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“WEST BENGAL'S TROUBLED TOURISM INDUSTRY: MITIGATION MEASURES”

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Abstract: The state of West Bengal is regarded as India's cultural capital. It has a wide range of natural and cultural attractions that make it appealing to both domestic and international tourists. Tourists flock to West Bengal due to the state's abundant bio-diversity as well as its moderate climate, rich cultural and historical heritage, religious places of worship, and ethnic aspects. Unfortunately, West Bengal has not been able to keep up with other Indian states in terms of tourism numbers. Only 3% of Indians and 6% of visitors come from outside the country to West Bengal. West Bengal's position in terms of overall tourism development, as well as the issues of policy making and implementation as a whole and shortcomings in tourist regions, is thus examined in the present paper, which is an attempt to revise West Bengal's position. The paper tries to make recommendations for better policy making and implementation.

Keywords: Tourism , Industry, Mitigation, International etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, tourism is seen as an important driver of the country's growth and development, both in terms of creating jobs and revenue. Since tourism is now widely accepted as one of the world's most important industries, it has

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brought about major social, economic, and environmental changes, all of which must be carefully understood and managed. Tourism refers to both domestic and international travellers. As a major social phenomenon in modern society, tourism is also a major source of economic activity. It is now widely accepted as a means of promoting economic growth and creating jobs around the world. In comparison

to other economic sectors, this one generates more jobs per million rupees invested than any other. Job creation, income generation, better cross-cultural relations, and mutual understanding are just a few of the benefits it brings. The state of West Bengal is blessed with a rich cultural heritage and abundant natural resources. As a result, it's a fascinating place to visit because of its lush forest and diverse wildlife, as well as its beautiful seashores, fine handicrafts, vast waterways, and an array of entrancing classical and folk dances and music. West Bengal's tourism industry is feeling the effects of globalization. As the country's economy grows and develops, tourism is increasingly seen as a major contributor. There have been a number of significant social, economic, and environmental changes as a result of the rise of tourism as one of the world's most important industries. An important development in the tourism industry is the increasing focus on quality from the customer's perspective. Accordingly, we've attempted to determine the extent of tourism growth in West Bengal and to identify some of tourism's most pressing issues.

BARRIERS WITH TOURISM IN WEST BENGAL

Bengal has been a late starter among India's competing tourist destinations, both in terms of recognising the importance of tourism development and in developing the necessary infrastructure. The promise of Bengal's tourism is high, but the results are lacking. Several

issues have resulted in a poor scenario for tourism activity, as is explained below.

Physically Inaccessible Locations

Bengal's tourism industry is being hampered by its remote location and poor transportation infrastructure. When it comes to tourist attractions, if their locations are inaccessible by normal means of transportation, they are of little value. As a result, despite their fascinating natural wealth, some areas remain inaccessible. In this way, access to the region is extremely difficult and facilities are practically non-existent, leaving it largely primitive. Besides that, the region lacks air transportation, particularly in the hilly region, which is North Bengal's richest tourist location.

Unplanned Tourist Spots

It is critical for the growth of tourist destinations that they appeal to both domestic and international visitors. The majority of West Bengal's tourist attractions have not been thoughtfully planned. These flowers grew in a haphazard fashion. Depending on the location, attraction, and expected tourist demand, tourist infrastructure features such as boarding and lodging, civic services, tourist shopping, leisure, and recreational activities must be adequately provided for when crowd density is high at tourist spots and destination areas. The success of a tourist attraction is also dependent on its physical layout and design.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

West Bengal's inadequate infrastructure is yet another obstacle to the state's tourism industry.

Water and electricity are two of the most basic necessities that are lacking or subpar in many places. Many other essentials, including banks, pharmacies and post offices, are scarce. There is also a major problem with the quality, number and distribution of lodgings. All the high-quality Western-style hotels in the country are concentrated in a few areas. Because of this, the growth of the tourism industry has been unevenly distributed, which can be explained by the uneven distribution of hotels. Lacking adequate infrastructure and related services, Bengal's tourism industry suffers.

Exploitation on tourists

Generally speaking, many tourists are not pleased with the conduct of taxi, land rover, or jeep drivers. Most tour bus drivers, conductors, and taxi drivers in the study area overcharge their customers. Tourists, both domestic and foreign, may be put off by the transportation workers' tendency to cheat. In addition, it has been observed numerous times that vendors and shopkeepers charge tourists inflated prices for their wares. While local tourists are used to haggling, tourists from other countries tend to avoid it by not staying longer or making purchases online, which hurts the economy of the country they visit. A number of threats have harmed the state's tourist destinations, including excessive pricing and high prices for food, water, lodging, and brokerage services.

Overcrowding during holidays

Though this is a problem for all tourist places throughout the country, in West Bengal this is

more prominent. Due to limited tourist spots, the places fill up with people during weekends and holidays. The extra load of the public becomes a nightmare for the administration to handle and it creates a negative impact on the image of the state as a tourist destination. Overcrowding invites many social and environmental problems, such as littering, pick pocketing, theft, prostitution, etc. If the government can increase the number of well-planned tourist spots coupled with sufficient infrastructure to handle the crowd, this problem can be handled easily.

Lack of diversification

Some of Bengal's tourist attractions have been underutilised or are too narrowly focused to be of much interest to tourists. As a tourist, you are always on the lookout for new and exciting places to visit, as well as new and exciting things to do. To put it another way, a lack of appropriate use, planning, and diversification is impeding the region's tourism and economic activity. In order to attract tourists to the tourist attractions that you want, adequate infrastructure and convenience in supporting the proposition must be provided, either in relation to road infrastructure, public facilities, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and banks.

Information and Publicity

Bengal's best historical and scenic attractions aren't always well-publicized. The state's architectural and iconographic treasures have so far received little attention, but they could become popular destinations for many.

Publicity in the form of high-quality publications and artwork, type focus, audio-visual, etc. is still a pipe dream for West Bengal. Some of the tourist attractions have been found to be deserted because few people know about them. As a result, tourism and the campaign to discover Bengal are slowed down due to a lack of widespread propaganda. If you want tourists to get the full picture of your tourist destination, you need to know what kinds of media are available. The media's coverage of tourist attractions is still at a very low level, and it has barely reveals any specific information that can be used to guide visitors to the area's tourist destinations. Since many tourists are unaware of the uniqueness and ownership of the attractions in their travel plans, it is up to the general public to provide information about the destination's uniqueness.

Environmental Degradation

Another issue related to tourism is the potential for environmental degradation and ecological imbalance as a result of the rapid expansion of infrastructure in some of Bengal's most popular tourist destinations. There are a number of issues with the soil, water, climate, and regional biomass no matter what is done or planned in the future there. Developing hotels and other tourism infrastructure without proper planning can have a negative impact on the area's ecology, sustainability, and aesthetics. Tourists' exploitation of the environment has taken a heavy toll on many areas, including the Sundarbans, coastal areas, and the Northern

Hills. Rich heritage buildings; monuments, temples, mosques and other relics which are the actual attractors for tourist are bearing the brunt of the tourist and the environment.

Lack of Coordination between Departments

Tourism helps in not only in the upliftment of the tourist spots alone, but also that of the districts in particular and state in general. It is unfortunate, that the different departments are at loggerheads over their domains and the tourist is made to bear the hostility of their mind-set. The government needs to sit with all the departments when planning or assessing the performance of existing and new tourist spots so that the tourist can visit the places with minimum trouble. Be it getting tickets to travel, entry to any infrastructure, hospitality, safety and security, etc. tourist should be made to wait for least minimum time. The general population of the state is unaware of the benefits of tourism. The scientific advancement of tourism in a region is impossible without the participation and awareness of the general public.

Skilled Human Resources

A region's ability to attract domestic and international tourists depends heavily on the availability of human resources and the general public. The ability of the service side to meet the needs of travellers is still not supported by competent human resources. People are still unaware of the importance of the tourist area's resale value, which necessitates outreach to the local community in order to protect the area's

natural resources, cultural heritage, and other assets while also fostering the region's distinctive indigenous identity. Traditional and indigenous arts and crafts development facilities, cottage industries related to tourism, housing for artisans involved in these activities, and land set aside for these purposes all fall under this category. The "service population" required to staff tourist and hospitality facilities and amenities must have access to adequate housing and other ancillary necessities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the research shed light on the state of West Bengal's tourism industry at the moment. The government of the state and other stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure the long-term viability and growth of the sector. A comprehensive approach to tourism planning means integrating the development of tourism resources and tourist activities in order to achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of social, economic, and ecological objectives. Therefore, the approach to planning should include physical, social, and economic elements as part of the development process as interrelated and interdependent components. A thorough examination of the current and possible structure of tourist demand and supply is a pre-requisite for better tourism planning. For both domestic and international tourists, the nature of tourist demand must be considered. For the benefit of coastal residents and for the proper operation and management of tourist attractions, West Bengal's tremendous potential

for tourism development must be fully exploited.

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