

CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM - AN ANALYSIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Cultural Heritage Tourism means any form of tourism that showcases the present and past lifestyle, art, culture and heritage of the people associated with the concerned location (Hawkes & Kwortnik, 2006). Cultural Heritage Tourism in West Bengal aims to recognize the importance of the cultural heritage products for continuity of culture and the balance within cultures. It generates local employment and business both directly and indirectly in the tourism sector and in various support and resource management sectors. The tourism sector is considered as an important vehicle for socio economic development of the concerned communities. The tourism sector stimulates improvements to local transportation, communication and other basic community infrastructures of West Bengal. This state is one of the important destination states in India for cultural heritage tourism for domestic and international tourists alike. Almost all districts of this state are replete with heritage products. This paper provides a theoretical framework for cultural heritage tourism development in West Bengal and their associated issues and concerns. The main objective of this research is to promote West Bengal as a preferred destination for visitors and provide the business of cultural heritage tourism with the desired opportunities that have every potential to improve the economy of the concerned people and thereby generate revenue for the State as well. The success of cultural heritage tourism depends on the ability of the destinations to engage in sustainable use and conservation of vital resources.

Keywords: *Heritage Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Impacts, Socio-Economic Development, Challenges and Opportunities, West Bengal*

INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populous country in Asia to China with a history as vibrant and varied as its many traditions. It has four thousand years of civilized history and as such it must be ranked as one of the greatest civilizations in all over the world. According to Hollinshead, cultural heritage tourism is the fastest growing area of tourism industry due to an increased specialization among tourists; a trend that is only recent. This trend is evident in the risen number of tourists seeking adventure, to get acquainted to the culture, history and archaeology of the place and looking to interact with the natives.

According to Ashworth & Larkham (1994) cultural heritage tourism is an important form of conventional tourism industry which basically targets the history, art and architecture, religious heritage, socio-cultural traditions and interaction, culinary habits and lifestyle of the people of a specified geographical area. Cultural heritage tourism is fast gaining popularity as tourists are seeking distinctive experiences in their tour (Smith & Robinson, 2006; Wang, 1999). 'Heritage' and 'Culture' are interchangeable and elastic terms. Cultural heritage tourism is gradually gaining importance for tourist

destinations all over the world (Prentice, 1993; Timothy & Boyd, 2002). Cultural heritage tourism is one of the most important assets and aspects of Indian tourism industry (Richards, 1996).

Amongst Indian destinations, West Bengal has a distinct image, with strong associations on cultural heritage tourism products. Most districts of West Bengal exhibit their own cultural heritage, the aspects which are very attractive items for both international and domestic tourists. We have to realise the impact of this cultural heritage upon tourism in a broader sense, where every tourism destination in this province involves at least one aspect or a part of cultural contact which constitutes the potential of cultural heritage tourism (Mishra, 1999). Thus, cultural heritage tourism in West Bengal plays a vital role as a component of foreign exchange earner. There is a wide range of important cultural heritage tourism destinations in different regions all over the state of West Bengal, such as:

- Monumental heritage sites associated with art and architecture
- Religious heritage sites
- Natural heritage sites
- Traditional arts and crafts • Music and dance etc.

All of the above mentioned aspects of cultural heritage tourism destinations (products) are available in West Bengal for domestic and foreign tourists alike. Tourists from European countries seem to cherish their visit to the beautiful province of West Bengal, aptly remarked as 'Beautiful Bengal'; a justified catch-phrase for the state, playing an enormous part in the promotion and the growth of the state's brand value.

Travel & Tourism is a key sector for economic development and job creation throughout the world (Foster, 1994; Hennessey *et al.*, 2008). In 2016, Travel and Tourism directly contributed US\$ 2.3 trillion and 109 million jobs worldwide. Taking its indirect and induced impacts into account, the sector contributed US\$7.6 trillion to the global economy and supported 292 million jobs in 2016. This was equal to 10.2% of the world's GDP, and approximately 1 in 10 of all jobs. In

the past six decades, tourism has experienced steady expansion and vast diversification, becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world.

Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTAs) in India from 2014 to 2016 were 76,79,099 (2014), 80,27,133 (2015) and 88,04,411 (2016) and the growth rate was 4.5% in 2015 over 2014 and 9.7% in 2016 over 2015. Foreign Exchange Earnings (Rs. in Crores) were 1,23,320, 1,35,193 and 1,54,146 in the year 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively where growth rate was 9.6% (in the year 2015 over 2014) and 14.0% (in the year 2016 over 2015). And Foreign Exchange Earnings (in US\$ billion) were 20.236, 21.071 and 22.923 US\$ billion in the year 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively where growth rate was 4.1% in the year 2015 over 2014 and 8.8% in the year 2016 over 2015.

Table 1: Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) and Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEEs) Month Wise from 2014 to 2016 and comparative figures of 2016 and 2015

Month	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (Nos.)			Percentage Change	
	2014	2015	2016	2015/14	2016/15
January	7,57,786	7,90,854	8,44,533	4.4%	6.8%
February	7,55,678	7,61,007	8,48,782	0.7%	11.5%
March	6,90,441	7,29,154	8,09,107	5.6%	11.0%
April	5,35,321	5,41,551	5,92,004	1.2%	9.3%
May	4,65,043	5,09,869	5,27,466	9.6%	3.5%
June	5,02,028	5,12,341	5,46,972	2.1%	6.8%
July	5,68,871	6,28,323	7,33,834	10.5%	16.8%
August	5,75,750	5,99,478	6,52,111	4.1%	8.8%
September	5,09,142	5,42,600	6,08,177	6.6%	12.1%
October	6,68,398	6,83,286	7,41,770	2.2%	8.6%
November	7,65,497	8,15,947	8,78,280	6.6%	7.6%
December	8,85,144	9,12,723	10,21,375	3.1%	11.9%
Total	76,79,099	80,27,133	88,04,411	4.5%	9.7%
Month	Foreign Exchange Earnings (in Rs. crore)			Percentage Change	
	2014 #	2015 #	2016 #	2015/14	2016/15
January	11,664	12,100	13,671	3.7%	13.0%
February	11,510	11,642	13,661	1.1%	17.3%
March	10,479	11,133	12,985	6.2%	16.6%
April	9,179	10,091	11,495	9.9%	13.9%
May	7,936	9,505	10,260	19.8%	7.9%
June	8,366	9,564	10,677	14.3%	11.6%
July	10,284	11,982	14,285	16.5%	19.2%
August	10,385	11,411	12,553	9.9%	10.0%
September	9,057	10,415	11,642	15.0%	11.8%
October	10,041	10,549	12,100	5.1%	14.7%
November	11,431	12,649	14,259	10.7%	12.7%
December	12,988	14,152	16,558	9.0%	17.0%
Total	1,23,320	1,35,193	1,54,146	9.6%	14.0%

Month	Foreign Exchange Earnings (in US\$ Billion)			Percentage Change	
	2014 #	2015 #	2016 #	2015/14	2016/15
January	1.880	1.945	2.032	3.5%	4.5%
February	1.849	1.877	2.001	1.5%	6.6%
March	1.716	1.783	1.938	3.9%	8.7%
April	1.520	1.609	1.726	5.9%	7.3%
May	1.337	1.491	1.534	11.5%	2.9%
June	1.470	1.498	1.587	1.9%	5.9%
July	1.712	1.884	2.125	10.0%	12.8%
August	1.706	1.752	1.875	2.7%	7.0%
September	1.488	1.573	1.744	5.7%	10.9%
October	1.636	1.621	1.812	-0.9%	11.8%
November	1.853	1.912	2.110	3.2%	10.4%
December	2.069	2.126	2.439	2.8%	14.7%
Total	20.236	21.071	22.923	4.1%	8.8%

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Comparative Statement 2014-16
#: Revised Estimate (based on final FTA received from BOI).

Objectives

Cultural heritage tourism has a number of objectives that must be met within the context of sustainable development such as the conservation of cultural resources, accurate interpretation of resources, authentic visitors experience and the stimulation of the earned revenues of cultural resources. We notice, that the cultural heritage tourism is not only concerned with the identification, management and protection of the heritage values but it is also required to be involved in understanding the impact of tourism on concerned communities and regions, achieving economic and social benefits and providing financial resources for protection along with marketing and promotion (Bhatia, 2012). Followings are the objectives of my study:

- To study the availability of heritage products in West Bengal.
- To study the importance and performance of cultural heritage tourism in West Bengal.
- To study the present status and trends in the flow of heritage tourists to West Bengal.
- To study the impacts of the cultural heritage tourism on economical, social and environmental issues.
- To study the challenges and opportunities of cultural heritage tourism.
- To analyze the different issues and concerns which are related to cultural heritage tourism industry in the state, West Bengal.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is purely based on secondary data. The data have been collected from various national and international journals, books and websites of the

government of India and government of West Bengal. Mainly the following data from government websites have been used for conducting the research (Ghosh & Sofique, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c):

- The Annual Report 2016-17, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India
- Reports of State/Union Territory Tourism Departments
- Report 2015, Bureau of Immigration, India
- India Tourism Statistics-2015, Government of India, Ministry of Tourism Market Research Division
- 27th Annual Report, 2015-16, Tourism Finance Corporation of India Limited
- Department of tourism, Government of West Bengal

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Heritage Tourism Trends in India

Heritage tourism in India has registered an immense growth in the last few years, ever since additional initiatives were taken by the government of India to boost the image of the country as a destination for heritage tourism. Indian heritage tourism products are always famous for its rich and attractive features to the foreign tourists. The glorious past of India with its cultural diversity makes a potent blend which attracts millions of foreign tourists each year to its heritage tourist attractions. The government of India and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture encourage heritage tourism in India by offering several benefits to the Indian states that are particularly famous for attracting tourists. India's rich heritage is amply reflected in the various

religious temples, palaces, monuments, and forts that can be found everywhere in the country. This has led to the increase in India's heritage tourism. The most popular heritage tourism destinations in India are: Taj Mahal in Agra, Mandawa castle in Rajasthan, Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, the Indian capital. The maximum number of tourists who come to India visit the

Taj Mahal for it is one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It is wholly made of marble with intricate inlay work done in an exquisite and meticulous style. The Mandawa castle in Rajasthan, built in 1775 reflects India's rich heritage and attracts thousands of tourists each year to Rajasthan which seems especially popular for its antique paintings, jade jewellery, palaces and costumes.

Table 2: FTAs and FEEs (1991- 2015) in India

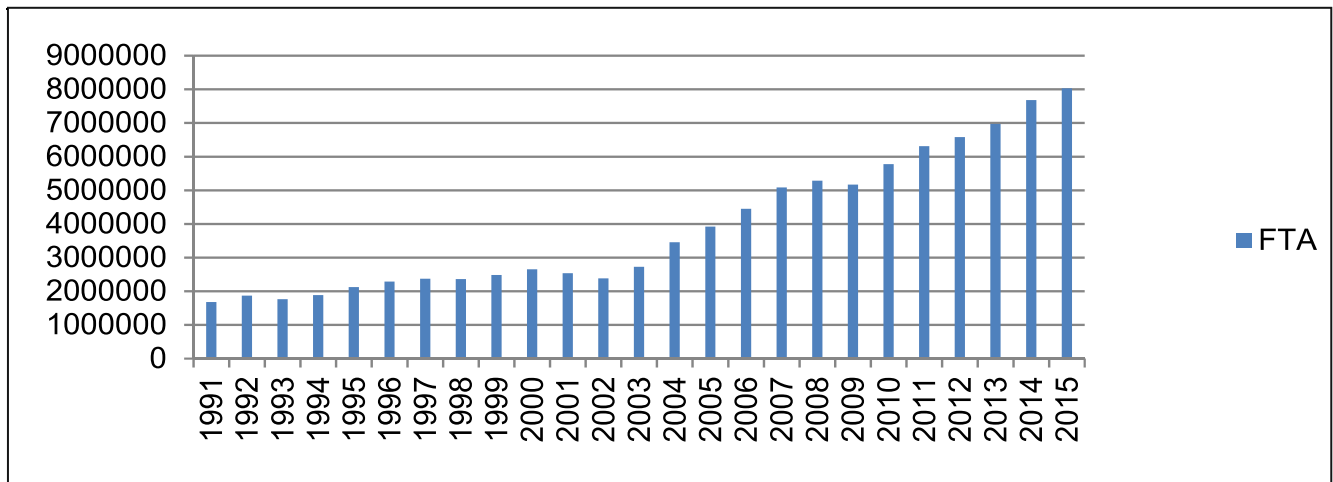
Year	FTAs	Annual Growth (%)	FEE in Rs. Term (Crore)	% Change over previous year	FEE in US \$ Term (Million)	% Change over previous year
1991	1677508	NA	4318	NA	1861	NA
1992	1867651	11.3	5951	37.8	2126	14.2
1993	1764830	-5.5	6611	11.1	2124	-0.1
1994	1886433	6.9	7129	7.8	2272	7.0
1995	2123683	12.6	8430	18.2	2583	13.7
1996	2287860	7.7	10046	19.2	2832	9.6
1997	2374094	3.8	10511	4.6	2889	2.0
1998	2358629	-0.7	12150	15.6	2948	2.0
1999	2481928	5.2	12951	6.6	3009	2.1
2000	2649378	6.7	15626	20.6	3460	15.0
2001	2537282	-4.2	15083	-3.5	3198	-7.6
2002	2384364	_6	15064	_0.1	3103	_3
2003	2726214	14.3	20729	37.6	4463	43.8
2004	3457477	26.8	27944	34.8	6170	38.2
2005	3918610	13.3	33123	18.5	7493	21.4
2006	4447167	13.5	39025	17.8	8634	15.2
2007	5081504	14.3	44360	13.7	1072 9	24.3
2008	5282603	4.0	51294	15.6	11832	10.3
2009	5167699	-2.2	53700	4.7	11136	-5.9
2010	5775692	11.8	64889 #1	20.8	14193	27.5
2011	6309222	9.2	77591 #1	19.6	16564	16.7
2012	6577745	4.3	94487 #1	21.8	17737	7.1
2013	6967601	5.9	107671 #2	14	18445	4.0
2014	7679099	10.2	123320 #2	14.5	20236	9.7
2015	8027133	4.5	135193 #2	9.6	21071	4.1

Source: India Tourism Statistics 2015 & Bureau of Immigration, India

#1 Provisional estimate, #2 Revised estimates

NA: % Change is Not Applicable (NA)

Figure 1: FTAs (1991-2015) in India



Source: India Tourism Statistics 2015

West Bengal: The Attractive Destination in India

West Bengal, commonly known as Bengal, is a state located in the eastern part of India. Spreading over an area of 88,752 sq. km. (34,267 sq. mi.), the state capital is the metropolitan city, Kolkata. As per the report published by the Census of India on 31st March 2011, the state of West Bengal shows a total population of 91,347,736. This contributes to 7.55 % of the country's total population. West Bengal has the widest variety of attractions in terms of tourism from the capital Kolkata being a mega polis with its cultural heritage, historical and modern charms extending to the zones of tranquility like the Himalayan terrain in the far north and the white snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas

itself, to the Mangrove forest of Sundarban in the far south, not to forget, Darjeeling, remarked famously by many as the 'Queen of Hill Stations' in India. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway has been declared by the UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The vast tea estates of the Dooars and the famous Royal Bengal tiger of Sundarban are amongst the innumerable landmarks and historical assets of India that forms West Bengal's glorious history, enticing prospective domestic and international tourists. Bengal undoubtedly is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse states of the country. This state boasts of different ethnicities, culture and heritage, religions, people and languages which add to this beautiful landscape.

Figure 2: Domestic Tourists Visits in 2015(To Top 10 States in India)

Rank	State/UT	Domestic Tourist Visit (%)
1	Tamil Nadu	23.3
2	Uttar Pradesh	14.3
3	Andhra Pradesh	8.5
4	Karnataka	8.4
5	Maharashtra#	7.2
6	Telangana	6.6
7	Madhya Pradesh	5.4
8	West Bengal	4.9
9	Gujarat	2.5
10	Rajasthan	2.5

Source: Annual Report 2015-16 Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India #
 Figures have been estimated.

In the year 2015, total 80,27,133 foreign tourists arrived in India, out of which 14,89,500 visited West Bengal. The number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India is 7.68 million and annual growth rate is 10.20 percent. Foreign earning from tourism in INR terms is 123,320 crores and in terms of US \$ is 20.24 billion and annual growth rate is 14.5 percent.

Heritage Tourism Products in West Bengal

Most of the districts of West Bengal are replete with enormous attractions of its cultural heritage, some of which enjoy both national and global fame (Boniface & Fowler, 1993). Kolkata is the capital city of West Bengal and is truly a place of talent, joy and passion. Some heritage products of West Bengal are discussed below.

Table 4: Some of the cultural heritage destinations

Cultural Heritage Destinations	District	Tourism Attraction (s)
Santiniketan	Birbhum	Famous for Visva-Bharati of Rabindranath Tagore
Tarapith	Birbhum	Tarama Mandir
Murshidabad	Murshidabad	Hazar Duari, History of Siraj-Ud-Dolla
Palassy	Murshidabad	Palashi Battle Field
Gaur	Malda	Dakhil Darwaja, Firoz Minar, Kadam Rasul Mosque
Bandel	Hooghly	Bandel Church
Hooghly	Hooghly	Hooghly Imam Bara
Tarakeswar	Hooghly	Tarakeswar Mandir
Kamarpukur	Hooghly	Birth Place of Ram Krishna
Burdwan	Burdwan	PirBaharam, Sarbamangla Temple, Tomb of Sheer Afghan
Nabadwip	Nadia	Sonar Gouranga Temple Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math
Mayapur	Nadia	Iskan Temple
Bishnupur	Bankura	Terracotta art in various Temples
Sunderbans	24 Paragonas(S)	Sunderban National Park

Source: Department of Tourism, Government of West Bengal

Architecture and Monumental Heritage

There are many Monuments in West Bengal which are unique and excellent in their cultural history and importance. Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, was founded by the British colonizers and has a history of around 400 years. There are but a few famous historical monuments in this state which belong to the pre-British period. The British constructed many archaeological structures and buildings for developmental purposes of the state and the country. Some of the prominent monuments and structures of the British period are Rabindra Setu (Howrah Bridge), Victoria Memorial Hall, Raj Bhavan, Writers' Building BBD Bag, Sahid Minar, etc. Besides these, a few other monumental heritages of the state are Indian Museum, Gandhi Ghat, Hooghly Imambara, Museum at Barrackpur, The Christ

Church, Jalpaiguri Rajbari and Darjeeling Town Hall, residence of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and various terracotta temples all over the state.

Religious Heritage

West Bengal is a secular state and is tolerant of religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, amongst many others. Every religious community has made their religious centres and places of worship viz. temples (mandir), mosques (masjid), churches (girja), gurudwaras. They have stood witness to the intensity of religious passion of people in the state spanning over a substantial period of time. These religious centres are visited by pilgrims and all types of tourists. The tourists visit these religious centres to enjoy and experience the beauty of their architectural splendour. Mayapur in Nadia district of this state is undoubtedly the most important destination for all tourists and worshippers of Lord Krishna, where the world headquarters of International Society for Krishna Consciousness is situated. Few other famous destinations of this state are- Dakshineswar Temple, Chandannagar church, Kamarpukur, Belur Math, Kalighat, Bandel church, Tarapith, Pathar Chapuri, Tarakeswar, 108 Shiv Temple and Sarbamongala Mandir of Burdwan, etc.

Natural Heritage

The Sundarbans (part) is famous for the world's largest mangrove forest which is located in southern part of West Bengal. West Bengal has 3.26% of its geographical area which is under protected areas with the wildlife sanctuaries and national parks such as Sundarbans National Park, Buxa Tiger Reserve, Gorumara National Park etc. Various types of migratory birds come from other countries or states come to this state mainly during the winter season. The Sundarban is a world famous reserve project conserving the endangered Bengal tiger. The Sundarban is also famous for the protecting other endangered animals like the Gangetic dolphin, the river terrapin and the estuarine crocodile etc. There are a few other natural heritage places like the Hooghly River and the Ganga Heritage River cruise etc.

Traditional Arts and Crafts

West Bengal is the place of modern and fine arts. Abanindranath Tagore had started the famous Bengal School of Art which was to create styles of art outside the European realist tradition that was taught in art colleges under the colonial administration of the British Government. The movement had many adherents like Ramkinkar Baij, Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and Gaganendranath Tagore. After the Independence of

India, some important groups like the Calcutta Group and the Society of Contemporary Artists were formed in the undivided Bengal which dominated the art scenario all over India. Some more famous art galleries like: the Academy of Fine Arts, Centre for International Modern Art, the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Asutosh Museums of modern art etc. Some famous handicrafts are also available in various districts of the state, like - painting, embroidery and kantha stitch, terracotta artefacts and masks, wood carvings, cane & bamboo items, inlaying, engraving, dhokra, etc.

Music and Dance

Famous Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Geeti and some folk songs of various districts like: Baul, Bhatiali, Kirtan, Bhawaya, Gajan etc. Rabindra nitya (performance of dance with Rabindra sangeet) and world-famous Chau dance of Purulia district. Since the early 1990s, there has been an emergence of new genres of music, such as those based on realism, called the bengali 'jeebon mukhi gaan' performed by artists like Kabir Suman, Nachiketa, Anjan Dutta and rock bands such as Bhoomi, Chandrabindoo, Cactus, Fossils etc.

Festivals

There is a very popular saying in Bengali "baro mase tero parban" that translates to: thirteen (or many) festivals in twelve months (an year). West Bengal is a land of festivals. Throughout the year many festivals or 'parban' are celebrated in this state. Some examples of the main festivals of West Bengal are Durga Puja, Charak Puja, Nabanno, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja, Nabobarsho (Bengali New year), Kenduli Mela of Joydeb, Rathayatra, Janmasthami, Saraswati Puja, Dolyatra, Shivaratri, Paush Parban etc.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the identification of tourist's destinations in West Bengal. It is concurred that such research efforts would help tourism practitioners and planners to have a better understanding of cultural heritage tourism and to formulate improved strategy and planning about cultural heritage tourism destinations in West Bengal (Chaudhuri, 2000).

From the result of the study, West Bengal cultural heritage tourism needs to improve in few areas like:

- Firstly, it needs to create more information outlets in various markets and to improve the accessibility.
- Secondly, the Ministry of Tourism, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDCC) should work more closely with the cultural heritage

areas to spread awareness and remove hurdles.

- Finally, it needs to work towards collaborating with various travel agencies & tour operators to create awareness of quality among domestic and international tourists. There is no doubt that West Bengal has immense potential and tourists are satisfied at cultural heritage destinations of West Bengal. It is hoped that West Bengal will receive more domestic and international tourists in future to be the leader in providing the flavour of cultural heritage tourism to the world.
- If the government succeeds in taking the necessary steps for proper development of the heritage sites, then West Bengal may potentially become the best heritage state in India.
- Some important heritage products are neglected by both government and non-government sides. Proper care must be taken by PPP mode for proper development of those sites or products.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Development and supply of cultural-historical heritage "dressed" in an attractive package for tourist consumption must be balanced with responsibility and seriousness required to uphold historical and national values (Kim, Chen & Jang, 2006). Followings are the recommendations for the betterment of the cultural heritage tourism in the state of West Bengal:

- Sufficient financial support should be given by the government or non-government organisations for proper maintenance of the heritage products of West Bengal.
- Proper basic education should be given to the local people concerned with the heritage tourism.
- Training should be arranged for proper understanding of languages like English and Hindi to minimize hindrance in communication.
- Physical communications have to be improved specially for destinations associated with heritage tourism in West Bengal for the development of this tourism. It includes communication facilities, food and lodging hotels, drinking water, electricity, telephone, safety and security, etc.
- Government legislation should be clarified for the tourist and residents.
- Tax rate and execution policy should be proper for the tourists and residents.

- Lack should be removed for the linkages between micro, small and medium enterprises of heritage tourism (Light, 1995).
- High level skill should be developed in this field and manpower should be increased.
- Alertness for business opportunity should be developed and financial institutional support should be given for development of their tourism business.
- Strong commitment should be ensured from the public sector.
- The number of trained guides should be increased in heritage tourism field as the guide plays a very important role in attracting tourists.
- Corruption and mismanagement should be prevented in the field (Kinnaird & Hall, 1996).

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