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**WEST BENGAL - A TOURIST DESTINATION: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BENGAL TOURISM BUSINESS MODEL WITH KERALA & GUJARAT**

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**ABSTRACT**

*West Bengal is a unique state of India that is gifted with all tourism ingredients to address the need of all type of tourists. With the Himalayan range on the north to Bay of Bengal in the south, lush green forest and wide range of historic evidence & Pilgrim destinations; West Bengal has varied option of tourism products to offer to its tourists. But in the context of tourism market Bengal is still a backbencher as compared to the other Indian states that have marched way ahead of Bengal. Tourism being one of the major contributing industries, its sustainable development is extremely important for an economy to capitalize. This paper is a study report on Bengal’s marketing mix inadequacies and finding and mixing consistent attributes to identify West Bengal as a preferred destination and distinguish it through positive image building, i.e. how tourists perceive West Bengal in their minds. A comparison of Tourism Business Model of West Bengal is done with that of Kerala and Gujarat to critically analyze the gap in Marketing West Bengal tourism.*

**KEYWORDS**

West Bengal, tourism ingredients, tourism marketing mix, positive image building, tourism business model, Kerala, Gujarat.

**INTRODUCTION**

Tourism being one of the major contributing sectors in the economy today has gained immense importance worldwide. All the economy worldwide is behind tapping the potential of this sector as growth of tourism sector can act as a supplement to declining Industrial Sector (UNWTO Annual Report- A year of recovery 2010). As tourism is a gamut of a number of ancillary trade and industry, focusing on the development of this sector can lead to the improvement of the economy as a whole. Nature is a gift of God and it is heterogeneously distributed. All the state, countries and destinations are struggling to en cash its natural possession in the form of highlighting its tourism products. But most of them fail to market the product due to lack of insights and myopic policy decisions. Tourism is considered either as a product or as a service while actually it is a combination of both product and service in a same cauldron. Creating, communicating and delivering value tourism added with professionalism in anticipation with the need & preference of the tourist, to be properly identified so as to reach the goal of acquiring the heart mind and market share.

**METHODOLOGY**

Tourism business model of West Bengal, Kerala and Gujarat is compared on the basis of the tourism policy of each state derived from the secondary source (internet). The Vision, Mission and Objectives of each state is critically analyzed to understand the motive of each state behind marketing their tourism products. The tourist’s inflow data of each state is refereed to infer their position in Indian tourism market. Some primary data is also collected to show the need of the tourist as a consumer of tourism sector to justify the gap in the Business Model.

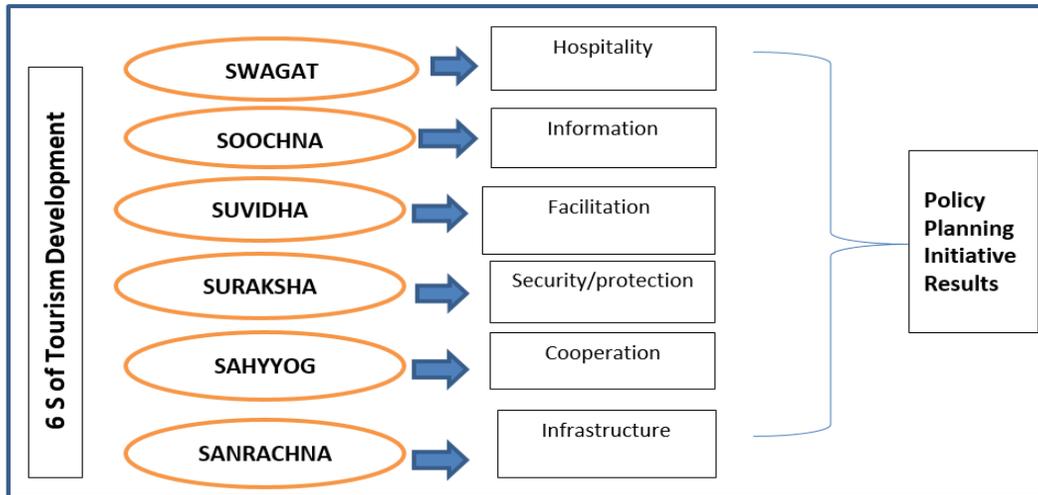
**LITERATURE SURVEY**

**TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF THE VISION STATEMENT OF THE STATES OF KERALA & GUJARAT WITH THAT OF BENGAL**

	<b>Kerala</b>	<b>Gujarat</b>	<b>West Bengal</b>
<b>Vision of the 3 states</b>	Tourism becomes a vibrant and significant contributor to the sustainable development of the state of Kerala. <b>Source:</b> Kerala Tourism Policy 2012, Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala.	To position Gujarat as a vibrant tourist destination, with an emphasis on improving visitor experience, livelihood linkages, environmental concerns and enhancing investment opportunities, thus catapulting tourism as one of the most important economic drivers, leading to sustainable development and inclusive growth in the State. <b>Source:</b> Tourism Policy for the State of Gujarat (2015-2020)	West Bengal will aim to become a preferred tourism and tourism related investment destination by leveraging its unique geographical setting along with its various tourism related assets to promote tourism in an integrated manner which will not only bring in more investment and further the socio-economic goals of the Government, but also ensure that all these are in conformity with the relevant acts, rules and regulations relating to environmental protection. The overall aim will be to see that the tourism sector contributes towards improving the quality of life of people in general. <b>Source:</b> West Bengal Tourism Policy, 2008, Government of West Bengal, Department of Tourism.

**Framework of Kerala Tourism Model:** based on this whole tourism strategy of the state is formulated.

FIGURE 1: KERALA TOURISM MODEL



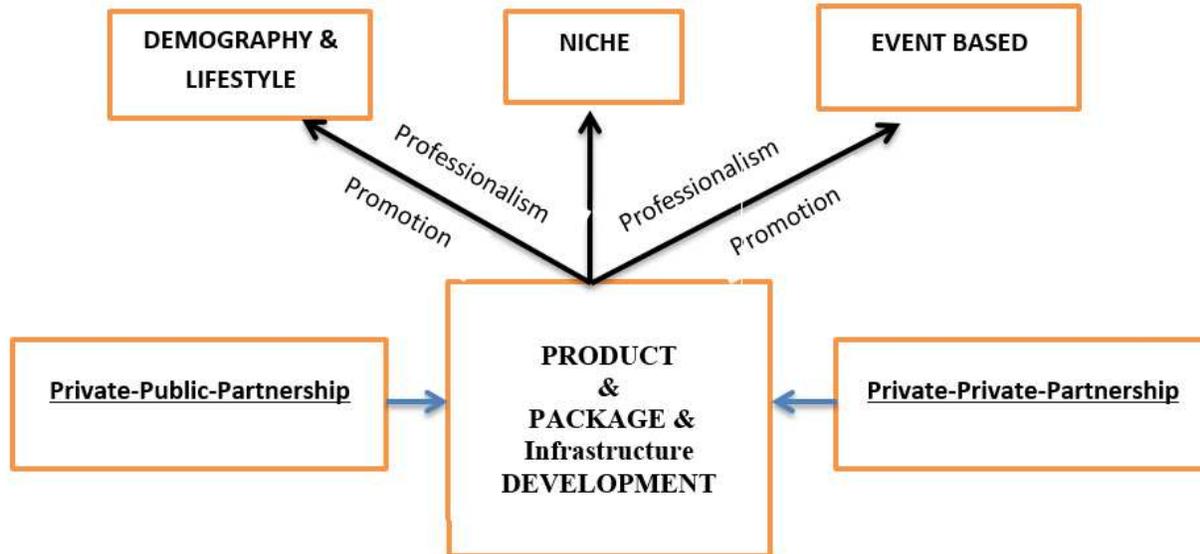
Source: A report on Kerala’s Approach to Tourism Development: A Case Study Ministry of Tourism Government of India and CRISIL

**FRAMEWORK OF GUJARAT TOURISM MODEL**

Gujarat’s strategy of marketing their tourism product is based on the motto of starting with segments as marketing is complex and each segment has its own flavor. Based on their objective of:

1. Positioning themselves among top five tourist destination(State) in India
2. Providing innovative form of tourism products likes adventure, cruise, event-based, inland waterways, medical.
3. Segmenting the tourists & targeting each segment with unique offerings.
4. Developing tourism packages and products to augment tourist stay and encourage repeat visits
5. Promoting tourism products segment-wise and building PPP framework of business.

FIGURE 2: THE PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION OF GUJARAT TOURISM BUSINESS BASED ON THEIR CURRENT POLICY IS SHOWN



**FRAMEWORK OF WEST BENGAL TOURISM BUSINESS MODEL**

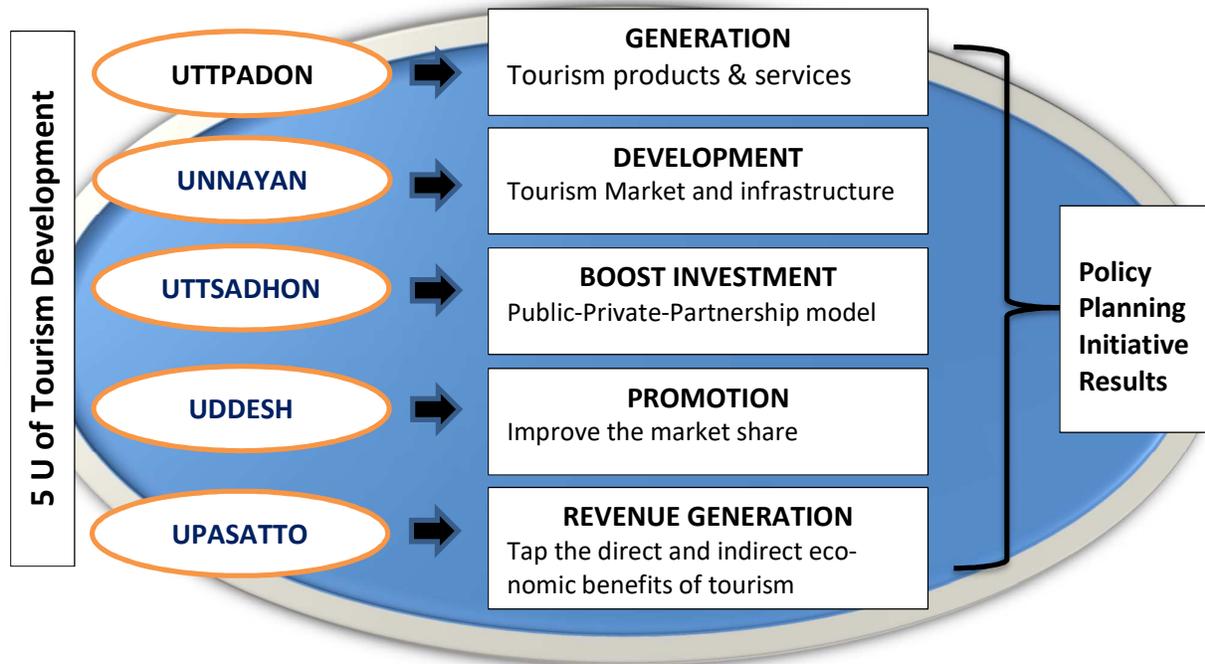
The current Bengal tourism is based on the following perceived model proposed on the basis of the objectives of Bengal Tourism Policy.

The basic objectives of the Tourism Policy of West Bengal will be as follows:

1. To **improve the market share** of West Bengal in the inbound international tourism segment and also to have a dominant share in the domestic tourism market.
2. To **promote** responsible and sustainable tourism through the integrated development of the infrastructure and not sporadic, stand alone and fragmented development.
3. To **develop a portfolio of tourism products** by utilizing its unique ecological, historical, cultural, religious, wildlife, sports, shopping, health care, educational and human assets.
4. To **facilitate** tourism by all segments, particularly the middle and lower income tourists, by making the tourist spots in the State more easily accessible through “single window facility” at the State capital and at the district headquarters and on the internet.
5. To fully tap the direct and indirect **economic benefits** of tourism by “broad basing” tourism activities. This will be done by creating more employment opportunities and by dispersing tourism into the hinterland which will further the socio-economic goals of the Government.
6. To proactively develop partnership with the governmental and nongovernmental agencies including the private sector (**Public-Private-Partnership model**) (PPP) to take advantage of complementary capital and intellectual assets to promote tourism.
7. To **increase the revenue earnings** of the State and the foreign exchange reserves of the country.

Source: West Bengal Tourism Policy, 2008, Government of West Bengal, Department of Tourism.

FIGURE 3: 5U MODEL OF BENGAL TOURISM BUSINESS



COMPARISON

TABLE:1 COMPARISON OF THE TOURISM BUSINESS OF KERALA, GUJARAT & BENGAL

Comparison Basis	KERALA	GUJRAT	BENGAL
1. FOCUS	Tourists and community development	Branding	Product and Economic Benefit
2. STRATEGY	Hospitality	S-T-P	Developing a portfolio of tourism products
3. USP	Illiteracy rate & global presence	Home state of PM	Rich culture and historic evidence, gastro-nomic delicacies
4. COST	Very High	Medium	Low
5. ACCESSIBILITY	Distance from major market. Infrastructural issues pertaining to air transport	New air strips and facilitating the commencement / strengthening air operations at major tourist destinations	Easily accessible through "single window facility" at the State capital and at the district headquarters.

To gradually minimize the gap in the model of operation to that of service delivery and maximize customer satisfaction a proper marketing plan need to be developed. This marketing plan matches the different form of tourism opportunities provided by a state to the right target market of the tourist to whom it is intended and the way of providing those opportunities. Developing a marketing plan around those components helps in

1. Ensuring that the offerings are satisfying the desires of the tourists or not
2. Identifying the strategies to help the target tourists to access the opportunities provided.
3. Understanding how to best market opportunities based on how tourists relate themselves to that potential market
4. Identify domestic and international competitors and strategies to diversify to the unique tourism opportunities the destination/state/country has.

Developing a marketing plan requires to think in terms of using diverse approaches to communicating about the tourism business of the state (i.e., marketing mix). Marketing Mix includes the four Ps (i.e., product, price, place and promotion) of business marketing (Perreault and McCarthy 2002) and three Ps (i.e., programming, people, and partnership) of tourism marketing (Mill and Morrison2002).

The Tourism Business of the 3 states Kerala, Gujarat and Bengal is compared on the basis of 8 P's of tourism marketing mix to identify Bengal's marketing mix inadequacies as in the context of tourism market Bengal is still a backbencher as compared to the other Indian states that have marched way ahead of Bengal in terms of tourist inflow.

TABLE 2: MARKETING MIX COMPARISON FOR TOURISM BUSINESS OF KERALA, GUJARAT & BENGAL

Marketing Mix Comparison	KERALA	GUJARAT	BENGAL
1. PRODUCT	natural environment	Innovative forms of tourism.	Develop portfolio of unique tourism product
2. PRICE	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
3. PLACE	Kerala is positioned as a visible global brand in tourism Distance from major market. Infrastructural issues pertaining to air transport.  Distribution channel: a. Internet & using social marketing tools b. Tie up with global institution c. Innovative campaigns & road shows d. Film & media	Infrastructural development for tourist information, transport services, accommodation and way-side amenities. Opening new air strips  Distribution channel: a. Internet b. Fairs and festivals c. social networking, d. blogs, e. virtual tourism, etc f. Celebrity Endorsement	Tourist spots in the State are easily accessible through "single window facility" at the State capital and at the district headquarters and on the internet.  Distribution channel: a. Celebrity Endorsement b. Tourism fair & Exhibition c. Advertisement Campaign d. On website & brochures
4. PROMOTION	To market Kerala as a visible global brand in domestic and international markets • Creating Kerala Convention Promotion Bureau (KCPB)	To make Gujarat one amongst the top five tourist States of India in terms of local, national and international tourist footfalls by 2025;	to become a preferred tourism and tourism related investment destination by leveraging its unique geographical setting
5. PEOPLE	quality human resources in tourism and hospitality	tourism-specific skill development leading to gainful employment and self-employment especially for the local populace	Not specified or considered
6. PROCESS	To create enabling environment & human resource in tourism for the state and the country.	Development of diverse tourism packages and products to augment tourist stay and encourage repeat visits	Integrated development of the infrastructure and not sporadic, stand alone and fragmented development.
7. PROGRAMMING	World-class, yet local visitor experience.  Tourism sector attracts investment, which will be sensitive to the natural environment	Attract the MICE segment, by creating convention/exhibition facility and support infrastructure;  leverage innovative forms of tourism such as adventure, cruise, event-based, inland waterways, medical and others	Utilizing its unique ecological, historical, cultural, religious, wildlife, sports, shopping, health care, educational and human assets.
8. PARTNERSHIP	P-P-P Model	P-P-P Model	P-P-P Model

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Instead of concentrating on the production, product and finally selling orientation of business West Bengal should concentrate on marketing and societal orientation for planning its tourism business.
2. Most of the objectives pertaining to the vision a mission of the state tourism policy is based on creating and developing a new product. Instead the state should focus on the matching ability of its offerings with the profile of the tourists.
3. If employment generation is the main concern of the state it could be done in developing tourism research institutes engaging individuals in different forms of tourism research. Training institutes to be built to train professionals for all the ancillary industries supporting tourism. This will lead to a sustainable growth to the tourism sector of the state.
4. Social Media to be used for community formation among tourists who are dedicated towards environmental conservation and hence sustainable form of tourism growth and development could be achieved.

**CONCLUSION**

West Bengal being the unique state of India that is gifted with all tourism ingredients can address the need of all type of tourists. The present model of tourism development of West Bengal to be amended and more professional approach of tourism marketing concentrating on the tourists to be developed for its growth in long run and built a positive image in the mind of its target tourists. Though the research is concluded on the basis of the tourism policy of Bengal that is available on the internet and on certain reports and articles on current tourism development, hence there are certain limitations. Following some of the tested successful Model like Kerala, Bengal should concentrate on better mixing its marketing ingredients for its tourism business. Certain professional and expert alterations in the business plan and policy by leveraging its unique geographical setting along with its various tourism related assets could lead West Bengal to fulfill its border vision of becoming a preferred tourism and tourism related investment destination.

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