

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Over the past several years, tourism has become one of the most significant and progressive industries in the world. The multi-level expansion of tourism strengthens its socio-structural impact as people travel the world not just for pleasure, but also for religious, health, education, and business purposes (Okafor et al., 2021). Tourism plays a significant role in generating employment, creating opportunities, boosting tax revenue and foreign exchange earnings.

The tourist destination is the main pillar for the development of the tourism industry. A tourist destination is a non-residential area where visitors stay and visit for a short period. The formation of a tourism destination requires six key elements: food, accommodation, transportation, attractions, shopping, and entertainment (Liu et al., 2020). A tourist destination is typically a specific geographic location such as a scenic spot, town, area of a country, or even an entire country or region, managed by a unified destination management organization (Fyall & Garrod, 2020). Common characteristics of tourist destinations include attractiveness, comfort, and accessibility, as well as the availability of tourism resources, facilities, and transportation infrastructure that enable and encourage tourism activities (Deng et. al., 2021). The essence of a destination is crucial to the success of the tourism industry, as it is the foundation upon which attractive places are identified and developed through investment. A tourist-friendly destination can generate significant revenue through tourism and thereby the economic development of the region.

Selecting the right tourist destination is crucial for the success of tourism investment. The process of identifying such a destination involves selecting a geographic location that offers opportunities for both tourists and investors to flourish. Investors typically utilize

various financial instruments to meet their financial objectives, such as generating returns, building wealth, or investing in a specific location, such as a tourist destination. However, due to the high cost of relocation and reconfiguration, selecting a tourist destination is a critical decision that can significantly affect market share and profitability. Selecting the right tourist destination can also shorten the payoff period for fixed capital investments. Investing in a tourist destination can lead to a significant level of employment generation, socio-cultural exchanges, revenue generation, and economic development. Investment in any tourist destination can be a crucial factor that helps to improve the livelihoods of the local population, while also presenting valuable opportunities for investors.

The development of a destination's attractiveness is strategically planned to cater to the needs of tourists as well as investors. Tourism ranking refers to a destination's ability to provide unique benefits to visitors including investors (WTFI, 2020). Tourists play a critical role in shaping the direction and growth of tourism over time, as their choices and preferences when selecting travel destinations have a direct impact on the economic development of that region.

A well-designed roadmap may help both investors and policymakers to decide on further necessary investments in a particular tourist destination, with the goal of creating more tourist-friendly infrastructure. In turn, improved infrastructure can attract more tourists, which can enhance the livelihoods and economic development of local communities and foster cultural exchange. By investing in such infrastructure, investors can improve the rate of return on their investment. This roadmap may also facilitate cultural exchange, as tourists are exposed to local traditions, customs, and heritage. This exchange can lead to a greater appreciation of cultural diversity, and create opportunities for the preservation of local cultures.

Our research study focuses on the selection and ranking of potential tourist destinations in North Bengal from the perspective of tourism investment. Our study area, North Bengal is a region of West Bengal that is located (Figure 1.1) in the northern part of the state and shares borders with Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. This region is known for its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and historical significance. North Bengal is renowned for its stunning tourist destinations, including popular attractions such as Darjeeling, Mirik, Kalimpong, and Coochbehar, etc.

Figure 1.1

Map Location of North Bengal



(Source: Shutterstock & Authors' Own Conceptualization)

Many authors view tourism destinations as complex systems in which various agents, such as accommodation providers, restaurants, and transport services, must work together to create a satisfactory tourist experience. Effective coordination among these agents is essential to create a high-quality tourist product (Gunn, 1972; Butler, 1980; Pearce, 1989; Laws, 1995). The supply of a destination is a crucial element in the tourism system as it comprises the fundamental components that collectively shape the overall visitor experience. The overall appeal of a destination greatly influences the tourist flow (Sebastian & Rajagopalan, 2009). The accessibility, attractions, and amenities of a destination area are significant factors that attract international tourists (Skerritt & Huybers, 2005). These are commonly referred to as "pull factors" in the tourism industry (Boniface et al., 2016).

To understand the overall development that happened through tourism, we need to know the tourism scenario worldwide, in our country i.e.in India, and also in the state of West Bengal, particularly in the North Bengal region.

1.2 Worldwide Tourism

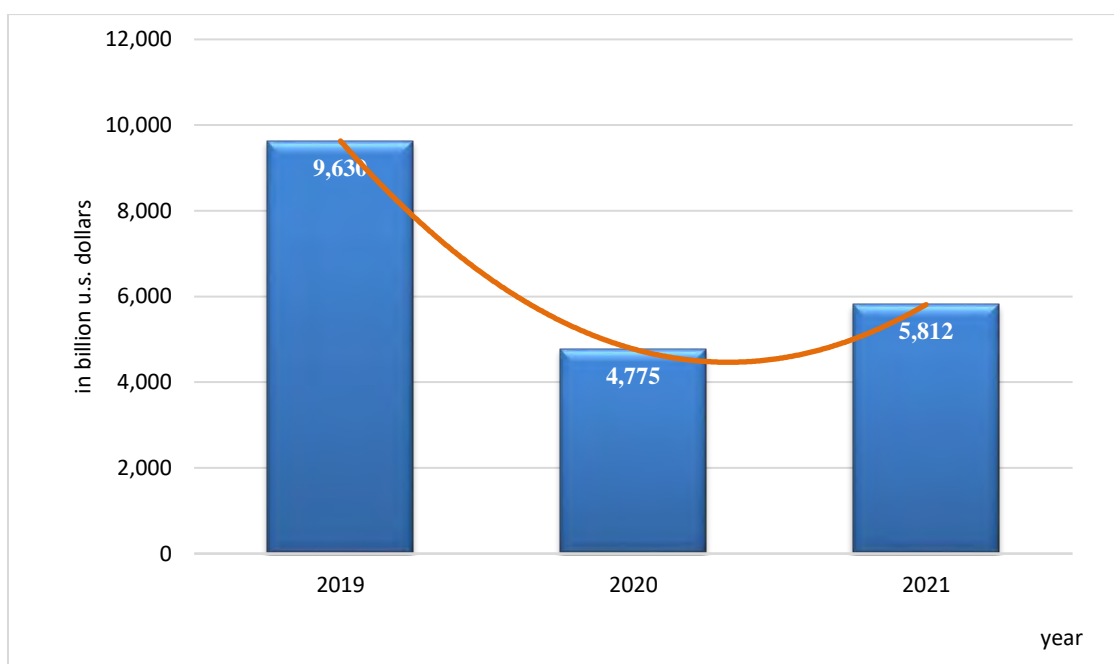
The tourism industry is a highly profitable and multifaceted sector that comprises various industries. In 2021, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to global GDP was approximately 5.8 billion U.S. dollars. The Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) is a comprehensive tool that assesses the performance and competitiveness of countries and territories in the travel and tourism industry. According to the TTDI report for 2021, Japan, the United States, and Spain have emerged as the top performers with the highest score of 5.2 out of seven.

Japan, for instance, has a well-developed transport network, including high-speed rail and efficient airports, which makes traveling within the country convenient and comfortable.

The country's rich cultural heritage, including its cuisine, architecture, and festivals, also makes it a popular destination for tourists. Similarly, the United States has a diverse range of attractions, from natural wonders like the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls to vibrant cities like New York and Los Angeles. The country also has an extensive hotel and restaurant industry, which provides high-quality services to travelers. Spain, on the other hand, is known for its rich cultural history, including its architectural wonders like the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona and Alhambra in Granada. The country's beautiful beaches, warm climate, and delicious cuisine also attract millions of tourists every year. These countries have excelled in areas such as infrastructure development, cultural resources, and effective policy frameworks, which have contributed to their strong performance in the travel and tourism industry. However, the global COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 had an important negative impact on the industry, including travel and tourism, despite its significant contribution to the global economy (Ghosh, 2020).

Figure 1.2

Total Contribution of Travel & Tourism to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Worldwide
(2019 to 2021)



(Source: WTTC; Oxford Economics)

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the travel and tourism industry globally, resulting in a sharp decline in the sector's contribution to the global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020. However, as depicted in Figure 1.2, the industry showed signs of recovery in 2021, with a 21.7 percent increase in its contribution to the global GDP compared to the previous year.

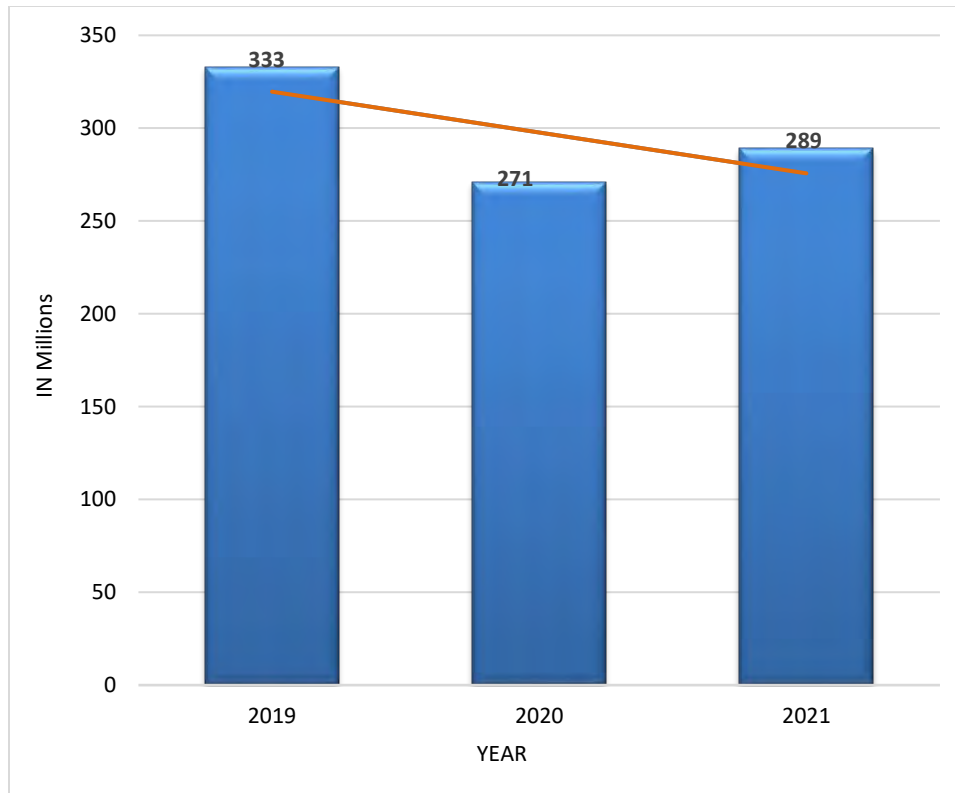
In 2021, the travel and tourism industry contributed a total of 5.81 trillion U.S. dollars to the global GDP, which is an increase of approximately one trillion U.S. dollars from the previous year. This remarkable recovery is attributed to several factors, including the gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions and the increasing availability of vaccines, which restored travelers' confidence and boosted demand.

Despite this significant growth, the industry's contribution to the global GDP in 2021 remained below pre-pandemic levels, indicating that the sector is still recovering from the pandemic's impact. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) expects that the industry's recovery will continue to gain momentum in the coming years, with the contribution to global GDP projected to reach 9.5 trillion U.S. dollars by 2029.

Figure 1.3

Travel & Tourism: Employment Worldwide

(2019 to 2021)



(Source: WTTC; Oxford Economics)

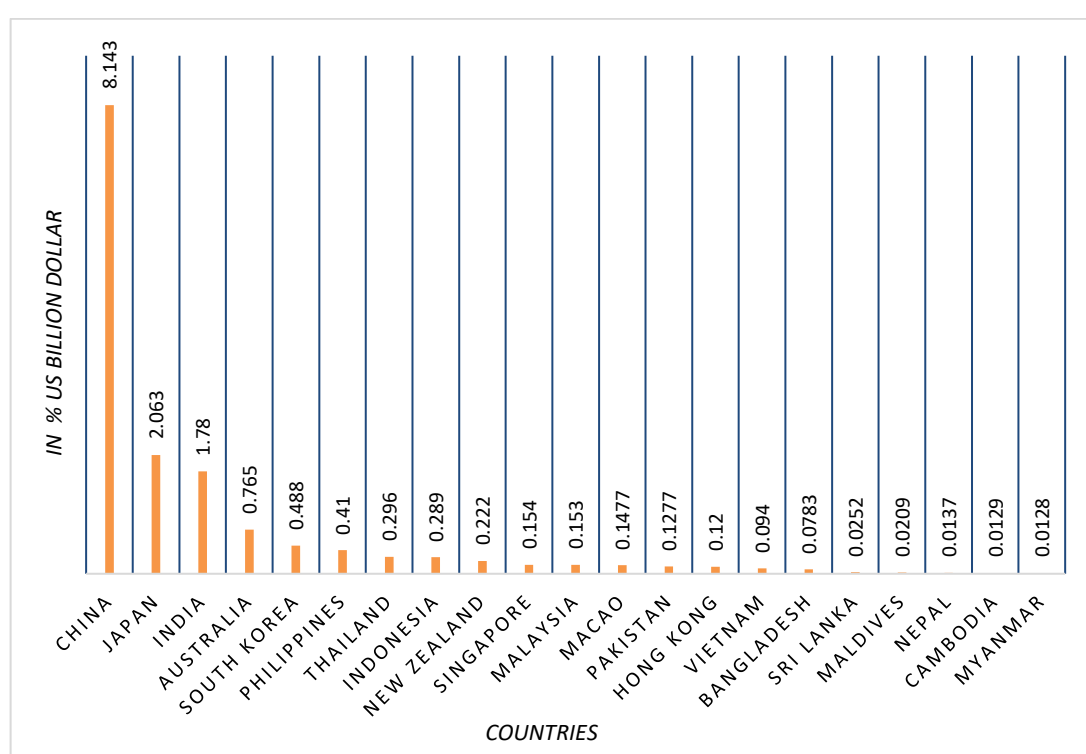
The travel and tourism sector is a significant employer globally, and the number of jobs supported by the industry is a crucial indicator of its contribution to the global economy. In 2021, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry recorded a rise in the number of jobs supported globally. However, the figure remained lower than that reported prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 1.3). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the global travel and tourism sector recorded a total of 289 million jobs in 2021, an increase from the previous year. This number represents approximately one in ten jobs globally, highlighting the industry's importance as a driver of employment and economic growth. This sector includes various industries such as transportation, accommodation, travel agencies, food and beverage services, among others. According to the Economic Impact Report (EIR, 2022), the Travel &

Tourism industry's GDP is projected to experience an average annual growth rate of 5.8% between 2022-2032. This growth rate exceeds the 2.7% forecast for the global economy. This growth rate is also expected to result in a GDP of USD 14.6 trillion for the industry which is equivalent to 11.3% of the total global economy.

Figure 1.4

Country-wise (Asia-Pacific region) Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP

(in Billion US Dollars %) in 2021



(Source: WTTC)

In the Worldwide tourism industry, the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region has emerged as a leading tourism hub, providing significant economic contributions to many developing economies. One of the key factors behind the region's growing popularity among international tourists is its competitive prices compared to traditional Western tourist hotspots. Consequently, an increasing number of international travelers have been drawn to the region. Additionally, the growth of economies in the APAC region has resulted in the emergence of an affluent middle class, which has further boosted domestic travel. For

instance, in 2021, the travel and tourism industry contributed a remarkable 814.3 billion U.S. dollars to China's GDP, highlighting its crucial role in supporting the East Asian country's economy. Other countries such as Japan and **India** have also reported impressive figures (Figure 1.4), while Southeast Asia has experienced consistent GDP growth due to the travel and tourism industry (*Statista Research Department, 2023*).

1.3 Tourism in India

India is an ancient civilization with a diverse range of cultural experiences, making it a highly sought-after tourist destination. Covering over 32,87,263 square kilometers, the country boasts a wide range of natural features, from the snowy peaks of the Himalayas to the lush tropical rainforests of the south. Its unique geography, marked by mountains and coastline, sets India apart as the seventh-largest country in the world.

Table 1.1

Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism (TT) to GDP by G20 Countries

(In Billion US Dollars) in 2021

Position	G20 Countries	T&T contribution to GDP (USD BN)	T&T % of GDP 2021	T&T GDP change (%) 2021
1	United States	1,271.20	5.50%	22.00%
2	China	814.3	4.60%	16.90%
3	Germany	251	6.40%	5.00%
4	Japan	206.3	4.20%	22.90%
5	Italy	179	9.10%	58.50%
6	India	178	5.80%	43.60%
7	France	177.9	6.50%	40.60%
8	Mexico	168.8	13.10%	23.60%
9	United Kingdom	157.5	5.70%	40.30%
10	Spain	113.1	8.50%	52.50%

Position	G20 Countries	T&T contribution to GDP (USD BN)	T&T % of GDP 2021	T&T GDP change (%) 2021
11	Brazil	103.5	6.40%	21.70%
12	Canada	88	4.40%	24.40%
13	Australia	76.5	4.70%	-6.80%
14	Russia	66	3.70%	32.80%
15	Turkey	59.3	7.30%	60.60%
16	Saudi Arabia	51.5	6.50%	1.40%
17	South Korea	48.8	2.70%	3.00%
18	Argentina	33.7	7.00%	39.30%
19	Indonesia	28.9	2.40%	-10.30%
20	South Africa	13.2	3.20%	8.40%

(Source: WTTC, Economic Impact 2022)

In 2021, India ranked 6th among all G20 countries in terms of the total contribution of travel and tourism (TT) to GDP (Table 1.1). Despite the impact of the pandemic, India, being the second most populous country in the world, has managed to bounce back and make a remarkable recovery, with a USD178 billion contribution from travel and tourism to its GDP. The G20 summit, being one of the most significant global events, presents a unique opportunity for India to showcase its rich cultural heritage and diversity to the world. With the upcoming first-ever G20 summit to be held in India in 2023, there are significant opportunities to further strengthen and enhance India's travel and tourism industry.

Table 1.2

Countries with the Highest Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism to EmploymentWorldwide (2019 to 2021) (in million jobs)

Country \ Year	2019	2020	2021
China	82.24	69.71	73.31
<i>India</i>	<i>40.10</i>	<i>29.14</i>	<i>32.10</i>
Indonesia	12.38	10.46	10.95
United States	16.80	9.75	10.50
Philippines	9.50	6.49	7.82
Thailand	8.19	6.66	6.86
Brazil	7.67	6.22	6.40
Mexico	7.03	5.52	6.03
Japan	5.80	5.29	5.50
Germany	5.88	5.08	5.10
United Kingdom	4.28	4.09	4.11
Vietnam	4.90	3.86	3.90
Russia	4.03	3.74	3.77
Pakistan	3.89	3.36	3.34
Italy	2.85	2.41	2.64
France	2.68	2.43	2.60
Spain	2.84	2.29	2.51
Nigeria	3.36	2.19	2.43
Turkey	2.59	2.13	2.42
Egypt	2.42	1.89	2.16

(Source: WTTC)

From 2019 to 2021, India stood as the world's second-highest country in terms of the total contribution of travel and tourism to employment, with 32.10 million jobs created in 2021 alone (Table 1.2). The tourism industry has a significant impact on employment generation in India, and as the industry continues to flourish, more opportunities will be created for the people.

Despite being one of the worst affected by the pandemic, the tourism industry is now emerging as one of the fastest-growing industries globally. As per a report by the Ministry of Tourism and Bureau of Immigration (BOI), Government of India, India witnessed a significant increase in foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in June 2022, with 5,22,737 FTAs recorded, as compared to 36,070 FTAs in June 2021. However, this number is lower than the 7,26,446 FTAs recorded in June 2019, with growth rates of 1349.2% and -28.0%, respectively. It is noteworthy that India is one of the most preferred tourist destinations for foreigners.

According to the Indian Tourism Statistics 2022 report, India witnessed 677.63 million domestic tourist visits in 2021, marking an increase of 11.05% from 610.22 million in 2020. Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka were among the top states in terms of domestic visits, with 115.33 million, 109.70 million, 93.27 million, and 81.33 million visits, respectively. India received 677.63 million domestic tourist visits in 2021, an increase of 11.05 percent from the previous year (India tourism statistics, 2022).

Table 1.3Top 10 States of India in Number of Domestic Tourists Visit in 2021

Rank	State/UT	Domestic: Tourist Visits in 2021	
		Number	Percentage Share (%)
1	Tamil Nadu	115336719	17.0
2	Uttar Pradesh	109708435	16.2
3	Andhra Pradesh	93277569	13.8
4	Karnataka	81333659	12.0
5	Maharashtra	43569238	6.4
6	Telangana	32000620	4.7
7	Punjab	26640429	3.9
8	Madhya Pradesh	25554067	3.8
9	Gujrat	24525210	3.6
10	West Bengal	24325984	3.6

(Source: India Tourism Statistics at A Glance- 2022)

Table 1.4

Top 10 States of India in Number of Foreign Tourists Visit in 2021

Rank	State/UT	Foreign Tourist Visits in 2021	
		Number	Percentage Share(%)
1	Punjab	308135	29.2
2	Maharashtra	185643	17.6
3	Delhi	100178	9.5
4	Karnataka	72487	6.9
5	Kerala	60487	5.7
6	Tamil Nadu	57622	5.5
7	Uttar Pradesh	44737	4.2
8	Madhya Pradesh	41601	3.9
9	West Bengal	34828	3.3
10	Rajasthan	34806	3.3

(Source: India Tourism Statistics at A Glance- 2022)

1.4 Tourism in West Bengal & North Bengal

West Bengal, the fourth-most-populous state in India, boasts a diverse religious landscape and covers a total area of 88,752 square kilometers in the eastern part of the country on the Bay of Bengal. Surrounded by Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan to the north, Assam to the northeast, Bangladesh to the east, the Bay of Bengal to the south, Odisha to the southwest, and Jharkhand & Bihar to the west, it is home to a wide range of natural features. From the Darjeeling Himalayan range of mountains in the north to the Gangetic Plain in the

south, the state offers a heterogeneous geographical division with countless natural assets. In 2021, West Bengal attracted approximately 24 million domestic tourists and more than 34,000 foreign visitors, due to its diverse attractions that range from the Sundarbans mangrove region to Darjeeling, the largest tea-growing area in the country. West Bengal ranked 9th & 10th in the foreign tourist and domestic tourist arrival respectively in the year (Table 1.3 & 1.4). Situated between the Himalayas in the north and the Bay of Bengal in the south, West Bengal is a state renowned for its captivating landscapes and cultural richness.

North Bengal, the northern side of West Bengal, India is one of the most promising tourist destinations since the 18th Century (Karmakar, 2002). North Bengal is comprised of eight distinct districts: Alipurduar, Coochbehar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Kalimpong, Malda, North Dinajpur, and South Dinajpur. Each district possesses unique characteristics in terms of natural, social, cultural, and ethnic resources (Jamwal, R, 2020). The natural beauty of the Darjeeling mountains, the reserve forests of Terai and Dooars, the heritage site of Malda, and the folk culture of the forest-surrounded rural areas of North Bengal all attract tourists from around the globe, both domestic and international. The Darjeeling Hills, often referred to as the "Queen of Hills," are well-known for their scenic beauty. The Darjeeling Tea and Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) are regarded as cultural heritage sites of the region. Additionally, the unique national forests in Jalpaiguri district, Coochbehar Rajbari, and the heritage site of Goura in Malda district are of major interest to tourists worldwide.

1.5 Motivation for the Study

India's ranking in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (2021) is 54th, but it is expected to be among the top five business travel markets by 2030. The tourism industry in India allows 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) through the

automatic route, as mentioned by Invest India (2021), Government of India, which provides significant opportunities for the growth of the Indian economy. According to the India Tourism Statistics at A Glance report, 2020, West Bengal ranked 5th and 6th in foreign tourist and domestic tourist arrivals, respectively, in 2019. However, there has been a decline in West Bengal's ranking in 2021. Therefore, in order to revive the tourism industry in West Bengal and regain its previous ranking, or much better than that, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive revival plan and conduct an in-depth analysis to improve its position. To achieve comprehensive economic growth, it is important to recognize the potential contributions that regional areas can make. With this in mind, our study is specifically focused on the Hill, Dooars, and Plain areas within the North Bengal Region of West Bengal, India, encompassing a total of eight districts. This region is already host to a number of well-known and up-and-coming tourist destinations, making it an ideal target for our investigation.

North Bengal, situated in the northern part of West Bengal, India, is a well-known tourist destination worldwide. We have identified this region as an area of our detailed research study. This study aims to contribute to the roadmap for the state of West Bengal as well as for India in attracting more tourists, leading to economic and livelihood development for the locals, improved infrastructure, and socio-cultural growth. Investment, particularly tourism investment, is essential to achieve these development goals. Our study focuses on eight districts in the northern part of West Bengal, popularly referred to as North Bengal, which offers exceptional tourism opportunities, including emerging destinations alongside existing ones, making them more tourism-friendly due to their scenic beauty, environmental attributes, and climates. These facts motivated us to conduct research to identify potential tourist destinations based on tourism investment criteria. This research could lead to the strategic planning of tourism revival and overall tourism

development of the North Bengal region.

The conduct of our research study has been organized in the following manner in *different chapters*;

Chapter I: Introduction

Here, we provide the background information, an overview of our study, the details about Tourism Worldwide, then the Tourism scenario in our Country i.e., India, Tourism in West Bengal & particularly in the North Bengal region & explain the motivation of the study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter, we review the existing literature relevant to our study. We discuss the development through tourism, key factors influencing the selection of potential tourist destinations, the importance of tourism investment for the selection of potential tourist destinations, the identification of criteria influencing tourism investment, the research gap, research objectives

Chapter III: Research Methodology

Here we provide the details of the methodology framework, research methodology of the analytical hierarchy process (AHP), study population, and sampling & data collection method.

Chapter IV: Analysis & Results

The fourth chapter of the study presents the key outcomes derived from the analysis of the data. We first identified the probable potential tourist destinations, selection of potential tourist destinations, district-wise selection of potential destinations, defining the weights of the major criteria, and proposed integrated tourism investment model, analysis

through random sampling, defining the area-wise ranking of potential tourist destinations in North Bengal.

Chapter V: Findings & Conclusion, Policy Recommendation

In addition to summarizing the study and offering concluding remarks, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings for policymakers, investors, and tourism stakeholders, and identifies potential areas for future research.

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