



Sustainable Tourism Development Prospects in Digha-Sankarpur Coastal area using Tourism Quality Index and SWOT Analysis

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Abstract: The coastline of Purba Medinipur is 60 km long, extending from Digha to the west bank of the Hooghly estuary, and is characterised by sand dunes, beaches, longshore currents, and low vegetation coverage. The fine sand beaches of Midnapore have gentle foreshore slopes and provide a sand surface for safe walking, playing, and bathing. Digha-Sankarpur is West Bengal's most popular sea resort and a tourist spot, located southwest of the state. This study is based on facts and information that are currently available from secondary sources. The current paper attempts to emphasise the kind, breadth, and level of tourist growth in coastal West Bengal and to find out what the current opportunities are in the region and what the problems are in terms of eco-tourism. The SWOT study and the Tourism Quality Index Method are used in this paper to highlight Eco-tourism development strategies. In the current situation, the goals are to manage coastal tourism in general and coastal resorts in particular without negatively affecting the coastal environment in light of the development of eco-friendly tourism.

Key Words: West Bengal, SWOT, Tourism Quality Index, Eco-Tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Coastal tourism activities occur outdoors and indoors as recreation, sport and play, and as leisure and business (Miller and Ditton, 1986). The coastal area of West Bengal is 200 kilometers long approximately. East Medinipur and South 24-Parganas districts, along the edge of the Northern Bay of Bengal are the coastal areas of West Bengal. Major beach tourism destinations in the internationally renowned Sundarbans include Bakkhali and Gangasagar in the southern 24-Parganas Districts; Digha, Shankarpur, Mandarmani, Junput, and Tajpur in the Purba Medinipur Districts. Within a single state, West Bengal provides an amazing variety of locations and experiences. It is a land of contrasts, with a wide range of ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions. It also boasts a diverse climate, vegetation, scenery, and geography. The fact that it stretches from the ocean to the Himalayas makes it a genuinely distinctive state. The romantic and cloudy hill towns of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Mirik; the diverse wildlife and lush tea gardens of the Dooars; the historical sites and temples of Murshidabad and Bishnupur; the expansive and magnificent beaches of Digha and Mandarmoni; and the lushly forested islands and meandering rivers of the Sunderbans have always been wonderful travel destinations. The Nobel laureates Rabindranath Tagore and Amartya Sen were born and raised in this state, one of India's richest in terms of culture. Additionally, West Bengal can be proud of the fact that it was the birthplace of a number of well-known individuals who are revered around the world, including Mother Teresa, Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda, Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prasanta Mahalanobis, and Ramakrishna Paramhansa. The state has tremendous tourism potential, which is evident from the rise in visitors over the past few years. The coastal tract of the West Bengal area presents an extensive natural tract interfaced by land and water. The whole coastal area is an ecologically undisturbed natural area full of scenarios and contributes to the high degree of biodiversity. For the last two decades, the coastal areas of West Bengal have faced a rapid growth in mass tourism. A large flow of recreational tourists as well as excursionists visit the popular coastal areas like Digha, Mandarmani, and Shankarpur for picnicking,



which has created huge pressure on the fragile ecosystem of the coasts. The loose beaches are becoming more and more vulnerable. West Bengal, along with the major burn from this mass development of tourism.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW :

Tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest growing global industries and an important development contrivance as it generates revenue and employment for nations (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). The big consumption of tourism in particular towns or tourist regions has positive and negative consequences (Goranczewski and Puciato, 2010). It is also vulnerable to disasters that are either natural or man-made. The impacts of disasters on tourism destinations are inevitable and profound, and there is no disaster immunity for destinations (Wickramasinghe and Takano, 2007; Sonmez et al., 1999; Beirman, 2003). Unplanned tourism management can harm a tourist destination's physical, social, cultural, and economic climate (Dwyer and Edwards, 2010). A recent study has focused on the growth of tourism in terms of economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability, bearing in mind the positive and negative impacts or effects of tourism (Kisi, 2019). West Bengal stands fifth in terms of foreign tourist inflow and sixth in terms of domestic tourist inflow in the country (As per Govt. tourism data, W.B., 2012). A stat from the state tourism department shows that there had been 49,34,173 tourists in the year 2000, while in 2013, the figure shot up to 267.92 crore. The coastal areas of West Bengal fall within three districts: North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, and Purba Medinipur districts. The entire coast line of West Bengal may be subdivided into three principal sectors from east to west: the eastern sector, the central sector, and the western sector. West Bengal offers tourists an opportunity to experience long, unending beaches with gentle rolling seas lined with casuarina forests, and a most important sea resort, Digha, has sprung up on the East coast (Western sector) of Bengal. The coastal area of West Bengal (Digha-Midnapore District), is characterised by sand dunes, long shore currents, high salinity, low turbidity, and low vegetative coverage (Annon, 2005; Paul, 2002).

1.2 LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA :

The Purba Medinipur district is part of the lower eastern coastal plains. My study areas are mainly the coastal areas of Digha and Shankarpur in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal State. The coastline of Purba Medinipur is 60 km long, extending from Digha to the west bank of the Hooghly estuary, and is characterised by sand dunes, beaches, longshore currents, and low vegetation coverage. The fine sand beaches of Midnapore have gentle foreshore slopes and provide a sand surface for safe walking, playing, and bathing. Digha is West Bengal's most popular sea resort and a tourist spot, located southwest of the state. Digha is located at 21.6222°N and 87.5066°E. It is 187 km from Kolkata and is described as the "Brighton of the East, which is best for a holiday. Warren Hastings dubbed it "Beerkul" at first. Digha has a low gradient and a shallow sand beach with gentle waves. The scenic beauty of this place is charming and luring. The beach is girdled with casuarina plantations along the coast, enhancing the beauty of this place. These trees, apart from beautifying the sands, also aid in reducing the erosion of the dunes. One can view both the sunrise and sunset at Digha Sea Beach. The sunsets and sunrises reflecting off the salty waters of the Bay of Bengal are something straight off an artist's easel. The sea at Digha is calm and shallow for about a mile from the beach, making it quite safe for swimming. Shankarpur, a virgin beach as of yet, is a recent discovery. It's located at 21.6344°N and 87.5698°E. It is a twin beach of Digha, around 10 km from Digha, along the Digha-Contai Road. It is now developed as a sea resort with hotels. It offers nearly all the pleasures of a private beach with casuarina plantations. Shankarpur is mainly credited for all the advantages of Digha and for decreasing the crowding of Digha. It can boast of a wide and unspoiled beach, casuarina groves by the side of a gentle sea, and a good climate throughout the year. Apart from the long, tree-lined beach, the main attraction is the Shankarpur Fishing Harbour Project.

1.3 OBJECTIVES :

- To study the present status of tourism in the study area.
- To identify the potential resources in terms of sustainable tourism.
- To identify the existing issues in terms of Eco-tourism.

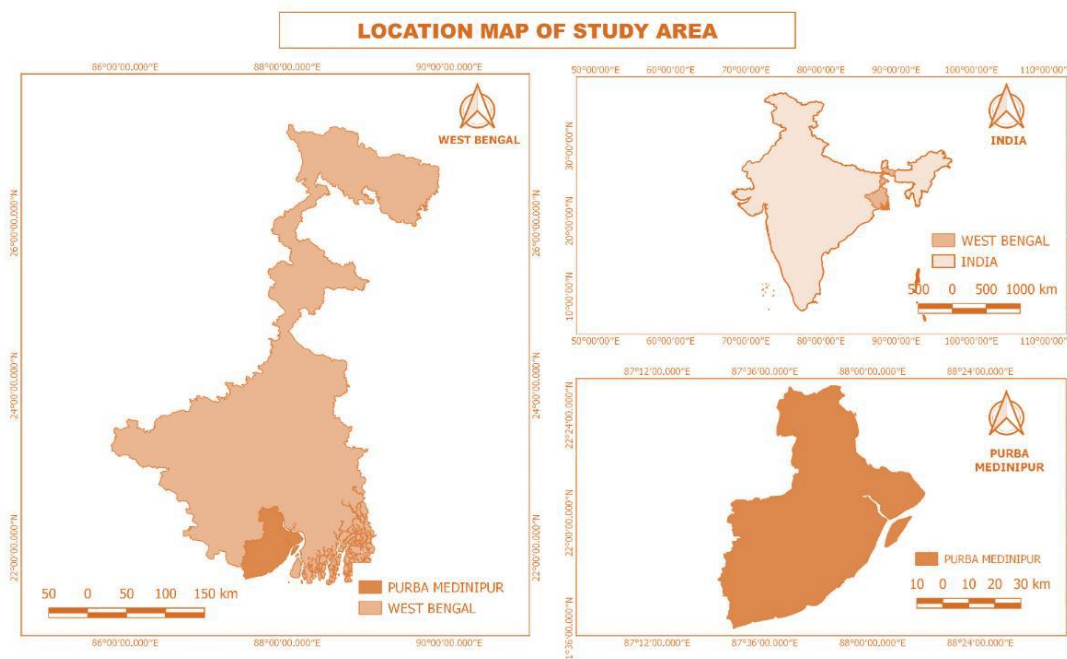


Fig 1: location map of study area

2. DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY:

The work is based on primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data items are planned to be collected from 200 respondents in the study area, like the coastal areas of Purba Medinipur (Digha, Shankarpur), by the survey method. The residents’ participation and cooperation are necessary to make the development more sustainable. Then the secondary data items are usually collected from different sources, like the government office (D.S.D.A.-Digha-Shankarpur Development Authority), published papers, authorized thesis documents, and also some of the related net sources like the book. This paper uses the Tourism Quality Index method, and the other method is used for sustainable tourism development strategies using a SWOT analysis of coastal tourism destinations. The approach can be used in West Bengal's Digha and Shankarpur coastal areas.

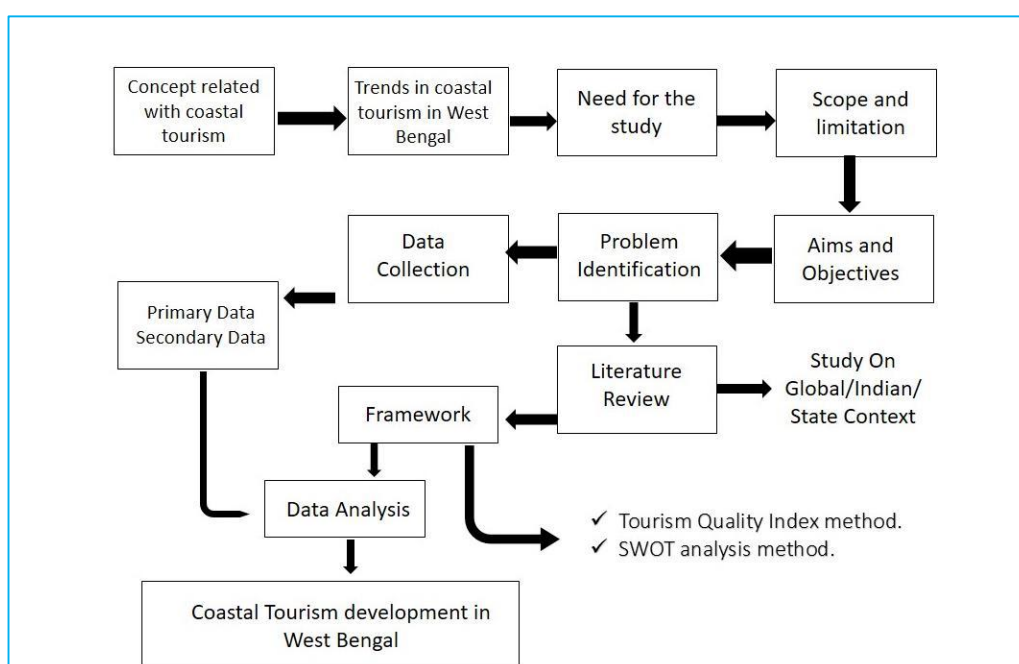


Fig 2: Flow Chart of Methodology



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

3.1 Tourism Quality Index

The tourism quality index is the most important aspect for knowing the problems and prospects of a tourist area. Here, quality means the quality of all the facilities available for tourist's .In tourism, the major site specific facilities required are as follows:

- Landscape scenario.
- Weather Condition.
- Recreational facilities
- Quality of the hotel and Lodge.
- Medical facilities.
- Transport facilities.

- **Landscape scenario:**

Digha coastal tracts presents scenic beauty where the sea and beach romance with sun, sand and sea. Digha-Sankarpur beaches are wide and flat, and their eye-catching, beautiful scenery attracts tourists to the coastal area. In any coastal resort area, conservation of the natural landscape, coastal ecosystem, floral and faunal species composition, and sand dunes is very necessary. Buildings are permitted on dune tops, which also destroy the natural landscape.



Fig 3: Beautiful Scenery



Fig 4: Sea Beach romance with Sun



Fig 5: Natural Landscape

- **Weather Condition:**

Climatically, Digha-Sankarpur is situated in a hot, humid coastal area. Comfortable weather, like a tropical monsoon climate with an average annual rainfall of 1952 mm, and The average temperature in Digha is 26.3 °C. The most suitable time for travelling in this area is October through February. Digha Beach alone attracts 2–2.5 lakh tourists per year. This data shows the strength of coastal tourism in the Digha-Sankarpur area.

- **Recreational facilities:**

Recreational facilities include (a) The Marine Aquarium & Regional Centre ((b) Dheusagar Park (c) Sea bathing, (d) Boating, (e) Swimming pools (f) Digha Science Centre (g) Saikat Sundari (h) Amarabati Park (i) Biswa Bangla (j) Oceana Sea Beach etc..



Fig 6: Digha Science Centre



Fig 7: Amarabati Park



Fig 8: Saikat Sundari



- **Quality of the Hotel, Lodge and resorts:**

In the Digha-Sankarpur region, some 3-star hotels are available. But disrupted electric supply, insufficient water supply, and a lack of standard luxury-type hotels are the main problems. Most of the rooms in hotels and holiday homes are not spacious, airy, or well lit.

- **Medical facilities:**

Medical facilities are also very poor in this area. Except for first aid no in-house medical facilities are available in hotels. A Government hospital is the only area for medical treatment. Hospital facilities are also very poor in this area.



Fig 9: Medical facilities



Fig 10: Transport facilities



Fig 11: Quality of the Hotel

- **Transport facilities:**

Regular 216 buses operated by different agencies and S.B.S.T.C. Bus Depot are very insufficient to carry a huge number of tourists in peak tourist season (Oct-Feb). Lack of super luxury express buses with limited stoppage, lack of interstate buses is a main problem in this area. Interlinking road networks in the local area are not developed. Digha Railway station is situated in Digha, The Station code of Digha is DGHA. Here are some trains that are passing through Digha railway station like Dgha Sup Ac Exp, Hwh Sup Ac Exp, Tamralipta Exp, Tamralipta Exp, Dgha Mldt Exp, Mldt Dgha Exp, Digha-asansol Exp, and many more.

3.2 SWOT ANALYSIS :

3.2.1 STRENGTHS (S)

Scenic beauty of the Sea Beach

There is hardly a beautiful bathing beach on the East Indian coast like Digha. Digha beaches are wide and flat, and their eye-catching, beautiful scenery attracts tourists to the coastal area. Many people come to this beach every year due to the natural beauty of the sea. Sunrise and sunset at Digha Estuary are very attractive to tourists.

Accessibility

Digha Shankarpur is situated in a place where it is connected by railway and road. Easily accessible through roadways from the Contai-Digha main road and railways at tourism destinations, many tourists come to this place through Odisha state.

Famous as a weekend destination

Digha-Sankarpur is known as a famous tourism destination. At the end of the week, many tourists from Kolkata and neighbouring states like Odisha, Jharkhand, and Bihar come to spend their holidays on Saturday and Sunday. Besides, from November to February, most tourists come to the Digha Shankarpur area during this time due to the pleasant weather.

Rich Biodiversity

Digha Sankarpur and other coastal tracts of West Bengal offer their individual characteristics as wide and flat beaches where sand dunes, casurina forest, red crabs, different types of fish, and a variety of aquatic life ultimately attract tourists to this coastal area.



Fishing Hub

Digha Mohana is the international fish market at sunrise. Lots of tourists come every year to see it. The largest fish trade in eastern India is in the Digha estuary.



Fig 12: Scenic beauty



Fig 13: Rich Biodiversity



Fig 14: Casuarinas Forest

3.2.2 WEAKNESS (W)

Unplanned development

Proper development planning is not followed when building hotels and resorts. The proliferation of hotels and lodges can be seen everywhere in the Digha-Shankarpur area. At present, the Digha Shankarpur Development Board has emphasised some planning.

Sand Mining

In the Digha Shankarpur area, the remaining sand is being cut and used to fill the floor of the house. Basically, grass sands are being dug up day after day, and the landscape of the area is being destroyed.

Plastic Pollution

About 30,000 tourists come to Digha every day during the season. At present, DSDA has banned the use of this plastic. A large number of tourists leave plastic bottles, crisps, chips, and pasties in this area.

Insufficient infrastructure

Insufficient public infrastructure such as banks, ATMs, Medical shops, the post office, and tourism information centres

Frequent embankment failures

In the Digha Shankarpur area, every year during the cyclone, the embankment built on the seashore is damaged. In 2021, Cyclone Yash breached the sea dams.

Safety and security of tourists

Digha-Shankarpur area has some security issues. Theft and robbery are the main problems here.



Fig 15: Plastic Pollution



Fig 16: Sand Mining



Fig17: Insufficient infrastructure



3.2.3 OPPORTUNITIES (O)

Proper development

DSDA has taken various steps to attract tourists to Digha, which is now taking care of sustainable tourism by witnessing various developments. Opportunities for eco-tourism through sustainable and planned development.

Marin Drive

In 2022, the marine drive along the seashore connecting Digha - Shankarpur - Tajpur - Mandarmani - Junput was opened for tourists. This is a 30 km stretch on Marine Drive. It is a new feather in the crown of tourism.

Basic infrastructure

After the Yash Cyclone of 2021, Digha has been rebuilt. Dheusagar Park and Old Digha have been redecorated in Biswa Bangla. Besides, it has been made more attractive through different lights and music.

Cultural identity

The Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee announced the construction of Jagannath Temple at Digha on 20 December 2018. The temple is currently under construction. It is expected to be completed by the end of 2023. Presentation of cultural identity through tourism.



Fig 18: Jagannath Temple



Fig 19: Marin Drive



Fig 20: Dighashree

3.2.4 THREATS (T)

CRZ Norm

The coastal town of Digha has changed from a small village to a tourist resort over a period of four decades. 15-20 years ago many hotels were built near the sea in violation of CRZ norms during the construction of hotels and lodges.

Coastal Erosion

Coastal erosion and loss of flora and fauna diversity. The Geological Survey of India in its report on the Digha coastal belt pointed out that the active processes of erosion and accretion have been accelerated by man-made causes including the removal of sand dunes.

Waste and Sewage Pollution

Solid waste and sewage from hotels and resorts are polluting the beaches.

Social negatives

Alcoholism and prostitution are increasing day by day in Digha Shankarpur area which is a negative impact on tourism.

Cyclones and storm surges

Due to the cyclone generated in the Bay of Bengal, the Digha-Shankarpur coastal area was damaged and tourism was disrupted. Cyclone Amphan in 2020 and Cyclone Yash in 2021 are examples.

Deforestation

During the development, many Casurinas trees have been cut in Digha-Shankarpur area. Dheusagar Park area is an example of this.



Fig 21: Coastal erosion



Fig 22: Violation of CRZ norm



Fig 23: Deforestation

4. CONCLUSION:

Based on the study's findings, it would be clear that the growth of the tourism industry in West Bengal's Digha and Shankarpur has some effect on the local population. This paper attempts to emphasise the potentialities of tourist growth in coastal West Bengal as well as some issues and how to manage them for the long-term growth of eco-tourism. In the current situation, the goals are to manage coastal tourism in general and coastal resorts in particular without negatively affecting the coastal environment in light of the development of eco-friendly tourism. Environmental concerns will be given top priority in the model, according to the impact analysis, followed by socio-cultural factors, which must be taken into account last for the development of sustainable coastal tourism in the chosen study region. Coastal regions are becoming more and more exposed to the dynamic mix of coastal uses as a result of rapid population expansion. The varied impacts of tourism are examined using SWOT analysis. This study will be carried out. Identification of new locations and backward and forward connections with the well-known hotspots will help develop primary tourism circuits based on the tourism Quality Index. The development of basic infrastructure, such as roads, drinking water, power, sanitation, transportation, solid waste management, and lodging facilities, is also necessary.



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