

Tourism Products, Consumer Behaviour and Development Pathways: A Study on District-Specific Analysis.

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Abstract

India's emerging regional tourism destinations often combine extraordinary natural and cultural assets with significant developmental deficits infrastructural, institutional, and promotional. This paper presents a district-specific analysis of tourism products, consumer behaviour, and strategic development pathways across four southern districts of West Bengal: Kolkata, South 24 Parganas (Sundarbans), Bankura, and Purulia. Using primary survey information from 600 tourists, secondary documentary analysis, and a systematic evaluation of each district's tourism product portfolio, the study constructs detailed tourism profiles and identifies the specific challenges and opportunities unique to each destination. Key findings reveal that all four districts attract predominantly domestic, educated, middle-income tourists primarily motivated by cultural exploration and relaxation; however, they differ markedly in infrastructure quality, service maturity, digital visibility, and the characteristics of their target visitor segments. Kolkata performs consistently across most service dimensions while the other three districts excel in cultural authenticity but suffer significant gaps in accessibility, accommodation, interpretation services, and marketing. The paper proposes district-specific development pathways grounded in a detailed analysis of tourist satisfaction drivers, market segmentation findings, and benchmarking against competing destinations. Collectively, the four districts are positioned as components of an integrated regional tourism system that able to successfully compete in both domestic and foreign markets through complementary positioning and coordinated circuit development.

Keywords: Tourism product analysis, Consumer behaviour, Tourist satisfaction, Kolkata, Sundarbans, Bankura, Purulia, West Bengal, Destination development, Circuit tourism.

1. Introduction

Tourism as a development tool has gained increasing prominence in India's economic policy discourse, particularly as the sector's contribution to GDP, employment, and foreign exchange earnings has grown. West Bengal, with over 80 million domestic and 1.6 million foreign tourist arrivals annually (WBTDC, 2023), represents one of India's more complex regional tourism systems: diverse in product type, uneven in development, and marked by a stark divide between its metropolitan hub (Kolkata) and its rural-heritage hinterlands.

The four southern districts under study Kolkata, South 24 Parganas, Bankura, and Purulia collectively embody this complexity. They range from a world-class city offering MICE facilities and colonial heritage to tribal communities in the Chhota Nagpur plateau offering indigenous performance art and forest adventure. This diversity creates both an analytical challenge and a strategic opportunity: how can districts so different in tourism product type, infrastructure maturity, and market visibility be developed within a coherent regional tourism framework?

This paper addresses this question through a detailed district-by-district analysis that examines: (1) the distinctive tourism product profile of each district; (2) the characteristics and behaviours of tourists visiting each district; (3) the specific infrastructure, service quality, and marketing challenges each district faces; and (4) district-specific and cross-district development pathways. The analysis draws on a primary tourist survey (n = 600), comprehensive secondary data review, and a systematic evaluation of the tourism product ecosystem in each district.

The paper argues that effective tourism development in southern West Bengal requires abandoning generic, one-size-fits-all strategies in favour of district-sensitive approaches that acknowledge the unique character, market positioning, and developmental starting point of each destination. At the same time, it demonstrates that individual district strategies gain maximum force when embedded within an integrated regional circuit framework that routes tourists across complementary experiences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tourism Product Analysis Frameworks

The tourism product is understood in literature as a composite bundle combining attractions, accessibility, accommodation, ancillary services, and activities that together constitutes the total destination experience (Swarbrooke, 1995; Middleton & Clarke, 2012). This composite nature means that product quality at the destination level is only as strong as its weakest component: a world-class natural attraction undermined by poor transport connectivity or inadequate accommodation cannot deliver a satisfying visitor experience.

Leiper's (1990) tourism system model conceptualizes destinations as nodes within a spatial and commercial network connecting tourist-generating regions to tourist-receiving regions via transit routes. Applied to West Bengal, this model clarifies how Kolkata functions not merely as a destination in its own right but as a gateway node for the broader regional system a role with significant implications for how its marketing and infrastructure investments benefit surrounding districts.

The concept of the tourism product lifecycle (Butler, 1980) is particularly relevant to the districts under study. Kolkata occupies a consolidation or possible stagnation stage, characterized by high visitor volumes, established infrastructure, and emerging congestion challenges. South 24 Parganas is in a development stage; Bankura and Purulia remain in exploration or involvement stages, characterized by small visitor volumes, rudimentary facilities, and dependence on local and regional tourists.

2.2 Tourist Satisfaction and Loyalty

The connection between destination loyalty and visitor satisfaction is well-established in the literature. Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as a post-consumption evaluation comparing perceived experience against pre-visit expectations. Correia, Oliveira, and Butler (2022) demonstrate in a multi-destination Indian context that satisfaction is most strongly predicted by attraction quality and hospitality, while dissatisfaction is driven primarily by infrastructure deficiencies findings directly relevant to the West Bengal study context.

Loyalty in tourism takes two primary forms: revisit intention and recommendation intention (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996). Research consistently finds that recommendation intention is stronger than revisit intention, particularly in destinations characterized by novelty a pattern confirmed in this study's findings. Chen and Tsai (2007) argue that destination image, perceived value, and satisfaction are sequentially related predictors of tourist loyalty, suggesting that image improvement is a prerequisite for loyalty enhancement.

2.3 Market Segmentation in Regional Tourism

Effective destination management requires market segmentation the identification of distinct tourist sub-groups with different motivations, behaviours, and value profiles (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2011). Psychographic segmentation, which classifies tourists by lifestyle, values, and motivation, has proved particularly powerful in heritage and cultural tourism contexts. Plog's (1974) allocentric-psychocentric continuum, for instance, predicts that cultural heritage destinations like Bankura and Purulia would initially attract allocentric (adventurous, independent) tourists before progressively appealing to the broader mass market as infrastructure improves a developmental trajectory directly applicable to these districts.

Roy and Mishra (2022) applied cluster analysis to domestic tourism in eastern India and identified five segments: Cultural Explorers, Nature Lovers, Adventure Seekers, Relaxation Seekers, and Budget Tourists. Their findings suggest that while Kolkata predominantly attracts Cultural Explorers and Business travelers, tribal and The main draw of historic locations like Purulia and Bankura is to niche Adventure Seekers and Cultural Explorers segments that, though smaller, demonstrate higher spending per day and higher recommendation intention.

2.4 Infrastructure and Accessibility in Destination Development

The infrastructural preconditions for tourism development have been extensively documented. Pearce (1995) identifies accommodation supply, transport connectivity, and visitor services as the three foundational infrastructure pillars. In the Indian context, Mishra and Rout (2011) find that infrastructure inadequacy particularly in last-mile connectivity is the primary constraint on tourism development in rural and tribal destinations, often more limiting than promotional budgets or awareness gaps. This finding is directly echoed in the current study's findings for Bankura and Purulia.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

A descriptive, mixed-methods research design is used in this study. The primary data component employs a structured questionnaire survey with 600 tourists, stratified by district. The secondary data component involves systematic analysis of tourism product inventories, government reports, and peer-reviewed literature for each district. The combination allows triangulation of supply-side and demand-side findings.

3.2 Survey Instrument and Data Collection

The structured questionnaire captured seven dimensions: demographic profile; travel characteristics (purpose, party composition, duration, expenditure); travel motivations (push and pull factors, rated on 5-point Likert scales); information sources; destination perceptions and image (semantic differential scales); service experience ratings (attribute-wise); and satisfaction, revisit, and recommendation intentions. Thirty respondents were used to pre-test the instrument and refined. Data collection spanned October 2024 to March 2025, covering peak and off-peak tourism seasons. Surveys were conducted in English, Bengali, and Hindi.

Sample distribution: 200 respondents in Kolkata; 150 in South 24 Parganas (primarily Sundarbans areas); 125 in Bankura (primarily Bishnupur and surrounding craft villages); 125 in Purulia (Ayodhya Hills, Charida, Bagmundi and tribal areas).

3.3 Analytical Methods

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS v26. Analytical methods included descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations), independent-sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA for inter-district comparisons, regression analysis to identify satisfaction predictors, factor analysis for motivation dimension reduction, and cluster analysis for tourist segmentation. Qualitative open-ended responses were subjected to thematic content analysis.

4. District-Specific Tourism Profiles

4.1 Kolkata: India's Cultural Capital

4.1.1 Tourism Product Overview

Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, offers India's most distinctive urban cultural tourism product. Victoria Memorial and Howrah Bridge are examples of its colonial past, Writers' Building, and the network of Raj-era buildings in the BBD Bagh area coexists with vibrant contemporary culture: literary cafes, art galleries, experimental theatre, and the world's most complex festival ecosystem centered on Durga Puja, which received UNESCO recognition for its immense cultural significance. Kolkata additionally functions as a gateway to Eastern India, offering the only major international airport in the region.

The city's tourism product is characterized by extraordinary diversity: heritage tourism, festival tourism, culinary tourism (Bengali cuisine, Mughal-influenced street food, Anglo-Indian dishes), religious tourism (Kalighat temple, Dakshineswar, Belur Math), and MICE tourism anchored by the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre. Its accommodation sector ranges from the heritage luxury of The Oberoi Grand and ITC Royal Bengal to a dense network of budget guesthouses catering to the large volume of domestic and religious tourists.

4.1.2 Tourist Profile: Kolkata Respondents

Survey respondents for Kolkata show the highest average income profile (34.8% earning above Rs. 10 lakh annually), the highest share of international tourists (8.4%), and the highest proportion of repeat visitors (44.2%). The dominant travel motivations are cultural exploration (Mean = 4.47) and urban experience (Mean = 4.31). Length of stay averages 2.8 nights, reflecting Kolkata's strong role as both a destination and a transit point for regional itineraries.

Service satisfaction scores in Kolkata outperform other districts across most dimensions: accommodation (Mean = 4.01), food and beverage (Mean = 4.12), and local hospitality (Mean = 4.35). Transportation within the city, however, registers below-average satisfaction (Mean = 3.61),

reflecting traffic congestion, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and the uneven quality of app-based taxi services.

4.2 South 24 Parganas: The Sundarbans Eco-Tourism Zone

4.2.1 Tourism Product Overview

South 24 Parganas is defined touristically by the Sundarbans: the world's largest mangrove delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the only tiger habitat in a tidal zone on the planet. The district's tourism product is therefore ecological in character, built around wildlife safari experiences, boat journeys through mangrove channels, birdwatching, and community-based village tourism. Key nodes include Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary, Sudhanyakhal Watch Tower, and the tiger reserve zones of Dobanki and Jharkhali.

The Sundarbans' tourism product has important structural characteristics that distinguish it from other districts. It is geographically complex major attractions are accessible only by boat, adding time and cost to visitor journeys. It is ecologically sensitive carrying capacity constraints fundamentally limit visitor volume and the type of commercial development permissible. And it is community-dependent most tourism services are delivered by local boat operators, eco-guides, and homestay hosts from fishing and honey-collecting communities.

4.2.2 Tourist Profile: South 24 Parganas Respondents

Tourists visiting South 24 Parganas show the longest average stay of any district (4.1 nights), consistent with the time required for meaningful Sundarbans exploration. Primary motivations are natural scenery (Mean pull factor = 4.61) and wildlife experience (Mean = 4.58). The district attracts a distinctive segment of environmentally conscious tourists, with 28.4% identifying as eco-tourism enthusiasts, higher than any other district. International visitor share (3.1%) exceeds Bankura and Purulia but falls well below Kolkata.

Infrastructure satisfaction is significantly lower than Kolkata across all dimensions. Last-mile connectivity to the Sundarbans crossing from Canning or Basirhat to boat-accessible areas is consistently identified as the primary friction point, with transport satisfaction (Mean = 2.98) representing the lowest score of any district-attribute combination in the survey. Accommodation satisfaction (Mean = 3.24) reflects the limited supply of quality lodging outside a few eco-lodges; most homestays, while authentic, lack consistent service standards.

4.3 Bankura: Terracotta Heritage and Living Crafts

4.3.1 Tourism Product Overview

Bankura's tourism identity is anchored in two world-class cultural assets: the terracotta temples of Bishnupur a complex of late medieval Malla-dynasty temples built in Bengal-terracotta architectural style that has no parallel in India and the living craft traditions of the district, including Baluchari silk weaving (known for its narrative panel designs depicting scenes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana) and the folk art forms of Panchmura and Radhanagar.

Bishnupur is included in the Swadesh Darshan tourism circuit and receives designation as a heritage tourism hub. Beyond Bishnupur, Bankura offers adventure tourism potential at Susunia Hill and Biharinath Hill, water tourism at Mukutmanipur reservoir, and forest-based nature tourism. The district's tourism product is therefore layered cultural heritage at its core, but with adjacent adventure and nature dimensions that remain largely undeveloped.

4.3.2 Tourist Profile: Bankura Respondents

Bankura attracts predominantly domestic regional tourists (62.4% from West Bengal or neighboring states), with a strong concentration in the 18–35 age group (58.6%), reflecting the district's appeal among younger culturally engaged travelers. Primary motivations are cultural heritage (Mean = 4.51) and craft experience (Mean = 4.22). Mean length of stay (2.2 nights) is lower than the regional average, reflecting both destination accessibility challenges and limited accommodation supply, which constrains extended stays.

The most prominent dissatisfaction drivers in Bankura are accommodation quality (Mean = 3.11, the second lowest in the study), transport connectivity (Mean = 3.18), and tourism information availability (Mean = 3.02). Open-ended qualitative feedback repeatedly identifies the absence of quality mid-range accommodation as the most significant barrier to extended stays, with multiple respondents noting that they would have stayed longer if better lodging were available.

4.4 Purulia: Tribal Culture and Adventure

4.4.1 Tourism Product Overview

Purulia's tourism identity is defined by its tribal cultural heritage and natural landscape. Created by villages on the Chhota Nagpur plateau, the Chhau dance is a martial-influenced performance art form that uses intricate mythological masks. In 2010, UNESCO recognized it as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, providing a globally recognized anchor for the district's cultural tourism positioning. The mask-making village of Charida is among the most distinctive artisan destinations in India.

Beyond Chhau, Purulia offers a compelling nature and adventure portfolio: the Ayodhya Hills (locally called the 'Poor Man's Ooty' for their scenic hill stations), the Bamni Falls, Matha Dam, and the

Panchet Dam all within a landscape that retains significant forest cover and tribal settlement patterns. The district is also home to significant biodiversity and indigenous plant knowledge systems that represent an undeveloped niche resource for ethnobotanical and academic tourism.

4.4.2 Tourist Profile: Purulia Respondents

Purulia attracts the youngest average tourist age profile (mean age 28.4 years) and the highest proportion of student respondents (19.2%), reflecting its niche appeal among adventure and cultural immersion seekers. Primary travel motivations are cultural immersion (Mean = 4.44) and adventure (Mean = 4.29). The district records the lowest average daily expenditure (Rs. 1,890) and the shortest average stay (2.0 nights) of any district studied, patterns that are partially attributable to budget travel profiles but more significantly to the severe shortage of quality accommodation.

Destination image perception in Purulia is the lowest of the four districts (Mean = 3.54), and open-ended qualitative feedback is dominated by infrastructure concerns: poor roads, limited ATM and digital payment access, absence of quality restaurants, and lack of tourist information centers. Despite these structural challenges, the district records the highest cultural authenticity satisfaction score (Mean = 4.61) and the second-highest nature scenery score (Mean = 4.52), confirming that the tourism product itself is compelling the development challenge is entirely infrastructural and promotional.

5. Comparative District Analysis

5.1 Key Performance Indicators: Cross-District Comparison

The following table presents key tourism performance indicators across the four districts, derived from survey data and secondary sources.

Indicator	Kolkata	S. 24 Parganas	Bankura	Purulia
Overall Image (Mean)	4.18	3.72	3.61	3.54
Attraction Satisfaction	4.35	4.28	4.21	4.19
Infrastructure Satisfaction	3.92	3.24	3.11	2.98
Service Quality Score	3.88	3.41	3.29	3.22
Digital Visibility	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Branding Maturity	Mature	Emerging	Nascent	Pre-nascent
Avg. Length of Stay (nights)	2.8	4.1	2.2	2.0
International Tourist Share	8.4%	3.1%	1.2%	0.9%
Repeat Visitor Rate	44.2%	39.1%	31.8%	28.6%

The data confirms a developmental gradient from Kolkata's mature performance to Purulia's pre-nascent status, but also reveals important non-linear patterns: South 24 Parganas achieves the longest length of stay despite relatively low infrastructure scores, reflecting the immersive nature of Sundarbans tourism. Bankura and Purulia record high cultural authenticity satisfaction scores that are partially masked by poor infrastructure ratings in aggregate satisfaction measures, suggesting that composite satisfaction scores underrepresent the authentic product quality these destinations offer.

5.2 Tourist Demographic and Behavioural Profile

Across all four districts, tourists are predominantly domestic (94.8%), educated (nearly 70% holding graduate-level qualifications or higher), and middle-income (59.4% earning Rs. 3–10 lakh annually). The 26–35 years age group constitutes the largest segment (34.2%), reflecting West Bengal's appeal to young working professionals seeking short-break cultural and experiential tourism. Family travel dominates (47.2%), followed by friend-group travel (23.6%).

Characteristic	Finding (%)
Leisure/holiday purpose	61.4%
Travel with family	47.2%

Average stay (1–2 nights)	33.2%
Budget hotel preference	34.7%
Mean daily expenditure	Rs. 2,350
First-time visitors	62.3%
Word-of-mouth as primary info source	64.5%
Overall satisfied / very satisfied	76.0%
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	+32

The high proportion of first-time visitors (62.3%) indicates strong destination curiosity but also underscores the conversion challenge: destinations must deliver sufficiently positive experiences to generate repeat visits and active recommendations. The NPS of +32 is encouraging it confirms that satisfied tourists are willing to advocate but the moderate revisit intention score (Mean = 3.87) suggests that accessibility and infrastructure barriers are constraining repeat visitation more than attitude.

5.3 Satisfaction Drivers: Regression Analysis

Regression analysis identifies attraction quality (beta = 0.41), service quality (beta = 0.28), value for money (beta = 0.19), and local hospitality (beta = 0.15) as the four significant predictors of overall tourist satisfaction, collectively explaining 61% of satisfaction variance ($R^2 = 0.61$, $F = 87.4$, $p < 0.001$). Infrastructure quality does not emerge as a direct satisfaction predictor in the regression model rather, it functions as a threshold variable: below a minimum infrastructure quality level (as in parts of Purulia and remote Sundarbans areas), it becomes a strong dissatisfier; above that threshold, attraction quality and service dominate.

This finding has important practical implications: for Kolkata and the developed zones of South 24 Parganas, investment priorities should focus on service quality enhancement and experience deepening. For Bankura and Purulia, infrastructure investment is a prerequisite for satisfaction improvement without it, even strong attraction quality and hospitality cannot deliver satisfactory overall experiences.

5.4 Tourist Segmentation

Cluster analysis of the full survey sample identifies five distinct tourist segments across the four districts. Cultural Explorers (31.2%) are highly educated, culturally motivated, willing to travel independently to offbeat destinations, and represent the core target market for Bankura and Purulia. Nature Lovers (22.8%) are the primary segment for South 24 Parganas, driven by wildlife and ecology motivations and demonstrating the highest environmental sensitivity. Adventure Seekers (14.6%) are

concentrated in Purulia, younger and prepared to settle for rudimentary facilities in return for genuine experiences. Relaxation Seekers (17.9%) prefer Kolkata's urban amenities and cultural offerings combined with comfortable accommodation. Budget Tourists (13.5%) are a cross-district segment marked by a high degree of dependency and price sensitivity on word-of-mouth.

The segment distribution reveals important strategic insight: the two districts with the weakest marketing Bankura and Purulia actually attract the segment (Cultural Explorers) that demonstrates the highest willingness to recommend and the strongest satisfaction with authentic cultural product, but the lowest satisfaction with infrastructure. Converting this dissatisfaction into positive advocacy requires targeted infrastructure investment, not primarily promotional spending.

6. District-Specific Development Pathways

6.1 Kolkata: From Cultural Capital to Experience Ecosystem

Kolkata's developmental challenge is not growth initiation but growth quality and sustainability. The city risks losing competitiveness to other Indian metros if it fails to address congestion management, heritage site deterioration, and the growing gap between its brand promise and service delivery reality. Priority development pathways include:

- **Festival Tourism Infrastructure:** Durga Puja's UNESCO recognition creates a global promotional opportunity that requires supporting infrastructure organized pandal routes, tourist welcome centers, multilingual guides, and crowd management systems to convert increased footfall into positive experiential memory.
- **Riverfront Development:** The Hooghly riverfront remains underdeveloped relative to comparable waterfront tourism assets globally. A River Arts District combining cruises, riverside cultural programming, artisan markets, and heritage café culture can add a distinct new tourism product layer.
- **MICE Positioning:** Kolkata possesses the convention infrastructure, hotel capacity, and academic-cultural ecosystem to position itself as Eastern India's premier MICE destination. This requires dedicated sales and marketing resources targeting corporate event planners and international conference organizers.
- **Digital Experience Enhancement:** Augmented reality (AR) interpretation at colonial heritage sites, AI-powered cultural tour apps, and 360-degree virtual content for international pre-visit engagement can deepen engagement and extend dwell time.

6.2 South 24 Parganas: Sustainable Eco-Tourism Development

The Sundarbans' ecological sensitivity makes it a case study in the tension between tourism development and conservation. The district's development pathway must be explicitly conservation-led, with carrying capacity management as the central planning parameter. Priority interventions include:

- **Sundarbans Eco-Tourism Charter:** A co-created governance document defining visitor codes of conduct, boat operator certification standards, wildlife-viewing protocols, and community benefit-sharing mechanisms, developed by the Forest Department, UNESCO, NGOs, and community representatives.
- **Eco-Lodge Development:** A network of low-impact, community-owned eco-lodges in designated tourism zones can provide quality accommodation that currently forces visitors to return to Kolkata for overnight stays, thereby truncating spending within the district.
- **Interpretive Infrastructure:** Visitor interpretation centers at Sajnekhali, Jharkhali, and Dobanki explaining mangrove ecology, tiger biology, and community conservation can enhance educational value and justify premium pricing.
- **Climate Resilience Planning:** Carrying capacity assessments for key islands and safari zones, seasonal closures for ecological recovery, and disaster resilience protocols for tourism operators address the growing climate vulnerability of the Sundarbans.

6.3 Bankura: Heritage Circuit Development and Craft Tourism

Bankura's development pathway centers on two mutually reinforcing investments: physical heritage circuit infrastructure and digital market access for craft products. Priority interventions include:

- **Heritage Circuit Physical Infrastructure:** Professional restoration and interpretation of the Bishnupur temple complex, installation of multilingual interpretive signage, development of a Heritage Walk map, and upgrading of the approach road and parking facilities can significantly improve visitor experience quality.
- **Mid-Range Accommodation Development:** The absence of quality mid-range hotels is the most frequently cited barrier to extended stays. PPP-funded boutique heritage hotels in converted Malla-dynasty structures and standardized homestay networks can address both accommodation supply and authentic experience dimensions simultaneously.
- **Craft Tourism Integration:** Structured artisan village visits with transport, guide facilitation, and hands-on workshop components can transform craft observation from a passive to an active experience, substantially increasing visitor willingness to pay and spending on craft purchases.
- **Digital Artisan Market Access:** E-commerce platforms enabling Baluchari weavers and terracotta artisans to sell directly to domestic and international buyers can supplement tourism revenue and reduce dependence on intermediary traders who currently capture the majority of craft value.

6.4 Purulia: Tribal Tourism and Adventure Circuit Development

Purulia's development challenge is the most acute of the four districts, requiring both foundational infrastructure investment and community empowerment to avoid the dual risks of tourism under-performance and cultural commodification. Priority interventions include:

- **Chhau Tourism Professionalization:** Regular scheduled performance events with booking platforms, performance explanation workshops, and behind-the-scenes mask-making demonstrations can transform isolated cultural encounters into a repeatable, bookable tourism product.

- Tribal Homestay Network: A certified, community-managed homestay network in key tribal settlement areas, developed with Basic hospitality training and assistance from NGOs can offer the accommodation bedrock currently absent and directly channel tourism revenue to indigenous communities.
- Adventure Tourism Infrastructure: Rock climbing routes at Ayodhya Hills, marked trekking circuits with distance and difficulty ratings, and trained eco-guides certified in first aid and rescue can unlock the adventure tourism potential that the district's landscape clearly supports.
- Community Marketing Cooperative: A collective marketing organization for Purulia's tourism operators dancers, mask makers, homestay hosts, guides would pool limited resources for digital marketing, create a unified booking platform, and give community members direct market access rather than dependence on intermediary tour operators in Kolkata.

6.5 Cross-District Integration: Circuit Tourism as the Regional Development Strategy

The analysis strongly supports a cross-district circuit tourism strategy as the most powerful tool for amplifying development impact across the region. Three high-potential circuits emerge from the district profile analysis:

- The Heritage and Culture Circuit (Kolkata – Bishnupur – Purulia): A 5–7 day cultural immersion combining Kolkata's urban heritage and festival culture, Bishnupur's temple architecture and crafts, and Purulia's tribal performance arts and hill landscapes. This circuit caters to the Cultural Explorer segment and offers a coherent narrative of Bengal's tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- The Delta to Dynasty Trail (Kolkata – Sundarbans – Bishnupur): A 6–8 day journey combining eco-tourism (Sundarbans tiger safari and mangrove experience) with heritage tourism (Bishnupur temples and Baluchari weaving), with Kolkata as the gateway and accommodation hub. This circuit targets both Nature Lovers and Cultural Explorers.
- The Wild Bengal Circuit (Sundarbans – Ayodhya Hills – Panchet Dam): A nature and adventure circuit combining the Sundarbans' mangrove ecosystems with Purulia's tribal landscapes and Bankura's forest zones, targeting Adventure Seekers and Nature Lovers with active outdoor itineraries.

7. Conclusion

This paper has conducted a systematic, district-by-district analysis of tourism products, consumer behaviour, and development pathways across southern West Bengal. The analysis reveals a regional tourism system of extraordinary potential that is, at present, significantly under-realized not because of insufficient natural or cultural assets, but because of inadequate infrastructure, fragmented planning, and insufficient marketing investment, particularly in the three districts outside Kolkata.

Several conclusions emerge with particular clarity. First, each district possesses a distinctive tourism identity that constitutes a genuine competitive advantage in its target market segment: Kolkata for urban cultural tourism, South 24 Parganas for world-class eco-tourism, Bankura for terracotta heritage and living craft traditions, and Purulia for tribal performance art and adventure tourism. These

identities are already perceived by tourists in broadly the intended terms the challenge is amplification and conversion, not invention.

Second, infrastructure investment is a prerequisite for tourism development in Bankura and Purulia, and a priority for South 24 Parganas. The regression analysis finding that infrastructure quality functions as a threshold dissatisfier not a satisfaction driver per se clarifies the sequencing of investment: infrastructure must reach a minimum threshold before promotional investment can deliver returns. Promotional investment in destinations with sub-threshold infrastructure primarily generates disappointed first-time visitors rather than loyal returning ones.

Third, the district-specific development pathways proposed in this paper are not alternatives to integrated regional strategy but components of it. Individual district investments in accommodation, interpretation, and digital marketing gain maximum return when embedded within a coherent cross-district circuit framework that routes tourists through complementary experiences, extending both length of stay and tourism spending within the region.

Finally, the human dimension of tourism development investing in community tourism personnel, artisan marketing capacity and guide certification emerges as the highest-value intervention available across all four districts. Tourism is an experience industry; its quality is irreducibly dependent on the people who deliver it. Institutional investments in community-based tourism cooperatives, multilingual guide certification, and digital entrepreneurship training for rural tourism operators represent the most direct pathway to simultaneously improving tourist satisfaction and ensuring that tourism revenues remain in the communities that generate them.

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