Main findings

The main findings of my work have been summarized as follows:-

i) Concept of travel and tourism is very old. To-day tourism is a fast-expanding industry. Tourism is comprised of three main elements, viz, travel by non-residents, temporary stay in area visited and stay not connected with earning.

ii) West Bengal has an area of 88752 sq. km. It has a long and rich history and a vast geographical diversity. It has natural tourist resources like the Himalayas in the North, the volcanic hills in the West, the beaches in the South and the mangrove forests of the Ganga – Brahmaputra delta. Its long history of rule of Hindu and Buddhist Kings, Nawabs and the British has left a vast and varied collection of the historical and cultural monuments, art and architecture. A number of fairs and festivals like Gangasagar Mela, Book fair etc. are also held. All of these are potential tourist resource.

iii) In comparison, tourist infrastructure still lags behind in development. West Bengal has 25984 km of surfaced roads, 32016 km of railway tracks and two airports at Kolkata and Bagdogra (North). Improvement, extension and maintenance of transport facilities are an immediate need. There are 38 tourist lodges in the state (2008-09)
under WBTDC. In addition there are a large number of accommodation facilities in the private sector.

iv) Kolkata as the capital of West Bengal has a vast collection of tourist resources. They can be classified into several categories. The religious tourist resources include Kalighat temple, Chitteswari temple, Dakshineswar Kali Temple, St. Pauls Cathedral, St. John’s Church, Nakhoda Mosque, Jain temple etc. Historical and cultural tourist resources include various museums, Victoria Memorial Hall, Shahid Minar, Marble Palace etc. The educational tourist resources include Science City, Energy education park etc. Zoological garden, agro-horticultural park, Nicco Park, Millenium Park all are pseudo-natural tourist resources of the city. Finally shopping complexes – old and new also attract tourists.

v) The transport network of Kolkata is quite extensive but compared to the volume of commuters, it is not sufficient. The city has both surfaced (1636 km in 2006) and unsurfaced roads (1870 km in 2006) and several flyovers for easy movement of traffic. The metro railway system and the circular railway system complement the roadways. Howrah and Sealdah are two railway termini which carried passengers to and from Kolkata. The stations Kolkata and Shalimar share their load to a certain extent. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport provide air link to the city. The tramways to-day is more a liability than an asset. But with the project of transforming it into monorail, it also promises to play a more active role in city
transport. Finally ferries and motor launches also share the daily commuter traffic in the city.

vi) Accommodation facilities in Kolkata are not sufficient. There is severe lack of data. The list published by the Federation of Hotels and restaurant Association of India (FHRAI) reveal that there are 12 star category hotels in the city and 56 hotels which do not belong to any star category. There is no one star or 2-star hotel in the city and there is a notable shortage of rooms.

vii) Other infrastructure like the quality of food and drinking water, cleanliness, greenery and use of information technology are also not fully developed.

viii) The trend of tourist arrival in West Bengal shows a consistent increasing trend over the years. The tourism department has vigorously launched development projects to encourage this.

ix) From the sample survey conducted over nine selected tourist spots it was seen that the greatest proportions of those visiting the spots are comprised of the residents of Kolkata (i.e same-day visitors) amounting to 35.6%. This group is followed by foreigners (24.7%), closely followed by domestic tourists (24%) and finally the tourists from other districts of the state (15.8%).
x) There is a marked preponderance of young males at various tourist spots (45.8%). The oldest age group (55+) who is also likely to have a greater propensity to spend, is quite small (4%).

xi) The religious composition reveals a marked dominance of Hindus (64.2%), followed by Muslims (14.7%), Christians (12.9%) and others (8.2%).

xii) The survey of group of tourists and visitors reveal that they have a high level of education. Graduates form the largest proportion (41.8%) followed by undergraduates.

xiii) The economic picture shows that people engaged in various services (34%) and the dependant people (35.6%) are almost equal in proportion and are the largest segment. Of the income groups Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 5 lakhs group is the dominant one (28%). These facts suggest that the really high spending tourists are rare in Kolkata.

xiv) An analysis of the tourist behaviour pattern suggests that there is a definite preference for low budget impromptu short tours. Thus a network of weekend gateways is likely to be highly popular. People have high preference for natural spots like sea sides and mountains. Hence, Kolkata can be linked with beach tourism or mountain tourism. The tourists also marked Puri and Darjeeling to be their most favourite spots of India.
xv) The tourists and visitors have found the quality and quantity of tourist resources of Kolkata to be excellent. The opinion about management however showed wide variation from spot.

xvi) Environmental awareness of the surveyed sample was found to be average. Though they found traffic and pollution to be high and hygiene and quality of drinking water to be moderate, they showed a tendency towards overall satisfaction.

xvii) Foreign visitors faced many problems in transport infrastructure as did tourists from other states. While frequency is admittedly high, comfort, speed and quality leaves much to be desired.

xviii) Of the different tourist spots of Kolkata, Victoria Memorial Hall was found to be the most popular among the tourists followed by the Nicco Park, Dakshineswar temple and the Indian National museum. Calm and peaceful atmosphere set amidst nature was found to be most appealing.

xix) Most of the tourists are first time visitors to the city (31.6%). The volume of repeat visitors except for purposes of education or occupation is quite low.

xx) Tourists regard transport facilities of the city to be average. Variety of transport types were thought to be high but speed, quality and comfort left something to be desired.
xxi) Accommodation facilities were found to be average. Variety and availability were found to be moderate but affordability has been voted to be poor to average in most surveyed spots.

xxii) Travel agencies are a key element in the tourism industry of any country. They can be defined as a business that sells travel related products and services to end-user customers on behalf of third party travel suppliers. 25 travel agencies were surveyed in the course of the research. Many are local in organization. The turnover is not large and most tourists are outbound. Ticketing is the main function of travel agencies of Kolkata.

xxiii) The transport infrastructure of Kolkata faces several problems. Roads are not well maintained; lacking road signs with no clear demarcation of bus stands and bus routes. Trams are slow and cause traffic jams. The metro railway is swift and clean but not very extensive. Many tourists complained about harassment at the hand of taxi drivers. Finally, the two railway stations and one airport require major face-lift and need to be made consumer friendly.

xxiv) There is a serious lack of cheap clean standardized accommodation in Kolkata. There is no central portal to choose hotels from. Tourist often fall prey to touts.

xxv) Pollution, lack of greenery and low hygienic level are the environmental problems faced by tourists. Low grade maintenance and lack of basic facilities like toilets, drinking water, benches, guides and substandard guide books are other infrastructural problems.
of development of tourism. The tourists found the general cost level to be high. Other problems of tourism include prevalence of touts at few places, problems of security, encroachment by vendors, lack of small flexible conducted tour packages, lack of first aid facilities at tourist spots etc. Finally lack of comprehensive collection of data makes the planning of tourism difficult.

xxvi) In order to improve and enrich the travel experience the existing problems need to be sorted out. The transport system should be more tourist friendly. It should also be so regulated as to be environment-friendly. All pending projects of extension and renovation needs to be completed as quickly as possible. There is a need to introduce the principles of urban eco-tourism. The east Calcutta wetlands can be utilized to restore environmental balance.

xxvii) There exists huge potential of organizing cruise tourism on river Hooghly and the old system of canals including the Bagijola canal, the Circular canal and the Tolly’s Nullah which drain into the wetlands. However the problems of implementing the above project are huge. Various tours to popularize cultural entertainments and the heritage of Kolkata are slowly becoming popular. The pending plans of converting Kolkata into a convention center of international standard needs to be materialized as quickly as possible.

xxviii) The tourists themselves suggested various means of increasing tourist flow to the city. Most of these suggestions centered around improvement of transport infrastructure
increase in cheap clean hotels (11.5%), introduction of more conducted tours, control of pollution (13.3%), introduction of more facilities (8.8%), better maintenance of tourist spots (9.3%) etc. Introduction of several new spots were suggested like science parks, natural spots, musical programmes, amusement parks etc.

xxix) Information technology should be utilized to its fullest extent promote tourism in Kolkata. Vigorous publicity campaigns as outlined in the tenth and eleventh five year plans should be implemented to increase tourism activity in the state. Business and convention tourism is another vast avenue of development.

**Testing of Hypothesis:**

1) Tourism is gradually expanding in Kolkata.

While data for Kolkata is not available, the data for West Bengal shows steadily increasing trend. From 2001 to 2002 several projects were finalized and tourist arrival increased by 79% . Since then the number of tourists is rising rapidly, the rate of increase being well over 10% per annum. Kolkata being the capital city is bound to claim a large share in this increasing business.

2) The natural and pseudo natural tourist spot are the most successful ones in the City.

A survey of the tourists and visitors reveal that 21.1% of all respondents consider Victoria Memorial Hall as their favourite spot followed by 16.7% preferring Nicco Park. Calm,
peaceful spots amidst a natural setting with plenty of greenery are opined to be the most successful spot of the city.

3) Most visitors to the tourist spots of Kolkata are local residents followed by residents of other states and other districts with only a few foreigners.

The proportion of local residents at the selected surveyed tourist spots actually shows a wide variation. It is very high at the Zoological garden (76%) and moderately high in several other spots like Indian National Museum (44%), Victoria Memorial Hall (46%) and Nicco Park (44%). In comparison, the proportion falls to quite low in spots like New Market (22%) and Jorasanko Thakurbari (20%). An extreme case is presented at the St. Paul’s Cathedral where no local residents were encountered. Foreigners are generally less in number except at the Cathedral (84%), and New Market (52%) and are moderate at the Museum (32%) and Jorasanko Thakurbari (30%). A notable fact which emerges here is that tourists from other districts of West Bengal are consistently low in all the selected tourist spots.

4) The tourist spots are generally frequented by specific tourist groups.

There exists obvious preference among different tourist groups. This was most noticeable at the Zoological garden. Here, almost all tourists were part of family group generally including small children. In fact, young mothers with their charges were most common here. This emergence of specific groups is less clear elsewhere. However, a dominance of young adults is seen at Science City and Nicco Park while middle aged groups are better represented at
5) The tourist resources of the city are sufficient in number while infrastructure needs to be upgraded.

When surveyed, most of the respondents have opined that the number of tourist resources is average to good in the city. In fact, more than 20% of the respondents at several spots like Museum, Science City, New Market and Nicco Park have said that number of tourist resources are excellent in the city. When asked about suggestions for improvement and new spots which may be introduced, most respondents replied that spots are sufficient in number. However more than 50% of the respondents at almost all the tourist spots asked for better and more improved transport facilities. There is also a high demand for more and better hotels at a more reasonable price. The need for pollution control was also seen to be quite urgent. All these reveal that both the tourists and the visitors think that infrastructural facilities need to be upgraded.

6) Tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the economic revival of the city.

Tourism generates income and opportunities in a number of direct and indirect ways. It is difficult to estimate the total income generated by tourism. However, we can study a few indications like the increase in the number of hotels and hotel rooms, establishment of
several travel agencies after 1990, increase in income and the number of employees in the 
travel agencies, the opinion of the repeat visitors that there have been significant increase in 
the number of shops and vendors around certain tourist spots. All of them imply that the 
contribution of tourism towards the economy of the city is increasing. The actual scope of 
such increase and their ripple effects remain to be evaluated.

Conclusion.

In a world besieged by hunger, unemployment and prolonged economic depression, most 
countries are trying to optimize the exploitation of whatever resource is available to them to 
feed the growing millions. India, being one of the most highly populated countries is 
developing several alternative avenues of economic upliftment. The Indian government has 
long recognized the role which tourism can play in the national economy. Several policies 
and programmes have been adopted to widen the scope of tourism and maximize its benefits. 
West Bengal has followed this path. It is one of the most densely populated states of the 
country. Therefore it has the responsibility to provide employment to a huge number of 
people. Tourism is playing a significant role in fulfilling this need.

Kolkata being the capital of the state and a leading metropolis, is the epicenter of tourism 
development in the state. It is rich in a variety of tourist resources. It has a well developed 
infrastructure to support the development of this activity. So intense effort need to be directed 
towards studying the development of tourism in this region and explore ways of maximizing 
the benefits.
Detailed survey of tourists, managing authorities of selected tourist spots, travel agencies and interviews at the Department of tourism have helped to create a picture of progress of tourism in the city. While tourism has definitely increased in volume there still remains a huge scope of expanding both domestic and foreign tourism. Several measures have been suggested to increase the efficiency of the existing system as well as introducing new ways of attracting and serving tourists. The development of circuit tourism is the most practical way to reap the greatest benefit of tourism and disperse its benefits as widely as possible.

One of the greatest problems of planning tourism in the city is the lack of secondary data and the absence of a well organized machinery to collect such data. Since domestic travel does not require any documentation, it is extremely difficult to estimate the number of tourists visiting the city. Even foreign tourists who have entered the country at some other city and then traveled to Kolkata remain unaccounted for. So the figures published by the Department of tourism are derived from a number of different sources like the statistics at the railway stations, the airport and some hotels. The absence of reliable figures makes it very difficult to plan infrastructural development.

Cooperation among the government, local people, tourism service providers and various diverse departments is vital to promote tourism. Above all, a friendly attitude, efficient infrastructure and well designed Publicity programme is necessary to maximize the benefits derived from tourism.