



Religious Tourism Development in Pakistan and its role in Peace Building (Kartarpur and Panja Sahib)

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Abstract: Religious tourism is a pioneering form of tourism that began at the dawn of mankind. Pakistan has many sacred sites in every state and people from all over the world visit these places. Notably, the Sikh community has many sacred sites, relics and Shrines that many Indian national Sikhs visit to pay for their rituals. But the big hurdle was the Indian- Pakistan clashes and the toxic history both share. Meanwhile, Pakistan's 22nd Prime Minister Imran Khan took the initiative of opening the Kartar Pur Corridor and allowing Sikh pilgrims to perform their holy rituals without a visa. Moreover, the country has more religious sites such as Panja Sahib in Hasanabdal where the Shrine of Guru Nanak has a holy stone. The stone is a sacred relic and has a story behind it. Around 2000 visitors come to Panja Sahib every festival. The pilgrims at Panja Sahib Shrine were studied as a sample for the study. This research studied that the Sikh community is satisfied with their religious tour experience and has responded positively to the efforts and developments made by Pakistan.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Pakistan, Peace Building, Kartarpur, Panja Sahib

1. Introduction

At the dawn of human history, there was a pioneering form of tourism known as religious tourism. Since the beginning of time, religious attractions have contributed to the cultural landscape as well as local marketing efforts and the economies of the places they are located. Many religious travelers, benefactors, missionaries, and humanitarians visit sacred locations like Makah in Saudi Arabia, Fatima in Portugal, and Lourdes in France to forge connections. large-scale financial transactions there. Religious tourism is frequently referred to in the literature on tourism as cultural heritage tourism, spiritual tourism, cultural tourism, and cultural tourism [1]. The tourist sector includes the study of religion in a significant way. It is often referred to as unique hobby travel. People who practice

a certain religion frequently travel to areas that are revered as holy sites. Because of its cultural, historical, and religious value, religious places are visited by both pilgrims and non-religious tourists. Economic instability immediately affects the most significant sector of the tourist industry, but religious tourism is generally less influenced by these issues because it develops so quickly and is so crucial to people's lives. Therefore, having money doesn't really matter when travelling elsewhere [2].

To make the society advance and in function there must be peace and harmony. They can also provide a steady and tranquil order. Without question, a world devoid of harmony and peace would disintegrate, returning to the jungle period where the strong prey on the weak. A nonviolent conflict resolution strategy called peace building aims to change the societal and cultural conditions that give rise to violent or destructive conflict [3]. Building strong interpersonal, social, and political relationships across racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and national boundaries is its main goal. Violence prevention, conflict management, resolution, or transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation or trauma healing are all parts of the process that take place before, during, and after any particular instance of violence. Strategic peace-building initiatives address the root reasons or potential causes of violence, foster a social norm of peaceful dispute resolution, and aid in the political and socioeconomic stabilization of society[4].

Depending on the setting and the peace-building agent, several peace building strategies are used. Successful peace building programs promote an environment that leads to self-sustaining, long-term peace, bring together adversaries, stop conflict from escalating, integrate civil society, implement rule of law procedures, and address underlying structural and socioeconomic issues. Researchers and practitioners agree that peace building is most successful and long-lasting when it is founded on local notions of peace and the underlying forces that support or encourage conflict [5].

The Panja Sahib is a highly revered religious site for Sikhs located in Hasanabdal, Pakistan. Thousands of Sikhs visit the shrine every year from all over the world. The shrine was built to honor the great Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who visited the site during his lifetime. The Panja Sahib has had a profound impact on religious tourism in Pakistan. The shrine is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country, and Sikhs from all over the world come to visit. The shrine has also helped to promote religious tolerance and understanding in Pakistan. Panja Sahib is one of the holiest sites in Sikhism. Located in Hasanabdal, Panja Sahib has become a popular destination for Sikhs from all over the world. Every year, hundreds of Sikhs make the pilgrimage to Panja Sahib to pay their respects at the holy site [6]. The impact of Panja Sahib on religious tourism in Pakistan has been significant. The influx of Sikhs from all over the world has boosted the economy of Hasanabdal and surrounding areas. Hotels, restaurants, and transportation companies have all benefited from increased tourism. The Pakistani government has also taken notice of the impact of Panja Sahib on religious tourism. They have invested in infrastructure projects to make Hasanabdal more accessible to pilgrims. And they have also stepped up security around Panja Sahib to ensure the safety of all visitors [7]. The impact of Panja Sahib on religious tourism in Pakistan is clear. The holy site has

brought prosperity to Hasanabdal and surrounding areas. And the Pakistani government is taking steps to ensure that pilgrims can safely visit Panja Sahib and enjoy their experience. In this study, we'll take a closer look at the Kartarpur Corridor and find its potential implications for peace and religious tourism in Pakistan [8].

In today's changing global political landscape religion is a significant component of social measures with many complications of the erection and purposes that irritated or disturbed values and customs. Tourism is experiencing, exploring and facing economic and social growth [9]. In many countries, it is the cause of harmony and trade. The aim of the study is to find the developments done for the Sikh pilgrimage and highlight the impact of Sikh religious tourism on peace building across the region.

1.1. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to find whether the Sikh pilgrimage is promoting peace and harmony in the region. However, mainly focuses to find out the pilgrims' perception and satisfaction regarding their spiritual journey and Pakistani officials' role in it. This study also aims to find if these developments by the two countries have successfully promoted peace across the region.

2. Literature review

2.1. The Partition and Religious Travel

The inhabitants of the new states of India and Pakistan discovered they were cut off from the religious institutions they revered after the partition of India in 1947. Particularly in Punjab, India, Sikhs have been cut off from the major religious institutions. Now, some of their sacred locations are located in Punjab, Pakistan. One of these is the gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib, which was constructed on the spot where Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, spent 18 years living. Each year, tens of thousands of Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus from Pakistan and India request for visas to cross the border to visit their respective religious sites. Currently, religious travel between the two nations is controlled by "Protocol 1974, which established a joint agreement between the governments of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan regarding the visitation of holy sites. India and Pakistan have agreed to let "organized groups," which are made up of pilgrims who travel to particular locations, by signing this convention [10]. These pilgrims need to receive the "visa category for visitors 3" According to the 1974 Protocol, a predetermined number of pilgrims are permitted to travel to particular destinations, and the host nation facilitates and controls their travel. Four times a year, Sikh pilgrims from India are allowed to travel to Pakistan. Pakistan has promised to provide 7,500 Sikhs in India visas overall and to enable three Hindu pilgrimages, which will bring in a total of 800 pilgrims annually. India has consented to letting 1,350 Muslims from Pakistan travel there for five pilgrimages. Cross-border tensions have an impact on the actual number of visas issued each year [11].

2.2 Peace Building through Religious Tourism in Pakistan

The Kartarpur corridor, which connects India and Pakistan, has given rise to a variety of contradictory conceptions. Some people think it will be a "corridor of peace," while others think it would be a "corridor of terror." Some claim that the construction of this corridor will strengthen the Qadiani community, while others argue that it will increase the influence of Sikhs on both sides of the corridor [12]. Gurharpal Singh, Jagtar Singh, Bhabishan Singh Goraya, Gurmeet Kaur, and politicians like Navjot Singh Sidhu and Harsimrat Kaur Badal promoted the Kartarpur Corridor as a portal to regional peace while some Delhi-based media dubbed it a "corridor of terror." The Corridor's development has generally received positive reviews from Sikhs and Muslims who view it as the start of a new era. Imran Khan, the prime leader of Pakistan, has received fervent praise for his support of the Sikhs. Many people also recognise the important efforts made by Indian politician Navjot Singh Sidhu and Pakistan's army head, General Qamar Javed Bajwa. The 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Sahib's birth was joyfully observed by Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, and Christians in Pakistan this year at Kartarpur and Nankana Sahib, which suggests that new horizons of peace and interfaith harmony have opened in the area. Celebrating the occasion as a single community also suggests the emergence of the belief in shared humanity, peaceful coexistence, and interfaith harmony. this project Punjabi Muslims in Pakistan and Punjabi Sikhs in India. Pakistan has taken the lead in fostering goodwill between the peoples of the two nations [13, 14].

2.3 Pakistan's Initiative toward Peace through Religious Tourism

Faith and diplomacy have been used positively and effectively to bridge the gap between South Asia's two Punjabs. Despite historical and contemporary disputes, faith and diplomacy have become a source of connectivity between South Asia's two Punjabs. Such as the Kashmir conflict, the Siachen war, and many other regional and geostrategic issues between India and Pakistan, religion's philosophy of interreligious tolerance, inclusive of respect and harmony, eliminated hatred and resentment, and brought the people of both Punjabs closer together, paving the way for trade and economic connectivity [15]. Although the Bajwa-Sidhu hug diplomacy caused a stir in the Indian media, Navjot later stated that it was a positive development. Sidhu clearly nailed all the propaganda when he stated that Gen Bajwa came to me and said, "Navjot, we want peace" [16]. Pakistan attempted to open up to have sophisticated relations with India and offered dialogue diplomacy to resolve all bilateral disputes peacefully, but Indian Prime Minister Modi rode Indian muscular nationalism and squandered a significant opportunity to save people from hunger, poverty, and ignorance. The liberal and conventional divisions of Indian society responded in a "mixed manner," with the liberal factions applauding the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor while the immoderate groups clearly rejected the peace initiative [17].

2.4 Religious Tourism and Peace and Societal Transformation

Tourism has been described as a therapeutic mental and physical activity that produces joy and is acknowledged as a specific sort of spirituality [18]. It is apparent that if more people use this method of therapy, society will be happier and more peaceful. Individual conflict and anomie at the level of the socially oriented society are less likely to occur the happier and more contented people are [19]. We can define spirituality as "therapeutic mental and corresponding [socially-oriented] physical behaviour that leads to lasting happiness and euphoria (including transcendental

euphoria) for members of a quasi-group, group, community, sect, or religion" using Singh's working definition as our guide [20]. In order to connect the two holiest Sikh shrines, the governments of India and Pakistan came to an agreement in November 2018 to establish the Kartarpur corridor. This project marks an important turning point in the accessibility of Sikh holy places in Pakistan. This essay takes a critical look at the attempts made since 1947 to govern and limit access. The Kartarpur corridor's potential to serve as a "bridge of peace" is considered, as well as the policies of the two nations to limit access. The Sikh situation presents an uncommon comparative case-study of the closing of sacred areas to a group in its "homeland" and "holy country" [21].

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Design

Systematic Approach and Empirical Framework Close-ended questions were used in a main survey to gauge the connection between religious travel and peace building [22]. A mixed method is defined as "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are acquired concurrently or sequentially, are assigned a priority, and require the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research."

3.2 Data Collection

At Panja Sahib Gurdwara, visitors' personal perceptions are the main source of information. A pilot survey is carried out by distributing a total of 80 questionnaires to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. the effect of individual views on the Panja Sahib shrine's surrounding surroundings. There are numerous other parameters that can be used to quantify both individual pleasure and peacebuilding. Therefore, this may also serve as the study's boundary. The PanjaSahib Shrine uses the SPSS analysis programme to determine how people perceive the development of religious tourism there.

3.3 Data collection tool

Part I of the study's questionnaire provides demographic data regarding the employees, visitors, and business owners of the Panja Sahib shrine. The second section of the questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions with a 5-point Likert scale (the options are limited to strongly agree=5, agree=4, neutral=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1) in order to gauge the relationship between a person's perceptions of religious tourism and five different dimensions (directional signage, safety and security, displays and exhibits, good value for money, and equal access).

3.4 Data Description

The temple receives around 20,000 average visitors at each festival. All of the visitors to Panja Sahib Shrine make up the study's population. Using a sample survey calculator, the sample for this study was determined. 360 respondents have arbitrarily and simply chosen to gather data and information using the sample survey calculator. 360 respondents have been thoughtfully and methodically chosen to gather data and information. The responders are

the administration of Panja Sahib Shrine, as well as the visitors that visit the shrine. Only 312 of the 360 surveys that make up the calculated and distributed sample come from the patrons, staff, and entrepreneurs of the Panja Sahib temple.

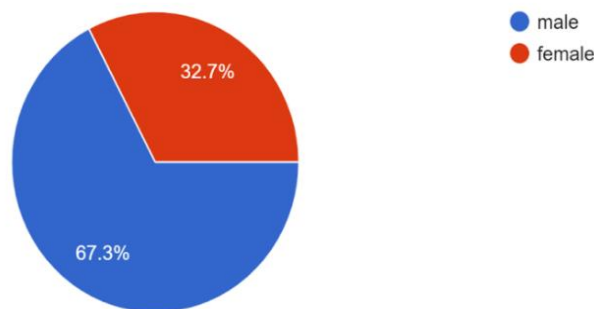
4 Data Analysis

4.1 Results and Discussion

Question # 1

Please specify your gender

49 responses

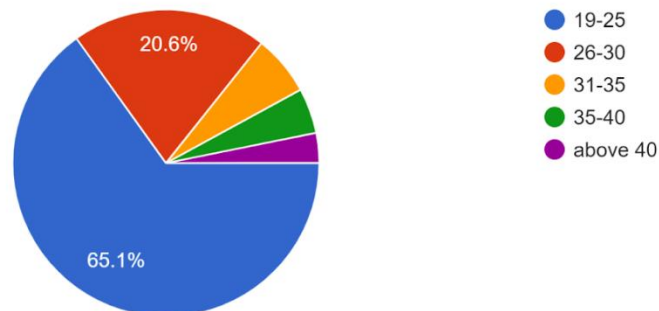


The above graph shows that 32.7% of the respondents selected for study are Female whereas the majority of respondents are Male making up to 67.3% of the total.

Question #2

Select your age

63 responses

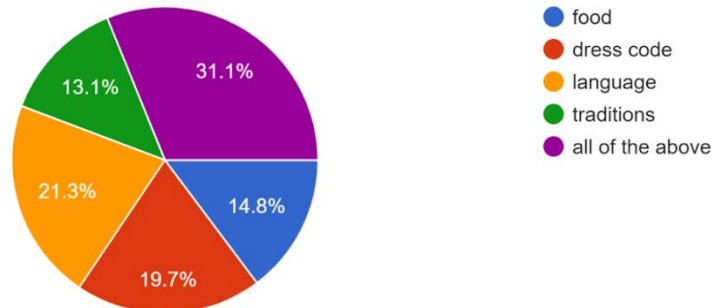


The above graph shows that 65.1% of the sample respondents consisted of people between 19-25 years of age while 20.6% were of the age between 25-30.

Question#3

What similarity do you find between the Sikh Community and Punjab of Pakistan

61 responses

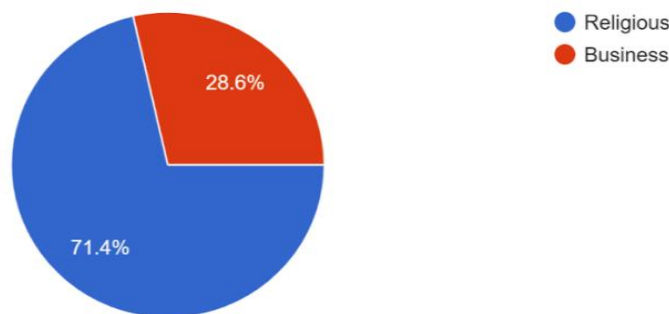


The above data shows that 31.1% of respondents agreed that all the above aspects were similar between Sikh community and Punjab of Pakistan. Whereas 21.3% of the respondents agreed to similar language, 19.7% agreed to the similar dress code and 13.1% said that their traditions matched.

Question #5

Please specify your purpose to Panja Sahib's Visit

49 responses

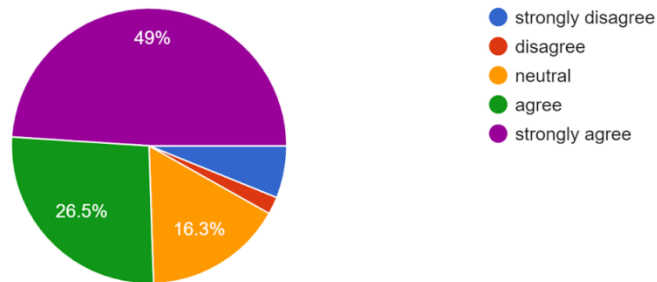


The above chart shows that majority of the respondents visited the shrine for religious purpose while 28.6% of the visitors came for entrepreneurial purpose.

Question #6

The Sacred places of Sikh Religion has been preserved and protected by the government of Pakistan in a prescribed manner

49 responses

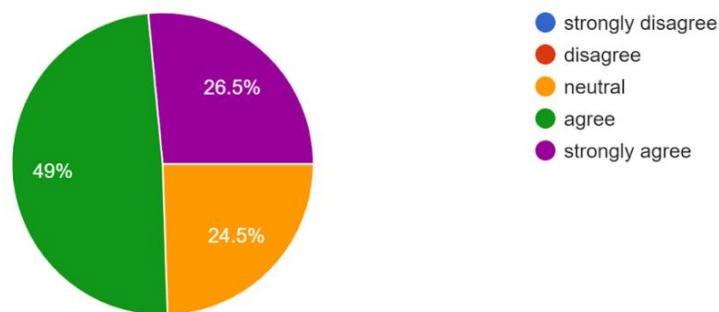


The above chart shows that majority of respondents strongly agreed to the statement that Sikh's sacred places have been preserved by the government of Pakistan. Meanwhile 25.5% of the respondents agreed to the same statement. 16.3% were those being neutral regarding the statement.

Question #7

The security and protection measures are taken by officials and are up to the mark

49 responses

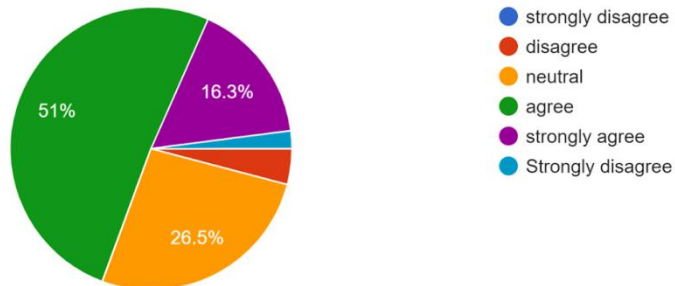


The above stats show that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the security measures taken by the Officials, at the same time 24.4% of the respondents expressed that they were neither agreed nor disagreed.

Question #8

Pilgrims and visitors are directed through Directional signs at different routes through the sites

49 responses

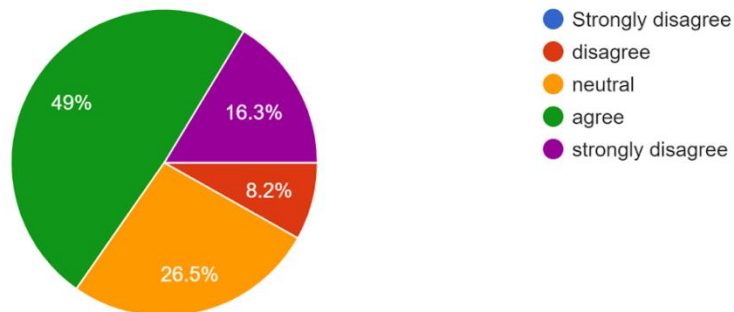


According to the above mentioned chart, 50% and 16% of the respondents agreed that there are directional signs to guide visitors towards the Shrine on their way.

Question #9

The entrance at the sites is easy and accessible to everyone

49 responses



The above chart shows that majority of respondents have found easy access to enter the holy places whereas 8.2% are those who have disagreed to the statement.

5 Conclusion of the Study

This study has tried to create a link between the pilgrims' perception of their visit to the shrine of Panja Sahib with the level of satisfaction they received. Pilgrims' perception is studied through variables that link back with satisfaction. Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism and facing it for a long time, which has had a bad impact on its goodwill. The opening of the Kartarpur corridor has the potential to wash away the bad image caused by terrorism. Moreover, the hybrid country's toxic history and ongoing disputes have a chance to calm down. After analyzing the literature, and people's perceptions especially the Sikh community and that of the Pakistani locals, it can be concluded that the developments made by Pakistan for minorities (The case of Sikhs) have paid off. Also, people from both sides of the border are pleased with the initiative bringing peace to both ends. Religious travel is a chance for commercial growth for entrepreneurs at religious locations. Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, was invited to the Kartarpur Corridor's opening ceremony. He discussed his visit to the Kartarpur Corridor and the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur. The UN head called the corridor's launch a "positive move" that would encourage interfaith harmony.

5.1 Recommendations

It can be recommended for students to conduct in-depth research on each Shrine of the Sikh Community, festivals, Pilgrims, rituals and the economic effect of each Site for Pakistan. Further studies can be conducted for Strategies to improve the service quality of religious tourism in Pakistan. There can also be a comparative study of the developments made for Sikhs and the rest of the minorities in Pakistan.

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