



The Importance of Religious Tourism- A case study of Kartarpur Corridor in Punjab

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Introduction

Religion is the most dominating motive of travel worldwide and has significant impact on the history of mankind. According to the world tourism organization, religion provides one of the main motivations to travel. It has two forms: short-term and long-term (Vijayanad, 2013; Shinde & Rizello, 2014). Excursions distinguish short-term religious tourism to nearby pilgrimage centers or religious conferences, and it is often a day trip. The long-term describes visits of several days or weeks to national and international pilgrimage sites (Vijayanad, 2013; Shinde et al., 2014). India is most ancient civilizations of the world and centre of almost all the major religions of the world.

Opening up of Sri Kartarpur Corridor between India and Pakistan to mark the completion of 550 birth years of first Guru of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev Ji is in November 2019 no less than a wonder in recent decades for the entire humanity and specially for 27 millions Sikhism followers around the world. Religious Tourism in India has been diverse and culturally rich. The most visited religious tourism destinations in India are the states of Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. Pilgrimages, Missionary travel, Crusades, conventions and rallies and Faith-based camps are most common form of Religious tourism.

Importance of Religious Tourism

United Nations World Tourism Organization (1995) focuses on the individual 'tourist' and their motivation: Religion and pilgrimage tourism refers to all travel outside the usual environment for religious purposes, excluding travel for professional purposes (e.g. priests travelling for work). There are many benefits to promote religious tourism. Religious tourism is a means to link people with different religions and cultures together and help to better understand each other despite political and social stresses (Heidari et al., 2018).

1. Religious tourism is global phenomenon and recognises the equality and respect of all religions. This corridor is a landmark in the modern history and is the perfect example to the world to support humanity and contribute to regional peace and harmony. Indian society is liberal and live a tradition to express due respect to the people & places of other religion. Religious tourism raises awareness of humanity's common heritage, and provides resources for preservation, for example, religious terms and as a source of public education, identity and pride (Kuthiala, 2001; Mishra, & Jharkhariya, 2013; Tomer, & Arora, 2012).

2. Tourism demands basic services of transport, accommodation, connectivity of roads, communicational network, safety and security in the region and other amenities. The Government of both the sides is committed to develop general and tourist infrastructure at a very fast pace. It will contribute to local development and empowerment of people through education, social awareness and employment opportunities. When tourists meet and show interest in the unique values of local communities, these communities feel empowered. Tourism helps them to take pride in themselves, in their history, traditions and environment (Karthi, et al., 2012; Kumar, 2009; Shinde, 2007).
3. Religious tourism can be used as an instrument for National & International understanding and world peace. Religious tourism gives an opportunity to express and explain the philosophy and principals of a religion and hence leaves no space for ambiguity and misunderstanding. Before Independence, the undivided Punjab had very strong social & cultural bonding between Hindus and Muslims communities. Kartarpur Corridor provides a platform for the social interaction and appreciation for the people of both sides and fosters social respect for each other. Religious tourism attracts millions of people united in respect and reverence for the world's great religions. These are the very same values needed for cross-cultural understanding and peace building (Kuthiala, 2001; Karthi et al., 2012).
4. The corridor has proved as a 'meeting place' of the people to their kin and kith from both the sides who were separated due to the tragic partition of 1947. Social media has captured such meeting which shows the emotional sentiments of the people for their departed land & people. Moreover, people perform different activities during religious trips, which also increase the importance of religious tourism such as religious festivals like Gurupurabs, Vaisakhi, Diwali, Navratri, and ceremonies like marriage, naming of a child, and funeral (PUDA, 2012; Sikhs.Org, 2011). For example, The Kumbh Mela (a Hindu festival), which takes place every twelve years at Allahabad, is considered the most significant religious gathering in the world. In 2013, the Kumbh Mela drew 80 to 100 million pilgrims to Allahabad (Jutla, 2016)

Conclusion

Religious Tourism plays very significant role in socio-economic development of a State. It promotes cultural diversity & spirituality; increase tourism receipts, generate employment opportunities and fosters mutually exchange of values, cultures, traditions and way of living between tourist and host community. Further, it helps in reshaping the socio-economic and political bilateral and regional foreign relationships. Religious sites & shrines of a religion is not confined to single country rather scattered over the neighboring and distant countries. Therefore, people travel to the holy places of their faith across the border to fulfill the religious pursuits and make religious tourism, the major segment of international travel. This factor guides to identify the religious tourism products of India and match it with the suitable markets which can be-

Religion	Target Market
Sikhism	United Kingdom, Canada, USA, Australia
Islam	Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh Countries of Middle- East(UAE, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi- Arabia)
Buddhism	Japan, China, Thailand, Vietnam and Sri Lanka
Christian	European countries & USA

Religious tourism can play a vital role in inclusive socio-economic development of a state. Further emphasis on this sector through proper policy interventions is also expected to play crucial role in integrating regions having socio-cultural and economic diversity.

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