

Impacts of religious tourism at Sikh pilgrim center of  
Amritsar, India

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Impacts of religious tourism at Sikh pilgrim center of Amritsar, India

**Impacts of religious tourism at Sikh pilgrim center of Amritsar, India**

**By Samreet Kaur**

Presented as part of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Sustainable Leisure Management within the Department of Recreation and Tourism  
Management at Vancouver Island University August 2020

**DECLARATION**

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

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**Student Signature**

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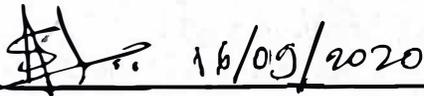
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### **ABSTRACT**

Religious tourism is a promising type of tourism for income generation for local communities and to preserve the cultural heritage, but still, it considered as one of the least explored types of tourism in Punjab despite its vast resources and opportunities. At the same time, numerous studies examined how religious tourism impacts on destinations and how residents view tourism in the context of Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, and Buddhism pilgrimage. There is a paucity of studies looking specifically at how religious tourism and tourists affect residents living in “holy or sacred” destinations in the context of the Sikh pilgrimage.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar, which has the Golden Temple, the most sacred place for Sikhs, with the help of secondary data. The findings of the study revealed that most local people are welcome religious tourists to the Amritsar and perceive the economic and socio-cultural impacts as positive. On the other hand, they are worried about the environmental impacts because they are facing some problems such as overcrowding, congestion, and pollution in Amritsar. Furthermore, the study found that few agencies were working in Amritsar to reduce environmental impacts. Overall, there is strong evidence that economic considerations override other concerns by locals. The paper suggests management and development strategies to make a balance in different impacts to achieve sustainable development of Religious tourism in Amritsar.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background

Religious tourism refers to contemporary patterns of travel to sacred sites that has its roots in the traditional practice of pilgrimage and where people can fulfil both religious and recreational needs (Shinde, 2010; 2015). It is a fast-growing sector within the tourism industry that generates massive revenue due to its mass tourism nature (Ojo, & Busayo, 2017; Vijayanad, 2009; Fourie, Rossello, & Santana-Gallego, 2015). According to UNWTO, every year, 300 to 330 million tourists visit the world's key religious sites, 60% of which take place in Asia (Shinde & Rizello, 2014).

India has different forms of tourism, but Religious tourism is regarded as the most common form of tourism. UNWTO estimates that around 170 million tourists visit more than 2,000 religious' sites in India. Out of a hundred 95 percent of tourists are domestic tourists (Shinde, 2015). One of the reasons being, within the country, individuals possess the strong religious belief that if they made visits to certain religious places, their aspirations would get fulfilled, obtain forgiveness of sins, and pray or seek a cure for the disease (Shinde, 2010).

Religion in India is specified by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices (Fourie *et al.*, 2015; Shinde, 2015). India is the birthplace of four great religions, namely, Hindu, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism (Mishra, & Jharkhariya, 2013; Fourie *et al.*, 2015). All the religions have their major and minor religious centers in different parts of the country

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(Vijayanad, 2012), and with changing times, these religious places have become a site for tourism, rather than a mere pilgrimage, for example, Buddhist shrines at Sarnath, Varanasi, the churches of Goa and the churches of Tamil (Singh, 2004).

In the context of tourism, many studies have focused on several pilgrim-sites in India such as towns along Ganga river, Shirdi, Tirupati, Vaishno Devi and Mathura (Kuthiala, 2001; Gupta, & Raina, 2008; Kumar, 2009; Karthi, Devi, & Daisy, 2012; Shinde, & Rizello, 2014; Kumar, & Singh, 2015; Shinde, 2015; 2018; Joseph *et al.*, 2019), but there are only a handful studies about Amritsar - the holiest sites for Sikh followers Amritsar is situated in the north Indian state of Punjab (Chaudhary, & Aggarwal, 2012; Jutla, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2018).

Today, religious tourism is a promising type of tourism for income generation for local communities and to preserve the cultural heritage, but still, it is considered as one of the least explored types of tourism in Punjab despite its vast resources and opportunities. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of religious tourism in Amritsar, which has the Golden Temple, the most sacred place for Sikhs.

### **1.2 The context of the study**

Punjab has attractive heritage sites and religious places, which attract both domestic and foreign tourists and has remarkable potential for becoming a major global tourist destination (Punjab Tourism Policy, 2003; Punjab Haryana & Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), 2011). In Punjab, tourism is primarily religious, but cultural, eco-tourism, and rural tourism are also emerging (Chaudhary, 2016; PHDCCI, 2011).

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Punjab's position in tourism has improved significantly in recent years, with the overall tourist inflow in the State growing at an impressive rate of 29.5% between 2010 and 2018. However, the tourism sector in Punjab is driven mainly by domestic tourists from within and outside the state. During 2017, Punjab attained 11<sup>th</sup> position at the national level in terms of domestic tourist visits (Ministry of Tourism, 2018). The number of domestic tourist visits in Punjab is almost doubled in three years, from 24.27 million in 2013-14 to 40.29 million in 2016-2017 (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India 2014; 2018).

Moreover, the development in the sector is supported by investments from the State Government and assistance provided by Asian Development Bank through Infrastructure Development Investment Program for Tourism (IDIPT) project (Punjab State Tourism Policy, 2018). The development of infrastructure for tourists has tremendous potential for income and employment generation. The tourism policies implemented by the State are focused on a similar Investment in tourism has led to the development of the sector with an expansion in both domestic and foreign tourists (Economic and Statistical Organization, Department of Planning, Government of Punjab (ESOPB), 2020).



Figure. 1 District of Punjab (Government of Punjab, 2020)

### 1.3 Study Area

One of the main attractions in Punjab is the Golden Temple at Amritsar, which is popular among domestic and international tourists. Amritsar is the second largest and one of the fastest-growing cities of Punjab (Punjab Urban Planning & Development Authority (PUDA), 2012).

Amritsar attracts many tourists, as it has many religious, cultural, and historical places. The city is situated 217 km northwest of state capital Chandigarh and 455 km northwest of New Delhi,

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the national capital. It is near to Pakistan, with the Wagah Border being only 28 km away (PUDA, 2012).

Amritsar, historically known as Ramdaspur and colloquially as Ambarsar, was founded by Sri Guru Ramdass Ji, the 4th Guru of the Sikhs in about 1574 A.D. Before its establishment, this place was covered with thick forests and had a few lakes. To begin the city, Guru Ramdass invited 52 traders from different places nearby like Patti and Kasur to settle here. The traders came with their families and started the first 32 shops (these are still present in the core part of the city and are called Batisi Hatta (PUDA, 2012; Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, (SGPC), 2020; Chakrabarty, 2018; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2016).

In 1577, Guru Ram Das Sahib began the construction of the Amritsar Sarovar (tank), which was ready by 1581. Guru Arjan Sahib laid the foundation of the Darbar Sahib on January 3, 1589. Sri Hari Mandir Sahib was completed in 1604. Later, when Guru Arjan Dev completed the writing of Holy Granth sahib, a copy of Guru Granth Sahib was ceremonially installed in Harmandir Sahib and Baba Buddha Sahib was appointed the first Granthi (priest) (PUDA, 2012; SGPC, 2020; Chakrabarty, 2018; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2016). Since then, the temple called the Golden temple developed as a significant place of worship for Sikhs. However, during the Mughal period, Hari Mandir Sahib was attacked several times (1628-1765), and after every attack, Sikhs reconstructed the Darbar Sahib and improved on its art and architecture (Chakrabarty, 2018).

The city was established and grew around the Golden Temple is popularly known as “Amritsar, sifti da ghar.” This means the “house of praise” that is, “the place (Golden Temple) where the Absolute (God) praised through the continuous singing of sacred music.” The city of Amritsar is named after the Golden Temple Sarovar. Amrit means nectar of immortality, and Sar

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or Sarovar means pond. In short, Amritsar means ‘the pond of nectar,’ the same surrounding the Golden Temple. The temple, with its glistening gold, the covered exterior stands in the middle of a square water tank with each side about 150 meters (m) with an 18 meters path on all four sides. (PUDA, 2012; Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, (SGPC), 2020; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2016).

The Golden Temple has four entrances doors, known as the Door of Peace, the Door of Livelihood, the Door of Learning, and the Door of Grace. These doors are a symbol that Sikhs believe in a non-sexist, non-racist society where all people of all casts, religions are equally welcome (Sikhs.Org., 2011). Moreover, the Golden temple has the most extensive free community kitchen, which serves free meals to all people of all faiths. The founder of the Sikh religion, Shri Guru Nanak, first started this service which outlines the basic Sikh principles of service, humility, and equality (Sikhs.Org., 2011).

The temple is over 400 years old and situated in a walled city along with the historic Jallianwala Bagh. The walled city is the historical center, which is 2 kilometres from the railway station located at the Grand Trunk road while the airport is located 11 kilometres away. The city of Amritsar and its Golden Temple are together a symbol of Sikh history and spiritual tradition. Amritsar is a landlocked city that experiences extreme weather conditions. The period between October to March is the most suitable for a visit. Most of the Sikh festivals fall during this period, such as Baisakhi, Diwali, Hola Mohalla, and Gurupurabs (PUDA, 2012).



Figure. 2 The Golden Temple, Amritsar (Government of Punjab, 2016)

#### 1.4 Issues

In recent years, tourism has shown exponential growth in Punjab. Amritsar is an established tourist centre, but it is not without problems (PUDA, 2012). Several problems have been observed in recent years. For instance, pollution in the state is a big problem (Kichloo, 2019). According to the World Health Organization reports, Amritsar a northwestern state of Punjab, India has been ranked among the 30 most polluted cities in the world in terms of delicate particulate matter (PM 2.5) levels in the air ( Kumar, 2015), which not only effects the heritage places but also effects on the development of tourism (UNESCO,2007). The other most visible problem is poor waste management (PUDA, 2012).

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However, the increasing number of tourists (Kichloo, 2019), mushrooming hotels around the Golden temple, and have become a severe threat to the gold-plated temple, which is almost 400 years old (PUDA, 2012; Chaudhary, & Aggarwal, 2012). The other issue is of safety and security because Punjab is only 28 km away from the international border with Pakistan border (PHDCCI, 2011; Malhotra, 2015), The relationship between India and Pakistan have been involved and largely hostile due to several historical and political events. There are chances of political unrest which adversely affect the sentiments of domestic and foreign tourists (Sallahuddin, & Abdul, 2017).

The most significant problem is lack of cleanliness and hygiene in already inadequate basic amenities like toilet facilities, drinking water and dining places at Amritsar (Malhotra, 2015). There are hardly any facilities for the disabled or families with young children, not even wheelchairs (Punjab Tourism Policy, 2018). Even at railway stations, bus stands, malls and tourist places, the elderly and disabled are not at all facilitated; therefore, their movement at these places is restricted (Sharma, Kumar, & Singh, 2013). As a city, however, Amritsar has an excellent infrastructure in terms of communication, banking, medical, and educational facilities (PUDA, 2012; PHDCCI, 2011).

### **The Purpose of the study**

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the impacts of religious tourism around the Golden Temple in the city of Amritsar, Punjab state, Northwestern India, with the help of secondary data.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What are the economic impacts of religious tourism around the Golden Temple and in the city of Amritsar?
2. What are the socio-cultural impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar?
3. What are the environmental impacts of increasing numbers of visitors in Amritsar?

The remaining thesis document is organized into four chapters. The next chapter provides a review of the literature on religious tourism and its impacts to arrive at a conceptual framework to then investigate the situation, specifically in Amritsar. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, paradigm, and data collection methods. Chapter 4 presents the results around three areas: economic impacts, socio-cultural impacts, and environmental impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar. The final chapter positions the results found from Amritsar with the broader literature around Sikh pilgrimage centers and sites belonging to other faiths in India.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review

This literature review aims to generate awareness, understanding, and interest in studies that have explored a given topic in the past. This chapter defines the current level of knowledge about the theoretical and conceptual research on tourism, religion, religious tourism, and different impacts of religious tourism. Furthermore, it will identify the research gap and develop a conceptual framework from the key concepts in the literature to answer the research questions.

#### 2.1 Religious tourism

To define the religious journey, it is essential first to understand what religion is and how it is used in the practice of pilgrimage and journey. Religion outlined by Heidari *et al.* (2018) as a system of belief in a higher being with great faith and devotion. There is a universal belief in a superior being to all religions. According to Kumar & Singh, religion can be understood as a total of all views that include supernatural beliefs (2015).

There are many benefits to promoting religious tourism. Religious tourism is a means to link together people with different religions and cultures and helps to better understand each other despite political and social stresses (Heidari *et al.*, 2018). Religious tourism helps to promote peace and stability in developing countries (Kuthiala, 2001) like India by providing jobs, generating income, (Fourie *et al.*, 2015), diversifying the economy protecting the environment, and promoting cross-cultural awareness (Karthi *et al.*, 2012).

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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).

There are two separate aspects of religious tourism, one of them is the religious belief of the domestic and foreign tourists, who have a spiritual attachment to the destination or deity according to their religious beliefs (Shinde 2007). For example, Sikhism is Indigenous religion for people of Punjab because Sikhs reside in Punjab from generations, and they possess a unique cultural and social identity (Sikhs.Org,2011). The other aspect is the domestic and foreign tourists, who have a different religion and come from a different country or region, whom the religious practices and the destination have the dimension of originality, a spiritual experience distinct from their own, even though the ethical values are continuing to be the same (Shinde 2007). For example, Shinde (2015) argues that most of the religions have similar norms which teaches respect, forgiveness, and equality but in different ways. These teachings increase humanity, peace, and cultural awareness (Karthi, Devi, & Daisy, 2012).

However, religious tourism is not easy to define. In the tourism literature, it is often categorized in different ways by different authors, with religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, cultural tourism, cultural heritage tourism and spiritual tourism often used interchangeably. Cultural tourism and religious tourism, although it can be defined differently, are always linked with one another as religion is a part of the culture (Tripathi, Choudhary, & Agrawal, 2010).

## 2.2 Importance of Religious tourism

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is evident in its enthusiasm for religious tourism, with Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, suggesting that religious tourism can be one of the most effective tools to foster inclusive and sustainable development. In so doing, three main benefits of religious tourism are below:

- 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).
- It can contribute to local development and empowerment. 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).
- It builds cultural understanding and peace. Tourism breaks down cultural barriers and builds bridges between people, communities and nations, the very foundation of peace. 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 peacebuilding (Kuthiala, 2001; Karthi *et al.*, 2012).
- 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).

### **2.3 Impacts of Religious Tourism**

Religious tourism has impacts like other forms of tourism, including the economic impact on the local community as well as socio-cultural and environmental implications (Anabestani, & Rajabi, 2014). Particularly, when it is associated with small communities, the impact of religious tourism upon the economy should not be underestimated (Egresi, Kara, & Bayram, 2012). According to Kumar et al., (2008), the economic benefits associated with religious tourism are higher than those associated with other segments, as pilgrims and other religious tourists are avid buyers of religious souvenirs. The benefits associated with the development of religious tourism is not only economic. It also offers the opportunity to reduce tensions and prejudices, encourage changes in attitudes and bridge the gap between different cultures through contact with other cultures (Vijayanad, 2014; Karthi *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, religious tourism development can enhance the maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage (Vansiya & Ragothaman, 2012).

Gupta, & Raina mentioned that religious heritage sites drive not only international tourism and economic growth (2008) but also provide essential meeting grounds for visitors and host communities, making vital contributions to tolerance, respect and mutual understanding between different cultures (Karthi *et al.*, 2012; Shinde, 2015).

### **2.3.1 Economic Impacts**

The economic impact of tourism has been commonly being viewed as a positive, contributing to employment, better services, and social stability (Kumar, 2013; Karthi *et al.*, 2012). According to Kuthiala, first and most visible economic impact of religious tourism is job creation (2001), through the visits to the religious site and the visitor's contact with the religious institutions (Tomer, & Arora, 2012). However, apart from the religious institutions, holy sites are often surrounded by religiously oriented businesses and facilities, such as souvenir shops, travel agencies, hotels and even hospitals, employing the host community (Gupta, & Raina, 2008). In particular, the sale of religious items and local things, for example, sacred water, icons, sweaters, shawls, and blankets (Karar, 2010) brings in considerable revenue.

Karar claims that "Religious tourism generates revenue in a way like no other kind of tourism does" (2010, p.99). In India, religious tourism accounts for 21 million jobs in terms of employment generation, which is about 8.9% of total employment in the country (Ojo, & Busayo, 2017). Moreover, Global statistics reported that about 23.3% of the total foreign exchange earnings in India are from religious tourism (Ojo *et al.*, 2017). For example, in Haridwar- a Hindu pilgrim-town in north India, religious tourism provides the most important sources of income as pilgrims and tourists use hotels, various means of transportation and purchase food. Moreover, several new hotels, ashrams, and restaurants are open to fulfilling visitors' demands. Many restaurants cater to a wide variety of visitors by offering different cuisines such as Marwari, Chinese, Continental, South Indian, and Gujrati. All the previous elements represent a large part of the local revenues in Haridwar (Karar, 2010).

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Religious tourism tends to encourage the development of multiple-use infrastructure (Gupta *et al.*, 2008) that benefits the host community, including various means of transports, health care facilities, and recreation centers (Kumar, 2013). Tourists want a safe and comfortable journey, security of food, shelter and health as an essential part of their pilgrimage and thus to cater to their needs and demands, business houses, individuals, agencies, and even the government have started playing an important role in providing services to the pilgrims which in turns adds to the development of the local region (Kumar, & Singh, 2015).

Nowaczyk (2018) explains that the multiplier effects of income generated by tourism can be direct, indirect, and induced. According to Kumar (2013), religious tourism tends to encourage the development of multiple-use infrastructure that benefits the host community. These include various means of transports, health care facilities, and sports centers, in addition to the hotels and high-end restaurants that cater to foreign visitors (Mishra *et al.*, 2013). The development of infrastructure has, in turn, induced the development of other directly productive activities (Tomer *et al.*, 2012).

Moreover, these impacts can also contribute to high living costs within the community, pushing out local businesses, and raising costs for residents (Gupta, & Raina, 2008). For example, local communities need to be able to fund tourist demands, which leads to an increase in taxes, price of living increases in terms of rent and rates, as well as property values going up. It can be problematic for locals looking to buy property (Gupta, 2008).

### **2.3.2 Socio-culture impacts**

The socio-cultural impact of tourism refers to changes in the quality of life of residents of a tourist destination (De Lucia *et al.*, 2020). The social and cultural impacts of tourism are how tourism is contributing to change in a value system, individual behavior, family relationship, lifestyle, safety level, moral conduct, religion, language, and interpersonal relationship at the destination (Kurmanaliyeva, Rysbekova, Duissenbayeva, & Izmailov, 2014).

These socio-cultural impact effect on the local people of host communities of their direct and indirect association with tourists (Kurmanaliyeva *et al.*, 2014), for example, the introduction of tourists to sensitive areas can be detrimental, cause a loss of culture, or contribute to the preservation of culture and cultural sites through increased resources (De Lucia *et al.*, 2020). Religious tourism provides funding to preserve and conserve cultural heritage, gives back cultural pride, revitalize customs, traditions and opens the door for cultural sharing and learning (Smith, 2009).

Most of the standard positive socio-cultural impacts include increasing cross-cultural interaction, understanding, maintaining, and keeping local culture, arts, crafts and traditions, empowering host communities, and strengthening cultural values (Banerjee, 2014). According to Kuthiala (2001), Religious tourism helps to preserve several places that have historical importance by declaring them as heritage sites: some examples being the Golden Temple, the Taj Mahal, and the Qutab Minar (Kumar, 2009).

On the negative side, religious tourism sometimes led to the destruction of the social fabric of a community (Shinde, 2010). It can increase tension, hostility, and suspicion between

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the tourists and the local communities when there is no respect and understanding for each other's culture and way of life (Suntikul, & Dorji, 2016).

Some experts and planners strongly believe that the host community and local people should be highly involved in the process of planning and accomplishment of tourism development because they considered as the fundamental part of any tourism product (Banerjee, 2014). For example, local people often take pride in their culture and religion and want to share their enthusiasm with tourists. Their involvement is significant in protecting and preserving the religious or cultural sites (Lee, 2013; Banerjee, 2014).

### **2.3.3 Environmental impacts**

Tourism causes wide-ranging environmental impacts on the host destination. These include congestion experienced at the tourist places (Mishra *et al.*, 2013), increasing demand for natural resources and contribute to the source of solid waste residual (Karthi *et al.*, 2012) the problem of air pollution, water, and noise pollution, (Kumar, 2009) and degradation of environmental features (Shinde, 2007). For example, tourists generate considerable waste, tourists on expedition leave behind their garbage, toilet papers, plastic bags, cups, and food waste. Such practices degrade the environment (Karar, 2010).

According to Hanandeh, tourism is the fifth largest pollution source in the world, which is responsible for nearly 14% of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The highest estimation of tourists per year is 300 million people from all around the world, which belongs to religious tourism (2013). Hanandeh cites the example of the impacts of Hajj in Mecca. Hajj is one of the oldest and largest religious tourism events in the world, drawing a million participants from all around the world. On average, each pilgrim contributes 60.5 kg CO<sub>2-eq</sub> per day because

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of transportation, hotel stay, meals and waste management (2013). At Mecca, Hajj, transportation is the most significant contributor to greenhouse gases, followed by the lodging, then food with each accounting to 60%, 18% and 13%, respectively. On the other side, one of the critical reasons for environmental pollution of transportation is that tourists never pay attention to adverse environmental impacts during their journeys, and they are not interested in altering their travel patterns and climate changes (Hanandeh, 2013).

On the other side, Kuthiala explained that tourism is well planned, which may also generate positive environmental impacts (2001). For example, improvements that help tourism such as better transportation and communication, tree planting, restoration of historic sites, Holy places, and urban beautification (Vijayanad, 2013).

Vijayanad explained that “religious institutions may provide a good platform to propagate environmental awareness based on religious teachings” (2013), for example, sustainable tourism practices and reduce the carbon footprint through composting of organic waste, recycling of plastics, glass and metals (Kasam, Iresha, & Setyoadi, 2019), use of renewable energy, reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation purposes, smart building designs to reduce energy use and improve natural lighting (Hanandeh, 2013).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as a tourism industry that meets current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is not a product, but a spirit that supports all tourism activities and meets the needs of tourists and host regions (Sustainability Plan 2013 – 2017, 2013).

The sustainable development of religious tourism is the key to safeguarding the vast cultural heritage of a region (Badawy, & Shehata, 2018). With this, a lot of churches, cathedrals, shrines, and temples will not fall into oblivion, keeping the grandeur that they have in the past

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(Turcov, & Nabolsi, 2018). The focus of sustainable tourism development is on maintaining the economic and social advantages of tourism development while reducing or mitigating any adverse effects on the natural, historical, cultural, or social environment. So, environmental sustainability mainly depends on the three Rs: 'reducing-reusing-recycling' (Turcov, et al.' 2018; Badawy et al., 2018).

### **2.4 Research gap(s)**

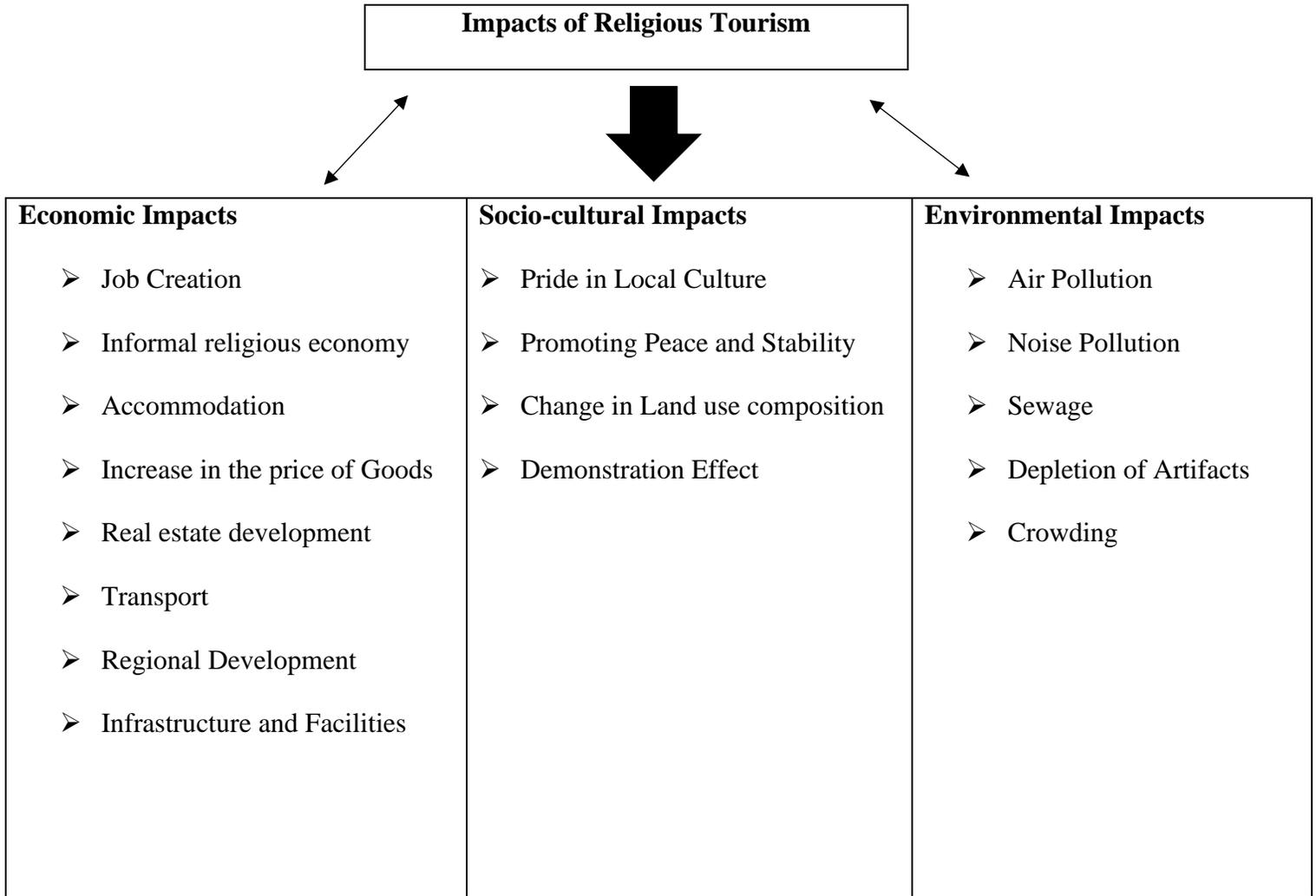
The numerous studies examined how religious tourism impacts on destinations and how residents view tourism in the context of Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, and Buddhism pilgrimage. There is a paucity of studies looking specifically at how religious tourism and tourists affect residents living in "holy or sacred" destinations in the context of the Sikh pilgrimage. A detailed assessment of impacts in a Sikh pilgrimage site needs to do in more excellent detail. Many studies have focused on several pilgrim-sites in India, such as Ganga, Shirdi, Tirupati, Vaishno Devi and Mathura, but there are only a handful of studies about Amritsar which is one of the holiest sites for Sikh followers. However, the lack of studies on the Sikh pilgrimage shows that this area of research needs to explore further.

## **2.5 Conceptual Framework**

Based on the review of literature, religious tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world, and it has enormous economic impacts, socio-cultural, and environmental consequences. These impacts are contributing to changes in the value system, individual behaviors, lifestyles, safety levels, moral conduct, and community organization. Moreover, attractions, accommodation, ancillary services, and amenities are the fundamental element of any kind of tourism. Based on the studies discussed above, it is possible to develop a conceptual framework to examine religious tourism and its impacts on the Sikh pilgrimage site of Amritsar.

In this framework, the three main categories of impacts are dividing into specific sectoral areas of influences that can be measure with indicators. This categorization helps to collect and analyze data for each indicator to present a more comprehensive assessment of impacts. Another aspect included in this framework is the response of different institutions and agencies in addressing and mitigating these impacts. The next chapter details the research design and methodology for investigating the impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar, building on the framework. This framework is in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: A framework to analyze impacts of Religious**



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research approach used for answering the research questions around the impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar, Punjab and introduces the study area.

#### **3.1 Secondary data**

This research paper is entirely base on secondary data. In this paper, the *environmental*, *socio-cultural*, and *economic* impacts have been exploring as key drivers. Within each of the three components, different data searches from various literature, such as journals, books, printed and electronic media, were explored to substantiate the potential future scenario further. There were two main reasons to choose the secondary data in this study: firstly, the topic was too broad and secondly, the sensitivity of the study area. For example, The Golden temple is main target for terrorist attacks in Punjab, and to research their prior permission from the SGPC is required (PUDA, 2012; Paul, 2019).

Secondary data analysis involves a researcher using the information that someone else has gathered for other research purposes. One of the most noticeable advantages of using secondary data analysis is its cost-effectiveness because someone else has already collected the data, the researcher does not need to invest any money, time, or effort into the data collection stages of his or her study (Cheng, & Phillips, 2014; Castle, 2003).

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Also, the data from a secondary data set is typically already cleaned and stored in an electronic format, so the researcher can spend his or her time rolling up their sleeves and analyzing the data instead of spending time having to prepare the data for analysis. Another benefit of analyzing secondary data instead of collecting and analyzing primary data is the sheer volume and breadth of data that is publicly available today (Cheng, & Phillips, 2014; Castle, 2003).

On the other hand, the data collected through secondary sources may not be as authentic as when collected directly from the source. It is a widespread disadvantage with online sources due to a lack of regulatory bodies to monitor the kind of content that is shared. Another main disadvantage of secondary data is that some of the data sources are outdated, and there are no new available data to replace the old ones. For example, the national census is not usually updated yearly (Cheng, & Phillips, 2014; Castle, 2003).

### **3.2 Study setting**

The study is about religious tourism in the city of Amritsar, which believed to attract a hundred thousand visitors a day – more than the iconic Taj Mahal in India. Amritsar city is famous as a religious centre and a place for religious tourism due to the presence of Golden temple, Durgiana temple and many other gurudwaras, temples and mosques (PUDA, 2012; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2016). The city is in the Majha region of the state of Punjab in India. The State is known as the land of great Sikh gurus and has a great heritage of famous religious shrines, palaces, monuments, and historical buildings (PUDA, 2012; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2016).

### 3.3 Data collection

In this research, secondary data collected from different online associations, government reports, projects, scholarly articles, newspaper articles, journals, e-books, censuses, internet searches and websites. These data sources are used to monitor the progress and evaluate their impact in different years, which helps to find the answers for research questions. These reports, schemes, and documents are mentioned below in Table.1:

Government Websites	Reports, Schemes and Documents	Nature of Data
Ministry of Tourism, Government of India ( <a href="http://tourism.gov.in/">http://tourism.gov.in/</a> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ State-wise summary report of Approved hotels and Travel trade operators.</li> <li>➤ Tourist inflow to India in different years (2017, 2018, &amp; 2019) through different Airports, for example, “Amritsar Airport.”</li> <li>➤ Domestic &amp; Foreign Tourist Visits (2017, 2018 &amp; 2019).</li> </ul>	This data will help achieve to find <i>Economic Impacts</i> such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increase in the number of tourists in Punjab</li> <li>➤ Increase in number of Hotels in Punjab</li> <li>➤ The economic growth of the region.</li> </ul>

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<p>Government of Punjab, India <a href="http://punjab.gov.in/">http://punjab.gov.in/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ History of Punjab, and Culture</li> <li>➤ Districts &amp; Map</li> <li>➤ Key Achievements of Punjab Government</li> <li>➤ Access to different departments</li> </ul>	<p>This data will help achieve to find the <i>Scio-cultural and Economic Impacts</i>, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ background information of Punjab’s history, culture, and area.</li> <li>➤ The different initiatives are done by the Punjab Government to improve tourism in the region.</li> </ul>
<p>Government of Punjab Tourism <a href="http://punjabtourism.gov.in/#/home">http://punjabtourism.gov.in/#/home</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Religious Tourism</li> <li>➤ Different organizations such as             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Punjab Heritage &amp; Tourism Promotion Board</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>This data will help achieve to find the <i>Scio-cultural and Economic Impacts</i> such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Information on tourist flow in the different districts of the region in the form of statistics.</li> </ul>

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	<p>2. Punjab Tourism Development Corporation</p> <p>3. Infrastructure Development Investment Program for Tourism</p> <p>4. Directorate of Tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reports, Statistics &amp; surveys</li> <li>➤ Registered Tour operators</li> <li>➤ Tour Facilitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The data about different jobs in the tourism sector, such as tour operators.</li> <li>➤ The detailed information about different departments of Punjab tourism</li> <li>➤ The information about different facilities such as Bed and Breakfast scheme, Regional development and preserving local culture and arts</li> <li>➤ Different job categories in Punjab tourism</li> </ul>
<p>Amritsar, Government of Punjab</p> <p><a href="https://amritsar.nic.in/">https://amritsar.nic.in/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ About District: History, Weather, Population, Area, Census and Map</li> <li>➤ Tourism in Amritsar: Tourist Places, Travel</li> </ul>	<p>This data will help achieve to find the <i>Environmental, Scio-cultural and Economic Impacts</i> such as:</p>

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	<p>Agents, Public Utilities, Accommodation, Culture &amp; heritage, and Handicraft</p> <p>Master Plan of Amritsar (2010-2031)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Background information of Amritsar’s history, culture, area, and population.</li> <li>➤ Different tourist places in Amritsar</li> <li>➤ Different sources of Pollution in the City</li> <li>➤ Facilities provided by Government and local people to tourists.</li> <li>➤ The service sector of the City, such as real estate and hotels and restaurants.</li> <li>➤ Increase in Local business</li> <li>➤ Preserving historical places and culture in the city</li> <li>➤ Public Awareness</li> </ul>
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<p>Municipal Corporation Amritsar <a href="http://amritsarcorp.com/">http://amritsarcorp.com/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Religious, Historical, and other vital places in Amritsar</li> <li>➤ Ongoing Projects such as Punjab Municipal Services improvement Project</li> <li>➤ Tours: shopping, fairs &amp; festivals, &amp; travel information</li> <li>➤ Slum Areas</li> </ul>	<p>This data will help achieve to find the <i>Scio-cultural and Economic Impacts</i>, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Different festivals and fairs celebrated in the city and at Golden temple</li> <li>➤ Ongoing different projects in the city Such as Smart City and Green City</li> <li>➤ Distribution of land</li> </ul>
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### **3.4 Data analysis**

In this study, existing data analyzed to identify the different impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar and the Golden temple. There are two general approaches for analyzing existing data: the ‘research question-driven’ approach and the ‘data-driven’ approach (Cheng, & Phillips, 2014).

In the research question approach, researchers have a question in mind and then look for suitable datasets to address the question. In the data-driven approach, researchers’ glance through variables in a dataset and decide what kind of questions can be answered by the available data. In practice, the two approaches are often used jointly and iteratively (Cheng & Phillips, 2014).

In the study, the research question approach used. On the base of three research questions, different government reports, projects, scholarly articles, newspaper articles, journals, e-books, censuses, internet searches, and websites explored. By combining all the different information, which had not done previously, the researcher was able to generate new information about environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts in the city.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

The findings presented in this chapter based on the analysis of content collected from many secondary sources, including reports prepared by critical stakeholders, media articles (newspaper and other online articles), and relevant research papers. Following the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2, the discussion of the impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar organized across three main types of impacts: Economic, Socio-cultural, and Environmental.

#### **4.1 Current scenario of religious tourism in Amritsar**

Amritsar is revere for the Golden Temple. The holiest shrine of the Sikh community has hundred thousand (100,000) visitors per day which can increase to hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) people on special occasions and festivals, (PUDA, 2012) which included 1500-1600 international tourists and 3000 Non-Residents of India (NRI's) (Roy, 2013). According to Punjab Tourism (the tourism department of Government of Punjab), in a lean month, the Golden Temple has 3,000,000 visitors, which can increase to 6,000,000 in peak month (Government of Punjab, 2016).

Among other tourist attractions, Jallianwala Bagh and Wagah border ceremony are the prominent ones. Amritsar is also one of the 12 cities in India which have been included under HRIDAY scheme (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) to conserve the historic and cultural resources in the city (PUDA, 2012).

**Table. 2 Year-wise Tourist visits in Amritsar and Punjab**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Tourist visits Amritsar</b>	<b>No. of Tourist visits Punjab</b>	<b>Amritsar's share in state's tourists' footfalls</b>
2011	11,096,952	16,567,596	67%
2012	10,072,719	19,119,943	53%
2013	12,058,034	21,544,962	56%
2014	15,368,340	24,526,751	63%
2015	16,924,412	26,038,728	65%
2016	25,462,627	39,363,061	65%
2017	25,978,495	41,401,987	63%
2018	26,935,017	45,796,030	59%

Source: (Economic and Statistical Organization, Department of Planning, Government of Punjab (ESOPB), 2020)

The tourist statistics presented in Table. 2 have shown a positive trend of an increasing number of tourists each year in Punjab. Moreover, Amritsar accounts for more than 50% of the total tourist inflow in the State. In 2018, a total of 45.79 million people visited Punjab; out of that, 25.97 million people visited Amritsar (ESOPB, 2020). However, this data does not mention how many tourists visited for religious motives. In a paper presented by Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, (2009-2010) reported on a visitors' survey they conducted in

## Impacts of religious tourism at Sikh pilgrim center of Amritsar, India

Punjab. According to them, 95% of foreign visitors and 43% to 49 % of domestic visitors visited Punjab for 'Holidays, Leisure & Recreation,' and only 6.14% domestic and 1.65% foreign visitors come for religious purposes. Moreover, they also mentioned that the Golden temple, Amritsar, is the most visited place in the city, with 35.41% visitors and ranked number one in the state.

The leading religious organization that manages religious tourism in Amritsar is the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). This organization manages the security, finances, facilities, and religious aspects of Gurudwara (SGPC, 2020). It is also known as Parliament of the Sikh Nation. The elections to SGPC held every five years. They elect the committee directly under the provisions of the Sikh Gurdwara Act 1925, which enables SGPC to control all the historical Gurdwaras. As such, SGPC is also responsible for the management of Gurdwaras in the state of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh. It also runs many prestigious educational institutions, including Medical colleges, Hospitals, and many Charitable trusts (SGPC, 2020).

The Golden temple is open 24 hours and performs different functions daily, which are managed by SGPC. For example, Spiritual functions like morning, evening ceremonies, the poetry of the Sikh Gurus, as well as writings of non-Sikhs, which are sung daily as hymns to local classical music. On special occasions like Gurupurabs, the Guru Granth Sahib will be read from beginning to end, which takes about two days and will time to end early on the morning of the anniversary (Sikhs.Org, 2011; Jutla, 2016; SGPC, 2020). Another important and essential function is the *Langar* (community kitchen), a hot vegetarian meal, prepared on the premises and served free of charge to all visitors. The tradition of Langar started over 500 years ago by the first Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The free community kitchen (Langar) serves food to

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100,000 people every day, and on special occasions, double the numbers of people visit the Langar. They serve the Langar 24 hours, and on average, 12,000 kilograms (kg) of flour, 1,500 kg of rice, 1,3000 kg of lentils, and 2000 kg vegetables used in preparing the meal every day (Anand, 2019). The free kitchen uses firewood, LPG gas and electronic bread makers for the cooking (Hindustan Times, 2014). Gurdwaras also provide facilities for schools, libraries, health clinics, and serve as a community centre (Sikhs.Org, 2011; Jutla, 2016; SGPC, 2020).

According to the study, “Religious tourism in India shows varied economic outcomes” (2011, para. 4), “Pilgrimage does involve not only visiting places but also performing rituals, for which religious specialists like priests must be hired. It has a large impact on the economy of a place, but it functions in very different ways from one place to another”. It could safely suggest that the high level of visitation to Amritsar has substantial socio-economic impacts on local businesses and the local community.

### **4.2 Economic Impacts:**

#### *Economic Growth*

Economic growth in Punjab is to overtake the national average growth rate in 2019-2020, after five years. Although in contrast with earlier years, growth is expected to moderate, in tandem with national patterns. This balance is a consequence of a there is a general slowdown in the Indian economy, and specifically, in the agriculture and manufacturing sector. These sectors contribute the most share to Punjab’s Gross Value Added (GVA) (ESOPB, 2020).

On the other hand, the share of the services sector in Punjab grew from 43% in 2004-2005 to 46% in 2019-2020. In comparison to other sectors, growth in the services sector has been the highest. The Sector grew and expected to be stable at 7% in 2019-2020. The Sector utilizes

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41% of the workforce. The growth rate has primarily driven by the growth in trade, repair, hotels, and restaurants sector. In 2019-2020 the 'Trade, repair, hotels and restaurant' sector accounted for 93.6% of the GSVA, which is more than one-fifth to the total services GSVA from 2011-2012. Moreover, real estate, ownership of dwellings & professional services in Punjab contribute to a 19.8% share in 2019-2020 as compared to 2017-2018, which was only 7.1% (ESOPB, 2020).

### *Job Creation*

As mentioned above, the leading organization directly involved in religious tourism in Amritsar is SGPC. The massive workforce working for many different functions at the temple include 90% of volunteers and 10% of staff that is directly employed and salaried by SGPC (Anand, 2019). The paid staff has 282 jobs which are provided by SGPC, such as, priests, managers, ragi group (Sikh musicians), machine operators, cooks, religious teachers, music teachers, clerk, storekeeper, security guards, managers of inns, and religious ceremonies in charges (SGPC, 2020). These workers must work a minimum of 2 years to get a permanent job (SGPC, 2020). Furthermore, over 2,000 people are employed on a contractual basis by the SGPC for maintaining cleanliness in the Golden temple premises and surroundings (Abakerli, 2017). In Golden Temple, with a hundred thousand visitors per day, it is necessary to rely on priests' support for performing ceremonies, and the people who choose to accommodate pilgrimage inns managed by SGPC staff.

Moreover, In Amritsar, 93% of the workers are engaged in tertiary activities such as hotels & restaurants, real estate, retail trade, transportation, and social services. In 2001, hotels & restaurants employed 4073 workers, which projected to increase to 5099 in 2011, 6409 in 2021

## Impacts of religious tourism at Sikh pilgrim center of Amritsar, India

and 8066 in 2031 (PUDA, 2012). These workers classified into four categories, such as management, food and beverages, housekeeping, and others (Development Management Group (DMG) Consulting Privately limited (2009-2010).

On the other hand, the Government of Punjab announced numerous initiatives with dual objectives of attracting tourists and empowering youth of the State by generating employment opportunities. Such as:

- *Punjab Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC)* has created Tourist Information Centers at Amritsar Railway Station, Wagha Border and Airport. More than 50 employees have been engaged by the department to act as tourist guides, which positioned at essential centres of tourist influx including Golden Temple, Bus Stand, Wagha Border, Railway Station, Airport and Durgiana Temple (PUDA, 2012).
- The State Government announced to create 10,000 self-employment opportunities for youth in the tourism sector. Renovation of properties of the Tourism Department into world-class tourist attractions - this includes 15 properties of the Tourism Department, located in beautiful natural locations that have the potential to attract tourists from all over the world (ESOPB, 2020).
- Heritage walks in Amritsar and Patiala were organized on World Tourism Day (27th September 2019), which witnessed participation from students and visitors. A batch of 27 tour guides and tour operators has also started, who are trained in collaboration with the Guru Nanak Dev University, to facilitate foreign tourists visiting the State (ESOPB, 2020).

*Informal religious economy*

According to Roy (2013), the Golden Temple sustains a large segment of the economy of Amritsar, by providing jobs to young people, and business to shopkeepers, transporters, and hotel owners. There are about 3,000 shops stretched along the circumference of the Golden temple, which sells religious souvenirs and a variety of items, including toys, kirpans (swords), papad (crispy flatbread), wadiyans (curry), shawls (mufflers), and blankets. As compared with the other shops in the city in the same business, these shops witness good sales. Moreover, it is important to note that access to the information for these shops are not easily available because most of shops are managed by SGPC and restricted regulations (PUDA, 2012; Roy, 2013).

Roy (2013) quotes examples of many shopkeepers from the old city area on their business opportunities and sales:

One of the guest-house owners said, "Despite having rooms for staying purposes within the temple premises for visitors, our occupancy rates throughout the season remain at around 95 percent"(cited in Roy, 2013, para. 9).

Kuldeep Singh, a papad shop owner, said, "As the Amritsar papad is famous throughout the country, people coming from different parts of the world never forget to buy papad" (cited in Roy, 2013, para. 8).

### *Accommodation*

Accommodation is an essential element of tourism. The necessary infrastructure needed for its growth is hotels, lodges, resorts, inns, and hostels. The numerous historical and religious structures in Amritsar attract an increasing number of domestic and foreign tourists. Not all the visitors to Amritsar stay overnight, and, among those who do, some have family and friends with which they can stay. Only some stay in hotels and other types of accommodation.

According to the field survey done by Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, 40.37 percent of domestic overnight visitors stayed with their friends and relatives, followed by 34.94 percent stayed in guest houses, Inns, Gurudwaras, Temples, and other temporary free stay facilities, and 24.69 percent stayed at hotels. On the other hand, the foreign overnight visitors mostly stayed in hotels with 75.53 percent, 28.47 percent with friends and relatives, and only 1.60 percent prefer to stay somewhere else. The occupancy rate of the hotels varied from 58.95 to 70.59 percent (DMG, 2009-2010).

Amritsar has more than 150 hotels in the city, which provide comfortable and convenient stay ranging from economical to luxury five-star hotels. Every year new hotels are opening in the Amritsar (PUDA, 2012; Roy, 2013). An international clientele frequents some of these hotels, and others serve mainly domestic tourists. The first five-star deluxe hotel, Hyatt Amritsar, opened recently in 2017, which has 248 rooms (PUDA, 2012; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2015). Major hotels, along with the number of rooms available in Amritsar are detailed below in Table. 3:

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<b>Category</b>	<b>Hotel Name</b>	<b>Total Rooms</b>
<b>5 Star Deluxe</b>	Hyatt Amritsar	248
<b>5 Star</b>	Hotel Ista	248 including ten suites
<b>4 Star</b>	M.K International	75
<b>4 Star</b>	Ritz Plaza	50
<b>4 Star</b>	Mohan International	76
<b>4 Star</b>	Grand Legacy	52
<b>4 Star</b>	P.R. Residency	49
<b>4 Star</b>	La Cascade	18
<b>4 Star without Alcohol</b>	Ramada Amritsar	145
<b>4 Star with Alcohol</b>	Holiday Inn	145
<b>4 Star with Alcohol</b>	Regenta Cantral	38
<b>3 Star</b>	Shiraz Regency	35
<b>3 Star</b>	R.V. Continental	32
<b>3 Star</b>	City Heart	30
<b>3 Star</b>	Ishan Villa	27
<b>3 Star</b>	C.J International	25
<b>3 Star</b>	R.S Residency	21

(Ministry of Tourism, 2015; Government of Punjab Tourism, 2016; PUDA, 2012)

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However, pilgrims and visitors also prefer the free accommodation provided by Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in its five pilgrim-inns near Golden Temple.

These listed in Table. 4

Table. 4: Pilgrim accommodation provided by SGPC

<b>Name of Inns</b>	<b>Capacity of Rooms</b>
Sarai Shri Guru Ramdas	228 rooms and 18 big halls
Shri Guru Har Gobind Niwas	88 rooms and two halls
Shri Guru Arjun Niwas	65 rooms
Akal Rest House	20 rooms
Shri Guru Nanak Niwas	80 rooms

(Gateway to Sikh Foundation, 2020)

According to the Punjab Urban Planning and Development Authority (2012), the available accommodation in Amritsar is inadequate to meet the needs of the tourists. There is an urgent need for creating affordable and budget accommodation with quality facilities for the tourists in the city, which not only helps the tourists but also extends their stay in the city, which increases the income.

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In 2016, the Punjab Heritage Tourism Promotion Board launched a scheme name called Bed & Breakfast. The primary purpose of this scheme was to provide clean and affordable accommodation for international and domestic tourists, including an opportunity for tourists to stay with an Indian family, experience the traditions, culture, and cuisine of Punjab (Government of Punjab tourism, 2016).

The first phases of the Bed and Breakfast Scheme launched in the urban areas of Amritsar, Patiala and SAS Nagar, Mohali. The homeowners who have the necessary aptitude and home of suitable size and requisite standards will be invited to participate in the scheme, and training is provided to homeowners. Bed and Breakfast Scheme can be a useful source of additional income, as well as an enjoyable business activity for local people (Government of Punjab tourism, 2016). The eight homeowners registered to the scheme in 2014 at Amritsar, which increased to 17 homeowners in 2015 and 19 homeowners in 2016 (Government of Punjab tourism, 2015).

Moreover, farmers of Punjab also participate beyond traditional farm enterprises to provide a unique experience to visitors through “Farm Stay.” These are farms that offer accommodation and meals for the tourists (Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, Government of Punjab, 2016). According to Punjab Farm Tourism Scheme, only those farms will participate in this scheme who are fully developed as a tourism point of view and have a minimum one room with a washroom and full meal service (Government of Punjab, Department of Tourism, 2012). In 2013, three farms stayed registered in Amritsar with a capacity of five and eight rooms. After that, in 2019, two more farm stays are recorded in Amritsar with four rooms each (Government of Punjab, Department of Tourism, 2018).

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Farm-stays can offer a significant source of on-farm income for rural economies and communities, which not only boosting business but also promote tourism in the local communities. Besides, farm-stays also helps in preserving the heritage and culture, farming, and family traditions. For example, In Punjab, through farm stay, visitors learn about crop harvesting, participate in local games, meet with local artisans, and visit temples, mosques and gurdwaras. Moreover, relax under the shade of a magical banyan tree and savour the mouthwatering cuisine of a homemade Punjabi feast (Government of Punjab, Department of Tourism, 2012).

It found that due to the increasing influx of religious tourists in recent years, many diverse forms of accommodation have begun to operate, providing more choice to tourists and contributing to the tourism economy.

### *Transportation*

Travel and transportation are an integral component of tourism. Amritsar connected by various means of transport such as rail, train, bus, and an international airport, which makes it easily accessible not only within the country but also from all over the world. The city well connected to various cities of India, such as National Highways with New Delhi, Jammu, and other significant states by rail, road, and air (PUDA, 2012; Government of Punjab, 2016). Most of the tourists coming to the city use rail and road as the preferred mode of transportation, and air traffic has also shown a considerable increase (Singh, 2016; Sharma, 2017).

For example, Tourism Survey Report of Punjab (2009-2010), reported that the domestic overnight visitors from within the state (60.15 percent), overnight visitors from outside the state (76.37 percent) and foreign visitors (64.46 percent) extensively used railways to reach their

## Impacts of religious tourism at Sikh pilgrim center of Amritsar, India

tourist destinations. However, same-day visitors (63.96 percent) from within the state used buses as the primary mode of transport. Other means of travel used by the domestic visitors are nil except air travel made by 0.32 percent of visitors from outside the state. Most of the foreign overnight visitors used Railways (64.5 percent), air (18.2 percent) and taxies (17.4 percent) (DMG, 2009-2010).

### *Public transport to the temple*

SGPC has a free bus shuttle to the Golden Temple that runs at the frequency of every two hours: the bus picks up devotees from the bus station, railway station and airport, and bring them to the temple. There are four bus shuttles going in between the railway station and the inter-state bus terminal and one bus shuttle to the Airport (Airport Authority of India, 2020; The Tribune, 2018). It takes about 15 minutes to reach Golden Temple. The capacity of one bus is about 30-32 seats, but sometimes, the passenger's arguments with the bus driver and end up making the bus overcrowded. Moreover, SGPC starts five more buses, which will be used to bring people from other states who wish to visit the Golden Temple but cannot afford the travelling expenses (The Tribune, 2018).

Besides, the SGPC enhanced the frequency of four buses that shuttle between the Golden Temple, and railway station because of the safety reasons. For example, many cases have surfaced wherein visitors have fleeced by autorickshaw drivers (Paul, 2017). The Golden Temple manager, Sulakhan Singh, said the service had made 24X7, keeping in mind the safety of the devotees. "This is our endeavour to ensure the safety of devotees who come from far-flung areas. Since the train timings are odd, the visitors hire rickshaws or autos, and sometimes it becomes a risky ride for them. We keep one bus, each ready at Golden Temple

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and the railway station. Before the bus with devotees leaves the railway station, our staff members present there to inform us, and we send another bus” (cited in Paul, 2017, para.4).

### *Regional Development*

The Punjab Government has a mission to double the annual tourist visits in the State from 25 million to 50 million in the next five years. There are many schemes and projects are undertaken to work towards the mission such as, creating new infrastructure and improving the existing one, particularly on-site facilities such as access roads, parking lots, public toilets, food and beverage (PHDCCI, 2011).

A notable example is “Circuit touring,” it is an underlying idea in which tourists should not confine to a single tourist center but undertake multiple destination touring. To work on circuit touring, the “hub and spoke” strategy is to adopt as the most appropriate approach, wherein one central destination acts as the hub for the circuit while secondary and tertiary destinations constitute points of the excursion. It would help in the extension of the duration of the stay of tourists with resultant economic benefits for the sector (PHDCCI, 2011).

Also, the circuit touring concept would promote through thematic circuits, which would attract the segment of the market, which is interested in a specific destination or theme (Singh, & Kaur, 2016). These circuits are divided into two categories, such as Local and National routes. Following is the description of these travel circuits:

### *Local Routes*

1. Amritsar circuit (Amritsar - Ram Tirath - Sarai Amanat Khan -Wagha Border)
2. Pathankot circuit (Amritsar - Dera Baba Nanak - Qadian -Kalanaur- Gurdaspur)

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3. Jalandhar circuit (Amritsar - Tarntarn - Hari - Ke - Pattan - Goindwal Sahib - Sultanpur Lodhi - Kapurthala Kanjli lake)
4. Jalandhar circuit (Amritsar - Baba Bakala - Kartarpur)
5. Chandigarh circuit (Chandigarh, Ropar (Rup Nagar) - Anandpur Sahib, Bhakra-Nangal, Ropar)
6. Faridkot circuit (Ludhiana - Moga - Ferozepur - Bhatinda - Malout- Muktsar)
7. Chandigarh circuit (Patiala-Nabha-Malerkotla - Ludhiana - Fatehgarh Sahib - Chandigarh Jalandhar - Hoshiarpur, either back to Jalandhar or Ropar)

(Singh, & Kaur, 2016).

### *National Routes*

- I. Amritsar-Hoshiarpur-Himachal Pradesh
- II. Amritsar-Muktsar- Rajasthan I
- II. Amritsar-Jalandhar-Chandigarh-Haryana

(Singh, & Kaur, 2016).

Among the various tourist circuits of Punjab, “Amritsar circuit” (Amritsar - Ram Tirath - Sarai Amanat Khan -Wagha Border), is viral and functioning seamlessly. The trip starts from the holy city of Amritsar by visiting famous places like Golden Temple, Durgiana Mandir, and Jallianwala Bagh. Move forwards to Ram Tirath Mandir, which is 11 km from Amritsar. The temple is one of the oldest temples dating back to the time of Ramayana. Follow by Sarai Amanat Khan, located nearly 46 km on the Tarn Taran-Attari road. The site has been announced

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as a "monument of national importance" under the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958'. The last destination is Wagha Border, which is very memorable to see the exchange of salutes between the armies of India and Pakistan (Punjab Tourist Circuits, n.d.).

With Amritsar as a major hub, it believed that these routes brought about considerable growth in numbers of religious tourists to Amritsar and across the region, which not only helps in reviving the economy but also helps in generating employment especially in rural areas, as well as preserve the rich heritage of Punjab while attracting the tourists to different places (Hindustan Times, 2017).

### *Tour operators*

In Amritsar, the development of different travel circuits undoubtedly encourages the growth of tour operators. Amritsar has 20 tour operators and 134 travel agents (Punjab Tourism, Government of Punjab, 2016). Most of them registered in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (Amritsar, Government of Punjab, n.d.). Out of these numbers, only nine travel trade operators approved by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, (2015) which divided into domestic (1), inbound (2), tourist transport (1), the travel agent (5) and adventure tour operators (0).

The availability of trained, well informed, and multilingual guides with proper motivation is very crucial for tourism. It will be the effort of the State to select and train an appropriate number of guides. The state government has initiated various educational and training programs with financial assistance from the central government to accommodate the needs of the required workforce in the industry. For example, training workshops of tour operators were conducted by Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board (PHTPB) to introduce Punjab to the travel industry

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in a new way that they could offer to their clientele (Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board (PHTPB), Government of Punjab, 2017).

### *Infrastructure and facilities*

Religious tourism has the efficacy to enhance infrastructure development of any tourist destination. Infrastructure development in the context of tourism explains those utilities and amenities that are useful to both the tourists and the local population. It implies that the increase in religious tourist arrivals to a destination increases the demand for infrastructure facilities. Hence, both the government and the organized private sector need to synergies to invest in planning and provision of state-of-the-art tourism infrastructure.

For example, Singh & Sohi (2018) mentioned that “Amritsar (Especially Golden Temple) is one of the most visited places from India as well as in the world for attracting the tourists and devotees. The traffic- transportation and economic scenario of Amritsar are affected by tourism of the city” (p.16).

The Golden temple is not only serving as the spiritual strength to the residents but also used as open space. It also enhances the social interactions between tourists and local people. These activities increase the traffic and transportation in the walled city. To overcome from the issue of traffic congestion in a walled city, the Punjab government started the construction and designing multilevel four wheeler parking as well as two-wheeler parking into ambit zone in between 100 meters before the Jallianwala Bagh entry gate and 200 meters to 220 meters from the entry gate of Golden temple (Singh, & Sohi, 2018).

*Increase in price of goods and real estate*

Tourism often leads to inflation, which includes the rise in the prices of food, property, land, and houses. It found that when the demand for certain goods increases, the prices of the goods automatically increase (Kichloo, 2019). In the study, “Positive and negative impacts of tourism: a case of Amritsar city,” Kichloo observes that due to the growth of tourism in Amritsar, prices of the commodities have increased, especially in the areas surrounding the tourist sites. Shopkeepers take advantage of tourist sites and charge more (2019). In December 2019, food inflation reached 13.2% in Punjab, because of the decline in the agriculture sector. It should be noted that, contrary to popular belief, mild levels of inflation are considered suitable for the economy by promoting consumption and, thus, production (ESOPB, 2020).

The walled city of Amritsar is the principal commercial area having many specialized bazaars. The total character of the walled city is marked by mixed land use with commercial use on the ground floor while with residential on the upper floors (PUDA, 2012). However, over time, commercial activities began to concentrate in the walled city, and there is a largescale conversion of residential areas into commercial use even on upper floors, wherein the availability of space is a constraint and land prices are very high (PUDA, 2012). For example, prices of residential and commercial properties in Amritsar have risen about 3.34% - 3.5% and 3.9% - 4.20% respectively per year (Shankar, 2016). Moreover, these numbers actively visualized to be double in the coming years due to different attributes such as heritage and spiritual tourism, increased connectivity, industrial development, smart city challenge, and improving education and healthcare facilities in Amritsar (Shankar, 2016).

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From the above discussion, religious tourism mostly has positive impacts on the economy of Amritsar. It generates considerable formal employment through SGPC and government initiatives in tourism promotion and supports a large variety of local businesses. The increase in accommodation choices also suggests a useful contribution of religious tourism to the economy of Amritsar. With connections to many regional tourist attractions and circuits, religious tourists make Amritsar as a significant hub, and this has provided opportunities for the economic upliftment of the city and the region. However, there are also negatives impacts experience due to high commodification and expensive real estate development.

### **4.3 Socio-cultural Impacts**

Religious tourism influences local culture in many ways, including the improvement of local facilities, infrastructure, and the conservation of the cultural heritage. On the other hand, religious tourism also posing a threat to the quality of life of locals, for example, security. In Amritsar, both positive and negative socio-cultural impacts of religious tourism have documented and described below:

#### *Pride in the local culture, art, and craft*

Religious tourism increases awareness among local people who are not involved in their traditional arts & crafts business. By building some institutional infrastructure, so tourism keeps these cultural components alive. Moreover, religious tourism provides funding to preserve and conserve cultural heritage, gives back cultural pride, revitalize customs & traditions, as well as opens the door for cultural sharing and learning (Kumar, 2009).

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For example, “*Thatheras community*” in Amritsar, which are well-known for their traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making, which are usually not found in modern markets and are highly beneficial for health. The crafts village of Jandiala Guru were included in the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2014 and further relisted in 2017 (Government of Punjab, 2016).

The municipal administration of Amritsar decided to help the Thatheras community to find markets to display their products, for example, hotels and branded showrooms. These people have very little exposure to the market due to that craft is dying (Rana, 2018). Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, Kamal deep Singh Sangha, said that when people and tourists visiting the hotels and showrooms will see handcrafted pieces of art. They will be buying and feel proud of contributing to saving a dying tradition. Moreover, to preserve the Thatheras community, Tourism Minister of Punjab, Navjot Singh Sidhu had announced a corpus fund of \$19,000 for the revival of craftsmanship (Rana, 2018).



Figure. 4 Craft by Thatheras in Jandiala Guru- Amritsar (Government of Punjab, 2016)

Another famous craft is “*Phulkari Embroidery.*” Phulkari is a form of craft in which embroidery is done in a simple and sparse design over shawls and dupattas. Over the years, the Indian and Punjab governments have been working towards the promotion of Phulkari embroidery by organizing special training programs, fairs, and exhibitions in the major cities of Punjab, such as Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, and Patiala (Government of Punjab, 2016).

The state has set up Punjab Small Industries & Export Corporation (PSIEC) Limited to provide a conducive environment and support to develop small scale industries and to market the handicrafts products (PHDCCI, 2011). PSIEC has set-up numerous training centers to develop the rich handicrafts of Punjab and to preserve the art and crafts of the state. They help the creative and skillful artists in Punjab by selling their handicrafts in the showrooms at various places in India (Punjab Small Industries & Export Corporation (PSIEC) Limited, n.d.). For example, almost all clothes shops near the Golden Temple sells the phulkari shawls, dupattas,

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and suits, which not only increase the income of almost 4000 women but also makes them self-sufficient (PSIEC, n.d.).

### *Promoting Peace and Stability*

According to the World Tourism and Travel Council, “Tourism can help support peace and stability by putting pressure on governments to cease fighting whether on an international front or domestically to attract tourists. It is particularly important if tourism is an important sector for an economy” (2016, p.5).

Moreover, it involves cross-cultural interaction among people of different nations and hence helps in building better understanding and peaceful relations, which strengthens dialogues between regions and neighboring countries through promoting cultural understanding, and mutual respect (WTTC, 2016).

For example, India and Pakistan have agreed to construct a new border entry point and road to allow Sikh pilgrims from India to visit a shrine in Pakistan, name called “the Kartarpur Corridor.” It is a border corridor between Pakistan and India, connecting the Sikh shrines of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib (located in Punjab, India) and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib (in Punjab, Pakistan) (Masih, 2019). The two countries decided that 5,000 pilgrims can visit the shrine every day and that additional pilgrims will be allowed on special occasions. It will be operational throughout the year and seven days a week (Sevea, 2018). It will be observed that the overall impact of the Corridor on India-Pakistan ties, can not only contribute to a reduction in tensions but also help to facilitate to more significant economic linkages and increased people-to-people ties, for instance, religious tourism, trade with Pakistan, and access to markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia (Sevea, 2018).

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Moreover, Amritsar will also get benefits from the Corridor because of the close ties to Pakistan. According to Singh, “the hoteliers in Amritsar are likely to benefit as the pilgrims visiting Kartarpur are less likely to stay in Dera Baba Nanak due to the online system of seeking permission” (2019, para.17). He also said that the Amritsar transport companies would benefit because of the pave the way for the corridor from roads of Amritsar (Singh, 2019).

Cross-border tourism can facilitate better mutual understanding and respect, potentially reducing the intensity of the international dispute, by acting as a confidence-building measure for peoples on both sides of the border (WTTC, 2016).

### *Change in Land use Composition*

Land use refers to the spatial distribution of various functions like residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational spaces. In Amritsar, land-use changes with the changing needs of a growing population in the city. Municipal limits have increased 2.5times than the limits in 1991 (PUDA, 2012). With the expansion of urbanization, land area under green spaces in the Amritsar is decreasing, and more space is used for construction purposes, for instance, malls and complexes. As per the prescribed standards, the area under recreation or green spaces should be 20-25%, but presently only 1.5% of the area is under green spaces in the Amritsar, which is negligible as compared to the standards (PUDA, 2012).

For example, initially, the walled city of Amritsar was marked with several parks and open spaces, which over time, have been using for commercial purposes. The area such as Hall gate, Ramanand Bagh, Jhande Wala Bagh, Kesari Bagh, and Bagh Akalian, which were earlier green areas and have now exploited for commercial use. However, with the changing

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lifestyles and priorities of the living community, all are in a state of neglect. The threats posed to the historical and heritage buildings are misuse and alteration in the architectural fabric (PUDA, 2012).

### *Demonstration effect*

In Amritsar, tourism has contributed to the growth in the change of value systems, the behaviour of individuals, lifestyles, and the local language (Kichloo, 2019). For example, the growth of the anti-social activities in the city lead to an increase in crime, a loosening of social cohesion, and an increase in anti-social behavior. Moreover, the local language of Punjab and dressing style are losing its essence because today's generations try to imitate the tourists, and they feel shame in speaking Punjabi and feel proud in speaking English and wearing western clothes (Kichloo, 2019).

Moreover, the SGPC temple management takes some measures to safeguard the peaceful ambience sought by the pilgrim (Jutla, 2016). For example, tourists have been banned from snapping photographs inside the Golden Temple in Amritsar, to preserve the sanctity of Sikhism's holiest shrine (Paul, 2019).

Mr. Roop Singh, Chief Secretary of the Shiromani Gurdwara, said that visitors are crowding for selfies and shooting videos within the centuries-old complex disrespect those making pilgrimages from all over the world. Moreover, he also said that Golden temple is not a place for leisure, it is a religious site where devotees come to pray and seek relief from their sorrows (Paul, 2019).



Figure. 5 Ban on photography draws flak, SGPC justifies decision (Paul, 2019).

#### 4.4 Environmental Impacts:

The environmental impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar have discussed below:

##### *Air Pollution*

One of the significant areas of environmental concern in the Amritsar city is that of rising air pollution levels, which are a result of increasing personalized modes of transport and intermediate modes of transport such as auto-rickshaws in the absence of efficient public transport system in the city (Singh, 2016). In Amritsar, the number of private vehicles has increased at a rapid pace (Singh, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Shergill & Thukral, 2009). The number of vehicles has increased by an average growth rate of 6.5% per annum (PUDA, 2012). Due to the rapid growth of the city, most of the core areas still have a road network of narrow width, which

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is unable to accommodate sizeable vehicular movement (Singh, 2016; Sharma, 2017), leading to significant traffic congestions and resulting in a concentration of air pollutants.

The road network in the Amritsar has divided into two parts: (1) walled city, (2) outside the walled city. The walled city is the heart of Amritsar, which carrying a one-sixth population of the city. There are 14 entry gates of the walled city leading to the Golden Temple, residential areas, and specialized bazaars. It has a road network that consists of narrow winding streets that are full of trade activities and generates much traffic due to the absence of adequate and well-defined parking spaces. In the absence of such spaces, most of the vehicles are park on the roads leading to traffic congestion and problems in the smooth movement of vehicles (PUDA, 2012; Kumar et al., 2016).

Within the walled city, most of the trips are covered by auto-rickshaws because of their low turning radius and high maneuverability, which offered the flexibility to move through extremely dense urban networks and narrow streets (Kumar et al., 2016). Most of the auto-rickshaws in the city use petrol mixed with kerosene, which is one of the significant sources of air pollution (Singh, 2016; Sharma, 2017; Shergill, & Thukral, 2009). The other significant sources of air pollution in the city include pollution from developmental activities, industries, traffic jams, handling and burning of municipal, domestic and agriculture waste (PUDA, 2012). Another source of air pollution in the old city is the amount of fuel used in the temple-kitchen. Approximately 60 quintals of wood are burnt daily in the free kitchen, which results in high emission of air pollutants (Hindustan Times, 2014).

### *Noise pollution*

Increasing urbanization, overcrowding, industrialization, and higher traffic volumes have resulted in increased noise levels in Amritsar city, leading to noise pollution. Construction work also plays a vital role in causing noise pollution (Bagga, 2018). The noise has already reached a level that is high enough to annoy capable of creating temporary to permanent hearing impairment, particularly to those people who remain exposed to such noise level for a longer duration of the day. The street vendors and shopkeepers doing business along both sides of the road are most vulnerable to this hazard (Kumar, 2015).

The primary sources of noise pollution in Amritsar are pressures horns in buses, high-volume DJs, and the blaring loudspeakers at religious places (Jaiswar, 2018). In addition to, during festive seasons running of gensets, which are around 16 lakhs in number, when the electricity supply was off not only added to noise but also considerable air pollution (Kumar, 2015).

The Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) had already banned the manufacturing, purchasing, selling, fitting and usage of pressure horns to curb the rising noise pollution, but still, there was a lack of enforcement of norms in this regard (Kumar, 2015). For example, residents are still appealing to the government to make some guidelines to ensure that loudspeakers are not playing at a high volume at religious places (Jaiswar, 2018).

*Sewage*

According to a recent study by Abakerli (2017), essential services such as sanitation and waste collection, which currently exist in the Golden Temple and its surrounding communities, are inadequate and are easily overwhelmed by both large influxes of visitors and extended stays of large groups. Despite the historical and religious significance, the Golden Temple and its surrounding Galiara area do not present the highest level of cleanliness expected from such a sacred site. Amenities and facilities that are available in Amritsar at various tourist locations need to upgrade (Kumar, 2015; Abakerli, 2017). For example, thousands of visitors reach the Golden Temple via Hall Bazaar, Sultanwind Gate Road, Sheranwala Gate Road, Burj Akali Phoola Singh road and Ghee Mandi, Gurdwara Shaheedan market. However, these roads, markets and bazaars do not have even a single toilet (Singh, 2017).

There are around 20 public toilets in the city, SGPC is managing ten toilets which are at the periphery of Galiara, Sulabh International is maintaining eight on pay and the remaining two are being managed by a United Kingdom-based organization named Fortal (Singh, 2017).

At Golden temple site, around 5000 people use public toilets every hour. The only inconvenience people face is that they are located slightly far from the leading temple site, which makes it difficult to access and less likely to be used (Singh, 2017).

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### *Degradation of Artifacts*

In Amritsar, every year increase in the number of tourists could lead to overuse of resources. For example, the Golden temple is the acme of Sikh architecture. All its walls and ceilings contain beautiful artwork that is unique and elegant in style and pattern. It is called the Sikh school of art (Jaspal, 2017; Gateway to Sikh Foundation, 2020).



Figure. 6 Art conservation of Sri Harmandir Sahib Ji (The Golden Temple), Amritsar, India

Jaspal, 2017; Gateway to Sikh Foundation, 2020)



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Figure. 7 Art conservation of Sri Harmandir Sahib Ji (The Golden Temple), Amritsar, India Jaspal, 2017; Gateway to Sikh Foundation, 2020.

The wall paintings at Sri Harmandir Sahib have been re-painted or restored many times in the past. Following are a couple of reasons behind the damage of wall paintings:

**Management of the inflow of pilgrims:** The sacred site is full of rush most of the time, and during festivals and holy dates, the rush is too challenging to handle, even though there are several SGPC staff to manage the crowd. According to Jaspal, “a study should be conducted to find out how much weight the vertical and horizontal elements of the structure can bear. It is important because this structure stands on vertical columns and not on the complete ground” (2017, para.19).

**Celebrations and festivals:** On every festival, mainly Gurupurabs, there are floral decorations on the walls and ceilings at the Golden temple. Pilgrims and visitors engaged in such decorations and use various means to hold the floral chains and bouquets on to the walls. These are mostly not good for the paintings because they touch the walls and generally wet (Jaspal, 2017, para.18).

**Cleaning rituals:** As mentioned above in economic impacts, the large workforce working for many different functions at the temple include 90% of volunteers. According to professional conservators, devotees need to know the difference between cleaning and damaging the beautiful work of art. For example, many devotees cleaning wall paintings with wet cloth and towels, which can be very damaging (Jaspal, 2017, para.17).

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### *Crowding*

The Golden Temple attracts tourists from all around the world. The increasing number of domestic and foreign tourists in Amritsar leads to crowding and have a direct or indirect impact on the way people experience at a religious place, for example, long queues and waiting hours (Jutla, 2016).

The issue of crowding is amply demonstrating in the numbers of visitor reviews found on TripAdvisor; a few suggestive comments presented below:

“We recently visited the Golden temple on 31st March and could not enter there just because of the massive crowd. So, we returned disappointed back to Delhi” (Sumit pal Singh, a visitor from Delhi, 2018).



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Figure. 8 People from all over the world, especially " Sikhs" visit Golden temple at least once in their lifetime, Shafi, 2013.

“I would call it the eighth wonder of the world. In the evening, the temple looks very beautiful; the view is breathtaking. We had to stand in the queue though for half an hour so, but it will always take that much time because of the crowd. Parking is available near the temple, but it is usually full” (Siddharth, who visited the temple in February 2020).



Figure. 9 Devotees queue up at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Bagga, 2018.

“It can take up to 3-4 hours or more to enter the temple as it is very crowded there. Also, people were rude to us as they did not allow us to click photographs. I do not know about

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others, but for me, this was not a very good experience” (Kashi, a visitor from Ahmedabad who visited the temple in 2019 July,01)

“It was very crowded, and a first-time visitor will get lost. No instructions put up in English. I wanted to experience the langar but did not understand how to go about it” (Anjana, who visited the temple in June 2019).

“One honest visitor has to stand in long unorganized queue same for both men and women for hours. The locals and bribers keep going unstopped from the exit gate. It needs to be better managed by SGPC. The Golden Temple has become too small compared to crowds. A separate exit point needs to construct, and only pious and brave hearts should visit” (Arora, a visitor from New Delhi who visited the temple in April 2018).

From the above discussion, it is visible that religious tourism mostly has negative impacts on the environment of Amritsar. The city desperately requires the need of practicing healthier and sustainable tourism practices. Moreover, efficient management and proper planning with the aid of strict legislation and proper interpretation are needed to create ecological awareness for both the local and visiting tourists.

#### **4.5 Managing impacts of religious tourism**

As shown in the previous section, the increasing religious tourism in Amritsar causes several impacts. While economic impacts are mostly beneficial, it is the environmental impacts that are a matter of concern. Some of these impacts addressed by a few agencies working in Amritsar which are below:

##### *Municipal Corporation of Amritsar*

The Municipal Corporation of Amritsar establishes an integrated Solid Waste Management (SWM) system to reduce the amount of waste being disposed of while maximizing resources recovery and efficiency (PUDA, 2012). The system focuses on the following points:

- Effective and efficient SWM by promoting 5 R (Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, Rot and Refuse) by the active involvement of communities and NGOs.
- Door-to-door collection of waste.
- Pilot program for waste segregation in the city initiated from 2015.
- Development of Land-fill Site for scientific disposal of waste, with weigh-bridge facility
- One hundred eighty-one households identified in the year 2015 under the IHHL scheme for construction of toilets, and the first instalment of \$ 37 has distributed.
- SWM Public grievance redressal increased to 95% (2015) from 80% (2012) (PUDA, 2012).

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### *The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee*

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the Municipal Corporation are working simultaneously to achieve improved levels of cleanliness and implementing international standards of sanitation and hygiene around the Golden temple site to make it a Swachh destination for devotees and tourists from around the world (Abakerli, 2017). Both are implementing a few schemes, and efforts are summarized below:

- Cleaning of public areas within the temple and its walls.
- Building additional toilets and enhancing existing public toilets.
- Installation of drinking water stations.
- Smart waste collection bins.
- Waste treatment facilities and services (Abakerli, 2017).

### *Eco Sikh*

Eco Sikh is the Sikh community's contribution to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) Plans for Generational Change Project, which aims to help the world's major religious traditions create long-term plans to improve their relationship with the environment (Eco Sikh, 2014).

Following are the notable examples of initiatives taken by the Sikh community all around the globe and local people to save their environment and sacred place the Golden Temple, Amritsar:

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### *Eco Amritsar*

Eco Amritsar is an initiative begun by Sikhs and supported by a diversity of local stakeholders to make Amritsar a greener city (Eco Sikh, 2014). The motive behind this initiative is to teach visitors and residents to be respectful of the natural environment and following their religious beliefs (Eco Sikh, 2014). As Amritsar is a holy city, they want to help the city to reduce waste, conserve water, and expand greenery projects through tree plantings and open spaces (Eco Sikh, 2014). Moreover, their aim is pilgrims coming to Amritsar to visit a clean green city, and to return home with ideas to improve their footprint and have a sense that being faithful is being gentle to the planet (Eco Sikh, 2014).

For example, on 1<sup>st</sup> Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the students of Khalsa College of Engineering and Technology, Amritsar formed and led the “Green Brigade.” In this brigade, many volunteers were involved in cleaning the streets in the night as well as early morning before the Nagar Kirtan begins (Eco Sikh, 2014). The volunteers have been working to send across the message of how important it is to ensure the cleanliness of the city and surroundings after religious events (Eco Sikh, 2014).

Moreover, Tarundeep Singh, Project Administrator, Eco-Amritsar, said, “It is very heartening to see that some people this year have returned to using leaf disposables (Pattal) leaving behind Styrofoam. We are sure that with the support of SGPC and city Administration, continuous efforts will bring us back to responsible ways of celebration” (Eco Sikh, 2014, para.4).

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The couple more initiatives in which Eco Sikh Organization is successful which given below:

- Zero waste public gardens.
- Planting trees.
- Sikh Environment Day on March 14 every year.
- Helping fund a green bus to bring villagers into Amritsar every night to help clean the pilgrim streets leading to the Golden Temple (Eco Sikh, 2014).



Figure. 10 Green Nagar Kirtan to Mark the 1st Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji  
(Eco Sikh, 2014)

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### *Green Gurdwaras*

All religions have temples where people can gather to contemplate on God and pray. The Sikh temple is called a Gurdwara. The word 'Gurdwara' means 'Gateway to the Guru.' In Sikhism, one's dedication to living a good life is essential, but another important aspect of Sikhism is the Sangat (congregation) (Sikh org, 2011).

There are thousands of Gurdwaras throughout Punjab and the rest of the world. They serve as community centers for the Sikhs. There are no restrictions on who may enter a Gurdwara for prayer. People of all religions are welcome to attend (Sikh org, 2011). Another common feature of all Gurdwaras around the world is Langer, the free community kitchen. Here food is served to all people who sit together to enjoy a communal meal. It is a symbol of the Sikh belief in a non-sexist, non-racist society where all people of all casts, religions are equal and can share a standard meal in the true spirit of unity (Anand, 2019).

Green gurdwaras is a grassroots movement led by Gurdwaras that choose to reduce the impacts on the environment. Gurdwaras worldwide are pioneering new ideas in renewable energy, water conservation, waste reduction and recycling, and organic and healthy food systems (Eco Sikh, 2014). For example, The SGPC plans to switch the Golden temple free community kitchen moved to a solar power system. The solar energy would not only reduce the use of wood, which is the primary source of pollution but would also help in reducing the expenses on LPG cylinders (Hindustan Times, 2017).

From the upper exchange of views, one of the initial presumptions in religious studies is that most environmental problems can be solved by increasing public awareness about the environment through religious teachings. In other words, it is assumed that environmental awareness is the key to solving most of the environmental problems. The acquisition of

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environmental awareness is the first step taken to achieve sustainability and the ability to understand the environment.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

This chapter presents the summary, discussion, and implications of the findings of the study. In the first section, it will discuss the key findings from the result section, followed by the limitation of the study, and are discussed next. Finally, the chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

#### **5.1 Key Findings**

Religious tourism is one of the critical sectors in the service industry, and the religious heritage contributes to visitor attraction mainly in Amritsar. The experiences of the tourist are valuable as re-visits are essential from an economic perspective. The study was an endeavour to identifying the impact of religious tourism on people in Amritsar. The impacts of religious tourism could be on the point of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects, both in positive and negative sides.

##### *Economic Impacts*

Economic impacts contributed both to positive and negative aspects. At the point of the positive side, there was improving economic growth, income and generating job opportunities for the people around the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Employment opportunities, personal income and business opportunities are attributable to religious tourism not only through the religious souvenir shops, hotels, restaurants but also through jobs directly connected to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) management party of the Golden temple,

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which is a complex institution with political and economic power, both locally and nationally (Government of Punjab, 2016; PUDA, 2012; Anand, 2019; Abakerli, 2017; Roy, 2013).

On the negative economic aspects, the research found that the development of hotels and tourist destinations did not necessarily improve the transportation facilities. For example, while analyzing the existing land use pattern for Amritsar city, it has been observed that the city requires rationalization of different land uses to bring it to the level of prescribed norms. It requires the provision of a larger area under industries and traffic and transportation categories (PUDA, 2012). Furthermore, the city needs to manage the traffic on a priority basis, and there should be separate lanes for auto-rickshaws as they are large in numbers and block the roads. Moreover, the study also found that the price of goods and lands in the city was going to be more expensive (Bureau, 2016; Kichloo, 2019; Shankar, 2016).

### *Socio-cultural impacts*

Religious tourism has a significant influence on host societies. It can be both a source of international amity, peace and understanding. The research finding indicates that in Amritsar, religious tourism involves cross-cultural interaction among people of different nations and religions, which helps in building better understanding and peaceful relations.

Moreover, religious tourism might cause a gradual change in society's values, beliefs, and cultural practices. For example, the local people may copy the lifestyles of tourists through the demonstration effect, and the result may be interpreted positively as an increase in the standard of living, it may also be considered negatively as an indication of acculturation the loss of native customs and traditions.

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The research finds that religious tourism is contributing to the revitalization of arts, crafts and local culture and the realization of cultural identity and heritage in Amritsar, for example, the Phulkari Production Center and Thatheras community (Government of Punjab, 2016).

The sociocultural value of religious tourism may include a great sense of community identity, a heightened sense of linking with local environments and increased social capital following an increase in tourists. For example, in Amritsar, the existence of a religious tourism destination improved the attitudes of residents toward accepting differences, improved their understanding of other people's habits, and allowed them to live healthier lives.

The research also finds that the Sikhism is Indigenous religion for people of Punjab because Sikhs reside in Punjab for generations, and they possess a unique cultural and social identity. For example, the Golden temple has the most extensive free community kitchen in the world, which serves free meals to all people of all faiths (Jutla, 2016; SGPC, 2020). The founder of the Sikh religion, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, first started this service in 1481, which outlines the basic Sikh principles of service, humility, and equality (Sikhs.Org, 2011). The free community kitchen is managed on a 90% volunteer basis by the community and with the active involvement of visitors (Pandey & Singh, 2015).

However, a booming tourism market also exerts the negative socio-cultural impacts on host communities, for instance, local culture and traditional values may be weakened by the acculturation and the rapid growth of the number of tourists could, however, put too much pressure on the infrastructure and could ruin the experience of the tourists (Jaspal, 2016; Jutla, 2016; Gateway to Sikh Foundation, 2020).

Architectural and historical sites need to be restored and protected in Amritsar, to attract more tourists. Moreover, the city requires the creation of many recreational and open

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spaces and an increased number of socio-cultural institutions that, at present, are absent to improve the quality of living in the city (PUDA, 2012).

However, to ensure a smooth transition, the authorities need to continue the investments in infrastructure and to provide a more diversified range of tourism attractions to bring more tourists and to make them stay longer and spend more in the local economy.

### *Environmental Impacts*

The quality of the environment, both natural and human-made, is essential for religious tourism. However, the relationship of religious tourism with the environment is complicated. The negative impacts of religious tourism development can gradually destroy environmental resources, lessen of outdoor spaces, and pollution problem.

Amritsar city is facing major environmental problems and issues in the process of religious tourism. The research found that due to the heavy traffic in the Amritsar city, the present infrastructure is not able to cope up the increased rush of tourists thus leading to overcrowding, pollution, congestion and poor sanitation which may further lead to diseases both the tourists as well as local people (Shergill & Thukral, 2009; PUDA, 2012; Kumar, 2015; Sharma, 2017; Bagga, 2018). As over-crowding occurs, the host community finds itself under higher pressure from visitors, a pressure which may change the rhythm of a community's lifestyle. Access to shops and transport is difficult; prices are risen to take advantage of the tourist's presence, causing a knock-on effect for residents (Shegal, 2019; Jaspal, 2016).

Sikh communities like Eco Sikh all around the world are coordinating the people to maintain the cleanliness of the holy city and the Golden temple. For example, the cleaning after

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the Nagar Kirtans and use of Styrofoam disposables, and wrappers in Langar to keeping the ecological health of the city in mind (Eco Sikh, 2014; Sikh Org, 2011).

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the Municipal Corporation of Amritsar are working simultaneously to achieve improved levels of cleanliness and implementing international standards of sanitation and hygiene around the Golden temple, for example, establishes an integrated Solid Waste Management (SWM) system, building additional toilets and enhancing existing public toilets, installation of drinking water stations, smart waste collection bins and waste treatment facilities and services (Abakerli, 2017; PUDA, 2012).

Moreover, the SGPC also plans to switch the Golden temple free community kitchen moved to a solar power system. The solar energy would not only reduce the use of wood, which is the primary source of pollution but would also help in reducing the expenses on LPG cylinders (Hindustan Times, 2017).

Based on the findings of the study, the contribution of local government, industry, and educational institutions is essential. It is evident in the research that the local and national government of Amritsar and Punjab is creating and taking the different initiatives to improve the cleanliness of the city, but there is a mismatch between the supply of funding for cleanliness and the current demand due to lack of proper planning ( Abakerli, 2017).

The findings of the study suggested that practical plans and policies must be revised to solve the existing problems and issues. Further, attention must be payable to the approaches and principles which are used to deal with the environmental effects of religious tourism development in Amritsar.

## **5.2 Limitations**

Limitations for this research revolved primarily around the data collected and analyzed. To effectively interpret the results of this research, it is vital to acknowledge these limitations. The following are the limitations of the research.

The massive gap in the literature on religious tourism in Punjab within the Amritsar context was one of the most significant limitations to this study. It was challenging to compare the findings of this study to existing literature, which directly impacts the results of the study.

The second limitation was related to the research method—the data used in the research collected from only one online platform. Future studies should incorporate a larger sample size rather than using just one data source. Larger sample size would provide more reliable, insightful results regarding the impacts of Religious tourism in Amritsar. Furthermore, future research may gather information from other data collection methodologies such as interviews or surveys.

Although this study has some limitations, it provides some valuable direction for future research. Researchers building on this study will be able to examine the impacts of religious tourism in the context of Amritsar, India.

## **5.3 Suggestions**

From all the study and the collected material, it has become evident that Punjab has done a lot for maintaining, restructuring, and repairing its famous holy city. At the same time, it became evident, too, that the management of religious tourism in Amritsar has many deficiencies. To help to improve it the following suggestions, resulting from the present study, can be of interest for all the stakeholders of tourism, especially religious tourism in Amritsar:

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*Educate Local Communities:* Firstly, a tourist awareness and community relations program should be a launch to educate the local community members and inform them about the impacts of religious tourism such as economic, socio-cultural, and environmental.

At the same time, it is also essential to show the local communities how they can participate in the management, operation, and ownership of the tourist facilities in their respective areas. The objective behind the program should be to create goodwill and a positive attitude among the local communities, particularly the landowners who live in that area.

Secondly, the relevant government department or organizations need to be better trained their local tour guides, especially in the field of religious tourism, so that the information given is accurate and in more languages. They should offer that type of service which increase tourists' satisfaction levels. For example, the activities provided at the holy sites should be family-friendly because most people who visit the sites are with their families. In this way, TripAdvisor participants would then share additional positive reviews online, and the destination would attract more visitors.

*Ecological balance:* Moreover, it should consider how to balance socio-cultural, economic, and environmental benefits. The balance is not natural to achieve, but if tourism organizations keep this balance in mind, it will be equipped to consider many aspects and set requirements before taking the actions. For instance, they should ensure that the price of services and products is reasonable. They also need to enhance transportation options so that transportation is convenient. Moreover, they should increase their service capacity to reduce visitors' waiting time. All these aspects would help Amritsar develop its religious tourism industry more effectively and sustainably.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The primary purpose of this research paper was to investigate the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts of religious tourism in Amritsar. The city has a rich cultural heritage, ethnicity and decorative features that attract not only the local people but also the people from other countries.

On the other hand, Amritsar faces some problems such as overcrowding, congestion, pollution and problems experienced by the individuals in the making of decisions regarding which places to visit. Moreover, there are various kinds of improvements and developments that have initiated in the areas of transportation, infrastructural facilities, and that have generated space for more occasions and prospects. There has been a productive contribution from the governments, private sector and voluntary organizations that have become active partners to accomplish the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Amritsar.

The impacts were both positive and negative sides. Positive economic aspects showed that people had better income, new job opportunities, and the economy grows. The negative economic aspects indicated that the development of hotels and tourist destinations did not necessarily improve transportation facilities. Moreover, the price of goods and services in the city of Amritsar was going to be more expensive.

The socio-cultural impacts of establishing hotels and tourists showed that people were accustomed to interacting with tourists. They were able to accept differences and had a better understanding of the habits of people outside their country as well. Furthermore, religious tourism in Amritsar has not affected the community negatively in terms of eroding their cultural values. For instance, they have not, in any way, be discouraged from carrying out their cultural activities like cultural dances and beliefs in the community.

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From the point of environmental view, the people felt that the appearance of some areas improved in Amritsar. There are negative impacts on the city due to tourism, such as the depletion of artifacts, pollution, the limitation of open spaces, being lack of a well-maintained natural environment, and plants.

The results strongly agree that the cleanliness area was well maintained, raising environmental awareness, protection, and preservation of the environment. However, there is still a lot pending to make balance the different aspects to achieve sustainable development of Religious tourism in Amritsar.

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