



Tourism and reconciliation in an enduring rivalry: The case of Kartarpur Corridor on India–Pakistan border

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to position the role of the Kartarpur corridor, a unique collaborative visa-free setting situated on the international border between Pakistan and India, as an interactional performative platform between tourists from both of the countries within the theoretical streams of tourism-peace studies. Classical grounded theory approach was considered that involved interviews from Pakistani and Indian tourists and service personnel in the Kartarpur setting. The findings add to the discursive discourses on the relevance of the contact-hypothesis in the debate surrounding the tourism-peace nexus within the novel setting of Kartarpur. Further, it evidences the evolving role of geo-political discourses in tourist encounters and signifies the relevance of memory-heritagization in relation to reconciliation tourism. It steers the debate towards relatively underutilized discourse of tourist identity as a pivotal tenet in the tourism-peace connection. The findings offer implications for the policy makers, practitioners and destination marketing organizations of divided nations.

1. Introduction

Tourism is known as a resilient industry due to its ability to recover quickly from post conflict situations and due to its instrumental role in peace restoration, reconstruction, economic revival and social development in war-torn destinations (Wohlmuther & Wintersteiner, 2014). Especially among politically divided countries, as the case this study undertakes, tourism is believed to diminish tensions and prejudices and develop better understanding (Butler & Mao, 1996). Pakistan and India share a relationship that is marred with mistrust, unsettled issues and never-ending conflicts. The two countries are intertwined in a convoluted relationship owing to the violent legacy of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, alternative narratives of the neighbors as traditional adversaries and the unresolved issue of the state of Kashmir, which both countries lay claim to and which has ensued in a number of wars and military stand offs resulting in the largest military engagement since World War II (Shukla, 2019). The national discourses in both the countries coincided to support national identities entrenched in pre-partition anti-colonial discourse. For this to sustain, the antagonistic view of the other side as an archrival in the political architecture was necessary to concur to the narratives of nation formation that lead to the partition (Singh, 2019). The alternative narratives eventually crystallized after the nuclearization of South Asia, several armed conflicts, numerous military standoffs and perpetual diplomatic frictions, where a

gain for one side is usually viewed as an equivalent loss for the other (Shukla, 2019).

This research examines the role of the Kartarpur Corridor Project (KCP), a unique collaborative initiative between the governments of Pakistan and India to facilitate, through tourism, contact between the people of these neighboring countries that have been engaged in conflicts over seven decades ameliorate relations between them. Historically, unfettered access to the Kartarpur religious site remained contingent on the hostile geo-political environments on both sides of the border. However, on the more optimistic side, it is believed that since both the countries share similar sociocultural heritages, a feasible environment for peaceful coexistence can certainly be developed. That is why the KCP is widely viewed as bridge for peace in the conflict-torn relationship between Pakistan and India (Singh, 2019).

From a theoretical standpoint, much of the understanding of the tourism-peace connection is derived from the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954). The contact-hypothesis postulates that the prevalence of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination between members of social groups is owing to inadequate communication opportunities. According to Butler and Mao (1996), tourism contact between politically divided countries may begin from a zero-tourism stage with little contact and evolve into a relationship that can be classified as normal. Pakistan and India's politically charged hostility implies that tourism contact between the two countries keeps vacillating between,

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what Kim and Prideaux (2006) classified as zero tourism, and less than what could be categorized as a normal relationship.

This research fills the lacuna in the existing tourism-peace scholarly literature in several ways. First, the distinctive position of the KCP is explored in relation to the unique, dynamic and complicated relationship between Pakistan and India. Traditionally, the scholarly research on tourism and peace between Pakistan and India has largely remained descriptive and atheoretical in nature, which is strange since international borders and borderlands are attracting the attention of tourism scholars as promising geopolitical tourist destinations (Chhabra, 2018). Especially for the countries in question, i.e., Pakistan and India, borders symbolize markers of distinction between “us” and “them” (Newman, 2006) as both the countries share antagonistic narratives of the other interwoven in their sociopolitical architectures. When the symbolism attached with ideologically and politically backed conventional borders is temporally obscured through a memorialized visa-free corridor, the engagement between tourists of conventionally hostile nations is likely to forge distinctive discourses of the collective past (Bendix, 2002; Marschall, 2012), which this study aims to unearth.

Second, the geo-political identity encounters between Pakistani and Indian tourists constitute the central tenet of this research. Geo-political identity encounters are frequently experienced in tourism, but contemporary tourism studies have not yet fully examined the tourism encounters constituted through geo-political discourses (Gillen & Mostafanezhad, 2019). In this milieu, a geopolitically informed analysis of encounters between Pakistanis and Indian tourists allows us to identify the manners in which tourism engenders a range of sociopolitical and sociocultural inclusions and exclusions, theoretically intersecting with the geopolitical tourism imaginaries. This is important because, more recently, the debate surrounding the tourism peace nexus has taken an all-encompassing inclusive approach, suggesting that the capability of tourism to be a positive force can only be recognized if its institutionalized role is studied in relation to broader political and socioeconomic views (Farmaki, 2017).

Third, it is also pertinent to study tourists' interactions, as they do not only constitute the overall tourist experiences but are also pivotal to the processual and social negotiations of constructing a tourist identity (Hough, 2011). The sociological aspects of tourist interactions are critical, as fellow tourists symbolize significant avenues to construct and communicate particular identities, which are interwoven with the sociocultural and geo-political contexts of the tourism spaces. The existing scholarly works have paid little attention to utilize tourist identity discourses in comprehending the tourism-peace nexus, which the current study aims to provide.

The current study has the following two primary objectives: i) to investigate the role of the Kartarpur corridor as an interactional performative platform for Pakistani and Indian tourists, encapsulating the meanings assigned to the geo-political and sociocultural discourses during these encounters and examining how these meanings are contextualized in their collective consciousness within the theoretical streams of tourism-peace studies and ii) to clarify how the memorialization of the collective past in partitioned states affects the renegotiation of the tourists' identities in relation to the adversarial discourses pervasive on each side of the border.

The rest of the research paper is organized as follows. First, the literature review section builds the theoretical foundation of the research based on the relevant scholarship concerning the tourism-peace nexus. This is followed by the methodology section and the iterative thematic analysis informed by Classical grounded theory approach. Next, the conclusions are presented and implications for research scholars and policy makers are discussed. Finally, the limitations and recommendations for the future research directions are presented.

2. Literature review

2.1. Tourism peace hypothesis – theoretical underpinnings

The causal relationship between tourism and peace has drawn diverse understanding among the tourism scholars (Litvin, 1998; Pratt & Liu, 2016). On the one hand, tourism is viewed as an instrument to reach peace, a contributor to reconciliation processes, and a facilitator for redevelopment in post-conflict contexts (Blanchard & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2013) and the other perspective advocates tourism and peace discourse be shifted from tourism as a “peacemaker” to tourism as a “peacekeeper.” (Khalilzadeh, 2018). For instance, the case of Israeli tourists' improved perceptions of Jordan after visitation elucidates the significance of proper contact conditions to realize the true potential of tourism in creating a reconciliatory environment (Pizam, Fleischer, & Mansfeld, 2002). While, the Mt. Gungang project in the Korean Peninsula, which has been the focus of much research on the tourism peace nexus studies (Cho, 2007; Kim & Prideaux, 2006), acknowledged that tourism development did not lead to positive spillover effects in fostering peaceful relationships between the two states. Moreover, limited potential for peace through tourism development was reported in former war-torn destinations such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (Causevic, 2010) and in postconflict Brundi (Novelli, Morgan, & Nibigira, 2012). This latter perspective endorses that tourism sector alone cannot bring about peace and it requires a host of other socio-economic and political factors to come together (Farmaki, 2017).

The discourse advocating the role of tourism in abridging intergroup and intercultural distances, which contributes to the advancement of global peace and inculcating the perception of a global fraternity, finds support from the intergroup contact-hypothesis (Allport, 1954). Intergroup contact facilitates people-to-people interactions and the development of mutual understanding. Kim and Crompton (1990) termed this as track two diplomacy, which may not be an official frame of reference of a state but could nonetheless affect the official government to government relationship between the countries, which is referred to as track one diplomacy. Yu (1997) reiterated the same by differentiating between high political activity and the low political activity. The former refers to the state level affairs, including economics, military and international politics, among others, while the later concerns interpersonal relationships between citizens. In this milieu, tourism is a source of low political activity, as it promotes cooperation among nations and has the potential to become a primary constituent in becoming an agent of change in fostering global peace (Causevic, 2010; Sarkar & George, 2010).

The proper conditions stipulated by Allport (1954) include voluntary and intimate contact in a supportive environment between participants sharing equal statuses and mutual goals. For tourism to act as a facilitator of peace in diminishing the intergroup differences, its institutional role will largely be undermined under the conditions of competition and prejudice emanating from inequality (Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009). In such a situation, tourism is believed to create a more intensive divide in societies and may lead to marginalization of certain communities in their quest to compete for scarce resources. Moreover, language barriers, nominal eagerness to learn more about the host community and the economically driven orientation of tourism, in general, may only engender a minimal quality contact condition, which reduces the possibility of a meaningful intergroup dialogue (Tomljenovic, 2010).

In addition to this, the political relevance of tourism has also been explicated as inadequate to foster peace, if not backed by the government at the highest level (Kim & Prideaux, 2003). The reason that tourism projects initially meant to foster better relations between the states failed to elicit integration between the states, e.g., Korean Peninsula, is because tourism is often regarded as a product of politics (Cho, 2007). It was the political support at upper echelons that primarily exploited the trade and tourism's ability to develop reconciliation between China and Taiwan (Guo, Kim, Timothy, & Wang, 2006), while

tourism's ability to promote peace remained largely inhibited in the case of Northern Ireland, as well as Nepal due to fluid political environments and lack of political consensus among political actors, along with unsound efforts at economic restoration, which did not allow for realization of the positive spill-over effects of tourism development (Anson, 1999; Upadhayaya, 2011). Therefore, tourism is considered to be innately linked to politics and the conceptualization of tourism's role as a promoter for peace may need to be considered through broader sociopolitical and economic lenses (Farmaki, 2017) and acknowledgement of the prevalence of the appropriate contact conditions stipulated by Allport (1954).

2.2. The setting of the Kartarpur Corridor – the contact conditions between Pakistani and Indian tourists

Kartarpur is regarded as a symbol of religious harmony in South Asia, where three main religions of the region, i.e., Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, converge. At the time of the partition in 1947, the boundary commission made a cut right across Kartarpur, dividing it between the two neighbors. The key sacred space of Gurdwara Kartarpur fell on the Pakistani side, just 2 km away from the international border with India, providing much impetus to the rising tide of communal violence making Punjab epicenter of tension at the time of the partition of Indian sub-continent (Singh, 2019). For decades, devotees on the Indian side used to pay their obeisance by viewing the Kartarpur tomb through telescopes or mounds in the locality on the other side of the border (Kamboh, Kamal, Nisar, & Kamboh, 2018). Kartarpur is regarded as the birthplace of Sikhism and this is where the founder of the Sikh religion, i.e., Baba Guru Nanak, spent the last 18 years of his life and where he died in 1539 AD (Goraya, 2017). Kartarpur is regarded as the most sacred place of Sikhs, but it is equally revered and held in high esteem by followers of other main religions in the region, i.e., Islam and Hinduism. The reason is that Kartarpur is where Baba Guru Nanak ran a community kitchen and welcomed all strata of society to socialize and eat together, which challenged the then prevalent caste system of the subcontinent that was crippling its social fabric. He is regarded as a social reformer by adherents of all the religions, as he not only promoted interfaith harmony but also broke the shackles of the inequitable socioreligious hierarchies of medieval Sub-continent (Kamboh et al., 2018). The present day Kartarpur corridor complex was inaugurated on November 9, 2019 and it is a fully functioning visa-free secure border crossing where devotees from the Indian side can visit Kartarpur Shrine in Pakistan. Close to 60,000 pilgrim-tourists from India visited the site till March 8th, 2020, (Hindustan Times, 2020) and approximately 25,000 pilgrims-tourists from Pakistan visited the site in the first month alone, till 9th December 2019 (Express News Service, 2019).

The author argues that the contact conditions prevalent in the Kartarpur corridor fulfill the relevant prerequisites of the contact-hypothesis stipulated by the extant literature on the tourism-peace relationship. First, the language barriers between the citizens of both the countries are minimal at the contact point (or otherwise), as in addition to speaking similar national official languages (Hindi vis a vis Urdu), the local language, i.e., Punjabi, of the geographical area where the complex is located, similar to the local languages of the citizens of both countries (Kachru, 2003). Additionally, there is a general high tendency to learn more about the culture and heritage of the other group due to the shared historical roots and cultural legacy of the people of both nations; however, due to low contact opportunities, the desire to learn more about each other and exchange ideas remains largely unfulfilled (Cheema, 2006). Hence, the argument that language barriers and the usual nominal level of interest regarding the host community produces a low-quality contact and prevents meaningful exchange between tourists and the host community (Tomljenovic, 2010) may not stand true in this particular contact condition.

Second, the KCP garnered strong support from the governments of both countries which maximize the potential to realize the favorable

inundation as a result of tourism development furnished through the KCP. The reason being that the extant literature has intimately linked tourism with politics and has demonstrated that the possibility of tourism to foster peace remains deficient if not endorsed by the political elite at the highest level (Farmaki, 2017; Guo et al., 2006; Kim & Priedeaux, 2006). The political leadership on both sides regarded the KCP as a steppingstone in ameliorating the relationship between the two countries (Siddiqui, 2019).

Third, the location of the KCP is right at the border between Pakistan and India. For people of both countries, the border evokes violent memories of the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. The topic of the partition has inhabited predominant space in the literature, arts and cinema of both countries, which has conditioned the popular mindset (Lall, 2008). However, unlike other borderline arrangements between Pakistan and India, and most notable being the Wagha border spectacle, which is a manifestation of nationalistic fervor where separateness and exclusionary rites are celebrated (Menon, 2013), the KCP provides an opportunity to know and understand the traditional adversary community on the other side of the border. Another aspect separating the KCP from Wagha is that the latter is strictly a political and a formal border point that restricts any movement of the common populace reinforcing the territorialized and nationalistic identities. The KCP on the other hand, fosters a congenial and open ambience and, hence, a relatively more intimate contact condition could be expected between Pakistan and India.

Fourth, the contact condition at Kartarpur renders relatively equal statuses to the citizens of both countries, as it does not only treat people across the Indian side of the border as tourists but it treats the host community as 'tourists' as well because they have to follow certain protocols given the religious sensitivity and diplomatic subtlety involved. For instance, in addition to adhering to the similar diplomatic protocols of entering and leaving the corridor, the tourists of both nations are also supposed to observe the same visitation timings, i.e., 8 am–4 pm.

Fifth, the KCP serves as a material marker reminiscence of the cultural and ancestral history, similar language, lifestyle and customs that both countries shared when they were united before the 1947 partition. Even when partitioned states attain the status of independent countries, they still continue to have many features in common (Butler & Mao, 1996). This not only includes more perceptible shared cultural and historical roots, religious customs and traditions and languages but also encompasses more convoluted similar social patterns of behavior. Therefore, Kartarpur represents that universality which brings people of all religions and backgrounds in the region together epitomizing the shared sociocultural spaces of pre-partition subcontinent.

Finally, as access to KCP in past had been made impregnable by geopolitical circumstances of both the countries, the unfettered access to KCP now, could better activate the process of remembering and affirming the significance of a shared legacy. Winter (2009), in contextualizing the war memorials of World War I, opined that the community perception associated with historical sites gradually recedes generation after generation and obtaining the same clarity in accessing the meaning communicated by a site may not be possible for contemporary generations. However, due to the large-scale population displacement between the two partitioned states, fragmented family networks prevail on both sides of the borders. The subsequent kinship ties between the citizens of the partitioned states were restrained by territorial divisions and largely relied on the political situation between the countries for resumption. In this context, the interactional patterns of Pakistani and Indian tourists at KCP can be expected to occupy a rather enduring space in their memories.

Hence, all the ingredients for intergroup cooperation between Pakistani and Indian tourists at KCP could be used towards a common goal of facilitating a reconciliatory environment between traditional hostile adversaries.

3. Methodology

The primary research method used in this study included conducting in-depth interviews of Indian and Pakistani tourists visiting the KCP using Classical grounded theory approach. The Classical grounded theory supports establishing the theory inductively following an iterative analysis, allowing researchers to visualize the emerging patterns from raw data on the basis of their conceptual proximity and underlying theoretical underpinnings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The timeline of this research was as follows; the first visit to the KCP site was made on 16th November 2019, one week after the formal opening of the project. The second and third visits were made in the preceding week. The first 3 visits were utilized by the author and a research team comprising of three graduate students, who were made well-versed with study objectives and background, to conduct the pilot study, following the Kim and Jamal (2007) protocol. The initial visits assisted in identifying the targeted tourist segments in line with the research questions and research design of this study. As the focus of grounded theory is to follow theoretical sampling method to recruit information rich participants whom researchers can learn a great deal about issues central to the purpose of research inquiry (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), several qualifying questions were devised on the basis of pilot study to identify information rich participants. Questions pertaining to the historical relevance of Kartarpur, the pre-partition and post-partition status of Kartarpur and exposure to partition or migration anecdotes from their elderly family members, helped in screening information rich cases.

The targeted interviewees were approached in the places which are generally the major attraction of tourist visitation at KCP; the *Mehman Khana* (resting place for pilgrims), *Khooh*, (preserved water well used by the guru *Sarovar Sahib* (the sacred pool), *Langer Khana* (place where meals are served to pilgrims), *Kirpan monument* (A monument made of a dagger, an article of Sikh faith, where the inauguration ceremony took place), *Khanda saheb* (a huge garden engraved along the edge of a

religious article) and the *Darshan Deori* (the main entrance leading to the pathway to the shrine). A total of 7 trips were made to KCP in the months of December (2019) and January (2020) to collect data. Additionally, the staff and service personnel at the KCP site were also involved in the interview process, as their regular encounters and interactions with tourists could be an important source of social data. Prior permission was sought from interviewees to audio-record the interviews and record field notes. Each interview lasted 15–25 min. The first author of this study served as a lingual expert to translate the audio tapes and field notes into the English language from the Punjabi/Urdu/Hindi languages due to expertise and proficiency in these languages. A total of 84 in-depth interviews were conducted. The respondents included 38 Pakistani tourists, 40 Indian tourists and 6 staff members, and their ages ranged from 27 to 60 years. The gender composition in the Pakistani sample was 65:35, i.e., 25 males and 13 females, in the Indian sample, it was 60:40, i.e., 24 males 16 females, and it was 50:50 in the staff sample. Approximately 80% of the population (67) had at least completed high school education. The detailed information about participants' profile can be found in Table 1. It is pertinent to mention that the access to the Kartarpur Corridor was closed down on March 15th, 2020 in the wake of the Corona Virus Disease outbreak. The corridor was open for Pakistani tourists on June 29th, 2020 but it continued to stay closed on the Indian side due to the COVID-19 peak period there. The interview protocol and semi-structured guidelines to interview questions is presented in Appendix A.

The data were stored and sorted using NVivo and underwent grounded theory iterative process proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Braun and Clarke (2006) and delineated by Yousaf and Fan (2020) and Yousaf (2021). In the first stage, data reduction was initiated by producing the transcripts of the interviews and becoming familiar with the data through thoroughly reading the transcripts of the interviews and the field notes and listening to the audio tapes. Next, a large number of conceptual nodes of solutions were generated after screening and coding the transcripts in consonance with interview questions and theoretical underpinnings. Accordingly, the conceptual

Table 1
Respondents' profile.

Pakistani tourists		Indian tourists		Staff personnel	
Gender	Frequency	Gender	Frequency	Gender	Frequency
Age	20–30 years = 7 (18%) 31–40 years = 21 (55%) 41–50 years = 6 (16%) 50–60 years = 4 (11%)	Age	20–30 years = 10 (25%) 31–40 years = 23 (57.5%) 41–50 years = 4 (10%) 50–60 years = 3 (7.5%)	Age	20–30 years = 2 (33%) 31–40 years = 4 (67%) 41–50 years = 0 50–60 years = 0
Gender	Males = 25 (65%) Females = 13 (35%)	Gender	Males = 24 (60%) Females = 16 (40%)	Gender	Males = 3 (50%) Females = 3 (50%)
Religion	Islam = 35 (92%) Sikhism = 3 (8%)	Religion	Sikhism = 20 (50%) Hinduism = 18 (45%) Islam = 2 (5%)	Religion	Sikhism = 4 (67%) Islam = 2 (2%)
International travel	Yes = 6 (16%) No = 32 (84%)	International travel	Yes = 10 (25%) No = 30 (75%)	International travel	Yes = 1 (17%) No = 5 (83%)
Education	Below high school = 7 (18.5%) High school = 7 (18.5%) Graduation = 14 (37%) Masters or above = 10 (26%)	Education	Below high school = 10 (25%) High school = 4 (10%) Graduation = 7 (17.5%) Masters or above = 19 (47.5%)	Education	Below high school = 0 High school = 3 (50%) Graduation = 3 (50%) Masters or above = 0
Occupation	Employed in a private organization = 16 (42%) Employed in a government organization = 4 (10.5%) Own business = 8 (21%) Full time Household = 7 (18.5%) Unemployed = 3 (8%)	Occupation	Employed in a private organization = 12 (30%) Employed in a government organization = 8 (20%) Own business = 11 (27.5%) Full time Household = 7 (17.5%) Unemployed = 2 (5%)	Total	6
Total	38	Total	40	Total	6

nodes were classified into categories and subcategories. Next, the thematic similarities were scrutinized and the coded information was systematized by linking the conceptual nodes to key themes on the basis of their theoretical proximity. The transcripts were consulted continuously to ensure consistency in the coding process and the themes were frequently referenced to identify the presence of concurring nodes that would be later merged to form a singular node. On the basis of conceptual closeness and theoretical proximity, the nodes were further refined in such a way that the nodes within the themes, categories and subcategories were mutually exclusive but still associated with each other. Next, the data interpretation stage was carried out by substantiating the findings after consulting the relevant literature to pave the way for a more theoretically informed analysis. Finally, the iterative process was recapitulated to further refine the formation of themes, categories and subcategories in pursuance of determining the links with the theory and research purpose. The coding process and analysis is exemplified in Table 2 along with the themes, categories and subcategories generated as a result of this iterative examination.

4. Analysis

4.1. Shared social memory/collective remembering

Although the younger tourists had no first-hand memories of the prepartitioned Indian Subcontinent but intergenerational narratives based on the memories of their parents, grand-parents and older family members are absorbed by them through day to day living. Marschall (2015) calls them 'second-hand memories', which are not based on actual experiences but are passed down from generation to generation and are perpetually influenced by the predominant popular discourses of the description of the past. In this sense, Kartarpur facilitated a purposeful and spontaneous remembrance of the past, emerging as an instrument to recall suppressed memories, validate existing memories, straighten out memory misinterpretations or simply to offer new perspectives about the shared past.

It was evident from the interviewees' responses that Kartarpur proved to be a comfortable space that encouraged sociality between the two nationalities. For the Indian tourists, the familiarity with sociocultural spatial environment of Kartarpur and the shared psychological empathy of prepartition India, constantly reproduced through intergenerational narratives, triggered collective remembering. Similarly, for the Pakistani tourists, the largest attraction of Kartarpur, apart from the Gurdwara, was an opportunity to communicate with common Indian citizens and commemorate the shared past of prepartition India passed on to them by their previous generations. For both the Pakistanis and Indian tourists, Kartarpur seems to represent a materiality which constitutes a place of social memory where-upon the collective past could be projected. This makes Kartarpur tourism different from conventional leisure travel, as Kartarpur served as a performative platform where both Pakistani and Indian tourists were able to remember the past together as a collective experience, creating what Winter (2009) referred to as social memories. The articulation of the shared past at the tourist site engendered touristic experiences that facilitated reconstitution of the once collective life that is now gone (Halbwachs, 1992).

4.2. Heritagization of memories

Kartarpur represents a symbolic memory site institutionalized by the heritagization of shared memories of the prepartitioned India to the tourists of both the countries, as the tourism landscape at Kartarpur Corridor is predominantly constructed and driven by these collective memories. Marschall (2012) asserts that memory products have an ever-expanding market in the rapidly growing cultural tourism industry. In addition, as consumerism is shifting from external object-centric exhibitions to experience oriented humanistic expressions, it is also exemplifying contemporaneous tourist consumerism (Yousaf & Fan, 2020). In

Table 2

Coding and analysis exemplified along with themes, categories and subcategories.

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Coding and analysis exemplified
Shared social memory/collective remembering	Heritagization of memories	Interactional past and interactional potential	"It is a no coincidence that that Guru's eventual resting place is located right on the border between Pakistan and India", "It (Visiting Kartarpur) feels like visiting your own native place", "Next time we (Indians and Pakistanis) have planned to meet at Kartarpur. It is like our meet-up point" To code such pattern of comments, the study drew on memory heritagization and collective remembering literature (e.g., Bendix, 2002; Halbwachs, 1992; Marschall, 2015, 2012; Milligan, 1998; Winter, 2009; Yousaf & Fan, 2020). The dominant theme identified from emerging set of responses was termed as "shared social memory/collective remembering" as tourism on Kartarpur site appeared to become a means of reinforcing the embodiment of collective remembering, allowing for territorial and cultural realignment, which causes the Pakistani and Indian tourists to connect to each other and create social memories to feel and remember life in prepartition India. In this way, the heritagization of Kartarpur institutionalized the symbolic memories of undivided Indian subcontinent. It was ascertained that a set of responses within the category (heritagization of memories) reflect that Kartarpur became a site of interactional past, as it symbolized a coherently shared history tied to the experiences of both Pakistanis and Indians and it also became a site of interactional potential, as it allowed

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Coding and analysis exemplified
		Intangible and tangible heritage values	the interpretation of the current understanding of the shared past configured in an intelligible order, deriving narratives to be reconstructed at a future time and place. <i>“Kartarpur belongs to people of both countries, it is not Pakistan or India’s alone, neither does it belong to any specific faith”</i> . To code such set of comments, this study took inferences from the theoretical streams of memory heritagization literature highlighting the articulation of the historical connection brought about by tangible and intangible significations of shared heritage values (e.g., Marschall, 2012; Salazar, 2005; Yu Park, 2011). The aggregation of responses reflected that that the heritagization of Kartarpur has led to understanding the KCP as more than a mere static construction to valuing the underlying intangible symptomatic heritage values it symbolizes <i>“A Pakistani stamp would limit my chances to travel to Western countries”</i> ; <i>“I became very emotional standing on the zero line (the line separating Pakistan and India)”</i> ; <i>“When I will go back, I will those who stopped me from coming, how wrong they were.”</i> To code such emerging patterns of comments, theoretical streams on tourist identity and geo-politically mediated tourist spaces were solicited (e.g., Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Gillen & Mostafanezhad, 2019; Mitra, 2003; Tuulentie, 2006; Wilson, 2017; Yousaf, 2017). The dominant theme which emerged from a similar set of responses was termed as “geo-political identity encounters between tourists”, which accentuated that the tourism between the
Geo-political identity encounters between tourists	Foregrounding tourist identities	Demarcation between state/media and the public	

Table 2 (continued)

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Coding and analysis exemplified
			two South Asian neighbors has traditionally remained a highly political phenomenon, and it is no surprise that the narrativization of the touristic experiences at the KCP are predominantly affected by geo-political influences. As a result, this led to a continuous re-negotiation and re-construction of tourist identities creating a liminal identity space. A particular set of comments reflected that liminal identity space facilitated by KCP allowed self-expansion of symbolic boundaries between Pakistani and Indian tourists, where instead of confirming to the dominant world views of the adversary perpetuated by media and state in each country, they endeavored to the touristic discourses of relational similarities between the two nations; apparently constituting a demarcation between them (public) and state/media.

this sense, the touristic images evoked by Kartarpur reiterate the collective remembering for the tourists of both the countries and symbolize values that permeate deep into reservoirs of the cultural memories of the undivided Indian Subcontinent.

In contrast, such interpretations of the past are very different from the traditionally preferred interpretations associated with commodified memory vehicles such as war sites, museums and national heritages, which ritualize the act of travelling as a show of patriotism and identity construction. Kartarpur, as a vehicle of memory, enables the tourists of both countries to revisit the past, where their collective memories become embedded in conventionally under-representative discourses of nostalgic yearnings to the relevancy of the undivided subcontinent in constructing cultural meanings and identities.

It is not a coincidence that Guru’s (saint) eventual resting place is located right on the border between Pakistan and India. Perhaps that symbolizes Guru’s mission to keep people united irrespective of their faith, ethnicity and cultures. My ancestors belong to a small village near the bank of river Ravi this side of border (Pakistan) who migrated after the partition. I would actually belong to this place had the partition not occurred.

(Indian male in late-thirties)

Kartarpur site is a not a mere Gurdwara. It reflects thousands of years of old historical and cultural linkages of the nations and religions that lived in this region. We were chatting with one family in

particular and they told us that their ancestors belonged to a village nearby. When we asked the name of the village, to our amazement, it is our own village. Extremely strange thing is that our caste is also the same. The eldest of their family gave Rs. 100/- each to all the young members of the family as a token of their love. They said we must be distant relatives with the common lineage in the past. It is possible that one part of the family converted to either Sikhism or Islam. They have promised us that they will come to our village in the near future and we will try to learn about our shared past.

(Pakistani female in late-twenties)

As implied by [Butler and Mao \(1996\)](#), to a conventional tourist, travelling to a foreign country entails experiencing a distinct cultural and physical environment entrenched in different lifestyle, patterns of behavior and systems of interactions, but this ought not be the case when tourists are travelling between partitioned states. The elements of prepartition India, which were once shared by both the current states of Pakistan and India are still retained, which makes tourism very inviting, as tourists become interested in seeking a familiar cultural environment that is similar to their homeland instead of searching for exotic and distinct experiences. In this milieu, the interactional potential of the prepartition subcontinental memory culture at Kartarpur serves as a prototype of modern-day normal interactions between Indians and Pakistanis, epitomizing the pre-partition era when people were not confined because of border laws.

We should not ignore that we have a shared past and we were one. I think the people still are not distant to each other and we can see this here at Kartarpur Sahib. Whenever we get a chance, we show the same excitement to meet each other, as though we are real brothers who got lost somewhere and are reunited. Isn't this amazing?

(Indian male in late-twenties)

Although the theorized role of Kartarpur typifies the politics of remembrance, which accordingly falls within the collective consciousness of Pakistani and Indian tourists, but it also draws together the divided spaces between the two nationalities, consequently giving hope towards the prevalence of a peaceful political climate. Historically, developing tourism projects between partitioned states contributing towards peace has been a valid argument but is predominantly dependent upon the bilateral political atmosphere, which is perpetually at the crossroad of geopolitics ([Cho, 2007](#); [Lee, Bendle, Yoon, & Kim, 2012](#)). However, the optimism surrounding the KCP bridging the gaps between politically divided states and facilitating a sustained peace in the region could be attributed primarily to the origination of the KCP conception, which was driven by the demands of the people living in both the countries to obtain hassle-free access to the religious site of Kartarpur, which is equally revered by adherents of all faiths.¹ Taking into consideration this long overdue populist discourse, the governments came on board next. Second, Kartarpur, as a tourist site, is the largest Gurdwara in the world that draws touristic appreciation for the collective

¹ India and Pakistan are two countries where partition occurred on the basis of religious grounds. The other such examples would be Israel-Palestine, Sudan-South Sudan and Indonesia-East Timor. It is true that when the foundational basis of partitioned states is religion then it is not possible to isolate that influence in collective consciousness of residents of both countries. KCP is a unique case in this regard because historically Kartarpur shrine has been revered by all the religious communities of the sub-continent. The same faith aspect is displayed at its zenith amalgamated with nationalistic narratives in another border corridor between the two countries i.e., Wagha Border between Lahore (Pakistan) and Amritsar (India). The reason why faith aspect is less vivid at KCP is the very nature of the corridor symbolizing the heritagization of universally shared values between Pakistanis and Indians. The faith aspects are highly vivid at Wagha as Wagha border celebrates the territorialization of two-nation narratives that lead to the partition of Indian sub-continent.

memorialization of shared spatiality. In this sense, Gurdwara reflects the heritagization of shared memories with a myriad of common grounds so that it allows little room for divergent interpretations of the past by Pakistani and Indian tourists, laying the foundation for robust discourses of reconciliation and nourished narratives of peace.

People back in India are overwhelmed by opening of this corridor. A new hope of peace has risen with this. I always wanted to come here and set foot on this holy place in Pakistan. I thought I will never be able to come here in this lifetime. We are so happy the borders are opening.

(Indian female in mid-sixties)

There were instances of agreements between India and Pakistan in the past as well, for example, the special train and bus service. The sad thing is that these agreements do not continue with consistency. A small incident on either side can break the continuity and the train service or bus service is temporarily stopped. Such a thing should not happen with Kartarpur Sahib. We know people from both sides of the border love each other irrespective of the harsh reality of politics. It is my belief that not only relations will improve but also political gimmicks of past will not affect the free movement to Kartarpur Sahib

(Pakistani male in late-fifties)

4.3. Interactional past and interactional potential

[Milligan \(1998\)](#) conceptualized interactional past and interactional potential by referring to the former as the extent of meaningfulness in the memories associated with a place that accordingly translates into attachment with that place and the latter as set of interactional experiences that occurred within and in relation to the site that establish the expectations for the future. In this sense, interactional past and interactional potential shall neither be perceived as dichotomous constructs nor shall they be treated as the same thing. The interactional past is dependent upon the second-hand memories passed onto descendants by older generations through day to day living ([Marschall, 2015](#)). Once these descendants visit the homeland of their forefathers, the interaction with Gurdwara fosters a commitment to remembrance the cataclysmic but rekindled memories associated with the 1947 partition making Kartarpur a site of interactional past between the tourists of both the countries. The most prominent medium of this interactional past was the migration stories facilitating the process of remembering, engendering, consolidation and transfer of memories between Pakistani and Indian tourists. These migration stories live vividly in the form of second-hand memories and allow a shared understanding of historical accords and discords, institutionalizing the interactional past between Pakistani and Indian tourists.

My forefathers belong to Lahore (city in Pakistan) and they migrated to India in 1947 partition. Sadly, my grandfather passed away longing to visit his native home and neighborhood. Gathering from his reminiscences, I always wanted to visit Pakistan, as it feels like visiting your own native place.

(Indian male in mid-thirties)

My forefathers migrated from Gurdaspur (present day India), which is just nearby on the Indian side of the border. My grandfather used to tell me the stories of undivided Indian subcontinent and his Hindu and Sikh friends. Today, when I met Indian friends and I shared those stories with them, I had this strong realization that the stories told by their forefathers are not very different than ours. It was a moment of truth.

(Pakistani male in early-forties)

It is pivotal to note that Kartarpur Gurdwara is not a newly constructed site. It has continued to exist for hundreds for years at the very same locality. Therefore, there was already an inherent emotional link constituted towards Kartarpur site among people of the subcontinent, which was given meaning through the interactions between them. The interactional potential perpetuated at the Kartarpur site facilitated the interpretation of the self for Pakistani and Indian tourists while maintaining mutually shared historical ties with the site of Kartarpur as a locus of identity. These interactions empower the retention of social memories articulated in the premises of Kartarpur.

Winter (2009) postulates that the acceptance of social memory is largely contingent upon its potential to be rehearsed and recalled by society members. One important feature of interactional potential, as evident from the tourists' impressions, was the potential narratability of the novel interactional setting provided by Kartarpur to be shared with other people via offline or online avenues, once the tourists return. When touristic experiences take the form of narration or storytelling about the travel, they are set to stay in the touristic memory for a long time period. As Bendix (2002) noted, tourists are naturally inclined to share their travel experiences, especially if the touristic journey covers novel aspects of the destination that are also highly valued aspects of the tourists' home culture. In such a communicative restaging, tourists are not only mentally resavoring and reliving the memory but are also evoking the desire of their audience to visit and reconnect with the place in such a way.

My friend visited Kartarpur last month and his wonderful experiences and sharing motivated me to personally visit this place. I met Pakistani people here and we instantly became friends. It was so surprising to see they speak the same language (Punjabi) and many of the ethnicities too are same as back home (India). We have shared WhatsApp and Facebook ids between us and we will keep in touch and next time we have planned to meet up at Kartarpur. It is like our meet up point.

(Indian female in late twenties)

4.4. Tangible and intangible heritage values

Yu Park (2011) elucidates the link between tangible and intangible heritage values, as the latter epitomizes the symbolic meanings and spiritual embodiment established in the more perceptible material residuals of the past signified in the former. Therefore, the sociopsychological testimony of heritage espouses intangible values and articulates an enhanced appreciation of ethnic and cultural representations of the past, whereas the material site or tangible settings of the heritage facilitate the process of consolidating symbiotic relations with the collective past. The KCP emerged as a transmitter of both tangible and intangible heritage values, signifying the combined past of Pakistan and India in an unpartitioned subcontinent. In this sense, KCP capitalizes on the deeply rooted sense of history entrenched in the collective consciousness of people of both countries and, thus, mediates the contentions and conflicts in the political sphere.

For Muslims, there is a separate place to pay their homage to Guru ji. Isn't this great that Guru ji doesn't belong to one religion only? Similar to the universal cultural values espoused by Guru during his days to look for equality among all irrespective of their faith and caste.

(Pakistani male in mid-forties)

Kartarpur belongs to people of both countries. It is not Pakistan's or India's alone; neither does it belong to any specific faith.

(Indian female in late forties)

The responses elicited from the interviews signaled high interest and

excitement levels among tourists from both the countries, thereby, implying that the tourists at Kartarpur were not merely passive on-lookers but were actively seeking information about the place from the service personnel and the cultural, ethnic and historical roots of the tourists from the other side of the border they come across. Tourists in such situations may become interpretant themselves by finding new information and updating their conventional set of social memories (Marschall, 2012). Usually, the breakthrough questions in interactions between Pakistani and Indian tourists were related to ancestral roots in the prepartition subcontinent that help them construct sociocultural contextualization of a shared intangible heritage and experience symbolic interrelationships with the collective past.

I wanted to visit this place to not only pay my homage to Guru je but also meet ordinary Pakistanis, which is not possible through other means and visit the country that was once a native place of my grandma who was a teenager when she migrated to India. I took my grandma with me and it is unfortunate that she cannot go to see Lahore (her native town), but we are grateful that we are here. Whenever I came across a Pakistani tourist, I ask them there whereabouts and to my surprise most of the time I know about the places even when I have never been there.

(Indian male in mid-twenties)

I met people of my clan (caste) from the other side of the border and felt really good. We used to be a single country and for centuries our forefathers have lived together. I don't see any point in this perception of framing other as a hostile country. Just by meeting Indians today, I realized that we are not very different at all.

(Pakistani female in late-thirties)

The tangible significations of heritage also articulate the historical connection between the two nations to the extent that similarities with traditionally popular cultural expressions of the region were actively sought. Kartarpur emerged as a symbolic object having its own intrinsic cultural values and where interdependent manifestations of tangible and intangible values converge to form a reconciliatory discourse unrestrained by the territorial divisions of both tourist groups.

The paraphernalia of this gurdwara (shrine) is so impressive and deeply rooted in the ancient architectural styles of the subcontinent. The white marbles resemble the historical Mughal architecture of Taj Mahal, the terraces are on the lines of ancient forts and the decorated sculptures are not different from Sufi shrines. It is like the whole subcontinent is encapsulated in this structure.

(Indian male in late-sixties)

In addition to the tourist-tourist interactions, the tourist-service personnel dyads at the KCP also emerged to be a significant influencer in developing meaningful connections with the collective consciousness of the tourists and enhancing the overall immersive experiences with the tangible and intangible heritage values of the site. Tourists' engagement with the sociospatial surroundings of the tourist space are better contextualized if the service personnel possess the ability to folklorize and ethnicize the cultural and historical aspects involving the heritage site (Salazar, 2005). In this sense, the enriched heritagization of the KCP allowed the service facilitation staff there to inculcate perceived authenticity in the touristic experiences, highlighting the public discourses that emphasize the shared cultural and historical values.

I saw Pakistani security officials lending a hand to elderly people in going through stairs. It was such an emotional scene. The response of the people was not a big surprise for me. The great thing is that the government officials and staff are equally hospitable and assisting. I am glad to see how the government of Pakistan is so different from what we used to learn at home.

(Indian female in early thirties)

Tourists from India were especially chatty with us, asking our names and whereabouts, asking directions and details about different aspects of our life in Pakistan and Gurdwara and vloggers interviewing us. Both Pakistani and Indian tourists took pictures with us like we are celebrities. We are very accommodating and welcoming, especially towards Indian tourists, like they are our own people... I really love working in such an atmosphere where every day is like a festivity.

(Pakistani male service personnel in early thirties)

4.5. Geo-political identity encounters between tourists

Geo-political tourism encounters are an interactive experience with political undertones that accentuate as well as question the ideologies of people and places (Gillen & Mostafanezhad, 2019). The encounters between Pakistani and Indian tourists is not just another ubiquitous encounter between tourists and hosts or tourists and tourists, as the pre-existing imaginaries enforced by recurrent diplomatic contentions between the two countries may either be contrasted or confirmed as a result of the tourism encounters in a mutually shared geopolitical landscape. The geopolitically mediated tourism encounters induce distinctive relational configurations that allow for the construction of tourism experiences that may perpetuate or challenge the tourists' identities (Wilson, 2017).

Moreover, the KCP embodies the oldest and the most popular pattern of tourism in South Asia, i.e., centered around the traditions of festivals and religious pilgrimages to the holy sites of the popular religions of the region, i.e., Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism, irrespective of an individual's religious affiliation (Richter, 1989). In this milieu, the contextual setting of the KCP is not conventionally unfamiliar to the people of this region, which allows for a more immersive interconnectivity to broaden the sociocultural construction of the tourist identities. Nonetheless, any kind of reconciliation or estrangement established between Pakistani and Indian tourists during encounters at the KCP is authenticated in the deeply engraved connotation of the partition of British India and its aftereffects on the strategic geo-politics of the region. This sets the stage for the tourists of both countries to reinforce their identities or make them intelligible through commonly accepted geo-political structures and media discourses.

4.6. Foregrounding tourist identities

In this research, tourist identity emerged as a construct that is intimately entwined with the broader sociocultural and geo-political contexts of tourists' engagement with the destination in question, i.e., KCP. During the encounters between Pakistani and Indian tourists, there is a continuous reconstruction and renegotiation of the identities in relation to their similarities and differences. This continuous renegotiation of identities reflects a social constructivist perspective, which reiterates that the process of identification is more central than merely the contents of a given identity (Tuulentie, 2006). As tourism experiences are acknowledged as a determinant of an individual's identity construction (Wearing, Stevenson, & Young, 2009), the narrativization of the experiences of the Indian and Pakistani tourists at the KCP is made comprehensible by the discourses pervasive on each side of the border, contributing to the formation of the coveted self-identity.

I was worried that a Pakistani stamp would be placed on my passport. (Upon asking why this is a matter of concern?) A Pakistani stamp would limit my chances to travel to Western countries, especially the US, Canada, Australia and the UK, etc. But I was relieved that nothing was stamped on my passport related to Pakistan. I will

tell other people at home who were hesitant to travel due to this grave concern.

(Indian male in mid-twenties)

This concern was common among Indian tourists and this significantly reflects the deeply engraved politicized societal structures in South Asia. India remains the largest military and economic power of South Asia, which is a considerable factor in how Indians see their country as a major player in the international arena compared to their neighbors (Mitra, 2003). In this sense, the KCP manifested an identity caveat compounded by the self-other binary, where the construction of an adversarial identity may be comprehended by political conflicts that pave the way for organizing one's worldview. The very idea that a Pakistani stamp on a passport will limit the Indian tourists' chances to obtain a visa for Western developed countries falls within the antagonistic identity discourses perpetuated among the masses in India (and Pakistan), where nationalistic ideologies of the self have naturally transformed to an antagonistic vision for the other.

However, Pakistani tourists appeared to be relatively more comfortable in contrasting counter discourses from Indian tourists, as for decades they have confronted this stereotypical representation of their country and religion in the West. Their nationality and religion have been a major source of construction of their collective identity, but as both are stereotyped negatively in popular Western discourses, they have incorporated this socially constructed discourse as a prerequisite of their national-self (Yousaf, 2017; Yousaf, Tauni, & Xiucheng, 2021; Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018)

I talked to many Indian friends here and was bemused by their concerns regarding the Pakistani stamp on their passport as a stigma (Chuckle). To be honest, I don't blame them for carrying this perception. I currently reside in the USA for my education and carrying a Pakistani passport with the Islam religion means strict scrutiny at airports and unnecessary detailed checks. Although the physical boundaries are blurred by the Kartarpur initiative, the decades of mental boundaries fostered by commonly held beliefs need more time to loosen up.

(Pakistani male in mid-twenties)

On the one hand, this self-other relation, i.e., construction of the identity through the formation of the otherness, enhances self-understanding (Galani-Moutafi, 2000), and on the other, the shared historical linkages demonstrated by the KCP facilitated as a medium for the tourists of both countries to reconstitute the deeply immersed ensanguined memory of the partition of British India through a dialectic interplay of self-expansion of symbolic boundaries between the two groups. As a result, a liminal identity space was created, where tourists instead of conforming to their popular world-view of the adversary, endeavored to the discourses of self-contemplation, accounting for relational similarities in sociocultural and geo-political representations of the touristic discourses of each side. The inherent authenticity of the Kartarpur's historical legacy affirms a legitimate sense of belonging to prepartition British India, compelling people to seek what they might have lost in their individualized identities of being an Indian or a Pakistani.

I became very emotional standing on the zero line (the line separating Pakistan and India). The impossible had materialized; the closed doors were open and I walked right into those open doors. It took us 72 years to walk across that zero line. Such a long time to cover such a small distance. Guru Nanek Dev Ji was the most important connection between India and Pakistan. And this, the Kartarpur corridor right on the border signifies the connection.

(Indian female in early-thirties)

I have come with my father, uncle and cousins to meet my uncle and extended family from India. My father's brother was 11 years old when he migrated to India in the 1947 partition. My father and his cousins remained in Pakistan. Now we are having a family reunion at Kartarpur after 72 years. Travelling to India and for us and to Pakistan for them has historically remained very difficult and full of hurdles and complexities. When my father was meeting his brother, it felt like that two brothers are meeting (Pakistan and India) in a literal sense.

(Pakistani male in late-forty's)

4.7. Demarcation between state/media and public

With the start of the new millennium, the people of Pakistan and India experienced a paradigm shift in their lives with respect to information bombardment from all corners by the influx of private electronic media houses. This precipitously transformed the dynamics of news accessibility to the general public. While domestic issues being highlighted by the media were creating a chasm between the general public and the government, the international news, on the other hand, uses specific symbols and stereotypes to create specific lenses (Entman, 1991), such as nationalism and patriotism, to glue the public together as the backbone of the government in front of the rival country. Through the help of the media, the political elite of Pakistan and India permeated the development of the nationalistic narratives in relation to the significant other adversary in defining and underlining the predominant discourses of national identity. In the same milieu, the tourists at the KCP shared their concerns regarding the agenda-driven news regarding the adversary, i.e., Pakistan by Indian news channels, that led them to develop an image of Pakistan as a country with sinister intentions. Pakistani tourists, on the other hand, have developed an image of rival Hindus and Sikhs rather than rival-Indians. The presence of Muslims in India with a population more than that of Muslims in Pakistan can be one explanation, though, the root causes of this image is mostly laid on the media and the movies based on the partition.

The media tells you on your face that Pakistan and Pakistanis are enemy no 1 for us Indians and they hold nothing but venom in their heart for India. The media has painted such a picture that it raised many doubts in my mind about Pakistanis. After visiting the place and interacting with Pakistani people, my all the doubts about this country are alleviated. I would want the media to play the role of a bridge and not create divides between people of both countries.

(Indian, male early forty's)

We came here to pay homage to Baba je, whom we believe to be a Sufi saint. We have met a couple of Sikh families and chatted with them. It is amazing to know about their lives on the other side of the border. I do not know why the media painted the pictures of Sikhs and Hindus as Muslim haters and killers of Muslims. We experienced the opposite of what we were told in the news and films regarding the happenings of 1947. Their lives are just like ours, similar language, even the food is mostly the same.

(Pakistani female in late forty's)

Baru (2009, 279) states that the broadcast media tend to turn important foreign policy matters into sensational debates aired on national television that capture the attention of viewers and increase "the role of media in shaping political thinking." The tourists from both countries are initially hit/struck with disbelief on their exposure to people living on the other side of the border, but an eventual change in perspective based on self-experience is a common journey that our respondents said they went through. Some went a step further and stated their intentions of spreading the truth through word of mouth and

defying the widespread iniquity that the media sow the seeds of.

When I will go back, I will tell those who stopped me from coming how wrong they were and how our media lies about Pakistanis. We should not ignore that we have a shared past and we were one. I think the people are still not distant from each other and we can see this here at the Kartarpur Sahib.

(Indian male in late thirties)

Interestingly, the Pakistani and Indian tourists with international travel histories were observed to be more expressive when defying the nationalist politics and propagandist media in their respective countries. One thing to infer from this is the perspective in favor of inclusivity lies more with the well-traveled people than those who are dependent on indigenous media for information. Unbeknownst to most of the KCP tourists, media outlets are businesses competing for profits and growth, catering to their own interests. The KCP tourists who either work in middle eastern countries or are living in the west presented a fresh viewpoint that already rejected the contemporary narrative built by the media of both countries. Their access to international media or living with their counter nationalities strengthened their views to accept humans as humans and remove the lens of nationalities and religions.

I have worked in the middle east for many years. I used to share my apartment with Pakistanis and Indians. We did not feel any difference between ourselves. We ate the same kind of food and chatted freely with each other. So, this interactional familiarity was not a big surprise for me. I have already seen this.

(Pakistani male in early thirties)

5. Conclusions

Kartarpur allows us to view the intricate social worlds of tourists from both countries, where on one hand, there is a conscious identity building through the proliferation of nationalistic discourses and narratives in their respective countries and to which Pakistanis and Indians identify with as a member of their collectives, and on the other hand, Kartarpur furnished a liminal space that lead to reimagination and reconstitution of the social framework, where communication was occurring between Pakistanis and Indians. The over 7 decades of political division of Pakistan and India enabled both countries to forge their own versions of distinctive but antagonistic identities. Kartarpur seemed to pervade the tourists, causing them to look beyond the underlying discourses of nationalistic identity. For the Indian tourists, paying homage to the Kartarpur site was not the sole purpose of their journey to Pakistan; it had a greater meaning, i.e., to visit a country where their forefathers once lived and where access to it had been made impregnable by geo-political circumstances of both the countries. Similarly, for tourists from Pakistan, travelling to Kartarpur was a means to search for a shared past and take a trip down memory lane with a memory of once repartition united India now embedded with the memory of a journey to a Guru's shrine that advocated shared universal values. It was only justified that no other place could better activate the process of remembering and affirming the significance of a shared legacy. This could be attributed to the selectivity and exclusion in remembering collective aspects of the shared past when then there is a conscious attempt and implicit consensus among competing groups to wishfully forget shared aspect of estrangement. Therefore, the interactions between the Pakistani and Indian tourists at Kartarpur ensued selectivity in advocating the relative importance of inclusive aspects of the bilateral relation of both countries and underplaying the relative hostilities imbued in past.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The study contributes to the existing discursive discourses on the relevance of the contact-hypothesis in the debate surrounding the tourism-peace nexus. Tourism scholars have traditionally remained skeptical about the validation of the contact hypothesis, deeming it far too simplistic to epitomize the complex nature of reconciliatory encounters in touristic settings (e.g., Pratt & Liu, 2016; Litvin, 1998; Milman, Reichel, & Pizam, 1990; Causevic, 2010; Novelli et al., 2012). However, the findings furnished by the present study elaborate the significance of the prevalence of suitable intergroup contact conditions and attribute the invalidation of the contact hypothesis to the omission of appropriate contact conditions.

The study makes a significant contribution by highlighting the relevance of the geopolitical discourses of fellow-tourist encounters. The transformative potential of tourism encounters can be realized if they look beyond the routinized mundane encounters occupying the leisure tourist spaces to contextual factors encompassing geo-political, social, historical and economic dimensions. By considering geo-political tourism encounters, we are encapsulating the historical narratives attached to territorialization and nation-building in relation to divided nations, which instead of fueling the skepticism may orchestrate a comprehensive understanding of tourism as a product of politics, thereby negotiating the relational configuration of reconciliation or estrangement as a byproduct of the same geopolitically mediated encounters.

Placing geo-political experiences as a central ingredient of the tourist encounters between divided nations lays the foundation for multifaceted reciprocal relationships intrinsically linked to perpetuating or challenging the national identities connotated by the strategic geo-politics of the regions. In this way, tourism can become an impactful avenue to transport geopolitical power centers from conventionally institutionalized macrolevel factors at the state level to community level interactional tourist spaces. Thus, tourism's political dimension may prove to be a facilitating channel in conflict renegotiation or reconciliation and needs to be firmly theorized in the emerging scholarship of tourism. Having said that, attempts like KCP, where common people on both sides of the border are consistently eager for exchange at the interpersonal level, will take due time and effort to trigger significant policy change at governmental levels.

This study also adds to the contemporary research by signifying the role of heritagization in reconciliation tourism. The heritagization of memories is an important avenue for divided nations with conflictual pasts to shape the popular discourse by either pacifying or exacerbating the divergent interpretations of the past. For this to materialize, the relativization of messages relayed by the site should also incorporate the interpretations in the tourist encounters taking place at the same site. Focusing on the interpretative side of heritage sites allows the tourists to develop their narration-ability and, thus, articulate and expedite the spill-over effects of reconciliation from the individual level to the collective level. The interactional potential observed at the Kartarpur premises manifested the narrativization of heritage sites as a vehicle of the collective past on which interpretative social memories are projected.

The present study steers the debate towards the relatively underutilized discourse of tourist identity as a pivotal tenet in the tourism-peace connection. Understanding tourist encounters from the identity perspective is important because it enables us to purview how the social worlds of tourists hailing from divided nations are organized and entwined with the sociocultural and geo-political milieu of the tourism landscape. When conventionally constructed exclusivist national identities of divided nations interact with the philosophical apprehension interplayed at highly engaging heritage sites such as Kartarpur, emanating opposing sense of antagonized history, a renegotiated socioculturally constructed category of identity rapprochement takes effect. In this sense, a tourist's identity is fluid in nature, prone to social

constructivism and may contest the state-defined media-driven identity discourses. This essentially implies the development of liminal identity spaces, where clashes between different versions of identity converge within the symbolism of the collective past and a shared historical legacy; however, whether the nature of these spaces is transient or enduring is yet to be seen.

5.2. Practical implications

The findings offer implications for policy makers, practitioners and destination marketing organizations. Retaining elements of prepartition states that were once shared by divided nations makes tourism a very inviting prospect for the tourists of such nations. Traditionally, indoctrination of a selective interpretation of history has made people in the subcontinent highly polarized in their world-views. In this milieu, memorialization of shared spatiality and a collective past not only lay the foundation for robust discourses of reconciliation but also possess the potential to draw great touristic appreciation. Both Pakistan and India are in unique positions to take advantage of religious tourism due to the abundance of religious sites with historical relevance relating to Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. An appropriate regulatory structure with a special emphasis on conservation and effective management of religious and heritage sites can make tourism a key area of participation for both the countries. Moreover, states using heritagization and identity politics to stigmatize the adversary on the other side of the border to foment their political clout might need to consider that this is not the only way to earn political legitimacy. The KCP received positive political mileage on both sides of the border, even when the political elites of the countries hold drastically different political ideologies.

5.3. Limitations and future research

The findings are qualified by certain limits in the research design. First, the Indian side of the KCP is not yet open to tourists from Pakistan, therefore, these data accounts for interactional encounters among tourists on the Pakistani side of the KCP; however, based on the findings furnished in this study, there are encouraging signs of what to expect if the Indian side of the KCP becomes operational. Second, the spill-over effects of encounters between Pakistani and Indian tourists outside the mediated setting of the KCP is yet to be determined. Although the signs are encouraging on social media spaces and even mainstream media, more research is required about how the positive interactional experiences at the KCP are translated to a broader public discourse in societal life for these two countries. Third, the grounded theory research design employed in this study was beneficial in uncovering the underlying themes associated with the interactions of Pakistani and Indian tourists through the lens of collective remembrance and geo-political identity rendezvous, but future research studies can make use of quantitative methods to lend empirical evidence for the themes, categories and subcategories identified in this study. Lastly, the researcher's positionality with familiar historical, political and socio-cultural background of Indian sub-continent proved invaluable during the sense-making process of the data. At the same time, it allowed for a more reflexive inquiry by appraising the interviews in a context based and historically situated remembering of the shared past of Pakistanis and Indians. But as researcher's personal, moral and social values significantly influence the research process (Greenbank, 2003), the selective perceptions of the researcher owing to positionality and reflexivity in creation and interpretation of knowledge in this study cannot be completely ruled out.

Declarations of interest

None.

Appendix A. Interview protocol

Following is the list of questions that were used as *semi-structured protocols* for the interviews. The exact nature of the questions was adapted and improvised in accordance with the context and the flow of conversations occurred during the interviews. The questions were adapted to different languages (Urdu/Hindi/Punjabi/English) depending upon the respondents' language proficiency.

A. Qualifying questions

1. What do you know about the historical, cultural and religious significance of Kartarpur?
2. What is your idea about the pre-partition and post-partition status of Kartarpur?

Follow up questions:

- i) What migration stories have you heard from your elderly family members or people in general?
- ii) Does exposure to partition or migration anecdotes from their elderly family affected your perception of the other side (Pakistan/India), if yes, how? If not, why not?

B. General questions

1. What does Kartarpur represent to you?

Follow up questions:

- i) Do you view Kartarpur as a religious site, a cultural site, a heritage site or combination of all? And why?
 - ii) What were your main motivation(s) to visit Kartarpur? Why?
 - iii) What are the major associations (tangible/intangible) you relate with Kartarpur? Why? In your opinion, what are the major attractions (tangible/intangible) at Kartarpur for a tourist? For a pilgrim? For a common Pakistani/Indian?
 - iv) What does Kartarpur remind you of in general? Please explain
 - v) In your opinion, Does Kartarpur belongs to a single religious/ethnic community of subcontinent? Why? Why not?
2. Do you think Kartarpur has a greater role to play in initiating reconciliatory politics between the two countries? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Follow up questions:

- i) If Kartarpur is a marker of collective past, can it lead towards a more peaceful political climate between Pakistan and India in current era? If yes, what could be the reasons? If not, what could be the reasons?
 - ii) How do you perceive border (just 1–2 km away from Kartarpur shrine); a marker of national identity or an administrative division? Why?
 - iii) How do you view partition of Sub-continent in 1947? Can you explain how does it affect the lives of people living in this region?
 - iv) How do you identify with being present at this *visa-free* corridor?
 - v) What experiences do you recall that you felt while crossing the border and entering *visa-free* corridor? (mainly for Indian respondents)
3. What are the cultural/physical/social similarities/differences you have witnessed while meeting Pakistanis/Indians at Kartarpur?

Follow up questions:

- i) Do you think you have more in common with Pakistanis/Indians than any other neighboring countries? Why? Why not?
- ii) What was your perception of common Pakistanis/Indians in general before meeting them here at Kartarpur? Has it changed, if yes, why? If not, why not?
- iii) What are/were some of the common misconceptions regarding Pakistan/India? Why do you think they exist? Do you think more interactional opportunities presented in the form of Kartarpur can help against these? Why? Why not?

4. How do you encapsulate/describe your overall experience and time spent at Kartarpur?

Follow up questions:

- i) Will you visit Kartarpur again? Will you recommend family/friends and people in general to visit this place? Why? Why not?
- ii) What are the most interesting and valuable things will you remember and cherish from your visit to Kartarpur?
- iii) Did you expect anything different before visiting Kartarpur? Has your opinion changed after visiting the Kartarpur corridor? If yes, can you explain? If not, what are the reasons?
- iv) Do you have any interest in visiting other parts of Pakistan/India? Why? Why not?

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