

## Beyond Pilgrimage: Evaluating Hospitality Facilities around the Takht Sri Damdama Sahib

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### Abstract

In developing economies like India, religious tourism plays a pivotal role in regional economic development. This case study focuses on understanding the ecosystem of hospitality around the Takht Damdama Sahib situated at Talwandi Sabo village in Bathinda district of Punjab, which is a place of attraction for visitors. The case study examined the hospitality facilities, including capacity, pricing, and booking mechanism and other facilities, of 10 hotels situated near Talwandi Sabo village. The findings indicated the dominance of budget and mid-range hotels with wide availability of basic amenities but limited workforce, poor standardisation of services, and lack of digital platforms for booking as major challenges to be addressed. This case study will provide valuable insights regarding the sustainability of hospitality sector around the pilgrimages.

Keywords: Pilgrimages, Hospitality, Takht Sri Damadama Sahib, and Religious Tourism

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in tourism to religious destinations globally, encompassing a variety of religious traditions, and this trend has emerged as a significant catalyst for economic development. Nevertheless, the body of work in this field is somewhat constrained. The primary elements influencing tourism for religious purposes include the growth of specific religious traditions, the variety of tourist

motivations, the advancement of media coverage regarding religious sites and events, and the active collaboration between religious and secular authorities. It is essential to develop effective strategic plans aimed at promoting tourism in religious destinations, which will contribute to the economic development of these regions. Historically, individuals' journeys were predominantly influenced by religious motivations. The initial individuals who embarked on journeys were pilgrims, undertaking travel to various locations with the intent of engaging in spiritual worship (Hvizdova, 2018).

Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, located in Talwandi Sabo, holds significant importance due to the literary contributions of Guru Gobind Singh Ji during his stay in 1705. It is at this site that Guru Gobind Singh prepared the revised and authentic version of the Adi Granth, culminating in the final edition known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, regarded by Sikhs as their Eternal Guru<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.goldentempleamritsar.org/top-religions-of-the-world/sikhism/five-takhts/takht-sri-damdama-sahib.php?>

Over a year, he added new teachings to the original Sikh scriptures compiled by Guru Arjan Sahib, which previously included the wisdom of all preceding Sikh Gurus along with verses from Guru Tegh Bahadur. The final edition of the scriptures produced at Damdama Sahib is referred to as the 'Damdama Sahib Bir'. During this period, many

converts embraced Sikhi and joined the Khalsa. The term 'Damdama' translates to a resting place, highlighting the location's significance as a sanctuary after Guru Gobind Singh's defensive battles against Mughal oppression. This period was marked by tragedy, as two of his sons were martyred, leading the Guru to seek refuge at Talwandi. The current structure of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, built in the 1970s under Sant Seva Singh's supervision, features a spacious hall with high ceilings, two pavilions, and a 2-meter-high marble platform serving as the sanctum for the Guru Granth Sahib. The hall is adorned with geometric and floral glass designs and topped with a prominent gold-plated dome and khanda at the apex. Recognized as the fifth Takht on November 18, 1966, following recommendations from a sub-committee appointed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, its designation as Guru Ki Kashi emphasizes its spiritual and educational significance. A further affirmation of this status came during the tercentennial celebrations of the Khalsa, when the Government of India officially recognized Takht Sri Damdama Sahib in April 1999. Throughout his time here, Guru Gobind Singh issued Hukamnama to the Sikhs, reinforcing the area's status as a prominent Takht. After composing Zafarnama, he successfully battled at Muktsar before resting at Talwandi Sabo, where his orders for Sikhs further solidified the site's legacy as a spiritual headquarters.

Damdama Sahib serves as the headquarters for the Nihangs. There exist 10 Gurudwaras and three tanks. The three tanks are Nankar Sarover, Akalsar Sarover, and Gurusar Sarover. The initial named tank is linked to Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who reportedly visited this village in 1510 A.D. during his second Pad Yatra to Rajputana. The Akalsar Sarover is linked to Guru Gobind Singhji, and a sip of its water is thought to provide protection from

diseases and afflictions. The Gurusar Sarover is believed to have been excavated under the directives of Guru Teg Bahadurji.

## 2. Research Methodology

In alignment with the study's requirements, primary data were gathered from 10 hotels located in proximity to Sri Damadama Sahib through a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire encompassed inquiries related to various structural aspects of the hospitality sector, as indicated in Table 1. The selection criteria for the hotels stipulated that they must be within no more than 5 kilometers, adhering to the purposive sampling method.

### Findings

Table 1 indicates the details regarding the nature and facilities offered by them.

**Table 1: Details of Hotels**

Sr. No.	Type of hotel	No. of rooms	No. of employees	Charges per day (Rs.)	Facilities provided	Mode of booking
1	Budget	<10	<5	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility	Walk-in, phone
2	Budget	<10	<5	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility, restaurant	Walk-in, phone
3	Mid-range	10-20	<5	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility, restaurant	Walk-in, phone
4	Mid-range	<10	<5	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility, restaurant	Walk-in, phone
5	Mid-range	<10	<5	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility	Walk-in, phone

Sr. No.	Type of hotel	No. of rooms	No. of employees	Charges per day (Rs.)	Facilities provided	Mode of booking
6	Mid-range	<10	5-10	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility, restaurant	Walk-in, phone
7	Mid-range	<10	<5	Below 1000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility	Walk-in, phone
8	Luxury	<10	5-10	1000-2000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility	Walk-in, phone
9	Luxury	10-20	<5	1000-2000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility	Walk-in, phone, online booking app
10	Luxury	<10	<5	1000-2000	AC room, free wi-fi, parking facility	Walk-in, phone

Source: Authors' compilation

### 3. The Local Hospitality Ecosystem

As a result of the fact that seven out of ten hotels fell into either the budget or the mid-range categories, with room rates reaching up to INR 2,000, the hospitality industry is concentrating its efforts on the factor of affordability. An organization of the sectors in this manner displays the degree to which individuals or tourists in such locations are sensitive to pricing. It is also worth noting that the bulk of the hotels have fewer than ten rooms, which is a strong indication of the restricted ability of the hotels to accommodate guests. Also, none of the hotels has more than ten employees at any given time. If the workforce is restricted in this manner, it has an impact on the maintenance, professionalism, and quality of service. When it comes to the services that are provided, virtually every company provides air-conditioned rooms, parking facilities, and free

wireless internet access. Additionally, some hotels also have restaurants, which provide an additional value to the property by giving the convenience of having access to sustenance. It may come as a surprise to learn that nine out of ten hotels continue to rely on conventional booking methods, such as walk-in registration and telephone reservations.

### 4. Strategic and Operational Challenges

This case study brought to light several operational and strategic difficulties throughout the organization. Although there are limited accommodations available, it is possible that they will not be sufficient to accommodate travelers during busy seasons. In addition, the limited availability of online bookings makes it difficult to arrange trips for guests and reduces the visibility of hotels on various web platforms. The management of customers will be significantly more difficult if there are restricted personnel.

From the point of view of the management of the hospitality industry, Takht Sri Damdama Sahib is a market that is both big in volume and low in cost. It is reasonable to anticipate that demand will remain consistent because of the religious significance of the item; nonetheless, the absence of a digital system and the lack of up-to-date technology would be key problems.

### 5. Conclusion

Considering the pilgrimage culture, the hospitality sector near Takht Sri Damdama Sahib focuses on providing affordable accommodation facilities, as the purpose of visiting such places is religious. Although the sector offers basic amenities at affordable prices, there is a need for digital integration along with professional services. Along with improved service quality, the enhanced adoption of new technology and coordination among stakeholders will assist in the sustainable

development of such a pilgrimage without compromising the spiritual ethos.

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