

## **Kartarpur Corridor: A New Role for Political Marketing**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Scammell (1995) has argued that by reducing the barriers between government's leads to reaching consent. She has also noted the perturbing reality of participation of consultants "into the inner sanctum of government" (p. 14). She counter argues that if marketing concepts are applied to politics, it will become more democratic. Political marketing can result in making political parties and candidates more knowledgeable of the needs of the public through improvement in information flow from public to politicians and vice versa. Thus, Scammell (1995) concludes that "'political marketing' provides a rational way for parties or candidates to behave in conditions of competitive mass democracy". O' Shaughnessy, (2001) has argued that due to permanent campaign, political marketing plays the pivotal role in policy making. This means that political marketing is not merely the run up campaign rather it is of strategic importance (Smith & Hirst, 2001; Lees-Marshment, 2001).

We can also analyze the Kartarpur Corridor event. Indian Punjab is attached with Pakistani Punjab. Both are resilient in culture, language and to some extent customs. At the time of partition of subcontinent some important shrines of Sikh community like Nankana Sahib, Sacha Soda, Hassan Abdal and Kartarpur Sahib became the part of Pakistani Punjab. The nearest most shrine from Indian Punjab border is Kartarpur Sahib where the Gurunanak Sahib spent his life's last eighteen years had been attached with Pakistan in 1947. It is only three km away in Pakistan from Indian international border. Sikh community used to see this place from Indian border via telescope. Every year few Sikhs who come to visit their shrines come to Pakistan via visa but the Kartarpur Corridor is a landmark for all the Sikh community. Whole Sikh community can visit their holy shrine of Kartarpur without visa. The initial recommendation by Pakistani side allowed us to see this whole event in the perspective of political marketing. We can also affiliate this event with the international political marketing. Because this step by Pakistan is not only appreciated by the Sikh community but also marketed Pakistan as the peaceful country which as Muslim state also takes care of other religions. This message can also be attributed as Pakistan is not dangerous for doing commercial activities and Pakistani government and other state

institutions are also vigilant for all communities.

**Key Words:** Kartar Pur Corridor, Sikh Political Marketing, Pakistan, Gurunanak Sahib

### **Role of political communication in Kartarpur corridor**

Franklin has pointed out the broadness of the concept, range and lack of clarity of items included in political communication. “The field of political communication studies the interactions between media and political systems, locally, nationally, and internationally” definition put forward by Franklin (p. 225). Franklin (1995) has emphasized that political communication “will need to accommodate even further diversity, expressing the varied analytical approaches, assumptions, and disciplinary backgrounds of communication scholars” (p. 226). These backgrounds include Political Science, Social Psychology, History, Sociology and Cultural Theory. Based on above argument, it can be assumed that political communication can guide political marketing in changing the perception from negative to positive. This shows the importance political marketing has gained over the past decade and has become a permanent strategic element of governance.

Pakistan has fought a great war against those elements which has spoiled the positive word of mouth that Pakistan is a safe place to visit and tourism. In past, Pakistan could not satisfy the international community that Pakistan as a state is not getting successful to combat those elements. Pakistan has given As huge numbers of sacrifices in this battle. It might be due to weak defense of Pakistani case and poor marketing of responsible institution or personality. But the event of Kartarpur corridor allowed Pakistan to communicate itself to achieve the desired goals. There is a saying that “action speaks louder than words”. In this matter Pakistan communicated its peaceful intention as terms of sound action. It also guided political marketers perceive it as required by Pakistan.

### **Political marketing in the interest of Sikh religion by Pakistan**

Notwithstanding the accusations of being an enemy agent amid a barrage of frightening public threats and the announcement of prize money on his head, the ever-smiling Sardarji remains determined to invest his energies in pursuing reconciliation. This is also inflaming the current loathsome political architecture in India, its auxiliaries in the media, and their calculus for perpetuating hate as a weapon of choice to produce a gainful harvest in the form of electoral victories.

The efforts towards reconciliation are also being stonewalled by a fossilized bureaucratic architecture shaped by the colonial thinking of yore that was deliberately shaped to denigrate and disparage common historical legacies to diminish their power in uniting and fostering mutual humanitarian bonds.

Sidhu’s recent visit to Pakistan has reignited the longstanding demand of Sikhs to open a pilgrimage corridor between Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan and Baba

### ***Kartarpur Corridor: A New Role for Political Marketing***

Nanak Gurdawara in Gurdaspur, India – an important settlement in Sikh history that contains three renowned Gurdwaras. Kartarpur Sahib is also an equally important monument and one of the most famous and historic Gurdwaras. It is the third oldest place of worship that was built by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh faith.

Baba Guru Nanak founded a commune of his followers in Kartarpur, a name also coined by Nanak. The current gurdwara was built on the site where Baba Guru Nanak passed away, on September 22, 1539. There is a mere distance of six kilometers between the two sites – Dera Baba Nanak and Kartarpur Sahib but a wall of an international border between India and Pakistan that is also tempered by a toxic rhetoric, the securitization of people and places, and a total breakdown in mutual trust.

Thankfully, Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur is visible to Sikh pilgrims from Dera Baba Nanak on the Indian side as Pakistani authorities usually prune the shrubbery to clear the field of view for the devotees. The visitors to Dera Baba Nanak are usually able to perform darshan from the cupolas of the gurdwaras or the mounds in the locality.

In a press conference last week, Sidhu claimed that Pakistan has decided to allow access to the Kartarpur corridor, a claim that was earlier supported by Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhry. The recent reports sound quite positive as they suggest that Sikh pilgrims will enjoy “visa-free direct access” to the gurdwara. An Indian news source that quoted Pakistani authorities claimed that some forward movement is expected soon around the matter. This would be a terrific gift for Sikhs all around the world as they are preparing for celebration of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Sahib next year.

Unfettered access to the holy place would also be a befitting tribute to Nanak, who rose to break the stranglehold of the oppressive system of socio-religious hierarchies in medieval Punjab and united people across various tyrannical divisions. “Pakistan will soon open the border at Kartarpur ... [and] ... a road will be constructed for pilgrims,” Chaudhry maintained.

This would be a befitting tribute to the composite past of Punjab that could help create a better understanding between both countries. There is overwhelming warmth for a lay traveller in Punjab and between Punjabis from the two sides with an unceasing yearning to know more about the other across the frontier.

### **The opening of the Kartarpur corridor, a landmark step in international political marketing**

The opening of the Kartarpur corridor for Sikh pilgrims would be a small step towards reconciliation, and foster shared cultural and historical linkages. In the future, a similar arrangement could be extended towards Hindu pilgrims who want to visit the Katas Raj Temples or similar monuments of historic and spiritual value.

Imran Khan's new government has started on a very positive note in its efforts to foster a friendly environment in order to create long-term accommodation with all neighbors. His first speech after winning the elections offers hope as he displayed a sound understanding of the problems facing Pakistan and their regional dimensions – mainly peace with India and peace in Afghanistan.

The continued rivalry between India and Pakistan remains one of the biggest challenges for South Asia – a tragedy that has blighted progress and equitable development in the whole region. The enmity between both countries has spilled beyond their borders and destroyed many chances for meaningful sociopolitical development as well as commercial linkages that would have benefitted everybody within the SAARC region.

### **Why construction of visa-free Kartarpur corridor is so historic and politically marketed?**

Shrine of Guru Nanak Sahib (Gurdawara Kartarpur), founder of Sikh religion, is situated in the tranquil green plains of Narowal area in Pakistani Punjab just three kilometers away from Indian border. Equally distant from Pakistani border, on Indian side, is situated Gurdawara Darbar Sahib in Gurdaspur district. On a clear day, both are visible to each other. But after the division of Punjab in 1947 between the two countries, it has become impossible for Sikhs to travel freely between these two most holy places. India's Sikh community is approximately 20 million in number, who are most affected from the Redcliff award. On November 28<sup>th</sup> 2018, both governments took a historic step towards making a corridor between these two holy places enabling visa-free travel for Sikh pilgrims.

### **Cut off to most Sikh pilgrims**

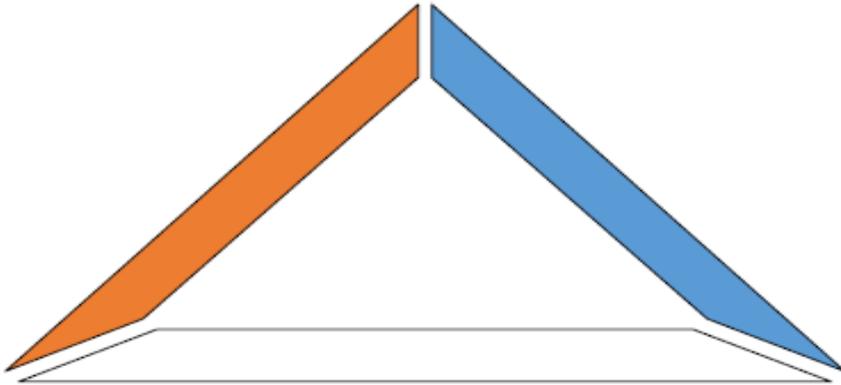
Sikhs have been the most affected community due to the division of Punjab into Pakistani Punjab and Indian Punjab. This division resulted in division of their most sacred and holy places. Kartarpur Corridor remained a demand from Sikhs for over a period of almost half century but the decision between two rivals remained a distant dream.

### **Service marketing triangle in perspective of international political marketing**

Service marketing is a dynamic model consisting of a triangle of three interlinked groups that work together to develop, promote, and deliver services. Applied to Kartarpur corridor, Service marketing model takes the shape shown in Fig. 1.

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Pakistan (State) People



Employees (Pakistani Govt.)

Customers (Sikhs)

- External Marketing: Company (Pakistan) and employees (Pakistani Govt.)
- Internal Marketing: Company(Pakistan) and customers (Sikhs)
- Interactive Marketing: Customer (Sikhs) and employees (Pakistani Govt.)

### **External marketing**

- Pakistan Government (marketers) interacted with the customers through representative of Sikh community Mr. Sidhu in order to satisfy their needs / demand to opening of Kartarpur corridor;
- Set parameters (Methodologies);
- Captured the attention of the market (International community) and interest of the customer (Sikh community) towards the company's (Pakistani State) services.

### **Internal marketing**

- Formulate the internal processes that enable the service marketers to deliver to its customers (Sikh community);
- Taking on board the relevant Institutions / Departments;
- Train employees of relevant institutions), keep them motivated, teamwork programs, etc.;
- The company has to communicate its goals and vision to its employees on regular basis.

## **Interactive marketing**

Service Encounter which refers to the most important, interaction of foreign office with the Sikh community, customers for if they fail, the whole model fails.

## **Strategic implications of the political services marketing triangle**

- Pakistan's focus should be the satisfaction of the customer's i.e. Sikh community because Sikh community is spread all over the world and it will create a positive word of mouth for Pakistan.
- Good ambience for the old neighbors and similar or same culture should be maintained and projected by Pakistan to accomplish all the efforts in a successful way.
- Relevant institutions personnel like, foreign office, police, rangers and army should be very good at performing their tasks through knowledge, skills and empowerment in performing the task.
- Good service delivery should be ensured.

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