5.1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge increment process and research, both terminologies are similar to each other, or it could be said that thorough research can help in increasing the knowledge of an individual about any particular subject or topic. Research is a very commonly used phenomenon among the scholars, but its actual usage and applicability could be justified if it is used to polish or to gain more intellect towards already established facts or sayings. Digging down the subject into different layers with respect to different dimensions gives birth to new knowledge, and for the same purpose, the need for research is huge (Pennink and Jonker, 2010). Thus, it could become clear that there is a positive correlation between research and knowledge. Further, research is a systematic and scientific approach to gather desired information on the topic. This information is always bound with certain criteria’s and specific objectives.

The major characteristics of research are that it is specific and moves in a certain direction. Random search is never a part of proper research where an individual can never reach towards any conclusion. Further, the directionless research always leads towards the huge amount of confusion. The pattern of the knowledge could never be created, and it becomes difficult to establish a relationship between various dimensions of subject matter. Thus, research tends to be a scientific and systematic method or approach of gathering the information. The purpose of research also varies as per the mindset or thought process of individuals.

Sometimes research is conducted just to gather the previous information, and sometimes the researcher can study previous findings just to add something new to it. Sometimes investigation could take place, and on the basis of results of that investigation, additional efforts could be made to improve the knowledge or earlier conclusions. Thus, research has various motives, and it comes into
existence from various points of view. The stronger the research is, the impact of
discovery and invention is also stronger. It is something that helps society to get
something unique and helpful and enable the researcher to deliver something new
and innovative (Neuman, 2009)².

Research is an academic activity and refines work in the field. Research
helps various participants of the society in bringing improvements as well. The
contribution of the research is huge in redefining the social problems and stating
the most suitable and appropriate suggestions. The section of research
methodology provides a firm base to entire study. In research methodology
section, special consideration is given to understand the science of research, and to
explore the various aspects of research. The part of research methodology could
be treated as a guideline to entire study, and most importantly the research could
be conducted in an accurate manner. The formulation of theories and selection of
various available research alternatives are all the aspects come into existence in
the chapter on research methodology. Here the researcher depicts his thought
process and portrays it to readers as well. The mindset of researcher towards the
subject matter could be easily identified with the help of research methodology,
and selected research techniques can justify with research report.

As mentioned above, to complete the research report, the need for research
methodology is immense. Thus, it becomes clear that the research methodology is
a technique to solve the particular problem. In other words, the research
methodology could be treated as a technique that allows the researcher to
complete the report in most suitable and easiest manner. The whole planning of
the work and describing the path to achieving the objectives is known as research
methodology (Merriam, 2009)³. Therefore, the significance of research
methodology is huge in the entire research process.

5.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although the above section explains the use of research methodology along
with its application to the study, its significance could be understood in a deeper
manner. Here it is understood that the research methodology is a very
significant and most essential element of the entire research process. It is to acknowledge that the researcher should work sincerely and in most appropriate and careful manner on constructing the section of research methodology. The major requirement of research methodology is to justify with the set up of the entire trajectory to reach the desired conclusion. It is clear that designing the suitable methodology can enable a researcher to solve the research problem. It provides right direction to the researcher so that the chances of errors could be minimised. Most importantly, the researcher can improve the quality of the report. The correctly and appropriately chosen research methodology helps in moving with right kind of approach, and it also allows dealing with research objectives and problem statement. The selected research techniques could show the path to get the estimated result, and efficiency of the research could also be maintained (Kothari, 2004).

In a broad context, it will not be wrong to say that the research methodology explains the mindset of researcher towards the topic, and his approach to deal with the problem could also be identified. Through research methodology, the decision making of a researcher could be improved as it guides in selecting the suitable framework for the study. To get a detailed understanding of any particular research, the readers first get into the section of research methodology. It includes the detailed description of the kind of data and information that has been gathered into the report. It is clear that the data and information are two very significant elements of research. Further, the research methodology includes the sources of data collection that have been used in the report. Other than data type and data collection sources, the nature of participants, their numbers are also mentioned in the section of research methodology. Additionally, the significance of research methodology also includes the proper planning of different techniques to be applied to the study. Overall, the major significance of research methodology is to disseminate the required information (related to selected research techniques and methods) within the report so that the nature of study could become easily understandable (Kumar, 2010).
5.3 RESEARCH ONION

Research Onion is an efficient model that has a high level of relevance with the logical completion of the entire research process. It is a research model that is highly helpful in selecting the most suitable research methodology. The research onion model explains the variety of techniques and methods that are available to the researcher. These research methods and techniques could be immensely helpful in achieving the relevant results and conclusions of the study. It is to acknowledge that the research onion model provides detailed knowledge about the research process. Saunders (2009) suggests the various layers of the research process (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The diagram below presents the diagrammatic representation of a research onion model:

Figure 5.1: Research Onion Model
(Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009)
5.3.1 Outside the Layer

This external part of the layer is related to the philosophical view of the study. It involves three kinds of philosophy one is ontology, the second is epistemology, and the third is axiology. The most important step in the planning of good research is selecting the most suitable philosophy.

**Ontology:** To show the reality, the researcher can apply the ontology philosophy. It explains the truth and actual scenario of nature. In this, the researcher focuses on identifying the real facts and figures in a detailed manner. The changes in world and actual scenario need to be shed in light under the ontology philosophy. Further, the relationship between reality and its influence on various dimensions of the society is also a part of such kind of philosophy. According to Saunders (2009), there is a huge gap between perception towards the reality and actual scenario, so eradicating the difference between these aspects is the major contribution of ontology philosophy. The subcategories of ontological philosophy are the constructivism, objectivism and pragmatism (Hjorland, 2005)\(^7\).

**Epistemology:** The differentiation here is that the facts about the perception of people towards the truth and reality took place. The role of facts and research is huge in epistemology. In this philosophy the truth and reality are not accepted directly, the research and the testing process proves the reality or provides different knowledge that has been accepted by the society at enormous scale. The volatile situations and opinions are also a part of scientific research, and epistemology philosophy can justify with the same. The subcategories of epistemology philosophy are positivism, critical realism and interpretive.

**Axiology:** It is completely different from the above two philosophies. It is to acknowledge that while accomplishing the research, the researcher also tends to put his thought process within the report. The mindset and opinion of the researcher also play a crucial role in affecting the entire process of research. The data collection, sampling, selection of topic and other research methodologies could be affected by the personal thought process of the researcher. The influence of this philosophy is huge upon the results of the study as well. Thus, these are the outside elements of research onion model.
5.3.2 Layer 1

This layer of the research onion model is the extension or the elaborated explanation of the subcategories of outside elements of the research onion model. This layer also consists the philosophical views of the study and has a detailed analysis of subcategories of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The selection of philosophies is something that must be done in a particular manner. The decision related to the philosophy affects the whole study as it guides to move in the right direction, and most importantly the structure of the report could also be affected immensely. The base of valid findings is dependent on the choice of philosophy, and it took place at the prior stage of the study.

**Objectivism:** As per this philosophy, different people have diverse objectives in different situations. It is clear that the social phenomenon have a different meaning to people, and they never behave similarly to the same situation. It recognises diversity in the thought process of society and people. Further, the impact of social phenomena is also huge in the society, and various sections of the society can witness different results and outputs (Hoy, 2009).

**Constructivism:** It is completely opposite to the objectivism research philosophy. It is clear that the social phenomenon is the result of a change in the mindset and impact of the society. Whenever any change took place within the society, the diversity of social phenomena is required, and it tends to be changed accordingly. In the previous philosophy, the social phenomenon was driving the society, but in this, the society and its elements are influencing the natural environment or the reality. It is a constructive ontological view that is very common nowadays.

**Positivism:** In positivism, the researcher is responsible for measuring the gap between the actual knowledge and the accepted knowledge. The researcher can frame the research questions and can test them in the actual and natural environment. It explains the universal truth that could never be changed under any circumstances. The positivism research philosophy deals with the top-most layer of truth and reality by testing the hypothesis in the real world. The role of statistical analysis is huge in positivism research philosophy.
**Realism:** There is no big difference between realism and positive research philosophy. Both the philosophies work, in the same way, and their principles are based on same ideology. The social reality never changes as per the change in the situation, and it always remains the same as suggested by realism research philosophy. The only difference in the realism and positivism is that the scientific methods and certain universally accepted truths and realities could be changed or tested under controlled environment. The realism research philosophy comes into existence when there is narrow but the possible scope is available to test the already established fact or reality. The scientific methods are not perfect, and scope of continuous improvement is always available. The theories could be revised, and most importantly the researcher can focus on the application of new research techniques, and experimental approach could come into existence (Jacobsen, 2005)\(^9\).

**Interpretive:** It focuses on the study of people’s mindset within the environment. The researcher tends to understand how people are connected to each another, and how the cultural existence is affecting their ideas and opinions. The people’s mindset and opinion towards each other could be different and could vary due to various external environmental forces. The researcher tends to study all the aspects and focus on identifying the meaningful change within the society. It is to acknowledge at this juncture that the connections between culture and people-to-people gain priority by the researcher. Thus, interpretive research philosophy is related to the participation of people in the social and cultural life of other people.

**Pragmatism:** It is an approach which explains the existence of both the constructivism and objectivism approach. As per the pragmatism approach, both these approaches are correct to implement within any research report. These approaches can provide complete detailing about the subject matter, and most importantly the conclusion or the solution to the problem could be found in the easiest manner. The main advantage of pragmatism philosophy is that both the points of view could be experienced. Thus, it was the explanation of layer 1 of the research onion model that deals with the philosophies of the researcher.
5.3.3 Layer 2

According to Saunders (2009), the second layer of research onion model is related to the research approach. The research approach includes the deductive and the inductive research approach. To decide the most suitable research approach, there is a huge requirement of giving special priority to the research aims and objectives along with the subject matter.

![Deductive vs. Inductive](Image)

**Figure 5.2: Research Approaches**  
*(Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009)*

**Deductive approach:** It is an approach in which a researcher aims at finding the answer to particular question or statement that is already available. The entire research moves into one direction so that answer to those statements or question could be found out. The statement could be in the form already accepted reality or fact (Jonas, 2007). The researcher intends to assess the possibility of the existence of reality or fact, and research helps in finding the same with the help of deductive approach. In deductive research approach, the researcher moves from theory or principles to particular statement. The relevance of theory to the statement could be established very easily. In deductive research approach, the scope of observation is narrow as compared to the inductive research approach.
**Inductive approach:** As in earlier approach the researcher assess the statement on the basis of already propounded theory, here the researcher is intended to create or form any new theory. In this, the role of observation is immense as it changes the thought process, and existing mindset could be changed accordingly. In inductive research approach, the possibility of observing and analysing the situation is very high. The description of the new theory is completely and solely based on the analysis of previously researched theories. The inductive research approach is justifiable when the researcher has intentions to test the reality and truth from a social perspective and is ready to accept the change. The role of subject matter is high in selecting the most suitable and appropriate research approach.

**5.3.4 Layer 3**

This layer is related to the selection of appropriate research style that could be helpful in identifying the data collection and data analysing sources, and most importantly how the researcher is going to use gathered data within the report. There are different styles available to the researcher, and every style has its benefits and limitations. It is mainly known as research design that determines the overall structure of the study. The description of various elements of this layer is given below:

**Experiment:** It is a kind of design that has relevance to the scientific analysis, and with the help of statistical tools and methods, the experimental design could be established. Here, the causal effect of one group on another group is measured, and it just enables to understand the phenomenon through independent and dependent variable (Goddard and Melville, 2004)\(^\text{11}\). It is comparatively complex kind of research design.

**Survey:** It is another kind of research design that has a high level of advantage to gather the detailed understanding of the subject matter. The major advantage of survey method is that it is helpful when a researcher intends to collect a large amount of data or information. A large amount of data could be easily collected through surveys like online survey as it has a wide reach and most importantly can cater large population area at the single point of time. Various
dimensions and areas of any topic like who, what, where, when and how could be addressed properly. Survey method is highly popular technique that has a high level of positive contribution in analysing the quantitative data or information. Further, it has an association with the deductive approach as through survey the validity of any statement could be assessed.

**Case Study:** It is more evident and realistic form of collecting data. By using case study method, the researcher can focus on the details of one area of subject or an individual. The number of case studies must be restricted so that the number of information could be extracted from the case study analysis. The biggest advantage of case study analysis is that the data collection process takes place easily, and it avoids the wastage of time. Further, the desired information could be gathered easily. Moreover, case study provides the real life information, and it could be associated with both qualitative and quantitative nature of the study (Flick, 2009)\(^\text{12}\).

**Action Research:** It is very specific kind of study in which a researcher focuses on finding the solution to the particular issue or problem. It is also clear that the researcher intended to implement the solutions for the issue. Thus, in action research, both finding and implementation of solution gain special consideration along with the identification of problems. Further, the researcher has an opportunity to become a part of organisational strategic management or case study that demands the special attention from the researcher. A case study may have certain kind of issues that could be solved by the researcher. In the same manner, the organisation can also get proper attention from the researcher. Here, the collaboration between the organisation and the researcher could be done. The action research design starts from the objectives, then reaches to the diagnosis of the issue, and at last, states some meaningful and effective solutions towards the problem based upon objectives. Thus, it is very specific kind of research design.

**Grounded Theory:** In grounded theory, the fundamentals of inductive approach come into existence, and it works in same way as the inductive approach. It could be said that this research design is more suitable for the inductive approach. The researcher collects the data and information through observation and most importantly the theory could be propounded from analysing
that particular information or data. Thus, the role of observation and creating the perception is immense in grounded theory research design. The only difference is that the new theory has relevance to the existing theory, and it does not create any argument against the argument from the current literature or research. Therefore, grounded theory is related to the extension or bringing the improvement into the existing theory in an appropriate manner (Kooy, 2008)\textsuperscript{13}.

**Ethnography:** It has some relationship with the anthropology and most importantly here the researcher tries to understand other people’s point of view. While applying the ethnography research design, the researcher requires mixing with the society or with the actual situation, where the whole study is concentrated. It can help in understanding the thought process of other people, and the results could be effective. It is to acknowledge that the ethnography research design is very much time consuming, and it just demands vast experience. The researcher may understand the long-term changes, and the social phenomenon could also be understandable easily.

**Archival Research:** In this research design, the researcher collects the data from archives or existing data sets. The usage of available information is very high in such kind of research design. It includes the exploratory, explanatory and descriptive analysis. These research designs have their advantages and applicability within the study. In exploratory research, the nature of research design is more of digging the subject matter from different dimensions. On the contrary, the exploratory research involves the detailed explanation of the existing information. Moreover, it will not be wrong to say that it deals with the secondary data or information.

**5.3.5 Layer 4**

This layer of research onion model is related to the nature of the study and is closely associated with the type of research. It is to acknowledge that the nature of study could be categorised into three major elements. These elements are qualitative, quantitative or the mix of both qualitative and quantitative. It is clear that in these types of studies, the level of research is different, and approach also differs as per the nature of report (Barrett, Powley and Pearce, 2011)\textsuperscript{14}. The
researcher can use both, but one of the qualitative and quantitative could be dominant, and decision for the same could be related to the subject matter. The characteristics of qualitative and quantitative research techniques are completely diverse than each other.

The quantitative method is related to the use of numbers, and special consideration is given to the implementation of statistical tools. On the contrary, qualitative research type is associated with the large elements. The topics that cover opinion thought process and emotions mostly catered within the qualitative research type. The major role of these methods is that they affect the style and sources of data collection as well as data analysis. It has the potential to affect the philosophy and approach of the researcher. Thus, this particular layer and its elements should gain huge consideration by the researcher.

Mono Method: It is a kind of method in which researcher understands the demand of topic or subject matter, and determines only one kind of research technique to apply. Either qualitative or quantitative could be applied rather than the combination of both. The data collection process and other philosophical aspects also put their impact on the selection of the mono method. Due to single research type, the research process becomes easy, and it helps in lowering down the complexity of entire research.

Mixed Method: As the name suggests, the mix of both qualitative and quantitative nature of research could be applied by the researcher. It is an ideal situation to be followed for the data collection and data analysis process. Here, the weak aspects of both the approaches could be eradicated, and most importantly the gap in the research could also be filled. The combination could be prepared as per the need of research and nature of data that has been collected.

Multi-Method: It is a more complex form of research type as the researcher has the leverage to apply both qualitative and quantitative kind of research. The complexity is high as the researcher may apply both but focus only on one kind of research type. The nature of entire study revolves around either quantitative or qualitative point of view. The data used in such kind of studies also vary as per nature, but treatment is similar. Therefore, these are the patterns or combinations available with the researcher (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).
5.3.6 Layer 5

This layer has an association with the particular period that has been taken to complete the research. It includes two kinds of time horizon; one is cross-sectional, and another one is longitudinal. Cross-sectional is used for the shorter period, and longitudinal is used for the longer period.

Cross-sectional is used when the research nature is qualitative or quantitative, and the researcher has intentions to study behavioural aspects of various groups or many individuals at the single point of time. On the contrary, the longitudinal time horizon is applied when the researcher is studying the behaviour of total samples for a longer period.

5.3.7 Layer 6

It deals with the data collection and data analysis tools. Here, the researcher takes the decisions regarding the selection of most appropriate collection and analysis tools. For the same purpose, the researcher focuses on various other decisions taken in above layers of the research methodology. This decision put its impact on the entire process of research. The data collection could help in gathering the most reliable and valid information. Further, the data analysis techniques must be selected in such a way so that the desirable results could be generated.

Data Collection and Analysis: Various elements of the data collection could be considered at this layer of the research methodology. The content related to the questionnaire, selection of the sample, sample size and their profile is covered in the phase of data collection. Other than this, the analysis technique must justify with the objectives and the nature of data or information (Ashwin, 2011).15

Thus, it is a complete description of each and every layer of research onion model. The understanding of this model helps in improving the quality and level of entire research. The subsequent paragraphs discuss the methodologies used in the current study.
5.4 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

With the help of above scenario, various kinds of research philosophies have become clear in a proper way. Objectivism, realism, constructivism, interpretive and positivism these are major available alternatives for the researcher that could be applied to the thesis to put more quality in the content. It is to acknowledge that the topic and research philosophy selection decision has a great relationship with each other. It could be stated articulately that if the research philosophy has not been selected as per the subject matter, then it is impossible to get the desired results, and most importantly the research resources could never be utilised in an appropriate manner. Here, the topic clears that the researcher has aimed at identifying the popular customer retention strategies within the Indian retail sector. Further, the retail sector and its category have also defined by the researcher.

The whole study is revolving around the organised retail sector in India. Thus, it ensures that the researcher has aimed to evaluate the impact of customer retention strategies of retail stores on the buying behaviour of their customers and to study various factors that can put its impact on the customer retention strategies of companies active in the organised retail sector. Thus, the most relevant research philosophy is the interpretive research philosophy. The basic fundamental of interpretive research philosophy is that it accepts the truth as per the situation and environmental conditions. The dynamism is the nature of interpretive research philosophy. Additionally, the subject matter is also very much dynamic as the customer retention strategies could never be the same for the companies under various situations. It is something that allows the researcher to rely on the interpretive research philosophy (Krishnaswamy, Sivakumar and Mathirajan, 2009).16

The major reason for using the interpretive research philosophy is that sometimes a simple fact demands an intense investigation from different perspectives, and it has so many hidden meanings. Thus, the researcher was in a position to deal with many thought processes and the differences in the strategies of companies. It is clear that companies can never adopt the same strategy to
handle the customer retention, so this fact itself supports the interpretive research philosophy. Through interpretive research philosophy, the reasons behind the selection of particular strategies (of diverse companies) were investigated, and critical analysis of the same was done. Openness is the major characteristics of interpretive research philosophy.

Several other reasons corroborate for the application of interpretive research philosophy in the current study. Other than dynamism, the scope of subject matter also matters in the current scenario (Hussain, 2011)\textsuperscript{17}. However, the study is very much narrow like it caters the one subject area of management \textit{i.e.} customer retention strategies. The area is specific \textit{i.e.} India, and the industry is also very much specific \textit{i.e.} organised retail sector. However, still, the scope of customer’s perception and their behaviour is very much high. It is something that forces companies to design their strategies. Thus, the researcher is supposed to understand the customer’s mindset first then only the retention topic could be covered.

The companies can never retain their customers if the organisations do not thoroughly investigate the cultural values of the host country. The retail sector companies may have strong retention strategies, but it is different in diverse situations. So the fact of universal applicability of the strategies is deniable in the current report. So, interpretive research philosophy is very much appropriate in present thesis report. Further, it is also required to understand that company in the current case is not specific; it is catering so many companies like Indian companies and foreign companies active in the Indian retail sector (Khan, 2011)\textsuperscript{18}. Therefore, this element also opens the scope of applying the interpretive research philosophy. Every organisation uses their ideologies and tactics to attract the customers. Thus, here the phenomenon that is common could not be followed for the study.

This research supports the use of interpretive research philosophy. Here, the researcher is not intended to find out any new theory that is also a strong element to use the interpretive research philosophy. However, it has its usage in other areas of research methodology. Further, the cultural and social environment of India could be taken into special consideration to understanding the strategies
of retail sector companies. The base or the influence of local Indian culture over the strategic decision making was identified. With the help of interpretive research philosophy, it becomes easier to establish a relationship between the local cultural values and other country’s cultural values. The difference between the mindset of local companies and outside retail sector companies towards the behaviour of Indian consumers was also understood through interpretive research philosophy. It was possible for the researcher to understand the topic with an open mind and taking all the facts and aspects from an environmental point of view rather than global scenario. Overall, to get a diverse set of knowledge and to shed light on different dimensions related to the current subject matter, the interpretive research philosophy has gained priority.

5.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

The selection decision of research approach is completely dependent upon the fact that how the researcher is dealing with the subject matter. It is the crucial element that the research approach explains that how the researcher has treated the various elements of the topic. It is to acknowledge that while selecting the appropriate research approach, the objectives or the aims of the study should be taken into special consideration. The researcher must be clear with the reason behind the selection of particular subject. It helps in deciding the treatment with the entire research. The research lies in two categories, as mentioned above, inductive and deductive research approach. The nature and applicability of both the research approaches are completely different to each other (Goddard and Melville, 2004).11

In the current scenario, the researcher has focused on the inductive approach as this approach helps in justifying with the subject matter and ultimate objective of the study. It is clear that the topic states about the identification of customer retention strategies within the Indian retail sector. Thus, the researcher has the leverage to study the entire organised Indian retail sector. Through deductive approach, it is not possible to observe the particular statement or situation as it does not focus on the established situation. On the contrary, the inductive approach enabled the researcher to focus on observing the existing
customer retention strategies of the Indian retail sector. It is very crucial that without observing, it is impossible to reach any conclusion. Here, the researcher is not intended to provide any theory but still the intentions are clear to get relevant and useful information about the customer retention strategies and already propounded theories.

The field could become clear through inductive approach as the observation could be so strong, and it could be done through various ways. There are various reasons that demand the use of inductive approach, and it just fosters the researcher to incline towards the mentioned research approach. Another reason is that the business environment and its various aspects related to the strategy making of long-term customer retention extracted from the social perspectives. Thus, the study of social perspectives and its keen observation is possible through inductive approach. The observation could be as deep as the organised retail sector, and its growth could be determined along with the challenges with respect to customer retention.

In India, the unorganised retail sector is very popular. In such cases, the study becomes very much interesting, and deep observation helped in digging out some very attractive and interesting facts about the strategic position and decisions of companies. Further, the observation was done on the pre and post customer behaviour also provided chance or an opportunity to identify the impact of various customer retention strategies. Thus in this way, with the help of inductive approach the researcher had a wide scope to observe the elements and thus, confirmed the valid conclusion afterwards (Hussain, 2011).17

At the same time, it is essential to understand that here the human emotions and their moods are the centres of study, which were easily investigated with the inductive research approach. The customer behaviour has a huge role in accepting or declining the strategies made by the companies. Thus, here the researcher had an opportunity to understand the consumer behaviour and strategic decision making and level of customer retention (specifically in the organised retail sector) simultaneously. Further, the level of flexibility is another element that allowed using inductive research approach within the current research report.
Due to the wide industrial investigation or observation, lots of companies have become part of the study so need of flexibility is high which could only be possible in inductive approach. Additionally, the main intentions of the study were to gather knowledge about customer retention strategies formed by the retail sector organisations, so there is no pint of generalising the findings onto a particular section of society as the study is concentrated on entire sector and one whole element of retail sector \textit{i.e.} organised sector. Therefore, in the current thesis, inductive research approach has been applied.

5.6 RESEARCH TYPE

It includes the overall nature of the study. The research type is associated with the type of data and information that has been collected and most importantly the kind of research analysis techniques has been adopted by the researcher. It is important for the research process that the data must be collected in a professional manner, so the research type plays a significant role in ensuring the reliability of the study. It is to acknowledge that the research type could be of three types; first is qualitative, second is quantitative, and third is the mix of both qualitative and quantitative. The nature of these three kinds of research types is different, and their contribution is also diverse. The qualitative is the one in which a researcher is aiming to measure the emotions or the other elements that cannot be measured in terms of numbers. Further, quantitative are the one that could be measured in terms of numbers. In above discussion, the detailed analysis has been already done about these two kinds of research type (Kuada, 2012)\textsuperscript{19}.

As mentioned above that both data collection and data analyses have strong and close association with the qualitative or quantitative nature of the report. In the current scenario, the researcher has used the mix research type as the demand of the study is high for the same. Thus, here the data collection and data analysis techniques are quite complex and are more reliable. The statistical tools have been applied along with the secondary data analysis. The diverse data has been gathered in the current study due to the qualitative nature of the study. Further, the logical and numerical information has also included within the report. The sources used for the data collection were justifiable to the both qualitative and quantitative nature of the study.
5.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopts the descriptive research design as the researcher got a chance to study the characteristics and the content in a detailed manner, and most importantly the elaborated knowledge about the customer retention strategies and their impact was gathered. Through descriptive research design, the researcher focused on the Indian retail sector and came out with interesting facts related to the customer behaviour. Thus, it helped in comparing whether the existing customer retention strategies of retail companies are positive or not. Thus, a variety of dimensions were covered through descriptive research design.

5.8 SAMPLING

The whole research methodology section or it could be said that the entire research process is categorised into two parts. One is done on the paper, and another is the field work. Here, the paperwork involves the use of internet and computer as well. The researcher stays at one place and plans the entire research process and prepares the report. However, for the same purpose, the significance of the field work is immense. Here, also, the special consideration has been given to the field work where the data has been collected through primary sources as well. Before such field work, the researcher is supposed to determine what kind of people will be the respondents and what are the questions that are expected to be asked. On the basis of it, the researcher determines the profession or the age group of the participants. It is a very complex element of the entire research process as it may put its impact on the results and final conclusions. If the researcher estimated its respondents in the wrong manner, then it will result in an incorrect conclusion, and it could spoil the essence of entire research. Therefore, it is right that the impact of sampling is huge with respect to ensuring the quality and validity of the report (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2006)²⁰.

The sampling is the very first stage of the preparation of field work as it provides the basic format that in what manner the research is going to take place on the field. The number of respondents, their kind, and behaviour, their mindset and status; all these aspects are already clear to the researcher, and accordingly, the researcher can approach the respondents. In some cases, it becomes very
complex when the researcher is focused on taking answers from the very specific category of people. Here also, the sampling has gained huge priority with respect to increasing the level of research and most importantly to increase the validity and the reliability of the study.

Another significant aspect of the sampling is that it helps in data analysis as well. The section of data analysis is dependent on the sampling techniques and majorly the number of respondents to be taken within the study. The data analysis tools and techniques could be applied accordingly. It is to acknowledge that there are two kinds of sampling techniques one is the probability sampling, and another one is the non-probability sampling techniques. Both these techniques and styles of sampling have their advantages and disadvantages. The major characteristics of probability sampling technique are that in this, the researcher can choose the respondents willingly, and intentions are just related to understanding their viewpoint. Here in the current scenario, the probabilistic sampling techniques have been considered by the researcher. Under the probabilistic sampling technique, the random sampling technique has gained huge consideration by the researcher.

There are various reasons behind the selection of random sampling technique into this report. The major reason is that the researcher aimed at identifying the responses of common people towards the retention techniques of companies. Here the simple questions have been asked to the common people so that the effectiveness of customer retention strategies of various retail stores could be identified (Bhattacharyya, 2006). Further, the researcher has applied the random sampling technique as it provides the chances of gathering the data with more accuracy and in speed manner. The researcher can gather the responses from random people, and it enables him to get responses within the stipulated period.

Another reason is that it is convenient to approach the common people, and their responses are most of the time based reliable facts and real incidents or events. It can help in gathering a different kind of information. The same factor can make the observation very much stronger. Therefore, these are some of the major reasons that influenced the researcher to select the random sampling technique into the current study.
Since the retail stores were located at different location in Udaipur and Mumbai, the researcher mainly focused on the areas nearby to the retail stores. Thus, the population residing nearby the retail stores is considered as the universe for the present study. In total, the researcher distributed 765 questionnaires to the customers of the five retail stores under study. Out of which 500 valid and completely filled questionnaires were received, 100 from each of the five retail giants, that is, Big Bazaar, EazyDay and Reliance Mart, Tesco and Wal-Mart. It is a huge number of respondents that can help in gaining the sufficient level of information. The respondents have given their responses regarding the strategies of the company and their connection with various retailers.

5.9 DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned above that the whole research process is divided into two major categories. One is the field work and other is related to paperwork or conducting the research through the internet. Thus, the major phase of field work is the data collection or the gathering of useful information. It is to acknowledge that, through the data collection, the researcher can easily reach to its results, and conclusion could be found out very easily. If the data collection phase is not executed properly, then it can put its impact on the quality of the report. The project could never be completed with ease and perfection if the data collection is not proper. Through sampling, the foundation of data collection process has been laid down. It is to acknowledge that the sampling helps in determining the population type, from which the data is required to be collected. Further, it helps in understanding that how many people are supposed to participate in the entire research process. Thus, sampling must gain a huge amount of consideration before jumping to the data collection process (Gupta, 1999).22

Here also, the discussions have been done at a preceding stage before gathering the information. The sample size and target audience everything is clear to the researcher in advance. It enables a researcher to move into right kind of direction and most importantly the path could also be clear. The situation of confusion could be minimised as well. At the same juncture, another crucial element to be considered within the study is that there are two kinds of data
collection techniques are available to the researcher. These methods of data collection help in collecting the data in various ways (Singh and Mangat, 2013). The two kinds of data collection methods are primary techniques and secondary techniques to collect data. These two methods are very much different to each other.

Foremost, the primary style of collecting the data is something that has a high level of relevance with the collection of first-time data. To gather the information that is real and based on the current social situation, the use of primary data is a must. There are various reasons that influence the researcher to focus on the primary collection of data or information (Thompson, 2012). The major one is that, through primary data, the researcher can identify the exact changes that took place within the environment. The primary data provide the information that is fresh and current. The immediate responses are always based on the experiences of respondents, and it helps in observing the current trend of the market. The primary sources of data collection are also very much different. It includes the questionnaire, survey, and interview. These are some of the major techniques that could be used by the researcher to collect the data. Here in the current report, the researcher has focused on the primary collection of the data or information.

It helped in assessing the immediate responses of the customers towards the retention strategies of the retail companies (Brink, Walt and Rensburg, 2006). Further, the researcher grilled the customers about other aspects as well. The honest responses were gathered by the researcher. Additionally, the major advantage of collecting the data through primary sources was that the observation was also be done through the primary technique of data collection. Observation is also a part of primary sources of data collection. The observation is something that could be done easily by the researcher on the basis of interaction took place between the researcher and respondents. Thus, it is an additional source of extracting the information, and most importantly the hidden facts could also be investigated properly.
In the current study, the primary data collection technique has been applied to find hidden mindset of the customers towards the retention strategies through observation. To rely on most effective primary sources techniques, the questionnaire method has been followed by the researcher. The questionnaire is well designed and contains various questions regarding the customer retention. The retail stores and its various dimensions have been assessed effectively. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, that is, Part A and Part B. Part A of the questionnaire included questions on the basis of which customer perception regarding retail stores and customer's shopping pattern can be judged. Part A included 32 questions. On the other hand, Part B questionnaire was designed to draw a relationship between customer retention and factors affecting it. In total, there were 7 questions in Part B. Moreover, both the questionnaires were based on 5 point Likert Scale and also had some open end and close end questions. Further, the primary data was collected through both online and offline mode. In online mode participants filled online questionnaire mailed to them and in offline mode participants filled a hard copy of the questionnaire at the retail stores (Daniel, 2011).26

Other than primary sources of data collection, the researcher has the option to collect data from secondary sources of data collection. The secondary sources include the researcher or information that has been propounded already. It could be other researcher’s result. It is to acknowledge that the secondary research is helpful when a researcher is aiming at identifying the previous situation of the market and most importantly the emotions and condition of the market in the past. The secondary study is very much useful in different perspectives. Majorly it provides the information about various trends changed in the past (Panneerselvam, 2014).27

Here also, the secondary sources of data collection have been used in the study. Through secondary sources, the researcher has understood the previous trend for the customer retention strategies. Further, it helped in investigating the success story of retail companies with respect to their previous retention strategies. The changes in existing strategies and previous strategies were easily identified. The changes in customer behaviour over the recent past were
experienced, and most importantly the level of change in perceptions was also identified. With the help of secondary sources of data collection, the researcher studied the preceding facts and sales figures as well.

It is to acknowledge that with the help of both primary and secondary sources of data collection, the researcher has done the comparative study by comparing the analysis of primary data and secondary information. It helped in ensuring that the detailed and wide spectrum knowledge could be gathered in an appropriate manner (Paul, 2010). The researcher ensured that the customer retention strategies and the customer behaviour could be matched with each other. The changes in the mindset of customers towards the retail sector and the growth prospects were experienced. Overall, the secondary investigation is compatible with the primary sources of data collection.

In current scenario the researcher has focused on the secondary sources of data collection to collect the already published or presented data. The used secondary sources in the current study are the textbooks, magazines, previous studies, and internet surfing and research journals. The extensive usage of research studies and online articles has also gained huge consideration. All the secondary sources were genuine and authentic, and most importantly the reliable information has been gathered from these secondary sources. Thus, in this way, the current study has focused on both the primary and secondary sources of data collection (Brink, Walt and Rensburg, 2006).

5.10 DATA ANALYSIS

It is another key section that gained huge consideration by the researcher. It is a section that justifies the whole study and gives a strong base to the entire study. To reach some conclusion, there is a huge requirement of selecting the best and appropriate data analysis method. Without data analysis section, the study could never be completed (Israel, 2009). For analysing the collected data both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analysis has been used. Thematic analysis has been used for qualitative analysis. Under this, various themes were plotted on the basis of collected, data and on the basis of those themes results were interpreted. On the other hand, to analyse the numeric data, various
statistical tests have been used for quantitative analysis. Firstly, Cronbach Alpha test was applied on the collected data to test the reliability of the data. Thereafter, paired t-test and multiple correlation and regression analysis was applied to analysing quantitative data using statistical software SPSS 20.

5.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While conducting the research, the researcher is required to focus on various ethical aspects that increase the reliability of the viewers and other social participants over the research process and its results. These ethical considerations must be followed at colossal scale as it helps in giving absolute validity to the report. It will not be wrong to say that the quality of the report and ethical considerations have great connections with each another. However, in broader terms, the ethical aspects are related to the practice of researcher that is authentic and genuine and avoids the illegal activities. The academic field also has certain illegal activities that must be avoided by the researcher. Without following the ethical considerations within the research, the researcher can never get the desirable results and can never win the confidence of academic fraternities (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009)\textsuperscript{30}.

The major ethical element is that aims and objectives of the study must be focused and should have the potential to reach some point of conclusion. Unnecessary elements must be avoided. The aims and objectives should be controversial and should not be focused on any flammable topic. It must be for the benefit of the society and various participants. The collaborative work can make it happen and it basic and principle element of the ethical considerations could be followed in the easiest manner. The code of conduct or the guideline for the preparation of research report is very strict, and there is need of following these guidelines in a convincing manner.

In this report, these guidelines have been followed in an appropriate manner. The major aspect of ethical consideration that has been followed by the researcher is that the honesty has gained special consideration by the researcher. The methods and data have been collected honestly, the researcher has avoided the element of manipulation. The alteration was strictly prohibited so that real and
genuine situation of the customer retention strategies of retail companies could be depicted. Most importantly the gathered data predicted the prevailing mindset and behavioural changes of the customers. Thus, the honesty has gained huge priority in terms of report conducting process and data collection stages (Wilson and MacLean, 2011).

Further, the honesty is essential while taking the responses from the respondents. There was not any of hesitation among the respondents as well as to any other authority while conducting the research. The purpose of conducting this research was delivered to the granting bodies and every participant before the start of the survey process. Therefore, no manipulation and alteration of the data or information are the parts of honesty, and it has been practised by the researcher in an appropriate manner. Further, the self-interpretation was avoided by the researcher. The researcher has presented the audiences review and did not add any spices to their content. Thus, other than alteration, the additions were not entertained (Le, 2010).

Further, the researcher has taken care of this fact that the self-interpretation must not be the part of data collection process in both primary sources and secondary sources. Now the most important and significant element of the ethical considerations is related to respecting the intellectual property rights of other authors and researchers. It is quite possible that while conducting the research the researcher might take use of previous research and take articles from the international journals or online articles. During this process, the researcher should not use the data or facts or statements as they have been presented earlier. It could become an infringement of intellectual property rights. For the same purpose, the researcher has cited all the references and just mentioned the sources within the research from where the material has been included. In a current report also the ethical issue of respecting the intellectual property rights has been followed in a convincing manner. Permission has been taken before taking their content into the report (Treiman, 2014).

Same wise the list of ethical considerations include avoiding the plagiarism and its related issue within the entire report. The plagiarism should not be found in the study else the credibility of the report could come under question.
The researcher is required to write all the content in their language else the allegations of the copying the content could be changed. Thus, the researcher must follow this guideline as well. Here in this report, the researcher has given huge consideration to avoiding the plagiarism so that the credibility of the report and information could be maintained (Weller and Romney, 1988).\(^{34}\)

Other than this, the ethical considerations also include the maintenance of the confidentiality of the respondents. The researcher has to focus upon not to disclose the identity of the participants who has taken part in the research process. It is one of the most significant elements of ethical aspects that must be followed by the researcher. The agreements must be signed by the respondents, and the researcher also needs to give them surety about the confidentiality of their identity. Therefore, these are some of the major ethical aspects that are needed to be followed in the research report. In current thesis also the ethical aspects have been followed as the study has taken place at enormous scale. The researcher has completely maintained the privacy of the respondents. Further, the need for following the ethical considerations was that the study includes some of the biggest retail stores, and their strategy has been assessed in the report. Thus, if the ethical aspects will not be followed, then they could never get the clear situation and the strengthening level of their customer retention strategies (Pratt and Loizos, 1992).\(^{35}\)

5.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In the current study, the researcher has faced certain limitations that have put its huge impact in the research process. Various limitations could be faced by the researcher and it all depends on the nature of the study. In most of the cases, the nature of study and information like qualitative or the quantitative nature of the study affects the process and mindset of the researcher hugely. Overcoming the limitations is required at enormous scale as it helps in ensuring the quality of the report and gives a strong edge to results as well. The sample size and the nature of respondents can also adversely affect the report and create troubles for the researcher (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006).\(^{36}\) If the sample size is too big and people who are supposed to be approached are in large number, then it becomes
tough to manage the timeline. In this report, the major limitation that has been faced by the researcher is related to completing the study on time. The sample size was so big and collecting the data from 500 people is a very demanding job.

However, here in this study, the advantage was that the researcher was surveying the common people or the customers. So it becomes easier to gather data from them on time. Only the sample size was little bit problem but still the researcher has conducted the study with proper planning, and scheduling has gained huge consideration. Therefore, the researcher has overcome this problem in proper and efficient manner. Further, the list of limitations that has been faced during the study is related to money management. It has also effectively overcome by the researcher (Olsen, 2011). Overall the problems related to time management and money management has been experienced by the researcher. Another major limitation was that since the entire study was based on the responses of the respondents, any false information provided by the customers may have its impact on the final outcome.

5.13 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

The reliability and the validity of the study are the most critical element in the entire study. The researcher has to ensure that the research is reliable, and its results are completely valid. In some big research studies, the companies take their strategic decisions and consider the results as the basis for their decision-making process (Miller et. al., 2012). Thus, the reliability of the results and the information is required at colossal scale. Here in this report, to ensure the reliability of the study, the most important step was related to selecting the sample size and respondents in very careful manner. It is to acknowledge that the people who have participated in the study were the one who has knowledge about the market and were the regular customers of Indian retail sector. So it was easier to relate the customer behaviour with retention strategies of companies.

Further, the data has been collected in most professional manner. A lot of efforts have been put down so that the customers can fill the responses in most appropriate and effective manner (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). Further, to maintain the validity of the results, special consideration has been given to the
data analysis section. It is highly required that the techniques for the data analysis must have relevance with aims and objectives. Thus, here the statistical tools and techniques that have been applied were most suitable and according to the research objectives. The particular applications of various research tools have also ensured the validity of the study. Mainly the combination of data collection, sampling, and data analysis section enabled a researcher to focus on the reliability and validity of the report. Hence, in this way the reliability and validity of the study have been maintained (Kimmel, 2009).

5.14 ASSUMPTIONS

- It is assumed that with the increase in the sales of the retail stores, their profit also increase. No company discloses its actual sales and profit figures to an outsider, so it is not possible to test the sales and profit correctly. The researcher has worked on the fact that with the increase in sales, profit increases automatically.

- The research focuses on sales maximisation and long-term profits. Thus, even if the retail stores introduce retention schemes or offer to increase sales, in the long term, it will have a positive impact on their profits. Moreover, at times companies go for sales maximisation irrespective of the level of profits or profit margins to retain customers and achieve sustainability and to mitigate the threat of potential entrants. It may be a part of their long-term maximising sales strategy.

- The study only focuses on customer retention strategies and offers, and not on any other kind of general schemes and offers.

- The study does not mean that sales imply customer retention; rather it states that customer retention strategies result in better customer retention, and higher sales and profit.

- A customer is assumed to be retained if he/she is shopping with a particular retailer for a year or so.
5.15 PILOT SURVEY

Before proceeding with this study, a pilot survey was conducted in the Udaipur city with 90 respondents. Under the pilot survey, customer retention strategies of Easyday, Big Bazaar and Reliance Mart were studied. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine whether customer retention strategies are effective enough and affect the buying behaviour of the customers of the organised retail store. The pilot study concluded that customer retention strategies are effective enough and affect the buying behaviour of the customers of the organised retail store.

5.16 SUMMARY

This research supports the use of interpretive research philosophy. The major reason for using the interpretive research philosophy is that sometimes a simple fact demands an intense investigation from different perspectives, and it has so many hidden meanings. Thus, the researcher was in a position to deal with many thought processes and the differences in the strategies of companies. Further, the researcher has focused on the inductive approach as this approach helps in justifying with the subject matter and ultimate objective of the study. Moreover, the researcher has used the mix research type focusing both on qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. In addition, the study adopts the descriptive research design as the researcher got a chance to study the characteristics and the content in a detailed manner, and most importantly the elaborated knowledge about the customer retention strategies and their impact was gathered.

In the current scenario, the probabilistic sampling techniques have been considered by the researcher. Under the probabilistic sampling technique, the random sampling technique has gained huge consideration by the researcher. The main reason for adopting the random sampling technique is that the researcher aimed at identifying the responses of common people towards the retention techniques of companies. On the basis of this, 500 customers (100 customers from
each store) were selected for the survey process. Further, the researcher has used both primary and secondary data collection sources for collecting primary and secondary information. A structured questionnaire was distributed to the customers of all the five stores selected under the study. Finally, the collected data is analysed through both qualitative and quantitative data analysis technique. The researcher has refined the raw data through thematic analysis and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).
REFERENCES


