CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present the theory of destination branding, brand awareness, destination perception and communication in context to tourists, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and stakeholders. Given that branding of a destination is rather a new concept and presently is not much research is available, the introduction to branding and how the branding can be applied to route as a complex destination product has been presented in general. Throughout the review of literature, the required perspective is analyzed and updated reports and articles on concerned issue is reviewed, as well as the relation between destination branding and route concept in general, the involvement of the DMOs and the process of strategic destination branding is discussed.

Beyond research efforts predominantly conducted on destination branding, significant efforts in the current study categorically emerges from the efforts of top academicians in the field of branding like Doyle (1990), Aaker (1996), Davis et al. (2002), Keller (2008) and Giannopoulos et al. (2011), with analytical focus on creation of a brand, the improvement and management of strong brands exclusive of direct implication of the destination’s tourism perspective. Through the first part, tourism definitions as commonly used theory in context to route will be presented. Further, the theory of destination branding is discussed and various aspects of route as destination categorization are given. Subsequently, the phenomenon defining branding destination’s elements have been given to enhance the clarity on the subject matter. The branding of destinations is a central point of literature analysis and an in-depth evaluation has also been carried out on available theory, destination branding procedure, how the branding links with aligned destinations across route as a solitary tourism product, the destination’s image, awareness, identity creation and management.

2.1 RESEARCH APPLICATION

A region symbolizes a well-designed and physical unit which requires development and identity creation through branding and other marketing and development activities (Krajnovic et al., 2013). The significance of tourism & the emergence of numerous and latest destinations in the market have strained all other
destinations to pursue and participate in a competitive process at a universal level (Riege et al., 2001). In contrast to this, destination development has been recognized as an area where marketers promote places for tourists and relationships and where the stakeholder involvement is considered as common theme for marketing (Jernsand, 2014).

It is generally accredited that tourism destinations should be incorporated in the tourists’ curiosity perspective from where an exclusive decision is finalized (Dana and McClearly, 1995; Leisen, 2001; Cai, et al., 2004; Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Changes in tourism sector, the competition among the resources and destinations and all of the expectations of tourists as well as variations in their habits results in considering a tourist destination as a brand that needs the concerned destinations to be administered with a strategic view point (Aksoy and Kiyci, 2011). The essence of tourism across routes is that they themselves form an important aspect as a product (Meyer, 2004). Generating a unique image has laid a foundation for destination sustenance in an international competitive environment where different destinations intensely compete with each other (Qu et al., 2011). This intense global competition in the tourism sector has pushed the destination authorities to create strong, exclusive and competitive destination brands (Hassan et al., 2010). For the purpose of promoting the destinations to its potential and prospective target groups (Soroka and Lominadze, 2011), marketers contribute a greater amount of concern to define the destination as a brand (Braun, 2008).

Using the same terminology of branding and tourism development along Silk Route in developing countries like India, may prove to be an integrative effort towards the destination(s) development but there is a need for motivating visitors along with generating markets and awareness of tourism routes and also to analyze whether visitors rate touring routes as attractive assets by their individual consent or just as a source for arriving at final destination (Meyer, 2004; Donaldson, 2007). Brands have always been seen with an association for clear image, and promotional elements utilized by marketers of a destination to attain competitive and unique benefits (Seaton and Bennett, 1996; Morgan and Pritchard, 2002; Saraniemi and Ahonen, 2008). Further McGhie (2012) has defined strategy operationalization as an additional stage for activating brand internally and in existing marketing, however branding is a vital process as it incorporates almost all strategic fundamentals that hooked into single success theory (Aaker, 1996). Additionally, academicians and experts provide a general agreement that branding of destinations is
aligned with much similar methods like consumer services and goods (like Anholt, 2002; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Olins, 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Similarly a route can be offered as a definition to a region, a subject that moves beyond geographical miscellany and a distance that could serve not only spatially and exclusive but also as an integrated marketable subject (Meyer, 2004). More interestingly Silk Route itself represents a spatial destination network and marketable theme. And in particular to this Morrison et al. (2004) defined tourism networks as complex structures; hitherto there is relatively less research work on tourism networks. Above all this there is a need to understand the theory of tourism along route, branding it as a complete destination and further its linkage to development of it incorporated destinations.

2.2 LINKING ROUTE AND TOURISM CONCEPT

A large number of tourists do not directly travel to their targeted destination and then return their native place again, rather they travel through completely planned or less planned route (Tideswell and Faulkner, 2002). Moreover, emerging tourism trends have modified the choices of tourists from usual mass tourism into extra distinctive model in which more meaningful experiences and superior flexibility have attained priority. According to ECI Africa (2006) routes attracts “to large and diversified type travelers especially overnight international tourists who travel along a route as an element of their unique interest for vacations and staying travelers who regularly take the particular route (or part of it) for day excursions or day travel”. This gives a prospect to attain financial system and scope rather than degree by serving a diverse range of tourism products and assets to motivate tourists from different niche markets and so to increase the expenditure conducted in the society (Greffe, 1994). Meyer (2004) has added that the routes are commenced with single or further added subsequent objectives taken in consideration:

- To disperse tourists and revenue generated from tourism activities;
- To put lesser-known places and related assets into tourism business/products;
- To enhance the demand of a destination in general;
- To boost tourists’ spending and their length of stay;
- To motivate new travelers and repeat visitors; and
- To enhance sustenance destination or tourism product.
2.3 SERVING ROUTE AS A COMPLETE PRODUCT: CONSTRUCT FOR DESTINATION BRANDING

Functions of a product are supposed to be more tangible like some features in products, despite of the fact that if they are branded or not (Gras, 2009). Development of a tourism along a route which is generally regarded as a source for tourism development, is in fact the expansion of an ultimate experience and a product which can be offered to the final customer (McLaren, 2011). However Pike (2004) has defined the term “Brand” as the foundation for marketing; prosperity of western countries had made the branding more complex.

However destination branding is not new and has continuously been explored and discussed since 90s (Yusof et al., 2014). In this regard, nations and regional areas are still taking their role in tourist destinations in more serious manner, committing all possible efforts and finances for improving their destination’s attractiveness and image tourists (Hsu, et al., 2004; Sumaco and Richardson, 2011).

Further Buhalis in the year 2000 has explained a destination brand as a defined geographical area which is acknowledged as an exclusive entity by its tourists, intact with a governmental and political structure for marketing and planning of tourism. Branding a tourism destination is a process of elaborating the specialties of an environment and helps in the implementation of the tourist facilities which are finally presented to tourists (Ivanović and Milicević, 2009). By branding a destination successfully, one can observe the development of a destination into an identifiable brand in the sight and perceptual concept of the world (Temporal, n.d.). The branding process also entails planning, communicating and crafting the characteristics and the name as an endeavor for creating or managing the status of a brand on the basis of four different fundamentals i.e. image, identity, purpose and brand equity (Anholt, 2007). In tourism, branding destinations proposes itself as ‘strategic place marketing that elaborates proactive image management in terms of improving position of a destination by:

- Defining environmental elements that influence its marketability;
- Examining the peripheral environment in association to prospects and coercion;
- Including all related stakeholders counting with government, local communities and industrialists to extend a common image;
• Setting and distributing incentives and organizing the factors that may have an impact on purchase decisions like people, perception, attractions and infrastructure (Kotler and Gertner, 2004).

However, the notion of branding has recently started to expand its structure into tourism research (Ricardo, 2009). Destination Branding has been considered and defined as combination of a philosophy and its implementation by Tan in 2008. It is all about giving cautious attention to specify what a destination should induced in tourists’ mentality, deciding on suitable characteristics to put further and utilizing the suitable communication method so as to ensure for finding the right people as proficiently and convincingly as possible (Tan, 2008).

In 1998, Brent and Brent in a report entitled “The branding of tourism destinations” for the Annual Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism has explained destination branding as a sign, title, symbol ,tagline or other details that together differentiates and categorize the destination brand; furthermore, it fulfills the consent of a remarkable travel experience which is entirely related to a particular destination and also serves to combine & highlight the collection of satisfying memories about a destination experience.

A destination brand is also similar with that of other consumer products and brands that present customers with numerous offerings and benefit to prospective tourists with information before visitation, that makes them to recognize a destination, distinguish it from its contenders and induce prospects for viable experience for vacations presented by a destination (Murphy et. al., 2007; Gras, 2009). Additionally, a destination brand is also supposed to become a producer of revenue from outfits or clothing and memorabilia trade, which may sometime, create an issue of logo rights and authenticity (Zou, 2007).

According to Cai (2002), brands are all about perceptions of a place as replicated by the links made in tourists’ memory. On the other hand, Blain et al. (2005) elaborated the destination branding as “a bunch of activities of marketing which (1) sustain the establishment of a title, icon, tagline, mark, logo or other graphical items that enthusiastically recognize & distinguish a place; that (2) constantly communicate the prospects of an exclusive experience of a travel which is particularly linked with a
destination; that (3) supply to strengthen & emphasize various emotional links among tourists & a destination; and that (4) lessen customer search expenses and perceived risk”. However, the major challenge for marketers is to make certain that the consumers have a true kind of experience by the usage of a product and services and to market it in through an exact process to create the required images, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs and opinions associated with the brand (Keller, 2001).

Providing a futuristic approach towards importance of destination brand, Morgan and Pritchard (2001) has added that, in future the battle for clientele in tourism business will not be for cost, but for the customers’ empathy and psyche – in real meaning, the branding (…) will be the answer to success. Branding aspires to increase awareness and construct positive perceptions which ultimately initiate purchase intentions (Henderson, 2007). In short, branding intends to fill the gap existed between the real and perceived destination image (Atanassova, 2011).

Further, in present market-oriented society, a firm brand provides majorly two objectives i.e. to develop a strategic system for brand composition through the chaotic business place and achieve the interest of potential buyers and generate emotional acquaintance with them, which further distinguishes products/services so as to achieve a certain target market (Dos Santos and Campo, 2014). Similar to the general prospect on product brands, destination brands use two vital tasks: differentiation and recognition (Qu et al., 2011). While the basic brand proposition is important, communication is a key to create consumer awareness of brand values (Litteljohn, 2006).

Branding is intended to create “value”, both for customers, and for the destination (Ivanović and Milicević, 2009). Consequently the values of constructing a destination brand are of same kind to those of broad industry branding: a brand generates business identity and insert value among consumer about the product or service by increasing fiscal asset, decreasing market communication outlays, and enlightening buyer loyalty (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). Whereas the benefit of brands over products is that they considerably become sustainable assets, their value get retained through cautious marketing (Morgan, 2004).

The ultimate purpose of branding a destination is to generate and improve a value or equity for a longer period and the similar has been termed as a significant motive of
destination branding process (Pak, 2013). Pike in 2005 has added that for most of the destinations, slogan is essential for open communication regarding brand positioning strategy of a destination. In fact, through the brand practices of destinations are broadly using names, taglines and logos to distinguish themselves from their challengers and to motivate tourists (Antonsen, 2010).

Anholt (2004) and Kerr (2006) have defined branding with regards of a place as a source for executing a brand strategy and supplementary practices for marketing & policy for socio-economic, cultural and political growth of various cities, nations and regions. Further Clarke (2000) in his research has summarized six benefit points of branding associated with tourism destination products:

1. as tourism involves classically a large participation, destination branding facilitates choice reduction,
2. branding assists in overcoming the effect of intangibility,
3. it communicates uniformity allover numerous outlets and during time,
4. branding helps to diminish the dimensions associated with risk that further leads to choice creation about vacations,
5. it helps to specify segmentation, and
6. facilitates in generating an idea for assimilation of producer’s effort, assisting community to work for a similar effect.

The benefit of a branding a destination is not only for motivating tourists but also for import venturing, employment generation and further settlements (Fan, 2006). Tourist destination branding is a procedure in lieu of which a destination vigorously move forward to create a unique and viable identity to site itself, as best as possible on the native and international market, as a popular tourist destination and an area of promising economic development (Krajnović et al., 2013).

Destination branding is about merging all the elements related to the place like its physical assets and amenities from diverse sectors like transport, agriculture, arts, sports, technology, investment, education, etc. under single notion, which further convey a unique identity and quality of a destination and distinguishes it from its opposition (Rizvi and Ahmad, 2012). The identity of the destination, acts as a base for creating a
sustainable and accountable tourist destination and it is possible to adequately implement this through tourist facilities (Meža, and Šerić, 2014).

In short destination branding is a method of generating a unique identity or individuality for tourism destination (including investment) and communicating the same to tourists or potential investors using a name, logo, tagline, design or an amalgamation of all these for construction of positivity about brand image (Harish, 2010). In fact branding is supposed to be applied differently depending upon the nature of destination like whether it is a city, a province or a nation (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Similarly in case of Silk Route which is in fact the combination of numerous destinations, a strategically defined branding approach is required.

Destinations that successfully implement their branding strategies and recognized the procedure for destination branding are supposed to be capable enough to assist in gap reduction that existed between perceptions of prospective tourists and destination’s potency (Morgan et al., 2010). And in this context destination branding further requires going beyond the creation of attractive advertisements that can persuade awareness among consumers (Soroka and Lominadze, 2011). In fact branding has been considered as recursive procedure that spins about an axis created by brand element mix, brand identity and image building (Cai, 2002). In extension of this Mulec (2010) in his study has identified five key phases of destination brand building:

1. Brand Perception (Image investigation),
2. Its development (identity creation),
3. Design,
4. Launch and communication, and finally
5. Its overall management

2.3.1 Brand Perception

Perception performs its vital role for the decision-making practice of tourists. In tourism, perception is termed as a crucial concept because of the intangibility factor. In extension to this, terms like, “perception”, “impression” or “mental imagination” of a tourism destination are usually utilized to give theoretical approach to destination image in tourism study (Martí’n and Bosque, 2008). Tasci and Gartner (2007) have identified it as a significant characteristic in flourishing tourism and destination marketing because of
its impact on both demand and supply. Turkish Language Association (2008) has defined image or perception as a thing which is premeditated in a psyche & required to be understood, interpret and feel. The organic or a pre-visit illustration about a destination held by potential tourists considerably influence tourists’ behavior, reactions and decision-making procedure regarding a destination visit (Castañeda et al., 2007). It is basically tourists’ viewpoint about a place which involves their ideas, opinions and impressions (Ilba, et al., 2008).

The gap of perception and reality has also been a factor for the tourism marketing and branding aspects. This may lead to rethink about the image of destination among tourists so as to increase the tourist influx. This is one of the reasons that the term destination perception appeared as one of the fundamental concern in tourism business. Nowadays, marketers are profoundly emphasizing the importance of creating a positive image when promoting their destination, as the role of the image concept is highlighted in present growing international tourism marketing and by the competition between destinations (Konecnik, 2005) thus creating an impact on destination choice making decisions. Thus a positive destination brand establishes the destination as a place worth visiting (Morgan et al., 2010).

Significance of destination perception should not be constrained to already acknowledging a destination but may also be extended towards underdeveloped and lesser known destinations. It is recognizable that an image of a destination among tourists as familiar or new also influences his or her intentions to visit a particular destination and also his/her behavior during whole of the trip (Chalip et al., 2003). While determining the conceptual framework for branding, perception about a destination should be considered as a pre-existing theory related to a destination branding (Pike, 2009). In fact, it is one of the major construct which establishes the destination’s future (Aksoy and Kiyici, 2011).

Discussing the study of Etchner and Ritchie (1993), Zahra (2012) has defined three components namely attribute-holistic, functional-psychological and common-unique characteristics of destination image:

*Attribute or Holistic:* Attribute is the portion of processed knowledge held by the customers which is further preserved in their psyche concerning any destination product.
This may include environment, lodging, friendliness of the community of the host destination etc. Whereas holistic is consist of mental illustrations of a destination.

*Functional or psychological:* Functional sections include all those features of a country which are visible & quantifiable like poor infrastructure and low charges, etc; whereas psychological section includes intangible assets and are difficult to quantify e.g. environment or frame of a destination.

*Common or unique:* Common elements include assets shared by most of the destinations. And unique consists of those characteristics which differentiate a destination from other with similar options.

Considering the above given perspectives of a tourist destination, it is viable to define its image with the usage or construction of taglines, logos or inscriptions which comprises every kind of information regarding facilities that could attract tourists’ to the particular nation or region, thus creating a picture in people’s mentality. In other words, perception is an outlook or a picture that motivates the tourists towards a country and makes them to spend there (Şahbaz, 2008).

It is a reality that community have diverse attitudes towards a similar product and examining such variances in their perception for diverse cultures and regions is absolutely imperative for acknowledging the image held by them especially about the associated destination and in selecting a precise tag and adjectives for the targeted market (Prebensen, 2007). Therefore, the image plays an arbitrating function among the unique, cognitive and affective brand relations and behavioral intentions (Maumbe and Unlimited, n.d.). Whereas according to Lopes (2011):

- There might be significant differentiations between veracity and perception in relation to a brand in the marketplace and these differentiations may be revealed negatively or positively in the image of a brand.
- A gap may exist between the preferred image of a brand and its available information, which may further deject the reliability of the strategies adopted by a company. This may be a counted as a negative end for business services, where experts who get in touch with consumers initiate directly to the creation of image of company’s brand, and ultimately turn
into representatives for the brand thus necessitate internal marketing practices.

Beneficial representation, impression or perception about a destination apprehended by tourists is associated with some anticipated benefits and utilization values (Sumaco and Richardson, 2011). So, brand perception of a destination among tourists requires contemplating the examination so as to make it sustained in the market and attain a considerable place among other opponent destinations.

Image investigation of a destination relies with the concept that basic values of a destination brand should be created which are significant, sustainable, significant and communicable (Morgan et al., 2010). Producing a destination brand which replicates some unique characteristics of a destination or place can be valuable for applying rational strategies with a view to maintain such assets, image and status (Pike, 2004).

Sonlleitner (2011) in her study has added that the mere existence of an image in people psychology is not sufficient rather it should represent the actual features of a place. On the other hand, the destination image may further be derived to elaborate pre and post image investigation among tourists. Briefly destination image or perception is an aspect of beliefs, impressions and views carried by tourists about a destination (Avcıkurt, 2004).

According to Gallarza, et al. (2002) image always depicts about creation of perceptions and every individual differs in his/her perceptions. So the pre visit image may vary from the information served to and perceived by tourists and post visit image stands dependent upon the facilities and experiences perceived and actually availed by tourists. At the same time cognitive image assessment is referred to as beliefs and knowledge about a destination (Sonlleitner, 2011) and emotional image is the concept developed by tourists in concern with feelings and attachment in particular to that destination(s).

The previous studies in the similar field focused to identify a variety of perceptions about tourism development from negative to positive impacts (Belisle and Hoy, 1980; Var, 1986; Liu, et al., 1987; Perdue, et al., 1987; Ross, 1992). According to Kim (2002), at the beginning of product or destination brand life cycle, residents and community perceives positive benefits or impacts of tourism development and if the perception about a destination is positive, the brand is considered more efficient in the
marketplace (Lim and Weaver, 2014). All these aspects may further need to be considered while creating a new destination brand or rebranding of an already existing brand in the market as such complexity in image depicts an overall positive or negative assessment about a destination and its related products in consideration (Beerli and Martín, 2004).

2.3.2 Brand Development

Before being able to brand a place and position this brand, the place must define its identity, its attributes and its improvement areas (Rainisto, 2003). In relation to this, Pike (2012) defined the importance of three interrelated component in destination process added that the first and basic component entitled as brand identity represents the destination image expected by the brand owners and their strategists. In short, identity is an explanation of an idea held by every individual about themselves that further addresses two senses i.e. who they are? and how should they act? (Alvesson et al., 2008). For branding a particular destination, the sender or destination marketer highlights an identity of a destination brand with the help of all the characteristics and activities that make a distinction to the destination from other competitive destinations (Qu et al., 2011). However, the image building procedure is just a step involved in the destination branding system and brand identity serves as a link between these two phases (Cai, 2002). It also provides brand features and its valuable characteristics inclusive of figurative, pragmatic, emotional and public values (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006). In fact, a distinctive brand identity enables the customers to fulfill their psychic need of being considered as unique (Tian et al., 2001; Berger and Heath, 2007; Shirazi et al., 2013).

Brand identity is shaped by the destination marketers with the support of touristic attractions, related history and people (Cretu, 2011). Further Aaker (2010) elaborated it as an exclusive bunch of brand; links that a brand strategist aspires to maintain and craft. It reflects on contribution of all the brand’s elements for creating brand awareness and image (Keller, 1998; Cretu, 2011). Hankinson (2007) elaborated the significance of perceptions generated by tourists, which due our atmosphere are often becoming more multifaceted than the understanding we derive for them. Since the identification of a brand involves emotional affection with the brands, customers needs to be identified more efficiently so that they assess the worth of their spending on a focal brand as desired (Shirazi et al., 2013). A sensitive concern of the destination marketing is characterized by
the reality that the brand’s identity should remained steady, whilst the destination image tends to change over time because of outside/intentional factors or must be improved with the due course of time– with effect from interior/individual dimensions (Mazurek, 2008 cited in Stâncioiu et al., 2011).

For the requirement of constructing a strong and successful brand, brand identity is considered highly important and desirable (Geuens et al., 2009) especially in terms destination branding where intangibility factor prevails. When destination identity reinforces the customer attention, it significantly attains a relationship to visitation intention thus providing a futuristic approach. So, to become sustainable and successful, a brand needs to be loyal towards its identity (Antonsen, 2010) as it induces recognition, strengthens differentiation and makes immense thoughts and meanings accessible (Wheeler, 2009). Consequently, prior to communicating a destination to the defined population, there emerges a necessity of adoption of vital approach by the destination organization(s) so as to understand:

- What exactly they want to communicate?
- How tourist will perceive it? And
- What would be the appropriate source for communication?

Of particular side, is the recognition of the need for research that identifies tourism resources, the significance of association and clustering of tourism products and services, and raising awareness, interests, and understanding of the potential value of tourism along Silk Route. And to this process, brand development involves solicitous, accountable commitment to enduring distinctiveness of a destination (Mendiratta, 2014). In extension to all this, Kapferer (2004) provided a theoretical model concerning identity development of a brand. This model forms a prism of six components of identity which included shape (structure), individuality (differentiation remark), correlations (service delivery), customs, expressions (value dimensions), and opinionated image (actual experience).

*Physique* implies to the tangible characteristics and specialties of the offered brand. And in terms of destinations physique stands for all tangible features, facilities and attraction including environmental conditions.
The personality represents the basic traits a brand may contain to create a differentiation as well as recognition in the market. Brand personality is defined and considered in relation to human personality significant for brands. Taking the concept to the destinations competition destination personality persists towards tourists’ perception generation thus creates inimitable destination identity. However, this terminology has further been considered as a combination of some particular characteristics associated with a destination (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006).

Relationship aspect has been described by Kapferer (2004) as an approach of performance that mostly depicts the brand and has propositions for brand performance, service applications and customer relations. However, in terms of destination as a brand relationship trait refers to the systematic service delivery to the tourists on visiting a destination.

Culture defines the combination of values which compliments a brand’s motivation. It acts as a significant trait that differentiates brands, and in regards to culture has been defined as a quality that helps in differentiating the destination and sets the level of competition among various destinations.

Reflection stands for the brand’s consumer indication. It reflects upon targeting the desired as well as potential buyer. In terms of tourism, this perspective reflects the type of visitors to a destination. So, all brands should organize and direct their customer reflection as they use brands to create or reflect their own identity (Kapferer, 2004).

Self-image stands for the customer’s experience while using a brand. And in tourism terminology it refers to tourists while visiting the destination. While using a brand, the buyers, or tourists, develop a particular attitude and an inner relationship with particular brands; however the choice of destination may differ depending tourists’ age, social status, etc.

Blian et al. (2005) has identified logos as a critical component of destination brand identity and image as they play an important role in crafting a readily recognizable and unique image for distinguishing the product, service, or organization that requires or utilizes successful visual attraction (Henderson et al., 2003). Concisely, brand identity of a destination communicates about what actually the brand owners wish for and how a destination should be perceived (Yusof et al., 2014). Thus, a brand having well-built
identity is fervent to satisfy figurative requirements of a customer, a lot more than relevant ones and this is why a brand with a stronger identity is believed to develop and recover perceived value among consumers (Shirazi et al., 2013).

In terms of tourism, a destination brand represents the basic essence of a destination. On providing a linkage between branding and design, Mozota (2006) explained it as a link in the chain of a brand or a source of expressing values of a brand to its various products. In other words, designing a destination brand provides a framework for branding, marketing and development of a destination (Cooper and Hall, 2008).

Design is a source for tangibilization of the exterior factors that persuade the individual’s perception about travel experiences, with special consideration on the stimuli of senses like audio, visual, tactile etc. (Bitner, 1992; Heide and GrØnhaug, 2006; Agapito et al., 2013). In fact, whole of the method for designing a strong brand and promoting positive and excellent travel experience includes vital actions pertaining to destinations which together make a destination more competitive tourism product in the market (Agapito and Lacerda, 2014).

Designing and formulation of product should be based on proper research (Calantone and Mazanec, 1991; Hu and Ritchie, 1993; Baker et al., 1994; Ritchie, 1996; Buhalis, 2000). As innovative organizations have recognized that the formatted designing of process lays the foundation to success of a new service and in lieu of this they have started to search upstream to consumer review or research to improve or remove the negativity for attaining a consecutive remark as a winner in the marketplace (Serra and Vieira, 2008). So along with understanding the requirements of a product offering, designers needs to identify the means to shift into the shared memory of people, their traditions, conduct, and behaviors, to know their backgrounds, requirements and ideas and also recognize the ethnicity and conducts of indulged institutes along with the needs of their products or services (Lacerda, 2004). Though intricacy of destinations as tourism products hampers the exploration or discovery of a destination but there are different tools and techniques relevant for attaining overview of both the offered product and the available consumers (Stickdorn and Zehrer, 2009).
2.3.3 **Brand Communication**

Being occupied with the factor of intangibility, brand communication serves as an important factor to conceive the services available at the destination(s) so as to attract the tourists and to make them to purchase/visit a destination. Communication often is referred to as a significant factor for successful introduction of a new service (Grace and O’cass, 2005). In common, brands have stressed upon external communication to an acknowledged target consumer market (Ind, 1997). Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) has further elaborated it as an attempt to communicate the identity and during the product development process, a classically designed communication is applied as a significant factor by marketers who select various communication sources to disperse brand information (Dos Santos and Campo, 2014). Thus, the communication should be directed internally as well as externally (Ind, 1997; de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001).

It is important that the brand name should be documented for a more proactive role it plays in communicating a brand, instead of merely being considered as an element of a brand (Grace and O’cas, 2005). And for this requirement it is also essential that the brand value should be conveyed perfectly and consistently to people at all levels in the organization in order for them to be communicated to external stakeholders (Knox and Bickerton, 2003). However, communications cannot substitute change, but can help to report it, consolidate it, and to some extent speed in on its way (Anholt, 2006).

According to Kolb (2006) product or service branding is a process of preparing a slogan that collectively communicates products and service image with a logo or symbol to the consumers along with its characteristics, values and benefits. Further Atanassova (2011) in his study, added that brand is not just a logo, slogan, a product or a simple marketing campaign rather it is a compilation of all these elements and has been considered as essential building block from which all marketing communications and behavior should flow (Munjoma, 2012).

Anholt (2007) and Bierzynski (2011) explained the significance of preparing an accurate message for the true audience with the help of a most effective communication technique. Slogans play an effective role in communicating and inducing the brand image thus augmenting brand equity (Plog, 2004). Whereas logos as a source for destination marketing and image communication helps to derive out the confusions for attaining consideration and fast identification of a company or product (Henderson and Cote, 1998; Gras, 2009). In fact tourism brands are classically an outcome of a planned endeavor to
communicate a destination’s unique selling proposition to prospective tourists (Chandler, 2014).

Nowadays, communication cites for two things; first is sending out messages and second is making sure they get properly received (Bak, 2009). So, when a marketer focuses on destination branding, they design symbols, names, taglines etc. to communicate their brand to potential customers (Rungø and Ulbæk, 2011). It is also suggested that for increasing the awareness of a brand, the slogans should be linked to the name and meaning of that particular slogan to increase its chances of being remembered (Cretu, 2011) as they are claimed to be the most effective way of gaining target audience’s attention, comparing to other communication tools (Brierley, 2002). These communication tools are made to distinguish a country in the minds of their potential tourists as a country that has convinced character, personality and identity (Wulandri, n.d.). Further Kavaratzis (2007) defined a structure which illustrated the system through which brand communication occurs with consideration of the alternatives and suitable management of diverse variables, which further may have both practical as well as representative significance.

2.3.4 Brand Management

According to Park and Petrick (2006), destination branding strategies work only under certain conditions and hence need a proper management. The idea of brand management for various regions and countries has been recognized as one of the techniques for attaining a significant position at global level (Giannopoulos et al., 2011). In continuation to this it has also been analyzed that the destinations with positive perceptions and well defined images (among tourists) comprise of increased chances of being preferred by the tourists, thus inducing the requirement for proper management (Jesca et al., 2014). Brand management has been defined as an inherent method of managing and considering brands along with their values, dispersed by the associates of an organizational community and manifested by similar culture which further perceived as an organization’s prevailing standards to determine its knowledge of brands, the process and substance of brand strategy, and consequently its prospective involvement in competitive benefits (Louro and Cunha, 2001). However, Quinlan (2008) added that, destination brand management involves a process whereby stakeholders decide on a strategic plan, the purpose of which is to identify the most appropriate brand architecture,
to change or modify brand equity mechanism such as brand awareness, value, relevance, qualities, emotional association and accessibility. Thus, the description of destination branding includes a phenomenon whose management and design requires a collaborative effort by all the stakeholders (Morgan et al., 2003).

Brand management requires organizational proficiency which should be understood and constantly developed in future (Moilanen, 2008). However an appropriate understanding and management of destination brand is critical in some areas especially where tourism is a major source of economic development (Hall and Higham, 2005; Bigano et al., 2007; Pike, 2009). Saraniemi and Ahonen (2008) proposed that by implementing corporate branding approach to destination branding and understanding a brand (as co-created) may assist DMOs to act in a strategic and proactive manner. Destination brand management involves a process whereby stakeholders decide on a strategic plan, purpose of which is to identify the most appropriate brand architecture to adopt, change or to improve various brand equity components like brand awareness, brand value, personality, emotional relationship and accessibility (Quinlan, 2008). It shapes the conduct of members of an organization for looking and managing brands their perception orientation, elucidation and assessment (Louro and Cunha, 2001).

Destination management operates on both micro and macro level and integration across these levels is critical if a destination is to function effectively (Page and Connell, 2006). And when the destinations are intact with a route, the management becomes more crucial. According to ECI Africa (2006), the management of routes and their marketing is usually done through private-sector associations related to tourism supported by local, regional or state authorities, depending on the level and importance of the route. The successful establishment of routes requires familiarity with the following aspects:

- Regional leadership dynamics;
- Tourism assets (mostly natural and cultural heritage);
- Carrying capacity of area and infrastructure necessities;
- Substantial framework;
- Market investigation;
- Establishment of local organizations;
- Promotion and explanation; and
- Tourism value norms (ECI Africa, 2006).
Destination management, harmonized with destination policy, forecasting, development, protection and cost in the grouping of qualifying dimensions, is sorted into management (Chan and Bauer, n.d.). Larger utilization of local products and produce are feasible through greater rural linkages and village tourism endeavor, only if proper policy fostering stakeholder participation, long-term management and control are executed (Smith, 2010). In fact, the creation and management of a destination brand are described with the requirement of collaborative effort by stakeholders (Morgan et al., 2002). Determining the branding concept in context to Silk Route will prove to be positive element for stake holders and destination authorities to introduce such kind of a circuit into the market as an exclusive tourism brand, comprising a variety of assets for tourists (Manhas et al., 2014).

Several destinations are not-for-profits, are funded through private partnerships, and/or local investors, in fact most Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) serve as multiple masters (Chandler, 2014). Bregoli (2013) has analyzed the significance of linkages between stakeholder coordination and destination branding process and further recommended that more efforts to be taken by destination marketing organizations to promote the destination brand especially to the stakeholders so that the brand gets well adopted and applied in their businesses. In fact, it is the responsibility of the stakeholders to coordinate, plan and promote the destination (Page and Connell, 2006). Possession and legal protection have been identified as essential mechanism for a brand and also prerequisite construct for efficient brand management and brand equity (de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998; Marzano and Scott, 2005). Adding to this approach Hankinson (2009) divided managerial practice relevant for destination branding into five categories i.e. brand culture, coordination of organizations, control, brand communication and collaboration of stakeholders. Within the relational model, brand management is an ongoing, vibrant and dialectical procedure, exclusive of a clear beginning or end in which various units (customers and organizations) support conflicting notions (like brand image and brand identity) and further creates brand value and wisdom through the cooperation among stakeholder groups (Louro and Cunha, 2001; Hankinson, 2004; Moilanen, 2008).

Overall, tourism can be used as a source for facilitating collaboration regions and such efforts should be able to reduce the gaps and barriers in tourism development along the Silk Road and in this process of collaboration, the stakeholders’ participation is
proved to be very essential (Chan and Bauer, n.d.). So, when defined this way, efforts for brand development and the challenge for its planning and implementation becomes evident (Meer, 2010).

2.3.5 Brand Awareness

In literature, the concept of brand awareness has widely been used as a factor for attaining knowledge about a brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Hsu and Cai, 2009). This characterizes the potency and presence of a brand in the mentality of the customer, with the purpose not only to achieve general awareness but also to be in the memory for projected motives (Aaker, 1996a). A question arises here that if sufficient brand awareness is present, will it be considered in the purchase decision which further may form a link for embedding relations brand-specificity, familiarity and preference for brand among the customers (Esch, 2004; Didascalou et al., 2009). To this Boo et al. (2009) added that it is one of the major components of a brand which effect tourism and represents the strength of the brand’s presence in the consumer’s mind.

Destinations about which tourists are not aware of, referred to as unawareness set (Tasci and Kozak, 2006) and if a consumer is highly aware of a brand and is familiar with that particular brand and also holds some strong, positive and exclusive brand association, then there exists probability that he or she may purchase that particular brand (Atilgan, et al., 2005). In terms of tourism, awareness is not only about whether customers have knowledge about a destination, but also about the probability that the destination will emerge in a choice set of potential tourists (Crompton, 1992). Though, the brand awareness actively connects a brand and its appropriate purchase indications, it also induces a positive image through effective communication and promotion (UNWTO, 2007). In other words, brand awareness significantly affects decision-making process among consumers as they generally use it as decision heuristic (Gouveia et al., n.d.). Superior and extensive brand awareness means prospective tourists could imagine about a destination across a multiplicity of surroundings at any suitable time (Li et al., 2008). Keller (2008) has elaborated that consumer awareness and their aptitude to decide on a brand can be imitated from two different conditions of evaluation and consciousness i.e.:

1. Brand recall, which define the consumers’ ability to remind a brand that must be fulfilled.
2. Brand recognition, which further refers consumers’ ability to verify their earlier phase of that particular brand and has been considered as a clue.

This further can be called as an extensive theory provided by Morgan et al. (2002) who elaborated it as a unique blend of related values and product personality, both non-functional and functional and have attained relevant sense which is inextricably associated to the brand, its awareness which could be cognizant or perceptive.

According to Milman and Pizam (1995) customers have diverse images about the destination which passes through three different levels: unawareness, awareness and familiarity through experiments. However a well-known brand has a higher probability of being selected or preferred by customers over a lesser known or an unknown brand (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012). So, it is important for a destination to have a good reputation which could increase its competitiveness and improve its economic, political and social dimensions (Anholt, 2009; Bačík, 2008). Furthermore Dowling has added that a visual identity such as logo helps to create awareness, recognition and brand perceptions in consumer’s mind (Dowling cited in Warnaby and Medway 2010). Thus, the value of a brand is enhanced if it followed a process of definition of brand identity, identification of brand awareness, development of an effective communication plan close to stakeholders and then to consumers and of constant monitoring of brand image, brand awareness and brand value close to those actors (Gouveia et al., n.d.).

2.4 LITERATURE GAP

Tourism has been recognized as among the most capable sectors of development and economy growth at global level (Scheidegger, 2006) and the countries are looking to develop the tourism entities and assets as a corporate unit thus making it compulsory for the stakeholders to run it like a single entity – generating and developing with new products (Sisodia, 2011). Although Silk Route presents the same concept but very less literature is available on the Silk Route and its destinations especially in India that requires an in-depth discussion and volunteered approach. However, branding the Silk Route has been a part of discussion by UNWTO but a needful approach at the regional level needs a due consideration and discussion. The literature presents evidence that tourism is a viable option, but it was highlighted that all the routes are not successful as projects but are just simply supply-side driven because of very little consideration on their
marketing aspects (McLaren, 2011). Although the central built attraction of Silk Route is its intact destinations, with varied tourism resources as its core product, tourism services and facilities at the different destinations can provide competitive advantages.

However, Silk Route is not only about the connectivity but also about the destinations’ development and integrity. Supporting the tourism development along the routes, Meyer (2004) has added that such methodology of merging the attraction or a number of resource providers into single regional packages not only helps in constructing better access to a variety of products but also helps in increasing the product’s appeal thus serves as an important tourism development strategies. As investment and trade once again moving swiftly through Asia and other parts of the world, a modern and restored “Silk Road” is required for facilitating Asian region to retain its potentiality (Biswa and Prabir, 2009).

In support of this perspective, analysis of perception towards destination as a brand has been observed as prerequisite aspect so as to understand tourists’ expectations from certain product or destination which further may help the authorities to create a more effective brand. In fact, the potency of routes in terms tourism of has long been recognized in the developed areas or regions (Meyer, 2004) whereas it is still at nascent stage in India and thus requires a strategic approach. However, Silk Route fulfils the basic criteria of being considered as a destination, a route as well as a network whereas the requirement is to make it recognizable to the tourists as well as DMOs. In fact, by joining numerous attractions and marketing them jointly, it is expected that number of tourists (domestic, international and repeat visitors) will increase, thus increasing their spending and length of stay a destination (Rogerson, 2007).

In short presenting the identity of Silk Route as a tourism assets may induce globalized conversion as it not only unites some linked destinations but also the nations with diverse consents (Manhas et al., 2014). All this requires a strategic approach to be adopted by the authorities to make the concept clearly known to the travel world which requires the enactment of tourism. This can only be done by making people aware of its significance, even if it is possible by taking the ideas from already developed route like Route 66 or Route of Africa (discussed in Chapter 4), where separate units/authorities are established for their development and who working towards the creation of brand awareness of such tourism products.
2.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Critical literature review related to destination products and various routes in relation with destination branding and its significance in the decision-making process about holidays, gives a clue to the Silk Route renewal as a destination brand.

UNWTO and countries like India are still looking for the ways to refine the status of Silk Route and its induced destinations as an Approved Tourism Brand/Network. Such perspective will provide opportunities to Indian tourism operators to promote directly to international and national tourism consumers and a hope for Silk Route destination to open up and attain a major growth market. Promoting Silk Route as a long-haul international destination to potential tourists in India is crucial to Indian tourism industry. Simultaneously, Indian tour operators and tourism enterprises needs to promote their products and services in contrast to national as well as international market.

Some successful cases from the tourism sector depicted that the complex constructs of custom, nature and history should effectively be utilized to generate and promote an exclusive destination image (Saarinen, 1997; Poimiroo, 2000; Ooi, 2001). Whereas lacking the access to information of Silk Route destination resulted in its degradation in the memory of tourists in India. It is a point of discussion that the image of Silk Route as a destination should be the representative of what exactly it is and what it potentially can offer. Moreover, it is also uncertain that the general population posses a clear image about Silk Route and its related destinations.

Describing the identity of some destinations is pointless because a huge number of aspects are involved in the process of destination brand research. So studying destination perception is necessary to compare the tourists’ awareness and its impact with marketing position strategies and its resilience both for the academic field. The branding techniques like brand development and brand communication for the inscribed Indian destinations of Silk route like Gilgit, Kashmir, and Sikkim, etc., may contribute to the scenario of thinking and help the informants to form a variety of tourism businesses in the region. This would also help managers as well as stakeholders to adopt and implement proactive strategies.
In context to the requirement of an independent research, present study is designed to assess the awareness level of the tourists as well as stake holders about Silk Route, to the other hand; Archaeology Survey of India is already working on the concept of identification of such related sites.

Overall the research problem addresses the six research objectives:

1. To study the awareness of tourists and travel agents about Silk Route in India.
2. To study the perception of tourists as well as travel agents about Silk Route tourism.
3. To study the branding strategies for Silk Route as tourism brand in India.
4. To study the effect of brand communication on brand perception.
5. To study the relationship between the brand perception and brand development.
6. To suggest and recommend the various destination branding and communication strategies.

Further, to fulfill the above research objectives four research questions have been framed which formed the basis of the survey i.e.:

1. Are the tourists and travel agents at the induced destinations aware about Silk Route and its linkage in India?
2. What is perception of respondents towards silk route as a tourism brand in India?
3. Does respondents’ perception towards Silk Route tourism as a brand affect brand development of Silk Route in India?
4. Is there any relationship between respondents’ Perception (Brand) towards Silk Route tourism and Brand Communication?
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