CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Present chapter illustrates the problems associated with research during of the conduct of this study and elucidate a basic structure of the research. A thorough discussion about research propositions and hypotheses has been conducted. A description of the instrument used for data compilation and a discussion concerning the projection of questions related to the study is given. Data collection and methods used for statistical analyses are also discussed. The last segment focuses the concerns of reliability and validity of opted measurement scales.

The major objective of this study is to identify various factors for determining branding strategies for Silk Route. Branding a destination is quite an intricate concept to assess and hence, utilizing only one technique will not be sufficient. A realistic outlook has been adopted to evaluate the awareness and communication, perception and brand development of Silk route as a destination. Self structured questionnaire has been used to analyze the related aspects of the concerned topic.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

Various studies revealed that more a place is branded more are the chance that the place is chosen in the market. Studying the level of awareness and perception among tourists gives the pathway to the branding strategies to be adopted while launching a new tourism product. In order to reduce the bias, quantitative approach has been adopted as it has formed a strategic aura in tourism areas that describes the reason and impact association in tourists’ behavior (Echtner and Ritchie 1991, 1993; Han et al., 1997; Jenkins 1999; Prayag and Ryan, 2011). In fact various studies like Finn et al. (2000); Jennings (2001); Echtner and Ritchie (2003) and O”Leary and Deegan (2005) has also revealed that adopting quantitative methods helps in making statistical comparison between the study variables. A quantitative approach to branding of a destination reveals that it as an amalgamation of various elements and when it comes to the Silk route branding, the approach becomes more critical and that can be only confined by adopting a self structured questionnaire in terms of quantitative method. On the other hand, qualitative approach is completely peoples oriented phenomena adapted to know their
own perceptions. It has also been nominated as world’s phenomena that can be use to obtain their gist of observing the social grounds (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative technique is linked with understanding, analyzing, determining and investigating the phenomenon of research and the senses allied with that phenomenon (defining a account or narration) instead of testing the hypothesis (Ryan, 2000). However there are the problems of generalization of results.

For the purpose of the study, the qualitative methods like content analysis and free elicitation, has been applied for designing and derive the unstructured part relevant for theoretical definitions and to discover the constructs significant to targeted sample population of the study. Whereas, quantitative method has been applied for the concern of measuring awareness level, Silk route perception as a destination brand applied using structured questionnaire methods on 5-point Likert scale.

3.2 RESEARCH PROCESS: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS

The research procedure of this thesis is consisted of two phases. The 1st stage was completed with qualitative perspective & constructed to develop a list of attributes for destination branding and that further can be employed to Silk Route as a complete destination brand in tourism market. Branding strategies of destination(s) needs in depth study hence supported by the qualitative methods including employed content analysis and free elicitation. At this stage, the literature review was conducted and pilot testing of the questionnaire was done on small groups of respondents (303 in numbers) to identify the attributes relevant for Silk route branding. During this process, previous literature and research on destination branding elements has been referred and content analysis of various Indian tour operators & stakeholders’ projected perception regarding Silk Route and its induced destinations and the utilization of numerous constructs of the pilot surveys was done. Finally, a list containing different branding strategies that might be significant to Indian Silk Route from the literature, various tour operators’ perception about Silk Route was prepared and extraction of the various strategies relevant for the study was done during the pilot testing.

Construct elicitation on destination branding and related aspects by qualitative techniques decreases the possibility of binding respondents to respond to a restricted aura
of available choices and there may be the chances of inaccurate representation of their thought about a targeted aspect. On the other hand pilot survey is the method to assess the language used in a questionnaire, progression and design which further makes the respondents familiar with researcher; to define and systematize the fieldwork; to calculate rate of response; make evaluation of time to fill questionnaire; and to examine analysis process (Veal, 2006). Content analysis is a process linked with qualitative investigation used to examine the written information or substance, generally written documents and manuscripts, in an organized method to enumerate their content via grouping all the related constructs into a single category/group (Bryman, 2008). Analysis of contents of printed information form brochures, reports, guidebooks required for the study has been done in order to derive significant amounts of information about Silk Route destinations in India.

In the second phase, on the basis of derived constructs or attributes recognized by respondents to define the destination branding strategies and related perspectives, structured procedure has been applied to measure directly the awareness level and perception of Silk Route held by the population of the study. In the design stage, specific attention has been given to the basic construct of the study; phraseology and sequencing of the questions created. Measurement included asking the respondents to rate the attributes relevant for study. The Measurement technique involved 5-point Likert scaling technique. However, the problems of errors and misapprehensions were minimized with the help of expert pilot testing.

3.3 ATTRIBUTE SELECTION AND PREPARATION

Since the exact studies on route branding or aligned destinations are not available analysis of literature of destination branding, was conducted to derive the constructs and attributes relevant for the study. Finally, a list of structured attributes pertinent to tourists and stakeholders about Silk Route as a tourists’ destination was enlisted (Annexure I).

Finally, it was quantified that the three attributes of destination branding such as, Destination brand communication, brand perception and development can further be used for study analysis in pursuit of branding perspective of Silk Route. For the purpose of pilot testing of the questionnaire, 400 questionnaires were distributed in Jammu state (Jammu and Kashmir). There were 365 returned questionnaires and out of which only 303
were usable, signifying 75% rate of response. The purpose of pilot testing was to drive the most holistic constructs pertinent to the study so as to make them a base to prepare the final version of the questionnaire of attributes of Silk Route branding.

The questionnaire was divided to four sections. All these were based upon destination perception, awareness, and brand development of Silk Route if promoted. Free elicitation endorsed respondents to describe strategies relevant to Silk Route as a destination brand without any pre-defined construct related to the research. The aim of elicitation of these constructs from the targeted population was to attain more refined representation of the Silk Route as a destination brand.

Content analysis of available govt. reports and brochures available from some of the Indian travel agents or tour operators provide a general outlook about how silk route can be marketed by using various promotional means. Some of the Indian tour operators and stakeholders projected Silk Route branding beneficial to long term tourism strategies. Furthermore some tour operators offering Silk Route packages in Sikkim were also approached for the same perspective and they tagged the silk route as enriched tourism trail and their views to brand Indian Silk Route were considered in the questionnaire. Finally, a structured format of questionnaire was designed and prepared so as to make the survey process easy. Overall, the final questionnaire was enlisted with attributes based on literature concerning destination branding, content analysis of various documents or reports available by some Indian tour operators, travel agents & stakeholders. At last pilot testing on small sample of Indian tour operators and tourists from Jammu and Kashmir was conducted.

3.4 RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

3.4.1 Research Population and Sample Size determination

It is not possible for the study investigator to target the whole population because of inclusion of larger areas and less time availability. And so is the case with this study as thus needs a cautious approach to justify the study. The total population of tourists to Jammu and Kashmir was 1,14,73,588 and registered travel agents/tour operators were 39. The tourists population to Uttar Pradesh was 14,64,30,100 and the registered travel agents/tour operators were 57 in numbers (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2012 ). The tourists’ population in Sikkim was 5578942 and registered travel agents/tour
operators were 180 (Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Govt. of Sikkim, 2012). Since it was not possible to target the whole population the sample technique was applied as according to Gray (2013), if whole population cannot be targeted, a sample might be chosen from the that particular population for the ease of the study.

The sample size was determined and cross checked by using formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

\[
\text{Sample size} = \frac{\chi^2 N P (1-p)}{D^2 (n-1) + \chi^2 p (1-p)}
\]

\[\chi^2 = \text{Table Value of chi square @ df = 1 for desired confidence level of}\]

\[0.1=2.71, \quad 0.05= 3.84, \quad 0.01=6.64, \quad 0.001=10.83\]

Where N= population size (assumed to be 0.50)

P= Population Proportion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destinations</th>
<th>Target Entities</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Individual Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uttar Pradesh</strong></td>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>146430100</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel agencies/tour operators</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jammu and Kashmir</strong></td>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>11473588</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel agents/tour operators</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sikkim</strong></td>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>5578942</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel agents/tour operators</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Sample Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2157</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Sample Size Determination
3.4.2 Sampling Process

Convenience sampling technique has been applied to attain completed questionnaires swiftly and reasonably (Zikmund, 2003). The usage of factor analysis in this study allows at least ten-to-one ratio of remarks to given variables as 10-15 participants per variable have been suggested for drawing good sample size (Field, 2009). While variables related to study were observed to 33 which were further analyzed. Consequently the minimum sample size observed to be analyzed these variables was 330 for pilot survey. To collect the required amount of completed study questionnaires, a sample tourists visiting Jammu (J&K) were surveyed. The total number of 400 questionnaires was distributed among tour operator and tourists in Jammu state.

In accordance with Sarantakos (1998 cited Jennings 2001), sampling requires issue being derived from the population targeted and involved in the investigation study & this sample must be an adequate representative that further may ensures generalizability of the results which means that the derived sample population must possess the characteristics (more or less) of overall population.

3.5 SELF ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

A self-administered questionnaire was circulated among tourists visiting the concerned destinations as well tour operators of Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim extensively for the purpose of data collection. The self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) stands for a questionnaire that has been prepared exclusively to be completed by a respondent without researchers’ interference (e.g. an interviewer) while collecting the data (Lavrakas, 2008). The survey instrument was supported by cover letter addressing the substance of this research so as to attain the respondents’ interest and support. Also the tourists were addressed about the basic concept of Silk Route in India and its related destinations with the help of an attached brochure/pamphlet so as to attain fair and relevant responses.

3.5.1 Design of the Questionnaire

The motive behind utilizing a questionnaire for collection of data depends upon the purpose of attaining a huge and more refined illustration for the study. Another rationale was, the respondents for this study were selected to be prospective and potential
tourists who actually travelled to such destinations that are connected to the ancient Silk Route as well as the travel agents present at those destinations and consequently, a large sample was targeted for response collection. Overall, the questionnaire was integrated with structured questions to attain the awareness level of the tourists and travel agents about the Indian Silk Route, their knowledge and views about the Silk Route tourism and branding strategies for the Silk Route as tourism product.

During the survey process, it was assumed that respondents may not be aware or may very less be known to Silk Route especially in India. In order to make them aware and to attain the relevant responses and also to lessen the biased approach towards the study the additional pamphlet containing relevant information was provided to the respondents so make survey easier and reliable (Annexure II).

The questionnaire contained five categories of questions. First section/Section A represented the social and demographic information of the participants. Questions on awareness about Indian Silk Route and its related destinations were given in Section ‘B’ of the survey instrument i.e. questionnaire. In section ‘C’ and ‘D’, necessary attributes for Silk Route tourism Perception and Brand Development were obtained from previous studies. Section E featured questions to analyze the destination communication attributes for Silk Route as a destination brand. The respondents were requested to provide their responses on 5-point likert scale (where 1= highly disagree and 5= highly agree).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND RESPONSE RATE

Final data was collected from Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim states of India. For the purpose of data collection tourists visiting J&K, U.P. and Sikkim was targeted. Also the government registered tour operators/travel agents from targeted areas were approached to attain defined results. Total 2157 questionnaires were distributed out of which only 1650 were returned representing 76.4% response rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destinations</th>
<th>Number of questionnaires distributed</th>
<th>Number of questionnaires received and valid</th>
<th>Response Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel agents</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Agents</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourists</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Agents</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2157</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Response Rate Analysis

*Source: Primary Research*

Relatively high response rate calculated in Jammu and Kashmir region was because of sufficient time given to the data collection approx. two to three months of consecutive peak seasons of tourism in 2013 and 2014. The response rate was supported by the indulgence of tour operators interest to the queries asked through self structured questionnaire. Whereas time and distance constraint was observed in the low response rate from Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim.

### 3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

The self administered questionnaire has further been analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), software version 22.0. As factor analysis is an independence technique whose major rationale is to identify and classify the primary structure existed between the variables in the examination (Hair et al., 2006), the technique was applied on 33 variables related to the study. For the purpose of completing the analysis of the factors that are considered significant, the first step is usually pursued by factors rotation that was retained (Abdi, 2003). SPSS offers five methods of rotations and in relevance to this study VARIMAX rotation method was applied for factor extraction. VARIMAX rotation is generally presumed to be a simplified technique to simplify the structure of various factors. It has been a successful technique in attaining an orthogonal rotation of factors as it clearly separates the factors (Hair et al., 2006). All 33 destination branding variables were further condensed to core dimensions by the usage of VARIMAX rotation of factor analysis.

Descriptive statistics predominantly means, and frequency percentages were applied for analysis. In statistical terminology two statistical methods: univariate; bivariate techniques, have been applied for data analysis in relation to this study. Single
variables have been analyzed by means of univariate statistical methods like percentages, means and standard deviation. Further the bivariate techniques are used to analyze the association among two dimensions or variables including dependent & independent variable. Whereas multivariate methods like factor analysis and regression are used to examine the relationship among more than two variables. However before deciding upon the statistical technique, the researcher is supposed to ensure the data is normally distributed in the population so as to decide between non-parametric and parametric methods or techniques (Bryman, 2008).

3.7.1 Questionnaire’s Validity and Reliability

As the survey instrument used for present study is self structured questionnaire, validity and reliability stands crucial for its further processing. Validity determines whether the study investigation exactly analyze which was proposed to analyze or how real the study outcomes are (Hair et al., 2009). In other words, validity of questionnaire stands accepted only if it measures the objectives of the proposed research (Easterby-Smith, 1991; Bryman, 2004 & 2008). The study involved samples from three different populations (Jammu & Kashmir, U.P and Sikkim) and the validation of this study is comprehensive to the overall population.

Furthermore reliability has been defined as the degree to which a research instrument like questionnaire, trial, observation or any analysis procedure generates the same results on repeated usage (Malhotra, 2008). So, reliability test has been applied to analyze the consistency of the chosen survey instrument so as to attain desired results. More specifically, Cronbach α (alpha) was analyzed/ applied using SPSS version 22.0, to test the reliability of the survey scale. The alpha value of 0.70 is the minimum adequate criterion for representing internal reliability (Hair et al., 2009). The Cronbach α (alpha) for all the 33 items of the study was calculated to 0.851 (>0.70), which gives a cue to the constructs (items) consistency and reliability for further research process.

3.8 DATA EXAMINATION

3.8.1 Outlier Recognition

Detection/recognition of outliers targets to discover the patterns in data that challenges the normal conduct (Singh and Upadhyaya, 2012). In general outlier is an
observation in the data set which remains isolated from rest of the data. However statisticians have developed various techniques for outliers’ detection, box plot has been considered as one of the most important techniques to look out for outliers (Field, 2005). Box plot technique has been used to determine item to item outliers in the data set. The entire data was found to 21 and thus were deleted.

3.8.2 Normality Determination

The normality determination of data is significant for normal and continuous distribution in statistical analysis not just due to a reason that a large number of frequency distributions have about normal forms, but also the theoretical consequence of the normal curve in the field of statistical conjecture (Sonia et al., 2012). Before applying any statistical tests, assessment of normality is a prerequisite. So, before pursuing for parametrical tests, normality distribution of the data was assessed using various available methods. For the requirement of the study graphical methods for checking normality of the data (Park, 2008) were used.

3.8.2.1 Graphical Method

The Q-Q plot or quantile-quantile plot output was utilized to define normality of data. The Q-Q plot evaluates the observed quantiles of sampled data with the subsequent quantiles of a speculative distribution, selected previously (Sonia et al., 2012). According to Field (2005), if the data can only be analyzed as normally distributed if only the data points lie approximately on a straight diagonal line, and if the data points drifts away from that straight diagonal line then it is not normally distributed. The Normal Q-Q Plot represents the empirical quantiles, i.e., the organized sample data alongside the theoretical quantiles, i.e., the quantiles of the standard normal distribution for Destination Communication (DC), Brand Development (BD), and Perception towards Silk Route (PSR).
Since the figure 3.1 depicted that all the data points lies closer or nearer to the diagonally straight line and no point was lied outside, it can be said that the data selected for the study is normally distributed.

3.8.2.2 Numeric Method

For numerical normality check, skewness and kurtosis were conducted as it provides clues to the normality of data (Field, 2005). In the present study, test for skewness and kurtosis has been conducted on Destination communication (DC), Brand Development (BD), Perception towards Silk Route (PSR) with the help of SPSS software (22.0 version) and these all were ranged between -0.161 to 0.722, and -0.113 to 0.736 respectively. According to Gao et al. (2008) data normality can be defined well when its values for skewness and kurtosis lies between -1.0 to +1.0 or nearer to zero which further suggested that the data used in the study is normally distributed.

3.9 HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

At the global level, brand depicts a title or a tag which are linked with a product; within the intellect, symbolizes a mental illustration, a thought, a perception or a psychological connotation of a consumer (Tybout and Carpenter, 2001). Observing or hearing about the brand makes mind to generate certain linkages among the organization
or product for the ultimate customer (Schaar, 2013) and similarly when destinations like Silk Route, struggle for differentiating themselves from the competitors, destination personality is observed as an effective instrument for understanding perception of a place among tourists (Ekinci and Hosany, 2006; Aaker, 1996 cited in Antonsen, 2010). DMOs such as unplanned communication tools like word-of-mouth or consumers own perceptions of the touristic product or destination (Berry and Seltman, 2007). Thus communications continuously reveals the value of a brand to avoid confusion in marketplace (Antonsen, 2010). Further brand perceptions emerges from a range of resource, involving customer understandings, WOM (Word of Mouth) and communications (Krishnan, 1996) and further people connect their elucidations of understanding with others by explaining stories and describing various accounts (Govers and Go, 2003) which will influence the amount of information obtained and efforts conducted in this process of search (Lopes, 2011). In context to this, knowing how tourists’ perceive about a destination is vital for the future development of the destination (Boukas, 2008) as they act and respond higher considering their own perceptions and less on the basis of ground reality (Kelly, 1950 cited in Donkor et al., 2013). And when a destination is promoted with certain perceptions in mind, there appears a space for trends and developments that could have an impactful effect on both the destination and the brand (Baker, 2012). In fact, marketers of a destination should be aware of particular strategy to adopt with their brand which could further make their brand more inspirational or more reliable (Lodge, 2002). So, to create a unique and effective destination as a tourism brand it is important to determine what tourists already aware about your particular destination and then decide a appropriate mix of brand characteristics for positive promotion of its image (Prebensen 2007; Schaar, 2013). These literature perspectives continued to form hypotheses to test the linkages between the different constructs under investigation, i.e.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a positive relationship between Destination Brand Perception towards Silk Route tourism and Destination Brand Communication (DC).

**Hypothesis 2:** Brand Perception (Perception towards Silk Route Tourism, PSR) has a positive impact on Brand Development (BD) of Silk Route.
REFERENCES


Antonsen, I. M. N. (2010). The stakeholders’ involvement in the process of building and maintaining a destination brand.


