

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive study of the available tourism literatures indicates inadequate attention of the researchers towards the marketing efforts in spiritual tourism services. The main objective of the present research is to explore some aspects of development of marketing strategy for spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand state of India. A conclusive research programme was undertaken; research design, hypotheses and the research methodology employed in the study have been presented in the following sections.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Success of a well executed research depends on proper planning and adopting appropriate methodology. The validity of the results and acceptability of the research outcome is also largely attributed to the scientific methods used to derive the results and inferring from them. Identification of the research problem and arriving at the objectives to be achieved through the intended investigation followed by determining a logical sequence of operations are some of the major steps in any scientific research. In the present investigation, the research problem was identified after a comprehensive survey of literature in the field of spiritual tourism, a set of objectives and a set of research hypotheses have been formulated details of which are presented in the section 3.2. A descriptive research with cross-sectional design has been adopted for the present study as illustrated in the section 3.3. Sampling design and collection of worthy data are other very important steps in research which are being discussed at length in section 3.4. Sources of data and methods of collecting primary and secondary data have been presented. An investigation is carried out within certain constraints considering the existing situations. The limitations of the present study have also been mentioned.

3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

One of the most important steps in a scientific investigation is to identify the ‘path of enquiry’, also called a research problem. A research problem is a gap which inhibits the process of efficient decision making. It involves starting with general problem and identifying the specific components (Malhotra and Dash, 2011). The problem identification process, as illustrated by Chawla and Sondhi (2011), ‘is action oriented’, also it requires a narrowing down of a wider decision problem to the level of information oriented problem in the quest of arriving at a meaningful conclusion based on the background information. The information can be collected through various means. The process can be schematically presented in the following important steps as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

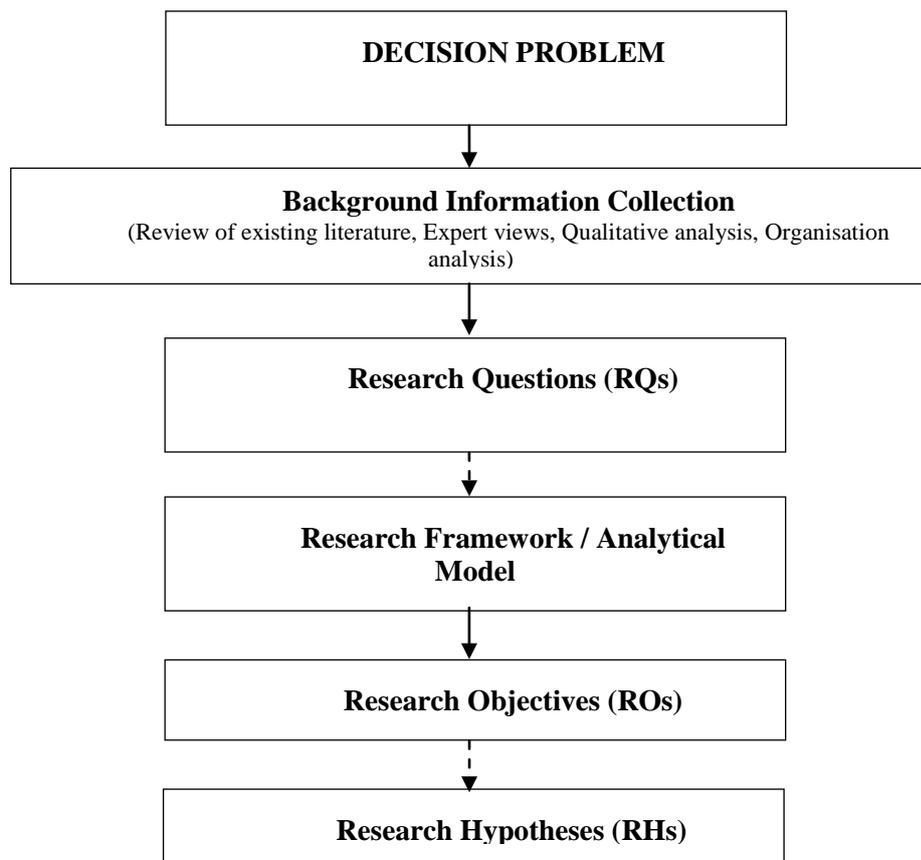


Figure 3.1 Problem identification process (*adapted from* Chawla and Sondhi, 2011).

In the present investigation, a reasonably good number of published literatures, both in Journals and in Conferences, along with number of reports published by the concerned departments/authorities related to tourism administration/management in the central as well as state government have been reviewed. Emphasis was given to the area of spiritual tourism in which literatures are not abundant in the public domain. Accordingly, the problem area was narrowed down to arrive at few focused themes as explained in the following sections (3.2.1 & 3.2.2) in the form of Research Questions (RQs) and Research Objectives (ROs). Hypotheses were formulated (section 3.2.3) based on the research objectives.

3.2.1 Research Questions

Research questions form the basis for what needs to be investigated. A researcher should identify the gaps in the existing information about the subject matter of the proposed research, and accordingly frame the questions (RQs) in order to fill the gaps. The questions can be of ‘*What ?*’ (in case of ‘descriptive research’) or ‘*Why ?*’ (in case of ‘explanatory research’) type. They should not be too narrow or too broad so that a reasonable answer can be obtained through the intended research.

In the present study, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature on tourism marketing and more specifically on marketing aspects of spiritual tourism in the context of Uttarakhand state of India, has been carried out as presented in the Chapter 2. As analysed in the previous Chapter, there are few literatures in the public domain except Government Reports and Statistics of different departments and authorities. However, contemporary publications show a steep rise in the literatures in the field of spiritual tourism. The following research questions can be derived based on the survey:

1. What are the existing tourism marketing practices being followed in India, and more specifically in Uttarakhand ?

2. What are the major means of promoting spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand ?
3. What are the implications of growth of spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand's economy?
4. What are the factors required for branding Uttarakhand as a spiritual tourist destination?
5. What are the roles of the Government in marketing spiritual tourism in the state?

3.2.2 Research Objectives

Research objectives are the goals to be accomplished by a researcher. These goals are basically set in order to respond to the RQs. In this stage, as observed by Chawla and Sondhi, (2011), the RQs are further broken down and spelt out as tasks or objectives. Obviously, a comprehensive and unbiased review of the literatures and other background information help arriving at them as illustrated in Figure 3.1. The main objective of this study is to analyse the existing marketing practices of spiritual tourism in the state of Uttarakhand, India in the context of present requirement and develop suitable marketing strategy. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine tourism marketing practices currently being followed in India as a whole, and, the state of Uttarakhand, in particular.
2. To identify the potentials of spiritual tourism in terms of places of interest, number of tourists and revenue earned.
3. To identify the Infrastructure requirements for promotion of spiritual tourism in the state and the bottlenecks with reference to (a) Government initiative, (b) Information, (c) Infrastructure, (d) Professionalism.
4. To analyse the economic impact of the spiritual tourism on the state's economy and to suggest strategies to develop spiritual tourism as a prime industry in the state.
5. To suggest suitable marketing strategy to develop spiritual tourism as a prime industry in the state.

3.2.3 Research Hypotheses

In the recent works of several authors on spiritual/pilgrimage tourism (Satpathy and Mahalik, 2010; Haq and Jackson, 2009; Srivastava, 2009; Aggrawal, 2008; Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Dash *et al.*, 2007; Husain, 2007; Khadaroo and Seetanah, 2007; Hannam, 2004; Mawa, 2004; Doolin *et al.*, 2002), it has been reported that there is hardly any structured way of approaching marketing of tourism, especially the spiritual tourism which is yet to be recognized as a regular form of tourism in India. One of the prime objectives of the present research is to examine the tourism marketing practices currently being followed in India as a whole, and, the state of Uttarakhand, in particular as outlined in the Chapter 1 of the present study. Accordingly, based on the published literature, the research hypotheses for the present study have been formulated as:

Hypothesis 1

H₁ There is no standard marketing practice being currently followed in the state of Uttarakhand for promotion of spiritual tourism. (Prasad, 2004)

Hypothesis 2

H₂ Number of tourists visiting a spiritual place depends on its perceived degree of spirituality. (Hannam, 2004; Haq and Jackson, 2009)

Hypothesis 3

H₃ Lack of adequate infrastructure restrains the potential tourists from visiting their places of interest. (Husain, 2007; Khadaroo and Seetanah, 2007; Srivastava, 2009)

Hypothesis 4

H₄ Information forms the most valuable component in attracting the tourists.

Hypothesis 5

H₅ Government plays a decisive role in formulating and executing marketing strategies for the places of spiritual importance. (Doolin *et al.*, 2002; Srivastava, 2009)

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the proposed investigation is to study different aspects of marketing of spiritual tourism and development of marketing strategies in the Uttarakhand state of India. Tourism is a complex phenomenon that involves a number of constitutive elements. Research in such an area calls for careful consideration of different attributes. In the present study, primarily ‘self-administered questionnaire survey’ methodology has been adopted. Data were collected through various methods. In order to collect primary data, cross-sectional multiple research design methodology was adopted in which samples would be questioned only once as part of the personal survey. Secondary data were collected from the data generated by different agencies and government organizations, other data repositories and published literatures. In the present research 500 samples were surveyed. Samples, both male and female, were selected randomly from the target population of Indian and foreign tourists at the sites. Separate questionnaires were developed to collect data from tourists, hoteliers, travel agents and travel guides; attempts were made to contact each person individually and help them in filling the questionnaires. The sampling design for the study, details of data collection and questionnaire are presented in the following section. A schematic depicting the research plan, work flow and methodology of the study is presented in Figure 3.2.

3.3.1 Research Design

Research design is considered as the primary requirement of any scientific investigation. A research design is the framework for carrying out the intended study (Malhotra and Dash, 2011; Riege, 2000). Efficient and effective completion of a research largely depends on appropriate design of the research scheme. The research design followed in the present study has been illustrated schematically in Figure 3.3.

In general, research design schemes can be categorized as – (i) Exploratory research design, and (ii) Conclusive research design. According to Robson (1993), research design can also be divided into fixed (also called ‘quantitative research design’) and flexible research design (also termed as ‘qualitative research design’). However, fixed designs need not be quantitative, and flexible design need not be qualitative. Fixed designs are normally theory-driven; otherwise it’s impossible to know in advance which variables need to be controlled and measured; these variables are often quantitative. Flexible designs, on the other hand, allow for more freedom during the data collection. One reason for using a flexible research design can be that the variable of interest is not quantitatively measurable, such as culture.

The basic objective of the present research is to carry out a systematic study of the marketing aspects of spiritual tourism and to identify the possible marketing strategies within a specific geographical domain. Thus, a ‘descriptive research’ with ‘conclusive research design’ shall be more appropriate to arrive at the desired objectives. Tourism is associated with several components of a society with a large spread. Government policies, Government agencies, Non-governmental agencies, societies, different functionaries at the spiritual places, tour operators, tour guides, traders, hospitality and other service providers and tourists themselves are the stake holders in spiritual tourism. The information required for any relevant study and consequent analyses, therefore, becomes multi-dimensional and large. Thus, a ‘multiple cross-sectional’ research design shall be more suitable for carrying out the present research. The necessary data/information may be collected from the secondary sources (published literatures and reports, government/non-government data repositories etc.) as well as directly from the sampled stake holders through surveys as shown in Figure 3.3. The other possible forms of data collection like observations and panels were excluded from the present research design scheme considering the operational easeness.

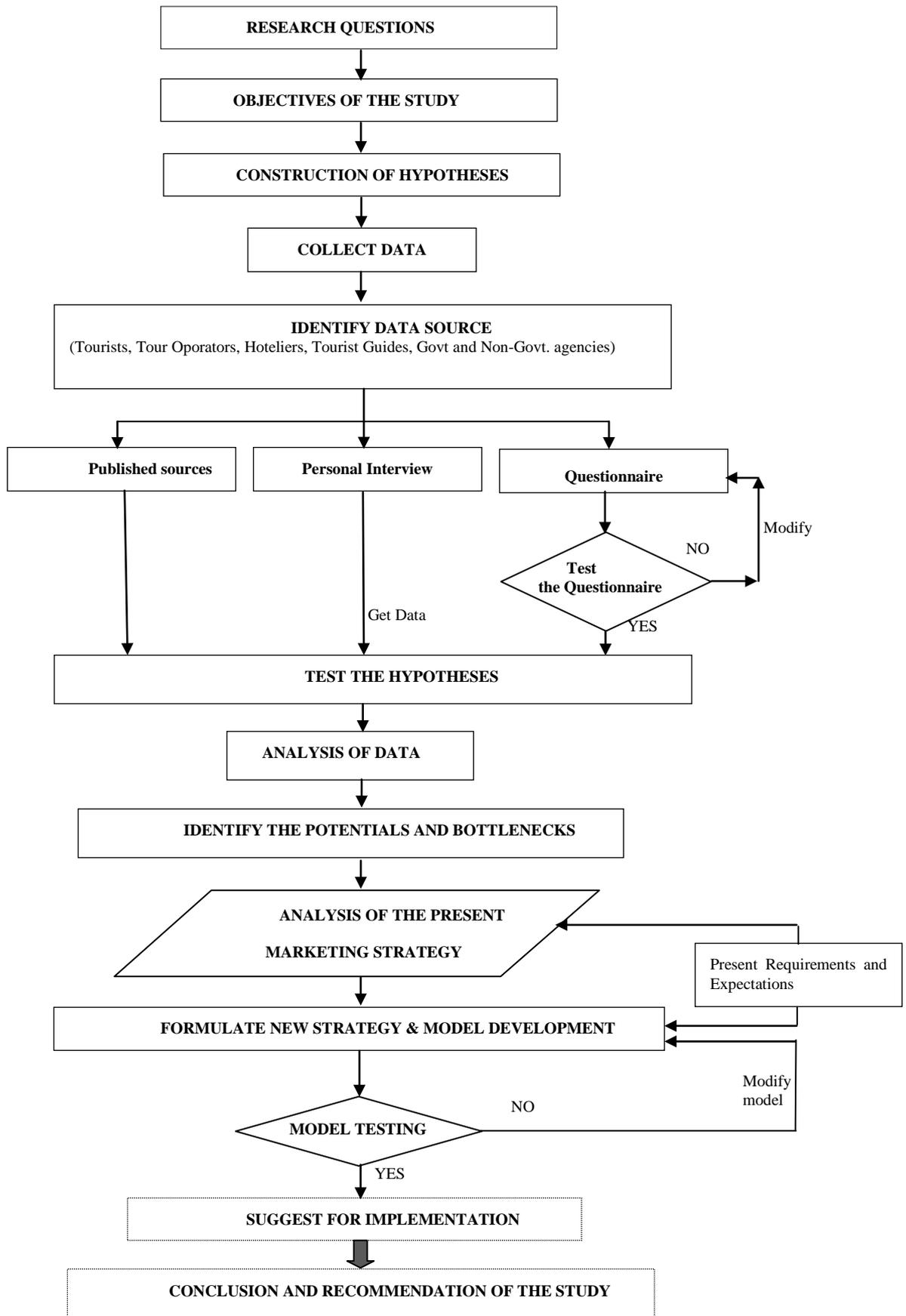


Figure 3.2 Methodology of the proposed study

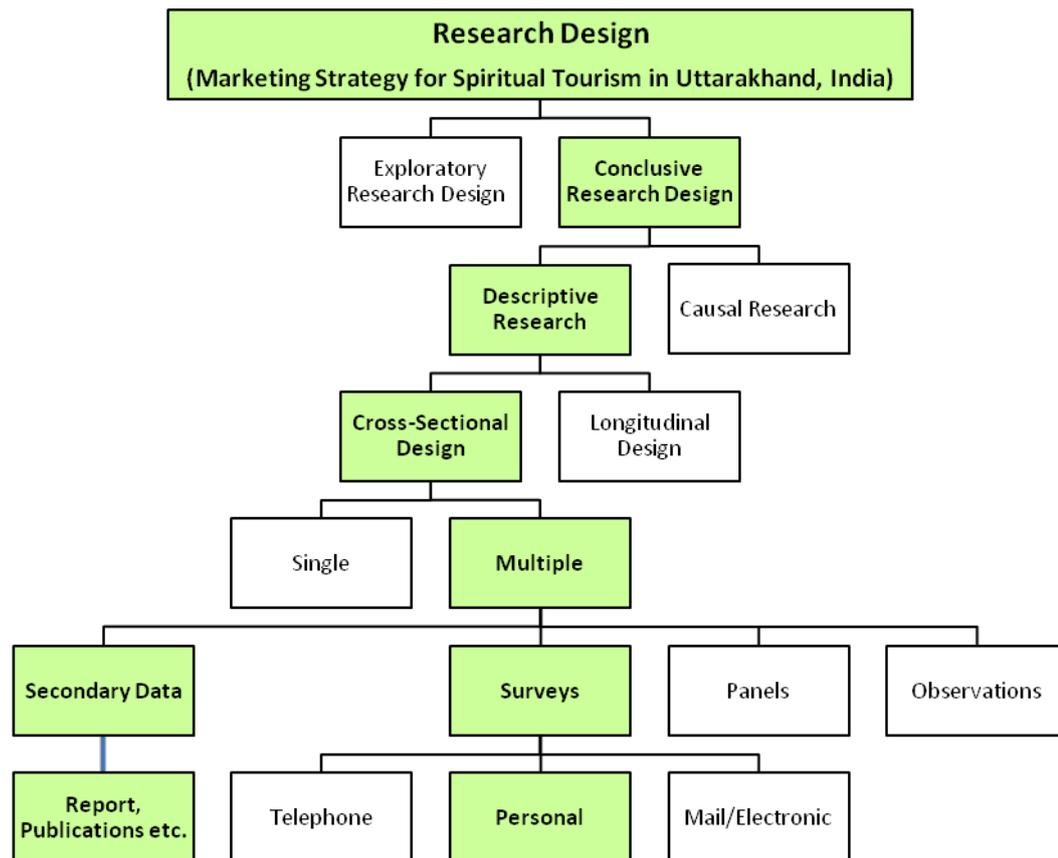


Figure 3.3 Schematic of the research design tree: the shaded components indicate the route used in the present research.

3.3.2 Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire is one of the most popular means of collecting data in the survey mode. However, the type of data, amount of data and correctness of data depend largely on appropriate design of the questionnaire (instrument). Thus, one has to be careful in designing this instrument. There are three most important criteria to be followed while designing a questionnaire – (1) the research objectives must be converted into clear questions so that answers can be extracted from the respondent, (2) the questions should be self-explanatory and non-confusing, and (3) a questionnaire should be in such a way to get a meaningful response.

In the present study, questionnaires were suitably designed to acquire data from the different sample strata. Open-ended, dichotomous and multiple-choice types of questions

were designed to extract information. Mostly, the ‘Nominal’ scale and ‘Interval’ types of scales were used as the primary scales of measurement, while the ‘Likert’ scale was used as the non-comparative scaling technique in the present study. Questionnaires were administered to the samples in person and were collected back in person. Other forms of communications like telephonic interview, use of e-mails and/or FAX facilities were avoided. Such communications are ruled out for the tourists due to inadequate infrastructure. Further, possible delay and awareness level were the prime reasons for not adopting these techniques for acquiring data from the other sources.

3.4 SAMPLING DESIGN

Sampling design is the feasible way to collect research data in almost all the situations. The process unavoidably introduces sampling errors; however, these errors are usually a small part of the total research errors. The sampling design process, in general, has five steps – target population, sampling frame, sampling technique, sample size and execution. Appropriate designing of these steps is considered significant in achieving the objectives of the research. In a conclusive research design as discussed in Section 3.3, data/information is collected from various sources from a ‘Population’.

Population is the aggregate of all the elements, sharing some common set of characteristics that comprises the universe for the purpose of the research problem. ‘Elements’ are usually the respondents in a ‘survey’ form of data collection. A certain fraction of the universe, called ‘Target Population’, is approached through various means for obtaining the required information. Target population, in fact, is the collection of elements or objects that possess the information sought by the researcher and about which inferences are to be made. Target population is defined in terms of elements, sampling units, extent and time. All male and females age fifteen years or more were considered as the target population in the present research. Persons/tourists below this age were

considered that they do not possess a matured opinion to provide information in response to the queries presented in the questionnaire, and hence were excluded. 'Sampling Frame' in a research design process is a representation of the elements of the target population. It consists of a list or set of directories/sources for identifying the target population. The following were identified as the sampling frames for the present research:

1. List of registered (a) hoteliers, (b) tour guides, (c) travel agents in Haridwar and Rishikesh,
2. Offices of State Tourism Department, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB),
3. Spiritual Centers,
4. Official Web portals of Government/Non-Government Departments.

3.4.1 Sample Size

The 'Sample size' refers to the number of elements included in the study. Determining the sample size is complex and involves several qualitative and quantitative considerations. Important qualitative factors that should be considered in determining the sample size include (Malhotra and Dash, 2011; Riege, 2000) – the importance of the decision, the nature of the research, the nature of the analysis, the number of variables, sample sizes used in similar studies, incidence rates, completion rates and resource constraints. It is reported that number of similar studies used a sample size in the range of 250 – 500 (Hui et al., 2007); accordingly, 500 respondents were considered as the 'sample size' for the present study.

3.4.2 Sampling Method

Sampling technique may be broadly classified as non probability and probability. Non probability sampling relies on the personal judgment of the researcher rather than

chance to select sample elements. Since the number of spiritual tourists in the selected locations (*Haridwar* and *Rishikesh*) is very large, hence, ‘Simple Random Sampling’ technique was not used while collecting data from the spiritual tourists as it creates problem in the preparation of a sampling frame (Chawla and Sondhi, 2011). ‘Judgmental Sampling’ technique was employed while collecting data from the tourists as well as from the organised sector in the present research. This form of ‘Convenience Sampling’ is generally used where the population elements are purposely selected based on the judgment of the researcher (Malhotra and Dash, 2011). In order to execute the data collection process, the target places were visited keeping the sampling frames in mind; information were gathered from the target population in the form of responses in the questionnaires, collection of official booklets, data/fact sheets, survey reports, statistical archives etc. The complete sampling design process followed in the present work is illustrated in Figure 3.4. Table 3.1 shows the sample segment.

Table 3.1 Sample segments in the present study

Sl.No.	Particulars	Sample Size	Total Sample
1	Tourists a) Domestic b) Foreigner	280 120	400
2	Hotels/Restaurants	50	50
3	Travel agents/Tour operators	25	25
4	Travel guides	25	25

3.4.3 Sample Location

Uttarakhand, as it is rightly called ‘*Devbhomi*’, is a paradise for spiritual tourists. There are number of sites to which tourists pour in from all over the world almost throughout the year. However, few spiritual shrines are located at prohibitively higher

altitudes of the Himalayan range (for example, *Kedarnath and Yamunotri*). Thus, commutation to such places in the peak of winter season is barred by the authorities. Therefore, it is difficult to obtain common characteristics of all the shrines and/or spiritual centers of the states. Haridwar, the gateway to the *Devbhoomi* and Rishikesh, the land of Yoga were selected as the two important study sites based on their popularity as a spiritual tourist destination for both outbound and inbound tourists. Moreover, these two cities witness tourists of all strata throughout the year. The two cities are well connected by rail and road ways and partially by airways through the state capital Dehradun. Haridwar and Rishikesh alone share the major part of the total tourists to the state.

Sample Location	Haridwar and Rishikesh
Target Population	Male and female with age greater than or equal to 15 years.
Sampling Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of Tourists- Domestic and International • List of registered (a) hoteliers, (b) tour guides, (c) travel agents in Haridwar and Rishikesh • Offices of State Tourism Department, UTDB • Spiritual Centers • Official Web portals of Govt/Non Govt Depts.
Sampling Technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenience Sampling, and • Judgmental Sampling
Sample Size	500 respondents
Execution	Reach out to the tourists conveniently at the spiritual shrine, interviewing the concerned officials of tourism organizations and collecting their statistical data, meeting the tourist/travel guides at the shrines, digital data from the web portals of Govt. departments.
Time period	February – July, 2011 .

Figure 3.4 The sampling design of the present research.

3.4.4 Data Collection

The data for the present research was collected from the primary as well as secondary sources. The sources of data are briefly discussed.

Primary source

A structured questionnaire is the principal means of collecting data through a survey on a target population or sample. This study uses four fully-structured questionnaires for data collection. The domestic and foreign tourists, owners of hotels and restaurants, travel agents/tour operators and tourist guides were respondents forming the sources for gathering primary information. Information from all the respondents in different categories was collected by means of differently structured questionnaires.

A pilot study of a sample size of 50 was conducted at the study sites (Haridwar and Rishikesh) to ensure the reliability and user-friendliness of the designed questionnaires. The sample size for the pilot study was selected based on the usual practice and published literature (Hui et al., 2007). All the respondents participating in the pilot study, in general, commented on the clarity, readability and ease of understanding of the questionnaires. Thus, only minor modifications in wordings were carried out along with discarding one dichotomous question and one redundant question. Since, factor analysis is not planned to be carried out, therefore, Cronbach Alpha scores were not computed (Hui et al., 2007).

The questionnaire was administered to tourists in their leisure hours at their convenience to get correct information through the structured questionnaire (Annexure-I) in a research schedule. Primary data was collected from a large segment of tourists at the tourist destinations to know about their motivation, experiences, preference and perceptions, especially about their orientation towards spiritual beliefs and rituals. Primary data was also collected from few major hotels/restaurants, which receive sizeable number of tourists in the form of another structured questionnaire (Annexure-II) through interview

schedules. Data were also collected from travel agencies/tour operators and guides, who form the intermediary group as an important link between the destinations and tourists. The structured Questionnaire-3 (Annexure-III) administered to this group was entitled in the Interview Schedule. Data was also collected from tourist guides, both government licensed and private ones, through the Questionnaire-4 (Annexure-IV). The data collection was completed by administering the instruments during the period February – July, 2011.

A lot of information has also been collected by way of visit to tourist destinations and personal discussions with eminent people in travel and tourism trade, Uttaranchal tourism, managing bodies of various spiritual places etc. Schedule interview and face to face interaction was also conducted with the international tourists who specifically came to attend the International Yoga festival at Rishikesh and also with the domestic tourists who came from different parts of the country. The overall focus was to collect information as objectively as possible.

Secondary sources

The secondary sources of data were collected from the published journals, magazines, newspaper, Government/Semi Government/Non Government/Private agencies and web portals. A large number of domestic and foreign tourists visit this state of Uttarakhand every year. Government organizations like Department of Tourism and Non Government organizations like Trusts, Management societies of different spiritual establishments and Private agencies are also involved directly or indirectly with tourism in these spiritual places which forms the major sources of data apart from published literature in the area of study. Representative samples were drawn from each category. More than three hundred samples in each major tourist places of spiritual importance were taken. It is important to note that the confidentiality of all participants' responses is maintained throughout the study.

3.5 PROCEDURE FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Proper analysis of collected data is crucial for extracting useful information and drawing inferences. Correctness of the information and consequent conclusions strongly depends on appropriate analyses of data. Thus, selection of data analysis tools, techniques is significant. In the present study MS Excel software tools would be used for data analyses. While simple statistical analyses like demographic details and other patterns can be performed using the MS Excel software.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

Uttarakhand is a large state of India and geographically it is challenging to travel. Ironically, most of the tourist places of spiritual importance are located in the hilly terrains in the foothills of the Himalayas. Further, there are large cultural differences between the places in the plains and the hills. Frequent travel to the places at higher altitude poses number of practical difficulties. Hence, the study sites were decided to restrict into two prominent places of spiritual interests in the plains – Rishikesh and Haridwar only. Moreover, it is a fact that, for any conclusive type of research, increasing the sample size yields better result. However, a considerably acceptable sample size of 500 was decided based on the relevant literature and from pragmatic considerations. Time and expenditure both increase with the increase in the sample size. Only one respondent from one group of spiritual tourists was selected as the representative of the whole group. Further, tourists were contacted for responding to the questionnaire only after their spiritual activities were completed/partially completed.

Another significant limitation of the process is that the general awareness level of the most of the people associated with spiritual tourism is significantly low. Thus, there might be erroneous information owing to misinterpretation of certain queries and consequently, there exists possibilities for incorrect data to emerge.

3.7 SUMMARY

The present research programme is concerned with an intensive study about spiritual tourism and development of marketing strategy. The research methodology to be adopted with detailed research design has been presented. A multiple cross-sectional conclusive research design has been followed. A self-administered questionnaire survey methodology has been adopted. Data were collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. Questionnaires were administered to a sample size of 500 from four different strata. Samples were drawn from a target population spread over two most populated and mostly visited spiritual places – Haridwar and Rishikesh in Uttarakhand state of India.