CHAPTER-4

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the objectives and methodology of the study. The research questions come after the objectives of the study. Then, the methodology of the study is presented, which includes the data source, sampling procedure, and analytical framework.

3.1 Objectives of the study

By considering the research gap and importance of the study discussed in Chapter 2, the present study has attempted to focus on the service quality of pilgrimage sites in north India, focusing on the seven *Jyotirlingas* of north India.

The main objectives of the study are

Objective 1: To measure the tourist expectation and perception towards the service quality variables at the selected pilgrimage sites of north India.

Objective 2: To assess the problems surrounding the selected pilgrimage sites of north India.

2(a) To determine the problems of supply side of the tourism sector at the the selected pilgrimage sites.

2(b)To determine the problems of demand side of the tourism sector at the the selected pilgrimage sites.

Objective 3: To identify the issues in the management of selected pilgrimage sites.

3.2 Research questions

The present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the tourists' expectations for service quality at the designated pilgrimage sites in North India?

RQ2: How do tourists perceive the actual service quality at these pilgrimage sites?
RQ3: What is the overall service quality at each of the chosen pilgrimage sites in North India?
RQ4: What is the supply, financial, manpower, and operating issues impacting the supply side of the tourism industry at the selected pilgrimage destinations in north India?

RQ5: What is the accommodation, food and water, transportation and other issues impacting the demand side of the tourism industry at these pilgrimage sites?

RQ6: What are the major management problems at the selected pilgrimage destinations in North India?

3.3 Research Methodology

This study adopts both exploratory and empirical research design to address the research questions. A mixed method approach to research has been applied.

3.3.1 Data Collection

Objective 1

For fulfilment of objective 1, the survey method of data collection has been adopted, and the tourists of the seven pilgrimage sites (*Jyotirlingas*) have been separately surveyed on-site through a structured questionnaire. According to literature, the face-to-face survey technique is more comfortable for visitors in public spaces (Zhang et al., 2017) since the aims and the importance of the study can be elaborated effectively and in a more convincing way. This helps to ensure maximum participation in the survey and reduce the non-response rate. First, an exhaustive literature review was conducted to study the area of service quality and generate the items and variables necessary to measure service quality in pilgrimage tourism. Table 4.1 shows the items generated for the study. The items were then presented to the ten tourists[2] and three temple management employees[3] for their inputs in the form of structured questionnaires before the pilot testing to check the feasibility of the study. The pilot testing of the survey instrument for reliability was done before administering the final questionnaire to the tourists. After finalising the questionnaire, a descriptive research design was adopted to select the sample for the study, collect data from the respondents, and further analyse the data. The questionnaire consisted of multiple items that were used to reflect various constructs related to temple service, safety and security, accommodation, food and water, etc. All the items were measured using a seven-point semantic differential scale. The previous literature on

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[2] These ten tourists were chosen by random sampling at the pilgrimage site to give their opinions and suggestions. The purpose was to find out if the researcher had missed any item that was essential to measure service quality.

[3] These three temple management employees included the temple *panda*, the temple priest, and one member of the temple management committee who agreed to cooperate with the researcher. Their opinion was required to know the limitations in the structured questionnaire.

service quality has used both the five-point scale and the seven-point scale to measure the service quality. But the seven-point scale has been preferred over the five-point scale because the original SERVQUAL scale developed by Parsuraman preferred the seven-point scale to measure the service quality. Moreover, the five-point scale has been criticised from the viewpoint that such a scale cannot be considered as an interval scale (Leung, 2011). The final questionnaire is presented in Annexure I.

Table 4.1: Source of Items generated for the study

Item	Adapted from
Presence of security (police/forces) at the destination	(Bhat, 2012)
Availability of proper prevention measures for hazardous situation (fire exit, fire extinguisher).	(Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Expect to be safe while waiting in the queue at the pilgrimage destination	(Canny, 2012)
Necessary first aid to be available at the destination	(Vukonić, 1996) (Vidhya & Selvam, 2020)
Emergency medical facilities available	(Vukonić, 1996) (Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Priest performs pooja as per the rituals	(Bhat, 2012)
Wheelchair facility for sick/old age citizens/PWD	(Bhat, 2012) (Frochot & Hughes, 2000)
Availability of Prasad and other necessary Pooja items	Suggested by experts since Availability of Prasad and other necessary Pooja items is a significant part of visiting a pilgrimage site.by experts
Jyotirlinga Darshan	(Vidhya & Selvam, 2020)
Participation in the Aarti in the temple	Self-addition inspired by the above item since aarti is a significant part of visiting a pilgrimage site.
Facility to keep footwear	(Verma & Sarangi, 2019)

Availability of locker facility	(Kumar & Singh, 2015) (Verma & Sarangi, 2019)
Proper queue management at the temple	(Canny, 2012)
Clear direction regarding public facilities	(Canny, 2012) (Kumar & Singh, 2015) (Verma & Sarangi, 2019)
Information about the protocols inside the destination	(Canny, 2012)
Easy communication with presence of guides	(Romadhoni et al., 2020)
Proper management of street vendors	(Canny, 2012)
Temple management addresses pilgrim's grievance quicky	(Romadhoni et al., 2020)
Availability of accommodation near the destination	(Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Fair price of the accommodation available	(Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Availability of clean toilet and washroom in the accommodation	(Balaji & Venkatesan, 2015)
Credible and courteous staff in the accommodation	(Bhat, 2012) (Latiff & Imm, 2015)
Staff responds to tourists' requests quickly	(Bhat, 2012) (Latiff & Imm, 2015)
Staff meets the needs, wants and complaints of tourists	(Romadhoni et al., 2020) (Latiff & Imm, 2015)
Easy availability of means of transportation	(Tsitsiloni et al., 2012) (Vukonić, 1996) (Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Fare price to be charged for transportation	(Romadhoni et al., 2020) (Vidhya & Selvam, 2020)
Cordial attitude and behavior of the transporters	(Romadhoni et al., 2020)
Good conditioned motorable road	(Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Hygiene to be maintained in terms of food	(Bhat, 2012)

	(Balaji & Venkatesan, 2015) (Latiff & Imm, 2015) (Kumar & Singh, 2015)
Availability of clean drinking water at the destination	(Bhat, 2012) (Balaji & Venkatesan, 2015) (Latiff & Imm, 2015)
Availability of preferred Choices of food items	(Bhat, 2012) (Latiff & Imm, 2015)

Source: Own Compilation

Objective 2

A qualitative research approach was employed to find the problems of the demand and supply sides operating at the seven pilgrimage sites. We conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews with respondents, which included local suppliers providing lodging, food, and other amenities (Objective 2 (a) and pilgrims and tourists (Objective 2 (b). Respondents were informed of the study's objectives in accordance with ethical considerations. Their consent was sought, together with a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality. Each interview session lasted, on average, 10-20 minutes. Some of those willing to participate were reluctant to have the interviews recorded, so the researchers took summary field notes of the conversations, as similar methods have been adopted by previous studies (Huang & Pearce, 2019). As soon as each interview ended, the researchers added more details to their notes to collect as much information as possible. Some of the recorded interviews were in Hindi, which was transcribed to English for analysis by the researcher which leads to minimal bias as revealed by previous studies. After the fieldwork, all the handwritten notes were transferred to text as descriptive words and phrases. The interviews were firstly coded as supply side (S1-S80) and demand side (R1-R89).

Objective 3

A mixed method approach was taken for the fulfilment of Objective 3. A review of secondary data from reports, laws, and periodicals along with an in-depth case study approach was considered most appropriate because the aim was to understand the functioning of temple management and gain understanding about the roles of different stakeholders and identify their issues. Because this approach relies on a full variety of

evidence-documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations, it helps to triangulate all the data and provide a fuller understanding of the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2003, Shinde, 2011).

3.3.2 Sampling procedure

Objective 1

Due to the unavailability of a sampling frame[4], this study utilised a non-probability sampling technique. Non-probability sampling, according to Malhotra and Dash (2019), does not rely on random selection of samples. Instead, they rely on the discretion of the researcher. A combination of judgement and convenience sampling was employed in the study. The survey locations were chosen via judgement sampling. Despite the fact that the temple grounds are abuzz with tourists, they rarely respond to the questionnaire because they are in a rush to offer their prayers. As a result, hotels, guest houses, and dharmshalas within a 4-kilometer radius of the temple were chosen for tourist surveys[5]. The locations were chosen because, among all the other locations and lodgings far from the temple, they record the highest number of visitors. Since only adult travellers were considered for the survey, judgement was also required when determining the sampling element. Additionally, only tourists who stayed in the city for at least one day were taken into consideration. Lastly, respondents were chosen by convenience sampling. Convenience had to do with how willing people were to take the survey and how easy it was to find the sample elements. It is critical to consider that once devotees leave the temple, it is much harder to find or get in touch with possible respondents. So, the study was done outside the temple near hotels, lodges, *dharamshalas*, food joints, and other places when tourists came back after making their offerings to the temple. It was convenient for both the respondent and the researcher.

Objective 2 (a) and 2 (b)

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[4] The researcher found that these seven pilgrimage sites do not maintain an accurate count of the tourists visiting the sites. The researcher also visited the temple management office, tourist office, and nearby police station, which claimed to have a rough figure of tourists visiting these sites. These visits did not yield any results. After the field visit, the researcher filed a request under the Right to Information Act, but it was futile.

[5] While conducting the pilot survey, the researcher discovered that tourists who were either going to the temple or coming back from the temple did not cooperate with the questionnaire. However, when these same tourists were contacted in their hotels and places of stay, they were relaxed and heartedly cooperated in filling out the questionnaire.

For the selection of the interviewees, purposive sampling was employed. Purposive sampling, which is broadly used in qualitative research, involves selection of participants based on an important feature (Patton, 1990). Previous studies have also employed similar methods for conducting interview in pilgrimage tourism sector (Sati, 2018; Triantafillidou et al., 2010)

Objective 3

The temple management was contacted in person for the interview. They were informed about the study and its importance. One official[6] from the management was requested to answer the relevant questions.

3.3.3 Sample Size

Objective 1

The sample size of a study is a small group of individuals chosen to represent the wider population from which the sample was drawn (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003; Marshall, 2006). The individuals in the sample are representative of a wider population There is little consensus regarding an ideal sample size for studies on measuring service quality. For determining the sample size for the fulfilment of objective 1, the following parameters were taken into consideration:

1. ***Roscoe's rule of thumb*** - The rule suggests that the sample size between 30-500 is justified in behavioural research. This is because sample size larger than 30 adhere to the advantages of central limit theorem and with a sample of 500, sample error will not exceed 10% of standard deviation (Kwak & Kim, 2017).

2. ***Sample size from similar studies***

Both research papers and thesis were considered before finalising a sample size for the first objective. The sample size analyses of thesis with more than one study area gave an idea that 500 was the minimum total sample size in researches, and researchers normally divided their sample equally in all areas in absence of a sampling frame for Indian religious sites.

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[6] Although the response of one sample participant is not generalisable, it was found that getting a response from the temple management was not easy. They refused to cooperate with the researcher. After multiple requests, one member of the temple management of the four sites out of seven agreed to cooperate with the researcher.

Table 4.2: Research Papers on Pilgrimage Tourism

Authors	Study area	Sample Size
(Gupta and Gulla, 2010)	Vaishno Devi Shrine	88
(Tripathi, Choudhary and Agrawal, 2010)	Golden Temple	84
(Agrawal, Choudhary and Tripathi, 2010)	Buddhist Temples	216
(Yadav et al., 2010)	Lotus Temple	196
(Bhat, 2012)	Kashmir Valley	320
(Gupta and Basak, 2018)	Rath Yatra	680
(Piramanayagam, Kumar and Mallya, 2021)	Bodh Gaya	426
(Deb and Lomo-David, 2021)	Sun Temple of Konark	473

Source: Own Compilation

Table 4.3: Thesis on Pilgrimage tourism

Authors	Study area	Sample Size
(Bhel, 2012)	5 Shaktipeeths in Himachal Pradesh	750 (150*5)
(Nair, 2014)	20 temples across Andhra Pradesh	800 (40*20)
(Vijay, 2016)	Srirangam pilgrimage	600
(Shanmuga Priya P, 2017)	Madurai	300
(Kour, 2017)	Mata Vaishno Devi	500
(Bhandarkar, Sachin Tryambak, 2019)	6 districts across Maharashtra	404
(Goutami,Kolluru Laxmi, 2023)	Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri	680

Source: Own Compilation

Table 4.4: General studies on Service Quality

Authors	Sample Size
(Jayawardhena, 2004)	1000
(Eid & Abdelkader, 2017)	1000
(Kuo et al., 2018)	1000
(Demir et al., 2020)	1000
(Lin et al., 2023)	1000

Source: Own Compilation

According to Comrey and Lee (2013), in a quantitative study, a sample with fewer than 50 participants is considered a weaker sample; a sample size of 100 is weak; a sample size of 200 is adequate; a sample size of 300 is good; a sample size of 500 is very good; and a sample size of 1000 is excellent. The proposed sample size for the study was 1001 divided equally in 7 study areas (143 each). The pilot study rendered a non-response rate of 13%. Keeping that in mind, a total of 1150 questionnaires were distributed to the seven study areas. The 1150 questionnaires were then checked for completeness and non-responses. Out of the questionnaires administered to the tourists, only 1047 were completely filled out and were considered suitable for the study. Most incomplete responses and non-responses were from Omkareshwar and Nageshwar. The overall response rate for this study was 91.04%.

Table 4.5: List of study areas and final data

Study Area	Final Data
Kedarnath	160
Kashi Vishwanath	156
Omkareshwar	120
Mahakaleshwar	160
Baidyanath Dham	156
Nageshwar	137
Somnath	158
Total	**1047**

Source: Own Compilation

Objective 2 (a) and 2(b)

Data saturation (Vasileiou et al., 2018) or theoretical sufficiency (the point at which no new themes were emerging) and thematic saturation (the point at which no new concepts emerge from subsequent interviews) was the basis of determining the sample size (Patton, 1990).

It has previously been recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Although this number can vary depending on the heterogeneity of respondents interviewed and complexity of the issues explored (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The minimum criteria of 12 was reached in all study areas except Nageshwar, where after 10 samples, we reached thematic saturation, and Kashi Vishwanath, where we reached data saturation. However, a sample size of 10 (Smith & Osborn, 2015) and 11 (Triantafillidou et al., 2010) was also deemed adequate for qualitative studies.

Table 4.6: List of sample size for Objective 2

Study Area	Interviews Conducted	
	Objective 2 (a) Supply Side	Objective 2 (b) Demand Side
Kedarnath	12	15
Kashi Vishwanath	10	14
Omkareshwar	13	14
Mahakaleshwar	11	12
Baidyanath Dham	12	12
Nageshwar	10	10
Somnath	12	12

Source: Own Compilation

However, the study's limitations should be acknowledged: the data are presented from interviews with a relatively small group of participants, and thus, the views are not necessarily to be generalized for all tourists.

Objective 3

A case study approach was used for identifying issues in management of the seven pilgrimage sites. A case study with a sample of one is considered adequate (Militello et al., 2010; Burkholder et al., 2020). Out of the seven study areas, the researcher could not get the response of the management committee at three management sites. The temple management of Mahakaleshwar and Somnath refused to cooperate with any study. Also, the researcher found that there is no official management committee at Nageshwar.

Table 4.7: List of interviews for Objective 3

Study Area	Interviews Conducted
Kedarnath	Conducted
Kashi Vishwanath	Conducted
Omkareshwar	Conducted
Mahakaleshwar	No response
Baidyanath Dham	Conducted
Nageshwar	No response
Somnath	No response

Source: Own Compilation

3.3.4 Time Frame

The time frame for collection of data for this study was from September 2022 to March 2023.

Extent: the seven *Jyotirlingas* of northern states of India were selected as the study area for this research. They are: Kedarnath *Jyotirlinga*, Kashi Vishwanath *Jyotirlinga*, Omkareshwar *Jyotirlinga*, Mahakaleshwar *Jyotirlinga*, Somnath *Jyotirlinga*, Baidyanath *Jyotirlinga* and Nageshwar *Jyotirlinga*

3.4 Pilot Testing

A pilot study was conducted before actual data was collected for this study. This was primarily done to identify the potential problems in the research instrument, i.e., the questionnaire, and rectify them. The questionnaire was tested by obtaining feedback from 101 tourists from one of the seven study areas (Baidyanath Dham). The data so collected were tested for reliability using the Cronbach 's alpha value, and the values of each variable were above 0.7 (Table 4.8), which indicates that the scales were reliable. The questions related to the demographic profile of the respondents remained the same. Items

that had been derived from the systematic literature review were categorised into six variables[7] and tested in the pilot testing.

Table 4.8: Reliability Analysis of Pilot Study

Statements	Expectation Statements		Perception Statements	
	Value of Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Value of Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Accommodation Statements	.826	6	.608	6
Ease of information statements	.785	3	.597	3
Transportation Statements	.742	4	.491	4
Safety and security Statements	.817	5	.717	5
Food and Water Statements	.762	3	.407	3
Temple Service Statements	.826	10	.583	10
Overall Reliability	.937	31	.830	31

Source: Primary Data Analysis using SPSS

3.5 Analysis Tools and techniques

Objective 1: The first objective aimed to measure the expectations and perceptions of tourists regarding service quality at selected pilgrimage sites in North India. The analysis was conducted using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), gap analysis, and paired t-tests to evaluate differences between expectations and actual experiences.

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[7] The items were placed under the six variables as found to be important in the literature review.

To identify key service quality dimensions, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with principal component analysis and varimax rotation was conducted. This helped in reducing a large set of variables into meaningful factors. Once the factors were identified, a Gap Analysis was performed to compare tourist expectations with their actual experiences. To statistically validate these differences, a Paired t-Test was conducted, revealing significant service quality gaps across most pilgrimage sites.

Objective 2: A qualitative research approach was used to analyse the problems on both the supply and demand sides of the tourism sector at the seven pilgrimage sites. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with local suppliers providing lodging, food, and other amenities. Similarly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourists to identify issues related to accommodation, food, water, transportation, and safety. The thematically interview data was thematically analysed in the following steps.

Statement > Keywords > Codes > Themes

Objective 3: A case study approach was used to analyse management issues at the seven pilgrimage sites. Data collection involved reviewing secondary sources such as reports, laws, and periodicals to understand governance and regulatory frameworks.

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