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Research Methodology

Outline of the Chapter

This chapter lays down a defined framework or so to say gives a blueprint of the research methodology adopted to carry out the research study on “*A study on Rural Tourism in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya: Prospects and Challenges*”. This chapter highlights the need and significance of the study, the research approach, research objectives and the research hypothesis. The sampling design is highlighted along with the area of the study, sampling frame, sampling method and sampling size. Finally in the chapter the research instrument, data collection and procedures, pilot testing, data analysis and statistical tools applied for the study has been emphasized.

3.1: Introduction

The word research has two components i.e., re meaning (again) and search meaning (find). Research is an organized and systematic procedure to uncover new knowledge for findings answers to questions or else its absence may mislead us to take cognizant decisions ,[197] and the capacity to take informed decisions is initiated through methodical study passing through many interrelated stages , [198].

The English proverb ‘Curiosity kills the cat’ is apt for humans too in the field of research. Curiosity in humans gives a thrust to research studies that encourages the humans to explore the unknown, understanding existing facts or phenomenon’s and it

basically feeds the human minds to seek for answers or solutions. Any form or research or study involves a set of procedures or steps like exploration, identifying, describing, analysis, interpretation and various inferences influencing the phenomenon ,[199].

A research design is a comprehensive plan involving the sampling dynamics, research instrument, data collection, analysis etc its basically acts as a blueprint of the research study and aids to test the various hypothesis drawn from the objectives of the study,[200]

After a comprehensive review of literature on rural tourism and based on research gap. The present study has been carried out on “*A study on Rural Tourism in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya: Prospects and Challenges*”.

3.2: Need for the study

Travel and Tourism statistics as per the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)³¹ 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, generated about US\$ 9.2 trillion to the world economy, which equated to about 10.4% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supported about 330 million jobs. During the pandemic period, the travel and tourism sector came to a complete standstill causing huge, colossal losses in terms of revenue and employment. However, post pandemic the sector is showing promising growth and it can deduce based on the past statistics that this sector of travel and tourism can bring significant benefits to the global economy, nations and in general to everyone.

Meghalaya a picturesque state of the northeast of India, commonly referred as “The Abode of Clouds” is endowed with natural resources and is an important tourist hub for the tourists who are travelling to the northeast. Meghalaya state being a hilly terrain, and rich natural resources likes like cascading waterfalls, clear water bodies, rich flora and fauna, enchanting valleys and canyon, sacred groves etc appeal a lot of

³¹ WTTC is a non-profit membership-based organisation, the members and partners are the core of the organisation and include over 200 CEOs, Chairpersons, and Presidents of the world’s leading ravel & Tourism companies from all geographies and industries. For over 3 decades, WTTC has conducted research on the economic impact of Travel & Tourism in 185 countries and issues such as overcrowding, taxation, policymaking, and many others to raise awareness of the importance of the Travel & Tourism sector as one of the world’s largest economic sectors.

both domestic and overseas tourists all throughout the year. Meghalaya primarily is an agriculture economy and where majority of the residents resides in rural areas. Alternate tourism initiatives like rural tourism can be initiated in the rural areas for the benefit of the local economy and local community development. Like other hilly states, Meghalaya too is primarily an agrarian economy, however the total sown area is quite low and also due to its fragile eco-system, extensive economic activities cannot be carried out ,[201]. However, a niche tourism form like rural tourism can be initiated and developed with the local communities being part of the stake holders so that the maximum benefit is routed to the local economy and local community. It can be a pioneering tool for the development of the rural local communities through rural tourism initiatives,[202]. The research done was primarily to explore the prospects and challenges of rural tourism and the impacts of rural tourism on the local community development so that it can provide a road map for the tourism authorities of the state to focus on the development of rural sectors and the rural communities.

The study on rural tourism in the state of Meghalaya is required, to understand the perspective of the local community and sustainability of the resources. Since the rural tourism concept is in an emerging concept in the state hence a lot of research is required to have a symbiotic relationship between rural tourism sustainable development and the local community involvement and participation. Generally, it has been noticed that majority of rural tourism studies focus on the economic gains only, but this study has helped to gain an insight about not only economic benefits but also to highlight on the socio-cultural and ecological effects. The study also highlights whether rural tourism initiatives has benefitted the local community at large and the local economy.

3.3: Statement of the Problem

In travel and tourism business, besides the tourist and stakeholders, the host community plays a pertinent role in the development of different forms of tourism. Through extensive review of tourism literature, it was observed that there was no significant study on to evaluate the impacts of rural tourism on the local community development in the study area i.e., the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya. The main vision of the study was to explore how rural tourism initiatives as a concept be implemented at village level and how it could benefit the local economy and the local community at large. Since all rural areas have different demographic, geographic set ups, hence it

was also explored in the current study how to strategies and plan for the initiation of the rural tourism concepts at the various block level of the districts. So, the research was carried out primarily to fill in the research gaps and to examine whether rural tourism initiatives can be successfully implemented in the district so that it benefits the community, the economy in a holistic manner. Hence after extensive review of tourism literatures and examining the research gaps, the study emphasised on the prospects and challenges of rural tourism initiatives to make a vibrant rural tourism initiation in the study area, hence the study is title as “*A study on Rural Tourism in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya: Prospects and Challenges.*”

3.4: Research Design

Research design is a blueprint within which the study is carried out and also keeps the research project together. The research study illustrates the perceptions of the rural host communities towards rural tourism development with economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects. The research study is partly exploratory but primarily descriptive. Exploratory because we need to identify how rural communities respond to the impacts of rural tourism development in their areas. This research study is predominantly descriptive and is well structured and the intention is to illustrate the outlines identified in the exploratory stage, the deeper knowledge acquired assisted in illustrating the study area. The research is both exploratory and descriptive as it undertakes to identify the prospects of rural tourism in the study area and also it undertakes to measure the economic, socio-cultural an environmental impacts of rural tourism development initiative and also the various challenges associated with the development of rural tourism initiatives.

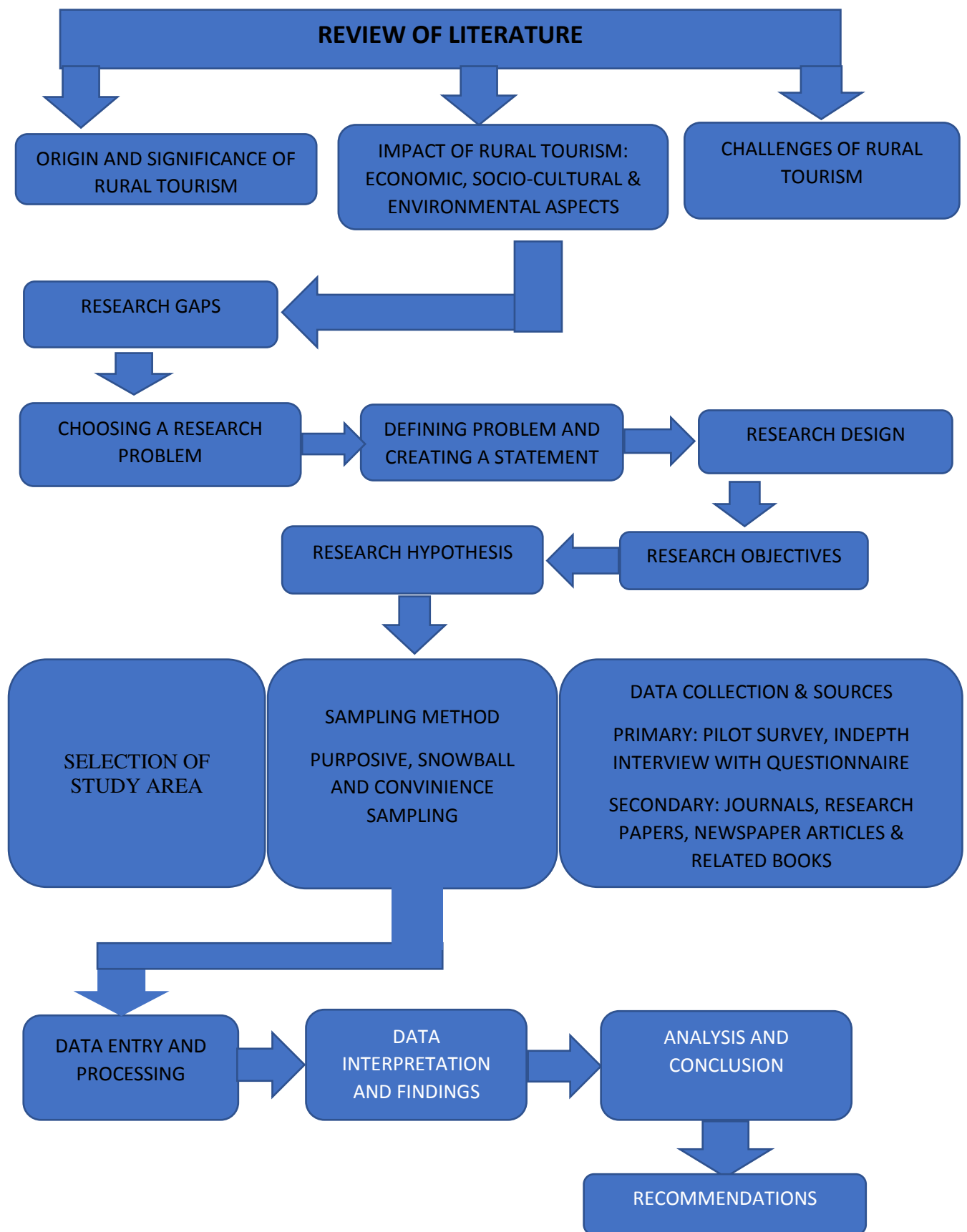


Fig.3.1: Conceptual Framework for the proposed Study
 Source: Compiled by the Research Scholar

The study is conducted through a survey method with an in-depth interview method in the 4 blocks of Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya (*Jirang, Umsning, Umling and Bhoirymbong*). The overall outline for the proposed study is shown in figure 3.1.

3.5: Research Approach

The research approach adopted by the researcher is both deductive and quantitative. The researcher has conducted an extensive survey in the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya with help of a well-structured questionnaire to understand the prospects and challenges of rural tourism initiatives and to understand the perception of the rural communities towards rural tourism development.

3.6: Research Objectives and Hypothesis

3.6.1: Research Objectives

1. To examine the present status of tourism in Meghalaya in general and Ri-Bhoi district.
2. To examine the prospects of rural tourism in Ri-Bhoi district.
3. To analyse the impact of rural tourism on host community with respect to economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects.
4. To study the various challenges associated with rural tourism development in the study area.

3.6.2: Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was constructed to validate the research study.

H_{01} = The responses of the respondents have been equally distributed in context to the challenges of rural tourism development in the study area.

H_{02} = Demographic factors has no association with the level of challenges in context to rural tourism development.

3.6.3: The methodology adopted for the fulfilment of the first objective:

The first objective of the research study was to examine the present status of tourism in Meghalaya in general and Ri-Bhoi district in particular. To fulfil this objective, data has been collected from secondary sources mainly from books, journals, websites, and government reports to get an in-depth idea of the present tourism scenario in the state

of Meghalaya and in the study areas. The data collected from secondary sources also highlights about the three A's, i.e., Accommodation, Accessibility and Amenities of the tourist destinations, which plays a pivotal role in the development of tourism in the region. Secondary data was mostly assessed from the offices of the Directorate of Tourism Government of Meghalaya and the Meghalaya Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) to understand the present initiatives of the State Government in tourism development at the various tourism sites and about the future plans or projects at other sites of the State. The data collected has been analysed in a descriptive manner.

3.6.4: The methodologies adopted for the fulfilment of the second objective:

The second objective of the research study was to understand the scope of rural tourism in the study area i.e., Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya. After extensive review of tourism literature, the variables for scope of rural tourism were formulated. Through an in-depth interview the responses and views were collected from village headmen's, women village community representatives and other tourism stakeholders. The stakeholders were community members involved in tourism businesses in the Ri-Bhoi district, district tourism officials and concerned blocked development officers (BDO) of the four blocks of the study area, tourism academicians and members of legislative assembly (MLA) of the five constituencies of the study area. The analysis of the collected data was done by using descriptive statistics, Content Analysis, and SWOT Analysis on the tourism scenario of the state and prospects and issues of rural tourism development in Ri-Bhoi district.

3.6.5: The methodologies adopted for the fulfilment of the third objective:

The third objective of the research study was to identify the impacts of rural tourism development in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya. After extensive review of literature from rural tourism related studies, the variables for impacts of rural tourism development were formulated. With help of well-structured questionnaire primary data and were collected from the targeted residents of the study area. The part B of the questionnaire (schedule) comprising of 40 statements is related to the (economic, socio-cultural, and environmental) impacts of rural tourism initiatives. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the survey varying from strongly agree (1), agree (2), neutral

(3), disagree (4) and strongly disagree (5). The analysis of the collected data was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

3.6.6: The methodologies adopted for the fulfilment of the fourth objective:

The fourth objective of the research study was to understand the challenges of rural tourism development in the study area. After extensive review of tourism literature, the variables for challenges of rural tourism development were formulated. With help of well-structured questionnaire primary data were collected from the targeted residents of the study area. The part E of the questionnaire (schedule) comprising of 22 statements are related to the challenges of rural tourism development. A 5-point Likert scale was used for the survey varying from strongly agree (1), agree (2), neutral (3), disagree (4) and strongly disagree (5). The analysis of the collected data were done by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

3.7: Sampling Design

3.7.1: Area of the Study

The villages selected for sampling were taken where rural tourism initiatives have been implemented and some villages were selected where there is tremendous scope of rural tourism initiatives due to the pristine natural resources available and accessibility factor. The study was conducted in 110 villages located in the four blocks of Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya, as tabulated in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Number of villages under study

SL. No.	Block Name	District	Total Villages	Selected Villages	Total Population	Block Population
1	JIRANG	Ri-Bhoi	105	30 (29%)	40919	29295(72%)
2	UMLING	Ri-Bhoi	211	30 (14%)	82021	58869(72%)
3	UMSNING	Ri-Bhoi	207	30(14%)	96100	57753(60%)
4	BHOIRYMBONG	Ri-Bhoi	125	20 (16%)	39800	34086(86%)
	TOTAL		648	110(17%)	258840	180003(70%)

Source: <https://ribhoi.gov.in/demography/>

3.7.2: Sampling Frame

The villagers who are residing in the 4 blocks of Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya and whose age is above 18 years, were part of the sample of study. The sampling frame as depicted in table number 3.2 was obtained from the electoral rolls of Election Commission of India.

Table 3.2: Sampling Frame

	JIRANG	UMLING	UMSNING	BHOIRYMBONG	TOTAL
MALE	14595	29329	28773	17120	89817
FEMALE	14700	29540	28980	16966	90186
				TOTAL	180003

Source: Election Commission of India (2021)

3.7.3 Sampling Method

The villages encompassed in the study were randomly selected based on three criteria's, firstly based on the tourism initiatives initiated in the villages, secondly the topographical distributions of the villages across the blocks and thirdly based on the pristine natural resources of the villages. Data were collected from the respondents with the help of a structured questionnaire through a multiple sampling method involving purposive, snowball and convenience sampling approach.

3.7.4 Sample Size

It has been generally observed that the main area of concern of a researcher is to select the ideal sample size, so that the study is reliable and dependable. For this research, to arrive at the accurate sample size the formula derived by Taro Yamane has been used, with 95 percent confidence level, [204]. The formula reads as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where :

n= sample size required

N = number of people in the population

e = error (0.05) reliability level 95%

$$n = \frac{180003}{1+180003 (0.05)^2}$$

➤ $n = 399.99$

Though the sample size arrived at was 400 as per the Taro Yamane formula, however keeping in mind about 4 respondents from each village and total number of villages selected for study area being at 110, hence total number of respondents has been increased to 440 (110 x 4).

Number of villagers selected from Jirang (block) = $30 \times 4 = 120$

Number of villagers selected from Umling (block) = $30 \times 4 = 120$

Number of villagers selected from Umsning (block) = $30 \times 4 = 120$

Number of villagers selected from Bhoirymbong (block) = $20 \times 4 = 80$

The total number of respondents from the four blocks of Ri-Bhoi district = 440

3.8 Research Instrument

Research instrument is a tool for data collection was initiated and developed after formulating the objectives, hypothesis and extensively reviewing several tourism literatures. A structured interview pattern was developed with the aid of a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=strongly agree, 2= agree,3= neutral,4= disagree,5=strongly disagree) was initiated to measure the impacts from rural tourism development and the perceived community participation along with the prospects and challenges for rural tourism development.

For this research study, closed ended questions were structured and it is divided in three parts namely:

1. Section 1: - Demographic profile of the respondents
2. Section 2: - Rural tourism initiative impacts as in economic, social, and environmental.
3. Section 3: - To measure the challenges of rural tourism for local community development and to evaluate the local community involvement & participation.

3.9 Data Collection and Procedure.

The data collected for this research were both from primary and secondary sources. With the help of self-structured questionnaire, primary data were collected from the residents of the study area. The self-structured questionnaire is presented in Appendix-I. During framing of the questionnaire to make it more reliable and valid, both industry

and academic experts were consulted. The researcher had pretested the questionnaire before the final survey and required changes were made accordingly. A pilot study of 40 sample size was conducted to assess the measurement prior to the collection of main data.

3.9.1: Primary Data:

The bulk sources of data were primary data to conduct the various statistical tests for this research. The primary data were collected from the residents of the study area through field survey with the help of self-structured questionnaire on rural tourism impacts and prospects and challenges of rural tourism initiatives and community involvement. The researcher himself filled up the questionnaire through a direct interview method and translated the questions in local Khasi language, where the need arises. The main target of the respondents were the local headmen of the village along with a female representation from the village women group and tourism stakeholders of the village.

3.9.2: Secondary Data

The data generated from the secondary resources were primarily from Research Journals, Magazines and newspaper articles, Tourism related textbooks on rural tourism development and from Government reports. Rural Tourism related dissertations were also reviewed to get an overview of the conceptual framework and research design and approaches used. The recent information updates related to the study area were sourced from E-sources, Websites, and portals.

3.10: Data Screening and Normality

As the data was being collected, the questionnaire was screened by the researcher to check for any unanswered questions or incomplete in any aspect was not taken into consideration for the study and for any analysis. After screening of the complete data set, the data was entered into IBM SPSS(25) software and there were no missing values and outliers. Statistical tests carried out on data sets depend primarily on the sample data being normally distributed or close to being normally distributed or else inferences drawn from these tests would be affected. For this research also a normality test was conducted in SPSS, to see if the data set's distribution pattern. A Kolmogorov Smirnov (KS) test and Shapiro Wilk test was used for the data set. The KS test is commonly used to test the normality, to ensure that the data is normally distributed,

and it also checks the assumption of normality in analysis of variances. For testing normality of a data set, the usage of sample means, and sample variance is important, which is mandatory in KS test. The test result from the Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro Wilk tests shows the data set used for the study are not normally distributed, as the p-value is less than 0.05, hence the null hypothesis is rejected, which indicates the data is not normally distributed (Table no. 3.3). Thus, non-parametric test will be carried out with the data set.

Table No.3.3: Normality test of Kolmogorov Smirnov test.

	Economic Factor	Socio-Cultural	Environmental	Prospects/Challenges
K-S Test	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Shapiro Wilk	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

3.11: Reliability and Validity

Reliability and Validity is a pertinent requirement for any quantitative research study, so that it allows a researcher to translate the research findings easily. Reliability is also be termed as the consistency to which the research study is carried out ,[206] and the extent to which results could be constant when the research is repeated under same conditions. Validity is about assessing whether the results of a research method is accurately measuring for what is proposed for ,[208].

Prior to the main survey, the researcher carried out a pilot study to test the effectiveness of the research instrument. A sample size of 40 respondents was used in the pilot study to identify any shortcomings in the research method. To test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire the Cronbach Alpha analysis, and Content Validity Ratio (CVR) proposed by Lawshe, [209] was carried out and the results showed that the research instrument was reliable and valid to obtain data for the main research study. The sample used for the pilot study was not part of the main study and the conclusion drawn from the pilot study helped the researcher to make some changes to make the research instrument more effective.

3.11.1: Discussion of the Pilot Results

The pilot study conducted with 40 sample size in the study area has given positive inputs of how to make the research instrument more reliable and accurate which results in less errors. With the help of SPSS, the reliability test was conducted for Cronbach Alpha for a sample size of 40 from the study area.

The demographic profile of the respondents from the study area were gender, block, age, tribe, marital status, educational qualifications, occupation, monthly household income, income depended on tourism and main source of income (Table 3.4)

Table.3.4: Demographic profile of the respondents for the pilot study

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER	MALE	22	55%
	FEMALE	18	45%
BLOCK	JIRANG	10	25%
	UMSNING	10	25%
	UMLING	10	25%
	BHOIRYMBONG	10	25%
AGE	20 TO 30	6	15%
	31 TO 40	11	27.5%
	41 TO 50	13	32.5%
	51 TO 60	8	20%
	ABOVE 60	2	5%
TRIBE	KHASI	28	70%
	JAINTIA	4	10%
	GARO	7	17.5%
	OTHERS	1	2.5%
MARITAL STATUS	MARRIED	36	90%
	UNMARRIED	4	10%
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	UNDER MATRIC	5	12.5%
	MATRIC	10	25%
	SENIOR SECONDARY	6	15%
	GRADUATE	14	35%
	POSTGRADUATE	5	12.5%
	PhD	0	0%
OCCUPATION	FARMING & ALLIED ACTIVITIES	18	45%
	SELF-EMPLOYED	11	27.5%
	GOVERNMENT SERVICE	2	5%
	PRIVATE	9	22.5%
	UNEMPLOYED	0	0%
MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME	LESS THAN Rs 20,000	28	70%
	Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000	7	17.5%
	ABOVE Rs 50,000	5	12.5 %
INCOME DEPENDEND ON TOURISM	NOT AT ALL	8	20%
	PARTIALLY DEPENDED ON	11	27.5%
	FULLY DEPENDED ON	21	52.5%
MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME	AGRICULTURE	24	60%
	SELF EMPLOYED	6	15%
	GOVERNMENT SERVICE	2	5%
	PRIVATE JOBS	8	20%

3.12 Data Analysis and Statistical Tools

Following the completion of data collection from the respondents of the study area, the data was screened properly to check for any missing value or any other abnormalities. This was followed by coding the data and entering in IBM-SPSS 25.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). After that data was analysed to arrive at

rational inferences by testing the research hypothesis. Descriptive analysis was carried out to assess the mean scores, standard deviation, Kolmogorov Smirnov, and Shapiro Wilk tests were conducted on the data set to assess the spread and the normality of distribution of the data. Factor Analysis was carried out to assess the underlying aspects of the impacts of rural tourism on rural community development and the challenges of rural tourism development. Pearson correlation test was used to assess the correlation between the factors derived from factor analysis. To ascertain the affiliation between the demographic variables and the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts due to development of rural tourism initiatives was analysed by using both Cross Tabulation analysis and Chi Square test of association. Also, percentages were used to examine the demographic profile, age, gender, tribe, marital status, educational status, monthly house-hold incomes, and economic dependency on tourism in the study.

3.13 Limitation of the study

Research being carried out are bound to have some limitations due to various factors. Most of these factors are generally uncontrollable by the researchers and may be related to the topography of the study area, mindset of the inhabitants of the study area etc. Some limitations outside the purview of the study area, could be related to the biasness on part of the researcher or the respondents.

Some of the limitations of the present study were as follows:

- The present study was conducted in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya, other districts of the state could have been incorporated in the study.
- Primarily due to Covid-19 pandemic, since there were restrictions of travelling, the researcher could not go too far-flung areas of the district for data collection.
- Due to financial constraints and paucity of time, the study was limited to the present study area itself.
- Since most of the respondents belonged to different tribal groups, hence their mindset and perception of the respondents were varied.
- In some instances, there were limitations on communication as the respondents only spoke in their local dialect, hence the researcher had to take help of interpreters and as a result some responses were biased.

Summary

This chapter emphasises on the research framework of the study. After an extensive review of tourism literature on rural tourism and inferences drawn from the research gap, this research on “*A study on Rural Tourism in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya: Prospects and Challenges*” is carried out. The main outcome of the study was to ascertain additional livelihood opportunities for the rural agrarian community and a means to uplift the local economy through rural tourism initiatives. The data was collected from the residents of the study area namely the village headmen commonly referred in local dialect as “*Rangbah Shnong*” and from the women village committee representatives commonly referred as “*Seng Kmai or Seng Kynthai*” and from the local tourism stakeholders of the village, so as to get the authentic responses about the prospects, impacts and challenges associated with rural tourism initiatives in the village. A pilot study was conducted prior to the main study in the study area and reliability and validity test was done on the research instrument, to validate the reliability aspects. The data collected has been analysed through statistical tools, percentage, and graphical methods to derive at reasonable inferences. Finally, this chapter also highlighted the limitations associated with the study in the study area.