**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.1. Primary research**

**3.1.1. Choice of research methodology**

One of the three major components in the research along with theoretical framework and empirical data compendium is the construction of methods to collect data. In order to meet the research goal, I apply the construction of qualitative research method. The qualitative method applies to ‘human subjectivity, meaning that the participants are attached to the events and that people believed the events of their lives. The present research is based on exploring customer opinions, i.e. the passengers of the low-cost air carrier. This can give valuable information in the way of targeted market works as well as whether the Loyalty Programs are satisfying Easy Jet frequent passengers or not.

I apply the construction of qualitative research method, to be used, in terms of exploring and understanding mentioned individuals, involved in research.

The main goal of the research is to see whether the Loyalty Program of targeted market satisfies customer needs or not, and it is important to see in which aspects the market meets new marketing strategy.

The reason to choose the qualitative method is to exceed the general character of presented knowledge on the brand management in Britain, as well to see how the marketing changes are going on in practice and to clear out what the beneficiaries of those changes are thinking.

The aim that influences and motivates my research is my interest in the low-cost carriers and their marketing strategies. As for audiences, there are two main audiences that I want to address with my research. Namely, professionals engaged in the targeted business and researchers studying it.

**3.1.2. Questionnaires**

The questionnaire is designed in the way that helps to reach the goal, highlighted in the thesis, and to answer the questions that are raised in the theoretical part, as well as the objectives defined in the research.

**3.1.3. Benefits and limitations of the method**

The online interviews were conducted through Facebook social network and e-mail. Snowball method was used to reach respondents. Online interviews are useful in terms of time-saving and can be done with several respondents simultaneously; that remove the limitation of face-to-face interviews. At the same time, the reliability of online interviews is considered to be much lower than face-to-face interviews. This is the limitation we face while using online interviews.

**3.2. Methods of secondary research**

Methods of secondary research we have used for this research paper, involve desktop research, which consists of the analysis of available data on the topic of low-cost carriers’ Loyalty Program, research on passenger satisfaction and other relevant research. It includes analyses of research papers, various articles, and books on the chosen topic, as well as official reports, produced by the company or other companies working in the field.

**3.3. Research design**

**3.3.1. Development of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire has been developed on the basis of the literature review and ethical considerations of this research. As has been indicated, no names are mentioned in the research. Therefore, the questionnaire doesn’t include any question regarding the name and surname of the respondent. Further, the questionnaire consists of the questions that will help to foresee the aspects and the level of satisfaction of passengers with the Loyalty Program of Easy Jet air carrier and to come up with further conclusions and recommendations.

**3.3.2. Structure of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire consists of 25 questions. Among them, we have introductory questions, i.e. respondent’s data, the topic´s specific questions, i.e. general flight experience, Easy Jet customer experience and final questions. Questions are open and confidential. The confidential questions are aimed to receive the precise answer to the questions, and the open questions help respondents to open up to dialogue and give us a broader answer as to their opinion. Questions for the interview were composed in relation to the problem areas evaluated at the introduction stage. Qualitative interviews´ data were used on the platform of the constructed theory and in order to discover new topics and variables in the problem area.

**3.3.2. Administering the pilot test**

The pilot test was conducted with the participation of 5 respondents and was not included in the analysis of data. The pilot test helped us to reveal the drop falls of the questionnaire and bring it to the final stage to further use for the data collection. At the pilot stage, there were no major changes done to the questionnaire .

**3.3.2. Ethical implications**

‘A principal aim of social science is to contribute knowledge to ameliorate the human condition and enhance human dignity.’ The present qualitative research is focused on the passengers’ satisfaction and effectiveness of Loyalty Programs of Easy Jet Carrier. So it was very important to start the interview and finish it on a friendly tone, avoiding harmful outcomes or frustration from the participation in the research. Conventional ethical concerns brought attention to the principle of informed consent, the right to privacy and protection from harm.

Participation in the research was of volunteer will, and the respondents were informed to feel free to refuse to answer any question at any stage of the interview process. Careful and truthful information on the research, provided to the respondents in advance (some of them wished to see the questions before the start), benefited to their readiness to speculate on their personal experiences and uncover strong opinions. Accordingly, the respondents were informed that the gathered data is used only for the research purposes and no private data would be discovered while presenting the results. With respect to the ethical issues and anonymity guarantee, the research papers do not contain any names of respondents

**3.4. Fieldwork construction**

**3.4.1 Sampling**

A sample is a small set of cases, selected by a researcher from a larger pool and generalized to the population. Qualitative research is a comprehensive understanding of some separate cases, rather than a general understanding of many cases, or population as a whole.

The major purpose here is to collect data on certain cases, events to provide a deep understanding of the examined issue. The research is of qualitative and quantitative character, so the choice of sampling has been determined by relevance to the topic rather than representativeness.

The sample for the interviewing included individuals, frequent passengers of the targeted air carrier. The interviews were conducted with 100 respondents. The selection sample set includes British passengers, beneficiaries of Easy Jet Loyalty Program.

The initial aim of the interviews was to study the specific aspects of customer satisfaction with Loyalty Programs. To find respondents, s the snowball sampling technique was used. Snowball sampling allowed to find cases using referrals from one or a few cases, and then referrals from those cases and so forth.

Thus, data was collected by in-depth qualitative interviews. Interviewing is a method of sustaining and initiating conversations with people on a certain topic or topics followed by interpretations of the resulting data. Qualitative interviews in comparison to quantitative ones have got advantages of ‘their openness’, possibility to ‘obtain more ‘’textured’’ and ‘’authentic’’ accounts and space for issues that may be important from the respondents’ point of view, while quantitative interviews give more statistical data, that can be used in statistical analyses of the market.

It was important to initiate atmosphere of natural conversation with the respondents during qualitative interviews in order to help them feel comfortable talking about their personal experiences and opinions.

Te semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the empirical stage of the research. The interview guide included confidential and open questions that helped to keep the content of the interviews up to topic and not to spread attention to the issues not related to the theme. Thus, a schedule of semi-structured interviews included specific items and by that, the interviewers got the significant freedom to discover their own way of approaching the problem they studied. Such form of interviewing fits well for conducting research with participants who share a common experience, so in the presented study, the respondents share experiences of working in the same field.

Yet before the interviewing, the respondents were introduced to the theme and aim of the study. They were informed about the anonymous principle of empirical gathering. The theoretical framework, former research, and analysis of legal policy practice assist processes of preliminary understanding of the research field and the focusing on particular items.

**3.4.2. Data collection**

The essence of qualitative research analysis is in selection, sorting and managing the masses of data obtained during data collection. Analysis of the qualitative data involves concerns whether each piece of data corresponds to all the other parts. Systematic analysis of small units/parts of the interview data allowed me to give proper attention to every statement made by the respondents. This way of data analysis has made possible to discover personal realities of the individuals with a deeper understanding of their unique perceptions and specific character of the situational settings.

In general, data analysis in the present research combines inductive and deductive elements. The inductive element will be used on the stage of preliminary research when data on the earlier research in the area will be analyzed in order to develop a common understanding of the research issues.

Theory construction preceded by the data collection as a core of inductivity, allows to define further ways of research and to define the direction to the most actual ones for the subsequent qualitative research. On the stage of preparation of the interview guide, the deductive analysis has been applied in order to set up the frames for the empirical investigation and to find a focus of the qualitative interviews. The deductive approach was transferred from the general theoretical understanding towards the empirical research on specified themes.

The specific feature of qualitative data analysis is the ability to identify valid and valuable units of information that will correspond to the research purposes. This process requires operationalization of the received data through grouping it into categories for a system analysis with sensitivity to the themes offered by respondents.

There is a risk; that inaccurate information would have been added to the data set without having been noticed while collecting retrospective data from a single respondent for each empirical case. A way to improve the data validity and to minimize measurement errors is the use of multiple items per construction (Huber & Powers, 1985). In addition, one should use a clear and structured design and avoid loaded questions and ambiguous phrasing, in order to protect against bias caused by the phrasing of survey items (e.g. Churchill, 1995).

Questions were developed, or fine-tuned, being based on theoretical and practical needs. Appropriate comments were provided. Most questions are involved in giving judgment on statements as to the interval scale. Brown et al. (2001). It is the study; that was among the most important for aiding the operationalization. The study uses a 5-point scale,which (among other benefits) reduces the problems with middle-value bias. This scale is also coherent with recommendations from the ECSI (1998) in regard to the measurement of non-financial variables. The scale was therefore adopted for this study, and the questions within each construction were consequently given from 1 to 5 range of answer alternatives. Consistent use of one scale to a possible degree made the questionnaire more consistent and comprehensive for the respondent. The questions were compiled according to the two following styles:

1. The alternative judging agreement (disagree-agree).

2. Judgment through a trade-off between two statements (X vs. Y).

Trade-offs between two statements involve a forced choice situation. This approach has been criticized and requires more effort from the respondents than alternative questions. In light of this, I minimized the use of this technique when and where it was possible. The scales of some items were reversed in an attempt to mitigate instrument bias and to allow the evaluation of response consistency if that was needed.

**3.5. Conclusions**

This chapter represents the methodological part of the research and explains the chosen methods, used for data collection and for further analysis of the research problem. The qualitative research construction has been chosen to be implemented for further research. The questionnaire has been developed being based on the theoretical review and has included all the aspects that need to undergo analyses to reach the objective of the current research finally.