

Table 14.4 Sequential steps in the Research Process

Step 1—Establish the need for research
Step 2—Define the problem
Step 3—Establish research objectives
Step 4—Determine research design
Step 5—Identify information types and sources
Step 6—Determine methods of accessing/acquiring data
Step 7—Design data collection forms
Step 8—Determine sample plan and size
Step 9—Collect data
Step 10—Analyze data
Step 11—Prepare and present the final research report

Source: Adapted from Burns, Alvin C., and Bush, Ronald F. (2003). *Marketing Research, Online Research Applications*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 28.

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH. When you hear the term *experiment*, you probably think of laboratory science experiments, but tourism organizations can and do conduct experiments to learn about the effect of one variable on one or more other variables. How will a price change affect demand for rooms or airline seats? Will running an ad in one magazine result in more inquiries to the visitor center than the same ad in a different magazine? Will a particular sales technique results in higher revenue? We will discuss experimental research a bit more later.

PREDICTIVE RESEARCH. Because in many tourism businesses demand varies greatly, predicting or forecasting demand is critical, especially to smooth operations. Most operational decisions are based on the demand expected for any time period. Staffing, purchases, and cash flow needs are all dependent on service demand. Therefore, predictive research is necessary to ensure cost-effective, quality operations whether we are thinking of a restaurant, a hotel, a museum, or an amusement park. Tourism managers and researchers try to predict the future by looking at patterns of the past and making best guesses about the future.

SIMULATIVE RESEARCH/MODELING. To help in making longer-term decisions about the future, some tourism organizations try to model or simulate it. By making certain assumptions based on data descriptive of the past or based on likely scenarios, estimates about the likelihood of various occurrences in the future can be made. Managers can simulate what will happen under different circumstances, particularly with the aid of computer technology. Using spreadsheets and other computer-assisted, awe-inspiring number-crunching powers, decision makers can generate specific levels of demand and other information that they then use to aid them in making longer-term decisions. For example, simulation would help determine the wisdom of investment and development of land tracts contiguous to a ski resort, addition of another tower to a hotel property, or relocation of the regional airport.

Who Conducts Tourism Research?

Research can be conducted by three different types of researchers. Much of the day-to-day information gathering and analysis activities that occur are conducted by employees of tourism suppliers, and government or public/private entities. We call this *in-house* research. However, some research requires special high-level skills that often are not available within most tourism organizations. In these cases, tourism suppliers, governments,