

Data collection is sometimes conducted through observation. Human or electronic counters that record the number of visitors to an entry point produce tourist counts. With the aid of satellite tracking devices, tourist movement within a city or attraction can be observed. Most commonly, however, tourism data are collected from tourists directly. Sometimes this information is collected prior to the tourists' visiting an area, sometimes during the trip, and often after the trip is complete. This direct consumer surveying can be conducted in the consumer's home, but in the tourism industry it is frequently conducted at visitor welcome centers, tourist attractions, or at border entry/departure locations such as border crossing points and international airports.

By using interviewers in person or over the phone or by using paper-and-pencil/mobile device surveys or online surveys, answers from tourists are acquired to a wide variety of questions of interest to tourism researchers and decision makers. The Internet is playing an increasingly greater role in the collection of information because the majority of potential travelers regularly use the Internet today. Surveys can be quickly and cost effectively developed and distributed over the Web. They can be fun and easy to respond to, and very importantly, answers are immediately translated into bits of data that can be statistically analyzed at any minute in time.

Tourism Research Is Hard to Do

Now that you know more about tourism research, you may realize that the nature of the industry makes tourism research especially challenging to do and to coordinate. Its large number of organizations, both big and small, and its many sectors make a snapshot of the tourism world hard to come by, let alone a full-blown analysis of its many facets. Data collection from so many organizations is a practical impossibility. Few consistent reporting requirements, except for quasi-regulated sectors, such as airlines, exist to make the task easier. Consumer research in tourism is difficult because consumers experience a set of services away from their homes, and frequently on a short-term basis (as opposed to long-term hometown-based service relationships such as those between consumer and bank or consumer and dentist). The breadth of issues to be researched is also mind-boggling because tourism by its nature strongly affects an area economically, culturally, and environmentally.

Because of tourism's wide reach (and frankly its intrinsic excitement), researchers from a wide range of disciplines focus their eyes and efforts on its study. Tourism is studied by academics and others in the fields of marketing and business, sociology and psychology, history and anthropology, geography and political science, planning and design, and even futurism. Even experts from the hard sciences are studying tourism because of its effects on nature and the Earth.

Conclusion

It seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Think back to that old custom of hospitality we introduced in Chapter 1. We may not follow that practice of sticking a fresh pineapple on the front fence, as the old New England ship captains did as a symbol of hospitality, but the welcoming touch provided by service employees will remain a key factor to service success in this growing industry in which the number of jobs created by tourism organizations is projected to continue increasing in record numbers for years to come.

You have made a great start in developing a sound foundation for becoming a professional member of the tourism industry or an informed consumer of tourism

services. There will always be new things to do and learn in our rapidly changing world. We hope you decide to become a part of this excitement. You can build a bright professional future by dedicating yourself to lifelong learning and a never-ending desire to improve your knowledge, skills, and abilities continually. If you would like to become a part of the growing cadre of tourism professionals, start planning your job search now! For more information on how to enter and succeed in your desired career field, see Cook and Cook.⁴⁸ We hope that you have enjoyed the journey through our exploration of the tourism industry, and we hope to see you as industry professionals in our future travels.