

# Chapter 2

## Approaches To Leisure and Tourism Research

### Introduction

#### **The disciplinary traditions of leisure and tourism research**

- The bulk of published leisure and tourism research has arisen, not from the demands of the leisure and tourism industries, but from the interests of academics who owe allegiance to a particular discipline.
- Here we examine, very briefly, the contributions made to leisure and tourism research by academic disciplines that have been particularly significant in the field.
- Leisure and tourism studies is a multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary field of study:

# Disciplinary tradition cont...

- *Multi-disciplinary means that research from a number of disciplines is used – for example the economics of leisure/tourism and the sociology of leisure/tourism.*
- *Cross-disciplinary means that issues, theories, concepts and methods which are common to more than one discipline are involved*

# Disciplines in leisure and tourism studies

- Disciplines vary in terms of their primary focus of attention within this system:
- psychology and social psychology are focused primarily on the *people element*
- political science is concerned mainly with *organizations and with link to the people*;
- history can cover the whole system – but much of historical research in leisure studies has also had the same focus as political science;
- economics at the macro-level is concerned with the whole system, while microeconomics is located around market process is at work;
- sociology is concerned primarily with the people and with Link with organizations;
- applied disciplines, such as planning, management and marketing, are based in organizations
- geography's basis is the interaction between the human parts of the system and the environment;

# Sociology

- Why do men tend to play sport more than women?
- How are the relationships between wealthy Western tourists and impoverished host populations in some tourist destinations to be interpreted?
- Why do middle-class, highly educated people make greater use of arts facilities and outdoor recreation areas than other groups?
- To what extent do people freely choose leisure activities and holiday destinations and to what extent is their choice limited by economic and social constraints or commercial manipulation?
- Sociologists have arguably been the most significant contributors to the field of leisure studies

# Geography

- How do people's perceptions of and appreciation of different landscapes affect their leisure travel behavior?
- How are the leisure and tourism trips of the population of a region accommodated and distributed within the region?
- How do people make use of outdoor recreation areas – how do they view crowding and congestion?
- What is the capacity of various environments to absorb visitors? These are the sorts of questions which geographical leisure and tourism research addresses.
- Geographers have been very prominent in leisure research (Coppock, 1982)

# Economics

- How do increases in incomes affect leisure expenditure and behaviour?
- What is the impact in terms of business turnover and jobs, of an event such as the Olympic Games?
- How significant is tourism, the arts or sport, in the economy?
- How will a change in the exchange rate affect international tourist arrivals? These are the sorts of question which economic research on leisure and tourism attempts to answer.
- Economics is the discipline concerned with the 'allocation of scarce resources between competing ends' – that is, with what is produced by a society and with the distribution of what is produced – who gets what.

# Psychology/social psychology

- What satisfactions do people obtain from their leisure?
- How do people's perceptions of tourist destinations affect their decision to travel?
- What motivates people to engage in one form of leisure activity rather than another?
- How do people's relationships with family and friends affect their leisure behavior?
- These are the sorts of question which psychological and social psychological research addresses.

# Psychology cont...

- In a review of the contributions of psychology to leisure research, Roger Ingham (1986) classified the body of work into four main categories:
  1. motivation and needs: ('why individuals do what they do'),
  2. satisfactions (the idea that 'particular types of leisure behavior and experience lead to differential levels of satisfaction'),
  3. Leisure as a state of mind
  4. and individual differences (including gender, age, personality and cultural differences).



# History and anthropology

- What are the historical roots of the practices, attitudes and institutions involved in contemporary leisure and tourism?
- To what extent has leisure time increased since preindustrial times?
- How is change constrained by the effects of past actions and events?
- Historians, in addressing such questions, have been influential in the development of leisure research.

# Political science

- leisure studies research has focused on the relationships between political ideology and leisure policy, in tourism the focus is less ideological and more to do with the role of tourism in political behavior (Matthews and Richter, 1991).
- Typically, any empirical work in the area of the politics of leisure and tourism tends to draw on the historic record; however, being related to recent history, studies are often also supplemented with interviews with eyewitness political figures.