

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.

Approaches and dimensions in tourism and hotel mgt research

- A number of alternative approaches to and dimensions of leisure and tourism research cut across the disciplines; some of them, as listed are discussed here in the form of dichotomies.
- ❖ Theoretical/applied
- ❖ Empirical/non-empirical
- ❖ Induction/deduction
- ❖ Descriptive/explanatory research
- ❖ Self-reported/observed
- ❖ Qualitative/quantitative

Theoretical and applied research

- *Theoretical research seeks to draw general conclusions about the phenomena being studied. Applied research, however, is less universal in its scope: it seeks not necessarily to create wholly new knowledge about the world but to apply existing theoretical knowledge to particular problems or issues.*
- Such problems or issues may arise in particular policy, planning or management situations. Policy studies, planning and management are themselves fields of study which have developed a body of theory. Because they are related to areas of practice they can be seen as *applied disciplines*.

Empirical and non-empirical research

Empirical research involves the collection and/or analysis of data – quantitative or qualitative, primary or secondary.

- The research is informed by observations or information from the ‘real world’.
- It is, however, rare for any research project to be *purely empirical* – it is usually informed by some sort of theory or conceptual framework
- non-empirical contributions are needed to review and refine ideas and to place the empirical work in context.

Induction and deduction

- Induction and deduction refer to alternative approaches to explanation in research.
- It has been noted that research involves *finding out and explaining*. *Finding out* might be called the ‘what?’ of research – what is happening? What is the situation? Explaining might be called the ‘how?’ and the ‘why?’ of research – how do things happen?
- Why do they happen the way they do? What are the causes of different phenomena? Finding out involves description and gathering of information. Explaining involves attempting to understand that information: it goes beyond the descriptive.

Induction deduction cont...

- The research process can work in two ways:

Inductive

- begin at point A, *observation/description*
- proceed to point B, *analysis*
- arrive at point C, *explanation*.

Deductive

- begin at point C, with a *hypothesis*
- proceed to point A, *observation/description, gathering data to test the hypothesis*
- proceed to point B, *analysis, to test the hypothesis against the data*.

Induction deduction cont...

- A hypothesis may arise from informal observation and experience of the researcher or from examination of the existing literature.
- The term *theory is also* included at point C since, when more elaborate hypotheses or a number of interrelated hypotheses are involved, the term theory may be used.
- A theory can be similar to a hypothesis, in being propositional, or it may have been subjected to empirical validation – that is, testing against data.

Induction deduction cont...

- A research project may involve a single circuit or a number of circuits of the process, possibly in both directions.
- If the research process begins with description, at point A, and moves from there to explanation, the process is described as *inductive*.
- *The explanation is induced from the data – the data come first and the explanation later.*
- *If the process starts at point C then it is deductive; it involves deduction, where the process is based on prior logical reasoning.*

Induction deduction cont...

- In practice data are rarely collected without some explanatory model in mind –
- otherwise how would we know what data to collect? So there is always an element of deduction in any research. And it is not possible to develop hypotheses and theories without at least some initial information on the subject in hand, however informally obtained;
- so there is always an element of induction. Thus most research is partly inductive and partly deductive.

Self-reported and observed data

- The best, and often the only, sources of information about individuals' leisure or tourism behavior or attitudes are the individuals' own reports about themselves.
- Much leisure and tourism research therefore involves asking people about their past behavior, attitudes and aspirations, generally using interviews or respondent completed questionnaires.
- There are some disadvantages to this approach, mainly that
- the researcher is never sure just how honest or accurate people are in responding to questions.
- In some instances people may deliberately or unwittingly distort or 'bend' the truth – for instance in understating the amount of alcohol they drink or overstating the amount of exercise they take.
- In other instances they may have problems of recall – for instance in remembering just how much money they spent on a recreational or holiday trip some months ago – or even yesterday!

- The alternative to relying on people to tell the researcher what they do, is for the researcher to use an alternative source of evidence. For instance, to find out how children use a playground or how adults make use of a resort area or a park it would probably be better to watch them than to try to ask them about it. Patterns of movement and crowding can be *observed*.

Qualitative and quantitative research

- Much leisure and tourism research involves the collection, analysis and presentation of statistical information. Sometimes the information is innately quantitative – for instance the numbers of people engaging in a list of leisure activities in a year, the number of tourists visiting a particular holiday area or the average income of a group of people.
- Sometimes the information is qualitative in nature but is presented in quantitative form – for instance numerical ‘scores’ calculated from asking people to indicate levels of satisfaction with different services, where the scores range from 1, meaning ‘very satisfied’, to 5, meaning ‘very dissatisfied’.

Qualitative and quantitative research cont..

- The *quantitative approach to research involves statistical analysis. It relies on numerical evidence* to draw conclusions or to test hypotheses. To be sure of the reliability of the results it is often necessary to study relatively large numbers of people and to use computers to analyse the data
- The data may be derived from questionnaire surveys, from observation involving counts, or from secondary sources.

Qualitative and quantitative research cont..

- In fact there can be said to be two approaches to quantitative research, which we will refer to as type A and type B research.
- Type A research makes use of statistical methods and tests,
- Type B research is also based on numerical data, but makes little or no use of statistical tests: its most sophisticated statistical measure is usually the percentage.
- Type B research is more informal than type A and is closer in approach to qualitative methods.

Qualitative and quantitative research

cont..

- The *qualitative approach to research* is generally not concerned with numbers.
- It involves gathering a great deal of information about a small number of people rather than a limited amount of information about a large number of people. The information collected is generally not presentable in numerical form. It is used when a full and rounded understanding of the leisure or tourist behaviour and situation of a few individuals, however 'unrepresentative' they may be, is required, rather than a limited understanding of a large, 'representative' group.
- The methods used to gather qualitative information include observation, informal and in-depth interviewing and participant observation.
- Research studying groups of people using non-quantitative, anthropological approaches, is referred to as ethnographic research or ethnographic fieldwork.
- it is now widely accepted that the two approaches complement one another