



Research Methods for Leisure, Recreation and Tourism

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of studying research in leisure, recreation and tourism.
2. Understand research and research process.
3. Learn how to formulate research problems and implications of research.
4. Identify and differentiate between various types of variables.
5. Know research typologies.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduces the nature and importance of research in leisure, recreation and tourism. Research in this broad field is

a process by which we produce new information and knowledge to answer questions, help managers solve problems and make effective decisions. The process is planned and systematic in its approach and is free from bias. Specifically, the process may consist of the formulation of research questions and ideas, identification of research concepts, development of the theoretical model that guides and underpins the research process, data collection, testing hypotheses, analysis and feedback to theory, and generating new questions. This chapter provides research typologies that include exploratory research, descriptive research and explanatory research. Exploratory research is intended to develop familiarity with a topic in order to generate new insights. The chapter further introduces the concept of the unit of analysis in research.

AN INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH IN LEISURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to familiarize you with the main concepts of the entire book. We will explain why you need to learn the process of conducting research with a few examples in the realm of leisure, recreation and tourism research. We will then review the actual process involved in carrying out a research project, concepts used throughout the book, and examples from past student projects that might help you think about your own research topic for the semester. Typically, instructors teaching research methods classes require their students to learn research methods with a hands-on project in your own area of interest. Thus, we need you to start thinking about an original research idea and the process early on, so that you can see the end of the tunnel before you even start doing the project. While we will give you enough details about how to proceed with each step in the upcoming chapters, you must picture the entire process before you even start reading the following chapters. This approach will help you use your time efficiently, so you can complete the research paper required by your instructor

on time. Some of the concepts we introduce in this chapter will be repeated over and over again, so do not worry if you don't understand them the first time. Repetition will lead to clarification and better understanding of what some might call 'the dry concepts'.

A research methods class is unlike any other course you have taken before; it requires you to be critical, detail-oriented, questioning, constantly thinking, and find new ways of writing and rewriting. Don't be scared; many students like you who have taken this class before have graduated. Some learned very well to the extent that they have decided to pursue a career in research; you may not want to go that far, but this class will help you formulate, organize and write your thoughts in a logical manner. You will become a better consumer of research and a more informed citizen as you learn to attack flaws in logic and arguments. Make sure that you read the real-world examples presented in **research boxes** and other student projects to get an idea of why research is an important function in our society, global economy and in our disciplines. The following case illustrations represent the vast realm of research and how we go about investigating these interests. The example, shown in the first research box, is about a group of students who wanted to run their own nightclub; the second box contains illustrations of a few student ideas and questions and the significance of their study answers.

Research Box 1.1. So many bars, so little time!

College students are always interested in where to go and what to do during their free weekends. One of the popular recreation activities for some is going to clubs and bars. Students who were taking a research methods class with one of the authors of this book had to conduct original research as their term project. Among the members of a student team was one student who was already managing a nightclub, thus had experience, and wanted to go solo in opening up his own nightclub/bar after graduation. He convinced his fellow group members to conduct a market feasibility study to determine the business potential for such a club among the many existing clubs in a college town. He wanted to know what type of music he should play and whether or not to provide live music; why students should prefer his bar to others; what type of students frequent which bars; how much do they spend when out and

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Research Box 1.1. Continued.

about; and, more importantly, how much would they be willing to spend for drinks and food during their night out.

The project began with listening to customers in the bar managed by the leader of the group. He spoke to potential customers informally while they were having their beers. After sharing what he found with his group, they went out one night to question more students and to recruit a few of them for intensive interviewing about all aspects of their research. Their focus group with bar patrons provided the necessary information for a more in-depth, longer and more standardized form of research (survey research) with appropriate scales that included like/dislike, agree/disagree statements that probed bar patrons on their motivations to frequent bars, the types of bars they frequent, their reasons, their likelihood of visiting under certain pricing of liquor and beer, students' concept of a new bar and whether these bar patrons would like their new bar concept, and, most importantly, whether they would become a customer. The idea took a semester to form. Framing their questions in a way that was free from bias, accurate, free from value words, the design of the questionnaire, the selection of a procedure that would give them a variation of responses that might come close to being representative of all potential bar patrons (population), the implementation of data collection and so on were all part of this process.

What they found at the end of their research process was that there were plenty of bars and clubs for college-age students, but none for older adults age 26 and above who liked a 'classy' atmosphere, dress-to-impress, big-city-type of club where pricing did not matter as much. They could command higher prices for the type of club they were going to offer. The student ended up opening the bar for no more than US\$50K initial investment and, after having a great time and making a good living for over three years, sold it for US\$375K and moved out of the college town to a larger city.

Research Box 1.2. Examples of student research ideas and their relevance.

Typical research questions asked by students	Real-world connection: significance of answers
What do students do during their leisure time? How satisfied are they with leisure service offerings?	Finding the answers to these descriptive questions can help create better programming for recreation facilities and public schools, understand the role of free time and leisure within the lives of students, and how leisure could be structured so it is beneficial for students and society in general. For example, many university recreation centres continuously monitor the use levels of various recreation activities and facilities, and satisfaction levels with them. Accordingly, they add or discontinue some leisure activities and recreation programmes, and improve facilities' equipment and work out schedules of their clients.

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Research Box 1.2. Continued.

Typical research questions asked by students	Real-world connection: significance of answers
How do tourists make their trip decisions and what influences them? What stages do they go through when choosing among destinations?	The answers to these types of decision-making questions help develop effective advertising and promotion strategies tailored to different stages of the consumer buying process. For example, Marriott Corporation taps into this research model during their advertising. The advertising is aimed at reminding people of the solution to the potential problem of what to do with relatives when they come to town for a visit. The advertising offers Residence Inns as an alternative lodging option. It uses an upside-down house as a picture and adds 'Does this remind you of your house when relatives come to visit?' It literally suggests that 'Marriott can help avoid chaos at home. Hosting people should not be a cause for stress at home.'
Why do women not participate in traditional 'men's sports,' such as football?	Equal access to recreation and leisure facilities to female students is mandated by law. An extension of this line of management application is to understand how women could be made welcome in the existing facilities without much investment on the part of the facility management. Understanding the reasons why women do not participate in activities traditionally dominated by men would not only satisfy the equal access mandate of the law by modifying the existing facilities, but also make existing facilities run more efficiently and to optimum capacity.
How and why is dining important for the health of a hospitality industry?	Understanding recreational dining experiences and patterns such as frequency/time, foods consumed, entertainment, and décor can help the hospitality industry at a tourism destination determine what foods, services and environments their customers dislike or enjoy. As a result, decision makers can improve services based upon these findings and serve their target customers better.

WHY STUDY RESEARCH METHODS IN LEISURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM?

You see and read research every day. Regular opinion polls about a particular societal issue, political polling, restaurant guest surveys, airport comment cards, even polling of coaches to determine the rankings of best football

teams represents some types of research. Why do you have to learn such a dull topic? Are you taking it because it is a required class for most higher education programmes in our field? On top of this, you might have heard about higher expectations placed upon such a course, and that a research methods class is one of the more difficult subjects a student can take, as it requires many hours of study time and it seems impossible to satisfy the teacher's expectations. These are all legitimate concerns,

but most are propagated by a few former methods students who found the topic difficult because they underestimated the time requirements and felt that they were unable to complete everything they wanted to accomplish within one semester. We understand this student psychology and other time requirements placed upon students today. So we've designed this book to give you the optimum knowledge in a precise, efficient and effective manner.

If this statement does not convince you, here is some news for you: research is everywhere, and it will not disappear anytime soon. Research does not have to be dull or boring; indeed, it could be very exciting, especially if you can find a topic that truly interests you. As a matter of fact, as competition for scarce resources, markets and people's money increases, the reliance on research, and hence quality information, will become even more evident and widespread. As a high-ranking manager, you will find yourself in situations where **accurate** (reliable) and **trustworthy** (valid) information will mean personal job security, advancement in your career, respect from your colleagues and, of course, success for your company. Knowledge gained through research activities, especially in our field of recreation and tourism (the 'leisure industry') will not only help you and your organization, but also your customers, guests and visitors with whom you interact. They will be appreciative of the resulting decisions (when implemented correctly, of course) that will help solve their problems and satisfy their needs and wants, and thus increase their loyalty to your business or organization.

Some of you will finish university and perhaps never set foot through its doors again; others will continue with their graduate degrees to become academics, researchers or consultants who conduct research. Most likely, you will be, like many of us, 'consumers of research', who read the research reports, news and papers that deal with a host of issues such as market segmentation, employee satisfaction, needs assessment, or recreation programme evaluation.

In other words, you will become not the 'doers of research' but the 'consumers of research'. The question then is: why do you need to learn research methods if you are not going to become a researcher or a graduate student who typically needs to conduct thesis or dissertation research for his/her degree? For those of you who may not get involved with research directly, knowledge in research methods will still be helpful, as you will become a better decision maker in this knowledge economy, where access to new information means everything. You will be in a position of power when you know how information has been obtained and interpreted. Thus, you will not accept claims based on their **face value**, but will require higher standards before accepting claims of advertisers, educators, pollsters and people around you who assert statements to be factually correct that are, in fact, based on **pseudo-science** or **bad science**. You will have the necessary analytical tools to be able to evaluate and assess life's claims.

In fact, we all were once very good researchers as babies, but as we got older, we seem to have abandoned that frame of mind. Babies do experimental research when they learn about their new world; they create presuppositions or hypotheses (i.e. what happens if I touch this burning oven?), test them (touch the hot oven), and confirm the presupposition (hot ovens hurt) and feed it back to their own world, thus supporting an ever-growing body of knowledge (theory) that consistently tells the baby that hot objects will burn and hurt when touched. Of course, we had so much to learn in such a short timeframe, we simply had to abandon that self-testing and self-learning, and started relying on our parents, teachers, friends and other sources of information such as newspapers, television and so on for information, and thus became efficient learners. However, because of the efficiency involved in relying on others' knowledge during that process, we have lost some of our innate ability to investigate and think critically.

But, here, within this book, your methods professor wants to show you how to sharpen

these skills you once had when you were a baby and to add to these skill sets a little bit more by letting you question things, and by teaching you how quality information is supposed to be obtained and verified. By this we do not mean that you ought to be disputing everything you hear or read or that you should start testing everything you see and learn about, but we hope that you will be in a position to say: 'I cannot accept at face value a certain assertion that is said to be true, until I know that it has been rigorously researched and tested'. For example, when someone in your management team suggests that three out of four resort guests are happy with your leisure and recreational programming, you will question whether this person has literally talked to four people and three of them said: 'Yes, indeed, we are happy with the programming'. You will ask tough questions such as: How did the person obtain this information? How many people were involved? Is this group representative of our larger customer base? What questions did s/he ask to get responses? Was there any bias

involved when asking the questions? Were the questions leading toward a positive answer (just like lawyers sometimes do in courts and judges warn them not to lead the witness)?

So, being equipped with such knowledge will not only help you with your professional career, but also with your daily life; you will learn to be sceptical and suspicious of unsubstantiated claims. For example, some economic impact reports indicate that spending US\$1 in tourism advertising results in US\$28 in return-rate for a particular region or state; or the multiplier effect of tourism in a particular community is seven or 12 (i.e. a dollar spent creates an additional seven or 12 dollars in the local economy); or, during your daily life, you might hear a politician or government official asserting something using statistics that appears to be a fact; or you might see a pharmaceutical commercial on television that product X is preferred over product Y by two to three doctors. How do you sieve through so much information without doing extensive first-hand research to get the most reliable and accurate information?

Research Box 1.3. Student research settings and decisions to solve research dilemmas.

Assume, for example, that you want to conduct a survey to assess students' levels of satisfaction with a university recreation centre on your campus. You go to the recreation centre during a rush hour, perhaps between 5 and 7 pm. You start with the students who work out in the free-weight room, because that area seems so busy. You make the decision to interview the students who are waiting to obtain a spot at a crowded workout station because they are waiting and don't seem to have much to do; they seem to be excellent candidates for your interviews. When they agree to participate and start answering your questions about the level of service, especially the space, all 25 male students turn out to be unhappy about the lack of workout space in the recreation centre.

Can you trust your results; does that really mean all recreation centre clients are unhappy about the space? Do these 25 male students represent the entire recreation centre clients? What about the female students? Where were they?

A better way for you to do your survey would be to randomly select the names from a list of all enrolled full-time students, making sure that females, minorities and international students are represented as well (there will be more on random samples in Chapter 6). You could perhaps ask them by using phone interviews, online or mailing questionnaires about what they think of the workout situation. Because your sample was randomly selected, you would expect their answers to reflect what the students as a whole felt about the workout situation. The use of random samples is just one way that researchers try to ensure that the answers they find are representative of the larger group.

Knowing the tools of research will help you identify and disclose potential trouble spots, which could prevent misinformation coming from your office, hence preventing potential embarrassment and even the dismissal of responsible people. Moreover, you will gain research skills that could come in handy in your first job, providing you with the opportunity to impress your superiors, hence give you an opportunity to climb the corporate ladder a little more quickly.

Your professor might choose to teach the research methods class, as is the case with many of us, by letting you carry out an original research project either on your own or as a part of a larger group, so that you can learn and question every aspect involved in a quality research. You will come to appreciate that obtaining useful and quality information is not as easy or simple as it sounds when you hear someone talk about it. Learning by doing, in other words, conducting an independent research project from its start to its end-report is our recommended approach for learning research methods. Having the necessary skills and tools of research will make you marketable and extremely valuable to your organization, because modern companies are looking for candidates who are knowledgeable in conducting and understanding research. Even if you do not conduct the research yourself, you would be able to assess a research report for its mistakes, deficiencies and the credibility of the information, therein helping your organization to get the best from research reports.

WHAT ARE RESEARCH METHODS? LEISURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM RESEARCH IN ACTION

You may be asked to solve a marketing problem of a resort destination via primary research. Let's look at one example of a typical research setting.

Case problem setting

Club Ottomans-II (Club O-II) is an all-inclusive vacation club in the Caribbean, targeting mainly married couples without kids and fun-seeking singles from higher income brackets. Club O-II has been known as the 'Paradise on Earth', with many indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities, exclusive cuisine and beautiful sandy beaches, including one that is set aside for nudists and provides a variety of other activities for alternative-style vacationers. Over the years, the club has created loyal customers; up to 87% of their new customers become repeat guests who usually come from north-eastern USA for a week-long vacation. The club has also been popular with British, Australian and Turkish tourists. There are ~16,000 guests, for whom only 12,000 addresses (~7500 in the USA; ~2000 in England; ~1500 in Australia, and ~1000 in Turkey) can be located.

Club O-II has been experiencing a consistent decline in their customer base since the early autumn of 2008. The Chief Operating Officer (you, in this example) suspects that the decline in service quality, concomitant increase in prices, and recent resentment against tourists by local residents have something to do with the sharp decline in repeat business. A focus group of 15 new guests from various age groups revealed that the problems stem mainly from dissatisfaction with the quality of the food, attitudes of the staff towards the guests and each other during work, and hostile attitudes of locals toward tourists. Guests also seem to be extremely concerned about the drinks at the bars because they have to pay for each drink, including soft drinks. Basically, it seems that the perception of all-inclusive advertising is deceptive because not everything is included in one price. You overhear one of the guests comment on how unfair the resort's advertising is: 'If I knew that drinks were not free and this expensive, I would not have come here in the first place'. He further comments 'they are ripping us off here as they charge extremely high prices for

drinks; they know we have no choice but to buy our drinks here’.

Let’s look at this problem from the viewpoint of a research-minded manager, like you. First of all, would you implement changes to all of the aforementioned problem areas based on the opinions of 15 people? Of course, some managers/marketers would argue even a single complaint is too much to ignore. However, realistically, you would think more in detail of all the implications that decisions related to price changes, staff allocation, and new product and service offerings would have on the resort before acting on what you heard from a small number of people that only represent 0.0001% of your customers. After all, each and every one of the management-related decisions has bottom-line implications.

So, here, well-designed research might come in handy. If you were to conduct research based on the aforementioned scenario, what and how would you do it? First of all, the most important question you should ask yourself is why you need to conduct a study at all; this establishes the need for scientific observation, the purpose of your study. Second, another important question is whether or not these 15 people are **representative** of the 16,000-plus guests in a year. There is no way that you can be sure about this. Will you change the direction of the company because you heard 15 people complain? Maybe the same 15 people always complain because they are motivated by the prospect of receiving ‘freebies’. On the basis of the responses of a small group of guests, you cannot say for sure that the guests at your resort are unhappy. What do the rest of the 15,985 guests think about the resort? What if it turns out that they are all happy? Maybe a focus group of people consists of volunteers, and volunteers may not represent the general population because they could be very different from the general population. So, simply put: your focus group becomes a **biased sample**, thus should not be trusted. Anything obtained from this group

of visitors cannot be generalized to the entire population of the guests. So, you should wonder whether the rest of the guests have similar concerns or whether these 15 people are just a **sub-sample** of biased customers who seem to complain at every occasion. In short, you need to design a **reliable** and **valid** study that would address all these issues in a way that you can **generalize** your findings to your entire customer population in a year using a **random probability sampling** method.

How do you design a quality study that addresses the aforementioned issues but is generalizable to the larger population of guests without actually getting an answer from them? Magic involved in sampling and statistical techniques will help you come very close to the true answer. In Chapter 6, we will deal more closely with sampling issues.

As you can see from the above example, the method involved in acquiring information to solve the outlined problems in a resort setting, such as this, requires one to carefully plan a systematic procedure that is value-free and unbiased (free from emotions or prejudices) when implemented, and therefore produces results that are trustable and accurate. So, what then is research? Can you come up with your own definition?

For us, *research in leisure, recreation and tourism means a process by which new information and knowledge are produced to answer questions we deem valuable and beneficial for our purposes in a planned and systematic way that is free from personal bias*. It is not just a fact-finding exercise; it is not just library research of some sort by reading pieces from a book or newspaper; it is not digging up information somewhere, but it is the combination of all activities that use the information generated by others that can be replicated when sufficient detail is provided, that provides results which can be used in other similar settings, that generates new questions and insights at the end, and first and foremost, that provides an understanding by allowing us to make predictions to settings similar to

the one studied. Thus, it must be based on some form of theory or rationale either generated (induced) by us, deduced from already available theories or both. So, what does a research process look like?

might be curious about why in certain Caribbean tourist destinations locals resent tourists from Western nations. You might ask yourself a question about what happens to your clientele base when you increase the price of a monthly membership to your recreation facility by 20%? You may have heard about the effect of school recreation programmes on preventing delinquency among young adults and wonder how this process really works. Simply put, an idea generated by you or a question posed by you or your supervisor is the only thing needed to initiate a research project. Depending upon the purpose of your

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH PROCESS?

Research question

A typical research project starts with an idea or questions (see Fig. 1.1 for an outline). You

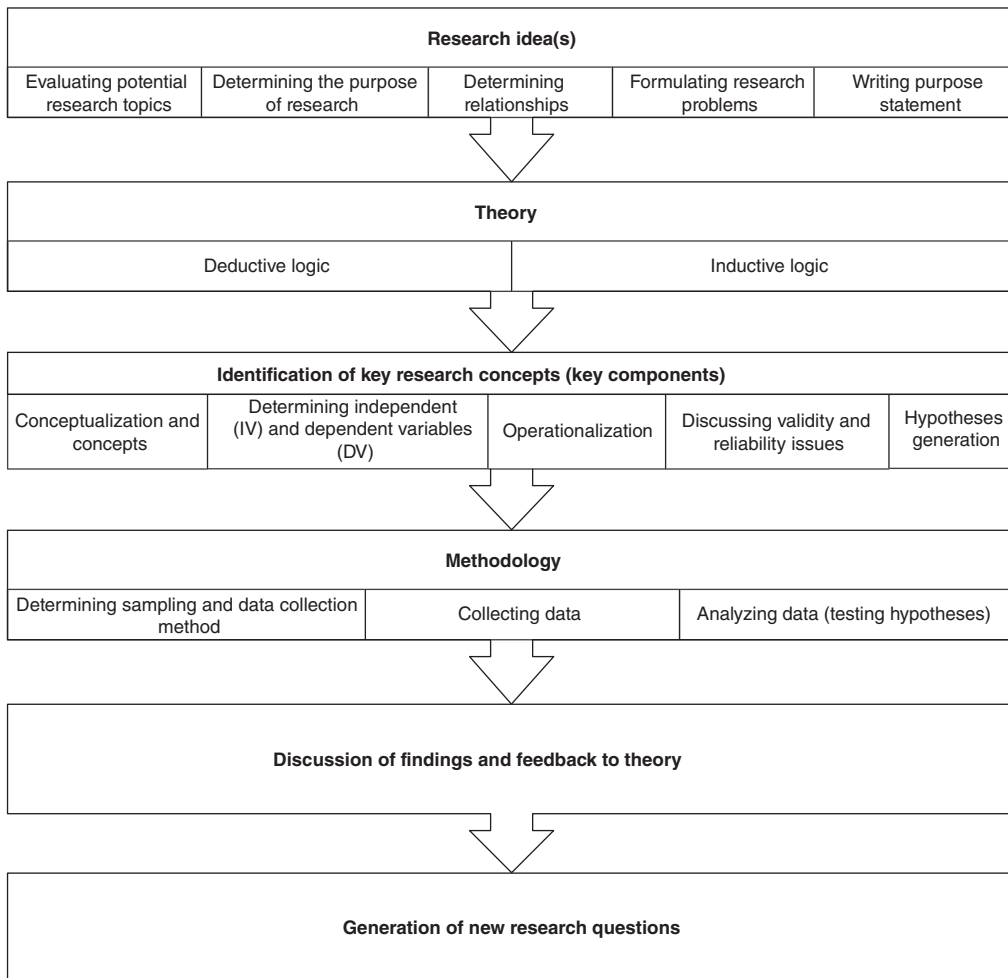


Fig. 1.1. Leisure, recreation and tourism research process.

research, whether exploring a phenomenon or describing it or explaining it, you will have to make a formal research statement or question. Obviously, asking a question must sound like a question and end with a question mark. For example, why is repeat visitation to your resort declining? If you are to state this question in a purpose statement format, it might read something like: the purpose of this research (or study) is to determine the reasons for customer decline at our resort. Note that this statement is clear and the study area is narrow enough to guide you in the right direction.

Where do ideas come from? They can be found anywhere: listening to your customers, talking to your peers, professors, friends and relatives, reading newspaper articles or formal research reports, reviewing social networks such as travel blogs or simply observing phenomena around you. The next step in research is to develop some background to the topic. What is out there? What type of information can you find that might have dealt with similar topics? What can you learn from it? Is there some sort of coherent form of study results that point toward a unified set of ideas (that we call **theories**) that might explain or provide you with clues as to how to tackle the problem?

Theory

Theories or rationales are important during the early phase of the research process; they will hint at possible solutions and give you a deeper understanding of the topic in which you are interested. If there is no formal theory, you may develop your own rationale as to how things might be related or working (inductive reasoning). Theories shape our world; they allow us to make sense of things, speculate and try to predict the future events. Theories allow us to make educated guesses about uncertain future circumstances and events, while taking into account all agreements and disagreements surrounding the phenomenon under study. Theories are building blocks of

research, but sometimes you can initiate research without a formal theory. A good theory must also be practical, so do not buy someone's assertion that 'it'll only work in theory'. Good theories should work in real life as well; there is nothing as realistic and practical as a good theory. Sometimes they may not work in the present, but a good theory may have been constructed by the theorist to work in the distant future when certain conditions are met, not necessarily in your current time-frame. Think about the famous theory of relativity by Albert Einstein. His theories were supported with evidence many years after he had first formulated them.

Theories allow a researcher to speculate on and play with unforeseen events, thus they work sometimes at the abstract level. Sometimes you may want to have a solution to some practical question without a much deeper understanding of the phenomenon, and then you may lack a firm theory. Even during those times, you may be relying on some sort of coherent ideas that may be formed while thinking and speculating about the topic. In relation to our resort scenario described above, you may use the formal **Social Exchange Theory** to describe the reactions of locals toward tourists. The theory asserts that host populations in a tourist destination will tolerate the inconveniences created by visitors if they are provided with some benefits from tourist activity.

Theories are nets cast to catch what we call 'the world': to rationalize, to explain, and to master it. We endeavour to make the mesh ever finer and finer.

(Karl. R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, pp. 37–38)

Concepts and variables

The next step in research is identifying the relevant factors (concepts) and specifying the meanings of these factors (conceptualization) so the questions can be answered. In our resort example, one of the important factors is **attitudes** of locals

toward resort guests and their **likelihood of return** to the resort. Concepts are building blocks of theories and make up the questions and the purpose statements. Once you conceptualize (define) the meaning of an attitude, the next step would be to operationalize the concept of attitude, in other words, translating the concept into a measurable indicator which we call a **variable**. How will you measure the attitude variable? Using a five-point scale of agree/disagree statements, or yes/no-type questions? Are you going to use one set of variables to explain others? Are there any other intervening variables that might change the relationship between the variables?

Independent and dependent variables

Please note that we differentiate between an **independent variable (IV)** and a **dependent variable (DV)**. Independent variables (IVs) refer to potential reasons that lead to variation or changes in the dependent variable. A DV is the effect or the outcome variable in which we are interested. One quick method of figuring out the dependent variable is to answer the question: What is it that I am trying to explain, understand or find out the solution to? Operationalization usually leads to the formulation of hypotheses (temporary guiding explanation pointing out the likely outcome of a test between variables). We basically transform the research question into a testable statement with a clear indication of the expected relationship that might exist between variables according to our theory. For example, attitudes toward the guests might be a function of whether a person works in or has a family member working in the tourism industry. You may state: 'People who have family members working in the tourism industry are more likely to have positive opinions about tourists than the people who do not have a family member working in the tourism industry'. Your variables here are the **nature of employment** (whether or not a person works for the tourism industry) and

attitudes toward tourists. Since the nature of employment determines (leads to) positive or negative attitudes toward tourists, it is the IV. It is independent because people work for the tourism industry regardless of their attitudes. Even if they don't have attitudes, they will still be working for the industry. Thus, we call this explanatory or manipulated variable an independent variable. On the other hand, attitudes are affected by (depend on) the nature of employment, thus the DV. If people were *not to* work for the tourism industry, they would not have had any attitudes toward it. Because attitudes depend on where people work, we call this the dependent variable (DV).

Other variables of interest

In addition to IVs and DVs, we encounter other types of variables that might help provide a better picture of study problems. We will briefly discuss three of them here, as you might encounter them more often or at least hear about them when reading research papers and you might think of a few yourself for your own research without being able to differentiate what type of variables they might be. Salkind (2012) distinguishes three such variables: moderator variables (also sometimes referred to as **interaction variables**), control variables, and extraneous variables. An extraneous variable is an undesirable variable that you intentionally want to omit (leave out) from your study or for one reason or another you may not even be aware of its existence. A special case of an extraneous variable, called a confounding variable, may have a direct impact on how an IV affects a DV, by leading you erroneously to believe that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between your IV and DV when in fact there is none, sort of muddying the waters.

When the relationships between two variables are masked by or depend on a third variable, we talk of a **moderated relationship**. This third moderating variable (statistically measured as an interaction effect) may affect

the true strength and/or direction of the relationships between IVs and DVs. The answer to the question of ‘What condition(s) make the relationship stronger or weaker between my IV and DV?’ would point to a moderator variable. Many of the recent interesting research findings in our field stem from studying the interaction effects of a third variable. However, the interpretation of such effects are not straightforward, sometimes requiring extra care and statistical know-how. We’ll leave the discussions about these third variable effects to a more advanced methods book. In the past, we (the authors) have studied the moderating effect of people’s moods on satisfaction ratings of cruise services. We found that people’s negative moods at the time of questioning strengthened their negative evaluation of the cruise lines, independent of other service quality factors. Another example: when studying the effects of diet and exercise on weight loss, one must examine the interaction effect of Diet + Exercise. When combined with exercise, dieting people may lose proportionately more weight than dieting or exercise alone. Think about another example in tourism! The satisfaction with vacation will not only depend on whether or not it is a mountain versus beach vacation, but on the third factor, namely, the temperature (or the season). If you take a beach vacation during cold winter temperatures (or rainy versus sunny days), you may be dissatisfied with your vacation as opposed to hot summer days. So, the weather temperature may amplify

or lessen the strength and the direction of your satisfaction.

When we study the effect of one particular IV on DV, we need to be able to eliminate the possibility of other factors affecting the DV; in other words, other factors need to be held constant or controlled for. In such cases, we speak of **control variables**. In essence, they are similar to extraneous variables, as we are not interested in studying the effects of these variables per se. For example, when you are studying the effects of outdoor recreational activities, such as biking on weight loss, you may want to control for people’s ages to eliminate the possibility of these affecting the outcome variable, as people of different ages react differently to weight loss.

Operationalization

The process of **operationalization** of variables and the formulation of hypotheses leads to the collection of information from relevant people or populations. There are basically two questions that need to be answered simultaneously before deciding how to proceed. You need to see the end of the tunnel before anything should happen, otherwise you might be wasting a lot of valuable time. The first question to ask is: Who will your study subjects be? Typically, you would go for a small group (**sample**) of people who you think is representative of the larger group (**population**). How will you collect the information? What means will you use?

Research Box 1.4. Independent variable versus dependent variable and hypothesis.

We differentiate between independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) because we try to understand or explain things by assessing the relationship between variables. IVs refer to reasons that lead to variation or changes in the dependent variable. This distinction is particularly relevant when you are investigating cause-and-effect relationships. For example, the variables such as income, cost of travel, attractiveness of the place and quality of services may all affect the demand for international tourism. Such variables would be called IVs. A DV is the effect (outcome) variable in which we are interested. In this case, the tourism demand, the number of arrivals from an originating market A to a destination place B would be the DV. The general research hypothesis should state that the

(Continued)

Research Box 1.4. Continued.

demand for international tourism can be explained as a function of income, cost of travel, attractiveness of the place and quality of services.

A hypothesis can be defined as a tentative guiding statement that gives direction to research by defining relationships between our variables or outcomes of our study. The specific null hypotheses related to the theory of demand explained above are as follows.

H_{0,1}: The demand for international tourism is not affected by income.

H_{0,2}: The demand for international tourism is not affected by the cost of travel to the destination.

H_{0,3}: The demand for international tourism is not affected by the attractiveness of the destination.

H_{0,4}: The demand for international tourism is not affected by the quality of services at the destination.

Data collection

Depending upon your purpose and budget, you might decide to collect information using a small group of people (a focus group) that might give you good insights, but will not provide you with generalizable information. Perhaps you could conduct survey research via questionnaires mailed to each individual member of the representative sample of the population. In our resort example, you could choose to use the telephone interview method with your guests. Once you have the data, you will need to enter them into a computer database and test your hypotheses. Here, you will have to be familiar with the basic concepts in statistics, such as measures of central tendency (Mean, Mode and Median), measures of variability (Range, Variance and Standard Deviation), test of independence or chi-square, *t*-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation analysis and so on; we assume that the student of this book has had an introductory course in statistics. You do not need to be expert in statistics to do well in research methods; however, being familiar with basic concepts would make understanding easier.

Data analysis and results

On the basis of what you find through using statistics, you will then either accept or reject

your hypothesis, relating back to the theory with which you started. Based on the results of your testing, you will either provide more support for the theory or question the predictive ability of your theory within the limits of your research setting. More questions should be generated because of this analytical decision process. If the results of your research do not make you pose new questions, you should re-evaluate your research process and/or read more studies that have similar or contradictory findings in different settings. Ultimately, you will generate more research questions than you have answered. A full application of research processes can be found in Worked Example 1.1 at the end of this chapter.

RESEARCH TYPOLOGIES

Generally, research can be categorized as either **experimental** or **non-experimental research**. Depending upon the nature of the investigation, they can further be divided into **descriptive, relational** and causal (**explanatory**) research. The first major category is called **experimental research**. Though we have started seeing more and more experimental studies conducted in the field of tourism and hospitality, you will rarely

perform experimental research. It is, however, important to recognize the difference between experimental and other research designs in order to understand what we mean when we say a **true cause-and-effect** relationship. In other words, how can we be certain that one thing leads (cause) to another (effect)? At the heart of experimental research is the question of whether an observed relationship between an action and an outcome is a true **causal effect** or a mere **spurious relationship**. Causality concerns relationships between variables where a change in one variable necessarily results in a change in another variable without the effect of another confounding third factor(s).

The best way of understanding the impact of something on a phenomenon is experimental in nature because one is in a position to isolate the impact, and attribute the cause of the effect to that source only and nothing else. We need to fulfil three important conditions before we can accept a causal link. First, there has to be co-variation: if X causes Y, they should move together or they should co-vary. Second, there should be a sequence in time or cause before effect: first X changes and then Y changes. The third requirement is a little bit challenging to pinpoint: no other, confounding or **'third variable'**, should co-vary with X and Y. If there were a variable Z that varies with X and Y, Z instead of X could be the true cause for the variation observed for

Y. There will be more detailed discussion on experimental research design in Chapter 10.

Experimental designs typically include at least two groups (conditions), one being the experimental group and one the control group. The **control group** does not receive the experimental treatment. You give treatments (conditions that can be manipulated) to your group of interest (experimental group) to determine whether it will change their reaction/behaviour due to that treatment. In a typical experiment, you can randomly assign subjects to two groups, one that receives the treatment (our manipulation group) and the other, the control group, that receives none or different treatment. By observing the reaction of the first experimental group and comparing it to that of the second group, you can determine whether your treatment had an effect on the observed outcome of the first group. There can be a number of variations in designing experimental research, each attempting to control for possible external factors and situations that are likely to impact the outcome of research. The challenge is to be able to conclude that the outcome is the result of the treatment itself only and nothing else. [Box 1.5](#) illustrates an example of an experimental research design that could be done using the resort example in this chapter, whereas [Box 1.6](#) shows an example study from the literature in our field.

Research Box 1.5. Experimental research scenario.

In the resort scenario presented earlier, you might be interested in isolating the impact of the quality of the food on satisfaction levels of guests. In other words, the research question you are interested in solving is: Is the quality of food responsible for dissatisfaction among your guests? From your guest list, you might randomly choose, say, 70 guest names to create two groups. You can draw 35 guest names out of the hat and assign them to the experimental group and the rest to the control group. The control group would be given regular meals that the resort has been serving, and the experimental group would be given 'higher-quality food' that was prepared elsewhere by a known chef. The difference observed between the two groups when related to their satisfaction would isolate the impact of food on satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

Research Box 1.6. Experimental research example from literature (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009).

The study used an experimental study to determine the moderating influence of review valence, hotel familiarity, and reviewer expertise on the within-subject effect of online hotel reviews on consumer awareness, attitudes, and consideration of hotels. Participants from different parts of the Netherlands were recruited by e-mail to participate in an online study; 168 respondents completed the entire experiment. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of eight groups in a 2 (review valence: positive vs negative review) × 2 (hotel familiarity: well-known vs lesser-known hotels) × 2 (reviewer expertise: expert vs non-expert reviewer) × 2 (review exposure: pre- vs post-review) mixed factorial design. Results showed that exposure to an online hotel review improves the average probability for consumers to consider booking a room in the reviewed hotel. This positive main effect of review exposure on hotel consideration can be explained by the fact that all reviews – positive or negative – make consumers more aware of the reviewed hotel's existence. The findings of the study indicates that familiarity with a hotel makes hotel guests resilient to the effects of online hotel reviews. Lesser known hotels seem to benefit more from online reviews; hotel awareness seem to have improved for lesser-known hotels than for well-known hotels. By using controlled conditions, the authors were able to show a true cause/effect relationship between changes in hotel consideration and exposure to reviews.

The second major category, which you might encounter more often in our field, is **non-experimental research**. In this category of research, you do not give any treatment to your group of interest or subjects but observe them in their natural settings as they process information, interview questions, or survey items and describe their reaction to your study phenomenon. In non-experimental research, you cannot truly study the cause-and-effect relationship between variables (factors); all you can point out is the **inferred relationship** (outcomes), but never the true cause. For example, if you wanted to survey visitors in your community to find out whether they came there because they saw an advertisement of your community on television, your descriptive study can only point to their presence after the fact; in no way can you truly identify whether the television advert or something else was responsible for their visit. You could find out whether they saw the advert, whether they thought it had an impact, and, if so, what they could recall about the advertising. However, since you cannot control the information

or the setting in which they saw the advert, the study results cannot isolate the true effect of advertising on their visitation behaviour.

The non-experimental research comes in a variety of forms, some of which could help you come close to the true cause–effect relationship but you can never be certain whether, in fact, your study variables really caused the outcome. As part of non-experimental research, we will briefly cover **exploratory research** (that explores a new under-researched area), **descriptive research** (as the name implies, this describes the characteristics of the phenomenon you are interested in), **relational research** (that investigates how one or more things are related to each other without any causal direction) and **causal research** (relational research that relates two or more things to each other in a causal way). To make things even more confusing, there is also another type of research category, **historical and ethnographic research** (that examines the effects of past events on current events), which we will not cover in this book, as you will seldom encounter such research in our field, although it is becoming popular among a few colleagues in our field.

The first group of studies can be collectively called exploratory. Exploratory studies are done when there is not much information about a phenomenon at hand, when the subject is relatively new and thus did not attract much attention, or simply to develop procedures to be used in larger follow-up studies. Frequently our students in methods classes come up with ideas that have simply not been researched well enough, or are too specific to their institution and have not attracted outside attention to produce the necessary mass of studies so they can read and compile a literature review (background information) for their research projects. We suggest that you find a researched area that contains enough reading material for the literature review section of your project proposal. You will find more information in Chapter 3.

The second category of studies refers to descriptive studies, which simply describe the characteristics of a population without truly understanding the underlying structure of the problem; why and how it happened in the first place. They are useful in that they describe the setting of the problem or events. Typically, we start with describing the situation and certain events quantitatively before trying to explain the reasons why and how they happened. So, descriptive studies precede all other studies because they set the stage for further analysis of the situation, events or phenomena. It answers the '*what*' question. They may lead to the formulation of hypothesis or form the foundation of another, relational type of research. The largest and perhaps best-known descriptive study is a population census. It describes various characteristics of the population accurately and precisely. When you obtain visitor statistics such as number of visitors to your city's attractions or the percentage of guests satisfied with your resort's offerings, you are basically describing the situation. You do not know why people visit your city's attractions, or why and how the guests are satisfied with recreation programmes at your resort. Surveys that seek to describe the percentage of people holding a particular opinion (e.g. the percentage of people preferring outdoor activities to indoor recreation activities) are

examples of descriptive studies. Here, you are simply interested in describing the current state of preferences for recreational activities, how many tourists visit your city within a year, how many people attend your parks within summer months, how many guests stay in your resort, or how many people attend your school's basketball games. These are all questions that are descriptive in nature; in other words, when a study is designed primarily to describe what is going on or what exists, we call it descriptive. Without knowing the current state of affairs, you cannot make much difference around you.

To make a difference, to change the world, to improve your business or eliminate some of the problems you encounter, you are automatically interested in relational studies. These studies that tell us how our constructs are related to (e.g. programmes, treatments, actions, interferences) the outcomes of interest but without any direct causal order. These relational studies are sometimes referred to as explanatory studies because they explain the cause (reason) of our phenomenon of interest. Remember, for this to happen, the three conditions for causation described earlier (i.e. covariation, time-sequence and exclusion of a potential third variable explanation) must be fulfilled. Regardless of what the situation might be, your instructor will probably ask you to do a combination of approaches, because a descriptive study alone cannot explain why things really happen.

Many authors of research method books use different ways of categorizing research; instead of using the term **relational**, they might call them **explanatory**, **correlational**, or **causal-comparative** studies. All these terms point toward the third general group of studies, which we call relational studies. The explanation of certain phenomena, whether by isolating the impact of one variable (cause, treatment, independent variable) on the outcome (effect, dependent variable), as in experimental studies, or whether the purpose is to determine the existence of some sort of relationship between variables (correlations or relational research) without attributing a cause, is the reason why a researcher conducts relational

research. What the researcher is interested in is a true understanding, followed by explaining or predicting the phenomenon under investigation. Although the terms seem to be a matter of semantics, they do indeed help to understand a class of studies, its methods, its benefits and its limitations. Although all study types can be useful in different circumstances, the ultimate goal of doing research is to provide understanding and an ability to predict similar cases. Relational research helps us understand how and why things happen in relation to other events or factors. For example, if you would like to know how many customers you would lose by increasing your price by 10%, you are looking at the relationship between the price and the number of customers using your services. The underlying assumption is that as the price of a good or service increases, the quantity of customer demand will decrease. Implicitly, we are saying that price increase precedes quantity decrease; thus, price increase causes customer demand decrease. This is the first law of demand you will recall from your introductory economics class (note: not all relational variables are causal, but all causal studies are relational). If, however, we cannot make predictions as to what the true cause–effect direction is, we talk about relational studies. Much research in attitude and behaviour can be interpreted bidirectionally; for example, attitudes toward alcohol consumption may have a positive effect on the drinking behaviour of college students. Because of participation in events involving alcoholic beverages, a student might have a positive attitude towards alcoholic beverages, indicating a bidirectional relationship. The true cause in this case cannot be ascertained by way of relational studies; here, we would need a causal study that will pinpoint the direction of the event; again, by applying the principles of causation. The purpose of various study types, along with specific examples from our field, are shown in [Table 1.1](#). When doing a study you will want to explore the topic first, then describe it and finally explain the causal relationships or predict the event. Let's briefly look at each category of studies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why should we do research?
2. Define research and its process.
3. Discuss typologies of research with examples.
4. Discuss and differentiate various types of research variables.
5. Identify one research topic that may deal with some aspects of recreation, parks, tourism and hospitality, and then provide justification as to why this particular topic needs to be investigated.

CHAPTER ASSIGNMENT

You have been just hired by Washington DC Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (WDCAC&VB) to conduct a study that will, first, determine the level of satisfaction (dissatisfaction) of international travellers with respect to main amenities (attractions) in the area, and second, further understand the barriers to international travellers to visit attractions once they have arrived. Write a brief proposal for this study that would convince your boss that you are capable of conducting the study. The main effort in this proposal should centre on your methodology, operationalization and justification of the variables for inclusion in your study. Please also remember that your boss wants to make sure that you look at the problem by origin of visitors (Germany, UK and Japan) to the area. Specifically, you need to provide brief written answers to the following:

1. State a general objective statement for the proposed plan of the study.
2. Provide a brief statement of justification for the importance of the study.
3. What relationships exist among the study's concepts (your theory) that would help your boss understand the setting of the problem?
4. Develop at least two examples of testable hypotheses for the study.

Table 1.1. Research typologies.

Research type	Exploratory studies	Descriptive studies	Relational studies (explanatory studies)
General aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop familiarity with the topic Qualitative in nature Yield new insights Explore an under-researched area Develop procedures for future larger studies Test the feasibility of in-depth research Break new ground via new insights Answer the 'what', 'how' questions for limited cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe and describe the nature of a population or event of interest Quantitative in nature Describe what is happening typically using descriptive statistics Answer the 'what' questions Map out the current situation Pave way to the creation of potential hypothesis First step in research Provide broad picture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide true understanding and prediction of topic of interest Examine relationships Determine cause-and-effect relationships when possible Answer the 'why' question
Temporal use	Beginning, when topic is new	Now	Now, past or future
Limitations	Answers not fully satisfactory	Rarely provide satisfactory answers	May not be able to determine real cause-effect relationship if the study is non-experimental
Common techniques used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups Case study Nominal (guided) group discussions Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys Observations Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlation analysis Experimental research Causal-comparative research (surveys, historical research) Interviews

Example tourism questions	<p>What is the opinion of a group of guests in your hotel regarding the level of services?</p> <p>How do travel agencies cope and deal with difficulties and competition imposed upon their business by emerging technologies such as the internet?</p>	<p>What are the most frequently visited tourist attractions in your city?</p> <p>How can tourists be classified?</p> <p>What tourism market segments exist, and how large are these segments?</p> <p>What are the factors affecting destination choices of college students?</p>	<p>Is there a relationship between exchange rates at a destination and visitation rates? If yes, what is the nature of this relationship?</p> <p>Can we reliably predict people's choices for a vacation destination knowing what images they have of the place and their motivations for taking the trip? What are the impacts of images, and motivations in destination choice decisions?</p>
Recreation example	<p>What are the existing barriers and obstacles to participation in recreational activities?</p>	<p>What percentage of visitors to a recreational sports centre buys food during their visit?</p>	<p>How would park visitors react to a 28% price hike? What would the effect be on visitation rates?</p>
Leisure example	<p>How and why is dining important for the health of a leisure industry?</p>	<p>How satisfied are customers with various services at our resort? What is the percentage of satisfied female customers?</p>	<p>What is the relationship between employee satisfaction and customers return intentions in area hotels?</p> <p>What roles do people's sensory perceptions play during a recreational dining experience?</p> <p>What effect does music have on consumption behaviour of diners?</p>

FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DOING GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT

Research Portfolio Assignment: Research Group Formation

Submit (exchange) the names, e-mail addresses, contact information, scheduled meeting times, common interests, and your CV with other group members. You may have to meet with your instructor several times during the semester, and at least twice: once before the submission of your proposal, once before the submission of your research final report.

Research Portfolio Assignment: The Research Ethics of Milgram's Obedience Experiment

Ask your instructor or go to your library's film archives and watch the classic ethics research film, *Obedience*. The film is based on experiments carried out by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s.

Write a brief response to the film, focusing on the research ethics issues raised by the experiments shown. Use your readings, IRB site training, and your class discussion to help you to understand these issues. You may also want to respond to other aspects of the film, such as whether the research techniques really get at what the researchers are trying to measure. Can you think of any alternative approaches to the research question? You might also want to give a personal response to the film. How do you think the various participants may have felt? Was the film disturbing to watch?

When you are writing your piece, organize it as an essay. That is, make sure you start with an introductory paragraph and end with a conclusion. These should give an overview of your responses. Make sure that each paragraph focuses on a single issue and has a clear topic sentence. Avoid one and two sentence paragraphs. Yes, spelling and grammar do matter.

Hint: make sure to focus on the research ethics issues and not the ethics of the subjects of the experiment (the 'teachers').

The movie may be accessible via your library or YouTube link at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jqr5-dWk6Gw>

Research Portfolio Assignment: IRB Certification (online) <https://www.citiprogram.org>

You are required to complete a course in human research subject using the link above, which can be accessed through your university's computers (most universities, in the US at least, are members of this site, wherein researchers get certified for free). Check with your librarian to find out whether this is true in your case, otherwise obtain the IRB certificate via local sources

(Continued)

Research Portfolio Assignment. Continued.

(provided by a local higher education institute if not available within your own institution). Alternatively, locate your university's office that deals with the protection of human subject in research (IRB-Institutional Review Board) and obtain a copy of its application form.

All members of the group must include a copy of their IRB certificate in the group's research portfolio. You cannot start doing your term project unless you get certified by IRB. Your instructor might ask for the submission of your IRB certificate with your research proposal.

Research Portfolio Assignment: Finding a Research Topic (notice your instructor's due date).

This is both a group as well as an individual assignment. You are required to include an individual copy into the group's portfolio as well. Submission type: individual as well as group assignment.

Part I. Individual

1. Make a list of five (5) topics you find interesting to pursue research in. These can be any topics within the field of leisure/recreation/parks and tourism that you might glean from a variety of sources, including newspapers, radio and television news, magazines, research journals, and even overheard conversations, from professionals or even from your instructor.
2. Contact a professional (manager) of one of your city's tourism, recreation, parks or hospitality businesses and ask about his/her research needs. Solicit his/her cooperation if you intend to conduct the research in their facility using their customers/clients. Assure them that the findings will be confidential and shared only with your class, and a final report given to the person in charge.
3. Rank these various ideas by level of interest, real-world application, feasibility, and utility. Then for each of the top three, write one sentence explaining why it appeals to you.
4. Take the idea that you ranked #1 above and do the following.
 - (a) Write a one-paragraph description of a study that incorporates that idea.
 - (b) From this idea, generate three more questions derived from the original question or idea.
5. Use the idea that you ranked #2 above and do the following.
 - (a) Locate a reference from a professional scientific journal and write out the complete citation (you must use APA style).
 - (b) Locate an additional abstract from a study that focuses on the topic.
6. Find five other sources of information about any of the topics you listed in #1 above, read the abstracts and write out the complete citation for each. Try to complete a set of other sources that is diverse as possible.
7. Now, compare and contrast your ideas and evaluate the feasibility of each idea and select your favourite research question.

(Continued)

Research Portfolio Assignment. Continued.**Part II. (Group)**

As a group do the following (note the instructor's due date).

1. Now, get together with whomever you want to work on your group project (a maximum of three people). Compare and contrast your ideas and evaluate the feasibility of each idea. Think in terms of (i) What problem does it help to solve? (ii) What decisions can be made based on potential results? Rank those ideas and vote to decide which one to choose.

2. As a group discuss your problem statement after you summarized your individual research articles.

With your existing literature, what information do you have now?

(a) What type of 'data' do and don't exist?

(b) Can you generate additional data when needed, how significant and relevant are the data?

(c) Do some data such as frequencies, attendance rates, and so on already exist?

(d) What does the existing literature say about your and similar research questions?

(e) How does your question and potential research result add a piece to the puzzle?

3. Discuss and summarize your problem statement, your research articles and declare the purpose of your study.

'The purpose of this study is to'(use action verbs i.e., examine, test, analyse, predict; don't use 'understand')

Present the purpose to your instructor/group members by writing a brief explanation of why you chose the topic along with an appropriate title.

4. Identify independent variable (IV), dependent (effect) variables (DVs) and confounding variables.

5. Write hypotheses.

Turn in all work described above to your instructor.

Note: Over the years we have found the following strategy to be effective to discourage the free-rider behaviour: You, as a group, can *fire* a member who is not living up to the expectations at any time during the course of the project. The person who gets fired will have to do the entire project alone (a different one, of course; this could mean failing the class, because if you cannot produce a research project, no final grade will be assigned, even if you do well in other parts of the class). For the health of the project, this method is essential to obtain full involvement. Everyone needs to be aware that *anybody can get fired up until the last minute*. My experience is that students try to be nice to a reluctant group member, but what happens in the end is that they tolerate a free-rider who is taking advantage of their good will. So, spell out your expectations from each other and stick to your planned schedule, no matter what. If someone is late or does not show up to any of the meetings, even the first few times, this is an indication of what you should expect from that member. Fire him/her on the spot. This class cannot tolerate 'nice' people. You will be the one who is going to do the most of the work; why should you?

KEY TERMS

Causation: Association between variables that can be directly attributed solely to the manipulated factor(s) or reason(s).

Concept: A term whose meaning is agreed upon.

Dependent variable: The outcome, the effect, or the result that independent variables have in hypothesized relationships. The answer to our question ‘What am I trying to explain?’

Experiment: A research procedure that can isolate the true cause of an effect.

Generalizability: Ability of research findings from a small sample to be applied to the larger target population.

Hypothesis: A tentative statement or educated guess that gives direction to research by predicting relationships of our variables or outcomes of our study.

Independent variable: The treatment or manipulated variable – the variable that is manipulated or changed to examine its effect or influence upon the variation in the dependent variable.

Operationalization: A process of creating measurements by assigning values or definitions to variables or abstract concepts.

Population: A collection of elements or subjects belonging to the same group.

Pseudoscience: A practice, belief or claim that is falsely being portrayed as science. Astrology, linking personalities or future events to stars, is a typical example.

Research: In leisure, recreation and tourism, this means a process by which new information and knowledge are produced to answer questions that we deem valuable and beneficial for our purposes in a planned and systematic way that is free from personal bias.

Research methods: Techniques involved or steps taken to produce new knowledge or to study a phenomenon.

Sample: A sub-group of a population that is selected to represent the population.

Theory: Tool of mind used to help understand, explain a subject matter, and/or predict an outcome and/or events.

Variable: Concepts that can take on different values such as gender (male or female), agreement (agree or disagree) or income (dollar value of earnings).

WORKED EXAMPLE 1.1. SOLUTION TO CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the main problem? Why do you need to conduct a study?

If you think that the main problem is just the high prices for drinks or locals’ attitudes toward the tourists, you would be mistaken. Remember, only a small fraction of guests expressed their dissatisfaction with various aspects of the resort. They did not list all possible problem areas that might be of concern to a larger population of guests who stayed in the resort. What would they think? So, these little useful hints are part of the problem, but not the main problem. The main problem is: Why is there a consistent decline in the resort’s business? What is the reason for such consistent decline over a period of two or three years? A potential list of likely answers to this question would perhaps include employee dissatisfaction with pay levels, a faulty perception of advertising by the guests (small print that has not been read by the guest), elitist attitudes toward the locals by the resort guests and, hence, locals’ reciprocal negative attitudes toward the resort guests. So, the first step would be to identify all possible reasons that would be part of the solution (you will have to consult the relevant literature here to gain more insight and background into your research problem). By doing so, you are creating a list of **hypo-theoretical answers** that, if confirmed by your collected information later, would constitute a solution verified by empirical observation. Would, for example, employee dissatisfaction

with pay levels be related to poor attitudes toward the guests? When conducting your research, you will need to create **hypotheses** that will give you guidance to your research. So, you know what you expect the results will show and how you are going to test relationships once you have the information.

2. Are there any smaller problems that you think of as an important area for study while investigating the main problem and are they in some fashion related to each other, hence to the main problem at large?

Maybe these little problems are parts of a larger problem and, hence, are related to the main problem? For example, what are the salary levels of workers? How many hours are they required to work? Is tipping allowed? Here again, we are talking about a **theory** of some sort that connects all concepts (variables) together to give a unified explanation of seemingly unrelated or sometimes even contradictory explanations. Is there an existing theory that describes such a scenario? Or do you have to create your own theory that might explain what is going on? Have other people done similar studies that looked at some of these questions? What did they find? Can you list some of their findings as an input for your study? Typically, there is a real truth, independent of what we are thinking; the relationships are there and working and there might be rules or *modi operandi* that control such relationships that are waiting to be discovered. We always have theories, or parts of theories, that make our world understandable, helping us reach logical conclusions. Most examples of what we think are original have probably been studied before, perhaps in a different context. Nevertheless, there must be some information, in the library, books, research articles, newspaper clips, even unwritten, existing only in your professor's thoughts and maybe, if you are lucky, someone might have pulled all these together, and called it an 'XYZ theory'. In the

context of this research example, you might use 'disconfirmation of expectations theory', which asserts that people are satisfied if the performance of whatever they are consuming or using is exceeding their prior expectations. They will be dissatisfied if the performance remains below their expectations. Or you might use Azjen's and Fishbein's theory of planned behaviour, which postulates that under certain circumstances people's attitudes will predict their behaviour. When studying the same question within this resort setting, you might try to understand why local residents are hostile towards the resort guests by using 'social exchange theory'. It argues that residents will tolerate inconveniences of tourists as long as they also benefit from their spending in their community; otherwise they will not support tourism activity in their community and, over time, they might even show antagonistic feelings towards their guests. You might deduce hypotheses from this theory and test whether they are valid within your setting. You will learn about the importance and the role of theories and derivations that give directions to your research, the so-called hypotheses, later.

3. Who are you going to study? What is your population?

The population of resort guests is at around 16,000 (theoretical population, because you do not have access to all of them), you know this because of the customer registrations. But you only have 12,000 addresses (list of addresses or the so-called sampling frame), which constitutes your effective population or practical population. Then, the question becomes, shall I ask all 12,000 customers? Thanks to statistical theory, the good news is that you do not need to ask or interview all of your customers; you could select a random sample, or small group of people who are **typical customers** in your resort, and conduct your research with them. Normally, if this sub-set of customers is selected carefully so that they represent the larger group, you can use as few as 600–800 people. Interestingly, for a nation

as large as the USA, in which 190 million-plus voters elect the president, political opinion polls usually do not ask more than 1200–1800 people to get an answer as close as $\pm 4\%$ of the true value. So, the design and selection of the sample is very important. How are you going to select the potential respondents? Are you going to use random-probability design or a convenient sample? Are there any drawbacks of each of these methods? These are typical questions that you have to answer before doing anything else. Thus, the sample will be made up of fewer people from the list of the effective population of 12,000 whom you will talk to, write to or e-mail. Typically, the sample will range from 600 to 1200, depending upon the accuracy you want. Statistical theory suggests that if you would like to reach $\pm 4\%$ to values that can be observed in the theoretical population (remember you never observe this because you never go to the entire population), you will have to approach at least XYZ number of people. What's really important is: can you select the sample in a way that is representative of the population without introducing unintentional and unwanted bias? There are a variety of ways to do this and you will learn about this later.

4. How are you going to go about collecting information so that you can draw conclusions about the general population of guests? Are you going to design your own questions and/or scales, or will you use scales and questions that have been validated before by someone else?

Typically, we avoid reinventing the wheel by using already accepted and used instruments. Only if we cannot find a measurement instrument do we create our own data-collection tool/instrument. The next series of questions: are you going to talk to the guests on site, or at their home, and how, via what medium (face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews,

a standard survey questionnaire sent via regular postal mailing or internet, i.e. e-mail list)? What type of design would be best to get the answers to your questions? Are there other methods to be used that can get you the answers to your questions easily and effectively? Do you have enough in the budget for conducting such research? How much can you spend for what method? For example, you might opt for conducting on-site surveys or interviews with guests while they are in your resort. Or you might include a list of questions and scales that are related to your questions in a survey instrument of some kind (typically, self-reported questionnaires) and mail them to randomly selected guests from your list of 12,000 and hope that they fill it out and send it back to you. There are ways and guidelines for creating effective surveys so that the response rate is high enough to draw reliable conclusions. Of course, survey questionnaires are one of many ways of collecting data. There are other types of data-collection techniques that we typically use. Depending upon the choice of the research design – whether, for example, it is an experimental or non-experimental, descriptive study, exploratory or explanatory study (see the difference between them) or relational or causal-comparative – we will explain in detail how to collect information, the caveats, rules and various methods.

5. Once you have the information, what are you going to do with it? How are you going to analyse the responses? What programme will you use for data analysis? Are you familiar with a data-analysis programme such as SPSS, SAS or Excel that will help you with analysis?

Typical programmes in our field ask students to complete at least one course in statistics before taking a research methods course. 'Research methods' is not a statistics course, but it does use statistics at one point. Your instructor might

review statistical tools so that you refresh your forgotten statistic skills. Chapters in Part IV of this book provide discussions on common statistical tools used by student projects. The next question is: How are you going to code and enter the responses into a computer software programme? Responses to a series of questions by one person constitute one unique entry in your database system; in other words, if you have one questionnaire filled out by one of your respondents, that questionnaire is given an ID number and entered into the database as one unique entry. So, a person becomes one observation. What happened to that person's answers in the questionnaire? They become variables or parts of variables that, when put together, can designate one variable. For example, in the scenario above, attitudes of guests toward locals might be measured on a five-point agree/disagree scale. The sum of all responses (items) to all attitude statements can make a variable called 'attitudes toward locals'. Every response must be entered in a single column in the computer program (thus every column becomes a potential variable), but it is you who will decide whether another **unique variable** that sums up all attitude items in columns should be created and called an 'overall attitude variable'. You will learn about these types of issues, coding, programming and so on, in Part IV of this book.

6. How are you going to use this information?

The most important part of your research will be not just the design, proposal of your research, and subsequent steps to collect the information, but the potential use and implementation of research outcomes. There are no

guidelines here, except that as a researcher or consumer of research you can only read what has been found in what way, but you cannot assure the correct implementation of research results. All you can do is to suggest what the research findings are telling you. Two people doing the same research may end up implementing totally different programmes to achieve their objectives. However, research is a value-free undertaking and thus cannot answer normative questions. It can only suggest or point towards the likely solutions of problems. The decision maker, you, will decide how to read the findings. Of course, knowing what others in similar situations with similar research findings have suggested would illuminate your path toward a better interpretation of your results. Thus, checking on what others have done and written about in the past might help you during the final phase of reporting.

7. The answers to these types of questions before you even start conducting the study constitute a formal research proposal

You may not submit a formal proposal in your own resort unless you work for someone else and are required to submit a brief outline of what you will do and how much it will cost in terms of time and money. For typical methods classes in programmes in our field, you will have to write and submit a formal research proposal to your instructor for approval of your term research project. There are certain guidelines and minimum required information to be included in a research proposal. We dedicate Chapter 5 to how to write an effective research proposal.

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