RESEARCH METHODS FOR LEISURE AND TOURISM

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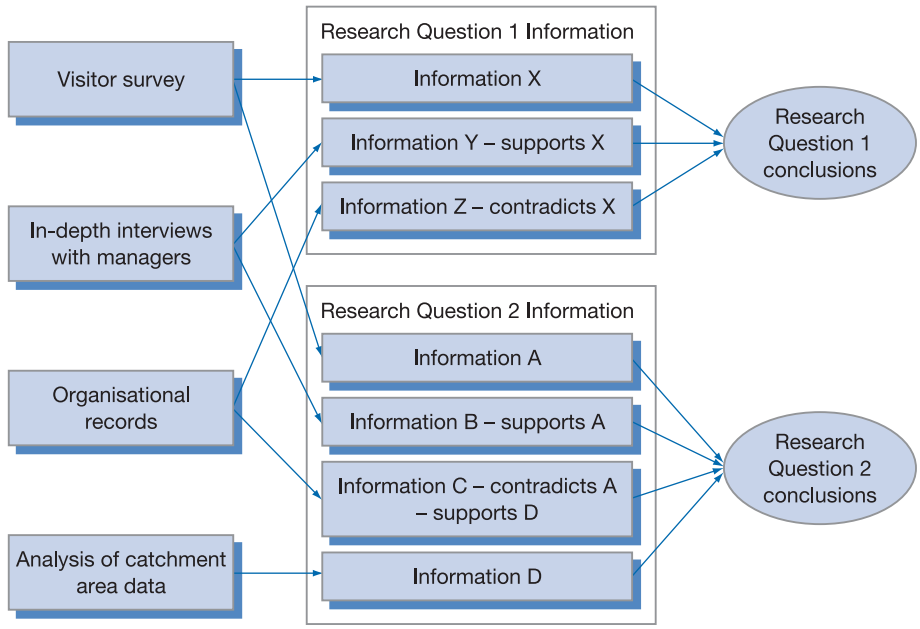

Figure 5.5 Triangulation

collection methods are used to address two research questions. A research report on a project where triangulation is claimed should therefore compare and contrast the findings from the multiple methods. Whether the multiple methods produce similar or different findings should then be an issue for discussion.

Triangulation, as metaphor and method, has, however, been subject to criticism, notably by Blaikie (1991), who argued that, in the original surveying use of triangulation, the two measurements from two different locations are made in the context of the same ontology. In social science terms, this was quantitatively based positivism. The second measurement is not made to overcome the limitations of the first as is often claimed in social research: the two measurements are part of the same process. In the social science situation, two contrasting methodologies may be addressing different questions altogether. To overcome this dilemma in the deployment of multiple methods, Richardson (2005) has used the metaphor of the multi-faceted *crystal* in place of the simple triangle.

Another term used to refer to the utilisation of multiple methods is *mixed methods*, which in turn is sometimes referred to as *pragmatism*. The above comments on triangulation generally apply to mixed methods/pragmatism.

4.2 Counting heads

In virtually all leisure and tourism contexts there is a requirement for information on visitor numbers for planning and management purposes. This calls for what is colloquially referred to as 'counting heads' or, in seated venues, counting

'bums on seats'. In many cases the required information is generated automatically by the ticket sales process. But there are situations where ticket numbers are not available; for example, urban parks, beaches, some museums and galleries and public events and tourist destinations with informal access (e.g. by private vehicle). In other cases, data are available from multiple sources – for example, a tourist destination with a variety of modes of access, or a festival with a combination of free and ticketed events. In these situations, a variety of data-collection methods may be available from which one or more methods may be selected. The methods/sources can be divided into administrative, survey-based and direct counts. Thus, assembling data concerning one site or destination involves consideration of methods addressed in a number of the chapters in Part II, particularly Chapters 7, 8 and 10. This issue is addressed initially in Chapter 7 and information provided in Tables 7.2 and 7.3 and cross-referenced in Chapters 8 and 10.

4.3 Community study as method

As long ago as 1954, Conrad Arensberg presented a case for viewing the community study as a distinct research method, describing it as a naturalistic, comparative method in which

> a problem (or problems) in the nature, interconnections, or dynamics of behavior and attitudes is explored against or within the surround of other behavior and attitudes of the individuals making up the life of a particular community. (Arensberg, 1954: 110)

The key requirement of a community study is, of course, the existence of an identifiable community, and this is generally geographical. Community studies have been a feature of leisure studies from the beginning:

- In the United States, one of the most famous community studies, of 'Middletown', was conducted by Robert and Helen Lynd in 1929 and included three chapters on the use of leisure; while the first major study of leisure, entitled *Leisure: A Suburban Study*, by George Lundberg and his associates (Lundberg, Komorosky and McInerny, 1934), was a study of Westchester County in suburban New York.
- In the United Kingdom, a study of High Wycombe formed part of the earliest major study of leisure conducted in the late 1940s by Rowntree and Lavers (1951) (see Case studies 9.1 and 12.1).
- More recently, there is Derek Wynne's study of the leisure behaviours and lifestyles of residents of a new housing estate near London (Wynne, 1998 – see Case study 12.4).
- In Australia, one of the earliest examples of leisure research, *Leisure: A Social Enquiry* by Scott and U'Ren (1962), was of the leisure participation of residents of a Melbourne suburban housing estate.

- In tourism, studies have been conducted of relatively small host communities: for example, Waldren's (1996, 1997) study of the Mediterranean island of Mallorca.

In effect, community studies are case studies, so the methodological considerations relevant to case studies as discussed in Chapter 12 are also applicable to community studies.

5. Policy/management-related methods

All of the aforementioned approaches and concepts are academically based. While all of these also apply in various ways to research conducted in policy or management contexts, the latter have also given rise to a range of research approaches, which are listed in Table 5.8 with brief descriptions and an indication of the main data-collection methods used in their conduct. They are not discussed in detail, but examples arise from time to time in the Resources sections of later chapters.

Table 5.8 Policy/management-related research approaches/techniques

Approach/ technique	Description	Main data collection and/or analysis methods
Balanced scorecard analysis	A structured system of performance measures applied across the whole of an organisation, beginning with mission/vision, then specifying 'critical success factors' (CSFs), then metrics for four *facets* for each CSF: financial performance, customer perspective, internal processes and innovation and learning.	Mainly management-generated data from the organisation, but could also involve survey results.
Cost-benefit analysis	Evaluation of a project (building, programme, organisation, service) by comparison of the total costs and total benefits using, where possible, monetary measures.	Secondary economic data and surveys of customers.
Demand forecasting	Estimating future participation levels, based on a variety of assumptions and using a variety of techniques.	Secondary and survey-based participation, demographic and economic data
Discrete choice analysis	Research subjects are offered choices of hypothetical products with varying characteristics.	Laboratory-type conditions. (see Chapter 12).

Approach/ technique	Description	Main data collection and/or analysis methods
Evidence-based policy	The idea that public/government policies should be based on, and evaluated on the basis of, empirical evidence.	All, but often mainly quantitative
Importance-performance analysis	Service/product users/visitors are asked to scale the importance of aspects of a service/product and then to scale the actual performance experienced.	Customer surveys
Key performance indicators (KPIs)	The success/failure of policies is assessed on the basis of a number of measurable indicators of performance.	Secondary data (e.g. sales, attendances, profit) or survey-based (e.g. customer satisfaction)
Logic model	Rational management model based on the sequence: initial conditions, needs, problems, resources; action; outcomes; impacts.	Secondary/ management-generated data, possibly surveys
Market segmentation	Actual and potential customers for a product or service are grouped into 'segments' on the basis of product preferences and socio-demographic characteristics.	Mostly customer surveys, also use of customer purchasing patterns.
Mystery shopping	Incognito researcher tests product/service and reports back.	Observation (see Chapter 8)
Performance evaluation	Assessment of the success or failure of an organisation, unit or programme based on outcomes compared with stated objectives, often using KPIs	As for KPIs
Resource auditing/ mapping	Compiling a register/inventory of existing or potential resources (e.g. cultural or heritage resources) of an area, for public information or as input to a policy process. See 'mapping' above.	Use of secondary sources, documents, internet, observation, organisational survey
SERVQUAL	Short for 'service quality': similar to importance-performance analysis, but users compare service quality *expectations* with actual quality experienced.	Customer surveys.

6. Choosing methods

The process of choosing appropriate research methods for a research task is part of the whole process of planning and designing a research project, as discussed in Chapter 3. Here, a number of considerations which should be borne in mind are discussed, as listed in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Considerations in selecting a research method

1. The research question or hypothesis
2. Previous research
3. Data availability/access
4. Resources
5. Time and timing
6. Validity, reliability, generalisability
7. Ethics
8. Uses/users of the findings

6.1 The research question or hypothesis

Much of the decision on how to research a topic is bound up in the basic research question or hypothesis. As discussed in Chapter 3, the 'research question' can take a variety of forms, but generally it will point the researcher in the direction of certain data sources – for example, in relation to employees, customers or organisations. Certain types of data also suggest certain types of analysis.

6.2 Previous research

If the proposed research is closely keyed into the literature and previous research, then the methods used in that research are likely to influence the choice of methods. The aim may be to replicate the methodology used in previous studies to achieve comparability, to improve on the methods used, or to deliberately adopt a contrasting methodology.

6.3 Data availability/access

In some cases an obvious existing data source presents itself and may even have prompted the research in the first place – termed *opportunistic* research in Chapter 2. For example:

- a set of archives of an organisation can provide the basis for historical research;
- official data which have been published but only superficially analysed could be analysed in more depth; and
- access to a sample of people, such as the workforce or customer-base of a company, members of a club or members of an informal interest group can be seen as an opportunity too good to miss.

In other cases *lack* of access shapes the research – for example, ethical or practical issues may preclude some research on children, so data may have to be gathered from parents.

6.4 Resources

Clearly the resources of staff and money will have a major effect on the type and scale of the research to be conducted.

6.5 Time and timing

Time and timing is always a limitation. Most research projects have a time limit. Timing in relation to external events or routines is also often a factor. For example, research using the current year's attendance data must be completed quickly if it is to be used to influence next year's strategic planning; and empirical research on events, such as sporting events or arts festivals, is constrained by their timing.

6.6 Validity, reliability and generalisability

As discussed in Chapter 2:

- *validity* is the extent to which the data collected truly reflect the phenomenon being studied; and
- *reliability* is the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later date, or with a different sample of subjects.

It is also noted in Chapter 2 that these concepts are sometimes replaced in qualitative research by the concept of *trustworthiness*.

As discussed in Chapter 2, generalisability refers to the extent to which the results of the research findings apply to other subjects, other groups and other conditions. The extent to which this is required as an outcome of the research will influence the choice of method.

6.7 Ethics

Ethical issues also limit choices of research method. Reference has already been made to ethical issues surrounding research on children: further examples of ethical issues are discussed in Chapter 4.

6.8 Uses/users of the findings

The uses and users of the research are often taken for granted, but they are an important factor in shaping research. If substantial investment will depend on the results of the research, then a more extensive and thorough-going project will be required than if the research is to used only to generate ideas. When