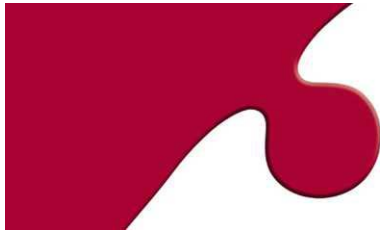




TOURISM
EXCELLENCE



UNDERSTANDING VISITOR
NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

TOURISM EXCELLENCE

Research

Fact Sheet – Hints and Tips

Prepared by **VECCI** for **Tourism Victoria**

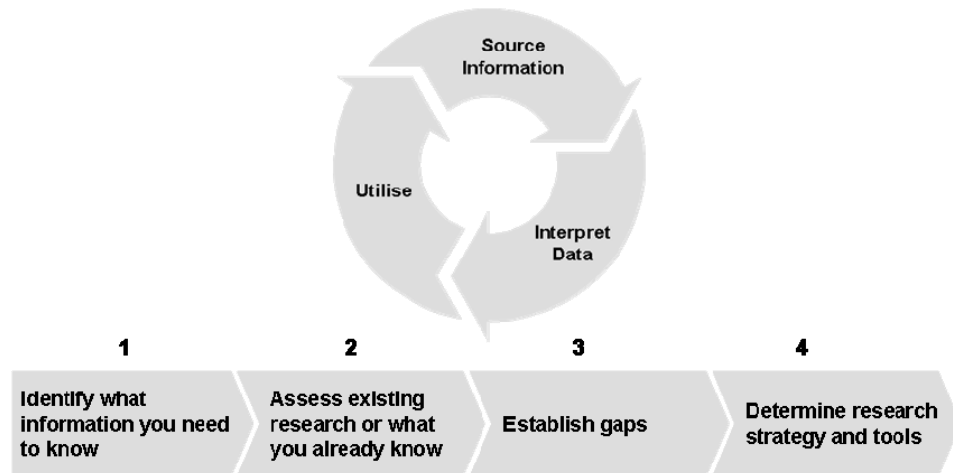
RESEARCH MODEL AND STEPS



Key Point

Source: *Tourism Excellence Website; Understanding Visitor Needs and Expectations*

Model and Steps



Key point:

- Remember, collecting your own research is one option, but may not necessarily be cost effective or the only alternative



Key Point

Source: *Tourism Australia*

Qualitative and Quantitative

Quantitative

- Objective
- Numbers
- Measurable
- How many, how much, how long...

Qualitative

- Subjective
- Descriptions, meanings, characteristics
- Define personal judgement/opinion/perceptions/feelings
- What, why...

Key points:

- If you need numbers and you need to be able to say that '23% of people said Yes' to something, or 'a quarter of the population say they want' something else – you need quantitative research
 - On the other hand, if you don't need numbers but need a particular sort of understanding – if you want to know not only what people do but why they do it, not only what they want but why they want it – you need qualitative research
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RESEARCH MODEL AND STEPS (continued)



Key Point

Key points:

- Quantitative
 - Quantitative research (quant for short) tries to indicate the views of a large number of people (ie. the population of a country, or the Australia tourism industry) by talking to a smaller group (or sample) of people who represent that larger group
 - The numbers of people spoken to in a quantitative survey can vary from 50 up to thousands
 - Who the sample is made up of is also key. It is, of course, not possible to talk to the entire population of a country. So a representative group is chosen. A representative group should look like the total population – the same characteristics in roughly the same proportions (eg. 50:50 male to female), but be a much smaller number
 - While the questions themselves can be asked face to face, over the phone, via a paper questionnaire and even over the Internet, the style of questions is very similar for all quantitative research
 - Questions with pre-set answers are usually used in quantitative research
 - Answers will then be added together so the researcher can say that "23% of people said yes" to a particular question
- Qualitative
 - Can help you to find out not simply what people do, but why they do it
 - So, for example, what is it that people like – or dislike – about a product, or advert? Why do they feel that way? What would they prefer?
 - Qualitative research can be conducted via focus groups or in-depth interviews – it is important to select appropriate people
 - Because you talk to fewer people in qualitative research work than you do in quantitative, and because in qualitative research you have exploratory discussions, qualitative research cannot provide numbers
 - What it can do, however, is provide greater understanding of what people need, want, feel and care about
 - Qualitative research can be used on its own, where numbers are not required. Equally, it can be used in advance of a quantitative study, to help researchers decide what questions to ask and how to ask them. Thirdly, it can be used alongside or after quantitative research, to help explain the 'why' about figures and numbers from the quantitative survey

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Key Point

RESEARCH MODEL AND STEPS (continued)

Time and Cost Considerations

- There are certainly opportunities for you to reference existing research or conduct your own informal and formal research, for minimal or no cost
- There may be times, however, where you identify a business need for specific or detailed information that does not already exist, and you seek external help to source this
- In this instance, be aware that there will be costs associated with conducting this formal research – and also that you need to allow time for this to take place

Key point:

- Costs will vary, based on several factors (including method of data collection, sample size and amount of reporting required)
- Ensure you allow time to write a research brief, receive proposal/s and select a consultant/research agency, develop the questionnaire or discussion guide, undertake the 'field' work, build and analyse data and report results
- One of the easiest and cheapest options is to utilise an 'Omnibus', where you can add a few extra questions to an existing standard survey that a research firm is running

Note: A typical fee for this would be \$3k - \$5k for 3 closed questions – allow a minimum of 3-4 weeks for completion

Preparing an Effective Brief

- If you do decide to outsource a piece of research, you should develop a research brief that clearly outlines what you want to know and achieve
- The more key information you can provide, the more likely you are to receive useful, constructive and appropriate information

An effective research brief should include:

- **Summary of the background to the research and the opportunities or problems that need to be explored**
 - **Description of the people whose views of are interest – the potential respondents**
 - **Objectives of the research - what questions specifically you must be able to answer with the results**
 - **Outcomes of the research - what you will do with the results**
 - **Outline of the questions that seem to need answering**
 - **Suggestions on how the data might be collected**
 - **Description of what you expect, or 'deliverables' – advice, data, a full report**
 - **Budget – how much money is likely to be available for the work**
 - **Desired timeline/s**
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RESEARCH TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Key Point

Summary: Research Tools

- Whether you are planning on conducting informal or formal research, there are several key tools you can use to gather data and information

Data and information gathering tools/resources include:

- Focus groups
- Survey/questionnaires (Survey Monkey, Omnibus surveys)
- Mystery shopping
- Interviews
- Observations
- Photographs/video
- Internet (whitepapers, blogs, social networking sites, travel and tourism sites)
- Industry resources (NVS, IVS, DVS, VPS, Decipher, Regional Tourism Profiles, LGA Profiles)

Focus Groups

- Generally used to gather qualitative information
 - A small group of people are brought together for an hour or so to discuss something and provide their opinion or feedback – for example a new product, marketing campaign or visitor experience
 - The respondents' different views and experiences combine to create a unique conversation that the researcher will use to identify themes, behavioural trends or individual quotes to follow up or make decisions
 - The researcher (or professional moderator if outsourcing) guides the group through a series of key topics, but in a less structured way than with a quantitative questionnaire – the discussion is more free-flowing
 - These conversations will sometimes discover things that the researcher had not previously considered
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RESEARCH TOOLS AND RESOURCES (continued)



Key Point

Surveys and Questionnaires

- Can be used to gather either quantitative or qualitative data – depending on survey design
- May be administered via telephone interview, face-to-face interview, online, email or paper-based
- Can be low-cost, depending on the method you choose to administer and the work required to design the survey or questionnaire
- Email and web-page surveys are the fastest methods, followed by telephone interviews – mail surveys are the slowest
- Face-to-face interviews are the most expensive, followed by telephone and then mail. Email and web-page surveys are the least expensive for large samples
- A useful tool for a variety of research purposes, including:
 - When identifying customer requirements or preferences
 - When assessing customer satisfaction, such as identifying or prioritizing problems to address
 - When evaluating proposed changes to product offerings
 - When assessing whether a change was successful
 - Periodically, to monitor changes in customer satisfaction over time
- Tips for survey or questionnaire design:
 - Keep it short and simple!
 - Include a brief introduction, welcome and thank you message
 - Include 'Don't know' or 'Not applicable' option for questions, unless you are sure your respondents will definitely have an answer to prevent potential abandonment in survey response
 - When the possible answers refer to possible opinions, preferences or behaviours, include 'Other' or 'None'



Hot Tip

RESEARCH TOOLS AND RESOURCES (continued)



Key Point

Survey Question Types

3 types: Multiple choice, Numeric open-end and Text open-end

Multiple Choice

1. In which State do you live?

VIC

NSW

NT

TAS

SA

WA

ACT

Numeric Open-end

2. How many days did you spend in Bendigo? _____

Text Open-end

3. How could we improve your visitor experience with us?

Rating and Agreement Scales:

- Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor
- Scale from 1-5; 1-10
- Statements – Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

*Source: Tourism
Excellence
Website;
Understanding
Visitor Needs and
Expectations*

Mystery Shopping

- If conducted correctly, mystery shopping (or customer auditing) should identify ways to close the gap between what customers expect from a product or experience and what the business is actually delivering
- Independent 'auditors' sample the product as an ordinary customer would experience it
- Staff /management do not know when the audit will take place and the 'auditor' pays normal price for all services (reimbursed by the client)
- However, while the auditors look and act like any other customer, they are trained to carefully observe, to objectively assess and to systematically record
- Mystery shopping can not only provide a snapshot of how a business is performing, but can also highlight those areas in which investing extra effort and resources could have a major impact on profitability
- Conversely, it can also identify things that are not particularly important or relevant to the customer experience

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RESEARCH TOOLS AND RESOURCES (continued)



Hot Tip

- You can use mystery shopping to target the following aspects of your business:
 - The customer planning process and their initial contact with you
 - Their first impressions of your tourism product/s
 - The presentation of your product/s
 - The quality of key facilities and services, such as food and beverage or accommodation
 - The quality of general amenities
 - Final impressions and whether the customer would recommend your product/s to others
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Key Point

Industry Resources

- There is an abundance of industry resources and research available to you for free, or at low cost
- Much of the research provides statistics and trend information on what is changing in the tourism marketplace (including visitor behaviour and preferences, visitor demographics and spend and destination information), and is updated for publication regularly
- Tourism Research Australia is a key resource, and publishes much industry information, including International and National Visitor surveys
- Useful links for research include:
 - www.tra.australia.com/
 - www.tourismexcellence.com.au/module1/index.php?page=module1-05

Destination Visitor Surveys

- The aim of the DVS Program is to provide the opportunity for regional tourism destinations to undertake research surveys specific to the destination and assist informed decision making to support growth of sustainable tourism products
 - The DVS is managed by Tourism Research Australia, which allocates funding to each State Tourism Organisation (STO). To access funding, STOs submit a written research project application
 - Approved projects are a collaboration between Tourism Research Australia, the STO and local tourism organisations (RTO, Local Council)
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Hot Tip

Industry Resources

(continued)



Key Point

RESEARCH TOOLS AND RESOURCES (continued)

Regional Tourism Profiles

- Tourism Research Australia produces a wide range of tourism research information at the national/State/Territory and regional level
- Data is gathered from the two primary surveys conducted by Tourism Research Australia – the International Visitor Survey (IVS) and the National Visitor Survey (NVS)
- Across Australia, there are 84 tourism regions. The Regional tourism profiles have been developed to assist the tourism industry, tourism researchers, planners and policy makers, and to provide comprehensive tourism activity data for the whole of Australia
- Individual profiles are provided for over 85% of the tourism regions in Australia
- Information generally includes:
 - Summary of international/domestic visitors, nights and expenditure
 - Top three origins of domestic overnight and international visitors
 - Purpose of visit of domestic overnight and international visitors
 - Top three accommodation types used by domestic overnight and international visitors
 - Transport modes used by domestic overnight/international visitors
 - Lifecycle groups of domestic overnight/international visitors
 - Experiences of domestic overnight/international visitors
 - Tourism businesses summary
 - Tourist accommodation establishments summary

Strategic Regional Research Projects

- Strategic Regional Research projects go beyond the objectives of Visitor Profile and Satisfaction program and focus on issues that are impacting several regional destinations (eg. decreasing caravan park supply, tourism product distribution or the financial impact of built attractions)
 - Alternatively the projects may concentrate on a single region and have a very specific focus such as management of coastal waters, holiday home usage or the development and marketing of a walking track
 - In all cases, the information is likely to be of interest to many regional destinations across Australia facing similar issues
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