

Lecture Note

Course Title: HIM 3309 Research for Hotel Business

Credits: 3(2-2-5)

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Program: Hotel Management

Week 2

Unit 2: Selecting a Topic

Topic

- Interest, motivations and expectations
- Interests and skills with access to information
- Structured and systematic approach to selecting a topic

Objectives

After the completion of this unit, students should be able to:

- Recall motivating factors that influence research topic selection.
- Describe the systematic way to selecting a research topic.
- Explain how selecting a right topic affects the practices that will follow.
- Identify research areas in different sectors in tourism and hospitality.

1. Interest, motivations and expectations

Tourism study is a wide-ranging subject and it crosses a number of traditional disciplinary boundaries within the social sciences. As a result, there is a wide array of potential topics for your research. Normally you are advised to select a topic you are interested in. Topics may arise from attending lecture programs, seminar discussions, from your reading, or from a presentation by a guest speaker which inspires your imagination. Your choice of topic relates in part to particular motivating factors such as personal connections with a particular study area or looking ahead to a possible career. Personal interest in a particular subject area is one of the most key motivations affecting the choice of research topics. Other very important factors include links to particular career development and perceived ease of access to data or how much easy or difficult will be to get data. Cost factors and local knowledge also are what you need to consider.

2. Interests and skills with access to information

Your personal interest may be the very first factor that influences you to select a particular topic, what you need to consider involves the skills that you have and ease of access to data. Different topics have different appropriate methods to get data. Some may need you to confront with a high degree of face-to-face data collection with members of the public, and if you are very uneasy about conducting interviews or on street questionnaire surveys, it will cause you difficulties in collecting data. However, most research topics in social sciences require you to conduct data collection by uses of these common methods and you may not be able to avoid the fact that you need to confront with lots of people. In some case, it will be more difficult if your topic has you to get data from persons who are in positions that is not easy to access such as those in high position (whose schedule is busy). As a result, you need to have a thoughtful plan as well as your attempt to contacts (probably through some persons) before reaching the targeted interviewee (s).

Level of ease to information access also concerns site (s) you select in the process of topic selection. If the site you select is quite far from where you live, which affects your fieldwork plan, or it is not easy to go, this will also affect length of time you will have to invest (cost factors) in your research conduct. Sources of information you need to find for your literature review is another factor you should consider in the process of topic selection. Some topics are very innovative or they are new ideas, where there is a limit of past studies. When you start to find past studies as in the literature review stage, you will

find that existing past studies are not enough for your discussion. However, this may not always be the case for those who are interested in conducting a research in searching for preliminary answers under innovative topics, as they would propose new ideas. However, normally there is likely no a 'real new' topic in the post-modern world today, and with easy access to information around the world via the Internet, you can find all you search for.

3. Structured and systematic approach to selecting a topic

The tourism system composes various sectors and in each sector, there are various functions or ways tourism tasks are operated as well as their different stakeholders, goals, visions and values. The following are the main sectors of tourism system:

- Tourism attractions
- Transport sector
- The hospitality sector
- Tourism bodies
- Government
- Tourists
- The community
- The environment
- Tourism and hospitality operators and companies

The way to view and understand tourism system and its sectors should be horizontally oriented; this means that each sector relates across one another in a linear direction, where management and development of them should go together likely at the same time. Each sector requires information for its management and future planning and development, and therefore it is where tourism research plays its role. The following are some recommended areas of research topics for your further idea of a narrower topic, based on data and information each sector need:

3.1 Tourism attractions

- Destination (attraction) image
- The competitiveness of a tourism product (attraction), experience
- The quality of the service delivery by staff
- Site visitation patterns

- The quality of educational components offered during a tourism experience
- Current and potential target markets
- Social, cultural, environmental, and economic impact assessments
- The location of a tourism product, experience in the destination [/ experience] life cycle (Butler, 1980)
- Strategies for future planning and marketing, or an understanding of the consequences of legislative and statutory (legal) changes

3.2 Transport sector

- The development and evaluation of pricing strategies
- The determination of demand elasticities, income and price elasticities
- Data regarding quality control
- Scheduling
- Safety and security issues
- Usage trends and patterns
- Customer expectations and satisfaction
- Seasonality impacts
- Environmental and social impacts
- Target markets
- Competitiveness within the transport sector
- Management issues
- Future forecasting of transport needs
- The effectiveness of innovations and technological advancements

3.3 The hospitality sector

- Quality evaluation and client needs in regard to services, amenities, facilities and their layout
- The functionality and aesthetics of room designs in accommodation facilities
- An evaluation of menu changes and menu contents
- Stock control
- Health and safety issues
- Education and training requirements
- Pricing strategies
- The effectiveness of yield management techniques

- The effectiveness of loyalty programs
- The development and monitoring of market profiles
- The evaluation of marketing strategies
- Competitors and their products
- The development and review of strategies regarding cost- efficiency improvements
- An evaluation of management and policies
- The implications of legislative and statutory changes such as tax systems
- The benefits and costs of tour packaging and product clustering
- A longitudinal knowledge of usage patterns and trends

3.4 Tourism bodies

- A destination's image
- The identification of major generating regions
- Identification of market segments
- The development of socio-demographic profiles
- The identification of community attitudes
- The assessment of social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts
- The resultant strategies for upgrading or restructuring, amplifying, modifying or restricting such impacts
- The evaluation of future development needs in regard to infrastructure, superstructure, facilities and amenities
- Investment requirements and strategies

3.5 Government: the government sector needs:

- To establish data sets to monitor incoming and outgoing visitation patterns and to keep track of residents and visitors
- To gather data on visitor numbers and activities in order to manage natural and built environments in a sustainable way
- To quantify visitor numbers and establish visitor patterns for planning and management purposes
- Data on visitor numbers to provide and maintain infrastructure and public facilities to support both local communities and visitors
- To know about expenditure patterns to regulate or stimulate investment

- Data to determine associated taxes or to implement legislation and statutory requirements to maintain standards of construction and/ or quality of life for residents or tourists
- To assess social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts
- To determine the effectiveness of overseas advertising and promotional campaigns.

3.6 Tourists: information/ data requirements relating to tourists include:

- Developing typologies in association with market segmentations and psychometric profiles
- Finding out and understanding tourists' motivations, to assist in providing quality tourist experiences, appropriate amenities, facilities and services, planning, development and maintenance of tourism spaces, and marketing campaigns
- Obtaining information/ data on socioeconomic backgrounds, generating areas, expectations, values and attitudes.

3.7 The community: there are two categories of research areas arisen in the community sector:

- Research associated with community participation in tourism planning and development
- Research to establish social and cultural impacts

The possible research topics in regard to the community sector can be about the following:

- The identification of community attitudes to development
- The assessment of social, cultural, environmental and economic impacts and development of strategies for sustainable tourism development
- Implementation or review of legislative requirements and policy development (re) formation

3.8 The environment

- Environmental audits
- The identification of preservation and conservation values
- The conduct of environmental impact assessments
- The monitoring of environmental impacts and restoration strategies

- The identification of issues and the subsequent development of legislative requirements and policy development
- The determination of carrying capacities, limits of acceptable change and recreational and tourism opportunity spectra
- Economic values such as use values associated with the environment
- The identification and monitoring of attitudes to user- pays pricing strategies

3.9 *Tourism and hospitality operators and companies*

- Information about visitor needs and wants in order to provide better services, facilities or amenities
- Data/ information to maintain or improve market share
- Data/ information in regard to the performance of their tourism operations in order to increase efficiencies and profits

Systematically, there are three key stages in the systematic approach to topic selection:

- (1) Initiating the idea (s)
- (2) Linking your idea (s) to other academic studies
- (3) Thinking about the practical implementations—is the study feasible?

To explain more, the following is ways to do in meeting the three key stages above.

- (1) Ask yourself what sector you are interested in. In many cases, a research topic is selected based on contemporary issues (issues currently talked about or of public interest).
- (2) Try to scope into an area or function (if you cannot think of any in this stage, studying previous studies first will help you get idea)
- (3) Ask what problem (s) is within that area.
- (4) Ask yourself what you would like to know or what answer you would like to find in this area.
- (5) Find other studies (previous studies) in the area you are interested—find what they found and what they suggested, and refine your topic.

Learning Activities and Medias

- Lecturer opens discussions and gives an introductory lecture.
- The lecturer applies problem-based learning by eliciting students' perspectives about tourism issues for further discussions for guiding the students for selecting their own research topic.
- Homework: Individual students think of possible topic with objectives from home, and bring it to the classroom next week for consulting with the lecturer. Here, the lecture tells the students to search for the literature, which can help them broaden their idea.