Unit2 Selecting a Topic

Topic

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

Objectives

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

Interest, motivations and expectations

- Topics may arise from the following:

  - attending lecture programs, seminar discussions
  - your reading
  - a presentation by a guest speaker which inspires your imagination
  - Personal connections with particular study area Personal interest is very important
  - ease of access to data or how much easy or difficult will be to get data.
  - cost factors
  - local knowledge

Interests and skills with access to information

- Different topics have different appropriate methods to get data.
- High degree of public confrontation
- Face-to-face data collection
- Collecting data from persons who are in positions that is not easy to access such as those in high position
- Remote sites/ sites not easily accessible
- Study site selection affect financial and time costs
- Easy to find relevant past studies during your literature review?

Structured and systematic approach to selecting a topic

- Tourism attractions

- Transport sector

- The hospitality sector

- Tourism bodies

- Government

- Tourists

- The community

- The environment

- Tourism and hospitality operators and companies

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

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/

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

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

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.

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.

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 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

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

*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
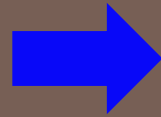
Systematically select a research topic
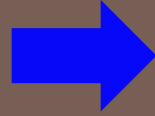
➡ ❑ **Initiating the idea (s)**
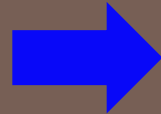
➡ ❑ **Linking your idea (s) to other academic studies**

➡ ❑ **Thinking about the practical implementations—is the study feasible?**

Box 3.2 Sketching possible dissertation topics on tourist behaviour

- Young British tourists and their holiday behaviour.
  This could look at whether there are patterns of excessive, anti-social behaviour among young holidaymakers in British seaside resorts as media reports suggest.
- Motivations of backpacker tourists.
  This could be developed around the motivation and decision-making processes of potential backpackers in the UK, not from the UK.
- Group decision making and holiday behaviour among young people.
  Most tourist behaviour studies focus on the individual but many young people travel in groups, so this dissertation might look at behaviour in this different unit of analysis.
- Overseas students as tourists.
  We know many students study overseas these days but less is known about where they spend time when they are not studying and how they weave their trips into their study programmes.
- People with disabilities and access to holidays.
  This could focus on access in terms of pre-trip behaviour along with barriers to access.

Box 3.3 Thinking through your topic selection

From the list of topics in Box 3.2, I've decided to develop ideas around the neglected area of disability and access to holidays. So far this leads me to two possible projects.

EITHER

Option 1

The study of how people with disabilities make decisions about holidays. This would involve focusing on the pre-trip stage. It could cover how promotion and marketing of holidays includes or excludes the disabled.

OR

Option 2

An examination of the meaning of holidays for people with disability. This would involve a more general study of access to holidays. It could allow me to develop a much deeper understanding of the barriers to holiday-making and -taking.

I'm going to go with the second option because it gives me greater scope to develop a topic. I could research this topic by means of a questionnaire or, better, by interviewing people. Perhaps better still might be to develop a mixed methods approach?

Source: authors

Box 3.4 Example aims and objectives for a potential dissertation topic
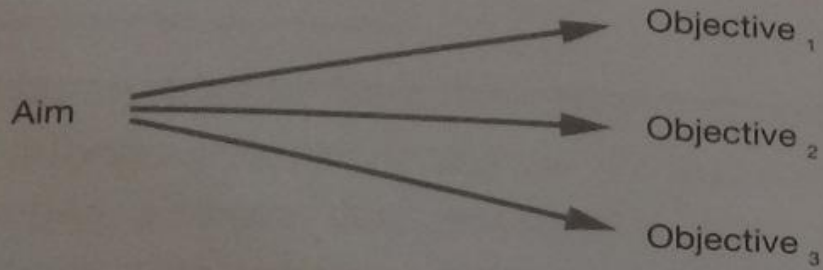
Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between disability and holiday-making in the United Kingdom.

This will be researched by the following objectives:

Objectives

1. To examine the levels of participation and exclusion of people with disabilities in holiday-taking. This will research the nature and type of holidays taken by people with different types of disability as well as the relative level of exclusion.

2. To investigate the nature of holiday decision making by people with disabilities in terms of perceived and actual barriers. This will also include how problems of access impact on patterns of behaviour while on holiday.

3. To understand the meaning of holidays to people with disabilities and their families. This will draw on ideas researched with disadvantaged families. In the process, it will help to construct a more detailed picture of the importance and roles of holidays to this group.

Source: authors

a) Aims and objectives

Aim → Objective $_1$

Aim → Objective $_2$

Aim → Objective $_3$

b) Aims, objectives and research questions

Aim → Objective $_1$ → Research Question $_i$

Objective $_1$ → Research Question $_{ii}$

Objective $_1$ → Research Question $_{iii}$

Aim → Objective $_2$ → Research Question $_{iv}$

Aim → Objective $_3$ → Research Question $_v$

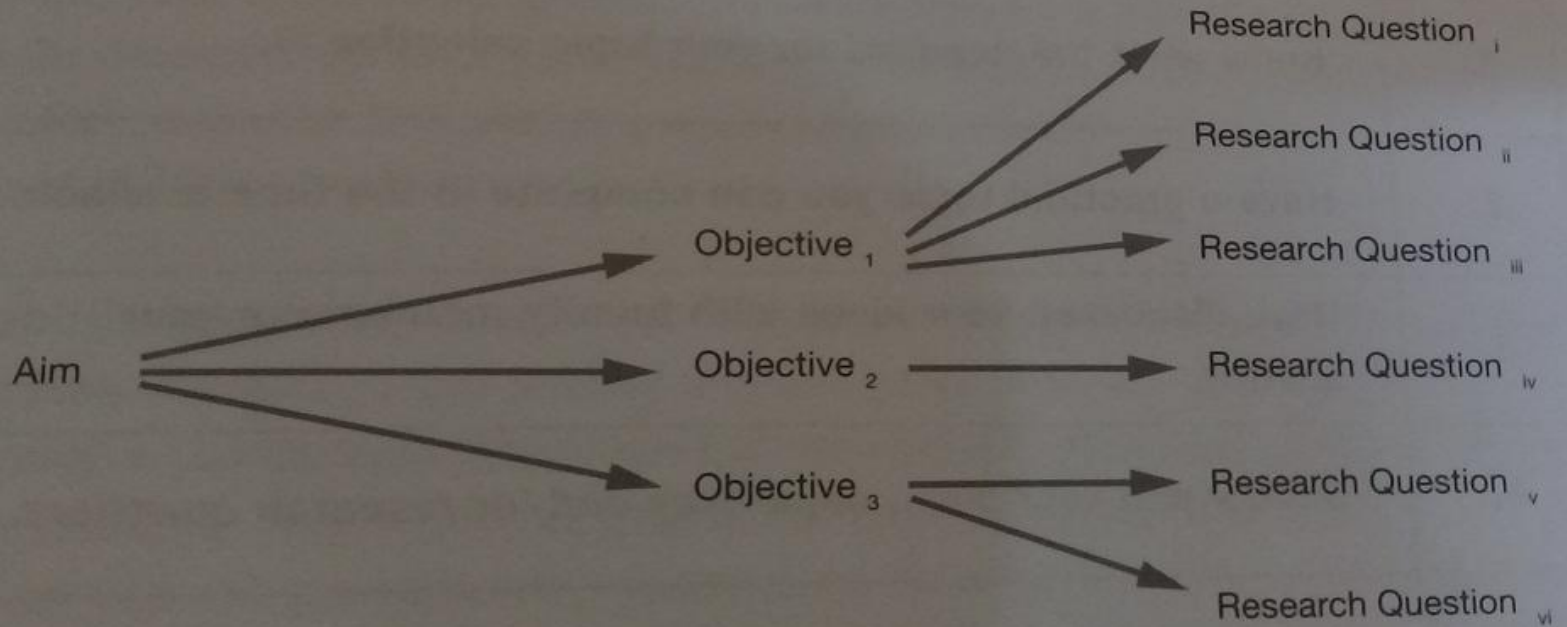Objective $_3$ → Research Question $_{vi}$

Figure 3.1 The connections between aims, objectives and research questions

Source: authors

□ 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.

Searching for the literature can help broaden your ideas.