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DREAM®trip: making data bigger

For half a century tourism statistics in the UK have been founded in the International Passenger Survey, IPS and the Great Britain Tourism Survey (formerly UKTS). . Face-face interviews with 250 000 and 120 000 people annually provide a base for many national policy purposes, for Tourism Satellite Accounts, and for other development and research. These core surveys provide a broad assessment of the geography of tourism, and follow national trends on a quarterly basis.

But local authorities, destination managers and tourism operators crave more local and immediate information, and national and regional policy demands a richer description of the visitor economy.

This paper reports on the first year of the three-year DREAM®trip project to meet these needs and bridge this gap. DREAM®trip aims to use the core surveys as a framework to integrate monitoring of the local visitor economy at community and destination level on a monthly basis into a rigorous national and social accounting framework.

Project partners include the majority of Scottish local authorities, national parks, the national tourist board (Visit Scotland) and the Scottish Government as sponsors. The authors, from a University's tourism institute and a knowledge-based SME, are undertaking the research.

The aim is to combine an eclectic approach to statistical 'modelling down' with rigorous consistency through a national accounting framework. The paper shows how each reinforces the other, and the eclectic models provide many prototypes for experimentation and use elsewhere, while the framework suggesting unifying approaches to the collection, processing and presentation of tourism economic data.

We will address:

Data quality issues: challenging new issues with the established surveys, and quantifying some methodological disruptions undergone as social behaviour and survey technology have evolved since 1960.

Geographical disaggregation: quantifications of destination attractiveness (to visitors and attraction-entrepreneurs), gravity models, weather statistics, physical features like mountains forests and lochs, the built environment, community and commercial features and accommodation parameters.

Temporal disaggregation: modern 'nowcasting' techniques to bring figures up to 'last month', and incorporate rapidly-available tourism correlates like attendance at visitor attractions, weather, and traffic by air, sea and road. Integration within an economic model offers demand determinants like

traveller income and relative international prices, and also the benefit from focusing wider economic commentary on the tourism-relevant aspects.

The *essential* integrative role of a consistent social accounting framework, in the tradition established by Richard Stone for the UN System of National Accounts - leading, for example, to rapid and continuous production of TSAs.

Information management issues and computer implementation through OLAP, Online Analytical Processing.

Note to organisers: in support of and in addition to, the paper itself we will be glad to provide summaries, in the form of research 'posters' or brief notes, on the individual models used, and we would hope that these would be of use to researchers elsewhere.

Some of us would hope to be at the Prague meeting, at least briefly, and would be glad to discuss any issues (or anything else to do with our project!) with the organisers there.