SESSION I: DEVELOPING NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF TOURISM STATISTICS

Chair
Ms. Haishan Fu
Officer-in-Charge, Statistics Division
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Ms. Haishan Fu is the Officer-in-Charge of the Statistics Division of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and Chief of its Statistics Development and Analysis Section. Previously, she had held positions as Chief of Statistics of the Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Senior Research Associate at the Guttmacher Institute in New York and Population Affairs Officer at the United Nations Population Division. She had also worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the Population Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania and Research Collaborator at the Office of Population Research, Princeton University. She holds a doctoral degree in Demography from Princeton University and a bachelor degree in Economics from Peking University.

Keynote speaker
Mr. Paul Cheung
Director, United Nations Statistics Division
Professor Paul Cheung, a national of Singapore, is the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

In this role, he facilitates the development of the global statistical system and coordinates the work of the United Nations Statistical Commission. He oversees a programme of work that includes the development of international statistical standards, the dissemination of global statistical data, the provision of technical advice to member states in the development of national statistical systems, the coordination of international statistical activities, and the delivery of programme support to the UN System on all statistical matters. Prior to his appointment, Professor Cheung has served as Chief Statistician of the Government of Singapore (1991-2004). In this role, he has been the National Statistical Coordinator as well as the Chief Executive of the Singapore Department of Statistics.

Born in Hong Kong, Professor Cheung received his education in Singapore and the United States. He did postgraduate work at the East-West Center, Hawaii, and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He received his PhD in 1983 from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA. He has taught at the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University for many years since graduation on full or part-time basis.

Professor Cheung served as President of the International Association of Official Statistics, (2001-2003). He was the past Chairman of the Governing Board, Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific (UN-SIAP), the Chair of the UNESCAP Committee on Statistics, as well as Chairman of the Regional Advisory Board of the Asian Development Bank's International Comparison Program for Asia and the Pacific.

Professor Cheung is well known in the Asia and the Pacific region for his pioneering research in the fields of manpower, population, social planning and official statistics. He has written widely in his areas of research.

He has received the following national and professional awards: The Von Neumann-Spallart Medal awarded by the International Institute of Statistics (1999); The Public Administration Medal (Gold) ‘Pingat Pentadibiran Awam’ awarded by the President of the Republic of Singapore (2001); The Honorary Doctorate Degree by the National University of Mongolia (2008).
Keynote speaker
Mr. Antonio Massieu

Chief, Department of Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)
World Tourism Organization

Born in the Canary Islands, Mr. Massieu studied economics in Madrid, before joining the “Instituto de Estudios Turísticos” (Institute for Tourism Studies).

As Vice-Director of the Spanish Institute for Tourism Studies, he helped develop and launch various new systems of measuring tourist flows, among which Frontur –based on visitor movements across the country’s borders- and Familitur –which studies the domestic tourism market-. He also began the first steps towards creating a Tourism Satellite Account for Spain. He worked with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) during two years as Chairman of the statistics Steering Committee, in his capacity of delegate from Spain.

Mr. Massieu began to work in the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in May 1999 as Chief of the Department of Statistics and Economic Measurement of Tourism and his immediate goals were to develop support systems for member countries and to expand cooperation with other leading organizations in the industry. Following the World Conference on the Measurement of the Economic Impact of Tourism in June 1999, he was deeply involved in gaining the United Nations approval for the Tourism Satellite Account methodology. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) adopted this document in March/April 2000 with the title: "Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework". An updated version of the TSA:RMF was approved in February 2008.

Keynote session I “DEVELOPING NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF TOURISM STATISTICS”

Abstract:

In its Thirty-ninth Session, the United Nations Statistical Commission approved the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 after an intensive revision process of the 1993 Recommendations on Tourism Statistics which included different initiatives: (a) the creation and working of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Tourism Statistics, (b) the implementation of the World Tourism Organization electronic forum, (c) the conducting of the International Workshop on Tourism Statistics, (d) the organization of dedicated meetings of the World Tourism Organization Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account, (e) a meeting of the United Nations Expert Group to review and endorse the provisional draft of the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 and (f) the worldwide consultation with National Statistical Offices and National Tourism Administrations.

The International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 update the 1993 version in a number of important ways and its approval has given way to a gradual implementation. The development of national Systems of Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Accounts is quickly gaining prominence on the agendas of many countries and an increased number of World Tourism Organization Member States have expressed their desire to receive training in the development and management of Tourism Satellite Accounts. For this purpose, a Statistical Capacity Building Programme prototype has been initiated that involves intensive and highly technical training to national officials. To set up such a Programme, the support and cooperation has been found of Austria and South Africa that each act as a hub for the participation of 12 European and 13 African countries. The Programme will be expanded to the Middle East and Asia during 2009. In addition to these initiatives, the United Nations Statistics Division and World Tourism Organization will join efforts to complement the Statistical Capacity Building Programme with sub-regional Seminars.

The System of Tourism Statistics should be understood as that part of the National Statistical System providing reliable, consistent and appropriate statistical information on the socio-economic aspects related to tourism, integrated within all the economic and social statistics related to other fields, and at different territorial levels. The International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008, along with the Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008, should be used as the reference in order to harmonize, coordinate and integrate the available tourism statistical information.
Panellist
Mr. Mohammed Al-Ahmed

General Director, Center of Tourism, Information and Research (MAS)
Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities

No biography is available
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Panellist
Mr. Leigh Harry

Chief Executive of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

In 1989 Leigh moved into the business events industry where he has overseen the opening of what was then the World Congress Centre Melbourne followed by the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. His efforts over the years have seen the combined venues evolve into an award winning, integrated facility with a strong and committed workforce.

Under Leigh’s leadership, the MCEC has won a number of national and international awards for its services and facilities, including:

- ‘World’s Best Convention Centre’ by the Association Internationale des Palais de Congres (AIPC)
- Best Purpose Built Convention and Exhibition Centre in Australia
- ‘Best Catering/Banqueting’ by the Meetings Industry Association of Australia;
- Best Meeting Venue and Best Venue without Accommodation (Quorum Magazine Readers’ Choice)

Over the last few years, Leigh has been working with the State Government and the Plenary Group on building and delivering a new world leading 6 star green star 5000 seat international convention centre integrated with the Melbourne Exhibition Centre and a $1 billion commercial development on South Wharf scheduled to open in mid 2009.

In 2008 Leigh was reelected for a second term as World President of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) the leading global association for the international meetings industry.

In January 2009, Leigh became President of the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC). JMIC is a forum for the exchange of information and perspectives amongst international associations engaged in various aspects of the Meetings Industry.

As well, he is Deputy Chairman of the Melbourne Convention and Visitors Bureau; member, Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) and the Tourism Australia Business Events Industry Advisory Panel and is also a Past National President of the MEA.

Abstract:

The World Tourism Organisation has been working in partnership with ICCA, MPI and Reed Travel Exhibitions for a number of years to produce a standard model for measuring the economic impact of the meetings industry. Thanks to a generous donation by MPI Foundation, Canada was able to jump ahead of this process and launch a new statistical model which is compatible with the UNWTO approach.
Panellist  
Mr. Peter Laimer  

Deputy Director, Directorate Spatial Statistics, Statistics Austria

After finishing two University Courses related to Export and Tourism at the University of Economics Vienna 1990 and the study in Geography at the University of Vienna in June 1992, Mr. Laimer have been started working at Statistics Austria in May 1993 and since 1998 he is responsible for the official “Tourism and Travel Statistics” (i.e. Tourism Satellite Accounts, Travel Balance of Payments).

Mr. Laimer is presently Deputy Director of the Directorate “Spatial Statistics” at Statistics Austria, which involves apart from Tourism and Travel Statistics, Motor Vehicles Registration Statistics, Road Safety Statistics, Environmental and Energy Statistics and Agriculture and Forestry Statistics.

Since mid 1990ies he is Austrian delegate of several Working Groups and Task Forces at EUROSTAT, OECD and UN/UNWTO, 1999-2003 he was/is participating as a technical expert in the EUROSTAT MedTour-program (MedStat I) related tourism statistics (Jordan; doing TES-courses), continuing the work within MedStat II since 2007 (Lebanon; in particular related Tourism Satellite Accounts).

Between 2000 and 2002 Mr. Laimer was working as a consultant on methodological issues related to “Tourism Statistics” and “Tourism Satellite Accounts” (TSA) for EUROSTAT (i.e. co-author of the “European Implementation Manual on TSA”). Since 2008 he is working as a consultant for the European project 2008/2009 related TSA.

Since 2004 Mr. Laimer is doing consultancies in several countries (i.e. Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Taiwan, Cyprus) related Tourism Statistics in general and Tourism Satellite Accounts in particular.

Between 2001 and 2006 he was chairman of the “Statistical Working Party” of the OECD Tourism Committee; since 2006 he is “statistics expert” of the OECD Tourism Committee.

Since 2000 Mr. Laimer is teaching at the University of Linz (University Course in Tourism Management) and at the Bachelor's Programme in Tourism Management in Vienna, giving regular lectures in Statistics with particular stress on tourism.

Since 2003 he is member of the “International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism” (AIEST).

Abstract:

The broad aim when analyzing time series data is the recognition of significant changes in the direction and level of economic activity. In the field of tourism statistics many countries have a recurring seasonal pattern in their time series that obscures the underlying behavior of the series. “… seasons exert an unquestionable influence on economic and social activity.”

This presentation is aimed at improving the interpretation of tourism related figures by explaining the concept of time series adjustment by answering the following three questions:

1. WHY is adjustment necessary?
2. WHAT do the adjusted results tell us?
3. HOW can the data be adjusted?

The most important question to pose when considering time series adjustment is whether there is a need to adjust figures. - The time series of nights spent in Austria illustrates, as an example, that seasonality is a significant factor in the explanation of fluctuations. The time series shows a strong seasonal pattern. The practical problem with such time series is that they are difficult to interpret and therefore often misinterpreted.

Selected examples will show that due to seasonal fluctuations, month-to-month comparisons often used in practice are not meaningful. In the case of Austria e.g. it does not make sense, for example, to compare the change between the month September and August since there will always be a decrease. It is often overseen that the seasonal effects may be masking the true movements. In order to overcome this problem same-month-year-ago comparisons are often used as an attempt to eliminate the seasonal variations by only comparing months with the assumed same seasonality. But that approach ignores what had been going on in the intervening eleven months, which can be a long time in a dynamic sector like tourism.

Adjustment of the time series can help to make more meaningful comparisons with the previous month’s data or with the data from the same month in the previous year. The basis for time series adjustment is the decomposition model,
with the subjacent hypothesis, that a time series observation can, due to varying, not overlapping causes, be broken down into a number of independent, not directly observable components. These components are the long-term trend (reflects general direction of the time series), the cycle (with a period length of more than one year), the seasonal (cyclical movement within a year) and calendar component (calendar irregularities) and the irregular component. The irregular component values are unpredictable as regards timing, impact and duration. It can occur from a combination of sampling error, non-sampling error, unseasonable weather, natural disasters, strikes, etc.) Random fluctuations are the main cause of the irregular component.

The idea of adjustment is to break up the studied series into the distinct components in order to better understand its evolution (by analyzing the released trend).

With the help of examples comparing original and adjusted data (nights spent in Austria), the benefits of using time series adjustments as analytical tools become obvious:

- The examples show that one month can be compared to the previous month meaningfully, for example by removing the regular and predictable seasonal fluctuations and calendar irregularities that occur. Changes from the normal patterns are revealed in the adjusted data series. Also meaningful same-month-year-ago comparisons can be made, when using calendar adjusted data.

- Comparing the original and the adjusted data illustrate the difference between adjusted and not adjusted data and how the use of adjusted data can help to avoid misunderstandings in the interpretation of tourism related data in practice. - Adjustments should therefore be done on a routine basis to identify trends that are happening regardless of, for example the season.

Several methods were developed over the years to adjust time series. The methods in use range from simple to very sophisticated. With a very simple procedure (adjustment with factors) it can be proven that simple methods for seasonal adjustments can even be calculated on a calculator without the need for sophisticated expertise. But there are, of course, more sophisticated models available that take into account a lot more information and have advantages over less sophisticated methods.

Besides technical challenges like finding the right method to adjust time series data - the adequacy of the model is significant in order to produce an adjusted series of quality – there are also some other challenges:

- First of all it should not be forgotten that although the adjusted series make it possible to better understand the fundamental trend-cycle of a series, the seasonally adjusted series always contains the irregular component.

- It should also be kept in mind that many factors influence tourism (weather, political factors, economic factors, social factors, health factors, technology factors as well as marketing, mega events, foreign holidays, terrorist attacks, …) and that tourist consumption can respond relatively easily and quickly to any influences.

- But the practical challenges more important at this stage: There is the risk of losing people’s attention with all the figures.) People could get confused.

- Another issue could be the misuse of the data: People could start to use the data that better fits them.

In conclusion it can be said that time series adjustment is a useful and relevant tool to adapt and react in a more enlightened way to the information given by time series. The development of sophisticated methods of seasonal adjustment makes it possible nowadays to overcome the possibilities of mistaken interpretations.

Getting the data right with the help of adjustment is important knowing more what is happening in tourism, because decisions are made using data that is produced. Getting a clear understanding of developments is vital to sound decision-making. People need to have confidence in the figures, so it is important to make sure the users understand the adjustments.

The understanding of underlying forces and structure that produced the observed data is therefore the first step towards forecasting.

"Time spent understanding the seasonal adjustment procedure is time well spent"