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Mirror statistics:
Checking the consistency of European
statistics on flows of international
tourism



Source

- “Measuring European Intra-regional
Tourism Flows”

Enzo Paci Papers on Measuring the
Economic Significance of Tourism

Volume 4 2004

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First general comments

The production of statistical data and of TSA's at a national level, using sources of information proper to each country, will not necessarily lead to a general consistency of intra countries flows, even if methodologies seem to be globally consistent.

This lack of consistency is particularly serious in the case of tourism, as intra European movements make most of international tourism. An analysis of tourism flows and tourism impacts at this level will, as a consequence, require a more decisive move towards not only harmonization, but also the sharing of data, and why not, the development of common statistical procedures at land borders, useful at both sides of it.

The case of Europe can also be applied to Africa, if land borders are also included.



Mirror statistics - Definition

- Mirror statistics is a statistical procedure that has been proposed in order to increase the quality of the data regarding basically international statistics. It takes into consideration the fact that
 - an import of a country is necessarily the export of another,
 - that an incoming flow of foreign investment necessarily corresponds to an outgoing flow of foreign investment,
 - that an outbound visitor for country A is necessarily an inbound visitor for the country visited, etc.
- Because of this embodied dual perspective of all international transactions, it should be possible to review all the international transactions involving a pair of countries, compare the data and their corresponding metadata, so that each country could improve its national picture, and at the same time improve the international comparability of data with that of any other country that have these data in common.



Desirable Coverage of the reconciliation of flows of international visitors through mirror statistics

- Flows of visitors
- Number of overnight stays
- Stays in hotels and other types of collective accommodation
- Arrivals by means of transport

Recommendation: work at a detailed level and then add up



Advantages of partner country data

- Can improve the quality of statistics as it allows the identification, explanation and correction of discrepancies;
- In some cases, it may represent the only available option to assess figures about specific aspects
- The source is inexpensive



The drawbacks of partner country data

- Comparability of data exchange can be unsatisfactory due to lack of harmonization of methodologies, detail and accuracy;
- The compiler has no control over the characteristics of the partner countries data collection system (scope, coverage, quality of the data, timeliness, periodicity);
- Require the co-operation among countries, in order to work efficiently; the exchange should be carried out on a regular basis, through an agreed standard procedure



Difficulties associated with mirror statistics

- Besides obstacles associated with differences in scope and methodology;
 - Lack of homogeneity of the definition of a trip makes it difficult to identify the same unit from the point of view of outbound tourism (a round trip) and that of inbound tourism (actually, the leg of a roundtrip that has to do with the country of reference);
 - The trip considered implicitly as instantaneous: duration of absence from usual environment is not equal to duration of stay at destination

Travelling from point p in country A to point d in country C might include crossing country B and staying overnight: From the point of view of country A, only point d and country C will be mentioned as destination...



Mirror statistics in Europe: two cases

	FRANCE				
	Inbound Tourism Flows				
	Arrivals (1)		Trips (2)	Travellers lodged in accommodation establishments (3)	
	Thousands	% World	Thousands	Thousands	% World
TOTAL	75,202	100.0		42,869	100.0
EU-15	61,389	81.6	21,969	29,814	69.5
REST OF EUROPE *	5,102	6.8		2,858	6.2
REST OF THE WORLD	8,711	11.6		10,397	24.3

	GERMANY				
	Inbound Tourism Flows				
	Arrivals (1)		Trips (2)	Travellers lodged in accommodation establishments (3) (4)	
	Thousands	% World	Thousands	Thousands	% World
TOTAL	17,861	100.0		17,844	100.0
EU-15	10,098	56.5	7,954	10,089	56.5
REST OF EUROPE *	2,997	16.8		2,863	16.0
REST OF THE WORLD	4,768	26.7		4,892	27.4

