Sources of information for the measurement of international travelers account of the balance of payments, the case of Mexico

I. Introduction

The Central Bank of Mexico is the institution responsible for compiling the statistics of the balance of payments in Mexico. To do this, it follows the recommendations and criteria outlined in the Balance of Payments Manual of the International Monetary Fund.

However, it is important to say that for the measurement of various accounts that comprise the balance of payments, the Central Bank of Mexico uses information generated by itself, as well as information from other government institutions, private companies and even by foreign institutions and companies. Therefore, we have established working groups to agree on methodological aspects and to integrate the information required in each case.

I. Introduction

For the calculation of international travelers there is a specialized technical committee composed by the main government institutions that have an interest in this subject, among which is the Ministry of Tourism, the National Migration Institute, the National Institute of Statistics and the Bank of Mexico, among others.

In particular, international travelers in Mexico is one of the main components of international trade in services, hence we have developed an important set of surveys, in order to calculate the diferent flows and expenses.

II. Definitions

In Mexico there are three types of international travelers clearly identified: non-border tourists, border travelers and cruises travelers. The average expenses of these three groups present significant differences, which are due to their different natures. Therefore, specific methodologies have been developed to measure the expenses of each type of travelers.

Non border tourists: travelers who visit the interior of the country.

Border travelers: Travelers living abroad visiting the border area. They can stay for a few hours or days in the border cities. As a convention in Mexico, the traveler who remain overnight is considered as a border tourist and the same-day traveler is named excursionist.
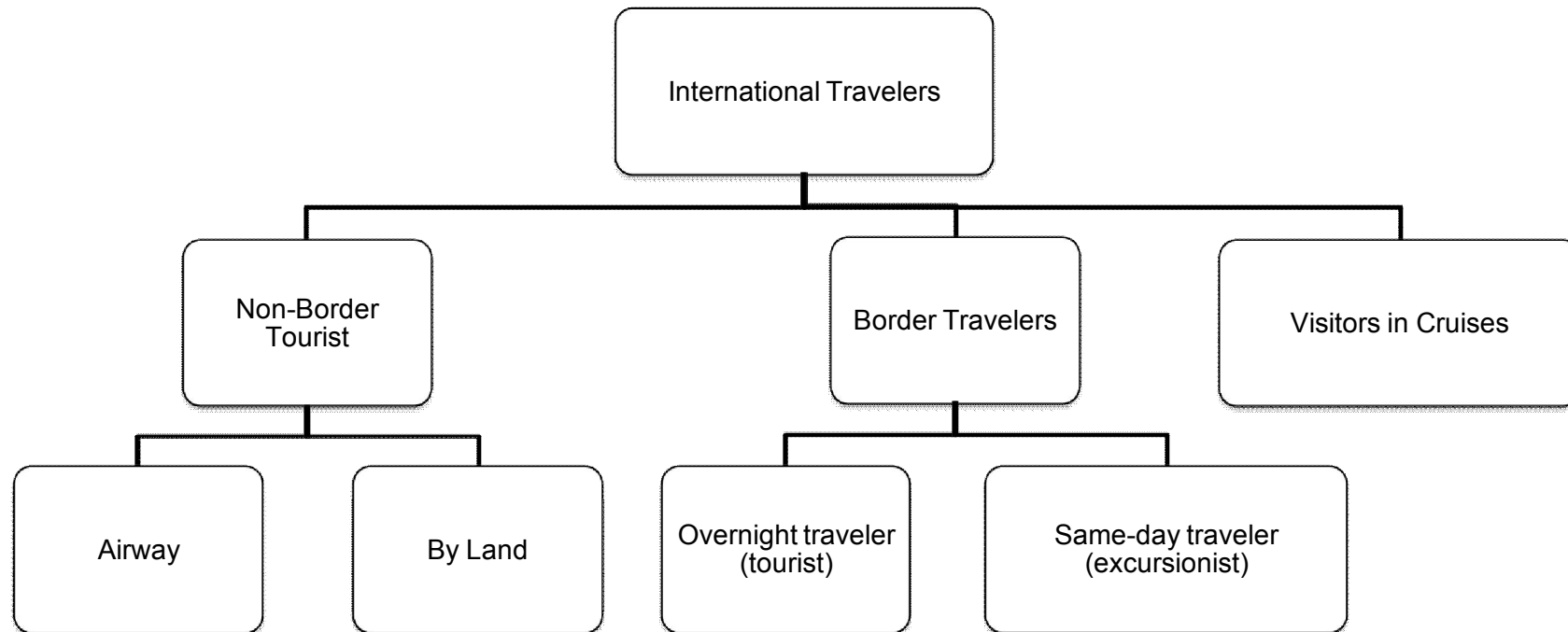
Travelers in cruises: The traveler who visit seaports, without visiting the interior of the country nor remaining overnight.

II. Definitions

For the measurement of the income and the expenses of international travelers is required information regarding the number of international travelers and their average expenses, for each type of traveler.

With this aim, Bank of Mexico conducts a set of surveys to the three types of travelers, and, in combination with migration data that are reported by the National Migration Institute, revenues and expenditures by travelers are calculated, for each of its components. The data are estimated according to the following structure by type of traveler:

II. Definitions

III. Sources of Information

This section presents the sources of information that the Bank of Mexico uses to measure the travelers account.

Amount of non-border tourist:

Tourists by air*. Official data is obtained from the National Migration Institute. The information is about the number of travelers living abroad who visit Mexico, classified by migration category and city of entrance.*

Tourist by land*. Because the Mexican tourists residing abroad are not fully documented by the immigration authorities of the country, it is necessary to get additional information besides the data provided by the National Institute of Migration. Expanders are calculated from monthly surveys to tourist by land conducted by the Bank of Mexico.*

III. Sources of Information

Average spending of non-border tourists: Surveys designed to estimate the average expenditure of tourists. This surveys are conducted at major airports and border cities. Each month about 7,000 surveys are applied with the objective of compile international tourism information.

III. Sources of Information

Northern Border

Number of Travelers:

Because there are no immigration records that reveal the number of travels that occur in the northern border, the Central Bank of Mexico makes estimates on the number of pedestrians and car travelers who cross the border and remain in the border area. To calculate these flows, the Bank carries out an estimation consistent of two stages: i) **Census**: intensive counts in a given week of the year, which take place in different cities, along the days by type of travelers (pedestrians and vehicles), and ii) **Surveys**: less intensive measurements, along the months.

Intensive counts are useful to identify the size of the universe of travels that occur in every moment, every city, every day of the week and for each type of travel. The censo is apply in a week considered "normal", it means that this week does not includ holidays or atypical events, such as election days or vacations..

III. Sources of Information

Continuous monthly measurements are used as a sample from the universe. Therefore, the results of continuous measurements are extrapolated to the relevant universe. The amount of border travelers, their expenses and their average expenditure are published monthly.

The census is conducted every two years, the last was held in 2012 and the next one is scheduled for the next in 2014. This periodicity may change if we consider that the presence of certain factors could affect the quality of the statistics.

These surveys are conducted in 10 cities that represent about 90 percent of all border travels on the northern border. Due to there are more border crossing points that occur in cities with smaller flows of people, this amount of travels is estimated using information from the selected cities with similar size.

III. Sources of Information

In the census are obtained for each city, for each time and for each day of the week, information about the following:

- ✓ **Number of pedestrians entering the country.**
- ✓ **Percentage of pedestrians residents in Mexico.**
- ✓ **Percentage of pedestrians living abroad.**
- ✓ **Number of cars entering the country.**
- ✓ **Percentage of cars with Mexican license plate.**
- ✓ **Percentage of cars with foreign license plate.**
- ✓ **Percentage of cars with Mexico residents and foreign license plate.**
- ✓ **Percentage of cars with foreign residents and foreign license plate.**
- ✓ **Average people per vehicle with Mexican license plate.**
- ✓ **Average people per car with foreign license plates.**

III. Sources of Information

Average Expense of Border Travelers:

Around 9,500 monthly surveys are conducted with the main objective of know the characteristics of the border travelers, with emphasis in the average expenditure of these travelers.

In addition to the average expenditure, with the survey can be identified how many travelers who remain overnight, and other characteristics such as the purpose of the trip, the group size, etc.

III. Sources of Information

Southern Border

Number of Travelers:

- *The information of the number of travelers living abroad who visit the southern border area is obtained from official figures from the National Institute of Migration.*

Average expenditure:

- *A census is conducted in one week, with the aim of estimate the average expenditure of cross-border travelers, and the percentage of those travelers who remain in the country.*

III. Sources of Information

Cruise Visitors:

Number of Visitors:

The number of cruise travelers is obtained from official figures from the National Institute of Migration regarding the amount of travelers who land in each seaport.

Average expenditure of Cruise Visitors:

The average expenditure of these travelers are estimated from surveys conducted in seaports one week every two years