A new approach to measuring travel services in New Zealand

Our experience with moving to an online survey

October 2013
Outline

- Why move to an online survey?
- Online versus face to face
- Latest update on the project
- The importance of communicating changes
Issues with the old methodology

- Small sample size
  - Large sampling errors, particularly for country data
- Excludes business lounge travellers, cruise ship passengers, and travellers departing from Queenstown airport
- Students included in sample – spending patterns distort overall picture
  - Statistics NZ removes student data from IVS anyway
Issues with the old methodology

- Increasing difficulty in accessing gate lounges
  - Security changes for flights leaving for North America
- Increasing cost of conducting face to face interviews
  - Increasing the sample size becomes more expensive
Online survey versus face to face

- Move to random sampling after airport security
  - Business lounge users now eligible to be selected
  - Students removed from sample

- Population increased to 10,000 annually

- Queenstown travellers now sampled

- Shorter questionnaire

- Expenditure collected by method
  - By cash, credit card, debit card etc.
  - Rather than by item, – food, accommodation, transport etc.
Pilot survey outcome

- Collecting email addresses
  - Almost every eligible traveller approached provided and email address (just under 95%)

- Response rates
  - Expected around 30% - achieved over 40%
  - Almost all countries and age groups
    - Some targeting of specific countries may still be required
Current project stage

- Dual run data for first six months of the year analysed and used for backcasting
- Paired data investigated – saw the increase that we expected from the online version
- Final decision on length of revision
  - Going back to the June 1982 quarter – exchange rate control data used for travel credits prior to this
  - Tourism data will be revised back to 1997 only
- Next step: continue communication
Communicating to stakeholders

- Large revisions may be perceived negatively by data users
  - Very important to manage perceptions
- Cross-government approach
- Revisions paper published 29 August
  - Outlining potential impacts
- Question and answer sessions with stakeholders
  - We want to be as transparent as possible
Communicating to stakeholders

- Revisions have wider macro-economic implications, and there is an element of re-writing economic history.

1. Increase exports of travel in the Balance of Payments
2. Decreases Household Consumption Expenditure in the National Accounts
3. Increases Household Saving in the National Accounts (as households are spending less, and their income doesn’t change)
Further reading

Our revisions paper can be found here if you’re interested in any further detail: