International Visitor Survey review 2018

Progress report 2

This is the second progress report of the International Visitor Survey (IVS), initiated by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

Engagement

During March 2018, we held engagement meetings with MBIE. These provided an in-depth view of MBIE's policy information needs, MBIE's role in the survey process, and their views about of the survey. We also liaised with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade by email.

Other meetings:

- 7 March, with Tourism Industry Aotearoa and Regional Tourism Organisations NZ.
- 9 March, with Stats NZ stakeholders and service providers representing national accounts, population, and statistical methods units at Stats NZ.
- 12 March the team travelled to Auckland to meet with Tourism NZ and Kantar TNS. We also observed and questioned Kantar interviewers while recruiting IVS respondents at Auckland International Airport.
- 13 March, at his request, we met with a former manager of the IVS from 2006 to 2012.
- 20 March, met with the Department of Conservation
- 26 March, met with the Treasury and Reserve Bank, on 26 March.

Progress

Note: We report progress against the following 11 scope items included in the review's terms of reference, available from IVS 2018 review.

1. Confirm the design criteria and key customers ensuring that the design criteria are understood by everyone involved.

Design documentation has been collected and reviewed.

Discussions with stakeholders reveal differing levels of understanding of the design criteria and expectation of the output.

2. Examine how other countries estimate their IVS expenditure and the confidence levels achieve.

The 22 February Assurance Group's meeting agreed that the strand on other countries equivalents of the IVS (approach to estimation of tourist expenditure and confidence levels) should cover Australia, Canada, the UK, Singapore, and Ireland. Contacts in these agencies have been emailed, asking for existing documentation on the sources of data for tourism expenditure and how it is collected, as well as documentation on calculation of confidence levels. To date initial responses have been received from Ireland and the UK.

3. Review the effectiveness of the processes within collection, mode of collection, processing, and analysis systems, and the quality of the IVS data and the resultant statistics, to ensure their fitness for purpose. This will include clarification of roles and responsibilities, and expectations with respect to the IVS.

We observed respondent recruitment at Auckland International Airport and discussed data processing and analysis with both Kantar, MBIE, and Stats NZ. Kantar provided more information about their processes as well as checking some elements of editing and estimation. As a result we have verified that the population benchmarking, using data provided by Stats NZ, is working as expected.

4. Identifying appropriate data to be used in the compilation and confrontation of a number the uses to which IVS output is put.

Stats NZ will progress their investigation of confrontation of IVS and credit card data. MBIE has suggested that travel visa data may also be useful, especially for visitors from China.

5. Clarify how IVS data relates to other indicators of international visitor expenditure spend and other relevant indicators.

The review team has prepared an integration framework identifying data sources relevant to the IVS, which was discussed with MBIE at a meeting on 13 March. MBIE intends to develop a broader set of analytics to compare relevant data from the sources.

6. Analysis to understand why the key quality metric of the survey – the relative margin of error for expenditure estimates – has not been met consistently. Identify the causes of this and what changes could be made to improve this.

The review team has analysed achieved samples by main market and airport. Analyses of achieved error confidence levels against target levels has also been carried out.

We will review the sample design in operation against the original design to determine how it performs and if improvements are needed.

7. Describe the organisation, statistical infrastructure, systems, and processes and other elements employed by MBIE and Kantar to obtain the data used to produce IVS statistics and assure their quality.

The review team discussed sample allocation and data collection and editing with Kantar on 12 March and observed interviewers recruiting respondents at Auckland International Airport. The team has also discussed an outline of the data processing undertaken by MBIE and has obtained more detail. Each agency is preparing a detailed timeline of the process they are responsible for.

8. Based on findings from applying an internationally validated assessment approach (ASPIRE), review MBIE's current statistical infrastructure as well as continuous improvement initiatives underway.

The review team will prepare a summary of the ASPIRE report.

Information about MBIE's statistical infrastructure was discussed with them on 19 March. MBIE will document continuous improvement initiatives conducted in the past 12 months.

9. Recommend where there might be need for further investment nor remedial action, in order (in particular) to provide additional trust and confidence. If possible, any recommendations will

be assessed against a cost-benefit analysis (eg some improvements to the survey may not necessarily be value for money).

Information about trust and confidence is being sought in stakeholder interviews.

10. Recommend whether revisions need to be made to any historical IVS data, as a result of improvements /changes made.

This will depend on the outcome of ongoing investigations of the survey systems and operational procedures.

11. Recommend a potential forward program of investigations, analysis or training that will continue to target a continuous improvement approach to the key variable of tourism expenditure and its fitness for purpose.

This will be happening in the later stages of the review.

Next steps

A meeting will be organised with Tourism Research Australia (by phone).

Analyses of IVS expenditure data is being carried out to gain a better understanding of drivers of spend change. Aggregate spend time series are being decomposed to adjust spend by market, exchange rates, type of visitor and length of stay.

The next monthly report is due at the end of April.

Signed 27 March 2018 on behalf of the governance committee of the International Visitor Survey review 2018:

Dean Rutherford
GM Products, Services & Insights
Stats NZ

Eileen Basher
GM Research, Evaluation & Analytics
Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment