



INBOUND TOURISM: FROM BORDER- TO ACCOMMODATION-SURVEY

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1 Introduction

Statistics Netherlands produces statistical information on several aspects of the Dutch society. One of these aspects is tourism.

During almost half a century the section Tourism and Leisure Industry gathers information on the capacity and use of accommodations in the Netherlands. This 'Tourism Accommodations' survey - on the supply side of the tourism economy - functions as a base for producing figures on the number of guests and overnight stays in that accommodations. Next to the results of this survey we also produce data on products, business sales, investments and employment in the tourism industry.

Another survey - on the demand side - amongst a sample of the Dutch population gives insight in the spending and characteristics of the Dutch tourists. The same sort of data from foreign tourists is seen as an essential piece of information to make the insight in the Dutch tourism industry more complete. The gathering of this information unfortunately is not part of the regular program of Statistics Netherlands.

As a supplement to that program - and financed by the Department of Economic Affairs - a survey on this demand-side subject has been held three times until now. A more detailed description of the spending and characteristics of the foreign tourists has been produced for the first time in 1979. The survey 'Inbound Tourism' has been repeated in 1984 and with the latest survey of 1993/'94 we are able to present the most recent profile of the foreign tourists visiting the Netherlands.

2 Inbound tourism in revision

In 1979 and 1984 the research on inbound tourism was conducted by interviewing tourists at the border at the moment they were leaving the Netherlands. One of the consequences of opening up the borders between the countries in the European Community is that conducting a border-survey on tourism became much more complicated. Especially interviewing travellers by car became problematic and they are a to important category foreign tourists to deny. For the purpose of illustration, car-users represent more than 50 percent of the total of foreign tourists visiting the Netherlands.

In the survey of 1993/'94, foreign tourists were interviewed at the moment they were leaving the accommodation. The interviews were held at accommodations like hotels or similar establishments, tourist campsites, holiday dwellings or other collective accommodations.

One of the implications of this method is that the population under research didn't include tourists on daytrips and those who resided in a boat, their second home or exclusively with family and/or friends. Another difference with the 'Inbound Tourism' research of '79 and '84 is that the survey of 1993/'94 does not cover all existent accommodations. To create the population under research we used the data of the 'Tourism Accommodations'-survey. The lower limit for every identified accommodation-category in that survey is 20 bedplaces for hotels and similar establishments, 50 bedplaces for holiday dwellings and other collective accommodations and 400 bedplaces for tourist campsites. Although it does not cover all accommodations, the volume of this population is at least 90 percent of the total capacity.

We made another important amendment: the survey's of '79 and '84 only covered the summer-period whereas the interview-period in the latest survey was extended to a whole year. A last difference to mention here is that the accommodation-approach had the implication we could observe tourists travelling by train for the first time in a inbound tourism survey.

3 Inbound tourism revised

Tourists were selected for an interview by a two-step sample-model. In the first step 1 400 interview-periods were spread at random over a sample of all observed accommodations. In this first step we took account of the following variables: the number of foreign guests in the accommodation, type of accommodation, region and the spread of the number of guests during the year. For all these data we made an appeal on the survey 'Tourism Accommodations'. During every interview-period ten foreign tourist parties were interviewed at the day of leaving. A interview-period is one week. A tourist party is a person travelling alone or a group of people travelling together which has collective spending during the trip. One person of the tourist-party was interviewed. When many foreign tourists left at the same time, a time-span between every interview was taken of 10 to 15 minutes.

This method resulted in a sample of more than 400 tourism accommodations where 14 000 tourist party(members) were to be interviewed. Of this total, 7 000 were to be interviewed in hotels and similar establishments, 3 000 in holiday dwellings, another 3 000 on tourists campsites and 1000 in youth-hostels and other collective accommodations. Every accommodation was visited at least two times by the interviewers. The large accommodations were visited more then 25 times.

4 Fieldwork

The fieldwork of Inbound Tourism 1993/'94 consisted of interviewing tourists. Interviewers were sent out to the accommodations equipped with laptops and the interviewee only had to answer questions in a language familiar to her or him. Interviewers inquired into questions like 'age', 'motive to visit the Netherlands', 'total spending', 'travel-mode', 'the composition of the tourist party' and 'net income'. Each interview took only about five minutes. The choice for this personal approach of the tourists was an outcome of a pilot-study in search for the most appropriate method. Compared with for example a questionnaire which could be filled in by the tourists at the desk of the accommodation, this method resulted in a higher response and more reliable answers.

Before the sample was taken, we prepared a letter to introduce the survey 'Inbound Tourism' to the accommodations perceived by the survey 'Tourism Accommodations'. All accommodations, which reported more than 365 foreign guests in a year received this letter with a request for cooperation. Most of the sample consists of the accommodations which replied affirmative on this request. It took nevertheless a lot of time and effort to persuade the managers of a number of the large accommodations to cooperate to the survey. The main reasons for non-cooperation were reported to be out of respect for the privacy of the guests and the idea that it would bring along a lot of extra work. Especially in the last case we tried to convince the managers to cooperate with the argument that the pilot-study had shown that it wouldn't take that much of their time. We also had to make some concessions to the sample-model by not burdening the large accommodations with too many interviews. Another problem arose at accommodations that refused to cooperate while they gave their commitment for cooperation in first instance. This could happen because of a change in the management, a renovation or a change of mind. To encounter these problem we build up a file of stand-in-accommodations which could be addressed at the moment of dropping-out of accommodations.

5 Response-rate

The fieldwork was done between october 1993 and october 1994 and resulted in total in 10 436 interviews. This number implies a response-rate of 75.

The reasons for the difference between the planned and realized number of interviews were the following: during some periods there were simply not enough or even no foreign tourists to interview. This was mainly the case in autumn and winter. In a peak-period on the other hand some interviewers didn't reach the planned number of ten interviews per interview-period. In high-season for example too many foreign tourists left at the same time or in the time the interviewers were busy interviewing other guests. In the third place we had to deal with partial non-response which in most cases could

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be solved by imputation.

Interviews amongst tourist-parties for Inbound Tourism 1993/'94

	Number of interviews amongst tourist parties		Response rate
	planned	realized	
	Abs.		%
hotels and similar establishments	7 000	5 395	77
tourist campsites	3 000	1 902	63
holiday dwellings	3 000	2 387	80
other collective establishments	1 000	752	75
Total	14 000	10 436	74

For the weighing-procedure the data of the survey 'Tourism Accommodations' did function as a important reference. The results of the survey 'Inbound Tourism 1993/'94' are consistent with 'Tourism Accommodations on the number of tourists and the number of overnight stays. We also reached consistency on the level of four types of tourism accommodations, four tourist-areas in the Netherlands, five regions on base of province and eight world geographical zones.

6 Inbound tourism to be continued

The objective of the survey Inbound Tourism 1993/'94 was to get insight in the composition of the foreign tourist-stream coming to the Netherlands per geographical zone, reason for coming, age, the pattern of stay, the volume of the tourist party, pattern of spending etc. The outcome of the survey is that we have a clear impression now of which tourists visit our country. The results of the survey will be issued in the beginning of july 1995. The survey is essential in making an overview of the dutch tourist industry more complete. It also enables policy-makers to make a profile of the foreign tourists visiting the Netherlands. The results are that encouraging that an accommodation-approach of inbound tourism research is worthwhile to be continued.