

Tourist Profiling : The Awareness and Knowledge of Irish Tourism Stakeholders

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This paper is part of a wider postgraduate research study which is focused on profiling Inbound Tourists to Ireland. This research assesses the level of awareness & knowledge of Irish Tourism Stakeholders on Inbound Tourist Profiling.

Tourism statistics are one of the key sources of information for tourism stakeholders and decision makers (OECD, 2020). Tourism Statistics collected through national tourism organisations & government agencies such as The CSO (Central Statistics Office) represent the primary source of information upon which tourism stakeholders predict demand and plan supply of tourism-related services (ITIC 2017). The author's recognised that the awareness and knowledge of Irish Tourism Stakeholders on how to effectively identify and create profiles of Inbound tourists to Ireland forms an understanding of what tourists want, need and expect. This information can significantly increase destination competitiveness within the marketplace. Although the collection of tourism statistics is a main source of planning for many national tourism organisations including local DMO's (Destination Management Organisations), a lack of accuracy and comparability exists at both international and national levels (Volo 2008).

The researcher suggests that the publication of tourist data at national level should be accompanied by specific training programmes targeted on how to access and assess such data and how tourism stakeholders can utilise such information to create tourist profiles to better understand the tourist. A mixed methodology was utilised for this research. A theoretical framework was developed that incorporates various elements that emerged from the literature regarding the process of profiling. A survey was distributed among Irish Tourism stakeholders within the Republic of Ireland that combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The findings indicate that Irish Tourism Stakeholders have significant low levels of awareness and knowledge on how to access, assess and collect Tourist data. This represents a considerable concern that tourism stakeholders are not aware of their market resulting in poor performing or unsuccessful marketing strategies. It is necessary to prioritise the importance of tourist profiling and how it can offer Irish Tourism Stakeholders within an understanding of the profile of tourist consuming the Irish tourism product.

- Findings underline that the awareness and knowledge of Irish Tourism Stakeholders on Tourist Profiling is essential to understanding the Irish Tourism Consumer
- This research offers the Irish tourism industry an opportunity to recognise that Irish Tourism Stakeholders lack the awareness and knowledge of profiling inbound tourists. It will identify the need for education and training in the area of consumer research in tourism consumption.
- Utilising a customised profiling matrix tool would help to create a tourist profile that is more relevant to the location. A matrix tool can be more effective if used in conjunction with smart technology methods to collect tourist data as the input of information by tourists will continuously update on an ongoing basis.

Keywords: Tourist Profiling, Tourist Awareness, Tourist Data, Tourism Stakeholders, Statistics, Tourist Statistics

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