Tourism Macroeconomics
Laboratory of Tourism Macroeconomics

Lab 01 – Research Methods, bibliographic searches, economic databases

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Introduction and general information

Ten lab sessions
Every Tuesday from 11:00 to 13:00 in Alberti 5

Learning Outcome
At the end of the lab sessions, students manage the tools for writing an economic report, starting with the process of retrieving and selecting bibliographic references; the searching, clearing and sorting of economic data; the statistical analysis of data and their interpretation; and concluding with the writing of the report.

Evaluation
Lab sessions count for 20% of the final mark (6 out of 30 points): there will be three ongoing assessment and, for each of them, students can get from 0 to 2 points. Extra points assigned during the labs.
Preliminary question 1: Is Economics a Science?

• Open issue, with lively debate and contrasting positions:
  • NO, since experiments can not be repeated in the laboratory (although one of the most flourishing fields of research of the last few years is experimental / behavioural economics);
  • YES, since it uses the scientific method.

• Distinction between hard sciences and social sciences, although the borders are blurring.

• Hard sciences evolve through theories that are formalized in mathematical models, which explanatory power is tested in the laboratory through controlled experiments (from this perspective, economics is not a “hard science”).

• Social investigation becomes “science” if the approach to problems implies the use of a scientific method.

• Distinction between research using the scientific method (economics) and other methods (case-studies, conceptual models, expository writing)
Preliminary question 2: What is the scientific methodology used in economics?

Scientific method is a type of **procedural rationality**: it identifies a protocol through which it is possible to conclude whether an interpretation of reality is correct or not.

Five steps of scientific method:
a) **Observation** of real-world evidence (formulate a relevant question)
b) **Induction**, through which assumptions and hypothesis are developed;
c) **Model building**: the theory is a set of logical and coherent correlations among a set of phenomena (variables);
d) **Deductive reasoning**, through which conclusions and likely outcomes can be predicted;
e) **Empirical testing**, to check the validity of the model.

Scientific ethics has to satisfy the principles of **CUDOS** (Communalism, Universalism, Disinterestedness, Originality, organized Skepticism) Merton (1942).
• Economics' method uses **theoretical models**: abstract representations of the real world.

• The model has to be judged on its **internal coherence** and its ability to explain reality, not on its assumptions.

• There is no such thing as the **true model** (according to Popper, a model is valid only until it is falsified).

• The “hard” work of the economist:
  • a) Economic facts are **historical facts** and can not be repeated and tested in labs;
  • b) The economist is part of his/her object of study: it is therefore influenced and biased by **values and ideologies**.
  • c) As a consequence, **pluralism** is the norm: different models coexist in a continuous battle of ideas and reasoning.

Most of these problems, however, are shared nowadays by all disciplines, including **hard sciences**.
Preliminary question 3: How can we classify the different types of research in economics?

Many classifications:

1. **Economics** (very general and abstract models) vs. **Applied Economics** (more specific models).

2. **Theoretical research** (studies steps 1-4 of the scientific method) and **Empirical research** (studies step 5, the empirical testing of hypotheses).

3. **Scientific production** (goal of publishing on a scientific journal, evaluated by a peer review), **Commissioned research** (externally funded) and **Popular dissemination** (contributing to the public debate through leaders, interviews, reports, journal articles, etc).

The output of university research is the Scientific production (including textbooks), but the researcher can / **should contribute** to the public debate.
Bibliographic and economic databases: search and analysis

Learning Outcomes for this lab:

- To be able to distinguish between **reliable** and **unreliable** bibliographic sources;
- To know **where to look** for reliable references in economics;
- To know **where to look** for reliable references in tourism studies;
- To be able to **distinguish** between reliable and unreliable data;
- To get accustomed with economic databases;
- To get accustomed with tourism data.
Bibliographic sources

Only a subset of references that is found on the web is reliable!

- **Scientific publications** (journal articles; research books; textbooks)
- “Grey publications” (working papers, discussion papers)
- **Policy Reports / Technical Reports** published by public institutions and organizations (regional, national, international);
- **Other publications**, of private research and study centres (although in this case, the commitment has to be fully identified)

Please, avoid:

- Articles and notes published on commercial or personal sites (they might be unreliable);
- Popular articles (newspaper and magazine articles): they might be imprecise and, however, it should always be possible to find a primary source for data.
Bibliographic search for students of the University of Bologna

Being a student of UNIBO provides you with many advantages with respect to an outside searcher:

You have access to the library system and, through Inter-Library loan, to any book or printed article that is available in the University libraries;

You can search for full-text electronic resources (journals for which UNIBO has a subscription, e-books, teaching material)

You can access to these resources: a) from any computer of the UNIBO network; b) from your notebook, if wi-fi connected to ALMAWIFI; c) from home, setting up your browser with proxy connection to UNIBO network.

Most of these resources are available also for smartphones and tablets.
Bibliographic sources in Economics

Different levels and methods of search coexist, and personal tastes matter! Find your own way to search for books and articles. However:

• **Bibliographic databases** exist in any scientific discipline. The list of databases accessible from UNIBO is [here](#).
• The main bibliographic database for Economics is **ECONLIT**.
• **ECONLIT** has recently been updated in order to provide more services. However, it has an important time lag due to the length of the publishing process;
• **IDEAS / REPEC** is, historically, the database of **pre-publications** and working papers in Economics. Now, it also includes journal articles;
• **SSRN** is a database including: works in progress, working papers, publications (be careful: the updating is not automatic: the single researcher has to update it);
• Ad-hoc search on the Internet: **google scholar** and advanced search in google;
• Ad-hoc search on the **websites** of national / international institutions;
• **Free search** on the Internet (be careful about the reliability of the links!!!)
How to search for material

Depending on the information you have:

1. **By topic**: just google the term(s) you are looking for.
2. **By author**: if you already know who have already published on the topic
3. **By site / journal**: if you already know the name of the site / journal on which such topic is debated / discussed.
4. **By reference crossing**: if you already have read an important material, just follow the cited references.
5. **By any combination** of the previous ways

Exercise: you are interested in looking for anything that has been published on tourism and cultural and religious diversity.

Try to find information by searching: a) The Internet and Google; b) Advanced search in Google and Google Scholar; c) ECONLIT; d) REPEC; e) SSRN.
The exegesis of sources

Bibliographic sources have to be critically analysed, according to several dimensions:

• **By importance of the journal** on which the article is published (a ranking of economics journals is in this paper).
  
  – The ranking is usually based on the Impact Factor: an algorithm measuring how many times, on average, an article is cited in other scientific articles;
  – The “official” Impact Factor Indices are computed by Web of Knowledge, and Scopus, but see also more open access indices, as the one computed by Google Scholar.

• **By importance of the author**
  
  – Again, many indices exist: ECONLIT, REPEC, Google Scholar, Publish or Perish Citation Index, h-Index...

• When a researcher starts a new project, s/he usually searches for a general article, providing an overview of the state of the art on the topic and then follows the cited references.
Bibliographic Search in Tourism Studies

Since tourism is an inter-multidisciplinary field of study, bibliographic searches are more difficult:

• Not all the main tourism journals are in ECONLIT.

• The main tourism journals are:
  - Tourism Management;
  - Tourism Economics;
  - Annals of Tourism Research;
  - Journal of Travel Research

• A ranking of the most important tourism journals is here

• Always consider also publications from UNWTO and related agencies.

• Save your time: read the articles in an efficient way:
  - Understand from the abstract whether or not the paper is of interest;
  - If yes, read introduction and conclusion;
  - If the article is really close to your work, read the whole paper.