



Mini-Symposium / Thematic Session 3

Valuing recreation with the Travel Cost Method

The travel cost method is commonly used to estimate economic use values associated with sites or areas that are used for recreation. The underlying premise is that the time and travel costs that people expend to visit a travel destination indicate the value that visitors perceive the site to offer. By analysing the costs expended on travel, the underlying demand curve for the recreation benefits can be created and the consumer surplus estimated through application of either the zonal or the individual travel cost method.

The travel cost method is most easily applied when recreation assets are unique and geographically separate from population centres, so that visitors are travelling specifically for the recreation benefits on single purpose trips. Yet patterns of recreation use are often not that simple. Travellers often engage in multi-purpose and multi-destination trips where recreation is co-mingled with other goods, or recreate close to home where minimal travel is involved. In some cases the challenge is to identify how visit behaviour changes with the condition and quality of the asset, or with the provision of substitute assets.

The purpose of this mini-symposia is threefold. The first aim is to review the uses and applications of the travel cost method, identifying recent developments and opportunities for applications for valuing different types of recreation assets and services. The second aim is to demonstrate some current case study work on different types of recreation assets that apply the travel cost method in different ways. The third is to provide a systematic review of recreation valuation studies in Australia to identify the extent to which values cluster around types of assets and methodological treatments.

These issues have important policy implications. Recreation is an important, and increasing component of Australian lifestyles, and impacts on recreation are routinely identified in potential resource allocation and policy changes. However valuing those impacts is challenging, and often only done through benefit transfer approaches. Identifying where value estimates are appropriate, and opportunities for greater inclusion of values for recreation impacts will help analysts and policy makers make more informed choices that involve recreation assets.

Paper 1: Using the Travel Cost Method to value recreation: Issues and opportunities

John Rolfe

Paper 2: Surfing Economics: a novel application of the travel cost method to the Noosa World Surfing reserve

Ana Manero

Paper 3: Measuring temporal change in recreational fishing values in Queensland's net-free zones and reference sites

Sabiha Marine

Paper 4: A meta-analysis of recreation values in Australia

Darshana Rajapaksa

Organisers:

Discussants: