MISSION

The Office of Tourism Analysis is one of the Centers of Excellence in the School of Business at the College of Charleston. The Office is counseled and advised by industry and community leaders charged with proposing the office’s research priorities. The Office collaborates mainly with the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau to implement a series of competitiveness research and monitoring programs and disseminates such information to decision-makers and stakeholders in the Lowcountry’s hospitality and tourism industry.

GRANTS

1. Charleston Hospitality Performance Tracking project: $104,000 USD
2. The Spoleto Festival Survey Research Project: $14,835 USD
3. Wild Dunes Economic Impact Research: $5,980 USD
STAFF

Bing Pan, Ph.D.,
Head of Research and
Associate Professor

Melinda Patience,
Coordinator

AFFILIATED FACULTY MEMBERS

John Crotts, Ph.D. and Professor
Dr. Crotts worked with the OTA on surveying Charleston residents’ attitude toward tourism development, funded by the City of Charleston.

Stephen Litvin, Ph.D. and Professor
Dr. Litvin has worked with the OTA for seven years on allocating Charleston accommodation taxes for the county council.

Robert Frash, Ph.D. and Associate Professor
Dr. Frash worked with the OTA on his research of the impact of the Taste of Charleston and the Lowcountry Oyster Festival.

Brumby McLeod, Ph.D. and Assistant Professor
Dr. McLeod has worked with the OTA on benchmarking vacation rental market performance for five years.

Wayne Smith, Ph.D. and Associate Professor
For many years, Dr. Smith has worked with the OTA on his projects on evaluating economic impact and studying visitor behavior of many festivals, including Wine+Food Festival, Fashion Week, and the James Island Connector Run.
STUDENT RESEARCHERS

PUBLIC TALKS

1. Economic Impact of Tourism in the Charleston Area, Presented to Charleston Travel Council, May 10, 2016.

2. The Pros and Cons of Tourism Big Data, Keynote Talk at the International Smart Tourism Conference, October 17, 2015

3. Perspectives on Tourism Big Data, Research Seminar at the Department of Tourism, Recreation & Sport Management, University of Florida, November 20, 2015
SPONSORSHIPS

Co-Sponsored South Carolina Vacation Rental Management Association meeting on May 5, 2016 at the College of Charleston, SC.
INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

Hanyu Zhang, Ph.D., Visiting Scholar, Jinan University Shenzhen Tourism College, China, September, 2015 – August, 2016

Zhenting Li, Ph.D., Visiting Scholar, Tourism and Environment College from Shaanxi Normal University, March, 2016 to February, 2017.

Bing Wu, Ph.D., Visiting Scholar, Tourism and Environment College from Shaanxi Normal University, September, 2016 to September, 2017.

Kai Bai, Chair and Professor, Department of Tourism, Tourism and Environment College from Shaanxi Normal University, April 16, 2016 to April 18, 2016
INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

Mr. Yong Liu, CEO, Shenzhen Venice Hotel Consulting Co., July 12, 2016 to July 15, 2016

ACADEMIC EXCHANGES

Dr. Bing Pan and Melinda Patience, attending South Carolina Annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Travel, February 15-17, 2016, Charleston, SC

Dr. Bing Pan attended the 3rd World Research Summit for Tourism and Hospitality and 1st USA-China Tourism Research Summit, Orlando, FL, December 14, 2015 to December 19, 2015

Dr. Bing Pan and Dr. Hanyu Zhang, attended TTIA conference in Vail, CO,
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<tr>
<th>PROJECTS</th>
<th>SHORT SUMMARY</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Tracking of hotel room inventory in the Charleston area</td>
<td>We continually keep track of hotel room inventory in the Charleston area.</td>
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<td>2. The continuation of the vacation rental market performance tracking system</td>
<td>We continually tracked the performance of the beach vacation rental market in the Charleston area.</td>
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<td>3. Quarterly Barometer Report of Charleston Area’s Hospitality Performance</td>
<td>We produced quarterly report of Charleston’s hospitality performance compared to that of the nation and competing cities.</td>
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<td>6. Charleston County accommodation tax distribution, 2015</td>
<td>Working with CACVB and Dr. Stephen Litvin, we completed Charleston County accommodation tax distribution evaluation in August, 2015.</td>
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<td>10. Economic Impact of the 2016 Southeastern Wildlife Exposition</td>
<td>We performed an online survey of attendees of the 2016 Southeastern Wildlife Exposition and calculated the economic impact of the event.</td>
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<td>11. Historic Weekly and Monthly Hotel Performance Benchmarking</td>
<td>We created a calendar comparing hotel performance in the Charleston area with events in Charleston.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Economic Impact of the 2016 Charleston Wine+Food Festival</td>
<td>We performed an online survey of attendees of the 2016 Charleston Wine+Food Festival and calculated the economic impact of the event.</td>
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<td>13. Weekly forecasting for hospitality performance in the Charleston area</td>
<td>The Office worked on a weekly forecasting system to project the hotel performance in the next six weeks. The forecasting is run every month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Monthly forecasting for hospitality performance in the Charleston area</td>
<td>The Office worked on a monthly forecasting system to project the hotel performance in the next 18 months.</td>
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<td>15. Estimation of average daily overnight tourist in cities/areas in Charleston</td>
<td>The Office estimate average daily overnight tourist numbers in various cities and areas in the Charleston area.</td>
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<td>16. Identifying the Next Flight Destination for Charleston (Ongoing)</td>
<td>Using data from hotel guests, airline passengers, survey results, web traffic logs, we are working on identifying the next flight destination for the Charleston area.</td>
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<td>17. Economic Impact of Spoleto Festival USA 2016 (Ongoing)</td>
<td>We obtained Spoleto Festival’s attendees’ email addresses and collected 4,000 responses. We are working compiling the demographic results and estimating the economic impact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Lowcountry Oyster Festival Attendee Experience Survey</td>
<td>We used a team of students to survey attendees of the 2016 Lowcountry Oyster Festival in January 2016.</td>
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PROJECT ABSTRACTS

2015 Charleston Area Visitor Intercept Survey Report
A survey of visitors to the Charleston tri-county area revealed important demographic and behavioral patterns. More than 650 survey responses revealed that the visitors are mainly 50 years or older with the “Baby Boomer” age group dominating. There is also a peak in early 40+ group, indicating business travelers. The respondents are most likely to be college educated, married or living with a partner, and have upper-middle income; they are mainly from adjacent states. Ethnically, Caucasians dominate the visitor population with very few other ethnicities. More than half of Charleston visitors are repeated guests. They spent an average of $944 per adult per trip, with $211 per adult per day locally. Most of them are extremely satisfied with their visits. They enjoyed the history of Charleston and food, and disliked humidity and parking. Most likely they will visit the Charleston City Market, historic houses, waterfront parks, beaches, and historic plantations. Most of them are extremely satisfied with their visits. They enjoyed the history of Charleston and food, and disliked the humidity and traffic. Most importantly, we also learned that most Charleston visitors also visited Mt. Pleasant, West of the Ashley, North Charleston, Isle of Palms, Kiawah Island, and Folly Beach. The average number of cities/areas visited is about 3. The average traveling party sizes of 2-3 adults without kids remained consistent year-over-year. The adoption of mobile technology and social media was increasing significantly among Charleston visitors. These results show that Charleston continues to attract an affluent visitor group. The CACVB continues to play a significant role in attracting visitors and helping them plan their trip.

Charleston Area Beach Communities Vacation Rental Reporting
In 2015, the Charleston Area Beach Communities Vacation Rental Reporting project continued to document the changes and growth in the vacation rental market. The annual average total occupancy for 2015 was 58.5% and average sold occupancy was 40.1%, increases of 8.6% and 8.0%, respectively, over 2014. In terms of rates and revenue, the average daily rate was $326.78 (up 7.8% over 2014) which brought in $130.97 in revenue per available unit.

Charleston County Accommodation Tax Distribution, Fiscal Year 2015-2016
Thirty-five applications for accommodation tax grants were submitted to Charleston County for fiscal year 2015-2016. These applications were evaluated based on economic impact (50%), community impact (10%), media impact (20%), and an overall panel judgment (20%). The scores from each of these categories were combined for an overall score. These scores were then used to determine what percentage of the available $300,000 in accommodation tax grant money the applicant would receive.

Charleston County Hospitality Forecast 2015-2016
From January to July 2015, Charleston County has seen a stable occupancy (-0.6%) with a significant increase in Average Daily Rate (ADR, +7.1%) compared to the same period last year. The similar trend applies to the Peninsula: a stable occupancy (+0.7%) and an increase in ADR (+8.0%). The outlook for the coming 17 months is for solid growth in ADRs and stability or drop in the occupancy rate. The occupancy rates for Peninsula hotels are forecasted to drop slightly from 79.4% for 2015 and 77.5% for 2016. The average daily rate is forecasted to increase to $203.65 in 2015 with continued growth to $210.99 in 2016. The Charleston County hotel occupancy rates are forecasted to remain steady at 73.3% in 2015 and 73.2% in 2016. The ADR for the County hotels is forecasted to increase from $147.53 in 2015 to $156.80 in 2016.
Economic Impact of the Charleston Area Convention Center Campus in 2014

In 2015, the Complex is estimated to have drawn 1.5 million visitors. The Office of Tourism Analysis at the College of Charleston estimated that $54.4 million ($53.7 million in 2014) in direct local spending was attributable to the Complex in 2015 due to the visitors it serves based on an average of $205 per visitor per day in local spending. Direct tax revenues derived from the Complex in 2015 were estimated at $5.9 million. However, the economic impacts of the Complex do not stop there. Visitor spending at the Complex, as well as at Charleston area hotels and restaurants, also generated additional spending “ripples” (i.e. indirect and induced economic impacts) in the local economy. Moreover, a large portion of this economic ripple effect included owners and employees of these hospitality-oriented businesses spending a substantial part of their income purchasing local goods and services, which then generated (induced) additional rounds of business income supporting more local jobs.

Estimation of Tourism Economic Impacts in the Charleston Area, 2015

In 2015, the Charleston area welcomed an estimated 5.15 million visitors. These visitors attributed to an estimated $1.23 billion in labor earnings. Visitors spent an average of $211 per visitor per day and generated $6.9 million in attraction admission tax and $7.9 million in lodging sales. Just under 14% of Tri-County sales can be attributed to tourism. Overall, Charleston area visitors generated a total economic impact of over $3.7 billion.
According to a Charleston County Hospitality Forecast by the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis, the average daily rate of a downtown hotel will increase by about $5 this year, and the occupancy rate will drop slightly, from 79% of rooms filled to 77%.

City planners present hotel study findings

Preserving Charleston’s urban core was the main topic of discussion during the presentation of the city’s 90-day hotel study at Tuesday’s City Council meeting. Conducted by the Planning Department, traffic engineers, and the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis, the study is intended to guide city officials in deciding how best to manage Charleston’s booming hotel industry.

Bing Pan, head of research at the Office of Tourism Analysis at the College of Charleston, said in an email that the increase in the number of guest rooms in Mount Pleasant matches up with demand, according to percentages looking at 1994 to 2013.

We must consider that in the last 20 years, tourism has increased more than 70 percent — and was up five percent just last year! More than 5,000,000 annual visitors come to Charleston and most of them come downtown. “The Tri-County benefits, but downtown bears the burden” of tourism, says Bing Pan, Head of Research at the Office of Tourism Analysis at the College of Charleston’s School of Business. In other words, those carriages aren’t taking the tourists to the Citadel Mall.

In 2011, just as the country was beginning to heal from the Great Recession, city officials recognized what a cash cow Charleston Fashion Week had become. At a news conference, Riley announced the event was a “$1.7 million direct boost to the local economy.” Last year, the impact more than doubled to $3.5 million, according to the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis.

“The hotel market is doing well,” said Bing Pan, head of research for the college’s Office of Tourism Analysis. Pan said he didn’t know how much more supply the city can handle.

Overall, the average occupancy rate for Charleston County hotels for 2015 slipped to 73.5 percent, down 11 percent from 2014, according to the College of Charleston’s Office of Tourism Analysis. The average daily rate climbed 5 percent to $143.75, the study found.
The North Charleston Coliseum, Charleston Area Convention Center and Performing Arts Center are tremendous attractions. In 2015 the three venues once again drew 1.5 million visitors. According to the College of Charleston’s Office of Tourism Analysis, $54.4 million in direct local spending was attributable to the complex, a 1.3% increase over 2014. And using conservative estimates, the total economic output impact of the complex was $91.5 million, which included $30.1 million in wages earned locally, again an increase over 2014.

Is it time to press pause on Charleston hotel development?

Charleston residents have watched in recent years as the city has become one of the top tourist destinations in the country and by some accounts the world. According to the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis, the city welcomed 4.9 million visitors in 2014, and all those people need a place to stay. As the city’s reputation has grown, so has its hotel industry, which has generated a healthy amount of revenue for the area. Averaging a daily rate of about $188 per room on the peninsula in 2014, the hotel industry contributed more than $8 million to the city through property taxes due to visitor spending.

Good summer for beach towns in Charleston area

Occupancy was up during May and June as well. The figures were compiled by the Office of Tourism Analysis of the College of Charleston School of Business.

Charleston hotel experts weigh in on flap over Expedia-Orbitz deal

Bing Pan, the head of research at the College of Charleston’s tourism office, said that in most areas of e-commerce, it’s not unusual for the market to be dominated by a few key players, such as Amazon or Google. Big crowds, more overnight stays reported at busy beaches

“The beach communities have done very well this year. It definitely was an improvement over 2014 for the last couple of months,” said Melinda Patience, research coordinator at the Office of Tourism Analysis of the College of Charleston School of Business.
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?
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