
Best of the Best Business Reference Web Resources 2019

BRASS Education Committee

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The BRASS Best of the Best Business Reference Web Resources Award was established in 2009. The award recognizes three websites highly relevant to information professionals involved in providing business reference services. The websites are nominated and selected by the BRASS Education Committee members in October–November. The criteria include the quality of content, ease of use, and technical execution.

UNITED NATIONS WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION
[HTTP://WWW2.UNWTO.ORG/](http://www2.unwto.org/)

The United Nations (UN) was formed after World War II with the mission of maintaining international peace and security. With almost 200 member states, the UN oversees numerous programs and funds, and since 1946 has negotiated agreements to establish working relationships with more than a dozen independent international organizations. These organizations, known as UN “specialized agencies,” have long served as sources of information for business researchers, with perhaps the most recognized being the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The UN specialized agency that devotes much of its efforts to the promotion and development of sustainable tourism is the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Headquartered in Madrid, Spain, the UNWTO was approved as a specialized agency by UN resolution in 2003. As described in its annual report, the UNWTO strives to “maximize the social and economic benefits of tourism while minimizing any negative impacts on host communities and the environment.” With this emphasis, the agency’s website is well-positioned as a starting point for those seeking reliable information on sustainability issues related to the travel industry.

While much of the UNWTO website provides free tourism information, it is important to note that some publications and statistics are freely accessible only by the agency’s members, with subscription-based options for non-members. Membership includes 158 countries and more than 500 affiliated companies, educational and research institutions, and nonprofit organizations. Among the affiliate members from the United States are Colorado State University, Ernst and Young, and the Medical Tourism Association.

The UNWTO home page is colorful, with easy-to-find sections for news, events, and key issues. It also features a basic search box and links to the agency’s social media

postings. Visitors to the site will see a menu ribbon across the top for information under multiple categories. The About category leads to detailed descriptions of the UNWTO's history and structure, and two additional categories direct users to listings of members by country and by affiliation. Hovering on the What We Do category reveals subtopics arranged under titles that match the UNWTO's priorities: (1) mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda, (2) sustainable development, (3) ethics, culture, and social responsibility, (4) tourism and development, (5) competitiveness, and (6) fostering knowledge.

The two website categories most useful for those seeking free information are Tourism4SDGs and Communications. The Tourism4SDGs category leads to a platform developed by the UNWTO for exploration of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The interconnected SDGs are part of the UN-approved "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," with goals such as "No Poverty," "Zero Hunger," and "Gender Equality." Clicking on icons on the platform will open an interactive tool that maps worldwide policies and programs in support of the SDGs.

In addition to press releases, photos, and videos, the Communications category provides links to tourism facts and figures, including statistical infographics that can be downloaded as PDF files. Information seekers will also appreciate the "Glossary of Tourism Terms" with UNWTO definitions that explain concepts such as how a "tourism trip" is classified according to its purpose.

A somewhat confusing aspect of the Communications category is that the UNWTO Elibrary, which is fee-based for non-members, is linked in the publications section alongside the many free offerings. For those interested in a preview of the Elibrary, the UNWTO offers a 30-day trial, with subscription pricing varying by type of institution. Academic subscription fees are based on the institution's total enrollment and then further broken down by number of students in tourism-related studies, which the UNWTO defines as "Geography, Sociology, Economics, Politics, Management and other subjects with special focus on Tourism."

Sections of the UNWTO website would be improved with a more intuitive interface for browsing and searching. New or casual users may find themselves getting lost as they explore the site's many resources; for example, a click on a topic heading can lead to another part of the website with no obvious link back to the UNWTO homepage. A more functional alternative to browsing is the "A to Z" site map, a navigational tool found at the bottom of most category pages. The site map also allows users to jump to news and event listings by world region.

The UNWTO website is recommended for a varied audience in the academic, corporate, and nonprofit sectors, but especially for those interested in the trends, issues, programs, and policies pertaining to sustainable tourism. Many users will find what they need with the free offerings, but those seeking more detailed information would benefit from access to the subscription-based content.—*Teresa Williams,*

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U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION [HTTPS://WWW.USTRAVEL.ORG/](https://www.ustravel.org/)

Comprising more than 1,200 member organizations, the U.S. Travel Association is focused on sustaining and growing the travel industry in the United States. The U.S. Travel Association conducts research, develops resources, and participates in advocacy designed to raise awareness of the travel industry and its impact on the US economy.

Information on the U.S. Travel Association's website is organized under a top-level menu with seven headings: Issues, Research, Events, Programs, News and Commentary, Membership, and About Us. The first heading, Issues, provides access to resources for international inbound travelers, and covers topics such as Customs and Entry and Trusted Traveler Programs. Additional topics covered under the Issues heading include National Parks, Infrastructure, and Tourism Budgets, with resources and statistical information provided for each. Industry Resources are also available under the Issues heading, and there are various toolkits found in this section for those seeking to organize and host events connected to the travel industry.

The bulk of the travel data and information that can be found on the U.S. Travel Association's website can be found under the Research heading on the navigation menu. The Research heading lists two separate subsections, Research Essentials and Interactive Data. The Research Essentials subsection features the Industry Answer Sheet, which provides freely accessible travel industry impact information for the United States across the leisure travel, business travel, and international travel sectors. Travel Facts and Figures, also located under Research Essentials, contains a collection of free reports, fact sheets, and graphics covering topics such as International Inbound Travel, Impact of Sports on Travel, Travel Creates Jobs, and more. The Country-Level Inbound Profiles section under Research Essentials contains country profiles for a handful of the United States' top inbound markets, including Japan, Germany, and Brazil. The Debrief, a monthly webinar series, and Travel Trends and Index are also featured under Research Essentials, but these features are accessible only to subscribers.

The Research heading on the top-level menu also provides access to a variety of free data tools, listed under the Interactive Data subsection, including the Downstream Impact Calculator, Economic Impact Calculator, and Economic Impact Map. The Downstream Impact Calculator is an interactive tool that allows researchers to simulate an increase or decrease in travel spending. Once a researcher has chosen a percentage change on the provided slider, the Downstream Impact Calculator shows a visual representation of the impact of that percentage change has on the economic output of other industries and on jobs. The

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Downstream Impact Calculator also includes an Effects of Policy section where researchers can explore the impact specific policies, such as the Open Skies agreement, have on economic output and jobs in travel and other industries. The Travel Economic Impact Calculator allows researchers to project how changes in travel spending will impact the economy of specific states. The Economic Impact Map gives researchers the ability to examine travel spending in congressional districts. Once a state and district selection have been made on the tool, a detailed report about the impact of travel spending on that district is generated. The Interactive Travel Analytics tool, the last tool listed in the Interactive Data section, supports visualization and analysis of US travel statistics, and it is only available to subscribers.

While there are additional headings listed on the website's menu, the information that is likely to be most beneficial to researchers will be found under the Issues and Research headings. The majority of the information that is freely-available is packaged in report form as a PDF. Website navigation is fairly intuitive, and is driven by the top-level menu that is featured prominently on most pages. Researchers can opt for using the search box to find information on the website, and information is searchable across all formats from toolkits to fact sheets. While there are a variety of free resources available on the U.S. Travel Association's website, many of the data tools, reports, webinars, and other resources are only available to paid subscribers. Despite the subscription limitations, the U.S. Travel Association's website is a great resource for researchers looking to do examine the relationship between the travel industry and the US economy.—*Jordan Nielsen, Business Librarian, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California (BRASS Education Committee Co-Chair, 2019–2021)*

INTERNATIONAL TRADE ADMINISTRATION NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM OFFICE [HTTPS://TRAVEL.TRADE.GOV/](https://travel.trade.gov/)

The International Trade Administration (ITA), an agency of the United States Department of Commerce, provides information, services, and expertise to help US organizations compete in the global business environment. The ITA website menu directs users to a variety of helpful resources, including statistics, industry links, and export guides.

The NTTO (National Travel and Tourism Office) provides analysis and statistics in travel and tourism. Their focus is

to assist the US travel and tourism industry through four avenues: the travel and tourism statistical system (which is the only source of statistics on international travel to and from the United States); development of tourism policy; technical assistance for expanding international tourism; and assistance with travel export expansion.

The strongest content within the website is centered around the Travel and Tourism Statistical System for the United States, which provides national and local level data. This area includes regional of origin profiles, as well as sector profiles (airline, business, car rental, leisure, lodging, package, cultural-heritage; American Indian communities; and Shopping). Highlights of the statistical system include:

- [Inbound Travel to the US](#)
- [Outbound Travel From the US](#)
- [Survey of International Air Travelers](#) (In-Flight Survey)
- International travel receipts and payments data
- Canadian travel to and from the United States data
- Monthly tourism statistics (data goes back to 1996 and is current to the past quarter)
- Annual visitor spending (data goes back to 1960)

Diving deeper into their website, there are separate areas for the individual foci:

- [Tourism Policy](#)
- [Export Assistance](#) (features articles, presentations, and links to other US government travel related agency departments and staff)
- [Industry Analysis](#)

NTTO also provides TI (travel industry) news which is a free news and update service. The TINews Archive is available back to 1998. In addition, their links section focuses on the travel industry trade and highlights additional US federal government sources, as well as other travel and aviation organizations.

The NTTO website interface is minimalist at best, with data available as an excel download, PDF, or webpage depending on the individual statistic. Due to the depth of travel statistics available via NTTO, it is a valuable, free resource for anyone researching the travel industry. From the simplest [Fast Facts sheets](#) to detailed historical downloads, the NTTO generated content is appropriate for a variety of research level needs, and the free access makes it an option for any research budget.