



Mille Lacs Visitor Profile Study 2014-2015

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Background

Current consumer profile information is essential for tourism marketing and planning

Most recent traveler information in Mille Lacs from 2001 (Liu, 2001) → Updated information is needed

Mille Lacs County contracted with Tourism Center to conduct a visitor profile project in the Mille Lacs Lake area from Sep 1, 2014 to Aug 31, 2015.

Method

Study setting 25,833 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015)
A major tourism destination with many natural assets

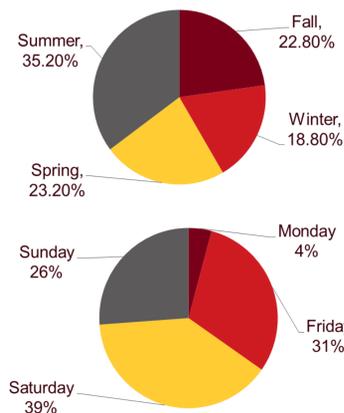
Sampling Convenience sampling
31 sites and 6 events in 8 communities
N=1,530

Data collection Onsite intercept survey

Questionnaire Visitor characteristics
Travel party and trip profile
Trip purpose and activities
Expenditure

Analysis Descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS (version 23.0)

Response rate



Key Findings

Table 1: Visitor characteristics and place of origin

| Visitor characteristics | Fall 2014 | Winter 2014 | Spring 2015 | Summer 2015 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Average Age | 51 | 45 | 48 | 49 |
| % Male | 60% | 67% | 55% | 54% |
| Place of origin-state | | | | |
| Minnesota | 92% | 93% | 95% | 99% |
| Wisconsin | 3% | 3% | 1% | 1% |
| Place of origin-metro area | | | | |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN | 72% | 77% | 73% | 86% |
| St. Cloud, MN | 4% | 4% | 8% | 3% |
| Rochester, MN | 2% | 2% | 1% | 2% |

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Fig. 1: Average respondents' travel party size (n=1523)



Fig. 2: Median number of visits to Mille Lacs in the past 5 years (n=1182)



Fig. 3: Percentage of respondents visiting with children under 18 (n=1530)

Table 2: Average visitor spending per person, per day, while in Mille Lacs Lake area

| | Fall 2014 | Winter 2014 | Spring 2015 | Summer 2015 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Lodging | \$20.72 | \$24.76 | \$16.57 | \$24.25 |
| Restaurant | \$19.33 | \$30.47 | \$18.88 | \$21.83 |
| Transportation | \$18.39 | \$15.08 | \$11.26 | \$12.09 |
| Grocery | \$10.55 | \$12.59 | \$10.53 | \$12.90 |
| Recreation | \$4.82 | \$7.45 | \$2.77 | \$3.68 |
| Shopping | \$4.64 | \$5.07 | \$4.36 | \$4.20 |
| Miscellaneous | \$2.77 | \$5.79 | \$5.48 | \$11.67 |
| Fishing equipment | \$2.71 | \$8.56 | \$8.73 | \$6.99 |
| Fishing-related guide service | \$1.58 | \$2.11 | \$1.57 | \$2.13 |
| Other fishing-related expense | \$1.47 | \$3.56 | \$2.50 | \$1.71 |
| Total | \$86.78 | \$115.44 | \$82.65 | \$101.45 |

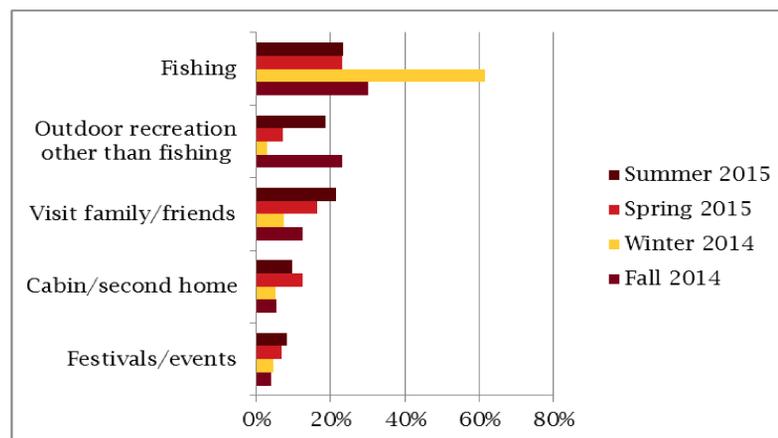


Fig. 4: Respondents' top reasons for visiting Mille Lacs across the four quarters (n=1523)

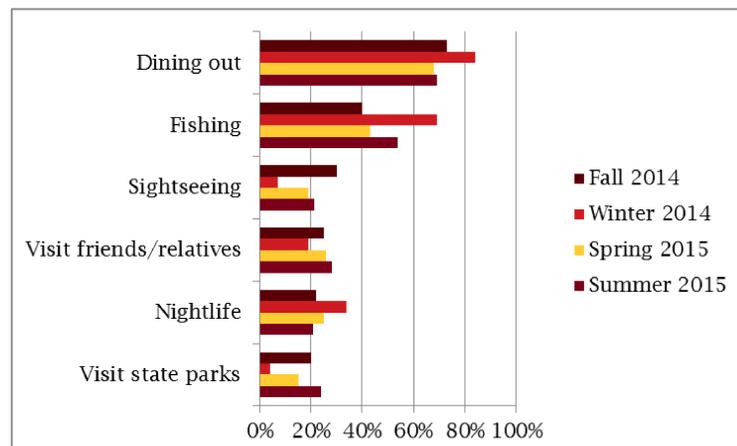


Fig. 5: Respondents' top five activities during the trip across the four quarters (n=1530)

Table 3: Trip information of visitors to Mille Lacs Lake area

| | Fall 2014 | Winter 2014 | Spring 2015 | Summer 2015 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Lodging | | | | |
| Own vacation home | 18% | 14% | 20% | 23% |
| Hotel/motel | 10% | 15% | 15% | 16% |
| Resort | 13% | 7% | 9% | 14% |
| RV | 20% | 3% | 16% | 14% |
| Fish house | 0% | 43% | 3% | 3% |
| Planning time frame | | | | |
| Less than 2 weeks | 60% | 60% | 51% | 49% |
| Information source | | | | |
| Friends & family | 45% | 54% | 48% | 47% |
| Destination website | 18% | 21% | 25% | 18% |
| Post-trip sharing | | | | |
| Facebook | 55% | 55% | 53% | 56% |
| Text message | 31% | 48% | 38% | 35% |

Discussion

Economic value of ice fishing:

- Primary reason to visit in winter
- Spending highest in winter

Important alternative market segments:

- Outdoor recreation other than fishing
- Vacation home owners
- Visiting family and friends

Lodging:

- RV grounds: maintain and possibly expand
- Fish house: predominant lodging choice in winter

Growth opportunities:

- Dining out
- Nightlife/evening entertainment
- Shopping
- Festivals and events
- Sightseeing

Marketing:

- In-state visitors
- Minneapolis-St. Paul a key market
- Baby boomers and Generation X as two key age groups
- Short planning time frame
- Destination website: maintenance and update
- Facebook: established sharing platform

Acknowledgements

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