DES MOINES VISITORS
FOCUS GROUPS
REPORT OF FINDINGS

Kevin Hanstad
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BACKGROUND

Meet Minneapolis is developing a tourism master plan for the city of Minneapolis. The plan is currently in the “Grounding” phase of development. The grounding consists primarily of data collection and information gathering to assess Minneapolis as a tourist destination. One of the key constituent groups to be included in the assessment are tourists. The markets from which the greatest percentage of tourists originate are Fargo, Sioux Falls, Des Moines and Madison, each contributing approximately 5% of the 32 million visitors to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area in 2015. Tourist focus groups were conducted in Fargo on April 11th and in Des Moines on May 19th. The report of findings from the Fargo study has been previously published. This document reports the findings from the Des Moines groups.

OBJECTIVE

To gain an understanding of Des Moines visitors’:

- Reasons for visiting Minneapolis.
- Trip planning.
- Perceptions of Minneapolis.
- Activities engaged in while visiting.
- Strengths and weaknesses of Minneapolis as a tourist destination.
- Opportunities for making Minneapolis a better destination.

METHODOLOGY

- Two two-hour focus groups were conducted on Thursday, May 19th, 2016 in Des Moines, Iowa.
- The groups were moderated by Kevin Hanstad and observed by Bill Deef, both of Meet Minneapolis, and video-recorded.
- Each groups’ participants were recruited according to the following criteria:
  - 50/50 Female to Male
  - 21 to 65 years of age
  - Annual household income of $45,000 +
  - Graduated high school
  - At least one non-Caucasian
  - Children under 18 years of age living in some of the participants’ households
  - No focus group participation in the past 12 months
  - Articulateness
- The two groups were differentiated on past visits to the city of Minneapolis:
  - Group One: Visited and stayed overnight in the city within the past 12 months (11 participants)
  - Group Two: Visited and stayed overnight in the city two or more years ago (12 participants)
  - No more than ½ of each group could travel to Minneapolis primarily on business
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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<th>VISITED WITHIN PAST 12 MONTHS</th>
<th>VISITED 2+ YEARS AGO</th>
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<td>ADULT GETAWAY</td>
<td>Pro &amp; Collegiate Sports, Concerts</td>
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<td>Leisurely Exploration and Discovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love Minneapolis – “Offers so much more; everything from eclectic to outdoorsy”</td>
<td>Are Not in Love with Minneapolis</td>
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<td>Minneapolis is Comfortable &amp; Approachable</td>
<td>Not Kid-Friendly</td>
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<td>Don’t Have to Plan</td>
<td>Extreme Lack of Knowledge of all that City Offers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restaurants, Pro &amp; Collegiate Sports, Concerts, Walking</td>
<td>Competitors = Chicago, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Louis</td>
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<td>Not Kid-Friendly</td>
<td>They Make Visits to the Comp Set Multiple Times a Year (Especially Chicago &amp; Kansas City)</td>
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<td>Competitors = Chicago, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Omaha, St. Louis</td>
<td>Chicago Because of all it Offers; Kansas City’s Power &amp; Light District, Shopping, Two Theme Parks, and One Less Hour Drive Time are Significant Draws</td>
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<td>They See Advertising for Some of These Cities, But Not for Minneapolis</td>
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IMPLICATIONS

- Minneapolis is an “adult getaway” destination.
- Lack of activities appealing to children.
- The city is comfortable and approachable and offers a wide variety of activities.
- Extreme lack of awareness of all that Minneapolis offers visitors.
- Contradicts the popular notion that all visitors love Minneapolis and want to return.

DETAILED FINDINGS

GROUP ONE: VISITED MINNEAPOLIS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

1. When you think of Minneapolis what words come to mind?
   a. Vikings
   b. Mall of America
c. Busy – traffic
d. Gophers
e. Twin Cities
f. Minnesota Twins
g. Target Field
h. Snow
i. Concerts – Orchestra Hall, Michael Bublé
j. Uptown
k. Dinkytown
l. Mayo Clinic
m. Nicollet Mall
n. University of Minnesota
o. Stone Arch Bridge
p. Lakes
q. Trails – biking
r. Prince
s. Fishing – lakes around the cities, as opposed to the city lakes
t. Skyways
u. Winter Carnival
v. Quirky cafes with bands
w. Sit-outside cafes
x. The Guthrie Theater
y. Lund’s
z. Whole Foods
aa. Burger Jones
bb. Love Lake Calhoun
c. Rose Garden
dd. “God’s Country”
ee. “Land of the Free, Home of the Twins”
ff. Comfortable, approachable, not Chicago or New York
gg. Not overwhelming
hh. You can do what you want, don’t have to plan
ii. Quick getaway
jj. Good transportation – LRT
kk. 3M
ll. Low crime – feel safe
mm.
nn. Minnehaha Falls
oo. Best Buy Corporate
pp. HGTV Rehab Addict
2. How often do you visit Minneapolis?
   a. Once a year
   b. Two times a year
   c. Monthly
   d. Every other month
   e. Four to Five times a year

3. How far in advance do you plan your trip?
   a. One month
   b. Two months

4. What resources do you use in planning?
   a. Family
   b. Open Table
   c. Hotwire
   d. Airbnb
   e. Trip Advisor (while in destination as well)
   f. Expedia to select hotel once in destination

5. Daytrips versus overnight stays?
   a. Daytrips = pro sports, celebrations, Mall of America shopping, Ikea, concerts on a week night & back to work in the morning
   b. Overnight = weekend trip or 1 – 2 day business trips (primarily training)

6. Why do you visit Minneapolis?
   a. Easy to get to
   b. Accessible

7. What other destinations do you consider?
   a. Kansas City = 3 hours drive
   b. Omaha = 2 hours drive
   c. Council Bluffs = 2 hours drive
   d. Chicago = 5 ½ hours drive
   e. St. Louis = 6 hours drive
   f. Milwaukee = 5 ½ hours drive
   g. Minneapolis = 3 hours drive

8. What are the criteria by which you select a destination?
   a. Drive time
   b. Weather
c. Hotel availability
d. What’s going on
e. Cost (Chicago is expensive)
f. Friends or family living there
g. Going because don’t want to be with family; weekend getaway; I don’t want to plan; “Get lost, discover new things”; “roll with it”; “explore”
h. “Minneapolis offers so much more; everything from eclectic to outdoorsy; green space; open area”
i. Minneapolis airport – fly out to other destinations – more direct flights – can’t get out of Des Moines without connecting - less costly – impressive airport; “my airport of choice – more to do”; leave car at hotel

9. Lodging?
   a. Airbnb
   b. Family/Friends
   c. Hotel cost not important to some (they’re there to have fun), but a key driver to others (staying in the suburbs, the West End, Country Inns & Suites, Embassy Suites on 494)
   d. Marriott/Hilton/Hyatt
   e. Stay downtown; park and walk; downtown costly and not much stuff for kids to do; not kid-friendly

10. Restaurants?
    a. Dining at locals, not chains, diners/drive-ins/dives, not necessarily high-end
    b. Burger Jones, The Melting Pot, French Meadow Bakery, Blackbird Cafe
    c. Plenty of options to choose from
    d. Wouldn’t take kids to St. Paul; small town
    e. Several participants agree with the sentiment that the two cities are a part of the “draw” to Minneapolis

11. What are you doing while in Minneapolis?
    a. Pro sports
    b. Restaurants
    c. Leisurely walks looking at architecture; like architecture and long walks
    d. St. Paul is different than Minneapolis: more historic and preserved versus new and growing
    e. Rented bikes
    f. Tailgating
    g. Photography – Minnehaha Falls, Stone Arch Bridge
    h. Cocktails
    i. People-watching
    j. Comedy club
    k. Theater (Broadway)
1. Historic – Mill City Museum
2. Walker Art Center
3. Bell Museum
4. U of M campus bookstore
5. Walking, biking, kayaking around/on the lakes
6. Shopping on Nicollet Mall (browsing)
7. Uptown (walking, eating, enjoying “eclecticism”, Art Fair, lakes, “lots there”)
8. Dinky town (tailgating)
9. St. Louis Park
10. Holidazzle is “awesome” for kids

12. Created a list of the activities they are not engaged in.
   a. MIA
   b. Parks
   c. The Guthrie Theater
   d. American Swedish Institute
   e. Live Music
   f. Craft Beer Breweries (have them in Des Moines)
   g. Riverfront; beside historic bridge, not much to draw you there

13. If staying with family & friends, do they act as guides?
   a. Yes
   b. A resource for ideas.

14. How do they talk about Minneapolis?

15. Wayfinding?
   a. Use apps, Garmin, Open Table, Yelp, TripAdvisor (Map-It and Tours)
   b. Just walk and see what looks exciting
   c. Hotel concierges / hotel maps
   d. Visitor center just over the Minnesota state line
   e. Walking around is not too difficult; key off of focal points
   f. Maps in skyways make them easy to navigate
   g. Driving easy with apps
   h. Some one-way streets are challenging; it’s a grid, but it’s turned; some tunnels confusing
   i. “Infrastructure is good”
   j. LRT from MOA to Nicollet is “phenomenal”

16. What’s missing?
   a. Outlet mall
   b. Entertainment District like Fremont Street in Las Vegas or the “Power & Light District” in Kansas City
c. Music Festivals
d. Farmers’ Market year-round
e. Target Field/Gophers tailgating
f. History tours by bus; River tours; neighborhood tours
g. Double-decker buses
h. Kids Activities
i. NASCAR Races
j. Theme parks
k. Christmas Market

17. How do you refer to Minneapolis?
   a. Minny
   b. The Cities
   c. Minneapolis

18. Does “Minneapolis” refer to the entire metropolitan area?
   a. Yes

19. What are Minneapolis icons?
   a. Metrodome
   b. Skyline
   c. Mall of America
   d. Stone Arch Bridge
   e. Spoonbridge

20. Are you familiar with the Midtown Global Market?
   a. No

21. How do Iowans develop professional sports teams loyalty, given there are none in the state?
   a. Dad
   b. Brought up
   c. Family
   d. What is broadcast on television
   e. Proximity to home

22. Do the Iowa collegiate games versus Minnesota draw you to Minneapolis?
   a. Yes

23. How can we encourage you to visit more often?
   a. Revamping sculpture garden
   b. Deals/coupons/groupons
   c. “Go Passes”
   d. Free tickets to Twins and Saints games
   e. Allow for tailgating
   f. Free bus transportation between attractions
g. Advertise – don’t see any advertising; see ads for Kansas City, Omaha, South Dakota, Missouri and Branson
h. Offer a Food+Wine Festival
i. Jazz Festival
j. Offer kids activities – park, playground
k. Advertise in weekly publications
24. Are you familiar with “Aquatennial?”
a. No

GROUP TWO: VISITED MINNEAPOLIS 2+ YEARS AGO

1. What words come to mind when you think of Minneapolis?
   a. Cold
   b. Close
   c. Twins
d. Mall of America
e. Children’s Hospital
f. Mayo
g. Lakes
h. Trails – jogging - outside
i. St. Paul Winter Carnival
j. Wolves
k. Gophers
l. Wild
m. Vikes
n. Minnesota Zoo
o. Minnehaha Falls
p. Snow
q. Sculpture Garden
r. Spoon & Cherry Sculpture
s. Road Construction
t. Skyways
u. Clean downtown
v. Nice atmosphere
w. Target Headquarters

2. When did you last visit Minneapolis?
   a. 1 year ago
   b. 2 ½ years ago
   c. 3 years ago
3. Why did you visit Minneapolis?
   a. Fly out of the airport – less expensive – even with a three-hour drive – one participant drives a rental car from Des Moines
   b. Shopping at Mall of America and IKEA (no taxes on clothing)
   c. Pro Sports
   d. Twins versus the Yankees (went to see the Yankees)
   e. Children’s Hospital
   f. Visit Family
   g. “Weekend Getaway” – 10 couples – went to the Wolves game – stayed at the Graves – a “nice experience”, proximity to Target Center and price considered in hotel selection (in that order)
   h. Guys weekend – partying downtown
   i. “Teachers Getaway” – provided reduced-price passes to Mall of America venues, Minnesota Zoo – took family – participant and her husband are educators
   j. Friends’ Weekend downtown – went to concert in local bar
   k. Attended kids’ sporting events
   l. College friends get-together
   m. Free transportation from Mayo in Rochester

4. Daytrips versus overnight stays?
   a. Most did not make daytrips.
   b. One participant has made medical visits, gone shopping and simply connected with friends

5. Why not visit more often?
   a. Busy life
   b. Money
   c. Distance = 7 hours round trip
   d. “World getting smaller - now easier to fly to Denver and other destinations”

6. What are alternative destinations to Minneapolis?
   a. Omaha = 2 hours drive
   b. Chicago = 5 hours drive
   c. St. Louis = 5 hours drive
   d. Kansas City = 3 hours drive
   e. Minneapolis = 4 hours drive
   f. Wisconsin Dells/Apple River = 5 hours drive

7. What are the criteria to choose from these cities?
   a. Events – what’s going on – concerts, sporting events
   b. Price
   c. Available activities
   d. Weather
   e. Chicago has public transportation and attractions all in close proximity to one another
8. How often do you visit these other cities?
   a. 2 times a year
   b. 4 to 5 times a year
   c. 6 to 7 times a year – one participant who has family in Chicago
   d. 5 times a month on business; often extends stay for leisure

9. How would you rate each of these cities on a scale of “1” to “10” as a destination?
   a. Chicago = 10; 8-9; 5
       i. Theater, Planetarium, Aquarium, Art Institute, Cubs, Wrigley Field, Natural History Museum, the Bears, pizza, shopping, trains from the airports into the city, Lake Michigan
   b. Minneapolis = 8; 6
       i. Casino outside of town, restaurants, IKEA, Minnesota Zoo, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Walker Art Center, “uncharted territory” (meaning things to do that they haven’t yet done), “young millennial liberal vibe”
   c. Kansas City = 8; 6; 5; 5
       i. Casino with free hotel, water park, amusement park, BBQ, variety of food, shopping, Country Club Plaza; 1-hour driving time advantage relative to Minneapolis, Power & Light Entertainment District, comparable to Minneapolis
   d. St. Louis = 7-8; 5
       i. Arch, Cardinals, Busch brewery, zoo (drive-through), Children’s Science Center, casino, amusement park
   e. Omaha = 8; 5; 2
       i. Zoo, college world series, nice airport, Market Brick Street (charming historic area), close to Des Moines

10. What activities did you engage in Minneapolis?
    a. Partying; a group of guys
    b. Arena concerts
    c. Twins games
    d. Visit friends and family
    e. Comedy club
    f. Wolves
    g. Shopping at IKEA
    h. Mid-Town Global Market
    i. Britt’s Pub
    j. Dinkytown
    k. Museum
    l. Minnehaha Falls
    m. Oakdale Mall
    n. Diners/Drive-Ins/Dives
11. You did not engage in these activities.
   a. Mississippi River
   b. Guthrie Theater
   c. Shopping
   d. Neighborhoods – no familiarity with the neighborhoods
   e. Craft Beer Breweries

12. How did you find “wayfinding” in Minneapolis?
   a. Confusing grid of streets – “twisted it” - not on a north-south orientation
   b. Freeways are confusing
   c. Skyways are nice in the winter and have good signage (one participant)
   d. No one used public transportation

13. What hotels did you stay at in Minneapolis?
   a. Millennium
   b. Graves
   c. Best Western

14. What restaurants did you eat at?
   a. Juicy Lucy

15. Does Minneapolis have any icons?
   a. Lakes
   b. “Twin Cities”- Minneapolis and St. Paul separated by the river; very unique
   c. Prince
   d. Metrodome
   e. Target Field
   f. Mall of America
   g. Sculpture Garden – Spoon Bridge – friends post photographs of it on Facebook

16. Of those staying with family or friends, do your hosts act as guides?
   a. Of only four participants who stay with family and friends, most hosts act as guides

17. How do your hosts talk about Minneapolis?
   a. “Pro Minneapolis”

18. How do you refer to “Minneapolis”?
   a. “IKEA”
   b. “Minneapolis”
   c. “Minneapolis”
   d. “Small Apple” – a positive
   e. “Twin Cities”
   f. “Minnesota”

19. How can we encourage you to visit more often?
   a. “Promote activities”
b. Communicate the activities that you have.
c. Provide “packages” for families
d. Create a “City Pass”: Two day; hop on/off tours at “World of Fun” Amusement Park
e. Public transportation with clear signage

20. What destinations provide a really good visitor experience?
   a. Vancouver – good signage and public transportation
   b. Washington, D.C. – the Metro
   c. Orlando – packaging and promotion
   d. Chicago – City Pass
   e. St. Louis – City Pass

21. With no professional sports franchises in Iowa, how do people develop team loyalty?
   a. What you grow up with; the family influence
   b. Local farm teams connection to pro franchises

22. Do you follow the Iowa collegiate teams to Minneapolis?
   a. Iowans refer to “Kinnick North” (Kinnick Stadium University of Iowa); there are more Iowans attending Gopher games than Minnesotans.

23. What are good destinations for kids?
   a. Those with kids do not take them to Minneapolis
   b. Kansas City theme parks
   c. St. Louis arch
   d. Omaha zoo
   e. St. Paul zoo
   f. Minneapolis baseball games

24. What can we (Minneapolis) do better?
   a. Marketing: direct mail, billboards, TV advertising
   b. “Not breaking through”
   c. Promote events on Facebook
   d. Advertise on social media
   e. Promote lakes and fishing – “Land of Lakes”
   f. Promote LRT, craft beer breweries
   g. Develop walking tours – museums, craft beer breweries
   h. Promote neighborhoods
   i. Promote something that we can’t get anywhere else, e.g. arena concerts
   j. Minneapolis is “only slightly larger than Des Moines”
   k. Most did not agree with this when probed.
   l. “Don’t know enough about it”; most agreed with this.
   m. Develop regional packages with Wisconsin Dells and free transportation between the two