

***CHICAGO VISITORS
FOCUS GROUPS
REPORT OF FINDINGS***

Kevin Hanstad and Bill Deef
June 30, 2016

DESTINATION TRANSFORMATION 2030

MINNEAPOLIS TOURISM MASTER PLAN

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. Three percent (3%) originate from Chicago. Tourist focus groups were conducted in Fargo on April 11th, Des Moines on May 19th and Chicago on June 27th. The reports of findings from the Fargo and Des Moines studies has been previously published. This document reports the findings from the Chicago groups.

OBJECTIVE

To gain an understanding of Chicago 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.*

METHOLDOLGY

- Two two-hour focus groups were conducted on Monday, June 27th, 2016 in Schaumburg, Illinois.
- 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*
 - *50/50 Millennials to Xers/Boomers*
 - *50/50 Residents of the city of Chicago versus the suburbs of Chicago*
 - *Annual household income of \$50,000 +*
 - *Three non-Caucasians*
 - *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 (10 Participants)*
 - *Group Two: Visited and stayed overnight in the city two or more years ago (11 Participants)*
 - *No more than two to three participants per group could travel to Minneapolis primarily on business*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VISITED WITHIN PAST 12 MONTHS	VISITED 2+ YEARS AGO
Positive Images: Lakes, Nature, MOA, Target Field, Corporate HQs, Good Restaurants, Relaxed (Easier than Chicago)	<i>Images: MOA, Cold, Lakes, Pro Sports, Corporate HQs</i>
<i>Reasons for Visit: Family, Friends, MOA, Business, Arena Concerts</i>	Visits are Obligatory: Family, Friends, MOA, and Business. “Not a reason to go beyond family, or a specific reason such as a wedding or to visit the MOA.”
<i>Hotels & Restaurants Held in High Regard</i>	Reasons for Lack of Return: “Nothing really appealing.” “They don’t promote themselves a lot.”
Activities: MOA, Pro Sports, Arena Concerts, Outdoors (Walking, Biking, Winter)	<i>Activities: MOA, Pro Sports, Arena Concerts</i>
Extreme Lack of Awareness of Anything Else To Do	<i>Complete Lack of Awareness of Anything Else To Do</i>
<i>Arts & Culture Available in Chicago</i>	<i>“If something special, and you have a passion for it, people will go; but if you just say ‘museums’, they will not go.”</i>
Suggested Improvements: Advertise, Promotion Packages, Tours	Suggested Improvements: Advertise, Promote “Quintessential Minneapolis”, “Put a positive spin on the cold”

IMPLICATIONS

- *Minneapolis is comfortable for tourists from big cities.*
- *For many, beyond the siren call of family, friends and the MOA, there is no reason to visit.*
- *Visits to MOA are akin to a pilgrimage for the benefit of the kids or checking-off an adult’s bucket list.*
- *Propensity to visit is significantly reduced because of an extreme lack of awareness of all that Minneapolis offers.*
- *This lack of awareness is directly related to the absence of advertising and promotion.*
- *Generically touting the arts & culture of Minneapolis is not enticing. A “hook” is required, e.g. an extremely special event or exhibit that cannot easily be found elsewhere.*
- *Contradicts the popular notion that all visitors love Minneapolis and want to return.*

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DETAILED FINDINGS

GROUP ONE: VISITED MINNEAPOLIS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

1. When you think of Minneapolis what words come to mind?
 - a. *Lakes*
 - b. *Nature*
 - c. *Mall of America*
 - d. *Target Field*
 - e. *Fishing*
 - f. *Outdoor activities*
 - g. *Twins*
 - h. *Ice Hockey*
 - i. *Cold winters*
 - j. *Kevin Garnett*
 - k. *Ecolab*
 - l. *Target*
 - m. *More houses than apartments and condos; different than Chicago*
 - n. *Bars close early*
 - o. *Biking trails*
 - p. *Mississippi River*
 - q. *Good restaurants*
 - r. *Less expensive than Chicago; cost-of-living is less*
 - s. *No sales tax on clothing*
 - t. *Less hectic/laid-back relative to Chicago*
 - u. *Minnesotans don't know how to merge on freeways*
 - v. *Minnesotans don't honk the horn; so timid*
 - w. *Minnesota "Nice"*
 - x. *Friendly; more friendly than Chicago*
 - y. *Mayo Sports Clinic*
 - z. *Cutting-edge medicine*
 - aa. *Rochester*
 - bb. *Asian immigrants*
 - cc. *Somali immigrants*
 - dd. *Cutting-edge of health care; Mayo Clinic*
 - ee. *Politically liberal*
 - ff. *Green; more green than Chicago*
 - gg. *Less populated than Chicago*

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- hh. Nature in the city*
- ii. 10,000 Lakes*

2. How often do you visit Minneapolis?

- a. Once a year*
- b. Twice a year (two)*
- c. 3X a year*
- d. 4 to 5 times a year for work (extended stays twice)*
- e. Few times a year*

3. How did you travel to Minneapolis?

- a. Four flew*
- b. Two Drove (~ a 6-hour drive)*

4. Why did you visit Minneapolis?

- a. Daughter had a dance competition at the convention center and went shopping at MOA*
- b. Long weekend before business in Red Wing; went to MOA*
- c. Quick trip; stayed at Marriott downtown*
- d. Visiting friends twice a year*
- e. Business once a year*
- f. Visited family; went to MOA and Nickelodeon*
- g. Visiting family*
- h. State Fair and Prairie Home Companion*
- i. Arena concert (less hassle and less expensive than in Chicago)*
- j. City experience*
- k. Concert (small theater)*
- l. Less expensive than Chicago; quick getaway*
- m. "Wouldn't go if I didn't have friends there"*

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5. Rate each of these destinations on a scale of “One” to “Ten”; “One” indicates not such a good destination and “Ten” indicates an outstanding destination

Indianapolis	Kansas City	Milwaukee	Minneapolis	St. Louis
8	9	8	9	8
7	8	8	9	8
5	7	7	9	7
5		6	9	7
2		6	7	7
1		5	7	
			6	
			4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Short Drive -Loud & Crowded -Due To Convention -Dirty Hotel -Run-down/dirty -Motor Speedway -Friendly -St. Elmo’s Steakhouse -Indy 500 -Underwhelming -Not Exciting -Spread Out -Football -Getaway -Redneck town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Football -Wholesome; Family - Like -Cold -Super Nice People -Great BBQ -Baseball Museum -No one in a rush -Less Expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cubs Game at Miller Park -Summerfest -Neighborhood festivals -Cheese -Beer -German Food -Breweries -Small Music Festivals -Feels like a far north suburb of Chicago -Some go just for dinner -Go w/regularity -1.5 hour drive -Weekend getaway -50/50 overnights vs. daytrips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long Weekend Getaway -Most Fly; A Few Drive -Biking / Hiking -Restaurants -Shop -Stay Downtown -MOA -Sporting events: hockey, Cubs vs. Twins -Visit Family & Friends -Nightlife downtown -Bars around the University -Boating on the St. Croix -Walking Paths -Craft breweries -Easy; easier than Chicago -Hard to Get Around; Need a Car -But Less Congested than Chicago -Airport Separated into Two Terminals -LRT “Pretty Cool” & Easy -Downtown Convenient Walk from MCC -“Feels Safer There”; “More Comfortable” -More Relaxed; Less Congestion than Chicago -“Incredibly Safe Around the Lakes” -“Crime Like Anywhere Else, But Perception is that it is Safer in Minneapolis” -“Diet Canada (American Version) Quieter, Slower, Friendlier, Healthier” -“City can Handle Snow; an Opportunity to Have Fun” -“People Embrace Winter in Minneapolis; They Don’t in Chicago”; X-Country Skiing, Ice Fishing” -“City really shines in the winter” 	

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6. What Midwest destinations do you go to?

- a. *Door County*
- b. *Omaha*
- c. *Green Bay*
- d. *Galena*
- e. *Dubuque*
- f. *Wisconsin Dells*
- g. *Madison*
- h. *Nashville*
- i. *Cincinnati*
- j. *St. Louis*
- k. *Detroit*

7. What resources do you use to plan a trip?

- a. *Proximity to restaurants*
- b. *I need a gym at my hotel*
- c. *Top results in search engines*
- d. *Always stay downtown and not have a car; cab-it, Uber or walk*
- e. *Location is key; no car; use public transportation or cabs*
- f. *Google "Things to do in Minneapolis."*
- g. *TripAdvisor*
- h. *Expedia, then call hotel directly to book and tell them going to book with Expedia to get better rate from the hotel*
- i. *No one is aware of Meet Minneapolis web site*

8. Lodging?

- a. *Holiday Inn Express*
- b. *Hilton*
- c. *Marriott Downtown*
- d. *Loew's – "really nice"*
- e. *Radisson Blu Downtown*
- f. *"As good as Chicago"*
- g. *"Clean"*
- h. *"Friendly experience"*
- i. *"Less expensive than Chicago"*

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9. Restaurants?

- a. *"Lot's to choose from"*
- b. *"Chicago has them beat with more to choose from"*
- c. *"Farm to Table: green, vegetables and fresh"*
- d. *Meets the "no-chain rule"*
- e. *Newsroom*
- f. *Smack Shack: "phenomenal"*
- g. *Brit's*
- h. *Hell's Kitchen*
- i. *The Bachelor Farmer*
- j. *Red Cow*

10. What did you do while in Minneapolis?

- a. *Arena concert*
- b. *Twins game*
- c. *MOA*
- d. *Walking paths*
- e. *Eating and drinking*
- f. *"Dive places" for local beers*
- g. *Football*
- h. *Toured the University of Minnesota*
- i. *Surly*
- j. *Red Cow*
- k. *Record shop*
- l. *Timberwolves game at Target Center*
- m. *Biking/blading around the lakes*
- n. *Tubing in Winter near Blaine*
- o. *St. Paul Winter Carnival*

11. You did not mention the following. Why not engaging in these activities? (Museums, Parks, Mississippi River, Orchestra, Theater, Tap Beer Rooms)

- a. *Can do these things in Chicago; better offerings in Chicago*
- b. *Want to relax in Minneapolis*
- c. *Parks are better in Minneapolis, but it doesn't have Lincoln Park nor Navy Pier*
- d. *"No reason to go"*

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12. Among those who took children to Minneapolis, what did you do?

- a. *MOA/Nickelodeon*
- b. *Pro sports; Minnesota Twins*
- c. *Target Field*

13. Did you use the LRT?

- a. *Yes; "easy"*

14. What was your "wayfinding" experience?

- a. *Used apps; Google Maps*
- b. *I always have to use a car in Minneapolis*
- c. *"Nice place to walk around"*
- d. *Easy to navigate*
- e. *Fewer panhandlers than in Chicago*

15. What can Minneapolis do better as a tourist destination?

- a. *"More tours; insider tours off the beaten path", e.g. craft beer walking tours*
- b. *Create a condensed party area*
- c. *"Don't open up Paisley Park to the public"*
- d. *"Create packages, e.g. art exhibits"*
 - i. *Weekend Packages: brunch, drinks, dinner, concert*
 - ii. *Enjoy the lakes right there and then still go downtown for nightlife*
- e. *"Advertise – don't see or hear anything about Minneapolis; Michigan has heavy advertising"*
 - i. *Tell us what is going on; don't know anything about what is going on in Minnesota*
 - ii. *Minneapolis is not the first place I am going to look at*
- f. *Make us aware of attractions other than the MOA*
- g. *Make house rentals easier for families*
- h. *Stillwater is similar to Door County*
- i. *Music festivals*
- j. *Promote water activities*
- k. *Air and Water Show*

16. How do you refer to Minneapolis? What do you call it?

- a. *Twin Cities (most think of the area as one large city)*
- b. *Minnesota*
- c. *Minneapolis*

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17. Why do you go to MOA to shop when the Woodfield Mall is right in your backyard?

- a. *Amusement park is great.*
- b. *And they bring big events there.*
- c. *“Appeals to everyone” – shopping, Nickelodeon, restaurants*
- d. *One-stop shopping.*
- e. *Teenagers love MOA.*
- f. *No sales tax.*
- g. *They advertise in Chicago.*
- h. *More of a destination due to the kids.*

18. Does Minneapolis have any icons?

- a. *Lakes*
- b. *MOA*
- c. *Metrodome*
- d. *Twins*
- e. *Paisley Park*

19. Would a respectful tribute to Prince be of interest?

- a. *Yes*

20. Would promotion of the music scene be of interest?

- a. *Most unaware of the Minneapolis music scene*
- b. *To those aware, or simply interested in music, makes sense*

21. Did you venture into the neighborhoods?

- a. *Uptown, yes*
- b. *Unaware of Northeast*

22. How do your family and friends talk about Minneapolis?

- a. *They love it; settled for life.*
- b. *Love the outdoors – running, biking, healthy environment*
- c. *Love the parks, bike trails*
- d. *Can buy property with a yard that is affordable; housing is too expensive in Chicago.*

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GROUP TWO: VISITED MINNEAPOLIS 2+ YEARS AGO

1. When you think of Minneapolis what words come to mind?

- a. *Prince*
- b. *Shopping – MOA*
- c. *Cold*
- d. *Lakes*
- e. *Vikings*
- f. *Ice Fishing*
- g. *Hockey*
- h. *Snow*
- i. *Museums*
- j. *Mayo at Rochester*
- k. *Paul McCartney Concert*
- l. *Land of 10,000 Lakes*
- m. *Lake Minnetonka*
- n. *University of Minnesota*
- o. *Series of Tunnels Downtown*
- p. *Eden Prairie leather outlet*
- q. *Target HQ*
- r. *Target Field*
- s. *Twins*
- t. *Farm to Table Restaurants*
- u. *Lots of Corporate HQs*
- v. *LRT – nice and easy to get around*

2. When was the last time you visited Minneapolis?

- a. *2 to 3 Years Ago*
- b. *3 to 4 Years Ago*
- c. *7 to 10 Years Ago*
- d. *5 Years Ago*
- e. *15 Years Ago*

3. Why have you not visited more recently?

- a. *“Nothing really appealing.”*
- b. *Better alternatives*
- c. *Alternatives with warmer weather*
- d. *“Not sure what makes it noteworthy beyond Prince”. I’m not aware of any renowned art museums, galleries, theaters.”*
- e. *“They don’t promote themselves a lot.”*

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- f. *“Not a reason to go beyond family, or a specific reason such as a wedding or to visit the MOA”*
- g. *“So close to Chicago, doesn’t feel like a vacation”*
- h. *City-feel like Chicago; looking for a vacation; want something different*
- i. *“Seen it once, don’t need to go back”*
- j. *“I travel for culture; don’t see much culture - music or food.”*
- k. *“Poor marketing; all those lakes there but no marketing about what I can do by or on the lakes. No clever slogan; need a slogan like Michigan”*
- l. *“Land of 10,000 lakes means nothing; I don’t fish or boat”*

4. Why did you visit Minneapolis?

- a. *Visit friends in college*
- b. *Wedding*
- c. *Business*
- d. *Exploring colleges*
- e. *Went to the MOA with the kids and a baseball game*
- f. *Baseball game*
- g. *Boating on Lake Minnetonka*
- h. *Went to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, then went to visit family and friends in MSP and went to the MOA*
- i. *Have friends in the area*
- j. *Conference*
- k. *Visit the University*
- l. *College visit*
- m. *MOA*

5. What Midwest destinations do you go to?

- a. *Door County*
- b. *St. Louis*
- c. *Madison*
- d. *Lake Geneva*
- e. *Milwaukee*
- f. *Wisconsin Dells*
- g. *Traverse City, MI*
- h. *Kohler, WI*
- i. *Dubuque, IA*
- j. *Galina, IL*
- k. *Kansas City*

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6. Rate each of these destinations on a scale of “One” to “Ten”; “One” indicates not such a good destination and “Ten” indicates an outstanding destination

Kansas City	Milwaukee	Minneapolis	St. Louis	Indianapolis
5	9	6	7	
4	6	6	7	
2	5	5	6	
	5	5	5	
	1	5	5	
	1	5		
	1	5		
		4		
		4		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Arts District is really cool -Nice Art Museum -Great BBQ -Plaza Area, like Michigan Avenue - Power & Light District -Royals -“Too far to drive to for what you get once you get there.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Close; 1.5 hours away -Concerts -Summerfest -Smaller, quainter version of Chicago -Public Market (indoor) -Casino -Restaurants -Harley-Davidson Museum -Cheese Castle (Kenosha) -Bars -Cheaper Concerts -Cheaper Baseball Tickets -Dirty; Chicago is cleaner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cold -More snow than Chicago; tough to drive -First Avenue; grimy, old, run-down -Lack of main attractions beyond MOA -“Time to drive up there, probably not worth it” -Lots of outdoor activities: bike-friendly, kayaking, enticing -Good restaurants -Uptown: great shopping; neighborhood like Lincoln Park with nice stores -Everything accessible by car within 20” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cardinals -Arch -Budweiser Clydesdales -“The Hill” Italian Neighborhood -Laclede’s Landing -“Sweetie Pies” Soul Food Restaurant -Crime! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Children’s Museum -Racetrack -“Not a place I would necessarily go back to; seen it once and that was enough” -Saw motorcycle races -“The city doesn’t offer a whole lot.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icons -BBQ -Music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icons -Miller Park -Breweries/Beer -Cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icons -MOA -Lake Superior -Lakes -Mayo Clinic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icons -Arch -Budweiser -Clydesdales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icons -Indy 500

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7. How did you travel to Minneapolis?

- a. *½ by car and ½ flew*

8. What are the criteria by which you select a destination for a weekend getaway?

- a. *Things that are fun to do*
- b. *Things to do that are different from here*
- c. *Rural – get away from city*
- d. *Relaxing*
- e. *Can explore somewhere new*
- f. *Close proximity to Chicago*
- g. *Historic sites, museums, activities*
- h. *Cultural – food, music, unique to the area*
- i. *Lifestyle of the people that live there*
- j. *Good weather*
- k. *Affordable hotels*
- l. *Transportation within the city*
- m. *Lots to do for a wide range of ages*

9. What did you do while you were in Minneapolis?

- a. *MOA*
- b. *Embassy Suites at MOA*
- c. *Twins at the Metrodome*
- d. *Boating on Lake Minnetonka*
- e. *Paul McCartney Concert at Target Center*
- f. *Movies*
- g. *Shopping in Uptown*
- h. *Restaurants*

10. You did not mention the following. Why are you not engaging in these activities? (Museums, Theater, Mississippi River, Live Music, Orchestra)

- a. *“I think people are not aware of them.”*
- b. *“If something special, and you have a passion for it, people will go; but if you just say ‘museums’, they will not go.”*
- c. *Too far away when we have them in Chicago.*
- d. *Nothing unique in downtown Minneapolis; no icons.*
- e. *The Mississippi River is only a secondary draw if there were something else even more inviting to see or do. “Why will I spend six hours driving for a river?”*

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11. What can Minneapolis do to attract you to the city?

- a. *More promotion.*
- b. *Music festivals*
- c. *Restaurants*
- d. *“What kind of food are you known for?”*
- e. *Noteworthy annual events*
- f. *“Quintessential Minneapolis; what is the New Orleans beignet or jambalaya in Minneapolis?”*
- g. *“Very green in Minneapolis; fall is a beautiful time of year.”*
- h. *“Put a positive spin on the cold; snowmobiling”*
- i. *“I know people, including me, who will drive five to six hours to go snowmobiling.”*
- j. *Things to do by age groups*
- k. *Create the equivalent of the Wisconsin Dells*
- l. *Prince tribute, e.g. Motown Museum or Graceland*

12. How do you refer to Minneapolis? What do you call it?

- a. *Minneapolis*
- b. *Mall of America*
- c. *Land of 10,000 Lakes*

13. Have you seen any Explore Minnesota advertising?

- a. *No.*
- b. *They have high awareness of Michigan advertising and Tim Allen’s voiceover; “relaxing”.*

14. Why did you visit the MOA?

- a. *Stores and roller coaster make it a special indoor amusement park.*
- b. *“All the people. It’s exciting. It’s cool.”*
- c. *Size of the mall and the variety of stores (variety in both offerings and price)*
- d. *“It’s the biggest in the country. That’s special. I went on a roller coaster ride. I can say I went there.”*
- e. *“If you have kids, you definitely have to go to the mall.”*

15. Have you been to St. Paul?

- a. *A few have.*
- b. *The participants view Minneapolis and St. Paul as one big city.*