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TOURISM CENTER

Itasca Area Visitor Profile: First Quarter Summary (Fall 2014)

Authored by Xinyi Qian, Ph.D., and Daniel Erkkila, Ph.D.

PROGRAM SPONSOR: College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota

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January 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, Visit Grand Rapids, the Convention and Visitor Bureau in Grand Rapids, collaborated with a variety of entities to fund a profile of visitors to the Itasca area from fall 2014 to summer 2015. Below is a summary of first-quarter findings—fall 2014 (September through November 2014).

RESPONDENTS

More than half (56 percent) of first-quarter respondents were male, and two-thirds were between the age of 41 and 70. The annual household income of about 43 percent of respondents was in the range of \$50,001 - \$100,000. Additionally, more than 30 percent had a bachelor's degree and another 19 percent had some college education. The majority of first-quarter respondents were repeat visitors, as 86 percent made between one and 10 visits to the Itasca area in the past 12 months.

2014 FALL QUARTER TRIP INFORMATION

The majority of first-quarter respondents indicated the Itasca area was their primary destination (82 percent) and spent between one and three nights in the area (68 percent). The most frequently chosen lodging facility is a hotel or motel (50 percent), and more than 90 percent of respondents arrived in the Itasca area by car, van, or truck. Close to half (46 percent) of respondents traveled in a group of two, and about 32 percent traveled with family. In terms of spending, the highest spending category was lodging, followed by other fishing-related expenses, restaurants/bars, shopping, and transportation. The average first-quarter respondent spent a total of \$181 a day in the Itasca area, although the number varies widely from visitor to visitor.

TRIP ACTIVITIES, PURPOSE, AND PLANNING

The most frequently identified trip activity is dining out (82.5 percent), followed distantly by visiting friends/relatives (25.5 percent) and sightseeing (23.6 percent). Visiting family and friends was the most frequently identified primary reason for taking the trip (20 percent). In terms of trip planning, about 35 percent of first-quarter respondents planned their trip less than two weeks in advance, and another 27 percent planned the trip two to four weeks in advance. Word of mouth was the most frequently used information source (46.8 percent), followed by area/destination website (18.3 percent).

IMPACT AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The majority of first-quarter respondents (71 percent) did not change their original trip plans based on social media information. Close to 40 percent of respondents reported they would use mobile devices more to share information about the trip. The three most frequently identified medium for sharing trip information were word of mouth (65.6 percent), text messages (39.5 percent), and Facebook (38.5 percent).

INTRODUCTION

Consumer profile information is essential for tourism marketing and planning. In the Itasca area, comprehensive consumer information dates back to 2002 (Tourism Center, 2002). Subsequently, Visit Grand Rapids, the city’s convention and visitor bureau, collaborated with various entities to fund a profile of visitors to the Itasca area from fall 2014 to summer 2015. This summary report presents the methods and findings of the first quarter—fall 2014 (September through November 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Trained staff administered on-site, in-person questionnaires to Itasca-area visitors during fall 2014, specifically between September 14 and November 30.

Study Setting

Itasca County, with a 2013 population of 45,564 residents, is located in Northeast Minnesota (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Boasting many lakes and the Chippewa National Forest, the county is a major tourism destination in Minnesota and attracts visitors from the upper Midwest and parts of Canada.

Sampling

A convenience sample was designed to reach fall tourists visiting the Itasca area. Based on discussions with Visit Grand Rapids, sample sites were distributed into four quadrants: the city of Grand Rapids proper, northwest of Grand Rapids, northeast of Grand Rapids, and south of Grand Rapids. Specifically, sample sites were located across eight communities in the Itasca area: Bigfork, Bowstring Lake, Cohasset, Coleraine, Deer River, Grand Rapids, Marcell, and Swan River. Data collection took place on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and a small number of weekdays throughout the fall quarter.

Sampling quotas for each quadrant were constructed based upon 2013 lodging tax receipts. Visit Grand Rapids was consulted to provide specific sampling sites (e.g., attractions, lodging facilities, restaurants) and subsequently made initial contact with site management to ask for their participation. Questionnaires were collected at a total of 36 sites throughout the Itasca area. All questionnaires were administered in person by surveyors hired and trained by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center.

Approaching and Screening Respondents

Two screening questions assured each survey respondent was an adult tourist (Figure 1). For the purpose of this study, a tourist was anyone who traveled at least 50 miles from their primary residence to the area. As an incentive, respondents were included in a quarterly drawing to win a \$100 gift certificate at participating businesses in the Itasca County area.

1. Do you live 50 miles or less to the Itasca area? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Thank/terminate) <input type="checkbox"/> No (Continue)
2. Are you 18 years old or older? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Continue) <input type="checkbox"/> No (Ask if an adult is present; if no, terminate)

Fig. 1: Screening questions for potential respondents of the 2014 Itasca area visitor survey.

Questionnaire

An onsite questionnaire was developed based on past research and with the assistance of Visit Grand Rapids. Questionnaire sections included trip motivation, spending, activities, accommodations, transportation, group composition, planning and information sources, and basic demographics (Appendix A).

Response Rate

Throughout the fall quarter of data collection, surveyors obtained a total of 511 questionnaires from eligible tourists. Only two questionnaires were unusable, thus 509 questionnaires were used for analysis. Nearly half (49.49 percent) of respondents were contacted in November (Figure 2), and the majority (80.04 percent) were contacted on a weekend (Friday afternoon through Sunday; Figure 3). More than 40 percent of respondents completed the questionnaire while in a lodging facility (Figure 4).

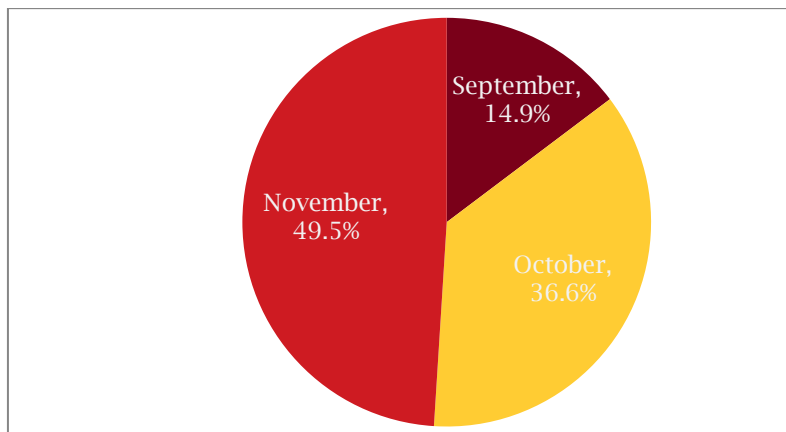


Fig. 2: Month respondents completed 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

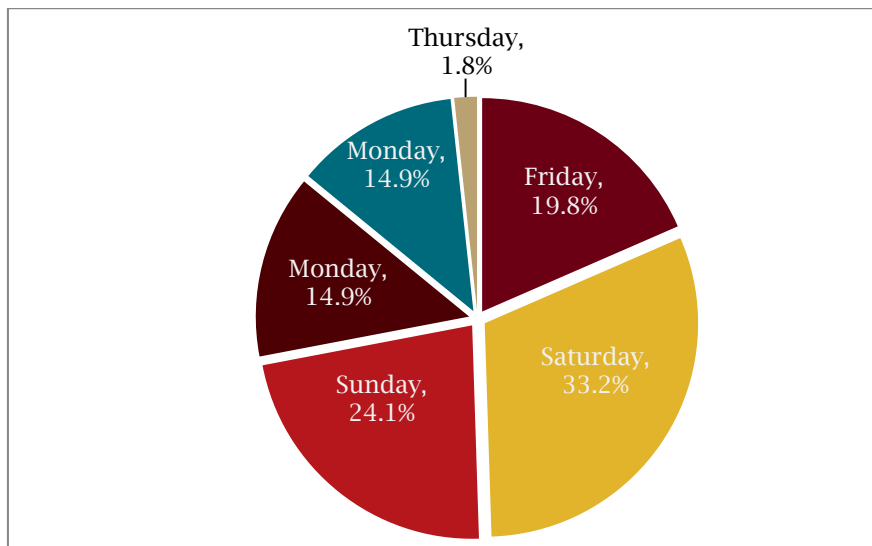


Fig. 3: Day of the week respondents completed 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

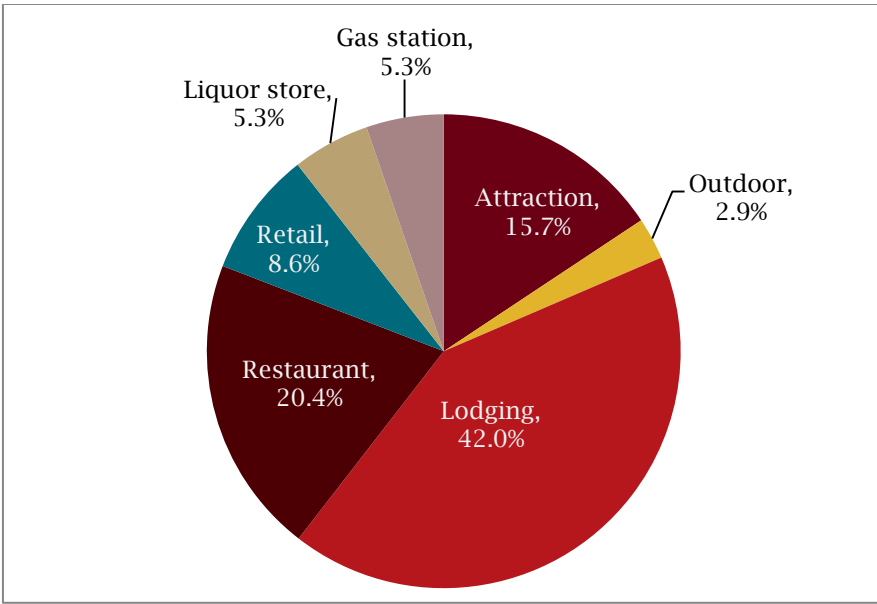


Fig. 4: Location where respondents completed 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

Analysis

Completed questionnaires were entered, cleaned, and checked in SPSS (version 22.0), a social science statistical analysis software. Analysis provided frequencies, means, medians, and standard deviations to describe the sample and provide information on variables of interest. Trade area analysis was conducted to create a customized trade area, based on the primary residence of visitors.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

More than half (56 percent) of first-quarter respondents were male (Figure 5). The average age of respondents was 51 years old ($M=52$, $Mdn=53$, $SD=14$ ¹). Close to a quarter of the respondents (23.6 percent) were between 51 and 60 years old, followed closely by the 41-50 (21.6 percent) and the 61-70 (21.6 percent) age groups (Figure 6). In the first quarter, the household income of about 23 percent of respondents was in the \$50,001-\$75,000 range, followed by the \$75,001-\$100,000 range (19.3 percent; Figure 7). In terms of educational level, more than 30 percent of respondents had a bachelor's degree (32.2 percent), and close to 20 percent had some college education (19.3 percent; Figure 8).

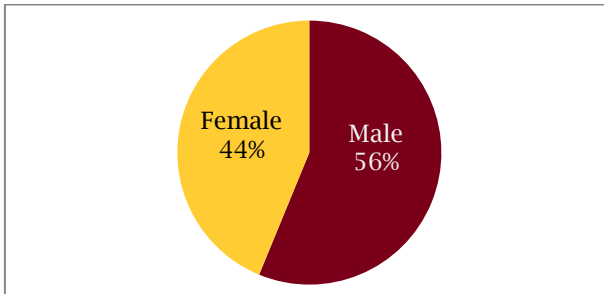


Fig 5: Gender of 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=480).

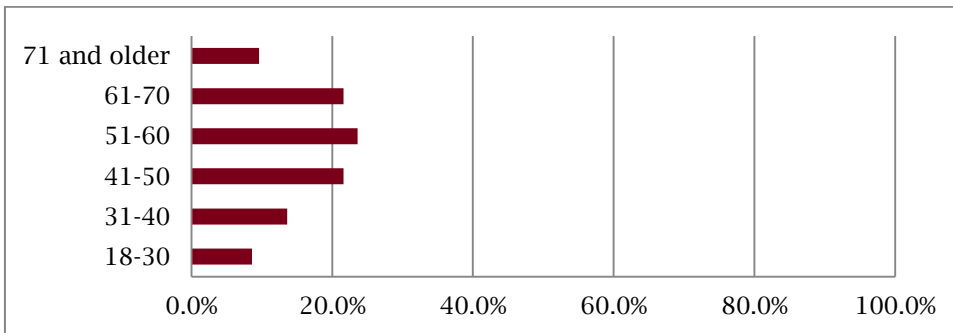


Fig. 6: Percentage of 2014 Itasca area visitor survey (first quarter) respondents in various age brackets (n=502).

¹ M=mean, Mdn=Median, SD=Standard Deviation

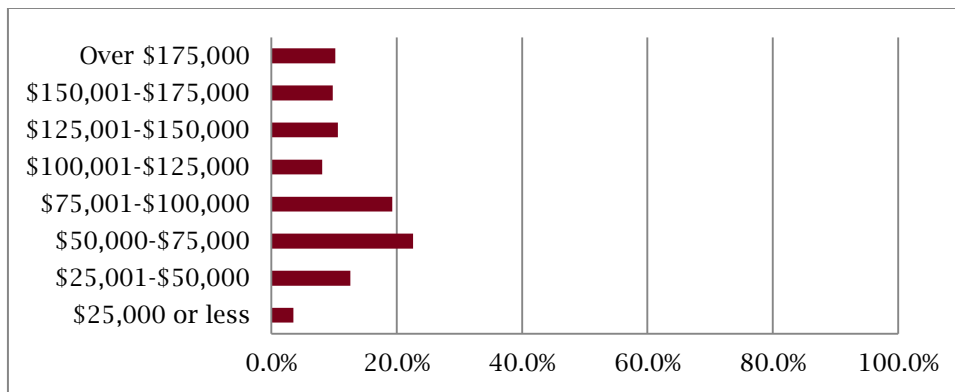


Fig. 7: Percentage of 2014 Itasca area visitor survey (first quarter) respondents in pre-tax income groups (n=492).

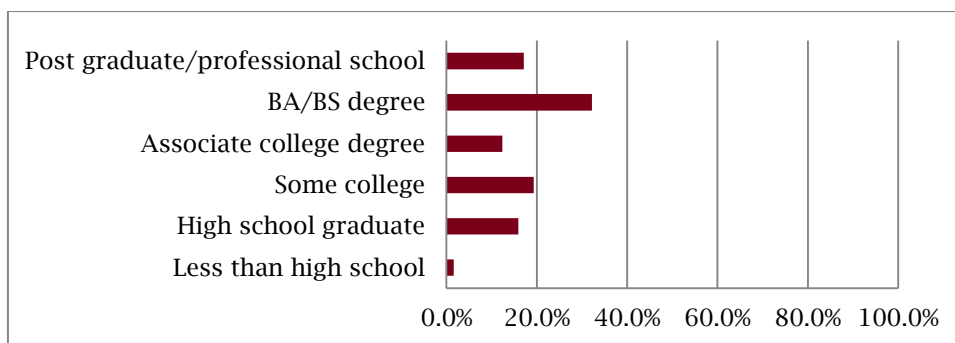


Fig. 8: Educational level of respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=501).

Primary residence

Approximately 80 percent of first-quarter respondents resided in the state of Minnesota, as indicated by a centroid analysis of the zip codes of respondents’ primary residence (Figure 9). Three percent came from Wisconsin, and another 2.5 percent came from North Dakota (Table 1). The Minneapolis-St. Paul Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA), which encompasses an 11-county area in Minnesota and Wisconsin, was home to 45 percent of first-quarter respondents, followed by Duluth, MN-WI (12 percent), Brainerd, MN (5 percent), and St. Cloud, MN (3 percent; Table 1). There were also three respondents who came from Canada.

Table 1: Primary place of residence of 2014 Itasca area visitor survey respondents, first quarter (n=493).

Top 5 states		Top 5 Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSA)	
State	Percent (%)	CBSA	Percent (%)
Minnesota	80.33	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	44.72
Wisconsin	3.11	Duluth, MN-WI	11.80
North Dakota	2.48	Brainerd, MN	5.38
Illinois	1.66	St. Cloud, MN	3.11
Michigan	1.66	Mankato-North Mankato, MN	1.66

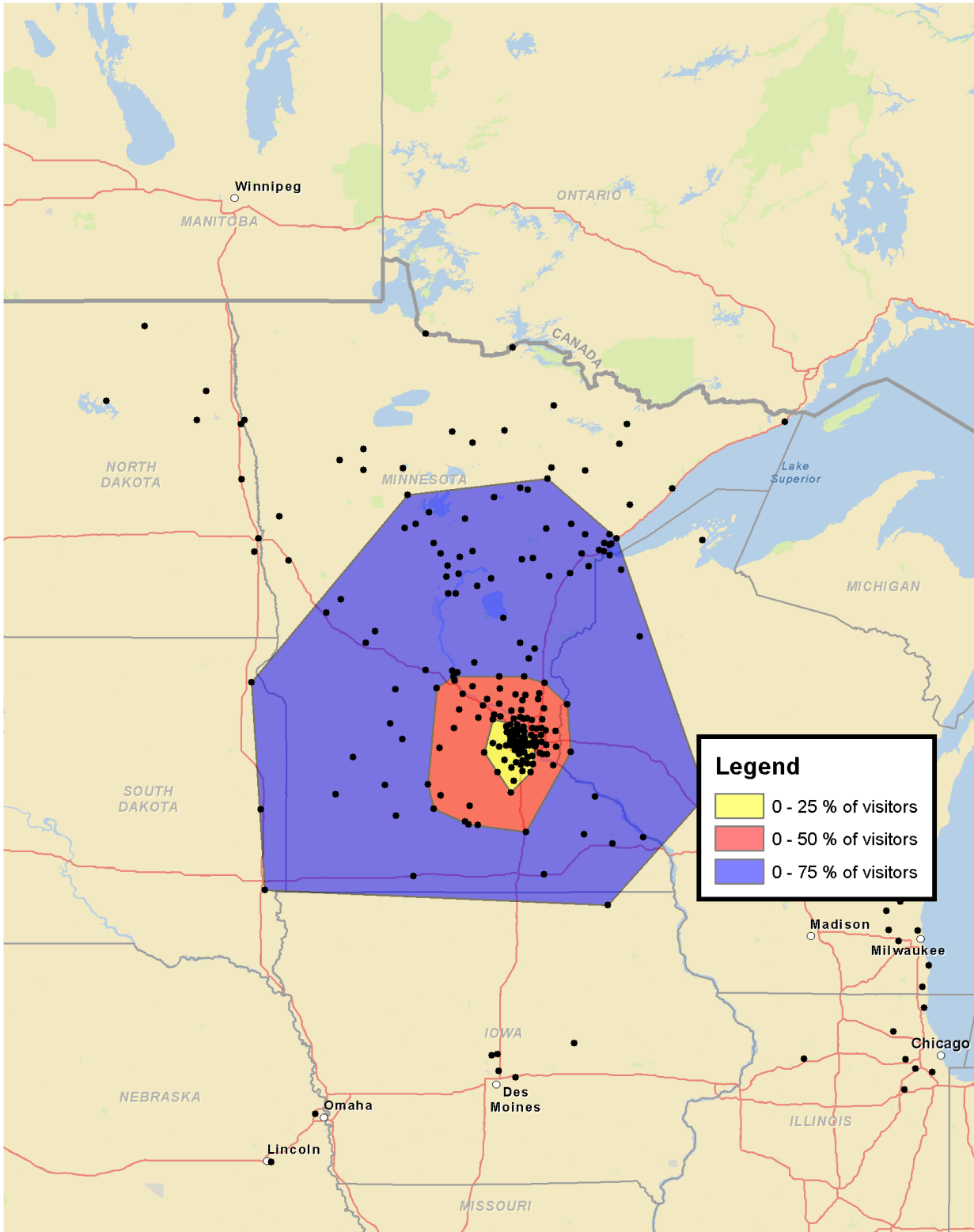


Fig. 9: Trade area of 2014 Itasca area visitor survey respondents (n=493).

Past visitation

First-quarter respondents made a median of two visits to the Itasca area in the past 12 months and a median of six visits in the past five years (Table 2). Specifically, more than 85 percent of first-quarter respondents made between one and 10 visits to the Itasca area in the past 12 months (Figure 10), and more than 60 percent (60.5 percent) made between one and 10 visits in the past five years (Figure 11).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of past visitation by respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter.

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Number of visits in past 12 months (n=458)	5.47	2	8.09
Number of visits in past 5 years (n=424)	22.36	6	40.59

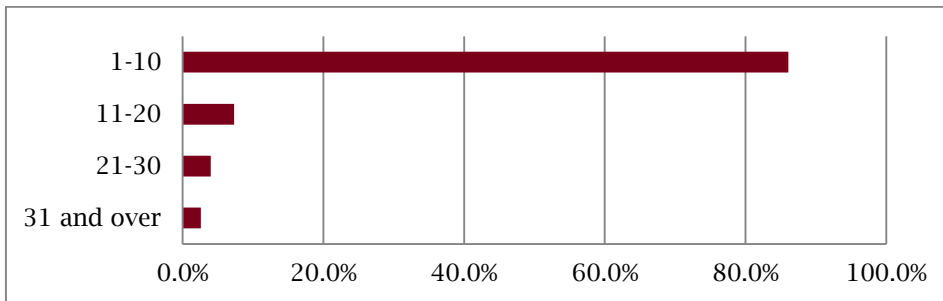


Fig. 10: Number of visits in the past 12 months by respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=423).

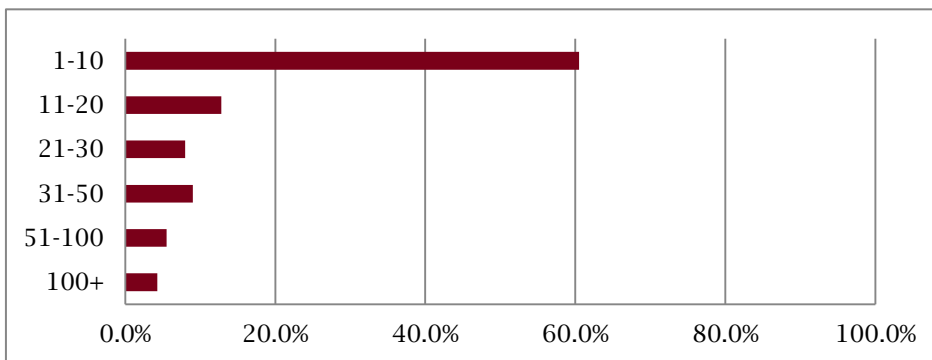


Fig. 11: Number of visits in the past five years by respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=400).

2014 Trip Information

Primary destination

The Itasca area was the primary destination for 82 percent of first-quarter respondents (Figure 12).

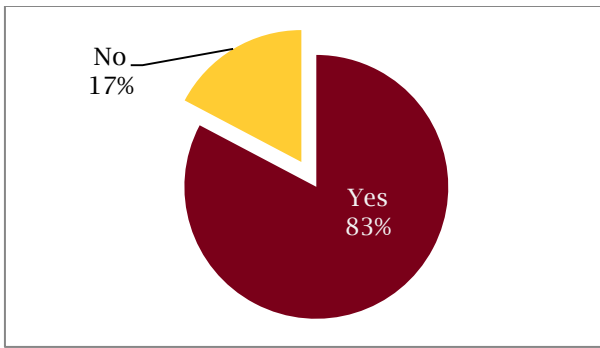


Fig. 12: Whether the Itasca area was the primary destination, first quarter (n=504).

Trip duration

About 32 percent of respondents spent two nights on the entire trip, followed by 18 percent spending one night and 15 percent spending three nights (Figure 13). Thirty percent of respondents spent two nights in the Itasca area, followed by 24 percent spending one night and 14 percent spending three nights (Figure 14).

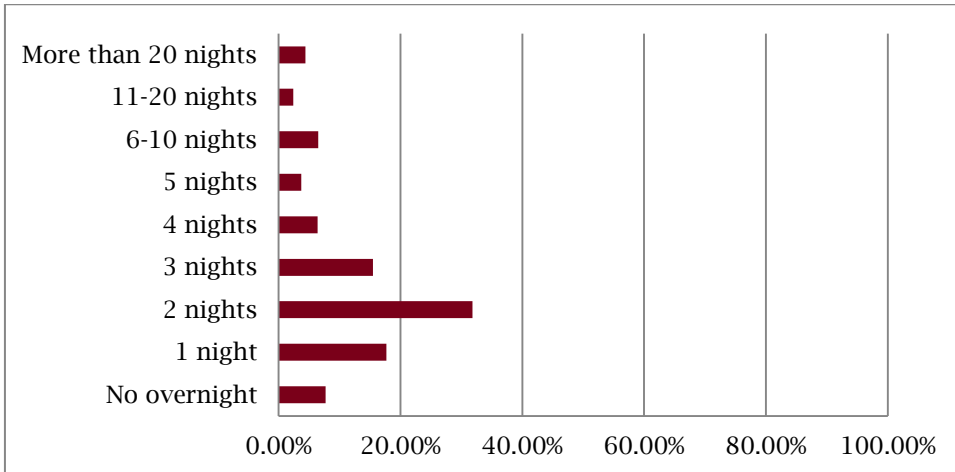


Fig. 13: Total number of nights spent on the trip by respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=489).

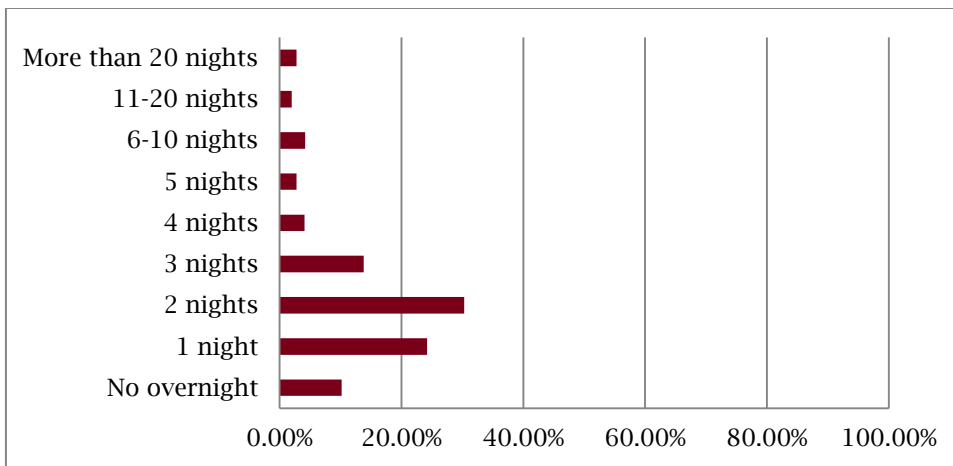


Fig. 14: Number of nights spent in Itasca by respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=479).

Lodging

About 50 percent of respondents stayed in a hotel or motel, the most frequently chosen lodging type (Figure 15). Fourteen percent of respondents stayed with a friend or relative, and 8 percent stayed in their own vacation homes.

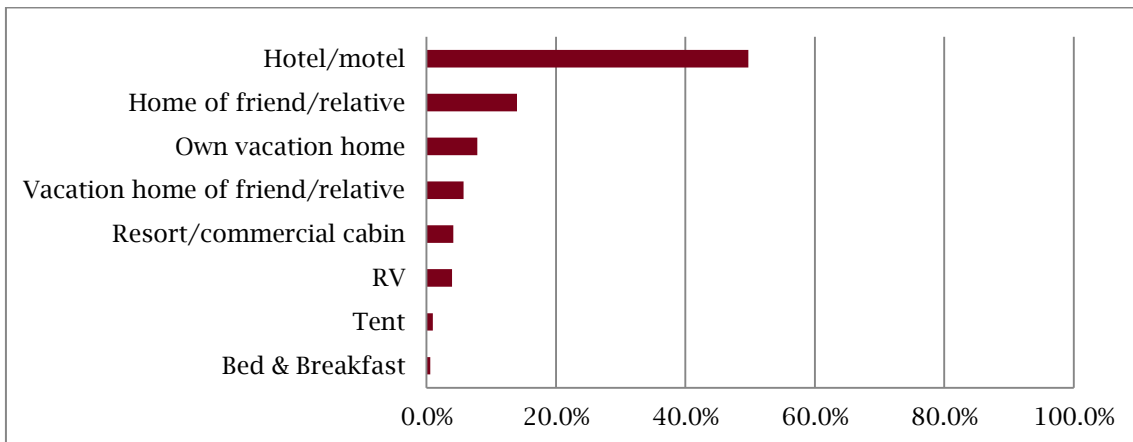


Fig. 15: Lodging type among overnight respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

Transportation

The majority of first quarter respondents arrived to the Itasca area by car, van, or truck (92 percent; Figure 16). Three percent arrived by an RV or camper.

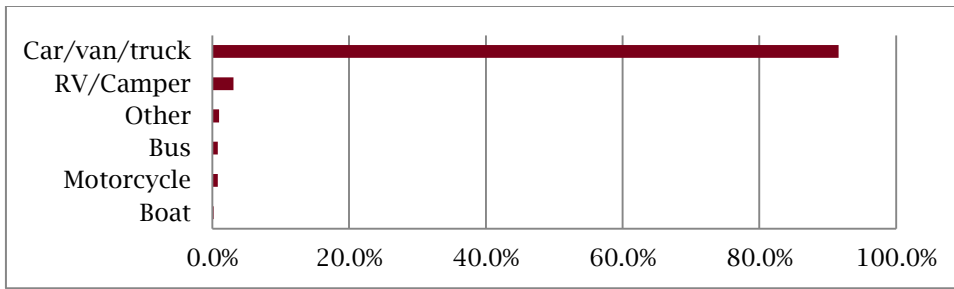


Fig. 16: Primary mode of transportation among respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=496).

Group composition and size

The average first-quarter respondent traveled in a group of three people ($M=3$, $Mdn=2$, $SD=3.63$). Specifically, 46 percent of respondents traveled in a group of two, 17 percent traveled alone, 12 percent in groups of three, and another 12 percent in groups of four (Figure 17).

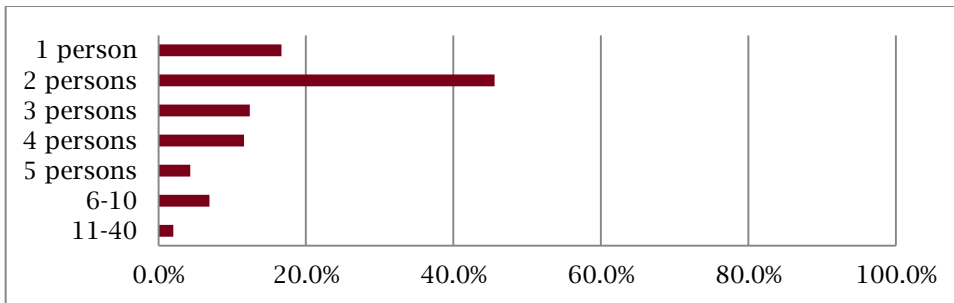


Fig. 17: Group size in which respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey (first quarter) travelled (n=506).

More than 30 percent of first-quarter respondents (32.2 percent) traveled with family, 20 percent as a couple or with a partner, and 15 percent traveled alone (Figure 18). Fourteen percent of respondents traveled with friends, and another 11 percent traveled with families and friends.

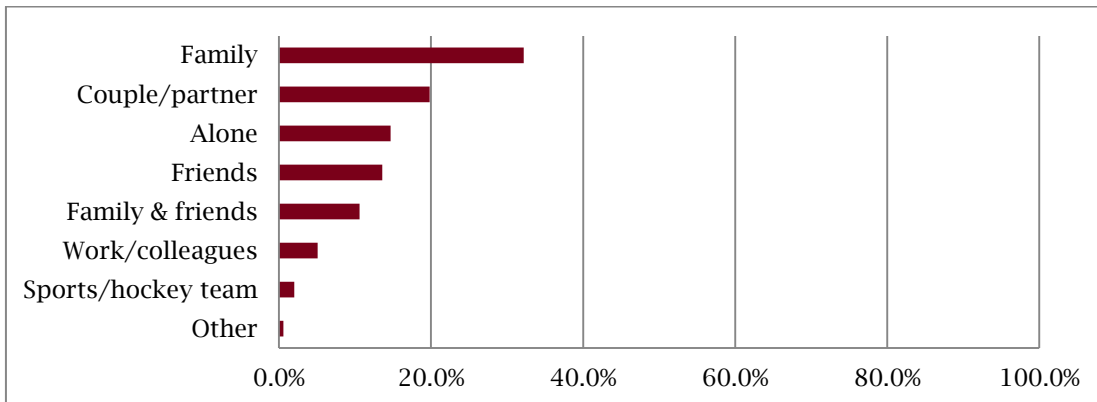


Fig. 18: Group type among respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=502).

More than half of first quarter respondents (52.3 percent) traveled with adults in the 51-69 age range, and another 38 percent traveled with adults in the 36-50 age range (Figure 19). About 19 percent of respondents traveled with children under age 18.

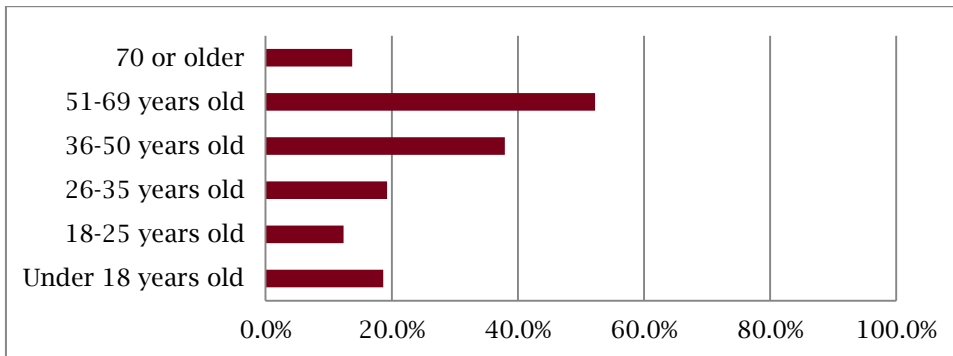


Fig. 19: Age groups included in 2014 Itasca area visitor survey (first quarter) respondents' travel party (n=509).

Visitor spending

The average first-quarter respondent spent the most on lodging, followed by other fishing-related expenses, restaurants/bars, shopping, and transportation (Table 3). Specifically, the average respondent spent \$44.71 on lodging ($M=44.71$, $Mdn=28.33$, $SD=100.76$), \$39.76 on other fishing-related expenses ($M=39.76$, $Mdn=0$, $SD=886.47$), \$26.82 on restaurants/bars ($M=26.82$, $Mdn=20$, $SD=27.79$), \$23.83 on shopping ($M=23.83$, $Mdn=0$, $SD=59.03$), and \$21.68 on transportation ($M=21.68$, $Mdn=12.50$, $SD=38.45$). The average total personal spending within a 24-hour period is \$180.74 ($M=180.74$, $Mdn=103.75$, $SD=906.38$).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of spending per person, per day, in various categories by respondents to 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

	Mean (dollars)	Median (dollars)	Standard Deviation (dollars)
Lodging	44.71	28.33	100.76
Other fishing related expense	39.76	0	886.47
Restaurant	26.82	20	27.79
Shopping	23.83	0	59.03
Transportation	21.68	12.50	38.45
Grocery	10.33	0	23.44
Recreation	6.22	0	84.73
Misc.	5.83	0	34.92
Fishing equipment	1.36	0	13.21
Fishing related guide service	0.21	0	2.81
Total	180.74	103.75	906.38

Trip Activities

First-quarter respondents participated in a variety of activities during their trip to the Itasca area (Figure 20). Their most frequent activity is dining out (82.5 percent). About a quarter of respondents visited friends/relatives (25.5 percent) and participated in sightseeing (23.6 percent). Approximately 15 percent of respondents drove on designated byways (16.7 percent), went fishing (15.5 percent), and participated in nightlife/evening entertainment (14.5 percent). About 11 percent of respondents visited museums (11.6 percent), state parks (11.2 percent), and Chippewa National Forest (11 percent). Ten percent of respondents participated in casino gaming.

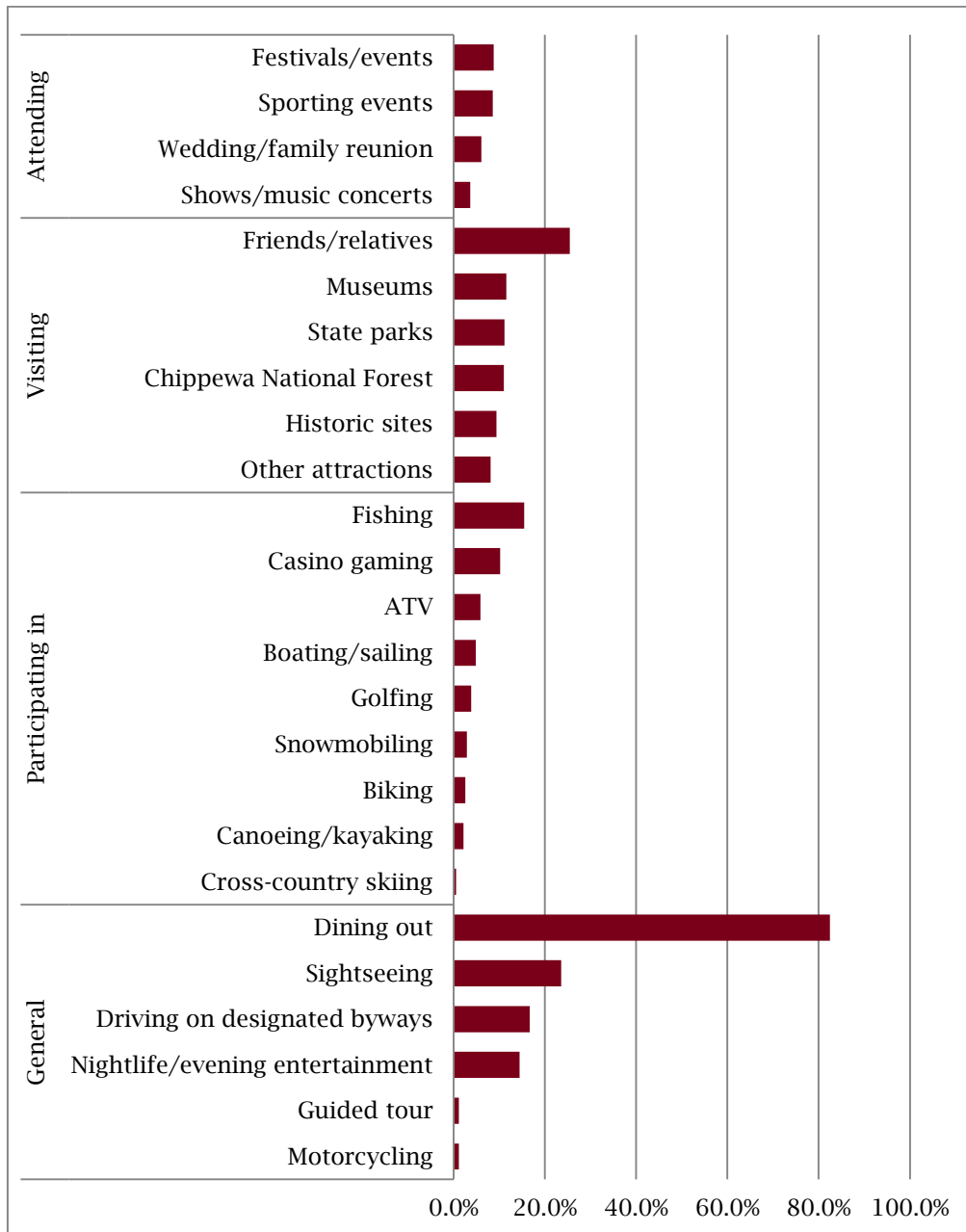


Fig. 20: Activities participated in among 2014 Itasca area visitor survey (first quarter) respondents (n=509).

Trip Purpose and Planning

Primary reason for making trip

First-quarter respondents most frequently indicated that the primary reason for the trip was to visit family and friends (20 percent), followed by business/work (12 percent), and hunting (11.8 percent) (Figure 21). All other reasons were identified by fewer than 10 percent of respondents.

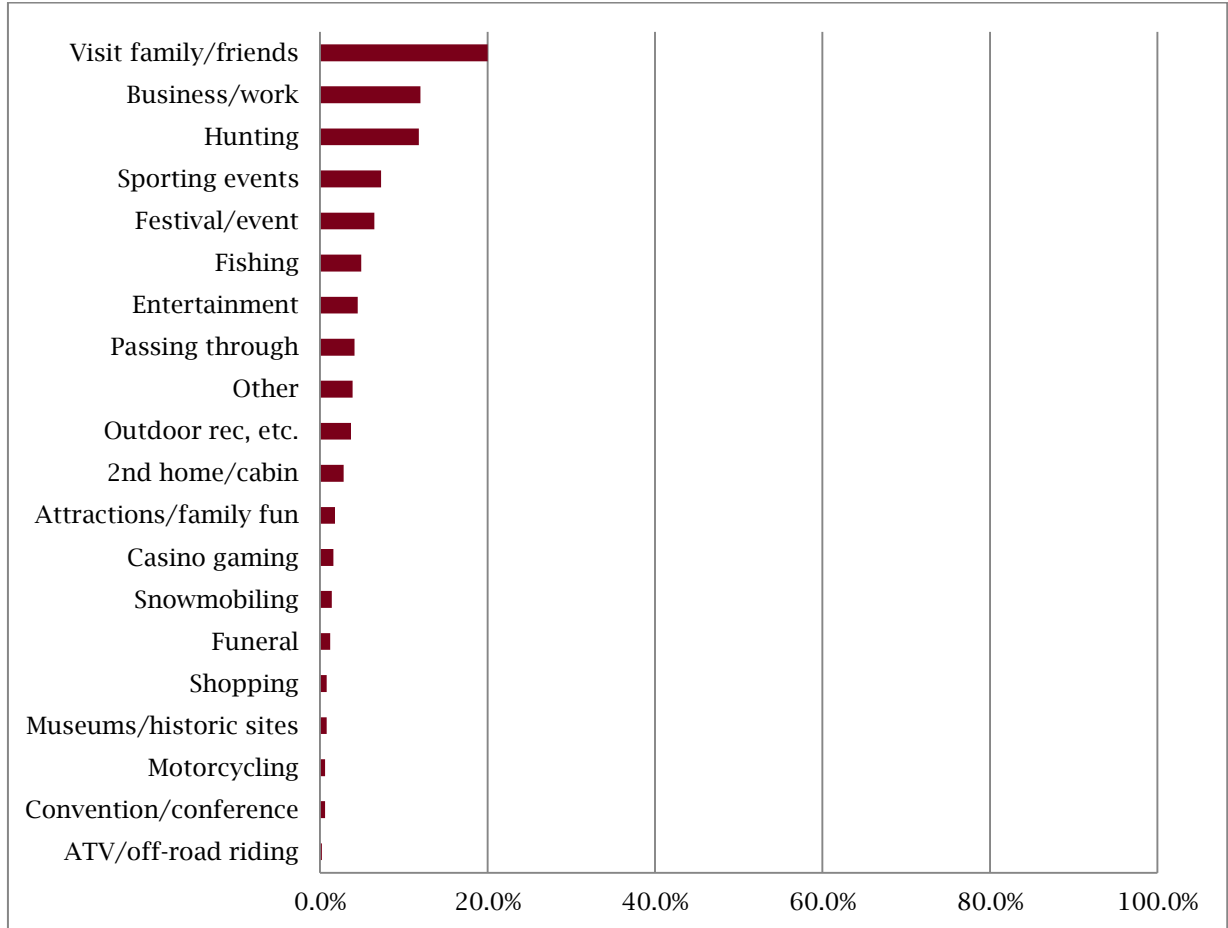


Fig. 21: Primary reason for making the trip among respondents to Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=460).

Trip planning timeframe and information sources

About 35 percent of first-quarter respondents planned their trip less than two weeks in advance (Figure 22). Another 27 percent planned their trip two to four weeks in advance. Only about 10 percent of respondents planned their trip either nine to 13 weeks in advance (9.2 percent) or more than 13 weeks in advance (10.2 percent).

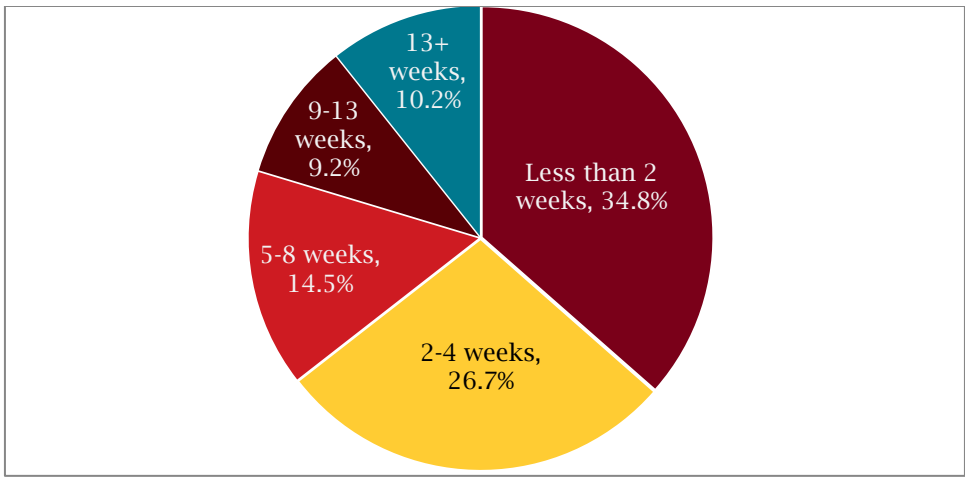


Fig. 22: Trip planning timeframe among respondents to Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=486).

In terms of information sources used to plan for the trip, the most frequently used were word of mouth (46.8 percent) and area/destination website (18.3 percent) (Figure 23). About 7 percent of first-quarter respondents used “other” information sources (7.7 percent) or an area/destination visitor guide (7.1 percent). No other information source was used by more than 5 percent of respondents.

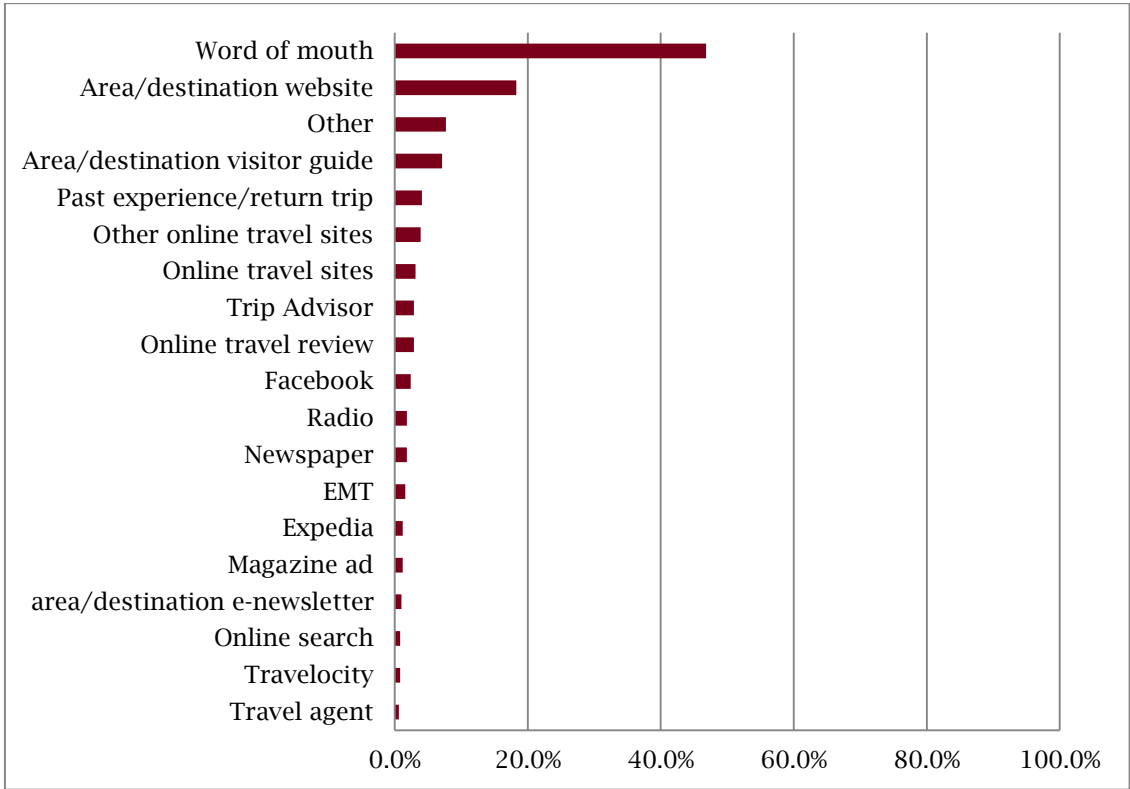


Fig. 23: Information sources used by respondents to Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

Impact of social media during trip

The majority of first-quarter respondents (70.9 percent) did not change their original plans based on information found on social media (Figure 24). Nearly 11 percent of respondents indicated making minor changes to their original travel plans based on social media, while only 2 percent made significant changes (2.4 percent).

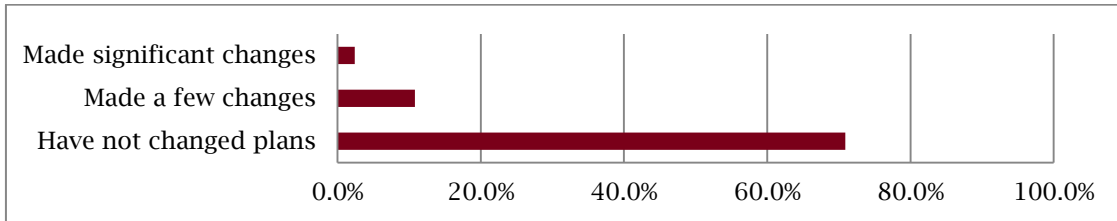


Fig. 24: Impact of social media on original travel plans among respondents to Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=428).

Sharing information about the trip

Close to 40 percent of first-quarter respondents (38.9 percent) reported they would use mobile devices more to share information about the trip (Figure 25). Another 26 percent reported they would use mobile devices and a personal computer equally to frequently share about the trip. Only 18 percent of respondents would use a personal computer more to share about the trip.

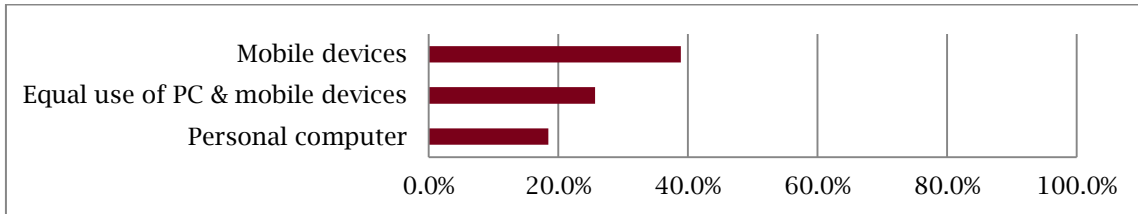


Fig. 25: Device used to share trip information by respondents to Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=423).

The majority of first-quarter respondents will share information about their trip through word of mouth (65.6 percent; Figure 26). Close to 40 percent of respondents will use text messages (39.5 percent) and Facebook (38.5 percent). No other medium was identified by more than 10 percent of respondents as an information sharing medium.

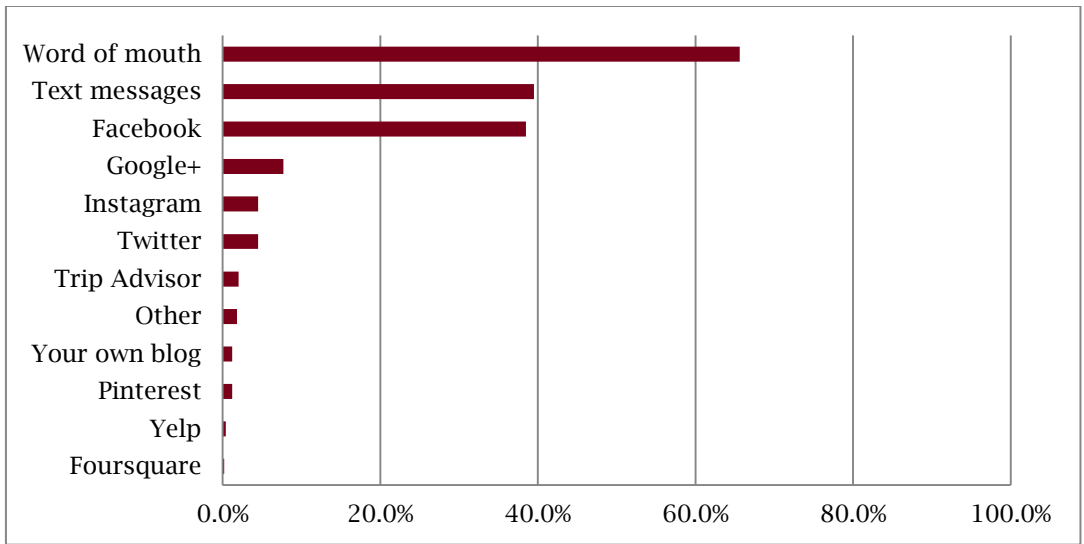


Fig. 26: Information sharing sources among 2014 Itasca area visitor survey, first quarter (n=509).

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APPENDIX A

**University of Minnesota Tourism Center
Itasca Area Visitor Questionnaire**

1. Is Itasca area your primary destination for this trip? Yes
 No, final destination is _____

2. What is the **primary** reason that you made this trip to Itasca area? (Check \checkmark only 1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycling	<input type="checkbox"/> Hunting	<input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling
<input type="checkbox"/> Visit family/friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Sporting events	<input type="checkbox"/> Casino gaming	<input type="checkbox"/> ATV/Off-road riding
<input type="checkbox"/> Festival/event	<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museums/historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Attractions/family fun
<input type="checkbox"/> Convention/conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Business/work	<input type="checkbox"/> Passing through	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Explain: _____)			

2a. If you could not come to the Itasca area for this primary activity, where would you go:

3. How frequently have you visited the Itasca area?
 Number of visits in past 12 months _____ Number of visits in past 5 years _____

4. How many people (including you) are in your immediate travel party on this trip? _____

5. How many **total nights** do you plan to spend away from home on this trip? _____ nights

6. How many of these nights will be in the Itasca Area? _____ nights (if 0, go to question 8)

7. If you are staying in the Itasca Area, how many nights are you staying in **each** the following types of accommodations?

_____ Hotel/motel	_____ Resort/commercial cabin	_____ RV	_____ Your own vacation home
_____ Tent	_____ Vacation home of friend/relative	_____ Bed & Breakfast	_____ Home of friend/relative

8. How many of your travel party are:

_____ Under 18 years old	_____ 18 - 25 years old	_____ 26 - 35 years old
_____ 36 - 50 years old	_____ 51 - 69 years old	_____ 70 or older

9. What was the primary mode of transportation you used for this trip? (Check \checkmark only 1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Car/van/truck	<input type="checkbox"/> RV/Camper	<input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Bus
<input type="checkbox"/> Boat	<input type="checkbox"/> Bike	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

10. While on this trip, which of the following activities have members of your travel party participated in or will participate in? (Check \checkmark all that apply)

<i>General:</i>	<i>Participating in:</i>	<i>Visiting:</i>	<i>Attending:</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Dining out	<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing	<input type="checkbox"/> Museums	<input type="checkbox"/> Festivals/events
<input type="checkbox"/> Driving on designated byways	<input type="checkbox"/> Boating/sailing	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/> Sporting events
<input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycling	<input type="checkbox"/> Sailboarding	<input type="checkbox"/> Friends/relatives	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows/music concerts
<input type="checkbox"/> Guided tour	<input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing/kayaking	<input type="checkbox"/> State parks	<input type="checkbox"/> Wedding/family reunion
<input type="checkbox"/> Nightlife/evening entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking	<input type="checkbox"/> Chippewa National Forest	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sightseeing	<input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling	<input type="checkbox"/> Other attractions	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing		
	<input type="checkbox"/> ATV		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cross-country skiing		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Golfing		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Casino gaming		

11. Please estimate your travel group's spending in the Itasca Area for the **last 24 hours** of your stay:

Lodging \$ _____	Transportation (includes gas) \$ _____	Shopping \$ _____
Groceries \$ _____	Restaurants/Bars \$ _____	Recreation/attractions (non-fishing) \$ _____
Fishing-related equipment \$ _____	Fishing-related guide service \$ _____	Other fishing-related expense \$ _____
Misc. \$ _____ (explain: _____)		

12. How many people are included in your spending estimate? _____

