ABSTRACT

RUSCH, M. F. 2000 Market Survey of La Crosse Area Tourists and Visitors. MS in Recreation Management, August 2001, 45pp. (G. Arimond)

A market survey of the La Crosse area was performed to determine the latest trends on visitors to the La Crosse region. The primary purpose of the study was to acquire visitor market information and compare it with the previous 1998 study. A visitor survey insert card placed in the 2000 *Area Visitor and Information Guide* provided a sample of 608 useable surveys. Of those 75.5 percent of respondents had actually visited the La Crosse area. It was determined that approximately 75 percent of La Crosse visitors were from 8 market regions, and the average driving distance was 191 miles. There were four primary sources respondents used for making travel plans: the Internet, friends and family, the 1-800 number, and brochures. Winter visitation in the La Crosse area is severely lacking, with 70 percent of visitors coming between the months of June and October. Sightseeing was the primary reason provided for visiting the area, as well as the most important attraction/activity. Eighty five percent of visitors stayed in a hotel. Finding new ways to attract winter visitors to increase profit margins was a key recommendation for future marketing.

2000 Market Survey
of
La Crosse Area Tourists & Visitors

La Crosse

ON WISCONSIN'S WEST COAST...

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2000 MARKET SURVEY of LA CROSSE AREA TOURISTS & VISITORS

INTRODUCTION

This 2000 Market Survey report was done jointly by the La Crosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (LACVB) and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Recreation Management staff and students. The purpose of this report is to provide the LACVB and its business members with the latest trends on visitors to the La Crosse region. This survey study is the second study; the previous study was done in 1998. This study report will compare the two to show changing trends. Comparing the 1998 study, this 2000 survey study included some minor changes and a few new questions. The 2000 report provides information from both visitors and non-visitors who requested travel information from the LACVB. The actual survey instrument was inserted as a bounce-back card in the 2000 *Area Visitor & Information Guide*.

A chance for a getaway weekend to La Crosse was the incentive for completing the survey. A total of 608 useable surveys were received, 75.5 percent of which were completed by respondents who had actually visited the La Crosse area. Respondents were asked to complete the survey whether they visited or not. Reported data pertaining to the questions regarding the actual visit include only the respondents who visited. An explanation of the survey methodology and a sample of the survey instrument can be found in Appendices A and B respectively.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this study was to acquire visitor market information and compare it with the previous 1998 study. The LACVB and La Crosse area businesses can use these survey findings to better manage and improve tourism in the La Crosse area. More specifically, data and recommendations from this report will be used to make LACVB marketing campaigns more effective and efficient. Equally important, LACVB business members can use this information to make crucial market decisions within their respective businesses. The following is a list of some of the key findings in this report:

- Origin of visitors
- Sources used for making travel plans
- Month of visit
- Type of visiting party
- Reasons for visiting or not visiting
- Attractions and activities participated in during visit
- Type of lodging used
- Nights of week stayed
- Length of stay
- Daily per person expenditures

RESULTS

Survey results are divided into three sections. In the first Section, General Results, Tables 1 through 14 describe the collective aggregate results. In Section Two, Results by Region, Tables 15 through 18 describe results in a subdivided form by geographical market area. Finally, Section Three provides information similar to Section One but represents only those visitors staying in La Crosse hotel/motels. All tables, except for Tables 1, 4, 6, and 16, are based on responses from respondents who actually visited. Tables 1, 4, and 16 include both visitor and non-visitor respondents, while Table 6 includes non-visitors only.

I. GENERAL RESULTS

Table 1
Origin of Survey Respondents - Visitor & Non-Visitor

Market Region	Frequency	Percent
WI-Southeast	79	13.0
WI-Northwest	72	11.8
WI-South Central	61	10.0
WI-Northeast	52	8.6
WI-Southwest	20	3.3
State Total	284	46.7
MN-Metro	44	7.2
MN-Southeast	43	7.1
MN	3	0.5
State Total	90	14.8
IL-North	50	8.2
IL	14	2.3
State Total	64	10.5
IA-East	27	4.4
IA-North Central	12	2.0
IA-South Central	7	1.2
IA-West	8	1.3
State Total	54	8.9
US-North Central	64	10.5
US-East	27	4.4
US-West and Southwest	20	3.3
US Region Total	111	18.2
Foreign	5	0.8
Total	N=608	100.0%

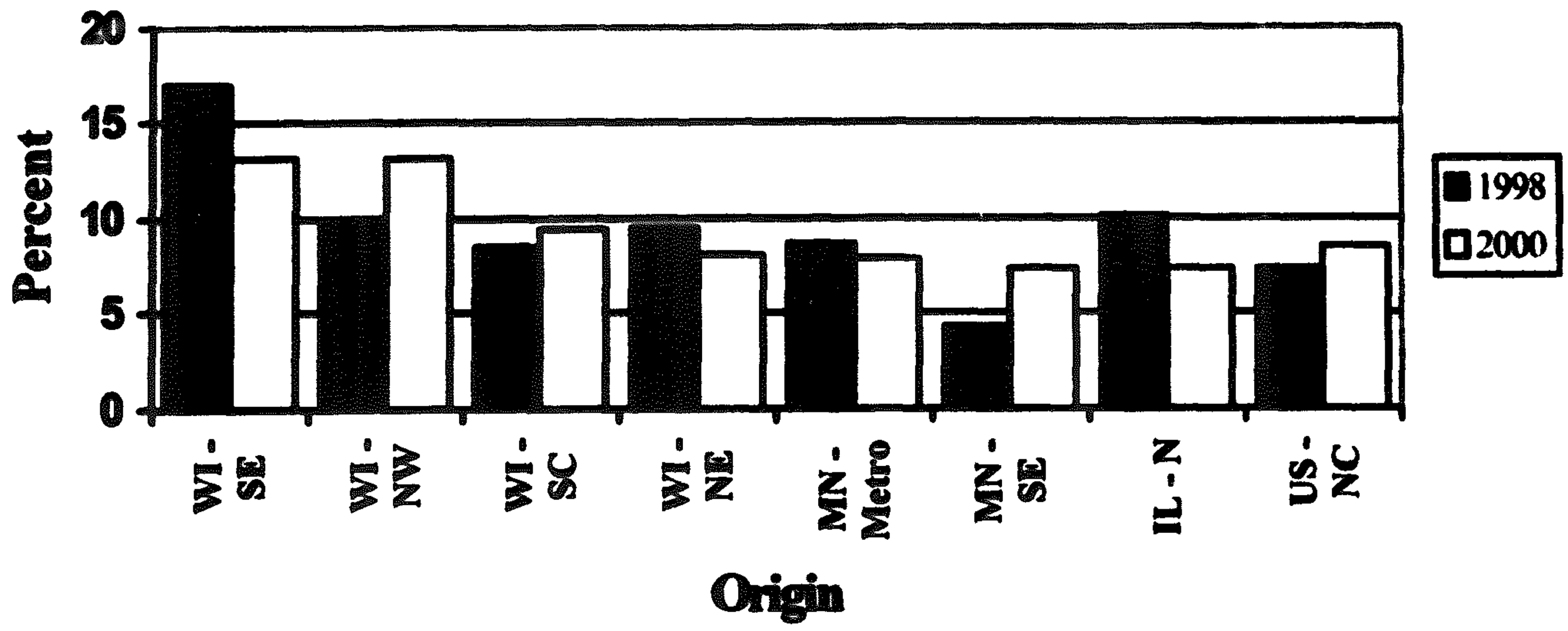
N = number of respondents that responded to the survey

Table 1 shows the survey respondents' places of origin. Maps visually defining the specific market regions are found in Appendix C. La Crosse's closest geographical market includes the states of Wisconsin (46.7%), Minnesota (14.8%), Illinois (10.5%), and Iowa (8.9%). These four states have been subdivided for a more definitive market analysis. The next closest market area is the North Central Region (US-NC), which includes the states of Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and South Dakota.

Table 2
Origin of La Crosse Visitors

Market Region	1998 Percent of Visitors N = 517	2000 Percent of Visitors N = 457
WI – SE	17.0	13.1
WI – NW	9.9	13.1
WI – SC	8.5	9.4
WI – NE	9.5	8.1
MN – Metro	8.7	7.9
MN – SE	4.3	7.4
IL – N	10.1	7.4
US – NC	7.4	8.5
	75.4%	74.9%

Figure 1
Origin of La Crosse Visitors



Both Table 2 and Figure 1 provide information on the origin of those respondents who did visit La Crosse, as opposed to Table 1, which shows both visitor and non-visitor responses. La Crosse's strongest markets in the year 2000 are Southeast, Northwest, and South Central Wisconsin. Comparing these results to 1998's visitation rates, it appears there may have been a decline in visitors from Northern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin, while Northwestern Wisconsin's visitation level may have increased.

Table 3
Travel Miles

Miles	Frequency	Percent
1-49	11	2.5
50-99	35	8.0
100-149	71	16.2
150-199	101	23.1
200-249	78	17.8
250-299	46	10.5
300-349	17	3.9
350 +	78	17.8
	N= 437	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question

Respondents were asked to identify the number of miles La Crosse is from their home. Table 3 reveals that the largest portion of visitors, 67.6 percent, traveled between 100 to 300 miles to reach La Crosse. Those who traveled 350 or more miles comprised the next largest segment, representing 17.8 percent of the visitors. The average distance visitors traveled was 191 miles.[1]

[1] This is an average based upon mile ranges.

Table 4
Sources Used for Making Travel Plans
N = 595 Visitors

Resource	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors
Local Visitor Center	256	43.0
Travel Guide	231	38.8
Internet	190	31.9
Friends/Relatives	182	30.6
1-800 Number	174	29.2
Brochure	168	28.2
Chamber of Commerce	155	26.1
AAA	136	22.9
Magazine	125	21.0
Newspaper	89	15.0
Other	38	6.4
Television	24	4.0
Radio	8	1.3
Total	1776	298.5%*

** Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could provide more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

Respondents were asked to check the primary travel sources they use in making their travel plans (See Table 4). The two major sources were Local Visitor Center/Bureau with 43.0 percent and Travel Guides with 38.8 percent. Other informational sources of importance were Internet (31.9%), friends and relatives (30.6%), a 1-800 number (29.2%), and brochures (28.2%). Travel sources that were utilized by very few were television (4.0%) and radio (1.3%).

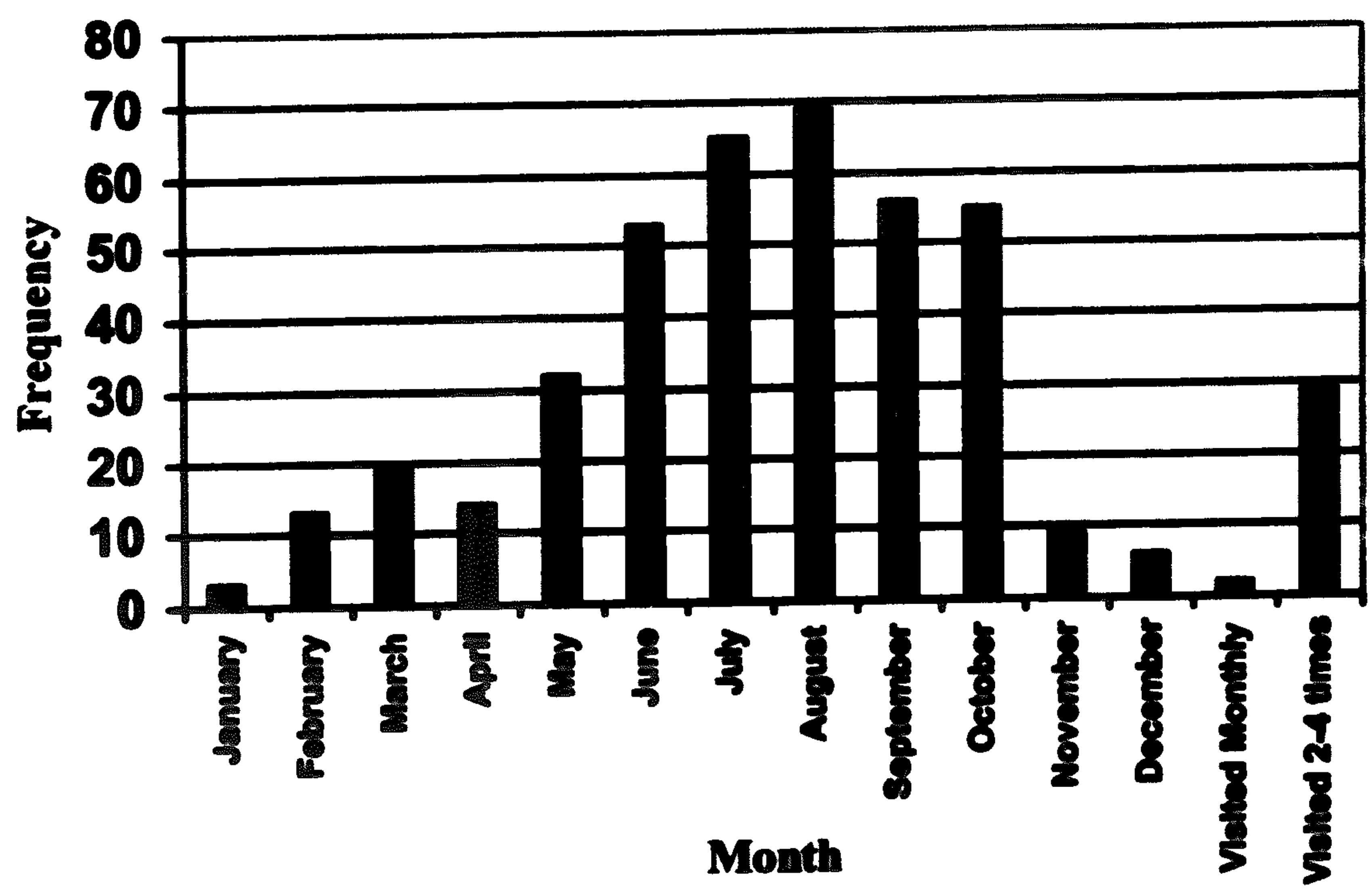
Comparing these results to 1998, an increase in usage was seen specifically in three categories. Internet usage went from 9.7 percent in 1998 to 31.9 percent in 2000, friends and relatives increased from 8.6 to 30.6 percent, and a 1-800 number from 9.7 to 29.2 percent.

Table 5
Month of Visit

Month	Frequency	Percent
January	3	0.7
February	13	3.1
March	19	4.5
April	14	3.3
May	32	7.5
June	53	12.5
July	65	15.3
August	69	16.2
September	56	13.2
October	55	12.9
November	9	2.1
December	6	1.4
Visited Monthly	2	0.5
Visited 2-4 times	29	6.8
	N= 425	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question

Figure 2
Month of Visit



The summer months of July (15.3%), and August (16.2%), represent the strongest visitor rates, followed by June (12.5%), September (13.2%), and October (12.9%) (Table

5). These five months represent a total of 70.1% of the annual visits. November (2.1%), December (1.4%), and January (0.7%), as in 1998, represent the slowest months.

Table 6
Reason for Not Visiting
N = 141

Reason	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors
Will Visit in Future	108	76.6
Not enough time	20	14.2
Visited elsewhere	18	12.8
Lack of money	9	6.4
Other	8	5.7
Poor Weather	5	3.5
Illness	3	2.1
Total Responses	171	121.3%*

** Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could provide more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

Those respondents who did not visit La Crosse were asked to cite their primary reason for not visiting (Table 6). In 2000, 75.5% of the survey respondents said they visited La Crosse, which is an increase from 1998 when only 64% of the respondents visited. A majority of the year 2000 respondents (76.6%) who did not visit said that they would visit La Crosse in the future. Other major reasons for not visiting were 'Not Enough Time,' 14.2 percent, and 'Visited Elsewhere,' 12.8 percent.

Table 7
Number of People in Visiting Party

Number in Party	Frequency	Percent
1	36	8.1
2	227	51.0
3	48	10.8
4	70	15.7
5	15	3.4
6	12	2.7
7	9	2.0
8	2	0.4
9	2	0.4
10	5	1.1
11 or more	19	4.3
	N = 445	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question

On the subject of party size the largest percentage of visitors was the two-person party, with 51.0 percent. The four person party was the next largest with 15.7 percent, followed by the three person party (10.8%) and single party (8.1%).

Table 8
Type of Party

Type	Frequency	Percent
Couple	134	30.7
Couple 55 & over	91	20.8
Family (children over 12)	62	14.2
Single	47	10.8
Young Family (children under 12)	44	10.1
Small Group (11 or less)	31	7.1
Large Group (12 or more)	28	6.4
	N = 437	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question

Similar to 1998, couples continue to be the dominant party type, representing a combined total of 51.5 percent (Table 8). A family with older children was the next largest party type with 14.2 percent, followed by singles with 10.8 percent and families with young children at 10.1 percent.

Table 9
Primary Reason for Trip
N = 455

Reason	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors
Sightseeing	209	45.9
Visiting family/friends	85	18.7
Other	81	17.8
Shopping	68	14.9
Attending events	62	13.6
Meeting/Convention	61	13.4
Visit College	27	5.9
	593	130.3%*

**Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

Sightseeing (45.9%) and visiting family and friends (18.7%) remain as the principal reasons visitors are coming to La Crosse (Table 9). The third most popular reason cited was 'other' (17.8%). A majority of respondents who marked this box did not explain their reason, but it must be assumed that they were coming for reasons other than those listed on the survey. Respondents who did provide an explanation most often cited a doctor's appointment as their primary reason for visiting La Crosse.

Table 10
Attractions or Activities Participated in During Visit
N = 433

Attraction or Activity	# of Responses	Percent of Participation
Sightseeing	356	82.2
Shopping	281	64.9
River boat cruises	128	29.6
Museums/Historical	108	24.9
Festivals	63	14.5
College visit/Event	49	11.3
Bicycling	31	7.2
Sports event	22	5.1
Fishing	21	4.8
Downhill/Cross country skiing	4	0.9
Snowmobiling	1	0.2
Total	1064	245.7%

****Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.***

Table 10 shows that sightseeing with 82.2 percent and shopping with 64.9 percent were the two most popular attractions for La Crosse visitors. These were followed by riverboat cruises (29.6%) and visits to museums/historical sites (24.9%). These top four categories were ranked similarly in the 1998 study. The most significant gain from 1998 to 2000 was college visits/events, moving from 2.0 percent to 11.3 percent, respectively.

Table 11
Type of Lodging by Location
N = 369

Lodging Used	La Crosse	Onalaska	Nearby Town	Total
Hotel/Motel	70.2%	9.5%	4.9%	84.6%
Family/Friends	7.3	1.9	3.0	12.2
Campgrounds	5.7	0.3	4.1	10.1
Bed & Breakfast	1.4	0.3	0.5	2.2
Other	1.6	0.3	0.3	2.2
Total	86.2%	12.3%	12.8%	111.3%*

**Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

Respondents were asked to identify both the area and type of lodging they stayed in (Table 11). Over 80 percent of those who responded to this survey stated they had stayed overnight. As in 1998, hotels/motels continues to be the most popular choice of lodging (84.6%). The next most popular choices were family and friends with 12.2 percent and campgrounds with 10.1 percent.

Table 11 also notes the area where visitors stayed. The majority of visitors, 86.2 percent, stayed in a La Crosse location. For those who stayed in a La Crosse location, over 70 percent utilized hotels/motels.

Table 12
Number of Nights Visitor Stayed

Number of Nights	Frequency	Percent
1	133	37.7
2	134	38.0
3	43	12.2
4	14	4.0
5	9	2.5
6	7	2.0
7 or more	13	3.7
	N = 353	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question

Nearly 76 percent of visitors stayed 1 to 2 nights (Table 12). Similar to 1998, the 1 or 2 night stays (37.7% and 38.0%, respectively) remained the most popular lengths of visit. The next most popular was three nights, with 12.2 percent.

Table 13
Nights of the Week Stayed

What Night	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors
Monday	68	19.5
Tuesday	76	21.8
Wednesday	90	25.8
Thursday	105	30.1
Friday	164	47.0
Saturday	176	50.4
Sunday	83	23.8
Totals	762	218.3%*

***Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.**

The two most popular nights for La Crosse visits were Friday and Saturday (Table 13). A response rate of 50.4 percent for Saturday means half of all respondents stayed that night, and nearly half (47.0%) stayed Friday night as well. Thursday night (30.1%)

was the next most popular night, while the least popular night was Monday night (19.5%).

Table 14
Daily Per Person Expenditure

Dollars	Frequency	Percent
$0-60	134	31.1
$61-99	118	27.4
$100-149	127	29.5
$150-199	33	7.7
$200-249	14	3.2
$250 or more	5	1.2
	N = 431	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question

A majority of visitors, 88.0 percent, spent under $150 per person per day (Table 14). Over half (56.9%) spent between $61 and $150 per person. Visitors spending under $60 represented 31.1 percent. A little over a quarter of visitors (27.4%) spent between $61 and $99. Another 29.5 percent spent between $100 and 149. The average expenditure for visitors was $71 per person per day.[2]

[2] This is an average based upon expenditure ranges

Table 15
Name of Lodging Facility
N = 204

Facility Name	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors
Brookstone Inn	26	12.7
Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites	24	11.8
Radisson	23	11.3
Best Western Midway Hotel	20	9.8
Days Inn	19	9.3
Hampton Inn – La Crosse	17	8.3
Total	129	63.2%

The top six choices for lodging were Brookstone (12.7%), Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites (11.8%), Radisson (11.3%), Best Western Midway (9.8%), Days Inn (9.3%), and the Hampton Inn La Crosse (8.3%) (Table 15). Thus, over half (63.2%) of the visitors who provided a hotel/motel name stayed at one of these six facilities, however only about 45 percent of visitors staying in a hotel/motel listed the facility name.

Respondents were asked to describe how La Crosse could make their next visit more enjoyable. The largest percent, 54 percent, felt La Crosse was doing well and should not change anything. Suggestions on improvement included offering coupon books or discounts (9.4%), more affordable lodging (6.3%), better maps/directions and street signage (5.7%), and improved advertising and tourist information (4.4%). A few visitors, 5.0 percent, felt the downtown riverfront restoration was positive, suggesting restoration should continue.

II. RESULTS BY REGION

La Crosse's geographic market regions were divided into 18 market areas. It was hoped this would help investigators determine whether there were any unique characteristics among visitors coming from certain market regions. Hence, this section explains unique characteristics of regions that differ from the general norms that were reported in Section One. As previously mentioned, Appendix C includes maps that display the market regions. Comparisons between market regions should not be made because of vast differences in demographic information.

The same 18 market regions used in the 1998 study were used again in 2000. For better clarity only the eight dominant market regions are reported in this section. These eight represent regions where the response rate was thirty or more visitors. Any regions with smaller response rates were not reported because the accuracy of the reported data maybe questionable.

Table 16
Sources Used to Plan Trip by Market Region
N = 595

Source	WI-SE	WI-NW	WI-SC	WI-NE	MN-METRO	MN-SE	IL-N	US-NC	Market Average*
Local Visitors Center	51.3%	47.1%	41.0%	42.0%	43.2%	54.8%	51.0%	32.2%	43.0%
Travel Guide	44.9	38.6	42.6	36.0	40.9	42.9	36.7	39.7	38.8
Internet	30.8	30.0	31.1	30.0	25.0	35.7	34.7	31.7	31.9
Friends/Rleatives	32.1	27.1	41.0	24.0	20.5	31.0	28.6	28.6	30.6
1-800 Number	39.7	34.3	34.4	24.0	22.7	26.2	28.6	19.0	29.2
Brochure	28.2	24.3	31.1	24.0	27.3	38.1	28.6	31.7	28.2
Chamber of	26.9	40.0	23.0	42.0	22.7	26.2	24.5	14.3	26.1
AAA	26.9	11.4	18.0	20.0	34.1	31.0	10.2	38.1	22.9
Magazine	23.1	18.6	19.7	16.0	31.8	14.3	18.4	20.6	21.0
Newspaper	17.9	14.3	21.3	4.0	29.5	23.8	16.3	7.9	15.0
Other	3.8	4.3	6.6	6.0	0.0	2.4	8.2	11.1	6.4
Television	3.8	5.7	4.9	2.0	2.3	7.1	6.1	1.6	4.0
Radio	1.3	0.0	1.6	0.0	4.5	4.8	0.0	0.0	1.3

N = number of visitors and non-visitors that responded to this question and/or category
****Market averages are from Table 4***
**** Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could provide more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.**

In Table 16, visitors from Northeast (42%) and Northwest (40%) Wisconsin tend to rely more on the Chamber of Commerce as a travel information source than the La Crosse market average (26.1%). Minnesota Metro visitors' have a greater preference for magazines (31.8%), AAA guide (34.1%), and newspapers (29.5%). Lastly, AAA guides are a more popular travel source for North Central US travelers (38.1%).

Table 17
Reason for Trip by Market Region
N = 455

Reason	WI-SE	WI-NW	WI-SC	WI-NE	MN-METRO	MN-SE	IL-N	US-NC	Market Average*
Sightseeing	50.8%	41.7%	48.8%	50.0%	58.3%	45.5%	45.5%	52.5%	45.9%
Visiting Family/Friends	21.3	6.7	27.9	8.3	30.6	12.1	9.1	15.0	18.7
Other	11.5	13.3	4.7	16.7	22.2	18.2	30.3	20.0	17.8
Shopping	8.2	16.7	14.0	5.6	11.1	30.3	3.0	7.5	14.9
Attending Events	13.1	16.7	20.9	8.3	13.9	21.2	18.2	7.5	13.6
Meeting/ Convention	11.5	23.3	14.0	13.9	5.6	9.1	12.1	20.0	13.4
Visit College	13.1	5.0	7.0	8.3	8.3	0.0	6.1	5.0	5.9

N = number of visitors and non-visitors that responded to this question and/or category
**Market averages are from Table 4*
**** Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could provide more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.**

Southeast Minnesota visitors ranked shopping (30.3%) second only to sightseeing (45.5%), while in the market average shopping (14.9%) was ranked fourth (Table 17). A substantial percentage of visitors from the Minnesota metropolitan area (30.6%) and South Central Wisconsin (27.9%) come to La Crosse to visit family or friends.

III. CITY of LA CROSSE HOTEL/MOTEL VISITOR INFORMATION

This section (Tables 18-21) reports findings on those visitors who stayed at one of the hotel/motels within the city of La Crosse. As was seen in Table 11, a majority of visitors, 70.2 percent, stayed in La Crosse hotels/motels. Other cities and lodging categories are not reported in this section. The response rates for these categories were too small to obtain statistically accurate information.

Table 18
La Crosse Hotel/Motel Visitors
Sources Used for Making Travel Plans
N = 253 Visitors

Resource	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors	Market Average*
Local Visitor Center	112	44.3	43.0
Travel Guide	96	37.9	38.8
Internet	92	36.4	31.9
Friends/Relatives	73	28.9	30.6
1-800 Number	78	30.8	29.2
Brochure	63	24.9	28.2
Chamber of Commerce	58	22.9	26.1
AAA	64	25.3	22.9
Magazine	34	13.4	21.0
Newspaper	30	11.9	15.0
Other	21	8.3	6.4
Television	10	4.0	4.0
Radio	3	1.2	1.3
Total	734	290.1%	298.5%**

** Market average is from Table 4.*
*** Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could provide more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

Those visitors staying in hotels used the Internet (36.4%) more than the market average (31.9%) as a source of information for making travel plans (Table 18). The brochure (24.9%), chamber of commerce (22.9%), magazine (13.4%), and newspaper

(11.9%) were all used less than the market average (28.2%, 26.1%, 21.0%, and 15.0%, respectively).

Table 19
La Crosse Hotel/Motel Visitors
Primary Reason for Trip
N = 256

Reason	# of Responses	Percent of Visitors	Market Average*
Sightseeing	122	47.7	45.9
Visiting family/friends	41	16.0	18.7
Other	42	16.4	17.8
Shopping	33	12.9	14.9
Attending events	35	13.7	13.6
Meeting/Convention	45	17.6	13.4
Visit College	21	8.2	5.9
	339	132.4%	130.3%**

** Market average is from Table 9*
*** Total percent exceeds 100% because respondents could give more than one answer. Percent is based on number of visitors, not the number of responses.*

For hotel visitors, visiting family and friends, 16.0 percent, was not as significant a reason for planning a trip to La Crosse as compared with the market average of 18.7 percent (Table 19). Not surprisingly, hotel visitors ranked meetings/conventions (17.6%) as a more important reason for visiting La Crosse than the average (13.4%).

Table 20
La Crosse Hotel/Motel Visitors
Daily Per Person Expenditure

Dollars	Frequency	Percent	Market Average*
$0-60	57	22.9	31.1
$61-99	70	28.1	27.4
$100-149	85	34.1	29.5
$150-199	25	10.0	7.7
$200-249	9	3.6	3.2
$250 or more	3	1.2	1.2
	N = 249	100.0%	100.0%

N = number of visitors that responded to this question
** Market average is from Table 14*

Table 21 reveals a slightly higher per person expenditure among La Crosse hotel/motel visitors than the market average. Visitors spending under $60 represented 31.1 percent in the market average, but only 22.9 percent of those staying in La Crosse hotels/motels. Just fewer than 57 percent of the market average spent between $61 and $150 per person, as compared to 62.2 percent of La Crosse hotel/motel. The market average represents visitors who did not stay overnight or stayed with friends and therefore did not have the extra-added cost of lodging, which is likely the cause of La Crosse hotel/motel visitors having a higher daily expenditure. The average expenditure for La Crosse hotel/motel visitors was $78 per person per day.[3]

[3] This is an average based upon expenditure ranges

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

La Crosse visitors come from all parts of the United States, and a few come from foreign countries. In this year 2000 study, evidence shows that seven out of every ten visitors came from one of the following locales:

- Wisconsin
- Northern Illinois
- Southeast Minnesota
- Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area

In traveling to La Crosse, the majority of La Crosse visitors are traveling between 100 and 300 miles. The average driving distance was 191 miles.

The origin of La Crosse visitors has changed somewhat. The changes were found by comparing these findings with those of the 1998 La Crosse visitor study. In 2000, Southeast Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin saw increased visitation rates while visitors from the densely populated areas of Northern Illinois and Southeast Wisconsin declined. The factors that contributed to these changes are not readily apparent. For Southeastern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin visitors, shopping and attending special events were second only to sightseeing as the reason for visiting La Crosse. These two activities may have been contributing factors in the increases for these two regions.

There is another visitation change worth noting. In 1998 almost two-thirds of the survey respondents visited La Crosse. Compared to other visitor studies, this is considered good. But, the numbers for 2000 were even more impressive. In fact, over