



ANNUAL REPORT





A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the official tourism board of the state of Minnesota, Explore Minnesota's job has always been to inform travelers of everything there is to see and do in our great state. But today's travelers want more than that. They don't want to simply be informed; **they want to be inspired.**

I am proud to say that we accomplished this goal in 2014—and then some. Our **new marketing campaign, new website, new logo, and advertising in new markets** made Minnesota top of mind and engaged more travelers than ever before. Our official hashtag, **#OnlyinMN**, made it easy for travelers to share their experiences with their social networks. We also expanded our presence internationally, putting Minnesota in the consideration set for travelers from Mexico to China.

Now in the campaign's second year, our increased resources allowed us to extend our reach. Visits to our new website were up, we **more than doubled the number of co-op programs** available to the Minnesota tourism industry, and we generated a **record amount of match dollars** from expanded partnerships with the private sector.

Our social media efforts reached new heights, allowing us to engage with **more than 100,000 potential travelers** across the web. Participation in trade shows, conferences and events helped forge new connections and strengthen existing ones. **Increased public relations efforts** resulted in coverage around the globe and in multiple languages.

We also welcomed several new members to our team, replacing veteran employees who spent their careers making Explore Minnesota what it is today. These new staff brought **new ideas and new energy** to our efforts, and we are very excited about the future of our changing organization.

Of course, none of this would matter if it didn't result in more travelers visiting—and spending more money in—Minnesota. An independent study confirmed that our spring/summer 2014 advertising campaign alone generated **3.1 million trips and \$320.2 million in spending** that would not have occurred without our efforts. In addition, close to 2 million people who did not visit Minnesota in 2014 intend to do so in the next year.

All of this adds up to a **6-to-1 state and local tax return on our advertising investment**. Additionally, Minnesota continues to rank in the top half or better among the 50 states in terms of traveler spending, employment, payroll and tax revenues.

It's clear that our investment in tourism is paying off. And we couldn't do it without the support of our partners and every person who makes the Minnesota tourism industry one of the best in the country.

Thank you for making 2014 a truly great year.

We look forward to working with you and continuing to grow our **\$13 billion tourism industry** in 2015 and for many years to come!

Sincerely,

John F. Edman
Director, Explore Minnesota

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economic impact of Minnesota tourism

The general fund operating budget for fiscal years 2014-15:

\$13.888
million annually*

*Includes \$500,000 in supplemental state funding available when private sector support generated by Explore Minnesota is at least \$3 million

Explore Minnesota generated a record amount of match dollars in FY14

Private Industry Match (FY14)

Cash	\$2.8 million
In-kind	\$5.5 million
Total	\$8.3 million



SALES

Grow gross receipts/sales of tourism in Minnesota



\$13 billion

Leisure & hospitality gross sales annually
More than \$35 million a day



REVENUE

Generate state and local sales tax revenue from tourism



\$840 million

State sales tax generated annually
17% of all state sales tax revenues



JOBS

Increase leisure & hospitality employment in Minnesota



250,000 jobs

Total payroll: \$4.5 billion
Size of employment:
11% of total private sector
(Note: Data for leisure & hospitality sector, 2013)

61%

16%

7%

6%

5%

5%

marketing & communications

technology & operations

international & group tour

partner relations

partnership grants

welcome centers

percentage of **budget**

\$13
← 2013

\$11.2
← 2008

\$8.7
← 2003

growth in **billions**

Sales at leisure and hospitality businesses grew 49% from 2003 to 2013, including 4% annual growth for 2013.

(Note: data not available yet for 2014)

campaign

#ONLYINMNE

Explore Minnesota launched its new **#OnlyinMN** campaign in spring 2014. With increased funding, the campaign reached potential travelers in **six new markets**, including Denver, Kansas City and Saskatoon

Campaign introduced via press conference hosted by Gov. Mark Dayton

The debut #OnlyinMN campaign generated **\$320.2 million in traveler spending**

Summer advertising efforts included **building wraps** in Denver, **train station takeovers** in Chicago and **light rail wraps** in Minneapolis, in addition to digital and television

In the fall, invited three groups of travelers to become **"10-Day Minnesotans"** and document their trips via blogs and social media. Program resulted in more than 40 million earned media impressions



Expanded **Checkpoint Minnesota** winter scavenger hunt to generate travel to 12 unique destinations statewide

Pedal Minnesota, a multi-agency partnership with Health Partners as a major sponsor, introduced mobile tune-up stations, launched a "Bike Mom" promotion to encourage family cycling, and hired dedicated staff to support and grow cycling statewide

More than **doubled the number of co-op advertising opportunities** for the tourism industry at reduced rates; increased Explore Minnesota investment to underwrite this program



\$1 invested = \$68 in traveler spending
STATE TOURISM ADVERTISING

TwinCities.com
PIONEER PRESS

MINNESOTA
PUBLIC RADIO®

Minnesota
Historical Society

Minnesota Ski Areas
ASSOCIATION

BRING ME >>> THE NEWS

mba
minnesota brewers association

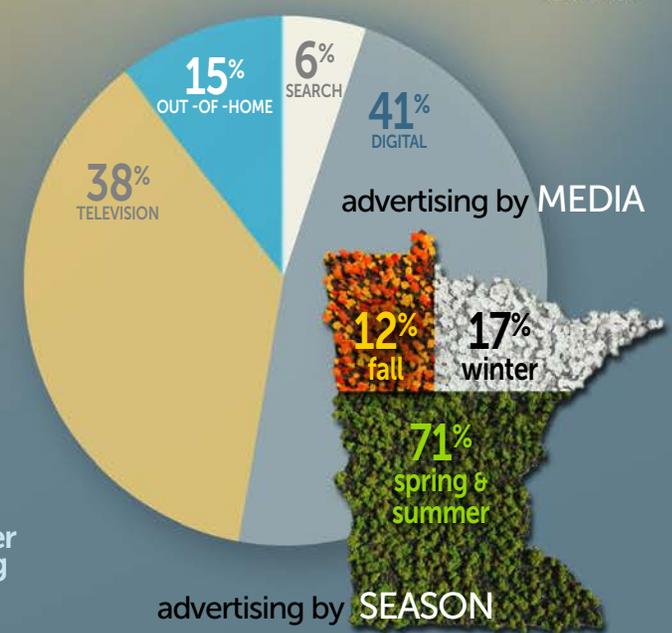
KARE 11

MINNESOTA
UNITED FC



marketing
partners

AmericInn



Launched responsive, engaging and image-driven **new website** in conjunction with #OnlyinMN campaign

Sent monthly **travel e-newsletters** and weekly e-mail reports on events, fishing, fall colors, winter trails and more to a qualified, opt-in audience

Served on-the-road travelers at **Welcome Centers** and wide network of affiliated centers, and provided printed materials at Mall of America and MSP Airport

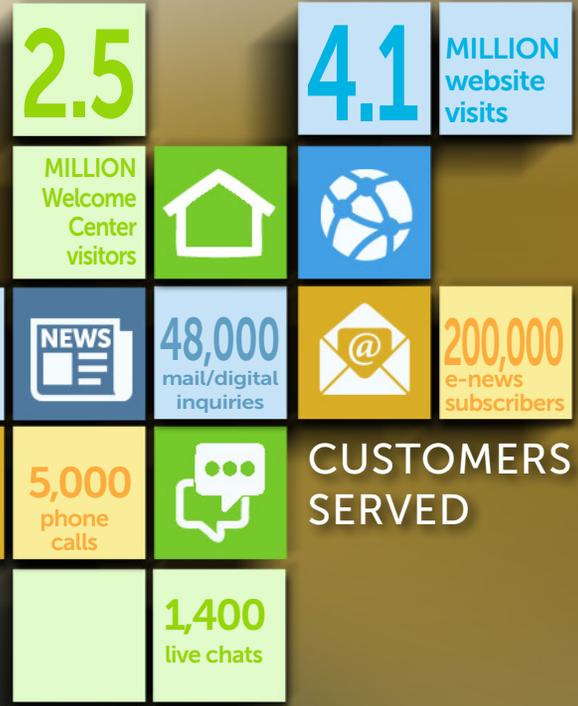
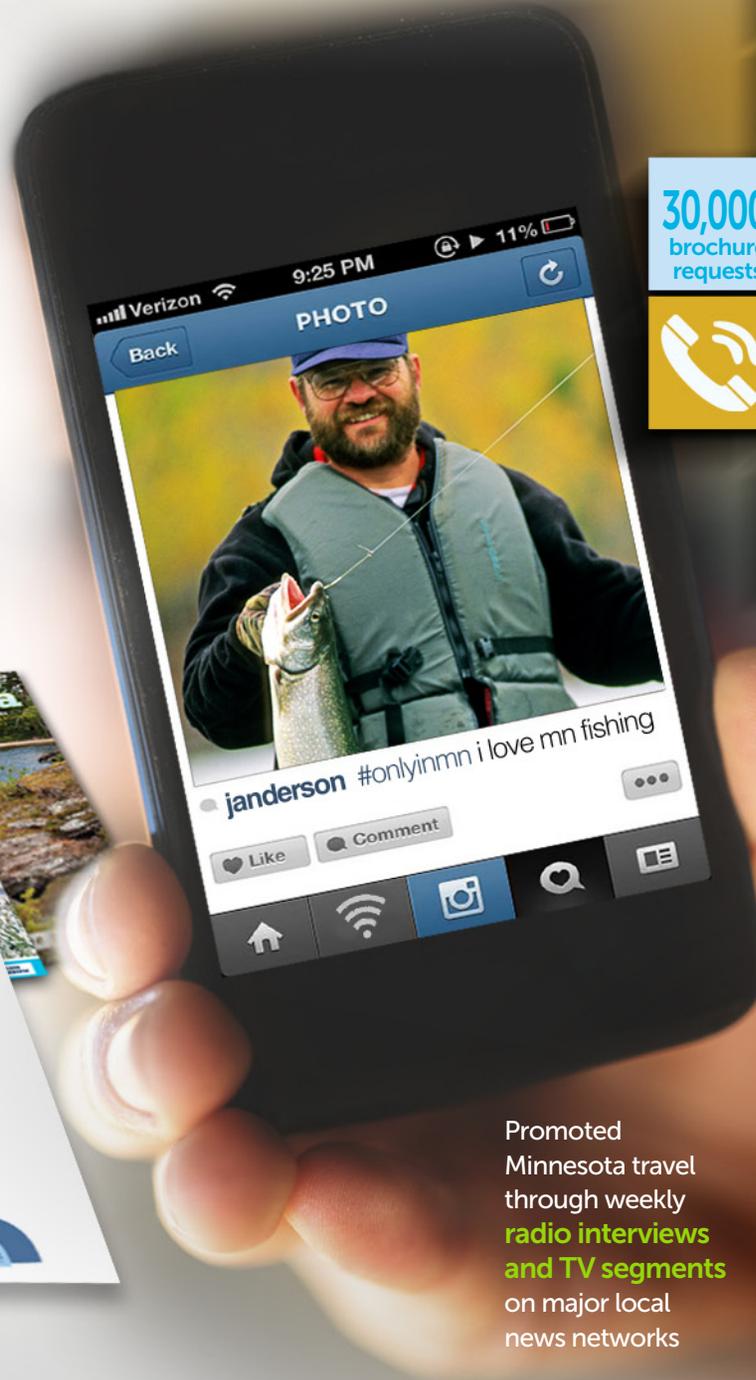
Promoted Minnesota activities and destinations through the **Minnesota Travel Guide** (300,000 distributed)

Offered seasonal trip ideas through **Minnesota Explorer travel newspaper** (total circulation of three issues: 1.5 million), published in partnership with Star Tribune

Provided customized, **one-on-one travel planning services** via phone, email and new live chat feature



traveler information



Helped generate **more than 69,000 uses of the new #OnlyinMN hashtag** across all channels

Greatly expanded social media outreach, adding a dedicated staff person and reaching **more than 110,000 followers** via Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube

Generated extensive coverage of Minnesota as a destination via media relations. Efforts resulted in high-profile placements in the **Chicago Tribune, CNN Travel, Denver Post, Travel + Leisure**, plus frequent coverage from Minnesota-based media

Promoted Minnesota travel through weekly **radio interviews and TV segments** on major local news networks

PR & social media

international & group tour

Attended the 2014 Ryder Cup at Gleneagles, Scotland, to promote the **2016 Ryder Cup** in Minnesota

Produced an **international tourism infographic** to tell the story of international visitors' economic impact on Minnesota

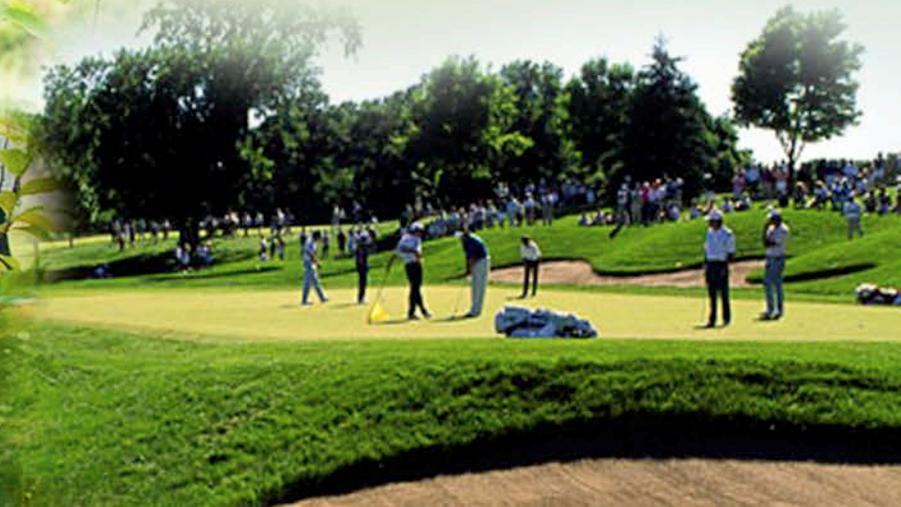


Hosted several **international media familiarization tours**, which generated significant media coverage in countries including Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom

Retained **in-country representative firms in China and Mexico**, new/emerging markets for Minnesota

House a database of more than **300 domestic tour operators** that offer Minnesota trips, ranging from day trips to multi-day tours of the state

Published **2014 Minnesota Group & Packaged Travel Planner** highlighting culinary tourism itineraries



industry outreach



Conducted **Governor's Opener events** for fishing (Brainerd area), pheasant hunting (Worthington area) and deer hunting (Bemidji area) in conjunction with DNR, host communities and other partners

Awarded **\$589,190 in grant funding** to 95 tourism and scenic byway organizations



Sponsored two national conferences and an annual event for sports planners and participated in two other national events as part of the **Minnesota Sports** partnership initiative

Entered into a multi-year, major event sponsorship with the American Society of Association Executives to increase Minnesota's visibility as a **destination for meetings and conferences**



Held one of the **best-attended tourism conferences** at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center



Coordinated participation in Destination Capitol Hill efforts to influence national tourism policy; reauthorization of **Brand USA** was an outcome of these efforts



research

Conducted **study on the return on investment** of Explore Minnesota's tourism marketing

Surveyed lodging businesses and campgrounds on expectations and results of summer tourism business, revealing Minnesota accommodations experienced their **fifth consecutive summer of growth**

Tracked lodging industry performance through Smith Travel Research, with Minnesota experiencing **annual growth in all six lodging metrics**

Collaborated with Department Revenue on reporting of **leisure and hospitality sales** data used to track industry performance



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For more details on Explore Minnesota marketing and programs, go to:
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