Assessing the Latino visitor experience in a rural Minnesota community: a case study

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- Buying power of Latinos in US increased seven-fold between 1990 and 2015. (Humphreys, 2015).

- Projected $1.72 trillion by 2020 (Humphreys, 2015).

- Approximately 370,000 US Latino households had incomes over $200,000 in 2015 --- up 187% since 2005. (Eisenach, 2016)
LATINO VISITORS
RESEARCH BASE

- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

- Community Tourism Development
  - Core values for tourism
  - Inventories and worksheets
TOURISM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

• 12-18 months process
• Multiple perspectives
• Report suggests actions
• Community implements
• REM Evaluation

Community Tourism Potential
LATINO TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong community assets
- 1 hour south of Minneapolis/St Paul metro
- Latino resident group
THE COMMUNITY

Photo: visitowatonna.org
LATINO VISITOR RECRUITMENT

- Demographic mix
  - gender, generations, professions and socio-economic status
- Partners in recruitment
  - Latino Economic Development Center
  - Southern Minnesota Multicultural Network
- Personal contact via phone and email
- Stipend, meal and mileage
THE VISIT

– 1 hour briefing
– 5 hours on own
– 1 hour debrief
– Written assessment
FINDINGS

- Overall what they identified as tourism assets and interests aligns with non-Latino visitors.
  - Shopping
  - Dining
  - Family-oriented recreation
  - Parks, trails
  - History and culture of community

- Information in Spanish cited as a necessity and a way to show respect for and interest in this target group.
LEGEND OF OWATONNA

AT THE SITE OF THESE BUBBLING MINERAL SPRINGS
MANY MOONS AGO FRAIL PRINCESS OWATONNA WAS
RESTORED TO HEALTH THROUGH DRINKING THE CURING
WATERS CALLED MINNEWAUJAN.

THE KINDLY SPIRIT OF CHIEF WABENA'S DAUGHTER
EVER BECKONS TO THE WEARY TRAVELER WHO VISITS
THIS PARK IN THE CITY NAMED AFTER HER.
“Owatonna should see Latino visitors as a great source of income for the hospitality and service industries.”

“I feel welcome when I asked for. All the people, Anglo and Latinos I met were very nice and friendly and willing to help me.”
VISITOR COMMENTS

- Need for Spanish-speaking employees

- "Improve signage in Spanish, use billboards welcoming Latinos, and learn about Latino culture and heritage."

- "I didn't see Latino families, so this can be a challenge for other Latino tourists because they feel more welcoming in a place where there are more Latinos."
 “…many Latinos are not attracted to Owatonna because they feel that there is nothing to do.”

 “They need an event that brings Latino families out and celebrates their culture, or even just a fun day with the family.”

 “Owatonna could be marketed for an "escape" to spend time at parks. Family parks with games because Latino families tend to have many children and so they take their children to have fun.”
Implications and Opportunities

LEGEND OF OWATONNA

At the site of these bubbling mineral springs
many moons ago frail Princess Owatonna was
restored to health through drinking the curing
waters called Minnewaukan.

The kindly spirit of Chief Wabena's daughter
ever beckons to the weary traveler who visits
this park in the city named after her.
Thank you!