



Delivering Big Economic Impact with Marketing Science & Data for the State of Wisconsin

March 2021



Arrivalist



Data Driven

Data driven. This is a pillar on which Travel Wisconsin has built their approach to marketing the state as a premier travel destination, and has now taken to another level.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism executes industry-leading marketing programs, provides reliable travel information and establishes strategic partnerships in its significant role of generating greater economic impact and jobs for Wisconsin.

"Our data-driven strategy is a critical component to our impressive return on the taxpayer's investment," said Tourism Acting Secretary Anne Sayers.

To best leverage existing resources and available data, Travel Wisconsin brought together their marketing and data partners to help empower the tourism department with new insights to make critical decisions.

The outcome from that collaboration is the *Propensity to Visit Model*, a new critical resource that sits at the intersection of marketing and data science. The *Propensity to Visit Model* has allowed Travel Wisconsin to be predictive and effective with their marketing executions. This model has been a key component in making smarter marketing decisions in order to support the recovery of travel to and within the state and continued economic development.

Creation of the *Propensity to Visit Model*

In 2019, Travel Wisconsin sought to partner with an agency of record that shared their strong data focus and commitment to being a data driven marketing organization. Hiebing was selected based on their marketing science expertise and their ability to bring Wisconsin's extensive data sets to life to power their marketing strategy. Hiebing's focus is about combining the power of storytelling with real-time, real-world data to build momentum for brands.

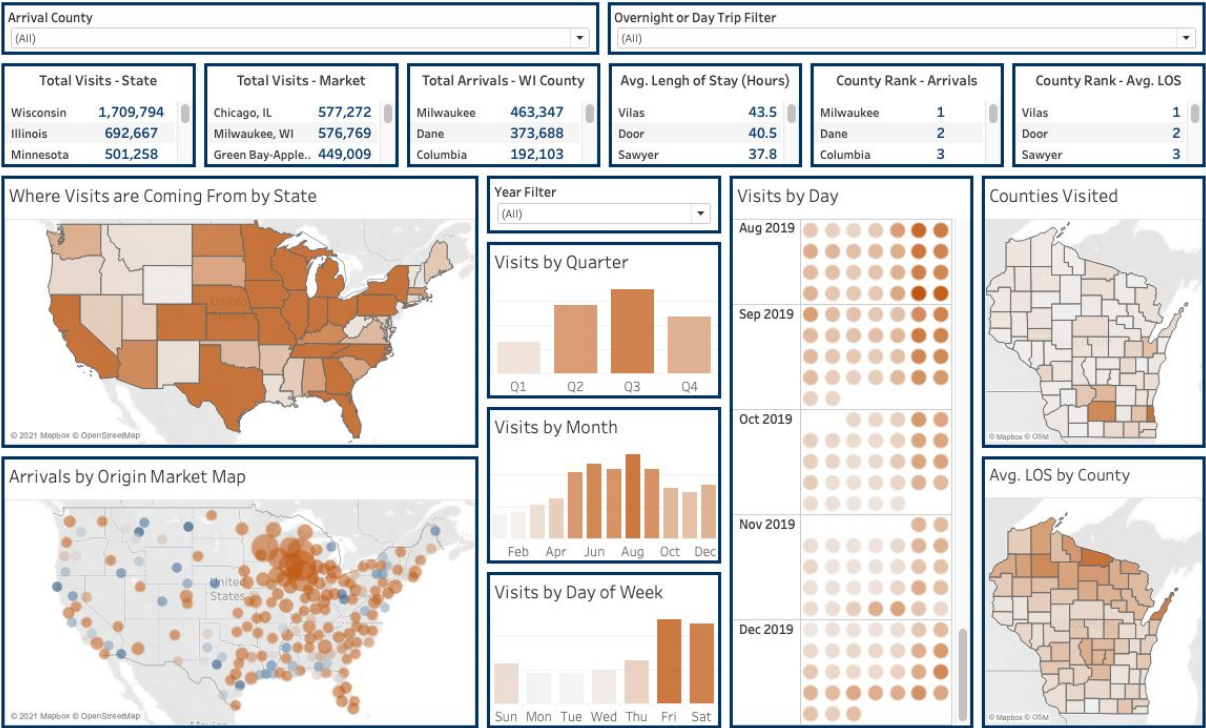
As the state's destination marketing organization (DMO), Travel Wisconsin was reevaluating investments in their existing markets while also eyeing expansion market opportunities for the state. The tourism team needed to know not only how current markets were behaving, but also how to predict where opportunities existed and which new markets would be best to target. With the goal of generating the greatest return on tax dollars to the state, Travel Wisconsin sought a data driven solution that would enable them to be predictive in identifying the markets that presented the greatest opportunity for generating incremental travel, while making the most efficient use of the state tourism budget.

"We need to get the wonderful Wisconsin story in front of more people but being great stewards of the state's money means finding smarter ways to outflank larger-spending competitors in our efforts to reach the right people. We knew that better use of data would allow us to be more precise, and therefore, effective," said Dave Florin, Partner/CEO of Hiebing.

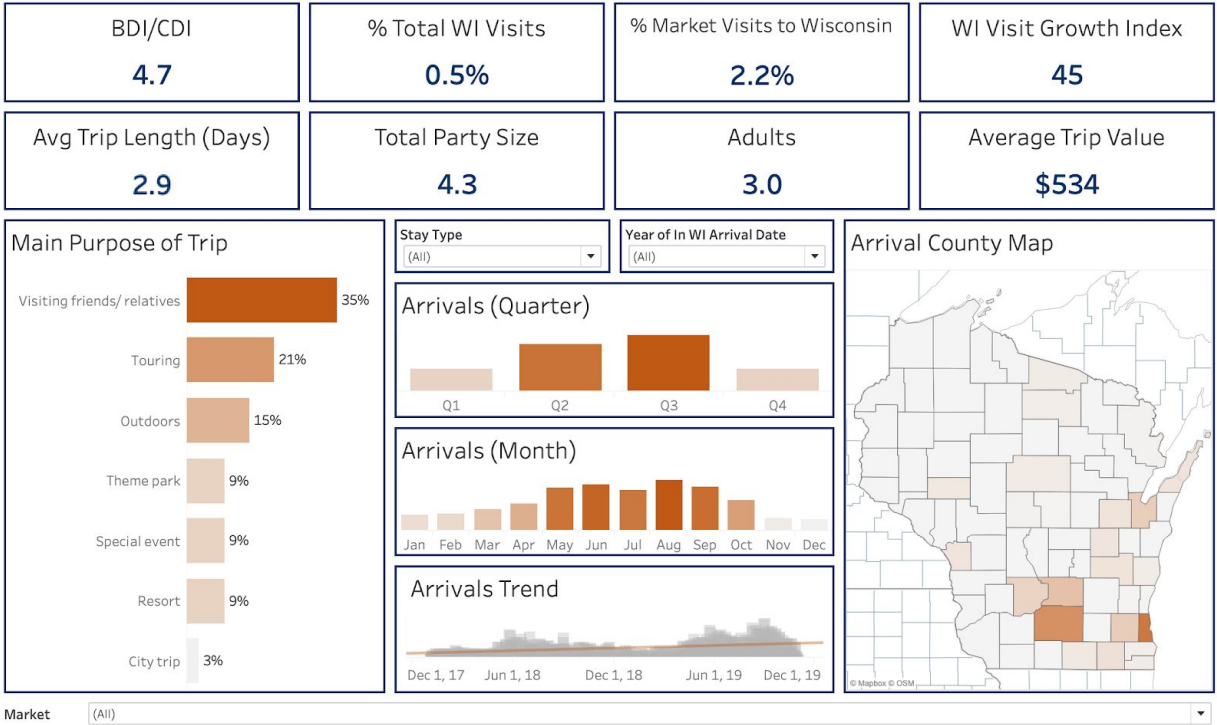
As with many successful initiatives, the genesis of this tool came out of a collaboration of partners, led by Travel Wisconsin, who rolled up their sleeves with Hiebing and evaluated the insights opportunities available within the existing Travel Wisconsin data.

The first step included Hiebing creating a highly visual dashboard that allowed multiple data sources to be quickly and easily captured in one place. The dashboard brought together key data points leveraged for driving marketing and market planning initiatives. It also showed a cohesive view of both existing and new opportunity markets.

Arrivals Dashboard



Origin Market Attribute Dashboard



Data shown are for example only.

While data access is a vital component in the implementation of AI, the tourism team wanted to go beyond a dashboard to a new level, creating a model that could connect the data across the various sources. This next step would not only show a cohesive view of markets, but also be predictive in the propensity to generate visitation and effectively allocate media dollars. Travel Wisconsin and Hiebing knew the return on investments (ROI) from the markets in which they already had a presence, but they needed a view into new markets and which ones might be the most successful. The question then became, “How do we unlock the insights needed to be predictive in market planning?”

The *Propensity to Visit Model* provides the touchpoint between marketing and data science, combining traveler insights and media logistics to be data driven and predictive in marketing planning. In this model, legacy data as well as emerging data sets are combined to effectively drive market selection for Travel Wisconsin initiatives. The mechanics of this model are driven by legacy data that provide insights on Travel Wisconsin’s visitor markets as well as the returns that occur in them when the state is active with marketing and communication.

As Hiebing began developing a predictive model to evaluate existing tourism markets and identify promising new markets, several sources and data were identified as essential to the project’s success: data from Travel Wisconsin data partners specifically Longwoods’ long-standing ROI and visitation research, and Arrivalist’s arrival data.

Partners in Helping to Power the Model

Longwoods International

Over a decade ago, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism needed a way to demonstrate the economic impact of their marketing efforts. The team wanted to collaborate with the leading experts in the field, so they diligently investigated the options. Longwoods' return-on-investment (ROI) methodology has won awards for best practices from the Travel & Tourism Research Association, Georgia Tech, the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association, and the Advertising Research Foundation. Longwoods was selected as a foundational partner in measuring ROI for the state and better understanding Wisconsin's image as a leisure travel destination. Over time the relationship evolved to include reporting domestic visitation and spending.

"It's been a pleasure and honor to be a research partner with Travel Wisconsin and their partners with our research for over 15 years. They truly understand the need for making research based decisions, and this has yielded significant increases in visitation and return on investment over the years!" noted Amir Eylon, CEO of Longwoods International.

Since the partnership began in 2010, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Longwoods International have coordinated on multiple research projects tailored to meet the strategic needs of the state. That collaborative relationship allows for the advancement of insights and recommendations that positively impact Wisconsin's successful strategies supporting the tourism and hospitality sector in the state. Additionally, the consistency and quality of the data and insights since then has demonstrated the value of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's efforts.

Two ongoing Longwoods projects essential to the *Propensity to Visit Model* include:

Travel USA®: Begun in 1990, Travel USA is the longest running and largest American domestic travel tracking study, with around 300,000 trips making up each year's database. This thorough survey includes a myriad of travel variables, from the number of visitors, where they came from, how much they spent, primary purpose of their trip, length of stay, planning, booking, transportation, accommodations, trip activities, special interests on trip, use of social media, trip satisfaction, and detailed visitor demographics.

ROI and Image Research: Longwoods International conducts the annual advertising effectiveness and image study for the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. This study measures advertising awareness and market penetration in each included geography and calculates the return-on-investment tourism spending brings. In addition, the study also measures Wisconsin across over 40 leisure travel attributes motivating destination selection, in relation to their competitive set.

Multiple variables across both these studies were selected for the project, including visitation counts, traveler expenditures, origin markets, average travel party size, and length of trip.

Arrivalist

Arrivalist measures the impact marketing and advertising have on influencing arrivals to tourism destinations. Using proprietary technology, Arrivalist analyzes the changing locations of mobile devices and connected vehicles to provide unique business intelligence about how media attracts visitors and how travelers interact with the locations once they arrive. Arrivalist does not report on individuals; rather, it anonymously measures aggregated locations of mobile devices around the country.

Since their partnership began five years ago, Arrivalist has become one of the key providers in Travel Wisconsin's analytics and research toolbox, helping the state make better-informed marketing decisions. Arrivalist takes a holistic approach to location insights for Travel Wisconsin, collaborating with the client and its partners in a comprehensive manner across the engagement, from sustainability to media optimization use cases.

"Travel Wisconsin is an industry leader in actively applying location data and encouraging collaboration among their partners. We're excited to be part of this work and this team," noted Cree Lawson, CEO of Arrivalist.

On a basic level, Arrivalist answers questions around who is visiting (origin markets and demographics), when the state is visited (seasonality), where visitors go (dispersion and visitation by county, city, and Point of Interest), how they arrive (fly vs. drive), how long they stay (days, hours, minutes), why they have visited (exposure to specific media messaging, attendance in certain venues, etc.), and how well media performs at encouraging trips (efficiency, lift).

Arrivalist also uses local tracking to enable analysis of key shared resources such as state parks. Arrivalist's Visit Model tracking allows Travel Wisconsin to understand the primary users, be they residents or visitors, within a defined geographic space, ranging from beaches to event venues.

Arrivalist provides custom trip data to Travel Wisconsin and Hiebing to feed into their own specialized destination dashboards and the *Propensity to Visit Model*.

Arrivalist data used for the *Propensity to Visit Model* includes:

Geolocation Insights: Data arising from Arrivalist's panel of mobile device users and connected vehicles and sub-panel of digital media-exposed users. This data is leveraged by Travel Wisconsin and Hiebing to understand Trips by Origin Market, Length of Stay by Origin Market, Arrival Lift™ by Origin Market, Stay Lift™ by Origin Market.

Daily Travel Index: Arrivalist's new tool to measure daily road trips of 50+ miles across all 50 States. Travel Wisconsin and Hiebing use this data to understand daily trips to the destination and other critical insights such as year-over-year visitation, origin market zip codes, and benchmarks against the national average and competitive markets.

Key Components to the *Propensity to Visit Model*

There are three components to the success of the *Propensity to Visit Model*:

1. The data science that connects the data sets;
2. The data that powers the model; and
3. The interpretation and insights provided by the people leveraging the tool.

It's the power of this model to inform the selection of markets where the state will receive the greatest ROI, coupled with the interpretation and implementation, that is driving an ongoing value for Travel Wisconsin.

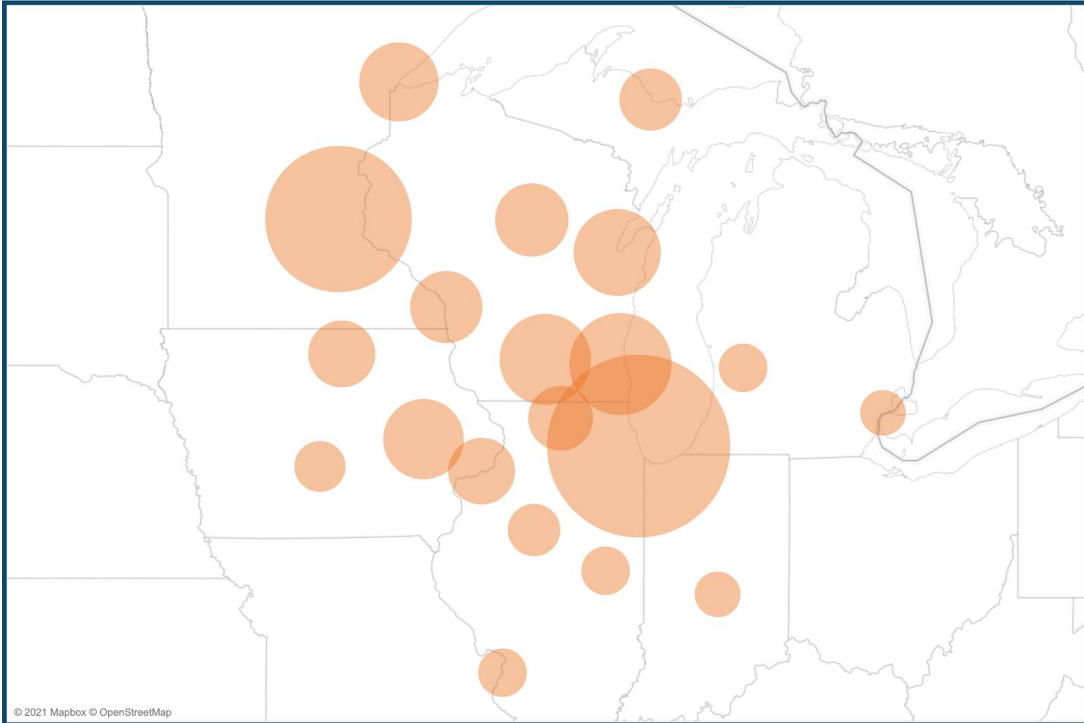
The *Propensity to Visit Model* takes inputs for existing markets in which Travel Wisconsin is active and combines those known returns and lifts metrics to evaluate those that are currently generating the greatest return for advertising initiatives.

The *Propensity to Visit Model* also:

- Evaluates opportunity markets based on key value metrics from Arrivalist and Longwoods encompassing: visitor volume, proximity, lengths of stay, travel party size and expenditures.
- Considers additional data such as brand market penetration as well as the cost of media and available impressions in each market.
- Informs an adjustment to the state's market mix including continued investment in five markets, shifts away from investment in a historical market, plus investment in seven new markets.

"We're not the most well-funded state tourism department in our competitive set, but we can be the most strategic. Our investment in data, research and marketing science allows us to stretch every precious advertising dollar and maximize ROI," said Travel Wisconsin Director of Marketing and Advertising Shane Brossard.

Predicted Incremental Revenue From Advertising



Data shown are for example only.

The tourism team has created a true game changer for understanding and acting on data by engineering new variables. The model allows Travel Wisconsin's decision-makers to make nuanced market selections to drive incremental revenue. When choosing between target markets with similar populations and travel behaviors, for example, the new model assists in understanding potential revenue trade-offs and the overall impacts.

"The key to unlocking the value of these data for marketing applications is to uncover the predicted lift from advertising in markets we've never advertised in. Creating new variables with a strong predictive relationship to ad lift enabled us to fill in that information gap with the power of machine learning," said Frank Vanderwall, Partner/Marketing Data Scientist at Hiebing.

Key Takeaways and What This Means for the Future

Today data aggregation and visualization is becoming a vital exercise for DMOs. The *Propensity to Visit Model* for the Wisconsin Department of Tourism takes the next step by creating the capability of linking aggregated data and then calculating their target markets' propensity to visit the state.

Travel Wisconsin has a legacy of being a leader in the DMO space and for being data driven in their work to drive economic development for the state's residents. With this new tool, Travel Wisconsin will continue to make important, incremental changes.

By applying business insights to data points generated from the model's diverse data sources, the tourism team is making data driven decisions and confidently expanding to new opportunity markets.

As the state continues to expand to new opportunity markets, and as additional relevant data sets become available and are incorporated into the model, the data that powers the *Propensity to Visit Model* continues to grow. With new information, the model will become smarter, enabling a continued enhancement of marketing effectiveness. As a result, the model will continue to drive efficiency of spending in key markets as well as identify opportunity markets to grow travel to and increase revenue for the state.

The model will also help the tourism team better track ROI in their research by helping to identify the most helpful data sets (sample sizes, markets, etc.) to validate the model predictions and continue to optimize spend for the future. As Travel Wisconsin markets the diverse tourism experiences across the state, individual county DMOs will in turn recognize the effects of this precision decision-making tool, intended to benefit the state's destinations collectively.

"With great data comes great opportunity. Wisconsin is aggregating the best data in the industry to predict visitor behavior and marketing impact to pave the path forward. We know we've got one of the best tourism products in the nation, but this data is going to help us break out in a big way," said Tourism Acting Secretary Anne Sayers.

About the Partners

Travel Wisconsin is the official destination marketing organization for the State of Wisconsin operating under the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. We work to market the state as a premier travel destination while generating greater economic impact for Wisconsin through tourism. Learn more at www.TravelWisconsin.com

Hiebing is a full-service marketing communications agency that creates measurable brand momentum through the marriage of data and artful storytelling. The agency has offices in Madison, Wisconsin, and Austin, Texas, and offers a suite of services, including brand strategy, research, creative, media, PR, social, digital, marketing science and production. Hiebing's client roster includes Culver's, ABC Supply, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Schneider, Summit Credit Union, Boys & Girls Clubs of Dane County and the Austin Area, Chuy's Tex-Mex, United Way of Dane County and many others. Learn more at www.hiebing.com

Established in 1978 as a market research consultancy, Longwoods International has grown into a respected leader within the travel and tourism industry working with over 150 travel brands and destinations. With offices in Toronto, Ohio, Georgia, Florida, and Wisconsin, Longwoods conducts strategic market research for public- and private-sector clients throughout North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim. For more information, visit www.longwoods-intl.com

Arrivalist is the leading location intelligence platform in the travel industry, using mobile location datasets to provide actionable insights on consumer behavior, competitive share, media effectiveness, and market trends. Over 200 travel marketers, including 100 Cities and 40 U.S. States use these insights to inform media strategy, operations, and destination development. For more information, visit www.arrivalist.com