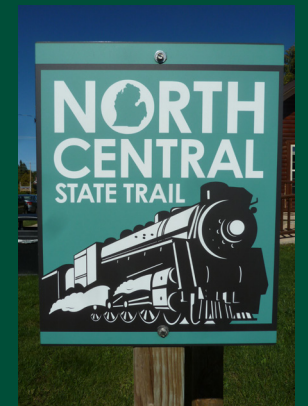


# Promotion of Tourism, Events and Trails in Northeast Michigan

Promotion of Tourism, Events and Trails in Northeast Michigan



Regional Analysis by UP454:  
Local Economic Planning Students

Fall 2013

## Introduction

The Urban & Regional Planning Program in the School of Planning, Design and Construction (SPDC) at Michigan State University (MSU) places great emphasis on linking theory to practice, and offering students the opportunity to contribute to Michigan's planning process. The analysis presented in this report is the result of applied research conducted by students in UP454: Local Economic Planning during the fall 2013 semester. The course addressed the economic development process in cities and regions, and

we were pleased to be able to partner with the Prima Civitas Foundation in an analysis of tourism and recreation development in Northeast Michigan. The results, presented in this report, show the energy and creativity of our emerging urban planners as they serve the needs of Michigan communities.

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## Acknowledgements

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MSU course to one of its ongoing projects and facilitating research and outreach.

Additional thanks go to SPDC Communication Manager Heidi Charron Macwan and her team for the design and layout of this report.

## About SPDC

The School of Planning, Design and Construction (SPDC) at Michigan State University integrates expertise to create a sustainable built and natural environment that enriches communities, the economy and family life. The School achieves its mission through leadership, entrepreneurial creativity, social responsibility, cultural relevance, and environmentally sustainable planning and policy.

The School offers undergraduate degrees in Construction Management, Interior Design, Landscape Architecture and Urban & Regional Planning. In addition, the SPDC offers Master's degrees in Construction Management, Environmental Design, International Planning Studies and Urban & Regional Planning, and a PhD in Planning, Design and Construction.

*Cover photos by the Urban & Regional Planning Program in the School of Planning, Design and Construction at Michigan State University, 2013.*

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# Part 1: Trail Design, Development and Promotion

## PLACEMAKING ON THE NORTH CENTRAL STATE TRAIL: USING TRAIL-SIDE PLACEMAKING AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOL

By: Conor Ott

The North Central State Trail stretches 62 miles from Gaylord to Mackinaw City in Michigan. From Gaylord, the southernmost town on the trail, the trail travels north through Vanderbilt, Wolverine, Indian River, Topinabee and Cheboygan. The 10-foot-wide former railroad line takes bikers, walkers, horseback riders and, in the winter, snowmobilers through forests, farmland and an inland lake, as well as Lake Huron when one uses the trail between Cheboygan and Mackinaw City. The trail is crushed limestone, which ensures a feel of asphalt without the necessary upkeep, so it's fairly easy to trek for most potential users. The trail can be an important economic development tool for the jurisdictions through which it passes

How best to harness the economic potential of the trail is a complex issue and the true economic opportunity of the trail is unclear. It is, however, obvious to see which towns along the trail put emphasis on capturing dollars from trail users and which towns do not. In other words, one can see when using the trail which towns use resources to make an aesthetic, comfortable and overall attractive place that encourages trail users to stop and visit the town's central business district.

During a late October weekend, this author and a few colleagues traveled the 62 miles from Gaylord and Mackinaw City by bike

and observed certain aspects of the trail. This author particularly geared his studies to placemaking along the portions of the trail that pass through the respective towns. What was found was a number of examples of how each town uses their portion of the trail to attract trail users to use businesses, see sites in the town, or just sit and rest. Furthermore, it was fairly simple to differentiate between the towns based on how well each jurisdiction allocated certain resources to creating and maintaining these places around the trail.

This paper will be divided into three main parts. First, we'll explore the economic opportunity offered by similar trails from studies done around the country, as well as in the state of Michigan. Second, we'll define what successful practices of placemaking by the trail entails. Finally, we'll take a close look at the places around the trail in each respective town on the North Central State Trail and rate these places on a few different criteria, which will give us a possible insight as to why some towns may see more dollars from trail users than the rest.

### **Economic Opportunity Offered By Trails Nationwide**

It has long been accepted that trails are good for communities, no matter the size. Trails bring in tourism in the form of person days as well as dollars, increases nearby property values, and creates an overall sense of place. These multi-jurisdictional parks, so to speak, can also connect towns to create a stronger region.

Studies based around the economic benefits of a municipality having a trail run through its borders is fairly new, but there are some compelling statistics. Here at Michigan State University, the Land Policy Institute (LPI, 2007) conducted a study focused on the valuation of green amenities in Oakland and Hillsdale counties in Southeast Michigan. The study found that property values of properties within 1,500 meters of “walkability and bikeability allowing green infrastructure” raised 6.3% compared with property values outside 1,500 meters of such green infrastructure.

An economic impact study conducted by the National Trails Training Partnership on the North Central Rail Trail in Baltimore County, MD, found similar economic benefits from the trail. The 1993 study found the costs of upkeep to the state for one fiscal year to be \$191,893 and split the benefits into three different categories: Goods sold, tax revenue, and jobs created/supported. Goods sold amounted to \$3,380,013, tax revenue from the State sales tax via those goods sold was \$171,885 and 262 jobs were created/supported. Although the data is quite dated, the amount of revenue from the trail alone shouldn’t be ignored. Another study conducted by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy found visitor spending along six trailheads in the Great Allegheny Passage to range from \$5.8 million and \$14.1 million in 1998 (PFK Consulting, 1993).

There is a study that is important to note that specifically focuses on the trail users themselves. A 2004 study conducted by

North Carolina State University’s Institute for Transportation Research found encouraging statistics about trail user demographics. The study was specific to the North Carolina Northern Outer Banks Trail and found that 87% of trail users had an income of \$50,000 and more than 78% completed college. It can be perceived from this study, although not necessarily universal, trail users are willing and able to spend money in trail towns (Institute for Transportation Research, 2004).

There are numerous other studies that show similar data regarding economic benefits of being a jurisdiction through which a trail runs. Studies conducted all over the country show that the economic benefits of trails and trail users, in most cases, outweigh the costs. It is important to note, however, having a popular trail running through or near a town does not guarantee that town strong economic benefits from the trail. Numerous documents and publications express the need for placemaking and delineate the elements of creating a successful and effective trail-side place.

### **Elements of Successful Trail-Side Placemaking**

Placemaking has long been used by planners and economic developers to create vibrant locations that help an area thrive economically. These places not only keep businesses around and create new businesses, but they also increase the quality of life of residents of the area by creating an instilled sense of place. While mainly thought of as a city center, commercial hub

or shopping center, these places can be used for all sorts of purposes and in all sorts of locations, not the least of which is the side of a trail. Trail-side placemaking can serve as a corridor from trail to town center, advertise for local shops and eateries, attract trail users to enjoy the community's amenities and create a pleasurable area in which trail users and residents alike can rest, play and meet one another. The following are concepts from numerous authors and associations help us take a closer look at what key elements and important facets should be included in trail-side placemaking.

The Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA, 2005), which oversees the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile-long trail that stretches from Pittsburgh, PA, to Cumberland, MD, has coined the term known as "Trail Town." A Trail Town, according to the ATA, is a place where trail users can enjoy "the scenery, services and heritage of the nearby community." In the ATA's publication *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism* they list a series of goals that trail towns should have. To name a few relevant to this paper, strategies of a trail town should contain elements that "entice people to get off the trail and into the town . . . welcome trail users to the town by making information about the community readily available at the trail . . . and make a strong and safe connection between the trail and the town." These three elements are all facets of good placemaking around trails in order to capture trail user dollars.

Harry Burkholder (2012) of the Land Information Access Association (LIAA)

has written in the *Michigan Township News* about the benefits of maximizing the economic potential of trail-based tourism. The original term by the ATA, Burkholder writes, is "geared toward cities and large urban centers," but he goes on to say that the idea can be easily applied to small towns and townships. Burkholder also mentions the importance of the safe and strong connection from trail to town, but goes into further detail. He mentions that the connection has three important elements, the *portal*, the *pathway* and the *gateway*. The portal is an important facet of the place directly surrounding the trail. This is where the trail user exits the trail to visit the nearby town and should provide wayfinding and advertisement for community businesses and historic and scenic points. The pathway entails the physical connection from trail to central business district. The pathway usually intersects roads and safe crossing should be maintained. The pathway should also strategically located to pass businesses. Finally, the gateway is where trail users enter the town's central business district. Wayfinding signage is essential at the gateway.

Burkholder's group, the Land Information Access Association (LIAA, 2010), has written a document titled *Trail Town Manual: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism* and is specific to Cheboygan County. The document uses the same ideals that Burkholder and the Allegheny Trail Alliance have expressed, but this manual is tailored specifically toward helping communities



along the North Central State Trail reap the economic benefits of the trail. After an extensive “Community Assessment” of each community along the trail, the LIAA moves to talk about the economic restructuring of a community in order to become a successful Trail Town. The document states the importance of a trail town understanding what trail users need. Questions should be asked such as “what do trail users eat?” and “where do trail users shop?” The changes both structurally and socially to the town center to become more viable to trail users require downtown redevelopment and land use policies that are outside the realm of this paper, however, these are important elements to consider when placemaking along the trail for effective wayfinding and informational signage.

### **Trail-Side Places along the North Central State Trail**

Now, let’s consider how well communities along the North Central State Trail use trail-side placemaking to capture trail user benefits. The places in this study are the surrounding locations of all the towns along the trail: Gaylord, Vanderbilt, Wolverine, Indian River, Topinabee, Cheboygan and Mackinaw City. To differentiate the perceived effectiveness of each of these locations, the author has devised a scoring system. The scoring system is based on two main categories: Informational, advertisement, and wayfinding signage and physical infrastructure.

The signage aspect of the rating system is based on a few elements. Before we dive into

the details, it’s important to note that at each community’s place along the trail, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources has put a trail map with historical facts of the trail. These signs are in every town so for comparative reasons, we’ll disregard them. The important elements to look at for signage are two-fold: 1) Advertisement for local businesses and community centers; and 2) wayfinding signs that direct trail users to such businesses and important community locations.

As far as infrastructure is concerned, it’s important to look at public facilities, such as bathrooms and drinking fountains, leisure spots that are inviting, such as benches and pavilions, and aesthetics, such as fountains, gardens and monuments. The portal, pathway and gateway idea brought about by Burkholder is also a key element when rating infrastructure of trail-side placemaking.

The trip taken by the author and his colleagues began in Gaylord, the southernmost town on the trail, and continued through the towns of Vanderbilt, Wolverine, Indian River, Topinabee and Cheboygan before finishing the trek in Mackinaw City, where the trail ends. The following section will take an in-depth look at the places around the trail in each of these towns. This study will focus on trails that are not destinations. In other words, we will be taking a look at towns that are not at a trail head but rather along the trail in passing. This criteria eliminates Gaylord and Mackinaw City leaving Vanderbilt, Wolverine, Indian River, Topinabee and Cheboygan. As a final note before we dive in, each rating will

be objective based on the ideas laid out in the earlier section as well as this authors assessment and will be rated on a scale of “good,” “adequate” and “needs improvement.”

### **Vanderbilt**

Almost eight miles north of Gaylord was our first stop in Vanderbilt.

Signage: There was a total of three signs in Vanderbilt, but they were not grouped together. The first two signs we saw were advertisements for restaurants that sat right along the trail, which were provided by the restaurants themselves. The third sign was a welcome to Vanderbilt sign that was just before downtown.

- Signage Rating: *Adequate*.
- Improvements: Put all of the signs in one spot to encourage trail users to stop and read rather than ride or walk by.

Infrastructure: Vanderbilt had little to speak of in the way of infrastructure but there were two encouraging pieces. First, both restaurants that provided for their own advertisement signs also created adequate portals from trail to establishment. These, again, were not centrally located and there wasn't a portal to any sort of central business district. A second encouraging piece to note was Vanderbilt's downtown was in very close proximity to the trail.

- Infrastructure Rating: *Needs Improvement*.

- Improvements: Create a place that entices trail users to stop and rest and encourages trail users to look at downtown.

### **Wolverine**

From Vanderbilt to Wolverine is a fairly long trek of 10.9 miles. A 10.9 mile drive would cause one to need the use of facilities, as well as refreshment.

Signage: There was no signage provided other than the DNR's historical sign. The downtown lies up the hill from where the trail enters and, at first, is hidden from the trail user until the trail user has decided to push on.

- Signage Rating: *Needs Improvement*.
- Improvements: Create signage with wayfinding, informational and advertisement literature to encourage trail users to come to and shop in the downtown.

Infrastructure: Wolverine's portion of the trail crosses the Sturgeon River just before entering the town, and there is a vast park with benches, portable toilets and a pavilion in which are several picnic tables. This park is across a quiet street from the trail and would entice trail users to stop. However, there is no portal, pathway or gateway into the central business district

- Infrastructure Rating: *Adequate*.
- Improvements: Create a portal, pathway and gateway

system to encourage trail users to visit downtown.

### **Indian River**

Indian River is 9.6 miles north of Wolverine and is about half way between Gaylord and Mackinaw City.

Signage: Indian River was one of the only towns to provide street signs to the trail once the trail crossed. Indian River, like Vanderbilt, is also helped by the proximity of the central business district to the trail. As one enters town, street signs, advertisement and directional wayfinding signs are prevalent. These signs, like Vanderbilt, are scattered and not centralized and trail users might forget what they read once they reach a place where they decide to enter downtown.

- Signage Rating: *Adequate*.
- Improvements: Put all signage in one spot so trail users stop to read.

Infrastructure: Indian River’s Chamber of Commerce sits adjacent to the trail, which is where Indian River has created its trail-side place. Trail parking is provided at this point, a 20-foot-high statue is located in this parking lot, as well as a bike rack and a vast park is on the opposite side of the park from the parking lot. The parking lot serves as a portal and a gateway, due to the fact that it is essentially in the central business district, but there is not an adequate portal, making it kind of awkward for trail users to transfer from trail to town if they are biking or riding.

- Infrastructure Rating: *Adequate*.

- Improvements: A gateway and pathway are already in place. Create a portal that encourages trail users to get off of the trail with more accessibility, such as a trail offshoot for easy trail exit.

### **Topinabee**

Just 5.6 miles north of Indian River, Topinabee sits in the middle of what might be considered the most scenic part of the ride due to the trail’s route along the banks of Mullet Lake.

Signage: Topinabee was the only town along the North Central State Trail to centralize the signage into one spot. This was most likely due to the fact that Topinabee also has the smallest central business district of the study. There was informational signage about the park and other amenities, but no advertisement. The lack of wayfinding signage was most likely due to the proximity of everything to the town.

- Signage Rating: *Adequate*.
- Improvements: Wayfinding and informational signage would seem to do Topinabee’s trail-side place little good, but advertisement would increase the amount of trail users who visit the local businesses.

Infrastructure: Topinabee’s natural and built amenities tied together to make all around holistic place. For the built environment of the place, the old train depot is a small library, there are formal and up kept bathrooms, drinking fountains, a bike rack,

covered picnic areas, a parking lot, several benches, a monument to the area's economic development association and a playground. Opposite the parking lot on the other side of the trail is a retaining wall with stairs that lead down to a small beach on Mullet Lake; hence, the tying together of the natural environment to the built environment. The portal, pathway and gateway are similar to that of Indian River in that the central trail essentially goes through the central business district. Topinabee's trail-side place encourages people to stop, rest and check out downtown very well.

- Infrastructure Rating: *Good*.

### **Cheboygan**

The final town of the study is Cheboygan. It is the largest municipality in the study and lies on the shores of Lake Huron 11.9 miles north of Topinabee.

Signage: Cheboygan had the only sign in the study that advertise most, if not all, downtown businesses, with a map of where they were. This sign should prove very

effective; however, the location of the sign is concerning. If one is coming from Topinabee on the trail, the sign is two blocks past where the heavy infrastructure investment, or "place," lies. Trail users are encouraged to stop and rest at the trail-side place, and decide to pack up and leave town before they see the informational sign.

- Signage Rating: *Adequate*.
- Improvements: Moving the downtown informational, wayfinding, and advertisement sign to the trail-side place would be most beneficial.

Infrastructure: Cheboygan's trail-side place was furnished with a drinking fountain, formal bathrooms, covered picnic tables, parking, a few benches and a garden. These amenities made it most enticing to stop and rest and there was an adequate portal just past the spot that directed trail users onto the pathway. The pathway was simply city sidewalks, but were well-maintained and easy to maneuver.

- Infrastructure Rating: *Good*.

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## AN EVALUATION OF CHEBOYGAN COUNTY TRAILS WEB-MARKETING

By: Manuel Mutimucuo

Cheboygan is part of the Northeast Michigan regional effort of developing trails to take advantage of the economic development potential of tourism. Marketing has been singled out as the weakest point in the link and web-based marketing defined as “the first obvious step to effectively make the region known throughout the country.” This research aims to evaluate the current Cheboygan County web-marketing effectiveness.

### Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to evaluate Cheboygan County trails web-marketing. The following objectives served as the primary focus of analysis:

- To evaluate Cheboygan County trails web-based marketing products; and
- To analyze the social mention of Cheboygan County trails on the web.

### Method

The Huizingh (2002) three hierarchical model of e-marketing was adapted to evaluate Cheboygan County web marketing. Three elements of the model were used: new customers (how the internet is used to enlarge the geographical size of the market), relationships (how Cheboygan County web-marketing provides a platform for customers to interact and increase brand recognition) and accessibility (to which extent customers can easily find the web site on a regular Google search). The social

mention analysis was carried out using the platform socialmention.com.

### Background Information about Cheboygan County

Cheboygan County is located at the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula. It is bordered on the north by the Straits of Mackinac and Lake Huron, on the east by Presque Isle County, on the south by Otsego County and on the west by Emmet and Charlevoix counties.

According to the Cheboygan County Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2002, the county has a total land area of 715.6 square miles, including 19 townships, one incorporated city (Cheboygan) and two incorporated villages (Wolverine and Mackinaw City) (Cheboygan County Planning Commission, 2002). As of 2010, it had 26,432 inhabitants, representing a population growth of 1.18% per annum since 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

General physiographic conditions in Cheboygan County are influenced by the Great Lakes. The County lakes include Burt Lake (the state’s fourth largest), Mullet Lake and Black Lake.

In terms of economic development, Cheboygan County is in general terms in distress, with major economic indexes below Michigan’s state average or Northeast Michigan’s nearby counties. The unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) was 10.5% (Michigan, 9.1%), poverty rate 17.3% (Michigan, 15.66%), with a median household income (2007 to 2011) of \$33,844 (Michigan, \$48,669).

Location quotient estimates indicate that the economic base is heavy in civil engineering construction and retailing, both industries with five times the average of Michigan.

Tourism-related industries are also important with accommodation representing four times the state average; amusement, gambling and recreation two times; museums, historical sites, zoos and parks 1.76 times; and food services and drinking 1.71 times.

## **Findings**

### **Cheboygan County**

#### **Web-Marketing Evaluation**

A Google search of the keyword “Cheboygan County Trails” produced about 20 websites that promote Cheboygan County Trails.

A thorough analysis was conducted of the website purposely built to promote Cheboygan County Trails. A summary of the rest can be seen in Appendix I at the end of this paper, in Table 2. In the absence of one website solely dedicated to Cheboygan County Trails, [www.US23heritageroute.org](http://www.US23heritageroute.org) was used as a proxy, because it is a website exclusively built to e-market Northeast Michigan trails and Cheboygan County is one of the members. Using Huizingh’s (2002) three hierarchical model of e-marketing, the following can be said:

#### ***New Customers***

It can be argued that [US23heritageroute.org](http://US23heritageroute.org) reaches a world audience because it is on the web and anyone can access it from anywhere in the world. However, if we take into account Huizingh’s (2002) argument that it is not effective just to build the website and expect that customers will come, it is fair

to argue that there is no deliberate effort to reach a larger audience, for example, through an option to access the webpage in other languages. Reaching out to out-of-state visitors is a Michigan State Strategic Plan 2012–2017 priority (Nichols, 2012).

#### ***Relationships***

The [US23heritageroute.org](http://US23heritageroute.org) site has links to the most common social networks, including Facebook, Twitter, Google + and Myspace. It also encourages users to share content and experiences in Cheboygan Trails called “stories.” This is a best practice according to Huizingh (2002), because well-managed, “online communities can strengthen brands.” From the number of stories shared (four) though, it can be argued that this feature is not very popular. One improvement could be, for example, to allow potential users to benefit from good or bad experiences that other users have had. A rating system with stars (common in e-commerce websites like Amazon.com) could be helpful. Furthermore, the travel and recreation assistants at trailheads could also encourage users from using the website and sharing experiences by sending them post-trip e-mails purposely asking for feedback.

#### ***Accessibility***

The [US23heritageroute](http://US23heritageroute.org) keyword is probably not the most obvious keyword search for people looking for trail experiences in Cheboygan County or Northeast Michigan. Michigan Trails is a website that serves as a “marketplace” for all Michigan trails and has a much better URL. Perhaps, [US23heritageroute](http://US23heritageroute.org) could have been kept

as the brand name for the trail, but a more deliberate URL for the domain registered.

Another dimension is how easily one can find [US23heritageroute.org](http://US23heritageroute.org) in a normal Google search. For the keyword “Northeast Michigan Trails” it appears second on page one, which is a very good outcome. For the keyword “Cheboygan County Trails” it still appears on page one, but is the sixth option listed. For the search “Michigan Trails,” which is arguably the most obvious keyword for out-of-state potential visitors, there is room for improvement. [US23heritageroute.org](http://US23heritageroute.org) appears on page five as the second listing. Research shows that most people do not look past page one in a normal search.

### **Social Mention of Cheboygan County Trails on the Web**

In Cheboygan County, there are 22 trails in various stages of development (refer to Appendix I). For the social mention analysis, in the absence of a ranking system, a convenience sample of trails that have the name “Cheboygan” attached was used. Table 1 presents the summary of findings based on the platform [socialmention.com](http://socialmention.com). This platform uses concepts like “strength,” “sentiment,” “passion” and “reach,” and defines as follows:

Strength refers to the likelihood that a brand is being discussed in the social media; sentiment is the ratio of mentions that are generally positive to those that are generally negative; passion is a measure of the likelihood that individuals talking about your brand will do so repeatedly; and reach is the measure of

the range of influence. It is a number of unique authors referencing your brand divided by the total number of mentions.

The aggregate social mention shows very little activity on the web about “Cheboygan County Trails.” The likelihood that the brand is being discussed in the social media is in average 2.4%. In general terms the opinions are neutral to favorable. The likelihood that individuals talking about the brand will do so repeatedly is higher at 34.8%. The ratio of unique users referencing the brand to the total number of mentions is also low at 10.3%.

The presence in social networks is also very tepid, with the exception of Youtube. The keywords most mentioned on discussions about Cheboygan County Trails are “trail,” “Cheboygan” and “Michigan,” and not the attractions or experiences associated with the trails.

### **Conclusion**

Cheboygan County is relatively easily accessible on the Internet, but the fact that the main website promoting its trail ([US23heritageroute.org](http://US23heritageroute.org)) does not have a very obvious URL in some searches, like “Michigan Trails,” makes it difficult to access especially to potential out-of-state customers. The digital footprint of Cheboygan County trails is very limited, but opinions range from neutral to positive. However, the main keywords that come in the social web discussions are not linked to the experiences, but rather to the places—Michigan and Cheboygan County.



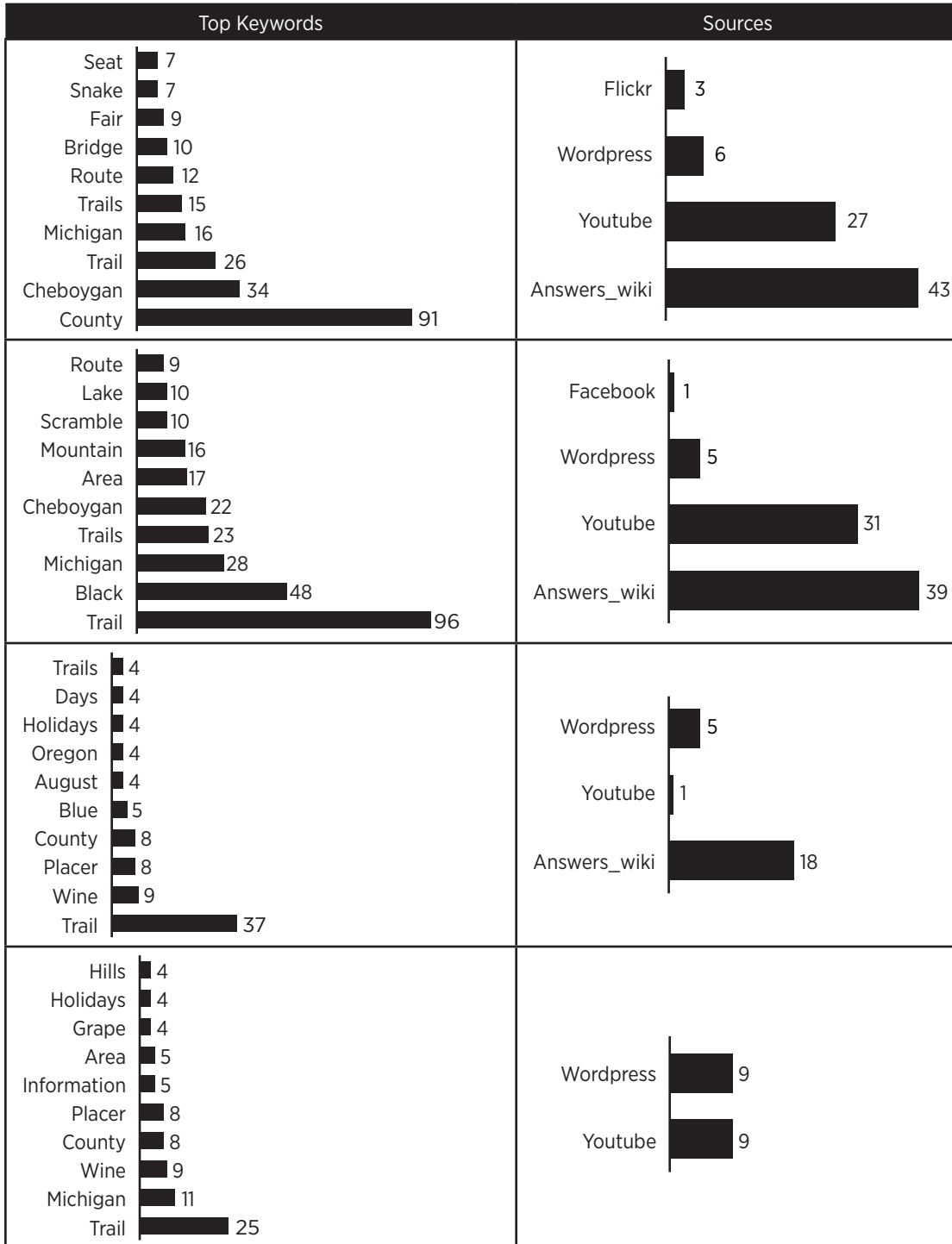
Appendix 1 (cont.)

Table 1: Summary of Social Mention of Cheboygan County Trail on the Web

Trail	Overall Rates		Sentiment	
Cheboygan Trails <sup>1</sup>	3% Strength	7:1 Sentiment	Negative	1
	44% Passion	10% Reach	Neutral	71
	One month average per mention		Positive	7
Cheboygan-Black Trail	3% Strength	7:1 Sentiment	Negative	1
	43% Passion	11% Reach	Neutral	68
	One month average per mention		Positive	7
Cheboygan-Blue Trail	4% Strength	1:1 Sentiment	Negative	1
	50% Passion	2% Reach	Neutral	22
	172 months average per mention (Last Mention 25 months ago)		Positive	1
Cheboygan-Gaylord Trail	9% Strength	3:1 Sentiment	Negative	0
	27% Passion	13% Reach	Neutral	15
	Two months average per mention		Positive	3

Source: Output generated from <http://socialmention.com/search>.

1. Refers to the search of keyword "Cheboygan Trails."



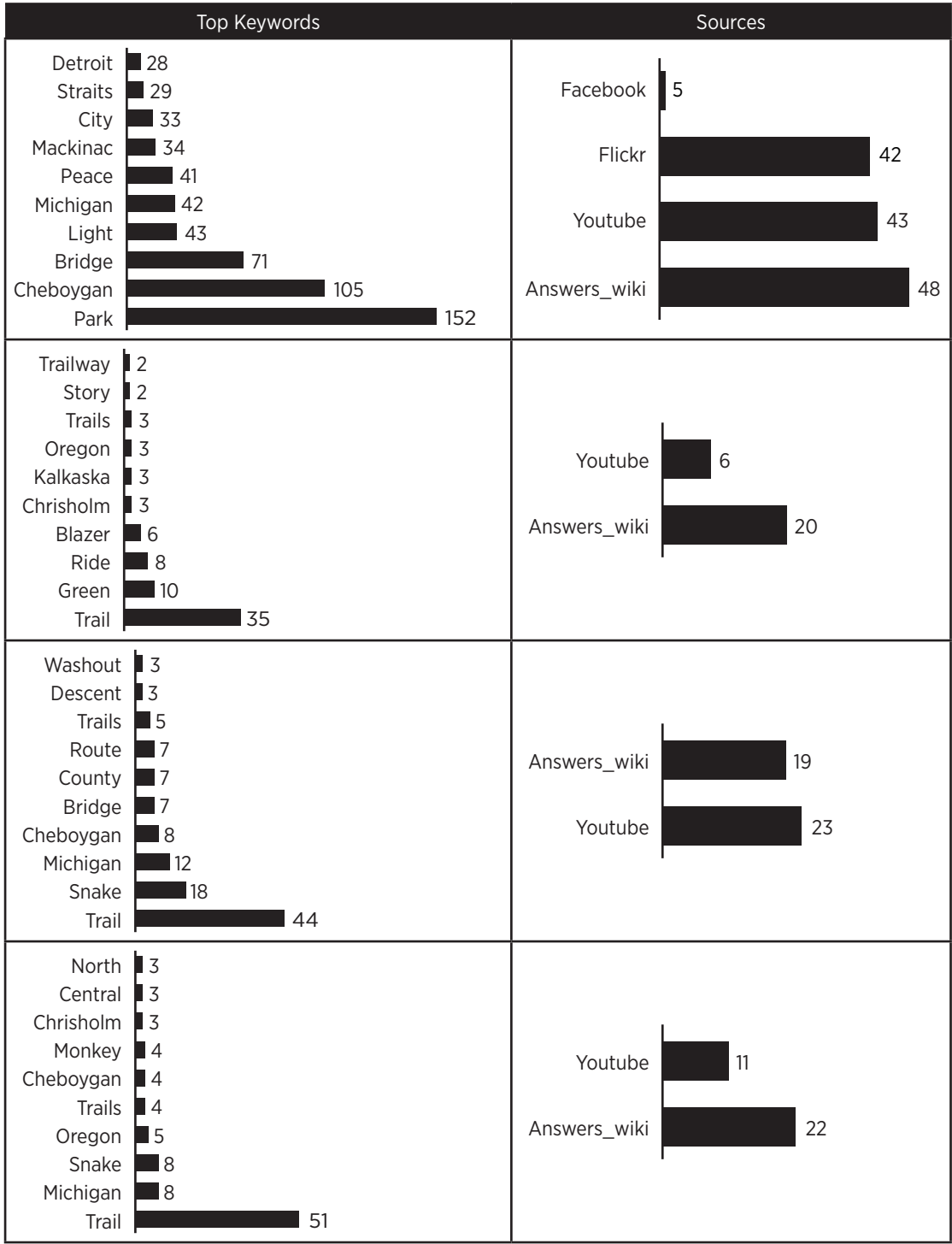
Appendix 1 (cont.)

Table 1: Summary of Social Mention of Cheboygan County Trail on the Web (cont.)

Trail	Overall Rates		Sentiment	
Cheboygan State Park	0% Strength	22:1 Sentiment	Negative	1
	62% Passion	17% Reach	Neutral	115
	Two days average per mention		Positive	22
Cheboygan-Green Trail	0% Strength	0:0 Sentiment	Negative	0
	0% Passion	6% Reach	Neutral	26
	Two months average per mention		Positive	0
Cheboygan-Red Trail	0% Strength	1:0 Sentiment	Negative	0
	43% Passion	13% Reach	Neutral	41
	One months average per mention		Positive	1
Cheboygan-Yellow Trail	0% Strength	1:0 Sentiment	Negative	0
	9% Passion	10% Reach	Neutral	32
	one month average per mention		Positive	1

Source: Output generated from <http://socialmention.com/search>.

1. Refers to the search of keyword "Cheboygan Trails."



**Table 2: Cheboygan County Websites**

Type of Organization	Level	Website	Description	Content
CSO		<a href="http://www.americantrails.org/resources/statetrails/Mlstate.html">www.americantrails.org/resources/statetrails/Mlstate.html</a>	<b>American Trails</b> is a national, nonprofit organization working on trails, including hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, horseback riding, water trails, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, trail motorcycling, ATVs, snowmobiling and four-wheeling.	Presented as NEST (North Eastern State Trail), a trail system involving Cheboygan, Presque Isle and Alpena counties. Offers general description, a map and brochures. Not very detailed but very friendly interface.
Government		<a href="http://www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/images/parknav/cheboyganarea.htm">www.michigandnr.com/parksandtrails/images/parknav/cheboyganarea.htm</a>	<b>Michigan Department of Natural Resources</b> is the State agency responsible for conservations. It owns and manages most of the state parks and trails.	Very bulky site with plenty of useful information, but very difficult to access Cheboygan trails from the DNR homepage. Easiest way is from a Google search. Although some information is available, Cheboygan trails do not stand out.
CSO		<a href="http://www.michiganwatertrails.org/trail.asp?ait=cv&amp;cid=73">www.michiganwatertrails.org/trail.asp?ait=cv&amp;cid=73</a>	<b>Michigan Water Trails</b> is a nonprofit promoting water-based trails.	Very brief information (only mentions Mackinac City). Brief information on Northeast Michigan trail. It has link for another website for more information.
Government/ CSO		<a href="http://www.nemcog.org/upnorthtrails.asp">www.nemcog.org/upnorthtrails.asp</a>	<b>Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG)</b> is a regional planning partnership. Members are local governments (counties, cities, townships, etc.) and some public institutions.	Strategic information about "Up North Trail" (Northeast Michigan Trail System). Links to relevant websites for detailed information. Largely friendly interface.
CSO		<a href="http://www.michigantrails.us/cheboygan-county-michigan/cheboygan-county-michigan-trails.html">www.michigantrails.us/cheboygan-county-michigan/cheboygan-county-michigan-trails.html</a>	<b>Michigan Trails</b> is a nonprofit dedicated to providing information about trails in Michigan.	It is a very informative website. Easy to navigate and with detailed information (including maps) of all Michigan Counties' trails. The Cheboygan page is all well stuffed. Some trails have limited information though.
Private		<a href="http://www.fishweb.com/maps/cheboygan/">www.fishweb.com/maps/cheboygan/</a>	Fishweb.com is a domain owned by <b>Michigan Interactive</b> , a private firm dedicated to the dissemination of tourism information.	Relatively easy to navigate. Few information about Cheboygan or any other trail, but very detailed maps about trails and other recreation interest points in Cheboygan.
County	Cheboygan County	<a href="http://www.cheboygancounty.net/library/Trail_Town_Manual.pdf">www.cheboygancounty.net/library/Trail_Town_Manual.pdf</a>	Cheboygan County.net is the official county webpage. It contains information about all sorts of relevant service, but also a few pages dedicated to trails. Includes comprehensive plan and current discussion on master plan update.	No trails specific.

Source: Compiled by Manuel Mutimucuo for UP454 course project, Fall 2013.

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## IMAGE OF TOURISM-RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUSINESS ALONG THE NORTH EASTERN STATE TRAIL: THE CASE OF TRIPADVISOR

By: Georgi Ignatov

The Northeastern part of the state of Michigan located along the shores of the Lake Huron is commonly regarded as offering a more peaceful retreat as compared to the more vibrant western part of the state on Lake Michigan. A large area of this part of the state is covered by forests with the Mackinaw State Forest and the Huron National Forest situated there. There are numerous lakes and rivers in the area and, of course, Lake Huron with its many picturesque lighthouses and unspoiled beaches on the coast. There are plenty of opportunities for recreational activities, such as hiking, biking, wildlife watching, fishing, kayaking, bathing, camping, exploring nature with kids, enjoying local festivals and performances and much more.

However, statistically, Northeast Michigan is not the most popular destination for tourists. According to the Michigan Visitor Profile, this part of the state ranked fourth of the five parts of Michigan by share of leisure visitor days, followed only by the Upper Peninsula (Garulski, 2011). The Southeast and Southwest parts of the state together enjoy 66% of leisure visitor days, a disproportionately large share compared to the land area they occupy.

At the same time, latest efforts of the state and different organizations in the state aimed

at developing one of the most comprehensive trail networks in the nation can strongly contribute towards the increasing number of tourists in Northeast Michigan, in particular. Because trails can be used year-round for hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, snowmobiling and equestrian activities, the proximity of nature makes traveling along these trails more enjoyable. And relatively unspoiled and unexplored nature is what this part of the state is rich in; thus, making it more attractive for tourists.

But having and maintaining a trail is not enough for the sustainable development of tourism in an area. Whether tourism-related infrastructure is adequately developed along the trails is of great importance. What people are looking at when they are making their decisions whether to visit an area or not are accommodation facilities, places to eat, to buy necessities, souvenir shops, rental facilities etc. Today an increasingly large number of travelers use the Internet for these purposes, and web-based resources are one of the most popular sources of information.

This paper focuses on researching what image the communities located along the North Eastern State Trail (NES trail) have on arguably the most popular and influential online resource for travelers—[Tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com). This website is a good example of social media in the Internet because most of its content is generated by its users. It also has a well-developed structure of travel forums. On Tripadvisor there is a system of rankings for many categories of tourism-related infrastructure like hotels,

restaurants, museums, events etc. in a specific location or in a proximity to it. The more positive reviews are posted by users the higher ratings a hotel, a restaurant or an event receives. An owner of a facility can make public comments on any review posted about their facility; thus, making Tripadvisor a truly convenient platform for interactive communication between the consumers and the suppliers of tourism-related products.

The two questions to be answered in this paper are:

1. How well are the communities along the NES trail presented on Tripadvisor in terms of the number of local tourism-related infrastructure facilities and businesses cited on this website?
2. How are these objects and facilities rated by travelers? Are the reviews mostly positive or negative?

To answer these questions the following methodology will be applied:

- For every settlement along the NES trail reviews will be searched on Tripadvisor for local accommodation services, restaurants, local attractions etc. The number of facilities and services reviewed will be calculated to get an idea how visited a community is among the tourists.
- Attention will be paid to the ratings of hotels, restaurants and local attractions resulting from the scores the users of the website give to them. The number of facilities and services

with positive, neutral and negative ratings will be calculated to find out how people like their quality.

- For each settlement all reviews on either local restaurants or hotels/motels/B&Bs will be processed using Wordle.net resource (available at [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)). This online service generates “word clouds” from text one provides. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. In our case, it will give visual representation of the words the users on Tripadvisor use most often in their reviews. This can help to understand what visitors’ impressions are about tourism-related products and services in an area.

### **Analysis of the Communities on Tripadvisor**

The NES Trail is a 70-mile multi-use rail-trail with a packed crushed limestone surface that runs from Alpena to Cheboygan. It is open year-round to all non-motorized users, and snowmobiles can be used on the trail from December 1 to March 31. According to the official map of the NES Trail, which can be found either on the Top of Michigan Trails Council website ([www.trailscouncil.org/](http://www.trailscouncil.org/)) or in the printed booklet. Table 3 shows the settlements located along the NES Trail.

#### **City of Alpena.**

The City of Alpena is located on the southern end of the NES Trail; it is a gateway to the trail or the end of the trail



depending on starting point of the trail user. For a relatively small community with a population of 10,430 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) the City is fairly well represented on Tripadvisor. First, it is useful to look at the general statistics on user reviews that are presented in Table 4:

There are an impressive number of tourism facilities and attractions in Alpena that are listed on the website, and the total number of reviews is very adequate. On average,

every facility or attraction was reviewed 4.4 times, with some of them having more than 100 reviews. The more feedback there is the more objective is the information available to a visitor of Tripadvisor. Secondly, attention will be paid to how satisfied were people with the quality of the tourism-related services provided in a city. Table 5 shows the satisfaction with quality of services in Alpena.

Overall, people were quite satisfied with the quality of services provided. Sixty-nine out of

**Table 3: List of Communities along the NES Trail**

Name of Settlement	Type
Aplena	City, Aplena County
Cathro	Unincorporated Community in Maple Ridge Township, Alpena County
Bolton	Unincorporated Community in Maple Ridge Township, Alpena County
Posen	Village, Presque Isle County
Metz	Township, Presque Isle County
Hawks	Unincorporated Community in Bishmark Township, Preque Isle County
Millersburg	Village, Presque Isle County
Onaway	City, Presque Isle County
Tower	Unincorporated Community in Forest Township, Cheboygan County
Aloha	Township, Cheboygan County
Cheboygan	City, Cheboygan County

Source: Top of Michigan Trails Council: [www.trailscouncil.org/](http://www.trailscouncil.org/).

**Table 4: Tourism-Related Facilities or Services Reviewed in Alpena**

Object of a Review	# of Facilities/ Services Reviewed or Mentioned	# of Reviews
Hotels and B&Bs/Inns	27	97
Restaurants	70	365
Vacation Rentals	1	0
Attractions	27	102
Activities	6	20
Shopping	3	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>585</b>

Source: Tripadvisor, 2013.

83 facilities or attractions were given a score of four or higher, although accommodation services performed just moderately well. On the other hand, attractions were valued very highly, and this suggests that they can be viewed as one of the most important assets to the tourism development in the area.

Lastly, it is worth looking at what expressions and words people use in their reviews. For this purpose, in Alpena, 392 reviews of local restaurants have been processed using Wordle.net engine. It is important to mention that out of 392 reviews processed 248 have been submitted by visitors to the City.

Although this is a crude generalization of an overall opinion it still gives an idea of what people feel about the dining services available in Alpena. Words like “good and “great” certainly stand out and “friendly,” “nice” and “delicious” being also well-represented. Taking into consideration data presented in Table 5 it can, therefore, be concluded that according to reviewers restaurants in the City have a good reputation.

### City of Cheboygan.

Cheboygan is where the NES Trail starts or ends in the North. It is at the mouth of the Cheboygan River on Lake Huron, is the seat of Cheboygan County and has a population of 4,876 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The City has considerable tourist potential located next to Aloha State Park and Mullett Lake, the latter offering good possibilities for fishing and other recreational activities. Two rail trails intersect in this City (North Eastern State Trail and the North Central State Trail), making the City a local hub for hikers, bikers and other tourists enjoying trail experience.

Table 6 examines general information on Cheboygan tourism-related infrastructure from Tripadvisor:

For a small city Cheboygan has a strong presence on Tripadvisor, especially with regard to dining options. It also has a very high ratio of reviews per facility or attraction of 10.5, which is more than twice of that in Alpena—a city with comparable assets for tourism development. This may imply

**Table 5: Satisfaction with Quality of Services in Alpena**

Object of a Review	# of Facilities/Attractions with the following Rating (the Higher, the Better)									
	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0.5
Hotels and B&Bs/Inns	1	1	1	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Restaurants	16	11	17	3	2	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A
Vacation Rentals	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Attractions	9	4	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Activities	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shopping	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Tripadvisor, 2013.

that the overall number of users of tourism-related facilities or attractions listed on Tripadvisor is higher for Cheboygan than for Alpena, which translates into more feedback left on the website for Cheboygan.

Table 7 assesses the quality of tourism-related services from Cheboygan:

In general, people are satisfied with Cheboygan tourism-related infrastructure, but there is a room for improvement. For example, only one Cheboygan restaurant has the highest rating (4% of total number), while for Alpena 16 out of 53 restaurants

(30%) have the highest user satisfaction score. Accommodation facilities in Cheboygan perform well. No reviews of local activities or shopping opportunities have been submitted by Tripadvisor users so far, but it seems that people in general are more reluctant to publish their opinion on these services.

Similarly with the results for Alpena restaurants the overall subjective experience of the quality accommodation services in Cheboygan is very positive. Words like “clean,” “great,” “nice,” “friendly” and “helpful” with reference to rooms and staff

**Table 6: Tourism-Related Facilities or Services Reviewed in Cheboygan**

Object of a Review	# of Facilities/ Services Reviewed or Mentioned	# of Reviews
Hotels and B&Bs/Inns	8	157
Restaurants	33	334
Vacation Rentals	3	16
Attractions	8	102
Activities	0	0
Shopping	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>515</b>

Source: Tripadvisor, 2013.

**Table 7: Satisfaction with Quality of Services in Cheboygan**

Object of a review	# of Facilities/Attractions with the following Rating (the Higher, the Better)									
	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0.5
Hotels and B&Bs/Inns	2	2	1	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Restaurants	1	7	12	N/A	2	N/A	1	N/A	2	N/A
Vacation Rentals	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Attractions	N/A	1	1	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Activities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shopping	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Tripadvisor, 2013.

dominate the word cloud. The word “river” was cited very often as well, which may indicate the importance of bodies of water for recreational tourism in the area.

### City of Onaway

The City of Onaway is located in Presque Isle County, and has a population of 880 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). When travelling along the NES Trail the distance from Onaway to Cheboygan is 25.25 miles, and from Onaway to Alpena—44.6 miles. The City describes itself as a place that offers relaxed way of life among pristine nature with numerous lakes, rivers and forests.

On Tripadvisor, general information can be found concerning reviews submitted about the tourism facilities and attractions in Onaway (see Table 8).

Although number of facilities/attractions reviewed is low, it has to be taken into consideration that the City itself is very small. Moreover, even though Onaway does not have such an advantageous location as Cheboygan and Alpena, both of which are

located on the U.S. Highway 23 and right next to Lake Huron, it has, on average, almost same ratio of reviews and number of facilities/attractions reviewed per inhabitant as the City of Alpena.

When it comes to quality of services, the reviewers are generally satisfied with Onaway tourism infrastructure (see Table 9), but it is difficult to make comprehensive conclusions on this issue because of the low number of reviews.

Lastly, as in the case with Alpena and Cheboygan, users’ reviews from Tripadvisor were processed using Wordle.net engine. For Onaway, 25 reviews of local restaurants showed a positive outcome with “good” and “food” the most frequent appearance in the reviews with other positive words dominating the picture. Overall, the City of Onaway can be regarded as a very successful example of a small community, which has a more than adequate presence on one of the most popular global travel website.

**Table 8: Tourism-Related Facilities or Services Reviewed in Onaway**

Object of a Review	# of Facilities/ Services Reviewed or Mentioned	# of Reviews
Hotels and B&Bs/Inns	1	1
Restaurants	6	25
Vacation Rentals	1	1
Attractions	2	19
Activities	0	0
Shopping	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: Tripadvisor, 2013.

**Table 9: Satisfaction with Quality of Services in Onaway**

Object of a Review	# of Facilities/Attractions with the following Rating (the Higher, the Better)									
	5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	0.5
Hotels and B&Bs/Inns	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Restaurants	N/A	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vacation Rentals	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Attractions	N/A	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Activities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Shopping	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Tripadvisor, 2013.

**Other Settlements along the NES Trail**

Other communities that are marked on the official NES Trail map as being located along the trail either do not appear on Tripadvisor or are mentioned to a very limited extent. For example, one restaurant and two attractions are listed for the Village of Posen with no reviews submitted; three restaurants are listed for the Village of Millersburg with only one restaurant reviewed by six users; Hawks and Tower, unincorporated communities, are mentioned, but no hotels, restaurants or attractions are listed for these locations. At the same time, this is perhaps not surprising, because these settlements are either smaller administrative units in townships or villages with a low number of residents.

**Summary of Findings**

Summarizing the results of this study it can be concluded that communities located along the NES Trail are fairly well-represented on the Tripadvisor website and have a positive image in terms of tourism-related services offered in them. Although most reviewers publish

their opinions on hotels and restaurants, other tourism attractions, like various activities and shopping opportunities, are assessed as well. Average number of reviews per restaurant or hotel is also quite satisfactory, thus giving the visitors of Tripadvisor the opportunity to receive a rather unbiased summary information of quality of services in a particular facility.

Although for most of the settlements along the NES Trail no substantial information is available on Tripadvisor, it should not be considered a very significant obstacle for further online marketing of the NES Trail. Firstly, the largest settlements on both ends and in the middle of the trail are well-covered on Tripadvisor, so that a traveller still has a broad range of tourism facilities and attractions along the trail to choose from basing his/her opinion on other people’s numerous reviews. Secondly, a comprehensive and detailed overview of the trail with maps and commentaries is available from other online sources, like the

official website of multi-purpose recreational trails in northern Lower Michigan ([www.trailsCouncil.org](http://www.trailsCouncil.org)), or the website of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy organization marketing the nationwide network of trails from former rail lines ([www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)) and other online resources.

However, the more feedback people provide on tourist attractions and facilities on the NES Trail the better the chances will be that tourists from other places will come to this region. Therefore, it is highly advisable that

owners and staff of local hotels, restaurants, bars, shops and museums located in communities along the trail ask visitors to comment on their level of satisfaction with the services provided using some of the numerous online resources. It is even more important for the owner or a manager of a restaurant or a hotel to track the reviews of his/her facility and provide a feedback to reviewers; thus, showing his/her commitment to improving the quality of services.

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## STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MICHIGAN’S NORTH CENTRAL STATE TRAIL AND TRAIL TOWN RESTAURANTS

By: Lori Morgan

When planning a trip, whether it be a day trip or a long vacation, it is common for people to research the amenities a location has to offer before deciding to visit there. They generally want to know that all of their needs can be easily fulfilled and have some idea of where they will need to go to meet those needs. One amenity that interests many people is food, more specifically restaurants, and people planning a trip along Michigan’s North Central State Trail are no exception. When planning a trip on the trail, people will want to know that they will be able to conveniently stop for a meal or refreshments without having to go too far from the trail itself.

But is this possible? To answer that question, this paper will research and analyze the accessibility of restaurants to people using the trail. Spatial analysis will be performed to determine the general location of restaurants in the area in comparison to the trail, while qualitative data will be collected to determine if access from the trail to these businesses really exists for people traveling by foot, bike and other modes of transportation commonly used on the trail. Based on the findings from this spatial analysis, recommendations will be made about how to utilize and develop the restaurant market along the trail to increase tourism and spending in the area.

## Methodology

To determine the accessibility of restaurants along the North Central Trail, business locations had to be gathered. Data was collected for each of the six trail head cities: Gaylord, Vanderbilt, Wolverine, Indian River, Cheboygan and Mackinaw City, as well as the two “rest stop” cities, Topinabee and Mullett Village (North Central State Recreational Trail, 2010). The data for each city was collected online using the search term, “restaurants in ‘name of city’ Michigan.” This phrase was entered into both Google and Bing to minimize the risk of inadvertently overlooking sources that may only be connected with one search engine.

After the phrase was entered into each search engine, the first page of results was scanned for any web pages that appeared to be associated with the city being searched. This frequently included restaurant listings from local chambers of commerce or visitor bureaus. This was done because it was found that these sites generally had the most extensive data, creating a good place to begin data collection. More widely known resources, like [yelp.com](http://yelp.com), [urbanspoon.com](http://urbanspoon.com), and [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com) were also used to research restaurants in the area. For each city, all of these resources were used to guarantee that data was up to date and as accurate as possible without performing ground verification. Web pages were checked until there was a sufficient amount of recurrence of locations to assume all locations had been collected.

The resources used were limited to Google and Bing searches and the first page of

results because this examination was also used to gain a general understanding of the availability of local restaurant information for the trail area online and to mimic what someone planning a trip to the area might actually do when searching for local resources. Based on a report by the Pew Research Center, 51% of adults used the internet to gather data about restaurants and bars, and 38% rely on search engines (Pew Research Center, 2011). Therefore, the use of two widely used search engines to collect restaurant locations was deemed appropriate.

From this data collection process, the names and addresses (including zip code) of all restaurants in each trail city were collected. While restaurant type was not collected or categorized, in some instances, determinations of what qualified as a restaurant had to be made. Some web pages included food retail businesses and grocery stores in their list of local restaurants. When this was encountered, these locations were then further researched and if they did not appear to actively serve prepared food, they were not included. For example, ice cream shops were included, but candy shops were not.

All of the address data was collected in a spreadsheet, which was then used to geocode the spatial locations of the restaurants along the trail. Buffers were created around the trail, indicating quarter mile increments away from the trail, from a quarter mile to one mile. These buffers were created to indicate the general distance between the trail and the restaurants. Quarter-mile increments were used, because 400 meters

or a quarter mile is a standard distance people are willing to walk to reach a service (Human Transit, 2011). Buffers up to one mile were created, because it was assumed that people using other modes of transportation on the trail, like bicycling would likely be willing to travel further. General buffers had to be used, because additional data about the accessibility of restaurants directly from the trail was not available, as will be discussed later in the paper. The final map created using this data can be found in Appendix 2, at the end of this paper.

## Findings

At the beginning of this analysis, it was assumed that mapping restaurant location data would reveal an opening in the market for facilities near the trail. However, after the information was collected and mapped, it was found that the trail towns hold an abundance of resources. The majority of the restaurants are located within the quarter- or half-mile buffers around the trail. This, in theory, should make them easily accessible by modes of transportation used on the trail and motivate trail users to venture out and take advantage of these dining establishments. However, this does not seem to be happening, so what is the disconnect? Additional research exposed a possible lack of accessibility. This included not only the possibility of a physical lack of accessibility, but more importantly, a lack of availability of information about how to access restaurants from the trail.

Research into the accessibility of restaurants from the trail began by looking at the trail's



web pages, including the currently active page, “[North Central State Recreational Trail](#)” and the page that is currently in beta testing, “[Up North Trails](#).” Both of these pages include recommendations for the places to eat along the trail. “Up North Trails” includes a map in a feature that appears to be helping visitors plan a trip to the area (NEMCOG, 2013). “North Central State Recreational Trail” includes a list of restaurants, for which you can get directions on the site (North Central State Recreational Trail, 2010). However, neither site includes information about how to get directly from the trail to the restaurant, minimizing the opportunities that a trail user might take advantage of.

The “Trail Town Master Plans” for Mackinaw City and the Village of Topinabee, originally created to help these towns capture trail-based tourism, were also examined for clues about access from the trail to restaurants. Both of the plans give great detail about the impact of the trail on the local economy and efforts being made to increase related tourism. The Village of Topinabee plans points out the value of understanding nodes of interesting use, like public shower location, local lodging, and local dining locations (LIAA, 2013b). However, nowhere in this plan is the map actually displayed, nor is there mention of this type of accessibility data and making it widely available online.

To understand the possibilities for tourism in the area and needs for expansion, data about current visitors and spending was also collected from the 2010 Michigan Visitors Profile. Based on this data, Northeastern

Michigan currently receives 13% of the visitors coming to Michigan, second only to the Upper Peninsula at 7% (Garulski, 2011). This report also shows that average “leisure party” spending per day in Michigan in 2010 was on \$81.00, compared to a national average of \$104.00, showing that there is a deficiency either in marketing to let people know about the resources Michigan has or that there is a simple deficiency in resources/ places for people to spend more (Garulski, 2011).

### Recommendations

Based on these findings, the first recommendation is clear that greater data about the accessibility of restaurants directly from the trail should be gathered and made available. The availability of this data should be focused on online resources, especially to target younger groups. However, to guarantee equitable access, brochures should also be created for visitor centers and/or chambers of commerce to distribute. Making this data more accessible will increase the likelihood for people to stay on the trail for longer periods of time because they know they will have convenient access to the resources they may need.

The collection of accessibility data may also lead to the realization that direct access from the trail to all restaurants is not available. This may make it necessary to invest in extensions or additional off-shoots of the trail. While this can be expensive, State grant programs, like the Transportation Alternatives Program, which funds projects for non-motorized paths, streetscapes, and historic preservation of transportation facilities, are available and may

assist with the costs (MDOT, 2013). A project like this may create additional and currently unplanned work; however, it would be very valuable in increasing trail users' access to trail town resources, making them more likely to stay in the area longer and spend more.

In addition to increasing knowledge of and physical accessibility to restaurants along the trail, branding the trail based on these culinary resources may help to bring people to the trail and create new markets for more specialized foods. In the past, long trails were created and hiked for the thrill of finishing the long distance or the time for extended exposure to nature (Lane, 1999). Today, however, people are generally interested in much shorter trips, along trails that have access to activities and resources (Lane, 1999). While the culinary trails, especially at the length of the North Central State Trail, are currently not that common, it is important gain peoples' interests by having a unified visions. As the Village of Topinabee trail town plan points out,

It is important for local leaders and trail planners in Topinabee to understand that most Trail Towns are not isolated communities; they are linked together by the trail, creating a regional destination for residents, trail users and tourists," (LIAA, 2013b).

Branding the trail as a total culinary experience would help to create a unified vision and take advantage of existing resources.

Choosing to use dining as the central "theme" makes sense not only because of the extensive collection of restaurants along the

trail, but also because dining currently holds economic viability. It was reported in the 2010 Michigan Visitors Profile that spending on dining has rebounded 60% to pre-recession levels, and that spending on water activities is down (Garulski, 2011). When placed in a situation with such an abundance of dining opportunities and a desire to increase tourism it makes sense to market the trail as a culinary hub in the state. If a plan to develop a culinary branding image for the trail were developed, additional research should be done about the current distribution restaurant types in the area. This may reveal possibilities for new culinary markets in the area and help to further boost local economies.

## Conclusions

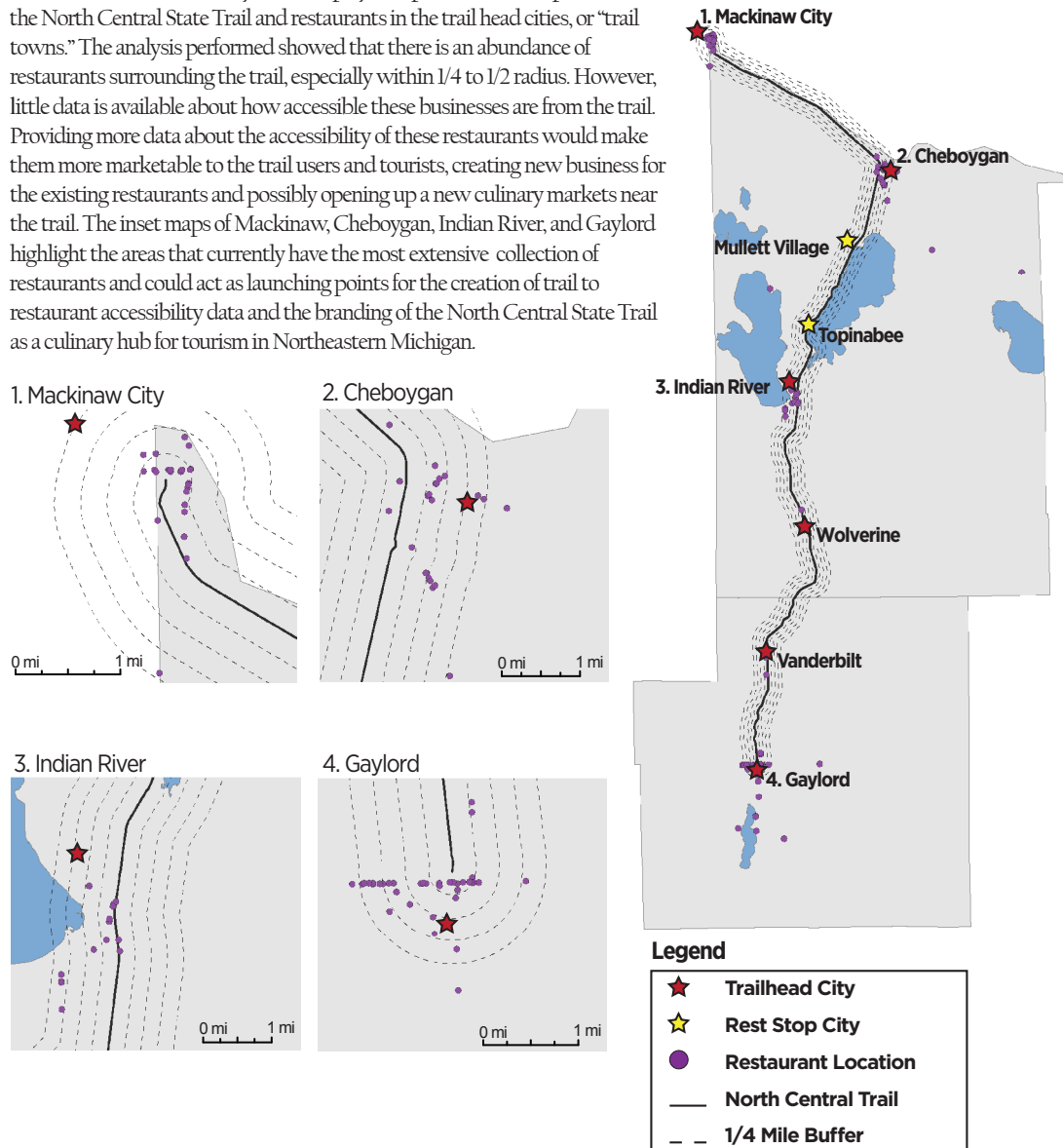
The area surrounding the North Central State Trail has an abundance of natural and man-made attractions, and the restaurants surrounding the trail are no exception. If increased tourism to the area is desired, people will want to be able to easily find out about these resources at the click of a button. The ability to bring people to the area, and have them stay and spend in the local economy depends on the ability to make information about the area more widely accessible. Whether they are simply marketed as a great place to stop for a bite or as part of a new branding scheme for the trail, restaurants are at the center of great tourism, and marketing them to potential visitors should be at the center of plans to increase tourism to the North Central State Trail.

## Appendix 2

Figure 1: Restaurants along the North Central State Trail

### Restaurants Along the North Central State Trail

Data was collected and analyzed to display the spatial relationship between the North Central State Trail and restaurants in the trail head cities, or “trail towns.” The analysis performed showed that there is an abundance of restaurants surrounding the trail, especially within 1/4 to 1/2 radius. However, little data is available about how accessible these businesses are from the trail. Providing more data about the accessibility of these restaurants would make them more marketable to the trail users and tourists, creating new business for the existing restaurants and possibly opening up a new culinary markets near the trail. The inset maps of Mackinaw, Cheboygan, Indian River, and Gaylord highlight the areas that currently have the most extensive collection of restaurants and could act as launching points for the creation of trail to restaurant accessibility data and the branding of the North Central State Trail as a culinary hub for tourism in Northeastern Michigan.



Data Collection & Analysis By: Lori Morgan  
 Map Designed By: Lori Morgan  
 Fall 2013  
 Michigan State University

Source: Created by Lori Morgan using data supplied by NEMCOG, 2013.

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## MARKETING OF THE TRAILS OF CHEBOYGAN COUNTY

By: Nick Najor

The North Central State Trail and the North Eastern State Trail each serve as a phenomenal resource for communities in the Cheboygan region. Michigan has a larger rails-to-trails system than any other state in the Union, and Cheboygan County has more of those trails than any other county in Michigan. And the trails intersect right in the City of Cheboygan, which is the county seat of Cheboygan County. Residents from the area possess a tremendous opportunity to take in the sights, navigate through a vast recreation area, and travel from different community hubs using only non-motorized transportation. Because the Cheboygan trails are part of a fully completed and well-established system, there is not an immediate need to improve the infrastructure itself. However, there always exists the potential for increased usage and resulting economic benefit by increasing community and consumer awareness of the trail system.

Not only does Cheboygan stand to benefit by marketing to its own residents, it can undoubtedly present itself as a viable tourism option for citizens from all over Michigan, or even people from out of state (such as Wisconsin) or out of country (most likely Canada). Because the reach of this clientele base has such massive potential, it remains absolutely crucial for the Cheboygan trails to have a clear and unified branding vision.

A clear segment of that vision, and the focus of this paper, is an emphasis on consistent visible marketing of the trail to travelers through the area, especially as they navigate via traditional motorized means (i.e., interstate freeways). But creating that consistent awareness goes both ways. There also is a need for the stakeholders in the Cheboygan trails to make certain that people using the trails are well-informed of the local businesses that are located in the vicinity of their route. The topic of this research paper is an exploration of steps that communities in the region can take in terms of physical signage and the marketing of local businesses within walking or biking distance of the Cheboygan trails. The economic system of the Cheboygan region can benefit from this research because it can expose opportunities to better promote existing resources to those unfamiliar, while also allowing local businesses to tap into a potential new clientele base.

This topic was partially inspired by Dennis Hansen, Senior Landscape Architect for the campus of Michigan State University. A conversation with Hansen, an avid bicyclist, earlier this semester revealed his passionate views on the topic of infographics and mapping on the Cheboygan trails. His major complaint is that while there are plenty of information kiosks in place, they lacked sufficient geographic guidance to nearby establishments. This paper seeks to ask two foundational questions to each of the municipalities that house the trail:

1. How well are the trails advertised to the people in the surrounding area?
2. How well is the surrounding area advertised to the people on the trails?

The websites for the Cheboygan trails, particularly for the North Central State Trail, provide thorough guides to the businesses along the corridor, such as a list of restaurants ([www.northcentraltrail.org/eat.asp](http://www.northcentraltrail.org/eat.asp)).

However, a physical advertising presence is also necessary. The North Central State Trail follows a route generally parallel to Interstate 75, and as such there is tremendous opportunity to increase awareness of the trail to automobile travelers as they drive the main north-south artery of the state of Michigan. Highway business signs are extremely common within the U.S. interstate highway system, and they can be used for a variety of purposes. One of the most common methods of business promotion on interstate highways is the usage of signs, usually blue, that display the logos of restaurants, lodging, and gas stations that are located at a particular interchange or exit. These are commonly referred to as Interstate Logo Signs, and they were first introduced in 1972.

Coinciding with these signs are similar displays meant to promote recreation areas, parks, museums, and other destinations. These are commonly referred to as Tourist-Oriented Directional (TOD) signs. The Cheboygan region could expand upon this practice by combining it with billboard use to create essentially a ‘You are here’ in terms of where you are on the trail as you drive down the

interstate. The cost estimates of such a program can be gleaned using the website for Michigan Logos, Inc., which is currently the largest entity in this particular industry, and can be seen as follows ([www.ortravelexperience.com/for-businesses/sign-programs/](http://www.ortravelexperience.com/for-businesses/sign-programs/)).

- Eight-hundred-fifty dollars annually per direction for one (1) mainline and one (1) ramp.
- One-hundred-twenty dollars annually for trailblazers.
- One hundred dollars per direction for removal, cover or change.
- One hundred dollars per direction for bumping, one-time charge.

One would think that because the trail covers such a vast length of highway, any contractor, whether private or governmental, would be eager to offer some type of discounted rate due to the sheer amount of business opportunity that is presented by the promotion of the Cheboygan trails.

On the flip side, touching on Hansen’s comments, the various population centers along the trail route could be designated as individual “hubs” in the corridor. Each of these hubs would conceivably create their own self-image in terms of how they want to market themselves to trail users. However, they would work together to maintain a unified effort to clearly and effectively demonstrate their accessibility and opportunities in relation to the trails.

Internet research on the Cheboygan trails reveals a good deal of information from first-hand sources, such as the Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce and the Top of Michigan Trails Council. However, from an outside perspective, there are a handful of excellent resources that are stunningly relevant to this discussion of trail promotion. The Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance (MTGA) is a nonprofit organization that fosters and facilitates the creation of an interconnected statewide system of trails and greenways for recreation, health, transportation, economic development and environmental/cultural preservation purposes ([www.michigantrails.org/about-us](http://www.michigantrails.org/about-us)). A great deal of information can be accessed through their website, including one document specifically focused on the Cheboygan region. In August 2010, the Land Information Access Association, through its Partnerships for Change Program, published a comprehensive guide for communities along the North Central State Trail. Titled *Trail Town Manual*, it focuses on capturing trail-based tourism ([www.michigantrails.org/sites/default/files/Trail\\_Town\\_Manual\\_NCST.pdf](http://www.michigantrails.org/sites/default/files/Trail_Town_Manual_NCST.pdf)). This manual uses the following definition of a “Trail Town,” first conceived by the Allegheny Trail Alliance:

A trail town is a destination along a long-distance trail. Whether on a rail trail, towpath, water trail or hiking, trail-trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy the scenery, services, and heritage of the nearby community with its own character and charm. It is a safe

place where both town residents and trail users can walk, find the goods and services they need, and easily access both trail and town by foot or vehicle. In such a town, the trail is an integral and important part of the community.

The document then follows with basic elements of a trail town strategy, including two relevant points for the purposes of this discussion:

- Welcome trail users to your town by making information about the community readily available at the trail.
- Work with neighboring communities to promote the entire trail corridor as a tourist destination.

After a lengthy section covering the design and function of the different elements of a trail system, the guide moves on to the topic of promotion. Most of the *Trail Town Manual* recommendations and strategies are based on drawing in visitors from beyond the local market. Therefore, the full potential of the Trail Town concept may not be realized unless the local and regional population base is aware of it and what it can offer.

One strong theme that is reflected in the mission of promoting a trail town is welcoming. Users of the trail must feel or see some type of indication that they are welcomed into the adjoining community, otherwise there is a high likelihood that they will simply keep navigating along the



trail without stopping off and potentially experiencing the community and benefiting the economy. An example of this welcoming attitude is found in the following example: “Several businesses in towns along the North Central State Trail have placed welcome signs for other user groups directly on their buildings. Each of these welcome signs is sponsored by a beer company. In

Indian River, the Inn Between Café, which is located just one block from the North Central State Trail, has placed welcome banners for golfers, fisherman and race fans on the front of their building.” Overall, the *Trail Town Manual* provides great insight into the strategic opportunities that exist for communities along the North Central State Trail to capture trail-based tourism.

## CHEBOYGAN COUNTY MICHIGAN TRAIL SYSTEM: MARKETING, IMPROVEMENT AND INITIATION STRATEGY

By: Aaron Dawson

Cheboygan County, located in the northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan, contains an excellent system of 288 miles of existing and planned trails ([www.trails council.org](http://www.trails council.org)). This extensive network of improved trails is a key component of northern Michigan tourism, attracting hikers, runners, bikers, snowmobilers, and equestrians. There are many elements that attract tourists in addition to the trail system itself. Some of the amenities that are on the trail system are:

- Hotels;
- Restaurants;
- Natural Scenery; and
- Landmarks (Fort Michilimackinaw, Mackinaw City, Bois Blanc Island, Lumberjack Park, Indian River, Trail-side Parks, many local unique businesses, camping, etc.).

This offering of amenities enhances the draw of the trail system, while helping local businesses and overall economic development. In addition to a massive amount of attractions, special events are held on the trail system, including long-distance relay races, special biking events and so on. With the importance of this trail system in the context of economic development, it is important to explore and improve marketing

and social awareness. The purpose of this paper is to explore existing marketing strategies, possible physical improvements, and make recommendations to improve this critical recreational resource. The *Trail Town Manual* by Partnerships for Change (2010) thoroughly explains the importance of this trail network:

Communities are realizing the economic potential of trails as highly desirable destinations that bring dollars into the places they serve . . . trails and greenways attract visitors from near and far—visitors who facilitate job growth in tourism related opportunities like restaurants, local stores and lodging. Communities are increasingly utilizing this “Trail Town” model of economic revitalization that places trails as the centerpiece of a tourism-centered strategy for small-town revitalization.

### Marketing and Promotion

The existing marketing of the trail system is excellent. There is a wealth of information, policies, and activities online. The primary website for information is [www.trails council.org](http://www.trails council.org)—this is a board consisting of representatives from many cities along the trail network that govern the operation and funding of the system. The importance of having this information available online cannot be understated. With a growing number of out-of-state and international visitors, the internet is a powerful resource to connect potential tourists with the information needed to plan visits to the trail system. There are several other websites and social networking sites dedicated to the trails.

With [www.trails council.org](http://www.trails council.org) being the main website for information, the most extensive exploration should be conducted there.

**I. www.trails council.org**

This website is extremely thorough in providing information on each section of the trail network. In addition, there are maps, news, events, amenity listing, and contact information. There are also opportunities to sign up as a member and have access to e-newsletters. One of the most important components to this website is the trail maps and amenity listings. There is a wealth of important information on these maps including, trail surface, trail availability dates, important landmarks, cities, distances, and various amenities. Each section of the trail listed on the website includes a list of features that would be important when selecting what portions of the trail a tourist might select. These indicate trailheads, parking, restrooms, and amenities. In addition to this information, there are sample pictures and explanatory text of each section of the trail showing a possible activity or scenic stop. This component is in addition to the gallery section of the website, a collection of images that show various activities on the trail year round. Another interesting feature of the website is the events section. There are several events listed that bring tourists and locals to the trail network, while promoting local businesses. An interesting feature is that specific local businesses provide discounts or activities tied into these events. Integration of business and recreation is a very useful economic development tool.

**II. www.cheboygan.com/visitors/recreation/our-trails/**

Provided by the Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce, this website offer a more generalized view of the main trails and a more specific list of events that are happening in the area. In addition, there are links provided to social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Google. The most comprehensive portion of the website is the calendar section. This section lists events with digital flyers that include locations, dates, and times. Linking these events with the trail system provides an opportunity for tourists to plan an extended stay, while enjoying specific activities.

**III. www.facebook.com/TrailsCouncil**

Facebook is arguably the most influential social networking site on the internet with hundreds of millions of users worldwide. The Top of Michigan Trails Council has taken advantage of this important resource by providing links and images showing the various activities available on the trail system. In addition, there are updates on the status of construction to various portions of the trails. Promotion of events is also a top priority on Facebook, allowing potential tourists to see what the trails are really all about.

This section is not a comprehensive list of the online promotion of the trail system, but these three clearly have the most influential online presence. The websites listed above are critical to the success of the trails, because they must convey "...an active, attractive, and interesting place with accessible and comfortable spaces, hosting

a variety of activities and promoting social interaction and a strong sense of place.” ([www.cheboygancounty.net](http://www.cheboygancounty.net)) Effective use of these promotional tools ensures a definite opportunity for economic development of the area.

### **Improvement - Digital Trails**

Digital trail technology could bring a more interactive, immersive experience to the trail system. One example of digital trail technology that is currently in use in America today is the QR (Quick Response) code system. This system allows Smartphone users to scan a code and obtain further information regarding a specific attraction on the trail. This type of technology will allow visitors to obtain and save information on the go, benefitting both the tourist and local businesses. For example, if a visitor sees a business they like they can scan a QR code and be immediately linked to the web site for that business. This would allow for businesses to gain repeat sales even after a visitor has returned home. Information on specific attractions can further enhance the trail experience as well. Historical sites can be explored further online, which could lead to repeat visits or word of mouth promotion.

QR technology is further explained in the article at [www.journalgazette.net](http://www.journalgazette.net). The idea is for walkers to find additional information by scanning the QR codes using their smartphones at each stop along the trail. Then they'll find expanded descriptions of the historic sites, more photos and hyperlinks leading to even more information. They'll also be able to listen

to “On the Heritage Trail” audio segments by Tom Castaldi, Allen County historian, heard weekly on public radio WBNI-FM. In essence, it is a self-guided audio tour. Integration of this technology could bring the Cheboygan County Trails to a new level of promotion and interaction.

### **Improvement - Interpretive Signs**

Exploring the images and literature on the trail system, it appears that there is little or no signage on the trails themselves. This could be an important improvement for users who have no access to Smartphones or internet access, while on the trail. Interpretive signs provide a more immersive experience and can be used to guide visitors to special attractions and local businesses that may not be directly on the trail system. These types of signage can be also provided in a digital format, such as a touch screen or interactive video monitor. These types of enhancements are excellent ways to promote the trail system, while enhancing economic development.

### **Implementation**

For other areas that may be interested in incorporating these types of trail systems, it is important to understand the process by which several communities can come together to make an effective tourist destination. The *Trail Town Manual* describes this process in four main steps: organizing, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. ([www.cheboygancounty.net](http://www.cheboygancounty.net)) Organization is the first and possibly most critical step in the implementation process. This step is further broken down in the *Trail Town Manual*:

1. Define the trail corridor: Understanding the physical and administrative structure of the trail.
2. Assess local capacity: Determining the capabilities and limitations of the local businesses and governments.
3. Create a local organization: The gathering and organizing of local stakeholders into a governing body.
4. Develop a local volunteer base: Relay the importance of a new trail system to the community to ensure adequate maintenance.
5. Get the message out locally: Marketing and advertising to excite and inform locals.
6. Build partnerships: Secure the resources and relationships required to develop the trail system.
7. Take one step at a time: Understanding that this process does not happen overnight, and informing stakeholders about progress and planning.

After organizing and promoting, design is the next step in the process. This is an important step that will have a major impact on the effectiveness of the system. The first step in the design process is to determine the type and geography of the trail. Identifying major centers, nodes, existing attractions, and business districts will aid in the development of the trail system. Important items to consider when deciding the path

of a trail through or around a center include cleanliness, safety, lighting, amenities, streetscapes, and possible opportunities for improvement ([www.cheboygancounty.net](http://www.cheboygancounty.net)).

The final step in implementation is economic restructuring. This is explained in the *Trail Town Manual*, which states “Economic Restructuring refers to the functions of business expansion, business retention, and new business recruitment. It also deals with the key issue of market demographics.” ([www.cheboygancounty.net](http://www.cheboygancounty.net)) Understanding the trail user is the first important aspect of economic restructuring. This gives trail developers an idea of how to proceed with development. An example of this is provided below, from *Trail Town Manual (Partnerships for Change, 2010)*.

Recent research suggests that many trail users tend to be well educated with fairly high incomes. A 2004 case study of the North Carolina Northern Outer Banks Trail, found that, of the typical bicycle tourist:

- Eighty-seven percent earn more than \$50,000 annually;
- Seventy-eight percent completed college; and
- Seventy-three percent rate themselves as an intermediate skill-level cyclist who rides 10 to 49 miles per month.

Lifestyle preferences relate to the activities (and associated economic impact) that trail-tourists make when they visit a community.

This understanding of demographics can allow planners to tailor trail design and attract visitors into business districts. This process will ensure that trails provide an economic development benefit to the towns and investors that are serviced.

## Conclusion

Trail systems, such as those found in Cheboygan County, can provide immense economic development opportunities for local communities. Understanding of marketing, improvements and

implementation strategies provide first steps for communities that are willing to invest in economic growth. Although this process can be long and difficult, this type of community improvement is sure to have long-term benefits for distressed areas. Online resources can provide a wealth of information for areas that are interested in taking first steps toward this development, making a trail system an effective and attractive form of economic development.

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## MARKETING TRAIL TOWN IN MACKINAW CITY

By: Jiexun Lei

**M**ackinaw City is filled with a large number of local trails, such as historic pathways, the cross-town loop and the lighthouse trail. Also, it has a lot of trails that are connected to other states and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. These trails make a great contribution to people’s lives, especially the trails users.

### What Is a Trail Town?

Recently, Mackinaw City created a Trail Town program that can be beneficial to the local economy and tourism. The trail town is defined as “. . . a destination along a long-distance trail.” It is not merely a safe and attractive place for relaxing, walking, biking, hiking or riding, but also an interesting and comfortable place for activities and interaction. Therefore, the town will be creating a lot of recreational facilities, retail shops, food services and hotels, as well as benches along the trails, and nearby communities will be involved in the Trail Town program.

How can the Trail Town attract local residents and tourists? It is not enough to only establish a town, the local leaders and planners should be aware of how to utilize the town to enhance its value as well as local tourism. In order to attract more visitors and benefits for the local residents, spending more time on long-term marketing will be necessary.

### Marketing a Chinese Old Town

Here is an instance of a famous Chinese

town, which is called “Shu he” old town. The town is located in the western part of China, and famous for its river system, as well as the pathway within the town. Also, it is one of the best places for developing tourism. A large number of tourists from all over the world come to the town no matter what the season. The town comprises a long river system, many pathways, unique wood and brick architecture, as well as an attractive natural environment. Other than these, the town is filled with special retail services featuring traditional local styles. The local government and planners spent a lot of time on marketing the town, and successfully attracted a large number of visitors. Their marketing strategies stressed here:

#### I. Identify the Target Audiences

This step will be essential to successful marketing because it depends on the age, income level, interests etc. Also, it depends on people’s needs. Marketing should be focused on those people who are potentially interested in the town, as well as those people who are willing to spend their money and leisure time there.

Consider current users, the backpackers from domestic and overseas, who are interested in the natural environment and walking, local groups who would like activities and the business groups who are potentially invested in the town are more likely to spend their time and money for the town.

#### II. Collect Local Resources and Information

Introduce the local history, culture, unique

architecture, special local customs, costumes, food, dancing, folktales, as well as a large number of photo shots. These all can be publicized and shown to their target markets in order to create awareness.

### III. Creating Special Routes, Signs, Activities and Mixed Uses to be Able to Attract Visitors

For example, creating more handcraft shops along the pathway, such as special traditional long dress and silver jewelry shops, which cannot be found in other places. Behind the old town, there is a famous snow mountain called “yu long.” Considering this special tourist resource, the local leader and planners build a biking trail that can be connected to the old town and the mountain. Along the trail, there are a lot of signs to show the way. Making special activities to provide interaction between town visitors and residents are popular because a lot of tourists are curious about local groups, particularly for foreigners who like to know more about local costumes, folk customs and living styles.

### IV. Social Media and Advertising

This step is the most important part of the marketing strategy. How to get people to know the town, and how to attract business groups to invest in the town? The local leader and planners promoted the town with advertisements shown all over China.

- **Videos:** All the local history, culture, folk-customs and special activities, as well as traditional food, have been advertised through brief

videos. People can find them on the Internet and television.

- **Social Media:** Invite social media to the town, show them everything, and provide special events for them to participate in. Social media sources will write their experiences for broader audiences.
- **Route Maps and Messages:** Make routes, as well as maps, and present them online or send messages to visitors via phones.
- **Advertising:** Advertisements appear on the buses and taxis, as well as the community, and many guideboards are made for people’s convenience.
- **Travel Agency:** Cooperate with travel agencies to help local leaders and planners publicize the town. Meanwhile, two famous film directors made short films about the old town in terms of its awareness and thus it became well-known in China.

### Marketing the Trail Town in Mackinaw City

Similarly, Mackinaw City should find their own special styles based on the experience of the Chinese old town. Some ideas are listed as follows:

1. **Main Target Market and Awareness:** They should firstly understand that bicyclists will be their main target market, and work together with stakeholders to create



greater awareness of the Trail Town. Give the trails catchy or historic names, and clearly mark the trailhead with guideboards, and maps with routes to the destinations or provide historic stories to attract trail users.

2. **Vision:** Use technique analysis, such as mapping or models, to provide a town vision that can be publicized through social media. They should also be able to post these on the Internet. The vision should include trail and bicycle routes, friendly pedestrians, signs, access to public spaces, public amenities, cultural heritage, town environment, recreational services, unique characteristics and events, restaurants, as well as hotels.

For example, for cyclists, they might like to find the routes that can be provided through websites or phone apps before visiting a trail. They might also like to search for nearby restaurants, hotels or retail services and, thus, figure out whether this is a worthy place to stop. Besides, some cyclists prefer to visit the scenery along the trails or within the town, a good vision for the town environment will make them want to spend their time and money there.

3. **Create and Show Something Special to Customers:** Visitors would be curious about special things, even those people who are not cyclists on the trail, such as the

historic stories of the trail, cultural heritage sites and unique design that could include paths, windows, signage and sidewalks to motivate people to visit.

The Chinese old town is famous for its special customs due to good marketing. A lot of people come to the town just for the special customs, and are interested in local activities. Thus, the Mackinaw trail town can present or create special events to attract visitors, such as performances based on local community volunteers or a small museum for presenting local culture and history.

4. **Design Way-Finding Signs on the trails:** The marketing committee should provide way-finding signs on trails that can be easily found. For example, way-finding signs will be beneficial to those visitors who are not familiar with the routes. In particular, a large way-finding sign in a downtown can easily lead people to the trails or the Trail Town.
5. **Brochures:** Offer printed brochures with the various attractions and route maps listed, as well as the local services available.
6. **The Location of Food Services, Benches and Bars:** These should be clearly provided on the website and maps to cater for visitor's needs. No matter

where people go, the location of eating, drinking and relaxing will be important. Some visitors might prefer relaxing in the town. These visitors want places that offer a range of services that are conveniently located.

The planners and marketing committee should work together to offer a convenient environment for food services, bars, hotels or relaxing. They should keep in mind the food visitors will like, or what kind of bar atmosphere they might prefer. Also, these locations should be marked on maps or on the website, as well as on phone apps to ensure people will easily find them.

7. **Advertising:** This is essential to promote the trail use and local tourism. Some strategies are stressed here:
  - **Social Media:** The marketing initiative will need to collaborate with the local media, and invite them to the town, and to come to special events.
  - **Education:** In order to attract more people to participate in cycling, use educational opportunities to promote its benefits and responsibilities. This information can be posted on YouTube or their websites, using videos or stories to make the website more interesting.

- **Newspapers, Magazines and Articles:** Provide the announcements in state, regional and local newspapers, including images, biking routes, as well as local events. Invite reporters to the town to write about their experiences or even feature stories. Publish articles and photos in cycling-oriented or travel magazines, emphasizing local attractions.
- **Books:** Contact and invite famous travelers or authors to write stories about their biking adventures and experience in their books.
- **Travel Guides:** Establish travel guides with detailed information, attractions, suggestions, routes, local weather and services. The guides could be downloaded from their website and printed on paper guides should be provided in front of the gateway.
- **Website:** Create an official website, a Facebook account, blogs and YouTube channels, and post with regular news. This form of promotion needs staff to answer people's questions online, and provide suggestions to them.
- **Newsletters:** Design attractive newsletters that can be sent by e-mail and mail to the public.

- **Travel Information:** Post travel discounts on the website for the people who are from other states or countries, such as coupons and discounts for hotels and restaurants. Also, they should provide information on various websites like state, transportation and cycling websites.
- **Phone Apps:** Design and create phone apps of their town, so people can easily find everything using their cell phone.
- **Travel Agency:** Cooperating with travel agencies will be a good way to enhance tourism. A lot of Asian visitors like to use travel agencies because they take care of everything. The local community will need to work together with local or big agencies to establish special tours for customers. The travel agency will provide translation services for foreign tourists, create adventure tours and provide rental bicycle services.
- **Funding and Business Investments:** Seek support from public agencies, local organization officials and related

businesses to fund advertising. The marketing committee should provide more business opportunities within the town, some services including retail services, outdoor restaurants, small special and brand shops, motels, free internet can be listed on their internet or town guides for customers.

Some elite groups will find the business opportunities through their internet or advertisement and hence invest in the town. Also, enhance retail services that can be helpful to local businesses.

8. **Citizen Participation:** Local communities should be involved in the marketing, collecting ideas from different age groups and volunteers. Create space for them to communicate with local leaders and planners because some of them will have special insights for the marketing.

In conclusion, the successful marketing of trail towns will play a significant role in the tourism of Mackinaw City. It will help bring trail users and tourists, and provide business groups with investment opportunities. Besides promoting tourism it will contribute to the development of the entire local economy.

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# Part 2: Tourism Marketing and Promotion

## USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE TOURISM THROUGH BRANDING

By: Lindsay Westin

Traveling “Up North” is something many Michiganders are fortunate enough to do in their lifetime. Outside of Michigan, visitors from areas like the City of Chicago, IL, or the state of Ohio refer to the entire state of Michigan as “Up North.” The Pure Michigan campaign helped bring in 2.3 million trips to Michigan in 2012 with visitors coming from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri and beyond the national border with visitors coming from Ontario, Canada (Anders, 2013). Whether in-state residents or out-of-state visitors are embarking on a summer escape to sandy beaches complete with sunrises or sunsets, taking off for a winter getaway to shred through fresh powder or adventuring to find the best fall colors, a Michigan “Up North” getaway is something that is known and loved by many. Michigan is home to more than 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, 19 million acres of forestland, more than 11,000 inland lakes, and more than 36,000 miles of streams. Michigan visitors and residents are never more than six miles from an inland lake or stream, and 40 counties come in contact with at least one of the Great Lakes (MDOT, 3013).

Due to the vast amount of natural beauty encompassing the entire state, it is difficult to decide where to go, what to do, and where to stay, among other things. Making a decision regarding the options that visitors and travelers have can easily be determined by what is popular, well known and easy

to find information about. A survey taken in May 2013 by Pew Internet, a project of the Pew Research Center, showed that 85% of adults in the United States use the Internet. Of those adults who use the Internet, 91% of them use search engines to locate information and 59% of those adults do this on a daily basis (Pew Research Center, 2013). In 2005, the Travel Industry Association of America determined that roughly two-thirds of people who use the internet use search engines for travel planning (Ziang and Gretzel, 2010). In a nation where the majority turns to the Internet for information, it has become the most used tool for providing information to those who seek it. It would be a smart decision for cities trying to attract those to the beauty, attractions, and activities in the area to have a strong online presence. It is more crucial than ever to have that online presence, whether it is through social media, web pages, blogs or YouTube videos.

The County of Cheboygan, located in the most Northeast portion of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, has an economy that heavily depends on tourism through the retail- and service-industry markets. Within its 720 square miles Cheboygan County is crossed by I-75 and US-23 (Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, 2013). It offers a wide variety of outdoor activities due to the several state parks and large inland lakes and rivers. The county is trying to grow the tourism in the area. As stated in the Cheboygan County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Strategic Plan, the

number one goal is to “become a distinctive tourism destination.” The first objective of that goal is to “coordinate county-wide/regional tourism strategies, which include branding and promoting a sense of place within the county. Branding is used to reflect the identities of a specific place and it’s people. When a brand is sought out correctly by keeping the community’s values, assets, and priorities in mind, it can be a successful tool used to drive economic, political and social goals of a community (North Star, 2013a). Once that branding is in place, it is crucial to promote it well in order to see success. County residents have to support their own branding in order for others to believe in it and want to travel there. This is when the Internet and social media come into the growth of this promoting.

In 2012, Cheboygan County had a population of 25,835, with 20,823 of those residents are legal adults (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). After a search for “Cheboygan” in the Twitter search bar for people, which is what organizations are also referred to as, roughly 30 results are shown. Not all directly relate to the county or city, and some appear to be residents or past residents. The Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce Twitter profile is one of the results and shows up under “Cheboygan Events @chebChamber.” As of December 4, 2013, the account has 44 followers, is following three other accounts and has a total of one tweet.

In the profile summary, it has the [Cheboygan.com](http://Cheboygan.com) website listed. This takes visitors to a page that has a welcome letter, as well as

information on visiting there, working there, and joining the commerce. On this website, there is also a link to their only social media site listed, which is Facebook. The Facebook page has 616 likes as of December 4, 2013. Without going through every like on Facebook or follower on Twitter and given the daily, sometimes hourly, changes that can occur on social media sites, there is not a way to determine how many of those likes or followers are currently Cheboygan County residents. However, these numbers compared to the Cheboygan County adult population and national internet usage among adults is miniscule.

Southwest of Cheboygan County is Charlevoix County. In 2012, its population was estimated to be 26,023, with 20,610 of those residents legal adults (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Compared to Cheboygan, these numbers are fairly similar. It is expected that because of the similar sizes, they would have around the same social media support. After searching for “Charlevoix” in the Twitter search bar under people, “Charlevoix Chamber @ VisitCharlevoix” is one of the multiple results displayed. As of December 4, 2013, the account has 173 followers, is following 101 other accounts and has tweeted a mere 11 times. The last tweet was on May 31, 2013. These numbers are not impressive, even when compared to Cheboygan. However, Charlevoix has something that Cheboygan does not have, a specific Twitter account for the Charlevoix Convention and Visitors Bureau. This account, which can be found

under the same people search as before, is displayed as “Charlevoix @CharlevoixCVB.” As of December 4, 2013 this account has 779 followers, is following 481 accounts and has tweeted 824 times. The account last tweeted the morning of December 4 at 11:07am.

@CharlevoixCVB and @VisitCharlevoix are both followed by the “Pure Michigan” @PureMichigan Twitter profile. This account has close to 80,000 followers, is following almost 3,500 accounts and has tweeted more than 13,000 times. Pure Michigan also has an impressive Facebook presence, with more than 580,000 likes on its page. Cheboygan and Charlevoix have a minimal social media presence on Facebook and Twitter when compared to Pure Michigan. However, that should be expected because of the fact that the Pure Michigan campaign spent \$25 million on their advertisement in 2012. Notably so, that \$25 million was not spent solely on the person, or people, who handle Twitter, Facebook and every other social media site that Pure Michigan has an account with. Impressively the State of Michigan received a return of \$5.76 for each dollar spent on the Pure Michigan campaign in 2012. Cheboygan may not have the means that the Pure Michigan campaign has to spend on advertising but it should have similar means compared to Charlevoix to take advantage of the opportunities that social media can offer in terms of free advertising.

Facebook has 1.19 billion monthly active users as of September 30, 2013. Twitter has 230-plus million monthly active users. Both of these social media sites are free to use.

This means that any company, person, city or corporation has the opportunity for free advertisement to 230-plus million people by simply signing up and managing accounts on one or both sites. In regards to opportunity costs, managing the accounts does take time and that typically means money. Cheboygan would be giving up time and money to hopefully gain something greater in return. The amount of time and money that is expected to put into social media before seeing the benefits is an important aspect to consider. Since the start of Pure Michigan’s campaign strategy began in 2006, the cumulative return on investment (ROI) is up to \$4.10, which is an increase from 2011’s ROI of \$3.70 (Zimmerman, 2013). The benefits from advertising will not just happen overnight. The time spent on this needs to be consistent, as in daily management of social media sites.

The four Twitter accounts listed above showed one distinct pattern, the more tweets that had been tweeted by an account goes hand in hand with the amount of followers each account has. Daily updates on Facebook and Twitter interactions are what get others on those social networks to notice an account. Updating a Facebook status with a question can lead to replies. Every time a reply to that question is made, it gains more popularity on that social media site. Posting a picture to Facebook can give people something aesthetically pleasing to look at, which can make them want to know more. By searching “Cheboygan” in the general search field of twitter, countless tweets that



contain the word “Cheboygan” in some way are shown. By replying to those tweets and engaging in conversation about the county, Cheboygan now has the opportunity of building relationships with those people who have the same county in common.

Something that can make it easier to identify a common ground is having a recognizable brand. One that is known by residents and visitors can be effective. North Star Destination Strategies is a company that focuses on branding. They have partnered with places, such as the City of Dublin in Ohio, Kosciusko County in Indiana and the Greater Lansing Michigan area, to create a unique brand for each of those places with an emphasis on destination marketing and tourism branding (North Star, 2013b).

Through the work done with the Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau (GLCVB), North Star realized what makes Lansing unique, “Lansing is actually the literal and figurative heart of Michigan” (North Star, 2013b). By finding out what makes Lansing stand out in Michigan, North Star was able to move forward with the concept and into further development. Their strategy focused on a target audience, a frame of reference, a point of difference, and the benefits that would come from branding. A little more than 10 years after the branding, the Greater Lansing area attracted 4.7 million in 2012. These visitors spent more than \$472 million at local businesses, compared to \$372 million pre-branding in 2000 (GLCVB, 2000). The Greater Lansing Sports Authority, which is part of the

GLCVB, helped attract 276,000 of those visitors to events, such as the USA Hockey National Tournament (AEG, 2013). All of these visitors helped the economy directly and indirectly. The visitors spend money in retail, dining and at other local businesses that directly support 4,600 local jobs (AEG, 2013). Indirectly, the people who are employed by those jobs turn around and put their money back into the local economy.

Cheboygan County needs to brand itself and take advantage of advertisement opportunities. First, it needs to identify the biggest challenges moving forward. Then it needs to figure out what makes the area and its resources unique, and what the county possesses and can offer to residents and visitors. This will take critical insight to establish what will make Cheboygan stand out from every other county in Michigan. From there the target audience can be determined. This is crucial when moving into the design process. For example, it wouldn't be in a brand's best interest to try and attract an 85-year-old the same way as it would a 21-year-old. After the target audience is established the branding process can begin. Branding successfully means representing the county positively and accurately. This will require extensive public input in order to be favorable within the community. Social media can act as a go to discussion forum, providing a platform for input and comments, negative and positive, from County residents. This would also be an opportunity for the county to share what their thoughts are and what they

think represents the residents and their surroundings. By engaging the public early, they will have more of a say in the process. This can help make them feel like it's their own brand. Once the county has accepted the brand, promoting it to visitors and travelers is important. This is also another

opportunity to engage in social media to market the brand. It is imperative to remain consistent across the board. Consistency in the brand and in social media presence will help in the success in moving towards being a “distinctive tourism destination.”

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## NORTHEAST MICHIGAN: THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL WEBSITE

By: Eric Wedesky

The sun has risen on the Internet age; planning trips and vacations via travel agencies or by sifting through a collection of brochures accrued from family and friends are quickly becoming yesterday's methods—if they have not already fallen by the wayside. That very notion, the movement away from an analogue means by which one can plan a trip should not be seen as the precursor to the extinction of the travel agency industry, but rather an opportunity for the growth of a more efficient and comprehensive way for eager travelers to engage the possibilities that await them in their desired destination.

Governments and businesses alike have taken to harnessing the potential that the internet creates for some time now. Every major airline now provides their stock of flights online. One simply selects dates for departure and return, they are then presented with available flights, times and rates, they chose the options that are the most suitable and just like that, they have booked their trip. No longer do willing customers need to wait on hold, while attempting to speak with a representative, or deal with a representative who is perhaps having a rough day—both of which could deter potential buyers of the company's product due to simple human nature. The simplicity of comparison and selection within these websites has caused not only

airlines, but hotel chains, rental car agencies, amongst several other industries, to invest in similar websites that effective because of their ease-of-use and also due to the fact that they remove human interaction, effectively eliminating the aforementioned scenarios.

In a similar vein, governments, specifically the State of Michigan, have sought to bolster tourism numbers through clever advertising campaigns and by rebranding themselves in a way that portrays the natural splendor and unique attractions offered within their domains.' So that these campaigns do more than provide entertainment and spark a remembrance of a fast time had years ago, the State of Michigan, in this case, has created an supplemental website ([www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org)) where one can wade through a sea of information about places to stay and things to in Michigan. Furthermore, on the website one can plan a trip, ponder driving suggested road trips, view places to stay, places to eat and things that are going on statewide.

The "Pure Michigan" advertising campaign has proven to be successful in attracting people to the Great Lakes State. John Flescher of the Associated Press reported from the Pure Michigan Governors Conference on Tourism that, "Tourism spending in Michigan rose in 2011 for the second consecutive year, a trend likely to continue" (Flesher, 2012). He proceeded to discuss how an Assistant Professor of Tourism from Michigan State, Dan McCole, asserted that from 2010–2011 spending on tourism rose by 8% thanks in part to, "A steady increase in visits from out-of-state

residents drawn by the ‘Pure Michigan’ ad campaign.” Fischer then wrote, “McCole projected tourists will spend 6% more in 2012.” It is evident that the State of Michigan has a growing tourism industry that should continue to flourish once the campaign reaches more people, including markets in Asia and Europe, and they have the opportunity to experience the unique and pristine attractions Michigan has to offer.

The aforementioned travel websites offer several pros, but also several cons. In regards to the type of website employed by airlines and hotels, they work because the information is constantly updated and the sites are easy enough to navigate. Options on those sites are usually plentiful, without regard given to prices, and one can usually find what they are seeking. Nowadays airlines have teamed with hotels and car rental agencies to even allow one to choose where they would like to stay and how they would like to get around where they are traveling too, on top of selecting a flight.

However, a problem still persists: What is one to do when they are on their trip? The airline website does not present the purchaser with a multitude of options to fill their daily itineraries. Although one may have found means to reach their desired destinations, there are still hours that need to be invested into finding things to do and places to eat. Even then, there are many places that are up to speed in terms of providing their information online, but some that do not. These places could be easily overlooked because one who knows

very little about what is available where they are traveling are going to be blind about the existence of restaurants and attractions that are not online.

Similarly, there are problems that arise when attempting to plan a trip using government initiated websites like [www.michigan.org/trip-planner/](http://www.michigan.org/trip-planner/). As mentioned previously, here one can see events, attractions, places to eat and stay, and even possible routes by which one can navigate a particular area. However, once one gets past the selection of the places they would like to eat, stay and visit, it does not allow for the booking of, say, a hotel room or to make reservations at a restaurant or to purchase tickets for an event one would want to attend. Also, this website is not specific to any particular region, rather it operates for a broad, statewide scope. By setting up the website in such a large fashion, it is easy to overlook particular regions and more difficult to envision, and then reap the intimate experience one could get by spending more time in a smaller range. For instance, Bavaria is a region in Germany, which has its own website ([www.bavaria.travel](http://www.bavaria.travel)) where one can find information much like that found on Michigan’s travel website, just on a much reduced scale being that it is slightly more than a third of the size of Michigan. Yet on Bavaria’s website, like Michigan’s, there is no way plan day-by-day, nor does it allow one to book directly on the site.

Some destinations will likely never have an issue attracting visitors and patrons. Paris has endless attractions, Detroit has professional sports and the attractions of

the surrounding suburbs, and Traverse City has Lake Michigan and the Cherry Festival to entice people to vacation there. The top 10 places people visit in Michigan, in descending order are: Frankenmuth/ Bavarian Village, Holland State Park, Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, The Henry Ford Museum, Grand Haven State Park, Island Lake Recreation Area, Warren Dunes State Park, the Woodward Dream Cruise, Mackinac Island and Muskegon State Park (Alexander, 2013). The one thing that stands out from that list is that not one of the mentioned destinations is located in Northeast Michigan. So now the question is posed: How does a state that is financing a major advertising campaign get people to visit a region that is bereft of any of the state's most popular pulls?

Before that question is answered, the area in question should be defined. The area that encompassed by the phrase "Northeast Michigan" is the region of Michigan north of Saginaw Bay and east of I-75. More specifically, it includes the counties of Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Roscommon, Ogemaw, Iosco and Arenac. Although this is one of the least populated areas in Michigan, the Northeast part of the Lower Peninsula has much to offer. Along the coast of Lake Huron there are a bevy of state parks, a national forest, a state forest and several coastal towns, including Tawas, Oscoda, Alpena, Rodger's City and Cheboygan. Inland there are more natural attractions, including Houghton

Lake, Higgins Lake, Mullet Lake, Burt Lake, Grayling, Gaylord, and West Branch for shopping. The coast is dotted by lighthouses and campgrounds are plentiful throughout Northeast Michigan. It is one thing to have these attractions but another thing altogether to get people to plan a vacation revolving around Northeast Michigan.

Most might not find it entertaining enough to spend a week in Alpena, but if one were to have the ability to plan a trip revolving around all the attractions in the region they were intrigued by, it could help them realize that traveling to Northeast Michigan would be worthwhile. Currently, however, there is no convenient way to plan such a trip. Using Michigan's website does not exactly move one to travel to Northeast Michigan. One could easily get lost in the exciting features of Grand Rapids or Metro Detroit. As a solution to this, the counties of Northeast Michigan must pool their resources to create a regional travel website that incorporates features from the previously discussed websites, along with a more comprehensive structure in order to present what they have to offer in a unique manner that engages people and creates excitement for the possibility of traveling to the region. In a time when one's primary resource for information is the internet, it would behoove this region, which seeks to attract more vacationers, to develop and promote a website ran by a unified coalition of invested parties where one can gather information, plan, and book everything they would like to do on one website in a manner that is convenient and comprehensive.

First, and most importantly, the group of people who take to developing such a website would have to gather a very extensive amount of information for all towns, parks, places, restaurants, hotels, motels, campgrounds, etc., about all the goings-on and menus, room rates, events, festivities, promotions and create a database where all the information is compiled and continuously updated. On top of this, the group would need to create a collection of photographs that are both high quality and depict something attractive. Outdated pictures simply won't do. If people running events or attractions could create videos that would be even more beneficial. Simply put, when people visit this site the last thing that should happen would be them getting turned away by a lack of things to do or lackluster displays.

Once this information has been compiled the development of the actual site could begin. Right away, when people pull up the homepage of the site they should be confronted by a prominent tab or button that says something along the lines of, "Begin planning your trip to the 'Sunrise Side' right now!" This really should be the only option on the first page. If there are more options they might get distracted from thinking about planning a trip to Northeast Michigan. Once past the first page of the site, one would be asked to enter the dates they are interested in traveling to the region. Here they could enter several ranges of dates in order to view different rates and compare attractions and events from varying times of the year.

Once they have determined dates they are interested in visiting, the next step should be to determine how they are going to get to the region. If they are flying they should be provided with all the air travel options and rental car services relative to where they fly into. The estimated travel times must be season-appropriate and considerate of construction and other possible hindrances, while traveling. This feature would be significant so that people can realistically plan out their days and have a relatively accurate idea of time they might spend on the road traveling around the region from place to place. Driving directions should be provided, along with things to look out for, and also to look for along whichever path is chosen so that attractions that do not require a whole day can be visited and experienced.

Once the preliminary selections of time in the region and mode(s) of transportation has been made, the distinguishing feature of this website will come into play. Here one will be able to go day-by-day and select everything from what they want to do, to where they would like to eat, to where they plan on staying. The detail in this part of the website should be so much so that there will not be any surprises or disappointing experiences. One should be able to read and write reviews, read through menus and see rankings of the most liked and disliked attractions in a given place.

Although this might initially shine an unfavorable light on some business in the region, eventually it should promote growth, competition and inspire business owners

to provide better products and services in order to receive more attractive reviews. Conversely, it will be known that businesses are top-notch and worthy of one's money and patronage. The website should have the facility to be able to inform one of nearby attractions that are popular and provide suggestions to help fill their day. Of course though, there should be the option to simply have nothing planned so that one can get some rest and relaxation. Furthermore, there should be a time tracker so that one can examine recommended amounts of time to expend doing something and adjust it to fit their schedule or feelings on how long they should spend doing something.

Once this has been completed the website should guide one to a page that presents all the things they have selected where they will have the ability to review their selections, see projected costs and, hopefully, book rooms and transportation and finalize their itineraries. The finalized plans should be available for print out with receipts and all

necessary information should be made both electronically and printable, if so desired. Being able to download the information into one's phone will be paramount, as well as sharing their trip ideas on Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets.

This idea of a comprehensive website that is specific to a region would be successful because those who plan the trip would have a sense of reassurance due to the honesty and scope of the information provided. It would empower one to have creative control over planning their trip by navigating a website designed to aid the planner and help them tailor a vacation specific to what they desire to do. The region would see a growth in tourism because when people search "Northeast Michigan" they won't be guided to pages of advertisements and corporate suggestions, but rather a site where all the information is at the forefront and options are widespread. Providing an innovation in the way one travels will also help foster awareness of the region.

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## CAN AN INCREASED ONLINE PRESENCE IN YELP PROMOTE THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY IN NORTHEAST MICHIGAN?

By: Patrick Falconer

Since the introduction of the smart phones in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Americans have used them to locate and find information on just about every topic. In order for businesses to keep up with the changing behaviors they must stay connected with their customers through an online presence. An online presence can be anywhere from a webpage to account on Yelp, and can cost hundreds of dollars a month to nothing. Creating this online presence is the first step for a business to reach new customers and more profits.

A report published in *The Economist* in September of 2013 looked at the benefits of having high ratings on the online review website Yelp. They studied 300 restaurants in San Francisco, CA, and found that if they received an increase in 0.5 stars on a one-to-five-star rating system they increased the sell-out of the restaurant at peak hours by 13% to 34%. According to Professor Michael Anderson and Professor Jeremy Magurder, the change in sales is attributed not to the change in quality of food and service but rather from the increase in their review score (Doward, 2012). In addition, an Assistant Professor Michael Luca (2011) at Harvard's Business School released a paper showing how an increase of one star for a restaurant can increase total revenues by 5% to 9%. This affects only independent restaurants

not franchised chains. The customer is also only affected by rating and the rating done by an "elite" Yelp reviewer, they are not swayed by the total number of reviews done.

Yelp is an free online review site founded in 2004 that reviews categories, such as art and entertainment, food, health and medical, hotel and travel, nightlife and restaurants, to name a few. It is the leading online review website on the Internet. Registered reviewers can rate a business with one to five stars and leave comments about their experiences there. These reviews are available for the entire public to see. When a customer searches for a business the results are organized by the most reviews. Businesses can create accounts for free and create their own page with detailed information regarding their business, such as photos, hours of operation and a basic summary of what they do. In the third quarter of 2013, Yelp had 117 million unique visits to their site, and reviewers have written 47 million reviews since its conception in 2004 ([www.yelp.com/about](http://www.yelp.com/about)). Yelp released their first iPhone app August of 2013, it provides fast easy information about businesses that are nearby. The app displays reviews, ratings, and map of location (Duffy, 2013).

Although Yelp covers many different categories of businesses I have chosen to focus my research on restaurants in the eight counties of the Northeast Michigan Region: Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Crawford, Oscoda and Alcona. I collected data from all 254 restaurants in these counties that had an account on Yelp and compiled the number of

reviews and stars each restaurant received. The average number of stars received by restaurants in the entire Northeast Michigan Region was 2.27 stars. The average number of reviews per restaurant was 2.56. In the calculations many restaurants had no review so they were labeled with zero stars and zero reviews, which could skew the data. Also, in recent years some restaurants have begun to create fake Yelp accounts to increase ratings. During my data collection I noticed many restaurants had only one review that gave them five stars, and until more reviews are conducted for those restaurants I would be hesitant on the quality of rating. Those fake accounts could also skew my data.

The total number of available restaurants on Yelp for the region was 254 and the number of restaurants per county were as follows; Cheboygan had 41; Presque Isle had 20, Otsego had 62, Montmorency had 21, Alpena had 59, Crawford had 21, Oscoda had 13 and Alcona had 17. Otsego had the most due to the fact that the City of Gaylord had a very large presence on Yelp, with 55 restaurants. My finding that Cheboygan had only 41 restaurants was surprising because it is one of the well-known cities of the region and draws large numbers of visitors to the region. A nearby city in northern Michigan is Traverse City. The population of Cheboygan County was 26,152 people in 2010, while Traverse City was 14,674 People in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2013a and 2013b). Yet the number of restaurants on Yelp in Traverse City is 5.4 times more than those in Cheboygan

County. I am sure more restaurants exist in Cheboygan County than Traverse City but they just do not have a presence on Yelp.

The region's average rating per restaurant was 2.27 and for each county is as follows; Cheboygan was 2.18, Presque Isle was 2.57, Otsego was 2.25, Montmorency was 2.23, Alpena was 2.07, Crawford was 2.34, Oscoda was 2.35 and Alcona was 2.19. I saw this statistic as a troubling sign for the region, because when a customer is looking for a possible place to eat and many restaurants are below 2.5 stars, the customer may just decide to drive another hour to another region with restaurants of higher ratings. The Anderson and Magruder article shows the importance of a rating on the choices a customer makes. They chose the restaurant based on ratings rather than quality of service and food. That scenario falls in line with an issue facing the Northeast Michigan Region. That issue is retaining visitors longer so they have a chance spend more money in the Northeast Michigan economy. In the "2010 Michigan Visitors Profile," published by D.K Shifflet & Associates Ltd, the research shows that on average when people visit Northeast Michigan they stay for 1.33 days. This is below the 1.53 average of all of Michigan (Garulski, 2011). The creation of a well representative presence on Yelp will create the feeling for visitors of more activities to do in the region, and thus more time and money spent in Northeast Michigan.

The average number of reviewers per restaurant for all counties was 2.56 and

the average for each county is as follows; Cheboygan was 3.07, Presque Isle was 1.75, Otsego was 3.96, Montmorency was 1.71, Alpena was 2.6, Crawford was 4.09, Oscoda was 1.71 and Alcona was 1.6. The statistics in all counties for this data shows the lack of communication between the customer and the restaurant. Very few reviews are being written for restaurants and this could be because of multiple reasons. First, the restaurant could not be informing its customers, whether they are new or old customers, that they have a Yelp account and appreciate their reviews. Another obstacle preventing the customer from writing a review and rating the restaurant may be from the lack of connectivity in the Northeast Michigan Region. Internet and cellular phone providers have been hesitant to invest in this region because of the slow rate of return on their investments. With lack of connectivity a customer could forget to write a review when they return to a place with connectivity.

In order to increase the number of stars, reviews and restaurants online, help needs to come from various different sectors. The most important goal that needs to be achieved for restaurant's presence on Yelp is to become effective economic development tool is to increase connectivity in the Northeast Michigan Region. Without complete and properly served connectivity coverage of Northeast Michigan, all efforts made to increase the size and strength of restaurants on Yelp will result in failure. Connectivity is what makes Yelp unique, effective, and efficient to consumers. Once complete connectivity is achieved other steps can be

taken to increase the quantity and quality of restaurants in Northeast Michigan on Yelp.

The issue of Internet connectivity in Northeast Michigan has been a struggle. Whether it be mobile or LAN connections, many areas of the region go under or un-served by providers. The nonprofit organization Connect Michigan ([www.connectmi.org](http://www.connectmi.org)) is working to create a Michigan where all of its citizens have access to broadband. The U.S Department of Commerce and the State Broadband Initiative (SBI) fund them. They provide capacity building, technical assistance, and data collection and report their findings to the state for implementation of program priorities . Connect Michigan can help a community find funds or create programs to create more seamless and well-covered areas of connectivity. They will also work with political and community leaders to help them become more “digitally literate” and understand how connectivity can improve their regions economy and quality of life for its citizens.

Once a seamless broadband network is put in place in the Northeast Michigan Region the next step would be to increase and strengthen the restaurants on Yelp. First in order to increase the number of restaurants on Yelp, the help of community leaders and local economic development planners would need to be requested. They would need to compile a list of restaurants open in their area of jurisdiction. These restaurants would then need to be approached and asked if they would approve of the creation

of a Yelp account for their restaurant. Sign up for it is easy and can take minutes to complete, and could be done with the assistance of the newly “digitally literate” economic development planners. Once the account has been created the local economic development planner in charge would then create guidelines to help restaurants create a pleasing and inviting Yelp account for prospective customers. The criteria that would be included in this guideline would be the addition of location, photos, hours of operation, menu, cuisine, and whether or not they are Wi-Fi enabled. When collecting the data for the current status of the Northeast Michigan’s Yelp presence, I noticed many accounts without photos or hours of operation, both critical pieces of information for a potential customer to know.

The final step to using Yelp to increase the restaurant economy of Northeast Michigan would be to teach the owners how to communicate with their reviewers. Our world is no longer solely face-to-face contact. We rely on technology to create and share information. A complaint in the

past would normally be dealt with in person at the restaurant, but now the customer would rather just go home and write a bad review about the restaurant because it can create a more lasting effect. Helping owners understand that they can talk to reviewers who have had complaints online is important. This could possibly get that bad rating changed by the reviewer and can help a restaurant keep its rating and thus revenue up. Also, keeping in contact with positive reviewers will make them remember you and your restaurant and make them more willing to return.

In conclusion, after data collection and analysis I believe that creating a stronger Yelp presence in the restaurant category online can create a more prosperous Northeast Michigan economy. The only major obstacle to jump through would be the creation of a seamless broadband network. But, the benefits of a seamless broadband network not only help the restaurant industry but almost every other industry in Northeast Michigan, and far outweigh the costs.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TOURISM OF NORTHERN MICHIGAN FOR CHINESE TOURISTS

By: Chan Wang

According to a survey conducted by *USA Today* in 2009, Michigan's tourism industry typically received about 70% of its tourists from within the state, which had been hit hard by recession. In addition, the number of visitors from out-of-state was also predicted to drop because several states were worse off in 2009 than a year earlier. However, the Pure Michigan brand has made a major impact on Michigan tourism. Since it launched, the Pure Michigan campaign has attracted seven million new, out-of-state visitors to the Great Lakes State, visitors who spent \$2

billion at Michigan businesses and paid \$138 million in Michigan taxes, primarily sales tax. (*PR Newswire*, 2010).

Michigan's economy, in 2012, is at a 10-year high; personal income increased by 3.5%, matching the national average; the percentage of employment in Michigan matches and is even higher than the percentage of employment in U.S. total (see Table 10).

Social media plays a significant role in building the brand of Pure Michigan. According to a report published by *CNN* (Gross, 2010), more Americans receive their news, such as it is, via the Internet than from newspapers or radio, as well of three-fourths who say they read about news from

**Table 10: Percentage of Employment of Michigan and U.S. Total -  
Calculated from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Data**

Industry	U.S. Total	Michigan - Statewide
Base Industry: Total, All Industries	100%	100%
Natural Resources and Mining	1.8%	100%
Construction	5.1%	3.8%
Manufacturing	10.8%	15.9%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	22.8%	21.5%
Information	2.4%	1.6%
Financial Activities	6.8%	5.4%
Professional and Business Services	16.2%	17.1%
Education and Health Services	17.5%	18.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	12.4%	11.5%
Other Services	4.1%	3.8%
Unclassified	0.2%	0.3%
Percentage of Employment: Ratio of industry employment to base-industry employment times 100.		

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010.

e-mail or social media sites updates. The survey also suggests that Facebook and Twitter make news a more participatory experience than before.

People share links to news articles, share and post articles on Facebook, and tweet them on Twitter. Seventy-five percent get their news forwarded through e-mail or social media posts, while 37% admit they share a news item via Facebook or Twitter. The China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) report shows that as of the end of June 2013, the number of internet users in China has reached 591 million, of which mobile phone users reached 464 million (CNNIC, 2013). More are people getting used to socializing by social media shows so that the Internet has created a social media-driven era.

### **Role of Social Media in Marketing Tourism in Northern Michigan**

Social media networking is the process of interacting with other individuals through the specific social media tools or the community (Mavoothu, 2010). Social media technologies have many different forms, including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. For instance, we mainly use Google as a search engine in the U.S. and Baidu in China; we use Facebook as online social networking service in the U.S. and Renren in China; for microblog, we use Twitter in the U.S., and Weibo in China; we use YouTube as video sharing in the U.S. and Youku in China;

we use Wikipedia in the U.S. and Baike in China; for rating, in the U.S., we have Yelp, and Douban in China.

Social media marketing provides organizations with a way to connect with their customers. It focuses on marketing sales, deals with public relations and maintains customer relations by using social media and other Internet media to disseminate and publish information. Besides, it refers to the process of gaining website attention through social media sites, using the social profile to promote brand-created content that will incite interest by their target customer base. The content is linked to the company webpage that drives customers in to the brand. Social media marketing programs can create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, about 1.5 million travelers from the Chinese mainland visited the U.S. in 2012, a 35% increase from 2011, and spent about \$8.8 billion. However, there is no data showing how many Chinese travelers set foot in Michigan. Furthermore, searching the key words “Pure Michigan” and “northern Michigan” by using Google, there are 19,300,000 results for Pure Michigan and 7,560,000 for northern Michigan, yet only 520 results for Pure Michigan and 246,000 for northern Michigan in China. Pure Michigan has its own Channel at Youtube with 194,000 results, while only 21 results are found at Youku, which is the most popular video-sharing website in China. From the

findings we can draw that there is large potential to attract more Chinese tourists to travel to northern Michigan.

Apart from lack of consideration about international tourists, the tourism marketing of northern Michigan shares the same problems with other tourist places. For example, it lacks innovation on products—tourism products age, lack a theme and display low-level redundant construction. Another problem is that some areas have inadequate facilities and “human” care missing—the infrastructure is inadequate, a common problem for many sightseeing attractions, such as the lack of recreational facilities, restaurants and hotels stereotyped characteristics not prominent; traders’ and tourists’ environmental awareness and so on. These issues pulled down the grade of the entire area, resulting in the formation of a landscape difficult to promote for tourists. In fact, the reason why tourism is increasing is the importance of human aesthetic, recreation, sports and other physical and mental forms of relaxation. Therefore, in order to attract tourists, a high standard of quality of service is needed, so that visitors feel they have experienced a worthwhile vacation.

### **Improvement**

First, since there is a large potential to attract more people to tour northern Michigan, the most effective way to do so is to add more languages on the official website of Pure Michigan so that people from different backgrounds can access direct information. Different people have different values and each person also has various feelings when

under different situations. However, most of the information about Pure Michigan on the Chinese search engine, microblog and social networking services are posted by students and visitors who have been there before, so the evaluation about the place is from the person’s own unique viewpoint, which is not objective. As the official information is more fair and credible, it is more convenient for potential travelers to know about new places directly from the source.

Secondly, as the tourism infrastructure is an important aspect of investment, plans need to be made to strengthen infrastructure in tourist areas. Both the demands of passengers and the overall harmony of the landscape needs to be taken into account during facility construction. For example, the number, location and sanitation of public toilets have to be carefully considered, so as to meet standards. In addition, it is important to beautify the area, shape the landscape for unique beauty, while keeping harmony with the environment.

Landscape facilities and tourism infrastructures not only should be promoted from the prospective of landscape quality and environmental quality, such as speeding up the construction of the scenic tourist service center, inside and outside the tourism scenic roads, navigation systems, health facilities and security facilities, but also from the perspective of improving the scenic consumption system and profit system, such as recreation, accommodation hospitality and shopping. What is more, standards of high quality should also be built from the



perspective of the gradual improvement of the scenic recreation system, landscape systems, consumer systems, security systems, environmental systems, marketing communications, service system and travel security system in order to enable the tourist to have a healthy experience.

Thirdly, tourism producers and tourism operators must meet the needs of tourists, through geographical location consumer goods or services developed, including the core tourist products and package tourist products. Tourist products need to be characteristic, unique and even irreplaceable, so as to attract visitors. Therefore, in product design, we must highlight independent features, such as the original ecology,

localization, both static and dynamic, fashion and nostalgia. Only by developing tourism facilities closely related to landscape features and cultural characteristics, establishing their own brands, and creating cultural tourism products, can a region acquire a high-quality, healthy and orderly development.

Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of mixed tourism product is suggested to give the visitor more choice by highlighting the theme of innovation, and vigorously developing special tourist products. Moreover, enhance the participation of tourist projects, enjoyment, interactivity and contextual experience of the longitudinal development of local tourism.

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## TOURISM PROMOTION THROUGH YOUTUBE

By: Marguerite Novak

**W**hen promoting tourism, an online presence is crucial to its success. The percentage of travelers using social media to plan their trips or pick destinations is growing. This growing percentage does not only include the younger generations, but the older ones as well. To appeal to all audiences, social media is an effective tool that is being utilized by countless tourism industries across the globe. To be competitive, Cheboygan must step into the arena as well.

Using YouTube as a source to promote tourism to a destination, such as Cheboygan, has proved to be very effective. YouTube is known as the second largest search engine in the world. It is a social media website owned by Google, used to view and share videos. It is used by not only private, personal users, but businesses as well. In particular, videos displaying information of a destination or vacation spot are plentiful. According to Google, YouTube reaches 62% of all travel enthusiasts. When thinking about taking a trip, choosing a destination, or looking for activities at a destination, more than 60% of travelers use YouTube to view videos. This percentage has grown within the past couple of years, indicating an increasing interest in online videos.

Once it is known that YouTube is being used by the majority when planning a trip, it is important to look at what types of travel videos are being watched. The most popular,

that being 62%, video for travelers to watch comes from hotels, cruises, or tours. Then, 58% of videos watched by travelers come from trip reviews from experts or travel related channels. This gives insight on what types of videos will be viewed most often, eventually proving to be most effective. Another factor that touches the effectiveness of the videos to promote tourism is the target audience. According to Google, 45% of leisure travelers, 72% of business travelers, and 74% of affluent travelers were prompted to book a vacation to a particular destination after viewing an online video. This shows that not only is the type of video important, but what group of the population the video targets is also crucial.

### Analysis

The current Cheboygan County presence on YouTube is that of a positive experience (YouTube, 2013). The majority of the videos are from individuals videotaping their experiences with the outdoors of Cheboygan County. They seem to be either events or moments where they are enjoying the outdoors, and sharing it with YouTube. The most popular videos featured Fourth of July fireworks, driving through the town on a snowy day, breaking ice, boating and driving thorough ORV (off-road vehicle) trails. As the viewer looks at further pages, the majority of the videos are real-estate for sale, or small, local businesses advertising. Unless these businesses or properties are such that would attract people to the area of Cheboygan, they are not necessarily a positive advertisement for the tourism in the county.

When the titles of the top videos displaying recreation, outdoors or events are analyzed, the key terms are all about recreation. It seems that driving, snow or ice, ORVs or lakes and rivers, mountains and trails are all popular among the YouTube users. As these topics might be popular attractions of the area, there are other assets that should be shown as well. Do arts and culture exist? There is no mention of anything other than local business, partial outdoors, activities and property. Is the viewer really getting a full picture of what Cheboygan is like?

There is one channel that is titled “Cheboygan Up North.” There is only one video on the channel titled “Cheboygan County: The Great Up North.” This is the only video/channel on YouTube that seems to promote tourism. This channel does not appear to be run by a government or local economic group. There is a lack of tourism-based videos for Cheboygan County. Without a specific channel dedicated to promoting tourism, there is a absence of awareness of opportunities for travelers. This has most likely economically hurt the county, considering the abundant of utilization of YouTube by travelers.

### **Future Options for Cheboygan County**

A very strong option for the county is to produce a channel on YouTube dedicated to promoting tourism to the area. As mentioned earlier, having a strong web presence will prove beneficial to the local economy. Taking advantage of YouTube as a device to endorse the assets of the county is a necessity to a

well-functioning economy. When Cheboygan is searched in either YouTube or Google, the channel will be among the top results, creating a fast and easy way to learn about what Cheboygan has to offer travelers. To be competitive with the top tourism economies in Michigan, it is important to offer information through all social media sites.

When creating the YouTube account for Cheboygan, It must include the Channel, home page, and individual videos. When creating a name for the channel, key words have been shown to be most effective and easy to search. For Cheboygan, an appropriate name would simply include the geographic location, or the location with the type of recreation, if it is focused on a particular sort. This will make it clear, easy to search, and ultimately ranked higher in the results. Considering that the majority of YouTube views that are prompted to book after watching a video are that of affluence, make sure the words use are directed at this population.

As for the home page of the channel, appealing graphics or pictures are important to include. The about section should also be filled out in detail. Even though viewers do not always read the text, make sure the text can stand alone in promoting tourism to the area. When creating names for the videos, the key is to be as descriptive as possible. Again, use keywords, and try to use as many words as possible. This will give the view a concrete idea of what the video is about, considering they have only the video to relay the message.

Within the channel, the videos should touch every aspect of the tourism industry in Cheboygan. Unlike the current presence on YouTube, the channel should show that the county has more to offer than boating. It should cover dining, shopping, accommodations, arts and culture, outdoor and indoor activities, and natural attractions. The videos could be displayed in a variety of ways. One option is to have a set-up couple or group explaining their experiences. Another would be to have an individual giving a tour, explaining his personal experience. This individual could be the main host for the Cheboygan YouTube channel. Having a familiar face can generate trust and belief.

For the dining, videos presenting various restaurants around the county would be very effective in promoting the area. Food is something that appeals to everyone, it is a necessity. Since dining is greatly affected by the tourism in the area, you will want to make sure that this topic is displayed in a positive light. The video could travel to each restaurant and show some of the popular dishes at each eatery. Each eatery could have an allotted time to showcase their dishes.

Accommodations could single handedly be one of the most important resources that the city will provide to its visitors. If a traveler is looking at Cheboygan, but cannot find appropriate shelter, it could be the deciding factor that turns them away. This video can be a variety of things. It could give them the resources they need to start looking for hotels or other accommodations.

Another option could be that of a tour of the most popular hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts. If one of those types of accommodation is more prevalent or well-known than the other, the video can highlight that.

The videos showcasing arts and culture would also be important in painting the entire picture of Cheboygan. This would draw in a crowd that is different than those seeking outdoor adventures. Because there is currently nothing promoting the arts and culture, a video on this would be essential. This could include footage on museums, local history, and music. There could be a separate video simply telling the story of Cheboygan. It could include the founding of the City, and how it was built.

For shopping and outdoor and indoor activities, the same can be done as above. Tours or a showing of each individual activities showing how great Cheboygan really is to its visitors is ideal. For this topic, it would be wise to target families. This is a chance to reach a specific demographic, helping to reach a well-rounded audience.

Last but most definitely not least, videos highlighting Cheboygan's natural attractions should be included. Because this is the county's largest attraction, the videos will have to show that. Whether you have more videos showcasing the natural assets or you simply mention that visitors come for the great outdoors, it is important to let the viewer know. In this section, include trails, lakes and forests. To put an emphasis

on the promotion of the trails system, it would be wise to include multiple videos on them. Giving impressive facts or statistics (example; length in miles) about them would be enticing to the viewer and appeal to the trail enthusiasts. Other videos could include virtual tours.

To tape these videos, the county could hire a videographer. Having one employer taking care of all areas of the industry and a variety of companies within each industry, the shared cost will prove efficient. The county could even hire one videographer for each area of the industry, like accommodations or dining and display the different companies. This would give a sense of fluency throughout the channel, giving the appearance of professionalism.

Ultimately, the objective of creating a channel promoting tourism in Cheboygan County is to be found by YouTube viewers. To get found, a strong title and a detailed description is essential. Linking the YouTube channel to other websites uses to promote tourism will also be beneficial. Although it is among the top search engines, YouTube is not the only resource used by people to plan trips. This is why it important not to isolate this site. Because tourism is aimed at a variety of audiences, not everyone will be the type to start their search with YouTube.

If you give the view an option to further explore Cheboygan through this site, you will capture those audiences as well.

## Conclusion

YouTube has proved to be a powerful tool when helping travelers decide destinations or activities within those destinations.

With Cheboygan's lack of videos promoting tourism to the area, there is room for improvement. Creating a channel dedicated to showcasing all that Cheboygan has to offer would be beneficial when attracting visitors into the county. This channel allows for a showcase of the natural environment as well as promoting other attractions, such as dining, accommodation, recreation, shopping, and arts and culture.

This creation of a channel would give Cheboygan a chance to brand itself. Producing an economic engine, that works promoting the tourism industry. Once the area generates money from the increased tourism spending, facilities and infrastructure must be changed to accommodate the new traveling population. Even though it might not have the services now, Cheboygan will slowly start to rebrand itself around its thriving tourism economy that started with the demonstration of its natural resources.

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# Part 3: Festivals, Races and Events

## MEGA EVENTS TO BOOST THE ECONOMY: A CASE STUDY OF TOUGH MUDDER

By: Pablo Majano

The county being discussed in this paper is Cheboygan County in Michigan. Cheboygan County, according to the U.S Census Bureau, has a population of 26,152 people (Cheboygan County, 2013). Cheboygan encompasses 720 square miles of natural beauty; the County is strategically located at the tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula along the pristine shores of Lake Huron and the Straits of Mackinac, more than half of the County is perfect forestland and winding their way through woods and along former railroads are more than 400 miles of recreational trails (Cheboygan County, 2013). Much of the economy in Cheboygan County is based on recreation and its natural resources; it is essential to embrace what Cheboygan offers and expand its potential for tourism.

Cheboygan County offers a lot of transportation access from airports to marinas in Mackinaw City, Cheboygan and Burt Lake to main highway access off of I-75 and US-23. Cheboygan County has 19 townships, two villages and six adjacent counties (Cheboygan County, 2013).

### Economic Boost

The solution to boosting the economy of Cheboygan County with lots of small local businesses is to bring in a mega event. Not just any mega event, there is one in particular that is sweeping the news and Facebook across the nation recently, and that event

is Tough Mudder. This event is becoming so popular you have thousands of people who attend this event to challenge their mind, body and will power, to see how much they can push themselves. Tough Mudder only began in 2010 in Bear Creek Resort in Allentown, PA. In 2011, the event grew to 14 locations and, in 2012, Tough Mudder scheduled 28 different locations (Tough Mudder, 2013). This event attracts so many people that local businesses benefit tremendously from it. Not only are the competitors paying for their entry fee, they are paying for a place to stay and to buy gas, food, groceries, clothes and encounter unexpected costs (car repair, injury, etc.). Not only do you want people to come to an area because of a competition, another strategy, based on what Cheboygan County has to offer, is to keep people in the area or make them come back because they are attracted by a town theme.

An example of a location that offers events and a well-developed town theme is Frankenmuth also in Michigan. Frankenmuth is known as the state's little Bavaria. The reason for that is because they emphasize a German theme. Known for its fudge, beer and cheese, Frankenmuth offers many events throughout the year that bring people from all over Michigan to this small town. This is speaking from experience and attending the long weekend of Zhender's Snowfest that happens in Frankenmuth, which is held every year since 1992. The history behind the Snowfest is that it began in 1992 and attracted more than 90,000 people; now this event has grown into



one of the most popular events to attend, attracting more than 200,000 visitors each year (Zhender's of Frankenmuth, 2013). One reason an event like Tough Mudder or any other similar type of event would work in the Cheboygan area is because of the trail system the County offers.

Michigan has a larger rails-to-trails system than any other state in the Union, and Cheboygan County has more of those trails than any other county in the state (Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce, 2013). The trails offer many types of entertainment; they give you a sense of adventure and make you want to explore further. People who come to the Tough Mudder events are looking to explore, and Cheboygan trails offer just that. A theme that can stick with this County is adventure, from offering things to explore, to international food, to events throughout the year that give people the chance to experience Cheboygan County like no other place in Michigan.

### **Tough Mudder**

Tough Mudder is an out of the ordinary event that motivates people to strive for more in life. Speaking with a two-year Tough Mudder participant, he mentions the only reason he joined and agreed to do Tough Mudder is because it is was time for change. The participant wanted to lose weight, and wanted to have fun doing it. At first, he was not so sure about it, but after watching his friends do the competition, he stopped smoking, drinking and eating junk food. Three months before the competition he trained three to four times a week because he

knew that this competition sounded fun but it was also no joke. After completion of his first competition he felt he had accomplished something he thought he would never be able to do and decided to keep on participating in these events. He mentioned it's worth the money, worth the gas, and worth the travel expenses to be a part of Tough Mudder. So not only is the competition promoting its local economy, it helped promote self-awareness of one's body.

Events like Tough Mudder can be held throughout the year in Cheboygan County to emphasize the theme of adventure. Tough Mudder is an event that has caught the attention of the public and has been increasing in popularity over the past three years. Englishmen Will Deal and Guy Livingstone founded Tough Mudder. With an \$8,000 marketing budget they used Facebook to launch their event, which has now increased exponentially through the years (Tough Mudder, 2013). It's crazy to even think that an event that has been helping so many economies grow came from two people with an idea, \$8,000 and the guts to go through with the project.

Tough Mudder was created to test toughness, fitness, strength, stamina and mental grit all in one place, and all in one day. Tough Mudder is not like many other events; it is a exceptional event for truly exceptional people (Tough Mudder, 2013). Each Tough Mudder event consists of a 10 to 12 mile trail run over uneven, hilly and wet ground that includes 20 to 25 military-style obstacles. Not only does Tough Mudder bring a lot of

unique people to a location, these people are one of many looking for something new, something that makes challenging fun. Not only do you feel accomplished when you finish the event, speaking with a Tough Mudder participant, you receive a nice cold beer at the end.

Tough Mudder has been known to help boost the economy it surrounds. You have many participants that come each year to these events and many will travel from other states to attend an event like Tough Mudder. Not only are you attracting outside sources to the event, it attracts people who have a positive outlook on life and a sense of adventure, and people who want something to do, and Cheboygan County offers just that. You are also attracting income, people who come to these events, feed off of local businesses, and local businesses also feed off Tough Mudder participants. Tough Mudder has already been proven to cause a positive economic impact wherever an event is held, from Ohio to Arizona and even across the seas to Australia. Wherever Tough Mudder goes it brings thousands of people and brings lots of revenue. Although there are many positive benefits to the event there are also some environmental impacts, which will be discussed later in this paper.

### **Case Studies**

#### **Arizona (Eastmark)**

This Tough Mudder event was held February 23 and 24, the total number of participants was 7,500 people and aside from that another 2,500 people were spectators cheering on families and loved ones. This has been

Arizona's second Tough Mudder event, with such a direct impact on its local economy that they have agreed to a five-year extension of Tough Mudder being located in Mesa, AZ.

According to the Eastmark blog, event registrations had stated that registrants and participants traveled from a number of cities around Arizona even from San Diego, CA; Reno, NV; and Las Cruces, NM. The registration itself already creates a direct impact to the economy through entry fees, merchandise and food/beverages. Again, not only are the participants spending money on the economy, the Tough Mudder's event management team spends thousands of dollars itself on the event. Tough Mudder spends money from tents, tables, equipment and also hiring contractors to build the courses the participants use throughout the race (Eastmark, 2013).

#### **Ohio (WMFD)**

This tough Mudder event reported by WMFD is located in Mansfield, OH. Its mayor mentioned that it was very pleased with the impact the Tough Mudder competition brought to its economy and has even signed a contract to bring the event back for another four years. This event, in particular, brought in 11,000 participants and 17,000 spectators, plus \$5.4 million for the local economy. The economic impact report was done by the Tough Mudder organization, which did not cost the City of Mansfield any money (Heindel, 2013).

#### **Australia (Sunshine Coast Daily)**

This Tough Mudder event is the largest

tourism money-maker on the Sunshine Coast in Australia, bringing in about \$10 million in just one weekend. This event is one of the largest held with more than 24,000 people in Caloundra, Queensland. An article by *Sunshine Coast Daily* also mentions that the Caloundra Chamber of Commerce and Event Chairman Bill Darby said that the Tough Mudder trumped other major events that included Noosa and Mooloolaba triathlons in terms of economic benefit. Bill Darby said “Tough Mudder is the best thing that has happened to the Sunshine Coast in a long time” (Clifford, 2013).

**Environmental Impacts of Tough Mudder (U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management)**

This case study was conducted by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in regards to an Environmental Assessment of a Tough Mudder event. This report evaluates the environmental impacts this Tough Mudder event produced on public and private lands located six miles north of Beatty, NV.

This is a 37-page report about the competition in Beatty NV, with a total of 8,000 to 10,000 participants, includes what they intend on doing with the competition, what land they are going to use, what routes they are going to use, and even the health and safety measures the competition is taking in order to ensure its participants are all safe and sound. In regards to environmental protection measures the report includes everything from reclamation, cultural resources, noxious weeds and invasive

Non-Native Species, waste, migratory birds and fire management. It also features environmental consequences to proposed actions. For example, the air quality is affected, because the event is associated with running and hiking that may create small amounts of dust in the areas of fine soils along the route (Tough Mudder, LLC, 2012).

Finally, the report states a series of stipulations that must be followed in order to protect or minimize the environmental impact caused by the event. An example of a stipulation would be reclamation, which involves the cleanup of all litter, equipment, everything and anything used for the event. The BLM is also responsible for both a pre- and post-event assessment of the course.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, as an Urban & Regional planning student at Michigan State University and undergoing some research of the Tough Mudder event, I think that an event like Tough Mudder will provide a great source of economic benefit to Cheboygan County. With what Cheboygan has to offer, such as trails, shopping, natural areas, an event like Tough Mudder would make a great fit and attract thousands of people to the area. An event like Tough Mudder will attract people who are looking to do something new in Michigan and the Cheboygan area. It will even attract people who have never been to that area and these people are the ones that want to explore, potentially targeting them to keep coming back for other local events that happen throughout the year.

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## MARATHONS AS TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN NORTHERN MICHIGAN

By: Kate Calabria

Every tourist has a main attraction that pulls him or her to their destination. This attraction is not always a sight to see or a place to be, rather, it can be an event or some form of active participation for the tourist. For many, running events have become a reason to travel. Whether for competitive or recreational reasons, people travel around the world to participate in marathons, iron mans and similar events. These runners then become tourists during their stay—dining at local restaurants, visiting shops and seeing the sites. The races pull not only the runners, but the runners’ family, friends and fans. For this reason, running events should be explored as opportunities to increase tourism and local economic activity.

Introducing more marathons into Northwest Michigan, specifically the Cheboygan community, would create a new tourist attraction and accelerate the local economy. In order to successfully implement races, it is important to identify best practices and strategies that allow marathons to have positive returns on investment. Therefore, it is important to understand how to finance a marathon and how to brand a marathon.

### Tourism in Cheboygan

Cheboygan is not without existing attractions. The community hosts a number of events that lure tourists and entertain the locals. For example, the Cheboygan

Area Chamber of Commerce sponsors the annual Waterways Festivals. This event pays homage to river town life through a parade, the World Championship Wanigan Race, a river cleanup, a wooden boat show, kayak races, and other entertainment. This event usually takes place during the second weekend of July. Shortly after, is the annual Downtown Cheboygan Musical Festival—typically held during the last weekend of July (Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce, 2013). The community hosts a few other events throughout August, including the Churchill Classic 5k, 10k and a recently added half marathon. In the winter, Cheboygan hosts a Waterways Ice Festival. While these events are successful, there are notable periods in the calendar, specifically fall and spring that lack entertainment—these seasons could be targeted to host a full marathon and make Cheboygan a year-round destination.

### Cheboygan Half Marathon, Marathon and Triathlon

August 2013 was the first year that Cheboygan offered a half marathon option during the annual Churchill Classic. Typically, the Classic features a 5k and a 10k. Nancy Lindsay, the Assistant Vice President of Marketing at Citizens National Bank—the race sponsor—noted that “more people are coming from all over, not just from around the region. . . With the addition of the half marathon, it helped improve our numbers from last year’s race” (Greenleaf, 2013). Approximately 300 people were present at the 2013 event.

The Waugoshance Trail Marathon was inaugurated in July 2013 and filled to capacity one month before the race date (Great Lakes Endurance, 2013). The race was limited to 200 runners and was hosted by the Little Traverse Conservancy as a way to promote awareness about preserving the wild habitat in northern Michigan. The course followed the North Country Trail that spans from Cross Village to Mackinaw City. A 2k, 5k and half marathon were offered on the same weekend.

Cheboygan also hosts an annual triathlon—thereby, utilizing its prime location and allowing participants to experience the land and waterways that define the community’s character. Considered a “sprint” triathlon, the race features two miles of kayaking, 8.5 miles of biking and 4.5 miles of running. (TriFind, 2013). This is a great way to not only embrace the environment, but to draw attention to it in a low-impact way. The race itself is a form of marketing because it exemplifies the many ways to explore Cheboygan. The race leads participants throughout Cheboygan State Park and exposes people to the trails and provides awareness about fishing, hunting, camping, lodging and many other opportunities featured in the park (MDNR, 2013).

### **Feasibility for an Additional Cheboygan Marathon**

The success of existing races in Cheboygan insinuates demand for more marathon events. In the nation, the amount of marathons per year along with the rate of participation in marathons has increased in

recent years (Cobb and Olberding, 2007). Between 2010 and 2011, there was an increase of approximately 20,000 runners that completed marathons (Marathon Guide, 2011) and in 2013, the number of marathon finishers broke half a million (Marcus, 2013). Overall, the number of marathoners has increased by almost 50% since 2000.

The scale of races varies. Some tend to receive a more local showing, while others are considered on the national scale. The total number of participants per marathon ranges from about 200 runners to over 50,000. With the current marathon in Cheboygan capped at 200, and filled to capacity, this suggests an opportunity to expand the race next year or add an additional race in another season to satisfy demand.

Localities with tourist lulls generally welcome marathon events as a way to fill hotel rooms and restaurants that would otherwise be empty in the off-season (Bynum, 2013). Cheboygan has an opportunity to host an event in fall and spring, where tourist traffic is low, but the weather is still appropriate for running. October is considered the most popular month for running marathons (Marathon Guide, 2011). There are currently two marathons scheduled for 2014 in Northern Michigan during the month of October (Running in the USA, 2013). However, there are no marathons scheduled for February through May. Strategic scheduling can allow for the existing races to serve as training opportunities for other races and as a way to maintain consistent activity in a community.

## Financing a Marathon

In determining best practices, four costs should be considered in introducing a mega event, such as a marathon: 1) Event costs, 2) infrastructure costs, 3) displacement costs and 4) opportunity costs (Crompton, 2010). Event costs refer to the actual investment on behalf of the host, such as race staff, medical supply and services and participant souvenirs. Marathon hosts have to pay fees to police and other municipal departments now—fees that used to be free (Marcus, 2013).

Infrastructure costs refer to any additional labor or maintenance needed to prepare for the race, including routing equipment, post-race clean up, and post-race repairs. Displacement costs refer to those who would have otherwise visited, but race logistics made their destinations unattainable or the simple presence of a large crowd was a deterring factor. Finally, opportunity costs refer to the benefits that a local economy would receive should it have chosen to invest in an alternative event or service, or paid for the event by utilizing other funding sources.

Together, these cost burdens encourage localities to seek sponsorship so that the full financial weight is not on the public sector, nor on the participants. Typically, marathon participants pay around \$100 to \$300 for registration fees, depending on the scale of the marathon (Luff, 2013). These costs would be much higher without the aid of race sponsors.

## Analyzing Economic Impact

The average expenditure per runner ranges from approximately \$1,000 to more than \$4,200 for visiting participants (Cobb

and Olberding, 2007). A key component to increase the per runner impact is the overnight stay (Crompton, 2010). Racers require a full night of rest, therefore, it is not uncommon for them to arrive a day or two early to get a full night's sleep. Also, it is not uncommon for locals to get hotel rooms closer to the race site due to early morning start times. And while most studies attribute economic impacts to out-of-town runners, the local participants are also important contributors (Cobb and Olberding, 2007). Anticipating the correct expenditure during the initial organization period is crucial to ensure that the race allows the host to at a minimum, break even, and preferably, accrue profit. With that in mind, it is better to spread the costs across multiple sponsors as a way of eliminating some costs (runners' souvenirs, often donated) and mitigating others. Keeping sponsors local so that the money circulates throughout the community hosting the event is important in maintaining high, positive economic impact for Cheboygan.

## Sponsorship Opportunities

The increased popularity of marathon racing has attracted new breeds of investors. Competitor Group is an entity owned by a private-equity firm that specializes in buying or investing in poorly attended races and rebranding them to become “destination runs” (Marcus, 2013). Investors, such as Competitor Group, control the registration fees in a way that produces a profit. Creating a comparable entity in the Michigan region to accrue profit from the booming race industry would be beneficial to the local

economic climate—versus outsourcing that role. Another option is to have the proceeds go toward local nonprofit organizations. Those organizations would have to play a large role in the initial financing and structuring of the race, so capacity to function in that role must be considered.

Most races include a conglomeration of sponsors. Typically, there are different packages that sponsors can purchase and this will determine the degree of marketing that their brand name receives. Being a sponsor is a networking opportunity. Typically for races, sponsors share a common goal of health oriented products or services. Coming together in one place presents future partnership opportunities. Also, sponsoring heightens the visibility of a contributing company.

Races typically have multiple modes of media to advertise the event as well as its sponsors. Consider that the New York Marathon, though one of the most popular and a high goal to achieve, attracts about 330 million television views along with 2 million spectators and about 50,000 runners (Belson and Pilon, 2013). And of course, the ultimate benefit of increased advertising is increased sales. Most races are under contracts to be repeated on an annual basis. Acquiring sponsorship for multiple years creates a steady platform for local businesses to become competitors in the local, regional, and potentially national markets.

Local businesses would be wise to participate in sponsorship too. Even a small stake in the race can allow for increased visibility. Some strategies once sponsorship

is achieved includes logo placement throughout the course, online materials, and runners' souvenirs. Racing events often have large expositions the day prior to the race to conduct registration and pick up important race packets (for tracking and timing purposes). These “expos” are opportunities for sponsors to sell their products or advertise their services in person. Also, the race packets can include advertisements or coupons for participants and their families to utilize during their stay. Overall, sponsorship is a great way to achieve exposure and notoriety, not only on the local level, but regionally or nationally depending on the scale of the event.

### **Branding Marathons**

Cheboygan has an opportunity to find its niche in the racing world and create a race that is uniquely branded for the community and its terrain—increasing its reputation as a destination. The Foot Levelers Blue Ridge 2013 Marathon attracted over 1,500 runners to the Roanoke Region in Virginia. This race has earned a reputation for being American's toughest road marathon (Roanoke Regional Partnership, 2013). For this race, 67% of the participants were from Virginia and a total of 38 states were represented in the competition. Others from Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Ethiopia were also present (Roanoke Regional Partnership, 2013). The study that calculated these participation rates also noted that the average stay in Roanoke was 1.92 nights and approximately 60% of visitors reported visiting a local attraction. Even 35% of locals reported visiting an attraction during race weekend. This



exemplifies the power of branding a race as the initial attraction and successfully retaining interest once the participants have arrived.

A place like Cheboygan can capitalize on this strategy, one seen through series, such as the Rock n’ Roll marathons that scatter concerts throughout the course, Color Runs that require participants to dress in white and travel through a course, while being splattered in paint, or the Zombie Dash that hires actors dressed as creatures of the dead to chase runners across the finish line. Cheboygan has a variety of features that are already utilized in current events and races, but could be capitalized even further to truly create a brand that attracts visitors and brings pride to the locals.

Marathon Tours and Travel is one of many travel agencies that specializes in worldwide race events (Marathon Tours and Travel, 2013). The agency offers group packages as well as individual travel arrangements to take people around the world to participate in marathons on all seven continents. Becoming a race on such an itinerary requires creativity and notoriety that can only be achieved through successful branding. Should Cheboygan implement another marathon, it is important that the race has its own identify that sets it apart from other marathons.

### **Technology**

Technology has become a major stake in marathon racing. The process starts with companies, such as Active Network, which lead online registration and collect service fees for every participant. Last year,

Active made over \$250 million dollars in registration fees. Other tech-savvy companies are profiting, such as MapMyRun, a site and phone application that most runners use during the training process. It maps a route, calculates the distance, and examines the inclines, along with many other features runner can enjoy in the palm of their hand. MapMyRun is also utilized by the spectators at marathons as a tool to track racers and live stream the entire event (Behringer, 2012). Phone applications have also been introduced to give participants information for the race as well as general visitor information.

Harnessing technology that can be used in the races and by associated tourists is a way for a locality to achieve profit from the race. The ability to develop that software and keep the profits local would highly increase the economic benefits of hosting such an event. Or, simply incorporating local ads through online sites and phone applications is a marketing strategy that should be considered by local hotels, restaurants, and attractions outside the race. Anticipating how technology can continue to assist in races is a great way to maximize profit, whether to be put toward local businesses or charity.

### **Conclusion**

The growing success of marathon racing and potential for profit is certainly reason to consider it a strategy for local economic development in the Cheyboygan region. In combination with existing tourist attractions and similar competitions, an additional

marathon could propel Cheboygan to be a year-round destination and could inherently contribute to the growth of local businesses. Appropriately calculating the costs and counteracting the costs through strategic sponsorship, marketing, and branding would

allow Cheboygan to harness a growing trend in a manner that is advantageous to the community as a whole. Marathons pose as a great business venture, but also as a great opportunity to promote health and charity.

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## MUSIC FESTIVALS CASE STUDY: ANALYZING THE ECONOMIC AND TOURISM POTENTIAL OF ELECTRIC FOREST AND BONNAROO MUSIC FESTIVALS

By: Charisma Thapa

**N**ortheast Michigan is a hidden eclectic gem, offering a variety of activities for any art lover, tree hugger or even athlete. Although this is all true many people are not aware of what Northeast Michigan has to offer, this may be due to a number of things, such as a lack of advertisements, and/or a lack of an event or historical site that would really draw people to the area. Certain cities are known for anything from a food, a natural landmark or even music festival that attracts people to the region. Although Northeast Michigan has a lot to offer there is nothing in particular that really makes it stand apart and attract tourism.

Music is a popular getaway for people of all ages, although Northeast Michigan has a few music festivals, they are very usually of the folk genre, small and commonly attract people who are already residents. However, there are cities across the country that can be considered rural, yet when they hold their annual music festival thousands of people come from across the nation, and internationally to attend them. This paper will analyze two different study areas and their respective music festival to give validation that there is an economic incentive as well as an increase in tourism that can be added to a region as a result of hosting a music festival.

The two different study areas and their respective music festival include: Rothbury, Michigan/Electric Forest Music Festival and Manchester, Tennessee/Bonnaroo Music Festival. The analysis of the festivals was done individually by evaluating the activities, food, sustainability initiatives, community involvement, philanthropic endeavors and overall economic impact studies. The information that was gathered touched upon the effects of the music festival on the city, county and potentially the state as a whole. The purpose of this analysis is to give legitimacy to the proposal for a music festival to be implemented in Northeast Michigan. To determine whether it would be beneficial to the overall economy or detrimental, whether it would generate an increase or decrease in tourism, and if it would really put at least a city or county in Northeast Michigan on the map.

The first music festival is Electric Forest Music Festival located in Rothbury, MI. Rothbury is in Oceana County on the West side of the state. The four-day festival does stay true to its name and actually takes place in the forest of Double JJ Ranch. The festival offers a multitude of genres most specifically focusing on electronic and jam music. More than 100 bands perform at the festival and according to *Mlive.com*, which did extensive reporting on the festival, “Electric Forest 2012 drew up to 25,000 people to West Michigan, many of them out of the state” (Arino, 2013). The festival is a place for people to come together and share their common love for music.

The festival offers more than just music, it is a four-day experience where you can try a multitude of new things and meet people from all around the world. Electric Forest has much more to do than just attending the musical festival itself. Over the four days “the festival provides plenty of options including an indoor waterpark, disc golf course and horseback rides, among others,” (Champion, 2013) Nestled on the Double JJ Ranch is also the Sherwood Forest that consists of acres of pine forests that are decorated with art installations and hosts light shows during the festival. The festival has so much to offer even, attendees are performers walking on stilts, twirling hula hoops, wearing costumes, practicing yoga, etc. it is impossible to be bored at the festival (Champion, 2013).

Along with the diverse activities the food at the festival is more eclectic than would be expected. Half of the food is provided by places close to home, such as the “McLaughlin neighborhood’s urban farm, which set up an “Electric Farmstand” with greens, strawberries, blueberries, carrots, squash, radishes and cherry juice” (Champion, 2013). This increases revenue at local businesses by significant amounts. Patrons of the festival have traditional food venues they go to every year and become “regulars” bringing in guaranteed revenue for local food vendors at the festival. The other half of the festival food options come from across the nation “including pad Thai, arepas, Japanese yakisoba noodles with teriyaki chicken and vegetables,” festival patrons love to try the new exotic foods at the festival, the

incentive to travel that far is worth it for the food venues that attend (Champion, 2013). The festival ensures that they cater to people with all dietary needs including: Vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free diets.

Electric Forest has a variety of charity activities, sustainable practices and ways of creating revenue for the city of Rothbury. For example, environmental sustainability, understandably 30,000 people can accumulate a lot of ground waste to pick up; therefore, Electric Forest decided to create a program that gives people incentives to pick up after themselves and recycle. The basic idea of the program is that “in exchange for keeping their campsite clean or putting their wastes in the appropriate container—trash, recycling or compost—attendees receive an “eco-point,” a small slip of paper.” “Eco-points can be collected and redeemed at the Electric-ology “store,” said Erin Slayter, founder of The Sweaty Mouse (Arino, 2012b). The program makes it the best of both worlds leaving the grounds clean and providing essentially free merchandise to attendees. The program leader hopes that people participating in the program will take these sustainable habits home with them after the concert.

The local community definitely plays a role in the festival. Just one of the many examples of this is the Shelby High School Marching Band performing at the festival. The band was invited by the “Music in the Schools’ program, the program’s aim is to donate money and instruments to local schools.” In 2013, the school received \$5000 from Electric

Forest to go towards their program (Arino, 2012d). A good portion of the revenue earned from Electric Forest also goes towards philanthropic endeavors. One of them is “Art that Feeds,” a nonprofit organization based in Colorado “that focuses on hunger relief and youth empowerment.” (Arino, 2012a). This food drive has an incentive for donations; those who bring nonperishable food will get art in exchange. At the end of the food drive the collection of food goes to areas across West Michigan, including: the cities of Rothbury, Whitehall, Muskegon and Shelby. This is just another way that Electric Forest has brought so much good into the area.

The second case study is Bonnaroo Music Festival located in Manchester, TN, in Coffee County, situated in the middle of Tennessee. The four-day music festival is best described as magical, unifying, peaceful, and all-around energetic and entertaining. The main music genres are jam bands and folk rock; however, the festival has about 150 bands that perform. People from all over the world come to Bonnaroo to experience the “escape into excitement, music, art, discoveries, trees, adventure, happiness. . .” (Bonnaroo, 2013). At Bonnaroo there is an unlimited amount of activities to do and there is never a dull moment. From yoga, great food, gift shops galore, a cinema, relaxation venues, there is something for everyone! Not only does the festival have diverse activities but the demographics are also pretty varied. Bonnaroo attendees are from all the 50 states as well as across the world. The festival also has people anywhere from age 13 to people 35 and older.

The food at Bonnaroo is health conscious and offers a variety of options to people with certain dietary restrictions. It is also a great place to try new exotic foods from Chinese and Japanese delicacies to spicy Indian and traditional American festival food. Local food vendors love Bonnaroo because they receive a lot of incoming revenue and business. Sharon Holmes, owner of The Health Nutt, “a café in Morrison near Manchester, estimates that 30% of her café’s annual revenues are generated from Bonnaroo” (Littman, 2013). Bonnaroo makes a sincere effort to ensure that they are environmentally sustainable. Here are some recycling statistics from the festival in 2012, “98.87 tons of single-stream (commingled) recyclable materials, 15.76 tons of scrap metal, 41.84 tons of cardboard, office paper and electronics, 1.6 tons of PVC, 5.7 tons of used cooking oil and approximately 70 tons of compost” (Bryant, 2013).

Bonnaroo Music Festival is an extremely charitable festival and the contributions go a long way. In 2013 alone, the music festival donated nearly \$370,000 in charitable contributions, over \$139,000 to 20 local charities and another \$230,000 for volunteering at the festival. Coffee County Mayor David Pennington “says he considers the festival a good neighbor, they have shown themselves to be a real partner to Coffee County. And not just Coffee County, but the other areas around, the other counties surrounding Coffee County benefits from it also” (Osborne, 2013).

Bonnaroo was established in 2002 with a charitable focus in mind. Festival-partner

Rick Farman states “one of the founding principles is to give back at the local, regional and national levels” (Clarksville Online, 2012). Bonnaroo has a strong pledge that they promise to the local and global communities and that is what led to the establishment of the Bonnaroo Works Fund, which is supported by the East Tennessee Foundation. The Works Fund was created to identify communities in the area that have a “special emphasis on local re-investment and asset building in the Bonnaroo communities” (Clarksville Online, 2012). The Bonnaroo Works Fund has supported a multitude of nonprofit organizations including: “Doctors without Borders, Hurricane Katrina, the American Red Cross, and the Boys and Girls Club of America,” to name a few (Clarksville Online, 2012).

Bonnaroo has a strong commitment to and appreciation for its home in Middle Tennessee. Since the beginning the festival organizers have ensured they engaged with the local community organizers, receiving many volunteers from the organization for the event. As an incentive Bonnaroo donates a share of their profits to the participating local organizations for their work. As a result of the inception of Bonnaroo, Manchester is a known City. Before, people would drive past the City without any recognition, but now, according to the mayor of Manchester Lonnie Norman, “people now know where Manchester is thanks to the ‘Roo, they put Manchester on the map” (Littman, 2013). Bonnaroo is considered one of the most influential events in the area and has inspired many other events similar to it, which are

now crucial to the City’s development. The economic turnover of Bonnaroo and its contributions to both the City of Manchester, Coffee County and Tennessee as a whole are enormous. The festival really contributes to the impact of the economic development of the area.

Highlights of Bonnaroo include:

- In 2012, Bonnaroo organizers and attendees contributed more than \$580,000 to Coffee County tax coffers. Of this total, nearly \$314,000 was generated by taxes on sales, fuel and hotel occupancy
- In 2012, Bonnaroo was responsible for \$2.9 million in taxes benefiting the state of Tennessee. More than \$2 million of that was generated by sales tax on Bonnaroo tickets and \$900,000 by the activity of Bonnaroo attendees during their time in Coffee County and travels to and from the festival.
- On average, Bonnaroo attendees spend \$86 per day during the festival. Approximately \$28 per day is spent outside Coffee County, and \$35 per day is spent outside the grounds but within Coffee County (Ewing and Marcario, 2013).

Through extensive research on both the Electric Forest Music Festival and the Bonnaroo music festival, with strategic planning and a well-suited location, a music festival in Northeast, Michigan would be highly beneficial to the area. The activities,

food offered, sustainability initiatives that are taken, community involvement, philanthropic endeavors and the overall atmosphere of a music festival can all lead to an economically sound and developed region as well as a popular touristic attraction for people.

Both of the music festivals that were analyzed in this case study are very well known in the nation, as well as internationally; however, the cities of Rothbury, MI, and Manchester, TN, would

not be prominent or have any significance if it were not for the initiation of these festivals. They are proof of the ability of a music festival to change from a ghost town to a beloved city. If Northeast Michigan were to pick an area that was feasible for a music festival, it would really put the region on the map, enabling the potential for economic development and a much higher influx of tourists.

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## MUSIC FESTIVALS: CASE STUDIES OF WAKARUSA AND COACHELLA MUSIC FESTIVALS

By: Lukas Hagen

**M**usic festivals have been around for a long time, and continue to grow (Parker, 2013). Each summer, a massive number of people, young and old, gather to camp out and enjoy their favorite bands. These music festivals have large impacts on their hosting communities, and for the purpose of this paper I will compare the environmental, social, and economic effects that Wakarusa Music festival has on Ozark, Arkansas, and the Coachella Music Festival has on Indio, California. The purpose of this essay is to provide the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) with information about these types of events, if they should decide to host a similar event.

### Environmental Impacts

The organizers of the Coachella Music Festival encourage visitors to their event to partake in environmental sustainability in a number of ways. Carpooling, recycling, innovative and creative energy generation are promoted on the festival's official website (Coachella, 2013b). Coachella has a long partnership with Global Inheritance, an organization dedicated to treating the planet responsibly (Coachella, 2013b). Carpooling is incentivized by VIP-for-life giveaways to anyone that shows up to the festival in a vehicle carrying four or more people (Coachella, 2013b).

The efforts outlined on the official website, however, do not do very much to decrease

the amount of trash that may have been found at one of these festivals, but incentivizes festival goers to recycle. Rather than finding ways to reduce the amount of trash generated by festival goers, Coachella founded "TRASHed: Art of Recycling" in 2004, which saw 50 artists design 64 gallon trash bins for the festival (Coachella, 2013b). Coachella did find a good way to incentivize recycling among participants by offering a free bottle of water for every 10 returnable containers turned in at special stations (Coachella, 2013b).

A further feature of the recycling efforts was the Recyclosaurus Rex, a gigantic plastic-bottle eating, scrap-metal-made T-Rex model, into the mouth of which festival goers can throw their bottles. Once the mouth is full, the Recyclosaurus Rex tilts back its head, tipping the bottles into collection bins located at its rear (Coachella, 2013b). The Energy Playground was created to draw attention to alternative energy creation methods. Connected to the seesaws, giant hamster wheels and other movement-based playground structures are generators, which power charging stations and entire stages with DJs (Coachella, 2013b).

Water use and sourcing has also become a topic at Coachella. Fourteen bars serving water were set up, staffed by scientists that informed consumers about the sources of the water that was being served, which included purified wastewater, desalinated ocean water and glacier water (Coachella, 2013b).

Those in charge of Wakarusa, which takes place in Ozark, AR, every year, are much

more direct in their approach environmental sustainability by calling on attendees to “Just say No to trash” and claiming that “littering includes everything” (Wakarusa Music Festival, 2013). Participants are encouraged to bring non-disposable dishes and water bottles, and to use reusable water bottles (Wakarusa Music Festival, 2013).

Although Coachella has more elaborate trash and recycling receptacles, Wakarusa has more of them, and they are much more efficiency oriented than a Recyclosaurus Rex. Rather than having artists design the receptacles, the organizers of Wakarusa simply color coded 300 barrels (Wakarusa Music Festival, 2013). Furthermore, attendees were strongly encouraged to clean up after leaving their campsites, return all of their recyclables, and to avoid bringing glass bottles for safety reasons, and because one cannot return a broken bottle (Wakarusa Music Festival, 2013). Ridesharing is also strongly encouraged, and the official website even offers to connect people traveling from similar regions (Wakarusa Music Festival, 2013).

Despite having become increasingly popular recently, music festivals, such as these, have been known to generate extremely large amounts of garbage and waste (Bain, 2013). The inconsistent labeling of garbage and recycling bins at Coachella has confused attendees in the past, and disposing of food waste and other biodegradable waste can be problematic (Bain, 2013).

### **Economic Effects**

Music festivals of the caliber of Coachella and Wakarusa have made names for

themselves by bringing economic activity to their host communities. In 2013, Coachella sold more than 160,000 passes, which grossed the festival a massive \$50 million (Cox, 2013). Concerts and live shows have made up for much of the money that used to be generated by album sales, and they require spaces to host them (Parker, 2013). Coachella itself brought \$254 million into the Indio region, with \$90 million going to the city itself, which sports a population of 79,000. Indio receives only 1% of each ticket sold, 160,000 of which sell at \$350, netting the city a comfortable \$500,000 (Anson, 2013). Visitors coming to Indio for the festival easily spend into the triple digits during their stays (Anson, 2013).

The relationship seems to be mutually beneficial, as Goldenvoice, the parent company of Coachella, have recently purchased 280 acres outside the City of Indio, where the festival has been held (Stutz, 2012). This has not always been the case, as Goldenvoice threatened to move the festival out of town after an amusement tax was proposed that would have cost the company between \$4 million and \$6 million every year (Stutz, 2012). The city ended up dropping the proposal, and Coachella stayed (Cox, 2013).

However, not all looks rosy for the festival circuit, as was seen in Europe in 2012, when the market seemed to have reached saturation (Parker, 2013). Festivals that had a long tradition were shutting down, although this could well have been due to the financial difficulties that the European Union itself was discovering (Parker, 2013). Another

point of contention becomes the signing of big name bands, which becomes difficult with the increasing number of festivals (Parker, 2013). This does not appear to have troubled Coachella, as the festival still sold out, despite lacking the usual megastar-studded lineup that has become so closely associated with the event (Cox, 2013).

Franklin County, home of Wakarusa Music Festival, took a close look at the event's actual economic impact, after tax revenue seemed to show that it might actually be costing the county money (Las Schneider, 2011). Wakarusa's economic impact would be most felt by small businesses, but due to irregular tax filing systems, this impact is hard to quantify or measure (Las Schneider, 2011). County Judge Joe Powell believes that the county actually lost money during the 2010 hosting of the festival due to road repairs and emergency staff pay that would otherwise not have been necessary (Las Schneider, 2011). Pipeline Productions employed students from the local vocational school to help with the set up for the event and then to dismantle the stages once the event ended, resulting in the creation of 50 to 60 local jobs (Schleuss, 2011).

Despite the pushback the festival has received on the county level, the businesses themselves are ecstatic about having the privilege to host such an event (Las Schneider, 2011). The data is there to support their enthusiasm. Businesses have reported their activity doubling during the time of the festival (Schleuss, 2011). Pipeline Productions, organizer of Wakarusa, spend a total of \$745,000 within the state of Arkansas in 2010,

\$388,000 of it inside of Franklin County (Las Schneider, 2011). Pipeline makes a point of buying local materials and supplies for their mega event (Las Schneider, 2011).

### **Social Contributions**

Aside from their partnership with Global Inheritance, Coachella Music Festival benefitted the Coachella Valley Community Trust, the Indio Teen Center, the Indio Senior Center, the Silverlake Conservatory of Music, the Painted Turtle, Martha's Village and the Desert Resource Center (Coachella, 2013a). Wakarusa and Pipeline Productions are planning on making several charitable donations to agencies in the Franklin County area in 2011 (Las Schneider, 2011). Rohrbach (2013) believes that the effects have reached into the local music scene itself, emboldening it. Furthermore, it has drawn people to rural Arkansas that would not otherwise come here, with the diversity of the acts drawing in people of all kinds (Rohrbach, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Considering the information presented above, I would recommend the NEMCOG to consider hosting a music festival. Although it takes a number of years for festivals to establish themselves on a national basis like Coachella (Parker, 2013), there seems to be a lot of economic opportunity in hosting one. There does appear to be evidence that hosting such festivals can put additional strain on municipal budgets, but since the business community welcomed Wakarusa as warmly as it did, and considering the millions that were washed into Indio's coffers, it does seem like an option well worth consideration.

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## ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF FOOD CULTURE PROMOTION IN NORTHEAST MICHIGAN

By: Christian Savona

No city perfects deep-dish pizza quite like Chicago, IL. The same notion holds true with Maryland and crab cakes. Napa and Sonoma Valley’s vineyards and wineries, nestled in Northern California, produce wines that rival those of Italy and France in quality and prestige. When one seeks to satisfy cravings for Cajun gumbo, they need look no further than the state of Louisiana. A stop to Geno’s or Pat’s for a cheesesteak is a must, while visiting Philadelphia, PA. Even Milwaukee’s (WI) breweries are well known among beer connoisseurs nationwide. Although these states, regions and cities attract people for a host of other reasons, food and dining are a major draw. Places can become destinations and thrive simply through emphasizing and promoting their food culture. Promotional events like festivals and tours are organized to celebrate products and their meaning to the area. These food-centric tourist attractions appeal to people that may not have reason to visit otherwise and thus spur economic activity. Over time, a sense of place is fostered; the practice of exploring and sampling a region’s cherished foodstuff becomes an experience, elicits emotional responses, and creates memories.

An area that lacks a major tourist attraction, food-oriented or otherwise, is Northeast Michigan. There exists no major city, natural wonder or chief agricultural product that significantly boosts the area economically

by way of tourism. Conversely, the region of Northwest Michigan has a thriving tourism industry, in part, based on the cultivation and marketing of its fruit crop, namely cherries and grapes. Northwest Michigan draws people from all over the country and is perceived as a destination because of its picturesque vineyards and wineries and events like the National Cherry Festival. Another area that attracts people as a result of the promotion of its food culture is the state of Nebraska and its prominent beef industry. Those visiting or passing through Nebraska make it a point to patronize the state’s reputable top-level steakhouses. Therefore, this assessment is threefold. First, it will examine the attractions and deficiencies of the area in focus, Northeast Michigan. Second, the analysis will look at two prime examples of regions that emphasize and promote their food culture: Northwest Michigan and the state of Nebraska. Finally, ways in which Northeast Michigan can connect to and emulate these areas in attracting visitors and driving economic activity are determined.

Outside of Michigan, the Northeast region is relatively unknown and unheralded in comparison with its westward neighbor. The eight counties that comprise the area—Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Crawford, Oscoda and Alcona—are mostly forested or agricultural. Alpena, the region’s largest city, only contains 10,483 people as of the 2010 U.S. Census. Again, Northeast Michigan lacks a large city, natural resource or main

food product that serves as a noteworthy tourism attraction. Tourists to the region by and large consist of residents from other parts of the state. They primarily take advantage of the bountiful deer population during Michigan's hunting season. Rivers and streams, notably the Au Sable, are utilized for fishing, as well as activities like kayaking and boating. Other attractions include the majestic lighthouses that dot Lake Huron's coast, as well as historic sites including the W.J. Beal Plantation and the Cheboygan Opera House.

In terms of agriculture, there is no predominant crop grown and promoted in the Northeast region that serves as an attraction for outsiders. Only a few vineyards and wineries are sprinkled throughout the region, aptly nicknamed the "Sunrise Coast," but none have the acclaim and renown of those in Northwest Michigan. Farming is limited because "the area is composed largely of soils of very low agricultural value and is at a further disadvantage because of the shorter growing season" (Schaetzl, n.d.). Thus, it is nearly impossible for the region to showcase and celebrate any crop on as large a scale as the Northwest area does with cherries and grapes. In a bulk of the Northeast region, though, "livestock [mostly cattle] is the major source of farm product sales" (Schaetzl, n.d.).

On the other hand, Northwest Michigan is a testament to a region's ability to attract people through food culture. Years and years of emphasis on and promotion of the region's most prominent crops, more specifically

cherries and grapes, has been a catalyst for economic development and attracting tourists. The area has become a destination for people throughout the entire state and the Midwest in part because of the allure of such unique and delectable agricultural products. Growing conditions, including climate and precipitation, make the area ideal for fruit production. Vineyards and wineries in Northwest Michigan are one prime example of a food-oriented tourist attraction that stimulates economic activity. Chateau Chantal is situated on Old Mission Peninsula with impressive vistas overlooking Grand Traverse Bay and is perhaps Michigan's most famous winery. It offers wine tasting and houses an elegant bed-and-breakfast.

Other popular destinations include Two Lads Winery in Traverse City and L. Mawby Vineyards in Suttons Bay, located on Leelanau Peninsula. These wineries, among a multitude of other in Northwest Michigan, are of the highest quality in the entire Midwest and, therefore, attract curious visitors from near and far. Andrew Putz, journalist for *Wine & Food Magazine* and Minnesota a native, claims after touring a number of the area's wineries, "Michigan wine country, it turns out, is a secret haven" (Putz, 2010). The wineries in the Northwest region encompass a large percentage of the total amount of wineries in the state. They contribute in large part to a wine industry that annually produces "nearly \$790 million of total economic value to the State of Michigan, [pays] more than \$42 million in state and local taxes in Michigan and an



additional \$42 million in federal taxes and [accounts] for more than 5,000 jobs across the state for a payroll of more than \$190 million” (Michigan Wines, 2013).

A reason for the success of Northwest Michigan wineries is due, in part, to competition and in part to collaboration. As they are all located in the same region relatively close to one another, they naturally compete for patrons. In terms of collaboration, they participate in wine tours among a number of the vineyards, aimed primarily at wine aficionado tourists. In addition, these wineries could be considered agglomeration economies, which are separate but comparable firms that obtain the benefit of “cost savings that arise from spatial proximity” (Leigh and Blakely, 2013). These cost savings are increased and beneficial to local economies—Northwest Michigan in this case—when firms are located within close proximity to one another. The use of similar resources, labor and technology occur between these competing wineries. In sum, the Northwest region has taken advantage of ideal growing conditions for grapes to nurture and promote wineries to the point that they are respected and held in high regard across the country.

The National Cherry Festival, held annually in Traverse City, is another prime model of a food-centric tourist attraction that drives economic activity. The mission of the event is “to celebrate and promote cherries, community involvement, and the Grand Traverse region” (National Cherry Festival, 2013a). The Festival, an eight-day summer

celebration of Northwest Michigan’s most noteworthy crop that began in 1926, is comprised of more than “[150] events, including free air shows over the [Grand Traverse] Bay, a music concert series, wine and culinary galas, an art fair, colorful parades and marching bands, sporting events, rides on the midway [and] pie-eating contests” (National Cherry Festival, 2013a). Over that eight-day period, the event annually draws more than 500,000 attendees from all around the state and Midwest. The contributions to the region are substantial, with “direct and indirect economic impact [. . .] estimated at about \$26 million annually, including 450 jobs (or \$7.2 million in wages)” (National Cherry Festival, 2013b). This economic impact is partly due to the superb performance of the National Cherry Festival’s organizers in promoting the event.

Word about the Festival is spread through promotional material, including regionally and nationally distributed brochures; news releases; feature stories in national media; National Cherry Queen tours and appearances; interchange with other major festivals in the country; 60,000 Festival week programs; Midwest media blitzes; highway billboards; and personal presentations” (National Cherry Festival, 2013a).

With the increasing interest in cherries, product sales have boomed. Stores like The Cherry Republic, solely devoted to the fruit, have opened around the state. They have spawned a line of cherry products, ranging from salsa and jelly to wine and candy. By placing emphasis on and fiercely promoting

the event around the state and Midwest, the Grand Traverse region has ensured that the National Cherry Festival will remain a tourist hotspot for the foreseeable future.

A third area that embraces and promotes its food culture is the state of Nebraska and its beef cattle industry. According to the Nebraska Beef Council, it is the state's single largest industry and the engine that powers the state's economy. The multiplied impact of the \$6.5 billion in cattle sales each year is \$12.1 billion. Cattle-related employment means income for businesses up and down main street in towns and cities across the state. In short, the beef cattle industry has an unmistakable impact on other economies in Nebraska" (Nebraska Beef Council, 2010).

The state has taken advantage of its ideal conditions for raising beef cattle and has capitalized economically. Additionally, even with most of the state dependent on one industry, the unemployment rate still only hovers just under 4% (3.9). Nationwide, "Nebraska" and "beef" are synonymous. Omaha Beef is one of the country's most prominent vendors of the product. Misty's Steakhouse in Lincoln is highly esteemed and recommended to visitors, as is The Drover in Omaha. Of the well-regarded Omaha eatery, K.C. Dermody of *Yahoo! News* states, "People come for miles for a taste of The Drover's Whiskey Steak" (Dermody, 2012). Nebraska's beef cattle industry promotion furthers the idea that food can serve as an economic driver and attraction.

In conclusion, people will travel nearly anywhere to partake in a unique and interesting food experience. Therein lies the economic potential in Northeast Michigan: if models like Northwest Michigan and the state of Nebraska can be studied, drawn upon, and emulated, success can be found. A middle ground could be worked toward: The Northeast region does not have a principal crop for which it is well known like the Northwest, but its most important agricultural product is beef cattle, similar to the state of Nebraska. Northeast Michigan has the potential to expand and enhance its food culture by initiating heavy promotion to the rest of the state and Midwest and becoming a hub for beef cattle. Traverse City is the most populous city in Northwest Michigan, but it is only larger than Alpena, Northeast Michigan's largest city, by about 4,000 people. If a city so small could organize and pull off an event as grand as the National Cherry Festival, why couldn't a similar event be replicated elsewhere?

One way to attract tourists and prompt economic activity in Northeast Michigan could be to take bits of both approaches and establish a large festival to celebrate the region's beef cattle food culture. The festival could feature events similar to those within the National Cherry Festival: Concerts, auctions, parades and marching bands, among others. Also emphasized could be the selling of beef products, similar to the marketing of independent cherry product stores. Promotion for the event could also be similar to that of the Cherry Festival:

News releases, distributed brochures, media blitzes or highway billboards. It is critical those in a position to cause change realize that Northeast Michigan, despite all of its natural beauty and other attractions, still has its limitations—smaller population, for one—of which should be acknowledged. These ideas could be implemented in

the Northeast region, albeit on a smaller scale, if they are honed in on and perfected according to the ability of the region. The method of emphasizing and promoting a regional foodstuff to draw tourists and thus spur economic activity could certainly be replicated in Northeast Michigan.

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## ICE AND SNOW FESTIVAL FOR CHEBOYGAN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By: Binyu Wang

**T**ourism as an important market has emerged during the 20<sup>th</sup> century after growth in gross domestic product (GDP) worldwide. More and more money is spent on tourism each year, which also represents tourism stimulated local economic development. This promotes a cycle between tourism and economic development, with visitor spending causing more economic development to occur in the area. As a result, residents will have reasons to invest in the tourism industry to create jobs and bring profits.

One very popular tourism attraction in China is the Ice and Snow Festival in Harbin, which can be traced to the 1996 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Winter Games. Harbin turns its very low winter temperatures into a positive aspect to attract tourists, and the festival is a good attraction for cold weather. The Ice and Snow Festival has become a sign of Harbin, bring a lot of tourists to the city as well. The two-month festival accounts for at least 10% of the tourism market for the whole year of the Harbin tourism industry.

Cheboygan County has a similar location and weather as Harbin and the vacant land needed for a winter festival. Adults who are between the age of 25 and 44 with some college education are the targeted population for the festival in Harbin. However, Cheboygan County may target a different

population, such as the 100,000 students in Michigan. Students are normally between the age of 18 and 26 so it would be a new demographic to attract to the area.

### Why Tourism?

Starting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of the countries in the world entered into a wealthier period. World GDP rapidly increased from 7,000 U.S. dollars in 2000 into 12,000 US dollars in 2011. This increase provides more money for people to use on entertainment. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international arrivals worldwide had more than doubled since 1990, rising from 435 million to 675 million in 2000, and hit one billion by the end of 2012 (UNWTO Tourism Trends and Marketing Strategies Programme, 2012). This dramatic increase did not stop after 2012, an extra 12 million people spent money on tourism in the first four months of 2013 based on UNWTO reports and “International tourist arrivals grew by 5% during the first half of 2013 compared to the same period of 2012, reaching almost 500 million” (UNWTO Tourism Trends and Marketing Strategies Programme, 2013).

The trend of the whole world showed the importance of tourism and also proves how large the economic impact could be due to spending from tourists. Millions of people may spend money in regions, countries and internationally that not only bring in money to each area but also stimulate the economic development in the area. The

same situation could be found in the United States, “travel and tourism generated a total impact of \$1.3 trillion of the United States’ GDP in 2011” (WTTC, 2012). Between 1990 to 2011, U.S. GDP expanded 75% for the travel and tourism direct industry, while the total GDP increased only 66%. This could well illustrate how fast the tourism industry changed when compared with other sectors. The rate of tourism industry growth after 2009 places the industry in the top 3 nationally, after automotive manufacturing and communication services. The total contribution to GDP of travel and tourism increased from around \$900 billion in 2000 to almost \$1350 billion (1.5 times than 2000) in 2012. Although the financial crisis of 2008 affected the tourism industry, the drop was about \$100 billion, which was not so large to destroy the whole industry as there was more than \$1000 billion contribution to GDP per year before 2008. The total US GDP was about \$15000 billion in 2012, which means the GDP conducted from tourism industry accounted for 9% of the total GDP.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) mentioned that:

Nearly 260 million jobs worldwide are supported by Travel & Tourism – either directly in the industry or in related sectors. And these jobs are vital not only for the livelihoods of those employed, but also for their families and the wider communities in host destinations.” (WTTC, 2011)

The WTTC reported that the tourism industry created 14.3 million jobs in 2011

including direct, indirect and induced employment. The generated jobs occupied 10.3% of employment in the United States in 2011, while financial services were the highest industry that created about 20% employment (WTTC, 2012). When counting direct jobs created by sector, travel and tourism directly generated jobs are much higher than in all industries. It offered nearly seven times more direct jobs than the automotive manufacturing industry and the same number of jobs as the financial services sector that had doubled created jobs in the United States.

Travel and tourism industry shared employment a lot as well. The industry shared about 10% of its jobs covering direct and indirect employment, while the top job creating industry (financial service) had 20% of the sharing employment. Half of the jobs generated by the tourism industry were shared with other industries, and the number of direct sharing employment is the same as financial service in 2011. Based on the number of direct job created and the direct sharing jobs, it is evident that tourism will quickly generate new jobs. Moreover, other industries will benefit from the increase in tourism because of the large percentage of direct sharing employment.

### **Why an Ice and Snow Festival?**

In 1996, the 3rd Asian Winter Games was held in Harbin, China. This provided Harbin the opportunity to discover the ice lantern and snow sculpture market during winter. The number of visitors during the festival increased every year and the profit grew as

well. In recent years, there were at least two million tourists visiting the festival each year especially during the winter festival opening (Zhang, 2012).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Winter Games for the first time brought the skiing market into Harbin. The Yabuli Ski Resort was the sign of the skiing market starting. Even though there were only 200 visitors to the resort in 1996 after the Games, the number increased to several millions in 2004, while 78 ski resorts opened in Harbin. In 2001, the Ice Festival was merged with Heilongjiang International Ski Festival and got its new formal name, the China Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival. Therefore, the real movement happened in 2001 after the festival was formalized. The number of tourists initially was about 10 million and it reached 30 million, which had tripled the number between 2000 and 2008. Over the same period, the income of the tourist industry had grown from 50 billion yuan to 250 billion yuan. Although the number of traveler rose after 1996, the rate of increase slowed as numbers of visitors grew (Zhang, 2012).

Since the Chinese Spring Festival is usually in January and February, depending on Chinese lunar calendar, the longest winter vacation is normally in these two months. Therefore, the large market for travelling to the Harbin Ice and Snow Festival should focus on these two months. There were 760,000 tourists at the festival in 2002 and the number doubled in 2006. In 2011, there were about 2.7 million travelers at the festival during January and February (Wang

and Xu, 2013). The tourists coming for the Ice and Snow Festival accounted for only 6.3% of total tourism in 2002 but it increased to almost 10% in 2011.

There are more than 100 activities held during the festival in several places, and the biggest three places are Ice and Snow World, Sun Island and Zhaolin Park. These attractions display different visions of ice and snow. “Ice and Snow World boasts the large-scale ice-snow landscape, abundant ice-snow entertainment programs and breathtaking night view during the festival” (Fabiowzgogo, 2013). The entertainment programs include climbing solid ice walls, playing ice peg-top, dog sledding, ice slides, walking through an ice maze and drinking beer in an ice house. Sun Island presents many snow sculptures, while Ice and Snow World focuses on using ice to show the art and making amazing ice activities. Zhaolin Park holds the world’s largest outdoor ice lantern show. The whole park is lit up by multicolored ice lanterns and thousands of scenic spots are exhibited. Moreover, there were at least two ski resorts around these three popular places.

More and more related activities designed for locals and international businesses followed the large numbers of tourists visiting Harbin. For example, ice and snow group weddings, which offer a special chance to get married in the snow and ice; conferences for national and international businesses and Chinese winter sports goods exhibitions (Zhang, 2012). In 2008, the festival worked together with Disney and used 20 thousand cubic

meters of ice and 10 thousand cubic meters of snow to build up an ice and snow Disney World. All of these activities will open a much bigger market to introduce Harbin to the world stage. Then, the Ice and Snow Festival will not only be a festival but also a place to bring various markets into China and build up market channels between China and the world.

### **Could it Apply to Cheboygan County?**

First of all Cheboygan County and Harbin have the similar climate and location. These make the natural environment possible for Cheboygan County to hold an Ice and Snow Festival. There are mainly four reasons covering location, weather, natural environment, available land and local population groups.

**Location:** The latitude of Harbin is spanning 44° 04' -46° 40'N, while Cheboygan County is around 45° N. This could make sure these two places have similar weather and may have similar environment.

**Weather:** Although the lowest temperature in Harbin is -31° F compared to 11° F in Cheboygan County, the weather is cold enough during winter in Cheboygan County to keep ice frozen and snow maintained. There are enough days for holding the Ice and Snow Festival in Cheboygan County with at least two months' low temperature.

**Natural Environment:** Part of the festival in Harbin is held on the frozen Songhua River, but Cheboygan County has much

better water resources. There are three lakes in the county that are Burt Lake, Mullett Lake and Black Lake. Lake Huron surrounds the north part of Cheboygan County. In general there are more natural resource in Cheboygan County than Harbin.

**Available Land:** The Snow and Ice World, which is one of the three main places, covers more than 600,000 square meters (about 150 acres). Then, the total of the festival should be around 500 acres. There are 63 areas matching this requirement out of 23669, with the final result from ArcGIS of 39 land selections that could be used.

**Population:** According to “Study on the Tourist Market of Harbin Ice and Snow Tourism”, the most people visited the festival in Harbin are aged between 25 and 44, and the majority of the visitors at least have an associate degree. (Na, 2012) This is a little harder to apply in Cheboygan County. First of all, locals may not be interested in going to the festival every year. As a result, the customers should be aimed for group that do not live in Michigan for a long time. Then, the best group should be the 100,000 college students in the universities and colleges in the state who are between the age of 18 and 26.

Based on the weather, the most reliable months to hold the festival in Cheboygan County are January and February. There is no break, however, in these two months for students. Therefore, the Ice and Snow Festival in Cheboygan County could be designed as a two-day trip to fit students' schedule.

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# Part 4: Economic and Tourism Development

## ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF CHEBOYGAN COUNTY

By: Mike Halfen

**B**usinesses, whether they be selling a product, a service or in our case a place, must create an effective brand to accompany their product in order to ensure a successful and prosperous lifecycle of that product. Branding, defined as the name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one's seller's product distinct from those of all other sellers, is an area of marketing and advertising that many take for granted or simply do not notice taking place (Cohen, 2011). Branding is a way for businesses to show potential consumers how their product is more valuable than products similar to it and gives businesses the opportunity to showcase their product in a way that people will remember.

Cheboygan County, located in the north-eastern portion of Michigan, is an area that has the opportunity to grow and would be positively affected by additional promotion and visibility. Cheboygan County offers consumers a multitude of attractive qualities that set it apart from the rest of the state. However, a large amount of individuals are unfamiliar with the area, so these redeeming qualities are largely unknown to many. By studying the factors that make up the County's economic profile (tourism, local business opportunities, transportation, marketing, etc.), we will be able to identify the benefits that Cheboygan County's branding strategy can look to enhance and, in

turn, develop an appropriate brand that will bring increased economic activity to the area.

Cheboygan County got its start in early history due to its unique geographical location along with its proximity to local trade and transportation networks via the Cheboygan River. These networks were utilized by the local Ottawa and Chippewa Indians in the area (Cheboygan County Chamber of Commerce, 2013). As immigration to the United States continued to increase, Cheboygan County offered settlers a comfortable area to reside and the opportunity to make a decent living in the booming lumbering and fishing businesses of the late 1800's.

White pine, which Cheboygan County lay amongst, was the most demanded type of lumber at the time, due to its high strength and long lasting durability. The lumber produced here was vast, and considering that much of the usable lumber eastward had already been exhausted, this lumber would be shipped to the rapidly expanding west. The once sleepy north took off, and when the river was dredged in the early 1870's and became easier to navigate, lumber could easily be shipped out of the Port of Cheboygan. Cheboygan's population peaked in the mid 1890's, and soon after began to dwindle as the supply of lumber ran out (Cheboygan County Chamber of Commerce, 2013).

While Cheboygan has not yet regained prominence to the days of the lumber boom, companion industries can be seen in the area,

such as paper making and manufacturing. A pivotal time in Cheboygan County history was made in 1945 when an article of the *Saturday Evening Post* quoted Cheboygan as being the “Town that Refused to Die” (Cheboygan County Chamber of Commerce, 2013). If the residents of Cheboygan County want to live up to this phrase and even move past it, an overhaul of their current branding strategy must take place. But first, in order to understand how to do this, we must first look at the County’s current branding strategies and attempts at creating an identity for itself.

### Economic Analysis

Presently, Cheboygan County is home to more than 25,000 residents. With its median family income of just over \$45,000, Cheboygan County sits well under the national average of \$52,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). With no major city or obvious main attracting force within county borders, Cheboygan County has long relied on its natural surroundings, beautiful scenery, and laid back attitude as a means of attracting tourists to the area and to build its economy upon. As early as 1876, the area was said to be the ideal location to help alleviate the conditions of consumption, asthma, chronic disease, general debility, and overworked professional businessmen (Cheboygan County Chamber of Commerce, 2013).

Today, tourism, along with the manufacturing and service industries, all play vital roles in the local economy and are the three largest producers of income for the county (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). With its

immediate access to the Upper Peninsula via the Mackinaw Bridge, the county is able to attract many of those seeking to explore the highly regarded natural areas in the state. The County itself has more than 400 miles of recreational trails, used for hiking in the summer months, and for snowmobiling in the winter months (Cheboygan County, 2013).

However, Cheboygan County, even with its positive qualities, is ranked 60<sup>th</sup> out of 83 counties in the state of Michigan for total economic output (Cheboygan County, 2013). With this ranking, it is evident that Cheboygan County has little diversity in its economic profile and that, in order to become a major economic force in the state of Michigan, it must branch out to new forms of potential revenue. To better understand where Cheboygan County could potentially increase their economic gains, we must first analyze the various spheres of the County’s economic profile. After doing such, best practice techniques will be utilized to show how other counties in the nation create a strong and supportive economic profile, using practices that are not out of reach for Cheboygan County to use. Let us begin by first understanding Cheboygan County’s transportation network and accessibility.

Cheboygan County has two major highways running directly through it, I-75 and US-23. Along with this, there is one major port and various small airfields spread throughout the county. Although there are no rail lines that exist in the County, there are clearly various ways to travel to and from the Cheboygan area. With this in mind,

Cheboygan County can take advantage of its easily accessible area and to even make transportation an attraction for potential consumers. For example, the County already has in place a ferry system that takes visitors from the major port, located in Cheboygan, to Bois Blanc Island. The island features preserved lands and hiking trails for visitors to behold and take advantage of. However, if Cheboygan County really wanted to utilize its accessibility to the Great Lakes, an increase and expansion of the current ferry system would need to take place, targeting a greater amount of attractions in the immediate area.

For example, Hawaii, being a chain of small islands, has an extensive ferry system that stretches to even the farthest island of Ni'ihau (Fry, 2009). With this ferry service, citizens are able to travel from island to island at a nominal fee. To further this, Hawaii also capitalized on its tourism sector by allowing specialty Hawaiian island cruise voyages to travel around all of the islands in Hawaii. This lets visitors explore the entirety of the state and allows them to spend money on all of the Hawaiian Islands. Clearly, Cheboygan and Hawaii are two completely different places, but regardless, there is a lesson to be learned.

If Cheboygan can expand its current ferry system to reach other popular destinations in the area (the southern Upper Peninsula, for example) a wider variety of consumers could be reached. This includes ferry enthusiasts, citizens of the U.P. looking for a ride home, and even local Cheboygan citizens looking

for a fun day trip not spent in an automobile. Regardless of whether Cheboygan decided to put this idea into practice, there is potential to expand and diversify its economic profile and to create a new brand for the area using already in place transportation networks and accessing attractions in the immediate area. Along with transportation, higher education is another branch of Cheboygan's economic profile in which they can take advantage of and market a new brand with.

There are two colleges located in Cheboygan County, Northwestern Michigan College and North Central Michigan College. These two schools have an enrollment of 4,500 and 3,000 students, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Along with this, Cheboygan County also offers its citizens a variety of different trade and vocational schools to help continue higher education in the area. With only 8.7% of people in the County having at least a bachelor's degree; however, it's obvious that Cheboygan County can do more to help retain educated people within its borders (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

With the increase in education efforts, Cheboygan would be able to gain potential economic revenue in multiple ways. For example, if Cheboygan County made a push to get more of its citizens enrolled in their schools, they would be able to collect more taxes from those schools. Along with this, these same people would be spending more of their money locally on things, such as textbooks, stationary equipment, coffee before class, etc., all of which would go back into the County's bank account through

tax collection. Additionally, having a more educated work force would increase the likelihood that white collar jobs would move into the area that, in turn, would bring even more revenue into the county. An obstacle to this goal would be the challenge of attracting students to the area. A way for Cheboygan County to combat this is to offer programs that are tailored to what major employers in the area are seeking, or even to offer a discount to those that enroll in classes in Cheboygan County colleges that are from that County. Although these suggestions are limited, it is a good starting spot for Cheboygan County. In order to create a new brand for the County, having a base of educated workers is a must. And in order to hire these newly educated workers, there needs to be local businesses willing to support it.

Local Businesses are what drive local economies, and in the case of Cheboygan County, there are few major businesses. The top three employers in Cheboygan County are Cheboygan Memorial Hospital, Vital Care Inc., and Wal-Mart (Cheboygan County, 2013). Of the top 10 major employers in the area, only three require skills attained at higher levels of education (Cheboygan County, 2013). Seeing that not many professional services are offered in Cheboygan County, it negatively affects their brand. This is because professional services, such as engineering firms, law firms or even private urban planning firms, do not want to locate themselves in an area where they cannot hire qualified people to do the work. In addition to this, the qualified people

who do live within the Cheboygan County borders are challenged to find jobs in which they are qualified for, and that's because there aren't many in the area to begin with. If Cheboygan County wants to remedy this issue, they need to find their "niche" in the marketplace, meaning they need to be able to find professional services that are unique to that area and that provide employment to qualified candidates.

For example, Silicon Valley is known for its vast amounts of high-tech and IT firms located throughout that area. Silicon Valley, with major help coming from Stanford University, made a bold effort to develop an industry that fit that area and to build the workforce to support the demand for those services. Obviously there are differences between Silicon Valley and Cheboygan County, but nonetheless, Cheboygan County has the ability to do create a niche just as Silicon Valley did. In order to accomplish this goal, Cheboygan County needs to look at its assets, such as the quality of life, the outdoor environment, the lake shore, etc. With these assets are opportunities to grow professional services around, like a Great Lakes research facility, for example. By focusing on their assets, the area presents itself as unique and shows professional services that Cheboygan County is serious in its efforts to attract new businesses. With a larger amount of professional services being offered in the area, Cheboygan County has the ability to not only increase their tax revenue, but to also positively brand themselves as a place that professionals can flock to in order to find a valuable

career. In any case, Cheboygan County has the potential to become a big presence in Michigan and the potential to brand themselves in an entirely different fashion.

### **Conclusion**

As it currently stands, the brand and general marketing strategy of Cheboygan County is one that has the ability to grow. By analyzing the County's current economic profile, it is clear that Cheboygan has the potential to increase its revenue sources, which would ultimately lead to additional economic gains. As it stands, the County relies in large part on its tourism and manufacturing sectors to bring in revenue. By enhancing other aspects of the County's economic profile, including its transportation network, higher education programs, and local business outreach, the County has the opportunity to diversify its economic profile. These are not the only

aspects on which Cheboygan County can enhance, but are areas that can be seen as having enormous potential to grow. With a more diverse economic profile, Cheboygan County would be able to see its marketability rise significantly, and would be able to cater to a greater variety of groups of people; including professionals, students, additional tourist groups, etc. With the enhancement and retrofitting of these added sectors, Cheboygan County has the ability to change their brand to a place for not only tourists to visit, but a destination for higher education and a place for employment of professionals. Although it may be a huge undertaking, Cheboygan County would be able to become a major economic force in the State of Michigan and would be ensured economic prosperity and security for the future.

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## RAILROAD TOURISM FEASIBILITY STUDY: NORTHEAST MICHIGAN

By: Elisha DeFrain

The Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG) was formed in 1968 under Public Act 281 of 1945 with the mission to provide comprehensive planning, community and economic development, and service coordination for their region, which includes Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego and Presque Isle counties. Although the northern region of the state is limited in its transportation options, NEMCOG has developed a variety of transportation plans and projects ranging from road, transit, non-motorized, rail, marine, and airport plans. However, the shift from industrial practices, such as lumbering, cement making and mining, towards more recreational and tourism activity has left some areas with abandoned infrastructure once used to carry freight.

The North Region is served by four rail lines that extend to Manistee, Traverse City, Petoskey, Gaylord and Alpena from the southern part of Michigan. All of these are operated by short-line railroads, and two of these lines are state-owned (the line terminating at Traverse City and Petoskey and operated by the Great Lakes Central (GLC), and the line operated by the Lake State Railroad (LS) that terminates in Gaylord). Although all of these lines have relatively low volumes of freight traffic, they are critical components of the economy of the region. No direct passenger rail service

is currently provided within the North Region because of its largely undeveloped and sparsely populated land. To its benefit, the region includes extensive lake shores on both Lake Michigan and Lake Huron; consequently tourism is a major driver for local community economies within this region. This paper will focus on the potential for passenger rail and in Northeast Michigan and the economic benefits of implementing intermodal transportation options in the area.

### Existing Transportation Assets

A large number of inactive rail lines in Northeast Michigan have been transformed into non-motorized trails for bicycling, hiking, horseback riding and even snowmobiling. The repurposing of unused infrastructure has had a tremendous impact on the quality of life for residents in the region. There are a few rail lines throughout the NEMCOG region that are still active. When looking at the National Functional Classification maps produced by the Michigan Department of Transportation, it is evident by the number of rail lines, particularly through Alpena and Alcona County, that railroad was once a tremendous asset for the region. The counties Alpena and Alpena in particular have a rail line along their edge, bordering Lake Huron and paralleling US-23. Stakeholders of Michigan's Northeast region have put much effort in using US-23 as a tourist and recreational treasure for the state.

The US-23 Heritage Route has been largely recognized and won numerous awards, such as "Innovation Award" and the "Trailblazers

Award” from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). This was done by using the geographical location to the regions benefit, and working together to captivate visitors and residents alike. The same ingenuity could be applied to the rail line to produce a similar, yet unique take on transportation planning.

### **Active Rail Lines in Northeast Michigan**

The North Region is served by four rail lines all of which are operated by short-line railroads, and two of these lines are state-owned (the line terminating at Traverse City and Petoskey and operated by the Great Lakes Central (GLC)). The active rail line that exists within NEMCOG region that runs along Alcona and Alpena County are owned and operated by Lake State Railway Company. Lake State Railway Company (LSRC) is a Michigan-based progressive short-line railroad that has been active since 1992. The LSRC’s approximate 300 miles of track run from Flint through its headquarters in Saginaw, up to Gaylord and Alpena.

Implementation of passenger rail service in the Northeast Region was consistently identified as a top priority through the Michigan State Rail Plan public outreach effort by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Supporters argue that regular passenger rail service would provide a substantial benefit to the region by providing transportation alternatives for visitors and residents. Using the unique location of coastline rail not only as an alternative transportation option for residents, but also as a tourist excursion,

could have a considerable effect on Northeast Michigan’s economic growth. The Michigan Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) State Rail Plan notes that the availability of rail transportation supports significant efficiencies for Michigan’s population and businesses (MDOT, 2011). For many commodity shipments and individual passenger-trip purposes, rail is far more efficient in terms of travel time and cost advantages than other alternatives. While rail accounts for only a small share of Northeast Michigan’s overall transportation system, the region has a significant economic stake in preserving and enhancing its rail network and services.

### **Potential for Railroad Tourism**

The success of the US-23 marketing campaign was an example of the region’s substantial tourist base. Despite this accomplishment, tourism marketing in the United States is undergoing significant change. Competition for visitors is intensifying between businesses, towns, states and countries. Regions are aiming to grow and return greater economic benefits in order to give their visitors a great and rare reason to visit. It’s now about creating a story and a unique experience unlike any surrounding region.

Many elements go into developing a successful tourism marketing strategy, which means NEMCOG’s already established marketing campaign for the eastern coastline will have much purpose here. Collaboration with the Lake State Railroad Company to incorporate passenger rail along this coastlines already existing tracks could



add an element of creativity to NEMCOG’s US-23 Heritage Route. The company has announced publicly that they provide access to LSRC’s right of way with approval of the property administrator. This process simply requires the applicant provide the following information: 1) Contact information of party requesting authorization (name, address, phone, fax and email address); 2) person authorized to sign agreement; 3) date of proposed project; 4) location of project—include railroad mile marker or the crossings that the project is between; 5) scope of project—working on the right-of-way for any reason, such as overhead wires and digging; 6) drawing of proposed project; 7) name and phone number of person in charge, while on the job site; and 8) pertinent certificate of insurance.

Alpena is at the end of the rail line, and Lake State Railroad has only one inbound and one outbound train per day, Monday through Saturday. This leaves a large amount of time for a passenger train to travel along the coast of both Alpena and Alcona. If the potential of the project is realized by residents and leaders in Northeast Michigan, there is definite opportunity for this to become an extraordinary tourist attraction.

There are a number of tourist railroads across the country that have proven to bring large amounts of revenue to the area in which they are located. Mount Rainier Scenic Railroad is located in the village of Elbe, WA, which was once a thriving lumbering town. The train’s newly built depot and gift shop stand on the site of the original Tacoma Eastern

Depot, built in April 1904. This is home to one the most unique collection of logging locomotives in the world.

Since 1994, the Adirondack Railway Preservation Society has returned nearly 80 miles of track to passenger service, acquired and refurbished enough equipment to provide comfortable, safe, regular seasonal service, beginning in April and continuing December, that carries more than one million tourists and community members through the mountain terrains in remote areas of the Adirondacks; all with minimal impact on the environment. Even Owosso, Michigan is home to the original “Polar Express” that draws thousands every year for its historical value and charm. Northeast Michigan has the infrastructure necessary for a railway attraction and a spectacular geographical location for such a project.

### **Intermodal Connectivity**

An ease in transfer between numerous modes of transportation in Northeast Michigan could be an enormous draw for residents and visitors. The Michigan State Rail Plan notes that intermodal freight transport involves the transportation of freight in a container or vehicle that uses multiple modes of transportation (rail, ship, and truck) without any handling of the freight itself when changing modes. The region also must consider intermodal connectivity in terms of passenger rail. Because of the difficulty in sustaining a form of public transportation in the region, there is limited modes of transport beyond the automobile, particularly during the winter months.

Providing this alternative would encourage multi-modal transport and provide a lot of flexibility for residents and tourists as they travel throughout the region year-round. It is crucial that all individuals are provided access to essential destinations for all residents, particularly the transit dependent population that includes low-income, elderly, and people with disabilities.

### **Expected Benefits of a Tourist Train**

When analyzing the already existing infrastructure, historical value, and incredible geographical location, it is evident that Northeast Michigan will experience a positive outcome a result of a tourist railroad. Not only is economic growth likely to occur, but the quality of life for residents will improve through having more transportation choices and more valued history of their region. The City of Eureka, CA, promoted its historical base (also being lumber) through partnering with the Northern California Logging Interpretive Association, the owners of a large collection of stored Pacific Lumber Co. locomotives and historic logging equipment. The city also used self-propelled speeders historically accurate to the lumbering era and other equipment relocated from local shops and museums.

Northeast Michigan could experience similar success in partnership with local businesses and historians in order to enhance the overall experience of passengers. Algoma Central Railway in Ontario, Canada used their natural landscape comprised of an 18,800 square mile recreational wilderness

area, access to several small towns, numerous lakes and rivers, private camps and cottages, to create a scenic rail route for tourist. Ontario noted a substantial economic advantages for communities in the corridor in the form of tourist spending on accommodations, food and related services. For many tourism providers (lodges and outfitters) and communities, the passenger train was essential to their livelihood as many of the region's tourism products are only accessible by the rail line. By tapping into and expanding on already existing resources throughout Northeast Michigan, the Region could experience notable benefits.

### **Conclusion**

Northeast Michigan undoubtedly has the resources, location and tourist base to generate interest in railroad tourism. In order to initiate the project, the region must generate leadership, develop partnerships with Lake State Railway and local stakeholders, and identify stable, dedicated sources of funding for start-up. In order to maintain passenger rail services, NEMCOG must find reliable sources of funding to continue existing programs and provide funds for potential federal or state-level support in the project. Local leaders must also work to develop a vision for the future of a tourist railroad and provide written strategies for how to achieve that vision. In doing this, NEMCOG can maintain an economical, entertaining, and unique source of revenue for their region.

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## THE PROFITABLE LEGACY OF LIGHTHOUSES

By: Delaney Yancey

**T**raditionally, lighthouses have always been an irreplaceable niche for sightseers and played a huge economic role in tourism around the world. In the reading, “Great American Lighthouses,” Francis Ross Holland, Jr. inferred that “lighthouses have long had a strong appeal to Americans, and are attractions that became more intense as time passes” (Holland, 1989). Pure Michigan indicated that the state of Michigan have more lighthouses than in any other state in the U.S. (Pure Michigan, 2013). There are at least 115 lighthouses that lie in the Great Lakes and these lighthouses in particular bring out a unique attraction and style of creativity. As Pure Michigan noted, lighthouses gladly “forms a stellar constellation along the Michigan coastline that guides sailors and capturing history” (Pure Michigan, 2013).

### Best Lighthouse Practices in Michigan

The Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association took ownership of the Cheboygan River Front Range Lighthouse and opened the historical landmark to the public for touring and exploring the restoration improvements throughout the years. According to Pure Michigan, visitors and lighthouse lovers have the opportunity to enjoy, learn its rich history and explore how uniquely and admirably this milestone contributes to Cheboygan (Pure Michigan, 2013). The lighthouse includes

public services, such as tours and a gift shop for residents.

Marquette, which is also a city in Michigan, has long accomplished many best practices pertaining to lighthouses. Since 2002, the Marquette Maritime Museum previously collaborated and made an agreement with the U.S Coast Guard to sign a 30-year lease, which marked a critical step in Museum economic development (Marquette Maritime Museum and Lighthouse, 2013). With much protection and preservation from the Museum, the lighthouse can remain the utmost historical building in Marquette. The museum plans to promote the lighthouses as an integral interpretative showcase. The Marquette Harbor Lighthouse also has many economic advantages and one benefit includes the historic navigation beacons on Lake Superior, which according to the Marquette Maritime Museum, has been a critical development of the Great Lakes iron ore trade since the 1890’s (Marquette Maritime Museum and Lighthouse, 2013).

Sand Hills Light Inn, which is located in Ahmeek, MI, has a population of approximately 150 people and lies on the Lake Superior coast formerly functioned as Coast Guard training ground during the World War II era. It was also developed as a seasonal private home in 1995 until the Lighthouse opened to visitors and guests as a lighthouse inn. This lighthouse hotel is opened year-round for the public and includes many public amenities, such as beaches and cross-country skiing, tourism and other recreational activities.

### Significance of Maine Lighthouses

According to the American Lighthouse Council (2013), the state of Maine believes that “lighthouses for centuries stood tall and strong as a symbol of safety and security upon Maine’s rocky coasts, faithfully guiding seafarers to our shores.” The state of Maine offers the public many tours of historical lighthouses, and has been known as “The Lighthouse State” and is a main attraction for people who love traveling and exploring lighthouses. According to the Visit Maine database, many of the lighthouses offer exciting recreational activities and events, such as museums, state parks, picnics, hiking areas, overnight trips and hotels in Inn keeper’s houses, to incoming visitors and travelers who want to explore and discover the beautiful sights of lighthouses. American Lighthouse Council President, Donald J. Terras stated that “as a nation, we all should recognize lighthouses for the prominent part they played on the growth and expansion of our country.” He also specified that lighthouses played a huge role in safeguarding ships and passengers along coast and inland waterways into and out of the United States ports, with a network for distribution of commerce that has had a significant impact on every state in the nation.”

### Best Practices in Other States

Referring to the *Milwaukee Business Journal*, places, such as Milwaukee, WI, have future plans converting certain attractions such the Breakwater lighthouse into a museum and an event space in 2016 for public viewing

and touring (Ryan, 2013). This touristic development is a 2.5 million dollar restoration improvement and plans to accommodate 75 people per tour in the lighthouse and will be available for public events four days throughout the year. City officials and stakeholders in the City of Milwaukee have secured a 25-year contract with the federal government and plan to reinstate and manage the property that oversees the Milwaukee Downtown lake front. Public residents and visitors need main attractions to explore lighthouses in cities like Milwaukee. This City, in particular, is a great example that displays the right economic development plan that pertains to fulfilling and enhancing a greater city using lighthouses.

The City of Pascagoula and Jackson County Amateur Radio Associations in Mississippi recently felt the need to sponsor and join forces by planning an outdoor concert to benefit the Round Island Lighthouse Restoration Project (WLOX, n.d.). According to City of Pascagoula Community and Economic Development Director, Jen Dearman stated that this event main practice was to “promote public awareness of lighthouses and their need for preservation and restoration, and furthermore promote amateur radio sales and foster the international goodwill of lighthouses” (WLOX, n.d.). This past summer event, also known as the Round Island Lighthouse Restoration Project, was also financially supported by community residents through ticket sales to encourage and fund the

restoration of the historical lighthouse for the City Pascagoula.

The Saugerties Lighthouse in New York, NY, is an insightful landmark that was developed near the New York's Hudson River in 1869. The lighthouse currently holds a small museum, gift shop, a parlor, kitchen and two guest rooms that view the river décor. The lighthouse also includes an activated 46-foot solar powered illuminated tower with views of the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill Mountains.

The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is one of the most famous lighthouses in America. Settled off the coast of North Carolina, it has been identified to be the tallest lighthouse in the United States and is considered a great significant symbol in the East Coast. According to CarolinaLights database, more than "175,000 tourists visit the lighthouse tower annually to climb the structure" (CarolinaLights, 2013).

### **Best Practices in Other Countries**

Outside of the United States the Enoshima Lighthouse in Japan is a very popular lighthouse and is known for its inverted cone-shaped form and has been called the "Enoshima Sea Candle." According to the Japan National Tourism Organization (2013) the lighthouse observation tower was built in 2003 as a result of the centenary celebration of Enoshima Electric Railway. The Enoshima Lighthouse is one of the largest beacons in Japan, which stands about 119.6 meters above sea level and comes with many features, such as outdoor escalators, elevators and its spiral staircase to view Mt.

Fuji. The lighthouse has a 360° complete panoramic outlook of the island for visitor view and tourism (Odagawa, 2013). The lighthouse is also vastly famous for its solar power generated device, which is installed to enhance and illuminate its landscape across the island.

Countries like Turkey are popular for their unique lighthouses and one in particular is the Maiden Tower Lighthouse, also known as the Leander's Tower, which was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Due to natural catastrophes and war combat, the Maiden Tower Lighthouse was in need of repair and reestablishment until 1999. However, the Maiden Tower Lighthouse is greatly famous and mainly popular as it has been featured in many James Bond films: "The World Is Not Enough" and "Hitman." The tower lighthouse today is a tourist attraction in Istanbul, Turkey, and offers several establishments in the lighthouse, such as restaurants, bistros, cafés and private lighthouse boats for visitors and tourists.

*The Huffington Post* (2013) explains the resourceful benefits and economic assets of the Corsewall Lighthouse. Located in Scotland, UK, the Corsewall lighthouse functions as a luxury hotel and cottage inn that includes multiple bedrooms for guests and visitors. This lighthouse, in particular, is known for its award-winning restaurant and views of picturesque landscapes and coastline.

The United Kingdom serves as a unique place to establish lighthouses towers. *The Huffington Post* (2013) notes the significance of the West Usk Lighthouse in Wales, UK.

This lighthouse is a productive development that offers many services for travelers inside the lighthouse. The West Usk Lighthouse has a unique two-floor hotel that oversees the Bristol Channel and, unlike many other lighthouses, this particular lighthouse hotel offers not only spa amenities, such as a roof-top hot tub, but also offers therapy workshops and courses for lighthouse lovers and visitors.

### **Funding and Promoting Tourism in Northeast Michigan**

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the State Historic Preservation Office in the Michigan State Housing Development Authority announced recipients of the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program (*PRNewswire-US Newswire*, 2013). The grants were financed and supported through Save Our Lights specialty license plate sales. The main purpose of awarding grants to Michigan lighthouses was to support numerous organizations that were passionate in stabilizing and preserving lighthouses heritage and history. For the past 13 years, the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program has awarded more than \$1.5 million in grants for the preservation of lighthouses. *PRNewswire-US Newswire* (2013) states that the State Historic Preservation Office provides monetary and economic assistance through public and private partnerships to generate educate and promote community economic development activities in Michigan.

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension recently published an article involving many contributors supporting regional economic

growth in the Northeast Michigan tourism industry (Schroeder, 2012). In efforts of encouraging tourism, Michigan Sea Grant has financially helped in making Northeast Michigan a more feasible region by supplying monetary aids for the service sector (Johnson and Schroeder, 2012). Northeast Michigan communities take pride in protecting their natural resources, identifying the economic prospective of coastal tourism and stresses about the damage of natural landscapes and culture that may possibly supplement an influx of tourists.

Michigan State University Extension also reports that Michigan lighthouses serve as beacons of Michigan's rich maritime legacy, building paths and opening opportunities to explore Great Lakes tourism development opportunities for coastal communities (Schroeder, 2013). Michigan State University Extension further explains the importance of Michigan iconic landmarks that offers many opportunities for visitors and travelers to learn its heritage and enjoy the wealth of Great Lakes lighthouses. Michigan State University Extension also expresses the significance of visiting Northeast Michigan by describing many activities related to tourism and the lighthouses. Many of the events consist of bird watching, dinner cruises, lighthouse climbing, and exploring the beaches near the lighthouses. Northeast Michigan is greatly known for their remarkable coastal natural wealth that echoes a rising culture of maritime inheritance of tourism.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the MSU Center for Community and Economic Development, methods and approaches, recommendations should be considered to support and encourage the tourism industries particularly in Northeast Michigan (Kang et al., 2010). I recommend that local city officials, stakeholders, community leaders, and residents launch and establish positive and sustainable connections with tourism industries and promote public awareness and interact with residents and visitors to assure economic opportunities for lighthouse enthusiasts. Using MSU Center for Community and Economic Development findings, it would be valuable and viable to also develop a strategic marketing platform, such as creating official internet-based websites that attract tourists everywhere and toughen and enhance the tourism sector. Lastly, I would recommend the State of Michigan to conduct incentive programs by effectively bringing and supporting new tourism businesses in Northeast Michigan.

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Lighthouses have been a part of our societal livelihood for many centuries and have played a huge role in securing, guiding and aiding our ships, seafarers and travelers. Throughout my research I was able to learn and observe the importance of how lighthouses expanded and evolved over the years. Lighthouses have become highly economically active, and effective symbolic structures given that they have incorporated and implemented numerous venues, services and financial amenities, such as hotels, restaurants, cafés, museums, festivals and national parks, etc. Lighthouses gradually became a useful instrument for tourism and economical attractions around the world, while also maintaining its share as protective landmarks. Lighthouses throughout the state of Michigan are being greatly utilized for more than its initial use and have financially played a substantial role in keeping Northeast Michigan economically achievable for now and for future generations to come.



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## NORTHEAST MICHIGAN ORCHARDS

By: Christopher Klove

For most families spending extended amounts of time vacationing in northern Michigan, their trip would not be complete without visiting an orchard for a freshly picked snack. Whether you prefer canning your own jam, baking a pie or simply eating it natural, the fact is that people enjoy fruit. Our society has become rather willing to drive long distances in order to obtain fresh fruit, and we are even more willing to pay for it to be shipped much longer distances when it becomes out of season locally. With the price and quantity of valued natural resources reaching respectively frightening levels, it is now more than ever important to “trim the fat” so to speak, and cease the harmful effects of our consumer heavy market.

Everyone needs to eat; that’s just a fact. However, it is up to us to choose what we get to put into our bodies. The past few generations have seen a dramatic shift into large scale commercial farming, processing, distribution, and sales of everyday food items. This process has taken a once extremely local industry and extended it to become international. Chances are, if our great grandparents walked through a grocery store in this day in age they would be taken aback at items, such as bottled water, entire aisles of disposable paper product and much more. The truth is, the current services that are provided in nearly every city and town across the country (much like a lot of current practices)

isn’t indefinitely sustainable. The current dependency on importing agricultural goods is so high that local produce makes up only 1% of market demand (Michigan department of agriculture). It is easy to understand that money spent locally on local goods, is far more beneficial to any regional economy. Unjustifiably the very same commonly understood ideology has not been put into practice where food sales are concerned.

The news isn’t all bad, however. Currently, there is a surge of action taking place across the nation, in an effort to rebuild the broken system that is the American Food industry. Northeast Michigan is no exception; in fact some might consider the region a trail blazer in the field of affordable produce. The Northeast Michigan regional Farm market is one of the proud organizations making vast efforts towards re-delivering local foods to local people. By taking the reins on advertising, organizing, and running a delivery service, new connections have been made in order to assist the sales of locally grown produce. Having been created in the spring of 2000, the last thirteen years of being incorporated into Northeast Michigan’s grocery needs has gone rather smoothly. They began their mission by establishing weekly local farmer’s markets, consisting of tent covered stations open to any vendor willing to pay the \$10 cover charge. Since the beginning, the organization has annually increased their farm market turnout, as well as sales and total vendors in attendance. The area is likely to now provide a much more diverse array of farm stand produce. Without

the heightened dependence on non-local goods, farmers and other vendors have been given the opportunity to establish a name for themselves amongst the community. In this way both parties are assured of continued business, with this instilled loyalty farmers markets and farms in general, have seen a yearly increase in their ability and need for more staff members (meaning more local jobs).

If the increase in local jobs, higher demand for a more sustainable industry, and the overall better quality isn't enough of a reason to purchase locally grown goods, then the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) incentive surely will be. The SNAP Program was originally incorporated into the Northeast Michigan regional farm market in the summer of 2010. The program pairs with the federally funded bridge card program with the intent of attracting low income residents of Northeast Michigan regularly shopping at farmers markets. For many bridge card holders, having an option that includes the highest quality product for no additional cost was a new experience. An experience that proved to provide such an impact on both the local economy, and quality of life for residents, that its efforts have been increased.

The very next year the SNAP program selected Northeast Michigan to be the pilot area for their double up food bucks service. This followed the same direction as SNAP, yet it also includes a fund that matches your locally grown food purchases up to \$20. This means that when a shopper using a bridge card purchases locally grown (most items

region specific some Michigan specific) produce items for \$20 or less on their bridge card, they could get an additional \$20 of local produce (only) without additional charge. Originally the difference is made up by using token coins in place of money or a bridge card; however, in more recent seasons the transaction has moved towards being all electronic. None the less the program gained rapid success, with 96% of users claiming they would gladly use the offer again (from Fair food network evaluation report). Aside from just customers, the vendor's main negative reaction towards the program was simply running into technical problems due to increased demand of card machine use. The entire venture as proven successful on most fronts.

As the Northeastern Michigan regional farm market is not responsible for funding or validating the needs of bridge card holders, credit is also due to The Fair Food Network (FFN). Having coined the 20% shift theory, with assistance from Michael Shuman, the FFN firmly believes in a strong commitment to local industry. The shift theory revolves around changing the currently poor 1% locally grown locally purchased rate. The idea states that if we make sure locally grown food sales account for 20% of the market demand, we will gain the financial structure to reshape the entire demographic of our state, country and possibly the whole world. The quantity of product would have extremely increased demand, but not beyond the scope that it cannot be serviced. The total number of local agricultural related jobs

would gain nearly \$1.5 million, of available work (lots of new jobs). Adversely this entire practice would boost sales and income taxes being collected by over \$200 million per year in Michigan alone. Shuman's work in the economic analysis of the 20% shift theory states to us as the consumer that we could have direct impact on the state economy to the tune of \$2.5 Billion annually.

To be specific towards the Northeast region of Michigan, I investigated further the yearly inputs and outcomes for fruit sales. The total amount of acres, that each crop type received, as well as the revenue made off of the crop type, are all accessible on the Michigan department of agriculture webpage. When compared to the harvest of corn/soy/wheat, the total acreage falls drastically short (602 acres fruit, compared to the 62,371 acres of corn/soy). But by the time the fiscal year has ended Northeast Michigan makes roughly \$1.18 million from fruit and \$11.8 million from corn/soy/wheat sales. This might look lopsided in favor of the corn heavy harvest, but fruit yields on average \$1,960 per acre, while corn/soy only generates \$189 per acre. Although I would not recommend replacing hundreds and hundreds of acres of corn with fruit trees, it does seem logical that one might want to invest a bit further into the industry.

Farming is hard work, it takes great skill, a strong desire, and patience above all else. AJ's Berry Farm, located in Lachine, Michigan, is one interesting example of that hard work and determination paying off in full. At the age of 14 AJ decided to begin his own strawberry field on roughly ¼ acres of land. Since 1997,

the fields have grown and so has AJ, and most importantly so has the opportunity for his industry. Surviving the entirety of the "great recession" along with the Northeast Michigan regional Farm Market, the staying power of the local farmer has begun to show signs of much needed vitality. There are many business men, many construction companies, and many other forms of employment that were completely terminated between 2008 and now. Many established professionals would have loved the type of job security that a farmer of AJ's standing has had throughout the recession, a statement seemingly unlikely, but none the less factual. With the whole world looking to the future in hopes of a better tomorrow, it might make sense to ease off the demand for discovering the new big thing. We might actually benefit from taking time to stop and smell the roses . . . and then pick those roses, harvest them annually, sell them locally to everyone in your area, and make a living promoting a healthy and sustainable industry.

The sad truth about divorce in the United States is ever present, and seems to be only worsening. In these times we look towards the colloquial expression "the family who plays together stays together," I believe we can make a small alteration to the phrasing and change it to, "the family that picks together sticks together." Go ahead and visit an apple orchard sometime in late October. It's nearly a guarantee that the fields will be crowded with families. Families, who make this trip annually, are investing in an opportunity for memories, ones that

last forever. As an attraction, it is a very common to be able to pick your own fruits, this option has been a long time favorite for children everywhere. Being able to introduce their children to a responsible form of social and environmental interaction is an extremely necessary experience that parents seek; an activity that can become much more than just a tradition, but a way of life. The enjoyment of you pick em orchards is nearly endless, and the side effects are either nonexistent, or entirely beneficial.

In the state of Michigan the annual fruit harvest is one of the highest in the nation. In 2005 alone Michigan produced more than 1.5 billion pounds of fruit (Orange Pippin, 2013). Of this total 56% were apples, generating the largest apple harvest in the country. Apples being the most commonly hand-picked fruit, the apple industry has provided a set of assistances to the state for years. Currently Northwest Michigan captures the majority of long range orchard driven tourism in the state. Listed on [Michiganapples.com](http://Michiganapples.com) is a series of orchard tours that are accessible by driving. Along with orchard locations, the web page provides a blog styled, resource for travel advice. Included are, places to stay, restaurants to eat at, stores to shop at, and any other local attraction that is worthy of mention. It has been proven that tourists are more likely to spend money on various local goods after leaving a farmers market or orchard, then after leaving a super market. This fact holds true for locals looking to spend time at their communities nearest farm stand as well. Families are more likely

to make an event out of going fruit picking due the activeness of its nature. Unlike a standard grocery store, the lack of clustered lines, and the presence of open air, and the shining sun naturally lifts the spirits.

Northeast Michigan falls behind in the overall profitability of their farming industry. In order to implement more successful business, the local suppliers should look into more advertising. Roadside produce stands have recently proven to create a larger interest in the local farm itself, even if placed on a nearby road. The fact of being seen is always important in business; however, an orchard has no appropriate location for large signage. Instead organizations, such as the Northeast Michigan regional farm market, have begun to take the burden of advertisement. Their strategy is to bundle as many possible suppliers, and deliver the target market gap, the service of a predetermined temporary market. Instead of individual farmers trying to capture the whole region, they take it on together as a team. Teamwork is also seen from the federal and state governments, by granting those on government bridge cards the right to purchase the best available product. This strategy banks on the notion that even once the family has the ability to purchase necessary items without assistance, they will continue to buy locally. It took maximum complaisance in order for our countries food system to become so dependent, so I expect it will take even more commitment, loyalty and hard work to get back to the 20% locally purchased goal.

Only an activity as old as time can have benefits forgotten by nearly everybody. It is imperative that we find a sustainable and efficient solution to the financial and environmental problems we currently face. Having the ability to increase jobs in the state of Michigan by an estimated 42,000 positions (in agriculture alone), seems like an opportunity that can't be missed. With all the choices we make every day, what you

purchase and where you purchase it has more of an impact than we might imagine. To think that simply changing the fruits and vegetables that we consume daily, could send us down the road to financial enlightenment, might sound foolish, but I assure you that this is one trend that we should have never strayed from, and one we must quickly move back towards.

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## AN AGING POPULATION: THE STRAIN ON TOURISM

By: David Hendrixon

**D**emographic considerations are vital to successfully operating a tourism industry. All variation in the population should be considered so as to effectively mold the tourist destinations to the needs and wants of the expected clientele. The aging demographic of the United States of America presents a challenge to many tourism destinations. Destinations are faced with appealing to an older, but able bodied population and generational values and their effect on tourism choices. These characteristics will be discussed here to understand the implication of an aging population on the tourism industry of Northeast Michigan.

A major demographic consideration in the tourism industry is the age of the population. The population of the United State of America has been rapidly aging due to the baby boom. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 13% of the population was 65-years-old or older in 2010 ,and that number is projected to increase to 21% by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Projections also show an increase in the overall population age mainly due to increased health and medical practices extending the human lifespan. The fertility rate has also been decreasing and is currently below the replacement rate of 2.1. This low level of births means the population pyramid will be top heavy and a downsizing of the population is in effect.

Outside of the U.S., the rest of the developed nations are experiencing a similar shift in age demographics with the consumer market being “one that is age 50 or older with shifting biological, psychological, social, and economic characteristics, needs, and expectations (Nedelea, 2008).” Shifts in these characteristics are cause for a reevaluation of the current tourism market. The need to open up a market for older people with interests that may be different from the previous status quo is crucial.

New or updated tourism markets are needed because even though the Baby Boomers are aging their interests stay the same.

As the population ages, the characteristics of the older generations become more predominant. . . An aging population is likely to create changes in the patterns of demand... As a consequence, tourism demand is likely to change over time (Glover and Prideaux, 2009).

When a new generation begins aging their generational values shape the way in which society responds to their needs. The Baby Boomers have been a generation of economic prosperity, technological advances, and the economic force behind consumerism. The lifestyle values, wants and needs should be reflected in the tourism industry. Tourism needs cater to the outgoing personalities of the baby boom generation or areas will become unattractive as destinations.

Destinations the previous generation visited at age 50 and older may not be the same as the destinations chosen by the Baby Boomers. A 2010 New Orleans Area Visitor



Profile report found that “Visitors age 50 to 64 made up the largest demographic for 2010 visitors (35.4%) . . . (Manufacturing Close-Up, 2011).” New Orleans is a City of celebration, one most people wouldn’t consider a destination for a “senior” age group. However, such areas as these are becoming more popular as the Baby Boomers enter retirement. New Orleans saw the largest spending in the City’s history in 2010 at \$5.3 billion. Tourism has become New Orleans’ most important economic industry comprising more than half the state’s tourism revenue (Manufacturing Close-Up, 2011). New Orleans is not the only example of the shift towards more engaging tourism destinations. Baby Boomers look for authentic experiences, they see travel as a means of social interaction . . . in meeting new people and building new friendships. . . the price of a leisure trip is less important to them than other factors . . . this attitude is a consequence of increased discretionary income (Nedelea,2008).

This drive means the destinations of the previous generation are going to have to adapt or realize their time is up.

Tourism destinations need to quickly determine how to adapt to the upcoming senior market or else a product gap will occur. This means that Baby Boomers will surpass the older generation, but the tourism market will not have enough resources (viable choices) in place to meet the demands of the Baby Boomers. The concept of a product life cycle can be applied here. The product in question would be the

service provided by the tourism destination. This service has a creation to meet a need, a duration of served purpose, and a reduction stage before it is removed from the market thus a life cycle (Nedelea, 2008). To remain viable a destination needs to begin a new products life as the old product begins to reduce. Therefore making a seamless transition from generation to generation.

The tourism industry of Northeast Michigan needs to take into account considerations of the demographic changes happening both in the state and in the global economy. The age shift happening in the population means the current market of the older generation is dwindling and the returning tourists are failing to return. A similar situation is happening on Norfolk Island, Australia: At present, the structure of Norfolk Island’s tourism industry is focused towards meeting the demands of the pre-war generation of seniors. However, in the coming decade the number of seniors belonging to the pre-war generation will begin to decline rapidly and be replaced by the Baby Boomer generation of retirees. In a recent report on the Island’s tourism industry Prideaux et al. (2002) noted that failure to alter the Island’s current range of tourism products and services to reflect the aspirations and consumption patterns of non-senior travelers may result in a slow decline in visitor numbers in the next decade. Further, they observed that there was a danger that a decline of this nature will reduce the capacity of the government and private sector to undertake refurbishment and finance new investment.

Currently, Norfolk Island's tourism industry primarily targets the older traveler who belongs to the pre-war generation, a focus that is translated in the themes, styles and images of the tours on offer, the narration and commentary on these tours, and the range of articles sold in shops. An observational analysis of the class and variety of goods available for sale in the Island's shop (including clothing, collectables, jewellery and gifts) found that the items were predominately oriented towards the pre-war generation (Prideaux and Crosswell, 2006). Less emphasis was placed on priding shopping and other services that were oriented towards Baby Boomer visitors. The lack of acknowledgement of the Baby Boomer visitor could reduce the attractiveness of Norfolk Island since, as Prideaux et al. (2004) noted, Baby Boomers have different needs and expectation from the earlier pre-war generation."

This phenomenon occurring in Northeast Michigan is one felt around the globe. To remedy the situation Michigan needs to look for ways to connect with the new market. Two directions can be pursued to make Northeast Michigan viable in the tourism market.

The first option is to continue with the same tourism industry and adapt the model to appeal to the Baby Boomer generation. New branding approaches, upgraded activities that stimulate and entertain, or a more active leisure environment would improve interest in the area for Baby Boomers. For example, the pre-war generation may have wanted a

cabin where they could escape the world and disconnect. The Baby Boomer would want a cabin to escape to, but have it be upgraded to offer the amenities they are used to at home, mainly high speed internet, but also social activities. An isolated cabin is no longer a want or need of the generation; connecting with others has become the norm.

The second option is to diversify the current tourism market bringing in new demographics. Attracting Generation X, or Millennials requires an overhaul of infrastructure. The tech-savvy generations will most likely require a range of different attractions. The main thing being high-speed internet to stay connected with the world at large. The cost of revamping the system to attract a new demographic may not be financially feasible for the area. However, the addition of high-speed internet at an affordable cost is a necessity for either route of administration to work for tourism.

High-speed internet has become a crucial part of today's society. Without access to the internet the flow of information ceases to exist. Businesses are unable to compete economically with other firms, they will be unable to advertise leading to a decline in number of people attending their business and ultimately leading to the business closing. From the consumer standpoint, the individual has no way of finding businesses on internet search engines and, therefore, will not visit the location. Going a step farther, visitors who do go to the area will have no information on how to find out about community events they may want to

attend during their stay. With nothing to do the visitor is unlikely to return. The first step to attracting tourists, both from the baby boom generation or any other generation, attracting businesses to boost tourism,

and attracting new residents to build the economy, starts with the introduction of seamless connectivity across the region through high-speed internet.

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## TOURISM-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By: Ken Hall

Improving Michigan is something that can never go wrong. Here in Michigan, we have a variety of industries, attractions, parks, waterfronts, etc., the list could go on. Looking at Michigan we still have an abundance of land that could be transformed into a more urbanized, and attractive location. A perfect example is Cheboygan County, MI, located at the northern part of the Lower Peninsula. In Cheboygan County there are host of attractions, shows and other events to keep people entertained. These attractions/events include things, such as a Lumber Jack show, Fort Michilimackinac, Light House tours, etc. Since there is always room for improvement, then let's make it happen.

Cheboygan has opportunities for fishing, hiking, cross country skiing, kayaking, hunting and much more. For the people who prefer to stay indoors, local merchants will welcome you to a variety of novelty shops, retail outlets, entertainment facilities, casual and fine dining, and much more. The area is also home to trailheads for the North Central State Trail and Cheboygan to Alpena Trail, former railroad lines that have been converted to pedestrian use in the warmer months and snowmobile trails for the winter. Cheboygan is home to two of its own lighthouses, plus there are two more that are easily visible from the beautiful city beach on Lake Huron. There are more lighthouses that are thirty minutes or less away, which most are open to tours. Last but not least, Cheboygan is also

the home port of the Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw (Friday, 2011).

### Tourism

During the mid-1700s, both the French and British were working with the Native Americans and battling over the Michigan territory. It wasn't until 100 years later that the area now known as Cheboygan County became its own recognized place, detached from Michilimackinac County. The population tripled in 1846, when the first sawmill was built, which brought a lumbering boom. When the lumber industry started to decline in the early 1900s, the Inland Water Route began bringing in tourism and brought the economy back. The Inland Water Route was important in the development of the Cheboygan area and is still heavily used today. Cheboygan County has some tourism but most other tourism spots are in driving distance. Some of the main attractions that Cheboygan promotes are: Bois Blanc Island, Cheboygan Crib Light, Cheboygan State Park, and Opera House.

One way to tour the islands is by ferry. There is an abundance of attractions associated with the County's waterways and lakes, such as lake fishing, fly fishing and sturgeon hatcheries. Cheboygan also has a fairly new brewery, the Cheboygan Brewing Company. It opened in the spring of 2011, and since has been a very popular spot for visitors. People would be able to participate in things, such as scuba diving, exploring the local trails, boating (leisure and sport), joining in on the winter sports and so much more (Michigan Association of Counties, 2012).

### **Social Media/Advertising**

Cheboygan is a city that has a lot to offer and people go there to do numerous things. Social media is something that can promote any and everything that you want to be out in the public and also to whatever target market that you are looking for. Currently, Cheboygan only uses Facebook, which directly links you with the Cheboygan's Chamber of Commerce. From here you are able to see what events, activities and pictures of what the Chamber of commerce has taken part in doing with the community.

Cheboygan should look into advancing and broadening their use of social networks. Social media can help the city because it gives you a way to reach the residents of the city, tourism travelers, as well as people passing through the city. Today a majority people go online for the purpose of using social media, and in order for you want to reach them you are going to have to use them as much as society does. A positive side to social media is that it can be a very cost effective way to promote your company; it does not cost a lot to use. Social media is also ideal for smaller groups, since they are able to compete on a more or less level playing field with large groups.

In order to promote the city with social media you have to make sure that it's done correctly. You can't just get on social media sites and start sending out ads because all you would do is irritate people. Another thing about social media is that instead of just talking and advertising to the customer, the customer can also speak about the

city. That means that you can use it to find out what your customers think of your company, the results can be nothing that you ever had thought before. The responses can go anyway, from very negative to very positive. Here is where the city would have the opportunity to include and take into consideration what the citizens would or would not like to see.

All of this can be used as a way to improve Cheboygan. Regardless, the city officials would have to be prepared for what they will hear. One last way that you can benefit from social media is that you can use it to build a relationship with your loyal citizens and customers (local and foreign) from the area. These social media networks are a way to let people know when; new products are being released; a way to give people special deals; promote all events, places and tourism spots. There are lots of ways that you can use social media for your city if you have a little imagination. (GNC Tech SEO, 2013)

### **Redevelopment/Transportation**

Cheboygan may be in need of some urbanization and redevelopment. The redevelopment of this northern county of Cheboygan could essentially raise the economy as a whole. The urbanization of Cheboygan city will create opportunities for new businesses, as well as create a bigger job market. A bigger job market could possibility bring back some of the residence that may have left because of the downfall of the community and how they stay so traditional.

Redevelopment of the coastline of Cheboygan County may not be needed but it would definitely improve it. Imagine if parts of the coastline was redeveloped into a well-known public waterfront: approximately four to five miles long. This walk will have all sorts of attractions and stops to view, while being able to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. I would love to incorporate things, such as annual festivals. This would bring people from all around. The “Detroit River Days” is a perfect example because River Days has served as the official kickoff to summer for many Metro Detroiters. In 2013, GM River Days presented by Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort drew 150,000 people to the shores along the Detroit River for a family friendly three-day weekend of music, activities, food and fun. When no particular event is going on then there are other things that you will be able to do and enjoy yourself. (Detroit RiverFront Conservancy, Inc., 2013).

While planning your trip to Cheboygan you have to make sure you will ride the ferry, placing ferry access on one end of the waterfront is a way to encourage people to view the entire walk and what it may offer. There could be daily 45 minute narrated tours, leaving on the hour, starting at 11 am. The ferry will allow you to travel on Lake Huron, in order to explore other islands and their attractions. Each island will have a connection to the new waterfront walk. This will be in order to educate people about their surroundings, from the fish to the native animals. The ferry would travel to Bois Blanc Island, St. Martin Bay, Search Bay (for both Search Bay

Nature Preserve and Birge Nature Preserve), and Mackinac Island. Ferry tours would be fairly cheap (children \$7 and adults \$15) so it encourages people to want to come and learn about Northern Michigan. Aquatic Adventures would be place on or near the waterfront.

This is the primary attraction that allows people to come and learn about the aquatic life in the Great lake Region. Having an indoor/outdoor ice skating rink (with retractable roof) will allow for the customers to enjoy the activity, and according to the weather enjoy the fresh air. Placing an Ice Bar with a restaurant on the walk would be a great attraction because it opens early and closes late. There will be daily for breakfast and lunch from 10am–4pm, Ice Bar open nightly from 8pm until 1am.

Transportation in Cheboygan is not like other cities that offers tourism. There are a total of 11 highways, county (C-58, C-64 C-66 and F-05) and non-county (I-75, US-23, US-31, M-27, M-33, M-68 and M-212). The accessibility needs to be expanded in order to allow the local citizens to still commute comfortably, with more tourists and visitors traveling to the area. By planning, designing and constructing, and reconstructing, we could transform the current accessibility road into a more highly urbanized commute. Even if we have to widen streets, pave roads in some communities, or whatever it takes for the people of Cheboygan, and the surrounding areas, still commute comfortably. With this new redevelopment,

the local cities, of all sizes would provide the quality access to jobs, healthcare, shops and schools their residents deserve. Rural communities and small towns tend to have higher concentrations of older adults with low or fixed-income citizens. These two populations are those who are less likely to own cars or drive. Without the roads that are up to date, these people would be stuck with limited transportation options: travel along the side of high-speed roadways with few pedestrian accommodations or stay home. This is where we would implement a transportation system, especially for the people who struggle to get around from point A to point B. Expanding the bus system would be an ideal option, it will allow people to travel regularly to their chosen destination (store, job, etc.) Creating a safer walking, bicycling, and public transportation options for residents will build a more livable, accessible community for people of all ages, abilities, and income levels.

With the new urbanization and redevelopment of Northern Michigan, the variety of industries, attractions, parks, waterfronts, etc. will be able to thrive more because the economy will be on the rise. This will cause an increase in the population and in visitors, from local areas and people that are coming to tour the area. Cheboygan is a city that needs to upgrade their way of “pubbing.” They have to be diverse with the way they put out their information. Joining other social media networks that other people use frequently would help further the rise in

the economy. Examples of such networks (not including Facebook) are: Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Indeed, Four Square, Hang Outs, etc. Each of these networks gives you something different, whether it’s a certain range of people to offering available jobs, but the point is reaching out to attract people. People as saying, businesses, tourist, or maybe deals for the local people of the area. By using these social networks you could save money that you would need to spend on the amount of T.V. commercials, billboards, solicitations, etc.

Redeveloping the Grass Bay area will allow for the expansion of the economy. The newly place Waterfront Walk with the Ice Rink, Ice Bar & Restaurant, and the Aquatic Adventures. There also will be a ferry tour of the locations away from Grass Bay. The ferry would travel to Bois Blanc Island, St. Martin Bay, Search Bay (for both Search Bay Nature Preserve and Birge Nature Preserve), and Mackinac Island in order to learn different things about the islands and what they have to offer. The Waterfront Walk will also have festivities that go on annually, monthly, etc. After the transportation portion of Cheboygan County it will be easier to get from one destination to another. We would first have to redevelop the current land and roads to modify or add anything. Adding a transit system for the elderly and people unable to afford cars, would help because there will be a way for people to get to jobs, supermarkets, etc. Now wouldn’t you just want to see a change like this? I KNOW I WOULD!

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