



Wisconsin Dells

Wisconsin Dells, a sprawling resort and entertainment center in south central Wisconsin, is one of the Midwest's favorite vacation destinations. The Dells area is a mixture of beautiful valleys, canyons, hills, forests, and recreational businesses nestled around an interlocking series of lakes and rivers. Wisconsin Dells is an hour north of Madison, Wisconsin (the state capital), three to four hours from Chicago, and four hours from Minneapolis/St. Paul. The Dells offers a wide variety of activities. In summer, people come for its water parks and amphibious tours. In winter, people come for cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. Indoor attractions are open year-round.

In the summer of 1995 Wisconsin Dells business owners were developing plans for drawing visitors to their attractions. They had many questions about their customers and potential customers. To answer these questions, business owners, represented by the Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau, enlisted the aid of Chamberlain Research Consultants, a marketing research firm headquartered in Madison. The firm conducted 1,698 in-person interviews with visitors to Wisconsin Dells. These interviews took place on the main street of Wisconsin Dells and at water parks, hotels, restaurants, and other area attractions. Interviewers obtained demographic and vacation trip information from visitors.

Written by Jonathan C. Harrington, Strategic Analyst, Chamberlain Research Consultants, Madison, Wisconsin. Information about Chamberlain Research Consultants may be found at <http://www.ChamberlainResearch.com>. An earlier version of this case appeared in "Data and Text Mining: A Business Applications Approach" by Thomas W. Miller, published by Pearson Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2005. This case is intended to serve as a basis for student learning and discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective management or research practice.

©2007 by Research Publishers LLC. Research case study and data set distributed by the Chicago Distribution Center of the University of Chicago Press. Information about Research Publishers LLC and research case studies may be found at <http://www.research-publishers.com>. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

The Wisconsin Dells area offers many popular tourist activities and attractions. Here are some of the more popular attractions.

- **Tommy Bartlett's Thrill Show.** Started in 1952, this is one of the most famous Dells attractions. The show is a combination of on-stage performances (including juggling, tumbling, and music) and a water-skiing show. The water show has highly choreographed stunts, including a three-tier human pyramid on water skis. The Thrill Show auditorium holds five thousand people, and there are three performances daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- **The Ducks.** When people talk about "The Ducks in the Dells," they are not talking about waterfowl. These Ducks are amphibious vehicles built by the U.S. Army during World War II as a means of transporting soldiers over land and water. The Ducks are used to give tours of the natural wonders of the area. Duck Tours take visitors up hills, down into valleys, across rivers, and through lakes. Along the way, visitors see all manner of intriguing rock formations and beautiful scenery. Duck Tours run from March through October, weather permitting.
- **Circus World Museum.** Wisconsin Dells is located just north of Baraboo, Wisconsin, former home of the famous Ringling brothers, founders of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Owned by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Circus World Museum celebrates the history of the circus with exhibits, circus performances, variety shows, clown shows, animal shows, and a petting menagerie. The museum is open year-round with extended hours during the summer.
- **Boat Tours.** The Dells area stretches along the Wisconsin River and includes several lakes. An alternative to Duck Tours are the boat tours, which stick to the waterways and attractions along the shorelines.
- **Stand Rock.** The Dells has fascinating natural rock formations because the upper layers of rock are more resistant to erosion than underlying layers. Stand Rock is an unusual formation, with a large, round, table-like rock supported by a far narrower column. This formation is near another tall rock formation with a gap in between. To commemorate a famous leap across the gap, the tour of this site includes a dog leaping from rock to rock. Stand Rock is accessible by boat.
- **Water Parks.** The Dells area is home to several water parks, including Noah's Ark, which is reportedly the largest water park in the nation.
- **Gambling.** Ho-Chunk Casino is located one mile south of downtown Wisconsin Dells. This Indian casino features slots, video poker, blackjack, and various forms of entertainment.

Additional area attractions include a wax museum, numerous campgrounds, many shopping opportunities, go-carts, a fifties revival show, golf courses, nature walks, a UFO and science fiction museum, a motor speedway, fishing trips, riding stables, laser tag facilities, movie theaters, and various other museums and shows.

Exhibit 1 shows visitor variables and their coding. Interviewers asked visitors whether they had participated in or were likely to participate in any of a number of activities around the Wisconsin Dells. Exhibit 2 shows variables relating to participation in these activities.

Taking the role of a Dells business owner or a representative of the Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau, we have many questions to answer. What can we learn about the people who visit the Dells? Are there discernible patterns in visitor activities? Is it possible to identify consumer segments among the visitors? What kinds of activities would we recommend for visitor groups identified by demographics or type of visiting party?

A majority of current Dells advertising takes the form of brochures and pamphlets placed at various attractions in the Dells. Business owners would like to target advertising to those people most likely to visit attractions. What can we learn from the Dells data to help business owners in their advertising and marketing activities?

Exhibit 1. Dells survey data: visitor characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Interview Item and Coding</i>
nnights	Length of stay (number of nights) Coded as five ordered categories: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4+
nadults	Number of adults in the party, including the respondent Coded as five ordered categories: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+
nchildren	Number of children under 18 in the party Coded as six ordered categories: None, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+
planning	How far in advance the vacation was planned One month or more ago This month (between two and four weeks ago) This week
sex	Sex of respondent, coded by sight and sound of voice
age	Age category of respondent in years Less than 25, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65+
education	Highest level of education completed by respondent High school graduate or less Some college College graduate Attended or completed graduate school
income	Level of total household annual income Lower income (\$50,000 or less) Middle income (between \$50,000 and \$100,000) Upper income (\$100,000 or more)
region	ZIP code recoded into one of six regions Chicago Minneapolis/St. Paul Milwaukee Other Wisconsin Madison Other

Exhibit 2. Dells survey data: visitor activities

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Activity (Participation coded yes or no)</i>
shopping	Shopping
antiquing	Antiquing
scenery	Driving to look at scenery
eatfine	Eating out at fine restaurants
eatcasual	Casual theme restaurants
eatfamstyle	Family-style restaurants/buffets
eatfastfood	Fast-food restaurants
museums	Going to museums/indoor activities
indoorpool	Relaxing in indoor pool areas where staying
outdoorpool	Relaxing in outdoor pool areas where staying
hiking	Hiking
gambling	Gambling
boatswim	Boating/swimming/outdoor sports
fishing	Fishing
golfing	Golfing
boattours	Boat tours
rideducks	Riding The Ducks
amusepark	Amusement or theme park
minigolf	Miniature golf
gocarting	Go-carting
waterpark	Water park
circusworld	Circus World Museum
tbskishow	Tommy Bartlett's ski show
helicopter	Helicopter rides
horseride	Horseback riding
standrock	Stand Rock Ceremony
outattract	Outdoor attractions (not an amusement park)
nearbyattract	Nearby area attractions
movietheater	Movie theater
concerttheater	Concert/theater/evening entertainment
barpubdance	Bars, pubs, dancing
shopbroadway	Shop, browse on Broadway
bungeejumping	Bungee jumping