

## Consumer Interest Regarding ‘Travel Green’ as Legislatively Defined

### Overview:

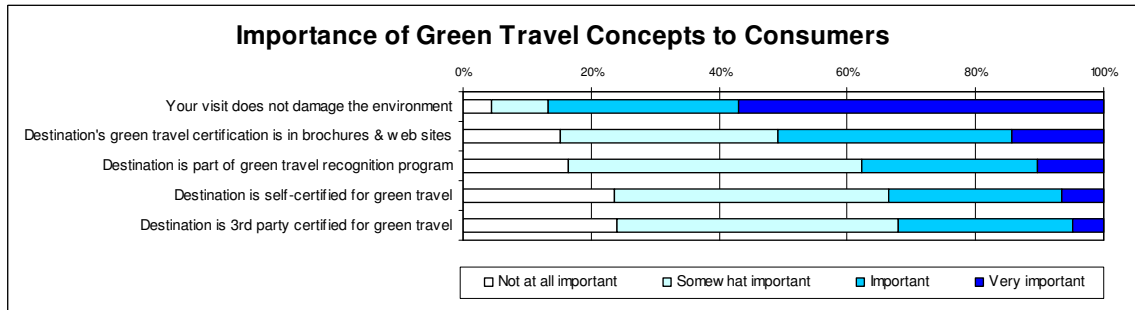
A total of 274 ‘Travel Green’ surveys were completed online by customers of Explore Minnesota Tourism (EMT). These consumers placed higher importance on travel green concepts related to their travel and planning experience than they did on green travel certification. They were also more likely to have previously sought out ‘green’ travel experiences than to have sought out destinations that were recognized or certified green. The majority of respondents did not know whether they would be willing to pay more for travel that is part of a Travel Green program; a quarter would be willing to pay more.

### Questions of interest:

*What potential elements of a ‘Travel Green’ program are important to consumers of MN travel?*

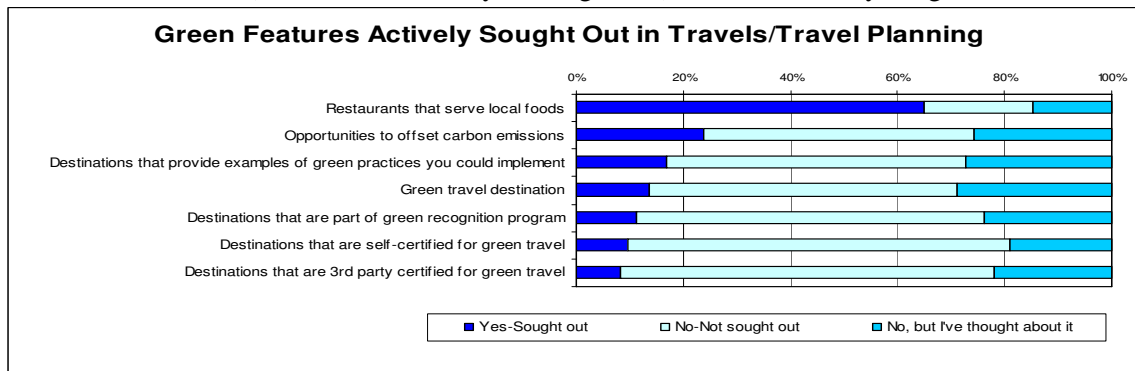
Two of 5 green travel concepts were rated important (i.e., important or very important) by 50% or more of respondents. “Your visit does not damage the environment” was rated important by 87% of respondents and “The destination/attraction informs you of its green travel certification in brochures, web sites, etc.” was rated important by 51% of respondents. The remaining concepts, addressing whether and how a destination/attraction is part of a green program, were rated important by fewer than 40% of respondents.

Respondents with higher previous green travel participation levels (i.e., reported having sought out 2 or more travel green features) were more likely to consider 4 of the 5 green travel concepts as important. Only the concept addressing damage to the environment did not differ in importance between higher and lower participation levels.



*What green travel features have been sought out by consumers who travel to Minnesota?*

Only one green feature – “Restaurants that serve local foods” – had been actively sought out by a majority (65%) of consumers in their travels and travel planning. Nearly one quarter (24%) of respondents had sought out opportunities to offset carbon emissions. Each of the other 5 features had been sought out by 17% or fewer respondents. With the exception of the “local foods” feature, more respondents had *thought about* seeking out each feature (i.e., without actually seeking it out) than had actually sought out the feature.



*Would consumers be willing to pay more for travel that is part of a Green Travel Program?*

The majority of respondents (54.0%) didn't know whether they would be willing to pay more for travel that is part of a Travel Green program. A slightly higher proportion would be willing to pay more for travel that is part of a Travel Green program (24.8%) than would not be willing to pay more (21.2%). Of the 25% of respondents who would be willing to pay more, 70% (i.e., 18% of *all* respondents) would be willing to add up to 10% to their trip cost; 18% didn't know how much more they would be willing to pay.

*What sentiments do consumers express about a potential Travel Green program?*

Open-ended comments generally reflected respondents' curiosity and support for a green program. Positive comments (27) outnumbered negative ones (6), with the balance being "neutral". (Note: 29 of 130 responses were "No comment" or similar.)

*What is the relationship between consumers' prior experience seeking out green travel features and their ratings of the importance of green travel program concepts?*

As mentioned above, respondents in the high participation group (i.e., reported having sought out 2 or more travel green features) were more likely to consider 4 of the 5 green travel concepts as important. However, overall measures of participation (i.e., total number of 'green' features that had been sought out) and importance of travel green concepts (i.e., sum of importance ratings) were not positively correlated.

**Methods:**

A sample of 4,994 consumers – individuals who provided e-mail addresses when inquiring for travel information from Explore Minnesota Tourism (EMT) from March through August 2007 – was invited to take the online Travel Green survey. The survey was administered using Zoomerang – a commercially available, web-based survey tool. E-mail invitations/reminders were sent on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2007, with a September 12<sup>th</sup> response deadline. Five \$50 cash prizes served as incentive. After adjusting for 181 undeliverable e-mail addresses, the 274 completed surveys accounted for a relatively low 5.7% response rate. This response rate points toward results being more directional rather than definitive. Summary results can be found at: <http://www.zoomerang.com/web/SharedResults/SharedResultsPasswordPage.aspx?ID=L23592UU4UE2>

EMT website users could take an identical survey by clicking on a "Travel Green Survey" box on the EMT website home page from August 31<sup>st</sup> through September 12<sup>th</sup>. The 33 completed survey responses were too few to analyze separately; they were not added to the other consumer group due to significant differences between group results.

**Who responded?**

By state: 54% Minnesota residents, 26% residents of the 11 other North Central states, 19% from remaining 38 states

By travel: Travel, and especially travel *to* MN was prevalent – 92% took at least one overnight pleasure trip (anywhere) in the past 12 months, with a mean of 4.7 trips; 83% had taken at least 1 pleasure trip in MN in the past 5 years, including 45% who took 5 or more such trips; 30% had taken 1 or more business trips in MN in the past 5 years

Actively sought out 1+ 'green' features in travels/travel planning-70%; 2+ features-31%

Summary: Respondents' state of residence reflects the mix of travelers to Minnesota found in other studies; respondents were experienced MN travelers, and many had at least some experience seeking out 'green' travel