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Thanks to a number of powerful events and big conventions in 2018, total business sales as a result of tourism in Milwaukee County grew by 5.2 percent to **$3.7 billion**. Direct visitor spending increased by $115 million to surpass **$2.1 billion** in 2018 – an increase of nearly $10 million per month. Visitor spending growth accelerated to 5.8 percent, from 3.1 percent in 2017. This is the seventh consecutive year with tourism spending growth of well over 3 percent. The spending increase in 2018 contributed to 32,921 full-time jobs in the tourism industry, a growth of 2.2 percent, with total labor income up 3.7 percent.

In the Greater Milwaukee area, tourism supported 52,357 full-time jobs and had a total economic impact of **$5.7 billion**, up 5 percent from the previous year. State and local tax revenue generated by tourism was $246 million, up 3.6 percent over 2017. Without the state and local taxes generated by tourism, each Milwaukee County household would need to pay an additional $645 to maintain the current level of government services.

In Milwaukee County, spending growth was led by visitor spending on recreational activities, which increased 9.5 percent. Our hotel partners also continue to see a positive revenue growth on their investments. Visitor spending in lodging increased 4.9 percent to $386 million, and this trend is projected to continue in 2019.

Future years continue to be strong for Milwaukee, with major conventions like American Indian Science and Engineering Society (2019), American Foundry Society (2021), Unitarian Universalist Association (2021), Association of School Business Officials (2021), International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (2022), American Biological Safety Association (2022), American Legion (2022), and of course, the Democratic National Convention (2020) all confirmed.

On the marketing side, our newly redesigned and mobile optimized website hit new records in 2018, particularly on the meetings and
conventions and group tour pages. Highlighting the events, attractions, and places that make Milwaukee wonderfully random, the new website won multiple awards in 2018, including the **U.S. Travel Association’s Best Destination Website**. Over 1,500 pages of new content and 5,000 photos and videos were curated for this effort, and new content continues to be updated and added regularly.

Also in 2018, Milwaukee received over **1,500 mentions in earned media**, including the coveted and widely-mentioned VOGUE Magazine story “Why Milwaukee is the Coolest (and most underrated) City in the Midwest.” This online media mention was the most read travel story from VOGUE Magazine in 2018, generating millions of earned media impressions.

Looking ahead, VISIT Milwaukee remains dedicated to expanding the current Wisconsin Center footprint to meet the needs of the market. We must remain competitive as a destination for top conventions, and an expanded, modernized convention center is the key to ensuring continued growth in Milwaukee’s tourism economy.
CONVENTION SALES

The convention sales team had a another strong year. They continue to see the trend of short-term bookings along with larger conventions booking further out. Big win conventions that were booked in 2018 for future years include American Indian Science and Engineering Society (2019), Democratic National Convention (2020), American Foundry Society (2021), Unitarian Universalist Association (2021), Association of School Business Officials (2021), International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (2022), and the American Biological Safety Association (2022).

A few of the larger 2018 conventions and events held in Milwaukee included the Northwestern Mutual Annual Meeting (10,000 attendees), Society of Women Engineers (500 attendees), National Association of Insurance Commissioners (2,700 attendees), International Cheese Technology Exposition (3,800 attendees), Church of God In Christ, Women's International Convention & Crusade (10,200 attendees), Structural Building Components Association (1,500 attendees), the Harley-Davidson 115th Anniversary (150,000 attendees), and National Tour Association (1,000 attendees).

The group tour efforts in 2018 included several new tactics, including attending a tradeshow in China where VISIT Milwaukee – the only North American city represented – met with potential tour operators interested in what Milwaukee and our region has to offer. This first-time opportunity was done in partnership with the National Tour Association (NTA).
2018 CONVENTION SALES HIGHLIGHTS

**ROOM NIGHTS**

192,186

DEFINITE ROOM NIGHTS

787,649

TENTATIVE ROOM NIGHTS

secured for future years

650+

BLOODY MARYS SERVED TO MEETING PLANNERS AT ASAE (AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES) IN 2018

$168,183,161 BOOKED for future years

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HOTEL ROOMS IN 2018

$225,403,126

442

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS BOOKED FOR 2018-2024
2018 CONVENTION SALES HIGHLIGHTS

490,000
ATTENDEES BROUGHT TO MILWAUKEE BY THE SALES TEAM

58
SITE VISITS HOSTED FOR CLIENTS
BY VISIT MILWAUKEE

57 CONFERENCES ATTENDED
TO MARKET MILWAUKEE AS A HOST CITY

117,200+
MILES TRAVELED BY THE SALES TEAM TO PROMOTE MILWAUKEE
The convention services team had a very busy year in 2018, hosting over 490,000 attendees at 354 events.

The services team launched a new activation booth at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport just ahead of the Harley-Davidson 115th Anniversary. Volunteers are assigned to staff the booth during peak convention events, and information is available at the booth year-round for business and leisure visitors.

The biggest event of the year for the team (and the city) was the Harley-Davidson 115th anniversary celebration. Over 150,000 fans “rode home” for the five-day festival, where all of VISIT Milwaukee’s staff and volunteers stepped up and stepped in to roll out the orange carpet, including stuffing bags, providing wayfinding assistance, and working at the multiple events throughout the city.

Our volunteer team also launched a new volunteer database to assist in recruiting and maintaining volunteers, thus allowing for a more streamlined process.

The convention services team also spearheaded VISIT Milwaukee’s participation in the NEWaukee Night Market, creating four different activation booths throughout the summer and organizing staff to work at these events. Activations included Milwaukee-themed postcards that could be filled out and mailed from the Night Market as well as interactive cut-outs for photo opportunities and social media.
2018 CONVENTION SERVICES HIGHLIGHTS

VISIT MILWAUKEE VOLUNTEERS WORKED 2,725 HOURS

BIGGEST EVENT
HARLEY-DAVIDSON 115TH ANNIVERSARY
150,000 ATTENDEES

4.8 / 5 STARS
CONVENTION SERVICES STAFF RATING BY CLIENTS

5 PRE-PROMOTES ATTENDED IN 2018 FOR UPCOMING CONVENTIONS

1,900+
PIECES OF COLLATERAL SHIPPED INTERNATIONALLY TO 63 COUNTRIES

"VISIT Milwaukee’s event planning services are second to none. All personnel are both helpful and knowledgeable about the city of Milwaukee. They are a pleasure to work with!" - WISCONSIN STATE READING ASSOCIATION
The 2018 advertising campaign yielded great results. The leisure campaign saw extremely strong digital results including reaching over 11 million impressions on Facebook alone, with traffic to the website from paid social campaigns up nearly 1.5 times over 2017. The meetings and conventions campaign reached more than double the impressions in 2018 compared to 2017. Highlights include an email series targeting meeting planners that generated 300,000 clicks back to the website, with open rates five times the industry average. Additionally, unique marketing tactics were used in Chicago over the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) show dates, including a mobile billboard circling around downtown Chicago featuring Milwaukee’s wonderfully random messages and videos.

The team also produced and launched the new Original Brew City Beer Map. This fully inclusive map features 62 beer-related businesses plotted out on a custom illustration covering Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, Waukesha, Greendale, and Whitefish Bay areas. A robust distribution strategy was developed to get the 500,000 maps out (including drops in both Chicago and Madison) and within paid brochure racks in Wisconsin.

For the first time, VISIT Milwaukee sent a team to the 2018 Great American Beer Festival in Denver to promote Milwaukee as a beer destination. The booth was extremely active, and included representatives from Third Space Brewing and Best Place at the Historic Pabst Brewery.

The team ended the year by selecting a new agency of record, Hanson Dodge, who will work with VISIT Milwaukee’s marketing team on rolling out new advertising campaigns in 2019 to support the new “wonderfully random” branding.
2018 MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

95,278,384 total paid media impressions

71% LEISURE CAMPAIGN
16% MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS
12% MILWAUKEE365 CAMPAIGN
1% GROUP TOUR CAMPAIGN

@DearMKE
18,560 34,559 5,144

@VISITMilwaukee
60,522 32,681 49,231

EVENTS ON MILWAUKEE365
3,468

MOST CLICKED EVENTS
CHRISTKINDLMARKET, IRISH FEST, WALKER’S POINT 5TH STREET FEST

PRINT COLLATERAL
OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE 200,000
OFFICIAL VISITORS MAP 200,000
OFFICIAL BIKERS GUIDE 160,000
BREW CITY BEER MAP 500,000
GROUP TOUR BROCHURE 32,000
INTERNATIONAL BROCHURES 13 LANGUAGES

CHRISTKINDLMARKET
Reached 56,851 PEOPLE with 7,519 engaged.

VOGUE ARTICLE
Reached 48,562 PEOPLE with 6,526 engaged.

70% OF THAT WAS ORGANIC REACH

12 NEW VIDEOS PRODUCED
1 MEETINGS & CONVENTION SERIES
6 NEIGHBORHOODS SERIES
5 DEAR MKE
After extensive research and a survey of key stakeholders, VISIT Milwaukee launched a new website on March 17, 2018 designed to be both appealing and informative to business and leisure visitors, as well as an informational resource for locals, partner businesses, and more. The new website has technical features that consumers have come to expect from retail sites, such as powerful filterable categories, live mapping tools, and a seamless mobile experience. VISIT Milwaukee added 5,000 photos and video assets, including 360-degree photography of meeting and event venues, and created over 1,500 pages of content to highlight the best of the city. The new website invites users to virtually explore Milwaukee through a new, expanded neighborhoods section, as well as interactive elements like the slot machine style “randomizer” on the homepage that suggests Milwaukee experiences based on mood and budget. Using the new “My Trip” tool, visitors can save attractions and businesses, articles, lists, and more to a virtual shopping cart. Voted 2018 Best Destination Website by the U.S. Travel Association, and receiving additional recognitions from CommArts, MarCom Awards, Hermes Creative Awards, W3 Awards, Davey Awards, and AVA Digital Awards, the website has garnered much acclaim. VISIT Milwaukee is proud to receive the outpouring of support, especially from locals, who have commented on how much the website “feels” like Milwaukee.
1. VISITMILWAUKEE.ORG 2. MOBILE BILLBOARD IN CHICAGO 3. ORIGINAL BREW CITY BEER MAP 4. WONDERFULLY RANDOM BUTTONS 5. EXAMPLE OF LEISURE AD 6. WONDERFULLY RANDOM POSTCARDS
COMMUNICATIONS

In 2018, the communications team hosted the **Midwest Travel Journalists Association (MTJA) Spring Conference**, with 70 attendees. The team also hosted a familiarization trip (FAM) in partnership with the Milwaukee Film Festival, bringing in four national writers to cover the festival's 10-year anniversary.

The team hosted over 70 individual writers throughout the year as well, including representatives from Chicago Tribune, The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Times (United Kingdom), Worth Magazine, Hadassah Magazine, VOX, Bon Appétit, Travel + Leisure, Reader’s Digest, and USA Today.

For the first time, the team attended TravMedia's International Media Marketplace in New York, connecting with over 25 media members for brief desk side visits. As a result, the team hosted four of those writers in the city throughout 2018.

Good pitching and good relationships led to one of the best stories of the year. “**Why Milwaukee is the Midwest’s Coolest (and most underrated) City**” ran on VOGUE magazine's website in July. This was VOGUE’s most popular online travel story of the year and received much local acclaim.

Communications partnered with marketing on the launch of the new website in March as well as the launch of the Original Brew City Beer Map in June to garner media coverage for these events.

The team continued its efforts to promote Sculpture Milwaukee, Summerfest, the launch of The Hop streetcar, and the Harley-Davidson 115th Anniversary, earning a combined 401 stories for these events alone.

Awards were a big part of 2018, and VISIT Milwaukee earned a total of **29 awards** for its marketing, public relations, and professional accomplishments.
2018 COMMUNICATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

742,304,030
EARNED MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

100
TV APPEARANCES

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL WRITERS HOSTED
LEISURE-FOCUSED STORIES
INTERNATIONAL STORIES
TOURISM TRADE STORIES
CONVENTION STORIES
146 829 20 55 259

1,502
EARNED MEDIA PLACEMENTS

2018 BIGGEST PLACEMENTS

VOGUE
USA TODAY
KANSAS CITY STAR
CHICAGO TRIBUNE
TRAVEL + LEISURE
MIDWEST LIVING
TRAVEL CHANNEL’S “EXPEDITION UNKNOWN”
FOODNETWORK.COM
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
(Forbes’ No. 4 travel influencer in the world)
The annual goals of the partnership department are to grow its partnerships, retain its current partners, expand its program offerings, and increase its sponsorships and program revenue. To this end, the partnership department added two new corporate partners and expanded its event offerings.

Two traditional events, the annual meeting and golf outing, attracted a record numbers of sponsors. Revenue for the annual meeting was up nearly 19 percent and attendance topped 535. Revenue for the golf outing increased nearly 21 percent, with 33 foursomes hitting the links at Brown Deer Golf Course. The Marketing Milwaukee Summit in February was a success, with 20 panelists teaching our corporate partners new ways to recruit and retain talent within the region.

A new program, Social Media Education, was held in July and was designed to educate partners on best practices around digital platforms and social media. In December, The 42 played host to new meeting Meetings Up MKE, which was designed to help meeting planners learn new and innovative ways to engage meetings audiences. The event attracted 82 attendees.

In addition, the team spent 2018 focused on renewing and strengthening partner relationships and, based on the results of this effort, made a strategic plan for 2019 to continue this practice.
2018 PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

82 NEW PARTNERS

90% partner retention rate

2 NEW CORPORATE PARTNERS

703 total partners
678 BUSINESS PARTNERS
25 CORPORATE PARTNERS

NEW EVENTS IN 2018:
MEETINGS UP MKE AND SOCIAL MEDIA EDUCATION

1 2

20 EVENTS IN 2018

ATTENDED VISIT MILWAUKEE’S ANNUAL MEETING, MAKING IT THE LARGEST EVENT IN 2018

535
VISIT Milwaukee, a private, nonprofit corporation, was incorporated in 1967 as a 501(c)(6) tax-exempt organization. Governed by an independent board of directors, the President/CEO leads a full-time staff of 38, as well as additional part-time and seasonal staff members.

VISIT Milwaukee had annual budgeted revenues of $10.1 million in 2018, of which 82 percent was derived from the occupancy tax and other public funding. Occupancy taxes in Milwaukee are comprised of a 7 percent City of Milwaukee occupancy tax and a 2.5 percent Milwaukee County occupancy tax. In 2018, total City of Milwaukee occupancy taxes were $15.1 million, and Milwaukee County occupancy taxes were $7.2 million. VISIT Milwaukee receives a portion of the City of Milwaukee occupancy tax only, which represented approximately 42 percent of the total city taxes collected in 2018. The remainder of the occupancy taxes are retained by the Wisconsin Center District in order to pay the bond debt on convention facilities and the Miller High Life Theatre. VISIT Milwaukee also receives a portion of the City of Wauwatosa and City of New Berlin occupancy taxes.

VISIT Milwaukee’s financial operations are reviewed by a five-member Audit/Finance Committee of the Board of Directors, led by the Secretary/Treasurer. In addition, VISIT Milwaukee retains an independent audit firm, Ritz Holman CPAs, to conduct an annual financial audit of the organization’s financial operations and internal controls.
2018 FUNDING SOURCES

- **82%** Hotel Occupancy Taxes & Public Funding
- **6.4%** Program & Service Revenue
- **6%** Marketing Sponsors & Ad Sales
- **5.6%** Partner Dues & Programs

2018 PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

- **80%** Convention Sales & Destination Marketing
- **10%** Convention Services
- **7%** Partnership Program
- **3%** Administration Department
In 2018, VISIT Milwaukee received **29 awards** and accolades for its work. This recognition among its peers makes the organization and its staff both appreciative and proud.

**AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

**VISIT MILWAUKEE WEBSITE**
- **BEST DESTINATION WEBSITE**
  - U.S. Travel Association’s Destiny Award

**GOLD AWARD**
- Hermes Creative Award
  - Website Overall: Tourism

**PLATINUM AWARD**
- dotCOMM Award
  - Website: Travel

**GOLD AWARD**
- W3 Awards
  - Website Features: User Experience
  - General Website Categories: Tourism

**SILVER AWARD**
- W3 Awards
  - Branded Content Tourism & Leisure for Marketing
  - Website features – Video or Motion Graphics for Websites

**PLATINUM AWARD**
- MarCom Awards
  - Digital Media: Website

**GOLD AWARD**
- Davey Awards
  - Best Visual Appeal – Aesthetic for Websites

**2018 OFFICIAL BIKERS GUIDE**
- **GOLD AWARD**
  - Davey Awards
  - Consumer Magazine for Design/Print

**“MEET MILWAUKEE” VIDEO**
- **AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**
  - Communicator Award
    - Online video: Travel
    - Online video: Branded Content

**2018 OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE**
- **AWARD OF DISTINCTION**
  - Communicator Award
    - Design: Marketing/Promotion: Features-Overall Design
    - Design: Marketing/Promotion Features-Copy/Writing

**PLATINUM AWARD**
- MarCom Awards
  - Print Media Publications: Guide

**GOLD AWARD**
- Davey Awards
  - Design & Print Collateral

**DEARMKE**
- **AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**
  - Communicator Award
    - Social: Content & Marketing: Community Building & Engagement
    - Social: Content & Marketing-Social Page by a Brand
    - Social: Features: Use of Photography / Images

**ANNUAL REPORT**
- **WINNER**
  - PR Daily Nonprofit PR Awards
    - Creative PR Assets

**GOLD AWARD**
- MarCom Awards
  - Print Media Publications: Associations

**SILVER AWARD**
- Davey Awards:
  - Design/Print

**MILWAUKEE NEIGHBORHOOD VIDEOS**
- **SILVER AWARD**
  - W3 Awards
    - Online Video Travel For Video

**ORIGINAL BREW CITY BEER MAP**
- **GOLD AWARD**
  - MarCom Awards
    - Print Media Publications: Guide

**GOLD AWARD**
- Davey Awards
  - Design & Print Collateral

**MILWAUKEE POSTCARDS**
- **HONORABLE MENTION**
  - MarCom Awards
    - Print Media Publications: Postcard
1. NEWAUKEE NIGHT MARKET   2. GREAT AMERICAN BEER FESTIVAL  3. GREATER MILWAUKEE HOSPITALITY OPEN  4. STAFFER RECEIVES CITY OF MILWAUKEE PROCLAMATION  5. NEW COMPANY CAR WRAP 6. CONNECT MARKETPLACE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD MEMBERS

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City of Milwaukee

Steve Baas
Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce

Joe Bartolotta
Bartolotta Restaurant Group

Alderwoman
Cheryl Berdan
City of Wauwatosa

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NEWaukee

Eve Hall
The Milwaukee Urban League

Kristine Hillmer
Wisconsin Restaurant Association

Tracy Johnson
Commercial Association of REALTORS Wisconsin

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Greg Marcus*
Marcus Corporation

Paul Mathews*
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Gerard Randall, Jr.
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Don Smiley
Milwaukee World Festival, Inc.

Howard Snyder
Northwest Side Community Development Corporation

John Steinmiller*
Milwaukee Bucks

Jim Villa
National Association for Industrial & Office Parks

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Teig Whaley-Smith*
Milwaukee County

Chuck Wikenhauser
Milwaukee County Zoo

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Dana Jones*
Assistant Secretary
VISIT Milwaukee

*Executive Committee
THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS