

THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE RESORT INDUSTRY
IN CROW WING COUNTY, MINNESOTA

An Abstract of
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the characteristics and geography of resorts in Crow Wing County, Minnesota. The study's methodology involves the categorization of resorts, based on the number of units; an examination of the subgroups' attributes such as activities, and the operators' attitudes; and finally, a comparison of resort characteristics to seven physical and cultural factors to determine possible correlations.

Three resort subgroups were formed. They were composed of 65 resorts with 5-10 regular class units (cabins, lodges, and motel style units), 15 operations with 11-20 regular grade units, and 7 resorts with 21 or more regular type units. There were wide variations among the characteristics of the resort groups.

Of the 1,215 total regular class units in the county, 725 were in the large- and medium-size groups. The largest resorts had the bulk of resort employees with 78 percent. They also added about 75 percent of the county's new resort lodging units within the past 10 years. All seven of the large resorts had man-created/capital intensive activities, while only five medium and five small operations had them. Most resort owners felt that their operations' most serious problems were rising costs and high taxes. Likewise, most of the operators said the state should help the industry by stocking fish and providing resorts with tax breaks.

In examining the correlation of resort attributes and the seven physical and cultural factors, the results are mixed. There is a strong relationship between resort size and lake size, and resort size and miles of lakeshore. There is also a small relationship between resort size and distance to a service center and similarly a minor correlation between resort size and distance to a highway. In addition, growing resorts show a strong relationship with lake size, but no correlation with distance to service centers and distance to highways.

The clustering of resorts is evident in the county and this effect shows some interesting correlations and attitudes concerning resort development. The cluster nodes are centered on the largest resorts. There are 40 operations in the zones. A majority of the resort units are in these areas. Sixty-one percent of the growing resorts are in the cluster zones. Almost 80 percent of the operations expanding through regular class units are in the nodal areas. This information suggests that a class status of resorts, partly based on geography, exists and is being maintained by resort operators.

In conclusion, resorts are influenced by the county's geography. However, the characteristics and success of individual resorts is also dependent on factors such as the creativity and determination of management and access to financial resources.