

## SOCIAL VALUES AND SOCIAL MEDIA: UNDERSTANDING PLACE MEANING IN COASTAL REGIONS THROUGH THE INSTAGRAM LENS

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The impacts of climate change to coastal ecosystems and human communities are a major concern for natural resource managers and tourism providers. As the opportunities and challenges presented by shifting climate patterns become more immediate and certain, coastal resource managers must make value-laden trade-offs among adaptation options that meet the needs of their constituents. A thorough understanding of stakeholder perspectives, including the meanings they attach to coastal areas, can facilitate decision making by managers that is sensitive to social values and norms. The place meanings individuals assign to coastal areas can mediate their motivation(s) to visit these sites, satisfaction with coastal recreation experiences, and perceptions of ecological and social impacts along shorelines. Traditional means of evaluating place meanings most often include extensive survey and/or interview research methods to measure and describe the complex multi-dimensional construct. However, these data collection tools may be cumbersome for managers to employ given limited resources (time, money, personnel, etc.). Social media platforms offer an alternative method of assessing place meaning in coastal regions. Data from social media sites (e.g., Instagram) can provide information that is publicly available, objective, and available in 'real time.' This presentation will describe how social media data was collected and analyzed to reveal place meanings of tourists to Lake Superior's 'North Shore.' The North Shore is a nature-based recreation and tourism destination characterized by camping, hiking, boating, and fishing in the peak summer season. Tourism infrastructure in the region is relatively undeveloped, with locally-owned lodges, shops, restaurants, outfitters, and guides characterizing the tourism landscape. While these characteristics have preserved the provincial charm that draws visitors to the North Shore, they also necessitate the region to be proactive in assessing resiliency to shifting environmental conditions. Social media posts tagged with "#MyNorthShore" and other relevant attributes were collected using an innovative 'web scraping' method. Thematic analysis of the photos returned from the 'scrape' categorized the social media posts into traditional dimensions of place meaning and provided further insight into the recreation behaviors of coastal tourists. Data generated by this innovative method can provide the North Shore's community leaders, tourism providers, and recreation managers with an 'inside look' at place meanings. This presentation will also describe how these data will be used to inform "Climate Change Readiness" planning efforts along Minnesota's North Shore.