1985 Michigan Charter Fishing Study

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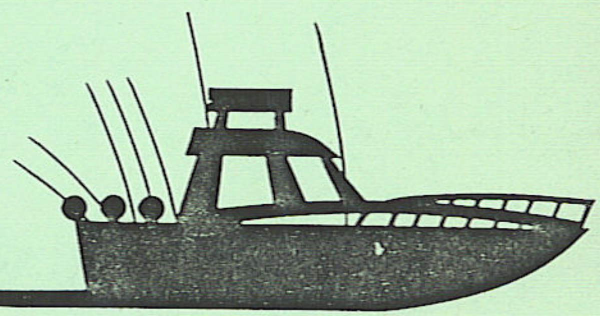
March 1986



Funded through a grant from the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Michigan Charter Boat Association, Michigan Sea Grant Extension, and Michigan Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center.

Preface

This study was funded primarily by Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station. Additional funding was provided by Michigan Boating Industries Association and West Michigan Marina Association. The Michigan Charter Boat Association also financed a free charter trip as an incentive to increase the response to the questionnaire.

Special thanks go to the four Michigan Sea Grant Agents who worked so hard to make the study a success. They include Jon Peterson, John Mckinney, Charles Pistis and Stephen Stewart. We would also like to express our special thanks to the 83 captains who took the time and effort to distribute questionnaires to their customers, and to the board of directors of the Michigan Charter Boat Association who supported the study.

This is the first comprehensive study of Michigan's charter boat market. We plan additional studies in the future to monitor changes in the market.

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by

Edward M. Mahoney, Mary Brunke and Charles Pistis

Introduction

The number of charter fishing boats operating in Michigan has increased dramatically in the last ten years. There are now 920 state licensed charter boats operating in Lakes Michigan, Huron, Erie, Superior and St. Clair. Although the size of the charter fishing fleet and the number of persons who charter fish have grown steadily, little was known about the size and characteristics of the market, the economic impacts of charter fishing, or the investment in charter boats. The void of information made it difficult for charter captains to develop more cost effective marketing strategies and negotiate business loans. It also made it more difficult for the Michigan Travel Bureau to develop and target its charter fishing promotion. In addition, the lack of information on the "economic impact" of charter fishing complicated industry efforts to convince state agencies and local units of government to develop and improve charter boat facilities and promotion.

This study, which was funded jointly by Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service and Agriculture Experiment Station, was designed to: 1) provide a description of Michigan's charter fishing market, 2) estimate direct expenditures associated with charter fishing trips, and 3) determine the amount captains have invested in their charter boats.

The study was possible only because of the combined efforts of the captains who participated in the study, the Michigan Charter Boat Association, Michigan Sea Grant Extension agents, and Michigan State University. It serves as an excellent example of the positive benefits that can be realized through cooperative industry-university research.

Study Methods

One hundred boats/captains were contacted to determine their willingness to participate in the study, and 83 agreed. The boats were selected to insure a proportional representation of those operating in different regions/ports throughout the state. The 20 charter boats operating in Michigan's Upper Peninsula were not included in the study.

Each captain was asked to distribute 10 questionnaires on 10 randomly selected dates between June 1 and October 10, 1985. The dates were assigned to insure a representative sample of dates - weekdays and weekend days - throughout the season across different regions of the state. Each captain was sent a calendar showing the dates to distribute questionnaires. They were also mailed reminder post cards several days prior to the distribution dates. To one person per party, Captains distributed a questionnaire along with a stamped self-addressed return envelope and cover letter which explained the purpose of the study and procedures for completing and returning the questionnaire. The letter also informed customers that if they completed the questionnaire and a separate post card (with their name and address), they would be eligible for a drawing for a free charter on the boat from which they received the questionnaire. The free charter was paid for by the Michigan Charter Boat Association.

The questionnaire collected information on: (1) the dates and length of charter trips, (2) the number of charters -half day and full day- they went on during the trip, (3) purpose(s) of the trip, (4) type of lodging used, (5) the number of years they have charter fished in Michigan and number of Michigan captains with whom they have fished, (6) the number and type of fish caught, (7) trip spending, (8) attributes important in selecting a charter boat, (9) reasons for chartering a fishing boat, (10) reservation behavior, (11) information sources used to select a charter boat, and (12) income, education levels and skill levels of customers.

Fifty-four percent (54%) of the 830 questionnaires which were scheduled to be distributed were returned. The names and addresses of a random sample of non-respondents were obtained from the captains and they were mailed follow-up letters stressing the importance of their cooperation along with another copy of the questionnaire. A comparison showed no significant differences, e.g., length of trips, spending, demographics, between respondents and non-respondents.

Before coding each questionnaire was carefully examined, with emphasis on spending data. A series of computer analyses (frequencies and cross tabulations) was performed to identify and correct coding and key punching errors. Again, special emphasis was placed on expenditure data. This included cross-checking spending in each category, e.g., lodging, meals, against the length of trips, party size, travel distance and spending in other categories.

At the end of the season captains were mailed a questionnaire which collected information on: the number of years they have been in business; the number of their full day and half day charters in 1985, and; the purchase price and present disposal of their boats, fishing rods, reels, and baits, down-riggers, fish finding equipment, and radar. Seventy-five (90%) of the 83 captains returned the questionnaire. Similar questionnaires were completed by 15 captains who did not distribute questionnaires in order to determine representativeness of the captains who participated in the study. A comparison showed little difference between study participants and other captains.

Findings

Investment in Charter Boats and Number of 1985 Charters

The average Michigan charter captain has been in business for eight years. On average, captains went out on 45 half day charters and 20 full day charters in 1985. Fees averaged $200 for a half day charter and $300 for a full day. Therefore, "the average captain" collected $15,000 in fees not including tips. About 239,000 people went charter fishing in Michigan in 1985 (59,800 charters X 4 persons/trip).

The average disposal value of charter boats state wide is $28,000 (Table 1). The captains have an additional $5860 invested in: rods, reels, and baits ($2480); downriggers ($1431); fish finding equipment ($1590), and; radar ($359). The total amount invested in charter boats state wide is estimated to be approximately $31.2 million.

Table 1. Present Value of Charter Boats and Equipment.

Boats and Equipment	Average Present (Disposal) Value
Boats	$ 28,000
Rods,reels,and baits	$ 2,480
Downriggers	$ 1,431
Fish finding equipment	$ 1,590
Radar	$ 359
Total/boat	$ 33,860
Total Fleet	$ 31.2 million [a]

a 920 state licensed boats x $33,860/boat

Charter Fishing Involvement

Charter customers included: 38.5% who had not charter fished in Michigan before, 18.5% who had chartered before but not with the captain on whose boat they received the questionnaire, and 43% repeat customers (Table 2). Persons who charter fish are very "brand loyal." Almost half (44%) of the customers, not counting first timers, have only fished with one Michigan charter captain, 27% have fished with two captains, and 13% with three captains (Table 3). Only 16% had fished with four or more captains. Over a third (35%) charter fished in Michigan for the first time in 1983 or 84. Two thirds (67.2%) had not charter fished before 1980. Only 17.6% of the customers had charter fished in Michigan in 1975 or before.

Table 2. Percent of First Time Charter Customers.

Charter Fishing History	Percent
First time charter fishing in Michigan	38.5
First time fishing with the captain	18.5
Fished before with the captain	43.0

Table 3. Number of Different Captains Customers Have Chartered With.[a]

NUMBER	PERCENT
1	44
2	27
3	13
4	9
5 +	7

a Does not included persons who had not charter fished in Michigan previous to the charter on which they received a questionnaire.

Table 4. First Year Customers Charter Fished in Michigan and With the Captain.

First Year They Charter Fished	In Michigan	With The Captain
1975 OR BEFORE	17.6	5.9
1976	.4	1.0
1977	1.6	1.0
1978	2.8	2.1
1979	4.0	2.7
1980	10.4	8.5
1981	10.4	7.4
1982	11.2	12.8
1983	17.6	17.6
1984	17.6	26.0
1985	6.4	15.0

a Does not include persons who had not charter fished previous to the trip on which they received a questionnaire.

b 6.4% charter fished for the first time in Michigan in 1985 on a trip previous to the one on which they received a questionnaire.

c 15% of the customers charter fished for the first time in 1985 with the captain on whose boat they received a questionnaire on a trip previous to the one on which they received the questionnaire.

Charter Fishing Trips/Parties

Charter fishing was the primary and only purpose for the trips of almost two thirds of the charter customers (Table 5). They would not have visited the area if charter fishing opportunities were not available. Charter fishing was the primary, but not only, trip purpose of 18% of the parties. This means that 83% of the parties made the trip primarily to charter fish. Only two percent of the customers did not plan to charter fish prior to leaving home.

The average travel party consisted of 4.6 persons (Table 6). Over half (59.4%) of the travel parties were comprised of immediate family members, 6.8% extended family, 27.3% friends, and 6.5% business associates (Table 7). Ninety-two percent of the members of the travel parties charter fished on the trip (Table 8).

Over two thirds (68%) of the people went on half day (5 hour) charters, the remaining 32% full day trips (Table 9). Three quarters went on one charter during their trips, 20% on two charters, and only four percent on three charters (Table 10).

Table 5. Purpose of the Trip on Which Persons Charter Fished.

Trip Purpose	Percent
Charter fishing was the primary and only purpose for their trip	65.2
Charter fishing was the primary but not only trip purpose	18.2
Charter fishing was not the primary purpose for the trip but they planned to charter before leaving home	14.2
Did not plan to charter before leaving home on the trip	2.4

Table 6. Number of Persons on The Trip to the Area.

Number of Persons	Percent
1	2.3
2	16.9
3	17.2
4	33.3
5	14.4
6	9.0
7	1.5
8+	5.4

mean=4.6 persons [a]

a 228,000 people are attracted to coastal communities for the primary purpose of charter fishing.

Table 7. Relationship of Persons on the Charter Trip.

Relationship	Percent of Parties
Immediate Family	59.4
Extended Family	6.8
Friends	27.3
Business Associates	6.5

Table 8. Percent of Travel Party Members that Charter Fished and Charter Fishing was Their Primary Trip Activity.

	Percent of Travel Party That Charter Fished on the Trip	Charter Fishing was the Primary Activity
Yes	92.4	82.7
No	7.6	17.3

Table 9. Percent of Customers Who Went on Full Day and Half Day Charter Trips.

Length of Trip	Percent
Full Day	32
Half Day	68

Table 10. Number of Charters Customers Went on During Their Trips.

Number of Charters	Percent
One Charter	76
Two Charters	20
Three or More Charters	4

<u>Length of Trips on Which People Charter Fished</u>

Charter fishing generates a large number of overnight stays in the state and communities where the charter boats are located. Eighty three percent of the trips on which people charter fished involved at least one overnight stay (Table 10). The average trip was two (2.2) nights. Over half of the customers (56.5%) stayed in hotels and motels, 13% in campgrounds, and 8% with family or friends (Table 11). The 83% of the parties whose primary trip purpose was charter fishing generate approximately 142,000 hotel/motel room nights and 16,000 campsite nights in Michigan a year.

Table 11. Length (number of nights) of Trips on Which People Charter Fish.

Number of Nights	Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	27.2	27.2
1	26.4	53.6
2	18.5	72.1
3	10.6	82.7
4	4.0	86.7
5	1.5	88.1
6	2.0	90.1
7	3.7	93.8
8	1.2	95.1
9	1.2	96.3
10 or more	3.7	100

Mean = 2.2 nights Median = 1.4 nights[a]

Table 12. Type of Lodging Used by Charter Boat Customers.

Lodging Type	Percent
Motel	56.5
Campgrounds	13.0
Relatives /Friends	8.3
Second Home/Cottage	6.4
Other (Lodge,B&Bs,Condos)	15.8

<u>Charter Boat Parties and Experience on the Boat</u>

The average charter fishing party consisted of four persons. Almost a third (32.4%) of the parties consisted of three or less customers (Table 13). Thirty percent of the parties were more than 4 persons. Ninety two percent of the parties caught at least one fish on their charter trips (Table 14). Almost three quarters of the persons who caught fish were allowed to set the hook themselves instead of having the captain set it for them (Table 15). The majority of these indicated that being allowed to set the hook improved the quality of the experience. Over half (53.8%) of the persons who did not set the hook themselves would have liked the opportunity to do so.

Table 13. Number of Persons in The Charter Boat Party.

NUMBER	PERCENT
1	2.0
2	15.0
3	15.4
4	37.5
5	15.4
6 +	14.7
Mean= 4.1 persons	

Table 14. Percent of Charter Parties that Caught Fish.

Someone in Party Caught Fish	Percent
YES	92.3
NO	7.7

Table 15. Percent of Customers Who Set the Hook on the Fish they Caught, Percent Who Said it Improved their Experience, and Percent Who Would Have Liked to Set Hook

	Percent
Set Hook	73.9 [a]
	26.1
Setting The Hook Improved the Experience	94.9 [b]
Would Have Preferred To Set the Hook Themselves	53.8 [c]

a Only included persons who caught fish
b Percent of those who set hooks themselves
c Percent of those who caught fish but did not set the hook.

The majority (86.2%) of the customers made reservations for the charter before leaving home (Table 16). Over two thirds (69.3%) made the reservation more than thirty days prior to the trip. Most (86%) made the reservation directly with the captain, 14% through an intermediary such as a reservation service, motel/hotel, or bait and tackle shop. Nine percent of the customers made a reservation after they arrived in the area where the boat was located. Two thirds of these people were able to reserve the boat of their choice; the other third had no preferred boat. About 5% of the customers were walk-ons without a reservation.

Charter customers were asked what information sources they utilized to select the charter captain/boat. Most customers utilized more than one source of information. Almost half (46%) relied on recommendations and information provided by family or friends, most (75%) of whom had fished with the captain previously. Approximately 19% used information provided in the captain's brochure, 11% saw the boat and made inquiries to the captain, and 5% relied to some extent on signs near the boat. Another 5% received information from bait and tackle stores.

Table 16. Percent of Customers Who Made a Reservation on the Charter Boat.

Reservation Behavior	Percent	
Made A Reservation before leaving home		86.2
7 or less days before the trip	15.9	
8 to 14 days before the trip	7.1	
15 to 30 days before the trip	7.7	
31 to 60 days before the trip	40.5	
61 to 90 days before the trip	10.7	
More than 3 months before the trip	18.1	
How was reservation made		
Thru the Captain	86.0	
Reservation Service	5.0	
Bait and Tackle Store	3.0	
Motel/Hotel	2.0	
Other	4.0	
Made a Reservation once they arrived in the area where boat was located		9.0
Were able to charter their preferred boat	64.0	
Had no Preferred boat	36.0	
Did not make a Reservation		4.8

Table 17. Information Sources Used to Select Charter Boats.

Source	Percent[a]
Friend/Relative Who Accompanied	23.9
Friend/Relative Who Did Not	22.0
Bait and Tackle Stores	5.0
Businesses near the Boat	3.8
Saw the Boat and Inquired	11.2
Signs Located Near the Boat	5.3
Brochure	19.3
Michigan Charter Boat Guide	3.6
Local Chamber of Commerce	2.1
Outdoor/Fishing/Boat Shows	5.3
Magazine Article or Ad	4.3
Newspaper Article or Ad	4.5
Television Show or Commercial	1.0
Radio Show or Commercial	.7
Reservation Service	1.9

a Does not add to 100% because people used more than one information source to select charter boats

Spending on Charter Fishing Trips

Tables 17 and 18 show spending for/on charter trips. Total trip spending by charter parties was $59.5 million. This includes spending at home in preparation for the trip, during travel to and from the location where they charter fished, and near where the charter boat was docked. Charter fees accounted for 23% ($13,800,000) of total trip related expenditures. The average charter (4.6 persons) party spent approximately $997 on trips lasting an average of 2.2 nights. Approximately 43% ($427) of this was spent within ten miles of the charter boat. The average person who goes charter fishing spends about $224 per trip including $58 in charter fees. They spent about $93 per day in communities within ten miles from the boat. Charter customers spend an average $18 at home in preparation for their trips.

The 83% of the parties whose primary trip purpose was charter fishing spent $49.5 million including $9,773,000 for lodging, 11,622,000 for meals (restaurants), and 8,175,000 for groceries. They spent approximately 21 million (not including charter fees) dollars in communities near where the boats were docked. Approximately 34% of this local spending was for lodging, 33% in restaurants, 15% for groceries (including alcoholic beverages), 1% for automobile gas, 6% for entertainment and 11% on shopping and other trip related expenditures.

The average charter boat annually generates approximately $23,000 in local spending (not including charter fees) by persons whose primary purpose for the trip was charter fishing. That means that they generate about 1.5 times more in local spending than they collect in revenues/fees. If the 1.78 multiplier that the Michigan Travel Bureau utilizes is applied to this amount, local direct and indirect spending generated by a charter boat is approximately $41,000. This does not include the direct and indirect impacts of local spending, e.g., gas, slipage, storage, repairs, supplies and labor, by the captains.

Attributes Important in Selecting a Charter Boat

Customers were asked to rank the importance of sixteen attributes in their selection of a charter boat. The three most important attributes are: 1) the captain's ability to locate fish, 2) hospitality, and 3) safety (Table 20). Thirty percent indicated that ability to locate fish was of crucial importance. Safety features of the boat and hospitality were considered crucial by more than 20% of the customers. Over a third (34.3%) ranked price as either unimportant or only somewhat important in their decision regarding which boat to charter. In large part this is due to the lack of significant price differentials between boats. Less important factors included nearness of the boat to where they vacationed or their second (vacation) home, and motels/hotels in the area.

Reasons for Charter Fishing

Customers were also asked about the reasons why they chartered a fishing boat (Table 21). Important reasons for charter fishing include: (1) challenge and excitement, (2) relaxation, (3) to enjoy nature and the lakes, and (4) the chance to get away. Less important reasons are catching fish to eat, catching many fish, and the chance to catch a trophy fish.

Table 18. Spending by Charter Fishing Parties.

Category of Spending	Entire Trip [c] Party [a]	Entire Trip [c] Person	Local Area [d] (near the boat) Party	Local Area [d] (near the boat) Person	Total Spending by Charter Parties: All parties	Total Spending by Charter Parties: Primarily for Charter Fishing [e]	Local Spending by Charter Parties: All Parties	Local Spending by Charter Parties: Primarily for Charter Fishing [e]
Charter Fees	$231.00	57.70 [b]	-----	----	13,800,000	11,454,000	--------	--------
Lodging	$196.90	42.80 [f]	145.80	31.70	11,775,000 [l]	9,773,000	8,719,000	7,237,000
Meals	$234.15	50.90 [g]	139.85	30.40	14,002,000	11,622,000	8,363,000	6,941,000
Groceries [h]	$164.70	35.80 [i]	63.00	13.70	9,849,000	8,175,000	3,767,000	3,127,000
Gas	$ 25.50	5.55	5.60	1.20	1,525,000	1,266,000	335,000	278,000
Entertainment	$ 50.30	10.95	27.60	6.00	3,008,000	2,497,000	1,650,000	1,370,000
Shopping and other spending	$ 94.80	20.60 [j]	45.10	9.80	5,669,000	4,705,000	2,697,000	2,238,000
Total					59,628,000	49,492,000	25,531,000 [k]	21,191,000 [k]

a Based on charter boat parties of 4 persons

b All spending other that charter fees are based on travel parties which averaged 4.6 persons

c Total trip includes : at home in preparation, travel to and from the area, and in the local area

d Local spending was defined on the questionnaire as within 10 miles from the boat Some people did not stay overnight within 10 miles from the where the boat was docked. They stayed overnight in other areas more than 10 miles away.

e 83% of the parties made their trips for the primary or only purpose of charter fishing

f $ 19.45 per person per night. 27% did not stay overnight, almost 15% stayed with relatives or in a in a second home, and 13% in campgrounds

g $ 15.90 per person per day

h includes snacks and alcoholic beverages

i $ 11.20 per person per day for the trip

j $ 6.45 per person per day for the trip.

k Many of the captains do not reside in the communities where their boats are docked and it not possible to determine the percent of charter fees that remain or are spent in local economies

l 605,000 person nights. Approximately 171,000 hotel/motel room nights, 19,500 campsite nights

Table 19. Distribution of Spending by Charter Parties.

Category of Spending	At Home in preparation/ before the trip		Travel or Outside Area the area where boat was located[a]		Local Near Boat Spending[b]	
	party	person	party	person	party	persons
Lodging	----	-----	51.10	11.10	145.80	31.70
Groceries	56.15[c]	12.20	45.55	9.90	63.00	13.70
Meals	3.00	.65	91.30	19.85	139.85	30.40
Gas	9.00	1.95	11.00	2.40	5.50	1.20
Entertainment	----	-----	22.70	4.95	27.60	6.00
Shopping and other expenses	14.25	3.10	35.40	7.70	45.15	9.80
Total	82.40	17.90	257.10	55.90	426.90	92.80

a Some persons stayed overnight but outside the area where the charter boat was docked

b Within 10 miles of the charter boat.

c Includes snacks and alcoholic beverages

Table 20. Attributes Important in Selecting a Charter Boat.

Attributes	NI 0	SI 1	I 2	VI 3	C 4	Mean
	---------	Percent	---------	---------		
Captain's Ability to locate fish	1.7	3.5	18.0	47.2	29.6	3.0
Safety Features	4.7	3.8	24.3	44.6	22.6	2.8
Hospitality shown guests	2.6	4.3	20.4	51.7	21.0	2.8
Catch Rate of fish in the area	5.3	9.1	32.3	39.3	14.1	2.5
Species found in the area	8.6	11.5	28.6	37.5	13.9	2.4
Comfort Features on the boat	8.7	13.4	38.5	31.8	7.6	2.2
Appearance of the boat	12.2	13.7	37.6	32.9	3.5	2.0
Contamination levels of fish in the area	22.7	18.2	21.5	23.3	14.3	1.9
Size of the Boat	14.1	17.6	38.2	25.6	4.4	1.9
Price	14.4	19.9	37.2	23.5	5.0	1.9
Nearness to Their vacation location	58.5	10.4	13.4	14.0	3.6	.9
Motels in Area	49.5	17.7	22.8	8.4	1.5	.9
Nearness to their second home	76.4	5.6	8.4	7.1	2.5	.5

NI = not important I = important C = crucial
SI = somewhat important VI= very important

Table 21. Reasons Why Customers Went Charter Fishing.

Reasons	NI 0	SI 1	I 2	VI 3	CR 4	Mean
	---------	Percent	---------	---------		
Challenge / Excitement	4.4	5.8	29.4	43.1	17.5	2.64
For Relaxation	3.9	6.9	29.4	44.4	15.4	2.61
To Enjoy Nature/Lakes	4.5	8.7	37.5	36.7	12.7	2.44
To Get Away	13.7	10.7	26.6	32.3	16.7	2.30
Family Togetherness	23.6	11.5	24.1	27.5	13.4	1.96
For Companionship	16.7	19.0	28.9	27.7	7.7	1.92
Catch Fish to Eat	18.1	29.9	28.5	17.5	5.6	1.62
To Catch Many Fish	27.8	29.8	22.8	14.5	5.7	1.41
To Catch A Trophy Fish	43.7	21.5	17.7	11.4	5.6	1.15
Improve Fishing Skill	44.9	22.8	18.8	10.0	3.5	1.00
To do Business	79.5	5.7	7.3	5.7	1.8	.50

Customer Characteristics

Seventy percent of charter boat customers are Michigan residents. Over a third live in southeast Michigan (Table 22). Approximately 19% of the customers reside in Ohio (11%), Illinois (4.5%) and Indiana (3.7%). Four percent of the customers are from Southeast and South Central states.

Charter customers have relatively high household incomes (Table 23). Three quarters have household incomes of $30,000 or more, 44% $50,000 or more. Over a quarter (26.7%) have college degrees (BS/BA), and 15% have advanced degrees (Table 24).

Approximately 57% of charter boat customers consider themselves to be either experienced or expert anglers. About 13% rate themselves as beginners. Over half have been fishing for 25 years or more. Approximately 14% have fished five or less years.

Table 22. Resident Zip Code Zones of Charter Customers.

Zip Code Zone		Percent	
Michigan			70.0
Royal Oak	(480)	21.7	
Detroit	(481,482)	14.3	
Flint	(484,485)	7.9	
Saginaw	(486,487)	4.2	
Lansing	(488,489)	6.9	
Kalamazoo	(490,491)	4.6	
Jackson	(492)	1.5	
Gd.Rapids	(493-495)	5.4	
Traverse Cty	(496)	2.2	
Gaylord	(497)	1.3	
U.P.	(498,499)	0.0	
Ohio			11.0
Columbus	(430-433)	2.4	
Toledo	(434-436)	4.2	
Cleveland	(440-441)	.8	
Cincinnati	(450-452)	1.4	
Other		2.2	
Illinois			4.5
N.Suburban	(600-603)	1.5	
S Suburban	(604,605)	.7	
Chicago	(606)	1.0	
Other		1.3	
Indiana			3.7
Kentucky			1.5
Southeast(Tennessee,Mississipi,Alabama,Florida)			2.0
South Central(Texas,Louisiana,Arkansas,Missouri)			2.2
Other States and Canada			5.1

Table 23. Gross Family Income of Charter Boat Customers.

Gross Family Income	Percent of Charter Customers
Less than 10,000	1.9
10,000-14,999	1.7
15,000-19,999	3.4
20,000-24,999	6.7
25,000-29,999	8.0
30,000-34,999	11.1
35,000-39,999	8.7
40,000-44,999	7.2
45,000-49,999	7.0
50,000 or more	44.3

Table 24. Education Levels of Charter Boat Customers.

Level	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Grade School	1.0	1.0
Some High School	3.1	4.1
High School	25.6	29.6
Some College	28.4	58.1
College Degree	24.3	82.4
Some Graduate School	2.4	84.8
Advanced Degree	15.2	100.0

Table 25. Customer Skill Levels and Years of Fishing.

Skill Level/Years of Fishing	Percent
Skill Level	
Beginner	12.8
Somewhat Experienced	31.0
Experienced	50.4
Expert	5.8
Years of Fishing	
5 or less years	13.6
6 to 10 years	8.2
11 to 15 years	5.7
16 to 20 years	13.7
21 to 25 years	8.2
26 + years	50.6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Charter fishing is an important element of Michigan's tourism industry. Approximately 228,000 persons a year are attracted to coastal communities primarily for the purpose of charter fishing; approximately 67,000 are out-of-state residents. These people spend about $ 21 million, not including charter fees, in communities located near the charter boats. Out-of-state residents whose primary reason for their trip to Michigan was charter fishing spent at least $ 7 million in the state in 1985. State agencies and local units of government should take this into consideration when making decisions which effect the charter boat industry. The Travel Bureau, regional and local tourism organizations, and chambers of commerce should cooperate with the industry to promote charter fishing.

The increasing number of charter boats in Michigan and surrounding states makes it more important that charter captains constantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their marketing efforts. They should identify the types (market segments) of customers they want to attract and develop service offerings and promotion which will appeal to them. Some customers are concerned only with catching fish, others place more importance on other aspects that create a charter fishing experience, e.g., hospitality, relaxation. Based on the results of the survey it appears that some charter captains may be over emphasizing the importance of catching many fish at the expense of other elements of the experience. If setting the hook themselves is more important to a customer than a fish "in the box" the captain should offer them the opportunity to do so.

Charter captains should recognize that they are providing and marketing a service. Given the importance of word-of-mouth promotion they should focus on providing a quality recreational experience to every customer who fishes with them. Their promotional material, e.g. brochures, should stress their unique strengths that are important to their target markets. Promotional material should also include non-fishing opportunities and facilities located near where their boats are docked. Greater emphasis should be placed on cooperative promotions with other charter boats, motels, and campgrounds. Captains should work with local communities to develop charter boat facilities/docks which are accessible and aesthetically pleasing to both existing and potential customers.

Michigan's charter boat industry/association should develop promotional materials which stress the safety, affordability, and value of charter fishing as compared with other types of fishing and recreational activities. At present charter fishing attracts primarily high income people. The industry should also, in cooperation with the Travel Bureau, more aggressively market Michigan charter fishing to out-of-state markets. There appears to be special potential to market Michigan charter fishing in Southeastern states. The promotion could stress quality fishing in a cooler less humid climate. Special attention should also be directed at promoting spring and early summer charter fishing in an effort to distribute demand throughout the season.

Marketing is a key to the continued success of Michigan's charter boat industry. It will require greater cooperation between captains, and between the industry and state agencies including the Fisheries Division, Waterways Division, and the Travel Bureau.