

# Oregon's ocean charter customers: Who are they and how do we attract them?

M.E. Lee, M.J. Manfredo, and D.E. Giles



- There appears to be a relatively large, unexplored market opportunity in charterboat sightseeing, whale watching, and a combination of these trips.
- Promotional efforts that focus on a charter trip's most important attributes generate more interest in taking a trip than those that do not.

These are just two of the findings of the 3-year research program undertaken by Oregon State University and funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The program's goal was to increase public awareness of, and interest in, Oregon's charterboat industry.

Working with the Oregon Coast Charterboat Association and coastal communities, we used research projects to accomplish this goal, including surveying Oregon residents about charter fishing, interviewing visitors at Oregon's EXPO-86 Pavilion, surveying charter customers at dockside, developing and distributing brochures about charter opportunities, and inviting outdoor writers from across the country to take charter trips and write about their experiences.

This publication provides an overview of results and suggests ways this information may be used in promot-

ing charter trips. Findings presented here focus on charterboat customers—both existing and potential customers. We hope to help answer three questions:

1. Who are charterboat customers?
2. What charter services do they want?
3. How do we reach them?

However, our outline here is a bit different. In preparing our answer to question 3, we realized that our suggestions fall rather neatly into two categories:

- those that seemed to follow from the *kinds of people* our customers and potential customers appear to be, and
- those that follow from the *preferences* these same folks expressed in our surveys.

So we divided "Reaching your customers" in two parts; you'll find Part 1 on page 3 and Part 2 on page 4.

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Marty E. Lee, assistant professor of recreation, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff; Michael J. Manfredo, associate professor of recreational resources, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins; and Donald E. Giles, Extension marine tourism specialist, Oregon State University.



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

Application of our findings to individual charter businesses may vary, and it depends on individual interests and capabilities. We hope you can find your own meaning in the findings and suggestions presented here and, where appropriate, apply them to your specific business situation.

For those interested in the methods used in the various projects, brief descriptions are presented in Appendix A. Other grant-sponsored promotional activities are listed in Appendix B.

## Who are your customers?

A major portion of the project was directed toward obtaining information about existing and potential charterboat customers. To obtain current information on numbers and types of charter trips being taken, we contacted a sample of Oregon charter operators.

From existing customers, we were interested in learning about charter opportunity preferences, sources of information influencing charter decisions, and various trip and demographic characteristics.

From potential customers, we were interested in learning about the types of products of interest, reasons for not going on a charter trip, and demographic characteristics.

We conducted three separate surveys toward this end, including an Oregon resident survey, a dockside survey, and a survey at EXPO-86.

### Q: What proportion of ocean charter trips taken are for salmon fishing? for bottomfishing? to watch whales? to sightsee?

Of the 7,881 charter trips reported in the 1986 survey of charter operators:

	%
Salmon fishing trips	65
Bottomfishing trips	31
Sightseeing trips	2
Whale-watching trips	2

### Q: Are Oregon residents interested in going ocean charter fishing?

(from Oregon resident survey)

	%
Had been charter fishing in the past 12 months	11
Thought about going but didn't go	32
Hadn't thought about going but were interested in taking a charter trip	9
Hadn't been, weren't interested	47

### Interest in taking charter trips in the future (from Oregon Wildlife readership survey):

Type of trip	% likely to take a trip in the near future
Any charter trip	40
Salmon charter	38
Deep sea/sturgeon charter	27
Whale-watching charter	12
Sightseeing charter	12

### Q: Who are these existing and potential customers? (from Oregon resident survey)

Where they live	Coastal cities	Willamette Valley cities
Have taken a charter trip	39%	27%
Interested in going	28%	16%
Gender	Male	Female
Have taken a charter trip	44%	56%
Interested in going	37%	63%
Employment status		
Employed	45%	
Retired	24%	
Homemakers	15%	
Self-employed	11%	
Unemployed	3%	

### Q: How do people get introduced to charter fishing? (from dockside survey)

	%
Parent	32
Friend	31
Other family member	17
Business associate	11
Grandparent	6
Other	4

### Q: What sources of information do charter anglers use in deciding to go fishing? (from dockside survey)

The deciding factor:

	%
Word of mouth from family or friends who recently took a charter trip	39
Brochure	9
Local merchant	7
Television program/advertisement	7
Newspaper/magazine	4
Radio	2
Other	32

### Q: What types of information might help charter customers?

(From the survey of Oregon Wildlife readers)

How knowledgeable do you feel about...

	% Not at all or slightly	% Some- what	% Mod. or high
Finding a town with a charter operator	16	19	60
Best time of year to go	33	20	48
Type of equipment and clothing to bring	19	19	63
Dealing with seasickness	21	20	59
Finding a reliable charter operator	38	24	37
What happens on different trip types	40	22	39
Costs of trips	49	24	29

**Q. Why don't more people take ocean charter trips?  
(from Oregon resident survey)**

	%
No time, schedule conflicts	43
Too expensive	22
Don't like to be out on ocean, don't like to fish	10
Didn't want to go	9
Live too far from the ocean	7
Other reasons (e.g., health, bad weather, have my own boat)	40

**Reaching your customers, Part 1**

- Oregon residents are a good target market, particularly those living in coastal cities and the Willamette Valley with its large population base.
- Advertise in coastal and Willamette Valley newspapers, magazines, etc. Be sure your promotional materials are available in coastal chambers of commerce and the State tourism office and welcome centers.
- There appears to be a fairly large, unexplored market among women and retired Oregon residents, particularly for sightseeing charter trips. The survey of Oregon's EXPO-86 Pavilion visitors found the average age of those interested in sightseeing charter trips was 50.
- Promotional activities targeting the retired market could involve advertising in magazines and newsletters published for this age group, such as *Modern Maturity*. Advertisements should emphasize issues that may be of particular concern to this group such as safety, appropriate clothes, weather to expect, length of trips, etc. (See "Where can you get more help?" page 5, for the addresses of two organizations for retired persons you can contact about mailing lists or advertisement guidelines.)
- Subscribers to *Oregon Wildlife* may be a particularly good potential market, and it may be worthwhile to contact the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to see if the mailing list is available for purchase.
- To get people interested in taking charter trips, you may want to work with local merchants to offer package deals that include other activities such as dinner, a museum pass, etc. By providing customers with "more for their money," you may lure those reluctant to come to the coast just to take a charter trip.
- It's important in promotional materials to let customers know what it is they're getting for their money—describe the "charter experience." You want them to realize it's well worth the cost.
- Word of mouth is the best form of advertising. Offer incentives (group or family discounts) for customers to bring family and friends. Collect the names and addresses of your customers and keep in contact. Your name will come to mind if they decide to go again or if someone asks them for something fun and unusual to do.

- A fair number of people don't know how to find a reliable charter operator. Be sure the local chambers of commerce are aware of you and your services. If you're a member of a charter boat association such as the Oregon Coast Charterboat Association, be sure information on your organization is available to potential customers.
- Make information available on when to go on a charter trip. People need to know when a particular type of fishing is good, when the season is open and when is the best time to take whale-watching and wildlife-viewing trips.
- Provide a quality experience—not just in terms of catching fish but in all-around service, safety, and comfort so customers will pass the word around about a particularly good skipper and a great time.

## What charter services do customers want?

**Q: What kinds of charter trips are people interested in taking?**

	EXPO-86 survey	Oregon Wildlife survey
Sightseeing trips	60%	64%
Whale watching trips	45%	75%
Salmon fishing trips	39%	90%
Deep sea fishing trips (rock bass, cod, snapper)	18%	84%
Bird watching trips	na <sup>a</sup>	46%
Sturgeon fishing trips	na <sup>a</sup>	67%

<sup>a</sup>Not included in the survey.

**Q. What attributes of a charter trip are most important to existing and potential charterboat customers?  
(from *Oregon Wildlife* readership survey)**

Agreed with the statement: "I would go on a charter trip..."

	%
For the challenge of catching fish	78
To catch big fish	65
To be with friends	62
To catch lots of fish	60
To be with family	60
To see ocean scenery	52
To view ocean mammals	50
To learn more about marine life	50

"What aspects of a charter trip are most important to you?"(most often mentioned responses from Oregon resident survey)

	% Had been out on a charter	% Interested in going
Catching fish	62	60
Being out on the ocean in a boat	22	36
Seeing birds, wildlife	8	11
Being with friends, family	12	7
Good weather	3	8
Miscellaneous other reasons	42	24

#### **Q. What else might operators offer charterboat customers?**

Recreation travel is typically done with multiple recreation goals. Packaging recreation activities together is a way of satisfying multiple goals and making more efficient use of promotional resources.

Visitors surveyed at the Oregon EXPO-86 Pavilion were asked to indicate activities they would be interested in doing on a future trip to Oregon. Five types of charter customers were identified among EXPO-86 visitors we surveyed:

- salmon anglers, 15%;
- angler generalists (interested in both salmon and bottomfishing), 8%;
- whale watchers, 8%;
- sightseers, 25%; and
- nonconsumptive generalists (interested in whale watching and sightseeing), 18%.

Each angler group demonstrated very distinct differences in activity interests for their intended Oregon visits. For example, here are the top five activities of greatest interest:

- Salmon anglers (15%)*
- Streamfishing salmon/steelhead
  - Sightseeing
  - Shopping/dining
  - Stream fishing for trout
  - Beachcombing
- Angler generalists (8%)*
- Sightseeing
  - Visiting national/state parks

- Stream fishing for trout
- Visiting museums/historic places
- Lake fishing

*Whale watchers (8%)*

- Sightseeing
- Visiting national/state parks
- Beachcombing
- Hiking
- Swimming

*Sightseers (25%)*

- Sightseeing
- Visiting national/state parks
- Shopping/dining
- Visiting museums/historic places
- Picnicking

*Nonconsumptive generalists (18%)*

- Sightseeing
- Visiting national/state parks
- Shopping/dining
- Visiting museums/historic places
- Picnicking

Groups were also compared on other trip-related differences in terms of mode of transportation, food, and lodging, although few significant differences were found. The most common form of transportation for all would be personal auto, and the most likely form of lodging would be motels.

Resorts were the second most likely form of lodging; however, salmon anglers would be much more likely to choose a resort than the other groups. The preferred dinner locations would be medium-price restaurants (\$5 to \$10 per person).

Other differences between groups were found, relating to past visitation to Oregon and residence (see chart below).

#### **Reaching your customers, Part 2**

Salmon and bottom fishing trips were of most interest to Oregon resident subscribers to *Oregon Wildlife*, although there was considerable interest in sightseeing and whale watching among this group. The traditional focus has been on fishing charters, particularly salmon. This strategy has proven successful, and now there may be opportunity to attract those interested in nonfishing activities such as sightseeing and wildlife-viewing charter trips.

	Salmon anglers	Angler generalists	Whale watchers	Sight-seers	Noncons. generalists
Been to Oregon previously	80%	65%	81%	67%	61%
Residence:					
Canada	35%	44%	57%	60%	50%
West Coast (CA, WA)	40%	26%	27%	17%	21%
Other states	25%	30%	17%	23%	29%

Catching fish is top priority for Oregon residents although other opportunities also appear to be important, such as being out on the ocean and being with friends and family. Include these other experience opportunities in promotional materials and offer group or family discounts on trips.

Common sense would tell us that our advertising efforts should focus on the most important and appealing aspect of charterboat trips. Our market survey suggested that people would respond more to charter advertisements that focused on being able to catch fish than those featuring wildlife or scenery. We tested that assumption and found it to be true. Among *Oregon Wildlife* subscribers, there was a 33% greater response to promotional materials featuring fish caught than those featuring a sea lion.

Instate ads will attract greater attention if the focus is on catching fish. Operators may then be able to introduce charter customers to other activities such as whale watching after they have customers' attention. Don't ignore those interested in nonfishing charter trips.

Promotional materials targeted at Canadians should emphasize sightseeing and other opportunities, as there was considerable interest among this group in nonfishing charters as well as the more traditional fishing trips.

A variety of other activities of interest were identified among the five charter customer groups (salmon anglers, angler generalists, whale watchers, sightseers, and nonconsumptive generalists). People typically do more than one activity on a recreation outing.

Charterboat promotional materials could include information on other activities of interest to these groups that are found in your area. The activities and attractions you include may depend on the type of charter customers you wish to attract.

For instance, for whale watchers you might include information on the beaches, parks, or museums in your area and nearby places to hike and swim. For salmon anglers, provide information on places to stream fish for salmon, steelhead, and trout, and a nearby beach for beachcombing. Brag a little!

From the dockside survey, we learned that word of mouth from family and friends contributed most to people's decision to take a charter trip. Second to information from others was use of a brochure. Brochures are a popular form of advertising and can transmit a great deal of information.

One of our surveys tested the effectiveness of brochures in increasing people's awareness of—and interest in—taking a charter trip. We found:

1. brochures can be very useful in making potential customers aware of charter opportunities, and
2. they're more effective if they're available during trip planning activities rather than after itineraries have been made and people have begun their trips.

Make brochures available to travel agents, state welcome centers, chambers of commerce, etc. Include in brochures the things visitors know least about, such as trip costs, fishing and whale-migration seasons, what happens on a charter trip, etc.

Charter trip brochures could also include information on motels, campgrounds, and restaurants in your area as well as other attractions and things to do. This information is useful in planning a visit to the coast that would include a charter trip.

We studied the cost effectiveness of two methods of advertising charterboat experiences:

- Send full-color postcards offering a free color brochure on Oregon charterboating to a sample of people; send the brochure to everyone who responds.
- Simply send the color brochure to a sample of people.

Then we compared those who requested more information (the brochure) to those who received it without asking, in terms of increased knowledge, interest, and intentions to participate in charterboating.

The results showed that those who asked for more information were more likely to take a charter trip than those who didn't. We also found, however, that it's much more expensive to target this group.

The mass mailing approach—simply sending people the brochure—was much less costly in increasing knowledge and interest in charterboating and intentions to take a charter trip.

While mass mailing may be a good way to go, don't ignore those who want information. Get in touch with the Oregon Tourism Division in Salem and ask for the names and addresses of people who ask for information about ocean charter trips. You could then send these people promotional materials about trips offered, overnight accommodations in the area, places to eat, other things to do, etc.

## Where can you get more help?

This summary of results of Oregon State University's 3-year charterboat promotional project is just one source of information to help promote Oregon's ocean charter opportunities.

### OSU Extension Sea Grant

For more information about promoting your charter business, contact:

Don Giles  
Oregon State University Extension Sea Grant  
OSU Hatfield Marine Science Center  
Newport, Oregon 97365  
phone (503) 867-0245

**Publications.** Single reprints of the following titles are available at no charge from the address above:

*Marketing Your Charter Boat Enterprise: Putting Relationships to Work*, Bruce DeYoung. Information Bulletin 206, Cornell Cooperative Extension Publication, 1987. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

"Diversity—A Unique Approach," Pat Wray, *Charter Industry Trade News*, May-June 1985, pp. 35-36.

"An Oregon Success Story," Pat Wray, <i>Charter Industry Trade News</i> , Nov.-Dec. 1985, pp. 38-39.	Lincoln City	Oregon Coast Community College 4157 NW Hwy. 101, Suite 123 Lincoln City, OR 97367 (503) 994-4166
"Gimmicks and Gadgets to Get 'em Back," Joe Wolff, <i>Charter Industry Trade News</i> . Jan.-Feb. 1986, pp. 34-35.	Medford	Southern Oregon State College, Medford 229 N Bartlett Medford, OR 97501 (503) 772-3478
"Increasing the Use of Underutilized Recreational Fish and Fishing Opportunities," Christopher Dewees, Greg Guagnano, and Elizabeth Strange. NMFS Administrative Report, SW Region, Publication No. 88-9.	Oregon City	Clackamas Community College 108 8th St. Oregon City, OR 97045 (503) 656-4447
"Competing for the Recreational Dollar: An Analysis of the California Commercial Passenger-Carrying Fishing Vessel Industry," Christoper M. Dewees, Elizabeth M. Strange, and Greg Guagnano, <i>Marine Fisheries Review</i> , 52(1), 1990.	Portland	Portland Community College Ross Island Center, B-13 12000 SW 49th Ave. Portland, OR 97219 (503) 244-6111, ext. 2562

### *Organizations for retired persons*

National Assn. of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE)  
1533 New Hampshire Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20036-1279

American Assn. of Retired Persons (AARP)  
Admin. Offices, National Headquarters  
1909 K St. NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
(publishers of *Modern Maturity*)

### *SBA publications*

Ask your community college for the local office of the U.S. Small Business Administration. These titles may be helpful; they're from the 1989 SBA *Directory of Business Development Publications* (which contains ordering information):

- MA 4.004 *Marketing for Small Business: An Overview* (\$1.00)
- MA 4.008 *Tips on Getting More for Your Marketing Dollar* (\$1.00)
- MA 4.012 *Marketing Checklist for Small Retailers* (\$1.00)
- MA 4.015 *Advertising Guidelines for Small Retail Firms* (\$0.50)
- MA 4.016 *Advertising Media Decisions* (\$1.00)
- MA 4.019 *Research Your Market* (\$1.00)

### *Small Business Development Center Network*

The network (21 centers) includes all of Oregon's community colleges and three state universities. The center nearest you should have the SBA publications listed above. Centers also offer workshops and conferences. Here are some addresses:

Coos Bay      Southwestern Oregon Community College  
                  1988 Newmark St.  
                  Coos Bay, OR 97420  
                  (503) 888-2525, ext. 259

Grants Pass     Rogue Community College  
                  206 NE 7th St.  
                  Grants Pass, OR 97526  
                  (503) 474-0762

Roseburg	Umpqua Community College 744 SE Rose Roseburg, OR 97470 (503) 672-2535 or 672-3679
Salem	Chemeketa Community College 365 Ferry St. SE Salem, OR 97301 (503) 399-5181
Seaside	Clatsop Community College 1240 South Holladay Seaside, OR 97138 (503) 738-3347
Tillamook	Tillamook Bay CC Service District 401 B Main St. Tillamook, OR 97141 (503) 842-2551

## **Appendix A: Project methods**

Information contained in this publication comes from several sources. A brief description of the target population, survey period, sample size, and information obtained for each survey is provided below.

### *Survey of charter operators*

- Target population: Oregon licensed charter operators
- Survey period: May 1987
- Sample size: 89 operators
- Information obtained: Number and types of charter trips taken in 1986.

### *Oregon resident survey*

- Target population: Oregon resident adults
- Survey period: Summer 1986
- Sample size: 1048 residents
- Information obtained: Past and future charter trip participation, desirable charter trip attributes.

### *"Oregon Wildlife" readership survey*

- Target population: Willamette Valley residents who subscribe to *Oregon Wildlife*, a magazine distributed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Survey period: Summer 1987
- Sample size: 30,500 subscribers used in three surveys
- Information obtained: Attitudes, knowledge, and intentions regarding charterboating; cost-effectiveness of using brochures vs. postcard advertising; and comparison of advertising features.

### *Dockside survey*

- Target population: Charter customers
- Survey period: Summer 1986
- Sample size: 250 charter customers
- Information gathered: Influences on decision to take a charter trip and introduction to charter fishing.

### *EXPO 86 survey*

- Target population: Non-Oregonian visitors to Oregon's EXPO-86 Pavilion at Vancouver, British Columbia
- Survey period: July 15-September 15, 1986
- Sample size: 667 visitors
- Information gathered: Interest in Oregon charter trips and other travel-related activities

### *Brochure distribution project*

- Target population: Tourists en route to the Oregon coast
- Survey period: May-August 1985
- Sample size: 400 tourists
- Information gathered: Effectiveness of distributing an informational brochure to increase awareness, interest, and participation in charterboating.

## **Appendix B: Other grant-supported promotion activities**

A number of promotional activities were conducted in association with the National Marine Fisheries Service grant. Major activities included:

- A radio program, *Ocean Fish Line*, provided up-to-date information during the summer of 1986 about coastal weather conditions, fishing success, and the diversity of charter opportunities available. Charter operators provided this information. During the relatively short time the program was aired (July 1-September 15), four Oregon radio stations carried *Ocean Fish Line*.
- Familiarization tours conducted over 3 years involved inviting 69 travel and outdoor writers to the Oregon coast; they were hosted by charterboat operators and local businesses. This resulted in 47 articles in newspapers and magazines such as *Outdoor Life* and *Field and Stream*. The equivalent advertising costs of these articles was \$21,000.

The Extension Sea Grant Program, a component of the OSU Extension Service, provides education, training, and technical assistance to people with ocean-related needs and interests.



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Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O.E. Smith, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

The Extension Sea Grant Program is supported in part by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

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