

**NOTICE:**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of reproductions of copyrighted material. One specified condition is that the reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses a reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

**RESTRICTIONS:**

This student work may be read, quoted from, cited, and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission by the author.

Albright College Gingrich Library

# Mapping the Consumer Profile of the American Sport Fisherman

Benjamin Foreman

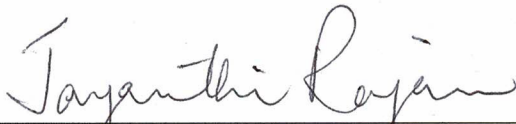
Candidate for the degree

Bachelor of Sciences

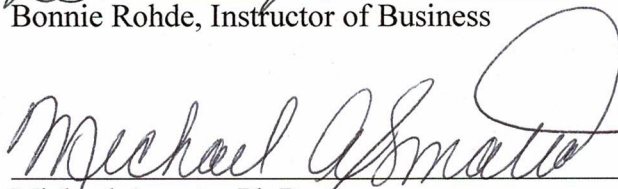
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

College Honors

Departmental Distinction in Business, Accounting, & Economics

  
Jayanthi Rajan, Instructor of Business

  
Bonnie Rohde, Instructor of Business

  
Michael Armato, Ph.D.


Albright College Gingrich Library

F. Wilbur Gingrich Library  
Special Collections Department  
Albright College

Release of Senior Thesis

I hereby grant to the Special Collections Department of the F. Wilbur Gingrich Library at Albright College the nonexclusive right and privilege to reproduce, disseminate, or otherwise preserve the Senior Honors Thesis described below in any noncommercial manner that furthers the educational, research or public service purposes of Albright College. Copyright privileges remain with me, the author.

Title: Mapping the Consumer Profile of the American Sport Fisherman

Signature of Author:  Date: 4/16/19

Printed Name of Author: Benjamin Foreman

Street Address: 9 Alsace Ave

City, State, Zip Code: Temple, PA, 19560

Albright College Gingrich Library

Mapping the Consumer Profile of the Sport Fisherman

Mapping the Consumer Profile of the Sport Fisherman

Benjamin Foreman '19

Albright College

Albright College Gingrich Library

## Abstract

*The recreational fishing industry generates over \$115 billion per year in revenue and creates more than 820,000 jobs around the world (Southwick Associates, 2016). For the purposes of this study, “sport fisherman” is an identity adopted by anglers who consider fishing a lifestyle rather than a hobby or occasional recreation. Given the fact that they are so serious about their craft, they are interested in high quality gear that delivers high performance. The sport fisherman cannot be singled out as a discernable entity, but the target group that we refer to as “sport fishermen” is a segment of the population whose background and interests span different subsets of the American population. In this research, we will profile this consumer group using demographic, psychographic, lifestyle and geo-demographic parameters. This research analyzed secondary data including industry reports, Nielsen PRIZM segments and existing literature to accurately describe the sport fisherman as a consumer. In addition to secondary data, primary quantitative research data was collected through a survey of avid sports fishermen, some of whom were “pro staff” members of existing fishing brands. A thorough, accurate consumer profile of the sport fisherman (buyer personas) was mapped, that brands in the industry can use for segmentation, targeting and positioning.*

*Keywords: sport fishermen, buyer personas, recreational fishing, consumer profile, lifestyle*

## Introduction

Each year, more than 49 million people of all ages and backgrounds find themselves fishing on America’s lakes, rivers, streams, and oceans. This is greater than the population of every U.S. state respectively, more than the combined number of Americans who play golf and tennis, and more than the sum of all who attend every NFL football game in any given season (Southwick Associates, 2016). Though there are several subcategories of fishing included in recreational fishing – freshwater and saltwater – the overall group of individuals who fish for pleasure, rather than for sustenance or industry, are considered “sport fishermen.” This term will be used throughout this study to describe this market segment.

The United States is in a unique position in terms of its fishing opportunities. It is one of very few nations with robust freshwater and saltwater fishing opportunities. Considering many nations are land-locked and others do not have access to significant amounts of freshwater, the United States has extensive coastlines, large rivers, streams, lakes, and estuary locations for

fishing. Not only are multiple types of fishing possible throughout the country, each state offers a wide variation of target species, methods of fishing, and regulations that must be followed. Coastal states like Florida offer the widest ranges of opportunities. From largemouth bass fishing in Lake Okeechobee and fly fishing for Tarpon on the Gulf Coast, to offshore trolling and jigging for pelagic tuna species, The Sunshine State is just one example of the diversity of targets each U.S. state has to offer.

Because of the vast opportunity for excellent fishing in the United States, the fishing industry, and those industries related to it, have become an integral part of the economy and help to sustain far more jobs and livelihoods than many recognize. However, businesses often struggle to segment their target market within the fishing industry because it is so broadly defined. Bass Pro Shops, one of the most prominent corporations in the industry, is largely successful because it offers products across a massive range of price points and practical needs. Sport fishermen are not one homogenous group across the United States or even across individual states. This thesis will analyze the consumer profile of the American sport fisherman, primarily those interested in premium, high-end gear, in order to create a more holistic view of this segment of the industry.

### **Literature Review**

The next best thing to face-to-face meeting with buyers is targeting communication to categories of buyer personas. Existing customers have already purchased and used the product. Understanding the needs of different categories of consumers will provide a broader perspective on the market potential of future offerings (Craig et al., 2011). Buyer Personas are profiles that put together a composite of the target audiences. Buyer personas map their profile, drivers, frustrations and more importantly their needs. A marketer can then determine the form and

content of the message that is best suited to the audience (Johnson, 2015). Prioritizing the needs of a category's buyer personas will help a brand in the category achieve its marketing objectives (Manone, 2018). There is no prior research that studies the buyer personas of sport fishermen. In fact, there has been no attempt to identify likely segments or personas.

Infographics are a more cognitively fitting and pleasant way of representing information (Locoro et al. 2017). Many reports point to rising interest in this visual form as an effective method for summarizing data, putting them in narrative forms, and making them more attractive to non-academic readers. Formats like infographics present complex information in a way that is easy to digest and understand (Lankow et al, 2012). Similarly, this research is the first to present the buyer personas of sport fishermen using an infographic.

In his 2014 work *Growth Hacker Marketing*, author Ryan Holiday explains the importance of product-market fit, or PMF, in detail. This essentially means that businesses must understand the group they are trying to target when creating a product and find the correct market segment for existing products (Holiday, 2014). In their early stages, companies are often so eager to start selling an innovative product that they fail to understand who they should be selling the product to. Understanding PMF is the key for businesses to actually find the right target. Firms can achieve PMF by listening to feedback from customers and continuously doing research into the types of people who are likely to use the product.

Holiday highlights the actions of Evernote, a productivity software, who's CEO barred the company from spending any money on marketing the product before they achieved the ideal product (Holiday, 2014). Though this may have slowed the growth efforts of the company in the beginning, the product now markets itself by being the best productivity and note-taking application available. In product-market fit it is important to remember that success in marketing

often stems from a product that customers find to be valuable. If they do not see value in the product, then the company is either targeting the wrong group, or the product has not been perfected. Most often a combination of both can cause businesses to crumble. Evernote clearly saw the value in crafting the perfect product and the decision to wait to sell a lesser version of the product allowed them to truly achieve product-market fit. The same tactic can be used by brands in the recreational fishing industry. By figuring out exactly what makes a product unique, deciding which consumer group could benefit most from this technology, and then marketing to them in ways that reach them, a business will be far more successful than if they tried to sell to just anyone.

### The Economics of Fishing

Fishing, in its various forms, is a very popular activity, but it is often overshadowed by sports that draw significant money and traffic to television such as baseball, football, and basketball. However, fishing also provides a substantial stimulus for the economy. According to the American Saltwater Fishing Association, fishermen spend more on gear and trips than is spent nationally on Valentine's Day, Easter, and Halloween combined. Though some were indirect, over 800,000 jobs were created or affected by recreational fishing in 2016 and many individuals have seen their lives impacted by fishermen and fishing culture. The number of people who recreationally freshwater fish in the United States has grown by 11% since 2011, which points to the growing popularity of the industry (Southwick Associates, 2016).

The outdoor recreation industry accounted for 2.2% of America's GDP in 2016. Within this segment, fishing and boating was the greatest subcategory, generating \$36.9 billion (Southwick Associates, 2016). The \$41.9 billion contribution to America's GDP by freshwater fishing was higher than that of the ground transit industry in 2016 and the contribution by

saltwater fishing, \$18.3 billion, is greater than total revenues by all Major League Baseball teams in the same year.

### **Research Methodology**

This study examines both secondary and primary data in order to provide a more holistic view of the sport fishing industry. One source of secondary data that will be used extensively in this report is the American Sportfishing Association's 2016 report on the economics of the sport fishing industry. This report focuses on fishing license purchasing statistics, statistics on macro-level economic trends in recreational fishing, and data on other activities that compete for anglers' attention and time. Though this report will not focus extensively on license purchasing statistics, it is important to note that most reports use this metric to provide accurate numbers of fishermen in an area. Generally, with the exception of those who choose to fish illegally without a license, fishing license totals are a sufficient indicator of the number of people fishing in an area. However, some states, like New Jersey, do not require resident or non-resident fishermen to purchase a license. In this case, data must be collected in another manner, thus making data collection much more difficult.

Another secondary source that will be analyzed in a more detailed manner is the 2017 Statista report on recreational fishing in the United States. This data very closely complements the data that will be sought in the primary research done on sport fishermen in the United States and will provide a useful cross-referencing tool to add validity to much of the primary data collected. Statista provides many well-crafted graphs and charts that help to explain the data collected in their study in a more relative way. This report will complement primary data for much of the demographic data explained in this report.

Nielson segmenting data reported through their Claritas 360 database will provide a detailed typology of recreational fishermen. By using this data to supplement the primary data collected, we will be able to understand the various types of fishermen that firms compete for in selling products. This data provides a somewhat illustrative approach to the segmentation that allows the brands to fill in the gaps with data they collect. Several examples of this type of segmentation will be explained in more detail, but it is crucial to understand that Nielson segmenting comes from questionnaires, media viewing habits, and focus groups conducted by the organization. This data will be used to craft the buyer personas typically used by brands to personify their target market.

The final source of data collected for this study will come from primary data collected through an online survey of known sport fishermen in the United States. Participants for this study have been asked to participate based on their affiliation as pro staff members for a brand of fishing reels. These respondents were selected because they come from a wide range of geographic and sociocultural backgrounds. The survey was sent via email to 54 individuals from an existing list of pro staff members from a brand in the fishing industry. At the conclusion of the survey, 18 respondents completed the entire questionnaire. Because of this, data collected from this survey will be used to provide qualitative validity to the secondary sources but does not have a sufficient number of responses to provide quantitative validity.

Questions in this survey attempt to validate the secondary data sources also used in this study. For instance, respondents were asked to provide generic background information like their age, education level, and state of residence. Then, this data was used to cross-tabulate with responses from several questions asked to gauge price sensitivity and preference of retailer of this group of consumers in relation to fishing-related products. A cross tabulation example

comparing results of education level and preferred retail space for fishing equipment has been included below. To gauge preferences in types of retail spaces, respondents were asked to rank their preferred locations from one to five, with 1 being most preferred and 5 being least preferred. This cross tabulation is seen in Tables 1-5. In addition to their purchasing habits, their opinions of certain manufacturing principles, such as the use of recycled materials and the country in which the goods were produced, were asked. These responses were also cross-tabulated to provide additional pieces of psychographic information for each buyer persona. A cross tabulation example comparing age to opinions on brands who promote environmentally friendly production practices has been included in Table 6. Because the survey was sent to fishermen who had an affiliation with one particular fishing reel brand, the data collected from their responses to brand preferences for fishing reels does not necessarily reflect that of the general fishing public. Therefore, brand association data has been left out of all analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Geographical Distribution**

One particularly interesting aspect of revenues generated by the fishing industry is the effect of geographical region on sales (Figure 1 and 2). Several variables, such as variation of fish species in the area, overall wealth of the area, and seasonality of fishing patterns affect the industry's profitability in certain regions. Those regions where fishermen can participate year-round or in multiple styles of fishing are generally more profitable. For instance, the South Atlantic Region of the United States boasts the highest overall retail sales among all US regions at \$95.7 billion, combining sales for both freshwater and saltwater fishing (Statista, 2017). This is one of five regions where both types of fishing are common, requiring many sport fishermen to invest in two separate categories of specialized gear.

### The Impact of Saltwater Fishing by Region

REGION	RETAILS SALES	TOTAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT	VALUE ADDED (GDP)	SALARY & WAGES	JOBS	STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUES	FEDERAL TAX REVENUES
New England	\$1,020,200,000	\$1,825,600,000	\$991,700,000	\$632,500,000	15,500	\$124,500,000	\$160,100,000
Mid-Atlantic	\$1,229,500,000	\$2,228,200,000	\$1,349,700,000	\$783,800,000	17,200	\$157,800,000	\$201,300,000
South Atlantic	\$6,474,500,000	\$11,874,100,000	\$5,974,400,000	\$3,614,200,000	83,900	\$592,400,000	\$890,400,000
West South Central	\$2,741,300,000	\$5,097,600,000	\$2,554,700,000	\$1,569,000,000	34,200	\$257,700,000	\$376,900,000
Pacific	\$2,192,200,000	\$4,087,100,000	\$2,137,400,000	\$1,340,800,000	28,200	\$247,300,000	\$330,800,000
United States	\$14,046,400,000	\$36,386,200,000	\$18,326,300,000	\$11,037,300,000	228,700	\$1,882,500,000	\$2,723,400,000

Figure 1. Source: American Sportfishing Association, 2018

### The Impact of Freshwater Fishing by Region

REGION	RETAILS SALES	TOTAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT	VALUE ADDED (GDP)	SALARY & WAGES	JOBS	STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUES	FEDERAL TAX REVENUES
New England	\$784,400,000	\$1,393,800,000	\$738,700,000	\$498,800,000	10,400	\$76,800,000	\$121,500,000
Mid-Atlantic	\$1,628,900,000	\$2,868,200,000	\$1,559,100,000	\$1,014,900,000	19,900	\$191,300,000	\$245,100,000
East North Central	\$5,456,400,000	\$9,645,900,000	\$5,067,400,000	\$2,949,500,000	75,300	\$633,300,000	\$727,800,000
West North Central	\$4,579,200,000	\$7,173,500,000	\$3,471,400,000	\$2,099,600,000	47,100	\$370,000,000	\$499,700,000
South Atlantic	\$3,094,200,000	\$5,465,600,000	\$2,809,400,000	\$1,741,600,000	41,000	\$282,300,000	\$418,900,000
East South Central	\$1,566,900,000	\$2,512,000,000	\$1,442,600,000	\$646,300,000	19,400	\$117,300,000	\$175,500,000
West South Central	\$5,977,300,000	\$10,644,500,000	\$5,681,800,000	\$3,656,300,000	92,200	\$581,700,000	\$852,600,000
Mountain	\$5,711,700,000	\$10,320,100,000	\$5,247,800,000	\$3,229,000,000	79,200	\$589,500,000	\$777,200,000
Pacific	\$4,407,800,000	\$7,874,300,000	\$3,881,000,000	\$2,369,300,000	48,000	\$474,100,000	\$594,600,000
United States	\$33,264,000,000	\$82,674,400,000	\$41,922,200,000	\$25,334,600,000	526,600	\$4,286,000,000	\$6,218,600,000

Figure 2. Source: American Sportfishing Association, 2018

Overall, the South Atlantic Region provides some of the most sought-after fishing opportunities for both freshwater and saltwater species. Mild weather permits fishermen to remain active year-round and species migrations provide opportunities to be successful with a multitude of tactics. A key state within this region, Florida, is considered the “Sportfishing Capital of the World” by countless publications because anglers flock to the area to enjoy the fishery (The Florida Keys and Key West, 2018). Therefore, many guide and charter services offer trips for people willing to pay to go fishing. The entire coastline of Florida, along with much of the interior of the state, is available for fishing and many professional guides provide access to even the most remote areas. Because of the vast opportunity presented in Florida and

the South Atlantic, brands in the recreational fishing industry have learned that capturing this market is a large key to success.

In general, it is extremely important for brands to understand where their target audiences are located. In the recreational fishing industry, population centers are closely correlated with bodies of water, as one would expect. However, culture, societal norms, and income distribution can also play large roles in understanding the fishing habits and preferences in an area. Some regions with legitimate opportunities for fishing have very low representation. For instance, the Pacific region sees very little recreational fishing, which is most likely because other forms of recreation are favored over fishing and hunting (Figure 3, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2016). Large cities, though they are often proximate to rivers and oceans, present obstacles to fishing that include limited access to fishing locations and reduced space for housing one's equipment. Therefore, brands must understand more micro-level population centers in order to plan which distribution locations and store fronts to enter into with their line of products.

## National Fishing Participation Map

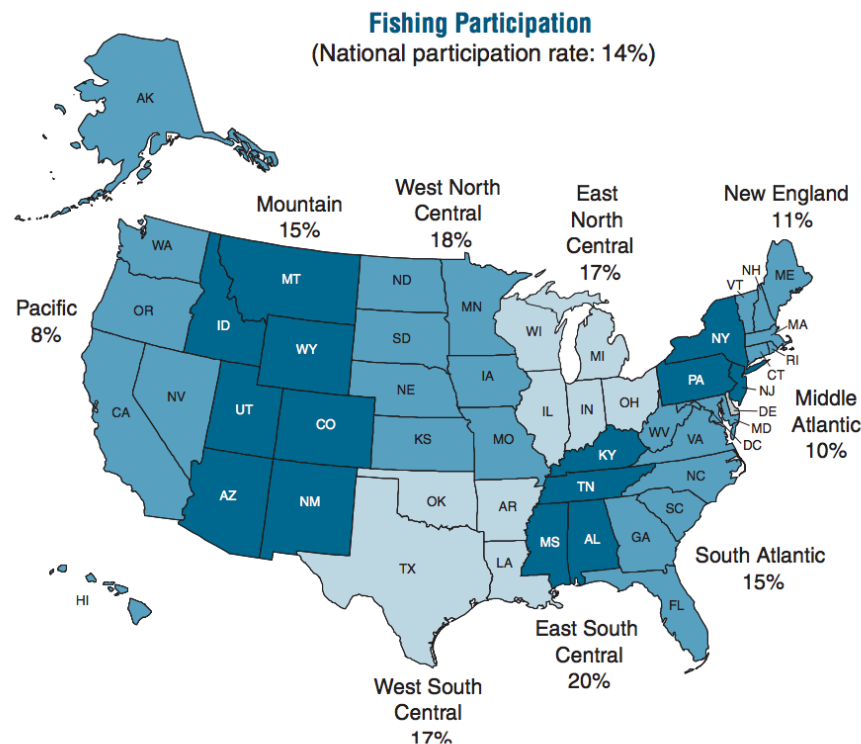


Figure 3. Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2016

## Age Distribution

One particularly astonishing aspect of fishing in 2019 is how viral the spread of preferences has become. As the use of social media in the sport grows, so does the speed at which information about tactics, gear, and productive fishing locations spread from person to person. Someone hired to promote a brand, often referred to as a “brand ambassador,” has the power to influence the purchasing decision of someone thousands of miles away from him. However, it is often those who are not professional marketers who have the greatest degree of influence. Social media has put the power in the hands of the consumer, thus changing the way brands position themselves in their marketing efforts.

Owing to the power of social media, young adults, aged 18-24 have become increasingly important in the positioning efforts among these brands. According to a Pew research study, and many others like it, young adults are the largest users of social media in nearly every metric imaginable (Pew, 2018). One of the largest platforms used by this age range of Americans is Instagram. A considerable majority, 71% of young adults, claims to regularly use Instagram. Whether that means posting photos of their own or merely reacting to others, they are viewing content on this form of social media very regularly.

As of 2017, approximately 4.43 million young adults participate in fishing activities in the United States (Statista, 2017). If we assume that the same percentage of young adults nationwide who use Instagram also applies to young adult fishing participants, there are approximately 3.14 million users in this population (Pew, 2018). Though young adults may have large networks of people they can influence, these individuals are seldom able to purchase high-end products. A number of challenges, including entry-level wages and student debt, limit this age group's disposable income.

Figure 4 reflects the number of young adults in fishing, and should prompt brands in the industry to understand two vitally important concepts. First, young adults are extremely important in spreading the word about a product or service, so it is crucial to educate this population and encourage them to represent products well to their networks of followers. Secondly, though young adults may not be in a financial position to purchase high end items on a regular basis, many of these individuals boast large numbers of followers who may be in the marketing for luxury goods. One way to harness the connectivity of young adults without relying on them to purchase products is to deliberately equip these individuals to promote products. Young adults with large networks of followers can be used as brand ambassadors to spread

knowledge of a brand's offerings. Often referred to in the outdoor industry as "pro staff," these representatives are given products to use and share on their social media pages and through word of mouth. Pro staff are generally a very effective tool in creating general awareness of a product.

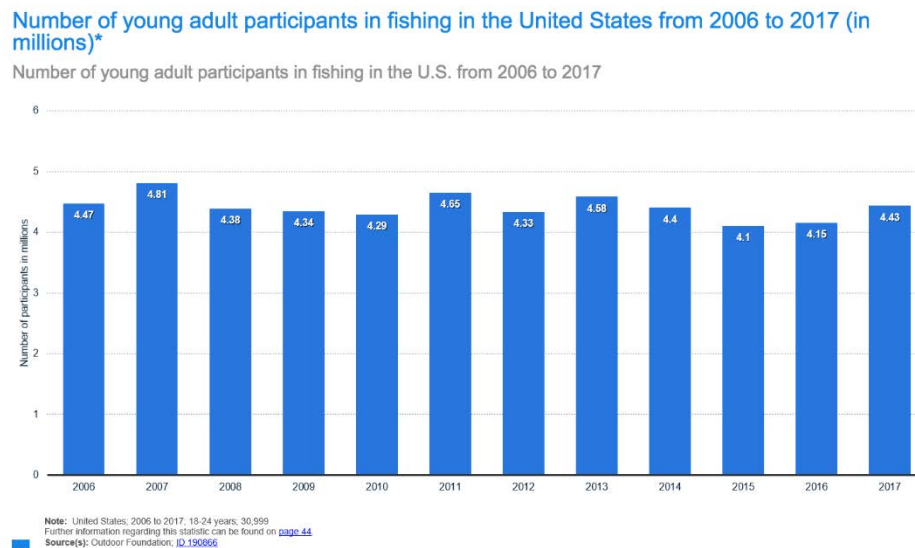


Figure 4. Source: Statista 2017

One obvious trend in the fishing industry is the decrease in youth participation. From 2006 to 2012, participation in fishing by those ages 6-17 fell from 15.41 million to 9.96 million (Figure 5, Statista 2017). Although youth participation in fishing has risen to about 11.6 million in 2017, this level of participation is nothing like was seen in America prior to 2006. New initiatives like South Carolina's "Take a Kid Fishing," have begun offering disadvantaged youth the opportunity to get outdoors and learn about the sport (TAKF, 2019). It is because of organizations like TAKF and many others that levels of youth participation have been rising. It is important to continue educating America's youth about the importance of fishing because they are the future of the sport. Without young people, the industry will suffer, and future generations will grow up without knowing the joys of the sport.

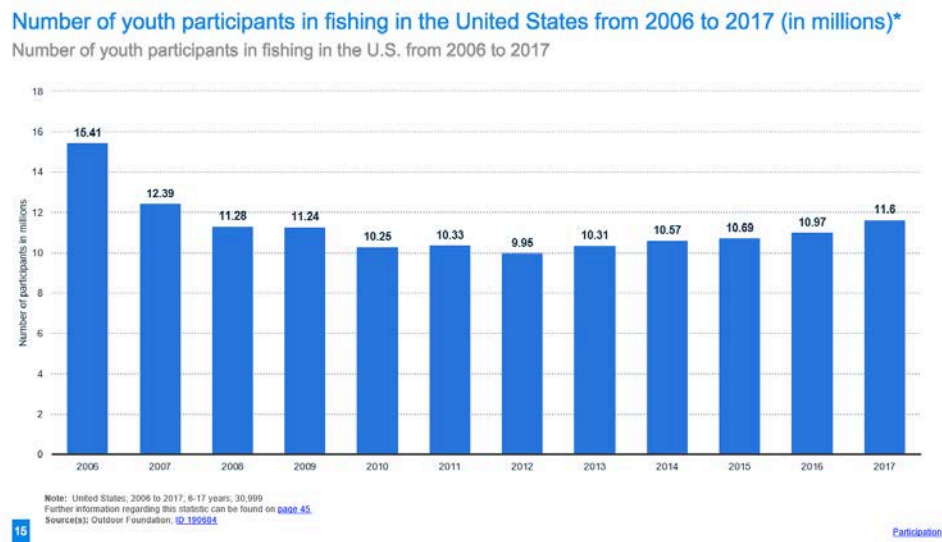


Figure 5. Source: Statista 2017

## Income Distribution

Income is the primary driving factor in a consumer's decision to make a purchase. If they cannot afford the product, they are not likely to buy it. However, income levels can be extremely useful for brands to decide which segments of the market to target. In 2017, 58.6% of the fishing participants in the United States fell in the parameters of the middle class (Figure 6, Statista, 2017). Those in \$100,000 plus column in the chart below, as well as the upper-middle class group, denoted by an income of \$75,000-\$99,000 represent the target market for high-end goods. Though others in the three previous groups may be able to afford that type of luxury on occasion, they are not the primary market segment for high-end goods. Because of this, the high-end market in the fishing industry is somewhat income-exclusive. Whereas the low-end and, for the most part, moderately priced goods are not income exclusive. Anyone can afford the low-end goods in this market and the same can be said, with a few exceptions of goods in the moderate pricing category.

In the case of income, it is important for brands to understand the size and capabilities of the segment they are targeting. Price sensitivity plays an enormous role in determining the ability of a target market to make a purchase. Brands can understand price sensitivity of their target market using the Van Westendorp Model for Pricing Research, which outlines several points at which customers begin to change their opinion on the price of a good (Pritchard, 2016). This will allow the brand to find the “optimal price point” for the quality of their product in relation to the group they are attempting to market to (2016). Using a standard set of questions in an anonymous survey, firms can ask for ideal pricing points and outline perceptions of the brand at each pricing level.

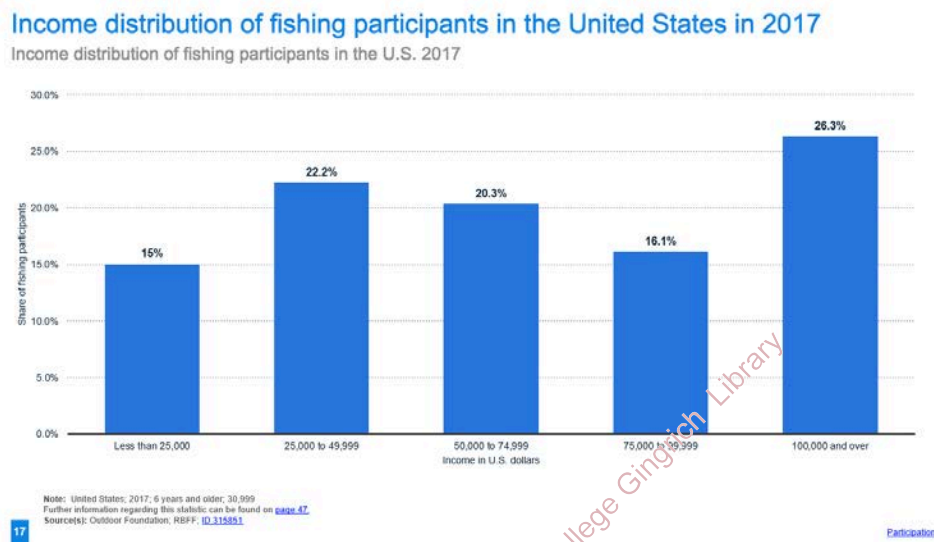


Figure 6. Source: Statista 2017

## Gender Distribution

Gender representation in the outdoor recreation industry is extremely lop-sided. As seen in the 2017 Statista chart below, the proportion of men in fishing is nearly double that of women (Figure 7, Statista 2017). Although women represent this disproportionately smaller share of the

total number of Americans who fish, they are drastically underrepresented in outdoor publications like magazines and journals. According to Robert Carini and Jonetta Weber, women were pictured on only 10% of magazine covers analyzed and only authored about 1% of featured articles (Carini and Weber 2017). In the photos and articles where they were depicted, they were generally analyzed for their beauty, rather than for their accomplishments in the sport.

Additionally, many women who become pro staff members for fishing brands are likely to be models or social media icons, so their physical appearance is often addressed primarily. This lack of recognition and sexualization of the sport likely discourages women from entering the field. Many women who do not fit the “mold” of the Instagram model tend to feel inadequate and choose not to enter the field or share photos of their successes on social media.

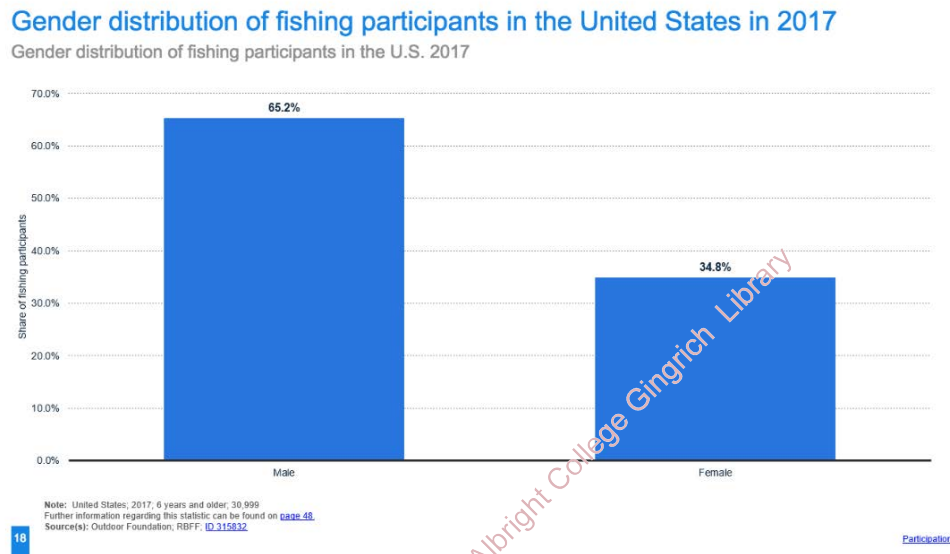


Figure 7. Source: Statista 2017

## Discussion

This research attempts to create buyer personas of sport fishermen based on primary and secondary data. Further, an infographic was generated vividly portraying the buyer personas.

Data was sourced from Nielson Prizm, a Claritas database that uses media habits of consumers to create segments of the population. This data is primarily used by businesses looking to identify their target markets. Though the anecdotal attributes assigned to each consumer group in this database are somewhat humorous in nature, they provide a very focused view of each group's defining characteristics. The types of qualities displayed by Nielson allow firms to create buyer personas for each type of individual they intend to market to, which encompass demographics, psychographics, and many other defining factors (Single Grain, 2018). Buyer personas are created by analyzing each of these characteristics and crafting a typology for each identity in the market (Single Grain, 2018). The present study focuses on the buyer personas of sport fishermen in the United States, and therefore requires some inferences about those most likely to partake in such activities. As discussed previously, this industry, which contributes \$46.1 billion to the US GDP per year, has become a very lucrative sector of the market in recent years (United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2016). Though there are many consumer groups interested in recreational fishing, this analysis will focus on six of the primary segments in this industry. From the data expressed in the Prizm segments, I have created unique names and identities for each of these groups to provide a more personified approach to the data. The infographic (Figure 8), illustrates each persona and provides psychographic context for each is included in the Appendix.

The first of these groups is referred to by Nielson as "Campers & Camo" (Nielson, 2018). For this study, it is embodied by the persona of "Camper Carl." Camper Carl and others like him make up approximately 2.2 million US households and bring in a median household income of slightly over \$45,000. The average age of those in Carl's position is 35-54 years and these individuals tend to have one to three children. Though Carl most likely has not completed

education beyond high school, he and his friends can be seen in positions in many sectors of the economy, from construction to sales. Some interesting facts about Carl are that he owns a Chevrolet, eats at Little Caesars, shops at Dick's Sporting Goods, and listens to country music. I found that 75% of survey respondents in Carl's age group were more likely to purchase a product if they knew that the brand practiced environmentally friendly manufacturing methods like recycling.

Essentially, this segment represents a lower-middle class family mix, generally from suburban areas, who do not have a high amount of disposable income but can afford to partake in occasional outdoor recreational trips and activities. Though Carl does not boast a high level of disposable income, brands in the industry can easily target his segment by introducing moderately priced, yet durable products, in a way that appeals to families. Because Carl most likely has children, it is important to provide an appeal to quality time in the outdoors. Cabela's "It's in your nature" advertisements target this group extremely well by including images of fathers and sons fishing and hunting together, while promoting sale items that the average outdoor enthusiast would be able to afford. This group should not be aggressively targeted with high-end items, but carefully courted with discounts that build trust and loyalty to a brand.

The second of these groups, which Nielson refers to as "Country Casuals," has been given the persona of "Johnny Catch" (Nielson, 2018). There are about 2.3 million households in the US just like Johnny and they each bring home about \$67,000 per year. These are mostly homeowners who are over the age of 55 who have no children in the household. Additionally, this group has slightly below average household technology, which affects the way they can be marketed to. Johnny owns a Ford, eats at Hardee's, shops at Bass Pro Shops, and listens to classic country (hence the namesake of the great Johnny Cash). Additionally, we found that this

group is most likely to purchase a product because of its durability and quality of manufacturing over any other factor.

Rural roots, upper-middle class status, and plenty of disposable income for recreation characterize Johnny's segment of the population. People in Johnny's segment liked things the way they used to be, but they are not afraid to try out new products that are easily understood and adopted. This segment can afford to purchase the occasional high-end item but is generally wary of new forms of technology. One brand that has been successful in targeting this segment is Remington. Though they are not in the fishing segment of the outdoor recreation industry, they have been a staple for hunters for over 100 years. Their tried and true method of providing quality products marketed through live television advertisements, magazine articles, and trade show expositions has allowed them to keep a significant market share in the hunting industry. Newer marketing tactics, like social media, are not the most effective way to reach Johnny's segment of the industry because these individuals are not likely to actively engage with these messages. In targeting this segment, it is important to stick with the basics and let the product do the talking.

The third group, which are categorized as "Kid Country, USA," by Nielson (Nielson, 2018) is expressed through the persona of "Sally Skateboard." Consumers like Sally represent approximately 1.4 million U.S. households with an average income of \$62,000. Sally is a college graduate of approximately 25-44 years of age, lives in a suburban setting, and probably has children. Sally owns a Jeep, eats at Sonic, shops at GameStop, and listens to country music. According to our research, those with Sally's level of education, are most likely to visit a local bait and tackle store when making fishing gear purchases, followed closely by online retailers like Tackle Direct and large retailers like Cabela's and Bass Pro Shops.

This group of adventurers is looking for a thrill. They are mostly middle to upper-middle class individuals with moderate amounts of disposable income. However, their attention is drawn to other opportunities for outdoor recreation besides fishing, like snow sports, skateboarding, and BMX. Advertisers must consider the diverse set of hobbies enjoyed by this segment of the population. To reach Sally, an effective marketing technique could involve co-branding with a popular extreme sports brand or product to create psychological correlations between two or more of her hobbies or interests. One such co-branding venture involved the partnership of Red Bull and Go Pro. By combining a product, Red Bull, that many extreme sports lovers enjoy with a piece of equipment that vloggers and everyday enthusiasts enjoy, Go Pro, the two can build on each other's strengths to create content that targets multiple segments of their respective markets. Since Sally's segment is known to possess high levels of household technology, these consumers can be reached effectively with online content on various social media platforms, following the example of the Go Pro and Red Bull campaign (GoPro, 2019).

The fourth group of consumers in the recreational fishing segment are the "Back Country Folks," known here as "Backwoods Bobby" (Nielson, 2018). This lower-income consumer makes up about 3.2 million US households who get by with about \$37,000 per year in median household income. Bobby is usually someone over the age of 55 who comes from the country, wields very little household technology, and does not have children. Though many in Bobby's group are retired, there is also a large portion of them who work in the service sector. Bobby owns a GMC, shops at Dollar General, eats at McDonald's, and listens to classic rock music. Bobby and many others like him are huge fans of NASCAR and can be seen at tailgates prior to any race in their area. My survey research also concludes that those in this age group are much

more likely to purchase a product if they know it is being produced in the United States rather than overseas.

Though Bobby's segment of the fishing industry does not boast a high amount of disposable income, these consumers are likely to be lifelong fishermen, and therefore are returning customers to brands they trust (Statista, 2017). This segment of the population very rarely purchases any products considered to be high-end, but they know the value of durable products. Therefore, targeting this group entails providing durable products at a low price. Popular mass-produced fishing brands like Shakespeare and Ugly Stik have been successfully targeting this population for over fifty years and they have been partnering together to provide even greater value to these customers. The average price of a Shakespeare and Ugly Stik rod and reel combo ranges from approximately \$30 to \$60 and, with proper care, it is not unreasonable to assume that this product will perform adequately for up to five years. These brands effectively market to Bobby's segment with old-fashioned television advertisements and constant points of contact in circulars for stores like Walmart and other discount retailers. Do not get too "fancy" with this group. The best course of action is to develop a product that lasts for a relatively low price, even if that means sacrificing some features or upgrades.

The fifth consumer persona in the recreational fishing industry is "Bigshot Brenda," who belongs to the Nielson grouping "Big Sky Families" (Nielson, 2018). This group makes up about 3.1 million US households that have a median income of \$68,000 and generally have some type of college education. This middle age group of upper-middle class Americans generally works in a managerial or executive setting. These individuals have moderate levels of disposable income to spend on trips with their children to outdoor recreation havens. Brenda owns a Toyota, shops at Academy Sports & Outdoors, eats at Jimmy Johns, and listens to New Country. Survey

research suggests that consumers with Brenda's level of education spend the most amount per year on fishing equipment. This is most likely due to their higher level of income and points to their desire for higher quality or luxury goods.

Though these consumers are in the middle range of age, their technology usage is average for the United States, opening them up to diverse marketing channels. This group of consumers can afford to buy just about any piece of sporting equipment on the market, so competing for their attention is paramount. It is reasonable for high end brands to market to Brenda's segment of the market because they can afford the luxury. Most families in this segment are searching for the best possible products for their families and they are very likely to do significant online research prior to making a purchase. Because of this, it is important to have a very diverse online presence and promote positive reviews online to reach this client base. Many companies, including Nordstrom, offer incentives to customers who leave a review in an online forum about their business. These can come in the form of product discounts, bonuses on purchases, or entering all reviewers into a drawing for some sort of giveaway. This method incentivizes current customers and creates a greater pool of reviews for future customers, namely those like Bigshot Brenda to research from.

The sixth and final consumer group addressed in this research, though there are many others, belongs to Nielson's "Simple Pleasures" segment, and has been named here "Barb and Harry" (Nielson, 2018). Barb and Harry bring in a median household income of \$51,000 and make up 1.6 million US households. This rural group of lower-middle class retirees do not have children living in their house and do not have high levels of household technology. This lovely retired couple owns a Cadillac, eats at Applebee's, shops at the farmer's market, and listens to Elvis. Though this group does not have a high amount of disposable income, they tend to adopt

hobbies through their retirement, which frequently include recreational fishing. According to the data collected through the survey, those in the typical age range of retirees are most concerned with the quality or durability of a product than any other factor when making a gear purchase. This group is also interested in the reputation and country of origin of the manufacturer when considering making a purchase.

Barb and Harry do not like to try out the newest gadgets, but they enjoy the proven products that have been around since they were younger. Just like Johnny Catch and Backwoods Bobby, marketing to this group must be done in a more traditional manner. Their lower levels of household technology use make social media and content marketing somewhat pointless. However, this consumer base can be reached on a larger scale through expositions and large-scale forums. For instance, the Great American Outdoor Show, which takes place every year in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, sees almost 100,000 visitors each year over the course of the show's nine days. Retirees who have significant amounts of free time during normal work hours can justify visiting an expo to learn about new products. Since Barb and Harry value face time and personal interaction, brands should purchase booth space at these events and take the time to speak to this segment to educate them on their products. Though this may seem time-consuming and ineffective, retirees often possess large networks of close friends with whom they frequently share opinions on current topics and brands. In this instance, starting small may be the key to reaching this segment of the market. Focusing on building relationships rather than reaching the largest possible audience could turn out to prove particularly effective.

As entertaining as it can be to create buyer personas, the applications for these profiles are extremely useful. According to Single Grain, a digital media marketing firm, "buyer personas are more than just a foundation for higher ROI and target marketing, they are a metaphor for

understanding your customers and how your product or service best suits them” (Single Grain, 2018). Going beyond the characteristics that make up each of these groups, it is important to remember that achieving proper “product-market-fit” is crucial to reaching each of these markets (Holiday, 2014).

### **Conclusions**

The recreational fishing industry positively impacts the American economy. It is a profitable industry that impacts the community by generating income and creating employment. Recreation anglers generate a sizeable GDP making it one of the most stable industries in the United States. According to the Economic Contributions of Recreational Fishing Report, this outdoor recreation has become a reliable source of jobs in the United States. Though it is often overshadowed by other American sports, far more people go fishing each year than play football and baseball combined. Brands in this industry must be very creative with how to reach their target audience because of this. Since there are so many different demographics and psychographics of people who partake in fishing, targeting the “sport fisherman” is virtually impossible with one single technique.

Each consumer segment belongs to a different socioeconomic status, with different degrees of access to technology, and varying levels of education. Given that the audience is fragmented in its exposure to media there is no single method of effectively reaching all consumers. Brands would benefit greater from finding which few personas are most likely to be interested in their product, catering their offering to them, and crafting marketing communications that appeal to them specifically. Starting with the correct product-market fit, firms can remove the uncertainty of marketing and ensure that their products and messages meet those who they are targeting.

## References

- Southwick Associates. (2016). Facts and figures. *American Sportfishing Association*. Retrieved from <https://asafishing.org/facts-figures/>
- Southwick Associates. (2018). Sportfishing in America: An economic force for conservation. *American Sportfishing Association*. Retrieved from <https://asafishing.org/wp-content/uploads/Sportfishing-in-America-Revised-November-2018.pdf>
- Carini, R. & Jonetta, W. (2017). Female anglers in a predominantly male sport: Portrayals in five popular fishing-related magazines. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(1). 45-60. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1012690215580101>
- Craig et al. (2011). *Tuned In*, Chapter 5, p.73-85. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Monroe County Tourist Development Council. (2018) The Florida Keys and Key West. Islamorada fishing: The sport fishing capital of the world. Retrieved from <https://fla-keys.com/islamorada/fishing/>
- GoPro. (2016). GoPro and Red Bull form exclusive global partnership. Retrieved from <https://gopro.com/news/gopro-and-red-bull-form-exclusive-global-partnership>
- Holiday, R. (2014). *Growth hacker marketing*. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing.
- Johnson, C. (2015). Seven steps to creating a business-driven content strategy. *EContent*, 38(9),25.
- Lankow, J., Ritchie, J., Crooks, R., & Column Five. (2012). *Infographics : The power of visual*

*storytelling*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Locoro, A., Cabitza, F., Actis-Grosso, R. & Batini, C.. (2017, June 1). Static and interactive infographics in daily tasks: A value-in-use and quality of interaction user study.

*Computers in Human Behavior*, 71, 240-257.

Mannone, S. (2018, September 25). Your 2019 marketing planning guide. *Target Marketing Magazine*, 41(3), 13-14.

Nielson Claritas. (2018). Segment details. Retrieved from

<https://claritas360.claritas.com/mybestsegments/?ID=7020&menuOption=learnmore&pageName=PRIZM+Social+Groups&segSystem=CLA.PNE#segDetails>

Newbold, C. (2018, January 30). How to create a consumer profile. *The VCG Blog*. Retrieved from <http://thevisualcommunicationguy.com/2018/01/30/how-to-create-a-consumer-profile/>

Pew Research Center. (2018). Social media use in 2018. Retrieved

from <https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>

Statista. (2017). Recreational fishing in the U.S. *Statista.com*. Retrieved from

<https://www.statista.com/topics/1163/recreational-fishing/>

Single Grain. (2018). What is a buyer persona? *Single Grain Blog*. Retrieved from

<https://www.singlegrain.com/buyer-personas/complete-guide-developing-using-buyer-personas/>

Pritchard, M. (2016). Van Westendorp pricing (the price sensitivity meter).

*The Pricing Gurus*. Retrieved from <https://www.5circles.com/van-westendorp-pricing-the-price-sensitivity-meter/>

Take a Kid Fishing. (2019). About us. *Take a Kid Fishing Foundation*. Retrieved from <http://takf.com/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau. (2018, April). National survey of fishing, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation. Retrieved from [https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/nationalsurvey/nat\\_survey2016.pdf](https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/nationalsurvey/nat_survey2016.pdf)

## Tables

Table 1

*Large retailers level of completed education vs. desired outlet for purchasing fishing equipment*

Cabelas/Bass Pro Shops/Other Larger retailers							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Q5: Did not finish high school	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: High school degree or equivalent	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	22.22% 4	3.00
Q5: Some college, no degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	2.00
Q5: Trade school certification	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: Associates degree	50.00% 1	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	4.50
Q5: Bachelors degree	20.00% 1	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	27.78% 5	4.00
Q5: Masters degree	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	16.67% 3	3.33
Q5: Doctorate degree	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	66.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 3	3.33

Note: N=18, Pro-staff members from the sport fishing industry, spring 2019.

Table 2

*Local bait/tackle shops level of completed education vs. desired outlet for purchasing fishing equipment*

Local Bait/Tackle Shops							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Q5: Did not finish high school	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: High school degree or equivalent	50.00% 2	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22.22% 4	4.50
Q5: Some college, no degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	3.00
Q5: Trade school certification	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: Associates degree	50.00% 1	50.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	4.50
Q5: Bachelors degree	60.00% 3	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	27.78% 5	4.40
Q5: Masters degree	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	16.67% 3	2.67
Q5: Doctorate degree	66.67% 2	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 3	4.67

Note: N=18, Pro-staff members from the sport fishing industry, spring 2019.

Table 3

*Online retailers level of completed education vs. desired outlet for purchasing fishing equipment*

Online Retailers	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Q5: Did not finish high school	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: High school degree or equivalent	25.00% 1	25.00% 1	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22.22% 4	3.75
Q5: Some college, no degree	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	5.00
Q5: Trade school certification	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: Associates degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	3.00
Q5: Bachelors degree	20.00% 1	20.00% 1	60.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	27.78% 5	3.80
Q5: Masters degree	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 3	4.00
Q5: Doctorate degree	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 3	4.00

Note: N=18, Pro-staff members from the sport fishing industry, spring 2019.

Table 4

*Facebook Market Place, e-Bay, Craigslist level of completed education vs. desired outlet for purchasing fishing equipment*

Facebook marketplace/craigslist/eBay	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Q5: Did not finish high school	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: High school degree or equivalent	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	75.00% 3	25.00% 1	22.22% 4	1.75
Q5: Some college, no degree	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	4.00
Q5: Trade school certification	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: Associates degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	50.00% 1	11.11% 2	1.50
Q5: Bachelors degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	60.00% 3	40.00% 2	27.78% 5	1.80
Q5: Masters degree	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	66.67% 2	0.00% 0	16.67% 3	2.67
Q5: Doctorate degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 1	66.67% 2	16.67% 3	1.33

Note: N=18, Pro-staff members from the sport fishing industry, spring 2019.

Table 5

*Other level of completed education vs. desired outlet for purchasing fishing equipment*

Other	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Q5: Did not finish high school	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: High school degree or equivalent	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	50.00% 2	22.22% 4	2.00
Q5: Some college, no degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	5.56% 1	1.00
Q5: Trade school certification	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00
Q5: Associates degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 1	50.00% 1	11.11% 2	1.50
Q5: Bachelors degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	40.00% 2	60.00% 3	27.78% 5	1.40
Q5: Masters degree	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	66.67% 2	16.67% 3	2.33
Q5: Doctorate degree	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	66.67% 2	33.33% 1	16.67% 3	1.67

Note: N=18, Pro-staff members from the sport fishing industry, spring 2019.

Table 6

*Age of respondent vs. Likelihood of purchasing from a company using recycled materials*

	MUCH MORE LIKELY	SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY	NO MORE LIKELY	SLIGHTLY LESS LIKELY	MUCH LESS LIKELY	TOTAL
Q2: 18-27	25.00% 1	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	22.22% 4
Q2: 28-37	75.00% 3	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22.22% 4
Q2: 38-47	25.00% 1	50.00% 2	0.00% 0	25.00% 1	0.00% 0	22.22% 4
Q2: 48-57	33.33% 1	0.00% 0	66.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 3
Q2: 58-67	100.00% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	11.11% 2
Q2: 68+	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.56% 1
Total Respondents	9	5	2	2	0	18

Note: N=18, Pro-staff members from the sport fishing industry, spring 2019.

## Appendix



Figure 8: Infographic of Buyer Personas of Fishermen

Note: Created on Canva by Ben Foreman. Image source: Canva image library