

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY REELING IN OPPORTUNITY

THE BACKSTORY

Hunting and fishing generate significant recreation and tourism revenue for many regions in Canada. The tourism body of one Canadian province asked kisquared to conduct an economic evaluation of the industry for its region. Its goals were to better support the sector and to more effectively advocate for increased government support dollars in order to do so. This “snapshot” would provide a useful benchmark for the industry over time.

Numerous stakeholders were involved in this study, including the provincial conservation department, the local lodges and outfitters association as well as hunters and fishers from within the province, outside the province and outside the country.

WHAT WE DID

This study presented unique challenges to creating a probability sampling strategy, which would ensure a representative sample of hunters and fishers. These obstacles, in part, dissuaded others from pursuing this kind of study in the past. Although the provincial conservation department keeps records of every hunter and fisher through its licensing program, these records existed in hard copy only and were filed in hundreds of boxes according to category of licence issuer. Further, the province was reluctant to relinquish the records to an outside third party (kisquared).

The access issue was overcome through negotiation that included steps to ensure the security of the files and assurances regarding kisquared’s quality assurance protocols. The logistics of making the records usable, on the other hand, was a labour intensive and complex process, but one we were willing to undertake. It involved manually keying more than 20,000 records into a database while retaining the integrity of the manual filing system.

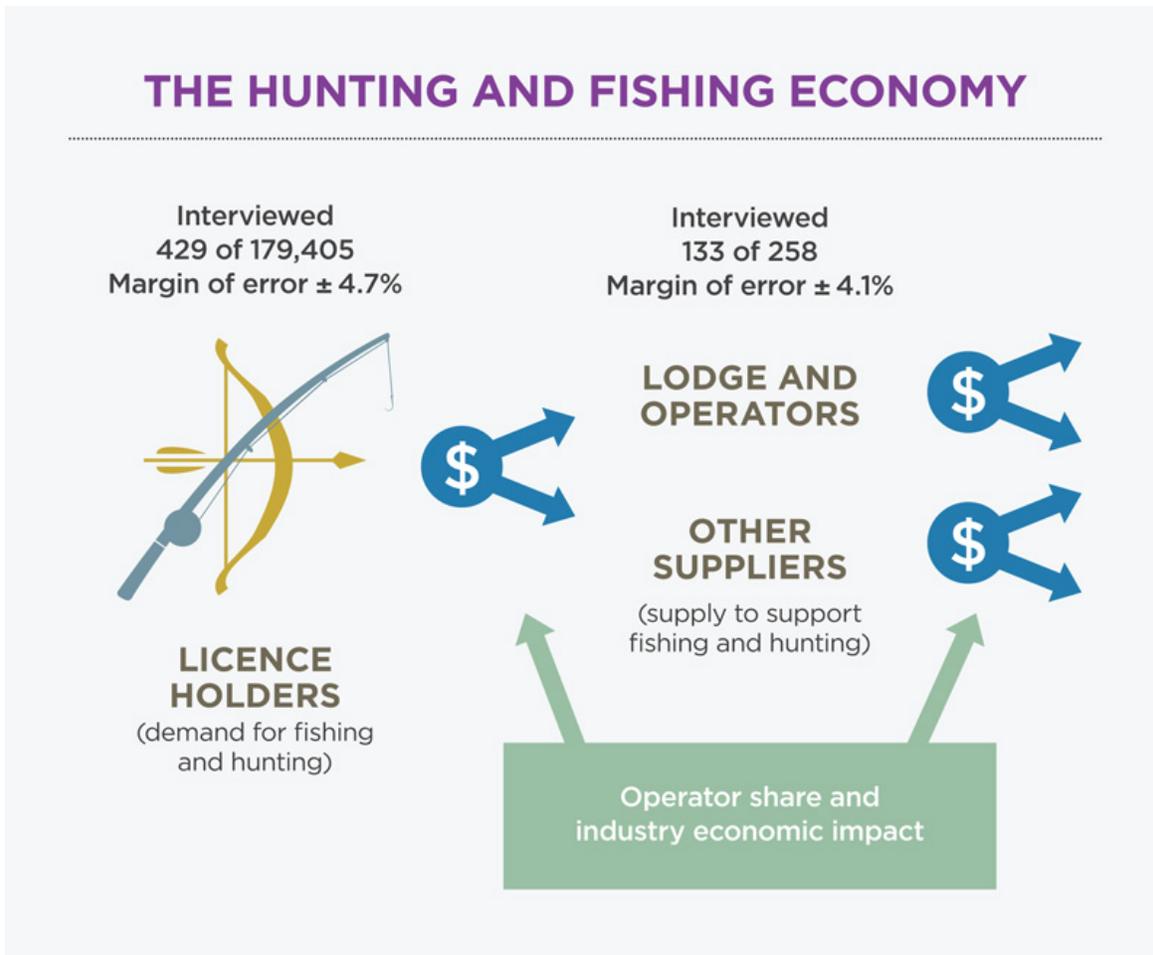
To inform the study design and validate our measurement instruments, kisquared facilitated a number of consultation sessions with various stakeholders.

The study was based on interviews with 133 operators (lodges and outfitters) and 429 fishing and hunting licence holders.

WHAT WE FOUND

The study confirmed that the hunting and fishing industry made a strong contribution

to the province's economy with a \$312.2M effect on GDP (.58% of market) and the creation of 7,499 jobs (1.2% of market).



Demographic observations included the fact that less than 25% of parties who take hunting and fishing trips were composed of members under the age of 16 and 40% were aged 55+, most were male. Overall, locals comprised most of the market (81%) but spent less on each trip as compared with American visitors (12%). Locals were far less likely to use outfitters and lodges.

Among the most prevalent challenges facing operators related to rising fuel costs and a strong Canadian dollar (influencing American visitors). There were some regulatory and environmental issues as well. An aging customer base indicated a significant challenge in terms of finding new markets.

In terms of how the industry was marketing itself, the study revealed that some realignment was likely required. For example, customers reported that they found outfitter and lodge operations primarily through word of mouth and operator websites, with trade publications a distant third. Operators, on the other hand, spent most of their marketing dollars on advertising in trade publications and attending sport and trade shows. Only a minority had plans to offer new products and many revealed that they didn't do much in the way of marketing. Many dedicated little time

or effort to fostering a professional online presence.

ACTION TAKEN

As the result of this study, the hunting and fishing sector as well as the provincial tourism body had a much better understanding of the importance of this industry to the economy as well as the challenges it faced.

The stakeholders proceeded to examine ways to adapt to this new information. They were in a better position to market existing and new products to specific groups that they now knew would be most receptive. For example, prior to the study, marketing activities were driven to big-spending American visitors while opportunities to capture more frequent but smaller-spending locals were neglected. Outfitters and lodges could develop products to tap into the local market by offering shorter duration stays or day trips and rentals. Efforts to better capture the couples and family market could also expand the sector's customer base.

Finally, the tourism body had tangible data to present to the province that indicated some of the barriers outfitters and licence holders faced with respect to regulatory issues and how this might be impacting revenue from this industry.

