

DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION

In March 2011, the District of Vanderhoof contracted with the University of Northern British Columbia (Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program) to undertake a survey of the accommodation sector operating in the Municipality of Vanderhoof, the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako (RDBN) – Area F and the portion of Area D which is south of the Nechako River.

The survey was designed to assess the initial level of support for a Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) funded Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) to develop more effective and innovative marketing of this area with a goal to increasing tourism traffic and visitor stays in the area. The four deliverables for the project were as follows:

- Assemble a comprehensive listing of accommodation properties in the prescribed area.
- Assess the level of interest in a DMO and MRDT among these accommodation properties.
- Develop an estimate of the yearly revenue that could be generated by the MRDT with attention to seasonal fluctuations.
- Develop an understanding of some of the benefits, challenges and recommendations from other DMO's within communities similar to Vanderhoof.

A group of five students distributed surveys to 14 establishments within the designated area. They received responses from 8 operators (1 operator had less than the required number of units to be included in the MRDT so only the responses that related to the DMO (not MRDT) were included). To qualify for a MRDT, the BC Government requires at least 51% of registered accommodation sector businesses (with four or more rooms) representing 51% of the room capacity in the proposed region agree to implement the 2% Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) – formerly the Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT).

Survey results indicate that 7 of the 14 total operators (50%) identified within the research area are supportive of the MRDT and these operators represented 48% of the total rooms. Although this result is somewhat below the required level, it is noted that support from only one more of our larger properties could

provide the required numbers. To be successful, however, we recognize that there needs to be widespread support for this initiative as it will impact all operators and therefore, requires a strong level of commitment.

Based on the information provided by those that participated in the survey, it was determined that approximately \$57,000 annually could be derived from the tax on room rentals in the prescribed area. It is felt that this is a modest estimate as the seasonality of the participating properties was used to gauge the contributions from the non-respondents. In fact, the majority of the non-respondents are year round operators so the amount could likely be much higher. In addition to these funds, it may be possible to secure a direct contribution from the Municipality and Regional District to add to these resources as well as apply for grants and perhaps charge a membership fee.

The survey provided some very general indications of the type of clientele that are visiting the properties in our area and suggests that if we were to proceed with the formation of a DMO, this data could be useful in determining where to direct marketing efforts to increase visitation by certain demographics and encourage multi-day visitation.

The survey also explored the types of services that a DMO might be able to provide including website marketing, print media, social media, travel guides, visitor centre services, partnerships within the sector, tourism and hospitality courses and partnerships with other areas and destinations.

All of the operators interviewed indicated that they had vacancies at different times of the year and based on this an assumption could be made that they would benefit from attempts to market their business during the off-season.

Valuable information was gleaned from other DMO's in the province that provided a list of benefits and challenges for our consideration.

The attached link is a power point presentation detailing the results of the report:

The recommendations from this report suggest that further meetings (group and one-on-one) are necessary to educate the operators on the various options available with regard to establishing a DMO and perhaps the MRDT and gaining

support for the development of a business plan if the group decides this is how they would like to proceed.

Plans are underway to arrange a meeting of the operators to share the results of this study and to determine next steps.

The winner of the prize for participation in the survey (Chamber of Commerce membership or renewal) was Barry Mills of Tatelkuz Lake Resort.



**DETERMINING THE
ACCOMMODATION SECTOR'S LEVEL
OF SUPPORT FOR A DMO IN
VANDERHOOF**

April 4th , 2011

Allison Bray
Jerrica Mann
Jen Miller
Jordan Hammond
Jessie Stephen

Supervised by Philip Mullins

OUTLINE

- Support for MRDT (Allison)
- Finances for DMO (Jerrica)
- Accommodation Clientele (Jordan)
- Marketing Implications (Jen)
- Preferred Services (Jessie)
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Recommendations



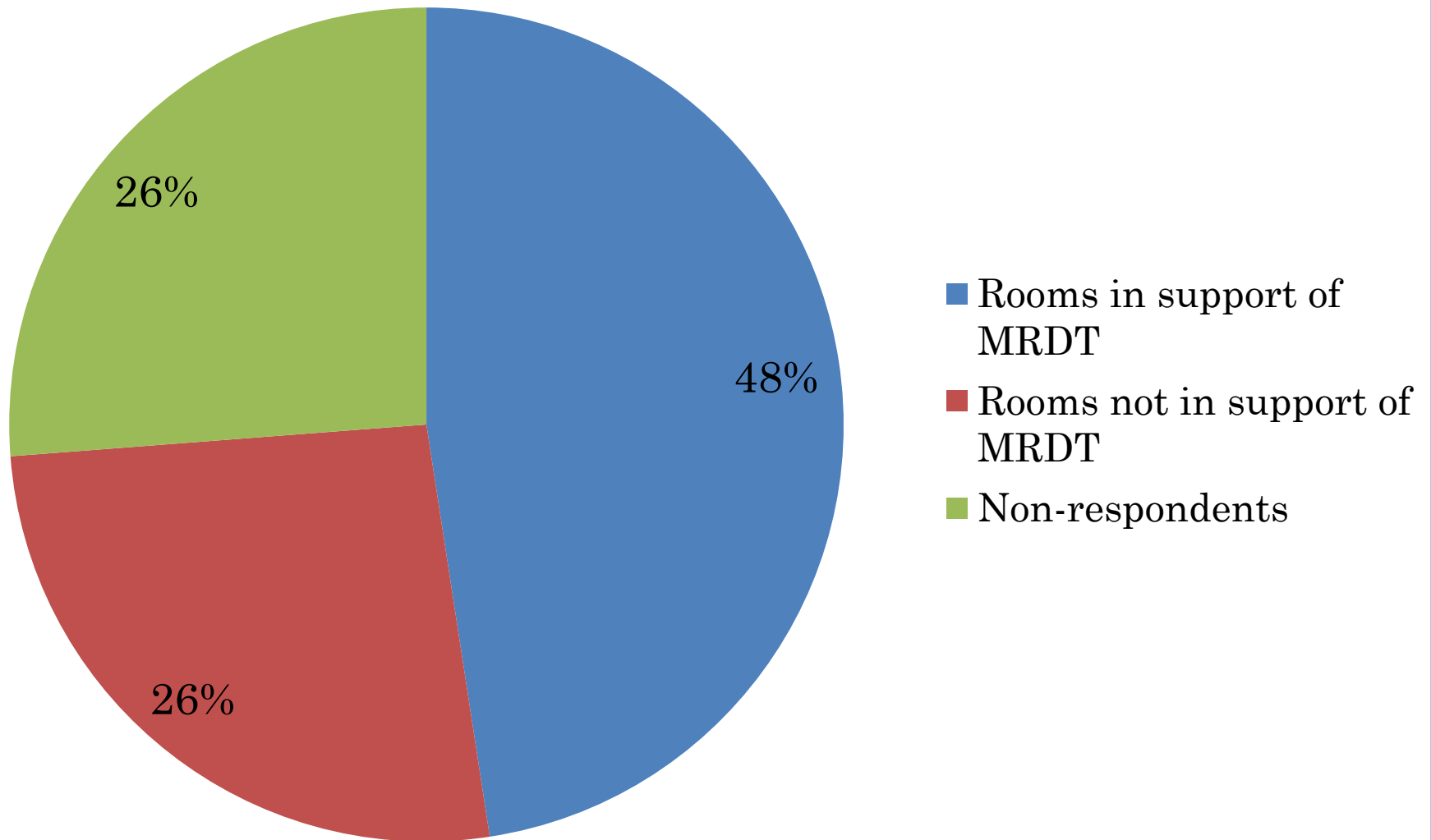


Figure # 1. Q.12: Support for MRDT by Rooms



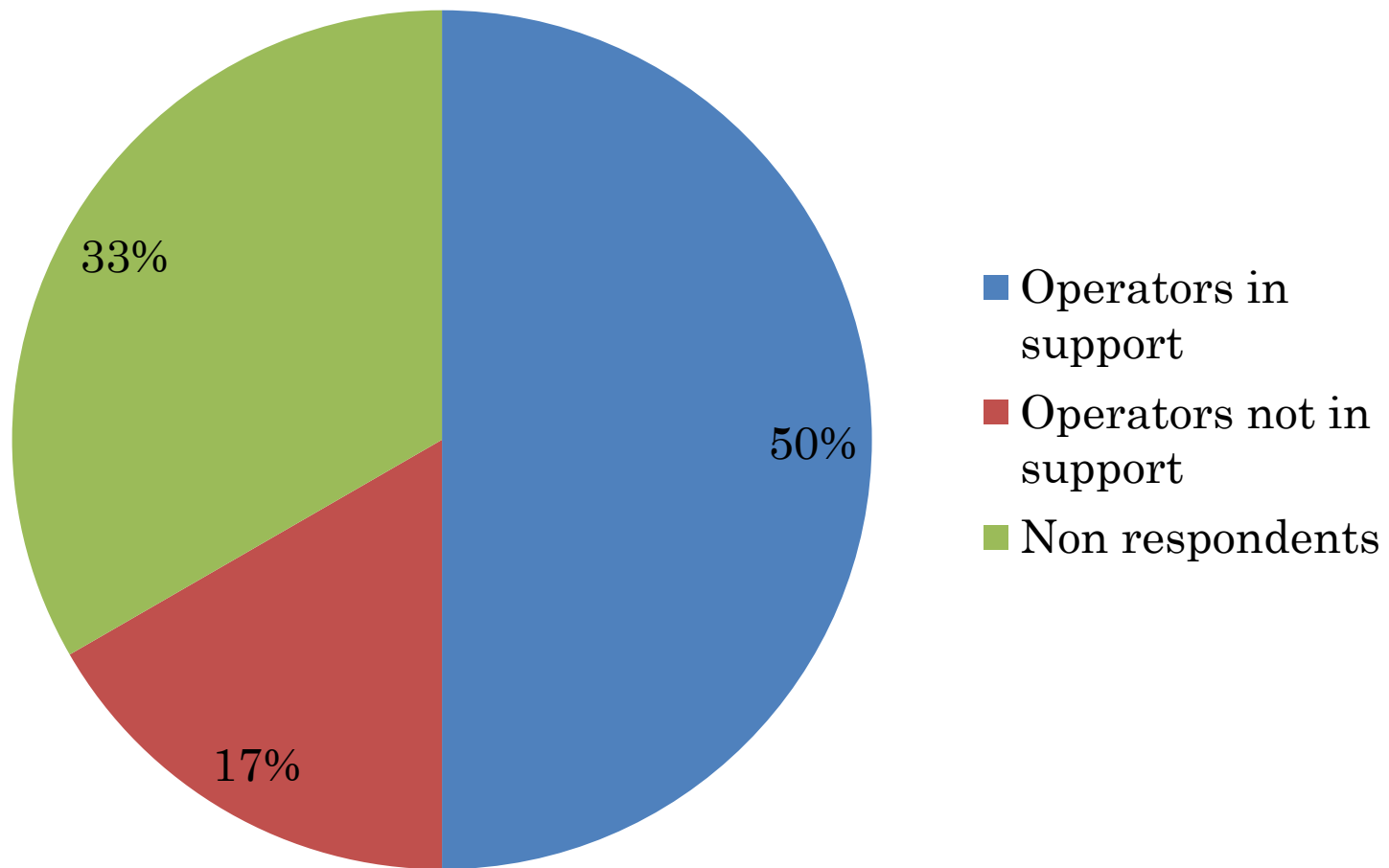


Figure #2. Q.12: Support for MRDT by Operators



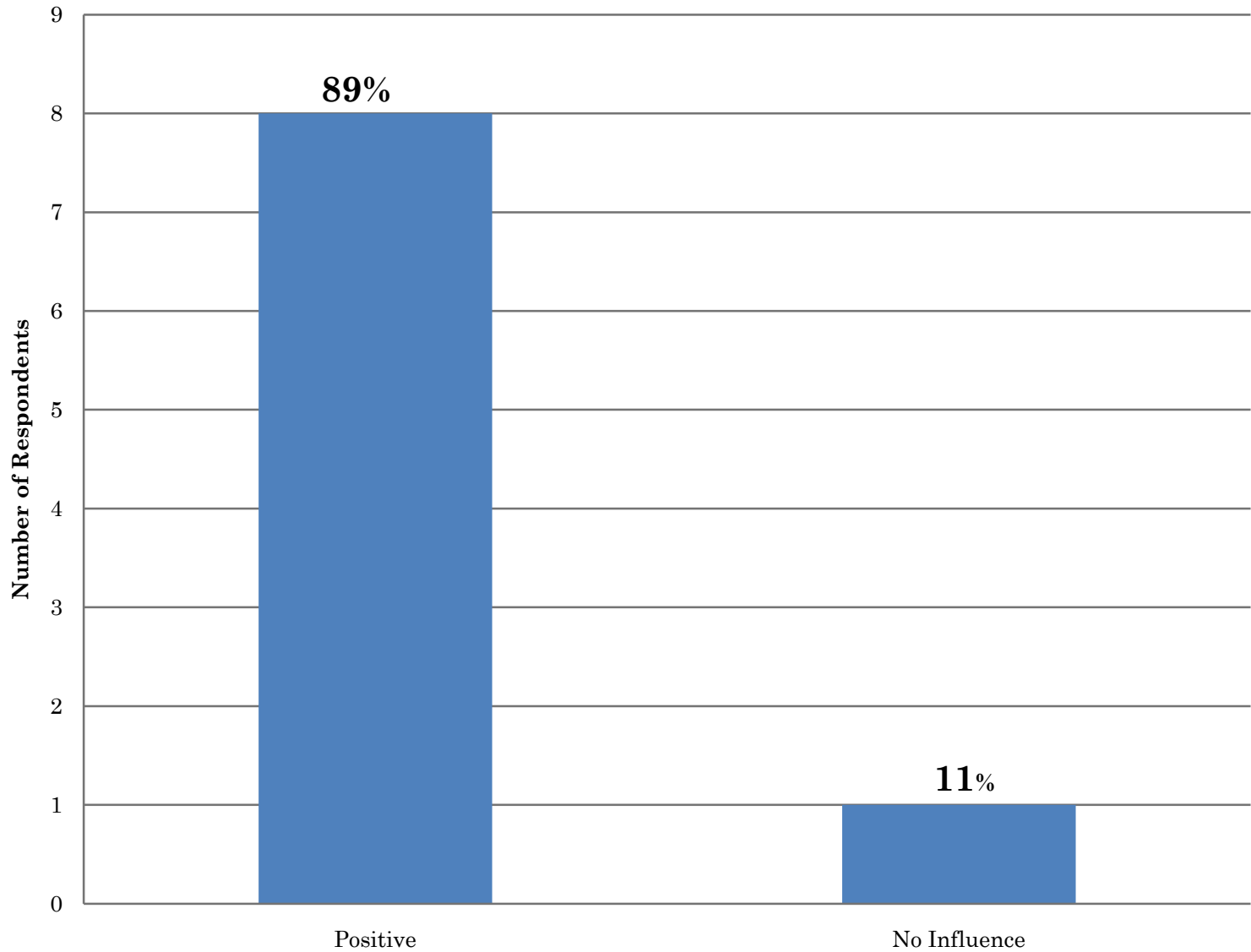


Figure #3. Q13: Perceptions of a DMO's Influence on Vanderhoof



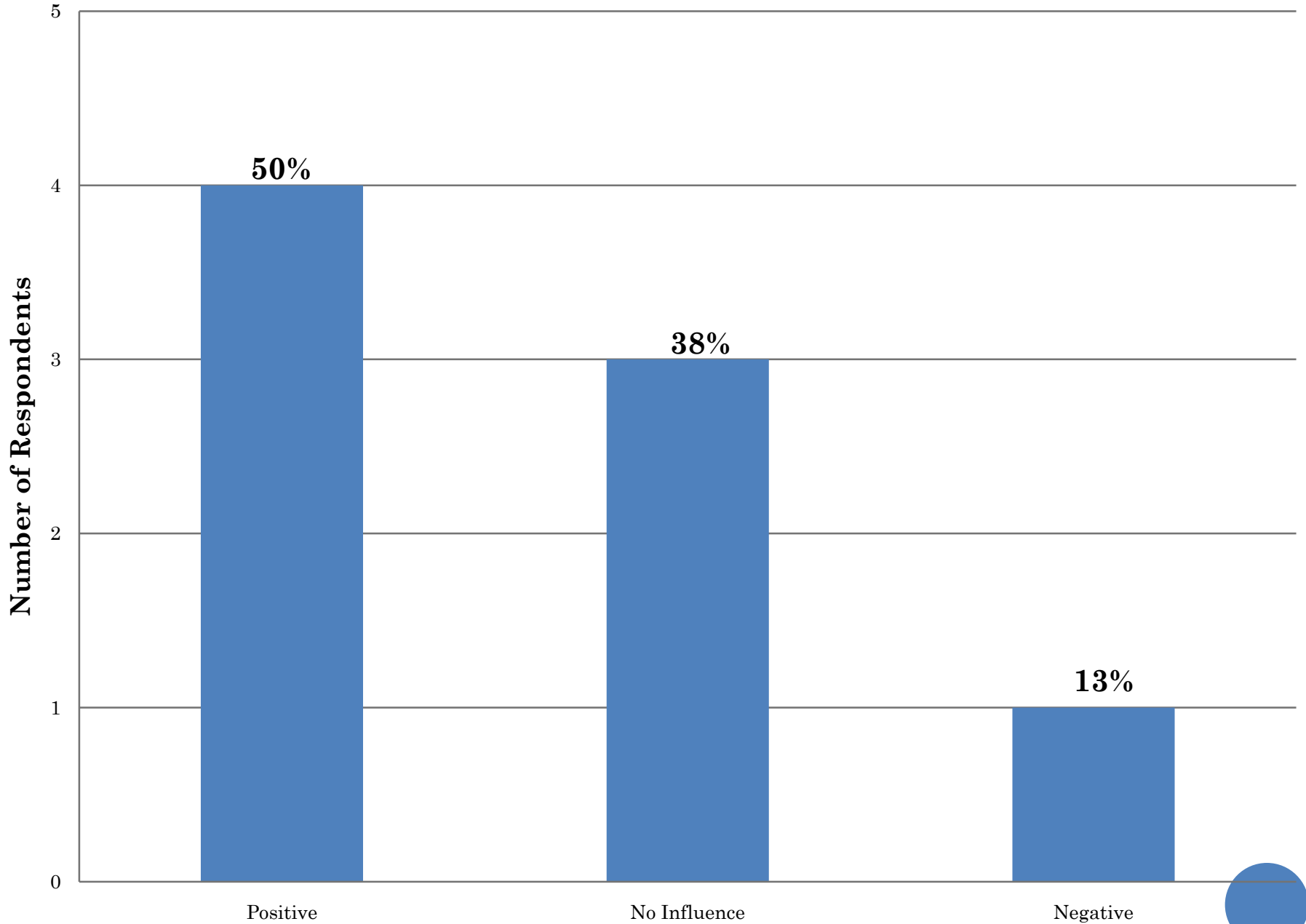


Figure # 4. Q.14: Perceptions of the MRDT's Influence on Vanderhoof

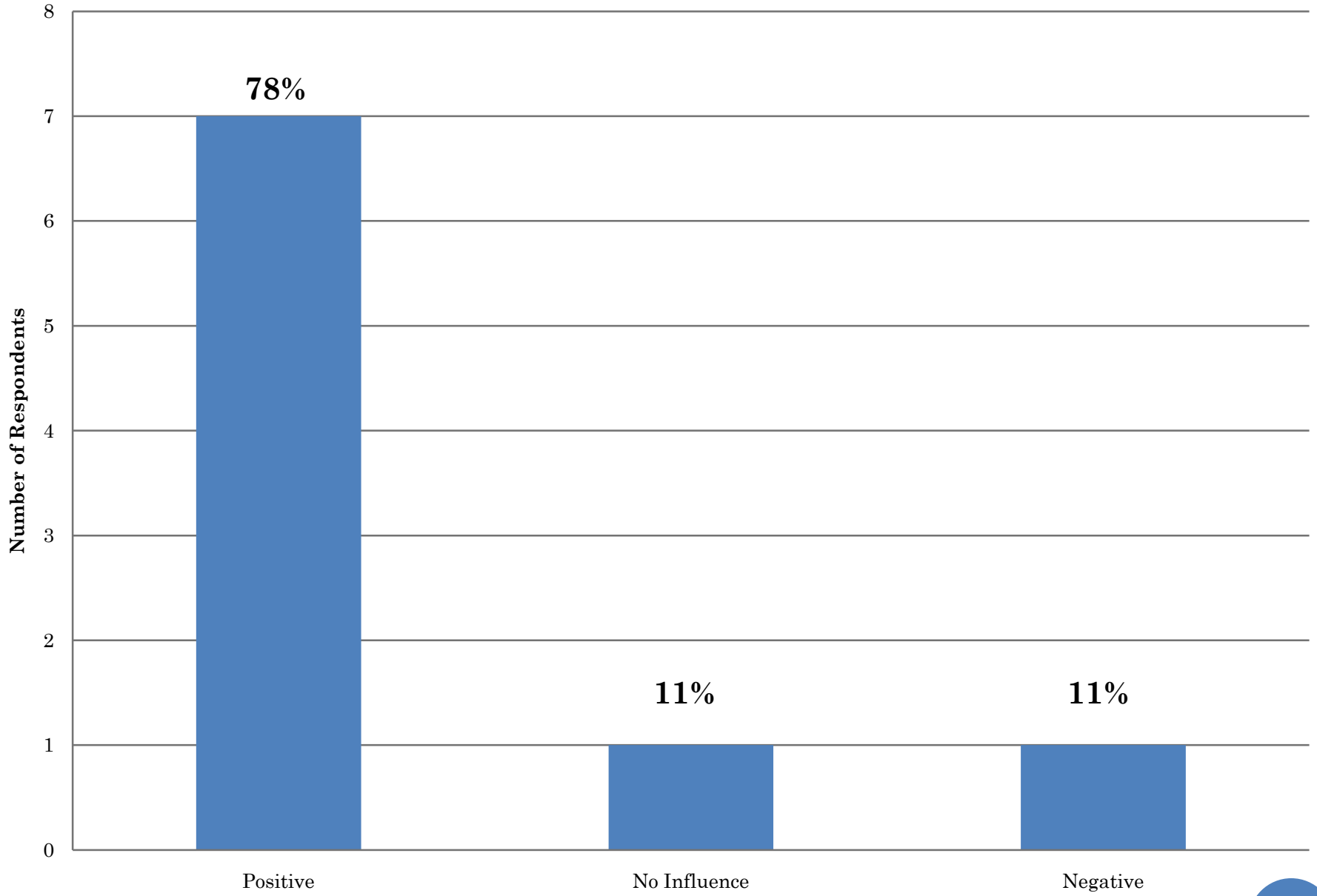


Figure #5. Q.15: Perceptions of a DMO's Influence on Individual Business

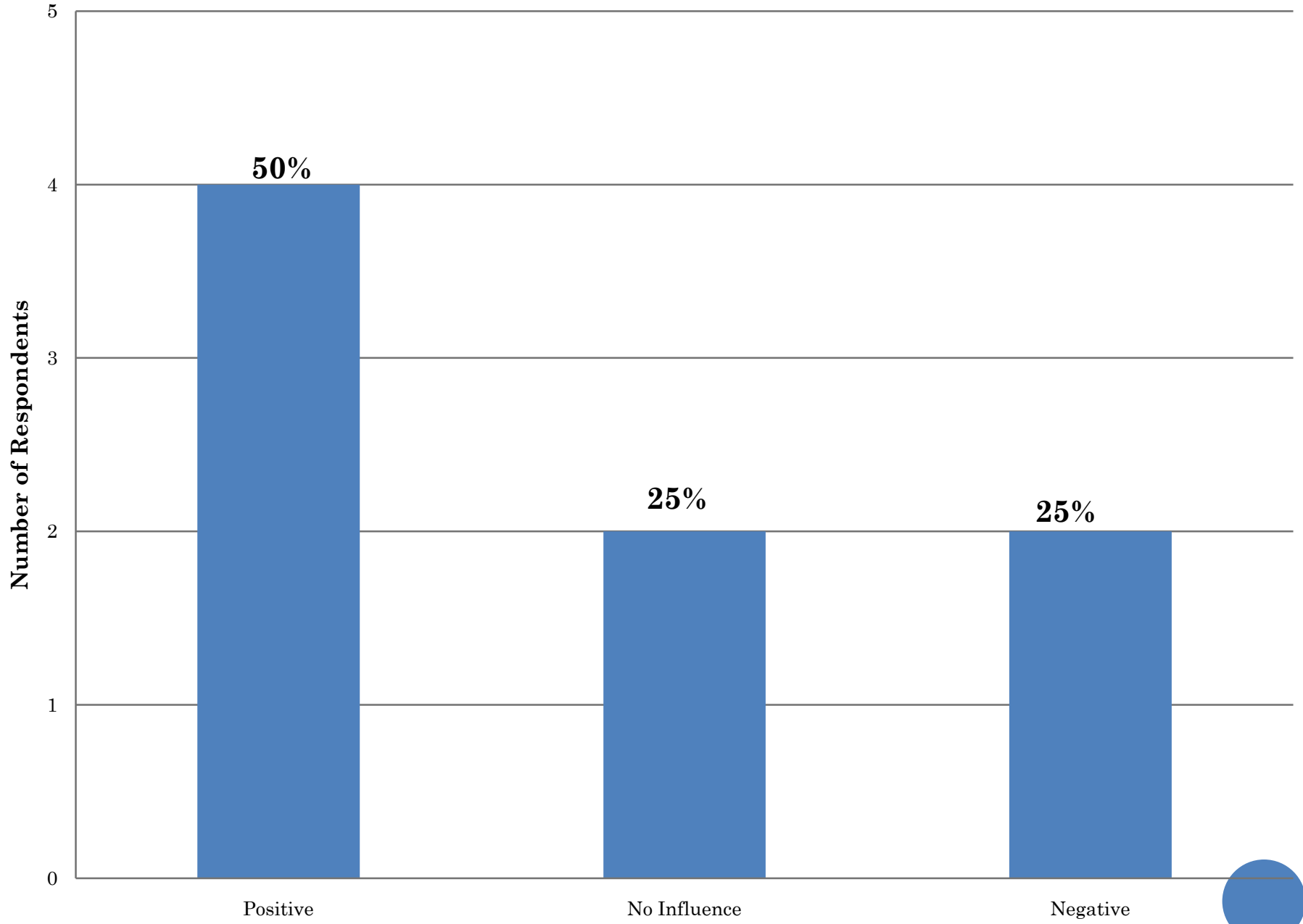
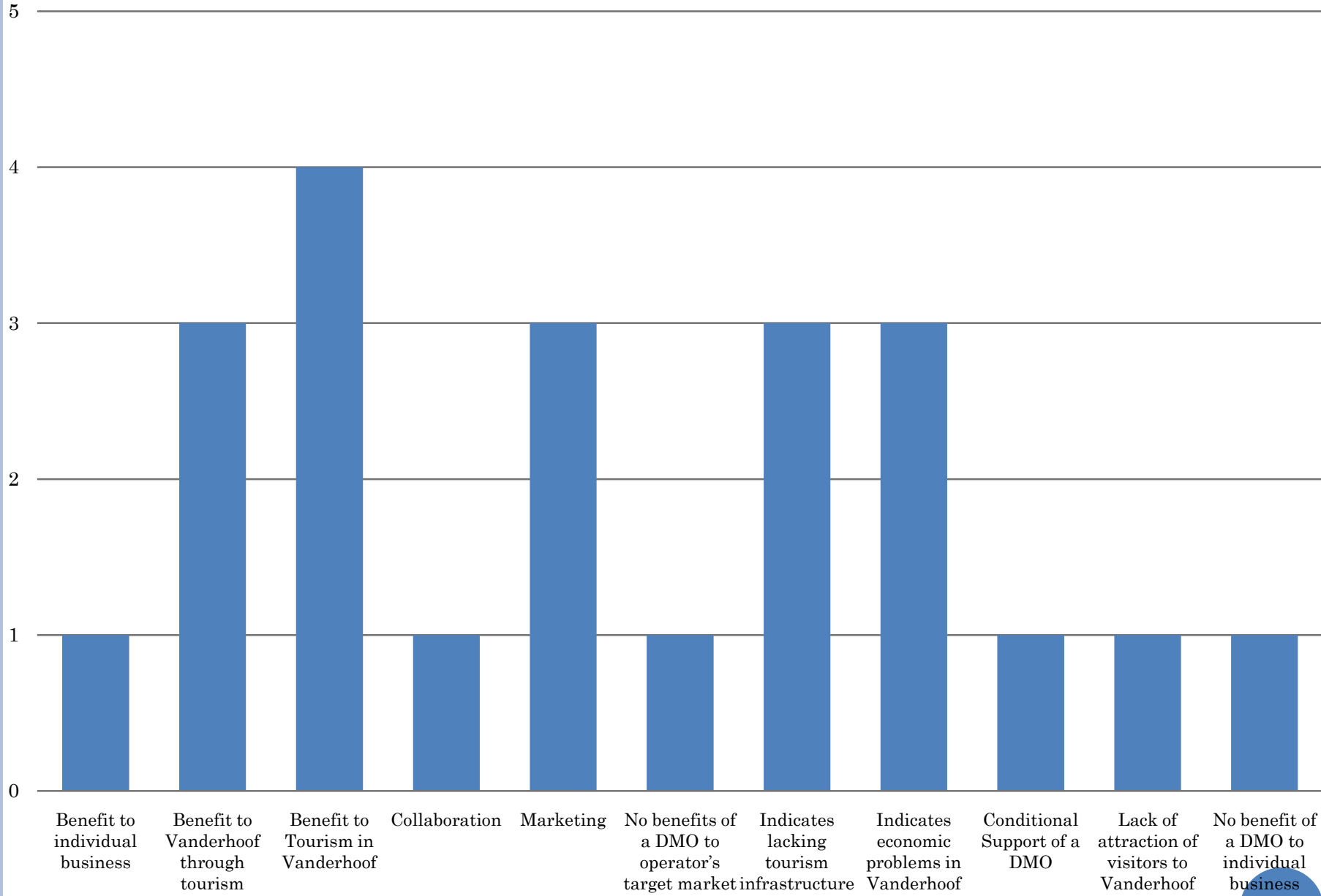
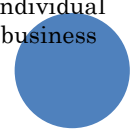


Figure #6. Q.16: Perceptions of the MRDT's Influence on Individual Businesses



**Figure #7. 17b: Support for DMO
Occurrence of Themes in Qualitative
responses**



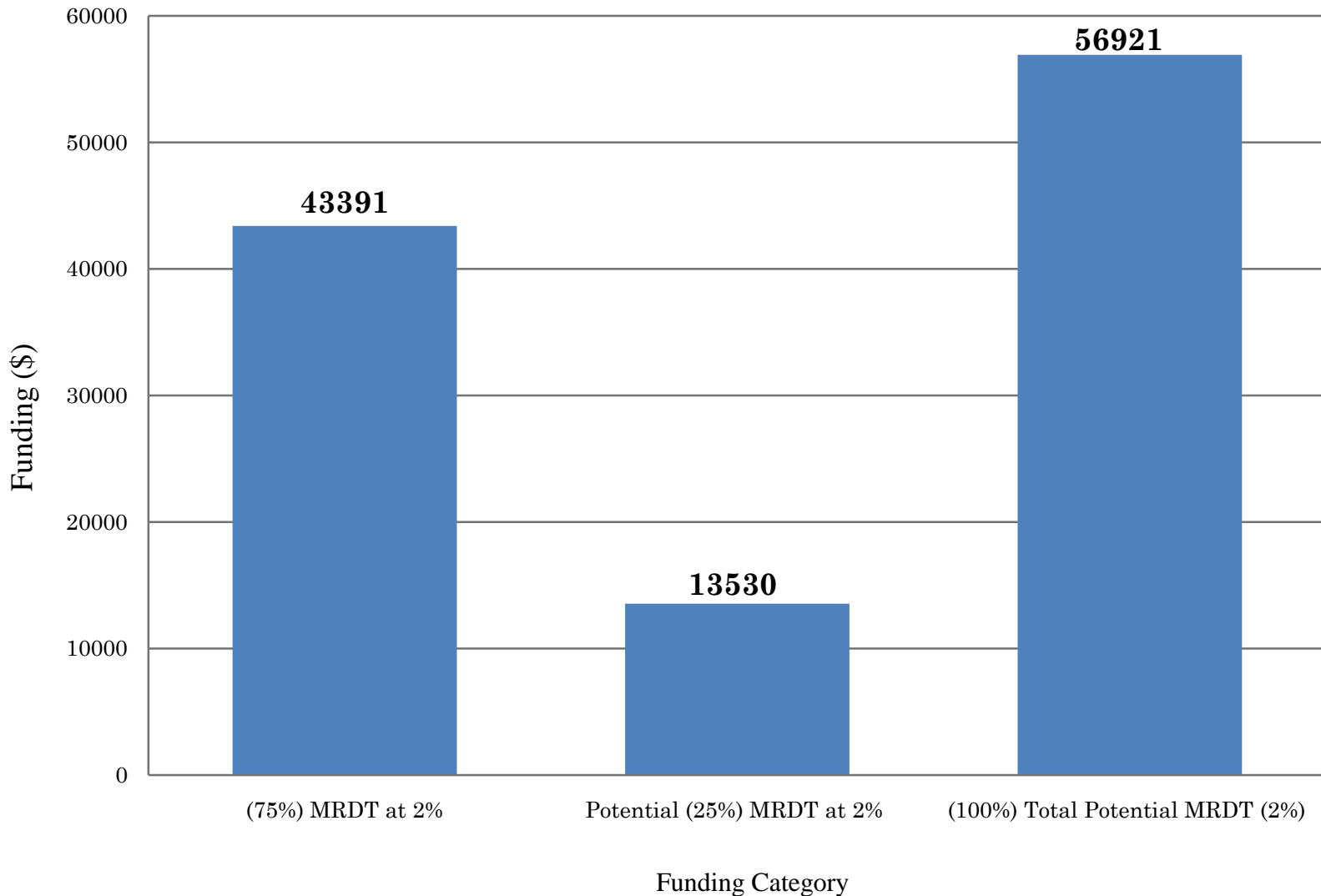


Figure #8. Total Potential MRDT (2%) Funding From 100% Accommodation Sector in Vanderhoof.



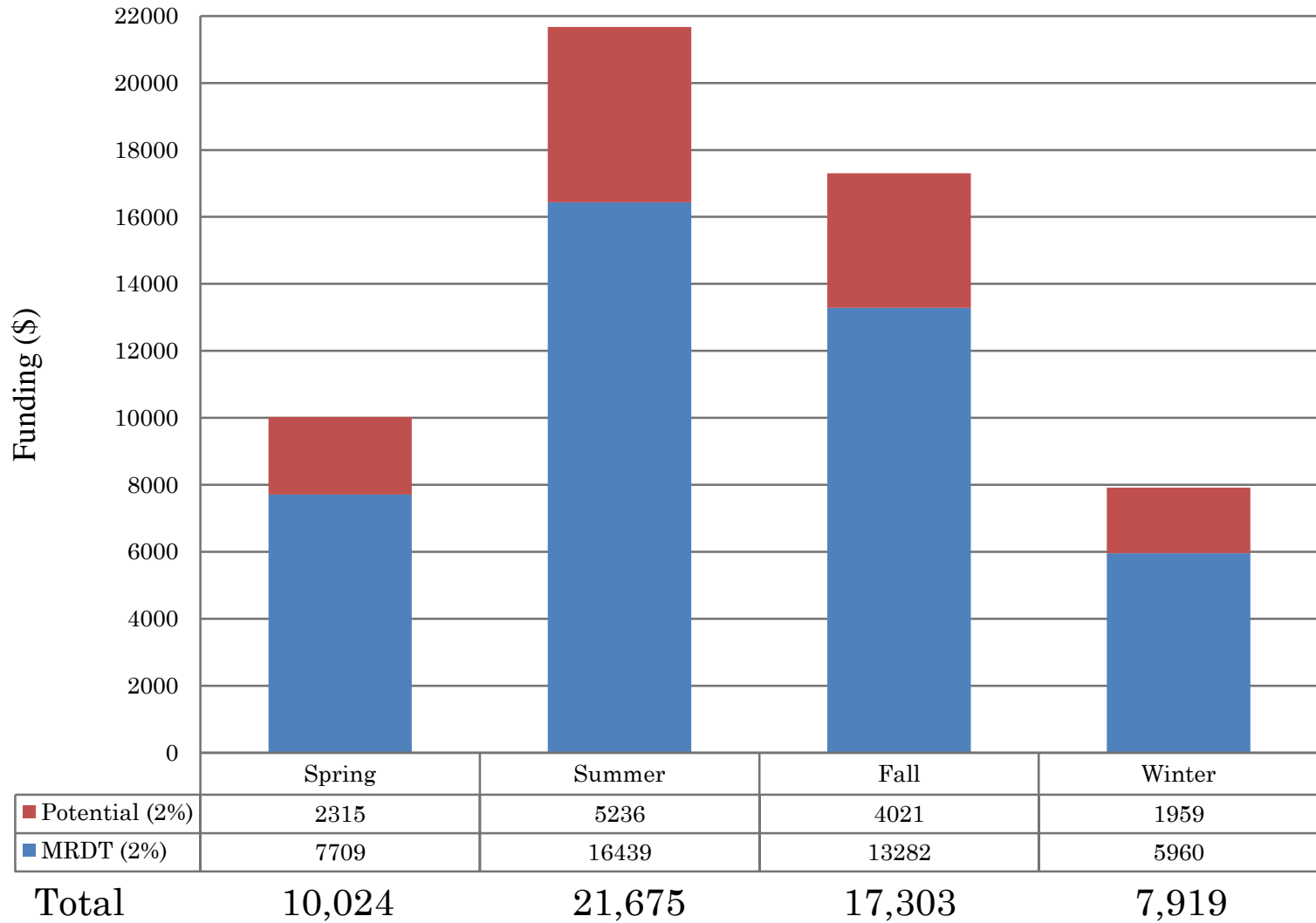
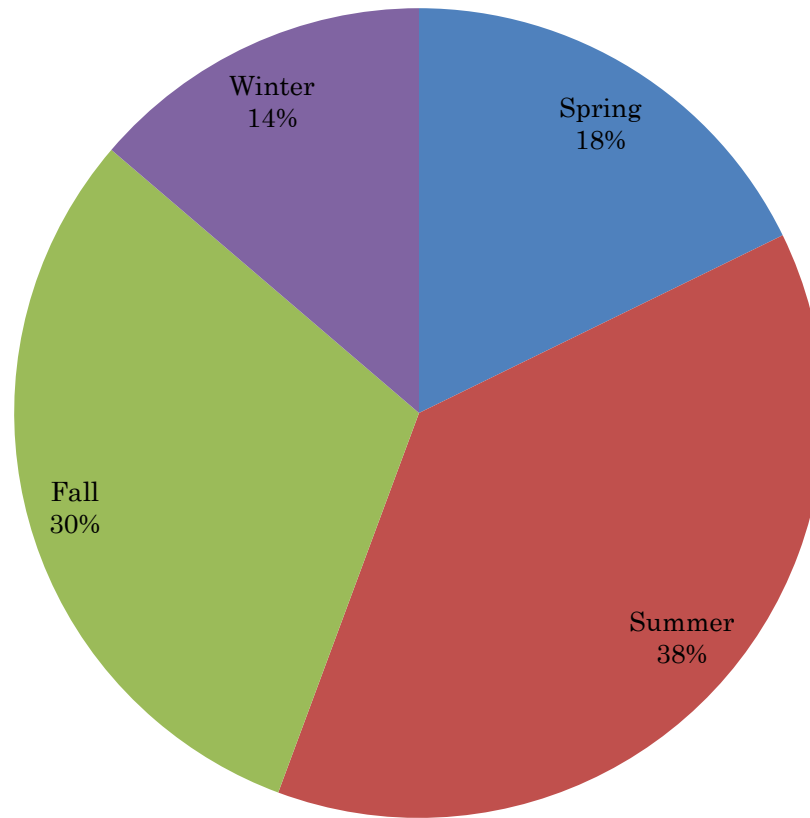


Figure #9. Potential MRDT (2%) Funding for Vanderhoof By Season, Based on Average Trends of 75% of Hotel Rooms in Vanderhoof.





**Figure #10. Proportion of Potential MRDT (2%)
Total Funding (100% rooms) in Vanderhoof.**



Vanderhoof Accommodation Clientele

Respondents were asked to rate their clientele by percentage via 6 separate categories.

- 1) Laborers and Work Crews
- 2) Professional Business
- 3) Tourism (+1 night)
- 4) En Route Travel Stopover (1 night)
- 5) Sporting Events
- 6) Local Residents



Research Findings

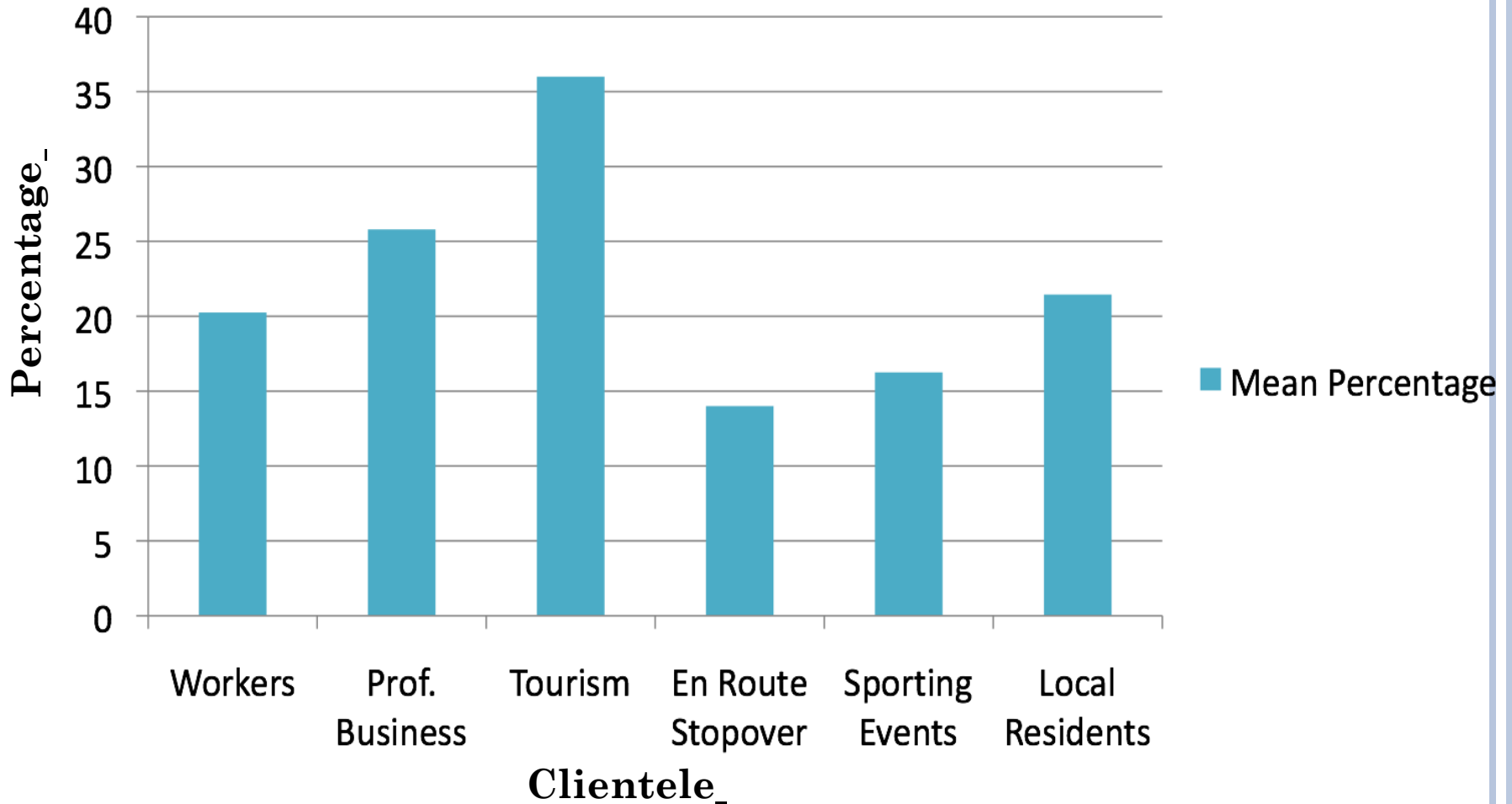


Figure # 11. Vanderhoof Accommodation Clientele



VANDERHOOF ACCOMMODATION CLIENTELE

Tourism (+1 nights) was rated as the highest for the accommodation sector with **36%**, while **En Route Stopovers (1 night)** were given the lowest percentage at only **14%**.

Professional Business (25.8%), Local Residents (21.45%) and Workers (20.25%) also received higher rankings while **Sporting Events** was rated lower at **16.25%**



MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

- This data provides some useful information as to hotel operators perceptions of their clientele based on visitor type.
- If Vanderhoof were to proceed with the formation of a DMO, this data set could be useful in determining where to direct marketing efforts to increase visitation by certain demographics and encourage multi-day visitation.



Rated Greatest (1) to Least (5) + Weighted Class Greatest = 5 points to Least = 1 point

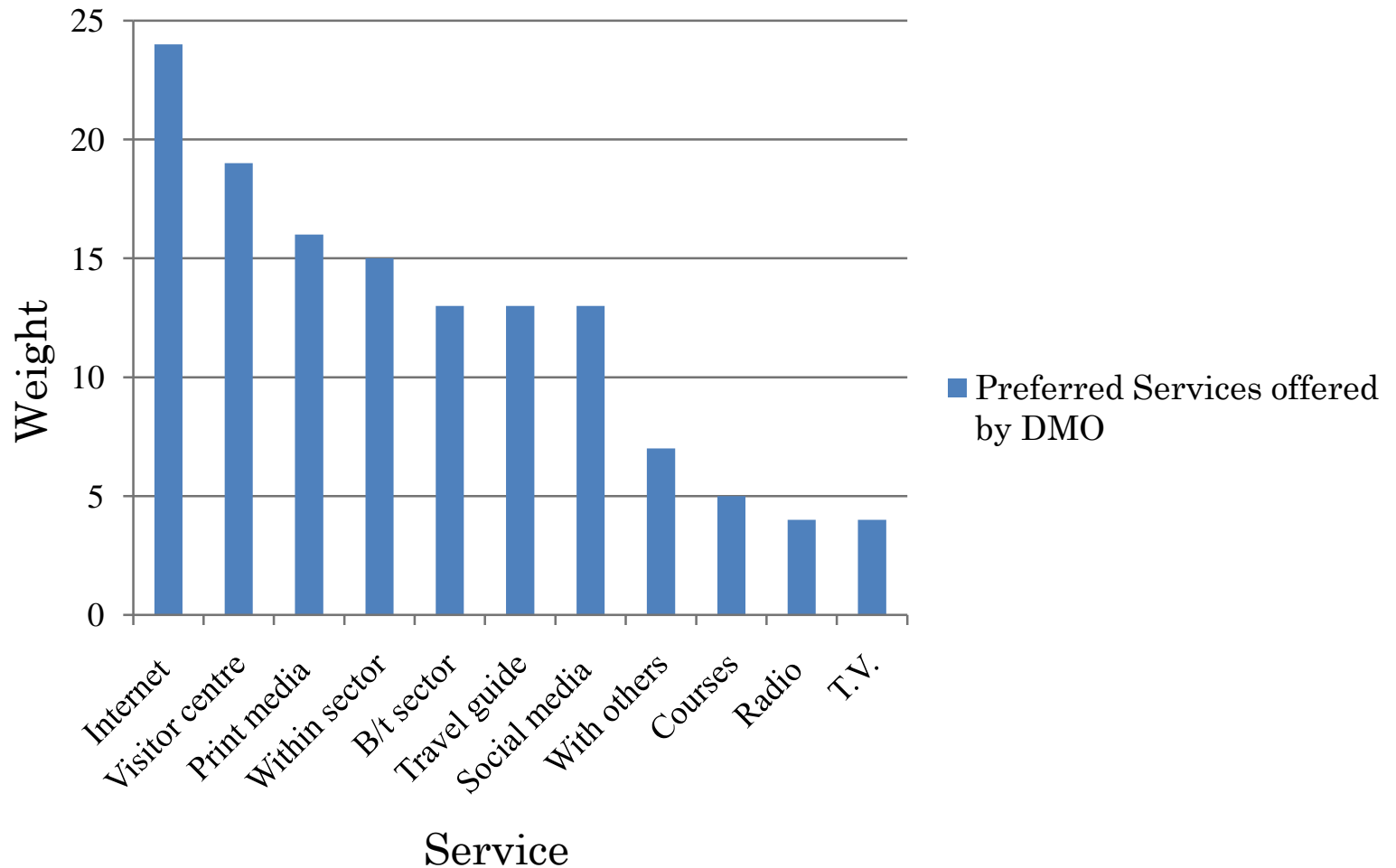


Figure # 12. Weighted Top Preferred Services Offered by a DMO from 75% of the Accommodation Sector in Vanderhoof.



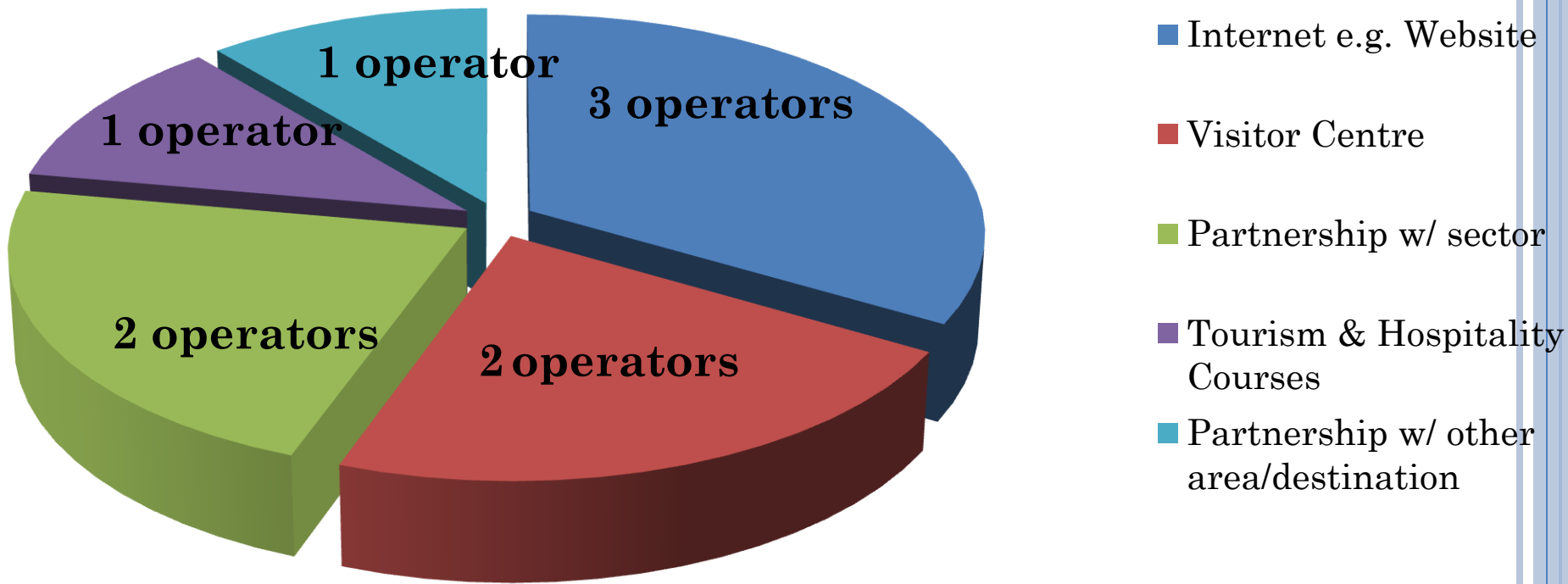


Figure #13. First Preferred Choice of DMO Services from 75% Accommodation Sector in Vanderhoof.



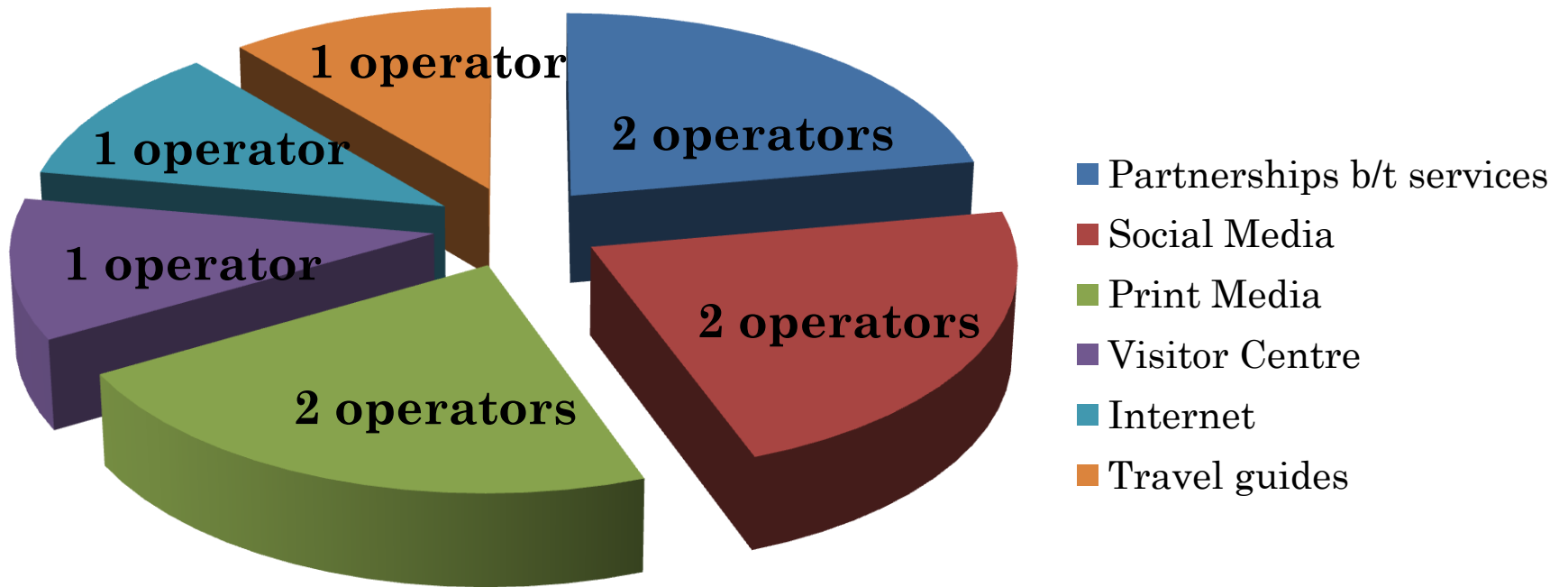


Figure #14. Second Preferred Choice of DMO Services from 75% Accommodation Sector in Vanderhoof.



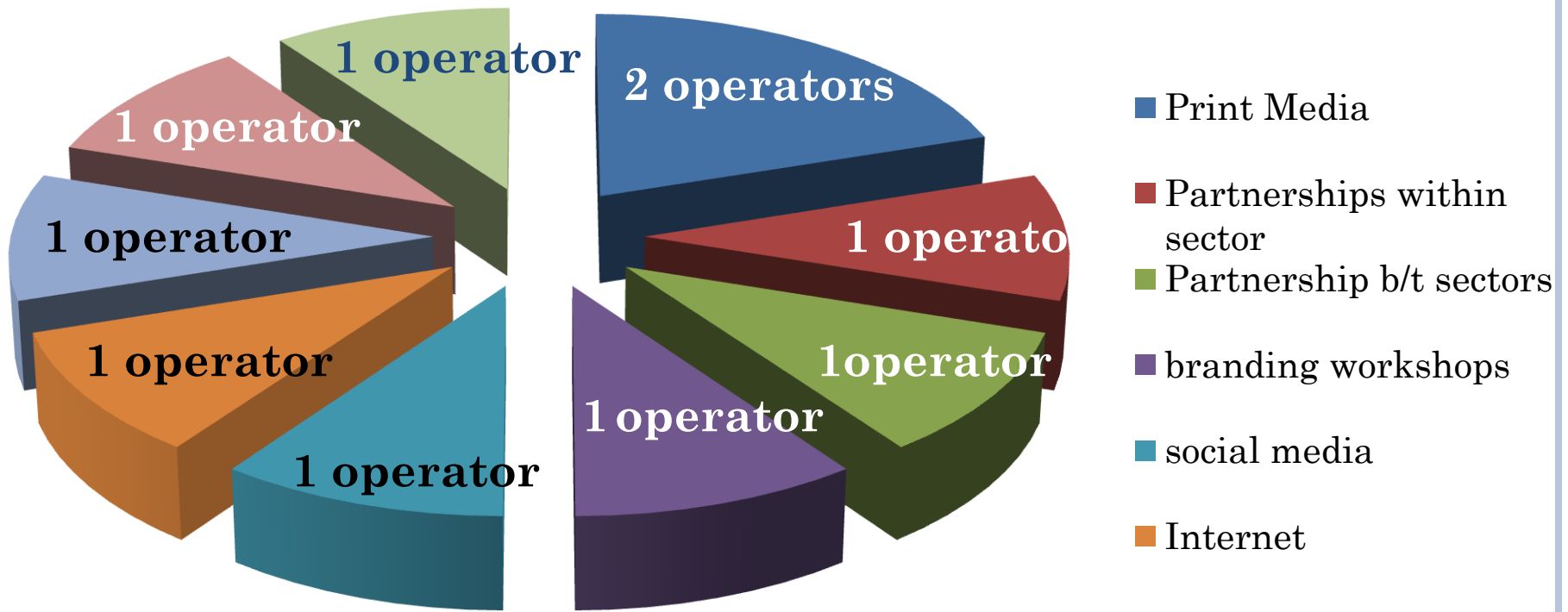


Figure # 15. Third Preferred Choice of DMO Services from 75% Accommodation Sector in Vanderhoof.



BENEFITS

- Positive results through marketing initiatives this can be seen through Google Analytics
- Incentive to succeed in order for the business to leverage the funds vs. often limited budget ends up going into overhead such as staff & office space.
- Eligible for Government grants & funding
- Social networking creates awareness powered by interested people sharing with others so the work ends up getting done for you
- Eligible for cost sharing funds through Regional Tourism Associations such as, Thompson Okanagan



BENEFITS CON'T

- Marketing destination under one cohesive unit, one brand, one voice, one name. This created a more organized and professional product.
- Increased coordination, and resourcing allows for more efficient funding of targeted campaigns thus driving more effective results in the end.
- Assisting tourism operators by leveraging their dollars more effectively.
- Gives strategic direction. Having a DMO brings things together on a higher lever under one umbrella, and gives a strategic focus that all stakeholders can work on.



BENEFITS CON'T

- More recognition as a sophisticated community that provides a professional tourism product
- Assist in community growth in terms of business development, job creation, and economic diversification.
- MRDT funding allows for a high level and detailed marketing plan, which executes initiatives and penetrates markets that tourism operators couldn't afford to on their own.
- Having a DMO can help identify target markets and can help indicate where resources should go.



CHALLENGES

- Segregating the DMO from the hotels limits communication and coordination.
- Making sure all stakeholders are represented equally.
- Communicating with the accommodators and the industry about the MRDT (What is it for and why is it important).
- Understanding the process and the logistics of the MRDT, building a business plan and the marketing plan around receiving this money from the public. Also what the plan is in terms of spending it and how it is being leveraged and such.
- More services are required which benefit the hotels directly, hotels need to see a direct benefit from implementation of the MRDT.



CHALLENGED CONT'

- Concerns regarding rooms sold in the market place that have nothing to do with tourism. These companies often do not want to pay the 2% MRDT as they may feel it is not relevant to them.
- Determining which DMO model to use.
- Challenges in bringing accommodation sector and tourism operators together in terms of metrics.
- Acquiring metrics from operators as they are very protective of their business information.
- In regards to the MRDT – the term 'TAX' is not viewed very positively among hotel operations.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Put in a lot of work and partnering prior to the DMO development
- Take into consideration community raised issues during planning
- Consider using a travel planner and website
- Be cautious and develop the DMO in the right fashion and go through the right channels and processes such (as community consultation, proper research, and hiring an outside consultant to help to do the process).



RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'

- Have the city or municipality in full support in partnership
- Develop a well established communication process which is almost like a sales pitch in terms of the benefits to everybody as a whole
- Utilize Tourism BC for grants and funding support
- Get your stakeholders on board and make sure that they understand what the DMOs purpose is, what it will do, and how it will achieve objectives and such is very important



RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'

- Understand the diversity of the DMOs.
- Do not think that somebody else's model will easily fit.
- Research the way to structure that DMO for an individual community, what it should look like and how it should operate.
- Definitely take advantage of the experience that is out there.
- Strive to create strong partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders, specifically the local governments, hotel operators and First Nations groups.
- Keep up to date with the government's agenda in relation to tax structures, specifically the MRDT.



RECOMMENDATIONS CON'T

- Make sure that all of the various groups involved with tourism are on the same page. The **KEY** is to adopt a plan and make sure the DMO is responsible to make sure that plan is carried out. Get the stakeholders on board and let everybody work within their own strengths but work together so that everybody is on the same page.
 - Accountability & transparency



Accommodation Sector Support for Establishing a DMO in
Vanderhoof, BC

Final Report

April 4th, 2011

Allison Bray

Jordan Hammond

Jerrica Mann

Jen Miller

Jessie Stephen

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Abstract

Students in the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management program at the University of Northern BC conducted a research study on behalf of the Economic Development Office of Vanderhoof and the Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development. The purpose of this study was two-fold; to assess the initial level of support and funding for an Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) funded destination marketing organization (DMO) among all accommodation providers and to provide information from the experiences of other DMOs in BC in order to help guide the development of a Vanderhoof DMO. The study results were unsuccessful at obtaining a 100% response rate and therefore were not conclusive as to whether the required level of support for the MRDT is sufficient for implementation. It can be reasonable inferred however, that with a higher response rate, the appropriate level of support could be attained. Interviews of DMO's throughout BC identified a number of benefits, challenges and recommendations that Vanderhoof could use to effectively implement a DMO.

Introduction

The municipality of Vanderhoof is interested in establishing a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) in order to be more competitive with other rural communities in BC's tourism industry. The DMO would represent the municipality of Vanderhoof and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area "F" and the portion of Electoral Area "D" south of the Nechako River. A DMO will align tourism industry stakeholders and pool resources in the

operating area to achieve a strong and effective common brand. The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) was contacted and a research team was developed consisting of students in the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program at UNBC in order to provide guidance on how a DMO representing Vanderhoof could be implemented and best succeed. To achieve this, four deliverables of the project have been identified:

- 1) Assemble a comprehensive listing of accommodation properties in the prescribed area.
- 2) Assess the level of interest in a DMO and the Municipal & Regional District Tax among these accommodation properties.
- 3) Develop an estimation of the yearly revenue generated by the Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT) with attention to seasonal fluctuations.
- 4) Develop a sense of understanding for some of the benefits, challenges, and recommendations of DMOs within communities similar to Vanderhoof.

The research team compiled a list of accommodation operators in Vanderhoof and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area “F” and the portion of Electoral Area “D” south of the Nechako River. This list allowed the research team to conduct surveys among hotel operators to ascertain if the level of support is adequate to legally establish a DMO under the *Hotel Room Tax Act*. The British Columbia Government requires at least 51% of registered accommodation sector businesses (with four or more rooms) representing 51% of the room capacity in the proposed region agree to implement the 2% Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)—formerly the Additional Hotel Room Tax or AHRT. The MRDT would apply to hotels, motels, resorts, hostels, bed & breakfasts or other lodging with four or more rooms and be charged in addition to the Harmonized Sales Tax. Survey results are not be legally binding and therefore cannot be used to apply directly for the Municipal & Regional District Tax. Actual application is beyond the scope of this study and must be implemented by proponents through the process specified by the Ministry of Finance. The survey also served to estimate the revenue

of the MRDT in order to determine the operating budget of the proposed DMO, which would allow for a prediction of expected currency, generated by the MRDT, available for DMO operations. Finally, to provide guidance for the best allocation of resources and successful operation of the Vanderhoof DMO, interviews of other BC DMOs with similar characteristics to Vanderhoof were conducted in conjunction with a review of the BC Destination Marketing Organization Association's Best Practices Report.

The research team completed this study on behalf of the Economic Development Office (EDO) of Vanderhoof, and was funded by the Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development. The results of the survey were used by the Economic Development Office of Vanderhoof to decide whether to pursue the establishment of a DMO. A formal summary report was produced and made available to the public through the EDO of Vanderhoof as well as on line through the UNBC ORTM Publication Series. This summary report was made available through the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development. Information from the report was shared through presentations by the researchers, the EDO of Vanderhoof, and the Regional Manager.

Literature Review

In order to properly inform this research study, it was necessary to review the literature, academic and technical, to facilitate a fuller understanding of Destination Marketing Organizations, their purpose, challenges and benefits that surround them, and how best to gain this data from respondents through survey and interviews. The gathered knowledge allowed the research team to better understand how to achieve the research objectives, reach the best answers to research questions and provide an insightful discussion of collected data.

Overview of Destination Marketing Organizations

DMOs are generally defined as non-profit organizations charged with the task of representing a particular region or destination and serve to provide leadership and direction for a long term tourism strategy through marketing and stakeholder collaboration (Destination Marketing Association International, 2011; Elbe, Hallen & Axelsson, 2008; Pike, 2004). Dodds (2010) states that DMOs promote and manage tourism within their destination in order to enhance the positive effects of tourism in the long run and to maximize competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

British Columbia has a network of Destination Marketing Organizations consisting of a Provincial Destination Marketing Organization (PDMO): Tourism BC, Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMO) representing the six tourism regions of BC, and City Destination Marketing Organizations which represent urban and rural communities and their regional districts (CDMO) (BC & Yukon Hotel Association, 2007). Administered under the Hotel Room Tax Act, municipalities or regional districts may individually, or in partnership, apply to the Ministry of Finance to implement an additional hotel room tax of up to 2%, known as the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT), in order to fund a CDMO (Ministry of Finance, 2010). Legal requirements specify that the applicant has officially consulted the local accommodation industry and gained approval of 51% of operators (representing 51% of rooms in the DMO's operating area) to implement the MRDT (Ministry of Finance, 2010). The initial application allows for a five year operating period for a DMO after which application for an extension can be made (Ministry of Finance, 2010).

This is significant information as it provides guidance as to the steps the research team took to fulfill the study's objective of determining the viability of a Vanderhoof DMO; compiling complete listings of the accommodation providers in Vanderhoof and the Regional

District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area “F” and the portion of Electoral Area “D” south of the Nechako River, and it determined the percentage of support for a DMO.

Benefits and Challenges Associated with DMOs

Wilson, Fresenmaier, Fresenmaier, and Van Es (2010) state that tourism is one of the most popular non-traditional rural development strategies. This implies an increasing amount of competition within municipalities between accommodation providers, tourism operators, food services and other tourism-related industries as well as between municipalities and regions vying for tourism revenue. CDMO’s can provide a competitive advantage for a destination by being able to create a stronger, more cohesive and marketable brand through collaboration (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). According to Wang and Xiang (2007), the pooling of financial and capacity resources allow for effective and innovative marketing of a destination, which as Masberg (1999) has found requires a massive amount of resources. Establishing a DMO also allows communities to access resources through umbrella organizations such as the BC DMO Association and DMO Association International (BC and Yukon Hotel Association, 2007; Destination Marketing Association International, 2011). This is particularly significant for rural destinations which may lack the resources and knowledge to effectively achieve the DMO goals and objectives.

Traditionally, DMOs have also provided services including training, research and product development, promotional and advertising campaigns, publishing and distributing of guides, online marketing, research and product development (Dodds, 2010). DMOs also link various sectors within the tourism industry such as transit, attractions, hotels, B&Bs, tour operators, travel agents, convention facilitators, retail operators and restaurants and this linkage and cooperation often leads to a more positive community image for residents (Wilson *et al*, 2001).

As these benefits are being realized, there has been a significant increase in DMO's, particularly in British Columbia since 2002 (BC and Yukon Hotel Association, 2007). It is important to be clear about what is within the scope of a DMO to achieve in order to ensure that stakeholders do not have false expectations of benefits rendered to them (BC and Yukon Hotel Association, 2007). This informs the research project that it is important to have an understanding of what accommodation providers expect from a Vanderhoof DMO so that realistic expectations can be disseminated prior to providers making a legal commitment to supporting a DMO. Failure to do so could result in confusion and conflict during the operation of the DMO that would render its stakeholders dissatisfied and could jeopardize the efficacy of the organization (BC and Yukon Hotel Association, 2007).

Wilson *et al.* (2001) and The BC & Yukon Hotel Association (2007) have both conducted research to identify general and case-specific challenges, key elements and best practices for success. Due to a number of factors it can be difficult for DMO's to achieve an effective brand and marketing campaign while providing benefits to stakeholders, visitors, and the community and ensuring the effective functioning of the organization (BC Chamber of Commerce, 2010; BC and Yukon Hotel Association, 2007; Gretzel, Fresenmaier, Formica & O'Leary, 2006; Sheehan, Ritchie & Hudson, 2007). DMOs often have to struggle with limited financial and human resources, unclear objectives, a lack of technological expertise, time constraints, and an inability to achieve cooperation and agreement among stakeholders (Dodds, 2010; Gretzel *et al.* 2006). The identification and recognition of these challenges and best practices are of interest to this study as they provide guidance for conducting the interviews of DMO communities in a way to best learn how a Vanderhoof DMO could succeed.

Study Area Characteristics

Vanderhoof is a district municipality in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako located on the Yellowhead Highway 16, approximately 95 kilometers west of Prince George (BC Stats, 2008). Urban Vanderhoof has a population of 4,064 and a rural population (outside the municipality but within electoral district F: Vanderhoof) of 3,140 (BC Stats, 2008; StatsCan, 2007). Based on the Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce brochure (2010), Vanderhoof does not offer any specific attractions that would serve to attract visitors, but is more so characterized by its location along a major transportation corridor proximal to a large service centre.

Vanderhoof's economy reflects this in that tourism sector industries such as retail trade and accommodation/food services employ the fourth and fifth largest percentage of the urban population (BC Stats, 2008). It is necessary to have a clear understanding of Vanderhoof's characteristics as this will aid the research team in determining what communities with DMOs have similar characteristics (geography, location relative to other service centers, population, attractions and industry). By selecting communities similar to Vanderhoof, it is assumed that data collected from the interviews will be more relevant to Vanderhoof's DMO experience.

Methods and Methodologies

As 51% support from accommodation businesses and 51% support of hotel rooms is required for the implementation of the MRDT, it is important to receive high response rates.

Findings from Fox, Crask, and Kim's (1988) positivist meta-analysis found certain factors can significantly influence response rates in mail surveys. Specifically, university sponsorship, pre-notification, and stamped return envelopes were found to significantly increase response rates.

The most effective factor was sponsorship of a research survey by a university instead of a private business.

A study by Crawford, Couper, and Lamias, (2001) found that web surveys may appear to attain lower response rates than mail surveys due to web users becoming more impatient with high-burden web interactions. The authors explored variables which can affect willingness to respond to a Web survey by embedding a series of experiments within a survey of students at the University of Michigan. Over 4,500 students were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in a Web survey on affirmative action policies. A progress indicator, utilization of a pre-notification report of the anticipated survey, automating password entry, and varying the timing of reminder notices to non-respondents were all tested to discover how they influence response.

Results of these experiments demonstrated that e-mail invitation plays a disproportionately important role in obtaining responses to Web surveys. Assuming complete coverage and access to the web, only 34.5% of the sample accepted the invitation and signed on to the Web survey site. Furthermore, individuals from the sample that were told the survey would take less time, individuals who received an embedded password, and those who received frequent reminder regarding the survey were more likely to accept the invitation and participate. This demonstrates that the factors that manipulate the perceived burden of the task had an effect on the likelihood of accepting the survey invitation (Crawford *et al.* 2001).

In addition Crawford *et al.* (2001) describes that questionnaires designed to display all the questions on a single page (such as scrollable or static web design) allow respondents to make informed decisions about participation based on the content. In contrast, interactive web survey (where information is accessible to the respondent gradually as they complete the survey) had high levels of abandonment that demonstrate the perceived burden of the survey in progress. This can be used to identify particularly burdening items. Open-ended items were also found to induce relatively high levels of abandonment.

Crawford *et al.* (2001) also notes that another reason that web surveys are less convenient than their paper equivalents is that respondents are more likely to set a paper questionnaire aside for completion later than to complete a web survey in multiple sessions. Although single-sitting completion is not required by web surveys, the burden of returning to a partially completed survey may be greater since the respondent must recover the e-mail invitation, URL, and password in order to re-enter the site (Crawford *et al.* 2001).

As existing DMOs have exhibited the ability to achieve high response rates, recommendations and experiences from established DMOs can be utilized in order to better understand the challenges faced by DMOs and increase the probability of developing a successful DMO. A study by Wilson *et al.* (2001) used focus groups to explore how communities developed their local tourism industries and community leaders' understanding of the reasons why some communities were successful at developing local tourism while others were not. Participants discussed their experiences with rural tourism development and entrepreneurship. Wilson *et al.* (2001) found the focus group suggested 10 factors/conditions as the most important variables for successful tourism development in rural areas. These 10 factors were; (1) a complete tourism package, (2) good community leadership, (3) support and participation of local government, (4) sufficient funding for tourism development, (5) strategic planning, (6) coordination and cooperation between business local leadership and persons, (7) coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs, (8) information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion, (9) good convention and visitors bureaus, and (10) widespread community support for tourism.

From qualitative data supplied by participants asked to discuss their experiences in generating tourism within their community, Wilson *et al.* (2001) found that community context

and rural tourism entrepreneur's role is vital in tourism development. Factors found to increase community involvement were to provide visitor packages (to increase longer visits and increased spending within the local area), funds to develop tourism attractions and facilities (within the community), and cooperation from local tourism operators including stakeholders.

Further research by Sheehan *et al.* (2007) involved understanding the relationship among stakeholders including the city, hotels, and DMOs. In-person interviews were conducted by an investigator, the interviews were completed through a structured survey, consisting of open-ended questions relating to the research questions and neutral prompts were used when needed (Sheehan *et al.*, 2007). The interviews were recorded and transcripts were verified for accuracy by the investigator prior to analysis. The study found that the two largest stakeholders are the city (or government) and the hotels (or accommodation sector). These stakeholders ultimately control the goals and strategies of a regional DMO. DMOs are also heavily reliant on the resources of other stakeholders within a destination and as a result, must facilitate and maintain an open, transparent and collaborative relationship with other key stakeholders, especially the city and the hotel industry (Sheehan *et al.*, 2007).

Choo, Park, and Petrick (2011) issued a web survey, respondents were asked to indicate the degree in which they identified with the brand of the area in terms of self-identity, self-image, attachment, feelings of belonging, and being a valuable or important member of the area. The researchers found that it is essential to understand how local residents recognize, understand, and identify with their destination as a brand, as this can influence their attitudes and behavior towards visitors. Since visitors interact with employees of the tourism industry and local residents it is crucial the tourism industry needs brand support for residents to retain their brand consistency for their visitors (Hazra, 2006). The study demonstrated that branding a destination

is a joint initiative that can be a powerful tool for engaging a community and their stakeholders in a shared effort towards positive outcomes.

Literature Review Implications

The literature reviewed has greatly enhanced the research team's understanding of what the scope of issues to be examined in this study should be. For example, with the knowledge of the legal requirements of establishing a DMO in BC under the MRDT, it was realized that to determine if Vanderhoof *could* establish a DMO, it would be necessary to gain the support of 51% of accommodation providers. Thus direction was provided as to how this study would proceed; a survey of all Vanderhoof's accommodation operators. By reviewing the benefits and challenges of DMOs within communities, it was realized that further additions would need to be made to the accommodation provider survey in order to advise the second of the research questions. Furthermore it was determined that interviews of DMOs representing communities in similar situations to Vanderhoof would help a future DMO to succeed. In order to decide upon which communities would be the most appropriate to interview, a profile of Vanderhoof was drawn through census data and other sources. This will be further elaborated upon in the Methods and Methodology section of the proposal. Finally, although the document was used throughout this stage of the research proposal, the 2007 Best Practices Report by the BC & Yukon Hotel Association has been attached to this proposal as it will be of further use in the analysis of data and recommendations made in this study to provide guidance for the success of the Vanderhoof DMO.

Research Questions

- 1) Does Vanderhoof meet the required support from the accommodation sector of 51% of the number of establishments that would collect the MRDT, and representation of at least 51% of the total number of rooms?

- 2) What are some the challenges and benefits experienced by DMOs with similar characteristics as Vanderhoof, B.C. and how can this information help make decisions regarding the potential DMO in Vanderhoof.

Theoretical Framework

The research conducted in this study was undertaken through a positivist paradigm meaning that the information gathered and observed by the research team was explained with logical analysis. To achieve a more comprehensive understanding behind the success of DMOs in rural communities, inductive reasoning was used to draw conclusions. In addition, descriptive and explanatory research was utilized for a better perspective of the potential benefits or disadvantages of implementing a DMO. The final summarized data was processed and interpreted by the UNBC research team.

Methodology

Primary data was collected from two separate study groups with the use of two different data collection methods. These two study groups consist of hotel operators in Vanderhoof, and established DMOs in British Columbia. Secondary data sources were provided to the research team by Kathie Laforge and Leslie Lax. This included a comprehensive list of 21 hotel operators in Vanderhoof (see appendix D) as well as a list of DMOs in British Columbia. This secondary data was used as a contact list for this study. A pre-notification letter regarding the accommodation sector MRDT support questionnaire were mailed out to all hotel operators in Vanderhoof (providing more than four rooms). This pre-notification letter was addressed from Kathie LaForge, Economic Development Officer, and Leslie Lax, Regional Manager Cariboo Region, and stated The University of Northern British Columbia as the institute conducting the survey. Pre-notification letters are beneficial in helping to ad credibility to the study and have

been known to increase response rates for surveys.

Incentives are an additional tactic that can be used to increase survey response rates. For this study an incentive was provided to those businesses that choose to complete the online survey. This incentive consisted of a Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce membership (or a renewal if they are already a member), a full page ad in their Chamberpoint newsletter, and a free ad on the Chamber of Commerce website (estimated value \$134). This incentive was raffled off to one of the businesses that participated in the survey, after the survey closed.

Methods

The primary data for this study was collected through multiple methods. In order to obtain the data to answer Research Question 1, pre-notification letters regarding the upcoming survey containing an access code (which would allow respondents to gain access to the web-based survey) were mailed to the entire accommodation sector of Vanderhoof on March 11, 2011. The same day, web-based survey hosted by the UNBC Research Centre was sent to hotel operators and consisted of 25 open and closed-ended questions (see appendix C). Respondents were intended to have from March 11th to March 28th to complete the survey, however a service interruption resulted in the survey being inaccessible for four days. The hosting website, however recorded that no one attempted to access the survey during these four days and therefore did not affect the response rate. By March 28, eight respondents had completed the survey. One additional respondent was reached by phone interview and added to the data set. Overall the data set of survey responses included eight full respondents and one whose results regarding the MRDT and finances were omitted as they own less than the MRDT required number of units. This respondent's results were included in results regarding general questions

about DMO development in Vanderhoof to gain further insight into how to make a DMO succeed.

For the second portion of primary data collection, three established DMOs; Fernie, Prince George and Terrace, as well as 2 similar tourism organizations; Merritt and Dawson Creek were contacted and participated in semi-structured phone surveys regarding benefits, challenges, and suggested recommendations in the establishment of a DMO. The chosen DMOs were also receive pre-notification; however, this was done by phone instead of a mailed letter. The pre-notification call informed respondents about the study, and was also used to set up a date and time for the phone interview. These DMOs and organizations were be chosen based on similar characteristics to Vanderhoof such as: population, attractions, willingness to participate, and proximity to a large city. The existing DMO interview consisted of 6 structured, open-ended questions (see Appendix F). Questions were read from a script with additional probing questions added at the interviewers discretion. Qualitative results were recorded, transcribed, and coded using a computer assisted transcription software.

Results

DMO Implementation Results

Results from the 75% of the accommodation sector that responded to the web-demonstrate found that that 47.5% support the implementation of the MRDT. The data also showed that 50% of the population believed there would be a positive influence from the MRDT, 38% believed there would be a negative influence, and 13% believed there would be no influence. Respondents in support of the DMO stated that they believe that a DMO would provide long term benefits to tourism in Vanderhoof. The qualitative data demonstrated conflicting comments, such as two respondents who were opposed to implementing the MRDT

yet indicated that they perceived no influence of the MRDT on Vanderhoof. Meanwhile, a respondent who is in favor of the MRDT indicated that they perceived a negative impact of the tax on Vanderhoof. On the contrary, 56% of the respondents indicated that they had a good understanding of a MRDT, 22% claimed they had a fair understanding, and 11% claimed they had a very good understanding. Similarly, 11% of respondents claimed a very good understanding of the functions of a DMO, 56% claimed a good understanding and 22% felt they had a fair understanding.

Finances Results

MRDT (at 2%) funding from the 75% of the accommodation sector that responded to the online-survey totaled \$43,391. Potential funding from the remaining 25% of the accommodation sector population is estimated (accounting for seasonal trends) at \$13,530. This accounts for a yearly estimated \$56,921 provided from 100% of the accommodation sector's MRDT tax. Summer accounted for the highest revenue gain of \$10,024 with \$7,709 from data provided by respondents, and a potential \$2,315 from non respondents. Total funding for Fall is estimated at \$17,303 with the respondents accounting for \$13,282 and \$4,021 from non respondents. A total of \$10,024 is estimated for spring with \$7,709 from the respondents and a potential \$2,315 from non respondents. Winter accounted for the lowest season of funding at an estimated \$7,919 total, from \$5,960 provided by respondents and an estimated \$1,959 from non-respondents. The provided data suggests that Summer would account for 38% of the MRDT yearly funding, Fall accounting for 30%, Spring at 18%, and lastly winter estimates suggests 14% of funding for the year.

Marketing Results

Results from the accommodation sector survey also found that 80% of the respondents were previously aware of the current effort to create a Destination Marketing Organization. Additionally, 90% of the respondents reported they were actively marketing their business for tourism, either by website, Yellowpages, printed pamphlets, newspaper, television, radio or word of mouth. Of the respondents, 80% identified that they are currently looking for new marketing strategies. New marketing strategies identified were social media packages, and new radio and website advertisements. The majority (70%) of respondents had not collaborated with other operators in order to create a “Package” product. When asked why then had never collaborated with other operators to create a “package” product, the most frequently indicated issues were lack of desire, communication and organization. One respondent felt that the market was too competitive, and other operators do not want to share business details, thus preventing collaboration on package products. Some of the respondents who also wanted to collaborate on products suggested packages such as horseback riding, cabin renting, and waterfall tours.

Services Results

The survey asked each respondent to rate the services preferred from 1 – 5 with 1 being the most preferred and 5 being the least preferred. A weighted factor of 1 (most preferred) worth 5 points to 5 (least preferred) worth 1. Results from the web0based survey indicated that the Internet was the most preferred service selected, by hotel operators, with a total of 24 points. The Visitor Centre was the second most preferred service with a total of 19 points. Print media, partnerships within sectors, and partnerships between sectors tied as the third most preferred service offered by a potential DMO with a total of 13 points each.

The data results also demonstrated the top three services preferred by each respondent. The first preferred choice for services was made up of 9 operators. Three operators selected Internet e.g. Website as their number one choice, two operators selected visitor centre, two operators selected partnerships with sector e.g. multiple accommodations sector, one operator chose tourism and hospitality courses and one operator selected partnerships with other areas and/or destinations. The second preferred choice for services was made up of nine respondents with two operators selecting partnerships between sectors e.g. hotel, fishing guides, and food services. Two operators selected Social media, two operators selected print media, and the last three operators selected visitor centre, Internet, and travel guides as their second preferred choice. The third preferred choice for services was made up of 10 respondents (one operator may have accidentally selected more than one choice). Two operators selected print media as their third preferred choice and the other eight operators each selected one of the following choices: partnerships within sectors, partnerships between sectors, branding workshops, social media, Internet, travel guides, radio and T.V. ads.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include limited access to the community of Vanderhoof (as the research team attend UNBC in Prince George) as well as some confidentiality and anonymity issues. The confidentiality and anonymity of DMO responses from the DMO telephone interviews could be guaranteed as a very small number of individuals were interviewed in an identifiable group and specific locations. Participation was entirely voluntary and DMOs had the choice to not participate (although no DMOs chose to not participate). In addition, interviews were recorded (which could potentially discourage participation) and then transcribed to ensure responses are accurately portrayed. The Economic Development Office (EDO) of Vanderhoof,

and the Regional Manager, Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development were granted access to the transcriptions of the interview.

As the accommodation sector survey was online based, a few of the respondents could not access the interview and had to be contacted over the phone. Additionally, technical difficulties resulted in the online survey being inaccessible for approximately one week. It is important to note that during this week no accommodation providers tried to access the survey. In addition, the survey was only available for completion for approximately one week which could have not been a long enough time span for accommodation managers to respond.

The web-based survey was completed in March when it appeared that a proportion of the accommodation sector was not open, and therefore could not be contacted to participate. Furthermore, one accommodation operation was in the process of changing ownership and it was not appropriate to survey them at this time. The resulting response rate was lower than what was required to definitively determine the support for the MRDT in Vanderhoof. The results and discussion however, attempt to address the research questions as best as possible despite these limitations.

The Destination Marketing Organizations interviewed consisted of Prince George, Terrace, and Fernie. While interviews were beneficial, it is important to note that Prince George is a much larger municipality than Vanderhoof and receives much more traffic via major highways. Additionally, Fernie is an established ski resort destination that is successfully marketed internationally while Vanderhoof has no such attractions. Terrace also provides skiing at a smaller Shames Mountain, and provides ocean salmon fishing and golfing. The other organizations interviewed were Merrit and Dawson Creek. While these communities shared more characteristics with Vanderhoof than the others, and although their organizations served a

similar function as a DMO they were not based on a MRDT DMO model. As a result, their responses were less relevant to the specific challenges to implementing an MRDT DMO although some interesting alternative DMO models were brought to light and could prove useful if the MRDT is identified as not being ideal to Vanderhoof.

Discussion

The web survey received a response rate of 74% of the total accommodation sector within the study area. . Although in most cases this would normally be a high response rate, it was found to be insufficient in definitively determining if the MRDT could be implemented to support a DMO in Vanderhoof. This is because 74% of respondents only corresponded to 50% of operators and 47.5% of the entire room population supporting a DMO (while 51% of rooms and operators is needed). The difference between these two percentages is due to the allocation of rooms among the operators. The majority of supporting respondents are operators of the smaller resorts, motels and hotels within Vanderhoof. The two respondents who did not support the MRDT account for 54 of the total 206 rooms (26% of all rooms), which skewed the results significantly. Additionally, combined, two of the non respondents also accounted for 54 rooms, another 26% of all rooms. Therefore, by contacting and gaining the support of only one of the non respondents, the required 51% could be achieved. It is recommended however, that for the long term success of the DMO through stakeholder support and cooperation, that significant efforts be undertaken to gain the support of as many rooms/operators as possible. Although it was not possible to obtain responses of the entire population of operators or rooms, this could be due to several limitations such as seasonality, and in one, case a transition of ownership prevented survey completion. Attempting to contact operators during the more active summer

months could result in higher response rates and would therefore be an ideal time to conduct an accommodation provider information meeting or focus group on the development of a Vanderhoof MRDT/DMO.

The results of the research gives evidence that the majority of accommodation providers in Vanderhoof were aware of efforts to create a DMO, and were interested in promoting tourism in their region, as this would increase revenue for their businesses. The majority of the respondents had the desire to advertise their business but lacked the adequate resources and knowledge needed to advertise efficiently. A DMO could provide services for these accommodators such as, bundling packages and increasing advertising. The results highlight a common theme that there is a lack of collaboration between operators. A DMO could also potentially assist accommodators in collaboration by establishing common goals, marketing strategically, and providing a funding platform.

The total estimated MRDT (2%) funding (from 100% accommodations) at \$56,921 is a substantial amount of money that could be utilized by the potential DMO in Vanderhoof to help market the destination. These funds would be available to leverage additional campaign funds through the regional tourism organization, as well as thorough provincial and national organizations. Seasonal fluctuations are important and can help anticipate shortages of funding throughout the year. This would allow for pro-active planning for funding allocation according to seasonal fluctuations. This funding could be used for market branding and joint marketing. Although this funding comes from the accommodation sector it is important that this revenue helps promote tourism operators. For example the manager of Tourism Fernie- Jikke stated that “although they (the accommodation sector) are usually the strongest coordinated voice by far,

they understand the need of all the other providers to make the experience. It is really important for them (tourism operators and accommodations) to work together.”

Additional funds could also be provided through membership fees by implementing a membership based DMO rather than a stakeholder based model. With a membership based DMO, tourism related businesses would have to be a member and pay a membership fee in order to be part of the “Tourism Vanderhoof” (DMO) marketing and sales initiatives. This would encourage tourism operators to further supply funding for the DMO and ensure funding acquisition from not only the accommodation sector, but also from the tourism operators. Members of membership DMOs are provided with effective marketing campaigns, product packaging, and funding leveraging from the DMO. For example, tourism operators who pay membership fees can work in partnership with the DMO in order to bring their messages to the marketplace. DMOs can help with offsetting costs, funding assistance, and increased efficiency of money spending. Additionally DMOs can help tourism operators improve marketing as they have a lot of expertise and want to help members with their individual businesses.

The majority of those in support of the MRDT explained their support based on the benefits that they would accrue through making a DMO work. The benefits mentioned were centered mainly around the marketing of individual businesses and the Vanderhoof area in general. Opposition to the MRDT was based on client/visitor perceptions of already paying too much for taxes. It is difficult to present a rationale to counter these responses, however it may be useful to present different scenarios/projections of the effects of the MRDT on individual businesses within the context of the Vanderhoof tourism industry and accommodation sector. For example, one of the operators opposed to the MRDT based their position on not wanting to make visitors pay more taxes, however the majority of clientele at this particular operation are not

tourists, but industry workers. Will they choose another accommodation if all prices of rooms in Vanderhoof are raised by 2%? It is unlikely that they will choose to seek accommodation in other communities, therefore the net effect on this accommodation business may be no net loss. Faced with a potential increase in occupancy however, objections to the MRDT may be less sure and result in support or at least cooperation if the MRDT is eventually established.

Respondents were asked whether or not they supported a DMO in Vanderhoof. The intention of this question was to differentiate between support for the MRDT and a DMO in general. It appears that there *is* more support for a DMO of a non-MRDT model as all but one respondent supported the implementation of a DMO in Vanderhoof (two respondents opposed the MRDT). The respondent who supported the DMO but not an MRDT model gave a qualitative answer as to why they support a DMO denoting that they were somewhat wary of a DMO as they would support it "... only if there is substantial evidence that it is a positive organization". This further validates the value of some form of meeting or workshop with accommodation providers in order to allay suspicions, confusion and fears and provide the evidence that a Vanderhoof that a DMO would be a "positive organization". Successfully putting such workshops or information sessions into effect could easily result in the required 51% support of the MRDT and would likely result in more than 51% support.

One of the respondents completed the survey through a recorded telephone interview, and although their responses were valuable, they are an accommodation provider that owns less than four units (rooms) and therefore is irrelevant to the process of determining whether or not the MRDT is supported. To deal with this limitation their responses were eliminated from questions pertaining specifically to the MRDT although their responses regarding DMO's in general were included as they still provided some insights into how a DMO may successfully be implemented

in Vanderhoof. For example, there was one other accommodation provider in the sampling frame (a non respondent) that does not own the required number of units to be considered under the MRDT process which highlights a potential conflict within the accommodation sector if the MRDT is to be implemented. The two accommodation providers with less than four units would not be required to charge the additional 2%, but would potentially still benefit from services the DMO offers. This could cause a rift within the accommodation sector and should be dealt with. Potential solutions could include exploring the option of taxing these operations in order to be more equitable within the sector or to limit the amount of marketing provided to these two operations through implementation of membership fees. Implementing membership fees enables the DMO to only market operators that pay membership fees which can be viewed as more fair since tourism operators are not required to charge a tax (MRDT). Based on recommendations of other DMOs in BC and the BC DMO Association's Best Practices Report, it appears that transparency through stakeholder communication, consultation and engagement is a major factor in the success of DMOs in their communities. Bringing this issue to the table within the accommodation sector prior to implementing the MRDT could be a sign of good faith that would ease concern over a potential lack of accountability and transparency in the DMO and set the stage for success in the future.

Through codification of responses as to why respondents support/do not support a DMO several common themes were found. Support for a DMO was frequently based around unspecified economic benefits to Vanderhoof through tourism and benefits to tourism/tourism infrastructure in Vanderhoof. This is significant as it may suggest that the best way of garnering support of other operators may be based on vaunting the benefits a DMO would have to Vanderhoof's overall economy and overall tourism industry. No mention was made of benefits to

the accommodation sector in responses. It may not be beneficial to pursue this line of argument as it may lead to segregation between sectors within the tourism industry if accommodation providers feel that they are due certain benefits to their sector over others. Although no reason was revealed for Merritt's choice of having a separate hotel association within their DMO, it is reasonable to speculate that something of the above nature occurred. It is recommended that Vanderhoof's tourism industry try and avoid such a split as it causes for a disjointed organization with potential for competition between the sectors. Only one mention was made of support for a DMO based on it benefitting an individual business and only one mention was made of not supporting a DMO as it would apparently have no influence on their business. This is contradicted by the fact that that particular respondent did not respond that they ever experience 100% occupancy of their rooms; there is always room for improvement, there is always benefit to be had from a business perspective.

Although some accommodation operators thought the DMO would have no influence on their business, others realized the benefits provided through services of the DMO. The data highlighted strong support for Internet based services provided by the DMO if implemented within Vanderhoof study area. The visitor centre was also another popular service that each operator rated highly on the survey. Visitor centers can be extremely beneficial as it is not only print media, but the word of mouth, that can promote activities and operators. Print media was also a popular choice as well as partnerships within and between current services offered with the study area. There is potential for social media to play a role as a marketing initiative.

Although some accommodation operators indicated their interest in social media, it seemed that many accommodation operators were unfamiliar with the potential benefits of social marketing. The DMO could provide all of these preferred services allowing each business to focus their core

business activities individually or as a package. Having a DMO, allows all participating businesses to avoid the redundancy of maintaining a market presence individually and gives the businesses the opportunity to save money and become more visible within the tourism market.

Overall, responses indicated that accommodation operators had a good understanding of the function of a DMO and were familiar with the MRDT. This high level of understanding however was not supported by the results of questions regarding the influence that a DMO and the MRDT would have on Vanderhoof and individual business. For example, one respondent who was opposed to the MRDT felt that the tax and any form of DMO would have no influence on Vanderhoof. This may indicate several things; because the respondent feels that a DMO would have no benefit on affecting their target market and could negatively impact their business through price increases they are completely apathetic to either concept or that they do not in fact fully understand what a DMO or the MRDT could do to affect tourism in Vanderhoof and the benefits that could have for their business by expanding their clientele base. Another respondent indicated that a DMO would negatively influence their individual business even though this respondent supported a DMO and the implementation of the MRDT. There are a number of reasons that could explain why this response was given; however, there seems to be some level of confusion indicated by these questions regarding the influence of the MRDT and DMO on Vanderhoof and individual businesses. This confusion over DMO's and the MRDT was consistent with the experience of other DMO's interviewed and presented a barrier to the initial success of their implementation. Based on these factors, it is recommended that a clear understanding of DMO's and the MRDT is established before attempting to solicit official support from accommodation providers.

In conclusion, "Does Vanderhoof meet the required support from the accommodation

sector of 51% of the number of establishments that would collect the MRDT, and representation of at least 51% of the total number of rooms?”. The findings of this study are not sufficient to ultimately determine this. Findings do however, indicate that it is highly likely that sufficient support of operators and total numbers of rooms could be achieved through either discussions/clarifications with at least one of the respondents opposed to the MRDT or through the surveying of any one of the non respondent accommodation providers.

DMO Interview Summary

Benefits

DMO Telephone interview respondents were asked to identify some of the benefits that they believed the community was receiving through the DMO. Overall, respondents viewed the establishment of a DMO as beneficial to their respective communities. However, given the fact that interview respondents were employed by the DMO, there is obvious reason to view the work done by DMOs in a positive manner. It was noted by many respondents that DMOs provide a more sophisticated platform for marketing the destination and its tourism opportunities. DMOs have the ability to pursue marketing directives that are above and beyond the capabilities of individual tourism organizations within the community. In this sense, DMOs are comprised of tourism marketing professionals and have a greater capacity for and understanding of tourism marketing practices, identifying target markets and allocating marketing resources. It was further noted by a respondent that this also allows tourism operators to pool resources with the DMO and leverage funds for marketing in a more coordinated and effective manner. Likewise, DMOs are able to share information such as statistics and target market research with tourism operators which can help to build stronger tourism products in the community. Since DMOs are typically

non-profit with the goal of regional and community economic development and diversification, it is possible to seek additional funding and grants from government and other organizations. It was noted by the majority of the respondents that there are benefits to collaborating with larger, regional tourism management firms such as Tourism BC and Northern BC Tourism. DMOs are able to leverage funds through these types of organizations and engage in broader marketing practices.

Many of the DMOs interviewed had a destination website with online booking capabilities. This allows travelers to make online reservations for accommodations and tourism activities. Additionally, DMOs can reach a wider audience than traditional marketing techniques such as print media and local advertising. With online marketing, DMOs can tap into foreign markets and supply tourism marketing information through multiple channels. Many of the DMOs interviewed provide the ability to book tourism packages, which would typically include accommodation coupled with another tourism product or activity. These types of services provide better value for the consumer and increased ease in booking vacations. This also provides greater cohesion within the local tourism industry and shared benefits from travel bookings. Additionally, a number of the DMOs interviewed manage the visitors' center in their respective communities, and this was identified by respondents as a positive contribution to the local tourism sector. It was indicated that among the obvious benefits a visitor center provides, such as providing access to local tourism products to travelers, it also allows a destination to count visitor number and gauge interests, which provides useful market information. Of the DMOs interviewed, multiple respondents noted a desire to increase use of social media services for tourism marketing, and many were actively working towards including these types

of digital services. It was indicated that this is an effective tool for marketing to prospective travelers and can be done at a lower cost than traditional marketing practices. As such, social media marketing and other online promotion techniques should be a primary marketing focus for a DMO in Vanderhoof, if it were to be implemented.

Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify challenges faced in the development and management of a DMO. The primary challenge identified by all respondents was the ability to create 'buy-in' from the community and other local stakeholders. There was a lot of confusion and about the functions of a DMO and how it would benefit the community. Similarly, there was misunderstanding in many of the communities and by tourism stakeholders about how the MRDT was being collected, how it would be utilized and who it was meant to benefit. Hotel operators wanted to know that the MRDT is going to benefit their business directly since they are most affected by the implementation of this tax. It was identified by multiple respondents that some of the hotel operators in their respective communities indicated that they wanted the MRDT funds to be used solely for the benefit of the hotel industry and not other tourism providers. They did not understand why other sectors of the tourism industry were not being taxed, but were receiving benefits from the hotel tax. Many of the respondents indicated the need to make sure that marketing was directed to benefit all tourism sectors.

Recommendations

Across all of the interviews conducted, the most predominant recommendation offered by respondents was strong communication, collaboration and partnerships with the community and

other tourism stakeholders. The structure and management of a DMO in Vanderhoof should be reflective of the needs, desires, values and goals of the community. This requires strong engagement with the community effective DMO requires stakeholder 'buy-in' which means having a community and the local government in full support of the directives of the DMO and helping to produce deliverables. This indicates the need for strong planning, goal setting, and implementation from the DMO, the local government and other industry stakeholders. Additionally, a recurring theme among many of the respondents in the interviews was transparency. Respondents indicated that there is a need for better communication with stakeholders and the community about how the DMO operates, how tax funds are being utilized and who is benefiting from marketing efforts. Greater transparency can alleviate some of the challenges faced by other stakeholders with understanding how the DMO is managed and how funds are allocated. In this regard, adequate transparency is an operational goal that the Vanderhoof DMO should strive for, if it is to be implemented. An additional consideration for Vanderhoof is a potential change in the structure of the MRDT. One respondent indicated that the framework for the MRDT provided by the provincial government may be in the process of being revised. The respondent noted that there may be new requirements and accountability with the MRDT, as the provincial government is restructuring some of their policies due to new leadership.

Budget

Data collection and analysis

UNBC Research Survey Centre services and support for data collection.

5 hours @ \$50.00/hr

\$250.00

Web survey of accommodation providers

UNBC Research Survey Centre Setup of web-based survey through fluidsurvey.com

5 hours @ \$20.00/hr

\$100.00

Mail-out letter of introduction

Envelopes - \$0.60 *50= \$30.00 Printing-\$0.10* 100=\$10.00 Postage-\$0.60*50=\$30

\$70.00

Phone interviews with community DMO's

UNBC Research Survey Centre equipment and transcribing for **25 interviews @ \$15.00**

\$375.00

Long distance rates

TELUS long distance rates

25 calls of 15 min. @ \$0.04/min

\$15.00

Incentive for web survey participants

Respondent incentive from Vanderhoof Chamber for Commerce.

\$134.00

CATI survey

15 interviews @ \$30.00/hr

\$450.00

Contingency

Additional unforeseen expenses

\$140.00

Total Expenses

\$1534.00

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Assessing the Support for a Destination Marketing Organization in Vanderhoof Information Sheet

The municipality of Vanderhoof is considering whether to pursue the development of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) as part of its economic development strategy. A DMO is a non-profit organization that strategically promotes a regional brand and coordinates tourism program delivery in order to maximize revenue for businesses and tourism operators. A DMO may also run a visitor's centre.

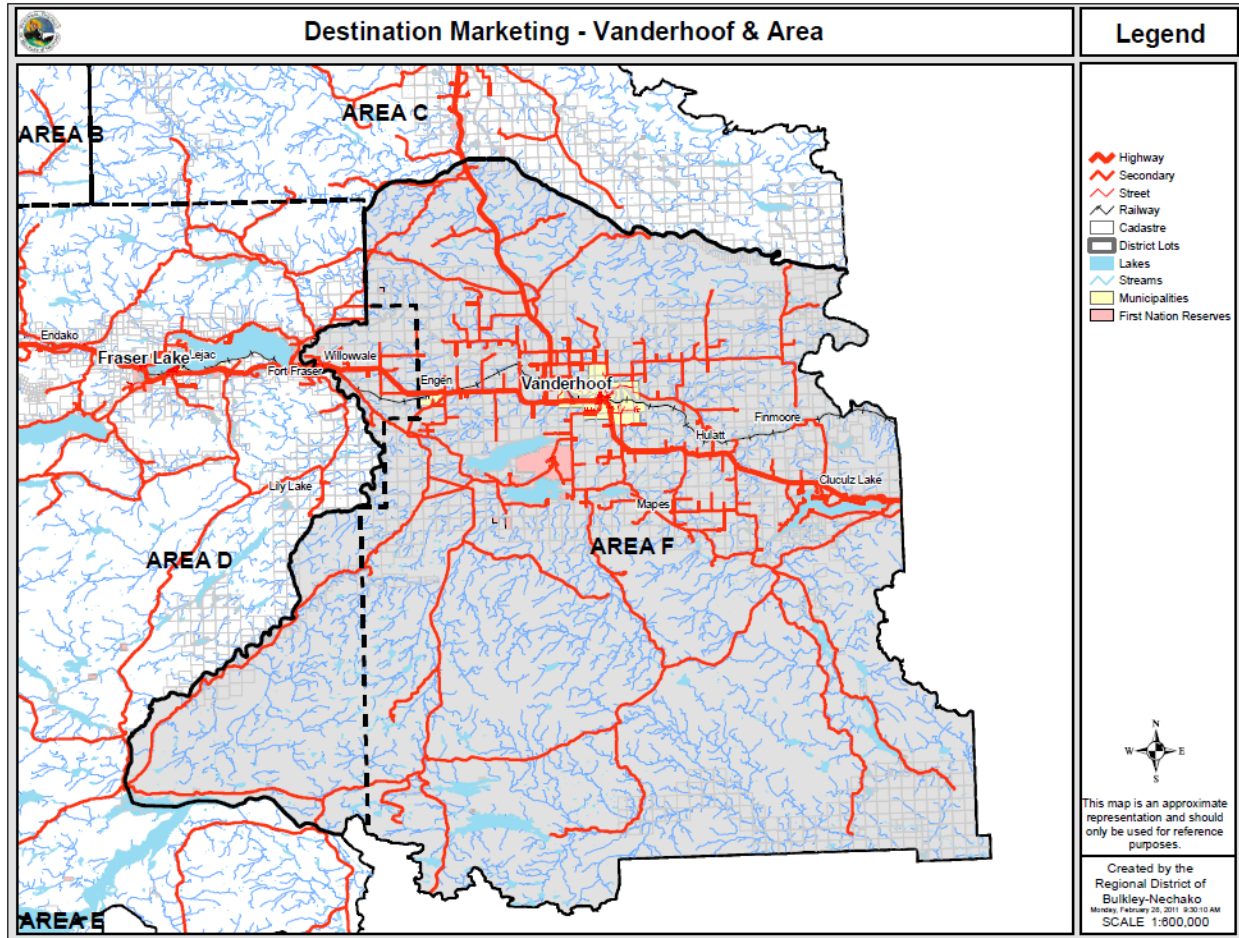
To proceed with a DMO and secure funding, the British Columbia Government requires at least 51% of registered accommodation sector businesses (with four or more rooms) representing 51% of the room capacity in the proposed region agree to implement the 2% Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)—formerly the Additional Hotel Room Tax or AHRT. The MRDT would apply to hotels, motels, resorts, hostels, bed & breakfasts or other lodging with four or more rooms and be charged in addition to the Harmonized Sales Tax. If the fifty-one percent support is obtained and the application for a DMO is approved, the province will collect the MRDT from all accommodation operators within the specified region. The local DMO will be funded by revenue from the local MRDT and possibly augmented from other sources.

For more information on the accountability of a DMO click here:

The BC DMO Association promotes mutual exchange and collaboration among DMOs to achieve enhanced professionalism, accountability, and performance. The implementation of the MRDT needs to be renewed with the Provincial Government after five years, at which time the municipality or regional district will again have to consult with the accommodations sector. There are no limits on the number of extensions.

For more information on the proposed boundaries of the DMO region click here:

The DMO would represent the geographic area bounded by the municipality and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area "F" and the portion of Electoral Area "D" south of the Nechako River.



For more information on the MRDT please visit the following link:

http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/business/consumer_taxes/Municipal_Regional_Tax/municipal_regional_tax.htm

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the initial level of support and funding for a DMO and the MRDT among accommodation businesses within the area represented by the DMO. If a decision is made to pursue the DMO designation, a formal petition will be circulated at a later date to establish the level of committed support among accommodation businesses. You have been contacted because you own or operate an accommodation business in the proposed region of the DMO.

Who is Undertaking the Study

This survey is being conducted by students in Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management at the University of Northern British Columbia as part of their senior research methods course. The survey is being conducted for the Economic Development Officer of the District of Vanderhoof, and is funded by the Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development.

Confidentiality

You can withdraw at any time during the on-line questionnaire and your responses will not be recorded. We will record which organizations have completed a questionnaire. Once you submit your results, your answers will be kept anonymous and disconnected from your personal and business names. The Economic Development Officer (EDO) of Vanderhoof, and the Regional Manager, Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development will have access only to the anonymous data. The lead investigator will keep the raw data on a disk, in a locked file cabinet at the University for one year, after which time the data will be destroyed. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, please contact the UNBC Research Ethics Board at 250- 960-6735 or reb@unbc.ca.

Potential Risks and Benefits

You may feel uncomfortable sharing information about your business. There are no questions of a personal nature asked in this questionnaire. The information you provide will help direct development efforts in Vanderhoof, and determine if a DMO should be pursued. If you decide to complete the questionnaire, you will be entered into a draw for one year's free membership to the Chamber of Commerce as well as a free full-page advertisement in their print and digital media.

Research Results

The results of the survey will be used by the Economic Development Officer to decide whether to pursue the establishment of a DMO. A formal summary report will be produced and made available to the public through the EDO of Vanderhoof as well as on line through the UNBC ORTM Publication Series. The summary report may also be made available through the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development. Information from the report will also be shared through presentations by the researchers, the EDO of Vanderhoof, and the Regional Manager.

Instructions

The questionnaire should be filled out by the business owner or operator. There are 26 questions that take a total of about fifteen minutes to complete. The questions ask about the marketing and capacity of your accommodation business and your support for a DMO and the MRDT. Please complete your questionnaire by March 11, 2011.

Please answer the questions one by one in the order that they appear. The survey must be completed in one session, or you will have to begin again. When you have finished the questions on a page, review your answers because you will not be able to come back to change them once you continue to the next page. Then, click "next page" to proceed. Do the same for all the pages of the survey. When you come to the end of the survey, click "submit" to complete it.

If you begin the survey and find that you are unable to complete it or you run into technical difficulties, please send the UNBC Research Survey Centre an email at kutzner@unbc.ca or call

250-960-6724. If you have any questions or concerns about this project please contact the lead investigator, Phil Mullins at mullins@unbc.ca or by calling 250-960-5509.

YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL, so please feel comfortable to be open and honest with your answers. Whether or not you choose to participate in the survey, we would like to thank you for reading over the above information.

Thanks,

The research team:

Phil Mullins, Lead Investigator:

E Mail: mullins@unbc.ca

Phone: 250-960-5509

Allison Bray

Jordan Hammond

Jerrica Mann

Jen Miller

Jessie Stephen

Appendix B: Online Survey for Accommodation Operators Consent Form

Consent Form

Before you begin, please read the following statements carefully:

- I have read and understand the information that has been presented to me on the previous pages about this survey and project.
- I understand any risks and benefits of participating in this research.
- I have been informed that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time.
- I have been given the opportunity to contact the researchers should I have any questions.
- I understand that my answers will be anonymous and confidential.
- I understand that only the project researchers and sponsoring organizations will have access to the raw data I provide.
- I understand that by participating in this survey, I am giving my free and informed consent to take part in this research.

If you agree to complete the survey after reading the above statements, please click yes to proceed.

Yes

No

NEXT

Appendix C: Online Survey for Accommodation Operators

QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. The information you provide will remain confidential and will help to determine whether or not establishing a DMO for the Vanderhoof area is a viable project supported by the accommodations sector. This survey is to be filled out by the owner or operator of registered accommodation rental businesses with four or more rooms.

1. Are you the owner or operator of a registered accommodation business with four or more rooms located within the Municipality of Vanderhoof or the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area “F” and the portion of Electoral Area “D” south of the Nechako River as shown in the map above?

Yes No

2. Were you previously aware of the current effort to create a Destination Marketing Organization in Vanderhoof?

Yes No

3. Have you actively marketed your business for tourism?

Yes No

If yes, how was this done?

4. At what frequency do you update you marketing?

1-4 Months	5-8 Months	9-12 Months	Once a year	Every two years	With opportunity	Never
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

5. How often do you purchase advertising for your business?

1-4 Months	5-8 Months	9-12 Months	Once a year	Every two years	With opportunity	Never
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

6. Are you currently looking for new marketing strategies?

Yes No

If yes, which ones would you like to pursue?

7. Have you ever collaborated with other operators in order to create a “package” product?

Yes No

If yes, which ones have you pursued?

a) If no, have you ever *considered* packaging with other operators?

Yes No

If yes, which packages have you considered pursuing?

b) If no, why not?

8. Have you worked with a Destination Marketing Organization for business purposes in the past?

Yes No

If yes, please describe your experience:

9. How would you rate your understanding of what a Destination Marketing Organization does?

Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
[]	[]	[]	[]

10. How would you rate your familiarity with the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) (formerly Additional Hotel Room Tax)?

Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
[]	[]	[]	[]

11. What five services would you most prefer a Destination Marketing Organization provide?
 Rank your five preferences, 1 being most preferred – 5 being least preferred.

Partnerships:

- Coordinated within sectors (multiple accommodation businesses)
- Coordinated between sectors (e.g. hotel, with fishing guide, and food service)
- With other areas or destinations
- Through travel trade (e.g. working with travel agents, etc)

Marketing:

- Visitors centre
- Print media (e.g. magazines, newspapers)
- Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
- Internet resources (e.g. destination web page)
- Travel guides
- Radio advertisement
- Local TV ads

Training:

- Certifications Programs
- Tourism and Hospitality courses
- Branding and Marketing Workshops

Other:

- _____
- _____

12. Would you be willing to implement the 2% Municipal and Regional District Tax at your business?

Yes No

Why or Why Not? _____

13. In your opinion, how would Vanderhoof be influenced by a Destination Marketing Organization?

Very Positively	Positively	Not Influenced	Negatively	Very Negatively
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. In your opinion, how would Vanderhoof be influenced by the Municipal and Regional District Tax?

Very Positively	Positively	Not Influenced	Negatively	Very Negatively
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. In your opinion, how do you think your business would be influenced by a Destination Marketing Organization?

Very Positively	Positively	Not Influenced	Negatively	Very Negatively
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

16. In your opinion, how do you think your business would be influenced by the Municipal and Regional District Tax?

Very Positively	Positively	Not Influenced	Negatively	Very Negatively
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

17. Do you support the development of a Destination Marketing Organization for Vanderhoof?

Yes No

Why or Why Not?

18. Approximately how many years has your business been in operation? _____

19. Approximately how many years have you owned or managed this business? _____

20. What is the maximum occupancy of your hotel in terms of:

a) Number of rooms: _____.

b) Number of beds: _____.

21. On average, how many days of the year are you open for business? _____

22. Please indicate the seasons during which your business operates as well as estimates of the average occupancy, room rates, and lengths of stay during those seasons.

Season	Operational?	Average Occupancy (% of capacity)	Average Room Rate (\$)	Average Length of Stay (nights)
Spring (Mar.-May)	Y / N	_____	_____	_____
Summer (June-Aug.)	Y / N	_____	_____	_____
Fall (Sept. – Nov.)	Y / N	_____	_____	_____
Winter (Dec.-Feb.)	Y / N	_____	_____	_____

23. How would you describe the majority of your bookings?

Single Occupancy	Double Occupancy	Family	Group (5+)
[]	[]	[]	[]

24. Please indicate the percentage of you clientele in terms of the purpose of their stay.
(total should add up to 100%)

- [] %] Labourers & Work Crews
- [] %] Professional Business
- [] %] Leisure Tourism (+1 nights)
- [] %] Leisure Stopover (1 night)
- [] %] Sports Events
- [] %] Local Residents

25. Would you be willing to participate in future efforts to establish a DMO for this area?
Yes No

If yes, please provide your contact information. It will not be tied to the answers you have provided in this questionnaire.

On behalf of the research team, we would like to thank you for participating in this survey. The answers you provided will be useful in helping to determine the suitability for a DMO in Vanderhoof. Final results will be available from the District of Vanderhoof - Economic Development Officer, and posted on line as part of the ORTM Publication Series.

- END OF QUESTIONNAIRE -

Appendix D: List of Accommodation Operators

Name	Address	Postal Code	P.O. Box	Phone Number	Email
Nechako Lodge & Aviation	2500 - 500 Road	V0J 3A1		250-412-2665	info@nechakolodge.com
Coachlight Motel	2110 Highway 16 East	V0J 3A0	89	250-567-2614	coach10@telus.net
Crystal Lake Resort	via Kenney Dam Road	V0J 3A0	619	250-567-7337	crystallake@xplornet.com
North Country Inn	2625 Burrard Avenue	V0J 3A0	2390	250-567-3047	ncinn@hwy16.com
Finger Lake Wilderness Resort	400 Gold Rd, KM 59 Kluskus Rd	V0J 3A0	181	866-334-6437	info@fingerlakeresort.com
Glen's Motor Inn	190 First Street West	V0J 3A0	398	250-567-2218	glen@hwy16.com
Siesta Inn	230 Highway 16 West	V0J 3A0	582	250-567-2365	siestainn@uniserve.com
Grand Trunk Inn	2351 Church Street	V0J 3A0	1108	250-567-3188	none
Hillview Motel	1533 Highway 16 East	V0J 3A0	279	250-567-4468	hillviewmotel@bcnetwork.com
Tachick Lake Resort	Tachick Lake Road	V0J 3A0	1112	877-567-4929	tachicklake@xplornet.com
Tatelkuz Lake Ranch Resort	via Kluskus Forest Service Road	V0J 3A0	2300	250-483-4023	tlrnr@uniserve.com
Tatuk Lake Wilderness Resort	Kluskus Forest Service Road	V0J 3A0	1217	250-483-6780	tatuklakeresort@xplornet.com
Nechako River Hotel	292 Loop road	V0J 3A0		250-567-2717	debbie.davie@gmail.com
Euchiniko Lakes Ranch	Harrington`s Hideaway	V0J 3A0	2509	no ph. #	info@blackwater.infosathse.ca

Appendix E: DMO Telephone Interview Information Script

Information Script

The following script will be read to potential participants in order to provide them with full information about the study.

Hello, my name is _____ may I please speak with _____, the CEO or manager of _____ (DMO Name) _____.

Describe the following:

1. Purpose of the Study

The municipality of Vanderhoof is considering whether to pursue the development of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) as part of its economic development strategy. The Economic Development Officer and Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region are seeking information about the benefits and challenges of establishing a DMO in remote and rural communities. I am a student at UNBC conducting semi-structured interviews to gain the professional opinions of CEOs or managers of DMOs in similar circumstances to Vanderhoof. Your DMO was selected because it matches some of the circumstances facing Vanderhoof.

2. Who is Undertaking the Study

This research is being conducted by students in Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management at the University of Northern British Columbia as part of their senior research methods course. The survey is being conducted for the Economic Development Officer of the District of Vanderhoof, and is funded by the Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development.

3. Confidentiality

The confidentiality and anonymity of your responses cannot be guaranteed as we are interviewing a very small number of individuals in an identifiable group and specific locations. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can stop the interview at any time. With your permission, we will be recording and then transcribing the interview to ensure we accurately portray your responses. The Economic Development Officer of the District of Vanderhoof, and the Regional Manager, Cariboo Region, Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development will have access to the transcriptions of the interview. The lead investigator will keep a copy of the interviews in a locked file cabinet at the University for one year, after which the recordings will be erased. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, please contact the UNBC Research Ethics Board at 250- 960-6735 or reb@unbc.ca.

4. Potential Risks & Benefits

You may feel uncomfortable sharing information about the challenges and successes that your Destination Marketing Organization has faced. We are only seeking your professional opinion. Your opinions and experiences will contribute to the potential success of a new Destination Marketing Organization in BC.

5. Research Results

The results of the research project will be used by the Economic Development Officer to decide whether to pursue the establishment of a DMO. A formal summary report will be produced and made available to the public through the EDO of Vanderhoof as well as on line through the UNBC ORTM Publication Series. The summary report may also be made available through the Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development. Information from the report will also be shared through presentations by the researchers, the EDO of Vanderhoof, and the Regional Manager.

6. Instructions

Participation is entirely voluntary. You will be asked six open ended questions, and based on your responses I may ask for more information or clarification as we go. The interview will last approximately half an hour, depending on your responses. Because we are seeking your professional opinion, feel free to elaborate on or revisit any of the questions we have discussed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project please contact the lead investigator, Phil Mullins at mullins@unbc.ca or by calling 250-960-5509.

7. Consent

Before we begin, please respond to the following statements with either yes or no. If you are unsure, please ask me for clarification.

- I understand the information that has been presented to me about this survey and project.
- I understand any risks and benefits of participating in this research.
- I have been informed that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time.
- I have been given the opportunity to contact the researchers should I have any questions.
- I understand that my answers will not be anonymous or confidential.
- I understand that only the project researchers and sponsoring organizations will have access to the full interview I provide.
- I understand that by participating in this survey, I am giving my free and informed consent to take part in this research.
- Finally, do you agree to participate in this interview?

**INTERVIEW
OF EXISTING DMOs**

Questions

1. What benefits have your community, tourism operators, and accommodation sectors seen from the DMO?
2. What were the biggest challenges you faced in developing the DMO?
3. What services that you provide are most valued by your stakeholders, the businesses you represent?
4. What programs or services do you provide to accommodation providers? Do they work well, and what are the strengths and weaknesses?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with your DMO?
6. What suggestions do you have for Vanderhoof as they pursue the development of a DMO?

Finally, would you mind being contacted if the Vanderhoof DMO development team have any future questions?

Thank you for your time. I am sure that your responses will help inform the development of a DMO in Vanderhoof.

- END OF INTERVIEW -

Appendix G: Letter of Introduction

Attention: Vanderhoof and Area Accommodation Operators

The District of Vanderhoof along with other tourism related organizations have been exploring the possibility of having a Destination Marketing Organization established in our area. The goal of this organization would be to develop tourism marketing tools, advertising campaigns and other activities that would raise the awareness of our area as a tourism destination.

As funds for this type of activity come partially through a tax levied to customers of accommodation operators in the proposed area, we need your support and approval to pursue this.

Before we invest time and money into developing a business plan, we need to gauge the level of support we may have from the accommodation sector. To do this, we have enlisted the help of the students enrolled in the Outdoor Tourism and Research Program at UNBC to survey those affected by this tax levy and to report back to us on the level of interest and types of concerns that need to be addressed before we proceed further.

The District of Vanderhoof asks you to participate in this important and confidential survey as we are trying to increase the tourism interest in our area and ultimately the number of overnight stays in our area.

To reward you for your participation, we are offering you a chance to win print and web advertisement along with a membership to the local Chamber of Commerce.

To access the questionnaire, please visit [insert web address here]

You will need to enter the following unique access code: [insert code here]

Reminders will be sent to the follow email address: [insert email address here]

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact me at edo@district.vanderhoof.ca or 250-567-4711.

Yours truly,

Kathie LaForge,
Economic Development Officer

Computer Assisted Survey Research Lab, UNBC

Transcription Services

Completed By: [Jen miller] on March 25, 2011

Project Name: DMO Interview

Client Name: Economic Development Officer and Regional Manager of the Caribou Region

Interviewee name: Aiden Kelly

Tourism Prince George

Interview Date: March 25,2011

Interview Location: University of British Columbia, Prince George

Length of Transcript: 6:46

Persons Present:

1. Interviewer (I) – Jen Miller
 2. Respondent (R) – Aiden Kelly
-

(I) What benefits have your community, tourism operators, and accommodation sectors seen from the DMO?

(R) The benefits of a DMO is that it gives strategic direction. Having a DMO brings things together on a higher lever under one umbrella, and gives a strategic focus that everyone (such as community, tourism operators and accommodation sectors) can work on. Having a DMO can help identify target markets and can help indicate where resources should go.

(I) What were the biggest challenges you faced in developing the DMO?

(R) Prince George's DMO was created last year, and some of the challenges they faced was getting enough buy-in from stakeholders and the community. There were challenges in the general understanding of what a DMO is, what it does, and whether it would serve the right purpose. There were challenges in establishing the funding model, and getting a stable funding source.

(I) What strategies were used to persuade the stakeholders?

(R) One strategy used was consultation meetings. This was a long process but it helped get everyone on the same page.

(I) What services that you provide are most valued by your stakeholders, the businesses you represent?

(R) The presence we are able to have outside the community. We run the visitor services center, which is a very valuable service as it gives information to customers all around the world. Another service is the visitor guide. We are still developing new services as we move forward, as Prince George's DMO is still new.

(I) What programs or services do you provide to accommodation providers? Do they work well, and what are the strengths and weaknesses?

(R) We are a good information source with our website. This allows accommodators to direct working on developing more services. The strengths are that everyone is getting on the same page as accommodators, and communities and other DMOs, as sometimes different parties don't meet eye to eye. The major weakness is that Prince George's DMO is still new and many things are still in the development stage.

(I) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with your DMO?

(R) You have to go through the right process, and you have to have buy-in. There has to be an overall understanding of the DMO's purpose in order to gain support. There needs to be consultation between different parties, and there needs to be transparency.

(I) What suggestions do you have for Vanderhoof as they pursue the development of a DMO?

(R) Ensure there is consultation and research, and know what you're getting in to. Get in touch with the Northern BC tourism association as this will provide more information on the pros and cons of establishing a DMO.

(I) Finally, would you mind being contacted if the Vanderhoof DMO development team have any future questions?

(R) That is fine.

Computer Assisted Survey Research Lab, UNBC

Transcription Services

Completed By: [Jessie Stephen] on March 16th, 2011

Project Name: DMO Interview

Client Name: Economic Development Officer and Regional Manager of Caribou Region

Interviewee name: Mike Fairfield

Merritt Marketing

Interview Date: March 16th, 2011

Interview Location: University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George.

Length of Transcript: 27.3 minutes

Persons Present:

1. Interviewer (I) –
 2. Respondent (R)
-

(I): What benefits has the community, accommodation sector seen

(R): having a specific answer is kind of difficult as a DMO is measuring the results of the market initiative we put out, we are able to track visitors to our local visitor info centre through the summer. We also have a Provincial visitor centre up on the highway, so we are able to see results through the traffic counts at those two locations. The challenge has been engaging actually revenues through the hotels. A lot of that simply a matter of getting the information from the individual hotels and restaurants. There are definitely positive results shown from marketing efforts put out through the DMO.

(I) Do you have any examples?

(R): I would say that the biggest example is the traffic counts, we can also track visitors that response to different marketing initiatives usually there is a call to action to the website so we have Google Analytics to track the number of people rep to number of either print, radio, tv,

(I): What are the biggest challenges you have faced during the development of the DMO - the last two responses were kind of a combination of questions one and two.

(R): Situation is a little bit unique for a marketing company to take on some of the tourism marketing initiatives on behalf of the city, many people would refer to that company as a DMO there are a lot of city run DMOs our case is a little bit unique in the sense that we are a private marketing company.

(I): So you are not a not-for-profit company

(R): That is correct we are a private marketing company that has operated as a DMO for the city of Merritt.

(I): Do you know why they chose to go that route?

(R): My position would be a bit partial when you put tax payer dollars into the hands of a local private business the chance of getting a better return on the investment is probably much greater because there is incentive for the business to succeed and in order for the business to succeed they have to really leverage the funds that they have to work with, where as if it's done in another way very often times the limited budget or money that's available ends up going into over head like hiring people and paying for office space and other things that go along with it.

(I): Private Company limited to grants or funds that are not-for - profit

(R): Absolutely not because you are working with the city so you can apply for grants cost sharing initiatives through regional tourism org. and through the province you can provide for things on behalf of the city.

(I): That's good, so do you find that there are any limitations by going with a "for" profit company?

(R): It's kind of unique; my opinion would that it would be unique to the community that you are in. I think if you are operating as a private company the challenge would be to make sure that you are representing all of the stakeholders in the community equaling. So that can be a challenge operating as a business its difficult to be the champion of the community without coming across little bit partial to your own interests. A lot of that has

to do with relationships if you involve the stakeholders from the onset with your planning, with the work that you're doing and people are willing to partner and buy into what you're doing then you can do really well. I think that many other communities that will have a not-for-profit organization that doesn't have those challenges they are directly under the leadership of the city or local government. Probably be a bit easier.

(I): What services that you provide are most valued by your stakeholders and the businesses you represent?

(R): Marketing , Advertising

(I): What streams of marketing do you use? I noticed you have a Facebook page.

(R): Yes absolutely, social networking, we use Facebook, twitter, because communicating with your audience generates an awareness powered by social media if the info is interesting it gets shared by multiple people so they end up doing the work for you in creating that awareness. So when it comes to things like events, such as the Merritt mountain music festival in the summer time. The more we talk about it, the more the word gets out through those social medias. We use the newsletters, people sign up on website send out regular announcements.

(I): E-newsletter or paper?

(R): We just do an e-newsletter, I think social networking is very powerful, having a good online presence not just static that communicates with people on a regular basis, content up to date, calendar of events, tweeting, Facebook it, keep getting the work out! I would say out of the tourism marketing initiatives they do that the web would be the central medium to everything else. If you are going into print ads, vacations ads, and newspaper ads, it would be to draw people to the website, where they can then get more information.

(I): Do you also advertise in the visitor guides

(R): Going back to being a small marketing firm, limited budget to work with we want to make sure we are producing the best market return for investors that we can. On behalf of the city for our practice we would never spend 100% dollars on a print ad, magazine, basically any of the marketing that we do unless the cost is shared somehow through private advertisers, through the regional tourism association. Like the Thompson Okanagan we can apply for cost sharing funds to go towards some of the print ads that go out. So then rather than \$1000 on an ad we are putting \$500 towards it and the regional people are paying the other half. Leveraging dollar for dollar. You can go a step beyond that and leverage things to a much greater extent there is some things that don't cost you anything, you get everybody else to contribute to the cost.

(I): A question in regards to branding Merritt,

(R): Going back 25 years I guess it was or maybe 30 now, we had the Coquihalla Highway sort of connecting all of the main routes made Merritt the gateway to the Interior of BC. Back then Merritt was really only known as a resource based community. We had a lot of lumber mills, local industry there is a lot of mines in the area and of course the ranching but Merritt soon started to recognize with the traffic on the main highway that there was potential to tap into that and sort of reinvent itself as a tourism destination. Lots of reasons for that because of our proximity to Vancouver and now the connection between Kamloops, Kelowna and other communities around us we are smack dab in the centre of it all. When the mountain festival first came about 18 years ago, the community really started to too see potential in tourism, so they started promoting 200 lakes in the area, ranching, fishing, and the things we had to offer visitors. When the mountain festival

started there was a real creative culture around the country music scene. It was soon after that a group decided to see about the branding of the country music capital. That was initiated/adopted by the city that we work at building that brand. There is a number of local initiatives that have taken place ever since then for example, a group called a Walk of Stars Society back when the mountain festival started they collected hand prints of the country music stars. Placing them into bronze stars and collected over a number of years. The walk of stars society was then formed and they created a walk of stars and throughout the downtown core you can see these handprints in display of these country music artists. There's another initiative that was birthed out of the whole country music thing. In addition to that there is youth mural project that was started a few years back we have these beautiful larger than life murals on the buildings downtown there kind of goes along with the country music theme, they are all country music artists and there is some First Nations blend of everything that sort of represents Merritt, many of the murals are signed by the artists themselves to perform and sign autographs. The latest to the Country Music Hall of Honour that is being built right downtown here. That is an answer to your question that branding adopting as we are the "Country Music Capital of Canada" and there is a lot of work to do. Many feel it fit our western culture and heritage and certainly goes along with the world class country festival we are doing every year.

(I): I heard you have Crystal Shawanda coming this summer

(R): Yah she has a mural here and she is very supportive of youth and the youth program here painting mural so she is a real supportive of mural. She has been here a number of times. Actually you would be surprised with the number of country artists that come here not just in Canada from the US and all over they just love when they come to Merritt and see what we are doing on their behalf they are just awesome. Johnny Reid huge fan of Merritt.

(I): That's great from just having a music festival to now having celebrities from all over North America coming to see you

In regards to Vanderhoof being on a main highway they are still trying to create ways for people to visit that area.

(R): You're always going to have the "naysayers" and you're always going to have to please everybody. We use to have a slogan "A lake a day" and it's true we have over 200 lakes in the area and it's a great place for fishing and there is no reason why you can't brand yourself around that. First Nations we got five to six bands in the area and there is that rich cultural history that we could be branding ourselves after that. You could say we are a lumber town or whatever it is or we could say we should be doing this or that. The fact of the matter is that community is all about personality and it's about the people that live there. So to come up with a brand that people can grab on to that will make you instantly recognizable I think is the important thing because everything about you as a personality as a community can shine through that. So people can say "Let's go to Merritt its country music, no we are not Nashville, its Merritt and when you go there it's all about all of these other things.

We are planning to launch another large event the week after the music fest. its going to be called the great Canadian Bike Rally" and it will be another major event for town, again all about motorcycle enthusiast.

(I): That's a big one lately, there are so many bikes on the road these days.

(R): The riding in this area is just awesome. It another that fits with what we're doing.

(I): What programs or services do you provide to accommodation providers?

(R): Other than promoting events that sell their rooms, I wouldn't say that we do anything to specifically. This goes back to our situation being unique, other DMOs in other communities have use of the room tax to be used towards marketing, and we don't. We have our hotels have their own group and they collect the money and spend it the way they want it. It's the hotel association. So they have their own pocket of money and they spend it the way they see fit.

(I): It is definitely unique

(R): Well its a little more fragmented, umm then we would like to see. We are learning and growing and sorting through things as well.

(I): So initially when they were planning to set up the DMO in Merritt did they need to confirm there was 51% for the establishment of a DMO from the hotel operators.

(R): I believe so, yep

(I): So the city went from there and then approached your business and then they created the association.

(R): Right, yep

(I): Is there anything else you would like to share with your experience with your DMO?

(R): How do you mean - we are the DMO?

(I): I guess what they mean is what would be beneficial...

(R): For other communities?

(I): Yah

(R): Umm you need to make sure that all of the various groups involved with tourism are on the same page. We took advantage of our community development program that was available through Tourism BC and they brought in a facilitator and brought all stakeholders together and looked at the gap analysis and what are strengths and weaknesses and came out with an overall plan. So the key I would say for any community you adopt a plan and make sure the city is responsible to make sure that plan is carried out. You get your stakeholders on board and let everybody work within their own strengths but work together so that everybody is on the same page.

(I): Do you have community forums or meetings with stakeholders or is it an individual approach is they had problems would they just call you?

(R): Yah that's the way it started out but we are going through a transition as well with the city. That's what I'm saying is that there is constant communication that the city take on the lead role so there isn't that partially thing happening so it doesn't become fragmented. Everybody is clear about what their role is and how they can work together and then you follow it through.

(I): The last question is would you mind being contacted of the Vanderhoof DMO development team has any future questions?

(R): No problem

(I): No problem, great. Wow, well thank you for your time

(R): Yah, No problem

(I): I'm sure your responses will help form the development of the DMO in Vanderhoof.
Thanks for meeting me today

(R): No problem, Good Luck with that!

(I): Well I guess if I needed to clarify anything would it be okay to contact you again?

(R): Yea, of course.

(I): Ok well thanks Mike and have a good afternoon.

(R): Your welcome, you too

(I): Take Care, Bye

(R): Bye

Computer Assisted Survey Research Lab, UNBC

Transcription Services

Completed By: [Jerrica Mann] on March 22/ 2011

Project Name: DMO Interview

Client Name: Economic Development Office of Vanderhoof, Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region

Interviewee name: Jikke Stegeman-Gyorki

Tourism Fernie

Interview Date: March 22, 2011.

Interview Location: University of British Columbia, Prince George.

Length of Transcript: 38:53

Persons Present:

1. Interviewer (I) –
2. Respondent (R)

(I) Ok, so before we begin, please respond to the following statements with either yes or no.
If you are unsure, please ask me for clarification.

(R) OK

(I) I understand the information that has been presented to me about this survey and project.

(R) yes

(I) I understand any risks and benefits of participating in this research.

(R) Sure

(I) I have been informed that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time.

(R) Yes

(I) I have been given the opportunity to contact the researchers should I have any questions.

(R) Yes

(I) I understand that my answers will not be anonymous or confidential.

(R) Yes

(I) I understand that only the project researchers and sponsoring organizations will have access to the full interview I provide.

(R) Sure

(I) I understand that by participating in this survey, I am giving my free and informed consent to take part in this research.

(R) Yes

(I) Good and finally, do you agree to participate in this interview?

(R) I do

(I)- What benefits have your community, tourism operators, and accommodation sectors seen from the DMO?

(R)- Definitely multiple benefits. One is the AHRT (MRDT). Fernie collects 2% of the AHRT from all visitors that book into accommodations in the Fernie area. As a DMO, we have access to that 2% for administration fees from the ministry and the regional district who is the one that actually receives the cheque from the ministry and passes it down to us. That is a substantial amount of money that helps to market Fernie as a destination.

Outside of that, we are able to market Fernie as one cohesive unit; under one brand, one voice, under one name, so that we are organized and professional in doing so.

With those funds we are able to leverage additional campaign funds through our regional tourism organization and provincial and national organizations. We are able to increase the revenues in those areas so that is a huge benefit to us. For us, as a DMO, we are membership based DMO, a lot of the DMOs in the province are actually stakeholder based which..... tends to any tourism, or tourism related, business to be a part of the DMO at no charge at no membership fee. They sign up to be a partner as this is typical across the board for all the regional tourism organizations and is becoming more and more popular with local DMOs as well.

(I)- I saw online that your list of memberships is pretty extensive.

(R)- Yes, we are actually membership based. For tourism related businesses to be a part of

the tourism Fernie marketing and sales initiatives they have to be a member and pay a membership fee. That is the way the DMO was set up originally. This is before my time, I've only been with the DMO for about 8-9 months now. The DMO here in Fernie has existed as a legal fully functioning non-profit society.... it started in November of 2007. I know it is obviously an involved process to get to that point with community consultation and all. So there is a lot of work and a lot of partnering prior to the development, in a more simplified way between tourism marketers in the past. Back to the question, benefits to our community, obviously by having a coordinated body to market for tourism we have an actual tourism marketing plan. It is being developed and executed by tourism professionals. That the organization is driven and governed by a board of directors, so the board is a representation of the sectors of the tourism industry so that every sector is involved. By having that type of coordination and level of involvement obviously your bringing that sector of the economy to a much higher level, a much higher sophistication professionalism, coordination, and it just pools all that energy, that resource, and those funds into really targeted campaigns thus driving more effective results in the end. Whatever those may be depending on the goals and objectives of the organization.

For the community specifically, obviously the community was involved early on in the stages of developing the DMO in terms of consulting the community as to what is important to them. We have a vision and a mission statement and also guiding principles that include the community and social and economic development to it. Even though we are there to market and sell Fernie as a destination, we do have to obviously keep it quite high in our planning and decision making and such of the important elements that the community raised from the start in sustainable tourism development. Making sure that we're on top of those things, and in terms of other community benefits obviously by being in this coordinated, collaborative, leverage capacity, we benefit the community by being more effective. When we have spending of dollars it is coordinated in a way that is going to drive more effective results. It is not just individual businesses spending money wherever they feel they need to which is not being very effective and sending out a confused message to the market place. And it (individual business spending) is not really benefitting our community at all in terms of raising the bar as a destination and one that needs to be fully competitive in the marketplace.

By increasing our tourism sophistication, I'll call it; we grow the tourism industry in that way as well outside of drawing more visitors and creating tourism sales. We draw more recognition as a sophisticated community that provides a professional tourism product and thus will help our community grow in terms of business development, job creation, in the tourism sector. But also in all of those sectors that are indirectly related to tourism that supports tourism sectors. So there is a lot of spin off benefits and obviously a lot of our community is employed by the tourism sector. It is quite a huge thing for us to be as organized as possible when we are naturally a destination that has a strong tourism economy.

In terms of the tourism operators, we help leverage their dollars more effectively, to be able to market Fernie as a destination in markets where they have never been able to before. To be able to help them in their marketing, so by for instance, fly fishing- we work in partnership with the operators to bringing their message into the market

place so (1) we are helping offset their costs (2) we are maximizing their dollar value by expanding into that marketplace. So they have say, 10 000\$ they use to market fly-fishing, we have another 25 000\$ say, that we will partner and help to promote fly-fishing to those key target markets.

So we are helping them with their marketing; we talk to them about their marketing specifically and where we can help to improve them on their own business level. Being that the DMO has a lot of expertise we want to help our members with their individual businesses wherever we can as well. We are obviously here to drive business so that is a big benefit to tourism operators.

Other benefits (notes she is going through her memberships benefits list) we provide a lot of working into workshops that help educate our members. (Notes they are renewing memberships as it is the end of the year)

(I) So everybody needs to reinstate their membership every year or?

(R) Everybody has to renew with an annual membership fee.

(I) Do you mind me asking how much members pay for their membership every year?

(R) It depends. It totally depends on what sector they are in, and we are actually just at the end of this week finalizing our updated fees. We just kind of did and over haul on our membership fees so that information will be accessible if you are interested in it once we finish with our board meeting later this week and it gets approved or any revisions that need to be made to it.

With our DMO we have quite a lot of sophisticated marketing too, so, our travel planner, our website is a huge element, so all of our members of course, participate in that for free as a member. Whereas with stakeholder based DMOs, members or partners would buy in to participate in those elements. When they already pay a membership fee those things are already included. So those are a variety of benefits and just being a part of that one tourism voice. The same with the accommodation sector it is pretty well the same across the board.

(I) So if I wanted to find those membership fees would those be online or would I have to call you again?

(R) They should get posted online. So that would be organized by my coordinator. That should be up within the next week.

(I) That would be great.

(R) And we do have a separate website for our operators which is tourismfernie.org and then tourismfernie.com is our consumer site. The corporate site is where about you could get a full update. We have been focusing mostly on our consumer site in the past 6 months or so. We are pretty happy with it and are going through some additional updates moving forward as well.

(I) Moving on to question 2. And going back towards funding and allocations in a little bit but that will go along with the next question which is.... What were the biggest challenges you faced in developing the DMO?

(R) Well, I guess I should preempt that with the fact that I was not around when they first developed the DMO. So I can only speak to kind of what I do know but if you really want specific details I can lien you up with somebody who was part of the process. Basically I guess the biggest challenge was communicating with the accommodators and the industry about the AHRT (MRDT). Obviously that was a new process that was really why the DMO got started, because that was now available to communities,

municipalities and such. That, I think, was the biggest challenge in the sense of effectively communicating to all of the accommodators what it was all about and why it is important and by far most of them were supportive of it. But, understanding the process and the logistics of it and then of course building the business plan and the marketing plan around receiving this money from the public and what the plan is in terms of spending it and how it is being leveraged and such.

The other challenges really were- it wasn't that we did not have a scenario where it was not a desired thing. People were really keen to have a DMO because a lot of the operators were quite aware of the fact that they are all individually spending money in a variety of markets and they knew that if they worked together and pooled resources and were able to leverage additional dollars that it would benefit everybody.

I think any of the challenges were in terms of just setting logistically how does it work, how is it governed, what is the model we actually use. There are many models out there as to how a DMO is structured, stakeholder memberships, what are the fees, and such, they (Tourism Fernie) did hire a consultant; Susanne Denback, I believe she is out of Whistler, to do the entire process. I believe she was connected with the whole tourism BC movement in this area of assisting with DMO development across the province. So it was very important to develop the DMO in the right fashion and proper research and hiring an outside consultant to help to do the process.

It did take quite a while; I think they started in 2000 so probably about a 2 year process really.

(I) Do you guys experience any opposition from community members?

(R) Maybe, bringing up some old information, I wasn't there, but I think that in a somewhat general fashion there is always going to be some community concerns about industry development especially in relation to sustainability and it was quite clear Fernie was already a major tourism destination because of the ski resort and I think the community consultation process allowed for a venue for the community to bring forward any concerns that they had to ensure that in moving forward and planning that those concerns would be addressed or are such. I think this is why it is so important to have a DMO and to have the city or municipality in full support in the forefront because it is now actually a part of the plan and process instead of having no plan and no organization keeping an eye out on the industry and helping sophisticate the industry. Now you have these two entities between the municipality and the DMO helping to look forward into the future as to what are we trying to achieve and how do we get there. By having those key guiding principles and their vision and our mission vision statement, and our goals and objectives keeping us on track and again making sure any concerns are always on top of mind as well. And ensuring that keeping in touch with the community in terms of changes and where things are moving as well.

(I) Do you recall if there was much opposition from the accommodation sector or was it fairly easy to get that 51% support?

(R) It was easy for us there was, I think, I believe there was one or two accommodators that were not in support. We had 91% in support of the accommodators and we had 88% of the rooms. So obviously you need 51 in both of those categories, so yah, we had more than enough support to approve the AHRT (MRDT).

The intern board at that time was quite active in terms of ensuring that there was a lot of effective communication with the accommodators, so meeting with them one on one to talk to them about the merits of the AHRT, what it was for, how it would be initiated or implemented within their operations. We did receive a lot of support, obviously, because they all felt the need for it as well. Based on (the fact that) Fernie is very much a tourism destination so it was quite relevant. I'm not quite sure exactly why the two were opposed, I don't have that information. I know every community has their own different dynamics in terms of how their tourism industry is structured, who their markets are, that kind of thing. In Fernie, the tourism industry isn't our biggest industry. Mining is still by far the biggest industry and there has been concerns that a lot of the rooms that get sold in the market place that have nothing to do with tourism that are corporate mining sector and that. I have heard of companies not wanting to pay that 2% or the hotel has to eat it because they feel it is not relevant to them.

(I) And it is mainly that mining sector, not the general public coming in and using the rooms?

(R) There are a variety of markets using those rooms.

(I) Your tourists, though, has it affected how many rooms they rent a year by implementing that tax? Or has it stayed pretty consistent?

(R) No, I think it has been pretty consistent I know that the accommodators had a concern.

Any time there are new taxes it's like that is going to increase their cost to the consumer, and they are feeling at the time 'does that mean I need to increase my rates', and all the concerns related to that.

And it's really a communication process and almost a sales pitch, in terms of, the benefits to everybody as a whole. That you know this tax is there to spring our industry together, to market it together and brand it, so that we can increase business where we need it, whether it's the slower times of the year, or even build up those even where its strong times of the year where there's still availability. We are doing it now in a much more sophisticated manner that's going to drive business to you (the consumer), and in the end is going to benefit you.

It's still beneficial to the consumer as well because it's again, sophisticating the product and the service and the experience. So it does benefit everybody you know, and is educating the operators, the accommodators to see it in that light and basically get their support hopefully. A lot of time it is how good of a sales pitch you can bring forward.

(I) What services that you provide, do you think, are the most valued by your stakeholder and the business that you represent?

(R) I think the fact that we leverage the AHRT (MRDT) with everybody's dollars and we create a high level and detailed level marketing plan, that executed initiatives and markets that they couldn't afford to do on their own. A lot of our efforts go into destination markets, whether it's Ontario, the US, the UK, Germany, or Australia, that is very valuable for our stakeholders.

Having a very professional travel planner is very important to them. being represented under the Fernie brand is very important to them. Having a website that is a one stop shop and one that is very attractive and functional it has a lot of quality information based on what the consumer needs, that is very important to them and to be a part of that as well.

And then there is being able to be a part of our planning, our committees, our board, to have a say in what gets done.

One of the other unique things that tourism Fernie has that is not very common in DMOs, in BC anyways, is we have a center reservation system. So, we have a 1-800 number and an online booking system so that we can sell and promote packages with one call to action. We do that by far for the benefit of the consumer more than anybody else. It is a great measurement tool. It is not the be-all-end-all of measurement tools, especially in today's markets. Because of the multitude (of methods of which) that consumers can book. It is definitely very important to educate the members that it is one avenue that is very important but is not the only new center reservation system and there is a kind of cen-res systems in the community so the pie is cut quite small for all of us. If we were the only one then we would have a lot more of the pie. We have only started 2 and a half years ago and I guess it has been slow and going but last year we have bumped up sales 400% so it is moving in the right direction and that is another very important service for.

- (I) What programs or services do you provide to the accommodation providers, do they work well, and what are the strengths and weaknesses?
- (R) What we offer to our members is pretty much equal across the board whether they are an accommodator or an activity provider. Again, it kind of gets to where you are in a different model. Other models for DMOs, like Revelstoke for instance, the group that collects the AHRT (MRDT) is the accommodation sector, and they are the only ones that have control of it and the only ones that have a say in it. Yet in Revelstoke the chamber has the name tourism Revelstoke. They (tourism Revelstoke) don't get any of the AHRT but they work with all the other providers, so they are very kind of disconnected I would say and it is a very different model. Their one group has a lot of specific things just for the accommodation sector, where we have all of our benefits are for everybody to take advantage whether they are an accommodator or an activity provider.

Accommodators have more to gain because they are the stronger presence in our on our board and because of their representation with the AHRT so they definitely have a strong say in how things funnel out. The benefits are pretty much cross the board and to everybody, but the accommodators take advantage of it the most for sure.

- (I) Do you think that is a weakness?
- (R) No, I don't think so. I think the accommodation sector is always kind of the biggest because everybody needs a hotel room. Not everybody gets the same activity all the time. Although they are usually the strongest coordinated voice by far, they understand the need of all the other providers to make the experience. It is really important for them to work together. We do have a variety of challenges in bringing them together especially in the sense of metrics. That is by far one of our biggest challenges by far as a DMO; acquiring metrics from our operators because they are very protective of their business information.

- (I) Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the DMO?
- (R) I guess really it is important to research heavily as to what model a DMO should become. There is the BC DMO association it is very casual, we meet once a year and there is an actually official, legal, non-profit, status given to it. Dan Stephenson (spelling unsure) from tourism Abbotsford is the chair. There is a wealth of experience in this group.

It is by far one of the greatest resources to get information about what is working and what's not. It also really understanding the diversity of the DMOs. That is one big thing with all the communities, anywhere really, but in BC we are all very unique in a multitude of ways, in terms of tourism product, tourism market, our geographic location, relationships with other organizations in the community whether it's the municipality or the regional district or whatever it is. We are all very unique and have very different needs and it is very important to understand what you are as a community and not to think that somebody else's model will just easily fit. Really researching the way to structure that DMO for an individual community, what it should look like and how it should operate. Definitely take advantage of the experience that is out there because there is a wealth out there.

One of the other key organizations is the Destination Marketing Association International, I think it's called. They are a huge organization, now knowing their based in the States, and knowing that most DMOs in the states are visitor and convention bureaus, and sales is a major focus because of conventions and all the groups and stuff like that. Where, a lot of our small DMOs are more marketing than sales because especially in our small communities we don't have a convention facility so we can't focus any efforts on that side yet. That organization in the states has such accreditation program. There are about 3 DMOs in the province now that have been accredited under their program, Richmond, Victoria I think and somebody else. It is a big process but one of the things for our DMO that we are going to be undertaking is looking at all that criteria for accreditation and seeing what we can slowly start to achieve. It is a little harder for a smaller DMO like us to get that level of accreditation for one because we are a very small organization and don't have a lot of man power, and either elements of it in terms of accreditation pushing more on the same side just aren't relevant for us. We don't qualify because we don't have a sales staff because we don't have a convention center and a major group business in that area. The tools and expertise that are there are a great guidance for us to improve ourselves as a DMO and make us more professional/ sophisticated.

- (I) Besides gathering this background information and really analyzing the diversity and different models that Vanderhoof could use, do you have any other suggestions to them as to pursue the development of a DMO?
- (R)- Make sure you have support and go through the community process, I really highly suggest hiring a professional, even somebody on the outside. A lot of, especially in small communities, if you use somebody locally there is always some challenges with that. It is good because a lot of people view an outsider as an expert opinion and very objective. Hiring somebody from the outside and looking to the municipality and the regional district, and utilizing tourism BC for grants and funding support. We were able to garner grants and such to help us through the process and get some grants even to get our organization up and running and do our branding and all that. Getting your stakeholders on board and making sure that they understand what its purpose is, what it will do, and how it will achieve objectives and such is very important. And figuring out how you can measure things is very important. Especially now that we are in a changed world and changed economy, it is ever more important to be able to measure results and track things and the more you can get your community on board

to share that information the better. It might require you working with an outside organization to help you do that.

(I) Would you mind being contacted if the Vanderhoof Development Team has any questions?

(R) No worries. I would be more than happy to help them. That another think you'll find out with the DMO community across the province is that they are very very supportive.

(I) Thank you for your time and this will help us a lot.

(R) I'm sure there is so much more to it all in a very detailed way, so by all means if there is every more questions I am more than happy to assist.

Computer Assisted Survey Research Lab, UNBC

Transcription Services

Completed By: Jordan Hammond on March 30th, 2011

Project Name:

Client Name: Economic Development Officer and Regional Manager of Caribou Region

Interviewee name: Graham Genge

Kermodei Tourism

Interview Date: March 30, 2011

Interview Location: University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George

Length of Transcript: 7:10

Persons Present:

1. Interviewer (I)
 2. Respondent (R)
-

- (I) The first question I have is: what benefits has your community and the tourism operators within it and the accommodation sector seen from a Destination Marketing Organization?
- (R) I'd say that the community has seen a growth in activity and marketing activities through our organization through inclusiveness of community partners and members and I think the hotels have certainly benefited from additional hotel revenues over the past several years.
- (I) Just through promotion and marketing and stuff like that?
- (R) Yeah
- (I) OK.
- (I) Are you collecting the hotel room tax?
- (R) Yes we are.
- (I) You are? The 2% MHRT?
- (R) AHRT yeah.
- (I) AHRT, right.
- (R) What were some of the bigger challenges faced by the community in developing the DMO?
- (I) It's definitely been to do with the hotel tax. There is a lot of different people not really sure what it's meant for. The tax, the term 'tax' is not necessarily the best approach. It's more of a destination marketing fee and a lot of people have a misconception that it's a burden to their business where it's not, it's actually a physical tax to the consumer not to the hotelier. So that's the misconception. As well as the use of the funds and how they were going to be used and best used for the benefit of the hoteliers want it to solely benefit them.
- (R) Of course, yeah.
- (I) But that's not the case.
- (R) Yeah We have been hearing a lot of that actually, just they want to know where the funds are going and how they are being distributed and stuff like that, through the organization.
- (I) With the services you provide, which ones do you find or, from feedback that you've heard have been most valued by your stakeholders and the businesses you represent.
- (R) Well we also operate the visitors' center.
- (I) Oh, Ok.
- (R) So that's a really big value the community and to travelers as well. And I would say also our travel guide that we produce, over the past years has been really valuable added asset. It's a long term marketing opportunity for people and it doesn't cost very much in comparison. A lot of the new benefits come down to social media and just digital tourism is some stuff which we're working towards.
- (I) Yeah it's a pretty good tool for marketing I'd say. I just wrote a paper on that.
- (R) Oh, yeah.
- (I) Do you find that the hotels, this is just going back to question 2, Is there is a better understanding or are they gaining a better understanding of the tax now? Is it being more appreciated or better received?
- (R) Yeah the whole. It's slowly, but you know I think that for us, we have a lot of people

- who have issues with other parties like the municipal parties and stuff. Not necessarily us and what we're doing.
- (I) The guess next question is what programs or services do you provide for the accommodation providers in the community and do they work well? And I guess what are some of the strengths and weaknesses?
- (R) The weaknesses I would say that this organization hasn't implemented enough services to support the hoteliers and that's where I've really said we need to improve on or we're working towards. One of the things that we do do is use a lot of funding opportunities through Northern BC Tourism. They have opportunities for us to get involved.
- (I) Ok.
- (R) And leverage some of our funds. So we do operate a Ski and Stay package and a 'Staycation' package as well.
- (I) Which includes the hotel accommodation?
- (R) Which includes the hotelier? Do you want to know what we're working towards?
- (I) That would be beneficial for sure.
- (R) So we're working towards having more transparency in our organization so people know capabilities so we can do booking and packaging and actually sell more room nights on behalf of the hoteliers and tourism operators.
- (I) So you are really moving into the digital media stuff for promotion?
- (R) Oh yeah, definitely.
- (I) Yeah that's definitely an emerging trend for sure.
- (I) Is there anything you'd like to share about your experiences with your DMO and the community.
- (R) I'd say it's definitely challenging to get people understanding what you're doing but being visible and creating good relationships is really important within community partners. Not only tourism operators, but support services and then we work with, you know, the city of Terrace and we also work with the regional district so, it's really important.... And a lot of First Nations so it's really important to create those relationships and we consider ourselves more a 'Destination Management Organization', not 'Marketing' organization 'cause we work with so many different areas. And wanted us to manage other areas so a little bit more higher level community support and growth.
- (I) Through tourism primarily?
- (R) Yeah.
- (I) And would you have any suggestions for Vanderhoof in their pursuing of a DMO?
- (R) They should really consider what the new government is looking for their AHRT framework. The hotel tax...their coming up... well like their coming out with a new framework.
- (I) The liberals are?
- (R) That's what we've been told, there's a new framework and accountability. So looking at that and making sure that they have a good solid community plan.
- (I) Perfect, yeah that pretty much wraps it up so would you mind being contacted in the future by Vanderhoof if they've got further questions for you?
- (R) Not a problem.
- (I) Perfect.

(R) Alright.

(I) Thanks for your time Graham.

(R) No problem.

(I) I'm sure your responses will be helpful for Vanderhoof in their development of a DMO.

(R) Excellent, well thanks.

(I) I appreciate your time.

(R) Take care. Bye.

(I) Goodbye

Computer Assisted Survey Research Lab, UNBC

Transcription Services

Completed By: [Allison Bray] on March 16, 2011

Project Name: DMO Interview

Client Name:

Economic Development Office of Vanderhoof, Regional Manager of the Cariboo Region

Interviewee name: Dustin Bodnaryk

Interview Date: March 16, 2011

Interview Location: University of Northern BC Length of Transcript:

17:15 min.

Persons Present:

1. Interviewer (I) – Allison Bray
 2. Respondent (R)- Dustin Bodnaryk
-

(I) Ok great, ok so do you understand the information that has been presented to you about the survey and project?

(R) Yes

(I) Do you understand any risks and benefits of participating in the research?

(R) Yes

(I) Have you been informed about your participation and that it is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time?

(R) Yes

(I) Have you been given the opportunity to contact the researchers should you have any questions?

(R) Yes

(I) Do you understand that your answers will not be anonymous or confidential?

(R) Yes

(I) Do you understand that only the project researchers and sponsoring organizations will have access to the full interview that you provide?

(R) Yes

(I) And do you understand that by participating in this survey you are giving your free and informed consent to take part in this research?

(R) Yes

(I) And finally, do you agree to participate in this research?

(R) Yes

(I) Excellent. Alright, so the first question i have for you is um just a general question about what benefits have your community tourism operators and accommodation sectors seen from the DMO?

(R) Tourism Dawson Creek was established in 2001 based on a, on the need from, from local stakeholders and city administration and local political leaders on how to capitalize on being recognized as mile Zero of the Alaska Highway. So, that's how it was uh determined and established in 2001. From that point on uh Tourism Dawson Creek has been established as a stakeholder based organization. That means we are not, we're not based on a membership model so we provide different marketing coop opportunities uh education, services uh visitor information, uh etc to, to stakeholders in dawson creek.

(I) Ok and so have you had any feedback from the stakeholders in your community about how this has affected their business for the better?

(R) All of our planning that we have done from the beginning to our current tourism plan that we are working under right now is established by community consultation and by discussing what is the most important priorities of the businesses and the hotels, restaurants, tourism service companies in Dawson Creek. So just by that nature that this is, its a living breathing community plan that's not established by just the DMO, but by the stakeholders of the community so now its our plan to fulfill.

(I) Ok, do you have any examples of the priorities that stakeholders would have set for that plan?

(R)Yes The current plan that we are working under right now is a 2010 to 2015 plan it has is a number of different tourism goals, 7 to be exact, or 7 pillars those goals are under

management and planning, destination development, product development, business and industry development, marketing, visitor services and visitor experience. And under each one of those core goals there's a number of different objectives and action steps which have been listed in the plan for us to accomplish in the next few years.

- (I) Great. Do you have any monitoring or feedback systems that are sort of formally in place that help you get feedback from stakeholders?
- (R) Absolutely. One of our ...communication is a key component of our organization. one of our key stakeholders is of course Dawson Creek as they are our major funder for our organization. as I mentioned before we are not a hotel tax DMO, so we have quarterly reports that we provide updates to city council and administration; have an ongoing communication dialogue with city administration we have constant you know,
- (I) Ok and those discussions with stakeholders in the industry, do they just happen as things come up or do you regularly seek out sort of phone interviews or discussions with them?
- (R) It is more on an informal basis.
- (I) Ok. Great. And so what were some of the challenges you faced in developing the DMO?
- (R) I'm not actually sure because I wasn't here at that time.
- (I) Ok, are there any areas that you would like to improve upon the model of the DMO that you have right now?
- (R) There's always different models that have been used if you look in different communities across B.C. of course the most popular one is the 2% hotel tax collection to fund a DMO. There's other business levies or there's city or municipal funding avenues that help create the DMO. It's really on a what-works-best for a specific community is really...what might work here doesn't work here doesn't work over there
- (I) Do you have any idea or information on why this, the city funded DMO worked best for Dawson Creek?
- (R) Because it was an option that city council has been very supportive about for the last ten years and based on continued progress reports and information and communication and results they continued to see as a viable piece of their economic development strategy.
- (I) Alright. What services that you provide are most valued to the stakeholders, the businesses you represent?
- (R) That's a very good question and I couldn't actually nail it down to a specific thing because of course every stakeholder would have a different response based on a number of things, whether they're a hotel or restaurant or a business in the community. You'd probably see different strengths about what we do for them.
- (I) Ok, do you have an example of one that you've had experience with, just like an example that worked really well? You don't need to include specifics about what..who that business was but just sort of an anecdotal example?
- (R) Increased exposure through marketing campaigns, increased exposure through media, and travel media, travel writers, increased marketing exposure that they probably wouldn't be able to do just on their own.
- (I) Ok. great. and specifically what programs or services do you provide to accommodation providers and do they work well? strengths? weaknesses?
- (R) We don't provide any programs just specifically to any sector, like hotels. I know where your question is coming from in that in a hotel tax community there may be influences that suggest that marketing dollars that are generated in a specific tourism sector should have more marketing attention towards it because that's not the case in our community, we

provide some accommodation based education programs such as how to become approved in different...whether its Tourism BC approved accommodation programs or you know those type of service rating programs.

(I) OK

(R) But as far as marketing it is more of a complete marketing mix of including hotels as a part of an overall package

(I) Yep. ok. and I guess, just going back, do you know if a hotel tax based DMO was ever proposed to the tourism/business community?

(R) Ya, it's been proposed and it's been talked about a couple times.

(I) And what were the, I guess, well what were the specific reasons that that wasn't chosen as the model for your DMO?

(R) I guess the challenges or the questions that ...can you just hold on a second...are a couple of things, and its not just something that questions that have been brought forward here, but taxed this amount?

(I) Ok

(R) Right?

(I) Yes that makes sense.

(R) Because we have different sectors, restaurant, food and beverage, transportation etc. so why is only one sector has this base tax on it. second one being in the last five, ten years in Dawson Creek, we've had a very high occupancy rate, alright? So if hotels are full on a regular basis, their argument is why do we need a destination feed to market?

(I) mhm

(R) Right?

(I) Yes

(R) If they're all full of oil and gas workers and industry, then summer months are just kind of extra.

(I) Hm that's an interesting point

(R) Right? so that's, that is a challenge on that side of course if that sector, oil and gas sector, were to move out of the area, we would have a lot of empty hotel rooms right?

(I) yep

(R) So, so ya. they're good questions as far as why are other sectors not taxed, and the response is always because YOU living in Prince George, right, are not necessarily going to stay in a hotel, a visitor stays in a hotel.

(I) Yep

(R) where you, living in Prince George, will go out to eat at a restaurant.

(I) Ya

(R) Right. so you're not actually classified a visitor.

(I) Ya exactly

(R) So it's not a visitor tax [if you tax a restaurant].

(I) Ok great. is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with your DMO?

(R) No, I guess I should also mention our DMO is classified as a Destination Management Organization

(I) Ok

(R) Alright, so there are those who classify their organizations as only marketing. we're set up as a management organization and have been since ever.

(I) Ok

(R) We also manage the visitor centre in the community so the visitor centre is a part of Tourism Dawson Creek.

(I) Right

(R) And as well we also manage the Alaska Highway House. So we also have one of our major attractions in the community that falls underneath our business portfolio or business organization.

(I) Alright. And do you have any suggestions for Vanderhoof as they pursue the development of a DMO?

(R) I think that the number one thing is that stakeholder and community engagement is definitely, it's number one. It's establishing those communication networks and that network of..that its an organization that is there to assist the tourism operators to increase business in the community.

(I) Great.

(R) OK

(I) So you've a very good...like, overall the community has had a very good experience with the Dawson Creek DMO?

(R) Yep.

(I) Great. And then finally would you mind being contacted if the Vanderhoof DMO development team have any future questions?

(R) Yes, sure.

(R) And I know the people in Vanderhoof, and the other comment I should make is that they should, or that you the survey team should also contact and approach the regional DMO association, which is located in Prince George. Because they'll also provide a level of assistance and provide information to Vanderhoof on those matters as well.

(I) Yes. Well, alright Dustin, Thank you for your time and I'm sure that your responses will be very useful to help creating a potential Vanderhoof DMO and if you have any questions about the research itself, feel free to contact Phil Mullins in the ORTM Program. I can give you his contact info now

(R) ok

(I) his email is mullins, two ls at unbc.ca and his phone number is

(R) great,

(R) perfect

(I) Bye, talk to you later

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Benefits	Visitor Centre are beneficial to promoting businesses within the area	“...track visitors through the visitor centre in town and one the highway”.
Benefits	Google Analytics is a great tool to measure and track the number of people utilizing different marketing initiatives such as, print ads, TV ads, and radio ads.	“...different marketing initiatives usually there is a call to action to the website so we can have Google Analytics to track the number of people to ... print ad, T.V. ads, or/and radio.”
Benefits	Private organizations versus not-for-profit organizations have an incentive to succeed because they must leverage the funds whereas, not-for-profit organizations may have a limited budget or majority of their budget goes into overhead such as, hiring staff, training, and renting/leasing office space.	“...incentive to succeed in order for the business to succeed they have to really leverage the funds they have to work with, where as if its done in another way very often times the limited budget or money that’s available ends up going into overhead like hiring people and paying for office space...”
Benefits	Private company are eligible for government funding or grants	“...private Companies can apply for grants cost sharing initiatives through Regional Tourism Organizations and through the province you can provide for things on behalf of the city... they are working with the city and they are able to apply for initiatives through Regional Tourism Organizations... on behalf of the city”
Benefits	Communities that have a not-for-profit DMO that are directed under the leadership of the city or local government are easier to run versus privately run DMOs	“...communities that have a not-for-profit organization that are directly under the leadership of the city or local government, probably a bit easier.”

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Benefits	Social networking creates awareness powered by interested people sharing with others so the work ends up getting down for you	“...social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, communicating with your audience generates an awareness powered by social media if the info is interesting it gets shared by multiple people so they end up doing the work for you in creating that awareness”.
Benefits	Eligible for cost sharing funds through Regional Tourism Associations such as, Thompson Okanagan	“...through the regional tourism association like the Thompson Okanagan we can apply for cost sharing funds to go towards some of the print ads that go out. So then rather than \$1000 on an ad we are putting \$500 towards it and the regional people are paying the other half. Leveraging dollar for dollar. You can go a step beyond that and leverage things to a much greater extent there is some things that don't cost you anything, you get everybody else to contribute to the cost”.
Challenges	Engaging revenue through the hotel & restaurant businesses is challenging when they are a separate organization from the DMO	“...engaging revenue through the hotel & restaurant businesses”.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Challenges	Making sure all stakeholders are represented equally.	... When operating as a private company the challenge would be to make sure that you are representing all of the stakeholders in the community equally. So that can be a challenge operating as a business its difficult to be the champion of the community without coming across little bit partial to your own interests. A lot of that has to do with relationships if you involve the stakeholders from the onset with your planning, with the work that your doing and people are willing to partner and buy into what you're doing then you can do really well."
Recommendation	Make sure that all of the various groups involved with tourism are on the same page. The KEY is to adopt a plan and make sure the city is responsible to make sure that plan is carried out. Get the stakeholders on board and let everybody work within their own strengths but work together so that everybody is on the same page.	"Make sure that all of the various groups involved with tourism are on the same page. The key is to adopt a plan and make sure the city is responsible to make sure that plan is carried out. Get the stakeholders on board and let everybody work within their own strengths but work together so that everybody is on the same page".
Benefits	A DMO helps give unity and a strategic focus for stakeholders.	The benefit of a DMO is that it gives strategic direction. Having a DMO brings things together on a higher lever under one umbrella, and gives a strategic focus that all stakeholders can work on
Benefits	A DMO is a helpful marketing tool.	Having a DMO can help identify target markets and can help indicate where resources should go.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendations	Be fully knowledgeable of a DMO	There has to be an overall understanding of the DMO's purpose in order to gain support. There needs to be consultation between different parties, and there needs to be transparency.
Benefits	Advertising and marketing ideas include utilizing visitor centres, travel guide, social media and digital tourism	Well we also operate the visitors' center [...] So that's a really big value the community and to travelers as well. And I would say also our travel guide that we produce, over the past years has been really valuable added asset. It's a long term marketing opportunity for people and it doesn't cost very much in comparison. A lot of the new benefits come down to social media and just digital tourism is some stuff which we're working towards.
Benefits	Utilize funding opportunities through Northern BC Tourism	One of the things that we do is use a lot of funding opportunities through Northern BC Tourism. They have opportunities for us to get involved and leverage some of our funds.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Challenges	The term “TAX” is considered negative to some by changing or referring to the MRDT as “Destination marketing fee” may be received more positively	It’s definitely been to do with the hotel tax. There is a lot of different people not really sure what it’s meant for. The tax, the term ‘tax’ is not necessarily the best approach. It’s more of a destination marketing fee and a lot of people have a misconception that it’s a burden to their business where it’s not, it’s actually a physical tax to the consumer not to the hotelier. So that’s the misconception. As well as the use of the funds and how they were going to be used and best used for the benefit of the hoteliers want it to solely benefit them.
Challenges	Understanding across all organizational levels in order to gain and maintain support for DMO	There has to be an overall understanding of the DMO’s purpose in order to gain support. There needs to be consultation between different parties, and there needs to be transparency.
Challenges	Need more services related to supporting hotels and more focus on improving this weakness	The weaknesses I would say that this organization hasn’t implemented enough services to support the hoteliers and that’s where I’ve really said we need to improve on or we’re working towards.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendations	Creating partnerships between businesses within the sector such as, the city, regional district, and First Nations	I'd say it's definitely challenging to get people understanding what you're doing but being visible and creating good relationships is really important within community partners. Not only tourism operators, but support services and then we work with, you know, the city of Terrace and we also work with the regional district so, it's really important.... And a lot of First Nations so it's really important to create those relationships
Recommendations	Keep up-to-date with government's agenda. There may be a new framework created if a new government is in power.	They should really consider what the new government is looking for their AHRT framework. The hotel tax...their coming up... well like their coming out with a new framework [...] and accountability.
Recommendations	Implement a solid community plan	... making sure that they have a good solid community plan.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendations	Create a Tourism Plan based on community consultation and stakeholder needs	All of our planning that we have done from the beginning to our current tourism plan that we are working under right now is established by community consultation and by discussing what is the most important priorities of the businesses and the hotels, restaurants, tourism service companies in Dawson Creek.
Recommendations	Create a Tourism Plan as it creates a clear set of goals and objectives for the DMO to achieve. This speaks to transparency and accountability of the DMO, something that is important to Vanderhoof accommodation providers according to survey results and is identified as a major concern in the DMO Best Practices.	The current plan that we are working under right now is a 2010 to 2015 plan it has is a number of different tourism goals, 7 to be exact, or 7 pillars those goals are under management and planning, destination development, product development, business and industry development, marketing, visitor services and visitor experience. And under each one of those core goals there's a number of different objectives and action steps which have been listed in the plan for us to accomplish in the next few years.
Recommendations	(same as above)	it's a living breathing community plan that's not established by just the DMO, but by the stakeholders of the community so now its our plan to fulfill.
Recommendations	Communication with Stakeholders is essential	communication is a key component of our organization.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Benefits	Models of DMO's must be tailored to meet the specific needs of its community.	There's always different models [of DMO] that have been used if you look in different communities across BC but of course the most popular one is the 2% hotel tax collection to fund a DMO. There's other business levies or there's city or municipal funding avenues that help create the DMO. It's really on a what works best for a specific community...what might work here doesn't work here doesn't work over there
Benefits	Benefits to stakeholders are based on filling marketing capacity gaps. The DMO assists stakeholders by pursuing marketing avenues that an individual business may not be able to pursue.	[benefits to stakeholders:] increased exposure through marketing campaigns, increased exposure through media, and travel media, travel writers, increased marketing exposure that they probably wouldn't be able to do just on their own.
Recommendations	Focus on providing beneficial services to all the various sectors of the tourism industry instead of just for example, the accommodation sector.	We don't provide any programs just specifically to any sector, like hotels. I know where your question is coming from in that in a hotel tax community there may be influences that suggest that marketing dollars that are generated in a specific tourism sector should have more marketing attention towards it.... But as far as marketing it is more of a complete marketing mix of including hotels as a part of an overall package

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Challenges	Challenges of implementing an MRDT DMO may be that because the accommodation sector is providing the funding, they may expect that the efforts, services and benefits provided by the DMO should be targeted to the accommodation sector.	I know where your question is coming from in that in a hotel tax community there may be influences that suggest that marketing dollars that are generated in a specific tourism sector should have more marketing attention towards it.... why is only one sector of the tourism industry being taxed this amount?
Challenges	The MRDT DMO Model did not succeed in Dawson Creek because	In the last five, ten years in Dawson Creek, we've had a very high occupancy rate, alright? so if hotels are full on a regular basis, their argument is why do we need a destination feed to market? ...If they're all full of oil and gas workers and industry, then summer months are just kind of extra.
Benefits	There needs to be unity and cohesiveness.	Were able to market Fernie as one cohesive unit; under one brand, one voice, under one name, so that we are organized and professional in doing so.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendation	Create a Tourism Plan based on community consultation and stakeholder needs	All of our planning that we have done from the beginning to our current tourism plan that we are working under right now is established by community consultation and by discussing what is the most important priorities of the businesses and the hotels, restaurants, tourism service companies in Dawson Creek.
Recommendation	Create a Tourism Plan as it creates a clear set of goals and objectives for the DMO to achieve. This speaks to transparency and accountability of the DMO, something that is important to Vanderhoof accommodation providers according to survey results and is identified as a major concern in the DMO Best Practices.	The current plan that we are working under right now is a 2010 to 2015 plan it has is a number of different tourism goals, 7 to be exact, or 7 pillars those goals are under management and planning, destination development, product development, business and industry development, marketing, visitor services and visitor experience. And under each one of those core goals there's a number of different objectives and action steps which have been listed in the plan for us to accomplish in the next few years.
Recommendation	(same as above)	it's a living breathing community plan that's not established by just the DMO, but by the stakeholders of the community so now its our plan to fulfill.
Recommendation	Communication with stakeholders is essential	communication is a key component of our organization.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendation	Models of DMO's must be tailored to meet the specific needs of its community.	There's always different models [of DMO] that have been used if you look in different communities across BC but of course the most popular one is the 2% hotel tax collection to fund a DMO. There's other business levies or there's city or municipal funding avenues that help create the DMO. It's really on a what works best for a specific community...what might work here doesn't work here doesn't work over there
Benefit	Benefits to stakeholders are based on filling the gaps in an individual's marketing capacity. The DMO assists stakeholders by pursuing marketing avenues that an individual business may not be able to pursue.	[benefits to stakeholders:] increased exposure through marketing campaigns, increased exposure through media, and travel media, travel writers, increased marketing exposure that they probably wouldn't be able to do just on their own.
Recommendation	Focus on providing beneficial services to all the various sectors of the tourism industry instead of just one. For example, the accommodation sector.	We don't provide any programs just specifically to any sector, like hotels. I know where your question is coming from in that in a hotel tax community there may be influences that suggest that marketing dollars that are generated in a specific tourism sector should have more marketing attention towards it.... But as far as marketing it is more of a complete marketing mix of including hotels as a part of an overall package

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Challenge	Challenges of implementing an MRDT DMO may be that because the accommodation sector is providing the funding, they may expect that the efforts, services and benefits provided by the DMO should be targeted to the accommodation sector.	I know where your question is coming from in that in a hotel tax community there may be influences that suggest that marketing dollars that are generated in a specific tourism sector should have more marketing attention towards it.... why is only one sector of the tourism industry being taxed this amount?
Recommendation	The accommodation sector is taxed to provide the funding for a DMO because it is the most stable sector that differentiates between visitor and non visitor. (Tourism operators/attractions are not necessarily plentiful enough in a community to provide adequate funding for a DMO). Other sectors such as restaurants and transportation do not differentiate between visitor and non visitor, therefore it is more assured that the DMO will not be funded off of residents of the community.	...why is only one sector of the tourism industry being taxed this amount? ...You living in Prince George, right, are not necessarily going to stay in a hotel, a visitor stays in a hotel. Where you, living in Prince George, will go out to eat at a restaurant. So you're not actually classified a visitor. So it's not a visitor tax [if you tax a restaurant].
Challenge	Challenges to implementing the MRDT DMO Model arise when there are already high occupancy rates during the tourism off season due to oil and gas or other resource industry workers. Accommodation providers see high occupancy during the tourism season as supplemental but unnecessary. Therefore their motivation/need to market themselves to tourists is very low.	In the last five, ten years in Dawson Creek, we've had a very high occupancy rate, alright? so if hotels are full on a regular basis, their argument is why do we need a destination feed to market? ...If they're all full of oil and gas workers and industry, then summer months are just kind of extra.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendation	Engagement and consultation of stakeholders is essential to the success of the DMO as it is an organization that ultimately exists to serve its stakeholders.	I think that the number one thing is that stakeholder and community engagement is definitely, it's number one. It's establishing those communication networks and that network of..that its an organization that is there to assist the tourism operators to increase business in the community.
Recommendation	Contact the regional DMO for further information on benefits, challenges and advice.	And I know the people in Vanderhoof, and the other comment I should make is that they should, or that you the survey team should also contact and approach the regional DMO association, which is located in Prince George. Because they'll also provide a level of assistance and provide information to Vanderhoof on those matters as well.
Benefit	A DMO can be a valuable part of a community's economic development strategy.	...city council has been very supportive about [it] for the last ten years and based on continued progress reports and information and communication and results they continued to see as a viable piece of their economic development strategy.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Benefits	Having an established DMO draws recognition as a sophisticated community that provides professional tourism products and services.	We draw more recognition as a sophisticated community that provides a professional tourism product and thus will help our community grow in terms of business development, job creation, in the tourism sector. But also in all of those sectors that are indirectly related to tourism that supports tourism sectors. So there is a lot of spin off benefits and obviously a lot of our community is employed by the tourism sector
Benefits	People are keen to have a DMO because of the many benefits such as, pooling resources and leveraging funding to benefit everyone versus individually spending money in a variety of markets	People were really keen to have a DMO because a lot of the operators were quite aware of the fact that they are all individually spending money in a variety of markets and they knew that if they worked together and pooled resources and were able to leverage additional dollars that it would benefit everybody.”
Recommendation	Create partnerships prior to the development of a DMO	There is a lot of work and a lot of partnering prior to the development
Benefits	A DMO helps leverage funds, market the area as a destination whereas the city has never been able to do this prior to the establishment of the DMO.	In terms of the tourism operators, we help leverage their dollars more effectively, to be able to market Fernie as a destination in markets where they have never been able to before.

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Benefits	A DMO helps coordinate a tourism marketing plan that is executed by tourism professionals.	Benefits to our community, obviously by having a coordinated body to market for tourism we have an actual tourism marketing plan. It is being developed and executed by tourism professionals
Benefits	Establishing a Board of Directors within the DMO organization creates a representation that supports all sectors relating to tourism in the area. Implementing this level of involvement creates a higher level of professionalism, coordination and pools energy, resources and funds into targeted campaigns thus driving effective results in the end	That the organization is driven and governed by a board of directors, so the board is a representation of the sectors of the tourism industry so that every sector is involved. By having that type of coordination and level of involvement obviously your bringing that sector of the economy to a much higher level, a much higher sophistication professionalism, coordination, and it just pools all that energy, that resource, and those funds into really targeted campaigns thus driving more effective results in the end
Benefits	A DMO allows communities to be effective in spending revenue.	By being in this coordinated, collaborative, leverage capacity, we benefit the community by being more effective. When we have spending of dollars it is coordinated in a way that is going to drive more effective results
Benefits	An important element is the travel planner and website	“our travel planner and our website is a huge element”

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Recommendation	Be cautious and develop the DMO in the right fashion and go through the right channels and processes such (as community consultation, proper research, and hiring an outside consultant to help to do the process).	“it was very important to develop the DMO in the right fashion and go through the right channels and the right processes such as community consultation and proper research and hiring an outside consultant to help to do the process.”
Recommendation	Each community is unique so it is important to understand what you are as a community and not try to fit into another community’s model.	“We are all very unique and have very different needs and it is very important to understand what you are as a community and not to think that somebody else’s model will just easily fit. Really researching the way to structure that DMO for an individual community, what it should look like and how it should operate. Definitely take advantage of the experience that is out there because there is a wealth out it out there.”
Challenges	Setting up logistically: how does the DMO work, how it will be government, and what model will be utilized ?	“the challenges were in terms of just setting logistically how does it work, how is it governed, what is the model we actually use.
Challenges	Concerns regarding rooms sold in the market place that have nothing to do with tourism. These companies often do not wanting to pay the 2% MRDT as they can feel it is not relevant to them.	“Mining is still by far the biggest industry and there has been concerns that a lot of the rooms that get sold in the market place that have nothing to do with tourism that are corporate mining sector and that. I have heard of companies not wanting to pay that 2% or the hotel has to eat it because they feel it is not relevant to them.”

Theme	Meta theme	Quotation
Challenges	<p>Challenges in bringing accommodation sector and tourism operators together in the sense of metrics.</p> <p>Acquiring metrics from operators as they are very protective of their business information.</p>	<p>“We do have a variety of challenges in bringing them together especially in the sense of metrics. That is by far one of our biggest challenges by far as a DMO; acquiring metrics from our operators because they are very protective of their business information.”</p>