

Market data study 2019: Water sports industry keeps sail set for success

Boating is benefiting from newcomers

From 19 to 27 January 2019, the water sports industry will be coming together at the Düsseldorf International Boat Show, known as Boot Düsseldorf. The world's largest boat show is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. On the first weekend of the boat show, Delius Klasing – Europe's leading publisher of maritime media and a Boot Düsseldorf partner from the very start – will be presenting the results of its 2019 market data study on the water sports industry. Two developments stand out in the results of the study: Due to an increased interest in water sports, small sailboats and motorboats are a clear trend at the moment. At the same time, the demand for large and luxurious yachts remains unbroken. Comfort and quality play a strong role in this upscale segment, while the purchase price is less of a concern

Bielefeld/Düsseldorf, 19 January 2019. Bielefeld publisher Delius Klasing conducts the world's largest reader survey on the water sports industry. For the 20th time, the print and online readers of Europe's leading sail- and motorboat magazines YACHT and BOOTE were surveyed on boat ownership, intended purchases, charter areas, supplies and brand profiles. A remarkable 12,662 readers took part in the most recent study, which covered 711 brands from the water sports segment. These brands include a total of 95 sailboat and 122 motorboat yards, 307 brands of supplies, and 187 charter companies from the sail- and motorboat industry. The independent market research institute Market Research, from Neuhausen near Stuttgart, was commissioned with preparing the study.

The key findings for the industry this year are as follows: More and more people in Germany are drawn to boating. This is also evident from the increased interest in small "beginner's" sailboats and motorboats. Moreover, consumers' willingness to spend money on new and used boats, supplies and charter holidays remains consistently high. When it comes to sailboats, there is an increasing share of people owning larger sailing yachts; while in the area of motorboats, more people are found to own smaller craft.

Almost one of every two surveyed YACHT readers are considering the purchase of a sailing yacht. According to the current market data study, 16 per cent of those surveyed have specific plans to purchase one within the next three years. Only 29 per cent are uncertain if they want to buy a new boat in the near future. This shows a nearly consistently high (45 per cent) likelihood of purchasing a sailboat (2016: 50 per cent).

Among motorboat drivers, 27 per cent of those surveyed responded that they would like to buy a motorboat in the next three years, while 36 per cent are uncertain. This places the likelihood of a purchase at 63 per cent among motorboat fans (2016: 64 per cent).

Responses concerning the hull length of anticipated new purchases, the 2019 study shows an increased interest in smaller sailing yachts. Among YACHT readers who anticipate making a purchase, 15 per cent plan to buy a sailboat with a hull length in the smallest category, “up to 7.5 meters” (2016: 11 per cent). However, larger sailing yachts measuring between 12 and 15 meters are also seeing an increased interest among readers (36 per cent). BOOTE readers are also showing a stronger interest in purchasing smaller craft within the next three years. When asked about their plans for a new purchase, 16 per cent (2016: 9 per cent) responded that they were looking for a motorboat of up to 5 meters in hull length. Motorboats between 7 and 10 meters in length remain the most popular craft among BOOTE readers, with 37 per cent planning to buy a boat of this category in the next three years.

According to the study, motorboat drivers are prepared to pay an average of €176,625 for a new boat. This is slightly lower than the price indicated in 2016 (€187,829). The reason for this is because smaller boats are becoming more popular among the readers. Sailboat enthusiasts, in contrast, are willing to pay a bit more for a new sailboat than before, with an average purchasing price of €280,803. When it comes to purchasing used boats, consumers’ willingness to spend has remained at a high level both for sailboats (€80,443) and for motorboats (€69,724). Here too, the slight decline is the result of heightened interest in smaller craft.

The overall survey responses showed the quality of a boat to be the determining factor in the purchase of a new or used sail- or motorboat, followed by the factors of price, handling characteristics and comfort.

Besides being surveyed about their plans for a purchase, respondents were also asked about their dream yachts (if money were not an issue). YACHT readers’ dream yachts are those from Hallberg-Rassy, X-Yachts and Swan. BOOTE readers’ top three motorboat brands are Linssen, Bavaria and Jeanneau.

Chartering is a very popular segment among both sailboat and motorboat enthusiasts. When asked if they had ever chartered a boat, 76 per cent of YACHT readers responded in the affirmative (2016: 77 per cent), and 57 per cent of BOOTE readers responded likewise (2016: 65 per cent).

For motorboat drivers, Germany is still the undisputed favourite charter area. Croatia and the Netherlands were named as the next-best charter areas among BOOTE readers. YACHT readers prefer their charter trips in Croatia, Germany and Greece. A motorboat holiday lasts one week, on average, and costs around €2,600. Sailboat charter holidays last around one and a half weeks, with costs averaging €3,127. Both sail- and motorboat fans most frequently book their charter holidays directly with a charter company. Nearly 50 per cent of motorboat drivers plan to book a charter trip within the next 12 months; this figure jumps to 68 per cent among sailboat enthusiasts.

The market study also surveyed the following areas relating to sailboat supplies: boat clothing, boat electronics, sailmakers, navigation apps, antifouling, insurances, consignors, and charter fleet operators and agencies. For motorboat drivers, the focus was on the supply categories of boat electronics, boat motors, insurances, charter agencies, navigation apps, consignors and antifouling. Questions concerning brand profiles addressed issues such as reliability, brand recognition, quality, workmanship, service, appearance, and the cost-benefit ratio of the boats and boatyards.

The data from the reader surveys in YACHT and BOOTE facilitate detailed market and image analyses of all relevant brands and segments relating to boatyards and supplies. The study is the only one of its kind in terms of exploring the depth and breadth of the segment, making it an important trend barometer for the international water sports industry.