

England Attractions Monitor

Quarter 2 Report

April – June 2010

Prepared for



bdrc
continental

providing *intelligence*

Contents

Background, objectives and methodology

Summary of findings

Main findings

- Visit trends
- Business performance & confidence
- Q2 Hot Topics
 - Marketing trends
 - VAQAS impact
 - What could the government do for the industry?



Background, objectives & methodology



Background, objectives & methodology

In January 2006, VisitEngland commissioned BDRC Continental to launch and manage the **England Attractions Monitor**, an online panel to help provide the attractions industry with rapid feedback on current trends in visits to attractions in England.

Objective to create a panel of **c.600 attractions** comprising:

- c.300 individual attractions recruited online, with geographic spread across England
- c.300 English Heritage/National Trust properties (with visit admissions data for each property provided centrally)

During the second 2010 quarterly period (April – June), **616 attractions** provided data, consisting of:

- 325 individual attractions recruited online;
- 291 English Heritage/National Trust properties (admissions data only)

A cross-section of attractions was recruited according to type, size and free/paid admission. Comparisons in visitor admissions figures are always made among constant samples where appropriate.

Regional Tourism Organisations also have the opportunity to enhance the survey within their region by boosting sample sizes to enable them to analyse their own results in greater detail. There is also the facility for regions to add bespoke questions.



Quarter 2 2010:

Summary of findings



Quarter 2 2010: Summary of findings

By way of context, the weather during Q2 was dry and fine for the most part. April was mainly dry and fine. The first half of May was characterised by cool weather, with temperatures recovering during the second half of the month. June saw plenty of dry, sunny weather, especially in the second half when it became very warm over England.

The year-on-year decline in visit admissions noted in the first quarter of 2010, has continued into the second quarter of 2010 (-1% across the Apr-Jun period overall). This decline was driven by declines in visits in April (-2%) and particularly in May (-10%). However, visits in the dry and sunny June increased by +11%.

Visit expectations and business confidence for Q3 reflect these visit declines – these both being among the lowest levels for the time of year since the survey began. There is an overriding feeling that it will be tough to sustain the strong performances reported during the peak season of 2009.

- Economic conditions have not improved sufficiently to generate confidence for many attractions
- ...but some continue to report year-on-year improvements in their business, evidence of the diversification on offer at many attractions

Growth of membership/friends/season ticket schemes continues to grow, particularly among markets local to attractions.

Since 2009, emphasis has shifted away from above-the-line advertising and towards online channels and to a lesser extent, PR activity and leaflets.

- Whilst there is great focus upon improving attractions' own website content, there is also increasing marketing emphasis on social media and e-newsletters
- Online advertising is increasing, primarily at the expense of newspaper/magazine advertising

Majority of participating attractions have heard of VAQAS, with around half currently members of the scheme. Variety of benefits recognised with accreditation, mainly use of the Quality Rose Marque and improving the visitor experience.



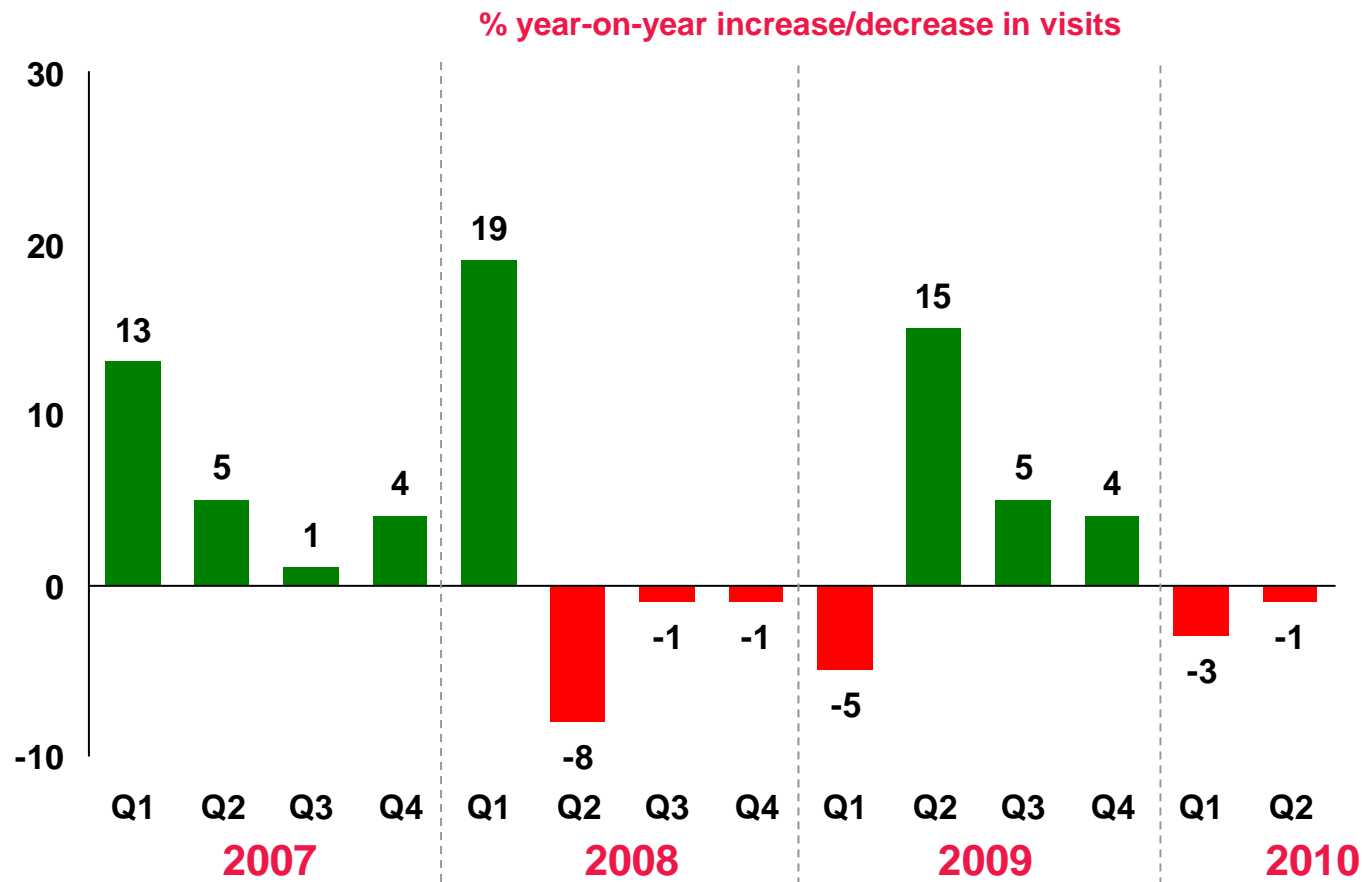
Main Findings:

Visit Trends



Year-on-Year Quarterly Visit Trends

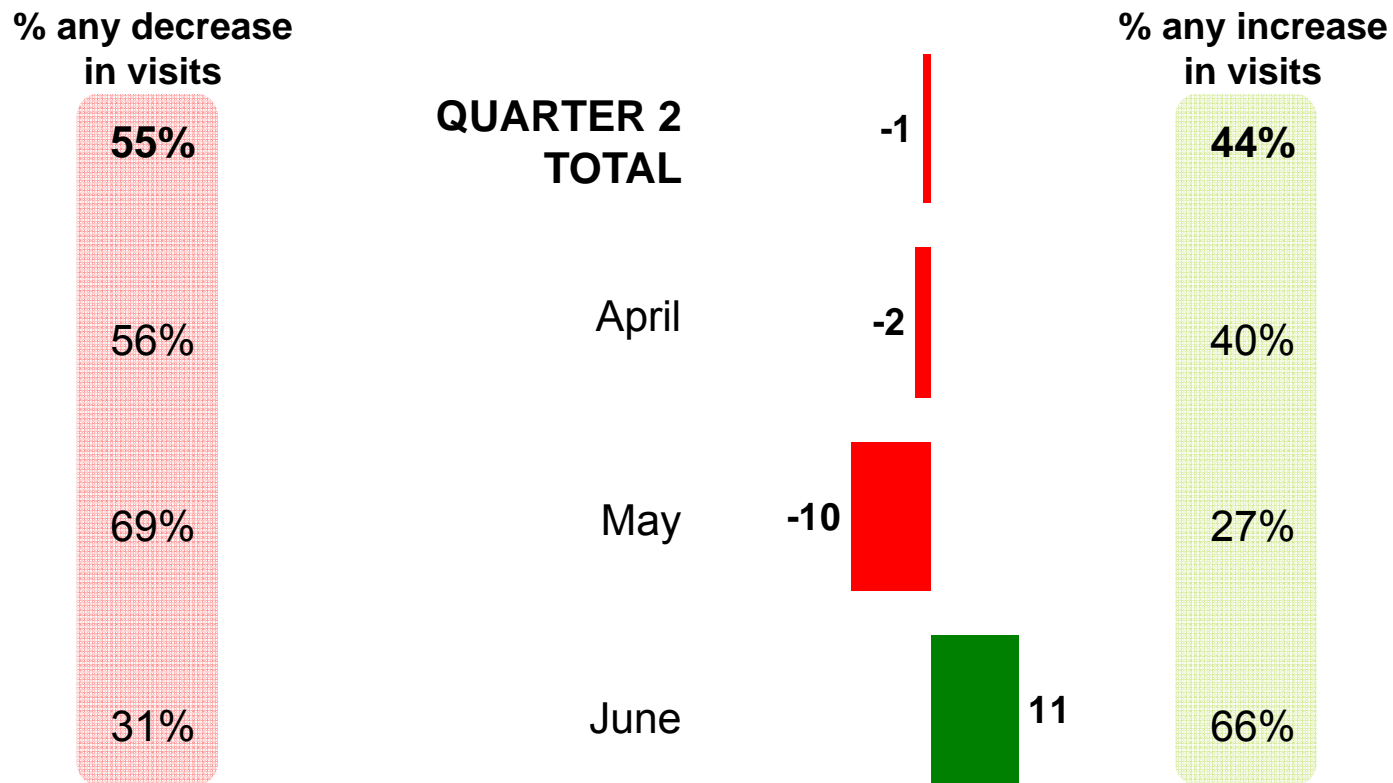
Following the strong recovery in visits observed during Q2-Q4 2009 which saw many attractions bounce back to a position stronger than in 2007, the first two quarters of 2010 saw visits fall back slightly. In Q2 2010, visits fell -1% compared with Q2 2009.



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Visit Trends 2009-2010

The second quarter of 2010 saw an overall year-on-year decrease of -1%. However, this masked notable variations within the quarter, with visits declining -10% in May but increasing by +11% year-on-year in June.

% Increase/Decrease in Visits



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Visit Trends 2009-2010 – By Region

All regions apart from the North West, London and South West reported a year-on-year decrease in visitor admissions for Q2 2010. North West and London were spared the significant visit declines in May experienced by other regions. North West also performed significantly better than average in June, with London only experiencing a +5% increase in visits for the month.

Region	Total Qtr 2 Change (%)	Apr Change (%)	May Change (%)	Jun Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (616)	-1	-2	-10	11
North East (44)	-6	-10	-18	12
North West (66)	6	<1	<1	18
Yorkshire & The Humber (59)	-3	-5	-16	13
East Midlands (54)	-3	-5	-15	16
West Midlands (52)	-3	-3	-15	12
East of England (75)	-2	<1	-16	10
London (36)	1	-2	-1	5
South East (120)	-1	<1	-12	10
South West (110)	<1	-1	-10	12

Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Visit Trends 2009-2010 – By Attraction Category

Wildlife attractions/zoos and gardens most negatively hit during Q2 2010, driven by a difficult April/May period. Strong performance by historic houses/castles during the June period. Museums/art galleries spared the poor May experienced by other attraction types.

Attraction Category	Total Qtr 2 Change (%)	Apr Change (%)	May Change (%)	Jun Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (616)	-1	-2	-10	11
Historic Houses/Castles (250)	<1	<1	-14	17
Other historic properties (65)	-1	-7	-15	11
Museums/art galleries (127)	1	-1	-2	8
Gardens (42)	-4	-5	-11	8
Visitor/heritage centres (22)*	<1	7	-3	-3
Wildlife attractions/zoos (19)*	-8	-11	-23	13
Others (91)	-2	-2	-11	9

*CAUTION: Low base size
Base: All attractions (616)



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Visit Trends 2009-2010 – By Other Segments

Free (+1%) and urban (+1) attractions fared best in Q2, with admissions driven by the indoor museums/art galleries.

	Total Qtr 2 Change (%)	Apr Change (%)	May Change (%)	Jun Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (616)	-1	-2	-10	11
Visits per annum				
Over 200,000 (47)	<1	-3	-7	10
100,001 – 200,000 (69)	-1	-1	-15	14
50,001 – 100,000 (105)	-2	-2	-13	12
20,001 – 50,000 (156)	-1	-1	-10	10
20,000 or less (239)	<1	3	-8	6
Free/paid				
Paid (490)	-2	-2	-13	12
Free (126)	1	-3	-2	9
Location				
Coastal (68)	<1	<1	-10	11
Rural (347)	-2	-3	-15	14
Urban (201)	1	-1	-4	7

Main Findings:

Business Performance &
Confidence



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Overall Business Performance Trends 2009-2010

2 in 5 attractions this quarter felt their business performance was better than in Q2 2009, a similar proportion to that who felt their performance was worse. Opinion of business performance was more positive in Yorks & Humber, the South and among coastal and urban attractions.



	% Better than 2009
Yorks & Humber	44
South East	43
South West	42
North West	40
East of England	38
East Midlands	28

	% Better than 2009
Coastal	47
Urban	43
Rural	33

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)

Q. We would now like you to think about how the overall business performance of your attraction has changed in the April to June 2010 period

compared with April to June 2009. Would you say that your overall business performance in the April to June 2010 period was....? File location/File Name (including version)/Author Initials/Support Initials/Date

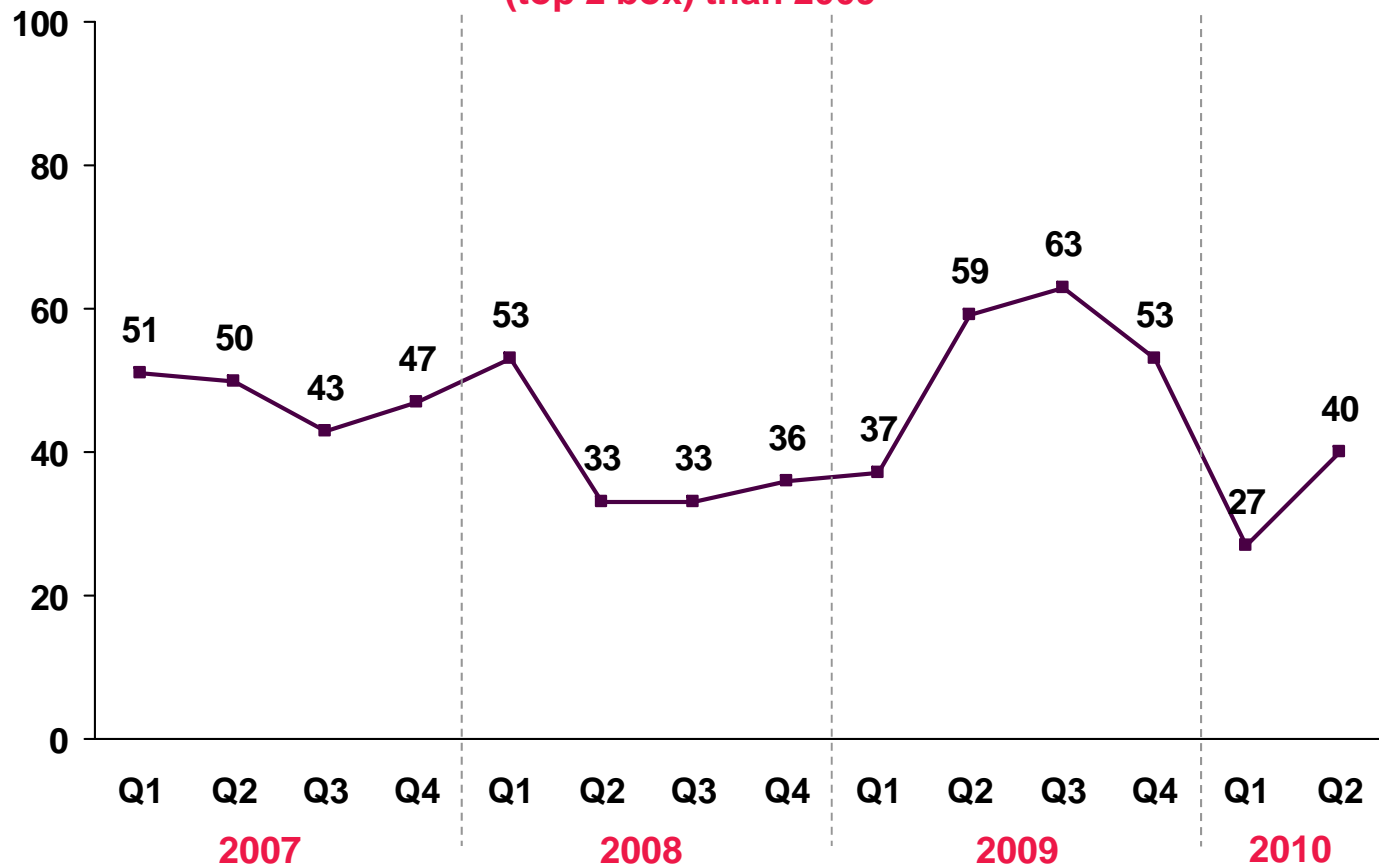


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Overall Business Performance Trends

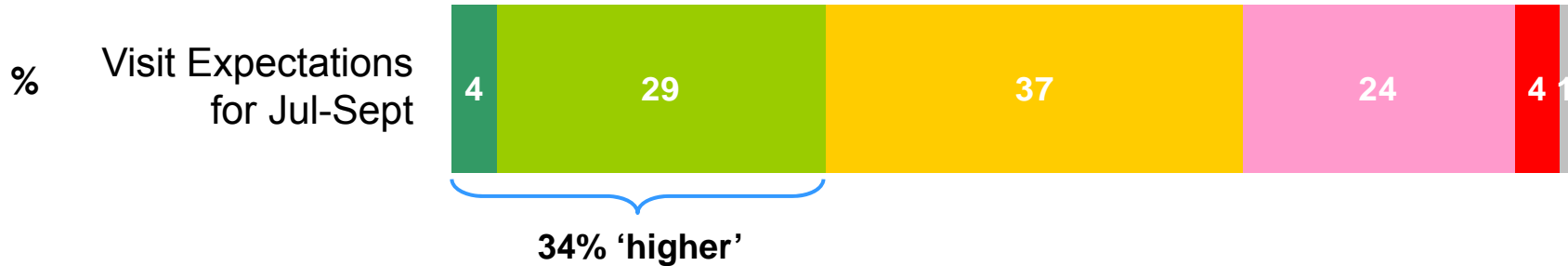
In line with the decline in visitor admissions in early 2010, many attractions have found it tough to sustain business performance improvements experienced in 2009. Only 40% managed to improve their business performance in Q2 2010 compared with 59% in Q2 2009. However, this remains higher than the level experienced in 2008.

**% claiming overall business performance is 'better'
(top 2 box) than 2009**



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Visit Expectations for Jul-Sept 2010

Around a third of attractions expect visits for forthcoming quarter to be higher compared to last year – especially attractions in the North West or South West, historic houses/castles, larger and urban attractions – slightly higher than the proportion that expect a fall in visits.



■ Much higher than 2009
 ■ A little higher than 2009
 ■ About the same as in 2009
 ■ A little lower than 2009
 ■ Much lower than 2009
 ■ Don't know

	% Higher than 2009
North West	42
South West	40
Yorks & Humber	36
South East	31
East of England	29
East Midlands	22

	% Higher than 2009
Museums/art galleries	31
Historic houses/castles	41
Under 50,000 visits p.a.	31
Over 50,000 visits p.a.	41
Urban	40
Coastal	34
Rural	29

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)

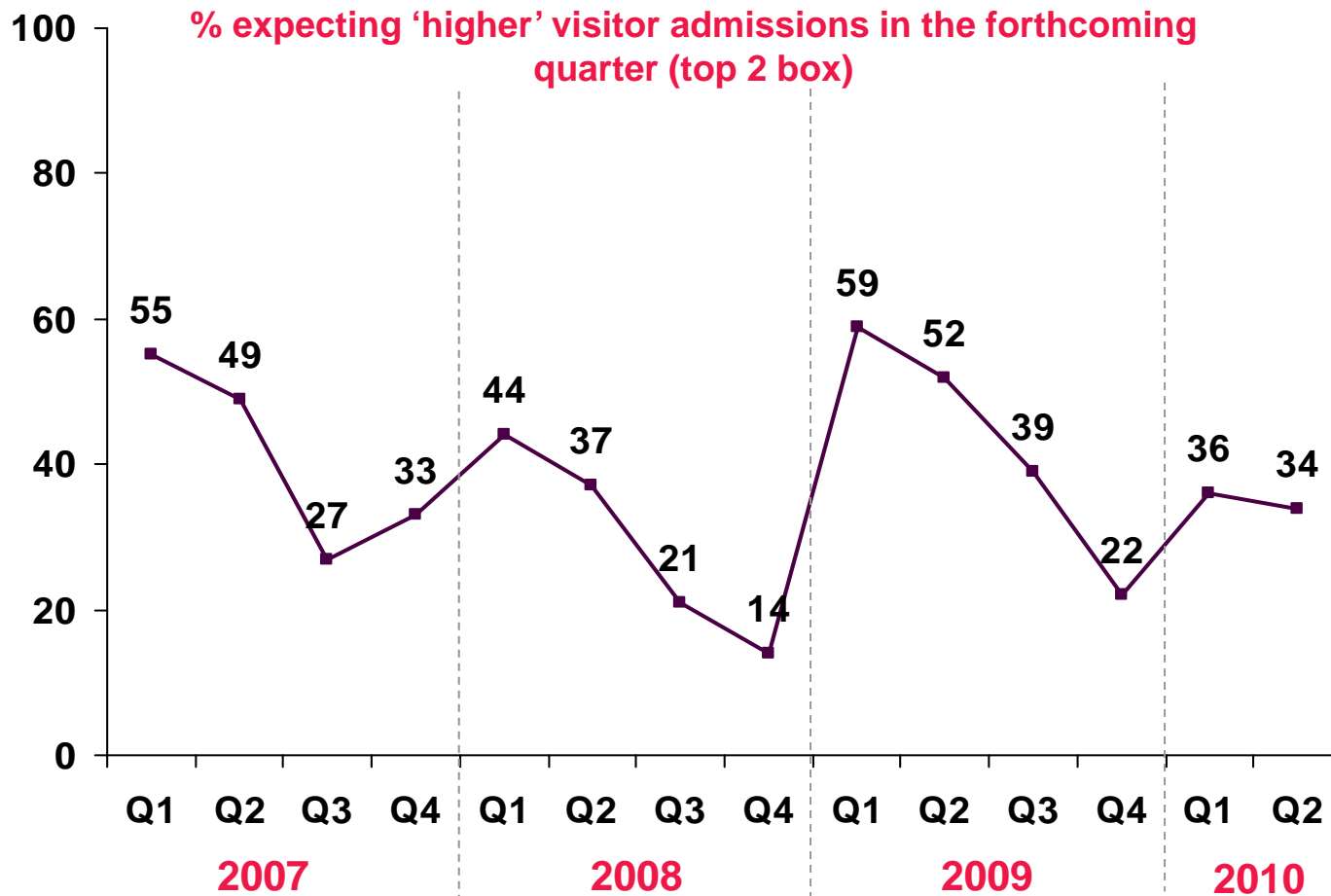
Q. Thinking about the July to September 2010 period, do you expect visitor numbers (paid and free) compared with July to September 2009 to be....?



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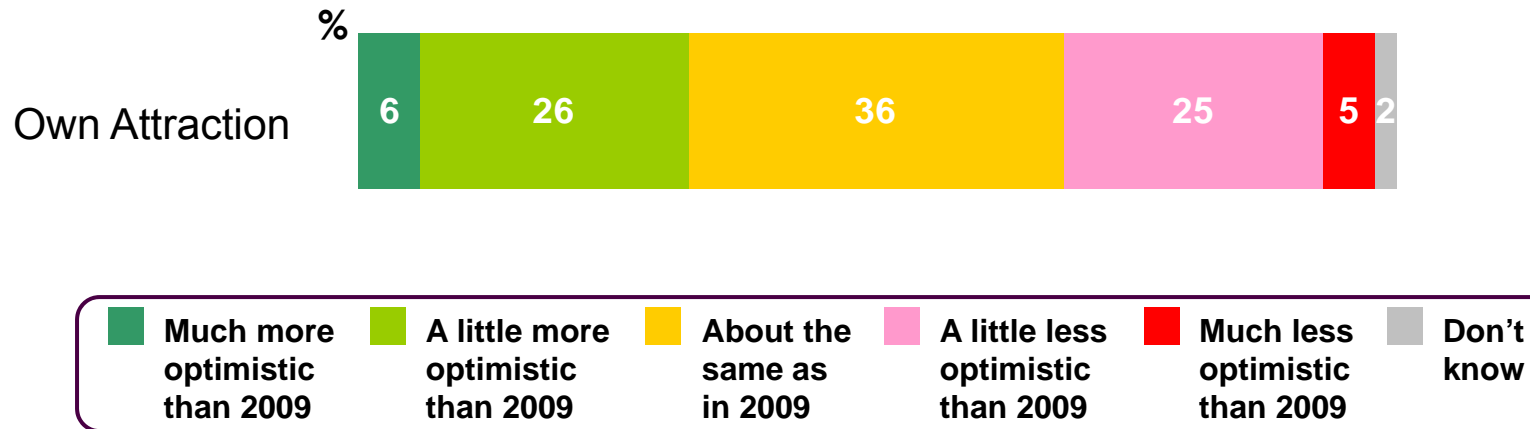
Visit Expectations Trends

Attractions tend to be more bullish about their performance for the year ahead at the start of the calendar year, with expectations diminishing as the year progresses. 2010 has seen the lowest visit expectations of the past four years in each of Q1 and Q2, many feeling that the strong performance of 2009 is unlikely to be repeated.



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Business Confidence for Jul-Sept 2010

In line with expected visits, positive business confidence for the forthcoming quarter (Q3) has fallen to 32%, with almost the same proportion (30%) less optimistic than they were a year ago.



Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)

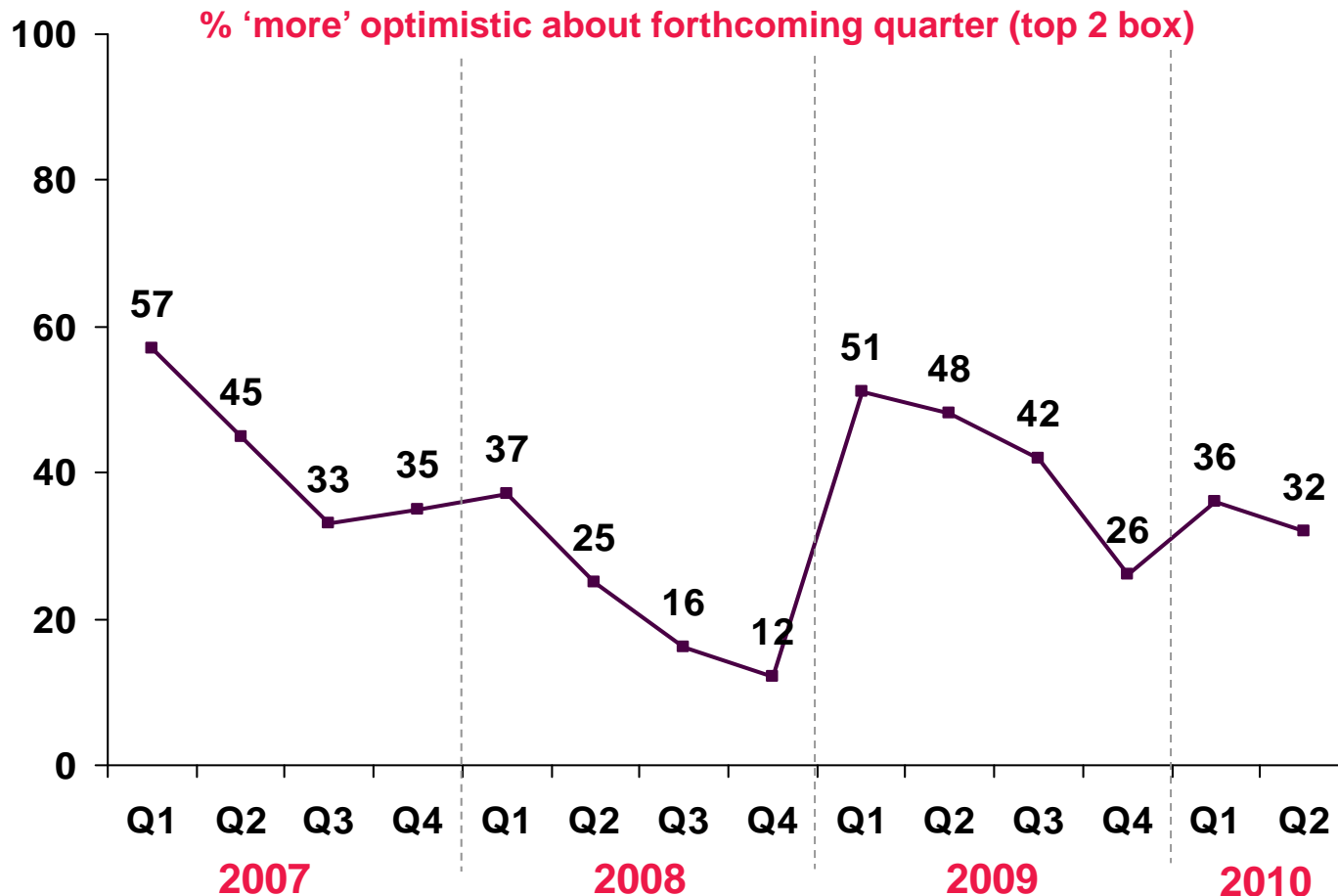
Q. And compared with this time last year, which of these statements best describes how optimistic you feel about the business prospects for the attractions industry generally / your attraction's business prospects for the April to June 2010 period?



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Business Confidence Trends (own attraction)

Overall business confidence trends also tend to start the year at high levels and decline as the year progresses. However, whereas visit expectations are at their lowest point since the survey's inception, business confidence has held up slightly better (remaining at a level higher than in 2008 in Q2). Evidence of attractions improving their offers beyond visitor admissions?



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Business Confidence for Jul-Sept 2010 (Own Attraction) – by Region

Whilst optimism still outweighs pessimism in most regions in Q2 (and is especially strong in Y&H and London/SE), confidence is much lower in the East Midlands and East.

Region	% more optimistic than 2009	% less optimistic than 2009
TOTAL ENGLAND (325)	33	30
North East (20)*	35	30
North West (48)	33	31
Yorkshire & The Humber (36)	39	22
East Midlands (32)	25	41
West Midlands (24)*	38	33
East (48)	27	38
London (19)*	32	16
South East (58)	33	21
South West (40)	30	32

* CAUTION: Low base sizes
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Business Confidence for Jul-Sept 2010 (Own Attraction) – by Other Segments

On balance the smaller (50,000 or less visits per annum) attractions appear to be the least optimistic about Q3 2010 compared with Q3 2009. Urban attractions were the most optimistic about the forthcoming period, with some concern among rural attractions.

		% more optimistic than 2009	% less optimistic than 2009
TOTAL ENGLAND (325)		33	30
Visits per annum	Over 200,000 (38)	33	33
	100,001 – 200,000 (26)*	34	28
	50,001 – 100,000 (49)	38	31
	20,001 – 50,000 (82)	30	34
	20,000 or less (129)	30	27
Free / paid	Paid (208)	33	33
	Free (117)	30	26
Location	Coastal (36)	34	33
	Rural (161)	24	34
	Urban (128)	42	24

* CAUTION: Low base sizes
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)



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21

Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Business Confidence for Jul-Sept 2010 (Own Attraction) – by Attraction Category

As has been the case in recent quarters, strongest optimism about the upcoming quarter is once again among historic houses / castles.

Attraction Category	% more optimistic than 2009	% less optimistic than 2009
TOTAL ENGLAND (325)	33	30
Historic Houses/Castles (51)	44	26
Museums/art galleries (124)	30	27
Visitor/heritage centres (20)*	36	27
Wildlife attractions/zoos (17)*	27	49
Gardens (13)*	31	15
Others (84)	24	40

*CAUTION: Low base sizes
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)



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Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Reasons for Business Confidence Jul-Sept 2010 (Own Attraction) – Positives

Optimism for the forthcoming Q3 in 2010 is driven primarily by the increase in visitors (domestic, overseas, education visits) experienced in recent times and the expectation that this will continue. Recent investment or improvements to events/exhibitions, better advertising and weather forecast are also influential.

	%	Quarter 2
Visitor number trends increased/hope it will continue		11
Improvements to events/exhibitions/attractions		6
New/better/more advertising/marketing		5
Good positive weather forecast		5
Increase in domestic holiday/short break		4
Refurbishments/improvements to site/investment		3
Economic climate / interest rates		2
Positive / forward advance bookings		2
Increase in spending retail / café		2
Increasing interest in the area		2
Increased overseas visitors		2
Better PR coverage		1
Increase in school / education groups		1

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)

Why do you feel this way about your attraction's business prospects for July to September 2010?



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Verbatim – Positives

“Experiencing better visitor numbers than previous year & forward group bookings are higher.”

“Strong early performance during the year, improved links with other local attractions (joint ticketing), strong exhibitions in the pipeline.”

“We feel guardedly optimistic because our attraction is becoming better known amongst schools and the public; we know that we have a unique attraction and we are doing our best to encourage people to visit it.”

“The new centre is continuing to attract more visitors and we have a lot of repeat business from visitors and locals alike.”

“We have no big extra events planned over and above what we did last year. Visitor numbers though are approx 10% up.”

“I feel we have reached a better marketing pitch and I feel more people are exploring the heritage at home.”

“More events lined up for families and high number of bookings.”

“Because we are coming out of a recession, so hopefully that will have an effect and also we have a greater range and number of events organised this year.”



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Reasons for Business Confidence Jul-Sept 2010 (Own Attraction) – Negatives

Reasons for lower business confidence for Q3 2010 tend to relate to experience of declining visitor numbers for the early part of the year. There remain notable proportions of attractions who feel that the economic climate continues to have a negative impact upon the industry.

	%	Quarter 2
Visitor numbers/trends down this year		12
Economic climate/interest rates/fuel prices		11
Less spending power of public		6
Reduction in visitor/retail spend		6
Lack of / declining external investment		4
Poor weather/forecast		2
Closed for refurbishment / works		2
General visitor decline		2
Post general election uncertainty		1
'Staycation' over, more holidaying abroad		1
World cup affecting attraction industry		1
Media coverage e-coli		1
Less advertising / marketing / PR		1

Verbatim – Negatives

“Visitor numbers down about 10% since last year suggests a slight downward trend and sales down a considerable 36% - the only good point is that donations per person (we are a free attraction) are up 17%, so that overall takings only down by 8%.”

“In 2009 we saw a substantial increase on 2008, but this year has been a slow start and as yet has not picked up.”

“Economic climate uncertainty creating spending caution amongst public.”

“In July 2009 we reopened after an 18 month extension & refurbishment, visitor numbers were good due to good publicity of the reopening. So far in 2010 we are struggling to attract visitors expected. Three factors to be taken in consideration are lack of free spending money by residents & visitors due to recession, refurbishment of seafront in Bexhill affecting passing trade and current hot weather spell.”

“The experience so far this year has been of slightly declining numbers, with no obvious cause. Weather, the World Cup have all perhaps contributed to the drop.”

“Lack of customer optimism about the current financial climate has reduced visitor numbers and spend.”

“Lack of investment, budget cuts, restructures which may reduce staffing for events etc.”



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26

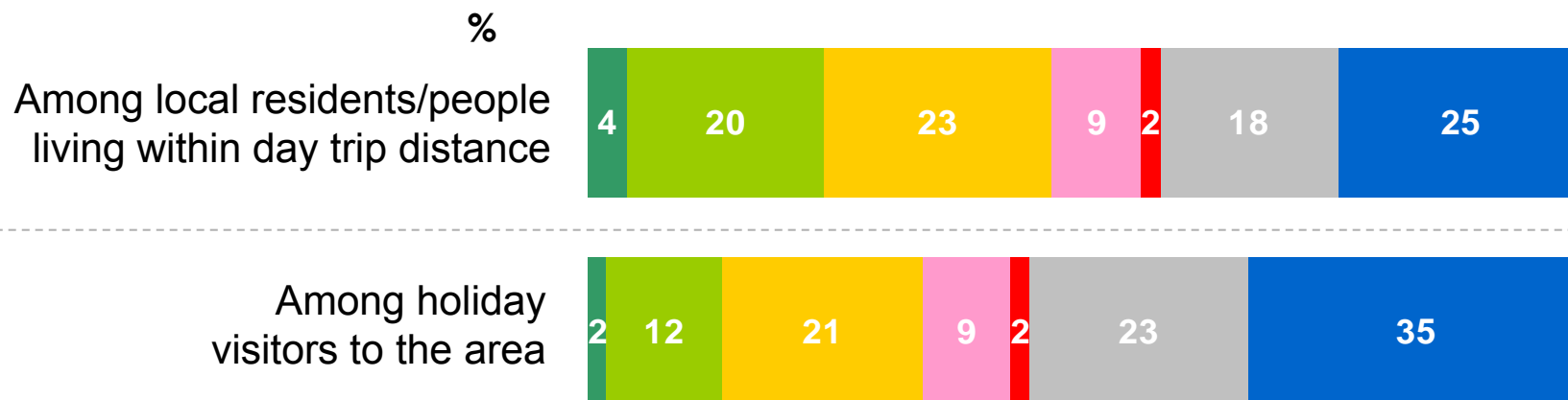
Main Findings:

Hot Topics



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Hot Topic Question: Changes in membership subscriptions

Members/friends/season ticket holding continues to increase, particularly within the local market. A quarter of attractions claimed that this had increased among the local market since Q2 2009 compared with only 11% who felt it had declined.



Increased a lot
 Increased a little
 Has not changed
 Decreased a little
 Decreased a lot
 Don't know
 Not applicable/No scheme

Q. What change, if any, has there been in the number of members/subscriptions/season ticket holders/friends for your attraction since this time last year?

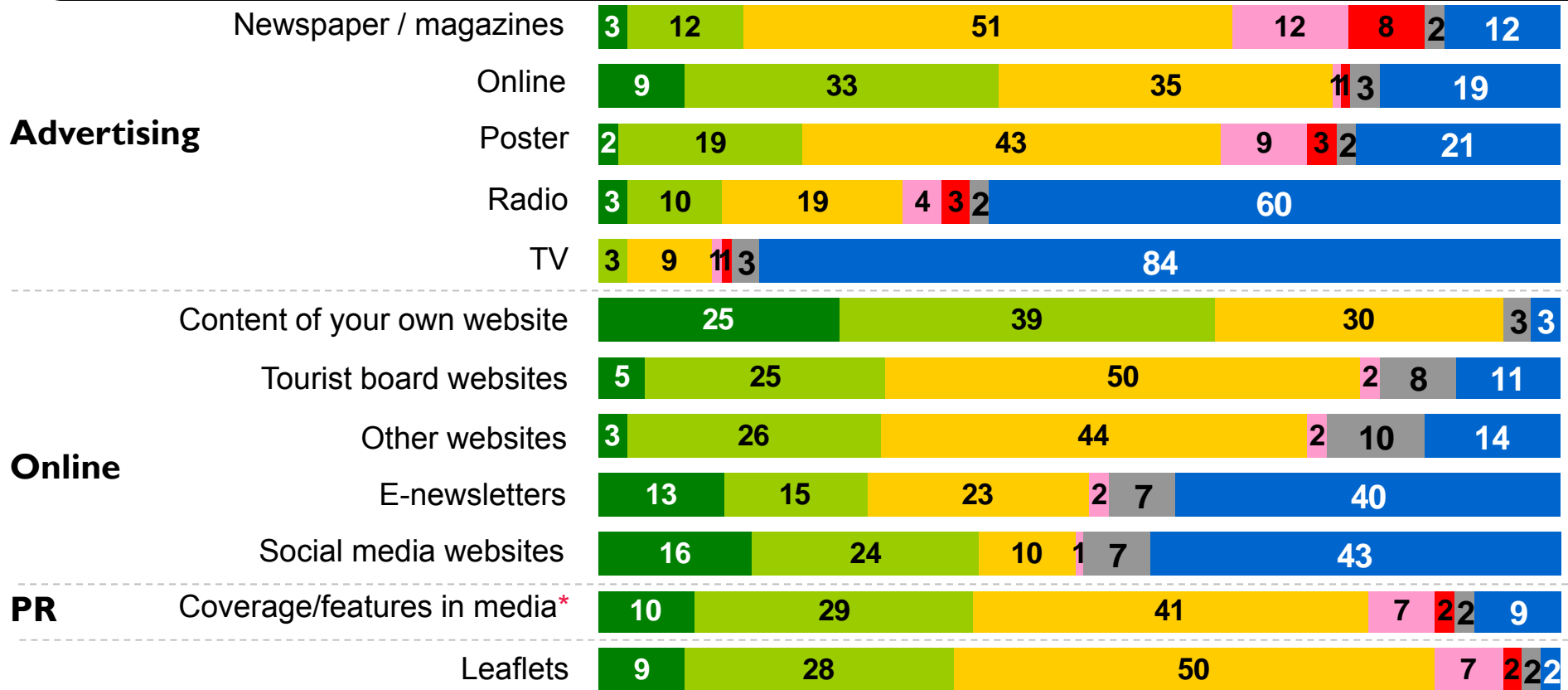
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)



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Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Hot Topic Question: Changes in marketing emphasis

Compared with 2009, attractions are focussing more of their efforts online. Online advertising has grown, primarily at the expense of newspaper/magazine advertising. Overall, above the line advertising is now receiving less emphasis than in 2009, with increasing emphasis on online channels (e-newsletters and social media as well as improving the content of their own website) and to a lesser extent, PR coverage and leaflets.



■ Much more emphasis
 ■ A little more emphasis
 ■ About the same emphasis
 ■ A little less emphasis
 ■ Much less emphasis
 ■ Don't know
 ■ Not applicable / Don't market in this way

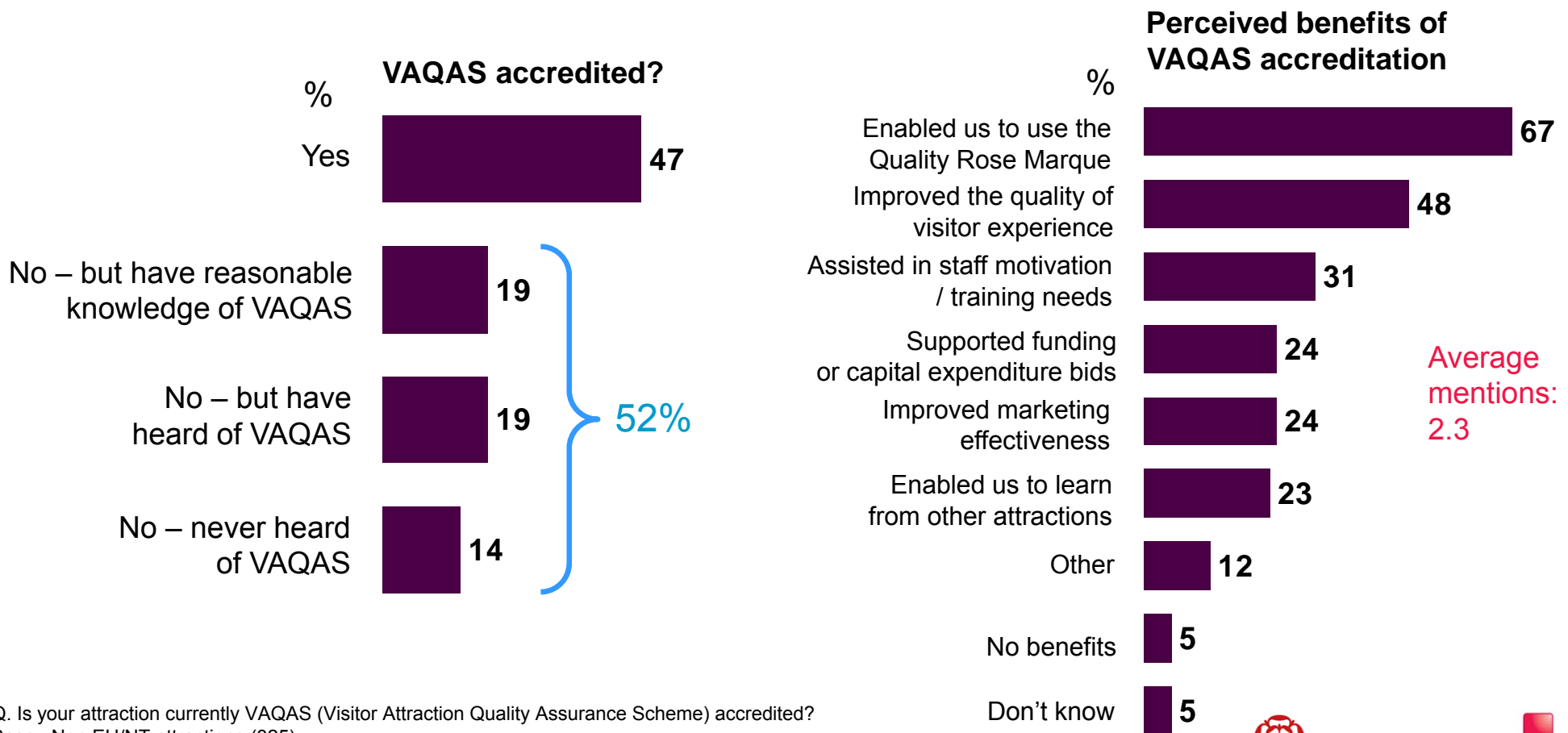
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325) *Media=newspapers, magazines, TV, radio

Q. Thinking specifically about marketing, compared with last year, how is marketing of your attraction changing? Is there more, less or about the same emphasis on each of the following areas?



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Hot Topic Question: Impact of VAQAS

Nearly half of all participating attractions are VAQAS accredited with the two main benefits being able to use the Quality Rose Marque and improving the quality of visitor experience. Majority of non members have at least heard of VAQAS.



Q. Is your attraction currently VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) accredited?

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (325)

Q. In what ways do you think that VAQAS accreditation has benefitted your attraction?

Base: Non EH/NT attractions who are VAQAS accredited (154)



Quarter 2 (Apr-Jun): Hot Topic Question: What attractions would like government to do...

Main comments (in order of frequency of mentions):

- Don't withdraw / increase funding for promoting UK as a destination to domestic as well as overseas
- Increase direct funding / support / grants eg. for the arts
- Recognise the value and benefit of tourism to the economy
- Continue gift aid (remove 10% clause)
- Reduce VAT / offer tax relief / other business rates to businesses in the industry
- Improve public transport eg. in the rural areas to increase accessibility

Other mentions:

- Reduce / simplify health and safety regulations
- Keep admissions free to eg. museums / galleries
- Improve signage by delegating to local authority rather than county level

Verbatim comments

“Invest in promoting UK properly both abroad and within UK. Time and time again shown it is quick win on new jobs etc and would have thought they should be increasing investment not decreasing it!”

“Take tourism seriously as a major contributor to the local and national economy. At least maintain its investment in tourist boards and new initiatives to offer more and better facilities for tourists. Do more to promote England as an inbound tourist destination.”

“I am not too sure we should expect governments to help directly as they have enough trouble managing the UK financial deficit. However, it would be good to hope that government will not add any financial burdens on to the visitor attractions industry. I think we must also take responsibility for managing ourselves.”

“Make local authorities take culture and tourism seriously not treat it as a luxury that can be disposed of.”

“Provide a good Visit UK website giving details of transport availability to places of interest outside London. We have so much to offer but visitors from overseas find it difficult to find information on how to reach our attractions.”

“Co-ordinate the effort more effectively from national to regional and down to local level. Be less London focused.”

“Better co-ordination between the local, regional, national and international tourist boards so that promotions and publicity becomes more streamlined.”

“Promote tourism more strongly and resist making cuts to bodies who do so. Resist cuts to the Gift Aid scheme.”

“A weak pound makes GB good for overseas tourists and makes people stay at home. That is good for us. We need a grant to update some of our facilities. Improvements in infrastructure eg. roads and rail would benefit everyone.”

