

England Attractions Monitor

Quarter 1 Report

January – March 2011



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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 first 2011 quarterly period (January – March), **682 attractions** provided data, consisting of:
 - 376 individual attractions recruited online;
 - 306 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.

Quarter 1 2011:

Summary of findings



Quarter 1 2011: Summary of findings (1)

- By way of context, the weather during Q1 2011 was significantly warmer and drier than experienced during the equivalent 2010 period. January was close to average in terms of temperature and sunshine, with February warm, but generally dull. In 2010, these months were characterised by extreme cold and in many areas, snow. March was very dry and sunny with some fine Spring weather. March 2010 was more mixed.
- There has been a positive start to 2011, with visit admissions up by +7% year-on-year. This has been driven by both a strong January (+19%) and February (+12%), helped by the more favourable weather of 2011. March has remained more stable (-2%).
- Outdoor attractions, including farms, wildlife attractions and gardens particularly benefitted from the finer weather experienced in 2011.
- Overall business performance and levels of satisfaction reflect this promising start to the year, with 41% of attractions reporting 'better' business performance in Q1 2011 than in Q1 2010 and only 21% a 'worse' performance. This is the highest Q1 level for three years. Over two-thirds (68%) were 'satisfied' with their performance.
- Attractions remain generally cautious about the immediate future. A third (34%) are more optimistic about the forthcoming quarter than they were a year ago, a similar proportion to that observed at the same time last year. Both museums/art galleries and historic houses/castles are noticeably less optimistic than the sector overall.

Quarter 1 2011: Summary of findings (2)

- Specific concerns over Government spending cuts and the VAT increase raised in Q4 2010, have once again given way to the wider resulting concerns over the economy and limited visitor spending power. Ongoing concerns over rising fuel/petrol prices continue. Those continuing to invest in events, exhibitions and other site improvements tend to be the most bullish, along with those who believe that the weather could come to their rescue.
- Nevertheless, more attractions are optimistic (68%) than pessimistic (23%) about the year ahead (although usually 'quite' as opposed to 'very'). The largest, urban attractions tend to be the most optimistic, although the good start to the year for outdoor attractions has also bolstered their optimism.
- Developments in digital communications move on apace, with 68% of attractions now involved in social media compared with 50% in Q2 2010. 80% of attractions using social media are placing more emphasis on this area than a year ago. Half (49%) of attractions are involved with Facebook and over a third (38%) in Twitter.
- E-newsletters are also becoming more prominent, with 64% of attractions now using compared with 53% a year ago. Development of Apps (26% have developed them) and mobile websites (31%) is notable among a minority of attractions. 73% of attractions are placing more emphasis on their website content.
- Views on the potential impact of the Royal Wedding and extra Bank Holiday was mixed. 27% felt that it would benefit their business, whilst 20% felt that there would be a negative impact. Questions at Q2 will assess the actual impact of the event.
- At this stage, other than London (where 60% of attractions feel it will benefit their business), views on the potential impact of the Olympics is cool – only 17% of attractions elsewhere feel it will have a positive impact. Attractions are more positive about the Diamond Jubilee, with 36% predicting a positive impact.

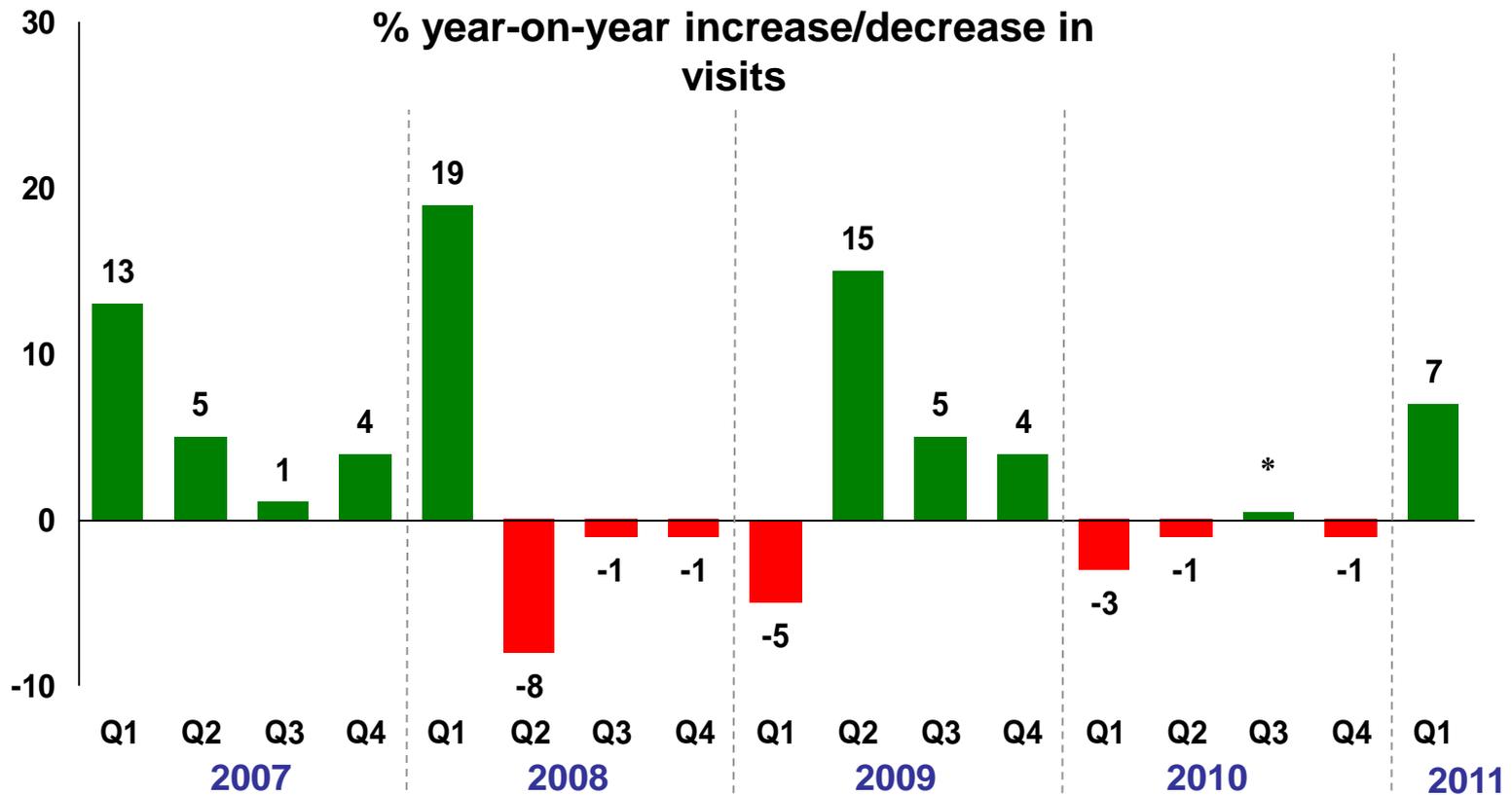
Main Findings:

Visit Trends



Year-on-Year Quarterly Visit Trends

2010 overall showed a stabilisation of the market following the very strong performance of 2009. Benefiting from the better weather in Q1, many attractions have made a positive start to 2011, with visits increasing by an average of 7%.

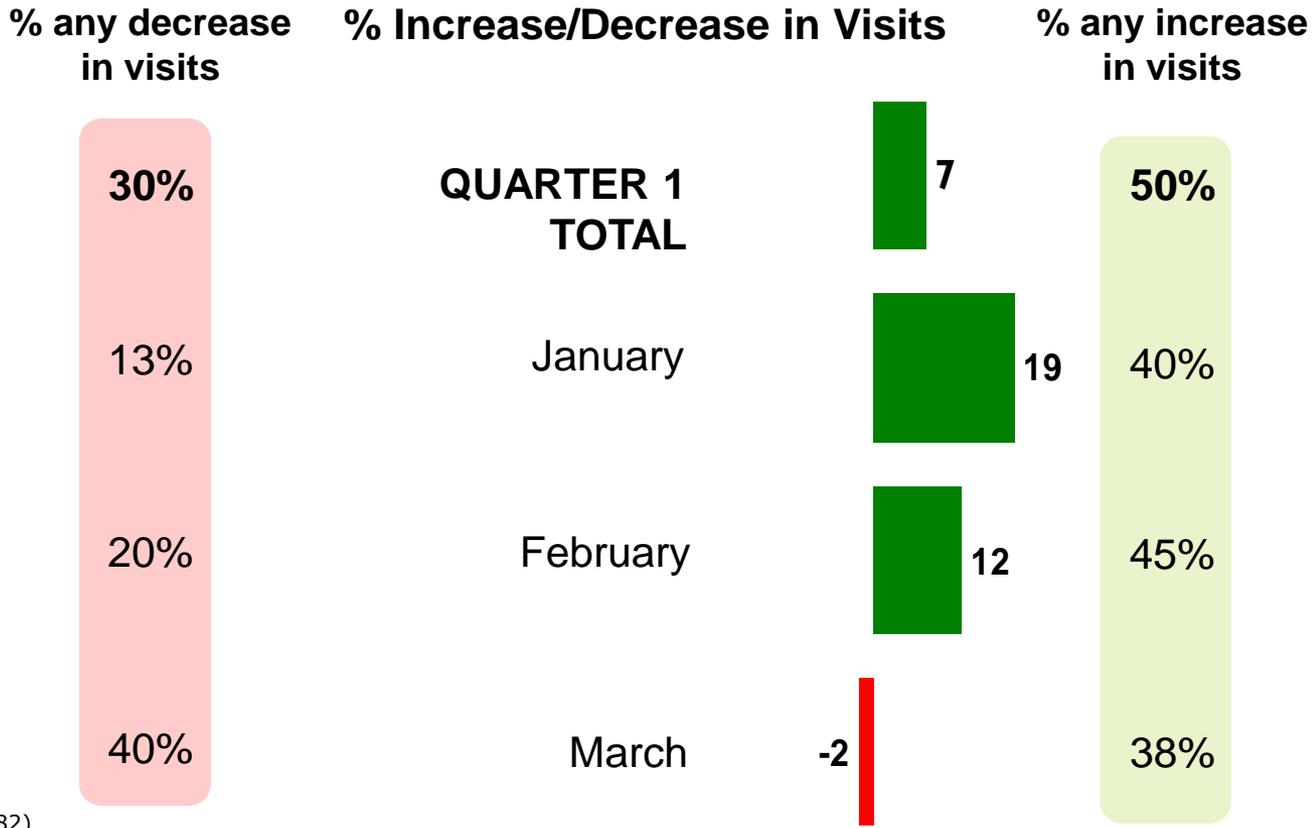


* = less than 0.5%

Base: All Q1 2011 attractions (682)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Visit Trends 2010-2011

The better weather experienced in January and February 2011 (compared with the exceptionally cold weather in 2010) has provided the foundations for many attractions to increase their visits in these months this year. March is perhaps more typical of what we might expect to see going forward.



* = less than 0.5%
Base: All attractions (682)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Visit Trends 2010-2011

- By Region

Attractions based in the North of England generally fared less well in Q1 than attractions in the Midlands and South of England. Although all regions showed an increase in admissions, increases in the North were much more limited in February. Whilst most regions reported a decline in admissions for March, those in the South and West Midlands reported increases, helping them to generate above average increases for the quarter overall.

Region	Total Qtr 1 Change (%)	Jan Change (%)	Feb Change (%)	Mar Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (682)	7	19	12	-2
North East (56)	6	30	*	-2
North West (69)	3	15	3	-3
Yorkshire & The Humber (66)	1	25	2	-9
East Midlands (56)	6	17	15	-6
West Midlands (56)	13	8	25	7
East of England (86)	3	15	21	-14
London (42)	10	17	12	4
South East (129)	9	20	17	*
South West (122)	10	28	12	4

* = less than 0.5%

Base: All attractions (682)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Visit Trends 2010-2011

- By Attraction Category

Outdoor attractions reported the most notable year-on-year increases in visit admissions for Q1, with gardens, other historic properties, wildlife attractions and farms (+25%) all reporting double digit increases. Much of this increase was driven by favourable comparables in January and February, although admissions for these attractions also held up during March, with admissions for many indoor attractions declining.

Attraction Category	Total Qtr 1 Change (%)	Jan Change (%)	Feb Change (%)	Mar Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (682)	7	19	12	-2
Historic Houses/Castles (256)	8	32	29	-7
Other historic properties (66)	13	31	16	4
Museums/art galleries (145)	2	11	3	-5
Gardens (47)	16	25	16	12
Visitor/heritage centres (19)*	-3	20	8	-22
Wildlife attractions/zoos (23)*	10	24	11	2
Others (126)	9	14	9	7

* = less than 0.5%

*CAUTION: Low base size

Base: All attractions (682)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Visit Trends 2010-2011

– By Other Segments

Perhaps belying the lower levels of business confidence of smaller attractions (see later charts), those attractions with fewer than 20,000 visit admissions per annum reported the greatest percentage increase in visits in Q1 2011. This was particularly driven by a +10% increase in admissions for these smaller attractions in March. Rural attractions also benefitted from the milder weather this year, with visits up by +10% year-on-year.

	Total Qtr 1 Change (%)	Jan Change (%)	Feb Change (%)	Mar Change (%)
TOTAL ENGLAND (682)	7	19	12	-2
Visits per annum				
Over 200,000 (50)	6	16	7	-1
100,001 – 200,000 (91)	8	26	19	-4
50,001 – 100,000 (106)	8	24	12	1
20,001 – 50,000 (151)	6	18	16	-3
20,000 or less (278)	14	3	25	10
Free/paid				
Paid (538)	9	28	18	-2
Free (144)	4	9	4	*
Location				
Coastal (81)	5	15	5	1
Rural (400)	10	25	19	-2
Urban (201)	5	14	6	-2

* = less than 0.5%

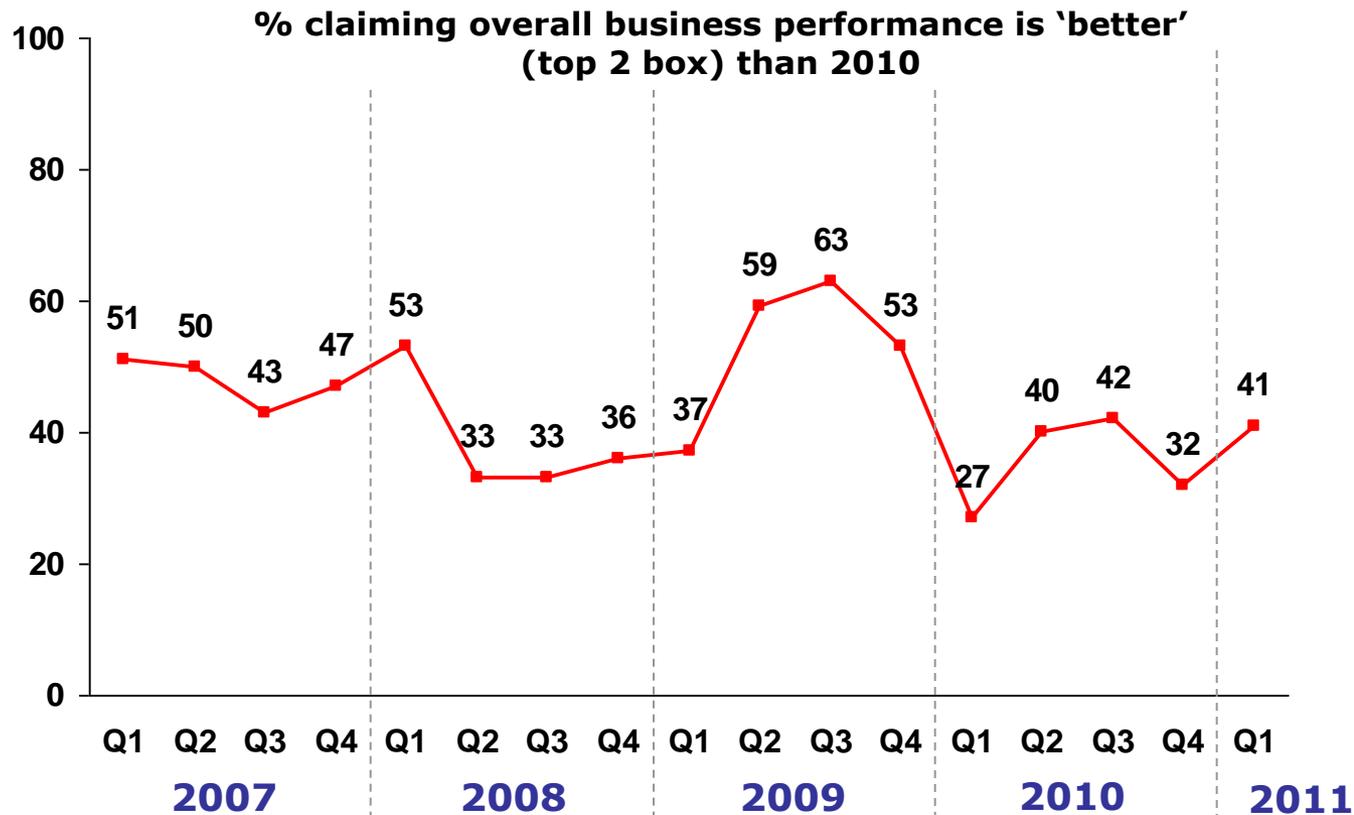
Base: All attractions (682)

Main Findings: Business performance and confidence



Overall Business Performance Trends

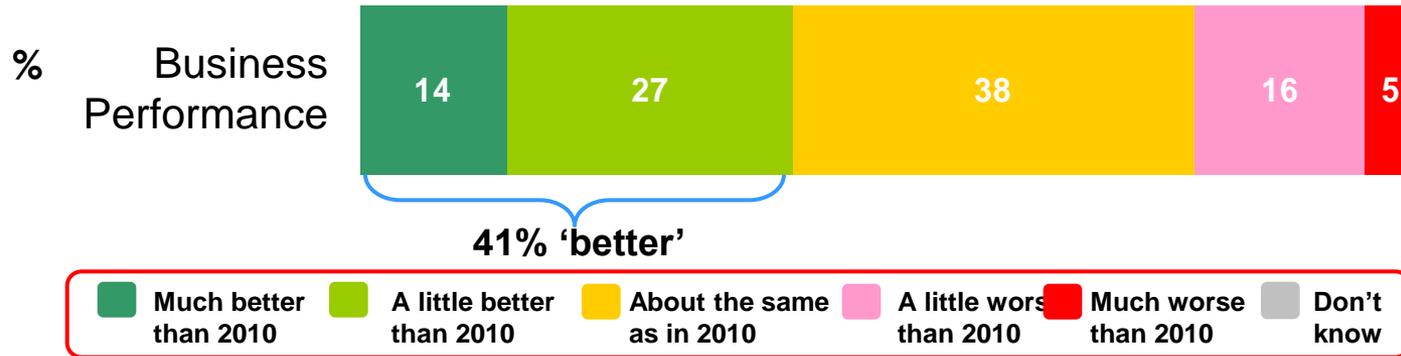
The proportion of attractions claiming that their business performance was better than Q1 the previous year is now at its highest level for three years. 41% feel that their performance was better in Q1 2011 than in Q1 2010, with only 21% feeling that it was worse. On the back of better weather, many attractions appear satisfied with their start to the year.



Base: Q3: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Overall Business Performance Trends 2010-2011

Outdoor attractions, particularly farms, wildlife attractions and gardens, are most likely to have felt that their business performance had improved in Q1 this year. Attractions in the North West also appear to have made a particularly positive start to the year.



■ Much better than 2010
 ■ A little better than 2010
 ■ About the same as in 2010
 ■ A little worse than 2010
 ■ Much worse than 2010
 ■ Don't know

	% Better than 2010
North West	53
Paid admission	47

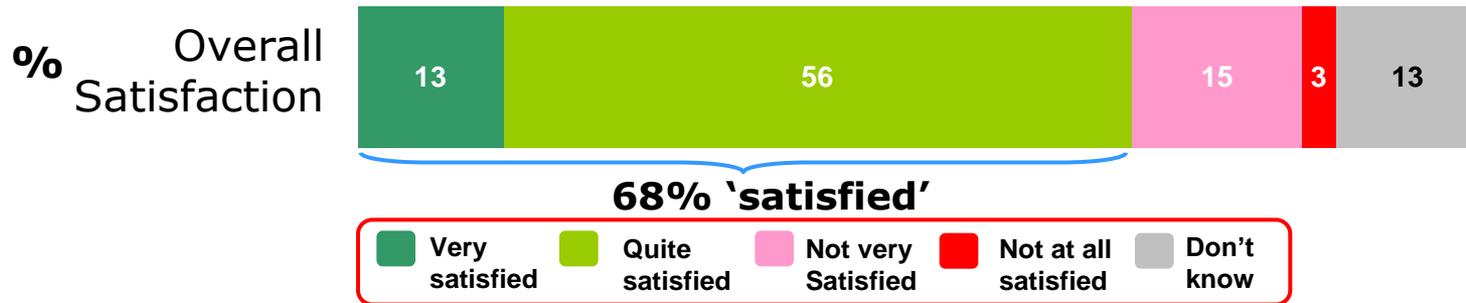
	% Better than 2010
Urban	37
Coastal	41
Rural	43
Farms/wildlife	73

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Q. We would now like you to think about how the overall business performance of your attraction has changed in the January to March 2011 period compared with January to March 2010. Would you say that your overall business performance in the January to March 2011 period was....?

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Overall Satisfaction with Business Performance

Reflecting the positive business performance viewpoint, over two-thirds are satisfied with their business performance for the quarter and less than a fifth not satisfied.



	% Satisfied
Free	74
Paid	65
Museums/galleries	71
Historic houses/castles	64
Urban	74
Rural	67
Coastal	56

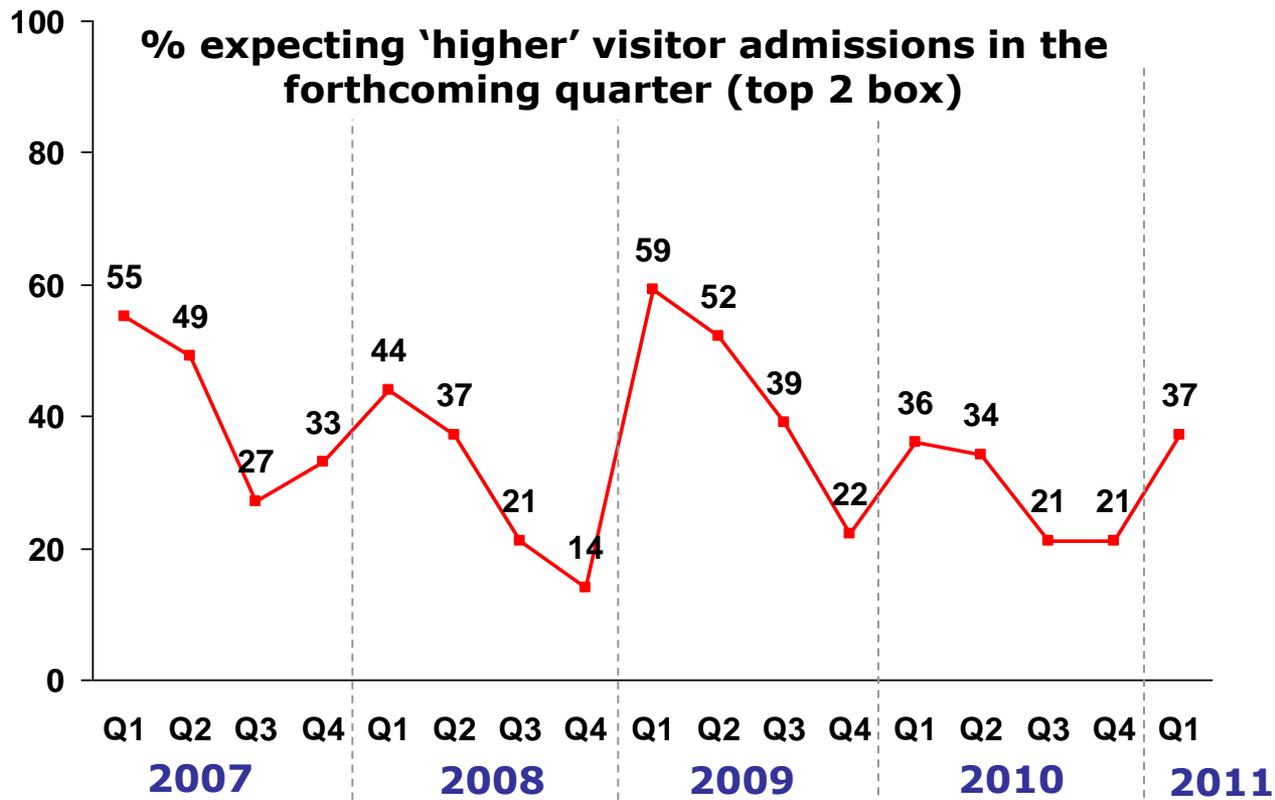
	% Satisfied
West Midlands	81
Yorks/Humber	76

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Q. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the performance of your business this quarter (January - March period)?

Visit Expectations Trends

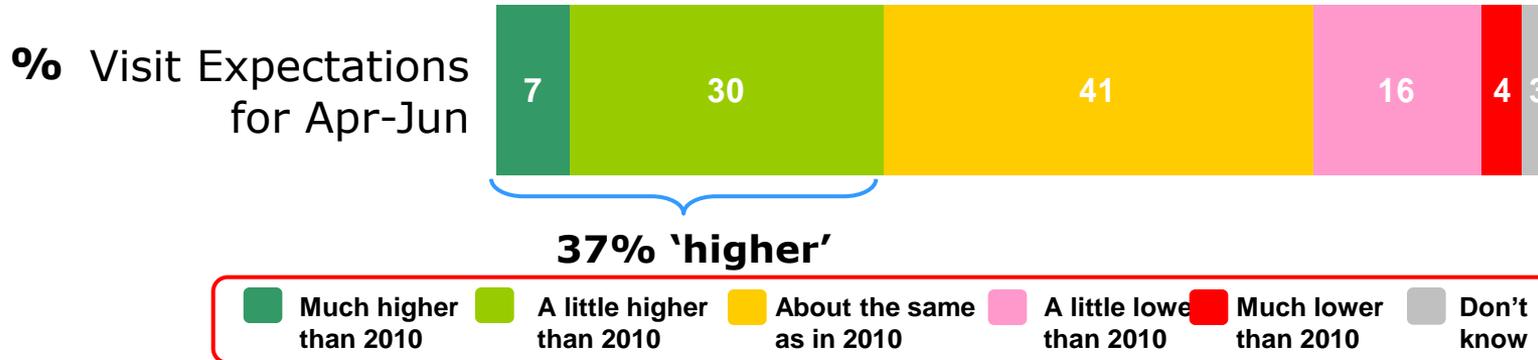
However, going forward, the challenging business environment continues to limit how bullish attractions feel about the future in terms of both visit expectations and business confidence. The proportion of attractions expecting an increase in visitor admissions for the April to June period remains similar to that observed last year (around a third).



Base: Q Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Visit Expectations for Apr-Jun 2011

Whilst outdoor attractions have started the year well and perhaps most bullish, museums/art galleries are noticeably less optimistic, with only a quarter (25%) expecting visits to be higher in Q2 2011 than in Q2 2010.



	% Higher than 2010
East Midlands	47
West Midlands	46
South East	41
London	40

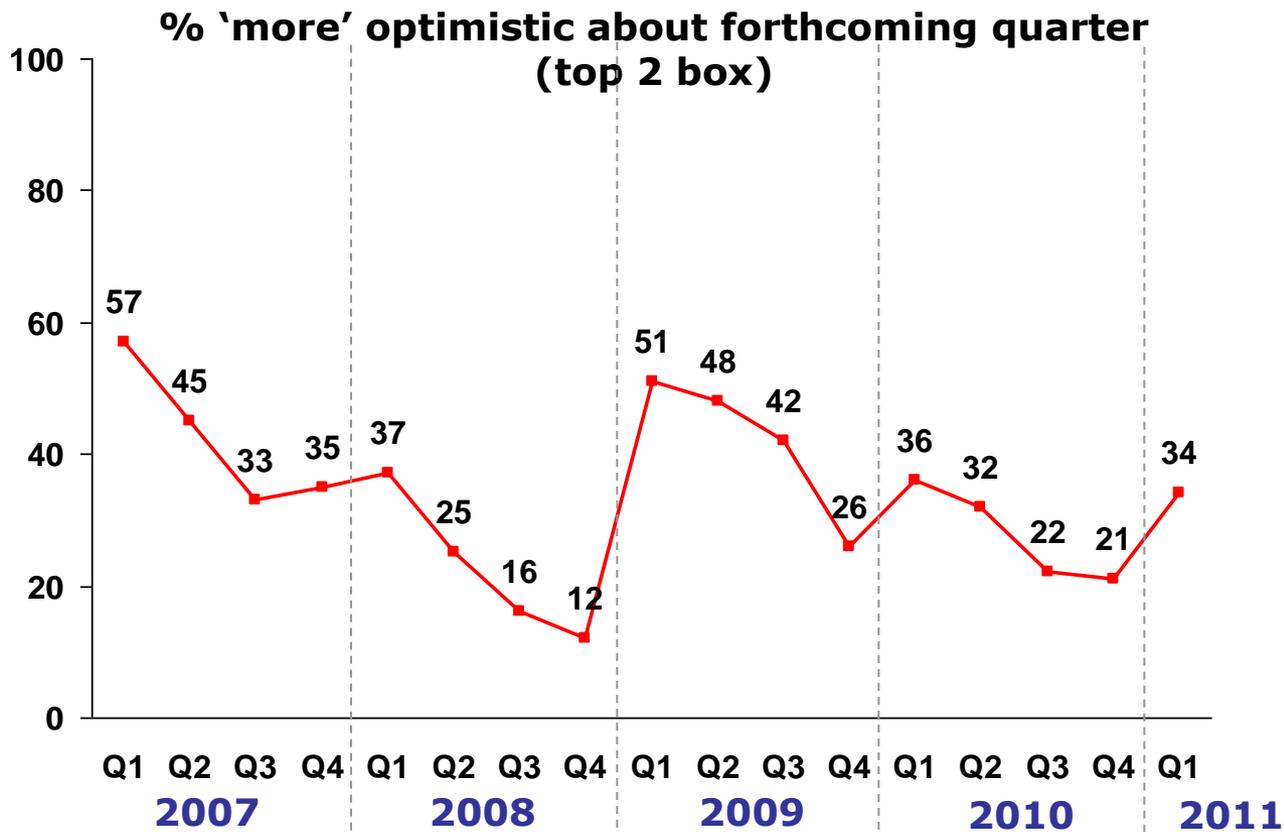
	% Higher than 2010
Historic houses/castles	32
Museums/galleries	25
Gardens	54
Farms/wildlife	70
Urban	32
Coastal	34
Rural	41

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Q. Thinking about the April to June 2011 period, do you expect visitor numbers (paid and free) compared with April to June 2010 to be...?

Business Confidence Trends (own attraction)

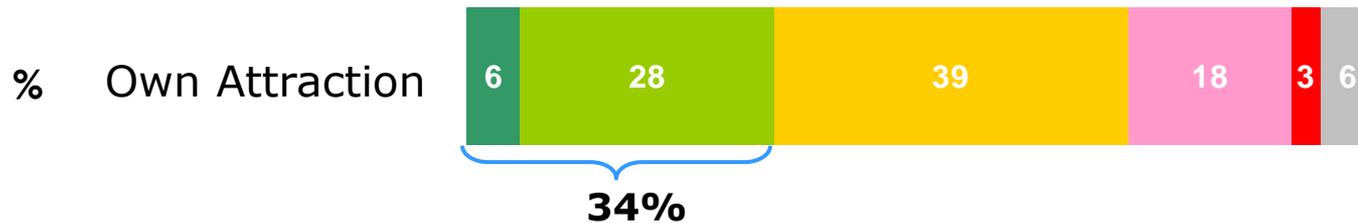
Overall business confidence trends tend to start the year at high levels and decline as the year progresses. In line with visit expectations, attractions remain cautious about the immediate future, with around a third feeling more optimistic than a year ago (a similar proportion to that observed this time in 2010).



Base: Q4: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for Apr-Jun 2011

Again, outdoor attractions such as gardens (50% more optimistic), wildlife attractions (50%) and farms (70%) tend to be more optimistic than museums/art galleries (28%) and historic houses and castles (26%).



	% More optimistic than 2010
Urban	38
Rural	33
Coastal	26

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

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 2011 period?

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for Apr-Jun 2011 (Own Attraction) – by Region

There is little variation in optimism by region at present, although the East Midlands' attractions seem more likely to be optimistic and the North East's attractions less optimistic.

Region	% more optimistic than 2010	% less optimistic than 2010
TOTAL ENGLAND (376)	34	21
North East (34)	29	38
North West (45)	33	24
Yorkshire & The Humber (42)	31	21
East Midlands (34)	47	9
West Midlands (26)	38	8
East (54)	31	22
London (25)	36	32
South East (69)	32	23
South West (47)	30	23

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for Apr-Jun 2011 (Own Attraction) – by Other Segments

The smallest (20,000 visits per annum or less) and coastal attractions appear to be the least optimistic about the forthcoming period.

		% more optimistic than 2010	% less optimistic than 2010
TOTAL ENGLAND (376)		34	21
Visits per annum	Over 200,000 (41)	41	13
	100,001 – 200,000 (43)	39	23
	50,001 – 100,000 (49)	48	20
	20,001 – 50,000 (78)	31	21
	20,000 or less (160)	28	24
Free / paid	Paid (244)	35	23
	Free (132)	33	18
Location	Coastal (48)	26	33
	Rural (198)	33	18
	Urban (130)	38	22

* CAUTION: Low base sizes
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for Apr-Jun 2011 (Own Attraction) –by Attraction Category

Outdoor attractions noticeably more bullish about the immediate future than museums/art galleries and historic houses/castles.

Attraction Category	% more optimistic than 2010	% less optimistic than 2010
TOTAL ENGLAND (376)	34	21
Historic Houses/Castles (50)	26	34
Other historic property (14)*	45	23
Museums/art galleries (140)	28	26
Visitor/heritage centres (18)*	36	27
Wildlife attractions/zoos (20)*	50	5
Gardens (19)*	50	19
Others (115)	38	12

*CAUTION: Low base sizes

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Reasons for Business Confidence Apr-Jun 2011 (Own Attraction) – Positives

Drivers of optimism for the forthcoming Q2 2011 remain varied: actions taken by attractions themselves such as recent investment in improvements to events/exhibition or site generally remain the most likely source of optimism. The recent better weather, forecast and associated increase in visitors gives others hope, whilst minorities hope the timing of the Royal Wedding and Easter would prove beneficial.

	%	Quarter 1
Improvements to events/exhibitions/attractions		9
Good positive weather forecast		8
Visitor number trends increased/hope it will continue		8
Refurbishments/improvements to site/investment		6
More/better PR/media/TV/radio/newspaper coverage publicity		4
Increase in domestic holiday/short break		3
New/better/more advertising/marketing		2
Positive / forward advance bookings		2
Increasing interest in the area / better known		2
Economic climate/interest rates		2
Increase in spending (retail/café)		2
Impact of the timing of Easter		2
Royal Wedding/extra Bank Holiday		2

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Why do you feel this way about your attraction's business prospects for April to June 2011?

Verbatim – Positives

Easter looks set to be particularly good due to the later date and fine weather

Good warm start to the year. Hopefully this will bring the tourists out

The long range weather forecast suggests we will have plenty of sunshine until the end of May

We have had a good start to the year, with an influx and French and Belgian visitors. The weather has been much better than last year and if it holds until the end of May I am optimistic

We have a lot of school holidays in April and if the weather stays fine, this will encourage people

Hopefully more people will visit local attractions and save on fuel costs. With additional events being organised to attract larger numbers of visitors to the area

We have a very popular wedding exhibition connected to the Royal Wedding

There is no doubt there is a Royal Wedding effect emerging

Bearing in mind the build up to the Olympics and the Royal Wedding, we are optimistic

The shop and museum has had a facelift

We have invested a lot in new exhibition material and interpretation – we also have grand plans for the site which start this year

New retail outlets and more monthly events to attract visitors

Not necessarily more visitors, but improved commercial opportunities with improved offer in shop and tea room

”

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Reasons for Business Confidence Apr-Jun 2011 (Own Attraction) – Negatives

Specific concerns over Government cuts and the VAT increase expressed in Q4 2010 have now given way to the resultant more general concerns in the economy and lower spending power of the public. Concerns over high fuel prices have re-emerged.

	%	Quarter 1
Economic climate/interest rates		12
Less spending power of public		5
Visitor numbers/trends down this year		5
Reduction in visitor/retail spend		4
Fuel/petrol prices		4
Lack of events/activities/interpretation		2
Lack of / declining external investment		2
Increase in entry prices/pricing issues		2
Poor weather/forecast		1
Decrease in school visits/education issues		1
Late Easter in 2011		1
General visitor decline		1
Lack of exhibitions		1
VAT increase		1
Less/poorer advertising/marketing		1

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Why do you feel this way about your attraction's business prospects for April to June 2011?

Verbatim – Negatives

“

This March was our worst we have had for nine years: it is unsettling and could be taken as an indication of how we will be affected

Difficult trading conditions. Price of petrol affects House open to the public in rural areas

Economic climate – although less people will holiday abroad, doesn't mean they can afford to holiday in the UK

The economy has severely weakened and continues to do so. Our customers spend less and less and are fussier and more demanding!

Lack of consumer confidence in the marketplace and a lot of negativity still around the economy

The overall national economic situation with more job losses, high fuel and utility costs means less disposable income

Visitors are still very wary about spending...I think it will be like this for a while longer while people feel that their money situations get better

Owing to the local authority's inability to help promote us and tackle our local issues I feel it will be a difficult year

Effects of increasing fuel and living costs will deter people from making the journey to our area

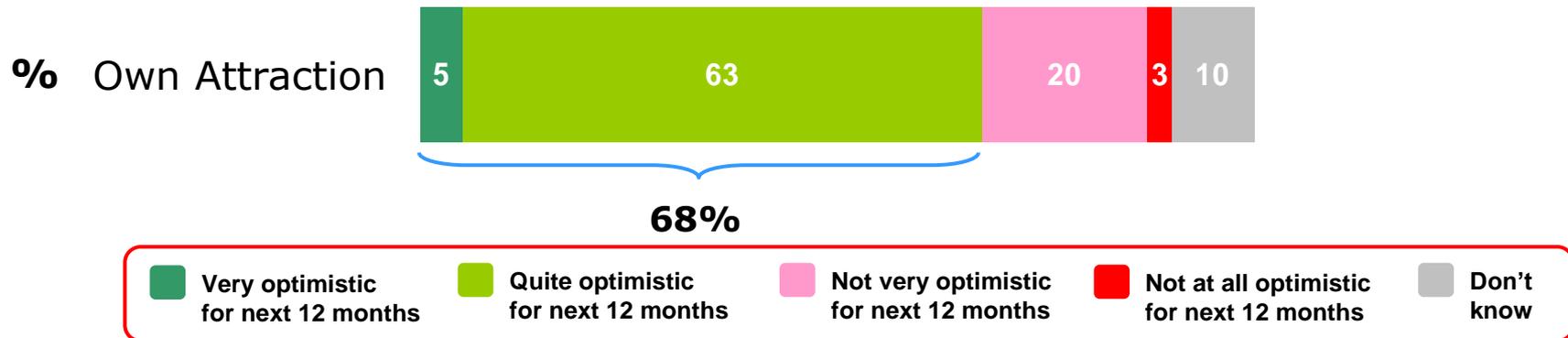
Recessionary pressures/reduced consumer confidence reducing day and longer term visits to the popular tourist area

Budget cuts leading to less new exhibitions

”

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for next 12 months

In line with the general pattern of higher optimism at the start of a year, optimism for 2011 as a whole is reasonably high, with 68% of attractions feeling positive – although primarily 'quite' rather than 'very' optimistic. There is a notable minority (a quarter) feeling pessimistic about the year ahead.



Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Q. Which of these statements best describes how optimistic you feel about your attraction's business prospects for the next 12 months 2011?

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for next 12 months (Own Attraction) – by Other Segments

The largest (200,000+ visits per annum) and urban attractions are the most confident about the year ahead. Whilst optimism still outweighs pessimism among coastal attractions, pessimism is the highest among this subgroup.

		% optimistic	% not optimistic
TOTAL ENGLAND (376)		68	23
Visits per annum	Over 200,000 (41)	85	13
	100,001 – 200,000 (43)	75	23
	50,001 – 100,000 (49)	76	20
	20,001 – 50,000 (78)	54	25
	20,000 or less (160)	66	24
Free / paid	Paid (244)	66	24
	Free (132)	70	21
Location	Coastal (48)	63	35
	Rural (198)	66	21
	Urban (130)	71	21

* CAUTION: Low base sizes
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Business Confidence for next 12 months (Own Attraction) – by Attraction Category

Again, optimism is highest among outdoor attractions at present.

Attraction Category	% optimistic	% not optimistic
TOTAL ENGLAND (376)	68	23
Historic Houses/Castles (50)	62	30
Other historic property (14)*	59	41
Museums/art galleries (140)	67	24
Visitor/heritage centres (18)*	56	33
Wildlife attractions/zoos (20)*	85	10
Gardens (19)*	76	20
Others (115)	70	17

*CAUTION: Low base sizes
Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

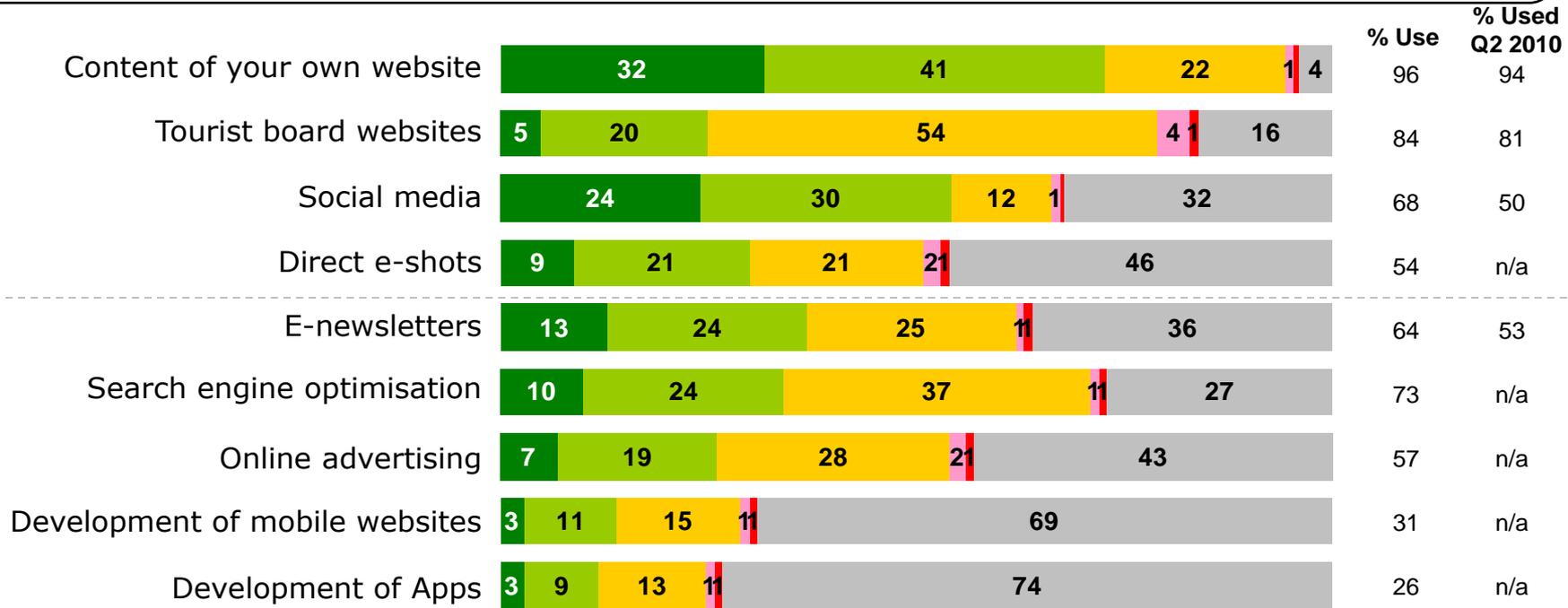
Main Findings:

Hot Topics



Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Hot Topic Question: Changes in digital communications

Attractions movement into digital communications is moving quickly, with more emphasis on website content appearing to be the minimum. Presence in social media has grown rapidly since Q2 2010, with emphasis growing most quickly in this area. Emphasis on e-newsletters is also increasing and a notable minority have also dipped their toes in the area of App and mobile website development.

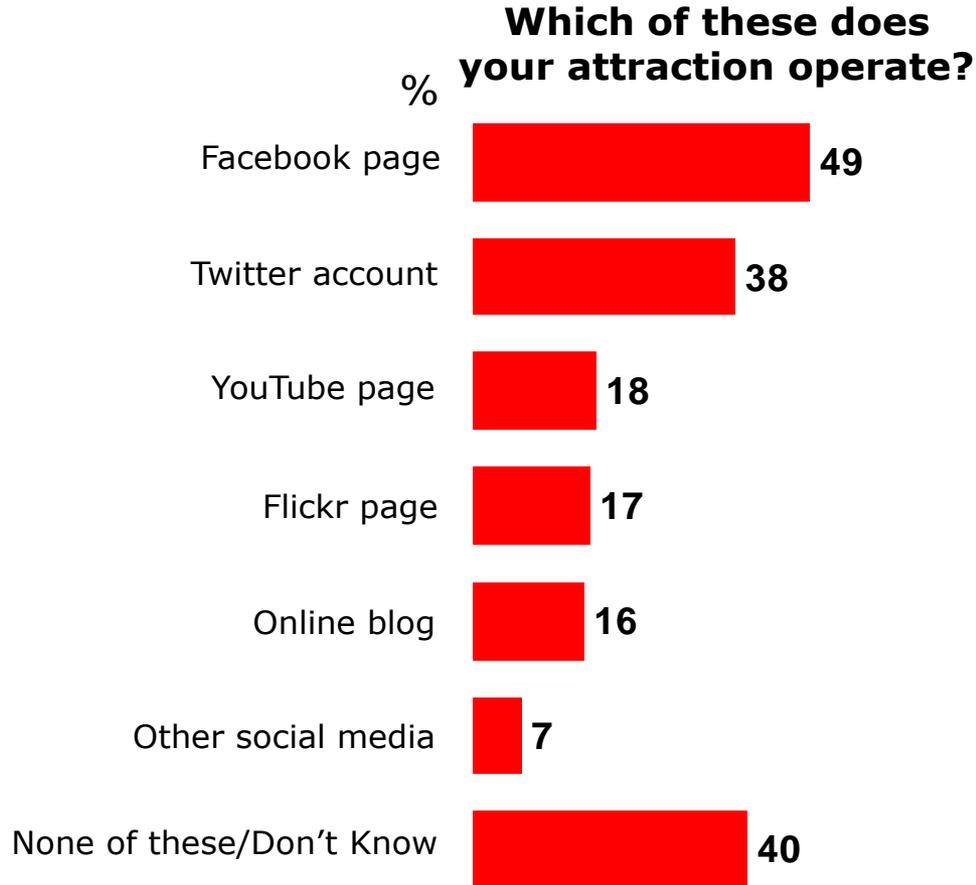


Base: Non EH/NT attractions who use digital communications (376)

Q. Thinking specifically about digital communications, compared with last year, how is marketing of your attraction changing? Is there...

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Hot Topic Question: Types of social media

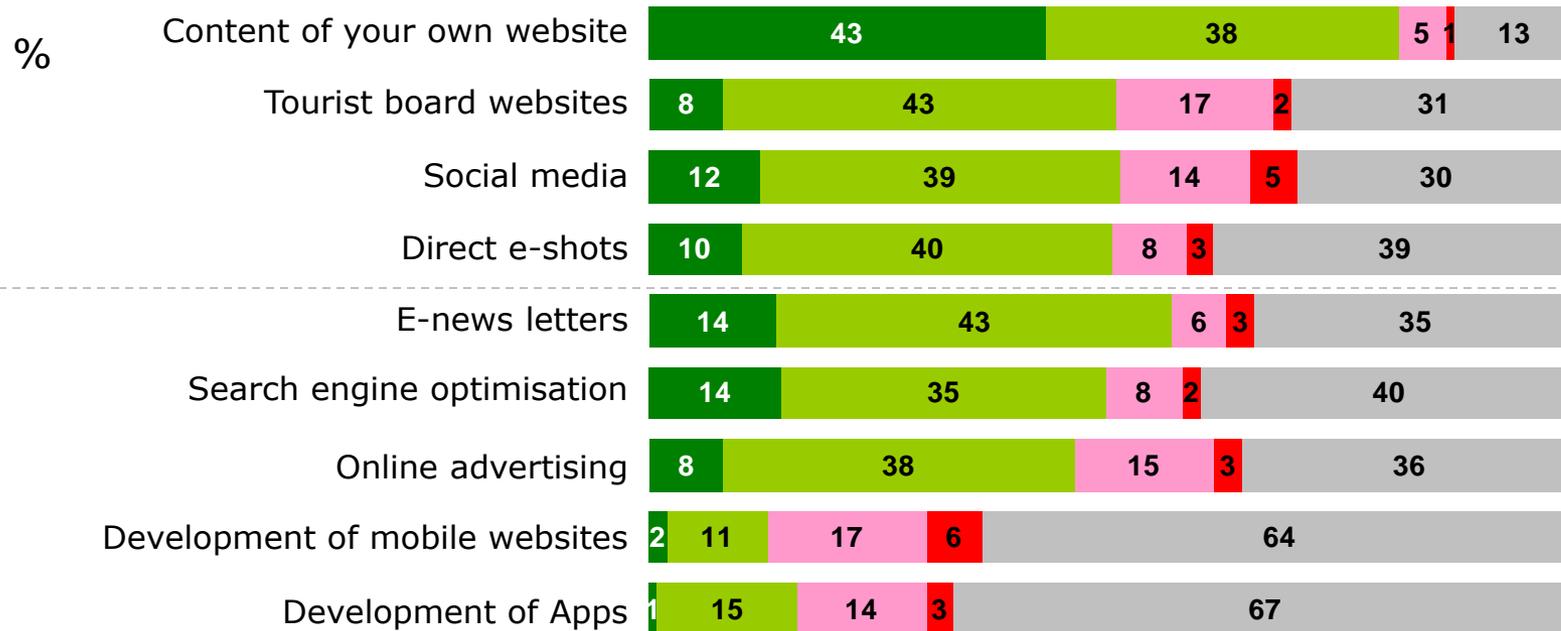
Social media presence is currently most likely to take the form of involvement with Facebook (half of all attractions) and Twitter (over a third).



Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Hot Topic Question: Benefit of digital communications

The vast majority of attractions who have invested in digital communications have found their move to be beneficial, although perhaps around a third have little idea of whether their investment has been beneficial or not. Perhaps a call for better monitoring of digital communications effectiveness? Given that so many are in the early stages of App and mobile website development, it is perhaps not surprising that few have an opinion of their success to date. However, perhaps there are some early lessons to learn, as there is a significant proportion who have invested in these areas who believe that they have not yet benefitted the attraction.



■ Very beneficial
 ■ Fairly beneficial
 ■ Not very beneficial
 ■ Not at all beneficial
 ■ Don't know

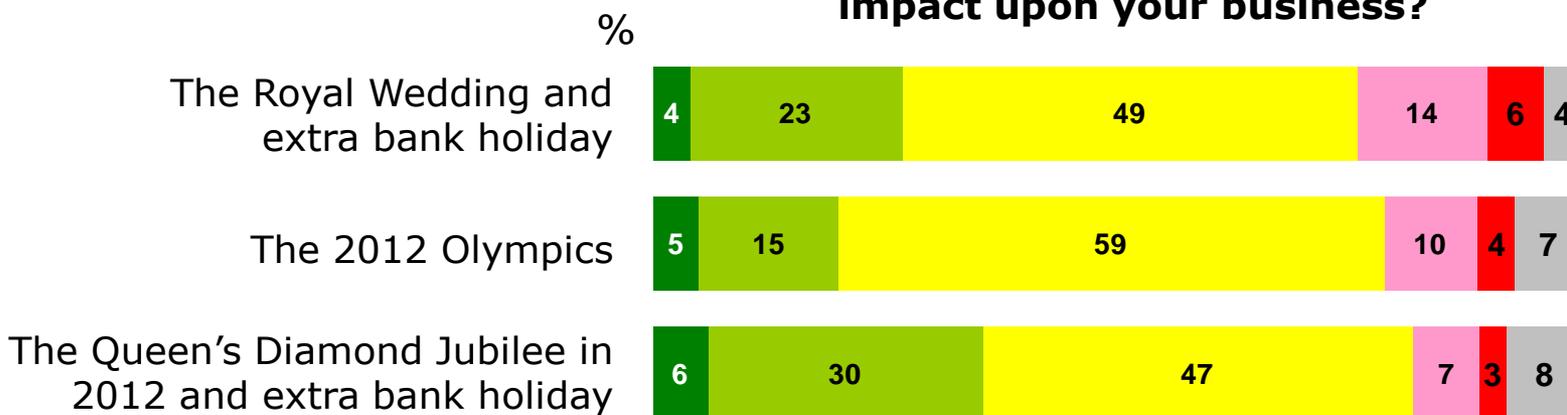
Base: Non EH/NT attractions who use digital communications

Q. So far, how beneficial has each of these been to the business performance of your attraction? Has it been...

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Hot Topic Question: Impact of future public events

Opinion of the impact of the Royal Wedding and extra Bank Holiday on business performance is mixed, with a quarter feeling that it would have a positive impact and a fifth a negative impact. Opinion is similar across the regions of England. Early opinion of the impact of the Olympics is polarised – 60% feel positive in London, but less than fifth in the rest of the country. Optimism is much more widespread for the impact of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee at this stage.

How do you think the following will impact upon your business?



■ Very positive impact
 ■ Fairly positive impact
 ■ Little or no impact
 ■ Fairly negative impact
 ■ Very negative impact
 ■ Don't know

Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)

Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar): Hot Topic Question: Registered charity and Gift Aid

Among the attractions responding (excluding English Heritage and National Trust properties), just under half were registered charities, with 80% of these currently claiming Gift Aid. Uptake of Gift Aid among charities was lower among museums/art galleries (73%) and historic houses/castles (75%).



Base: Non EH/NT attractions (376)