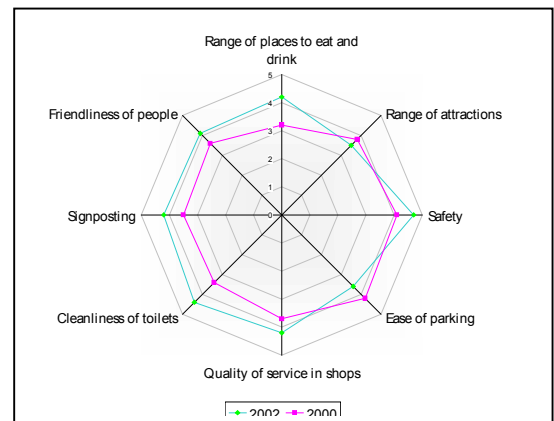


DESTINATION BENCHMARKING

What are the benefits of destination benchmarking?

Many Councils are keen to learn more about the profile of their visitors, where they come from, how much they spend, the characteristics of their visit, how they choose where to visit and most importantly, their opinions on various aspects of the destination. A common methodology for collecting this data through visitor surveys has been used by Regional Tourist Boards since 1998 allowing comparative figures for different types of destination. Known as 'Destination Benchmarking', this national programme is providing Local Authorities with powerful information about the relative strengths and weaknesses of towns, cities and resorts from a visitor viewpoint. Such data is being used to monitor continuous improvement and set priorities for action. Participation also provides opportunities for sharing best practice.

- Destination benchmarking provides a customer focused and competitor related basis on which to set priorities for action and improve the destination product
- Identification of strengths and weaknesses
- Securing additional resources for visitor management projects
- Raising the profile of the visitor management function within the Council
- Influencing product suppliers
- Generating positive PR
- Identifying best practice and learning from this
- Demonstrating achievement through year on year improvement



Benchmarking and Best Value?

The Government's introduction of **best value** is likely to be a key driver in the search for benchmarking data. Of particular relevance here is the duty to **consult**. Best Value is inherently about judging the quality and cost of services; consultation with service users such as visitors will both test and measure an authority's success. It is also about **comparison** of an authority's performance with others. Measuring customer satisfaction through surveys in a way which allows for comparison and data sharing has a clear role to play.

The approach

The survey adopts a standard methodology, ensuring a common approach to the following:

face to face interviews conducted by trained market researchers over a core period between April and October
Sampling, using a minimum sample size of 400 at times and points which reflect visitor flows
Comparison with all destinations and by destination type (market towns, large towns or cities, historic towns or cities and resorts).

Collection and analysis of visitor survey data on a series of visitor satisfaction indicators relating to profile, characteristics and opinions (although scope does exist to add further questions as required)
Reporting to a standard format, providing participating destinations with their own scores together with the best and average for the comparable destination type – via a central database.