

New Forest Tour: Customer Feedback 2008

1. Introduction

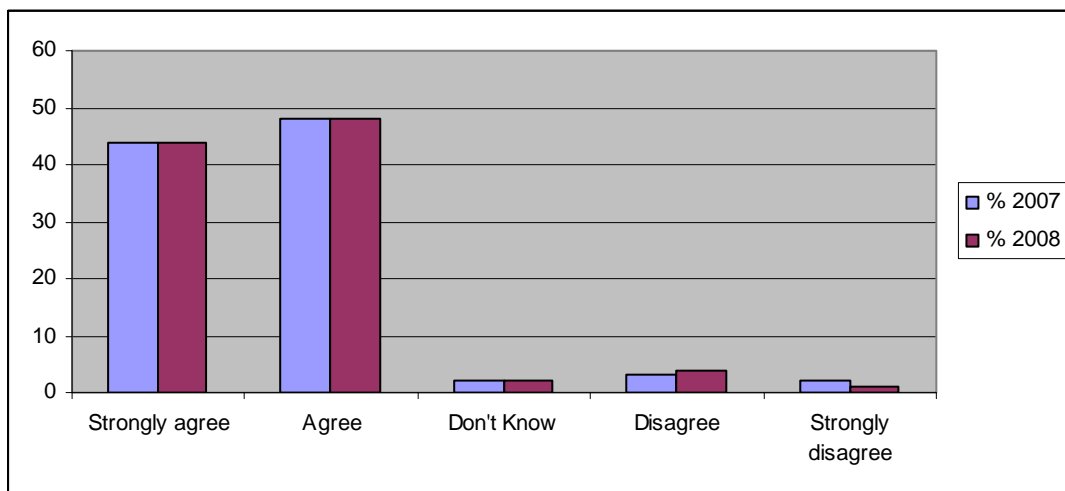
1.2 As in 2007, as customers using the New Forest Tour were offered a complimentary New Forest Tour Official Guide. This guide included a customer feedback form which customers were encouraged to complete and return.

1.2 334 customers (representing a 2.4% response) completed and returned the form, this compares with 250 customers (3.8% response) during the 2007 season.

1.3 An analysis of the customer feedback is set out below. Data from 2008 is presented alongside that of 2007 for comparison purposes.

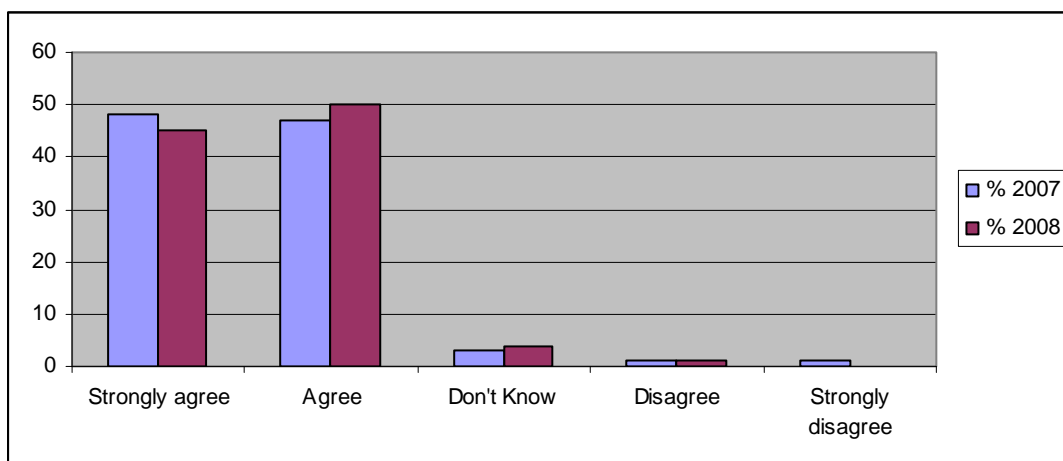
1.4 Questions 1 to 8 asked customers to rate statements based on 5 options ranging from strongly agree through to strongly disagree. Questions 9 to 16 sought to identify information about the customers' wider New Forest Tour and New Forest experience. The questionnaire concluded with a free text box for more general comments.

2 Question 1: The New Forest Tour improved my understanding and enjoyment of the New Forest



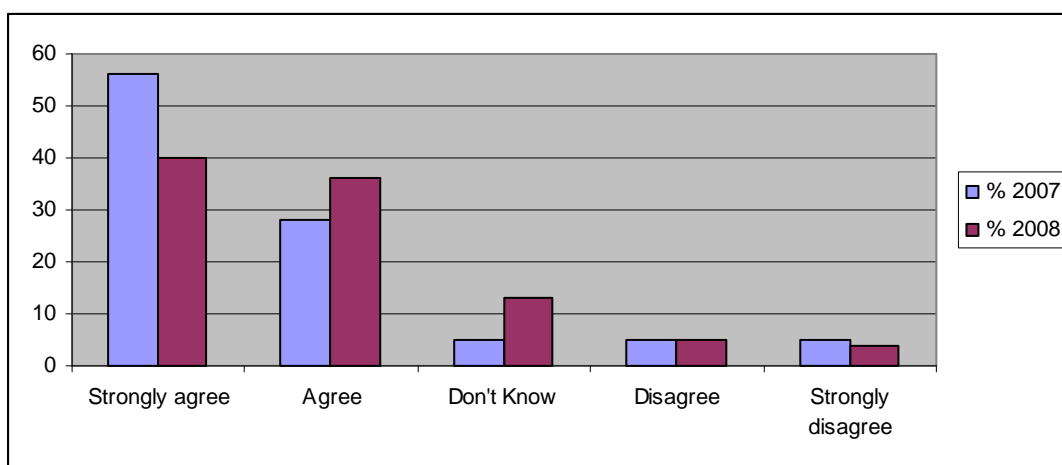
2.1 Results over the two seasons show virtually identical results, with 93% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement, demonstrating the link between the New Forest Tour and delivery of the National Park second purpose.

3 Question 2: I found the guidebook useful



3.1 Again, a very high level of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The guidebook was offered to all customers upon boarding the bus and includes a written commentary, walking and cycle routes, and discount vouchers for use in local attractions and other services.

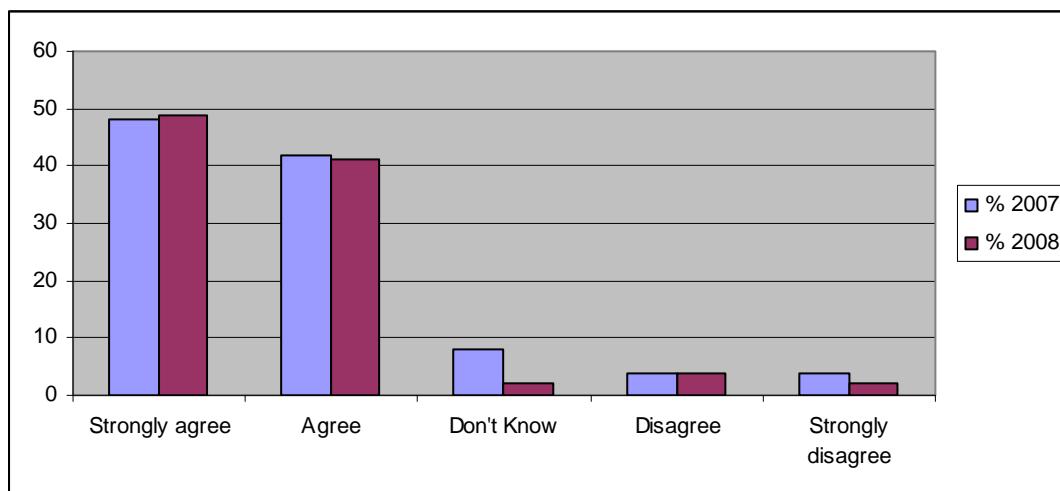
4 Question 3: I found the information given by the driver interesting and enjoyable



4.1 In 2008 a new professionally recorded commentary was introduced on the New Forest Tour, which improved upon the ad hoc commentary which was sometimes delivered by the driver in 2007. Consequently, the level of interaction with the driver was reduced in 2008 which may help to explain the responses to this question.

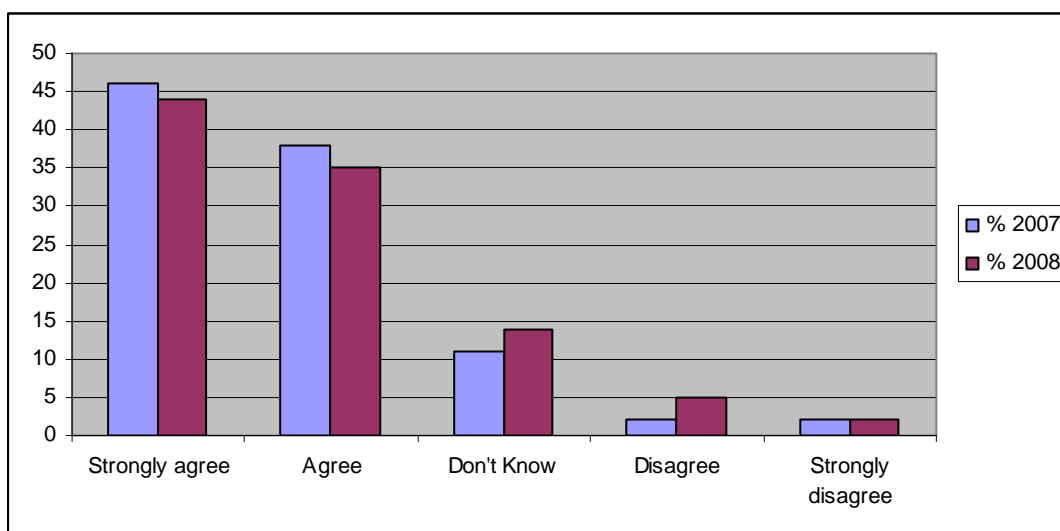
4.2 Several customers raised issues regarding the volume of the commentary in 2008. In an attempt to resolve this the bus operator fitted replacement speakers to the top deck of both buses.

5 Question 4: The service was comfortable and reliable



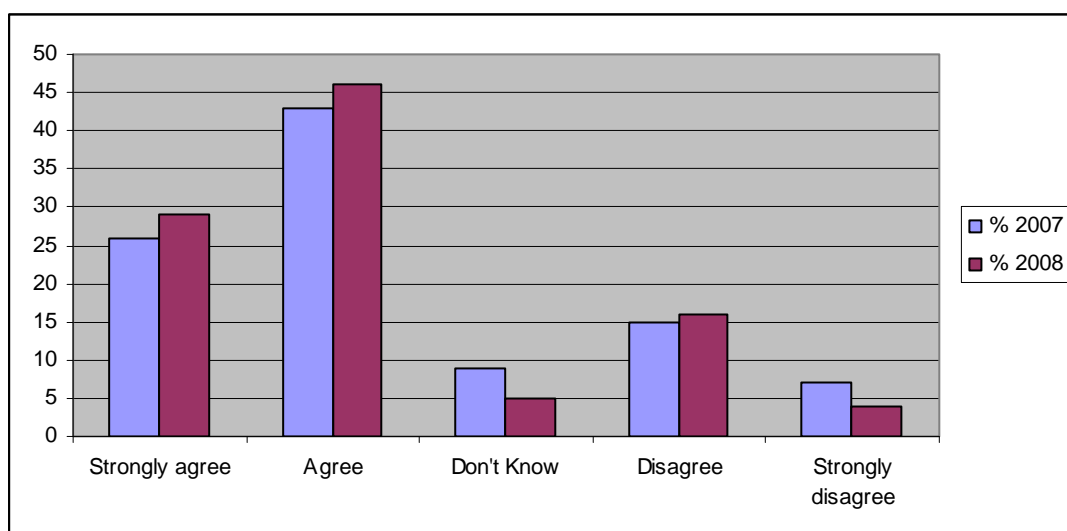
5.1 Again, over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement both in 2007 and 2008. The two 'nearly new' buses used for the New Forest Tour have clearly proved appealing to customers for both reliability and comfort, and represent a significant improvement over the older 'orange buses' used before 2005.

6. Question 5: In comparison to other visitor attractions in the area, the New Forest Tour was value for money



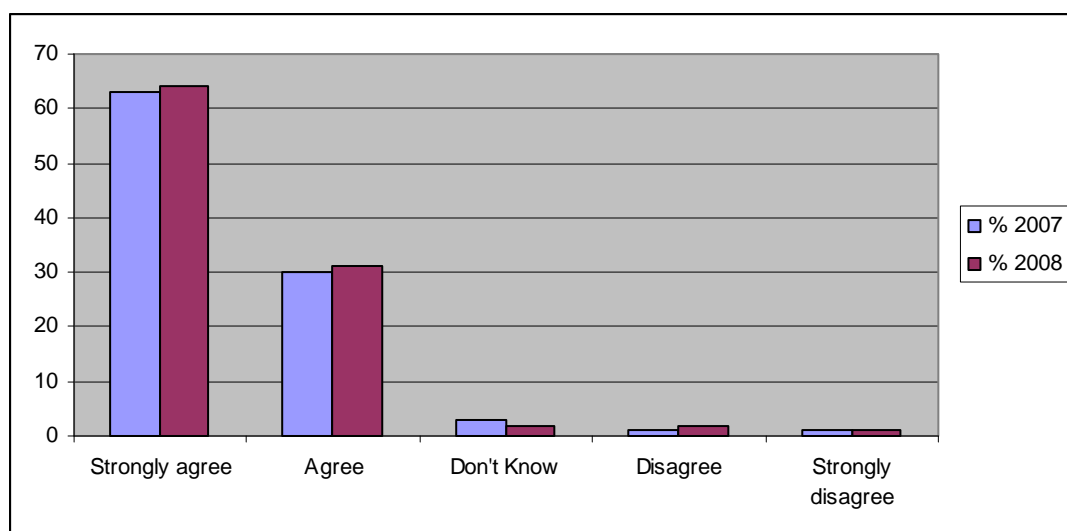
6.1 This question sought to gain customers opinion on product pricing. The results show that as in 2007, high levels of respondents thought the New Forest Tour was good value for money when compared to other local visitor attractions. Only 8% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

7 Question 6: The weather affected how much I enjoyed the experience



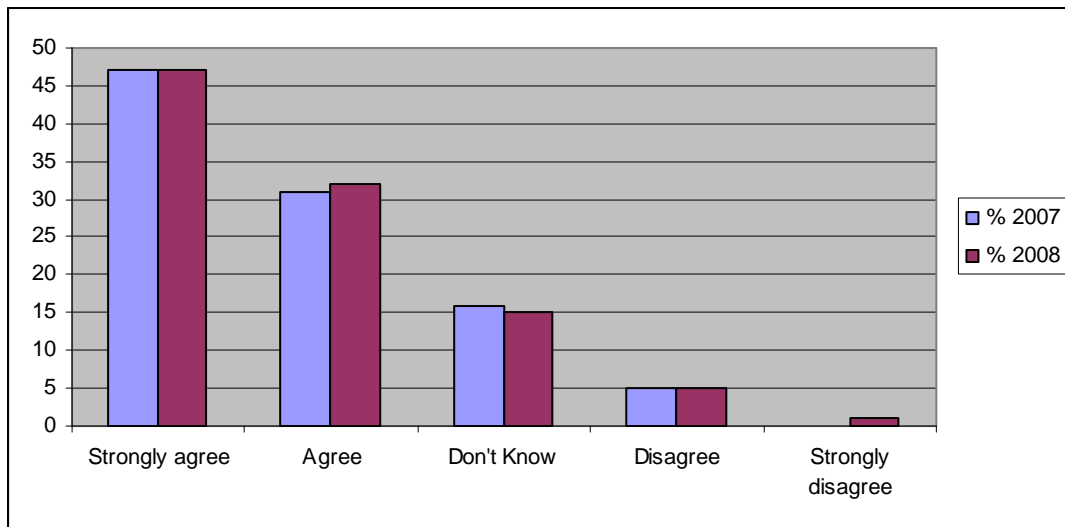
7.1 In general the weather for the 2008 season was an improvement on 2007, which was the wettest summer on record. The success of an open top recreational bus such as the New Forest Tour is heavily influenced by the weather and this is again reflected in the responses for 2008, which again illustrates the impact of the weather on the experience.

8 Question 7: I would recommend the New Forest Tour to my friends



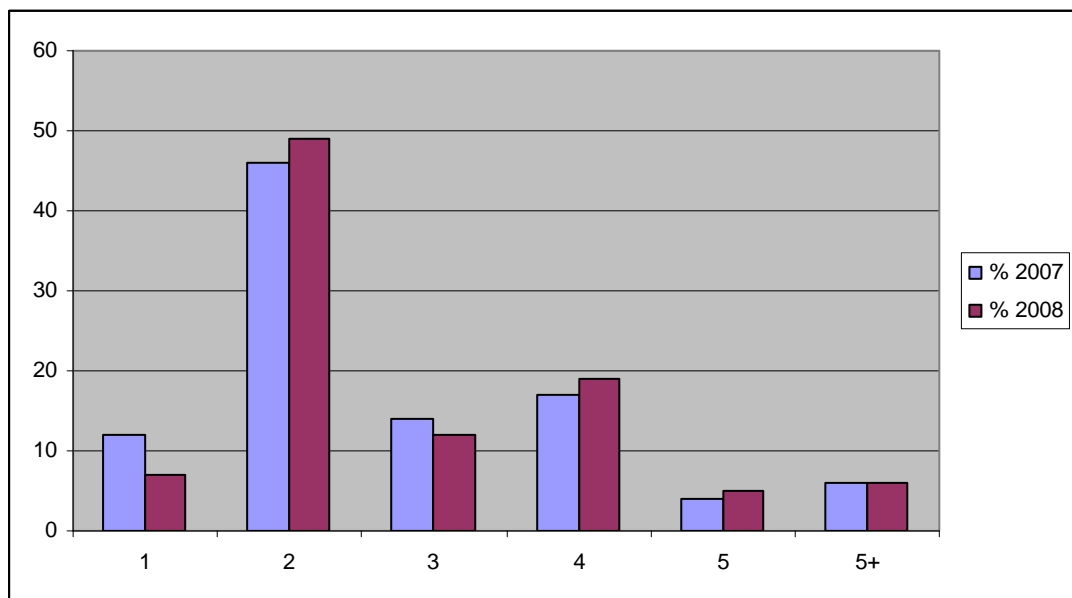
8.1 As in 2007 over 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the service to their friends. This is clearly a pleasing statistic which demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with the product.

9 Question 8: The New Forest Tour will help to reduce the impacts of traffic in the New Forest.



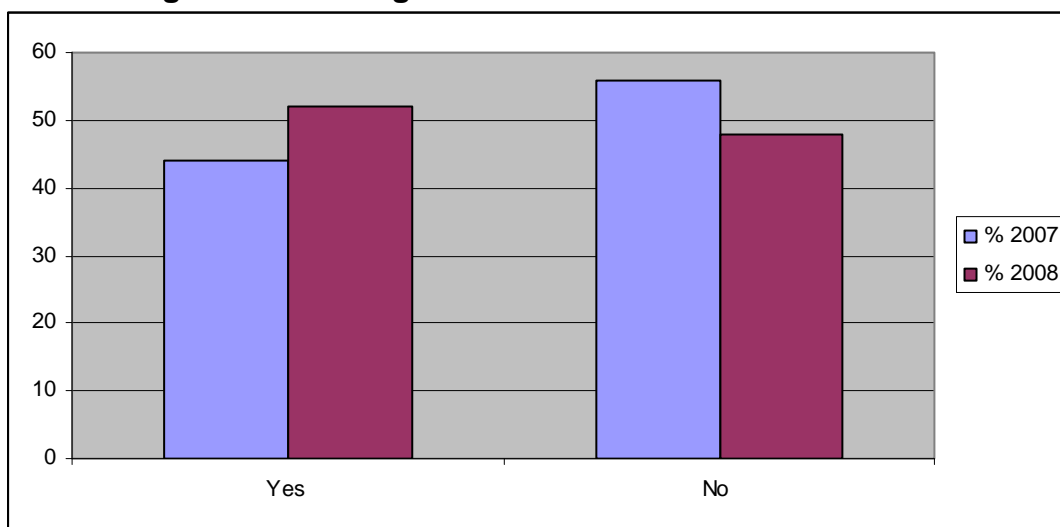
9.1 This question sought to quantify customers' wider appreciation of the New Forest Tour in the context of the New Forest transport. Again, a high level of respondents (80%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, which is encouraging.

10 Question 9: How many people were travelling in your party today?



10.1 This question sought to establish the size of the group travelling. The 2008 results are broadly similar to 2007 and show that nearly half (49%) of respondents travel in groups of 2. The New Forest Tour also appears to be popular with large groups (5+) with 6% of all respondents categorising themselves into this field.

11 Question 10: Did you, or do you plan to follow any of the promoted cycling and walking routes in the guidebook?

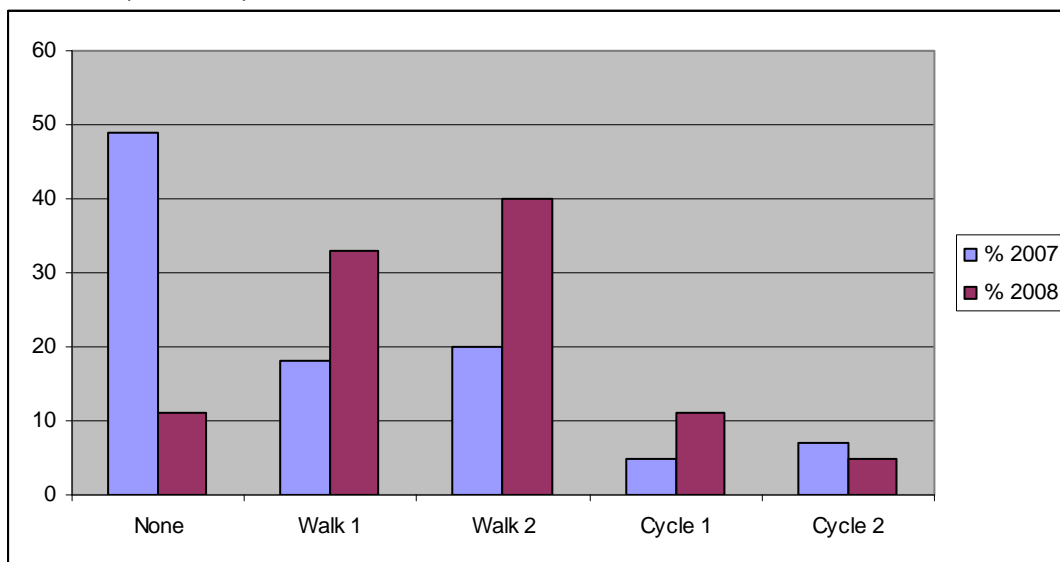


11.1 Included in the guidebook are a series of walking and cycle routes, situated in locations easily accessible from bus stops on the New Forest Tour route. The 2008 results show that over 50% of respondents either planned to, or undertook these options. This illustrates that the New Forest Tour is actively used as a platform to undertake recreational activities in the New Forest, such as walking and cycling.

12 If so which did you find most appealing?

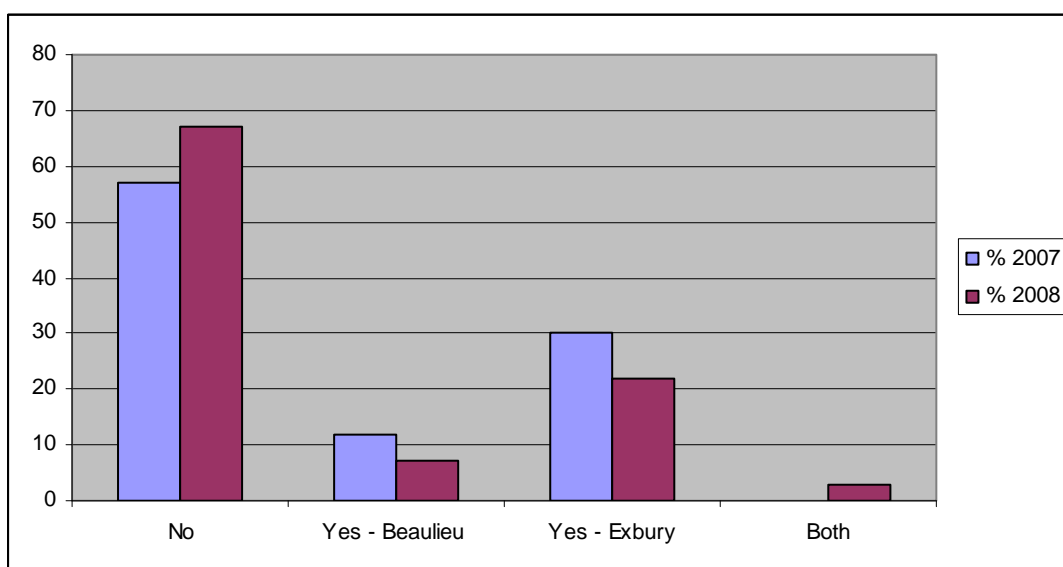
12.1 Two walks and two cycle rides are offered, these being:-

- Walk 1: Standing Hat Woodland Walk: A short walk around the Pignal Inclosure.
- Walk 2: Beaulieu River Walk: Beaulieu village to Bucklers Hard and back
- Cycle 1: Parkhill Cycle Ride: Hollands Wood to Beechen Lane
- Cycle 2: Queens Meadow Cycle Ride: Brockenhurst to Rhinefield and New Park (Circular).



12.2 It would appear that the walking and cycling routes offered in the guide were better received in 2008 than in 2007, with at least one offering appealing to 89% of respondents compared to just 50% in 2007. The results show that the walk options were again much more popular than the cycle route options, with 73% of respondents favouring either walk 1 or walk 2. Only 16% of respondents favoured the cycle routes but this was an increase on 2007. Clearly the availability of a bike would have influenced this decision.

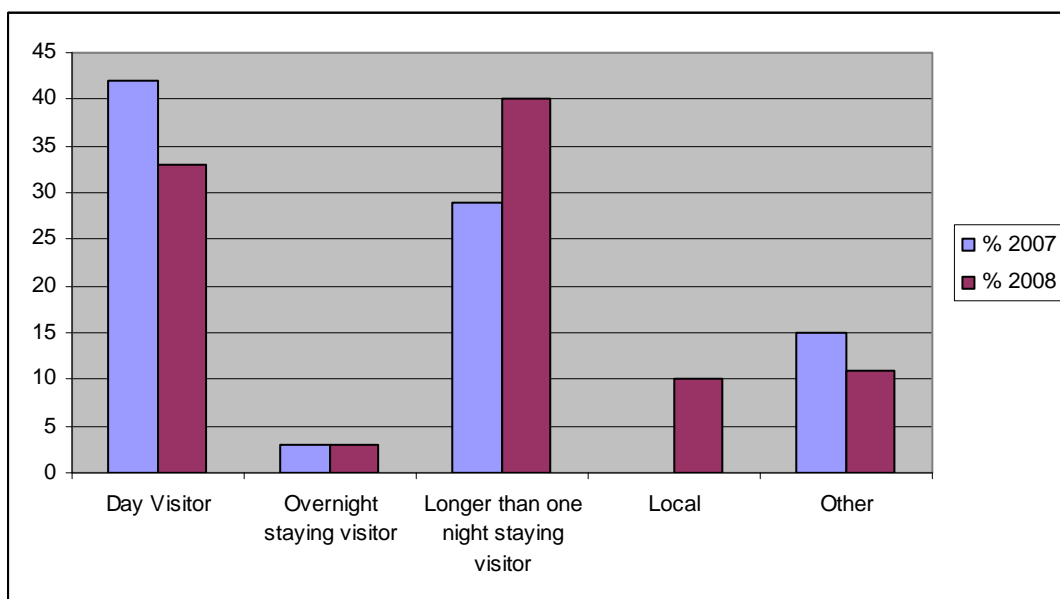
13 Question 11: Did you visit any of the other visitor attractions on the route of the New Forest Tour today?



13.1 The New Forest Tour route includes stopping at Beaulieu National Motor Museum and Exbury Gardens and Steam Railway, to collect and drop off customers. The results of this question show that Exbury Gardens has consistently proved to be the most popular of the two visitor attractions en route, with 22% of respondents paying an entrance fee to visit the gardens in 2008 compared with 8% for the National Motor Museum.

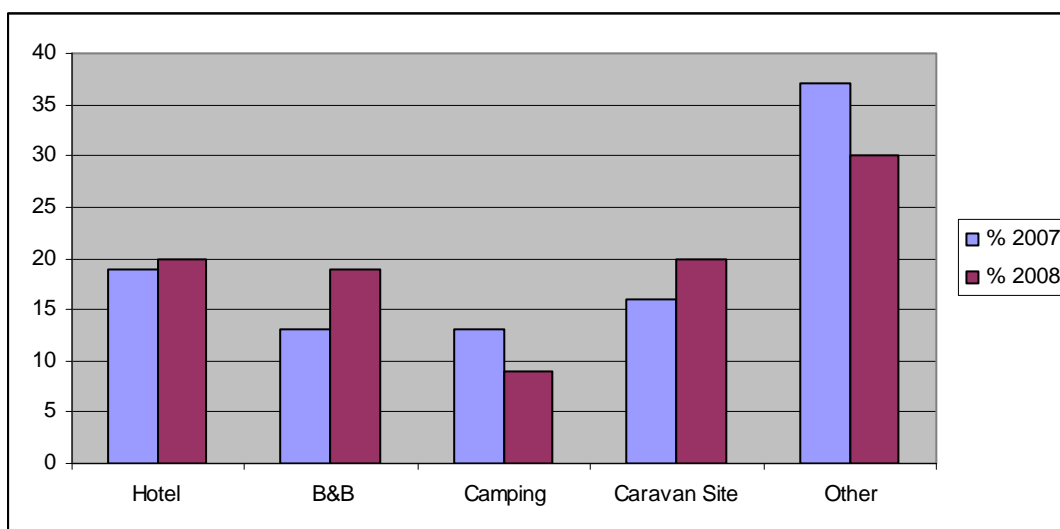
13.2 Both attractions offer New Forest Tour customers special incentives to visit, with Beaulieu National Motor Museum offering £2 off one adult admission price (when accompanied by one adult paying full admission price) and Exbury Gardens offering a free steam train ride to those paying an entrance fee to the gardens.

14 Question 12: Which of the following would best describe your visit to the new forest on this occasion?



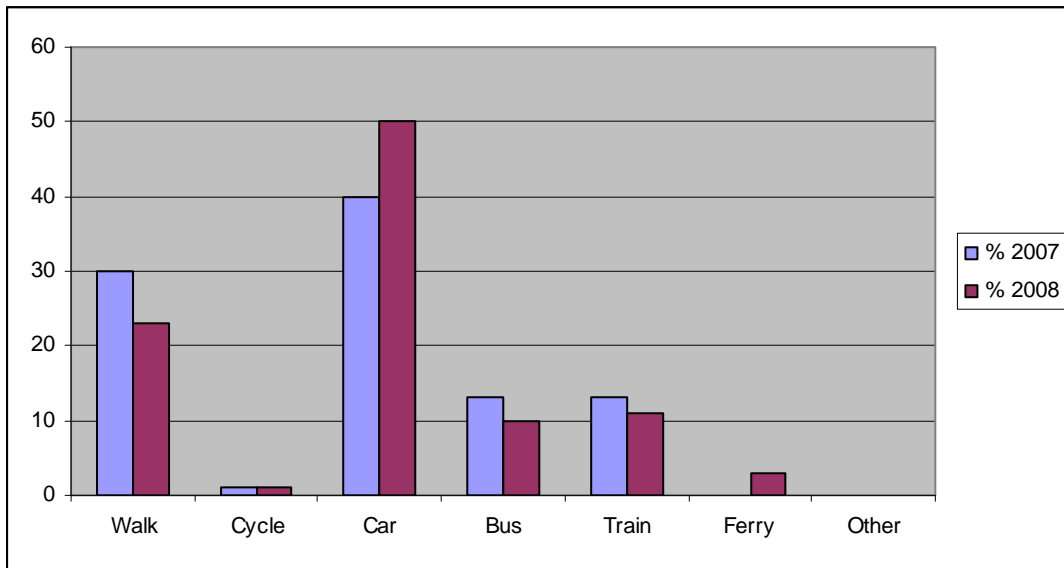
14.1 Customers were asked to categorise their visit to the New Forest. The two largest segments were 'day visitors', with 33% and 'longer than one night staying visitor', with 40%. This latter category showed significant growth over 2007, perhaps illustrating the joined up marketing activity with the accommodation section in 2008. As in 2007, only 4% of respondents were 'Overnight staying visitors' (1 night).

15 Question 13: If you are staying one night or more, which of the following best describes your accommodation?



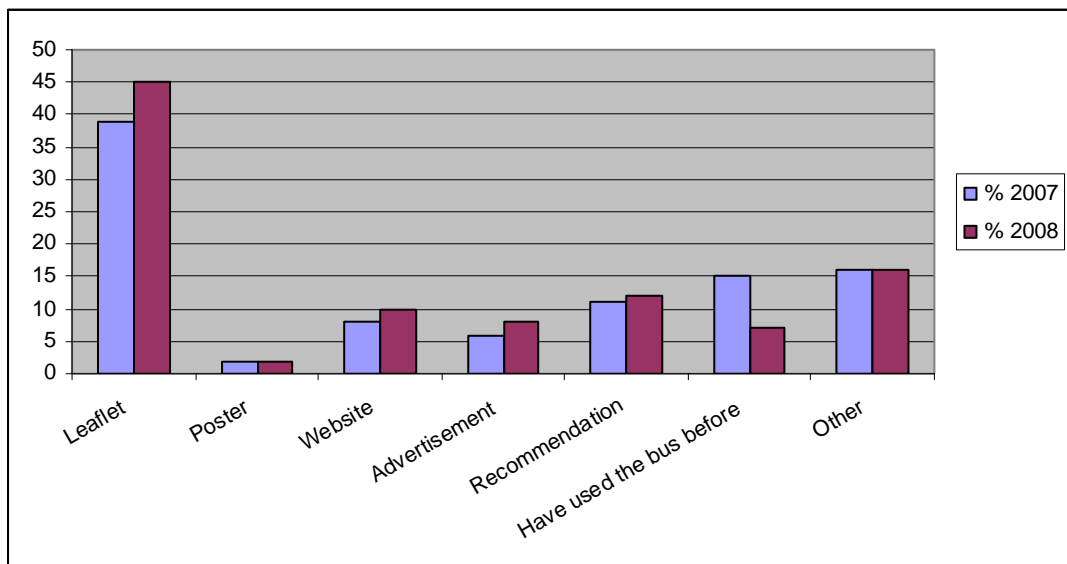
15.1 This question asked staying visitors to define their accommodation type. Results show that the mix between hotel, B&B, Camping and Caravan accommodation is evenly spread. As in 2007, a high percentage of respondents defined their accommodation as 'other'.

16 Question 14: What mode of transport did you use to get to the start of the New Forest Tour today?



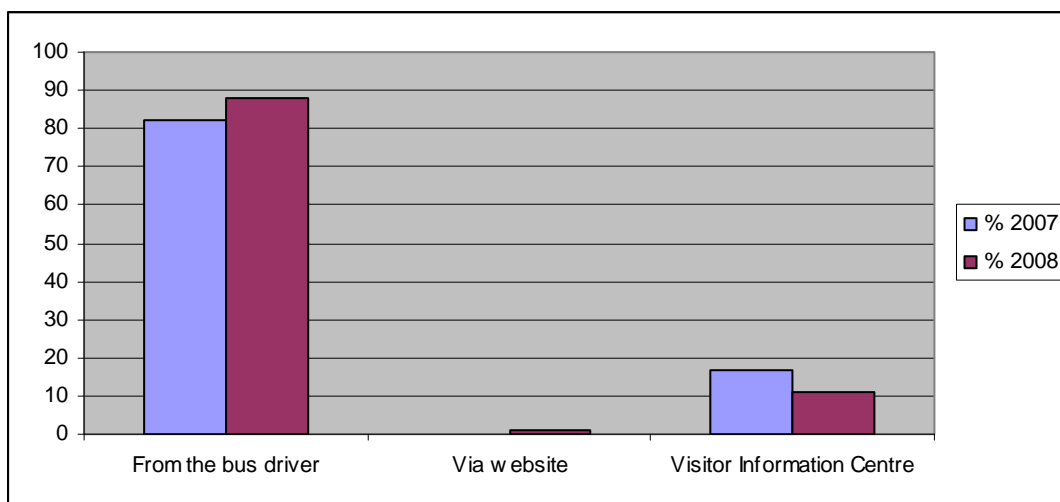
16.1 Half respondents travelled to the start of the New Forest Tour by private car. This helps to illustrate just how many private car trips are replaced by the single New Forest Tour trip, clearly having benefits for the New Forest highway network. 3% of customers arrived direct from the Yarmouth – Lymington Ferry, significant as the Lymington Terminal was added to the route for 2008.

17. Question 15: How did you become aware of the new forest tour today?



17.1 The results of this question show that the leaflet proved the most useful product awareness tool, perhaps due to its high print run and extensive distribution. Most promotional tools outlined in the marketing plan appear to have been picked up by customers. It is interesting to note that 'recommendation' and 'website' channels increased in 2008.

18 Question 16: How did you purchase your ticket for the New Forest Tour today?



18.1 There are three ways of purchasing tickets for the service, from the bus driver, via the New Forest Tour website, or from Lyndhurst or Lymington Visitor Information Centre (VIC). The results over the two seasons are similar with purchase from the bus driver being by far the most popular. In real terms, ticket purchases via the website increased 300% in 2008, with an increase from 12 to 28 tickets sold through www.thenewforesttour.info.