

Visitnorthumberland.com

User research 2014

Undertaken October 2015

Methodology

Visitnorthumberland.com is Northumberland's official tourist website. Managed by Northumberland Tourism, the site showcases Northumberland's attractions, accommodation, activities, shopping, restaurants, cafes and more.

Visits to the site vary by season ranging from around 56,000 per month in the winter, to over 147,000 in the Summer (2015). Compared to the last period that the survey was done, visitor numbers were 47,000 per month in the winter to over 116,000 per month during the summer of 2014.

In October 2015 a questionnaire was emailed to over 70,000 people on our consumer database. People were offered the chance to win an additional prize if they filled in an online questionnaire about the visitnorthumberland.com website.

3621 responses were received, compared to 3436 responses for the 2014 survey.

Not all of the respondents answered all of the questions; percentages for each question have been calculated to reflect this.

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Executive Summary

Users of www.visitnorthumberland.com can be broken down into those already booked and committed to visiting the county (21.6%), those considering a visit (44%) and those still deciding where to go where Northumberland was just one option (28.5%).

46.8% of those surveyed said they did visit Northumberland after using the information on www.visitnorthumberland.com. Given that 1,014,755 unique visitors used [visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com) during 2014, this equates to 474,905 parties, or 1,396,221 visitors (the average party size is 2.94).

As 21.6% had already decided to visit, this represents a conversion rate of 25.2%.

The 21.6% who had already committed to visit were using the website to research things to do and see. This shows that the website plays an important part in encouraging people to visit but also in influencing people to do more and spend more while they are here.

Of those that visited 70.8% said that their decision to visit had 'probably' or 'definitely' been turned from possible to a certainty by the website.

70.8% of those that visited but hadn't already booked (25.2%) said the website turned the possibility of a visit into a certainty, meaning we can say 84,731 visits were directly influenced by [visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com). As the average size of a party is 2.94, this results in a total number of additional visitors of 249,108.

Website users surveyed spent an average of £624.70 per party.

If each of the 474,905 parties visiting Northumberland after using [visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com) spent this average, this equates to £296,673,153.50 generated for the county.

If each of the estimated 84,731 parties inspired to visit by the site spent this average, the additional amount generated for the county would be £47,638,147.73

A total of 892 comments and suggestions were made. Of these 697, or 78.1% were compliments, and 195 or 21.9% were criticisms or suggestions for improvement.

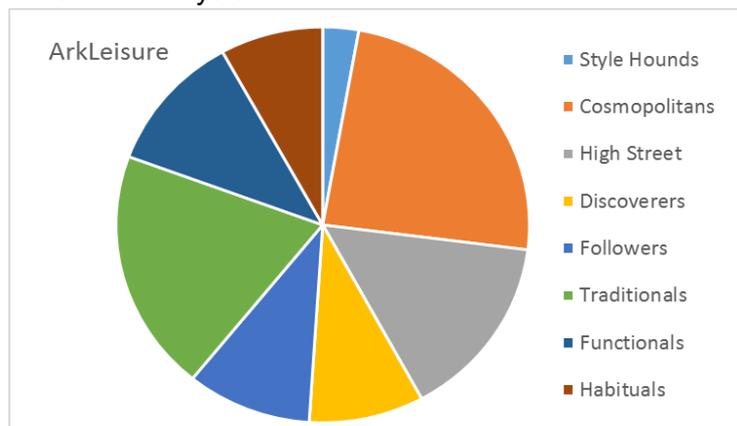
Section One – The Visitor

- 61% of respondents were female, 39% male.
- The majority were aged 40 or over – 88.2%, with 42.6% over 60.
- 16.7% of visitors came from the North East region with a further 25.9% from neighbouring North West and Yorkshire areas. 7.8% came from Scotland and 2.7% came from outside the UK.

Ark Segmentation

This year we added a specific set of questions provided by ArkLeisure in order for them to do a refreshed analysis of our database. Previously, discoverers, traditionals and cosmopolitans were identified as our 3 key market segments. As you can see from the table below, this has partially changed with the new analysis.

	%
Style Hounds	3%
Cosmopolitans	24%
High Street	15%
Discoverers	9%
Followers	10%
Traditionals	20%
Functionals	11%
Habituals	8%



Cosmopolitans – A high-spending market who are strong, active and confident. Risk takers, they have a desire for things that are different and like new challenges. They have an appreciation of art and culture, are comfortable trying new things but are happy to adopt traditional values when appropriate.

Traditionals – Self reliant and independent, they hold traditional values and are unlikely to justify spending on expensive alternatives. Value traditional, established brands and value, and will pay for, good service (recognition and individual attention). Functionality is most important, they enjoy a relaxed pace of life with intellectual challenges, arts and culture.

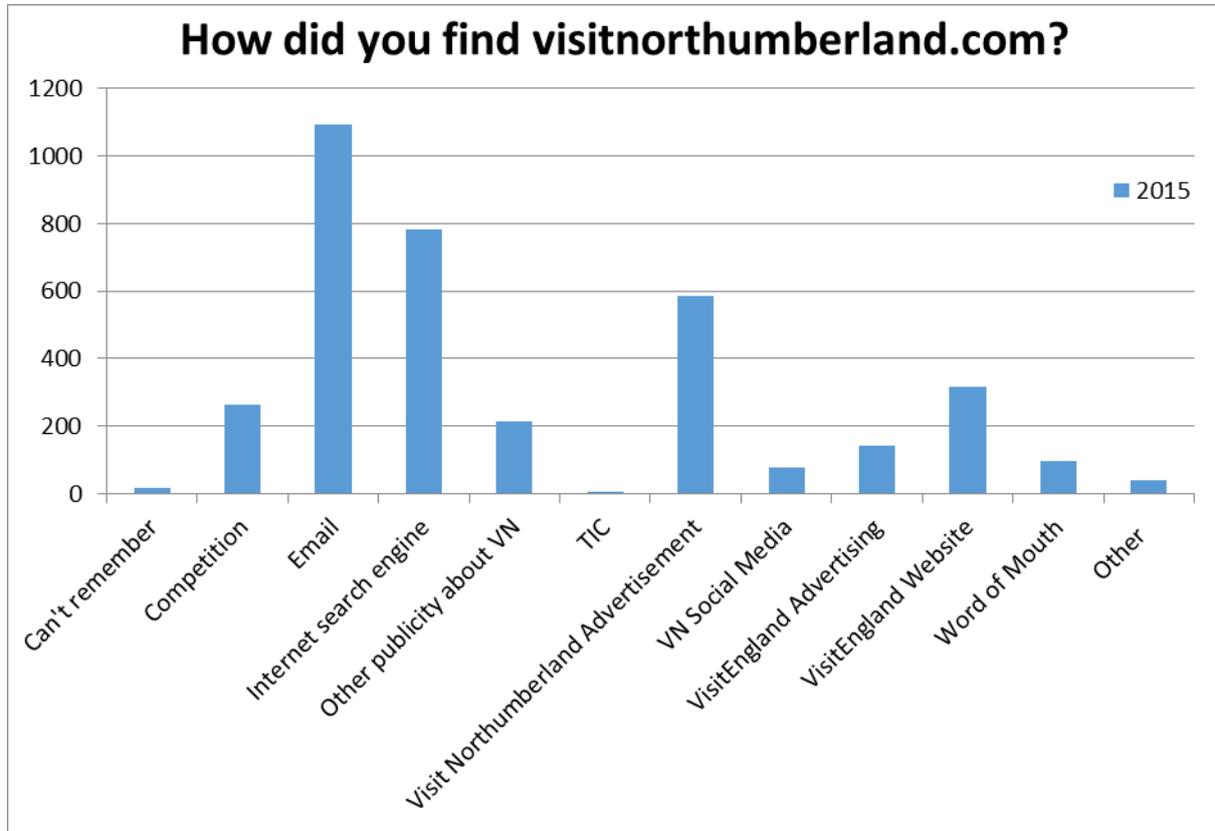
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High Street - Like to be advised, taking information from other sources rather than discovering for themselves. Are prepared to spend money on luxury and brand and style are more important than functionality or individuality. An active segment that is moderately interested in intellectual pursuits, arts and culture. Not the first to adopt new products but are keen to follow along once a fashion has been established.

We did some analysis into the differences between those who booked and those who haven't yet visited, to see if there were any discrepancies. The percentages were very similar, showing our database of consumers is made up of the appropriate segments who will be interested in actually visiting.

There is some interesting analysis into the percentage of each segment that went on to book. Followers and habituals, although being smaller segments, had 51 and 53% respectively that visited, compared with the bigger segments that had 45,44 and 43% who visited (traditionals, cosmopolitans and high street respectively).

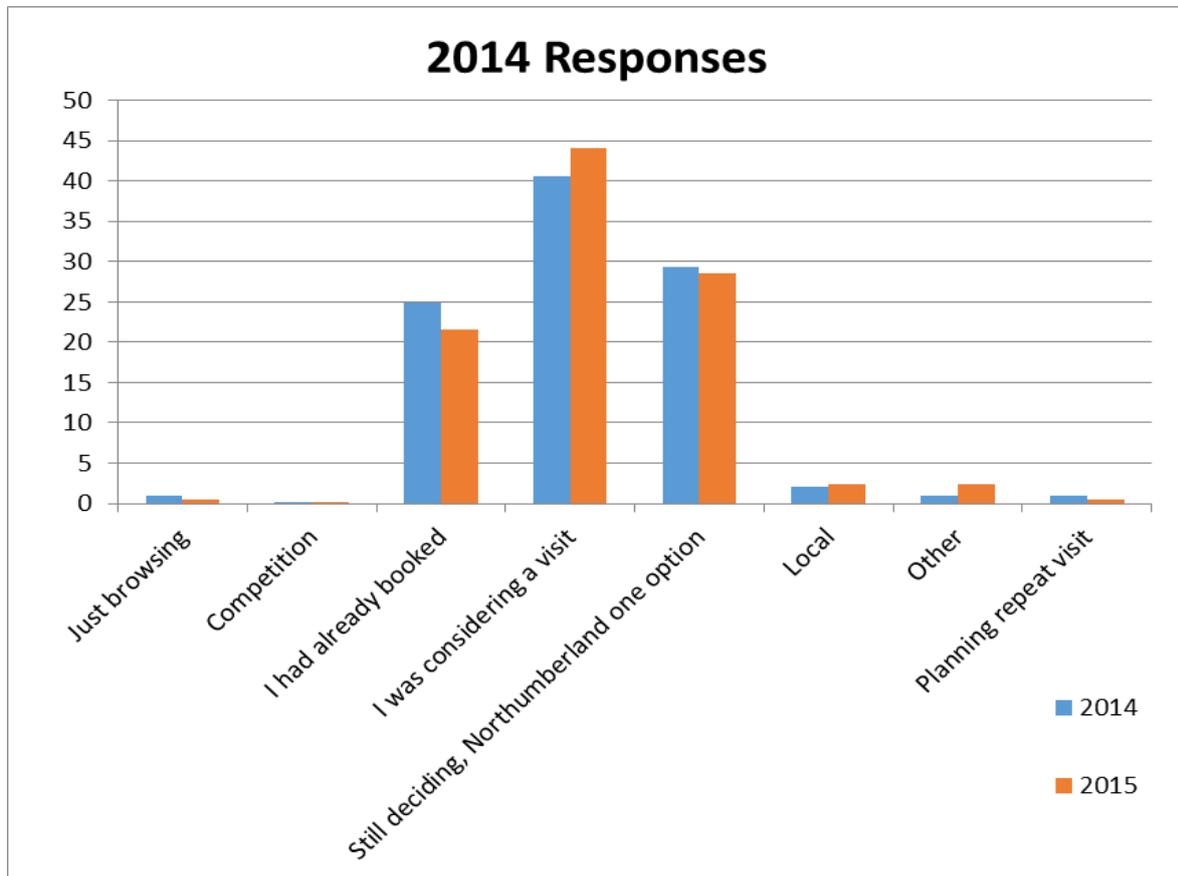
Section Two – How did you find visitnorthumberland.com and what was your travel status at the time?



The most popular answers were email newsletter, internet search engines and visitnorthumberland advertising.

Competitions are an important way to encourage users to visit the website – not only do they visit the site to enter the competition, but around 40-50% also opt-in to receive our email newsletters, allowing us to keep in touch with them and communicate key messages.

'Which of the following best describes your travel status when you used visitnorthumberland.com?'



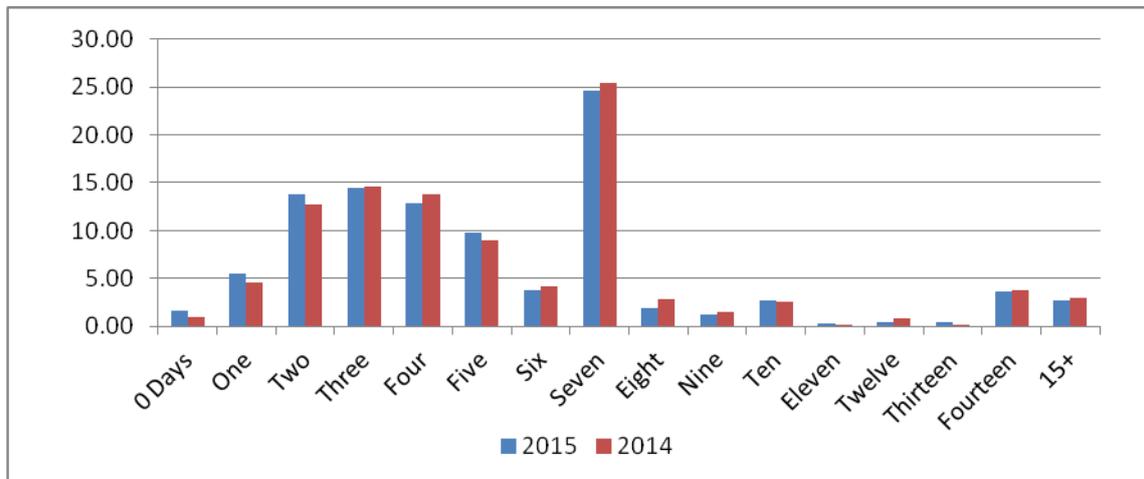
A smaller percentage of people had already booked a holiday (21.6%) compared to 2014 (24.9%) but more people were considering a visit, so still had Northumberland in their plans rather than not being sure about visiting.

Section Three – The Holiday

46.8% said they have visited since using visitnorthumberland.com which is consistent with the 2014 survey. Of those who didn't visit, 47.2% said they are planning to visit in future and 26.9% said they visited somewhere else.

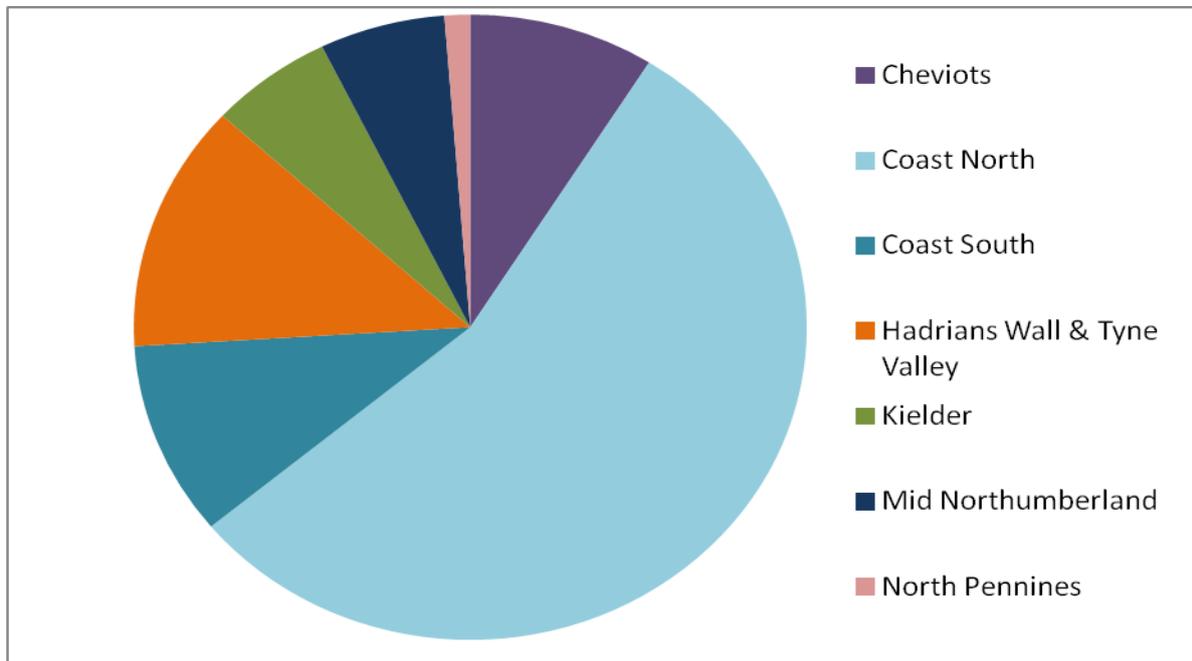
81.2% of those who visited said they visited for a holiday, while 11.1% said they were visiting friends or relatives and 5% were on a day trip. Less than 1% were visiting Northumberland for business.

The average length of stay was 5.7 nights, the breakdown of length of stay is depicted in the chart below. Seven night stays are still very popular, but 2-4 night stays make up 41% of stays, showing the importance of short breaks.

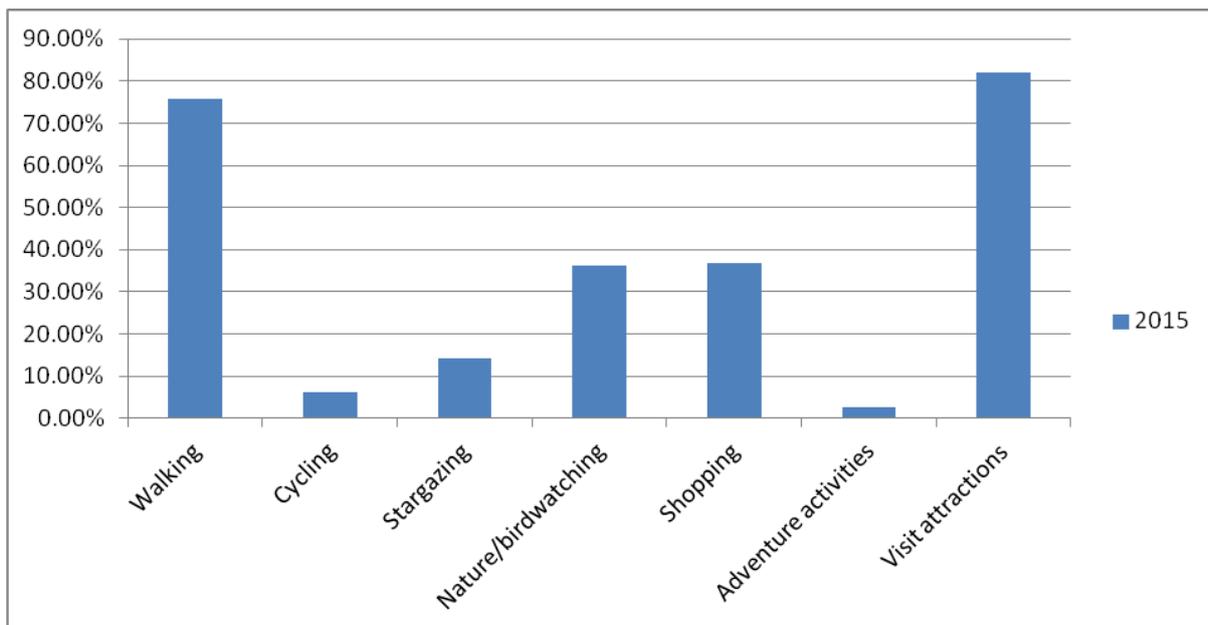


60.5% of parties were 2 people, the average party size (excluding those who said they came as an organised group) was 2.94 people. 35.2 people is the average party size of an organised group. 17.6% said they visited with children.

The chart below shows where people said they stayed when they visited. 55.1% said they visited the North Coast area, with 12.8% visiting Hadrian’s Wall & Tyne Valley, 10% visiting the South part of the Coast and 8.9% The Cheviots. Kielder and Mid Northumberland had 6% each with the North Pennines at 1.2%.



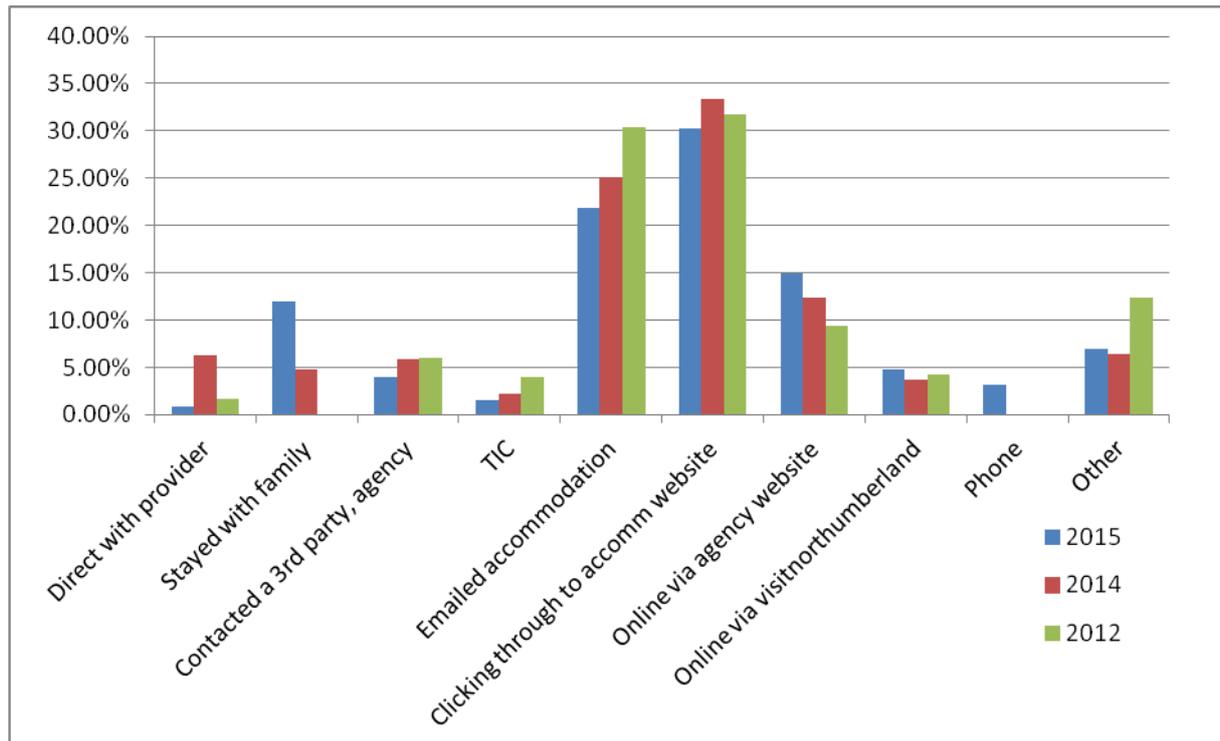
For 2015 we also asked what activities people undertook during their visit, which was a multiple choice question. Visiting attractions was the most popular (82.1%) closely followed by walking (75.7%). Interestingly, 36.1% said they did a nature/birdwatching activity, very similar to the number that said they went shopping as an activity (36.7%). Considering the Dark Sky Park is still relatively new, stargazing had a strong response at 14.1%.



When asked how the respondent booked their holiday, the most popular answers are emailing the accommodation provider (21.8%) and clicking through to the accommodation website (30.2%).

Although only 4.7% say they booked through visitnorthumberland.com, this is not surprising as we do not have a direct booking facility, some accommodation providers have a 'book online' button which links to their own booking system. Those who booked by clicking through to accommodation providers' websites originated on visitnorthumberland.com.

The 'other' category includes those who stayed with family/friends in 2012, which we added as an answer option in 2014.



Section Four – Spend

	Average 2015	Average 2014	Average 2012
Days out & attractions	£ 166.26	£ 165.01	£ 156.46
Travel	£ 109.62	£ 132.22	£ 112.24
Food & Drink	£ 160.21	£ 163.75	£ 137.60
Accommodation	£ 376.71	£ 364.52	£ 279.83
Total average spend	£ 624.70	£ 671.95	£ 686.14

In 2015, the average spend was calculated by averaging each respondent's total spend, rather than adding the averages together.

We also asked respondents if they would be willing to spend more on food & drink if it was produced locally. 57.7% said yes, with only 5.3% saying no. The others said maybe (37%).

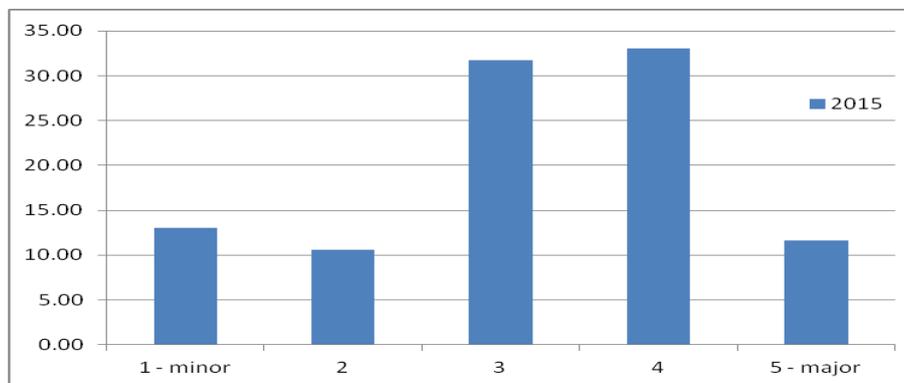
Section Five – Visitnorthumberland.com’s influence

39.7% of people who visited said visitnorthumberland.com definitely turned the possibility of a visit into a certainty, with a further 31.1% saying it probably did. Only 10.6% said it definitely didn’t (also included don’t know).

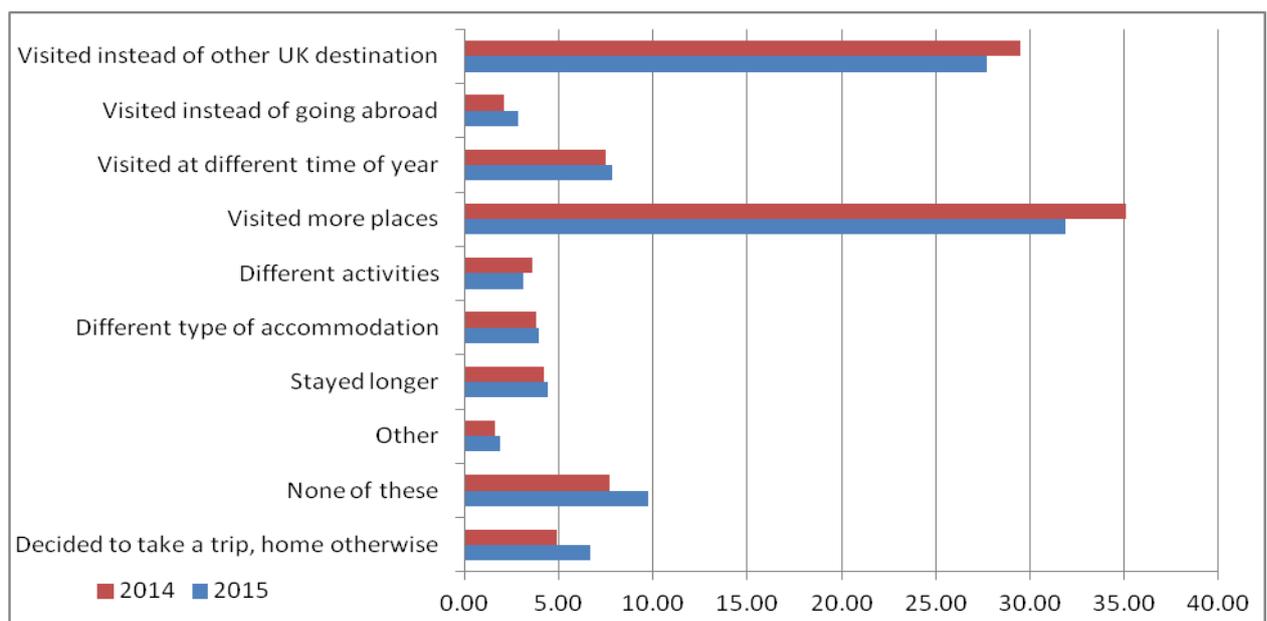
29.4% of people who visited said visitnorthumberland.com definitely or probably encouraged them to stay longer. The average number of extra days they stayed was 3.1 days.

When asked how many times they have visited Northumberland since using the website, 48.3% said once, 25.6% twice, 11.4% came three times and 13.9% have visited 4 or more times.

The table below charts the responses when asked how much visitnorthumberland.com influenced their decision to visit.

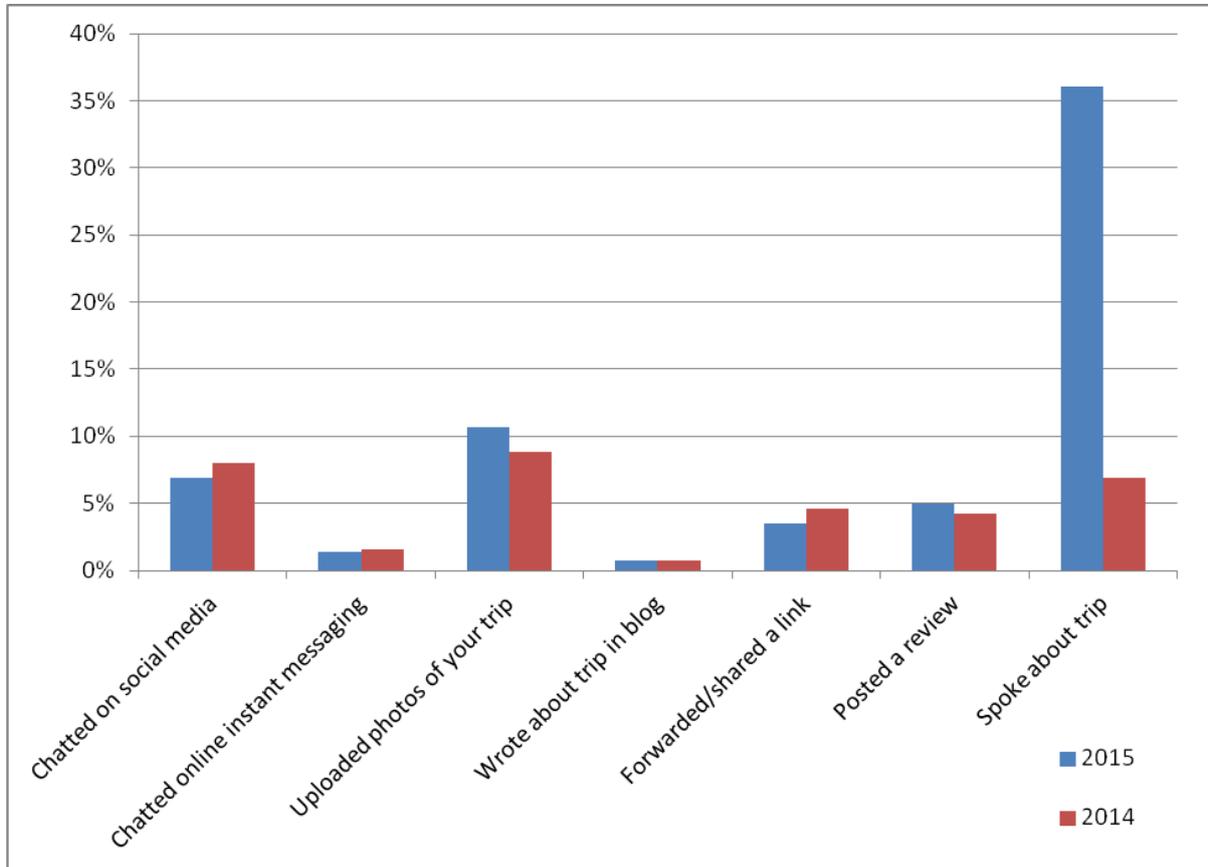


When asked how visitnorthumberland.com influenced them, the most popular responses were that they visited more places while they were here, or that they visited Northumberland instead of another UK destination.



Section Six – How else do you communicate with/about Northumberland

12.4% of people who used the website also received a brochure, while 49.1% said they receive emails. 2.4% said they had connected with us on social media.



In 2015 we added 'Spoke about your trip' as an answer option. This shows that word of mouth is still a very strong form of personal recommendation. Posting reviews and uploading photos to the internet have both increased in popularity.

Section Seven - Comments and Suggestions

1. Do you have any comments about visitnorthumberland.com or suggestions for how we could improve it.

A total of 892 comments and suggestions were made. Of these 697, or 78.1% were compliments, and 195 or 21.9% were criticisms or suggestions for improvement.

Compliments

A selection of compliments regarding the site include:

- Concise and easily accessible
- Easy to use. Good reliable information - links clear
- For an insider it is an excellent diary filler of events and outings
- Gives great advice and reviews for visitors
- Great site, and full of information about "What's on", which is important if you don't live in the area. Found new places to visit via the site.
- Great website, good info, good competitions, though I haven't won one yet!
- I check out other local websites (I live in Tyne & Wear) and find the Northumberland website the easiest to navigate, the most attractive and generally up to date. Well Done!!
- I find the website very helpful and easy to navigate through the menu.
- I like the website and find the photography very attractive and beautiful
- It is a good website and makes me want to book to come to Northumberland whenever I access it.
- It is very easy to follow, click on the picture and you are taken directly to information. Excellent! Easy use.

Criticisms & Suggestions

Criticisms seemed to concern the aesthetics of the site and some functionality, with suggestions for extra content.

- More photos; visitor image gallery – perhaps live feed from Instagram
- Wider range of bookable accommodation
- More information about accessibility
- More basic/cheaper accommodation
- Better search facilities
- Bland colours/dull
- Out of date/needs updating
- Interactive map, especially on where to go pages
- Elsdon missing from places
- Mobile and tablet functionality needs improvement
- More competitions and special offers
- More information for families
- More links within text, so if mentioning tipis, link to a list of tipis in Northumberland