



# Perception research of Essex and its tourism offer

Lisa Bone

Strategic Tourism Manager

# Background

- Year of culture
- Image of Essex
- General understanding
- Aims and objectives

# Methodology

- Sample size
- Timings
- Method
- Geographical areas
- People that take days out or short breaks



# Key findings

- 64% took a rural short break, (54% city break, 20% shopping break)
- 17% had been to Essex on a short break
- Rural destinations were less known than the coastal and town locations (Southend and Colchester most recognisable)

# Key Findings

Open question- what characteristics do you associate with Essex?

- Countryside 34% (2008), 28% (2009)
- Rural 7%
- Villages 10% (2008), 6% (2009)

# Key Findings

To what extent do people think Essex has beautiful countryside?

	Very much	Quite a lot	A little	Not much	Not at all
Essex girls	28%	28%	22%	13%	9%
Chavs	24%	27%	25%	14%	9%
seaside	18%	39%	27%	11%	6%
Beautiful villages	15%	33%	30%	17%	5%
<b>Beautiful countryside</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Being flat	8%	24%	37%	19%	11%
Diverse	7%	24%	35%	27%	7%

# Key findings

Essex is much better than:

- Liverpool
- Hertfordshire

The same as:

- Shropshire
- Suffolk

Much worse than:

- London
- Devon
- Norfolk



# Key Findings

- 12% recognised the Festival of the countryside guide
- 13% recognised the visitor guide
- 15% have recognised the website



# Conclusion

- Lack of awareness (in particular of the products)
- Essex girls image and Romford still in peoples minds – perceptions are embedded.
- People living here have the most positive image and those that have never visited have the most negative.
- Awareness had decreased over the year of rural locations
- **BUT MORE PEOPLE WANT TO VISIT!**

# Why did the perception change?

- Competition from other destinations with greater resource
- Other destinations promoting rural areas
- Different sample of people

# What next?

- Raise the awareness of rural locations
- Use town and coastal destinations as the hook
- Word of mouth campaigns
- Take the opportunity to promote something that is new to the consumer.
- Image of Essex work



# Other research

- Festival of countryside requests
- Volume and value research
- 2007 Visitor guide 61% visiting for countryside (72% coast, 65% heritage)

# Economic Downturn

- Visitor attraction numbers
- Tourism robust against economic downturn
- VB research

# Economic Downturn

- Stansted greater inbound, decrease in outbound
- Holidays are a necessity (only 45% cutting back on holidays)
- Day trips and UK short breaks less likely to be affected
- Some markets affected more than others



# Change in behaviours

- Short breaks taken at home
- Spending longer to look for good deals
- Spending less time at destination
- Time of year
- Frequency of trips
- Cost of getting there (fuel prices)
- Booking earlier or last minute

# What we can do to assist

- Promote to London market (cheap to access)
- Work with Stansted and ports to maximise European market
- Give value added or upgrades rather than discounts
- Loyalty schemes
- Package with train operators
- Remove guilt
- Keep marketing

[visitessex.com](http://visitessex.com)



**Questions?**