Digital Innovation and Efficiency Committee

Report title:	Website satisfaction
Date of meeting:	12 September 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services

Strategic impact

Norfolk County Council's online offer is an integral part of our drive for efficiency and channel shift. Online transactions are not only more cost effective than tradition channels, but are also available 24/7 to Norfolk's residents.

Customer website feedback is an important aspect of our web analytics; used to check the success of previous improvements, prompt future development and diagnose issues. Understanding our customers better and how they interact with our websites - and making changes as a result - is a key route to increasing take up of our digital services.

Executive summary

We have been using software to monitor web satisfaction for some years. In 2014 we signed up to GovMetric, a product from RoL Solutions Ltd used by more than 70 councils. We are also rated by SocITM (the society for IT practitioners in the public sector) against customer experience criteria.

Customers leave can feedback about a page, or generally about the website, by clicking one of the GovMetric 'smileys' at the bottom of website pages. Due to a change in the feedback mechanism in April 2018, the overall level of customer satisfaction with the web offer dropped considerably, despite being rated as a 4* customer experience by SocITM. A proportion of the feedback we get is about council decisions, as opposed to directly about the website. Appendix 1 shows a breakdown of areas of the website with most feedback.

This reports sets out the background to the changes and factors which are impacting satisfaction on an ongoing basis. The main proposals for improving online satisfaction are:

- Focus on search engine optimisation, which means more customers who use services like Google getting to the right pages quicker
- Draw on lessons learnt from areas that have a high proportion of positive feedback, eg the museums website www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk
- Improve the readability scores of content on the website, so making the pages more accessible
- Target certain areas of the website that customers find particularly challenging

Recommendations:

Members are asked to note the content of the presentation (see Appendix 4) and approve the proposals for ongoing website satisfaction improvement.

1.   Proposals

1.1   Up until March 2018, the GovMetric smileys were displayed in the bottom right hand corner of the website. Feedback from some customers suggested the feedback smileys were interfering with scrolling web pages, particularly on mobiles.

1.2   By moving the smileys the amount of feedback increased by 340% and the type of feedback we receive has also changed and become more polarised (see appendix 2).

1.3   While there were potentially several factors at play here, including some key policy changes in April, this illustrates what a major effect a change, initially perceived as minor, can have on the behaviour of online customers.

1.4   Members requested an update on web satisfaction and this report details several proposals aimed at improving customer experience on Norfolk County Council websites.

1.5   The presentation that accompanies this report highlights some areas of good practice, as well as some areas for further development. The following section outlines the proposals for ongoing improvement.

1.5.1   Continue to focus on search engine optimisation (SEO)

1.5.1.1.   SEO means making sure our pages are prominent in search engine search results from search engines such as Google or Bing. The gov.uk domain is already trusted and highly rated generally so we have a head start.

1.5.1.2   However there is still more that could be done to improve our standing in areas where multiple providers offer similar services, such as adult education.

1.5.1.3   Moreover, only about 7 to 9% of web traffic enters the Norfolk County Council website via homepage, the rest goes direct to pages within the site, often signposted by search engines. So we need to ensure that the information displayed by Google, for example, is accurate, to help customers get to the information they need in as few clicks as possible.

1.5.1.4   To do this we use metadata – meta titles and meta descriptions – which are content titles and short descriptions we surface for search engines to use. This should make entry points clearer and also pick up some of the common search terms.

1.5.1.5   Starting with our most used pages we are writing bespoke meta titles and descriptions for search engines.

1.5.1.6   One key area we have focussed on is fostering:

'Fostering Network were very impressed with the position of our fostering recruitment web site when doing a google search and they liked our website.'
Fostering service

1.5.2   Making our content easier to understand

1.5.2.1   Siteimprove, our quality assurance software, gives www.norfolk.gov.uk pages an overall quality score of 97.7 out of 100. This takes into account aspects such as how up to date content is, readability scores, misspellings and common issues that can affect usability, such as large image files that have to be downloaded, non-pdf documents that aren't easy to open and broken links.

1.5.2.2   However there are pockets of content across the site that online checkers rate as the same difficulty level as a scientific journal.

1.5.2.3   Many online checkers, and also the plain English setting that can be enabled in Microsoft Word, use the Flesch Reading Ease Scale. Generally scores are out of

100, and the higher the rating, the easier to read the content is.

1.5.2.4   We are first targeting pages with the poorest scores. The Government Digital Service quotes the average reading age in the UK as 9.

1.5.2.5   Mystery shoppers from industry body SocITM have praised journeys where we have rewritten and optimised content:

"The main eBooks landing page is very easy to read and there are clear links to the catalogue"

"The information was clear and unambiguous"

1.5.3   Drawing on the success of the museums website's move to Sitecore

1.5.3.1   In September 2017 we relaunched the Norfolk museums website, redesigning and restructuring it and moving it out of the legacy Oracle website content management system (CMS) and into our new CMS, Sitecore, which we also use for www.norfolk.gov.uk.

1.5.3.2   Sitecore has been positioned as a leading CMS for the ninth year running in a Gartner Magic Quadrant Report (more information in appendix 3). Other companies that have used Sitecore are as diverse as Asos, British Heart Foundation and easyJet. Having already created www.norfolk.gov.uk in Sitecore, we were able to take our learning from that, when commissioning the design of the museums website.

1.5.3.3   The museums site design has had positive feedback from customers, the service, and other stakeholders who were interested in emulating it. At Easter this year we had a particular focus on adding seasonal activities and content to the site and we hit 88% website satisfaction in April.

1.5.3.4   We are now looking at ways to integrate what worked well for museums, back into www.norfolk.gov.uk, where appropriate. The visual approach on the museums site fits best where there is a strong element of 'persuasion' or income generation required. Fostering, for example have a requirement to attract more foster carers, and we also have projects underway with registrars and Think Norfolk.

1.5.4   Targeted interventions on certain parts of the site, for example:

i)   **Quick search for what you can recycle at a recycling centre**

There were 595 pieces of feedback in the first six months of 2018 that related to what can be recycled, including quantities and charges. 72% of this feedback was poor, suggesting there is confusion around what can be recycled.

Displaying a 'complete' list of what can be recycled can be challenging, partly because an item can often be described several ways. So a member of the digital content team has prototyped a dynamic table that searches a list of items and brings back an answer. This way we can include all the ways an item might be described, without overwhelming the customer.

ii)   **Customer account**

The multiple customer accounts in use across www.norfolk.gov.uk have proved confusing for some customers. The roadmap for customer services transformation looks to join up these accounts as part of our Single Sign On project. This would be via the MyNorfolk account and the aim would be to make sign in, password, account profile updates etc much more consistent

and done once.

In the meantime, we are looking at ways to make the current set up less confusing – for example taking care how we describe account actions in website content and where possible removing any confusing links that might interfere with the customer journey.

iii)   **Improving search**

There have been 822 pieces of feedback about search in the first six months of 2018, of which 71% were rated as poor.

Changes that are currently in development include:
- Giving pages their own bespoke search titles that only appear in search results, to aid the search process
- If a search returns no results, adding some suggestions of what customers could try instead
- Adding links to other commonly searched products, eg the library catalogue, to all search templates.

2.   Evidence

2.1   The proposals above are based on what customers are telling us themselves, best practice approaches as defined by organisations like SocITM, and by analysing instances where we have been able to substantially increase satisfaction for other services, and learning from what worked best.

Some examples of comments from GovMetric:

Rubbish and recycling:

It didn't answer my question

Very difficult to find information regarding whether there are charges for fridges and freezers at the tip

Paying to get rid of a fence panel … I'll burn it instead … 28 mile trip wasted not happy

Just easy and has all the information required

It would have been nice if you had recommended some companies

Very helpful and informative.

Schools information:

Easy to find and understand

Please make the calendars downloadable onto common online organisers…

Unable to find school holiday dates

Should be quicker and clearer to access appeals process for secondary schools

Simple and easy to use

Can't log in not easy to find out if my son got his school

Very easy to access information.

3.   Financial implications

3.1   There are no financial implications for the work proposed in this paper.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

4.1 Accessibility

4.1.1 When developing our websites, we look to ensure that changes adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 at level AA. These international guidelines cover aspects such as text size, colour contrast and whether the website code and layout are designed accessibly to work with screen readers.

4.1.2 In 2017, www.norfolk.gov.uk for the first time met the accessibility criteria laid down as part of the annual council website testing by SocITM. In 2018 we retained that accreditation as well as moving to a 4* rating overall.

4.2 Industry expertise

4.2.1 In recent recruitments, the digital content team has brought in members of staff with strong front end digital design, usability and analytical skills that can better translate our requirements into technical specifications for IMT colleagues. This reduces our reliance on external design services, enables skills sharing and complements the editorial and Sitecore knowledge we already had.

5. Background

Socitm Better Connected reports can normally be found at https://betterconnected.socitm.net/, however the website appeared to be down for maintenance at the time of writing.

An introduction to web accessibility
https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines WCAG 2.0
http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/

A www.gov.uk summary of WCAG 2.0
https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/helping-people-to-use-your-service/understanding-wcag-20

Officer contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:
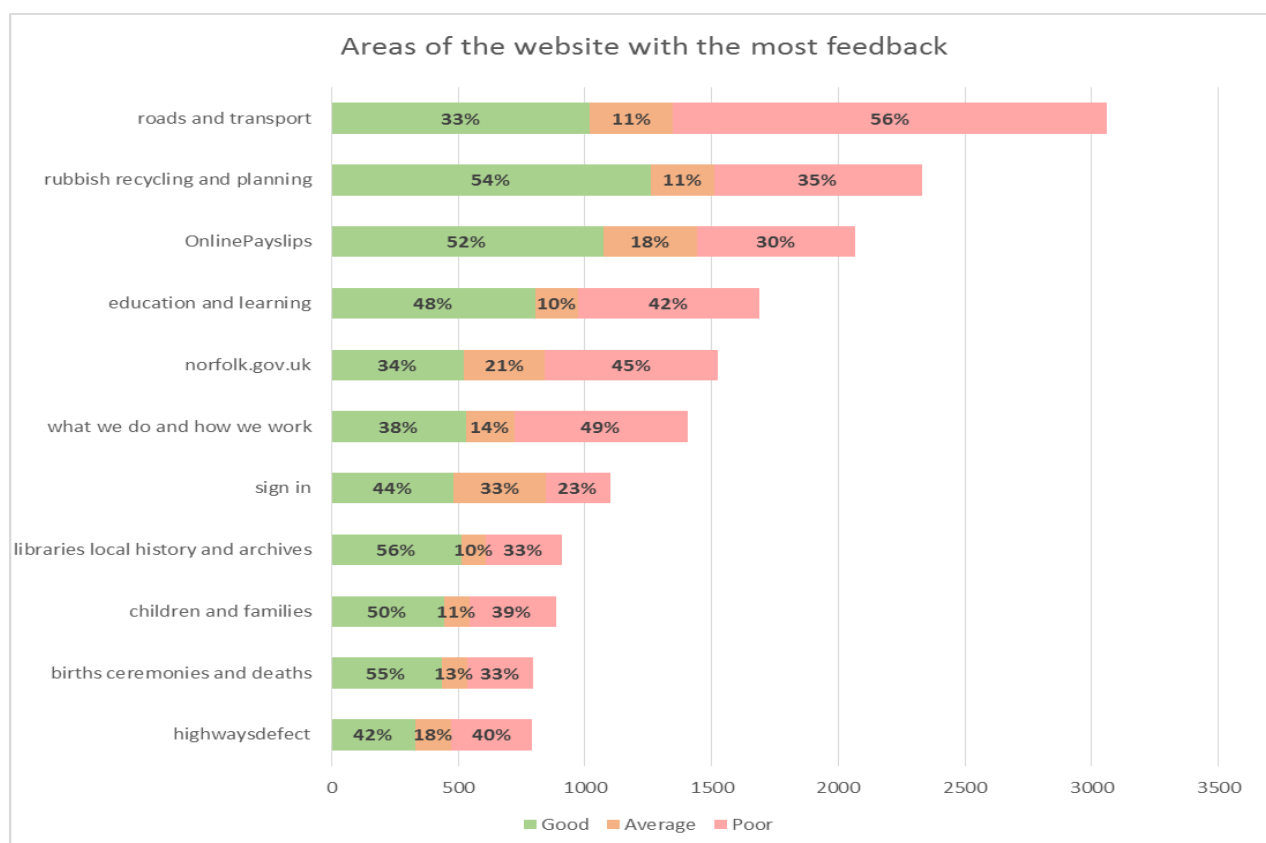
Officer name : **Frances Grimmer** **Tel No. :** **01603 222821**
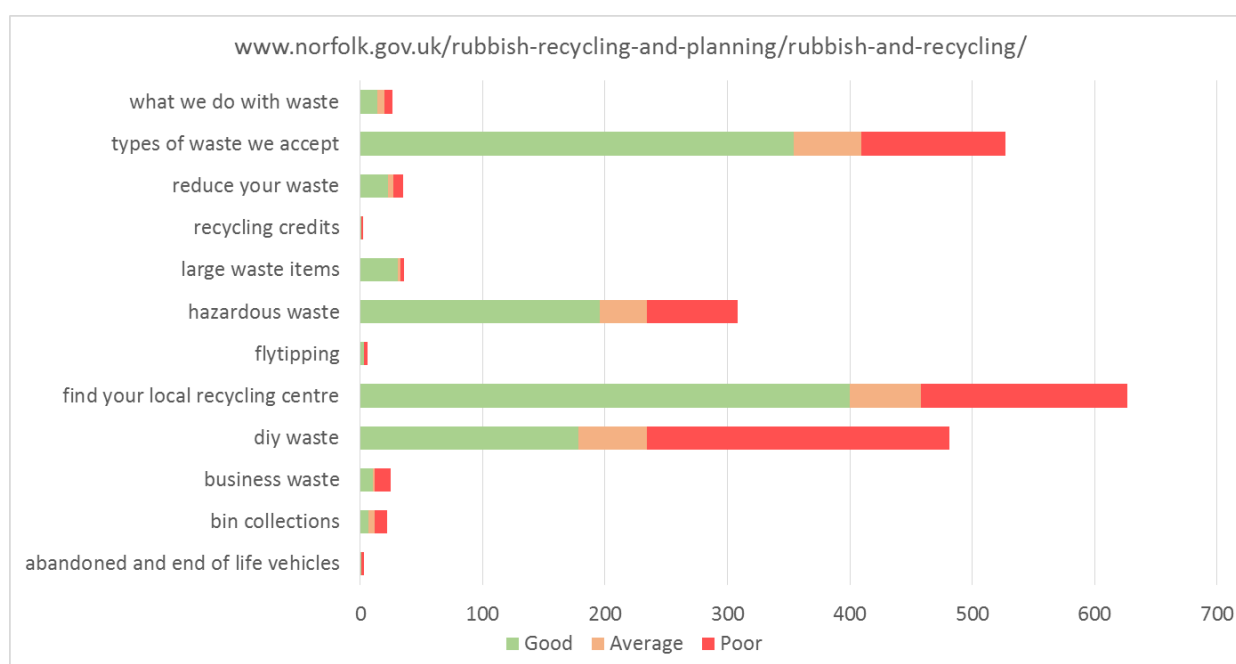
Email address : **frances.grimmer@norfolk.gov.uk**

Areas of the website with the most feedback, first six months of 2018:

Areas of the website with the most feedback

	Good	Average	Poor
roads and transport	33%	11%	56%
rubbish recycling and planning	54%	11%	35%
OnlinePayslips	52%	18%	30%
education and learning	48%	10%	42%
norfolk.gov.uk	34%	21%	45%
what we do and how we work	38%	14%	49%
sign in	44%	33%	23%
libraries local history and archives	56%	10%	33%
children and families	50%	11%	39%
births ceremonies and deaths	55%	13%	33%
highwaysdefect	42%	18%	40%

Looking at two areas in detail, firstly recycling*:

www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/rubbish-and-recycling/

- what we do with waste
- types of waste we accept
- reduce your waste
- recycling credits
- large waste items
- hazardous waste
- flytipping
- find your local recycling centre
- diy waste
- business waste
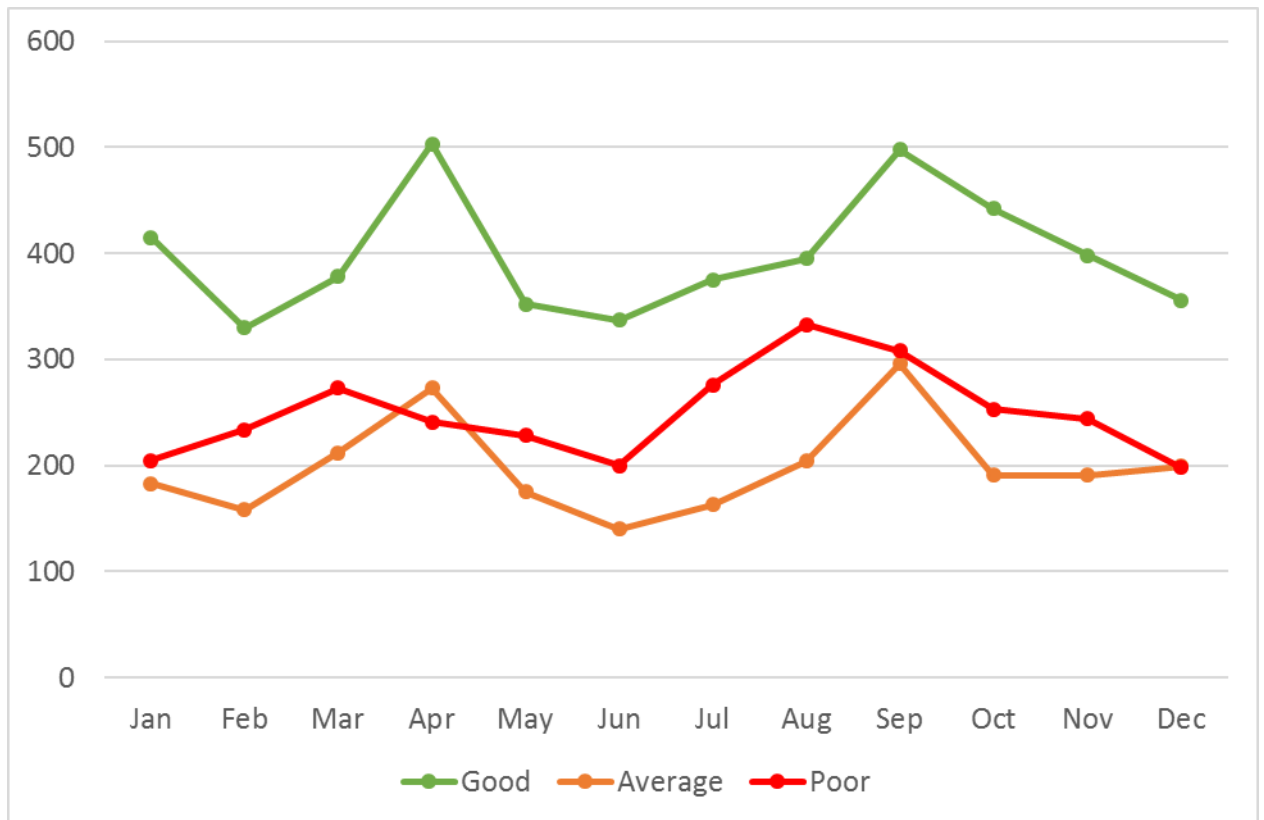- bin collections
- abandoned and end of life vehicles

And schools*:
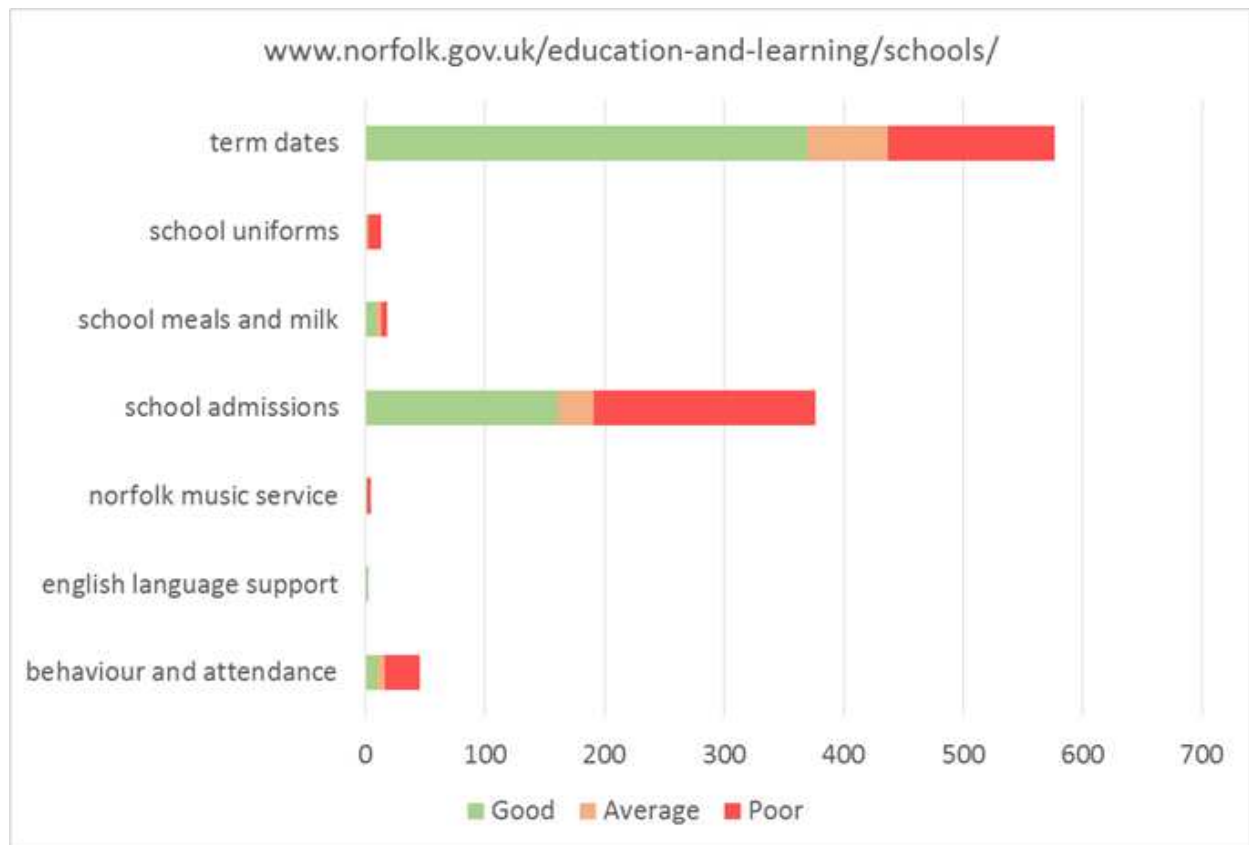
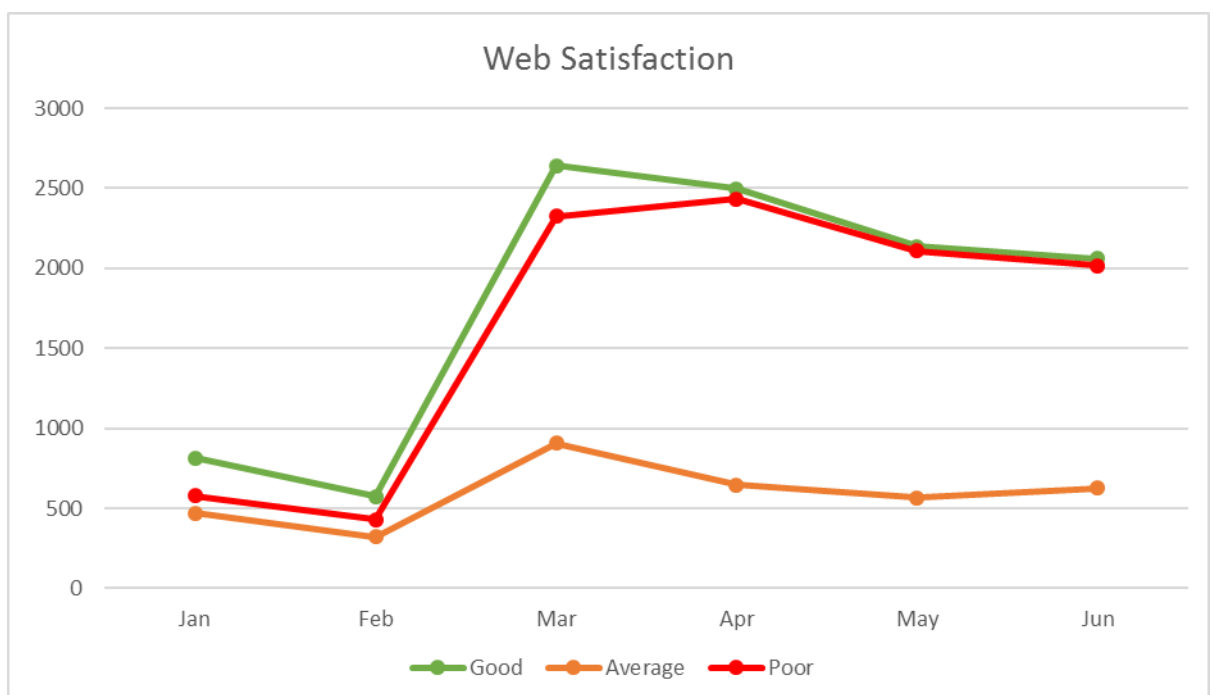*This website feedback can relate to policy and the service, as well as the website itself.

These tables illustrate the changes in customer feedback before and after March 2018.

a) Feedback over 2017:

b) First six months of 2018:

Gartner Magic Quadrant reports

Positioning technology players within a specific market. A **Gartner Magic Quadrant** is the result of research into a specific market, showing Gartner's evaluation of how different competitors compare to each other.

This is the 2018 Magic quadrant for Web Content Management 2018:

There is more information about the evaluation methods at
https://www.gartner.com/en/research/methodologies/magic-quadrants-research