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Blackpool Grand Audience Data North West Marketing Benchmarks

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1 Background

Seven theatres and arts centres in the North West of England have participated in a pilot project to benchmark key marketing achievements. The participating venues are Burnley Mechanics; Dukes Theatre, Lancaster; Chester Gateway; Grand Theatre, Blackpool; Crewe Lyceum; Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster; Pyramid Arts Centre and Parr Hall, Warrington.

The venues were asked to extract data about customers who bought tickets for events between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2006 inclusive and to analyse key benchmarks to enable them to compare:

- Proportion of first time ticket buyers
- Average frequency of visit
- Proportion of ticket buyers purchasing at different frequencies each year
- Proportion of customers whose name and address their organisation manages to capture
- Proportion of complete names and addresses
- Average price paid including discounted tickets (ticket yield)
- Proportion of tickets sold at full price
- Proportion of customers buying tickets on the day of the performance
- Average number of tickets per transaction (group size)

Comparisons were made with 16 small, middle and large scale venues in the Republic of Ireland and with an arts centre elsewhere in England that kindly made its data available for this project to provide a suitable comparator for the Nuffield Theatre.

2 Data quality

2.1 Data collection

To get a reasonably accurate picture of audience behaviour, organisations must collect the names and addresses of at least 75% of their ticket buyers. Within the industry, a data capture rate of over 85% is considered acceptable and over 90% excellent. Five organisations were able to provide this information and all five have exceeded the minimum level of 75%. Two have achieved levels over 90% but one has achieved levels under 85%.

	% of transactions where customer details captured
Blackpool Grand	99%
Average for all organisations	85%
Highest organisation	99%
Lowest organisation	76%
Irish venues	83%
English Arts Centre	96%

No. of organisations

5

2.2 Data integrity

Six venues were able to provide data on the number of incomplete addresses for ticket buyers in the past 12 months (missing first address line or postcode). All but one of these venues have a very high proportion of complete addresses. This data was not collected for Irish venues.

	% of incomplete addresses
Blackpool Grand	1.7%
Average for all organisations	14%
Highest organisation	74%
Lowest organisation	0.1%
English Arts Centre	1%

No. of organisations 6

Five venues were able to provide a listing of potential duplicate records. The records for customers with last names beginning with A or B were assessed manually (all records for one venue with a relatively small number of records) to identify genuine duplicates as opposed to records for customers with a similar last name and first line of address.

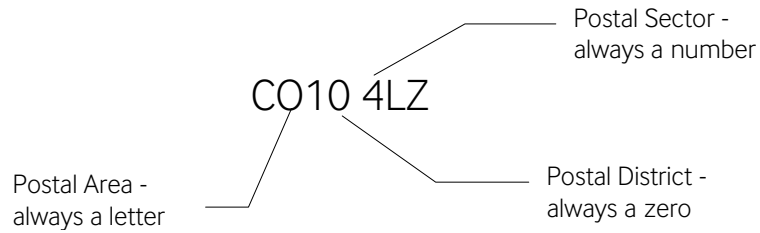
Four venues had levels of duplicate records well within acceptable limits, although it is important that they continue implementing their housekeeping procedures on a regular basis. One venue had higher levels of duplicates, mainly because of an absence of protocols for the entry of first names or initials.

	% of duplicate records
Blackpool Grand	1.4%
Average for all organisations	3%
Highest organisation	7%
Lowest organisation	0.2%
English Arts Centre	0%

No. of organisations 5

The key protocols to be established and implemented by venues are as follows:

- Always enter a title such as Mr, Ms or Dr etc., otherwise some of your mailing labels will just have the surname on the first line.
- Decide whether you are going to collect first names or initials and then make sure everyone sticks to it, otherwise your direct mail letters may start 'Dear IJ.' or 'Dear Green' and you may end up with duplicate records for everyone, one with initials and the other with the first name.
- Agree whether you will enter house names when there is also a house number and stick to it, otherwise you will end up with lots of duplicate records.
- How much of the address are you going to record in the first address field – just the flat number or the flat number and the building number and street?
- Always ask "Have you bought tickets from us before?" at the beginning of the transaction and it will save time and effort for everyone.
- Make sure that everyone enters numbers and letters in the right place – particularly O and 0 – otherwise you won't be able to analyse or select by postcodes accurately.



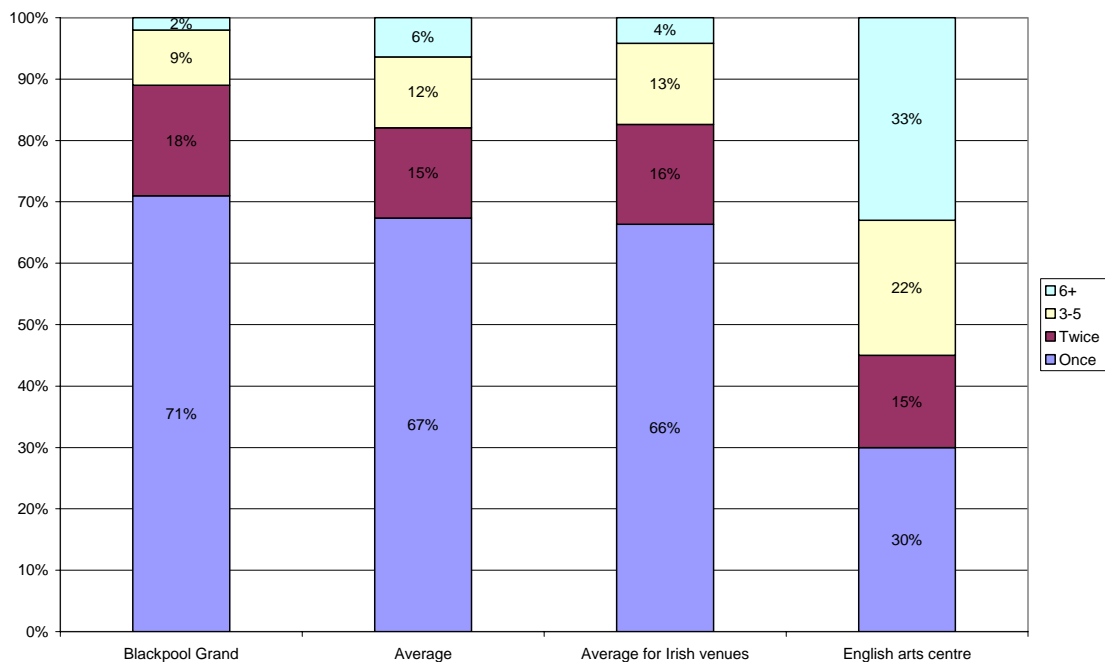
3 Frequency of attendance

Frequency of attendance varied widely between venues. Three venues' ticket buyers purchased for fewer than 2 events per year – lower than is typical for UK venues. One of these venues attracts significant numbers of tourists, however the other two do not and would benefit from implementing strategies to increase frequency of attendance. Local arts centres typically have a higher frequency of attendance than other types of venue, however the highest achieving venue participating in this project operates on the middle scale – an impressive achievement.

Note: data for the Dukes, Lancaster is based on frequency bands (1, 2, 3-4 and 5+) as opposed to actual number of visits per year so the figures below under-reports the mean frequency of attendance.

	Average no. of events purchased in the past 12 months
Blackpool Grand	1.5
Average for all organisations	2.5
Highest organisation	4.5
Lowest organisation	1.5
Irish venues	1.9
English Arts Centre	7.0
No. of organisations	7

Figure 1: No. of events purchased by known ticket buyers in 12 months



4 New Audiences

Most of the participating organisations were highly effective in attracting new audiences with more than half of ticket buyers in three of the venues purchasing ticket for the first time.

Caution is needed in interpreting these figures, however. Unfortunately, Many venues with such high proportions of first time ticket buyers find it difficult to retain customers. On average, two thirds of ticket buyers at the Irish venues did not buy tickets at the venue the following year. Such a high turnover of audiences year on year represents an extraordinary degree of wasted effort. If the North West benchmarking project is repeated, it should look additionally at audience turnover.

	% of first time ticket buyers in 12 months
Blackpool Grand	40%
Average for all organisations	51%
Highest organisation	74%
Lowest organisation	20%
Irish venues	67%
English Arts Centre	17%

No. of organisations

6

5 Average party size

There is significant variation in average party size between venues. Three venues have average party sizes between 3.3 and 3.5 and two have averages of 2.1 and 2.2. All five could benefit from investing staff time in increasing average group size either by developing school and/or group bookings or by offering incentives for small groups to encourage customers to bring two car loads instead of one. The venue with the lowest party size has significant numbers of customers attending on their own.

	Average party size
Blackpool Grand	4.9
Average for all organisations	3.0
Highest organisation	4.9
Lowest organisation	1.5
Irish venues	2.9
English Arts Centre	2.4

No. of organisations 7

6 Types of ticket

Four venues have relatively low proportions of ticket sold at full price. The organisation with the lowest proportion attracts a significant proportion of students who are all eligible for a discount, however a further 40% of tickets are sold at other discounts. Selling so few tickets at full price has a negative impact on the perceived value of its activities. Since this analysis, the organisation has been implementing a pricing strategy to increase its ticket yield.

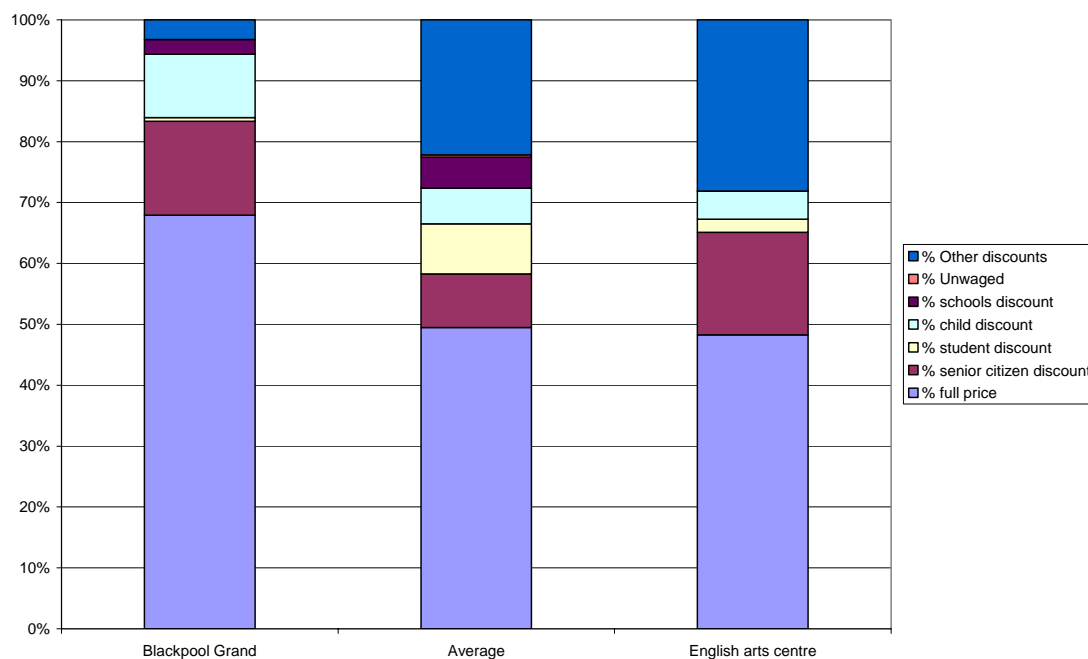
	% of tickets sold at full price
Blackpool Grand	68%
Average for all organisations	49%
Highest organisation	74%
Lowest organisation	17%
Irish venues	64%
English Arts Centre	48%

No. of organisations 7

Different organisations will inevitably offer a range of different discounts, but there are some categories that are likely to be common to all: senior citizens or OAPs, children, students, unwaged or unemployed and schools. (In Ireland, several venues did not distinguish between schools and groups so comparative data is not available).

	% full price	% senior citizen discount	% student discount	% child discount	% schools discount	% Unwaged	% Other discounts
Blackpool Grand	68%	15%	1%	10%	2%	0.02%	3%
Average	49%	9%	8%	6%	5%	0%	22%
English arts centre	48%	17%	2%	5%		0.01%	28%
No. of organisations	7	7	7	7	7	6	n/a

Figure 2: Tickets sold at selected discount rates



7 Late booking

These figures show sales on the day of the performance but exclude 'doors' and other sales where tickets are sold to unknown customers. The venue with the highest proportion of doors sales also has the highest proportion of tickets sold at student discount, a group perceived to be consistently late bookers (although there seems to be no publicly available, cross-venue evidence to support this assumption).

	% of tickets purchased on the day of the performance
Blackpool Grand	no data
Average for all organisations	17%
Highest organisation	37%
Lowest organisation	5%
Irish venues	22%
English Arts Centre	9%

No. of organisations 4

8 Ticket yield

The venue with the lowest ticket yield has a high proportion of discounted tickets and has a student membership card, the income from which is accounted for separately with tickets being recorded at zero value. Even so, its ticket yield is only £1 lower than the comparable English arts centre.

	Ticket yield £
Blackpool Grand	14.38
Average for all organisations	9.21
Lowest organisation	4.40
Highest organisation	14.38
English Arts Centre	5.46

No. of organisations 7

9 Defining catchment areas

The industry standard methodology for analysing catchment areas developed by Peter Verwey uses a combination of two factors: a 30 minute drivetime¹ and the area in which the nearest 80% of ticket buyers live. The drivetime is used because a survey of 2,063 adults carried out by Arts Council England revealed that 93% said they would normally expect to travel up to 30 minutes to see an arts event.

¹ A 30 minute drivetime is the distance from a selected point that can be travelled by car in 30 minutes. The drivetime is calculated using data derived from satellite imagery used for Sat Nav applications. This method of calculation is designed to standardise driving conditions so that drivetimes for different places are comparable – essential for this kind of analysis of customer data. The standard drivetime is therefore unlikely to reflect any personal experiences of particular journeys.

The 30 minute drivetime areas of the participating venues overlap significantly as can be seen in Figure 3. This level of competition usually has an impact on the extent of venue catchment areas.

Figure 3: 30 minute drivetimes of participating venues



Other factors that could impact on catchment areas identified by Peter Verwey are:

- poor access by public transport, times of last buses or trains back from the venue
- a low level of travel into the city /town for shopping, work or leisure- another city/town being preferred
- relatively low car ownership
- competition from other places of entertainment which have greater appeal or are more accessible
- the characteristics of the population for example age, social grade, higher educational qualifications
- relatively low levels of family income

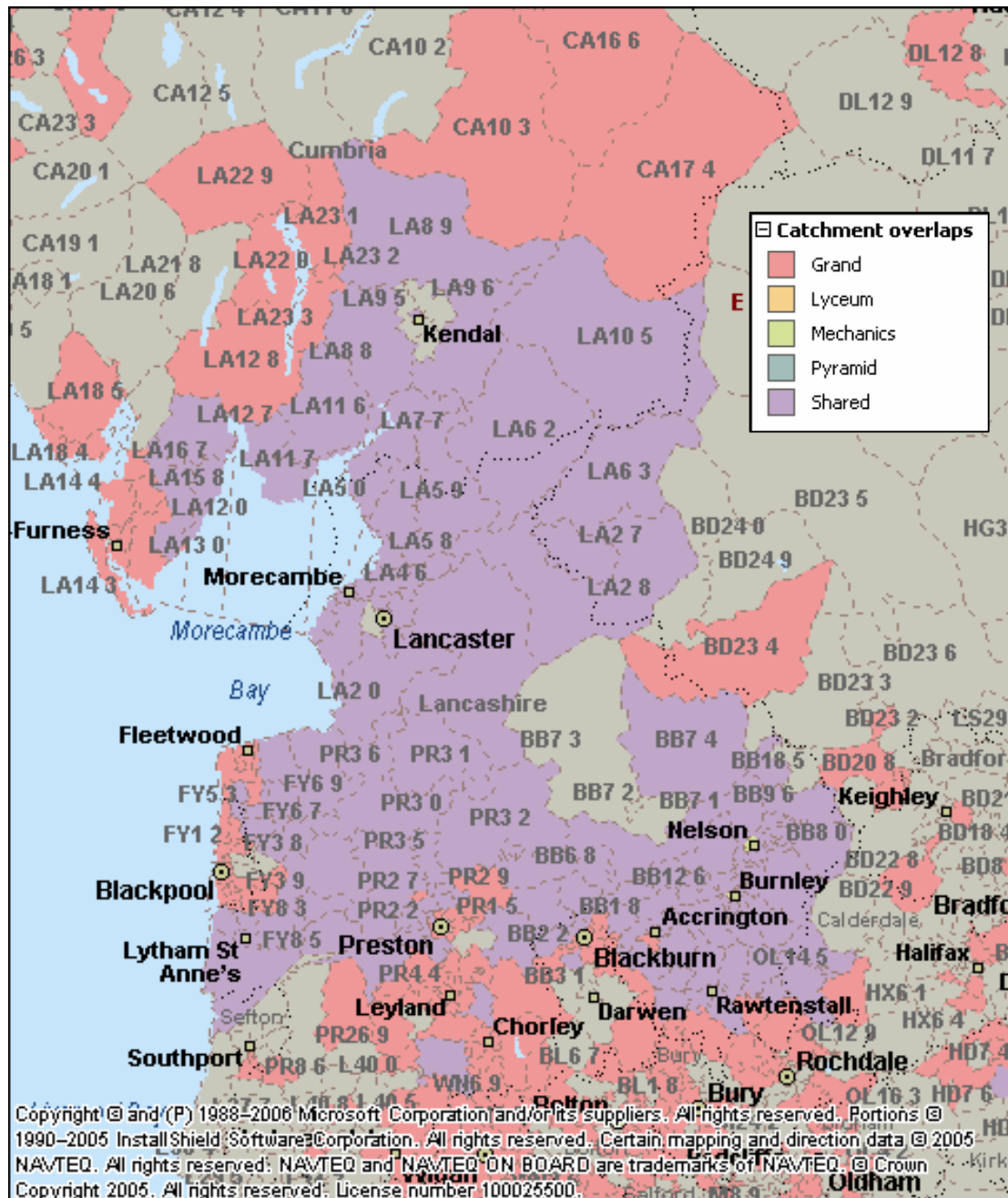
- a decline in local employment opportunities
- limited potential for group bookings because of a lack of appropriate places of employment, clubs and societies etc
- relatively low coverage by the venue's current marketing and publicity (i.e. small numbers of people on the venue mailing list, a low level of distribution for leaflets and posters, lack of coverage by the local press)

Participating venues will need to identify which of these factors are applicable to their catchment and the extent to which they can do something about them.

The North West region has been divided into two maps below which show the area encompassing the nearest 80% of each venue's audience by postal sector. Where a postal sector falls within more than one venue's catchment area, it has been shaded violet.

Some venues have catchments that extend significantly beyond a 30 minute drivetime. Others have catchments that fall significantly short. Where catchments fall short, venues will benefit from identifying postal sectors beyond their catchment but within a 30 minute drivetime where there is a potential audience using data from the relevant Area Profile Report which will show the computed number of arts attenders within a particular postal sector. It is recommended that participating venues undertake this as a next stage with the help of the Audience Alliance team. They can then implement strategies for developing audiences from those postal sectors. These strategies may be as simple as improving the availability of print in those sectors.

Figure 4: Venue 80% audience catchments - northern area



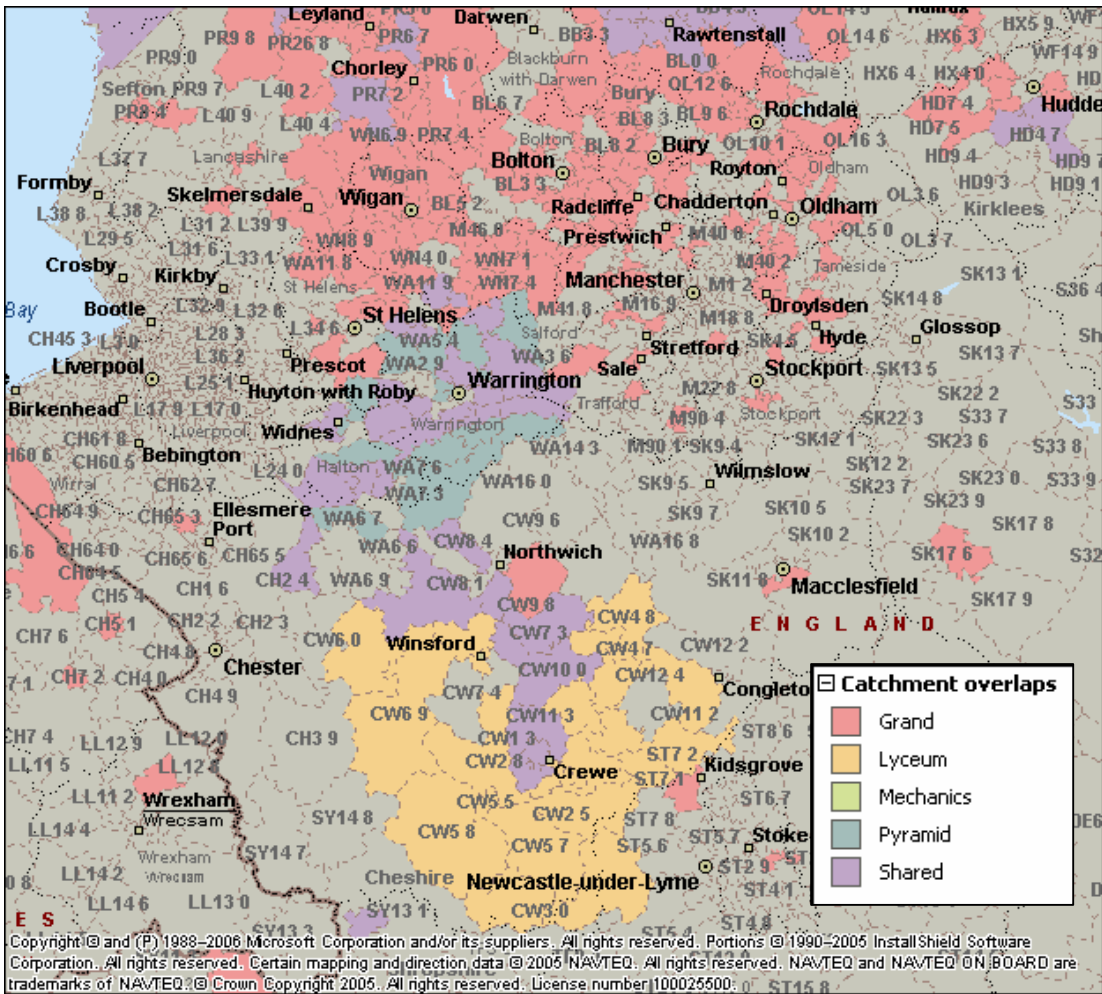


Figure 5: Blackpool Grand catchment and 30 minute drivetime

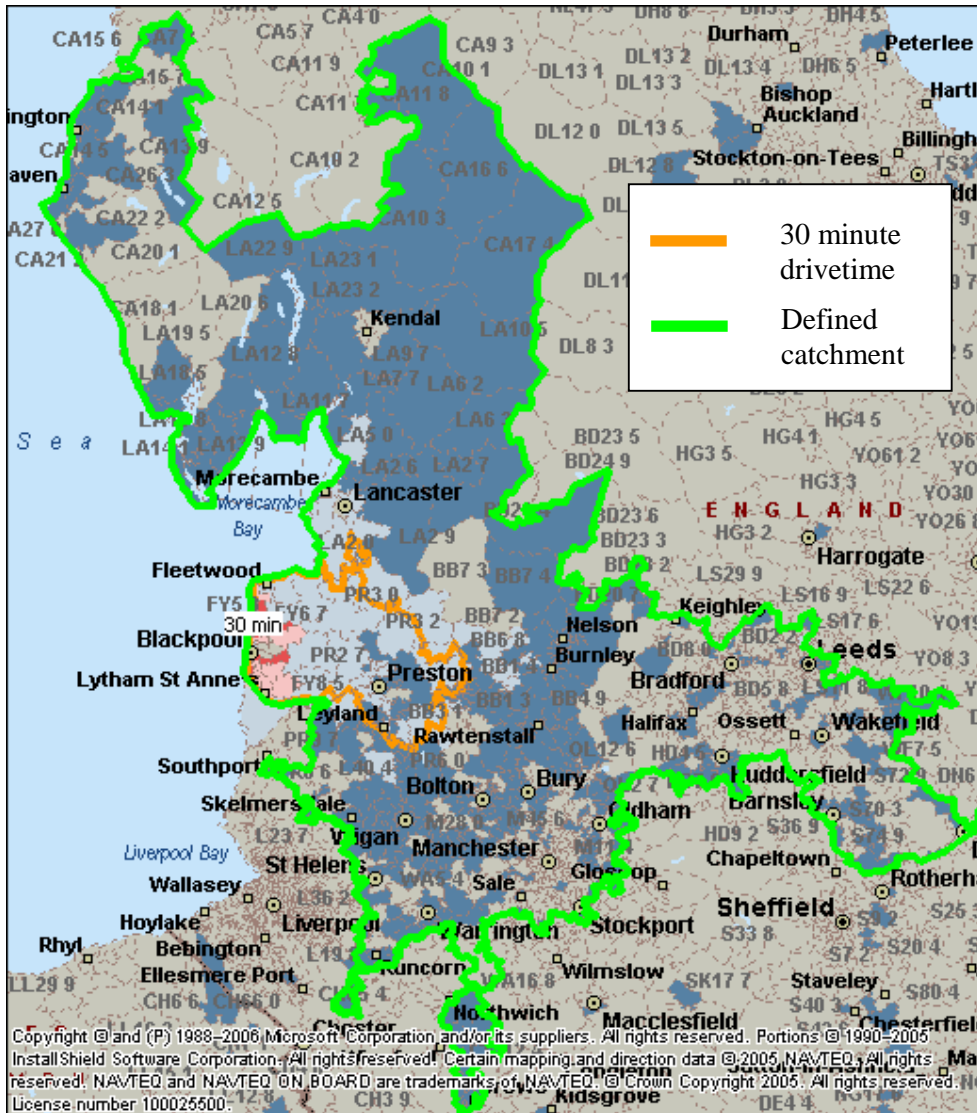


Figure 6: Blackpool Grand 30 minute drivetime

