

## Customer Satisfaction

### Summary

One of the key challenges for public-transport operators is to keep their customers satisfied. Low levels of customer satisfaction are normally a result of a mismatch between customer expectations and experiences.

As public-transport operators should perceive the needs and expectations of their passengers and customers as crucial, managing the expectations and perceptions has become increasingly important, and is crucial in the development of public-transport companies from simple providers of transport to providers of a real service.

In this regard, public transport practitioners not only want to find out what their customers think, they also want to identify deficits in their services so that they can plan and implement measures for better service quality and improvements in customer satisfaction.

Customer-satisfaction surveys are useful tools to get a better idea about customer satisfaction on a more general level. Other measures, such as passenger advisory boards, can register more specific information.

### Aims, objectives

- Improve the satisfaction of customers and ensure that they bind with the company.
- Know the perception of public transport non-users and gain new customers.
- Use the collected information to identify and develop suitable measures to improve the customer satisfaction: If expectations are higher than experiences this means that system improvements are necessary; if expectations are lower than experiences, soft measures such as marketing and communication campaigns are more important.

#### IN PRACTICE

### Barcelona: Event campaign

Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (TMB) is responsible for public transport in the city of Barcelona, Spain and runs bus, tram and metro services in the city and the surrounding area. Due the fact that TMB is the only major public transport provider in Barcelona, its efforts in the areas of marketing and customer relations were slightly neglected over time. During the last decade, municipal authorities, together with TMB, wished to increase the satisfaction level of public transport users while recruiting new users of their services. To address a large number of customers and to gain new ones with a small budget was one of the challenges to be faced.

In 2006 and 2007, TMB initiated a co-branding relationship



with Primavera Sound, a prominent annual music festival in the city of Barcelona. "Primavera Sound goes down to the metro" was a non-intrusive campaign which was designed to benefit both the festival organisers and TMB. Some concerts were held at metro stations and TMB provided all-night, non-stop service when concerts were performed after midnight. The event was promoted with a poster campaign and a special event website.

"Primavera Sound goes down to the metro" reinforced a strong link with the target group of Barcelona's alternative young people and showed that creativeness can be a substitute for money.

### Useful hints

- Operating new vehicles or services is not enough to ensure customer satisfaction. There are several factors affecting customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction surveys together with related tools can be used to identify them.
- Use consultants if there is not enough in-house knowledge.
- Simply collecting data on customer satisfaction is not enough. A company needs to know how to interpret the information and translate it into measures to improve customer satisfaction.
- A good strategy to improve satisfaction is the use of campaigns linking events with the use of public transport, making it an integral part of the daily lives of citizens.
- Customer satisfaction should always be linked to the use of public transport and the possibility to switch to other modes.
- It's also important to know how non-users perceive public transport, as this is a key to the service's potential.



## Possible problems

- Budget: Improving customer satisfaction is not always considered the first priority in the public transport sector.
- As there is still inadequate independent marketing and/or customer-relation departments within public transport companies, there is insufficient information about customers. Therefore, public transport companies are unable to realise their potential.
- The prevailing thinking among public transport operators is that most patrons are, and will remain, captive users who have no viable alternatives to public transport.
- To address a large number of customers with a small budget is one of the challenges to be faced.
- Customer-satisfaction surveys need appropriate methods to avoid measuring only prejudices.

## IN PRACTICE

### Wiener Linien: Passenger advisory board

In 2004, Wiener Linien established a passenger-advisory board. It is designed to secure and develop the customer focus for all the company's activities. Wiener Linien has designed the board to represent a cross-section of the population. It consists of 16 members selected from various groups. To ensure independence, selection follows a general-application process organised by an external consultancy. The aim was to represent all social groups, both genders and — if possible — all geographical areas of the city.

The passenger-advisory board acts as the voice of the passengers. It collects opinions from customers and passes them on to the company. This way the passengers have a medium that works directly with the company and thus can pass on their requests more effectively. For Wiener Linien, the board provides an opportunity to get in contact with the customer in a constructive way and discuss requests, suggestions and criticisms directly with the affected customers. At least one executive director of the Wiener Linien participates in each of the meetings.

The objective of the passenger-advisory board is to represent the interests of existing and potential Wiener Linien customers. Furthermore, it advises Wiener Linien in issues concerning the schedule, network and tariffs. In its role as a medium for customers it also submits proposals for change and improvement.

*(Further information regarding in practice (Case Studies) can be found on the SPUTNIC website <http://www.sputnicproject.eu/sputnic-meetings.php>.)*