

Surveys and More

Summary

The provision of high-quality public transport services, their further development and improvement require sufficient knowledge about customers and potential customers, especially regarding their expectations and experiences. The same is true with marketing and customer-relations measures.

Surveys and other instruments should be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data on people's behaviour, attitudes, expectations and levels of knowledge. There are, indeed, a high number of different survey tools and methodologies that can be used to collect such data.

Making the outcomes of such surveys available to a wider audience enables companies and individuals to compare between different operators, cities and countries and to learn from one another.

Aims, objectives

- Collect useful information about people's travel behaviour, needs and expectations.
- Check the gap between experiences and expectations and identify measures to close these gaps.
- Collect data on a number of basic, comparable variables such as various modes of transport.
- Collect data in long-term studies to identify changes and the success of improvement strategies.
- Formulate suggestions to improve public transport, e.g., by changing the network and/or schedules.
- Assist decision makers with adjusting and enhancing both their long-term strategies and current operations.
- Help public-transport decision makers to improve their services and to increase ridership.
- Collect arguments for the promotion of public transport both internally and externally.

IN PRACTICE

URTP (Romanian Association of Public Transport) – Statistical Yearbook

The size and structure of operators and public transport organisations in Romania is extremely varied. As part of its efforts to establish high standards for all its members, and to help them with the operation of their services, URTP has been publishing a statistical yearbook with public-transport data for a number of years. This book provides a foundation for well-backed decision making by both large and small sized operators. The data is provided by URTP members and then put together by URTP in a standardised format.

ANUAR STATISTIC 2007



Anuarul statistic al operatorilor de transport public din România, editat de Uniunea Română de Transport Public

The statistical yearbook makes key figures available for all operators and interested stakeholders, and supports decision making by giving a continuously updated, comprehensive and realistic image of the public-transport situation. By publishing statistics annually, trends and comparisons help those seeking to find answers to questions, particularly those from smaller public transport providers.

The book provides valuable knowledge for URTP's cooperation with governmental institutions and local authorities. By providing such wide and detailed information, URTP plays a vital role in helping them adjust and enhancing their long-term strategies and current operations. Additionally, there is the goal of providing a database to harmonise the operators' activities and to meet high quality standards.

Useful hints

- Work together with local councils and use other tools to create trust and increase response rates of surveys.
- Try to measure actual behaviour (e.g. travel diaries) instead of hypothetical behaviour.
- Learn from the example of successful public-transport operators
- Communicate survey outcomes with other operators and city authorities.
- Involve consultants regarding data collection and analysis (if insufficient knowhow is available within an organisation).
- Use collected data and survey outcomes to promote the further use of public transport.
- Set clear targets for surveys.
- Repeat surveys regularly to get a better insight into changes of travel behaviour and new developments.
- The methodology and contents of surveys should always be determined by how the collected data will be used.

Possible problems

- Budget: Improving customer satisfaction is not always the first priority in the public transport sector.
- As there are still too few independent marketing and/or customer-relation departments among 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

Vilnius: SWOT analysis

In order to support the development of its transport system and to strengthen the position of public transport within the transport system, the municipal authorities of Vilnius in collaboration with local public transport operators, implemented a SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis in their city. The survey and analysis focussed on transport and public transport issues in the Lithuanian capital. Basic driving powers were identified. The main objective was to get a picture of the actual situation and to gain knowledge regarding possible developments and potentials.

The data was used to improve the public-transport network and timetables, as well as to get to know customers' requirements. According to the respondents, the most important improvements needed in public transport concern punctuality, service reliability, travel time, comfort, the network and passenger information.

To establish the distribution of passengers between transport regions of the city, the town carries out an annual survey of people at public-transport stops and via webpage www.vilniustransport.lt. Passengers are asked about their trips, transfers, tickets, travel time, comfort and mobility on a daily basis.

The share of people having a car has increased during recent decades. In 1995 only 191 people out of 1,000 owned a car. In 2007, 533 out of 1,000 people were motorised, and more than 50% of all people said traffic jams were a main concern in Vilnius. These figures emphasise traffic issues as a major problem in the city. To allow public transport to get through traffic jams, the city operates a number of special public transport lanes. This enables buses to drive on a separate lane and prevents them from being affected by slow or stationary traffic.

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