

The Influence of Travel Experience within Perceived Public Transport Quality

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Abstract : The perceived public transport quality is an important driver that influences both customer satisfaction and mobility choices. The competition among transport operators needs to improve the quality of the services and identify which attributes are perceived as relevant by passengers. Among the “traditional” public transport quality attributes there are, for example: travel and waiting time, regularity of the services, and ticket price. By contrast, there are some “non-conventional” attributes that could significantly influence customer satisfaction jointly with the “traditional” ones. Among these, the beauty/aesthetics of the transport terminals (e.g. rail station and bus terminal) is probably one of the most impacting on user perception. Starting from these considerations, the point stressed in this paper was if (and how much) the travel experience of the overall travel (e.g. how long is the travel, how many transport modes must be used) influences the perception of the public transport quality. The aim of this paper was to investigate the weight of the terminal quality (e.g. aesthetic, comfort and service offered) within the overall travel experience. The case study was the extra-urban Italian bus network. The passengers of the major Italian terminal bus were interviewed and the analysis of the results shows that about the 75% of the travelers, are available to pay up to 30% more for the ticket price for having a high quality terminal. A travel experience effect was observed: the average perceived transport quality varies with the characteristic of the overall trip. The passengers that have a “long trip” (travel time greater than 2 hours) perceived as “low” the overall quality of the trip even if they pass through a high quality terminal. The opposite occurs for the “short trip” passengers. This means that if a traveler passes through a high quality station, the overall perception of that terminal could be significantly reduced if he is tired from a long trip. This result is important and if confirmed through other case studies, will allow to conclude that the “travel experience impact” must be considered as an explicit design variable for public transport services and planning.

Keywords : transportation planning, sustainable mobility, decision support system, discrete choice model, design problem

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