

## What about the Travel Experience? Service Development in Public Transport Based on an Exploratory Survey on Instruments and Stakeholder Attitudes

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The paper aims to make the “travel experience” accessible to transport planning in general and public transport service development in particular. This dimension of mobility has so far been neglected by transport planning, while social-science mobility studies have had an analytical rather than practical approach to it. The paper proposes criteria to disaggregate and handle the “travel experience” in public transport development and examines how current industry practices take account of this subject. Media reports were analyzed to classify planning, marketing and customer care initiatives, and 22 case studies were analyzed regarding the organization, implementation and experiences made. The paper concludes that initiatives undertaken so far are mainly considered in terms of their publicity value, rather than their contribution to service development. A wide range of concepts is used at least occasionally, but only part of the experiential needs is targeted.

*Keywords:* Marketing, public relations, public transport, service development, travel experience, transport planning

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### 1. Introduction

As travel is an integral part of transport, one would expect that transport science has taken some interest in the various ways in which this basic activity can be performed and the different effects these forms of movement have on people and their travel decisions. However, this has, by and large, not been the case so far. For reasons discussed in detail elsewhere (Schiefelbusch 2008, 2010), a specific transport science world view has evolved which can be summed up as an abstract, rational and technical understanding of mobility. Travel demand is often considered as a “derived” phenomenon, shaped and explained by time, cost and spatial factors only (Mokhtarian 2005, p.93, Crockett/Hounsell 2005, p.536). From this perspective, studying the journey itself appears to be of secondary importance.

On the other hand, the act of traveling and the characteristics of different travel environments have been discussed in studies from a psychological, ethnographic, cultural or social science per

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spective. However, their limitation lies in their predominantly analytical focus (in other words the analysis and modeling of behavior with limited interest in the policy and planning implications) and the heterogeneity of the approaches used, which complicates accessing, comparing and transferring the findings of this research. This has made it difficult to transfer their results into the terminologies, models and processes of transport planning.

The present paper seeks to improve knowledge on the experiential dimension of travel by public transport and to provide a framework for further analytical and conceptual work.

Before the empirical work is presented, however, the main concepts and terminologies used in the empirical work will be introduced briefly in section 2. This is kept intentionally short; readers interested in more details are welcome to consult other publications by the author (2008, 2010). This part is followed (section 3) by a review of important studies in related fields. The focus of this paper is on the empirical work, and specifically on the results of an in-depth case study analysis on the development and implementation of different travel experience measures (section 6). The concluding section discusses the experiences made and suggests possible activities for further research and development.

## 2. The “travel experience” as a theoretical and empirical concept

### *General definitions*

As described below, the “travel experience” is a multi-faceted phenomenon which can mean many different things to the travelers. Journeys may be experienced as stress or waste of time, an occasion to reflect or sphere of transition between activities and also as an activity in itself. But it is also multi-faceted in terms of the determinants that can be used to shape it. Before these different aspects are discussed (section 3), it is certainly useful to develop a “core” definition of the key term “travel experience”. We may define this as the aggregate of sensual impressions a driver or passenger experiences during the course of his or her journey.

This is open for a variety of elements causing these impressions - both “hard” (like service speed, frequency, cost) and “soft” ones (like staff attitude), and all kinds of “experiences”, hence stark impressions as well as more subtle ones<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, both the “active” driver and the more “passive” passenger may be subjected to a travel experience during all parts of a journey, including access/egress, change of modes and breaks or stopovers.

It is important to note that the travel experience of course also depends on the mobile person’s subjective perception, which is in turn influenced by personal and situational characteristics (Anable/Gatensleben 2005, p.178). These include for example the personal affinity to the means of transport, situational characteristics such as purpose of trip, personal fitness, mental disposition and also the travel environment from a social perspective (number of other passengers, relationship to them and their behavior, in turn influenced by general cultural practices of using the public space of the transport system).

These different factors are illustrated in figure 1. Without underestimating the role of other approaches, the remainder of this paper will be primarily concerned with the dimensions of the travel experience which can be influenced by the service provider.

To deal with the travel experience - a phenomenon on the customers’ side -, another definition for the activities available to a service provider to shape it is necessary as well. These activities can be summarized as “travel experience measures” or “schemes” and defined as elements of a

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<sup>1</sup> In other languages, there may be possibilities to express this better without creating such ambiguities. In German, for example, it is possible to distinguish between “Erlebnis” (the spectacular experience) and “Erleben” (the act of experiencing). But in order to stay with a concise English term, the “travel experience” is used in this paper.

transport service which are provided during the journey (including access/egress and waiting times) in order to create emotional impressions, entertainment or experiences, and presuming that these elements are usually provided with positive intentions, one might add with the aim of a more attractive and successful product.

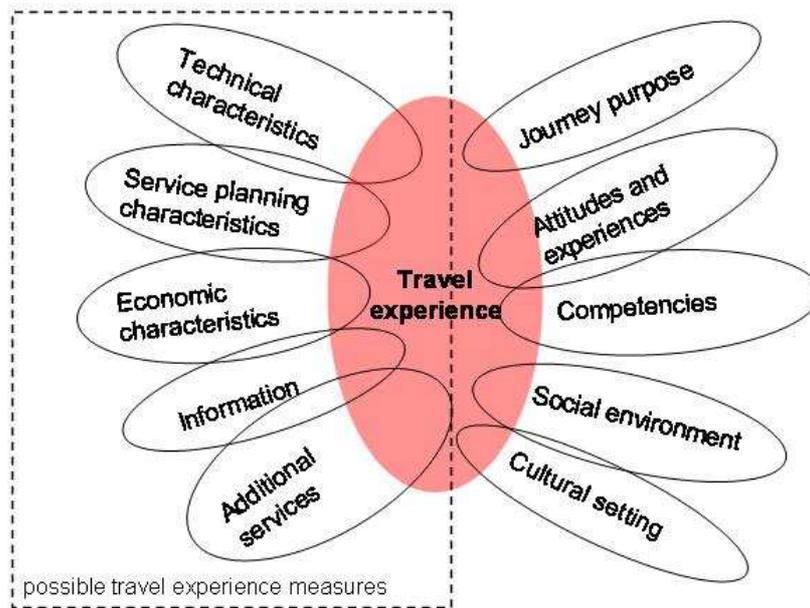


Figure 1. Influences on the travel experience and "measures" to influence it (author's depiction)

This definition implies also that these activities are conducted by, on behalf of or at least with the consent of the service provider, although the travel experience can of course be shaped by the passengers themselves as well (cf. Watts 2008, Currie/Stanley 2008, p.540 seq.). It also implies a link to a concrete journey, hence general marketing/publicity activities conducted by transport providers, for instance through advertising, would not be included.

A distinction between the customers' and the providers' view on the travel experience should also be maintained in looking at the individual elements of this topic. In the next paragraphs, a summary of the potential elements of travel experience measures are described. The travelers' experiential needs are not discussed in this paper in detail (see Schiefelbusch 2010, 2012), but the link between the kinds of experience provided and the range of users' expectations is discussed in section 6.

#### *Travel experience elements*

How can now the travel experience be "designed"? And who can do it? Turning first to the latter question, the remainder of this paper will - following the definition given above - deal with activities of the transport provider or agents acting on its behalf. But it should be remembered that there are other possible "designers" as well, including regulators setting the framework, urban planners shaping the environment of the journey, the individual user him- or herself and also other travelers with whom they share the ride. This provides important, and challenging, framework conditions for the development of "travel experiences".

Further to these characteristics, another challenge lies in the fact that the customer needs and expectations usually cannot be addressed directly. Instead, the provider can develop its service in

many different ways, choosing for example the means of transport, interior design of vehicles, the provision of additional services and associate different conditions with using the service.

Based on the available literature and the author's empirical and conceptual work, 24 travel experience elements were identified as potentially relevant. These are shown with a definition in table 1. Concrete travel experience measures use one or more of these elements in many different designs and combinations.

**Table 1. Brief definition of the experience elements (author's depiction)**

Name of element	Description of element
Advance information and preparations	preparatory activities offered to provide assistance to travellers, but also create motivation to travel (relevant mainly for long/infrequent trips)
After the journey	activities offered after the journey to recreate the atmosphere, provide contact possibilities among the travellers or refresh memories
Atmosphere	directed at influencing the mood of the travellers - this may be done through the previous elements, but also other, less tangible activities
Audio	provision of announcements, music, entertainment and other acoustic effects
Comfort-related features	special features regarding physical comfort, temperature and ventilation, seat design, lighting etc.
Direct surroundings, stations	design features and services at stations, interchanges or as part of the transport infrastructure
Experience of movement	service features which permit a direct and particular experience of acceleration, deceleration, lateral force etc.
Cinema	photos/films shown on large screens, not adjustable to individual needs
Food and drink	provision of catering/food and drink during the journey (both to fulfil basic needs and to provide something to do during the journey)
Games, entertainment and information material	material provided either as part of the above or for the discretionary use by the travellers
Group spirit	measures which (partly as a sub-type of the above) aim to develop a feeling of "community" among the passengers present
Inter-modal elements	services in which a change of mode is used to provide variation and added value
Landscape	characteristics of the wider environment through which the journey goes, and service features which facilitate perception of this environment
Live events	similar as before, but "larger" activities, usually directed at (or addressing as a matter of fact) all travellers present in a vehicle or station (like concerts or performances)
Participatory elements	sub-type of the above categories in which the passengers are invited to participate directly or conduct their own activities, thus going beyond the "passive vicinity" typical for normal public transport journeys
Sale or hiring of useful things	distribution of material or tools either for general use or for a specific event or destination served
Short breaks	short breaks during a journey, with or without change of vehicle, necessitated by timetable or for other purposes
Side-events	longer breaks during which a part of the journey programme takes place
Souvenirs	provision of souvenirs (to commemorate the trip) or presents
Staff	activities conducted by staff (either regular on-board/station personnel or other staff recruited for a specific purpose) - note: other travel experience measures may be based on staff activity as well
Type of vehicle	use of unusual vehicles (e.g. historic, open-top)
Vehicle interior	design of vehicle interior, either permanent or temporary
Vehicle exterior	design of vehicle exterior, either permanent or temporary
Video	visual or audio-visual information and entertainment, provided through small screens and thus accessible (and modifiable) at a personal or small group level

### 3. Links to current mobility research

With few exceptions, the topic of this paper has not found much research attention so far. The reasons for this are described in section 1 and in more detail in Schiefelbusch (2008, 2010) and shall not be repeated here. However, this work does have links to several other strands of recent mobility research, which shall be briefly discussed in the present section.

As already described in the previous section, the term "travel experience" refers to the perception of the journey, while "travel experience measures" are the activities to influence this experience. The following review focuses on the former dimension, because this is by far the dominant perspective in existing research, while the remainder of the paper is mainly concerned with the latter.

Perhaps the most relevant is the growing interest in how travel time is used in different contexts. While there has been a large number of cultural studies as well as literary works on the act of traveling from a social and cultural perspective (exemplified by the seminal book of Wolfgang Schivelbusch (1977) or Löfgren (2008)), this interest has for a long time been pursued by scholars from the social sciences and cultural studies rather than transport and mobility. During the last decade, however, transport research has become interested in this issue and sought to provide both quantitative data as well as information on the social practices involved. Several papers by Lyons/Urry (2005), Lyons/Jain (2007) and Jain/Lyons (2008) have presented empirical findings based on a British survey of train passengers, complemented by Watts (e.g. 2008) ethnographic studies on train journeys. Other works that covered (sometimes specific) activities during journeys include Flaig/Kill 2004, Tillema/Schwanen 2009, Berry/Hamilton 2010. These studies do not use the aggregate concept of the "travel experience". But by looking at en-route activities, these studies demonstrate that (a) travel is not endured passively, rather, things like reading, working and even window-gazing are performed and (b) also appreciated by the travelers. Those who work even consider their time use in part "productive" - they tend to ascribe a lower level of productivity to travel time than to office work, but still see value in it. Even short trips and window gazing are to some extent perceived as useful (cf. in particular Lyons/Jain 2007).

Apart from the empirical evidence, this body of work is mainly concerned with the implications of these findings for modeling and appraisal procedures - as Jain and Lyons (2008) have pointed out, the notion of travel time as an occasion for other activities challenges key assumptions of traditional procedures and policy assumptions. They propose to consider three "useful uses" of travel time: (a) as "transition time", a space to switch between activities, prepare and reconcile, (b) as "time out", an occasion for recreation and (c) the conscious use of travel time for work or other productive activities. Although their work does not discuss much what this means for vehicle and service design, one may take this as a starting point to consider what can be done to address these needs in the most efficient way.

The same can be said about the possible value of travel as an activity in its own right from which sensual stimulation, entertainment or other benefits may be derived. Inspired by the work of Mokhtarian and colleagues in particular (e.g. Mokhtarian/Salomon 2001, Mokhtarian 2005, Ory/Mokhtarian 2005), several studies have sought to capture the "intrinsic" value of travel (Heinze 1979) and measure the role of this phenomenon in quantitative terms (e.g. the contributions to the themed issue vol. 39 no. 2-3 of *Transportation Research A* and Diana 2008). The empirical work of Mokhtarian/Salomon (2001, p.707seq.) showed that across the different ways of traveling for fun or "for the sake of it", this was practiced "often" by between 1 and 22% and 5 to 55% "occasionally" of the respondents - the highest value being recorded for "driving out of the way to see beautiful scenery" and the lowest "to show off a means of transportation". These figures applied to car driving only, and public transport was given the lowest, but still remarkable, level of attractiveness in this survey. Apart from these impressive values, Mokhtarian's and Salomon's discussion as well as their use of 13 different categories of travel with some kind of intrinsic ele-

ment shows the challenges of disaggregating “purposeful” from “intrinsic” travel. Vice versa one may conclude that the intrinsic element is also present in many journeys recorded as purposeful with normal empirical methods.

A different approach to the same topic is provided by psychological researchers whose focus are the sensual impressions created through acceleration/deceleration, lateral movement, the visual impressions created by the surroundings etc. These influences are, on the one hand, a source of stress and fatigue, but do also provide stimulation and excitement (Schulz et al 2000, Redmond/Mokhtarian 2001, Handy et al 2005, Steg 2005, Dick 2009, Basmajian 2010). But while the interest in travel time use is so far focusing on public transport, studies on “travel as an activity” have concentrated on car, bike and motor bike use. (cf. Lois/ Lopez-Saez 2009, Steg 2005, Gardner/ Abraham 2007).

The social sciences have provided another important contribution through the link of lifestyle and milieu studies with mobility. While the disaggregating of travel demand based on socio-demographic data or on travel behavior has also found extensive use in transport research (Pipkin 1986), the development of “mobility typologies” based on lifestyles and/or attitudes to mobility has progressed since the late 1990s (e.g. Götz et al 1998, Diana/Mokhtarian 2009, for a synthesis Zahl/Götz 2001, Hunecke 2009, v. Acker et al 2010). Across the different approaches and sub-groups considered in these studies, one common result is that the explanatory value of attitudes, subjective perceptions and qualitative characteristics of travel options is much greater than evident from other empirical approaches used so far.

Other strands of social-science mobility research emphasize travel as part of everyday life. Following the quantitative growth of travel on the one hand and the diversification of lifestyles on the other, the role of mobility for society has grown (Rajé 2007) and brought new mobility patterns e.g. for leisure pursuits, long-distance commuting and multi-local family life (e.g. Cantwell et al 2009, Schneider/Collet 2010, Urry 2007, Jakobsson Bergstad et al 2011). These tasks require to reconsider the role of traveling and requirements for creating a suitable travel environment.

A relatively important stream of related research - in terms of publications -, and probably the one closest to a technological and economic planning approach addresses the definition, measurement and perception of service quality (Becker 2003, Werner 2001, Hensher/Stanley 2003, Friman/Fellesson 2009, Friman 2010 to name just a few). However, most of these have aimed to capture “quality” by disaggregating it into concrete elements (although they may be re-aggregated later on), and in doing so focused on measurable parameters, be they obtained through user surveys or by monitoring supply (cf. Rietveld 2005, Brenck/Mitusch 2008). Reasons for this are both the industry’s tradition of “quantitative thinking” (cf. section 1 and Schiefelbusch 2010) and the need to consider “quality” as a criterion for the operator’s performance assessment in public service contracts (cf. section 7). As in many travel behavior surveys, the experiential dimension is often not considered. But it can nevertheless be important as a “delight factor” according to the Kano model<sup>2</sup>.

More interesting, therefore, some works at the interface between psychology and transport geography provided comparative analyses of the ambience and appeal of different modes, an approach that has similarities to the travel experience (Klühspies 1999, Lois/ Lopez-Saez 2009) (cf. also Guiver 2007). Despite the different terminologies used, the various studies confirm the relative disadvantage of public transport compared to the car: Anable/Gatensleben (2005), analyzing “instrumental” and “affective factors” in the assessment of different modes found that, while overall respondents made differences between modes, journey purposes and factors, public

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<sup>2</sup> Put simply, the Kano model structures elements of a product or service into (a) “given” features which are taken for granted by customers, but whose absence leads to strong dissatisfaction, (b) “wanted” features who are explicitly demanded and whose absence leads to (less strong) dissatisfaction (c) “delight” features who are seen as beyond what can be normally expected, and whose provision is noted as a positive surprise. (cf. Kano 1984).

transport received the worst ratings in nearly every criterion, both by users and non-users. Ettema et al (2010) applied the concept of "subjective well-being" (SWB), which focuses on an individual's general satisfaction, to transport and conclude that travel may influence SWB by giving access to activities, through the level of stress the travelers are exposed to, but also through the "affects experienced during traveling itself" (Ettema et al 2010, p.728). In their review of studies on the "enjoyment of commute" as well as their own work, (Paez/Whalen 2010) again find the least positive valuations expressed by public transport users.

Despite their heterogeneity, these approaches have in common that they consider travel beyond a merely instrumental perspective. Although the term "travel experience" has so far rarely been used, they provide information about how mobility is perceived and "used" apart from getting from A to B. Hence these works also offer opportunities to think about how transport providers (and other stakeholders) should react to these findings. In this respect, however, a limitation of many studies lies in their analytical focus.

While new analyses and more comprehensive descriptions of mobility are without doubt necessary in this field, they do not automatically offer concrete suggestions for transport policy and planning and (Zahl/Götz 2001, p.55f, Hunecke 2009, p.430). The present paper aims to help closing this gap by analyzing developments in the industry as well as proposing a conceptual and terminological framework (for more details on this see also Schiefelbusch 2010, 2012) that helps to address this field further.

#### 4. Research methodology

A survey of media reports was conducted to understand the level of use and the structure of the travel experience measures employed. Reports in industry journals, specialized newsletters and a literature review undertaken in a related research project were analyzed. Taken together, the information sources included in the survey covered all kinds of public transport in the German-speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) in the period from 1999 to 2004. The selected media covered all types of public transport and settings (cf. table 4 for classifications used), although a modest bias towards urban transport and cities with urban rail systems was probably incurred because of the reporting focus of some media. In the absence of specialist rural transport sources, this had to be accepted.

Each news entry was checked whether it included elements relevant from a travel experience perspective, and if so, classified regarding its experience elements, using the structure shown in figure 3. In line with the definitions above, it was decided to classify features which go beyond normal industry standards (regarding for example vehicle equipment, information systems, staffing) of the time as relevant, but not those which have already become "normal" and thus unlikely to be noticed by an average customer. As a general rule, a feature's relevance for the travel experience was taken as given in case of doubt. The number of such cases was taken into account in the analysis.

Due to resource limitations, this classification was limited to the information included in the respective news entry. The overall use of travel experience measures has probably been underestimated as a result (see also section 7).

The analysis of case studies was conducted to obtain comprehensive information on the planning and implementation of travel experience measures, including feedback from users. The 22 examples were selected based on the results of the media survey with a view to covering all experience elements (cf. table 2), the most common or characteristic measures and possibly all transport modes and sub-markets (local, long-distance, scheduled, special, occasional services).

**Table 2. Experience elements addressed in the case studies (author's depiction)**

Information	Entertainment	Service	Vehicle	Environment
Audio 1 3 9 10 17 19		Food and drink 1 4 8 9 11 16 17	Interior 1 4 5 6 8 9 11 14 17	Direct surroundings, stations 6 8 9 14
Video 8 15 17		Sale or hiring of useful things 4 8	Exterior 1 3 5 6 8 10 11 14	Landscape 2 3 4 12 13 16 17
Cinema		Souvenirs 9 19	Type of vehicle 2 4 6 8 12 16	Short breaks 2 4 8 17
Staff 1 3 4 9 11 17 19			Comfort-related features 11	Inter-modal elements 2 4 8 17
Advance information and preparations 4	Games, entertainment and information material 4 5 9 13 17		Experience of movement 2 8 12	Side-events (major stops en route) 3 4 6 8 17
	Live events 6 7 8 9 14 16			
	Participatory elements			
	After the journey 18			
	Group spirit 8 16 17			
Atmosphere 1 4 5 6 8 9 10 17				

Note: Numbers shown for each element refer to the case studies discussed in section 5

Information on the case studies was collected through the analysis of additional documents and one or more expert interviews per case (usually with people directly involved in the case study's implementation). All interviews were conducted according to a semi-structured questionnaire which included a description of the case study, reasons for its implementation, the planning and preparation phase (organization of material, funding, institutions involved), experiences made during the process, customer feedback, evaluation activities and the interviewee's opinion on the future use of such measures.

The interviews were transcribed and a content analysis undertaken. Information on the different topics of interest was coded and analyzed using the software Atlas.ti, developed for qualitative research in the social sciences.

Additional information was collected where practicable through participant observation, other site visits and analysis of a video documentary of one of the case studies. As most case studies were analyzed well after their implementation, information on user reactions was limited to what the provider's monitoring activities had revealed. In most cases this was only to methodologically unsophisticated, anecdotal information. Only in three of the case studies had a specific survey of user attitudes or reactions been carried out.

## 5. Results of the media survey

Information was sought on all types of land-based public transport services. A total of 357 cases was identified. While about half of them were set in a regular service context, tours, special scheduled services (accessible for certain groups only) and private hire/charter played a key role for the development of travel experience elements. Information on the temporal setting of the mea-

asures (and hence distribution between commuting, education, shopping and other trip purposes) was not always available, but as an indicative classification, the following types can be identified:

- permanent features or longer-term modifications to vehicles or stations, available for all user groups at any time
- commuting hours only were rarely targeted
- a significant share were practiced in the off-peak hours (either midday during the week, evenings or weekends) for the practical reason of greater tranquility and more space in the vehicles<sup>3</sup>
- certain types of measures are limited to certain occasions (such as Christmas, local events, trade fairs, natural phenomena).

**Table 3. Frequency and complexity of travel experience elements (author's depiction)**

Rank	Title of element	Number of registrations of the element in column 2 in the 357 measures	Experience element in column 2 is part of ... % of the 357 measures	Measures with the experience element in column 2 have on average ... of experience elements
1	Type of vehicle	87	24.4	2.7
2	Vehicle interior	86	24.1	3.5
3	Staff	70	19.6	3.8
4	Live events	64	17.9	2.7
5	Landscape	58	16.0	3.6
6	Food and drink	57	16.0	3.4
7	Vehicle exterior	50	14.0	4.1
8	Direct surroundings, stations	44	12.3	3.5
9	Atmosphere	40	11.2	5.1
10	Audio	39	10.9	2.8
11	Experience of movement	31	8.7	3.8
12	Side-events	30	8.4	5.6
13	Inter-modal elements	27	7.6	5.1
14	Short breaks	22	6.2	5.6
15	Souvenirs	21	5.9	2.5
15	Participatory elements	21	5.9	4.6
17	Group spirit	20	5.6	5.4
18	Sale or hiring of useful things	15	4.2	3.9
19	Games, entertainment and information material	12	3.4	5.0
19	After the journey	12	3.4	4.5
21	Video	11	3.1	3.5
22	Comfort-related features	8	2.2	2.6
23	Advance information and preparations	7	2.0	4.7
24	Cinema	6	1.7	1.2

<sup>3</sup> The number of cases targeting explicitly the peak hours was marginal; of the rest, precise information was often not available. Fixed art installations, technology-based entertainment, information and sometimes catering can be assumed to be offered throughout the day. Special tours, live acts and the like are usually offered outside the peak hours, in evenings or at weekends. Private hire is available anytime, but can also be assumed to be used mainly in times when leisure activities take place.

A disproportionately high number of schemes were identified in the urban rail sector, and consequently fewer in main line rail and bus transport. The long-distance segment was represented by some main line rail as well as coach services<sup>4</sup>. On the whole, examples from rural public transport were less numerous than this sector's share of passengers carried. This is probably due to the data sources used, the greater orientation towards captive riders and difficulties in organizing travel experience activities in rural areas.

The available information does not permit to "weigh" the identified activities according to their size (in terms of participants, duration or other), although there are clearly differences in terms of impact between permanent features and one-off activities performed during a few journeys only.

In the 357 experience measures identified in the survey, the total number of experience elements registered was 838, giving an average of 2.35 per case<sup>5</sup>. In 43% of the cases only one experience element was registered, while the maximum number of elements per case was 13. If more than one experience element was identified in the same measure, each of them was assumed to be of equal importance, based on the consideration that the often limited information available was not sufficient to make judgments on their visibility or impact.

A large variety was observed in the use of the 24 experience elements. Table 3 shows the frequency of registrations and the share of measures including the respective element. On the whole, vehicle-based elements are the most common, followed by staff-based entertainment, information and service. The landscape and direct surroundings are also important elements of experience-related services.

## 6. Results from the case study analysis

The 22 case studies were selected to include schemes identified as typical or frequently used in the media survey. They also cover a wide variety of transport modes and service types - see figure 5 for details on their setting in terms of service type, location etc.

1. "Nightcruiser" Hamburg: special bus route with night club atmosphere (music, illumination and limited catering) linking nightlife locations<sup>6</sup>
2. "Moorexpress mit Torfkahn": offer combining regional train and punting boat service for day excursions
3. Künstlerdorflinie: trial tourist service offering comprehensive information and combined offers with other leisure activities
4. "Kultur on Tour": Mini package tours to cultural destinations using regional rail services
5. "Spatzenbahn" Gera: tram with permanently installed games for children used for scheduled and private hire services
6. "Kultourbahn" Bremen: cultural performances offered in a tram vehicle rebuilt for this purpose
7. Lecture in the "Schönbuchbahn": poet's lecture in a regional train unit as a surprise in normal service
8. "Traumbusrevue" Gütersloh: as part of an educational project in a secondary school, pupils developed dreams and visions on bus travel and implemented them together with the local transport companies in a special event

<sup>4</sup> As measures could be applied in different modes simultaneously, the total here is 451. Of these, approx. 40% were set in light rail/tram systems, 10% in urban heavy rail, 26% in urban/regional bus services, 13% in regional mainline rail, 5% long-distance mainline rail and coach, 3% ships/ferries.

<sup>5</sup> Of the 838 registrations, 6% were made as "cases of doubt" due to inconclusive information.

<sup>6</sup> The information in this section is based on the situation in spring 2007.

9. Special programme in the “IGA-Express” 11 October 2003: Various entertainment and service features offered in a medium-distance train service on occasion of an event at the destination
10. “Celebrity announcements” in Essen: Announcement of stops and additional comments by a comedian or celebrity impersonator on an urban tram route
11. Luxury coach “Starckes Stück” of the Rhätische Bahn (RhB): specially rebuilt coach with modern luxury interior offered for private charter
12. “Railrider”: open-top coach (rebuilt freight wagon) used on selected scheduled journeys of the RhB as well as for private hire
13. Route information provided by RhB: various solutions to provide information on the scenery along the line (printed window-gazer guides, recorded and personal announcements)
14. “Kunstlinien” Essen 2002: exhibition of different works of art and art performances in vehicles and stations of the public transport system of Essen as well as some other locations, curated by local museum
15. TV on board the Regiobus Hannover: technical upgrading of buses used on regional services to show live TV sports programmes. One screen per vehicle visible in rear part only.
16. “Ebbelwei-Expresß” Frankfurt/M: specially rebuilt fleet of old trams where local drinks and small catering are offered on a city sightseeing service or on private hire tours
17. Coach tour to the International Horticultural Exhibition (IGA) Rostock 28 May 2003 with special programme, service and decoration
18. “Herzliche Grüße” in Erfurt: passengers greet their friends over the operator’s public address system on Valentine’s day

**Table 4. Setting of the case studies (author’s depiction)**

Target groups	not explicitly specified	com-muters	chil-dren/young people	fami-lies	leisure traffic in general	excursions, event visitors
case no.	7 8 10 14 15 18 20	21	1 5 19 22	9 19	1 6 11 12 16	2 3 4 9 17
size of party (users of experience element)	individuals	small groups		all passengers in the vehicle		
case no.	7 9 13 14 20 21 22	2 5 7 9 14 21 22		1 3 4 6 7 8 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20		
duration	hours	days	weeks	months	permanent	
case no.	1 2 6 7 8 9 11 16 18 19	4 17	10 14 22	21	3 5 12 13 15 20	
spatial setting	urban transport		suburban/regional transport		long distance	overnight tours
case no.	1 5 6 8 10 14 16 18 19 20 22		2 3 4 7 9 11 12 13 15 17 21		9 11 13 17	none
mode/ vehicle type	minibus	urban bus	regional bus/coach	tram/light rail/metro		mainline rail
case no.	none	1 8 14 18 20 22	3 8 15 17	5 6 10 14 16 18 20 22		2 4 7 9 11 12 13 19 21
formal type of service	scheduled service for general public	scheduled service targeted at specific market	publicly accessible special trip	excursion	private hire	package tour
case no.	5 7 9 10 12 13 14 15 18 20 21 22	1 2 3 16	6 8 11 12 19	4 13 17	11	none

Notes: multiple allocation permitted - “duration” refers to the individual application, not the total time it is provided as a feature of the service.

19. Christmas train of S-Bahn Berlin: historical train with decoration, catering, music and Santa Claus giving small presents to children, public and private tours for groups
20. Support of bookcrossing activities by the public transport operator in Nürnberg
21. English course on a commuter service of RBS Solothurn
22. SWU-Ferientour: treasure hunt for children in Ulm offered during the summer holidays to get to know the city and learn to use public transport

The case studies cover most experience elements at least once as shown in table 2 above. The diagram shows the different experience elements described already in table 1, this time allocated to five main areas (first row). The numbers shown in each cell of the table indicate that the case study with the respective number (see list above) targets the respective experience element.

The following sections sum up the case study analysis. Except for the next section, which discusses the experiential needs addressed in the examples based on an assessment by the author, the statements are summaries of the information obtained from the interviews.

#### *Experiential needs addressed*

Based on a synthesis of relevant studies on mobility behavior, the author has identified 13 criteria of experience-related needs (for details see Schiefelbusch 2008, 2010, 2012). This list includes several items related to comfort and travel time use, but in particular issues arising from the social, psychological and physiological dimension of travel. A profile of the measure's "experiential attractiveness" and a point score can be derived (see box below for procedure, for details see Schiefelbusch 2008, p.203seq, 2012).

Figure 6 shows the results of this assessment for the 22 case studies. It is evident that the criteria "Transport function", "Communication and contact possibilities" and "Entertainment and stimulation" are targeted by more than half of the case studies. Activities promoting travel time use ("Other practical use...") are also relatively common. These criteria are also those where public transport already performs well in comparison to the car mainly because its users are relieved from driving duties and share their ride with others (Klühspies 2001). Considering this, the much fewer cases offering "relaxation" and/or "comfort" are surprising, but this can be explained by the operators' strong interest in the "public visibility" of their activities.

The numbers shown at the bottom of Table 5 are to be used with caution due to the limited sample size and scope for subjective influences in the assessment process. However, it is evident that those criteria which are closely associated with the individual ownership and use of a vehicle ("freedom", "aggression", "partner") are also least addressed by the measures reviewed here. To a lesser extent this is also true for "privacy" and "physiological stimulation", given the relatively high number of examples where these criteria are only in part addressed. Those dimensions which target the social role and status of the citizen ("image" and "identity") are targeted to some extent, but are likely to have only limited impact - it has to be borne in mind that a number of case studies had specific target groups and probably only marginal impact in other parts of society.

**Assessment process:** In short, one point (shown as “+” in the figure) is given for each criterion positively influenced by the measure under review. Negative points (“-”) indicate that the measure has negative impacts on the respective criterion. Half points are given where the measure’s impacts on the parameter is of secondary nature in proportion to other effects.

A total point score can be established by summing up the individual valuations (with negative values offsetting positive ones). The more criteria are addressed, the higher the score and thus the “emotional attractiveness” will be. Weighting factors may be added later to distinguish between the criteria provided that suitable data on customer preference is available.

Rules for the classification have been drafted to ensure consistency. Generally speaking, the assessment is based on an analysis of the measure’s design and (planned) implementation and the likely effects this has on each criterion. For example, seating arrangements that facilitate individual seating and separation from the direct environment were considered as favoring privacy. Image/prestige can be addressed if the measure offers a particularly high level of comfort and/or if it is marketed as a premium, “prestigious” service. Identity/meaning is addressed if the measure contributes - in the passenger’s view - to a meaningful, satisfactory life or symbolizes values with which s/he identifies him/herself. For better reliability, assessments should be done independently by several persons to be reconciled later on.

It is important to evaluate only the measure in question, not the transport service as such in which it is to take place (although this may well be analyzed separately). In future developments of the methodology, these rules may be elaborated further and based, where possible, on empirical findings (cf. concluding discussion)<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Objectives and driving forces*

One important finding from the case studies is that the development of new products or markets is only one of several possible reasons for the development of travel experience measures. The results of the case studies show that this is even a comparatively minor issue. Many activities are instead developed to improve the image and public visibility of their providers. A positive commercial result by increased ridership may be the ultimate aim, but direct effects of this kind are usually not expected.

The main stakeholders in the development of travel experience measures are the transport operator and what may be summed up as “experience providers”. This comprises for example cultural and educational institutions, tourism organizations, catering providers, marketing agencies and media to name the most important contributors. Both can be the driving force of a travel experience project, but external developments and events can give rise to such an activity as well. For “experience providers”, the reasons for becoming involved are mainly to make one’s activity known to the public, to stimulate a debate on an important issue, occasionally also to provide inspiration for the evolution of the transport system. Transport operators’ interest is motivated by better public visibility, hopes for an improved image and to communicate public transport as “fun”, to enter into new markets, provide entertainment etc. as added value of traveling by public transport.

<sup>7</sup> The full details of the assessment process including reasons for the valuation of each item can be found in the author’s PhD thesis online at <http://opus.kobv.de/tuberlin/volltexte/2008/1782/>

**Table 5. Experiential attractiveness of the case studies (author’s depiction)**

Case study	Image	Free	Aggr	Ident	Comm	Part	Priv	Phys	Relax	Comf	Trans	EntS	Pract	Criteria (from left to right): Image = Image and prestige - Free = Feeling of freedom and thrill - Aggr = Regulation of aggression and mental imbalances - Ident = Finding identity and meaning - Comm = Communication and contact possibilities - Part = Substitute friend or partner - Priv = Regulation of privacy - Phys = Physiological stimulation of movement - Relax = Relaxation - Comf = Comfort - Trans = Transport function - EntS = Entertainment and stimulation - Pract = Other practical use of travel time Impact: + = positive - = negative o = neutral (...) indicates reduced influence
1	+	+	-	+	+	o	-	+	(-)	(+)	(+)	o	+	
2	o	o	o	(+)	+	o	o	+	+	-	o	+	o	
3	o	o	o	(+)	o	o	o	o	o	o	+	+	+	
4	(+)	o	o	+	+	o	+	+	o	(+)	o	+	+	
5	+	o	+	(+)	(+)	(+)	+	o	+	o	+	+	o	
6	(+)	o	o	o	+	o	o	o	o	(+)	o	+	(+)	
7	o	(+)	o	o	+	o	o	o	(-)	o	+	+	o	
8	(+)	+	o	(+)	+	(+)	o	+	o	(+)	o	+	+	
9	(+)	o	(+)	o	+	o	(+)	(+)	o	(+)	+	+	+	
10	o	o	o	(+)	(+)	o	o	o	(-)	o	+	o	o	
11	+	o	o	o	+	o	+	(+)	+	+	o	o	(+)	
12	(+)	(+)	o	o	o	o	o	+	o	-	+	+	o	
13	o	o	o	o	o	o	(+)	o	(-)	o	+	+	+	
14	o	o	o	o	(+)	o	o	o	o	o	+	(+)	o	
15	o	o	(+)	(+)	o	o	(+)	o	(+)	o	+	+	o	
16	+	o	o	(+)	+	o	o	+	o	(+)	(+)	+	+	
17	o	o	o	o	+	o	-	+	o	+	o	+	+	
18	(+)	(+)	o	o	o	o	(+)	o	(-)	o	+	o	o	
19	(+)	(+)	o	(+)	+	o	o	+	o	(+)	(+)	+	+	
20	o	(+)	o	o	o	o	(+)	o	o	o	+	o	+	
21	o	o	o	+	+	(+)	o	o	o	o	+	o	+	
22	(+)	o	o	(+)	+	o	o	(+)	o	o	+	+	o	
Totals	Image	Free	Aggr	Ident	Comm	Part	Priv	Phys	Relax	Comf	Trans	EntS	Pract	
no. + or (+)	12	7	3	12	16	3	8	11	4	8	16	16	13	
no. - or (-)	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	5	2	0	0	0	
total	12	0	4	12	16	3	10	11	9	10	16	16	13	

*Planning and implementation*

As mentioned, the transport operator and what may be summed up as “experience providers” are the key actors involved in the process. Other stakeholders play a minor role as drivers, but it is worth noting that external clients can also act as initiators and hire the necessary additional capacities, comparable to the role of a package tour organizer in tourism.

Within the transport company, the marketing and public relations department is usually the driving force. The advantage is that people with useful skills and experiences work in these units (e.g. marketing/communication specialists, journalists). For the implementation, the operations department and maintenance facilities are important to make the necessary modifications to vehicles, provide resources and secure smooth implementation. Front-line staff also have to be kept informed and involved, and often perceive such activities as a welcome change to routine business.

Coordination of different stakeholders with heterogeneous organizational and disciplinary cultures with the associated communicative skills is essential. This also has to compensate for the fact that travel experience measures are often unique or at least new in their respective context and cannot be handled by routine work procedures. Flexibility was therefore also mentioned often as a prerequisite. It is relevant as an attitude to planning, in the actual implementation and also as a characteristic of the system in which the activities take place - some spare infrastructure capacity, for instance, makes it easier to accommodate special services and events.

Problems can arise if travel experience measures are at odds with the regulatory framework, including industry standards, conditions in transport contracts and established planning practice. The case studies showed that many critical issues could be solved without abandoning the project by talking to the relevant authorities at an early stage. However, the concerns raised were not always seen as adequate by the promoters, and many wished a greater openness towards unconventional ideas. It should also be noted that the survey methodology did not permit to analyze schemes which had been abandoned at the planning stage.

*Experiences and user reactions*

Customer reactions are rarely measured in an organized way, and given the variety of ideas as well as target groups, it is not necessarily meaningful to provide aggregate information. Some indications can nevertheless be given here: On the whole, travel experience measures seem to be received positively by passengers even in cases where they come as a surprise. Where detailed surveys of user opinions were undertaken, a much higher appreciation and satisfaction with travel experience measures was recorded than in studies where the travel experience was framed in general terms. These surveys confirmed the customers' general appreciation mentioned above and demonstrated an interest in a wider range of service quality parameters that is often ignored when questionnaires are designed with a “rational transport user” in mind. Service elements which respond to concrete needs and have practical value are particularly welcomed. Care has to be taken, however, when customers not interested are exposed to live events or other intrusive activities. Such interventions should be kept short, and longer ones ideally be confined to separate, and clearly designated areas. Certain entertainment elements (such as music provision) can attract a certain clientele, whose behavior may become a problem for other passengers. Concerns of vandalism were raised in particular where special interior design elements are used without presence of on-board staff, but turned out to be unfounded in most cases.

The evaluation of public transport through travel experience elements also met with criticism in some situations. Objections were mainly based on two lines of argument: first, public transport providers who were co-funded through taxpayers' money should keep to their “core business”. Second, concerns were raised that travel experience would raise costs which would have to be borne by all passengers.

*Economic results*

In all cases the direct costs of the case studies represent only a small part of total costs of operation. The commercial outcome of a travel experience development depends on the type of activity as well as on the framework conditions. Some types of catering and entertainment services can recover their costs directly through user charges. Other features may be integrated in higher-priced premium products. Furthermore, excursions and tours as well as private-hire services are in general operated as a commercial activity without subsidies.

For scheduled services, it was observed in some cases that travel experience activities led to extra journeys being made. However, these observations did not go as far to establish whether this was induced travel or journeys shifted from other modes. Furthermore, the fare systems in use normally do not permit to allocate revenue or journeys made precisely to those times and locations where the activities took place. The experts interviewed for the case studies also considered this not worth the effort such precise accounting would require.

In some cases, even publicly-owned companies who had been active only in (subsidized) scheduled services were able to develop occasional services with special vehicles as a commercial activity. However, it became clear in the interviews that profit-making remained a secondary objective for these operators.

An important advantage from the perspective of public visibility is that travel experience represent excellent value for money if compared with the costs of other advertising activities (newspaper adverts or similar). The interviewees were mainly satisfied with the number and content of media coverage generated by their actions. Only two of the 22 case studies had given rise to negative comments in the public due to the travel experience elements (in case study 1, complaints about the service's users loitering at stops before or after were received, in case study 14 animal rights' activists protested against one of the art installations).

*Indirect effects*

The case studies fate was mixed with less than half of the examples being introduced on a permanent basis. A closer look nevertheless shows that the reasons for ending them were varied:

- not repeated due to unsatisfactory results or technical problems: no. 3, 22
- permanent offer, but withdrawn due mainly to external influences: 1
- intended only as one-off activity: 7, 8, 9
- repeated several times, but no further activities planned at the moment: 6, 10, 14, 17
- one-off activity, repetition planned: 18, 20
- seasonal or permanent offer, continuation planned, but not finally decided: 15, 21
- permanent offer, no major changes planned: 2, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19

While the direct outcomes of the activities have been summed up above, the introduction of travel experience measures is often driven by expectations of longer-term and/or indirect results such as an improved image or access to new customer groups (the latter applies more to the "experience providers" involved than to the transport companies).

Thus a wider view has to be taken when considering the effects of travel experience measures (cf. Schiefelbusch 2008, p.174seq). However, the efforts to evaluate the impacts of such activities were on the whole fairly limited and far from the level of detail and methodological sophistication known from transport planning processes (see also section 7). The techniques used are mainly more or less systematic observations, monitoring of media responses and explicit user comments, in part also of direct user figures.

On the whole, the experts that were interviewed considered this limited feedback sufficient in view of the circumstances - the services being conceptualized either as PR measures or as small in terms of user numbers, even in case of permanent offers. For PR measures, the volume and kind of feedback generated clearly was deemed a sufficient indicator. Furthermore, they considered it important to keep the efforts spent on monitoring in proportion to the "size" of the measures in terms of passengers reached, but also costs.

## 7. Discussion

### *Recent developments*

Public transport planning has also not paid much attention to the travel experience for a long time. But this has started to change over the last years, in the time between the original research was conducted and this paper was written. As a result, there is now much more academic work on related issues - see section 3 -, but also new technological approaches have emerged or found widespread use. Therefore in the present section the findings of the present paper shall be briefly discussed in light of these more recent developments.

Looking at industry developments (as a contrast to the academic perspective), the last two decades have been dominated (in Europe) by a debate on major changes to the policy framework of public transport, which may be summed up here with the keywords of liberalization, greater market orientation, effectiveness and accountability of service providers, furthermore (at least in some regions) greater interest in public transport as a contributor to sustainable mobility, and improved cross-modal integration. This has led to a growing interest in the "travel experience", though not normally referred to as such, of which the activities studied in the present work were already part:

a) The providers' interest in activities with "news value" (activities that generate positive news headlines and improve their image, cf. section 6) was explained in several of the case studies as a response to the changing policy framework: To be seen as an active, customer-oriented company by providing innovative services is not only an aim to generate extra revenue from existing or new customers (on the contrary, this was a secondary objective, as described above). Transport providers see this also as a way to improve their bargaining position with authorities and political bodies and their credibility in future tendering processes. Such effects are without doubt difficult to "prove" in a scientifically sound way, but one has to remember that these activities are conducted with a long-term view, furthermore, by addressing both opinion leaders and the electorate in its role as traveling public, they can have a dual effect.

b) The growing managerial and research interest in service quality is also a result of increasing demands for customer focus and accountability linked to this changing framework: Quality parameters, measurement methods and user perceptions of quality have been covered by different works with a large variety of concepts regarding the concrete meaning of "quality". To be accessible for service planning, management and controlling, this general term has to be disaggregated. Therefore studies with a general character exist side by side with works that deal with specific modes, items or journey stages. The experience of waiting, access/egress and perceived security are areas that are related to the travel experience and have been covered by several recent papers (e.g. Givoni/Rietveld 2007, Kim et al 2007, Iseki/Taylor 2010 on stations, Cox et al 2006, Fuhrmann/Striefler 2001, Flade 2002, Kim et al 2007, Cantwell et al 2009, Cheng 2010, Hensher et al 2010 on perceived security and crowding, Friman 2010, Bissell 2007 on the waiting experience).

c) However, the growing attention to service quality does not automatically guarantee attention to the travel experience. It depends on how quality is conceptualized: If the level of quality provided becomes part of the criteria used in service contracts, quantifiable, unambiguous parame-

ters are likely to dominate. Furthermore, the setup of service contracts may actually set incentives against temporary modifications, additional services and other creative approaches (Blümel 2004, p.34, Jemelin 2004).

d) While the travel experience has again not found much use as a general concept, there seems to be growing acceptance of “convenience” as a factor influencing travel decisions. As the overviews provided by Crockett/Hounsell (2005) or Buys/Miller (2011) show, a wide variety of definitions are used to explain this general concept. These topics are clearly related to the travel experience as defined in the present paper, even though the measures presented here do not necessarily target them.

e) Station design, staff training and vehicle comfort are areas of service development that increasingly get attention even in the professional media. This can be associated with a greater interest in “soft measures”, although the definition of this term is again fairly wide (cf. Cairns/Sloman 2008). More comprehensive travel experience measures are rarely part of such a strategy, as the previous parts of this paper have shown; instead they are considered as marketing or publicity tools. This finding is confirmed by the rareness of publications on such topics in research and industry journals. Some of the case studies have been covered by feature articles (Jain/Schmithals 2005, Meier/ Czaplá 2002), apart from these, only heritage services seem to have found occasional interest (Halsall 2001, Morgan 2005).

f) Technology has without doubt advanced considerably since the empirical work for this paper has been conducted. The equipment of vehicles with air conditioning has become the norm, although this implies a reduction in the range of possible sensual experiences (fewer possibilities to adjust temperature, less contact to external environment). More importantly, mobile communication and media now allow a much enhanced range of entertainment, information as well as education and work activities to be conducted during a journey, by passengers alone as well as with the support of transport providers. Examples of on-board information and entertainment have already been included in the media survey and case studies (see above), but their use has become much more widespread in the following years. In addition to offering this on their own equipment, operators can also support these kinds of travel time use by providing electric power outlets, tables, shading and a better differentiation between work/quiet and other environments.

This greater range of information, communication and entertainment facilities would be the main difference if a similar survey of travel experience measures was undertaken today. But the survey would probably show a decline in some types of vehicle-based techniques (such as on-board audio entertainment) and an increase in mobile devices, which nevertheless need to be supporting features in the vehicle and infrastructure. This trend can be observed in all kinds of public transport, although the greatest adjustments are found in mainline rail, where travel times are longest.

#### *Discussion of research outcomes*

In the light of the previous remarks, the concepts and findings presented in this paper can be seen as a complement to several emerging strands of mobility research. The picture that emerges from the brief review above is that different issues related to the “travel experience” have been discovered as research topics and (perhaps less so) issues for service development, but usually in an isolated way. What seems to be missing is an integrative view and an awareness of the different facets that contribute to the experiential dimension of mobility.

This paper has aimed to provide such an “umbrella concept” as a framework for future activities. Priority was therefore given to an overview of the field as a whole. In the absence of comparable studies, this meant that most of the terms and concepts used here had to be developed anew. This in turn made it impracticable to establish the use of travel experience measures by automated keyword searches or standardized surveys, because there was no guarantee the search terms would be understood in the way intended by the researcher.

Based on this, the empirical work was intended to provide an overview on the concepts used by transport providers - through the media survey - as well as the motivations and expectations linked to this topic (through case study analysis). Although quantitative results were obtained in the former, these should only be understood as indications of orders of magnitude and information on the relative frequency of different experience elements. In analyzing media reports, one is dependent on the selection of news items by the editors, the way information is condensed and presented in each report, in addition to the geographical/thematic focus of each medium (such as an urban transport focus). These inaccuracies are inevitable in this approach, but they nevertheless affect all kinds of experience elements in the same way.

The use of this source can, however, lead to a bias towards measures with greater publicity value, because these are - as intended - reported more frequently than other activities. This may indeed have influenced the outcome of the survey, but the author considers this effect to be limited due to the sources used: The media included in the survey represented a mix of local/regional newspapers (respectively their online editions), operators' press releases and industry newsletters who report extensively also about "normal" service changes, new vehicles and the like.

One conclusion at this stage therefore has to be that there is still much work to be done in order to refine the concepts presented here. However, a practicable compromise also needs to be found between the desire for thorough investigation and possibly quantitative results on the one hand and the multi-faceted, subjective nature of many issues on the other. In this respect, the "travel experience" has much in common with the challenges posed by operationalizing "convenience" and "quality" and a pragmatic approach may be the most suitable way forward (cf. Crockett/Hounsell 2005, p.538seq).

In the author's view, the insufficient efforts to establish and analyze the passengers'/users' reaction to travel experience elements is the main issue worth addressing through research and methodological developments. If travel experience measures are pursued from a public relations perspective alone in an environment which is otherwise dominated by technology-focused thinking, this can - paradoxically - create a vicious circle where the lack of evidence on their effects supports their limited use (figure 2).

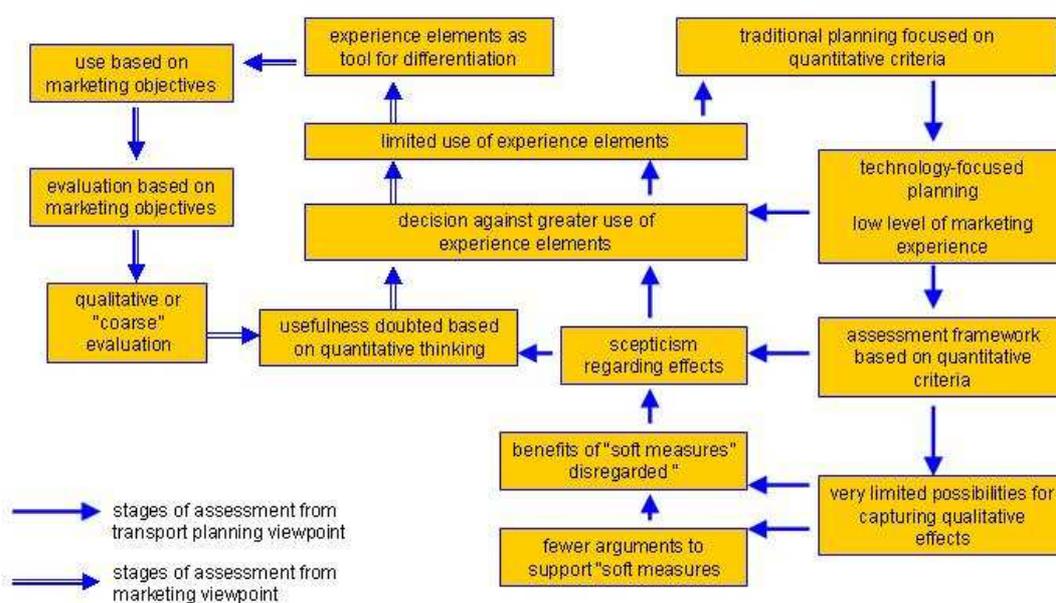


Figure 2. Assessment perspectives supporting limited application of experience measures (author's depiction)

*Policy and research implications*

It is clear that areas such as timetable design, public transport priority measures and the like also have a contribution to make in creating a good travel experience (Klühspies 2001, Beirao/Cabrai 2007, p.485seq). But a better, more comprehensive understanding can help to explain why mobility choices are made the way they are and open new “soft” options to change travel behavior (Basmajian 2010, cf also Ettema et al 2010, Bamberg 2011). Over time, travel behavior research and modeling has already advanced from a simple model of conscious, rational decision making to more complex, sequential and often habitualized process (cf. Axhausen 1999, Gärling/Axhausen 2003). The importance of lifestyle and status considerations for consumer choices is now acknowledged as much greater than in the past (v. Acker et al. 2010, p.225 and 227). The consideration of a “travel experience” as a factor of its own can therefore be seen as a logical next step. Products with clear positive “emotional characteristics” therefore are likely to have better chances on the market and also in the political arena: Policy options which do not have enough political appeal, are more easily overlooked when resources are allocated.

From the perspective of public transport development, the potential benefits of addressing this area hence are twofold: to provide a more attractive service and added value to the customers and to contribute to correcting a long-standing deficit in the visibility and image of public transport, in particular among non-users. This deficit has its base in a traditionally low interest in marketing and customer care by most public transport providers (compared to the car industry, cf. Klühspies 1999, p.18; VCÖ 2000, p.15).

The case studies provide some indication that travel experience measures can contribute to both objectives, but the findings as such do not permit much more detailed conclusions. The empirical results presented above, as well as the growing research interest, show a situation where much work remains to be done in developing strategies that provide effective responses to emotional needs.

A main limitation clearly lies in the limited size of the current activities: Many are undertaken in small market niches or as one-off publicity events. As such, they work reasonably well and are received positively also by their users. But considering these activities in relation to the overall volume of activities, it is legitimate to ask what impact they can make on the overall perception of public transport and on travel behaviour.

The value of these “small” measures can indeed lie in changing public perceptions, but also in providing additional services for specific customer groups, or in providing “unexpected” positive experiences that, according to the Kano model, are highly valued and create lasting impressions. Nevertheless, to capture these effects, more effort is also necessary to capture their effects beyond the level of anecdotal evidence dominating today.

Only few ideas for practical and effective measures to create permanent positive experiential impacts have been developed so far. Technological developments since the completion of the empirical work - in particular in information and communication technologies - have without doubt added new possibilities, which are also co-designed by the users themselves to a greater degree than before. The emergence of these new options for travel time use is without doubt a good opportunity for public transport to position itself as the transport mode which allows a much greater range of activities than any other. These approaches and instruments work usually as permanent features, and hence on a different level than short-term measures, events or special services.

These two strands of activities are likely to be the main ones also in the coming years as far as the active “design” of the travel experience by service providers is concerned - though this is not to say that concepts not following either of the two are impossible. A third possible use of the work

presented here lies in a greater awareness of the industry towards this subject when user needs are to be analysed and potential users are canvassed, for example in (social) marketing campaigns. The experiential dimension of travelling has to become a natural element of looking at the way services are provided. This may seem unconventional for industry insiders at the moment, but any comparison with other consumer goods, service sectors and also other mobility providers indicates that the negligence of this topic by the public transport industry is an exception rather than the norm.

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