RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title   **Developing a reliability metric for LU customers**

Objective   To explore LU customer expectations and perceptions of reliability and the potential role of a reliability metric

Date   August 2011   **Agency:**   2CV

Methodology 6 x two hour focus groups with a wide range of Tube customers across London, including commuter and leisure users, a mix of advocacy to LU, and half had been affected by disruptions in the last six months

Abstract

LU are working on providing metrics for reliability, which appeal to the public and opinion-forming stakeholders. Research showed that customers see reliability not simply as operational efficiency but the entire customer experience, including crowding, customer care, information, aircon, etc. Their perceptions of LU's reliability are a mixture of all these factors and are, moreover, variable by time of day, journey purpose and journey state of mind. Given the complexity and subjectivity of customer perceptions of reliability, communicating operational metrics which jar with current perceptions, or are not easily understood, can have a negative effect on favourability to LU. However, metrics which enable customers to feel a greater sense of certainty and control are welcomed.

Key findings

Customers view their Tube experiences and expectations holistically and therefore cannot isolate reliability as a single calculated quality, but rather something that is felt. Personal experience sits at the heart of customers' perception and knowledge of the system, emphasising a 'me-centric' approach to the Tube.

For customers, reliability is about performance in Operations and Customer Care. The customer expectation is that Operations and Customer Care should work in tandem, however, the customer experience is that they are often unpredictable, which contributes to poor perceptions of reliability.

Customers cannot have absolute certainty in their ability to predict or forecast their day to day experiences and have therefore developed ever-changing personal strategies to try to stay in control.

Opportunities for metric development exist, but there is a need to be very wary of any potential discord between a LU metric and the customer mind-set. To have a positive impact on customer perceptions of LU, reliability metrics will

need to compliment the customer mind-set, relate to personal experience, and help customers hone their individual habits.

Customers call for greater transparency and communication from LU; however, this information must relate to customers' current or future journeys and chime with customer experience and expectations to prevent potentially damaging LU's reputation.

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