RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title   **Buses marketing communications development**

Objective   Barriers to increased usage of buses in North West London (NW), including inter-suburban routes, amongst infrequent and non-users in NW London. Explore potential for advertising propositions and web-based solutions.

Date   **August 2009**

Methodology   Three part qualitative study: 1) Desk research, 2) Nine ethnographic interviews/ accompanied journeys, 3) Six focus groups. Sample of infrequent/non-users of buses in NW London, with a mix of peak/off peak and long/short journeys.

Key findings:

- There are a complex series of barriers to increasing bus usage amongst infrequent and non-users, covering how the system is perceived to work, how it looks and feels, and how the system reflects the personal identity of individuals.

- The main barrier for infrequent users and non-users of buses is an impression that the system is unregulated, unpredictable and unreliable. This is underscored and exacerbated by a perceived lack of information.

- The web-based concepts presented in research (e.g. online interactive bus stop/ bus route information) help address these barriers, as do the on-bus features such as iBus. They demonstrate investment by TfL and counter the impression of there being a lack of information, therefore giving the impression of a more regulated, predictable and reliable service that would encourage usage of the bus for unfamiliar journeys.

- Advertising ideas that supported the web information solutions (through mentions of website and investment in IT) were also well-liked.

- Emotional barriers are deeply ingrained for non-users of buses. They are underpinned by an underlying set of negative cultural associations that position the bus as a socially inferior form of transport. However, these are so entrenched that the propositions that attempted to address the image of the bus were not liked, and lacked credibility.

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