Report on work package 25
Public Appetite for Creative Behaviours
www.ideasintransit.org
October 2010

Introduction

Earlier research in the project suggested that a stimulus for user innovation is that individuals are faced with needs not being met by, or problems with, the transport system that they are motivated to solve through innovative use of ICTs.

This 'observatory' work package sought to explore and address the extent to which the public consider transport problematic and in turn examine the ways in which innovative behaviours do, or do not occur in response and why.

Objectives

The aims of the research were to explore:

i. To what extent people consciously think about transport in their everyday lives and why?
    - Are they aware of making travel decisions?
    - Do they enjoy travelling, or simply 'put up with it'?
    - Do they only think about their own travel or that of other people as well (such as family or colleagues)?

ii. What constitutes a transport 'problem'?
    - Is it an emotional issue, a practical issue or both?
    - Does it have to be something that affects the individual, or can it be something that someone else is affected by?

iii. Whether people want to/feel they can affect travel problems and why.
    - Could a full, or part solution by offered by an innovation?

Methodology

In the first stage of research, a desk study was undertaken in order to establish current understanding of people's response to transport problems. Following this, new empirical research was undertaken.

Reflecting the exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative method was chosen. Eight focus groups of six participants were undertaken, divided by gender, age group (18 – 40 years and 41 years and over) and residential location (urban/rural)[i]. A purposive sample of participants was recruited across social classes from the general public in Bristol and the surrounding area.

Each focus group followed the same structure, led by two moderators:

- **Warm-up task**: Participants were asked to put their daily travel on a scale between 'problematic' and 'problem free' and explain their choice.

- **Task 2**: Participants were invited to consider the emotions they experience when travelling (over the previous two weeks) and to fill in three boxes on two cards labelled 'emotion,' 'mode', and 'journey purpose'[ii]. The participants were asked to reflect on their responses individually, then as a group.

- **Task 3**: Participants were presented with a list of the 'top five transport problems facing the UK' (as constructed by the research team using the Government's 2004 White Paper 'The Future of Transport') and asked to tick those they consider to be a problem for them and those which they consider to be a problem for other people. We then discussed their responses as a group.

- **Task 4**: Adding to the above chart, participants were asked to indicate which of the top five problems they feel they could do something to solve and which they feel they couldn't do anything to solve and were instead the responsibility of others (e.g. Government or private companies). The group then discussed the responses.

Key Findings

The relationship between people's recognition of transport problems and their motivation to find (innovative) solutions is complex. Overall, participants in both the empirical study undertaken for this work package, and that undertaken for work package 10 (ICTs and Everyday Mobility: Learning from Informal Experts) illustrate that several of the participants use ICTs in innovative ways to mitigate the challenges they face in relation to transport on an *individual* basis. However, they did not express a motivation to, or even belief that they can 'solve' the wider problems from which these challenges stem. For example, they may be able to use their mobile phone to contact child care providers in order to mitigate the challenge of arriving on time to pick up their child, but they are not in a position to solve the wider problem of congestion from which this time pressure stems. Several factors have been found to be influential in this context.

Control beliefs: Transport behaviour decision making is influenced by perceived and actual behavioural control in relation to the resources and obstacles facing people in relation to the transport options available to them. The empirical research suggested that these include a lack of control over (and cynicism towards) transport service providers and local authorities. This links with the importance of self efficacy – the participants simply do not believe they, as individuals, can make changes to solve the problems they face.

Social factors: The empirical research highlighted the influence of impression management and amplification in that the participants suggested that people may portray some transport challenges as being more problematic than they really are (in terms of providing motivation for change). Instead transport is often the subject of socially acceptable conversation, a way to break the ice when meeting new people for example. This findings also highlights methodological issues related to asking participants to focus on this subject, but to place it in the context of their 'usual, everyday life'[iii].

Values: Although people may express concern about transport problems, their underlying value system could place 'an easy life', higher than, for example, the environment. As such, it may be that an individual identifying a user innovation and having a positive attitude towards taking it forward for others to use, is likely to be outweighed by the 'easy life' option of putting up with the transport problems faced. Perhaps only when the transport problems faced by people no longer make 'putting up with them' the easiest option will a greater proportion of the population be more motivated to find solutions.

This is not to say that those more localised innovative practices are not important. A number of user innovations have been identified through the literature review and the empirical research undertaken – chosen on the basis that they represent use of ICTs in ways 'unexpected by the provider'. Three examples are given below:

1. Using text messages to request phone calls from family members in order to save money, or individuals texting to inform family members that they can expect a '3-ring' phone-call when they have reached a particular location (e.g. 'I'll phone when I'm outside')
2. Women actively displaying that they are using their mobile phone in order to deter personal attack.
3. Employees using buying mechanisms designed for individuals – i.e. internet search engines and price comparison sites – in order to organise cheaper travel at work.

A number of key points can be made in light of these examples:
- They link to particular 'niche' situations – reflective of particular personal contexts, rather than an attempt to solve problems on a wider scale.
- Some of the examples contradict – although not necessarily directly - our original hypothesis that people will only innovate where they are motivated by a particular problems or needs. Instead, in a number of cases, individuals reported uses of ICTS that are likely to have stemmed more from the *opportunity* to use ICTs in new ways, rather than the *need* to do so in order to solve a particular problem.
- Even where these practices are taking place, they are not recognised as such by the participants as 'innovative', nor are they motivated to take them further as user innovations that could be used by other people. In this sense, user innovations are difficult to find as people may not be 'flagging them up' in the same way that individuals or small companies do when motivated to profit from their innovative ideas.

Together these findings illustrate why it is difficult to identify user innovations through a focus on understanding people's response to particular transport problems or by asking them to identify innovative practices themselves. Thus, in order to better understand why user innovations (in the context of ICTs and transport) occur and how they might be exploited by others, the next stage of our research will be focussed on the way in which the technical innovations devised by producers lead to user response (by those in a position to exploit them), which transform, or sometimes subvert, the original design objectives.

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[i] These divisions were made as age, gender and residential location have been established as factors influencing the transport challenges facing individuals and we aimed to establish whether the findings of the present study also varied in this way.

[ii] Here it was explained that they needed to consider to two different emotions, but the mode and journey purpose could be the same.

[iii] Here the challenge remains how to establish overall 'consciousness' of transport (problems) in everyday life – both in light of the motivation to innovate and more widely in light of any policy or intervention aimed at changing behaviour and based on the assumption that people face transport problems they want to solve.