Summary report on Work Package 40
Survey of users of Established Innovations
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Introduction

Situated in the Ideas in Transit 'research observatory', this work package sought to test the qualitative findings obtained from work package 33 - 'Case Study of Established Innovations' across a wider population of users of established innovations.

The report briefly outlines the research objectives, questions and methodology, before detailing the key findings.

Objectives and Questions

The **aims** of WP40 were to test a number of findings arising from WP33. This previous research used in-depth interviews with users of walkit.com, bristolstreets.co.uk, liftshare.org and cyclestreets.net. In particular, it was found that:

- The innovations were used to solve identified transport problems or to gather particular information about a transport journey or mode.
- The innovations lacked facilities for social interaction and there was a desire for this.
- There was limited use of smart phones and innovations on smart phones amongst the participants.
- The innovations complemented, or enhanced, users' already established travel behaviours, rather than triggering new travel behaviours.
- There was a lack of feedback from users to the innovators.

The aim was also to test a small number of additional questions surfacing from an analysis of these core findings:

i) To what extent was the use of ICTs embedded into users' travel decision making, and was their use of the innovations dependent on one particular type of ICT?

ii) To what extent was the use of the innovation embedded into everyday travel, or used 'only for the odd journey'?

iii) Was the 'niche' nature of user innovations a motivation for users (or are they 'loyal' to these sites due to their bottom-up, and perhaps their non-commercial, nature), or would they have been happy (or happier) to use top-down innovations (e.g. Google transport information as available in the US and in a more limited form in the UK) if they provided the same or better information.

iv) To what extent were users engaged in the process of information sharing with the innovation?

Methodology

A survey questionnaire was developed and this was delivered online by three of the innovators involved in WP33. However, despite using the similar promotional methods and being available to users for the same length of time, low response rates for bristolstreets.co.uk and cyclestreets.net surveys meant that a valid quantitative analysis of data could only be completed for the walkit.com survey.

The survey was administered using a variety of methods. A link to attract internet users was viewable during over 150,000 interactions. Although a small amount of overlap between the interaction types may have occurred, the vast majority of contacts were known to be by unique users. The survey was 'live' from 7th March to 30th March 2012; 966 people started the survey and 84% completed it (n=811).

Key Findings

It is recognised that the findings may have been influenced by expectation bias, as well as being biased towards those people willing to fill in an online survey. It is also noted that the study was less likely to pick up on occasional users of the site due to the limited time it was live. Consequently, the findings summarised below should be considered with these caveats in mind.

Age and gender: 73% of the users were female and were between 26 and 56 years of age. Although this is not representative of the national population, these findings are consistent with a separate survey of walkit.com users carried out in May 2010. Here, it was found that 30.8% of walkit.com users were male and 69.2% were female and 73% of users were aged between 26 and 55.

Thus, although there was a larger number of female respondents, this seems to be broadly representative of the study population, and seems in part to be explained by walkit.com's focus on information about walking: a similar (although less extreme) variation in gender is reflected in national statistical data related to walking behaviour (e.g. DfT 2010b).

Impact on travel behaviour: The majority of users stated that there was no change in their use of different transport modes as a result of using walkit.com with the exception of their walking behaviour; more than a fifth stated they walked a lot more and more than a third stated that they walked a little more.

Also, of those respondents who walked a lot or a little more, half used the car, the bus, the train, or cycling less – this is consistent with users not only having moved their travel behaviour away from other modes,

towards walking, but also with them undertaking new journeys on foot. These findings are supported by qualitative findings from WP33. Here, one walkit.com user explained that their use of the site had triggered a reduction in use of public transport and an increase in walking. Another user talked about their use of walkit.com coinciding with a choice to give up cigarettes and one other used the site to help train for a marathon walk.

Access to the innovations: The majority of the walkit.com users accessed the site on a monthly or weekly basis and there was no discrepancy in these findings on the basis of gender. However the 15-25 age group were more likely to access the site on a weekly basis than the other age groups; the 56-65 year old users were more likely to access the site on a yearly basis; and a significantly higher proportion of 66+ respondents never access the site.

98% of users owned a mobile phone and 68% could access the internet on this device, although access to the internet on mobile/smart phones was more prevalent amongst younger respondents. However, not all respondents utilised this function on their phone in relation to walkit.com - the majority of respondents used the site at home/work, before a journey, using a desktop computer at a fixed work station. The next most popular method was also at home/work before a journey, but using a portable laptop or tablet computer. The majority of users also accessed other travel information websites on a desktop computer.

Users were more likely to use their smart phones to access the innovation during a journey, than before or at the destination. This is likely to reflect the smaller screen size and more limited functionality, making mobile phones the platform of choice only when a larger device is not available. However if, overall, respondents are accessing the sites prior to a journey, why are they accessing it while on the move? Is it because this group prefer look at walking route maps on their phone, rather than printing them? This is a question for future research.

Information need and provision: The travel behaviour of the users links to travel needs arising in response to their frequent use of the modes focused upon by the sites; 91.4% of the users walk more than once a week and nearly a quarter used walking-related websites (including and in addition to walkit.com) on a weekly basis.

In terms of a need, or desire to use niche transport information sites in particular, there was some use of all of the journey information websites. However, the top-down sites were used more frequently. This is unsurprising in that niche websites tend to be less well known and used.

Use of the travel information websites is not just for the odd journey: A higher proportion of users access websites for new journeys on a 'more than once a week' or monthly basis, than they do for frequent and infrequent journeys. Although it is also of note that websites are still used by nearly a fifth of the sample for frequent journeys more than once a

week, again highlighting a reliance on this type of information by a proportion of users.

Feedback to the innovator: 15% of walkit.com users provided feedback to the innovator and the majority was positive and received via the website feedback button. Email was the next most popular method of communication, followed by the walkit.com app, Twitter and then Facebook. The use of Twitter and Facebook illustrated a community element to the site. The use of the app may be of interest to other web-developers concerned with the value of this facility, beyond selling them as a product *for* the consumer. They may also be used to gather user-generated information to develop a website or app itself.

Together these findings illustrate what is known in relation to the factors affecting the use of walkit.com and the relationship between them is illustrated in Figure 1. As such, it is assumed that:

- Use of innovations was dependent on users' access to the innovation, which was in turn dependent on:

  a) their access to the internet on either a PC, mobile computer or smart phone; and

  b) their information needs, which may have stemmed from a particular transport problem/challenge and may have related to: the transport modes frequently used, a lack of particular transport information (by mode or journey type), and/or a desire for 'niche' transport information.

- Users' access to the innovation and their information needs were influenced by their social demographics (i.e. age, gender, income).

- Users of the information may, or may not, have provided the information the user desired, which in turn may, or may not, have led to a change in travel behaviour.

- The user may, or may not, have provided feedback to the innovator in relation to the information provided.

Department for Transport (DfT), 2010b. *National Travel Survey: 2010 Travel by age and gender.* Department for Transport. Available online at: http://assets.dft.gov.uk/statistics/releases/national-travel-survey-2010/nts2010-06.pdf [accessed 7 May 2012].

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Figure 1: Research framework: