INFORMATION TOOLS FOR INTEGRATED PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT

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Summary: The paper deals with an issue of information for passenger and applied information tools in integrated public passenger transport systems. Attention is focused on general issues, on the groups of information needs, on the information tools for common passengers and special groups of passengers and at last on requirements for the website of integrated public passenger transport.

Key words: information tool; passenger; public passenger transport

INTRODUCTION

Information and information tools are the essential elements, which are needed during travelling by public passenger transport. In some cases, all the available possibilities are not exploited. This is the reason why it is important to pay attention to this area for keeping the share of integrated public passenger transport in modal split.

1. INFORMATION IN INTEGRATED PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT

The basic information attributes on which mainly emphasis are put, include:

- completeness,
- topicality,
- comprehensibility and visible location of peripheral devices (e.g. digital information panel),
- official and uniform design (important in terms of identity for the integrated public passenger transport system and clear distinction of it from the advertising panels),
- professionally submitted information (employees: manners, language skills, professional level).

    Information (not only) for travellers can be divided by several aspects:

- by time for finding out the information: before, during journey, after journey (described below in the text),
- by the content of information: about traffic network, about the connection between the required locations, about the tariff terms and transport terms, about unusual situations in transport, about other services and many others,
- by form of information:
    - o acoustical - voices or sounds on an electronic basis,

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- o visual - PC monitor (web, software), digital information panels, mobile phones (SMS, WAP, web), printed sheets and brochures, printed timetables, static information panels, etc.;
- by the place of finding out the information: stations and stops of public passenger transport system, public passenger transport vehicles, web, other places (passenger information centers, etc.),
- by the variability of time: static or dynamic.

They have to be determined for passengers at the first sight and potential clients, who provide the transport needs of passengers in public passenger transport. The highest attention has to be given to building of image of public passenger transport system. It includes:

- well rememberable logo of public passenger system,
- uniform colour of waiting rooms, bus stops and public transport vehicles,
- information networks and information resources,
- proper manners towards clients, accuracy, consistency, helpfulness, counselling and many others.

The information centres are another separate issue. They offer information of public passenger transport, selling tickets, connection searching including printing, sale of timetables in book or electronic form, issuing of public transport guide, sale of parking cards, services in cultural and tourist sectors, sale of promotion materials and other service information.

The public passenger transport system in Dingolfing (Germany) can be shown as an interesting exam of the practice of simplifying. The vehicle on a particular line has always the same colour as the line in the diagram of the network. In addition, there is a white vehicle with colour stripes of all the lines. This vehicle is used in the case of failure, service, etc. of basic vehicles. It is easy for passengers to find, that this vehicle goes as a reserve.

2. FIVE GROUPS OF INFORMATION NEEDS

If you try to summarize and supplement the information from above, you can collect the five groups of information needs:

1. General basic information - basic information about offer of the public passenger transport (map of region with a line network plan, connectivity to public passenger transport, travel times, tariffs, services, etc.); these information should be available to all households, workplaces, educational centers and schools, as well in other locations depending on the needs of the city. The main emphasis is laid on comprehensibility and consistency.
2. Personal basic information - public passenger transport offers related to each of stops. There are electronic timetables (stand with touch screen), detailed tariff information, brochures with line or timetables which are placed at the stops, an overview of the connection, timetables for each of stops and other specific information.

3. Information before the journey - information about suitable lines for carriage, tariff, network routes, timetables, connections, etc. Information can be obtained by using special software, by telephone query, in the information centre or by electronic communications (e-mail, web, WAP, SMS), etc.
4. Information during the journey - the signs of public passenger transport stops, timetables of stops, tariff and information boards at stations, information about transport in unusual situations, external and internal information tools of vehicles (detector of station names, information panels according the direction of connection, following stops or an overview of available transfer connection change, network of lines, information boards, etc.), information during a journey from the operational staff.
5. Information after the journey - plans of following stops, offer for the return connections, information about the possibility of complaint register, grievances, lost property).

3. INFORMATION TOOLS FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS OF PASSENGERS

Information tools for specific groups of passengers in public passenger transport are the following:

- disabled person - on-line or off-line information about the operation of special vehicles for this group of passengers, information on accessibility of transport system, a tracking system for the elevators, etc. (it is also important to the appropriate location of these information devices),
- deaf person or with the remnant of hearing - emphasis on the addition of acoustic information with visual information (such as the addition of information panels about the journey/connection, visual information about opening and closing doors, etc.),
- blind or with the visual remnant person - detectors coming vehicles (using a special blind hole for communication with the processor in the vehicle), touch panels with acoustic information output, emphasis on readability for the visually impaired, guide lines or elements, special information stands, information in Braille on stops etc.,
- person with baggage (with prams, more luggage, etc.) - information about the operation of low-floor vehicles,
- visitors, strangers - information output in various languages (visual and acoustic), using of understandable symbols (pictograms).

4. WEB PAGES AS MODERN INFORMATION TOOL
IN INTEGRATED PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT

At present time the Internet plays an important role for passengers as a source of information. Public passenger transport is not an exception as well. Level of web site quality contents of particular transport companies varies from system to system. Data used in this article come from a wide self-analysis of public passenger web sites in the Czech Republic. Their list does not have to be definitive.

Czech public passenger transport web sites were compared with web sites in Germany or in German speaking countries.

The level of basic transportation information is mostly the same. German web sites contains more advertisements and their visual impression is more fancy. It seems that the accent is putted more on impression than on content comparing to Czech web sites. On the other hand   there are few Czech web sites with possible a translation to foreign language. This shortage is found necessary to be improved.

4.1   Web site content of public passenger transport

Here is a basic information structure appearing at many either official or in some cases unofficial web sites of public passenger transport systems:

1. general information:
   o basic data about the operators or co-ordinator (of integrated transport system),
   o contacts;
2. transport information:
   o basic information about the public passenger transport system,
   o a line routing map or an interactive journey map,
   o list of stations and stops,
   o stop timetables or line timetables,
   o connection searching,
   o information about connections with systems as P+R (Park & Ride), B+R (Bike & Ride) and K+R (Kiss & Ride),
   o information for handicapped passengers,
   o service centres,
   o W@P and SMS services;
3. tariff information:
   o fares, tickets and tariff zones,
   o full text of carriage condition (+ also abstract),
   o inspection + competence of inspector,
   o where to buy a ticket,
   o prepaid chip cards;
4. service changes and disruptions:
   o long-term service changes,
   o short-term service changes,
   o topical information about transport,
   o future plans and changes;
5. passenger help and services:
   o help, complaint procedure,
   o important places (offices, schools, hospitals ...),
   o street and stop searching,
   o lost property;
6. other information and matters of interests:
   o history of transport,
   o photos,
   o interesting things concerning transport,

- o special periodics edited by the operators or co-ordinator,
- o fan-club,
- o promotion and special trips (special transport service, historical cars etc.)
- o contests, games, entertainment;
7. others:
    - o job opportunities,
    - o additional services (car repair shop, tire service, car-wash, advertisement on vehicles etc.),
    - o other information (press releases, articles concerning public passenger transport, etc.);
    - o useful links,
    - o questionnaires, quizes,
    - o FAQ's,
    - o views of passengers (discussion group),
    - o other web site properties (sitemap, searching, up-dating...).

4.2 Informative minimum for web sites of integrated public passenger transport

It is clear that the above mentioned list is not used on the websites in such an extent by the biggest operators or co-ordinators. Though, the biggest operators or co-ordinators has the better and more extensive content of their web sites.

Nevertheless, so-called informative minimum of web sites of public passenger transport system should be maintained. It is assumed that every system presents itself as a modern communicative tool on the internet.

There are minimal web site data concerning a public passenger transport below:

- basic data about the operators/co-ordinator and contact,
- basic data about the transport service system,
- a line routing map,
- timetables,
- fares and tickets and tariff zone information,
- full text of carriage condition,
- real time information and service changes and disruptions.

In this case the enough information is not provided for passengers. It could be perceived as partial operators/coordinator's lack of interest for customer and his or her transportation and enhancing of transportation quality in general.

5. CONCLUSION

Information and information tools serve as an important means to obtain or retain passengers in public passenger transport. Informing of passengers must be secured at all times when potential passengers require this. It is also important areal coverage for the possibility of obtaining information and different ways of identifying information. It will be necessary in the public passenger transport to place emphasis on a website in the future that more and more potential passengers look at.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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