Personalised Travel Plans in the Workplace

The importance of social context

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better**together**

Personalised Travel Plans in the workplace

- Case-study exploring user involvement in the development of an innovative, web-based tool to generate personalised travel plans in the workplace.

- Developed by *lift*share with support from the GeoVation Challenge. http://www.geovation.org.uk (Ordnance Survey, Technology Strategy Board)

- This paper: influence of social context and social interaction on user responses to the myPTP innovation in three pilot workplaces.

Presentation Overview

- Introduction:

  - Personal(ised) Travel Planning : residential and work-based

  - The 'myPTP' innovation

- Research questions and methods

- The piloting of the myPTP tool

- Findings:

  - Workplace travel cultures in the pilot organisations

  - How contextual factors influenced user responses to the tool

  - Social diffusion of myPTP

  - 'Personalising' the myPTP tool

- Conclusions and recommendations

Personalised Travel Planning (PTP)

- The provision of travel advice to individuals which "*encourages people to make more sustainable travel choices.*" (DfT)

- Usually residential location and one-to-one advice.

Sutton advisors. Photo courtesy Smarter Travel Sutton

UK Evaluations:

- Mean decrease in the number of car driver trips : 11%
- Mean decrease in car distance travelled : 12% (Chatterjee, 2009)

PTP in the Workplace

Workplace Travel Plan

Personalised travel plans

- PTP enables employees to evaluate the full range of alternatives to the car for their journey to work.

- PTP can support a behavioural change agenda within workplace travel plans.

Few evaluations of the impact of PTP within the workplace.

(exception: Fujii and Taniguchi, 2006)

The 'myPTP' Tool

- All commute options 'in one click' (including lift-share)

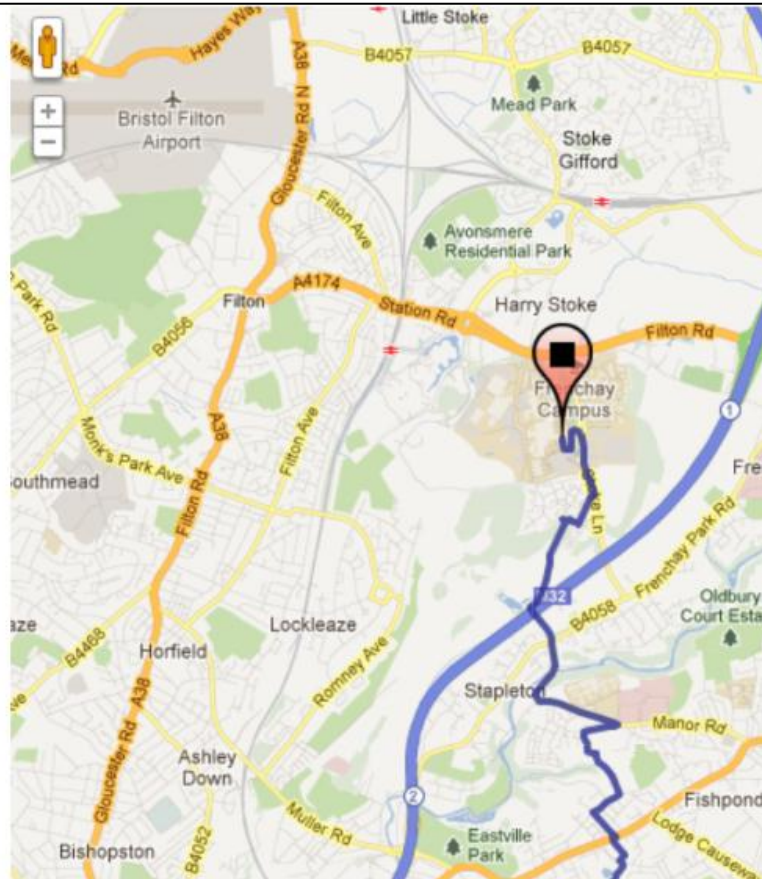- Combine 'conventional' PTP with time/cost advantages of instant, online trip planning

Social factors and the PTP process

I. Source (communicator) variables

    A. Credibility
    1. Expertise
    2. Trustworthiness

    B. Attractiveness
    1. Liking
    2. Similarity
    3. Familiarity

II. Message variables
    A. Style
    B. Type of appeal
    C. Type of argument, information

III. Channel (medium) variables

IV. Receiver variables

V. Destination (target) variables

Model of persuasive communication

Adapted from McGuire (1984)

Questions

- Might the reduced social interaction inherent in the myPTP process (compared with 'conventional' PTP) influence its potential impact in the workplace?

- How might social and organisational factors influence users' attitudes to myPTP and its potential to encourage behaviour change in different workplaces?

- How might the context of the workplace create opportunities for social dissemination of both the PTP tool, and of sustainable travel choices?

Exploratory, qualitative research in three employer organisations piloting the myPTP tool.

Methods

- **Three 90-minute interviews with Liftshare** at the beginning, mid-point and end of the nine-month project.

- **Six interviews of 30-45 minutes with travel plan coordinators** in three pilot organisations.

  (1 pre-pilot interview and 1 post-pilot interview with the travel coordinator in each organisation).

- **Interviews with 2 to 3 'users' at each pilot site** (8 people in total).

- **Online survey of 'users'** at each pilot site

  (Completed by 55 of the 119 people provided with a PTP.

The Pilot Organisations

- **Council A**
  - Imminent office relocation to city centre site (1,800 staff)
  - Loss of free car-parking

- **University A**
  - Planned increase in parking charges, aimed at reducing single occupancy car-use as part of its corporate CO_2 reduction strategy.

- **Council B**
  - 'myPTP' part of an overall CO_2 reduction strategy – one of a 'suite of information tools' available to staff.

The Pilot Process

February-March 2012

- Liftshare staff spent one day in each organisation, generating PTPs for employees at their desks, or at pre-arranged appointments, using a tablet computer.

- Council A : 35 PTPs delivered

- University A: 36 PTPs

- Council B: 48 PTPs

Workplace Travel Cultures

In all three organisations, norms of travel behaviour were strongly influenced by 'hard' factors which had encouraged car-use, e.g. -

- geographical location

- established practices for business travel

- free or low-cost, plentiful parking

Workplace Travel Cultures

Both 'hard' and 'soft' measures now being employed to try to change this culture, including:

– higher parking charges/reduced number of parking spaces

– public transport discounts

– Bike2Work scheme

– marketing and information e.g. myPTP

Workplace Travel Cultures

Interviews showed that perceptions of the 'travel culture' at their workplace differed among the myPTP users, often connected to their professional role.

- "strong culture of sustainability" (marketing staff) versus "a car-dominated culture" (transport planner).

- *"People tend to sort of have priorities that relate to their own roles, so we tend to have sort of highways-related ones, environmental ones, whereas if you go and talk to a group of people who work for education or social services, you get a completely different set of cultural values as a result of what they do."*

  (myPTP user, female, post-pilot interview).

Workplace context and user response to myPTP

- Interviews and survey showed that attitudes to myPTP were positive overall, but that it was also enmeshed in wider transport concerns within the organisations.

  - *"This whole process has left me feeling very angry. I feel that I contribute to the success of the University but am completely disregarded when they have compiled the new car park charges. My experience of myPTP has just confirmed and compounded these feelings".*

    (myPTP user, female, survey)

Workplace context and user response to myPTP

- For some, it confirmed that they had no alternative but to use the car.

    - *"The PTP which was sent to me took no account of my needs other than getting from A to B. There are many people who work in the Uni. who have more complicated needs than this. I have a child who needs to get to school and another who needs to get to nursery. MyPTP paid no attention to this."*

        (myPTP user, female, survey)

Workplace context and user response to myPTP

- The survey asked whether people had reconsidered their commuter travel behaviour as a result of their PTP.

- More were doing so at Council A than the other two organisations.

  - 32% of respondents at Council A were now reconsidering their mode options for their commute after the office move (University A: 13%; University B: 19%).

  - Bus and train were the most frequently considered alternatives at Council A. Before receiving their PTP, most of this group had intended to drive to work on their own.

  - Suggests importance of information context and salience.

Social diffusion of myPTP

- The innovators were clear about the importance of a 'champion' in promoting the tool within each organisation, e.g. travel plan coordinator.

- Many of the users interviewed saw themselves as having a role in the diffusion process within their organisation (often related to their professional role, e.g. managers, transport specialists).

- Diffusion of myPTP was seen not as an end in itself, but part of a process of diffusing information about alternatives to single-occupancy car travel.

Social diffusion of myPTP

- *"...there's a little bit of negativity with staff moving out to the new building, because they're so used to being able to drive to work, park up, and it's a matter of price. (My aim is) letting them know that there are other options." (myPTP user, female, post-pilot interview)*

- Interviewees with managerial roles believed that they should be "leading by example" – not only promoting the tool, but showing that they were considering their own travel options.

  - *"You've got to be a cultural architect. You've got to be a champion of things, and if your staff see you doing it, there's a chance that more of them will think, yes, we might have a go". (myPTP user, male, post-pilot interview)*

Social diffusion of myPTP

- Word-of-mouth diffusion was also occurring in more conversational manner among employees:

    - 79% of survey respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the statement: *"I have discussed myPTP with colleagues".*

- The innovators also believed diffusion to be occurring *between* organisations via travel planners, due to inquiries but no formal marketing of the tool.

Personalising the 'message' and the 'messenger'

"……that's crucial, isn't it? To personalise these plans".

(myPTP user, male, post-pilot interview)

"People get an email but it just becomes overload, whereas it's the personal that will work".

(myPTP user, male, post-pilot interview)

"I think that lends itself better to more than a sort of self-service thing; it lends itself more to it being talked through with someone like a travel planning coordinator – somebody who will find out that those are your personal circumstances - that you need to factor in the journey to school…."

(myPTP user, female, post-pilot interview)

In Conclusion….

- This research:

    - provided specific case-study evidence of the requirement for innovators to understand the specific needs of potential users and the contextual factors which shape these needs.

    - added further evidence to the established knowledge that targeted transport information can play a role in encouraging people to reduce their single occupancy car use, but only in confluence with other supporting factors.

    - showed how an information tool can become enmeshed in wider, contextual issues, which can make it a focal point for concerns which have little to do with the information itself.

In Conclusion…..

- This research:

  - highlighted the limitations of an information tool to address some car-centric issues which have become embedded in society (may apply to many behaviour change measures when looked at in isolation).

  - demonstrated the importance of 'champions' in promoting and diffusing a new technology through organisational structures and social networks within an organisation, and also between organisations.

  - Suggests that the importance of social interaction in the PTP process should not be underestimated in the design and delivery of more automated systems.

Good practice points emerging from this case study

- For innovators designing tools/measures to promote travel behaviour change measures:

  - Consult with potential users (e.g. travel plan coordinators) from an early stage to ensure that the innovation will meet a genuine need.

  - Seek a detailed understanding of contextual issues affecting travel behaviour and culture within the target community, to ensure that the innovation can be fine-tuned for use in different contexts.

  - Seek understanding of specific factors affecting specific groups of users (e.g. trip-chaining requirements) and whether/how the innovation might accommodate such requirements.

Good practice points emerging from this case study

- For innovators and travel plan coordinators:

  - Ensure that the innovation (or measure) is 'championed' by a figurehead within the organisation.

  - Ensure that the innovation is 'personalised' by the organisation, and that additional, one-to-one travel advice can be obtained.

  - Encourage diffusion across the organisation by convincing managers and other influencers of the value of the tool.

  - Encourage social interaction about the innovation and associated travel choices among users and potential users at all levels in the organisation.

Any questions?

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