Quality attributes of public transport that attract car users: A research review

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Abstract

The transport sector presents contentious issues with respect to sustainable development, particularly regarding the use of private motorised vehicles in urban areas. Public transport (PT) together with cycling and walking are generally agreed to be sustainable alternatives to private car use. This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of those aspects of PT quality most likely to attract car users. Toward achieving this aim, relevant research was sought to answer the following two questions: What quality attributes of PT services are attractive to users? And what changes in quality attributes of PT services would encourage modal shift from private motor vehicles to PT? Using a qualitative systematic review, it is concluded that while service reliability and frequency are important PT attributes in general, those attributes most effective in attracting car users are largely affective and connected to individual perceptions, motivations and contexts. Reduced fare promotions and other habit-interrupting transport policy measures can succeed in encouraging car users to try PT services initially. Attributes over and above basic accessibility, reliability and mobility provision, perceived by the target market as important service attributes, must then be provided in sustaining the switch from car use after promotional tactics have expired.

Keywords: Sustainable travel; Car-use reduction; Public transport quality; Policy for public transport