How People Choose

Research Project for Transport Direct

Interim Findings and Implications

Why was MR07 commissioned?

To develop a logical representation of travel factors and decision-making styles

To find out "How people think when they engage in journey planning?"

- How are choices made?
- How do individuals link preferences to alternatives?
- Flow diagrams to explain thought processes

Methods used to meet these research requirements

Stage One	Inception report Literature Review
Stage Two	600 In-depth interviews to understand actual journey planning Analysis of choice styles
Current Position	Interim conclusions and presentation of key findings
Stage Three	Validate findings by in-depth consumer research

Three Key Findings

- When planning a journey, decision-making behaviour is **influenced by past experience** and the way in which information is taken into account **does not follow any set pattern.**

- People break down their travel choices into manageable tasks and in order to do this they typically first **set their main travel mode** (e.g. car, train, coach, plane, bus).

- **Three very different choice styles** are operating. These are sometimes used by different people but also by the same person in different circumstances.

The Three Choice Styles

- **Constrained**
  - My personal circumstances dictate my choice,

  or

  - I believe I already know what to do

- **Passive**
  - I expect to be told what to do by a trusted source

- **Active**
  - I carefully weigh up all the options and make a systematic choice

'Constrained' choice style

Examples

- I am disabled
- I have small toddlers with lots of 'equipment'
- I have a company car
- I need to work en-route
- We are taking large amounts of luggage or shopping
- 'I won't go by car at that time because the traffic is awful'
- 'It's impossible to get to where I want to go by public transport'

Implications

- Some travel information doesn't interest them at all
- Other information is of great importance to them and must be accurate and easily found
- Prompts to offer alternatives may be unwelcome if beyond constrained scope

'Passive' choice style

Examples

- relies solely on GPS for route navigation en-route
- seeks advice from trusted friends
- wants to be alerted and directed when things go wrong or there are service disruptions or route diversions
- appreciates helpful information from a trusted source
- is likely to be loyal to information sources he / she has learnt to trust

Implications

- Transport Direct will be valued if users learn to trust it
- If not, users with a 'passive' style will go elsewhere
- Accuracy and 'added value' are keys to success

'Active' choice style

Examples

- may make much use of maps for route planning
- actively compares alternatives (e.g routes, modes, costs)
- may need to be convinced that they have made the right decision: may be suspicious of 'strange' answers
- may seek out a lot of different information
- will try and make use of the information available to them

Implications

- Transport Direct answers must 'look right' to users: if not they will reject it as a travel planning tool
- Transport Direct must be fast in order for their systematic search to be straightforward compared to using other information sources

Travel Choice Palette

Each Choice Style requires different sets of information

Travellers want to determine their own sequence for selecting information

Transport Direct becomes the palette to select information, using the three choice styles

Origin

Destination

Personal constraints

Travel Mode

Journey Details

Real Time updates
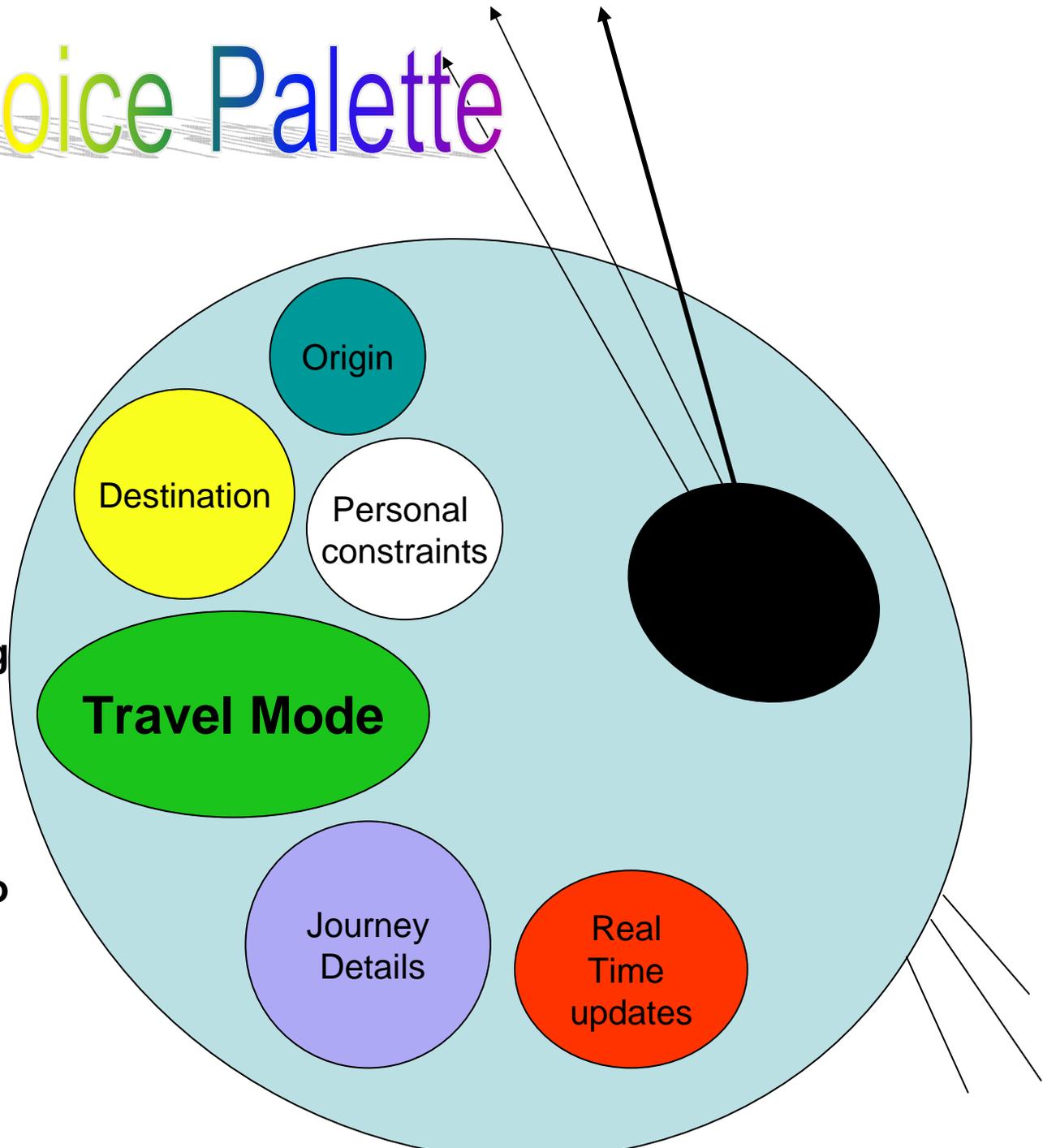
Overall Implications for Transport Direct

- Users need different sets of information combined in different ways
- Some information is absolutely key to some users and irritating to others
- The TD home page must cater for these different selection processes within the interface design
- Processes within the site must also cater for the different choice styles
- Even each set of information must be packaged and presented to reflect the different decision making styles
- During the enquiry, to avoid repeated re-entry of data, Transport Direct should allow users to store travel parameters and entries.

Short Term Implications for Transport Direct

- It is crucial that the design of the Home Page offers intuitive access to the full palette of information items

- Quick Trunk Planning, with add on extensions, is consistent with the identified iterative choice process

- This approach supports 'selecting the main mode' at an early part of the decision process

Possible New Products (1)
suggested by interviewees

- Better information to take into account travel at airports – parking and public transport.
- Links of accommodation information to travel information.
- Information on local taxis arrangements and charging
- Information on travel routes / alternatives at or near to the destination.
- When the journey goes wrong: An En Route Virtual Personal Travel Adviser
- En-route travel alerts
- Implications of parking rules on my travel choices
- Intermediary outlets for Transport Direct information.
- Concept maps and diagrams which show landmarks to assist orientation
- Company training courses in travel planning using Transport Direct travel services

Possible New Products (2)
suggested by interviewees

- Information on accessibility of mobility-impaired people
- Information on London congestion charge
- Parking space searches with forecasts and real time updates
- Today's special travel offers
- Mobile Personal Navigation devices
- Destination-based travel promotions and journey advice
- Personalised car cost calculator
- Multilingual site navigation on the Transport Direct Portal