



On-Train Provision of Tickets Mystery Shopping Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Passenger Focus commissioned Continental Research to carry out a mystery shopping programme to measure the performance of the following aspects of the rail service:

- ticket machines
- ticket offices
- on train provision of tickets
- telesales

The results for the on-train provision of tickets mystery shop are provided in this report. The findings for the other services are provided under separate cover.

1.2. Methodology

All mystery shopping was carried out onboard trains between mid-October and mid-November 2006. In total 5 shoppers worked on the project and a total of 56 trips on trains were made. Shoppers were given specific shift times to work within and the details of what routes they were to travel on during that shift. All routes covered were in South Wales only and comprised a total of six Arriva Trains Wales routes: (1) Treherbert to Cardiff (2) Aberdare to Cardiff (3) Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff (4) Rhymney to Cardiff (5) Radyr to Cardiff via Ninian Park (6) Barry Island to Cardiff

It should be noted that some of the sub-sample base sizes are too small to report percentages. For this reason numbers are used instead as these are more reliable and indicate that statistical caution should be observed.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2.1. Purchasing of tickets onboard

For just over three quarters (77%) of the 56 trips made, shoppers were able to purchase a ticket. Shoppers behave like ordinary passengers and waited to be approached by the onboard staff to be sold a ticket.

There is a strong indication that passengers on the Merthyr to Cardiff and Rhymney to Cardiff routes are less likely to be able to purchase their tickets onboard than the other four routes.

Table 1: able to purchase ticket onboard train?

	Treherbert to Cardiff	Aberdare to Cardiff	Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff	Rhymney to Cardiff	Radyr via Ninian to Cardiff	Barry Island to Cardiff
Base	(8)	(17)	(10)	(8)	(6)	(7)
Yes	6	16	6	3	6	6
No	2	1	4	5	0	1

Base: all trips

There was an indication that being able to purchase a ticket onboard was more likely on a weekday (86%) than at the weekend (42%). This rises to 91% being able to make purchases during peak weekday¹ travel times. At the weekend it was less likely that the mystery shoppers were able to purchase a ticket (58%). It should be noted that the base size for the weekend was a total of 12 trips and the necessary statistical caution should be observed when viewing this finding.

¹ For the purposes of this study, peak hours were defined as: 0700-1000 and 1600-1900, Monday to Friday. Off peak hours are defined as all other hours.

Table 2: if able to purchase ticket onboard train?

	All Journeys	Weekday	Peak time in week	Weekend
Base	(56)	(44)	(22)	(12)
Yes	77%	86%	91%	42%
No	23%	14%	9%	58%

Base: all trips

2.2. Payment options available

For the 43 trips where shoppers could purchase a ticket onboard, most could pay by either cash or card. Only 14% of these trips allowed cash only. It was not evident that one route more than another offered a cash only option.

2.3. Staff handling

A scale of 0 to 5 was used to measure how polite the onboard sales staff were. A score of 0 meant the staff were rude or abusive and a score of 5 that they were very helpful and courteous. The mid-point of 3 indicated they were business like, impersonal but not helpful. The shoppers found no signs of rudeness amongst staff and all 43 on board purchase experiences achieved a score of 3 or more.

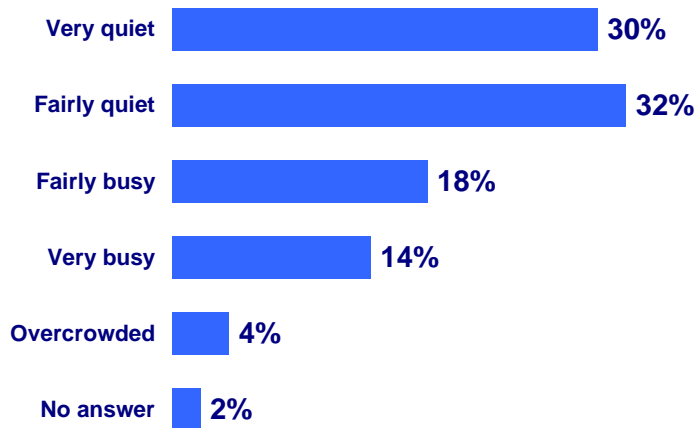
3 (business like, impersonal but not helpful)	5%
4	23%
5 (excellent, very courteous and helpful)	72%

Compared to other methods of ticket purchase, on – train sales staff achieved the highest scores for helpfulness and politeness.

2.4. How busy was the train?

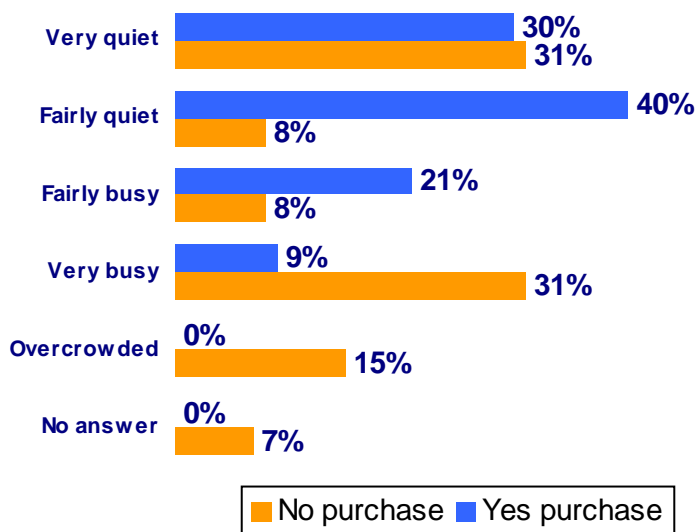
For nearly two thirds (62%) of the total 56 trips made, the trains travelled on were either very quiet or fairly quiet.

Table 3: how busy was the train?



Base: 56 train trips

Table 4: how busy was the train by ability to make ticket purchase



Base: 43 purchasers and 13 non purchasers

2.5. Comments about journey

The final part of the mystery shop allowed shoppers to express in their own words any comments they felt relevant about their onboard experience. These tended to cover either the politeness and helpfulness of the guard, or reasons for why no payment was made.

The comments concerning non-payment were usually for the following reasons:

- Guard was present but made no/little effort to collect fares.
- No guard was seen at all.
- Busy crowded train and the guard was too occupied with other passengers.
- Guard's ticket machine was not working (e.g. battery flat).

End