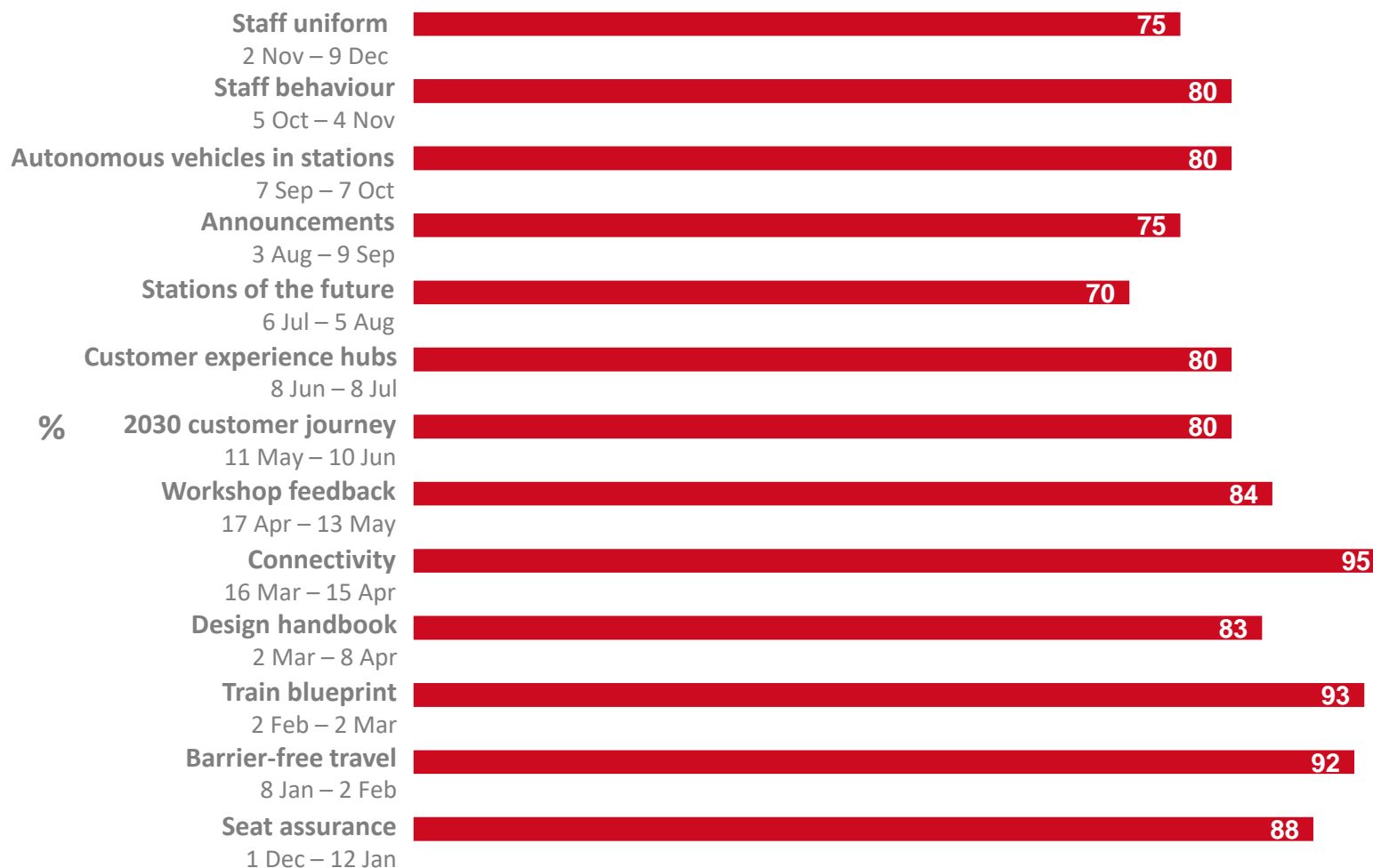




HS2 Customer Community
Staff Uniform – November 2018
Debrief: 20/12/18

Panel participation



The task

🔖 Station Staff Uniform

As with last month's task, the team at HS2 are thinking about **staff in stations**. This time they're considering the uniform(s) they might wear.

Thinking about **uniforms more generally**, consider the following questions:

1. How important to you are staff uniforms? Why?
2. What identifies a staff member to you? If they were not wearing a uniform, what would identify them?
3. Can you give examples of uniforms you have really liked?
4. Can you give examples of uniforms you haven't liked?
5. Have you seen examples of the same uniform being worn by different members of staff where one looks smart and another scruffy?
6. Can you think of a time where you had a strong impression of a brand and its quality from seeing their uniform (when you didn't necessarily know the brand)?
7. What do you think of name badges? Are they useful/effective or not?
8. What is your opinion of high visibility uniforms?

Now thinking about **staff in stations**:

9. What would you like to see from HS2 station staff in terms of a uniform? Should there be similarities in uniform with train staff?
10. Would you expect/want to see different roles wearing different uniforms? E.g. cleaners, customer experience staff, managers etc.
11. What are the key elements of a uniform?

Overall

Customer Community members emphasised the importance of uniforms for embodying a brand and ensuring that customers can easily identify who to go to for support and assistance if required

“Staff uniforms are very important as they **project the overall image of the company** and act to display its vision”

Male, 18-23, Commuter

“A higher class smart uniform gives an **impression of what you can expect** from a staff member”

Male, 51-60, Commuter

“It's also about looking smart and professional, which **builds into how you see the company**”

Female, 18-23, Commuter

“In a **busy environment like a train station**, uniforms are vitally important”

Female, 41-50, Leisure

“I think staff uniforms are important as they make it **easy to see who is staff and who is a customer**”

Male, 51-60, Business

“I like to see members of staff in a distinctive uniform, it **sets them apart from the general public** and provides a point of contact”

Female, 61-70, Leisure

“It gives a smart, professional appearance that often **helps people feel more associated with the company**”

Female, 61-70, Business

“Uniforms are very important to me as they **help me identify who I can seek help from, those in authority, and those providing a service to me**. Without it I would be lost if I needed help and couldn't identify who to go to.”

Female, 18-23, Commuter

“It can make you **feel calmer if you can see staff**”

Female, 24-30, Business

The importance of staff uniforms

Customer Community members emphasised the importance of uniforms for embodying a brand and ensuring that customers can easily identify who to go to for support and assistance if required

- The majority of Customer Community members were strongly in favour of staff uniforms, particularly in a busy station environment
- They stated that being able to immediately identify staff by their uniform facilitated the seamless journey experience
- Additionally, they highlighted how uniforms can unite staff by fostering a sense of pride and loyalty to the business; they gave examples of other sectors where they thought this worked well

“The uniforms that make a statement to me are airline uniforms, regimental, navy or service uniforms. Even football kits are uniforms because they are a representation of clubs and teams.”

Female, 41-50, Leisure

“Also by staff wearing uniform, their attitude is different. They act in a more professional manner and they know they are representing the company so they have to behave in a respectful way.”

Female, 41-50, Leisure

“It can promote a strong sense of belonging and being valued amongst staff. A quality uniform worn well makes you feel that the company you are dealing with stands for quality and exceptional customer service.”

Male, 41-50, Commuter

Identifying staff

Community members considered what helped them to locate and identify a member of staff, aside from uniforms. Whilst there were factors such as behaviour and physical location, they felt that none were as effective as uniforms.

“I would look for a badge that might identify them or they might be in a position where workers usually are”

Male, 31-40, Commuter

“If a member of staff isn't wearing uniform it can be really hard to identify them as a name badge is often to hard to spot”

Female, 31-40, Commuter

“If they were not wearing a uniform, it would be difficult to identify them unless they approached me and mentioned that they were a staff member”

Female, 18-23, Business

- **A name badge/lanyard** – they indicated that a wearable identifier could be useful, however that it was not as impactful as a uniform, therefore should be used in addition rather instead
- **Their location** – some stated that staff could position themselves in specific locations (i.e. at a help desk)
- **Their behaviour** – many suggested that it would be possible to spot staff by identifying those providing assistance to others.

“Groups of people in the same colour (think Asda Green) lead me to them more than their ID badge for example. People are quite lazy these days when they finish work and have lanyards and badges on when coming home so I usually don't pay them attention.”

Female, 31-40, Business

“Their demeanour and actions e.g. showing authority and giving guidance or proactively assisting customers”

Male, 41--50, Commuter

“A clipboard/iPad, a megaphone, a lanyard, if on the rail network a dismissive, uninterested attitude”

Male, 24--30, Leisure

Examples of uniforms

The Community shared examples of uniforms from both within the transport sector and elsewhere that they preferred or disliked. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many comments referred to the iconic Virgin brand, along with other airlines.

"I've always really liked the Virgin Atlantic uniforms. As a child travelling on airplanes, being able to see the uniforms I'd seen in movies, magazines and tv shows made it all seem very glamorous! It still looks stylish and modern but also represents the brand's colours really well and as an adult now, I can look at it and think it wouldn't be bad to wear to work."

Female, 18-23, Business



"I travelled with Virgin and Eurostar lately and found their uniforms to be very smart"

Female, 51-60, Commuter



"China Eastern have a lovely navy uniform with an accent belt that looks really nice"

Female, 61-70, Business

"The uniforms that I really like are Fly Emirates, Hainan Airlines and China Bullet train attendants"

Female, 41-50, Leisure



"Tesco and Sainsbury's always have seemed fairly grim"

Male, 24-30, Leisure

"British Rail quite a few years ago adopted a very strange approach with hats looking like a French policeman or railroad conductor in the United States. Completely over the top and looked rather silly."

Female, 31-40, Commuter

"Arriva Trains Wales tend to have some staff in shirts and some in polo shirts. It doesn't seem to matter how new polo shirts are; in my opinion, they always look scruffy."

Male, 61-70, Leisure

"Anything that involves a hoodie/fleece or vibrant colours. Virgin Trains fail on both with staff often wearing red fleeces. Most supermarket uniforms with the exception of Waitrose. They are usually garish colours and staff wear them in different ways and combinations."

Male, 41-50, Commuter

Staff presentation

Community members emphasised the extent to which staff presentation can influence customer perception of a company's brand. They stated that consistency of appearance is key to maintaining high standards.

- They cited various reasons for a uniform being worn in different ways:
 - Ill-fitting
 - Uncomfortable
 - Desire to personalise
- They placed blame on the uniform not being flexible enough, not fit for purpose or staff not receiving the necessary training

"Problems with age, size and care can make a big difference to how uniform is worn and no matter what is done, people will personalise them in their own ways. Top buttons, sleeves rolled up etc."

Male, 51-60, Business

"Absolutely, I quite often see this, for example people not doing ties and buttons up properly"

Male, 18-23, Leisure

"Polo shirts and scruffy trousers and trainers- not smart or fashion orientated"

Female, 24-30, Leisure

"It is vital for those giving instructions to be credible & 'obeyed'. Staff should have the uniform they need in the quantity they need to look smart - no cost excuses. Proud to wear it, trained to wear it."

Male, 61-70, Commuter

"Presentation is important and that comes down to simple things - someone wearing a creased shirt, ill-fitting trousers and plimsolls whilst another is wearing a smarter version gives off an impression of inconsistency"

Female, 18-23, Commuter

Uniforms and brand identity

Community members were able to identify companies that they considered use their uniforms to support and strengthen their brand and consequently the level of customer service to be expected

- Examples of strong alignment between staff uniforms and a company's brand came from a variety of sectors
 - e.g. tech, transport, retail

"Apple, to be fair, have a very strong brand identity - they train their team to be efficient... they all look like droids yet they have the speed of a droid so am happy when going in to the Apple store"

Male, 31-40, Business

"BA cabin crew uniforms are presentable and clearly identifiable. Going old school is sometimes the best - shirt, blazer, or fitted uniform."

Female, 18-23, Commuter

"I really like the British Airways uniform as it's in keeping with their upmarket brand"

Male, 18-23, Commuter

"If the brand is strong e.g. John Lewis/Waitrose you feel that anyone wearing that uniform shares the brands value of quality and excellence"

Male, 41-50, Commuter

- They commented that the most successful uniforms were those that were fit for purpose and industry-appropriate

"I like the post office delivery staff uniforms, as they have a variety of garments, all corporate, but covering different tastes and roles. They have short trousers, long trousers, cold weather gear, warm weather gear etc. It's good to allow staff to choose what suits the individual while still retaining a common corporate theme."

Male, 51-60, Business

Name badges for staff

Many Community members saw value in staff having name badges, stating that it added a personal touch to the experience and even had the potential to encourage individual staff to be accountable for their customer service

- They discussed whether badges should show both individuals' names and job titles
 - Some thought that first names add a valuable human element
 - Others thought that job titles would be more useful so that customers can approach the right individuals

"I don't need to know someone's name but a job title can be useful to know if they can help"

Female, 41-50, Business

"Name badges are great but I feel with a uniform they aren't necessary. Especially in this day & age where everyone has a phone in their pocket capable of recording at great quality. It can result in customers abusing staff & then knowing their name whereas the staff member wouldn't know the customers name."

Male, 18-23, Leisure

"Name badges give an identity"

Female, 41-50, Leisure

"I personally do like name badges. I like to know that I am speaking to the right person"

Female, 51-60, Commuter

"I like name badges. It adds a personal touch and makes you feel the staff member is more approachable"

Male, 51-60, Business

"I like to be able to relate to someone on a more personal level by using their name, and if a staff member has been particularly helpful (or the reverse), it's nice to be able to recognise this in any review or comment."

Wheelchair user

"I think name badges are very effective for both positive and negative feedback - people should be rewarded for excellent customer service. Also when a staff member is aware their name is visible it can be a factor in going the extra mile with their customer service!"

Female, 18-23, Commuter

High visibility uniforms

Whilst Community members recognised the value of high visibility uniforms in health and safety or high risk situations, they felt that they were not as relevant for customer-facing roles if a clearly branded and identifiable uniform is in place

- They said that uniforms with a strong brand would be sufficient to make staff noticeable and identifiable, therefore high visibility elements would not be required
- Some suggested that they could be used selectively for certain roles (e.g. platform staff) or in small doses (e.g. armband)

“They have their uses when H&S is an issue or they need to be highly visible for any other purpose like attracting attention in a crowded platform”

Male, 41-50, Business

“Some kind of high visibility is always useful. This does not need to be a whole garment, this could be elements such as armbands or some form of decoration”

Female, 71+, Leisure

“Good but more for high risk jobs rather than indoor customer service staff”

Female, 24-30, Business

“High vis uniforms can be necessary but shouldn't be overdone”

Male, 51-60, Business

“They are a bit of an eyesore but in certain situations they are necessary for the safety of customers and staff alike ”

Male, 18-23, Leisure

“Very good - I can easily identify who can help but they're not very smart”

Female, 18-23, Commuter

What would the Community like to see from HS2 station staff uniforms?

Community members were keen to see a uniform that reflected the high quality service and superior customer experience that they anticipated from HS2

- Many stated that staff should look smart and well-presented with a uniform that was fit-for-purpose
 - They wanted to see consistency of appearance so that all staff were conscious of being representatives of the company at all times
- They suggested that staff be involved in the process of designing the uniforms, which they saw as in keeping with the HS2 ethos – asking those affected
- Some wondered whether a degree of flexibility could be built in to provide employees with enough choice and autonomy to decide on the best options for them depending on their role and their personal preferences
 - They thought that this freedom would enable them to feel more content with the choice and respectful of the uniform.

“Staff pleased to wear - reasonably fashionable, suitable for weather/season differences, easy/economical to care for. Different options so to allow 'freedom' of choice for wearers - not just 'him' & 'her' options.”

Male, 61-70, commuter

“HS2 staff uniform could include an elite colour code that would be visible and easily recognisable. Staff can share opinions about what they would like regarding the uniforms they will be wearing. The uniform co-ordination could be carried throughout the team as it brings pride and unity to all.”

Female, 41-50, Leisure

“Because different people suit different kinds of clothes, the uniform should be easy to wear and be of materials that are easy for the employee to look after. Maybe some kind of jacket with high visibility elements could be designed.”

Female, 71+, Leisure

Uniforms for different roles

Whilst the Community didn't want hierarchy introduced into staff uniforms, they were pragmatic about the fact that HS2 station staff would be working in a variety of environments, therefore their requirements would differ

"Cleaners might so that what they wear is most practical. Others? All should be in uniform - why differentiate between staff & managers? They should all subscribe to the same values and treat customers to the same standard."

Male, 61-70, Commuter

"Probably yes, as role needed but not in an obvious hierarchy way, all the roles are important and the uniform should be practical for roles but look respectable"

Male, 24-30, Leisure

"Referring to the NHS example it would be good to have ways to identify different roles from train crew, managers and customer service agents. I would expect cleaners to have practical clothing but still look smart. Cleaners in 5 star hotels manage to do this."

Male, 41-50, Commuter

"Yes a bit like hospital staff, maybe its the colouring of the shirt/blouse that sets them apart"

Female, 61-70, Leisure

- Many strongly felt that uniform should not be used to reinforce ranking or position, rather that it could be used to unite staff
- They acknowledged that, for practical purposes, uniforms may need to be adapted to the environments in which they are used e.g. cleaners, maintenance staff, customer service staff
- They thought that a baseline design should be employed that could be adapted dependent upon the demands of the job

"Preferably, no, not really. Badges should be sufficient to differentiate different roles, or simply a conversational response in case of confusion, but when you make uniforms for different roles too different, it actually makes it more confusing."

Female, 51-60, Leisure

Train staff uniforms

Community members said that they would like to see consistency in the uniforms worn by station and train staff, however felt that they needn't be identical, perhaps instead opting for a similar colour scheme

- Some were not clear on the differences between the two sets of employees
- However, the overall response was that it would be logical for there to be a similar uniform for station and train staff
 - They thought that it would help to deliver against the 'seamless journey' vision by ensuring a more consistent end-to-end experience for passengers

"Consistency, so that staff are easily recognisable as being HS2 staff. A consistent colour scheme would be essential for both station and train staff, with perhaps small differences to distinguish between them, like a reversal of colour accents whilst keeping within the same colour scheme."

Male, 61-70, Commuter

"I think anyone who works for the HS2 brand whether through the operator or not should wear the same uniform so there is consistency. Or whatever it may be called in the future"

Male, 18-24, Leisure

"I think for Identification purposes they should all be wearing the same uniform, that way you know who is who when waiting on the platform or if you need assistance. Too many variations should become confusing"

Female, 31-40, Commuter

"Yes but there can be differences too. A common colour scheme and theme is all that is required. At the same time it might not always be practical at some of the interchange stations. Will a station employee only ever work on the HS2 platforms?"

Male, 51-60, Business

Key elements of a uniform

Community members identified factors they felt were important when considering the requirements for a uniform

- Recognisable – allowing customers to instantly identify them
- Smart – to convey a sense of authority and professionalism
- Durable – long-lasting to prevent uniforms from looking scruffy or unkempt
- Practical – suitable for the tasks they will perform and the environment in which they will work
- Wearable – ensuring that staff feel comfortable and able to carry out their job
- Serviceable – making it easy for staff to look after their uniform
- Flexible – to meet the needs of different types of employees (e.g. gender, size)

“The most important part of Northern Rail’s uniform that is missing... A SMILE!”

Male, 31-40, Business

“Its a very personal thing to display your name, but I think it adds an extra level of care, letting you feel you are talking to someone who you know slightly”

Female, 61-70, Leisure

- Other suggestions included:
 - Environmentally friendly (Virgin Atlantic have polyester thread made from recycled bottles)
 - Adjustable – to allow staff to feel able to personalise it in some way

Summary

Customer Community members emphasised the importance of uniforms for embodying a brand and ensuring that customers can easily identify who to go to for support and assistance if required

- They explained that uniforms play a vital role in communication; in stressful travelling environments, customers should be able to easily recognise and locate staff
- They stated that uniformed staff represent the brand and company, therefore their outfits serve as tools to encourage individuals to deliver the best service they can
- They explained that poorly presented staff could negatively impact customer perception of how well they could handle queries and requests, in turn contributing to a worsened experience
- They thought that HS2 should consider involving employees in the process of designing the uniforms, seeking feedback to ensure that they meet the needs of both customers and staff.