Exploring the future of rail retailing

Qualitative research report

January 2022

PRS IN VIVO · BVa BDRC · transportfocus

Introduction

Background

Transport Focus would like to understand rail passengers' experiences of purchasing their ticket, along with their views on how this has changed and may change in the future.

Increasing numbers of passengers have been using 'digital' ticketing channels such as apps, websites, smartcards and contactless (a trend accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic), however, many passengers continue to buy tickets at the station, via ticket machines or through a staff member at a booking office. Transport Focus want to understand the reasons for passenger choices, barriers switching to 'digital' ticketing, the kinds of changes that may be acceptable as part of industry reforms, and what kind of 'safety net' (if any), passengers think may be needed to ensure everyone can buy a ticket and that the railway remains open and accessible.

Passenger numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels, with pressure to reform, modernise and reduce costs. The Williams-Shapps plan for rail points to efficiency savings of £1.5 billion.

The staffing of ticket offices is one area of potential change, with consideration given to how passengers value the service they provide and how they can be deployed to benefit passengers the most.

Transport Focus recognises the importance of ensuring the passenger voice is heard amidst these discussions, thus **the key objectives of this piece of research were to understand:**

- current experiences of booking tickets
- people's willingness to change
- attitudes towards a move to digital ticketing
- views on staffed booking offices at stations and staff at stations in general
- attitudes towards the rail industry today and savings/cuts
- key concerns about the possible changes and ways to mitigate these.

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We utilised three methods to answer the research objectives

Although this study targeted a diverse variety of travellers, given the topic of research, those currently purchasing tickets via more traditional methods were over-represented in the sample, to ensure adequate coverage of reactions from those who may be more affected by potential future changes:
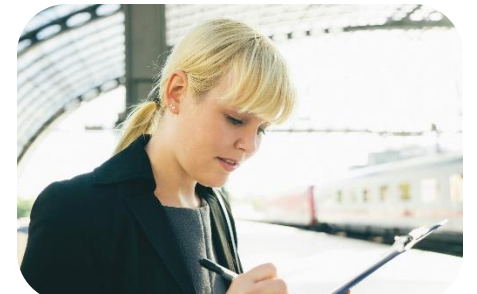
x 9

ONLINE MINI GROUPS
5-6 participants per group

- 6 groups with travellers buying paper tickets at the station
- 3 groups with travellers using digital ticketing

x 12

IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS
60 mins each, via Zoom or telephone

- 3 x digitally excluded travellers
- 6 x disabled travellers
- 3 x travellers less confident with technology

x 4 days

STATION OBSERVATIONS AND INTERCEPTS
3-4 hours duration

- Exeter
- Manchester Piccadilly
- Tunbridge Wells
- Middlesbrough

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Setting the scene

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Snapshot of travellers and their ticket buying habits

Name: Bryonie, 60
Disabilities: Very poor eyesight, plus dyslexic partner
Travel routine:
Purchasing method: Ticket office
Comments: The ticket office takes away all my stress – even when there are queues!

Name: Simon, 71
Disabilities: None
Travel routine: Commutes for work. Last journey from Birmingham to Croydon
Purchasing method: TVM
Comments: My station is unmanned 70% of the time and I've got used to it. The TVM is very convenient!

Name: Joanne, 37
Disabilities: Dyslexia, mental health and cognitive issues
Travel routine: Trips to see family. Last journey was from Chester to Telford
Purchasing method: Ticket Office
Comments: Because I have a learning difficulty, I feel much better talking to someone. With dyslexia if you don't read something right, you'll be very upset when you get the wrong ticket

Name: Stacy, 34
Disabilities: None
Travel routine: Commuting from Hertfordshire station to Euston
Purchasing method: Ticket office
Comments: I like the ticket office because I'd rather speak to someone and know I'm getting the right ticket at the right price!

Name: Ruth, 55
Disabilities: Anxiety & Depression
Travel routine: Infrequent Day trips. Last journey from Bristol to Bath
Purchasing method: Ticket Office
Comments: If I couldn't get a ticket at the ticket office I just wouldn't bother going.

Name: Mike, 35
Disabilities: None
Travel routine: Semi-regular commute. Last journey from Manchester to Huddersfield
Purchasing method: App (Trainline)
Comments: I get to the station, See what train I want, book a ticket on my phone, then get on a train. Easy.

*Images used are not real participants

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Rail travel and covid

For many, Covid has made a marked difference to the rate of train travel, with both commuter and leisure users travelling far less frequently, due to:

- New working practices (hybrid/more flexible/working from home/virtual meetings)

- Lockdown restrictions

- Fear of being around other people (thus not travelling at all, travelling during off-peak hours, or using the car)

Purchasing behaviour

While covid has affected travel frequency, ticket purchasing behaviour appears to be largely unchanged, with only a small minority claiming to be less likely to go into the ticket office, or less likely to use the vending machine due to social distancing / covid related hygiene concerns

*"I'm more conscious of the germs and having people around me, so now I avoid peak times, but **nothing's changed about the way I buy my ticket**"*

Debbie, 56, Ticket Office most often

"I don't want to touch things in general anymore and that includes vending machines – so maybe I do a bit more online now than I did before"

Adrian, 36, TVMs most often

It's had absolutely no impact on my purchasing behaviour, but business travel is down 90%

Stuart, 42, App user (Trainline Business) most often

Incoming perceptions of the railways

Historical and political events have affected the passenger relationship with Britain's railways

Britain has a long and storied history with the railway which is something travellers are tacitly mindful of – but not all of it is positive.

While there is some degree of history and romance around trains within the UK, this isn't front-of-mind during daily commutes, or even when booking longer leisure journeys.

There are however often persistent negative feelings around rail travel within Britain, tied to 2 key factors:

Privatisation: Still hotly debated and inherently political, some travellers have lingering negative sentiments about privatisation that impact how they see train operators.

High cost/Low service: Some passengers draw direct comparisons between the quality and the cost of services in other European countries as a benchmark, and often find the UK's network falling short

Lack of trust
Passengers aren't necessarily entering these conversations with good faith or an open mind. The railway operators are generally not trusted brands or seen as being owed any loyalty.

This can influence their immediate and instinctual reaction to certain proposals and often results in a tendency to 'assume the worst'.

"Sometimes it's cheaper in the car. That blows my mind. I'm trying to be sustainable, use train journeys to work but it's not financially viable"

Chloe, 31, TVMs most often

"It's a public service, a public good. That costs money. We have to accept that costs money. It's creating a narrative about commoditising a public service."

Stuart, 42, Online (Website) most often

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Rapid changes in modern technology

In recent years, online reservations, self-service technology and apps have fundamentally changed behaviour in many areas of life. This has touched the lives of almost all the participants in the study, with many acknowledging positive contributions – particularly in terms of speed and convenience

Key top of mind areas where digitalisation has changed life:

- Working from home (meetings via Zoom / Teams)
- Banking and payments (e.g. contactless, apple/google pay)
- Shopping (especially supermarkets and Amazon)
- Supermarket self check-outs / scan and go
- Booking train / airline / cinema tickets
- Taxis (e.g. Uber)
- Restaurants and pubs (ordering via app for table service)
- Booking Doctor's appointments
- Post office self service
- Paying at the petrol pump

"Buying from Amazon is amazing and so quick. It's a different world now!"

Christopher, 35, TVMs most often

"I think I got the banking app first as they were promoting it so heavily. It was so efficient that I started downloaded lots more apps"

Claudia, 28, Online (app) most often

"I've been booking trains online for a long time now. It's just so much more convenient!"

Matthew, 42, Online (App & Website)

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Rapid changes in modern technology – the darker side

However, this shift is difficult for some, and even advocates can feel sadness at some of its effects. Four themes emerge when discussing changes in modern technology:

Exclusion

Some are too scared/unable to get online without the help of family members (in our sample this includes older people, those with cognitive issues, and those with brain injuries), and this can make them feel 'left behind', while some of the oldest participants have no real concept of the internet

"There's a lot less human interaction. It's taking away conversation. It'll have a big impact on our mental health"

Simon, 71, TVMs most often

Fear

Many (particularly older passengers) are worried about the possible repercussions of having their data on the internet (specifically worried about fraud)

"All public services are disengaging themselves – even the post office. They're replacing people with machines to save money and I hate it!"

Laurie, 57, Ticket office most often

Frustration

Most have experienced some frustration relating to the shift to digital – mainly when technology goes wrong / doesn't do what you want it to do, and it is then difficult to reach a human to resolve their issues

"They're doing away with the human element, but a lot of times you want to speak to someone. How often does it go wrong in the supermarket and then you need to call someone and they're not there? It's frustrating!"

Daniel, 26, Ticket office most often

Sadness

Lack of human interaction is frequently mentioned as a sad downside to a more digital life, with many concerned about how the future will look if the trend continues

"I've never really heard of a website or app. I only know ticket offices. I couldn't imagine what a website or app is" (81 year old man)

Reg, 26, Ticket office most often

Rapid changes in modern technology – buying train tickets online

Those who have changed their purchasing behaviour due to these new technologies, yet prefer to purchase their train tickets in person*, claim that buying train tickets is very different to other types of online shopping. Whether through real experiences or perceived issues, reasons for reluctance to buying train tickets digitally can be broken down into two areas:

Complexity

Purchasing a ticket feels less straight forward than in other categories (e.g. buying grocery products or an item on Amazon) due to:

1. The complicated ticketing structure and the number of elements which need to be considered to get the ticket right (e.g. date, time, peak/off peak, single, return, route etc.)

2. The lack of clear reassurance that the correct product is being purchased (e.g. when grocery shopping or using Amazon, there is a clear image and description of the product being purchased, which greatly reduces the likelihood of buying the wrong thing).

Risk

For some, the idea of buying train tickets online poses high risk:

1. Given the perceived high potential to purchase the wrong ticket, passengers are concerned about inconvenience and financial loss related to incorrect purchase

*Reminder: we specifically over indexed on people who are never / infrequently purchasing rail tickets online

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Why buying train tickets online is different to online shopping elsewhere – direct from passengers

"With trains there are too many different things – different apps, different companies – I don't even know where to start!"

Ruth, 55, Ticket Office most often

"It's just all so confusing. There's hundreds of different options and it doesn't make sense!"

Peter, 40, Online (App) most often

"You don't get that 100% success rate like you get with online banking!"

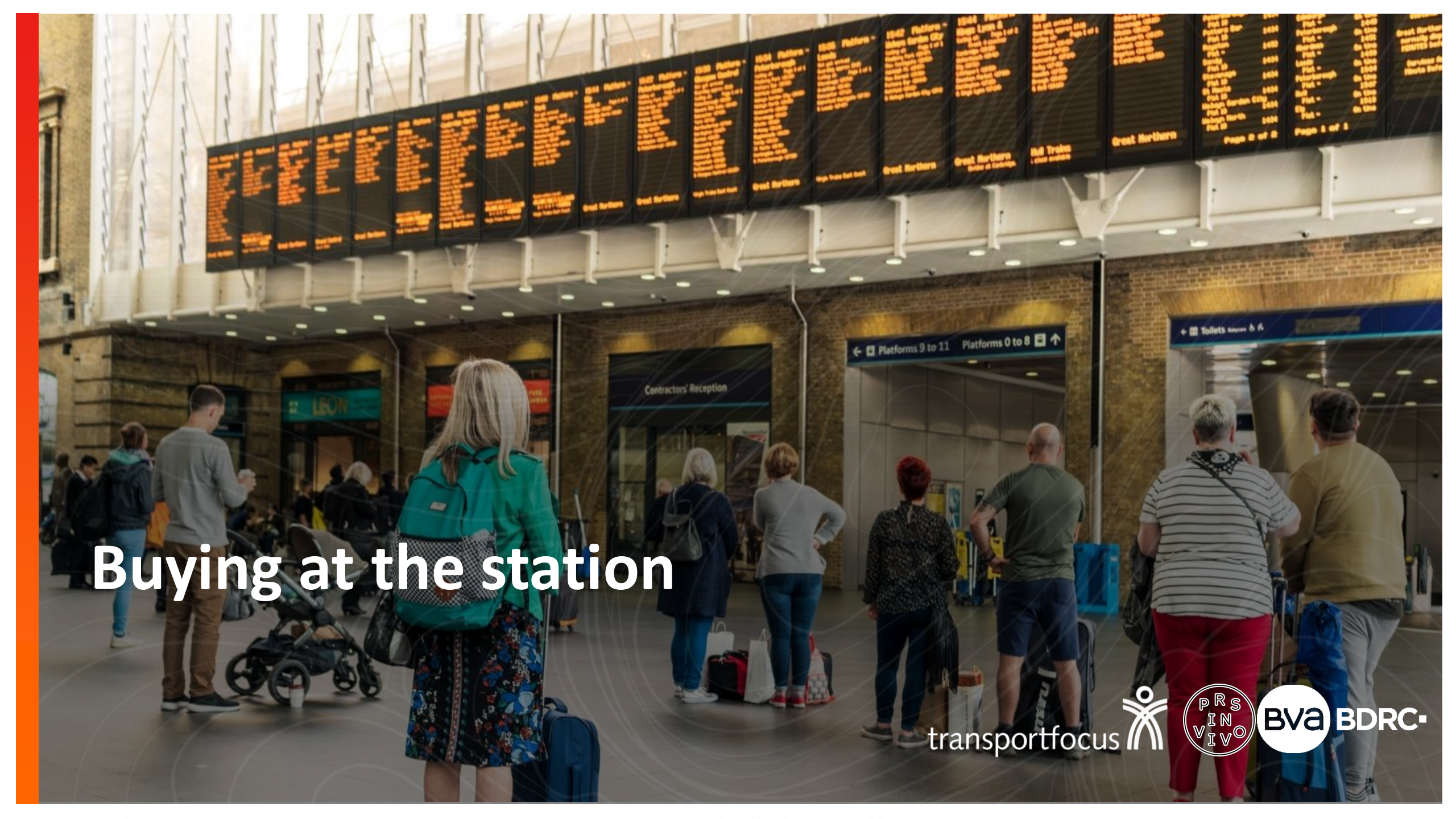**Darren, 54, Ticket Office most often**

"I'm dyslexic and I bought a ticket to Portsmouth instead of Plymouth – so now I always go to the ticket office"

Robert , 50, Ticket office most often

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Current ticket buying experiences

Buying at the station

Ticket offices – how do regular users feel?

Those who predominantly book via the ticket office appreciate the human interaction and the feeling of security it provides.

Human interaction = reassurance, which is ultimately the key benefit of using the ticket office

Anxiety and fear are often barriers to other purchasing methods and are alleviated when using the ticket office. Passengers claim to feel reassured…:

- …that the **right ticket** has been purchased at the **best possible value**

- …by the issue of a **physical ticket** (no problems with phone batteries, or bar/QR codes not working at the gate)

- …by **staff advice** regarding typical concerns such as delays and alternative routes / how to get to the platform / best place to board the train / delays etc.

For an older minority, the ability to use cash is also claimed to be a benefit

Attitudes towards ticket office staff

Those who exclusively / most often use the ticket office generally have a very positive attitude towards staff, describing them as friendly and knowledgeable – with passengers' best interests at heart

Gripes with ticket offices

Though queuing is sometimes an unpleasant by-product of buying face to face, for those who predominantly use this method, the reassurance provided outweighs this concern and they typically factor waiting time into their journey, ensuring they arrive at the station early

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Ticket offices – what do regular users say?

*"My issue is that I never know if it's peak, off peak, super off peak – it drives me mad. **Too many options and I don't know what I'm doing so I'd rather talk to someone."**

Stacy, 34, Ticket Office most often

"They tell you if there are issues with the service straight away and if there are any deals on. Also, I use cash which is another reason I go to the ticket office. I don't bank online, I've still got a cheque book so I mainly use cash and only use a credit card if I absolutely have to".

Colin, 66, Ticket Office most often

*"I like that she sells me the cheapest ticket. For example with a machine you need to do so much more. **She designs my route for me – I can't fault the ticket office"***

Bryonie, 60, Ticket Office most often

Ticket offices – learnings from intercepts and observation

Intercepts fully support the sentiments heard in groups and depths, and the people we spoke to were very satisfied with their purchasing experience – heaping high praise on the staff*

As revealed during groups and depths, reassurance is the key reason for booking at the ticket office

The stations we visited were busy (except Exeter which was quiet for most of the day). A steady stream of people waiting in the queue were observed, with limited waiting time in all stations except Manchester Piccadilly, where waiting time could be up to 15 minutes.

Staff were seen engaging in **friendly banter and heard discussing / answering questions regarding:**

- Prices
- Delays/train times
- Southeastern franchise changes (at Tunbridge wells)
- Platforms
- Bus routes
- Refunds

Those who use the ticket office appear/claim to be very satisfied unless requesting a type of refund which the staff are unable to process

''I like to buy my ticket at the ticket office because the staff are helpful. They always recommend which is the cheapest and best option for me. It's especially helpful because I'm new here.''

"I love the service and I love speaking to them. They're brilliant."

"I used the ticket office because I'm coming back tomorrow and I'm not sure if you can come back another day when you buy from the vending machine. It was a good purchasing experience. I occasionally book online, but I prefer to speak to someone if I'm unsure"

"I couldn't find a direct ticket when I looked online. But when I spoke to the staff, they told me there is a direct train. You can always get better and cheaper options when you speak to staff.''

*All verbatims on this slide are from intercepts

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Ticket offices – barriers to use

Barriers to use can all be linked to perceived levels of convenience

Those who reject ticket offices or rarely use them, typically mention:

- Queues – too long, too slow

- Not wanting to speak to anybody (younger people)

- Limited opening hours (smaller stations)

- Social distancing concerns

There is a feeling among some of these travellers that they're independent enough to buy tickets through alternative means, however, the ticket office does provide a level of reassurance.

"There's way too much queuing. I want less contact with people. The ticket office is small and there's loads of people in there and I want to avoid that".
Natasha, 47, TVM most often

"It's harder to find someone at the ticket office now, so you might as well just go online".
Intercept

"I travel very early so I do what I need to to give me an extra 5 minutes in bed!".

Christopher, 35, TVM most often

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TVMs – what do regular users say?

Those currently buying tickets via vending machines are using them through necessity (no ticket office / limited opening hours) or convenience (avoiding the ticket office queue, no need to go online).

TVM Users:

- Users describe TVMs as quick and easy to use (once you know how), and typically use them for habitual, regular journeys and appreciate the paper ticket

- Although useful for habitual purchases where the ticket type, price and destination are familiar, TVM users appear more inclined to use alternative methods for unknown or more complex journey types

Though seen as straightforward to use, some gripes exist:

- Broken machines

- Unresponsive touchscreens

- Large queues (often a result of machines being out of order)

- Inability to purchase all ticket types (e.g. duo tickets)

- Hygiene concerns (has become more top of mind since Covid)

"I've got no issues with them. It's quick and easy – straightforward!"

Christopher, 35, TVM most often

"The touch screen can be a bit temperamental and it's not that hygienic with Covid!"

Tiago, 44, TVM most often

"The touch screen on mine isn't very responsive. Sometimes you really have to hammer it, and if you're in a rush, it's a nightmare"

Tanya, 38, TVM most often

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TVMs – barriers to use

Many appear to avoid TVMs, often being worried about what could go wrong!

Fear and anxiety are the main emotions behind avoiding TVM use

- Fear of being overcharged / not getting the best deal

- Concerns about buying the wrong ticket by mistake (and the perceived high probability of doing so)

- Finding oneself in a nightmare scenario - not understanding the machine ➔ causing a big queue to form ➔ feeling more anxious because of the queue ➔being even slower because of anxious feeling etc.

- Ultimately, the impersonal experience, with no clear guidance or reassurance is the reason why many avoid TVMs

TVMs – barriers to use – direct from consumers

"There isn't room for empathy with technology – that's what's missing when you use vending machines etc."

Claudia, 28, App most often

"The Trainline app gave me 7 different options for tickets – single, day return, open, super off peak etc. and it took me ages to work out what I needed – some of them had certain restrictions or I had to book a specific train – it took me forever. If I'd been there trying to do that at a ticket machine it would be awful. The person behind me would want to punch me"!

David, 59, Online (App) most often

"I have very poor eyesight and my partner has dyslexia. It would take us a really really long time to use the machines which would be super stressful"

Intercept

"The station I go to is quite small and so sometimes the window isn't open so I have to use the machine. Once I had a bad experience with the machine – it wanted an extra £10 and the guy at the window told me I could get a much better deal and that's stuck with me"

James, 34, TVM most often

"I'd rather go to the window. It's a more personal service, it's guaranteed, with the machine I might put in the wrong thing and end up paying more, at the window I feel like they'll always give me the best price or I worry that I'll put my card in there'll be an error, I'll miss my train, need assistance – I'd rather have a friendly face behind the window"

Natasha, 47, Ticket Office most often

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Pay as you go – contactless and smart cards

Contactless payment works well for those who use it, but it doesn't feel suitable for all journeys or all travellers

Contactless payment is something almost all travellers have experience within their lives, and everywhere from supermarkets to petrol stations to corner shops use it.

Contactless/smartcards (debit/credit cards, Oyster etc.)

Pay as you go travel is something which millions of travellers already use as part of their travel journeys, but this is much less common outside the London area and TFL.

Those who use it generally feel the convenience of 'tap and go' style travel outweighs any downsides, and over time have become comfortable with using it.

Many remember the days of the oyster card as a transition period, but now the majority of users have moved on to contactless payment tapping directly via card or app.

Downsides to contactless

- Card Clash is a genuine issue travellers are mindful of, using the wrong card to tap in/out, but few have experienced it.

- Forgetting to tap out is similarly a concern, where travellers will incorrectly be charged the maximum fee by default.

- The inability to transparently see what's being charged (rather than waiting for the payment to show several days later) is a pain point for some travellers who'd prefer more control.

Tapping is trusting

Relying upon contactless payments, or a smart card involved a certain degree of trust:

- Expensive tickets mean travellers take more care in their purchase

- A lack of trust that the correct amount will be charged (And how that's calculated)

- A desire for transparency to check the charge if needed - and not need to wait

- A fear of presenting your bank card/Phone in a public area where it might be stolen

- Concern it might not scan, leading to delays and hassle at the gates

"It happened to me that I touched in with one card and touched out with another by accident. You don't find out the mistake until much later, so you can be losing money without knowing"
Intercept

"You know how in London you have the oyster, tap on tap off. If they did that up here, I'd love it. It'd be a dream come true. It'd be brilliant for me. I don't know why we haven't got it up here. It makes me thing lack of investment really."
Harry, 38, TVMs most often

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Considering a smart card system across the network

Smart cards present an alternative to contactless payment, but many are suspicious about fare calculation and convenience

Smart card opinions

When presented with the idea of a smart-card used to pay for travel directly rather than buying tickets, opinions are mixed, and often linked to previous experience (or lack thereof) with similar smart travel cards

Unfamiliar technology

Travellers who hadn't used similar systems find the concept difficult to comprehend. Using a card or phone directly at the gate instead of a paper ticket doesn't feel like a natural process for some less tech-savvy travellers

Experienced but cautious

Though many have had positive experiences with smart cards (either with Oyster or abroad), some have abandoned smart cards / contactless due to negative experiences, and the idea of using such a system for long journeys is typically rejected

When considering a smart card across the rail network, several questions are raised, and many can't see how the system would benefit them

- How fares are calculated, and how accurately?

- Would they be getting the *very best* price possible compared to other option?

- Where and how would these cards be topped up?

- What would happen if they forgot the card?

- What if it was stolen?

- How can you book a seat?

- How are railcards taken into account?

- What are the penalties for forgetting to tap out?

- Who to contact if things go wrong?

"I used them when I visited my daughter in London but I'm not entirely sure how it worked. I'd want to be able to check I couldn't get it cheaper at the station or online first."

Mandy, 64, Online (App *and* website)

"The pricing is all over the show, so that means there are so many opportunities to charge incorrectly and you'd have no idea. Where someone is there, you know how much it's going to be from the get go."

Stacy, 34, Ticket office most often

Trying to track a smartcard would be horrendous if you're going to different places. How much should you load? How much would you be charged?"

Sue, 64, Ticket office most often

"Contactless is too much of a gamble for long journeys"

Em, 34, TVM most often

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Considering a smart card system across the network (continued)

A smart card system could be a useful alternative for some passengers

The system must address the questions passengers raise

Reassurances regarding pricing must be given, particularly regarding longer journeys.

One way to combat fears regarding fares is to allow cash top-ups and pay as you go, for journeys under a certain amount. For any journeys over that threshold, a specific ticket has to be purchased and uploaded to the smartcard.

This alleviates all fears about fares being calculated incorrectly and other concerns such as being 'fined' for not tapping out

Convenient top-up locations should be available close to the station and in other easily accessible places.

Passenger suggestions:

- Train station
- Post Offices & Banks
- Supermarkets
- Corner shops
- Online (for family / relatives to top-up on their behalf)

Buying online

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Booking online – why travellers choose this method

Booking online allows travellers additional flexibility and convenience when booking their train tickets

Benefits of booking online

Booking their ticket online is the preferred option for many travellers, and has a number of key benefits, because they can:

- Book a ticket in advance, without visiting the station

- Book on their device of choice

- Maximise savings by making comparisons

- Skip the need to queue

- Preview train times for their journey options

- Book their seat

- Avoid additional contact (especially during Covid)
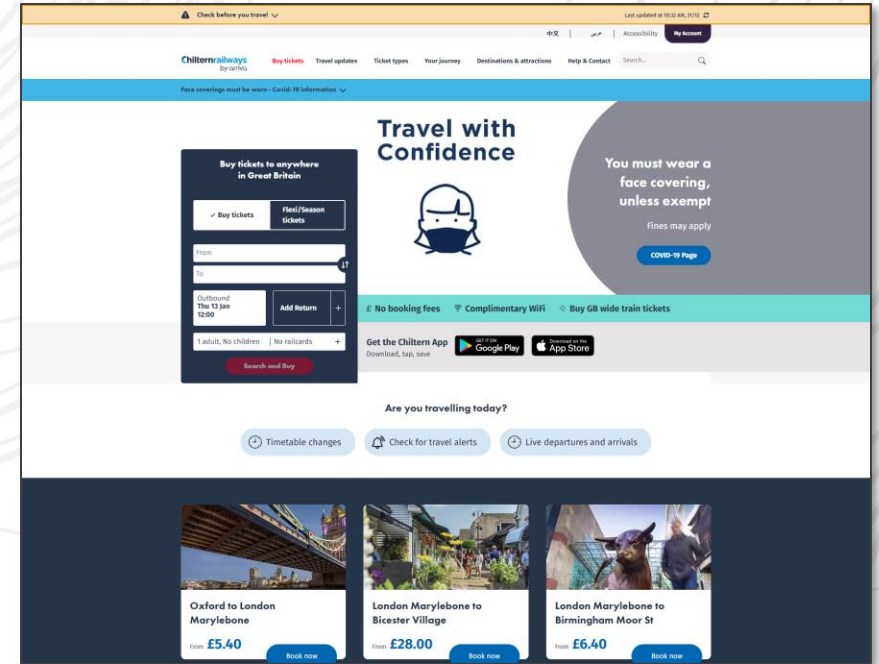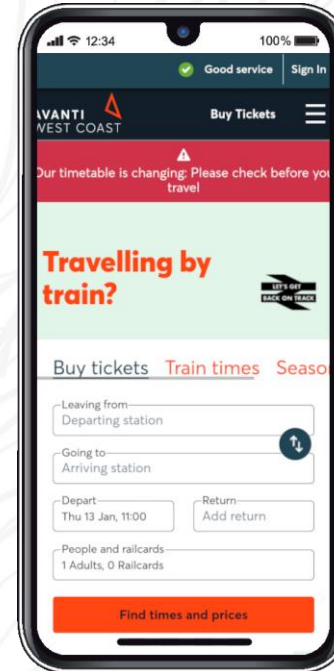
"I usually book online if it's a longer journey which will be more expensive. That way I can look at different times and different sites to make sure I'm getting the best price"

Nicola, 31, Website most often

"I literally don't think I've ever used a ticket office. I just book via the app and can get onto the train without ever needing to queue."

Kitty, 19, App most often

""I can't remember the last time I went to a ticket office – maybe it was around 10 years ago. You can book way in advance and do it all from home. I see all the options, all the times easily and I can reserve seats – just like you do at the cinema"

Fiona, 32, App most often

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Booking online – why travellers use websites

Websites often feel more familiar than apps, and the use of a larger screen on desktops means less room for error

Why websites?

When it comes to booking online, Websites are often a more comfortable choice for travellers than apps:

- A familiar interface, large enough to see (on laptop)

- More confidence with device, reassuring they'll make the right purchase

- More easily able to price compare between different 'tabs'

- No need to download anything

- More experience 'buying' via a website than an app

Desktop vs. Mobile

Many of the highlighted ease-of-use benefits are exclusive to Desktop/laptop websites.

While mobile sites are used by some to avoid installing an app, they share the same usability issues as apps due to the device being used, which can outweigh the convenience for some travellers.
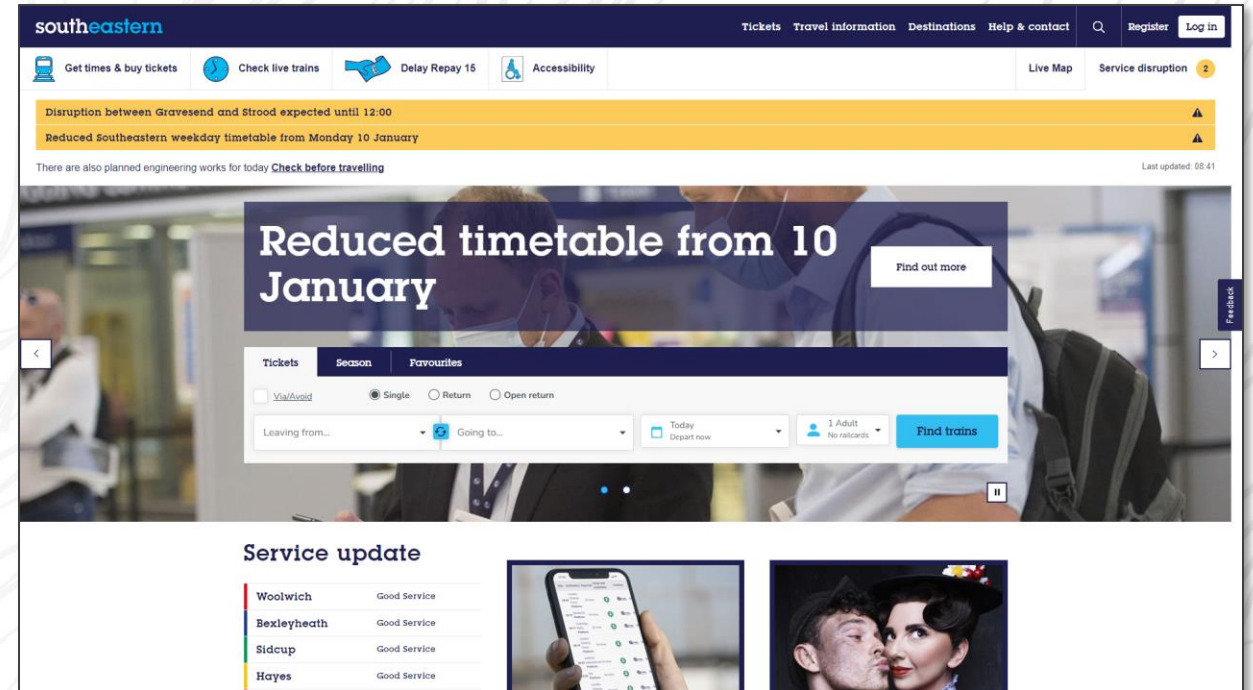
"I only travel about once or twice a month, so I book tickets online from the house. I'm not sure I'd be able to see all the options properly on my phone, but my laptop is fine."

Rob, 56, Website most often

"I actually do use the app sometimes for shorter journeys, but if I'm spending money on a bigger ticket, I find it easier to compare different options on my computer."

Matthew, 41, Website most often

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Booking online – why travellers use apps

Apps are the most convenient option for their users, but can be an intimidating extra step for others

Why apps?

Compared to both desktop and mobile websites, apps offer travellers several key benefits:

- One-touch access to booking, without the need to open a browser and navigate to a website directly or via search. Quicker for last minute purchases.

- A smooth and familiar interface

- Account-tied feature, such as journey history for easy repetition

- Easily displayed e-ticket codes

- Live tracking of information without needing to refresh the whole page

Convenience vs. confidence

Travellers who use apps typically claim to do so for the additional conveniences they offer, but for travellers who are less experienced using apps they can be an intimidating shift.

App rejectors typically lack confidence, either that their required services will be available, that they'll be able to get the best price (all options being shown, Railcard entry, etc), or merely in their own ability to effectively navigate the interface.
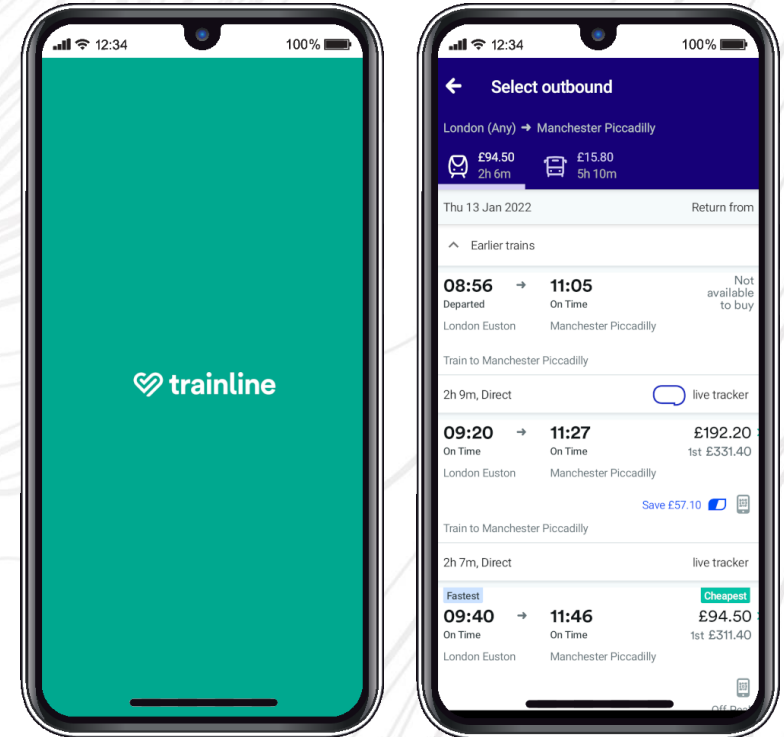
"Because I don't always know what time I want to get back, I like being able to pull out my phone and bash through the trainline app as I get to the station"

Claudia, 28, App most often

"The app is easier and what I know. I've booked tickets in the back of a taxi before as I'm on the way to the station. You're not going to pull out a laptop and do that are you?"

Joshua. 28, App most often

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Booking online – barriers to booking online

Overall, resistance to booking online often comes from uncertainty and a lack of confidence
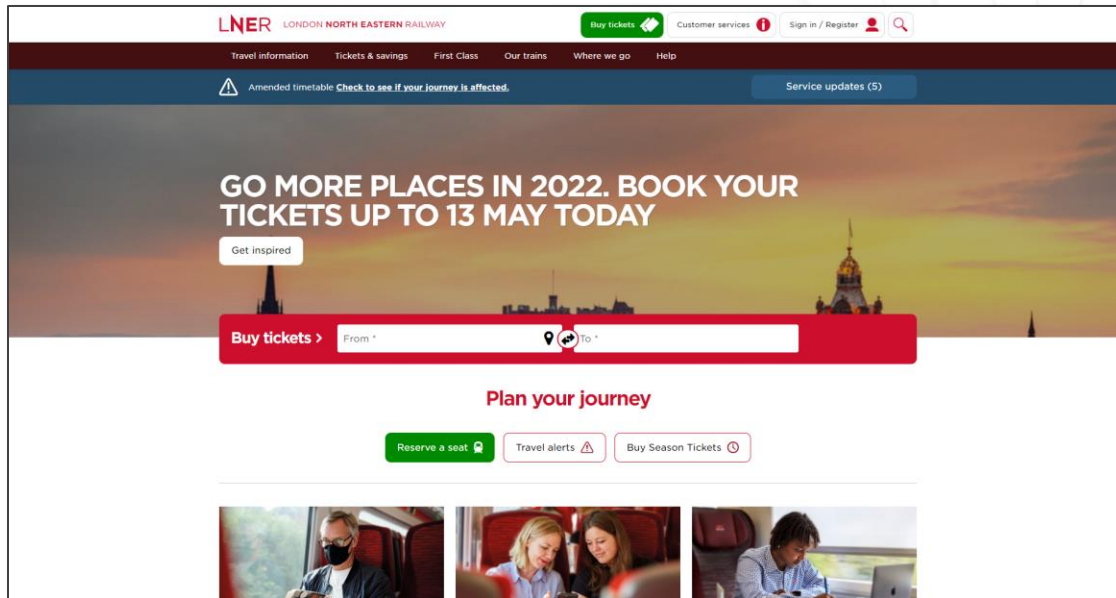
"My eyes aren't very good, so I'm not off to a great start. My neurological condition means I get confused easily, so I just find the whole thing so stressful."
Robert, 50, Ticket office most often

"I'm honestly just afraid I'd get myself lost and waste money on the wrong blooming ticket. The station is 5 minutes away, It's easier for me to drive down to the station."
Angela, 54, Ticket office most often

Barriers to booking online

In general, the most commonly mentioned barriers are:

- A lack of confidence in using the device or interface
- A lack of trust paying via app, or even website
- Unfamiliarity with ticket options (Super off-peak, etc)
- Not confident they'll be able to access the same/best deals
- Booking fees from some providers (E.g. Trainline)
- Fear they'll book the wrong ticket (Time, day, or journey)
- Desire to apply a rail card but not knowing how/if they can
- Unable to pay by cash
- A lack of human contact
- Smartphone fears (e.g. Battery/signal running out)
- Giving away personal information

An education issue, not an App & website design problem

Notably, many of the barriers are less to do with specific problems on the apps or websites they've used, and are more 'knowledge gaps' in what's possible, and how they can achieve it. This is exacerbated by the complexity and variety of ticket options available compared to buying other things online.

Reluctance to book online is more often an emotive reflex based on low trust and low knowledge, rather than specific problems with specific sites.

Booking online – direct vs third-party

Trainline is a cohesive offering for many travellers, contrasting the fragmented and regional feeling operators

Booking via Operator

southeastern

GWR LNER AVANTI WEST COAST

As they are only responsible for part of the network, operators don't feel universally relevant to all journeys – e.g. LNER doesn't feel like the natural place to go to book a trip to Cornwall.

Most travellers feel there is little difference between operators in terms of the quality of service on platform and on the train, as well as reliability of train services. Choice of website/app is therefore driven by their location/route, with most using the app/site from the operator who's responsible for their most frequent journeys.

Common comment:
Among travellers who have used multiple operator sites and apps, there is a common view that these websites/app are largely equal on a practical level, often sharing some similarities.

Booking via Third party

trainline

By far the most well-known ticket booking service, for some travellers this is synonymous with booking tickets digitally.

It's broad use is partially driven by how easy it is to find and use, being the top result for many relevant keywords when searching, and thus easily discoverable and re-discoverable.

Travellers usually have a relatively good experience, and so they tend to re-use it out of familiarity.

Common positives:

- Usually the first search result
- Clear and easy-to-use app
- Comprehensive coverage of the whole network

Common negatives:

- Booking fees

"I use the Great Western app when I'm visiting my daughter down at Plymouth, but I suppose if I was going somewhere else I'd need a different app, so I'd probably just go to the ticket office"
Intercept

"I started using the Trainline app because there was a queue and I was running late for work, but now I use it for pretty much all my rail travel."
Intercept

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Websites and apps – how travellers book their travel

Travellers form their online ticket buying habits based on what's easiest for them, and gets them the best deal

For most travellers, buying tickets digitally follows one of three common paths to purchase:

Searching

Travellers enter their journey directly into Google, and select a link from the first few options to book their trip.

This is typically exhibited for less familiar journeys, longer journeys, and by those who travel less frequently – thus haven't had enough opportunity to build a preference for a preferred service.

Shopping

Many travellers believe prices can differ between websites, and so either use google or manually visit different sites, comparing prices, before purchasing a deal with confidence.

This is generally more common for higher priced journeys, where savings are more impactful and journeys are typically booked enough in advance to allow time for them to shop around.

Direct purchase

This path has travellers visiting a website or, more commonly, opening an app, before entering the required journey, and booking immediately.

This is often more suited to familiar or semi-familiar journeys by those who travel enough to have justified downloading an app to purchase. Their app choices are driven by familiarity and habit more than a perceived benefit between apps – but Trainline is most popular.

Looking at booking patterns and traveller's journey to begin booking online, there are several factors that draw travellers into using services:

Search listing

A google search is often the first step of the journey for most travellers, and is part of the reason Trainline are by far the best known train booking service in the country.

Travellers often first connect with Trainline via Google search, where they are frequently the top result for relevant search terms, and they are able to connect with travellers at these opportune moments.

App habits

Generally speaking, travellers have little interest in keeping multiple apps for booking trains on their phones. As a result of this, once they have downloaded an app that suits their booking needs, they are likely to return to it for future bookings.

This is more often a result of habit and behavioural inertia than any comparative assessment of features, but repeatedly using the same service via website does seem increase the likelihood of downloading their app at some point.

The fragmentation factor

Crucially, travellers have a latent but shallow understanding that the network is split between different operators, and this makes a centralised 'whole network' option feel more like a comprehensive solution than an app run by someone only responsible for part of the network.

By having the appearance of catering for the whole network, to some extent Trainline are already doing what Great British Railways intends to.

Booking online – common issues

Sometimes things intended to make a better online experience, can add unnecessary distractions for less confident travellers

Distracting/'irrelevant' information

The extensive presence of features displayed as part of the buying process can end up being visually distracting and mentally taxing for travellers who are less familiar with online booking.

While emissions information and Nectar Card integration may be key draws for some travellers, they present unnecessary complication for travellers who are less digitally savvy.
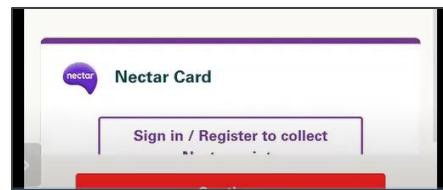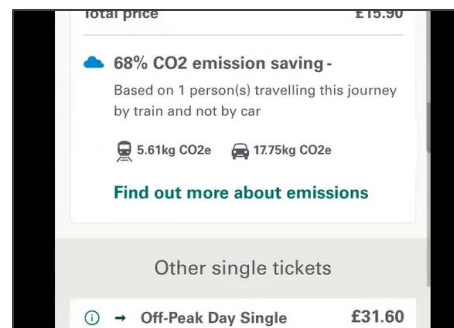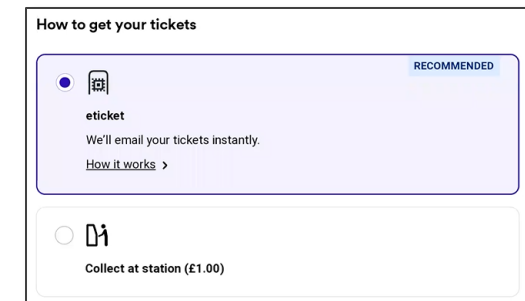
Lack of clarity around 'return'

A common hurdle when booking online was users unsure if they needed to pick a specific train back, and how an 'open return' would impact price

E-ticket introduction

Some platforms give little information around e-tickets and how they're used, despite the fact the option to avoid them is sometimes more costly

"I understand why booking on your phone might be easier for some people, but it's not something I'm ever doing to be able to do because of my eyesight. I don't even really feel confident doing it on the computer, and that's a much bigger screen."
Sujay, 56, Ticket Office most often

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Ticket preferences

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Ticket preferences – paper tickets

For many travellers, paper tickets remain the tried-and-true method providing comfort in their familiarity

Tactile reassurance

For many travellers, being able to have a physical ticket they can hold in their hand is a source of comfort and reassurance. It allows them to readily double-check their ticket information, and is a level of security and proof they have successfully purchased their ticket, particularly if they are purchasing in advance.

This is a strong enough factor for some travellers to have gotten into the habit of printing their ticket out at home, just to have it 'safe' and in their possession.

The only thing I don't like is when you've got a return ticket, and your receipt, and maybe a different ticket for tomorrow. Then you can get to the barrier and not know where you are or what you're doing. But it would probably be the same with different tabs on my phone.

Simon, 70, Ticket Office most often

"For me, I need to have that paper ticket in my hand. It might sound silly, but just being able to open my purse and check its there means I'm on the right track (Pardon the pun!). And if you are swapping trains halfway, you can keep them in order."

Kay, 65, Ticket Office most often

"I need a hard copy for my expenses."

Harry, 38, TVMs most often

Ticket tribulations

Some travellers feel with a card receipt, and a separate ticket for return journeys, they can end up having too many pieces of paper to manage.

This can be exacerbated if they are using split-ticketing to achieve a better deal or are making multiple journeys in a short space of time.

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Ticket preferences - e-tickets

E-tickets are convenient for the confident, but come with additional potential risks some aren't willing to take onboard

E-ticket ease

For travellers who have used e-tickets, the option is typically something they are willing to switch to for relevant journeys in the future

The convenience factors of having all their information at the touch of a button is often enough reason for travellers to switch

"I'm not actually sure when I started using it. It just came up on my Trainline app one day, and I thought 'Oh here we go, is this going to scan?' and it did. Because I only travel now and then, I'm not even sure the last time I used a paper ticket was"

Richard, 59, App most often

A few travellers also outwardly appreciated the reduced environmental impact from not using paper tickets, but this wasn't their main reason to switch.

Digital drawbacks

Some travellers have a background anxiety around relying on their mobile phone to manage their tickets, with common fears including:

- Unreliable scanners at the gate
- Signal/internet reliability
- The battery running out
- Having to have their phone 'out' in a busy place.
- Losing/forgetting their phone

Bad experiences

Some travellers report having these difficulties when first using e-tickets and that it was enough to revert them to using paper tickets.

A mental hurdle:
These concerns are also the common potential issues that keep travellers from trialing e-ticketing in the first place. In these instances, the challenge may be less about solving specific issues with the service, and more about allaying their fears enough to get them to trial e-ticketing in the first place.

Attitudes and opinions towards station staff

Attitudes towards staff at stations

For most travellers, staff are seen as a crucial part of the travel experience, although some have had to get used to unstaffed stations

Staff as a service

Many of the strongest impressions travellers have around ticket office staff in particular are that they help make purchasing a ticket and resolving any issues much easier.

Travellers have a general perception that ticket office staff are knowledgeable about routes and potential offers that they might otherwise not have access to, providing a great level of comfort for less confident travellers.

Staff for socialising

Whether it's being polite in their practicality, or going the extra mile, some travellers have lasting positive impressions of staff around the station and in the ticket office where there's been a earnest and appreciate social interaction.

While the location and size of the stations travellers use plays a factor in how present this is (in both unmanned and much busier station it's less of a factor), for many travellers it's common to have an affectionate relationship with the rail staff they interact with.

While this isn't something that's 'expected' pre se, it *is* widely appreciated.

Staff as a barrier

While true 'Horror stories' are very rare, there are travellers who have had negative experiences with members of staff they have interacted with.

This is usually a result of staff being inattentive or needlessly curt with the travellers when they need assistance, e.g. too busy talking or looking their phones to be dutiful.

These instances are relatively rare, but seem more common at larger, busier stations, and some travellers give a vague sense this can differ between train operators.

"The main reason I like talking to someone is I know for sure if I'm getting the correct ticket, and at the right price. I took my family to bath last year and the lady helped us get £20 with a family ticket."
Simon, 70, Ticket Office most often

"I quite like the staff at my station. We make jokes about the football and that. If you're seeing them every day then it's nice when they're not just robots. There's not enough social interaction these days"
Robert H, 47, Contactless most often

"They're 99% okay but I've had it once or twice where you go to talk to them about something and they're too busy chatting to each other or playing on their phones."
Sati, 46, TVM most often

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Perceived staff responsibilities - the four S's of station staff roles

Travellers understanding of the responsibilities of station staff can broadly fall into four key categories

Safety

Considered a key aspect of the station staff role, the safe management of the station involves everything from patrolling the 'Yellow Lines' to helping passengers onto trains, and keeping an eye on anyone walking too near the edge of platforms.

Security

Similar to safety but with regards to limiting potential attacks or abuse between passengers on trains and stations. Generally passengers attest to feeling 'safer' with station staff visible and present, particularly when travelling a unsociable hours.

Service

Travellers rely on station staff to inform them about alterations and updates to current trains, advice on potential routes and changes, as well as help navigating the station and broader network.

Sales

Finally, though mentioned less often, sale of tickets is seen as a role station staff currently have to undertake.

"Health and safety. I went to the end of the platform for better reception and someone must have seen me, who ran over to ask if I was alright."

Stuart, 42, Online (Website) most often

"As a woman, I think it's nice to have someone on the station. It just makes me feel safer."

Alice, 41, TVM most often

"They're always there to help me when I have lots of questions, which I usually do!"

Bryonie, 60, Ticket Office most often

"Obviously the main reason they're there it to sell tickets. They're busier at some stations than others"

Joanne, 37, Ticket office most often

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Looking towards the future

Exploration of hypothetical scenarios

Scenario 1 – imagining a world where digital tickets are the only option*

When imagining a world where it is no longer an option to buy tickets at the station, 1 of 3 attitudes typically emerge

1 Acceptance

A portion of travellers feel that change is inevitable

"At the end of the day it's inevitable…although I feel sorry for older people."

I won't have too much resistance. I'd rather the window stays, however, if the option is taken away, I'll just accept that we're moving with the times.

"It's natural progression. It's what's happening in the world and makes perfect sense to help reduce costs"

2 Reluctant Acceptance

Some travellers are unhappy at the proposal and have a level of resistance – however, they understand that it's progressive - which sometimes leads to unpleasant side effects

"It's unavoidable. Though I'd feel helpless, there's nothing I can' do about it, so I'd have to adjust."

"It's sad but it's going to happen. Just look at every other area of our lives."

If they moved to digital, I'd probably grumble a bit and then just get on with it!"

3 Opposed / Strongly opposed

Some are very upset / angry by potential changes. While there are concerns about how it would affect them personally, much opposition is more about how this could effect others – i.e. vulnerable passengers and staff who may lose their job

"It would be a travesty. It's an institution. There are too many people who will be impacted – especially the old. I use my Mum as a benchmark. For Mum to have to do this, it would be so tough for her"

"You can't do that! There are people of a certain age who you've completely written off. Or people with disabilities. That's a non starter"

"I feel really bitter about it. We spend so much on tickets, so it would be disappointing"

Although some exhibit acceptance / reluctant acceptance, like the strongly opposed, they express concerns regarding:

1. **Vulnerable passengers who may be affected**
2. **Loss of choice and safety net for when things go wrong (e.g. lost phone / bank card, spontaneous journey)**
3. **Job losses (most express opposition to this and it damages the already fragile relationship that passengers have with the railway)**

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*Reminder: we specifically over indexed on people who are never / infrequently purchasing rail tickets online

Scenario 2 – imagining if ticket offices were closed

When considering a network with no ticket offices (but TVMs remain), initial reactions can be negative…

There's an element of Nostalgia when it comes to ticket offices

- Ticket offices feel like an inherent part of the railway, and those who use them are very satisfied by the level of service and reassurance they provide

- The thought of removing them completely is initially met (by some) with sadness and / or anger, driven by:
  - The thought of potential job losses
  - Worry about how to get help / how to buy a ticket
  - A feeling of unfairness

- For others, it is however inevitable – especially those who already live on lines with unstaffed stations or who believe they've already begun to see a shift in the number of ticket booths open or the hours of operation

What about reduced opening hours?

- While potentially disruptive, reducing ticket office opening hours seems to be more acceptable at less busy stations, but the intention to do this must be clearly communicated.

- Notably, there isn't a consensus when it comes to potential opening hours:
  - Some suggest peak hours;
  - Others suggest off peak hours are more important, as more people who need the service are likely to be travelling at those times

This lack of consensus suggests that consultation with passengers or analysis of ticket buying behaviour on a case by case basis may be necessary

"I'd be gutted. The lady by the desk has helped me a lot. I'd feel bad for her. I don't know what they'd do"
Gemma, 33, TVM most often

"It would be the end of an era"
Darren, 54, Ticket Office most often

"It wouldn't even register as I rarely use them. My station probably hasn't had one since 1965"
Warren, 57, TVM most often

"I'd be devastated – it's such a useful tool being able to talk to someone. What about all the staff? Where would they go. It's the information they give you, like 'make sure you get on the middle coach and things like that'. They give you so much information."
Colin, 66, Ticket Office most often

"I miss seeing people around. It makes me wonder if they've lost their jobs and it makes me feel a bit sad".
Kay, 65, Ticket Office most often

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Scenario 2 – imagining if ticket offices were closed (continued)

Considering a scenario where TVMs are the only option at the station

Fear and anxiety are the main emotions behind barriers to use

- Fear of being overcharged / not getting the best deal

- Concerns about buying the wrong ticket by accident (and the perceived high probability of doing so)

- Finding oneself in a nightmare scenario - not understanding the machine ➜ causing a big queue to form ➜ feeling more anxious because of the queue ➜being even slower because of anxious feeling etc.

- Ultimately, the impersonal experience, with no clear guidance or reassurance is the reason why many avoid TVMs

Reminder

Other important considerations:

- **Provide a suitable number of TVMs** for footfall numbers

- **Carry out regular maintenance** of vending machines (several travellers report encountering 'out of order' TVMs)

- Sanitise vending machines (and provide reassurance regarding regular sanitization, referencing Covid)

How to alleviate passenger fear and anxiety around TVMs:

Provision of adequate, capable staff is key to providing the passenger reassurance required, in a scenario where TVMs are the only booking option at the station. This could be in the form of staff available to help with TVM's whenever required. There must be adequate staff relative to the number of machines (people should not be left alone for long periods if they need assistance). Staff must be:

- Friendly and Patient – willing to offer advice, guide passengers through the process or complete the booking on the passenger's behalf

- Knowledgeable – able to select the most cost effective option

Some passengers appear to be open to a scenario where the guidance is provided virtually – potentially through an intercom or better still, a zoom like interface, allowing the passenger to experience some human interaction. In this scenario it should be possible for the staff member to complete the booking – not just answer questions – as the visually impaired, dyslexic and those with other disabilities may still not be able to confidently select the correct ticket, even with guidance.

A voice activated vending machine (similar to Siri/Alexa/Google home) could also be considered.

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Scenario 2 – imagining if ticket offices were closed (continued)

Despite initial negative reactions, when thinking about their own and other passenger needs, it appears there are clear ways to address concerns

Thinking specifically about needs

- The main purpose of the ticket office is to provide:
  - A central point of contact
  - A reassuring purchase experience

Though it feels impractical to happen overnight, many people can conceive of a near future where this change is manageable within their lives, providing a number of measures are taken to mitigate the effects

What feels manageable?

- **Continue to provide a central point of contact:**
  - There should be a central area where passengers can access help from staff – and if they are not available there should be a way to alert them
- **Continue to provide a reassuring purchase experience**
  - Ideally, staff on the concourse should be able to issue tickets 'on the go' for the digitally excluded or allow on-train ticket purchases
  - An adequate number of staff should be available to help with purchasing from TVMs

"As long as they're easy to find, and able to help you when you need it that's the main thing.

..They might even prefer not being stuck in a booth all day."
Simon, 70 ,TVM most often

*see advice re TVMs overleaf

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Scenario 3 – ticket offices closed and staff redeployed around the station

The concept of staff redeployment is received more positively, but a degree of scepticism and concern remains

Practical in principle

Most travellers were able to see the benefit of staff being more flexible in their duties, and readily on-hand around the concourse and platforms rather than being 'cooped up' in a ticket office. This was often supported by previous experience seeing or interacting with staff in these areas previously.

Searching for staff

A common concern was that travellers currently know where in the station to go to get assistance from staff, with the ticket office itself being a landmark, whereas with staff moving about the station may be harder to find or engage with in an orderly fashion.

Sales on the go

One suggestion that some travellers felt was necessary was staff being able to still sell tickets to those who needed them that way – e.g. via handheld ticket machines like those used by on-train conductors.

Availability and attentiveness

Travellers often had queries about how this would be rolled out differently for smaller, lower-staffed stations. Additionally, some highlighted examples of staff being too busy to help (Or in one instance too distracted talking to one another).

! Scepticism towards the idea

When the idea of redeploying ticket staff around the station is mentioned, a number of travellers express a initial reaction of scepticism that it would actually happen rather than "Just getting rid of people."

This is typically travellers finding the idea incredulous in the short-to-medium term, but some also highlight that even if such roles are made, they're not hopeful they'll be maintained when those employees retire.

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"The best way to implement any kind of change would be by keeping staff around . It doesn't necessarily need to be in a booth, but there needs to be people helping us to get the right ticket, helping with luggage, directing us to the right place.

"It's important to have that human interaction. Taking that away completely is wrong. You still need people there."

Stacy, 34, Ticket Office most often

"Of course they SAY they'll redeploy them, but do we know if that'll actually happen?

"I understand the need to be cost-effective but I'd hate to see anybody done out of a job…"

Simon, 70, TVM most often

Who would be most impacted – travellers who need extra help

With digitisation, the elderly are often the most represented group who are resistant to the changes, but other groups are impacted too

Considering potential changes to the available methods of booking tickets, and the staff on-hand to help passengers, the elderly and disabled are organically most concerned, feeling they may struggle or be 'left behind':

The elderly

Often the most readily concerned were the older generation of travellers. Most commonly driven by lower levels of technological capability, these travellers often felt they would struggle.

The physically disabled

Another group who anticipate potential problems are those with physical disabilities. A broad category of people who require specific assistance already, they had concerns around how staff changes might impact their varied needs.

The mentally disabled and neurodivergent

Change is inherently hard for people with anxiety issues, and re-learning processes can feel almost impossible for those with cognitive impairments, so this group of people are especially vulnerable to altering the booking process and should be given extra assistance.

Notably, for travellers who don't fall into these group, the elderly are the most top-of-mind group of people they have concern for, driven by experience with parents & grandparents struggling with technology

"I'm 88 years old, and while I'm pretty good for my age, I'm not going to be downloading an app just to catch the train."
Patrick, 88, Ticket Office most often

"My vision isn't very good so the machines are no good for me. I have bought tickets online before but I had to get my daughter to do it for me because I can't read the screen."
Sujay, 56, Ticket Office most often

"I suffer from depression and anxiety, so the idea of me fumbling around blocking the gate trying to get it to work while other people are huffing and tutting behind me is enough to put me off the idea all together to be honest."
Debbie, 56, Ticket Office most often

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Can rail go cashless?

Not a far-fetched notion, but it may discriminate

- Though they express concern for others, the majority of people we spoke to **would not be adversely affected if networks became cashless**
  - Many already rarely use cash, and many have already been exposed to bus networks which don't accept cash
- However for an older minority, this could be very disruptive (some even claim they wouldn't use trains anymore), as cash is their predominant currency and they are more likely to fear debit/credit cards
- Passengers also worry about potential emergency situations where they only have cash available and need to get on a train or where technology fails
- Though we didn't speak to anybody in this position, a minority mention the unbanked as a group who could potentially be excluded via a cashless railway

Cashless feels inevitable for most younger (under 55) passengers– but safety nets are important:

There are business benefits to being cashless and many passengers see benefits in not carrying cash also

However, the older minority, the unbanked (and other groups we may not have identified) must be catered for – as well as provisions for emergency situations.

- An **accessible smartcard system, with convenient top-up locations**, appears to be a viable alternative to cash **if steps are taken to ensure it is truly accessible (e.g. close to station, open at times when trains are in operation) and does not disproportionately disadvantage those affected***

"It's fine for me, but I'm privileged. It doesn't sit well with me thinking about others. After all, cash is legal tender!"
Olivia, 38, Contactless most often

"If I couldn't use cash, I don't think I'd use the train anymore"
Intercept

I think we already have a cashless society. I can't remember the last time I used cash.
Anthony, 26, TVM most often

"Sometimes you need cash. Technology fails, your card doesn't work or you lose it or there's no connection. There's definitely still a need for cash"
Matthew, 41, Online (App & Website) most often

*See slides 23 and 24 for details regarding how this might work

The industry context

The industry context

At the end of each group, passengers were exposed to some industry background, to give some context to the scenarios they'd been exploring

- Train operators have been under direct government contract since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. They are paid a fixed fee to deliver services with the revenue and cost risk taken by the government.
- As passenger numbers (and so ticket revenue) fell due to the pandemic this meant taxpayer funding has been needed to fill the gap.
- An extra £6.5bn of taxpayer funding was needed to keep services running in 2020-21 financial year.

Read out to all groups

- Passenger numbers have recovered in 2021, but are still only at around 70% of pre-Covid levels so a substantial funding gap remains.
- As part of the Governments reforms setting up 'Great British Railways' the railway is expected to find £1.5bn of savings over the next 5 years.
- The proportion of tickets sold by ticket offices has reduced over time and this change has been accelerated by the pandemic. Pre-Covid in 2019 around 25% of tickets were purchased from a ticket office, this has reduced now to around 15%. Digital methods have increased their share from around 4 in 10 tickets pre-Covid to 6 in 10 now.
- The Government has recently announced plans for a £360m investment in Pay As You Go ticketing outside of London (including the North of England) covering 700 stations.

One or more points were summarized in each group – '£1.5bn savings' was always mentioned

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Initial attitudes towards industry issues

Overall, most aren't aware of the current industry context. Once explained, two predominant attitudes towards the predicament the rail industry faces emerge.

Understanding

"It all makes sense now"

or

Apathetic

"It's not my problem"

Interestingly, the attitude exhibited does not necessarily correlate with the attitude towards a move to digital ticketing (i.e. because somebody is strongly opposed to digital ticketing, it doesn't mean they are apathetic to the situation the rail industry finds itself in, and vice versa):

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Attitudes towards industry issues – the apathetic

Once this context is explored and understood, the apathetic get angry

The Apathetic viewpoint

While apathetic to the industry's predicament, the suggested solutions give rise to various emotions – from mildly annoyed to extremely angry. The apathetic feel that the issues affecting the industry are not a passenger problem, (and therefore should in no way affect passengers) and can only be attributed to incompetent management.

It is especially hard for some to comprehend the issues, when pre-covid travel was marred by overcrowding and high costs – which in their mind means that there should be surplus money available now

Their Solution

There is a belief that alternative ways to generate income / cover the shortfall should be explored prior to any changes to ticketing and staff.

Suggestions include:

▪ Price reductions to encourage more train travel

▪ Cuts to under utilised services (suggested by a minority)

Some of the most vocal opponents are unlikely to be personally affected by any potential changes to ticketing

Though they express a distinct lack of empathy for the industry, **empathy for their fellow humans is at the heart of the opposition**, with passengers concerned about:

• Those less able to cope with changes (elderly, disabled, young)

• Tourists who don't necessarily understand our system

• Potential job losses

"Some journeys are super expensive. That can put people off. I used to travel a lot from Leeds to London and the cost was unbelievable. If they want to get more people on trains, this has a negative impact"

Warren, 57, TVM most often

"I know it sounds counter-productive, but they need to make the tickets cheaper. You need to get more people using the trains to make up the money and the only way they might, is if they're cheaper"

Gemma, 33, TVM most often

"I'd cut uneconomic routes. Trains serving places with only 2 people from a community travelling on it – its taxpayers money"

David, 59, Online (App & Website) most often

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Attitudes towards industry issues – the Understanding

Once the industry context is explained the understanding recognise the issues

The Understanding viewpoint

The understanding hear the figures, understand the issue, and take the view that everybody has to 'do their bit' to contribute to fixing the problem – which for them, may mean learning how to survive without a ticket office / learn how to use a website / app or seeking help from family members

"I feel a bit differently now that I've heard that. There's clearly a much bigger picture and if I'm in the minority by buying tickets at the station, maybe I have to change. It's not sustainable now and it would be worse if they closed a station or doubled the prices"

Bryonie, 60, Ticket Office most often

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Encouraging digital adoption

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Encouraging digital adoption – what do passengers suggest?

To switch, passengers suggest that online ticket purchase needs to provide the great service they get from the ticket office, plus offer something extra. Passenger suggestions tend to fall into one of two buckets – providing reassurance and giving incentives

Callback service*	Suitable confirmation	Cooling off period	Loyalty schemes	Link to other schemes	Cashback
A system where passengers can request a call back with a real person who will double check what they are booking and confirm	A feature where the device reads back what has been selected, prior to confirming the purchase	For a period of time after purchase, passengers would like the opportunity to get a refund – no questions asked – in the event that they made an error when booking	Something similar to Tesco Clubcard or frequent flier miles	Ability to earn Clubcard / Nectar / similar points	Receive money off tickets or cashback per ticket / for every X tickets purchased

Reassure

Incentivise

* There is a perception that calling to buy a ticket is either not possible, or will be unpleasant (based on experiences with attempting to call other services where digital has become prevalent – e.g. airlines). Promoting the option to purchase over the phone should be considered.

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