

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

<b>Title</b>	LU Customer Language 2		
<b>Objective</b>	Explore the language used by LU to describe delays currently and inform the development of a new naming convention for delays		
<b>Date</b>	18/06/2012	<b>Agency</b>	2CV
<b>Methodology</b>	Six focus groups with customers across a range of lifestages and types of Tube user (commuter and leisure)		

## Abstract

London Underground would like to understand the effectiveness of language used to inform customers of problems on the system and how this can be developed. Two, three-stage naming conventions were selected by customers as potential options for developing service performance language. 'Good service, Short delays, Long delays' is felt to be logical and time based and has the potential to bring language more in line with the customer experience through more consistent definition and timing information. 'Good service, Minor delays, Major delays' delivers more emotionally directive information and is in line with existing conventions with 'Major' perceived to be slightly less serious than 'Severe'; however over time 'Major' would come to mean the same as 'Severe' in describing the service. Beyond naming conventions, customers call for service performance information is isused more consistently and is in line with their experience. The current use of language feels more LU-centric (network led) which is in discord with customer needs (me-centric and journey led).

## Key findings

Customers are me-centric when travelling on the Tube and want to stay in control; when there is a problem they use system performance information to understand if/how their journey will be affected so they can react accordingly.

Customers develop heuristics and automatic responses when on the Tube to align with system language and help them navigate their journeys easily. Commuters in particular are accustomed to these announcements and feel comfortable with the current conventions. 'Good', 'Minor' and 'Suspended' are all relatively easy to understand and respond to when heard or seen. However, the meaning of 'Severe' spans a broader range of journey impacts and therefore the course of action for customers is less clear and requires more effortful thinking when deciding how to respond.

When presented with alternatives, customers prefer two, three-stage options: 'Good service, Short delays, Long delays', and 'Good service, Minor delays, Major delays'.

The former option is more time-based which could create a clearer solution for customers, as long as this reflects the customer experience and is used consistently. The latter is more emotional and could therefore prompt a more active response; it is also generally seen to be marginally less serious than 'Severe' (but over time it is likely to mean the same as 'Severe' as customers become conditioned to system language and align this with their personal experience).

Other alternatives are rejected, such as 'Normal service' (a desire for more positivity), 'Extended delays' (feels inconclusive and long-term), and 'Delays - please seek alternative routes' (feels incomplete and can leave customer in a state of decision-paralysis). 'Limited service' is preferred to 'Special service' as it is felt to be more descriptive and has a clearer meaning.

Customers feel all language conventions can currently be used inconsistently, which can inhibit the development of heuristics and ability to trust service updates. Customers also feel that service performance language is LU-centric rather than customer-centric, due to communications being cross-network and engineering focussed, and call for information that is more localised and tells them how their journey will be affected. Customers currently rely on information regarding the nature of the problem to work out how to respond as a result of this.

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