

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title	New Bus for London – in service evaluation		
Objective	To assess customer perceptions with the New Bus for London (NBfL) in service, compared with conventional double decker buses		
Date	June 2012	Agency:	SPA Future Thinking
Methodology	Face to face interviews with 221 customers on the NBfL and 529 on conventional double decker bus serving the same route (Route 38)		

Abstract

Pre-launch customer assessment of the NBfL was very positive, but in-service research was required to understand how customers perceive the NBfL in operation, and how it compares with conventional buses. While both the NBfL and the conventional bus performed well, the NBfL consistently gained higher ratings. The NBfL has the 'wow factor'; it received a high proportion of 'top box' ratings on all measures. The conventional bus performed better for temperature and ventilation (but there were known issues with the NBfL air conditioning during fieldwork) and lighting.

AMTS assessments by wheelchair users were also conducted to complement this research – see job number 12017.

Key findings

Both the NBfL and the conventional bus generally received high ratings from customers. However, the NBfL performed better than the conventional bus in almost all areas. The NBfL generated a 'wow' factor, with customers giving a high proportion of 'top box' ratings: for example, 35% 'strongly like' the overall design and environment of the NBfL, compared with 11% for the conventional bus.

The NBfL was rated significantly higher for the amount of vibration, smoothness of ride and engine noise – around nine out of ten customers were satisfied with these aspects of the NBfL, compared with around two thirds for the conventional bus.

Customers also rated the design of facing seats, the mix of forward and rear-facing seats, the fabric design, and layout for standing passengers more highly on the NBfL. Customers valued having two sets of stairs on the NBfL, and the rear platform caused very few difficulties during the trial.

The conventional bus was rated more highly than the NBfL for lighting, temperature and ventilation. However, there were known issues with the air conditioning on the NBfL during the fieldwork period. The vast majority of customers on both buses were satisfied with lighting levels; however the conventional bus scored slightly higher; most likely due to the fact the lights were on during the day, whilst the NBfL lights are not on all the time. Timetabling restraints meant that no after-dark assessment was possible, so views on lighting reflect day time only.

The conductor received very high satisfaction ratings (89 out of 100), with 49% of customers giving the rating the conductors' behaviour and attitude as 10 out of 10. Customers generally understood that the conductor's role is to ensure safety when using the rear platform; very few thought that the conductor was there to check tickets.

Most customers could not suggest any improvements to the NBfL; where they did, these tended to relate to ventilation and windows.