

TripViewThe User Experience

October 8, 2016

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Introduction

TripView, a mobile application developed by Grofsoft, first appeared on Google's Android Market in 2009. Seven years and many iterations later, TripView has secured itself a prime position on the front-screen of more than a million Android devices in Sydney and Melbourne.

Available in two versions: free and ad-supported or paid and full-featured, TripView offers users in Australia's two biggest cities access to state transit timetables and related real-time data. More specifically, Grofsoft's flagship application promises to provide its customers with:

- Offline train, bus, ferry and tram timetables
- Transit maps
- Trip planning support
- Up-to-date service interruption information
- Real-time service tracking and delay estimates

At a fundamental level, TripView simply utilises information which is freely available to anyone via government-administered API gateways. In fact, as of October 2016, over 300 applications tap into public transport data hubs in New South Wales and Victoria, making for a crowded and homogenous marketplace.

This leaves developers, like Grofsoft, only one true point of difference to exploit: design! Each business must endeavour to separate itself from the competition by presenting information in a manner most appropriate and meaningful to the intended user.

This report seeks to explore the TripView user experience and answer the question: to what extent does its design satisfy the needs of the user and contribute to overall usability?

To begin, the report will define the qualities of a typical TripView user and highlight some common tasks they may choose to complete using the application.

Second, TripView's usability will be scrutinised via heuristics, using Jakob Nielsen's ten principles as a framework for analysis.

Finally, the results of a user survey will be presented, interpreted and compared to the findings extracted from the aforementioned evaluation.



TripView at a glance...

Developer: Grofsoft, 2009

Build: 3.5.1 30/9/2016

Platform:

Category: Travel & Navigation

Versions:Ad-Supported - Free
Full-Featured - \$4.49

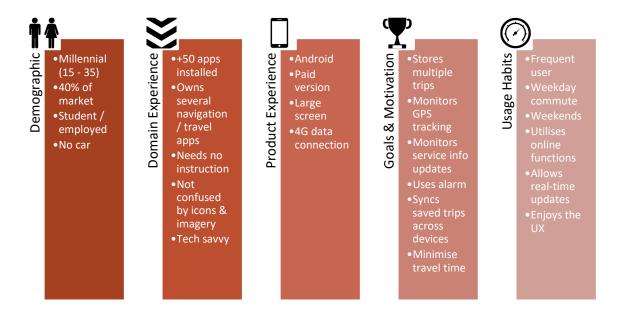
Accolades: 6th Top Selling +1,000,000 Downloads 4.6 Star Rating

User Groups

Before it is possible measure TripView's success as an application, one must first examine how it is likely to be used and by whom. This section will identify the characteristics, attributes and needs of three typical user groups.

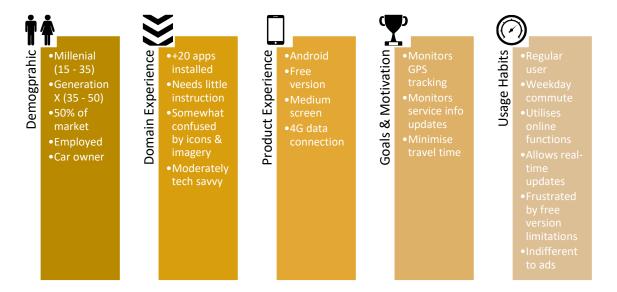
The Power User ... "I'm lost without you!"

The *Power User* may concede that TripView has some flaws, but is more than satisfied with their decision to hand over \$4.49 for the full experience. They use the application on a daily basis, often as way to pass time at the bus stop, and make use of non-core functionality.



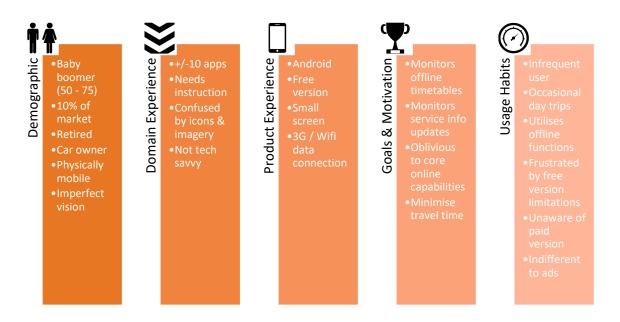
The Casual User ... "it's like Google Maps, right?"

The *Casual User* treads the fine line between wanting to delete TripView and splashing out for the full version. TripView's cleverly implemented 'teases' are largely responsible for this love / hate relationship. For the moment, the *Casual User* is willing to endure some frustration in exchange for access to real-time timetabling. A lifestyle change resulting in an increased reliance on public transport may prompt this user to upgrade.



The Novice User ... "where are my glasses?"

The Novice User uses TripView like an electronic timetable, largely oblivious to its online functions and GPS tracking. Typically a user of the free download, they find the regular disappearance of their created trips baffling and would likely upgrade to the full version given some instruction.



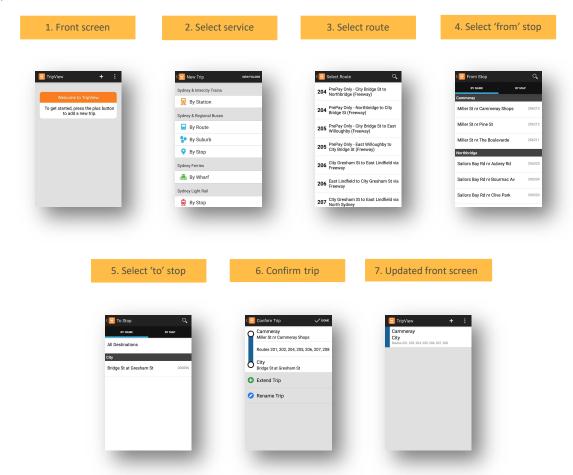
Task Analysis

This section outlines the steps involved in utilising some of TripView's core functions. It also identifies which users are most likely to use them.

Create a New Trip (Power, Casual & Novice)

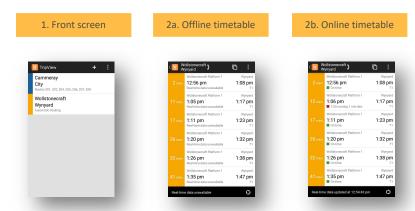
Every user will be prompted to create a new trip upon first opening the application. Trip-making is TripView's most critical function. The user must complete this step before accessing any other functionality. A negative experience with this process would likely result in the application being removed from the user's phone.

Owners of the free version will be all-too-familiar with these screens. Their created trips are wiped once the application is closed.



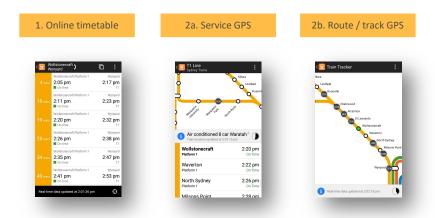
Monitor Timetables (Power, Casual & Novice)

After a new trip is created, most users will utilise the ability to monitor service timetables. These can be viewed offline, as scheduled arrivals, or online, with times adjusted to reflect real-time GPS data. The user taps a previously created trip on the front screen to explore the timetable.



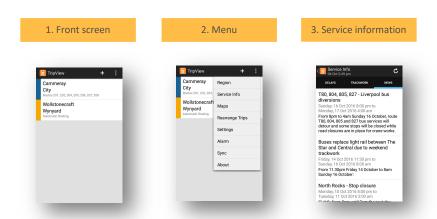
Monitor GPS Tracking (Power & Casual)

While an online timetable will display estimated arrivals as text, some users may prefer a graphical representation. Tapping a particular service will show its position on a map. Alternatively, tapping the target icon at the bottom-right will show every service in operation along a given route or track. The GPS data is refreshed every 15 seconds.



Monitor Service Information Updates (Power & Novice)

TripView users can monitor regularly updated service information direct from the transport authority's API. This is accessed via the application's menu icon at the top-right of the front screen.



Heuristic Analysis – Nielsen's 10 Principles

This section of the report seeks to examine TripView's interface and usability in the context of Jakob Nielsen's ten heuristics for design. Nielsen, a usability consultant, developed these principles as a method by which an application's quality of design could be measured (Nielsen, 1995).

Visibility of System Status ★★☆

"The system should always keep the user informed about what is going on."

TripView is lightning fast. Assuming the user is operating a relatively up-to-date handset, almost every action is met with an immediate response. The only exception occurs while the application is downloading data. Users will experience a delay while timetables are updated and GPS data is refreshed. In both instances, an animated clock face will be displayed to indicate progress.

Unfortunately, while viewing the map, the clock continues to move even after data is disabled. This may lead the user to believe they are monitoring real-time activity in moments when there is no connection.

GPS data is set to refresh every 15 seconds. The ability to modify this rate may be appealing to *Power Users* or those with large data allowances.

Match Between System & the Real World ★★★

"The system should follow real world conventions, displaying information in a natural and logical order."

Early versions of TripView drew inspiration from Sydney train stations by replicating the appearance of their digital arrival boards. This was later scrapped in favour of a homogenous aesthetic across the entire application.

Nonetheless, TripView's design maintains a firm connection with reality.

This is most obvious with regard to Grofsoft's extensive use of Google Maps and overlayed GPS data which places the user in the real-word and offers the ultimate visual aid.

User Control & Freedom ★★★

"A user should be able to leave an unwanted state without having to go through extended dialogue."

TripView's simplicity ensures that no problem is too difficult to untangle. Even the most complex task – creating a trip involving multiple service changes – can be undone in a matter of a seconds. In fact, TripView's shallow menu design means the user is never more than a few taps away from the front screen.

Error Prevention ★★★

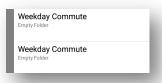
"Even better than good error messages is careful design which prevents a problem occurring in the first place."

Despite Grofsoft's best efforts, TripView is not capable of preventing users from making real-world errors. Unfortunately, the application cannot claim to stop people setting foot on the wrong bus or programming a trip in the wrong direction. However, it does go a long way to making these blunders unlikely.

For example, when creating a new trip, options are removed as they become impossible. This eliminates the need to notify the user that their starting point and destination are not connected by the same route.

Similarly, TripView utilises progressive disclosure to ensure users are not overloaded with options as they go through the process of creating new trips.

A possible oversight is TripView's inability to warn users against creating folders or trips with a duplicated name which could lead to confusion.

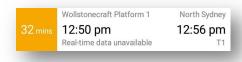


Help Users Recognise, Diagnose & Recover from Errors ★★☆

"Error messages should be in plain language, indicate the problem and suggest a solution."

Try as one might, it is impossible to generate an error message in TripView. On the surface, this appears to be the result of excellent design and was, no doubt, a conscious decision made by the developer. However, there are situations where *Novice Users* may appreciate some guidance, particularly surrounding the use of TripView's online functions.

Grofsoft's use of the message – "real-time data unavailable" – does not differentiate between problems with the API gateway, which are common, or the user's device status. A separate message for outages related to the loss of a network connection may be beneficial.

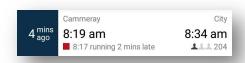


Consistency & Standards ★★☆

"Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing."

TripView makes excellent use of commonly understood imagery and visual cues to reduce text and simplify its aesthetic. Android platform conventions are followed closely. If the user is even vaguely familiar with Google Maps, they should have no problem navigating the application.

Occasionally, the user is presented with a graphic that is difficult to decipher. A recent update added three 'heads' to real-time bus timetables as an indication of the space available on-board. However, this feature arrived with no explanation, appears sporadically and may even be broken. It remains to be seen if this is merely a gimmick or something that can influence the user's travel habits.



Recognition Rather than Recall ★★☆

"Minimise the user's memory load by making objects, actions and options visible."

The TripView experience is almost identical across all services. Whether the user chooses to travel by train, bus, ferry or tram, the process of creating and monitoring trips remains the same.

However, this uniformity does have a minor downside. If the user has multiple saved trips in variety of services, it is not always immediately obvious which one is being explored or edited. In fact, the constant presence of TripView's logo – a train – may even cause a brief moment of doubt for users of other transport services.

Flexibility & Efficiency of Use ★★★

"Allow users to tailor frequent actions."

TripView's free version deliberately ignores this principle in an effort to encourage users to upgrade. Created trips are not saved and must be reprogrammed after a short period of inactivity or upon restarting the application.

Fortunately, the full-featured version reliably stores saved trips and pins them to the front screen to allow for quick and easy access. These can then be sorted and arranged into folders.

Aesthetic & Minimalist Design ★★★

"Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed."

Grofsoft expertly walks the fine line between minimalism and functionality. Weighing in at just under 2mb, TripView is lean and mean. *Casual* and *Novice Users* will likely appreciate its modest downloads and the lack frivolous animations and graphics. On the other hand, *Power Users*, with less regard for data consumption, may be in favour of a more visually stimulating aesthetic.

Free users will appreciate the unobtrusive adverts, the removal of which is not a compelling reason to upgrade.

Help & Documentation ★☆☆

"Documentation to provide help should be easy to search, focused on the user's task and list steps."

TripView is simple and intuitive, but the complete absence of anything resembling an instruction manual is surprising. This is likely to frustrate *Novice Users*, looking for basic guidance, and some *Power Users*, keen to make sure they are pushing the application to its limits.

The Survey

This section explores the results of a small survey which was conducted to validate the findings of the proceeding chapters. It sought the opinions of ten TripView users on a range of issues that impact the user experience.

Never Lose My Stuff!

'Never lose my stuff' is one of 17 design principles set out by Android for developers. Borrowing heavily from Nielsen's ideas surrounding flexibility and efficiency, it states:

"Save what people took time to create and let them access it from anywhere. Remember settings, personal touches and creations across phones, tablets and computers."

Clearly, TripView users agree. Owners of both versions, free and paid, unanimously cited the ability to save created trips as the most compelling reason to upgrade. This confirms the findings of the heuristic analysis and highlights the effectiveness of TripView's business model. Grofsoft cleverly manipulates this key usability principle to lure 30% of survey respondents to the full version.

Interestingly, no users reported any interaction with advertising on the app. This brings into question the free version's viability as an income generating asset.

Everybody is Connected

Contrary to this report's prediction, the survey revealed that all user groups, *Novices* included, use TripView in an online environment. In fact, every respondent said they primarily utilise the application while connected to Wi-Fi or a mobile data network. This invalidates the assumption that older users see TripView as nothing more than a static timetable browser.

Furthermore, *Novice Users* rated GPS tracking and service updates, both online functions, as 'somewhat important' or 'very important'.

Power Users Are Impatient

15 seconds is a long time to wait. At least, that is the opinion of *Power Users*. According to the survey, four out of six millennials who use the application multiple times a week, would like to see to their transport's GPS position updated more frequently.

This possibility was raised by the report's internal analysis and should not come as a surprise. Nielsen suggests that users become impatient after just 1 second and the average attention span maxes out after 10 (Nielsen, 2009).

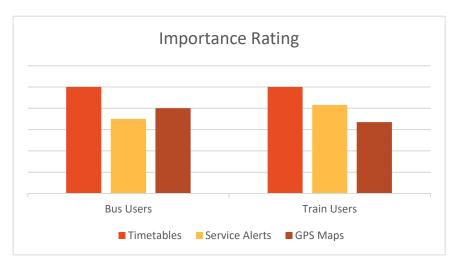
Older users demonstrated better endurance. Four out of five over the age of 35 indicated they were content for the refresh rate to remain unchanged.

Buses Vs Trains

The survey produced some findings which were not uncovered by other analysis. Most notably, it highlighted a few differences in the usage habits of bus and train travellers.

Those who primarily travelled by bus were more likely to value GPS tracking, while train users reported being more reliant on service status alerts.

These results may be explained by characteristics unique to each service. Trains are more susceptible to scheduled outages and stations already utilise GPS



information on electronic arrival boards.

A Little Help Would Be Nice

As predicted, Grofsoft's minimalist approach to help and guidance proved to be a point of concern for some respondents. Less than half of those surveyed strongly agreed with the statement that 'TripView is intuitive and easy to learn', while 20% indicated they had difficulty finding and utilising the map.

Additionally, with only a single response in the affirmative, it seems reasonable to conclude that TripView has failed to adequately communicate the meaning behind the 'three heads' symbol. This should be considered a missed opportunity for Grofsoft. Although most were oblivious to its existence, 70% considered the data behind the symbol to be useful.

Final Thoughts

TripView's interface design offers its users a first class experience on mobile devices. Its developers faithfully adhere to Nielsen's principles, only occasionally straying in the interests of minimalism and monetisation. This conclusion is supported by the results of a user survey which were overwhelmingly positive.

References

Nielsen, J. (1995, January 1). 10 Usability Heuristics for User Interface Design. Retrieved from Nielsen Norman Program: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/

Nielsen, J. (2009, October 5). *Powers of 10: Time Scales in User Experience*. Retrieved from Nielsen Norman Group: https://www.nngroup.com/articles/powers-of-10-time-scales-in-ux/

Appendix

- 1. Participant Information Form
- 2. Sample Survey
- 3. Survey Results

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

User-Centred Survey in the User Centred Design course in RMIT

Chief Investigators:

William Lim, Computer Science & IT, School of Science, RMIT University; email flora.salim@rmit.edu.au

Other Investigators:

Group members: *Mark Raffan*

You are invited to participate in research being conducted by students of User Centred Design course in the School of Computer Science and IT at RMIT University. Please read this information carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate.

Participation is purely voluntary. Participation in this study does not impact you directly or your assessment in any courses being conducted at RMIT University. If you have any questions about the project, please ask any one of the investigators listed above, by emailing them.

Who is involved in this research? Why is it being conducted?

This research is conducted as part of User Centred Design course. The first assignment of the course is User-centred survey. In this assignment, students need to perform an analysis and a short survey on a deployed IT based system with users.

Why have you been approached?

You have been approached because you are a current user of TripView (Android)

If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?

If you agree, you will be required to answer a short survey. Consent will be implied by the return or completion of an anonymous survey.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages?

There are no direct risks of physical or emotional harm.

What are the benefits associated with participation?

There will be no direct benefits associated.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Your response will be stored, anonymously, with other responses.

The results from the analysis of the data will be not be published.

It will make a part of the first assignment of this group enrolled for submission to User-Centred Design course. The submission will be stored safely in RMIT secure server that hosts the Blackboard system.

What are my rights as a participant?

As a participant in this research you have the rights to:

- withdraw from participation at any time.
- have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed provided it can be reliably identified.
- have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

Please contact any of the investigators listed at the beginning of this participant information.

Security of the website

Users should be aware that the World Wide Web is an insecure public network that gives rise to the potential risk that a user's transactions are being viewed, intercepted or modified by third parties or that data which the user downloads may contain computer viruses or other defects.

Security of the data

This project will use an external site to create, collect and analyse data collected in a survey format. The site we are using is Google Forms. If you agree to participate in this survey, the responses you provide to the survey will be stored on a host server that is used by Google. No personal information will be collected in the survey so none will be stored as data.

Yours sincerely

Mark Raffan And Flora Salim

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Ethics Officer, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, Research & Innovation, RMIT, GPO Box 2476, Melbourne, 3001.

The telephone number is (03) 9925 2251. Details of the complaints procedure are available on the

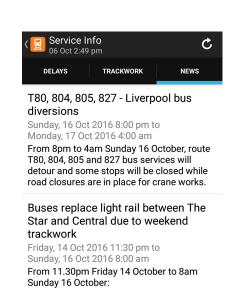
Complaints with respect to participation in research at RMIT page

TripView: User-Centred Survey * Required

	Do you use T Mark only one	ripView for Android	? *	
	Yes			
	No	Stop filling out this t	orm.	
	Which age gr Mark only one	oup do you fit into?	*	
	Millenn	ial (15 - 35)		
	Genera	ation X (36 - 50)		
	Baby b	oomer (51 - 75)		
	How big is yo Mark only one	-		
	Small			
	Mediur	n		
	Large			
		Small	Medium	1
		Smail	Wealum	Large
	Which mode Mark only one	of transport do you	use most?	
	Bus			
	Ferry			
	Train			
	Tram			
5. [
1	Do you own t Mark only one	he full (paid) or lite oval.	(free) version of Tri	pView? *

) Lite Skip to question 6.

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	They're annoyi	ing					
	I check them o	_	sionally				
	of the following one oval.	ng is the	e best r	eason t	o pay f	or the fu	II version (\$4.49)? *
	So I can save	my crea	ted 'trip	s'			
	The alarm fund	ction and	d multita	asking su	upport		
	To get rid of the	e ads					
	None of the ab	ove. I w	ould ne	ver pay	for the f	ull versio	on
Skip to ques	stion 9.						
	vas the bigges	st reaso	n for bı	uying th	e full v	ersion?	*
	So I can save	my crea	ted 'trip	s'			
	The alarm fund	ction and	d multita	asking su	upport		
	To get rid of the	e ads					
	Other:						
Mark or	any times a w nly one oval. Everyday	eek do	you us	e TripVi	ew?*		
	Weekdays only	y					
	Weekends only	y					
	Not more than	once a	week				
-	primarily use	e TripVie	ew onli	ne or of	fline? *		
	Online						
	Offline						
How im	portant a	re th	e foll	owing	g Trip	oView	features?
	vork and serv	ice inte	rruptio	n inform	nation		
Mark or	nly one oval.						
		1	2	3	4	5	
Comple	tely useless						Very important

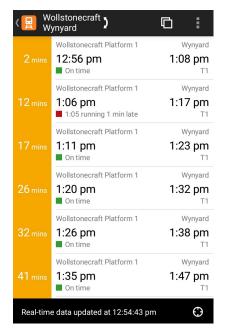


North Rocks - Stop closure

Monday, 10 Oct 2016 8:00 pm to Tuesday, 11 Oct 2016 2:00 am

12. The timetables

Mark only one oval.



13. GPS tracking maps

Mark only one oval.



						W	HOR /ynyard CEN	
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4.	Arrival & depa		arms (fu	ull versi	on only	y) *		
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	Completely use	eless						Very importa
0	w would y	you d	escri	be th	e fol	lowii	ng pi	ocesses'
5.	Creating a new							
		1	2	3				
	Brain surgery				Piec	e of cak	e	
6.	Finding and ex	_	j servic	e interru	uption i	informa	ation	
		1	2	3				
	Brain surgery				Piec	e of cak	е	
7.	Finding and ex		j timeta	bles				
		1	2	3				
	Brain surgery				Piec	e of cak	e	
8.	Finding and vi	_	he map	s *				
		1	2	3				
	Brain surgery				Piec	e of cak	e e	

Brain surgery

How do you feel about the following statements?

Mark only one oval.						
	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree						Strongly agr
TripView is fun / sa Mark only one oval.		g to use	•			
	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree						Strongly agr
TripView is visuall Mark only one oval.		ling				
	1	2	3	4	5	
I would recomment Mark only one oval.		iew to a	ı friend	*		Strongly agr
I would recommen		iew to a	a friend	*	5	Strongly agr
I would recommen					5	
I would recomment Mark only one oval. Strongly disagree I in the blank TripView fits Mark only one oval.	1 (S info	2		4		
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I would recomment Mark only one oval. Strongly disagree I in the blank TripView fits Mark only one oval.	1 (S info	2	3	4		
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I would recomment Mark only one oval. Strongly disagree I in the blank TripView fits Mark only one oval. too much too little enough TripView uses	1 (S info	2 rmation	3 onto m	4 ony scree	en	Strongly agre

25. Did you know the 3 'head	ds' in this screen grab are used to	represent how full a bus is?
	Cammeray	City
4 mins	8:19 am	8:34 am
ago	8:17 running 2 mins late	111 204
Mark only one oval.		
Yes		
No		
26. Would you consider this Mark only one oval.	useful information or a gimmick?) *
Useful		
Gimmick		
27. The GPS position of you following would you pre	r transport is updated on the map fer? *	every 15 seconds. Which of the
Mark only one oval.		
Make it update mo	re frequently even though this uses	more data
	s frequently to use less data	
Leave it as it is		
Optional Short Ans	·wor	
Optional Short Ans	WEI	
28. Is there anything you wo TripView?	ould change about	
•		
Devices d by		
Powered by		

Google Forms

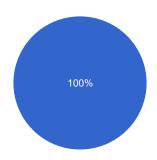
10 responses

View all responses

Publish analytics

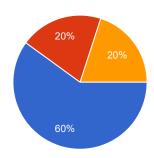
Summary

Do you use TripView for Android?



Yes **10** 100% No **0** 0%

Which age group do you fit into?

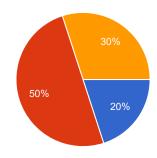


Millennial (15 - 35) **6** 60%

Generation X (36 - 50) 2 20%

Baby boomer (51 - 75) **2** 20%

How big is your phone?



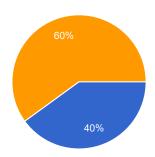
 Small
 2
 20%

 Medium
 5
 50%

 Large
 3
 30%

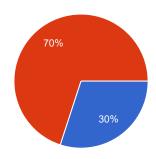
[Image]

Which mode of transport do you use most?



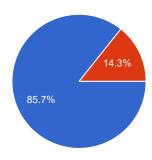
Bus	4	40%
erry	0	0%
Train	6	60%
Tram	0	0%

Do you own the full (paid) or lite (free) version of TripView?



Full **3** 30% Lite **7** 70%

Which of the following bests describes your attitude towards the ads?

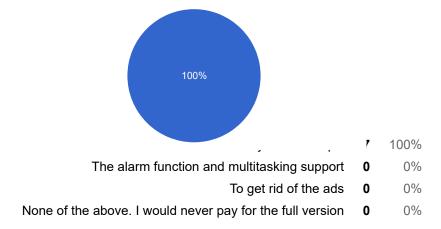


What ads? **6** 85.7%

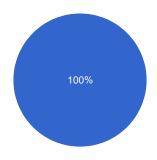
They're annoying **1** 14.3%

I check them out occasionally **0** 0%

Which of the following is the best reason to pay for the full version (\$4.49)?

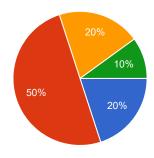


What was the biggest reason for buying the full version?



3 10	l 'trips'	So I can save
0	upport	The alarm function and mu
0	ne ads	То
0	Other	

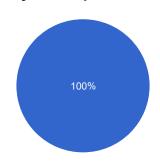
How many times a week do you use TripView?



Everyday **2** 20% Weekdays only **5** 50% Weekends only **2** 20%

Not more than once a week 1 10%

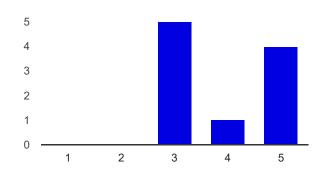
Do you primarily use TripView online or offline?



Online **10** 100%
Offline **0** 0%

How important are the following TripView features?

Track work and service interruption information



Completely useless: 1 0 0%

2 0 0%

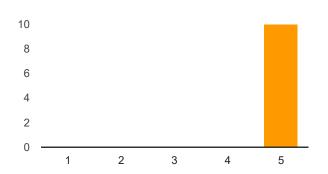
5 50%

4 1 10%

Very important: 5 4 40%

[Image]

The timetables



Completely useless: 1 **0** 0%

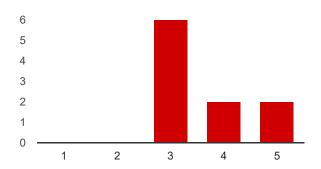
2 0 0%3 0 0%

4 0 0%

Very important: 5 10 100%

[Image]

GPS tracking maps



Completely useless: 1 0 0%

2 0 0%

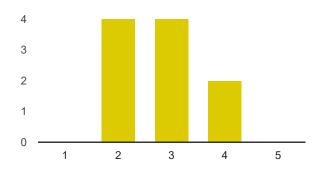
3 6 60%

4 2 20%

Very important: 5 2 20%

[Image]

Arrival & departure alarms (full version only)



Completely useless: 1 0 0%

2 4 40%

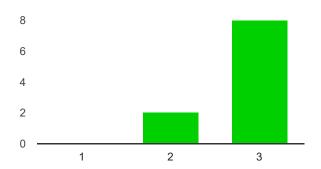
3 4 40%

4 2 20%

Very important: 5 **0** 0%

How would you describe the following processes?

Creating a new 'trip'

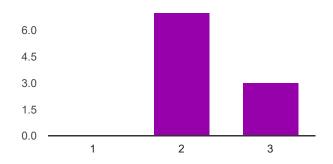


Brain surgery: 1 0 0%

2 **2** 20%

Piece of cake: 3 8 80%

Finding and exploring service interruption information

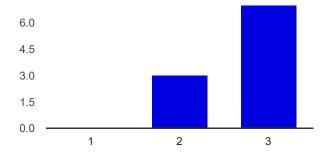


Brain surgery: 1 0 0%

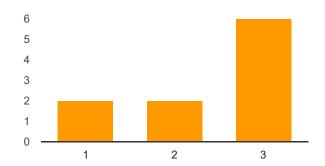
2 7 70%

Piece of cake: 3 30%

Finding and exploring timetables



Finding and viewing the maps



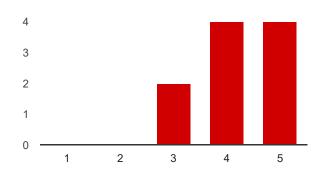
Brain surgery: 1 2 20%

2 **2** 20%

Piece of cake: 3 6 60%

How do you feel about the following statements?

TripView is intuitive and easy to learn



Strongly disagree: 1 0 0%

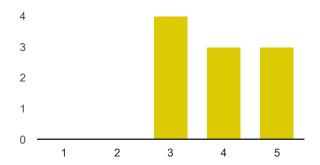
2 0 0%

3 2 20%

4 4 40%

Strongly agree: 5 4 40%

TripView is fun / satisfying to use



Strongly disagree: 1 0 0%

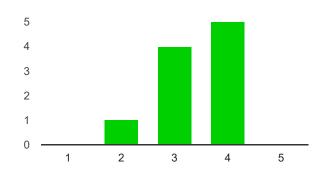
2 0 0%

3 4 40%

4 3 30%

Strongly agree: 5 **3** 30%

TripView is visually appealing



Strongly disagree: 1 0 0%

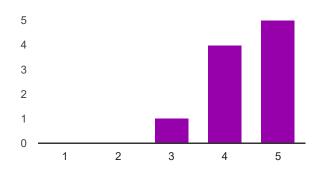
2 **1** 10%

3 4 40%

4 5 50%

Strongly agree: 5 **0** 0%

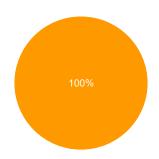
I would recommend TripView to a friend



Strongly agree: 5 5 50%

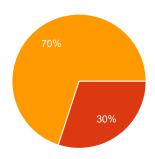
Fill in the blanks

TripView fits _____ information onto my screen



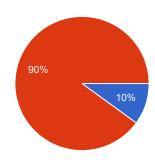
too much **0** 0% too little **0** 0% enough **10** 100%

TripView uses _____ sounds, graphics and animations



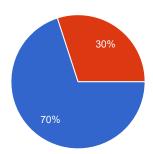
too many **0** 0% too few **3** 30% enough **7** 70%

Did you know the 3 'heads' in this screen grab are used to represent how full a bus is?



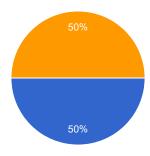
Yes **1** 10% No **9** 90%

Would you consider this useful information or a gimmick?



Useful **7** 70% Gimmick **3** 30%

The GPS position of your transport is updated on the map every 15 seconds. Which of the following would you prefer?



Make it update more frequently even though this uses more data 5 50%

Make it update less frequently to use less data 0 0%

Leave it as it is 5 50%

Optional Short Answer

Is there anything you would change about TripView?

When away from your usual route have to use google maps or something to find the best bus Choose destination a let tripview work out the rest

Number of daily responses

