

ASSIGNMENT 05: PERCEPTION ANALYSIS



Image: http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/_-N56YluUmwIK-ug1B-aCQ

Bus systems are arguably the most flexible, cost-effective and easily deployed mass transit solution for growing cities. Currently, New York has the largest municipal bus system in the nation, but the ridership on the city's buses has been declining, while the subway has expanded its ridership. "We don't know exactly why, but we're seeing a decline in the inner portions of the boroughs... Other than [traffic congestion], we can't really pinpoint why ridership is declining on portions of these routes." - Kevin Ortiz, MTA spokesman.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304066504576345721266616028.html>

So what is contributing to this decline? What is the public perception of the NYC bus system? How do New Yorkers feel about the various touch points, (website, vehicles, kiosks, etc) the bus system, the information available? What is it like to ride a New York bus - as a daily habit, or for the first time? How does it impact their life? How could the scenario be altered, and what outcomes could result?

1) In groups of two, conduct a brief secondary research survey to learn about the context; what is currently happening with NYC's bus system? What are other cities doing with their buses? What academic studies have been done on bus use? What precedent design work has been done around bus systems?

2) Write a discussion guide, which you'll use to conduct interviews. This is not a questionnaire, but rather an aid to target specific queries you have. What specific questions are puzzling about this context? What can you not learn from observation? What information could offer insight on the perception of buses in New York?

3) Interview 2 people each (4 per group) about New York's bus system, using your discussion guide when needed. Capture their responses using paper, pen, and writing tools, or audio recording device **if you have asked for permission to record**. Some strategies for your interview process:

- Intro - start a conversation by asking about something familiar or nearby
- Clarification - ask the person to clearly explain why they think what they think about the bus.
- Reflection - ask them to remember when a memorable instance happened, was different, etc.
- Encouragement - let them know when you think something is interesting, to get them to elaborate.
- Challenge - say something to challenge them to really think about their motives.
- Summarize - feed back what you think you heard to be sure you understood them correctly.

Photograph your experience on the bus, including your respondents **only if they consent to being photographed**.

Before the following class, capture your respondents' thoughts on sticky notes - each unique idea on an individual sticky note. In the following week's class, we'll launch into Assignment 6 and break down the information collected using methods appropriated from Baty, as a way to synthesize the range of ideas collected.

Be prepared to present your work in class.