a smarter approach:
Updating CATA's Technology
to Improve Customer Satisfaction
A Smarter Approach: Updating CATA’s Technology to Improve Customer Satisfaction

Prepared for
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April 15th, 2014
Memorandum

To: Jacqueline Scheader, Marketing Manager  
From: Rachel Hong, Melina Smith, Nicole Naula, Andre Holmes  
Date: April 15th, 2014  
Subject: Research on Catabus App

Dear Jacqueline Scheader,

With more and more people owning smartphones, businesses are realizing how much more convenient and easy it is to use a smartphone application to be personal with their customers.

Having a well built smartphone application can help gain recognition as well as satisfaction among potential and existing customers. A smartphone application helps cement a company’s image: a well built application portrays an image of success and strength, while a poorly built application cements an image of disorganization and indifference toward customers.

Unfortunately, CATABUS’s smartphone application is the latter. Its mobile application is buggy, inconsistent, and inconvenient for users. With a more accurate mobile application, CATABUS can easily improve its relationship with customers, creating and nurturing a more satisfying and rewarding relationship between company and consumer.

To rebuild CATABUS’s image within the college community at University Park as well as outlying areas, we propose CATABUS to take steps forward and make their smartphone application smarter.

Introducing a high-quality application is not an easy task. Attached is our report detailing the suggestions on the steps needed to take to improve the already existing CATABUS application.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with CATA. We look forward to hearing from you again. We hope you will take the proposal to the next step and improve services within the Centre County Area. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,
Andre Holmes
Rachel Hong
Nicole Naula
Melina Smith
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executive summary

This report analyzes the CATABUS smartphone application. It compares and contrasts CATABUS's application against competitors and offers proposals for improving the CATABUS application.

catabus’s smartphone application is buggy, inconsistent, and inconvenient

The CATABUS smartphone application currently does not reflect CATABUS's dedication and devotion toward its mission statement as well as customer satisfaction. Currently CATABUS's smartphone application is full of problems, some are listed below:

- Application often lags resulting in buses being displayed at incorrect stops
- Buses often do not appear in the application
- Layout is clunky and often unresponsive
- Application often crashes
- No schedule of buses included

grow your business with a better smartphone application

CATABUS needs to connect back with its customers, building a better rapport within the Centre County Community. Improving its already existing smartphone application is an easy and convenient way to retouch with CATABUS’s consumers. Smartphones are becoming more and more prevalent within the growing community. Having a well-built application can help a business gain recognition, cementing a more positive image for potential customers.

a smarter approach

Rebuilding a smartphone application will not be an easy task. However, a more efficient and better built application will help the company provide better customer service. With a more updated application, customers will have a better and more resourceful way for accessing information. Below are some suggestions:

- Update the application more often
- Use more recent technology in your application
- Take in feedback from your consumers and use it constructively
  - Layout
  - Schedule of Buses

Updating the mobile application will cost time and money. But, if updated, the benefits will help CATABUS grow and provide a better customer service.
our mission is to deliver safe, reliable, accessible and affordable transportation, provided in a courteous and environmentally, fiscally and responsible manner.

CATA strives to achieve its mission statement and works hard to follow these guidelines in order to demonstrate a well-maintained and organized company culture; as well as a successful company.

With the technology age at its peak and potentially rising, it is a necessity for corporations to keep up with this fast pace. Companies should incorporate as much technology as possible into their company culture in order to be successful.

159.8 million people are users of smartphones in the US (comScore Reports). With a number like this, it should come as no shock that companies across the US are implementing social media tactics into their company culture such as Twitter or Facebook. In addition, certain companies include smartphone applications for easier access to company information.

CATA is one of these companies. CATA has designed a smartphone app for the Centre County community to more effectively and efficiently access current bus locations and routes. While this smartphone application is an asset to CATA’s business, some elements of the application can further be improved upon. Improving elements of the already existing smartphone application will help CATA achieve all parts of their mission statement.
who is catabus

The Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) provides public transportations to State College, Patton, Ferguson, Harris, and College. CATABUS’s mission is to “deliver safe, reliable, accessible and affordable transportation, provided in a courteous and environmentally, fiscally and socially responsible manner.”

catabus and its community

With a campus size of 8,550 acres, Penn State needs CATABUS to transport its 40,000 students to desired locations on a daily basis. Unfortunately for the Penn State community, CATABUS is oftentimes unreliable with its service.

CATABUS is a transportation service for the 40,000+ students of University Park, including Penn State employees and faculty. These buses have different lines coordinated for on and off campus. Because of the various bus routes running at the same time, CATA has developed an app downloadable on smartphones. This helps them reach out to their customer baseline and provides a better and more reliable service for customers.

Having a smartphone application is an asset to the company and helpful to its users. However, the app is often slow, inaccurate, and needs to be updated frequently for proper use. Another cause of concern are the bus schedules. Properly laid out timetables are not included in the application, which is very inconvenient for consumers.

CATABUS does not effectively meet the needs of the Penn State community our outlying areas. In addressing this problem it is hopeful that CATA will obtain a more satisfied customer base if they pursue an improved app service plan.

our credentials

As students of Penn State, we recognize the need to improve the service provided by CATABUS. Most students, faculty members, as well as local residents are affected by these issues everyday. In order to fix the problems, we need effective communication, customer service, and research skills. Our credentials with hospitality, Health Development, and Business Risk Management prove that we are qualified to address this problem.
problems with catabus’s smartphone application

CATA’s customer service is created from many aspects: quality of bus drivers, accuracy of bus schedules, amount of buses, smartphone application and more. CATABUS’s application in particular lacks consumer effectiveness. The application is buggy, inconvenient, and often unreliable to use. Alone, it stands to receive much needed improvements.
problems with catabus’s smartphone application

an application to improve on

CATA customers who utilize their Smartphone app experience many issues with the app on a daily basis. Below are 5 key issues for users of the CATABUS application.

1. The CATA app often lags, displaying the buses at incorrect stops. For students of University Park, going to class becomes extremely inconvenient, frequently causing students to be late to class, meetings, exams, etc. However, CATABUS’s smartphone application is not as harsh on residents who do not have to rely on public transportation.

2. Many app users have experienced the bus not showing up on the app at all. This shows that the current CATABUS application is unreliable and inconsistent. Often become a hassle for consumers to use.

3. Another issue is the “off routing” of the bus. This is when the app displays the bus “off route” or in places where it is not currently located. In some instances shown in the image to the right, the bus has been displayed in Africa. This makes customers angry, especially students who utilize the bus as a necessity.

4. Complaints include the layout and unresponsiveness of the app as well. Users nag about the clunkiness of the app design finding it hard to navigate. The app becomes unresponsive on users phones, resulting in freezing of the phone. If a users phone does not freeze, the application most likely crashes due to the unresponsiveness.

5. Lastly, there are no schedules located on the app. Because these buses travel around Centre County, schedules for travelers are needed. These schedules are not located in the app, leading to the customer having to close the app and open a separate browser to view the schedule. It would be much more efficient and accommodating to upload daily schedules into the app.
a “smarter” smartphone application

Smartphone apps can not only help you gain new customers, but can also increase your sales and market share, as well as improving customer rapport. Smartphone apps enhance the interaction between you and your customers, directly linking them to your products and/or services.

More and more people are beginning to own smartphones. This is because:

1. It’s convenient!
2. It’s easy to use!

In order to be successful, it is important to take a good hard look at your business and devise a business plan which best suits your services. Having a great Smartphone app creates a good reputation among your current and potential customers.
research findings

survey data displays app as largest problem

In order to gain more information on any potential issues with CATA we conducted a customer service survey. The survey was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most problems and 1 being the least. Facebook was used to broadcast the survey and results were received from about 50 participants over the course of 5 weeks. Students and residents were asked to rate five aspects of CATA’s customer service on this problem scale of 1 to 5. The five aspects of customer service were the five main sources of complaints heard about CATA over four years. These aspects included the amount of buses, the bus times, customer service forums, bus drivers, and the smartphone application.

The graph in figure 1 displays the overall results of the 50 surveys. The average of all the total scores was used for each aspect respectively. While all the aspects of customer service did not have outstanding reviews, one perceived to be the most problematic. As the research demonstrates, the main issue with CATA customer service is their smartphone app.

Due to the survey results reflecting the CATA application to be of main customer service concern, attention was focused on the app in particular. The goal was to research more successful transportation apps and have CATA’s app imitate their success points.
Research was conducted on two different successful transportation apps, SEPTA and Go Metro, in order for comparison with CATA. These two apps were chosen because they are both preliminary transportation systems in their dedicated locations. Both SEPTA and Go Metro's apps have qualities that would be important for CATA to adopt in order to become a more successful app.

**CATA**

CATABUS services app, also known as “Routes” or “CATA,” is the focus app. The app home page features a list of all routes listed alphabetically. It also features a recently viewed section for easy access to more commonly used routes for the user. Upon selection of the desired route the user is then taken to a “live” feed of buses on that route, refreshed every 20 seconds. This “live” feed is shown on a map with all stops. These are the main pages of the app and all other links are for information or maintenance. There is no way to view multiple buses at once or view a timetable for regularly scheduled times on non-loop/link routes. The app is often criticized for its inaccuracy, long wait times via loading, and potential crashes/resets. It is currently ranked 2.8 out of 5 stars on the Google Play Store.

**SEPTA**

SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) operates various types of transportation system such as subway, bus, rail, and trolleybus in Philadelphia. The SEPTA app has over 80,000 downloads and 1,000 reviews. This app first displays the different types of transportation to choose from. The buses are listed in numbers and customers can see when each bus arrives at a specific stop and how much time is remaining until the next one. Customers are able to easily follow where the transportation vehicles are at the time and tell which directions they are headed toward. According to the Google Play Store, the reviews show that SEPTA app is very accurate and most of the users are highly satisfied. It received 4.4 out of 5 stars.
go metro

Go Metro is an app for Metro (Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority), which is a transportation agency located in Los Angeles. Go Metro has a slight difference from SEPTA and CATA. The buses and metros are not shown on the map, instead the locations of all the stops are displayed. Customers can check the remaining arrival time either by selecting one of the bus stops on the map or on the list. Each stop is determined by street names and specifically assigned stop numbers, included are the bus numbers that are on schedule for arrival. The overall review of Go Metro is positive with a 4.1 out of 5 stars. An abundance of comments read that the app is both accurate and reliable.

research conclusion

It is apparent that these two applications are for larger areas than Centre County and include more transportation vehicles such as subways and trains. Although this apps are utilized in bigger cities, the main point of the comparison is to take away the importance of certain components of their apps that the CATA app does not currently include.
Strive for Better Performance

Previous sections have illustrated how SEPTA and Go Metro have better qualities to their apps which drives their customer service performance. CATA will benefit from following their example and by redesigning the CATA app to resemble each of these apps as necessary. By restructuring the app in a more efficient manner we will see an improvement in CATA’s app rating along with customer service in general.

Implementing arrival and departure times will be helpful for the app users. Both SEPTA and Go Metro use this asset and their ratings are 4+ stars of 5.

Introduction to an Updated App

After compiling popular complaints regarding the app and analyzing other successful transportation apps, there are several proposals to further app development. More updates.

A common complaint was the lack of updates resulting in the lagging nature of the app. Research exposed that the app is updated only once a semester. Frequent app updates will produce a more efficient app.

Customers would also like to see more modern technology utilized in the app. High end tracking technology will increase the receptibility of the app. This will aid in accurately displaying the buses at the appropriate stops.

In addition to these suggestions, it is important for CATA to listen to feedback from customers and address the feedback appropriately. As suggested earlier, this includes redesigning the layout of your app for easier navigation. Customers want an app that is user-friendly, having to search through the app to find what one is looking for is redundant and inefficient.

A list of schedules is also a common complaint regarding the app. Including a time schedule as a feature will add convenience to the app, furthering the app’s usefulness and enjoyment.
conclusion

The following is recommended to improve CATABUS's satisfaction due to the app:

- More updates
- Higher quality tracking technology
- List of bus schedules
- Take feedback constructively

CATABUS service is essential to transportation in the Centre County Area. Since it is the main transportation service provided, CATABUS should strive to be the best that it can be. This is why it is critical to improve its customer satisfaction, starting with improving the Smartphone application.

Over the past 25 years, technology has changed the way businesses interact with their customers. Customers want powerful devices and applications. Better yet, businesses seek cost-effective technology to cope with the increasing demands and fast pace changes of society. Smartphone applications are cost effective and low risk, high reward.

Using smart technology makes your business look in tune with the edge of new cutting technology. Consumers love it when they can access data easily, with no hassle. By improving CATABUS's Smartphone application, business will be improved in multiple ways, not just consumer satisfaction.
Bibliography:
