



CAR-FREE TRAVEL TO HOLIDAY REGIONS - MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE RAILWAY

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Abstract

There are two main reasons why people often choose to travel by car rather than by train. On the one hand, there is the transport of luggage, which many find too difficult. This is especially true when changing trains or travelling with children. Secondly, concern about the lack of mobility options at the holiday destination without a vehicle of one's own is a reason to prefer to go on holiday in one's own car. The paper refers to the easytravel project, an extensive research project in the Ötztal valley, a typical holiday region in Austria with a pronounced winter and summer tourism. The paper addresses the needs and concrete requirements of holidaymakers with regard to luggage transport and mobility offers in the holiday region and shows concrete measures how the willingness to travel by train can be improved.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, luggage transport, sustainable mobility, easy booking

1 Introduction

Tourism in Austria is largely characterised by guests in rural (alpine) areas who travel to the destination predominantly by their own cars. In the sense of sustainable tourism, an environmentally friendly arrival of guests is being promoted today. In order to encourage as many holidaymakers as possible to travel by train, it must be possible to replace their own car as far as possible at all stages of a journey. Studies show that the transport of luggage as well as concerns about lack of local mobility are the main criteria for choosing the means of transport. The aim of the "easytravel" (already completed) and ULTIMOB (currently ongoing) projects, which are funded by the Ministry for Climate Action in Austria in the Mobility of the Future programme, was to develop an "all-round carefree package" for non-car travellers, with special consideration of rail travel. This concerns in particular suitable luggage transport, ensuring the most flexible local mobility offers, and simple booking of all components and a seamless mobility chain in one process.

2 Methods

In addition to intensive research on the internet and in scientific literature, one focus of the project was a comprehensive survey of expectations, wishes, requirements and willingness to provide various services in the field of local mobility, baggage transport and information and booking options. This was achieved by interviewing approximately 11,000 people in trains, ski resorts or summer attractions and at Innsbruck Airport in winter, summer and in the off-season.

3 Measures to increase the attractiveness of rail travel in holiday regions

3.1 Baggage transport

A car offers the comfort of loading luggage into the car boot right at the starting point of the journey. In addition, in many cases it is not necessary to pay attention to the compact packing method, several loose pieces of luggage can be stowed. Before the luggage is unloaded at its immediate destination, the entire intermediate journey luggage does not essentially affect the comfort of the journey. For example, it has been shown that for 82 % of winter holidaymakers in Austria travelling by car, luggage transport is a major reason for choosing the car, whereas for only 55 % the cost and for 40 % the travel time have a decisive influence (see Figure 1).

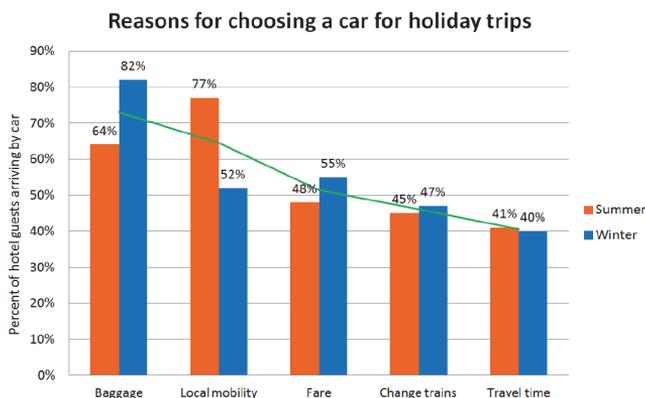


Figure 1 Reasons for choosing a car for holiday trips, Source: Ruger B.

The investigations in the above-mentioned projects show that there is an interest in baggage services, especially door-to-door delivery, and that good services would also create a concrete incentive to choose rail for travel to the holiday destination. Door-to-door baggage services are nothing new per se and are offered in many European countries for rail travel. In general, however, the weakness of these services is that they are not considered sufficiently flexible for travellers. In particular, the large time slots when collecting luggage from home or vice versa after returning home when delivering the luggage means that people have to wait an indefinite amount of time at home for the luggage service and sometimes need up to two days' holiday for it. In the holiday regions, hotel staff at the reception usually take care of the luggage, but if you are staying in apartments, there is seldom someone on site who can take care of the luggage for the guest who has not yet arrived. The projects show that there is a corresponding need and demand for different baggage handling services, which is particularly (but by no means exclusively) in the following areas:

- Holiday travel [Interest: approx. 40 %].
- In general when taking along larger pieces of luggage [approx. 50 %].
- Elderly people [approx. 40 %].
- Persons with reduced mobility [approx. 50 %].
- People who travel with children [approx. 50 %].

An attractive service from the traveller's point of view comprises two essential measures, the absence of which are also the main points of criticism of existing services: These are "(subjective) security" and the "flexibility" already mentioned above. The perception of security

includes the virtual observation of the luggage and the certainty that it is on the right track or has reached its destination and must be achieved by means of real-time tracking information. Flexibility covers several points. One is flexibility at home:

- The time slot for both collection and delivery at the home address should ideally not exceed two, maximum three hours.
- A collection or delivery must also take place in the morning and in the evening so that you do not have to take a day off.
- On the day of collection or delivery there should be as exact and timely information as possible about the exact time of collection or delivery.
- Alternative collection or delivery options, such as partner shops or automated terminals similar to lockers, are desired.

Furthermore, flexibility in booking is desired. It is important to be able to make changes to the booking at short notice, for example, to the number of pieces of luggage.

The third important point is flexibility at the holiday destination: not all people stay in hotels where luggage can be delivered to or collected from. For holidaymakers in second homes or apartments, alternative collection and delivery options are also important.

In the project, a concrete concept was developed with the involvement of local companies, especially a regionally specialized logistics company, and tourism managers, which enables flexible collection and delivery possibilities in the model region Ötztal. If there is nobody at the destination address who can accept the luggage, a central address in the holiday region will be given as delivery address. These can be partner shops, concrete possibilities in the model region Ötztal are currently being coordinated. The logistics company responsible for the luggage transport then transports the luggage to the specified partner shop. Travellers, who usually move into their apartment the next day, can order the delivery of their luggage after arrival by phone or mobile phone application. Since passenger and goods transport is constantly taking place in the model region, it is expected that within two hours the luggage can be taken along and delivered to the guest within the framework of a journey that has been carried out anyway. On the return journey, luggage can also be picked up by a local company after pre-ordering and taken to the partner shop and stored temporarily where the logistics company can pick it up.

3.2 Local mobility

For 52 % of winter holidaymakers in Austria, concern about insufficient mobility at their destination is a major reason for travelling by car. In summer this applies to 77 % of holidaymakers (see Figure 1), which is due to the fact that in winter the focus is on typical winter sports such as skiing, while the required range of movement is smaller, as many hotels are located close to the ski lifts and guests can walk there or use the ski buses. In summer, holidaymakers also want to go on excursions, which increases the need for mobility. People from cities in particular are used to being able to choose their mobility flexibly. In cities, there are usually well-developed public transport systems with a dense timetable. Many people who live in cities therefore often do not own a car at all. Car sharing is a popular alternative. This flexibility at all times is therefore also required on holiday. Guests do not want to be tied too closely to timetables or even to means of transport that only run once a day. In many holiday regions there is therefore, at least in the high season, a well-developed public transport system. Guests expect the offer of public transport means at least every 30 minutes, and it should tend to be more frequent. For 75 % of holiday maker this is a must to imagine car-free holiday (see Figure 2).

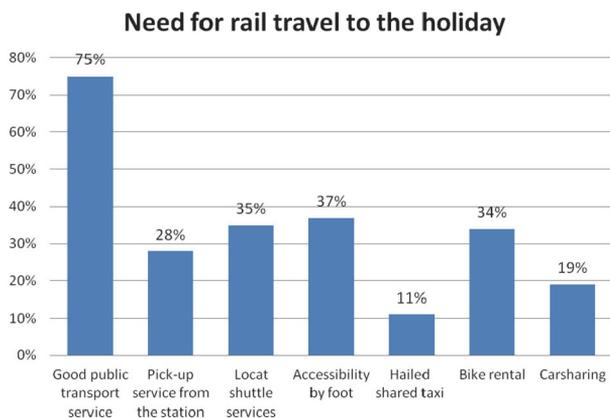


Figure 2 Needs from the perspective of holiday makers to be willing to travel by train, Source: Wanner A.

As an additional service, local car rental or car sharing services are considered important. These increase above all the subjective security of being able to have a vehicle available at your destination at any time, even without your own car. In most cases, these offers are then not even taken up, but the knowledge of being able to borrow a car at any time increases the willingness to arrive without an own car. If such offers exist, they must be easy and uncomplicated to use. Car sharing offers are also expected to be able to use the same systems as at home. For 19 % a car sharing offer is required (see Figure 2).

3.3 One-stop-shop

The car has the decisive advantage that people at the home address load their luggage, get into the car, are guided to their destination using modern navigation systems and unload their luggage there. Travellers do not need to worry about anything else, even necessary steps such as refuelling or paying tolls are internationally standardised.

If you are travelling by train, there are many more steps to be taken to obtain information and booking. Travellers have to obtain information about the travel options, then have to obtain the tickets and possibly reservations. Often several means of transport or operators have to be used, which means that separate ticket purchases are necessary. Taxis are often available for the last mile, which often must also be reserved in advance. This apparent complexity is another reason why many holidaymakers prefer to use their own car for the journey, which is why simple information and booking systems are required, where all information and travel documents can be obtained from one source.

However, the easytravel project has made it clear that it is practically impossible to develop an application or a website where all the information for a holiday trip and all the relevant booking options can be obtained “from a single source”. The reason is that the interests of the various players are too diverse and too complex for the necessary data interfaces. It has become clear, however, that in sum most of the information is already available on the web, but it is often difficult to find. In any case, it makes sense to at least strive for good cross linking, e.g. the homepage of a tourism region should provide all relevant information on travel options including bookings and on local mobility. This requires a good and clear bundling of information. Despite conflicting interests of various stakeholders, it makes sense to actively integrate platforms such as Google-Maps or Booking.com, as the majority of holidaymakers are used to and use these systems. If the local public transport offer is not or only to a very limited extent shown in a timetable query via Google Maps, the impression is created that there is a corresponding undersupply of public transport offers, which entails clear disadvantages for the location.

4 Conclusion

For global and local environmental protection reasons, the aim is to shift as much mobility as possible to sustainable transport systems such as rail. This also applies to tourist transport. However, especially when travelling on holiday, there are many challenges for travellers which make it particularly difficult to travel by train. These challenges are intensified by the fact that families often travel with children and have a correspondingly higher amount of luggage with them for the holiday. Despite the advantages of a train journey compared to a car journey, such as relaxed travelling, especially with children, or the usability of the travel time, the subjectively perceived disadvantages outweigh the advantages, which arise in particular due to the taking along of the sometimes extensive holiday luggage combined with necessary transfer processes.

Particularly in summer, the concern about insufficient mobility at the holiday destination is an important reason for choosing not to travel by train but to use your own car. Nevertheless, many people are willing to use the railways for holiday trips. Younger people from urban regions with very good public transport systems in particular often do not own a car themselves. However, this group is also “spoiled” by the good offers they are used to at home. The flexibility offered at home by very dense intervals on public transport combined with various car-sharing offers is also expected at holiday destinations. Uncomplicated travel by rail and the best possible flexible mobility at the holiday destination are thus increasingly important location factors for holiday regions. In order to increase the willingness to travel by rail in holiday regions, the following points are of particular importance:

- **Uncomplicate procurement of information and simple ticketing:** For this purpose, all relevant information for travel and local mobility must be available centrally and must also be displayed in full. Even if many operators do not want to give up their data, it seems to make sense to provide systems like Google Maps with all relevant information, as these systems are used by many people. If timetables are not available there, the impression is created that there is a lack of public transport in the holiday destination, which discourages people who want to travel by train from travelling to this region. In parallel with the provision of information, it must be possible to book the entire journey without complications, including taxis for the first and last mile and any luggage transport.
- **Sufficient local mobility:** An important reason for not taking the train on holiday is the concern about insufficient mobility at the holiday destination. Especially in summer, holiday-makers also want to go on excursions, which is why the radius of action is greater than in winter. Well developed public transport systems with at least one continuous 30-minute interval and operating times even at off-peak times are seen as a minimum requirement. In addition, rental cars or car sharing are a good complementary offer, as people who are willing not to travel by car know that they can always fall back on a car locally. As a rule, rental cars are then not or rarely used locally, but the knowledge that they can fall back on a car at any time is an important incentive for travelling by train.
- **Luggage transport:** A major reason for choosing a car is the need to carry luggage on holiday trips. To free travellers from bulky luggage, it is important to offer door-to-door luggage services. To ensure that these are ultimately accepted and contribute to the desired use of the railway, price and flexibility are the main factors to consider. Currently there are large time slots for the collection and delivery of luggage. Important for the attractiveness of baggage services are short time slots for collection and delivery of a maximum of three hours as well as a service also in the morning and evening. In general, drop-off and pick-up terminals or partner shops are also considered interesting, to which travellers can bring their luggage at any time, for example the day before, and are therefore flexible in terms of timing.

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