

Comparing practices of carpooling and the building of trust for two different online services

Lisa Créno¹ & Béatrice Cahour
Télécom ParisTech – i3
46 rue Barrault – 75013 Paris – FR
First.name.name@télécom-paristech.fr

Carpooling is a service allowing people to get in touch online through dedicated websites, and we studied the practices of this developing mode of transport. Studying solutions for sustainable mobility and more particularly connected and shared mobility services is an important environmental, political and social issue if we want to deal with the urgency of decreasing pollution and congestion within our cities. Carpooling in particular, allowing the common use of a vehicle by a non-professional driver and passengers for making a common route, is an interesting solution to reduce the number of circulating vehicles and therefore the greenhouse gas emissions (Shaheen & Lipman, 2007). In Europe, two main forms of carpooling exist: the *planned carpooling* (users organize in advance their common ride) and the *dynamic carpooling* (users can be matched in real time for their improvised ride). Planned carpooling is the most popular form of carpooling in Europe (Blablacar carpoolers are more than 10 million) and dynamic carpooling is slowly emerging (such as Djump in Paris, Lyon and Bruxelles).

The issue of the *trust/mistrust* between the carpoolers is crucial for the development of these shared practices and we studied how this trust/mistrust is built by Blablacar users (planned and long trips) and by Djump users (trips in and around Paris, not planned in advance but requested in real time thanks to mobile geolocation on smartphone).

The *methodology* to gather the data is based on:

- In-depth *interviews* to analyse the lived experience of the users (30 for Blablacar and 10 for Djump). The interview techniques used are the Explicitation Interview and the Video-based (or self-confrontation) Interview, both aiming at re-situating the user in the past context of the use and having the users describing specific situations.
- *Observations* of the behaviour were also performed, either participative observations with note-taking (10 for Blablacar and 10 for Djump), or *video-recordings* of the online reservation, encounter and/or travel (10 for Blablacar).

The analyses indicate that most of the users consider the carpooling as a *shared travel experience* during which they appreciate the social relations and exchanges created during the trip; some others consider it as a mere *service*, more or less like a cheap taxi, and they are not involved in the social relationships which can be created during the travel.

Most of the users also consider the carpooling experience as *risky*. From the data, we extracted the different types of perceived risks that they feel when engaging in a carpool. A “perceived risk” is the subjective belief that an event or a situation may cause negative consequences. The perceived risk is the result of a social and cognitive construction which is subjective, depending on the point of view of a specific person, her state of beliefs, her individual tolerance (Kouabenan et al., 2006) and also the situation in which she is engaged in. This definition of risk is broad, it includes not only high risks but also small and light risks.

¹ This study has been financed by the VEDECOM Institute (Versailles).

We organised the perceived risks described by the users in 4 categories: (A) *Relational risks*, such as feeling a socio-cognitive gap (lack of common interests, values, knowledge...) with the others of the crew, the risk of being robbed by the driver, of an interruption of the ride, of being matched with an alcoholic/drugged driver, the risks of being exposed to private phone conversations in the car. (B) *Organizational risks* correspond to carpoolers who do not respect neither the time nor the meeting place, difficult telephone contact with the driver, passengers who lead too insistent negotiations for the point of arrival, difficult collective control of rhythm and breaks of the ride. 68% of the users mention this type of risks. (C) *Road safety risks*: passengers who fear that the driver drives too fast, with an aggressive driving style, who apprehend a non-attentive and multi-activity driver. 56% of the users mention this type of risks. (D) *State of the vehicle and passenger placement risks*: passengers may fear the state and the style of the car especially for long rides, they also apprehend their placement (front and rear seat) and comfort in the car. 40% of the users mentioned them.

To cope with the perceived risks and uncertainty, users try to build a *feeling of trust* which will temporarily suspend their search for information, and will leave to others the power to act (Luhmann, 2006). It is a subjective feeling, a cognitive, affective and conative outcome (McAllister, 1995) based on positive expectations, resulting from knowledge and subjective assessments of the situation. This feeling is fragile and it is easier to deconstruct than to build it. Trust has already been highlighted as a key factor in carpooling practice but we still ignore his characteristics and dynamics.

We will develop in our presentation two fundamental processes of how users *build trust* during carpooling experiences:

(1) With Blablacar, the planned carpooling service, the users begin building their trust by *carefully choosing a ride* online: the photo is for instance an important source of projection to imagine who is the driver, online ratings and notifications are analysed, the way the announcement is written is also a sign of the precision, the directivity/flexibility of the driver. We could observe how the users gain an expertise to interpret the information about the driver, and we extracted three patterns of search of the “safe and convenient” drive.

(2) With Djump, the dynamic carpooling service, since the online matching between the driver and the applicant is faster, the information about the drive is also reduced. The rarity of the information is compensated by a feeling of being part of a same *community*, with shared interests and values. The others are not “anybody”, they are not complete strangers but people being part of the chosen group.

To conclude, we see how analysing the real activities, practices and lived experiences of this online service allowed us to understand better the building of trust which is known to be a key element in this form of collaborative economy.

References:

- Kouabenan, D.R., Cadet B., D. Hermand, M.T., Munoz Sastre (eds) (2006): *Psychologie du risque: Identifier, évaluer, prévenir*. Bruxelles : De Boeck Université.
- Luhmann, N. (2006). *La confiance : un mécanisme de réduction de la complexité sociale*, *Economica*.
- McAllister, D.J. (1995). Affect- and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations, *Academy of management journal*, 38, 1, 24-59
- .Shaheen, S. & Lipman, T. (2007). Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Fuel Consumption: Sustainable Approaches for Surface Transportation, *Journal of Intern.Assoc. of Traffic and Safety Sciences (IATSS) Research*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 6-20.

