

Interconnection and Intermodality In Train Station: a Key Element For Tourism Development Linked To High Speed Rail French cities' case

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Major investments on High Speed Rail (HSR) systems have been carried out all over the world. The existing and planned lines generate many expectations in served cities in terms of tourism growth. By decreasing travelling time, high-speed rail service can improve accessibility of served cities and could then attract tourists. But the results of studies conducted all around the world show that HSR doesn't produce systematic positive impacts on tourism even in cities with tourism assets. The effects depend on the kind of places and tourism (Delaplace, Benoit-Bazin, Pagliara, 2014, Benoit-Bazin, Delaplace, 2013) and more particularly on the existence of amenities (cultural, gastronomic, historical heritages, etc.), on city size, on the quality of the HSR service and on tourism and transport policies. Among these policies, interconnexion and intermodality policies are a key element for promoting tourism. According to Hickman et al. 2015 "*The interchange is a critical part of HSR and the door-to-door journey*". Indeed, accessibility improvement must be analyzed on the whole mobility chain from door-to-door, and the transport services should be designed for this whole tourism mobility chain to produced seamless tourism mobility. "*There is a clear connection between improved intermodality and increased accessibility*" (Tapiador et al., 2009). Time savings linked to HSR must not be lost with other transport modes needed to reach the final destination. The question of the articulation of different speeds and different transport modes in HSR stations and towards the final destination must therefore be taken into account. To consider the whole mobility chain allows to highlighting the importance of specific policies which manage interconnection and intermodality questions (rail-road, High-speed train-other trains and rail-tramway or other urban transports). Moreover concerning tourism, the pedestrian mobility (and more broadly soft modes) from rail station to different sites must also be taken into account.

To analyze interconnection and intermodality questions, theories of service innovation (Gallouj and Weinstein, 1997) provide a useful theoretical background. These kinds of integrated transport services can indeed be analyzed as an architectural or re-combinative transport service innovation. Our analysis of French cities cases served by HSR allows highlighting some interesting service innovations.

Designing the whole transport services can be based on existing services innovations as geo-tracking, applications with Smartphone (as Monument Trackers) but improved by transport services, or free Wifi connection in HSR station but also inside the other transport modes.

But producing the best connection from the station towards the tourism sites requires organizational innovations. This is the case between rail transport operators and urban transport ones in cities for example to supply a single transport ticket (rail /Metro/Bus/Tramway, etc.). This is also the case with city urban planning department to improve pedestrian and bicycle ways from the station to tourism sites and conceive a tourism-oriented sign system. This is also the case with tourism offices to combine transport services with tourism services in a single pass (City Pass with transport) and also between tourism public stakeholders and rail operators to produce and renew packages including high speed rail transport and tourism. Moreover, it should be useful to reinforce the link between transport and tourism destination by producing events in train linked to the destination because in the new experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), total journey quality can be part of the destination experience.

Within this new tourism mobility chain, station must become the starting point of tourism destination and moreover station should become a part of the destination in terms of experience by producing experiential services innovations in HSR stations linked to the management of “in-between” trains and/or to the destination.

To conclude, two elements must be highlighted.

First, HSR can promote tourism but only with conditions. Indeed, it is necessary to fight against the possible decrease of the average length stay. For that it is necessary to attract repeaters and new travelers by producing and renewing the destination (new packages). But producing these new packages should take into account the organization of new transport services. It can also be useful to enlarge the destination by suggesting new places to be visited in the city but also in other nearby tourism cities. Therefore a new organization of interconnection and intermodality to produce a new integrated transport services should be conceived.

Second, interconnection and intermodality are depending on different types of tourism and stations. For example, it is clear that these questions are very different in the case of polarized tourism with central station, polarized tourism with distant station and dispersed tourism.

References

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