

# THE USER'S IDEAL LIFT

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## ABSTRACT

The lift plays an important part in most of our lives. Almost always the lift is imposed on the user, who has no opportunity to select or choose any options.

A survey was carried out recently in Italy, in order to understand user requirements.

The results are here.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

During all the meetings, seminars, simposiums and technical conventions the debate is always about lifts and lift components from a technical, technological and safety point of view.

We never take into consideration what the everyday users want, nor do we try to understand why they want it.

Also today, many people are afraid of the lift. Manufacturers should try to understand the problem of the people that need to use the lift, but will not use it. For example people leaving on the third or higher floors, people who have problems with thier legs, elderly people, handicapped people and so on. In Italy we tried to understand this situation by just asking user's opinion and listening to their problems.

## 2. THE SURVEY

First, it is necessary to define the characteristics of the interviewed sample and the type of the questionnaire used, in order to facilitate the comprehension of the answers. The survey methodology is based on a national random sample.

All the 800 adult people interviewed lived in a residential building (flat) with a lift. The survey source was the official national phone directory. The samples were selected from cities with more than 50.000 inhabitants.

The modality to collect the data was totaly casual, based on the person, who answered on the phone. The survey was carried out during the evening (from 18.30 to 21.30), at the end of the normal working day; in order to avoid only speaking to persons, who might be housebound (housewives, the elderly, the infirm etc), but with all different kind of residents.

The sample was as follows:

### Sample by floor occupancy:

Floor	Percentage
Ground/Mezzanine	6.6 %
First	15.6 %
Second	17.8 %
Third	19.4 %
Fourth	18.9 %
Fifth	9.5 %
Above fifth	12.2 %

### Sample by age :

Age	Percentage
18 - 25	16.5 %
26 - 35	21.2 %
36 - 45	22.6 %
46 - 55	13.8 %
56 - 65	11.1 %
Above 65	14.8 %

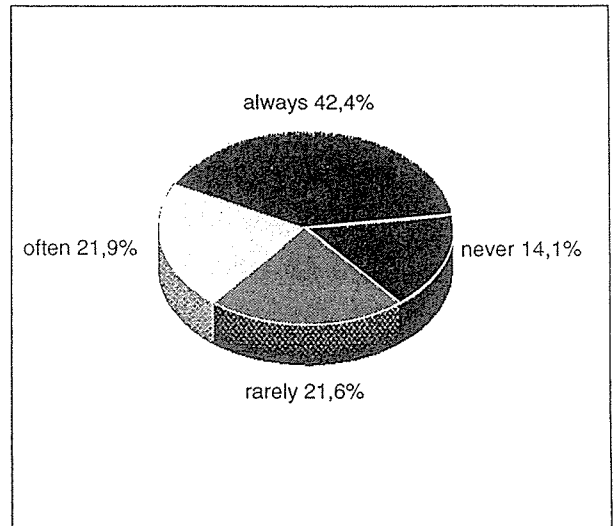
### Sample by Italian areas :

Area	Percentage
North East	18.9 %
North West	27.5 %
Centre	19.6 %
South	22.9 %
Islands	11.1 %

### 3. THE QUESTIONS:

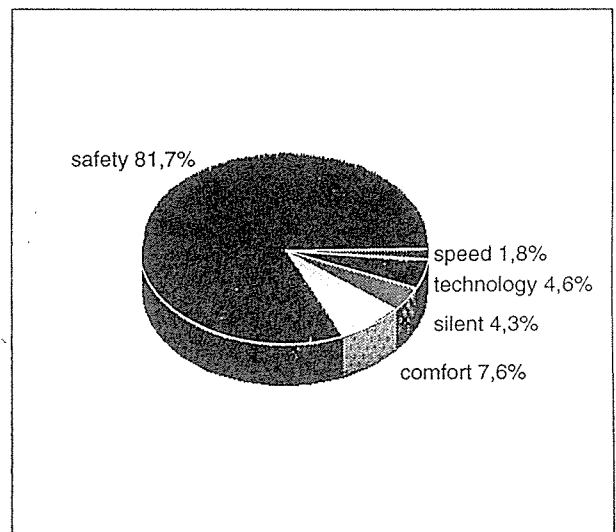
#### 1) How often do you take the lift at home?

It is obvious that the answers never come from people leaving on the ground floor and rarely from those living on the first floor.



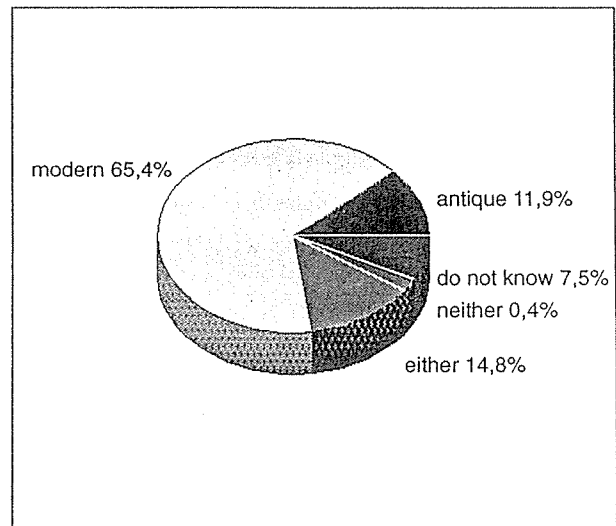
#### 2) Which of the following features do you think are most important?

This answer shows that many people are still afraid of the lift: they mostly ask for a safety device.



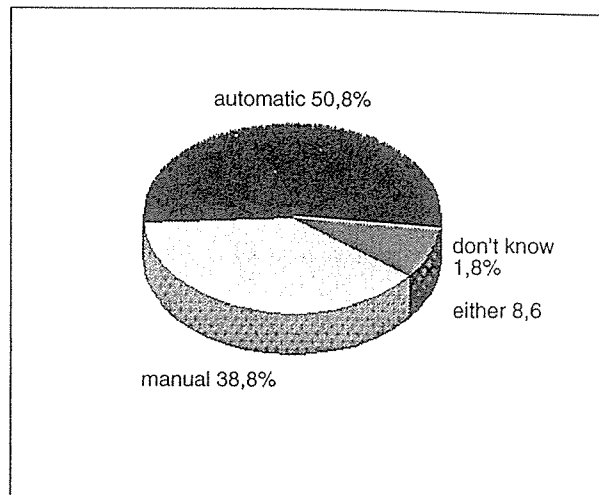
#### 3) Which do you think is more reliable: an older lift or a modern lift?

We have to think about the first answer. Those who think that an old lift is more reliable are thinking about a lift with a partial glass car in a steel structure, which in many cases is made by a metallic netting.



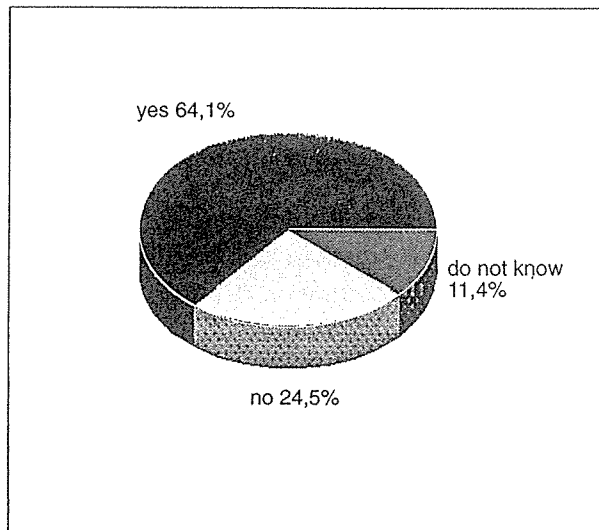
**4) Do you prefer automatic or manual doors?**

Although the majority answered "automatic" it is strange that as many as 38.8 % prefer manual doors. This choice may probably be explained by taking into account that many people may feel oppressed and "caged" inside a lift with automatic doors, which may be more difficult to open in the event of a break-down.



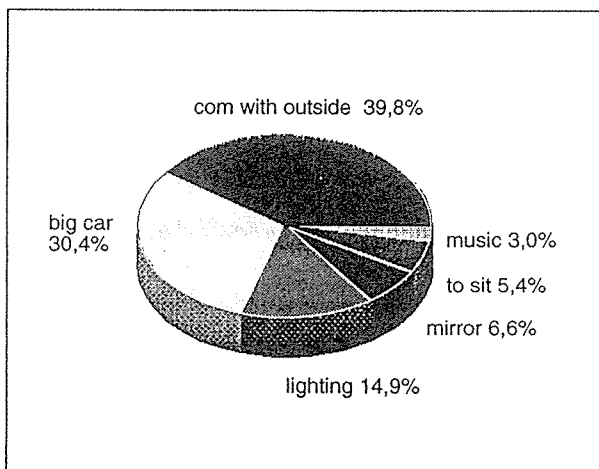
**5) Would you prefer that a lift has a transparent structure to allow passengers to see outside, when passing through the different floors?**

In particular, users appear to prefer a lift, which is defined as modern, provided with automatic doors and whose structure is transparent. The modern feature are given in a even way throughout the different regions and age range. Neither the floor, where a flat is situated, nor the age of the lift, appear predominant. On the contrary, a subordinate and frequent association with the meaning of "modern" to factors such as speed and technology is evident.



**6) Which of the following features do you think are most important in a lift (three choices available)?**

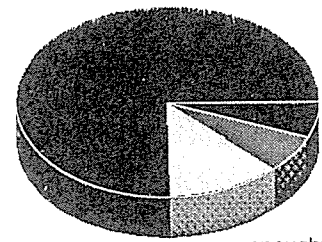
The possibility to communicate outside of the lift is the most required characteristic. That is a demonstration that many people are afraid of the lift; only the possibility to communicate with outside make them feel safer. The interviewed persons most concerned about communication outside of a lift are aged below 45. Also the demand for a spacious car appears noticeable, especially among the people living on a higher floors and youngsters.



Brightness and a wall mirror are shown as features deserving more attention.

7) Would you find it useful to have a telephone device installed in your lift, which could be used to call directly to the fire service and the maintenance service company?

a lot 75,2%



no 6,5%

a little 5,9%

enough 12,4%

8) Would you find it useful to have a device installed in your lift, which could avoid the car stopping between two floors in a event of a power failure?

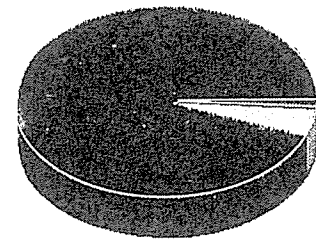
Confirming the sensitivity and attention paid by users to the safety issue, a wide section of those interviewed are interested in the installation of two specific devices, which operate when break-downs or power failure occur.

One of this devices enabling direct contact with the emergency service (87.6% if the "very" and the "quite" modes are combined), and the other one to stop the car at the landing (97.2% combining the "very" and "quite" modes).

The residents on the higher floors are interested in the direct link with fire service and the maintenance company to a just above an average degree. This request is present within our sample in a widespread way, as compared to variables such as the place of residence.

The request for a device taking the lift to a landing when a power cut occurs is even higher, and it appears to meet some of the reservations among the youngest people.

a lot 93,9%



no 1,5%

enough 4,6%

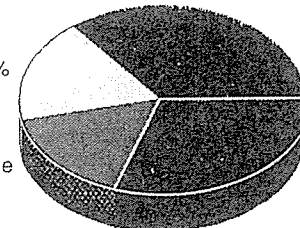
9) In general which of the following fears do you mostly have the moment you enter a lift?

The data showed that 17.2% are afraid of falling which is most serious. This is obviously the result of an acute lack of information. In fact the only event that is infinitesimal among the numerous failures, which may occur with a lift, is the breaking of the

to be stuck inside 35,6%

to fall 18,0%

meet people 16,2%



no fears 30,2%

suspension ropes. Evidently this is the most frightening thought in the user's imagination.

It also curious that 3,1% know they are afraid, but do not know about why or will not say. The discomfort caused, when taking the lift occurs to an above average degree among person aged 36 to 45, and does not seem to depend on the lift's age and it represented by one quarter of the sample. The majority of this segment maintain, however, that such a feeling reduces, if other people are in the lift car with them, and the reassuring effect is noticeable particularly among the more elderly.

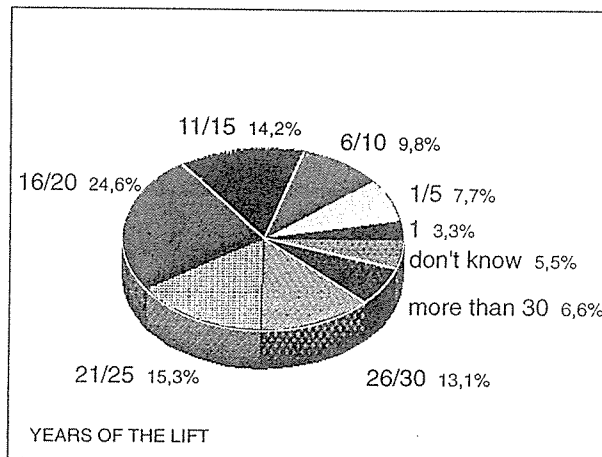
In general, the fear recurring more frequently in the imagination of the interviewed persons relates to the possibility of being trapped.

This is noted in a particularly marked way among those whose lift has been installed for less than a year, but it is felt also among persons who have had it for 11 to 20 years and among people aged 26 to 45.

Younger people appear to be worried about the chance of meeting unpleasant persons, while the fear of falling seems to be more present among those living above the fourth floor, and again among the persons aged 26 to 45.

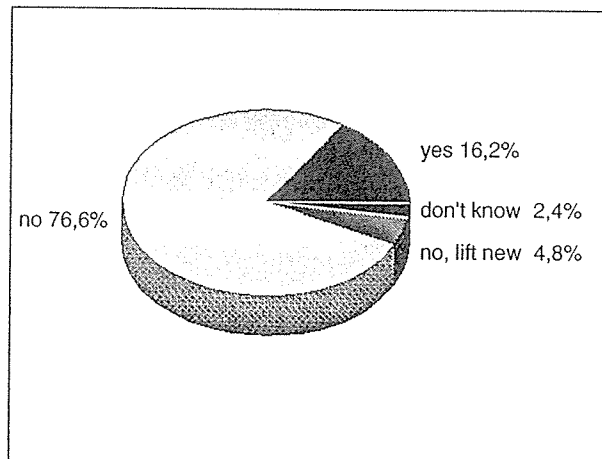
The proportion expressing this kind of feeling is partly balanced by the presence of a segment, of about three persons out of ten, who declare that the "lift syndrome" is unknown to them.

**10) As far as you know, can you tell us how many years the lift we are talking about has been installed?**



**11) Have you ever thought of changing the lift in the building where you own a flat?**

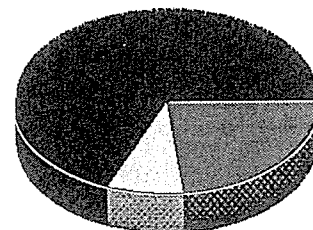
(Asked to those whose lift had been installed for less than 1 year)



**12 ) Do you recall whether your building management has ever received any proposal to have your lift replaced?**

(Question asked to all interviewees except those who stated that their lift was new)

no 68,4%

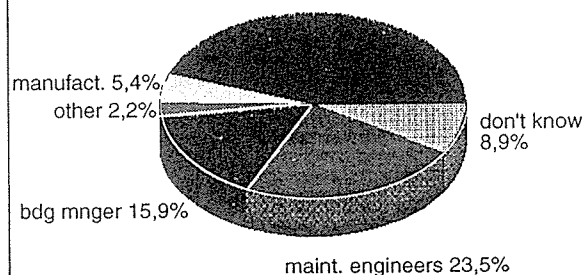


yes 8,2%

don't know 23,4%

**13) Who, in your opinion, should make this proposal?**

apartment owners 44,1%



manufact. 5,4%

other 2,2%

bdg mngr 15,9%

maint. engineers 23,5%

don't know 8,9%

**14) After how many years of operation should a lift be replaced in your opinion?**

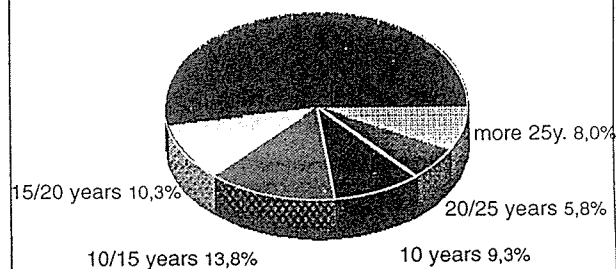
The average ages of the lifts included in our sample is 17,6 years (weighted average within a scale ranging from a minimum of 0,5 assigned to the answer "less than one year" to a maximum of 40 years corresponding to the answer "more than thirty years").

Only among the interviewees, whose lift has been installed for more than one year, was the

hypothesis of an interest to have the lift replaced verified. As this turned out to be requested by less than two out of ten individuals (16,2%).

The lift has been a part of the fabric of everyday life for many people for sometime, but the logical and economical processes, which determinate its use remain unknown and alien to the majority of lift users wishes and their requirements are of little influence and mostly ignored .

don't know 52,8%



15/20 years 10,3%

10/15 years 13,8%

10 years 9,3%

more 25y. 8,0%

20/25 years 5,8%

#### 4. THE CONCLUSIONS

The average age of the lifts operating in Italy is higher than the users would be prepared to accept. This widely explains the existence of a significant section of people surveyed, who would like to have a lift in their residence changed.

Of course, the older a lift is, the larger is the number of person willing to have it changed. And the users ready for the change are obviously prepared to support some of the cost, as the service provided by the lift is appreciated; it is a valuable.

To change, then. But how? How must take the initiative be taken? This is when the matter begins to get complex. The majority of the "innovators" think that the burden of the first move, i.e. the replacement proposal should come from themselves.

The proportion of those, who think that it is the maintenance service's task is also high. The percentage of those, who rely on the evaluations and the proposition of the building manager decidedly low.

On the whole there are persons who would like to rely on technicians, but this attitude does not always produce the desired results. In terms of safety the user's interests and those of the people in charge of the maintenance no doubt coincide, but economically speaking some disagreement may exist.

So, who should launch the proposal to change the lift? The users are the people most concerned, and may think that the first step is up to them. Everyone think, in fact that, it should be his neighbour's task, the man next door!

On this matter the wishes and the requirements of the consumers do not form into precise choice within reasonable period of time, owing to the lack of information on the quality and performance of the different lifts and on the commercial and manufacturing aspects. It may seem strange that the user, who comes into contact with the lift as his residence several times each day, does not know anything about it and in almost all cases he has not chosen it. The building company decides for everybody.

According to what criteria? Naturally according to mere convenience criteria, which does not necessary means a quality price criterion. The saying of that wise consumer who used to say: "I am too poor to afford cheap stuff." comes to our mind. The lift quality as well as the user's desires, often take a back seat.

How about the lift manufacturing company? It often adapts to these circumstances.

The users are always ignored, who finds a lift at home, that he have not chosen. The user is so ignorant, that he can make it even safer by having a device installed, which takes the car back to the landing floor, whenever there is a power cut. The user does not know what to do, when he think that the lift should be replaced.

What should be done in this situation? Provide communication and knowledge.

The lift should be regarded as important as other industrial products commonly used. Everybody would benefit: the quality machine manufacturers, the maintenance people and the users. It would be necessary that the bodies, who protect the consumers interests should be more active. It would be desirable that lift was tested in consumers magazines.

The users would know more about lifts and archive a guarantee to all users: the freedom to choose.