



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [SciVerse ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

# Transportation Research Part A

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/tra](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/tra)

## Convenience for the car-borne shopper: Are malls and shopping strips driving customers away?



Vaughan Reimers\*

Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Australia

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 27 March 2012

Received in revised form 19 November 2012

Accepted 3 January 2013

#### Keywords:

Shopping

Mall

Convenience

Car

Parking

### ABSTRACT

Global warming, increasing traffic congestion, diminishing resources and declining health levels have led to the introduction of several policies aimed at deterring car-usage. However many such policies have not only often failed to achieve their objective, they also risk jeopardising the retail sector. To help understand why, this study measures the importance shoppers assign to car convenience, their perceptions of shopping malls and shopping strips (also referred to as Main Street or the High Street) in relation to it, and then compares them in their actual provision of it. To achieve these objectives, the study utilised a consumer household survey and a retail audit. The results of the study indicate that consumers regard car convenience as an important determinant of where they choose to shop, and perceive malls as a superior source of it. Moreover, with the sole exception of being able to park close to desired stores, malls offer car-borne shoppers more convenient access and parking. The findings suggest that any strategy designed to deter car usage should be designed to impact equally on both mall shopping and strip shopping, or risk tipping the balance even further in favour of the mall.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Transport has traditionally been perceived in the positive context of its ability to facilitate economic growth and satisfy peoples' desire for mobility (Button, 2010). However growing climate concerns have led to the recognition that an effective transportation system should not come at the expense of a safe, clean environment (Coyle et al., 2006). Transport is the fastest-growing emission sector and within that, road transport is the largest contributor to global warming (Fuglestedt et al., 2008). Transport accounts for nearly a quarter of current energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, with these levels forecast to treble by 2050. While the automotive industry is seeking to address the problem by developing alternative fuel technologies, such measures may not occur in time to prevent CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from reaching critical levels (Graham-Rowe et al., 2011).

Concerns over the automobile are not limited to global warming. Increasing traffic congestion, diminishing resources and declining health levels have also changed the perception many policy-makers have of the car (Mackett, 2003). In the context of traffic congestion, the average American commuter spends 38 h a year sitting stationary in traffic (McDonald, 2007). Further adding to the congestion problem is the act of cruising for parking (Van Ommeren et al., 2012). For an American motorist, cruising for a parking space can account for up to 30% of traffic volume and add around 8 min to trips to downtown areas (Shoup, 2005). This problem is particularly acute in a shopping context where cruising behaviour is at its most frequent and cruising times are at their longest (Van Ommeren et al., 2012). Australia's urban motorists often face a similar situation. Limited public transport and urban sprawl have combined to create a car-dependent society (Mitchell, 2007a). The resultant

\* Tel.: +61 3 99026704.

E-mail address: [vaughan.reimers@monash.edu](mailto:vaughan.reimers@monash.edu)

increasing levels of car-ownership are in turn creating increasing levels of traffic congestion, thereby compromising the environment and the quality of urban life (Mitchell, 2007b).

In response to problems such as these, policy-makers throughout Asia, Europe and North America continue to introduce schemes designed to deter car usage (Cairns, 2005; Ibrahim, 2005; Turner, 2005). Such schemes typically seek to encourage the use of public transport by making the car a relatively more expensive and/or less convenient option. However such interventions have proven relatively ineffective in reducing car-usage (Graham-Rowe et al., 2011). A likely reason for this is the counter-veiling force imposed by time-scarcity (Chetthamrongchai and Davies, 2000), declining fitness levels (Knuth and Hallal, 2009), urban sprawl (Mackett, 2003) and retail decentralisation (Williams et al., 2001). For example, such is the relationship between urban sprawl and car ownership that as the former increases, so too does the latter (Witten et al., 2011). In the case of retail decentralisation, one study found that upon the introduction of outlying malls and hypermarkets, 32% of patrons that had previously shopped by public transport and 56% that had walked or cycled, switched to shopping by car (Garb, 2006). Hence while environmental concerns work against the car, population growth, urban sprawl and decentralised retail options only serve to emphasise its importance to consumers. Such a situation can be expressed as the citizen vs. consumer paradox (Rowlands et al., 2002), whereby the 'citizen' in each person *knows* it is better for the environment if they utilise alternative means of travel, but the 'consumer' in them still prefers to use their car.

With ever-increasing levels of car ownership in Europe (Eurostat, 2010), the USA (Davis et al., 2012) and Australia (ABS, 2012), scholars propose that the livelihood of bricks-and-mortar retail formats will rest on their ability to provide convenience to the car-borne shopper (Cairns, 2005; Kim et al., 2005). The purpose of this study is to measure the importance consumers assign to car convenience. In so doing, it will provide insight into the likely impacts of new policies introduced to deter car usage. The rest of this paper is structured as follows: first a review of the literature provides insight into the nature of car convenience and identifies the research gaps that serve as the focus of this study. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology, the presentation of the results and the conclusion thereafter.

## 2. Review of literature

For many consumers, the car is a key requirement of any shopping trip (Cairns, 2005), providing speed, flexibility and the ability to transport purchases (Hagman, 2006). In the USA, shopping serves as the car's second most commonly utilised trip purpose. The number of car-borne shopping trips per American household continues to increase, as does the total distance travelled each year, and the average distance per trip (Santos et al., 2009). Amongst the many reasons as to why the car may be so synonymous with shopping in the US is its high level of car ownership. The number of vehicles in the US is now growing faster than its population. In 2010, there were 777 passenger vehicles per 1000 head of population or 1.72 vehicles for every employed civilian (Davis et al., 2012). As an indication of the American population's dependence on the car, in 2009 it accounted for 91% of passenger-miles travelled in the US (excluding air travel and inter-city rail) and 83% of all trips. In contrast, public transport (including bus, train, subway and streetcar) accounted for just 2% and walking for 10% (Department of Transportation, 2012).

In Europe, the percentage of car-borne shopping trips also continues to grow (Mackett, 2003). In the UK, 65% of all shopping trips are made by car (Department for Transport, 2011); a figure that jumps to as high as 85% for food shopping (McEachern and Warnaby, 2006). In Sweden, Sonesson et al. (2005) found that the car accounted for 83% of food shopping trips to supermarkets, and that half these trips were made specifically for the purpose of shopping. Moreover, 59% of food shopping trips to convenience shops were also made by car; this in spite of the fact that the distance to such stores was only a couple of kilometres. Further highlighting the importance of the car, they also found that the average weekly shopping distance covered per Swedish household ranged from 28 km through to as much as 63 km. As with the US, the propensity to shop by car is likely to be linked to the increasing levels of car ownership (Eurostat, 2010) and the large proportion of travel that it accounts for. For example in 2010, passenger cars were responsible for 84.1% of the total kilometres travelled across 27 European countries. In stark contrast, buses and coaches (8.8%) and railways, trams and metros (7.1%) accounted for just 15.9% (Eurostat, 2011).

The car is equally popular in Australia. Although the most recent statistics on car-based shopping trips are now 12 years old, more recent data suggests little has changed in the interim period. In 2000, McLennan reported that the car accounted for 86% of Australian shopping trips, with walking (8%) and buses (3%) a very distant second and third respectively. Though not conducted in a shopping context specifically, a longitudinal study by Cosgrove (2011) reported very similar results. In 2010 the car accounted for 86% of all consumer trips in Melbourne (the geographic context for *this* study), dwarfing the proportions accounted for by public transport (10%) and walking/cycling (4%). In the period 1945–1980, public transport trips on a per capita basis in Melbourne declined 75%. In the same period, car travel increased sevenfold. Since 1980, public transport usage has remained steady, accounting for just 10% of consumer trips; down from 56% in 1945. Moreover, in spite of a threefold increase in population over this period, the total number of public transport trips in Melbourne declined 21%.

Given the declining fitness levels, urban sprawl and increasing levels of car ownership that characterise many markets, it is unlikely that the rate of car utilisation will diminish in the near future. As such, the future success of bricks-and-mortar retail formats could well rest on their ability to provide convenience to the car-borne masses (Cairns, 2005; Kim et al., 2005). There are two key sources of convenience for the car-borne shopper: access and parking. Access refers to the convenience of travelling by car to, from and within a retail centre. Inherent in the principle of accessibility is the notion that the more con-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/311267>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/311267>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)