Pandemic Behavior: How it Affects Transportation Options

August 18, 2020
Introduction

• How are consumers behaving?
• Why are they behaving like that?
• What are transit riders saying?
• What emerging trends are responding to new consumer psychology?
• Where do we go from here?
Driving Forces: COVID Consumer Behavior

• Desire For Control
• Need for Safety
• Healthy Travel Options
• Personal Space
• Teleliving
Consumer Behavior
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Crisis response resets to lowest levels

- Self-actualization
- Esteem
- Love and belonging
- Safety needs
- Physiological needs
Consumer Psychology During Times of Crisis

• Consumers withdraw until they feel a sense of control

• Purchasing (and hoarding) necessities provides a sense of control

• Social exclusion sacrifices self-care for social well-being

Image Credit: CNBC, 03/20
Consumer Response

• Digital and ecommerce will continue to expand

• Demand for cleanliness and low/no-touch transactions

• Demand for healthy travel options - active travel, clean transport, public spaces

• Expectations for lower income reduces spending on non-essentials
Wait, isn’t this GOOD for our program?

- Traffic WAS down, but collapse of transit/carpool market has traffic almost back to pre-crisis levels, despite huge telework rates.

- Air quality is roughly 20% better, but it’s not that simple. Teleliving has environmental costs.

- Telework rates remain high

- Spring / summer can be deceiving
Employer Response

• Telework for all able employees. Requesting help from CT for telework policies

• Minimal staffing for construction, creating new shifts

• Salary cuts and layoffs, expected to continue

• Employees think transit is unsafe

• Future: Case for more telework. ETCs fear reductions in transit/vanpool use due to safety
Teleliving changes travel demand

Pre-COVID Trips by Purpose
- Commute: 20%
- Family/Personal: 45%
- Social/Recreation: 27%
- Teleliving: 8%

Post-COVID Trips by Purpose
- Commute: 13%
- Family/Personal: 40%
- Social/Recreation: 27%
- Teleliving: 20%
E-Schooling

• 98% of colleges moved the majority of classes online
  • University of Washington was the first
  • College enrollment down 15-30% for fall, summer semesters

• K-12 Schools unlikely to open fully in 2020, or may be forced to re-close
  • Likely mix of in-person and e-learning
  • Staggered start times for students

Image Credit: Seattle Times, 03/20
Teleliving Trends After COVID

- Entertainment industry relying more on digital sales
  - 44% say they would attend fewer events after COVID, 40% will see fewer / no movies in theaters
  - 100% of games to be sold online by 2022

- Big shift from cash to digital payments
Economic Impacts

- Transit use will decrease due to low gas prices, but at a slower rate.

- Mixed bag for shared mobility providers

- Built environment shifts to active modes

- Durability of the housing market suggests previous residency models will remain stable

- High unemployment / high benefits
Transit Response
Denver RTD Rider Survey - May 2020

- Transit is perceived least safe activity of any choice

- 65% will “wait and see” before resuming transit; 9% will never return

- Demand for PPE for both drivers and riders, clean vehicles, and social distancing in vehicles

Image Credit: RTD, 06/20
Transit Safety

- Masks required on all services, available for free
- Fare adjustments
- Seat blocking
- Increased cleaning

What does this mean for the future of transit?
Emerging Trends
Local-Level Transportation Policies

• Stay-Healthy Streets prohibit car use and see increase in bike/ped
  • Seattle (20 miles even post-COVID)
  • Edmonds
  • Everett

• Repurposing street parking for outdoor (socially distanced) restaurant seating

• Expanding pedestrian space
## Micromobility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer Behavior</th>
<th>Transportation Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for control</td>
<td>Switch to full trip lengths from first/last mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for safety</td>
<td>Demand for long-term rentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social distancing</td>
<td>Expansion of services to medical/food sector</td>
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Image Credit: Intelligent Transportation, 04/20
## Teleliving

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<tr>
<th>Consumer Behavior</th>
<th>Transportation Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for control</td>
<td>Telework expected to encompass 25-30% of commutes by 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for safety</td>
<td>Online shopping / schooling replaces trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social distancing</td>
<td>Online social activities replace community events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image Credit: Everett Herald, 03/20
Adapting Transportation Services

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<th>Consumer Behavior</th>
<th>Transportation Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for control</td>
<td>No desire for branding-public vs private makes no difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for safety</td>
<td>Linking modes seamlessly, reducing transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced cleaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social distancing</td>
<td>Utilizing resources for food/medical deliveries</td>
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Image Credit: News-Herald, 04/20
Adapting Transportation Services (cont.)

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<th>Consumer Behavior</th>
<th>Transportation Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for control</td>
<td>On-demand services; flexible routing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing habits</td>
<td>Services change rapidly to meet new demand</td>
</tr>
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Image Credit: CNBC, 01/20
# Built Environment

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Consumer Behavior</th>
<th>Transportation Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Demand</td>
<td>REI, Microsoft, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social distancing</td>
<td>De-Urbanization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social distancing/Active demand</td>
<td>Cities explore ways to change streetscapes</td>
</tr>
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Image Credit: MyEdmondsNews, 07/20
Summary & Next Steps
Summary of Consumer Behavior

• Desire For Control
• Need for Safety
• Healthy Travel Options
• Personal Space
• Teleliving
What’s an ETC to do?

• Keep us informed- new shifts, workforce changes- not just for CTR but for transit and vanpool

• People will continue shopping, studying, and working from home- *embrace it*

• Active travel will continue to surge through the summer and fall- promote!

• Emphasize *control* and *safety* when discussion back-to-work travel.
Bibliography


4. Rogers, Kristina and Andrew Cosgrove “Future Consumer Index: How COVID-19 is changing consumer behaviors” (2020)


