

Behavioral Economics

Tutorial 9

Designing Policies to Induce More
Eco-Friendly Transportation Choices

Tasks

- In small groups, use material covered so far in the course to analyze non-price barriers to the wider adoption of public transports, walking and cycling rather than private cars as means of transport
- Apply relevant theory to devise a cost-effective strategy for promoting the uptake of these alternative to private car use

Material to apply

- Non-compensatory decisions (reject if 'too ...' or 'not enough...')
- Social pressures and willingness to comply (Part of Fishbein-Ajzen model, covered in Chapter 8)
- Social norms as hidden persuaders
- Kelly: world-views, self-image, emotions, core constructs
- Hayek's theory of cognition – past cognitions shape new ones, but the brain can change itself in the long run
- Cognitive dissonance theory
- Routines; need to come up with and adhere to new systems of and sequences of operating
- Scope for nudges?

Safety Issues

- ‘Too dangerous’ – fear of accidents or assault, for self, spouse, children (tank-like SUVs for the school run, rather than letting children walk to school – but also an issue related to suburban design with sprawl and fewer, larger schools)
- Expensive solutions: changing road designs (though sometimes just a ‘missing link’ in the system may need fixing), separating cyclists via dedicated cycle tracks, improving street lighting
- Change cycling culture: it’s not the Tour de France, and aggressive cyclists pose threat to more sedate ones
- How does your city compare with cycling-friendly European cities where cycling is very common and other road users are more sympathetic to their needs?
- Rules for using roads: can be changed to cyclists’ benefit but failure of cyclists to follow road-rules does not help in bringing about a more sympathetic attitude in motorists.

Image issues

- UK study at Lancaster University found that cyclists were seen as 'poor' or 'weird', rather than 'fit' and 'socially responsible'
- Similar issues with buses and limit use by more affluent consumers?
- Scope for conspicuous consumption with bikes instead of cars? Note importance of being able to signal how much one has spent: others need to be able to recognize brands, etc.
- Sweaty clothing and 'hat hair' (should cycle helmets be compulsory? – they aren't required in some cycling-friendly countries) – not only with cycling but also via poorly placed bus-stops
- Shower facilities may be part of the solution, but also there's the problem of needing to be organized with changes of clothing, which requires some skills in planning and creating new routines

Logistical issues

- Transport is a means to making things happen, but time(tabling) issues may get in the way: for the 'soccer Mom' using a private car may be the only way of handling the school run and after-school activities
- Luggage issues: e.g. shopping routines based on weekly supermarket visits, not on small daily shopping (on way home from work): a solution needs to limit the increase in shopping time
- Nowhere to store bike safely at destination?

Issues of control

- Private environment of car, versus not being able to choose with whom one shares a bus
- Unreliability of bus service can be critical with infrequent services
- Bigger risk of punctures when cycling than breakdown/punctures in private car
- Control problems are not just associated with risks of being late but can also be to do with parents' fears about their kids' behaviour if allowed to get about unsupervised

Comfort issues

- Audio-entertainment environment
- Quality of seating in buses and poor ride quality – not good for those with back problems
- Too hot or cold out in the open
- Physically exhausting to walk or cycle the necessary distance if not fit (how to get people fit enough?)

Procrastination

- Ease of putting off switching until another day (restrictions on parking spaces might be a way to change this, as might introduction of more bus lanes to limit road space for car)
- Dread of what a greener transport mode could entail may deter commitment to it (how might we instead induce potential for 'enjoyment by anticipation'? Promoting new social opportunities that aren't available from inside a car, and fitness, perhaps)
- Can policymakers play the 'guilt' card with motorists?