

DOCTORAL THESIS

Inter-generational changes in activity-travel behavior and auto-mobility in the chinese context

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ABSTRACT

Observations in a number of developed countries have shown a stagnating or declining trend in the level of car use and sparked a heated debate on whether such trend would persist into the future. While arguments over the potential causes of this trend remain largely unsettled, the crucial implications of the long-term trends on the strategic development of transport infrastructure as well as the long-term planning schemes in the transportation sector are generally agreed upon. This study aims at providing evidence of the changing trends in an under-researched area with historically limited car dependence and distinct cultural and social characteristics through disaggregate analysis on several large-scale datasets. Three separate case studies were carried out to identify the changes in car ownership, activity-travel behavior, car use, and personal attitudes towards cars in different Chinese cities, namely Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Beijing. Statistical modeling approaches were applied for the disaggregate analysis at the household and individual levels. Findings in the case study of Hong Kong suggest that the level of car ownership and car use has shown indications of levelling-off and even a certain degree of decrease in the past decade, despite the low level of car dependence for the entirety of the city's history. Results in the case of Shenzhen, on the other hand, indicate a surging car ownership rate in recent years, which is in contrast with the situation in its neighboring city of Hong Kong. The interactions between built environment and travel behavior have also changed significantly in Shenzhen, a city undergoing rapid expansion. The third case study reports that the level of auto-mobility has increased significantly during the past decade in Shenzhen and all age groups and cohorts experienced similar uptrends in car ownership and car use. In addition, analysis on the dataset from Beijing suggests that young adults do not evaluate private cars and their functions as favorably as the middle-age adults. Findings in this study contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the recent changes in car ownership, activity-travel behavior, and attitudes towards private cars in the Chinese context. This study also highlights the importance to expand the range of research

attention out of the developed and motorized countries in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics in travel behavior and auto-mobility around the world. Findings also have important policy implications in curbing auto-dependence in daily travel and planning and managing future transportation.

Keywords: Inter-generational changes, activity-travel behavior, peak car, built environment, travel attitudes, auto-mobility

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables	xii
Symbols and Abbreviation.....	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Background	1
1.2 Research Objective	7
1.3 Organization of Thesis.....	8
Chapter 2 Literature Review	10
2.1 Peak Car and Peak Travel.....	10
2.2 Travel Behavior of Younger Generations.....	14
2.3 Relationship between Built Environment and Travel Behavior	18
2.4 Psychological Factors on Car Use	21
2.5 Summary and Research Gaps	24
Chapter 3 Research Approach.....	27
3.1 Theoretical Framework.....	27
3.2 Scopes of Studies	30
3.3 Research Design	31
3.3.1 Inter-generational changes in activity-travel behavior	31
3.3.2 Urban development and travel behavior changes	33
3.3.3 Inter-generational changes in auto-mobility	35

3.4	Data Description	37
3.4.1	Hong Kong Travel Characteristics Survey	37
3.4.2	Shenzhen Household Travel Survey	38
3.4.3	Household survey data in Beijing	39
3.5	Statistical Methods.....	40
3.5.1	Propensity score matching	40
3.5.2	Structural Equation modeling	43
3.5.3	Multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis	45
Chapter 4 Inter-generational Changes in Activity-travel Behavior: a Disaggregate Approach		48
4.1	Introduction.....	48
4.2	Study Area and Data	50
4.2.1	Study area	50
4.2.2	Travel Characteristics Survey Data	52
4.3	Analysis Approach.....	54
4.3.1	Propensity score matching	54
4.3.2	Covariates and outcome variables	55
4.3.3	Analysis setups	58
4.4	Results.....	59
4.4.1	Descriptive statistics	59
4.4.2	Changes in household car ownership.....	60
4.4.3	Changes in activity-travel behavior	65
4.5	Discussions	71

Chapter 5	Travel Behavior and Built Environment Impact under Rapid Urban Expansion	75
5.1	Introduction.....	75
5.2	Study Area and Data	78
5.2.1	Study area	78
5.2.2	Household Travel Survey Data.....	81
5.3	Methodology.....	82
5.3.1	Model structure of built environment impact	82
5.3.2	Variables and procedure	84
5.4	Descriptive Analysis	88
5.4.1	Urban expansion, suburbanization, and jobs-housing imbalance.....	88
5.4.2	Increasing car ownership and car use	90
5.4.3	Lengthened travel with more time	90
5.5	Modeling Results	92
5.5.1	Goodness-of-fits.....	92
5.5.2	Changes in interactions among endogenous variables	92
5.5.3	Changes in effects of built environment factors	96
5.5.4	Changes in effects of socioeconomics and household attributes.....	99
5.6	Discussions	100
Chapter 6	Inter-generational Changes in Car Ownership, Car Use, and Attitudes towards Cars.....	106
6.1	Introduction.....	106
6.2	Inter-generational Changes in Car Ownership and Car Use.....	108

6.2.1	Study area and data	108
6.2.2	Methods and variables	109
6.2.3	Overall trends in auto-mobility and urban growth.....	110
6.2.4	Changes by age groups: cohort effects	114
6.2.5	Changes by birth cohorts: ageing effects	117
6.2.6	Discussions	119
6.3	Generational Differences in Attitudes towards Cars	121
6.3.1	Study area and data	121
6.3.2	Methodology	125
6.3.3	Descriptive analysis	126
6.3.4	Generational differences in attitudes	130
6.3.5	Linking attitudes to auto-mobility	134
6.3.6	Discussions	136
6.4	Conclusions.....	138
Chapter 7	Summary and Discussions.....	141
7.1	Summary	141
7.2	Discussions	144
7.2.1	Linking to current literature.....	145
7.2.2	Implications on policy making	147
7.3	Limitations and Future Work.....	149
	Appendices.....	152
	Bibliography	173
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