

ABSTRACT

CONSUMER GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY IN AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT: IMPACT ON MARKETPLACE BEHAVIOR

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The rate of U.S. geographic mobility has declined in recent years, to 17% or less, from a once very stable annual level of 20%. This decline is attributed to life-style, economic, and employer policy variables. These contemporary forces are fostering the emergence of three alternate mobility/non-mobility groups, or segments, namely renovators, and inter-urban (or long distance) and intra-urban (or short distance) mobiles. These three (3) emergent groups of homeowning households were studied from a marketing perspective which focused on the contemporary framework of the declining annual geographic mobility rates. Utilizing public records in a metropolitan Ohio area, respondent households were selected and mailed questionnaires which investigated such post-move or post-renovation marketplace activities as actual and planned purchases as well as changes in and retail patronage patterns.

Specifically, a total of sixteen (16) hypotheses, regarding the post-mobility and post-renovation marketplace activities, were formulated and tested against null hypotheses. Four (4) of these involved testing to determine whether differences existed across all three (3) samples in the following types of marketplace activities: one, actual and planned purchases in eight (8) product categories; two, just actual purchases in the same eight (8) categories; three, just planned purchases in the same eight (8) categories; four, retail patronage patterns in fifteen (15) classifications. Additionally, there were three (3) pairwise tests--renovators/intra-urban mobiles, renovators/intra-urban, inter-urban/intra-urban mobiles--for each of the four (4) types of marketplace activities. This resulted in twelve (12) additional hypotheses, and a total of sixteen (16).

The eight (8) product categories were mainly durable goods and six of these had been studied by Andreasen (1964) in an urban study of long distance mobiles. The Andreasen study concluded that these inter-urban

mobiles were a viable market segment which engaged in considerable post-move actual and planned product purchases. Many of the fifteen (15) retail classifications had been researched by J.E. Bell (1969) and McWilliams (1978) in two other marketing studies of inter-urban mobiles. Both of these researchers expanded upon Andreasen's market segment theory by adding "patronage flux" to the inter-urban mobiles' marketplace activities.

The current study provides an update on Andreasen's, J.E. Bell's, and McWilliams' inter-urban mobility research and also an examination of whether similar marketplace behavior results among intra-urban mobiles and renovators. By means of discriminant analyses, eleven (11) of the sixteen (16) null hypotheses were rejected. This indicates that among the sampled homeowning households there are considerable post-decision differences across the three (3) groups, as well as in many of the paired comparisons. Indeed, all four (4) post-decision marketplace activities null hypotheses (actual and planned purchases; just actual purchases; just planned purchases; and retail patronage changes), which were tested across all the samples were rejected.

The current findings indicate that inter-urban mobiles continue to represent a viable market segment for selected product marketers and retailers, just as Andreasen, J. E. Bell, and McWilliams had earlier reported. However, the current findings also illustrate that intra-urban mobiles and renovators might also provide opportunities for marketers. Thus, while for all three (3) groups, contemporary strategic implications are discussed, the current study serves as a means of reminding marketers of the earlier inter-urban mobility implications as well.

(The references are included in the complete paper, a copy of which can be obtained from the author.)