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Defining the lifestyle concept An application to travel behavior research

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Travel is generally considered as a derived demand: although sometimes people might travel just ‘for fun’ (e.g., Mokhtarian, 2001; Mokhtarian and Salomon, 2001), people mainly travel in order to access desired activities in other locations. After all, activities such as living, working, shopping and recreating are in most cases spatially separated. Therefore, it seems commonsensical that the travel behavior of individuals and households will alter by changing the location of these activities and the design characteristics of these locations. This suggests a relationship between the built environment and travel behavior. Many studies try to model and measure this relationship (for a review, see, e.g. Badoe and Miller, 2000; Crane, 2000; Ewing and Cervero, 2001 for the U.S.A; Stead and Marshall, 2001; van Wee, 2002 for Europe).

However, different travel patterns can still be found within similar neighborhoods or within similar socio-economic homogenous population groups. This is (partly) due to personal lifestyles. The impact of lifestyle has certainly increased. During the last decennia, prosperity increased, resulting in more available possibilities to choose from. Moreover, the social burden to behave uniformly disappeared because of increasing individualization and decreasing social control. These processes allow people to lead a personal lifestyle (Ferge, 1972; Bootsma *et al.*, 1993). Consequently, taking lifestyles into account in addition to the traditionally used variables may provide interesting insights into the connection between the built environment and travel behavior.

Despite its frequent colloquial use, a distinct lifestyle theory is hard to find. Lifestyle is elaborated pragmatically, rather than theoretically. Especially marketing studies (e.g., Mitchell, 1983) use the concept of lifestyle in order to retrieve market sectors. These studies generally analyze numerous data by explorative statistics, such as cluster analysis. Each cluster is then referred to as another lifestyle. Because a sound theoretical basis is lacking and results are data-dependent, each study “finds” new lifestyles. This pragmatic approach is criticized by Sobel (1983) among others. Nevertheless, some theoretical contributions to the lifestyle concept are made by Weber (1972), Bourdieu (1984) and Ganzeboom (1988). They agree on the communicative character of lifestyles: the individual elucidate his or her social position through specific patterns of behavior. However, lifestyles include more than observable patterns of behavior. According to Ganzeboom (1988), lifestyles also refer to opinions and motivations, including beliefs, interests and attitudes. This may confound our understanding of the lifestyle concept. For that reason, Munters (1992) distinguished lifestyles from lifestyle expressions. He considered lifestyles as the individual’s opinions and motivations, or orientations. Mainly work orientation, leisure orientation and household/family orientation definite lifestyles (Salomon and Ben-Akiva, 1983; Bootsma *et*

al., 1993). Consequently, lifestyles are internal to the individual and, thus, are unobservable. A lifestyle, then, manifests itself in observable patterns of behavior, or lifestyle expressions. In this way, observable patterns of behavior (= lifestyle expressions) are explained by underlying opinions and orientations (= lifestyles).

From the above, it should be clear how to measure lifestyles. Briefly summarized, lifestyle refers to the individual's opinions and orientations toward general themes such as family orientation, work orientation and leisure orientation. Some empirical studies (e.g., Salomon and Ben-Akiva, 1983; Cooper *et al.*, 2001; Hildebrand, 2003) analyze what they would call lifestyles, but in fact they combine various objective socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the individual and the household. Consequently, these studies refer to stage of life cycle or household composition rather than to lifestyles. Although a lifestyle is partly influenced by stage of life cycle or household composition, lifestyle has a different meaning. Socio-economic and demographic variables must, therefore, be separated from lifestyles.

Current travel behavior surveys can be used to analyze travel behavior as the derivative of activity behavior, but these surveys generally lack information on lifestyles. Therefore, we conducted an additional Internet survey during May 2007-October 2007. According to the preceding theoretical explanation of lifestyles, the Internet survey included questions on leisure (holidays, sports, culture, literature and weekend activities) and the assessment of the work-family balance. A second-order factor analysis revealed 6 lifestyles: (i) social networkers, (ii) culture-lovers, (iii) low budget, but adventurous, (iv) low budget, not adventurous, (v) family ties, and (vi) high budget and adventurous. Then, a structural equation model explains the supplementary explanatory power of lifestyles in travel analyses.

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