

Crafting Commute Times

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Abstract

The objective of this research to understand the way commuters think about and spend their time when commuting from home to work, as well as what impact this may have on their thoughts and behaviors at work. Commute can be a valuable time to engage in a host of thoughts and behaviors, ranging from productive work thoughts and behaviors to relaxing thoughts and behaviors that may promote detachment and recovery.

Using internet research, we examined the ways individuals “craft” their commutes, as they approach this liminal, or transition, time differently than is typically assumed.

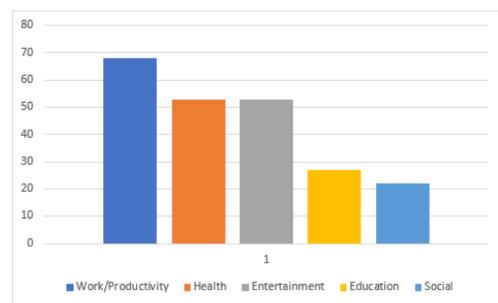
The themes that emerged include: maximizing use of time, reducing stress, maintaining a work-life balance, and passive vs. active behaviors.

Project Activities or Findings

Data: Online research of articles that referred to commute experiences Used search terms such as daily, travel, productive, activities, and tips in combination with “commute”.

Sources: Magazines, Newspaper articles, and blogs.

Methodology: An analysis of over 40 articles found that individuals most frequently used commute time to get a head start on their work day; such as checking email and planning tasks. Individuals also held high value in activities that contributed to their physical and mental health (e.g. meditation, sleeping, and repeating positive mantras). Reducing stress and maintaining work-life balance were the primary objectives. Some individuals expressed that commute time should not be unpaid work time for their employer. Commuters also use media as entertainment to relax. Individuals typically looked at commute time as an opportunity to optimize the time that was otherwise “lost”. For example, a commuter that lacks the time to study for a course is more likely to have positive feelings towards their commute if they can use this time to study effectively.



Theme	Example/quote
Work	“If you’re not driving or riding a bicycle, your morning commute is a great time to get a head start on your workday. Attending to messages early in the morning will set you up for a productive day.”
Social	“You may have very limited time for this type of communication throughout the rest of the day, so use your commute time to call your parents, chat with your significant other, or text your friends...”
Education	“Listening to audiobooks is a great way to get the benefits of reading while driving into work. Audiobooks can help you get a better grip on marketing, understand how to minimize office politics, or learn a new language.”
Entertainment	“...there’s nothing wrong with starting the day with some good, upbeat music. You don’t have to be productive all the time during your commute. Take the time to relax and enjoy yourself.”
Health	“...the stress caused by gridlocked traffic is probably the exact reason why you should give meditation a shot. Meditation may help you pivot away from a frustrating situation towards a positive frame of mind.”

Research Questions

1. How reactive or proactive are individuals in using their commute time?
2. Do they tend to perceive commute time as “lost” time in their day?
3. To what extent do they perceive it as predictable time carved out of their day to engage in specific activities?
4. What are the activities?

Citations

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