

# FIRST AND LAST SMILES: FUN AND THE ADOPTION OF MICROMOBILITY

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## INTRODUCTION

Micromobility is novel, shared transportation made up of light vehicles such as scooters. It is often considered a first- and last-mile transit solution for urban centres facing increasing pressures of congestion, densification, increased cost-of-living, and climate degradation (Bartling, 2019; Cervero et al., 2017; Santos, 2018; Shaheen & Cohen, 2012).

Despite health, environmental and social benefits, industry participants maintain that consumers will adopt micromobility “because micromobility is more fun, because its liberating and because it just feels better” (Dediu, 2019, para. 19). Fun as motivation in scooter use has been reinforced in empirical observations (Tuncer & Brown, 2020), yet academic exploration of fun remains underdeveloped (Fincham, 2016; Fine & Corte, 2017; Tasci & Ko, 2015).

## OBJECTIVE

By exploring how fun manifests within consumer experiences in the micromobility context and how they inform micromobility consumption, the objective of this study is to understand:

**How do experiences of fun inform micromobility adoption in urban populations?**

## METHODOLOGY

 This in-progress, multi-sited ethnographic exploration of scooter use and adoption explicitly considers experiential aspects of consumer behaviour.

**Theoretical lens:** This study is situated within Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as a recognized sub-discipline of consumer research (Arnould et. al, 2015; Joy & Li, 2012; MacInnis & Folkes, 2010) and utilizes a grounded theory approach.

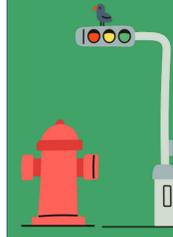
**Participants:** 8 scooter users at each site (6 completed at this point). Sites include Kelowna, BC, Canada and Portland, OR, USA.

**Data:** Techniques such as in-depth transit diaries, interviews and participant observation were used, and included following participants in ‘ride-alongs’ to better understand contextual behaviour during the activity. As data collection is ongoing, emerging categories and insights are preliminary and subject to further data analysis.



## WHAT DO WE KNOW?

- o Micromobility as active transport has demonstrated health (Bruzzone et al., 2020; Kent et al., 2017), environmental (Furie & Desai, 2012; Jia & Fu, 2019; Nurse & Dunning, 2020) and social benefits (De Vos et al., 2013; Mokhtarian, 2019; Smith, 2016)
- o Challenges to utilitarian perceptions of transport decisions can be found in the new mobilities paradigm, which attests that “there is value to the embodied nature and experience of all mobilities” (Popan, 2020, p. 289).
- o Dominant transportation frameworks focus primarily on utilitarian motives and tend to ignore experiential consumption factors (Ettema et al., 2010; Jiron & Carrasco, 2020).



## EARLY FINDINGS

- Fun is ubiquitously included in users’ scooter experience.** Users were asked to sort and then rank descriptors related to their scooter experiences – fun was unanimously chosen by users and ranked highest as best describing their experience.

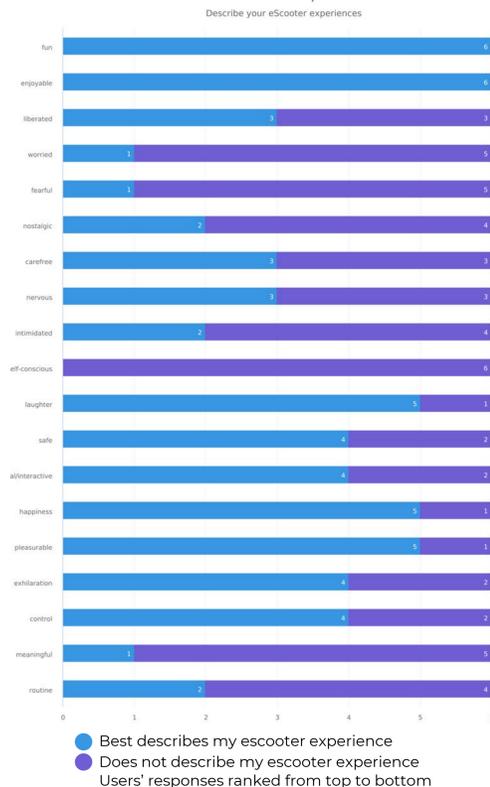
While fun is an emerging factor in scooter use, more work is required to understand if/how it impacts sustained behaviour change when it comes to transportation mode choice.

*It was exhilarating and I was immediately hooked.*



*I had so much fun and enjoyed it that much, that I bought my own e-scooter the following week.*

*It was so much fun. We had lots of laughs and just a really great experience shared together.*



- Participants were asked to differentiate experiences of fun from other experiences, particularly their experiences of enjoyability. Three key characteristics of fun are emerging:

- o **A level of engagement or involvement**
- o **A sense of freedom**
- o **An element of discovery.**

- Hedonistic experiences during the use of scooters are closely tied to hybrid use of roads, shared pathways and etiquette.** Participants were observed developing unique ways of using the roads and were keenly aware of when they did, or did not, fit into established norms. For example, handlebar throttles on shared scooters prevents users from traditional signaling to other road users. The result has been users developing their own unique ways of approaching road use, where scooter users operate as pedestrian, vehicle and something that is in between.

## CONCLUSION

While conclusions are preliminary, emerging findings have built on extant literature that recognizes both engagement in hedonistic activity *and* a sense of liberation as required elements of fun, however discovery is surfacing in this study as a potential third element and is a novel contribution to existing understandings of fun..