THE INFLUENCE OF PARKING PRICING ON THE PROFILE OF ON-STREET PARKERS

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Abstract

The influence of parking-pricing policy on the profile of parkers in a given area or facility is crucial to parking management. It is important to understand the impact of a new pricing structure and level on aspects of profile such as: business versus non-business users, casual versus frequent users and users of varying social class. As part of a large-scale study utilising revealed and stated preference data relating to on street parking, this paper considers before and after profiling data from two 1,000 plus face to face surveys in a central on-street parking area from before and after an actual citywide change in the price of on-street parking in Dublin, Ireland. Following a 50% price increase in on-street parking zones in Dublin city, there was no significant change in the profile of age or the lower social class brackets. The noticeable changes consisted of a slight reduction in the most infrequent parkers, a reduction in city and suburban commuters relative to those traveling from further afield, and a slight increase in the relative proportion of non-business visitors. The latter result indicates the difficulty in using just one price for all sub-populations of clients of on street parking, particularly at higher levels of price increases. Overall, at this price change level the impact was expectedly small with no significant distributional impacts noted as a result of this policy move. Forthcoming work related to this study however, will show that such serious distributional impacts in relation to certain types of parker will occur at certain higher level tariffs.


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Introduction

Parking pricing has been suggested as a ‘second-best’ approach to managing road space. Authors such as Garland et al. (2002) have identified parking pricing as a potential ‘push’ pricing measure that can be used to influence private motorists away from this mode of travel. While Button and Verhoef (1998) have listed the numerous advantages inherent in parking policy. The main potential for its use derives from the fact that on-street parking affects road capacity and so its management has consequences for congestion. In particular, vacancy rates are important in congested areas as ‘cruising’ for parking (search time) is a contributor to congestion. In addition, the cost of parking (for those who pay themselves) is a large and often the largest monetary component of a car trip and so parking pricing has the potential to be a significant factor in influencing the decision to drive. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends not only on the responsiveness of demand to price but, crucially for the parking manager, the effect of price changes on the profile of the parking population in a given area.

A parking manager in an inner city may wish to encourage shoppers to enter the city but discourage business users. However, with on-street pricing, it is not possible to charge a different price to different sub-populations. Other concerns would include potential regressive effects of such increases in prices such as the effect on lower socio-economic groups.

This paper examines the changes that occurred in the demographic of an on-street parking area in the aftermath of a fifty percent price increase per hour of on-street parking in the general city area of Dublin, Ireland.

Methodology

The area chosen for an analysis of the effect of a change in the scheme of parking charges in Dublin city was Dublin’s prime parking area, St. Stephen's Green in the centre of Dublin. St. Stephen's Green is located just south of the river Liffey, which divides Dublin city into northern and southern halves. ‘The Green’ is one of the most popular and best-known on-street parking areas in the city centre. Parking spaces are available on each side of this large square park located at the centre of one of Dublin’s most popular shopping and entertainment areas. In addition to the on street parking facilities there are two multi-story car parks in the immediate area.

Aside from the Green itself as an attraction, the immediate area contains a number of office buildings. The Green is also host to a number of bars and restaurants, and the entrance to a large Shopping centre, which is built upon its own substantial parking facility. The area also borders on a number of other prime streets in the city including, Grafton Street, the most
popular shopping and social districts in the city. The area is often described as the 'heart' of the city centre.

**Stated preference methodology**

Stated preference data for the purposes of this paper were derived from two face to face parking surveys commissioned in sequential years. The scope of these surveys was quite broad and targeted a wide range of information for parking policy related study. The questionnaires were designed by the authors with the input of the Director of Traffic of Dublin City Council and a professional survey company who were commissioned to implement the survey. The population being sampled was those people who park their car between Monday and Friday at peak hours (8:00 hours to 17:00 hours) on-street at St. Stephen's Green. Interviewers positioned themselves along different sections of St. Stephen's Green and approached people as they left or returned to their car. Though predominantly the latter as interviewees were less likely to be in a rush and also less likely to perceive the interview as using up their parking time. The interviews lasted approximately ten minutes each.

The first such survey began on St. Stephen's green in late July of 2000 and an effective sample of 1,062 responses was achieved in two weeks (10 days). This gives a margin of error of approximately +/- 3% with 95% confidence. The second survey took place in the same location the following summer in early August of 2001. A revised but comparable questionnaire was drafted and the same market research company contracted to administer the questionnaires. The sample size for this second survey was 1,002 giving a similar error margin.

**The pricing Instrument**

This research was carried out in co-operation with the Director of Traffic of Dublin City Council. This facilitated a form of experiment whereby a profile of parkers could be taken before and after a significant price change. In this sense this paper uses revealed preference methodology combined with stated-preference responses. At the time of the second data collection in 2001, the price of on street parking in Dublin city had been altered significantly from the two tier system of IR£1 per hour (€1.27) or IR£0.80 per hour (€1.02) in 2000. A new 5-tier system was brought into place - the structure of the new pricing scheme is presented in Box 1.

The area under study (St. Stephen's Green known as 'the Green') is considered amongst the highest demand areas and as such was part of the yellow area. The price increase represented a 50% increase from the tariff in the area in the preceding year. The map in
Figure 1 shows the new tariff bands as they change outwards from the city core. The Green is the square in the bottom half of the yellow section.

The changes in price on the Green were also matched by price increases in all nearby and neighbouring areas. Even in the fringe areas near the Green, which fall within the ‘Red’ zones, the price in these areas was now higher. The price there represented approximately a 50% increase for these areas, and meant that these ‘cheaper’ areas were now still more expensive per hour than the hourly tariff on St. Stephen’s Green a year earlier. Thus all on street options within the viable alternative parking area (based on an average walking time of less than ten minutes) had increased, and as all nearby areas went from either IR£0.80 (€1.02) to IR£1.20 (€1.52) or IR£1 (€1.27) to IR£1.50 (€1.90) the general increase was 50%. In order to find an area the had increased by less than this amount, one would be required to park in a green zone, well outside of the city centre. Thus consistency was maintained in terms of the cost of alternative on-street parking, as the relative remained the same. Changes in alternate sources of paid parking [Multi-Storey Car Parks (MSCPs)] were as presented in Table 1. Notably over the two years, on street parking has always been the cheaper alternative, despite the narrowing margin of difference.

In addition, a considerable amount of effort was invested into identifying confounding factors, other than price, which may have influenced changes in profile. As part of the overall parking study, consideration was given to changes in the supply of parking spaces, new road laws, growth in traffic levels and vehicle registration, the rate of inflation and real income growth.

RESULTS

This section examines the results of the basic profiling from 2000 and 2001. Rather than treat the results of either year individually the results will be presented alongside each other from both years for comparative purposes.

Age, Class and Gender

Areas of consideration include the age, gender and social class comparison of 2000 to 2001 as presented in Figure 2. In the brackets of social classes F (lowest class), C2 (lower middle class) and DE (upper and middle lower classes) we note there is no significant change whatsoever between the two years, thus it would appear arguments that shifts in parking pricing could have more serious negative equity concerns for such classes are not substantiated by these data. In fact the only change in class ratings is an exchange between classes AB (upper class) and C1 (upper middle class). Interestingly the change is in the direction of fewer AB class users and more C1s in 2001. As such it would seem based on these top-level results that the lower class spectrum has not been adversely affected by the
price increase, and the sole change was a transfer between the upper class and the upper middle class.

With respect to age, there is an almost indistinguishable difference between the age spread of users from 2000 to 2001. There remains a remarkably well-distributed age profile of parkers in the area in both years, irrespective of the price changes.

Finally in regard to this Figure, we examine the gender profile, which has altered significantly in 2001. In 2000 there was a very pronounced difference between male and female parkers in the area, with only 36% of that sample being women. In 2001 subsequent to the price change, the balance has been redressed somewhat as 43% of the users surveyed in 2001 were women. This represents a significant narrowing of the gap between the genders of users. No satisfactory reason has thus far been developed to explain this phenomenon. However regression analysis has shown a strong positive relationship between men and being a business user. Thus perhaps as business use also fell in this period, part of the explanation may lie in that aspect of the profile change.

In addition to data on class, information was also collected directly on income levels. However income related questions are more frequently rejected in face-to-face surveys, and these surveys were no exception with a 42% rejection rate in 2000 and an 85% rejection rate in 2001, thus making basic comparisons of the responses to this question far less useful due to distortion. A proxy question for income was included on engine size and the results of this are presented in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 again show a good consistency between the two years. With a margin of error of +/- 3% at the 95% level, the table indicates no significant change in regard to engine size between the years.

Frequency of parking and purpose of visit

The next results to be examined comparatively are those of frequency of parking and purpose of visit, as presented in Figure 3. With regard to frequency of parking in the area, there are no large changes in the proportions between the two years. The only noticeable change is the 6% drop in parkers who only visit the area every 6 months or less from 20% in 2000 to 14% in 2001. This could be indicating a slight shift away from the more sporadic visitors, although the change is only marginally significant. In addition, mostly more users parking once or twice a month and once every two or three month account for the change.

With regard to purpose of trip, which is one of the most interesting profile areas for parking managers, we see a clear change. The number of individuals ‘meter feeding’ or parking again
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after their time limit is expired (3 hours) remains at 1% for both years. However in the distincting of either business or non-business users, there has been an almost mirror shifting in the proportions of these two populations. In 2000 the greater balance lay with business users who accounted for 53% of all users, to 46% of non-business users. The balance being made up of people parking again/meter feeding. However in 2001, following the price change, this balance has reversed in favour of non-business users who now account for 53% of the sample relative to 46% of business users. It should be noted that these “business” users are only in a few cases (due to 3 hour parking requirements and the need to "meter feed") all day commuters. Again this change is only barely significant given the +/- 3% margin of error both surveys deliver.

The general evidence in regard to these two categories suggests that the level of price change implemented had no significant impact on these aspects of parker profile within the test area.

User origins and payment burden

Figure 4 presents the origins of each user who parked in the area and was surveyed. The response options range as follows:

- No reply given
- Traveled from outside of the County of Dublin
- Traveled from inside the County of Dublin but from outside the city and suburb areas
- Traveled from inside Dublin city or suburbs

With regard to no reply or those who traveled long distances (i.e. outside of the county) we note only a minor change, which is insignificant given the +/- 3% confidence level of the surveys. However, in 2001, 28% of the sample traveled from inside Dublin County, as opposed to 15% in the previous year. Thus a higher percentage from further out are traveling to park in the area. A ten-percentage point drop of users traveling from within the city or suburbs accounts for this difference from 2000 (52%) to 2001 (42%). Following the price changes in parking, a lower percentage were traveling and parking from within the city or suburbs. This could be a result of users closer to the city, opting not to travel and pay the increased tariff. This would be consistent with the concept of parking charges bearing more heavily on those who travel shorter distances, for whom the charge makes up a greater proportion of total cost.

Figure 5 presents the basic breakdown of parking payment sources in both 2000 and 2001. The simple classifications are “pay myself”, “claim through work” or “other/no reply”. This is an important consideration when considering the impact of any pricing measure, as it is expected
that for users who claim their expenses somehow, that they would be more price insensitive. As those who claim the expense are supposed to be business users (though others apparently claim leisure trips as work trips!) the implication would be that severe high level pricing measures would force out non business users who could not afford the burden of cost themselves, while business users would be more resistant to a point.

The results show a notable change in the response proportions to this question between the two years. Although the ‘no reply’ is 1% in 2001 versus 7% in 2000, it would appear there is still a significant shift in the proportions that claim their expenses and those who claim through work. Though it must be remembered that the 6% difference who gave no reply likely belong in one or other category and the absence of their specific response distorts matters somewhat.

We can see however based on those who did respond that in 2000 25% claimed expenses while in 2001 only 19% claim. Thus the proportion of claiming business users has dropped. Also in regard to those who stated they pay all themselves, the proportion in 2001 is 80% versus only 68% in 2000. Thus there has been a shift towards users whom pay for their own parking. This change is likely related somewhat to the slightly higher proportion of non-business users parking in the area in the second year.

**Search and walking times**

Next we consider the data from 2000 and 2001 in relation to aspects of the users parking visits on the day they were surveyed. This includes search time for a space, duration of the visit, the walking distance to their destination, and in general terms the longest amount of time they would spend walking to their destination. These factors rate significantly as crucial factors in the parking decision in the works of Arnott and Rowse (3), Tsamboulas (4) and Shiftan (5).

As the results are quite close, the comparative analysis of the duration of their parking on the day they were surveyed in Table 3, is somewhat distorted by more (5.5% vs. 1.8%) users in 2001 claiming they "Didn't Know". In 2001 there are notably few people 'reparking' after 3 hours, this would be an expected reaction to the higher parking charges. There are also less extremely short duration parkers (less than 30 minutes). The biggest gap is in those parking 1-2 hours with almost 10% more of the sample in 2001 parking for this length of time. Other than these results, the proportions parking for 31minutes to an hour or 2 to 3 hours are remarkably consistent over the two years. It is important to reiterate however that these results are based solely on the responses of users parking in the area on the day they were parking, thus these results are based on just over 1000 individual parking events as opposed to total parking levels in the area in the time under study.
Notably however, revealed preference data from the parking meters for the area following the change indicated the biggest change in the area subsequent to the change in pricing was a considerable (16.5%) reduction in average parking duration. This data covers all of the full six weeks and all parking events that took place during the empirical data-gathering period. The influence of such a change is significant in terms of parking turnover levels, in other words the total volume of ‘users’ who avail of the service of on-street parking.

In Table 4 we are presented with data on the length of time users spent searching for a parking space. One of the goals of the increased parking pricing was to increase turnover of spaces, while maintaining a 10% aggregate vacancy rate to ensure it was easier to find a space. The results are encouraging for 2001, in so far as no deterioration is noted in search times. However, the scale of changes between the two years are only barely statistically significant in regard to an increase of 4% in the ‘searched for up to 5 minutes’ category.

Table 5 examines the amount of time users spend walking to their destination from their parking spot. Although in 2001 the results for all time categories have increased, this is likely due to the significant shift in users who claimed they “didn’t know”. In 2000 7.7% gave this response versus only 0.6% in 2001. This significant level of non responses (for users who obviously had some walk time ahead of them) makes it difficult to draw significant conclusions from the other results, as their combined differences might be the same if the “Don’t Know” respondents had answered. In any case with the +/- 3% margin of error, it is clear there has been little significant change in walking times.

Table 6 is related to walking distance, and does provide some interesting results. This Table shows us the maximum amount of time users claim they would spend walking to their destination. The difference between 2000 and 2001 is quite pronounced, even disregarding the 4.5% difference in the “don’t know” category.

The main change is a very clear drop in the proportions of people whom would only walk for up to 5 or 5 to 10 minutes in 2000. These levels have fallen by 5% and 10.2% respectively. The biggest alteration is noted however in the category of 11 minutes of more, where we see almost 20% more of the sample in 2001 state they would spend this amount of time walking to their destination. As such their walking time threshold would appear to have altered significantly following the citywide price increase in on-street charges.

However, Table 5 showed that the actual lengths of time spent walking to their destination from their parked vehicle vary significantly from their stated maximum threshold for amount of time they would be willing to walk to their destination. Thus whilst users claim they would walk for longer in 2001, there is no evidence to suggest they actually have started doing so.
CONCLUSIONS

This paper has considered the changes in profile and behaviour in a central on-street parking area of Dublin, following a general 50% increase in on-street parking costs. The results presented are based on 2000 and 2001 survey responses from the sample area. Although the price change meant that in both years, on-street parking still remained cheaper than local MSCP parking, the results show an interesting change in a few aspects of on-street parking. In particular a generally quite consistent level of profile in terms of age, social class and frequency and purpose of visit was remarked, with no indication of a negative equity impact for the lower class brackets or a deterioration in the numbers of shoppers and leisure users. A significant change involved the reduction in the number of shorter journey trips in favour of those traveling from further out in the county. This has positive implications in terms of the potential to influence road users. In addition, in 2001, almost 20% more users would consider walking more than 11 minutes to their destination relative to the year before. As regards the quality of the parking service, there was a marginal reduction in search times for parking spaces.

These results are simple, yet crucial to the understanding and management of a parking area. The difficulty with parking pricing as an instrument is its inability to differentiate between different subpopulations of parkers. The empirical results show not much has changed in any negative sense with regard to the profile of those parking, however related stated preference research in the area suggests that higher prices (particularly those that place on-street above the cost of alternatives) could have far more significant consequences and indeed pose quite a challenge for a parking manager seeking to maintain a balanced profile of parkers.

As part of the larger study from which it is drawn, this profiling information is of great significance for measuring the impact of the actual revealed price change in Dublin city. In addition from a stated preference perspective, it allows us to further distinguish the larger data set into sub populations to better understand how the suggested prices affected individual groups such as business users or shoppers, the young and the old and those travelling from varying areas within Dublin county. Other available data combined with profiling information will allow further research to examine this issue more closely by assessing price elasticities for the different sub-populations using stated preference data embodying a contingent valuation. In addition, a future paper will consider the revealed preference data on what actually happened to parking levels and trends following the citywide change of generally 50% against the stated preference responses of users as to how they would react to a local 50% price increase in on-street parking on the Green.
Acknowledgements

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TABLE 6 Maximum amount of time all users would spend walking to destination from parking
Box 1. New Parking tariffs 2001 in Euros

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usually Monday to Saturday 7am to 7pm or Monday to Friday 8am to 6.30pm *</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Demand Areas</td>
<td>€1.90 Yellow Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Demand Areas</td>
<td>€1.50 Red Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Demand</td>
<td>€1.30 Green Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Demand</td>
<td>€1.00 Orange Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Suburban Villages</td>
<td>€0.60c Blue Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1  2001 Tariff system map for Dublin
Table 1  Nearby MSCP charges and OS charges for 2000 and 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pricing</th>
<th>Dawson 00 July</th>
<th>Drury 00 July</th>
<th>Dawson 01 July</th>
<th>Drury 01 July</th>
<th>On-street 00</th>
<th>On-street 01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Hour</td>
<td>IR£1.60</td>
<td>IR£1.60</td>
<td>IR£1.80</td>
<td>IR£1.80</td>
<td>IR£1</td>
<td>IR£1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Hour</td>
<td>IR£3.20</td>
<td>IR£3.20</td>
<td>IR£3.60</td>
<td>IR£3.60</td>
<td>IR£2</td>
<td>IR£3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Hour</td>
<td>IR£4.80</td>
<td>IR£4.80</td>
<td>IR£5.40</td>
<td>IR£5.40</td>
<td>IR£3</td>
<td>IR£4.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Figure 2  Comparison of age, gender, class from 2000 (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)
Table 2 Income and Engine Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engine Size</th>
<th>Percentage 2000</th>
<th>Percentage 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 litre</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1/1.2 litre</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3/1.4 litre</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5/1.6 litre</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7/1.8 litre</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9/2 litre</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+ litre</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/Other</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3 Frequency of parking to area and purpose of trip 2000 (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)
Figure 4 Point of origin for those queried 2000 (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)
Figure 5 Payment of parking comparison (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)
Table 3 Parking duration of users on the day surveyed only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of time parked on day surveyed</th>
<th>Percentage of all Users and count 2000</th>
<th>Percentage of all Users and count 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 30 minutes</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 1 hour</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 hours</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 hours up to 3 hours</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 hours / Repark</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 Amount of time spent searching for a parking space for all users 2000 (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>% difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 minutes</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 minutes</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 + minutes</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>+1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 Amount of time spent walking to destination from parking for all users 2000 (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>% difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 minutes</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>+ 4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 minutes</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>+ 2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 + minutes</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>+ 0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>- 7.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 Maximum amount of time all users would spend walking to destination from parking 2000 (n=1062) and 2001 (n=1007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>% difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 minutes</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>- 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 minutes</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>- 10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ minutes</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>+ 19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>- 4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>