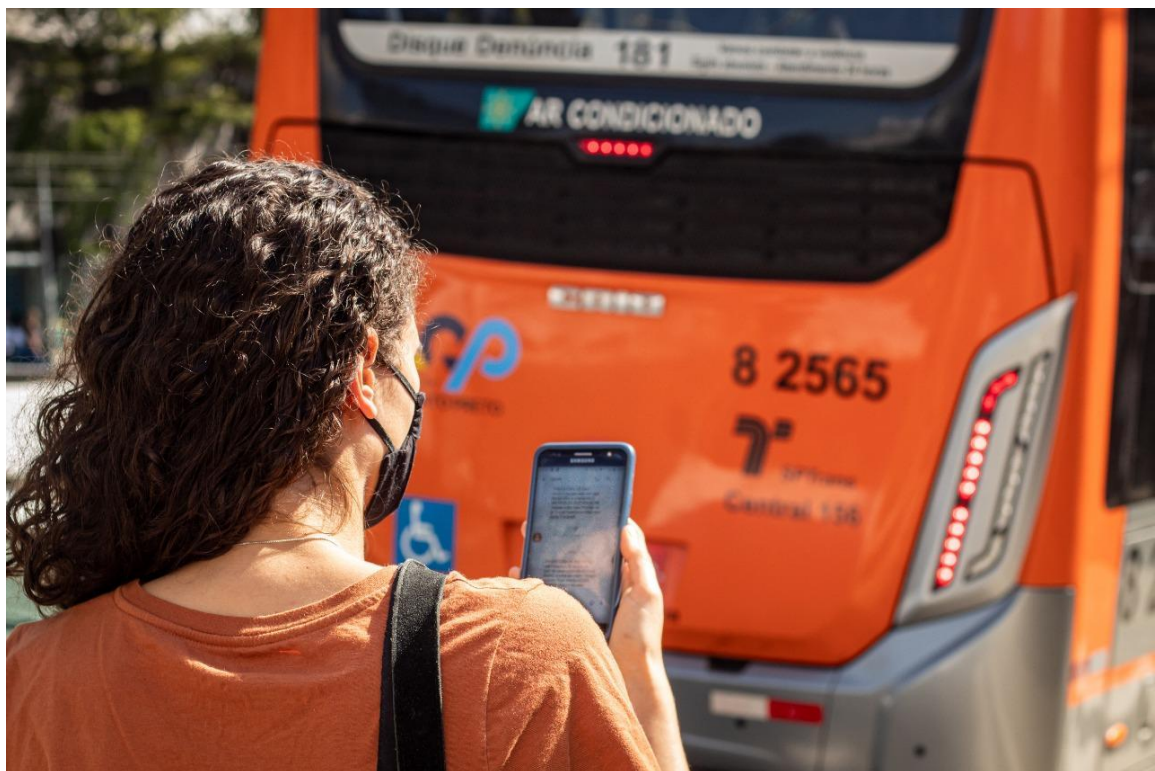


São Paulo's City Hall Innovation lab sent 1 million text messages to incentivize pandemic preventive behaviors at bus stations

São Paulo, 08/12/2020

After the success with the first round of text messages about mask wearing promotion, the City Hall performed another delivery at bus stations

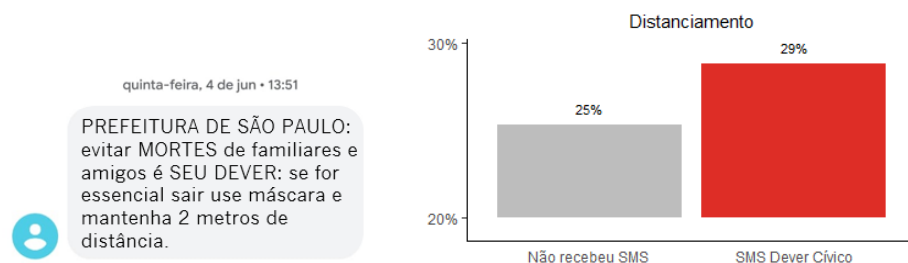
Encouraging people to stay at home whenever possible, to wear a mask and to keep their distance became a priority for the city of São Paulo in recent months. São Paulo City Hall, through its Innovation and Technology Department, sent around 1 million text imagnetic messages to citizens between 7th to 11th December with simple orientations that save lives.



This campaign is an example of São Paulo's commitment to combat Covid-19 pandemic counting with support of the [Partnership for Healthy Cities](#) initiative against the disease ([#cities4health](#)). This campaign has financed and supported several cities around the world towards effective interventions to combat the new coronavirus' spread amongst citizens.

To ensure the public adherence to the sanitary measures, the (011).lab, a behavior insights unit from the Innovation and Technology Department of São Paulo's City Hall, has conducted a trial study to evaluate what kind of messages would work best. It was based on new scientific findings in the Behavioral Sciences field. In this study, results showed that messages that framed people's responsibility to protect their loved ones were effective for motivating proper behaviors against the virus.

With this in hand, the messages were escalated to 2.5 million people in the city's districts most hit by Covid-19. Results of a telephone survey showed the messages increased people's awareness of the recommended behaviors. Also, citizens who had received the text messages were 3% more likely to claim to be wearing a mask than those who had not.



Now, once the lockdown measures are more flexible, bus stations are places where gatherings are an inevitable outcome. As it happens more often, they offer a risk to the citizens welfare and are key points that the city's administration needs to act upon.

The laboratory therefore planned a second phase to slow the disease: we scaled the text message to about 1 million people at bus stations. The messages delivered aimed to guide and motivate to wear masks and to maintain proper distance at bus queues during the rush hours of the day. This escalation was fully financed with external resources, from the Partnership for Healthy Cities, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Vital Strategies. Beyond the financial resources, this partnership also provided support through technical and practical issues for the campaign implementation. From inside São Paulo's City Hall secretariats, the project also had contributions from the Municipal Departments of Transport, Communication, and Health.

The content from the three messages delivered in the first phase were clustered into one single message, followed by an informative image about the behaviors in order to expand the number of telephones receiving it. During the five days of the campaign, people in the stations received the following lines "COVID-19 ALERT: to avoid DEATHS from family and

friends is also YOUR DUTY. Outside your home, wear a mask covering MOUTH and NOSE all the time. At the terminals, keep DISTANCE from people in the queue. Inside buses, avoid eating or touching your face and always use HAND SANITIZER. Help keep the transportation system safe! More at bit.ly/PMSP_covid19", together with an image informing about the correct way to wear a mask.



Image about the correct way to behave and wear a mask inside buses delivered during the campaign.

Source: Municipal Department of Transports

This way, the São Paulo City Hall intended to offer support to citizens through a fast, cheap and efficient communication about the measures to be complied in order to reduce coronavirus transmission rates.

"At this moment, every communication needs to be as effective as possible. It is a gain for the city that our (011).lab team has identified, together with partner institutions, messages that better mobilize people for prevention actions. And it reflects each citizen's concern towards others", says the secretary of Innovation and Technology, Juan Quirós.

"Beyond the sanitary concerns, the correct information is vital at the fight against Covid-19 in São Paulo city and the world. Following the instructions from the Mayor, Bruno Covas, the international relations team has been searching for strategies that supply the actions to slow the Covid-19 spread and we have received a lot of international support", highlighted the International Relations Secretary, Luiz Alvaro Salles Aguiar de Menezes.

About the research:

Between December 7th to 11th, around 1,000,008 million imagnetic text messages were sent to citizens at bus stations during the morning and afternoon rush hours. Information about each station transit rate was granted by the Department of Transports to design the delivery according to the hours that each station usually shows a higher rate. This message had the intent of informing, instructing and motivating people to comply with preventive behaviors against Covid-19, such as mask wearing and social distancing at bus queues. They were formulated based on the messages content sent in the first delivery round and that showed significant efficacy for the Behavioral Sciences informational model used for the sanitary measures adherence. The telephones were selected randomly from the partner company data-base responsible for the delivery. Since an index for mask usage and social distance is still unknown and hard to acquire, the campaign efficacy will be evaluated through a field observation before and after the messages have been sent. Also, the company will provide information whether people visualized or interacted with the message at the intervention places.

#Cities4Health: about the Partnership for Healthy Cities

The Partnership for Healthy Cities is a prestigious global 70-cities network, committed in saving lives through the prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and other types of injuries that can threaten citizens. Since 2017, together with [support from Bloomberg Philanthropies](#), they work in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Vital Strategies to enable the participants cities for planning and implementing high-impact policies that aim for the reduction of NCDs in the population.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the project has [changed its focus](#): rather than noncommunicable diseases, it has been promoting assistance for cities to create immediate responses to the new coronavirus that is spreading around the globe. Their work consists of financial and practical support to governmental programmes for the complex challenge offered by the constant and invisible threat the virus has been offering to urban life. Its assistance ranges from maintaining city services to implementing legal guidance on measures that protect health and safety.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is primarily an urban crisis, placing cities at the forefront of the response to this unprecedented public health emergency,” said Ariella Rojhani, Director of the Partnership for Healthy Cities. “The Partnership remains committed to supporting São Paulo and other cities worldwide in saving lives, protecting urban residents and building a healthy future.”

The efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic is part of the \$40 million [Bloomberg Philanthropies COVID-19 Global Response Initiative](#). The team supporting the cities is formed by world's leading experts on epidemic prevention, from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the [Resolve to Save Lives](#), a Vital Strategies project, that also is planning support to cities through the tough times of nowadays.