

Title

Call a Bike – bike rental scheme

Short description

The Call a Bike initiative was founded in 2000 by Christian Hogl and was bought up after six months by the Deutsche Bahn company. To rent a bike, users must attain a code for the lock, either through the smartphone application developed by Call a Bike, a phone call or at a terminal. They can then use the bike for a flexible amount of time and return it to the station after they are done. The rate is 1 euro per half hour, with a maximum rate of 15 euros for a whole day. There are special rates for students, BahnCard owners and elderly people.

The practice provides benefits both with regard to the environment and human well-being. Especially for short ways, people may choose to use a bicycle instead of a car or taxi due to the greater flexibility and the low costs, saving greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to peoples' health. An increasing number of people are making use of this additional mobility offer.

Topic

Moving – active mobility

Characteristics (type, level)

Innovation/Product, national

Country/Countries of implementation

Germany

Aims and Objectives

The goal of the Call a Bike business is to enable more people to move around autonomously and be flexible. At the same time, the bike rental service offers an alternative to cars and taxis and is therefore supposed to benefit the environment due to less emissions.

Target Group

Basically, everybody can rent a bike by registering through an app or the internet and then simply calling the service and obtaining the code for the lock. Specifically though, the offer targets DB customers who already use the company's services and can make use of benefits such as discounts.

Status

Ongoing

Start and Completion dates

2000/2001 – today

Lifestyle and Behavior Change

As renting a bike is very cheap and easy, it could constitute a serious alternative for many people to other ways of mobility, such as public transport, taxis or one's own car. The service is marked by a greater flexibility than public transport, offers the possibility to avoid

traffic jams, and is way faster than walking. For some people, the environmental aspect might also be an influencing factor.

Effects on:

Health and Wellbeing	Riding a bike is obviously healthier than taking the car. With the service being easy and flexible and offering spontaneous use, people might rather be motivated to choose taking the bike to work, to the city or wherever over the train or car.
Vulnerable populations	The practice is very cheap (3€ per year plus 1€ per half hour, max. 15/12€ a day) and could therefore also attract economically weak persons who do not own their own bike but would need one for their daily way to work or to run errands.
Environment	Unlike other ways of mobility such as public transport, taxis and cars, bikes don't emit any dangerous greenhouse gases that harm the environment. If more people use bicycles instead of more harmful ways of traveling, the benefits for the environment are clear to see.

Initiated and/or implemented by

The practice was initiated by Christian Hognl in Munich who had the idea of enabling people to rent bikes from one station in the city and leave it wherever they get off the bike – his idea was to make mobility more flexible. His business proved unsuccessful after six months and was sold to the Deutsche Bahn in 2001.

Stakeholders and sectors involved

Involved in this practice is the Deutsche Bahn company as well as its subsidiary company DB Rent, responsible for mobility concepts.

Financial support

The Deutsche Bahn bought the bankrupt Call a Bike company in 2001. With such a financially strong and independent mother firm, there were no other supporters needed.

Evidence-base

A scientific institute for social research in Berlin published a study on the intermodal transport models of the Deutsche Bahn in 2006, pondering their impacts on customers, traffic and the environment. The mobility behavior of a DB customer sample was analyzed through interviews in order to find out how many people make use of the offer and in what way they substitute other means of transport.

Main activities

In almost 50 German cities, people can rent a bike at low fares for a flexible amount of time; this is either possible through a smartphone application, at special terminals or through a phone call. The procedure is quite easy: users attain a four-digit code to open the bike lock and after use, the bike is to be returned to the station. In Munich and Cologne, it is possible to leave the bike at any junction in the city centre. The Call a Bike program is also being offered to companies that seek to foster their sustainability image and their employees' health and well-being.

Evaluation

The mobility behavior of a DB customer sample was analyzed through interviews in order to find out how many people make use of the offer and in what way they substitute other means of transport.

Main results

The further development of mobility offers attracted new target groups. Environmental benefits mainly arise from efficient organization and the stabilization of the customers' present multimodal competencies. The new individual services can strongly contribute to the quality and image of public transport offers and possibilities.

Key success factors and barriers

Barriers: The practice would probably need a strong company to run it that has other areas of activity and by that other sources of incomes, as right now, the expenses surpass the revenues. In order to make the practice more profitable, higher prices would need to be taken – which, in turn, would probably lead to fewer participants.

INHERIT Perspective

This project has been chosen for inclusion because it has theoretical potential to improve both health & wellbeing due to additional movement on the bike and to reduce pressures in the environment. The product offers a rental bike system, which can easily be assessed and which is well suited to support a modal shift in transport. Call a bike directly supports behaviour change, as it provides the opportunity to use rented bikes as a part of everyday mobility with little effort, and it provides motivation for users due to the comparably low costs. Finally, as most citizens know how to ride a bike, capabilities are there.

More information

- Call a Bike web page: <https://www.callabike-interaktiv.de/de>
- Study: <https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2006/iii06-101.pdf>
- ZEIT article on the practice: <http://www.zeit.de/2003/36/rentbike0309>

Contact

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