



Local Actions to Encourage Cycling for Shopping

Introduction

There is still untapped potential for increasing bicycle use for shopping. Retailers and customers are often unaware of the comfort, speed and efficiency that bicycles offer on shopping trips. Therefore, it is important that information be disseminated to help customers familiarise themselves with this mode of transport: e.g. explain the quickest and safest ways for reaching shops by bike, where bicycles can be parked there and what options are available for transporting purchases home with the bike. In addition, retailers often have no clear idea of what improvements their cycling customers may want and which, in many cases simple and inexpensive, measures can make their business more cycle-friendly.

Local cooperation, the path to success

The implementation of successful strategies for increasing the percentage of shoppers coming to city centres by bike is usually dependent on the collaboration of multiple stakeholders. Municipal officials, as well as local retailers and their interest groups, have equally important roles to play in the continued vitalisation of both neighbourhood and city centres. Professional cooperation also allows for the joint promotion of cycling. A possible interface for such cooperation is the city marketing office, along with the city managers employed there, who work on behalf of the municipality to stimulate retail trade in the city centre. Together with representatives of the local retail sector, as well as interest groups dealing

with cycling-related issues, successful concepts can be developed for a cycle-friendly city centre.

What can the retail sector do?

Many of the promising measures of the retail sector can be summarised under the strategic concept of accessibility marketing. Shop owners in the city centre have an interest in improving the quality of their location: they want to see the city's image spruced up, the streets crowded and, above all, the accessibility optimised. These conditions could help them reach new, important target groups and win them as customers. In this spirit, it is important to communicate accessibility in a positive manner: instead of complaining about shortcomings, a

Cover images: The bicycle is perfectly suited for shopping convenience goods © left image: City of Hamm, Thorsten Hübner; right image: Jörg Thiemann-Linden

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preferable strategy is to point out the easiest alternatives available to customers for reaching the city centre to do their shopping. There are good reasons for retailers in the city centre to focus their accessibility marketing on cycling. Shopping areas that are nearby and car-free are especially attractive to pedestrians and cyclists.

Customers who shop by bike are dependent on the availability of adequate parking facilities for their shopping trips. Such facilities should not only be located near the shops; they also must be as stable as possible, well lit and, wherever architecture allows, sheltered. Some of the bike racks in Freiburg's city centre have been specially designed for bikes with trailers, making them particularly useful for retail customers with large loads.

In comparison with car-parking spaces, parking facilities for bicycles are much less expensive and require only a fraction of the space. Retailers are able to offer parking facilities in front of their shops on their own initiative. Alternatively, with the support of local advertising alliances and city marketing organisations, shop owners can appeal to the municipality for the creation of larger facilities in central locations.

Innovative solutions for left luggage can also be developed cooperatively: lockers and staffed left-luggage offices offer customers the opportunity to drop off and store the goods they have purchased in various shops, enabling them to continue their shopping, unburdened. For example, in Kitzingen, a town in the German re-



A 'baggage safe' in Kitzingen
© Tourist-Information Kitzingen

gion of Franconia, a so-called 'baggage safe' was set up for town-centre visitors. This facility offers lockers of various sizes. The larger lockers can accommodate loaded panniers and extensive purchases, and the smaller ones offer space for items like helmets. The locks are operated with a coin deposit. In addition large compartments are also offered for the storage of bicycles. Such storage facilities

allow bicycle owners to protect particularly expensive bicycles from theft.

Retailers can also work together, like they did in the Franconian town of Ansbach and the city Mülheim an der Ruhr, to organise a delivery service that helps customers transport particularly large and heavy goods that are unmanageable with the bicycle. In several Swiss municipalities, such as Zurich, such programmes are organised in cooperation with social projects so that the delivery service also presents an opportunity for the re-integration of unemployed individuals into the labour market.



Delivery service in the Swiss region of Emmental
© Valérie Chételat

Certain on-site services can also be helpful for cycling customers: tyre pumps and puncture-repair kits in the shops help customers fix flat tyres for their trips home and are, above all, 'signals of acceptance', which show cyclists that consideration has been given to their needs. Some businesses, mainly bicycle shops, are already offering a 24-hour tyre-repair service that includes a vending machine for bicycle tubes and a public bicycle pump.

Marketing activities, such as price discounts and competitions, for motivating existing customers to use the bicycle and winning new cycling customers are relatively easy and inexpensive to organise. Customers who shop by bike in the Austrian town of Bezau are given either a discount on certain products or a small gift. In order to reach the largest possible target audience, it is not only important to carry out original and intelligent campaigns, but also to advertise them with the help of the media. For such purposes VIPs can attract considerable attention, e.g. a mayor doing his shopping by bike.

Further Reading

Thomas Böhmer (2007): Customer Cyclist? Cycle Promotion for Shopping Trips in Dresden, Paper presented at the Velocity conference in Munich (www.nationaler-radverkehrsplan.de/eu-bund-laender/eu-velocity/presentations/velocity2007_tu4f1_long.pdf)

City of Dresden (2007): Customer Cyclist. Marketing information for retailers in Dresden (brochure of the EU-funded project URBIKE) (www.dresden.de/media/pdf/mobilitaet/FB_costumer_cyclist.pdf)

What can the municipality do?

An important part of the municipal promotion of cycling is, of course, the creation and maintenance of infrastructure facilities. In addition, however, there are numerous opportunities for towns, cities and municipalities to influence transport choices in favour of sustainable urban mobility through municipal mobility management and the provision of information and services. New residents can be informed of local transport options by advisory services, for example as in the Baden-Wuerttemberg city of Offenburg, with a welcome package full of informational materials on cycling in the city.



*Free bicycle inspection at the 'Radlfrühjahrsmarkt' in Munich
© City of Munich, Wiegand von Sassen*

An important feature of such new-resident packages is a cycling map of the city, showing safe routes for cycling, as well as secure parking facilities. The local cycling maps for Göttingen and Freiburg can also be used as 'shopping guides'. These maps show the user which retail shops are easy to reach by foot or bike. For cycling customers special shopping routes are marked, parking facilities are shown and information is provided on special services.

In addition, municipalities can initiate special action days and campaigns to promote cycling and its use for shopping. Bicycle days, for example, are usually colourful festivals with extensive programmes of events. In 2011 the city of Marl in North Rhine-Westphalia celebrated its 20th annual Bicycle Day. Every year this event attracts more than 4,000 visitors. Attractions in-

clude bicycle-registration booths, presentations on speciality bikes, cycling tours through the surrounding region, a bicycle flea market, an auction of unclaimed lost property and a bicycle obstacle course for kids. Every year the North Rhine-Westphalia cities of Soest and Hamm co-host a large-scale bicycle day known as the 'Sattelfest' ('Saddle Festival'). On this day the 36-kilometre road connecting the two municipalities is closed to vehicular traffic, and numerous attractions are set up along the length of the road. In 2009 this event attracted 23,000 visitors. The 'Sattelfest' is co-organised by a large group composed of various stakeholders: municipalities, city-marketing associations, cycling clubs, local media and many others are involved.

Cycling markets can be held directly in the shopping areas of the city centres. These markets offer various bikes and the associated accessories. Munich, for example, organised its first 'Radlfrühjahrsmarkt' ('Spring Bike Market') in April of 2011. Visitors had the opportunity to test-ride and buy all kinds of pedal-powered vehicles: bikes, trikes, folding bicycles, e-bikes, children's bikes, cargo bikes, trailers and an extensive range of accessories. In addition a free bicycle-inspection and repair service was provided, along with bicycle registration. Booths offered information on the subject of safety and cycling. Cycling acrobats and DJ sets rounded off a diverse programme of entertainment.

In the city centre of Salzburg, Austria, service stations were installed in the form of distribution boxes that can be used without staff supervision. These boxes contain tools, a repair stand in the form of a foldout frame clamp, a compressed-air source, chain-oil dispensers and wet wipes. The tools are attached to the stations to protect them from theft.

What can the civil society do?

Numerous civil society organisations are active at the interface between cycling and retail trade: cycling clubs, transport clubs, consumer organisations, environmental organisations, neighbourhood-improvement projects and many others. They have the opportunity to bring the issue to political debate and formulate proposals for improvement. Furthermore, civil society organisations are the initiators of larger campaigns. In these campaigns they often coordinate the work of local stakeholders.

English webpage of the BUND-project „Shopping by bike“
("Einkaufen mit dem Rad")
(www.einkaufen-mit-dem-rad.de/shopping_by_bike.shtml)

English conference-poster from the BUND-project „Shopping by bike“
(www.einkaufen-mit-dem-rad.de/poster_shopping_by_bike.pdf)



*'Sattelfest' ('Saddle Festival') between Hamm and Soest
© City of Hamm, Thorsten Hübner*

In the years 2006 to 2008, the German environmental protection organisation BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany) launched the nationwide project 'Mit dem Fahrrad zum Einkaufen' ('Shopping by Bike'). The aim of this project was to inform citizens, administrations and retailers about the advantages of using a bicycle for shopping and suggest improvements. With coordination and content-support from the BUND office in Berlin, model projects were carried out in seven German cities and regions.

These projects included a survey on the cycle-friendliness of two shopping streets in Bremen, an oversized 'street newspaper' in the pedestrian area of Karlsruhe and the 'Aktion Probezeit' ('Trial-period Campaign')

in Kiel: car-owning households were provided with bicycle trailers and panniers

so that they could try out this equipment on shopping trips. When interviewed later three of the 20 households participating in the campaign reported having switched their mode of transport to cycling for all of their shopping, and another three for some of their shopping.



Campaign of the BUND in German cities

One example of a project with a more local focus can be found in the city of Darmstadt in Hesse. The initiative 'Ich kauf per Rad' ('I Shop by Bike') was jointly organised by the alternative-transport organisation 'Verein für innovative Verkehrsmittel Darmstadt' and the local groups of the German Cyclists' Federation AD-FC, the environmental organisation BUND and the political party Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. This project focuses on the idea of providing customers with the opportunity to give feedback to the local retail sector concerning its cycle-friendliness. On the website of the initiative, visitors could rate businesses directly or print out so-called feedback cards, which could be given to shop personnel. In the spring of 2011, the retailers with the best ratings in the Internet poll were awarded the title of 'Darmstadt's Most Cycle-friendly Businesses'.



*Campaign logo
'Ich kauf per Rad'*

Conclusion

Customers who shop by bike represent a great potential for the retail sector in city centres and neighbourhoods. Campaigns and contests can be implemented in the short term and are relatively inexpensive. For the success of most projects, it is important that the various retailers, as well as municipalities and their city-marketing associations, join together as a coalition in order to communicate locational advantages with a unified voice. Campaigns that promote cycling as a mode of transport for shopping not only make it possible to attract new customer groups to shops. They also help upgrade the image of the city centres as lively and, at the same time, car-free places.



Funded by



Federal Ministry
of Transport, Building
and Urban Development

More information on Cycling to Shopping can be found in
CyE A-6 Cycling to Shopping - Evidence from Research
CyE I-5 Bicycle Parking in the City Centre

"Cycling Expertise" is available online:
www.nrvp.de/en/transferstelle

Imprint

Publisher: German Institute of Urban Affairs (Difu) gGmbH
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