

Marketing Action to Promote Cycling

Principles

Marketing actions are increasingly used in cycling promotion because creating infrastructure alone often does not bring about the desired increase in cycling levels. Marketing actions often try to convince through rational arguments, such as ‘cycling is healthy, climate-friendly, and practical’, but there are other ways of reaching target groups apart from using informative and convincing arguments.

The term ‘action’ includes a number of measures on different levels that encourage cycling. These measures are based on simple and effective principles, such as playful competition, community, reward and surprise. The purpose of the action is to emotionalise cycling, to be fun and to encourage people to join in. It is crucial that these actions contribute to a positive image of cycling and that the media and the politicians also get involved. In doing so, cycling in general will gain acceptance.

A number of principles must be considered to achieve this objective. In order for an action to be effective, it is important to first define the purpose or target group. A decision needs to be taken as to whether an action should target society as a whole to encourage cycling in general or whether marketing should target specific groups, such as families with children, young people with an urban lifestyle or senior citizens. This is only then followed by the decision regarding the message, medium and, if needed, the possible cooperation partners. In addition, it is important to clarify whether an action should be integrated into a larger campaign and

whether already tested materials and elements can be used for an action.

Publicity through actions in the street space

In order to attract as much attention as possible, low-threshold actions in the street space are often used. These actions serve many different purposes and can, for example, also encourage non-cyclists to get involved in the topic. In this way, cycling becomes visible and also different uses of public space beyond the purpose of transport become evident.

This is achieved with events, such as the ‘Radlnight’ (‘Munich Bike Night’) organised by the city of Munich or the ‘Bikefestival’ taking place just outside the city of

Munich Bike Night
© Daniel Sommer

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Vienna town hall. Both events celebrate the 'start of the cycling season' with a diversity of cycling-related offers. These events are centred around testing new or unusual bicycles, bicycle flea markets, as well as small repair services and bicycle coding.

In recent years, the Vienna 'Bikefestival' has been accompanied by the 'Wiener Radparade' ('Vienna Bike Parade'), where people enjoy cycling on a car-free ring road in the city centre of Vienna (for more information see also 'S-3 Car Free Days'). These events are organised with the support of associations, as well as media and advertising partners. Cooperation partners for these



'Vienna Bike Parade'
© Radlobby IGF

events range from local radio stations to supermarket chains.

Many cities worldwide organise bike film festivals that put a new and unusual perspective on everything around cycling. In the German-speaking region, the city of Vienna has become a household name for bike film festival aficionados. The city offers an extensive framework programme including a bike paper chase (Fahrradschnitzeljagd). The festival can, for example, be organised as an outdoor cinema event in summer or as an indoor event with screenings in established cinemas.

Action days and festivals also allow room for actions with a competitive element. The 'Radlrekordtag' ('Cycling Record Day') held in the Austrian Bundesland Lower Austria offers a range of contests and competitions. Participants compete for first prizes in various categories ranging from 'the largest family travelling to the event by bike' to 'the most senior cyclist'. The contests take place mostly on central squares of participating cities/towns and municipalities. This action is supported, for example, by the Austrian climate protection strategy

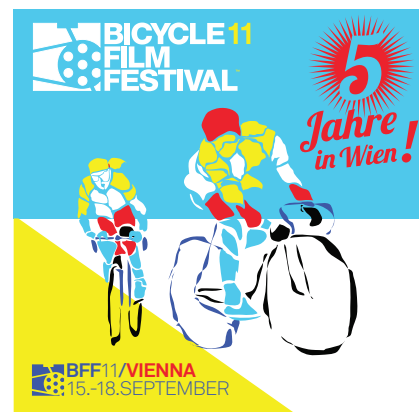


Logo from the Austrian Campaign for a 'Cycling Record Day' ('Radlrekordtag') for climate protection
© Land Niederösterreich

'klima:aktiv', as well as the local media and the Austrian electric mobility initiative.

Other actions do not have a competitive element. For example the German town of Bünde organises group cycling tours throughout the year. The tours strengthen the sense of community and at the same time deal with a diverse range of topics and serve many different interests. A variety of offers can be developed for various target groups ranging from historic routes to local cuisine. The town administration often collaborates with local associations and organisations.

Bike actions also focus on rewarding active cyclists. The German cities of Karlsruhe and Bremen, for example, organise a 'Radlerfrühstück' ('Biker Breakfast'). A good occasion for such a bike action is, for example, the change to summer time when an hour of sleep is taken away. A breakfast to go will wake up sleepy cyclists on their way to work. Many other actions focusing around city



Logo of the Vienna Bike Film Festival'
© Radlobby IGF

marketing and mobility management for companies also concentrate on rewarding cyclists. For more information on these subjects see also 'S-5 Local Actions to Encourage Cycling for Shopping' and 'S-1 Travel Plans, Mobility Management for Cycling'.

In order to analyse the volume of cycling traffic, a number of cities have already set up bicycle counting stations. These stations can also be used to add a playful element to day-to-day cycling. For example, the mayor could personally award a prize to cyclist number 10,000

Sources

'Radlhauptstadt München' – campaign webpage (German)
(www.radlhauptstadt.muenchen.de)

Webpage of the Vienna Bike Festival (German)
(www.bikefestival.at)

'Ich bin die Energie' – campaign webpage (German)
(www.ich-bin-die-energie.de)

'Radlust' – campaign webpage (German)
(www.radlust.info)

and the ceremony could be covered by the press. This would clearly show that cycling is worthwhile.

The Internet as a dynamic space

The virtual space also offers a lot of possibilities to place marketing actions for cycling and to engage especially younger people. The city of Munich came up with an interesting way to combine 'the street' and 'the internet' in its street casting campaign 'München sucht den Radlstar' ('Munich got a Cycling Star'). The campaign involved professional photographers taking pictures of citizens of Munich with their bikes. These pictures were uploaded on the Internet and people were able to vote their local 'cycling star'.

A similar casting is organised at the 'Vienna Bike Parade'. A photo rally is a further example of a marketing format involving pictures of specific motives related to cycling. When choosing the motives and taking pictures, the aim is to be as creative as possible. The photos are then also put to the vote on the Internet. The award for the winning picture can again take place within the framework of an event or action involving an audience.

It is important to bear in mind that actions on the Internet – as well as actions in the street space – require direction and resources. If prepared adequately, the actions can acquire a special dynamic through their participatory element – something conventional media cannot achieve.

It is useful to collaborate with stakeholders that already have a strong Internet community. Along with local newspapers, these may also include cycling blogs. These bike actions must also be advertised on the website of the city/town administration.

Official character through print

Given that events organised in the street space are only temporary and Internet actions reach only certain target groups, print media offer a longer lasting alternative. Depending on the focus and the edition, printed materials, such as brochures or information materials, can reach larger segments of society. With the right presentation (e.g. the corporate identity of the city, including crest or logo) these products can also add a more official stamp and give additional weight to a bike action.



Wähle deinen  und **gewinne!**

'Choose your cycling star...and win something' - billboard, showing the final candidates from the Munich street casting
© Radlhauptstadt München/helios

Cities such as Aachen or Munich purposefully make use of the means of newcomer marketing. As part of a welcoming package, newcomers can receive besides an official letter also city cycling maps or combi-tickets for the carriage of bicycles. These actions focus on the fact that in such 'times of change' routines regarding mobility behaviour must be developed anew. They offer good starting points for marketing activities.

The German campaign 'Kopf an, Motor aus' ('Start your brain, stop the car') was especially creative: The city of Freiburg stocked ticket machines for parking with tickets carrying slogans that were meant to entertain and motivate people to travel by bike. One of the recommendations read: 'Free parking? Go by bike!'

'Kopf an, Motor aus' – campaign webpage (German)
(www.kopf-an.de)

Success factors

When organising bike actions, it is worth considering a few success factors. For example, actions do not have to be started from scratch. Often ready-made modules are available that can easily be transferred.

An example for this is the campaign titled 'RadLust' ('Joy of Cycling') that was designed as a mobile 'poster show' by students from the University of Trier and can be used within the framework of local actions. A special feature of the campaign is that it wants to win over through evoking emotions and not through arguments.



Poster from the campaign 'Radlust' ('Joy of Cycling')

The Association of Bike-friendly Cities, Towns and Counties in North Rhine-Westphalia (Arbeitsgemeinschaft fahrradfreundliche Städte, Gemeinden und Kreise in Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V., AGFS) regularly provides materials and resources for its member municipalities that can be used locally.

A current example is the campaign titled 'Ich bin die Energie' ('I am the Source of Energy'). The third edition of the campaign in 2012 included apart from a mobile stand also various give-aways and a magazine. The campaign mainly targets car users and encourages them to shift to cycling or walking when covering short trips. Municipalities can ask for the campaign, which is often presented to the public by local figures (e.g. the mayor). An action gains authenticity by making use especially of local references, such as winning local figures to present the action, referring to local topics or using dialects.

Moreover, it is crucial to ensure recognisability and consistency. Recognisability can be achieved by integrating and placing individual actions into a larger context



Logo of the Campaign titled 'I am the Source of Energy' (Ich bin die Energie) in the German Land North Rhine-Westphalia
© P3 – Agentur für Kommunikation und Mobilität

such as image campaigns. The campaign 'Radlhauptstadt München' ('Cycling Capital Munich') is an excellent example. For more information about the campaign see 'O-4 Campaigning for Public Awareness'.

Regarding timing and consistency, it is helpful to use an action calendar for preparation like the one used by the town of Bünde. The calendar can, at the same time, also be used for marketing purposes.

In order to gain arguments in support of further actions to be carried out, it is important to always collect some parameters: How many people participated in the action? Which especially important partners or stakeholders were engaged? How was the action covered in the press? Especially for politicians such data provides a vital basis for decision-making processes.

Conclusion

Today marketing actions are instruments in the toolbox of cycling promotion that have proven successful in 'selling' everything around cycling through creative and targeted measures. Bike actions can emotionalise cycling. They can reach new target groups and create a 'good atmosphere', also among politicians and the media. At the same time, actions valorise infrastructure and ensure support from vital partners.

Actions can thus be regarded as a planning challenge and part of a new concept of administration. The most important resources, namely inventiveness and know-how, can be used for local actions through existing networks and experiences.



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More information on Marketing Actions can be found in
CyE O-4 Campaigning for Public Awareness on Cycling
CyE S-3 Car Free Days
CyE S-5 Local Actions to Encourage Cycling for Shopping

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www.nrvp.de/cye

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