



Campaigning for Public Awareness on Cycling

A rapidly developing field

In recent years the number of cycling campaigns has increased significantly across Germany creating a new area for cycling promotion activities. First evaluations show that professional campaigns increase public awareness with regard to cycling. In its National Cycling Plan 2020 (draft), the German government thus explicitly calls for further establishing public relations as a relevant component of 'cycling as a system'.

This shows a general trend that nowadays the primary concern in the area of traffic is no longer only infrastructure. Instead, relatively inexpensive but efficient communication and service activities can help usher in the shift to environmentally friendly means of transport. This is evident also in areas such as mobility management or the bike rental systems.

For Europe, the campaigns carried out in Germany are exceptional both in terms of concept and scale (up to EUR 1 million per year). Many other examples that are worth replicating show that the budget is an important factor for campaigns, but not the only relevant one.

Higher cycling levels through campaigning

Campaigns are actions limited in time and space where stakeholders operate jointly; they combine various individual formats such as posters, events or ads to convey a shared 'message'. These campaigns aim to influence the target groups' attitudes and behaviour and at the same time transmit vital information. In recent decades a new

discipline and a new branch have emerged within the advertising industry that deal commercially with this topic. In the transport sector, it is primarily the car manufacturers that conduct large-scale campaigns employing significant resources; this emphasises the role of advertising in the area of mobility.

However, in the area of cycling, priority is not placed on achieving high sales figures for bicycle producers, but on fostering a behaviour that is desirable for society as a whole, namely encouraging already active cyclists and reaching out to new segments of society. These 'social marketing' activities are therefore conducted in Germany mainly by groups from the civil society as well as the Länder and municipalities which have now gained a significant degree of professionalization.

Cover images: Cycling campaigns in urban space, Munich and Copenhagen © Wiegand von Sassen, City of Munich (picture on the left); Monoline Urban Design of fotografi (picture on the right)

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THANK YOU – to all cyclists in Dortmund!
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The most important target group of cycling campaigns is first and foremost the society at large, i.e. all present as well as potential future cyclists. The effectiveness of a campaign is therefore also dependent on its ability to increase the percentage of cycling in the modal split of all trips made by the local population, which is the main indicator for successful mobility concepts. Apart from these broad campaigns, there are other communication activities focusing on a specific target group, for example schoolchildren or commuters.

A successful campaign must, in any case, have an impact on those factors that are relevant to cycling-related attitudes (e.g. opinion about cycling) and behaviour (e.g. choice of transport mode). Such factors, derived from a diverse range of studies, include:

- perception of the problem
- perception of the consequences of action
- personal standards
- social norms
- expectations regarding costs and benefits
- perception regarding the scope of action
- habits

A campaign should ideally transmit information and emotion at various levels simultaneously to prompt people to reconsider their own day-to-day behaviour. A good example of this is the German campaign 'Kopf an: Motor aus. Für null CO₂ auf Kurzstrecken' ('Start your brain: stop the engine. Zero emissions on short trips') that was conducted in various cities. In a comical-political way it conveyed to the local population that the high level of car use for short trips has a negative im-

pact on the environment (perception of the consequences of action); and hence is not desirable from a societal perspective (social norms); and that short car trips could easily be replaced by walking or cycling (perception regarding the scope of action). These achievements are recognised in the last phase of the campaign:

In addition, experience shows that successful communication activities should not only target present and future cyclists because public opinion about cycling is also influenced by other stakeholders. Cycling is a popular topic in many local and regional media outlets (newspapers, radio stations, blogs, etc.). These outlets do not always report positively or constructively about cycling, however, there is hardly any media outlet that purely out of an anti-cycling attitude reports negatively about bicycle users. Often the media is simply after a 'good story' and the press uses the topic of cycling according to the principle 'bad news is good news'. Successful campaigns thus also provide the media with pertinent and, if possible, exclusive background stories.

Local campaigns

Radlhauptstadt München

In the spring of 2010 the city of Munich launched a large-scale campaign titled 'Radlhauptstadt München' ('Cycling Capital Munich'). Its aim is to motivate the citizens of Munich to use the bicycle more frequently, and to create a true cycling culture. The campaign's focus is to showcase cycling as urban lifestyle.



Radlhauptstadt München: XXL-Bike on the Oktoberfest, photomontage

© Wigand von Sassen, City of Munich

Sources

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

'Stadtradeln' – project webpage, including broad information on the annual competition (German)
(www.stadtradeln.de)

'Fahrrad' in Aachen – cycling informations on the webpages of the city of Aachen (German)
(www.aachen.de/de/stadt_buerger/verkehr_strasse/clevermobil/fahrrad_in_aachen/index.html)

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

The decision by the Munich City Council provided the framework for a strong focus on cycling promotion. The council also adopted the cycling campaign itself. Following a Europe-wide tender, the campaign was launched with various events, such as a 'Radlfrühjahrsmarkt' ('Spring Bike Market') and the street casting 'München sucht den Radlstar' ('Munich got a Cycling Star').

It is also notable that right from the start the campaign included an evaluation, which was imposed as a condition for its possible continuation. According to the available results, the campaign reaches around two thirds of the respondents and is received very positively. It has its greatest impact on active cyclists that are further encouraged to continue to cycle; a respectable 10 per cent of respondents use the bicycle more often since the launch of the campaign. Overall, in combination with, for example, infrastructural measures, cycling levels have increased to 17 per cent.



The street casting 'München sucht den Radlstar'
© Radlhauptstadt München

Fahrrad in Aachen

In order to increase cycling levels, the German city of Aachen uses a broad range of information and communication materials and markets it since 2008 under the simple motto 'Fahrrad in Aachen' ('Ride your Bike in Aachen') and with the corresponding and professionally designed logo. What is special about this inexpensive approach is its flexibility and transferability. The slogan and the logo can be placed on materials that are very different in terms of their design and content, such as



Logo of the campaign on the website of the German city of Aachen
© City of Aachen

road safety education materials for schools, recommendations for leisure routes, or an invitation to the contest 'Fahrradfreundliche Arbeitgeber' ('Cycle Friendly Employers'), thus making the coherent strategy for the promotion of cycling visible and convincing to local residents.

Decentralised campaigns

Kopf an, Motor aus

This image campaign was the first large-scale effort in Germany to actively promote walking and cycling simultaneously in various German cities. In nine German cities, from the southern city of Bamberg to the city of Kiel in the north, diverse channels were used to communicate the same central message, mostly for the duration of one year with funds from the emissions trading scheme and support from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The campaign aimed at encouraging car users to shift to walking and cycling. Hence, the campaign mainly employed large billboards for advertising, which are visible from approaching cars.

Kopf an: Motor aus.
Für null CO2 auf Kurzstrecken.



Campaign Logo 'Kopf an, Motor aus'

© Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

The basis for the campaign was a behavioural model divided into three levels: preparing a shift in behaviour; the actual shift in behaviour; and implementing and maintaining the new behaviour. For the individual levels, separate communication activities were developed within the framework of the campaign 'Kopf an, Motor aus'.

Thanks to the coherent framework offered by the campaign, it could be replicated in many different cities in Germany while at the same time allowing to draw on local references, such as vernacular. Checklists and schedules that were made available increased the transferability. The campaign 'Kopf an, Motor aus' is also special in the sense that it marks the first time that a scientific evaluation was conducted to assess the effects of a cycling-related image campaign. The evaluation showed, among other things, that there was a high level of awareness and that in all campaign cities up to 25 per

Prenzel, Thorben (2011): Kommunikation im Radverkehr, PhD thesis (German)
(arbeitsweltdergeographie.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/prenzelthorben-dissertation-kommunikation-im-radverkehr.pdf)

Kirwitzke, Karsten (2012): Radverkehrskampagnen im Vergleich. Diploma Thesis at the Technische Universität Berlin (unpublished)

cent of those aware of the campaign said it had an impact on their travel behaviour for short distances.

Stadtradeln

The German cities competition 'Stadtradeln' ('City Cycling Councillors') is a campaign that is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development. Since 2008 the campaign encourages municipalities to compete with one another by collecting as many cycling kilometres as possible. It calls, in particular, on public figures, such as municipal councillors and mayors to act as local role models and shift from car to bicycle for a period of 21 days. The campaign's desired effect is, on the one hand, to increase awareness among politicians and the administrative staff through their own personal cycling experience. The competitive element is to incentivise participants to travel as many kilometres as possible by bike. In addition, the campaign provides the media with a good story during the cycling-campaign period. Every year a prize is given to the most committed municipal parliament as well as to the overall winner.



Start of the campaign in the city of Dresden (winner 2011)
© City of Dresden

Success factors

Cycling campaigns carried out in recent years have proven to be successful mainly because they are not carried out in isolation; they must be linked to cycling promotion in general. While this does not exclude organising campaigns prior to creating attractive cycle facilities, a communication activity must, however, address the infrastructural framework conditions in such cases.

In addition, a campaign should not be carried out in isolation, but must be integrated into a comprehensive communication strategy outwardly (addressing citizens) as well as inwardly (addressing policy-makers and administrative staff). This includes for example the designation of a contact person who can also receive feedback on campaigns citizens might give. Moreover, a campaign will increase its impact by involving mayors or other public figures.

During the campaign, the timing of the individual activities must be carefully planned. The campaign schedule must be adapted to the priorities set by society and the media in the course of the year, focusing on periods such as, for example, the start of the season in spring or the beginning of the school year in autumn.

In order to be successful, cycling campaigns also require personnel and financial resources to develop, for example, professional advertising. Hence, for cities and municipalities, allocation between EUR 0,50 and 2,00 per capita per year for public relations and service activities are recommended in the National Cycling Plan 2020 (draft).

Conclusion

In Germany experience shows that cycling campaigns have become vital and cost-effective instruments to promote cycling. Especially when they enjoy political backing, communication activities can be conducive to higher cycling levels and better valorise cycling infrastructure.

Campaigns serve as umbrellas for the broad use of many diverse instruments (see Cycling Expertise File S-7) and ensure that this 'social marketing' remains visible in the face of the flood of commercial advertising we are exposed to every day. The campaigns provide the media with positive stories about cycling and thus, indirectly, also motivate politicians and administrative staff to act.



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More information on Campaigns can be found in
CyE S-3 Car Free Days
CyE S-5 Local Actions to Encourage Cycling for Shopping
CyE S-7 Marketing Action to Promote Cycling

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

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Editors: Wolfgang Aichinger, Jörg Thiemann-Linden
cycling-expertise@difu.de