



CASE STUDY

Encouraging the use of a municipal bike sharing scheme

Led by BIT & Transportation
Bureau of the city of Portland

BeST

Behaviour Smart community
for Tourism



Co-funded by
the European Union

CHALLENGE

In 2019, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) and the Transportation Bureau of the city of Portland in the United States worked together to encourage new members to sign up to the city's bike sharing scheme.



BEHAVIOUR

Choices in modes of transport have important implications for public health and air quality.

In this context, cities around the world are investing in bike share systems. While the growth in bike share journeys is impressive, globally, **lots more needs to be done for cycling to take up a bigger share of journey modes.**

BEHAVIOUR

MECHANISM

There are many barriers to resorting to bike sharing schemes:



Users may not be sure **how to access or use the bikes**, they may have **concerns about safety** or even put off/forget to try it.



Personal preferences and anchored **habits for other transportation modes** are also key obstacles to signing up to this kind of scheme

HOW DID WE GET THERE?

This project aimed at optimizing a social marketing campaign to encourage use of the bike share scheme, rather than exploring further the behavioural barriers to adopting such schemes.

The team undertook extensive literature review to identify how best to optimize the campaign (literature on monetary incentives, forming new habits, and the temporal effects of social marketing interventions) and worked closely with the Bureau of Transportation staff to design the intervention.

The Bureau of Transportation staff played a key role in this project, including by identifying the recipients of the intervention, mailing it and collecting the outcome data.

INTERVENTION

Full Copy: Postcard A (Free Frame)

BIKETOWN 

**Haven't met BIKETOWN yet?
Take a spin on us!**

Use promo code **NEIGHBORS2017** to get **FREE BIKETOWN rides** with either:

- 1 Free Day Pass
- 4 Free Single Rides, or
- First month free of an Annual Membership

TO GET STARTED

- Read this card
- Find bikes near you using the BIKETOWN app (biketownpdx.com/app)
- Use the app to register using your promo code **NEIGHBORS2017**

Full Copy: Postcard B (Discount Frame)

BIKETOWN 

**Haven't met BIKETOWN yet?
Take a spin on us!**

Use promo code **NEIGHBORS12** to get **\$12 OFF** any of these BIKETOWN plans: Day Pass, Single Rides, or Annual Membership

TO GET STARTED

- Read this card
- Find bikes near you using the BIKETOWN app (biketownpdx.com/app)
- Use the app to register using your promo code **NEIGHBORS12**

Certain households in the city received a **postcard** inviting them to redeem a promotional code for a **12 dollar credit** when signing up to the scheme to encourage them to sign up.

Households were either households close to a newly built bike dock and households near a bike dock that had a new resident (someone who recently moved there).

2 postcards were tested with different messages (frames) to test :

- if either of the 2 messages could encourage households to sign up generally
- if either of the 2 messages was more effective at encouraging either/both 'types' of household
- if households with a new resident or households near a new bike dock were more susceptible to change.

TESTING

The postcards were tested in a **randomized controlled trial**, which is a way to measure the impact of an intervention by randomizing who gets a specific treatment. **The trial involved 10 500 households.**

7000 of these households were near a newly built bike dock and 3500 households had a new resident located near a bike dock.

RESULTS & LESSONS LEARNED

1

We found no overall difference in redemption of the offer between postcard messages, but for those with a new bike dock in their vicinity, the **message that framed the discount as a 'free' ride** was significantly more effective.

2

We also found that those who had just moved houses were about 4 times more likely to sign up - showing the **value of encouraging habit change at moments of disruption.**

3

As a **result of the study**, the city transportation bureau's marketing team have **used the 'free' frame on subsequent materials and continue to target new movers.**

Municipal governments elsewhere, who already send mail to those who have moved house, could consider using these interactions as an opportunity to drive take-up of other city services.

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LEARN MORE

Kirkman, E. (2019). Free riding or discounted riding? How the framing of a bike share offer impacts offer-redemption. *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*, 2(2).

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