

Vélib'/JCDecaux France – Cycle Share Revolution in Paris

1. The Company

Created in 1964, JCDecaux is the world's second-largest outdoor communications company. Headquartered in Paris, France, the company has installed approximately 1.1 million panels in over 60 countries and had revenue in excess of €2.67 billion in 2013.

One of JCDecaux's three key business units is that of street furniture which installs and maintains street furniture in return for placing advertising.



2. Sustainability Innovation

Vélib', when launched in July 2007, was the largest self-service cycle share system in the world. By December of the same year there were over 20,000 bikes available over the whole city of Paris, day and night, throughout the year. Today Vélib' counts on over 280,000 subscribers and between 50,000 and 130,000 rentals a day depending on the weather. It has received widespread acclaim and been credited with fuelling the worldwide trend for cycle share systems.

As a joint project between the Mairie de Paris (Paris City Hall) and JCDecaux, Vélib' formed part of Bertrand Delanoë, former Mayor of Paris' plan to 'green' the city of Paris. This was to involve reducing car traffic and pollution while promoting public transport, pedestrians and cycling, green spaces and local living. It aims to almost halve the use of private vehicles in the city centre by 2020.

Bicycle sharing systems are now well known around the world. The concept involves the positioning of self-service bike stations throughout the city, which can be accessed by would-be cyclists for short trips. By using a contactless card, cyclists can unlock an individual bicycle and use it to make a trip within the city. The bikes are then returned to another station at the destination. Vélib's target market was initially Parisians but their patented technology, which enables bank cards to be used directly at the cycle terminals, has meant that it is easily accessible for tourists and visitors to the city.

There are a variety of socially and environmentally sustainable aspects to Vélib', for example:

- Conversion of over 6,000 parking spaces into Vélib' stations;
- Substantially extending the cycle lane network in the city;
- Maintenance and redistribution vehicles fuelled by natural gas;
- Special pricing options for youths, students and the long-term unemployed;
- Eco-friendly anti-graffiti product used with rainwater to clean the bikes;
- 90% of the materials used in the bikes can be recycled;
- Incentive events and partnerships to extent the concept of sustainable lifestyles beyond the use of the bike-share system;
- Creation of a sharing mentality and community in Paris.

3. Engagement of End Users

The integration of end users into the running and development of Vélib' has been achieved in multiple ways. Particularly innovative and successful has been the creation of an end user committee dedicated to bringing the voices of end users, the Mairie de Paris and JCDecaux together.

In-house customer relations call centre: this is the first line of communication for end users to contact JCDecaux. Rather than outsourcing the call centre, JCDecaux decided to set this up, develop the capabilities, and run it themselves.

Vélib' blog: set up by the Mairie de Paris as an interface to enable communication between end users and those running the project, the blog came as a result of the extensive interest shown by users in Vélib'.

User committee: in 2010, at the request of the Mairie de Paris, a user committee was established to obtain recommendations from the Vélib' community. This allowed JCDecaux to measure what worked and what didn't. The committee is composed of around 12 volunteers for a period of two years. Successful applications were chosen as a representative selection of users from different backgrounds and areas of Paris. The user committee meets three to four times a year with representatives from JCDecaux and Mairie de Paris to discuss challenges, potential solutions and to trial new ideas.

Surveys: JCDecaux's research department has experts in both qualitative and quantitative research and often deploys surveys to get feedback and new ideas from users on the Vélib' project. While in general, expected questionnaire response rates are low, bike sharing prompts a large response attracting participation rates of up to 30%.

Focus groups: end user participation on some more specific issues has been organized in the form of focus groups. Groups have discussed their visions for the future in terms of how they see the self-service bikes of tomorrow in order to generate ideas about possible innovations.

There have been lasting and positive effects of the integration of end users in sustainability innovation. The ability to pilot ideas and prototypes with end users was noted as particularly valuable.

4. Engagement of Other Stakeholders

Collaboration has been central to the entire Vélib' project. Particularly useful for JCDecaux, traditionally a business to business company, have been those partnerships which have supported an interface between Vélib' and the users.

Mairie de Paris: For JCDecaux, Vélib' represented the opportunity to secure the outdoors advertising contract with the Mairie de Paris, and was therefore fundamental to JCDecaux's core business. JCDecaux bore the cost of setting up and managing Vélib' while it benefits from advertising income throughout the capital. The role of the Mairie de Paris is to manage the blog and the user committee. More broadly the transport and infrastructure policies of the Mairie de Paris have been essential for the development of Vélib'. Extending and improving cycle lanes and a range of other policy changes in order to substantially reduce, and at some point in the future, eliminate the use of private cars in Paris and 'green' the city, have created an environment in which Vélib' can thrive.

CitéGreen: The collaboration between CitéGreen and JCDecaux provides advantages for all involved parties. As a French start-up communications company with the aim of promoting 'green' behaviour, CitéGreen has accelerated the use of Vélib' and extended its impact into other areas of sustainable lifestyles. CitéGreen has developed a programme that enables the tracking of subscribers' movements, who are then rewarded for their "green behaviour" through an incentive system. This system enables the exchange of points for green products and services and other rewards. CitéGreen also organises several competitive challenges annually to promote Vélib' usage.

Cycling associations: Vélorution is a movement that has the aim of reclaiming the streets for cyclists and pedestrians. By working in collaboration with Vélib' in debating issues such as cyclist safety, legal issues and cycling lanes, this cycling association has played an important role in helping to '*bring people into the streets*'.

Other associations: A number of informal associations have grown up around Vélib' such as 'Velibataire' and 'TrocVert'. The creation and growth of both formal and informal associations and organisations has had the effect of creating a culture around Vélib' making it much more than a cycle-sharing system and promoting more fundamental change in terms of transport and sustainable lifestyles.

The greatest advantage of working with third parties for the Vélib' project has been to create and facilitate a much wider movement and a cultural change around mobility in Paris and sustainable lifestyles. The participation of the Mairie de Paris ensures infrastructure and public policy is in place and provides a key interface between JCDecaux and the end users, while CitéGreen, with its community management focus, provides expertise in the 'business to consumer' relationship.