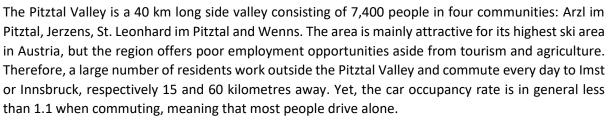# Ummadum: a reward-based carpooling model for a more sustainable mobility

In some mountain areas, residents have no alternative to the car for daily commuting. Ummadum is an Austrian carpooling app that works on a reward model and involved companies and municipalities. The aim is to further encourage carpooling to reduce traffic congestion, decrease greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.

MORE INFO

The challenge of mobility and employment

The Pitztal Valley is a 40 km long side valley consisting of 7,400 people in four communities: Arzl im Pitztal, Jerzens, St. Leonhard im Pitztal and Wenns. The area is mainly attractive for its highest ski area in Austria, but the region offers poor employment opportunities aside from tourism and agriculture. Therefore, a large number of residents work outside the Pitztal Valley and commute every day to Imst or Innsbruck, respectively 15 and 60 kilometres away. Yet, the car occupancy rate is in general less than 1.1 when commuting, meaning that most people drive alone.

Traffic density is a challenge for air quality and environmental pollution and impacts on the commuting experience. In regions where little public transport exists, or where multimodality is not optimal for commuters, shared transport solutions are particularly suitable in the mountains. Yet, regular carsharing struggles to find users. To further encourage car sharing, the Ummadum app, proposes a new incentives-based model. The service is used in the four communities of the Pitztal Valley and was identified as a smart approach to mobility by the Smart Villages project.

Credits Ummadum

A win-win solution for users, municipalities, and partner companies

The Ummadum app was developed in 2017 by a local SME to facilitate car sharing between commuters and enable people to work outside the valley. Although mainstream car sharing apps already existed, Ummadum proposes a more integrated approach that includes rewards for users and involves both municipalities and private companies.

The app works on a on the reward principle. Each user of the car sharing app, whether they are a passenger or a driver on a shared ride, receives points to be used in partner shops. For each 17g of CO_2 saved, users get 1 point. Considering that for a 60km journey, the distance between Arzl im Pitztal and Innsbruck, the estimated emissions amount at 11.8 kgCO2e, users could collect around 69 points for a single shared journey.

Municipalities and companies can become Ummadum partners and create a "community" of car-poolers. They allocate a budget for their users' community, which is converted into Ummadum points. More than 80 municipalities and companies are now partnering with the Ummadum app. To join a community, users can contact their affiliated municipality, employer or local business and ask for membership.

Companies and shops are also get involved in the concept by becoming redemption points. Ummadum users can exchange their points for vouchers in these shops. About 30 regional shops and 3 important Austrian retail companies are involved; in total, they represent more than 2400 redemption points locations in the country. They can become partners for free, as a way to demonstrate their commitment to more sustainable mobility practices, and they can benefit from more visibility on the Ummadum app.

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Governance and resources

The business model is similar to other applications available in rural areas. The Ummadum team makes the application available for free to individual users, municipalities, and companies. Municipalities and companies interested in being part of the scheme become partners and finance the operation of the model. By allocating a monthly budget to their community of users, they finance the Ummadum points that carpoolers can then collect and exchange in local shops.

Innovative aspect

By offering rewards and getting municipalities and companies on board, Ummadum proposes an integrated model to encourage car sharing in mountain areas. Where fuel savings or reduced greenhouse gas emissions are not sufficient incentives to carpool more frequently, the reward model can encourage commuters to change their behaviour. The business model relies on municipalities and companies engaging directly in the fight against traffic congestion, for better air quality and for a reduction of CO_2 emissions. Such practices can be promoted at the level of functional areas, to encourage mountain people who work in the nearest town and have no alternative to car to carpool more often.