

VOLKSWAGEN PIONEERS CAR SHARING

Europe's number one car maker, Volkswagen, is pioneering car maker involvement in car sharing programs in Germany, which aim to reduce the number of cars on Europe's crowded roads, reduce the cost of car use and maximise the use of existing vehicles

Volkswagen's aim is to help the environment by enabling more people to use the right type of transport for each type of journey and not automatically use a car. This program has already seen the car maker study why people don't use public transport and develop automatic information systems that enable car drivers to switch to public transport easily and quickly when the roads are blocked.

More than 20,000 German car users have already discovered the value of vehicle sharing with an average of 20 people sharing each car. Volkswagen believes that this market will grow at a rate of up to 50 per cent per annum to a potential market of 2.45 million vehicles across Europe within ten years

Volkswagen is running two car sharing programs. One sees the tenants in one block of units sharing a vehicle or vehicles, which is kept right outside the main door of the apartment block. For larger groups of people or organisations a range of vehicles are kept, allowing car sharers to chose the vehicle that is ideal for each trip, for example a Polo for a single person journey, a Caravelle for a group or a Passat wagon for a shopping trip

In both cases a small fee is paid - considerably less than a taxi, car rental or normal car ownership - each time the vehicle is used and an automatic car booking system is run by Volkswagen

The first results of Volkswagen test programs have proven that the concept has major advantages and benefits. The scheme has been highly rated by all involved in it, with more than 70 per cent of people becoming regular users of the shared vehicles, often enabling them to sell second cars. Estate agents and housing companies have found that blocks of units involved in the scheme are considerably more attractive to renters and purchasers

The research has also shown that the primary use of the vehicles is the type of journey which cars perform at their best, unique trips carrying more than one person for shopping and recreation, as opposed to commuting.