

# CASE STUDY Swapfiets



## Company Name

Swapfiets

## Category

Bike subscription service / circular mobility

## Location

Netherlands

## Website

<https://Swapfiets.com>

Swapfiets is a Dutch mobility company that offers bicycles and e-bikes through a monthly subscription model. Instead of buying a bike, customers pay a fixed fee that includes the bike, maintenance, repairs, and service. This “bike-as-a-service” model allows users to access mobility without ownership while enabling the company to retain responsibility for the product’s lifecycle. Swapfiets presents itself as a circular business that aims to create more liveable European cities and make bicycle use more convenient, accessible, and sustainable.

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## How does this case align with StartDSP?

Swapfiets aligns strongly with the Start-DSP vision because it combines **digital service management, circular economy thinking, and commercial viability** in one integrated business model. It is a useful example of how entrepreneurs can build a sustainable and scalable service around access, reuse, and long-term customer relationships.

### **Digital:**

Swapfiets uses a digitally supported subscription and service system that allows customers to sign up, manage their contract, request repairs, and interact with the company in a simple and ongoing way. Its model demonstrates how digital systems can support recurring customer relationships, service logistics, and a user-friendly mobility experience.

### **Sustainable:**

The company explicitly frames itself as a circular mobility provider and links its business model to product longevity, reuse, repair, and circular design. Official sources state that Swapfiets aims to reach **100% circular bikes** and climate neutrality in the short term, while its sustainability communications describe the role of modularity, circular components, and reduced ownership-based consumption.

### **Profitable:**

Swapfiets shows how a subscription-based model can create recurring revenue while supporting sustainable behaviour. By keeping ownership of the bikes, the company can control maintenance, extend product life, and create long-term customer relationships rather than depending only on one-time sales. This makes it highly relevant for Modules 8 and 9, especially in relation to business model design, pricing logic, retention, and balancing purpose with profitability.



## How does Swapfiets create value through a circular subscription model?

Swapfiets creates value by replacing ownership with access. Customers do not need to buy and maintain a bicycle themselves. Instead, they pay a fixed monthly fee and receive a functioning bicycle or e-bike together with ongoing support, repairs, and servicing. This lowers barriers to cycling and gives customers greater convenience and predictability. For the company, the model creates recurring revenue and stronger long-term relationships with users.

### **Circularity through product control and maintenance**


A key strength of the Swapfiets model is that the company retains ownership of the bicycle fleet. This makes it easier to repair, refurbish, and redesign products over time, which is fundamentally different from traditional sales models where responsibility often ends after purchase. Official sustainability materials emphasise the company's circular ambitions and the move toward more modular and circular bicycle design. This makes Swapfiets a strong teaching example of how business models can embed circularity at the operational level rather than only at the communication level.



## Scale, sustainability, and strategic positioning

The subscription model is also financially relevant because it creates a predictable flow of recurring revenue. At the same time, customer satisfaction depends on maintenance quality, fast repairs, and reliable service. This helps learners understand that sustainable profitability often depends not only on sales, but also on service quality, retention, and operational efficiency. Swapfiets therefore provides a strong example of how sustainable business models can shift the logic from product turnover to lifecycle value and long-term service relationships.

Swapfiets has grown into one of Europe's leading micro-mobility providers, with official B Lab information referring to more than **270,000 members (2022)** across the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Austria, Spain, and the UK. This scale shows that circular and service-based models can move beyond niche markets when they solve real customer needs. For learners, the company demonstrates how sustainability, convenience, and revenue logic can be combined in a scalable model with a clear market identity.



Swapfiets is the world's first 'bike as a service' company with a circular business model.

B Lab Swapfiets company profile



## Challenges

**High operational demands:** A subscription model with maintenance included requires constant service quality, logistics coordination, and repair capacity. This means the company must manage fleet availability, workshop operations, and customer service efficiently across multiple countries.

**Circularity at scale:** Moving toward 100% circular bikes is ambitious and requires not only design changes but also supplier cooperation, material innovation, and product lifecycle control. This shows that circularity is a long-term strategic process, not an immediate result.

## Opportunities

**Recurring revenue and retention:** The subscription model creates regular income streams and gives the company long-term contact with customers, which can improve retention and support better planning. This makes the model highly relevant when discussing financial resilience and sustainable revenue structures.

**Circular product innovation:** Because Swapfiets keeps ownership of the bikes, it can continuously improve product design, repairability, and circularity. This creates opportunities for stronger lifecycle management and lower long-term material waste.