Tchibo

Circular Solutions Pattern Cards

Sharing practical insights and real stories from our Circular Economy journey

About the Circular Solutions Pattern Cards

Tchibo is exploring circular innovations for sustainable impact and economic benefits. Recognizing that implementing the Circular Economy requires fundamental changes to our value creation, we developed the Circular Solutions Pattern Cards: a systematic analysis of circular activities at Tchibo, designed to navigate our transformation.

What can you expect?

The case studies are categorized according to their approach to circularity and their maturity stage. Each one includes an introduction, market insights, and our learnings from evolving work, acknowledging that details may change. We aim to share both our successes and challenges with colleagues and other organizations not for promotion or green claims purposes, but rather to scale circular solutions and inspire engagement. We will update the pattern cards in both digital and physical formats. We wish you a pleasant circular journey!

Your team from the Tchibo Circular Solutions Lab

Tchibo

Tchibo stands for a unique business model. We operate ca. 900 shops in eight countries, over 24,200 retail outlets and national online shops. Through its multi-channel distribution system, Tchibo offers weekly changing non food ranges in addition to coffee. These weekly collections include products specially produced and curated for Tchibo, focusing on high quality at affordable prices. Founded in Hamburg in 1949, the family-owned company has received several awards for its sustainable business practices.

Our complex business activities in coffee and non food offer fertile ground to explore circular solutions across different product and material cycles and circular services. This is reflected in the various circular approaches initiated within Tchibo.

Circularity Approach: Reuse | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

Reusable Shipping Bags

During a 13-month test period between June 2023 and July 2024, 26,000 reusable shipping bags were sent for random online orders within Germany. Customers could return the empty bags via mailboxes or Tchibo shops. The pilot helped test the necessary intralogistics processes. No deposit system or other incentives were used for this test.

Goals: Gain customer feedback, test the durability of the packaging

Tchibo

What if we reuse our shipping packaging instead of throwing them away?

FACTS

- Bags were used 3 times on average
- Response rate of approx. 80 %
- Overall customer satisfaction: good or very good (94 %; n = 3,000)
- CO_2 emission break-even point: 2.5 – 8 circulations (depending on the way of return)
- 1,300 bags damaged

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- The bag return rate is a key indicator for costs and CO_2 impact
- The bags were generally returned in good condition
- Simple preparation without much effort
- Higher perception as a sustainable brand

Challenges

- The durability of the bag and the closure system can be improved
- High costs for mailbox returns
- Collective returns are necessary to reduce costs
- There is a need for customer education on correct handling (some cut the bag open)
- The lack of strict reusable quotas for the mailorder business

NEXT STEPS

The pilot delivers valuable insights used for the further development of e-commerce packaging, also in light of regulations like the "Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive" (PPWR). Tchibo is committed to bringing together different brands and online retailers in a common industry approach for reusable shipping bags.

Circularity Approach: Recycling | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Textile-to-Textile Recycling

As an alternative to conventional or recycled polyester from PET bottles, Tchibo used recycled polyester from textile waste, also called "textile-to-textile" (T2T), for four products in the Active collection in calendar week 41/2024. This closed-loop material was produced using an innovative chemical recycling process ("Green Circle" by Jiaren). The commercial use of recycled polyester from T2T for clothing is currently an innovation in the market.

Goals: Proof of concept, nominating and testing new material suppliers

Tchibo

What if we use textile waste to create new clothing?

FACTS

- Input: pre-consumer waste (e.g., waste from textile production)
- Price premium: 5 – 10 % vs. conventional polyester (2023)
- For post-consumer recycled polyester (e.g., from discarded clothing), the premium was higher
- Quality and workmanship are like conventional polyester
- Supply chain: Recycling, fiber production, and final production in China
- Smooth integration of the new fiber into the normal Tchibo supply chain

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Create awareness (internally, customers, and throughout suppliers)
- Market availability of recycled polyester from post-consumer waste is low
- Interim solution: Using pre-consumer waste as input
- Identify innovators within the Tchibo supply chain

Challenges

- Limited customer communication due to the small number of products in the collection
- Further scaling of the technology and higher market demand are required to reduce the price upcharge

NEXT STEPS

The proportion of textile products made from textile-to-textile (T2T) recycled polyester is to be further expanded by 2027. Tchibo is also committed to support the scaling of these and other T2T recycling technologies.

Circularity Approach: Circular Infrastructure | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

Coffee Capsule Sorting Technology

For plastic coffee capsules to be recycled, they first need to be separated in the waste stream. Together with Nestlé and JDE, Tchibo is investing in optimizing sorting efficiency and has jointly developed the Best Available Technology (BAT). It was successfully piloted at the light-weight packaging (LVP) sorting plant of Veolia in Rostock in 2022 and 2023.

Goals: Enable large-scale recycling of plastic coffee capsules, prove technology for industry-wide scaling in Germany.

Tchibo

What if we improve the sorting of coffee capsules for recycling?

FACTS

- Sorting rate improved from <30 % to up to 90 %
- Main adjustments: software for NIR detection, air nozzle distance and pressure, and conveyor belt surfaces
- Joint investment enables the provision of extensive personnel and financial resources
- Improvement of the total polypropylene stream by 1 %

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Cooperation facilitates the pooling of know-how and resources
- Technical and digital innovations in LVP plants offer a central solution approach

Challenges

- Coffee capsules have a very high grammage compared to other similarly sized packaging in the LVP fraction (reason: coffee grounds in the capsule)
- Technology must be adapted to the size, weight, and shape of the capsules
- Sorting concepts at LVP plants are individual

NEXT STEPS

Project partners intend to implement the technology in more LVP sorting plants, aiming to optimize 50–60 % of German sorting capacity (medium-term goal) and increase it to 90 % by 2030. The BAT is to support the development of sorting and recycling infrastructure in Europe, in line with the PPWR.

Circularity Approach: Share | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

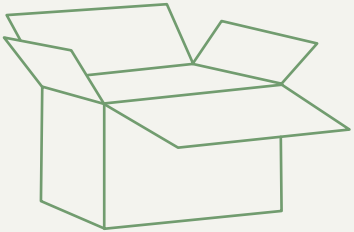
Tchibo Share

In January 2018, Tchibo became the first major retail company to launch a rental model for children's clothing: "Tchibo Share", in cooperation with the startup Kilenda. Customers could rent products for a self-selected period of time. Later, the range was expanded to women's clothing, coffee machines, and other brands.
In December 2020, Tchibo Share was discontinued for economic reasons.

Goals: Test and scale a circular business model, acquire new customers, retain existing ones

Tchibo

What if customers rent Tchibo products instead of buying them?



FACTS

- Highest demand for kids' and women's clothing; lowest demand: furniture
- Customer: Sustainability as the main argument, high satisfaction with the rental process
- 85 % of textiles are rented multiple times
- Contribution margin from 2nd rental of kids' and higher-priced women's wear, and from 3rd rental of selected items like baby carriers
- High media equivalence value

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Successful targeting of young families
- Test lab for new non food assortments
- Brand and employer branding

Challenges

- Critical mass of customers not reached within 2 years; rental models (still) not mainstream
- High costs for reverse logistics and storage
- Suitable for higher-priced products
- Decision to discontinue also caused by uncertainty in the COVID-19 pandemic

NEXT STEPS

Based on the learnings from Tchibo Share, a "Second Hand Restart" was attempted in 2023 with resale platform Sellpy where customers can buy returns that can no longer be sold regularly, as well as selected used Tchibo textiles.

Circularity Approach: Reduce | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Renewable QBO Coffee Capsules

For its QBO capsule system, Tchibo developed coffee capsules in 2022 using 70 % renewable resources. The material is mainly polypropylene (PP), but instead of using mineral oil as a base, it's made from organic waste and residue oils and fats. The proportion of the raw material is supplied via a mass balance approach, certified by the International Sustainability & Carbon Certification (ISCC PLUS) system.

Goals: Reduce fossil resource use, provide a sustainable material solution

Tchibo

What if our coffee capsules are made from renewable raw materials?

FACTS

- Bio-based fats processed into PP polymers (same properties as virgin PP)
- So-called "second-generation material" (e.g., tall oils from forestry, waste fats from the food industry)
- ISCC PLUS certification mathematically assigns the bio-based raw materials proportion to the QBO capsule (mass balance approach)
- Life-Cycle Assessment: 35 % CO_2 emission reduction (results by TU Berlin)
- Development partners: Neste and Berry

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Credible customer communication via ISCC PLUS certificate
- Promote alternative raw material use
- Recyclable material (like previous PP capsule)
- Coffee quality: No compromises on quality
- Off-flavors: Successful avoidance of unwanted tastes

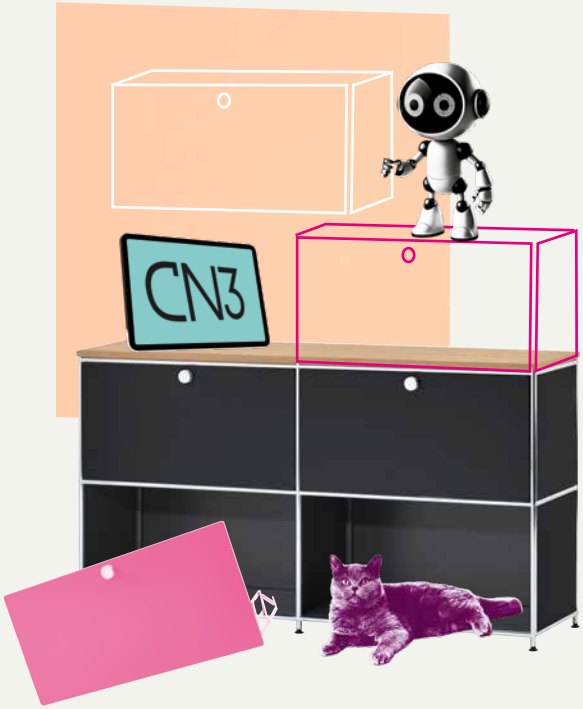
Challenges

- Mass-balance system is difficult to explain to consumers
- ISCC Plus process and documentation are resource-intensive
- Capsules are heavily criticized, requiring well-tested, verified, and communicated sustainable solutions to avoid greenwashing

NEXT STEPS

Continue developing solutions for more sustainable capsule coffee enjoyment, e.g., joint industry investment and initiatives to optimize the practical coffee capsule sorting and recycling.

Circularity Approach: Longevity | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025



Longevity in Furniture Design

The "CN3 furniture series" embodies our idea of quality and durability. Designed for longevity, it features a timeless design and sturdy construction, complemented by a scratch-resistant surface. Customers have the flexibility to update their products with supplementary modules, such as colored fronts, wheels, or drawers.

Goal: Enhance longevity and empower customers to adapt their furniture to their evolving needs and tastes

Tchibo

What if we design furniture to be timeless and durable?

FACTS

- Stable construction for a long lifespan
- Scratch-resistant surface
- Timeless and longlasting furniture design
- Spare parts and new accessory sets are continuously launched, so customers can always look forward to new highlights

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- High customer interest in customizable designs: colored back panels and new add-on sets
- "Design for upgradability" approach: Modifications and replacement of components extends the product's lifespan

Challenges

- Balancing timeless design with evolving consumer trends can be complex
- Staying relevant while maintaining a long-lasting product requires constant market research and innovation

NEXT STEPS

New types of furniture and additional custom colors and new accessory sets will be launched, allowing customers to expand their CN3 furniture and customize it to meet their current preferences and needs.

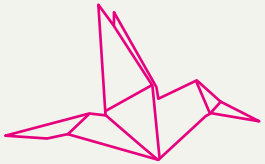
Circularity Approach: Reduce | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Journey to Plastic-Free Packaging

In April 2020, Tchibo introduced a new packaging concept for (almost) plastic-free packaging of non food articles. Hard goods like kitchen utensils are packed plastic-free. Textiles are packed in a cardboard banderole and a bow-shaped cardboard insert for stabilization. Only the suspension, which holds the construction together, is in some cases made of recycled plastic. The designs are unique worldwide and already patented.

Goal: Eliminate plastic polybags, reduce material use

Tchibo



What if we redesign our packaging to eliminate plastic?

FACTS

- Savings of 30 million plastic covers for products per year
- Savings of 60 million protective bags for transport per year
- > 98 % recyclable packaging
- < 2 % plastic for all non food packaging
- Patent for packaging solution made of paper
- Significant material reduction, e.g., for socks: up to 50 % less cardboad

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Good customer feedback, e.g., touch and feel of the clothing fabric
- Baseline for further reduced packaging in 2021, e.g. downsizing paper bands and folding boxes

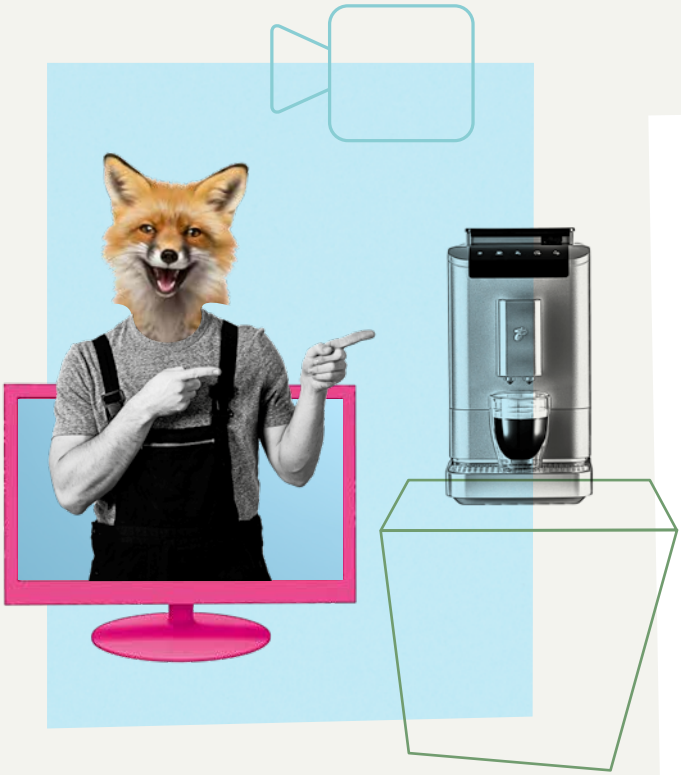
Challenges

- Allow customers to find all important information
- Ensure that products look presentable both in stores and on supermarket shelves
- Ensure enough space to legibly include all legally mandatory information
- Protect the product during transport

NEXT STEPS

Continuous efforts to reduce the use of materials, use sustainable materials, ensure recyclability, and further develop new approaches e.g., chain-specific online packaging, which can be packaged significantly less than Tchibo products in-store.

Circularity Approach: Repair | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025



Video Repair Service

Since 2022, after-sales services for coffee machines include "Remote Fault Inspection", where customers book video inspection appointments with a specially trained Tchibo brand ambassador. The service was developed based on the experience that many malfunctions or error patterns can be easily rectified without prior technical knowledge or specific tools. This provides quick help, avoiding the need to send machines to the repair centre.

Goals: Increase customer satisfaction, avoid unnecessary returns

Tchibo

What if we help our customers to repair their coffee machines at home?

FACTS

- Only a fraction of complaints are due to actual technical defects
- Many issues are solved via video calls, instruction videos, or chatbot
- Video call problem-solving rate: 40 %
- Easy to use via various devices
- >4,300 video calls in 2022, >6,000 in 2024 (DACH and Eastern Europe)
- Customer satisfaction: 4.8/5 stars

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Increased customer satisfaction and loyalty
- Saves time with immediate, remote solutions
- Reduces shipping and packaging costs
- Promotes a "repair" mindset
- Saves technician resources which are scarce and expensive
- Enjoy Tchibo coffee without having to take a long break

Challenges

- Customers who bought their machines at one of the external retail partners are often unaware of this service
- Appointment booking can be a hurdle
- Technical issues (login, connection quality) can occur

NEXT STEPS

Continuously expand the machine portfolio to other self-service modules like “first tips and assistance”. Expand the service also for first-time installation for new coffee machines.

Circularity Approach: Longevity | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

Circular "Fab City Lamp"

Tchibo is participating in the project "The Fab City Lamp - testing local, circular and distributed production", which involves designing a lamp that is modular, repairable, and recyclable. In February 2025, Tchibo invited loyal customers from the TchiboCard Community to a workshop in Hamburg to contribute their suggestions on the prototype and involve them in the product development process.

Goal: Finalize the first prototype and tailor the product to customer needs

Tchibo

What if we develop a circular product together with our customers?

FACTS

- High interest: 300+ applicants from the TchiboCard Community in Germany
- 11 participants were selected to represent the customer base
- Funded by The Federal Ministry of Education
- Partners: The New Production Institute of the Helmut Schmidt University Hamburg, INDEED Innovation and InMachines Ingrassia
- "Fab City" concept: designs are freely accessible as an open-source file, and production is local

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- First-of-its-kind community co-creation workshop for Tchibo
- Valuable, honest feedback on necessary changes
- Gained new insights and a clear plan for next steps

Challenges

- Integrate the key aspects of the community feedback, such as repairability and the availability of spare parts
- Assess the feasibility of local production, e.g., through "Fab Labs" as local mini-factories
- Highlight modular design and customization
- Local sourcing of components - currently, a majority is produced in Asia

NEXT STEPS

Adjust the prototype based on feedback and finalize the product design. Use the project strategically to initiate internal discussion on local, demand- and customer-oriented, as well as circular design of future products.

Circularity Approach: Repair | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Online Shop for Spare Parts

To prolong the lifetime of coffee machines and make repairs more convenient, Tchibo has expanded its product service for guarantee or warranty cases by offering a wide range of replacement parts in the Tchibo online shop. This has been launched for the Esperto Caffè, Esperto Latte & Esperto Pro models, allowing customers to easily order and replace individual parts and enjoy their product longer.

Goal: Make spare parts accessible in a standard product order process

Tchibo

What if customers could order spare parts by themselves?

FACTS

- Average sales per month: approx. 450 pieces
- Starting with 9 spare parts
- Top seller is the Esperto brewing unit
- Purchases have increased at an annual growth rate of 50 % since the post-launch years
- 60 % of the spare parts have become cheaper by eliminating previous costs for customer service and the repair center
- International roll-out is already at 50 % of Tchibo sales markets

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Growth rate shows customer interest in repair
- Improved convenience compared to contacting customer service
- Streamlining of previously inefficient processes where spare parts were stored and placed by an external partner

Challenges

- Stepwise changeover required to inform customers: web formula at "services & help" section before full integration into the Tchibo online shop
- Identification of business need
- Combine commercial goals of involved departments with circular solutions

NEXT STEPS

The expansion of the range of spare parts for other coffee machines is planned, as well as for other non food products like travel suitcases and furniture. We are even considering "3D printing on demand" in the future.

Circularity Approach: Rethink | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Tchibo Circular Solutions Academy

In September 2022, the Tchibo Circular Solutions Lab launched the "Circular Solutions Academy", a multi-faceted internal training program to encourage colleagues to "Rethink." The program, which began with quarterly online basic courses, was soon expanded to include advanced workshops for specific product categories and round table ideation formats.

Goal: Spark interest in the Circular Economy, provide knowledge, and highlight opportunities for Tchibo

Tchibo

What if we inspire and train colleagues to think more circular?

FACTS

- 200+ participants in basic courses
- 50+ participants in advanced workshops and round tables
- Participants from 33 departments, including Product Design, Packaging Development, IT-Solutions, Human Resources, and Coffee Buying
- Participant feedback: Knowledge, impulses, and inspiration were most valuable

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Identify "Circular Economy Ambassadors" within Tchibo
- Provide tools for practical implementation
- Colleague enthusiasm greatly motivates the Circular Solutions Lab team, energizing them for the sometimes difficult transformation work

Challenges

- Initial high enrollment in basic courses decreased over time
- The training program must be continuously adapted to the organization's maturity level (resource-intensive but worthwhile)

NEXT STEPS

New think tank format "Circular Round Table" started in February 2025, aiming to share knowledge and examples while discussing how each of us can implement circularity at Tchibo. Colleagues are further supported to develop their own ideas.

Circularity Approach: Reuse | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

Tchibo x Sellpy Resale Partnership

After a successful second-hand pilot, selling remaining stock of our discontinued Tchibo Share service, Tchibo followed up with online resale platform Sellpy to also offer selected returned Tchibo clothing. The products are usually in like-new to good condition but are not available through Tchibo's regular sales channels due to, e.g., minor defects or missing packaging. Sellpy takes new product pictures, uploads product information, and manages shipping and payment operations. The pilot ran in spring 2024.

Goal: Test profitability for potential roll-out

Tchibo

What if we offer used and like-new Tchibo clothing on a resale platform?

FACTS

- Most sales in Germany (46%) and Sweden (36 %)
- Best-selling categories: Jeans and pants (21 %), followed by jackets and outerwear (15 %)
- Average selling price was between €10 - €15 per piece

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Better understand the positioning of Tchibo in the second-hand market
- Develop new sales channels and revenue streams for selected returns
- Prove resale as a viable business opportunity internally
- Higher visibility of the Tchibo brand in younger target groups

Challenges

- Adjust existing internal processes for returns handling (minor changes required)
- Open up for B-Stock marketing in own distribution countries
- Aligning processes with those of Sellpy

NEXT STEPS

The pilot was a success, demonstrating a positive business case and a good partnership, and will be rolled out as a collaboration in 2025.

Circularity Approach: Recycling | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Recyclable Coffee Packaging

To preserve the quality and aroma of roasted coffee, current coffee packaging consists of a three-layer composite material. For our recyclable coffee packaging, the plastic layers have been adjusted with advanced materials so that they are recognized in the sorting process after disposal by the customer via the yellow bin. This way, they can be assigned to the correct recycling stream and remain in the material cycle.

Goals: Improve material reusability, reduce the CO_2 footprint, comply with PPWR, and avoid plastic tax

Tchibo

What if we make our coffee packaging truly recyclable?

FACTS

- Roasted coffee sets above-average quality demands on packaging: protection from light, moisture, and oxygen
- Since 2023, over 20 % of packaging (volume-based) has switched to recyclable foils with good to very good recyclability scores (70 – 90 %)
- Life-Cycle Assessment confirms 35 – 50 % CO_2 reductions
- Major improvement through recyclability and advanced materials

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- The packaging development process also included significant material reductions for some products, partially offsetting the cost increase for new materials
- Packaging labels highlight recyclability, improved CO_2 footprint, and disposal instructions

Challenges

- Transitioning from composites to monomaterials requires adaption or investments in new packaging machines
- Limited marketing impact: Customers assume coffee packaging is already recyclable

NEXT STEPS

Tchibo aims to be a pioneer for sustainable and economically viable packaging in the European coffee market, switching to optimized recyclable composites in all our sales areas by 2027 (Tchibo branded) and 2030 (rest).

Circularity Approach: Reuse | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

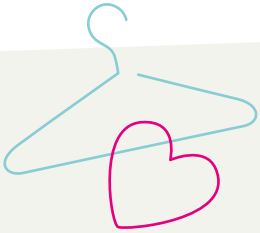
Tchibo x Sellpy Second-Hand Pilot

In July 2023, Tchibo initiated a pilot with European online resale platform Sellpy, offering second-hand Tchibo clothing in a branded shop-in-shop. Sellpy's core business is providing private customers with services to sell and buy their used fashion items. Tchibo was the first mainstream brand to open a pop-up shop on Sellpy. The selected products included ladies' wear and children's clothing from the previous Tchibo Share rental model.

Goal: Learn about the marketability and target group for Tchibo second-hand textiles

Tchibo

What if we sell second-hand Tchibo products online?



FACTS

- Good sales rate with prices at around 50 % of the original retail price
- High demand for ladies' outdoor wear (37 %) and pants (22 %)
- Main selling countries: Germany (43 %) and Sweden (40 %), Sellpy's home market
- Successful restart of circular business models after Tchibo Share in 2020

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Main customers were already Sellpy users
- Developing customer base in new countries like Sweden

Challenges

- Tchibo is not yet an established brand on Sellpy
- Lower sales volumes and search queries compared to other competitor brands
- Tchibo customers showed interest but didn't purchase (high click rates in the newsletter, low redemption rate of discount codes)

NEXT STEPS

Enhance the partnership between Tchibo and Sellpy and extend the product assortment:
In 2024 we successfully tested the sale of selected textile returns that are not available for regular sale.

Circularity Approach: Refurbish | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

Refurbished Coffee Machines

In June 2025, Tchibo launches the one-year pilot "Tchibo Refurbished" to buy back used coffee machines, starting with the Esperto Caffè 1 model. Machines will be refurbished to Tchibo standards.
Tchibo partners with circular solutions startup koorvi to develop take-back and recommerce process integration.

Goals: Extending product lifecycle, reducing electronic waste, and offering affordable quality coffee machines

Tchibo

What if we buy back Tchibo coffee machines and refurbish them?

FACTS

- Customers return their used Esperto Caffè 1 machines to the Tchibo Repair Partner
- All machines undergo rigorous testing, repairs, and cleaning to meet Tchibo quality standards
- Refurbished machines are sold at reduced prices with a two-year warranty as an affordable quality alternative

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Market expansion: Reaching sustainability- and price-conscious customer segments
- Extend product lifecycle and reduce electronic waste
- New service offerings: Take-back options and refurbished devices strengthen brand reputation and customer loyalty

Challenges

- Build customer acceptance for refurbished devices
- Ensure a continuous supply of returned coffee machines
- Generate sufficient demand
- Build up complex processes behind the refurbishment service

NEXT STEPS

Launch "Tchibo Refurbished" with targeted marketing on benefits and quality. Use feedback to optimize the refurbishment process and product quality and expand to other products based on the pilot's success.

Circularity Approach: Recycling | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Cradle to Cradle Garden Shoe

The olive-green Tchibo garden clogs, sold in 2022, were designed for recycling using a monomaterial construction. The plastic and dyes were tested for material health and recyclability according to Cradle to Cradle Certified® Silver. After use, customers can return them to the manufacturer free of charge within four years of purchase, where they can be continuously recycled into new products without loss of quality.

Goals: Raise awareness and test customer feedback

Tchibo

What if we design a fully recyclable shoe?

FACTS

- Unisex design for adults and children
- The timeless design and robust material ensure they can be worn for a long time
- Cradle to Cradle Certified® ensures safe ingredients and recyclability
- Product development and take-back partner: German ISA-TRAESKO Group

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Cradle to Cradle Certified® provides a well-known sign and external proof point
- Good feedback on the shoe's quality and longevity
- 74 out of 96 customers gave 4 or more stars
- Start of the journey of circular product design

Challenges

- Within the 4 years, none of the customers used the free take-back option and sent the product back for recycling
- Possible reasons: Products didn't reach end-of-life due to high physical durability, or customer communication was not visible enough

NEXT STEPS

Continue the journey of circular product design, evaluate the use of external certifications like Cradle to Cradle, and improve communication.

Circularity Approach: Share | Stage: Pilot | Status June 2025

Tchibo Mietbar

In April 2025, Tchibo launched the "Tchibo Mietbar": Employees have the opportunity to rent a variety of items offered by their colleagues through a community platform. The partner is Fainin, a startup from Hamburg that provides a service solution for "sharing" within an organization. Fainin has already been successfully validated by over 10,000 users, e.g., at university campuses.

Goals: Promotion of corporate culture, raise awareness for the concept of renting instead of buying

Tchibo

What if we rent rarely used items instead of buying them?

FACTS

- Use rarely needed items without purchasing – saves money and space
- External platform solution with no process or resource costs for Tchibo
- Rentals are insured for up to €15,000
- Secure handover location: Office provides a trustworthy space for exchanges
- 200+ products available as a basic range
- User-friendly platform for easy sharing (mobile & desktop)

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Community building: Creates cross-departmental colleague connections
- "Sharing" marketplace strengthens employee cooperation
- Solution is aligned with the transformation strategy

Challenges

- Finding early adopters to upload the first products and offer an attractive assortment
- Maintaining consistent engagement beyond the initial launch phase

NEXT STEPS

Launch an activation communication campaign to raise employee awareness and recruit "Mietbar Early Adopters" across departments. Organize a kick-off event with live platform demonstrations and develop metrics for usage, environmental impact, and employee satisfaction.

Circularity Approach: Circular Infrastructure | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Baby Body with circularity.ID®

In May 2025, Tchibo launched a set of baby bodysuits created according to the circular design criteria by circular.fashion to be durable and recyclable. They feature a digital product passport: the circularity.ID®. Customers can scan the QR code on the care label with their smartphones to find out more about the product life cycle and the take-back system for a closed-loop solution at the product's end-of-life.

Goal: Test the use of digital product passports and gain customer feedback

Tchibo

What if our products have a digital product passport?

FACTS

- Circularity.ID®: QR code on the care label links to digital product information
- Material: 95 % GOTS organic cotton in conversion, 5 % elastane
- Cross-size design with adjustable buttons
- Part of the collaboration project "Implementing Circularity in the Textile Industry (ICTI)"
- Partnership with "Aktion Hoffnung" for sorting for reuse/recycling

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- The Digital Product Passport (DPP) enables full product transparency, including information for the customer, the sorter and the recycler
- Tchibo suppliers in Bangladesh and India received training on circular design and digital product passports

Challenges

- Additional data carriers like RFID were evaluated, but a QR code was the only option feasible within the time frame
- A QR code is not a scalable option for sorters and recyclers

NEXT STEPS

Tchibo will continue investing in circular solutions like Design for Longevity, Textile-to-Textile Recycling, and Circular Design Guidelines after the ICTI initiative ends in summer 2025. The capacity building and learnings from the project are valuable milestones.

Circularity Approach: Rethink | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Tchibo Circular Solutions Lab

In June 2022, the Tchibo Circular Solutions Lab was founded. It acts as an internal spin-off from the environmental team, offering an experimental space for exploring circular ideas and quickly testing them in markets to get real-time feedback. Whether it's material and packaging innovations or circular business models, the team provides its expertise and network in the field of Circular Economy, as well as human and financial resources to support colleagues.

Goals: Identify barriers and economic potentials

Tchibo

What if we provide a space for piloting circular ideas?

FACTS

- 7+ pilots realized within the first three years with some already in the scaling phase
- Establishment of an internal training curriculum reaching 250+ colleagues
- 5 team members with expertise in various fields like textile recycling, business development, or circular design
- Capture the momentum of excitement and interest in Circular Economy

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Official mandate to quickly test new concepts and get market feedback on scalability
- "Lab" approach as a new way of working to accelerate the internal transformation
- Building a network of circular service startups and other brands

Challenges

- Internal visibility can be improved
- Output and results still depend on the engagement of other departments
- Balance the degree of actively driving progress vs. supporting other departments to do so

NEXT STEPS

Celebrate the 3-year anniversary with colleagues and external partners that accompanied the team. Share learnings from successes and failures with other stakeholders and companies to foster collaboration.

Circularity Approach: Reduce | Stage: Commercialized | Status June 2025

Selling Unpackaged Coffee in Shops

In all shops, Tchibo offers its customers the opportunity to buy their coffee without packaging by bringing their own tins or buying tins in the shop. The shop employees then fill the desired amount directly from the chute next to the counter. Customers can choose between 8+ different coffees like Tchibo Privat Kaffee, Blonde Roast, or Raritäten, available as bulk goods sold as whole beans or with a customized grind - without compromising on quality.

Goals: Raise awareness, reduce packaging waste, and save resources

Tchibo

What if we sell unpackaged coffee to reduce waste?

FACTS

- Available in 800+ shops in 6 countries
- Tchibo is the largest unpackaged coffee house chain worldwide
- TchiboCard customers can also secure an extra 30 loyalty beans, which is equivalent to € 0.30 for the next purchase

LEARNINGS

Opportunities

- Incentives such as the "TreueBohnen" loyalty program help motivate customers
- However, numbers are still below potential, so enhanced communication is needed

Challenges

- Spontaneous coffee purchases and inconvenience of carrying containers may limit adoption
- Developing a solution for the entire process, also from the roastery to the shops, with reduced packaging

NEXT STEPS

Focus on communication to raise more awareness. Tchibo also plans to conduct a test with the option to use reusable tins in a deposit system.

Created by Tchibo Circular Solutions Lab