

## Research Article

# The Bike Boom: An Indonesian Massive Bike Riding Movement

Ahmad Fathan Rizqi Irawan\* and Mohammad Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata

Telkom University, Bandung, Indonesia

## Abstract.

The Bike Boom or the massive increase in the use of bicycles in Indonesia by urban communities during the COVID-19 pandemic is unavoidable. Stress and the desire to maintain health during a pandemic, are the triggers that emerge from urban communities to start cycling. These activities must have other factors that can trigger a unison action. This massive cycling activity is not the first time in Indonesia and can be categorized as urban culture. This research aims to understand this phenomenon through online literature studies that discuss the history of cycling itself, especially in Indonesia, the factors that cause this phenomenon to occur in unison and massively in urban communities, and the resulting impacts of that matter. The results showed that celebrities greatly influence this phenomenon, and its impacts are divided into environment, business, and design.

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Corresponding Author: Ahmad  
Fathan Rizqi Irawan; email:  
fathanirawan09@gmail.com

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## 1. Introduction

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic has become a wide-open gate for a classic activity that will unexpectedly be greeted with massive open arms by everyone on earth and Indonesia will not be left behind. Cycling, previously only an activity enjoyed by children as a means of play and occupied by certain communities, has become a weekly or even daily routine for almost every family and co-worker in urban society in Indonesia. The city streets and Instagram stories were suddenly filled with the activities of pedaling this two-wheeled transportation.

Bicycles, which initially arrived in Indonesia during the Dutch colonial period, had a status as a transportation option that was looked down upon by the Dutch, aristocrats at that time. “Bruine Broeders (Brown Brothers) vehicles” are specific designations aimed at bicycles as their status [1]. As another example, in the United States simultaneously, Bicycles are considered as transportation with the status of “Too Young/Too Poor to

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Drive” [2]. Similar things cause both of these examples. The aristocrats with a low stigma on bicycles are part of an elite motorized vehicle club, the Motor-Wielrijders. Meanwhile, the “Rise of the Automobile” is occurring in the United States.

From a phenomenon to becoming a part of today’s life, motorized vehicles continue to grow, and innovation always occurs in the industry. Compared to bicycles, motorized vehicles even dominate in purchases. The vehicle, which at the time of its arrival to Indonesia was considered a “status symbol for the poor,” became a “status on social media” amid the advancement of the motor vehicle industry. A drastic change certainly has a significant cause.

Several news articles stated that the stress caused by the long obligation to stay at home at the start of the pandemic and the need to be more active made cycling an automatic survival mechanism for humans to stay sane and healthy. Bicycling is the safest and most affordable way to improve physical and mental health while helping people reduce social isolation [3]. However, this is not enough to justify the uniformity of thinking among urban communities in Indonesia for choosing cycling as a means of channeling their worries. An X factor has initiated and encouraged this phenomenon to continue until now.

This paper is purposed to explain the X factor and the impact generated by this cycling phenomenon on the various fields concerned. Its status within this phenomenon has raised new questions for the future evolution of cycling and the status of the bicycle itself as a means of transportation. Between a hobby, being a culture or just a trend are the main questions that will be the theme of this paper.

## 2. Research Methods

This research will use qualitative methods. Qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena concerned through descriptions presented in words [4]. A case study approach through literature studies of related books, journals, and articles will be used to understand the phenomena discussed in this study, especially through the online data-collecting method caused by the limitation during the COVID-19 pandemic [5]. Case studies make it possible to investigate a particular event, situation, or social condition and to provide insight into the process that explains how certain events or situations occur [6].

### 3. Result And Discussion

The history of bicycles and their use in this paper will be divided into two eras. The Wood is Good Era, namely the era of bicycles made of wood with the designation “Boneshakers,” and The Iron Frame Era, namely the era of innovation of bicycles made of iron and bicycles began to be called “Bicycle”. The Wood is Good Era has two types of bicycles: the Draisienne made by Baron Karl Von Davis and the Velocipede by the Michaux family. Whereas in the Iron Frame Era, various innovations occurred. Names such as Ariel, Penny Farthing, Bush Roller, and Geared Bikes became the types of bicycles that became an inflection point in the evolution of bicycles.

#### 3.1. The Wood is Good Era (Boneshakers)

##### **3.1.1. Draisienne Creator: Baron Karl Von Davis de Sauerbrun. Place: Germany. Year: 1817.**

Created by someone with a noble title (Baron), the Draisienne became a vehicle with a high price and was used by the nobility. This early type of bicycle had no pedals and relied on the ground motion of the feet as a means of motion. Its production is largely carried out in London, England, by Denis Johnson. It is a “pedestrian curricle,” roughly translated as a pedestrian carriage, and “hobby horses” or vehicles are used as a hobby and lifestyle only. After that, there was an effort to innovate in its design, which lasted quite a long time due to its bad impact on health, especially the bones. Therefore, it is called “Boneshakers”. The totality of wood and the absence of rubber tires by Dunlop made the draisienne design not ergonomic.

##### **3.1.2. Velocipede Creator: The Michaux Family (Pierre Micahux & Ernest Michaux). Place: Paris, France. Year: 1860.**

The father and son of the Michaux family suggested this simple innovation in wooden bicycle design. They added a pedal placed on the vehicle’s front wheel, called the velocipede. This innovation was briefly bought by the Olivier brothers, who moved velocipede production to a larger factory. Large production led to the popularity of this vehicle in France. Iron was introduced as the main material during the Olivier brothers’ production of the velocipede.

## 3.2. The Iron Frame Era

### 3.2.1. Ariel & Penny-Farthing. Creator: James Starley (Father of The Bicycle Industry). Place: Coventry, England. Years: 1871 & 1883.

The changing bicycle industry saw a shift from Paris to Coventry during the Franco-German war when Rowley B. Turner brought Michaux's velocipedes to England to his uncle Josiah Turner, a manager of a sewing machine company in Coventry which eventually became an order for 400 models which were resold in England. In 1871, James Starley proposed a new bicycle design that was already made of iron with the designation Ariel. In 1883, this type of bicycle was better known as the "Penny-Farthing". The name comes from the equation of the shape of the bicycle with the designation of two types of coins in England. Penny is used for the bigger front wheel, and farthing is used for the smaller coin for the smaller rear wheel.

### 3.2.2. Bush Roller (The Safety Bicycle). Creator: Hans Renold. Place: Manchester, England. Year: 1880.

A more ergonomic and safer design, namely by balancing the diameter of the front wheel and chain-driven rear wheel, became a new standard in bicycle design. Although the initial design was made by Hans Renold, the more accepted and known design in the community is by John Kemp Starley (James Starley's nephew) and is known as the Rover Safety Bicycle.

### 3.2.3. Geared Bikes (The Modern Bicycle). Creator: William Reilly. Place: England. Year: 1896.

After The Safety Bicycle, innovation in bicycle design has not changed much and can be said to be in a static period. Significant changes occurred in 1896 by William Reilly by making bicycles with gears with variable speeds. Two speeds characterize the design. In 1913, the Sturmey-Archer company added gears to a three-speed hub. After this, bicycle innovation has stagnated for a long time due to the presence of motorized vehicles, which are a novelty.

The Bike Boom 2020 phenomenon in Indonesian urban society is not new. The first The Bike Boom occurred in 2005 as B2W. B2W (Bike to Work) is a social movement cycling to work which was declared in Jakarta on August 27, 2005, with various

accompanying reasons such as personal reasons that cycling is more economical and healthier to idealistic reasons such as reducing carbon emissions for reducing global warming. B2W then spread to other big cities in Indonesia, giving birth to various Bike-to-work communities [1].

In 2010, a new form of bicycle emerged among young people in Indonesian urban society. Fixie or Fixed-gear bikes are experiencing a rapidly increasing popularity. This phenomenon originates from couriers in New York who use vehicles that can quickly pass through the dense traffic of New York City [7]. This type of bicycle has gears that are “fixed” or cannot be changed. If the pedal is held and pedaled, then this bicycle will stop, and if pedaled backward, then this bicycle will reverse. Such a feature is one of the reasons that invites young people, especially those who like to freestyle on bicycles, to start looking at this type of bicycle. Starting from the largest specialized bicycle forum in Indonesia in Jakarta, this bicycle developed into a trend supported by the government and even a fashion statement with bright colors that are different from previous types of bicycles.

In 2020, the cycling phenomenon resurfaced amidst a pandemic worldwide. Urban people flocked to buy bicycles in an increasing number of variations, with folding bicycles being the best-selling type. With reasons to relieve stress from quarantine and activities to increase immunity as a method of fighting the COVID-19 virus, cycling is the right answer.

The unison thinking of urban society certainly has an X factor, which is the cause. Influencers from social media and celebrities who often upload their cycling activities on social media can be said to influence the unison of people’s thinking. Coupled with a type of folding bike as a new type of bicycle that has emerged and the President of Indonesia himself, Mr. Joko Widodo, who often includes bicycles as the subject of conversation indirectly in his presence, The Pandemic Bike Boom comes at the right time.

From a marketing perspective, influencers play a role in the ZMOT (Zero Moment of Truth) process. ZMOT is when a buyer uses a laptop, cellphone, or other 10-wire device and starts looking for and studying a product or service being considered for purchase [8]. At this time, consumers study products through a form of review on social media and master product knowledge, such as advantages and disadvantages, before deciding to buy a product. In this phenomenon, influencers become directly and indirectly involved in ZMOT. Indirectly, by uploading cycling activities, influencers have influenced their

followers on social media to buy bicycles. Directly or intentionally, influencers with an endorsement agreement with a bicycle company have reviewed the product to influence their followers to buy the related product again.

A massive phenomenon cannot be separated from the impact it produces. Various fields such as design & business, culture, and environment are affected examples. In the bicycle design world, there have been new developments and innovations due to the popularity of Brompton's folding bicycle design. Various large bicycle companies were sensitive to the trend of this type of bicycle and started to produce their folding bicycles. France is participating in this phenomenon again with the presence of a designer named Gaëtan Francq, who innovated a new form of folding bicycle called the "Loop" with the characteristics of a circular frame and is very specific as a vehicle for urban communities.

However, on the business side, especially in bicycle shops, consumer demand is increasing rapidly so the policy to order (pivot) for 2-4 weeks is normal due to limited raw materials due to the closure of the iron supply factory. Reporting from the BBC, Butler-Adams, managing director of Brompton Bikes said, "The company's raw metal suppliers were closed, while shipping containers carrying their goods were stuck in Rotterdam for a week... which led to a reduction in production numbers and an equipment imbalance... We saw lockdowns happen months before [it] happened because many of our suppliers are in Asia...As many bicycle components, including drivetrains, derailleurs, and brakes, continue to be manufactured almost exclusively in Asia, some in the industry predict that the coronavirus will shift bicycle manufacturing to England."

In the cycling community, this is seen as an extraordinary phenomenon, and it is hoped that it will not only become a trend. A policy to accommodate cycling needs is needed so that this phenomenon can last a long time [9]. A sociologist at the University of Gadjah Mada, Sidiq Harim, said that this phenomenon could only be considered a practice of urban society. However, he later explained that the answer could only be concluded after the pandemic. In an interview with Kompas, he said "So the character is the same, the desire for space is typical of urbanites. Only the color is different. Now it's a bit green, green. But because it's still COVID-19, everyone cares about the environment and health.". The impact on the environment is, of course, the most visible. Naturally, of course, one can see that a greener and fresher environment in a big city, such as Jakarta, which is full of pollution, can be seen turning into a health-friendly environment during this phenomenon.

## 4. Conclusion

In terms of design, this phenomenon widens the historical point of bicycle evolution with the Brompton folding bicycle type which gained fame and resulted in variations in the shape of folding bicycles in every other company's production and innovation of a more prominent and sophisticated generation of folding bicycles such as the "Loop" by Gaëtan Francq. In terms of culture, it is not yet certain that this phenomenon can become a culture that is adopted nationally and must wait after the COVID-19 virus pandemic ends to see this phenomenon as just a trend or it can take place consistently for a long time. In the Oxford dictionary, culture means "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group," meaning that cycling does not have to be adopted nationally to become a culture. A family or community is enough to make cycling a segmented culture. However, if it turns out that this phenomenon can continue nationally after the pandemic, of course, there will be changes in urban planning, such as increasing the number of special roads for bicycles and increasing bicycle parking and empty motorized vehicle parking lots.

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