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Context and Purpose

The city of Utrecht wants to remain an attractive city to live in, offering its inhabitants a clean and healthy living environment, now and in the future. Park and Ride (P+R) facilities will contribute substantially to keep the city accessible – even in case of substantial growth - and to improve air quality on and around access roads to the city centre. Utrecht has already four P+R transfer hubs at the city edge and two more transfer hubs will be opened in the coming years. Within the scope of CIVITAS, Utrecht wants promote the use of the P&R. Making P+R facilities better-known to a large audience has been identified as a crucial factor for successful use of P+R facilities in the future. In order to optimize marketing and promotion efforts regarding the use of P+R-facilities, a special 'P+R marketing and promotion plan' has been developed. This deliverable effectively is the P+R marketing strategy. Furthermore, every year an action plan will be drawn up. For 2009-2010 an operational implementation plan has also been made. That plan is the second focus of this deliverable.

Summary Contents

The city of Utrecht would like to achieve a 10% increase in the use of P+R facilities every year until 2012. The marketing strategy that has been developed, based on a marketing mix and a SWOT-analysis, identifies five strategic principles where the strategy will be based on.

1. Position P+R as a valid travel alternative in the hearts and minds of visitors of the city centre:
(Spontaneous) familiarity with the P+R areas of Utrecht needs to be created and a positive feeling needs to be attached to that. A campaign will be launched and free publicity will be sought. The creation of a uniform, national P+R logo is recommended.
2. Make 'ease of use' a pledge to customers:
Current users indicate that it is very easy and practical to use P+R. Other promises such as 'carefree', 'cheap', 'comfortable', 'flexible', 'fast' and 'sustainable' can be used as

supporting messages, but should not be the central theme because it is unsure if these promises can be met fully. P+R will be positioned as 'much easier than people think'.

3. Seduce the most likely target groups to use P+R at the right moment:

The most relevant target groups have been identified in the marketing plan, divided into two broad categories: regular visitors of Utrecht (automatic behavior; commuters) and new and incidental visitors of Utrecht (planned behavior; day-visitors). Each target group is specified further and different messages will be constructed for them, to use on different times. This leads to effective and efficient marketing efforts.

4. Lower the threshold to entice the (trial) use of P+R:

By reaching out to certain target groups at the right time with the right message. For example, contacting commuters when there are local road works going on and/or emphasizing 'ease of use' by offering car washes and dry-cleaning for P+R users. Also, it should be made as easy as possible for (potential) users to obtain P+R tickets.

5. Turn trial-users into permanent customers:

The aim is to entice people to try out P+R once, and then turn them into loyal customers. This can only be done when the expectations that people have are met. One of the most critical success factors is the transport from the P+R location to the destination. Waiting time, comfort and travelling time are essential elements for trial-users, when considering using P+R again.

Recommendations for the marketing mix:

Product

1. Make sure that the product fulfills required quality standards.

P+R areas should be attractive, facilities such as ticket machines or toilets should work well, road signs should be clear and visible and, most importantly, public transport to and from the P+R should be functioning well. These are basic requirements. Extra facilities such as coffee machines, snack corners, shoe polish facilities or handing out free newspapers can make the P+R area extra attractive.

2. Investigate if wider opening hours have an added value.

3. Introduce new types of tickets and ways to subscribe.

At the moment there are only day tickets for private people and year subscriptions for companies. More flexible forms are necessary, such as a two-day ticket or a monthly subscription.

4. Investigate if tailor-made transport possibilities have added value.

Examples of these tailor-made solutions are group taxis to the city centre, rental scooters or rental bicycles. These enable people to travel from door to door without using their car.

5. Support travelers that use a P+R facility with better information, before as well as during the journey.

Information supply should be optimized, for example through online route planners and time-schedules of the public transport to and from the P+R. Electronic communication panels should improve the information situation on the P+R area itself.

Price

6. Make sure that the price of a P+R ticket is competitive.

In Utrecht, research has shown that this is already the case at the moment. Clear communication about the price is important and the implementation of a national uniform P+R price is recommended.

Place (distribution)

7. Make sure P+R tickets and subscriptions are available through the Internet.

8. Make P+R tickets available through third parties such as hotels, museums, events or companies.

Promotion

9. Seek attention for P+R .

Through a campaign (posters in the city, activities during traffic jams, advertisements in newspapers and other media), through free publicity (inviting press at events and informing them on achieved milestones) and through contacts with third parties.

10. Inform people about P+R (for example through folders, flyers, free postcards, website).

11. Use incentives to 'reward' people using P+R (such as discount tickets).

Functional Use

Now that the Park and Ride marketing strategy and the P+R implementation plan for 2009-2010 have been established, the implementation of this measure will be carried out as a rolling programme that will be monitored, updated and financed on an annual basis. The identified actions of the promotion plan will be carried out according to the planning.

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