

's Hertogenbosch Parking Garage Sint Jan

As the most hospitable city of the Netherlands 's Hertogenbosch is welcoming visitors with open arms. Due to the historic layout the city is lacking space for parking and cars. Therefore P+R parking at the city outskirts is being successfully championed already for some years. Nevertheless, demand for quality parking facilities at the edge of the city centre is persisting. In summer of 2015 the Sint-Jan parking garage was opened, offering space to 1100 vehicles in a historic setting. The walking route to the centre takes you over a bridge with the city canal, through the city wall and across a garden. Making it the first facility in the Netherlands having received the EPA gold award.

Objectives

The city of 's Hertogenbosch would like to see this new facility be found by the public and considered as a nice reception area to the car visitors. Boundary condition is to not compromise the P+R policy already in place.

Description

Defining the measures some assumptions were used such as:

- Visitors of the facility are not there because of the garage but have a destination in the city. First of all they are the clients of a shopkeeper, of the theatre or of an event. In the communication on the parking facility therefore the choice was made to highlight this reason of visiting the city, and to place the parking garage as such more on the background. This resulted in the motto for the parking garage being: "Hier begint het", it starts here.*
- The parking garage is primarily intended for visitors from outside the city. In the campaign they are therefore set out as the predominant target group.*
- Facilitate that event organizers promote the use of the St. Jan parking garage to their clients and attendees. And use digital media for this purpose. As an example the music festival Parade Open Air has added a message to their radio commercials the invitation to reserve a parking spot in the new St. Jan garage through their Facebook page.*
- A separate website was created: www.parkeergaragestjan.nl. This website plays a central role in digitally facilitating and seducing the city's visitors to park their car in the facility.*
- Promote the use of license plate reservation. The facility has been fitted with number plate recognition camera's. This enables a pre booking and payment service for parking spaces through the facility's website, for certain events.*
- To familiarize the public with the facility, a free parking trial was put forward as cost efficient method. Every inhabitant (one per address) was allowed to fill in up to two different license plate numbers through the website. This allowed them to park for free for two full days on a preferred moment. This could both be their own number*

plate, or some else's. Also different free trial sessions were set out. Those schemes all together have generated a total of 3326 reservations over a period of three months.

- The use of multiple media channels such as:
 - A twitter account, the city's Facebook page, some promotional clips drawing the direct link between the goal of the visit and the parking garage. Those clips are screened before the film of the local movie theatre as well as displayed on the theatre's website.
- Try to engage visitors to come back more frequently
- Make sure the website was generated through search engines when browsing for "parking & Den Bosch". Therefore it was also necessary that all the local events and the organisations for parking were referencing to this website.

Impact & outcomes

Cost: Opening a new parking garage always involves a some form of communication or campaign. Such a campaign normally features one theme, through one channel. The development of a broad multimodal communication campaign accounts for most of the costs. In this case also the development of the website, the reservation module and the realization and implementation of the promotional actions. One have to take into account that those elements will increase the budget with an additional 50%. Those costs will have to be earned back by visitors finding their way to the parking facility more swiftly and by the city administration, as the facility operator, receiving insights and data on the visitors and reasons to visit. This to intelligently use to boost the re-visiting rate of the facility. The goal is also for shop-owners and entrepreneurs of the inner city to continue this campaign on their own terms.

Measured effect: The effect of the campaign is hard to measure, because with the opening of the new St. Jan parking facility a new parking situation was created. It is hard to establish whether by the campaign, and especially the digital part, the visitors have found their way to this parking lot more swiftly.

No side effect were established.

Barriers / constraints and how they have been overcome

Lessons learnt

It is not for granted that inside a city administration which have been spearheading a successful P+R policy for years, to find support for a promotional campaign of a parking garage just outside the city core. Therefore it is possible that visitors on the approach roads are solely directed towards the existing P+R facilities and to the new parking garage.

Not every entrepreneur is ready to take, already in advance, responsibility for the parking demands of their visitors and clients. Some evidence has proven that they are for instance

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unaware about the current parking tariffs and times in the city center.

Both the within the city administration as well the retail sphere there was some reluctance towards a digital promotional campaign for a parking garage.

Success factors

Having support for the digital approach across the different departments of the city administration. As well support for this approach from external stakeholders: the tourist office, the retailers association, event's organisers, theatre et cetera. Producing testimonials with satisfied users of the digital parking tool.

Potential failing factors

- *Faltering technology. This new approach had to prove itself. Therefore there was not much room for technical hick-ups.*
- *Unknown makes unloved*
- *Timing. Launching a digital campaign with primary role for the local shop owners is difficult to combine with having a broad and general information campaign on the opening of the facility.*
- *Perseverance. Once chosen for a digital approach, it takes a while before this approach becomes the new standard. In all communication this digital approach will be the primary focus.*

Remarks

- *Making a reservation for a parking spot is something that is becoming more commonly spread at airports, but at other locations this practise is not so commonly spread.*
- *Using the license plate to gather data on the use of the parking garage is not yet on top of the priority list of parking management office of the city. Crossing the bridge between the commercial use of the use for parking management purposes is still work in progress.*

Translation of the Dutch document Parkeren en gedrag - Een totaaloverzicht van alle relevante kennis op het gebied van parkeren en gedrag (CROW).

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Park4SUMP has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 769072.

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