

ECOMM 2003

“Clever Kids Travel with Public Transport” – An Integrative Marketing Strategy by the Styrian Transport Association

Workshop 1d: How can public transport meet the increased mobility demand?

Speaker: Cosima Pilz

Organisation: Austrian Mobility Research – AMOR

Country: Austria

e-mail address: pilz@fgm.at

Preamble

What are the differences between McDonalds and Public Transport Companies?

Aside from the fact, that these companies offer different products, they differ distinctly in their marketing concepts. McDonalds works very successfully because they have recognised children and youths as a very important target group for their products.

What about Public Transport Companies?

Children and youths are one of the most important user-groups of Public Transport. Hardly any commercial enterprise has a product which is used by the majority of an age group which can still be influenced longer term.

Due to the ever increasing trend of more and more liberalisation for public transport this could be a big chance for Public Transport Companies to win new clients with a tailor-made marketing strategy. Unfortunately, only a few PT companies have realized this.

On the contrary: Usually kids in busses and trams are hardly recognised as adequate members of the society neither by grown-up PT-users nor by the employees of PT companies. As soon as children start using PT on their own, they often make bad experiences with other adults giving them the feeling that they are not really desired in busses and trams and that they are the ones responsible for vandalism in busses and trains. In the course of time this negative image increases. Small wonder that as soon as youths are allowed to drive by themselves they switch to the car. Unlike Public Transport, car-advertising consider children and youths as the foremost good in society so that they feel in good hands when becoming car-drivers.

A first step to change this situation was set by the Styrian Transport Association and the Austrian Mobility Research by creating an integrative marketing strategy for all primary schools in Graz, which was carried out in 3 workpackages.

Step 1: Teaching-material: “Clever Kids travel with Public Transport”

Creating an integrative education model on Public Transport in Graz including pioneer pedagogical and didactically sophisticated concepts and new forms of dissemination. A briefcase with five fully edited teaching-lessons containing games, work sheets, slides, and background information were developed by using modern and child adequate teaching methods.

Content:

- ✂ Behind the Scenes of a Transport Association
- ✂ Route Scouting
- ✂ Schedules ‘R’ Us
- ✂ The Ticket - Your Passway to Route Scouting
- ✂ What does this cost?

Step 2: How to motivate teachers to integrate the teaching material in regular lessons?

To reach the highest possible identification with the teaching material two mobility managers of AMOR visited all primary schools in Graz (about 50 schools). They held exemplary lessons in various classes in order to show teachers how to use the material in the best way.



Step 3: Evaluation and building of a teacher focus-group

Before, during and after the lessons a qualitative and quantitative survey was carried out. With this two aims were to achieved: On the one hand the developed material and its handling could be evaluated, on the other hand the discussions with the teachers served to raise their awareness concerning Public Transport and to inform them about the mobility system as a whole. In addition to that the mobility managers gained insight about the needs of the teachers, which helped to further improve activities. The evaluation of the data shows that there are teachers who are interested in working in a focus-group in order to motivate other colleagues to integrate this issue more in traditional lessons.

The Educational Concept:

A marketing strategy must be tailored to the individual wants, if it is to be successful. Therefore it is important to have knowledge about the volume, the structure and the preference of the target group. To create tailor-made teaching material requires a lot of pedagogic skills in order to develop the right profile for each age-group. In "Clever Kids" an interdisciplinary project team of educators and public transport experts worked together to reach the highest possible success. One aim of the action was that those teachers and students using the material should feel comfortable and understood. "Winning instead of loosing" and "having fun" were the mottos of this new approach.

Respecting of young people as an important target group for PT companies

As our mobility attitudes are deeply influenced by our experiences in childhood, young people were addressed on the one hand as clients of today, on the other hand as clients of tomorrow. Kids and youths, were praised for their exemplary mobility behaviour, because most of them use environmentally friendly transport modes and are experts of PT. Under the motto "children are teaching adults how to use public transport in the best way" they should also motivate adults to use PT more often.

Closing the information-gap about Public Transport

It is understood that people learn how to drive a car. Usually nobody learns how to use a public transport system most efficiently.

This lack of information is one obstacle which keeps people from using public transport.

Who is to teach children about transport routes, how to use time tables, which tariff systems are the best, pros and cons of different transport modes?

Parents often are not familiar with the Public Transport System especially given that usually they are car-users.

Experiences in collaboration with schools have shown that the issue PT is very hesitantly integrated in traffic education as teachers are often car-users and they are scared, that this means also a change of their mobility behaviour as they are prominent role models for kids. It was assumed that external consultants could help to overcome this obstacle.

Results of the Integrated Marketing Strategy:

- ✍ Direct marketing for about 50 schools, about 1300 students could be reached
- ✍ Oral interviews with about 60 teachers
- ✍ About 250 teachers filled in the quantitative questionnaire
(rate of return: 94 %)

Summary of the oral interviews:

All teachers were enthusiastic about the new approach of materials, especially of the new didactics and the playful methods. They agreed with the pedagogical concept of the "Clever Kids" and wanted to continue in this sense. Some of the teachers complained that the traditional traffic education is out-of-date concerning the content as well as the methods of teaching.

Before starting the campaign the project team set up the hypothesis, that mobility behaviour of the teacher correlates with the commitment of the teacher. This could be confirmed during the project. In fact teachers coming to school by car agreed to integrate Public Transport in common traffic-education, but the commitment differs from those who walk, cycle or use Public Transport on their way to school. The latter were proud to be praised as a prominent role model, they feel reassured especially because the fear of being ridiculed continues.

"My colleagues laughed about me, because I walk to school" (verbatim teacher).

Some teachers stated that due to the ever increasing rate of car-transport children more and more lose their perception of space and aggression is also increasing.

Summary of the lessons:

Children felt very much recognised by this kind of mobility education especially when they realized that it had nothing to do with traditional traffic education. During the lessons the knowledge of the children about the Public Transport System could be made visible, they liked to learn, because the content of the program addressed their needs when using public transport after school. They were keen to show time-tables and route maps to their parents under the motto "children are teaching adults how to use public transport in the best way". Lots of pupils using the Public Transport every day had big knowledge and taught the others, who were not familiar with the system. They were happy to be (maybe for the first time) praised as PT-experts. Top rated were the "Transport association Memory", a game with 38 cards, where kids had to find two cards (one card shows the number of the bus- or tram route, the other shows a station), that fit together and the "cost disc".

Summary of the questionnaire:

Number of teachers in primary schools: n=226 (rate of return: 94 %)

99 % of the teachers stated, that it is important to integrate Public Transport and other alternative transport modes in traffic education. This means that the teachers have recognised that car-use has negative effects on the quality of living and on the environment. To what extent this means they are willing to change their mobility behaviour, cannot be said.

Most of the asked teachers consider PT in Graz as environmentally friendly, expensive and not friendly to kids.

96 % of the teachers stated, that there is a need of information about PT, which means a confirmation for the carried out action.

Teachers are keen to get teaching material, games and external consulting. This is also a confirmation for being on the right path.

35 teachers have seen the exemplary lessons, 33 of them stated that the lessons were an enrichment for their lessons, 2 persons stated that this is not " the duty of the school".

61 % of the teachers come to school by car, only 12 % use PT. Looking at these figures it becomes apparent that special marketing strategies for teachers would be needed.

6 % of the teachers are keen to work in a focus group about Public Transport because of the reasons "interest", "makes sense to raise the awareness of others", "the good pedagogical concept".

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- ✗ Schools are an important target-group for Public Transport companies for marketing strategies as they are able to reach lots of people (students, teachers, parents) with (relatively) little effort
- ✗ Basically most of the young people like using PT, give young people respect as important clients for PT (address young people with various give aways, be open-minded for their needs and requests) so that they need not to switch to the car when they get older
- ✗ Close the information gap which keeps people from using PT
- ✗ To win schools as partners for PT companies it is important to have high quality standards because more and more commercial companies are also interested in this target group.
High quality means:
 - Knowledge of the curriculum
 - Experience in the contact with teachers and students
 - Not only specialised knowledge but also knowledge about new didactical methods
 - New pedagogical approach (differences to traditional traffic education)
 - Integrate factor "Fun"
- ✗ External consulting is often needed

A network of interested teachers will collaborate in form of regularly meeting focus-groups with the aim to empower ambitious teachers, support the exchange with others, show them how to use the teaching-materials and create new materials and games for older classes.

If marketing is to work successfully - so that the image of the public transport system can be improved - each strategy must be tailored to the individual wants. Often public transport companies have not enough knowledge about the needs of their youngest clients and teachers don't teach about PT, because they don't use it themselves. Therefore it is important that marketing-experts find new methods how to make the information more comprehensible and it is especially important to also address the emotional needs of the youngsters. Although it is often cited in speeches that mobility starts in the brain, a holistic approach to mobility management should also take into consideration that mobility starts in the heart. Therefore use only positive affirmation and address the three marketing-keywords: freedom, prestige and love.

The project "Clever Kids Travel with Public Transport" is a shining example, of what successful mobility management can do. It can serve as a prominent role model for other European transport companies. The teaching material can be downloaded at the PROVIDER web-page in six languages: www.schoolway.net

Speaker:

Forschungsgesellschaft Mobilität -
Austrian Mobility Research
FGM-AMOR gemeinnützige GmbH
Cosima Pilz
Schönaugasse 8a,
A – 8010 Graz,
e-mail: pilz@fgm-amor.at
www.fgm-amor.at
www.schoolway.net