

## “MobiHarz”-project: Integrated mobility management and services for visitors

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Concerning main topic 1 g – Services and products for the traveller

### Basic project information

The “MobiHarz”-project as both a research and implementation project has two strategic aims:

1. Gaining empirical based knowledge on tourism/- and leisure mobility
2. Improving intermodal mobility of visitors (tourism, day trips) in order to reduce car use by demonstrating a combination of different solutions.

The project focuses particularly at day trips and short holidays. Excursionists are a group of visitors payed only little attention concerning integrated measures although they cause substantial negative impacts.

MobiHarz refers to Wernigerode district in the eastern part (former GDR) of the Harz mountains in the middle of Germany. The region is an important German tourism destination and recreation area for the surrounding agglomerations (like Hannover, Braunschweig, Magdeburg, Halle, Leipzig).

The project is funded by the federal ministry of education and research. It has started in 2001 and is standing 2003 in the implementation phase.

The consortium nests around the two main poles:

- ? interdisciplinary scientific partners (social scientists, psychologist, transport planners, tourism consultants, IT experts) and
- ? different regional partners for implementation (local and regional authorities, tourist agencies, transport operators and authorities).

### Problem setting

Private, individual motorised vehicles have an overwhelming modal share of all leisure trips to the Harz mountains (93%) and *within* the destination resp. during the reported day trip (90% including alternative transport modes within a journey). Generally, the average distances of leisure trips as well as the overall kilometers travelled for leisure purposes except holidays have been getting longer and longer and are stabilising on high level since the mid 90ies (federal German ministry for traffic 2001). But (short) holidays may show other developments. The car use in tourism and leisure transport is seen not only as a result of inappropriate infrastructure for alternative transport modes, but also as a consequence of insufficient information and marketing efforts. Therefore, the integration of transport modes as well as additional mobility services and multi-channel information is regarded a key factor to foster alternative modes of transport.

Even if the negative effects of individual motorised traffic are locally not or not yet high enough to motivate restrictive measures against motorised vehicles, the improvement of tourism is always a reason and a motivation to enhance marketing actions – and they can be taken as a chance for a joint development of mobility management.

The advantages of combined mobility and economic profits for each participant (particularly transport operators) can and should be coupled. An economic argumentation is necessary, because the public budgets are not well balanced and sustainability is not an important issue in the Harz region despite the high value, tourists pay to clean and “untouched” nature. The usual aim of tourism marketing to gain more visitors should not lead to higher negative impacts of traffic.

### Approach

The MobiHarz project comprises both empirical research and work packages (WP), which

implement a strategy to foster sustainable modes of leisure transport by optimising services and infrastructure as well as offering integrated information on tourism and mobility.

The empirical WPs have been finished, parallel to the empirical research the working groups started to implement an improvement of infrastructure, service and information in 2001. So the development of measures could be linked with empirical results.

### **Research design**

The research design has been concentrated on the identification of target groups for different forms of soft mobility<sup>1</sup>. The formation of target groups should help to better analyse and explain the mobility of tourists, improve transport demand models and – relevant for this paper – develop appropriate measures of mobility management by taking into account the attitudes and habits of the tourists.

According to the scientific knowledge, that structural data of persons does not sufficiently explain or predict their behaviour, the definition of target groups was based on attitudes and motivations. In the given context general attitudes (lifestyles) and leisure mobility orientations have been chosen. Besides, the usual structural data were collected, too.

The research was based on both qualitative and quantitative surveys in the touristic destination in the Harz as well as in the main catchment area for tourists (150 km resp. two hours of journey; "MobiHarz" State of the art, Brunsing 2001).

Before the quantitative survey took place, intensive qualitative interviews have been carried out by the Institute for Social-ecological Research (ISOE, Frankfurt). The aim was to explore the motives for Harz visits and the travel habits as well as the social background and main attitudes and preferences concerning leisure, travelling and information habits. In the following phase, quantitative surveys with standardised questionnaires were carried out both in the Harz destination and in the main catchment area, each with about 2.000 interviews. The identical items of both surveys had been empirically tested in another research project<sup>2</sup>. In order to build lifestyle groups with different general orientations and attitudes towards mobility, a cluster analysis based on these items was carried out. The sample was clustered around ideal starter cluster based on the results of the intensive qualitative interviews. Seven lifestyle groups were distilled. In a 2<sup>nd</sup> step, these lifestyle groups were described with all the other attributes in order to get a comprehensive profile. The description was done separately in order to take into account the differences between the Harz visitors on the one hand and the interviewed persons in the catchment area on the other hand. The sample of Harz visitors is not representative, because it is methodologically not possible to get a random sample of visitors in a greater area without knowing the total number and structure of the Harz tourists. The given sample can therefore only be an approximative image of the visitors, even as the locations, where the interviews took place, are carefully chosen and cover all kinds of activities in the region.

Within the seven lifestyle groups, three target groups for measures of mobility management have been identified according to their affinity to 'soft mobility'. This attitude gives a notion of the potential for according measures. For example, the so-called "nature-related" (the 'label' tries to characterise the groups very shortly). The traditional attitude of these people goes with affection to nature. They want to avoid risks without feeling socially insecure. Walking is their preferred form of mobility and they have a positive attitude towards public transport. Leisure and car use are not closely related for this group.

### **Implementation of mobility management**

MobiHarz tries to better promote the Harz region as an attractive destination, which can be explored by different modes of transport – either without using the car. So it tries to promote alternative modes of transport via information services. On the other hand infrastructure and services for "soft mobility" have to be improved in order to get a product, which can be successfully promoted.

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<sup>1</sup> all transport modes except individual motorised vehicles

<sup>2</sup> Examples: „The meaning of life is for me to have as much fun as possible.“ (general social orientation) or "I can imagine to spend my spare time without car." (attitude towards leisure mobility). (ISOE 2002: "Leisure mobility styles", on behalf of the federal environment authority)

### **Optimising transport infrastructure and services for tourists**

MobiHarz focuses on improving mobility offers for tourists in the Harz region. This includes the public transport network in the Harz mountains, the Rübeld railway line as well as walking in Wernigerode city, cycle routes and mountain bike trails in the region.

#### **Public transport**

Public transport in this mostly rural area has to be adapted to the requirements of visitors - without neglecting the daily needs of the locals. As there is no additional project funding for the transport operation, the given resources have to be re-allocated. The knowledge of the tourist structure (origins of trips like the main accommodation centres and the main attractions) should lead to restructuring the public transport (lines and schedules). As the bus service is normally oriented to students and commuters, i.e. only covers the morning, lunch and the (later) afternoon hours, there are capacities for leisure purposes during the working day and, more important, for the weekend.

In cooperation of the MobiHarz project with the transport operators and authorities, the public transport network in the district of Wernigerode for the weekends will be restructured in summer 2003 by introducing a structure of lines and frequencies (1-2 hrs) as clear as possible. Optimised connections between buses and trains are important to allow day excursions from the catchment area into the remote mountain areas.

During the season from April to October bus services run through the national park, where no private cars are permitted, with clean gas vehicles. An additional, free service are rangers on board, explaining environmental issues.

Event oriented mobility for visitors is also offered in original steam trains, especially to a famous mountain top (no motorised accessibility).

Besides, packages with several transport modes (different kinds of public transport and walking/hiking; biking) are offered to those visitors who prefer to reduce their own organisational effort.

If the transport with fix schedules does not reach the critical mass of demand, flexible services like arranged passenger transport (Taxi-Bus-Services) can be implemented in cooperation with local taxi companies. Flexible services are important to be able to offer a 'guaranteed ride home' in order to minimise the fear of constricted mobility.

The challenge for the concept for the Rübeld railway, threatened to be closed because of low passenger numbers, is to transform the often negative connotated use of collective transport to an event and make it a part of the activity scheme. The experience of a beautiful landscape, interesting technical details (technical heritage) and the tourist attractions along the railway are the factors for the joint marketing focussing on excursionists. Unfortunately external developments (a complicated tendering procedure, which changed several times due to political changes and the intention of the federal railways to close the electrical railway) disturbed the process. On the other hand, these developments raised the motivation of the tourism stakeholders and local authorities along the railway to foster the passenger figures. The local political pressure helped to persuade the regional government and the German Rail to invest into the railway and to increase the offer. As one result of MobiHarz, a joint flyer will advert the tourist attractions and the Rübeld railway.

#### **Cycling and Mountain Biking**

Cycling and mountain biking are touristic market segments with a high potential, but starting at zero. In order to foster these sustainable modes resp. making it more sustainable concerning the arrival, MobiHarz developed cycling routes, that have been adapted to three kinds of user with different criteria: less sporty ambitious cyclists, ambitious cyclists and mountain bike for more sports and risk orientated target groups. In cooperation with Wernigerode City and the National Park authorities signposting and information products will be realised in 2003. The advantages of combining tours with public transport are pointed out (short cuts, wheater).

#### **Integrated information**

In tourist destinations usually a lot of offers can be found, but particularly for the non-motorised visitors the effort of getting advice and information is a high barrier to visit this

region without a car. In contrast, motorised visitors are better informed due to the hegemony of car use.

Visitors have to be assured before the trip, that non-motorised mobility does not mean reduced mobility, but that mobility management offers the opportunity to be individually informed about mobility patterns according to the personal needs. This general approach is particularly fruitful for non-habit situations like trips and holidays in an unknown environment. It has been empirically shown, that the visitors informed themselves before their visit the longer they stayed in the destination. In the given case it has been supposed, that either visitors for one day could be reached by compact information and influence their behavior at least concerning further visits<sup>3</sup>.

In the Harz mountains mostly separately operating tourism agencies inform tourists about their very local area. The tourist agencies, particularly the help desks, are by far the most important source of information used by the Harz visitors during their stay. But, apart of some coach or steam train excursions, the mobility issue is not touched. On the other hand, the transport companies, which have a marginal information effect for visitors, are the only institutions dealing with public transport.

The implementation of the mobility management – the so called “HarzTourService” - had to be founded on the existing information and marketing structures in order to avoid greater financial efforts and to build on the given and widely accepted channels. An intensive communicative process started involving the responsible persons of the tourist information agencies, the transport companies and the authorities. This effort lead to broad and stable results with the explicit aim to last after the end of the project.

The HarzTourService as a *de-centralised mobility and tourism service* offers integrated information about activities, points of interest (POI), accommodation and their accessibility as perhaps the most important product for visitors. A brochure (*HarzTourGuide*) is offered at 20 HarzTourPoints in the district (the tourist information offices of all cities and villages, bus operator centre, railway stations and National Park information centres) as well as on the internet. The print media is complementary to the face-to-face information and can be purchased for a small fee and used on the way. This service includes information for the visitor about interesting details (e. g. opening time, fares/reductions, further information etc.), who so far had to contact fractal sources of information. The design is more traditional according to the target groups preferring this media channel.

The offers are arranged around topics and themes (e.g. culture & history, sports & wellness, nature, mobility). The empirical knowledge about information behaviour and needs of the target groups supported the development of this service on all levels: printed products for the more traditional groups, IT-solutions for the more innovative groups.

As it is not sufficient to deposit some flyers on the desk, the counter staff has to be motivated and trained. This is important because you break through professional competences and change daily work. Tourism staff should now inform on mobility options, public transport staff should inform about tourist attractions, the local tourist information should inform about all the regional offers.

On the longer run the network of distribution should become more dense. Accommodation companies and attractions will distribute the HarzTourGuide either. As the guide contains a lot of very detailed information, regular updates are absolutely necessary.

The internet version focuses the technically interested target groups. (Potential) visitors can plan their day in advance: they select simply what they want to do (activities and attractions) and are told how to get there by different modes of transport. Also visitors who arrived by car can be made interested for public transport by offering a combination of public transport trip, visit of attractions and walks/hikes. The system displays stops and stations nearby the POIs as well as the schedules and the walks to the stops. For hikes between two attractions a map and a profile of heights are produced. The chosen route for the day can be printed. Some tour suggestions will also be given, showing the variety of possibilities of this region with its long hiking tradition. The technical layout is according to the partialities of the target groups.

Comment: für welche Zielgruppe?

<sup>3</sup> Only 15% of the interviewed Harz visitors were there for the first time, tourists more than excursionists.

To reduce maintenance costs of the system, the solution of a self updating system has been chosen. Interested tourism stakeholders can register and add their offer (hotel, attraction) by positioning it on an interactive map and adding further details.

Not only the services have to be eager for visitors, but also the fares and the ticketing. The *HarzTourCard*, which offers for three days free use of public transport in the region and reduced fares or free access to attractions, is promoted, too. Beyond this, efforts are made to develop a tourist card for the whole Harz Mountains destination.

Bikers and cyclists with their particular information request will not only be informed with brochures or on the internet about the route suggestions, but also about the attractions along the route and the opportunities of taking along the bike with public transports. These brochures, due to their large content not integrated in the *HarzTourGuide*, will also be offered at the *HarzTourPoints* and in bike shops and hotels interested in it.

### **Lessons learned**

Joint research and implementation projects – does it work?

The regard that there is not 'the visitor', but defined groups of visitors with particular requirements is to be transferred to the implementation partners. As they usually play a more passive role or do not cross fixed competences and their decisions are usually not based on empirical data, it is hard to break through given structures, install new ones and integrate a lot of scientific information. Not only the different 'languages' used, but also the muddling through of implementation partners as well as the scientific correctness are to be related to each other. Another problem is, that some working packages started already before the end of the research phase, because working groups of partners, who rarely had contact before, need a lot of time to get agreements about the proceeding. These are critical aspects, that should not deny the necessity.

Target groups based on orientations and attitudes – a promising strategy for mobility management?

The scientific experiences show, that for the explanation of mobility behavior an approach beyond structural data is necessary, same for promising marketing activities. But the efforts made in this project are exceptional due to the funding. As in the normal case there are limited means for surveys, it is at least recommended to cross the borders of the habituated proceeding resp. target group(s) towards more differentiation resp. new target groups (concerning the Harz: to have also other groups in mind than only traditional elderly hiking).

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, the project shows the opportunities of an integrated development of existing mobility and information/marketing structures towards a more sustainable mobility of visitors. The financial effort can be kept low, the more existing structures and products are integrated. To tackle the problems linked with the predicted rise of tourism and leisure mobility, new approaches and examples of best practises are needed.