

IMPLEMENTATION OF “PERSONALIZED” PT MARKETING CAMPAIGN IN LANGADAS

Country: Greece

OVERVIEW

Short description of the Good Practice Case:

The Good Practice was implemented in the Municipality of Langadas at the border of Thessaloniki conurbation (20 kms far from the inner centre), in Greece. The municipality of Langadas consists of 7 Local Municipal Entities covering 1220 Km². It consists of a rural area with a low population density of just 41.103 residents (according to 2011 census of Greek Statistics Services). The area is mostly hilly and mountainous, covered by forests and rich with lakes, gulches and rivers, being included in the ecosystem of “*Koroneia – Volvi – Riheios river – Macedonian Tembi*” that constitutes one of the eleven most important biotopes of Greece.

The personalized PT marketing campaign was carried out by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with the support of the local PT Operator, OASTh. The implementation of a strong “*face-to-face*” information campaign addressed to citizens can overcome some of the behavioural barriers for using PT service in peri-urban and rural areas, can produce tangible effects in terms of improved PT use (modal split) and can lead to a better

Main aspect/issue addressed by the good practice

Considering the selecting criteria (ToR, pag.9), the Good Practice relates to increasing ridership through good marketing campaign.

The bus offer is quite limited and largely affected by seasonality: the main connections link Langadas and surrounding rural areas with Thessaloniki. Some feeder bus services connect the other villages to the OASTh terminal in Langadas but they are underutilized as residents are not duly informed of them and they prefer to travel by car (as driver or passengers) to reach it. When the marketing campaign was designed, OASTh was convinced to cut again the service offer limiting it to the main feeder services between Langadas and the surrounding villages and rural area.



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understanding of target users’ needs through a closer engagement/participation of citizens to PT design. The campaign is based on a “*face-to-face*” approach with the citizens to be implemented through a wide range of initiatives then it is strongly “*customers oriented*” as requested by a proper “*marketing approach*” which is not still well consolidated in PT.

Main objectives of the good practice

The “*personalized*” marketing campaign organized by AUTH/OASTh complied with the needs of target users and of the PT Operator as well. On one hand, the campaign was targeted to overcome negative perception and poor awareness of available services promoting an increased used of already existing feeder services between the area surrounding Langadas and the interchange point with main connections towards the city of Thessaloniki. On the other hand, the campaign was designed to understand better the needs of the target groups in order to tailor the offer to be more easily sustainable over time and re-design the feeder services of rural area near Langadas.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

<i>Region</i>	<i>Target area</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Population density</i>
Regional Entity of Thessaloniki, Greece	Rural area of Langadas Municipality and small villages around 1.220 Km ²	41.103 <i>official 2011 census, Hellenic Statistics Authorities</i>	35 inhab. /km ²

Other

The administrative entity of Langadas Municipality was born from the aggregation of 7 former Local municipal Entities. The most populated municipal entity is Langadas (town of about 7.700 inhabitants) while the ones of Sochos and Koroneia follow having a population that ranges approximately from 4.000 to 6.000 residents; the other municipality entities have approximately between 2.000 and 4.000 residents. As a total, the 7 municipal entities include 46 settlements that vary in size from 57 residents to the maximum number of residents in Langadas (7.700). The maximum distance between Thessaloniki and any settlement in the county is approximately 90 km, and the minimum 14 km.

On the whole, the population of the municipality of Langadas increased by about 5% from 2001 to 2011. The proportion of elderly people (65+) in Langadas Entity is 27.9 percent, far higher than the respective proportion for the prefecture of Thessaloniki as a whole (13.86 %). As far as the gender distribution, the population is equally divided between female and male. As far as the population's economic activities, over a total of 11.590 working citizens, 1.883 work on the primary sector, 2831 in the secondary while 6.876 work in the tertiary sector. 3.443 citizens face unemployment.

Target user groups and needs

The "personalized" marketing campaign organized by AUTH/OASTh did not address any specific target group even elderly people (which represents a large part of all the residents) could be considered the potential users of Public Transport with more flexible transport needs and not familiar with the latest technological developments.

The total number of residents involved in the "personalized" marketing campaign was 725 household (for a total of about 1800 citizens). They were divided into two groups: the panel group consisting of 502 households and the control group consisting of 223 households. The panel was the group addressed by the "personalized" marketing campaign and the control one (baseline) was the group used as benchmark to assess the impacts of the campaign in terms of increased use of PT.

The data collected in the ex-ante evaluation related to the number of trips weekly carried out by the citizens involved in the two groups, the modal split, the number of the trips carried out by citizens in each PT line (providing

feeder services from the area around Langadas to main interchange stop in Langadas and from Langadas to Thessaloniki), the reasons why citizens used or did not use PT lines and needs analysis (suggestions for PT improvement). The ex-ante data collection showed that motorized private transport, either car or motorcycle, is the most popular transport mode with a 32,5% share for drivers and 12% share for passengers. Public Transport has a significant share of modal split (21%). Walking amounts to a 29% share, cycling has only a 4,5% modal share and taxi is under 1%.

The travel needs related to trips from Langadas to Thessaloniki: large part of citizens use their own car to reach Langadas interchange bus stop and then to use the bus: line n°83 connecting Langadas with Thessaloniki is well known and more frequently used by the citizens whereas the feeder lines n°85, 86, 91 were underutilized.

The level of satisfaction of the lines use was 6,67 over 10 which meant the service acceptance was fairly

Target user groups and needs

positive even if there was large room for improvements. The reasons for preferring the use of the car rather than the use of PT were identified in the long travelling time of feeder services and waiting times at interchange bus stop but the reason to use public transport to reach Thessaloniki were the cheaper costs of the travel

(compared to the costs of the petrol that time) and the time savings for not searching for parking at the destination.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Timeframe(s)

The ex-ante evaluation took place in the summer 2015, the *"personalized"* marketing campaign in the first six months of 2016 and the ex-post evaluation after the campaign in June 2016.

Bodies involved

The *"personalized"* marketing campaign involved the following stakeholder: OASTH, the urban transport operator in Thessaloniki which operate the PT lines and some local citizens associations. The local water company made available a database of target people to which address the campaign.

Mobility services provided/addressed

The objective of the *"Active Mobility"* campaign was to promote the use of PT via personalized travel marketing approach. The word *"active"* has a two-fold meaning: from one hand, it referred to a *"more proactive"* process of informing (current and potential) customers according to their individual needs; from the other, it is more than a pure provision of information. The panel group of citizens were informed about PT lines and feeder services through written information, *"face-to-face"* talks, practical traveller training, citizen participation in service planning of guided tours for showing feeder services.

Legal Framework

The institutional framework does not allow the provision of public transport services other than on a fixed route basis. In Greece there is not a specific policy addressing rural mobility and defining the strategies for ensuring adequate transport services for rural population.

The issues related to transport and mobility in rural areas, in most cases, are being deferred to the Regions, which plan the transport service independently. One PT Operator per prefecture (regional units/sub-areas of a Region) has the exclusively right to provide PT services in its area. Usually there is one for serving the main capital city of each prefecture and one for any other transport connection of the capital city of the prefecture with other cities and settlements.

Cost and Financing sources

The cost of the promotional campaign was Euro 28.539,37 including: staff costs relating to set up the database of the citizens sample and the questionnaire of the survey, to carry out the campaign (about 90 person-days) and to complete follow up analysis, costs for information material, gadgets. The campaign was co-funded within the SmartMove project by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises (EASME) which was established by the EU Commission. The project ran from February 2014 to January 2016.

Organizational set-up

The *"personalized"* marketing campaign was carried out by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Supporting technologies

- N/A

INNOVATION ASPECTS

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The role of an “external” actor coordinating the campaign brought an innovative approach and a different perspective to carry out the campaign. The result is a campaign more oriented to marketing approaches of other business sectors rather than what is traditionally carried out in Public Transport.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

N/A

Any change in the level of public sector financial support is allowed by the national regulation.

On-going debate is taking place on a new act to be promoted, in accordance with the EC Regulation 1370/2007 which forces the awarding of Public Transport services to private operators, after an open and competitive process

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SHARED AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Only Public Transport services on fixed routes are allowed by national regulation. The case study highlights how innovative customers and citizens engagement strategies can be used to better cope with the requirements of improving interconnection between urban and interurban services.

ICT CONNECTIONS AND IMPACTS OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED

N/A

Technological issues not involved in this case study

OTHER (E.G. SOCIAL INNOVATION, ETC.)

The campaign fostered a more strict involvement of citizens in the service assessment and it enabled to close the gaps between the users needs and the PT offer.

ASSESSMENT

The “personalized” marketing campaign achieved a response rate of 81%.

Feedback received via the questionnaire, including complaints and possible improvements, was shared with the local transport operator. This analysis brings to restructure the feeder lines in order to reduce the travelling time and optimize the interchange time at Langadas main bus stop.

Comparing the level of use of PT between the panel group of users (to whom the campaign was applied) and the control group in the ex-post evaluation, 6,67 % of people reported to have increased public transport use. This result must be also evaluated taking into account that petrol became cheaper during the period the campaign took place: the costs went from Euro 1,57 to Euro 1,32. This factor clearly impacted on the results as the reason for using public transport to move to Thessaloniki was to save money compared to the car use.

The other key results of Langadas’s active mobility campaign are as follows:

- Participants who felt better informed about the local public transport options: 76.2%
- Those who felt motivated to reduce car use: 22.7%
- Those who increased their use of public transport took, on average, 4.4 fewer trips by car per week, according to the post-campaign survey. That translated into a reduction of CO₂ emissions of 70.4 tonnes per year.

Good Governance

The case study demonstrates how good cooperation between Public Transport stakeholder (OASTH, the service Operator) and external actors (the Aristotle University, the local association and communities) can success in implementing innovative way to engage the Public Transport customers and the citizens and better plan the service to answer to the mobility needs.

Success factors/strengths

A key success factor is the implementation of innovative modalities/processes of customer satisfaction survey and needs analysis. These innovative approaches can replace the traditional data collection campaign which can be ineffective in the context (such the rural one) when the Public Transport suffers from a bad image and citizens feel their opinion is not historically taken into account to improve the service.

Difficulties encountered/weakness

The bad perception of Public Transport among the citizens was a barrier in the start up face of the marketing campaign as the citizens need to be convinced that the objective of the Public Transport stakeholder was really to listen their opinion and needs and to define suitable solutions to answer to them.

On the other side, a weakness point of the marketing campaign was the number of involved participants which is statistically significant in Langadas but still low (due to the dimension of the site). The change in the framework conditions (the increase of petrol costs between the ex-ante and the ex-post evaluation) could have biased the results of the analysis as some people could have been forced to use Public Transport despite the marketing campaign itself.

Anyway the innovative approach to re-think Public Transport marketing actions breaking out the former traditional habits has demonstrated to produce good results even in similar experience involving a higher population.

FEATURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD PRACTICE (LESSON(S) LEARNT)

The Good Practice shows as a “face-to-face” marketing campaign of PT based on a mix of “pro-active” actions and aiming at establishing a closer link with potential users and customers can achieve a two-fold result:

- to improve the awareness of the available services in rural are,
- assess the users needs in order to improve the service planning making it more close to the real need of users.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Contact of the operator and of relevant stakeholders

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Key references

- www.smartmove-project.eu/news/65/83/Cheap-petrol-blunts-impact-of-Langadas-campaign.html

Websites

- www.smartmove-project.eu/regions/langadas-greece.html