Key *messages*

from the **parking** sector

www.europeanparking.eu

THE PROBLEM, THE CHALLENGE

The parking industry needs to get better at selling the benefits of properly managed parking and persuading drivers of the true cost of parking. The accepted best practice in the off street parking industry has been for providers to aim for an "unnoticed" or "seamless" product without any hassle: it should just be available, just like fresh air. People just start complaining when it's not there. But there is evidence to suggest that this does not encourage consumers to appreciate the true cost, and value, of the service. It may be that providers of off street parking should consider more ways of making the quality, added-value aspects of their service more noticeable to consumers at the point of purchase. Also where quality of the off street parking service has developed considerably over the last ten years, public perception about parking is still poor and not appreciating the value. This poor public perception has been echoed by media, politicians and retailers over the past two decades which have drawn public attention to the parking industry, both on and off street.

The parking industry failed to deal with this negative media coverage effectively and has often been pushed into defensive actions, but in the past few years the local authorities and some private contractors have developed new approaches to communication, which means that the industry is more open and transparent, and works harder to build public support for its parking strategies. A media strategy is not the only part of a successful public relations strategy – but it is arguably the most important, as the media in most European urban centres is an important opinion former.

DEVELOPING THE MESSAGES

The parking industry across Europe needs to get better at building the business case for realistic pricing for on street parking as for off street parking. Currently the public does not expect to pay the true cost of parking cars in urban areas.

We do have anecdotal evidence, but we believe that the industry needs to work harder to identify the true cost of providing parking, and then building public support for paying the true cost. This can happen on a pan-European basis as a framework, but the foremost emphasis of the campaign should be at national, regional and local levels, as parking is basically a local problem and prerogative of local planning authorities. On the other side consistent messages will help getting the right message across Europe.

COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE

Develop key messages

The examples quoted in the next chapter can be used as a starting point, but may need to be revised and enhanced on a national basis. The messages should be as concise as possible, and ideally the messages should be consistent for all different audiences (media, public and other stakeholders) in local markets. The next chapter provides detailed messages and also concise alternatives (the latter designed for use in media relations, for example). They should be suitable for proactive marketing and PR campaigns, but also for reactive comments in response to media inquiries or approaches from other stakeholders. The aim is to achieve a consistency of message so that all communications, to any target audience, assist in building awareness and support of our message.

Identify the audiences

Main target audiences are:

1. Parking customers, consumers, car drivers

Confronted more and more with the true costs and the needs and values of parking, finally make their own choices from the mobility options available.

2. Government mobility and parking policy makers & politicians

Decide on regulations, zoning, parking rates and enforcement strategies, permissions for parking infrastructure (to be financed with public funding or private funding).

3. Other stakeholders like retail organisations

Need to be accessible for customers. Paid parking is often seen as obstacle for customer access, but free parking may attract non intended users (i.e. commuters) occupying the spaces for shopping customers.

Delivering the messages

Parking customers, consumers, car drivers

Parking customers and consumers are strongly influenced by media (press, radio, television, etc.). Media engagement typically happens on a tactical, opportunistic basis – and the parking industry across Europe could benefit from approaching this in a more proactive way. For example, all media commentators who cover parking should be proactively engaged with to ensure they receive positive messages about parking whenever they cover the issue. While they – and any opinion formers – are unlikely to quickly change their views, a consistent approach to the delivery of key messages will have the effect of moderating their views. National parking associations should consider to actively react to every negative comment in the press.

Similarly, local media can be targeted with proactive communications based around agreed key messages. The aim is to back up the car park provider in local markets with acknowledged experts (could be the national parking association; a position from which it will be much easier to advance the industry's agenda).

Planning authorities/government (local and national)

The media should be the first port of call in any strategic campaign, as they are likely to be the most influential opinion formers with reach across the broadest range of stakeholder groups.

Media campaigns should therefore be the starting point, but then backed up with formal engagement with political audiences at local and national level – both in terms of influencing planning authorities, but also influencing policymakers with proper information (white papers, showcases) to ensure the benefits of providing effective off street car parking are understood when it comes development of policies for the future.

Campaigners/business associations

Both these groups are, in general, likely to be opposed to the general concept of paying more for car parking – but they can be very vocal, and highly influential, especially with politicians at a local level, so they should be engaged with, informally if necessary, on similar terms to local media.

KEY MESSAGES

In this chapter key messages will be specified in **four clusters**:

1. Urban development & accessibility
2. Quality of urban public space
3. Costs & allocation
4. Sustainability & safety

Each key message will be translated to address **three types of audience**:

- Consumers
- Politicians and public agencies
- Other stakeholders

Urban development & accessibility

Message 1
The Scarce Resources in central urban areas

»In concentrated urban areas demand for access and parking regularly exceeds available capacity. Car drivers won't find a space and start searching and cruising.«

Consumers: In attractive areas where more people want to come by car as spaces available, visitors cannot find a parking space available and start searching and driving around. This is annoying for the visitors and time consuming, eventually being late for appointments. Residents of those areas are confronted with the same issues when coming back home.

Public authority: Cruising traffic with stop-and-go traffic causes pollution. Car drivers' attention is taken by searching and the risk for small accidents increases. As damage is usually light due to low speeds, victims usually will not need to be hospitalized and those accidents will not reach statistics.

Stakeholders: If visitors cannot get access to the retail and need to spend time searching, alternatives might be considered. Parking spaces might be occupied by workers around, not having any relationship with local retail.

Message 2
"Drive-in parking" is not always the best option

»In concentrated urban areas natural behavior (park in front of the door for free) needs to be changed. Visitors should understand coherence of parking behavior and quality of urban space.«

Consumers: Citizens and visitors need to be aware of the high value of parking in the central urban area. The value needs to be mirrored by quality of service of the parking product. Visitors to the central urban area will be informed about the alternatives for accessibility: either using the car as close as possible to the destination at high parking costs, either parking at walking distance or using Park & Ride facilities at lower costs. Only with knowledge about alternatives, smart choices can be made.

Public authority: Coherent policies for on and off street parking facilities in and around the central urban area, not to be positioned as competitors, but as one coherent system. At open parking areas (not controlled by barriers) customer behaviour in line with intended policies are to be maintained by strict enforcement. To low enforcement levels will evoke customer behaviour against the intended policy to maintain quality of public space.

Stakeholders: In central urban areas where available space is limited and must be allocated in an optimal way to the visitors, bringing added value to the area, occupation of space by commuter cars must be reduced as possible. Employers can contribute by proposing alternative transport modes to their inner city employees: either parking at walking distance or using Park & Ride facilities with local public transport or cycling if the distance allows such.

Message 3
Shared Parking Facilities are more effective

»Use of parking spaces is time constraint: one single parking space can over the day be used by one commuter or up to six visitors.«

Consumers: It must be clear that occupying a parking space for a whole working day of eight hours hinders several other visitors to the area, who could benefit of this parking space. A day of parking has to be valued and priced at the level of eight individual hours. Also residential parking has to be assessed in this background, considering other priorities.

Public authority: To share the available public space for parking for most possible visitors, time-based charging is essential. Every additional parking hour needs to be priced, to endeavour the citizens, not to leave their car in the city centre useless.

Stakeholders: It is important to maintain turnaround in the occupation of parking spaces. New visitors to the area bring new potential customers; commuters staying all day will not bring additional trade.

Message 4
Parking means value of convenient access

»Pricing of use of parking spaces should be based on value (close to attraction, safe and easy) for the beneficiary (not the consumer by definition).«

Consumers: The most valued parking spaces are usually those most convenient and closest to the main destination. Thus in terms of paid parking the most central parking facilities will show the highest prices. Alternative parking at some walking distance will show lower prices, compensating the inconvenience of walking. Visitors can make their own trade-off in terms of total price for parking during the visit (might be one hour or a full day) and the walking distance and related inconvenience (i.e. weather conditions). For residents parking at home is to be recognised as part of the value of the residence and its location in the city with all facilities at short distance.

Public authority: Creating different pricing zones for parking can balance capacity and demand in the specific zone. If the demand is still exceeding the capacity, the price of (long term/full day) parking could be increased. Additional revenue generated could be used to finance other accessibility provisions (i.e. better public transport or additional parking facilities (multistorey or underground)

Stakeholders: By balancing price and occupation accessibility for visitors can be assured. Especially by managing the price for long term (day) parkers those parkers might be influenced to use alternative parking facilities at an acceptable walking distance. This will free up parking capacity for visitors who are beneficial for the merchants/retailers. In major urban areas the alternative for day parking visitors might be using P+R facilities at low prices with local public transport.

Message 5

Select the best from available options to park

»Parking on street (incl. enforcement) and in multistorey or underground car park (incl. private operated) are one integrated bundle of options for the visitor to choose from.«

Consumers: Citizens and visitors of the central urban area will be informed about the alternatives for accessibility: either using the car as close as possible to the destination at high parking costs, either parking at walking distance or using Park & Ride facilities with local public transport. Also residents can value a parking facility immediately connected to the home or at some distance, however the trade-off will be different from visitors.

Public authority: Provide coherent policies for on street parking and off street parking facilities in and around the central urban area. On street parking facilities and off street facilities (also those privately operated facilities with public access) should not be positioned as competitors, but as one coherent system with consistent pricing schemes effectively supporting the local urban transport policy. On street parking penalties must be in line (read more expensive) than the cost of a full day of parking, taking into account the risk of getting fined.

Stakeholders: Built parking facilities, integrated in the destination functions will increase the quality and value of it. Shopping facilities with direct access to parking are better valued by visitors and retailers. Also parking attached to residential housing increases the value of the property.

Quality of public space in the urban area

Message 1

On street parking and quality for pedestrians

»Creation of more on street parking and parking lots in central urban areas decrease quality of public domain and pedestrian areas.«

Consumers: If capacity is to be enhanced with larger parking lots, this will come with longer walking. The public space around the attraction (shopping, leisure etc.) will lose quality. Large surface parking facilities exceed human scale and special guidance will be required to identify where the car was left behind.

Public authority: Increased parking areas for free parking jeopardise business cases for commercial land development. The area will be less attractive for functions, depending on quality of public space.

Stakeholders: Areas for shopping and leisure, well accessible but less parked cars visible, are better perceived in terms of quality. Retailers will benefit from this perceived customer quality.

Message 2

Smart Alternatives for on street parking: parking garages

»Parking garages are good alternatives for on street parking.«

Consumers: Enhancing parking capacity by building multistorey parking facilities reduces walking distances and provides a better overview for the customers as the floor levels can be clearly marked and identified. Customers are provided better weather protection. Also residents and employees can benefit from built parking facilities, however costs allocating fully to the residents/employees might be challenging.

Public authority: Multistorey car parks provide better ratios for commercial land development. Land for parking can be used for other commercial purposes. In urban areas usually the revenue of commercial land use will compensate the construction cost of the parking facility. If 400 spaces (10,000 sqm) will be replaced by a four storey car park, about 7,000 sqm will become available for development. A commercial price of 400 Euros per sqm will compensate completely the construction costs of a multistorey car park.

Stakeholders: A multistorey car park can be given direct access from a shopping centre, can even be integrated. Thus very short walking distances and convenience parking can be provided to the shopping customers.

Message 3

Best Of The Best: completely out of sight parking underground

»Underground car parks create maximum development capabilities for additional attractions to improve urban environment.«

Consumers: Underground parking facilities bring parking out of sight and provide the best quality of space. Parking can be directly connected with functions on top, reducing walking distances just to vertical mobility using elevators. Quality of the functions above ground (i.e. shopping centre) can be extended to the underground car park.

Public authority: Underground car parks provide complete freedom in developments above ground without any architectural restrictions. Development area can be commercialised at higher value due to parking facilities available.

Stakeholders: Underground car parks can be given direct access from functions on top at walking distances being zero, when using elevators. Quality of the function on top (i.e. shopping centre) can be continued in the underground car park. Purchased items pick-up service for visitors by car can be provided in the direct connected underground car park.

Costs & allocation

Message 1

Investing for future quality of life

»Replacement of on street parking by built parking facilities comes with high investments (underground car parks in central urban areas up to EUR 40,000 per space).«

Consumers: The use of built car parks normally has to be paid for. Remember: Also parking at home is not for free, despite it is not paid per use.

Public authority: Investments for construction can be covered by Public Private Partnerships for financing and operation. Private finance can be recovered by annual revenues, either paid by the actual user of the car park (customers) or by a third party beneficiary. Costs of parking could be included in the operational costs of the shopping centre which are part of the rent of the shopping area.

Stakeholders: Underground car parks can be directly connected to the destination functions, increasing the quality and value of it. Shopping facilities with direct access to parking have higher values. Also parking attached to residential housing has its costs and added value. A covered car port, detached at the residence occupies about 30 – 40 sqm of land and may cost about 10,000 – 20,000 Euros of investment and may represent about 30 – 50 Euros each month. A garage attached to the house represents a value between 25,000 and 45,000 Euros, representing about 125 – 225 Euros monthly costs incl. maintenance, insurance etc.

Sustainability & safety

Message 1

Direct guidance reduces search traffic

»Paid parking with parking guidance reduces search traffic and cruising.«

Consumers: Parking guidance, based on actual available data, helps visitors to find a parking space. This saves time and irritation.

Public authorities: Surveys in concentrated urban areas unveiled that about every third car is just cruising for an available space to park. Clear guidance to concentrated parking facilities reduces search traffic and emissions in concentrated urban areas.

Stakeholders: Accessibility of commercial functions (retail, offices) improves. Visitors experience less lost time and annoyance.

Message 2

Free parking is a fairy tale: somewhere the bill is paid

»Total costs of parking infrastructure in many cases exceed the parking rates. Nevertheless over 80 percent of all parking spaces are unlimited free of charge for the users.«

Consumers: Citizens and visitors of the central urban area need to be aware of the cost of a parking space in a (underground) parking garage. Individual choices have consequences for the local society and may occur indirect costs. Parking provided for less than actual costs or less occupied car parks need to be compensated from other sources, usually general funding, raised by taxes. ***Remember, also parking at home is not for free (message 1).***

Public authority: Free parking spaces on street and parking lots need to be maintained and cleaned as well. The costs need to be funded from other sources, usually raised by taxes. Paid on street parking usually generates positive cash flow, covering costs for free parking areas. Low cost permits for residents and local businesses for on street parking in central urban areas can create unfair costs and often oblige to build parking garages at high cost to accommodate visitors to the area.

Stakeholders: Providing free parking in over-demanded zones might lead to unintended side effects: visitors to other attractions in the area (i.e. commuters) might occupy the fee-offered parking spaces, thus not leaving any spaces for the intended visitors, arriving later. This leads to bad behaviour and frustration, leaving the business connected to the parking facility ultimately without the intended benefits from it.

Message 2

Store your car safe in a parking garage

»Parking in garages is safer than on street parking.«

Consumers: Cyclists and searching car drivers interfere less with each other. In built and well lit parking facilities the risk for car theft is about 10 percent compared to on street.

Public authorities: Less traffic accidents with manoeuvring cars in car parks vs on street.

Stakeholders: Traffic safety and environmental security improves the image of the area and the businesses attached. Damage caused with parking manoeuvres or during the parking stay impacts the businesses around negatively.

SUMMARY

The key reputational issue facing the parking industry across Europe is that drivers are not aware of the need to pay for the full cost of parking spaces. There is no such thing as a free parking space. The costs may not completely or directly be borne by the motorist, but the space is being paid for, for example in a higher price for goods and services in shopping centres, or in subsidies from tax payers in parking spaces on public roads. The average subsidy for parking across Europe is 300 Euros per taxpayer per year.

1. Properly managed car parking is essential to control traffic flow in busy urban centres. Without it, parking space becomes difficult to find and traffic becomes increasingly congested.
2. Off street car parking, if supplied by a professional provider, is the highest-quality and safest place to leave your car.
3. Off street car parking allows much more flexibility of time than on street parking.
4. Where off street car parking is given a proper priority by city planners, it creates streets with free flowing traffic, good quality pedestrian space and supports vibrant businesses in the urban areas.

MESSAGES FROM PARKING SECTOR	TARGETED AUDIENCE		
	Consumers	Public/Politicians	Stakeholders/Retail
1 Urban development & accessibility			
A. Demand exceeds space availability	Can't find parking space, cruising traffic	Cruising traffic, polluti-on, environment	Spaces occupied by workers, no access for customers
B. Change behaviour by creating awareness	Acceptance of paid parking by improved value for money	Consistent enforcement	Employee transport schemes
C. Occupation is time based	Parking for 8 hours costs more than for 2 or 3 hours	Time-based pricing, day rate minimum 8-10 hours	Turnaround parking im-proves customer access
D. Pricing based on value for the beneficial	Closest parking at highest price	Pricing zones for parking	Retail can refund parking for customers spending threshold
E. On street and off street: one integrated bundle of options	Inform about options for on street and off street parking	Coherent pricing sche-mes for rates and fines (fine > max day rate)	
2 Quality of public space			
A. Unlimited surface parking jeopardises public space	Huge parking lots incre-ase walking distance	Decrease of commercial land development	Shopping streets without parked cars are more appreciated by shopping customers
B. Multi level built parking facilities	Shorter walking distances	Better ratios in land development	Integration in store, direct access
C. Underground car parks	Direct access to destina-tions on top, safety, light & comfort inside	No architectural restrictions	Integration in store, direct access
3 Costs & allocation			
A. Costs of built parking facilities	Awareness, refer to parking at home	Public Private Partner-ships for financing and operating parking facilities	Share costs of parking with customers by loyalty programs
B. Total cost of parking, free parking doesn't exist	Awareness, refer to parking at home	Increase cost of on street permits for residents	Unintended side effects, unauthorised use of parking
4 Sustainability & safety			
A. Parking guidance reduces search traffic	Easier to find an availab-le space, less annoyance	Less search traffic and emissions in central urban areas	Easier access to retail & offices, time savings
B. Parking in garages is safer than on street parking	Less car theft & burglary, less accidents between cyclists and cars	Reduction of accidents, safer cycling	Safe traffic environment improves image of the area

Imprint

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