

Q-Park and The Meadows:

“How Car Parks and Retailers can Work Together
to Increase Footfall and Repeat Business in City Centres”

Introduction

This document analyses the significance of collaborations between car park operators and retailers to increase footfall and repeat business in city centres. Q-Park, a high-quality car park operator, has engaged in a partnership agreement with Meadows Shopping Centre located in Chelmsford, UK. The initiative aims to promote an innovative scheme whereby customers can park free for 2 hours on the next visit if they spend over £10 in the shopping centre.

Problem Statement

Consumer behaviour and preferences are reshaping due to out-of-town shopping centres and the growth of the online community. The city centres face the challenge of being innovative and meet the challenges and growing expectations of the consumers.

Parking in town centres has been an issue with different problems and complexities. The growth of car ownership is far beyond the conventional accommodation capacity of urban centres. On the other hand, shopping centres have been exposed to severe competition, and they need to ensure good accessibility. A study conducted by ATCM (2014) found different factors influencing the parking facility. These included traffic congestion, transportation systems, utilisation of space, safety, and security. The study emphasises that the planners and decision makers should consider the uniqueness of every location. Replicating a model cannot ensure the creation of a successful parking strategy. Some of the factors have universal applicability such as greater awareness of the consumer behaviour. However, other factors vary with the geography and dynamics of the location. The current study is thus focused on the dynamics of a specific case of Meadows Shopping Centre where Q-Park provides the car parking.

Aims and Objectives

- To increase retailer footfall and revenue
- To build partnerships and collaborations to attract customers towards town shopping centres
- To ensure consumers have a safe and secure parking experience to increase repeat custom

Key Considerations

The medium and modes of purchasing have grown with the trend of online shopping and out-of-town shopping centres. The increased choices available to the consumers have made it imperative for retailers and shopping centres to build alliances among car parking operators, retail, restaurant, and destination locations. Q-Park realises this need and has come up with an innovative approach to drive more footfall. The incentives regarding the parking facility can improve the profitability of the shopping centres significantly because parking is the first step of a customers journey.

Another consideration with this current initiative between Q-Park and Meadows Shopping Centre is the larger spend in the shopping centre relating to those consumers who reach the shopping centre by car. Hence, these consumers will be best pleased by availing of the free car parking for 2 hours.

Analysis and Discussion

In the development of modern shopping centres, the parking and the level of transport access is one of the primary considerations. Business operators and developers consider the car parking spaces as a necessity but free parking can not be a reality due to land values being high. Also, when the parking facility is free, it attracts casual visitors who may visit the shopping centres without making significant purchases. In this context, the initiative of providing a free car park based on the purchases in the Meadows Shopping Centre is a win-win situation. This scheme allows shopper to receive free parking but only linked to the shopping centres revenue.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The scheme of free car parking for 2 hours introduced by Q-Park will bring significant improvements in footfall and repeat business in the shopping centre. The shopping centre will have increased profitability by more consumer spending.

Q-Park currently operates a loyalty app which rewards customers with free parking on the 6th visit to the car park. The innovative collaboration between Q-Park and the Meadows Shopping Centre has resulted in Q-Park developing additional functionality which allows the parker to be rewarded for retail spend automatically through the mobile loyalty programme. This is due to be launched in Q4 2018.