



Wartburgmobil (VUW) Transport Company Replaces Ticket Vending Machines with Cell Phones

The Wartburgmobil (VUW) transport company relied on HandyTicket Deutschland to overcome the Corona pandemic and tackle the issue of expensive ticket vending machines. Customers now enjoy stress-free cashless ticket purchasing – not just in their own transport region.



verkehrsunternehmen
wartburgmobil

The idea of offering mobile ticketing has been on the minds of the Wartburgmobil transport company – a partner of the Verkehrsgemeinschaft Wartburgregion (VGW) transport association – for some time. “Our ticket vending machines were generating extremely high maintenance costs; worse yet, many spare parts were no longer available at all. We also wanted to address the delays in service caused by ticket purchases handled by bus drivers. We wanted to give our customers the option of getting tickets without the hassle of searching for small change and also become less dependent on service centers, which are not open around the clock,” says Jeannette Heinz, Head of Passage/Marketing at Wartburgmobil, the public transport authority for the Wartburg region.

Together with its partner companies, Wartburgmobil operates public bus transport in the Wartburg district, the independent city of Eisenach and in parts of neighboring districts. In addition to regular services, the Wartburgmobil transport company is also increasingly offering bus-on-demand services for the rural regions of its territory. The Covid 19 pandemic provided the final incentive for making the ticket offer available digitally as well. Due to the required hygiene regulations, transport companies in the VGW were forced to temporarily close their service centers and suspend cash ticket sales by bus drivers.

“During this time, the decision matured at Wartburgmobil to open a digital sales channel and make the ticket range accessible via HandyTicket Deutschland.”

Convenient Ticket Purchase

HanseCom’s smartphone app works on the principle of “log on once, ride anywhere”. Users only need a single account to buy tickets for all participating regions. Whenever a new transport region joins the ticketing platform, existing users can immediately purchase tickets for trips in that region. New users from this region, in turn, are given the opportunity to purchase tickets for other participating regions. Everybody involved benefits from the convenient ticket purchasing process and complete transparency. A customer portal enables customers to keep track of their purchases at any time, print out receipts for travel expense statements, for example, or change account and user data.

“The concept of HandyTicket Deutschland convinced us, as did their investment-free operating model and commission-based billing,” continues the department head. “Implementation, operation, hosting, maintenance and further development are free of charge, and payment is made on a pay-per-use basis. The fees directly reflect the number of trips in the own region. Moreover, now that the pandemic is over, transregional traveling will continue to play a particularly strong role for us as a tourist region.”

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Almost the Entire Range of Tickets Available

Due to the way its fares are structured, the Wartburgmobil transport company mapped its tickets in HandyTicket Deutschland in two steps. In the first step, it made tickets for urban transport available on the platform. These include one-way tickets for adults and children, day tickets, weekly and monthly tickets, quarterly tickets and tickets for the night bus and the Wartburg shuttle operated by the Wartburgmobil transport company. Special leisure tickets that combine tickets with admission to zoos or attractions have also been made available in the mobility app. “Since our operating radius in urban transport does not exceed seven kilometers, our ticket range offers fixed prices for one-way tickets. We were able to implement this tariff model particularly quickly,” explains Heinz. In the second step, tickets for regional transport were implemented. The associated tariff model is more complicated since a distance matrix applies here. Today, HandyTicket Deutschland users can purchase almost the entire range of VGW tickets digitally. To give them flexibility in payment, they can use the digital PayPal payment service in addition to traditional payment methods such as direct debit or credit cards.

With the completion of the second step, the transport company Wartburgmobil directly launched a broad marketing campaign to announce its digital offering. The still ongoing campaign includes publications in local media, timetable directories, the passenger newspaper, flyers, the website of the Wartburgmobil transport company, information material in the service centers, advertising on the ticket machines, and even floor stickers, hangers and posters in the buses – all the stops were pulled in public relations and marketing to raise awareness. Soon, traffic boards on the exterior of Wartburgmobil buses will join the effort by prominently drawing attention to mobile ticketing in urban traffic.

Consistently Positive Customer Feedback

Success means the Wartburgmobil transport company is on the right path. “Mobile ticketing is very well received by our passengers, and acceptance is steadily increasing. The feedback from our customers is consistently positive. And that doesn’t just apply to the younger generation, by the way,” says the department head, who is also full of praise for HandyTicket Deutschland and HanseCom. “Our requirements profile was implemented quickly and comprehensively, and the cooperation with the technicians from HanseCom was outstanding. This really helped us get through the Corona crisis.” The transport company has since been able to take the costly vending machines out of service.

The further expansion of the digital offering has already been decided. In the future, customers will, for instance, also be able to purchase season tickets via HandyTicket Deutschland and will be able to pay using additional digital payment services: ApplePay and GooglePay. After the end of the Corona crisis, cooperation with regional tourist associations on special tickets will also be further intensified. The introduction of an inspection scheme is also on the agenda. At present, the validity of mobile tickets is still checked visually. In the future, the transport community plans to use HanseCom’s checking app for this purpose. This app is fully installed on the inspectors’ cell phones and allows them to easily and conveniently scan the code of the digital tickets to verify their validity.

Wartburgregion (VGW) and Wartburgmobil (VUW)

The Verkehrsgemeinschaft Wartburgregion (VGW) transport association covers public bus transport in the Wartburg district, the independent city of Eisenach and parts of the neighboring districts of Fulda, Hersfeld-Rotenburg and the Werra-Meißner district in Hesse, as well as Schmalkalden-Meiningen, Unstrut-Hainich and Gotha in Thuringia. VGW’s partner companies operate a total of 155 buses serving 79 lines. The transport area covers 1,421 square kilometers.

The Wartburgmobil (VUW) transport company operates 125 buses (115 of its own as well as 10 from subcontractors) and is at the same time operator, responsible body and competent authority.