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Blauwestad

*Recreation and Tourism in the Blauwestad -
Monitoring and customer research*

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Bachelorarbeit

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Preface

This report researches the Blauwestad area as a tourist destination. The first aim is to determine what kind of tourists visit the Blauwestad. The second aim is to identify popular tourist activities and activities tourists would like to see. The Blauwestad is a project that entails five new living areas, a lake, a sand beach, and new cycling and hiking paths that also connect with existing routes. With an unemployment rate that is the highest in the Netherlands and an income level that is the lowest, the Blauwestad project hopes to give the area a new impulse by attracting new residents and new tourists to bolster the local economy.

The keywords of this thesis are monitoring and customer research. Monitoring, according to Howell (1996), is part of a cyclical process, including performance and evaluation. The customer research is a tool of the monitoring process to get detailed information about the customers or tourists of the Blauwestad.

In order to carry this research through, a questionnaire had to be formulated and conducted to gain the necessary information about the customer “tourist” in the Blauwestad. The target of the research is 250 questionnaires, taken in different parts of the year. The following report is the first part of the research in the low season and a target of 80 questionnaires has been decided on. Following researches will be done in the high season and shoulder season. The sample of the 250 questionnaires has been taken because the desired reliability is 90% and the accuracy is 5%, which can be found out with different formulas.

It has been decided that one questionnaire is not enough because the image of the residents is equally important, therefore two questionnaires have been conducted. The one questionnaire is based on information about overnight tourists and the second questionnaire is based on information about day tourists and residents.

Questions in the questionnaire were partly taken from the survey “Consumentenonderzoek Toerisme 2005” (Customer research Tourism 2005) made by Toerdata Noord. The outcomes of the Blauwestad will be compared with the results of the “Consumentenonderzoek” in this research. The questionnaire for overnight tourists consist of 24 questions and the questionnaire for day tourists and residents consists of 21 questions.

The questionnaires are divided into two parts, the first part gives information about the customer as a tourist, where he or she stays, how he or she got the idea of coming to the area, what made him or her come to the area, the activities done in the area, assessments of different features, and improvement points for the area. The second part gives information about the customer, his or her place of origin, gender, household status, age, with whom the customer came to the area, and if he or she would recommend the area as a tourist destination.

The questionnaires were taken in different locations around the Blauwestad. Focus areas were the beach and surrounding areas in Scheemda, the Blauwestad Information Centre and local camping sites.

Two different questionnaires were made for the different target groups in the area. One questionnaire focused on the overnight tourists, who stay at least one night in one of the local accommodations; the other questionnaire focused on day tourists, local residents and groups, such as TRAM (“Toeristisch-Recreatieve Aanjagers en Managers” – Touristic-Recreative Initiators and Managers) and professional teachers in the Tourism field at the CHN, Leeuwarden, Netherlands.

Sixty-nine questionnaires were taken in total in the month of June, whereas 68 respondents were day tourists and residents and only one overnight tourist. Due to that fact, the focus of this report will lie on the day tourists and residents; the result of the overnight stay will not be evaluated in detail.

The result of this research is that similarities and differences can be found between the above-mentioned groups. The main similarity between the different groups is the image they have about the Blauwestad: tranquillity, space and nature. Main differences can be seen in the assessment, i.e. the cultural history. Whereas residents gave, on average, a bad assessment of this feature, visitors and day tourists gave a much better assessment. Half of the respondents would recommend the area to their friends and relatives, exactly the same percentage that would recommend the areas in the Toerdata Noord research. The main activities of the respondents are cycling and swimming and sun bathing. Improvement points vary but one of the most important one is the facilities offered for children.