Applying Balanced Scorecard Control System for Implementing External Communication Strategy in the Gauja National Park, Latvia

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Abstract: - Gauja National Park (GNP) in Latvia was established in 1973 and it is one of the most important tourism regions in Latvia. It has been estimated that the GNP is visited by over 400,000 people per year. In 2008 threat in the GNP ecosystem preservation is stated – “Inadequate visitors’ behaviour”. It can be eliminated by intensive, planned and controlled work in informing and educating community. It needs a strategic approach – working out and implementing GNP External Communication Strategy. By this time such strategy has not been in the GNP. During working out this paper we base on scientifically managed communication. In this paper we show a way how it is possible to plan and control logically the implementation of the strategy by using modern technologies and Balanced Scorecard (BSC) control system. We have introduced an innovation – we offer a perspective division different from the classical division of communication perspectives. It could bring the GNP nearer to reaching more effective target for external communication– Public Behaviour and Attitude changes. The approach could be a part from the total GNP development strategy.

Key-Words: - National Park; External Communication Model, Strategy, Perspectives; Balanced Scorecard

1 Introduction
Gauja National Park (GNP) in Latvia was established in 1973. GNP is located in the middle of Latvia, in the ancient valleys of the river Gauja and its creeks; it covers 91.75 km² area where approximately 21,000 inhabitants live [1]. There are 575 objects of cultural history, including 221 cultural monument, almost 900 plant species, 149 bird and 48 mammal species, 31 protected biotype of European value and 46 of national value [2], [3]. GNP includes over 60 protected geological and geomorphologic natural monuments of Europe and national importance – rocks, cliffs and caves. The typical and picturesque landscapes of the Gauja ancient valley, the valleys of the Gauja River tributaries and their vicinity were one of the criteria why the first national park in Latvia was founded [1].

Since 2004 GNP is a part of European NATURA 2000 territory net. The administration of the park is a legal person being an establishment under inspection of Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Latvia. The aim of the GNP actions is to protect less reformed nature territories with wide biological variety, rock detritions, relief forms, rubbles, founts as well as typical landscapes, nature and culture monuments; to facilitate nature tourism and sustainable development of the territory [4].

GNP is one of the most important tourism regions in Latvia. It has been estimated that the GNP is visited by over 400,000 people per year. Access to the NP is free. GNP is an open area for society. Nature tourism is developed there. The target audience of the park is local, as well as international visitors. For instance, in 2008 in the GNP there were 53% local and 47% international visitors. International visitors came from 44 different countries [1].

According to the data of the survey carried out in 2008, the main motivation for visits was to observe nature (35, 1%) and to relax (27, 7%). In total, they stand for almost 2/3 (62, 8%) of all activities/motivations of GNP visitors. In the research of 2008 The Public use of Gauja National Park SWOT analysis threat is mentioned – “Inadequate visitors’ behavior” – a potential risk. It can sharply decrease visitors’ satisfaction which in 2008 was positive for 90% of visitors [1].

Basic functions of GNP administration are to ensure the public being informed about the goals of the Park, to promote public knowledge about nature and culture historical values and their protection and one of the techniques to reach this aim is communication with external public [1].
According to Oliver, S. (2005), there are eight basic publics or key groups in Public relations (PR): the community; employees; customers; suppliers; investors (stakeholders); distributors; media professionals and nongovernmental organizations [5]. According to this division, the external communication target audience of the GNP is the community; customers (adults and children); media professionals; investors (stakeholders) and nongovernmental organizations (NGO).

Communication is used to warn, report, explain, characterize, assure or entertain public [6]. Realizing these aims is very significant also in national parks and other protected areas, and that is impossible without a society as a target audience, including media [7].

2 Problem Formulation
Current situation shows that GNP lacks strategic documents, including tourism, environment education and communication strategies which could help to reach the aim of the organization [1]. By this time there have been some attempts at least to characterize the current situation. For instance, the results of the research Communication with Society of Environment Protection Organizations : An Example of the Gauja National Park, done by a student of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Latvia) in 2008 proves that lack of understanding in society about the basic functions of the organization (GNP), although its image is perceived positively and does not create doubt or critics in the society [7].

3 Problem Solution
In the context of the Paper we offer using the suggested communication researching – planning approach by Broom and Dozier (1990) according to them called „the scientific management of public relations” – yet not existing strategic management of external communication of GNP to base on the scientific experience [8]. It could initially let planning, management and evaluating communication by creating an added value to it – a scientifically applied approach in the process of GNP external communication. To provide preservation of nature values, management principles in GNP external communication should be based on the value based management 1 that is an adaptive strategic management experience from corporations. Such research questions are set: (1) Communication models, strategies and techniques in nature protected areas; (2) Modern possibilities of measurement and control implementation of communication strategy effectiveness.

3.1 Communication models, strategies and techniques in nature protected areas
In the world there exist many definitions of the communication term, from such calling communication as „social collaboration with the help of reports” up to „...a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed” [6], [10]. By McQuail and Windahl (1993) communication can be any or all of the action on others; interaction with others and reaction to others. The information or message sender often is a part of an organized group and often a member of an institution which has functions other than communication [11]. Environmental communication is the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationships to the natural world; it is the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society’s different responses to them [12].

Mintzberg offers five uses of the word strategy, namely: (1) a plan; (2) a ploy; (3) a position; (4) a pattern – system or model; (5) a perspective – an integrated way of perceiving the world [5]. We interested in pattern and perspective in the context of this Paper.

3.1.1 Communication patterns
A pattern or model is a visualization of the communication process; simple and generalized way to explain and understand the structure and functions of communication. Narula, U. (2006) has worked out five variations how a classical Sender – Message – Channel – Receiver model is used in praxis in different spheres. We believe that exactly this model can be used in nature protection as a conceptual model. The target audience is not differentiated, sender immediate concern is not receivers’ reactions and intended effects. There could be both short and long term effect [13]. Anticipated effect of protected areas including the GNP is a communication result – behavior and attitude change of the society and its

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1 The Value Based management is the approach that ensures organizations are run consistently on value. It includes increasing or generating maximum future value [9].
social diffusion that can be reached by choosing a suitable communication strategy.

Characterizing current process of reaching the general aim of GNP external communication, it is possible to refer to the USA model used in 70ies for saving biological variety Knowledge – Attitude – Behavior Model or changing attitude model based on society’s knowledge. Currently this model is being used in external communication of GNP, realizing programs for visitors in different ages, also numerous informative brochures. However, in the experience of the USA this model has been instrumental in shaping environmental education programs since 1975, yet researchers and educators have noted that an increase in knowledge does not necessarily precipitate an increase in behavior change. Current communication in nature protected areas in the USA take an audience – centered approach in order to be more effective, recognizing that people have different values and myriad ways of engaging with the natural world [14].

If the realized communication with society is characterized from the view of tourism, then in current communication the McMillan’s Park Experience Model is being used that implements three phases: (1) Pre-visit; (2) On-site; (3) Reinforcement. The model shows how the timing of messages relative to stages in visitor’s trip (i.e. pre-visit, on-site and on departure) is essential to effective communication [15]. In the result of it, the welcome communication result should be achieved – not only the change of attitude but also its diffusion in the community [14]. Use of timing dimensions, as well as implementing other strategies in communication process, are elements which can be integrated in the general communication model. For instance, Vora’s complex model for diffusion of concepts presents the concept of diffusion, knowledge, attitude change, and behavior change in a dynamic as progressive spiral that utilizes mass media and interpersonal channels. The model emphasized the external and internal environment and effect components in addition to Sender – Message – Channel – Receiver components in the mass communication process for diffusion concepts [13].

Business management principles and technologies integrate in the development of environment and social organizations. According to Mowlana, H. (1985) the classical Sender – Message – Channel – Receiver model nowadays can be expressed in a modern form: Source – Message as a Production stage; Distribution – Destination as a Distribution stage of communication process. It foresees planning, implementing strategies and their effectiveness measurements being in a communication process Production and Distribution stages. Achieving results facilitates attraction of Technology axis as nowadays communication with society is possible because of suitable hardware and software provision [16].

3.1.2 Communication perspectives

According to Narula, U. (2006) communication perspectives are: basic, development and intercultural communication; information communication technologies; international communication and globalization; communication management and communication research. Communication planning through interactive patterns is an integral part of a holistic communication perspective. It includes media planning, communication strategies and resource management culminating in communication policies [13].

Major approaches of communication strategy are included in Environmental Education and Communication for Sustainable World : Handbook for International Practitioners (2000). This manual provides an orientation to four theoretical perspectives that shape environmental education and communication projects: behavior change, participation, gender, and systems thinking. This strategy depends on four integrated key approaches: (1) Social Marketing; (2) Environmental Education; (3) Public Participation; (4) Environmental Communication [17]. We believe Financial perspective is also important that in case of successful communication can even be an economic potential of the GNP. From the view of achieving strategic aims by the organization, the given approaches are elements of integrated communication strategy which include: (1) setting aims and indicators; (2) working out plans and programs; (3) implementation; (4) evaluation [8]. We are interested in setting aims and indicators as well as assessing strategy effectiveness to use the world – wide acknowledged Balanced Scorecard (BSC) control system2 – software Balanced Scorecards Designer (BSCD). It is a MS Excell based tool that supports building communication BSC system for organization or its departments, created in the USA. BSCD offered bases or classical strategic perspectives are: Financial, Customer, Internal Processes, Education and Growth Perspectives.

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2 The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) was developed at the beginning of 1990s by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton at the Harvard Business School [8].
3.2 Effectiveness measurements of communication strategy and implementing control with BSCD

BSC as a multidimensional control system used for value based management model the interactions involving communication from perspectives and define suitable performance indicators on the basis of central value links. This produces an organization-specific framework for holistic control of communications that links strategic targets with the results of evaluation of communication and communication measures. Scorecards must not be misunderstood as mechanistic calculation tools. On the contrary, they serve to provide a transparent representation of the knowledge and expertise of those in charge of communication, thereby creating a joint basis for target-oriented action [18]. American scientist Grunig, J. E. Calls framework building as a conceptualization – it is a process of thinking logically and systematically about concepts, definitions, measures, and the relationships among them [8].

3.2.1 Setting aims and indicators

A good way to set realistic and doable goals and objectives is to adopt the SMART principle: S – Specific (What is to be done or achieved); M – Measurable (How many? By what degree or percentage?, etc.); A – Achievable (actions that can be completed within the time frame); R – Realistic (err on the side of expecting less, rather than too much); T – Time-bound (deadlines). Forming SMART goals and objectives need to look at the type of indicators that will be used to assess communication results.

There are three basic types of indicators: (1) Output indicators; (2) Outcome or Impact indicators (for each objective); (3) Process indicators.

Most output indicators are concerned with the number of things that are produced and the numbers of people reached through media products. But they do not show what type of impact is taking place.

Outcome or impact measurements correspond to whether or not the communication effort has made any really impact among target audiences. These include impact with respect to changes in: (1) Behavior – quantitatively noted in terms of a change in percentage in specific behaviors or changes in actual numbers; (2) Behavior intent – is particularly relevant for short-term communication efforts for which it is only possible to measure intent rather than actual behavior; (3) knowledge – relate to changes in awareness of: facts (e.g., % of people that now know the actual amounts of garbage that are impacting coastal areas), information (e.g., % of people that now know garbage does not just “wash way” but actually harms other living things in the water sources), recommendations (e.g., % of people that now know the alternatives); (4) Attitudes – attitude indicators, opinions (the only option we have is to throw trash in the river), values (e.g., only ignorant people who do not know better dump garbage in rivers). For both changes in knowledge and changes in attitudes indicators, some type of quantitative and/or qualitative evaluation will have to be conducted to see if the numbers of percentage of people have indeed changed due to the communication effort; As well as (5) Responses to strategy elements; (6) Levels of awareness of key messages and (7) Customer satisfaction levels.

Process indicators are concerned with whether or not the communication strategy was implemented and managed efficiently (on time and within budget) while outcome indicators are concerned with whether or not it was effective. Process indicators are also important than outcome or impact indicators because they measure the quality of participation, ownership as well as “how well the strategy implements”, “how well participants were engaged”, etc. [19].

Usual words to characterize indicators are “number”, “percentage”, “amount”, “volume” or “changes”.

3.2.2 Assessing strategy effectiveness and control using BSCD

In indicator measurements mainly data achieved by using qualitative methods, for instance, sampling, interviews, surveys, focus groups, observation, documents content analysis, ect. is used [20]. Communication theories generally have not been expressed in mathematical symbols [13]. Most PR practice of research is limited to quantitative measuring of communication, however, using BSCD, qualitative data is transferred in quantitative. The main steps in using BSCD are: (1) Strategy tree building; (2) Defining units of measurements (current, min, max or optimization); (3) Time points defining; (4) Strategy map building; (5) Chart visualization; (6) Export to Excell format, if necessary (7) Export to HTML report; (8) BSC cascading – matching with other organization strategy BSC. There is an example how stochastic GNP values works in the BSCD (Fig.1):
The probable GNP External Communication Strategy planed for three years long period. Scorecard includes four perspectives and twelve indicators. Perspectives are created on base stochastic data (starting point is zero). Figure shows situation after one year of implementing Strategy. We determined total Strategy performance (32.36%) and performances for each perspective: Financial Perspective (59.29%), Social Marketing and Environment Communication Perspective (24.17%), Environmental Education Perspective (34.44%) and Public Participation Perspective (29.86%). Illustrate achievements see in the Figure no.2 (Fig.2):
4 Conclusion
Conceptually this Paper is based on scientifically managed communication. There are adapted business management theories for GNP External Communication strategy using modern information technologies opportunities as BSC. It will promote effective management in the field of communication as well as it will give benefit for control or supervising of process in GNP. An innovation is introduced – a perspective division different from classical communication perspective division to be achieved. It could bring the GNP nearer to reaching more effective external communication aim – Public Behaviour and Attitude changes. The approach could be a part of the total GNP development strategy.

References: