



Marketing Strategy-Bow River Basin Council

Created By:

Amy Knippshild (Mentor)

Ross Mcphail

Max Moore

Ryan Muir

Kevin Zurevinski

Executive Summary:

The following describes a project designed to assess the public's awareness level regarding the control of a hydroelectric dam along the Kananaskis River. The Bow River Basin Council, for whom this report has been prepared, is a Calgary based organization whose primary concern is to protect and observe the waters of Bow Valley Basin. The environmental concerns regarding the water flow in the Kananaskis River include issues such as decreased fish and insect populations both in the lake and downstream. The council has recently released a report evidencing these claims, as well as proposed changes to the current water management that could alleviate these issues.

As a Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary term project, our group's primary objective was to measure the current awareness levels with respect to the state of the Kananaskis river system and, if need be, create a strategy to increase awareness and generate public support for the recent report's findings.

Our method for measuring how much the public knew about the river system was a survey. Insights gained from our survey revealed that the majority of people are unaware that the Kananaskis River is controlled by a dam, much less that the water fluctuations caused by the way the dam is managed are having a negative impact on the surrounding ecosystems. Building on the survey findings, our next objective was to design a marketing strategy to maximize and generate support.

The marketing strategy uses social media (Facebook) in conjunction with website alterations to increase awareness and streamline the presentation of information. These two mediums were chosen based on our survey results. The Facebook page serves as an introduction to the environmental problems resulting from the current control of the water flow, as well as a quick and inexpensive avenue to reach a high population quickly. Secondly, the website upgrade is recommended to include more streamlined content and information on the well-designed webpage that currently exists. In addition, we've recommended print media to target all audiences and maximize exposure. The print and social media will be a way to direct as well as increase traffic to the website so others can learn more.

It is our hope that the Bow River Basin Council can significantly increase awareness not just for the proposed system changes, but also to inform the public on an environmental issue that we believe has gone on without sufficient public attention or concern. In addition to an increase in awareness and knowledge, we hope that the general public will show support for the Bow River Basin Council's initiatives and that the environmental long-term objectives of the organization can successfully be attained.

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND:	4
INTRODUCTION:	5
OBJECTIVES:	5
THE SURVEY:	6
WHY A SURVEY IN THE FIRST PLACE?	6
WEAKNESSES OF THE SURVEY	7
RESULTS	7
HOW WE USED THE DATA	10
OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RESULTS	12
SUMMARY OF SURVEY DATA	14
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND TACTICS:	14
INTERACTIVE:	14
PRINT:	17
CREATING AN EFFECTIVE FACEBOOK PAGE:	18
TYPE OF PAGE:	18
EFFECTIVE USE OF A FACEBOOK PAGE:	20
CONCLUSION:	22
REFERENCES:	24

Background:

The Bow River Basin Council (herein referred to as “The BRBC”) is an organization based in Calgary, Alberta dedicated to conducting activities related to the improvement and protection of the waters of the Bow River Basin and the surrounding environment.

One of The BRBC’s current initiatives concerns the water flow at the Pocaterra hydroelectric dam and how it could be better managed. The dam is located on the Lower Kananaskis Lake and is fed by its waters. The turbine in the dam, which generates the electricity, has been found to run most efficiently at water flows that are either particularly high or low. Subsequently, the fluctuations in water level in both the lake and the river are quite high. This method of managing the water flow has been shown to have a negative impact on fish and insect populations both in the lake and downstream as they reduce the spawning area on which they rely. Although the impacts are currently negative, the initiatives towards sustainable energy exercised by TransAlta are significant and will continue to lead the way to a future of sustainable energy in Alberta.

The BRBC has done extensive research and released a report on March 9th, 2011, detailing a solution to help stabilize the water levels in the area and subsequently improve the aquatic ecosystems. The proposed changes involve installing a new turbine that runs efficiently at moderate water flows. Currently, annual fluctuations in the Lower Kananaskis Lake exceed 13 meters; this turbine would bring the fluctuations down to less than 1 meter. This is expected to increase

fish reproduction in the area by threefold or more. The benefits go beyond the environment and into recreation. The model created by the BRBC suggests that the number of days in the shoulder season for kayakers, canoeists and anglers would increase by roughly 35%. The lake would also become more aesthetically pleasing.

Introduction:

Four Haskayne business students, as well as a group mentor, Amy Knippshild, were connected with The BRBC as part of a senior level management studies course. Our goal for the semester was to create a report consistent with the values of the BRBC, relevant, and beneficial to the goals and objectives of the organization.

Objectives:

The objectives of our project are to help the BRBC to create awareness of the current state of the Kananaskis river system, as well as to create public support for the proposed changes in water flow management and the accompanying environmental benefits.

We planned to achieve this surveying the general public in the Calgary area to get a sense of what people know about the state of the Kananaskis river system. In addition, we intended to establish the level of public concern about the environmental damage caused by the way the water levels are regulated, and if the public would support the BRBC's proposed initiative to run the dam in a way that

had a minimal impact on the surrounding ecosystem. Our next step was then to analyze the data collected and use our findings to create a marketing strategy in order to add momentum to the March 9th report.

The Survey:

Why a Survey in the first place?

In addressing the primary objective of our project, creating awareness, we opted to conduct a survey in order to create a starting point we could build a strategy from. The key issues we identified in building our strategy include:

- How much do people currently know about the Kananaskis River system?
- The level of support that the general public would offer.
- How many people would be interested in learning more about the project?
- Preference of media for communicating information regarding the basin.

By answering these questions, we were able to determine what information needed to be conveyed, whether or not it was worthwhile informing the public and how best to reach them. All of this provided us with a solid direction on what a successful marketing strategy should entail.

Weaknesses of the Survey

Provided limited time and resources, both the number of surveys we were able to complete, and the population we could reach were limited. In total, we completed 60 surveys with the 18-29 year old demographic representing the majority of respondents; unfortunately, older populations were underrepresented. However, the fact that most of the respondents were polled on the University of Calgary campus is advantageous due to the diversity of the student body. Despite the age bias in our sample, the results across the older age groups were consistent with the answers provided by younger respondents. This consistency followed the majority of variables in our survey.

Results

The results as presented are an aggregate of all responses with the exception of what age group people placed themselves in. The data for the remainder of the questions ignores age, as no significant differences were found across age categories. As mentioned earlier, we collected a total of 60 surveys and the results for each answer are in parenthesis beside the respective answer.

1.) What age category are you in?

- a. 18-29 (76.67%)
- b. 30-39 (3.33%)
- c. 40-49 (5.00%)
- d. 50-59 (11.67%)

e. 60-69 (3.33%)

2.) Which of the following activities do you do regularly? (Check all the apply)

a. Hiking (41.86%)

b. Kayaking/Canoeing (8.14%)

c. Fishing (26.75%)

d. Camping (23.26%)

3.) How often do you do these activities in the Kananaskis area?

a. More than 20 times per year (3.57%)

b. 10-20 times per year (8.93%)

c. 5-10 times per year (30.36%)

d. Less than 5 times per year (39.29%)

e. Never (17.86%)

4.) Are you aware that the water levels in the Lower Kananaskis Lake and River are controlled by a dam?

a. Yes (32.00%)

b. No (68.00%)

5.) Which of the following environmental impacts do you perceive as a result of the damming? (Check any you feel are true).

a. Decrease in fish population (25.56%)

b. Poor regeneration of trees near the lower reaches of the Bow River
(20.00%)

c. Decreased insect population (19.44%)

d. Negative impact on bird populations (16.67%)

e. Decreased algae levels (18.33%)

6.) If the dam could be managed in such a way that the water fluctuations would have a minimal impact on the surrounding ecosystem, would you support the initiative?

a. Strongly support (42.86%)

b. Somewhat support (55.71%)

c. Don't care (1.43%)

7.) Would you like to learn more about the initiative?

a. Yes (70.00%)

b. No (30.00%)

8.) If yes, what is your preferred method of being informed?

a. Website (42.00%)

b. Facebook (25.97%)

c. Twitter (7.79%)

d. Pamphlet (5.19%)

e. Information Sessions (5.19%)

f. Other (1.30%)

9.) Where do you live?

a. Calgary proper (95.00%)

b. Greater Calgary (5.00%)

c. Other (0.00%)

- 10.) How long have you lived there?
- a. Less than one year (3.33%)
 - b. 1-5 years (16.67%)
 - c. More than 5 years (80.00%)

How We Used the Data

Although all of the questions helped us in formulating a strategy to effectively increase public awareness about the Bow River Project, a few of them directly addressed our core issues. Here is a breakdown of the results for those questions.

- Does the public care enough about the issue to make publicity efforts worthwhile? (If the dam could be managed in a way that would minimize water fluctuations and have a minimal impact on the surrounding ecosystem, would you support the initiative?)
 - By answering this question, we could identify whether the challenge was public awareness or public support. Out of 60 responses only one checked “don’t care.” The remaining 59 responses showed at least some support for the issue, with many showing “strongly support.” This makes our challenge somewhat easier, as gathering support for the project is more a matter of informing people rather than persuading them to support it. Also worth noting is that the number of people who would strongly support the issue was greater than the

number of people who even knew about the hydroelectric dam in the first place.

- How many people would be interested in learning more about the issue?
 - Although people may “support” an issue, their support may simply reflect what they hope the outcome of the project would be. In other words, do people want to become involved, or just agree that there is an issue? By prodding further into their interest level we can see how many people are actually interested by the issue compared to how many simply hope it works out in the end. Overall, 70% of people said they would be interested in learning more. This is an interesting figure because it is greater than the 42.86% who said they strongly supported the issue. Assuming most people who strongly support the issue would be interested in learning more (which is not an unrealistic assumption), we can conclude that almost half (about 48%) of people who somewhat support the issue, would also be interested in learning more. This exposes a large group uniformed likely supporters.

- How much do people already know about the Kananaskis River System?
 - The philosophy here is “why tell people what they already know?” Conversely, we don’t want to deliver information that is overwhelming or complicated. Less than 1/3 of people even knew that the water flow was controlled, much less by a hydroelectric dam. This shows that a good starting point would be a simple briefing on

the damming system before introducing people to the negative environmental issues.

- What medium of communication do people prefer to be informed by?
 - Since it is clear that informing the public about the current water flow management and the project is worthwhile, knowing how to disseminate the information is critical. The most preferred channels of communication were website and Facebook (a free social networking site which a large proportion of the population uses). Although other methods were chosen by some, they may prove to be more costly both in time and money, for a smaller payoff.

Other Interpretations of the Results

Outside of our core issues, the other questions help us target our information more effectively.

- Which activities do people enjoy most?
 - By getting a sense of how most people use the area, we can frame the information in a way that means the most to the greatest number of people. For instance, although there are significant benefits for people who canoe and kayak, you would likely have more to gain by addressing people who fish and hike.

- How often do people use the Kananaskis area?

- This result is of particular interest when matched against what proportion of people knew about the damming of the Lower Kananaskis Lake. Assuming that the 30% of respondents who knew about the damming made up most of the top 30% of frequent users of the area, we can conclude that nearly half of people who use the area between five and ten times per year do not even know about the damming. This leaves a large group of frequent users who do not know very much about how the Kananaskis Lake and River system is managed, as well as a large group who would likely support the issue.
- Perceived environmental impacts.
 - The results for this question were somewhat logical (being that the most selected answer was also the most valid), however, perceptions about environmental impacts as a result of the dam were widespread. Since The Project would yield very specific benefits, it would make the most sense to emphasize the impacts that would be resolved by the project over those that would be less affected.
- Where the population lives.
 - It is important to consider that most of our data was collected in and around Calgary, which obviously biased the results towards residents of Calgary. However, this does not make the data less valuable. Most of the respondents have lived in Calgary for over 5 years, and still do not know about the hydroelectric dam. Referring to our core issues again, our population, which is constituted almost entirely by

residents of Calgary, had a larger number of people who said they would strongly support the issue than knew about the dam prior to the survey. This could serve as an excellent opportunity to gain support for the project provided the population density of Calgary, and how quickly people answered “strongly support,” and how many would like to learn more.

Summary of Survey Data

The data collected, although from a small population of similar age groups, appears to show both interest and support for the project. Most people don't have a clear idea of how the dam operates or how the water levels are controlled, much less about the project. The population surveyed also seems to use the area on a regular basis (with less than 20% choosing “never”), and capturing their interest would be attainable.

Communication Strategy and Tactics:

Interactive:

In order to achieve the communication objectives, we recommend focusing efforts primarily on social media and website initiatives. Based on the 60 surveys completed, these two forms of communication were overwhelmingly chosen as the preferred methods regardless of the age of the respondents. This confirms our

initial estimates and our strategy focuses on these two vehicles. We recommend Facebook as a means to gain initial leverage while constantly promoting the website for those who wish to learn more about the cause. In addition, we have outlined potential print avenues with a focus on "brand spiraling" - relaying people to your website-to maximize exposure and attention.

Social media has emerged as the new vehicle of activism for "generation Y". Joe Green, co-founder of "The Cause" application on Facebook, reports an estimated 11 million users and promotes its effectiveness for spreading information. He refers to it as "social pressure", and he believes that today's youth use social media as a means to become informed and involved. For youth, becoming involved in a social cause is simply a matter of clicking "like" on a Facebook page. Once the initial interest is obtained, they actively seek information and look for ways to become more active. Over 25% of our survey respondents agree with this sentiment, which is why we believe it is important to use this resource.

Other sources have concluded similar if not more favorable results when using social media for philanthropic causes or activism. A survey conducted a year ago by The Society of New Communications Research found overwhelming support from a pool of 426 Americans. For social media savvy respondents aged 30 to 49, 84% used conversational media as a means to discuss matters of social change and activism. Within this age bracket, 80% want to see conversations regarding organizational impact, 74% would like to hear about success stories, and 71% want to learn more about the organization that they are dealing with. For those over 50, the numbers were 86%, 80% and 80% respectively. Although people over 50

represented a smaller pool (13% of respondents), these numbers are still significant when considering the power of using social media to disseminate information and involve people in your cause (Livingston, 2009).

Social media is the first stage in our proposed cause-related marketing campaign. Facebook is regarded as a crucial step in gaining awareness and interest, but it is also highly recommend that further means of communication be used. Over 54% of our respondents chose a website as their preferred method to be informed, and it is important that those interested are directed to the website to learn more.

The primary concern, as indicated by our survey results, is the level of awareness people have about how the water supply is governed. Only 32% of respondents were aware that a dam controls the water supply. This is both a cause for concern and an indication of where to begin. The focus of Facebook should be to introduce people to the basic issues that concern the BRBC and the public. Issues such as reduced fish and plant populations will resonate with active youth and create a cause for concern. These people can then go to the website in order to learn more about the BRBC's initiatives, and learn about how to become involved.

Based on the limited information given in the survey, the majority of people showed some interest in the state of the basin. Over 98% of respondents indicated that they would either strongly or somewhat support a sustainable management process. All of these respondents live in the greater Calgary area, which indicates a correlation between our sample population, and an issue that affects their surrounding geography.

As mentioned, the focus of Facebook should be to leverage some initial interest and give some basic information about the The BRBC and basin. It is up to the website to provide the bulk of information and to gain the majority of active support. This is effectively done on the BRBC's website, but without an initial level of knowledge, people might be intimidated by the amount of information provided. In addition, the website is unclear on what the primary issues are. It lets the audience know that the council is interested in the health of the basin, but not why the problems exist. It also provides an opportunity for the general public to become involved, but no discernable reason why they should. The most useful resource on the website is the informational episodes which tell the story of the Bow River. From the videos it is clear how important the river is to the health of Calgary, but these videos are hard to find, and they downplay some of the issues concerning the river. If the issues are not presented in a streamlined manner the general public will quickly lose interest.

In order to implement the proposed strategy, we recommend either creating a tab dedicated to the primary issues and reasons for concern, or creating a secondary website. Either way, the issues should be presented in a manner that the general public can easily follow and understand: present the primary issues, explain why it matters, and then describe what can be done to solve them.

Print:

As mentioned, the majority of communications media should be web based. Facebook should be used to gain initial support and awareness and the BRBC

website to provide the majority of information, as well as to show people how to become involved. The focus of print is to direct people who are not actively seeking causes, or might not be on Facebook, to either the Facebook page, or the website. Based on the survey results, we recommend placing print communications in areas that attract outdoor enthusiasts. Of the 60 survey respondents, almost all of them engaged in at least one of the mentioned activities, with a primary focus on hiking, fishing and camping. Based on this information, print media should be placed in or around outdoor sport and fishing stores throughout Calgary, Canmore and Banff. Additionally, print media should be allocated to climbing wall facilities or other urban environments where outdoor enthusiasts congregate.

Print can be designed in a number of ways, ranging from pamphlets to posters. Regardless of the form, we recommend using rational appeals, which are best used for issues of a more technical or serious tone. If the BRBC decides that a pamphlet would be a good way to disseminate information, we recommend that they be used in conjunction with posters so as to maximize exposure, and help ensure that people have some degree of knowledge or awareness regarding the issues.

Creating an Effective Facebook Page:

Type of Page:

This section will discuss in detail the different options for using Facebook and how they can be applied. Firstly, when creating a corporate page, an organization must decide whether it wants to create a group or a fan page. Group

pages are more personal, allowing for a direct link between the organization and the people they want to communicate with. Group pages are good for smaller organizations that only want people whom they know, or are already in contact with. There is more control with a group page, as personal and privacy settings can narrow the scope of communication. This is also the primary limitation of group pages as it is more difficult to reach a large audience. Everyone who wants access to the information must be “friended” by the organization, which may deter people who are not extremely passionate about the particular cause (Vila, 2010).

Fan pages are for organizations wanting to reach a larger audience, or that do not want to limit who has access to the page. Becoming a part of a fan page is done by clicking on the “like” tab, which will immediately give the user access to all of the page’s information, as well as allow them to post their own (Vila, 2010). For the BRBC, we strongly recommend using a fan page. The nature and specificity of the issues regarding the basin dictates immediate access so that users are not intimidated. Feeling intimidated or unwelcome will cause people to move on to the next cause instead of staying to learn more about the BRBC.

The third option is to use both a group and a fan page. This is done when there are a number of subsets of demographics or groups that are interested in the social cause. For example, the BRBC could create a fan page, which everyone has access to, and then create a group page specifically for fisherman, hikers, kayakers or any other group. The fan page would contain all of the information and issues that affect the basin, and the group page(s) would contain information that relates to each group specifically. In addition, if the BRBC wanted to hold events that relate

specifically to a subset, they could invite them via the group page without alienating everyone else. This would be a good option for the BRBC, but not until there are enough members of the fan page to justify breaking the members into smaller groups (Vila 2010).

Both group and fan pages can be used to disseminate the same type of information and media. Both users and administration can post videos, photos or links, which can be seen and accessed by everyone (including the organization). As previously mentioned, the difference between the two relate to scope and privacy. Before making a decision, the BRBC has to determine the level of exclusivity that they want.

Effective Use of a Facebook Page:

The first decision that an organization must make when creating a Facebook page for their organization is the look and design of the page. This is extremely important, as it will dictate the tone of the cause, and must match other interactive and print communications. This is called integrated marketing communications (IMC), and is done by being creatively consistent across all media. The primary reason that this is important is so people know that they are on the right page. If someone first looks at a print ad and then the Facebook page, it is important that they know that the two communication medias are related. As soon as someone is confused or frustrated, they will move on to the next cause (Driscoll, 2010).

With regards to content, the Facebook page should use: two-way communication, active discussion boards, links to the website (and other relevant

information), videos, photos and other catchy media (Driscoll, 2009). There are no rules to what an organization posts, as long as it does so in a regular and timely manner. Generally speaking, the best time to post information is during weekdays, when people have free time (morning, lunch and evening). This is when the page will receive the most traffic, so it is important that people are not disappointed with the same posts as the previous week (Vila, 2009).

The language on the Facebook page should be less formal than the website or other forms of communication. It is designed to be conversational, allowing all types of people to become enthusiastic and take part in the discussions. For these discussions, the organization must act as a mediator by asking the audience questions about certain issues, and allowing the conversation to build organically. Conversations will generally build off of something specific. After the organization posts a video, link, or other piece of information, they should ask the public what they think about it. After the conversation builds, the organization should provide the audience with closure (if relevant). That is, they should explain what they are doing about it, thus persuading the audience that their opinion and time is important (Vila, 2010).

The point of the Facebook page is to provide two-way communication. The organization must respond to questions, comments or concerns so that people know that their opinions matter. In addition, people should be directed to the website in order to learn more about the particular cause, and to gain more specific and detailed information. An effective way to get people to go to the website is by giving them a reason to go. For example, an organization can post a survey, video or

article on the website and tell people about it on the Facebook page. Once on the website, people will usually spend time looking for more information regarding the organization. Another, and arguably the most important way to direct traffic to the website, is by providing a link for people to learn how to become involved or do their part. People will need closure, and by letting them know how to help, they will feel good about themselves, and continue to support the organization (Vila, 2010).

Regarding maintenance and security, it is important for the organization to enable the relevant privacy setting, back-up all the information and read the official Facebook blog. The blog is used to update organizations on new applications and features that Facebook offers. The general public will be up to date, so in order to remain relevant, the organization must be as well. In terms of backing up information, it is important that event dates, posts and all relevant information be recorded on a secondary source. If this information is lost or if event dates are confused, people will begin to question the legitimacy of the organization. Privacy settings are specific to the organization, which must determine the level of information that it wants the world to see (Vila, 2010).

Conclusion:

The insight gained from the survey highlights that the majority of people are unaware that the Kananaskis River is controlled by a dam, much less that the water fluctuations caused by current water flow management are having a negative impact on the surrounding ecosystems. The survey also made it clear that people

are interested in this topic and would relish the opportunity to become more informed on the subject. Also, since 98% of our respondents stated they would support an initiative to run the dam in a way that minimizes environmental damage, we know the public would be very willing to back the suggestions from the March 9th report, if only they were made aware of the current situation.

Based on these findings, we believe it would be beneficial for The BRBC to take action to raise public awareness of the issues associated with the damming of the Kananaskis River. Through the use of print ads, forming a BRBC Facebook fan page, and making additions to the BRBC website, we feel this goal can be achieved. The print ads will be designed to catch people's attention, make them aware of the issue concerning the Kananaskis River, and encourage them to seek out more information. The Facebook page has the ability to reach the vast number of people who are subject to the influence of social media. Therefore, it will serve to create more awareness, as well as provide introductory information, and promote the BRBC website. The Facebook page also enables people to show support for the BRBC's initiatives, and motivates them to visit the BRBC website to educate themselves further on the matter. This will allow people to find ways to get involved with the BRBC and their initiatives.

It is the sincere hope each one of us, as well as our mentor, Amy, that the information and recommendations provided in this report will be useful to you at the BRBC. It is our wish to have, in some way, contributed to your organizational goals of working together to nurture, renew and protect the waters of the Bow River Basin, so that the river can be used and enjoyed for generations to come.

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