

SOCIAL MARKETING: PROMOTING A CHANGE IN PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR. A CASE STUDY OF COMPANY "RIGAS MEZI"

Kaspars Erts¹, MBA; **Santa Bormane**², Dr.oec.

²Riga Stradins University

Abstract. Social marketing is often used in public administration and in the activities of NGOs, for example in health care, traffic safety, anti-corruption etc, but there is a lack of case studies on the design of these campaigns, the methods used, as well as the results achieved. However, public administration and NGOs are not the only ones that can use social marketing to change the social order, since in business too, public opinion and action often affect and influence companies in various sectors that work in the public interest or manage state and municipal property. The aim of the study is to develop a concept for the implementation of social marketing campaigns, based on theoretical knowledge about social marketing and empirical data analysis. In order to achieve the objective of the study, the monographic method, the document analysis, the secondary data analysis, the contextual analysis and the quantitative data analysis to find out consumers' views on social marketing and what tools would encourage behaviour change. Based on the findings of the study, a concept was developed for the future implementation of social marketing campaigns. Findings. It was concluded that educational/informative materials, real experience stories, statistics and facts, increasing penalties and legal liability, as well as the introduction of new solutions, such as the deposit system for new groups of consumer goods, contribute to a change in social behavior. Company "Rigas mezi" needs to focus on reducing pollution, preserving and enhancing natural values and reducing forest fires. Based on the theoretical and practical research, the authors developed a social marketing impact process, which is presented as a theoretical social marketing impact scheme.

Key words: consumer behavior, municipal corporation, social behavior change, social marketing, sustainable development goals.

JEL code: M31

Introduction

Already in the 1970s, researchers in the USA saw an opportunity to use marketing principles applied in business to solve various social problems in order to initiate a change in public opinion or behaviour. This was the beginning of the concept of social marketing, which is most often practised in public administration, non-governmental and non-profit organizations in order to promote social welfare in areas such as environment, health, material well-being, security etc.

In recent years, several social campaigns have been running in Latvia in the areas of health care, traffic safety, combating corruption and the shadow economy, and solving environmental protection issues. However, there is a lack of detailed research of these campaigns, including on the application of methods, measurement of the results achieved etc., which could serve as a foundation for more effective communication between public administration and the public regarding sustainable development issues.

Public administration and non-governmental organizations are not the only sectors that use social marketing to create changes in the existing order in society and promote social, economic, and communicative effects. Public opinion and actions are also relevant in the business environment directly affecting and impacting companies of various sectors with a public-service mission, including the management of state and municipal properties.

Waste discarded by the members of society, malicious or unintentional forest fires, destruction of the forest with motorized vehicles etc. are just a few examples of harmful activities faced on a daily basis by companies that manage municipal properties, such as forests. The reasons for harmful public behaviour can be different and include ignorance, impunity, lack of knowledge and awareness etc.

¹ E-mail: Kaspars.Erts@gmail.com

² E-mail: Santa.Bormane@rsu.lv

Research results and discussion

The social marketing in essence is based on the idea that socially desirable behaviour or public behaviour can be achieved more effectively if marketing methods are applied in addition to social advertising (Kotler F., Zaltman G., 1971). To understand the role development of the concept of social marketing, several definitions of social marketing were analysed. These include, for example, that "social marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviour that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience, and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition-sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable" (International Social Marketing Association, 2017). "Social marketing is a process that uses marketing principles and techniques to change priority audience behaviors to benefit society as well as the individual. This strategically oriented discipline relies on creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have positive value for individuals, clients, partners, and society at large" (Lee N. R., Kotler P., 2019). Social marketing is a practice-based framework guided by ethical principles, integrating "research, best practice, theory, audience, and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition-sensitive and segmented social change programs that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable" (Bardus M., Assaf S. A., Sakr C. J., 2023). Therefore, it can be concluded that social marketing that combines ideas borrowed from commercial marketing and social sciences is a proven tool for influencing behaviour in a sustainable and cost-effective way (National Social Marketing Centre, 2022). As the definition of social marketing evolved, the benefits of social marketing programmes were identified over time. For example, initiated behavioural change promotes public benefit and well-being (Bormane, S., Batraga, A., 2018; Bormane, S., Putans, R., 2022).

The biggest difference between social and commercial marketing is the product. Commercial marketing involves specific products and services, whereas social marketing mostly promotes intangible and more conceptual products. In the case of social marketing, the product is increasingly related to changes in an individual's thinking, attitude, lifestyle, or behaviour (Liao C., 2020). Therefore, social marketing activities should be focused on creating value and offer to society, emphasizing a product, service, idea, or some type of experience. The company has to become attractive in the eyes of the target audience, thus finding the possibility of solving some social problem or satisfying the needs and desires of the consumers (French J., Gordon R., 2015). First, however, a detailed feasibility study of the situation is required. The causes of unsuccessful social marketing campaigns include insufficient research of the problem, weak development of social marketing intervention strategy, erroneous or inaccurate identification of interested parties (target audience), management, and lack of consistent action (Cook J., Lynes J. Fries S., 2021; Akbar, M. B., Foote, L., Soraghan, C., Millard, R., Spotswood, F., 2021).

Competition can be considered essential when planning social marketing programmes. It can either promote or prevent change. When developing social marketing programmes, competitive aspects should be taken into account; and activities promoting interaction and change, as well as, in the case of competition, neutralizing/obstructing activities, should be developed.

In order to effectively implement social marketing programmes, it is necessary to apply the elements of the marketing mix – product, price, place, and promotion. Similar to commercial marketing, it is necessary to contemplate and evaluate each of these elements for use in the context of social marketing. In social marketing, ideas can serve as the product, whereas changing people's actions or behaviour can be the price. On the other hand, place and promotion in social marketing work in the same way as in

commercial marketing, and both require considering the place and channels of product distribution, i.e., the means of product promotion.

The role of consumer behaviour in social marketing. In the context of social marketing, consumer behaviour plays a decisive role. This is caused by the fact that the expected result of a social marketing intervention is a change in public behaviour. It raises the issue of what exactly creates, influences, and changes consumer behaviour.

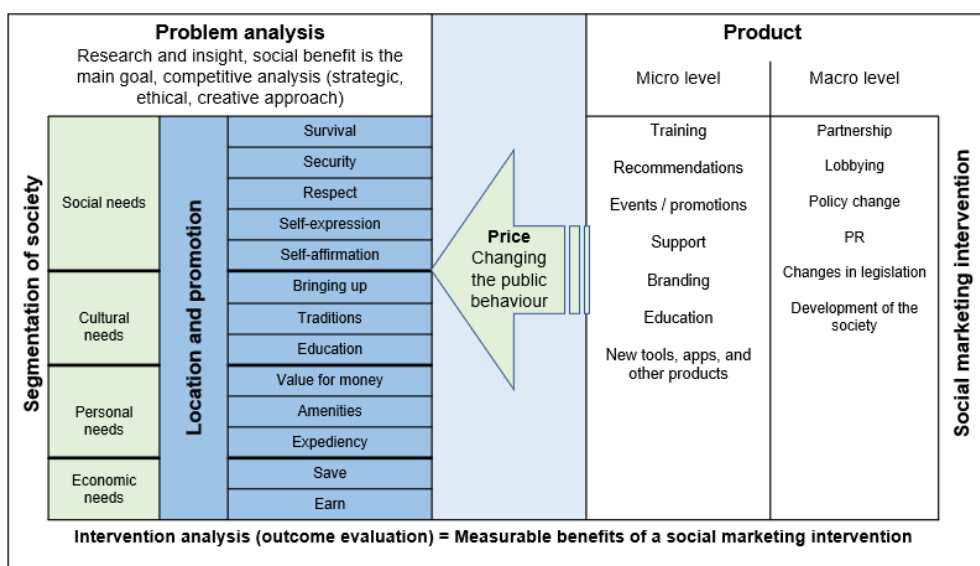
Instead of simply buying products and services, consumers are looking for solutions to their existing and potential problems. Consumer behaviour is complex and often unpredictable. It is driven by the social, cultural, personal, and economic needs of consumers (Rajagopal, 2018). This means that the adoption of new behaviour largely depends on whether the offer will conflict with either of the drivers of consumer behaviour. When implementing social marketing activities, efforts should be made to ensure that the product created meets the defined social, cultural, personal, and economic needs.

Consumer (including public) behaviour is largely driven by the creation of needs and the available solutions that satisfy consumer demands (desires and needs). By understanding the problem, it is possible for social marketing practitioners to more accurately determine the target audience, create acceptable concepts for changing behaviour, and as a result, achieve higher efficiency. For example, researcher M. L. Rothschild offers a conceptual framework for the behavioural management of public health and social issues by providing three tools that promote behaviour change: education, value exchange offer, and changes in legislation. The application of these tools depends on the specific target audience's desire and motivation to change or, on the contrary, reluctance to engage (Rothschild, M., 1999).

In order to encourage the society to change its behaviour, one or more of the following conditions must be met: 1) the individual has fully developed a strong positive intent (commitment) to act; 2) there are no environmental restrictions that make it impossible for action to occur; 3) the individual has the necessary skills to act; 4) the individual must believe that the advantages (benefits, expected positive result) arising from the action are greater and more significant than the disadvantages (costs, expected negative result), in other words, the person must have a positive attitude; 5) the social (regulatory) pressure to perform an action felt by the individual must exceed the willingness to do nothing; 6) the individual must consider that the performance of an action is compatible with his/her self-image or that its performance does not violate personal standards that activate negative self-sanctions; 7) the individual's emotional reaction upon taking action should be more positive than negative; 8) the individual should consider that he/she has all the necessary talents to be able to perform the specified actions in different situations and conditions (Fishbein M., Ajzen I., 2009). These conditions include barriers that must be overcome for action to occur. This means that in order to achieve a change in public behaviour, it is necessary to develop a strategy that includes techniques which can "break down" the barriers interfering with consumer decisions. In order to be able to do this, it is first necessary to find out which of all the barriers are involved in making a specific decision, and therefore, these should be the focus of the campaigns. In addition, it is necessary to find the points of contact that act on select emotions and psychological stimuli that promote action. The created campaign communication and visual and informational materials should include the above-mentioned points of contact so that they are attractive to the target audience. The above is represented in the theoretical social marketing impact scheme that reflects the interaction of the elements of the marketing mix and the process of changing public behaviour (Fig. 1).

In general, the process can be divided into several stages: 1) *problem analysis* (implemented at the basis of each marketing intervention planning stage). Actions of the members of society are stimulated by unlimited desires and needs. In general, they are divided into social, cultural, personal, and economic

needs. However, in order for social marketing to be more effective, segmentation of the society must be carried out for each intervention, including determining what needs stimulate existing actions or attitudes; 2) *product development*, which can be divided into micro and macro levels. At the micro level, products affect the target audience, a small part of society, or even each individual separately, while at the macro level, social marketing programmes and products affect a broad section of society or even society as a whole; 3) *product promotion* (including advertising and display). Through awareness of the needs of the target audience and following the development of the product, it is possible to determine where and in what way the product should be promoted – what marketing communication channels and activities will be used to reach the target audience; 4) *Pricing*. Pricing is the middle-stage between product development and problem research – in social marketing, it is manifested as a prediction of behaviour change. Namely, the higher the change in public behaviour, the smaller the initially identified problem becomes. In the model, "price" is represented as an arrow pointing in the direction of society's needs. Namely, the more the initially identified needs are met, the more likely it is that a change in behaviour will occur in society.



Source: authors created based on literature review

Fig. 1. Theoretical social marketing impact scheme

Analysis of the intervention, including regular surveys, data collection and comparison, should take place at all stages. It also allows for the adjustment of the products, as well as in the case of effective intervention, reveals the achieved results, which are manifested in the public benefit and various types of benefits for the organization (the initiator of the intervention). The performance of social marketing activities cannot be determined using classic marketing measurements, therefore, in order to determine the performance of social marketing, each activity may involve different types of data and means of obtaining information.

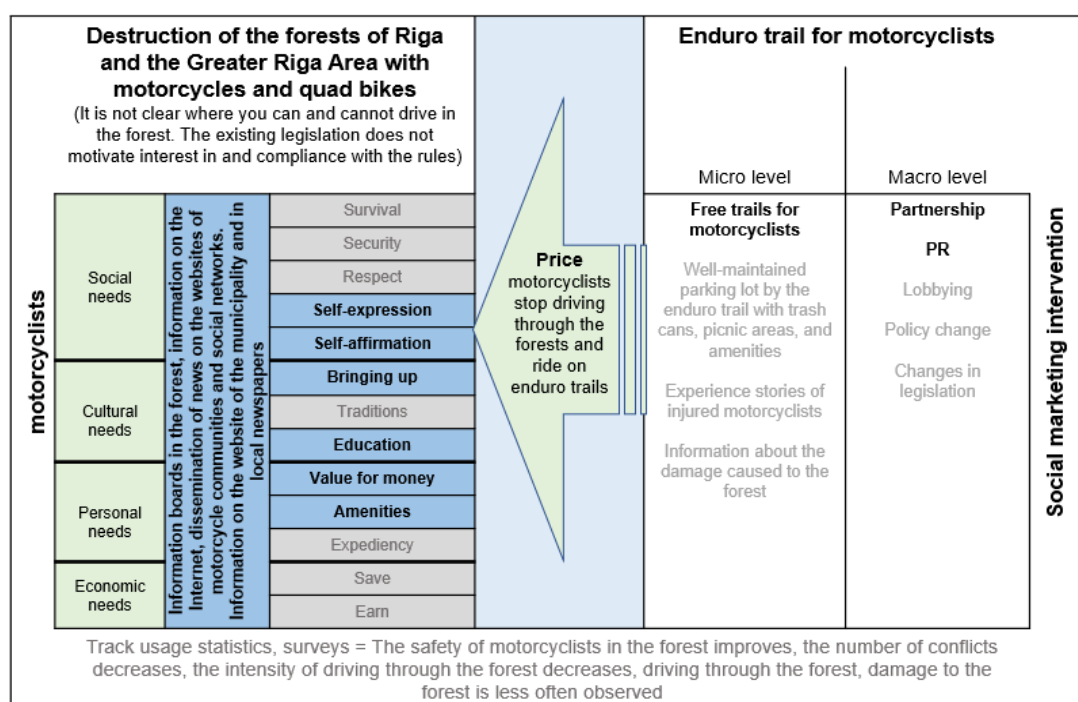
In general, it can be concluded that the public administration, non-governmental organizations, other non-profit organizations, and companies that practice social marketing provide a benefit to the society through various marketing activities and promote a change in public behaviour. As a result, the implementation of social marketing can give organizations recognition, create competitive advantages, highlight brand value, and reduce expenses that caused by the activities to mitigate the consequences arising from unwanted public behaviour (Kotler P., Hessekiel D., Lee N., 2012).

Materials and methods

The case study of company "Rīgas meži", a commercial enterprise owned by Riga City municipality that deals with the administration and management of forests, public greenery, and other types of real estate owned by the municipality (company "Rīgas meži" website, 2022). The company manages territories that are home to a large number of the residents of Riga metropolitan area, and other cities, and every day the company faces various consequences of human actions.

The company implements and participates in social initiatives in order to reduce the consequences of these actions or to change the habits of the society that are environmentally harmful. The case study is based on the social marketing campaign "Enduro trails – experience the forest on a motorcycle!" ("Enduro takas – piedzīvo mežu uz moča!"). The campaign is a unique product. Enduro trails are marked routes created in the forest for motorcycle and quad bike riders. Similar to walking trails, they are designed for public recreation, however Enduro trails are tailored for motorcycles.

The purpose of Enduro trails is to make visiting them safer, more comfortable, and more interesting than the usual forest trails that are often located in protected natural areas or close to populated areas, including recreational facilities. With this campaign, the company wants not only to protect nature and make enduro motorcycling more controlled, conscientious, and cultured than before, but also to reduce conflicts and mutual dislike between the groups of society representing different interests. Motorcycling in the forest very often causes dissatisfaction among certain members of society, which manifests in a variety of ways, and in more radical cases it even poses a threat to people's health, for example, when traps are set in the forest to punish motorcyclists.



Source: authors created based on case study (social marketing campaign case study)

Fig. 2. **Integration of the campaign "Enduro trails – experience the forest on a motorcycle!" into the social marketing impact scheme**

Using the theoretical social marketing impact scheme as a basis, the Enduro trails campaign is integrated in this scheme to discover if and how the tools and methods used in this campaign affect the identified problem, and whether they meet the needs of the motorcyclists.

The impact scheme of the campaign "Enduro trails – experience the forest on a motorcycle!" defines the problem and identifies the causes of the problem. Additionally, the needs of the motorcyclists have been determined, contributing to the existing actions, and these must be satisfied by the social marketing product, namely, Enduro trails for motorcyclists. The product of this social marketing programme is Enduro trails, which are able to address the need for self-expression and self-affirmation, but do not satisfy the need for awareness and education. Currently, such trails are not very good value for money, nor do they provide sufficient amenities. In order to be able to act on all the existing action-stimulating needs, it is necessary to expand the social marketing offering with additional products and influence-promoting tools.

Based on the lessons learned in the case study, a survey was developed to find out the opinion of consumers about social marketing and what tools would promote a change in public behaviour. The purpose of the survey was to find out which social marketing tools would promote a change in public behaviour, as well as how the society would benefit from practising social marketing.

Based on the limitations of the research, the target audience of the survey is the residents of Riga metropolitan area of working-age. According to the data available on the Official Statistics Portal of Latvia, of Riga metropolitan area was home to 612,655 people of working age in 2022, forming the general dataset (Official Statistics Portal of Latvia, 2022). Using the research sample calculation tool, it was determined that the size of a representative sample with 5% error equals 384 respondents (Raosoft, 2022). The survey was conducted electronically and distributed via Facebook groups for the people living in the neighbourhoods of Riga metropolitan area with a total of 262,000 members. Such data collection method is characterized by random sampling. Survey period – 21.11.2022 to 12.02.2023. Sample size – 802 respondents.

Communication channels. In order to reach the audience more effectively, it is necessary to find out how the residents of the neighbourhoods of Riga metropolitan area would prefer to receive news from the company "Rigas meži". Facebook was the most frequent choice, perhaps since the survey was distributed via this social network. Environmental advertising and Internet news portals are tied for second place, as both options were preferred by 14% of respondents. The popularity of news portals is related to the fact that they are regularly found at the top of the list of the most visited websites in Latvia. However, the respondents' answers reveal that people notice and are willing read the information available on information boards placed in the forest or near waste bins. The company "Rigas meži" does not have an Instagram account, however a significant part or 10% of respondents would like to receive company news directly through this social media platform.

Upon analysing the responses per age group, it was revealed that the youngest respondents aged 18-24 most often marked the company's website as the preferred way of receiving information: this option was marked by 16% of the respondents in this group. This indicates that younger respondents search for information more consciously and purposefully, because unlike social networks or media, company websites are visited in case of specific questions.

Further examination of the responses in the younger age groups clearly marked a trend, indicating that a smaller proportion of respondents choose the Facebook website as a channel for receiving information. Although Facebook was chosen more frequently by all age groups, the popularity of this social network is still lower than that observed in the overall distribution of answers.

Tools and methods to reduce forest destruction and littering. Respondents indicated that the most effective method for improving the situation would be to increase penalties and legal liability, which was marked by 22% of respondents, respectively. This is not a social marketing tool, but initiating such changes is possible with the help of social marketing. In general, the respondents' responses on this issue

are evenly distributed – increase of penalties and legal liability (22%); better-tailored tracks, sports areas (21%); more recreational routes for motorized vehicles freely available to all (20%); informative signs in the forest (16%); educational materials on where and how motorized vehicles may be driven in the forest (15%). Such a distribution of replies indicates the need for a complex solution to the problem, creating both recreational areas, as well as informing and educating the public. Respondents under the age of 40 and respondents who live in Riga understand the need for recreational routes for motorized vehicles freely accessible for all better than the other groups of respondents in the sample, and they marked it as the most popular answer.

The most harmful human activities in the forest. The respondents ranked the answers in order of priority from 1 to 6, where 1 is the most harmful human activity in the forest, and 6 is the least harmful human activity in the forest.

Their replies revealed that the most harmful human activity in the forest is unintentional or malicious burning. Considering the danger of fires and their potential harm to people, this is indeed a very significant risk and every possible step should be taken to reduce the number of fires caused by human carelessness or malice. However, it should be taken into account that there is no such measure that can reduce the occurrence of these fires, so the greatest attention should be paid directly to the formation of the habits of conscientious behaviour of people.

Respondents marked littering as the second most harmful human activity in the forest. The company "Rīgas meži" actively communicates and implements campaigns also about this important problem that concerns the respondents, for example, the company launched a campaign about waste in the forest "#TīrīRīgasMeži" (company "Rīgas meži" website, 2022).

Destruction of the forest with motorized vehicles is takes the fourth place and the respondents think this topic is less important than unsanctioned and unauthorized felling of trees. It could be explained by the fact that motorcyclists only represent a small part of the society. Their harmful activities usually take place locally and therefore only affect the residents of nearby neighbourhoods. Also, building barriers to stop motorcyclists was marked as the least harmful activity. If assessment would have been made taking into account the potential lethal consequences of this activity, it would have been rated higher, but the respondents rated it lower than everyday activities, such as poaching, perhaps given the fact that such cases occur relatively rarely.

Priorities of "Rīgas meži". The respondents' answers reveal that company "Rīgas meži" should primarily focus on reducing pollution. The next two equally prominent priorities are "preservation and increase of natural values" and "reduction of the number of forest fires". The first of these two also resonates with the goals of the "Enduro trails" campaign – to reduce the destruction of valuable natural areas. The results reveal that "Rīgas meži" should focus more on the prevention of forest fires. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to form partnerships with the interested parties and jointly communicate fire safety promotional activities during the fire-hazard season.

After summarizing the conclusions obtained by analysing the theoretical sources, studying the previous experience of the company "Rīgas meži" regarding social marketing, and analysing the consumer survey, a concept was developed in order to allow "Rīgas meži" to further solve social issues by using social marketing tools and methods, and the plan consists of 4 stages.

Table 1

Concept for improving social marketing programmes

Stages No.	Objectives
Stage 1	An analysis of the problem should be carried out and the target audience should be determined. It is necessary to determine the competition (cooperation, activities hindering change), the target audience (who causes the problem, or is it the society as a whole), and determine what social, cultural, personal or economic needs motivate the current behaviour.
Stage 2	According to the information obtained in Stage 1, the most suitable tools should be selected and a social marketing product should be developed. At this stage, the ability of the parties involved in the planning of the social marketing programme to influence political processes should be considered if necessary to initiate changes in the broader society. The survey shows that effective tools include educational materials, events (promotions, volunteer clean-ups), stories of real experiences, as well as the introduction of new solutions, such as Enduro trails.
Stage 3	Location and promotion. During the social marketing campaign "Enduro trails – experience the forest on a motorcycle!" it was found that the potential of spreading social messages on Latvian public media is not being used. Latvian public media provides an opportunity and social marketing programme planners should actively use it, as it allows reaching and addressing a very wide target audience. When identifying the causes of problems, it sometimes becomes clear that it is a specific, local target audience, which neither company-owned social networks nor Internet news portals can reach. In such cases, other communication methods should be considered, such as direct marketing communication.
Stage 4	The performance indicators of the social marketing programme should be defined. Depending on the specifics of each programme, indicators such as attendance, measurable quantity or volume, economic indicators (sales growth or losses), the opinion of the target audience, and other indicators could be useful, allowing to assess whether the programme is functioning as planned.

Source: authors created based on literature review, case study and consumer survey

Conclusions

The analysis of the scientific literature, the case study of the social marketing campaign of company "Rīgas meži", and the consumer survey on social marketing and tools to promote a change in behaviour provide the following conclusions:

- 1) The performance of social marketing activities cannot be determined using classic marketing measurements, therefore, in order to determine the performance of social marketing, each activity may involve different types of data and means of obtaining information. Sometimes it can be very difficult, too expensive, or even impossible to get statistically accurate data, and therefore such measurements are often not carried out. It is considered one of the biggest mistakes made by social marketing practitioners.
- 2) The main goal and result of social marketing is public benefit; however, the marketing is based on the exchange of values, therefore the benefits (including economic benefits) for the company resulting from social marketing should be perceived as a natural and logical result of marketing activities.
- 3) Municipal companies cater to various public interests and face clashing views. They deal with the consequences of public behaviour, arising as a result of various social problems. It is necessary to delve into the causes of the action and the needs of those who carry out the action, because the change of action is promoted by points of contact that act on selected emotions and psychological stimuli promoting action.
- 4) Social marketing, although based on classical marketing, is an interdisciplinary method, the use of which requires combining the theories and tools of various social, psychological and economic sciences.
- 5) It is precisely in the neighbourhoods of Riga metropolitan area that fires occur most often, but they are also considered a significant risk elsewhere in Latvia. Stakeholders, namely, forest owners and monitoring and rescue authorities, issue individual communications regarding fire safety. As a result,

the information is not presented in a uniform way which makes it more difficult to perceive and remember. There is a lack of a unified approach to the communication of human-caused fires.

6) The most common form of communication of "Rīgas meži" has been informing the public, but the company has also been involved in social initiatives. Although the topics communicated by the company range widely and often refer to specific target audiences, news is distributed through the same communication channels. As a result, citizens are not sufficiently informed about the company's social marketing initiatives, so this approach is not useful when communicating segmented social marketing campaigns.

7) The feeling of impunity, or lack of control, is one of the main motivating factors for harmful human activities. The existing situation satisfies the need for security felt by the perpetrators of harmful activities, which is why they engage in unauthorized behaviour.

8) Residents would most like to learn about the news of "Rīgas meži" on the Facebook and Instagram, but the company does not have an Instagram account, therefore some residents do not have the opportunity to receive information on the platform of their choice.

9) "Rīgas meži" should focus most on topics such as reducing pollution, preserving and promoting environmental values, as well as reducing the number of forest fires. One of the initiatives to preserve and increase environmental values is the social marketing campaign "Enduro trails – experience the forest on a motorcycle!". In terms of reducing the number of forest fires, information about fire-hazard seasons are published and people are reminded that activities, such as lighting fires or driving mechanized vehicles, should be avoided in the forest during this time. However, this is not enough to achieve more conscientious behaviour of the population during the fire hazard season.

10) What is most lacking in the campaign "Enduro trails – experience the forest on a motorcycle!" is its evaluation, i.e. campaign analysis. The attendance of these trails is not measured, as well as no criteria have yet been defined that would indicate a decrease in the number of cases of destruction of the forest. This, in turn, prevents the ability to determine the benefits of this social marketing campaign.

11) "Rīgas meži" does not take advantage of the opportunity to broadcast social marketing campaigns with the support of Latvian public media, which has the potential to reach a large target audience.

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