Cooperation between the National Park Kalkalpen and regional economy

Analysis and recommendations

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M.Sc. Programme
“Management of Protected Areas”

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Analysis and recommendations

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DECLARATION OF HONOUR

I herewith declare that I am the sole author of the current master thesis according to art. 51 par. 2 no. 8 and art. 51 par. 2 no. 13 Universitätsgesetz 2002 (Austrian University Law) and that I have conducted all works connected with the master thesis on my own. Furthermore, I declare that I only used those resources that are referenced in the work. All formulations and concepts taken from printed, verbal or online sources – be they word-for-word quotations or corresponding in their meaning – are quoted according to the rules of good scientific conduct and are indicated by footnotes, in the text or other forms of detailed references.

Support during the work including significant supervision is indicated accordingly.

The master thesis has not been presented to any other examination authority. The work has been submitted in printed and electronic form. I herewith confirm that the electronic form is completely congruent with the printed version.

I am aware of legal consequences of a false declaration of honour.

St. Pölten, May 2011

Signature
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ABSTRACT

Topic of this thesis is the cooperation between the National Park Kalkalpen (Austria) and regional economy. How is the brand national park being used in order to create added value for the region?

The thesis does not calculate the exact amount of added value that is created for the region through the national park – this has already been done in other studies – but it analyses in detail the previous experiences of different regional stakeholders that are involved in this field and collects their ideas and wishes for the future. Positive aspects are evaluated, as well as starting points for possible improvements. Recommendations are derived from this analysis.

The treated scope of the thesis comprises existing cooperation networks for regional businesses, such as national park partners or touristic initiatives such as hiking specialists, as well as the relation to the Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) or the regional tourism associations.

The most important recommendations from this thesis comprise the establishment of defined structures for management and coordination of economic cooperation between the national park and regional economy, the development and implementation of a concept for communication with regional economy and the clear definition of the role of the national park in regional economic development.
1 PREFACE

The modern understanding of a national park’s meaning has shifted from pure nature conservation to reconcilability between conservation aims and sustainable economic development in the vicinity of the park. In the best understanding, a national park can serve as a *motor* for the region, by enabling local people and businesses to make use of the brand *national park* in tourism or business marketing and thus create added value for the region. Local people get (economic) benefits from the national park, which may be one way to raise their acceptance and support for the national park’s goals, even if nature conservation is not their primary concern. Without the acceptance and support of local people and stakeholders, it will be difficult for the national park to fulfill its goals in nature conservation. The protected area would stand alone as an island and might not be as effective.

On the other hand, the chances that a national park can offer for regional economic development may not be overestimated, and especially the tasks that the park management itself can perform. It seems that there often exist too high expectations towards the management of a national park in this regard. The main goal of a national park is nature conservation; besides that the park management can provide a contribution for the pursuit of regional economic development, but this topic certainly requires the cooperation of different regional and superregional bodies, as well as political commitment.

All involved people and institution have to be aware of the fact that a national park cannot meet all expectations. It has to *fulfill* its main tasks at a maximum degree and beyond that it also has to *optimize* its other tasks and targets [25].

Since the establishment of the National Park Kalkalpen in 1997, there have been efforts by regional businesses in different sectors to make use of the brand *National Park Kalkalpen* for their marketing. The term *national park* is perceived as a good selling-argument for various products and services, because it transports topics such as sustainability, care, responsibility or environmental awareness.

The national park therefore developed the network of *National Park Kalkalpen partners*. Member businesses can use the protected partner label and the topic *national park* in their own marketing, if fulfilling certain membership criteria, such as environmental-friendly business management. Over the last years, additional cooperation programmes with focus on tourism were developed – also by regional stakeholders – allowing for a more specific support of certain groups of businesses. In addition, there are further cooperation programmes with focus on regional food products or farm holidays.
Some of these initiatives are rather recent, others have already existed for several years; some are rated as successful, others as less – according to the estimation of involved people and institutions.

The here presented thesis uses this issue as a starting point and deals with the following three questions:

• Which kind of cooperation between the national park and regional economy exists?

• What is the current status of the cooperation?

• How can the cooperation be improved (if necessary) in order to create added value for the region?

This thesis does not evaluate the exact added value that is achieved through the existing economic cooperation for businesses in the region, but it analyses the current situation and mood on the basis of many personal interviews with regional stakeholders.

The results of this thesis are based to a large extent on personal experiences and opinions of interviewed stakeholders, which of course can be subjective and therefore may not be generally valid. From these interviews, conclusions were drawn that serve as the basis for recommendations.

This thesis may not cover all kinds of cooperation with economy, but it includes selected topics that were repeatedly brought up in interviews with different regional stakeholders. Some topics are treated in more detail, others are only briefly brought up.
2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Objectives and Design

The following table shows the overall goal and objective, as well as the concrete targets of the here presented thesis and gives a short overview of the main activities that were performed.

Table 1: Objective, targets and activities of the thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Sustainable embedment of the National Park Kalkalpen into its region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>To increase added value for businesses in the national park region through the brand National Park Kalkalpen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>T1: Existing cooperation of national park with regional economy evaluated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>A1.1: Identification of existing cooperation programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1.2: Analysis of existing cooperation programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1.3: Analysis of existing cooperation with economic and touristic institutions in the region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The thesis was performed between November 2010 and May 2011.

The idea and trigger for this thesis originated from a talk between Dr. Mayrhofer, the director of the National Park Kalkalpen, and the author. The topic was rated as urgent by Dr. Mayrhofer.

2.2 Methods

The results of this master thesis are based on the following methods that were used for data collection:

The most important data sources were detailed personal interviews that were carried out with stakeholders in the region. This method was selected, because thus personal experiences of different groups of involved people and institutions in their relation to the national park could be collected. From these interviews, conclusions were drawn for the evaluation of the current status of cooperation between the national park and regional economy. Of course, the results of the interviews always contain a certain subjective, personal note – a fact that has to be kept in mind.

Most interviews were carried out as semi-structured personal talks, based on a pre-defined set of questions, depending on the context of the interview partner.
Most interviews also went beyond this set of questions. The interviews lasted from about 45 minutes up to two hours.

The following groups of persons were interviewed:

- Director and 2 staff members of the National Park Kalkalpen
- Directors of the four regional tourism associations
- Chairman of one regional tourism association
- Heads of the two regional offices of the Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO)
- 6 members of the National Park Kalkalpen partners
- Three members of the touristic initiative of National Park Kalkalpen hiking specialists, two of which also are members of the National Park Kalkalpen bike specialists
- One representative of the National Park Kalkalpen horse region
- Telephone interview with a representative of the Upper Austrian Tourism Association (OÖ Werbung)

In addition, the following data sources were used:

- E-mail contact to the regional office of the Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) in Lienz, Eastern Tyrol
- Statistical evaluation of spatial distribution and web-appearance of members of the partner networks
- Extended literature and internet research

The results of the interviews with members of the cooperation initiatives were evaluated anonymously.

2.3 Background: National Park Kalkalpen

2.3.1 Forests, mountains, water and wilderness [33]

The National Park Kalkalpen is situated in the federal country of Upper Austria (see Figure 1), covers an area of 208,6 km² and was inaugurated in 1997. The legal basis for the national park is formed by the Upper Austrian national park law and by several other agreements and regulations. It is one out of six national parks in Austria, which are internationally recognized by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) under category II (national park). The area of the national park – and partly also beyond that – was declared a European
protected area in the network of Natura 2000 in the year 2004, according to the European Birds and Habitats Directives. In the same year, it also became a Ramsar site for the protection of wetlands, due to its extended creek ecosystems (see Figure 3) [1]. Thus, the National Park Kalkalpen is legally protected on Austrian and European level and is also given international recognition and attention by the IUCN and through the Ramsar convention.

The national park stretches over two mountain ranges: the Reichraminger Hintergebirge is among the largest closed forest areas of Austria, which is not cut by public transportation ways or settlements. One of the longest intact systems of creeks in the eastern Alps can be found here. Old logging dams and decayed rafter tracks remind of the lumbering of past times. The second mountain range, the Sensengebirge (Scythe Mountains) is a northern fore post of the mountain range of Kalkalpen (limestone Alps), which is also the origin of the national park’s name. The main ridge, which extends over 20 km, reaches its maximum height with the peak of the Hohe Nock (1.963 m). The name Scythe Mountains comes from the utilization of the forests as energy source for the
scythe forges, which were very common here in past times. The rock in the national park mainly consists of limestone and dolomite and contains 68 caves. The largest cave-system in the area is the Klara cave, which was discovered in 2004 [1].

Four fifths of the national park’s area is covered by forest, which makes the national park a forest national park. Thirty different forest societies can be found here, amongst which are the spruce-fir-beech forests the most common ones. The timber utilization over centuries has altered the forest structure: the part of spruces and larches has increased at the expense of firs, beeches and other deciduous trees. However, there are forests in the national park, which are very close to nature and which form the germ cells of a connected natural forest of the future [1].

On the area of the National Park Kalkalpen, there are approximately 800 wells, with an average capacity of 0.2 l/s. The park also comprises 20 mountain pastures, which form a precious habitat [1].

30 species of mammals, 80 species of breeding birds, 1,500 different species of butterflies and 1,000 different species of flowering plants, mosses and ferns can
be found in the National Park Kalkalpen. Very special and rare are sightings of lynx and brown bear. In May 2011, a female lynx was released into the wild on the area of the national park [1].

2.3.2 Trigger and development of the national park

The following table gives a short overview of the previous steps in the history of the National Park Kalkalpen [1].

*Table 2: History of the NP Kalkalpen [1, 32]*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Key words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982 - 1985</td>
<td>Several utilization plans on today’s national park area in the <em>Reichraminger Hintergebirge</em>, such as a water reservoir plant of the company <em>Ennskraftwerke</em> and a canon shooting range of the steel company <em>VOEST</em> caused immediate protests by the Austrian Alpine club and the formation of the action group <em>Protect the Hintergebirge</em>. The first ideas and plans for the establishment of a national park were developed. After sit-ins in the Hintergebirge, protests of several NGOs and a negative nature impact study, the construction plans were withdrawn.</td>
<td>Trigger and pre-phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 - 1995</td>
<td>Several NGOs jointly claimed the establishment of a <em>National Park Kalkalpen</em> in the so-called <em>Molln declaration</em>. Thereupon the Upper Austrian federal government unanimously decided on the planning start for the National Park Kalkalpen, which began in 1990. A branch office of the agriculture and forestry department of the Upper Austrian federal government started the planning process and the association <em>National Park Kalkalpen</em> was formed, which aimed at the establishment, maintenance, promotion and international recognition of the <em>National Park Kalkalpen</em>. Local farmers and land owners demanded full participation and formed the interest union <em>planning area National Park Kalkalpen</em>. The first concept proposals for the park area were criticised by NGOs and scientists, the final planning concept was presented in 1993 and included the following objectives:</td>
<td>Planning-phase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- protection of the natural dynamics of forest communities from low mountainous areas up to the tree line
- extensive protection of whole creek systems
- protection of alpine habitats and their fauna and flora

With the development of the system of *nature protection by contract* the essential breakthrough in negotiations with landowners and stakeholders could be achieved.

| **1996 - 1998** | The *law for the National Park Kalkalpen* was enacted by the Upper Austrian federal parliament. The *Nationalpark OÖ Kalkalpen Gesellschaft* (limited company) was founded by the national government and the Upper Austrian federal government to serve as the operator of the national park. In July 1997, the National Park Kalkalpen was officially inaugurated with an area of 165 km² and in the same year internationally recognized by the IUCN under category II. In 1998, the first lynx was detected on the national park area. |
| **2003 - 2004** | The National Park Kalkalpen was enlarged to 208 km² and declared as Natura 2000 area (European protected area) according to the Habitat and Birds Directives of the EU and as wetland of international importance according to the Ramsar convention, due to its numerous creek systems and wells. The first picture of a brown bear in the park area was shot. A *cooperation framework agreement* for the promotion of conservation goals and sustainable regional development was signed by mayors of municipalities in the vicinity of the national park. | **Inauguration, international recognition I, regional development** |
### 2005 - present

The national park aims at the *re-development* of large parts of the national park into wilderness areas and also strongly includes the topic wilderness into its marketing strategy and visitor programme. 72% of the national park’s area is a *forest wilderness area*, where no forestry management measures take place any more. On 45% of the national park area no game regulation measures are performed any more. Almost 1/3 of the forestry roads were abandoned in order to avoid disturbance of wild animals and natural ecosystems.

### 2.3.3 The national park management

The administration of the National Park Kalkalpen comprises the two following institutions – as defined in the Upper Austrian national park law [12]:

- The national park limited company (Nationalpark Gesellschaft)
- The national park board of trustees (Nationalpark Kuratorium)

The board of trustees has a consulting function and summons representatives of the municipalities, tourism boards, land owners, nature conservation unions, the Alpine Club etc. [12].

The national park company is a non-profit institution and is owned by 50% each by the federal country of Upper Austria and the Republic of Austria. Its tasks are the establishment and management of the national park [2].

The park management comprises the following main areas [1]:

- Nature management: Forest (re-change of forest into its natural state), alpine pastures
- Management of wild animals: Regulation of hoofed game
- Visitor management: Establishment and maintenance of visitor infrastructure, such as trails and buildings
- Planning and negotiations (nature conservation by contract) as well as contract tendance with land owners
- Research
• Education and public relations

• Promotion of nature and environmental conservation in the region

**According to IUCN criteria, a national park (category II) is a protected area, which is mainly set aside for the protection of ecosystems and for recreational purposes [24].**

The national park has listed the following statement among its values and principles in the corporate concept 2008 – 2012 [23]:

“The conservation of natural habitats, of biodiversity and of natural ecological processes is of priority; however, the national park shall also be open to people for recreation, education and unique experience of nature and bring economic added value to the region”.

The long-term objectives of the national park include the following point [23]:

“The region uses the brands national park and wilderness and hence gains added value”.

The cooperation with regional businesses per se is not laid down in the specific medium-term targets of the corporate concept 2008 – 2012 [23].

*However, it is visible in the park’s values and long-term objectives that sustainable regional development based on the brand National Park Kalkalpen is aspired [23].*

### 2.3.4 The National Park Kalkalpen region

The spatial extent of the official National Park Kalkalpen region is defined by the Upper Austrian national park law and the national park declaration. According to §13 of the Upper Austrian national park law, national park communities are those communities, which have parts of the national park area on their municipal territory. §14: The national park region comprises the area of all national park communities, but can also be extended to other communities or parts of communities, provided that these communities commit themselves to the implementation of measures that serve the national park’s goals [12].

Currently, the National Park Kalkalpen region consists of sixteen communities in the districts of Kirchdorf and Steyr-Land [14]. Figure 5 gives an overview of the region and the location of the NP communities. The headquarters of the national park is situated in Molln.
There are eight National Park Kalkalpen communities with parts of the national park area on their territories: Molln, Reichraming, Großraming, Weyer, Rosenau, Windischgarsten, Roßleithen and St. Pankraz [14].

In addition, the following eight communities were declared as NP region communities: Gaflenz, Grünburg, Laussa, Losenstein, Maria-Neustift, St. Ulrich b. Steyr, Steinbach a.d. Steyr and Ternberg [14]. The national park region can still be enlarged in the future, upon application of communities that meet the required criteria.

In 2004, the mayors of these communities signed the so-called framework agreement National Park Region Kalkalpen, where goals and guidelines for the cooperation between the national park and the communities are defined. Nature-
and landscape protection are of as high importance in this framework agreement as regional development, in terms of tourism, economy, traffic or settlement development. This agreement is a guideline and not legally binding to the communities. It can be seen as a box of recommendations and aims at embedding the National Park Kalkalpen into the surrounding region and incorporating the communities into the project national park. Local people shall benefit from their proximity to the national park also in an economic way and the region itself shall provide a buffer for the special natural values of the national park. The framework agreement comprises recommendations for regional development, such as the further development of close-to-nature tourism and the establishment of associated visitor facilities and tourism programs, thus securing local jobs. The brand National Park Kalkalpen shall be used by local companies for marketing. Alpine pastures shall be preserved, for reasons of biodiversity conservation, sustainable farming and tourism. Educational programs for schools and environmental-friendly traffic concepts are being developed. The proximity of the national park shall also be considered in regional planning, through various measures; etc. [14, 33].

From this framework agreement, it already gets visible that sustainable regional development and the creation of added value for local people through the brand national park is of importance, both for the management of the national park and for the regional municipalities.

2.3.5 Touristic regions around the National Park Kalkalpen

The area around the National Park Kalkalpen is divided into three main touristic regions (Ennstal, Steyratal and Pyhrn-Priel) which are coordinated by three regional tourism associations. Ennstal and Steyratal jointly present themselves as the National Park Kalkalpen region, whereas Pyhrn-Priel does not refer to the national park in its name – even though the geographic region comprises some national park communities. This means that the touristic utilization of the name National Park Kalkalpen region does not coincide with the definition according to the Upper Austrian national park law. This issue will be further analysed in chapter 3.4.2.

In addition, the town of Steyr – even if not situated in the official national park region – is currently starting to include the topic national park into their new touristic strategy (see Figure 6).
2.3.6 Programmes for cooperation between the National Park Kalkalpen and regional businesses

There exist several partner networks for the cooperation between the National Park Kalkalpen and regional businesses in different sectors (see Table 3). Some have already been existing for many years, others are rather recent; some are actively managed and others have been neglected over the last years.

The goal of all these programmes on the one hand is to develop new chances of income for regional companies through the brand *NP Kalkalpen* and thus promote regional economic development in the rural areas. On the other hand, the networks shall contribute to the further spreading of the national park idea [3].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Link</th>
<th><strong>Cooperation networks</strong></th>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th><strong>Year of establishment</strong></th>
<th><strong>No. of members</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>NP Kalkalpen partners</td>
<td>All sectors in the NP region, outside of NP region: contextual relation</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>NP Kalkalpen hiking specialists</td>
<td>Accommodation facilities in the NP region</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>NP Kalkalpen bike specialists</td>
<td>Accommodation facilities and outdoor organizers in the Ennstal and Steyrtal</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>NP Kalkalpen horse region</td>
<td>Riding stables, horse farms in the NP region</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>Verein Nahtur</td>
<td>Union of farms in the NP region for joint marketing and product development</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>NP Höfe Ennstal</td>
<td>Farms in the Ennstal that offer farm holidays and a joint touristic programme</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>NP Genussregion</td>
<td>Fruit juices and organic beef meat, marketing via an Austrian-wide initiative</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following chapters, an insight is given into these partner networks and into the cooperation between the national park and regional economy in general. The current status of the cooperation is analyzed and – if necessary – suggestions for improvement are described.
3 RESULTS

3.1 The National Park Kalkalpen labelling concept

Around 2005/06 the National Park Kalkalpen developed a new standardized labelling concept, in order to establish one common design with recognition value as a signboard for communities, networks or tourism associations in the NP region that refer to the national park in their marketing or other activities. The national park region labels shall allow for a clear differentiation to the label of the national park itself, which is only being used by the National Park Kalkalpen GmbH and represents the park’s mission and its according activities (see Figure 8, first row, first column) [14].

There are the following national park region labels under the standardized labelling system:

- The label for the national park region (see Figure 8, first row, second column) can be used for free by the official NP communities [14].

- In the process of label standardization, the old NP seal of quality label (see Figure 7) – which was used for the network of NP partner businesses – was replaced through the new partner label (see Figure 8, first row, last column). This label can only be used on the basis of a contract and a fee [14].

- In addition, other labels for touristic initiatives in the region with reference to the national park were developed (see Figure 8, second row). Also these labels can only be used by members of these networks, based on a contract and a fee [14].

As stated in the labelling concept [14], it is not easily possible any more today for individual organizations to successfully implement a brand. The success is more likely if the brand is being transported by a broad basis, in this case by a whole region and its different sectors [14]. This signifies that all members of this
network in their activities (in)directly do advertisement for all the other members, independently from the single product or service and thus – in the best case – profit from each other. This requires the functioning of the network and the input and participation of all members.

3.2 Description of existing cooperation programmes

3.2.1 The National Park Kalkalpen partners

The so-called National Park Kalkalpen seal of quality was developed in the early years of the national park, in order to set up a certain framework for the formerly unregulated use of the protected brand National Park Kalkalpen by regional companies.

There are three types of partnership, which enable member-companies to implement the topic National Park Kalkalpen in their marketing [2].

- National park farmers
- National park partners
- National park sponsors

In the beginning, there were different logos for these three types of partnership (see Figure 7). Around 2005/06 the three logos were summarized under a new label – in line with the standardized labelling concept of the national park (see Figure 9 and chapter 3.1). However, there still are different cooperation criteria for the different groups of partners, as their characteristics and demands vary.

Businesses from industry, commerce, trade, services and agriculture in the districts of Steyr-Land, Steyr-Stadt and Kirchdorf (federal country of Upper Austria) can become National Park Kalkalpen partners, if fulfilling certain criteria. Beyond that, also other businesses that are not situated within the defined national park region can become national park partners – as so-called sponsors, if they have a contextual relation to the national park and its goals [3]. National Park Kalkalpen sponsors for example offer products or services that show synergy with the national park’s activities, they want to support specific projects of the national park or they see the partnership as useful for other reasons – as long as this partnership is acceptable for the national park. Originally, the selection of the partner companies was done in close cooperation with the regional offices of the Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) [2].
The cooperation between the National Park Kalkalpen and its partners is regulated by contract. In the year 2005, the national park developed a detailed concept for cooperation with partner companies, which contains rights and duties of the contractual partners [3]. The national park partners pay an annual licence fee of € 150.-- and receive in return a package of services, which contains amongst others the right to use the brand National Park Kalkalpen for their marketing. The partners commit themselves to stick to certain defined criteria: on the one hand the mode of business management may not contradict the national park’s basic principles, and on the other hand the contract includes guidelines for the cooperation between the national park and its partner companies [3]. When a company wants to become a national park partner, the company first has to do a self-check according to a pre-defined catalogue of criteria for different branches. A partner farm for example has to stick to the principles of organic farming. After this, the companies were usually also checked by representatives of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. If fulfilling the criteria, the business will be awarded with a certificate and can use the title National Park Kalkalpen partner. In addition, a quality check of the partners by the national park and/or the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber is planned every three years [1]. The contract does not include a time limit for the partnership, but it can be terminated annually by the partner businesses. The membership-status will be prolonged after the annual payment of the membership fee [3].

The partner businesses receive the following service package by the national park [3]:

- Right for utilization of brand National Park Kalkalpen for own marketing
- Presentation and information package
- Link of partner on national park homepage
- 30 vouchers per year for national park exhibitions (for regular customers)
- 2 free national park tours per year
- Mentioning of partners in national park folders
- Annual information event for national park partners
- Display of brochures of business partners in national park info centres
- Bid invitation of partners for national park projects
- Cooperation in events and presentations
Support in marketing through targeted contributions at events, fairs, in media etc.

Some additional services are available for partners at a reduced price

### 3.2.2 Touristic initiatives: hiking, biking and horse-riding

In addition to this partner programme, there are three initiatives that follow certain objectives with focus on the promotion of regional tourism. Whereas the *NP partners* comprise companies from many different sectors, the so-called *NP specialists* are dedicated to touristic development. These initiatives were started in order to create thematic groups, which can be more easily supported than it would be possible for single businesses. The management and support of the members of these touristic initiatives is mainly done via own unions and partly also via the regional tourism associations.

- **National Park Kalkalpen hiking specialists**: a network of accommodation facilities in the NP region that provide special offers and service for hikers
- **National Park Kalkalpen bike specialists**: a relatively new network of accommodation facilities, a mountain bike guide and a bike rental shop – in the Ennstal and Steyrtal – that provide special offers and services for (mountain) bikers
- **National Park Kalkalpen horse region**: a cooperation of horse stables in the regions Steyrtal, Ennstal, Pyhrn-Priel and Kremstal

#### 3.2.2.1 National Park Kalkalpen hiking specialists

The so-called National Park Kalkalpen hiking specialists (label see Figure 10) were formed around 2005 in order to create added value for touristic accommodation facilities in the region through the brand NP Kalkalpen (www.wanderspezialisten.at). The programme was initiated by the former director of the tourism association Pyhrn-Priel. Through this initiative, the National Park Kalkalpen region is one of four official hiking regions (Kalkalpen, Salzkammergut, Mühlviertel, Donau) in Upper Austria that are supported by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association [20].

The hiking specialists want to offer specific service to hiking-guests, who spend their holidays in the region. Due to many hiking trails in the national park region and also some on the territory of the national park itself, the area is an interesting hiking destination.

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Figure 10: Label of hiking specialists [5]
An important factor for the success of this initiative is the joint marketing of the hiking specialists.

The hiking specialists are organized as a union, with defined membership regulations and quality criteria. Unlike to the National Park Kalkalpen partners, they are not linked to the national park by contract. The hiking specialists are supported by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association in organizational and marketing issues. Marketing activities by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association include:

- 2 mailings per year to around 20,000 addresses
- Reports in the journal Wandermagazin (topic hiking)
- Online marketing via wandern.at
- Reports in Life Radio tourism news

Financial resources for these marketing activities are partly provided by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association through a budget allocation from the federal country of Upper Austria. The union co-finances the marketing activities that are organized by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association. Some are also provided for free.

The regional tourism associations also play an active role in the union. The union holds an annual general meeting for all members, as well as 2-3 annual meetings of the management body. The NP is represented in the union by the manager of the national park seminar hotel Villa Sonnwend, who also is a hiking specialist himself. The organizational connection to the NP is rather loose, as the union organizes itself with the support of the regional tourism associations and the Upper Austrian Tourism Association; however, there of course is a contextual relation, not only due to the name NP Kalkalpen. The national park also advertises the offers of the hiking specialists in its brochures. In addition, the national park has changed its visitor tour plan, in order to meet the needs of the hiking guests.

The working budget of the hiking specialists comprises of four parts:
• membership fees of the participating accommodation facilities, which are calculated from a basic amount per member plus an additional fee per bed

• funding by the regional tourism associations that double the membership fees

• contribution by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association though marketing activities

• a financial contribution of the national park

In 2004 the Upper Austrian Tourism Association organized a series of seminars for interested accommodation facilities in the NP region, during which the participating businesses themselves developed the future goals, targets and activities of the hiking specialists. This also included a targeted qualification programme for the future members.

The hiking specialists offer a service-package to their guests that includes different features, depending on the status of the single member. All members of the hiking specialists were rated as awarded hiking facilities with 3 to 5 so-called hiking boots (see Figure 12) by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association – after completion of the qualification programme and compliance with defined membership-criteria. The hiking boots are a standardized rating system for all Upper Austrian hiking regions that are supported by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association.

3 hiking boots include the basic package, which contains [5]:

• a tour programme with professional national park rangers – 2 times a week (Tuesday and Saturday)

• European hiking trail – guidance system

• Regional system of hiking taxis (available for a fee, but reduced price)

• Hiking library with flyers, nature guides, route suggestions, maps, books, videos, panorama maps, weather forecast, events, first-aid kit for hikers etc.

• Individual tour recommendations

• Rental of hiking sticks, back bags, thermos jugs, rain coats (partly also for sale)

• Facilities for drying and cleaning of shoes

• Thermo breakfast; packed lunch possible

Figure 12: Hiking boots of the hiking specialists [5]
• At least one guided tour per week with the hiking specialists

• 1 qualified contact person for hiking issues on the premises

Accommodation facilities with four hiking boots additionally provide the following features [5]:

• at least 3 guided tours with the hiking specialists: together with 2 NP tours = 4 guided tours per week

• Hiking guide on the premises, personal hiking information (information evening or personal talk)

• Alarm-call service, early-bird breakfast, vegetarian food, rental of pulse watches, binoculars, hiking boots, sauna in the house

And finally 5 hiking boots signifies the following additional offers:

• at least 3 guided tours with the hiking specialists: together with 2 NP tours = 4 guided tours per week

• A qualified contact partner and certified hiking guide on the premises

• Wellness-area, heated outdoor or indoor pool, massage on the premises, free rental of hiking boots, hiking finale with coffee and cake after guided tour

Some hiking specialists also offer hiking-holiday programmes on different topics that can be readily booked by interested guests. These programmes are developed in cooperation with the regional tourism associations.

One big advantage of this network is the bundling of resources for a joint marketing and presentation to the public, which certainly has a far wider impact than it would be feasible for a single member on its own.

3.2.2.2 National Park Kalkalpen horse region

The initiative horse region National Park Kalkalpen originated from the riding association Pyhrn-Eisenwurzen (Reiter und Fahrverband Pyhrn-Eisenwurzen) that was founded in 1998 [18].

Since 2002, the riding association has started to relate to the topic National Park Kalkalpen and some cooperation between the riding association and the national park developed over the years. In 2007 the national park organized a course for trail riding guides that want to offer guided tours in the national park. Content of this course were the aims and
targets of the national park, its natural characteristics and the communication of the topics nature and national park to riding guests.

In 2009, the riding association Pyhrn-Eisenwurzen was renamed to riding association horse region National Park Kalkalpen.

Figure 14: Overview horse region NP Kalkalpen: riding trails (red) and riding stables [15]

The riding association has about 170 members – besides riding stables also inns, farms or municipalities. With the membership fees, the maintenance of riding
trails, member badges, the association’s homepage, riding trail maps etc. are being financed. Most members can be found in the Pyhrn-Priel region. The riding association is part of the professional body for horse-riding of Upper Austria (Landesfachverband).

One important aim of the riding association is the fastening, maintenance and marking of riding trails in order to create the framework for riding activities in the region and limit wild cross-country riding. The union has contracted an insurance that releases land owners along the riding trails from liability. The work of the union is largely based on voluntary commitment of its members. The riding association holds a general assembly every two years and at least 2 board meetings each year.

In 2010, the touristic competence centre horse region National Park Kalkalpen was started as a project of the riding association and regional tourism associations and is being promoted under the standardized labelling concept of the national park (see Figure 13).

Its aims are strategic marketing for riding tourism in the region, connectivity along the service and information chain and further increase in quality and professionalism of touristic offers in the field of riding [18]. The horse region National Park Kalkalpen is one of three official horse-riding regions in Upper Austria that are supported by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association (www.pferdeurlaub.at) [21].

In 2008/09, riding stables and other touristic facilities in the region that wanted to be part of the touristic competence centre were invited to participate in a qualification initiative, which comprised 5 seminars on topics such as the needs of riding customers, communication, marketing strategies or web presence [17]. This qualification initiative was financed via the LEADER programme. Equity capital was provided by the regional tourism associations.

About 30 riding stables of the riding association, which partly also offer accommodation facilities, now participate in the competence centre. The horse region National Park Kalkalpen stretches over the touristic regions of Pyhrn-Priel, Ennstal, Steyrtal and also the Kremstal and provides about 300 km [15] of well-marked riding trails (see Figure 14). Non-marked trails in the national park can only be visited with qualified riding-guides. Riding season in the national park region is from mid of April to end of October [16]. The official homepage of the initiative: www.pferdeland-nationalpark.at.

The competence centre offers and performs activities in seven main fields: trail riding, western riding, riding lessons, therapeutic riding, carriage riding, horse breeding and horse accommodation [15].
The working group (ARGE) *competence centre* was established for the pursuit of the goals of the competence centre, such as touristic marketing activities, and is based on voluntary work of motivated members. The budget of the competence centre is provided by the 30 participating riding stables and the regional tourism associations.

Some additional budget for certain projects can be gained through LEADER funding. The competence centre is also supported by mayors and municipalities, especially in the Pyhrn-Priel region. In general, the touristic and marketing focus of the competence centre lies in the Pyhrn-Priel region at the moment, even though it is intended to include all touristic regions.

Another working group within the riding association is working on the topic *trail riding* and aims at the further expansion of the network of riding trails in the Pyhrn-Priel region. This working group also serves as a communication platform between private riders and businesses.

The riding association and the working group *trail riding* organize amongst others an annual riding event in the Pyhrn-Priel region, which is called the horsemen’s celebration (Reiterfest Pyhrn-Priel). It usually takes place at the end of July or beginning of August and attracted around 2,500 visitors in 2010 [19]. It is used as a presentation of the different fields of horse riding to the public and has a good marketing value for the region, also due to reports and articles in different media.

### 3.2.2.3 National Park Kalkalpen bike specialists

The National Park Kalkalpen region is one out of two mountain bike competence centres in Upper Austria. These centres are presented on the website www.biken.at by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association [27]. The idea was initiated by a staff member of the national park, according to interviews in the frame of this thesis.

The region provides around 500 km of well-marked bike trails in different degrees of difficulty [27].

The *National Park bike specialists* are – similar to the NP hiking specialists (see 3.2.2.1) – a network of qualified accommodation facilities in the Ennstal and Steyratal that are specialised on the topic of (mountain) biking. In addition, a professional mountain bike guide, a bike rental shop and the tourism associations of Ennstal and Steyratal also are part of the network. Member businesses have committed themselves to stick to certain quality criteria [27]. The members are
not yet organized as a union, but are active in a working group. Organisational work for the bike specialists is being done by the two tourism associations Ennstal and Steyrtal, to which the member businesses pay a membership fee.

The bike specialists are not supported financially by the National Park Kalkalpen; however, the park supports the bike specialists through mentioning in its brochures etc.

Also here, qualification workshops for interested members were offered, where for example guest-host scenarios could be run through. The network is still in the phase of development.

The network is also being advertised via the Upper Austrian Tourism Association.

The right of way on the land of the ÖBF (Austrian federal forest company) for bike trails is generally being paid by the federal country of Upper Austria – independently from the bike specialists.

Accommodation facilities in the network of bike specialists have to provide the following services to their guests [27]:

- lockable bike rooms
- bike tools (incl. assembly stand, lubricant, most important replacement parts)
- Washing areas for bikes
- Drying room for clothes
- Laundry-service for sports clothes
- Tour provisions (energy bars and drinks)
- First aid kits
- Bike-info-corner
- Capable personnel for bike-relevant questions incl. info about weather and public transportation
- Weekly *bike-info-meetings*

The bike rental shop for example has to offer breakdown service on weekdays [27].
The *Kalkalpentour* is a new long-distance mountain bike trail (220 km) that links the Ennstal with the Steyrtal and the Reichraminger Hintergebirge in the National Park Kalkalpen. The 3-days tour passes several accommodation facilities in the network of the bike specialists and also leads to rest stops, for example on farmed alpine pastures. The GPS tracks of the tour in three different degrees of difficulty can be downloaded from www.kalkalpentour.at. The *Kalkalpentour* is supported by the LEADER programme and the federal country of Upper Austria [34].

### 3.2.3 Other cooperation programmes

#### 3.2.3.1 Verein Nahtur

The *union Nahtur* is an association of around 180 farms in the national park region (some are also outside the NP region), with the focus on joint marketing and product development, and has been existing since about 1997 [2].

*Figure 17: Label Verein Nahtur [30]*

The union has its own label (see Figure 17) referring to the national park and a homepage (www.nahtur.at), and follows the motto: *quality from the National Park Kalkalpen region* [30].

Aims of the union are the creation of additional income through innovative products and thus the contribution to the further existence of their rural family businesses. Rural depopulation shall be avoided and the precious cultural landscape of the region maintained [30].

The establishment of the union was supported by the national park and the national park also assisted the union in the first years in organisational issues [26]. The criteria for the utilization of the label *Nahtur* are strict, but not necessarily based on organic farming.

The membership requires the following preconditions [2]:

- membership fee
- location of the farm within the NP region
- if outside the NP region, the membership requires the agreement of the union
- the farm has to be managed according to the criteria of organic farming or at least according to ÖPUL-criteria
- The farm has to allow for a voluntary control through a certified control union
- All legal requirements for the production, processing and selling of food have to be fulfilled.
The union already comprised different project groups, such as direct marketing, national park farms in the Ennstal or organic beef [30]. The union defines in which projects only organic farms may participate. Other projects also are open to conventional farms, which have to stick to ÖPUL criteria.

ÖPUL is the Austrian programme for ecologically sound agriculture. It is based on the environmental friendly use of agricultural land for the conservation of nature as well as the maintenance of natural habitats. In addition, ways of agricultural production are being subsidised, which help decreasing the harming effects of agriculture on the environment. Basic ÖPUL criteria are the adherence of the good agricultural practice concerning manuring, the maintenance and careful handling of landscape components and the maintenance of the extent of grassland [31].

3.2.3.2 Nationalpark Höfe Ennstal

The national park farms in the Enns valley originated from a project group of the union Nahtur (see chapter 3.2.3.1) and are a network of currently 11 farms that offer farm-holidays in the Enns valley [30].

Each member farm offers different guest attractions and services. Special about this network is the fact that no matter at which farm the guests book their accommodation, they can use the leisure and recreational attractions and activities of the whole network, which creates a wide range of possibilities [35].

This includes [35]:

- Children searching for tracks in the adventure forests
- Must-press with old farm devices
- Climbing wall and romantic spots
- From grain grinding to bread baking
- Guided hikes: from the miner’s trail to the Kalkalpen
- Pottery painting – rural craftwork for skilled hands
- Visits to alpine pastures and inspection of cattle
- Fishing paradise for the whole family
- Try-out horse riding for children
• Healthy herbal holiday for the whole family
• Hiking through the nature conservation area Klausgraben
• Bike rental and tours

The *NP farms in the Enns valley* exist as a network since about 1998 and are organized in a working group. Marketing is done via the official website of the network (www.ferien-bauernhof.at) and via a folder that is mainly being distributed by the tourism association Ennstal.

### 3.2.3.3 Genussregion National Park Kalkalpen

The *Genuss Region Österreich* is an Austrian-wide initiative that stresses the importance of regional delicacies (www.genuss-region.at). It is a protected brand of the Agrarmarkt Austria Marketing GmbH. and of the Austrian ministry of agriculture, forestry, environment and water management. A central point is the information of tourists and consumers about the specific culinary offers of different regions in Austria: which food is produced where? The region and its food products shall fuse to a distinctive brand and create added value for rural areas. The connection between food production and traditional cultural landscapes shall be made visible to consumers. Regionalism (short transport ways...) and freshness of products are important keywords of the initiative [13].

Regions can apply for the label *Genussregion*. The decision for admission is taken by a jury. The ministry awards regions with the label *Genussregion* under specific criteria [13].

• The product must be typical of the region and
• be traditionally produced there in a verifiably higher quality than a standard product.
• The raw materials for the product must come from the region.
• The product has to be used in regional gastronomy and
direct marketing of the product is (also) done in the region.
• The product must be borne by a union.
• There are cultural events that take place in the region around this product
• etc.
The National Park Kalkalpen region was awarded with two Genussregionen in 2008: the National Park Kalkalpen organic beef and the National Park Kalkalpen fruit juices [13].

Figure 20: The two “Genussregionen” National Park Kalkalpen [13]

The preservation of the traditional cultural landscape and of precious habitats in the National Park Kalkalpen region are important aims of both initiatives [1].

Aim of the Genuss Region National Park Kalkalpen organic beef is the development of a stable long-term marketing system for the participating regional organic farmers. Project partners are Bio-Austria – an organisation of Austrian organic farmers, the regional forum Steyr-Kirchdorf, the farmer’s chamber and the breeding association Murbdn [1]. Preliminary work was done amongst others through a project of the Verein Nahtur.

The Genuss Region National Park Kalkalpen fruit juices is based on the work of the working group natural juices Steinbach. This is an initiative of seven farmers, who have recognized the importance of the conservation of traditional fruit trees in the region. Also the National Park Kalkalpen started a project in 2007 on the conservation of the 250 identified old fruit tree species. Fruit trees and traditional fruit tree meadows are precious habitats [1].

In addition, both initiatives make a contribution in preserving the area as an attractive touristic region, with its mixture of typical cultural and natural landscape [13].
3.3 Analysis and recommendations: cooperation programmes

3.3.1 National Park Kalkalpen partners

3.3.1.1 Geographical and sectoral distribution

At the moment (status quo March 2011), 34 businesses from different sectors are members of the national park partner-network [1].

- 3 National Park Kalkalpen farms
- 3 National Park Kalkalpen cooperation partners or sponsors
- 28 other National Park Kalkalpen partners

The membership criteria for national park farms follow the principles of organic farming. These criteria are too strict for many farms in the National Park Kalkalpen region, therefore only three farms could be won as partners. These three organic farms sell their products via direct marketing. In addition, the use of the NP partner label only makes sense when the member business is doing its own marketing, which is very difficult for the small and medium scale farms in the region [2]. In order to start cooperation with other farms, the Verein Nahtur was founded (see chapter 3.2.3.1).

The largest fraction among the National Park Kalkalpen partners is formed by the inns (see Figure 21). This can be explained by the fact that all the remaining members of a former initiative called the Eisenstraßenwirte (iron trail inns), jointly became members of the NP partner network.

![Figure 21: NP Kalkalpen partner businesses divided by sector](image)
A big fraction of the NP partners has already been member of the network for many years. Some new partners could be won in the last years and there also are current attempts for new partnerships; not systematically, but on occasion.

It is visible in Figure 22 and Figure 23 that the partner companies are underrepresented in the Pyhrn-Priel region. Within the last 3 years, some individual businesses from this region were added to the network.

3.3.1.2 Personal interviews with partner businesses

From the list of all NP partners, six businesses from different sectors were randomly selected and asked for a personal interview. These interviews were
conducted in February 2011 and followed a standardized questionnaire; however, the talks mostly exceeded the prepared questions. Scope of this survey was the degree of satisfaction of the partners with the partner programme, their previous experiences as NP partners and their wishes for the future cooperation.

The first question asked for their reasons for becoming a NP partner. The wish to support the specific goals of the NP was a relevant joining-reason for 2 of 6 polled partner companies. However, for almost all polled partners, the topics of sustainability and environmental protection in their companies are important and they thus can see certain connecting factors to the national park. Of course, the wish for economic benefits was also an important factor in the decision for the entry.

The question for the general satisfaction of the partners with the partner programme was answered by 4 of 6 polled companies with “no/rather no”, by 2 partners with “rather yes”; however, one of the latter companies has not been a partner for very long yet and by their own statement cannot give a clear evaluation. Choices for answer were: “yes, rather yes, rather no, no”.

In addition, the randomly selected partner companies were asked if they had visible advantages from their membership in the NP partner programme. This was answered with “no/rather no” by 5 of 6 polled companies. However, the following advantages were mentioned by one or more polled partners:

- It is a good promotion to give the NP gift coupons to regular customers.
- The topic national park is a good sales argument, also abroad.
- One partner is known as unofficial info point for touristic issues relating to the national park and is thus – as a side effect – attracting new customers.

One important part of the personal interviews with 6 randomly selected NP partners was the question for their previous experiences and impressions in the partner programme, respectively in their cooperation with the National Park Kalkalpen.

All polled partners, who have already been member of the programme for many years, state in the interviews that the cooperation with the NP was better in the beginning and that they do not really see the programme as a partnership any more. Originally, the partner programme was well managed and coordinated by a staff member of the NP Kalkalpen. Unfortunately, such a personal attention has not been forthcoming any more in recent years. There is a feeling that these partnerships are not of priority for the national park and that only the most important tasks are fulfilled in this respect. The goals of the national park in this context are not clear to the partners. There was the repeated question in the
interviews if cooperation with regional economy is really of interest to the NP management. In addition, some partners stated in the interviews that they have the impression that there are internal conflicts of interest within the NP management concerning this topic. This lack of a straight line seems to reduce the motivation of the partners to approach the national park with new ideas.

Further critical issues are the perceived lack of direct communication with the NP administration and of professionalism in the cooperation. However, this is being attributed to both sides – NP and partners. Many partners are rather small businesses, which often cannot treat the topic of marketing in an as professional way as a larger company could do. For this reason, more cooperation in terms of marketing with the NP and also among the different partners would be of interest. The majority of the polled partners state that they are aware of the fact that the insufficient cooperation is not only the park’s, but also their own fault, because they could show more initiative and motivation; however, they would like to get an impulse and a certain framework for the cooperation from the NP. Some partners also state that they do not exactly know what they can expect from the partner programme. There might sometimes be too high expectations towards possible benefits.

In addition, some polled partners also criticise the lack of networking among the partners themselves.

The topic National Park Kalkalpen is seen as a good marketing tool by all polled partners and they see big potential for the future; however, the current realization is rated as insufficient.

**There is the wish of all polled partners to revive and intensify the partnership.**

One question during the interview referred to the possible areas of cooperation. All polled partners would like to continue using the brand NP Kalkalpen in their own marketing, but they also have the wish to intensify the cooperation in respect to joint marketing with the national park. 5 of 6 polled partners also are interested in developing specific projects or products together with the national park on occasion, if the necessary structures are available.

Those structures include an adequate support and management of the partner programme (see chapter 3.5.2), a concept for communication with the partner businesses (see chapter 3.3.1.4) and a clear frame of cooperation (see 3.3.1.3).

Adequate personnel structures for the management of cooperation programmes are not only suggested for the partner initiative, but also for other activities concerning economic cooperation with the region. Therefore, this issue is discussed in a later chapter of this thesis (see chapter 3.5.2).
3.3.1.3 Rights and duties in the partnership

There are contracts between the national park partners and the national park, which define rights and duties for the contractual partners, for the benefit of both sides. Duties for NP partners according to the contract are for example the utilization of the NP partner logo on their homepage, which is not fulfilled by each partner business, or the participation in the annual information event of the national park, which is also not given in many cases. It seems to be the case that the partner businesses do not always stick to their agreed duties.

One possible reason, which was mentioned in the interviews, is that some partner businesses do not well know about the possible scope of cooperation and about their exact duties in the partnership, even if it is written down in the contract. But this is maybe a document that gets buried in the files.

The framework of cooperation should therefore be made aware again to the partner businesses through different communication activities; for example in biannual meetings specifically for national park partners (see chapter 3.3.1.4).

Some partners asked in the interviews for a more detailed definition of their duties as written down in the contract, by defining specific tasks and their time-frame, which would make the tasks better planable. This further specification of tasks could for example be done in the mentioned biannual partner meetings (see chapter 3.3.1.4).

The results could be summarized as a check-list, which is then being worked-off by the partner businesses and can be used as a self-check and a reminder.

The fulfillment of the duties according to the contract is important for the contractual partners; especially also for the national park, because thus the partner businesses communicate the national park message to the region, act as multipliers and help building the brand National Park Kalkalpen (see chapter 3.1).

A quality check in cooperation with the WKO should also be re-introduced again. The member businesses could be checked for example every 3 years, whether their membership criteria are still valid and if they stick to the cooperation agreement. However, this quality check should not be limited to the partner businesses, but be extended to the whole structure and management of the partner network as such, including the national park’s tasks.

3.3.1.4 Communication with the National Park Kalkalpen partners

Currently the NP Kalkalpen hosts an annual information event for all members of NP cooperation networks – including NP partners, hiking specialists etc. According to an estimation of a NP staff member, about 30% of all involved
businesses attend this meeting. In the frame of this event, member businesses are being informed about new projects and offers of the national park.

In the course of the interviews, some NP partner businesses stated that these events were interesting and well-prepared by the NP; however, the issues of NP partnership and its further development unfortunately were not widely discussed and therefore the events did not have so much practical value for them. This partly reduces their motivation to come. If partners do not come to this annual event, there often is no communication with the NP at all.

In the interviews there was the repeated wish for a more regular communication with the NP - with clearly defined goals and content. It is suggested to arrange meetings solely for the NP partner companies, as their needs might differ largely from those of the touristic initiatives, such as the hiking specialists. The touristic initiatives hold their own meetings through their unions, but there is no such individual meeting for national park partners.

In the frame of such NP partner meetings that could take place bi-annually, for instance the following topics could be treated; the regional offices of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber should be included in preparing and realizing these meetings:

- presentation of current projects of the NP partners that refer to the partner programme or could be linked to the partner programme
- presentation and discussion of new ideas and suggestions for improvement of the partner network
- presentation of successful projects or products or interesting ideas for different sectors from other national parks or protected areas as a thought-provoking impulse
- tips & tricks for topics such as branding, marketing, product development etc.: changing topics according to needs and interests; e.g. by external lecturers or the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (if desired)
- Planning and determination of joint marketing activities, such as performances at fairs, common events etc. for the upcoming term
- Definition and repeating of rights and duties of all involved parties according to the contract, discussion about compliance: e.g. pick one or two topics per meeting
- Definition of activities of partners and park and necessary preparation for the next meeting
For the first presentation of the new communication-concept, an introductory event will be necessary. The concept should be discussed with the partners and adapted if necessary. This is recommendable in order to win the partner’s support and to thus secure the future success of the partner programme. The real commitment of the partner businesses has to be gained, before starting this initiative.

It will probably not be enough to invite the partner companies to this start meeting by post or e-mail, but there should be personal invitations via telephone or visit, in order to demonstrate the special interest by the NP in the success of the programme.

3.3.1.5 Extension of the partner network

After the establishment of clearly defined structures and processes that allow for a professional, sustainably successful cooperation and coordination, there might be the wish to enlarge the partner network, especially for companies with a reference in content to the NP. The Federal Economic Chamber of Austria should be involved again in acquiring new partners.

Interesting new members could for example be large and middle-scale leading companies in the National Park Kalkalpen region; some of which are listed in Table 4. These companies partly already now refer on their homepages to their location within the NP Kalkalpen region, respectively to their use of natural resources from this region, and set value on environmental-friendly production processes. They partly export their products within Europe or even world-wide and thus have far-reaching contacts. Acquiring such companies as national park partners could provide a significant contribution to the wider spreading of the national park idea.

Table 4: Examples for large and medium-scale companies in the region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DANA Jeld-Wen Türen GmbH</td>
<td>Gleinkerau/Spital am Pyhrn</td>
<td>Production of timber doors, Europe-wide successful brand, environmental-friendly production according to homepage, sport sponsor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARK Metallwarenfabrik</td>
<td>Gleinkerau/Spital am Pyhrn</td>
<td>Production of metal parts for automotive industry, medicine, electronics etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisvogel</td>
<td>Molln</td>
<td>Fish farming and processing, refers to the NP on its homepage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, cooperation with the following sectors that have a certain contextual reference to the national park could be interesting:

- **Renewable energy systems**: e.g. solar companies, biomass heating: reference in content to the basic principles of the NP; CO₂-low, sustainable energy-supply
- **Gift articles**: possible cooperation in selling of NP-products, mutual cooperation
- **Outdoor and adventure organizers**: „Experience nature“ ↔ national park, very good possibility for introducing the topic of nature protection and appreciation especially to young people
- **Museums and cultural cooperations**: Combination of nature and culture (see also chapter 3.6.4.2)
- **Timber processing**: Sustainable timber products
- **Traditional clothing / traditional events**
- **Food**: Retailing, bakeries, inns etc.: organic and/or regional products

3.3.1.6 **Summary of observations**

- All polled partners want to continue and improve the cooperation, because they see potential
- The topic *national park* is seen as a good marketing tool

- Currently no systematic management / coordination of the partner programme
- Intentions and goals of NP concerning economic cooperation and regional development not clearly visible to the outside
- Lack of communication between national park and partners
- Lack of motivation of partners
- (Too high?) expectations vs. reality
• Underrepresentation of partner companies in Pyhrn-Priel region

Recommendations

• establish structures for coordination and management of partner networks
• define a clear framework for cooperation, including definition of specific tasks and activities
• implement a communication concept with the partners
• regular quality control of the partner network
• Enlarge the network after establishment of according structures

3.3.2 National Park Kalkalpen hiking specialists

3.3.2.1 Geographical and sectoral distribution

The network of hiking specialist currently comprises 22 accommodation facilities (Status quo March 2011), ranging from hotels to private apartments or farms. Most members are located in the Pyhrn-Priel region, as can be seen in Figure 24.

![Hiking specialists in the NP Kalkalpen region](image)

*Figure 24: Hiking specialists divided by region*

This can be explained by the fact that this region is a winter-sports area, comprising the two skiing resorts of Hinterstoder and Wurzeralm (in Spital am Pyhrn). Especially winter tourism is an important economic factor in this region and therefore many hotels and guesthouses can be found here. In addition, the programme was initiated by the former tourism director of the Pyhrn-Priel region.

The situation in the Steyrtal and Ennstal looks quite differently, with only 3 hiking specialists each. Tourism is not such a strong factor here as in the Pyhrn-
Priel region and the network of accommodation facilities is not so well developed. There simply are not so many accommodation facilities that could become members of the hiking specialists.

Figure 25 shows the division of hiking specialists by communities. Most members can be found in Hinterstoder and Vorderstoder, which are the two communities in the closest vicinity of the ski resort Hinterstoder.

The community of Hinterstoder comprises about 63 accommodation facilities, providing about 1,160 beds. 6 out of 15 large accommodation facilities >30 beds are members of the hiking specialists.

Vorderstoder has 21 accommodation facilities with altogether 360 beds. Here 5 out of 7 large accommodation facilities >30 beds are members of the hiking specialists.

![Hiking specialists in the NP Kalkalpen Region](image)

**Figure 25: Hiking specialists divided by communities**

3.3.2.2 Interviews

The network of NP Kalkalpen hiking specialists of course also was a topic in various interviews in the framework of this thesis, amongst others with the directors of the three regional tourism associations. In addition, interviews with three members of the initiative of hiking specialists were performed, as well as a telephone interview with the manager at the Upper Austrian Tourism Association, who is supporting the hiking specialists concerning marketing.

The directors of the tourism associations in the Enns- and Steyrtal see the programme **hiking specialists** in a positive light: through the bundling of resources and the organizational and financial support by the Upper Austrian Tourism Association, far better marketing effects are possible than for an
individual accommodation facility. The director of the tourism association Pyhrn-Priel sees the hiking specialists as an example for good cooperation in the region and as a proof for the willingness of regional businesses to transport the topic national park.

The national park and the tourism associations at times check the quality of the hiking specialists. All three tourism associations see the problem that the motivation of the hiking specialists is strongly varying among the single members. One part is highly motivated and strongly implements the topic into their businesses, e.g. by providing a well-maintained homepage, offering readily bookable hiking-packages or actively talking to their guests about the national park and its offers. They are implementing the brand National Park Kalkalpen, play an active role in the union and also attend the meetings. These members usually are satisfied with their membership in the programme, because they take some effort themselves and want to get the maximum out of it.

When looking at these members, the whole potential of the initiative gets visible.

Another part may not be as active as the above mentioned, but still tries to create some benefits for their businesses. And the third part unfortunately is not active at all. As stated by several interview partners, this is also the group that complains most about the programme.

The hiking specialists are not set up as a sole service facility, which does the whole job for its members. The single members cannot just settle back and wait for the success to approach them. In order to get the best results and really creating economic benefits for their own business, it is necessary for the members to get active themselves.

One critical point could lie in the fact that the largest part of the union-members provides good quality in their services and offers, but that there are a few black sheep. When guests book their holiday in one of the latter accommodation facilities, they may draw negative conclusions for the whole network of hiking specialists. This could maybe trigger negative effects for the reputation of the whole network. The question arises on how a joint level of quality can be ensured for all members of the hiking specialists and what shall be done if members do not stick to quality criteria. On the one hand, more pressure could be put on those members that have to catch up; on the other hand it is difficult to realize consequences, because the number of members and thus the available working budget of the union already is rather low.

As already mentioned above, some hiking specialists offer readily-bookable holiday programmes for their guests. During the interviews with three hiking specialists, it was stated that these programmes are so far only sold rather
seldomly but that they are perceived as important signboards for marketing. The tourism association Steyrtal has started to sell according present-vouchers. This seems to run quite well and shall stimulate the sale of readily-bookable programmes.

The interviewed hiking specialists state that their guests regularly use the tourism attractions and offers of the national park during their holidays and that they generally give a positive feedback about these services to them.

3.3.2.3 Web-presence of the union

The official homepage of the hiking specialists points out the aims of the network and its special offers and describes all members. It can be found via: www.wanderspezialisten.at. The website was set up via the online accommodation platform tiscover.

The homepage of the hiking specialists cannot easily be found via search engines. However, references to the programme of hiking specialists are found on other websites.

The homepage contains a variety of menu-points, which makes it rather complicated; a more simplified main structure could be considered.

The members businesses are listed on the homepage and are divided by categories, such as hotels, guesthouses, inns, apartments etc. These single lists can be either sorted by region, name or guest recommendations. However, there is no possibility for search according to certain criteria and combinations of criteria. It would be very useful to implement the possibility to search for accommodation facilities for the following single or combined criteria: rating (hiking boots), location (village), region (Steyrtal, Ennstal, Pyhrn-Priel), category (hotel, inn, apartments etc.) and/or guest recommendations.

On the welcome page there are links to hiking in the National Park Kalkalpen region and hiking in the Pyhrn-Priel region. The latter link forwards to a completely wrong page. The first link does not connect to the official homepage of the National Park Kalkalpen region (www.nationalparkregion.com), but to another tiscover page. Here, the link to the official page would be preferable, because it gives a much more professional and well-structured impression to the visitor.

In general, there seem to be several websites that overlap in their topics. It often is not clear if these websites are still in use or already outdated.

All links on the website should be checked for functionality and linking to the right pages.
Also the structure, highlighting and arrangement of text, as well as pictures, could be reconsidered, in order to invite the guest to read the information. Compare to: www.nationalparkregion.com

3.3.2.4 Web-presence of the single members

All hiking specialists also have their own web-presence on the tiscover platform, which is a good tool for small businesses that cannot invest much time in maintaining their own homepage. This web-presence of all hiking specialists was one criterion for the membership in the network and was set up with the support of the regional tourism associations. However, this platform certainly has its limits concerning the scope of individual design and features. 11 hiking specialists also have their own homepage, apart from tiscover.

According to statements in the interviews, some hiking specialists do not regularly update and maintain their homepages. Some for example do not always activate their current free beds on the tiscover page and thus cannot be found by interested guests, or they do not display their readily bookable holiday programmes on their homepages. Concerning the web-appearance of some hiking specialists, the hiking manager of the Upper Austrian Tourism Association still sees some potential for improvement.

One aim of all partner networks is the further spreading of the national park idea. This means that NP partners should actively communicate their status as NP partners to the outside, also via their homepage. These activities help in building the brand National Park Kalkalpen. Therefore, the visibility of the topic NP Kalkalpen on the internet appearances of the hiking specialists was evaluated, according to different questions:

26 % of the hiking specialists have no or almost no reference to the National Park Kalkalpen or to the network of hiking specialists on their homepage (see Figure 26). For 26 % it is not visible at first sight that they have a link to the national park or that they are hiking specialists; this means that only when browsing though sub-pages of the website, some information on the national park or a link can be found. However, on almost half of the homepages, there is an immediate and well-visible reference to the national park.

Hiking specialists offer a special service-package to their guests, which definitely gives them some winning margin to other accommodation facilities in the area and which must always be available to their guests. So why not advertising this extra service on the homepage?
Unfortunately, only 39% of the hiking specialists use the **logo of their network on their homepage**. A logo is much more likely to catch the eye of a visitor of a homepage than a reference in the text, especially if the visitor does not take a long time to study the homepage. A logo shows the affiliation to a topic or institution and also has a certain recognition value, which creates marketing benefits for all members of the network (see figure 3.1).

![Figure 26: Evaluation of homepages of hiking specialists](image)

Many people today use the internet in order to search for accommodation facilities and therefore the presence in the web is very important, also for small hotels or guesthouses, and should not be neglected. The affiliation of the hiking specialists to the national park should be immediately visible on their homepages, in the best case by integrating the logo into the welcome page and also by mentioning the network in the text of the welcome page.

As already evaluated, almost half of all hiking specialists mention the national park on their homepage in one way or another. The next question would be, if they also offer some **additional information**, not only the logo, a link or a short reference in a text. 43% of all members do not provide any additional information. 35% at least provide the link of the national park or the hiking specialists. 22% offer some more information about the national park to their visitors, which can be a small text maybe including a link or some pictures of the area. It can be recommended that all hiking specialists put a small piece of information on the national park and its goals on their homepage.

As already mentioned, some hiking specialists have developed specific holiday-programmes that can be readily booked by their guests; such as a weekend-holiday dedicated to a certain topic, e.g. for young couples. 39% of all hiking specialists offer such holiday-programmes on their homepages.
3.3.2.5 Summary of observations

- several highly motivated members
- joint marketing allows for a much wider impact than it would be possible for a single member alone
- Readily bookable holiday programmes as *door openers*

- No equal level of motivation and quality among members
- Individual homepages of members:
  - 39% do not use the logo
  - About 50% have no or no immediate reference to the national park or the network of hiking specialists
- Official homepage of hiking specialists:
  - Cannot immediately be found via Google
  - no possibility for systematic search for accommodation facilities
  - homepage does not give a very professional impression to the visitor
  - some outdated links

Recommendations

- Equal level of motivation and quality should be achieved for all hiking specialists
- Improve official homepage of hiking specialists
- Implement the topic National Park Kalkalpen on the homepages of all hiking specialists

3.3.3 National Park Kalkalpen bike specialists

Currently, the network of bike specialists has nineteen members: eight are located in the Steyrtal, eleven in the Ennstal. So far, there are no members in the Pyhrn-Priel region [27]. This can be explained by the fact that the tourism association of the Pyhrn-Priel region does not rate the topic of mountain biking as very important for their region.
Two interviews with bike specialists – both of them accommodation facilities – were performed in the frame of this thesis.

It was stated in the interviews that the support and assistance of biking guests is rather time-consuming. Personal contact and talk to the guests is very important.

Figure 27: Spatial distribution of hiking specialists

One advantage of this initiative, according to the interviews, is the fact that investments were necessary in order to become a member of the bike specialists; for example equipment for bike repair, assembly stands, bike rooms etc. Thus, only those businesses became members that are motivated and serious about it.

The initiative is just starting, therefore no real conclusions could be drawn in the interviews, however, the interview partners believe in a positive development.

A possible conflict field was also mentioned in the interviews: bikers and hikers on the same trails.

As a possible topic for the future, e-bikes were mentioned, in order to make nature experience on bike accessible to less-trained or aged people.

3.3.4 National Park Kalkalpen horse region

Apart from carriage rides, the visitor programme of the national park is not linked to the riding association horse region National Park Kalkalpen. In an interview, a representative of the riding association stated that the riding association would like to cooperate more intensively with the national park.
There should be joint considerations on how a closer cooperation can be achieved.

There are especially two topics that were mentioned in the interview:

- **Charge for use of trails by ÖBF (Austrian federal forest company):** The riding association marks and maintains riding trails, but has to pay a fee for the right of trail to the ÖBF in order to be allowed to use the trails on the land of the ÖBF for their riding activities. (88% of the national park’s area is owned by the ÖBF [1].) This fee accounts for a large part of the riding association’s budget. The riding association therefore would like the national park to support them in according negotiations with the ÖBF.

- **Trail riding in the visitor programme of the national park:** Trail riding for visitors is not yet offered by the national park. There should be talks between the national park and the riding association on how to improve the cooperation in this field. There is for example no tour riding guide available, who could offer guided tours in and around the national park on a regular basis. The riding association offers some guided tours also in the national park, but this offer cannot be extended with the existing resources, because a lot of it is already being done on voluntary basis by members of the association.

**Summary of observations:**

- Motivated team that largely works on voluntary basis
- Interesting touristic concept that can be well linked to the topics *nature* and *wilderness*

- Closer cooperation to the national park desired concerning trail riding
- Charge for use of trails to ÖBF weights the union’s budget

**Recommendation**

Meeting between riding association and national park to clarify the possible scope of cooperation
3.3.5 Other cooperation programmes

3.3.5.1 Verein Nahtur

The union Nahtur was actively working until 2002, according to a staff member of the national park. The union developed successful and worked-out projects and products, some of which are being still produced and sold; but at the moment the union as such is not active any more. However, some of its members still are doing direct marketing. Even if the union did successful work, the process got stuck since 2002.

The union was important in the stage of groundwork and fund generation. If new projects are intended, they could again be carried out via the union.

According to an interview, one problem might have been the too strong focus on direct marketing. This requires the farms to become commercial businesses and invest in reconstruction for the fulfilment of hygiene criteria. For many farms, this did not pay off and that is why they stopped to be active in the union.

There still are some leading members that do direct marketing, but which do not need the support of the union any more. The union Nahtur is not active any more, but has triggered some branch initiatives.

In a thesis in 2006 [2], it was mentioned that one problem of the union might have been the fact that it was accessible for conventional farms (at least ÖPUL criteria) as well as organic farms. For consumers, this mix might have been confusing, because it maybe was not clear what the union was standing for [2].

The idea of a cooperation network for farms in the national park region is very good, as there is no other possibility at the moment for farms to make use of their proximity to the national park; except if they offer farm holidays (hiking specialists, bike specialists or NP farms Ennstal) or if they are organic farms and have their own direct marketing strategy, where they can use the NP partner label.

Organic products today are more and more appreciated by consumers; however, also the factor of regionalism is getting increasingly important. This goes along with short transportation ways and thus smaller emission of CO₂, the support and esteem of regional small-scale farms, the protest of many consumers against the industrial large-scale production of food, and in general a closer relation to the consumed products.

The reason for the founding of the union is still as valid as ever: securing the income of small-scale farmers in the region, in order to avoid rural depopulation [30].
Therefore, there should be ways to include small-scale farms in the region into the park’s cooperation programme.

It is recommended to evaluate the current status of the union:

- Which members are still active in direct marketing of their products?
- Which members have continued working on the basis of the union Nahtur?
- Is the label Nahtur still being used for some products?
- If yes, where are Nahtur products being sold?
- Is there some cooperation between the active members?
- How could a closer cooperation with the national park achieved again?

In any case, the current status of the union should be clarified in order to get a basis for the possible further pursuit of this label.

On the homepage of the national park and of the union, the visitor gets the impression that the union Nahtur is still active:

It would be recommendable to add some information to the union’s homepage about the current status (projects finished) and a short summary of previous activities. In addition, the starting page still displays the old union name Naturland, which seemingly had to be changed to Nahtur due to copyright issues [2]. The homepage of the national park still links to the homepage of the union Nahtur, therefore the data on the Nahtur homepage should be updated, in order to avoid confusion among visitors of the site.

The label of the union Nahtur (see Figure 28) refers to the national park by using the heraldic animal of the national park, the golden eagle. However, it is not designed under the standardized labelling concept of the national park (see chapter 3.1), which would mean that also the name National Park Kalkalpen is being found in the label. In case the union should be revived, the label could also be reconsidered, in order to guarantee the immediate association of consumers with the National Park Kalkalpen.

**Summary of observations:**

- Successful work in the first years
- Trigger for follow-up initiatives, such as the Genussregion NP Kalkalpen organic beef and NP farms Ennstal
• Possibility for added value for small-scale farms in the region (organic and conventional) through the brand NP Kalkalpen

• Only some members are still actively doing direct marketing

• Unclarity about the current status of the union

Recommendations:

• Evaluate the current status of the union as a decision basis for further activities

• Update the information on the homepages of the NP and the union

3.3.5.2 Nationalpark Höfe Ennstal

There is a close cooperation between the national park farms and the tourism association Ennstal. The relation to the national park on the other hand is described as rather loose, also concerning the implementation of the topic national park in the concept of the farm network. This could be a starting point for improvements.

The work of the single members is described as successful by the director of the tourism association Ennstal.

A closer relation to the national park can be recommended, especially because the topic farm-holiday could be very well linked to the topics national park and nature.

The label of the national park farms is not in line with the standardized labelling concept of the national park.
3.4 Analysis and recommendations: Touristic and economic representations

3.4.1 Cooperation with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber

The national park region is situated in the territory of two districts: Steyr-Land and Kirchdorf (see Figure 29). For each district, there is a regional office of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber that aims at further economic development and strengthening of the region and is the first contact point for economic concerns. It represents the interests of regional economic businesses.

The WKO was in the past for example involved in the selection and check of applicants for the National Park Kalkalpen partner network. At the moment there is no cooperation, according to the interviews with the directors of the two regional WKO offices.

The WKO Kirchdorf has performed a project on the future of economy in the district of Kirchdorf (Zukunft.Wirtschaft), which was based on many interviews with regional businesses. One question inquired for the business owner’s perception of the National Park Kalkalpen. The result was that the businesses see the national park as a chance and a barrier at the same time; a chance, because the national park may increase the degree of popularity of the region – with different further positive effects; and a barrier for the fear of a stop in economic development through the prioritization of nature conservation in the region. This fear certainly is unfounded for the biggest part, but there seems to be a lack of according information.

Both directors of the regional WKO offices state in the interviews that they are really interested in achieving a better and closer cooperation with the National Park Kalkalpen in the future and that they see a big potential for the region through the national park.
Unfortunately there was no cooperation over the last years. According to the WKO directors, there were attempts by both regional offices in the past to contact the national park and there also were occasional meetings aiming at triggering future cooperation, unfortunately without concrete results. The interviews in the frame of this thesis gave the notion that problems from the past hinder the present communication.

The following short analysis of the situation was performed by the WKO office in Kirchdorf, after a meeting with a representative of the national park in 2010. It is based on the experiences of the WKO and regional businesses with the national park:

- There is only little communication visible within the region about the national park - communication outside the national park region is perceived as better.
- The level of acceptance for the national park among local people and businesses seems to rise with increasing distance to the national park.
- WKO/economy and the national park partly have very differing points of view due to differing aims and tasks.
- The real benefit of the national park is not visible to local people and businesses.
- There were/are several misunderstandings in communication: e.g. the role of the Villa Sonnwend (seminar hotel owned by the national park) – it does not displace other inns, but brings new structures of clientele to the region.
- The possibilities for cooperation between regional businesses and the national park are not well known by the businesses.
- Due to experiences in the past, there is a rather problematic relation between the national park and the WKO at the moment.
- There exists the wrong perception among many local people and businesses that the national park is only of interest and use for a certain, limited group of people, such as nature conservationists.
- The national park is often situated between the two camps of strict nature conservationists and tourism/economy.
- The possible enlargement of ski-resorts could become a bigger conflict between the national park and the region Pyhrn-Priel.

The WKO Kirchdorf has summarized the following concrete demands for the future cooperation:
• Improvement of communication: between the national park and the WKO and also between the national park and the local population and businesses

• Use supportive critics of both sides as a chance

• Make the benefits of the national park for the region visible, in order to increase acceptance for the national park

The WKO Kirchdorf would like to hold a small-scale start-workshop national park and regional economy with representatives of the park and discuss questions on how to improve the future cooperation:

• How should the future cooperation look like?

• What were the previous problems?

• What were the previous success stories?

• How can the national park and regional businesses profit from each other?

• What are the joint aims?

In addition, the WKO Kirchdorf claims for the establishment of a forum national park and regional economy, where topics can be discussed by a larger audience, including regional businesses and economic representations. This could for example take place every two years. A regular economy meeting with NP and WKO is also requested by the director of the tourism association Steyrtal.

It was suggested by the WKO office in Steyr that the national park should participate in the regular meetings of the committees of WKO district offices (Bezirksstellenausschuss). These are boards that represent regional businesses. The participation of the national park would be very welcomed.

In addition, the national park could be represented at various branch meetings. It is being suggested that the WKO and the national park invite each other to important meetings in the region, in order to strengthen the regional network.

For the WKO Steyr cooperation in many projects is imaginable: e.g. in the topic of e-mobility, in a project in the Ennstal between gastronomy and fishery, and in product development with regional businesses. Again, meetings between the national park and the WKO would be necessary, in order to define the extent and content of future cooperation.

And one very central demand is the wish for a defined contact person for economic issues in the national park management.
Summary of observations:

- WKO sees big potential for the region through the national park
- Will for cooperation on both sides
- No cooperation / communication at the moment due to experiences in the past
- No resources currently available for systematic cooperation

Recommendations:

- Kick-off meeting between national park management and both WKO offices for definition of common goals and framework for possible future cooperation
- Consequent pursuit of the topic on both sides
- Development of clear structures for coordination of projects concerning national park + regional economy (see chapter 3.5.2).

3.4.2 The touristic regions around the national park

The subsequent evaluation is partly based on personal interviews that were performed in February 2011 with the following persons:

- Director of the tourism association Ennstal
- Director of the tourism association of the city of Steyr
- Director of the tourism association Steyrtal
- Chairman of the tourism association Steyrtal
- Director of the tourism association Pyhrn-Priel

There are four regional tourism associations that refer to the National Park Kalkalpen in their marketing. On the one hand – as already mentioned – there are the tourism associations Ennstal, Steyrtal and Pyhrn-Priel, which are directly located in the vicinity of the national park; and on the other hand there is the tourism association of the city of Steyr (see Figure 6). Even though not directly located in the NP region, the Steyr is currently working on the integration of the topic national park into their future touristic strategy, according to the motto Tourism destination Steyr at the national park [9]. This transportation of the topic national park in the future touristic marketing of Steyr will definitely also
have a good impact on the degree of popularity of the national park and thus create benefits for both sides.

Based on the expert interviews, the cooperation between the regional tourism associations has to be rated as somewhat problematic. The touristic core region around the national park has split up 2 or 3 years ago into two fractions with differing aims. A working group on joint marketing was planned, but dropped again.

Currently, the tourism associations of Ennstal and Steyrtal have a close cooperation and present themselves as the National Park Kalkalpen region, with a joint homepage and marketing (www.nationalparkregion.com) and use the logo derived from the standardized labelling system of the national park (see Figure 30). They see the national park as an important – maybe even their most important – touristic resource and are accordingly promoting it. This cooperation is being intensified step by step and is seen in a positive light by the tourism associations of Ennstal and Steyrtal. The directors of the tourism associations of Ennstal and Steyrtal both state in the interviews that the national park has the function of a calling-card for their regions. There has been a constant increase in overnight stays in these regions over the last years. According to the interviews, this can certainly not only be attributed to the national park, because the tourism associations invested into marketing and also created different new offers and products apart from the national park in the last years, but the brand national park is definitely seen as a good tool for marketing and attracting new visitors. The director of the tourism association Steyrtal would be interested in a regular jour fixe with all tourism associations, the national park and the visitor centres, for example once per quarter, where possible ways for cooperation can be discussed.

The tourism region Pyhrn-Priel on the other hand – even though several communities in its sphere of influence are national park communities by law – does not call itself National Park Kalkalpen region and only sees the national park as one offer in a wider variety of offers. The national park also is not part of their corporate design or branding (see Figure 31) and is not immediately visible on their official homepage (www.pyhrn-priel.net). Especially winter tourism is of big importance in the Pyhrn-Priel region, as the ski resorts Wurzeralm and Hinterstoder are located there. Thus, there is a completely different touristic infrastructure available in this region, compared to the Ennstal and Steyrtal, with much more beds and also several large accommodation facilities.
A popular offer by the Pyhrn-Priel tourism association is the *Pyhrn-Priel card* (see Figure 32). This is a service card that is given to overnight-guests in the region for free and that can also be purchased for a certain price by other people. This card allows for example for the free utilization of the regional cable cars in summer season, provides free entrance to many museums and other touristic and recreational facilities in the region and also supports attractions of the national park. Through this popular touristic card, contents of the national park are transported.

The director of the tourism association states that he recognizes the touristic offer of the national park as a good complement, but he sees other focal points in the tourism strategy for his region.

At the moment, the possibilities for the future touristic direction of the Pyhrn-Priel region are being evaluated in a study.

As a result of numerous personal interviews with regional stakeholders, it would be recommendable for the responsible parties to consider the creation of a touristic umbrella organization *National Park Kalkalpen region*, which comprises all three touristic regions and represents the individual tourist associations.

The director of the tourism association Pyhrn-Priel states that the position of the existing touristic cooperation initiatives in the NP region is unclear to him in the future tourism strategy for Upper Austria.

The Upper Austrian Tourism Strategy 2011 – 2016 [8] for the whole federal country of Upper Austria was presented in spring 2011 and aims at the promotion of touristic *light houses*, which means that marketing efforts will be concentrated on few, selected high-quality products, which then of course will also have a certain pull for other touristic products. Those *light-houses* will be presented in the *show-case* of Upper Austrian tourism [8]. The definition of those future lighthouses for Upper Austria is done in an externally accompanied project, also in cooperation with the Upper Austrian Tourism Association. It is too early at the moment to estimate whether attractions and offers in the national park region could become such lighthouses or not, according to a representative of the Upper Austrian Tourism Association. The process is just starting and still completely open.
A possible lighthouse could maybe be the Kalkalpen long-distance hiking trail (www.kalkalpenweg.at). This trail resulted from a successful cooperation between institutions in the region – including the national park – and is also seen as a very good marketing tool that attracts the attention of the media. The trail is designed in several day-etaps under different mottoes and takes people to interesting places in and around the national park [29].

The Steyrtal

The following problem in the Steyrtal was mentioned in the interviews: even though the number of overnight stays has been increasing in the last years, the number of beds in the region is declining. There especially are no larger hotels or guesthouses available in the region, which would allow for the accommodation of larger tourism groups. The chairman of the tourism association Steyrtal states that the region would need political and financial support for the development of new infrastructure, especially in the field of tourism and agriculture. Several farmers cannot make their living any more and have to abandon their farms, with the consequence that in the future it might not be possible any more to maintain the typical cultural landscapes of the region and traditional structures get lost. In addition, there is a lack of job opportunities in the region, forcing locals to either move away or commute to their work places. Further development in tourism could do its part in lessening this problem. The chairman of the regional tourism association Steyrtal claims for the development and implementation of an accompanying programme for regional economic and touristic development in the vicinity of the national park, which would be a task for politics and not for the national park.

Summary of observations:

- The national park is seen as an important factor by all regional tourism associations
- New touristic strategy of the town of Steyr can attract additional public attention on the national park
- Contents of the national park are being transported via the Pyhrn-Priel card
- Touristic regions around the national park do not jointly present themselves as one National Park Kalkalpen region
3.5 General recommendations for economic cooperation

3.5.1 Definition of internal targets concerning economic cooperation

As already mentioned in the evaluation of the national park management in 2007 by Christoph Imboden... “the national park – in the eyes of some involved people – does not always clearly show its priorities between nature conservation and added value to the region” [25]. The same was also noticed during the interviews in the frame of this thesis.

In a first step, the management of the NP Kalkalpen should therefore define clear internal goals and targets in respect to the cooperation between the NP and (regional) economy and give an official commitment for the pursuit of these goals. It has to be clearly stated what is possible for the park management and what goes beyond its tasks. Christoph Imboden recommends in his evaluation of 2007 that the national park management should develop criteria on when the park participates in projects concerning regional economic development and under which conditions the park gives comments on regional development projects [25]. The role and tasks of the national park in the region should be clear for the park management itself and of course also for the regional stakeholders [25]. The future line should be communicated to the partner companies, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and other representatives of the regional economy, in order to define the basis for the future cooperation.

3.5.2 Establishment of structures for coordination and management of economic cooperation with the region

The field of cooperation with economy is not treated consistently and systematically enough by the management of the national park at the moment, but it is co-served by one or two staff-members besides other topics. If the park decides to intensify this cooperation, it would be recommendable to establish a central coordination and contact point for projects with (regional) economy, in an extent that allows for:

- The coordination and support of all existing partner programmes (see Table 3), as necessary in the single cases
- The regular exchange with tourism boards, regional offices of the Federal Economic Chamber (WKO), the regional management and other economic or touristic representations in the region

• Significance of the topic national park in tourism strategies varies between the different tourism associations
The coordination / realization of a certain range of additional, individual projects or requests

As a good cooperation with the regional economy of course lies not only in the interest of the National Park Kalkalpen, there should be discussions and coordination with the WKO, the regional management, the LEADER office and other relevant bodies about details concerning content, goals, tasks and financing of such a management position.

The economic cooperation manager would not only fulfill a coordinating function, but would also improve communication and information exchange between the national park and regional stakeholders. Through the establishment of a coordination point it will get visible to the stakeholders that the national park is taking concrete steps in order to support regional development and to create a good basis for cooperation with other institutions in the region.

Already in the economic impact study of the national park on the region from 2006 it was stated that it is important that the existing partnerships are professionally maintained, in order to create and keep a functioning network for mutual benefits [26].

3.5.3 Communication with regional economy

For all cooperation programmes and for the cooperation between national park, regional WKO offices, tourism associations and other relevant regional bodies, a communication plan should be developed and implemented. A good overview should be achieved on the necessary communication interventions that should be performed or attended by the economic cooperation manager, including concrete targets, involved people or institutions and a time-plan. This helps in planning the necessary actions and estimating the necessary expenditure of time for the economic cooperation manager.

The following communication activities – amongst others – could be part of the communication plan:

Table 5: Possible communication interventions with participation of or performance by the cooperation manager

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involved parties</th>
<th>Communication activity, frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP partners</td>
<td>Bi-annual meetings recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual sending of material according to contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP hiking specialists</td>
<td>Annual general meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP region</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse region NP Kalkalpen</td>
<td>2 – 3 meetings per year of the management body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General meeting every 2 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 board meetings per year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP bike specialists</td>
<td>Meetings of working group and regional tourism associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP farms Ennstal</td>
<td>Meetings of the working group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genussregion</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional tourism associations</td>
<td>Regular meetings, maybe bi-annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKO</td>
<td>Regular meeting between WKO and NP recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large-scale forum NP and regional economy recommended, e.g. every 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bezirksstellenausschuss and branch meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All cooperation partners</td>
<td>Annual information event by the national park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication via social media or intranet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular consultation hours at the coordination point for economic cooperation for individual requests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.5.4 Networking and exchange of experience

A working group under EUROPARC Germany consisting of representatives from different German PAs has been working since 2007 on common standards and criteria for touristic partner initiatives for national parks, biosphere reserves and nature parks in Germany. This working group was supported by the German Ministry of Environment. Aim was the exchange of experiences and the planning of joint activities [37].

Even if the harmonization of criteria for all Austrian partner initiatives might be a (too) complicated challenge, there should be at least some regular exchange – if not already existing – among representatives of Austrian protected areas on their according experiences and best-practice-examples, in order to promote mutual learning. In addition, there could be contact to the German working group for an exchange of findings. This could be a possible task for the economic coordination manager.
3.5.5 Structure of the cooperation network

From the point of view of an external person, the multitude of existing economic cooperation programmes around the brand National Park Kalkalpen can seem a little confusing. And even when intensively dealing with this topic, it takes a while to get an overview all the different initiatives, their current status and offers.

The question arises on whether it would be possible to somehow simplify the cooperation network as such, or at least its presentation to the public. Maybe it would make sense to summarize all member businesses under the title national park partners and then divide them by according sub-categories, such as tourism, food or other partners.

This question shall serve as a starting point for further thinking.

3.6 Analysis and recommendations: additional points

3.6.1 Communication with the region

Although the evaluation of the perceived level of information and knowledge among local people and institutions about the national park was not a focus of this thesis, this issue was frequently mentioned during the stakeholder interviews and shall therefore be shortly discussed here.

Many comments in the interviews suggest that the general level of information among locals about the NP is not very good. A few interview partners stated that they feel well informed about the goals and activities of the national park, but only because they have personal relation to staff members of the national park or they pro-actively look for information and news, because they are especially interested in nature conservation. It was often stated in the interviews that the stream of information coming from the national park to the region is perceived as limited and that the level of information about the park is even estimated to be better outside the national park region. In general, it was also stated that the level of acceptance for the park seems to rise with the distance to the park.

This general mood was common in almost all interviews with different kinds of stakeholders, and the interviewer hence got the impression that there is need for action concerning this issue.

In the evaluation of the national park management that was done in 2007 by Christoph Imboden, staff members of the park administration see the following weaknesses concerning the here discussed topic [24]:
Insufficient involvement of local people; no identification; acceptance has reduced since establishment

No acceptance among hunters and foresters; too little self-marketing and explanation

The park’s aims and activities are not present in local people’s minds; decisions are not understood

These impressions were basically also repeated in the current interviews with regional stakeholders.

In most cases, the interviewed stakeholders did not know the results of the study on the economic impact of the park on the region from 2006 and if they knew them, they did not really believe them. The question is, if the national park did not well enough communicate these results to the region and/or if the results were not well enough explained to the stakeholders. Such a study can be performed in order to convince sceptics, if the results show a positive picture. And for the study in 2006, the results were really positive. For example, around 104 additional jobs were directly or indirectly created by the national park in the national park region until 2006 [26]. It is a pity that regional stakeholders do not seem to be aware of these results or question the results, as perceivable from the stakeholder interviews.

It would certainly make sense to repeat an economic impact study in the next years; but the commissioning of this study should maybe be done in cooperation with the regional WKO offices (Federal Economic Chamber) and other regional institutions, in order to immediately and automatically spread the results in concerned circles and raise the subjective credibility of the results.

### 3.6.2 Homepage of NP Kalkalpen

The presentation of the partner companies and different partner networks on the homepage of the National Park Kalkalpen is not clearly understandable. The multitude of different initiatives could be confusing for potential customers and visitors of the NP homepage, therefore a more simplified and clear structure is recommended.

The NP hiking specialists, bike specialists and horse region are not listed among NP partners, but they are rather difficult to find among the menu-point Region and the sub-point Holiday and spare time. On this page, there is a list of links, which are not really described. The link Hiking and excursion tips in the Steyrtal is not working any more.
In a first step, it would be recommendable to summarize all partner programmes among one menu point *NP partners* with the following sub-points (suggestion):

- NP partners
- NP hiking specialists
- NP bike specialists
- NP horse region
- Other cooperation initiatives (Genussregion, NP farms Ennstal, Nahtur)

There should be a clear and updated description and definition of each partner programme (not too much text): Content, targets, offers, benefits, application procedure, contact person plus a link to the homepage of the programme. In addition, the current folders of hiking specialists, bike specialists and horse region should always be available for download on the NP homepage. For the NP partner programme, there could either be a downloadable folder with a short description of all partners or a direct description of the partners on the homepage including their logos and pictures, not just a link. Of course in return, there should be an agreement with the partner companies to also use the NP partner logo, a short description and the link of the NP on their own websites, in order to create mutual benefits (see chapter 3.3.1.3).

The next suggestion would be the creation of a sub-point *partner news* on the NP website, where regular news from the partner programmes can be published. This possibility should really be used to demonstrate the progress in those cooperation initiatives to the public and to show the benefits. This information update could also be done via social media platforms, such as Facebook (see chapter 3.6.3).

In the interviews with the NP partners, one partner suggested the implementation of an intranet on the NP website for partner companies. This would be a special area that can be used by NP partners to download logos and marketing material, exchange information with other NP partners, take a look at the cooperation guidelines and catalogue of criteria, announce special events etc. When announcements in the partner network are made, there could be an automatic e-mail notification to all partners. This online platform would be a support for the creation of a real network, in terms of exchange and interaction.

**Summary of observations:**

- Not all partner initiatives are well described on the NP homepage
Complicated menu structure concerning NP partners

Recommendations:

- Changes in homepage structure concerning partner networks
- Partner news on homepage (or on social media platforms)
- Partner intranet

3.6.3 Social media

A study that was published in January 2011 by the management consultancy McKinsey shows that the majority of businesses that use social media thus also gain verifiable economic benefits. The positive effects are the higher, the more different social media are being used and the better these media are integrated into the business / the more intensively they are being used. Economic benefits range from a faster access to information, over decreasing costs for communication and a more effective marketing, to more satisfied customers and partners. One fifth of the polled businesses already see an increase in their turnover due to the competitive advantage through social media [36].

Facebook currently is one of the best-known social media platforms. The National Park Kalkalpen – with its natural scientific and conservational goals and contents – is not present on Facebook yet, apart for some short Wikipedia description. However, there are a couple of pages related to tourism in the NP region, such as the horse region or the bike specialists, which seem to be currently updated and rather well maintained.

Social media platforms such as Facebook are useful tools for marketing, information, communication and exchange with the interested public and are especially valuable to reach the young audience. Meanwhile, Facebook is being widely used in Austria: in January 2011, Facebook had 2.3 Mio. members in Austria [6], this equals 27% of all Austrian residents. The age class between 20 and 29 represents the largest group on Facebook [6].

Institutions or companies can create pages on Facebook, add information, pictures or logos and use it as a marketing and communication tool. Interested Facebook members can add such pages to their like list, which means that from this moment on they will always get the latest updates from this page on their start page when entering Facebook. In contrary to a normal e-mail newsletter, users do not have to enter their e-mail account and take their time to read a certain e-mail, but they will automatically get the news on the starting page when logging in to Facebook; and they login to Facebook for many different
reasons. They so to say get the information about their like pages as a by-product.

Another marketing benefit of Facebook is the fact that whenever a user adds the page of a company or institution to their like list, all friends of this user usually also get a short notification that this user likes this institution. In this way, the publicity of a page can spread via many paths.

Of course there is a difference between just having a Facebook site with some pictures and information and not actively using and maintaining it; or using Facebook as an interactive communication tool with frequent updates and active discussion between the site owner and other Facebook members.

The success for companies in the use of social media depends on the degree of utilization, as shown by the McKinsey study [36].

The national parks Hohe Tauern and Donauauen (Danube flood plains) seem to do the latter. They are present on Facebook and use the page for sharing news and information with the interested public, discussing different issues or announcing events. Hohe Tauern already has more than 6.800 Facebook-friends (Status quo May 2011) that get regular updates in this way; Donauauen currently has 990 friends (Status quo May 2011).

The national park Gesäuse also started its Facebook presence in 2010, but it seems that there is not an as frequent and systematic maintenance and update of this page than for Hohe Tauern and Donauauen. Current number of friends: 194 (Status quo April 2011).

Of course it requires regular effort to maintain such a page by updating information and answering questions and requests of members, but it cannot be neglected or overseen that social media platforms such as Facebook meanwhile have become an important means of communication for many people today. In addition, the maintenance of such a Facebook site can also be done by a layperson; no software engineer is necessary for this. Information and communication are very important tasks of national parks and tools like Facebook could do their part.

As already mentioned, Facebook offers the possibility for discussion between institutions and normal Facebook members. Of course also critical comments are possible; however, this must be seen as a chance for presenting facts and maybe changing opinions.

Recommendation

Implementation and regular maintenance of a Facebook page for the National Park Kalkalpen, links to the partner initiatives
3.6.4 New project ideas

3.6.4.1 Idea competition

Through an idea competition, ideas from different institutions or private persons on a certain topic can be mobilized; in the best case a big pool of creativity and possible innovations can be opened.

Prior to the organization of an idea competition, a lot of preliminary work has to be done. First of all, it has to be defined what the goals of the competition shall be and who the target group is. Based on this first idea, the further content can be developed: which topics are included, what are the participation criteria, how and by whom is the evaluation of the ideas done, what are the prizes, how can the ideas be further developed to real projects etc. And of course: who is the coordinator of the competition and how shall the competition be financed.

In order to get an impression on how such an idea competition comes into existence, is being carried out, organized and financed, the WKO Tyrol was contacted, which has already performed such an idea competition around the topic national park and economy twice (2007, 2010) [22].

Since 2007, the regional office of the Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) in Eastern Tyrol (Lienz) organizes the idea competition Economy in the national park region called HABITAS every three years, in cooperation with its project partners. This idea competition is tendered for businesses, institutions, private persons etc. in the national park region Hohe Tauern Eastern Tyrol [22].

The impulse for the idea competition was triggered by functionaries of the WKO Tyrol / Lienz, who claimed for activities towards the further economic development of the national park region Eastern Tyrol. Also 25 years after the establishment of the national park Hohe Tauern, many opinion makers in the region still saw/see the national park as a constraint and brake shoe for successful economic development. However, the WKO did not see the
national park as a constraint, but as a chance and wanted to identify the best possible solutions (in the frame of the national park law) for sustainable economic development and promote innovative ideas in the region.

Based on longer preliminary work, it was decided to hold the first idea competition in 2007. The competition shall only be repeated every three years, in order not to drain the available pool of ideas too fast. The winning projects are being supported by the project team for three years, in order to ensure sustainable success. In the logo and design of the idea competition, the label of the national park Hohe Tauern is used, as well as the name HABITAS, which refers to *habitat* (space for living). This signifies the stand together of nature conservation and human use of nature. The winners of the competition are being declared by a jury [22].

The project-call folder and some information about the necessary steps in the project can be found in the Appendix.

*Table 6: Project fact sheet "HABITAS 2010" [22]*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project coordinator</strong></th>
<th>WKO Lienz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Project partners**    | • Felbertauernstraße AG  
                        | • Osttiroler Bote (regional journal)  
                        | • Osttirol Werbung (East Tyrolean Tourism Association)  
                        | • National park administration Tyrol  
                        | • Chamber of Agriculture Tyrol  
                        | • Raiffeisenbanken |
| **External support**    | Pirker Networks (communication consultant) |
| **Cooperation among project team** | Regular team meetings for harmonization of single project steps and organization of implementation |
| **Expenditure of time** | • 160 working hours WKO staff (10% on voluntary basis)  
                        | • 70 voluntary working hours by project partners |
| **Project costs**       | 30,000 € |
| **Financing**           | 2/3 by partners, 1/3 by WKO |
**Project facts**

- Three submission categories:
  - Tourism and services
  - Commerce and industry
  - Products and gift articles
- 36 project submissions in the HABITAS 2010!
- 3 main prizes of 1.500 € each
- HABITAS trophy designed by a young regional artist
- 3 years support for winner projects

**Decision criteria of the jury**

- Innovation: No similar offer is available in the region.
- Feasibility: The possible implementation has to be considered.
- Added value: What are the economic benefits for the region and its people?
- Image factor: There should be a direct connection to the national park region.

The WKO Lienz names the following benefits from the HABITAS project [22]:

- Through broad public relations in the frame of the HABITAS, the WKO Tyrol in cooperation with its network of project partners, got visible as an active trigger for innovations in regional economy.

- The idea competition was noticed by a large part of the regional population and is also seen by young people as an innovative and modern concept.

- With 36 idea submissions, there was a very good response to the competition.

- During the official awards show, a celebratory and excited atmosphere among audience, nominees and hosts could be perceived, because the winners were not announced before this event.

- The project documentation and the descriptions of all submitted ideas can be used as an idea pool for the national park region.

- Several submitted projects were already realized, some will be realized in 2011, with concrete benefits for the participants.
Through the cooperation with regional partners and their co-financing of the HABITAS, a better communication to the target groups was possible. Until now, the HABITAS only took place in Eastern Tyrol. As the national park Hohe Tauern also stretches over parts of Salzburg and Carinthia, the HABITAS 2013 shall be extended to these two federal countries [22].

Conclusion

An idea competition could also be a very interesting concept for the National Park Kalkalpen region, because it mobilizes ideas, attracts public attention, strengthens networking among regional institutions and shows the interest of the national park and the WKO for cooperation and joint efforts towards sustainable regional development. However, prior to the development of an idea competition, the communication and cooperation with the WKO should be strengthened and necessary personal resources for regional economic cooperation have to be established (see chapters 3.4.1 and 3.5.2).

A possible version could be, not to develop a completely own competition, but to create a kind of spin-off from the HABITAS project in Eastern Tyrol; a HABITAS Kalkalpen.

3.6.4.2 Other

- **National park rangers as guides for nature and culture in the region:**
  This idea was suggested by an interview partner in the frame of this thesis. National park rangers could not only present natural assets of the national park to visitors, but also cultural values in the national park region. There could be combi-packages for interested visitors, in order to bring new visitors to regional museums, thus creating added value for cultural institutions in the region. However, the development of such a concept would not be a task for the national park alone, but would require cooperation of different regional bodies.

- **Joint presentation at events in the region:**
  The national park and its partner businesses in tourism and other sectors can jointly present themselves at events in the region – if not done yet. Throughout the year there are several traditional celebrations and bigger events in the National Park Kalkalpen region, which could be used as an information, communication and marketing platform. At booths, the park management could present its aims and activities in nature conservation, while the partner companies present their products and services. Such activities could be done regularly in all three regions around the park, in order to keep the topic present in people’s minds. This would create marketing
effects for the partner businesses and help the national park in spreading its message in nature conservation and raise public awareness.

- **Partner ball:**
The partner businesses of the National Park Gesäuse (Austria, Styria) have already twice held a partner ball. The idea of a joint event that is being planned and realized by partner businesses from different sectors sounds very interesting. The partners could use such an event to present themselves, their products and their network to the public. Partners from different sectors could contribute different activities, services and products for the event. Not only the partner businesses, but also other initiatives, such as the Genuss Region or the touristic programmes could participate.
4 CONCLUSION

Aim of this thesis was to analyse the existing cooperation between the National Park Kalkalpen and regional economy on the basis of many personal interviews with regional stakeholders and hence derive conclusions and recommendations for the further pursuit of this topic.

All interview partners see the national park as a big chance for the region, but they also state that the current situation leaves some room for improvement.

The role of the national park in regional economic development is not completely clear for many regional stakeholders and the general flow of information from the national park to the region is perceived as limited. There is a gap between the expectations of regional people and institutions towards the national park and the real possibilities of the park. Regional stakeholders have to be aware that the main task of the national park is nature conservation; besides that the national park management can make a contribution to regional economic development, but this certainly requires the cooperation of different regional bodies.

From the stakeholder interviews it became obvious that the national park should clearly communicate its goals concerning regional economic development to the outside and set concrete actions to pursue these goals. It has to be clear what the role of the national park in this context can be and what goes beyond that role.

The national park has already (co)implemented or triggered a series of valuable projects that create added value for the region, such as the Kalkalpen long-distance hiking trail, the electrification of alpine pastures on the Pyhrn pass, the successful event *alpine music summer*, which attracts many visitors to alpine pastures, the hiking bus etc. The economic impact analysis [26] that was performed in 2006 also showed the positive impact of the national park on the region. According to this study, the park has directly or indirectly created 104 new jobs in the national park region by 2006 [26]. These positive facts should be communicated in order to help raising the support for the national park in the region.

There are several cooperation networks of businesses in the national park region that aim at the creation of added value through the brand *National Park Kalkalpen*. The degree of involvement of the national park in these initiatives varies. The touristic initiatives, such as the hiking specialists, mainly organize themselves in unions and do not depend so much on the national park’s support; but still the involvement of the national park is necessary in some points. The National Park Kalkalpen partners on the other hand require systematic
coordination by the national park. In order to continue this initiative and create benefits for the involved businesses and for the national park – because both sides can profit from each other – it is recommended to implement well-functioning coordination structures and a clear framework for cooperation, including regular exchange and communication.

An important issue that was treated in this thesis is the relation between the national park and the regional WKO offices. The WKO represents regional businesses and sees a big potential for the region through the national park. There is the will for cooperation on both sides – national park and WKO – but such cooperation does not exist at the moment. The thesis gives some according suggestions and strongly recommends the pursuit of this issue.

Another point concerns the different integration of the brand National Park Kalkalpen in the touristic regions around the national park. The three tourism regions do not jointly present themselves as ONE National Park Kalkalpen region, but are split up into two fractions.

The most important recommendations from this thesis can be summarized as such:

- Definition and external communication of the goals of the park management concerning economic cooperation with the region (possibilities and limits)
- Establishment of defined (personnel) structures for the coordination and management of economic cooperation between national park and region
- Implementation of a communication concept with regional economy

The detailed recommendations that are given in this thesis for different areas are summarized in the following table:

Table 7: Table of recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic area</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP partners</td>
<td>Define a clear framework of cooperation, including definition of specific tasks and timeframe (possibilities and limits)</td>
<td>3.3.1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement a communication concept with the partner businesses</td>
<td>3.3.1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular quality control of the partner network incl. its management</td>
<td>3.3.1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enlarge the network after the establishment of according structures</td>
<td>3.3.1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NP hiking specialists</strong></td>
<td>Equal level of quality and motivation should be achieved among all members</td>
<td>3.3.2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reference to national park should be visible on homepages of all partners</td>
<td>3.3.2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in official homepage of hiking specialists are recommended</td>
<td>3.3.2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NP horse region</strong></td>
<td>Closer cooperation with NP, especially in trail riding, is desired</td>
<td>3.3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support in negotiations with Austrian Federal Forests (ÖBF) concerning the right of way for horse-riding is desired</td>
<td>3.3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NP bike specialists</strong></td>
<td>Is it possible to include the Pyhrn-Priel region into this concept?</td>
<td>3.3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Union Nahtur</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate the current activities of those members that are still active, as a basis for further decisions</td>
<td>3.3.5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Update the current status on the union’s and the national park’s homepage</td>
<td>3.3.5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NP Höfe Ennstal</strong></td>
<td>More reference to the topic national park in the concept of the farm network is suggested</td>
<td>3.3.5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaption of the network’s label to the national park’s standardized labelling concept could be considered</td>
<td>3.3.5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WKO</strong></td>
<td>Kick-off meeting between national park management and both WKO offices for definition of common goals and framework for a possible future cooperation</td>
<td>3.4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequent pursuit of the topic on both sides is recommended</td>
<td>3.4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism</strong></td>
<td>Joint presentation of all three tourism regions as THE National Park Kalkalpen region is recommended</td>
<td>3.4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All cooperation programmes</strong></td>
<td>Clear definition and communication by NP of internal targets concerning economic cooperation is recommended</td>
<td>3.5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of (personnel) structures for cooperation and management of all partner initiatives</td>
<td>3.5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication and cooperation concept with existing cooperation programmes</td>
<td>3.5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New project ideas:</strong></td>
<td>3.6.4</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Idea competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• NP rangers presenting nature AND culture to visitors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Joint presentation and regional events</td>
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<tr>
<td>• NP Partner ball</td>
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</table>

| **Exchange of experience concerning partner initiatives with other Austrian PAs and the German working group** | 3.5.4 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Other</strong></th>
<th>3.6.2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in official homepage of National Park Kalkalpen are recommended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Use of social media platforms for communication** | 3.6.3 |

| **Communicate the park’s economic benefits to the region (economic impact study 2006 or commissioning of a new study in cooperation with other regional bodies)** | 3.6.1 |
5 SOURCES

Picture on cover page: © National Park Kalkalpen: www.kalkalpen.at

[7] Homepage of National Park Donauauen:
   http://www.donauauen.at/?area=nationalparks, status quo April 2011.
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[20] Homepage of the Upper Austrian Tourism Association on riding competence centres: http://www.pferdeurlaub.at
[26] Homepage of the initiative of National Park Kalkalpen biking specialists: www.biken.at
[27] www.steiner-kraml.at
[28] Homepage of the long-distance hiking trail Kalkalpenweg in the National Park Kalkalpen region: www.kalkalpenweg.at
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[37] Homepage of the National Park Gesäuse, Austria: www.nationalpark.co.at
[38] http://hotel.retter.at/
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for the Conservation of Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>National park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKO</td>
<td>Wirtschaftskammer Österreich / Federal Economic Chamber of Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Protected area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ÖBF</td>
<td>Österreichische Bundesforste / Austrian forest company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGE</td>
<td>Arbeitsgemeinschaft / working group</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix

Appendix 1: Data on the WKO HABITAS idea competition 2010 [22]

Drei Hauptpreise zu je 1.500 Euro


Jede Initiative zählt


Der Name des Preises ist Programm: Der HABITAS gebührt jenen Projekten, die ihren wirtschaftlichen Erfolg auf die schonende Nutzung unserer natürlichen Ressourcen gründen.
For the realization of the HABITAS 2010, the following steps were necessary [22]:

- Public project-call via invitations, media, direct mailing
- Regular insertions in the Osttiroler Boten (regional journal)
- Choice of location for final event, choice of moderator, music, regional food etc.
- Choice of designer for the HABITAS trophy
- Support of interested applicants
- Pre-evaluation of submitted projects for the jury meeting
• Jury meeting: In the jury meeting, three nominees from each category are selected. The winners will only be presented at the award ceremony.

• Invitation and preparation for award ceremony

• Development of a presentation for the award ceremony

• Realization of the award ceremony with around 150 guests

• Media work after the award ceremony: e.g. publication of a brochure with all submitted project ideas

• Final documentation

• Final accounting with project partners

• Further support of winner projects