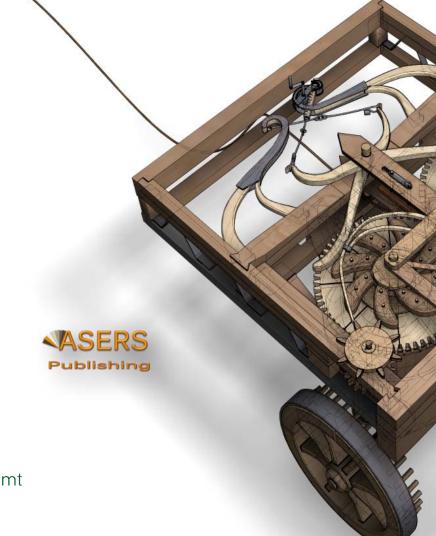
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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Formation of Ecosystem Marketing Concept

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Abstract:

Economic ecosystems were considered in the paper. The concept of ecosystem marketing was proposed and disclosed. The effective functioning of ecosystems facilitates mutual with the consumer and other interested parties creation of values, allows working quicker with less expenditures, with risk sharing, making reasonable decisions in the real time mode. Application of the concept of ecosystem marketing allows companies to gain competitive advantages under conditions of turbulent medium. The classification of ecosystems was proposed in such directions as business, socium, state and science. An ecosystem approach in marketing allows building effective interactions and acts as a way of achieving goals. The authors substantiated the formation of ecosystem flexibility as a strategic goal of the ecosystem marketing. The developed methodology of calculating the ecosystems' flexibility allows assessing their flexibility at different levels.

Keywords: ecosystem marketing; ecosystem flexibility; ecosystem business; modern technologies; consumers' involvement; mutual creation of value

JEL Classification: M30; M31;Q56; Q57.

Introduction

Today marketing operates in complex and quickly developing ecosystems, accumulating in themselves inner and outer resources. With the development of modern information and communication technologies, the role of ecosystems increases. Mutual creation of values, involvement of consumers, academic institutes, competitors and other interested parties allow working quicker with less expenses and a lower risk level.

Initially, the concept "ecosystem" was used as underlying in biology, representing a "combination of jointly living organisms and conditions of their existence, being in the regular interrelation with each other and forming a

system of interdependent phenomena and processes" (Giliarov 1986). It was introduced into the economic science by J. Moore, who defined a business ecosystem – "economic community, supported by the base of interacting organisations and separate persons – organisms of the business world" (Moore 1993). At the present time, in the academic literature there is a vast variety of ecosystems. B. Clarysse distinguishes business ecosystems, innovation ecosystems and knowledge ecosystems (Clarysse, Wright, Bruneel and Mahajan 2014). Besides, there are industrial ecosystems, ecosystems of health, labour resources and other ecosystems by a specific form of activity. The dominating quantity of appearing and actively developing ecosystems in recent decades has been connected with information and communication technologies (ICT) and branches close to them. Among them, there is a digital ecosystem, a mobile ecosystem, an ecosystem of consumer's involvement, a social system (for example, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) (Vincent, *n. d.*), etc.

Economic agents function within the framework of numerous networks. At the individual level, the circle of contacts has enlarged significantly. Besides the current immediate environment, a human being can operationally interact with childhood friends, friends of their friends, former colleagues, interest friends, brands or companies by means of social networks, online messengers, etc. An average user of social networks has about 200 "friends" (Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts 2016). It is possible to note that a high level of involvement of economic agents in the virtual environment allowed erasing time and space limits of communication.

At the company level, the growth of the interaction networks is connected with complication of the environment, the desire to share risks, to communicate with responsive groups of consumers in the virtual environment. The effectiveness of search, of outsourcing, as well as management of them, directly influences the results of economic activity and prospects of company development. The growth of the number of organisations, introducing crowdsourcing, platforms for communication of companies and target consumers, reflects its significance.

At the same time, in modern conditions, it is already insufficient to introduce agile-marketing (flexible marketing) aimed at organising the work of marketing departments and having become widespread in recent years (Martin 2015, 15 experts define agile marketing, *n. d.*), as well as to integrate all activities of the company. The use of the broadband Internet, mass distribution of portable devices – notebooks, smartphones, tablets, and then the appearance of cloud technologies and applications has fundamentally changed the environment 9 Business ecosystems come of age 2015). The focus of marketing influences is to be extended in the direction of formation and regulation of ecosystem flexibility.

1. Methods

The system approach, allowing a complex approach to solution of the urgent problem of enhancing the effectiveness of marketing activity, is used in the paper. A continuous change of the environment is supported by accelerated development of information and communication technologies. The ongoing increase of the speed of information dissemination, new media, a possibility of instant response of responsive groups of consumers, swift effect of separate events exert a direct influence on marketing activity of companies (Sekerin, Burlakov, Dzyurdzya and Gorokhova 2015, Dudin, Lyasnikov, Veselovsky, Sekerin and Aleksakhina 2014).

New developments, such as cloud technologies (cloud computing), the Internet of Things, Big Data, virtual/augmented reality, allow bringing the marketing activity of the company to a new level and increasing its marketing potential considerably. Creation and effective management of data platforms act as a competitive advantage of economic agents of all levels. It is important to note that a decisive role belongs not to collection and storage of data arrays, but to the algorithms of their processing, allowing one to conduct analytical work and make reasoned decisions.

Marketing automation, real and virtual environment integration act as a basis of organisation activity. Artificial intelligence in increasing frequency helps companies to interact promptly with users concerning standard questions, as well as it starts to be used for the tasks of a higher level along with several other technologies.

Despite the complication of modern business ecosystems, new technologies promote drawing together their participants. External environment of companies and their connections become more open and intimate. An open access to large volumes of information can entail both opportunities and threats. The importance of reputation of economic agents increases in the virtual environment. An employer can watch the profile and activity of the applicants for a certain post in social media. Partners and investors also pay attention to public data before making decisions. For instance, company's events or other news, having feedback in the social environment, can have repercussions. In this connection, professions, related to formation of image in the virtual environment, to management of users' communities, to development of algorithms of individual information formation, the style of its presentation and so on, become relevant (Atlas of new professions, *n. d.*).

Current tendencies promote formation of such marketing fields as influencer marketing, social media marketing, event marketing (for certain events), mobile marketing, digital marketing, geomarketing, search engine marketing, database marketing, reputation in virtual environment, etc.

Marketing interactions in the business ecosystem have a branched network. Companies direct marketing influences, receiving in response the results of interaction from responsive groups of consumers and a reaction of other participants of the ecosystem. Influences are characterised by different degrees, depth, duration of influence.

Market interactions are realised in the companies' networks, consumers' networks and in the networks of other persons and are directed by institutions and institutionalized norms. There are multiple levels of interaction, intersections, impositions of institutes. Integration of resources increases depending on the considered level – micro, meso or macro.

2. Results

In modern conditions, it is necessary to form the concept of ecosystem marketing, which represents a direction of marketing, realising its essence in the framework of business ecosystems, functioning in real and virtual environments, including existing and potential customers, leaders of opinions, suppliers, marketing mediators, competitors, investors, public leaders, regulating institutes and other interested parties.

Ecosystem marketing includes:

- conducting a complex analysis of contacts and interactions in the framework of the ecosystem;
- acceleration, systematization, accumulation, analysis and management of information;
- management of the complex "marketing-mix";
- planning, predicting and assessment of marketing interaction not only from the viewpoint of the financial result, but also form the positions of ecosystem change and its place in it;
- monitoring of emerging promising technologies and their introduction in one's activity;
- marketing analysis of ecosystem evolution at short-term and long-term levels.

Non-transactional behaviour of ecosystem participants becomes of particular importance. Measurement and use of indicators, connected with relations, satisfaction of responsive groups of consumers - WOM (word-of-mouth), e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth), traffic, the time spent, registration, downloads, etc., are necessary. Their dynamics influence the revealing insights, company cost, prospects of development.

New media offer a wide range of opportunities for economic agents, require high proficiency and constant development of competences in this field. Their characteristics are interactivity, anticipation, mobility, wide spread, activity in real time, etc.

Depending on the degree of consumer involvement, it is possible to identify a number of indicators of assessment at each of the four levels (Table 1).

| Comparative tests | Indicators in virtual environment | Indicators in real environment | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Participation | Frequency of visiting website, official pages | Traffic in sale points, participation in | | |
| Participation | of company in social media | arranged events | | |
| Interaction | Number of viewed pages and time spent on | Time in sale points, using product testers, | | |
| Interaction | them, registrations, downloads of content | purchasing | | |
| Class contacts/intimesy | Receiving feedback on company's website, | Monitoring customers' complaints, analysis | | |
| Close contacts/intimacy | on official pages in social media | of calls to product support services | | |
| | Posts of responsive groups of consumers in | | | |
| Influence/ impact | personal blogs, profiles and other social | Possible recommendations, WOM | | |
| | media, e-WOM | | | |

Table 1. Levels of involvement of target audiences and indicators of their assessment

Note: Composed by the authors based on classification "Forrester Consulting" (Forrester Consulting. How Engaged Are Your Customers? n. d.)

To develop knowledge in understanding the ecosystem approach, let us classify ecosystems in economy (Table 2). The classification is conducted by a number of criteria and four directions – business, socium, state, science.

Ecosystems intersect in multiple combinations, the place and the nature of contacts among elements – customers/consumers, leaders of opinions, suppliers, marketing mediators, companies of other sectors, competitors, investors, public leaders, regulating institutes, etc., change.

Table 2. Classification of ecosystems in economy

| Classification criterion | Business | Socium | State | Science | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| by hierarchy | - project ecosystem; - separate enterprise ecosystem; - ecosystem of companies' group/ sectoral ecosystem; - national business ecosystem; - international business ecosystem. | - separate individual ecosystem; - household ecosystem; - regional community ecosystem; - national community ecosystem; - international community ecommunity ecosystem. | - ecosystem of separate officials realising state activity; - ecosystem of separate structural units; - ecosystem of state subdivisions; - state ecosystem. | - innovation ecosystem of separate academic institutes; - innovation ecosystem of clusters; - regional innovation ecosystem; - national innovation ecosystem; - international innovation ecosystem. | | |
| by scope of activity | ecosystem of: - production; - commerce; - finances; - other services. | - religious; - political; - educational; - cultural, etc. | ecosystem of: -public health; - taxation; - labour resources; - education; - ecology, etc. | - innovation ecosystem of services; - innovation ecosystem of agroindustrial complex, etc. | | |
| by the nature of emergence | - purposefully created; - self-organized. | | | | | |
| by key technology or | by key technology or - digital ecosystem; their combination - mobile ecosystem; | | | | | |
| their combination | | | | | | |
| by speed of change | - complex ecosystem, etc with high speed of changes; | | | | | |
| by speed of change | - with high speed of changes;- with average speed of changes;- with low speed of changes. | | | | | |
| by environment of | , , | | | | | |
| functioning - real; | | | | | | |
| by degree of flexibility | - mixed. by degree of flexibility - flexible; | | | | | |
| a y angles of normality | | average; | | | | |
| | - infl | exible. | | | | |

Source: composed by the authors

The ecosystem strives for development, enhancement of effectiveness of interconnections and productivity. It is characterised by flexibility, stability, coevolution supported by the dynamics of internal and external environments, by the integrated information network of interactions, by numerous and heterogeneous synergetic effects. The explanatory dictionary of the Russian language offers the following definition to the word "flexible" – "easily submitted to changes, reforms; adaptable to circumstances; able to solve different, frequent difficulties" (Ozhegov and Shvedova 1999, Explanatory dictionary of Russian language 1935-1940). The authors imply by ecosystem its ability to maximize a mutually created by the participants value in medium-term and long-term horizons of planning in the framework of constant, active changes of the environment.

The behaviour of participants of business ecosystems is best of all explained by variables related to profit, but many non-material characteristics of processes, such as relationships, knowledge, experience, convictions, risk perception, can also facilitate the explanation of the observed behaviour of ecosystem agents. The form and application of ecosystem models have evolved from predominantly general models to the increasing number of private models, adapted to needs and the structure of separate ecosystems. Rating systems based on score scales, as well as cost methods that are based on the effectiveness of reaction to changes and use of opportunities of increasing the values, can be used in the framework of assessing flexibility. An integral index of flexibility of separate participants of the ecosystem bases on the results of such constituents as team flexibility, management flexibility, financial flexibility, marketing flexibility, technological flexibility, logistic flexibility. For example, team flexibility determines reactions to organized changes in projects – time, rules, processes, the information structure, etc., as well as technological changes, such as technologies, equipment, instruments, IT infrastructure, programming languages. Reaction effectiveness and using opportunities in value terms are assessed as a degree of influence on effectiveness and productivity of the agent as compared to the variant when one lacks flexibility. Initiatives on

offering a wider range of choice, formation of complex propositions, adjustments, cancellation, etc. should be preliminary assessed.

Assessment of ecosystem flexibility of higher order, including a multitude of economic agents, is conceived as a complex and many-sided task. Relative assessment of ecosystem flexibility can be conducted based on the rating system using score scales. At that, the ecosystem flexibility value will be equal to the sum of numerical scores of its participants' flexibility taking into account the interaction effectiveness of each specific participant in the ecosystem framework and one's share of significance in it. In a general view, the formula of calculating ecosystem flexibility can be presented as follows:

$$F_e = \sum_{i=1}^n F_i \times k_i \times z_i \,, \tag{1}$$

where: F_e -is the score value of ecosystem flexibility;

 F_i - is the score value of the *i*-th participant of the ecosystem;

 k_i - is the weight coefficient of interaction effectiveness of the *i*-th participant with others in this ecosystem;

Zi - is the specific weight or contribution of the i-th participant to ecosystem functioning.

As a rule, the size of the value of specific initiative on changing flexibility is of different value for ecosystem participants. Cost estimate can be represented as a sum of values, additionally and mutually created by the ecosystem participants.

$$V_e = \sum_{j=1}^n V_j \,, \tag{2}$$

where: V_e - is the cost value of ecosystem flexibility;

 V_j - is the cost value of the value, additionally created by ecosystem participants by flexibility in the framework of the j-th project.

3. Discussion

Management in the framework of traditional limits of the company is unable to provide it with a competitive advantage in new reality. The technological process allows automating the relations among participants. By means of it, it becomes possible to control the openness of company limits. A high value of large data and their significant influence attract interest of market participants at all levels. Large data can be generated by users and by different networks of physical objects. In addition to state regulation at the level of separate countries, there are a number of associations, uniting key participants of the market – European BDVA (Big Data Value Association), American (American Association of Big Data Professionals), Data Management Association, Data Science Association, etc. Many researchers call data the "oil" of information economy. International Data Corporation (IDC) predicts that earnings from large data and business analytics in the world will grow up to the level of 50% for five years and will reach the value of 187 bn. dollars by 2019 (Worldwide Semiannual Big Data and Analytics Spending Guide, *n. d.*).

Among successful examples of using the recent achievements allowing automation of separate marketing processes, it is possible to point out such programmes as "Lucy" (Lucy lends a helping hand to marketing professionals, *n. d.*), developed by company Equals 3 in partnership with IBM, and "Albert" (Artificial Intelligence Software, *n. d.*) developed by company Adgorithms. Replacing the work of the full-fledged digital agency, the programme "Albert" showed disrupting results for a lingerie company Cosabella. For the first months of work, the current marketing budget was successfully decreased along with enhancing key indices of effectiveness – investment return increased more than three times; the growth of the consumers' quantity was 30% (Why Cosabella replaced its agency with Al and will never go back to humans, *n. d*).

The ecosystem approach in marketing allows building effective interactions and acts as a way of achieving goals based on mutual creation of values. Purposeful formation of ecosystem flexibility is a strategic goal of marketing. Flexibility determines effectiveness of marketing influences in the ecosystem. The influence of ecosystem flexibility dominates considerably as compared to flexibility of separate economic agents in it. For example, unreadiness not only of the enterprise itself, but also of partners, of external environment frequently acts as one of the barriers, hindering introduction of innovative products at the enterprise. The quantity, variety, motivation of ecosystem agents, as well as available flexibility, influence its effectiveness.

Creation and development of IT-infrastructure of the ecosystem exert direct influence on its effectiveness. The issues of environment flexibility in relation to information systems have been widely presented in economic literature. A unique unified platform is an information centre which will provide a flexible approach to design and creation of values, to profit maximization of the ecosystem participants. Special attention should be paid to a continuous supply and updating of data, to development of algorithms of their analysis, to transparency and uniform knowledge of data, to the system of protection and control of access to data for separate participants. Duplication and territorial distribution of system components promote stable operation of the platform. At the same time, data are a basis for making decisions. Coca-Cola Company accumulates data in the framework of its own group using cloud technologies (Zeszut and Mitra 2016). It implements centralization from the viewpoint of unity of the information source for participants, understanding indicators, used analytical instruments. Decentralization occurs predominantly at the local level, where business subdivisions, partners can carry out tactical analysis, testings, optimisation of data to meet their own needs.

All in all, the Internet, mobile technologies, sensors and other technologies provide an integration mechanism of the ecosystem and evolve exponentially. In the first place, this is an economy of joint use (shared economy), the volume of which according to PWC prediction will increase more than 20 times by 2025 in Europe (PWC, *n. d.*). As a rule, the ecosystem evolves, adapts and integrates, erasing borders among sectors, meeting a wide range of interconnected needs, involving a multitude of interested parties both on a global scale and at the local level. Formation of a favourable environment in the framework of the ecosystem for emergence of start-ups, aimed at developments in the field of audience needs and absolutely new needs, perceived by the market, develops it, opens up new markets and niches. These processes facilitate the enhancement of strategic flexibility of the ecosystem.

In addition to tactical and strategic flexibility in the framework of ecosystems, technological, financial, logistic, managerial, behavioural, communication flexibility, risk-taking flexibility, etc. manifest themselves. Ecosystem flexibility can have a continuous nature, interrupt or fluctuate in time and space.

Automation of repetitive processes acts as one of the ways of increasing ecosystem flexibility. Many processes are not interrupted on weekends, holidays and in other off hours for employees. Automation allows studying market, introducing innovations more rapidly, meeting the needs of ecosystem participants to the fullest extent possible. An effective collaboration of robots and qualified creative people is a future of all economy sectors. Such modern developments as algorithms of artificial intelligence, technologies of virtual reality, drones, the Internet of things, robots, 3D printing allow enhancing flexibility of ecosystems and their participants.

Conclusion

Economic agents gain advantages when creating values, when they act as active participants of the ecosystem. Their collaboration becomes closer and more diverse, more adaptive and rapidly developing. An effective ecosystem is aimed at mutual creation of values, development of innovations, testing, scaling a successful experience and at quick service of the market.

Continuous processes of many-sided connections among business, socium, state and science are especially important in the context of ecosystem marketing since it implies renewed attention to adaptive, but not prescribing approaches. The use of modern technological platforms allows operating a large volume of topical relevant information, automating processes, attracting a great number of participants of the ecosystem to codesigning goods and services, providing mutually beneficial cooperation, reducing expenses, sharing risks, reducing the time of development and market entry, raising the level of service and ecosystem effectiveness

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