

УДК 339.187

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## **Impact of marketing on the lifecycle of small businesses**

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### **Влияние маркетинга на жизненный цикл малых предприятий**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Marketing is an important factor for successful existence and development of any enterprise, which makes it possible to select and understand target customer groups for a certain company, and the factors, which contribute to its competitiveness. Nevertheless, small and medium enterprises (SME) do not pay proper attention to marketing. In many respects, such situation was caused by insufficient understanding by the management and/or business owners of the role of marketing. In order to study the role of marketing in small and medium enterprises, we need to focus on the influence of marketing on SME development. And here we need to rely on two main directions: the role of marketing in entrepreneurship and the influence of marketing at various stages of the enterprise development. Focusing on the first direction, it is

important to distinguish between the two terms: *entrepreneurship* and *marketing* (Sidorchuk, 2009a). Miles, Russell and Arnold (Miles, Russell & Arnold, 1995) compared the marketing-based and the entrepreneurship-based approaches. They conclude that bias towards entrepreneurship results in improvement in the customer satisfaction, focusing on the customer's needs, summing the marketing-based approach with innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk appetite. However, D. Carson, Professor at the University of Ulster (Carson, 1993) believes that there are common features and differences between the entrepreneurship-based approach to decision-making as compared to formal marketing planning, management competence and enterprise communications. Therefore, entrepreneurial decisions are viewed as informal, occasional, creative, adapting and reactive, while marketing decisions are formal, consistent, systemically oriented, organized and structured. On the other hand, there are common features in existence and use of personal communications between entrepreneurs and marketing managers. Some skills are equally necessary to entrepreneurs and marketing managers, for example use of analysis, positiveness, innovativeness and creative thinking. Professor Omura suggests his approach to the issue of differences between marketing and entrepreneurship. In their research, Omura et al (Omura, Calantone & Schmidt, 1994) considered the approach, which assumes that marketing is present in entrepreneurship, though in different forms. In their turn, Hills and LaForge (Hills and LaForge 1992) suggested that when defining the mission of a new company, we need to take into account at least two factors, which are located right on the border of marketing and entrepreneurship disciplines. The first factor is represented by the impact of the entrepreneur's personal aspirations and goals on the company mission (Sexton and Bowman-Upton 1987), while the second factor is represented by the role of the marketing concept (Kotler 1972). While studying growing SME, Hills interviewed executive directors, who specified the strongest factors, which affect successful development of a company: quality of the commodity/service and openness to the customers' desires (Hills and Narayana,

1990). In his turn, Gardner (Gardner, 1983) studied the issue of the marketing concept / creation of new enterprises based on the example of 15 existing companies (with sales ranging from 1 to 30 million dollars). He concluded that distributors are less eager to use the marketing concepts (which means that they are more reluctant to take into account the customers' needs and desires with their subsequent satisfaction) as compared with other types of companies. Manufacturers know their customers better and pay more attention to their requests. Peterson (Peterson, 1989) asked the owners of small businesses to formulate the philosophy of their companies, using the key indicators: marketing, sales and focus on the needs. Marketing focus was selected mostly by retailers (50%), sales-based philosophy was chosen by service providers (42%) and wholesalers (57%), manufacturing-based philosophy was chosen by manufacturers (58%). This result brings us closer to the second direction – impact of marketing on the company development. And here we need to pay attention to an important aspect of “marketing management”. Marketing management can be defined as the process, which provides to the company an opportunity to generate necessary revenues in order to achieve its goals. Various factors of the external environment represent an important group, which affects the company business operations, which are often described by the cyclical nature. The nature and the society are described by various cycles, which affect the company and the interaction between the elements of the macro- and microenvironment. As you know, marketing strategy reflects anticipated market development and changes in the market situation, and first of all changes in the demand/supply ratio. In their turn, such interactions affect pricing and investments in the company operations. When considering various ways of adaptation of the company to external impacts and when determining the directions of changes in the internal organization in order to ensure reasonable business operations, it is necessary to establish a link between the development trends of the macroeconomic processes with the operations and development of the company. Analysis of various cyclical processes makes it possible to formalize forecasts to a certain degree.

Therefore, in order to identify and take into account the factors, which determine the impact of the market situation on the company operations, Aniskin and Moiseeva (Aniskin, Moiseeva, 1996; Aniskin, 1998) suggest starting from the cyclicity concept. Economic waves (cycles), which affect the demand and supply, result from interaction between the cycles of various nature. Various cycles, which are present in the nature and the society, affect the company as the manufacturing and distribution system (structure, functions, ways of their implementation) and the interaction between the elements of the macro- and microenvironment. The objective nature of oscillatory processes in economics are confirmed by several studies, for example Schumpeter's three-cycle scheme, which allows to combine in a consistent manner Kondratiev's cycles (50-55 years) with Juglar's cycles in the banking and credit system (10 years) and Kitchin's cycles (3 years and 4 months). Impact of the factors, which determine these cycles, may take various forms (Moiseeva, 2002):

- cyclicity of crises (which are described by mismatch between sales and purchases in time and in space, gap between the links in the price of sales and purchases etc.);
- structural crises (which result in price increases, excessive demand, lag between demand and supply etc.), which are often do not coincide with the cyclical crises;
- periodic crises (which are described by conflicts, collapse of systems etc.; interacting with the two previous cycles, they play the main role).

Determining the current level of business activity, explaining its progress and forecasting its further condition are possible only if the market situation and the company lifecycle are viewed as the oscillatory system. Being under the influence of changes in the macro- and microenvironment, companies have to assess critically their opportunities, as well as new threats and risks, which slow down or accelerate implementation of earlier plans and transformations. Comprehensive impact of the factors of the internal and external environments creates risky situations, which result

in unjustified losses. Various tools (and, first of all, marketing tools) may be used in order to mitigate the market risks. They include marketing studies of the macro- and microenvironments, marketing assessment of the company internal environments, analysis of consumer preferences and their trends, analysis of the market situation. The extent and efficiency of these tools are determined by the infrastructure and the company internal specifications, which urges us to consider the marketing activities as the element of business operations. We believe that the organizational development cycles (which describe the creation and lifecycles of the companies) are most important for small enterprises. Very often enterprises are compared with biological organisms in the form of a sequence of events, during which organizations are born, grow, get older and die. According to Semenov (Semenov, 2001), half of U.S. companies cease to exist during less than 5 years, only 4 out of 10 companies operate during 10 years, and only 3 out of 10 companies celebrate their 15th birthday. Even 50% of large corporations cease to exist before they are 40 years old. Long before the complete collapse, the company may receive sufficient signals, warning of its moving towards the crisis, but the company itself can not realize the threat. In order to simplify the analysis of these problems, company organizational development stages are often tied to the stages, which are similar to the lifecycle stages of the biological organisms: formation, maturing, maturity, old age and death. This sequence of stages is known as the company lifecycle. For the purpose of further analysis of the factors, affecting business operations of SME, we need to consider the companies' lifecycles. The company lifecycle was initially developed by researchers as an extension and adaptation of the product's lifecycle concept from the marketing theory to analysis of the companies' development. Later on, this direction became an independent area for development of various approaches and theories. The company lifecycle in most cases can be understood as the period of the company operations (Shestopero, 2007). We should mention that "cycle" implies recurrence of similar events. Despite the fact that each company may have its own way of development, we may speak about the

patterns of development, which are known as the company lifecycle. We believe that the most successful model of the company lifecycle was suggested by Adizes (Adizes, 2007). He identifies three phases of the organization's development: growth, stabilization and aging. Growth phase starts with the birth, followed by courtship, infancy, go-go stage, adolescence. Stability stage means prosperity. And stabilization. Third phase includes aristocracy, early bureaucracy, bureaucracy and death. We used this model in order to study the impact of marketing on the lifecycle.

## **2. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION**

The impact of marketing on the lifecycle of small businesses requires further research (Sidorchuk, 2009b). As part of our research conducted in 2010, we analyzed some SME with various specifications. The purpose of the study was to determine the role of marketing in existence and development of small businesses. Our survey covered 400 managers and owners of small businesses in various parts of Russia: Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as well as in Moscow, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Sverdlovsk, Tomsk and Chelyabinsk oblasts, and Krasnodar Krai. Selection of the above regions for the survey was caused, mostly, by availability of significant data, which makes it possible to identify small enterprises. We did not try to achieve regional or industrial representation. We also did not distinguish between the form of incorporation (JSC, CJSC, LLC, sole proprietor) and the type of small enterprise (small enterprise or macro-enterprise). The main criteria for making the selection included the quantity, year of creation, annual turnover (up to 400 million roubles). Additional limitation, which is connected with formation of the sample, is represented by the companies' electronic communication means (website and/or email), which is caused by the need to conduct research using electronic communications. We should mention that the issues, which are considered as part of the research, belong to professional competencies of the small business manager/owner. Therefore, the manager/owner of a small business may be viewed as an expert. We may assume that, when making his or her judgment, an expert relies on a group of causal factors, which

operate in terms of a certain scenario, estimating the probability of their realization and their probable effect on the studied indicator (Golubkov, 2000). Expert judgments are widely used in marketing studies. They are often used for studies, if statistical data are insufficient. They are also used for quantitative measurement of such events, which can not be measured in any other way, for example when estimating the importance of goals and preferred organizational conditions of enterprises. In other words, methods of expert estimates are used both for quantitative measurement of present events and also for forecasting purposes. Business Card Companies Database was used to create the sample. Creation of such database implies personal involvement of the companies' representatives in providing the data on their companies. Besides, the data from this database are checked for their validity on a regular basis. 13,100 companies meet the main criteria according to the Business Card Companies Database. Only 7,954 companies out of them provided director's email. The managers'/owners' reluctance to participate in the survey became a serious restriction in this research. Due to the above reason, the research did not include special restrictions based on the quantity of enterprises, their specifications and business areas (except for the above parameters) in the sample. Answers were provided by 327 managers/owners of the companies. After reviewing the provided questionnaires, only 300 questionnaires were used for research purposes. The remaining questionnaires were rejected for their non-compliance with the research criteria or for their incompleteness (less than 80% of answers to the questions).

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS**

The variables, which were used in the research, include: quantity of employees of a small business at the time of study; main operation; period of the business' existence; Adizes development stage; key business competence, selected by the enterprise; marketing business strategy; enterprise's growth rates; market growth rates. The survey gave us answers to the questions, and such answers were processed using SPSS software. Since it was a multipurpose survey, we will analyze the



answers regarding the hypotheses of a link between the lifecycle stages of a small company and some marketing parameters. Such parameters include a link between the chosen key competence and the marketing strategy, on one hand, and the small enterprise's lifecycle stage on the other hand. We believe that the standard profile of a company is determined by 4 parameters: quantity of employees, period of the company existence, type of operations and taxation system.

Diagrams 1, 2 and 3 describe frequency distributions of these variables for these companies, which were involved in the research. In order to determine the link between the indicators, we used  $\chi$  (chi)

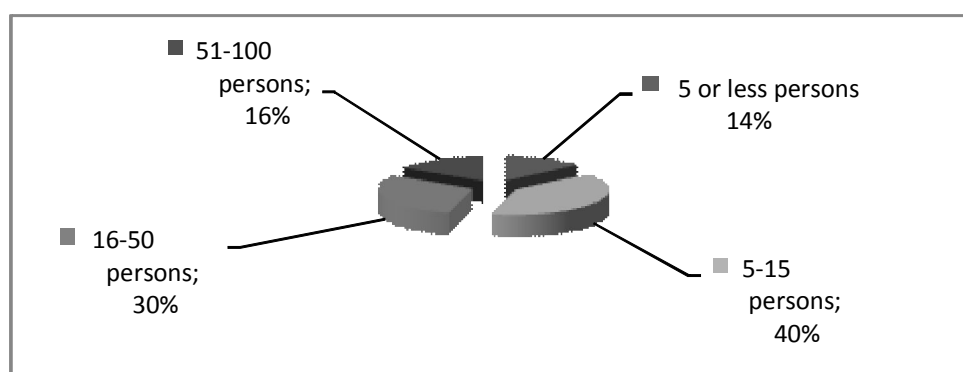


Diagram 1. Number of employees of small businesses, which are involved in the study

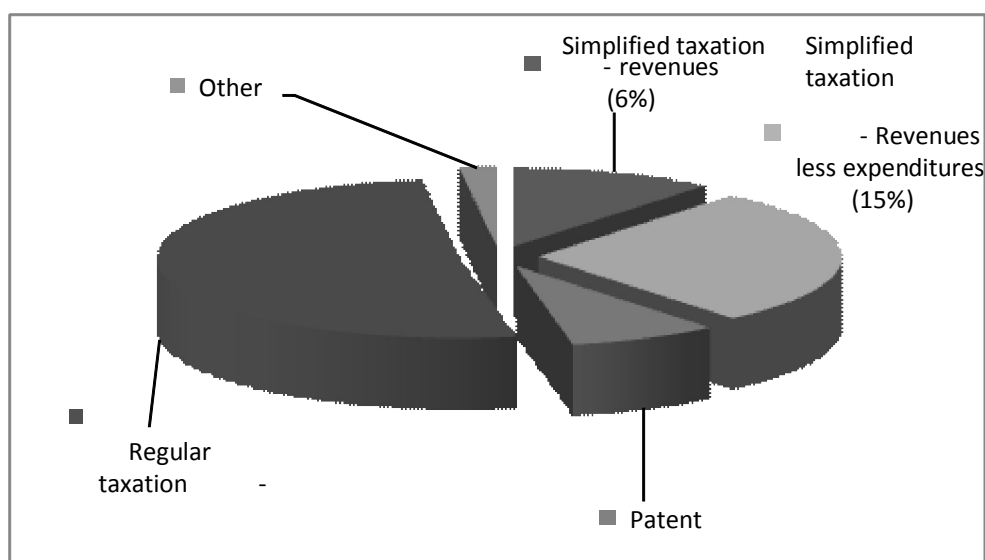


Diagram 2. Taxation, applied to the employees of small businesses, which are involved in the study



squared ( $\chi^2$ ) and  $\phi$  (phi) significance coefficients. If chi squared is less than 0.05, then we may say (with 95% probability), that the hypotheses regarding absence of the link between the variables, is rejected; therefore, a link between these variables exists.

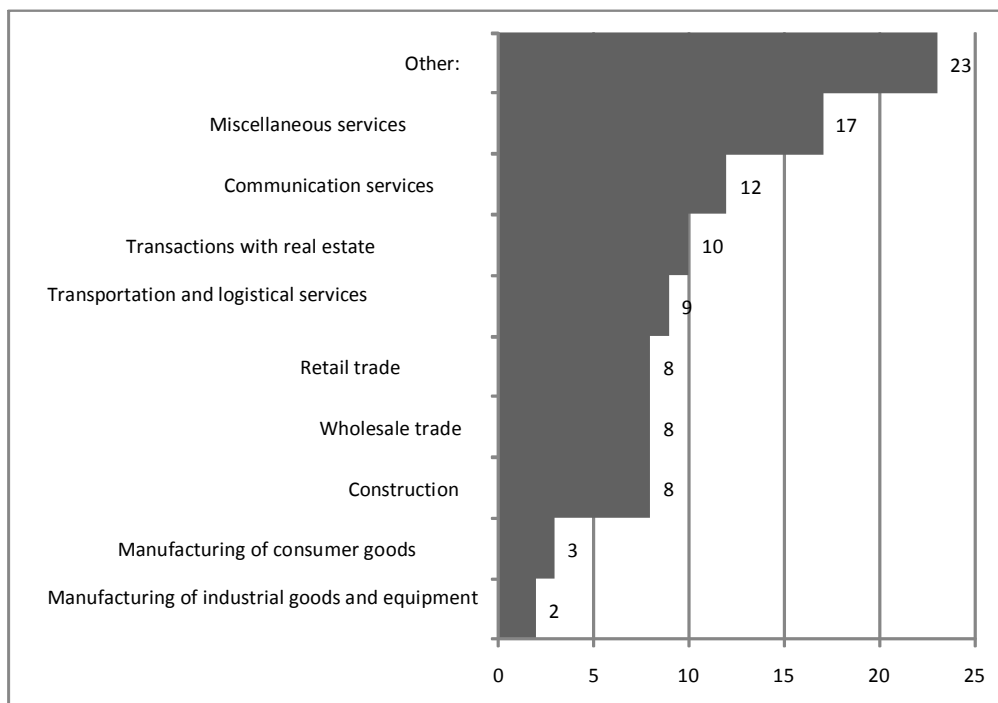


Diagram 3. Distribution by type of operations of small businesses, which are involved in the study

Based on the analyzed data, we may say that there is no link between the following variables (Table 1). We used phi coefficient in order to measure the strength of the statistical link between the variables. Phi values range from 0 to 1. Table 2 presents the results of the analysis. Interpretation of data from table 2 shows no link between the period during which the business exists and the key competence. An important aspect, revealed in this study, may include absence of the link between the key competence, chosen by the company, and types of the company operations. We may assume that the specifications, which distinguish the respondents from competitors (i.e. their distinguishing competence) may be successfully used in various industries in terms of the suggested options. Analysis of data in Table 2 is also interesting.

**Table 1.** Variables, between which a link exists

Variable 1	Variable 2
Period during which the business exists	Key competence
Operations	Key competence
Operations	Stage of the company development
Company growth rates	Period during which the business exists

The revealed link between the number of employees and the company development stages, as well as the strong link between the market growth rates and the company growth rates point to obvious dependency of these indicators. This may be used as an indirect proof of other revealed links. One of the most important links is represented by the link between the variables of the company development stage with the marketing strategy and selected exceptional competence. Taking into account strong correlation between the company growth rates and the selected exceptional competence, we may speak about the impact of marketing on the company lifecycle stage and (which is not less important) on its growth rates.

**Table 2.** Results of the analysis of links between the variables

Variable 1	Variable 2	Phi coefficient	Interpretation*
Quantity	Stage of the company development	0,593	Moderate link between the variables
Period during which the business exists	Stage of the company development	,676	Strong link between the variables
Stage of the company development	Marketing strategy	0,908	Strong link between the

			variables
Stage of the company development	Company growth rates	0,583	Moderate link between the variables
Stage of the company development	Key competence	0,796	Strong link between the variables
Market growth rates	Stage of the company development	0,690	Strong link between the variables
Market growth rates	Company growth rates	0,758	Strong link between the variables
Market growth rates	Key competence	0,715	Strong link between the variables
Company growth rates	Key competence	0,672	Strong link between the variables

\* All  $\phi$  (phi) coefficients have at least 95% significance levels.

Therefore, we may assume that if a small enterprise implements marketing function, especially in the area of selection of the marketing strategy and the company exceptional competence, high growth rates of a small company may be achieved, and they may affect the company lifecycle stage and the company development. One more proof of the role of marketing may include the revealed strong link between the market growth rates and the selected key competence. This link shows to us the importance of implementation of the marketing's research function in small companies. More detailed results of the study are described in my monograph (Sidorchuk, 2012).

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