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ABOUT DIGITAL MARKETING OF BELARUSIAN COMPANIES IN THE CHINESE MARKET

The relevance of the article is due to the development of economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and China. This trend makes marketing of products and brands of Belarusian companies in China undoubtedly relevant. The article considers the task of implementing international digital marketing of Belarusian exports in China. Three alternative options are considered. The first option is to use the already established infrastructure of international marketing in the Republic of Belarus. The second is to use the already established infrastructure of digital marketing in China. Based on the SWOT analysis, the disadvantages of these two options are identified, which can be overcome by the proposed solution for the third option. The third option is to create an innovative cross-border digital ecosystem for marketing Belarusian goods in China. Based on the process approach, a model of such a digital ecosystem is proposed. The model has the form of a set of life situations that develop between companies supplying products in the Republic of Belarus and their customers in China, and many business processes of digital ecosystem services to resolve these situations. The advantages of the proposed solution and possible ways to expand its capabilities are indicated. The practical significance of the study is that it can be used as the basis for a project that may be of interest to a number of institutions specified in the article.

Keywords: international marketing, digital marketing, marketing in China, digital marketing ecosystems, Internet marketing, process model, marketing business processes.

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О ЦИФРОВОМ МАРКЕТИНГЕ БЕЛОРУССКИХ КОМПАНИЙ НА РЫНКЕ КИТАЯ

Актуальность темы статьи обусловлена развитием экономических отношений Республики Беларусь и Китая. Такой тренд придает маркетингу продукции и брендов белорусских компаний в Китае несомненную ценность. В статье рассмотрена задача осуществления международного цифрового маркетинга белорусского экспорта в Китае, а также три альтернативных варианта систем такого маркетинга. Первый вариант – использование уже сложившейся инфраструктуры международного маркетинга в Республике Беларусь. Второй – использование уже сложившейся инфраструктуры цифрового маркетинга в Китае. На основе проведенного SWOT-анализа обозначены недостатки этих двух вариантов, которые могут быть преодолены предлагаемым решением по третьему варианту. Третий вариант – создание инновационной трансграничной цифровой экосистемы маркетинга белорусских товаров в Китае. На основе процессного подхода предложена модель такой цифровой экосистемы. Модель имеет форму совокупности жизненных ситуаций, складывающихся между компаниями – поставщиками продукции в Республике Беларусь и их клиентами в Китае, и множества бизнес-процессов сервисов цифровой экосистемы по разрешению этих ситуаций. Указаны достоинства предложенного решения и обозначены пути расширения его возможностей. Особенность предлагаемой модели заключается в том, что она предусматривает использование комплекса различных методов маркетинга продуктов и брендов на единой платформе с учетом особенностей законодательства Китая (в частности, метода нишевого маркетинга, SEO-маркетинга, короткого видеомаркетинга, персонализированного, контентного маркетинга, маркетинга с использованием дополненной и виртуальной реальности). Модель предполагает исполнение бизнес-процесса совершения на платформе трансграничных электронных сделок с использованием современных технологий. Практическая значимость исследования состоит в том, что оно может быть положено в основу совместного проекта ряда указанных в статье заинтересованных институтов.

Ключевые слова: международный маркетинг, цифровой маркетинг, маркетинг в Китае, цифровые экосистемы маркетинга, Интернет-маркетинг, процессная модель, бизнес-процессы маркетинга.

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Introduction. A significant result of bilateral cooperation between the Republic of Belarus and China has been the growth of trade turnover. In 2023, the total amount of trade turnover reached almost \$8 billion. In relation to 2022, the growth was 20%. In 2022, China became Belarus' second trade partner after the Russian Federation. Exports of Belarusian companies reached \$1.6 billion back in 2021. In 2023, exports from Belarus to China increased by 23% compared to 2022. In 2023, 330 different commodity items were supplied from Belarus to China. About 148 Belarusian enterprises in 171 categories of goods are accredited to work in the Chinese market. The export potential is high, and the systematic work of Belarusian enterprises in the Chinese market continues. Therefore, their activities in the so-called international digital marketing of their products in the Chinese market are of particular relevance. The relevance of digital marketing is characterized by the fact that as of June 2024, there were about 1.1 billion Internet users in China, which is 7.42 million more than in December 2023, with an Internet penetration rate of 78%.

The article discusses three possible options for international digital marketing of Belarusian products and brands in China. The first option is to utilize the existing international marketing infrastructure in Belarus. The second option is to use the existing digital marketing infrastructure in China. The third option is to use the proposed innovative infrastructure in the form of a specialized cross-border digital ecosystem. The last option is the result of the author's master thesis.

Main part.

Option 1. Digital marketing of Belarusian products and brands using the existing international marketing infrastructure in Belarus.

The State Unitary Enterprise "National Centre for Marketing and Price Study" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus operates in the sphere of international marketing in the Republic of Belarus. The enterprise fulfils the functions of the national export support institute of the Republic of Belarus. It provides a range of marketing services in such areas as research of foreign markets, analysis of their indicators, analysis of the competitive environment, consumer research, search for business partners, monitoring, analysis and review of prices, procurement management, analysis of marketing information on the results of procurement, etc. The enterprise provides a range of marketing services. The company conducts up to 280 marketing researches per year. Following the principles of the digital economy, the National Centre for Marketing and Price Study is the operator of a number of Internet platforms, namely:

- www.Export.by – a portal of information support for exports;

- www.Icetrade.by – a portal for placing information on procurement in Belarus and abroad;

- www.Goszakupki.by – an electronic trading platform containing information on public procurement in Belarus;

- www.Ca.ncmps.by – a certification center;

- www.Gias.by – a portal of the state information and analytical system of reviews, development of presentations of enterprises and investment projects.

Special mention should be made of the www.Export.by portal, the main purpose of which is to support exports and promote Belarusian goods and services abroad. The portal presents goods and services on the Internet; provides search for the necessary goods, services; allows establishing direct contact with the platform user, i. e. with producers and suppliers of goods and services; allows identifying promising markets; contains information about marketing tools. The audience of the portal is 670,000 subjects per year from 200 countries. In fact, the portal serves as an electronic showcase of Belarusian goods. The portal presents catalogues with descriptions of more than 6,000 companies, Belarusian and foreign, catalogues of more than 22,000 goods and services in two languages – Russian and English.

Nevertheless, this infrastructure cannot yet be considered a full-fledged digital marketing ecosystem, as it does not implement most digital marketing technologies [1, 2]. In particular, content marketing, performance marketing, targeted advertising, CRM marketing, email marketing, SMS marketing, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), affiliate marketing, influencer marketing, niche marketing, social media marketing, e-commerce marketing, artificial intelligence (AI) marketing, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), personalized marketing, pay-per-click marketing (Pay-Per-Click Marketing). All of the above technologies are successfully implemented by the existing digital marketing infrastructure in China.

Option 2. Digital marketing of Belarusian products and brands using the international marketing infrastructure already existing in China.

Digital marketing in China has received significant development, which, in principle, can be used by Belarusian enterprises [3–13]. Many well-known platforms form the digital marketing ecosystem.

WeChat marketing – marketing based on the ecosystem of WeChat, the largest social network with 1.29 billion monthly users. Practices various forms of advertising on a paid basis. Including for foreign companies. Allows brands to publish content for their subscribers in the form of WeChat newsletters. Allows real-time interaction with audiences and potential customers and answers questions about the supplier's brand and products. Registration is required to register a company on the platform. It is carried out on the basis of a certificate confirming the ownership of the trademark, nPassport

(you can have a foreign passport) of the main account administrator, mobile phone number, email, bank documents – confirmation of opening an account in your country.

Another major social network Xiaohongshu is one of the key platforms in the digital marketing ecosystem. Combines elements of user-generated content, product reviews and e-commerce. For international brands, it creates their accounts that host content, e-stores. Brands get to track consumer data, buy content for promotion, live streaming, which is considered a growing channel of commerce. KOL influencer marketing takes place on the platform.

Bilibili is a Chinese video sharing platform. Popular in the youth niche. Offers traditional display advertising options, integrated marketing, with KOL promotion. Marketing services are paid for.

Pinduoduo – the platform is unique because of the integration of social media into the online shopping process. Foreign companies can set up their own shops on the platform.

Baidu Statistics is a tool that allows you to track key SEO ranking metrics such as keyword rankings, website traffic, user behavior and more.

Marketing on niche platforms is becoming a trend for enterprises seeking to enter the Chinese market. For example, through the “Hot Mum” platform of baby products.

HI-COM is a digital marketing agency that presents e-commerce marketing services to large companies. It works with more than 100 brands and is considered a preferred partner.

Belt Road Consulting is a China-based digital marketing and content marketing company, helping foreign companies generate revenue in China.

Marketing using AI. The application of AI in marketing is related to the analysis of big data. A number of brands are using AI to create personalized recommendations based on previous customer orders, for an innovative way of communicating with customers.

The characteristic of foreign brand localization in China is the characteristic of the brand name in hieroglyphic. This is an official requirement.

Nevertheless, in digital marketing, Belarusian products face many challenges in entering the Chinese market. These challenges are not only due to cultural differences and diverse consumer behavior, but also due to the complexity of laws and regulations and rapid changes in technological developments. The problems are caused, in particular, by the following reasons:

1. Cultural differences. There are significant differences in values, consumption habits and traditions between China and other countries. Belarusian companies need to understand the preferences and needs of Chinese consumers in order to effectively adapt their products and marketing strategies.

2. Language barriers. Ensuring that the target audience correctly understands all marketing materials and messages is a major challenge.

3. Laws and regulations. China's legal environment imposes strict requirements on foreign companies, especially in the areas of data protection, cybersecurity and advertising content. Foreign companies must ensure that their marketing activities comply with Chinese laws and regulations or they may face fines or other legal consequences.

4. Stiff competition. The Chinese market already has many well-known local and international brands with strong market presence and brand loyalty. Belarusian companies need to look for a unique market niche to stand out among competitors.

5. Technological Adaptability. Digital marketing tools and platforms are rapidly evolving in China and are constantly changing. Belarusian companies need to constantly monitor the latest technological trends and flexibly adapt their marketing strategies to take advantage of new digital marketing tools.

6. Building consumer confidence. For Belarusian companies, as players in an emerging market, building and maintaining consumer trust is another major challenge. It is crucial to gradually build brand trust through high quality products and services, as well as an effective communication strategy.

7. Data Analysis and Exploitation. China's big data market provides many resources for digital marketing, but how to effectively collect analyze and exploit this data to optimize marketing strategies remains a challenge for many Belarusian companies.

The above-mentioned complexities determine the relevance of creating a dedicated transnational digital ecosystem as proposed below.

Option 3. Digital marketing of Belarusian products and brands using an innovative specialized cross-border digital marketing ecosystem.

The model of such a digital ecosystem can be represented in the form of external and internal infrastructure and in the form of a set of business processes (hereinafter referred to as BP) of its digital marketing services created according to the process approach [14, 15].

The basis of the ecosystem is the IT platforms. The platform's external environment is formed by potential and actual suppliers (companies) of Belarus products and consumers of these products in China (clients). Suppliers and customers interact with each other on the platform using the Internet. Information intermediaries authorized by suppliers and customers can be participants of the BP. The external environment of the platform is also social networks popular in China.

The internal structure is formed by web pages (hereinafter referred to as showcases), automated platform information system, platform administrator, internal data, not excluding artificial intelligence agents.

The main function of the digital ecosystem is to promote the products of the Republic of Belarus to the Chinese market. For this purpose, its platform provides almost all types of marketing of products and brands with due regard to the peculiarities of China, establishing communication between suppliers of products and their consumers, concluding transactions between them electronically, and, if necessary, tracking the movement of goods along logistics chains. The platform uses two languages, Russian and Chinese, and is created taking into account the regulatory and legal framework of China.

The proposed tentative composition of the platform showcases:

- showcase of supplier companies brands;
- showcase of offers to supply products and services from Belarus;
- showcase of customers' evaluations (feedback) of Belarusian product supplies and company brands;
- showcase of customers' appeals (offers) to Belarusian supplier companies;
- showcase of loyalty;
- showcase of market participants;
- showcase of online media;
- showcase of electronic transactions;
- showcase of traceability of goods movement;
- showcase of news.

The process model of the platform takes the form of a set of BPs of its services rendered in certain life situations. In particular:

1. Life situation: a Belarusian supplier company has an offer for Chinese consumer customers. The platform provides the BP service of entering and displaying the data of the suppliers offer for customers through the suppliers' offer showcase. In this way, marketing aimed at creating awareness is carried out.

2. Life situation: a customer intends to obtain a supply offer for a product according to its needs. The platform provides the service by executing the BP of editing and visualizing the showcase of market participants based on the supply offer. Thus, it becomes possible to analyze the target audience, customer demand and launch a new product on the market.

3. Life situation: suppliers and customers-consumers intend to perform mutual dialogue and benefit sharing between them. The platform provides an appropriate service by executing a BP of direct communication between them for dialogue through channels declared in advance by the supplier. For example, email, interactive dashboard. In this way, direct effective relationships between producers and consumer clients are formed.

4. Life situation: a manufacturer-supplier intends to cause trust to its brand or product and to interest customers. The platform at the initiative of the supplier ensures the execution of the BP of formation on the showcase of offers or brands of supplier's

advertisements in the form of text, video, audio, defining the content of the brand or product content. This ensures content marketing, creating a positive brand image, increasing brand awareness in China, expanding the reach of potential customers and increasing their loyalty.

5. Life situation: customers intend to establish a connection with manufacturers-suppliers unknown to them so far. The platform on the showcase of customer requests (offers) to Belarusian supplier companies provides the BP of collecting, processing and storing information about customers who are potentially interested in goods and services of manufacturers in Belarus. Thus, CRM marketing of customer relationship management is realized.

6. Life situation: a manufacturer from Belarus intends to inform the target audience of the Chinese market about the launch of a new product, promotions, sales, and other significant events. The platform at the showcase of offers of products and services from Belarus realizes the BP of advertising the new product. This ensures marketing of the brand and products at all stages of the life cycle of the supplier company.

7. Life situation: the client intends to express his/her assessment, give feedback on specific products of a particular manufacturer. The platform on the showcase of evaluations (feedback) of customers of Belarusian product supplies and brands of companies provides the service of BP communication with new and existing customers, feedback and feedback on products with data reflection (results). In this way, proper CRM marketing is ensured.

8. Life situation: a supplier intends to inform potential customers about a news item relevant to the China market. The platform, as the data on the news showcase is updated, implements the BP of informing potential customers about it, including email services and services in social networks. For this purpose, the BP of collecting addresses of potential customers is implemented beforehand. This is how the so-called email marketing and marketing via social networks is realized.

9. Life situation: a platform operator intends to have digital marketing metrics for the platform. The platform implements a BP of defining key indicators of its activity. In particular, page loads (page view); site traffic; time spent on web pages; number of interactions with the site per visit (Bounce Rate); subscription and subscription rates, size of target audience, etc. This is how key indicators (KPIs) of marketing quality are defined.

10. Life situation: the platform operator intends to combine online promotion of goods with offline events (exhibitions, forums, conferences). The platform operator organizes an offline event with the subsequent realization on the online media showcase of the BP publishing the video of the event on

a special page of the portal. In this way, marketing is ensured by combining online promotion with offline events.

11. Life situation: a platform operator intends to organize an online exhibition and/or online auction. The platform realizes the BP of an online Internet exhibition or online auction on the online media showcase. In this way, marketing via an online exhibition and via online auctions is ensured.

12. Life situation: a supplier intends to carry out targeted advertising. The platform provides the service of BP identification of the target audience with the right interests, age, and gender for the subsequent execution of BP establishment of direct communication and dialogue through channels, chat forums on websites or social networks. This is how targeted advertising is realized through SMM and SEO promotion.

In principle, it is reasonable to combine the BP of marketing problem solving in the digital ecosystem with the BP of procurement and supply management. For example, to solve the following life situations:

- Life situation: suppliers and customers intend to place an order for the delivery of goods. The platform for this purpose provides the BP service of concluding an e-transaction on the platform showcase in the form of an electronic document with the participation of a third trusted party, information intermediaries, EDI providers. As a result, the marketing of attractive relationships between Chinese customers and producers in Belarus becomes available;
- Life situation: manufacturers-suppliers and customers intend to trace the delivery of goods along

the logistics chain. The platform provides a BP service for tracking the movement of labelled goods on the way from the manufacturer to the user using electronic waybills and with the participation of certified EDI providers. Traceability results are displayed on a special showcase.

Conclusion. This study has identified three main options for the further development of digital marketing of Belarusian products and brands in China. As a result, the project of creating a special cross-border digital marketing ecosystem recommended for practical implementation. The project is undoubtedly relevant, corresponds to the modern strategy of digital transformation of the economy, joint policy of co-operation between the two countries, and promotes Belarusian products in China.

In accordance with the current legislation of Belarus, the conducted research can be used as a basis for the development of a technical passport for the creation of a digital ecosystem for inclusion of the project implementation in the State Program of Digital Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2025–2030.

Possible operators of the digital ecosystem could be the State Unitary Enterprise “National Centre for Marketing and Price Study” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus or the Belarusian-Chinese Industrial Park “Great Stone”. In the latter case, the functions of the digital ecosystem could be extended to promote goods and brands in both directions: both in the Chinese market for Belarusian enterprises and in the Belarusian market for Chinese enterprises.

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