

EMERGING CREATIVE ECOSYSTEMS: PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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Abstract—Ecosystems’ domain became well known since there were promoted the cross – industrial collaboration as main driver of economic evolution. The increasing necessity to assess organizational collaborative capabilities led to the emergence of new forms of engagement into product or / and services development process. The importance of ecosystem’s approach can be identified in case of emerging industries. The creative potential, as well as innovation features are essential for innovation ecosystem development. This paper aims to highlight the importance of emerging business ecosystems within creative industries. Thus, based on case study approach, there will be emphasized the key features regarding the co – creation process, collaborative relations establishment, the development of new products through actors’ engagement and crowdsourcing relevance and implementation. The foreseen result is to understand the main mechanism behind platform development, as co – creative approach to the emergence of creative business ecosystem and the engagement process of other relevant stakeholders. Also it highlights the main benefits from using the platform based ecosystem approach within emergent creative industries.

Keywords—business ecosystem, co – creation, creative industries, innovation, platform development

I. INTRODUCTION

An ecosystem point of view is adopted especially in cases where there should be emphasized the importance of collaboration. As it was defined before, a business ecosystem can be seen as a community of related actors, by J. Moore [1] and E. Den Hartigh, M. Tol and W. Visscher [2], an area for business transactions or interactive business network in the vision of Farhoomad, Ng and Yue [3] and M. Iansiti and R. Levien [4], M. Weber and M. Hine [5] defined it as multi-sided markets or value network or , as E. Autio and L. Thomas sustained, can be organized around a key asset [6]. The key aspect in business ecosystem’s theory is related to the interconnectedness of the participants with a set of technologies, according to E. Autio and L. Thomas [6]. Rong and Shi identified that a business ecosystem, along with the community of actors and the area of opportunities, also comprises value co – creation, co – evolution feature and platform development [7].

Although the concept is widely known, there are still gaps which should provide to researchers new opportunities. From this point of view there can be referred to major changes which occurred at the moment of ecosystem regeneration. New emergent industries depends upon these changes as this stage of ecosystem development is usually characterized by arising new trends or competition intensification, the fact pointed by E. Galateanu (Avram) and S. Avasilcai [8]. However, there should not be excluded the importance of collaborative mechanisms, processes and features, as these represents the key point in ecosystem development.

Thus, this paper aims to treat the most important aspects regarding new trends in emerging industries, especially creative industry, the relevance of collaboration in creative product development / creation and the platform development as result of a successful ecosystem evolution.

II. BUSINESS ECOSYSTEMS AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES: THE CASE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

A business ecosystem represents an interactive, interconnected structure, there are opinions which state that it is composed from several value networks. The ecosystems’ based approach is essential especially for emerging industry analysis. C. Lu, K. Rong, J. You, Y. Shi [9] stated that an emerging industry usually is characterized by two main features: uncertainty and complexity. Thus it faces many technology and market challenges as it was identified by C. Lu, K. Rong, and J. You, Y. Shi [9] and K. Rong, Y. Shi and J. Yu [10]. The comprehensive knowledge of inter - industry collaboration enables actors to avoid or minimize the effects of those uncertainties, the idea expressed by K. Rong, Y. Lin, Y. Shi, J. Yu [11]. From this point of view G. Xu, Y. Wu, T. Minshall and Y. Zhou [12] highlighted that new emerging technologies could create opportunities for new companies or traditional actors to adopt innovation as the main engine in product or / and service development.

In order to provide viable products or services, a business ecosystem within an emerging industry should

comprise three main layers: product, integration services and infrastructure [8, 13]. G. Xu, Y. Wu, T. Minshall and Y. Zhou emphasized the importance of science, technology and business as distinct layers of an innovation ecosystem [12]. Technology development in addition to the opportunity exploration is highly perceived by new entrants into ecosystem, sustained by R. Adner and R. Kapoor [14]

Nowadays innovation means also individual creativity as well as technology enhancement. The creative potential, in relation with industrial usage, can be measured and represents the main target for Creative Industries (CI), as it was pointed by A. Bujor, S. Avasilcai [15]. Also A. Bujor and S. Avasilcai [16], as well as L. Lazzeretti [17] claim that at the core of Creative Industries emergence and development stays the use of cultural capital and its capability to generate or to be used as potential resource. Lazzeretti identified that the dynamics of innovative and creative processes is more valuable as strategic input rather than the context itself [17]. Basically it is about how we achieve creative and innovative products and not when or where. The roots of innovation within these industries lies in creative capacity of individuals or groups, their perceptions and feelings which can be quantified and may be or not used further, the idea sustained by L. Lazzeretti [17] and A. Scott [18]. Also, the innovation concept seems to be more relevant and closer to creativity implementation A. Scott [18].

Potts considers Creative Industry a part of highly innovative service sector, as these industries are involved in value creation process [19]. In table I is presented a summarized overview of the creative industries:

TABLE I: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES OVERVIEW A. BUJOR, S. AVASILCAI [15], R. E. CAVES [20]

Key Aspect	Explanation
Resources	Human capital, creative ideas, entrepreneurs, creative service and experience providers, creative content and originals producers
Domains	Architecture, urban regeneration, photography, fashion, design, crafts, tourism, advertising, electronic publishing, video games, web design, movies
Main Processes	Co – creation, value creation, innovation development, creative projects development, digitization, creative entrepreneurship
Properties	Uncertainty, creative skills and responsibilities, requires time, durable products, variety of products and differentiated capabilities, Intellectual Property rights

III. OPEN INNOVATION AND CROWDSOURCING FEATURES

A. Open innovation in action

Innovation, as it was mentioned before, represents the main driver for ecosystem formation and relies on actors capabilities to develop new products. However as Alexa, Avasilcai and Bujor stated that in order to create there

should be continuously developed and updated the base of knowledge and innovation [21]. Product development became a collective effort, as companies started to involve other stakeholders and this effort can be highlighted through individual performance [21]. L. Alexa, M. Alexa and S. Avasilcai pointed that especially useful is company's effort to enhance open innovation technology into daily activities and product development process [22]. Rohrbeck, Hozle and Gemunden [23] pointed that nowadays dominant companies should adapt to the changes within their industry, should innovate in order to maintain their current level of development because of the increasing number of successful small actors can be seen as potential threat. These aspects can be achieved by using open innovation which according to Chesbrough [24] means to enhance own innovation capability by attracting external resources into the innovation process. Basically it is about the access to company's innovation ecosystem, to attract external resources in terms of human and financial capital, knowledge and materials, and in the same time to influence other relevant actors, insights provided by D. Cox et al. [25]. According to Cox et al companies start to use web developed instruments in order to provide attractive and competitive products, this includes the use of specially designed platforms, ranking systems or other relevant instruments for creative ideas generation and internal innovation enhancement [25].

B. Crowdsourcing activities and key features

Hence the crowdsourcing activities are especially designed and used in order to enhance the other relevant stakeholders' engagement. K. Boudreau and R. Lakhani [26] explained the relevance of the crowd within a corporate innovation process. According to the authors the crowd is relevant especially in problem – solving processes, as it is comprised of individuals with various skills and capabilities, and from different areas of expertise or competences [26]. Also K. Boudreau and R. Lakhani identified four main activities, such as it is presented in table II.

E. Schenk and C. Guittard [27] provide a comprehensive approach to the crowdsourcing activities, by identifying and defining the main types of crowdsourcing, such as:

1) *Integrative Crowdsourcing* – it is more about routine tasks. Comprises cheap activities which requires a large amount of resources. Interesting is the fact that the value is generated and provided by simple tasks, low cost realization and seek complementary contributions;

2) *Selective Crowdsourcing* – requires the realization of complex tasks. It works with arrays of solutions as it seeks the use of specific skills and capabilities. Includes projects which identify and choose specific solution to the problems and are highly remunerated;

3) *Creative Crowdsourcing* – implies the use of creative tasks. Usually provides creative problem solving, innovative solutions. At early stances it was illustrated through posters and design contests. It is important to mention that this type of crowdsourcing can be integrative or selective according to the client’s choice.

TABLE II: CROWDSOURCING PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO K. BOUDREAU AND R. LAKHANI [26].

Activities	Key Features
Contest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific problem solving • Use specific combination of skills and capabilities • Used for creative projects • Is more effective with complex tasks • Provide reward for problem solving • Use creativity and subjectivity
Collaborative Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value – creation process • Hard to control because of individuals diversity • Used for open collaboration projects • Relies on crowd task modularization, specific routines and technology • Recombining and sharing the ideas and information
Complementors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the core product as reference • Provide multiple problems solving • Creates arrays of solutions • Grants to the crowd access to product functions and technology through specific interfaces
Labor Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match skills and expertise with specific tasks • Represents a flexible markets, which requires custom platform design and infrastructure • Enhance evaluation and controlling activities and procedures

IV. CROWDSOURCING SOLUTIONS WITHIN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES ECOSYSTEM: THE CASE OF 99DESIGNS

Crowdsourcing represents at this moment an essential application of open innovation which implies the use of collective effort for own benefit. As it was mentioned before it is used especially in problem solving processes. The main question is still referred to how companies implement crowdsourcing activities within their innovation ecosystem. In order to illustrate the major importance of the collective effort this paper will present the case of 99Designs.

A. 99Designs – overview and business model / ecosystem

99Designs was founded as result of a competition on SitePoint forum in 2008. As the co – founders stated this company was born as result of collective and friendly effort of Mark Harbottle, Matt Mickiewicz, Lachlan Donald and Paul Annesley [28]. Nowadays, what started as a competition, became a well-known company among logo designers, with a strong developed platform, present in USA, Australia, Germany and Brazil.

The management team is comprised from 119

individuals starting with high management level: Patrick Llewellyn (Chief Executive Officer), Jason Sew Hoy (Chief Growth Officer), Pam Webber (Chief Marketing Officer), Ashish Desai (Chief Product Officer). Also management team includes product managers, directors of brand marketing, operation managers, support directors, engineers, front- end developers, software developers, and heads of sales, designers, accountants, and digital marketing director, representatives of customer support (Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish), senior and junior developers, People Ops managers, risk analysts, product specialists and quality control, performance marketing manager, project managers UI / UX designers and marketing interns, by 99Designs [29]. What is remarkable 99Designs includes also 6 non – traditional members: Boris and Henry (office cats) and Brinkley, Oscar, Ruffus and Valentino or Walter (office dogs and bones inspectors) [29].

They believe that “design can change everything”, which means that there should not exist obstacle between brilliant ideas and their dissemination to the others by 99Designs [30]. According to Abhari and Davidson [31] the company 99Designs use and attract external creative potentials in their own designs, basically, as 99Designs stated it is about creating an online graphic design and labor marketplace [28].

As 99Design pointed in their presentation of the company, they address to anyone who are passionate and creative [28]. Basically their customers are from B2B (small business) but also they appeal to the young designers, those who contributes to the design contests in the platform [28].

Brian Hurley [32] described 99Designs as a niche keystone, as the company provided the market place where graphic designers were linked to the customers. According to Hurley 99Designs provide a platform for actors’ interaction, such as: graphic designers, ecosystem suppliers or graphic customers. The main result of these interactions are logos or other relevant graphic products [32]. At the same time, by borrowing from business ecosystem’s domain the concept of keystone, there can be identified the most important features, such as:

- Ensures secure financial channels
- Build trust between actors
- Changing cost structure according to customer specifics
- Decrease time for proposal processing and solutions proposing
- Creates a large pool of professionals and designers
- Interactive feedback [32].

In figure 1 is presented 99Designs’s business ecosystem as it was identified by Brian Hurley.

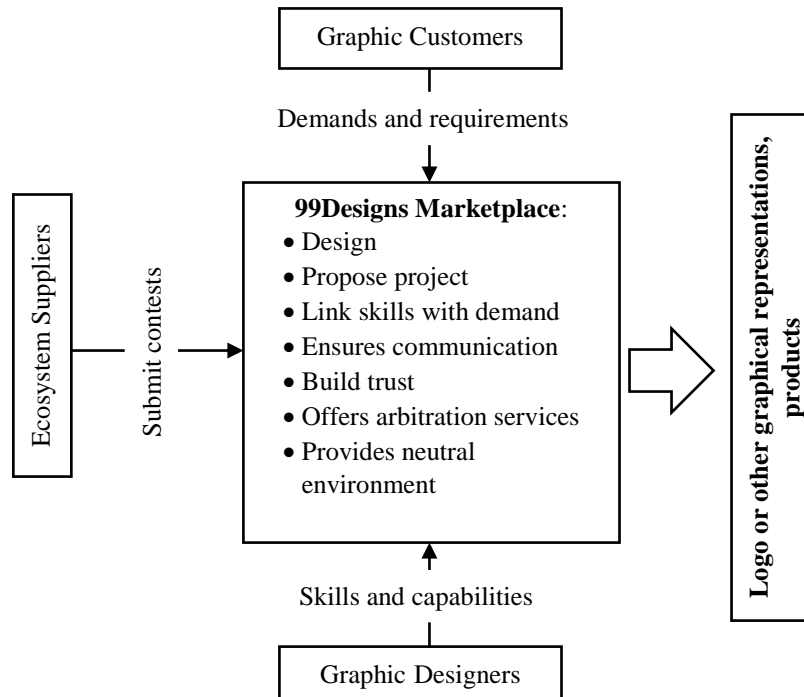


Fig. 1. 99Designs Ecosystem according to B. Hurley [32]

B. 99Designs crowdsourcing marketplace

One of the main crowdsourcing activities, as it was listed in table I, is about creating a labor marketplace. 99Designs established a platform to facilitate the interactions between designers or artists and potential ecosystem suppliers or customers.

The platform comprises four main sections, presented by 99Designs:

1) *Categories* – represents a quick menu for designers as well as customers to find a project according to own requirements or needs. It comprises such categories as: Logo & Identity, Web & App Design, Business & Advertising, Clothing & Merchandise, Art & Illustration, Packaging & Label, Book & Magazine, Other [33]. Each of these sections are divided into several subsections as example for business & advertising there will be find following subsections: postcard, direct mail, poster, infographic, signage, booklet, resume, trade show booth and others. Each subsection contains a short description, how it works, a section with questions and answers, recent projects or contests and package of price (bronze, silver, gold and platinum) [34].

2) *How it works?* [35] – contains clear description of the most important steps for project proposal or finding the most interesting design. Each step is exemplified and described. Also it contains options to contact directly the needed designer and the option to address to the management team's designer. Basically it is about to request an opinion from a professional designer.

3) *Pricing* [36] – in this section 99Designs provide all needed information about pricing packages: bronze, silver, gold and platinum. However each package differs based on the destination.

4) *Pro* [37] – is the section for professional users and agencies. It offers such services as: talent recruiting, exclusive training, especially designed tools or instruments. Also to build trust for other businesses there is a section with testimonials from other customers and the option for direct call.

The marketplace also includes the log in section for designers or potential freelancers.

C. Marketplace services

The 99Design Marketplace does not represent just a place to meet talented designers, it also offers specially designed services.

1) *Design a contest* – this is where a customer can launch his design contest. Basically it is about to specify the strict requirements in terms of: the type of required design [38], the choice of already existing designs just to make the potential contestant to understand customer's brand and which can be already found, brand's style calculator, the attributes of the brand [39], colors and a 99Designs's survey [40] which includes information such as: email, language, logo's name, industry, slogan, the target audience, message to the potential designers, upload of images or sketches, a few examples of templates and the sources for ideas and inspiration. At the last section the potential customer can explain in detail the requirements of the design, the web sites for inspiration and give detail about preferable elements.

2) *1 – To – 1 Projects* [41] – contains a list of potential designers with their representative work.

3) *Discover designer* [41] – represents the list of all designers from 99Design platform. Each designer has its own profile page which includes: information about the designer, the work portfolio and the service the designer provides. There is also listed designer’s experience: the number of projects, response time, won contests, repeated customers, certification and reviews.

There can be found also information about the company, shortcuts to design services provided by the 99Designs marketplace, the section “get a design” and designers’ resources. At this section the potential users are informed about the opportunities of joining this marketplace [42]. All the interesting creative designs or ideas, as well as information about the importance of social media or current trends in logo designs are listed in the 99Designs blog. Also there can be found the contest for best design of the month [43]. Resource center, powered by 99Designs, includes data and information necessary for a successful design development, small businesses kit, infographics, branding and marketing (email design templates), web and mobile design, use of colors and social media design [44].

D. 99Designs crowdsourcing marketplace resources

Just to create a marketplace for designers or potential freelancers is not enough, as this marketplace emphasize the importance of creative human capital. 99Designs not only created a neutral environment to enhance customer – designer relations, but also try to help freelancers by providing specific resources. At the section Designer Resource Center, provided by 99Designs, freelancers can found guidelines for each category, for example brand guide, business card design, social media cover design, product label design, interior book design, eBook cover design [45]. Also there are displayed 99Designs standards, freelancer toolkit, tutorials, interviews with 99Designs’ professional designers and successful stories [45].

E. Other relevant issues / features of 99Designs Marketplace

It is important to cover also Intellectual Property issues. The 99Design marketplace established and defined clearly their privacy terms and copyright policy. Basically the designer remains the owner of the logo or other graphical representation until he / she signs design transfer agreement [46], the moment the designer become the winner of the contest.

Remarkable is that 99Designs acts as a community rather than just a platform. This aspects matters as management team implemented and defined Designer Code of Conduct [47]. The company promotes such values as respect of the community, honesty and fairness, originality of the work and designer’s obligations [47].

Concept Originality Policy promotes the originality of the concepts, uniqueness and creativeness. 99Designs promotes the creation of new and original projects rather than merely replication [48]. Being a creative platform implies also their presence and use of social media. From this point of view 99Designs are present on such online

environments as Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

F. How does it work?

The main idea behind the 99Designs marketplace is that customers, according to their own requirements get to choose from a various number of projects. Basically the customers propose a brief idea which is developed into specific graphical products. In figure 2 is presented the main mechanism behind the marketplace starting with customers’ requirements [35]

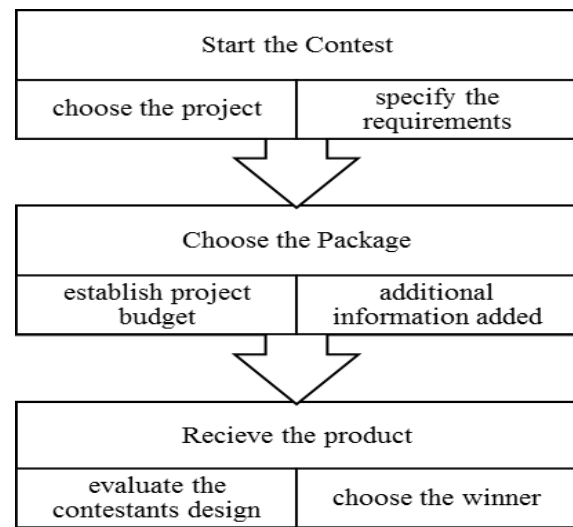


Fig. 2. The main mechanism behind 99Designs Marketplace contests [35].

V. CONCLUSIONS

Business ecosystems became well known structure, however as innovation became the main driver – these ecosystems also transformed into innovation ecosystems. Nowadays companies started to disclose their product development processes, in order to innovate and to be a part of an ecosystem. From this point of view open innovation technologies are used. As collective effort approach is preferred, rather than individualism or strong competition, crowdsourcing became an essential variable or even solution for the companies, especially if we are thinking about emergent industries such as creative ones.

From this point of view, based on case study of 99Designs Marketplace, there were presented the most important features of crowdsourcing within Creative Industries. This paper emphasize the relevance or even the power of crowd in product development, the collective effort in creative process and the creative approach to the entire design process. All these aspects implies the use of creative human capital.

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