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# **BUDGET FOR MARKETING STIMULATION OF REGIONAL BEE PRODUCTS ON THE BASIS OF VALUE**

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**Lyubomir Dimitrov Lyubenov<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> "Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse, Bulgaria

**E-mail:** <sup>1</sup>LLyubenov@uni-ruse.bg

**Abstract:** The aim of the research is to propose a budget for marketing stimulation of bee products in the Ruse district on the basis of value. The regional bee farms shall integrate among each other to form solid organization for the development of products of high added value, respectively, for the accumulation of a solid budget for the most efficient communication tools. The budget for marketing stimulation on the basis of value shall be treated as an investment in value communications regarding the demanded, the promised and the desired value by consumers. When public relations (PR) on the basis of value are not carried out well, a larger budget will be necessary for the remaining tools of the communication mix (advertisement, personal sales, sales stimulation, etc.); on the other hand, their efficiency will be lower. Direct marketing (DM) has the capacity to create added value, to offer it and to communicate it to the customers on the basis of value in unison with the marketing tools. The organization of bee farms shall form a virtual community which in the course of time will collect information about the needs of the consumers, turning into a community with value. It will direct the organization not only towards the value communication via PR and DM, but also towards improving the products, the supplies, the prices and, as a whole, towards improving the customers' service and satisfaction.

**Key words:** value communication, budget, PR, communities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Individual bee farms as micro-producers of raw materials do not have funds for large-scale communication campaigns. They cannot afford expensive advertisements on TV, the radio or in the most popular printed media. As a result, they adopt an approach of limited stimulation of sales and personal sales; their funds for the remaining communication elements are most often insufficient. This necessitates the development of horizontal and vertical relationships at industry (beekeeping) and inter-industry level with industries and services. Regional bee farms shall integrate among each other to form solid organization with opportunities for equivalent partnerships with trade and industrial enterprises, which will allow them to develop products with high added value, respectively, to accumulate a solid budget for public relations (PR), advertisement, etc.

Bee farms face difficulties implementing classic advertisement constants such as company name, brand, company logo, advertisement slogan, company colour, company font and formats, company documents, company manners, distinctive company clothing, branding of transport vehicles, advertisement gifts, etc. As such, they can primarily benefit from sorts, breeds, technologies, geographical names, know-how, certification under certain standards, etc., showing the uniqueness of the region. Another fundamental problem is the depersonalization of regional origin by processing enterprises and retailers, who put under one brand the purchased bee products from various regions. This hampers the implementation of integrated marketing communications due to the lack of, poor use and insufficient representation of the available communication tools and applicable advertising constants.

The relevance of the problem of marketing stimulation of regional bee products arises from the fact that bee farms as micro-producers of raw materials develop primarily products of low added value. The farms of this type do not have sufficient funds available for solid communication campaigns. They face difficulties in the limited implementation of classic, regional, and other advertising constants. Another fundamental problem is that they, as individuals, can implement to an extremely limited extent the trivial communication tools – PR, advertisement, sale stimulation and personal sales. Their vertical integration by processing enterprises and retailers turns them into suppliers of raw materials. The horizontal integration at industry and regional level will form solid organizations with powerful communication budget; such that do not exist in Bulgaria yet.

In addition to the discussed above serious problems faced at agro-industry and regional level, there are other problems concerning the traditional methods of forming a budget for marketing stimulation which have a number

of weaknesses: 1) they do not correspond to the market situation and goals of the enterprises and the farms, including the bee farms; 2) they determine annual fixed turnover of funds which does not allow flexibility in the activity of the farms focused on sales, markets, etc.; 3) they do not take into consideration the differences in the channels, the image, the prices, etc. because they are based on average industry indicators or such valid for the competition. The relevance of the problem regarding the budget for marketing stimulation is complemented by its influence on the sales, the income and the profit of the bee farms. This necessitates basing the budget for marketing stimulation on specific goals and tasks.

Bearing in mind the fact that historically, advertising is most closely associated with marketing, the majority of the literary sources place the emphasis on it in the development of communication policy, respectively, a budget for marketing stimulation, whereas PR is actively included as an element of this policy only throughout the last thirty years (Blagoev, 1989; Marinova, 1993, et al), but having a significantly more intangible presence in its budget. The research dedicated to the development of budget for marketing stimulation on the basis of value with a focus on PR and the remaining elements of integrating marketing communications such as direct marketing, etc., are but a few, in particular, in communication activities dedicated to bee products. To compensate for this scarcity, this research shall focus primarily on them, not on advertisement.

Marketing stimulation has varying significance on the organizational (B2B) and consumer (B2C) markets of bee products. The relative significance of the communication tools for marketing stimulation on the B2B and B2C markets varies. On the B2C markets, advertising is the most significant, followed by the stimulation of sales, personal sales, and PR. On the B2B markets, personal sales are the most significant, followed by the stimulation of sales and PR (Velev, 2001). However, they are valid primarily for the industrial, but not for the markets of agricultural and bee products, for which of most significance remain PR and direct marketing (DM) as elements of integrating marketing communications (Lyubenov, 2020). Bee farms, however, shall plan a budget for marketing stimulation with the active participation of PR, DM, etc.

A study carried out by the author (Lyubenov, 2021) discovers that the own B2C online channels in the conventional segment achieve net margin of BGN 48 per year per beehive, whereas in the biological segment – BGN 97.92 per year per beehive. The latter online channel generates at 150 beehives a net income of BGN 1,224 per month per annum, which is the profitability at the realization of biological honey on the offline B2C markets with 950 beehives. This is why the marketing stimulation of regional honey and other bee products shall focus on the highest profitability segments, i.e., on the own B2C online

channels in the conventional and the biological segment. They provide excellent conditions for the implementation of online advertising, PR, and DM of regional bee products through various internet media. They also offer a wide range of opportunities for personalized communication on the basis of value (we assume cost and value have identical meaning).

The value of agricultural products, including those from bees, depends on a number of sector and regional factors, but it has an impact on the communication tools, the advertising constants, and the budget for marketing stimulation. The aim of the research is to form a budget for marketing stimulation of bee products from the Ruse district on the basis of value. It shall be realized through completing the following tasks: 1) marketing stimulation on the basis of value communication; 2) budget for value marketing stimulation through PR; 3) budget for value marketing stimulation through DM as an element of the integrated marketing communications and 4) budget for value marketing stimulation through communities. The methods of research include the complex combination of induction, deduction, grouping, comparison, analysis, synthesis, observation, mathematical.

### **1. Marketing stimulation on the basis of value communication**

It is important that we distinguish between reference value (referential, of indifference), related to the characteristics of regional bee products which are similar to the characteristics of the competition, and difference value (psychological and monetary), which concerns the characteristics of regional bee products by which they differ from the products of the competition. Reference value is determined by the price of the best competitive analogue. Psychological value expresses the means by which the product creates positive emotions, satisfaction, security, safety for the consumer compared to the best alternative product available. Monetary value refers to the total sum of the saved expenses or the higher income which the consumer receives in comparison to the best competitive analogue.

We shall also bear in mind the difference between the objective and the perceived value of the product because the consumers are inclined to pay for the perceived by them value of the product, not for the objective one. Therefore, marketing stimulation shall be directed: 1) towards the differentiated value of the product and 2) towards increasing the perceived value by customers on the basis of the objective value of the product. It is necessary that we clearly understand the consumer perception of the value of the product. This necessitates knowing the real characteristics of the products and services (pollination,

apitivism, etc.), forming the value for the consumer and their weight in his/her total assessment of value.

It is not the internal understanding of bee and other farms for which parameters determine the consumer's choice, but it is the understanding and the perception of the consumers themselves which is important. Frequently, the "humanitarian" requirements of the consumers, not the technical characteristics – the quality (objective and perceived), the convenience of a purchase, etc., have more weight in the total assessment of value. The distributors also play a key role in the formation of the value of the product for the consumer. They can reveal and direct the customers towards the advantages of the differentiated value of the product compared to its competitive analogues. Furthermore, all participants in the channels of realization (processing enterprises, retailers, etc.) can form additional differentiated value to regional products on their way to the markets.

What is necessary is value communication which shall defend the value of regional bee products against unfair competition by improving the readiness of the customers to pay a higher price for them. It will direct the communication with the customers towards the value of bee products. Value communication is one of the weakest aspects of agricultural farms, incl. the bee ones. Its implementation requires deep understanding of the value of the product for the customer in combination with how and why customers purchase. Often, customers are not aware of the value of the product and are not informed about its characteristics; they do not know how to use them and do not understand how a certain characteristic of bee products or pollination service, etc., will satisfy their needs. Online channels allow ascertaining its perception and promotion to the target customers.

Value communication shall differentiate regional bee products compared to their competitive analogues. It will facilitate bee farms in defending the value of their products against their competition and will increase the possibility of a purchase. The tools for value communication vary depending on the customers and the character of the value of the products. On the B2B markets, value communication shall place the emphasis on the certified production under a specific standard, whereas on the B2C markets, it shall place the emphasis on the health, emotional, and environmental factors. The development of regional bee products with high added value has a defining role in their positive perception by various segments on the basis of their differentiated value, because of which, it is namely them that achieve higher price levels.

## **2. Budget for marketing stimulation via PR on the basis of value**

It is universally acknowledged that PR being an unpaid formation of positive public opinion have lower costs, more trust and flexibility, wider application, and higher efficiency than advertisement. However, the costs for PR are primarily of investment and strategic character. They involve various means and channels (Table 1), which require solid investments in equipment and facilities, partnership, and infrastructure. PR require permanent investments for marketing stimulation in printed media (newspapers, magazines, annuals, bulletins, brochures, correspondence), electronic media (television, radio, media networks, movies, audio-visuals), personal contacts (speeches, meetings, open telephone lines), visual materials (exhibitions, hoardings, posters) and events (general assemblies, press conferences, office hours, sponsorships).

The main slogan of PR “Work well and speak about yourself” shows that it is of uppermost importance for bee farms, respectively for their organizations (groups of producers, associations, cooperatives, boards, clusters, etc.), to work well and to boast their achievements and their real capacity, placing the emphasis on the value communication with the public. Bee farms as micro-enterprises need sector and regional integration for the realization of the PR slogan because it requires solid investment (Table 1) for the accumulation of trust in the sector and the bee farms. They shall establish an organization with partners as organs of the state and the local authority, non-governmental organizations, educational and developmental units, banks, insurers, processing enterprises, merchants (Lyubenov, 2021), which expand the range of PR.

The company name, the brand, the geographical indication (the designation of origin and the geographical sign), foods of traditionally specific character, sorts, breeds, technologies, standards, the label, the wrapping, the price, the manual, the relationships with partners and customers, the education and training on the market, personal sales and advertisement have different PR aspects regarding the value communication with the public. They provide, on the one hand, vast opportunities for outlining the differentiated value of the products – object of marketing stimulation, whereas, on the other hand, they increase the value perceived by the customers. PR have the capacity not only to present the differentiated value of regional bee products and increase their perceived value, but also to integrate them with other tools for marketing stimulation.

*Table 1*  
**Budget for value marketing stimulation via PR of bee farm organizations in the Ruse district (board, cluster, etc.), BGN/year.**

Channels and tools	Costs	Value
Publications on the web, offline printing, etc. (articles, reports, interviews, financial statements, etc.)	Presenting products, technologies, financial results, etc.	100
Press conferences, talks and others in the mass media – television, radio, printed media, the Internet	Relevant information about the sector, the farms, etc.	50
Festivals of the farms (jubilees, festivities, etc.)	Catering, printed media, etc.	2,500
Newspapers, brochures, bulletins, collections, etc.	Creation, printing, distribution	500
Participations in social, environmental, and other projects and causes	Presenting the role of bees for preserving the biodiversity	150
Sponsoring cultural, sports, local and other traditions	Prize for the most innovative beekeeper	1,500
Participations of the sector and the farms in conferences, fairs, expositions	Presenting traditional and new products, technologies	500
Films about the history, activity, and achievements of the farms	Creation, publication	500
Visits and open-door days to the farms	Facilities and equipment, infrastructure, manners, and culture of the farm	2,500
Business meetings, cocktails, thank-you letters, greeting cards, congratulation cards, etc.	Catering, creation, printing	2,500
	Total	10,800

The world practice shows that the attempts for accelerated development of new brands (makes, sorts, breeds, etc.) via a massive budget with an emphasis on advertisement are not successful. The establishment of a brand of regional bee products requires permanent PR on the basis of their value. PR programmes on the basis of value are primarily of strategic character, unlike advertisements, which are more short-lived and focused on shows and fashion events. At a significantly later stage, only when trust in regional products has been formed, it is appropriate to adopt advertising. Therefore, the programmes for the marketing stimulation of new brands of regional bee products shall begin with PR campaigns on the basis of value, which shall form and incorporate trust in

the minds of the consumers, after which, advertisement will play only a supporting role.

### 3. Value marketing stimulation via DM as an element of integrated marketing communications

According to the definitions of DM and bearing in mind its crucial role in integrated marketing communications (Bird, 2000; Marinov, 2011), it provides direct relationships between the enterprise and its customers via interactive media – post, telephone, the Internet, etc. DM is based on customer database, without which it cannot be implemented. Its implementation requires the establishment of database infrastructure and interactive media – Table 2. Customer database plays a vital role in both building relationships with customers and maintaining loyal consumers. It turns the customers of the enterprise into a measurable asset regarding value. The investment in customer database is significant because it has a long-term influence on the enterprise's profit. They reveal both the value sought by the customer and its value for the enterprise.

Table 2

*Budget for marketing stimulation via DM of a bee farm from the Ruse district (cooperative, cluster, etc.), BGN/year.*

Channels and tools	Costs	Value
Customer database	Establishment, maintenance and update of Internet-based lists and databases	1,000
e-mail campaigns	Preparing an offer and content, automatization of email processes. Visualization of the brand, advertising constants, etc.	2,500
Tele-campaigns	Establishment and maintenance of business contacts, tracing direct mail, servicing, SMS, MMS, etc.	1,000
Online campaigns	Support of a website of the enterprise with information and online channel for trade with regional bee products.	3,500
	Total	8,000



All business activities which rely on post and telephone can migrate to the Internet as well. The smartphone integrates them and numerous other additional functionalities, which is why today it is the most widely used device for DM; it gets to the heart of the customer. It integrates the media and personalizes the marketing tools. The media provides rich and interactive information which increases the value of the products, whereas at the same time, the marketing tools are personalized and enriched – the main products are supplemented by digital products, services and innovations, brands, etc.; the distribution and logistics become less expensive, faster and more accessible to customers; transactions become easier and faster; communications are attractive and interactive, fast and less expensive; prices can be kept low and at sustainable levels due to the possibility of fast price analyses.

Internet technologies have the capacity to distribute, store, collect, use, personalize and modify the information about the value of the products. Customer Internet databases can amass, group, reconfigure and assemble the information about the value of the customers. As an element of the integrated digital marketing communications, DM has the capacity to create additional value, to offer and communicate it to the customers on the basis of value both regarding the customers and in the context of the marketing tools. The customers receive faster and more detailed information about the value of the products, better opportunities for comparison and choice, as well as additional extras – digital services, observation, participation in and control of the business processes, including the exchange of values.

#### **4. Value marketing stimulation via communities**

The new value can be created on the basis of adding value to the incoming information resources, or via transforming the existing information resources into new substitutes with new value. One of the most significant consequences of the continuing information revolution is its impact on the process of creating and extracting economic value (Mougayar, 2000). On the one hand, Internet technologies secure and deepen the relationships of the organization with its customers via its interactivity, personality, speed, and low price, which all play a significant role for value communication and the formation of loyal customers with high long-term value. On the other hand, these technologies favour the relationships among the customers themselves, including those in which they dominate in the relationships with organizations.

The purchase of a specific product presupposes not only a direct relationship between the customer and the organization, but also the exchange of a huge amount of information and mutual influence among the people around

this consumer. The Internet enables the consumers to communicate directly among each other via many and various means. Consumers share their opinion about products, services, farms, non-governmental, municipal, governmental, and other organizations. Thus, consumer communities are established on the basis of common interests through which the control is transferred from the producers and retailers to the consumers. During discussions about the distinctive characteristics of the products and their value, the consumers create, exchange, and distribute information – Table 3. This information is perceived as more plausible and has higher weight than the information provided by the producers and retailers.

Internet consumers shall be perceived as members of communities sharing common product interests. The oral exchange of information and its confirmation by personal contacts is of key significance and its influence on marketing stimulation shall not be underestimated. This is why, many organizations stimulate consumers to communicate via chats, forums, etc., to create content, they come up with new applications of the products, they offer standards, etc. By establishing communities of brands, of fans, etc., as well as by participating in communities established by others, the organization can receive essential information about the sought for and desired value by the consumers. Most consumer communities do not depend on the influence and the participation of the organization, due to which the consumers do not accept them as a reliable source of information about value.

*Table 3*

***Budget for value marketing stimulation via communities of a bee farm from the Ruse district (cluster, etc.), BGN/year.***

Channels and tools	Costs	Value
Blog	marketing research, presenting messages, creating topics and content, forming trust	300
Forum	establishing own community and fans forum, participation of the consumers in the creation of new products	500
Social networks	audio, video, and other advertisements in Facebook, Google, Twitter, You Tube, etc. Visualization of production and other processes	2,500
	Total	3,300

The regional organization of bee farms shall form virtual community because consumers will communicate not only among each other, but also with

it. The creation of word-of-mouth advertisement is of crucial importance for the formation of good image of the regional organization among the public. In the course of time, the community will collect information about the needs of the consumers, turning into a community of value. This will direct the organization towards improving the products, the distribution, the PR, the DM, the advertisement, the prices, etc. The regional organization shall actively participate in the community, to identify with its goals, to encourage the consumers to provide information about the demanded products, to assist them in solving their problems via value communication, which will improve the service and their satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

As a result of the conducted research on marketing stimulation of regional bee products on the basis of value communication, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Bee farms shall function as entrepreneurs and integrate among each other in order to form a solid organization with opportunities for equal partnerships with trade and industrial enterprises, which will allow them to develop products with high added value, respectively, to form solid budget for the most efficient communication tools at sector and regional level – public relations (PR) and direct marketing (DM).

- Because consumer online channels in the conventional and the biological segment achieve much higher profitability compared to their offline segments, the marketing stimulation of regional bee products shall focus on online channels, because they provide much better conditions for the implementation of PR, DM, etc., via various interactive media with personalized communication on the basis of value.

- The value of the agricultural products, including the bee ones, depends on a number of sector and regional factors and has an important influence on communication tools, advertisement constants and the budget for marketing stimulation. What is necessary is regional bee products of high value, i.e., value as the starting base for the realization of value communication.

- The budget for marketing stimulation on the basis of value shall be treated as an investment for value communication regarding the presentation of the demanded, promised, and desired value for the consumers. When PR on the basis of value are not carried out well, not only a larger budget for the remaining

tools of the communication mix (advertisement, personal sales, encouragement of sales, etc.) will be required, but also their efficiency will be lower.

- The establishment of a brand of regional bee products requires permanent PR on the basis of their value, which will form and incorporate trust in the minds of the consumers, after which advertisement will have primarily supporting role. PR programmes on the basis of value are of strategic character, unlike advertisements, which are short-lived and focus on sensations and fashion events.

- DM has the capacity to create added value, to offer it and to communicate it to the customers on the basis of value in unison with the marketing tools. Consumers receive faster and more detailed information about the value of the products, better opportunities for comparison and choice, as well as additional extras – digital services, observation, participation in and control of the business processes, including the exchange of values.

- The organization of bee farms shall form a virtual community, which in the course of time will collect information about the needs of the consumers, turning into a community with value. It will direct the organization not only towards value communication via PR and DM, but also towards improvement of the products, the distribution, the prices, and as a whole, towards improvement of the service and the customers' satisfaction.

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**Lyubomir Dimitrov Lyubenov**, Assoc. professor, PhD at the Department of Economics and International Relations at “Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse. **Research interests:** business economy, economy of agriculture, finance, marketing and agromarketing, strategies, incl. agricultural and marketing policies.

**ORCID ID:** 0000-0002-5500-0265

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