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## BALANCED APPROACH FOR OPTIMIZING MARKETING NETWORKS IN TOURISM

This paper focuses on the current manifestation of marketing inter-firm networks and attempts to further develop the knowledge for optimizing their activities. The marketing network concept is based on the theory of networks in the economy, business networks and the marketing paradigm, in particular. Wilkinson [1] highlights a few areas of contemporary research on these issues, namely: interactions among the dimensions of network relationships, relations between partners, network analysis, simulation, and modelling of network complexity. At present, on the one hand, scholars' research and discussions in these areas have not yet been exhausted, especially in the field of marketing networks. On the other hand, there are modern processes of distribution of network formations in different economic sectors, including in tourism. They are perceived as a means of overcoming economic crises at company, national and global levels, as well as of tourism companies coping with the risks and problems related to dynamic competition, surrounding macro- and micro-business environment, and processes of customization and globalization. The tourism sector has the potential to develop marketing networks representing modern structural formations, as well as the strategy to achieve competitive advantages for tourism business organizations.

Viewing marketing tourism network as a flexible system and an integrated economic organism, whose activities can be optimized, the paper aims to offer a new balanced approach to improving network activities based on the established Balanced Scorecard performance management approach. It is logical to bind the specificity of marketing networks as an economic phenomenon, their specificities in tourism and their optimization through a new Marketing Balanced Scorecard in Tourism (MBScT) approach, based on a system of balanced Key Performance Marketing Indicators in Tourism Networks (KPMItn).

### 1. Specifics of marketing inter-firm networks in the tourism sector

The introduction of the network concept into economic theory and practice, and marketing in particular, occurs at different times and in different aspects. **The theory of marketing networks in the economy** is based on the knowledge of business networks and marketing paradigm. Several stages of development in the 'business networks' aspect can be highlighted [2]: linking the statics and dynamics of these networks to their

economic, social and legal dimensions; studying the behavioural characteristics of the participants in them; applying analytical models of their structure (mathematical modelling and empirical measurements and analysis); holistic perception of networks; studying the power and conflicts in the partners' behavioural relationships. In the 'marketing paradigm of business organizations in networks' aspect, normative marketing management theories of companies participating in a network are initially developed and research is still ongoing [3]. A number of authors, such as Bartels [4], Reid and Plank [5], present a systematized knowledge of network structure, nature of the relations between partners, degree of coordination, management and control, changes, network optimization and efficiency, and views of individual firms on network relationships. Iacobucci [6] defines the main modern trends of studying marketing networks as marketing relations in B2B networks and network management, as well as creation of strategic advantages.

**Marketing networks as business associations of companies** are formed in three aspects: as a structure (group of companies), as a strategy of an individual participant or of the whole group, and as tactical moves (behaviour). These networks have specific characteristics, namely: a structure of partner organizations of a different scale, level, economic sector, united by a common marketing strategic goal, a dominant (focal organization) and two-way (dyadic and/or multiple) relations among partners of the type 'gives to – takes from', which are channels for the passage of marketing flows (information, investment, knowledge, personnel); adding value; flexibility; complexity; lifecycle with phases of preparation, construction, functioning, disintegration; dynamics; non-linearity of the 'efforts-benefits' relationship; strategic border management; way of occurrence (informal or formal); key principles of work (mutual trust, creating shared value through fair distribution, risk diversification); integration of participants; a dual competitive role (both combating and encouraging competition); synergistic effects; arrangements; management and control processes. Based on these formulations, a definition of marketing network can be proposed: *a market structure built by non-hierarchically integrated organizations of varying scale and activity, located on one or several levels along the value chain, of which one can dominate, maintaining dual relationships with each other and performing a common marketing*

*strategic goal (related to creating, distributing and communicating value to the client)*<sup>1</sup>.

The characteristics presented are also valid for the **marketing tourism networks** that arise among tourism business organizations in order to carry out various marketing processes related to the creation, supply and realization of tourism products and services. They are developed in a vertical aspect (franchising, for direct sales, of the tour operator-restaurant-carrier type, vertical cluster, etc.) and horizontal aspect (with homogeneous and heterogeneous specialization of partners, horizontal clusters, strategic alliances, innovative, distributor, communication, etc.). This process is mostly influenced by factors, such as the global trends in supply and demand for tourism products, the macro- and microeconomic business framework, the marketing specificities of national tourism services markets.

Key parameters for evaluating these networks are the features of the participating firms, the duration of the relationships between them, the degree of centralization, the intensity (density) of the relationships, the efficiency of the network and the factors that influence the achievement of the results.

The optimization of marketing tourism networks is necessary in their functioning in cases of creating, when problem situations arise, identifying weaknesses in the general marketing activity, total or partial non-fulfillment of the adopted common marketing strategy. To this end, it is necessary to adopt an approach that is relevant to this type of networks and ensures that the set strategic goals are achieved.

## **2. Relevance of the Balanced Scorecard approach for optimizing marketing network activities**

In economy, the goal of optimization is to achieve the best possible positive effect (short-term or long-term) among many alternatives, within the framework of the established organizational structure and the surrounding business environment, in such a way that this effect is not constant but can be maximized and adapted to changes. Several aspects have been developed for its realization in marketing networks:

– *maintaining an achieved competitive advantage or building a new one* – when these networks are one of the possible strategies of business organizations for building competitive advantages;

– *achieving a complete synchronization between the network structure and activity and the adopted network strategy, choosing a new network strategy or renovating the existing one* – in perceiving these networks as a whole organism that manages itself through stra-

tegic approaches in order to achieve the strategic goal common for all partners;

*impacting individual marketing activities within the framework of the adopted marketing strategy of the network* – in this case, approaches are sought for optimizing marketing activities and/or campaigns.

These ideas can be realized by applying the **Balanced Scorecard (BSc) concept** due to its proven ability to build a new competitive advantage, synchronize the structure, operation and strategy, as well as to measure and evaluate current marketing activities according to the extent of implementation of the adopted strategy. It is flexible, adaptable and fully applicable to the marketing network theory, perceiving marketing network as a single economic organism functioning in the light of the common marketing strategy of the partner organizations.

In order to implement the BSc approach, established in the United States by Kaplan and Norton [7] in 1992, an integrated balanced system of goals and indicators is created, which makes it possible to measure the efficiency of processes and to control the organization's strategic development. Besides, the qualitatively described goals are transformed into desired future results and effects that are boiled down to the operational level of management and performance.

Its development is influenced by quality management theories, performance management theory, traditional management control systems, stakeholder theory (co-owners, customers and employees), as well as by the competing organization theory as a set of internal processes, etc.

Niven [8] defines BSc's primary goal as an ambition to achieve two main outcomes: effective measurement of the activity and implementation of the strategy. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are used as measures, they serve as a tool of identifying the current state of the activity, proper targeting of investments, monitoring the efficiency of processes, management, disclosure of performance and priorities in the organization, motivation of staff, calculation of remuneration.

The BSc presents in a structured way a small number of factors that are critical to the implementation of the strategy with the aim to model the value chain of the organization<sup>2</sup>. In this way, the management process is integrated through a continuous analysis of the correspondence between the factual and target values by key indicators integrated into a system. They are grouped into four perspectives – financial, customer, internal process, learning and growth, and are presented in a special map through goals, indicators, tasks and measures,

<sup>1</sup> In the present study, the 'marketing network' concept is distinguished from the narrowly perceived understanding of marketing networks that serve for marketing purposes in the Internet space and developed by Social media marketing.

<sup>2</sup> According to the initial idea of the approach, the results are reflected in four groups of indicators – customer, internal business processes, staff and interests of partners [7].

which are used to track the transformation of resources into goals [9, p. 197]<sup>1</sup>.

According to the logic of the value chain, the 'learning and growth' perspective is the input of the BSc, the transformation and the actual operation are presented in the 'internal process' perspective, the 'customer' perspective is the output, and the economic outcome is presented in the 'financial' perspective [10].

The **Marketing Balanced Scorecard (MBSc)** retains its strategic focus and involves measuring the effectiveness of the organization's marketing activity through a system of key performance marketing indicators (KPMI) that balance financial with non-financial, integrated with private, external with internal, short-term with long-term indicators, and those in the separate perspectives. It provides information on the impacts that have to be undertaken and the way they are to be carried out in order to perform the marketing activity in compliance with the set goals and standards and the marketing strategy. The emphasis is on the non-financial KPMI for efficiency, on the non-quantifiable aspects of the activity and the key success factors of marketing.

MBSc focuses on indicators that are used to quantify efficiency and effectiveness and to bind these indi-

cators to marketing strategy and long-term improvement of marketing activity. At a strategic level, it assesses the extent to which marketing contributes to achieving the desired levels of innovation, quality, flexibility and expenditure in the organization. At the operational level, it identifies the achieved level of marketing performance.

The MBSc system is built iteratively, by major product groups or categories, and the processes in the activity are viewed comprehensively. The goals and indicators are developed on the basis of a market analysis first for the 'customer' and 'financial' perspectives, then for 'internal and external marketing processes' and finally for 'learning and growth' perspectives. The procedure goes through the following stages: 1) developing a strategy map; 2) identifying relevant KPMIs for each of the goals of the four perspectives and developing a performance map; 3) selecting strategic initiatives. One of the goals of the approach is to discover potential for the development of marketing activity as part of the overall activity of the organization.

The formulations of this modern approach have a number of advantages and opportunities for improvement as defined in Table 1.

Table 1

#### Characteristics of MBSc<sup>2</sup>

<b>ADVANTAGES OF MBSC</b>
<i>interactivity</i> – due to the constant traceability of the results by individual indicators, the causal relationships between them and their binding to the strategic goals, it is constantly the focus of attention of marketing and corporate managers [11]
<i>predictability</i> – the results by indicators are tracked on a dashboard, similar to a cockpit, where several KPMIs are placed, requiring regular monitoring at different frequencies, and several warning 'signalling' marketing efficacy indicators that inform about possible problems in performing the goals. Attention is directed to them when diagnosing deviations from target values. Timely warnings are given on problems and opportunities for corrective measures
<i>timeliness, relevance, clarity and accuracy of information</i> – it is obtained regarding the current marketing activity at all times, at all levels of management and performance, and the extent of achieving the marketing goals is assessed
<i>flexibility</i> – the causal relationships between marketing indicators are established specifically for each organization [12]
<i>dynamics of the KPMI system</i> – the causal relationships between the indicators are not constant but of a probable and dynamic nature according to the daily needs of the management [7, p. 218]
<i>communication, information and training nature of the approach</i> – the strategy is clearly formulated and transformed into goals and tasks, the strategic initiatives are coordinated and the strategic feedback is expanded [9, p. 10-19]
<i>accuracy of the obtained information</i> regarding past and current processes, analysis and assessment of the trends in the development of marketing activities, detection of potential problems, setting and meeting goals and performing corrective effects to optimize marketing management
<i>universal applicability</i> for all sectors of the economy
<i>all-round application in the organization</i> – enables and requires managing the implementation of the marketing strategy at all executive levels by linking goals, initiatives and indicators
<i>transforming the strategy into individual actions</i> by aggregating the KPMI

<sup>1</sup> Business organizations themselves decide which perspectives they will use, and can add new ones according to their importance for achieving the strategic goals.

<sup>2</sup> Developed by the author.

<i>integrating financial and non-financial indicators in the KPMI system</i>
<i>management of non-material values, such as customer loyalty, innovation, employee competencies, etc.</i>
<i>preserving the structure of the organization – the marketing activity is regulated without any change in the organizational structure of the company</i>
<i>real-time measurement of key factors</i>
<i>creating a system for marketing activity operational management</i>
<i>changes are encouraged</i>
<i>integrated, iterative and interactive approach to marketing management and its measuring, which makes management more reliable [13, p. 130]</i>
<i>reduces the heterogeneity and variety of the information processed by systematizing it.</i>
<i>establishes priorities in performance and measurement trends</i>
<i>comprehensiveness – integration with other approaches, such as the comparative approach of measuring performance towards goals</i>
<i>prevention – opportunity to identify wrong or poorly defined goals</i>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING THE MBSC</b>
<i>methodological simplification in defining indicators (especially for effects that are difficult to measure, such as those related to intellectual capital)</i>
<i>providing data on all external environment parameters to overcome inaccuracies in the ‘customer’ perspective [14]</i>
<i>taking into account the expanded value chain, which is an essential principle for building up modern network organizations instead of affecting only key suppliers [15]</i>
<i>demonstrating the role of society in defining the business environment in which the organization operates [15]</i>
<i>measuring the results should be viewed as a two-way process, without giving priority to the ‘top-down’ relationship, which requires a cascading principle in the development of performance maps [15]</i>

The presented features of the approach confirm its relevance to the problem of optimizing the activity of marketing networks. Moreover, the network partners can modify it according to the specifics of the general marketing activity. In this way, it can contribute to realizing a number of advantages such as growth in net marketing profits, increasing customer satisfaction, improving product (service) competitiveness and quality, introducing product innovation, improving the quality of managerial decision-making in marketing, improving partners' image, ensuring the economic sustainability of the business and the rational use of all kinds of resources at national level. Moreover, its versatility makes it applicable to all types of marketing networks, including in the tourism sector.

### 3. Framework of the MBSc approach for optimizing the marketing tourism network management

Some of the opportunities for developing the specifics of the MBSc approach in conceptual and practical terms are manifested in optimizing marketing networks that arise in a particular economic environment, especially in the service sector. In this way, the tourism sector as one of the fastest-growing areas of the global economy where marketing networks emerge is a suitable sphere for its approbation. In this regard, the MBSc approach can be tailored according to the specificities of marketing tourism networks and a modification called **Marketing Balanced Scorecard in Tourism (MBScT)** can be proposed based on the principle of balanced ma-

agement of the key performance indicators of the common marketing strategy of this network.

The basic **elements** of the approach are: \*marketing strategy of the network; \*marketing activity of the network; \*resources – competences of marketing specialists, data about internal and external marketing processes of the network, information and technical tools, financial resources; \*causal relationships between marketing indicators at all levels of marketing activity; \*KPMI system with target values defined in accordance with the strategic goals of the network; \*process of measuring (diagnosing) the short-term effects (outcomes) of marketing activity; \*process of assessing the marketing effects for the network; \*process of optimizing the marketing activities of the marketing tourism network; \*information provision.

When evaluating and optimizing the effects of marketing activities of this type of networks, the approach takes into account factors such as the conceptual aspects of network theory, characteristics of marketing tourism networks, features of marketing in the tourism sector, global and national trends in the tourism services market. The theoretical foundations adhere to the principles of holism, integrity, comprehensiveness and balance.

MBScT is based on the symbiosis of marketing short- and long-term effects measured through selected KPMIs for marketing tourism network (KPMIt<sub>n</sub>) bound into a system. Optimization as a process is subject to the logic ‘input – activity – output’, the input being the re-

sources: the competencies of the marketing network specialists, internal and external marketing processes carried out in it, information and technical tools and financial resources of the network. The input information enters into four panels containing KPMItn, then it is analyzed and the short- and long-term effects are evaluated. The evaluation is performed towards the KPMItn's target values and the adopted marketing strategy of the network. KPMItn give a detailed picture of the current state and development of the marketing tourism network, and they have to be disaggregated to the lower executive levels. This will lead to greater expedience and rationality in the processing of results and in making managerial decisions.

The four panels of the approach are presented in the model in Fig. 1 and are described as follows:

– **'Financial effects related to the marketing activity of the network' panel.** In this panel, the following key indicators are most commonly used: *number of sales of targeted products and services, expenditures on general advertising campaigns, return on marketing investments*. KPMItn can be disaggregated by segments, and some of them (*sales revenue, revenues generated from launching new tourism products*) – by separate tourism products.

– **'Effects, related to the customers of the network' panel.** The following can be used as key indicators: *'mystery shopper' regular surveys, number of customers attracted for a certain period of time, regular internal checks of customer service, customer feedback analysis*. The focus of the activities of marketing tourism networks on the relations with customers requires that the tools of another management approach – Six Sigma, be applied by creating three additional subpanels: 1) 'KPMItn related to finding and attracting new customers'; 2) 'KPMItn related to retaining loyal customers'; and 3) 'KPMItn related to developing loyal customers'. Here, the evaluation is conducted in two stages, the *first* of which includes the following elements [16]: defects (errors) in the marketing activities of the network in the development of customer relationships; opportunities for measuring customer relationships; units to be measured and marketing indicators; detailed customer process mapping; plan for gathering data on customer relationships; dashboard for data presentation; graphs for measuring customer-related processes; assessing customer relationships; opportunities for improving the customer-related marketing activity of the network. The *second stage* involves measuring and reporting customer opinions and attitudes to them before booking/buying a tourism service.

– **'Effects, related to internal and external marketing processes in the network' panel.** For the tourism sector, this panel covers two groups of marketing processes: the internal ones are related to the pricing of tourism products, assortment solutions, product innovations, and the external ones are related to communica-

tion solutions, sales promotion, distribution solutions, etc.

– **'Effects, related to the development of marketing activity and marketing personnel in the network' panel.** This panel covers KPMItn in two trends: marketing activity as a whole and marketing personnel, where four sets of indicators are used – motivation, quantitative characteristics, qualitative characteristics and improving the qualification of the marketing personnel.

The possible KPMItn by individual panels are presented in Table 2.

The outlined KPMItn function in a system based on causal relationships between them, which is an essential element of the structure of the balanced approach.

**The approach operates according to the following logic:** the information submitted from the document flow and the information flows in carrying out the marketing activities in the network goes to the four panels containing KPMItn. There, the short-term effects achieved (diagnosing the results) and the long-term effects obtained, as well as the expected (predictive evaluation of the effects) are processed, analyzed and evaluated. The evaluation is carried out in accordance with the marketing goals expressed in the KPMItn target values and the adopted marketing strategy of the network. The input of the evaluation process involves the competences of the marketing specialists, information and technical tools and financial resources. The output involves the optimization process based on the assessments made of the achieved marketing effects and proposed corrective impacts.

The conclusion of the presented research. The formulations of the Balanced Scorecard approach are relevant and completely applicable in optimizing marketing tourism networks. The new framework of this balanced approach focuses on measuring and evaluating the current state of these networks, depending on the implementation of the common marketing strategy adopted by the partners.

Further research perspectives of the issues raised relates to the approbation of the optimization approach in a real marketing tourism network, as well as its use in marketing networks in other economic sectors.

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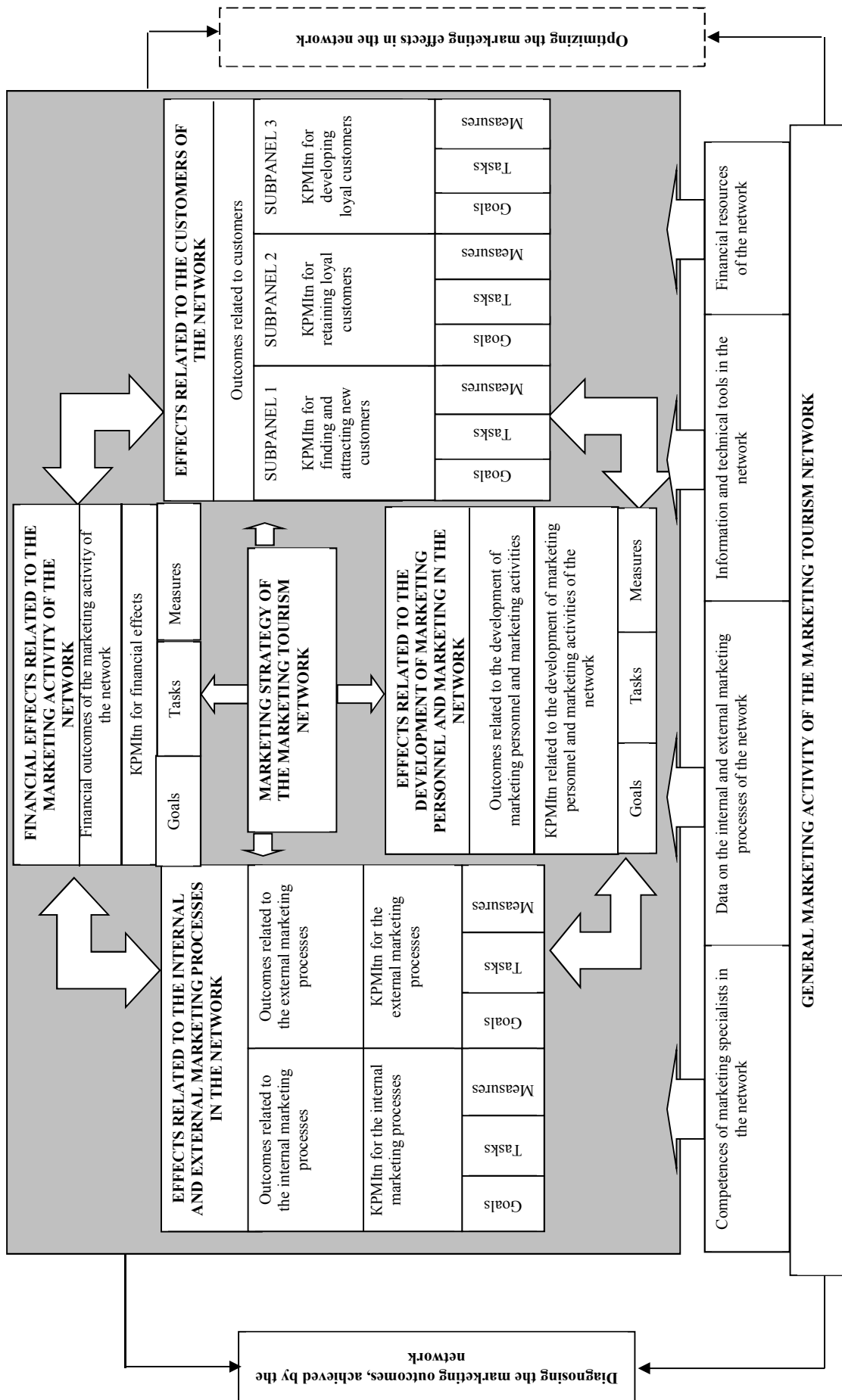


Fig. 1. Model of the MBScT approach for optimizing a marketing tourism network (Developed by the author)

<b>Recommended KPMItn<sup>1</sup></b>			
<b>Panel: Financial effects related to the marketing activities of the network</b>	<b>Panel: Effects related to the customers of the network</b>	<b>Panel: Effects related to internal and external marketing processes in the network</b>	<b>Panel: Effects related to the development of marketing activities and marketing personnel in the network</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Returns on marketing investments</li> <li>• Net marketing profit</li> <li>• Marketing expenditures</li> <li>• Revenues from sales of tourism services</li> </ul>	<b>Subpanel</b> <b>Finding and attracting new customers</b>	<b>Subpanel</b> <b>Internal marketing processes</b>	<b>Subpanel</b> <b>Effects related to the development of the marketing personnel in the network</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new customers</li> <li>• Coefficient of updating the customer base</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficiency of sales units</li> <li>• Number of launched innovations of tourism products</li> <li>• Efficiency of customer service units</li> <li>• Efficiency of communications units</li> <li>• Share of revenue generated from launched innovations in the total sales revenue over the last 3 years in %</li> </ul>
	<b>Subpanel</b> <b>KPMItn related to the development of loyal customers</b>	<b>Subpanel</b> <b>External marketing processes</b>	<b>Subpanel</b> <b>Effects related to the development of the marketing activities of the network</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of purchases by loyal customers</li> <li>• Frequency of using network products by loyal customers</li> <li>• Number of products of the network by types, used by loyal customers</li> <li>• Amount of one-off consumption of network products by loyal customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of tourism products</li> <li>• Realized sales by types of distribution channels in %</li> <li>• Market share in %</li> <li>• Network competitiveness</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference between the set and accomplished marketing strategic goals for a certain period of time</li> <li>• Market placement of the network products for a certain period of time</li> <li>• Number of initiatives for innovating the tourism products</li> </ul>
<b>Subpanel</b> <b>Retaining loyal customers</b> <b>Customer satisfaction (rating)</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer loyalty by the number of repeated purchases</li> <li>• Customer loyalty index (rating)</li> <li>• Customer retention rate %</li> </ul>		

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#### **Григорова В. П. Збалансований підхід до оптимізації маркетингових мереж у туризмі**

Теорія маркетингових мереж, розроблених у сфері туризму, пов'язана з підходом збалансованої системи показників, що пропонують новий метод їх оптимізації. З цією метою здійснено спробу коротко пояснити положення теорії маркетингових мереж, їх специфіку в секторі туризму. Для цього пропонується ввести поняття маркетингу збалансованої системи показників у сфері туризму як інструменту оперативного управління та оптимізації цих мереж.

*Ключові слова:* маркетинг мережі компанії, маркетинг туристичних мереж, оптимізація, збалансована система показників, маркетинг збалансована система показників в сфері туризму, ключові показники маркетингу показники для туризму мережі.

#### **Григорова В. П. Сбалансированный подход к оптимизации маркетинговых сетей в туризме**

Теория маркетинговых сетей, разработанных в сфере туризма, увязана с подходом сбалансированной системы показателей, предлагающим новый метод их оптимизации. С этой целью предпринята

попытка кратко объяснить положения теории маркетинговых сетей, их специфику в секторе туризма. Для этого предлагается ввести понятие маркетинга сбалансированной системы показателей в сфере туризма как инструмента оперативного управления и оптимизации этих сетей.

*Ключевые слова:* маркетинг сети компании, маркетинг туристических сетей, оптимизация, сбалансированная система показателей, маркетинг сбалансированная система показателей в сфере туризма, ключевые показатели маркетинга показатели для туризма сети.

#### **Grigorova V. Balanced approach for optimizing marketing networks in tourism**

The article links the theory of marketing networks developed in tourism with the established Balanced Scorecard approach, offering a new balanced approach for their optimization. To this end, the formulations of the marketing network theory and their specificity in the tourism sector are briefly clarified and the Marketing Balanced Scorecard in Tourism concept is introduced as an optimization tool of the operational management of these networks.

*Keywords:* marketing corporate networks, marketing tourism networks, optimization, balanced scorecard, marketing balanced scorecard in tourism, key performance marketing indicators for the tourism network.

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