Use of Online Marketplaces for Marketing and Management Specialists: A Sustainable Business Model Perspective

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Abstract: The present paper tackles two major phenomena of today's world – online migration and the need for sustainable behavior, both in a business-to-business approach. First of all, online presence is becoming indispensable for all businesses, considering that consumers have developed a first-online check-up for every need and potential purchase, even more, if we consider the outcome of the last two-years pandemic, where we consider the outcome of the last two-years pandemic direct contact is avoided. Thus, the need for online marketplaces, where supply and demand can be balanced, is becoming a paramount priority for all marketing and management specialists. Secondly, sustainability is the future; thus, every specialist must think of ways to implement such a judgment in their business model. One of these ways is transforming most processes to be tailor-made in the online environment. We have developed a concept for an online marketplace where specialists from marketing and management can offer their services as suppliers and find the needed services as clients. To develop a high-quality platform, we have first identified the specific needs of marketing and management specialists when dealing with research and consultancy. The present paper presents the results of two researches: qualitative research conducted among such specialists to identify what the new platform should offer and usability test market research to see if the online marketplace fits the specialists' expectations. These are mandatory steps in every new product development; thus, we hope to be a proper example for future businesses.

Keywords: *Marketplace, marketing, sustainable, qualitative research, usability research*

INTRODUCTION

The present paper tackles two major phenomena of today's world – online migration and the need for sustainable behavior, both of them in a business to business approach, meaning that companies have to have an online presence for a sustainable way of incorporating their businesses into the more and more pretentious markets (Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014).

First of all, online presence is now becoming indispensable for all businesses, considering that consumers have developed a first-online check-up for every need and potential purchase (Fernandez, Jenkins, & Vieira, 2020), even more, if we take into consideration the outcome of the last two-years pandemic, where direct contact is avoided

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(Kim & Moon, 2021; Sharma & Jhamb, 2020). Thus, the need for online marketplaces, where supply and demand can be balanced, is becoming a paramount priority for all marketing and management specialists.

Secondly, sustainability is the future; thus, every specialist must think of ways to implement such a judgment in their business model. One of these ways is transforming most processes to be tailor-made in the online environment. Process migration online means less resource consumption and less pollution, which is the core of sustainable business development (Lányi, Hornyák, & Kruzslicz, 2021).

We have developed a concept for an online marketplace where specialists from marketing and management can offer their services as suppliers and find the needed services as clients. This platform is called ASECOMP Marketplace and is part of a bigger research project (POC) financed through a grant from the European Funds.

The idea of such a marketplace relies on the need of researchers (being individuals or companies) to make their services available worldwide and the need of clients who now use the Internet to find the best solution for their needs in terms of products or services (Suh & Chow, 2021).

There is always the dilemma of third-party marketplace versus own marketplace, but in our situation, we thought of suppliers and buyers with small and medium potential, meaning specialists that don't have enough resources to sustain their platform. Moreover, consumers nowadays don't like using apps/platforms from single retailers, and they are much more likely to download an app that offers product ranges broader than one store can offer (Gaudenzi, Mola, & Rossignoli, 2021; Kestenbaum, 2017).

Our marketplace will allow anyone (individual or company) to be a marketing and management services supplier or a buyer for such services. But, to build a proper platform where users find it easy to be and act, we had to resort to research first to identify the specific needs of marketing and management specialists when dealing with research and consultancy. The present paper presents the results of two researches: qualitative research conducted among such specialists to identify what the new platform should offer and usability test market research to see if the online marketplace fits the specialists' expectations. These are mandatory steps in every new product development. Thus we hope this can be seen as a proper example for future businesses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the term 'online marketplace' or 'e-marketplace' is so familiar nowadays, we will first present some definitions to ensure a sound conceptual understanding of the term.

According to Kestenbaum (2017), an online marketplace is a website or app that facilitates shopping from many different sources. The author adds a very important aspect of third-party marketplaces: the marketplace operator does not own any inventory; their business is to present other people's inventory to a user and facilitate a transaction.

According to Merton (2021), two key features define an online marketplace: 1) many sellers and buyers are trading through the same website. 2) Buyers can purchase products without leaving the site (or app).

Practically, we can state that today, online marketplaces are two-sided online markets that facilitate a customer and seller to come together (Gaudenzi et al., 2021).

The impressive growth of online marketplaces can be attributed to the mass accessibility of technology, consumers' need for choices and increasing market competitiveness. Not to mention that selling on online marketplaces positively impacts the organization's revenue growth (Garcia, 2021).

A 2017 Forrester Research report reveals that 95% of all consumers have already used a marketplace, and more than 50% of buyers have revealed that it has changed the way they shop (Mcfadyen Digital , 2018).

According to Ecommerce News (2015), global marketplaces would have own 39% of the online retail market by 2020. However, this estimate exceeded the larger growth due to the COVID-19 pandemic influence. Globally, 47% of ecommerce sales were made through online marketplaces in 2020, amounting to nearly two trillion dollars, and this is forecast to grow dramatically over the next 5 years (Merton, 2021).

The effect is expanding business opportunities for sellers/providers (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020) and broadening the array of choices and value for consumers (Suh & Chow, 2021).

There are a lot of online marketplaces today, ranging from products to services, from individual customers to businesses and from dedicated offers to all-in-one platforms. We often speak about online marketplaces for products (amazon, eBay, etc.), as they were the first to appear and international development. However, since 2009 the sharing economy (like Uber, Airbnb, etc.) has represented the next chapter in advancing digital marketplaces (Solis, 2018; (Li, Tian, & Zheng, 2021).

In terms of specialization, there are three types of marketplaces (Kestenbaum, 2017): Vertical – sell only one type of products or services; Horizontal – sell different types of products, but they are related to the consumer's need (for example, gifts marketplaces); Global – they sell everything.

In our case, there is also another classification of interest – a type of user: individuals or businesses.

The present article will focus on online marketplaces that sell services for business purposes.

Before going into details about the specific ASECOMP marketplace, let's see why a company will want to be part of such platforms and the success factors of online marketplaces.

According to Farkash (2021), we are nowadays talking about millions of young professionals in a continuously changing industry (digital marketing) with real talent that can make money from offering their services in the digital space; thus, a managed marketplace, specifically geared for digital marketing talents, can be a real catalyst for growth.

Upadhyaya also mentions this idea; Upadhyaya, Mohan, and Karantha (2017) show that B2B e-marketplace offers ample opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to access global markets and enhance their competitiveness. Nasajpour et al. (2020) is even bringing the Internet of things into the discussion, gaining convincing research ground based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

B2B e-commerce adoption enables SMEs to gain and sustain competitive advantage in a dynamic competitive environment through 4 pillars: cost reduction, differentiation, quality improvement, and growth (Hamad, Elbeltagi, Jones, & El-Gohary, 2015).

Discussing the impact of e-marketplace on the B2b relationships, Loro and Mangiaracina (2021) show that compared with the offline scenario, the B2b e-marketplace is expected to bring value to the overall supply chain, which tends to increase as the share of e-sales penetration is increased, ranging from a cost reduction of 0.1% (€ 229.2k) in the base-case of 10% e-sales adoption, up to 0.9% (€ 2.2 M) in case of full e-marketplace adoption.

If we conduct a detailed analysis of the market, we can identify a series of already dedicated platforms to our topic, such as mayple.com, marketresearch.com, collaborata.com, savio.pro, askwonder.com, zursh.com, cor.us, scienceexchange.com, consult2050.com, comatch.com, a-connect.com. And we can think of so many others that started but failed.

For marketplaces to succeed, they must do three things well:
- Reduce friction in both selling and buying to create sufficient liquidity on both sides of the marketplace
- Engender a greater level of trust and transparency to encourage participation, and
- Create both proactive and reactive mechanisms for addressing inevitable issues between marketplace participants.

Moreover, we have to take into consideration the factors affecting the performance of third-party B2B e-marketplaces from a seller's perspective (Thitimajshima, Esichaikul, & Krairit, 2018):
- The reputation of e-marketplace and trust in market makers, as well as transaction cost reduction and website usability, had significant effects on customer loyalty
- Website reliability had a positive impact on trading volume
- The relative advantage and number of buyers significantly affected customer loyalty and trading volume.

This part is important as customers won't visit the marketplace without quality seller options, and quality sellers won't list their products and services on your marketplace. This usually results in a supply and demand gap in the marketplace.

We saw the need for a thorough analysis to help us identify the best version of our ASECOMP marketplace, thus deciding to conduct two types of research among specialists that can later become the platform's users.

Our decision will perhaps shorten the literature gap related to research on business-to-business online marketplace usage. In this area, we can mention only the paper of Chang, Lin, Yen, and Hung (2020), who has analyzed the purchasing behavior of procurement personnel in B2B e-marketplaces. Another gap that can be reduced by the results presented in the present paper refers to research on online marketplaces design and testing, especially when discussing the service sector. This gap appears due to the literature's focus on online marketplaces for commodities, where there is a physical element to consider; thus, the supply chain's advantages are aimed at the supply chain.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the first rule of marketing – build a product that the consumer wants, the first direct research developed as a qualitative one among specialists representing the potential users for our marketplace, focusing first on the academic

world. The reason for focusing on this segment relies on the future marketplace specifics – a marketplace builds within a research grant of our university – Bucharest University of Economic Studies, from Romania.

Given this situation, the scope of this first study was to identify and analyze the needs of marketplace solutions (demand/supply of marketing and management services) among members of academia.

The main objectives of our qualitative research were:

1. Research and consultancy background – projects, experience, academic versus business research
2. Marketplace solutions/platforms for marketing and management services

  a) Known solutions/platforms
  b) Opinion of their utility, content, ease of navigation and usage, access to information, etc.)
  c) Do/would they use them
  3. Need an analysis of such a marketplace by types of services:
  a. Research
  b. Consultancy
  c. Training
  d. Implementation and support
  4. The ideal solution of such a marketplace
  a. What it looks like from the perspective of the service provider
  b. What it looks like from the perspective of the service buyer.

As already mentioned, the research method used here was a qualitative one, more precisely an in-depth interview with research and consultancy experts from the academic world.

The sampling process was based on criteria such as field of activity, experience in both academic and business research. Considering that the Bucharest University of Economic Studies is the biggest economic university in Romania, we have selected our participants from this institution, seeing no problems in sample representation for what it represents the Romanian academic specialists in marketing and management.

Participants were selected using a selection questionnaire, and the discussion was based on a semi-structured guide and data was collected in August 2020.

RESULTS

Research and Consultancy Background

beneficiaries of the education system – students. However, there is also the problem of systematizing the research and consulting activity in the academic environment, considering that "for academic research, there are special programs that finance this activity, which makes it easier. But the academic consulting, however, does not yet have a well-defined status within the financing grants, and there is not yet a culture for it".

In addition to European funds (mostly non-reimbursable), academic research funding has another potential source – the business environment. However, here the blockage refers to the lack of information of businessmen about the research potential of academic researchers ("the business environment doesn't know that we can offer something like that, we are seen as suppliers of juniors for companies, not necessarily as researchers").

The parallel made between academic and business research highlights several advantages of the latter, especially related to the pragmatism and applicability that characterizes it ("in business research, the data is more accurate and targeted," "it is much more pragmatic, more results-oriented," "compared to academic research, the business one needs simpler explanations").

The participants were asked what they feel they lack to develop even more on the research and business consulting side. We notice a series of obstacles that can be solved through the future marketplace platform – organizing in a team of specialized researchers, access to data and information, the existence of demand from companies, and the practice of attractive rates for such services.

Marketplace Solutions/Platforms for Marketing and Management Services

This part of the discussion started by asking the participants to tell us if they knew of such platforms, which the vast majority answered negatively. However, they mentioned several sites and organizations that play to some extent the role of a marketplace, providing information mainly about market bidders: AMCOR for management consulting

services, IAA for companies and media agencies and advertising, www.marketingindirect.ro for direct marketing services, Forbes through the tops it makes for advertising agencies, media, public relations, digital advertising and marketing companies.

From the few research participants who said that they know of marketplace platforms for marketing and management services, we can use as relevant information for our study only the mentions related to iproduse.ro, virtualboard.ro and seo-factory.ro, because the rest of the mentions are about generic marketplaces, such as emag, Olx or publi24, not some platforms dedicated to marketing and management services.

Whether or not they knew in advance about the existence of such platforms, all research participants were asked to present their opinion on this marketplace concept for marketing and management services. Opinions were divided. On the one hand, we have those who see in these platforms a "concept of the future," which "is suitable for new types of business," being "very useful for both customers and bidders." This concept "will boost the marketing and management services market," bringing "direct beneficial effects on customer performance." Although this first approach is positive, it is not without conditions, regarding the need for a structuring by categories and sub-categories of the services offered, for example, "financing consulting; mergers and acquisitions consulting; marketing researches; advertising agencies; PR agencies; branding agencies; direct marketing agencies; digital marketing services, etc.".

The second category corresponds to the reluctant ones, to those who do not consider the appearance of this type of marketplace a good idea, either because it will take much effort to be accepted in the market ("it can be interesting, but it depends a lot on the level of recognition and promotion; I see here a major risk of non-use"), or because it is not suitable for the business model in these fields (normally, these things are not automated, on an online platform; customers want to meet, to talk to researchers, that's why I think it can be more useful as a tool to promote these services").

Before asking them about the future, participants were asked to talk about their interaction so far with similar platforms. As we have already mentioned, not many people knew about such concepts, and those who used the existing ones did so rather "to analyze the market for such services and study the offer of competing companies."

Asked if they would use marketplace platforms for marketing and management services in the future, all participants answered in the affirmative, the vast majority interested in both hypostases of a user - both supplier and buyer.

Needs Analysis by Types of Services Included in the Platform: Research, Consultancy, Training, Implementation and Support

In this section, participants were asked about their interest in each of the 4 potential components of the platform (Research, Consultancy, Training, Implementation and support), along with a justification of their interest, as well as some exemplifications on several areas of interest. The 4 components were identified in previous research, which analyzed similar solutions on the market, and the present study intended to validate which of them should be included in our future marketplace.

Research

Those who see the useful research component justify this through the benefits of accessing the platform to find both customers and participants in research ("data collection and analysis of product markets, both on the demand and supply side, labor market analysis – size, structuring, evolution – can be more easily achieved through these platforms"). They also see "the opportunity to learn and provide new quality services."

The role they would like to play in this section of the platform would be, rather, as a provider of research services.

The areas of applicability for the research module within the platform cover a very wide range: organization diagnosis, organization strategy development, strategic management, analysis and remodeling of organizational culture, leadership, change management, entrepreneurship, project management, data collection, demand/supply analysis, market segmentation, the impact of regulations on the business activity and strategy.

Consultancy: The vast majority of participants were also interested in this platform module, most often justifying this by the experience already gained on the consulting side, which would allow them to offer a wide range of services. In addition, using the platform would bring "the opportunity of accessing a representative number of potential customers already interested in these areas."

Regarding the role they would like to have, the participants were divided into two categories, having, on the one hand, those who want to be only bidders, and on the other hand, those who are interesting to access the platform both

as a bidder, as well as as a customer.

Within this consulting module, the areas of applicability extend even further: investment management, project implementation, labor market analysis, organization diagnosis, organization strategy development, strategic management, analysis and remodeling of organizational culture, leadership, change management, entrepreneurship, impact regulations on business activity and strategy, consulting in accessing European funds, consulting in business development.

Training: This category of services wasn't so successfully received by research participants, as they see the marketplace platform from a transactional approach, which goes hand in hand with marketing and management projects. But when it comes to training, this activity requires a longer period, certified organizations and time invested in acquiring the proper skills.

Implementation and support: For this module, the interest is also lower, but not non-existent, the participants who opted for the implementation and support part seeing it more as a continuation of the activities in the research and consulting modules ("it offers important facilities and tools in the implementation of various projects from the research and consulting modules").

The Ideal Solution of an Online Marketplace for Marketing and Management Services

In this last section, the participants' imagination was used to identify their expectations regarding the marketplace platform from the perspective of the bidder and the client.

The perspective of the service provider: The discussions led to obtaining very useful ideas for building the future platform, given that the recommendations of the participants covered several aspects of content and form:

a) User-friendly design: "the platform should be friendly, easy to access and understand," "it should offer the feeling of usefulness and trust."

b) Easy interaction between users: "to facilitate the meeting between supply and demand," "ease of interaction with customers," "to allow easy and repetitive communication."

c) A more intuitive way of presenting the service offered: "the possibility to present in an easy way the services, their characteristics and supplier's experience in the field," "to contain both a data area with a predefined format and one with the free format, better to describe the characteristics of the product/service," "to be structured on types of services offered, by industries," "one can go on the idea of crowdfunding – to propose certain topics of general interest, and certain companies to support them financially (on the TGI model)"

d) The research results should be easily used: "to generate reports, statistics," "to allow data download in a format that allows their easy processing," "portability and speed of operation."

e) Efficient promotion of the services offered: "promotion in the platform," "to ensure a high visibility for potential clients."

The perspective of the service buyer: Also, at the customer level, there are several clear expectations from potential users of the platform, both in terms of structure and content:

a) User-friendly design: "no risks of use," "ease of interaction with the respective service providers," "facilitate understanding, learning and use."

b) Platform structure: "to provide comparisons of services and products," "to be well structured, with clear sections that allow users to quickly identify the type of service they are interested in," "to present relevant information about existing services, to facilitates the adoption of decisions to use a certain service or a package of services," "to be structured on types of services offered, by industries, on tariff ranges, etc."

c) Content quality: "to contain a diverse range of services, but also a large number of bidders in the field," to provide information on the research experience of the provider; this could translate into the existence of articles with research results, researchers' CVs."

d) Speed of interaction: "to allow rapid receipt/transmission of responses to any requests for additional information."

e) Results: "allow data download in a format that allows information to be easily processed," "high customization," "low costs."

Research results' implications : First of all, we will underline the implications of a sustainable business model for the marketplace users, and secondly, we will present the decisions taken after the research regarding the ASECOMP platform's structure and content.

In terms of implications for a sustainable business model, some important conclusions can be drawn from the research as mentioned above:

- Considering the existing limitations imposed by the business environment and felt by the researchers, especially the academic ones, being present on a dedicated online marketplace for marketing and management services can offer those researchers the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with the business environment, as they become more transparent in what they can do and the work they have done until now;
- This is also linked to the lack of information of the business environment about the research potential of academic specialists; mitigating perceived uncertainty and risk is critical for successful exchanges in an online B2B marketplace (Yoon, Yoon, Nam, & Choi, 2021); thus, being present on a marketplace in which customers can vouch for the quality of service providers represents a huge advantage and a pillar for sustainable development;
- Participants were asked what they feel they lack to be able to develop even more on the research and business consulting side; we notice here a series of obstacles that can be solved through the future marketplace platform
- Organizing in a team of specialized researchers, access to data and information, the existence of demand from companies, and the practice of attractive rates for such services;
- Participants described the new ASECOMP marketplaces as an "opportunity to learn and provide new quality services," which is sustainable in terms of

This new marketing paradigm is reported to reshape the business relationships between consumer marketers and consumers, improving business processes and enhancing business exposure in the new markets (Chong, Shafaghi, Woollaston, & Lui, 2010).

Having all this information, we have taken a series of conceptual decisions for our new marketplace, as follows:

- From the four initial categories of services (Research, Consultancy, Training, Implementation and support), we have reduced the marketplace focus to just two – Research and Consultancy. The training wasn't received positively by specialists as a service that can be provided on this platform, and Implementation and support is now included in the main two services (research and consultancy) as a continuation of the activities in these two modules;
- the platform will offer the possibility of both an individual account and a business one; every user can choose how he wants to be presented; this is applicable for both supplier and buyer type of user. In Figure 1, you can see the landing page of the ASECOMP marketplace, as it was before the market test (second research).

2ND RESEARCH – USABILITY TEST MARKET

Considering that we now have the first version of our new marketplace platform (MVP), we have to test it to adapt it to users' needs better. For this reason, we have conducted second research in the form of a usability test market, with potential users playing both the role of suppliers and buyers in the platform.

The research scope is to identify how the user goes through the necessary steps to create an account, to fill in the profile section with the necessary data for individuals/companies and to describe an offer (Supplier account) or a request (Buyer account) for a research project on the platform.

The research had a very specific structure, based on a scenario that will follow the user from first contact with the platform to build a proper research offer or demand.

Testing was done with four users, as follows:
- 2 Buyer type users (of which one individual and one company)
- 2 Supplier type users (of which one individual and one company).

There were three actions that each participant had to do: create an account, fill in their profile data, and build a research offer/request. After each of the three actions, every participant answered a few questions (corresponding to the below objectives).
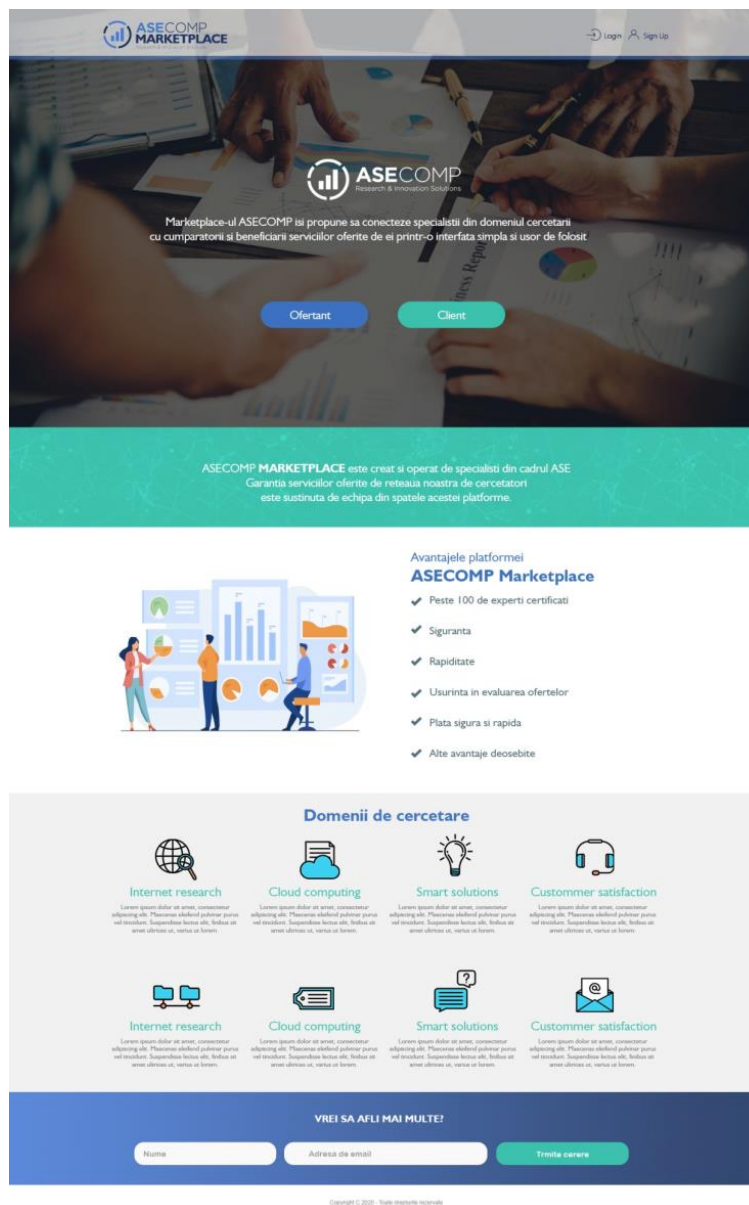
Figure 1 *Landing page for ASECOMP marketplace*

For every step of this scenario, we had a series of research objectives, as follows:

Step 1. Creating the user account in the ASECOMP Marketplace

a) Perception regarding the ease of finding the section

b) The opinion regarding the data required for the creation of a user account

Step 2. Completing the Profile section with the necessary information

a) Perception regarding the profile completion process

b) Opinion on the required data

Step 3. Creating a research offer (Supplier profile)

a) Perception regarding the offer construction process

b) Difficulties encountered in the process

c) Identifying other information considered necessary by users to describe the offer better

d) Identifying the sections that users consider useless in building the offer

Step 4. Creating a research request (Buyer profile)

a) Perception regarding the demand construction process

b) Difficulties encountered in the process

c) Identifying other information considered necessary by users to describe the request better

d) Identifying the sections that users consider useless in building the application.

We search methods for this study –for this study, The market test followed the above-presented scenario, and the in-depth interview used a semi-structured guide built on the research objectives.

The sample was composed out of marketing specialists that can represent potential clients for the ASECOMP Marketplace, both suppliers and buyers. The selection condition was that research participants must have experience in research projects and business consulting. This experience was also structured by categories: under 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-5 years, 6-10 years, more than 10 years.

Data was collected in the first week of September 2021.

Considering that we are now in the process of data analysis for this second research, we can present just a few preliminary results:

In terms of perception regarding the ease of finding the My account section, all participants were satisfied, as the platform was adapted to users' behavior habits when navigating the Internet. Thus everyone knew that, if you want to create or enter your account, you have to search for that section in the upper right corner of the webpage;

- we also have a positive opinion regarding the data required for the creation of a user account (user id and email address), as participants conclude that not much information is required from the beginning, so as not to discourage interested people; this is also a pillar in the sustainable approach of the business process, considering that trust must be gained from the start and if you ask too many information from the user when he is not yet familiar with your platform, he can see that as trespassing;
- something we lost sight of is the GDPR agreement, which has to be made available from the start, even if the user doesn't share too much information at the beginning, is still necessary if we want to contact him in the future, moreover considering that the first step in validating the user account is by email communication;
- when it comes to the profile completion process and the opinion on the required data, participants were positively impressed by the detailed information required; although it may take a while to complete it when finished, it allows the other users to get to know each other very well, thus building on the transparency issue; the Supplier has to give information about his experience, about his skills and also other projects that he worked on, so the Buyers can have a better view on the potential partners found on this marketplace;
- when creating a research request or offer, participants wanted a more personalized manner, as the standardized one that we have built makes them feel that they can't describe so clearly want the look for or offer as specialists on this platform; this is rather a predicament for marketplace owners in general, as the standardization helps in structuring the offer on the platform and offers users the possibility to search within the platform by research domain, area, method, etc., element that contributes to the platform usability and ease of navigation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Marketplaces will only continue to expand and diversify, introducing new retail and service experiences to sellers and buyers alike (Swani et al., 2014). Thus, we have to be one step ahead of time, estimating users' expectations and adapting the platforms to their constantly changing needs.

The two types of research conducted for the ASECOMP marketplace development showed us a duality in users' attitudes. On the one hand, they want to benefit from the platform advantages by making as little effort as possible, which prevents the platform from having a detailed presentation for the comprised services. On the other hand, the users want to have as many details as possible when searching the platform.

We have to see this duality for what it is – a reality check of the market, in which we have to find the balance between consumers' needs and the effort they are prepared to make. This effort can be increased if we can show consumers how their input leads to a more sustainable relationship, one that can bring time and money advantages and a better tomorrow.

One concept that is developing so rapidly in today's economy is co-creation. Within co-creation theory, consumer experiences and, thereby, value are created by the consumer, with the service provider's only involvement facilitating the experience (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

(Priharsari & Abedin, 2021) investigated factors that facilitate and constrain value co-creation in online communities. And discovered that there are some with high impacts, such as transparency, participatory leadership, content quality, social hierarchy, sense of community, flexibility, and privacy.

[Merhabi, Petridis, and Khusainova](2021) even discuss the gamification concept, commonly defined as the use of game elements in non-game contexts. The authors propose such a concept as a facilitator factor in convincing the platform's users to put in the work, as they say.

Research Limits and Future Research

The present research brings many advantages for online marketplace developers, as they offer the opportunity to learn beforehand what the platform should look like and what to offer so that users can be satisfied with content and effort.

However, some limits can be mentioned. First of all, none of those researches is statistically representative for a wider market. Having a limited number of participants in each research made it clear that it is exploratory, but it has been seen as a start for the development stage. The next step will be a quantitative study, in which more users will participate in a test market for the improved version of the ASECOMP marketplace.

Another limit can be related to the structure of our sample, as the marketplace was tested just on the Romanian market, but the platform wants to offer an international perspective. This will also require an English version of the platform; it's just in Romanian.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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