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Framing the Competitive Behaviors of Niche Players: the Electric Vehicle Business Ecosystem Perspective

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Abstract

The approach on the research of business ecosystems' actors evolved as result of the analogy with the biological ecosystem. Based on this analogy, three major strategies were selected and defined, in following roles: keystones, dominators and niche players. However, the behavior of different actors was framed differently within already existing industries. From this point of view, this paper aims to emphasize the change of actor behaviors based on the main adopted strategy. Therefore, the role of niche players was chosen as analysis unit. A critical analysis of the literature was performed in order to classify the features of niche players. Hence, the competitive behaviors of actors were identified based on their visibility in relation to their impact on the business ecosystem. From this point of view, based on a case study approach, evidence of identified competitive behaviors in the automotive industry was provided. The result emphasized the dynamic change of actors' behavior within their business ecosystem and the importance of the actors' positioning in relation to the produced effect. Additionally, based on framed competitive behaviors, the linkage between the adopted strategy and the actors' performance within the automotive business ecosystem was illustrated.

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1. Introduction

Introduced as a community of collaborating actors, the business ecosystem (BE) concept acknowledges the importance of the established relationships rather than actors' analysis. Although the concept was proposed primary as a framework for competition analysis (Moore, 1996), in time it became more related to network or community based approach in terms of structure and specific actors (Iansiti & Levien, 2004a; Iansiti & Levien, 2004b). It was shown that business ecosystems evolution depends upon cross industries collaboration between interrelated actors, and symbiotic relations (Galateanu (Avram) & Avasilcai, 2014; Basole, et.al, 2015). From this point of view, as Holmstrom Olssen and Bosch stated the need for inter – organizational approach is preferred over an intra - organizational one (Holmstrom Olssen & Bosch, 2015). The actors' capability to co-evolve in the business ecosystem depends primary on their adopted strategies, which can be defined as playing a role (Moore, 1993; Iansiti & Levien, 2004; Ma, Jorgensen & Lundgaard, 2015; Kalyanaram & Aung, 2015) and requires a clear definition of the ecosystem main goal. This approach stands for clear definition of the competitive environment provided by ecosystem as well as better understanding of collaborative relation in order to achieve synergy between different actors (Pilinkiene & Maciulis, 2014). The gap between actors' development and their business ecosystem can be filled by exploring actors adopted roles theory.

From this point of view, this paper presents essential insights in terms of roles identification within specific business ecosystem.

2. Business ecosystems and actors' roles

As it was mentioned before, in order to understand the concept of business ecosystem it should be defined the main goal. According to Pilinkiene and Maciulis clear statement of business ecosystem's goals provide insights for ecosystems' classification (Pilinkiene & Maciulis, 2014). However the knowledge about the ecosystem type (goals, objectives or scope) provides reasoning for understanding the competitive environment where actors can be found but do not fill the gap about the adopted roles. As business ecosystem comprises actors from different industries such as suppliers, clients, value network actors (Moore, 1993; Ronteau, 2009), the need for their differentiation arose. From this point of view, Iansiti and Levien proposed three key roles: keystones, dominators and niche players (Iansiti & Levien, 2004a; Iansiti & Levien, 2004b), as it is shown in fig. 1.

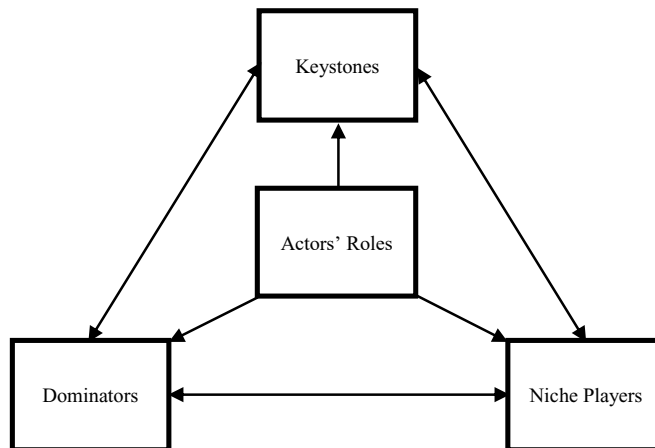


Fig. 1. Actors' Roles Framework (Iansiti & Levien, 2004a; Iansiti & Levien, 2004b)

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