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UNVEILING NEW FRONTIERS: A BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR CULTIVATING CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL PATHWAYS

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Abstract. *This study explores the adaptation of the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) framework to cultivate creative entrepreneurial pathways. The BOS principles, which emphasize value innovation and the systematic creation of uncontested market spaces, are applied to the context of creative industries and entrepreneurship education. Utilizing the BOS methodology, including the BOS Canvas tool, expert interviews, a focus group, and literature review, the research conducts an in-depth "As-Is" analysis of the existing industry landscape. The findings reveal digital transformation, business education, and intellectual property rights as the top priorities within the current value proposition. However, areas such as mentorship and industry case studies emerge as potential "blue ocean" opportunities for value innovation. The BOS analysis suggests strategic actions, including eliminating accounting skills, reducing government emphasis, and increasing focus on financial literacy, marketing, digitization, and entrepreneurial skillsets. By adapting the BOS framework, the study proposes innovative approaches to foster creative entrepreneurship, tap into unexplored market spaces, and redefine industry boundaries. The systematic application of BOS principles holds the potential to drive sustainable growth, enhance competitiveness, and cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets within creative disciplines. This interdisciplinary research contributes to the literature on strategic innovation, creative entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship education.*

Keywords: *Blue Ocean Strategy, creative entrepreneurship, qualitative research methods, entrepreneurial criteria, theory development, expert assessment, canvas.*

Main provisions. This study applies the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) framework to Kazakhstan's creative industries to identify new entrepreneurial pathways beyond traditional market competition. Through expert interviews and a multidisciplinary focus group - including creative entrepreneurs, educators, and industry professionals - the research highlights key priorities such as digitalization, intellectual property, and business education. The findings emphasize the strategic importance of mentorship and real industry case studies as untapped areas for value innovation. These results offer a practical roadmap for policymakers, educators, and creative industry stakeholders to realign priorities and develop competitive, innovation-driven ecosystems. Applying these insights can strengthen Kazakhstan's global creative competitiveness and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

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Introduction. In an era defined by rapid technological progress and shifting economic landscapes, innovation and adaptability are increasingly crucial across various sectors. This is particularly applicable to creative industries, which not only make significant contributions to economic growth but also play a role in shaping cultural narratives and advancing societal development. Kazakhstan, with its rich cultural heritage and growing entrepreneurial ecosystem, stands at a promising moment to unlock the potential of its creative sectors.

According to Kazakhstan's National Statistics Bureau, the creative economy contributed approximately 2.5% to the country's GDP in 2021, with over 100,000 individuals employed in creative fields such as advertising, architecture, design, and arts and crafts. However, several challenges persist, including limited access to specialized education, insufficient funding, and a lack of strategic direction to help creative entrepreneurs navigate the constantly evolving market landscape.

In order to create a proper environment for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship this paper aims to adapt the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) framework to the case of Kazakhstan's creative industries. The BOS principles were introduced by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne and are based on value innovation and the systematic creation of blue ocean markets, i.e. uncontested market spaces as the way to sustainable growth and differentiation.

The Blue Ocean Strategy can be used effectively to solve the problems of creative entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan. The BOS framework helps organizations and people to go beyond the competition boundaries of the traditional industries and discover and develop market opportunities that are not yet explored. This strategic mindset is well connected with the creative and innovative spirit, which allows entrepreneurs to develop new strategies, propositions and value.

In this regard, this study attempts to offer a systematic approach for building entrepreneurial mindsets, supporting innovative business models, and releasing the creative capacity of Kazakhstan's creative talent when the BOS methodology is implemented specifically to the context of Kazakhstan's creative industries. In this way, through an interdisciplinary perspective on strategic management and the dynamics of creative industries, this study contributes to sustainable growth, global competitiveness, and cultural vibrancy in Kazakhstan's creative economy.

Literature review. The idea of exploring uncontested market spaces to render competition irrelevant has gained considerable traction recently, largely through the Blue Ocean Strategy framework developed by Kim and Mauborgne. This approach challenges the idea of surpassing rivals within established industry limits, referred to as "red oceans." Rather, it supports the systematic creation of new, uncontested market spaces, termed "blue oceans," where demand is generated instead of contested [1].

Value innovation is the central principle of the BOS strategy, that is, to simultaneously design differentiation and lower costs, hence creating new market space [2]. This is done by breaking out of the industry's traditional segments, focusing more on the general approach than the specific improvement, and searching for a value elsewhere in the demand pool. The framework points to the need both to sequence strategic actions appropriately, to deal with organizational challenges, and to align strategy.

In the beginning, it was meant for businesses only, but now it is being investigated as applicable for other fields as well such as the arts and entrepreneurship education and this is due to the versatility of BOS principles. Essig (2014) explores the idea of a 'creative



entrepreneur' whereby one considers how ownership, entrepreneurship or means of creating value are practiced in the field of art [3].

In parallel, more and more scholars have looked at how higher education institutions can help students in adopting an entrepreneurial attitude and skills, more so in creative areas. Bridgstock (2012) and Pollard and Wilson (2014) emphasize the importance of integrating entrepreneurship education across disciplines to equip graduates with the necessary skills to navigate the evolving landscape of creative industries [4,5].

This theoretical foundation is used as a springboard to consider how the Blue Ocean Strategy can be synergized with the growth of creative entrepreneurial pathways. When the BOS framework is applied to the creative industries and entrepreneurship education, it is possible to discover new ways to create value and distinguish oneself in the market. The interface between strategic thinking, creative problem solving, and entrepreneurial mindsets may hold the key to new approaches to career development and industry transformation.

The methodology was broadly informed by the foundational principles set forth in Kim and Mauborgne's influential work on value innovation and the systematic development of blue oceans. This work allows the usage of the BOS Canvas which serves the purpose of showing the current state, also known as the 'As-Is' situation. This included looking into the elements that the industry usually competes on and determining what factors have been overlooked. As such dynamics are represented visually, the BOS Canvas put forth which helped structure the idea around taking advantage of innovation and differentiation.

Materials and Methods. To analyze the creative industries and businesses exhaustively, a number of expert opinion techniques were used such as semi-structured interviews with a heterogeneous group of regarded creative entrepreneurs, educators, and other participants from the working industries. The interview protocol was composed with the aim of extracting the information on challenges, opportunities, as well as emerging trends among these respondents and related stakeholders [6]. The interviewees were requested to describe their experiences, observations, as well as dreams, which served as helpful qualitative data.

In addition, the discussion was carried out through the use of a focus group which had and provided a selected set of stakeholders from diverse creative and business disciplines. This structure allowed for free flowing, multidirectional dialogue, creativity, and, along with that, the research issue was discussed. The objective of the focus group was to generate conversations around shared experiences, discuss the underlying issues and come up with practical suggestions within the context of BOS framework.

Qualitative data was obtained and academic journals, industry reports as well as practitioner-oriented publications were part of the literature review. This strategy helped to achieve even great depth in the understanding of the theoretical framework, the empirical works, and the practical implementation of the aspects of the field [8]. The literature review served a great deal of guidance in undertaking the research and scoped out new opportunities and validation of the findings.

The "As-Is" analysis, a critical step in the BOS framework, involved synthesizing the insights gathered from the expert opinion methods and literature review. This rigorous analysis enabled the identification of the current state, including the factors that the industry traditionally competes on, as well as the overlooked or neglected elements. Having a comprehensive understanding of the existing landscape, the researchers wished to conduct interviews that would allow them to move into the phase where the value would be transformed due to the innovation that took place by altering the former landscape to the 'To-Be' state.

According to the expert opinion methods, the techniques utilized in the "As-Is" analysis were pivotal. The semi structured interviews were designed with the expectation of



gathering testimony from creative entrepreneurs, educators and professionals in order to understand the phenomenon at a deeper level. Consistent with the qualitative inquiring method, the interviews were rather aimed to provide elaborate accounts of their experience and understanding of the issue while trying to uncover the key themes and structures of the provided information [9].

With these dimensions added, it has been possible to capture the interview data in its most trustworthy manner. Guba and Lincoln used reliability and validity of the data which was measured using various methods, including member checking where selected participants were allowed to edit multiple drafts of the transcript so that all their views were accurately represented [10]. Furthermore, using these probes, asking participant and non-participant questions during the interviews resulted in a more credible and enhanced data.

As a supplement to these interviews, the focus group discussion aimed to provide all participants with a different collaborative experience. The focus group was thoughtfully designed to include different creative disciplines and people from different business backgrounds in order to encourage interaction and idea generation. Participants were prompted to recollect their experiences, obstacles, and knowledge and were equally engaged in discussions to build upon one another's arguments.

The expert opinion approaches have provided qualitative data that was carefully processed as per standard practices such as thematic analysis and the constant comparative method. This practice within social science research has enabled to examine and properly code and classify the data into relevant themes and categories, which provided valuable insights into the situation and the areas of value innovation that can be tapped in the future.

As highlighted in Table 1, the sample comprised 100 participants from Kazakhstan, all of them have a background at creative industry. Demographic data provided insights into gender, age, and entrepreneurial experience. Women represented 46% of experts, indicating a higher male concentration. Most respondents fell within the 20–29 age group, accounting for 40%. This diverse representation across age and entrepreneurial experience ensures a balanced perspective on creativity sector in Kazakhstan.

Table 1 - Demographic Profile of the Participants (N=100)

Category	Subcategory	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	64	64%
	Female	46	46%
Age Group	20-29 years	40	40%
	30-39 years	20	20%
	40-49 years	25	25%
	50 years and above	15	15%
Entrepreneurial experience	With experience	52	52%
	Without	48	48%

Note: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data



A key feature of the BOS framework is its methodical way of reshaping industry standards and discovering new value through four main strategies. These strategies - eliminate, reduce, increase, and create- have been applied across diverse industrial and geographic contexts to catalyse innovative thinking and drive sustainable growth.

The first action is a constructive approach that encourages the identification and removal of factors which add no real value or are out of tune with the existing situation or trends within an industry. As a result of the identification and subsequent removal of these activities, resources that are at this time trapped in unproductive activities can be put to better use in more productive endeavors that are consistent or aligned with the vision of the organization. Further, the 'reduce' row aimed to reduce the stress on the position of government in the industry, thus aiming to promote a less centered, more free market and entrepreneurial culture in the industry.

The second action is centered on downsizing investment and attention to factors that are overserved, or no longer enhance the employee's competitive advantage. This pragmatic approach recognizes the dynamic nature of markets and encourages a reallocation of efforts towards more promising and underexploited areas of potential growth and innovation [11].

The third action reflects on placing more focus and investment on elements within the industry that had little or no investment in the past. This is a forward-looking approach that realizes the potential of trends, technologies, and the emerging capabilities that need to be tapped in order to create and sustain value in the organization while gaining a competitive edge.

The fourth and most disruptive action is create, which supports the building of completely new sources of value for the industry. This radical approach forces companies to look for untouched market areas, also known as 'blue oceans' and introduces challenges that enterprise strive to meet. There are many instances from different parts of the world which highlight the capacity of the BOS methodology to innovate industry growth boundaries and achieve sustainable development within the innovative spheres. In the United Kingdom, the application of BOS principles by the British Fashion Council has helped to uncover new market needs, such as sustainable and ethical fashion, which led to the creation of a 'blue ocean' space in fashion. Likewise, in South Korea, the use of BOS strategies has allowed the country's developing creative content industries, including music, movies, and even digital media, to expand their reach beyond the traditional markets [12].

The consumer preferences and culture, together with technology are rapidly changing in the creative industries. Because of this, it is important for the business to adapt obsolete practices, reduce overserved areas, increase focus on undervalued competencies, and create innovative value propositions. The BOS framework allows people in the creative business to identify and act on new opportunities as it gives them a chance to develop a plan for the described issues and challenges.

An example can be business models and distribution channels which are no longer align towards the age of technology. These can be disposed of while reassigning resources to tackle more important and profitable models, which tackles the elimination action. Shifting the attention towards the development of digital skills, controlling intellectual property along with data centric marketing strategies are often neglected in the traditional creative industries but can prove to be exceptional in undervalued paradigms and can fulfill increase action.

Challenging the boundaries of the industry while seeking uncontested market space can truly be a transformative factor. This action holds particular relevance in the realm of creative industries, where the fusion of artistic expression, technological innovation, and entrepreneurial vision can give rise to entirely new value propositions.



Results and discussion. The rigorous analysis conducted through the Blue Ocean Strategy Canvas has yielded significant insights into the current state of the industry and potential avenues for value innovation. The evaluation of concordance and dispersion coefficients revealed a generally robust consensus among respondents regarding the significance of key criteria, lending credibility to the findings.

Significantly, the industry value core analysis underscored digitization, business education, and intellectual property rights as top priorities within the present industry landscape. This aligns with the broader trends and priorities observed in the sector, highlighting the importance of technological advancements, entrepreneurial skills development, and intellectual property protection. The concordance coefficient, a measure ranging from 0 to 1, represents the degree of agreement among respondents. A higher value signifies stronger consensus. In this analysis (table 2), most criteria exhibited relatively high concordance coefficients, ranging from 0.97 to 1.00, implying a generally robust consensus among respondents concerning the significance of these factors.

Table 2 – Expert Opinion Analysis

criteria	dispersion	concordance coefficient	average	industry value core			Blue Ocean Strategy		
				weigh	significance	total	weigh	significance	total
role of government	0,92	0,99	4,18	4	3	12,4	4	1	4
business education	1,56	0,98	4,32	4	2	8	4	5	20
financial literacy	1,26	0,99	4,27	4	2	8	4	4	16
marketing	1,55	0,98	4,14	4	2	8	4	5	20
accounting skills	2,43	0,97	3,36	3	2	6	3	0	0
IPR	0,92	0,99	4,59	5	2	10	5	4	20
digitization	0,32	1,00	4,68	5	3	15	5	4	20
mentorship				5	0		5	5	25
industry real cases study				5	0		5	5	25
Note: compiled by the authors on the basis of survey data									

Complementing the concordance coefficient, the dispersion value quantifies the variation in responses, with lower values indicating less dispersion and higher agreement (Lehmann, 1975). Factors like digitization (0.32) and government (0.92) involvement showed low dispersion, indicating substantial consensus among respondents.

The analysis then delved into the industry value core, a critical component that represents the areas in which the industry traditionally competes or places emphasis. Adopting the approach outlined by Kim and Mauborgne (2005), the criteria with higher total scores, calculated as the product of weight and significance level, were deemed most crucial to the industry's current value proposition. Notably, digitization (13.99), business education (8.48), and intellectual property rights (IPR) (9.09) emerged as the top three criteria with the



highest total scores, indicating their prominence within the industry's existing landscape. However, the dispersion and concordance coefficients suggest varying levels of agreement among the respondents or experts regarding the significance of these criteria.

Our analysis identified several criteria with high potential for driving such value innovation, as evidenced by their elevated total scores in the "Blue Ocean Strategy" column. Mentorship (25) and industry real case studies (25) emerged as novel value propositions that could differentiate the industry's offerings and tap into unexplored market spaces. Additionally, criteria such as digitization (20), business education (20), marketing (20), and IPR (20) were recognized as areas where increased emphasis could lead to the development of unique and differentiated value propositions.

Notably, the BOS analysis (Figure 1) revealed several criteria with high potential for value innovation and blue ocean creation. Mentorship (25) and industry real case studies (25) emerged as new value propositions that could differentiate the industry's offerings and tap into uncontested market spaces. Additionally, criteria such as digitization (20), business education (20), marketing (20), and IPR (20) were identified as areas where increased emphasis could lead to the development of unique and differentiated value propositions.

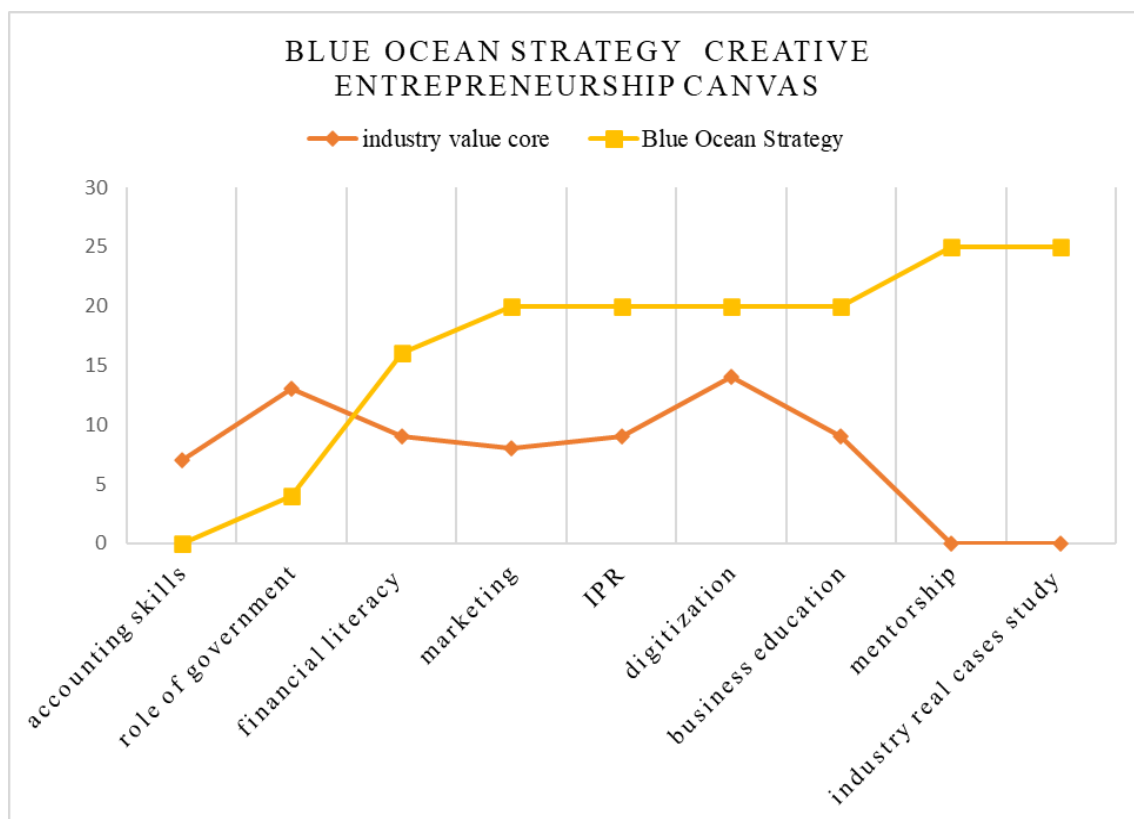


Figure 1 - Blue Ocean Strategy canvas

Note: compiled by the authors based on the conducted survey sources

The strategic actions suggested by the BOS Canvas (figure 1) further reinforce the potential for industry transformation. The recommendation to eliminate accounting skills from the current value proposition reflects a strategic shift, recognizing that such functions can be efficiently outsourced. Moreover, the proposal to reduce the emphasis on the role of



government suggests a potential decentralization of industry dynamics and a move towards more entrepreneurial and market-driven approaches.

On the other hand, it is needful to begin paying closer attention to financial literacy, marketing, IPR, digitization, and business education. These are consistent with the current interests of the industry and also provide chances for value addition and differentiation in the blue ocean context.

With the help of the findings of this canvas BOS analysis, industry participants can reformulate their value propositions, locate white spaces in the market, and create new products that go beyond the existing industry. The systematic application of the assistance in the BOS framework will enhance the chances of achieving sustainable development, boosting competitiveness, and ultimately shifting the industry towards uncontested market spaces.

Conclusion. Cultivating a thriving creative entrepreneurship ecosystem is crucial for driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and strengthening Kazakhstan's global competitiveness. The creative industries, with their unique ability to blend artistic expression with entrepreneurial vision, hold the potential to open new paths for value creation and cultural enrichment.

As previously pointed out in this study, there is a very possible way to enable creative entrepreneurial pathways by adopting the BOS framework in Kazakhstan. Armed with the principles of value innovation, creative entrepreneurs can redefine their value propositions, penetrating new opportunities and extending beyond industry borders. It allows for the systematic creation of unchallenged market spaces, thereby contributing to the nation's sustainable economic development.

It is interesting to note, that this research points the importance of mentorship, industry case studies, digitization, business education, marketing, and even intellectual property rights with respect to their role in value innovation needed in the creative entrepreneurship domain. Core stakeholders can create more value by realigning their efforts and resources toward these domains, enabling differentiation strategies, and fostering entrepreneurial and innovative business environments.

Moving on, it is critical to mention that in order to implement the Blue Ocean Strategy, cooperation is needed from a wide range of stakeholders such as educational regions, policymakers, industry associations, and of course, the creative community. Kazakhstan needs to promote cross-disciplinary combinations, encourage the provision of entrepreneurship education, especially at basic levels, and provide special treatment and support to its creative talent to tackle the changing market.

The systematic application of The Blue Ocean Strategy framework has the crystalized potential to achieve sustainable growth, improve competitiveness, and change the story of Kazakhstan's creative industries. Adopting this strategic approach can open new frontiers for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial achievement, positioning Kazakhstan as a global center for creative excellence and economic vitality.

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ЖАҢА КӨКЖИЕКТЕРДІ ДАМУ: КРЕАТИВТІ КӘСІПкерлік ЖОЛдарын Қалыптастыру үшін "Көк Мұхит Стратегиясы" Тұжырымдамасы

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Түйін. Бұл зерттеуде Шығармашылық индустриялар арасында кәсіпкерлікті дамыту үшін Көк мұхит стратегиясы тұжырымдамасын бейімдеу қарастырылады. Көк мұхит стратегиясының құндылық инновациялары мен нарықтық кеңістіктерді жүйелі түрде құруды ерекше атап көрсететін қағидаттары шығармашылық индустриялар мен кәсіпкерлік білім беру контекстінде қолданылады. Көк мұхит стратегиясының әдістемесін, соның ішінде құралдар канвасы, сараптамалық сұхбаттар, фокус-топтар және әдеби шолуларды пайдалана отырып, ағымдағы индустрияның "As-Is" жағдайына терең талдау жүргізіледі. Нәтижелер сандық трансформация, бизнес-білім беру және зияткерлік меншік құқықтары ағымдағы құндылық ұсынысындағы негізгі басымдықтар екенін анықтайды. Алайда, тәлімгерлік пен салалық кейс-стадилер құндылық инновациялары үшін әлеуетті "көк мұхиттар" ретінде ерекшеленеді. Көк мұхит стратегиясы бойынша талдау стратегиялық әрекеттерді ұсынады, соның ішінде бухгалтерлік есеп дағдыларынан бас тарту, мемлекеттің рөлін төмендету және қаржылық сауаттылыққа, маркетингке, сандық технологияларға және кәсіпкерлік дағдыларға назар аударуды күшейту. Көк мұхит стратегиясы тұжырымдамасын бейімдеу арқылы зерттеу шығармашылық кәсіпкерлікті дамытуға, зерттелмеген нарықтық кеңістіктерді игеруге және салалық шекараларды қайта анықтауға инновациялық тәсілдерді ұсынады. Көк мұхит стратегиясы қағидаттарын жүйелі түрде қолдану тұрақты өсуге ынталандыру, бәсекеге қабілеттілікті арттыру және шығармашылық пәндерде кәсіпкерлік ойлауды қалыптастыру әлеуетіне ие. Бұл пәнаралық зерттеу стратегиялық инновациялар, шығармашылық кәсіпкерлік және кәсіпкерлік білім беру әдебиеттеріне үлес қосады.

Түйінді сөздер: көк мұхит стратегиясы, креативті кәсіпкерлік, сапалы зерттеу әдістері, кәсіпкерлік критерийлері, даму теориясы, сараптамалық бағалау, канва.

РАЗВИТИЕ НОВЫХ ГОРИЗОНТОВ: КОНЦЕПЦИЯ "СТРАТЕГИИ ГОЛУБОГО ОКЕАНА" ДЛЯ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КРЕАТИВНЫХ ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСКИХ ПУТЕЙ

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Резюме. В данном исследовании рассматривается адаптация концепции Стратегии голубого океана для развития предпринимательства среди творческих индустрий. Принципы стратегии голубого океана, подчеркивающие ценностные инновации и систематическое создание рыночных пространств, применяются в контексте креативных индустрий и предпринимательского образования. С использованием методологии стратегии голубого океана, включая инструмент канву, экспертные интервью, фокус-группу и обзор литературы, проводится глубокий анализ текущего "As-Is" состояния существующей индустрии. Результаты выявляют цифровую трансформацию, бизнес-образование и права интеллектуальной собственности как главные приоритеты в рамках текущего ценностного предложения. Однако такие области, как наставничество и отраслевые кейс-стади, выделяются как потенциальные "голубые океаны" для ценностных инноваций. Анализ по стратегии голубого океана предлагает стратегические действия, включая отказ от навыков бухгалтерского учета, снижение акцента на роли государства и усиление внимания к финансовой грамотности, маркетингу, цифровизации и предпринимательским навыкам. Путем адаптации концепции стратегии голубого океана исследование предлагает инновационные подходы к развитию креативного предпринимательства, освоению неосвоенных рыночных пространств и переопределению отраслевых границ. Систематическое применение принципов стратегии голубого океана имеет потенциал для



стимулирования устойчивого роста, повышения конкурентоспособности и культивирования предпринимательского мышления в креативных дисциплинах. Это междисциплинарное исследование вносит вклад в литературу по стратегическим инновациям, креативному предпринимательству и предпринимательскому образованию.

Ключевые слова: стратегия голубого океана, креативное предпринимательство, качественные методы исследования, предпринимательские критерии, теория развития, экспертная оценка, канва.

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