

**ISCKMC 2020****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF SMM PROMOTION OF  
BIODEGRADABLE AND EDIBLE TABLEWARE**

Olga Aleksandrovna Moiseeva (a)\*, Olga Aleksandrovna Filippova (b),  
Irina Veniaminovna Polozhentseva (c), Vladimir Gennadievich Ponomarev (d),  
Mikhail Yurievich Chernavsky (e)

\*Corresponding author

- (a) Moscow State University of Technologies and Management named after K.G. Razumovsky (the First Cossacs University), 73, Zemlyanoy val, Moscow, 109004, Russia, MoiseevaOA@mgutm.ru,  
(b) Moscow State University of Technologies and Management named after K.G. Razumovskiy (FCU), 73, Zemlyanoy val, Moscow, 109004, Russia, helga-azarova@mail.ru,  
(c) Moscow State University of Technologies and Management named after K.G. Razumovskiy (FCU), 73, Zemlyanoy val, Moscow, 109004, Russia, Pologencevaiv@mgutm.ru,  
(d) Moscow State University of Technologies and Management named after K.G. Razumovskiy (FCU), 73, Zemlyanoy val, Moscow, 109004, Russia, ponomarev\_v.g@mail.ru,  
(e) Moscow State University of Technologies and Management named after K.G. Razumovskiy (FCU), 73, Zemlyanoy val, Moscow, 109004, Russia, chernavsky14@mail.ru

**Abstract**

The paper is concerned with the problems and prospects of promoting biodegradable and edible tableware on the Russian market. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation is preparing a ban on disposable plastic tableware that cannot be recycled and therefore cause great harm to the environment. The initiative is supported by many large retail chains. In the European Union, disposable tableware and certain other foam plastic products such as soda straws, cotton buds, balloon holders and take-out containers will be banned from 2021. The ban is meant to address marine pollution. Once adopted in Russia, the law will put forward the relevance of promoting biodegradable and edible tableware, since, despite being banned, plastic disposable tableware will still be in demand. In this case, the use and promotion of biodegradable and edible tableware will be an effective alternative. Environmental pollution affects the majority of living beings, therefore, the significance of promoting biodegradable and edible products, as well as popularizing the idea of a more careful attitude to the environment is undeniable. Modern civilization commonly generates not only useful and user-friendly things, but also causes significant and even catastrophic damage to nature and the planet. According to experts, in 2050 the volume of plastic produced in the world will exceed one billion (!) tons per year. The paper discusses the prospects for SMM promotion of biodegradable and edible tableware in the Russian market.

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## 1. Introduction

In a globalizing world, environmental pollution affects the majority of living beings, therefore, the significance of promoting biodegradable and edible products, as well as popularizing the idea of a more careful attitude to the environment is undeniable. Modern civilization commonly generates not only useful and user-friendly things, but also causes significant and even catastrophic damage to nature and the planet (Wright, 2018).

One of the solutions to the problem of global pollution with plastic is the development and promotion of products for daily use, tableware and cutlery from biodegradable and edible materials. Many researchers believe that biodegradable packaging is a myth, though. Unscrupulous manufacturers of pseudo-biodegradable plastic packaging massively mislead consumers by playing on their environmental consciousness. Deceiving consumers with the prefix “bio-” is picking up steam (Bukhteeva et al., 2019).

However, recycling technologies are not standing still. Today it is not only efforts to reduce plastic pollution that are being made in various parts of the world, including attempts to reduce the consumption of plastics and encourage their recycling, but also the use of an alternative, such as edible tableware.

The advantage of popularizing tableware and cutlery made from biodegradable materials through social media is to select the target audience with a fairly high degree of accuracy. Social networks today unite people of different societal background, social groups, nationalities, age, etc. SMM and advertising as such feature a mechanism of targeting. You can select exactly that part of the public that meets the specified criteria and present the desired information to this particular audience (Zotova et al., 2019).

## 2. Problem Statement

Modern man uses disposable tableware more and more, but does not think that the use, production, and disposal are irreparable harm to the environment, and many users do not throw it away in the places provided. It is necessary to raise user’s awareness of the use of tableware and cutlery made from biodegradable materials through social media. Promoting a product in social networks builds upon a feeling of personal appeal, due to the fact that social networks are perceived by people as systems or a channel of personal communication. Users themselves become advertising agents and begin to disseminate information on the promoted topic on the Internet. This is of particular value, since real people’s feedback is the best advertisement. Thus, the use of social networks in Russia to promote a line of biodegradable and edible tableware will attract consumers to environmental problems.

## 3. Research Questions

Plastic is the most popular material today for the production of packaging, disposable tableware and cutlery. The material has become best known for such properties as plasticity, lightness and at the same time strength. According to researchers, over the past 15 years, the planet has produced more plastic than in all previous years since its mass production. Of this huge amount, about 5 % is recyclable and can be reused for plastic products. For 2018, around 380 million tons of plastic are produced worldwide every year. From 1950 to 2018, about 6.3 billion tons of plastic were produced, of which about 9 % was

recycled and 12 % was burned. A huge amount of plastic waste inevitably ends up in the environment. Research suggests that 90 % of seabirds have plastic in their bodies (Wright, 2018).

In Russia, the main groups of people using disposable tableware and cutlery are young people, athletes, and tourists. They are also active users of social networks. In this regard, social networks are an effective platform for promoting these products. Most people in Russia are not ready to stop using plastic tableware and cutlery for the sake of the environment and believe that measures to replace plastic tableware and cutlery with biodegradable and edible will not bring significant benefits to the environment.

The study suggests that environmental concerns are stereotypically linked to femininity and that men are generally more concerned with maintaining their own gender identity.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to explore SMM promotion of biodegradable and edible tableware and cutlery. It is necessary to analyze the experience of promoting biodegradable and edible tableware in social networks, identify challenges, analyze basic techniques used by manufacturing companies, incorporate and unify their experience and mistakes to develop an SMM strategy for promoting biodegradable and edible tableware, market structure and trends, determine essential factors of its development and cause-and-effect relationships of processes, identify the features of supply and demand, evaluate the object from consumers' viewpoint, and obtain other data relevant to the study.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodology was based on the fact that the use of dishes made of biodegradable materials and edible tableware should be promoted among people who most often use all kinds of disposable tableware – travelers, tourists, athletes, youth, people with an increased rhythm of life, etc. using visual information, through the creation of unique content (Zotova et al., 2019). It is necessary to introduce your product to the public, and convey the idea of using biodegradable and edible tableware. The study is based on comparative analysis and expert interviews.

#### **6. Findings**

In February-March 2019, a comparative analysis of the promotion of biodegradable and edible tableware by the largest manufacturers in Moscow and the Moscow region was carried out in the following social networks:

1. V Kontakte.
2. Instagram.

*Ekovilka* is engaged in the supply and manufacture of nonchemical environmentally friendly tableware from biodegradable materials.

*Picneco* declares that all its products are made from natural materials and does not emit any substances harmful to humans. The company focuses on the fact that appreciation for the natural is now flaring up in Russia.

*Geovita* supplies products from corn starch and sugar cane to the domestic market.

*Biologic* supplies disposable biodegradable tableware made of rapidly renewable biological resources to the Russian market.

Table 1 provides a comparative analysis of promotional activities by companies producing biodegradable tableware in social networks.

**Table 1.** Promotional activities by companies producing biodegradable tableware in social networks

Promotional activity	Company			
	Ekovilka	Picneco	Geovita	Biologic
Product photos	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Photos from past events	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Information about upcoming events	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a
Photos of various foods in the brand's products	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a
Brand news	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a
Recipes for various dishes	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a
Entertainment content	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Product alternatives	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Cooperation invitations	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
Ecology posts	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a

Based on the analysis, these companies basically have their own official profiles on social networks, but not everyone actively uses these media platforms to promote and popularize their products.

There were no significant differences in administering social networks between the companies. Sponsored posts make up about 50 % of all content.

Large companies producing edible tableware are rare in the domestic market. When promoting this particular type of tableware of a new similar brand, there will be minimal competition and a good opportunity to occupy this niche in the domestic market.

## 7. Conclusion

A qualitative method of sociological research was used to identify the features and problems of promoting biodegradable and edible tableware in social networks in the context of a low popularity rating of these products in the Russian market and low awareness of the public. Twenty SMM-promotion experts were interviewed in February-March 2019.

The questions were aimed at solving the following tasks:

- 1.To highlight the most effective methods of promoting biodegradable and edible tableware.
- 2.To find out which social network will be most effective in promoting biodegradable and edible tableware.

3. To identify the most effective channels in the social network selected to promote biodegradable and edible tableware.

The interview found that integrated SMM events should include community branding. A group or community pages should visually depict the idea of a distribution product. It should be born in mind that the majority of the leads are young people.

It is not reasonable to be targeted at any particular social network. Subject to the tasks and product, an SMM specialist should focus on one or the other social network. There is no looping on one social network. Provided that the idea is typical and popular, it is advisable to mainly focus on competitors' expertise. On the other hand, if the idea is fresh and unique, it is necessary both to incorporate someone else's experience and try to introduce some new, if possible, effective ideas for promoting the product. When a new product or a social idea is launched to the market, it is not reasonable to spray all efforts on several social networks and choose just one. It is better to heavily focus on one specific selected social network at the initial stage of promotion (Kozlov et al., 2018).

Addressing the promotion of a product or idea with a social connotation, many of the interviewed experts agree that it is most effective to attract consumers to such social topics as environmental protection, etc. through various promotions and contests. Social media contests can help users deepen the content and generate it on their own. Most users, if they can get any bonus, are ready not only to take part in promotions themselves, but also to share information with their friends and followers (Rabadanova, 2020). This can maximize the audience by drawing attention to the content of the community and to the promoted topic by generally larger number of users. Feedback tools must be used. Various contests and promotions can encourage an indifferent consumer to use an unpopular product or idea with a social connotation.

According to the interviewees, to promote an unpopular and yet unknown product, such as biodegradable and edible tableware, the following methods are most effective to use:

1. Events, contests, promotions, etc.
2. Word of mouth. The more social network users learn about the product, the faster it will become known and popular among potential consumers.
3. Potential attraction of influencing bloggers.

Today there is a company called Opinion Leaders, which provides services in the field of contacts with famous bloggers both in Russia and in the world for a fee (Zotova & Kondratiev, 2019). However, it is possible to get opinion leadership interested in the idea of biodegradable and edible tableware under the pretext of raising their reputation due to the fact that they will promote, along with biodegradable and edible tableware, a current topic of environmental protection. Events, engaging bloggers and disseminating information virally are the main tools at the initial stage of promoting biodegradable and edible tableware.

The experts gave different numbers about the growing number of followers in the company's community on the social network Vkontakte, but everyone agreed that the main thing is not quantity but quality. It is very important to involve a community follower in the topic since he/she first joined the community, otherwise the company may lose them as potential clients.

According to the experts there is no universal way to promote any goods and services. Each

product has its own audience, tasks and goals, and therefore for each type of product you need to look for a specific approach to promotion.

Biodegradable and edible tableware is a fairly rare product on the market. It is necessary to create vivid content, since conventional advertising does not provide a lot of trust to a potential consumer. Therefore, a unique and interesting idea is needed for promotion, which will provoke consumer's emotions and feelings.

As a consequence, the following recommendations were shaped for promoting biodegradable and edible tableware, as well as similar products:

- creating a corporate identity,
- in the initial stage focusing efforts on one social network,
- organizing various promotions and competitions that can attract the consumer to the idea,
- attracting opinion leadership,
- avoiding unnecessary followers, but working well with existing ones, bright visual content is required,
- using the phenomenon of peer pressure in the promotion of biodegradable and edible tableware.

Peer pressure is the direct influence on people by peers changing their behavior, personal habits and attitudes (Zotova & Kondratiev, 2019). The use of the following setting – actions aimed at protecting the environment are good – will direct the consumer in all aspects of life to protect nature, including the purchase of goods made from biodegradable materials. The modern producer, as well as the modern consumer, needs to be “accustomed to green behavior”.

Thus, the study conducted in the form of a comparative analysis of companies' strategies in social networks and an expert interview made it possible to highlight the features of SMM promotion of biodegradable tableware. The main problem in promoting biodegradable tableware will be that the consumer does not understand the need for the product. Therefore, this misunderstanding should be overcome. When promoting products from biodegradable materials, it is necessary to pay due attention to the idea of environmental protection. The main element of promoting almost any product through social networks is vivid visual content.

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