

CO-PATENTING AND CO-OWNERSHIP AS DRIVERS FOR UNIVERSITY BUSINESS INNOVATING The case of public universities in Spain

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Purpose – The aim of the present paper is to explore whether in the context of universities as complex services, it is possible to develop new business models rooted in Service Dominant Logic (SDL), where the constituent actors generate resources and co-create value for and within the system. In this context, the innovating perspective (Russo-Spena et al. 2017) can bring to universities the need for the development of institutions in universities (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) that bring out new co-creation formulas (such as co-patenting and co-ownership), which in turn facilitate “system equilibrium” (balanced centricity) in university and business contexts.

Methodology – A conceptual approach is applied to develop and propose a framework for a deeper understanding of the “University Business Ecosystem” from the perspectives of SDL (Vargo and Lusch, 2016) and value co-creation (Russo-Spena and Mele, 2012; Quero and Ventura, 2015). Quantitative and qualitative case-study research was conducted using various methods of generating data, including personal interviews and a netnographic analysis of 95% of public universities in Spain.

Findings – The findings reveal that enterprises with a technological focus are increasing their relationship with universities and attempting to build up an ecosystem that we refer to as the “service business ecosystem”, and are building new strategies for value co-creation such as co-ownership, co-patenting, and co-ideation. These new formulas of value co-creation can be the basis for the design of strategies, but they need to be re-conceptualized from an open-economy, SDL, and ecosystem perspective.

Research limitations/implications (if applicable) – The paper is a conceptual study combined with an empirical approach. The empirical approach relies on a quantitative approach using 6 case studies in Spanish public universities. Research in the private sector and in other countries could improve the perspective afforded by the proposed model.

Practical implications – From the present study, we conclude that there is a need to develop specific strategies for innovating in the university context. New strategies are proposed in order to develop a University Business Innovation Model that facilitates the transition in which most universities are embedded: from closed to open innovation. The conceptual perspective, and notions of the Ecosystem and viable systems, can help to develop strategies to allow open innovation, improving the university’s third mission, namely the transfer of knowledge to business and other social actors.

Originality – The present paper suggests that University Business Innovation occurs within complex service structures such as public universities in Spain. The model aims to contribute to the literature given the lack of previous research that adapts SDL and innovation theory to the reality of a complex university system. Following an in-depth literature review, the paper redefines concepts such as innovation in complex service ecosystems, university business ecosystems, co-patenting, co-ownership, and co-ideation.

Key words (max 5): Innovating, Service Dominant Logic, value co-creation, co-patenting, co-ownership, service ecosystems, systems of value co-creation.

Paper type –Research paper

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