Use of Contact Form in Development of Prosumer Innovations

Elżbieta A. Wyslocka, Faculty of Management, Czestochowa University of Technology, Czestochowa, Poland
Waldemar Szczepaniak, Faculty of Management, Czestochowa University of Technology, Czestochowa, Poland
Renata Biadacz, Faculty of Management, Czestochowa University of Technology, Czestochowa, Poland
Dariusz Wielgórka, Faculty of Management, Czestochowa University of Technology, Czestochowa, Poland

ABSTRACT

Operations of modern companies involve adjusting offered products and services to requirements and expectations of customers which are changing permanently. In order to keep up with expectations of consumers, they are engaged in production, promotion and consumption of co-produced goods or services. This article focuses on the phenomenon of inter-prosumption, that is cooperation consumer – Internet user and manufacturer through web pages to develop new or improve existing products, which is in this case taste of food products or their better packaging. Creating product innovation by engaged consumers requires good communication between them and the manufacturer. Such communication is often possible through a website and a contact form.

KEYWORDS

Creation of Innovation, Food Industry, Innovation, Open Innovation, Prosumption

INTRODUCTION

Development of modern enterprises and the effectiveness of their management depend to a large extent on the level of innovations. Hence the great interest of both economists and business practitioners in raising the level of innovation in the Polish economy, which although improving, is still not at a satisfactory level\(^1\). Polish food industry has undergone a period of intense technological innovation, with the adjustment of conditions of production to the requirements of the European Union. Currently, the development of this industry is determined largely by product innovations, which are largely influenced by consumers. It is therefore important that companies of this industry properly use the potential in the development of innovations which have customers of their goods and services. This article analyzes the extent to which 116 companies operating in Polish food industry use contact forms available through their websites to develop product innovations. What is more, a direct survey based on 160 women and 140 men, which means 300 people in total has been performed in 2016. Above-mentioned was designed in order to research consumer activity in the area of assessment and engagement in the design of food products and their improvement. This framework has been covered in two separate segments. First part presents prosumption as a form of open innovation. Second part is empirical, and is based on the results of own research.

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CONCEPT OF INNOVATION

Innovations have played a significant part in social and economic development for several centuries. They are associated most often with progress and modernity, and their diffusion into the realm of the practical operations contributes to economic development. As a rule, enterprises treat them as a permanent part of the market game, strengthening implementation and realization of modern projects and favorable improvement of their competitive position (Firlej, 2014, p. 50; Pachura, 2012, pp. 122-129).

Origins of innovation can be identified back in time in the middle of the 18th century, when the First Industrial Revolution has taken place, and when innovation was implemented in the textile industry. Subsequent century - 19th is often cited in the literature as the “century of innovation”. This is because the number of innovations at that time was unprecedented by any other period in past regardless of the place on earth or scale of civilization development. According to W. Kwaśnicki (2015, p. 1), the greatest innovation of the 19th century was institutionalization of the search for innovation. However, it was not until the early 20th century that, thanks to the work of Joseph A. Schumpeter, especially the Theory of Economic Development (Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung), published in 1911, some researchers realized that innovation has been the basis of civilization development. On the other hand, it must be underlined, that Schumpeter’s theses were not universally accepted at first, and only Robert Solow’s groundbreaking work published in 1957 (Solow, 1957, pp. 312-320) contributed to the thesis that technological progress (knowledge development) is the greatest force driving economy (for Kwaśnicki, 2015, p. 2). According to the definition of J.A. Schumpeter, innovation is “a process of transforming existing possibilities into new ideas and implementing them into practical use, introducing new goods which are new for consumers or new kind of goods; introduction of a new production method practically unproven in a particular industry; opening up of a new market, i.e. one in which a given type of domestic industry has not previously operate, regardless of whether the market existed before or not; gaining a new source of raw materials or semi-finished products regardless of whether the source already existed or had to be created; introduction of a new organization of an industry, such as the introduction of monopoly or breaking one” (Schumpeter, 1960). Above-mentioned definition is one of the most often quoted in the literature on the topic. It should be underlined that Schumpeter had limited his understanding of innovation to commercialization of a new product or implementation of a new process. He appreciated the significance of knowledge, but at the same time he did not consider and research on relations between innovation and knowledge, because at the beginning of the 20th century the basic factors of production were land, capital and work. Knowledge and information were not as significant as they are nowadays (Lemanowicz, 2014, p. 307).

Schumpeter’s view on innovation was the starting point for subsequent analysis on the significance and impact of innovation on the economy.

Innovations are identified with a certain idea, innovative thought or concept, as well as the substantive effect and concrete change in the business or in the sense of a functional process of a cause-and-effect relationship, which are aimed at preparing and putting into practice innovative solutions (Makarski, 2013, p. 212). However, it should be noted that the key objective of innovation is not only to improve the rationality of the management of all entities involved in the supply of products from their place of production to their final destination, but also to improve the quality of life of society (Knee, 2002, p. 19).

Although in the literature the most frequently encountered classification of innovation is on product-related and process-related, since the release of the OECD Oslo Manual (2005) more and more attention is paid to organizational and marketing innovations. For the purpose of unification of the term innovation in the European Union, a definition of the Oslo Manual (2005) has been accepted. Therefore, innovation is defined as “(...) the introduction of new or significantly improved product (good or service) or process, a new marketing method, a new business organization, a workplace organization or external relations of the company.” (Haryanto & Haryono, 2015, p. 68).
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