Chapter 11
Open Innovation through Intermediaries in the Web: A Comparative Case Study

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ABSTRACT
Since its conception Open Innovation has become what can be called the reference mark for business innovation management. The aim of this chapter is threefold; first the authors explain the trends that have emerged from the use of web based open innovation by firms. Secondly, they will establish a relationship between these trends and the phases of the New Product Development (NPD) process. Thirdly, they will carry out a concrete qualitative analysis based on active intermediaries firms. The authors compare different case study of companies that offer themselves as intermediaries in the web for open innovation practices oriented to the product.

INTRODUCTION
Since its formulation by Henry Chesbrough, in 2003, Open Innovation has become what can be called the reference mark for business innovation management. Open Innovation derives from the phenomenon associated with globalization, people, labor and knowledge mobility, making nearly impossible that the best ideas will only be generated inside the R&D centers of big companies (Chesbrough, 2006). Nowadays, the best ideas surge everywhere and the companies must implement the mechanisms that will allow them to discover the ones that can generate value and incorporate them to their business.

Therefore, the Open Innovation model means that companies instead of internally develop innovations, they externalize this activity, through
alliances with universities, other companies and even competitors. In this sense, Laursen and Salter (2004) and Cohen, Nelson and Walsh (2002) allow us to identify what can be called the external sources of innovation. Even more, the internally developed innovations with little opportunity to be used by the company, can be shared with other companies or generate spin-offs. In this context companies tend to get involved with increasing levels of outsourcing and collaboration (Chatterjee, 1996, Howells, 1999) and innovation is becoming more distributed or open over time (Coombs, Harvey & Tether, 2003). So, a new problem has arisen from this collaborative context: who are the right partners and which is their mode of intervention?

Within this new reality of Open Innovation has emerged, as it did in the traditional innovation process, the figure of intermediary firm. In general, intermediaries are a set of actors who perform a variety of tasks in the innovation process (Howells, 2006: 715), but specifically, in the Open Innovation context, the intermediaries act and operate as organizations that match demand and supply (Lakhani, Jeppesen, Lohse & Panetta, 2007; Boudreau, Lacetera & Lakhani, 2008; Jeppesen & Lakhani, 2010). The interest in the types and roles of the intermediaries in innovation process are not new, it has emerged over the last 20 years from different literature fields. Nevertheless, from Open Innovation theory perspective, still there are many gaps to be filled. For this reason is interesting to initiate a line of research that will analyze the different forms in which Open Innovation can be carried out and develop a typology and framework of the different intermediaries surged from the different collaborative platform used in Open Innovation. We initiate this process by identifying the trends of Open Innovation in function of the type of collaborative platform used.

On the other hand, the development and introduction of new products into the market place has been critical for the profitability and growth of any company, but nowadays it has even a bigger role. In the past the product life cycle could span over years, even decades. Now many products life cycles only last a few months. That forces companies to deliver innovation to the market in the form of new products, at a rate not even dream before. As well, new product development and launching represent a high risk for companies, because the amount of resources consumed and the reduce proportion of successful new products. The success of a new product launching is closely linked to the new product development process, in particular how is followed, how many activities of the process have been undertaken, their level of completeness and how well they were executed (Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1986).

In this new context of new product development process, Open Innovation has become for the companies in the panacea to deliver this kind of product innovation. Its role is to improve the execution and support the activities of the process. These activities can be market or product oriented in function of the focus of the company efforts. One firm will be market oriented if it focuses in satisfying customer needs, on the other hand, a firm will be product oriented if it focuses in developing the product first. We will match the activities of new product development process (market and product oriented) with the trends observed for Open Innovation in function of the type of collaborative platform used.

Finally, from the empirical point of view, the present lack of open innovation indexes makes very difficult to carry out quantitative analysis, for this reason the tendency is to perform case studies. In this paper we will analyze the cases of companies that offer themselves as intermediaries in the web, specifically, we focus our study in those that have an active intervention in Open Innovation process. We focus in this kind of intermediary because they are presented as a solution of product oriented problems.

The aim of this paper is threefold; first we explain the trends that have emerged from the use of web based open innovation by firms. Sec-