ROLE OF CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT IN NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES: A CONCEPTIONAL RESEARCH¹

Araştırma Makalesi

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ABSTRACT

The success of industrial enterprises is made possible by new product development. Therefore, industrial enterprises need to develop new products according to customer demands and expectations in order to increase their competitiveness, sales and profitability. Participation of customers plays an important role in the development of new products. The needs, demands and expectations of the customers are constantly changing and need to be followed in the long run. Therefore, establishing long-term relationships with customers is very effective in developing new products. The aim of the participation of the customers in the development of new products in industrial marketing is to determine the needs of the customers, to put forward new ideas, to facilitate the product marketing and to minimize the costs. The other purpose of customer engagement is to obtain the necessary information resources for the enterprise. Various methods are used to ensure customer participation in new product development. These are survey, focus group interview and internet. Using these methods, customers' wishes and expectations are determined and new products are developed accordingly. The aim of this study is to discuss the importance of customer participation in the development of new products in a theoretical framework. In this context, customer participation

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in new product development process of industrial enterprises are examined. As a conclusion, establishing long-term good relations with customers with a relational marketing approach and providing customer participation in the development of new products make a significant contribution to the success of the enterprise. This study is expected to contribute to marketing managers and scientific literature on innovation management.

Keywords: Industrial Enterprises, New Product, New Product Development, Customer Involvement, Innovation Management, Customer Relationship Management.

ENDÜSTRİYEL İŞLETMELERİN YENİ ÜRÜN GELİŞTİRME SÜRECİNDE MÜŞTERİ KATILIMININ ROLÜ: KAVRAMSAL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZET

Endüstriyel işletmelerin başarısı yeni ürün geliştirmeyle mümkün olmaktadır. Dolayısıyla endüstriyel işletmelerin; rekabet güçlerini, satışlarını ve kârlılıklarını artırmaları ve kaliteli olabilmeleri için müsteri istek ve beklentilerine uygun yeni ürün geliştirerek pazara sunmaları gerekmektedir. Yeni ürün geliştirilmesinde müsterilerin katılımının önemli rolü bulunmaktadır. Müsterilerin ihtiyac, istek ve beklentileri sürekli değismekte ve uzun dönemde takip edilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle müşterilerle uzun dönemli ilişkiler kurma yeni ürün geliştirmede oldukça etkilidir. Endüstriyel pazarlamada müşterilerin yeni ürün geliştirilmesine katılımının amacı; müşteri istek ve ihtiyaçlarını belirlemek, yeni fikirler ortaya koymak, ürün pazarlamasını kolaylaştırmak ve maliyetleri en düşük düzeye indirmektir. Müşteri katılımının diğer amacı ise işletme için gerekli olan bilgi kaynaklarını elde etmektir. Yeni ürün geliştirmeye müşteri katılımını sağlamak için çeşitli yöntemler kullanılmaktadır. Bunlar; Anket, Odak Grup Görüşmesi ve İnternettir. Bu yöntemler kullanılarak müşterilerin istek ve beklentileri belirlenmekte ve bu doğrultuda yeni ürün geliştirilmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, yeni ürün geliştirilmesinde müşteri katılımını teorik çerçevede tartışmak ve önemini ortaya koymaktır. Bu kapsamda calısmada endüstrivel isletmeler ve veni ürün, veni ürün gelistirme süreci ve endüstriyel işletmelerin yeni ürün geliştirme sürecinde müşteri katılımı konuları incelenmektedir. Çalışmanın sonunda, yeni ürün geliştirme sürecinde müşterilerin düşüncelerine başvurulması ve bu doğrultuda ürün geliştirilmesi gerektiği sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Müşterilerle uzun dönemli iyi ilişkiler kurularak başka bir ifade ile ilişkisel pazarlama anlayışı geliştirilerek yeni ürün geliştirmeye müşteri katılımının sağlanması işletmenin başarısına önemli katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın pazarlama yöneticilerine ve yenilik yönetimi bilimsel yazınına katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Endüstriyel İşletmeler, Yeni Ürün, Yeni Ürün Geliştirme, Müşteri Katılımı, Yenilik Yönetimi, Müşteri İlişkileri Yönetimi.

1. INTRODUCTION

The need for new product development and innovation has overemphasized in contemporary management literature to challenge with market conditions that change continuously. The role of new product development overemphasizes both marketing and innovation management literature. The new product development stated as "value creation strategy". The aim of new product development is important to create superior customer value beyond the development of goods and services. The creation of new customer value is important in terms of obtaining sustainable competitive advantage and differentiation from competitors and it also allows to increase of profit and incomes (Svedsen et al., 2011: 514; Rocca et al., 2016: 45-46). "Value creation strategy" is also expressed as innovation. Innovation is defined as the application of new ideas to products, processes or other high-added-value aspects of enterprise operations (Sahinli and Kilinc, 2013: 336). In other words, innovation is money-saving or innovation that adds value to the economy. Enterprises need constantly changing and renewing their products and production methods to ensure their continuity. In this respect, innovation plays an important role in the development of countries and in the achievements of enterprises (Bulut and Er, 2012: 73). Innovation is the transformation of new ideas (goods, services, methods, etc.) into value-producing output. Innovation is used to solve problems and respond more effectively to human needs, and it is not just R&D.

Most of marketing researches about new product development do not only deal with the issue from consumer aspect but it also deals producer aspect. Customers are seen as information source for many enterprises. Researchers emphasize that the understanding of customer needs and problems with information that obtain from customers are critical success factor. Therefore, customer involvement in new product development is more important. Customer involvement helps to obtain competitiveness across the rivals because it decreases development costs, achieves saving from development effectiveness, productivity and quality. Customer develop involvement helps to supplier to obtain superior market performance constantly. Customer involvement in new product development not only affects the development process but also affect subsequent marketing works. Customer involvement in new product development process shortens of launching time, enable the new ideas and producing solutions. Product development and innovation in industrial markets carry out with customer-supplier relations (Li et al., 2015: 1041-1042; Laage-Hellman et al., 2014: 258: Svedsen et al., 2015: 513-514). Relations with customer provide success factor for new product and these relations should be long term. The aim of this study is to reveal the significance of customer involvement and discuss the role of customer involvement in a theoretical frame, in this

context after given information about industrial enterprises, new products and new product development process, the role of customer involvement in new product development of industrial enterprises is examined.

2. INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES AND NEW PRODUCT

When the enterprises classify with regard to economic structure, they are addressed as three groups that are producer enterprises, seller (commercial) enterprises, service-producers. Industrial enterprises take part in good producer enterprises in this grouping. Therefore, big and small all enterprises which are operate in industry and produce physical product are referred as industrial enterprises (Mucuk, 2014: 42). After industrial markets put the raw material and semi-finished products through the process in order to meet human needs and they present the outputs to the market. These enterprises operate diverse sector such as automobile, tire, dye and they product new type products (Tengilimoglu et al., 2014: 36-37). Industrial enterprises are the enterprises that are produce goods and services such as raw materials, auxiliary products, education, maintanence and repair etc. (Unsalan ve Simsekler, 2011: 29). According to this defination, industrial enterprises not only produce goods but also produce services. The market which consist of these enterprises is industrial market, the products which enterprises produce are industrial products.

The products that industrial enterprises produce and put on market affect enterprises future. Nowadays industrial enterprises should follow the market closely. Existence of industrial enterprises depend on develop new products to respond the changing customer wants and needs in the face of changing technology, globalization, and increasing competition. Top management in industrial enterprises get the 'either produce or die' message. Therefore, enterprises produce new products and put them on market in order to survive. New product is a new for enterprises. The new products which are developing in market penetration stage of product life cycle should be different from other products on the market. One product should be different in many ways. Authentic thoughts can transform a new product, or some changes can make in existing products. New products can be an invention or can be a new product for enterprises. New product, in the meaning of invention, is the product which is not on the market and is qualified an invention by everyone.

The new product in the meaning of invention is the product that has not been in the market and everyone evaluate it an invention. New product for the market is to put on the market the available product which has not known in the market. On the one hand new product for enterprises is the product which has been taken to product mix by a enterprises for the

first time (Altug, 2017: 20-21; Gulcubuk, 2009: 190). On the other hand new product can be original, developed and changed product (Cengiz et al., 2005: 134). If one product is a new product it must be original, developed or changed product.

If industrial enterprises want to be sucess they should attach importance to new product concept. The capacity of development new product of industrial enterprises and capabilities have centered today's developing and changing enterprises world and new product development has been shown key for success.

3. NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Its important to determine and develop new product ideas and strategies for enterprises to survive and success. New product development is carried out within the framework of strategies. Enterprises general strategies concern closely the product development strategies. Product development process is made with two way. Either new products can develop by enterprises or the new product can be buy by another enterprises through buying patent and licence. The collabration among other departments in new product development is very important. For this, managers have to adopt system approach (Altug, 2017: 20-22).

The reason of the develop new product are increasing competition, increasing customer needs and wants, difussion of information, decreasing product life cycles, providing values to the customers. The successful product development incereases enterprises profit and incomes additionally it contributes to customer commitment and awereness of enterprises (Chien ve Chen, 2010: 186). Because new product development process is a difficult process, enterprises in this process should enter the planning period that is short, middle, long. Enterprises should have strategic perspective, effective marketing information, a good research and development department, efficient leadership behavior to succeed in new product development process (Durmaz and Yardimcioglu, 2016: 382-383). The new product development process is rather complicated. From every hundred ideas, just one can put in practice. There are some steps which are practiced in new product development process. These are idea development, concept test, technical feasibility analysis, testing of product, profitability analysis, test marketing and launch of new product (Balta, 2006: 122-123, Bekoglu and Ergen, 2016: 925-926).

• *Idea development*; new ideas can come from various resources which are enterprises inside or outside. While resources from inside in the enterprises are sales personnel and management department,

resources from outside of the enterprises are customers and rivals. After the ideas determined, ideas evaluate whether appropriate with strategies.

- Concept test; after the ideas are eliminated, there remain some ideas
 which proper to strategies and resources of enterprises. These ideas are
 deeply examined with concept test. The concept test is to look with
 customers' perspective to the current situation. Purchase possibility of
 product is estimated in concept test.
- Technical feasibility analysis and testing of product; the product decided to produce are transform to the real product and physical product are revealed. Necessary technical requirement is defined and prototype of product is produced and product performances are tested with feasibility analysis.
- Profitability analysis; the cash flows are planned to measure profitability potential; managers expect that the net cash flows will surpass the initial investment and a minor part of investment also will turn back.
- *Test marketing;* test marketing is to offer product some geographical areas instead of offer products to all market.
- Launch of the new product; the time of launch is rather important. If the product launch to the market early, necessities are not created already. If the product launch late; because the rivals can enter the market previously, competitive advantage can be lost.

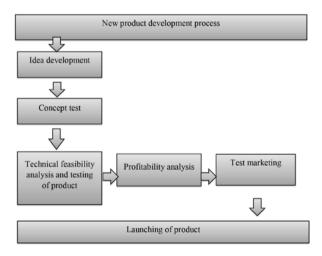


Figure 1. New Product Development Process

Source: Balta, 2006: 123.

In recent years, some models and assumptions which effect of new product success have been revealed in studies made by researcher. Bobrow (1997) asserts that organizational culture qualification underlying product development, human and physical resources, strategic tendency affect directly success of new product development process. Chorda (2002) has revealed that top management support is important for the effectiveness of new product development process (Cengiz et al., 2005: 134).

4. CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT IN NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Industrial marketing has based on the change idea among enterprises. The experiences won with using product of customers bring them valuable enterprises partner position and they are important knowledge resource for product development (Hemetsberger ve Godula, 2007: 1). Therefore, industrial customers' needs should be identified within the shortest time. The experiences and ideas of customers have an important place to identify the new product development problems (Stenmark et al., 2011: 538). Customer involvement in new product development has importantly affected the future of enterprises and customers' roles in producing and transferring products are increasing gradually (Anning-Dorson, 2018: 269).

The small enterprises need more customer involvement to win financial resource and more time (Stenmark et al., 2011: 538). Nowadays customers not only buy products and services but also take part in processes which are from ideas stage to end user stage. Therefore, enterprises should make structural alteration to integrate the customers to the new product development process (Pado, 2017: 76-83). There are many studies made associated with customer involvement to new product development process.

The extent to which understand the subject of the customer needs of innovating enterprises is a success factors of new product development process. Customer involvement as a source allow to take advantages from customers. The enterprises performance increase when customers are effectively utilized. According to model which is developed by Anning-Dorson (2018: 271-272), the customer involvement ability enhances enterprises innovation potential and innovation (product and process) is mediator variable between enterprises performance and customer involvement. This model has shown in Figure 2.

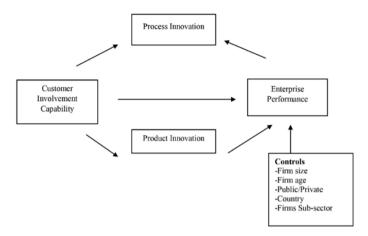


Figure 2. The Relation Between Customer Involvement, Innovation and Enterprise Performance

Source: Anning-Dorson, 2018: 272.

The successful innovator enterprises understand better the customers' necessities and they collaborate with them more frequent. Industrial enterprises ensure the participation of customers' various purposes, the main reason of involvement of customers is to understand the customers' needs better. In addition to this, customer involvement decreases development costs of innovator enterprises, increase effectiveness of development process, shorten the time of the product launch and save ideas and solutions. Customers have a part in co-developer in new product development (Laage-Hellman et al., 2014: 258; Durmaz and Yardimcioglu, 2016).

First steps of new product development, enterprises should know how to meet customers' needs. Therefore, external communication is one of the success factors of development products for key customers. The reason of this, that kind of rational communication increase the quality of development process, knowledge variety and quality of knowledge. Customer involvement in new product development is important to get in contact between customer and supplier. New product development strategy is one of the value creation strategy (Svedsen et al., 2011: 514). Increasing the variety of product, shortening product lifetime, increasing competition and enhancement of imitation of product increase the significance of new sources to develop new products. Belkahla and Thriki (2011) have referred that, the knowledge obtained by involvement of customers should integrate into organizational structure. Besides, enterprises need to create easy communication platforms with customer by integrating of growing

communication technologies (Pado, 2017: 78). The direct communication with customers present rich information to suppliers. Information obtained by customer relationship increase the quality of product development process (Ylimaki, 2014: 997).

Customer-supplier relationship is rather important for innovation and product development in industrial markets. The customer relationship should be established to sold of products but later these relations should be use in new product development. The supplier-customer relations in industrial markets not only allows idea creation but also reveal new solution. Customers can involve the product development at every stage. There are many ways to integrate the customers to new product development. These are traditional methods such as questionnaire, focus groups, leader customer management and virtual integration methods (Laage-Hellman et al., 2014: 261-274). Customer involvement helps to solve incompatibility between product development plans and enterprises technology.

Who participate the product development process? Customer involvement is not adequate for product development. Besides, enterprises should have managerial abilities such as communication, mediation, motivation for effective customer involvement. While enterprises determine who will participate the product development, enterprises consider partners characteristic and they have to make a choice between leader customers and ordinary customers. As a concept, leader customers are to be motivated and talented customers and these customers have a talent which is to make important effects in new product development process. Enterprises must find relevant partners who proper its infrastructure. Customers' knowledge level is rather important to support product development attempt. Besides, the success of new product development process has been affected from participation of attractive customers. If a customer is important in terms of enterprises, integrating him into to product development process can be a good tool to increase sales and strengthen the relations (Laage-Hellman et al., 2014: 262-274).

There are positive relations between customer involvement and new product development. Especially production of high level technical and engineering products, enterprises should provide more customer involvement because technological investments are high cost. Enterprises must take advantage of customer involvement so as to reduce market uncertainty (Percin, 2006: 370). Morgan et al. (2018) The studies related to "customer involvement in new product development process" are summarized Table 1.

Table 1. The Studies Related to Customer Involvement in New Product Development Process

Authors	Findings
Chang and Taylor (2016)	The benefit of customer involvement is quite large in small enterprises and developing country.
Mahr et al. (2014)	Constitution of new products with customers create high level related information. Therefore, the new product development is affected positively. Lead user involvement that effect market and financial performance positively lead to obtain both new information and related information.
Ngo and O'cass (2013)	Customer involvement in new product development process lead to development of enterprises performance. Customer involvement make functional technical and nontechnical innovation capacity of enterprises.
Coviello and Joseph (2012)	Enterprises which make successful innovation have customer involvement at the stage of commercialization, development, testing and feedback.
Mahr and Lievens (2012)	Lead customers are sensitive to contribute to value in comparison with other customers and they help development of functions of new product.
Fuchs and Schreler (2011)	Customer empowerment and interaction in the process of new product development lead to improve perceived customer satisfaction, to cause more positive behavior towards enterprises and to strengthen intention to buy products from enterprises.
Bonner (2010)	Interaction with customers while developing new products affect customer knowledge quality positively.
Carbonell et al. (2009)	Customer involvement in new product development leads technical quality and innovation speed. As a result, this affects the competitive advantage and sales performance of new products.
Fang et al. (2008)	Customer involvement in new product development affects knowledge sharing which effect new product value positively and investment relations.
Yli-Renko and Janakiraman (2008)	The impact of customer involvement to new product development performance depends on the size of customer portfolio. When the customer integrates with enterprises, enterprises develop more products. The number of customer portfolio leads more products.
Joshive and Sharma (2004)	The development of customer knowledge affects product performance positively. The development of customer knowledge and reward systems is provided by new product development teams.

Source: Morgan et al., 2018: 500-501.

In summary, research shows that industrial enterprises are significantly influential in customer' involvement in the new product development process.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Industrial enterprises offer industrial products and services to their customers in industrial markets. Therefore, industrial enterprises which have important role in production should be growth and provide their continuity. The key of growth is to be success and be skilled on the subject of product development in competitive environment (Fesel, 2014). The industrial enterprises which cannot develop new products do not succeed. Industrial enterprises should respond the customers wants, needs, and expectation in order to be success, develop and gain competitive advantage. This might be possible with development new products which match industrial enterprises' needs, wants and expectation. New product development according to needs and expectation of customer require customer involvement. Customer information is needed to determine customer needs and expectation and offer appropriate product. In order to efficiently manage the information that obtains with customer involvement, it is necessary to integrate information to organizational structure. The quality of development process increases with the ease of obtaining information. Customer involvement is provided to new product development process to do this. Enterprises should integrate the customers to new product development process in order to decrease costs, shorten launching time, produce products which are proper customers' needs.

When the results of the studies are examined, there appears positive relationships between customer involvement and new product development performance. Customer involvement in new product development increases market presentation speed of product, provides information sharing, increases coordination efficiency, increases quality of information, facilitates the formation of related information, positively affect the new product performance, strengthens the intention of purchasing products.

The role of customer involvement in new product development process is examined theoretically in this study. With this framework, the studies related the subject have been examined and evaluated. It is stated that, in the context of innovation, customer involvement in the new product development process increases productivity, effectiveness, quality and success. Therefore, it is argued that industrial enterprises should attach importance to customer involvement. In the new product development

process, customers' thoughts need to be considered and product development is required in this direction. Customer involvement to new product development provide important contribution to industrial enterprises success by establishing good long-term relationships with customers and developing an understanding of relationship marketing.

As a result, it is thought that this study will reveal importance of customer involvement in new product development process and will contribute to empirical studies on innovation management in terms of literature. In addition, an empirical study to support this theoretical work will give more meaningful results.

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