

Chapter 9

Innovation Resistance: A Rising Tide of Consumerism

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ABSTRACT

Innovation resistance has become a subject of increasing concern to academics and practitioners in recent years. Dealing with innovation resistance appropriately plays a very important role for companies. In this chapter, innovation resistance is examined in the context of consumerism. Innovation resistance concept and innovation resistance models are explored thoroughly and the relationship with innovation resistance and perceived risk is emphasized in the context of consumerism. Then, overcoming innovation resistance and the ways how to deal with barriers are explained and finally this chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and managerial implications.

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism is not a new concept for marketing, but it is a concept of growing importance in the recent years. Today, many established non-governmental organizations included consumption and consumerism in their agendas (Brown and Vergragt, 2016). Researchers have studied the phenomenon of consumerism from within different dimensions. However, its relationship with innovation resistance has not been dealt with accurately. Consumerism is a social and economic order that is based on the systematic creation and fostering of a desire to purchase goods or services in even greater amounts. The term “consumerism” is also used to refer to the consumerist movement or consumer activism, which seeks to protect and inform consumers by requiring such practices as honest packaging and advertising, product guarantees, and improved safety standards (Mirchevska & Markova, 2011). Consumerism defines a specific analysis category that studies the phenomenon that came up with mass production development and consumption expansion (Bostan, Burciu & Grosu, 2010). It has been defined for example as “organized group pres-

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sure which has become a set of values held not only by the consumers of a company's products but also within the wider society" (Jones, Hillier, Comfort & Eastwood, 2005). Kotler (1972) defined consumerism "as a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers in relation to sellers". By consumerism, it is understood that assembly of ideologies regarding social activism, pressure groups (consumer associations) and in general the trend that tries to raise the rights and the consumer's power in relation to the entities (Bostan, Burciu & Grosu, 2010).

Innovation has attracted considerable interest recently in both profit and non-profit oriented organizations (Lee, 2012) and it is an important topic of study for a number of different disciplines such as economics, management, engineering, and sociology (O'Sullivan & Dooley, 2009). Adoption and consumer resistance to innovation are important topics in innovation literature. Even consumers have some benefits from innovations, they can resist them. If the uncertainty about innovations decrease, then adoption of consumers to the innovations rise. The term "resistance" contains the idea of opposition, which can be expressed passively or actively (Roux, 2007). Innovation resistance is the resistance offered by consumers to an innovation, either because it poses potential changes from a satisfactory status quo or it conflicts with their belief structure (Ram & Sheth, 1989). Thus, consumer resistance to innovations is a special case of general resistance to change (Ram, 1987). Innovation resistance varies in degree. Resistance leads consumers' response towards three different forms which are (Khan & Hyunwoo, 2009); postponement, opposition, and rejection. *Postponement* occurs when consumers delay the adoption of an innovation. It simply refers to pushing the adoption decision to future. A postponement may take the form of acceptance or rejection after a certain time period. *Opposition* refers to protesting the innovation or searching for further information "after" the trial (Kuisma, Laukkanen & Hiltunen, 2007). An opposition might lead the consumers to search for more information to decide to accept or reject the innovation. The most extreme form of resistance is directly *rejection* an innovation. Rejection may occur if the innovation does not offer any valuable advantage or has too much risk.

Opposition behavior can range from verbal complaints to negative word of mouth or even protest action (Claudy, 2011). Consumer boycotts are the structural form of "a vote in the marketplace" as the weapon of resistance (Penaloza & Price, 1993) however they are only minimal forms of opposition compared to a more massive rebellion against the consumer society (Roux, 2007). A consumer boycott was defined as an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace (Friedman, 1985). A review of past literature provides a variety of definitions of boycotts. Garreth (1987) defines a boycott as "a concerted refusal to do business with a particular person or business to obtain concessions or to express displeasure". Yüksel & Mryteza (2009) define consumer boycotts "as the collective action of foregoing or withholding consumption in response to perceived wrongdoing". What is common across these definitions is the fact that boycotts are a form of resistance behavior, typically a planned collective action by a consumer community in order to express displeasure or achieve specific objectives (Al-Shebil, Rasheed & Al-Shammari, 2011).

The central dimension that organizes innovation resistance is uncertainty (Kline & Rosenberg, 1986). Innovation always involves some degree of perceived risks because of uncertainty (Khan & Hyunwoo, 2009). The degree of perceived risk associated with using an innovation is one of the main barriers that promote rejection of innovations. Perceived risk represents a consumer's subjective perception of uncertainty about the consequences and outcomes of adopting an innovation (Reinders, 2010). Perception of the risk associated with the adoption of an innovation is an important determinant of innovation resistance.

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