

Drivers of Innovation: From Motivation for Ideation to Assessments and Market Reception of New Product Proposals

The dissertation by Marianne Harbo Frederiksen revolves around certain drivers of innovation with a main focus on product innovation. The dissertation takes as its point of departure the fact that going for innovation can be a risky business, as many firms experience difficulties turning their innovation efforts into successful products. In that connection, recent research has shown that higher performing firms have new product strategies directing and integrating their entire new product development much more often than less successful firms. This means that the chances of success increase when managers establish objectives and, hence, it indicates the need for overall management of intra-firm innovation activities.

The dissertation focuses attention to factors that firms can consider when seeking to increase the accuracy of management initiatives for (1) encouraging employees to engage in online ideation and (2) ensuring the focus of assessors and assessments on the innovation potential of new product proposals.

First, the findings from an investigation of what motivates the employees in a large multinational firm to contribute to ideation through an online system show that four factors are particularly important for engaging employees in such work: the sense of achievement gained from making contributions, *recognition* from peers and superiors through feedback and rewards, *relations* to peers and superiors, and the work of *ideation itself*. Recognition is consistently the most important factor. However, the findings also demonstrate that these motivation factors are interconnected, not independent, components. The insights provide an important understanding of how management initiatives can influence employees' motivation for engaging in online ideation.

Second, the dissertation discusses and illustrates what product innovation is and what it is not. This involves an investigation of whether and how widespread definitions of innovation match firms' overall objectives of pursuing an innovation strategy. Based on, e.g., data collected both in an educational setting and in firm settings, the dissertation conceptualizes a set of criteria for identifying the innovation potential of early new product proposals. The suggestion is to assess such ideas on *novelty*, *usefulness*, and *market potential*, since these criteria mirror the most important determinants of new product success in the marketplace.

Third, this criterion-concept is used as the basis for investigating ways that assessors and assessments focus on the innovation potential of new product proposals. Interviews with the members of the product committee of a Danish firm and some of the firm's customers and users shed light on what those assessing new product proposals during the development process can and will focus on, and also on whether their assessments compare with impressions formed in the market after release of the final product. The findings highlight the benefits to be gained when management ensures that assessors of new product proposals *focus on the corporate new product strategy*. Moreover, the findings illustrate that *intra-firm assessments may not completely match* how customers and users perceive the qualities of the final product.

Finally, a recurring theme of the dissertation is identified as *transparency*. The findings presented throughout the dissertation suggest that there are both pros and cons of transparency in relation to management initiatives for ensuring employee involvement with online ideation and a product committee's assessments of the innovation potential of new product proposals. The dissertation discusses the implications of these findings as related to both innovation research and innovation management.