

Customer Involvement in the Development of New Sustainable Products: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract : The acceptance of sustainable products by the final consumer is still one of the challenges of the industry, which constantly seeks alternative approaches to successfully be accepted in the global market. A large set of methods and approaches have been discussed and analysed throughout the literature. Considering the current need for sustainable development and the current pace of consumption, the need for a combined solution towards the development of new products became clear, forcing researchers in product development to propose alternatives to the previous standard product development models. This paper presents, through a systemic analysis of the literature on product development, eco-design and consumer involvement, a set of alternatives regarding consumer involvement towards the development of sustainable products and how these approaches could help improve the sustainable industry's establishment in the general market. The initial findings of the research show that the understanding of the benefits of sustainable behaviour lead to a more conscious acquisition and eventually to the implementation of sustainable change in the consumer. Thus this paper is the initial approach towards the development of new sustainable products using the fashion industry as an example of practical implementation and acceptance by the consumers. By comparing the existing literature and critically analysing it this paper concluded that the consumer involvement is strategic to improve the general understanding of sustainability and its features. The use of consumers and communities has been studied since the early 90s in order to exemplify uses and to guarantee a fast comprehension. The analysis done also includes the importance of this approach for the increase of innovation and ground breaking developments, thus requiring further research and practical implementation in order to better understand the implications and limitations of this methodology.

Keywords : consumer involvement, products development, sustainability, eco-design

Conference Title : ICPD 2015 : International Conference on Product Development

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : August 06-07, 2015