

Virtual Customer Integration in Innovation Development: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract : The aim of this study is to answer the following research question: What do we know about virtual customer integration in innovation development based on existing empirical research? The paper is based on a systematic review of 136 articles which were published in the past 16 years. The analysis focuses on three areas: what forms of virtual customer integration (e.g. netnography, online co-creation, virtual experience) have been applied in innovation development; how have virtual customer integration methods effectively been utilized by firms; and what are the influences of virtual customer integration on innovation development activities? Through the detailed analysis, the study provides researchers with broad understanding about virtual customer integration in innovation development. The study shows that practitioners and researchers increasingly pay attention on using virtual customer integration methods in developing innovation since those methods have dominant advantages in interact with customers in order to generate the best ideas for innovation development. Additionally, the findings indicate that netnography has been the most common method in integrating with customers for idea generation; while virtual product experience has been mainly used in product testing. Moreover, the analysis also reveals the positive and negative influences of virtual customer integration in innovation development from both process and strategic perspectives. Most of the review studies examined the phenomenon from company's perspectives to understand the process of applying virtual customer integration methods and their impacts; however, the customers' perspective on participating in the virtual interaction has been inadequately studied; therefore, it creates many potential interesting research paths for future studies.

Keywords : innovation, virtual customer integration, co-creation, netnography, new product development

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