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CREATING VALUE FOR CUSTOMERS IN THE PROCESS OF NEW TEXTILE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Purpose. *In line with the contemporary requirements of the fashion market and the development of new production technologies, which can be adapted to these requirements, new opportunities are emerging in the production segment of the textile and clothing industry. This industry can be characterized as creative industry in which innovation leads to sustainable development and competitive advantage. Innovation of products in fashion industry is a continuous process which should be properly managed so that its outcome could produce satisfactory results. As Ekstroem and Karlsson [1] state, customer needs analysis has become more important over the time. Based on this statement, companies are becoming more customers oriented, and they tend to involve customers in process of new product development in order to increase the value outcomes of customer participation [2] in mentioned process. This paper presents the evaluation of textile products value creation through the implementation of innovations in the development of new products based on customer involvement in the new product development process by gathering customer opinions.*

Scientific novelty. *The research part of this paper seeks to examine the degree of product value creation for customers based on their own involvement in the process of developing new products. Focusing on the place of the involvement of customers in the process of creating values in different phases of the product development process and the degree of customer satisfaction with the outcome of the process in which they took a role. A small number of papers actually focuses on examination of the level of customers involvement within the various phases of the process of developing new textile products, and this paper is mainly oriented on examination within idea generation phase which could serve as an aid in new product development “front-end” decision making.*

Practical value. *The results of this research could be used as a guidance for formulating the future strategic steps of innovation within new product development based on ideas generated under the influence of the dialog between companies and customers. Practical value of this paper is, also, reflected in encouraging domestic organizations to innovate and position themselves more favourable while building widely recognizable brand. While accepting the fact*

that customers are at the center of attention and that they should not be approached with an "one size fits all" attitude, because different segments of customers have different expectations and different perceptions of values.

***Keywords:** New product development, Value creation, Customers involvement, Sustainable consumption, Textile and clothing industry*

Objectives. The main objective of this paper is reflected in highlighting the customers involvement importance in new textile product development process on value creation and relative impact of it on sustainability of consumption of products developed in this manner.

Methodology. The main research question and hypothesis based on it is as follows:

«Do consumers think that the value created through the development of a new product is the outcome of their participation in the process of idea generation?»

H0: Customers think that value creation in new textile product development is not based on their participation in idea generation phase.

In order to clarify this issue and test the formulated hypotheses the questionnaire for gathering customers opinions is created. This questionnaire is inspired by research of the impact of customer participation on the customer's share of the new product value pie conducted by Fang et al [3] and another research in this field by Chan et al [4]. Based on that the questionnaire takes a consideration upon dimensions of customer participation in new textile products idea generation and new textile product value obtained by customers. This research included 265 respondents, actually consumers of textile products in Eastern Serbia, whose answers were processed using ANOVA test within SPSS software package.

Research results. The market for textile and fashion products in the present times of rapid change gets forms of globalization [5]. Fedajev et al [6] come to the conclusion that textile industry currently has great impact in Serbian economy and perspective to take its advantages and overcome the key problems successfully. Understanding the customer is becoming a prerequisite for new product success. Yet the transfer of customer knowledge from marketer to designer still proves to be problematic [7]. Grönlund et al [8] state that customer integration imposes risks when practicing open innovation such as the potential loss of know-how, being overly dependent on customers' views, and being limited to incremental innovation. Still, not integrating customers at all might expose firms to even greater risks. Achieving cooperation with customers can have an effect on new product development costs reduction, as well as reaching wider creative efficiency. Thereby, cost reduction is connected to avoiding the costs of the trial and error process, and the costs of faulty prototypes in process

of attaining the desired textile product [9]. Customers opinions, ideas and experiences are valuable for new product development teams, and through forming this information base they are becoming able to identify problems and to find innovative solutions [10].

Table 1 – ANOVA test results

ANOVA					
Contribution by customers involvement in new textile product development					
	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	1,528	2	0,764	1,570	0,210
Within Groups	127,506	262	0,487		
Total	129,034	264			

ANOVA test results show that the realized level of significance of F test is 0,210, which is higher than $\alpha = 0,05$. Based on these results follows the conclusion about acceptance of hypothesis H0: Customers think that value creation in new textile product development is not based on their participation in idea generation phase.

Conclusion. Therefore, it is considered that the results of the research are related to the situation in the region in which the survey was conducted. Textile industry in Eastern Serbia region has experienced significant losses and it is just beginning to recover itself. Customers think that their opinions are not considered in new product value creation and development process. This might mean that many small and medium-sized textile firms operating in this area have not developed an adequate system of collecting customer ideas. There also remains a question whether they would actually innovate based on the customer's opinions, which opens a new discussion field and new research possibilities in testing the very will of organizations to accept such participation of customers in this process. We believe that the formation of a customers opinion acquisition system in the phase of generating ideas leads to the creation of value of products that would result in sustainable consumption of textile products, and that companies in the environment are forced to accept new directions of business and reject ideals from the past if they want to achieve a competitive advantage in the modern textile market.

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