

6-11-2016

## MEASURING CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT DURING THE CREATION OF INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF AN INSTRUMENT (SUMMARY)

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### Recommended Citation

Buffart, Mickaël and Tornikoski, Erno T. (2016) "MEASURING CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT DURING THE CREATION OF INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF AN INSTRUMENT (SUMMARY)," *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*: Vol. 36 : Iss. 9 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol36/iss9/3>

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

**MEASURING CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT DURING THE  
CREATION OF INNOVATIVE BUSINESSES: DEVELOPMENT  
AND VALIDATION OF AN INSTRUMENT**

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**Principal Topic**

In this study, we propose an index to measure the degree of customer involvement in the creation of innovative businesses. According to the Lean Startup approach, involving customers at early stages of new business creation increases the likelihood of success (Ries 2011; Blank & Dorf 2012), but is this really the case? It is difficult to answer this question because we lack theoretically consistent measure of customer involvement during new venture creation. Our study intends to fill in this gap by proposing an index of customer involvement. It can be conceptualized by looking at the intensity and the content of exchanges between an emerging business and its customers (Gruner and Homburg, 2000; Roser et al., 2013). The notion of business model, on the other hand, describes the architecture of an innovative business (Amit and Zott, 2011; Chesbrough and Rosenbloom, 2002). We mix these two streams of literature to design a measurement tool of customer involvement. For the five customer-related blocks of business model (Osterwalder, 2004), we propose four dimensions of customer involvement: size of the interaction, frequency of interaction, level of contribution and the exploitation of customer feedback.

**Method**

We develop our index following the method proposed by MacKenzie et al. (2005) to develop behavioral measurement models. Based on the preliminary instrument deduced from the existing literature, we generate items for the different sub-dimensions of customer involvement. We test the face validity of the construct with interviews of nascent entrepreneurs. Then, we collect data from a population of French high-tech startups and we test the validity of the instrument following recommendations of Diamantopoulos (2001) for formative constructs.

**Results and Implications**

The empirically validated instrument indicates the degree of customer involvement, and it measures how, how much, when, and for what purpose the customers were involved during the startup process. This can help validate some of the key assumptions of the Lean Startup approach (Ries, 2011). It also creates conceptual linkages between new product development and entrepreneurship literatures to help us understand the role of customer involvement in the design of new innovative businesses.

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