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The enablers, inhibitors and triggers of New Product Development in SMEs

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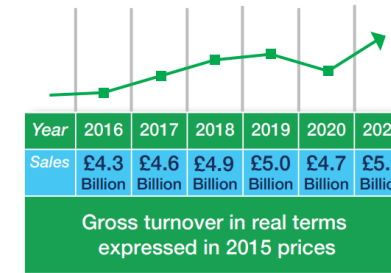
Introduction

SMEs are generalised in the literature as resource-constrained organisations with limited finances and personnel compared to larger food firms. As a result, these large firms can purchase highly valuable Market Intelligence (MI) data to inform their NPD and marketing processes. Given the financial value of MI data, SMEs have difficulty accessing formalised MI and remain disposed to utilising personal networks of *self-harvested* consumer insight. These sources lack the professional real-time consumer insight which professional MI can offer. SMEs NPD processes are often based on ad-hoc judgments and lack the consumer focus needed for successful NPD.

This study addresses a gap in the research to understand how and where MI data embeds at specific stages of the NPD process.

Background

- ❑ In 2023, just over 2% of NI businesses were medium or large enterprises, with the remaining regarded as small or micro-organisations.
- ❑ The NI Food and drink sector is growing exponentially and in 2021 had a gross turnover of £5.2 billion.
- ❑ SMEs are faced with a plethora of challenges from changing consumer diets, cost of living crisis and political instability in NI.
- ❑ Innovation has been identified as a key process in overcoming these challenges and sharpening competitive advantage.



Methods

This study will adopt a **three-stage qualitative approach** over a **longitudinal period of ten months** across **15 food companies** in Northern Ireland.

Stage 1. Initial Interview

This initial semi-structured interview will be conducted before any MI data is provided. This interview will allow the researcher to gain an understanding of the entire NPD process of each SME and whether MI data is used.

Stage 2. Participant Observation

SMEs will be provided with MI data free of charge after the initial interview. The interviewer will engage with each business regularly and provide them with more MI data if necessary. The researcher will take the role of the observer as participant.

Stage 3. Final Interview

The final interview will be conducted at the end of the ten-month period to understand how and where MI data is embedded in the NPD process.

Aim

To explore the role of MI data on small firms' NPD process and the development of capabilities as the enablers to successful NPD.

Objectives

Objective 1. To assess if and where market intelligence data is integrated at specific stages along the NPD process.

Objective 2. To explore capabilities as the enablers/constructs of New Product Development.

Objective 3. To identify the changes in a firm's NPD process after exposure of Market Intelligence Data over time.

Objective 4. To determine any characteristics in the small business environment which promote/ inhibit the NPD process in SMEs.

Technology

The new Ulster University Market Intelligence Lab (MIL) will be used in this study to provide SMEs with powerful market intelligence data free of charge.

Data sources available include Dunhumby owned Tesco Clubcard data and Mintel. This data allows SMEs to understand who is buying their products as well as identifying new opportunities for NPD.

MIL Lab Facilities include:

- 32 networked computer terminals with direct access to Tesco Clubcard and Mintel.
- 3D printing facility
- Dedicated academic support in marketing strategy and NPD

References/Authors

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