
Editorial

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In recent years, the race to develop new products has become the core of fierce market competition. Companies, large and small, relentlessly pursue innovative product development in order to create new streams of competitiveness, revenue, and market share. Because of the evolving consumer demand and rapid improvements in technology, concentrating on cost reduction and quality superiority for existing products does not guarantee their financial success or even survival any more. New product development is so powerful that most firms consider it as one of the strategies for sustainable competitive advantage.

However, new product development is a complex and dynamic process. In today's global economy, rampant product proliferation, decreasing product lifecycles, rapid technological progress, and increasingly demanding customers present tremendous challenges for effective product development, requiring companies to deliver products with better quality and a lower cost in short time period. As a result, product design and development tasks have changed drastically and companies are striving for better product development techniques on a continuous basis. In business management, 'project' is a term used for describing the one time endeavour undertaken to create unique products. Project management has been defined as the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques that culminates with successfully meeting the objectives of the 'project' in hand. In this special issue, we will focus on the interface between new product development and project management where quantitative techniques and latest practices in both areas are emphasised. We believe that the findings reported here will enable organisations around the world to better understand the efficiency and effectiveness of their product development activities.

This special issue brings papers together that provide various perspectives and insights on new product development and project management. In the first paper, 'The impact of knowledge delivery factors on New Product Development teams: a quantitative analysis of software development efficiency', Ajila examines the question of how different characteristics (or variables) in knowledge management systems affect software development team efficiency. Ajila shows that software development is more efficient if knowledge is delivered close to the time it is needed; and that software development efficiency is not affected by how deeply knowledge delivery is embedded in the development process.

In 'A review and critical analysis of global New Product Introduction and Development', Atkinson and Al-Ashaab provide a conceptual review of Global New Product Introduction and Development (GNPID) and the coverage of its practices encountered within the automotive industry. From their empirical study covering over 20 automotive suppliers, they find that there are key differences between what is seen as 'best practice' in the literature survey and the actual reality of work within the industry.

A firm needs to seriously consider its role in a Technological and Manufacturing Cluster (TMC) when evaluating and operating New Product Development (NPD) projects. In Chen and Tong's 'Evaluating and operating NPD mix within Technological and Manufacturing Cluster under uncertainty', a fuzzy Analytic Network Process (ANP) is employed to prioritise the relative importance of multiple evaluation criteria and the preferences of new product mixes. The authors show that the structured procedure and proposed model leads to a more satisfactory performance about NPD for an enterprise within TMC.

In 'NPD project timeliness: the project-level impact of early engineering effort and customer involvement', Johnson and Luo carry out an empirical investigation of new product developments at the project level. They specifically concentrate on the impacts of early customer involvement and early engineering effort on project timeliness. The findings suggest that both early engineering effort and customer involvement has a positive effect on project timeliness. Another interesting finding in their study is that these two factors were found to be negatively correlated such that, for any particular project, one or the other was utilised but rarely both.

The paper by Judgev ‘Good theory: developing a foundation for project management’ presents some of the latest thoughts on the importance of collaboration between academics and practitioners in developing project management theory and the challenges of developing a theoretical foundation. Judgev also discusses the progress made in developing theories in project management.

Finally, in ‘Development of a Conceptual Framework for Lean New Product Development Process’, Anand and Kodali proposes a Lean New Product Development (LNPD) framework providing an approach for organisations to integrate NPD and lean management. The conceptual framework for LNPD is then validated at one case organisation. The author argues that this framework provides the practitioners with necessary guidelines to improve their NPD process and reap the benefits of lean philosophy.

The guest editors would like to thank all the authors for submitting and revising papers for the special issue. Our thanks also go to the referees in offering valuable comments and suggestions to the papers, which is essential for maintaining and improving the paper quality. Finally, the guest editors would like to express their sincere appreciation to Dr. Mohammed Dorgham, the Editor-in-Chief, and Ms. Liz Harris, the Journal Manager, for their help and assistance.