

Domain-specific innovativeness: a meta-analysis in business and consumer

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Received 5 August 2015; accepted 31 March 2016

Available online 13 May 2016

Abstract

The specific domain of a product and the perception of innovation are topics that aroused interest in research in the last twenty years, especially after the development of the domain-specific innovativeness (DSI) construct. This paper conducted a meta-analysis to assess the consequents of the DSI. To this end, a total of 276 works were identified in nine databases, of which 78 were included in the study work, generating 98 observations for a sample set of 40,641. The results showed significant relationships between the consequents: adoption of innovation, attitude, behavioral intention, product usage, opinion leader and risk perception. Furthermore, it was noted that the research method (survey vs. experimental) and the country of application (Western vs. Eastern) were moderating factors of the relationships between DSI, opinion leader and behavioral intention.

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Keywords: Domain-specific innovativeness (DSI); Meta-analysis and consequents

Introduction

People who have domain over certain products are more likely to identify innovations when these are released (Bartels & Reinders, 2011; Gao, Rohm, Sultan, & Pagani, 2013; Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991). For example, wine connoisseurs tend to perceive more quickly the launching of a new product derived from a particular crop than consumers that are non-connoisseurs. Experts in automobiles are better able to evaluate the performance of an engine that promises to be powerful. Specialists in beauty products will more quickly identify the positives and negatives of a new skin cream. This heightened perception is due to the specific domain of a person for innovation in a product class, which was proposed by Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991) through the construct called domain-specific innovativeness (DSI).

In management studies, there are many examples that demonstrate the use of DSI (Roehrich, 2004; Zhang & Kim, 2013), especially when assessing the consequents of this behavior (Gao et al., 2013; Goldsmith, d'Hauteville, & Flynn, 1998; Kim, Di Benedetto, & Lancioni, 2011; Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). Although there are a significant number of studies evaluating the DSI, there is still no consensus regarding the impact of this construct on its possible consequents. As an example, the relationship between the DSI and the opinion seeking is indicated in literature in a positive way (Grewal et al., 2000; Sun et al., 2006), in a negative way (Goldsmith, d'Hauteville, & Flynn, 1998; Shoham & Ruvio, 2008) and sometimes neutrally (Goldsmith et al., 1998; Kim, Di Benedetto, & Lancioni, 2011).

Guided in the absence of consensus, this article proposes, through the use of a meta-analysis, to consolidate the understanding of the relationships resulting from DSI. For this, a systematic review was performed, of which were raised 276 studies published in leading databases, theses and dissertations of the marketing and business area. With this search, it will be possible to verify the magnitude of the effect sizes of each of the raised relationships, which will provide a way to the empirical generalization of the aforementioned construct and its consequents (Farley, Lehmann, & Sawyer, 1995).

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Peer Review under the responsibility of Departamento de Administração, Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade da Universidade de São Paulo – FEA/USP.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rai.2016.03.003>

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Domain-specific innovativeness (DSI)

The domain-specific innovativeness (DSI) construct basically studies the aspects of human behavior associated with innovation within a specific interest of a person (Midgley & Dowling, 1993). This construct seeks to understand the predisposition of an individual to a class of products and, at the same time, to analyze the tendency to learn and adopt new products (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991; Roehrich, 2004). Thus, the DSI is basically considered a predisposition to buy new and different goods or brands, instead of remaining with previous consumption patterns (Steenkamp, Hofstede, & Wedel, 1999). This predisposition is perhaps a consequence of the interaction between the innovation as a whole and the strong interest in a particular product category (Midgley & Dowling, 1978; Roehrich, 2004).

The concept of the DSI was introduced in the seminal study of Robertson (1971), when the author stated that the consumer has the ability to innovate within a given category, and, occasionally, between related product classes. Subsequently, other authors, such as Goldsmith, Eastman, and Freiden (1996), demonstrated the fundamental role of this behavior, since it may trigger various actions associated with innovation and consumption, wherein the central point is the specification of some categories of products. This means that while a customer at any given time can adopt an innovative behavior in a particular consumption context, at the same time, he or she can be conservative in another field (Gatignon & Robertson, 1991; Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 1996).

This study was elaborated from the DSI construct proposition coming from the work of Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991) in the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. Over the past few years, with the popularization of this behavior, its application has been observed in different categories of products, industries and countries (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Agarwal & Prasad, 1998; Flynn & Goldsmith, 1993; Goldsmith & Flynn, 1992; Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn, & Kim, 2005; Roehrich, 2004).

DSI consequences

After the development of the DSI construct, several works and authors examined the relationship of this behavior and its consequences (Citrin, Sprott, Silverman, & Stem, 2000; Goldsmith & Flynn, 1995; Hirunyawipada & Paswan, 2006), but in a dispersed and non-meta-analytic form. From this, it was observed associations with the behavior to adopt innovation (Citrin et al., 2000; Huotilainen, Pirttilä-Backman, & Tuorila, 2006), the influence of the opinion leader (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991; Feick & Price, 1987; Shoham & Ruvo, 2008), the behavioral intention and the use of a product (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000), the risk perception (DelVecchio & Smith, 2005; Mitchell & Harris, 2005) and the opinion seeking (Black, 1982). Based on these relationships, it was built a meta-analytical framework that can be seen in Fig. 1. This model brings the relationship between the DSI and its main consequents, identified from the literature review.

The first construct analyzed as a possible consequent of the DSI is the innovation adoption. The process of adopting a new

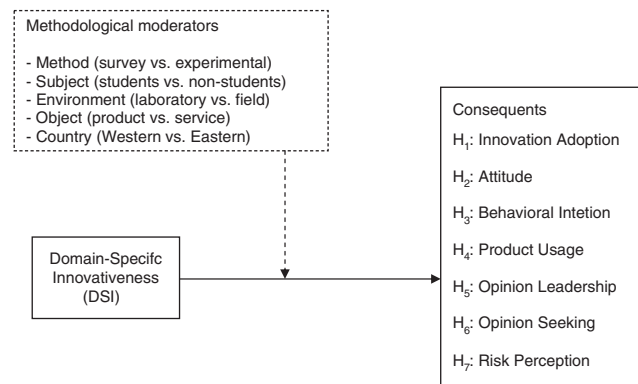


Fig. 1. Meta-analytical framework of the DSI and its consequents.

technology, product or service can be seen in the work of Rogers (2003), in which this behavior is closely linked to the concept of consumer innovativeness. In this approach, the tendency to adopt new products does not depend on the individual's perception only, but also on the context in which he/she is inserted (Gatignon & Robertson, 1991). This fact suggests that there is a specific domain to understand the process of adoption and innovation of consumers (Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991). This causes the DSI to be associated with the adoption of new products, as perceived in most studies on the subject (Citrin et al., 2000; Huotilainen, Pirttilä-Backman, & Tuorila, 2006). As the basis of this argument, there is the following hypothesis:

H1. DSI positively affects the adoption of innovation, i.e. consumers with a more innovative profile in a given domain adopt products with a more innovative feature.

The second relationship studied regards the consumer attitude. The attitude of an individual is a predisposition toward a conduit and can be understood as a favorable or unfavorable evaluation that the person does on a given good or service. In this case, the DSI may be considered an antecedent of this behavior, because it precedes and produces favorable or unfavorable behavioral intentions of a person (Crespo & Del Bosque, 2008), a fact detected in several works, such as Karahanna, Straub, and Chervany (1999), Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003), Caro, Mazon, Caemmerer, and Wessling (2011). Thus, it is expected that:

H2. DSI positively affects the consumer attitude, that is, consumers with a more innovative profile have more constant consumer attitudes.

The third hypothesis proposes a positive relationship between DSI and behavioral intention. Purchase intent can be determined as a predisposition to perform a certain behavior (Gao et al., 2013; Zhang & Kim, 2013). In this scenario, consumers likely to have specific domain of certain products or services will tend to present greater intention to purchase than others who do not have it, in other words, innovative consumers tend to have higher propensity to consume than the conservatives (Gao, Rohm, Sultan, & Huang, 2012). Thus, it is expected that:

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