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Sustainable user innovation from a policy perspective: A systematic literature review

Kristian Roed Nielsen, Lucia A. Reisch, John Thøgersen



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**Authors:**

Kristian Roed Nielsen (Corresponding Author)

Copenhagen Business School - Department of Intercultural Communication and Management.  
Porcelænshaven 18A, Frederiksberg, 2000, Denmark

Lucia A. Reisch

Copenhagen Business School - Department of Intercultural Communication and Management;  
Zeppelin University CCMP - Center for Consumers Markets Politics

Porcelænshaven 18A, Frederiksberg, 2000, Denmark

John Thøgersen

Aarhus BSS, Aarhus University - Department of Management  
Bartholins Allé 10, Building 1327, Aarhus C, 8000, Denmark

**Abstract:**

Sustainable innovation is typically viewed through the lens of the producer innovator, whereas end-users (or consumers) are perceived to play only a peripheral role in the development of sustainable products and services. A growing literature stream, however, sharply departs from this view by suggesting that end-users often play a critical role with regard to sustainable innovation. To further consolidate this field, the purpose of this paper is threefold. First, the paper summarizes and synthesizes key insights within the field based on 84 papers published from 1992 to 2015. Second, we offer a framework to understand the current observed barriers and drivers to this innovation process, suggesting two distinct end-user innovation types: independent and facilitated. The end-users' motivation, ability and opportunity to innovate serve as the deductive analytical tool utilized for discerning these drivers and barriers. Third, the paper suggests how this form of innovation may be ameliorated from a policy perspective. The paper reveals that the literature on end-user innovation within sustainability is both diverse and compartmentalized. Hence, policy mechanisms designed to support this type of innovation process need to be tailored to the independent or facilitated framework in which the end-user resides and to take into account how each framework is necessitated by a different actor logic and motivation, resulting in the pursuit of different innovation types. It is concluded that the literature focusing on independent end-user innovation typically highlights policy aimed at enabling end-users with the necessary skills and resources to innovate, whereas literature focusing on facilitated end-user innovation typically emphasizes creating platforms that enable the effective introduction of end-user knowledge into an already existing framework.

The paper offers an overview and a framework for researchers to further explore this diverse and compartmentalized field. Practitioners may especially benefit from the proposed policy tools, including the overview of potential tools for drawing on end-user competences and resources.

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