

Literature on Frugal Innovation: Mapping the Field and Perspectives for Future Research

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Introdução

The concernment of innovation to competitiveness is acknowledged and emphasized. However, understanding the meaning of innovation seems more controversial, especially in the academic environment, where research is mostly concentrated on technological innovation when compared to other types of innovation. The Frugal Innovation, for instance, has required further study in the innovation field since many scholars and business managers started to understand its business applications and disruptive potential.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

Recently, many contributions have been published addressing frugal innovation and similar concepts that share some standards in common with other resource-constrained innovations. However, researchers and practitioners often use the concepts of cost innovation, good-enough innovation and frugal innovation interchangeably darkening their meaning, which in turn hinder the understanding of the differences among them. These three types differ from each other with respect to their technology and market novelty and therefore significantly affect how firms approach, develop, and position solutions.

Fundamentação Teórica

The environment in which companies are embedded is increasingly dynamic. The market of emerging countries has attracted attention from large multinationals for its growing consumer market. Due to the fast expansion of the low-income consumer base, the innovation process has been aimed to reach these high-potential markets because they have been seen as great opportunities. In this sense, we understand that frugal innovation should be considered in the entire innovation process or every product or service with the principles of frugality, and it is not just a specific typology of innovation.

Discussão

To answer our question, we performed a bibliometric technique called Co-citation analysis. Considering the main approaches used by the authors, we established three parameters in order to clarify where, along with which theory and to whom the frugal innovation has been most commonly applied. Such parameters encompass the geographical context, the theoretical streams associated with frugal innovation and the range of consumers and innovation areas. Furthermore, the creation of the parameters that characterize frugal innovation provide a better and organized understanding of the definitions.

Conclusão

For the first parameter, the geographical context, there is an agreement that resource-constrained environments like the ones found in emerging markets present a big opportunity for frugal innovations. Regarding the second parameter, it is clear that frugal innovation is very close to sustainability and reengineering approaches. At last, considering the third parameter, it seems that what frugal innovations have in common is that they usually arise from a situation of difficulty and designed to meet the basic needs of poor consumers. One limitation is the chosen database and the small sample.

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