ABSTRACT

Customer involvement has been recognized as highly valuable for new product development. Customer involvement refers to the scope and depth of customer’s participation in the supplier’s new product development process. However, the factors affecting customer involvement and the ways in which customers actually are involved in the different phases of the co-development process remain unclear. To address this gap, a multiple case study of eight supplier-customer co-development processes in the business-to-business context was conducted. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with eight supplier’s managers, six customer representatives and two researchers who have been closely involved in the studied eight co-development processes. We find that the intensity of the customer’s involvement varies significantly in different phases of the co-development process. Based on the findings, a typology of customer involvement that captures both the scope and depth of the involvement is developed. The scope covers the three phases of co-development, namely ideation, development and commercialization while the depth captures three levels of involvement, in which customer acts either as a source of information, participator or co-creator. Furthermore, four propositions on the factors that influence the intensity of customer involvement are presented. The propositions are related to customer’s strategic interest and resources, prior experiences and geographical distance which influence to the intensity of customer involvement. The proposed taxonomy and the findings offer a more nuanced understanding of customer involvement in new product development.