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1. Introduction

We live in a world where product life cycles are becoming ever shorter, global competition is increasing, and customers demand more and more of products they buy. For firms and industries this means that it is now more and more important to develop new products and the necessary new technologies as an integral part of their production strategies. Such proactive developments enable organizations to maintain competitive and healthy product portfolios, as well as contributing to their sustainable long-term competitive advantage (Bruce and Cooper, 2000:5).

Any new product management strategy must focus on customer requirements and expectations, take account of the competitive pressure in the market stemming from the pace of new product introduction, and allow for the increased capital requirements of the new technologies involved in developing a new product (Zhang, 1998; Alexandre, et al., 2003:48-63). For these reasons, developing a new product is no easy task.

Success in launching a new product into the market requires successful new product development (NPD). The purpose of this paper is to examine the introduction of a new product by means of a practical NPD process, to compare the process with traditional NPD theory, and finally, to undertake a process analysis.

2. A Practical NPD process

2.1 Idea generation

People today have more leisure time and like to relax by enjoying a hot drink, such as coffee, tea or some other beverage. Numbers of coffee shops have increased rapidly as a consequence. Consumers who choose a take-away hot drink may be forced to use polystyrene cups. For these consumers, this raises a particular concern about environmental issues, since the disposal of polystyrene products may add to the pollution of the environment. There is also an additional concern relating to their health, for it is known that when the liquid in the cup reaches a certain temperature, poisonous traces may be introduced into the drink. As a result, some organisations have approached the problem with a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, and packaging changes. The idea for a new product that has emerged is to provide customers with a cup that may be used to boil water (around 250 to 300 cc) within 10 minutes. After the water has boiled, they then put in instant coffee powder, a tea bag or whatever is needed to make their preferred drink. Consumers can thus enjoy a take-away hot drink that they have made for themselves. Three design concepts may be associated with this new approach to the product.