

**FACTORS AFFECTING INNOVATION MANAGEMENT AT MAZINOOR
LIGHTING IND. IN IRAN**

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to special people in my life:

To my mother and father who always give me energy and without their encouragement and support I could not achieve this degree.

To my dear husband Mohsen for his wonderful love, patience and sacrifice during this difficult stage of our life.

To my sisters and brother for their inspiration and love.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify what factors affecting innovation management and investigate the relationship between those factors and innovation management. A survey has been done to explore innovation management being practiced in Mazinoor Company, an Iranian Company that manufactures lighting products. The respondents in the survey were selected from the personnel of Mazinoor Co. who were involved in innovation activities and the questionnaires were sent to them for collection of data for analysis. The findings demonstrated that five factors top management support, team working, communication and knowledge sharing, organizational culture and leadership have statistically significant positive correlation with innovation management. The results also indicated that among those factors, top management support had the most significant influence on performance of innovation management in Mazinoor Co., followed by team working, leadership and communication. The findings of this study are expected to enhance the existing literature on innovation management in Iran and it also provides managers of Mazinoor Co. with the necessary information regarding the level of managing innovation in that company.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Innovation has a significant importance for companies that are seeking for competitive advantage. Managers of business firms from each industry make innovation among their top priorities and concerns (Scantlebury & Lawton, 2007). Tidd et al. (2001) stated that innovation is becoming the most important factor in developing and sustaining competitive advantage. Many authors refer to innovation as lifeblood of any business (Balachandra and Friar, 1997). The number of the studies focusing on the importance of innovation management in organizations and investigating innovation from different aspects has been increased in last decades. This study also attempts to focus on managing innovation in a company in Iran and tries to explore the influential factors in the process of innovation management.

This dissertation presents the case study of a firm, Mazinoor Lighting Ind. in Iran, which has experienced management of innovation for many years. The aim of this study is to investigate innovation management practice at Mazinoor Lighting Ind. and to determine factors affecting the management of innovation process in that company.

The background, the problem statements and the research questions as well as research objectives are described in this chapter. The scope of study, the limitations and the importance of study are discussed subsequently.

1.2 Research Background

Management of innovation is an essential matter that firms face today. In the era of globalization of markets, new technologies of communication and transportation, customers have become more knowledgeable and empowered than ever before as the information about the products or services are easily available everywhere. This leads to the pressure on enterprises to acquire new technologies to remain competitive. Moreover, today technology is growing extremely fast and the business environment is changing with a high pace, which force firms to find new ways to compete and survive (White & Bruton, 2007). Molero and Garcia (2008) also refer to the advance of science and technology that motivate companies to experience change and innovation. Therefore, these reasons encourage companies to innovate in order to keep up to date with the latest developments and changes in the technology.

However, innovation is a process that needs to be well managed and innovation alone is not enough for companies to commercially succeed (Tekawade, 2004). There are many factors affecting innovation and depending on the situation and circumstances of each industry and company, different approaches or processes need to manage innovation successfully. This is not an easy approach and because there are many different factors that affect innovation, it is very challenging to manage it successfully.

These challenges also put pressure on firms in developing countries to engage in innovation in order to survive. Since developing countries are trying to enhance their position in the international divisions, it is essential for them to put emphasis on technology and innovation management (Pirella et al., 1993).

Iran, like other developing countries is trying to promote innovation among firms. It is considered by the policy makers as one of the key drivers of economic growth. Therefore, this study presents a case of a company active in lighting industry in Iran and tries to investigate the factors that impact innovation management in that company.

1.2.1 Background of Mazinoor Lighting Ind.

Mazinoor Lighting Ind. is the pioneer company in lighting industry in Iran and even Middle East. With over 30 years of experience in manufacturing of lighting instruments, it has gone through innovation for a long time and obtained successful achievements in this effort. It has received award from the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran for being the exemplary exporter of the year 2006. It also could gain certifications of ISO 9000/9001/9004/19011: 2000 for quality management system.

Mazinoor Co. with 50000 square meters area is located in Mazandaran Province in north of Iran. The company have several departments with more than 600 employees including experts, technicians and workers working in different departments. Its departments include: R&D, designing, molding, production, different lines of montage, quality control, quality assurance, planning, computer & IT, procurement, marketing, finance, HR and sales department.

The products of this company consist of luminaries, lightings and light fixtures with usages of official, commercial, decorative, industrial and explosion proof. Mazinoor Co. has the privilege to produce explosion proof lightings for the first time in Iran under a German company licensing.

Realizing the background, structure, business type and products of Mazinoor Co., this study aims to investigate how innovation management is understood and practiced by its managers and personnel as well as what factors affecting innovation management in that company.

1.3 Statement of Problem

It is widely discussed and demonstrated by researchers that the most competitive companies are those that rigorously engage in innovation in order to achieve profitability and sustainability (Tomala and Senechal, 2003; Cormican and O'Sullivan, 2004; Eris and Yasar, 2006). For example, Halbesleben, Novicevic, Harvey and Buckley (2003) argued that there is a need for innovative solutions to emerging novel needs of organizations in order to survive in complex business competitions. To reach this goal, of crucial importance is to manage innovation actively. According to Diedrichs, Engel and Wagner (2006) to ensure a steady flow of innovation in companies, it is essential to manage it systematically and constantly.

Since innovation is recognized as a risky, time consuming and costly process, it is a challenging approach to manage it. Some factors affect the process of innovation positively or negatively. To manage innovation successfully, the first prerequisite is to identify factors that affect innovation process and then firms need to strengthen the factors that have positive effect on innovation.

Numerous studies could be found that identified the success factors or barriers in the process of innovation (Balachandra and Friar, 1997; Cooper, 1999; Sun and Wing, 2005; Hidalgo and Albors, 2008; Peng, 2009). In most of the relevant literature the focus is on increasing innovativeness among organizations in order to remain competitive (Porter, 1990, Tidd, 2001). However, less attention has been paid to explore what factors can influence the ability to manage innovation in organizations from the viewpoint of employees within organizations. Particularly, regarding Iranian companies, few studies have been conducted to do survey on companies to understand the level of innovation management practiced in firms.

Then, the aim of this study is to do a survey on Mazinoor Company, which is an Iranian manufacturing company in the lighting industry, to investigate innovation management practiced in that company and to identify factors affecting innovation management from the view of personnel actively involved in innovation management in Mazinoor Lighting Ind. These lead to the following research questions that are surveyed in this study.

1.4 Research Questions

Question 1: What are the factors affecting management of innovation in Mazinoor Lighting Ind.?

Question 2: What is the relationship between those factors and innovation management in Mazinoor Lighting Ind.?

1.5 Research Objectives

This dissertation is going to study the factors that influence innovation management. The purpose of this study was:

- To identify the factors affecting management of innovation in Mazinoor Lighting Ind.
- To examine the relationship between those factors and innovation management.

1.6 Scope of Study

The scope of this study covers different types of innovation like both product and process types of innovation as well as internal and external strategy of innovation. This research does not include all departments of Mazinoor Co. and the focus is only on the departments that are actively involved in innovation process. The respondents will be selected from the executives, managers and personnel of Mazinoor from the following departments: R&D, marketing, designing, quality control, quality assurance, planning, computer & IT, procurement, marketing, finance, HR and sales department. Workers and technicians of Mazinoor Co. whose job is not associated with innovation activities are not included in the scope of this research.

1.7 Research Limitation

The main limitation of this study is that the findings could not directly be generalized to the other companies since this is the study on only one case in Iran. It is unknown that Mazinoor Lighting Ind. is exactly a typical company in Iran as the characteristics, culture, environment and structure of firms may differ from each other.

1.8 Importance of Research

Many studies have been conducted regarding the issue of innovation management and different aspects of it. However, concerning Iranian companies the number of researches on this issue is limited. So, it is essential to do such research on Iranian firms to understand the level of managing innovation in Iran and also to compare the results of this study with that of similar research overseas.

It is very important to identify factors affecting innovation management process because recognizing these factors is beneficial for the managers of Mazinoor Lighting Ind. to make improvement on their weaknesses and make necessary changes to their performance. Moreover, since innovation is a risky and costly process, it is critical to know what elements cause success or failure for the firms in this process.

Managers need to understand what innovation management is and how important it is to manage innovation. They also need to be able to motivate other personnel to commit to the process of innovation. This is not an easy effort since there are some factors that affect the innovation management approach. Identifying

such factors would help managers of Mazinoor Lighting Ind. apply necessary changes to the process of innovation, overcome the challenges and enhance the opportunities.

The aim of this study is to investigate innovation management practice in Mazinoor Lighting Ind. to find out how much the results of this study are similar to the findings of past studies from different countries. The results and findings of this study would enrich the existing literature on managing innovation in Iran and it provides managers of Mazinoor Lighting Ind. with the necessary information for the long- term plans.

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