지식집약비즈니스서비스기업의 고객지식통합활동의 정도: 디지캡의 사례를 중심으로[1]

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Extended Abstract

Title in English: *To what extent does a knowledge-intensive business service firm need customer knowledge integrative activities? the Case of DigiCap*

This study examines the relationship between customer knowledge degree and integrative activity of customer knowledge in a new custom product development process by using an exploratory and qualitative single case study of a knowledge-intensive business service (KIBS) firm. Many studies premise that customer knowledge integration will lead to the success of a new product by satisfying customer expectations, even though there are counteractive arguments that each firm should lead their customers. However, there is still a question of to what degree firms need to have customer knowledge integrative activity to make their products successful, in terms of customer knowledge degree. This study regards a firm's customer knowledge integrative activities as a new product development.

To examine the relationship between customer knowledge degree and integrative activity of customer knowledge in a new custom product development process, this study selected the case of new Open Mobile Alliance Digital Rights Management (hereafter OMA-DRM) developed in the relationship between DigiCAP and SK Telecom (hereafter SKT). DigiCAP took the role of a KIBS firm, while SKT was a customer of DigiCAP.

This study empirically identifies that a KIBS firm requires much effort and time for customer knowledge integrative activity to develop a new custom product, while there were different properties and contents of customer knowledge integrative activity at each stage of a new custom product development process. It also identifies that the degree of customer knowledge integrative activity depends on the degree of complexity of a customer product, while the degree of prior customer knowledge in a KIBS firm can reverse influence the degree of customer knowledge integrative activity. Finally, this study further explores two factors which can influence customer knowledge integrative activity: the range of customers and product characteristics.

Even though customer knowledge and customer knowledge integrative activity are critical to a KIBS firm's business due to the characteristics of KIBS firms, scant attention has been paid to customer knowledge or customer knowledge integrative activities. Through a single qualitative and exploratory study of DigiCAP, this study has established an important path for theoretical development and practical implications of KIBS firms, marketing and innovation.

Firstly, this study can be used to theoretically explain one dimension of KIBS firms' behaviours, particularly their innovation or new product developments. It can be very helpful to develop a further theoretical understanding of KIBS firms' behaviours. By considering unique characteristics of KIBS firms and innovation, there is a strong need to understand customer knowledge integrative activity in a KIBS firm, because the emphasis on interaction between KIBS firms and customers in previous studies has not sufficiently explained the properties of KIBS firms' activities in the creation or development of new custom products. Furthermore, an empirical understanding of customer knowledge integrative activities can complement existing studies of knowledge processes in KIBS firms.

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[1] For your information, it is an extended abstract of the following publication:

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Secondly, this study helps to improve our understanding of customer-oriented marketing theory in terms of innovation or new product development. As many studies have identified, customer knowledge and marketing practices are important themes. Most of all, this study is able to offer an interesting picture of how to customize a new product for customers through customer knowledge integrative activity. Exploring a range of customers within each firm's strategy can give scholars some theoretical ideas on how customer knowledge degree influences each firm's organization of its business. Furthermore, it theoretically implies that the growth of customer knowledge for entrepreneurs or small and medium-sized companies would be a path by which to scale up or grow their business. Therefore, this empirical study makes some important contributions to the theoretical development of marketing.

However, because this study uses an exploratory and qualitative single case study of a T-KIBS firm, regarded as a small or medium-sized firm, it has some limitations; therefore further study would be valuable. As a suggestion, it would be useful to extend this study's findings and new discussions to various industries and (non-)T-KIBS firms—for example, looking at differences in customer knowledge integrative activity between (non-)T-KIBS firms, and exploring the relationships in various contexts.

In terms of managerial implications for KIBS firms, when they are engaged in co-creation or development of a new product through knowledge-intensive business services, this study points managers or executive officers towards resource allocations in terms of customer knowledge and the need for preparatory contingent factors regarding co-creation or the development of new product. In an industrial market, product characteristics and the range of customers are important factors which can influence customer knowledge integrative activities, suggesting resource allocation to managers or executive officers in KIBS firms. Furthermore, they need to consider their innovation or product strategies in terms of their customer portfolio, while it is necessary for them to build up their customer portfolios through their strategies. Finally, each firm's degree of customer knowledge or customer-oriented competence, where expert knowledge mixes with customer knowledge, implies its position. It also needs to put in a lot of effort and time to manage its customer portfolio, particularly in a service-oriented firm like KIBS firms.