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TECHNOLOGICAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND MARKETING INNOVATIONS IN SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES²

Innovations are studied at different levels of analysis. At the organizational level, they represent the core of renewal process and are usually defined as the development and use of new ideas or approaches, where a new idea could pertain to a new product, service, production process, organizational structure or administrative system. Using a questionnaire build up according to Oslo Manual, developed by the European Commission and the Eurostat, this paper examines the range and type of innovative activities across 104 out of 305 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the South Banat Region (Republic of Serbia). A principal finding of the study fleshes out that 73% of SMEs have adopted at least one type of innovations, with the exception of technological process innovation, which has been adopted in 61,5% of the sampled enterprises. Additionally, 3 clusters of firms are identified by the intensity of use of innovations.

Keywords: innovations, SME, survey.

Ніколіна Врцель

ТЕХНОЛОГІЧНІ, ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙНІ Й МАРКЕТИНГОВІ ІННОВАЦІЇ НА МАЛИХ І СЕРЕДНІХ ПІДПРИЄМСТВАХ

У статті показано різні підходи до аналізу інновацій. На організаційному рівні інновації є основою процесу оновлення і, як правило, визначаються як розробка і використання нових ідей і підходів, коли нова ідея може відноситися до нового продукту, послуги, виробничого процесу, організаційної структури або адміністративної системи. За допомогою анкети, розробленої відповідно до "Керівництва Осло" від Європейської Комісії і Євростату, розглядаються діапазон і типи інноваційної діяльності в 104 з 305 малих і середніх підприємств (МСП) регіону Південний Банат, Сербія. Основний висновок дослідження: 73% малих і середніх підприємств ввели принаймні один тип інновацій, за винятком технологічного інноваційного процесу, який був введений на 61,5% досліджених підприємств. Крім того, виділено 3 групи фірм за інтенсивністю використання інновацій.

Ключові слова: інновації, МСП, опитування.

Таб. 4. Літ. 22.

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ТЕХНОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ, ОРГАНИЗАЦИОННЫЕ И МАРКЕТИНГОВЫЕ ИННОВАЦИИ НА МАЛЫХ И СРЕДНИХ ПРЕДПРИЯТИЯХ

В статье показаны различные подходы к анализу инноваций. На организационном уровне инновации представляют собой основу процесса обновления и, как правило, определяются как разработка и использование новых идей и подходов, когда новая идея может относиться к новому продукту, услуге, производственному процессу, организационной структуре или административной системе. С помощью анкеты,

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разработанной в соответствии с "Руководством Осло" от Европейской Комиссии и Евростата, рассматриваются диапазон и типы инновационной деятельности в 104 из 305 малых и средних предприятий (МСП) региона Южный Банат, Сербии. Основной вывод исследования: 73% малых и средних предприятий ввели по крайней мере один тип инноваций, за исключением технологического инновационного процесса, который был введен в 61,5% исследованных предприятий. Кроме того, выделены 3 группы фирм по интенсивности использования инноваций.

Ключевые слова: инновации, МСП, опрос.

1. Introduction. The online Oxford Dictionary defines innovation as "a new method, idea, product etc." The term "etc." in the definition presupposes a lot of possibilities; however, we focus here on the innovations related to the way in which goods and services are produced and promoted and to the nature of those goods and services. An innovation might be an idea or scientific discovery that contributes to technology, it might be a better way of organizing production, or it might in itself be a useful new product. The dictionary definition just given implies that the primary characteristic of innovation is simply newness and that an innovation can be good, bad or neutral. Still, it is common in economics to define an innovation as a successful new method, idea or product [3]. We follow that practice here. It gives the advantage of referring just to "innovations" instead of referring repeatedly to "successful innovations".

Furthermore, innovation is viewed as the use of new technical and administrative knowledge to offer a new product or service to customers. The product or service is new if its cost is lower, its attributes are improved, it now has an attribute it never had, or never existed at a market before. Innovation has been believed to be nothing but a strong key to maintain worldwide competitiveness for any firm. It fuels SMEs growth, drives future success, and is the engine for business to sustain viability in a global economy [5].

Innovation is not tangible as other forms of capital; it is a creation of mind, intangible by nature and rooted in material and nonmaterial assets. As material assets play an increasingly important role in production activities, that increases the general meaning of innovation and human factors [20]. Successful SMEs create competitive advantages through creativity and innovation — employees contribute their creativity and organizations transform it into innovations. Innovation therefore represents an orientation different from traditional financial outcome of an SME. In the innovation processes, an innovative climate and related professional knowledge are necessary to support innovative activities [13].

In this time of a rapidly changing and a highly competitive world, innovation is a vital source of competitive advantage or even a survival necessity. Every new product/process/service originates from a new idea and addresses customer needs/problems [17]. Also, innovation is widely regarded as a critical source of competitive advantage in an increasingly changing environment. According to [4], innovation management is the most important determinant of a firm's performance.

While some innovations involve fundamental scientific breakthroughs, many innovations are the result of recombinations of existing ideas in new contexts. The history of innovation arises from fortuitous interactions between individuals unaware

their separate efforts had mutual relevance [10]. Innovation is, of course, affected by chance, by sociological context, prices, inputs to the innovation process, and by other factors [3]. In this paper we do not take a position on the relative importance of different sources of innovation or on the most suitable specific theory of innovation. The primary question of this paper relates to the recent record of innovations in SMEs from the South Banat region, whatever the cause of that record may be.

The paper is organized as follows: the next section fleshes out the theoretical foundation of the paper; thereafter, the empirical basis for the study is outlined. Then the key findings are presented. The paper then concludes with a brief summary on the contributions and its limitations along with implications for future research.

2. Background. Most studies on innovation at SMEs usually include all innovations in one category. Innovations do vary, however, and each type of innovation has its own attributes that influence its rate of adoption [5]. Innovation has previously been divided into different categories, including radical and incremental, high and low cost, simple or complex, technological and administrative, process and product, organizational and marketing etc. It is these last two categorizations — process and product as well as organizational and marketing — that we have selected to focus on here. These categorizations were selected because both have important practical implications.

Before turning to the discussion on each of these classifications, it is important to note that other categorizations of innovation are important as well. It was determined, however, that the distinction of process and product as well as simple and complex innovations were slightly broader so that several others could be subsumed within them, and thus propositions made could be applied more broadly [9]. For instance, technological innovations would be defined, in this study, as a product and process innovations, and administrative innovations would be defined as process innovations.

2.1. Technological innovations. According to [7], technological innovation is central to how SMEs create value for themselves, unleash gales of creative destruction on competitors, and enable progress for society. Product development and acquisition of new knowledge have long been significant strategies for innovation. But in increasingly open and dynamic industries in which resources are highly distributed and frequently changing, it is unlikely that a single SME can consistently develop or acquire best innovations.

This study primary focuses on technological innovations. These innovations are further categorized into product and process innovations. Product innovations are defined as new products or services introduced to meet external users' needs, and process innovations are defined as new elements introduced into a firm's production or service operation to produce a product or render a service. Secondly, product innovations change what SME offers to the outside world, while process innovations change the way SME produces and delivers those offers. Thirdly, product innovations have a market focus and are primarily customer driven; on the other hand, process innovations have an internal focus and are mainly techniques of producing goods or services. Therefore, while product innovations are embodied in the outputs of an SME and may result in product differentiation or an increase in product quality, process innovations are oriented toward the effi-

ciency or effectiveness of production and may result in a decrease in production costs [6].

Once more, product innovations are those that generate a novel product, whether it is a physical product, emergent technology, new service, or new intellectual property, which is usually visible to consumers [9]. Product innovations are pursued to respond to customers' demand for new products or executives' desire to capture new markets [6]. Process innovations are those that are not as visible to those outside on SME and include changes in the procedures by which products are made, business is conducted, information is distributed, or other organizational operations are handled. To conclude, product innovations have outward goals such as competing with other organizations or satisfying consumer needs, whereas process innovations are more likely to originate to satisfy internal goals such as improving efficiency [9].

2.2. Organizational innovation. SMEs currently face turbulent and complex environments with increased uncertainty and competition. This has fostered a sustained focus on organizational innovation as a means of creating and maintaining competitive advantage [13].

The correlates of organizational innovation are supposed to be organizational structure, market structure, institutionalized expectations, organizational determinants, organizational climate and leadership. In [12] it is emphasized that organizational structure explains as much as 60% variance in the adoption of innovation in organization. Similarly, the research literature on effective operation of innovation at the organizational level have deciphered factors which are human, social, and also cultural in nature and all these tend to centre around learning at an organizational level. Hence, it can be assumed that the correlates of organizational learning are the main building blocks of the discipline of innovation at enterprises. In such a scenario, learning and work are intimately integrated in an ongoing and systematic fashion to support continuous improvements, and this learning needs to occur at all levels within an SME — individual, group, organizational and global. At the same time, innovation is different from organizational learning as it includes technological and non-technological aspects of organization to create commercial products or services from inventions. Organizational learning has been found associated more with proactive and new-to-the-market innovations, as they require a change in the way business were seen beforehand. However, both innovation and learning are fundamentally dependent on ideation, a process that only lately has received more attention for its capacity to provide important input to innovation and also, to some extent, to learning [2].

Other authors believe that organizational promotion of knowledge sharing changes traditional ideas about managing intellectual resources and employee' work styles by providing new processes, disciplines and cultures which constitute organizational innovation. Also, employees' willingness to both donate and collect knowledge is related to SME innovation capability. It is defined as the "resource [human and relational] inputs and intermediate transformative assets" that enable a firm to engage in the activities needed for innovation. In defining and applying the concept of innovation capability in this way, the emphasis is on "the underlying resources and the extent to which it is embedded" [11].

According to [19], the ability to transfer knowledge in the corporation for the innovation is significantly influenced by: a structured IT network which enables indi-

viduals to deposit and share knowledge, flat organizational structure with less hierarchy and bureaucracy, a trusting culture where knowledge transfer relationships between individuals and groups are transparent and supported through equitable performance related incentives and rewards, and a learning strategy whereby corporations actively promote the double loop learning. On the other hand, organizational culture which supports innovation have the characteristics features of engaging people to value creativity, risk taking, freedom, teamwork, value seeking and solution-oriented communication, trust and respect for each other, and be quick in making decisions. Moreover, it is argued that culture supporting innovation rejects practices and behavior which hinder innovation such as rigidity, control, predictability and stability.

Organizational innovation is arguably the most complex construct in multilevel innovation studies as all individual (e.g., personality, motivation, cognitive ability, and job characteristics), group (e.g., team structure, team climate, team member characteristics, team process, and leadership style), and organizational (structure, strategy, size, resource, and culture) levels are active in analysis. Moreover, certain factors that positively promote innovation at one level inhibit innovation at another level [13].

2.3. Marketing innovation. In a market economy, in addition to innovations in products/services and production/organizational processes, there are also innovations in marketing of products/services. The development of new marketing tools and methods plays an important role in the evolution of industries. In recent years, for instance, new ways of gathering consumer information through innovative marketing programs and technologies have enabled SMEs to reach consumers more effectively and to use pricing strategies previously not feasible — new trading formats and techniques. However, despite its obvious importance, and unlike product or process innovation, marketing innovation has received little attention [22].

Much focus in traditional marketing has been on a firm's immediate or next in line customers. This narrow approach leads to a myopic view of the marketplace, customers' changing preferences, and possible emergence of better substitutes. Value chain marketing looks at the entire business system to map the behavior of customers at various levels, several steps beyond the immediate customer, to understand industry developments more clearly in order to identify the key industry drivers [14].

[18] states that, a firm's more significant marketing actions usually involve some form of innovation, something done for the first time by that SME. They are very likely to have been wrested from an organization resisting the need to innovate, to be aimed at customers who may have to innovate in response, and cause competitors to react with further innovations. The successful marketer must combine the role of sentry and sleuth in watching the innovations of others and identifying the innovations needed in reply.

Marketers have long grappled with the problem of fixing the "right" price, which in most cases, was either too high or too low, and, as a consequence, lost market opportunities. The days of one uniform price are over in many cases. Today the combination of databases and technology presents marketers with a multitude of ways to offer different prices to different customers, and, as a result, manipulate the product line to increase both margins and sales. Marketers should leverage pricing to capture as much of the consumer surplus as possible through the individualization of price, product/service through a menu of alternatives from which more or less price-sensi-

tive consumers can choose, but they will have to be extra cautious when employing differential pricing especially when it is based on demographics since consumers generally view this as being unfair [14].

Because marketing innovation has many forms that differ in nature, this study focuses on these commonly observed forms: preliminary market research, market tests and launch advertising, new marketing program or technology that allows an SME to acquire consumer information (target consumers) more effectively and to charge individualized prices and new trading method that reduces consumer transaction costs.

3. Research method.

3.1 Strategy. There are two main approaches to collecting data on innovations by firms: the "subject approach" which starts from the innovative behavior and activities of the enterprise as a whole; and the "object approach" which we use as it is more concentrated on the number and characteristics of individual innovations.

This paper deals with the changes which take place at the level of an individual firm. It does not cover some other categories of innovation discussed, for example, by Schumpeter, such as the re-organization of an industry.

3.2 Sample. The data was drawn from the database of SMEs which use new technologies and innovations in their businesses. Database creation was one of activities within the project "Cross-border initiative for research and development activities, (and) cooperation between economy and scientific educational institutions, in Serbian and Romanian Historical Banat, as contribution to competitiveness improvement and regional identity, according to EU standards", financed by the European Union. Data were collected from June til October 2011, using samples of only private small and medium enterprises at the territory of South Banat Region (Vojvodina, the Republic of Serbia) covering different municipalities and industry sectors. The sample was drawn via random sampling with respect to staff headcount criteria for classification of SMEs suggested by the European Union: 10 to 49 employees — small-sized enterprises and 50 to 249 employees — medium-sized enterprises [8]. The enterprises matching these criteria were identified via www.trzis-tesrbije.com (this Internet site lists enterprises which have submitted final reports 2009) and the data were sorted manually in order to correspond to previously mentioned criteria.

From the original population of 3.622 enterprises in South Banat Region, stratified sample by size included 352 enterprises, and further stratified by ownership structure sample counted 305 enterprises. 150 enterprises were contacted and 104 voluntary responses (about 69,33% response rate) were eventually registered. Some information on geographic composition of the sample is given in Table 1.

Forms of industry activity within the sample were the following (forms of activity were classified according to [21]):

- manufacturing - 44 enterprises;
- agriculture, forestry and fisheries - 19 enterprises;
- wholesale and retail sale, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles - 19 enterprises;
- construction - 9 enterprises;
- information and communication - 5 enterprises;
- transport and storage - 3 enterprises;

- water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities - 2 enterprises;
- accommodation and food services - 2 enterprises;
- mining - 1 enterprise.

Table 1. Geographic composition of the sample, South Banat Region

Size	Municipality							Sum
	Alibunar	Bela Crkva	Kovadica	Kovin	Pancevo	Plandiste	Vrsac	
Small	3	3	8	6	38	7	17	82
Medium	2	1	3	4	10	1	1	22

Source: author's own calculation.

3.3 Instrument. The instrument used is based on the innovation types originally published in the research literature [15, 16]. In order to achieve a satisfactory response rate, the questionnaire was short and included clearly formulated instructions and questions divided in 4 groups (technological product/service innovation, technological process innovation, organizational innovation and marketing innovations implemented within the firm during the last 3 years, precisely from June 2008 to June 2011).

In particular, it contained information on whether the companies had introduced new product innovations; new process innovations; apropos, any technological innovation such as new machinery, equipment and computer hardware or software to produce new or significantly improved goods, services, production processes or delivery methods. Further to these traditional indicators of innovative activities, the third set of questions (organizational innovations) examined whether the enterprises have major changes in the areas of business structure and practices during the three-year period concerning: the implementation of new or significantly changed corporate strategy; implementation of advanced management techniques and major changes to organization structure. The fourth part of questionnaire inquired implementation of changed marketing concepts or strategies during the mentioned period.

The data for this survey were gained through personal contacts by telephone with the most suitable respondent in the enterprise, as it is particularly important in innovation surveys, because the questions are highly specialized and can be answered by only a few people in a unit, usually not those who complete other statistical questionnaires. Since the survey covers only SMEs, managing directors or owners were respondents in all cases.

4. Results and discussion. Out of 104 enterprises who responded to the questionnaire, about 73% have adopted at least one type of innovations, with the exception of technological process innovation, which has been adopted at 61,5% of the sample. As this type of innovation incorporates software and PCs innovations it may be that information technology has become so widespread that it no longer yields a competitive advantage to adopters. Table 2 additionally reports the variable definitions and the percentage of adopting firms in the sample.

Table 2. Definition of innovation variables and sample adoption

Innovation variable label	Definition	Adopting firms
Technological product/service innovation	Whether a product/service innovation (new to the enterprise or to the market or a significantly improved good or service) has been introduced on the market between 2008 and 2011.	26,9%
Technological process innovation	Whether a process innovation (new to the enterprise or to the market that significantly improved methods for the production or supply of goods and services, i.e. advanced machinery, equipment and computer hardware or software) has been introduced between 2008 and 2011.	61,5%
Organizational innovation	Whether major changes to the organizational structure, e.g. introduction of cross-functional teams, outsourcing of major business functions, advanced management techniques, new or significantly changed corporate strategy) have been implemented between 2008 and 2011.	15,3%
Marketing innovation	Whether changes in marketing concepts or strategies, e.g. packaging or presentational changes of a product to target new markets, new support services to open up new markets etc., have been implemented between 2008 and 2011.	20,1%

Source: author's own calculation.

Based upon the intensity of use of 4 innovations we identified 3 clusters of SMEs. Into the first cluster we placed the firms which introduced only one type of innovation during the last 3 years, in the second cluster are the firms which implemented 2 types of innovations, and the third cluster represent SMEs which implemented at least 3 types of innovations. Cluster 1, cluster 2 and cluster 3 incorporated 34, 31 and 11 enterprises, respectively.

Table 3 reports the within-cluster percentage of firms who report having introduced innovations. The intensity of use of innovative practices is highest in cluster 2 where the majority of firms have adopted 2 types of innovations. Cluster 1 contains the least innovative firms. Within this cluster less than 1% of the firms reported they carried out marketing innovative activities, although more than 26% have introduced technological process innovations. Interestingly, the extent of technological process innovation is comparatively high in the first two clusters, although its intensity is less than proportional to the extent of overall firm' innovativeness. This may confirm that technological innovations can more easily be introduced and assimilated than organizational innovations or a product new to the market, which require flexibility and cognitive skills that not all firms might possess [1].

In Table 4 we report the distribution of firms across industrial sectors by clusters. Within the production sectors, perhaps unsurprisingly, firms in agriculture, forestry and fisheries; mining and water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities are the least intensive innovators. By contrast, firms in manufacturing, wholesale and retail sales, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; and accommodation and food services are more intensive innovators.

At the end of this chapter, we decided to examine the relationship between organizational size and innovation management, since [6] noted that small organizations are more likely to be innovative because they have a more responsive climate for making quicker decisions to go ahead with new and ambitious projects, less bureaucratic inertia and more flexible structure, higher ability to adapt and improve, and less dif-

ficulty in accepting and implementing changes. On the other hand, large organizations have more financial and technical capabilities, the economies of scope to spread the risk of failure and absorb the costs of innovation, ability to establish and maintain scientific facilities, resources to hire professional and skilled workers in diverse fields, and ability to raise capital and market innovations; they are usually less innovative. His hypothesis is confirmed in this study also, since 76,8% of small enterprises reported innovations of any type during the last 3 years, comparing with 59% of the sampled medium-sized enterprises.

Table 3. Within-cluster percentage of firms who report having introduced the innovations

	Technological product/service innovations	Technological process innovations	Organizational innovations	Marketing innovations
Cluster 1	3,8%	25%	2,9%	0,9%
Cluster 2	15,4%	26,9%	7,6%	9,6%
Cluster 3	7,7%	9,6%	4,8%	9,6%

Source: Author's own calculation.

Table 4. Distribution of firms by sectors within clusters

Definition	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
<i>Manufacturing</i>	31,3%	46,9%	21,8%
<i>Agriculture, forestry and fisheries</i>	92,3%	0%	7,7%
<i>Wholesale and retail sale, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles</i>	38,4%	46,2%	15,4%
<i>Construction</i>	28,6%	71,4%	0%
<i>Information and communication</i>	50%	50%	0%
<i>Transport and storage</i>	33,3%	66,7	0%
<i>Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities</i>	100%	0%	0%
<i>Accommodation and food services</i>	0%	50%	50%
<i>Mining</i>	100%	0%	0%

Source: author's own calculation.

5. Conclusion, limitations and further research. Such has been the intensity of the current global recession that SMEs, as well as their human resources, have been suffering from fear psychosis. The financial meltdown has strengthened the contentions of management thinkers that if the corporate does not wear the mantle of innovation, it will die out. There are corporations which purely swear by this particular mantra where the art of organizational innovation has been given prime importance and all micro- and macrolevel organizational variables are tuned to have the characteristic features of a true innovator.

Although there are huge amount of literature on the adoption and diffusion of innovations, only a very limited part considers the joint adoption of a range of innovations. Because of that, in this study we have explored the scope of use of innovations in SMEs from the South Banat Region and calculated complementarities among 4 types of innovations, i.e. process, product, organization and marketing innovations. Despite the extensive focus of the innovation literature on process innovations, product innovations are found to play a vital role in the innovative activity of the sampled enterprises. This indicates that innovations based on the technical aspect of the deliv-

ery of the final product (the process or the machinery used), although important, tell only part of the story of innovative efforts of a firm.

The analysis of the intensity of use of 4 innovations types was carried out leading to the identification of 3 clusters of SMEs. One cluster was found where intensity of innovations' adoption was directed to just one type of innovations. This is the largest cluster containing about 44,7% of the firms in the sample. The second cluster (about 40,8% of the sample) was found with intermediate adoption of innovative activities. Finally, the third cluster (containing about 14,5% of the sample) was, made up of highly intensive adopters seemingly capable of fully exploiting the synergistic effects generated by joint adoption of 3 out of 4 types of innovations. This is a very new picture of the pattern of innovative activity showing that innovations can be seen as complements and not substitutes for each other.

Although this work provides useful theoretical and managerial insights, it also has several limitations that need to be kept in mind. While the researchers tried to investigate the evidence of innovation management in an exploratory manner, the research design should be tested with more challenging questions. Second, even though the role of innovations in SMEs has been highlighted, the study does not discuss it thoroughly. Third, the data do not enable conclusions on directions of causality. Fourth, the use of the sample from the South Banat Region limits the generalizability of the results both geographically and in scope. However, comparison of this innovation study results with other regions can be an interesting and promising challenge for future research.

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