

Marketing Innovation in the Apparel Industry: Turkey

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Abstract

With globalisation the extent of competition is increasing rapidly in the world. In these conditions companies need innovation to be more efficient and productive, as well as to offer what is expected from them. This has caused innovation to be one of the most important areas of today's economy. Companies able to make innovations can expand their market share and be successful. Creativity is the key factor for innovation, which can refer to the properties of the product, employment, organisation and marketing. On the other hand, innovative methods can develop not only inside the firm but also in response to conditions outside. Marketing innovation is an attempt to come up with applications, novelties and changes that enrich a product through marketing activities. Such attempts and activities can come in the form of the packaging, placement, promotion, and pricing of products or in the application of a new marketing method which includes important changes in customer service. In this study, an innovation concept, its varieties and properties are explained, and afterwards the marketing innovations of selected Turkish apparel firms are studied.

Key words: marketing, innovation, apparel industry, market shares.

■ Innovation concept

Innovation has been the concept of expressing creativity and novelty for centuries. It is well known and accepted that without creativity and novelty, improvement and development will not be possible. Many definitions can be found in literature about innovation.

Innovation comes from the Latin word “*innovatus*”, which means the start of using new methods in social, administrative and cultural environments. The Webster Dictionary defines “innovation” as the introduction of something new, and also as a new idea, method, or device. On the other hand, innovation expresses the consequence more than the novelty itself; social and economical systems depend on change and diversification [1].

Firms should frequently change, diversify, differentiate their products and carry out methods of conducting business to survive in today's competitive atmosphere, which is changing and developing very rapidly. This diversification or change is also called ‘innovation’ [1]. If firms do not get with innovation, they will either self destruct or will be rejected by the market. Because of being in a competitive atmosphere, firms constantly follow other firms as well as replicate and take the best applications. For this reason innovation will prevent companies from being the same and also make them one step ahead.

OECD Innovation Data – *Oslo Manual* includes one of the most internationally accepted definitions of innovation. In its 2005 version, innovation is defined as the

implementation of a new or significantly improved product (goods or services), process, marketing method, or a new organisational method of business practice, workplace organization or external relations [2].

According to the OECD definition, we can describe innovation as any kind of different, original method, or implementation that has a commercial value. Therefore, the value of innovation and its importance come from new and different applications and methods that provide profit for the firm and/or person. For this reason, many discoveries, different methods and implementations have a commercial value which can take time to apply.

For example, although the vacuum cleaner was invented by J. Murray Spengler, it was sold by W.H Hoover, a leather manufacturer. Therefore Hoover's name is known and has become widespread all over the world [3]. Such examples can be explained.

■ Innovation types

Innovation is developed to solve hitherto unresolved problems, to answer needs that could not be satisfied before or make a service or product better and handier. Hence, innovation does not need to be an invention. According to all of these ideas, the totality of the process creates the innovation itself.

Hence, innovation can occur in the products of firms, services, manufacturing, distribution, or in the methods describing how to carry out business. In short,

it means a process which starts with inventions, the improvement of these inventions, the going forward process and eventually the launch of a new product/process or service onto the market [19]. These are defined as “product innovation”, “service innovation”, “process innovation” “organisational innovation” and “marketing innovation” [1]. These innovation types are studied below.

Product innovation

Product innovation is defined as putting a service or product whose properties or intended uses are suitable for the market. Product innovation includes significant advances in technical properties, its parts or materials, associated software, intended uses or other functional properties [2].

A Turkish sportswear company called ‘Colin’s Jeans’ has a ‘Double Vision’ product. This product, which can be worn inside out, is an important example of innovation. With the idea of Double Vision, Colins was able to achieve sales targets in a very short time, hence we can see that a competitive force can be established by innovation in the apparel or textile industry [1].

Since the beginning of 2000, Yeşim Textile’s smart fabrics, which are nano techniques: water proof, no ironing required, producing little sweating, can be also counted as product innovation [4]. One of the most important properties of product innovation can be the customer willing to pay extra for a newly developed product. Therefore firms need to analyse this concept thoroughly.

Process innovation

This can be defined as managing the process of production or distribution methods which are new, improved or developed. This method includes important modifications in production techniques, equipment or software [2].

Increasing the speed or capacity of a new production system which has not been applied to the sector before by reducing costs, creating fast and correct distribution and ensuring its continuity is process innovation [20]. Adapting this situation will bring a price advantage, efficiency, profit and competitive power.

Since 2006, Yeşim Textile is one of the firms in the apparel industry which has gone through process innovation via a

lean production system. Therefore, they can look over their work process and improve the situation thanks to Kaizen’s, which aims to have a management philosophy encompassing all employees [4].

The latest purchase orders of the apparel industry are generally based on low cost, short term fashion products. High cost and long term fashion products are mostly wanted for classic models. Many firms, including Sun Textile (Jkey), have renewed their processes and implemented a modular system, replacing the batch production system. In the modular production system, production takes place in modules, which are also called cells. A low number order is sewn on a certain module, and after a quality check, it is packed and ready to be distributed. The products are not transferred inside the company, preventing work and time loss.

Organisational innovation

This is the application of a new organisational administration in work applications, workplace organisations or external relationships [2]. For this reason it changes the structure of an organisation in a significant way; the application of advanced management and organisational techniques, or the application of new or highly modified techniques can be counted as organisational/administrative innovation.

Zara is an example of innovation which brings about the most suitable and fashionable products in a very fast way and with very reasonable prices. It also leads the design, production and its branches in a very efficient way. DELL is another example of organisational innovation that creates a business model by working with zero stock and selling configured systems according to customer request.

Marketing innovation

Basically, marketing is a process of defining and meeting customer needs and wants. Each of the two or more sides, to meet their needs gives valuable goods (product, service or idea) and receives other valuable things such as money, credits use. This exchange process happens through communication between the two sides. Each side should believe in receiving a profit from this trade. In 1985 the American Marketing Association defined marketing as ‘the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create an exchange

that satisfies individual and organisational objectives [5].

The marketing department spends money on promoting the properties of an already manufactured product to the target group. But this approach no longer works. Traditional approaches are already old fashioned. Alternative approaches are not novelties, but what is left behind [6].

Marketing innovation is the application of a new marketing method which includes significant changes in the pricing, promotion, placing or packaging of a product [2].

In short, a firm which is able to present a product or service to customers in a very different way makes a marketing innovation. Organisational and marketing innovations are counted as non-technological, but both are very important as technological innovations. However, it is not possible for a firm to have great trading success with only technological innovation and no marketing innovation. Seth Godin stated that being successful in marketing is a result of being able to pick a target group which spreads an idea, and a product which is developed for that special target group [21].

Marketing strategy categories can be named as follows: the pricing process, packaging, distribution channels, advertisement, customer relations or services, and store designs. If firms adopt a new approach that includes these, it means they have a marketing innovation.

Marketing innovation in the apparel sector

The apparel industry is one of the oldest in the world and is also an important area that directly provides products and services for the appreciation of the customer. Its production and marketing activities are all over the world. Therefore, apparel can be accepted as one of the important industries in all countries, including developing ones. The size of the apparel industry, which is connected with the development of countries, is decreasing, but its importance and efficiency still continue.

As far as Turkey is concerned, the place and importance of the apparel sector is different. The basis of Turkey’s industry is the textile sector. After the development of the textile sector and its becoming an

Table 1. Apparel export in Turkey and the world. *Source:* World Trading Association, Trading Statistics 2008.

Years	Apparel exportation (in millions of USD)				
	1990	2000	2005	2006	2007
Turkey	3331	6533	11833	12052	14001
World	108129	198158	276822	309593	345301
Turkey's proportion, %	0,0308	0,0330	0,0427	0,0389	0,0405

important branch of industry, the apparel sector started to develop inside the country in the 1980's. This sector started to develop very fast due to a young, entrepreneurial, dynamic and cheap labour force. Owing to this process, it has become the biggest exporting sector of the country. Furthermore it is Turkey's biggest means of competition in international trade. For a country like Turkey, which was an agricultural country for many years, after the role of agriculture in the economy decreased and gave way to industrialisation, the apparel sector developed in a very successful way. If we look at the general situation of the sector in the economy, according to the Turkish Statistical Organisation, the total amount of export in Turkey in 2008 was 131.974.788 USD, of which the apparel sector represented 15.239.716 USD, comprising 12% of the total export. The total export of Turkey in April 2009 was 30.230.848 USD, 3.103.028 USD of which was by the apparel sector, representing 10.26% of the total value [7]. With nearly 1.5 m workers in total, it makes a critical contribution to employment. The sector shows its potency in the economy with a 5% share of the GSMH and 27% share of all the total investment. With the globalisation of international competition conditions, the situation has got harder for firms, but the sector has adjusted successfully to this change and progressed. With innovative applications, it tries to comply with the rules of global trade and also aims to be an initiator. As a result of this, today

this sector is ranked as the third biggest exporter of apparel in the world. **Table 1** shows values for Turkish and world apparel export, as well as Turkey's share of the world apparel export in proportion/percentage. In 2000 the share of the apparel sector in world trade was 3.2%, and in 2007 was 2.5%. Turkey's share showed an increase until 2005, dropped in 2006, and continued to rise after 2007.

The sector reinforces its success with process, production and organisational innovations, but the most important is marketing innovation, whose success increases the country's and world economy.

In this study the marketing innovations of selected Turkish firms and the effects of these innovations on them are examined.

Vakko

Vakko, which has a brand name in fashion, has achieved many initiatives in the name of modern retailing and customer satisfaction. Vakko is a determinant brand for customers who want to have the best [8].

With its limited creations in 1955, Vakko organised the first fashion show in Turkey that represented the fashion of the period. Every season it works with worldwide known top models [8].

In 1962, with a very special store in Beyoglu, Vakko entered the retail sector. With this store, Vakko exchanged the

prevalent garment habits in Turkey for a completely new concept. Furthermore, in that period it was not only the biggest store in the country, but it also offered high quality and high customer service to Turkish customers. Through this store, customers in Turkey experienced "retail without bargaining", "sale days on special days" "a refund/exchange system" for the first time [8].

With its new shop in İzmir, Vakko generally advertised at national and regular fashion events, thereby increasing its popularity. In 1988 it celebrated its 50th anniversary by renewing its fashion identity with a new logo, which is still used today [8].

In 1989 for the first time a fashion brand in Turkey produced its own chocolate with the name of "Vakko Chocolate Collection", and also by creating *V de Vakko* and *Piu Piu* in 1990, Vakko became the very first fashion brand in Turkey to have its own perfumes. In 2005 Vakko became a leader in concept retailing by initiating Vakko Shoes&Bags, Vakko Wedding and Vakko Couture stores in Nisantasi [8].

Vakko is a brand that brings firsts to Turkey. Vakko ensures the continuity of its own concepts, achieves customer satisfaction and increases its performance.

Vakkoroma

In 1982 Vakkoroma was established by Vakko as a young and popular brand name. Since then it has brought music, art and sport concepts together and has a new approach to retail by going beyond the fashion in Turkey. It presents a young dynamic life style [8].

Sarar

Sarar is mostly seen as a sponsor. Its sponsorships are the Turkish National Football Team, 12 Giant Man, the Turk-



Figure 1, 2, 3. Different store designs of Damat, Tween and ADV brands.



Figure 4. Gentlemen's Club.

ish National Women's Volleyball Team, Galatasaray, Efes Pilsen, Eskisehir Sport, Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Sport and Werder Bremen. Thus Sarar aims to be known by many people.

Additionally it is very common to come across news which shows some politicians wearing Sarar. Such news as "Not only in Turkey but also managers from overseas have their suits sewn by Sarar", "Sarar Fashion in Ankara", "A suit from Sarar for the Brooklyn Mayor" are seen in the press. Besides this, Sarar also draws attention with its marketing innovations in advertising [9].

Sarar appeals to different masses through different advertising media, thereby extending its market share.

Kıgılı

Today, Kıgılı is the determinant of the sale price of a nice suit in apparel. When Kıgılı lowers prices, they generally drop, and when Kıgılı raises prices, they are raised nationwide. On the market, Kıgılı is known as the "price murderer". Kıgılı is mostly a middle class brand, and the factor that makes it a parameter of men's garments is the Kıgılı Logistic Center in Gebze.

The biggest logistic center of men's garments in Turkey works with a simple automation system. It is not a warehouse because nothing is stocked there. Everything, such as which colour, which model or which product is sold or waits in a shop window, are being followed. Products which are not sold in one store are transferred to another if the same products are already sold in that one [10].

Kıgılı increases its market share by improving the efficiency of its logistic center/distribution channels. .

Damat – Tween – ADV

Damat – Tween and ADV attract attention with their different store and window designs (*Figure 1, 2, 3*). They work with professionals in the design work of their stores and windows, always creating new designs.

Damat established the Gentlemen's Club for businessman and managers, which provides fabulous services. The Gentlemen's Club is an exclusive place where the needs of businessmen are met (*Figure 4*) [11].

Damat, Tween and ADV draw attention with their different styles of customer approach. By strengthening customer satisfaction, they increase their performance.

Abbate

Abbate is a Turkish fashion brand which prepares its collections one year beforehand, distributing them amongst its retailers.

Abbate is well known for its product innovations. After noticing that half of its customers are women, they changed a tradition of 17 years and started to manufacture women's blouses. However, they also have some marketing innovations such as creating the idea of 'bring the old one, get a new one' campaign, as well as making presents of tango classes for couples when a certain amount of shopping is done.

Although Abbate is a men's shirt manufacturer, it has also increased its market share in the apparel sector by manufacturing blouses for women.

Koton

We can explain this company's important marketing innovations and points of origin as follows:

Women visit stores with their husbands, but they cannot spend enough time in them due to the boredom of the husbands. However, women who spend approximately 25 minutes in a store are very likely to shop. Hence, the company has focused on "men" and the question of how to make men have a good time in the store. As a result, such ideas came out: Let's put a bar in the store, so when women shop, men can have a couple of drinks, which would be free; an internet access point where men can check their e-mails or surf; a nice comfortable couch with newspapers or magazines around it so they can read; a pool table or pintable for them to have fun with their kids etc. Koton customers, who are mostly under 30's, like "trendy" designs, frequently changed models and reasonable prices. And for this reason they have also focused on creating different designs, allowing 15 new models in stores every day at reasonable prices [12].

In the time of "Cow Parade", Koton exhibited its stylish cow with shiny stones and world emboss on, in front of Galatasaray High School at Beyoğlu in Istanbul.

Apart from that Koton is also a leader because of its strong distribution channels. As evidence, in 2008 it was chosen as a finalist for the World Retail Awards.

Due to globalisation, the world is changing fast, and hence firms need to act faster. In the apparel industry, the term "fast fashion", which has developed of late, has created a different point of view in the marketing system. Koton continually strengthens customer satisfaction, its advertising campaigns, and distribution channels and tries to show its presence in the fast fashion area all over the world.

Zeki Triko

The owner and the chairman of Zeki Triko – Zeki Başeskioglu is a brand person who has been able to apply the necessities of marketing communications. He started marketing potential customers when they approached him, and he has always been a good listener [13].

In the 1950's, when he had a stable store, he went to bazaars to sell his goods individually in a very enthusiastic way, nowadays he is involved in multi channeled retailing (internet) . Actually, with its online-shop they aim at direct sale, thereby making a brand very popular and protecting its position [13].

During his marketing of socks, Mr. Başeskioglu created a very different attitude to selling socks (communication-promotion). He used to throw one sock to the crowd, thereby making people bring that one sock back to him. In most cases people asked for the other sock. This method was without risk because one cannot wear just one sock, hence he increased his sales in this ingenious way [13].

Customers and stakeholders (such as public opinion groups, firms etc) have an idea or common impression about a brand mostly when they hear its name, for instance, the brand names Zeki Triko or Zeki Başeskioglu; they know Zeki Triko is identical to other world brand swimsuits. In addition to this, fashions, styles, designs, fashion shows, and top models appear in their minds. Cindy Crawford, Claudia Schiffer etc. are only some of the top model names that are seen in Zeki Triko advertisements or commercials. And then there are big billboards with beautiful top models in swimsuits at the different points in İstanbul, especially the ones seen at İstanbul Atatürk Airport come to the mind [13].

Zeki Triko increases its market share and brand power gradually with its innovative applications in marketing.

Mavi Jeans

Its marketing strategy with the “perfect fit” concept is the biggest factor which takes Mavi away from being simply a brand of jeans to a much larger global fashion brand. With *Perfect Fit* Mavi aims to get a good fit from its jeans, not only physically but also culturally. Apart from creating a lifestyle for its customers, Mavi has become a part of their lives, making them a part of Mavi. Their philosophy is to create a new Mediterranean fashion brand around jeans which have a perfect fit and blue jean culture [14].

With new projects such as turning the ground floor of Mavi’s store in New York Union Square into an exhibition site, Mavi aims to give a message to young people: Mavi not only designs products for them but also shares the world with them, hence this exhibition site becomes a meeting point with Mavi’s different organisations, such as movie days, yoga classes etc. [15].

To create a brand which inspires young people but also gets inspiration from them, Mavi makes different, up-to-date initiator projects and effective advertisement campaigns. In this way it develops its relationship with customers.

This campaign and project are as follows, Mavi has long provided on-line sales just for overseas customers, but today with the m@vistore Mavi also serves Turkey, changing the shopping habits of its customers. Mavi started the first online sale of blue jeans, and 150 products are available at m@vistore, which one can access through www.mavi.com.

Mavi Jeans supports Society Voluntary Charity youth projects, one of which are t-shirts with the voice collection. In this limited collection ten t-shirts are designed with lyrics from the most famous Turkish rock stars, such as Teoman, Aylin Aslım, and Mor ve Ötesi. Performers are able to give these specially designed t-shirts as gifts to young people of the Charity.

The advertisement campaigns of Mavi Jeans are most interesting, for example there are some mottos which are still remembered by many, such as “We go too far, we get too beautiful”, “Don’t call it

the same George”, “If you feel like 2007” and “If you feel like 2008”.

Mavi Jeans not only fit the body but also the culture of customers, hence it could improve its exporting skills and also strengthen its performance.

Collezione

Collezione’s owner transferred to retailing when he was a window artist. He is someone who aims to manufacture cheap but stylish garments for young people, and he is also able to apply this as an innovation in its retail chain.

Their marketing innovations can be listed as follow:

- The rapid changes in the market show that in the future the customer will visit the store once every 15 days, therefore they think there will be a “make dirty, get new” trend soon. Moreover, they put emphasis on using more technology in manufacturing, and they have devoted more time to retailing, causing an increase in efficiency [16].
- They turned a corner and changes their distribution method by setting up franchising management. They diversified profits by creating product groups. By dividing the season into three groups, they decreased the number of products on sale, hence they increased their efficiency [16].
- The Collezione trade mark is one of the leading brands that applies the fast fashion concept in Turkey with its marketing innovations. It increased its market share in a very short time, becoming very popular among 18-24 year olds.

T-Box

T-box has created its own market by distinguishing itself in the packaging technique of an ordinary product. Today the company exports its products to a total of 17 countries, primarily to Australia. Their marketing strategies and sales channels are followed up by at least an innovative packaging system. The main sales strategy is based upon selling the product where possible. T-Box products can be found anywhere, from Beymen stores to gas stations, from ice cream trays on the beach to even Frigo trays in cinemas [17].

The general manager of T-box Dilek Sensoy states their strategy as “being

able to touch the customer anytime and anywhere”. She explains that a person who is travelling should be able to get a T-Box product from a gas station if he has spilled coffee on him during his journey, and adds the reason for achieving much bigger success being the fact that they are a producer of funny, naughty and lovely products. T-box products composed of useful items, funny billboard ads, and witty marketing techniques are used. For example, putting coins into the top of the packaging shows the instructions of use and how to use the product in the presence of a well.

To summarise T-box:

- They follow a different marketing strategy by packaging compressed t-shirts in small packages.
- Although it is a new brand on the market, they have adopted an expansionist policy. They have used the advantages of all the brand names which exist in Boyner Holding and have sold goods in Beymen, Benetton, and Divarese stores. Therefore different socio-economic groups have been aimed at.
- They use broad sales points like gas stations, pharmacies, ferries, airports, ice cream trays etc.
- Their pricing policy is “to provide superior quality cheaper”, which the company is founded upon. They aim to achieve high class in metropolises, but also to appeal to people with low income in Anatolian cities.
- Although they appear to be a textile brand, they have also created different products which fit in with the brand concept.
- T-box products are sold in over 5 continents, in countries such as Canada, Australia, Greece, The Lebanon, and South Africa, at more than 4000 selling points [17].

Apart from T-box, the packing innovations of two other Turkish textile firms are as follows:

- Funika Textile packs their cooling pyjamas in icecream boxes to give the idea that their pyjamas will keep customers cool.
- Eke Textile, which has the Hamam brand, manufactures bath garments and accessories, and they pack these products in a set which has a special lock, hence after leaving the factory no one is able to touch these products

except the person who purchases the product.

■ Summary

Innovation is defined as transforming information into a social and economic benefit. Therefore it is a combination of technique, as well as economic and social progress. It is a product of cultures which are open to novelty, have a will to change as well as the entrepreneurial spirit [2]. The need for innovation policies were examined with respect to the four main reasons at the association conference in 2007: First, countries with “big” industrial policies can not achieve the desired success; secondly innovation is the key to competitiveness, and thirdly, due to the pressures of globalisation, companies and the “protected” areas of countries are significantly decreasing. Finally, market forces are insufficient for disadvantaged firms and economies [18].

To provide more employment and active trade, the apparel sector needs to improve itself constantly. Firms should improve their products, technologies and service concept as well. Apparel firms which are able to apply innovation become trend makers. Innovation is also a continuous activity. There is always a next stage; firms cannot give up their innovative actions when they reach a certain point.

Day by day, consumers demand more diversity and movement from apparel firms. As well as this, their expectations from a garment is increase rapidly; they want to receive some extra properties from “smart garments”, such as it can be worn easily, it is light, very easily ironed or no ironing needed, protects against UV or other weather conditions, takes up the less space in a bag, non-crease, can change its colors under different lights, can measure body temperature, can keep track of heart beat and breathing rate, cool in summer, warm in winter etc. Other extra properties which are expected from these improved garments are that they are fashionable, high quality, cheap, easy to buy, easy to obtain, attract attention etc. Globaliation is increasing the possibility of obtaining any kind of product and service in the world. For this reason, only some firms will be able to hold onto the market. In view of globalisation and increasing demands, the apparel sector also needs to work on innovation.

Marketing strategy categories are as follows: price development, packaging, distribution channels, advertising, customer relations (customer service provided), and store design. Catching an innovative approach that falls into these categories may bring about a marketing innovation.

In this study the marketing innovations of Vakko, Sarar, Kiğılı, Damat, Abbate, Koton, Zeki Triko, Mavi Jeans, Collezione, and T-box are examined.

Vakko was the first to achieve many concepts in the name of modern retailing and customer satisfaction. Sarar is notable for innovations in the field of advertising and sponsorship. Kiğılı increases its market share with innovation in its distribution channels. Damat attracts attention with its different store and window designs. Gentlemen’s Club provides an unlimited service to business men. Abbate applies different promotion campaigns. Koton adopts different store concepts for the women who visit their stores with their husbands and also works according to the fast fashion concept, creating many different designs for their stores in a short period of time. Zeki Triko applies marketing communication science in a very systematic way. Mavi Jeans creates effective advertisements, creative, and fashionable projects, as well as its e-commerce site, giving another shopping alternative. Collezione directs its work towards product groups and focuses on franchising management and the system of retail. Lastly textile firms such as T-box, Funika and Hamam concentrate on different types of packaging to draw customers’ attention.

The companies who manage to achieve innovation, manage to attract more customers, sell more products and, consequently, get more revenue from the market, expand their size more than their competitors. Companies which can perform different innovations in the future will be more likely to expand their market share

Turkish apparel companies are making significant progress in production and service, showing important achievements compared to other competitor countries by delivering speed, product diversity, design talent, product quality, efficiency etc. Hence Turkish apparel firms are likely to continue their innovations in marketing. However, firms need to foresee and accept that innovation is a necessity,

thus Turkish firms should show significant innovations consecutively. Pricing, packaging, distribution channels, promotion activities, customer service, retailing efforts etc. should be taken into extreme consideration to create a new approach i.e. firms should make improvements in these areas. As is well known, other technical innovative approaches are also very important for firms, but if the innovative application is not combined with marketing innovation, it will not be enough to achieve the desired success or contribution.



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