

Sources for product and service innovation from reverse flows

In the case of product innovations companies use various sources of inventions and ideas. Probably every company deals – more or less – with some reverse flows managed by the activities of reverse logistics. Reverse flows can be both an interesting as well as important source of ideas. Despite this belief there is not much known about the realization of this potentiality in practice and the theme is neglected also in theory.

This paper examines various questions of the utilization of existing reverse flows as the sources for product and service innovation in the context of companies' innovative behaviour and reverse logistics management. Based on the empirical survey of 270 companies we have identified some major differences between two groups of companies (manufacturing and services) related to the various sources for product (service) innovation encompassing reverse flows, too. Variables of reverse logistics management context measured drivers for management of these flows, reverse logistics performance issues and perception of reverse flows by managers. Frequency analysis, crosstabs, χ^2 , Mann-Whitney U and t-tests were applied to get answers to the basic research question if there are any differences between manufacturing and service companies in their new product development behaviour concerning reverse flows.