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## Customers' Participation in Innovation Processes of Inventors and SMEs

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**Abstract:** Is market pull, technology push or their combination important on the background of innovations? The recent aspect speaks for the necessity of joining customers in the innovation process for better service to the customers. The frequency and ways of customers' participation varies according to the phase of both the innovation process and the life cycle of the enterprise concerned. This paper focuses on the common and distinguishing traits of customers' participation in the innovation processes of case SMEs and inventors in the machinery sector. Comparative national statistics and survey data are included in. Findings on the meaning of patenting to SMEs and inventors bring in additional aspects.