

Innovations

Extraordinarization in Innovation

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Abstract: *This paper explores the concept of Extraordinarization in innovation, reimagining it as performing ordinary tasks in extraordinary ways. By making innovation accessible, approachable, and practical, this research emphasizes the significance of Extraordinarization in driving sustainable development and inspiring individuals and organizations to rethink management practices. The Centre for Food Technology and Research (CEPTER) establishment at Benue State University, among others, is a prime case study of how Extraordinarization can elevate mundane tasks to produce exceptional outcomes that generate long-term value. The study highlights strategies for overcoming challenges, emphasizing micro-creativity and extraordinary execution, and unlocking growth, prosperity, and sustainability opportunities.*

Keywords: *Extraordinarization, Ordinarizing, Innovation, Micro-creativity, Sustainability Opportunities*

JEL Code: O31, O32, Q01, Q56, M10

1. Introduction

The concept of innovation encompasses a wide range of facets and goes beyond the mere introduction of novel ideas. (Schumpeter, 1934) It entails a paradigm shift away from established practices, introducing fresh or improved products, services, or processes that produce value for individuals, companies, or society. This study proposes a nuanced definition of innovation, which could be described as the performance of regular activities in extraordinary ways. This conception focuses on how persons, organizations, or ideas can be modified or improved to attract attention, significance, or effect by performing routine duties with extraordinary proficiency.

According to Smith and Tushman (2005), the defining characteristic of innovation is transforming ordinary things into extraordinary experiences, goods, or services that generate long-term value for all stakeholders. Christensen (1997) describes innovation as creating new entities and uniquely executing traditional tasks. This perspective highlights the multifaceted nature of innovation, emphasizing its role in enhancing and redefining established practices. Through "ordinarizing" innovation, this study aims to make it more accessible to all individuals by making

it more inclusive and practical (Lee & Dovchin, 2019, p. 56). Creativity is transformed into a collective duty and a driver for sustainable growth by implementing this approach, which democratizes creativity.

The primary objective of this study is to highlight the concept of "Extraordinarization" as an innovation strategy for driving sustainable growth. The motivation to inspire and enable individuals and organizations to reimagine management practices and create an environment conducive to innovation (Grint, 2024: 162). The investigation of the idea of extraordinaryization is of utmost importance because it has the potential to establish new opportunities for growth, prosperity, and sustainability. It also makes it possible for individuals to participate in innovation actively and, eventually, to reshape communities.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The Essence of Innovation

The primary motivation for innovation is to solve current issues more effectively. This drive goes beyond theoretical debates and concentrates on actively attending to the needs of local communities and the larger global community (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The purpose is to close existing gaps through the extraordinary provision of requisite goods or services, improve existing processes, and enhance the quality of products or services. An unwavering focus on improving lives within the communities and the broader global space should be at the core of initiatives (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Passion plays a critical role in driving Extraordinarization. It fuels our commitment to drive change, even in adversity. It is essential to remember that innovation is often born out of necessity, guided by ethical obligations, and driven by a vision for a better future (Christensen, 1997).

The motivations for innovation must be rooted in a desire to positively impact society rather than solely for personal gain or recognition (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Sustainable innovation for development initiatives involves creating solutions that address immediate needs and contribute positively to the environment and society in the long term. This approach requires integrating economic viability, social equity, and environmental protection at all stages of the initiatives (Hart & Milstein, 2003). Adopting a sustainable innovation approach makes it possible to create solutions that drive economic growth while promoting social and ecological well-being (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). To determine whether an innovation is sustainable, it can be evaluated against several criteria, including financial viability, social equity, environmental protection, and resilience. Economic viability refers to the innovation's ability to generate revenue and sustain itself financially (Schumpeter, 1934). Social equity ensures innovation promotes fairness, justice, and equal opportunity access (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Environmental protection requires innovation to minimize environmental harm and promote the sustainable use of natural resources (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Finally, resilience ensures that innovation can withstand and adapt to

dynamic challenges and uncertainties (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Considering these factors, it is possible to create innovations that contribute to a better future for future generations. Ultimately, sustainable innovation can transform our world, creating a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future for all (Hart & Milstein, 2003).

2.2 Extraordinarization in Innovation

In this context, "extraordinarization" implies elevating something to extraordinary status. The concept of extraordinarization in innovation, which involves transforming ordinary activities into extraordinary experiences, products, or services that generate sustainable value, is gaining increasing attention in the literature. Traditional definitions of innovation often emphasize introducing new or improved products, services, or processes (Schumpeter, 1934). However, the concept of extraordinarization expands this definition by highlighting the importance of creativity and deliberate effort in reimagining everyday activities. "Innovation is the art of 'extraordinarization' - the deliberate and creative process of transforming ordinary things into extraordinary experiences, products, or services that create sustainable value for all stakeholders" (Smith & Tushman, 2005, p. 524). The term "art" in the definition highlights the significance of creativity, intentionality, and skill in transforming everyday activities into extraordinary and value-creating experiences. To actualize, this concept entails cultivating a mindset that embraces creativity and encourages innovative approaches to routine tasks, ensuring these efforts align with sustainable value creation for all stakeholders. By fostering a culture that values deliberate and imaginative thinking, organizations can consistently elevate ordinary processes to extraordinary levels, driving growth and sustainability. This approach underscores that innovation is not solely the domain of groundbreaking technological advancements but can also be achieved through the exceptional application of ordinary tasks (Christensen, 1997).

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) discuss the "Extraordinarization of the Mundane" concept, emphasizing how ordinary aspects of organizational life are presented and perceived as extraordinary. By inverting this concept to relate to "Extraordinarization in Innovation," the focus shifts to making the extraordinary aspects of innovation more accessible and approachable. This inversion implies democratizing innovation, ensuring it is not confined to an elite few but integrated into the everyday practices of individuals and organizations. Rather than emphasizing the uniqueness and rarity of innovative activities, this approach promotes the idea that innovation can be achieved through ordinary means performed extraordinarily well. This concept aligns with the belief that sustainable development can be driven by making innovation a collective responsibility and fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can contribute to and benefit from innovative practices (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Grint (2024) explores the concept of the "mundanization of the extraordinary" by discussing how what was once considered extraordinary can be downgraded to the mundane when subaltern groups achieve what was previously exclusive to privileged individuals. This inversion supports the idea of "Extraordinarization in Innovation," emphasizing democratizing innovation and making it accessible to all. When innovation becomes a collective endeavour, ordinary people can perform extraordinary acts, challenging the traditional monopolies of privileged groups. This democratization of innovation aligns with Grint's observation that the actions of previously privileged groups may be devalued as others achieve the same feats. By making innovation a shared responsibility, we can foster sustainable development and empower diverse groups to contribute to the innovative landscape, thus transforming extraordinary accomplishments into accessible, everyday practices.

Several other studies illustrate the application of extraordinarization in various management domains. For instance, in human resource management, extraordinarization can transform conventional training programs into immersive and interactive experiences that significantly enhance employee engagement and retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). In operations management, adopting extraordinarization can lead to the development of sustainable and socially responsible supply chain practices, thereby minimizing waste and maximizing value (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Strategic management literature also highlights that reimagining business models through the lens of extraordinarization can drive growth and profitability while reducing environmental impact (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). These examples demonstrate that extraordinarization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development across different organizational practices.

The significance of extraordinarization lies in its capacity to create shared value and drive sustainable development. By transforming ordinary management practices into extraordinary experiences, organizations can enhance their relevance and adaptability in a dynamic global environment (Porter & Kramer, 2011). This approach fosters innovation and encourages inclusivity by making innovation accessible and actionable for all stakeholders (Hart & Milstein, 2003). Ultimately, the concept of extraordinarization emphasizes that innovation is a collective responsibility, requiring the concerted efforts of individuals, organizations, and communities to create sustainable and impactful solutions for the future (Smith & Tushman, 2005).

2.3 Resistance to Extraordinarization

Resistance to extraordinarization can originate from various sources, notably from individuals who are comfortable with the existing state of affairs and are hesitant to accept change. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) identify that a prevalent reason for resistance is the fear of the unknown or uncertainty regarding the potential outcomes of extraordinarization initiatives. People might exhibit apprehension towards deviating from familiar routines and methods, thus resisting innovative

ideas that challenge their established beliefs or practices. Furthermore, resistance can also be attributed to a lack of comprehension or awareness of the advantages of extraordinarization, as individuals might perceive it as unnecessary or disruptive to their established work processes (Gonen, 2020). Effective communication and education are crucial for overcoming resistance, as they help address concerns and misconceptions while highlighting the value and positive impacts of extraordinarization on individuals and the organization.

Additionally, resistance to extraordinarization can be exacerbated by organizational barriers or constraints that impede the implementation of innovative ideas. Amabile (1998) emphasizes that organizational structures, processes, and cultures that prioritize efficiency and conformity over creativity and experimentation can pose significant obstacles to extraordinarization. Bureaucratic red tape, rigid hierarchies, and risk-averse attitudes can suppress creativity and innovation, making it challenging for individuals to introduce extraordinary approaches to everyday tasks. Overcoming these barriers requires organizations to cultivate a culture that values and rewards creativity, encourages risk-taking, and provides the necessary resources and support for extraordinarization efforts to flourish (Smith & Jones, 2017). Addressing individual and organizational resistance is essential to pave the way for successful extraordinarization and drive positive change in daily activities.

2.4 Strategies for Overcoming Challenges of Extraordinarization

Individuals can play a pivotal role in driving innovation within their communities and organizations by challenging the status quo through a series of strategic approaches. One of the most crucial strategies is adopting a growth mindset, emphasizing openness to change and continuous learning (Dweck, 2006). Individuals can foster a culture that embraces transformation and improvement by viewing challenges as opportunities for personal and communal development rather than as barriers. This shift in perspective is essential, as it encourages experimentation and resilience in the face of setbacks, creating an environment conducive to innovative thinking.

Another effective strategy involves questioning prevailing assumptions and practices. By critically examining established beliefs and processes, individuals can identify inefficiencies and potential areas for improvement (Harris, 1990). This kind of inquiry stimulates creativity and promotes a collective reevaluation of how organizational tasks and responsibilities are approached. Furthermore, seeking diverse perspectives is an essential aspect of this process. Engaging with individuals from varied backgrounds and disciplines enriches problem-solving efforts and ignites fresh ideas. Diversity in thought can often lead to novel solutions that might not emerge in more homogeneous environments (Page, 2007).

Collaboration and knowledge sharing are also instrumental in fostering innovation. By working with others and leveraging collective expertise,

individuals can discover new insights and develop innovative solutions that would be challenging to achieve alone (Gonen, 2020). Maintaining curiosity and an inquisitive nature also encourages individuals to explore new possibilities, ensuring they stay aware of emerging trends and best practices (Hansen, 2010). When these strategies are embraced, individuals can effectively challenge the status quo, cultivate innovation, and contribute positively to societal advancement, thus transforming their communities.

3.0 Demonstration of "Extraordinarization" at Benue State University

Innovation is often associated with grand discoveries and revolutionary ideas. However, the following case studies illustrate the concept of "extraordinarization" in innovation, emphasizing that innovation extends beyond groundbreaking technologies and could be accessible to all individuals in every facet of life. The goal is to demonstrate that innovation can transform ordinary activities into extraordinary experiences, products, or services that create sustainable value for stakeholders.

The establishment of the Centre for Food Technology and Research (CEPTER) at Benue State University (BSU) in Nigeria exemplifies the concept of extraordinarization. Initially, this endeavor seemed impossible. The Acting Director of the BSU Centre for Entrepreneurship Studies was tasked by the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor (Mrs.) Charity Angya, to respond to the World Health Organization's (WHO) plan to establish centers of excellence in four Nigerian universities across different geopolitical zones. Utilizing the autonomy provided, a team of senior professionals was assembled by the Acting Director to address the challenges. The first challenge was a national strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in the country, which halted all academic activities. Rather than confronting or retreating, the team took an exceptionally innovative approach by privately engaging with ASUU leadership to highlight the opportunity and the long-term advantages of the time-sensitive project, ultimately allowing it to move forward without interrupting the ongoing strike. The strategy that allowed the team to meet discreetly without violating the strike conditions ultimately protected the university's interests.

Thus, the team created an enabling environment to move forward despite the serious constraint. Employing several methodologies, the team's collective effort was eventually focused on minimizing post-harvest food waste in Benue State, known as the "Food Basket of the Nation." Consequent to the prevailing conditions, the conception and planning of CEPTEER began without institutional support from the university. The Acting Director personally funded all the activities throughout the duration of the strike. There were numerous other limitations, including lacking an agricultural-related department, an energy establishment, foreign students or staff, and standard hostels. The team developed sophisticated strategies to address these challenges, which included establishing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Energy Centre in Abuja, the University of

Agriculture Makurdi, and the College of Agriculture Yandev. Additionally, commitments were secured from the state Commissioners of Education and Agriculture to meet the state's obligations upon the center's establishment. The official Chairman of the Steering Committee was conceded to a more competent person, while continuous work late at night ensured that the necessary submissions were made in a timely manner.

These extraordinary efforts eventually bore fruit. Though the centre was not initially granted, as the University of Jos was chosen from the same North Central zone. However, the WHO was so impressed with the extraordinary submissions that they awarded an additional grant to Nigeria specifically for BSU, making it the first state-owned university to be awarded a centre of excellence in Nigeria.

Other unusual innovative approaches also bore fruits. The Acting Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship conducted a feasibility study for the BSU Water Project and submitted the proposal to the Vice-Chancellor, including funding alternatives. Despite initial skepticism, the project has become a proud product of the university. Similarly, the proposal to sponsor academically outstanding indigent students was another amazing idealization presently benefiting numerous bright indigent students. This was almost thrown out as being rather trivial relative to the pressing needs of the university at the time, which were considered more significant. It has become a special feature that distinguishes the university from its competitors.

These case studies demonstrate how extraordinarization can transform seemingly insurmountable challenges into remarkable successes. Significant achievements were realized by engaging with stakeholders, creatively addressing limitations, and persistently pursuing innovations. The establishment of CEPTEP at Benue State University is a compelling example of how ordinary activities can be transformed into extraordinary experiences, creating sustainable value for all stakeholders and illustrating the transformative potential of innovation.

Discussion

These narratives illustrate the essence of extraordinarization in innovation: transcending ordinary methods to address existing problems legitimately and creatively. The distinguishing factor in these examples is not the magnitude of the initiatives but the extraordinary approaches employed: articulated problems, actionable and sustainable solutions driven by passion, and selfless pursuit of impartial benefits, all contributing to successful innovations (Christensen, 1997; Smith & Tushman, 2005). The concept of extraordinarization emphasizes that innovation is not confined to groundbreaking technological advancements but can also be achieved through exceptional applications of everyday tasks (Schumpeter, 1934). Exploring innovative management practices for sustainable development highlights the importance of transforming ordinary activities into extraordinary experiences, products, or services that generate sustainable value for all stakeholders (Hart & Milstein, 2003).

This concept is particularly relevant across various management domains. Transforming traditional training programs into immersive experiences in human resource management can significantly enhance employee engagement and retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). In operations management, adopting sustainable supply chain practices can minimize waste and maximize value, aligning with the principles of extraordinarization (Porter & Kramer, 2011). In strategic management, reimagining business models to drive growth and profitability while minimizing environmental impact can propel sustainable development (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Ultimately, the power of extraordinarization lies in transforming ordinary practices into extraordinary experiences, benefiting all stakeholders and ensuring long-term sustainability (Smith & Tushman, 2005). By fostering a culture that embraces creativity and innovative thinking, organizations can navigate the dynamic global environment and drive sustainable development through extraordinary approaches to ordinary tasks.

The foregoing provides useful insights into the flip side, which reveals innovation is commonplace and its accomplishment is just a matter of mindset. Therefore, in the context of societal development, individuals possess significant potential to improve their communities. However, traditional approaches to these contributions often reinforce the status quo and can lead to decline, especially amid escalating societal demands (Schumpeter, 1934). Conversely, when individuals seek to elevate their customary actions by integrating value and innovation, they catalyze societal progress and advancement (OECD, 2015).

This differentiation among developed, developing, and underdeveloped societies is intricately linked to the concept of extraordinarization in innovation. Individuals can drive innovation in their communities by persistently pushing themselves to enhance everyday tasks and adopting novel strategies (Fagerberg, 2005). It is vital to recognize that innovation transcends an abstract notion; it embodies a mindset shift that invites individuals to challenge and improve existing norms (Drucker, 1985). This transformative process is universally accessible and applicable to all aspects of life at any time (Pesser & Oldham, 1980).

In summary, the journey toward innovation is in the daily pursuit of extraordinary solutions to commonplace challenges, cultivating a culture of continuous improvement and societal progress (Auernhammer & Hall, 2014).

Conclusion

Innovation is not merely about introducing new concepts but reimagining everyday activities in exceptional ways. This paper has proposed a more nuanced definition of innovation: "the art of 'extraordinarization' - the deliberate and creative process of transforming ordinary things into extraordinary experiences, products, or services that create sustainable value for all stakeholders" (Smith & Tushman, 2005, p. 524). This concept emphasizes that innovation extends beyond groundbreaking technological advancements and can be achieved through the exceptional application of ordinary tasks (Christensen, 1997). By making

innovation ordinary, accessible, and actionable, it becomes a shared responsibility that requires the collective efforts of individuals, organizations, and communities (Porter & Kramer, 2011). The significance of this approach lies in its potential to inspire and empower us to rethink our management practices and embrace innovation as a catalyst for sustainable development (Hart & Milstein, 2003).

The practical application of extraordinarization can be seen across various management domains, illustrating its potential to transform ordinary practices into extraordinary experiences. In human resource management, extraordinarization can enhance employee engagement through immersive training programs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Operations management can lead to sustainable and socially responsible supply chain practices, minimizing waste and maximizing value (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Strategic management can drive growth and profitability while minimizing environmental impact by reimagining business models (Prahalad & Hart, 2002). Ultimately, the power of extraordinarization lies in its capacity to create shared value and drive sustainable development. This collective responsibility requires the concerted efforts of individuals, organizations, and communities to create sustainable and impactful solutions for the future (Smith & Tushman, 2005). By embracing the art of extraordinarization, we can unlock new opportunities for growth, prosperity, and environmental sustainability, actively participating in the transformative potential of innovation.

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