

## THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF MARKETING STRATEGY IN LIGHT INDUSTRY INNOVATION

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**Abstract:** This study explores the economic role of marketing strategy in fostering innovation within the light industry sector. As global markets become increasingly competitive, innovative approaches to production and marketing are essential for maintaining sustainability and growth. The light industry of Azerbaijan, encompassing textiles, clothing, and carpet production, has significant potential for innovation-driven expansion. Effective marketing strategies contribute to this process by aligning innovative products with market demands, improving brand competitiveness, and enhancing export potential. The study emphasizes that innovation marketing supports not only technological advancement but also consumer awareness and preference for locally produced goods. Moreover, the integration of innovative products through modern marketing tools—such as digital promotion, market segmentation, and branding—stimulates investment and job creation in the sector. Consequently, marketing strategy acts as a bridge between innovation and market success, ensuring that new ideas translate into economic value. The paper concludes that strengthening marketing capabilities and innovation-oriented management practices is a key factor for the sustainable development of Azerbaijan's light industry in the global market.

**Keywords:** marketing strategy, innovative products, market research, consumer relations, export promotion

### I Introduction

The light industry sector plays a critical role in Azerbaijan's economy, encompassing the production of textiles, apparel, footwear, leather goods, and related consumer products. Beyond serving domestic consumption, this sector provides essential materials for other industries, including agriculture, metallurgy, and food processing. Its high labor intensity, rapid production cycles, and sensitivity to changing consumer demand highlight the need for continuous innovation and strategic marketing approaches.

In recent years, the adoption of innovation marketing in Azerbaijan's light industry has gained momentum. Innovation marketing integrates modern marketing strategies with technological and product innovations to enhance competitiveness, optimize production processes, and meet evolving consumer preferences. However, challenges remain, including limited understanding of marketing principles, inadequate market research, and underdeveloped technical infrastructure (Kotler et al., 2018:75-80).

Government initiatives, such as the promotion of the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand and support for export-oriented enterprises, provide a favorable environment for the sector's growth (Azexport, 2023:12). Effective innovation marketing requires the alignment of market research, product development, distribution channels, and consumer relationship management. By combining state support with enterprise-level strategic planning, the light industry sector can expand its market share, increase product quality, and strengthen its contribution to the national economy.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of innovation marketing in Azerbaijan's light industry, identify existing challenges, and propose strategies for sustainable sectoral development.

## 2 The Role of Marketing in Innovation Strategies in the Light Industry Sector

At present, the main driving force of economic development worldwide is innovation activity. Economic dynamics and new advancements are leading the global economy, driven by digitalization and changes in socio-economic processes. The processes of digitalization and globalization occurring across the world significantly influence economic development. Therefore, firms and enterprises must focus on creating innovative solutions and integrating them into production processes in order to maintain their market position and ensure profitability.

In the modern era, as in other sectors, the effective planning and management of innovation processes in the light industry sector has become one of the main strategic priorities. The implementation of innovative activities and the formation of development strategies in enterprises within this field can lead to more efficient results through the application of marketing approaches (Kotler et al., 2018:43).

The success of the innovation process is primarily determined by its productivity and the possibility of practical implementation within a short period. The introduction of innovative products to the market directly depends on the proper organization of this process. At this stage, the application of effective communication strategies with consumers, the enterprise's openness to technological innovations, and the rapid integration of innovations into practice play a decisive role (Schwab, 2017:58).

As in all other fields, innovation activity and the strategy of creating innovative products in the light industry can be implemented in various directions and through different types of innovation. However, the creation of an innovative product is ultimately closely linked to the introduction of new management systems and modern technologies. An enterprise may choose multiple directions for innovation development, but a properly structured innovation strategy based on marketing principles ensures a competitive advantage in the market. The key factor determining a company's competitiveness is precisely the application of an effective innovation strategy.

Therefore, to gain high consumer recognition and achieve profitability in the creation and sale of innovative products, innovation development strategies must be implemented in close interaction with marketing strategies.

As seen, the application of marketing in innovation is essential. Once a company decides to create a new product, the role of marketing becomes crucial from the very beginning. During the production planning stage, the use of marketing tools forms the basis for ensuring the product's competitiveness. In general, if the marketing concept is applied in innovation activities and innovative product manufacturing, the resulting product will meet the modern consumer's needs and preferences. Therefore, the use of the marketing concept and its fundamental principles is extremely important when carrying out innovation activities.

Overall, enterprises operating in the light industry sector define the objectives of their innovation activities based on their innovation potential and, in accordance with these objectives, develop and implement appropriate marketing and innovation strategies (Kotler et al., 2018:136). In modern times, enterprises aim to evaluate their selected marketing strategies from a marketing perspective at every stage of implementation. In this process, each enterprise chooses and applies marketing strategies in line with its specific goals. These strategies enable innovative products produced by the enterprise to gain competitive advantages in specific markets, increase their overall competitiveness, and ultimately ensure the enterprise's profitability (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).

## 3 Key Success Factors in Innovation Marketing for Light Industry Enterprises

There are several important factors that determine the success of marketing strategies chosen by an enterprise. These factors provide wide opportunities for achieving more successful outcomes in innovation marketing. The main factors include the following:

1. *Innovative product with unique features:* The unique characteristics of an innovative product allow the enterprise to differentiate itself in the market and gain a competitive advantage (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).
2. *Innovative product providing additional value to customers:* A product that offers additional benefits to consumers not only increases customer satisfaction but also responds more accurately to market demand (Kotler et al., 2018:83).
3. *Implementation of market- and consumer-oriented marketing strategies:* The application of relevant marketing strategies ensures the effective introduction of innovative products to the market in accordance with market requirements (Teece, 2014:328-352).
4. *Product concept aimed at international competition and foreign markets:* A product concept directed toward international markets helps the enterprise build broader market networks and gain advantages in global competition (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).
5. *Technical and economic justification for the creation of an innovative product:* Technical and economic justification ensures the efficiency and economic feasibility of the product before its introduction to the market (Kotler et al., 2018:81).

Each of these factors enables enterprises to achieve more successful results in the field of innovation marketing and to strengthen their position in the market. During the selection and development of an innovative product concept, a number of important factors must be taken into account. These factors ensure the effective implementation of innovation activities and contribute to achieving successful outcomes in the market. The following factors are essential for the success of this process:

1. *Defining the innovation-oriented objectives of the enterprise:* The enterprise must clearly define its innovation goals and objectives when managing the innovation process (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).
2. *Selection of target markets:* The success of an innovative product depends on the market in which it will be introduced. The enterprise should identify the most suitable markets for its product (Kotler et al., 2018:163).
3. *Ensuring product positioning:* It is important to determine how the product will be perceived in the market and what position it will occupy (Teeche, 2014:328-352).
4. *Coordination between operational and strategic marketing:* Operational marketing activities should be aligned with strategic goals to ensure the enterprise's long-term success (Kotler et al., 2018:189).
5. *Coordination and marketing-based evaluation of all stages of the innovation process:* The innovation process should be managed as an integrated system, and each stage must be properly evaluated from a marketing perspective (Teece, 2014:328-352).
6. *Provision of resources and implementation of incentive measures:* Adequate resources and incentives must be provided for the implementation of innovation (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).
7. *Assessment of market attractiveness and demand for the innovative product:* The market potential and consumer demand for the product should be analyzed (Kotler et al., 2018:220).
8. *Evaluation of commercialization opportunities for the innovative product:* The commercialization potential must be thoroughly assessed, and an appropriate market strategy developed (Teece, 2014:328-352).
9. *Monitoring and evaluation of results at each stage of the innovation process:* Each stage must be controlled and evaluated to ensure proper management (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).
10. *Ensuring optimal financial resource provision:* Innovation activities must be supported by adequate and optimally regulated financial resources.
11. *Staff provision and application of motivation mechanisms for research personnel:* Training and motivation of qualified specialists required for innovation are crucial (Teece, 2014:328-352).

12. *The role of time management in the creation and market advancement of innovative products:* Proper time management ensures the fast and efficient introduction of products to the market (Poushneh, 2018:169-176).
13. *Existence of risk in the innovation process:* Innovation always involves risks that must be properly managed.
14. *Knowledge and experience gained from previous innovation strategies:* Previous experiences and lessons contribute to the improvement of innovation strategies (Teece, 2014:328-352).
15. *The role of owners in the innovation process:* Owners and managers can actively intervene in the innovation process and influence the adoption of effective decisions (Poushneh, 2018:114).

The factors listed above are highly important for managing innovation processes and implementing appropriate marketing strategies. They enable enterprises to achieve more successful results in the market and gain a competitive advantage.

When implementing innovation strategies and defining objectives, enterprises use various marketing approaches. The application of these approaches helps to conduct the innovation process more efficiently and successfully.

The main methods include the following:

1. *Incremental improvement method:* This method involves the gradual enhancement of existing products and technologies. Incremental improvement usually focuses on making small but continuous changes to develop products and services and adapt them to customer requirements. This approach is considered conservative and allows significant achievements with minimal risk (Poushneh 169).
2. *Radical innovation (leap) method:* This method covers radical innovations and involves the implementation of fundamental changes in products and technologies. The leap method requires entirely new or different approaches, independent of previous activities. It allows enterprises to enter new markets and gain greater innovation advantages, but it also carries higher risks (Kotler et al., 2018:31).

Both methods help enterprises strengthen their market position and gain advantages through new products and technologies. They offer different approaches to developing marketing strategies, and the choice of method depends on the enterprise's objectives and resources.

In industrial sectors, including light industry, the formation of a marketing system for innovative products involves several marketing activities, primarily: a) conducting market research on demand for the innovative product; b) developing a product concept for creation and commercialization; c) promoting and commercializing the innovative product; d) ensuring the product's competitiveness in the market, among others.

The effective application of innovation and marketing in the light industry is aimed at both improving internal production processes and achieving competitive advantages in the market. Several key directions are particularly important in this regard:

1. *Application of innovation and technology:* The development of the light industry heavily depends on the implementation of innovations and technological advancements. Modernizing technologies, automating production processes, using high-tech equipment, and applying new materials will increase productivity and strengthen competitiveness in the market. Examples include the modernization of primary production and the optimization of production processes.

Modernization of primary production involves the introduction of contemporary weaving machines, high-tech sewing equipment, and leather product manufacturing machinery. Optimization of production processes entails incorporating digital technologies and IoT (Internet of Things) systems into the production chain, which allows monitoring, increasing efficiency, and reducing costs.

The creation of innovative products is essential for further development in the light industry. Innovations should not only focus on new designs but also on functional features, durability, and compliance with environmental standards. Eco-friendly products should be produced, including the use of environmentally safe and recycled materials, enabling the creation of products aligned with

innovation and market demands. Additionally, designing functional and visually appealing products tailored to consumer preferences, particularly for the new generation, can enhance market attractiveness.

*2. Application of marketing strategies:* Proper marketing strategies are crucial for market success in the light industry. Modern marketing approaches play a key role in product promotion, establishing consumer relationships, and increasing market competitiveness. Enterprises must define target markets and consumer segments. Competitor activities, market shares, and strategies should be monitored to inform marketing decisions.

Online marketing, social media campaigns, influencer collaborations, and other digital tools can increase sales of light industry products. Market diversification and access to new markets, particularly international markets and new segments in the domestic market, are also vital for positive outcomes. In Azerbaijan, the development of the light industry and its sub-sectors, along with the implementation of innovation marketing, is of great importance for accelerating economic growth and enhancing competitiveness.

Although there are some shortcomings in the application of innovation marketing in Azerbaijan's light industry, several steps can be taken to address these challenges:

Promotion of innovative products in the market: Effective marketing and advertising campaigns should be organized to introduce innovative products, with broader use of social media and digital platforms.

Competition analysis and adaptation to consumer demands: Product lines should be optimized considering consumer preferences and the competitive situation in different regions.

The proposed measures to develop innovation marketing can stimulate the efficient growth of the light industry in Azerbaijan. Strengthening interactions between enterprises and consumers, offering scientifically grounded products, and establishing a proper legal framework are crucial. These measures can increase the production of innovative products, enhance the number of competitive products in the market, and foster the overall development of the innovation sector.

Sustainable development of innovation marketing cannot be achieved in the short term; it can only be realized in the medium- and long-term perspectives. Therefore, increasing innovation activity and forming a competitive economy are among the most urgent priorities. The implementation of a national innovation development concept would boost the production of high-value innovative products, strengthen competitiveness, and support economic modernization. Challenges and obstacles along this path must be overcome, and both public and private sector support should be enhanced alongside the development of innovation infrastructure.

The light industry—covering sectors such as textiles, clothing, leather, and footwear—is labor-intensive, responds quickly to changing consumer demand, and is sensitive to fashion trends. These characteristics indicate the sector's need for continuous innovation and differentiation strategies. Therefore, innovation marketing complements and expands traditional marketing approaches.

In the highly competitive and rapidly changing structure of the light industry, innovation marketing is strategically important for successful product positioning and ensuring sustainable demand. This approach not only increases market share but also contributes to technological development and the expansion of export potential.

A marketing strategy reflects the enterprise's objectives and activities. Without it, it is impossible to justify the budget and operational steps. Moreover, a marketing strategy ensures that operational activities are coordinated. Enterprises in the light industry should establish a unified marketing strategy, with annual marketing activities planned in advance according to this strategy.

The developed marketing strategy should be measurable and constantly monitored, evaluated, and adjusted as necessary. As a sector producing consumer goods, the light industry's main task is to meet the growing needs of all segments of the population.

The light industry is a sector in which the production of consumer goods is carried out in a complex and integrated manner. It produces a wide range of products for the population, including fabrics, clothing, footwear, knitwear, socks, fur products, textiles, and leather goods.

However, the light industry is not limited to consumer goods; it also manufactures various products for other industrial sectors. For instance, it produces steel cords for coal mining and metallurgy, filters and sieves for the food, chemical, and electrical industries, and different types of fabrics and auxiliary materials for the agricultural sector. These products have broad applications and play a significant role in the functioning of various economic sectors. Therefore, the light industry contributes not only to consumer goods production but also to the supply of raw and auxiliary materials for different branches of the national economy. Light industry has a notable impact on the overall economic situation, primarily due to its rapid capital turnover.

Innovation is a constant necessity in light industry products, as technology evolves rapidly and new competitors emerge. To overcome these challenges, market research must be conducted, and innovation should remain central. Several factors contribute to delays in Azerbaijan's light industry, such as insufficient financial resources and the additional costs associated with implementing new technologies.

Despite these challenges, there are promising development opportunities. One of the main advantages supporting the growth of light industry in Azerbaijan is the availability of a raw material base. Effective utilization of this base, coupled with continuous modernization of production and scientific-technological development, is essential. Progress in the light industry will reduce dependency on imported products and raw materials while increasing market share for innovative products. The expansion of locally produced light industry goods enhances the country's economic situation and the sector's share in overall production.

Recent years have witnessed improvements in the marketing strategies of Azerbaijan's light industry. Economic development policies increasingly emphasize the export of non-oil products. Accordingly, the government implements incentives, tax breaks, and other benefits for entrepreneurs. Furthermore, industrial parks, industrial zones, agroparks, and special economic zones have been established in different regions (Kerimova et al., 2024).

Light industry requires relatively low investment compared to other sectors. Capital invested in this sector is quickly returned, and production costs are relatively low. The textile sector is an exception, as it requires significant investment in machinery and equipment due to high competition in the market. The clothing sector, in contrast, is more labor-intensive, and machinery and equipment used are mobile and can be easily relocated.

International industrial experience indicates that the development of light industry is one of the most effective ways to increase production, strengthen entrepreneurship, and create multiple new business entities. This is because light industry produces goods for everyday consumption, making the establishment of such enterprises relatively simple.

The foundation of Azerbaijan's light industry is the availability of raw materials, ensuring low production costs and continuous consumer demand. Marketing strategy, as a component of micromarketing, is aimed at creating and strengthening the high image of a light industry enterprise. Its main objectives are to determine demand and market conditions, make informed decisions regarding consumer needs for innovative products, and align production with market requirements.

#### 4 Marketing Strategies and Their Objectives in Azerbaijan's Light Industry

Overall, the primary goal of a marketing strategy is to ensure that all enterprise activities are based on the study of consumer demand and potential future changes in it. As in other sectors, the marketing strategies applied in light industry reflect the following objectives:

1. *Maximization of consumption*: The primary goal of maximizing consumption is to increase production volumes. Increasing production positively impacts employment in the economy, which in turn contributes to the overall welfare of society.

2. *Maximization of fulfillment of consumer demand for innovative products*: Here, the focus is not merely on increasing consumption, but on ensuring that consumer demand is effectively met to the highest possible degree.

3. *Maximization of consumer choice*: The objective is to provide consumers with the opportunity to select products that correspond to their tastes and preferences.

4. *Maximization of quality of life*: The goal is to ensure the cultural and physical environment quality for individuals, enhancing overall living standards.

Currently, in organizing the production of innovative products in the light industry, products known as “market innovations” should be developed. Such products either meet new consumer demands or raise the quality level of fulfilling already existing demands. Typically, these products are fully competitive and generate demand among a wider consumer base.

The application of marketing strategies in Azerbaijan’s light industry enterprises has only begun in relatively recent years. However, in several enterprises, the essence of marketing has still not been fully grasped. In some cases, marketing activities are equated solely with the sales function, which complicates the formation of products and services that meet market demand.

An analysis of marketing activities in the country’s light industry sector reveals a number of significant problems. The most notable among these are: (a) enterprises’ insufficient understanding of the essence of marketing; (b) inadequacy of marketing information systems and lack of data; and (c) a weak material and technical base for production development based on innovation.

The current state of the light industry necessitates managerial decisions focused on the proper formulation of commodity policy, pricing, product distribution, sales organization, and the effective implementation of communication policy. All of these aspects are interrelated, allowing enterprise marketing activities to be evaluated as an integrated system for production and sales decision-making (Armstrong et al., 2022:401-411). Decisions related to commodity policy aim at expanding product ranges, developing innovative products, product branding, packaging, and enhancing product competitiveness. Currently, most of these decisions are implemented in the marketing practices of Azerbaijan’s light industry enterprises, though there remains a substantial need for their improvement.

As emphasized in the “Azerbaijan 2020: Outlook for the Future” Development Concept, the light industry sector—one of the country’s traditional economic sectors—possesses significant development potential. Reforms in this sector have facilitated the reorganization of light industry enterprises and increased the volume and quality of innovative product manufacturing. Positive results have been particularly observed in raw material processing, textile, sewing, leather, and leather product manufacturing. Notable progress has been made in leather and leather product production, as well as footwear, and it is considered important to utilize these opportunities more effectively. Currently, numerous enterprises and workshops operate in the carpet weaving sector across various cities and regions of the country. In the future, strengthening the raw material base, modernizing production technologies, and improving the quality of carpet products are identified as key goals.

In the context of global competition, the development of the non-oil sector should not be limited to reviving traditional industries, but should also include the formation of modern industrial sectors producing innovative products. One of the priority directions of economic development should be to ensure the dynamic growth of high-tech industries, increase investments in research and development, enhance the scientific and technological content of products and services, and expand the innovation activities of enterprises.

The transition from a raw-material-based economic model to an innovation-driven economic development model should be defined as a strategic goal, particularly for the light industry sector. Accelerating this transition requires the creation and operation of industrial parks and technoparks. Such parks contribute to the commercialization of existing knowledge and technologies, the

development of knowledge-intensive enterprises, the improvement of industrial structure, regional development balance, increased employment, and accelerated implementation of high technologies.

Establishing an effective marketing strategy requires highly qualified marketing specialists. Marketing professionals working with innovative products must analyze all relevant factors, which should also be considered during the development of innovations and planning of marketing programs.

Marketing strategy is a key factor in the development of the innovative products market. To produce innovative products, market research is essential, and this task is performed by marketers. According to the marketing strategy, activities such as consumer segmentation, selection of sales channels, and implementation of sales promotion measures must be executed in the proper sequence.

It is well known that the fundamental concept of marketing is needs. Human needs are variable and inherent to their nature and character. The primary principle of marketing is for marketers to identify these needs. The task of marketers is to convert needs into demand.

In the light industry sector, the marketing strategies applied should aim at increasing the sales of innovative products through the integrated operation of the marketing mix. Therefore, the essence of marketing strategies applied for innovative products in the light industry is reflected in improving the production process, selecting target markets, and enhancing the competitiveness of innovative products.

When developing a marketing strategy, the main focus should be on the ability of the industry to implement that strategy. The marketing strategy should cover a long-term period, starting from the calculation of consumers' purchasing power and extending to the long-term production capabilities of the light industry sector.

The marketing strategy should be designed in such a way that it can respond timely and appropriately to changes in the external environment. It must include a properly defined pricing and sales policy. Correctly establishing the sales policy is critical because appropriate sales channels must be selected to deliver innovative products to potential consumers. In general, a marketing strategy must answer questions such as: which innovative product to sell, in what quantity, at what price, where, and how.

Marketing strategies implemented in light industry enterprises plan activities that leverage the available resources and potential of the sector to meet the existing or emerging consumer demand. This activity plan also includes the work of enterprise marketers, the innovative product project, and measures to address problems arising during production and presentation.

Even if a marketing strategy reflecting the enterprise's marketing activities is professionally developed, it will fail if it does not focus on fulfilling consumer demand. Similarly, if the enterprise lacks the resources and economic capacity to produce an innovative product, the marketing strategy prepared for that product becomes irrelevant.

As mentioned, an enterprise's marketing strategy is based on its available resources. Therefore, an enterprise must have a comprehensive inventory of its resources. Not all resources are necessary for the development of an innovative product; some may be irrelevant for marketing strategy development. The core strategy should identify resources that create a foundation for the enterprise's development. These resources may include the enterprise's assets and capabilities.

It is evident that marketing in our country has not yet been fully understood and does not exhibit a high pace of development as an independent activity. However, in recent years, state support for domestic and foreign market research in business indicates the potential for marketing development. A clear example of this is the decree signed by President Ilham Aliyev in 2016, which aims to promote Azerbaijani production in international markets and strengthen the "Made in Azerbaijan" brand. The decree also supports local companies' market entry abroad by covering the costs of export-related research and development programs from the state budget.

Unfortunately, most enterprises in Azerbaijan still consider marketing research unnecessary, and many lack a dedicated marketing department. By comparison, in several CIS countries, per

capita marketing expenditures reach 1–2 USD, while in developed countries, research costs account for 10–12% of advertising expenses. In Azerbaijan, however, research spending is less than 1% of advertising costs.

Marketing activities are a key factor in the development of innovative product markets and typically begin with market research. Such research identifies consumer needs, collects and analyzes their feedback, and delivers this information to producers. In the modern era, producing innovative products is only possible through continuous and effective consumer engagement. Managing customer relationships, gaining their loyalty, and developing a potential customer portfolio constitute the core of marketing activities.

Moreover, enterprises must implement automated marketing processes and maintain agile management platforms. These platforms should enable rapid response to emerging situations and ensure the effective implementation of marketing strategies.

## 5 Discussion / Conclusion

In Azerbaijan, the application of innovation marketing in the light industry sector is a relatively recent development. Despite notable progress, several challenges remain, including insufficient understanding of marketing principles by enterprises, limited use of market research, and weak material and technical infrastructure. Nevertheless, recent state initiatives, such as promoting the “Made in Azerbaijan” brand and supporting export activities, create favorable conditions for the development of innovation marketing and enhancement of market competitiveness.

Effective implementation of innovation marketing requires enterprises to conduct market research, understand consumer demand, select appropriate sales channels, and maintain constant consumer engagement. Strategic planning, including pricing, distribution, and product positioning, ensures that innovative products meet market expectations and gain a competitive edge. Such approaches not only increase sales but also contribute to the modernization of production, technological development, and expansion of export potential.

The availability of raw materials, low initial investment requirements, and constant consumer demand make the light industry sector highly promising. Long-term sustainable growth in this sector depends on the integration of state support, enterprise strategic planning, and modern marketing technologies. Continuous market research, effective consumer relationship management, and innovation-driven product development will strengthen sectoral competitiveness and contribute to the broader modernization of Azerbaijan’s economy.

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