3. Need analysis tools supporting innovation

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Innovation is closely linked to needs. However brilliant and innovative a product it will be of no use if nobody asks for it. Innovation is also related to design and sustainability. If we do not foresee sustainable development using renewable resources, low energy etc there is no need to develop a product further. Design is an important factor taking the interest of the end user of a product into account.

Extensive background information about end users needs is important before even thinking of developing a new innovative product. Tools for finding the needs can be very different and here we will just give a brief background on some of them like questionnaires, SWOT analysis, On-line tools, focus groups and technology watch methods.

3.1. Questionnaires

Most of us have probably responded to different types of questionnaires. This is however not equivalent to the construction of a questionnaire where your intention is to get responses and adequate answers to your problems and the items you want to investigate. Many questionnaires include simple and short questions which fail to be carefully prepared and there are just too. This is mostly not effective and takes a long time to answer for the best results. If too ambitious, many questions not being applicable, the response could be low and the results not as representative as they should be.

It is important to exactly define the information you need and not go beyond these borders even if tempting. Define and write a clear objective to get the scope of the survey and then make a draft of the questionnaire. If you have settled your objectives then it is easy to define the exact items planned to be measured by the questionnaire.

A reference group or colleagues could be consulted. You could also use a small group of responders, who you know very well, to get an input from their reaction on the draft version of the questionnaire.

Open questions where the responders are expected to give written answers are easy to construct but also often tend to give less response than other type of