

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION

Yulia Mykula, *JT-72*,
S.V. Podolkova, *EL adviser*

The process of the diffusion of innovation has been around since the first new idea popped into someone's head. The diffusion process is not a math equation or a chemical reaction but rather a natural progression of peoples' attitudes, opinions, and feelings towards accepting a new idea.

According to Rogers, the diffusion of innovations is "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. Innovation is used more generally here to mean an item, thought, or process that is new. Good examples of innovation would be automobiles, brain surgery, and a new kind of running shoe.

Relative advantage. This characteristic expresses to what extent the new product is better than the one it is replacing.

Compatibility. Compatibility is the level of which an innovation fits into the specific society. The smoother the innovation fits into the culture, the faster the rate of adoption.

Complexity. This type of innovation is the extent of how difficult it is for an adopter to understand and use an innovation. It is very logical to think that the harder an innovation is to use, or at least perceived to use, the less likely that an adopter would be to consume it.

Divisibility. This refers to the ability of the consumer to give the innovation a test run before deciding whether to adopt it or not. Being able to try out a product before purchase helps increase the rate of adoption drastically.

Communicability. This characteristic is simply stated as the idea that when an innovations benefit does not directly or immediately solve or fix a consumers problem or need it will not diffuse through a society as quickly compared to an innovation that is more of solution to a problem. We'd better buy pills which treat us after three days than after a month.

To realize how an innovation diffuses through a society you must first understand how one person adopts an innovation. The process can be broken down into five stages.

The first stage of the adoption process is awareness. At this stage the innovation is introduced to the person but there is no true knowledge of the product. Because of this lack of information the person does not feel the

need to run out and find out more information, much less consider consuming it. It is argued that a person often stumbles upon the innovation on accident during the awareness stage it will provide little incentive to get more information. Others feel that for a person to become aware, the innovation must fill a particular need in their life for them to notice. The second stage is interest. Here the person decides to invest time and energy into finding out more about the innovation. At this point the person feels good about the innovation but does not really know how or if it can be useful. The interest stage is purely to gather knowledge, not to decide whether to adopt. The third stage is evaluation. Here the person firsts begins to make a decision about the innovation. Then if the innovation appears to be positive for their life they will try it out. If the innovation has a negative connotation to the individual they may seek the advice and knowledge of their peers. This leads into the next stage called the trial stage. Here the individual physically gives the innovation a chance by trying it out for a limited basis. Research proves that most people will not adopt an innovation without personally testing it first to see if it really "works". The final stage is the adoption stage. Here the individual uses information that they have gathered in the interest and evaluation stages and with the outcome of the trial stage decides to adopt the innovation. There is, however, another possible stage to adoption process. After the individual adopts the innovation they may decide to reject it for whatever reason. This decision is called discontinuance.

So you see people do not just welcome into their homes every innovation that is put in front of them. Every person reacts differently in the ways that they hear about, understand, and finally accept or do not accept an innovation. Much in this process depends on individuals or other decision making units as well as on attributes of innovation.