

Diffusion of Innovation, 5th ed., Everett M. Rogers, Free Press (1995), 512 pages, ISBN10: 0-7432-2209-1

How does new innovation spread out?

Let's assume that you are a consumer who intend to buy a new smart phone that is just introduced into the market. When will you buy? What kinds of aspect do you consider when you decide to buy? Secondly, let's assume that you are in charge of marketing in newly start-up company. What is your marketing plan for the innovative your products? Who will be major customer segment? Thirdly, assuming that you are the government official who has to introduce new postal address system by 2014, how would you persuade the general public to adopt new system? All cases mentioned above, are about diffusion of new idea/innovations under different context.

Prof. Everett M. Rogers wrote the first edition of book named "Diffusion of Innovation" in 1962 When he was 31 years old. He reviewed the existing studies on diffusion of innovations in the domain of education, medical and marketing and found substantial similarities.

He updated continuously and the latest edition, 5th was published in 2003. It is interesting to see that the book is keep being updated over 40 years. Unfortunately, there will be no 6th edition due to the death of author in 2004.

This book gave the author academic fame and received various awards. In 1990, the *Institute for Scientific Information* designated this book as a "Citation Classic" on the basis of the large number of citations (over 7,000). It still remains the second most cited book in the social science according to the *Social Science Citation Index*. Additionally, it was designated as a "Significant Journalism and Mass Communication Book of the Twentieth Century" by *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*.

The book consists of total 11 chapters. It starts with the definition and four main elements of the diffusion of innovations in Chapter 1, providing general overview on the contents that follows. Even just reading the Chapter 1 is enough for you to get general idea what diffusion of innovation is about. The

following chapters include full details of each concept provided in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1 starts with amazing story about water boiling project in a Peruvian Village. The Peruvian public health service attempted to introduce the innovations to villagers to improve their life condition but failed eventually. This story tell us how complicated the diffusion of innovation is, even in the case that appeared to so simple. There are a couple of cases such as 'Controlling scurvy in the British navy' and 'Non-diffusion of the Dvorak keyboard', which showed that the process of diffusion of innovation is rather involved with many aspects.

The authors defined diffusion as the process by which (1) an innovation (2) is communicated through certain channels (3) over time (4) among the members of a social system. (p.11)

Here, (1) Innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. If an idea seems to new to the individual, it is an innovation regardless of actual newness. The rate of adoption of innovation depends on its characteristics. The author mentioned the five attributes of innovations : ① relative advantage, ② compatibility ③ complexity ④ trialability and ⑤ observability. These five attributes are described in Chapter 6 with full details.

(2) Communication channel is the means by which innovation is transmitted to or within the social system. For example, the means include mass media and interpersonal channel etc. Mass media is more effective in creating knowledge of innovation, whereas interpersonal channels are more effective in forming and changing attitudes toward new idea. The concept of heterophily and homophily are introduced and explained fully in Chapter 8.

(3) The Time is involved in (i) Innovation-decision process (ii) innovativeness and (iii) an innovation's rate of adoption .The (i) innovation-decision process is given fully in Chapter 5 and (ii) Innovativeness in Chapter 7. The rate of adoption is discussed in Chapter 6.

According to the authors, the Innovation-decision process consists of five stages: an individual (or other decision-making unit) passes from first knowledge of an innovation, to forming an attitude toward

the innovation, to a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision.

The individual in a society system do not all adopt an innovation at the same time. Rather, they adopt an innovation in an over-time period and it is more efficient to use adopter categories based on their innovativeness. The innovativeness is the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting news idea than other members of a system. This adopter categorization figure is so famous that you may see in any innovation books and journals. For example, Geoffrey Moore's Crossing the Chasm drew from the current author's categorization in explaining how and why technology companies succeed.

(4) Social System is a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goals. The social and communication structure of a system facilitates or impedes the diffusion of system. The details on opinion leadership, diffusion network and critical mass in the diffusion of interactive innovation are given in Chapter 8 and those one for change agent is given in Chapter 9. Especially

innovation in organization is described in Chapter 10. In Chapter 11, the consequence, the changes that occurs to an individual or social system as result of the adoption or rejection of innovation is described.

We know that creation of new idea is not enough. It has to spread out to the people and change the system, and then it can be called innovation. As anyone can imagine, the scope of diffusion of innovation research is inherently wide and multidisciplinary. In marketing, the perception of customer on the new technology is the focus of study. The marketer wants to know the customer's behavior and reaction to technological innovation. In new product development (NPD), the people want to know which stages in the development process is most important for the wide adoption of products. Contrarily, in the sociological study of diffusion of innovation, the research has more interest in characteristics of a system of society that would facilitate or hinder the adoption of innovations.

The book provides a comprehensive theory of how inventions and new idea spread through the communication channel into a social system. When the

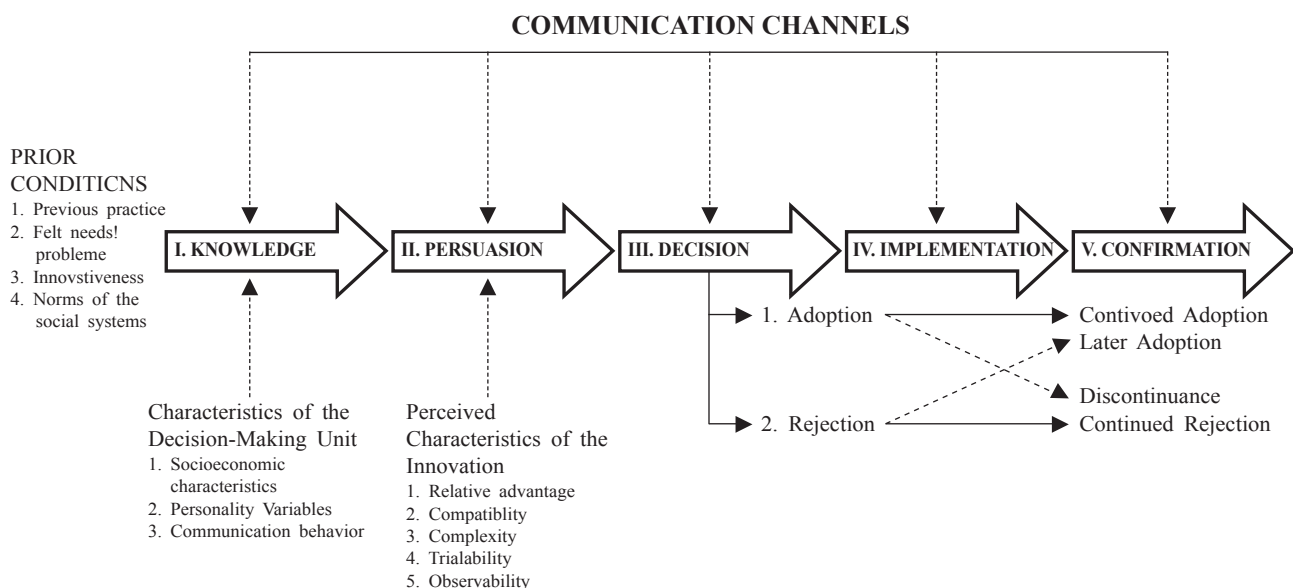


Figure 1 Model of Five Stages in the innovation-decision Process (p.170)

I. Knowledge : Person becomes aware of an innovation and has some idea of how it functions

II. Persuasion : Person forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation

III. Decision : Person engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation

IV. Implementation : Person puts an innovation into use

V. Confirmation: Person evaluates the results of an innovation-decision already made

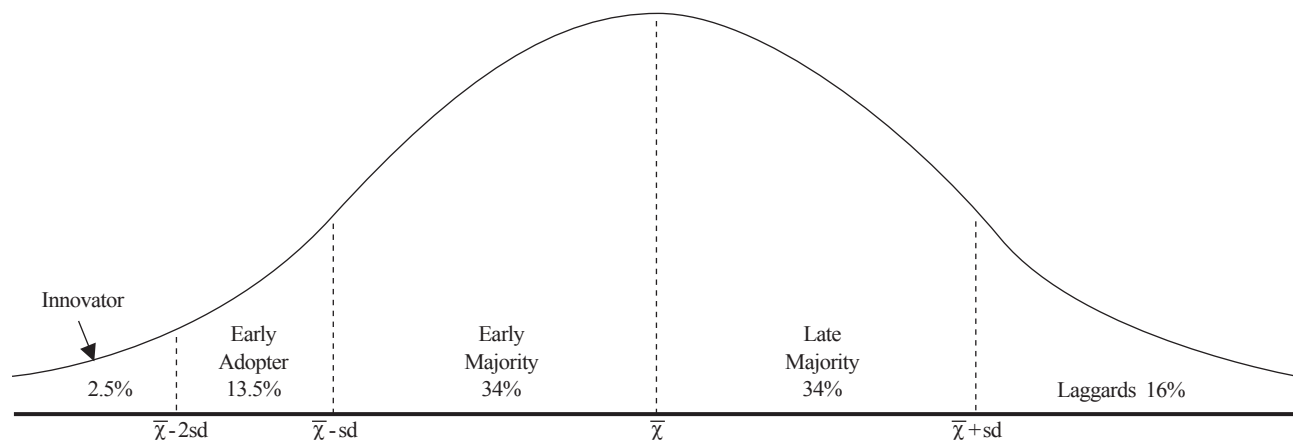


Figure 2 Adopter Categorization on the basis of Innovativeness (p. 281)

- Innovator: Venturesome → interest in new ideas leads them out of a local circle
- Early Adopter: Respect → has highest degree of opinion leadership in most systems
- Early Majority: Deliberate → interact frequently with peers, 1/3
- Late Majority: Skeptical → pressure from peers, economic necessity, cautious, 1/3
- Laggards: Traditional → possess no opinion leadership, isolates, suspicious of innovation

reader picks up the book, he might be intimidated due to the thickness of book, total 551 pages. However, the contents is systematically organized and written in easy English with many case studies that is helpful to understand the real situations. It is interesting to find out that the author served in the Korean War for two years and studied the diffusion of several different family planning innovations in twenty-five Korean villages in 1981.

Without any hesitation, the reviewer strongly recommend “Diffusion of Innovation” who are seriously interested in changing the society based on especially on technological innovation via marketing, new product development and so on.

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