Innovation:

An idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption (Rogers,

1995)

Diffusion: The process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time

among the members of a social system (Rogers, 1995)

Definition

In his comprehensive book Diffusion of Innovation, Everett Rogers defines diffusion as the process by

which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social

system. Rogers' definition contains four elements that are present in the diffusion of innovation process.

The four main elements are:

(1) Innovation - an idea, practices, or objects that is perceived as knew by an individual or other unit of

adoption.

(2) Communication channels - the means by which messages get from one individual to another.

(3) Time - the three time factors are:

(a) Innovation-decision process (b) Relative time with which an innovation is adopted by an individual

or group. (c) Innovation's rate of adoption.

(4) Social system - a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a

common goal.

Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation

Stages of adoption:

Awareness - the individual is exposed to the innovation but lacks complete information about it Interest -

the individual becomes interested in the new idea and seeks additional information about it

Evaluation - individual mentally applies the innovation to his present and anticipated future situation,

and then decides whether or not to try it

Trial - the individual makes full use of the innovation

Adoption - the individual decides to continue the full use of the innovationFactors affecting diffusion

• Innovation characteristics

• Individual characteristics

• Social network characteristics

• Innovation characteristics

Innovation characteristics

• Observability

The degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to potential adopters

• Relative Advantage

The degree to which the innovation is perceived to be superior to current practice

Compatibility

The degree to which the innovation is perceived to be consistent with socio-cultural values, previous

ideas, and/or perceived needs

• Trialability

The degree to which the innovation can be experienced on a limited basis

• Complexity

The degree to which an innovation is difficult to use or understand

Individual characteristics

• Innovativeness

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Originally defined by Rogers: the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting an

innovation than other members of his social system–

Modified & extended by Hirschman (1980):

Inherent / actualized novelty seeking

Creative consumer

• Reliance on others as source of information (Midgley & Dowling)

Social network characteristics

• Opinion leadership: number of nominations as source of information

Other possible factors

• Lyytinen & Damsgaard (2001)

Social environment of diffusion of innovation

Marketing strategies employed

Institutional structures (e.g., government) Diffusion research examines how ideas are spread among groups of people. Diffusion goes beyond the

two-step flow theory, centering on the conditions that increase or decrease the likelihood that an

innovation, a new idea, product or practice, will be adopted by members of a given culture. In multi-step

diffusion, the opinion leader still exerts a large influence on the behavior of individuals, called adopters,

but there are also other intermediaries between the media and the audience's decision-making. One

intermediary is the change agent, someone who encourages an opinion leader to adopt or reject an

innovation (Infante, Rancer, & Womack, 1997).

Innovations are not adopted by all individuals in a social system at the same time. Instead, they tend to

adopt in a time sequence, and can be classified into adopter categories based upon how long it takes for

them to begin using the new idea. Practically speaking, it's very useful for a change agent to be able to

identify which category certain individuals belong to, since the short-term goal of most change agents is

to facilitate the adoption of an innovation. Adoption of a new idea is caused by human interaction

through interpersonal networks. If the initial adopter of an innovation discusses it with two members of a

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given social system, and these two become adopters who pass the innovation along to two peers, and so

on, the resulting distribution follows a binomial expansion.

Adopter Categorization

The criterion for adopter categorization is innovativeness. This is defined as the degree to which an

individual is relatively early in adopting a new idea then other members of a social system.

Innovativeness is considered "relative" in that an individual has either more or less of it than others in a

social system.

Fig. 1 - Adopter categorization on the basis of innovativeness

Adopter distributions closely approach normality. The above figure shows the normal frequency

distributions divided into five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and

laggards. Innovators are the first 2.5 percent of a group to adopt a new idea. The next 13.5 percent to

adopt an innovation are labeled early adopters. The next 34 percent of the adopters are called the early

majority. The 34 percent of the group to the right of the mean are the late majority, and the last 16

percent are considered laggards.

Adopter Categories

Innovators are eager to try new ideas, to the point where their venturesome ness almost becomes an

obsession. Innovators’ interest in new ideas leads them out of a local circle of peers and into social

relationships more cosmopolite than normal. Usually, innovators have substantial financial resources,

and the ability to understand and apply complex technical knowledge. While others may consider the

innovator to be rash or daring, it is the hazardous risk-taking that is of salient value this type of individual.

The innovator is also willing to accept the occasional setback when new ideas prove unsuccessful.

Early adopters tend to be integrated into the local social system more than innovators. The early adopters

are considered to be localities, versus the cosmopolite innovators. People in the early adopter category

seem to have the greatest degree of opinion leadership in most social systems. They provide advice and

information sought by other adopters about an innovation. Change agents will seek out early adopters to

help speed the diffusion process. The early adopter is usually respected by his or her peers and has a

reputation for successful and discrete use of new ideas.

Members of the early majority category will adopt new ideas just before the average member of a social

system. They interact frequently with peers, but are not often found holding leadership positions. As the

link between very early adopters and people late to adopt, early majority adopters play an important part

in the diffusion process. Their innovation-decision time is relatively longer than innovators and early

adopters, since they deliberate some time before completely adopting a new idea. Seldom leading, early

majority adopters willingly follow in adopting innovations.

The late majority are a skeptical group, adopting new ideas just after the average member of a social

system. Their adoption may be borne out of economic necessity and in response to increasing social

pressure. They are cautious about innovations, and are reluctant to adopt until most others in their social

system do so first. An innovation must definitely have the weight of system norms behind it to convince

the late majority. While they may be persuaded about the utility of an innovation, there must be strong

pressure from peers to adopt.

Laggards are traditionalists and the last to adopt an innovation. Possessing almost no opinion leadership,

laggards are locality to the point of being isolates compared to the other adopter categories. They are

fixated on the past, and all decisions must be made in terms of previous generations. Individual laggards

mainly interact with other traditionalists. An innovation finally adopted by a laggard may already be

rendered obsolete by more recent ideas already in use by innovators. Laggards are likely to be suspicious

not only of innovations, but of innovators and change agents as well.

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Adopter categorization

Innovators (2.5%),

1. Innovators - venturesome, educated, multiple info sources, greater propensity to take risk

2. Less self-conscious / ‘the bleeding edge of technology’

Early Adopters (13.5%),

1. early adopters - social leaders, popular, educated

2. Tend to be well-connected opinion makers

3. Some tend to look for new innovations - looking for new fashions

Early Majority (34%),

Early majority - deliberate, many informal social contacts

Adopt since something has been shown to work

Late Majority (34%),

late majority - skeptical, traditional, lower socio-economic status

Laggards (16%)

Laggards - neighbors and friends are main info sources, fear of debt

Don’t like the new innovation - But they might be right!

Interactive media have grabbed the attention of communication researchers in the latter half of the 1990s,

but the focus to date has been primarily on media audiences and their use of these new forms. This paper

suggests four approaches that may help provide theory based underpinnings in a different area: the study

of journalists and the ways in which their roles and jobs are changing. The approaches are gate-keeping

theory; diffusion of innovation theory; sociological perspectives, particularly those involving the

sociology of news work; and a somewhat eclectic perspective that explores the idea of journalism as a

potential force of cohesion in an increasingly fragmented society.

Introduction

The explosion in interactive media forms has grabbed the attention of communication scholars in the

latter half of the 1990s. The number of studies is burgeoning, and new ones appear at a steadily

accelerating pace. The focus to date has been primarily on the audience for computer-based media forms,

particularly on the uses and effects of these new media. Adding to our understanding of computermediated communication have been explorations of everything from the effects of computer and video

games on adolescents' self-perceptions [(Funk and Buchman, 1996)] to audience perceptions of

interactivity in e-mail sent to a network news show [(Newhagen, Cordes and Levy, 1995)] to a whole host

of forays into the constitution, implications and ethics of online community (see, for example, [Jones,

1995]; [Brennen and Primeaux, 1997]; [Weinrich, 1997]).

The interest in online audiences may be especially acute because of the nature of these newer media

forms: by definition, interactive media blur the lines between the receivers and senders of a mediated

message. The use of a medium such as the Internet obviously involves not only active participation in the

traditional audience roles of selecting and processing media messages, but active participation in creating

them, as well. However, the traditional receivers are not the only ones profoundly affected by this change.

The traditional senders of media messages -- the journalists -- are faced not just with a new delivery

method but with what may be a fundamental shift in their role in the communication process. How is

what we know as "traditional" journalism similar to or different from online journalism? How does the

nature of the interactive medium affect what journalists do?

This paper will suggest four foundations, resting on existing theories and conceptual approaches, upon

which researchers might build in studying that changing journalistic role. Morris and Ogan [(1996)] have

provided a valuable framework for exploration of the Internet as a mass medium, outlining the application

of such theories as critical mass, social presence and media richness. This paper seeks to provide a similar

framework, but with a narrower focus: journalists swept up in challenges to their one-time franchise of

creating and delivering mass-mediated messages. New conceptual paradigms eventually may evolve tohelp us study their role. But before we take that leap, we have much to learn by using familiar aids to

guide us along new paths.