

Diffusion Theory

Historical Development

- Everett Rogers (1995) points out that a 1943 study by Ryan and Gross at Iowa State University provided the genesis of modern diffusion research.

- Everett M. Rogers. Rogers' book Diffusion of Innovations, first published in 1960, is the closest any researcher has come to presenting a unified theory of diffusion.

- Four of the theories discussed by Rogers are among the most widely-used theories of diffusion:
 - 1) Innovation Decision Process
 - 2) Individual Innovativeness
 - 3) Rate of Adoption
 - 4) Perceived Attributes.

1. Innovation Decision Process

1) Diffusion is a process that occurs over time and can be seen as having five distinct stages.

2) The stages in the process are

(1) Knowledge

(2) Persuasion

(3) Decision

(4) Implementation

(5) Confirmation.

2. Individual Innovativeness

The Individual Innovativeness theory (Rogers, 1995) states individuals who are predisposed to being innovative will adopt an innovation earlier than those who are less predisposed.

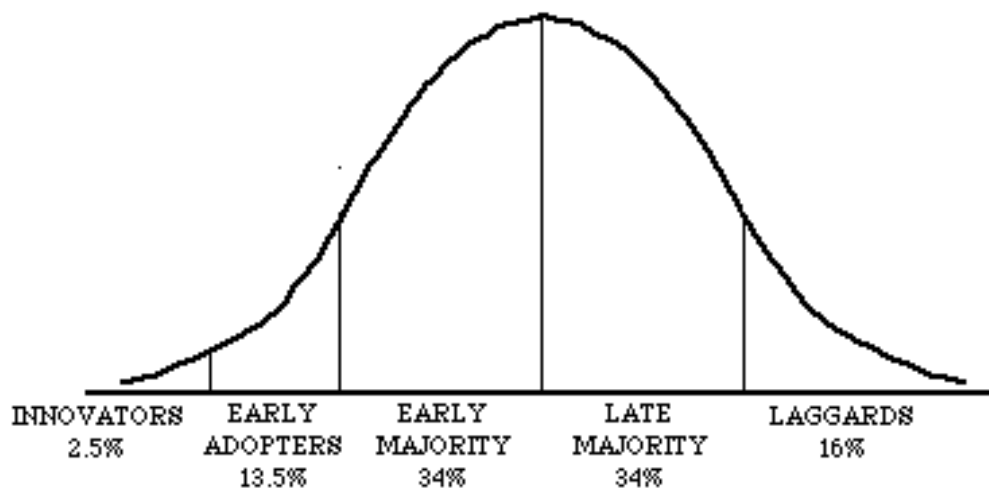


Figure 1. Bell shaped curve showing categories of individual innovativeness and percentages within each category

3. Rate of Adoption

Rate of Adoption theorizes that an innovation goes through a period of slow, gradual growth before experiencing a period of relatively dramatic and rapid growth.

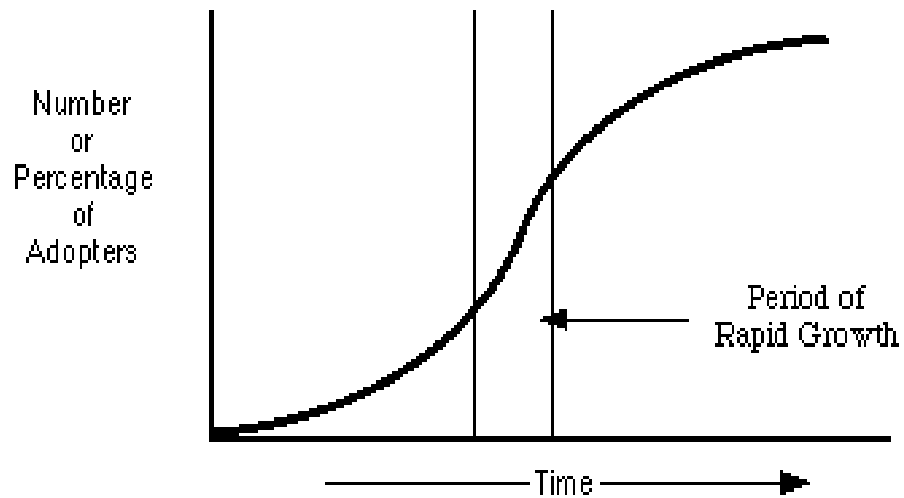


Figure 2. S-curve representing rate of adoption of an innovation over time

4. Perceived Attributes

1) The Theory of Perceived Attributes (Rogers, 1995) states that potential adopters judge an innovation based on their perceptions in regard to five attributes of the innovation.

2) These attributes are: Trialability; Observability; Relative Advantage; Complexity; and Compatibility;

(1) Can be tried on a limited basis before adoption;

(2) Offers observable results;

(3) Has an advantage relative to other innovations (or the status quo);

(4) is not overly complex; and

(5) Is compatible with existing practices and values.

Understanding Development Theory

Lecture Note
by
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Daniel Lerner's The Passing of Traditional Society (1958) on a Turkish village



Concepts

- organized efforts to use communications processes and media to bring social and economic improvements, generally in developing countries.
- Early communications theorists like Wilbur Schramm and Daniel Lerner based their high expectations upon the apparent success of World War II propaganda

Assumptions:

- Obstacles to development were naively seen as rooted in developing countries, not as products of international relationships.
- existence of “progressive forces everywhere...and democracy and a modern market orientation would sweep everyone easily forward into a glorious future.”
- Mass media technologies, including television, have been "magic multipliers" of development benefits.

Paradigm Controversy

Development, Modernization

vs.

Cultural or Media Imperialism

- Q & A