



## **Diffusion of Innovations**

*Everett M. Rogers , Nancy Singer Olaguera (Designed by)*

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Now in its fifth edition, *Diffusion of Innovations* is a classic work on the spread of new ideas. It has sold 30,000 copies in each edition and will continue to reach a huge academic audience.

In this renowned book, Everett M. Rogers, professor and chair of the Department of Communication & Journalism at the University of New Mexico, explains how new ideas spread via communication channels over time. Such innovations are initially perceived as uncertain and even risky. To overcome this uncertainty, most people seek out others like themselves who have already adopted the new idea. Thus the diffusion process consists of a few individuals who first adopt an innovation, then spread the word among their circle of acquaintances--a process which typically takes months or years. But there are exceptions: use of the Internet in the 1990s, for example, may have spread more rapidly than any other innovation in the history of humankind. Furthermore, the Internet is changing the very nature of diffusion by decreasing the importance of physical distance between people. The fifth edition addresses the spread of the Internet, and how it has transformed the way human beings communicate and adopt new ideas.

## Diffusion of Innovations Details

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## From Reader Review Diffusion of Innovations for online ebook

### Laurens Bon says

classic

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### Michael Sturgeon says

The phenomenon of new ideas and the point at which a trend catches fire – spreading exponentially through the population is an interesting one. Giving this phenomena a name is where this book helped me label what I observe. The idea suggests that, for good or bad, change can be promoted rather easily in a social system through a domino effect. The tipping point idea finds its origins in diffusion theory, which is a set of generalizations regarding the typical spread of innovations within a social system. In an effort to judge the truth and power of epidemic spreading of trends, I read Everett Rogers's scholarly and scientific *Diffusion of Innovations (1995)*, which has become the standard textbook and reference on diffusion studies. What I find in this comprehensive and even-handed treatment is an insightful explanation of the conditions that indicate that an innovation will reach the much-hyped tipping point. The review outlines these basic characteristics of an innovation and its context that correlate with its diffusion.

#### The Mechanism of Diffusion

Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (5). Given that decisions are not authoritative or collective, each member of the social system faces his/her own innovation-decision that follows a 5-step process (162):

- 1) Knowledge – person becomes aware of an innovation and has some idea of how it functions,
- 2) Persuasion – person forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation,
- 3) Decision – person engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation,
- 4) Implementation – person puts an innovation into use,
- 5) Confirmation – person evaluates the results of an innovation-decision already made.

For most members of a social system, the *innovation-decision* depends heavily on the innovation-decisions of the other members of the system. In fact, empirically we see the successful spread of an innovation follows an S-shaped curve (23). There is, after about 10-25% of system members adopt an innovation, relatively rapid adoption by the remaining members and then a period in which the holdouts finally adopt. I will review Rogers's assessment of the factors affecting the adoption of an innovation with the goal of elucidating how the earlier adopters of an innovation profoundly affect the innovation-decisions of later adopters.

The innovation-decision is made through a cost-benefit analysis where the major obstacle is uncertainty. People will adopt an innovation if they believe that it will, all things considered, enhance their utility. So they must believe that the innovation may yield some relative advantage to the idea it supersedes (208). How can they know for sure that there are benefits? Also, in consideration of costs, people determine to what degree the innovation would disrupt other functioning facets of their daily life. Is it compatible with existing habits and values? Is it hard to use? The newness and unfamiliarity of an innovation infuse the cost-benefit analysis with a large dose of uncertainty. It sounds good, but does it work? Will it break?

Since people are on average risk-averse, the uncertainty will often result in a postponement of the decision until further evidence can be gathered. But the key is that this is not the case for everyone. Each individual's innovation-decision is largely framed by personal characteristics, and this diversity is what makes diffusion

possible. For a successful innovation, the adopter distributions follow a bell-shaped curve, the derivative of the S-shaped diffusion curve, over time and approach normality (257). Diffusion scholars divide this bell-shaped curve to characterize five categories of system member innovativeness, where innovativeness is defined as the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a system. These groups are: 1) innovators, 2) early adopters, 3) early majority, 4) late majority, and 5) laggards (262). The personal characteristics and interaction of these groups illuminates the aforementioned domino effect.

Innovators are those that enjoy being on the cutting edge (263). The innovation's possible benefits make it exciting; the innovators imagine the possibilities and are eager to give it a try. The implementation and confirmation stages of the innovators' innovation-decisions are of particular value to the subsequent decisions of potential adopters.

Early adopters use the data provided by the innovators' implementation and confirmation of the innovation to make their own adoption decisions. If the opinion leaders observe that the innovation has been effective for the innovators, then they will be encouraged to adopt. This group earns respect for its judicious, well-informed decision-making, and hence this group is where most opinion leaders in a social system reside (264). Much of the social system does not have the inclination or capability to remain abreast of the most recent information about innovations, so they instead trust the decisions made by opinion leaders. Additionally, much of the social system merely wants to stay in step with the rest. Since opinion leader adoption is a good indicator that an innovation is going to be adopted by many others, these conformity-loving members are encouraged to adopt (319).

There is a plethora of information, ideas, and Rogers' theory detailed in this book. The above is a bit of a teaser to help you get an understanding of what this book is all about. This book supported the framework of my PhD dissertation, which is how I discovered it. The content is extremely rich.

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### **Ninakix says**

This gets a high rating because it's a pretty classic book, and so far, I have yet to see the ideas covered in other books. Adoption theory is a surprisingly useful tool for understanding your customers and adoption cycles, and based on my personal experiences, I believe it is an accurate reflection of real-world phenomena. However, that said, I believe the book is long-winded, and can be frustrating because it seems to be targeted towards different audiences: a textbook for students of adoption theory, a message to diffusion researchers, and a primer for businesses, nonprofits and individuals interested in adoption theory. As I was reading as an interested individual, I found many parts of the book not relevant, constantly clicking "next page" on my Kindle. This applied particularly to the entire chapter dedicated to weaknesses in diffusion research. If I were to rewrite this for designers and product people, I might consider what all these insights mean for our designing and how one would apply them to the way we market and design products.

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### **Jim Razinha says**

Hindsight lesson learned and shared for future readers...unless you have to read this for academic purposes, it's probably best to read the very good summaries at the end of each chapter and then decide if you want to dig further. This is enormously tedious. I am in a year long certification program this year and one of the lectures cited some good stuff from this book. I didn't ask, nor had a reason to ask, if the book was worth reading beyond the couple of sound bites. Fair warning to the casual reader...the concepts are not difficult,

and may even seem obvious (and also dated, despite this being the fifth edition), but ...flat.

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### **Holly Bond says**

Textbooks suck, but not this one. The case studies in this book are so eye-opening about how change is more art than science. You can't just say, "do it because I said so" and expect it to get done. The people really need to be involved in the change and have an opportunity to be heard. This is a long book, but I promise that it is worth it.

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### **Lu Wunsch-rolshoven says**

Essential reading if you want to understand how new things come into our world. It's not the majority that accepts those new things - it's a small minority of about 2 % that takes them at first. Others observe the pioneers and only if it seems that in practice the new thing has an advantage a second group of about 14 % will accept it. After them a third and fourth group. There is nearly no chance to convince people of the second or a later group, if not the whole first group is using the new thing.

I was interested in the book because of the international language Esperanto. The consequence of the theory of Diffusion of Innovations is the following: For the further spread of Esperanto it is necessary to fully inform small target groups about Esperanto, teach them and help them to begin using Esperanto. If they do so, their example will help others to get interested in Esperanto.

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### **Keith says**

The foundational text on scaling & spreading new interventions. It's a long and slightly academic read, but it is extremely informative.

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### **Stephen says**

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Packed with case studies and excellent examples, this is a must read for any organizational consultant or change leader.

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### **Abdulrahman Hariri says**

Excellent resource on innovation and technology adoption and diffusion. Based on extensive research of the innovation literature.

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## **Kåre says**

Halvvejs igennem er jeg begejstret. Den gør alt det, den skal: Viser udviklingen indenfor forskellige fag og indenfor feltet som helhed, kommer med gode ideer til diverse for mig, virker gennemresearchet, har det nyeste med, og samler det meget fint sammen. Og så er der gode eksempler, som opsymmeres præcist og klart og er underholdende.

Undrer mig dog lidt over, hvordan det lykkedes ikke at gøre mere ud af reklamerne, som må være en stor del af feltet, både som metode og som indhold. Men der er måske ikke dokumenteret meget derom? Eller også distancerer forfatteren sig fra dette?

Bogen holder hele vejen igennem. Den er konstruktiv og metodisk præcis med massere af opsamlede pointer og klare eksempler.

Der er ikke så stort fokus på antropologi, som der kunne have været - hvilket nok i det store hele er en styrke. Eneste sted, hvor dette opleves som lidt af en mangel, er i det afsluttende kapitel om konsekvenser. Her er påstanden, at der er få studier heraf. Nej, antropologer har lavet tusindvis af den slags studier.

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## **Deane Barker says**

Classic book (in its fifth edition) about how new ideas spread. I like how Rogers has a set of "generalizations" about his ideas. These are things that might not be proven by statistics but feel generally correct. A lot of network theory, but a very good read. Just the right mixture of density and readability.

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## **Saber says**

I've read a couple of chapters of the first version (1983), it was an exciting read. It changed my view to the diffusion of innovations process. It made me understand and be aware of some fundamental elements I need to consider before creating or promoting a software product, though the book is not about software.

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## **Erin Skinner says**

I read this one for work and definitely felt like I was back in school. The book is well written but there's a lot of information and new concepts to work through, so reading it felt a lot like work. Funny that. Highly recommended for anyone trying to get new ideas, technologies or any other innovations adopted.

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## **Indra says**

diffusion of innovations theory has been used in fields of ICT, in marketing and in developing behaviour change communications. This is a great and thorough overview. Many of the ideas in the field overlap with theories of social networks.

## Michael Shaw says

This book has aged well. It's good to see innovation discussion in contexts that we don't usually think of it today (i.e., pre-internet). It highlights the consistent patterns, and helps separate them from the idiosyncrasies of each industry.

Nevertheless, the style is quite dry, and the author repeats himself more than I'd like. His chapter summaries are literally restating the thesis of each section, rather than connecting them in a more memorable way.

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