

# Approaches to development communication



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## 1. Introduction

Development Communication is based on one-way flow of information for the purpose of disseminating information and messages to induce change. Its main intentions can be divided into two different types of applications: (1) communication to inform and (2) communication to persuade. Development Communication uses method of investigation in which a problem is first identified and observations, experiments, or other relevant data are then used to construct or test hypotheses that solves it.

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## 2. Diffusion of Innovation Approach

This concept is given by Everette M Rogers. Mass communication is a two-step flow process. It develops favourable attitudes through the mass media and leads to the adaptation of inter-personal channels, especially opinion leaders.

Modernization is taken as a process of diffusion, where individuals move from a traditional way of life to a different, more technically developed way of life. This approach is concerned with the process of diffusion and adoption of innovation in a more systematic and planned way. This diffusion model is a vertical or one-way perspective on communication, and that active involvement in the process of the communication itself will accelerate development.

This approach is based on the need assessment of the target groups and helping people to fulfil their needs by adoption of innovation.

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Communication has to play the role of facilitator in disseminating innovations to the target groups. Development is basically acceptance of change and innovations –ideas, practice and technologies. Facilitating diffusion of innovations is an essential aspect of the development.

All innovations need not be new to all people. An innovation refers to an idea perceived as new by an individual. Diffusion is a process by which an innovation spreads from its source of creation to the users or adopters. The essence of the diffusion process is the human interaction, in which one person communicates a new idea to another person.

There are four elements in any analysis of the diffusion process:

1. Innovation (any idea considered new by recipient)
2. Communication (the individual to another through certain channels).
3. Social system (among members of society)
4. Time taken (from the stage of innovation to the stage of adoption).

Stages in the adoption process: Five distinct stages have been identified by the scholars:

1. Awareness stage –there is broad exposure of the innovation, but the individual does not have sufficient information. He is yet to get motivated either to seek further information or to act upon it or know how it functions (Knowledge).
2. Interest stage –individual shows interest in the new idea, makes an effort to seek additional information. However, the person is still undecided about its application. Person forms a favourable/unfavourable attitude towards innovation (Persuasion).

3. Evaluation stage –The individual mentally applies the innovation to one's own situation, and then decides whether to try it or not. Person engages in activities that lead to a choice to accept / unaccept the innovation (Decision).
4. Trial stage –individual uses the innovations on a pilot stage (limited scale) to decide about its utility and relevance to one's own situation. Observation is that people will not adopt an innovation without trying (Implementation).
5. Adoption stage– It is the process through which the individual arrives at the decision to adopt or reject the innovation from the time they first became aware of it. Individual decides to continue the use of innovation. Adoption implies sustained or continuous use (Confirmation).

Information Sources and their Relevance at Various Stages of Adoption:

While personal communication is face to face contact, whereas impersonal is mediated through mass communication channels – (mass media) Print, Radio, TV and film are most effective in providing various options and alternative choices. They are effective in drawing the attention of the individuals. Hence, the mass communication channels are found to be most important in the evaluation stage of the adoption sources.

Inter-personal communication through extension workers, friends and family members can influence behaviour and facilitate transfer of ideas. The mass communication channels seldom effect decisions directly although they influence indirectly.

### Factors affecting the Rate of Adoption of Innovation:

While some of the factors that stimulate and facilitate quick diffusion of innovation are transfer of technologies. Well informed opinion leaders communicate their approval/ disapproval of an innovation based on the innovators experiences to the rest of the social system. Majority respond by rapidly adopting it. The analysis suggests a small point—whether or not opinion leaders vouch for it but some others inhibit adoption:

1. Compatibility-the degree to which an innovation was consistent with existing values and past experiences.
2. Cultural incompatibility –certain social systems do not encourage adoption of innovations. Individuals in such a system are very slow and rigid in accepting new ideas, practices and technologies. The vegetarians show marked resistance in accepting non-vegetarian diet because of change in food habits. New crop varieties which give higher yields and better incomes, have been rejected on the ground of taste, fear of ill-health and unacceptability as food. Thus cultural incompatibility and mismatch with the existing social system are considered to be very strong inhibitors.

### Classification of adopters:

It is based on the rate of adoption and the time lag between initial exposures to final adoption. Innovativeness is defined as the degree to which individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a system. The personal characteristics and interaction of these groups illuminates the

diffusion effect. Diffusion researchers have classified adopters into five categories:

1. Venturesome innovators: These are the most eager members of the society to try new ideas and adopt new practices. They are enterprising and willing to take risks. Usually they belong to the cosmopolite category.
2. Early adopters –These are usually younger, had a higher social status, more favourable financial status, engaged in more specialized operations and were equipped with greater mental abilities. They used the data provided by the innovators in implementation and confirmation of the innovation to make their own adoption decision. If the opinion leaders observe that the innovation has been effective for the innovators, then they will encourage others to adopt. This group earns respect for its judicious well- informed decision making and hence this group is from where most opinion leaders reside. These belong to the local system; they follow the venturesome. These used more mass media.
3. Early majority –They become the reference groups for the subsequent late adopters, which constitute the early majority.
4. Late majority– Much of the social system does not have the inclination or capability to acquire information of the most recent innovations. So they trust the opinion leaders, since adoption of opinion leader is a good indicator that innovation is going to be adopted by many also and other members will be encouraged to adopt.

5. Laggards –The laggards are very slow in adoption. They are rigid, traditional, isolate in their social system, hard to be convinced, stick to the old methods and resist change. If they are traditional, they are suspicious of innovations and often interact with others who also have traditional values. If they are isolates, their lack of social interaction decreases their awareness of an innovation's demonstrated benefits. It takes much longer than average for laggards to adopt innovations.

Potential adopters, uncertain about innovation go through a stepwise social process. Well informed opinion leaders communicate their approval-disapproval of an innovation, based on the innovators experiences. Some respond by rapidly adopting. We can judge the importance of opinion leaders. Large subsection of the social system follows the trusted opinion leaders.

Those who do not adopt lose status or economic viability. Adoption becomes necessity as implementation results in social, economic benefit and this contextual pressure motivates adoption.

## Conclusion

Diffusion of innovation research established the importance of communication, new ideas and their practice is a crucial component of the modernization process. People change attitudes of those whom they talk to, work with, or interact with. People will adopt an innovation if they believe that it enhances their utility; it determines the extent of change in their normal functioning increases compatibility with habits and values, and has cost-benefit analysis.

### 3. Localised Approach

This approach advocates that information transmitted through media must be locally and functionally relevant to the audience is called localised approach. The development programmes must be local to meet the local needs which vary widely in different regions and sub-regions in a large country like India due to the diversity of climate, cultures and languages.

Localised approach would enable communicators to design messages which will be relevant in terms of utility, timeliness, applicability, specificity, etc.

The relationship between communication and development can be broadly divided into two types:

1. Macro society level studies (by Wilbur Schramm, Daniel Lerner etc.) gave direct support to the view that a modern mass media system is an important requirement for development.
2. Micro societal level studies argue that information of certain kind generates appetite for new things and new ways of doing things, which ultimately sets the process of development.

#### Benefits of localised approach

1. Localised approach would enable the communicators to design messages which will be relevant in terms of utility, timeliness, applicability, specificity etc.
2. The approach would tailor message for local conditions.



3. The approach can overcome infrastructural difficulties.
4. Such an approach will allow greater involvement and participation of the audience in the communication process.
5. As the needs of people vary widely in different regions and sub-regions.
6. In a large developing country like India, there is diversity of cultures and languages

Dos and Don'ts of localized approach:

1. There should be proper need-assessment of the local population.
2. The socio-economic condition of the local people should be kept in mind before designing the message.
3. The geographical and political conditions of a local area bear a lot of significance for message designing and delivery.
4. Preferences should be given to local media and local resource persons for the execution of communication tasks.

Conclusion

The localised media approach helps to plan messages specially designed for various local groups. This facilitates two way communications by allowing greater involvement and participation of the audience in the communication process. In case of any problem at the local level, the solution is found there and then. Naturally for particular specific situation the solution would also be specific. There cannot be a general approach. This localised approach generally yields a positive result.

#### 4. Magic Multiplier

Mass Media is called the magic multiplier as it can multiply the messages and reach a number of people very fast and at one go. Its output does have great potential and modernizing effect. It is their content that is the key to use in development. Mass media are important in spreading awareness of new possibilities and practices, but at the stage where decisions are being made about whether to adopt or not to adopt; personal communication is far more likely to be influential. Therefore, the general conclusion of this line of thought is that mass communication is less likely than personal influence to have a direct effect on social behaviour

Wilbur Schramm (1964), in his book ' Mass Media and National Development' which was produced for UNESCO became almost a blueprint (programme of action) for development communication. Schramm stated that content is the key to their use in development. Social change of great magnitude can be accomplished when people informed, persuaded, educated. Information must flow at all levels so that they can participate in the acts and decisions of nation building. He also argued that each person would have requirement of information of the work he would undertake, and there being millions of workers would require information of various types.

The conventional channel of communication would never be able to meet this demand. Therefore, modern communication technologies would be of

great use to meet this demand by multiplying the messages and reaching each and every worker simultaneously.

### Arguments for Magic Multiplier

We need magic multiplier for the following reasons:

1. For social change of great magnitude, people must be informed, educated, motivated and persuaded. Information must flow, not only to them but also from them, so that their needs can be known and they might participate in the acts and decisions of nation-building.
2. As the required amount of information and learning is vast so the targeted population. Work should be organised and skills should be learnt at all levels of society for better utilization of the resources of society.
3. The available channels of communication like inter-personal, group-communication, traditional media are incapable to undertake this task, as this will require a lot of time and resources. For a developing country, it's difficult to gather a large pool of resources and wait for such a long time. Mass media with its magical reach can do this job in less time and resources.

### Analysis of magic multiplier

1. The audit found that the mass media succeeded in reaching a vast majority of population in less time and resources.
2. Mass media as a magic multiplier did a commendable job in spreading awareness but it could not give expected results in persuading and educating the targeted population.

3. It was found that persuasion, motivation and education for/on something is best achieved by close interactions which is possible in inter-personal, group-communications etc.

## Conclusion

Use of latest technologies is required to supply large amounts of information to large number of people at one time and in modern formats. A lot of feedback is required when one uses communication for development; it should never be one way traffic. The users should be able to give feedback to the implementers, as success/failure of the programme could be judged.