

# **Diffusion and its Elements**

- **Diffusion:** It is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. It is a special type of Communication in the sense that the messages are concerned with innovations.
- Diffusion is a kind of social change:
- **Elements of diffusion:**
  - a) Innovation
  - b) Communication channels
  - c) Time
  - d) Social system
- **Innovation: An innovation is an idea, practice or object perceived as new by an individual or others in a social system.**

# Communication Channels of diffusion

- i. **Interpersonal channels** – neighbours , friends ,local leaders, extension personnel , etc.
- ii. **Mass media channels** – radio , television , news paper, etc.,
- iii. **Localite channels** – They originate within the social system of the receiver – eg. Neighbors, relatives, opinion leaders
- iv. **Cosmopolite channels**: Originate outside a particular social system – eg. Extension workers, consultants, sales personnel, technision, etc. ,

- **The time dimension is involved in the following aspects.**
- (i) In terms of innovation-decision process by which an individual passes from first hearing / knowledge of an innovation through its adoption or rejection.
- Innovation- decision process (I-D Process) is a mental process through which an individual passes from first knowledge of an innovation to a decision to adopt or reject and to confirmation of the decision.
- (ii) in terms of innovativeness of an individual (ie) the relative earliness-lateness with which an individual adopts an innovation when compared with the members of his social system.
- (iii) in terms of rate of adoption in a social system usually measured as the number of members of the system that adopt the innovation in a given time period.

# Adopter categories

- The adopters in a social system can be classified into five categories on the basis of their innovativeness. They are :
- i) Innovators
- ii) Early adopters
- iii) Early majority
- iv) Late majority
- and Laggards

# Innovators

- - First to adopt an innovation in a social system;
- - Venturesome, much ahead of other members in a community.
- - Generally very few in number
- - May deviate from social norms and viewed as deviants by others.
- - Mentally alert, oriented to take risk, have large enterprises and rich financial resources
- - Generally more literate
- - Have good contact with cosmopolite sources of information, research stations/ organisation and high level extension functionaries.

# Early adopters

- - Respectable; Localite; More integral part of a community;
- - Average members of a community can comprehend their activities relating to adoption of an innovation.
- - More opinion leadership
- - Potential adopters look to them for advice and information on the innovation
- - They try to maintain adoption leadership to keep up their prestige in the community.
- - Literates, have large size enterprise, high income, more participative and maintain good contact with cosmopolite information sources.
- - Keeps up good contacts with extension functionaries
- - Do not test untried ideas but quickest to use tried ideas in their own situations.

# Early majority

- - Deliberate, adopt the innovation just before the average members of the community.
- - Neither very early nor relatively late in adoption
- - Do not hold leadership position but participate in extension programmes
- - Slightly above average in education, social and income status and experience
- - Because of their limited resources, they cannot take hasty or poor decisions.
- - Less contacts with cosmopolite sources of information.
- - Active localites and associates mainly with people of their own community.
- - They are the neighbour and friends from whom majority of members of the community seek information about innovations.



# Late majority

- - **Skeptical**
- - Adopt new ideas just after the average members of the system.
- - They adopt mainly because people have already adopted it and reaped the benefits.
- - Low level of education, low level of participation in extension program and depend mainly on localite sources of information.
- - Pressure of peer is necessary to motivate them to adoption.

# Laggards

- - **Traditional**
- - Last to adopt an innovation in a system
- - By the time laggards adopt an innovation, it may already have been superseded by a recent idea in the system
- - Most localite and interact primarily with those who have traditional values
- - Tend to be suspicious about innovations, innovators and extension agents.
- - Little or no education, least participation in extension programmes and hardly have any contacts with outside world
- - Generally resource-poor, live in areas having least urban influence
- - Socially and economically most disadvantaged