CABLE TELEVISION VIEWERSHIP: AN EXAMINATION OF INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR

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Abstract
The present study provides a life style profile of the early adopter of cable television service. A questionnaire was administered to 600 householders from which 149 were later identified as early adopters and 238 as non-adopters. The early adopters were found to be younger, have a higher annual income and more children at home aged 11 to 15. They were more achievement oriented, more individualistic, more materialistic, and possessed greater self-esteem than the non-adopters. They were greater users of the media in general and of television in particular.

Introduction
While research on diffusion of innovations dates from the late 1800's in anthropology and later in sociology and rural sociology, it was not until the 1960's that such research became a major area of concern within the marketing discipline.

In his extensive work, Rogers (1962) identifies five stages of the process of innovation adoption and attaches labels to that portion of the population who fall into each stage. These categories are used to indicate where a consumer stands in relation to others on the adoption of a new product or service. Since Rogers suggests that the true "innovator" comprises a very small percentage of the population, for the purpose of the present study the terms "innovator" and "early adopter" will be used interchangeably. This research examines the characteristics of the early adopter of cable television service.

Background
The findings of diffusion studies from various disciplines have led to numerous generalizations about innovators and early adopters. Many of these have been found to apply to consumer innovators, falling under the headings of personality or life style traits: purchase and consumption behavior; media usage; social characteristics; and sociodemographics. It is anticipated that similar findings will apply in the case of early adopters of cable television service.

Life Style Characteristics
A common trait found to be characteristic of innovators is their venturesomeness or willingness to try new products. Robertson and Kennedy (1968) found it to explain 35 percent of the difference between innovators and non-innovators. Closely related to this is the concept of perceived risk, the uncertainty of the consequences of making a purchasing decision. The consumer innovator has been shown to be a low risk perceiver (Shiffman, 1972).

Opinion leadership has also been shown to be closely associated with innovative behavior (Myers and Robertson, 1972; Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971; Tigert and Arnold, 1971). This relationship is significant for marketers and has received considerable attention, since as one who advises others in their purchasing decisions, the consumer innovator is likely to influence the acceptance or rejection of a new product by later adopters.

Innovativeness is generally measured by identifying the first purchasers of a new product. However, it is also possible to measure an individual's perceived innovativeness. While Lambert (1972) found that early triers of eight different products perceived themselves as being more innovative than did non-triers, Pessmer et al. (1967) found that early buyers of a new detergent did not regard themselves as innovators.

According to Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), various studies have also characterized innovators as having higher levels of achievement motivation and higher aspirations than do non-innovators. Innovators have also been shown to be less dogmatic (Coney, 1972; Jacoby, 1971); to be inner-directed (Donnelly, 1970; Donnelly and Ivancevich, 1974); to be vivacious--avant-garde (Tigert and Arnold, 1971); and to have more positive attitudes toward change, education (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971) and advertising (Tigert and Arnold, 1971).

Purchasing and Consumption Behavior
Innovators have been shown to be more bargain conscious and also less brand loyal (Arndt, 1968; Tigert and Arnold, 1971). This concurs with their willingness to try new products which appear on the market. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) also mention the early adopter as having a more favorable attitude toward the use of credit. And as might be expected, the consumer innovator is more likely to be a heavy user of the product category in which he adopts (Arndt, 1968; Taylor, 1977). Thus, heavy viewers of television are expected to be more likely to adopt cable service than are light viewers.

Media Usage
While innovators tend to have greater total exposure to the mass media in general, the findings for television viewership have been less consistent than they have been for magazines. Several studies (King, 1965; Painter and Granzin, 1976) revealed the innovator to have less exposure to television than do non-innovators. Green et al. (1974) found innovators of grocery products to watch more television but found both innovators and non-innovators of retail services to be heavy viewers. Magazines appear to be a more important medium for innovators, as a number of studies (Boone, 1970; Engel et al., 1969) have found them to be heavier subscribers than are later or non-adopters. In particular, innovators are likely to have greater exposure to magazines which deal with the product category in which they innovate (Painter and Granzin, 1976; Summers, 1972).

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While early adopters tend to be more cosmopolitan, they are also more socially integrated and more socially active within the social system (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971). They also appear to be more socially and occupationally mobile (Boone, 1970; Pessesier et al., 1967; Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971).

Sociodemographics

Innovation studies have consistently found a positive relationship between early adoption and annual income (Boone, 1970; Pessesier et al., 1967; Robertson, 1971). This has been explained as possibly due to the cost involved in purchasing the new product, with wealthier households able to absorb the loss from a poor purchase decision. The consumer innovator is also more likely to have a higher level of education and a higher occupational status (Feldman and Armstrong, 1975; Gorman and Moore, 1968; Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971). However, because those with lower educational levels and lower occupational status are heavier television viewers (CBC, 1973), the opposite result is expected in the present study.

Age and family size have yielded contradictory results when distinguishing adopter categories. A review of the literature by Robertson (1971) showed a lack of relationship between age and innovativeness. Several marketing studies (Feldman and Armstrong, 1975; McClurg and Andrews, 1974; Painter and Granzin, 1976) have found innovators to be younger than later or non-adopters, but this may be owing to the type of product under study, which is generally more appealing to a young consumer. Robertson’s (1971) survey also found no relationship between number of children in the home and innovative behavior. Foster and Arbeit (1978) found family size to be related to innovativeness when a combination of ages and number of children was used. These two variables, age and family size, are of particular interest to the present study. While older people (65 years plus) have been found to be the heaviest television viewers (CBC, 1973), it is anticipated that in many households the decision of whether to purchase the cable service will be influenced by the presence of children.

The present study will look at the early adoption of cable television service as innovative behavior. A previous study by Boone (1970) on the early and later adopters of CATV in Laurel, Mississippi may serve as an interesting cross-cultural comparison with the present Canadian sample. In Boone’s study, the "consumer innovator" was found to be more highly educated, to earn a larger annual income, to be more likely to be employed in a professional or managerial occupation, and more likely to be married than was the "consumer follower". He was also more occupationally mobile and more involved in local clubs and organizations. The two groups also differed on personality traits; the innovator exhibiting more leadership ability, more self-confidence, more achievement motivation, greater openness-mindedness and greater acceptance of change.

The variables used in this study to develop a profile of the early adopter of cable television service were chosen so as to permit comparison with earlier studies. The authors were particularly interested in determining whether similar results would be found in a Canadian context and in a situation where a home entertainment service was the object of consumer innovative behavior.

It is suggested that early adopters of cable television service will have certain characteristics which distinguish them from non-adopters. Based on previous research findings, it is hypothesized that early adopters will: perceive themselves as innovative; be more achievement oriented; be more individualistic; be more community-minded and socially active; have more positive attitudes toward the increased exposure to American programming; be heavier users of the mass media in general, and in particular, will be heavier viewers of television; have higher family incomes; have lower educational levels and lower occupational status; and have more children at home.

Research Methodology

The data which are presented in this paper were collected as part of a larger project designed to examine the long-term socio-cultural effects of the introduction of cable television. The data were collected in a large Eastern Canadian city into which cable television was about to be introduced. At the time the survey was conducted, the city was served only by the two national Canadian television networks. The cable television service introduced two American networks as well as educational and community channels. The data presented in this study were obtained before the cable television service was available.

Sample

The sample surveyed in this study was obtained using a systematic random sampling approach. The city was divided into eight regions of approximately equal population size and an interviewer was assigned to each. Interviewers employed a personal delivery and collection approach rather than other data collection methods for a number of reasons, including the length of the questionnaire and the nature of the questions asked (LoveLock et al., 1976). A total of six hundred completed questionnaires were obtained. Six months after the inauguration of the cable television service, the researchers obtained from the cable operator the names and addresses of householders who had purchased the service. This list was matched against the list of six hundred respondents to the survey in order to identify cable television adopters. The sample of six hundred was then divided into three groups as follows: (1) 149 respondents who had adopted cable television within six months of its introduction (early adopters); (2) 238 respondents who had access to the cable service but who had not adopted (non-adopters); and (3) 213 respondents who lived in areas of the city which had not been wired for cable and who were therefore unable to adopt the service.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire used in this study was in five parts, only four of which were used in the present analysis. The first contained 197 statements to which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale. The second section of the questionnaire contained a number of questions dealing with the respondent’s use of the mass media and with leisure time activities. Part three contained a listing of 93 television programs currently shown on the two Canadian networks. For each program, the respondent was to indicate his/her frequency of viewing on a four-point scale. The final section of the questionnaire contained a standard list of demographic and socioeconomic questions.