

Digital Media: Adoption of New Technologies and Intergenerational Differences

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As the world becomes increasingly digital, with a growing reliance on digital media as the main source of news, entertainment, communication, and education, both the adoption of new technologies and intergenerational differences will continue to have an impact on who is able to access this digital content, creating a division in society between those who welcome these technologies, and those who feel unprepared to use them.

#### Adoption of New Technologies

The adoption of new technologies refers to the rate at which new technologies are accepted and used by the public (Bresnahan and Yin, 2017). For a new technology to be widely adopted, it needs to be beneficial in some way and also presented at a price that people can afford (Rogers et al., 2017). A new technology that is not useful would not be adopted, nor would a useful new technology that is priced beyond what most people can afford. However, because the rate at which technology is being created is growing significantly, this creates divisions in society between those who use a technology, and those who do not. This can impact how people can be reached, which would be important for news media, business, or even social communication. For instance, if someone has not adopted smartphone technology, or even computer technology, then this person will not have access to text messages, the internet, or social media.

The social effects of this trend is that there will be differences between groups based on the technology they use. Because there is a price component with the adoption of new technologies, because technology must be affordable for it to be

adopted, there will be groups of people with lower socioeconomic income that do not have access to digital information. This can make a societal difference on things such as the quality of education, health care, and how informed people are. A health care initiative that is conducted solely online, through online ads or social media, will not be received by people who have not adopted the technologies required to access this information. Education that requires online research will also not be fully accessible to those without digital means.

The recommendations that emerge from this societal disparity is that there needs to be a growing effort to lower the cost of new technologies, so they may be widely adopted. There also needs to be a growing awareness that not all people have adopted new technologies. In some instances this may be due to cost, but it may also be due to a personal distaste for technology, or a preference for an older technology. This would mean that any societal initiative, such as education, health care, or important news information should still be delivered in a way that remains accessible for those who have not fully adopted new technologies.

### **Intergenerational Differences**

Intergenerational differences refer to the use and accessibility of digital media for different age groups. Generally speaking, younger generations are more likely to adopt technology more enthusiastically than older generations (Hernandez, 2019). For instance, more users of social media tend to be younger because they are more familiar with this technology. The reason for this difference is because younger generations are more likely to use technology from a developmental age. They will be exposed to computers in the classroom, or be responsive to digital media on the internet or on

smartphones because these technologies are often designed with a younger user in mind. Older generations will be accustomed to the technologies they are already familiar with, and will be less likely to understand or adopt newer forms of technology.

The effects on society is that this can create a barrier for older persons who are not familiar with new types of technology, which might be needed for certain types of jobs. For instance, older individuals may have less familiarity with computers, which can cause problems finding employment, or accessing information online that might be important, such as tax or health care information. They may also be limited in the types of news they receive, as they will rely solely on newspapers or television broadcasts.

The recommendation to overcome these challenges for older generations is to focus on user accessibility for digital technologies, while also promoting adult education services. The reason the iPhone has become so widely adopted was because it was designed to be as intuitive and user-friendly as possible, which helps reduce the barrier created by the generational gap. Many older people might feel overwhelmed when using new technologies, so designing an easy to use interface can go a long way in overcoming this barrier. At the same time, there should also be an awareness that older generations may be unwilling to use new technology, so any essential documentation or forms should also be provided in a traditional way.

The long term effects of technology will mean that as time goes on, more people will become familiar with new technologies currently available, such as the internet and smartphones. While this will increase the amount of users who are comfortable with current-day technologies, newer technologies will always be introduced, so there will also be a continuing age gap. Children growing up today who are savvy with all forms of

technology will eventually become older and unfamiliar with the technologies of the future. Therefore, there should be a constant awareness of how different generations use technology, as this will help address both the problem of limited adoption of new technologies, and the intergenerational differences that result from the technological age gap.



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