Who uses food apps and why? An exploration of their disruptive potential

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Troubling Platforms: Disruption, mediation and transformation in digital food geographies

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Tackling climate change – Low Energy Demand scenario

Source: Global Carbon Project (2018)
Can (digital) **disruptive innovations** which offer **novel attributes** help stimulate **end-user demand** for a low carbon transition?

Social Influence and **disruptive** Low Carbon Innovations
Consumer innovations — potentially disruptive!

offer novel attributes to consumers, digitally mediated
consumption practice | potentially disruptive consumer innovations

- doing big (meaty) supermarket food shops
- online food hubs
- recipe boxes
- 11\textsuperscript{th} hour apps
- P2P food sharing
- diet gamification

(Kantar Worldpanel, 2018)
Diffusion of innovations

Opinion leaders

THE CHASM

EARLY ADOPTERS

3.5

34

EARLY MAJORITY

LATE MAJORITY

16%

LAGGARDS
Social networks and information diffusion

“The slow pace of diffusion is often a result of network structures”

Valente (2010)
Social networks and information diffusion

Highly heterophilious

Low clustering

Valente (2010)
Changing diet

Recipe apps
Plantjammer
Flexitarian Diet

Gamification apps
Quit meat
Less meat, less heat
waste

Peer to Peer food sharing apps
OLIO
Share your meal

11th hour/surplus food apps
Too good to go
ResQ Club
Lunchie
Buy ‘low carbon’ food – Online food hubs

Open Food Network, Neighbourfood, Food Assembly

1. You place an order
2. The farmer harvests
3. Your order is packed
4. Your food is delivered
Questionnaire survey

Distributed to 6 UK food hubs which use the Open Food Network platform, as well as non-adopters

580 complete responses, 200 current users
July / August 2019
Who are the early adopters?

**Respondents:** overwhelmingly female, quite a young demographic: 24-44 years, most have an undergraduate degree

**Household income:** modal category was ‘£55,000 or more’, but otherwise quite evenly distributed across the full range of lower income categories

**Diet:** 12% have a food intolerance, 24% are vegetarian or vegan

**Use of food hubs:** every week or fortnight, tend to use them for 30% or less of weekly shop

**Use of other food apps:** very high – over 80%!
Consumer appeal of online food hubs

**Relative advantage:** Freshness and higher quality of food – very strong appeal for both groups. But...more expensive!

**Trust/choice:** Early adopters especially emphasise transparency in the supply chain and finding specific products

**Convenience:** Both groups believe online shopping and home delivery save time. Yet non-adopters believe it takes more effort than buying food from supermarkets

**Social/Environmental benefits:** Both groups perceive a high appeal

**Identity:** Both groups believe food hubs fit with their personal values, but more ambiguous on whether it sends a positive identity signal to others
Social networks – overcoming ‘the chasm’

**Finding out about online food hubs** - Talking to friends and advertising most important

**Sources of information which shape their opinion of food hubs**
Talking to friends. But social media and seeing what neighbours or people in general are doing also important

**Communication density (in the past 6 months)**
Early adopters talk to an average of 9 people about food hubs, of which 5 are close friends

**Opinion Leaders?**
1/3rd consider themselves to influence the opinions of others about food hubs
Disruptive potential?

Scale is still quite small at present – but demonstrate a broader consumer appeal

Network structure and digital medium support a diffusion process

“In comparing Food Assembly to the dominant institutions of the food system in Germany, it is clear that CPPSs [community pick-up point schemes] exhibit transformative potential. They show indications of challenging, altering, or replacing a variety of these dominant institutions...CPPS change relationships and (infra)structures within the food system and enable changes in ways of doing, knowing, framing, and organising.” (McFarland and Wittmayer, 2015)
Carbon emission reduction?

Not just about food miles!
Different modes of Home Delivery
Harvesting to order = less waste
Low carbon production, less of... refrigeration, heated greenhouse, synthetic inputs, machinery
Thank you for listening!

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