

*Technological Innovation as a
Ground for Parental Attitudes in
Choosing a School, their Satisfaction,
and their Marketing among Target
Audiences*

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Abstract

In this study we examine the effect of technological innovativeness on parents' attitudes towards this innovation and its application globally and locally on the marketing of the school, the considerations of parents when choosing a school, and their satisfaction as the target audience. The independent variable is the demographic one, which includes: place of residence, sector, type of school, and socio-economic status. The dependent variables are : parents' considerations in choosing a school, and parents' satisfaction with the school. The intervening variables are: parental attitudes towards technological innovativeness, degree of marketing by the school, and extent of use of technological innovativeness - a variable that will be examined as a controlled variable.

The study sample consisted of eleven principals of elementary schools which implement processes of information and communication technology (ICT) and routinely use innovative technology aids in teaching / learning and assessment, as well as their ICT coordinators. They all completed a questionnaire about the inventory of technological aids and the extent of their use in their school, as well as a questionnaire on attitudes related to implementing these aids at their school. In addition, 523 parents of students in those schools completed a questionnaire that examines: parents' considerations in choosing a school, satisfaction with the school, attitudes towards technological innovativeness, marketing, and a demographic questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using a quantitative method.

This study focused on the point of view of parents as clients of the education system. Its findings may shed light on the perception of parents of the school in view of the changes taking place there in the age of knowledge and learning in the 21st century, and parents' attitudes toward technological innovation in the schools as improving the schools' image and helping to market them.

The first objective of this study was to examine the effect of demographic background characteristics, the extent of the use of innovative technological aids in the schools, and parents' attitudes towards this innovativeness. The second objective was to examine the correlation between the extent of use of technological innovativeness, and the attitudes of parents towards this innovativeness, and between the extent of school marketing. The third objective of the study was to examine the effect of the extent of marketing the school on parents' considerations in choosing the school and their satisfaction with

it. Finally, the fourth goal was to check the pattern of structural relations between the study variables in keeping with the prediction model developed for this study.

In the first research hypothesis it was assumed that the demographic background characteristics will have an effect on the extent of use of technology in two indices of use: the extent of use of technology during the week (several times a week), and the number of classes in the school which have innovative technological aids. The study findings indicate that the degree of use of technological aids during the week is significantly higher in schools in the central region, in the Jewish sector, and in the state education system, in places where the school population is eligible for increased government funding, the frequency of use of technological aids decreases. In terms of the number of classes which have innovative technological aids, it is evident that for schools in the periphery, in the non-Jewish sector, in state education, and of a low socio-economic background, the number of classes which have technological aids increases.

In the second research hypothesis the premise was that there will be a positive relationship between the use of technology and the attitudes of parents towards technological innovativeness, such that the greater the use of technology, the more positive the attitude of parents towards technological innovativeness. The findings show a weak but statistically significantly positive correlation between the extent of use of technological innovation and the number of classes that make use of these aids, on the one hand, and the attitudes of parents towards technological innovativeness both in terms of all schools and specifically with regard to the school that their child attends, on the other.

In the third research hypothesis the premise was that demographic background characteristics have an effect on parental attitudes towards technological innovativeness, when the index of use of technological innovativeness is controlled. The findings indicate that the place of residence has a significant effect even after controlling for both technology usage factors and that parents who live in outlying areas attest to significantly more positive attitudes in both parental attitude factors. On the other hand, the findings indicate that the school sector, school type, and socioeconomic status of the school have no effect on the different attitudes of the parents in the various factors after controlling for both technology usage factors. The effect of the level of

technological innovation usage as a controlled variable was found to be significant in all four measures of demographic background.

In the fourth research hypothesis it was assumed that parents' attitudes toward technology innovativeness would be an important factor and would add significantly to predicting the extent of marketing the school. The results show that there is a significant effect of the variables: place of residence, type of school, socioeconomic status, number of classes that make use of innovative technological aids, and both indices of parental attitudes towards technological innovativeness for predicting the extent of marketing the school .

In the fifth and sixth research hypotheses, the assumption was that the level of the school's marketing would be an important factor and would add significantly to predicting parents' considerations in selecting a school, as well as to predicting the degree of parental satisfaction with the school. The results show that the variable of marketing adds significantly to explaining the difference in parents' considerations in choosing a school, and in level of satisfaction with the school, beyond the demographic background indices, both measures of the extent of technology use and both measures of parental attitudes toward technological innovativeness. The findings of this study indicate that as the extent of marketing the school increases, the number of parents choosing it also increases, and their satisfaction with it is higher.

These findings reinforce the argument that the need to survive, to compete, and ensure a steady flow of clients requires the public school system to improve its performance, and to be creative and effective. All this sets the stage for creating a common ground between the two approaches – the educational and the business / marketing. Aiming for excellence and innovation in public education is examined through the creation of supportive learning environments that enable the structuring of knowledge and encouraging higher-order thinking and fostering independent learning. Seeing the school as enabling and encouraging learning in an interactive ICT environment, which is ground breaking and progressive, represents its added value.

Moreover, in order to bring about a paradigm shift within the entire school system, it is important to promote "islands of success" (Offir, 2010), and to encourage the teachers to make use of the technological aids available to them. This includes tools to create varied modes of communication with students and their parents, as those who will

contribute to the visibility of the school's accomplishments in general, and the products of innovation and progress in particular (Avni & Rotem, 2010).

This move would generate the desired effect, i.e., the efficient and intelligent use of technological innovation aids, which will lead to positive parents' attitudes, and this will be the platform for optimal marketing of school by its own clients. This will affect the considerations of parents' selection on the one hand, and raise their level of satisfaction on the other.