research highlights

ENERGY INNOVATION

Disinterest impedes adoption

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A common assumption is that new smart energy technologies and services designed to reduce energy consumption are adopted first by early adopters and then gradually by the mass market once the technology is established. Consequently, research typically focuses on users, with the expectation that non-users will eventually follow. However, understanding why certain consumer segments are reluctant to adopt a new technology can be informative to service providers and policymakers. To this end, Nina Kahma and Kaisa Matschoss from the University of Helsinki, Finland, conducted a survey in Finland to examine the attitudes underlying different kinds of smart energy service non-use.

Rates of non-use, defined as not purchasing an energy technology or service, ranged between 40–70% in the study sample. Principle component analysis revealed that disinterest was the most important dimension of non-use. Disinterest was distinct from lagging adoption (the need for successful demonstration before purchase). Moreover, disinterest was more common in respondents who were older, richer, more educated, and living in detached houses. In other words, those who could benefit the most from smart energy services, because they live in larger dwellings where they can implement energy choices and who have the financial resources to do so, were the least interested in energy issues and new technologies. These results challenge views of technology diffusion that assume that non-use simply reflects delayed adoption.

Jenn Richler