

Evolution begins with the genesis of an activity e.g. the first battery, the first phone, the first television or the first digital computer such as the Z3 in 1943. If it is successful, then it will diffuse in its applicable market. If it is useful then others will copy and custom-built examples of that activity will appear (e.g. systems such LEO — Lyons Electronic Office). They will also diffuse in what tends to be a larger applicable market. As the activity spreads through custom-built systems then pressure mounts for adoption and products are produced. These products themselves diffuse through an even wider market often with constant improvements or disruptive changes with each diffusing in turn and growing the market. As the act becomes more widespread and well understood alternative models of provision appear such as rental services. Eventually the act becomes so widespread and well defined it becomes “ubiquitous”, well understood and more of a commodity. It will tend to be standardised with little feature differentiation between offerings. At this stage of volume operations then utility services are likely to have appeared especially if the the act is suitable for delivery by such a mechanism.

There is no time or adoption axis on the evolution curve, only ubiquity (to its ubiquitous market) versus certainty. It may take ten years or a hundred for something to make its journey from genesis to commodity. It may become a commodity when 2% of the population own it or everyone has three. However, regardless of this, I know the path it will take. What causes things to take that journey turns out to be simple competition represented in two forms: -