DIFFUSION OF A MANAGERIAL INNOVATION: NOTHING IS EVER PLAYED

The case of the diffusion of mindfulness in the workplace

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Abstract :

Forces that influence managerial innovation (MI) diffusion are still unclear. This paper aims to shed more lights on the factors and actors influencing the diffusion of an emergent MI by studying the case of mindfulness programs and techniques. The research design is based on a qualitative methodology. Two main primary sources of data were mobilized and allowed to analyze the two communication channels identified in the diffusion literature: the interpersonal network and the press media. The results show that among the attributes traditionally studied to explain the diffusion of an MI, elements regarding its origins and its capacity to be transposed and adapted should be taken into account. Furthermore, while opinion leaders are considered as key players in both the rational and "fad and fashion" perspectives of the diffusion of an innovation, our results lead us to a much more nuanced analysis.

Keywords: Managerial Innovation, Diffusion, Rational perspective, Fad and Fashion perspective, Mindfulness

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INTRODUCTION

Big businesses such as Google, General Mills and Aetna have adopted managerial innovations (MI) such as mindfulness programs. The benefits of those programs for an individual's cognitive ability, attitude and behavior are supported in the organizational literature by several empirical studies (eg. Dane 2010; Dane & Brummel 2013; Siqueira & Pitassi 2016). Mindfulness training programs can, for instance, favor creativity, ecological concerns, ethics and sustain corporate social responsibility behaviors (Siqueira & Pitassi, 2016). However, while marked by positive outcomes and a recent surge of interest in the organizations' world (Good et al. 2016; Choi & Leroy 2015), mindfulness programs or techniques would not seem to be the subject of a large diffusion in the firms.

While the MI adoption process and the factors that favor or hinder it have been largely studied (Daft, 1978; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Dubouloz, 2013, 2014; Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2008; Kimberly & Evanisko, 1981; Mol & Birkinshaw, 2009; Wischnevsky, Damanpour, & Méndez, 2011), the MI diffusion process and the factors that influence it, are little empirically explored. The diffusion literature has largely focused on technological innovation and more precisely on product innovation (Alänge, Jacobson, & Jarnehammar, 1998; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Keupp, Palmié, & Gassmann, 2011; Rogers, 1995). However, while it is recognized that the diffusion of a product is not an automatic

process and is rather long and difficult (even when the product has obvious advantages), the difficulties could be heightened in the case of MI because of its specific attributes. MI would be less impactful than technological innovation, operationally more complex, and more tacit, which can make communication difficult about this type of innovation (Alänge et al., 1998; Damanpour, 2014). Therefore, the importance of conducting researches aiming at gaining better understanding of MI diffusion, its process and the factors influencing it has been stressed (Damanpour, 2014; Volberda, Van Den Bosch, & Heij, 2013)

The MI diffusion is defined as the process in which a MI is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (Rogers, 1995) or as the process by which an innovation is disseminated amongst potential adopters or users (Teece, 1980). Two main perspectives are generally mobilized to study diffusion. The first approach developed by Rogers (1995) get largely inspiration from the "efficient choice" model and focus on product innovations. Following this perspective, the attributes of the innovation help to explain their diffusion and the communication around the innovation generates the appetite of the social system members for its diffusion, or in the reverse, its reject. Opposing the model of "efficient choice", the fad and fashion perspective developed by Abrahamson (1991) extends the analysis to look more specifically at MI. It argues that the rational perspective cannot totally explain the diffusion or rejection of MI whether efficient or not. In this view, the outside and the imitation influence can explain the MI diffusion. In this regard, it is crucial to take into account the norms of rationality and progress that fashion-setters promote. While both perspectives are of particular value, the forces that influence MI diffusion are still unclear (Damanpour, 2014). First, except a recent study (Becker, Wald, Gessner, & Gleich, 2015), the effects of perceived attributes of an MI have rarely been studied. Second, the current approaches most of the time reduce the diffusion analysis by looking at single respondents

only (Becker et al., 2015). To our knowledge, and following Becker et al. (2015), no research has considering both views of diffusion, rational one and fad and fashion one, to better understand this complex phenomenon. We try to address these gaps in this paper. Indeed, this paper aims to shed more lights on the factors and actors influencing the diffusion of an emergent MI by studying the case of mindfulness programs and techniques.

To address this question, two methodologies have been mobilized. First, we have realized 32 interviews in 2016 with different actors such as CEOs, Human Resources Managers, Managers and consultants, across a wide variety of industries and organizations. Second, we have analyzed the content of 29 newspaper articles published in 2016.

Our results show that among the attributes traditionally studied to explain the diffusion of an MI, elements regarding its origins and its capacity to be transposed and adapted should be taken into account. Furthermore, while opinion leaders are considered as key players in both the rational and "fad and fashion" perspectives of the diffusion of an innovation, our results lead us to a much more nuanced analysis.

In the next section, we outline a literature review about the two main approach of innovation diffusion. This is followed by the study's methodology and results. We conclude with a discussion of our findings and their implications for future research and practice.

1. LITTERATURE REVIEW

1.1 MINDFULNESS PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS AS EMERGENT MANAGERIAL INNOVATION

1.1.1 Managerial innovation definition

Managerial innovation (MI) has been represented by a variety of overlapping terms, including administrative, management, organizational (Damanpour, 2014). MI anchors on "what managers do and how?" (Hamel, 2006), involving a departure from traditional

processes, practices and structures. MI is thus defined as management practices, process, structures, or techniques that are new and intended to further organizational goals (Birkinshaw, Hamel, & Mol, 2008; Volberda et al., 2013). Based on these definition, four major characteristics of MI can be identified: distinction from technological innovation, novelty, multi-dimensional character (MI covers innovations in structures, practices and management procedures) and intentionality (MI clearly aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization). The novelty of MI can be understood as new to the firm (Van de Ven, 1986). Examples of significant MI from 1900 and 2000 are Total Quality Management, Lean Management, 360-degree feedback and spaghetti organization (Hamel, 2006, Le Roy, Robert & Giuliani, 2013), which have been theorized and labelled for a long time. More recently, practices and programs of mindfulness in the workplace have been recognized as an emergent managerial practice (Hafenbrack 2017; Qiu & Rooney 2017; Francoise 2016) and *de facto* as an emergent MI. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of MI, Mamman (2009) propose to be aware of its three components (or "3ps"). At the core, is the Philosophy or the theory of thinking of the MI. It is the core foundation of the MI, on which Principles and Practices are built. So, next to the core are the Principles that guide the implementation of MI. At last, they are the Practices, which are the visible tip of the MI iceberg as they can be observed.

1.1.2 Mindfulness definition

There are a considerable body of literature and debates revolving around the delineation, definition as well as the practices to measure mindfulness (eg. Grossman 2011; Chiesa 2013; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell 2007a). From among many options, we will choose a commonly accepted definition of mindfulness as the act of *intentionally focusing one's attention on the experience occurring at the present moment in a non-judgmental or accepting way* (Baer &

Krietemeyer, 2006). This definition has the advantage of noting that mindfulness is above all a practice, a kind of mind training and not a mystical exercise (Bondolfi et al., 2011). In this perspective, mindfulness can be implemented by firms through different Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) (eg. Brown, Ryan, & Creswell 2007b; Baer & Krietemeyer 2006; Quaglia et al. 2015) such as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR) or the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

1.1.3 Mindfulness as Managerial Innovation

Mindfulness programs clearly represent a concrete form of MI based on the four key characteristics used in the MI definition: (1) the notion of novelty which can be verified at the level of the adopting company; (2) a set of managerial practices (set out below); (3) a non-technological character; and (4) an intentionality, i.e. developing sustainable individual and collective performance, preventing or curing health problems in the workplace (stress, burnout) or supporting positive behaviors and corporate social responsibility. Furthermore, following Mamman's model, the 3Ps of the mindfulness as practices and programs implemented in organizations are:

*The philosophy. T*wo main philosophies of mindfulness in the workplace are identified (Francoise, 2016) : (1) a pure psychological approach aimed at curing and developing human potential, and (2) a more buddhism inspired approach in which mindfulness is the way of positive and ethical behavior development like happiness and kindness. The first is more rational and evidence-based driven, whereas the second promotes a humanist project for individuals and society.

The core principles of mindfulness-based intervention are: Volunteerism and commitment of individuals participating in mindfulness programs; Need for individual practice on regular basis; Need of being guided by a professional and qualified instructor or resources developed

by qualified people; Importance of an intensive and structured training to develop the basic skills of mindfulness (Mc Cracken, et al., 2004).

Practices involve MBIs (often related to or inspired by MBSR) as formalized mindfulness development programs, the components of the MBIs as practices of mindfulness, and groups of practice. The MBIs used in companies can be mainstream protocols (MBSR or ACT) or ad-hoc protocols developed by the firms or consultants. The components or practices of mindfulness themselves can be formal (timed and guided exercises like body-scan, sitting or walking meditation, yoga movements) and/or informal (everyday life in-site meditation, 3 minutes of breathing). Integration of mindfulness into work routines is made through meditation rituals (for example before meetings), feedback sessions or problem solving or creativity meetings.

While mindfulness in the workplace can be considered as a MI, the novelty and the few number of adoption cases question its diffusion.

1.2 THE DIFFUSION PHENOMENON OF A MANAGERIAL INNOVATION

In the management literature, two main perspectives can contribute to the understanding of the MI diffusion process.

1.2.1 The general and classical perspectives of diffusion of innovations

Following Rogers (1995), diffusion is "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (p. 5). The four main elements, (1) innovation, (2) communication channels, (3) time and (4) social system are identifiable in every diffusion process and would explain partly the brakes and levers for the diffusion of innovations. For Rogers (1995), an *innovation* is composed by different attributes, as perceived by individuals, that help to explain its diffusion. First, the relative

advantage of innovation or, in other terms, the degree to which the innovation is perceived as good, or even better than earlier ideas can favor or not the diffusion. It may be measured in economic terms but also in terms of social prestige or satisfaction. Second, the compatibility of the innovation with existing values, past experiences and needs in the organization can also play a substantial role in the innovation diffusion. The same applies for the complexity or the perceived difficulties to understand and use the innovation. Its trialability or the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis; and its observability (the visibility of its results) would affect the innovation diffusion. Rogers argues that all attributes explain the innovation diffusion even if relative advantage is the most important attribute. In a more recent study, Becker et al. (2015) highlight that only relative advantage and trialability have significant and positive effects on a MI diffusion such as Activity based costing in their study.

In the classical diffusion perspective, *communication* is central and aims to share information to reach a mutual understanding of the innovation. By doing so, it generates the appetite of the social system members for the innovation, or in the reverse, its reject. Two communication channels are identified: the mass media and the interpersonal networks. First, ideas often flow from mass media to opinion leaders and, second, from these to the potential audience of adopters, knowing that opinion leaders are individuals who are able to influence formally or informally other individuals' or entities' behavior or attitudes. Then, it seems crucial to identify the content of the messages developed around the innovation in mass media channels, which are the most rapid and efficient means of informing an audience of potential adopters about the existence of an innovation and its attributes. Interpersonal networks are also important as a mean to persuade unit of adoption or individuals to adopt or reject innovation.

Time allows understanding the diffusion process in a dynamic perspective. At last, the *social system* constitutes a boundary within which an innovation diffuses. In the social system, norms and social representations serve as a guide for the behavior of its members. The opinion leaders or other change agents such as experts, consultants or gurus can play a crucial role by providing information and advice about innovation that can influence the potential adopters. Depending on the information diffused, innovations can be adopted or rejected by the social system. The social system includes different actors: innovators (who have the ability to understand and apply complex practices and techniques and do not hesitate to take risks even if the degree of uncertainty is high); early adopters (who can serve as a role model for potential adopters – In one sense, they put their stamp of approval on new practices by adopting them and can become opinion leaders); early majority (is not the first by which the new is tried, nor the last to lay the old aside); late majority (skeptical) and even laggards (traditional).

The diffusion process proposed by Rogers (1995) and issued from his early work published by 1962, has been criticized because of its "efficient choice" inspiration. It suggests that organizations, within a social system, can independently and freely choose to adopt an innovation and that they are relatively certain of their goals and the how innovations will achieve them (Abrahamson, 1991; Kimberly, 1981). While Rogers (1995) nevertheless suggests the premises of the fads and fashions perspective (Abrahamson, 1991, 1996; Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999) of innovation diffusion by highlighting the role of opinion leaders and mass media, it seems important to go further and to better understand the mechanisms through which organizations are influenced.

1.2.2 The managerial fads and fashions perspective

The fads and fashions perspective can complement the Rogers' diffusion perspective and seems even more interesting that it is not restricted to the technological innovation as the one of Rogers. In its paper of 1991, Abrahamson clearly includes "innovative administrative technologies" which correspond to MI (Birkinshaw et al., 2008; Damanpour & Aravind, 2012; Volberda et al., 2013). Opposing the model of "efficient choice", Abrahamson (1991) suggests three other models depending on two dimensions: the outside influence and the imitation influence. According to the forced-selection perspective (low imitation influence, the influence of organization within a group), a number of organizations control sufficient power to influence MI diffusion across organizations. Consistent with the fashion perspective (strong imitation influence, influence of organization outside a group), firms imitate MI promoted by "fashion-setting organizations"— organizations outside their group, such as consulting firms, gurus, business schools or mass media publications. These fashions setters develop and disseminate rhetoric that describes the new managerial practices. Lastly, the fad perspective (strong imitation influence, the influence of organization within a group) assumes that the diffusion of MI occurs when organizations within a group imitate other organizations within the same group to reduce their uncertainty. Some organizations imitate others for instance because they obtain from these first adopters, the knowledge that reduces ambiguity about the MI or because the first adopters have the reputation to better perform with the MI. They also can imitate other firms in order to appear legitimate by conforming to emergent norms that sanction an innovation or to avoid the risk that some competitors could gain a competitive advantage by using this innovation.

According to Abrahamson (1996), management fashion is largely a cultural phenomenon, shaped by norms of rationality and progress. Both norms are societal expectations, the former

is about MI as most efficient means to ends, and the latter depicts the fact that organizations tend to use over time new and improve management practices. Moreover, it is the management-fashion-setting community, populated by management fashion setters, that shapes transitory collective beliefs that certain management techniques are rational and at the forefront of management progress. Put it differently, the fashion perspective suggests that management fashions are cultural commodities deliberately produced by fashion setters. This production of this management culture occurs through a fourfold process of creation, selection, processing, and dissemination by fashion suppliers of rhetorics championing certain MI. During the creation phase, fashions setters identify incipient preferences, which will guide future fashion demand, and then create, detect or rediscover MI that might meet the incipient demand. They will also produce the collective beliefs about the rationality of the MI adoption and about the progress that it can bring. During the selection phase, fashion setters will select the MI that is the more likely able to meet the demand. When MI is selected, fashion setters elaborate rhetorics that can convince future adopters about their rationality and the improvement or progress that they can bring. It is the processing phase. At last, during the dissemination phase, fashion setters use these rhetorics in order to launch managerial techniques in the fashion market.

This review of the diffusion literature leads to adopt an integrative framework of MI diffusion, including on the one hand, actors of the social system and their role in influencing the diffusion process and on the other hand, both rational norms (that includes the attributes of the MI) and norms of progress. All these elements can help to better understand the diffusion process.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The research design is based on a qualitative methodology. This qualitative approach was followed for three main reasons. First, this methodology suits very well to the exploratory nature of our work (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Even though innovation diffusion has been theoretically conceptualized, some perspectives regarding specific MI needs more consideration, yet integration in existing models. Second, to understand the complex phenomenon of MI diffusion, it is necessary to consider perceptions of various actors. A qualitative approach provides more detail and better access to multiple actors and perspectives and allows us to obtain a better appreciation of the complexity considering different points of view (Miles & Huberman, 2003). Third, qualitative methods are much more suited to how and why questions than quantitative methods (Yin 2009).

2.2 DATA COLLECTION, INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND DATA ANALYSIS

We have chosen a multi-actor approach. Two main primary sources of data were mobilized to analyze the two main communication channels identified in the diffusion literature.

2.2.1 Interviews

Sample: First, the research design explicitly captured the viewpoints of multiple actors such as 9 CEOs, 9 Human Resources Managers, 8 managers and 6 consultants. Amongst these actors, 13 have adopted or have supported some enterprises for adopting mindfulness programs and techniques. The role of all these interviewed actors is suggested to be relevant in the innovation diffusion literature as both opinion leaders and early adopters. As illustrated in table 1, we have considered that the 6 consultants were opinion leaders because, following Rogers (1995), they are able to influence formally or informally other individuals' or entities'

behavior or attitudes. Following Rogers (1995), the actors who are in companies, which have adopted mindfulness programs and/or practices in 2016, are considered as early adopters because firms adopting such new managerial practices are still very few at this time. And early adopters can serve as a role model for potential adopters. They are 7 in our sample. Furthermore, non-adopters (18 in our sample, four of them with private practice) can also be a source of rich information about the reasons why they hesitate or do not want to adopt mindfulness practices or programs. The interviewed actors are from different sectors of activity (industry – mechanic, metallurgy, agro-food, automotive, sport - hospitals, aviation transport, energy, telecommunication, insurance, management consulting, Canton of Geneva), from small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), large firms (even large multinationals) and state organizations, from France and Switzerland. The number and diversity of interviewees are a chief strength of this research.

Table 1 – Interviews conducted

	HR Managers	CEOs	Managers	Consultants	Total
Interviews	9	9	8	6	32
Opinion leaders (consultants)				6	6
Early adopters	4	1	2		7
Non-Adopters	4	8	6		18
Practicing meditation on a personal basis	3	2	4	6	15
Dates for interviews	02.06.2016 03.19.2016 04.08.2016 04.11.2016 04.12.2016 04.14.2016 04.20.2016 05.30.2016 05.31.2016	01.11.2016 03.07.2016 04.15.2016 04.18.2016 04.25.2016 04.29.2016 05.09.2016 05.10.2016 06.30.2016	01.31.2016 04.15.2016 05.10.2016 05.11.2016 05.19.2016 07.14.2016 08.18.2016 12.22.2016	03.21.2016 03.24.2016 04.07.2016 04.14.2016 05.02.2016 05.12.2016	

Data collection and interview protocol: All the interviewed actors have been submitted to a very rigorous and flexible protocol of semi-directive interview. When calling for the appointment, we explain that our topic of research was about innovative practices without

speaking about mindfulness. The same interview grid was maintained throughout the survey period and consisted of the following themes: 1) Characteristics of the respondent; 2) Innovative managerial practices that their organization has adopted or that they promote 3) Their knowledge about mindfulness; 4) Their perceptions of the mindfulness (potential advantages or disadvantages for themselves and for their organizations; compatibility with the world of organizations, with their own organization, perceived difficulties for adopting mindfulness, trialability, observability); 5) Their sources of information about mindfulness; 6) Their motivations and incentives to adopt or not mindfulness.

All interviews have been conducted in the workplace or in the personal environment of the respondents to make us familiar with their direct environment. They have all been recorded and fully transcribed. Each interview which lasted one hour on average resulted in 34 hours of recording and 380 pages of transcripts. All in all, 32 interviews have been completed from the 11th of January to the 22nd of December 2016.

Coding: Each interview was coded sentence by sentence onto a theme list in order to document and evaluate the degree of influence of actors and factors in the mindfulness programs and practices diffusion within firms. To do so, data has been encoded into the categories, themes and sub-themes inherited from the literature: five categories of actors (mass media, opinion leaders, early adopters and non-adopters) divided into three themes (norms of rationality, norms of progress and influences). The sub-theme of "norms of rationality" has been divided into five sub-themes such as relative advantage, compatibility, perceived difficulty, trialability, observability. The sub-theme of "influences" has been divided into five sub-themes such as imitation influence, influences (coercive and incentive) of organization within a group, influences (coercive and incentive) of organization outside a group. For each interview transcript, two authors were responsible for coding a single

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interview transcript, serving respectively as first and second coders. Review and discussion between the first and second coders continued until they agreed on the quotations to include in each category. We removed all quotations not agreed on by the two coders from further analysis.

2.2.2 Press articles

The second source of data was press articles. They are suggested to be relevant in both diffusion literature from the efficient choice perspective and the fad and fashion one. Press articles are a good way to study mass media, one of the most important "fashion-setting-organization" and communication channel (Rogers, 1995, Abrahamson, 1991). In the innovation diffusion literature, it is admitted that ideas often flow from mass media to opinion leaders and potential audience of adopters. Then, it is crucial to document and evaluate its content and degree of influence

Data collection: We searched the Nexis database for articles with more than 500 words published in 2016 (year when all the interviews have been realized) and that had "mindfulness" or "meditation" and "organization" or "workplace" in the topic field. The topic field includes the title and the article itself in the database. This search yielded 37 papers that we downloaded and examined carefully to assess whether they dealt with mindfulness in workplace or not. This screening resulted in a short list of 29 articles (see table 2 for more details).

Table 2 – Newspaper articles selected

	Number	Publication Dates in 2016	Newspapers
General newspapers	18	19.01(2)/10.03/19.03/23.04/04.05/14.05/ 19.05(2)/04.08/03.09/13.09/25.09/22.09/ 23.09/20.10/02.11/30.12	La Croix (1) ; Le Temps (1) ; Le Monde (3), La Tribune (4) ; Le Point (6) ; Le Télégramme (1) ; Le Figaro (2)
Business Newspapers	11	20.1/01.02/24.03/26.05/25.05/09.06/ 01.07/08.07/08.09/15.10/01.12	Stratégies (1) ; L'Entreprise (1) ; L'Expansion (1) ; Challenges (4) ; Les Echos Business (1) ; Les Echos (3)

Coding: The content of the articles has been coded with the same grid than the one used for the transcribed interviews: norms of rationality (with five categories such as relative advantage, compatibility, perceived difficulty, trialability, observability), norms of progress and other. A double coding was also carried out.

RESULTS: THE REPRESENTATIONS OF MINDFULNESS FROM THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF ACTORS

The diffusion process of mindfulness at work was analyzed in terms of actors and theoretical dimensions. The result is a convergence of representations of mindfulness at work by different stakeholders and the emphasis on different aspects and dimensions according to their place in the diffusion chain.

3.1. MASS MEDIA AND MINDFULNESS AT WORK

The non-specialized press (18 articles) offers a more in-depth and much more critical analysis than the specialized press (11 articles in economic or management journals), which emphasizes more strongly the rationality norms through the relative advantages of mindfulness at work. The negative representation of norms of progress are not almost approached by the specialist publications but are central in the non-specialized press.

3.1.1 Relative advantages and norms of progress structure the debate

While the press media highlights numerous and positive relative advantages, norms of progress express an often-negative value-based approach.

The main relative advantages: A first category of positive outcomes is relative to mindfulness as a response to psychosocial risks, a way to find balance and health but also to develop well-being and support the development of employees. *"The idea is to accompany everyone towards balance"* (Le Figaro.fr, 20/10). A second category of benefits is relative to

mindfulness as a way to better manage emotions, develop empathy, step back and support decision-making, creativity and innovation. *"Companies are all looking for ways to develop their innovation capabilities, this is one of the methods to help managers drive change management in their company."* (La tribune, 10/03). All in all, through these different advantages, mindfulness at work is presented as vector of performance and profitability through the decrease in absenteeism, the number of sick leave and an increase in productivity.

Norms of progress: The discourse on norms of progress opposes to a humanistic and benevolent rhetoric, that of man-by-man "instrumentalization" in a logic of cynical exploitation of all the levers of economic competition. From the first point of view, mindfulness is a response to the loss of meaning felt by individuals in modern societies. This quest is a part of positive economy logic, based on the search for sustainable growth and respect for individuals. The mindfulness participates in this project by developing kindness among individuals and organizations, and inviting them to slow down. The project is summarized in Le Point (25/09): *"Meditation should not help us to" manage our stress "but to re-humanize our world"*. From the second point of view, this mode of meditation is an additional injunction that adds new pressure on individuals, struggling already with increasing tasks and demands. In this regard, the use of meditation in the workplace is seen as a mean of exploiting individuals a little more and of blaming them for the inconveniences of work rather than dealing with real causes. It is also a way to diffuse at the same time the image of an innovative and responsible company. *"The last avatar, in short, of merchant individualism. This is a practice perfectly adapted to a world decommunized, deinstitutionalized, consisting of juxtaposed individuals to which one makes believe that their happiness lies only in themselves. Food for thought..."* (Le Monde, 14/05). *"To summarize, our society is split into*

two camps: the perfect being who runs, meditates, thinks positively and only feeds on antitoxin foods; and the others, fat, lazy, greedy, pessimistic, sad" (Le Figaro, 20/10).

The norms of progress, which are strongly negative, therefore come and challenge the relative numerous advantages. As for the norms of positive progress, they are often labeled utopias or *"care bears" world* (La Tribune, 04/05).

3.1.2 Compatibility and other norms of rationality

The *compatibility* of mindfulness at work is addressed in the mainstream press in a rather negative way echoing the debate about norms of progress. The compatibility attributes focus on the secular aspect of the method, the rationality of the protocol established scientifically, and the fact that it is a tool among others, available in a pragmatic policy of "small steps". However, several elements of incompatibility put forward and refer to cultural, managerial and symbolic dimensions. A cultural incompatibility would explain the European reluctance to adopt, compared to North Americans. Some cultures would manifest more unwillingness regarding contributions of mindfulness. From a managerial point of view, a practice related to the body would have no place in the company, as well as a "right to emotions", which makes the debate. The practice of meditation would be the register of the intimate and relegated to the private sphere. Meditation and benevolence are also considered incompatible or incongruous in a competitive world where the weakness and sweet dreamers have no place. *"Conducting a conversation about the body is intimate. But the intimate and the company do not necessarily do well together"* (Le Monde 19/03). The symbolic dimension is about the fear of others' opinions. Negative reactions make meditation a practice that should remain hidden. *"The criticism is easy. Not all leaders have come out in this area yet"* (Le Monde, 19/03).

Thus, the norms of progress underlying meditation are judged to be incompatible with organizations but not the practice itself.

Complexity, trialability and observability: positive representation but of little effect

In the debate on norms of progress and compatibility with organizations, the issue of complexity, trialability and observability is rarely addressed. Paradoxically, these points are rare in the professional press, which is supposed to provide more in-depth evidence and to facilitate the implementation of managerial innovations. The meditation is rather presented as simple enough to understand and implement as well as to present quickly tangible results. This comes in support of the clearly positive relative advantages but does not offset a very clearly negative compatibility. In sum, the debate is primarily articulated around norms of progress and the potential lack of compatibility, despite the very positive relative advantages. In fact, the incompatibilities underlined refer to a rejection of norms of progress promoted by mindfulness perceived as utopian and subject to instrumentalisation. Although the articles are generally positive towards mindfulness, negative representation of norms of progress outweigh positive representation of norms of rationality. Table 3 gives an overview of the results about mass media.

3.2 OPINION LEADERS

In our corpus, the opinion leaders include 6 consultants and coaches, who have provided guidance to firms that have decided to adopt mindfulness practices and programs. They have been identified as well-informed about mindfulness in workplace and able to advice and promote this practice. Their area of influence is France for one of them and Geneva to Lausanne for the others. A key finding is that rational norms are more frequent in the opinion leaders' discourses than the progress norms.

Table 3 - Synthesis of the number of arguments between general and newspapers business

		Representations	Non-specialized press	Specialized Press (Business, Strategy…)
Norms of rationality	Relative advantages	Positive	51	23
		Negative	15	0
	Compatibility	Positive	11	1
		Negative	19	0
	Complexity	positive	7	2
		Negative	8	0
	Trialability	Positive	12	5
		Negative	1	2
	Observability	Positive	17	3
		Negative	4	1
Norms of progress		Positive	16	6
		Negative	24	5

3.2.1 The norms of rationality

The discourse of opinion leaders who diffuse mindfulness in business is very detailed with regard to the norms of rationality. In contrast to the mass media, which focuses on relative advantages and compatibility, the opinion leaders consider all dimensions of the norm of rationality.

Relative advantages: They see considerable advantages in the practice of mindfulness that overlap with those present in the mass media. Their discourse, however, attributes to mindfulness deeper and more global effects than those found in the press. Thus, they emphasize the effects on performance and leadership improvement: Mindfulness would help to become a better leader, even representing a secret weapon for some MBSR participants. *"Practicing mindfulness would allow you to get to know each other better and develop your personal talents"* (02/05). Finally, thanks to a greater motivation, a team-building spirit and a liberated creativity, the collective performance is potentially improved. *"Having ideas, having a vision, bringing things are what make the company grow"* (02/05).

Compatibility: Opinion leaders point out a number of difficulties in the compatibility between mindfulness and the work environment, on the same registers than the mass media (at the cultural, managerial and symbolic level). For most of them, identifying incompatibilities refers to seeking strategies to circumvent them. Adaptations are mainly about the terminology used and the duration of the programs. For instance, opinion leaders highlight that the language applied to mindfulness has to be controlled: *"I should not say the word meditation"* (02/02). The temporality of the meditation practices is adapted to take into account the focus on the action and the fear of the image of inaction potentially conveyed by mindfulness: *"It is unimaginable for a company to spend sixty minutes meditating"* (14/04).

Complexity: With early adopters, opinion leaders are also those who are the most aware of the real complexity of the adoption of mindfulness in business, despite its apparent simplicity. *"We can sit, and we can sleep half the time. We can sit down and think about something else, or be in a state of agitation, complete frustration and it does not matter. It's the minutes that make the difference and not the fact of having done it perfectly"* (21/03). Nevertheless, under this apparent simplicity, hides a complex practice that requires rigor, discipline, time and concentration: *"There are things we can understand by our own efforts, only if we spend 45 minutes meditating"* (21/03).

Observability: Defections during MBSR courses are almost natural. But for the company, these drop-outs can be considered abnormal compared to the expected performance of "classical" courses (21/03). Furthermore, some trainees may feel "insecure" during meditation practices: *"They're so formatted to be performant that whatever comes out of this performance view puts them in an insecure zone and scares them"* (02/05).

3.2.2 The norm of progress

It is with regard to norms of progress that the discourse of opinion leaders has specific characteristics. Despite implementation difficulties, opinion leaders are convinced by the overall benefits of mindfulness at work. From their perspective, this practice answers to major issues of the current work environment as part of a system of humanist values. Mindfulness at work is seen as necessary in terms of "societal" progress. Thus, opinion leaders echo some entrepreneurs for whom *"the model of capitalist growth is at the end of life and their leaders are trying to find a model of alternative society"* (05/12). Mindfulness is part of this paradigm, shifting towards a more conscious society. The willingness of *"recovering" the sense* (all), *"recovering" the human being* (24/03) appears as fundamental in their discourse. Training the influencers to change the whole society appears to be the dominant strategy of opinion leaders.

3.2.3 Strategies and channels for diffusing meditative practice

While opinion leaders were unanimous with regard to societal benefits of diffusing mindfulness practices and programs within companies, their strategies vary. Some of them make the choice to keep the original format of the secular MBSR protocol in rigorist way, and even to take a more radical meditative approach to *"produce a shock"* (02/05). Whereas others think it is necessary to adapt it to the concrete needs and context of a company (24/03). One of them promotes a broader strategy with mindfulness as a part of the establishment of the National Gross Happiness (05/12). Four coaches and consultants largely endorse their role of opinion leader. One by creating a "new TV channel": *"This television will be a new mean of communication precisely to sell what I am convinced of"* (02/05). Another one acts and "militates" by being a member of a Foundation whose goal is *"Promoting Trust, Ethical Leadership, Sustainable Living and Human Security"* (24/03). The third one is developing a

specific training center and the last one provides training for executives via the Chamber of Commerce and a top-ranked business school (14/04). Table 4 gives an overview of the results about opinion leaders.

The important work of promotion and diffusion realized by opinion leaders is variously received by the potential adopters: the early-adopters and non-adopters.

Table 4 – Synthesis of number of arguments concerning opinion leaders

	Relative advantage	Positive	19
		Negative	1
	Compatibility	Positive	8
		Negative	20
	Complexity	Positive	4
		Negative	9
	Trialability	Positive	6
		Negative	5
Norms of rationality	Observability	Positive	8
		Negative	5
Norms of progress		Positive	20
		Negative	1

3.3 THE EARLY-ADOPTERS

Adopters are generally influenced by the personal beliefs of early-adopters that are legitimized by mass media, personal networks and researchers.

3.3.1 Diffusion: a game of influences?

As part of the incentives identified with adopters, mass media plays a key role in the diffusion of mindfulness practices. The specialized press in management participated in the de-demonization of mindfulness, originally very strongly connoted "religious" or "new age". As such, iconic, widely publicized examples of companies, which have adopted these new managerial practices (such as Google, General Mills and Aetna), paved the way for the early-adopters we met. The media help to legitimize their decision to adopt them. *"You have to put it in the context. At the beginning of this experiment, it was the first time we heard about it. It*

was not a hot topic. Today, the media facilitates the acceptance of this type of very new practice within companies" (HRM, 20/04).

Along with the media, the personal networks of the actors behind the adoption of mindfulness in their businesses (in some ways the "opinion leaders of the shadows"), played a great role in terms of influence and incentive to always discover more about the topic. It was then through lectures and conferences by opinion leaders on the topic that the final barriers to adopting these practices finally fell. Management researchers and the opening of programs such as "leadership and mindfulness" in universities and business schools have also favorably influenced the diffusion of these practices. They have largely participated in theorizing and legitimizing these new practices. *"The fact that the deployment of the MBSR program was done in connection with the university, brought seriousness and credit. It gave confidence"* (HRM, 20/04).

These positive influences by specialized mass media and researchers, as well as the development of a freedom of speech by the meditating employees through the firms, have largely offset the negative pressures within adopting firms. These pressures came, for one of the adopting companies, from unions that felt that these practices are "fig leaf" in order to conceal the imposed work rhythms and associated stress. *"One of our concerns was not to be accused of making people resistant to more and more deteriorated working conditions. That's the union's discourse, too."* (HRM, 11/04). Table 5 reports the incentives and coercive influences identified in the early-adopter's discourses[1].

3.3.2 Primacy of the norms of rationality

In the discourses of the 7 interviewees who participated or were behind the adoption of

[1] The degree of importance of influences was determined according to the number of occurrences and respondents (+++ important number of occurrences AND idea emitted by all respondents ++ important number of occurrences AND idea emitted by the majority of respondents + number of occurrences low AND idea emitted by a minority of respondents).

Table 5 - Influences for the mindfulness diffusion

		Influence degree	Arguments
Imitation influences		+	Imitation of another firm for which mindfulness training programs have been profitable
Outside influences	Coercive	/	/
	Incentives	+++	**mass media** promote recently a more positive view of mindfulness
		+++	**through personal networks**
		++	**through readings**
		++	**university and high schools**: recently, specific programs proposed in high school and universities → legitimization
		+	**conferences of opinion leaders**
		+	**researchers**: scientific legitimization
		+	**early adopters** that become opinion leaders
Influences within a group	Coercive	+	Coercive pressures to not adopt this kind of practices and programs
	Incentives	+	meditators within the firm who speech about their experiences

mindfulness training programs within their organizations, the primacy of the norms of rationality is very clear, in particular, those connected to the relative advantages of these new managerial practices. *"At the source of the decision? The feeling that mindfulness was a good way to fight against stress, to reduce the mental load, which is strong here because of our matrix structure... so the mindfulness in order to be more centered, more concentrated, more creative... in a company that wants to be innovative like ours, it's important "* (HRM, 02/06).

However, all of them, in a more or less direct way, highlight that these new practices are not immediately perceived as compatible with the functioning of companies and the most shared values within them. Incompatibilities identified by early-adopters are similar to those highlighted by mass media and opinion-leaders. *"I still had a question about how it would be perceived in the company. I wondered if the staff was not going to say, "What took her, the HRM, did she smoke drug?"* (HRM, 02/06). *"On the format, it requires a commitment that is hardly compatible with the constraints of an MBSR program, especially since people are often on the move at home"* (HRM, 02/06).

Despite these risks of incompatibility, for three of the adopting companies, these new managerial practices were perfectly in line with their desire to work on management and

rethink their organizations by promoting a better quality of life at work. For example, the management of one of the adopting companies has been moving for more than five years towards the more democratic and benevolent management and organization modes linked to the phenomenon of "liberated company". Accordingly, the inclusion of mindfulness programs in the training plan seemed completely compatible with the overall vision of the company.

3.3.3 Norms of progress present but much less significant

The adoption of Mindfulness programs is more rarely justified by the desire to renew practices or even to adopt more forward looking managerial practices, even if they are driven by the desire to rethink the management's vision. *"In our vision, it [mindfulness program] is participating of the new role of the manager"* (DRH, 11/04). *"Our organizational context was favorable to the adoption of mindfulness with a group's CEO who has a strong investment in the human and is in favor of managerial innovations"* (CEO, 11/01).

Yet the mindset of decision-makers and the corporate culture are clearly given as key and largely facilitating elements. *"It is thanks to the Human Resource Manager, who were sufficiently open that such a project could be adopted"* (Executive, 31/05).

3.3.4 From adopters to change agents: to adopt is to adapt!

The question of the compatibility of mindfulness programs with the habits and customs of companies and their imperatives of results have naturally led the adopting companies to adapt them at different levels. The long-standing religious connotation of mindfulness in social representations has led adopters to pay a particular attention to the rhetoric. Discourses "marketed around management and performance" allow improving the compatibility of these practices with the culture, the strategic axes and the context of the companies. This was particularly true when it was necessary to convince not only the collaborators, but above all

the corporate general management. These adaptations in the discourse also concerned the terminology used to introduce these new management practices. *"Our entry was on the search for efficiency: to be more minded, focused, creative... and then well-being within the company, which also means being more efficient"* (HRM, 02/06); *"It's going to change its name. I do not know yet how to call it ... we will proceed with the idea of efficiency and economic peace. So suddenly, we also arrive by a door that is a little different and more acceptable"* (HRM, 11/04).

The adopting companies also have opted for spokespersons or supports that allowed them to break with religion or esoteric discourses. Thus, they appealed to management researchers, doctors, former fighter pilots and early-adopters who were better able to highlight the managerial contribution of mindfulness programs and practices in organizational contexts. *"But one of the ways to get it in, maybe it's just simple calculations, using people who are not, I'm going to be very naughty, psychologists, doctors, but for example, in our case, a former fighter pilot. He reassures some colleagues"* (HRM, 11/04).

For the most of adopting companies, they quickly integrated the idea of proposing the most flexible training format to employees in order to adjust it to the organizational and structural requirements. In addition, the first entry was always opened through volunteering. By this way, a snowball effect can appear. The most skeptical employees are gradually persuaded by employees who become fans and natural spokespersons of the internally dissemination process. *"After the first MBSR session, the participants talked to each other about it. It was a little secret stuff, between the participants. Today people are talking about it openly"* (HRM, 20/04).

Through these adaptations, our results show that adopters have identified the adjustments needed to connect distant social worlds. In this sense, they can be considered as change agents.

3.3.4 From adopters to opinion leaders: a more delicate hand-over

According to our results, early adopters rarely endorse the role of opinion leaders. Thus, only one of the adopting companies played an opinion leader role with another adopting company. Indeed, this early adopter has disseminated information to his counterpart in another firm, promoting the mindfulness practices adopted and their effects through an employee satisfaction survey conducted at two-time intervals. *"Currently, following the presentation made by XX, and because I perceived positive signs of acceptability of the MBSR program, I decided to be in an "incubator" mode of such programs in our firm"* (HRM, 02/06). Apart from this isolated case, the data collected show that most adopters are watchful about these new practices and their compatibility with all organizational contexts. One of the reasons given is related to their short experience, which does not yet allow them to free themselves from some concerns, particularly related to the fact that within their own organizations, reluctance could be identified. In addition, the mindfulness was "*introduced into their companies by small-scale infiltration mode by watching what were the reactions before going further"* (HRM, 11/04). While this caution exists when they adopt mindfulness in their own firm, it is even tenfold when they think about promoting it externally. As a result, they seldom play a leading role in promoting mindfulness programs outside their company. *"It's great in the business environment at the professional and managerial level. But I don't really communicate about it...I don't want to proselytize on it"* (HRM, 04/20/2016).

This difficult move from early-adopter to opinion-leader status probably explains the very largely unfavorable opinion of non-adopters about a potential implementation of mindfulness at work.

3.4 NON-ADOPTERS

Among those likely to adopt mindfulness at work, none of the 18 interviewees said that he would consider deploying the practice in his organization. A significant part of them is aware of mindfulness and of its benefits in the workplace: some practicing it on a personal basis (5/18), others having echoed through their spouse (4/18), or through the mass media (see table 6). Moreover, informed about the practice, or referring to their knowledge of it, a large half of them considers its potentially interest, even if it is sometimes only for themselves.

All the interviewees of this category, without any exception, consider mindfulness programs and practices difficult, impossible or not worthwhile to adopt in their organization. Many express the idea that in their organization *"we do not have the time"*, which also refers to a lack of priority. Unsurprisingly, the discourses of this category of actors essentially focus on the norm of rationality, and within it, essentially on the issues of relative advantages and especially on compatibility.

Regarding the relative advantages, non-adopters recognize the potential advantages identified by the other categories of actors. However, a clear distinction is made: their high skepticism about the existence of relative advantages. They consider that the benefits promised by mindfulness are achieved in their organization by other existing managerial or organizational practices. *"Live in the present, I already do it"* (Manager, 18/08). They also believe that they are not necessary in the context of their enterprise. *"In our company, we do not deal with talents, if they do not adapt, they leave"* (Manager, 19/05).

Furthermore, the issue of cost, time needed is often raised as an obstacle. Finally, a disadvantage is that such an approach can result in distortion between employees who adhere to it and the others, or can send a negative message about the company as creating stress. *"I remained very secretive regarding my MBSR training, I did not want my boss to think that my stress could be the fault of the company"* (Manager, 15/04). Thus, the central point for this category of actors concerns the incompatibilities they identify between mindfulness at work and cultural and managerial practices in their organization. *"It's not compatible with the culture of business in the car industry. I do not see myself suggesting this to truck drivers"* (Manager, 10/05).

Non-adopters tend to be very critical about mindfulness at work and mainly develop negative norms of progress. These norms refer to the illegitimacy or absurdity of developing mindfulness at the workplace. For some, this approach is cynical, since it is about giving employees the means to withstand the increasing pressure. For others, illegitimacy is due to the fact that management mobilizes the consciences of its employees and asks them to question themselves. For others finally, it is just a passing fad, psychological "bullshit", smoke and mirrors that does not make any sense.

They are willing to theoretically consider the interest of mindfulness at work and to show that they are progressive through that. Their discourse structure is quite similar to that of the media – especially non-specialized press: while highlighting the many relative advantages, they reject the possible adoption for incompatibility or norms of progress issues. Table 6 gives an overview of the non-adopter attitude towards mindfulness in the workplace.

Table 6: Non-adopter attitudes towards mindfulness at work

	Yes	No
Knowledge of mindfulness	12	6
Interest in mindfulness at work	10	8
Would consider bringing Mindfulness to work in your organization	0	18

To recap, table 7 illustrates the content of the messages developed around the mindfulness in mass media and the interpersonal networks and the influences at play in the diffusion of a MI such as mindfulness.

Table 7: Content of the messages developed around the MI and influences at play in the MI diffusion

		Mass Media	Opinion leaders	Early adopters	Non adopters
Norms of rationality	Relative advantage	+++	+++	++	+
	Compatibility	-	--	--	---
	Complexity	=	-		--
	Triability	++	=	+	-
	Observability	+	+	++	
Norms of progress		-	++	+	--
Influences	Imitation influence			+	--
	Within a group influence			+	+
	Outside influence			+++	+

3. DISCUSSION

In this research, we have considered both views of diffusion, rational one and fad and fashion one, to shed more lights on the factors and actors influencing the diffusion of an emergent MI such as mindfulness programs and techniques.

4.1. THE DELICATE TRANSITION FROM ONE WORLD TO ANOTHER

Although many management researchers have already highlighted the difficult transposition of an MI from one culture to another (van Everdingen & Waarts, 2003), the difficulty for a MI to be diffused in the business world while it has its origin in the religious world (here Buddhism), or even in the intimate world, rarely has been studied. Our qualitative approach illustrates that among the attributes traditionally studied to explain the diffusion of an MI, elements regarding its origins and its capacity to be transposed and adapted should be taken into account. Indeed, our results show that they represent attributes that seem to best explain the difficult diffusion of mindfulness programs within companies. Even in a secular perspective, the "spiritual" attribute of the MI plays a key role. It was already the case in the

70's with transcendental meditation. Leavitt (1975) call for going beyond the analytical manager through meditation received very little echoes in both academic and business world (Francoise 2016, 29–30). More than 40 years later, even with a secular and evidence-based approach of mindfulness - anchored in medicine and psychology - the "spiritual" attributes remain a blocking factor.

Consequently, it is also highlighted that the early adopters had to adapt this MI to be able to adopt it. These adaptations concerned the name to give to this MI, its content and its simplification. This is of course in line with the work of Ansari, Reinecke, & Spaan (2014) and Ansari, Fiss, & Zajac (2010) on the necessary adaptations to reduce misfits between MI and the political, technological and cultural characteristics of adopting companies. It is also in line with Mamman's (2009) 4 types of modifications of MI when diffused or adopted: addition, omission, substitution, hybridization. Our results show that modifications introduced by early-adopters consist of three different kinds: omissions (omission of some principles of mindfulness programs such as the retreat component and the personal diary of the classical MBSR program), substitutions (substitution of the mindfulness philosophy about buddhism inspiration), and hybridization (mindfulness practices are most of the time combined with other managerial practices such as management training programs or creativity seminars. These modifications are key elements to respond to the incompatibility obstacle.

4.2. THE ROLE OF ACTORS IN THE DIFFUSION OF AN MI

To determine the role of actors in the diffusion of an emerging MI such as mindfulness, we have taken into account the two main key communication channels in the process of diffusion of an innovation identified by Rogers (1995): mass media and interpersonal networks. In this way, we could analyze the roles actually played by fashion-setters (Abrahamson, 1991), that is to say, organizations external to adopting or potentially adopting companies such as opinion

leaders, early adopters and mass media. We were also able to collect the perceptions of non-adopters. While opinion leaders and the mass media are considered key players in both the rational and "fad and fashion" perspectives of the diffusion of an innovation, our results lead us to a much more nuanced analysis. In these perspectives, fashion-setters have the clear goal of promoting the creation and diffusion of an MI. While these fashion-setters do not have the same coercive power as the external organizations of the perspective called "forced-selection" (no coercive influence was found in our research except a coercive counter-influence by unions in one of the adopting companies), they use every means at their disposal to promote and thus encourage organizations to adopt the MI they have selected. In the case of mindfulness, the mass media, as well as the opinion leaders, to date, play more a role of demystification and legitimization than a role of promotion and diffusion strictly speaking. The "business" mass media give little practical information (compatibility, trialability, observability) on the implementation of MI in organizations. As for mainstream media, their controversial discourses would encourage actors to remain unyielding. In addition, opinion leaders (consultants) do not converge on implementation strategies. Some advocated an approach respectful of the theory and philosophy behind the MI (yet issue as we have seen from a world somewhat distant from that of companies) while others advocate the integration of mindfulness into the overall humanist strategy of companies or its adaptation, even if it means that MI adopted moves away from its original version. Adopters also spotlight the critical role of academics in their adoption process. Their role has been highlighted for the MI generation process. According to Birkinshaw et al. (2008), they provide legitimacy and expertise in many different phases of the generation process. Our results also show this kind of influence during the MI diffusion. Beyond their role of traditional ex-post critical analysts, our results also show that academics together with practitioners can develop new approach of

a MI, which is not totally theorized in the enterprise context. The influence of academics should be subject of a more extensive study to understand MI diffusion.

In addition, according to Rogers (1995), the early-adopters' category, more than any other, has the highest degree of opinion leadership. Potential adopters would look to early adopters for advice and information about the innovation. In our study, the results show that the early-adopters refuse, to date, to play the role of opinion-leaders, in particular, because the adoption of mindfulness has often been made, as they say, "through the back door", not free of skepticism, and without being assured that such practices can be maintained in the future. Thus, they show great caution but also a great discretion, which does not allow potential adopters to overcome their stereotypes, their reluctance, or even to lower the guard of their very critical approach. At this level, our results also lead us to hypothesize rarely identified actors, the "opinion leaders of the shadows". Indeed, early adopters highlight the strong influence of certain people within their purely personal network (spouse, husband, teacher of yoga ...) who made very clearly and positively evolve their representation of the MI. While early adopters are intimately and professionally convinced of the relative benefits of mindfulness within the company, they remain paradoxically very cautious on its compatibility with the business world. That is why they do not want to assume the role of opinion leaders, theoretically important in the diffusion phenomenon. They are two possible explanations. First, we can think that the mindfulness programs and practices is in the early stage of diffusion in the economic world, between selection and processing phase (Abrahamson, 1996) or in the phase in which MI has been adopted by early adopters while early majority is still deliberating before adopting it (cf. the sigmoidal curve of adopter distribution of Rogers, 1995). It has not yet been clearly selected by fashion-setters because of the obstacle of compatibility and thus the rhetorics that can convince future adopters about their rationality

and the progress that they can bring, are not elaborated and largely diffused (Abrahamson, 1996). A second explanation is that diffusion is definitively a cultural phenomenon in which some representations are hard to uproot.

When we are looking at the different stakeholders and their rhetorics, it appears that the phenomenon of MI diffusion is more complex and intertwined than what is highlighted by the sequential and linear models proposed in the literature. The different discourses are referring to each other's through feedback loops to legitimate and reinforce actors point of views and argumentations, leading to virtuous or vicious circle. This dynamic perspective of diffusion process requires more research to understand the causes of vicious or virtuous circles development and condition of switching.

4.3. THE ROLE OF MI ATTRIBUTES IN ITS DIFFUSION

For Rogers (1995), the attributes of innovation, such as relative advantage, compatibility, low complexity, observability of effects, and trialability positively explain its diffusion rate. In this very rational view of diffusion, the relative benefit has the strongest effect for product innovations in particular. A recent study shows that this is not necessarily the case for MIs. Indeed, it highlights that only the relative benefits and the trialability have a positive and significant effect on the diffusion of an MI such as the Activity-Based Costing. In our case, it seems that the perception of a difficult compatibility largely outweighs the relative advantages of the studied MI. Beyond, the compatibility, it is the origin of the MI which is issued from another cultural environment than the one of firms, which seems to be a crucial obstacle. Thus, this particular attribute seems to us to be able to enrich the model of Rogers (1995).

Moreover, the case study underlines the opposition between norms of rationality and norms of progress. Norms of progress (positive and negative) are in fact systems of values and representations of the world that oppose each other. Faced with norms of negative progress

(misery cache, instrumentalization, "care bear" world, individualizing approach), norms of rationality, including those about relative advantage, even if they are sometimes clearly proven, do not matter. This shows, if it is still necessary, that adoption and diffusion processes are not based on purely rational factors. Thus, despite rather positive norms of rationality, if the norm of progress, that is to say for example the desire to change the world of business, do not have enough weight, it seems that in a desire to rationalize decisions, non-adopters accentuate the role of the incompatibility factor to legitimize their decision not to adopt. Indeed, in the rhetorics of non-adopters, maintaining the traditional vision of the company and the associated managerial practices took precedence in many respects.

4.4 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITS

From a theoretical point of view, our study is one of the rare studies, which empirically study the factors that favor or hinder the MI diffusion process. When diffusion process is concerned, most researches focus on product innovation. And, when antecedents of MI are concerned, most studies focus on adoption process. By integrating the rational and fad & fashion perspectives of diffusion, we bring a finer analysis of the role of norms of rationality (Abrahamson, 1996) from the MI attributes point of view inherited from Rogers (1995). By doing so, we highlight the crucial role of the representation of actors about MI compatibility which is reinforce by the origin of the MI, which is from outside the management world. We suggest that this latter attribute should be add as antecedent of MI diffusion and that an in-depth study of the actors' representation would be rich to understand the complex phenomenon of MI diffusion. Furthermore, this paper showcases the important role of new actors such as academics and "opinion leaders in the shadows". The role of academics has been intended in theoretical studies about the MI generation process (Birkinshaw et al., 2008; David, 2013) but not in the context of diffusion.

From a mindfulness perspective, the existing literature focus on the benefits of mindfulness in the workplace, which refers to the relative advantages. This paper defines mindfulness as a MI and contributes to a more global and strategic view of mindfulness diffusion in a global quest of competitive advantages.

From a managerial point of view, this paper gives many insights to managers and stakeholders on the obstacles to face for MI diffusion in companies. For instance, it gives evidences that MI adaptations and modifications are necessary to better fit the strategical, managerial and cultural characteristics of the firms. We can also think that the strategical and managerial view of the firm has to be adapted including the search of progress norms. Furthermore, it highlights the crucial and non-automatic role of early adopters in the MI diffusion. While they are best placed (more than mass media or fashion setters) to trigger critical mass by decreasing uncertainty, it is not always obvious that they would like to play such a role. Other actors have to find incentives to encourage them to share their MI experience. These actors may be, for a part, academics, and for another part, public or private structures in charge of supporting MI diffusion.

This study is not exempt from limitations, which also represent future research opportunities. First, the limited period (year 2016) that cannot give a full comprehension of a dynamic diffusion process. A longitudinal research could help to better understand the changes in the rhetoric and representation of actors. Second, the cultural limited sample (French and Swiss) cannot allow us to make a comparative overview of their representation. Furthermore, comparison with other national cultures (for instance North-American or Asian culture which are told more receptive to mindfulness in the workplace) could be interesting. Third, a sample of the academics and business schools can be added in this study as opinion leaders.

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