CRITICAL MASS

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Reference this article

Abstract / Definition
Critical mass is defined as the point at which the rate of change of demand, or the gradient of the demand curve, changes in magnitude and direction, leading to an exponential increase in the adoption of a product by consumers. The phenomenon of critical mass is evident in network products such as mobile phones, email software, messaging services, social networks and collaborative gaming platforms. Before the critical mass point is reached, the product is hardly known by consumers or considered feasible, and adoption rates are gradual. Beyond the critical mass point, the demand for the product accelerates rapidly and continues to grow until it reaches the limits of the consumer population. How fast critical mass is attained depends on consumers’ expectations regarding the performance of a new technology and the final size of its network of users. The higher the expectations that a new product will be successful the faster the market will reach its critical mass point. Research shows that critical mass is attained when 10 to 20% of the population has adopted a new product.

Keywords
Critical mass, network externalities, network products

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