There are differences between inventions and different grades of innovation.

Every company uses the word innovation enthusiastically when they launch a new active or product. Does the word still have real meaning? When last did we see true innovation in the cosmetic industry?

What is the difference between an innovation and an invention?

An invention is the creation of a product or introduction of a process for the first time. Thomas Edison (an inventor) became known for inventing the light bulb (only one of many of his inventions). An invention is usually a 'thing', while an innovation is an invention that causes change in people's behaviour or interactions. The iPhone was a great innovation, steered by Steve Jobs (in this case the innovator), because all its components were already invented, and just cleverly combined. Sci-fi movies often give us a taste of what is yet to come... The iPhone created an ecosystem of media content, telecommunications, licensing, applications development, and the iPad then grew on its success adding video, music and all its complementary industries.

One of the authors of the articles I read and referenced, gave this clever explanation of how inventors and innovators interact: An invention is a pebble tossed in the pond, innovation is the rippling effect that pebble causes. However, someone has to toss the pebble - that's the inventor. Then, someone has to recognise that the ripple will eventually become a wave - that's the innovator! They do not stop at the water's edge. They watch the ripples and spot the next big wave before it happens. It is the act of anticipating and riding that 'next big wave' that drives the very nature of innovators.

The top innovations in the last 30 years were the internet, broadband and the World Wide Web, personal computers and laptops, mobile phones, e-mail communication, DNA sequencing and human genome mapping.

Some of the innovations in the last few years were the hover board, edible wrappers, vitamin A enriched bananas to prevent blindness, a chip that alerts you when you slouch and wireless electricity.

Innovation comes in many forms, like process innovation (cost, service and strategy innovation), business model or management innovation, the way we share news or the way we market products. Examples of innovative marketing are **Nivea's doll** to

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encourage kids to wear sunscreen, and P&G's **Secrets Deodorant**

Product innovations can be categorised into continuous or innovations, dynamic continuous or breakout innovations, and disruptive innovations:

Continuous innovations is what we normally see in the cosmetic industry, i.e. a new active in an existing product, or a new active doing the same as other actives, a more concentrated version, or coloured beads containing actives in a clear gel. Continuous innovation normally entails a minor change that causes minor change in customer behaviour.

Dynamic continuous innovations are usually major changes that brings about minor changes in customer behaviour such as a Hand and Body lotion that is dispensed from a pump, baby oil in gel form dispensed from a tube or a mask that bubbles when applied to the face.

Disruptive innovation creates a demand for something consumers did not think they needed like microwave ovens, whitening strips instead of toothpaste. iPods changed the way we buy, and listen to music.

With a better understanding of innovation now, is 'Innovation' as diluted in our industry as 'Friend' is in Facebook? When last did we see ground-breaking innovation in our industry?

Social media has become a very important factor in marketing and innovation. More than 88% consumers are influenced by other consumers' comments when they consider buying a product. Is your website mobile-friendly considering that more than 4 billion people are connected to each other by mobile phone? Do you want to reach customer Z, and potential customers in remote areas? Do customers have to visit your shop in future to make decisions?

Digital technology has crept into the cosmetic industry space with interactive applications assisting customers when buying make-up products. In June 2016, a show hosted in Paris will be all about make up marrying digital technology.

How disruptive will digital technology and social media innovations be to our industry? Have you seen the interactive mirror, launched by Panasonic early last year?

How quickly can we adapt? What will your company's next (true) innovation be?

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