



THE MARKET RESEARCH INDUSTRY: EARLY ADOPTER OR LAGGARD?

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According to the GRIT Report, the market research industry is a strong adopter of new technologies and, in many cases, embraces them. However, anecdotes and empirical data suggest otherwise.

Technology Adoption Life Cycle

To assess technology adoption in market research, Geoffrey Moore's timeless work called "Crossing the Chasm" provides a useful model. He describes the Technology Adoption Life Cycle as having five segments:

- **Innovators** (2.5% of market) – The Innovators are first to adopt. They are intrigued by fundamental advancement and curious about new technologies.
- **Early Adopters** (13.5%) – The Early Adopters buy products early in their life cycle because they may address a need. They are okay with "beta" products.
- **Early Majority** (34%) – The Early Majority focus on practicality. They wait for innovations to be vetted by earlier adopters. Their business is required to grow significantly and profitably.
- **Late Majority** (34%) – The Late Majority wait for an established standard.
- **Laggards** (16%) – Laggards aren't concerned with new technology, whether for personal or economic reasons.

Adoption but Immature Offerings

The data in the GRIT report suggests that our industry is a strong adopter of technologies. Two thirds of the technologies highlighted would fall in the Early Majority stage or better. If you include those considering using these technologies, 57% are in the Late Majority.

To many in our industry, the analysis above may not resonate. All you need to do is read an industry blog or listen to conversations at conferences, and the conclusion is there is not enough adoption of innovation.

As another proof point, there aren't any new technology providers in market research generating \$10s to \$100s of millions in revenue within a ginormous \$40B industry, which you would expect to see based on the aforementioned adoption data. So, what gives? I argue that most of the offerings that are being adopted are seeing limited use, because in Moore's words, they are too "Generic" and they have not achieved "Whole Product" status.

Moore defines the Whole Product as that which is required to fulfill on the marketing promise. And for new technologies in market research, that often means doing things faster, more affordably, at scale, and with quality results – a lot to accomplish. And, the reason the purveyors of the technologies listed in the GRIT Report haven't scaled is they can't deliver on that promise. They are too Generic.

Clients Are Looking for the Whole Product

Observations and data suggest there is ample trial of new technologies. After all, there is no shortage of conference presentations or webinars where technology companies and their innovator clients are giddy over the results from their isolated, controlled experiments, and I've been there myself. It's clear people want to use these new technologies, or the data wouldn't be what it is. However, suppliers must provide the Whole Product in order to move toward being a \$100MM company capable of owning their segment of technology. These companies must mature past a bare-bones offering leveraged by early adopters to one that can deliver on the marketing promise clients demand. The clients want to adopt; it's the supply that is lagging.