

Do early adopters walk the opinion leadership talk? A meta-analysis

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Abstract

Early adopters are the first to adopt innovative products, but perhaps more importantly, they are believed to encourage adoption by others. Much research has found that early adopters indeed rate high on opinion leadership, and should therefore facilitate the diffusion of innovations. However, the chasm theory posits that there is a communication break between early adopters and other consumers. If early adopters were opinion leaders, they should facilitate and not delay the diffusion process. This paper presents a meta-analysis of the profile of early adopters, and specifically examines whether they are opinion leaders. The results suggest that subjective early adoption scales may capture innovation enthusiasts: highly involved, knowledgeable consumers who have early adoption tendencies, and believe that they are opinion leaders. However, when using actual adoption scales and for high-risk innovations, early adopters often acknowledge that they may not walk the opinion leadership talk.

Keywords: *early adopters; opinion leadership; meta-analysis*

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