



 **FUEL CYCLE**

2021

State of Community



Introduction

In the last year, organizations have had to adapt to a rapidly changing business landscape. While the pandemic is one reason for the dramatically altered business world and the boosted reliance on technology, our research indicates the trend toward digital adoption of innovative market research technology has been in the works for a while and promises to extend well beyond the pandemic.

In December 2020, we surveyed 275 market researchers about their day-to-day, impact strategies, and use of quantitative and qualitative tools and methods. 144 of those insights professionals told us that they leverage market research online communities. Further survey results show that organizations have expanded their reliance on customer insights to inform decision-making, and researchers are increasingly reliant on and open to innovative market research technologies such as online communities.

Executive Summary

ADOPTION OF RESEARCH COMMUNITIES IS GAINING EVEN MORE SPEED

In the face of COVID-19, market researchers and their organizations were forced to rethink the way they handled business. As such, more researchers turned to digital qualitative research, namely the use of online communities. Over 67% of researchers surveyed started using online communities for the first time in 2020.

RESEARCHERS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY SATISFIED WITH ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Researchers report that they are satisfied with their online community tool, as online communities help researchers generate new product ideas, test marketing campaigns, and uncover industry insights. Two-thirds of researchers say they are impressed with the value of online communities.

COMMUNITIES HELP ORGANIZATIONS STAY IN TOUCH DURING TIMES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

If one thing is certain about the pandemic, it's that businesses and customers lost face-to-face contact with each other. Researchers report that the use of online communities has been a saving grace in helping them reconnect with customers effectively, safely, and quickly. Researchers also expect online communities, as well as other digital qualitative solutions, will remain a powerful and reliable way to connect with customers beyond the pandemic.



Section 1

More Researchers Are Turning to Online Communities to Gather Qualitative Data

Nine out of ten market researchers rely on qualitative data, and last year more people said they planned on using digital qualitative research methods and tools. Online communities, in particular, are generating interest at unparalleled rates.

MOST MARKET RESEARCHERS ARE USING COMMUNITIES FOR THE FIRST TIME

Market researchers haven't always been quick to adopt new technologies. However, the global crisis and a need to shelter in place made it necessary to look outside the traditional market research toolbox. In terms of capturing qualitative data, more researchers are turning to online communities. 67% of market researchers say this past year is the first time they worked with an online research solution.

NEARLY TWO-IN-FIVE RESEARCHERS NOW USE DIGITAL RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

37% of all market researchers surveyed say they use online research communities. More than half of the researchers who use online communities say they started using community research solutions within the past two years. Most researchers report their online communities have between 1,000 to 10,000 members, suggesting that an online community doesn't have to be massive to provide value.

THE RATE OF COMMUNITY RESEARCH SOLUTION ADOPTION IS SKYROCKETING

The rate at which market researchers adopt community research is growing faster now more than ever, especially over the last year. 32% of market researchers that have adopted a community solution did so in the past 11 months.

RESEARCHERS KNOW WHAT THEY WANT IN AN ONLINE COMMUNITY

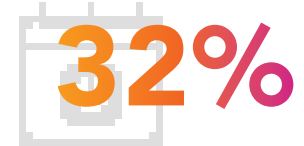
Even though the spike in growth of online community solutions is a relatively recent phenomenon, researchers know what they want from a community. When shopping for an online community provider, researchers look for tools that offer agile survey solutions, provide advanced qualitative and quantitative research capabilities, allow for automation, and are flexible and customizable.

ONLINE RESEARCH COMMUNITIES



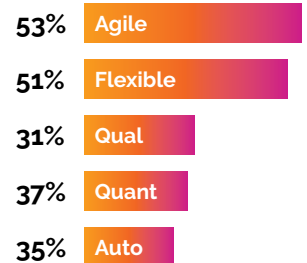
37% of all market researchers surveyed say they use online research communities.

RAPID ADOPTION OF MR COMMUNITIES



32% of market researchers that have adopted a community solution did so in the past 11 months.

EFFECTIVE ONLINE COMMUNITY MEANS



Section 2

Researchers Are Overwhelmingly Satisfied With Online Communities

Researchers report that online communities are working. Communities help researchers connect meaningfully with customers, capture qualitative and quantitative data effectively, support company values, and flexibly meet organizational research needs that evolve alongside shifting industry landscapes.

OVERALL, THE MAJORITY OF RESEARCHERS ARE SATISFIED WITH ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Almost two-in-five market researchers use online communities to collect qualitative data. And it works: 67% of researchers say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with their current online community research solution. Researchers are happy with how communities help improve business goals, as 37% use online communities to test marketing campaigns, uncover industry insights, and generate new product ideas.

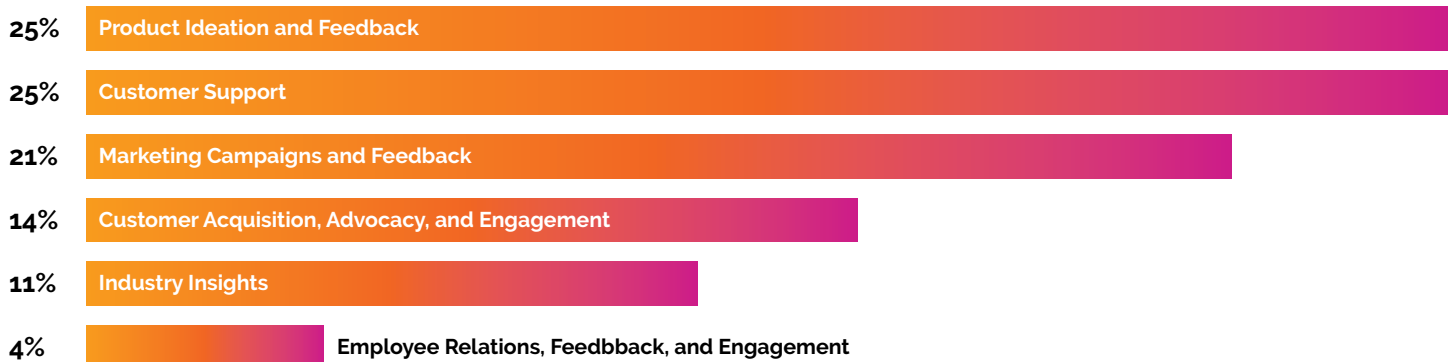
RESEARCHERS SAY ONLINE COMMUNITIES SUPPORT COMPANY VALUES

Two-thirds of researchers say they're satisfied with the values communities deliver on. And 71% say research communities are supporting the most important values for their organization. These values include product ideation and feedback, customer support, marketing campaigns and feedback, and customer acquisition, advocacy, and engagement.

Researchers who have been using their community solution for over a year report that ongoing discoveries with their community have led to increased value over time. For instance, the more that researchers utilize the community for various project types, the more they see their values being met. And the more that communities deliver on these values, the more involved internal stakeholders become. Finally, when other teams catch wind of the community's success and status among leaders, it quickly scales into an invaluable resource for the business as a whole.

The bottom line: businesses that leverage their community well tend to build stronger internal connections that lead to accelerated decision-making.

TOP VALUES COMMUNITIES DELIVER:



Section 2

More Researchers Are Turning to Online Communities to Gather Qualitative Data

ONLINE COMMUNITIES HELP ORGANIZATIONS MEET RESEARCH NEEDS

The majority of researchers are satisfied with their online community solution. One reason for this is because online communities help organizations meet their research needs. Well over half of the market researchers said online communities helped them act “very well” to “extremely well” on responsive customer support, community management, data analysis, research support, diverse research methodology, and reporting.

TOP RESEARCH NEEDS MET:



Section 3

Communities Help Businesses Respond Appropriately Now And Into The Future

Since the beginning of 2020, more researchers have adopted online-only methodologies, communities in particular. Researchers report the use of communities has helped them stay in touch with consumers during the pandemic, and that they will continue to use online technologies in the future.

COVID-19 DISRUPTED TRADITIONAL MARKET RESEARCH

88% of researchers say the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on market research methodologies, focus, and tools. One of the most profound impacts of the pandemic was transitioning from traditional qualitative research methods to adopting new online tools. While some researchers had been running digital qualitative studies for years, others had to make the pivot quickly. Fortunately, a community solution enabled research teams to connect with customers safely and synchronously.

COMMUNITIES HELPED RESEARCHERS FEEL COMFORTABLE REACHING OUT SAFELY

It has been challenging to know what to expect from one day to another during the pandemic. Many market researchers wanted to immediately connect with customers to find out how they were doing and how their needs had changed. However, market researchers only wanted to reach out in an appropriate way. The digital nature of online communities helped companies feel comfortable engaging customers safely.

COMMUNITIES HELP RESEARCHERS CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS AS THE WORLD BECOMES MORE DIGITAL

The rate at which market researchers adopt community research is growing faster now more than ever, especially over the last year. 32% of market researchers that have adopted a community solution did so in the past 11 months.

“

“Since we had an online community, we felt more comfortable reaching out to them. Online communities allowed us to get information and feedback from our community first to help understand our general population in a difficult time.”

- Research, over 15 years experience, works in Technology & Software

“Our online community has given us the ability to reach customers on-demand in a safe environment.”

- Researcher, 11-15 years experience, works in Finance & Accounting

“We’ve been able to rely heavily on the community for the majority of our insights that needed to be surfaced quickly.”

- Researcher, 3-5 years experience, works in Technology & Software

“Our community has granted us a better real-time understanding of behavior and attitude changes during the pandemic on our specific brands and categories.”

- Researcher, over 15 years experience, works in CPG

”



Conclusion

This last year has brought about abrupt changes in the business and market research worlds. To adapt to change, market researchers have started adopting online community solutions at remarkable rates.

And for good reason. Researchers are largely satisfied with their community solutions and use them to capture customer feedback in real-time, meet market research goals, and adapt to a changing global context. Especially in times of transformation and uncertainty, having the equivalent of an in-house consultancy made up of a brand's most intuitive collaborators has provided an unanticipated degree of value.

To discover more ways to incorporate digital qualitative research into your organization's strategic decision-making, reach out. Fuel Cycle's Community solution is leveraged by the world's most consumer-centric brands to create and nurture meaningful connections with their best resource: their customers.

Discover how Fuel Cycle technology enables market research leaders to drive meaningful change with the power of an always-on insights engine.

[SPEAK TO AN EXPERT](#)