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Crossing the Chasm: Barriers to Early-Majority Adoption of Plant-Based Meat in the United States



By: Nina Chung
Email: nina.chung@yale.edu

Independent Study Advisor: Peter Boyd
Email: peter.boyd@yale.edu

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ABSTRACT

Reducing the 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions attributable to meat and dairy production requires large-scale shifts in dietary behavior from animal-based products toward plant-based alternatives. Despite decades of innovation and rapid early growth in the plant-based food sector, adoption of plant-based meat remains limited to a relatively narrow segment of consumers. Drawing on Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory and Moore's concept of a "chasm" between early adopters and the early majority, this literature review argues that plant-based meat has reached Early Adopter saturation but has failed to achieve habitual substitution among mainstream consumers.

This review shows that current plant-based meat adoption patterns reflect trial and occasional repeat rather than routine replacement of conventional meat. In contrast, plant-based milk is now purchased by 40% of U.S. households and has progressed into the Early Majority phase of diffusion. Synthesizing insights from the diffusion literature, behavioral economics, and plant-based adoption research, this review identifies three strategies that enabled plant-based milk to cross the chasm: 1. improvements in product attributes and performance, 2. the use of choice architecture and defaults, and 3. mainstream, normalization-oriented messaging. Applying these strategies systematically to plant-based meat is necessary for achieving the scale of adoption required for meaningful climate impact.

INTRODUCTION

The meat and dairy industries account for approximately 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions. (Blaustein-Rejto & Gambino, 2023). The Speed & Scale roadmap, which synthesizes mitigation pathways for a net-zero world, argues that to reach a net-zero carbon economy by 2050, emissions from beef and dairy consumption must be reduced by approximately 25% by 2030 and 50% by 2050 (Speed & Scale, 2025).

One of the most direct ways toward such reductions is to substitute animal-based meat and dairy products with plant-based alternatives. Plant-based products are designed to look and taste like their traditional animal counterparts, such as burger patties and chicken nuggets. Ideally, with alternative proteins, consumers can enjoy their staple foods without modifying much of their buying or cooking behaviors.

Despite huge innovation and billions of dollars investment in the alternative protein industry over the past decade, consumer adoption of plant-based products, particularly plant-based meat, remains limited. Plant-based foods represent a very small share of overall food and beverage sales, and the industry has been contracting in recent years (Good Food Institute (GFI), 2024). This poses the question: *why has mainstream consumer adoption of plant-based meat remained limited, despite vast improvements in awareness, availability, and product quality?*

This literature review approaches that question through the lens of diffusion theory. Drawing on Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovation framework and Moore's (1991) "crossing the chasm" concept, this literature review argues that plant-based meat has failed to cross the chasm between Early Adopters and the Early Majority within the Diffusion of Innovation framework.

The first part of this literature review explores the current market landscape and consumer purchasing behavior and maps it onto the Diffusion of Innovation adoption curve. The second part synthesizes consumer segmentation and behavioral research to examine how various consumer groups differ in their motivations and barriers to habitually adopt plant-based meat. Finally, this literature review will look to plant-based milk as an example of a category that has appeared to have progressed further along the Diffusion of Innovation curve into the Early Majority segment. Based on "crossing the chasm" literature and the strategies that has worked for plant-based milk, this literature will end with recommendations that the plant-based meat category can adopt to successfully cross the chasm into the Early Majority consumer segment.

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, the plant-based food industry has experienced substantial growth, followed by a recent stagnation. From 2017-2024, the U.S. retail plant-based food market grew from \$3.9 billion to \$8.1 billion. This growth was driven by the expansion of product variety and availability, along with increased household trial in multiple categories like milk, meat, creamers, yogurt, and others. Within this \$8.1 billion market, plant-based milk is the largest category, with U.S. retail sales of \$2.8 billion, and with plant-based meat and seafood as the second largest category at \$1.2 billion (Kirchner et al, 2024).

However, the plant-based industry remains small compared to its conventional counterparts; U.S. retail conventional meat sales exceed \$100 billion annually and conventional fluid milk sales are around \$17 billion. Put in perspective, plant-based foods only account for about 1.1% of total U.S. retail food and beverage dollar sales in 2024. Within their respective categories, plant-based milk has about a 14% share of the total fluid milk market, while plant-based meat and seafood achieved roughly 1.7% share of the total retail meat category (Kirchner et al, 2024).

Unfortunately, there has been a recent reversal in growth trends. Over the last two years, plant-based food dollar sales in U.S. retail declined by roughly 18%, even as total food and beverage dollar sales increased by about 2% and conventional meat and seafood sales grew by around 4%. This is due to a combination of inflationary pressure, price sensitivity, and slower-than-expected repeat purchase rate, particularly in plant-based meat, where sales declines have been more drastic (Kirchner et al, 2024).

This data suggests that the plant-based industry – specifically the plant-based meat category -- has moved beyond its initial growth hype but is not yet at a self-sustaining stage. Within the Diffusion of Innovation Framework, the sector appears to have reached Early Adopter saturation but have not crossed the chasm into the Early Majority consumer segment (Rogers, 1962; Moore, 1991). The next section will explore household-level purchasing behavior to understand how penetration, frequency, and repeat purchase patterns contribute to this stall.

CONSUMER PURCHASING TRENDS

Household panel data reveals a discrepancy between household penetration (how many households buy plant-based foods), frequency (how often they buy them), and its share relative to their conventional counterparts. Approximately 40% of U.S. households have purchased at least one plant-based milk product in a year, and about 13% of U.S. households purchased at least one plant-based meat or seafood in a year. (Kirchner et al, 2024). By contrast, the U.S. household penetration rate for conventional meat products and milk is at 97% and 94%, respectively (Center for Dairy Excellence, 2021.; Kirchner et al, 2024).

However, repeat purchase rate for plant-based meat and milk is relatively moderate and consistent over the years at 63% and 76%. (Kirchner et al, 2024; Just Food, 2024). This suggests that most consumers do not reject the product and are willing to purchase the product again. But, because repeat is typically defined as any second purchase within a twelve-month period, it does not by itself indicate habitual weekly or even monthly usage. For instance, a household that buys plant-based meat twice per year is counted as a repeater but may still consume animal meat dozens of times per year.

This seems to be the case. Households that purchase plant-based meat average about six purchase occasions per year and approximately 12 units of plant-based meat annually. By comparison, households that purchase both plant-based and conventional animal meat buy animal meat on roughly 36 occasions per year, with an average of 88 units annually (Kirchner et al, 2024). This implies that among “dual users,” plant-based meat plays a minor, supplementary role in people’s overall protein portfolio.

From a diffusion perspective, this combination of 1. low penetration, 2. moderate repeat rates, and 3. low frequency and volume, suggest that the category succeeded at generating trial and some repeat, but has not succeeded in converting repeat behavior into habitual substitution. Plant-based meat rarely becomes a default replacement for animal meat in weekly meal planning. Instead, it remains an occasional add on, something consumers try and occasionally rebuy, but without meaningfully replacing their existing meat consumption. From a climate goal standpoint, this is a subject of concern. The goal of plant-based foods is for consumers to replace their meat intakes with plant-based ones at a rate substantial enough to lower their overall carbon footprint. Yet, at the moment, the rate is far from substantial.

ROGERS’ DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION AND THE “CHASM” IN THE PLANT-BASED MEAT ADOPTION

The Rogers’ (1962) Diffusion of Innovation theory explains how new innovations spread and get adopted within an addressable market. It provides a useful framework for understanding why plant-based meat adoption has progressed rapidly among some consumers but remains stalled at

the population level. Rogers segmented adopters into Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, and Laggards. Innovators, 2.5% of the addressable market, are the first adopters of a technology who are eager risk-takers and have a high tolerance of imperfection. Early Adopters, 13.5% of the population, are the opinion leaders and carefully consider before adopting new technology. Early Majority, 34%, adopt innovations after seeing the success from Innovators and Early Adopters. Late Majority, 34%, adopts innovations only after the average person adopts it and is more skeptical of change. Finally, Laggards, 16% of the population, are the most skeptical group. They are the last to adopt and only adopt out of necessity for survival (Williams, n.d.).

Enhancing the Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation further, Moore (1991) later argued that a structural "chasm" often exists between Early Adopters and Early Majority, particularly for technologies or products that require behavioral change rather than simple product substitution. Early Adopters are willing to tolerate imperfections and adopt based on values or vision, whereas the Early Majority requires reliability, social proof, and seamless integration into existing routines.

If we treat household penetration as a rough proxy for the share of households that have adopted plant-based meat at least once, then the current penetration of 14% maps closely onto the Early Adopter segment. This suggests that plant-based meat has reached Early Adopter saturation but has not yet entered Early Majority diffusion. The fact that penetration has not advanced into the 30–40% range despite substantial awareness and marketing investment suggests that plant-based meat is stuck at the Early Adopter boundary and has not "crossed the chasm" into the Early Majority segment. On the other hand, plant-based milk, with 40% household penetration, has appeared to have crossed this chasm and is now within the Early Majority segment.

The next step is to understand, for the plant-based meat category, what the different characteristics between each consumer segment are, what differentiates the Innovators and Early Adopters from the Early Majority, and what we learn from plant-based milk in developing strategies to cross the chasm.

PLANT-BASED MEAT CONSUMER SEGMENTATION

Plant-based meat consumers can be segmented based on their behaviors and preferences and can be matched within the segments identified in the Rogers Diffusion of Innovation. About 71% of U.S. consumers fall into the addressable market for plant-based meat, defined as anyone who is open to plant-based meat. Those who do not are labeled as ‘rejectors,’ and strongly endorse beliefs such as ‘it is natural for people to eat animals’ and prioritize meat for taste, satiety, and muscle building (Kirchner et al, 2025). Within the addressable market, consumers can be segmented into the following six categories, with the matching labels to the Rogers Diffusion of Innovation’s consumer segments:

Innovators/Early Adopters: Ethical Alternative Seekers

The segments that most clearly align with Rogers’ Innovator and Early Adopter category are Ethical Alternative Seekers. They constitute about 10% of the addressable market (Kirchner et al, 2025).

Ethical Alternative Seekers are primarily motivated by animal welfare and environmental sustainability. Many already identify as vegetarian, vegan, or as actively reducing meat consumption. For this group, plant-based meat serves as a direct substitute for conventional meat that allows them to maintain familiar eating experiences while aligning with deeply held ethical values. Consistent with Early Adopter behavior, they demonstrate the highest rates of meat reduction; approximately 66% report reducing or eliminating conventional meat in the past year (Kirchner et al, 2025). Their primary barriers relate less to taste or price, and more to concerns about processed foods and ingredient transparency.

Early Adopters/Early Majority: Health-Conscious Compromisers

Health-Conscious Compromisers make up about 18% of the market. This segment is motivated by concerns about chronic disease risk, cholesterol, and weight management, but is also highly sensitive to taste, price, and convenience. While they are open to plant-based meat for health reasons, they are unwilling to accept large trade-offs in sensory quality or cost. Only about 27% of this group reports reducing meat consumption, and many exhibit high “lapse rates,” cycling in and out of plant-based purchasing (Kirchner et al, 2025).

In diffusion terms, they sit between the boundary of the Early Adopters and the Early Majority. They are willing to experiment, but continued use depends strongly on functional performance rather than values alone.

The Ethical Alternative Seeker and Health-Conscious Compromisers segments together approximate the size of the current plant-based meat market and help explain why penetration has stagnated at around 14%. These groups are willing to tolerate price premiums, evolving product performance, and social distinctiveness in ways that the broader population is not.

Early Majority/Late Majority: Nutrition-Focused Integrators

The next segment, Nutrition-Focused Integrators (10%), can be viewed as transitional users who have adopted plant-based meat additively rather than substitutively. Nutrition-Focused Integrators actively monitor nutrition labels and are motivated by long-term health outcomes. They incorporate plant-based meat selectively into otherwise meat-heavy diets, but remain concerned about artificial ingredients, protein content, and ultra-processing (Kirchner et al, 2025). As a result, their adoption behavior reflects supplementation rather than replacement.

Early Majority/Late Majority: Protein Maximizers

Protein Maximizers, 19% of the market, prioritize protein for muscle building, physical performance, and energy. This group often exhibits strong cultural and identity-level attachment to conventional meat and oftentimes reports *increasing* meat consumption over time. They may view plant-based meat as an occasional additional protein source but cite texture realism and cooking functionality as major barriers to regular use (Kirchner et al, 2025).

From a diffusion standpoint, both the Nutrition-Focused Integrators and Protein Maximizers represent consumers who have crossed the trial and repeat thresholds but have not crossed the habit or substitution threshold.

Late Majority: Carefree Considerers

Carefree Considerers, 19% of the population, are consumers who are not fundamentally opposed to plant-based meat, but they are highly routine-driven, risk-averse, and sensitive to price and taste. Carefree Considerers pay limited attention to nutrition or sustainability and rely heavily on familiar foods and habitual purchasing patterns. Their adoption of plant-based meat remains minimal, not due to ideological opposition, but because plant-based meat does not yet offer sufficient perceived advantage over existing defaults (Kirchner et al, 2025).

Late Majority/Laggards: Value-Driven Skeptics

The last segment, Value-Driven Skeptics (24%), is the largest single segment. They are primarily motivated by price and taste, and view conventional meat as natural, affordable, and routine. They exhibit the lowest repeat purchase rates and the strongest resistance to dietary change. For this group, plant-based meat would only become attractive under conditions of clear cost advantage and strong taste parity or superiority (Kirchner et al, 2025).

These characteristics align closely with Moore's (1991) description of the Late Majority/Laggards as pragmatic, skeptical of novelty, and oriented toward minimizing risk.

Overall, only two segments, Ethical Alternative Seekers and Health-Conscious Compromisers, exhibit meaningful reductions in conventional meat consumption. All other segments add plant-based meat to existing diets rather than using it as a replacement (Kirchner et al, 2025). Some, like Protein Maximizers, report eating more conventional meat over time. This explains why relatively high repeat purchase rates (~63%) coexist with low overall market penetration and low frequency: repeat behavior often reflects *occasional additive use*, not *habitual substitution*.

From a diffusion perspective, this pattern reveals the structural nature of the chasm.

WHY THE CHASM EXISTS

Different Motivations

According to Moore, the chasm exists because Early Adopters and the Early Majority make fundamentally different adoption decisions. As seen with the consumer group Ethical Alternative Seekers, Early Adopters are motivated by vision, identity, and long-term potential. They willingly tolerate performance gaps, social distinctiveness, and higher prices. In contrast, the Early Majority, such as the Health-Conscious Compromisers, Nutrition-Focused Integrators, and

Protein Maximizers, are pragmatic, risk-averse, and oriented toward reliability, convenience, and social proof. They adopt when uncertainty is minimal and the product integrates seamlessly into existing routines.

When it comes to food choice theory, food choice among consumers is fundamentally motivated by taste, cost, and convenience. Secondary food choice motivations evolve around things like health, sustainability, and animal welfare (Szejda et al, 2020). This distinction maps cleanly onto Moore’s Early Adopter–Early Majority divide. Early Adopters are disproportionately driven by ethics, environmental concern, and health values, whereas the Early Majority are seeking a taste that meet or exceed expectations, pricing that’s close to parity to conventional meat, and convenient preparation and availability that fits with existing routines.

For these consumers, if foundational motivations are not satisfied, evolving motivations cannot compensate (Szejda et al, 2020). This explains why plant-based meat has failed to convert consumer segments beyond Innovators and the Early Majority. These segments are not actively hostile to plant-based meat, but they are highly sensitive to any friction relative to conventional defaults.

Lack of Habit Formation

Aside from different motivations between the two groups, another failure of plant-based meat diffusion is the failure of trial and repeat to translate into habitual default behavior. Behavioral economics and nutrition research consistently show that habit formation requires repeated behavior in stable contexts with low friction and high immediate reward (Wood & Neal, 2007; Lally et al., 2010).

As we saw earlier, the U.S. retail panel data for plant-based meat reveal moderate repeat purchase (63%), low household penetration (14%), and very low purchase frequency relative to animal meat. This pattern is consistent with what behavioral economists describe as “intermittent substitution” rather than “habitual replacement.” Consumers may experiment with plant-based meat under conditions of novelty, promotions, or health resets, but the behavior does not become automatic. Each purchase remains a deliberative decision, vulnerable to price shocks, taste disappointment, or simple forgetfulness.

In contrast, Early Majority adoption requires that the alternative becomes the path of least resistance; that is, the option that is chosen when consumers are tired, rushed, or inattentive. This is precisely the stage plant-based meat has not yet reached.

PLANT-BASED MILK AS AN EXAMPLE OF “CROSSING THE CHASM”

Plant-based milk provides a useful contrast to plant-based meat, as it has progressed significantly further along the diffusion curve. In 2024, 40% of U.S. households reported purchasing plant-based milk in a given year, compared to 14% for plant-based meat (Kirchner et al, 2024). This level of penetration places plant-based milk within the Early Majority phase of Rogers’ adoption curve, and suggests that it has already crossed the chasm that plant-based meat continues to face.

Several structural differences help explain why plant-based milk diffused more successfully. First, plant-based milk offers a clear functional replacement use case driven by widespread lactose intolerance, dairy allergies, and digestive discomfort. For many consumers, switching from cow’s milk to almond, oat, or soy milk provides an immediate personal benefit rather than an abstract environmental or ethical one (Kirchner et al, 2024).

Second, milk occupies a less identity-laden role in the diet than meat. Meat is widely viewed as the “center-of-the-plate” protein and is deeply embedded in cultural norms, masculinity ideals, and family traditions, whereas milk functions primarily as an ingredient or beverage (Catallo, Sarah, personal communication, Nov 25, 2025).

Third, plant-based milk achieved mainstream normalization through institutional and retail channels, particularly coffee shops. The availability of oat and almond milk as default options in national coffee chains substantially increased observability and social proof, two key drivers of Early Majority adoption under Rogers’ framework (Rogers, 1962; Better Food Foundation, 2025).

Fourth, price parity between some plant-based milks and conventional milk has narrowed more quickly than in the meat category, reducing economic switching costs (Kirchner et al, 2024).

Together, these factors created a set of conditions consistent with Moore's (1991) requirements for crossing the chasm: a dominant use case (milk in coffee and cereal), collapsing performance uncertainty, and visible social normalization. In contrast, plant-based meat continues to struggle with identity-level resistance, inconsistent taste and texture parity across products, and higher relative prices—all of which inhibit Early Majority adoption despite the presence of trial and repeat behavior.

CROSSING THE CHASM FOR PLANT-BASED MEAT

Building on Moore's (1991) conception of a chasm between Early Adopters and the Early Majority, recent research suggests that crossing the chasm for plant-based meat requires coordinated interventions across product design, purchasing environments, and communication strategies. Drawing insights on how plant-based milk successfully implemented such strategies to achieve widespread household penetration and habitual use, as well as Szejda et al.'s (2020) evidence-based synthesis, this section organizes chasm-crossing strategies into three categories: 1. product attributes and product development, 2. choice architecture, and 3. messaging.

1. Product Attributes and Product Development

Product performance is the most fundamental determinant of adoption beyond Early Adopters. Plant-based meat products must meet or exceed consumer expectations on taste, texture, appearance, and cooking functionality, and satiety in order to appeal to the Early Majority (Szejda et al., 2020). Across multiple studies, taste consistently emerges as the strongest predictor of purchase intent, outweighing health, environmental, or ethical considerations (Aggarwal et al., 2016; Parry & Szejda, 2019).

The trajectory of plant-based milk illustrates the importance of iterative product improvement (Good Food Institute, 2024). Early versions of soy milk were often criticized for off-flavors and limited culinary functionality, restricting adoption to niche consumers. Over time, advances in

formulation led to products with improved taste, texture, and performance across use cases such as coffee, cereal, and baking. This functional parity, rather than values-based appeal alone, enabled plant-based milk to become a viable everyday substitute for dairy milk.

For pragmatic consumers, plant-based meat is evaluated not as a novel category but as a direct substitute for animal meat. As with plant-based milk, even small sensory or functional gaps like unfamiliar textures or inconsistent cooking outcomes can prevent habitual use (Szejda et al., 2020). The milk category demonstrated that Early Adopters may tolerate such gaps, but Early Majority consumers will not.

Price parity is another critical product-related factor. Cost is a foundational driver of food choice, particularly for lower- and middle-income households. For plant-based milk, adoption accelerated as prices decreased and private-label options emerged (Good Food Institute, 2024). Similarly, sustained adoption of plant-based meat will likely require products to approach or undercut the price of conventional meat during routine purchases.

Finally, familiarity and ingredient perceptions influence perceived product quality. The success of plant-based milk was supported by familiar, simple ingredient list and clear nutritional positioning around protein, calcium, and vitamin fortification. In contrast, skepticism toward highly processed foods and unfamiliar ingredients continues to pose a barrier for plant-based meat (Catallo, Sarah, personal communication, Nov 25, 2025). Product development strategies that emphasize recognizable ingredients and nutritional comparability can help replicate the trust-building that exists with plant-based milk.

2. Choice Architecture

Choice architecture leverages behavioral tendencies toward defaults, salience, and convenience to influence behavior without restricting choice (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008).

Defaults play a particularly powerful role within food because decisions are frequent, habitual, and often made under cognitive constraints (Wood & Neal, 2007). Across dining halls, hospitals, and other institutions, research shows that when plant-based options are positioned as the default rather than as a special alternative, selection rates increase significantly without reducing satisfaction or perceived autonomy (Szejda et al., 2020; Food for Climate League, 2014; Zhang et al., 2022; Cascada, 2024). The success of plant-based milk demonstrates how structural normalization can transform an alternative product into a routine choice. Indeed, in recent years, the US have seen dramatic integration of plant-based milk at coffee shops as a default/near default option, dramatically increasing exposure, trial, and habitual use (Better Food Foundation, 2025).

For plant-based meat, similar choice architecture interventions, such as integrated menu placement, default plant-based proteins in certain dishes, or procurement-driven defaults in institutional dining, may help convert trial into habit. As with plant-based milk, these interventions reduce reliance on deliberate decision-making and instead embed plant-based choices into everyday routines (Better Food Foundation, 2024).

3. Messaging

While product performance and choice architecture are the foundation for adoption, messaging plays a complementary role by shaping perceptions, expectations, and social norms.

The evolution of plant-based milk messaging illustrates this (Parry & Szejda, 2019; Good Food Institute, 2024). Early messaging often emphasized lactose intolerance or ethical considerations, appealing primarily to niche audiences. As the category matured, messaging shifted toward taste, versatility, and everyday use. This reframing supported normalization and reduced perceptions of sacrifice.

Thus, effective messaging for plant-based meat among early-majority consumers will need to emphasize immediate personal benefits such as taste, familiarity, and value rather than abstract environmental or moral appeals (Parry & Szejda, 2019). Avoiding identity-laden language (e.g., “vegan,” “meatless”) and instead emphasizing flavor, indulgence, or culinary performance

mirrors the successful messaging evolution of plant-based milk (Szejda et al., 2020; Greene et al, 2024; Turnwald et al, 2019; Patrycja Śleboda et al., 2024; Faunalytics, 2019).

Finally, social proof plays a critical role in bridging the chasm. Early-majority consumers look for evidence that a product is widely accepted and routinely consumed by people like them (Moore, 1991). The widespread visibility of plant-based milk in mainstream retail and foodservice environments reinforced its legitimacy and safety as a default choice. For plant-based meat, signaling similar normalization through institutional adoption, menu ubiquity, and popularity cues may be essential for achieving comparable diffusion.

Taken together, these three strategy categories offer a pathway for plant-based meat to cross the chasm into the Early Majority market. While there are many moving factors and parts, a cohesive initiative that considers all aspects, from product development to marketing and operations, can be effective into moving plant-based meat along the Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation curve.

CONCLUSION

Despite substantial investment, technological innovation, and growing public awareness, plant-based meat adoption in the United States remains largely confined to a small consumer segment. While household trial and repeat purchase rates suggest openness to experimentation among a large percentage of the population, purchasing frequency and substitution behavior remain low, indicating that plant-based meat has not become a default or habitual replacement for conventional meat. Viewed through the lens of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation framework, current penetration levels align closely with Early Adopter saturation, confirming the presence of a structural "chasm" between Early Adopters and the Early Majority.

The persistence of this chasm is due to a misalignment with the foundational decision criteria of mainstream consumers. Behavioral and food choice research consistently show that taste, price, convenience, and habit dominate dietary decisions, while ethical, environmental, and health considerations play secondary roles. For pragmatic consumers, plant-based meat continues to

introduce friction, whether through higher prices, inconsistent cooking performance, or identity-laden positioning, that prevents habitual substitution.

In contrast, plant-based milk illustrates how a food innovation can successfully cross the chasm. Its diffusion into the Early Majority was enabled by clear functional parity, rapid price normalization, widespread institutional exposure, and messaging that emphasized everyday use rather than moral appeal. Drawing on this comparison and on evidence synthesized by Szejda et al. (2020), this review identifies three interdependent levers for advancing plant-based meat adoption: improving product attributes and development to meet mainstream performance expectations; leveraging choice architecture to reduce cognitive and behavioral friction; and deploying messaging that normalizes use and provides social proof.

Unless action is taken across all these domains, plant-based meat is likely to remain an occasional supplement rather than a meaningful substitute for conventional meat. Understanding adoption through a diffusion and behavioral lens clarifies that crossing the chasm requires more than technological innovation -- it requires structural changes that align plant-based meat with everyday routines, economic rationality, and social norms. Such alignment is essential if plant-based foods are to achieve their promised environmental and public-health benefits at scale.

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