

AI PLAYBOOK 6



Enhancing Market Research with AI


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This Playbook is part of the CMA's AI Mastery Series, empowering marketers to Implement AI in ways that earn regulatory confidence, maintain strong brand reputation, and foster consumer trust.



Navigating the Future of Market Research

AI-powered solutions are enhancing traditional research methods, which typically require long timelines and significant resources. These new technologies not only allow marketers to work faster but also enable them to incorporate market insights more frequently in the development process and to add more strategic value to their organizations.

This paper outlines some key areas where AI-driven market research can help inform your marketing decisions, along with key considerations for mitigating the potential for biased or inaccurate information.

The CMA is your strategic partner in navigating AI. We provide comprehensive frameworks, ethical guidelines and practical roadmaps to help Canadian marketers harness AI's potential while ensuring compliance with evolving privacy regulations like PIPEDA and GDPR. Our approach combines innovation with responsibility, ensuring that AI adoption enhances rather than compromises research integrity.

Four Ways AI is Transforming Research

In the article "How Gen AI is Transforming Market Research", HBR identified four key areas of opportunity:

1. Supporting current practices: Consider qualitative research analysis: what once took research teams weeks to code and analyze can now be processed in hours, reducing analysis time by up to 80%. This allows researchers to focus on strategic interpretation rather than mechanical analysis.

2. Replacing traditional methods: Synthetic data represents a paradigm shift in how we gather consumer insights. With enterprise AI adoption reaching a 44.2% CAGR, organizations can generate statistically valid data without traditional constraints of survey fatigue or panel limitations. This is valuable for testing sensitive scenarios or reaching hard-to-access demographics.

3. Filling research gaps: AI enables "continuous insight generation" – the ability to analyze and act on market changes in real time. Questions that previously went unexplored due to time or budget constraints can now be investigated thoroughly, leading to more informed decision-making.

4. Creating new possibilities: Digital twins and advanced simulations have unleashed opportunities for market testing. With synthetic data showing 85% correlation with traditional methods, marketers can test multiple scenarios, predict responses accurately, and refine strategies before implementation.

The Business Case for AI in Research

The adoption of AI in market research isn't just about technological advancement – it's about delivering measurable business value. An analysis by McKinsey revealed four key areas of impact:

Cost transformation: Organizations implementing synthetic data solutions report a 30-50% reduction in primary research costs. This isn't just about doing the same research for less; it's about reallocating budgets to higher-value strategic initiatives.

Exponential efficiency: The 80% reduction in qualitative analysis time translates directly to faster market response. Companies can now run multiple research waves in the time it previously took to complete one, enabling more agile and responsive marketing strategies.

Unprecedented scale: Modern AI systems can analyze datasets 100 times larger than traditional methods without proportional cost increases. This capability allows organizations to identify micro-trends and niche opportunities that previously went undetected.

Quality and reliability: With synthetic data achieving up to 85% accuracy compared to traditional methods, organizations can make decisions with confidence. This high correlation rate means AI-driven insights are not just faster and cheaper – they're also trustworthy.



Will AI Transform Your Research Practice?

AI in the Research Process

Research stage	How AI can help
Problem definition	Analyze historical data and trends to help define sharper research questions.
Research design	Recommend optimal methodologies based on objectives, past performance, or constraints.
Sampling	Use predictive modeling to identify target segments or optimize sample composition.
Data collection	Automate surveys or interviews (e.g., chatbots, AI interviewers); scrape online data.
Concept exploration	Use AI to simulate audience responses through synthetic data, personas, or digital twins. These tools help pressure-test early ideas, refine concepts, and prioritize what to validate with real consumers.
Data cleaning	Detect anomalies, duplicates, and missing values using machine learning techniques.
Analysis & modeling	Run sentiment analysis, clustering, predictive analytics, and text summarization.
Insight generation	Summarize key findings; identify hidden patterns or trends across large datasets.
Reporting & visualization	Auto-generate dashboards, create natural language summaries, and tailor presentations to different audiences.
Ongoing monitoring	Set up real-time data pipelines to track consumer sentiment or behaviour over time.

AI Research in Action

AI is beginning to play a practical role in how brands conduct market research. The following examples show how companies are applying AI tools to improve how they collect insights, test concepts, and accelerate decision-making:

WeightWatchers' use of AI interviews: In a recent study, WeightWatchers found that participants were often more open with AI interviewers than with human ones. The AI tool provided consistency in question delivery while adapting follow-ups based on individual responses, resulting in more nuanced insights into consumer health behaviours.

Colgate-Palmolive utilizing digital twins for product testing: Colgate-Palmolive is employing “digital twins,” which are computerized simulations of real-life consumers, to test new product ideas. This allows the company to observe how virtual consumers respond to new features and claims, accelerating product development. Additionally, Colgate leverages generative AI with Market Logic to analyze consumer research, enabling employees to quickly retrieve insights about consumer trends, thereby aiding in sales growth and cost reduction.

General Mills' Product Innovation Acceleration: General Mills is actively exploring the use of synthetic data to enhance its product ideation processes. By simulating consumer behaviors and preferences, the company aims to identify promising product concepts more efficiently, increasing the likelihood of successful innovations that resonate with their target market.

Your Path to AI-Powered Research

Successfully implementing AI in market research requires a structured, phased approach that balances innovation with practical reality. Our recommended three-phase implementation framework ensures sustainable adoption:

1. Assessment phase (1-2 months)

Begin with a comprehensive evaluation of your current research ecosystem:

- Audit existing research processes and identify pain points
- Map high-impact opportunities where AI can deliver immediate value
- Assess data infrastructure readiness and quality
- Define success metrics and ROI expectations

2. Pilot phase (2-3 months)

Start small but think big:

- Select one high-impact research type for initial implementation
- Implement synthetic data generation for controlled testing
- Run parallel traditional studies to validate results
- Document learnings and adjust approaches based on feedback

3. Scale phase (3-6 months)

Expand success systematically:

- Gradually extend AI implementation across research functions
- Develop comprehensive governance frameworks
- Create training programs for research teams
- Establish centers of excellence to support ongoing innovation

Overcoming AI Research Challenges

Watch-out

Biased data

Insights can reflect skewed or incomplete datasets, leading to inaccurate conclusions.

Misleading patterns

AI may surface correlations that aren't meaningful or actionable.

Privacy compliance

Mishandling personal data risks legal exposure (e.g. GDPR, CCPA) and reputational harm.

Operational integration

Without thoughtful integration, AI remains a siloed tool with limited impact on real decisions.

Overreliance on automation

Teams may over trust AI outputs and reduce human oversight, leading to shallow insights or flawed decisions.

How to mitigate

Use diverse data sources. Validate findings with traditional methods or control groups. Choose vendors transparent about their training data.

Combine AI output with human judgment. Involve researchers or strategists to interpret results and assess context.

Never input personal or proprietary data into publicly accessible or unpaid LLM tools. Instead use enterprise-grade AI platforms and confirm their data handling practices (e.g., retention policies, model training usage, and encryption standards).

Align AI tools with existing workflows. Engage teams like marketing, insights, IT, and compliance from the start to ensure the AI tool fits real workflows, addresses practical constraints, and gains organization-wide buy-in.

Use AI to augment—not replace—critical thinking. Encourage teams to question outputs, apply domain expertise, and explore multiple interpretations.

Recommended Reading

- [CMA Guide on AI for Marketers](#)
- [Setting the Stage on Artificial Intelligence: A CMA Primer on AI for Marketers](#)
- [CMA Accountability Checklists for AI In Marketing](#)
- [CMA Mastery Series: AI Playbooks](#)
- Harvard Business Review: [How Gen AI Is Transforming Market Research](#)
- McKinsey: [The Economic Potential of Generative AI](#)
- Precedence Research: [Generative AI Market Analysis](#)
- GBK Collective: [The State of AI in Market Research](#)
- Colgate-Palmolive: [Utilizing Digital Twins for Product Testing](#)

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The CMA

The CMA is the voice of marketing in Canada and our purpose is to champion marketing's powerful impact. We are the catalyst to help Canada's marketers thrive today, while building the marketing mindset and environment of tomorrow.

We provide opportunities for our members from coast to coast to develop professionally, to contribute to marketing thought leadership, to build strong networks, and to strengthen the regulatory climate for business success. Our Chartered Marketer (CM) designation signifies that recipients are highly qualified and up to date with best practices, as reflected in the CMA's Canadian Marketing Code of Ethics and Standards. We represent virtually all of Canada's major business sectors, and all marketing disciplines, channels and technologies. Our Consumer Centre helps Canadians better understand their rights and obligations. For more information, visit thecma.ca.

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