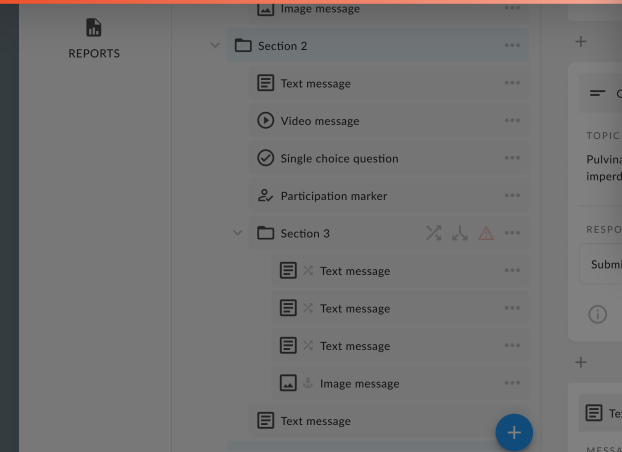
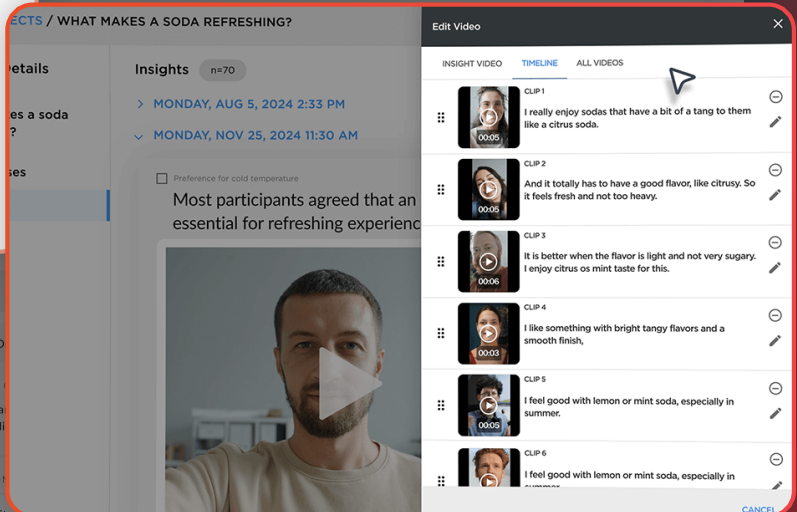
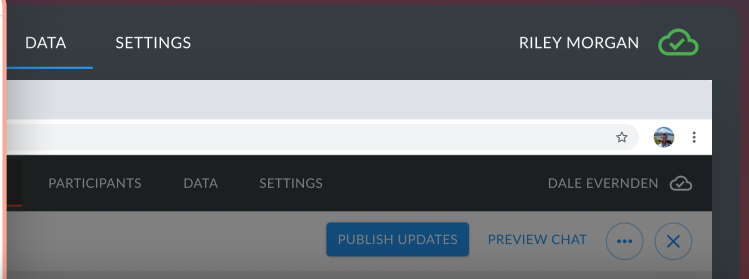
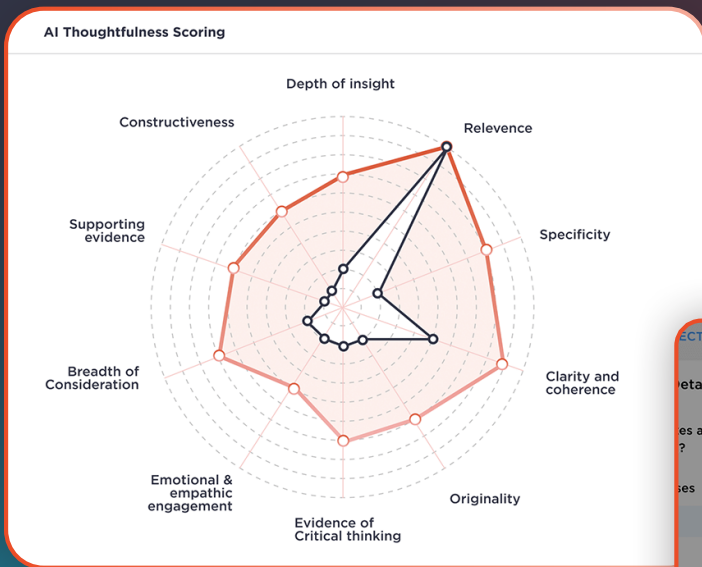


From Chaos to Clarity: How to Transform Qualitative Research With AI and Agents



Pushing the boundaries of qual research

Unstructured data is a goldmine—if you can make sense of it fast. This guide shows how enterprise insight teams are using AI Agents to automate analysis, scale qual research, and deliver richer, faster insights. Learn how companies like **ŌURA** unlocked **293% deeper responses** and **99% completion rates**—without sacrificing rigor. If you're buried in open-ends, video, or messy qual inputs, this is your blueprint for clarity, speed, and strategic impact.

Unstructured data holds the key to modern consumer insight—but most teams are stuck with slow, manual methods that can't keep up. Now, AI is flipping that script. One of its most exciting applications in the insights industry is its ability to make sense of unstructured data at scale—unlocking opportunities that were once out of reach.

Large language models (LLMs) can now extract key themes and summarize long-form qualitative data, from social media posts and video responses to consumer reviews and open-ends. These sources used to be too complex or costly to analyze efficiently. Not anymore.

AI can match human analysts in core tasks like identifying key sentences, clustering responses, and generating clear, informative summaries. The result? Less manual wrangling. More time for strategy.

And now, agentic AI is pushing boundaries even further. These intelligent agents can autonomously perform multi-step tasks—adapting analysis, orchestrating tools, and scaling insights in ways that were once unimaginable. For unstructured data, this opens up new possibilities for consistency, speed, and impact. That said, the best outcomes still come from collaboration. Researchers—and

the critical thinking they bring—remain irreplaceable. When people and AI work together, that’s when the magic happens.

That said, the best outcomes still come from collaboration. Researchers—and the critical thinking they bring—remain irreplaceable. When people and AI work together, that’s when the magic happens.



What’s inside:

- How to practically use AI to analyze unstructured data and turbocharge your research, while maintaining quality controls and human oversight.
- Exploration of cutting-edge innovations and actionable tips you can implement immediately.
- Proven strategies to elevate your work and discover emerging capabilities to find the “aha” moments in your unstructured data.
- Smart ways to integrate AI into the research lifecycle and take a future-focused look at how new tools and technologies can enhance market research in 2025 and beyond.
- Introduction to AI Agents and how agentic AI frameworks can support the full research lifecycle.

Tactics for breaking ground with AI: 5 Essential Moves to Start Using AI in Qual

Let's jump right into how to maximize the chance of success when using AI to analyze unstructured data. Below are four foundational strategies for identifying opportunities and ensuring AI delivers the most value.

Identify gaps and friction.

Begin by understanding where your research process could benefit from scale, speed, or smarter analysis. Are open-ends being coded manually? Are insights scattered across decks and docs? Is it taking too long to put together video reels? These inefficiencies signal where AI can help. Start with capabilities like summarization or thematic clustering. Innovation starts by identifying real problems worth solving.

Don't underestimate the role of humans.

Even the best AI fails without human oversight. Enterprise-grade research demands context, nuance, and ethical guardrails—something only experienced researchers can provide. Use your expertise to refine prompts, review outputs, and interpret nuance. Oversight isn't optional—it's essential. Systems designed for augmentation, not automation, help guard against bias and maintain ethical standards.

Even with advanced tools like Rival's AI Summarizer (see [page 12](#)), humans are still the stewards of context and quality. AI can help you move faster—but only people can ensure you're moving in the right direction.

“Human-in-the-loop AI systems improve decision accuracy by up to 42% compared to fully autonomous systems.”

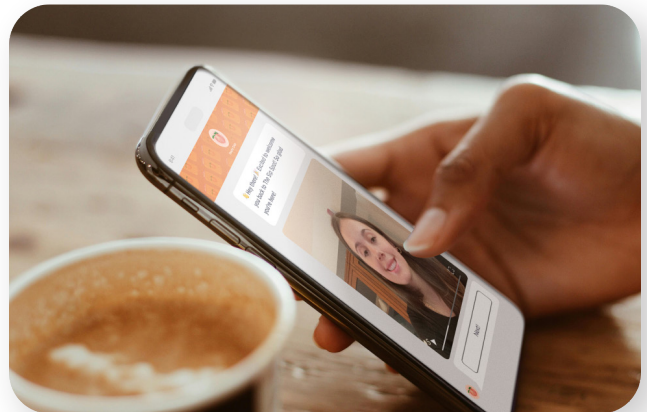
— PwC, AI Predictions Report, 2024

Better input, better output.

As the old adage goes: garbage in, garbage out. The value of AI-generated insights depends entirely on the quality of your inputs. Rich, in-the-moment responses, especially those captured in natural, conversational formats, can significantly enhance the depth and relevance of insights. A mobile-first approach to research can help.

According to a **study** from the Wharton School, people are more likely to share personal thoughts and experiences when responding via phones compared to traditional computers.

When the input reflects authentic consumer sentiment and context, AI becomes a powerful tool for generating truly meaningful outcomes.



Rival's Mobile-First, Participant Experience.

Ensure transparency and maintain trust.

As you integrate AI into your workflows, be open about when and how you're using it. Transparency builds confidence. If AI played a role in shaping insights, acknowledge it—both internally and externally. Establish governance frameworks, clear audit trails, and human review checkpoints to maintain rigor. Once trust is lost, it's hard to get back. That's why maintaining rigorous standards for data privacy, compliance, and responsible use is non-negotiable.

Guide the tech—don't let it guide you.

To truly unlock AI's potential, you need to understand its limitations. AI is not deterministic—it's probabilistic. That means it doesn't always provide the same output for the same input, and it can hallucinate or miss the mark. That's why researchers must steer the process. Direction, context, and feedback loops are critical—especially with unstructured data.

“Research projects that embedded structured human oversight into AI workflows experienced a 29% reduction in bias and a 32% improvement in actionable insights.”

— Forrester Research, AI in Market Research Report, 2024

Enter Agentic AI

AI's potential doesn't stop at summarization or clustering. The next leap forward is agentic AI—a new paradigm where intelligent agents operate independently, tackle specific tasks, and collaborate across workflows. These systems orchestrate tools and adapt dynamically to evolving research needs, bringing both speed and structure to the complexity of unstructured data.

76.7%

of insights pros are excited about AI summarizer tools

Source: Rival Technologies and Reach3 Insights survey, December 2024

Rival Technologies is helping lead this shift with the launch of its first Agent purpose-built for unstructured data. Designed to accelerate insight generation, this agent connects **Rival's existing AI capabilities** into a unified, seamless experience. It's part of our Multi-Agent AI Framework: a suite of orchestrated, task-specific agents, each functioning as an intelligent "brain" equipped with the right tools to complete a distinct research job. For unstructured data—a long, slow, manual part of the process—this approach offers new speed, consistency, and clarity. It's a glimpse of what's possible when modular tools are connected and given autonomy. (See [page 12](#) for details.)

Testing AI research innovations with ŌURA

At Rival, we partner with forward-thinking brands like ŌURA to test new AI innovations before bringing them to market. ŌURA’s Inner Circle insight community—built on our **platform**—helps the team capture candid, in-the-moment feedback, even on sensitive topics. With strong engagement and close collaboration, the community supports strategic planning and rapid iteration across product, marketing, and member experience.

Given the high volume of unstructured feedback generated, ŌURA uses Rival’s AI Summarizer to extract key themes quickly and at scale. ŌURA also partnered with Rival Labs, our innovation program, to test new approaches, including our Smart AI Probe Text feature. Designed to follow up on open-ended responses in real time, Smart AI Probe Text delivered more thoughtful feedback without disrupting the conversational experience. Here are some of the results:

94%

of participants said the AI-generated questions were relevant and appropriate

99%

said they were easy to understand

293%

lift in “thoughtfulness” score, which measures response depth and quality

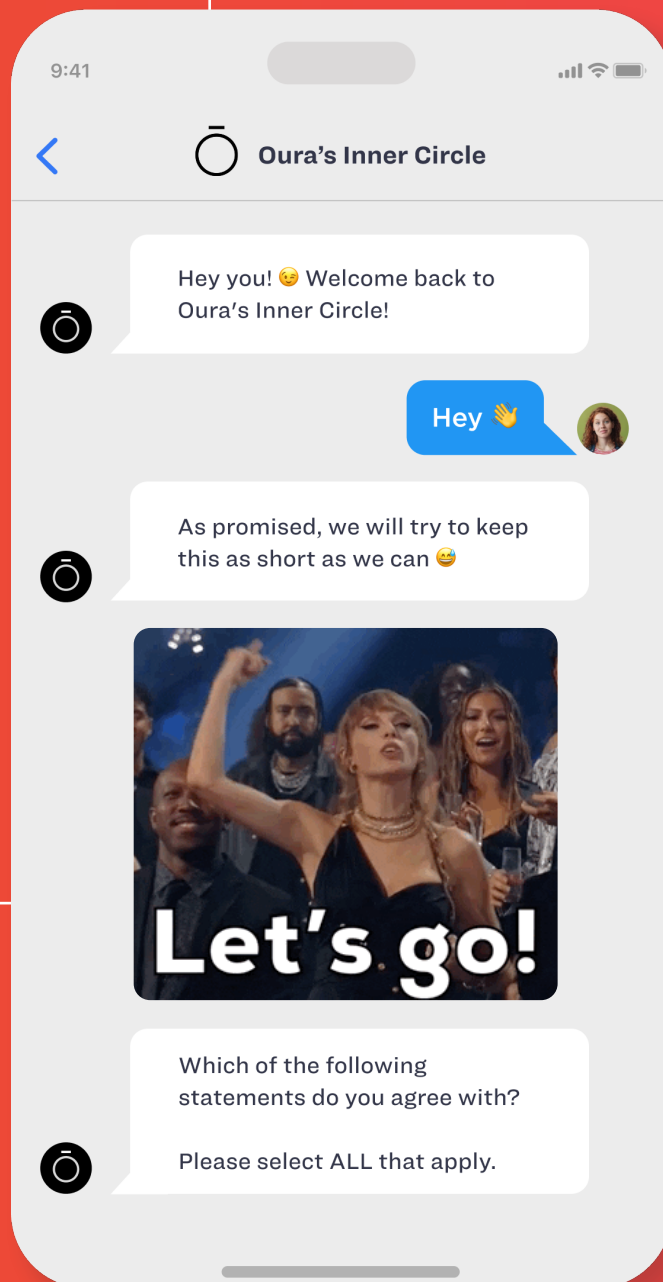
86%

average completion rate for ŌURA’s insight community

By combining Rival’s AI capabilities with strong customer success support, ŌURA has increased its capacity to deliver more strategic, high-impact insights.

“Launching our insight community on the Rival platform has allowed us to increase our capacity for research and contributed invaluable insights to our overall business strategy. The power of AI in the tech space is undeniable, and I’m thrilled to be partnering with Rival to test additional AI developments that allow us to unlock deeper consumer insights.”

- Kati LaBeaume, Director of Consumer Insights & Brand Strategy at ŌURA



From Tools to Intelligence: How We're Wrangling Unstructured Data at Scale

Unstructured data—open-ends, video, voice—is one of the richest sources of insight in modern research. But without the right systems, it's also one of the most underutilized. Manual coding and scattered tools slow things down. That's why Rival is shifting from standalone AI features to a more intelligent, orchestrated approach: **Agentic AI**.

We've designed a framework that connects task-specific agents into one seamless system—purpose-built for qual. These agents act like smart collaborators, each focused on a specific job across the insight lifecycle.

Here's how it works:

Unstructured Data Agent

Automates core qualitative tasks—from Smart AI Probe Text and summarization to insight reporting—freeing your team from tedious manual work.

Multi-Agent Framework

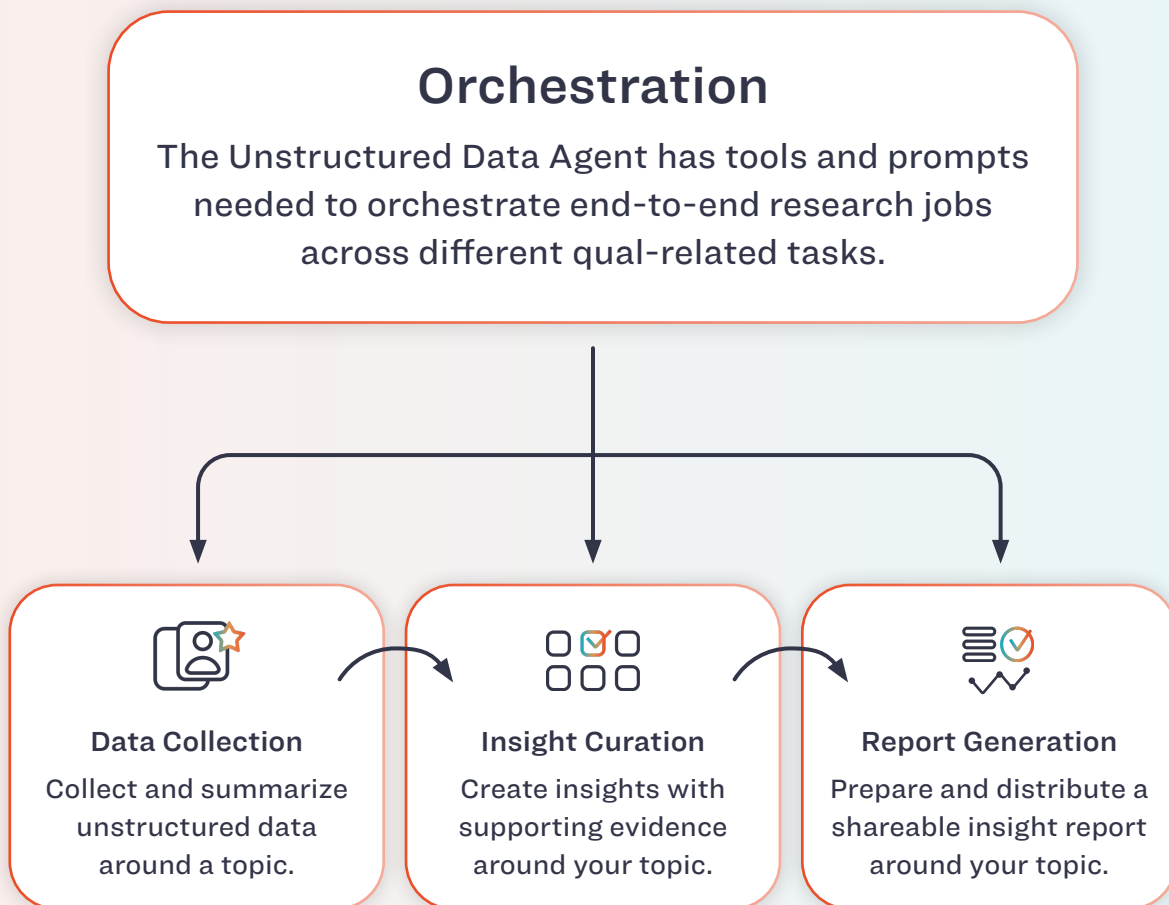
Coordinates multiple agents that specialize in different jobs. Each agent is optimized for speed, structure, and adaptability—and agents can work together to deliver a cohesive output.

The Result

Faster, deeper insights without sacrificing human oversight, rigor, or storytelling quality. It's qual research, evolved for the enterprise.

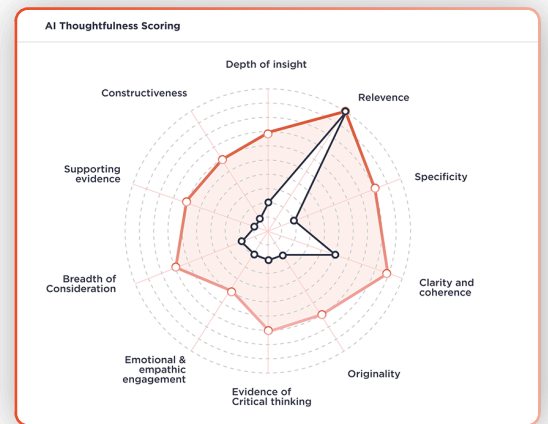
Unstructured Data Agent

The Unstructured Data Agent is a powerful, AI-driven tool designed to help researchers capture, analyze, and synthesize open-ended data. It leverages agentic AI to coordinate a network of specialized AI tools, acting as an intelligent partner that augments your research process and brings clarity to complex findings.



Data Collection Agent:

Thoughtfulness Score: Our proprietary metric that evaluates the relevance, specificity, clarity and empathic engagement of open-end responses. This score is unique because it helps ensure that any AI-driven probing happens only if it makes sense for the participant. By minimizing redundancy and improving conversational flow, Thoughtfulness Scoring ensures participants feel valued and researchers receive meaningful, actionable insights.



Rival's AI Thoughtfulness Score

Smart AI Probe Text: This dynamically follows up on survey responses in real time, using intelligent, context-aware prompts to uncover deeper insights without disrupting the flow of conversation. On the Rival platform, users can set this up so Smart AI Probe Text only happens if the Thoughtfulness Score is below a pre-determined threshold.

Insight Curation Agent:

AI Summarizer: This generative AI tool quickly distills large sets of open-text, qualitative data into clear, actionable themes, ideal for projects with large volumes of video and open-end responses.

Insight Reels: A capability that automatically turns video and text responses into curated highlight reels. Insight Reels uses AI to analyze and summarize open ends, with human-in-the-loop affordances to customize and refine storytelling.

Report Generation Agent:

AI Insight Report: The AI Insight Report consolidates all collected and summarized data into a polished, shareable deliverable—designed for mobile

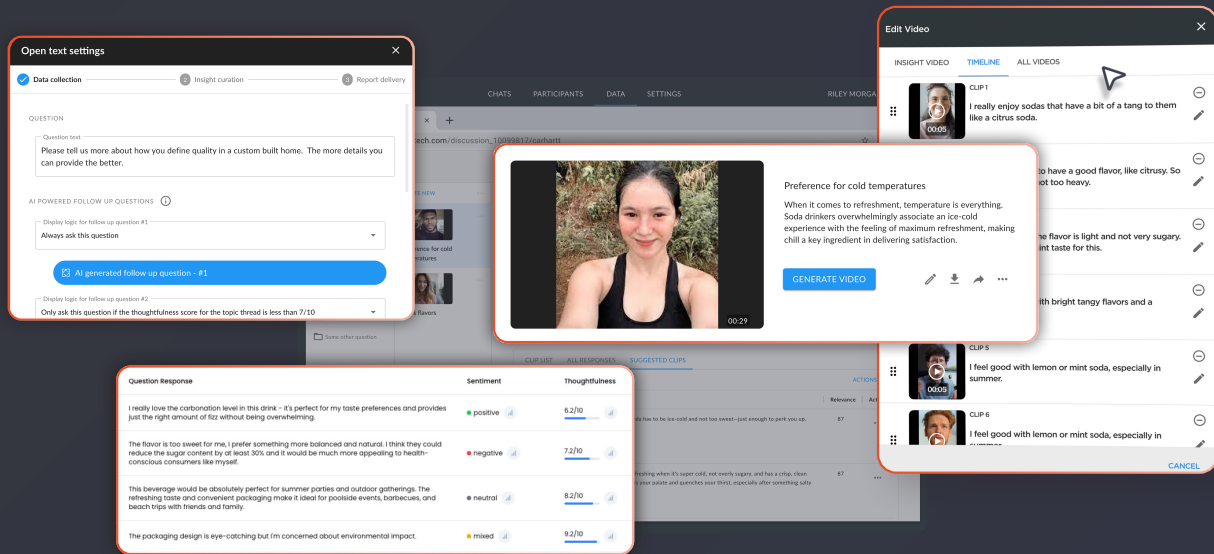
viewing and stakeholder engagement. It highlights key themes backed by participant quotes and video reels, includes a visual breakdown of response volumes by theme, and features a dynamic video summary that brings the story to life. This report makes it easy for research teams to quickly communicate findings, drive alignment, and move from insight to action—without spending hours formatting decks or sifting through raw data.

In addition to tools designed specifically for unstructured data, Rival offers a growing suite of **AI-powered features** that enhance the broader research experience. Looking ahead, our AI Super Agent will provide full lifecycle support—coordinating across tasks, learning from each iteration, and helping insight teams move with greater speed and clarity. As technology continues to advance, the potential will only continue to grow, opening up new possibilities for researchers worldwide.

Reach out to us if you'd like to apply to **Rival's AI Early Access Program**.

“AI alone can’t interpret nuanced, context-heavy data. The human touch ensures the right questions are asked at the right time, improving both the efficiency and authenticity of the insights. Rival has done a great job striking that balance—it feels less like automation and more like augmentation.”

— Jason Jacobson, Senior Director
Consumer Insights, Sekisui House



The Unstructured Data Agent has tools and prompts needed to orchestrate end-to-end research jobs across different qual-related tasks.

Conclusion: Where we go from here

Unstructured data isn't just an untapped resource—it's quickly becoming the main event. With the help of AI, and especially agentic systems, researchers can finally keep up with the speed and scale modern insights demand.

But none of this means the days of the human researcher are numbered. Innovation in market research isn't just about adopting new technology—it's about cultivating a new mindset. By leaning into AI and keeping people in the loop, we can ensure our insights are not only cutting-edge, but also meaningful, responsible, and impactful.

The next chapter of market research is already being written. Let's make sure we're the ones holding the pen. And with even more AI-driven tools on the horizon, reach out to learn what's coming next—and how you can be part of shaping it.

AI will define the next era of market research. Want to lead the change? **[Join our Early Access Program](#)** and help shape what's next.

Be a leader in AI innovation

Rival's AI Early Access Program is for forward-thinking brands and researchers who want to co-create the future of insights.

Apply today.

rivaltech.com/ai-early-access-apply

