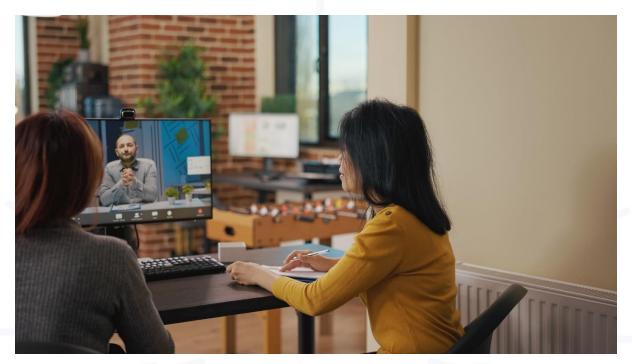# Redefining Insights: How AI is Shaping the Future of Social and Consumer Research

By Professor Gemma Calvert

The ability to uncover authentic, unfiltered insights has long been a challenge in social and consumer research. Traditional methods often fall short due to biases and constraints inherent in human interactions. However, a groundbreaking study which we conducted in collaboration with Research Network and powered by Listen Labs' AI platform offers a glimpse into a transformative future.

This AI-driven platform not only accelerates data collection but also unlocks perspectives that are rarely voiced in conventional research, making it a pivotal tool for fields as diverse as healthcare, public policy and consumer behaviour.

Breaking Down Barriers with AI-Driven Interviews

The study, which involved 230 young Singaporeans, used Listen Labs' innovative AI technology to explore attitudes toward family planning. Unlike traditional surveys, the platform conducted text-based interviews with spoken responses, creating a conversational flow that respondents likened to talking into a diary. This judgment-free environment encouraged candidness and significantly reduced social desirability bias.

The findings illuminated the complexities of family planning among Gen Z, with 70% of our respondents citing financial concerns, 60% mentioning work-life balance challenges and 40% claiming insufficient emotional readiness as major barriers. Respondents also voiced desires for changes in private and public policies to allow greater flexibility in their career paths, better support to help them become "child-ready", as well policies embracing diverse family structures – all of which reflect broader societal shifts.

Thanks to the perceived neutrality of the platform (64% highlighted its non-judgmental nature as a key advantage) we were also able to uncover less commonly expressed concerns about having a family in the future. For example, several respondents voiced concerns about the possibility of generational trauma repeating itself, expressing fears that unresolved emotional and psychological struggles from previous generations could influence their ability to create healthy family environments. Others discussed the possibility of alternative family structures, such as sharing child-rearing responsibilities with a group of friends to distribute the financial and emotional burden. A few also communicated concerns about potential threats to the survival of future children, including those posed by climate change and geopolitical unrest.

Why AI is the Future of Research

The study's success underscores the potential of AI in reshaping research methodologies. The platform's ability to rapidly analyse responses, adapt questions and identify patterns saved weeks of traditional labour-intensive processes. This agility is critical in fast-moving industries and policy landscapes.

Beyond this efficiency, the platform's ability to capture deeper emotional truths and less mainstream perspectives opens new doors for innovation. By eliminating barriers to self-expression, it creates a richer dataset, particularly valuable in sensitive areas like mental health, sustainability and social policy.

Applications Across Research Fields

The implications of this AI platform extend far beyond family planning. Its ability to unlock genuine human emotions and beliefs holds promise for sectors such as healthcare (e.g. honest reflections about mental health challenges); consumer behaviour (e.g. candid feedback about products and sustainability initiatives); education (uncovering secret stressors, concerns about bullying or exam pressure) as well as public policy (e.g. exploring attitudes towards aging, climate change, alternative proteins and many more).

As James Breeze, CEO of Research Network, noted, "We are pioneering a paradigm shift, delivering genuine insights that drive impactful change."

The Road Ahead

Looking forward, enhancements like vocal cue analysis (tone of voice, speed and style by which respondents react) as well as the option to analyse facial emotions via webcams built into digital devices, will allow researchers to gauge emotional states in real time. This evolution aligns perfectly with the needs of younger, tech-savvy generations who seek authenticity and innovation.

The full report can be accessed here:

https://www3.ntu.edu.sg/CorpComms2/Research%20Papers/NBS_MarketResearch_Report%20on%20SG%20Youth%20Attitudes%20towards%20having%20children.pdf