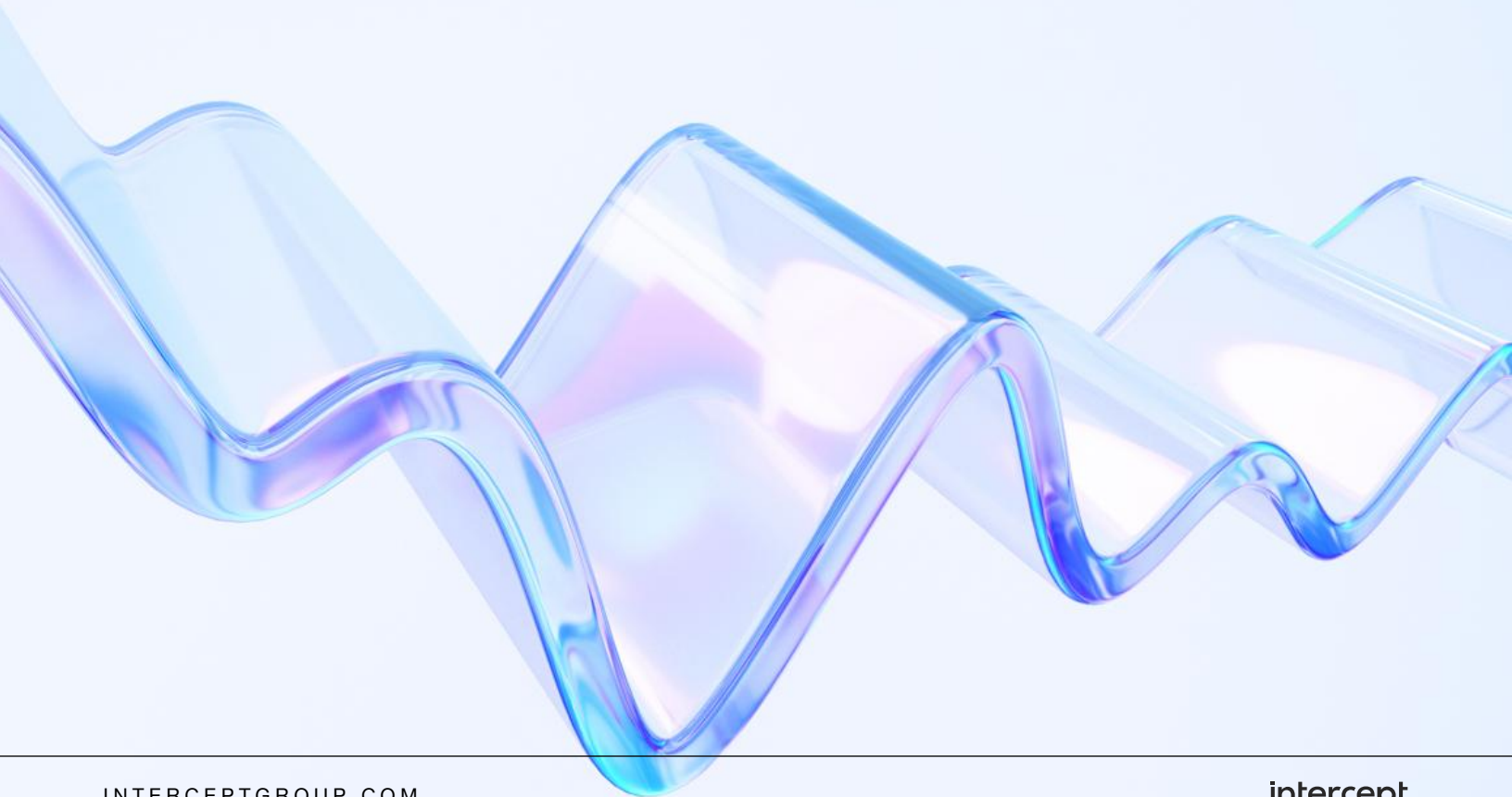


Time's up for traditional research

Exploring AI-powered insight



Introduction

B2B marketers are being asked to do more with less. Budgets are tighter. Buyer journeys are more complex. And decisions have to be made faster than ever, often under more scrutiny, with fewer resources.

In a moment that demands sharper foresight, many research tools are stuck in the past.

Traditional methods rely on slow cycles, small samples, and often, skewed results. Surveys routinely go out to the same panels who've turned participation into a side hustle. That results in limited reach, recycled voices, and inputs telling you what people *say*, not what they *do*.

Ask an IT leader how often they refresh devices, and you'll hear "every three years". But purchasing data says four. That's not deception. It's recall bias. And it's everywhere in conventional research.

People also tend to respond aspirationally, not accurately. They answer based on what they *think* they should do or what fits the role they believe they're supposed to play. It's not dishonest; it's part of being human. But it skews data all the same.

And even when the data's clean, it only snapshots a moment in time. A single data point. What you really need is a sense of trajectory. In healthcare, that's why doctors don't just take one blood pressure reading. They monitor overtime, tracking patterns. In marketing, we must apply the same rigor and use longitudinal data that reveals how sentiment shifts, not just where it stands today.

Then there's the influence problem. Ever notice how different analyst firms report different 'top priorities' depending on who commissioned the study? It's worth asking how much of that owes to 'content marketing' rather than 'market research.'

Intercept asked, what if we could understand our audience by observing instead of asking?

It's not a new concept. Ethnography has long been the gold standard for deep, qualitative insight. Researchers would embed themselves in people's environments, watching how decisions got made in the real world. But it was expensive and slow, impossible to scale.

Today, this kind of insight is scalable with AI.

By choosing the right models and methods, we can observe behavior in the wild by examining the digital footprints people leave across the platforms they use every day. We don't need to step into their homes. We can trawl their digital feeds.

This is AI-powered research. It's reshaping how we listen, learn, and lead.

Let's explore what that means.






What is AI-powered research?

Traditional research methods were built for a different era, when marketers had more time and budget and fewer buyer signals to heed. In a digital-first world, buyers don't wait around to be surveyed. They share, react, and decide in real time, often in places traditional research tools don't reach.

AI-powered research flips the model. Instead of asking questions, it listens. Rather than relying on self-reported feedback, it analyzes unprompted behavior. You don't capture a single point in time; you're always on, continuously monitoring whatever your audience puts out.

At its core, AI-powered research is about using artificial intelligence to uncover insights from real, unsolicited digital conversations—what people actually say, in their own words, on the platforms they use every day. It's like modern-day ethnography at scale: observational, adaptive, and fast.

This isn't scraping for sentiment. It's structured research that tasks machine learning to:

-  Identify the right audience
-  Detect relevant conversations
-  Filter for signal over noise
-  Classify language and sentiment
-  Quantify trends over time

These are key distinctions to measure against social media listening. Listening tools tell you who's loud or influential. AI-powered research tells you what's statistically significant.

You gain richer insight, with less bias and faster turnarounds. You bring more confidence to the decisions you make next.



Enter Watchtower

Our proprietary AI-powered research platform is called Watchtower. It was built to surface statistically significant insights from the unfiltered conversations B2B buyers participate in online.

Watchtower analyzes live, organic conversations from platforms across Reddit, X, Threads, TikTok, and more. It zeroes in on the conversations that matter, filtering by audience, relevance, and intent.

What sets Watchtower apart from every other listening tool? We start with a constantly refreshed panel of over 10 million users. These are actual professionals who actively post and engage regularly across social platforms. Watchtower weeds out bots, influencers, and paid panelists.

Our platform uses AI to define target audiences based on job role, industry, region, and company size. Then it surfaces posts that match these criteria, using a blend of keyword and semantic search.

It doesn't stop at finding mentions. Watchtower applies advanced filters to distinguish signal from noise, then re-weights results to ensure what you're seeing reflects your actual market, not just the loudest voices.

Once the AI has done its job, our strategy team interprets patterns, uncovers insights, and transforms findings into actionable strategies for marketers.

Whether you're testing messaging, tracking category shifts, monitoring buyer sentiment, or validating your brand positioning pre-launch, Watchtower helps you go to market with more clarity and less risk. And unlike traditional research, our platform isn't constrained to single moments in time. It pulls from a live, dynamic sample that you track longitudinally to see how conversations evolve month by month, quarter over quarter.

Use Cases



Buyer intelligence for GTM planning

A leading chipmaker used Watchtower to understand how IT decision-makers perceive AI PCs. We uncovered what they're excited about, what's holding them back, and who they believe these products are truly for (informing both sales enablement and messaging strategy).



Persona development and activation

One of the world's largest software companies uses Watchtower to power live, quarterly-updated personas. Tracking shifting priorities, pain points, and content preferences across roles, they've fine-tuned their campaigns for greater precision.



Transforming brand health tracking

A global enterprise tech brand used Watchtower to expand beyond a small-sample annual brand tracker. Their dynamic dataset now reflects over 600,000 signals across key markets, enabling them to measure brand breadth and track KPIs over time.

Inside the machine

Watchtower mirrors a full-cycle research process. It's just faster, more adaptive, and built for scale. Here's how it works:

01

Audience definition

It begins with identifying the right audience. Not only based on job titles or static profiles, but also on how people actually communicate and engage. Using machine learning, Watchtower builds compound audiences through multiple filters, including job function, industry, region, company size, and more.

02

Signal discovery

From there, Watchtower runs a lexical (keyword-based) and semantic (context-based) search across a live panel of over 10 million users. This ensures it captures both direct mentions and adjacent, meaningful conversations—even when people use different language to describe the same ideas.

03

Relevance filtering

The platform next runs a two-stage filtering process. First, it uses a bi-encoder model to perform a fast, wide sweep that eliminates clear mismatches—much like scanning resumes for basic criteria. Then, it applies a cross-encoder model to compare the content and query in tandem, tapping deep neural networks to rank the relevance of each post with much greater precision. This isolates the strongest, most meaningful signals for analysis.

04

Real-time classification

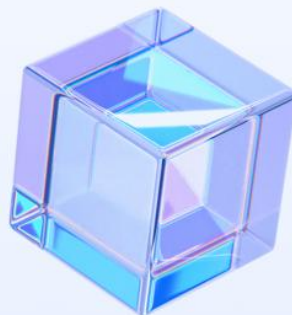
Watchtower doesn't rely on pre-trained examples to understand each new topic. Instead, it applies zero-shot classification to analyze new contexts in real-time. It also employs a technique called entailment to infer intent and audience fit based on how users talk (not just what their bios say).

Inside the machine

05

Rebalancing the dataset

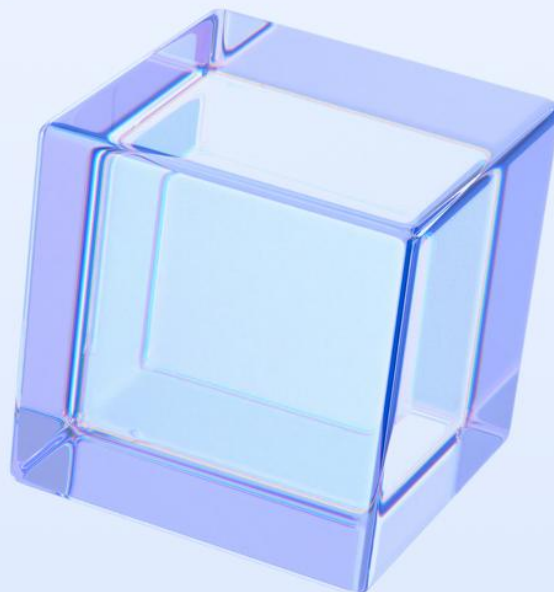
To ensure research-grade reliability, Watchtower re-weights data with post-stratification methods. This adjusts for over- or underrepresentation across key variables such as demographics, geography, and posting frequency—so insights reflect your true market.



06

Structuring the output

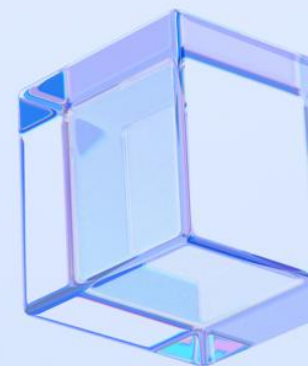
Once noise is stripped out and a dataset is validated, Watchtower turns raw input into structured insight: themes, sentiment groupings, quantified metrics, and time-based comparisons.



07

Human review and packaging

Finally, our strategy team interprets, validates, and shapes the output into reports or narratives that help marketers act with confidence. It's the best of both worlds—AI for speed and scale, human intelligence for insight and meaning.



Where research goes from here

Less certainty. Smaller teams. Tighter budgets.
And yet marketing is asked to do more than ever before.

You're expected to make faster decisions, show greater impact, and build stronger strategies, all while navigating shifting buyer behavior and a flood of contradictory data.

Traditional research methods just can't keep up anymore. Surveys are slow; panels are limited. Listening tools tell you who's loud, not what's significant.

That's why Intercept believes the future belongs to marketers who embrace a different model.

AI-powered research helps you:

- Move faster without sacrificing depth
- Surface real insight from organic conversation (not pre-selected questions)
- Track sentiment over time, not just in snapshots
- Replace gut feel with statistically sound, strategist-validated direction

[Get in touch](#)

To be clear, we are 'Team Human.' Our goal is not to replace researchers or our instincts. We're giving marketers the confidence to act, backed by insight that's built for the pace and pressure of modern B2B.

Yes, AI is changing everything. What remains unchanged is this: marketers who gain a deeper understanding of their audience create more effective campaigns and drive better business results.

When priorities and KPIs compete, it's no longer humanly possible to simultaneously do it all. The smartest teams are combining human and AI capabilities to achieve strategic judgment at machine-powered scale.

Watchtower turns the largest living dataset in the world into a constant stream of actionable insight. Discover what your audience is saying, right now.