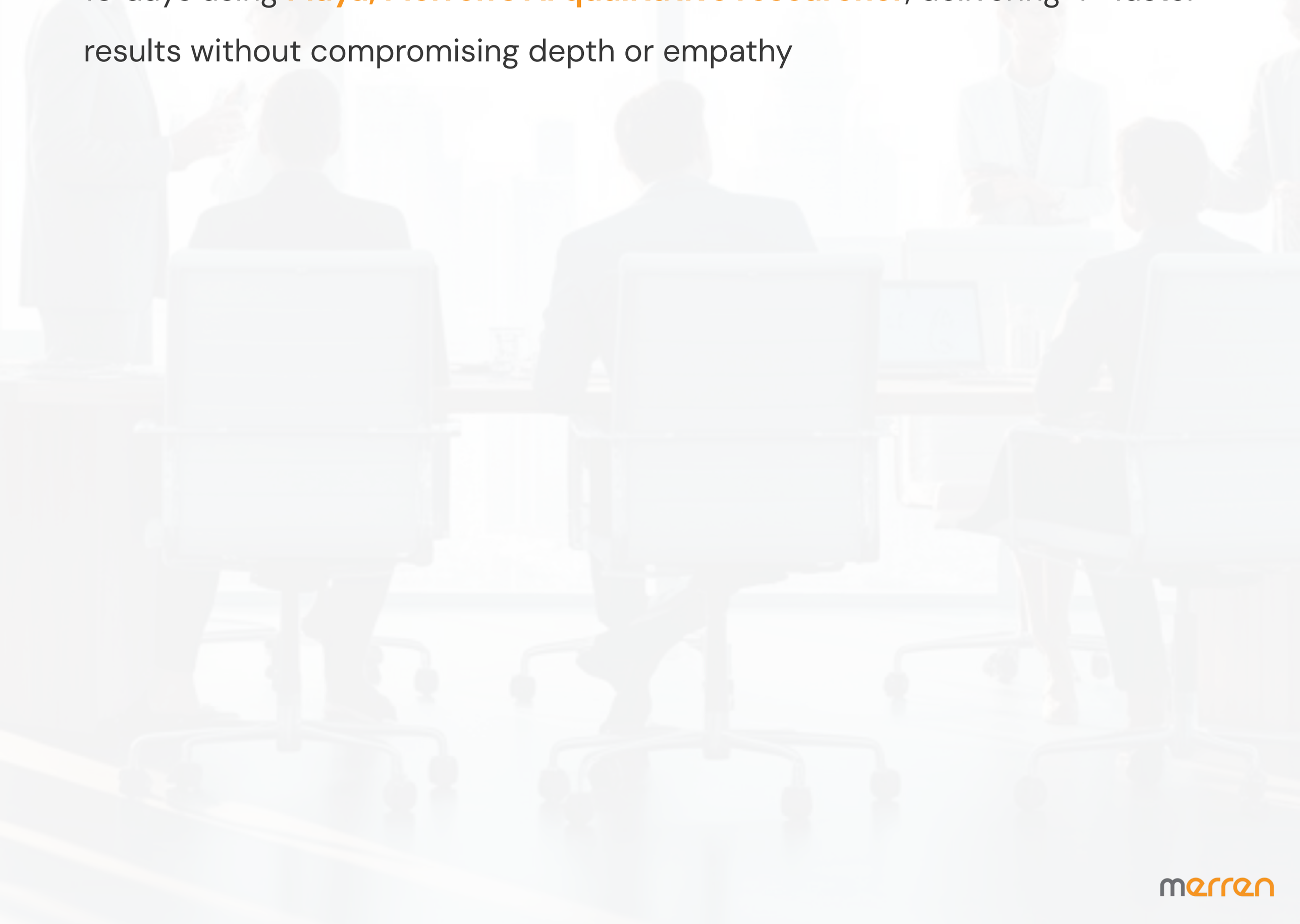
Case Study: October 2025

Understanding Mid-Career Executives in Urban India

How a leading digital-wellness company unlocked deep consumer insights in 10 days using **Maya, Merren's AI qualitative researcher**, delivering 4× faster results without compromising depth or empathy



Executive Summary: Maya AI Research for Urban India

This case study outlines how Merren's AI qualitative researcher, Maya, delivered rapid, actionable insights for a digital-wellness company, enabling timely strategic decisions for the Indian market.

The Challenge: Urgent Market Insights

A leading digital-wellness company required **rapid qualitative research** to inform critical strategy decisions for the highly competitive festive season in urban India. Traditional research methodologies proved too time-consuming for the tight market window.

The Solution: Maya AI Researcher

Merren deployed its advanced AI qualitative researcher, Maya, to gather and analyze in-depth feedback from mid-career executives across India's top metros. Maya's capabilities ensured both **speed and depth** without compromising data quality.

Key Results & Efficiency

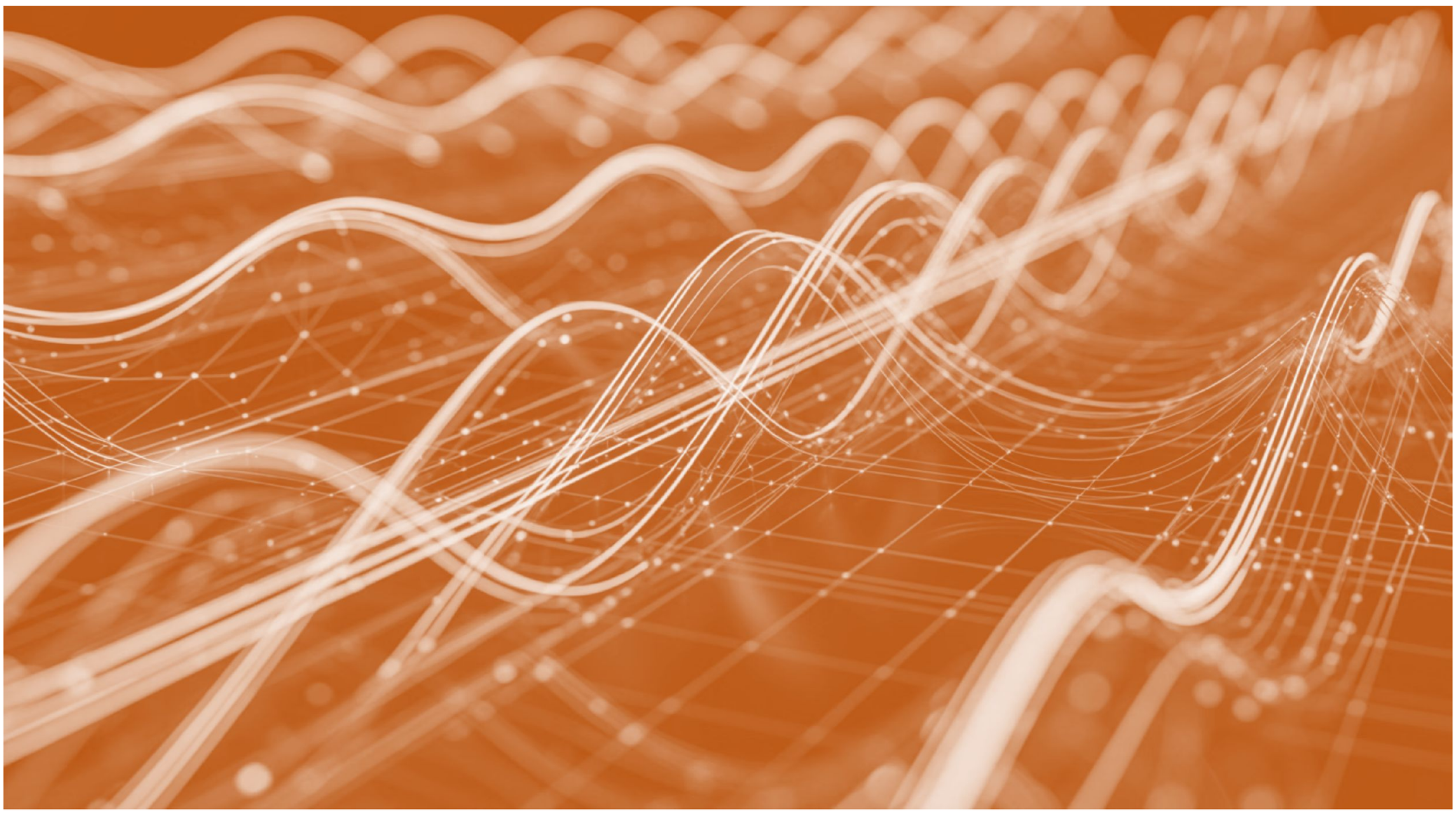
Maya delivered unprecedented research efficiency:

- Total Project Duration: **10 days**
- 25 Interviews study conducted in just **10 days**
- Speed Advantage: **4x faster** than conventional qualitative research methods

Strategic Business Impact

The rapid insights generated by Maya provided significant business advantages:

- Successfully informed and optimized the **festive season strategy**.
- Validated and guided **expansion plans** into Tier-2 cities.
- Enabled the client to gain a **competitive edge** through agile market understanding and responsive product development.



The Client Challenge

Target Audience

Mid-career executives aged 40–50 years across India's major metropolitan hubs, Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore. These high-value consumers represent a critical segment navigating complex life transitions and wellness decisions.

Research Objectives

Understanding evolving priorities across five critical dimensions: physical health, mental well-being, financial planning, family dynamics, and retirement preparedness. The goal was actionable insights to refine product offerings.

Time Pressure

With the festive season approaching, the client needed comprehensive qualitative insights within two weeks, a timeline that would challenge traditional research methodologies and require innovative solutions.

For a digital-wellness company operating in India's competitive market, understanding the nuanced needs of mid-career professionals was essential for product-market fit. This demographic faces unique pressures, balancing demanding careers with family responsibilities while planning for an uncertain future. Their wellness decisions are influenced by cultural expectations, financial constraints, and changing social norms around health and self-care.

Traditional research approaches posed significant obstacles. Busy executives have limited availability for lengthy interviews. Coordinating schedules across three major cities would require substantial logistical effort. Moreover, discussing personal topics like mental health, finances, and retirement requires building trust and creating safe conversational spaces, something that typically takes time and skilled human moderators to achieve effectively.

The Traditional Research Dilemma

1	2	3
4–6 Week Timeline Standard qualitative studies require extensive planning, recruitment, scheduling, conducting interviews, transcription, and analysis, far exceeding the client's two-week deadline.	Coordination Complexity Scheduling in-depth interviews with busy C-suite executives across three cities involves multiple touchpoints, rescheduling, and logistical challenges that delay insights.	Depth vs. Scale Tradeoff Traditional methods force researchers to choose: either conduct fewer deep interviews or sacrifice conversational depth for structured surveys that miss nuanced emotional insights.

The client faced a classic research paradox. They needed the rich, contextual understanding that comes from qualitative conversations, the kind of insights that reveal why people make certain choices, what emotional factors drive decisions, and how cultural context shapes behavior. Structured surveys couldn't capture this depth, especially around sensitive topics like mental health struggles or retirement anxieties.

Yet traditional qualitative research couldn't meet their aggressive timeline. Recruiting 25 mid-career executives, coordinating schedules across multiple cities, conducting hour-long interviews, transcribing conversations, identifying themes, and synthesizing findings into actionable recommendations typically requires 4–6 weeks minimum. Even with parallel workstreams, the sequential nature of qualitative analysis, where early interviews inform later ones, creates unavoidable delays.

The situation demanded a fundamentally different approach: one that could deliver the empathetic depth of human conversation at the speed and scale of digital automation, without sacrificing the trust and authenticity required for exploring personal wellness topics with discerning professionals.

Enter Maya: AI-Powered Qualitative Research

Maya, Merren's AI qualitative researcher, represents a breakthrough in research methodology, combining the empathetic depth of skilled human interviewers with the speed, scale, and consistency of artificial intelligence. Unlike rigid survey tools or simple chatbots, Maya conducts genuinely adaptive conversations that feel natural and human.

Conversational Intelligence

Maya uses natural language processing to understand context, emotion, and nuance, enabling authentic dialogue that builds trust and encourages candid responses on sensitive topics.

Adaptive Probing

The AI follows emotional and contextual cues in real-time, asking relevant follow-up questions that dig deeper into interesting responses, just like an experienced human researcher would.

Multi-Language Support

Respondents can express themselves naturally in their preferred language, removing barriers that often constrain authentic self-expression in traditional research settings.

What makes Maya particularly powerful for this use case is its ability to handle the entire research lifecycle autonomously. From recruitment and scheduling through conversation facilitation to analysis and synthesis, Maya manages end-to-end execution without requiring human moderation. This doesn't mean sacrificing quality, Maya's conversational design incorporates proven qualitative research principles, including empathetic listening, probing techniques, and rapport-building strategies developed by expert researchers.

For busy mid-career executives, Maya offers unprecedented flexibility. Respondents can participate at their convenience, during commutes, between meetings, or late evening, without coordinating calendars with human interviewers. The asynchronous nature removes scheduling friction while the conversational approach maintains engagement and depth that structured surveys cannot achieve.

Study Design and Execution

1

Day 1-2: Setup & Recruitment

Maya's conversational framework was configured with research objectives, screening criteria, and interview guides. Automated recruitment identified and invited qualified mid-career executives across Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore.

2

Day 3-7: Adaptive Interviews

25 in-depth conversations conducted at respondents' convenience. Maya adapted questioning based on responses, following interesting threads and probing emotional cues while maintaining conversational flow.

3

Day 8-9: Analysis & Synthesis

Automated theme identification, sentiment analysis, and verbatim extraction. Maya generated comprehensive dashboards highlighting key patterns, emotional drivers, and actionable insights.

4

Day 10: Delivery

Final presentation with topline report, supporting verbatims, and strategic recommendations delivered to client stakeholders.

The study covered five core dimensions of mid-career wellness: physical health priorities and barriers, mental well-being challenges and coping strategies, financial planning and retirement preparedness, family dynamics and caregiving responsibilities, and lifestyle aspirations for the next decade. Maya's conversational approach allowed these topics to emerge naturally, rather than forcing rigid question sequences.

Respondents appreciated the flexibility and privacy of the format. Several noted that discussing sensitive topics like mental health struggles or financial anxieties felt easier in conversation with Maya than it might have in traditional focus groups or face-to-face interviews. The AI's non-judgmental presence and multi-language support enabled authentic self-expression without the social dynamics that sometimes inhibit candor in group settings.

Throughout the interviewing phase, Maya continuously learned and adapted. Early conversations informed later ones, with the AI identifying emerging themes and probing more deeply in subsequent interviews. This iterative approach, typically requiring manual analysis between interview waves, happened automatically in real-time, improving data quality while accelerating timeline.

Quantified Impact

4×

Faster Turnaround

10-day completion versus 5-6 week traditional timeline, enabling the client to act on insights before the festive season launch window closed.

25

In-Depth Interviews

Comprehensive conversations across three major cities, capturing diverse perspectives while maintaining conversational depth and emotional nuance.

100%

Automation Rate

End-to-end execution without human moderation, from recruitment through analysis, freeing research teams to focus on strategic interpretation.

The speed advantage wasn't merely about faster execution, it fundamentally changed the economics and scalability of qualitative research. Traditional approaches require significant per-interview costs: moderator time, transcription services, analysis labor, and coordination overhead. These costs create pressure to minimize sample sizes, often limiting studies to 8-12 interviews due to budget constraints rather than research needs.

Maya's automation enabled the client to conduct 25 interviews, more than double typical qualitative sample sizes, within the same budget and timeline. This larger sample provided richer pattern recognition across demographic segments, greater confidence in theme identification, and more diverse verbatims for stakeholder presentations. The client could explore variation across cities and demographic subgroups without the prohibitive costs that usually limit qualitative research scope.

Beyond speed and scale, respondent satisfaction emerged as an unexpected benefit. Several participants specifically mentioned enjoying the interview experience, describing it as "refreshing," "surprisingly human," and "easier than I expected." This positive experience has implications for recruitment and panel management, satisfied respondents are more likely to participate in future research and provide candid, thoughtful responses rather than rushing through to completion.

What Customers Are Saying

Research Participant

> "Damn cool the assistant was. It beats communicating with your average call-center rep."

, Customer, digital-wellness company

Company Leadership

> "This is a real game changer for customer interviews. This is how I see future customer interviews taking place. For companies like us, it just makes it so much faster to understand feedback, learn, and iterate."

, CEO, digital-wellness company

These testimonials reveal something profound about AI qualitative research: when done well, it doesn't feel like talking to a machine. The conversational intelligence, adaptive probing, and empathetic tone design create experiences that respondents find engaging and even enjoyable. The participant who compared Maya favorably to call-center representatives highlights an important insight, many "human" interactions in customer service feel scripted and frustrating, while well-designed AI conversations can feel more attentive and responsive.

The CEO's perspective captures the strategic value beyond individual studies. Traditional qualitative research cycles, 4-6 weeks per study, create a fundamental constraint on organizational learning velocity. Companies conduct qualitative research quarterly or semi-annually because the time and cost investment limits frequency. This means product teams often work with outdated insights, unable to validate hypotheses or explore emerging customer needs in real-time.

Maya's 10-day turnaround transforms qualitative research from an occasional deep-dive to an ongoing learning capability. Product teams can test concepts, explore reactions to competitive launches, or investigate unexpected churn patterns without waiting months for insights. This acceleration of the learning loop enables faster iteration, more customer-centric decision-making, and ultimately better product-market fit.

Expanding into Small Town India

Encouraged by the metropolitan study results, the digital-wellness company is now planning to expand Maya's deployment into Tier-2 cities across India. This expansion represents both an opportunity and a test of Maya's capabilities in more diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Language Diversity

Tier-2 cities require research in regional languages and handling accents.. Maya's multi-language support enables natural conversations without requiring bilingual moderators in each region.

Cultural Nuance

Wellness concepts, family structures, and financial priorities vary significantly across India's regions. Maya's adaptive probing can explore these differences without imposing metropolitan assumptions.

Market Opportunity

Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities represent massive untapped markets for digital wellness solutions. Understanding these consumers' unique needs is critical for inclusive product development.

Traditional qualitative research in Tier-2 cities faces even greater logistical challenges than metropolitan studies. Finding qualified moderators with local language skills and cultural knowledge is difficult. Travel costs and coordination complexity multiply when researchers must visit multiple smaller cities. These barriers mean that many companies simply skip Tier-2 research or rely on limited surveys that miss critical context.

Maya removes these barriers. AI interviews can scale across geographies without travel costs or local recruiting challenges. The same conversational framework that worked in Mumbai can adapt to regional contexts, with language support and cultural sensitivity built into the platform. This democratization of research access means companies can develop truly India-wide strategies informed by diverse consumer voices, not just metropolitan perspectives.

The expansion also represents a philosophical shift in how companies think about market research. Rather than treating qualitative research as a specialized, expensive tool reserved for major strategic questions, Maya enables continuous listening across all customer segments. This ongoing dialogue helps companies stay connected to evolving needs, identify emerging opportunities, and build products that resonate across India's incredible diversity.

The Future of Qualitative Research

0

1

Speed Meets Depth

AI qualitative research delivers the rich, contextual insights of traditional methods at digital speed, enabling faster learning cycles and more agile decision-making.

0

2

Scale Without Sacrifice

Automation removes the economic tradeoffs between sample size and depth, companies can conduct more interviews, across more segments, without proportional cost increases.

0

3

Democratized Access

By reducing barriers of time, cost, and logistics, AI qualitative research makes deep consumer understanding accessible to more organizations and enables research in previously underserved markets.

This case study demonstrates a fundamental transformation in qualitative research methodology. For decades, the field has been constrained by an unavoidable tension: deep understanding requires time-intensive human conversation, but time and human labor are expensive and don't scale. Companies were forced to choose between superficial surveys that reach many people or rich interviews that reach few.

AI qualitative researchers like Maya resolve this tension. They bring the empathetic, adaptive qualities of skilled human interviewers, building rapport, following interesting threads, probing emotional cues, while operating at the speed and scale of digital technology. This isn't about replacing human researchers but augmenting their capabilities, handling execution while freeing strategic thinkers to focus on interpretation and application.

FAQs on Maya, the AI Qual Researcher

Q1. Why should I use an AI voice interviewer instead of online forms or traditional interviews?
Most online forms get ignored, and when people do fill them, their answers are short and surface-level. Traditional interviews, on the other hand, are rich but take weeks to organize and are expensive. Maya combines the best of both: it feels like a real conversation but scales to dozens or even hundreds of respondents at once, with results in just a few days.

Q2. What problems does Maya solve in my day-to-day?
You don't have to spend time recruiting, scheduling, moderating, or typing up notes. Instead, you can run more projects in parallel, get toplines without the manual grind, and focus on telling the story to your stakeholders.

Q3. How does Maya save me time compared to doing qual myself?
Normally, you'd spend days planning guides, conducting calls, and transcribing. With Maya, you type in your research objective, and it generates the discussion guide, runs the conversations using voice AI, transcribes them, and even pulls out the highlights. That means hours of work reduced to minutes of setup.

Q4. What kinds of projects are best suited for Maya?
Maya is best for projects where you need quick consumer reactions:
- Ad and campaign testing before launch
- Pack or product design feedback
- Churn reasons from exiting customers
- Experience checks (NPS, CSAT with probing)
- Quick exploratory interviews when you don't have time for a full study

Q5. Can Maya handle different languages and accents?
Yes. Maya is trained in about 30 major global languages and understands accents and code-switching (e.g., switching between multiple languages). This is crucial for reaching diverse consumer groups.

Q6. How natural is the conversation , will respondents feel comfortable?
Maya uses a human-like, neutral-accent voice. It pauses, probes politely, and follows conversational cues. Respondents quickly forget they're speaking to AI , especially if the interview is short (10–15 minutes).

Q7. Can Maya show stimuli and capture feedback?
Yes. You can show images or short videos (like ads or pack shots), then Maya asks respondents for their reactions immediately. It's almost like sitting in a personal interview, but faster and more controlled.

Q8. How does Maya probe deeper like a human moderator would?
The probing is adaptive and varies by response. If someone says, "It was fine," Maya can follow up with, "Could you tell me what you liked about it?" or "What could have been better?"

Q9. How fast will I get toplines and transcripts?
You will get full transcripts and an AI-generated topline summary with the most relevant quotes almost as soon as the interview is over. You can also generate a first draft PowerPoint® report within minutes of data collection

Q10. Will respondents really talk to a bot?
Yes. As long as the setup is clear ("this is a quick voice interview"), most people are happy to share. Busy executives, Gen Z and millennials in particular are very comfortable with voice interactions.

Q11. Will responses be shallow compared to real qual?
No. Because of adaptive probing and the comfort of talking into their phone in a familiar setting, respondents often open up more than they do with a stranger.

Q12. Can Maya replace human moderators?
Not completely. Human moderators are still valuable for deep, strategic explorations. Maya complements them by handling repetitive, scalable, fast-turnaround projects where cost or speed is a barrier.

Q13. What about respondent fatigue if it feels scripted?
Maya interviews are short, conversational, and to the point. No 50-question surveys. Respondents are done in under 20 minutes, which feels natural and engaging.

Maya by Merren:
Real Conversations. Real Insights. Real Fast.

About Merren-IO:

Merren is an AI-powered customer insights platform that helps businesses collect, analyze, and act on feedback in real time.

With multichannel survey automation and **Maya**, our AI qualitative interviewer, Merren makes in-depth, human-like research possible at scale , across voice, WhatsApp, and chat.

For More Information Contact:

Sumit Saxena | *Sumit.saxena@merren.io* | +91-9820160880