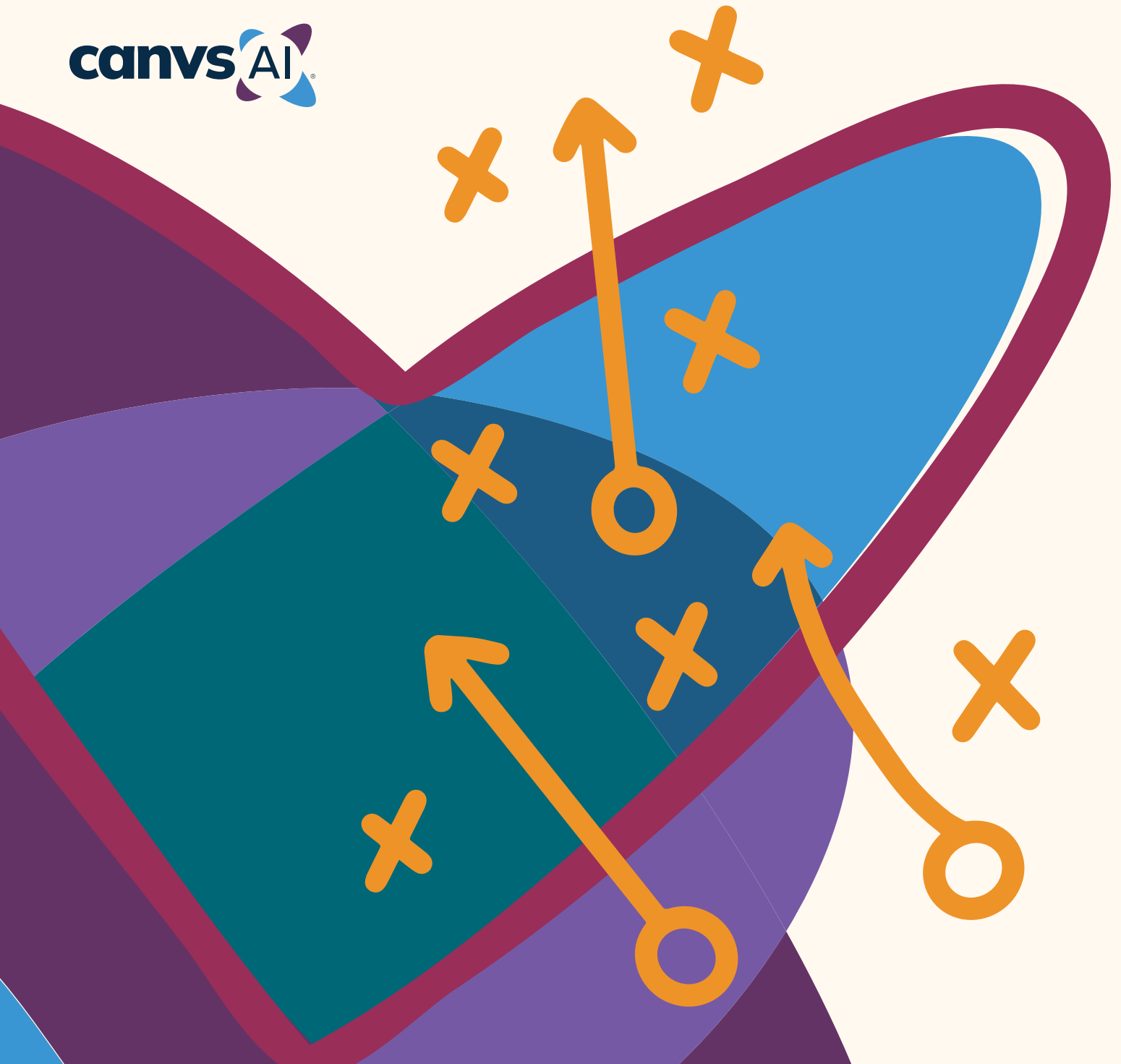


The Empathy Playbook:

3 Key Plays from Leading Brands to Unlock Consumer Empathy



Foreword

A word from our CEO and Founder, Jared Feldman

At Canvs AI, our mission is to help create a more empathetic world. Empathy, in my view, is one of the most powerful skills that a person—or company—can possess. Beyond altruism, empathy is a competitive differentiator. I hope that after reading this ebook, you will join us on our mission to empower empathy. By leveraging the insights and strategies shared here, you can help your organization not only thrive but also make a positive impact on your customers and the world.



*Best,
Jared Feldman*

Table of Contents

Introduction

SECTION 01

Understanding Consumer Empathy 5

SECTION 02

The Role of Unstructured Feedback 7

SECTION 03

Playbooks from our customers 9

SECTION 04

Practical Tips to Elevate Consumer Empathy 13

Conclusion

Introduction

Every year, billions of dollars—\$84.3 billion in 2023 to be exact—are spent on market research to help companies better understand their consumers.¹ On paper, it seems like a no-brainer. Of course, companies should take the time to understand their consumers and the market. But in reality, taking the time to elevate your empathy toward your consumers, market, or employees can have a massive impact on:

- **Loyalty:** Customers who give a brand high trust scores are three times more likely to stick with it through a mistake. Eighty-eight percent say they're more likely to buy from that brand again, and 62% will buy almost exclusively from the brand ([HBR](#)).
- **Revenue:** Over two-thirds of customer loyalty is driven by customer experience, which can be significantly enhanced through detailed customer feedback and market research. Additionally, 61% of consumers are willing to pay at least 5% more for a good customer experience ([Gartner](#)).
- **Growth:** Companies that achieve long-term profitable growth have Net Promoter Scores (NPS) two times higher than the average company. Bain's Net Promoter System leaders, on average, grow at more than twice the rate of competitors ([Bain](#)).

Why is this the case? Harvard-trained and published neuroscientist, Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor puts it best:

"Most of us think of ourselves as thinking creatures that feel, but we are actually feeling creatures that think."

Brands that gain a competitive edge are those that truly understand and connect with their customers on an emotional level. By fostering empathy and leveraging comprehensive market research, brands can drive loyalty, revenue, and growth, creating a more resilient and thriving business.

In this ebook, we'll walk you through the steps you should take to unlock consumer empathy and how leading brands like Tillamook, PODs and FOSSIL have paved the way. You'll discover practical strategies and real-world examples to help your business build stronger, more empathetic relationships with your consumers, ultimately driving better business outcomes.

¹ [Statista](#) - Global Revenue of Market Research Companies

SECTION 01

Understanding Consumer Empathy

What is Empathy?

Empathy is simply “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.” It’s the intersection of awareness and emotion, or better yet, awareness of emotion.

Why is Empathy Important in Business?

When we talk about empathy in consumer insights or customer experience, it means taking the time to truly hear feedback and understand how your consumers, users, customers, and employees feel and why. This kind of empathy can be a game-changer for business outcomes—from the products you make and the services you provide to your creative content and beyond.

Empathy drives loyalty, boosts revenue, and fuels growth. Brands that understand and connect with their customers on an emotional level are more likely to retain those customers and see higher lifetime values. Empathy isn’t just a feel-good strategy; it’s a proven path to better business outcomes.

The Challenges of Practicing Empathy

So, if empathy is so beneficial, why isn’t every brand doing it? Great question. Unlocking consumer empathy at scale is not as simple as it sounds because to uncover how consumers feel and why, you need to use their words—which means analyzing open-ended and unstructured feedback. This means you have to overcome:

- **Data overload:** Unstructured feedback comes in floods from survey open-ends, social media comments, community feedback, in-depth interviews (IDIs), consumer journals, and more. Analyzing these at low volumes is manageable, but at scale, it can make even the most seasoned insights professionals’ heads spin. The sheer volume of data can be overwhelming and difficult to process without the right tools and strategies.



- **Complex analysis:** Managing the flood of data is one thing, but structuring and formatting it for consistent analysis is a massive resource drain and time suck. Unstructured data is inherently messy, requiring either advanced text analytics or a purpose-built solution to turn it into actionable insights. This complexity is what largely causes many insights professionals to shy away from, and even fear, unstructured data.
- **Inconsistencies and bias:** Because unstructured feedback is so rich and nuanced, it can be very easy to introduce inconsistencies and bias in the analysis process. Human analysts may unintentionally impose their own biases or misinterpret the context of the feedback.

Think of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s mariner’s tale: “*Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink.*” Similarly, brands often find themselves in a sea of feedback but struggle to analyze it effectively. In order to make unstructured feedback a first-class source of insights to unlock consumer empathy, insights teams must start by addressing these challenges. With the right technology and approach, brands can effectively harness the power of unstructured feedback to drive empathy and make data-driven decisions that enhance customer experience and business outcomes.

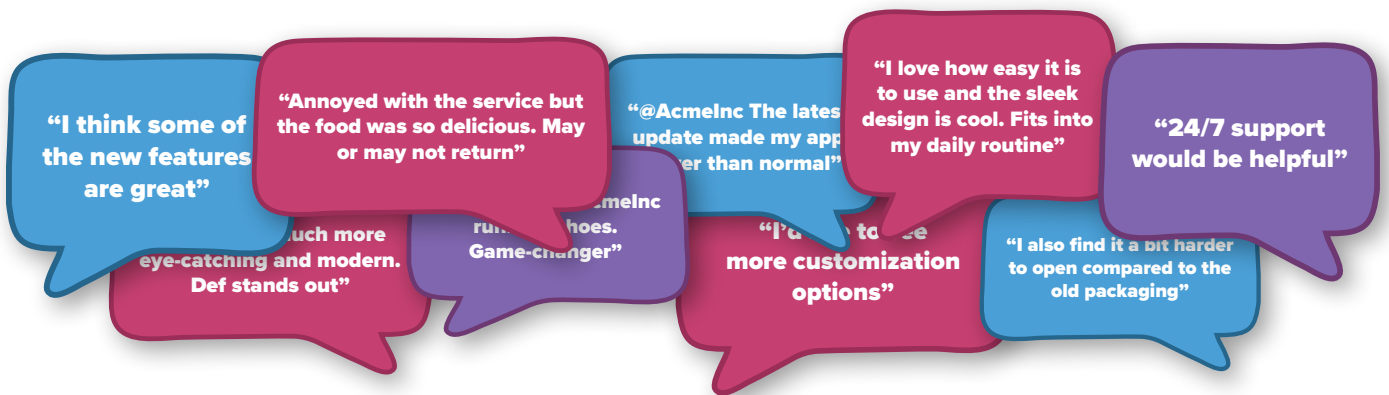


SECTION 02

The Role of Unstructured Feedback

Unstructured Feedback: The first-class source of insights for empathy

Unstructured feedback—like survey open ends, focus group and interview transcripts, social media comments, and online customer reviews—is where consumers freely share their thoughts and feelings. This type of feedback provides a raw and unfiltered view into consumer sentiment, making it the best source to uncover true empathy.



Why Unstructured Feedback Matters

There are few scalable substitutes for the nuance and detail that open-ended text delivers.

Open-ended responses present a more complete and nuanced picture of consumer attitudes, preferences, and feelings, free from the limitations of predetermined answer options.

Increasingly, feedback captured across customer touchpoints is viewed as the best source for an unfiltered view into the customer's mind.

- **Depth of Insight:** Open-ended feedback allows consumers to express themselves in their own words, providing richer insights compared to structured feedback. This depth is critical for understanding the full range of consumer emotions and experiences.
- **Nuance and Context:** Unlike multiple-choice questions, open-ended responses capture the nuance and context behind consumer opinions. This helps businesses understand not just what consumers think, but why they think that way.

Challenges in Analyzing Unstructured Feedback

Despite its value, unstructured feedback is notoriously difficult to analyze at scale. Here are some common challenges:

- 1. Volume and Complexity:** Organizations receive vast amounts of unstructured feedback from various channels. Analyzing this data manually is time-consuming and often impractical.
- 2. Analysis Tools:** Traditional text analysis tools can be either too complex or too simplistic. Highly complex tools may require specialized skills, while simple tools like word counts fail to capture the true sentiment and context.
- 3. Resource Constraints:** Many organizations lack the resources—both in terms of technology and personnel—to effectively process and analyze unstructured data.
- 4. Missed Insights:** Without proper analysis, critical insights can be overlooked. For instance, a leading food company might miss consumer insights about their retail shopping experience, or a restaurant chain might not fully understand guest responses to new menu items without analyzing open-ended feedback.

The Risk of Ignoring Unstructured Feedback

If you're not fully utilizing unstructured feedback you risk missing out on critical consumer perspectives, which can negatively impact key business outcomes like:

- 1. CPG:** A brand may misjudge the impact a new type of packaging or design has on the purchase intent of an existing product.
- 2. Beauty:** A newly designed fragrance may not capture the nuanced preferences of the target market.
- 3. Entertainment:** A media brand might persist with unpopular content, leading to declining viewership and lost advertising revenue.
- 4. Healthcare:** A hospital system might overlook critical feedback that could dramatically improve patient experience.
- 5. Retail:** A food company might fail to address long checkout times or unfriendly staff, leading to declining store visits and revenue.
- 6. Services:** A moving and storage provider might overlook issues like poor handling of items, causing decreased customer loyalty and negative word-of-mouth.

SECTION 03

Playbooks from Our Customers

Let's look at some real-life examples of brands that have truly embraced consumer empathy as a superpower by unlocking the full value of unstructured feedback.

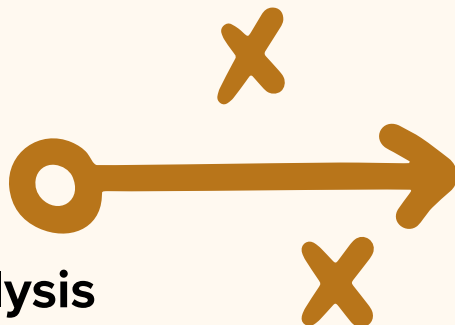
PLAY 01:

Research Community Feedback



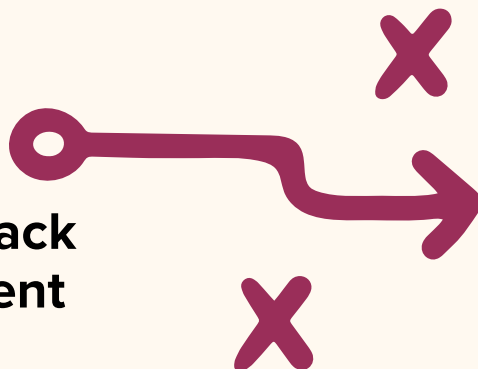
PLAY 02:

Voice of Customer Analysis



PLAY 03:

Product Feedback and Development



Boost Customer Lifetime Value with Community Feedback



The Tillamook team needed new ways to drive brand love and loyalty to work toward the business goal of “more hands, more often.”

Data Used:

Their in-house insights team used an online consumer research community to create a five-day food diary study with 130 participants. The team received over 8,000 journal entries to analyze!

? What attributes do consumers seek when selecting food to eat?

? What are deeper emotional consumer needs that we can address?

Impact:

With these insights generated from unstructured consumer feedback, the Tillamook team uncovered from an independent study that insights rooted in empathy drive five times higher customer lifetime value for their brand. With Canvs' help, Tillamook was able to move away from manually coding open ends, saving their team 10 to 15 hours a week. This shift allowed the team to focus more on the “why” behind consumer behavior rather than just the “what,” dramatically boosting productivity and enjoyment within the insights team.

Analytics & Insights:

8,000 responses

The team uploaded all 8,000 responses to the Canvs AI platform and relied on the high-trust research assistant to prompt answers to their business question directly from their dataset. They found that:

- Consumers seek food that satisfies their hunger and cravings, tastes delicious and flavorful, and provides a feeling of emotional comfort.
- Emotional comfort in food refers to feelings of satisfaction, happiness, and contentment associated with taste, texture, or nostalgic memories tied to the food.
- Consumers want nostalgic foods because these often evoke positive memories and emotions from their past, providing a sense of comfort, familiarity, and happiness. Nostalgic foods remind people of simpler times, cherished experiences, and connections with loved ones.

“Canvs AI has helped us with speed, accuracy, and ultimately that deeper empathy that we’re really seeking as a team and as a brand.”

Olivia Zabrodsky,
Consumer and Market Insights Manager

Transform Customer Experience with Targeted Insights from CSAT Surveys



Improve customer experience by understanding the “why” in consumer feedback.

Data Used:

The PODS customer experience team used tens of thousands of open ends from experience surveys to uncover the key pain points experienced by their consumers.

Analytics & Insights:

The team utilized the Canvs AI platform to process, analyze and extract meaningful insights directly from the data. The analysis revealed:

- Key pain points in the customer journey, such as issues with delivery times and handling of items.
- Positive sentiments about the convenience and flexibility of PODS services.
- Specific areas for improvement in customer service interactions and support.

Impact:

With the insights generated from unstructured feedback, PODS made several strategic changes that significantly improved customer satisfaction. Key outcomes included:

- The ability to identify and anticipate specific issues to improve training.
- A thorough understanding of differences between customer segments to tailor how feedback is applied.
- Increased focus on communication and support throughout the customer journey, leading to higher customer retention and positive reviews.

The Solution:

The use of Canvs AI allowed PODS to move away from manual analysis, saving substantial time and resources when managing their millions of open ends.

“Canvs provides our ‘why’ behind the score better than other text analytic tools in the industry.”

Logan Fern,
Customer Experience Analyst

Refine the Customer Journey with Voice of Customer Feedback

FOSSIL

To understand how they could better connect with customers as a brand.

Data Used:

The Fossil team had an abundance of feedback—from surveys, online reviews, ethnography studies, etc.—but lacked the resources to analyze the open-ended responses effectively until they partnered with Canvs AI.

Analytics & Insights:

With the help of Canvs AI, the Fossil team was able to leverage customer feedback across the customer lifecycle, from marketing messaging and product development to refining customer experience. They discovered:

- What was and wasn't working in the messaging for the latest marketing campaign based on real consumer emotions and feedback.
- Actionable insights for the customer care team, providing feedback from users on both products and services received.

Impact:

Adopting Canvs AI resulted in significant improvements for both the insights team and the teams they support:

- The insights team can now keep pace with stakeholder demands, delivering reports with up to 5,000 open ends in as little as a day.
- The marketing team can craft messaging and creative with high confidence, knowing it resonates with real consumer feedback.
- The customer care team receives the necessary information to train their representatives, maximizing customer satisfaction in every engagement.

"We started using Canvs last year, and it has been a game changer for us. We've started to embrace open ends, and we are not fearing it anymore."

Deepa Iyer,
Head of Data Science and Market Research

SECTION 04

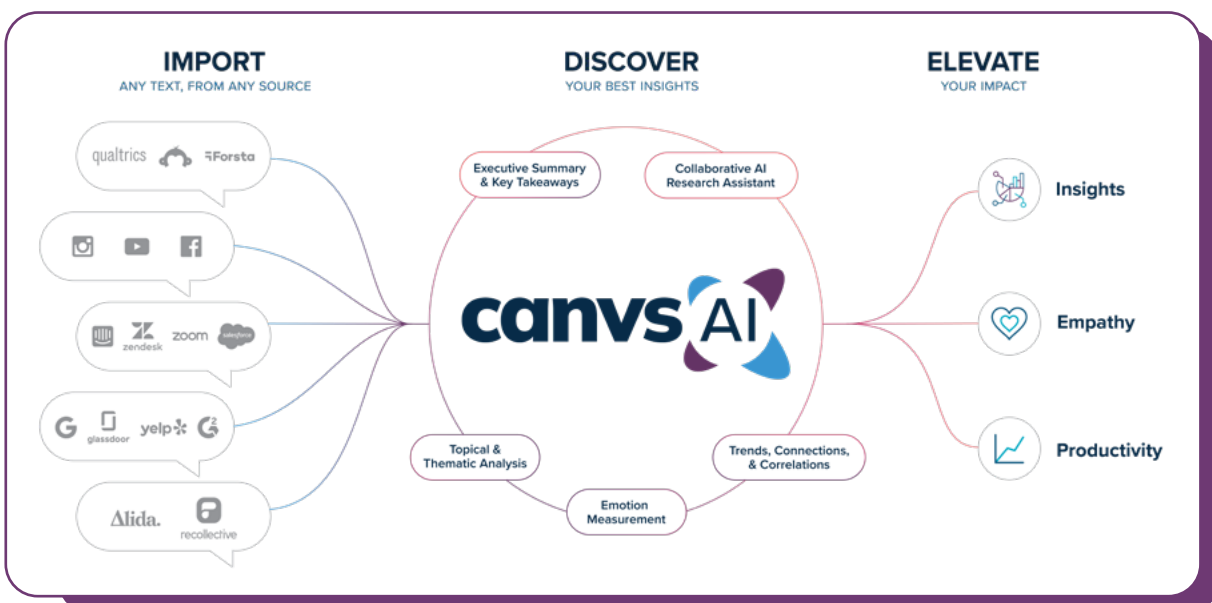
Practical Tips to Elevate Consumer Empathy

It's inspiring to see what can happen when you make empathy a core business goal. No matter what industry you're in, taking the time to understand not only what consumers are saying but how they feel and why can have massive impacts on your business: from improving products and services to boosting satisfaction and loyalty. Now, let's dive into outlining your action plan for repeatable results.

What Tillamook, PODS and Fossil had in common:

Aside from a common goal to do more with their consumer feedback, these brands chose to trust the analysis of their unstructured consumer feedback to a best-of-breed tool like Canvs AI. The importance of using a tool like Canvs AI includes:

- **Consistent Analysis:** Gain a consistent analysis of any source of unstructured text.
- **Understanding and Quantifying Feedback:** Easily understand and quantify themes, topics, and emotions in feedback.
- **Removing Bias:** Ensure that feedback analysis is objective and free from bias.
- **Segmented Insights:** The ability to filter and create crosstabs to understand unique segments of feedback.
- **Efficiency and Data-Driven Storytelling:** Boost efficiency and enhance data-driven storytelling with the help of generative AI.



Evaluate your readiness to unlock consumer empathy at scale:

Data Sources:

- Can you easily and efficiently prepare unique data sources for consistent analysis?
- Do you have the tools and resources to manage large volumes of feedback?
- Can you consistently add data to existing projects to track changes over time?

Analysis:

- Do you have the tooling to easily and consistently uncover key topics, themes, and emotions in unstructured feedback?
- Can you create cross tabulations to uncover and compare results across different segments of your data?
- Can you effectively quantify results and responses from unstructured data?
- Do you have access to purpose-built tooling that can help you avoid bias in your analysis?

Customization:

- Do you have the ability to edit labels of topics, themes, emotions, and categories across analysis?
- Can you build custom, repeatable rules that work alongside AI to personalize analysis based on the needs of your business/use case needs?

Reporting & Data Visualization:

- Do you have the ability to easily create visualizations from your analysis that support your story-telling efforts?
- Can you send your data to other necessary tools like PowerBI or Tableau?

AI-Powered Solutions

- Does this tool protect your data security and privacy?
- Is the use of AI transparent and can you validate the findings ?
- Does the AI take an “open-source” approach or “walled garden”/”closed-domain” approach?

Conclusion

Empathy isn't just a buzzword—it's a strategic advantage that can transform your business. By truly understanding how your customers feel and why, you can drive loyalty, boost revenue, and fuel growth. The case studies of Tillamook, PODS, and Fossil demonstrate the powerful impact of leveraging unstructured feedback to foster deeper customer connections and enhance business outcomes.

These brands have shown that with the right tools, like Canvs AI, it's possible to turn vast amounts of unstructured feedback into actionable insights. By consistently analyzing feedback, understanding and quantifying themes, removing bias, and tailoring insights to specific customer segments, they have significantly improved their customer experiences and operational efficiencies.

Ready to elevate your empathy?

[Learn More at Canvs.ai](#)



Our Mission at Canvs AI

At Canvs AI, we believe open-ended text and unstructured feedback is a goldmine of customer and market insights that often goes untapped. Our mission is to empower researchers, insights, and customer experience professionals to unlock the full value of open-ended feedback to elevate their empathy. Using our purpose-built text analysis platform with high-trust AI capabilities, we help you understand consumer attitudes, preferences, and feelings across various research types, so you can discover your best insights, faster.