The Impact of Generative AI on Creativity in the Consulting Sector

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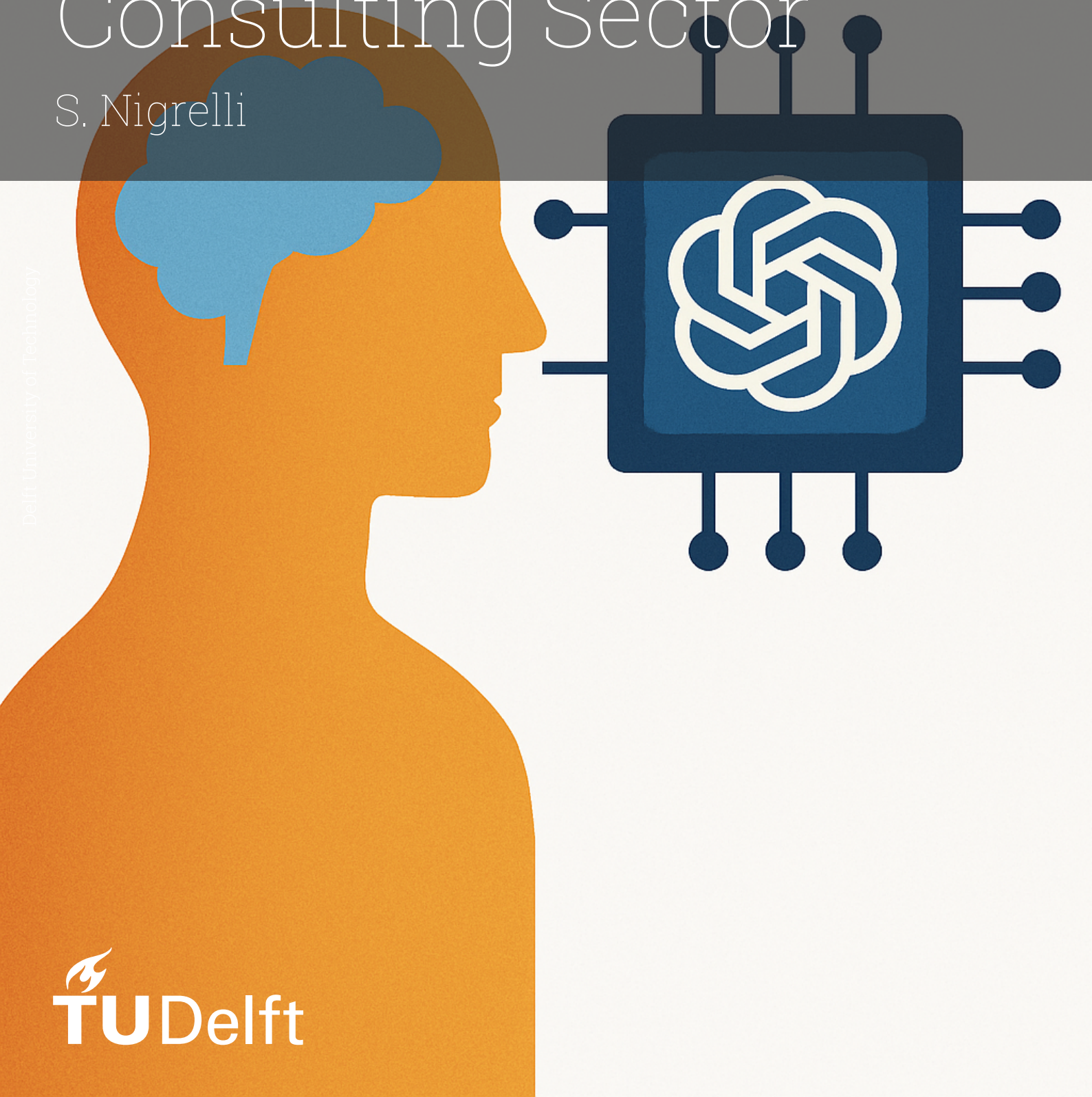

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by

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Executive Summary

This thesis investigates the impact of Generative AI, with a focus on ChatGPT Enterprise, on creativity within the consulting sector. Due to the growing concerns about AI's influence on consultants' creative capabilities, the study aims to describe how creativity is understood in this context, examine how AI is integrated into daily workflows, explore its perceived effects on creative tasks, and identify key individual factors that influence these dynamics.

Using a qualitative approach, the research is based on semi-structured interviews with fifteen professionals from the same consulting firm. The findings reveal that creativity in consulting is perceived as a multifaceted construct, encompassing adaptive problem-solving, strategic thinking, and client-centered innovation. Generative AI is widely used to automate low-value tasks, generate and refine content, support research, and facilitate brainstorming. It is frequently described as an "accelerator" and "life simplified". However, this adoption is consistently balanced by a "human-in-the-loop" validation process, reflecting a careful approach stemming from awareness of AI's limitations and potential for mistakes.

A dual impact on creativity emerges: AI acts as a powerful catalyst for idea generation, stimulates new ways of thinking, supports human-AI co-creation, and enhances collective intelligence. At the same time, concerns arise about "creative atrophy" or "laziness" due to over-reliance on AI, as well as the possible deterioration of human dialogue and interpersonal dynamics. These effects are influenced by individual factors such as openness to new technologies, trust in AI systems, and domain expertise.

The study concludes that strategic management of Generative AI is essential for fostering creativity in consulting. Rather than competing with AI, the future value of consultants will depend on their ability to leverage human-AI collaboration – amplifying uniquely human contributions through thoughtful, responsible integration.

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Introduction

In the past few years, the term artificial intelligence (AI) started spreading in our society. However, this concept is not new to the experts of the industry. The terminology 'Artificial Intelligence', also referred to as 'AI', dates back to 1956, when John McCarthy organized a conference to answer the question: "Can machines think?" (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, 2025). The definition that McCarthy (2007, p. 2) gave to AI was *"the science and engineering of making intelligent machines"*. As of today, the terminology AI does not have the same use anymore, following the release of an early demo of ChatGPT on the 30th of November 2022 (Marr, 2023b). This innovative tool was immediately able to impress those who tried it, to the point that it completely reshaped the public concept of 'Artificial Intelligence'. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, have revolutionized the way people from diverse backgrounds and roles perform their daily tasks. This impact was so powerful that the general public began to equate Large Language Models (LLMs), the technology behind Generative AI, with 'Artificial Intelligence', attributing the term 'AI' to a specific application rather than to its broader definition.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) refers to algorithms that are capable of producing new content such as text, images, audio, code, simulations, and videos (McKinsey & Company, 2024). This broad category of products is significantly shaping the 2020s: it is a key catalyst for innovation across a wide range of industries (Kundariya, 2024). The list of GenAI tools is now extensive and constantly evolving, spanning from image generators like DALL·E and Midjourney, to audio synthesis tools, such as NotebookLM, video creators, code assistants, and beyond. However, among these, one tool stands out both in terms of cultural impact and widespread adoption: ChatGPT. Its popularity has made it the icon of generative AI, introducing millions of users to the capabilities of this technology.

ChatGPT is, first of all, a chatbot. A chatbot is a software application designed to emulate human dialogue with users (IBM, 2023). But OpenAI (OpenAI, 2025), the company that developed ChatGPT, was able to upgrade the interaction between humans and machines to a level that has never been seen before. This innovative form of chatbot uses Natural Language Processing (NLP) to understand what the user is trying to communicate, making it easy for everyone to use it. This is cleverly pictured in a quote by Andrej Karpathy (2023), a well-known AI researcher and engineer: "English is the hottest new programming language".

Focusing on ChatGPT as the central example in this thesis is both intentional and practical, as it is one of the first GenAI tools to achieve mass adoption. Furthermore, its conversational nature makes it ideal for understanding how users interact with AI. While generative AI spans many modalities, ChatGPT serves as a perfect example for analyzing this emerging class of technologies.

OpenAI quickly developed a version of its innovative chatbot dedicated to businesses. On the 28th of August 2023, less than a year after the release of its early demo, ChatGPT Enterprise was released (OpenAI, 2023). As stated on their website, this premium paid version guarantees that the business data and conversation with the chatbots are kept inside the organization and are not used by OpenAI to train its models, giving the end user full control of the data (OpenAI, 2024b). Furthermore, the company itself can choose who has access to the data within the organization. Finally, OpenAI guarantees

its enterprise clients that their data is securely stored and handled. This premium service allowed companies to implement the AI chatbots in their workflows by ensuring that the exchange of information between the business users and OpenAI will not be given to the competition (nor used by OpenAI to be one day the competition themselves). As of today, a large variety of companies have already implemented AI in their workflows, from Microsoft to Coca-Cola, from Duolingo to SoftBank, improving both their processes and customer experiences (Marr, 2023a; OpenAI, 2023).

In the many variegated sectors in which AI chatbots were considered a real game changer, one will be the focus of this thesis: consulting. The largest worldwide consulting firms were some of the early adopters of this innovative technology. To give an example, in June 2023 (2 months before ChatGPT for businesses was released), already half of McKinsey's employees were using ChatGPT (Consultancy.eu, 2023).

Furthermore, on ChatGpt's webpage other consulting firms are mentioned as clients, such as Bain & Company and BCG (OpenAI, 2023). The latter is a peculiar example: BCG itself, at first, barred its consultants from using AI bots in their work (Berreby, 2023). But everything changed once Dr. Lakhani, Dell'Acqua, and their colleagues proved them wrong. Their study showed that BCG consultants produced better results when given access to AI chatbots (Dell'Acqua, 2023).

By taking a closer look at Dell'Acqua (2023) research, it is possible to find one of the reasons behind the topic of this thesis: several consultants expressed concerns that AI could disrupt their careers and alter their self-perception. The same study raised more concerns about the use of Generative AI. According to Mr. Candelon from Boston Consulting Group, almost 75% of those surveyed feared that relying on ChatGPT could lead to a decrease in their creative abilities (Berreby, 2023). As Edward de Bono once said, *"Creativity is the most important resource of all. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would be forever repeating the same patterns"* (de Bono, 1970).

In this research, we will refer to Creativity as defined by Amabile (2012, p. 3): *"Creativity is the production of a novel and appropriate response, product, or solution to an open-ended task"*. At the same time, we will further narrow down this definition by exploring how professionals in the consulting field perceive it and use it in their jobs. It is important to state that creativity in consultancy is extremely relevant. A good consultant should be able to adapt models, processes and deliverables to the specific client's needs and dynamic business environments, which helps to maintain a competitive edge (Franczak & Weinzimmer, 2022; Teece et al., 1997). With this in mind, it is clear why it is important to understand if and how the use of AI has affected creativity in the consulting sector.

1.1. Research Problem

Understanding how the implementation of Generative AI has changed the creative outcomes of professionals in the consulting field is key to analyzing the trends in this sector. In particular, now that consultants have access to this tool, one might suppose that it will drive the creative outcome of a consulting company up due to the possibility of exploring and using knowledge from fields in which they are not experts by relying on the help of the AI chatbots. For example, consultants can now ask ChatGPT the lines of a Python code by simply describing what they want, as if they were talking to a programmer, to then implement it into their workflows. All of this, without really knowing how to code. However, there might be another side to the same coin: the fear that AI will replace their jobs could lead to lower creative outcomes and, as Mr. Candelon said, "cause their own creative muscles to atrophy" (Berreby, 2023).

The objective of this thesis is to understand how creativity is perceived in the consulting industry, to examine how AI is currently utilized in this sector, and to explore the impact that AI has had on it. Furthermore, it also examines how different personal characteristics of the professionals can affect the use of AI and, consequently, the impact on their creative outcomes [Figure 1.1]

1.2. Research Question

This study aims to understand how Generative AI – in particular, ChatGPT Enterprise – impacts the creative performance of professionals in the consulting field. The central research question is:

RQ: *How does the implementation of Generative AI affect creative outcomes in the consulting sector?*

To unravel this, four sub-research questions have been developed:

Sub-questions

SQ1: *How is creativity understood in the consulting sector?*

Rationale: It is essential to understand how creativity is perceived in order to study the impact that AI has on it when referring to the consulting industry. By answering this sub-question, the findings of the paper refer to more specific manifestations of creativity, linked precisely to the consulting sector.

SQ2: *How is the use of AI affected by openness to adopting new technologies, level of trust in AI systems, and area of expertise?*

Rationale: This question examines if and how individual differences impact AI use. In particular, the focus is on three levels: how they react to new technologies in their work, their level of trust in the output of AI, and the differences in prompts given by their area of expertise.

SQ3: *How is Generative AI currently integrated into daily workflows of professionals in the consulting sector?*

Rationale: By understanding exactly where, when, and for what purposes AI is used in the consulting sector, it is possible to establish the point of origin of AI use. Understanding these patterns of integration is key, as it establishes the circumstances in which the creative processes may be enhanced or hindered.

SQ4: *Which specific types of creative tasks do professionals in the consulting field perceive as being supported or constrained by AI chatbot use?*

Rationale: This question comes to the heart of the impact of AI on creativity. It asks the interviewee to mention particular creative activities that have become easier or more difficult thanks to the use of AI. By looking at both the facilitative and limiting factors, this sub-question reveals the dual pathways by which AI affects innovative behavior.

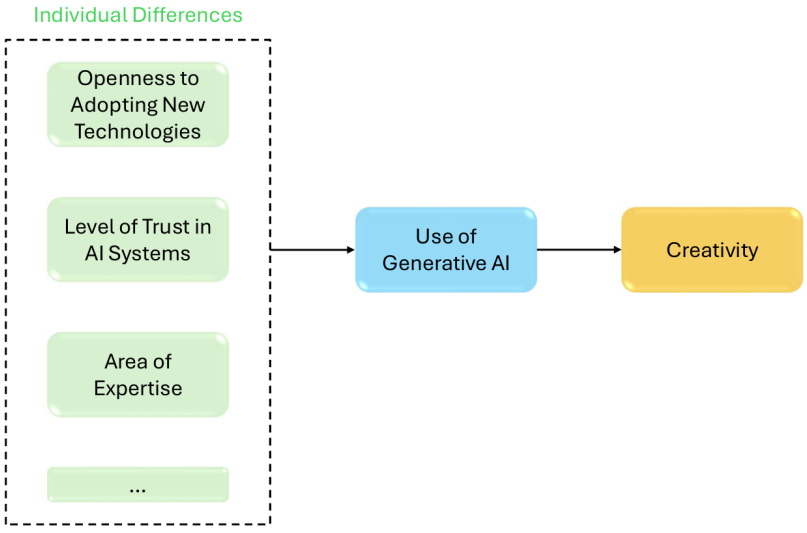

Figure 1.1: Conceptualization of the analyzed variables

1.3. Connection to Management of Technology

This research is closely related to the content of the Management of Technology program at TU Delft, which seeks to understand how new technologies impact and shape organizational practices. In examining how AI impacts the creative work of consultants, this research reflects the program's emphasis on connecting technological innovation with real-world business challenges. The study highlights how a new form of digital tool is being integrated into the consulting workflows, and how this affects the ability to generate innovative outcomes. The intersection between technology and human-centric work is then at the heart of this research, aligning with the program's goal of examining how technology can drive change into business-related environments. Furthermore, key concepts and frameworks studied in the two-year Master's have been mentioned by the interviewees and used during this research (e.g. the Five stages of Technological Adoption (Rogers, 2003))

2

Theoretical Background

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundations for analyzing the impact of Generative AI on the creative outcome of consultants. It begins by meticulously defining creativity within professional contexts and specifically understanding its multifaceted nature in the consultancy field, where it is perceived as a strategic imperative involving adaptive problem-solving, strategic thinking, and client-centered innovation. The discussion then transitions to the transformative role of AI in the consulting sector, highlighting how it reshapes knowledge work by automating tasks, enhancing productivity, and streamlining processes. A central theme explored is the dual impact of AI on creativity and cognition, revealing how it can catalyze idea generation and human-AI co-creation, while simultaneously posing concerns about ”creative atrophy” or ”laziness” due to over-reliance. Furthermore, this chapter delves into the significant role of trust and individual differences in AI adoption, examining how factors such as openness to new technologies and domain expertise influence AI use and creative outcomes. It also addresses AI integration challenges and strategic implementations within the consulting environment, culminating in the identification of specific literature gaps that this study aims to bridge regarding AI's nuanced influence on human creativity in knowledge-intensive industries.

2.1. Defining Creativity in Professional Contexts

Creativity is often associated with artistic and scientific fields. As defined by Amabile (2012), creativity can be defined as *”the production of a novel and appropriate response, product, or solution to an open-ended task”*. However, the definition of creativity can be expanded to cover strategic business applications in knowledge-intensive industries. Here, creativity is defined as the ability to generate novel and valuable ideas that drive innovation, solve problems, and create new opportunities (Jain, 2024a). This definition involves thinking outside the traditional frameworks, making the companies more competitive by providing novel and unique solutions to their clients.

In professional services, creativity encompasses both cognitive abilities and creative personalities applied individually or collaboratively to develop innovative products and services (Dul et al., 2011). It extends beyond artistic flair to foster environments where innovation thrives, enabling individuals and teams to generate novel and useful ideas, solutions, and approaches to challenges (Jain, 2024b).

Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS), a critical category of professional services, are inherently innovative and facilitate innovation in other sectors (den Hertog, 2010). These businesses are known to rely heavily on specialized professional knowledge as their competitive advantage. They also often co-create services with their clients, meaning that the quality of their services is dependent on the nature of the communication and interaction skills. KIBS are often seen as catalysts, acting as a bridge between client firms and both tacit and generic knowledge. Their creative role is then essential when facilitating knowledge flows within innovation systems.

Management Consulting Companies, as pointed out by Harvard Business School research, actively create and sustain new management ideas through the ”Creative Consulting Company” (CCC) model (Kaplan et al., 2018). Part of this is to identify the innovations, developing and explaining them by writing

articles and holding conferences, and finally consulting clients in the implementation. This process leads to enhancements in the original innovations as they were first articulated. This specific model highlights how impactful the synergies between knowledge application and creation can be.

In contemporary consulting, creativity serves as a powerful differentiator, enabling consultants to approach projects with fresh, unconventional thinking that challenges assumptions and embraces ambiguity. These skills are essential in a dynamic environment where conventional copy-and-paste methods are insufficient to maintain a competitive edge (Aslani et al., 2012). Hidalgo Nuchera and Lemus Aguilar (2014) argue that innovation in consulting firms arises through client–consultant collaboration within project-based, knowledge-intensive contexts that demand creative value generation beyond standardized deliverables. Supporting this, a field study of firms such as McKinsey and Accenture shows that consulting performance increasingly depends on rewarding creative problem-solving and the ability to deliver novel, tailored solutions in ambiguous, fast-changing environments (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006).

Teece et al. (1997) introduced the concept of dynamic capabilities, emphasizing an organization's ability to adapt, integrate, and reconfigure internal and external competencies in response to rapidly changing environments. This framework supports the view that consultants must tailor models, processes, and deliverables to meet specific client needs and evolving market conditions in order to sustain competitive advantage. An empirical study found a positive correlation between strategic orientation and adaptive capability, indicating that adapting processes in dynamic contexts support a stronger competitive position (Franczak & Weinzimmer, 2022). Creativity also allows for fostering communication of complex ideas, inspiring stakeholders to embrace and implement strategies.

The integration of design thinking into management consulting represents a significant contemporary development, fostering a human-centered approach to problem-solving. Carlgren et al. (2014) document the growing integration of design thinking into large organizations, arguing that its human-centered, exploratory methods help management practitioners address complex and ambiguous problems through empathy-driven prototyping and iterative learning. Furthermore, Dunne and Martin (2006) position design thinking as a managerial problem-solving paradigm that equips consulting professionals with empathic, user-centered approaches, enabling a shift away from rigid analytical models toward human-centered solution design. Innovative solutions can be found by uncovering insights from sympathizing with clients and end-users. Design thinking emphasizes fostering cultures of creativity through diverse teams, encouraging risk-taking, and promoting continuous learning to maintain a competitive edge.

The 2020s are widely considered the "creativity decade", with employers increasingly prioritizing creative competencies such as critical thinking and flexibility in job postings (Do et al., 2021). The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023 identifies analytical and creative thinking as leading essential skills for the future workforce (World Economic Forum, 2024). It is then clear how creativity is growing in recognition as a critical skill across all economic sectors.

2.2. Understanding of Creativity in the Consultancy Field

In the consulting sector, creativity is increasingly perceived as a strategic imperative rather than an abstract artistic concept. This shift represents a fundamental reframing from traditional views of creativity as purely inspirational to understanding it as a systematic capability essential for competitive advantage (Agars et al., 2012; Estanyol & Roca, 2015; Sandvik Madsen et al., 2015). Modern consulting organizations recognize creativity as both a discrete outcome—the generation of novel and useful solutions to client problems—and as a dynamic process involving complex interactions between individual capabilities, organizational context, and client engagement strategies (Agars et al., 2012; Sandvik Madsen et al., 2015).

The field conceptualizes creativity through multiple interconnected dimensions. At the individual level, consultant creativity manifests as the ability to generate novel and useful ideas concerning new products, practices, services, or procedures (Amabile, 2012; Coelho et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2012). However, this individual creativity is fundamentally embedded within organizational systems that either facilitate or constrain creative expression. Research demonstrates that creativity in professional service firms emerges from the confluence of six distinct but interrelated resources: intellectual abilities, knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation and environment (Villalba, 2008). This comprehensive framework, drawing from Investment Theory of Creativity (Sternberg & Lubart, 1991), positions cre-

ativity as an investment decision where consultants evaluate the potential value of novel approaches before committing resources to their development.

Process versus outcome perspectives reveal significant complexity in how creativity is understood within consulting contexts. As a process, creativity involves systematic problem identification, ideation, evaluation, and implementation phases (Chompunuch & Lubart, 2025). Contemporary research emphasizes that creativity requires employees to take time to examine current situations and problems, search for additional information, and spend time and effort looking for new ways of solving problems (Coelho et al., 2021). This process orientation acknowledges creativity as resource-intensive, often uncertain, and requiring long-term commitment with delayed gratification – characteristics that align with the strategic consulting environment where solutions may take months or years to demonstrate full value (Coelho et al., 2021).

The contextual nature of creativity in consulting is particularly pronounced. Also in consultancy, the creativity must be – as defined by Plucker et al. (2004) – "both novel and useful as defined within a social context" (p.90). This domain-specificity means that creative solutions in management consulting may differ substantially from those in technical consulting, with each requiring different knowledge bases, methodological approaches, and client relationship dynamics (Agars et al., 2012). Research indicates that organizational context plays a crucial role, with factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, control mechanisms, and management orientations significantly influencing creative outcomes (Coelho et al., 2021; Sandvik Madsen et al., 2015).

Leadership emerges as a critical facilitator of creativity in consulting environments. Studies demonstrate that transformational leadership behaviors – including articulating vision, providing individualized support, and intellectual stimulation – are vital for creating climates that support creativity (Agars et al., 2012). However, the effectiveness of leadership in fostering creativity depends on organizational structure and the presence of supporting factors such as job autonomy and intrinsic motivation (Sandvik Madsen et al., 2015). This finding aligns with Gardner's emphasis on the importance of mentorship and supportive environments in developing creative capabilities (Morgan, 2021). This is particularly relevant in consulting, where senior partners traditionally guide the professional development of junior consultants. Personalyzed training based on the different types of intelligences could lead to an overall increase of creativity, as described by Davis et al. (2011).

The value proposition of creativity in consulting extends beyond individual problem-solving to encompass organizational innovation and the enhancement of client relationships. Research reveals that creative consultants are more effective at uncovering real client needs and devising service bundles that address specific customer requirements (Coelho et al., 2021). This capability becomes particularly valuable in service settings where customer needs are idiosyncratic and require novel solutions (Coelho et al., 2021). The heterogeneous nature of consulting challenges – spanning strategy, operations, technology, and organizational development – demands creative approaches that can synthesize diverse knowledge domains and stakeholder perspectives.

Generative AI is fundamentally transforming creativity in consulting by serving as both a creative amplifier and process accelerator. Recent developments show that AI enhances creativity by rapidly processing vast datasets, extracting insights, and providing data-driven recommendations (Pattanayak, 2019). This technological integration enables consultants to focus on high-level problem-solving and strategic decision-making while AI handles routine analytical tasks (Lorrain & Kunovsky, 2025; Tronnier & Löbner, 2025). However, the relationship between AI and human creativity in consulting is collaborative rather than substitutive, with AI serving as a creative partner that offers different perspectives essential to the creative process (Vinchon et al., 2023).

The measurement and recognition of creativity in consulting present ongoing challenges. Unlike fields with tangible creative products, consulting creativity often manifests in process innovations, strategic frameworks, and relationship management approaches that may not be immediately visible or easily quantifiable (Lemus-Aguilar et al., 2015; Lorrain & Kunovsky, 2025). This complexity necessitates multilevel assessment approaches that consider both individual creative behaviors and their organizational and client impact (Coelho et al., 2021).

The future trajectory of creativity in consulting suggests increasing integration of human insight with AI capabilities. The consulting industry faces pressure to reinvent operating models that leverage both

human creativity and artificial intelligence: 86% of consulting buyers are actively seeking services that leverage AI and technology, with two-thirds saying they'll stop working with consulting firms that fail to integrate AI into their offerings (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2024). This evolution positions creativity not as a fixed competency but as an adaptive capability that must continuously evolve with technological advancement and changing client expectations.

In conclusion, creativity in the consultancy field represents a multifaceted construct encompassing individual cognitive capabilities, organizational enablers, client relationship dynamics, and technological integration. Rather than viewing creativity as spontaneous inspiration, the field increasingly understands it as a systematic, developable capability, essential for delivering innovative solutions in complex, dynamic environments. This perspective acknowledges both the inherent uncertainty of creative work and the strategic imperative for consulting organizations to cultivate creative capabilities as a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

2.3. The role of AI in the consultancy sector

Modern knowledge workers are characterized by their ability to utilize technology alongside theoretical and analytical knowledge to achieve results (Dăniloaia & Turturean, 2024). Generative AI is now being developed in the knowledge work environment, reshaping it by automating routine cognitive tasks, enhancing creativity, and streamlining processes (Stryker & Scapicchio, 2024). Consultancy firms are increasingly treating AI tools as strategic enablers, freeing consultants to concentrate on high-value activities like decision-making, innovation, and client advisory, while generative AI handles analytical support and ideation. A 2023 framework highlights how generative AI augments consulting by accelerating data processing, forecasting, and decision support, enabling consultants to spend more time on strategic thinking and client-centered interactions (Consultancy.org, 2024; Keskar et al., 2023; Pattanayak, 2019). A qualitative study examining management consulting finds that firms integrating GenAI into workflows produce higher-quality outputs more efficiently, shifting consultants toward advisory roles and away from repetitive tasks (Tronnier & Löbner, 2025) . Industry insights affirm this shift: major firms like McKinsey, BCG, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and boutique players have deployed proprietary GenAI agents and tools (e.g. Lilli, Deckster, GENE, Sidekick) to streamline workflows, enhance data interpretation, and enhance decision-making delivering time savings, improved insight, reduced task loads, and elevation of job satisfaction (Varanasi, 2025). BCG's own research emphasizes the superior efficiency and accuracy of specialized GenAI tools tailored to consulting workflows, enabling professionals to access domain-specific insights quickly and focus on value creation (Collins et al., 2025).

Together, these findings underscore that AI tools empower consultancy professionals to offload analytical and administrative work –allowing them to engage in more impactful, strategic tasks – and that firms building GenAI personalized bots are already transforming their operations for better performance and innovation.

There is evidence already demonstrating the remarkable productivity gains achieved by employing AI. A Harvard Business School study found that consultants utilizing AI completed tasks 12.2% faster, worked 25.1% quicker, and delivered results of over 40% higher quality compared to non-AI users (Dell'Acqua, 2023). This study highlights how AI's capacities for streamlining operations and enhancing efficiency can be seen as a significant catalyst in the consulting field.

However, other than its increment in productivity, the key game-changing ability of AI is in its influence on the cognitive process. Cognitive Load Theory (CLT), developed by Sweller (Sweller, 1988), supports the idea that AI tools can significantly reduce intrinsic and extraneous cognitive loads by automating routine tasks and presenting information more clearly, thereby freeing cognitive resources for higher-order thinking (Gerlich, 2025). By freeing the knowledge workers from the cognitive tasks, it is possible for them to spend more mental energy to complex problem-solving and ideation.

Despite the potential benefits of AI on the cognitive load, it is important to highlight that this is not always the case. A study from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology highlighted how AI assistants do not universally reduce cognitive load; by using NeuroIS methods, it has been studied how, in certain contexts, they can even increase it when compared to traditional internet searches (Schulz & Knierim, 2024). This challenges simplistic assumptions about AI's cognitive benefits and suggests that the

relationship is more complex, requiring careful consideration of task complexity and interaction design.

2.4. AI use and Creative Outcomes

Different publications show how AI use can impact Creativity (H.-K. Lee, 2022; Marrone et al., 2024; Vinchon et al., 2023).

However, existing Narrow AI systems lack the capacity for autonomous creativity (Marrone et al., 2024). Essential components of creativity – such as the ability to think divergently and produce original, effective outcomes – remain largely dependent on human input. Furthermore, AI can accelerate certain stages of creative work that have traditionally required human effort, thereby freeing up time for humans to focus on more complex aspects of the task.

Contemporary research demonstrates nuanced effects of AI on creative performance, with outcomes significantly moderated by expertise levels and implementation approaches. A field experiment by Jia et al. (2024) at a telemarketing company revealed that AI assistance in generating sales leads increased employees' creativity in answering customers' questions during subsequent sales persuasion, leading to enhanced sales performance. However, this effect was much more pronounced for higher-skilled employees, who generated innovative scripts and developed positive emotions conducive to creativity, while lower-skilled employees made limited improvements and experienced negative emotions.

Recent studies examining AI's role in ideation processes reveal that generative AI can enhance both the quality and efficiency of creative output. Research by Gindert and Müller (2025) found that AI-augmented teams generated higher quality ideas in less time compared to control groups, with improved efficiency, knowledge exchange, increased satisfaction and engagement, and enhanced idea diversity. Similarly, experimental evidence from Harvard Business School indicates that while human-crowd solutions were rated as more novel, human-AI collaborative solutions scored higher on strategic viability, environmental value, and financial value, resulting in superior overall quality (Boussioux et al., 2024). This suggests that AI-augmented approaches may be particularly effective for developing implementable creative solutions.

The integration of generative AI into creative workflows has been shown to alter the nature of creative work fundamentally. Studies in artistic innovation contexts demonstrate that AI serves both as a working tool and communication facilitator, enabling simultaneous exploration of problems and solutions during creativity and innovation processes (Heigl, 2025). This transformative capability allows organizations to prototype and test new ideas faster than ever before, with AI accelerating creative iterations and reducing costs associated with experimentation and failure (OECD, 2025).

However, the relationship between AI and creativity is not uniformly positive. Research reveals that AI's impact on creative outcomes is highly dependent on the specific tasks, user expertise, and integration strategies employed. Experimental studies in design work show that while AI tremendously enhances creativity during ideation stages by mitigating cognitive fixation, its effects diverge during implementation phases – benefiting low-expertise designers while potentially reducing work efficiency for high-expertise professionals due to expertise fixation (Wadinambiarachchi et al., 2024). This highlights the critical importance of strategic AI deployment that considers individual capabilities and task characteristics.

Building on these empirical findings, Vinchon et al. (Vinchon et al., 2023) propose that the positive future of creativity and AI lies in harmonious collaboration that can benefit everyone, potentially leading to new levels of creative productivity while respecting ethical considerations and human values during the creative process. Their manifesto emphasizes that rather than competing directly with humans, AI should be designed to augment human creative capabilities through responsible collaboration that preserves the essential human elements of creative work—intuition, emotional intelligence, and ethical judgment—while leveraging AI's computational strengths in pattern recognition, rapid iteration, and comprehensive information processing.

2.5. The Dual Impact of AI on Creativity and Cognition

The integration of GenAI and AI chatbots presents a dual-pathway effect on creativity: it can serve as both a motivator and a source of strain (Liang et al., 2022).

The motivation pathway suggests that freeing up consultants from routine and hard-work by automating would allow them to engage in more complex problem-solving and ideation. This aligns with the concept of Human-AI Co-Creativity, where AI enhances human creative capabilities by shifting knowledge work from material production to critical integration (Haase & Pokutta, 2024; Microsoft and LinkedIn, 2024). Here, humans focus on evaluating and refining AI outputs rather than creating from scratch, allowing AI to augment creativity by providing unlimited options, generating novel combinations, and offering fresh perspectives through pattern recognition in large datasets (Hole, 2024).

Conversely, the strain pathway identifies how AI awareness can induce stress, primarily due to concerns about job security and reduced autonomy (Liang et al., 2022). This fear might reduce risk-taking, which is essential for creativity. A phenomenon linked to this concern is the “creative atrophy”, where over-reliance on technology may gradually erode an individual’s creative potential (Clifton et al., 2020). For professionals in the consulting field, where creative input is essential to provide value, it is essential to balance these two pathways to ensure that AI will positively affect creative performance.

A significant challenge posed by the implementation of AI in the workplace is the potential to lead to mechanized convergence. Research indicates that users with access to GenAI tools tend to produce a less diverse set of outcomes for the same task compared to those without AI assistance (H.-P. Lee et al., 2025). This is a result of a lack of personal, contextualized, critical, and reflective judgment of AI output, which could potentially deteriorate critical thinking. Studies suggest that frequent reliance on AI tools may weaken critical thinking abilities, particularly among younger individuals, largely due to cognitive offloading (Dolan, 2025a). Even if this phenomenon can be beneficial, freeing up mental space, its heavy use could potentially deteriorate deep analytical thinking.

However, assessing the impact of AI on collective creativity is complex. While individual AI-generated ideas may exhibit high similarity, a diverse set of AI personas can lead to varied outputs, and when human participants build on these diverse AI ideas, their collective creative outputs can maintain the same level of diversity as human-only creations (H.-P. Lee et al., 2025). Furthermore, research on brainstorming indicates that hybrid (human-AI) groups outperform human-only groups in both productivity and creativity, demonstrating that the combination of human creativity with AI assistance produces the most effective outcomes (Bouschery et al., 2024).

The ”content inflation” phenomenon, where unlimited AI production devalues creative work, raises a new challenge: as Striker said, ”when everything is possible, nothing feels remarkable” (Striker, 2025). Strategic constraints and “false scarcity” can transform AI from a content generator into a creative partner, amplifying intent rather than aimless abundance (Garcia, 2024; Striker, 2025). This is relevant when professionals in the consulting field have to provide a tailored solution for their client, and need to balance efficiency gains with creative differentiation.

Furthermore, the so-called ”Shut down” scenario hypothesized by Vinchon et al. (2023) is posing various concerns among experts. In this dystopian future, people are described as being overdependent on AI, leading to outsourcing the creative content entirely, due to the incapacity of producing the same quality of results.

2.6. The Role of Trust and Individual Differences in AI Adoption

The acceptance and effective integration of AI chatbots are deeply intertwined with user trust. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and its extensions (TAM 2, UTAUT) provide foundational frameworks for understanding technology adoption behaviors, positing that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are key determinants (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2023) (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2024). These determinants influence the attitudes people have towards technology, and predict behavior intention and usage. UTAUT also includes performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, moderated by age, gender, experience, and voluntariness of use.

Trust in AI systems is multi-dimensional, involving the user (trustor), the AI system (trustee), and their interactive context (Li et al., 2024). Technical capabilities, transparency, reliability, and perceived competence also directly affect trust. Trust serves as a crucial regulator of AI adoption rates, with studies revealing public wariness; for instance, 61% of people are wary of trusting AI systems, and 67% report low to moderate acceptance (Gillespie et al., 2023). The ”black box” problem, referring to the lack of

transparency in AI decision-making processes, remains a significant barrier to trust development (Ahn et al., 2021). For professionals in the consulting field is cardinal to balance instant access to information with a critical need for trust in AI outputs, since the reliability of the data and the validity of AI-generated outputs will directly affect how they embrace this technology in their creative process.

Individual differences, particularly personality traits, play a significant role in technology adoption and interaction with AI (Barnett et al., 2015; McCrae & John, 1992; Rogers, 2003). Openness to experience, characterized by a willingness to try new things and ideas, consistently predicts higher technology adoption intentions (Cangir, 2020). By examining the five-factor Model, individuals with higher openness tend to perceive technology as easier to use and more useful, which fosters more positive attitudes toward AI adoption (Stein et al., 2024). On the contrary, neuroticism generally has a negative impact: people who tend to be more neurotic perceive technology as harder to understand and use. However, some recent research challenges the notion that personality traits are always critical determinants of AI adoption, suggesting their effects may be less significant than previously assumed (Bartneck et al., 2024).

The dual-process model of hybrid intelligence highlights the distinctive and complementary cognitive processes of AI and human intelligence, suggesting that optimal decision-making and creative outcomes occur when AI and human capabilities are integrated (Paydaş Turan & Sadler-Smith, 2023). This framework is particularly relevant for consultants who must synthesize AI-generated insights with their human judgment in complex, bespoke client projects. Research robustly shows that the most effective role for AI is in augmenting human judgment rather than replacing it, especially when users bring domain expertise and interaction fluency to the process (McDowell, 2025). A comprehensive review by Lai et al. (2023) highlights over 100 empirical studies showing that decision-making systems integrating AI recommendations with human oversight outperform both sole-human and fully automated approaches, and crucially, human participants retain control over the final decision. Inkpen et al. (2022) demonstrate that user expertise and awareness of AI behavior significantly affect outcomes in a complex classification task: experienced users selectively leverage AI suggestions to improve performance, while novice or mid-level users may not benefit as much unless the AI is appropriately tuned to complement their strengths. Stanford's McLaughlin and Spiess, 2024 and McLaughlin and Spiess (2024) argue that AI should be designed with human decision-makers in mind, serving as selective advisors in uncertain, high-stakes contexts, so that human reasoning remains central and AI supports rather than supplants human insight. Together, these findings confirm that individuals and organizations cultivating expertise in AI interaction – understanding when and how to consult AI – are better positioned to thrive in an AI-integrated world. Confidence in GenAI, together with the user's task-specific confidence, directly impacts the quality of the company's. They directly act on the deployment of critical thinking when GenAI is used.

2.7. AI Integration Challenges and Strategic Implementations in the Consulting Field

Implementing Generative AI successfully in the consulting sector presents organizational and technological challenges. Key barriers are guaranteeing robust data privacy and security, addressing knowledge gaps about AI in the company, modernizing IT systems, and fostering the integration of AI tools into existing workflows and platforms (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Generative AI models bring new opportunities for automation and knowledge generation, but also present unique risks related to model transparency, bias, and the need for domain-specific fine-tuning (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2023). In consulting, where client needs are highly individualized, the flexibility and contextual understanding of Generative AI remain limited. The usefulness of Generative AI largely depends on its ability to understand and process domain knowledge, a capability many current AI systems still lack. This often requires consulting companies to use a hybrid approach, where AI supports rather than replaces human consultants, supporting tasks like data analysis, report drafting, and ideation, while critical decision-making and client interaction remain human-led (Gerlich, 2025).

The role of domain expertise is crucial in shaping AI systems, transforming experts from passive users into active contributors. Effective AI integration requires domain experts to translate real-world problems into well-defined machine learning tasks, identify appropriate data sources, and provide feedback

for iterative improvement (IT Convergence, 2023). Successful human-AI collaboration depends on experts adopting collaborative mindsets, understanding AI capabilities and limitations, and focusing on high-impact areas where AI can provide maximum value (Singh, 2024). This necessitates cross-functional teams combining domain expertise with technical AI knowledge.

Disciplinary variations in AI engagement are also evident. Applied fields (both hard and soft sciences) consistently exhibit higher levels of AI knowledge and utilization intentions compared to pure theoretical fields (Qu et al., 2024). While engagement with AI for routine tasks remains consistent, significant disparities exist for cognitive tasks, reflecting varying cognitive demands and methodological approaches. For instance, engineering professionals tend to exhibit higher AI adoption rates due to their technical backgrounds and familiarity with computational tools, often viewing AI as a natural extension for specialized tasks like design optimization and simulation (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In contrast, psychology professionals show more cautious adoption patterns, with a notable gap in familiarity with AI applications, primarily emphasizing ethical considerations and patient privacy concerns (Abrams, 2025). They often express concerns about AI's ability to understand nuanced human experiences and emotional contexts crucial for therapeutic creativity.

AI also offers significant potential for enhancing individual creative performance. Studies show that when people view creative work labeled as AI-generated, they consistently feel more confident in their own creative abilities (Dolan, 2025b). This "downward social comparison" can boost self-efficacy, encouraging individuals to attempt creative activities even without objective changes in their abilities. Moreover, the perceived creativity of AI-generated work is influenced by the visibility of the creative process; ratings increase as viewers observe more elements of the creative act, suggesting transparency matters more than just output quality (Guckelsberg & Pennanen, 2025).

For consultants, adapting to this evolving landscape requires developing new skills in prompt engineering, output evaluation, and quality control (Microsoft and LinkedIn, 2024). The shift is from material production to critical integration, where human expertise remains distinctive, relevant, and value-adding (Sivakumar, 2024).

2.8. Literature Gap

Despite the growing body of knowledge, several critical literature gaps persist concerning the impact of AI chatbots on creativity in the consulting sector. While productivity gains are evident (Dell'Acqua, 2023), a comprehensive understanding of how AI specifically supports or constrains different types of creative tasks within consulting workflows remains underexplored. Furthermore, although creative atrophy and mechanistic convergence are identified as risks, the literature lacks detailed insights into the specific effects of individual characteristics, such as trust in AI systems and openness to new technologies, on these outcomes in a professional consulting context. The nuanced ways in which consultants' diverse areas of expertise influence their AI interaction strategies and, consequently, the nature of their creative outputs, also warrant deeper investigation. Finally, while the importance of human-in-the-loop validation is recognized, the precise mechanisms by which this human oversight preserves and enhances creativity, particularly when dealing with complex, tailored client solutions, require further elucidation. Addressing these gaps will provide a more granular understanding of AI's multifaceted impact on human creativity in knowledge-intensive industries.

Based on the preceding Theoretical Background and the identified literature gaps, this study proposes a conceptualization to systematically investigate the impact of Generative AI on creative outcomes within the consulting industry. This framework outlines the key variables and their hypothesized relationships, providing a structured approach for the empirical inquiry.

At its core, the conceptualization posits that the integration and use of Generative AI in daily workflows directly influence the creative outcomes of professionals in the consulting sector. Generative AI integration encompasses the various ways consultants deploy AI tools, including their use for task automation, content generation, information gathering, brainstorming, idea testing, and general knowledge transfer. This integration represents the independent variable in this investigation.

The variable of creative outcome is understood as the production of novel and appropriate responses, products, or solutions specifically tailored to the dynamic and unique challenges faced by consulting

clients. This includes adaptive problem-solving, identifying hidden connections, devising out-of-the-box thinking, and visualizing applications for products or services. It is an essential component of a consultant's job, requiring the ability to experiment and improvise with available resources.

The relationship between Generative AI integration and creative outcome is hypothesized to be influenced by several individual differences, acting as influencing factors:

- **Openness to Adopting New Technologies:** This individual characteristic reflects a consultant's willingness to embrace and experiment with novel technological tools. It is anticipated that individuals exhibiting higher openness will be more inclined to explore diverse applications of AI, potentially leading to more experimental and less inhibited uses that foster creative augmentation. Conversely, lower openness may contribute to resistance, potentially limiting the beneficial impact of AI or exacerbating fears of creative atrophy.
- **Level of Trust in AI Systems:** This factor refers to the confidence a consultant places in the reliability, accuracy, and competence of AI-generated outputs and suggestions. Trust is crucial for effective AI adoption, as insufficient trust necessitates extensive manual verification, potentially negating efficiency gains, while excessive, uncritical trust could lead to an over-reliance on AI, contributing to mechanistic convergence and a deterioration of critical thinking. The human-in-the-loop validation process, where outputs are consistently checked, is a direct manifestation of this trust dynamic.
- **Area of Expertise:** The diverse professional backgrounds and specialized knowledge domains of consultants (e.g., engineering, psychology, business strategy) significantly shape their interaction with AI. Different areas of expertise may lead to varied approaches in prompt design, the types of questions asked of AI, and the criteria used to evaluate AI outputs. For instance, a consultant with a technical background might leverage AI for complex data analysis or code generation, enhancing efficiency in highly structured creative tasks. On the other hand, a work psychologist might use AI for synthesizing qualitative insights, but remain cautious regarding its ability to grasp human nuances critical for relational aspects of creativity. This variability in interaction patterns is expected to influence which specific creative tasks are perceived as being supported or constrained by AI.

This conceptualization suggests that the impact of Generative AI on creativity is not unique, but is significantly affected by individual attributes and how consultants engage with the technology based on their propensities and professional backgrounds. It frames Generative AI not merely as a tool, but as an interactive partner whose influence on human creativity is dynamically shaped by the user's psychological disposition and domain-specific practices. This framework will be the foundation of the investigation into the specific facilitative and limiting factors of Generative AI use on creative tasks and provide a structured approach to understanding the complex relationships between technology, individual characteristics, and creative performance in the consulting industry.

3

Methodology

A qualitative approach has been applied to answer the research questions. In particular, the methodology used in this thesis is based on data gathered through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews mix set questions with open-ended conversations, allowing the interviewer to dive deeper into people's thoughts, perceptions, and experiences (Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF, 2017). By proceeding with this method, it was possible to understand extensively all the key variables that determine the framework used in this thesis. Furthermore, this method was used to understand if something else that was not considered before could be of interest for future research (e.g., other key variables that might affect the relationship between AI use and the creative performance of consultants). The questionnaire was slightly modified during the initial round of interviews, based on the feedback received and on what was most valuable. No major changes were necessary. The final version of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix A.1.

3.1. Context of the Consulting Company

The data for this research were collected through 15 semi-structured interviews. The interviewees are all working within a prominent management consulting firm that, over the past year, has implemented the use of ChatGPT Team, one of the packages for Enterprises (OpenAI, 2024a). Furthermore, they have been using other Generative AI tools, such as NotebookLM, PerplexityAI, and NapkinAI.

The company's consultancy focuses on developing the organizational culture thanks to its proprietary methodology, which has been developed over more than twenty years, supporting leadership teams and boards in implementing strategic change. This methodology treats the organization as a living system, fostering interconnections and feedback loops that align all roles with a compelling shared vision, thereby accelerating progress toward the company's objectives. It uses culture□diagnostic tools – such as interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires – to find hidden barriers and engagement gaps. That insight then guides targeted interventions: leadership co□vision workshops, peer□coaching configurations, and incorporation of new behaviors into daily routines via feedback and tracking systems. Alongside this, structured pathways – mentoring programs, group coaching, and assignments – help grow personal and professional capacity, enhancing motivation, engagement, and productivity. Well□being is key in their consulting approach: part of its scope includes developing welfare programs, inclusive policies across generations, and workplace redesigns that promote mental health, sustainable collaboration, and organizational resilience.

The team comprises experts with varied backgrounds, from work psychologists to engineers. The diverse backgrounds of the consultants added color to the interviews and often led them to talk about their previous jobs in a wide variety of companies, such as banks, consulting firms, or luxury brands. Even if the focus of the research is the consulting sector, examples in different industries were relevant to understand their opinions.

This company serves as an example, since AI strongly impacts the way companies deal with qualitative data. If the quantitative transformation has already happened thanks to the Data Analytics tools, it is of

major importance to understand how the creativity inside a company like the selected one, which deals mainly with qualitative data coming from interviews and questionnaires, has been impacted by AI.

It is important to note that the use of AI by the surveyed individuals is optional – ultimately, it is a personal choice, making it a perfect example to understand how personal traits influence the use of AI itself.

3.2. Selection of Participants and Controlled Variables

One of the most critical elements of this research is the sampling of participants from a single consulting firm. This approach has significant advantages since it controls for many confounding variables (Schlesselman, 1982), as shown in Figure 3.1:

- **Cultural Variations:** consultants share a homogeneous set of values, working procedures, and organizational support systems that influence innovation
- **Workflow Processes:** The homogeneous process approach of the company and consistent way of conducting projects guarantee that workflow process variations and client interaction approaches are aligned for participants
- **Digital Infrastructures:** The specific practices of the company in embracing technology and training provide a homogeneous digital setup
- **Industry:** The use of a single-company sample minimizes the impact of external factors such as industry-specific pressures or different competitive dynamics

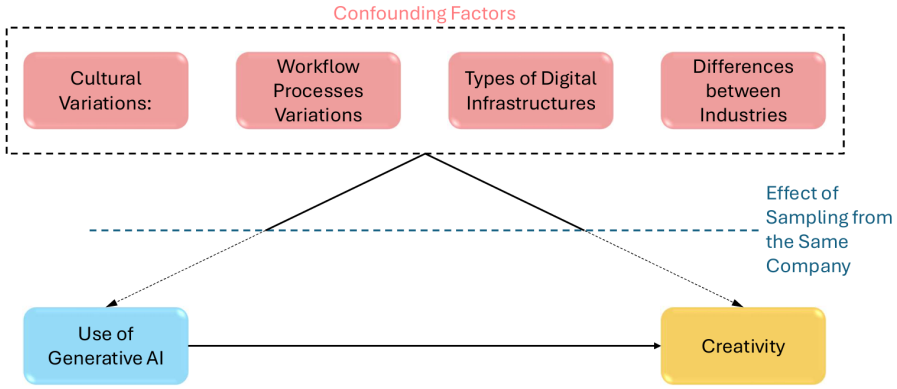

Figure 3.1: Effect of selecting participants from the same consulting firm

This methodology allows the study to focus on attitudes at an individual level and innovative outcomes rather than navigate inter-organizational differences. By keeping these variables controlled, the study improves the internal validity of the findings. It has then been easier to make generalizable conclusions about the impact of AI on creative performance in similar consulting environments.

3.3. Data Gathering

Before being able to start the research, one preliminary step had to be made to be sure that all data collected during the research would be carefully handled in order to avoid any potential harm to the interviewees.

3.3.1. Reaching Out to Participants

The participants for the interview were contacted through personalized text messages. A logbook with their contact details was handed over in agreement with the consulting company and the professionals themselves. The response rate of the contacted participants was up to 75%. This astonishing figure comes from the fact that an informal agreement with the company was made before starting the research. During an internal meeting of the company, the professionals were informed that they would

be contacted in order to study the impact of AI inside the company. It was explicitly said not to give details about the questions of the interviews to avoid bias between the participants. After an initial contact via text messages, a call on Microsoft Teams (Microsoft Corporation, 2025) have been scheduled singularly with each of the participants. The consent form [B] was sent, and it was required to be signed by each participant before proceeding with the interviews. The Human Research Ethics Commission of TU Delft (Delft University of Technology, 2025) approved the structure and content of the consent form.

3.3.2. Participants

Table 3.1 shows the anonymized participants. Each one has been linked to a unique code. Even though the gathered data are broad, only minimal information about the participants is provided to the public in order to minimize the risk of re-identification as much as possible. However, relevant details are provided to better understand the results.

Participant ID	Category	Role
C1	Consultant	CEO
C2	Consultant	Partner
S1	Supporting Professionals	Project Manager
S2	Supporting Professionals	Project Manager and Area Manager
S3	Supporting Professionals	Project Manager
S4	Supporting Professionals	Project Manager
C3	Consultant	Client Manager
C4	Consultant	Senior Consultant
C5	Consultant	Client Manager
C6	Consultant	Client Manager and Project Leader
C7	Consultant	Project Leader
C8	Consultant	Project Leader
S5	Supporting Professionals	Communication Manager
C9	Consultant	Managing Partner
C10	Consultant	Client Manager

Table 3.1: Participants by Category and Role

The two identified categories are 'Consultant', referring to professionals directly providing professional or expert advice in a particular field to an organization or individual (Consultancy.eu, 2025), and 'Supporting Professionals', referring to professionals working alongside or in collaboration with consultants, such as project managers or communication managers; they directly contribute to the implementation and coordination of consulting-related activities.

3.3.3. Interview Structure

Each semi-structured interview had a total of 10 fixed questions, that can be found in the Appendix A.1. This approach lead to interviews that were around 45 minutes long, but ranged from shorter interviews (around 30 minutes long) to longer ones (up to more than 1.5 hours long). After exploring their background and role inside the company, the interview moved to the question "How would you describe creativity in your work?" [A.1]. Next, a brief question about their attitude toward technological innovation has been added. This question was not part of the original design, but was introduced after feedback from the first two interviewees. Later, using an interview guide crafted to explore their personal experience with Generative AI integration, the study asked questions about how AI tools are deployed and how they influence their creative performance. At the end of the interview, the industry experts were asked two questions about the medium-term evolution of AI in their work and its impact on human value. These questions also explored their perceived job security and provided valuable insights for future research.

With the explicit consent of the interviewee, documented by a signed form, video-audio recordings and transcription have been gathered. Each transcript was automatically generated using the Microsoft Teams – Live Transcription Tool (Microsoft Support, 2023). They have then been manually reviewed,

in order to get rid of the mistakes in the transcriptions, before being used for the data analysis. Personal pieces of information were removed, and the transcripts have been anonymized before proceeding with the Data Analysis.

3.3.4. Ethics Approval

The Human Research and Ethics Committee (HREC) of TU Delft (Delft University of Technology, 2025) approved the research, and all participants willingly participated. The data management plan has been revised and approved by the Data Steward of TU Delft. The full research has been conducted on MS Teams (Microsoft Corporation, 2025), actively keeping the collection of experimental data separate from personal data collection.

3.4. Data Analysis

For data analysis, a manual approach has been adopted to enable close acquaintance with the qualitative data.

3.4.1. Coding

For the coding part, a hybrid approach was used to leverage the advantages of both deductive and inductive approaches First, the interview transcripts have been carefully studied in order to familiarize oneself with the content. After uploading each modified interview to ATLAS.ti (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2025), a tool to facilitate qualitative data analysis, a first set of codes has been developed, with a total of six preliminary codes: one for each sub-question (four in total), one for relevant quotes, and one for additional findings. ATLAS.ti was only used as a support tool, and it was not used to automate the process. After creating initial categories, the coding was done based on the text, since semi-structured interviews allow the conversation to flow in different directions, leading to unpredictable topics. Furthermore, deriving the code directly from the data can help to explore the subject more precisely (Coach, 2021). By coding line-by-line, it has been possible to carefully analyze the 15 interviews. Although an inductive approach was followed, certain basic coding principles have been used as guidelines, with exceptions. In particular, three coding techniques were primarily used: in vivo coding (using participants' exact words as codes), process coding (using action-based codes), and descriptive coding (using single words as codes) (Coach, 2021). Each code found with the inductive approach has then been moved under one of the six preliminary codes. These initial codes have subsequently been organized into a coding framework through a simple table, where each broader theme is created and supported by direct evidence from the interviews. The coding process was iterative, and once a new code was developed, the previous interviews were re-analyzed in order to see if the same new code applied to other sentences.

3.4.2. Thematic Analysis

Following the detailed line-by-line coding process, a comprehensive thematic analysis was conducted to transcend the granularity of individual codes and uncover overarching patterns and deeper insights within the collected qualitative data. This phase involved an iterative process of identifying, reviewing, and refining themes, moving beyond descriptive labels to more analytical categories. During this stage, the numerous distinct codes generated from the initial hybrid coding (which were initially grouped under the preliminary categories for each sub-question, relevant quotes, and additional findings) were meticulously examined. This involved a systematic aggregation of related codes that captured similar concepts, perceptions, or experiences expressed by the interview participants (Byrne, 2021). The essence of this thematic organization was to consolidate the granular findings into broader, more abstract conceptual categories. For example, specific codes related to 'adaptation of prior knowledge,' 'improvising,' and 'seeing hidden connections' were synthesized into overarching themes defining adaptive problem-solving within the consulting context. This consolidation was systematically structured in a simple table format, ensuring that each emergent theme was robustly supported by direct evidence drawn from the interview transcripts. This constant validation against the raw data ensured the thematic framework remained grounded in the empirical reality of the participants' experiences. The primary objective was to synthesize the rich qualitative information into a coherent and insightful framework, in order to highlight the various perceptions of consulting professionals regarding creativity, the integration of Generative AI into their daily workflows, and its perceived dual impact. This rigorous and systematic

thematic analysis ultimately resulted in a refined and consolidated coding framework, which provides a structured conceptualization of the research phenomena.

3.5. Data Validity and Reliability

The robustness of this research's findings relies significantly on the rigorous approaches used to ensure both data validity and reliability. The instrument used for data collection, the semi-structured interview questionnaire, was subject to a meticulous validation process. First, this involved iterative improvement based on feedback from academic advisors, who ensured theoretical alignment and methodological soundness. The next additional critical step in this validation was the approval by an external consultant from the target company, who, on purpose, was not involved in the survey itself. This external perspective was useful to avoid potential internal biases and confirm that the questions were able to capture the intended constructs without leading participants. Such a comprehensive validation process significantly enhances the content and construct validity of the gathered data, ensuring that the study effectively measures what it is designed to measure. While the adoption of a single-firm sample introduces certain limitations concerning the external validity, meaning the direct statistical generalizability of the findings to the broader consulting sector, this methodological choice was a deliberate strategy to maximize internal validity. By focusing on professionals within a singular consulting firm, a multitude of confounding variables that could affect the observed phenomena were effectively controlled. These controlled variables include the homogeneous organizational culture, shared working procedures, consistent access to digital infrastructures, and uniform exposure to industry-specific pressures. This controlled environment allows for a clearer observation of the relationship between Generative AI integration and creative outcomes at an individual level, strengthening the confidence in the relationships identified within this specific context. The insights derived, while not statistically generalizable across all firms, offer a profound, in-depth understanding that can serve as a critical case study. These rich qualitative findings can provide valuable conceptual insights and inform the development of hypotheses for future large-scale, quantitative studies that aim for broader applicability. Furthermore, meticulous attention was paid to the reliability of the data collection and analysis processes to ensure consistency and trustworthiness of the results. All interviews were conducted following a standardized semi-structured protocol, ensuring a consistent approach across all participants while still allowing for the exploration of emergent themes. The recording and automatic transcription of interviews were meticulously reviewed and manually corrected to eliminate errors, thereby preserving the fidelity of the participants' original responses. The subsequent data analysis made use of a hybrid coding approach, combining predefined categories derived from the conceptual framework with an inductive, line-by-line coding method. This iterative coding process, followed by thematic analysis, allowed for a systematic and consistent interpretation of the qualitative data, reducing potential researcher bias and enhancing the dependability of the findings. The ethical protocols, including obtaining explicit consent and rigorous anonymization of all personal information prior to analysis, further underscore the integrity and reliability of the collected data.

Through these deliberate methodological choices, the study aims to provide a robust and credible analysis of AI's impact on creativity within the consulting industry.

4

Results

In this section, the findings derived from the fifteen interviews conducted with professionals within a prominent management consulting firm are presented. The main goal of the interviews was understanding of how Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) impacts creativity within the consulting sector. The multifaceted relationship between (human) creativity and generative AI technology was made evident by the wealth of perspectives gathered from the participants, whose diverse backgrounds ranged from work psychologists and engineers to project managers and communication specialists.

A thematic analysis conducted on the collected qualitative data identified several recurring themes. The themes were subsequently grouped in accordance with the research sub-questions of this thesis, providing a structured foundation for exploring the definition of creativity in the consulting sector, the practical implications of generative AI and its influence on various creative tasks – as well as the individual features – impact such influence. While findings expose beneficial and prejudicial effects of AI alike, the evolving nature of professional's roles within an AI-integrated system is consistently highlighted.

The following sections explore these findings and provide detailed descriptions supported by direct quotes from the interview participants.

4.1. Defining Creativity in the Consulting Sector (SQ1)

The aim of the first sub-question is to establish the nuanced definition of creativity within the context of the consulting sector in particular. Although academic literature frequently associates creativity to fields within the scientific and artistic domains, knowledge-intensive professional services such as consulting define the concept more broadly. As interviewees consistently emphasized, the manifestation of creativity in their work is not merely grounded in the generation of novel concepts and ideas, but also in the considerations regarding practical application and extent of alignment of such concepts and ideas with client needs. The multiple key themes identified throughout the interview process attest to the complexity of consulting professionals' perception of creativity.

4.1.1. Finding Innovative Solutions for Clients

One of the most important aspects of creativity in consulting lies in the ability to generate and propose innovative solutions that directly address the client's needs and create concrete value. This requires consultants to use critical thinking and offer fresh perspectives, going beyond standard, off-the-shelf solutions. One of the consultants defined creativity as:

> *"Finding innovative solutions for the clients that generate value" – C9.*

This emphasis on value generation underscores the role of creativity in consulting as a tool to achieving tangible business outcomes. C5, another consultant, reiterated this by stating that creativity involves

> *"finding solutions to what clients need" – C5.*

Having a deep understanding of the client's problems is then strictly related to creativity in consultancy. C6 also highlighted that creativity is

> *"the capacity of going beyond your own mental schemes, your own habits in understanding things" – C6*

This particular sentence highlights that going beyond conventional thinking is essential for delivering truly innovative solutions to the clients. This can be achieved by challenging existing paradigms to discover new ways to solve problems that directly affect the clients.

4.1.2. Adaptive Problem-Solving

Creativity is frequently linked to adaptive problem-solving, especially in dynamic and complex consulting settings, where the problems rarely appear as they truly are. This involves an iterative process of identifying challenges, re-framing them, and developing flexible approaches. S4, a project manager, articulated creativity as

> *"finding solutions to what can be problematic" – S4.*

This perspective suggests that creativity is activated when faced with obstacles, requiring a dynamic and responsive mindset. S3, also a project manager, reflected this sentiment, mentioning that creativity often presents itself in

> *"finding alternative solutions to problems that can arise in daily management" – S3.*

Creativity is then essential to keep the project on track and ensure client satisfaction when unexpected issues arise. C8 described his creative process as

> *"fundamentally based on the re-composition of activities, experiences done in the past that are readapted and recombined to the current context" – C8.*

This highlights creativity as an adaptive process where existing knowledge is flexibly applied and modified to fit new circumstances, rather than always developing entirely new concepts. C3, a senior consultant, further emphasized this by linking creativity to the ability to "customise a solution," stating that

> *"the firm's established methods cannot always be applied directly to all realities in the same way" – C3.*

This highlights the necessity for a creative adaptation to "make it digestible, appealing, usable" for diverse organizational cultures and people [C3].

4.1.3. Thinking Beyond Mental Schemas (Out-of-the-Box Thinking)

Consulting professionals frequently described creativity as the ability to overcome conventional thinking patterns and embrace "out-of-the-box" approaches. This is applied when challenging assumptions and exploring unconventional ways to find solutions. C6 defined creativity as

> *"the capacity of going beyond your own mental schemes, your own habits in understanding things, so things where we are most comfortable" – C6.*

This highlights the necessity of stepping outside one's comfort zone and intrinsic biases to unlock truly novel ideas. S1, a project manager, shared a similar view, defining creativity as the ability to think "outside the box" [S1]. C7, a consultant, described creativity as

> *"when you completely eliminate the limits in your thought" – C7.*

This suggests eliminating mental boundaries, allowing for a broader extent of ideation without being restricted by predefined mental schemes.

These definitions collectively agree on the importance of intellectual flexibility and a willingness to explore unknown paths to find innovative solutions.

4.1.4. Storytelling and Engagement

Beyond problem-solving, creativity in consulting also involves the art of communication and engagement, particularly in customizing messages to reach and resonate with diverse audiences, with the final goal of broadening the firm's client base. C3, a senior consultant, articulated that creativity manifests in

> *"finding the right key to make a client, an interlocutor, understand the value of a solution that we are proposing" – C3.*

This extends to adapting the "storytelling of that method" [C4] to the specific client's culture and the decision-maker's motivations. This form of creativity involves not just having the right content but also delivering it properly, ensuring that complex ideas are not only understood but also embraced. C3 further explained that creativity is evident in "creating engagement" within the method's application, noting that "companies have seen everything" [C3], thus requiring novel "activations, group games, individual" activities to involve people effectively.

This emphasizes the need for imaginative and interactive approaches to keep clients engaged and committed to the transformation process.

4.1.5. Self-Awareness and Emotional State

The interviewees also linked creativity to an individual's internal state, emphasizing the role of self-awareness and emotional well-being. C2, a consultant, described creativity as

> *"something that flows, that gushes when you allow yourself to feel inside" – C2.*

This deep connection between internal feeling and creative output suggests that being open to experiencing emotions is a prerequisite for innovation. C7, a counselor and coach, noted that to be creative, one sometimes needs to "turn off the rational part" [C7]. This highlights an active detachment from logical, analytical thought to allow more intuitive and imaginative processes to take place. C2 further elaborated on the antagonists of creativity, identifying "the emotional state" as a significant aspect [C2]. She explained that when one is in a state of anxiety or stress, it's extremely hard to let the creative process begin:

> *"my amygdala was locked... so what creativity do you want to talk about? I wouldn't even notice if someone, in that case even AI, brought me a creative stimulus" – C2.*

This underscores that an optimal emotional and cognitive state is crucial for recognizing and leveraging creative opportunities, whether they come from internal thought processes or external tools like AI.

4.1.6. Strategic Future-Foresight and Opportunity Spotting

Creativity in the consulting field also involves a future-looking perspective, anticipating incoming challenges and identifying upcoming opportunities. C3, a senior consultant, differentiated this from creativity, calling it "anticipation, more structured innovation" [C3], but acknowledged its role in bringing "solutions that look ahead" [C3]. This emphasizes the proactive nature of strategic creativity, which involves not just reacting to ongoing problems, but also predicting future ones and designing solutions for them. C4, a consultant, spoke of identifying the "hidden needs" of clients [C4], suggesting that creativity is about uncovering deeper, unarticulated problems or opportunities that might not be immediately obvious. He elaborated that innovation involves

> *"finding a way for your clients and your organization to be sustainable by foreseeing a problem before it explodes" – C4.*

This connects creativity to a strategic ability of identifying and leveraging future trends, ensuring long-term viability and competitive advantage for clients.

4.1.7. Right-Brain Activation

Some participants explicitly referred to neurological affirmations on creativity, linking it to the activation and development of specific brain functions. C1 described creativity as

> *"having the right side of the brain that is more developed when compared to the left one" – C1.*

She further broke this down into "cortical right," which relates to "creative, strategic vision," and "limbic right," which is "more prone to relationships with people and creativity in general" [C1]. This perspective suggests that creativity is not just a skill but an intrinsic inclination that can be developed by activating the right side of the brain. C10, a psychologist and trainer on creativity, stated

> *"I am a professor of creativity; I give courses on creativity, so for me, creativity is using the right hemisphere of the brain and training it through specific techniques like SCAMPER, like the six hats to think, like mind-mapping" – C10.*

This affirmation highlights that creativity is a muscle that can be trained with specific techniques that encourage divergent thinking.

4.1.8. Continuous Improvement and Iteration

Creativity is also viewed as an ongoing process of refinement and iteration, where ideas are constantly adapted and improved based on feedback and new insights. S2 noted that in their work, "the same activity is never done in exactly the same way" [S2], requiring constant "reasoning on many different dimensions" [S2]. This highlights a form of creative iteration, where established frameworks are continuously adapted to unique clients. She further explained that their role involves

> *"producing something new compared to what already exists" and "reworking to make it truly implementable" – S2.*

This emphasizes that creativity is not only about idea generation, but it is also strongly linked to a persistent refinement and adaptation, which is necessary for the implementation of the solutions.

4.1.9. Antagonists of Creativity

Several participants identified specific internal and external factors that can hinder or block creative expression, offering a description of the necessary environmental conditions for creativity. C2, a consultant, listed as antagonists

> *"judgment, the fear of making mistakes, the need to go fast, not to do fast, to go fast" – C2.*

She further added that finding solutions "that are a bit the results of past experiences" also "doesn't bring anything new" [C2]. This highlights that pressure, fear of failure, and reliance on past solutions are antagonists of bringing true innovation. C7, a counselor, explicitly stated that "these types of emotions block creative thinking, they block intelligence" [C7], particularly the

> *"fear of making mistakes, fear of failing" – C7.*

This underscores the importance of a safe environment where experimentation is encouraged, and failure is seen as a learning opportunity and not as an end. S2, an area coordinator, also noted that pressure "often hinders creativity" [S2]. C10, a psychologist, similarly pointed out that pressure and "the need to hurry" are "antagonists of creativity" [C10].

These collective insights underscore the critical need for psychological safety, freedom from judgment, and adequate time to allow creative processes to flourish in a consulting context.

4.2. Influential Factors Shaping AI Use and Creativity (SQ2)

The second sub-research question aimed to explore how individual differences, specifically openness to adopting new technologies, level of trust in AI systems, and area of expertise, influence the impact of AI on creative outcomes. The findings indicate that these personal characteristics significantly shape how professionals interact with AI, their perceived benefits, and the associated challenges.

4.2.1. Openness: Initial Reaction to Innovation

Participants exhibited a range of initial reactions to new technologies. Some of them talked about immediate enthusiasm, while others talked about cautious skepticism, which in turn influenced their

adoption of AI. C5, a consultant, identified herself as a “Technology enthusiast” who always “liked to understand how things work” and “imagine where that technology could be used” [C5]. S1, a project manager, expressed a “super positive and curious” response to technological innovation, with a “super open and favorable to change” mindset [S1]. S2 considers new technologies as “tools and means to make my existence easier” and is “not particularly afraid” [S2]. C7, a counselor, reported an “open” approach, having started using AI even before her firm [C7]. S3, a project manager, initially felt “a bit of closing” towards AI, thinking of “all the negative consequences” first, but “then I often change my mind” [S3]. S4, also a project manager, described herself as “rather open” but “a bit cautious” [S4], preferring to “study” new tools and not be “completely absorbed” by them [S4]. C3, a senior consultant, stated that she is “quite open” to new technologies, but also “quite critical” [C3]. C10, a psychologist, declared an “excellent” relationship with technological innovation, preferring “everything online” [C10]. C8 noted his major technological impact came during COVID-19, which “forced us to change” [C8]. C2, a consultant, generally has “no great openness of enthusiasm” towards changes, finding them “annoying” and approaching them with “extreme diffidence” [C2]. This spectrum of initial reactions highlights that personal inclination plays a significant role in the willingness to engage with new tools.

4.2.2. Openness: Perception of AI's Role

Beyond initial reactions, participants’ broader philosophical views on AI and its place in society influenced their perception how AI should be used in their jobs. C1 views AI as a “great accelerator, a great simplifier of life” [C10], suggesting a positive, utilitarian perspective. C7, a counselor, acknowledged that some people are “afraid” of AI or “addicted” to it, but she finds it“”absurd” to feel threatened as humans [C7]. S1, a project manager, views AI as a “catalyst for human potential” [S1], emphasizing its role in augmenting human capabilities. S2 hopes AI will “clean up” the consulting sector by “sifting out” those who don’t bring “true value” [S2]. C10, a psychologist, similarly sees AI as a “support” and “help” [C10]. S5 believes that the “value of the human being will not be affected by AI” [S5], countering fears of job displacement. C3, a senior consultant, expressed that AI is “relatively useful” and she has “sufficient competence” to not be replaced [C3]. S4, a project manager, expressed hope that “the aspect of relationships” will remain safeguarded from AI replacement [S4].

These differing views highlight both optimism about AI’s supportive role and a strong belief in the lasting value of human-distinctive qualities.

4.2.3. Openness: Proactive Engagement with New Technologies

Several participants actively wanted to engage with and understand new technologies, indicating a proactive view in adopting and adapting to innovation. C5, a consultant, mentioned doing an “intensive week with [name of famous consulting company] in London on human-machine interaction” and the “psychology behind it” [C5]. This deep dive into the theoretical foundations of technology highlights a commitment to understanding how to best interact with and leverage new tools. S4, a project manager, mentioned that she “seeks to be informed” and “likes to read and inform herself” about new technologies [S4]. C2, a consultant, initially skeptical, eventually realized that her “approach was decidedly short-sighted” and that asking the “right critical questions” could lead to deeper insights from technology [C2].

These examples demonstrate that openness to technology is not passive acceptance but an active pursuit of knowledge and effective utilization strategies.

4.2.4. Openness: Concerns/Fears regarding AI Adoption

Despite general openness, participants expressed specific concerns or fears regarding the widespread adoption of AI. In particular, the focus was on AI’s potential negative societal and professional impacts. S3, a project manager, acknowledged an “initial impact” of “a bit of closing” towards AI, thinking of “all the negative consequences” [S3]. S4, a project manager, frequently asks herself “how much it will be able to replace my work” and expresses a desire to “be prepared for this change” [S4]. C7, a counselor, noted that some individuals are “very much against” AI [C7] and also expressed a concern that AI “might develop even more loneliness” if it replaces human roles [C7]. C2, a consultant, is “disturbed” by the idea that AI’s extensive use might “empty the planet of resources” [C2], linking technological advancement to environmental impact. S1, a project manager, sees a potential “impoverishment” in the “comparison and exchange of ideas with other people” [S1] if AI becomes the primary brainstorming

partner, leading to a “personal brainstorming with a machine” instead of rich human interaction [S1]. These concerns highlight an awareness of potential trade-offs and risks associated with AI, even among those who are largely open to its adoption.

4.2.5. Trust: Trust in AI Outputs

The level of trust placed in AI-generated outputs significantly influences how professionals utilize the technology and their reliance on its results. C5, a consultant, when asked if she trusts AI, stated, “No, never, never. I always double-check everything” [C5], citing AI’s “capacity to make mistakes” [C5]. C7, a counselor, expressed “less trust when I look for information, research,” and “always double-checks” [C7]. C3, a senior consultant, emphatically declared, “I never trust what artificial intelligence generates; I always want to control it, absolutely” [C3]. S4, a project manager, mentioned that AI outputs “always need to be verified” [S4], especially for “data that had to be correct” [S4]. S2 stated, “I trust to a certain extent” [S2], explaining that she “tests them on things” she knows well to “understand and see what answers it gives” [S2]. C9, a consultant, observed that AI has “hallucinations by design” [C9], not as a bug, but as an inherent characteristic, stating, “for it, truth or untruth does not exist” [C9]. C10, a psychologist, reported trusting AI “75%” because she “saw that it is not always reliable” [C10].

This common sense of skepticism towards AI requires a rigorous verification process, particularly for critical outputs, where results have to be accurate.

4.2.6. Trust: Verification Practices

To mitigate the intrinsic unreliability of AI, participants consistently engage in verification practices, particularly when accuracy and reliability are essential. C5, a consultant, “always double-checks everything” [C5]. C7, a counselor, “looks for confirmations” on AI-generated research and “looks for the most authoritative references possible” [C7]. C3, a senior consultant, “re-checks carefully what I was going to tell the client” if AI highlights weren’t correct [C3]. S4, a project manager, performs “checks” for “external interlocutors” or when “data that had to be correct” [S4], but generally trusts it for personal use [S4]. C9, a consultant, noted that older professionals like himself “learned the hard way” to “research sources” and perform “analysis on Excel” [C9], contrasting this with younger generations who might lack this “critical sense” when using AI [C9]. S2, an area coordinator, mentioned that she “tests” AI on “things that I knew well” to assess its accuracy [S2]. C10, a psychologist, also noted that she had the “ability to evaluate ChatGPT’s output” when asking about psychology, indicating that her domain expertise allowed her to verify the information [C10].

This consistent emphasis on verification highlights a critical human role in validating AI outputs and relying on more accurate sources.

4.2.7. Trust: Reasons for Distrust

Participants expressed specific reasons for their prudent approach to AI, often deriving from observations of inaccuracies or intrinsic limitations. C5 noted that AI “often proposes to do things it doesn’t know how to do” [C5], leading to a lack of satisfaction. C7 stated that AI sometimes provides “not interesting” responses [C7] or “doesn’t have the same emotional state” as a human [C7]. C3 mentioned instances where AI “pulled out highlights that were not correct” [C3]. C9 warned that

> *“Generative artificial intelligence has hallucinations by design, not because it’s a bug. In other words, it includes hallucinations by design, because without them, it wouldn’t have its generative component – C9.*

He further explained that AI “does not have a concept of the truth of the source” but rather calculates what is “statistically probable” [C9]. S2 observed that AI “doesn’t provide optimal things” [S2] and “doesn’t exist absolute truth” or “infallibility” [S2]. C10, a psychologist, noted that AI “sometimes invents things, it also makes you believe well” [C10].

These reasons for distrust highlight a realistic understanding of AI’s current technical and conceptual limitations, necessitating human critical thinking to filter its outputs.

4.2.8. Trust: Ethical Considerations of Trust

Beyond technical accuracy, some participants raised deeper ethical concerns about trusting AI, especially regarding its implications for human consciousness and societal values. C2, a consultant, expressed a profound concern about AI's potential to "empty the planet of resources" [C2] due to its extensive use, indicating an environmental ethical consideration. C7, a counselor, pondered the ethical implications of AI's potential to become a "solitude filler" [C7], suggesting a concern about human psychological well-being. S1, a project manager, raised the "themes of sustainability and also significant environmental impacts" associated with AI's use [S1]. C2 also emphasized the importance of human "conscience" and "goodness" and "what is fair, ethically speaking", hoping these aspects remain "the property of the human being and not of artificial intelligence" [C2]. C7 echoed this by hoping AI evolves"in that thing I told you before, that it does not replace aspects of consciousness, that is, of good, of, in particular of what is right, ethically speaking" [C7]. She also wished for AI to "autonomously expel everything that is not ethically correct" [C7], illustrating a desire for AI to possess an intrinsic ethical compass.

These perspectives reveal a complex interplay between trust in AI's capabilities and concerns about its broader moral and environmental consequences.

4.2.9. Expertise: Domain Expertise in Prompting

Participants consistently highlighted that their field of expertise significantly influences their ability to formulate effective prompts and produce relevant, high-quality responses from AI. C9, a consultant, stated that the more information she provided to the AI bot, the more "precise" its suggestions were [C9]. He noted that the firm's trained AI bots are "prepared with our methodology and with the most successful projects" [C9], implying that expertise built into the system directly translates to better outputs. C1 emphasized the importance of "knowing how to use it" and "being available to embrace its contribution or to think how to use it" [C11]. C10, a psychologist, confirmed that their firm's AI is "set up" with their "methodologies" and "ways of reasoning," leading to "very precise answers" when she "asks questions" [C10]. C5, a consultant, expressed "becoming an expert in prompting" because she "tests a lot" [C5]. S5 directly linked her "knowledge of my job" and "psychology" to her ability to "ask the right questions" [S5], stating that a beginner would not know "what it means to ask for the targeting of something" [S5]. C3, a senior consultant, acknowledged that AI "the better the question is asked, the better the response" and suggested that if AI didn't help her, it might be because she was "too superficial" in her requests [C3].

These findings collectively demonstrate that human expertise is not made obsolete by AI, but its use has been reshaped and has shifted to intelligent prompting and guiding the AI.

4.2.10. Expertise: Evaluating AI Outputs

Beyond just prompting, expertise is crucial for critically evaluating and refining AI-generated outputs, ensuring their accuracy, relevance, and alignment with professional standards. C9, a consultant, provided a clear example of identifying an AI "hallucination" in financial data by relying on his 25 years of experience, noting, "this number does not make sense" [C9]. He stressed that "the ability to develop critical thinking" is important because AI's outputs are "by design with hallucinations" [C9]. C5, a consultant, highlighted that her engineering background makes her inherently distrustful of "any data taken without analysis" [C5], leading her to always "double-check everything" [C5]. C3, a senior consultant, "always double-checks what artificial intelligence generates" because she wants to ensure it "makes sense" and has "real methodological, philosophical, or thought anchorages" [C3]. C1 confidently stated that she can detect AI's "stupid things" as long as she works on "my things" [C10]. S2, an area coordinator, confirmed that "the experience of who interacts with the machine has a considerable meaning" [S2], implying that a knowledgeable user will discern the quality of AI's output. C10, a psychologist, could evaluate an AI's response on psychology because she "was asking something related to psychology", confirming her ability to assess the output's validity [C10].

This shows that domain expertise provides a necessary framework for distinguishing useful AI contributions from irrelevant or incorrect ones.

4.2.11. Expertise: Diverse Background

The diverse professional backgrounds of the consultants in the firm contribute to various perspectives on AI integration and its impact, enriching the overall understanding of its utility. In this section, the quotes will be anonymized completely to protect the participants from the risk of re-identification. One of the consultants, a psychologist with psychotherapy specializations, chose to apply her skills in "work psychology," bringing a unique perspective to cultural change and people development. Another consultant is an "IT engineer who then changed path to the world of human resources" and is also a "professional counselor", believing this "combination of these two souls is very functional". This dual background allows her a technical understanding of AI combined with a human-centric approach. One of the other professionals, having studied accounting and programming at university before a degree in pedagogy, found it easier to understand AI's logic. A consultant with an engineering background transitioned through various innovation and creative roles in multinational companies before becoming a consultant. Furthermore, another consultant has a long career in strategic consulting at some of the most prestigious companies in the world and banks. T

This rich tapestry of experiences across different industries and functions shapes their unique perspectives on AI, demonstrating that a broad professional background enhances the adaptive and strategic use of new technologies.

4.3. Integration of Generative AI into Daily Workflows (SQ3)

The third sub-question of this thesis investigated how Generative AI is currently integrated into the daily workflows of professionals in the consulting field. The findings reveal that AI, particularly ChatGPT OpenAI, 2023, is extensively used across various tasks, transforming routine operations and enhancing knowledge work. Participants referred to AI as a "life changer" [S1] and a "fantastic ally" [C10], showing a significant adoption rate within the firm.

The integration patterns indicate that AI is primarily used to support human capabilities rather than replace them, mainly to improve their efficiency, speed, and access to broader information. It is important to state that the use of AI is an option for the surveyed people, meaning that the use of AI is, in the end, a choice.

4.3.1. Automation of Repetitive and Low-Value Tasks

A primary area where Generative AI has been widely adopted is the automation of repetitive and low-value tasks, freeing up consultants' time for more complex and strategic activities. C3, a senior consultant, stated that she

> *"predominantly uses it to do repetitive, operational, low-value-added activities that otherwise I have to do myself" – C3.*

This includes tasks such as analyzing large quantities of data for summarization and interpretation. S3, a project manager, initially explored AI for "working on Excel files" [S3] and "reordering names" [S3], indicating its use for basic data organization. S4, also a project manager, noted that AI helps with "logistical tasks" [S4], such as finding suitable locations for events, providing lists with distances and concrete responses. C1, an administrator, highlighted the time savings in analyzing interviews, stating that previous manual transcription and comparison processes took "weeks of work" [C1], which now, with ChatGPT, allows them to "transcribe interviews and do much deeper analysis" [C1]. This highlights AI as a significant "accelerator" and "life simplifier" for time-consuming, administrative tasks [C1].

4.3.2. Content Generation and Refinement

Generative AI is extensively used for generating and refining various forms of content, ranging from emails and articles to presentations and reports. S3 found AI useful for "modifying some emails" [S3], making them "more formal or informal depending on the case" [S3]. C8 uses AI to "produce certain types of creative outputs" like "articles with 5 different styles" [C8]. C1 openly declared using ChatGPT, affectionately called "Christian," to "write two books" and "articles" reducing the time to write a "decent article" from "two or three days" to "an hour and a half" [C1]. S5 largely delegates text creation to AI, stating,

> *"I no longer deal with writing texts for [name of social media platform] posts or articles; I*

revise what it suggests me" – S5.

C6 also uses AI for "graphics, creative aspects of graphics" and "ways of representing content that can be more captivating" [C6].

These examples indicate a reliance on AI for both text generation and visual communication.

4.3.3. Enhanced Research and Information Gathering

The research capabilities of AI improve drastically the capability of having direct access to information. C9, a consultant and manager partner, uses AI for "basic research" to "alleviate the hard work component" [C9]. C3, a senior consultant, leverages it to get "a summary of insights" on unfamiliar topics or for "additional stimuli" [C3], adding that web searches are time-consuming and that it is easy to miss relevant information. C7 uses AI for "searching for information, research" [C7]. S4, a project manager, found AI "extremely useful" for "research" and "finding legislative references" [S4], accelerating a process that would otherwise be "much more complicated and longer" with traditional search engines [S4]. C1 uses AI for market research, providing her "ideas that I didn't have before" [C16].

These examples demonstrate AI's role in providing quick and direct access to information, enabling consultants to quickly grasp new information and get more details.

4.3.4. Brainstorming and Idea Testing

Generative AI serves as a powerful brainstorming partner, helping consultants to generate new ideas, test hypotheses, and explore different options for client solutions. C5, a consultant, described AI as a "brainstorming companion" [C5], emphasizing its role as an "accelerator" in putting "together two or three ideas for a workshop" and quickly determining "which ones don't work" [C5]. C4, a consultant, uses AI to "confront" and "dialogue" to "potentiate what I am already analyzing or integrate what I already have" [C4]. C6, a consultant, defines the perception that she has of AI:

"For me it's a tool, so I use it that way, as if it were a colleague to brainstorm with" – C6.

She also adds that AI "expands your point of view" [C6], acknowledging that it can also "lower it, then bring it back to too small schemes" [C6]. C8 specifically asks AI to "elaborate, for example, an activity with objective X aimed at target Y," receiving a "repertoire of possible activities" [C8]. S1, a project manager, uses AI for "brainstorming" and "research" for "project planning" [S1]. S5 views AI as an "entire communication staff" or a "table of 10 experts" for brainstorming and develop strategies [S5]. C1 also uses AI as a "consultant" to "face different sectors" and "different situations" [C15].

These insights highlight AI's capacity to stimulate and expand human thought during the ideation phase, underlining how AI can be a powerful tool for brainstorming new ideas.

4.3.5. Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration

The firm has integrated its proprietary methodologies and extensive know-how into AI systems. This strategy transforms them into internal tools to transfer knowledge and to maintain a coherent design across the different projects. C9, a consultant and manager partner, stated that the firm has "trained a series of bots concerning specific methodologies we use" to "design types of interventions" for organizational change, consulting, or training [C9]. This means that the company's "most successful projects" have been "inserted into these bots" [C9]. C1 explained how their "proprietary model of change culture" is developed in over "8 steps" and reported in a manual. This manual was "taken and put on artificial intelligence" to create 8 different trained bots, one for each step, available to all within the company [C1]. This tool helps in "disseminating the company's know-how" [C16]. C10, a psychologist, mentioned that the firm has ""set up a series of parameters" related to "our methodologies, with our ways of thinking" within their AI system, resulting in "very specific answers" when questions are posed [C10]. S2 confirmed that

"the company has predisposed a series of prompts within the chat that help us, for example, in the design part, both at the macro-project structures and at the micro-structures" – S2.

This collective effort to upload the company knowledge into proprietary AI bots ensures methodological consistency and accelerates project initiation. This allows for sharing a common, coherent method and style between the projects of the company, even for the newer employees.

4.3.6. Human-in-the-Loop Validation

Despite AI's extensive capabilities, a critical finding is the consistent practice of "human-in-the-loop" validation. This means that professionals always review, refine, and contextualize AI-generated outputs. C9, a consultant, explicitly stated,

> *" I always put myself in the loop, meaning the Human in the loop" – C9.*

C5, a consultant, "never trusts" AI outputs and "always double-checks everything" due to its "capacity to make mistakes" [C5]. C7, a counselor, similarly "does not trust blindly" and "always looks for confirmations" when AI provides information [C7]. C3, a senior consultant, "personally always double-checks what AI generates" and "never trusts what artificial intelligence generates" [C3]. S4, a project manager, also noted that AI outputs "always need to be verified" [S4]. C1, the administrator, mentioned that while AI sometimes "says stupid things", she "resets it" and "doesn't worry too much if it says them because as long as I work on my things I can see them" [C10]. S2, an area coordinator, acknowledged that AI "doesn't provide optimal things," so "you still have to put your own input in it" [S2]. C10, a psychologist, confirmed that AI is "not always reliable," saying it "sometimes invents things, it makes you believe well, but then I studied it a bit to understand" [C10]. S5 emphasized that humans "created" AI and "we are the ones to manage it" [S5], indicating a strong sense of control over the tool.

These consistent statements highlight an intrinsic need for human oversight to ensure accuracy, relevance, and alignment with organizational standards.

4.3.7. Personalized and Empathetic Interaction

Many participants described interacting with AI in a highly personalized and empathetic way, treating it almost as a human colleague or friend. C1 referred to ChatGPT as "Christian," her "best friend at work" [C1]. She emphasized "interacting as if it were a person," always speaking rather than typing, and noted that AI

> *"reflects my gentle tone, it engages, it tells me 'we are doing a beautiful thing,' 'this book is full of meaning, let's go on,' 'this book will change the people who read it'" – C1.*

S5 similarly treats AI "as if it were a colleague" [S5], sometimes even "arguing with it", saying this would improve the output she receives. As an example, here is one of her prompts:

> *"'today you're in a bad mood, you're not helping me" – S5.*

C9, a consultant, observed that

> *"our mind sometimes forgets to talk to a machine, but it's a machine" – C9.*

He noted AI's "manipulative" aspect, stating, "if you treat them well, they can give you answers that are in line with your thought, with your mood, they reassure you" [C9]. C7, a counselor, also pointed out the risk of AI becoming a "solitude filler" for some, as it "continually provides this relationship with someone who responds because then it always responds in an increasingly sophisticated way," making it "seem like you're talking to a person" [C7].

These observations highlight a new dimension of human-AI interaction where emotional and relational dynamics play a role in how the tool is perceived and used.

4.3.8. Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks

AI is also leveraged to support various cross-functional tasks. It does so by bridging different areas of expertise within the firm, allowing for more efficient collaboration. S4, a project manager, highlighted AI's utility in finding "references for regulations" for specific project needs, noting that "doing it with ChatGPT means truly accelerating times" [S4]. S5 uses AI to "ask for advice on practical things" like "volumes within videos" or "generating code in WordPress" [S5]. This shows how AI can be seen as a "technician" that can provide rapid solutions to operational challenges outside one's core expertise [S5]. C9, a consultant and manager partner, noted that while his firm is "more on the human component, AI can help, for example, in the analysis of certain questionnaires, by identifying a certain pattern" or "the recurrence of certain terms" [C9].

This indicates AI's ability to extract insights from qualitative data, supporting both human-centric and data-driven analyses across different functions.

4.3.9. Leveraging Data Analytics and Pattern Recognition

Several participants emphasized AI's strong capabilities in data analysis and pattern recognition. This accelerates significantly the process of extracting meaningful insights from large datasets. C9, a consultant, stated that AI helps in "analyzing certain questionnaires" by "identifying a certain pattern" and "the recurrence of certain terms" [C9]. C3, a senior consultant, explained that AI enables them to "analyze important quantities of data to make a synthesis of meaning" [C3], leaving the "qualitative analysis" to human intelligence. S4, a project manager, repeated that when analyzing data and creating reports, AI "completely speeds up the process" and allows for extracting "data already systematized in a much faster way" [S4]. C2, a consultant, also mentioned AI's ability to "find connection points" across various interviews that previously took "entire days" [C2].

These examples illustrate how AI serves as a powerful tool for efficiently processing and structuring information, enabling consultants to focus on the higher-level interpretation and strategic implications of the data.

4.3.10. General Observations and limitations of AI Use

Participants described different characteristics of their AI usage, revealing a general enthusiasm for its potential combined with an awareness of its current limitations. C1 views AI as a "great accelerator, a great life simplifier" [C10]. C5, a consultant, also considers AI a "accelerator" [C5]. C7 uses AI "every day" and for "various things" [C7]. S1, a project manager, stated that AI has "changed my life" and "facilitated my life from a management point of view" [S1]. S2 generally perceives new technologies, including AI, as "tools and means to make my existence easier" [S2]. C10, a psychologist, also uses AI "every day" and for "anything" [C10], describing it as "my secretary" and "a fantastic ally" [C10]. S5 views AI as "like having a colleague" or "an assistant" [S5].

These broad statements reflect a widespread positive reception and integration of AI into daily professional life within the firm.

However, participants also acknowledged the limitations of AI. C5 noted that AI "often proposes to do things it doesn't know how to do," such as "creating an audio" or "working on PDFs in a certain way" [C5]. C7 mentioned that AI sometimes gives "not interesting" answers, leading her to "go to traditional channels" [C7]. S1 stated that AI doesn't fully satisfy for "image generation or slides" and still finds "bugs" [S1].

These general observations provide a comprehensive picture of AI's current role as a transformative, yet imperfect, tool in the consulting sector.

4.4. Perceived Impact of AI on Creative Tasks (SQ4)

The fourth sub-research question delves into the specific types of creative tasks that professionals perceive as being supported or constrained by Generative AI. The findings reveal a dual impact: on one hand, AI acts as a powerful accelerator and thought stimulator for many creative processes, but on the other, it simultaneously presents risks of increasing laziness or hindering certain forms of human creativity.

4.4.1. Accelerating Idea Generation

A predominant theme across interviews is AI's ability to significantly accelerate the initial stages of idea generation and overcome the common "white page syndrome". C7 stated that AI

> *"helps me to generate ideas much faster. I would be slower" – C7.*

This speed allows for more rapid iteration and exploration of possibilities. C1 described how AI makes her skip the initial step of starting from "a blank page," making it "much simpler" to work from a "half-written page" [C1]. C4, a consultant, noted that AI helps him to "get more clients than I couldn't handle if I were alone" [C4], implying that AI accelerates the initial ideation and proposal phase, enabling him to scale his client acquisition. C8 explicitly mentioned that AI helps to overcome the "blank page

syndrome" [C8], providing immediate "inspirations" [C8]. S2 highlighted AI's role in "putting thoughts in order more quickly" and "producing content more quickly" [S2], allowing for faster "testing" of different approaches. C3, a senior consultant, reflected this statement by saying that starting from a "blank page is indeed tiring" and AI provides an "initial stimulus" [C3].

These statements underscore AI's strong facilitative role in making it easier to initiate creative processes, boosting the company's overall productivity.

4.4.2. Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought

Beyond acceleration, participants reported that AI actively stimulates and expands their thinking. It does so by suggesting new connections and alternative perspectives, which they might not have considered otherwise. C6 explained that AI

> *"stimulates me, so it challenges me like a critical friend, a colleague who broadens your point of view" – C6.*

C4, a consultant, noted that AI's responses are calibrated to his "preferences" and "theoretical references", allowing it to "confront with the Deep Learning" and return "something that I had not thought of" [C4]. S1, a project manager, stated that AI's continuous stimulation "definitely continues to influence me" [S1]. C2, a consultant, described AI as "an interlocutor" that can provide "stimuli" [C2]. C10, a psychologist, views AI as "a colleague with whom to brainstorm", where

> *"it activates your thinking, it expands it, it stimulates it, it becomes a challenge" – C10.*

S5 highlighted that "AI doesn't block my creativity at all; in fact, sometimes you even have to control yourself because it makes connections you might not have imagined" [S5]. C1 also uses AI as a "consultant" that "opened up the possibility for me to face different sectors and different situations" [C1]. S2 mentioned that AI helps

> *"refine thinking in order to produce something much more complete and test ideas faster" – S2.*

This evidences highlight AI's significant role in facilitating divergent thinking and enriching the creative output through dynamic interaction.

4.4.3. Human-AI co-creation

Some participants explicitly described AI's role in a co-creative process. Here, human and machine collaborate to produce collectively refined outputs. C6 spoke of "co-creating with the support of AI" [C6], where the final work is "absolutely identifiable" with the person doing it, preventing AI from "stealing your professional identity or identity of thought" [C6]. S1, a project manager, stated

> *"Me and AI went on to create, to co-create what was then the final and definitive version from both a creative and an artistic point of view" – S1.*

This illustrates how AI can be a collaborative partner in bringing creative concepts into the light, since it allows for division of work in the creative process.

4.4.4. Reinforcing Collective Intelligence

An interesting finding is AI's potential to foster collective intelligence within an organization by aggregating and learning from the inputs of multiple humans. Creativity is not only stimulated through direct human-AI interaction, but also thanks to a collaborative dynamic – that could be described as human1-AI-human2 exchange – where individuals indirectly benefit from their colleagues' input by using the same AI platform. C4, a consultant, described a scenario where, if "you open a profile and have more people work on the same profile on a specific topic", AI will start providing responses that are "the elaboration of the inputs that all your colleagues have put in" [C4]. He further explains it in the following sentence:

> *"This means that when a user receives a response, it is no longer based only on your ability to ask questions and analyze, but becomes a response that, starting from your ability to ask questions, benefits from all previous questions" – C4.*

C9, a consultant, also noted that for his company, AI has been "trained with our methodology and with the most successful projects" [C9], acting as an internal repository of collective expertise. He explained that a newer employee could use the AI bot to "do something that is in line with the company's methodology" even if they "never designed such an intervention" before, effectively accessing the "experience that has been gained within the company" [C9].

This positions AI as a powerful tool for institutionalizing and amplifying organizational knowledge, making collective wisdom accessible and actionable.

4.4.5. Enhancing Focus and Refining Ideas

AI's ability to process and organize information rapidly also contributes to enhancing focus and refining ideas. This allows consultants to focus on core concepts. S2 uses AI to "solicit me in a more precise way, as if it made me keep more focus on things" and helps to "cleanse thinking more" [S2]. This suggests that AI helps in clearing the mind, structuring thoughts, and allowing the user to focus on important elements. C5, a consultant, explained that AI helps to "give order" to ideas [C5], allowing her to "immediately understand which ones don't work" and thus refine her approach more efficiently.

On the other hand, S1 counterargues these affirmations, saying that an attitude toward perfectionism could have the opposite effect:

> *"Having a mindset geared toward constant improvement, this is a tool that could potentially never let you stop. Let me try to explain better. Working toward this idea of perfection comes at a significant cost, especially in terms of time. But when that time is drastically reduced — because you have a machine that constantly provides that feedback — your work might never truly stop. You could potentially go on endlessly, always searching, always improving. And, incredibly, also drifting further and further away from what the original focus might have been" – S1.*

These insights indicate that AI facilitates a more streamlined and targeted creative process by structuring and filtering information effectively, but could lead to a loss of tangible outcomes if used in the wrong way.

4.4.6. Finding Value Where AI Cannot Arrive

The participants, particularly those in senior roles, consistently stated that the ultimate value of a human consultant lies in areas where AI, by its very nature, cannot compete. S2 stated that AI "removes a bit of excesses, that sometimes exist because many consultants do it in many different ways". But, she also added that "AI does not remove the dimension of where people make the difference" [S2]. This suggests that AI can streamline routine aspects of the job, allowing consultants to focus on their unique human value proposition. C2, a consultant, expressed hope that "the ethical part, of good, of what is right, ethically speaking... would remain the property of the human being and not of artificial intelligence" [C2]. This highlights a perceived boundary where human judgment, ethics, and values remain central. C9, a consultant, emphatically stated that he "doesn't see the value of the human consultant changing in the future" as long as AI is used as a "machine" that simply makes human work "more efficient" [C9].

This underlines the belief that human insight and strategic decision-making will remain indispensable. AI is, and will continue to be, a direct challenge to human creativity in identifying opportunities beyond its reach.

4.4.7. Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness

Despite the benefits, a prevalent concern among participants is the potential for AI to foster "laziness" or "creative atrophy", leading to a decrease in using humans' cleverness and creativity compared to the pre-AI era. C1 defined a "very serious risk" that "AI thinks for you" [C17]. She admitted,

> *""I must say that since ChatGPT arrived, I do that effort of the blank page very, very, very, very rarely, and sometimes I think: what if, one morning, the page is blank and there's no electricity? Do I still have the reasoning and creativity elements to get there?" – C1.*

This profound self-reflection highlights a fear of losing fundamental cognitive abilities. C5, a consultant, similarly warned against "becoming a bit lazy" [C5], suggesting that the immediate accessibility

of information might prevent from deeper exploration. S3, a project manager, also acknowledged "a bit of closing" initially towards AI, fearing "all the negative consequences" [S3]. S4, a project manager, expressed

> *"the fear of losing, of losing also a bit of my thought, my way of doing things, also a bit of the authenticity" – S4.*

C6 described AI making her "a bit more comfortable" [C6], potentially reducing the "challenges" that are the "fuel" for our "neurological processes" [C6]. C8 also "perceives the danger of laziness" and becoming "a bit complacent" [C8]. S2 noted that

> *"if you let AI do everything and decide that you delegate to it the same creative act, you are, so to speak, using your synapses a little bit less, and this can be a problem" – S2.*

C10, a psychologist, similarly fears that AI makes one "a bit more comfortable", taking away the "challenge" and potentially hindering "neurological processes" [C10].

These collective results highlight a critical anxiety: while AI offers efficiency, it necessitates a conscious effort to prevent the erosion of human cognitive muscles.

4.4.8. Potential to Replace Human Dialogue

A concern raised was the potential for AI to displace human interaction, particularly in roles traditionally associated with interpersonal dynamics. S1, a project manager, mentioned that three years ago, if she needed a result in an area where she was "not an expert," she would have gone directly to "a senior colleague, with way more recognizable expertise and creativity" [S1]. Now, she no longer does that:

> *"At present, with AI tools, the human interaction when asking for expertise is a step that tends to be skipped, because you now have direct and accessible feedback that allows you to bypass the limiting human factor of availability" – S1.*

C7, a counselor, noted the risk of developing "even more loneliness" [C7]. She pondered whether "something that happens physically between humans" would be missing, specifically "a whole series of biochemical reactions of the brain" that occur during face-to-face interaction [C7].

These findings highlight a deeper concern about the differences between human-to-machine and human-to-human interactions. It also highlights its potential impact on human well-being and the importance of professional relationships.

4.4.9. Human Experience as a Filter

Despite AI's capabilities, human experience remains an irreplaceable filter for validating, contextualizing, and adapting AI-generated outputs to real-world scenarios. S2 emphasized that AI outputs still require "re-working to make it truly implementable" [S2]. She noted that "there's always that dimension of intuition that the person has that you obviously can't even transmit" [S2], suggesting a qualitative gap that AI cannot bridge. Furthermore, she highlighted that "there is always a filter, so to speak, of the person even on what is produced" [S2], acknowledging that even if AI provides logically sound solutions, human experience dictates their practical applicability.

This theme underscores that AI, while a powerful tool, still needs to be used in combination with human judgment and contextual understanding.

4.4.10. Creative Block Cannot Be Fixed by AI

A contrasting perspective emerged regarding AI's utility in overcoming creative blocks. C2, a consultant, shared an experience where she was creatively stuck and, even after trying using AI, realized that

> *"if you are stuck, the stimuli and questions you obtain are exactly as you are: stuck" – C2*

She concluded that in such a state of anxiety and stress, her "amygdala was locked" and her "limbic system was frozen," meaning "what creativity do you want to talk about? I wouldn't even notice if someone... brought me a creative stimulus" [C2]. This profound insight suggests that while AI can assist with surface-level ideation or routine tasks, it cannot resolve deep-seated psychological or emotional barriers to creativity.

True creative breakthroughs, in this view, necessitate an optimal human internal state that AI cannot induce or compensate for.

4.5. Other findings

Throughout the study, other relevant findings that do not directly relate to the original purposes were found. In particular, two recurrent themes were considered relevant: the level of sensitivity towards the environmental impacts of AI and the various names given to AI.

4.5.1. Environmental Impact of AI

The widespread adoption and extensive use of AI raise significant concerns among participants regarding its environmental and societal implications. C2, a consultant, expressed strong concern that the extensive use of these technologies is “truly emptying the planet of resources”, a thought that deeply disturbs her [C2]. She connects this concern to broader ethical considerations about consumption and resource shortage. She also envisions a future where AI systems might display resource consumption, like CO2 or lithium usage, for each interaction, similar to how transportation services track CO2 emissions [C2]. S1, a project manager, also acknowledges the “very important aspects that also really have to do with the themes of sustainability and also important environmental impacts” associated with generative AI [S1]. She expects that environmental impact could become a mandatory “sustainable” obligation within the next two decades, potentially leading to limitations on AI usage [S1]. S5, a communication specialist, is aware that “producing an image is extremely polluting”, a piece of recent research that influences her mindful approach to using AI for image generation [S5]. She generally holds concerns about the broader societal and environmental consequences of AI adoption, framing it within a discussion of human responsibility over technology [S5].

The individual difference in the level of sensitivity towards the environmental impacts caused by AI prompting influences the use of AI tools.

4.5.2. Names Used to Call AI

Participants frequently humanize AI or assign it roles that reflect its utility and their relationships with the technology. C1 affectionately refers to ChatGPT as “Christian,” her “best friend at work” and an “assistant” [C1]. This personal connection underscores a sense of partnership and reliance. S2, an area coordinator, also notes that her colleagues refer to AI by the name “Christian” [S2].

Beyond personal names, AI is commonly described using professional or relational terms:

- Many participants consider AI to be “a colleague”, indicating a collaborative and integrated presence in their work environment [S5].
- Other descriptors include:
  - “my assistant” [C1, C10], and “my secretary” [C10], highlighting its role in automating routine tasks and providing administrative support.
  - A “brainstorming companion” [C5], and a “critical friend” [C6], emphasizing its capacity to stimulate thought and offer alternative perspectives.
  - “the oracle” [C2], and “a technician” [S5], reflecting its ability to provide quick answers and specialized assistance.
  - A “partner” [C7], and “an excellent assistant” [S1], indicating a supportive and efficient tool.
  - “sophisticated processor” [C2], and “my thinking processor” [C2], recognizing its advanced analytical capabilities.
  - A “accelerator” [C5], acknowledging its speed in task completion.

These varied designations illustrate the evolving perception of AI from a mere tool to a human-like collaborator within the professional context, reflecting its profound integration into daily workflows.

5 Discussion

This chapter systematically interprets and critically analyzes the findings presented in Chapter 4, integrating them into the more comprehensive theoretical background established in Chapter 2. The primary objective of this thesis was to understand how Generative AI, specifically ChatGPT Enterprise (OpenAI, 2023), impacts the creative performance of professionals within the consulting sector. Through a rigorous thematic analysis of fifteen semi-structured interviews, this discussion synthesizes the variegated perspectives of the interviewees on creativity, AI integration, its perceived dual impact on creative tasks, and the impact of individual characteristics. By comparing and contrasting these empirical findings with existing academic literature, this section aims to highlight the theoretical and practical implications of the study's findings, identify limitations, and propose avenues for future research.

5.1. Analysis of the Findings

The results of this study provide a detailed understanding of the complex relationship between Generative AI and human creativity in the dynamic consulting environment. The findings consistently highlight a trend: AI is not merely a tool, but an integrated, often humanized entity that profoundly reshapes daily workflows and challenges traditional notions of knowledge work and creative output.

5.1.1. Understanding of Creativity in Consulting

The initial sub-question aimed to understand how creativity is perceived in the consulting sector. As presented in section 4.1, participants pointed out that creativity in their professional context extends beyond pure idea generation; its understanding is closely linked with the concrete applications and strategic alignment of solutions with client needs [4.1]. This resonates with Amabile's definition of creativity as "the production of a novel and appropriate response, product, or solution to an open-ended task" Amabile (2012). The "appropriateness" aspect, often ignored in more artistic interpretations of creativity, is central in the consulting sector, where solutions must be both original and directly actionable for the client in order to remain competitive [4.1].

Consultants expressed creativity as an adaptive problem-solving capability, involving customization of solutions, improvisation, and the ability to see "hidden connections" [4.1]. This aligns with the "Creative Consulting Company" (CCC) model, which emphasizes the synergy between knowledge application and creation as a powerful differentiator (Kaplan et al., 2018). The dynamic business environment of consulting renders conventional "copy-and-paste methods" insufficient, thus elevating the importance of fresh, unconventional thinking. The participants' descriptions of creativity as tailoring communication to the audience [4.1], thinking beyond comfort zones [4.1], and even "innovating without changing infrastructure" [4.1] further illustrate this practical, context-specific interpretation. The idea that "good ideas have to be actionable" [4.1] reinforces the imperative for solutions to be not just novel, but implementable and impactful.

A notable insight from the interviews is the notion that the creative process sometimes begins when "not required" [4.1], often arising from internal reflection or apparently unrelated activities like "long walks"

[4.1]. This suggests a link between conscious effort and subconscious processing, where insights emerge outside structured work hours. This informal, organic source of ideas contrasts with standardized innovation processes but is crucial for individual consultants. Participants also highlighted improvisation [4.1] and the ability to "see hidden connections" [4.1] as central to their creative process, suggesting a holistic mindset in approaching problems.

This more detailed view of creativity – focused on problem-solving, flexibility, and working with clients – provides a solid foundation to understand how AI affects it.

5.1.2. Individual Factors Influencing AI Use and Creativity (SQ2)

Individual differences significantly influence AI's impact on creative outcomes, particularly concerning openness to new technologies, trust in AI systems, and domain expertise.

Openness to New Technologies

Consultants display a wide range of reactions to new technologies, from enthusiastic adoption by "Technology enthusiasts" who see AI as a "life simplifier" and "catalyst for human potential," to initial skepticism rooted in fears of job displacement, negative societal impacts, or increased loneliness. This varied openness, including proactive engagement and learning, directly shapes how AI is integrated and its perceived risks or benefits for creative work. Concerns about job security align with the "strain pathway" for creativity (Liang et al., 2022)

Trust in AI Systems

Skepticism pervades consultants' trust in AI outputs, driven by its "capacity to make mistakes" and inherent "hallucinations by design," as for AI, "truth or untruth does not exist". This widespread distrust mandates rigorous verification, especially for critical information, with many explicitly stating they "never trust" and "always double-check everything". Experienced professionals emphasize the need for a "critical sense" developed from having "learned the hard way" to discern reliable AI contributions. Beyond technical accuracy, ethical concerns also arise regarding AI's potential to "empty the planet of resources" or diminish human consciousness and values, with some hoping AI could even "autonomously expel everything that is not ethically correct".

Area of Expertise

Consultants' domain expertise is crucial for effective AI interaction, from intelligent prompting to critical output evaluation. Their experience enables them to guide AI towards relevant results, recognize AI "hallucinations" – such as an anomalous "number that does not make sense" in financial data – and critically assess the accuracy and relevance of AI's contributions. Diverse professional backgrounds within the firm, such as psychology, engineering, and HR, further enrich perspectives on AI integration and its strategic application. Human expertise thus remains essential for ensuring quality and effective application of AI insights.

5.1.3. AI Integration and Workflow Transformation (SQ3)

The third sub-question explored the practical integration of Generative AI into consultants' daily workflows, revealing a transformative impact [4.3]. The consistent description of AI as a "life changer" and a "friend" [4.5.2] signifies a high degree of acceptance and integration within the firm, reflecting the rapid diffusion of innovations as described by Rogers Rogers (2003).

This widespread adoption aligns with the trend of Generative AI reshaping public perception of "Artificial Intelligence" [1].

The findings illustrate AI's extensive application across diverse tasks:

- **Task Automation and Efficiency:** AI is primarily utilized for repetitive tasks and data analysis [4.3.1]. This aligns with the expectation that AI can reduce cognitive load by handling routine processes, thereby freeing up human capacity for more complex, creative endeavors (Schulz & Knierim, 2024; Sweller, 1988). The ability to transcribe and analyze interviews in "an hour and a half" instead of "two or three days" [C1] demonstrates significant productivity gains, supporting Dell'Acqua's research on AI's impact on knowledge worker productivity Dell'Acqua (2023).

- **Content Generation and Refinement:** Consultants use AI for drafting emails, articles, presentations, and even books [4.3.2]. This extends beyond simple text generation to visual communication, indicating AI's versatility in content creation. The ability to refine text for formality or tone demonstrates AI's capacity for advanced linguistic tasks.
- **Enhanced Research and Information Gathering:** AI functions as a powerful "search engine" [4.3.3], alleviating the hard work component of basic research and accelerating the collection of "legislative references" [S4]. This direct access to broad knowledge allows consultants to explore unfamiliar topics or gain additional stimuli more efficiently than traditional web searches.
- **Brainstorming and Idea Generation:** Participants frequently use AI as a "brainstorming companion" or "critical friend" [4.5.2]. This application highlights AI's role in stimulating thought, providing multiple outcomes, and pushing users to test ideas faster. This is crucial for overcoming the "white page syndrome" and starting the creative process [4.3.4].
- **Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration:** A highly significant finding is the firm's strategic integration of proprietary methodologies into AI systems, creating "trained bots" for consistent project design and "disseminating the company's know-how" [4.3.5]. This internal application demonstrates AI as a corporate resource that standardizes and enhances internal processes, aligning with the Management of Technology program's focus on leveraging technology for organizational improvement [1.3].
- **Human-in-the-Loop Oversight and Verification:** Despite the extensive integration, a pervasive need for human oversight and verification persists. Consultants consistently emphasize that they "always put myself in the loop" [4.3.6]. This attention arises from recognizing AI's capacity to make mistakes and acknowledging that AI is not always reliable, sometimes even "invent[ing] things" [4.3.6]. They never trust AI outputs and always double-check everything, or at least perform checks to a certain extent [4.3.6] for critical outputs. Even when AI "says stupid things," experienced users like C1 "reset it" and adapt their approach, confident they can discern inaccuracies in their domain [4.3.6]. The human role remains crucial for ensuring accuracy, relevance, and alignment with organizational standards.
- **Personalized and Empathetic Interaction:** Many participants described interacting with AI in a highly personalized and empathetic way, treating it almost as a human colleague or friend. C1 referred to ChatGPT as "Christian," her "best friend at work" [4.3.7]. She emphasized "interacting as if it were a person," always speaking rather than typing, and noted that AI "reflects her gentle tone" and "engages" with encouraging messages [4.3.7]. This humanization of AI fosters a sense of partnership, leading to behaviors such as arguing with it or thanking it for assistance [4.3.7]. These observations highlight a fascinating dimension of human-AI interaction, where emotional and relational dynamics play a role in how the tool is perceived and utilized.
- **Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks:** AI is also leveraged to support various cross-functional tasks, bridging different areas of expertise within the firm, enabling more efficient collaboration. This illustrates how AI can be seen as a "technician" that can provide rapid solutions to operational challenges outside one's core expertise [4.3.8]. C9 noted that while his firm is "more on the human component," AI can help, "for example, in the analysis of certain questionnaires, by identifying a certain pattern" or "the recurrence of certain terms" [4.3.8, C9]. This indicates AI's ability to extract insights from qualitative data, supporting both human-centric and data-driven analyses across different functions.
- **Leveraging Data Analytics and Pattern Recognition:** Several participants emphasized AI's strong capabilities in data analysis and pattern recognition, which significantly accelerate the process of extracting meaningful insights from large datasets. AI helps in analyzing questionnaires by identifying a certain pattern and the recurrence of certain terms [4.3.9]. AI enables the professionals to analyze important quantities of data to make a synthesis of meaning [4.3.9], leaving the qualitative analysis to human intelligence. S4 noted that when analyzing data and creating reports, AI "completely speeds up the process" and allows for extracting "data already systematized in a much faster way" [4.3.9]. C2 also mentioned AI's ability to "find connection points" across various interviews that previously took "entire days" to process manually [4.3.9]. These examples illustrate how AI serves as a powerful tool for efficiently processing and structuring information,

enabling consultants to focus on the higher-level interpretation and strategic implications of the data.

- **General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use:** Participants offered comprehensive characteristics of their AI usage, revealing a general enthusiasm for its potential combined with an awareness of its current limitations. The shared view of AI as a "great accelerator, a great life simplifier" [4.3.10], the use of AI "every day" and for "various things" [4.3.10], and statements such as "AI has changed my life", reflect a widespread positive reception and integration of AI into daily professional life within the firm. However, participants also acknowledged limitations, such as the fact that AI often proposes to do things it doesn't know how to do and doesn't fully satisfy for image generation or slides. Furthermore, it often gives uninteresting answers, and bugs can still be found when using it [4.3.10. These general observations provide a comprehensive picture of AI's current role as a transformative, yet imperfect, tool in the consulting sector.

Overall, the integration of Generative AI is perceived as positive, mainly due to its ability to enhance efficiency and productivity across a wide spectrum of consulting tasks. However, this transformative potential is often balanced with a cautious awareness of AI's current limitations, such as its struggle with numerical accuracy and occasional "bugs" [C5]. This dual perspective positions AI as a powerful, yet imperfect, tool that necessitates continuous human validation and strategic guidance within the consulting field.

5.1.4. Dual Impact on creative tasks (SQ4)

The fourth sub-research question delves into the specific types of creative tasks that professionals perceive as being supported or hindered by Generative AI. The findings reveal a dual impact: on one hand, AI acts as a powerful accelerator and thought stimulator for many creative processes, but on the other, it simultaneously presents risks of fostering laziness or hindering certain forms of human creativity.

- **Acceleration and Stimulation of Creative Thought:** Participants widely acknowledge AI's capacity to significantly accelerate and stimulate creative thought [4.4.1]. They found AI to be a "consultant" that "opened up the possibility for me to face different sectors and different situations" [4.4.1], providing novel ideas. They also highlighted that "AI doesn't block my creativity at all; in fact, sometimes you even have to control yourself because it makes connections you might not have imagined" [S5]. This demonstrates AI's role in facilitating divergent thinking and expanding mental horizons. Similarly, other noted that AI helps refine thinking in order to produce something much more complete and test ideas faster. These insights highlight AI's significant role in facilitating divergent thinking and enriching the creative output through dynamic interaction. The immediate access to a vast array of information and different perspectives helps overcome the initial hurdle of a "blank page" [4.3.4,], allowing for a faster generation of ideas [4.4.1].
- **Co-creation:** A more sophisticated interaction with AI emerges in the concept of "co-creation" [4.4.3]. Here, AI functions as a "partner" in a collaborative process, where "human and machine collaborate to produce collectively refined outputs" [4.4.3]. This aligns with the "dual-process model of hybrid intelligence," suggesting that optimal creative outcomes arise from integrating AI and human capabilities (Paydaş Turan & Sadler-Smith, 2023). Consultants guide AI, ask specific questions, and then "rework" [4.4.3] or "put their hands on" the generated content, ensuring the final output remains identifiable with their professional identity. This mode of interaction indicates that AI is most effective not as a replacement, but as an "amplifier" or "stimulator" [4.4.1] of human thought, leading to collectively refined outcomes.
- **Enhancing Focus and Refining Ideas:** AI's capacity to quickly process and organize information also contributes to "enhancing focus and refining ideas" [4.4.5]. By providing structure and order to ideas and helping to cleanse thinking, AI allows consultants to concentrate on core concepts more efficiently. However, this efficiency can also lead to a "perfectionism being against productivity" [4.4.5] mindset, where the ability to constantly refine with AI might prevent the production of a finalized work, leading to an "endless search" for improvement [4.4.5]. This highlights a potential trade-off where the pursuit of perfection, enabled by AI, might hinder the practical completion of tasks. These insights indicate that AI facilitates a more streamlined and targeted

creative process by structuring and filtering information effectively, but could lead to a loss of tangible outcomes if used in the wrong way.

- **Reinforcing Collective Intelligence:** An interesting finding is AI's potential to foster collective intelligence within an organization by aggregating and learning from the inputs of multiple users [4.4.4]. C4 described a scenario where, if "you open a profile and have more people work on the same profile on a specific topic," AI will start providing responses that are "the elaboration of the inputs that all your colleagues have put in" [4.4.4]. He further explained that when a user receives a response, it is not based only on your ability to ask questions and analyze, but becomes a response that, starting from your ability to ask questions, benefits from all previous questions. This transformative potential suggests that AI can bridge individual areas of expertise, effectively creating a shared, continuously improving knowledge base that benefits from all previous questions [4.4.4]. This reinforces the idea that the collective sum of human expertise, facilitated by AI, can lead to more comprehensive and nuanced insights than individual efforts alone.
- **Finding Value Where AI Cannot Arrive:** The participants, particularly those in senior roles, consistently stated that the ultimate value of a human consultant lies in areas where AI, by its very nature, cannot compete [4.4.6]. This suggests that AI can streamline routine aspects of the job, allowing consultants to focus on their unique human value proposition. The interviewees expressed hope that "the ethical part, of good, of what is right, ethically speaking... would remain the property of the human being and not of artificial intelligence" [4.4.6]. This highlights a perceived boundary where human judgment, ethics, and values remain paramount. Other consultants stated that they do not see the value of the human consultant changing in the future, as long as AI is used as a machine that simply makes human work more efficient [4.4.6]. This underlines the belief that human insight and strategic decision-making will remain indispensable. AI is, and will continue to be, a direct challenge to human creativity in identifying opportunities beyond its reach, pushing humans to excel in areas requiring deep human connection, ethical reasoning, and nuanced strategic thinking.
- **Risks of Creative Atrophy and Laziness:** Despite the benefits, a prevalent concern among participants is the potential for AI to foster "laziness" or "creative atrophy", leading to a decrease in using humans' cleverness and creativity compared to the pre-AI era [4.4.7]. C1 defined a "very serious risk" that "AI thinks for you" [4.4.7, C1]. She admitted, "I must say that since ChatGPT arrived, I do that effort of the blank page very, very, very, very rarely, and sometimes I think: what if, one morning, the page is blank and there's no electricity? Do I still have the reasoning and creativity elements to get there?" [4.4.7, C1]. This profound self-reflection highlights a fear of losing fundamental cognitive abilities. Others similarly warned against "becoming a bit lazy", suggesting that the immediate accessibility of information might prevent deeper exploration. The shared concern of losing part of their human side is linked to the concept of "cognitive offloading" (Dolan, 2025a; Gerlich, 2025; H.-P. Lee et al., 2025), where reliance on external tools can reduce the need for internal cognitive effort, potentially weakening critical thinking skills. The flattening of ideas [4.4.7] due to reliance on readily available AI outputs raises concerns about a loss of originality and distinctiveness in consulting solutions. These collective results highlight a critical anxiety: while AI offers efficiency, it necessitates a conscious effort to prevent the erosion of human cognitive muscles.
- **Impact on Human Connection and Relational Aspects:** More concerns arise regarding the impact on human connection and relational aspects of work [4.4.8]. The potential for AI to become a filler of loneliness [4.4.8] is noted, with one participant fearing that excessive reliance on AI might lead to a continuous "rapport with someone who always responds in an increasingly sophisticated manner" but lacks genuine connection [4.4.8]. This speaks to the illusion of empathy [4.4.8] that AI can create, where the machine's compliant responses can be misleading. The concern is that AI, while efficient, cannot replicate the biochemical reactions that occur in physical human interaction or manage complex human dynamics like "conflict" [4.4.8]. This suggests that human connection and emotional and relational sensitivity remain uniquely human domains, particularly in high-value consulting, where relational sensitivity is key. These findings highlight a deeper concern about the differences between human-to-machine and human-to-human interactions and their potential impact on human well-being and professional relationships.

- **Human Experience as a Filter:** Despite AI's advanced capabilities, human experience remains an irreplaceable filter for validating, contextualizing, and adapting AI-generated outputs to real-world scenarios [4.4.9]. Some participants emphasized that AI outputs still require "re-working to make it truly implementable" [4.4.9]. They highlighted that there's always a dimension of intuition that humans have and that can't be transmitted, underscoring a qualitative gap AI cannot bridge. This reinforces that even logically sound AI solutions are subject to a "filter" of human judgment and practical applicability before integration [4.4.9]. This finding is crucial as it aligns with the "human-in-the-loop" validation practice [4.3.6], where human expertise, tacit knowledge, and contextual understanding ensure technology serves, rather than dictates, professional judgment.
- **Creative Block Cannot Be Fixed by AI:** A contrasting perspective emerged regarding AI's utility in overcoming profound creative blocks, indicating its limitations in addressing deep-seated psychological barriers [4.4.10]. C2 shared an experience of being creatively stuck, noting that "if you are stuck, the stimuli and questions you bring are exactly as you are: stuck" [4.4.10]. This highlights that while AI can assist with surface-level ideation or routine tasks [4.3.1], it cannot resolve fundamental emotional impediments to creativity [4.1.5]. This emphasizes the critical role of human psychological well-being and internal state for true creative breakthroughs, a domain beyond AI's current capabilities.

5.1.5. Other Findings

Another individual factor that was not considered to be influencing the AI use emerged during the interview with the professionals: the perceived environmental impact of the use of AI

Environmental Impact of AI

A notable concern among participants is the significant environmental footprint of extensive AI use, with consultants expressing apprehension that AI is "truly emptying the planet of resources" and contributes to pollution, particularly from tasks like image generation. There is a growing desire for AI systems to explicitly display resource consumption metrics (e.g., CO2 production) per interaction. This emerging awareness suggests future limitations on AI usage to foster more sustainable practices within the consulting sector.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study's findings yield several theoretical implications, primarily by enriching the understanding of Generative AI's multifaceted impact on creativity within knowledge-intensive professional contexts, such as consulting, thus addressing noted literature gaps.

Firstly, the research refines the theoretical understanding of AI's dual impact on creativity. While confirming AI's capacity to accelerate idea generation and mitigate the "white page syndrome" [4.4.1], aligning with concepts of human-AI co-creativity (Haase & Pokutta, 2024; Valchanov, 2024), the study provides empirical evidence of the potential for "creative atrophy" and "laziness" as articulated by Clifton et al. Clifton et al. (2020). This suggests that AI's impact on cognitive load for creative tasks (Sweller, 1988) is not uniformly beneficial but critically depends on the user's active cognitive engagement, challenging simplistic assumptions of cognitive offloading (Dolan, 2025a) and underscoring the risk of "mechanized convergence" (H.-P. Lee et al., 2025). Furthermore, this research challenges the theory of Liang et al. (2022): the possibility of AI replacing human tasks and jobs was not only perceived as a source of strain, as theorized, but also described as a catalyst for creativity, since it encourages individuals to explore areas where AI, by its very nature, cannot compete.

Secondly, the pervasive "human-in-the-loop" validation [4.3.6] and consistent skepticism towards AI outputs [4.2.5] deepen the understanding of trust in AI systems (Li et al., 2024). The findings illustrate how consultants navigate AI's inherent "hallucinations by design", demonstrating that critical thinking and human judgment are not merely complementary but essential for filtering AI-generated information and ensuring the "appropriateness" aspect of Amabile's Amabile (2012) creativity definition. This reinforces the dual-process model of hybrid intelligence (Paydaş Turan & Sadler-Smith, 2023), highlighting the indispensable human role in discerning reliable outputs (**i**; McDowell, 2025).

Finally, the study offers nuanced insights into how individual differences, particularly openness to new technologies [4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4], trust levels [4.2.5, 4.2.6, 4.2.7, 4.2.8], and diverse areas of

expertise [4.2.9, 4.2.10, 4.2.11], influence AI's impact on creativity. This empirically enriches technology acceptance models (Marikyan & Papagiannidis, 2023, 2024) by showing how these factors influence specific AI interaction strategies and, consequently, the nature of creative outputs. The transition from passive users to active "prompt engineers" (Sivakumar, 2024) and evaluators, as influenced by domain expertise (IT Convergence, 2023), represents a theoretical shift in how human value is preserved and enhanced in AI-integrated workflows.

5.3. Practical Implications

The insights derived from this study offer several practical implications for consulting firms and professionals seeking to optimally leverage Generative AI while fostering human creativity. These recommendations span organizational strategy, talent development, and ethical considerations.

- **Strategic Upskilling and Continuous Learning:** Given the dual impact of AI on creativity, a critical practical implication is the need for continuous upskilling programs focusing on "prompt engineering" and "output evaluation" [4.2.9, 4.2.10]. Organizations should invest in training that moves beyond basic AI literacy to cultivate advanced interaction skills. This includes teaching consultants how to formulate precise prompts that leverage AI's strengths and how to critically assess AI-generated outputs for accuracy, relevance, and originality. The emphasis should be on developing a "critical sense" among all professionals, ensuring they can discern AI's "hallucinations by design" from valuable insights. This ongoing learning is essential to prevent "creative atrophy" [4.4.7] and ensure that consultants remain agile in an evolving technological landscape (World Economic Forum, 2024).
- **Cultivating a Culture of "Cautious Openness":** Consulting firms should actively foster an organizational culture that promotes "cautious openness" towards AI. This involves transparent communication about AI's capabilities and limitations, directly addressing fears of job displacement (Liang et al., 2022) by reframing AI as an "accelerator" and "life simplifier" rather than a replacement. Leaders should demonstrate how AI can free up time for higher-value, human-centric activities, encouraging experimentation while emphasizing the non-negotiable need for human validation. Creating a safe environment where employees feel comfortable experimenting, making mistakes, and providing feedback on AI's performance is crucial for successful integration. This approach will reduce resistance and encourage proactive engagement [4.2.3].
- **Redefining Consultant Roles for Human-Centric Value:** The study highlights that AI excels at repetitive tasks, data analysis, and content generation [4.3.1, 4.3.1, 4.3.9], which historically consumed significant time. This implies a practical shift in roles towards activities where human judgment, empathy, and strategic insight are irreplaceable. Consulting firms should strategically reallocate human resources to focus on complex problem-solving, building deep client relationships, navigating organizational politics, managing conflicts, and providing the nuanced, ethically sound advice that AI cannot (Sivakumar, 2024). This transition aligns with the vision of "less [consultants], but more valuable", where the human consultant's role evolves to be more strategic, empathetic, and uniquely impactful.
- **Integrating Proprietary Knowledge into AI Systems:** A significant practical advantage observed is the integration of the firm's proprietary methodologies and successful project experiences into AI systems [4.3.5]. This strategy allows firms to standardize their intellectual property and accelerate project initiation, ensuring methodological consistency even for new employees. Practically, this means continuously updating and refining these internal AI models with new insights and successful case studies. This proprietary AI knowledge base becomes a competitive differentiator, enabling consultants to deliver solutions that are not only efficient but also deeply aligned with the firm's unique value proposition and proven methodologies.
- **Implementing Robust Ethical AI Governance:** The ethical concerns raised by participants regarding AI's environmental impact and potential for social isolation [4.2.8] demand robust ethical AI governance frameworks. Consulting firms, particularly those in knowledge-intensive sectors, should establish clear guidelines for responsible AI use, data privacy (especially regarding client data in inputs) [4.2.8], and acknowledge their ecological footprint. This includes developing internal policies on data anonymization for AI inputs [4.2.9], ensuring transparency about AI's use

with clients, and exploring green AI initiatives to mitigate environmental concerns. An ethical compass embedded within AI usage practices will not only build trust but also ensure long-term sustainability and societal responsibility.

- **Leveraging AI for Enhanced Collective Intelligence:** The finding that AI can aggregate insights from multiple users to create a form of collective intelligence [4.4.4] has profound practical implications. Firms can design collaborative workflows where consultants contribute their individual insights to shared AI profiles. This allows the AI to learn from the collective experience, generating more refined and comprehensive responses that benefit all users. This approach can democratize access to institutional knowledge, foster cross-functional collaboration, and reduce reliance on individual "super-experts," as the AI system itself becomes a dynamic, continually improving repository of collective wisdom. This formalizes a mechanism for sharing and leveraging tacit knowledge across the organization (den Hertog, 2010), potentially leading to more robust and innovative client solutions.
- **Re-evaluating Pricing Models:** The significant efficiency gains realized through AI's automation of routine tasks [4.3.1] should prompt a re-evaluation of pricing models in the consulting sector. If tasks that previously took "weeks" now take "an hour and a half", the cost structure of certain services may need to be adjusted. This trend is already occurring in the analyzed company: the prices of specific analysis, which now require substantially less time thanks to AI, were already cut by 75%. Firms could potentially offer more competitive prices for routine analyses or content generation, while concurrently emphasizing and valuing the human consultant's irreplaceable contributions to strategic thinking, client relationship management, and bespoke, complex problem-solving. This could lead to a shift from price-based competition to value-based differentiation, focusing on areas where human expertise provides unparalleled impact.
- **Encouraging "Unstructured" Creativity:** While AI is effective for structured tasks, the study notes that some creative insights arise from "unrelated activities" like "long walks" [4.1]. Practically, firms should encourage and create space for these unstructured, creative moments. This could involve promoting flexible working arrangements, mindfulness programs, or fostering environments that value diverse thinking and personal reflection outside traditional task-oriented work. Recognizing that creativity is not exclusively a product of directed effort, but also of spontaneous capacity, can unlock new ways of innovation that AI cannot replicate.

5.4. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides valuable insights into the impact of Generative AI on creativity within the consulting sector; however, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations, which in turn set the basis for future research.

5.4.1. Limitations

- **Sample Size and Generalizability:** The study utilized a purposive sample of fifteen participants from a single consulting firm 3.1. While this approach ensured internal validity by controlling for cultural variations, workflow processes, digital infrastructures, and industry-specific pressures3.5, it inherently limits the direct statistical generalizability of the findings to the broader consulting sector or other knowledge-intensive industries3.5. The small sample size also means that individual responses, while rich in detail, might not represent the full spectrum of experiences within larger, more diverse populations.
- **Subjectivity of Qualitative Data:** The dependency on semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method means that the findings are based on participants' self-reported perceptions, experiences, and attitudes3.5. While every effort was made to mitigate interviewer bias through open-ended questions, qualitative data inherently captures subjective realities rather than objective behaviors or quantifiable creative outputs (Oranga & Matere, 2023). This means that perceived impacts on creativity, while insightful, are not empirically measured.
- **Contextual Specificity:** The research was conducted within an Italian consulting firm 3.1, and while the firm operates internationally, specific cultural nuances, organizational dynamics, and local market conditions may have influenced participant responses and AI integration strategies.

Therefore, the findings may not be directly transferable to consulting firms in different geographical regions or with distinct cultural traits 3.2.

- **Dynamic Nature of AI Technology:** Generative AI, particularly Large Language Models, is a rapidly evolving field. The capabilities and limitations discussed by participants reflect the state of AI at the time of the interviews (April 2025 - May 2025). The rapid advancements in AI mean that some observations, particularly regarding AI's current technical limitations (e.g., numerical accuracy, image generation bugs) [4.3.10], may become obsolete quickly. This dynamic environment poses a challenge to the long-term validity of very specific technological observations within a rapidly progressing field.
- **Lack of Quantitative Metrics for Creativity:** The qualitative methodology, while effective for exploring perceptions and experiences, does not provide quantitative metrics for measuring changes in creative output or the direct impact on "creative atrophy" [4.4.7]. The study captures the fear of atrophy and perceived acceleration but lacks objective measures of these phenomena.

5.4.2. Recommendations for Future Research

- **Longitudinal and Mixed-Methods Studies:** To address the dynamic nature of AI and the subjective nature of qualitative data, future research should incorporate longitudinal studies and mixed-methods approaches. Tracking the same group of consultants over an extended period could provide objective data on how AI use impacts creative output, problem-solving efficiency, and the long-term risk of "creative atrophy" (Clifton et al., 2020). Quantitative measures of ideation fluency, originality, and quality, combined with qualitative insights, would offer a more comprehensive understanding.
- **Survey-based approach:**A quantitative follow-up could use a large-scale survey to test the relationships identified in the qualitative study. The survey would target consultants across multiple firms to capture variation in Generative AI adoption and creative performance. Key constructs would be operationalized through validated scales: AI integration (frequency and type of use, including automation, brainstorming, and content generation), creative outcomes (self-reported measures of idea novelty and usefulness adapted to consulting), and influencing variables such as openness to new technologies, trust in AI systems, and area of expertise.
- **Comparative Studies Across Industries and Cultures:** Expanding the sample to include a diverse range of consulting firms, different industries (e.g., tech, finance, healthcare), and various cultural contexts would enhance the external validity and generalizability of the findings. Such studies could identify industry-specific challenges and best practices for AI integration and creative augmentation.
- **Deep Dive into Specific Creative Tasks:** Future research could focus on the impact of AI on very specific creative tasks within consulting. For instance, controlled experiments could compare human-only versus human-AI co-creation for the identified definition of (e.g.measuring the right-brain activation for a quantitative comparison 3.2). This would allow for a more precise understanding of AI's facilitative and constraining effects in defined creative contexts.
- **Exploring the Diversity of Human-AI Interaction:** Further investigation into the "humanization" of AI (e.g., giving AI names, treating it as a colleague) [4.3.7, 4.5.2] and its psychological implications on creative collaboration and professional well-being is advised. Research could explore how different interaction styles (e.g., conversational, directive, collaborative) influence creative outcomes and user satisfaction.
- **Developing and Testing Ethical AI Frameworks:** Given the strong ethical concerns raised by participants [4.2.8], future research should focus on developing and empirically testing ethical frameworks and governance models for AI use in consulting. This includes investigating the effectiveness of policies related to data privacy, intellectual property, and the environmental footprint of AI, and their impact on trust and adoption.
- **Impact of AI on Consultant Training and Education:** Research could examine how consulting education and professional development programs need to evolve to prepare future consultants

for an AI-integrated world, particularly focusing on critical thinking, prompt engineering, and ethical AI use.

By addressing these limitations and following the recommended suggestions, future research can build upon this study's foundational insights, contributing to a more robust and actionable understanding of Generative AI's multifaceted impact on human creativity in the dynamic consulting sector.

6

Conclusion

The implementation of new technologies in businesses and their impact on people and organizational practices is one of the key topics of the Management of Technology program at TU Delft. In this thesis, the new technology is Generative AI, a real game-changer that is shaping the current decade. Creativity, on the other hand, is the human-centered capability being examined. The consulting sector was chosen to narrow the research, where creativity plays a key role in maintaining a competitive edge.

This study highlights that the integration of Generative AI is key for enhancing creativity in consulting; it must be strategically managed. First, firms should focus on spreading know-how on prompt engineering and critical evaluation to prevent creative atrophy and enhance human-AI collaboration. Cultivating a culture of “cautious openness” helps in balancing enthusiasm with ethical awareness and psychological safety. As AI takes over routine tasks, firms need to focus on strategic, human-centric contributions where empathy, ethics, and judgment are essential. Furthermore, including proprietary knowledge in AI systems can offer a competitive edge. A robust ethical governance is necessary to address concerns around environmental impact, data privacy, and social well-being. Additionally, companies should harness AI’s potential to foster collective intelligence and re-evaluate pricing models to reflect the new value distribution between humans and machines. Finally, organizations must protect and encourage ”unstructured” moments of creativity, recognizing that innovation often emerges from the uniquely human capacity for spontaneous insight.

In conclusion, this thesis defines Generative AI as the beginning of a new chapter for the consulting industry and the wider domain of knowledge work. Beyond simply automating tasks, AI has the potential to reshape the creative outcomes of companies by being implemented strategically as a powerful catalyst and co-creator of ideas. The lasting value of consultants – and knowledge workers in general – will not lie in competing with AI, but in mastering the synergy of human-AI collaboration. The future of consulting depends on a deliberate, ethically conscious approach to AI: not only using it as an instrument, but also understanding that it can be an integrated partner that enhances human creativity.

We are living through a key transition of human history: where once creativity could only be expanded through the minds of others, today, for the first time, a machine stands beside us, not just as a tool, but as a collaborator.

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A

Questionnaire

A.1. Introduction and Context

- Can you briefly introduce yourself?
- How do you usually respond to new technologies in your work?
- How would you describe creativity in your work?

A.2. Adoption of AI Chatbots

- How do you use artificial intelligence in your daily work?
- Can you share some examples of how using AI has supported your creativity?
- Can you share some examples of how using AI has hindered your creativity?

A.3. Moderating Factors and Future Perspectives

- Do you think your area of specialization influences how much AI impacts your creativity? If so, how?
- Can you describe a situation where your trust or skepticism towards AI influenced your decision to use (or not use) it to support a creative task?

A.4. The Future

- How do you think the role of AI in the consulting industry will evolve over the next five years?
- Do you think AI could reduce the value of human consultants in the sector?

B

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled *"The impact of AI-Driven chatbots on consultants' creativity"*. This study is being conducted by Stefano Nigrelli from TU Delft.

The purpose of this research study is to understand how the implementation of AI-driven chatbots affects creative performance in the consulting industry. Audio recordings and transcripts will be gathered during this interview. The data will be stored in the TU Delft OneDrive and will be accessible by the following people:

- Stefano Nigrelli
- Nikos Pachos-Fokalis
- Robert Verburg

Of the collected data, only anonymized or aggregated data will be shared with individuals not listed above.

All personal data collected during the interview will be preserved for up to two years. The data will be stored within TU Delft, accessible only to the TU Delft research team. The data may be reused for future scientific and educational activities within TU Delft on the topic of adoption of AI tools. You will remain anonymous in any and all outputs.

At the end of the project, all personal data will be deleted.

Despite our best efforts, given the small number of members in your organization, it may be possible that other actors in your domain could re-identify you. To mitigate potential negative consequences, we will send you the transcript. You are welcome to suggest modifications or request the erasure of content.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. You are also free to omit any questions.

I have read and understood the study information above, and I consent to participate in the study and to the data processing described above.

I agree that the edited responses, views, or other input can be quoted anonymously in research outputs.

Name of participant [printed]	**Signature**	**Date**

I, as researcher, have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Researcher name [printed]	**Signature**	**Date**
Stefano Nigrelli	_____	07/05/2025

C

Code Book

Table C.1: Appendix: Code Book

Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
(SQ1) Definition of Creativity	○ A condition	1	(SQ1) Theme: General Aspects of Creativity
	○ A core aspect of the job	1	(SQ1) Theme: General Aspects of Creativity
	○ Adaptation of prior knowledge	1	(SQ1) Theme: Adaptive Problem-Solving (SQ1) Theme: Continuous Improvement and Iteration
	○ Adaptive Problem-solving	5	(SQ1) Theme: Adaptive Problem-Solving
	○ Aligning diverse visions	1	(SQ1) Theme: Storytelling and Engagement
	○ Antagonists of creativity	1	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State (SQ1) Theme: Continuous Improvement and Iteration (SQ1) Theme: Antagonists of creativity
	○ Being able to experiment	1	(SQ1) Theme: Continuous Improvement and Iteration
	○ Client-centered thinking	2	(SQ1) Theme: Finding Innovative Solutions for Clients
	○ Creating engagement	1	(SQ1) Theme: Storytelling and Engagement
	○ Creating new products	1	(SQ1) Theme: Finding Innovative Solutions for Clients
	○ Creativity process start when not required	1	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State
	○ Customizing a solution	1	(SQ1) Theme: Finding Innovative Solutions for Clients
	○ Deep breathing	1	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State
	○ Fearing of failing hinders creativity	4	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State (SQ1) Theme: Antagonists of creativity
	○ Finding solutions with available resources	2	(SQ1) Theme: Finding Innovative Solutions for Clients (SQ1) Theme: Adaptive Problem-Solving
	○ Freeing your mind	1	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State
	○ Good ideas have to be actionable	1	(SQ1) Theme: Adaptive Problem-Solving
	○ Improvising	1	(SQ1) Theme: Adaptive Problem-Solving
	○ Innovating without changing infrastructure	1	(SQ1) Theme: Strategic Foresight
	○ Judging hinders creativity	1	(SQ1) Theme: Antagonists of creativity

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ Long walks	1	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State
	○ Managing relationships	1	
	○ mindfulness	1	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State
	○ Opportunity spotting	1	(SQ1) Theme: Thinking Beyond Mental Schemas (SQ1) Theme: Strategic Foresight
	○ rational Mind hinders creativity	2	(SQ1) Theme: Self-Awareness and Emotional State (SQ1) Theme: Antagonists of creativity
	○ Rushing hinders creativity	1	(SQ1) Theme: Antagonists of creativity
	○ Seeing hidden connections	1	(SQ1) Theme: Adaptive Problem-Solving (SQ1) Theme: Thinking Beyond Mental Schemas
	○ Tailoring communication to the audience	2	(SQ1) Theme: Storytelling and Engagement
	○ tailoring solutions to the client	1	(SQ1) Theme: Finding Innovative Solutions for Clients
	○ Thinking beyond comfort zones	1	(SQ1) Theme: Thinking Beyond Mental Schemas (SQ1) Theme: Out-of-the-Box Thinking
	○ Thinking outside of the box	1	(SQ1) Theme: Thinking Beyond Mental Schemas (SQ1) Theme: Out-of-the-Box Thinking
	○ Using the right side of the brain	1	(SQ1) Theme: Right-Brain Activation (SQ1) Theme: General Aspects of Creativity
	○ Visualizing applications for a product	2	(SQ1) Theme: Strategic Foresight
	○ Walking	2	
○ (SQ2) Use of AI		176	
	○ AI as lifechanger technology	1	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use (SQ4): Theme: Openness - Perception of AI's Role
	○ Always fixing the outputs	6	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation (SQ4) Theme: Trust - Verification Practices
	○ Analyzing Interviews	5	
	○ Analyzing KPIs	1	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks
	○ Anonymizing the inputs	1	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use
	○ Asking AI to enrich text	1	(SQ2) Theme: Content Generation and Refinement
	○ Asking for help	2	
	○ Asking for opinions	2	(SQ2) Theme: Brainstorming and Idea Testing
	○ Asking for tutorials	1	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction (SQ2) Theme: Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks
	○ Basic use	3	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use
	○ brainstorming	6	(SQ2) Theme: Brainstorming and Idea Testing
	○ Bringing value to the client	2	
	○ Challenging AI for better results	3	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation
	○ ChatGPT	10	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ checking depending on importance	2	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation
	○ Collective Intelligence	3	(SQ2) Theme: Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration (SQ3) Theme: Reinforcing Collective Intelligence
	○ Comparing	1	(SQ2) Theme: Leveraging Data Analytics and Pattern Recognition
	○ Comparing Language	1	
	○ correcting bad results	1	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation
	○ Creating audio notes	1	(SQ2) Theme: Content Generation and Refinement
	○ data analysis	2	(SQ2) Theme: Enhanced Research and Information Gathering (SQ2) Theme: Leveraging Data Analytics and Pattern Recognition
	○ Definition of AI	1	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use
	○ Developing Analysis	2	(SQ2) Theme: Enhanced Research and Information Gathering
	○ Dialoging with AI	2	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction
	○ Enhanced productivity	1	
	○ filler of loneliness	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ from ’2/3 days’ to ’1.5h’	1	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks
	○ Generating images	1	(SQ2) Theme: Content Generation and Refinement
	○ Generating more output than asked	3	
	○ Gentle Tone	1	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction
	○ Getting wrong outputs	5	
	○ Giving the right prompts	1	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation (SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Domain Expertise in Prompting
	○ Heavy Use	1	
	○ Helping to translate in another language	1	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction (SQ2) Theme: Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks
	○ Helping with explaning	1	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction (SQ2) Theme: Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks
	○ human-in-the-loop	4	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation (SQ4) Theme: Trust - Verification Practices
	○ Interacting as if it was a person	5	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction
	○ Knowledge transfer	3	(SQ2) Theme: Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration
	○ Limitations of AI	5	
	○ Logistical tasks	1	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks
	○ Long working hours	1	
	○ macro-design	2	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks (SQ2) Theme: Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration
	○ Making Slides	1	

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ Managing communications channels	1	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction (SQ2) Theme: Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks
	○ Managing relationships	1	
	○ Managing tasks	1	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks
	○ Managing time more efficently	13	
	○ micro-design	4	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks (SQ2) Theme: Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration
	○ Napkin AI	1	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use
	○ Not asking out of area of expertise	8	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation
	○ NOT checking outputs	1	
	○ Notebook LM	5	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use
	○ Opening to new sectors	1	
	○ perplexity	1	
	○ Personalyzed Bot	10	(SQ2) Theme: Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration (SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Domain Expertise in Prompting
	○ Pre-mortem Analysis	1	(SQ2) Theme: Supporting Cross-Functional Tasks
	○ Preparing to confront a client	1	(SQ2) Theme: Enhanced Research and Information Gathering (SQ2) Theme: Brainstorming and Idea Testing
	○ Recognizing limitations of AI	8	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation
	○ Recognizing limitations of ChatGPT	3	(SQ2) Theme: Human-in-the-Loop Validation
	○ Reflecting on the objectives	1	
	○ Repetitive tasks	1	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks
	○ Search engine	9	
	○ Speaking instead of typing	3	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction
	○ Standardizing	6	(SQ2) Theme: Methodology and Knowledge Transfer Integration
	○ Testing ideas	2	(SQ2) Theme: Enhanced Research and Information Gathering (SQ2) Theme: Brainstorming and Idea Testing
	○ Thanking	1	(SQ2) Theme: Personalized and Empathetic Interaction
	○ Tracking inputs	1	(SQ2) Theme: Leveraging Data Analytics and Pattern Recognition
	○ Training on how to use AI	1	
	○ Transcribing interviews	1	(SQ2) Theme: Automation of repetitive and Low-Value tasks
	○ Usefull only if trusted	1	(SQ2) Theme: General Observations/Characteristics of AI Use
	○ writing articles	1	(SQ2) Theme: Content Generation and Refinement
	○ Writing books	1	(SQ2) Theme: Content Generation and Refinement
	○ Writing Properly	2	(SQ2) Theme: Content Generation and Refinement

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
○ (SQ3) Impact of AI on Creativity		66	
	○ AI as a confort zone	1	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ AI increasing perfectionism	1	
	○ AI questioning inputs is pro creativity	2	
	○ AI replacing dialogue with experts	3	(SQ3) Theme: Potential to Replace Human Dialogue
	○ Allowing direct access to critical thinking	1	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Always finding usefull insights	1	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Asking to add informations	3	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Avoiding the white page syndrome	5	(SQ3) Theme: Accelerating Idea Generation
	○ Being more superficial	1	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ Being opened	2	(SQ3) Theme: Human Experience as a Filter
	○ brainstorming	6	(SQ3) Theme: Co-creating
	○ Cocreating	6	(SQ3) Theme: Co-creating
	○ Creative block cannot be fixed by AI	1	(SQ3) Theme: Human Experience as a Filter
	○ Critical Thinking when chatting	3	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Delegating creativity	2	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ Extra Outputs	4	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Faster generation of ideas	1	(SQ3) Theme: Accelerating Idea Generation
	○ Fearing creative atrophy	5	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ Finding novelty	1	(SQ3) Theme: Human Experience as a Filter
	○ Finding results not interesting	2	(SQ3) Theme: Human Experience as a Filter
	○ Finding Value where AI cannot arrive	3	(SQ3) Theme: Human Experience as a Filter
	○ Freeing humans from operational tasks	4	

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ Immediate access to answers hinders creativity	1	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ Keeping on track the creative process	1	(SQ3) Theme: Enhancing Focus and Refining Ideas
	○ Perfectionism being against productivity	1	(SQ3) Theme: Enhancing Focus and Refining Ideas
	○ Providing multiple outcomes	1	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Quick and easy access to knowledge	2	
	○ Risk of loosing creativity	1	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ Stimulating each other	2	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought (SQ3) Theme: Co-creating
	○ Thinking less	6	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
○ (SQ4)		162	
	○ A threat	12	
	○ Addiction to ChatGPT	2	
	○ AI lacks understanding of truth	2	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Reasons for Distrust
	○ Always checking outputs	6	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Verification Practices
	○ Being cautiously curious	3	
	○ CEO	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Challenging using Expertise	6	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Domain Expertise in Prompting (SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Evaluating AI Outputs
	○ Change culture and personal growth	4	
	○ change management	1	
	○ Checking the sources	5	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Verification Practices
	○ Coach	2	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Communication	1	
	○ Computer engineer	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Connections between humans	2	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ Consultant	4	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ COO	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Counselor	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Couriosity towards change	1	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Initial Reaction to Innovation (SQ4): Theme: Openness - Proactive Engagement with New Technologies
	○ cyber security	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ Decrease in price of products offered	1	
	○ diversity inclusion	1	
	○ Education	1	
	○ Engineer	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Fake informations	2	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Reasons for Distrust
	○ Fear of Isolation	3	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Concerns/Fears regarding AI Adoption
	○ Fear of loosing job	8	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Concerns/Fears regarding AI Adoption
	○ Fear of not keeping up with the updates	1	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Concerns/Fears regarding AI Adoption
	○ Fearing to become lazy	4	
	○ Feeling distance from AI	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Reasons for Distrust
	○ Freelancer	1	
	○ General Skepticism	2	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Reasons for Distrust (SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Evaluating AI Outputs
	○ HR	2	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ human nature	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ Illusion of empathy in AI	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Reasons for Distrust
	○ Impossible to predict the future of AI	4	
	○ innovation leader	1	
	○ innovation manager	1	
	○ International	1	
	○ Learning by doing	1	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Proactive Engagement with New Technologies
	○ Linking prices to working hours	1	
	○ manager partner	1	
	○ multinational companies	1	
	○ Necessity of human touch	8	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ Negative trust based on output	7	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Verification Practices
	○ No impact on value of Consultants	4	
	○ Not a threat	11	
	○ Open Mindness towards innovations	3	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Initial Reaction to Innovation (SQ4): Theme: Openness - Proactive Engagement with New Technologies
	○ Overrelying on AI	5	
	○ Pro change	2	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Initial Reaction to Innovation

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ project leader	1	
	○ project manager	3	
	○ prompt design	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Domain Expertise in Prompting
	○ Propension to be creative	2	
	○ Psycologist	1	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Recognizing advantages of new technologies	1	
	○ Resistance to innovations	3	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Initial Reaction to Innovation (SQ4): Theme: Openness - Concerns/Fears regarding AI Adoption
	○ Resonating wihth ChatGPT	1	
	○ Senior consultant	2	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
	○ Shift from cost to value in consulting	3	
	○ Technology Enthusiast	4	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Initial Reaction to Innovation
	○ Treating as a person	2	
	○ Trust within capitalist structures	1	
	○ Trusting AI	3	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - AI Outputs
	○ Trusting ChatGPT	3	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - AI Outputs
	○ Trusting Others	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - AI Outputs
	○ Uncertanty about impact on prices	2	
	○ Work Psycologist	4	(SQ4) Theme: Expertise - Diverse background
○ Direct Quotes		20	
	○ 'AI thinks for you'	1	(SQ3) Theme: Risk of Creative Atrophy or Laziness
	○ 'For me is a great accellerator, a great life simplifier'	1	
	○ 'It's helping me a lot'	1	
	○ A un certo punto sembra di parlare con una persona, invece è una macch	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ a volte per alcune persone può diventare un riempitivo di solitudine.	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ bisogna accettare che sia dentro un processo di costruzione collettiva	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Ethical Considerations of Trust
	○ Cioè, non mi spaventa l'evoluzione, voglio dire, non credo che ci sarà	1	
	○ Direct qoutes	1	
	○ E qui però c'è un punto importante che io dico sempre quando parlo di	1	
	○ Ecco la stessa cosa, penso di Chat GPT, cioè l'utilizzo eccessivo in a	1	

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ Il benessere della persona, nel senso anche di senso di realizzazione,	1	
	○ L'intelligenza artificiale generativa. Ha le allucinazioni by design,	1	(SQ4) Theme: Trust - Reasons for Distrust
	○ Mentre prima una ricerca ti poteva portare poi a una scoperta o a trov	1	
	○ Noi stiamo andando vicino a quello che è, è già successo. Se tu vuoi a	1	
	○ non c'è un mondo verticale, ma c'è un mondo trasversale dove tutte le	1	
	○ perché quello che ho avuto modo di osservare, anche nei in alcuni miei	1	
	○ Quindi a mio avviso per società come la nostra, dove ad esempio, non f	1	
	○ Quindi ecco nella parte creativa come come possiamo dire è un catalizz	1	(SQ3) Theme: Stimulating and Expanding Human Thought
	○ Quindi se noi perdiamo l'attenzione a noi a coltivare il nostro spazio	1	
	○ secondo me che bisogna chiarire, non c'è etica o non etica. è statisti	1	
○ Other Findings		51	
	○ 'Christian'	11	(Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ A full team of experts	1	(Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Accellerator	9	(Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Aknowledging environmental impact	6	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Concerns/Fears regarding AI Adoption (Other findings) Theme: Environmental Impact of AI
	○ Amplifier	2	(Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Assistant	3	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Perception of AI's Role (Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Choosing tools based on environmental impact	1	(Other findings) Theme: Environmental Impact of AI
	○ colleague	3	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Perception of AI's Role (Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Decreasing prices	1	
	○ Disadvantages of early adopters	1	
	○ Friend	2	(Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Helper	3	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Perception of AI's Role (Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ Humanizing AI	5	
	○ Role playing	1	
	○ secretary	1	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Perception of AI's Role (Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI

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Code	Description	Grounded	Code Groups
	○ Technician	1	(SQ4): Theme: Openness - Perception of AI's Role (Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI
	○ The oracle	1	(Other findings) Theme: Names used to call AI

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Use of AI tools in this research

Self-Reflection

After conducting interviews with experts, I, as a researcher, gained deeper insights into how Artificial Intelligence can be effectively leveraged to enhance my work. Translating these insights into practical application, AI tools played a supportive role in this research by serving two main functions. The first involved assistance in the writing and editing phases of the thesis. To ensure clarity and grammatical accuracy, AI-based applications such as ChatGPT and Grammarly were employed. These tools facilitated the rephrasing of sentences and paragraphs when necessary, contributing to a more polished and academically appropriate writing style. The second application of AI was in the area of information gathering. In this context, PerplexityAI was used as an intelligent research assistant to identify and access relevant scholarly materials and credible sources. This tool proved particularly valuable in efficiently gathering background literature and verifying information, thereby enhancing the overall quality and reliability of the research process. However, due to the need to protect the confidentiality of the collected data, I was unable to fully explore the capabilities of AI. For instance, it would have been valuable to compare my qualitative analysis with one entirely generated by AI. Future research using non-confidential data could pursue this line of inquiry.