



Exploring the Application of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Consulting Firms: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Abstract

Title: Exploring the Application of generative Artificial Intelligence in Consulting Firms: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions

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This thesis examines how generative artificial intelligence (genAI) is affecting the consulting industry, focusing on its integration, benefits, challenges, and future trends. It presents three research questions: current level of AI adoption in the field of consulting, opportunities and ethical concerns, and predicted future developments in AI. A qualitative methodology was applied, involving interviews with twenty consultants from three German firms. Results illustrate that genAI tools are extensively used for a range of tasks, including text formulation, idea generation, research, and analysis. Although genAI significantly increases efficiency and supports decision-making, consultants hesitate to rely on it exclusively due to concerns about data accuracy, ethical implications, and biased output. Primary advantages include time efficiency, improved work quality, and enhanced creativity. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain, including prompting, accuracy, and data protection. Ethical considerations represent a fundamental aspect of this field of study, with a particular focus on data privacy and bias mitigation. Establishing robust ethical frameworks and continuous training is essential for building trust and effective AI use. It is anticipated that the future will see increased AI integration in routine tasks and complex processes, with a focus on collaboration between AI and human consultants.

This research contributes to the academic discourse on AI in consulting and offers practical recommendations for firms aiming to utilise genAI to enhance service offerings and operational efficiency. By addressing challenges and adhering to ethical standards, consulting firms can leverage AI's potential to drive innovation and maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence, consulting industry, AI benefits, AI challenges, ethical considerations, future outlook, recommendations

Resumo

Título: Explorando a aplicação da Inteligência Artificial generativa em empresas de consultoria: Oportunidades, Desafios e Direções Futuras

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Esta tese examina como a inteligência artificial generativa está a afetar a indústria da consultoria, focando-se na sua integração, benefícios, desafios e tendências futuras. Aborda três questões: nível atual de adoção da IA na consultoria, oportunidades e preocupações éticas, e previsões de desenvolvimentos futuros. Utilizou-se uma metodologia qualitativa, com entrevistas a vinte consultores de três empresas alemãs. Os resultados mostram que as ferramentas genAI são amplamente usadas para tarefas como formulação de textos, geração de ideias, investigação e análise. Embora aumentem a eficiência e apoiem a tomada de decisões, os consultores hesitam em confiar exclusivamente nelas devido a preocupações com a exatidão dos dados, implicações éticas e preconceitos. As principais vantagens incluem poupança de tempo, melhoria da qualidade do trabalho e aumento da criatividade, mas desafios significativos persistem, como a criação de prompts, exatidão e proteção de dados. Considerações éticas, especialmente privacidade dos dados e mitigação de enviesamentos, são cruciais. O estabelecimento de quadros éticos sólidos e formação contínua é essencial para criar confiança e uma utilização eficaz da IA. Futuras tendências apontam para maior integração da IA em tarefas de rotina e processos complexos, destacando a colaboração entre IA e consultores humanos. Esta investigação contribui para o discurso académico sobre a IA na consultoria e oferece recomendações práticas para as empresas que pretendem utilizar genAI para melhorar serviços e eficiência operacional. Ao enfrentar desafios e aderir a padrões éticos, as empresas de consultoria podem aproveitar o potencial da IA para impulsionar a inovação e manter uma vantagem competitiva.

Palavras-chave: Inteligência artificial generativa, sector da consultoria, benefícios da IA, desafios da IA, considerações éticas, perspectivas futuras, recomendações

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
DL	Deep Learning
GANs	Generative Adversarial Networks
GenAI	Generative Artificial Intelligence
ML	Machine Learning
VAEs	Variational autoencoders

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1. Introduction

Over many years, the consulting industry has been a vital source of expert advice, strategic counsel, and innovative solutions across various sectors (Kipping & Clark, 2012). The integration of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) into consulting represents a paradigm shift, offering both opportunities and challenges. Its advanced algorithms improve decision-making, increase innovation cycles, and create customised client solutions by analysing large data sets to provide invaluable insights and advice (Beheshti et al., 2023; Kanbach et al., 2024). Thereby, genAI could add \$4.4 trillion to the economic value by improving productivity through specific and widespread use cases (Chui et al., 2023).

This thesis investigates the potential impact of genAI on the consulting industry. The upcoming chapter outlines the context, motivation, and objectives of the thesis. A comprehensive overview of the structure is provided, thus establishing the framework for the following theoretical and empirical investigations.

1.1 General Topic Overview

The term genAI refers to a subset of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies which can create new content by learning patterns from existing data. This includes creating texts, images, and designs, as well as complex analytical models (Martineau, 2023). Hence, its opportunities are in line with the obligation of consulting firms to deliver targeted solutions and strategic planning. By automating day-to-day tasks and generating insightful analytics, genAI enables consulting firms to modernise their processes, increase efficiency, and deliver better client value while gaining a competitive advantage in the market (Hafke, 2023).

However, the adoption of genAI in consulting is not free of challenges. It is essential to address the ethical considerations related to the potential for bias and data privacy (Gînguță et al., 2023). Furthermore, the consulting industry must navigate the complexities of integrating AI technologies into existing workflows and ensure that consultants can effectively work with AI systems (McCormack et al., 2020).

1.2 Relevance and Objective

Given these potential opportunities and challenges, this thesis explores the application of genAI within consulting firms. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, and interviews

with industry experts, it seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how genAI reshapes the consulting landscape. Additionally, it offers insights into future trends and innovations that could further influence the integration of AI in consulting. More precisely, this thesis addresses the following three research questions:

RQ1: What is the current extent of AI integration in consulting firms and to what extent do consultants rely on AI-generated advice and insights in their decision-making process?

RQ2: What are the opportunities, challenges and ethical concerns consulting firms face when they integrate genAI into their workflows?

RQ3: What are the future trends and innovations expected in AI that will impact the consulting industry?

1.3 Course of the Investigation

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical part by a comprehensive review of the literature on the development of AI in the field of consulting. Moreover, it presents the evolution and definition of AI and genAI, a critical analysis of the connection between AI and consulting firms, followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations and future trends in AI within the consulting industry. This thesis conducted 20 qualitative interviews as the empirical part to collect data to shed light on the research questions. Thus, Chapter 3 describes the methodology that was used for the interviews, explains the selection process both of the sample and the interviewees, and discusses the derivation of the interview guide. Lastly, it outlines the method of analysis and explains how the data was analysed. Major findings are represented in Chapter 4, providing an overview of the interview results, and delving into a detailed analysis of key themes as the current use of AI in consulting firms. Additionally, the benefits and opportunities of AI, the reliance on AI advice, the ethical considerations and challenges related to AI are presented. Lastly, the Chapter ends with insights into the future outlook and recommendations for the use of AI in consulting. Chapter 5 synthesises the findings and discusses them in the context of the existing literature. It provides insights into how the findings can influence future academic research and consulting practices, while also acknowledging the limitations of the study and suggesting avenues for future research.

2. Literature Review

The following literature review covers several key aspects as an explanation of the consulting sector, an overview of the consulting industry, and the challenges facing the consulting sector. Moreover, an overview of the evolution and definition of AI and genAI, the impact of AI on the consulting industry, human response on AI and an examination of ethical considerations is given. It also explores future trends and innovations in AI relevant to the consulting industry.

2.1 What is Consulting?

Consulting provides expert advice to organisations to improve operations, strategies, and overall effectiveness in exchange of a fee by trained and experienced people (Kipping & Clark, 2012; “What is consulting?”, n.d.). Consulting services encompass activities like diagnosing problems, recommending solutions, implementing new systems, and training employees (Hanuláková & Daňo, 2018; Turner, 1982). Management consultants are often involved in the decision-making process (Kipping & Clark, 2012).

Consulting firms vary by focus areas and expertise, including global strategy consulting firms, strategy boutiques, global functional specialists, and accounting firms as, for example, the Big Four. They offer services tailored to specific needs, like financial modelling, human resources management, or technology consulting (Ashley et al., 2019). For example, McKinsey & Company focuses on strategic consulting, while firms like Navigant and FTI Consulting specialise in financial and operational advice.

Consultants need multifaced skills such as strong analytical, diagnostic and strategic skills, alongside soft skills like communication and relationship management to foster effective client interactions (Ashley et al., 2019; Lopes da Costa et al., 2013; Turner, 1982). They are expected to understand business processes to offer actionable insights to clients and ensure satisfaction by tailored solutions (Crişan & Stanca, 2021; Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022). Building trust and maintaining consistent communication are crucial for successful projects and long-term collaborations, which are beneficial for both parties involved (Lopes da Costa et al., 2013; Turner, 1982).

As the industry evolves, core competencies remain essential but are increasingly supplemented by critical technical and analytical capabilities (Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022). Analysing large datasets, interpreting complex information, and using advanced tools like business intelligence

and data visualisation software is essential. AI and automation enhance these capabilities, enabling faster, more accurate data processing and deeper insights for data-driven recommendations (Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022).

The impact of consulting services is measured by tangible improvements in the client's operations, strategies, and overall business performance. Successful engagements can significantly enhance efficiency, innovation, and competitive advantage (Ashley et al., 2019).

2.2 Consulting Industry: An Overview

The consulting market's size and growth reflect its global economic importance. Despite fluctuations the market maintains an upward trajectory (Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024), in 2023, the global management consulting industry was estimated to be worth around one trillion U.S. dollars and is expected to increase to approximately 1,024 trillion U.S. dollars in 2024 (IBISWorld, 2024). Moreover, the annual revenue per consultant worldwide was 212,000 U.S. dollars in 2023 (Sage, 2024). In addition, a growth rate of 8.9% was predicted in 2022, with an increase of 4% in European employment since 2021 (FEACO, 2023).

Major players in the consulting industry by prestige include renowned firms like McKinsey & Company, Boston Consulting Group Inc., and Bain & Company, exercising control over the market by offering a wide range of services and their extensive global networks (Vault, 2023).

According to Lippold (2023) the consulting sector has been highly attractive over the last thirty years, growing faster than the economy as a whole. However, the consulting business is not only attractive for stakeholders and shareholders as university graduates see consulting as a good start to their careers due to its varied and challenging job, a good atmosphere, independent work, excellent training and competitive payment (Lippold, 2023). To attract and retain talent, U.S. consultancies prioritise competitive salaries, bonus systems, profit sharing, and sociable hours of work for better work-life balance (Management Consultancies Association, 2024).

2.3 Challenges of the Consulting Sector

Despite its growth and its bright future prospects, the consulting sector faces numerous challenges, driven primarily by rapid technological advancements and shifting market dynamics (Jerónimo et al., 2019). Consultancies need to continuously adapt their business models to keep pace with digital transformation. They invest in technology and specialisation,

such as cybersecurity and big data analytics to survive in the fast-changing world, in order to stay competitive (Jerónimo et al., 2019).

A survey conducted in 2020 revealed the most significant business challenges confronting consulting firms on a global scale indicated in percentage of respondents: marketplace unpredictability (48.9%), changes in client service acquisition (47.1%), increased competition from newcomers (42%), need for new skills (39.6%) and automation (36.2%) (Deltek, 2021). Another common challenge is pricing the offered service because there is a fine line between demanding too much, which leads to becoming uncompetitive, and demanding too little, which could harm the profitability (Lekoutovich, 2024). Staying ahead of trends is also a big challenge, as industries and technologies are continually changing, and clients want their consultants to keep ahead of these changes (Lekoutovich, 2024). Consultants need to be equipped with both professional and technological skills to address the challenges, necessitating continuous training and recruitment (Ashley et al., 2019).

The growth of technology presents a complex set of challenges and opportunities for the consulting sector (Jerónimo et al., 2019). AI, in specific, offers innovative solutions to the challenges consulting firms face (Minevich, 2024). In the following section, the evolution of AI will be explored, including its historical development, key milestones, and its impact on the consulting industry. An understanding of AI's evolution provides insights into how consulting firms can leverage its potential to overcome challenges and drive growth.

2.4 Definition of AI

In 1955, AI was interpreted as “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines” (Manning, 2020, p. 1) by Stanford Professor John McCarthy. Since then, AI research has advanced significantly, moving from developing chess-playing machines to creating systems that learn like humans (Manning, 2020). According to Pinzolit (2023), AI is the simulation of human intelligence functions by machines, specifically computer systems that are capable of learning, reasoning, and correcting errors. AI covers a range of subfields, including machine learning (ML), natural language processing, and neural networks. Data is the foundation of AI systems, providing the necessary information for training and refining algorithms. Algorithms constitute a set of rules or instructions that direct the AI system in processing of data and making decisions. Advances in computing power have significantly enhanced the capabilities of AI systems, enabling fast and efficient data processing. ML and Deep Learning (DL) are types of

AI that focus on developing algorithms that allow machines to learn from data. ML involves training algorithms to spot patterns and figure out what to do based on data, while DL uses neural networks to simulate human brain functions and improve decision-making processes (Morley et al., 2019; Osasona et al., 2024).

2.5 Evolution of AI

The evolution of AI has seen significant milestones shaping its current state. Early concepts and theoretical foundations by Alan Turing and John McCarthy in the mid-20th century laid the groundwork for AI by exploring the potential of machines to simulate human intelligence. Turing's paper published in *Mind* in 1950 introduced the concept of a machine's ability to think, laying the foundation for future AI research (Muggleton, 2014). McCarthy's concept of AI during the Dartmouth Conference in 1956 marked the birth of AI as a formal discipline (Cao, 2017). The early days of AI were all about symbolic reasoning and rule-based systems. These were the main areas of research from the 1950s to the 1960s. Despite the initial excitement, AI research slowed down a few times because the technology wasn't as advanced as people hoped. The increased availability of data and computational power in the early 2000s further accelerated progress, leading to the emergence of DL. For example, DL, pioneered by Geoffrey Hinton, leveraged multi-layered neural networks to achieve remarkable results in various domains, including image and speech recognition (Shrestha & Mahmood, 2019).

In recent years, the field of AI has witnessed a revolution with the advent of deep learning and genAI. Techniques like Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), presented by Ian Goodfellow in 2014, have enabled the creation of highly realistic synthetic data, transforming industries ranging from entertainment to healthcare (Audibert et al., 2023; Emmert-Streib et al., 2020; Goodfellow I. et al., 2014). AI is now recognised as a general-purpose technology with significant implications for various sectors. In consultancies, AI presents both opportunities and challenges, requiring a balance between leveraging cutting-edge technologies and addressing ethical and practical considerations.

2.6 Generative AI

A sub-domain of AI is genAI, which is described as the use of deep learning models to produce text, pictures and other high-quality content based on pre-trained data (Martineau, 2023). GenAI is a substantial step forward in AI capabilities, in particular in the field of natural language processing, enabling a wide range of uses such as writing software code, searching

for molecules, and conversational chatbots. The technology relies on advances in deep learning models, such as variational autoencoders (VAEs) and GANs, that have expanded the usability of AI (Martineau, 2023). VAEs use an encoder-decoder architecture to generate new data samples (Doersch, 2016). Moreover, GANs involve a generator and discriminator competing to create realistic data (Goodfellow I. et al., 2020).

GenAI leverages DL to generate new data by learning patterns from vast datasets. For instance, tools like ChatGPT utilise transformer models to comprehend and generate text that is akin to human language based on the parameters provided in the input. The models, which have been trained on large and diverse datasets, are thus able to produce responses that are both appropriate and coherent in context (Korzynski et al., 2023). This capability is not only limited to text; genAI can also create realistic images, videos, and even music, making it valuable in media, entertainment, and design (Arya & Sharma, 2023).

2.7 Link between AI and Consulting Firms

AI and Consulting – State of the Art

According to a study conducted by Fishbowl, the rate of genAI adoption in consultancies in the U.S. in 2023 is at 30% (Fishbowl, 2023). GenAI integration is transforming consulting by reshaping traditional business models and service delivery mechanisms, enhancing capabilities, fostering innovation, streamlining operations, and evolving business models (Minevich, 2024).

GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT, enabled firms to enhance their capabilities significantly by automating the creation of persuasive content and advertising materials, often surpassing human-generated content in quality (Zhang & Gosline, 2023). The automation of this process enhances efficiency and enables consultants to dedicate their attention to tasks that are more complex and of greater value, necessitating human intuition and expertise (Paliwal et al., 2021; “Is AI going to impact the consulting industry?”, 2023).

GenAI potentials

GenAI's potential in consulting is significant, fostering innovation and streamlining operations. Firms like PWC have developed "Responsible AI Toolkits" to ensure ethical and effective AI applications, maintaining client trust and promoting continuous technological advancement (Gupta & Yang, 2024; Morley et al., 2019; PWC, 2019).

The practical applications of genAI in consulting firms are diverse. In management and strategy, genAI assists in data collection and analysis, providing insights for decision-making processes by analysing market trends and consumer behaviour (Korzynski et al., 2023). A study by Deloitte revealed that 74% of organisations identified AI technologies as a factor in accelerating data analysis processes (IRG Executive Search, n.d.). Additionally, in human resources, genAI can streamline recruitment and employee engagement by automating routine tasks and providing personalised recommendations (Korzynski et al., 2023).

AI also influences traditional business models by enabling 24-hour availability of client support, automating routine tasks, and rapidly synthesising deliverables, enhancing consulting services (Forbes Business Council, 2023). Moreover, management consultants can assist companies in developing technology strategies and AI stacks aligned with their business strategies (Mohan, 2024).

AI Drawbacks

Despite its promising capabilities, genAI in consulting firms faces several challenges, including data quality issues, and maintaining human touch (Gîngută et al., 2023; Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022). Data inaccuracies can arise from incomplete or biased datasets, leading to flawed outputs and remains a significant concern (Arya & Sharma, 2023). Additionally, there are fears related to job displacement, as routine tasks previously done by humans become increasingly automated, potentially resulting in economic inequality and social unrest (Tiwari, 2023). Integrating AI while maintaining the human touch is crucial for client trust and satisfaction. Resistance to change within organisations can further complicate the adoption of AI and other advanced technologies, making it imperative for consultants to manage these transitions effectively (Gîngută et al., 2023; Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022). High implementation costs pose a challenge, especially for smaller firms (“Is AI going to impact the consulting industry?”, 2023). As AI is getting more important, consulting firms are encouraged to proactively incorporate AI into their business models, addressing challenges, ethical and legal considerations (Samokhvalov, 2024)

Ethical considerations are pivotal in the application of genAI. Responsibility, transparency, potential for bias, are critical factors. The results of a study investigating the relevance of ethical guidelines for AI indicates that responsibility is a key factor in the development of AI (Rothenberger et al., 2019). Both experts and participants in the survey highlighted its

importance. However, there is no consensus on who should be held responsible AI's actions – manufacturers, developers, or users (Rothenberger et al., 2019).

A further point to be taken into consideration is the guideline Protection of Data Privacy as it is important to know who protects the data and what happens to this data. Although one expert has stated that this guideline is already regulated within the constitutional law, implementing the protection of privacy in the context of AI represents a significant future challenge (Rothenberger et al., 2019). Moreover, a significant number of researchers argued that individuals need control over their data (Tucker, 2019). In consulting, adhering to ethical standards is crucial. Advisors must not abuse client trust and are obligated to keep confidential information private, only sharing it with prior consent or when absolutely necessary. They should only disclose information as needed for the consultation's purposes (Mingaleva, 2013). Concerns about privacy and unauthorised use of personal data by AI systems highlight the need for transparency and accountability (Adeyelu et al., 2024; Osasona et al., 2024; Tiwari, 2023). Client trust and confidentiality are foundational in consulting, and genAI must not compromise these values. AI systems often handle sensitive client data, raising concerns about privacy and data security (Gînguță et al., 2023). To maintain client trust, firms must implement robust data protection measures and ensure that AI algorithms do not expose confidential information (Gînguță et al., 2023).

AI-generated content can infringe on copyrights and other legal rights. The training of genAI models with large datasets results in the inclusion of previous works by different individuals, which are subsequently extracted from the Internet (Arya & Sharma, 2023; Pavlik, 2023). AI systems are often hard to understand because the way they make decisions isn't always clear. Enhancing in classification, prediction, detection, and the selection of results is essential (Rubin et al., 2020). Addressing these issues require further development such as pre-deployment certification, human oversight mechanisms, a multidisciplinary approach and robust ethical frameworks and regulatory guidelines to achieve transparency and accountability (Arya & Sharma, 2023; Eitel-Porter, 2021; Wachter et al., 2017). Regulatory compliance is crucial for ethical AI application. As regulations evolve to address data privacy and ethical concerns, consultancies must align their AI practices with these frameworks (Gerlick & Liozu, 2020). The European Commission's emphasis on 'trustworthy AI' underscores the need for compliance with legal and ethical standards (Miguel et al., 2020). Consulting firms should develop AI

governance frameworks, incorporate certification programs and stay up to date on AI regulations to navigate the complex landscape of AI regulation effectively (Mills et al., 2023).

Moreover, transparency is necessary for public acceptance, as lack of it can reduce support for AI technologies (Wright, 2011). Initiatives should have the goal to make AI systems more explicit, intelligible, and communicative, fulfilling objectives like minimising harm, advancing AI, meeting legal obligations, and fostering trust (Jobin et al., 2019).

The ability of genAI systems to generate new content, including text, audio, and images, raises concerns about misleading or malicious information that is difficult to distinguish from genuine content and which could impact individuals and society at large (Pavlik, 2023). Bias and fairness are significant concerns, as AI systems can unintentionally perpetuate existing inequalities. AI models trained on biased datasets may produce unfair outcomes, disadvantaging certain demographic groups (Brusseau, 2021). Algorithms used in hiring processes have shown gender bias, reflecting historical data biases, showing the importance of understanding how algorithms work (Mujtaba & Mahapatra, 2019; Osasona et al., 2024; Yarger et al., 2019). Ensuring fairness requires scrutiny of training data and implementing techniques like reweighting training data or adjusting models to mitigate biases. Addressing bias is not just a technical challenge but also an ethical imperative to prevent reinforcing societal disparities (de Laat, 2021). Transparent communication about how AI systems operate and the safeguards in place can reassure clients (Gîngută et al., 2023). By prioritising confidentiality and trust, consulting firms can benefit from genAI while upholding ethical standards (Alexandre & Blanckaert, 2020). Addressing these ethical and social implications ensures AI technologies positively contribute to society and align with ethical principles (Adeyelu et al., 2024; Osasona et al., 2024; Tiwari, 2023).

Human response to AI, particularly in the context of reliance on AI advice, is another critical aspect. Studies have shown that while AI can provide valuable insights, there is still significant scepticism towards fully relying on AI-generated advice (Dawes, 1979; Logg et al., 2019). Research has shown that people tend to over-rely on AI in specific scenarios, especially when AI provides consistent and accurate outputs. However, in high-stakes or complex decision-making contexts, users may exhibit distrust, opting for human judgment instead (Schemmer et al., 2022).

The concept of trust is crucial for reliance on AI advice. It can be defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party due to the expectation that this party will carry out a specific action that is important to the trustor, regardless of the capability to oversee or regulate the actions of that party (Mayer et al., 1995). Factors influencing trust in AI systems include transparency, data quality, and user training (Dietvorst et al., 2015; Logg et al., 2019). Understanding these factors is essential for designing AI systems that are reliable and user-friendly, thereby enhancing their acceptance and effective utilisation in consulting practices.

2.8 Future Trends and Innovations in AI for Consulting

The future of AI in consultancies will be characterised by significant and far-reaching transformation. This will be driven by emerging technologies that have the potential to radically revolutionise the way in which consultants deliver value to their clients (Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024). The relationship between AI and consulting firms is likely to become increasingly strong in the coming years. McKinsey & Co. has reported that the utilisation of AI has increased significantly over the past five years. In 2017, approximately 20% of firms were using AI in one or more areas. By the end of 2022, this figure had risen to 50% (IRG Executive Search, n.d.).

One key trend is the proliferation of AI-powered analytics and insights, which are expected to significantly enhance data processing capabilities (Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024). Tools like ChatGPT can process vast amounts of data in real time, enabling consultants to offer more timely and accurate insights (Laffitte, 2022).

Moreover, collaborative AI is another milestone in the development of consulting. The development of AI systems that can work together with people, similar to teamwork between people, is becoming increasingly important (McCormack et al., 2020). This collaborative approach can enhance the effectiveness of consulting projects by leveraging the strengths of both human consultants and AI systems. For instance, AI can handle repetitive tasks and the shift will allow consultants to transition from traditional data crunching roles to freeing up to human consultants to focus on creative problem-solving, interpreting complex data, formulating actionable strategies and do strategic planning (Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022; Nagarajan, 2022; Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024). This synergy between humans and AI not only optimises workflow but also leads to more innovative and comprehensive solutions for clients (Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022).

Custom AI solutions are also emerging as a vital component in the competitive consulting landscape. Specialised AI-driven consulting firms are likely to cater to niche sectors, offering tailored solutions that address specific client needs more effectively (Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024). These custom solutions use AI to provide faster, cost-effective services, leading to the client's satisfaction (Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024). As a result, traditional consulting firms will face increased competition, prompting them to innovate and integrate AI more seamlessly into their service offerings (Laffitte, 2022; Oarue-Itseuwa, 2024).

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used for conducting expert interviews, including data collection methods and interviewee selection. It provides an overview of the interview structure and guidelines, enabling an understanding of how responses to the research questions were derived. Additionally, it justifies the chosen research methodology, addressing gaps in the literature regarding the impact of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) on consulting performance and the practical and ethical challenges of AI integration.

The objective of the research is to examine genAI's application in consulting firms by interviewing consultants about AI adoption, benefits, challenges, future trends, and recommendations. The goal is to understand how genAI transforms consulting, offering insights into opportunities and challenges. The study collects data through interviews with consultants in order to gain insight into their experiences with AI tools, exploring the practical implications and identifying best practices. Understanding genAI in consulting can lead to enhanced productivity, decision-making, and innovation while addressing ethical and practical challenges. This research contributes to the academic discourse and offers recommendations for effective genAI use, thereby assisting firms in maintaining competitiveness and upholding ethical standards.

Building on Chapter 2's literature review on the consulting sector, AI evolution, and ethical considerations, several areas remain to be investigated further. It is necessary to analyse the extent of reliance on AI-generated advice and the criteria by which consultants determine when to rely on AI-generated advice versus their own judgement or that of their colleagues. Identifying factors influencing trust in AI, including transparency, data quality, and user training, is similarly important.

Further investigation is required to understand the practical challenges and mitigation strategies associated with the integration of genAI tools, including data accuracy, prompt formulation,

and system reliability. Moreover, it is vital to comprehend how consultants address ethical concerns, such as data privacy, bias, and AI-generated errors. Additionally, the real-world applications and efficacy of genAI in consulting must be investigated, focusing on beneficial tasks and their impact on achieving client goals. Insight into the optimal balance between AI assistance and human expertise is also essential. Finally, examining the future outlook and strategic recommendations for AI integration in consulting firms, including expected developments and best practices, is necessary.

To address these gaps, this study focuses on the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the current extent of AI integration in consulting firms and to what extent do consultants rely on AI-generated advice and insights in their decision-making process?

This question aims to gain insight into the extent of AI integration and the factors influencing consultants' reliance on AI advice, revealing how frequently and in what contexts consultants turn to AI for support.

RQ2: What are the opportunities, challenges, and ethical concerns consulting firms face when integrating genAI into their workflows?

This question explores the challenges consultants face and how they deal with them, including data accuracy and ethical considerations.

RQ3: What are the future trends and innovations expected in AI that will impact the consulting industry?

This question examines prospective AI advancements and their potential influence on consulting practices. It presents expert forecasts and suggestions, offering a prospective viewpoint on the evolving role of AI in consulting.

The objective of this study is to bridge the gap between theory and practice by investigating the impact of genAI on the consulting industry through expert interviews. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of genAI's impact and offer actionable insights for its effective integration.

3.1 Research Design

When doing research, it is essential to focus on a specific design that outlines procedures and provides a framework for the study. There are two main types of research: quantitative and qualitative (Kandel, 2020).

Quantitative research studies psychological, social, and economic processes using numeric data. Methods include questionnaires, observations, and experiments, enabling statistical analyses to generate knowledge and understand social phenomena. It provides insights into behaviors and characteristics of specific groups (Ahmad et al., 2019). Qualitative research is designed to facilitate comprehension of social phenomena within their natural contexts, focusing on the "why." It uses methods like case studies, interviews, and ethnographies to collect narratives and observations. The aim is to explore reasons and motivations, offering insights into human behavior and contexts (Ahmad et al., 2019).

For this thesis, a qualitative approach in the form of interviews was chosen to answer the research questions and to gain insights into the behavior of consultants. The following paragraph provides a detailed overview of the data collection procedure.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

While various methods exist for qualitative data collection, as text or document reviews, diaries, and participant observation, interviews are the most widely utilised technique for primary qualitative data collection due to their natural and comfortable environment (Taherdoost, 2021). Interviews are generally categorised into three formats: unstructured, structured, and semi-structured (Taherdoost, 2022). Unstructured interviews use flexible, open-ended questions guided by themes, providing rich insights but are time-consuming, prone to bias, requiring skilled interviewers for complex issues (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Doody & Noonan, 2013). Structured interviews maintain consistent questions across all participants, following a specific protocol. This reduces biases, simplifies coding and analysis, but limits in-depth exploration, making them more suitable for sociodemographic data than qualitative research (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

This research used a semi-structured interview approach, a common method for qualitative data collection. It involves predetermined questions, but interviewers can also ask follow-up questions for clarification. The main guide is based on similar questions and order for interviewees. Interviewers can adjust the wording and order of questions and explore new

directions to achieve research goals. This approach allows for rich data collection and the emergence of new concepts (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Doody & Noonan, 2013).

According to Patton (2021) there are no set rules for sample size in qualitative research. The appropriate size depends on the inquiry's purpose, credibility and usefulness of the findings. Selecting interviewees based on specific, relevant characteristics representative of the population is more crucial (Patton, 2021). The following paragraph will detail the selection criteria and describe the chosen interviewees.

3.3 Sample selection

To understand AI application in consulting firms, interviews with 20 employees from three consulting firms in Germany were conducted.

The participants in the interviews are presented below (see Table 1). To ensure anonymity, the companies and interviewees' names are withheld. Participants were selected based on their use of AI in consulting, diverse positions and project involvement. The participants included former classmates and colleagues, with participation conducted on a voluntary basis. Particular attention was paid to represent different age groups, genders, management responsibility, and lengths of service with the company.

A series of steps was employed to contact potential interview partners. Initially, the potential interview partners were contacted in person; however, some via chat message or email. Prior to the interview, participants received a consent form (see Appendix C) ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, with audio recorded via mobile phone with consent, and the information that the duration of the interview would be between 20 and 30 minutes.

Table 1: Interview Partner

Interview partner		
#	Identification	Position
1	C1	Consultant
2	C2	Project Lead
3	C3	Project Lead
4	C4	Senior Consultant
5	C5	Consultant
6	C6	Consultant
7	C7	Consultant
8	C8	Consultant
9	C9	Senior Consultant
10	C10	Senior Consultant

Interview partner		
#	Identification	Position
11	C11	Senior Consultant
12	C12	Senior Consultant
13	C13	Project Lead
14	C14	Consultant
15	C15	Senior Consultant
16	C16	Consultant
17	C17	Senior Consultant
18	C18	Consultant
19	C19	Senior Consultant
20	C20	Senior Consultant

3.4 Derivation of the Interview Guide

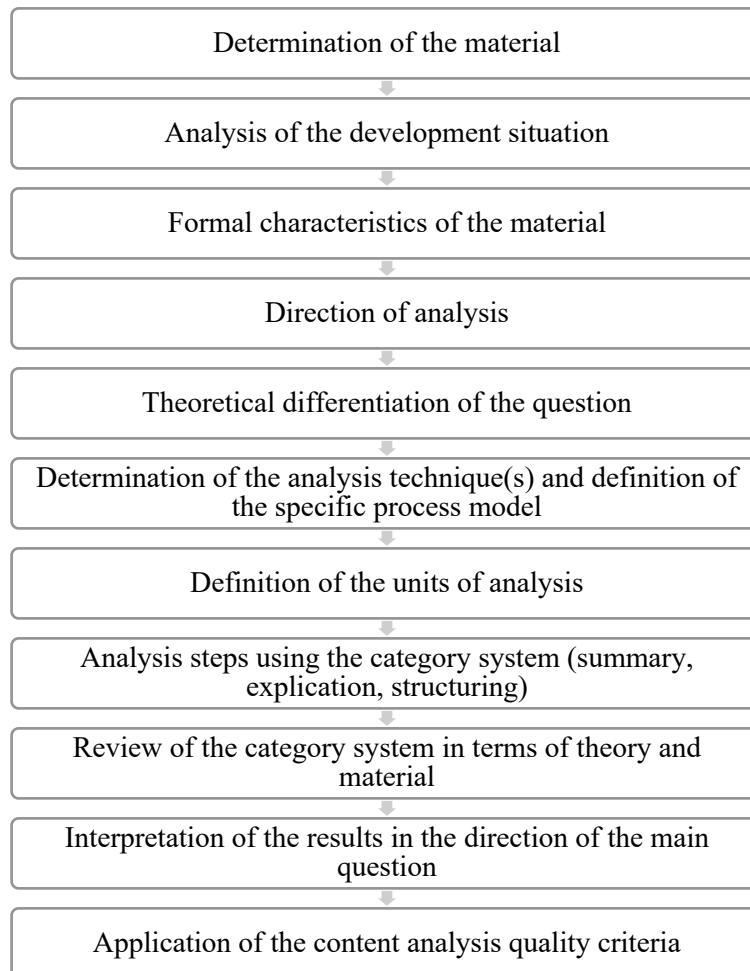
A structured guideline was devised for conducting the interviews (see Appendix A), comprising an introductory overview, a main section with specific questions, and a concluding section. In the introductory, the research objective and the significance of the topic are presented. The main section included five principal questions with follow-ups.

The first question seeks to ascertain the present utilisation of AI in consulting firms, aiming to determine AI's current role, integration extent, and specific tools used. The second question concerns the extent to which consultants rely on AI advice in their practice, identifying situations in which consultants rely on AI advice and in which they do not, as well as factors influencing this trust. The third question addresses benefits and opportunities of AI, exploring its primary benefits, its contribution to achieving clients' goals and its impact on the decision-making process. The fourth question pertains to the challenges and limitations of using AI in consulting, along with strategies for addressing ethical concerns such as the potential for biased responses or data privacy issues. The final question asks respondents for their views on the future outlook and recommendations for AI implementation in consulting firms, seeking to identify anticipated trends and developments and provide guidance for effective AI integration. Finally, the participants were invited to address any additional relevant aspects not yet discussed. The interview concluded with a formal expression of gratitude for their participation and contribution to the thesis.

3.5 Method of Analysis

The content analysis was followed after the 11-step method recommended for a qualitative content analysis by Mayring (Mayring, 1991) (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: 11-step Method for a Qualitative Content Analysis by Mayring



Source: (Mayring, 1991) (own illustration)

The process started with the determination of the material, which included 20 transcribed interviews with employees from three different consultancies in Germany. Next, the development situation was analysed focusing on the context and circumstances of the interviews to gain insight into AI's role in consulting, its reliance, benefits, challenges, and future outlook. The formal characteristics of the material were addressed, with interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams and recorded with consent. The audio files were transcribed using Microsoft Word and to guarantee accuracy and readability, they were revised.

The analysis direction was defined to explore specific themes related to AI use in consultancies. Responses related to "trust in AI advice," for instance, were flagged and categorised for deeper

analysis. The research questions were theoretically differentiated to ensure comprehensive coverage of issues. For example, while exploring "ethical concerns," specific sub-questions about "data privacy" and "bias" were identified.

The qualitative content analysis involved a systematic process model comprising the following stages: coding, categorisation, and interpretation of data. Examples are segments of the text related to themes such as "benefits of AI" and "challenges in AI integration." For instance, when a participant mentioned "AI improves efficiency," this statement was coded under "Benefits." The units of analysis were defined as individual interview responses, allowing for rich, contextual information to be drawn from detailed explanations.

The analysis steps involved using the category system to summarise, explicate, and structure the data. Interviews were coded by identifying key themes and patterns, such as mentions of "data accuracy" being coded under "Challenges." If a participant stated, "AI sometimes gives inaccurate data," this was categorised accordingly. The category system was then reviewed and refined to ensure accuracy. For example, multiple participants mentioning "AI bias" were cross-referenced with existing literature on AI ethics. This review process helped ensure that the categories accurately reflected the data and theoretical underpinnings. The results were analysed in order to gain insight into the frequency and context of the identified themes. For example, the recurring appearance of the term "data privacy concerns" underscored its importance. These findings were then linked to the primary research questions in order to draw valid conclusions, specifically in relation to the extent to how consultants utilise AI whilst considering these privacy concerns.

The final categories are: AI usage, AI reliance, factors of trust, benefits, influence on decision-making process, achieving client's goals, challenges and limitations, ethical concerns, future outlook, and recommendations. Each category underwent thorough analysis. For instance, multiple participants mentioning "AI helps me structure large volumes of data quickly" were grouped under "Benefits," demonstrating a common benefit of AI tools. These categories provided a comprehensive understanding of the themes and patterns emerging from the data. The results were interpreted in light of the main research questions, identifying patterns, drawing conclusions, and relating the findings to the broader context of AI in consulting. Quality criteria for content analysis, including validity, reliability, and transparency, were applied to ensure the analysis's credibility and rigor.

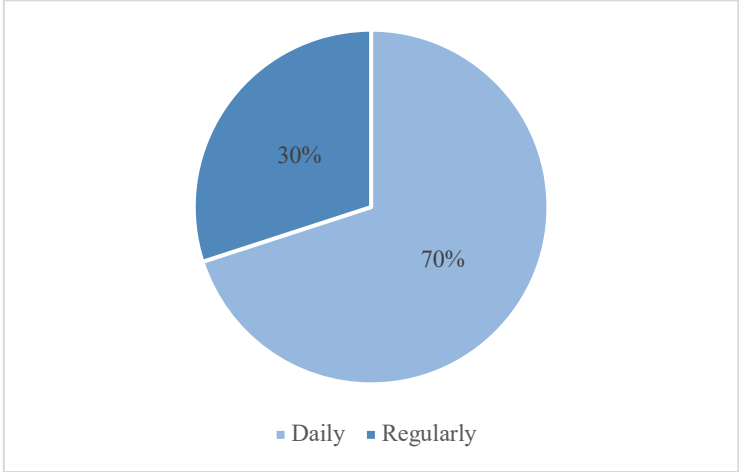
4. Results

This section presents the findings from the interviews, analysed by using the content analysis approach developed by Mayring (1991). Appendix B shows the data coding, including themes and patterns. The results are structured according to the interview questionnaire.

4.1 Current Use of AI in Consulting Firms

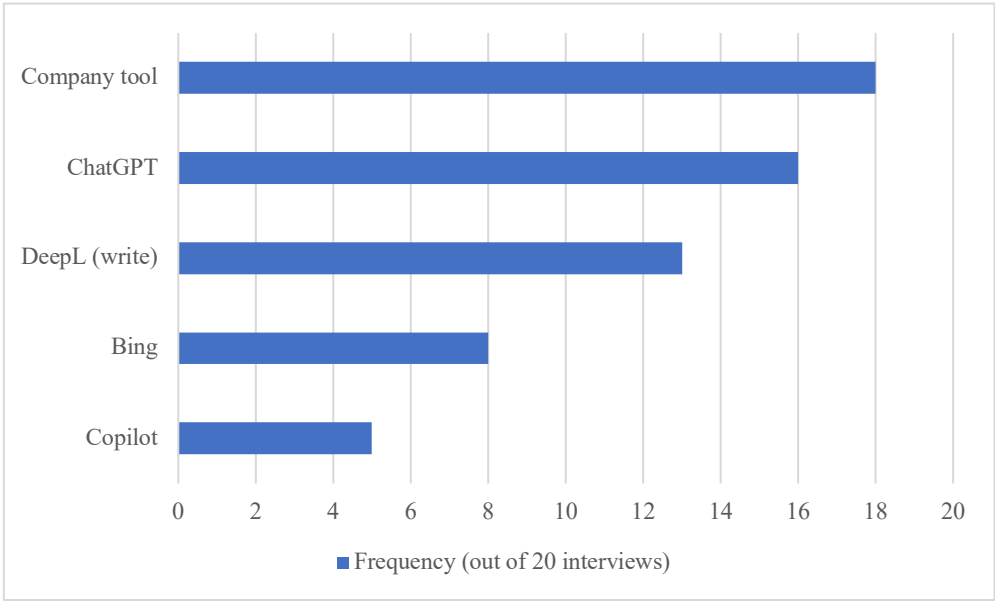
This section discusses the current usage of genAI in consultancies, focusing on how frequently consultants utilise it, its purposes, and the specific tools they use. Among the 20 consultants interviewed, 70% (14 individuals) use AI daily, while 30% (6 individuals) use it regularly (Appendix B, p. 54) but not daily.

Figure 2: GenAI Usage (out of 20 Interviews)



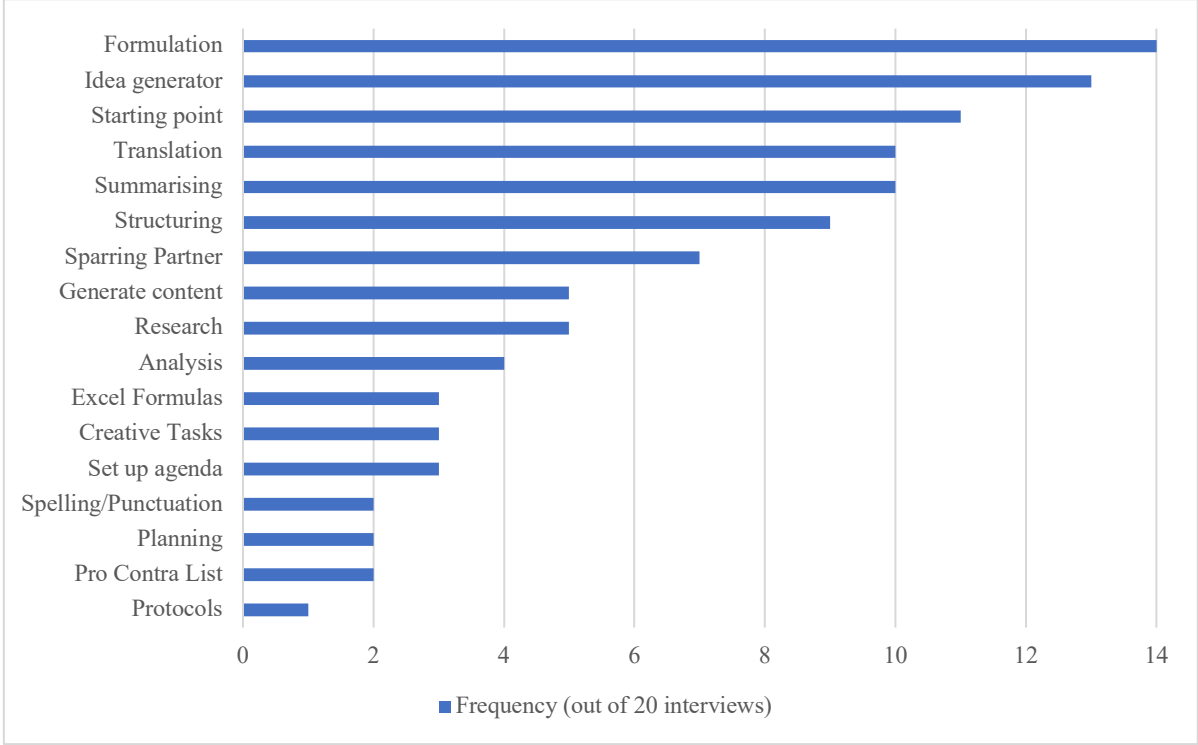
All interviewees reported using generative AI, with 18 using their company's in-house GPT tool, 16 using ChatGPT, 13 using DeepL and its writing function, 8 using Bing and 5 using Copilot (Appendix B, p. 52).

Figure 3: Use of Various GenAI Tools (out of 20 Interviews)



The following overview (see Figure 4) highlights the specific activities for which consultants use GenAI tools, which will be further described in the following.

Figure 4: Tasks Performed by Using GenAI Tools (out of 20 Interviews)



Consultants use genAI tools for various tasks. Most use genAI primarily for text formulation, such as formulising emails and correspondence. Examples include, “Formulate an email a bit

more formally when communicating with a customer” (C11, 9), and “formulate texts better, in other words, to concentrate better on the other person’s language” (C13, 3).

GenAI is also popular as an idea generator or as a starting point. Statements like “you have a new client, and you don't really understand their business model yet, you don't really know what it's all about, you try to find out in which direction everything could go (...) ChatGPT can help you to find it or give you some direction or ideas on how to proceed, which you might not necessarily have thought of at the beginning” (C6, 31) and “to get an initial impulse” (C7, 6) or “take it as an impetus or advisor at the beginning” (C10, 3) illustrate this use.

Many Consultants also use genAI tools as a support to structure notes, tasks or themselves, for translation, or summarising (Appendix B, p. 53-54).

Using genAI as sparring partner is another key activity (Appendix B, p. 55). This seems to be especially important in the consulting industry, as consultants often need to prepare presentations which they present in front of the client. For example, C1 said, “It is like a sparring partner. Before presentations, I like to be asked critical questions that might come up, which gives me the opportunity to prepare myself better” (C1, 28) and C18 mentions “I use the feedback directly that I somehow got on a slide” (C18, 8).

Another use case involves generating content through genAI such as to “write a newsletter article” (C3, 5) or “creating images, especially with PowerPoint, if you need a spontaneous image that’s a bit smaller, you can have it created” (C4, 5).

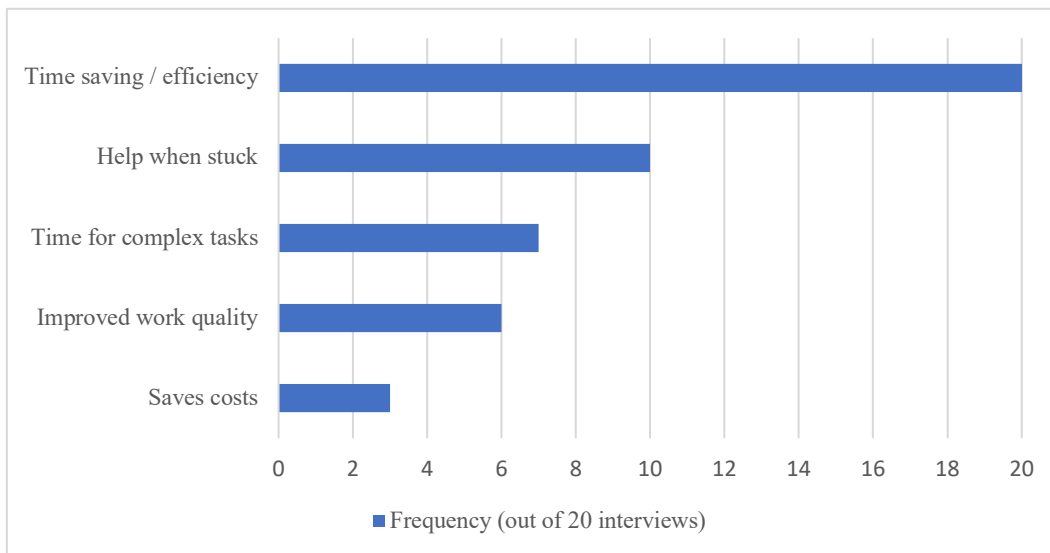
Furthermore, genAI assists with research, analysis, and Excel formulas. For research, it helps to find sources and information (Appendix B, p. 53). For analysis, it is used to analyse interviews (C6, 39), conduct market and competition analysis (C7, 10) and perform data-driven analysis (C8, 5). In Excel, it simplifies formulas (Appendix B, p. 54).

Some consultants use genAI for creative tasks (Appendix B, p. 54), setting up agendas (Appendix B, p. 53), checking spelling/punctuation (C4, 27; C20, 4), general planning (C3, 5; C15, 5), setting up pro/contra lists (C3, 5; C12, 3), and drafting meeting protocols (C2, 4).

4.2 Benefits and Opportunities

This section explores the benefits of using genAI, its support in achieving client goals, and its impact on the decision-making. Interviewees mentioned various benefits of using genAI tools (see Figure 7).

Figure 5: Frequency of GenAI Benefits (out of 20 Interviews)



The most significant benefit of using genAI tools is the time saved and increased efficiency, as noted by all respondents. For example, C3 stated, “I can simply complete certain tasks more quickly” (C3, 27) and C6 mentioned “(...) definitively work more effectively” (C6, 31).

Additionally, genAI is helpful when consultants are stuck and need a starting point or new ideas, as mentioned by 50% of the interviewees (Appendix B, p. 53-54). C3 remarked, “I like to use this as a starting point when I’m stuck. It helps me there and of course it’s also an advantage that I can ask for help, let’s say.” (C3, 29).

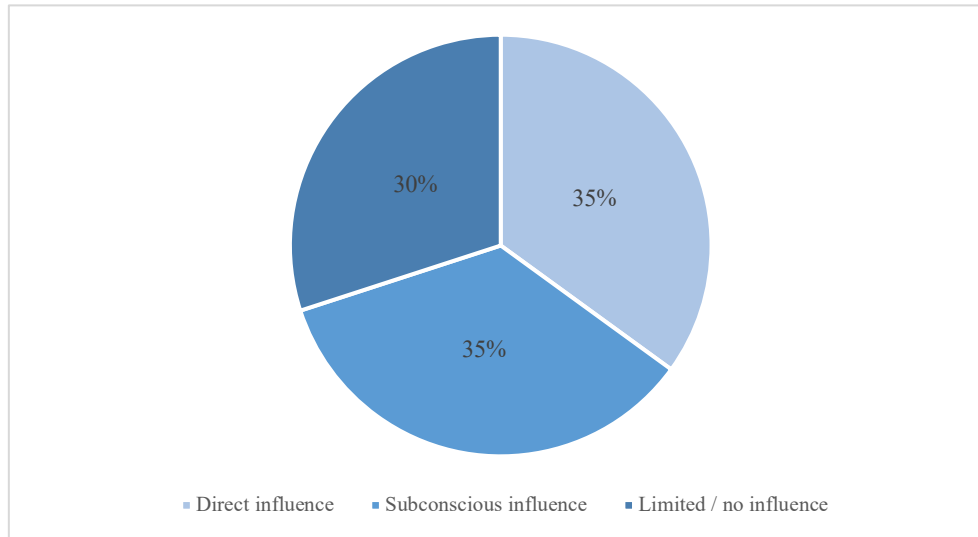
GenAI also reduces time spent on complex tasks and improves work quality. As C1 noted, “The quality of my work has improved a bit since using AI, as I can use my time differently, which benefits my capacity.” (C1, 28). C2 supported, “(...) gives me more time to concentrate on the more complex things that the AI is perhaps not yet so good at.” (C2, 27).

Additionally, genAI can save costs for a company. C16 mentioned, “You can do this quite well initially, before actually establishing more expensive solutions” (C16, 33).

Influence on decision-making processes

GenAI can influence decision-making (see Figure 8) by increasing efficiency (C4, 31), offering new perspectives (C10, 11) and accessing expert knowledge (C4, 31). It has been identified as serving as a valuable support tool that complements human advice (C12, 15).

Figure 6: Influence on Decision-making Processes (out of 20 Interviews)



GenAI influences decision-making processes in various ways. Among interviewees, 35% reported a direct influence, 35% noted a subconscious influence, and 30% stated that genAI has no impact on their decision-making (Appendix B, p. 59-61).

Several interviewees confirmed that genAI directly impacts their decision-making. C8 mentioned, “I usually let it judge me in some way from various perspectives and then I make a decision based on that, even if I’m really stuck between two pairs of shoes” (C8, 30). Another consultant noted, “For sure. I like to let the AI think ahead and then make decisions based on that, I would say” (C12, 15).

Many interviewees noted that, while they do not explicitly seek AI for decision-making, their decisions are subconsciously influenced by AI suggestions. This influence often occurs through idea generation and brainstorming sessions, where initial thoughts are shaped by AI inputs (Appendix B, p. 60). For example, C3 noted, “(...) AI has an influence on my decision-making processes, as I like to use it as a starting point. And of course I usually already have something in my head, but it happens subconsciously that my own ideas take a back seat and I orientate myself to what the AI tells me.” (C3, 33). C4 expressed, “(...) AI tends to be the first port of

call, so that you can somehow brainstorm or ask the precise question (...) it's somehow quite cool to have that as a basis in the decision-making process or in the conceptual process and to start there.” (C4, 31).

A minority of interviewees reported that AI has limited or no impact on their decision-making, relying more on personal judgment, human advice, and non-AI sources. These respondents use AI tools as a supplementary information rather than primary guides (Appendix B, p. 60-61). As one interviewee mentioned, “I don't think I would really make decisions on the basis of AI decisions because, on the one hand, I think it's your own job to make a decision and, in addition, you have a lot more factors or influencing variables that you know yourself and an AI doesn't, which also have weight on your decisions.” (C16, 29).

Achieving client goals

A number of interviewees reflected on AI's role in achieving client objectives, viewing it as a supportive tool rather than a primary driver of success (C11, 33; C14, 34). While AI contributes to efficiency and quality, core outcomes still heavily depend on human input (Appendix B, p. 61-62).

Despite AI's role in improving efficiency, its direct impact on achieving customer goals is supportive rather than transformative. AI supports the process, but outcomes still depend on human expertise and decision-making (Appendix B, p. 61-62). Thereby, C3 noted “(...) AI has contributed to achieving the customer's goals. Simply because I can work faster, because I can get inspiration (...) But there is still my own work behind it. The AI helps me a bit as an assistant. But it's still my work.” (C3, 37-38). Another interviewee added, “I have nothing now where I say I somehow built the model with the AI and it gave me the decisive tip, which is why I then somehow doubled some KPI (...)” (C4, 35).

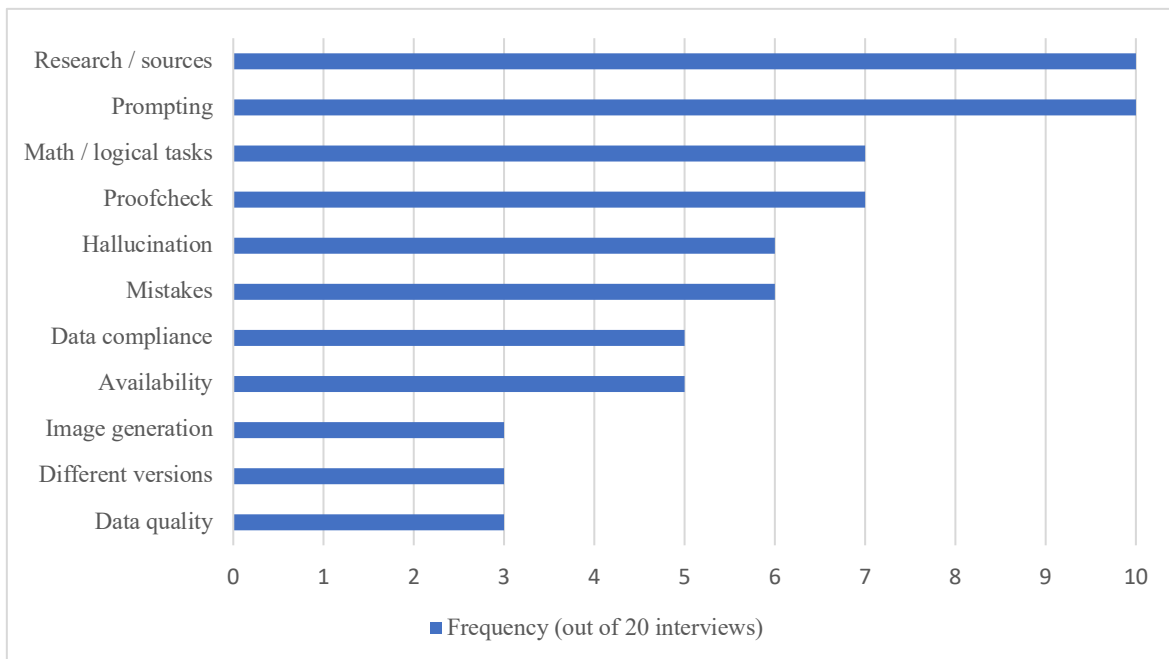
Interviewees noted that AI tools have improved the quality of their work, particular in communication and presentation (Appendix B, p. 59). AI's ability to produce clearer, more polished text and images has resulted in more professional client deliverables (C4, C7). C7 commented, “(...) the quality has definitely improved (...) especially when it comes to translations (...) The formulations are much nicer, much more elegant in a business context (...) the overall quality of the work has improved significantly” (C7, 12). C4 agreed, stating “(...) it has contributed to the fact that my texts are more understandable and readable (...)” (C4, 35).

Overall, respondents highlighted that AI complements their skills and expertise, supporting specific tasks and suggesting solutions, but ultimate decisions and strategies remain with human consultants (Appendix B, p. 61-62). This partnership increases effectiveness and efficiency in meeting client objectives. As C19 stated, “The customer's goal would have been achieved without it (...) it was never the case that AI made a customer and result possible in the first place” (C19, 13).

4.3 Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Apart from the benefits, the use of genAI also brings challenges, illustrated with their frequency mentioned in the 20 interviews (see Figure 9).

Figure 7: Challenges (out of 20 Interviews)



The reliability and accuracy of sources provided by AI systems is a frequent challenge. One respondent observed, “I often have the problem when I'm doing research that the sources don't exist at all” (C1, 40). Another added, “I somehow asked for sources or something like that, it spit them out and I was very happy about it, but they didn't actually exist at all” (C2, 42).

Moreover, users often struggle to prompt correctly to get the desired output from AI systems. As C1 noted, “The topic of prompts is always a challenge for me, as you really have to be very precise there and sometimes have to say 'imagine you're a consultant...' which I forget quite often and then don't get satisfactory results” (C1, 40). Another echoed this, stating “(...) people

really have to train how to prompt properly. So, I think that's a very, very big restriction” (C7, 14).

Many users reported challenges with AI's accuracy in handling mathematical and logical tasks. One interviewee observed, “When it comes to mathematical or logical things, he doesn't get on well with them and the results are often simply wrong” (C2, 52). Another agreed, saying, “AI itself can't do math well” (C7, 16).

Proof-checking AI-generated content for accuracy can be time-consuming. As one interviewee explained, “In general, I find it a challenge to reread everything (...) it means I have to invest time again” (C1, 40). Another shared, “(...) you have to roughly test whether what it's spitting out is correct” (C17, 18).

AI systems generating incorrect or fictional information is known as the phenomenon of hallucination. C4 described, “I somehow want to stimulate communication, I have to write to some managing director, or some vice president and it rewrites my text and then I just see that it goes completely in the wrong direction (...)” (C4, 47). Another added, “(...) it can generate unknowledge (...) an AI can hallucinate.” (C16, 41).

Errors in AI outputs necessitate additional verification steps. C1 explained, “I've also often discovered errors in summaries, for example. There were made-up things in the summary that weren't in the source at all.” (C1, 40). Another noted, “(...) information is gathered that isn't correct and then to identify okay what's true, what's not so what is very difficult.” (C11, 42).

Ensuring compliance with data protection regulations is crucial for organisations handling sensitive information. As C2 stated, “The fact that it's not entirely compliant with data protection regulations means that I don't necessarily have the confidence to enter my customers' data” (C2, 45). Another emphasised, “(...) the big challenge is really data protection” (C19, 26).

The unavailability of AI systems at crucial moments can hinder workflow efficiency. C2 stated, “I often have the problem that the program doesn't work at all” (C2, 42). Another mentioned, “(...) it often doesn't work (...)” (C6, 44).

Generating images that meet specific requirements can be challenging with AI tools. One interviewee noted, “You want to generate an image and you just can't get what you want based

on the wording of the image (...)” (C4, 39). Another shared, “I'm looking for a certain image and I want it to generate it for me, then it doesn't work 100% of the time (...)” (C6, 44).

Different AI models can lead to performance inconsistencies. As C2 clarified, “(...) if you use the free version, you obviously don't have the same experience as if you use the version that costs money” (C2, 43). C14 added, “There are different versions that can do different things” (C14, 38).

Input data quality significantly impacts AI performance, with poor data quality being a major challenge. C3 emphasised, “One of the main problems is dealing with data quality and availability. The available data is often incomplete, distorted or unrepresentative” (C3, 42). Additionally, C7 noted, “(...) if the data itself is simply not of the right quality, then even the best or most well-programmed AI is simply useless (...)” (C7, 14).

Ethical considerations

The interviews revealed different strategies and concerns about using AI tools ethically, focusing on data protection, bias, and caution. Many preferred internal GPT models for better data security and privacy. For instance, C1 said, “(...) I'm not so worried about the ethical aspects, as we have our own GPT where no information leaves the organisation” (C1, 44).

To address ethical concerns around data privacy, respondents suggest anonymising data and using workarounds before inputting it into AI systems by removing or altering names, numbers, and other details to keep information confidential. C2 explained, “(..) I try not to include any names or even company names (...) I would really make sure to leave out full names, first names, surnames or even companies and ask more generalised questions that are a bit more high-level and not related to the client” (C4, 43). Additionally, interviewees avoid uploading sensitive information into AI systems altering questions or structuring tasks differently to use AI without risking data security, as highlighted by C2: “I always make sure that I don't mention a company name, and that I change the figures a bit if I write in the turnover (...) so that you really can't tell which project or company it belongs to. Exactly, so I always have to do a bit of a workaround” (C2, 56).

People prefer internal AI tools over ChatGPT due to data protection concerns. As C12 pointed out, “(...) gives me a bit of confidence that it has been checked by the group and that it's a bit more relaxed to use than the public tool” (C12, 22).

Data protection was a key ethical issue in the interviews. Respondents complied with data protection rules and prevent data breaches by following company rules and not putting sensitive data into AI systems (Appendix B, p. 65-66). C14, for instance, stated, “And data protection is also a huge issue, so you can't just bang things in there (...) especially when it comes to the customers, the data with names (...)” (C14, 42).

Concerns about biased and inaccurate AI outputs were highlighted. Respondents noted the need to check AI output for reliability and fairness. As C3 noted, “I always do a proof check, no matter what it's about, and I try to formulate everything as broadly as possible” (C3, 48).

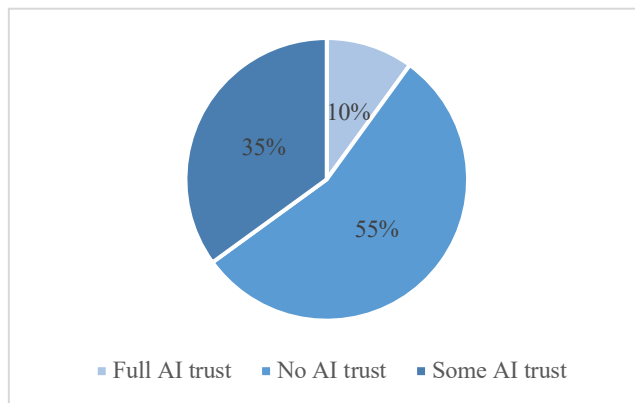
General caution and common sense were recurring themes in respondents' use of AI tools. Many highlighted reviewing inputs and outputs carefully to avoid ethical problems. For instance, C7 said, “(...) use common sense and simply check before you submit this request, that you really read through it again and see if there's anything in there that shouldn't be accessible to this public AI (...)” (C7, 15).

Finally, some interviewees expressed broader concerns about AI's ethical implications and societal impact, stressing the need for careful development. C17 remarked, “(...) I sometimes have the impression that it's just OK, the AI/genAI trend is somehow here now and the last one to bite the dogs, which means it's simply being developed further without giving much thought to whether we actually need it and where it's actually all leading and it's just being developed in a completely mindless way” (C17, 47).

4.4 Trust in AI Advice

The challenges of using genAI, lead to consultants' trust issues on AI advice which are examined in this section. As illustrated in Figure 5, only 2 out of 20 (10%) consultants surveyed completely trust AI advice. In contrast, 11 consultants (55%) do not trust AI advice at all, while 7 consultants (35%) trust it to some extent (Appendix B, p. 55-56).

Figure 8: Trust on AI Advice (out of 20 Interviews)



The interviews revealed that some consultants trust AI advice. C8 mentioned, “Yes, I think I can rely on it quite well. Of course, you should double-check sensitive data, at least on a random basis, but yes, I think you can rely on the data provided” (C8, 13). Consultants who trust on it to some extent, typically do so in specific situations, as C1 noted “(...) but one situation in which I rely a little on the output of the AI is, for example, with translations or summaries (...)” (C3, 14) which is also supported by many other interviewees (Appendix B, p. 55-56). Others mentioned using AI for spelling and punctuation check (C3, 14; C4, 17) and handling large documents (C3, 14).

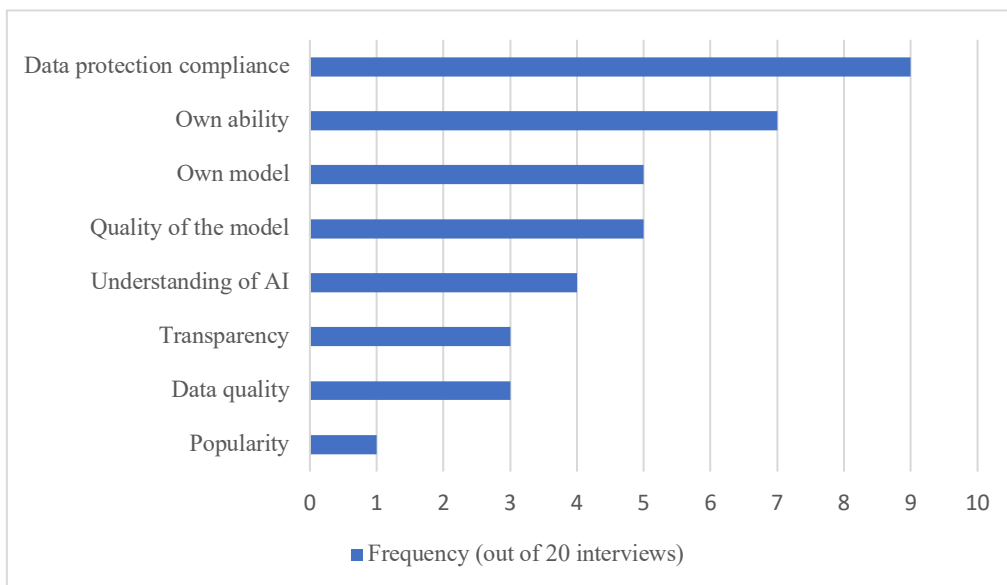
However, many consultants remain sceptical, with the majority either not trusting on AI advice or only doing so to some extent. Most insist on proof-checking AI output, showing a lack of trust. For example, C2 stated, “In general, however, I would do a proof check when using AI” (C2, 12), and C10 stated, “You always have to do a proof check, so I wouldn’t say 100% and I wouldn’t say you can pass it off as your own. Basically, you didn’t create it yourself, the AI itself did. So no, I don’t rely on it.” (C10, 7). Similarly, C7 added, “So relying on it sounds as if you just blindly accept it, which of course never is the case, of course you always have to check whether everything fits 100%.” (C7, 6). Concerns about AI reliability, such as hallucinations and errors, contribute to this scepticism (C17, 14).

Some consultants prefer seeking advice from colleagues over AI tools, contributing to their lack of trust on AI (C2, C3). Colleagues provide experienced, nuanced insights that AI lacks, making them more reliable in complex situations. AI’s potential for inaccuracies and irrelevant information, which require double-checking, diminishes trust in its reliability for critical tasks (Appendix B, p. 61-62).

Specific situations where AI advice is not trusted include mathematical or logical problems (Appendix B, p. 56-57), business-critical advice (Appendix B, p. 56-57), making decisions between options (C2, 16; C14, 18), and finding up-to-date research sources (Appendix B, p. 56-57).

The interviews revealed that while some consultants, like C8, trust AI advice, many do not. Several factors (see Figure 6) affect their confidence in AI tools and the results they get.

Figure 9: Factors of Trust (out of 20 Interviews)



Consultants trust AI tools more if they comply with data protection regulations, as their projects often involve confidential client data (Appendix B, p. 57-58). In addition, a significant factor is whether the tool is an own tool or a public one, with data protection compliance being a primary concern. C5 stated, “I don’t have to worry that the things I put in there, the information I put in, that it will somehow be passed on, that’s of course a big point, that I can use it at all, how I use it and that I have trust in it.” (C5, 21).

Another aspect is the user’s ability and understanding of AI. C3 mentioned, “(...) my own ability, because you have to be able to prompt really well in order to generate useable output” (C3, 22). Similarly, C17 stated, “I think the more you’re trained in it and the more you know, the more you feel like you understand how this AI works. What it needs in terms of prompts, then the confidence grows that it will something sensible out of it” (C17, 23).

Moreover, model quality influences trust, with differences between free models and paid ones (Appendix B, p. 57). Transparency is also crucial, as C10 stated, “so if they are very transparent

about what information they use, what they use things for, etc. then I think that strengthens my trust in there” (C10, 9).

Less important factors are data quality (Appendix B, p. 57) and the tool’s popularity, such as “how well known the AI is” (C7, 9).

4.5 Future Expectations

Based on the benefits and challenges, consultants expect that in the future the adoption of genAI in the consulting sector is expected to grow significantly. Interviewees highlighted its transformative potential, with C1 noting, “(...) its use will increase significantly over the next few years, especially in the consulting sector, as it can take over many tasks” (C1, 52). Companies are already establishing their own AI systems; C4 stating, “(...) we already have our own GPT, and I think most other companies are also setting something like that up” (C4, 51). AI's role will continue to expand, with a participant mentioning, “the topic will become increasingly dynamic in companies (...)” (C7, 17).

AI in consulting is expected to automate routine tasks, reducing time spent on mundane activities. C1 expressed, “It would be cool, which would save us consultants a lot of time, if PowerPoint presentations could be created with AI” (C1, 52). Another noted, “(...) perhaps even AI can build you complete dashboards, calculation tools and I think that would be a really great added value for the consulting industry” (C14, 50).

While progress is needed, AI's role in conceptual work is being recognised, as C4 stated, “(...) it will still take a while for the AI to really understand what you want and how you need it” (C4, 51).

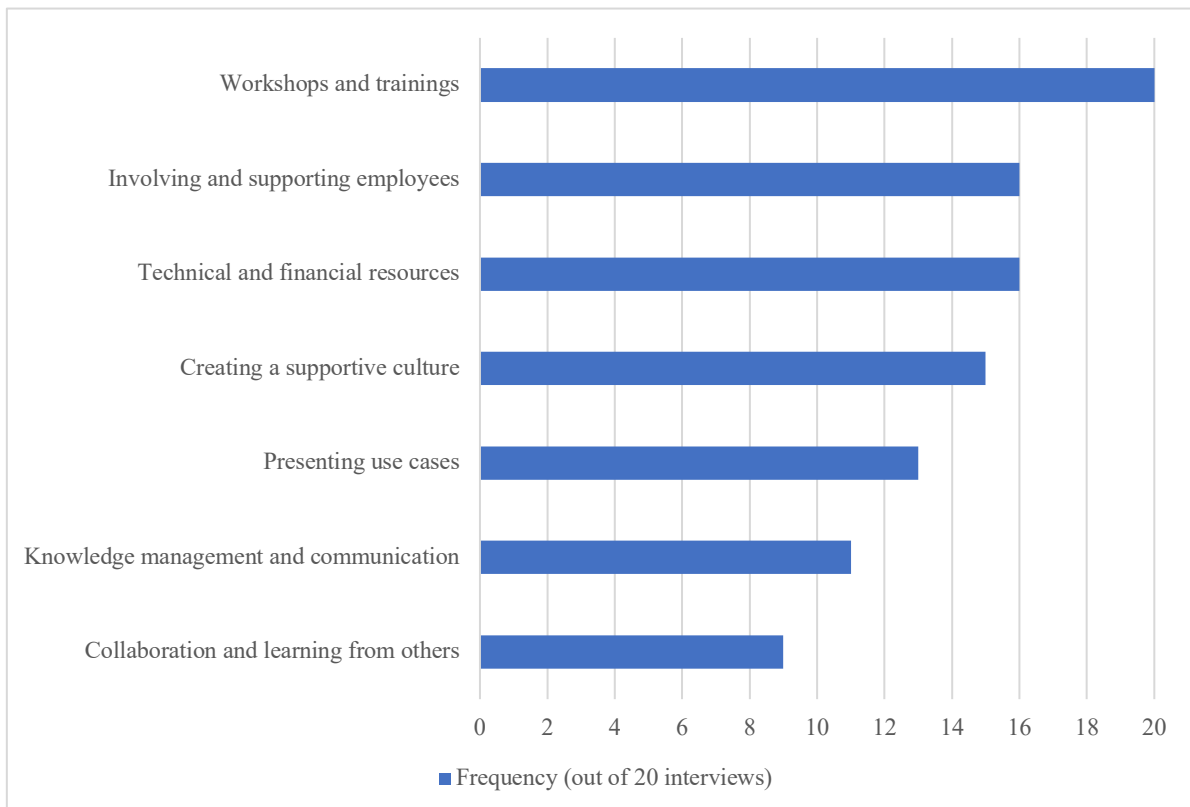
Technological advancements in AI suggest genAI's capabilities will continue to improve. Interviewees expressed optimism about enhancements in image generation, audio transcription, and reliable analytical outputs. C2 said, “(...) topic of image generation, that it will simply get better and better, become more reliable and you'll get cool things out of it” (C2, 62). Ongoing research and development promise further innovations, as C11 mentioned, “(...) a new AI tool is probably coming onto the market every day, I think that there will definitely be further progress” (C11, 50).

AI integration in consulting is poised to significantly impact job roles and efficiency. While some fear that AI may replace jobs, the consensus is that AI will augment human roles. C7 noted, “It’s always the case that people, especially those who don’t deal with the topic, fear that AI can completely replace their jobs” (C7, 17). Another echoed, “(...) a bit of a fear, that jobs will disappear and be replaced by AI” (C6, 58). AI will handle repetitive tasks, thereby enabling consultants to direct their attention to strategic work. “So, you can save a lot of time and hopefully put this time into tasks where you can provide even more added value yourself” (C5, 49). However, concerns remain that “(...) jobs such as consultants will also disappear (...) as soon as AI starts building slides. Then it will be over very quickly” (C6, 58).

4.6 Recommendations

Furthermore, the consultants have proposed a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing the integration of genAI within the organisational structure. The following recommendations are based on the analysis of 20 interviews and are categorised into seven key areas to support and integrate AI technologies. The graph (see Figure 10) illustrates the frequency of mentions for each category.

Figure 10: Frequency of Recommendations on Integrating AI (out of 20 Interviews)



The most frequently mentioned recommendation is workshops and trainings, highlighted by all 20 interviewees. These sessions are essential for equipping employees with the necessary skills to utilise AI effectively (Appendix B, p. 70-71). Focus areas should include data protection and prompting. C1 emphasised, “(...) offering workshops or training courses, especially in the area of prompting and simply providing information about AI.” (C3, 60). Additionally, making workshops mandatory was suggested to ensure participation: “(...) it should be mandatory to take part in at least one, because I think people who aren't quite so enthusiastic about the topic won't sign up otherwise” (C1, 56).

The need to involve and support employees was mentioned by many interviewees. Engaging all employees, especially those less familiar or enthusiastic about AI, is crucial (Appendix B, p. 71-72). C2 noted, “(...) you definitely have to make sure that you get people involved, especially the older generation” (C2, 68-69). Providing security and making the process enjoyable can help alleviate fears and encourage engagement. C5 stated, “(...) introduce employees to it as well as possible and give them a sense of security, because many are naturally afraid” (C5, 57).

Providing adequate technical and financial resources was, similarly, emphasised by many interviewees. Successful AI integration requires dedicated personnel and budget (Appendix B, p. 72-73). C2 mentioned, “(...) you need money... and the personnel capacity to set up your own GPT” (C2, 74-75). Another emphasised, “You really need a separate department (...) which is completely dedicated to developing these use cases (...)” (C9, 17).

Creating a supportive culture for AI adoption was mentioned as participants highlighted the need to convey that AI can make work easier and more enjoyable (Appendix B, p. 73-74). C5 noted, “(...) convey to them that it's fun and that the work can be easy” (C5, 57). Another stressed, “The point is to make the work easier, to make the work more effective, to make it faster and yes, to relieve the employees (...)” (C6, 67).

The presentation of use cases was emphasised by a lot of interviewees. Regularly presenting best use cases can demonstrate AI's benefits and encourage adoption (Appendix B, p. 71). Interviewees suggested incorporating these presentations into routine meetings. As C1 noted, “(...) the best or useful use cases should be presented regularly so that everyone can see that AI

can bring benefits and that it makes sense to deal with it” (C1, 56). Another proposed, “(...) integrate use cases of the week into our bi-weekly (...)” (C9, 19).

Effective knowledge management and communication were highlighted. Establishing a clear process and a knowledge management system to share best practices is beneficial (Appendix B, p. 73). C4 suggested, “(...) create a framework, establish a clear process and perhaps also have a kind of knowledge management system where best practices are shared (...)” (C4, 59).

Learning from other organisations and collaborating with peers was mentioned as it provides valuable insights and prevents common mistakes (Appendix B, p. 73). C2 recommended, “(...) exchange ideas with other consultancies of the same size to see how they do it, whether they already have any tips and to learn from the mistakes” (C2, 76). Another emphasised the importance of dialogue with other companies (C3, 66).

5. Discussion

The following paragraphs compare existing literature with the interview results, discussing key theoretical and empirical findings in relation to the research questions. This includes balancing AI and human expertise, ethical considerations, and evolving trust in AI-generated advice.

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

The results of the interviews provide comprehensive answers to the research questions highlighting the current use, benefits, challenges and future prospects of genAI in consulting firms.

RQ1: What is the current extent of AI integration in consulting firms and to what extent do consultants rely on AI-generated advice and insights in their decision-making process?

GenAI is widely used in consulting, with tools like in-house GPT models, ChatGPT, DeepL, Bing and Copilot. Key tasks include text formulation, idea generation, structuring notes and work, translation, summarising, sparring, content generation, research, analysis and creating Excel formulas. This broad use demonstrates genAI’s vital role in enhancing consultants’ efficiency, supporting Kapoor and Ghosal’s (2022) findings regarding the growing incorporation of AI instruments to elevate analytical and operational capabilities.

Human response to AI, particularly in regard to trust, remains one of scepticism, with factors like transparency, data quality, and user training influencing confidence in AI-generated advice. Studies by Dietvorst et al. (2015), as well as Logg et al. (2019), support this finding, emphasising the crucial role of user trust in AI systems for their effective utilisation in consulting practices.

Consultants remain cautious about trusting AI-generated advice, despite the widespread use of genAI tools. Only 10% of consultants completely trust AI advice, while 55% do not trust it at all, and 35% trust it to some extent. The issues of data accuracy, the necessity of verifying AI output, and the potential for AI errors or hallucinations represent significant concerns. Dietvorst et al. (2015) and Logg et al. (2019) emphasise the significance of transparency, data quality, and user training in fostering trust in AI systems. This study's findings echo these points, with consultants emphasising the need for proof-checking AI outputs and the challenges of relying solely on AI-generated advice. Furthermore, consultants prefer human advice for critical business decisions, utilising AI as a supplementary tool rather than a substitute because AI has a high potential for inaccuracies and incorrect information, requiring consultants to double-check outputs to identify errors. This is in accordance with Tiwari's (2023) conclusions regarding the significance of human supervision in AI-driven decision-making processes.

RQ2: What are the opportunities, challenges and ethical concerns consulting firms face when they integrate genAI into their workflows?

The principal benefits of genAI are significant time savings, efficiency improvements, and enhanced work quality by providing structured outputs and new perspectives for decision-making. This resonates with Kapoor and Ghosal's (2022) assertion that AI tools enhance analytical and operational capabilities, thereby improving consultants' productivity. GenAI helps clients meet their objectives more quickly and effectively. This supports the findings of Paliwal et al. (2021) on AI's role in improving productivity and innovation in consulting.

Nevertheless, the integration of genAI poses a number of challenges, including the formulation of effective prompts, the resolution of accuracy issues, the necessity for rigorous review of AI outputs, and managing AI errors or hallucinations. Ethical considerations, including data protection, potential biases, and client confidentiality, are of paramount importance. These concerns are echoed by Gînguță et al. (2023) in their analysis of the ethical implications of AI in consultancy.

Nevertheless, the existing literature also highlights the ethical and practical challenges associated with the adoption of AI. In a similar vein, Gînguță et al. (2023) examine the ethical implications of AI, with a particular focus on data protection and bias. This resonates with the concerns articulated by consultants in this study. It is of the utmost importance to implement robust data protection measures and ethical frameworks in order to guarantee the responsible use of AI in the field of consulting.

RQ3: What are the future trends and innovations expected in AI that will impact the consulting industry?

The outlook for the application of generative AI (genAI) in the field of consulting is positive, with expectations of increased integration and the development of advanced capabilities. It is anticipated that AI will further automate routine tasks, enhance analytical and research processes, and improve output quality and reliability. Nevertheless, the expansion of this field, in the eyes of the interviewed, must be underpinned by the implementation of robust data protection policies, ethical considerations and the pursuit of continuous accuracy improvements. This perspective is consistent with the findings of McCormack et al. (2020), who emphasised the necessity for continuous training and ethical governance in the context of AI adoption.

Looking ahead, the extant literature indicates a promising outlook for the application of AI in the field of consulting. Minevich (2024) argues that AI can help consulting firms if they focus on learning and ethics. This study supports this view, as consultants mentioned that workshops, engaging staff, allocating resources, fostering a supportive culture, presenting use cases, and promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration are good ways to do this. These measures are important for dealing with issues like bias in algorithms and data security. If consulting firms focus on fairness, inclusivity and good data governance, they can use generative AI in a responsible and effective way. This will lead to a new era of consulting in the AI age.

In conclusion, the integration of genAI in consulting presents both significant opportunities and challenges. While AI tools can enhance efficiency and work quality, it is essential to address ethical considerations and trust issues in order to ensure their effective and responsible use. The existing literature provides valuable insights into these themes, supporting the findings of this study and offering guidance for future AI adoption in the consulting industry.

5.2 Academic and Managerial Implications

The incorporation of genAI into consultancies offers academic and managerial implications, providing future research opportunities and practical insights for effective AI use.

Academically, this study contributes to the literature on AI in business, particularly in consulting by highlighting AI's transformative potential and suggesting areas for further research. Researchers can investigate particular use cases, such as AI's impact on strategic planning, operational efficiency and client relationships. Critical ethical considerations highlighted call for developing and implementing ethical AI to guarantee a responsible use. Future research could address AI's long-term societal implications, as well as concerns about data privacy, bias, and transparency. The thesis emphasises the importance of human-AI collaboration, suggesting that AI should complement, not replace, human expertise.

Management should strategically integrate AI to complement human expertise focusing on areas where AI adds the highest value. Consultancies should invest in training programs to provide consultants with the skills to use AI tools effectively (Minevich, 2024). Workshops could include explanations on how to prompt, understanding AI output, and applying AI insights. Ethical considerations are essential, requiring strong privacy policies, tackling potential bias, and ensuring client confidentiality. Implementing clear guidelines for ethical AI use are crucial for building trust with clients and stakeholders (Rothenberger et al., 2019).

Ensuring high-quality, up-to-date, and unbiased data is fundamental for reliable AI performance, necessitating regular audits and updates of datasets. Creating a supportive organisational culture that fosters experimentation with AI tools, exchanging best practices, and learning from each other is vital for effective AI integration (Gînguță et al., 2023; McCormack et al., 2020; Minevich, 2024).

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This paper presents findings on the integration of genAI in consulting firms. However, it is important to acknowledge the research limitations and identify areas for future research to deepen the understanding of this dynamic field.

A major limitation of this research is the sample size and demographic scope, as it includes interviews with 20 consultants from three consulting firms in Germany. This snapshot may not

fully represent the global consulting industry, where AI adoption and challenges vary. In order to capture a broader range of experiences and insights, future studies should consider a larger, more diverse sample. The average interview length of 25 minutes, often constrained by scheduling conflicts, may not have allowed for detailed responses. Additionally, the study relies primarily on qualitative data, which, while providing in-depth understanding, lacks the statistical accuracy of quantitative methods. Future research could benefit from quantitative approaches like surveys or experiments to validate findings.

Future research should tackle these limitations and extend the findings of the current study. One area for further research is a comparative analysis of AI adoption in different regions and consulting firms of various sizes to identify regional trends, unique challenges, and best practices. Furthermore, it is crucial to investigate the long-term effects of AI integration on the practice of consulting. Long-term studies could monitor the evolution of AI use in consulting firms and investigate its effects on business outcomes, client relationships, and consultant roles over time, providing a deeper understanding of the lasting benefits and potential drawbacks of AI adoption.

More research is needed to explore ethical considerations related to AI in consultancy. This study emphasises the importance of data protection and bias reduction, but further research should establish strong ethical frameworks and practical guidelines. Investigating the effectiveness of various ethical strategies and their influence on client trust and satisfaction would be beneficial. A further area for future research is to investigate advanced AI applications in consultancy.

Another area for future research is advanced AI applications in consultancy. As AI technologies develop, new use cases like AI-driven predictive analytics, personalised client solutions, and AI-augmented decision-making processes will emerge and should be explored.

Lastly, interdisciplinary research linking AI technology, business strategy, and organisational behavior can contribute to a fuller understanding of AI's in consulting. Joint studies involving technologists, business leaders, and social scientists can provide in-depth insights into AI's diverse effects on the consulting industry.

6. Conclusion

This thesis explored the integration of genAI into consulting firms, highlighting its extensive use in tasks like text formulation, idea generation, and research. GenAI tools enhance efficiency and support decision-making, yet consultants remain cautious about fully trusting AI advice due to concerns about data accuracy, ethical implications, and potential biases.

GenAI contributes to achieving client goals by saving time and improving work quality, but human expertise and judgment remain crucial for complex decision-making. Successful AI integration requires comprehensive training, employee engagement, adequate resources, a supportive culture, regular presentation of use cases, and effective knowledge management.

The future of genAI in consulting is promising, with expected advancements in AI capabilities and increased automation. However, ethical considerations, data protection, and balancing AI with human expertise are essential for responsible and effective AI use in consulting.

In conclusion, this study provides insights into genAI's impact on consulting firms, offering practical recommendations for AI integration and identifying areas for future research. Consulting firms must remain adaptable and active in leveraging AI's potential while upholding ethical standards to enhance service offerings and operational efficiency.

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persuasive-content-generation/419C4BD9CE82673EAF1D8

Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Guide – Application of AI in consulting firms

1. Current Use of AI in Consulting Firms

- **Question:** Does AI play a current role in your consulting practice? How extensively is AI integrated into your day-to-day operations?
- *Follow-up Question:*
 - Which specific AI tools or technologies are you using?

2. Reliance on AI Advice

- **Question:** Do you use AI for work advice? Do you rely on AI advice in your consulting practice?
- *Follow-up Questions:*
 - In what situations do you rely on AI advice?
 - In what situations do you not rely on AI advice?
 - What factors impact your trust and reliance on AI advice?

3. Benefits and Opportunities

- **Question:** What are the primary benefits you have experienced from using AI in your consulting services?
- *Follow-up Questions:*
 - How has AI impacted your decision-making processes?
 - Has using AI significantly contributed to achieving client goals? How?

4. Challenges and Ethical Considerations

- **Question:** What challenges or limitations have you encountered while using AI in your consulting practice?
- *Follow-up Questions:*
 - How do you address ethical concerns related to AI, such as biased answers or data privacy?
 - Have there been any instances where AI provided misleading or incorrect insights?

5. Future Outlook and Recommendations

- **Question:** Looking ahead, how do you envision the future of AI in the consulting industry? What trends or developments do you anticipate?
- *Follow-up Questions:*
 - What additional support or resources do you think consulting firms need to better integrate AI?
 - Do you have any recommendations for firms looking to adopt or enhance their use of AI?

Final Thoughts:

Given our conversation and your experiences, are there any other insights you would like to share with me? Maybe something crucial that we didn't address?

Your participation is of great value, and I appreciate the time and insights you shared with me. Thank you very much!

Appendix B: Interview Summary

Code: AI usage			
Code description: describes to which extent and for what consultants use AI in their daily work			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
5	14	“(…) I think I would say I use it every day (…)” – C1	Every day
4		“(…) I actually use it every day (…)” – C2	
4		“(…) I use it every day (…)” – C3	
5		“(…) I actually use it every day. Yes, every day in any case.” – C4	
5		“(…) actually every day.” – C5	
5		“(…) I use it every day.” – C6	
5		“(…) I already use it every day.” – C8	
3		“(…) I also use it on a daily basis (…)” – C9	
5		“(…) I use it very often and also in daily use (…)” – C11	
3		“(…) I definitely use AI in my day-to-day consulting work (…)” – C13	
6		“(…) I would say that it plays a role in everyday consulting (…)” – C14	
5		“(…) every day.” – C16	
6		“(…) I use it on a daily basis.” – C17	
3		“(…) I actually use it every day (…)” – C18	
3	6	“(…) So I always try to use AI very consciously where I can, but that's, yes, sporadically I would say at the moment.” – C7	Regular use
3		“(…) I wouldn't say I ask ChatGPT once a week, but rather a little less whenever I get a bit stuck, exactly.” – C10	
3		“(…) not necessarily on a daily basis, but (…) once or twice a week (…)” – C12	
5		“(…) how often I use it would be fair to say that it's quite regular (…)” – C15	
3		“(…) happens regularly (…)” – C19	
4		“I use it regularly I would say. Not daily but on a regularly basis.” – C20	
9	27	“I use our internal tool, DeepL and (…) ChatGPT (…)” – C1	AI tools
8		“(…) I use our internal tool, but privately I also use ChatGPT. Otherwise DeepL and DeepL write and sometimes Bing (…)” – C2	
9		“(…) our internal GPT (…) ChatGPT (…) Bing (…) DeepL, DeepL write.” – C3	
9		“(…) internal tool (…) ChatGPT (…)” – C4	
9		“(…) internal GPT, DeepL and DeepL write” – C5	
9		“So our internal one, ChatGPT. I use DeepL, I use DeepL write (…)” – C6	
49		“(…) Bing (…)” – C6	
4		“(…) ChatGPT of course the internal tool here of course at XYZ. I also had a look at Copilot, which is actually the counterpart to ChatGPT. Of course something like DeepL too (…)” – C7	
9		“(…) internal GPT of course, then I use power bi, Copilot, Canva” – C8	
4		“(…) ChatGPT or then internal one for XYZ (…)” – C9	
5		“(…) Bing Image Creator (…) ChatGPT, our internal GPT, DeepL (…)” - C10	
9		“(…) Chat GPT (…)” – C11	
9		“(…) Deep L and its AI Write function (…)” – C11	
5		“(…) inhouse GPT (…)” – C12	
5		“(…) DeepL and DeepL write (…)” – C12	
6		“(…) DeepL and the internal chat GPT (…) and ChatGPT (…)” - C13	
10		“(…) internalGPT (…) ChatGPT (…)” – C14	
10		“(…)” DeepL (…)” – C14	
10		“(…) I've already tried out and used Co Pilot a bit (…)” – C14	
9		“ChatGPT, internal GPT and otherwise the Bing Image Illustrator (…)” – C15	
9		“(…) internalGPT (…)” – C16	
9		“(…) Bing (…)” – C16	
10		“(…) internalGPT and otherwise Microsoft Copilot (…)” – C17	
10		“(…) ChatGPT (…)” – C17	
4		“(…) internalGPT (…)” – C18	
5		“(…) internalGPT and (…) ChatGPT (…) also Copilot (…)” – C19	
8	“ChatGPT, DeepL, DeepL write, Bing (…)” – C20		
39	4	“(…)if we now conduct interviews (…) analyse this more quickly. (…) – C6	Analysis

10		“(…) market and competition analyses (…)- C7		
5		“(…) data-driven analyses (…)- C8		
60		“(…) analyse data (…)- C16		
49	5	“(…) I use it for sources, it's great for that, the best sources I've ever had (…)- C6	Research	
10		“(…) then also this gain in knowledge that you get from these research topics (…)- C7		
21		“(…) if you're looking for specific sources (…)- C11		
22		“(…) sources and research (…)- C14		
13		“(…) sources (…)- C18		
5	10	“(---) summarising texts (…)- C1		Summarising
4		“(…) summaries (…)- C2		
4		“(…) summarising text (…)- C3		
13		“(…) summarising things (…)- C5		
6		“(…) I like to use it for things like text summaries (…)- C7		
13		“(…) in the case of a summary (…)- C16		
5		“(…) summarising something (…)- C17		
3		“(…) summarise information (…)- C18		
21		“(…) summarise notes (…)- C19		
4		“I use it for summarising (…)- C20		
5	9	“(…) structuring notes (…)- C1	Structuring	
4		“(…) structuring (…)- C2		
4		“(…) structuring my notes (…)- C3		
10		“(…) new structure (…)- C9		
5		“(…) structure something (…)- C11		
14		“(…) structure things (…)- C14		
13		“(…) I find it helpful for structural tasks (…)- C15		
5		“(…) structuring something (…)- C17		
4		“(…) structuring myself, my notes (…)- C20		
5	14	“(…) formulating emails (…)- C1	Formulating	
4		“(…) formulating emails (…)- C3		
5		“(…)doing correspondence, writing emails, what else is being done, any messages, any posts now with us, with teams, writing texts in general (…)- C4		
13		“(…) rephrasing (…)- C5		
5		“(…) wording, reformulations (…)- C6		
6		“(…) rewording (…)- C7		
26		“(…) formulating emails (…)- C8		
3		“(…) reformulate texts (…)- C9		
25		“(…) formulating (…)- C11		
3		“(…) formulate texts better(…)- C13		
5		“(…) refining texts or having other versions (…)- C16		
3		“(…) by having bulletpoints formulated from a larger, longer text (…)- C18		
9		“(…) to sharpen it up (…)- C19		
4		“(…) and for formulating mails, texts, messages, etc.” - C20		
4	1	“(…) protocols that I enter my key points and then have a detailed one written (…)- C2	Protocols	
27	3	“(…) I can simply have an agenda drawn up (…)- C2	Set up agenda	
3		“(…) what I like to do is when it comes to a workshop agenda or any agenda in general, that I like to have ideas spit out (…)- C12		
27		“(…) if you somehow create an agenda for an appointment or something like that, that it then spits out topics (…)- C17		
5	2	“(…) to plan workshops (…)- C3	Planning	
21		“(…) or when I'm planning (…)- C15		
4	13	“(…) as an idea generator (…)- C2	Idea generator	
17		“(…) come up with something or an initial idea (…)- C4		
31		“(…) help you to find it or give you some direction or ideas (…)- C6		

10		“(…) you've got a rough idea of what you want to do, how you want to implement it, you ask again to be on the safe side and then you get completely new impulses (…)” – C7	
34		“(…) which is why you may have found exactly the one idea (…)” – C8	
10		“(…) helps me when I'm stuck to find for example new ideas (…)” – C9	
3		“(…) I get inspiration (…)” – C10	
25		“(…) that you get new ideas (…)” – C11	
3		“(…) It helped me a lot as an idea generator (…)” – C12	
3		“(…) as a source of ideas (…)” – C13	
29		“(…) to get an idea (…)” – C15	
25		“(…) if you're approaching new topics that you don't know much about yet, I think you can use the Pareto principle to get a good overview first (…)” – C16	
7		“(…) I occasionally use it to get a few more ideas (…)” – C18	
5	11	“(…) I also use it as a starting point if I'm stuck (…)” – C3	Starting point
18		“(…) I'm having something generated now, where you say, OK, that's somehow creating something completely new from scratch (…)” – C6	
10		“(…) you're not starting completely on a blank sheet of paper (…)” – C7	
26		“(…) because a certain problem can be assessed from, let's say, many different perspectives (…)” – C8	
10		“(…) to somehow get an approach to the topic (…)” – C10	
13		“(…) come up with good ideas (…)” – C12	
11		“(…) I can just put everything in briefly and get an answer straight away and I also get new food for thought, so to speak (…)” – C13	
5		“(…) I use it as a kind of starting aid (…)” – C15	
13		“(…) so more as a starting point, so that you can quickly get a good overview (…)” – C16	
10		“(…) could have asked the question of how a transformation process looks like, and get some good structural points and I've already used it that way.” – C14	
5		“(…) not starting complete new as I already have some aspects in mind.” – C20	
5	2	“(…) create a list of pros and cons (…)” – C3	Pro/contr a list
15		“(…) decide in favor of option A or option B. I don't think you can generalise that, I think that would point me in the right direction again if I was really totally fifty-fifty (…)” – C12	
5	6	“(…) write a newsletter article (…)” – C3	Generate content
5		“(…) any messages, any posts now with us, with teams, writing texts in general (…)” – C4	
5		“(…) if you need a spontaneous image that's a bit smaller, you can have it created (…)” – C4	
3		“(…) creating slides (…)” – C10	
3		“(…) generate brief inputs for any formulas or similar (…)” – C19	
29	3	“(…) But it also helps me a bit when it comes to more creative things (…)” – C3	Creative tasks
44		“(…) creative process (…)” – C6	
13		“(…) especially when it comes to creative tasks (…)” – C12	
5	3	“(…) so with Excel formulas, if you somehow don't know how it works for a moment, then pull out a quick formula (…)” – C14	Excel formula
15		“(…) formula and said please simplify here (…)” – C18	
3		“(…) using Excel to simply generate brief inputs for any formulas (…)” – C19	
17	2	“(…) spelling and punctuation (…)” – C4	Spelling check
2		“I also use it to check my spelling.” – C20	
5	10	“(…) translating (…)” – C1	Translati on
4		“(…) translations (…)” – C2	
18		“(…) translating (…)” – C6	
8		“(…) translations (…)” – C7	
26		“(…) translating (…)” – C8	
8		“(…) text translations (…)” – C9	
3		“(…) for translation purposes (…)” – C13	
10		“(…) translation (…)” – C14	

15		“(…) text translated (…)” – C18	
2		“(…) translating (…)” – C20	
28	7	“It is like a sparring partner. Before presentations, I like to be asked critical questions that might come up, which gives me the opportunity to prepare myself better” – C1	Sparring partner
28		“I don’t have to wait until my project manager or someone else has time to take a look at my generated work (… I always have a sparring partner (…)” – C3	
10		“You can upload presentations. And that you can then be asked critical questions about it, so that you are prepared, so to speak, when you give a presentation, so that you can prepare yourself directly for critical questions that you may be asked.” – C9	
11		“(…) I can use the tool as sparring partner “– C13	
25		“(…) I think that's quite good as a sparring partner (…)” – C16	
7		“I use the feedback directly that I somehow got on a slide” – C18	
25		“It acts as a reliable sparring partner, providing suggestions and alternative perspectives that we might not have considered.” – C20	
Code: AI reliance			
Code description: describes if consultants rely on AI and to what extent			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
14	2	“(…) You rely on the technology (… that means that if it doesn't work, you're in a mess and your day is ruined right at the start, so you rely on the output in that sense (…)” – C6	Full AI reliance
13		“Yes, I think I can rely on it quite well. Of course, you should double-check sensitive data, at least on a random basis, but yes, I think you can rely on the data provided.” – C8	
12	11	“I would say not really for advice. Rather to get inspiration when I'm stuck, (… relying on that is difficult to say, I don't think so.” - C1	No AI reliance
13		“(…) I would never rely on it and just copy paste it. Firstly, I think you can tell that it's AI written and secondly, you have to adapt it a bit to your context and I can't do that perfectly yet (…)” – C5	
6		“So relying on it sounds as if you just blindly accept it, which of course is never the case, of course you always have to check whether everything fits 100%.(…)” – C7	
8		“(…) I would never rely on it one hundred percent, no matter what I use it for or what I use it for. I would always say I definitely have to read over it again with a good eye.” – C9	
13		“I think relying is a bit extreme, so I do use it a lot and I've also realised in the meantime that if it doesn't work, I might get a bit hung up on it or that it can be quite frustrating. But relying is another matter (… if I'm really working something out intensively or developing an answer to something specific and it's a longer project, then I wouldn't rely exclusively on that now, but it works more, it's a basis for what I'm doing, so to speak, or provides me with a little support.” – C11	
7		“As I said, I use it more as a source of ideas and I always find it's something you have to check somehow. So it's rare that I copy and paste 1 to 1 (…”. – C12	
14		“Not 100% because I think it's great as a source of ideas. But I don't want to rely on it 100% (… But I wouldn't say that I would only work with it exclusively, no. I don't rely on it 100% (…)” - C14	
13		“(…) I generally don't rely on it completely, but of course I always look at it with a critical eye (…)” – C15	
13		“(…) I would use it as input, so I wouldn't use the output that AI generates directly as a result (… I wouldn't rely purely on an AI (…)” – C16	
7		“Honestly, I don't really rely on it, but rather as additional input (…)” – C19	
12		“I wouldn't say that I rely on AI advice in my consulting practice. I always double check everything and I'm not dependent on the outcome.“ – C20	
12	7	“(…) In general, however, I would do a proof check when using AI.” - C2	Some AI reliance
14		“(…) I wouldn't necessarily say that I would rely on its advice, or rather I have very rarely asked for specific advice (… But one situation in which I rely a	

	little on the output of the AI is, for example, with translations or summaries (...) of course I read through it, look at it, yes, it sounds logical. So I kind of rely on that. And also when it comes to grammar and spelling. I rely on it to be correct.“ – C3	
13	“Yes, I would say actually rather less so. Mostly for advice and suggestions, I don't actually ask the AI that much, but more as inspiration or, as I've just said, if I want to revise someone's text, somehow adjust the wording or simply the spelling, then that's something I rely on more.” – C4	
7	“(…) you always have to do a proof check, so I wouldn't say 100% and I wouldn't say you can pass it off as your own. Basically, you didn't create it yourself, the AI itself did. So no, I don't rely on it (…)” – C10	
6	“(…) for translations and so on, I am very sure that it always works well. Some things have to be checked again (…)” – C13	
14	“I have to say, I'm a pretty sceptical person when it comes to these tools, because we've already had some summits where there's a lot of talk about hallucinations, dropping out and things like that (…)” – C17	
6	“Well, for me at least, it's very dependent on the use case, i.e. relatively clear work instructions such as formulate bullet points from the text, the tool can do that quite well, I rely on it or just read it once, but as soon as the work instructions become more unclear or the tasks become more complex, Unfortunately, there's often not much that's usable (…)” – C18	
24	“It also depends on how well I enter my prompts, if I already know that my prompt is not expressive, then I don't really trust the output.” – C1	Example no AI reliance
16	“I don't rely on it for mathematical things, as I've only ever had the experience that the results are wrong.” – C2	
16	“(…) too risky with things that are business-critical and I would rather ask a colleague for advice.” – C2	
16	“Another thing I wouldn't use it for is if I couldn't decide between two options. Sure, the AI might make it easier to compare, but I don't think I'd listen to the AI's advice, especially not if it's for work.” – C2	
18	“(…) what doesn't work at all are mathematical or logical things. I would never rely on the output, I would always check it again.” – C3	
18	“(…) same applies when I do research and ask for sources. Unfortunately, this has never worked so far. It spits out sources, but they usually don't exist or aren't accessible. So I've given up on that too.“ – C3	
18	“(…) anything that's a bit critical, I'd rather ask my colleague or something for advice and not just ask the AI.” – C3	
27	“(…) anything mathematical, where you might have to think not just around one corner but around two, then it becomes difficult and in my opinion you can no longer rely on it 100%.” - C6	
8	“I think the data is somehow up to date until 2022 and that's why you always have to be careful not to adopt it 100%.” - C7	
17	“(…) sensitive data or particularly important data, it's better to check it twice before you pass it on.” – C8	
8	“I wrote in, what are the top 5 scientific articles from a plus journals on the topic of sales enablement and it explained something to me, so it told me something and I thought to myself oh okay, I don't even know it yet and I tried like hell to find these articles. I couldn't find them because they were just made up.” – C10	
17	“I don't rely on it when it really matters, for example when I'm working with customers (...) so it helps to brainstorm, but the bottom line is that I don't copy in all of the customer's internal data and then say, solve the problem for me, I don't think it's developed enough for that yet, so I use it to get ideas on how to tackle it, maybe even sometimes when I'm thinking, OK, how do you get out of this situation or how do you solve a problem, that I get ideas, but then actually develop them.” – C11	
17	“Problem solving and making really critical decisions is something where I wouldn't necessarily rely on ChatGPT.” – C11	
9	“(…) everything that is somehow totally business-critical (…)” – C12	

7		“(…) sources (…)” – C13	
18		“Well, I wouldn't rely on it when making decisions.” – C14	
18		“(…) sources are simply not correct and yes, then it doesn't work.” – C14	
13		“When it comes to complex things, you always have to look at whether it's helpful or not. And he's not so good at logical things either, it just doesn't work.” – C15	
17		“(…) can't type maths problems into it (…)” – C15	
Code: Factors of trust			
Code description: describes the factors that improve trust in AI tools			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
24	5	“(…) my trust depends a little on the quality of the models (…)” – C1	Quality of the model
22		“Also the quality of the models. I have more confidence in GPT 4 because it somehow just works better for me. With 3.5 there are often hitches, which I find rather annoying.” – C2	
22		“And otherwise, for example, in terms of the quality of the models, whether 3.5 or 4 (…)” – C4	
21		“(…) So there are the different models, from GPT 3.5 to 4 (….) and so the trust is then also reflected in the respective models (…)” – C8	
22		“Well, the quality of the models definitely. I would say that if you're willing to spend a bit of money on it, then you can get very good models (…)” – C17	
24	7	“(…) It also depends on how well I enter my prompts, if I already know that my prompt is not expressive, then I don't really trust the output (…)” – C1	Own ability
21		“(…) my own ability. By that I mean how well I prompt, because that is very important for my output. If I already know that the prompt could be confusing for the AI, then of course I don't rely on the result.” – C2	
22		“(…) my own ability, because you have to be able to prompt really well in order to generate usable output.” – C3	
21		“(…) I would say it's also my own, my own knowledge, so the more knowledge I have in an area, the more I can naturally test. Is the result correct or not.” – C5	
23		“I think the more you're trained in it and the more you know, the more you feel like you understand how this AI works. What it needs in terms of prompts, then the confidence grows that it will get something sensible out of it (…)” – C17	
8		“(…) So once you have confidence, that's usually when you have an answer generated and do the first sense check. So the first prompt is usually not the final one and you always sharpen it up. But you already know pretty much exactly which direction it's going in and can actually assess whether it's really worth sharpening properly or not (…)” – C19	
20		“(…) my own ability to understand and interact with the AI system (…)” – C20	
24	3	“(…) data quality. When I do research, for example, I know that current articles are not taken into account, as I think ChatGPT has remained at the level of 2022 (…)” – C1	Data quality
9		“(…) issue of data quality, so as far as the AI itself is concerned. If I were to try out a new AI now and I had to see whether I would want to use it or not, then it would definitely be an issue that would also strengthen my trust (…)” – C7	
9		“Definitely the data quality (…)” – C13	
24	4	„/…) The same goes for understanding the AI as a whole. Since I have a relatively good understanding that the whole thing is based on probabilities of the next word, my confidence is not quite as good (…)” – C1	Understanding of AI
22		“(…) That's why I would say that one factor is my own understanding (…)” – C3	
21		“(…) I would say it's also (….) my own knowledge, so the more knowledge I have in an area, the more I can naturally test. Is the result correct or not.” – C5	
23		“(…) I think the more you're trained in it and the more you know, the more you feel like you understand how this AI works (…)” – C17	
9	1	“(…) In general, I would also say that yes, how well known this AI is (…)” – C7	Popularity
20	9	“(…) One is the platform and the feeling of security it gives me, as data protection is very important (…)” – C2	Data protection-
23		“And then I would also say how data protection-compliant it all is (…)” – C3	

21		“(…) I don't have to worry that the things I put in there, the information I put in, that it will somehow be passed on, that's of course a big point, that I can use it at all, how I use it and that I have trust in it (…)” – C5	ion compliant
9		“(…) So one factor would definitely be whether the tool is data protection compliant.” – C9	
9		Of course, I have a lot more trust in it and simply because ChatGPT is also the tool in a private context, - C10	
21		“I think data security is a really big issue here. That's also often discussed and I think that on the one hand it's important to me that I know that the data I put in there is secure, so on this basis, I think you can also set in Chat GPT whether it can be used for this further development of the tool, if you have that on, then you know okay, it's now being fed into this system. So it probably won't show up now when I Google, but this data is there somewhere, so you have to make sure that you at least switch it off first and also make sure that you don't somehow copy highly sensitive information into it - that's one thing I would do myself to establish my trust (…)” – C11	
21		“(…) But when it comes to sensitive data or when I'm dealing with project stuff that I don't want to be published, I generally only use [our GPT] for things like that and I'm more careful (…)” – C15	
21		“(…) somehow the General Data Protection Regulation etc. So what has to be guaranteed that you can even use it initially. This is now a matter of course (…)” – C16	
20		“(…) the compliance of the AI with data protection regulations (…)” – C20	
21	5	“(…) I think that's cool to have an own model, important and yes, I think that's a big aspect (…)” – C5	Own model
9		“I would always rather write in [our GPT] in my own than in ChatGPT (…)” – C9	
9		“(…) I have more trust in ChatGPT than in [our GPT] (… of course, which is simply a tool for us (…)” – C10	
21		“(…) I would say that with [our GPT] because it's in a corporate context, I have a higher level of trust because I think the experts who understand it have an eye on it so that it's trustworthy for us to use, so I have a relatively low threshold, I'm not so cautious, I just try it out (…)” – C15	
21		“(…) This is now a matter of course and we have the advantage that we not only use Chat GPT, but also additional layers in between, which means that it becomes our own GPT (…)” – C16	
9	3	“(…) so if they are very transparent about what information they use, what they use things for, etc. then I think that strengthens the trust in there (…)” – C10	Transparency
9		“(…) the transparency (…)” – C13	
20		“(…) and the transparency of the AI's processes and decision-making.” – C20	
Code: Benefits			
Code description: describes the benefits of using genAI as a consultant			
#	Frequency	Identified Sentence	Subcode
28	20	“The advantage is definitely the time I save (…)” – C1	Time saving/ Efficiency
26		“The main advantage is actually the time I save (…)” – C2	
27		“There are actually many advantages, mainly efficiency and time savings of course, as I can simply complete certain tasks more quickly (…)” – C3	
26		“(…) I would say speed in any case (…)” – C4	
25		“(…) save your own capacity a bit.” – C5	
31		“I would say that you definitely work more effectively (…)” – C6	
10		“So in any case, reducing the workload (…)” – C7	
25		“I think at the top of the list is increased efficiency (…)” – C8	
20		“(…) it makes work easier (…)” – C9	
10		“(…)I think that's very primary except from the time I save of course.” – C10	
25		“First and foremost, I would say that it definitely allows you to work faster (…)” – C11	
13		“Well, it's mainly efficiency in some way, so saving time (…)” – C12	
11		“I can definitely work faster (…)” – C13	
26		“It saves time to some extent (…)” – C14	

25		“Yes, speed, so it takes away the initial start-up time and this is really shortened (...)” – C15	
25		“I think time is always a factor in the day-to-day work of a consultant, I think efficiency in particular, i.e. a lot of time saved (...)” – C16	
27		“Saving time (...)” – C17	
9		“Yes, so the advantage for me is clearly saving time (...)” – C18	
9		“(…)Yes, it really is primarily a time-saving tool for me (...)” – C19	
24		“AI significantly enhances time-saving and efficiency, allowing us to accomplish tasks much faster than before.” – C20	
28	10	“(…) giving me initial pointers when I'm stuck” – C1	Help when stuck
29		“I like to use this as a starting point when I'm stuck. It helps me there and of course it's also an advantage that I can ask for help, let's say.” – C3	
26		“(…) So you can really slap a message on paper quickly and dirty and then pull it in once, have it revised once (...)” – C4	
25		“(…) Then to have a starting point again (...)” – C5	
10		“(…) It also helps me when I'm stuck to find for example new ideas or a new structure.” – C9	
10		“(…) it's simply about getting an approach to how to approach certain things, how to structure certain things (...)” – C10	
25		“(…) that you get new ideas and exactly, I think that's also a big factor. I think that can help a lot with brainstorming things in particular.” – C11	
11		“(…) I also get new food for thought, so to speak, so I just get new ideas by using it (...)” – C13	
25		“(…) I also think as an initial point of knowledge, if you're approaching new topics that you don't know much about yet, I think you can use the Pareto principle to get a good overview first (...)” – C16	
25		“(…) AI serves as a crucial support system when we're stuck on a problem.” – C20	
28	6	“(…) the quality of my work has improved a bit since using AI, as I can use my time differently, which benefits my capacity.” – C1	Improve d work quality
27		“(…) So maybe the quality does improve somehow.” – C4	
25		“(…) So you can improve your writing style a bit and you still take it with you, so it's not just blind copying, so to speak, but small changes that you go through again yourself (...)” – C5	
12		“(…) As a result, I would say that the overall quality of the work has improved significantly (...)” – C7	
25		“(…) I think that makes it faster and better in terms of quality (...)” – C15	
25		“(…) there's also a gain in quality (...)” – C16	
28	7	“(…) I have more time to concentrate on more relevant tasks (...)” – C1	More time for complex tasks
27		“(…) gives me more time to concentrate on the more complex things that the AI is perhaps not yet so good at (...)” – C2	
27		“(…) This gives me more capacity for other things, for more complex things (...)” – C3	
27		“(…) I save time and can put more effort into more complex things (...)” – C4	
12		“(…) that you have more time for other tasks (...)” – C7	
9		“(…) I can concentrate more on the more demanding things (...)” – C18	
26		“Moreover, by automating routine tasks, AI frees up more of our time for complex, strategic tasks that require deeper analysis and human insight.” – C20	
39	3	“(…) have the opportunity to have the AI explain certain, yes, issues somehow or to have them explained in more detail, to have ideas given to you and that is of course also a cost issue (...)” – C6	Saves costs
33		“You can do this quite well initially, before actually establishing more expensive solutions” – C16	
27		“Another significant advantage is cost savings. By streamlining operations and reducing the need for extensive manual labor, AI helps cut down on operational costs, making our services more cost-effective.” – C20	
Code: Influence on decision-making processes			
Code description: describes if using AI as a consultant has an influence on the decision-making process			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode

29	7	„Yes, definitely, whether it's smaller decisions or just minor ones. I can imagine that yes, for example, if I say, please help me to structure this and that task and to visualise my approach a little more clearly and perhaps give my input, that already feels like a decision (...) and I do believe that the evaluation or suggestions made by this AI have already influenced me.“ – C5	Direct influence
30		“I usually let it judge me in some way from various perspectives and then I make a decision based on that, even if I'm really stuck between two pairs of shoes.“ – C8	
11		“I would say that it does influence it in the sense that you might google certain factors that you say, "Oh, I haven't seen that yet, I've overlooked it or something," and maybe change your decision as a result.” – C10	
29		“I think you have to say that. I think so, especially what I just meant about not being more efficient, about working more creatively, that I perhaps had an idea and then I said again, yes, when you're in a situation or something, that you present the scenario to the AI, so to speak, and then say, is that a suitable solution or can you perhaps go another way and that I then perhaps got a few more food for thought from the AI to look at something from the other side and then perhaps adjusted a decision accordingly.” – C11	
15		“For sure. I like to let the AI think ahead and then make decisions based on that, I would say.” – C12	
11		“It can take a lot away if it doesn't go into a certain level of detail, but I would say that superficial questions or something like that make me trust it and I can make my decisions more quickly as a result.” – C13	
30		“If I come back to the topic of idea generation and if I go into something with 0.0 idea, perhaps even more complex questions, then it is definitely a great help because you get the first points as a basis. This has clearly influenced me.” – C14	
32	7	“I do believe that genAI has an influence on my decision-making processes, even if I don't necessarily want to admit it, but in my opinion we humans can be strongly and quickly influenced (...) Most of the time you already have a rough idea of how you want to proceed, but I don't think I can deny that my decision-making process is influenced. I've certainly accepted ideas before that have had an influence on my project.” – C1	Subconscious influence
31		“(…) when I think about it, I've already said that I often use the AI as a source of ideas, as a starting point. When I get stuck and need a few ideas on how I can perhaps tackle a project. I usually already have something in mind, but to be honest, I can imagine that my own ideas are sometimes overwritten a little by the AI.” – C2	
33		“(…) AI has an influence on my decision-making processes, as I like to use it as a starting point. And of course I usually already have something in my head, but it happens subconsciously that my own ideas take a back seat and I orientate myself to what the AI tells me.” – C3	
31		“(…) AI tends to be the first port of call, so that you can somehow brainstorm or ask the precise question (...) it's somehow quite cool to have that as a basis in the decision-making process or in the conceptual process and to start there.” – C4	
35		“(…)for example, if you give the AI a certain task and then it runs in a certain direction with a certain structure. You may have had a different idea in your head and then your idea is overwritten a bit.” – C6	
31		“Maybe to the extent that you could say, for example, that if you have a consulting project (...) and there was something, there's an aspect that you hadn't considered before, that you might really have a flash of inspiration and say, hey, that actually makes a lot of sense.” – C17	
31		“AI has had a subtle yet significant impact on my decision-making processes. Often, its influence operates on a subconscious level.“ – C20	
11	6	“The decision-making processes themselves, I would say less” – C7	Limited/ no impact
11		“Well, I've never really used it for decision-making” – C9	
29		“I don't actually use it as a decision-making aid for anything” – C15	
29		“I don't think I would really make decisions on the basis of AI decisions because, on the one hand, I think it's your own job to make a decision and, in	

		addition, you have a lot more factors or influencing variables that you know yourself and an AI doesn't, which also have weight on your decisions.” – C16	
10		“(…) not that I've somehow handed over the decision to the tool.” – C18	
11		“I don't think so much in everyday consulting” – C19	
Code: Achieving clients goals			
Code description: describes if using genAI has an impact on achieving clients goals			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
33	2	“(…) So it's a good companion, let's say from how do I tackle the problem and then always as support in between (….) So I would say that it is now perhaps more of a supportive basis or really like an assistant for some projects and less for others, it all depends on how specific it is, what exactly it is about (….) – C11	AI as supporting tool
34		“(…) But I wouldn't say that AI has achieved a complete project or a customer solution from my point of view. So maybe it's more the little things, like being able to prepare the presentation faster, for example, and if you then say okay, that helped to achieve the goal, then yes, but not exclusively. The AI always provides support from my perspective.” – C14	
36	14	“(…) genAI took some of the work off my hands, such as structuring notes, summarising etc., so that I could concentrate on more complex things. So it was more like I could always meet the deadline or finish earlier (….)” – C1	Influence on efficiency and quality
37		“(…) I can work faster and be more efficient (….) I may have been able to deliver results to my customer faster than they actually requested. Perhaps I was able to make my slides a little more appealing or the workshop a little more engaging by using AI (….)” – C2	
37		“(…) I can work faster (….)” – C3	
35		“(…) it has contributed to the fact that my texts are more understandable and readable (….)” – C4	
33		“(…) saving myself time and then being able to meet deadlines more quickly.” – C5	
39		“(…) we work more effectively or efficiently, work faster (….)” – C6	
12		“(…) the quality has definitely improved (….) especially when it comes to translations (….) The formulations are much nicer, much more elegant in a business context (….) the overall quality of the work has improved significantly.” – C7	
34		“(…) And otherwise perhaps the time saved means that a deadline is reached more quickly or it has helped me to reach this deadline at all.” – C8	
12		“(…) it may have helped me to meet customer deadlines because I was able to get my work done faster (….)” – C9	
34		“(…) being able to prepare the presentation faster (….)” – C14	
33		“(…) deliver faster and better quality.” – C15	
33		“Perhaps otherwise the faster achievement of a deadline (….)” – C15	
11		“(…) time saving, which is always a goal to stay on time (….) can concentrate better on the complex things (….) outsource a few simpler tasks.” – C18	
13		“(…) time saving, having time for other things or just meeting a deadline from the customer, or then somehow achieving it faster or with less stress (….)” – C19	
36	7	“(…) It's all my work after all (….)” – C1	Supports but still consultants work
38		“(…) AI has contributed to achieving the customer's goals (….) But there is still my own work behind it. The AI helps me a bit as an assistant. But it's still my work.” – C3	
35		“(…) I have nothing now where I say I somehow built the model with the AI and it gave me the decisive tip, which is why I then somehow doubled some KPI (….)” – C4	
12		“(…) the goals have always been achieved through my own work (….)” – C9	
17		“(…) anything that somehow makes me more efficient, that gives me more ideas, naturally also helps me to reach my goal (….)” – C12	
35		“(…) in the end you can't really say whether the impulses that come from the AI have really contributed significantly to satisfying the customer (….)” – C17	

13		„The customer's goal would have been achieved without it (...) it would have been possible without it (...) it was never the case that AI made a customer and result possible in the first place.“ – C19	
Code: Challenges and Limitations			
Code description: describes the challenges and limitations of using genAI			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
42	5	“I often have the problem that the program doesn't work at all.” – C2	Availability
37		“It doesn't work for me at the moment, for example. It is therefore a very functional thing (...)” – C5	
44		“(…) it often doesn't work (...) often get the feeling that it somehow doesn't work because there are just too many people using it at those times.” – C6	
37		“Of course, ChatGPT or another AI must be available and must not have any downtimes, which I have already experienced.” – C16	
40		“(…) it starts to get annoying when you're using an internal AI tool, when the thing reaches its limits and you get error messages and you don't know what the problem is.” – C17	
45	5	“The fact that it's not entirely compliant with data protection regulations means that I don't necessarily have the confidence to enter my customers' data.” – C2	Data compliance
18		“(…) I'm dealing with a lot of personal data right now, of course you can't throw everything in there, so that's already a limitation, that you have to look a bit at what's possible with the AI and what's not (...)” – C12	
38		“It's probably also an issue of data security, what do I really put in there, what can I show, what can I not show?” – C14	
21		“(…) I would still have some concerns about entering very sensitive data or facts there, given the thought that if there were to be a security breach and data were to be leaked either externally, which would of course be a disaster, or internally, then in the worst-case scenario, project contexts would be anticipated or sensitive data would be leaked.” – C16	
26		“That's why I think the big challenge is really data protection (...)” – C19	
42	3	“One of the main problems is dealing with data quality and availability. The available data is often incomplete, distorted or unrepresentative.” – C3	Data quality
14		“(…) if the data itself is simply not of the right quality, then even the best or most well-programmed AI is simply useless (...)” – C7	
39		“One of the main challenges we have encountered is data quality. The effectiveness of AI is highly dependent on the quality of the data it processes. If the data is incomplete, inaccurate, or biased, the AI's output can be unreliable and potentially misleading.” – C20	
43	3	“(…) if you use the free version, you obviously don't have the same experience as if you use the version that costs money.” – C2	Different versions
44		“There are many different models of it, i.e. different chats, normal chat, image generation, whatever, despite all this, I somehow have the feeling that you could differentiate more strongly between all of them and that the actual chats don't vary that much in what they can do.” – C6	
38		“There are different versions that can do different things.” – C14	
47	6	“I somehow want to stimulate communication, I have to write to some managing director, or some vice president and it rewrites my text and then I just see that it goes completely in the wrong direction (...)” – C4	Hallucination
48		“I can't explain it, but sometimes you ask something, and it runs off completely in the wrong (...) it always has to be a statement, not a double negative or something, then it's over anyway.” – C6	
6		“It always works simply by calculating the probability of the next word, so to speak, and then building that up, but there's also a lot of hallucination in the answers and you notice that.” – C9	
41		“(…) it can generate unknowledge (...) an AI can hallucinate (...)” – C16	
43		“(…) I somehow got a hallucination from a system (...)” – C17	
13		“(…) quickly start to hallucinate and then it leads to frustration (...)” – C18	
39	3	“You want to generate an image and you just can't get what you want based on the wording of the image (...)” – C4	

44		“I'm looking for a certain image and I want it to generate it for me, then it doesn't work 100% of the time (...)” – C6	Image generation
40		“(...) you have an image and then develop it further (...) Something doesn't match here, make it a bit brighter, photorealistic or something, the model can't do that with us and that's a bit annoying in places (...)” – C17	
52	7	“When it comes to mathematical or logical things, he doesn't get on well with them and the results are often simply wrong.” – C2	Math / logical tasks
27		“(...) anything mathematical, where you might have to think not just around one corner but around two, then it becomes difficult (...)” – C6	
16		“(...) AI itself can't do math well (...)” – C7	
42		“(...) faced with mathematical problems, then I entered them and then something very wrong came out (...)” – C8	
42		“It's also really bad that it can't do maths when you enter numbers. It doesn't work at all, that's what I learnt.” – C11	
17		“(...) you can't type maths problems into it (...)” – C15	
18		“(...) maths in particular (...) there are already some kind of tests that he can't do maths well.” – C17	
40	6	“I've also often discovered errors in summaries, for example. There were made-up things in the summary that weren't in the source at all.” – C1	Mistakes
42		“(...) information is gathered that isn't correct and then to identify okay what's true, what's not so what is very difficult.” – C11	
20		“(...) when a translation is simply wrong in the context, or misleading, then you just think ah yes and it's probably the right translation in a different context, but of course something like that can also be misleading.” – C12	
13		“You definitely have to be careful if you want to go into a certain kind of depth of detail, that sometimes there can be misinformation (...)” – C13	
43		“I've had that happen a few times now, that something comes out that wasn't in the text at all or that he completely mixed up figures (...)” – C17	
15		“I already had mistakes in there and that's really an essential aspect. One of the errors was really critical (...)” – C19	
40	10	“The topic of prompts is always a challenge for me, as you really have to be very precise there and sometimes have to say ‘imagine you're a consultant...’, which I forget quite often and then don't get satisfactory results.” – C1	Prompting
44		“(...) what I would also see as a general challenge is the whole topic of prompting. Because yes, if the input isn't good, then the output won't be anything either. And I also sometimes find that a challenge when you just want to enter something quickly. And then you have to concentrate very hard on making sure the prompt is good, which can take time.” – C3	
39		“(...) this whole issue of prompting. So maybe you have a text, you want it to be rewritten somehow (...) can't get what you want based on the wording (...) I think that's the biggest limitation that I have myself, that you first have to do prompting again or provide more information.” – C4	
14		“Another challenge is the issue of promptness (...) is also a very, very limiting factor that you also have to learn, where I am also convinced that experts, people, really have to train how to prompt properly. So I think that's a very, very big restriction (...) that's also a kind of learning process if you're interested in it yourself.” – C7	
38		“(...) it's always a man-made problem somewhere, with prompting, so that's a huge issue, that you have to prompt properly.” – C8	
41		“(...) should adapt the prompting accordingly with appendages such as "if you don't know". You can also tell an AI, for example, that it is okay to say that it doesn't know or that it doesn't have to generate anything, or perhaps give a range of how likely this statement is (...)” – C16	
23		“(...) to be able to do something with short prompts, but then what comes out in the end is often only very superficial and then I often think to myself okay, if I have to write pages and pages of prompts to get what I need, then I might as well write the text myself.” – C17	
13		“(...) it depends a lot on what information you give him and how clearly you formulate the desired output, i.e. whether you say short, precise bullet points,	

		maximum 1 sentence or whether it's more of an open question that you give him, it just depends on that (...)” – C18	
15		“(…) prompting is challenging if you have to do it very precisely so that you can really use it 1 to 1. And then you have to weigh up from time to time whether it's really worth the effort or whether I can put it together myself in time.” – C19	
40		“Crafting the right prompts to get useful and accurate responses from AI models can be tricky.” – C20	
40	7	“In general, I find it a challenge to reread everything (…) it means I have to invest time again.” – C1	Proof-check
43		“(…) apart from that it's a challenge that you always have to do a proof check.” – C2	
39		“(…) you shouldn't check it twice, but probably 3-4 times.” – C8	
14		“(…) that you always have to do a proof check again.” – C10	
42		“(…) you always have to be careful, is the information correct, is it not correct, which part of it is correct, which part is perhaps not correct and so on, that can happen again and again (...)” – C11	
18		“(…) you have to roughly test whether what it's spitting out is correct (...)” – C17	
42		“(…) cross-check and validate the sources of the AI's information, which again, increases the workload and requires a thorough understanding of the subject matter.” – C20	
40	10	“(…) I often have the problem when I'm doing research that the sources don't exist at all.” – C1	Research / sources
42		“(…) I somehow asked for sources or something like that, it spit them out and I was very happy about it, but they didn't actually exist at all.” – C2	
44		“I also had bad experiences with searching for sources, as they often didn't exist or weren't accessible.” – C3	
41		“(…) the sources weren't correct (...) makes a lot of things up.” – C5	
14		“(…) the timeliness of the data. I think that's also one of the most critical factors to consider.” – C7	
16		“(…) the made-up sources.” – C10	
38		“(…) that results are then spit out that didn't really exist.” – C11	
42		“You really had to be careful whether the answer it gave was correct (...) it was a topical issue and that there were a lot of updates. What he's giving me right now can also be judged with caution, whether it's something from the past or whether it really corresponds to current developments, so I was careful, but I just knew that because the topic is current.” – C15	
15		“(…) citing sources (...)” – C18	
42		“(…) conducting research and ensuring the reliability of sources used by AI is another limitation. AI can sometimes pull information from sources that are not credible or up-to-date, leading to potential misinformation.” – C20	
Code: Ethical concerns			
Code description: describes possible ethical concerns consultants may have when using genAI tools			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
44	15	“I'm not so worried about the ethical aspects, as we have our own GPT where no information leaves the organization.” – C1	Internal gpt
56		“We have our internal GPT, which is supposed to be compliant with data protection regulations.” – C2	
48		“I don't really have any ethical concerns at work in that sense, as we use our own tool and can simply look at or put everything in there, even if it's customer data (...) as everything remains internal.” – C3	
43		“Exactly, so what it is with us it's kind of a closed framework, I'd say, that I have fewer concerns because I know that the information doesn't leave our organisation.” – C4	
45		“We have a very good model, I honestly haven't thought about it that much.” – C5	

54		“And I think that especially in the Group this model is an incredibly smart (...) and innovative solution somehow to counteract the problem a bit and to say okay, we're building our own GPT model.” – C6	
45		“If there was no internal GPT (...)” – C8	
14		“(…) I don't really have any concerns with [our GPT].” – C9	
15		“(…) I mean [our company] gives us the option of simply using something data-protected.” – C10	
22		“(…) gives me a bit of confidence that it has been checked by the Group and that it's a bit more relaxed to use than the public tool.” – C12	
15		“We have our own internal GPT, I don't have any problems with it.” – C13	
47		“Now we have our own (...)” – C16	
47		“Now it's a bit different with internal company systems (...)” – C17	
13		“Well, because we have this tool, I don't have any concerns about data protection in my day-to-day work.” – C18	
17		“So data protection is less of an issue if you have your own AI model in the Group. – C19	
44	13	“(…) try to make sure that when I enter something, it is not clear which company or which customer it is. So I would keep all names out (...) falsify any numbers a little.” – C1	Anonymising/ workaround
56		“I always make sure that I don't mention a company name, for example, and that I change the figures a bit if I write in the turnover (...) so that you really can't tell which project or company it belongs to. Exactly, so I always have to do a bit of a workaround.” – C2	
48		“(…) of course you worry about things like that. I made sure that it wasn't obvious which project it was about, that it wasn't clear which customer it was. I changed the names, numbers and dates a bit, made some kind of workaround (...)” – C3	
43		“(.) I try not to include any names or even company names (...) I would really make sure to leave out full names, first names, surnames or even companies and ask more generalised questions that are a bit more high-level and not related to the client.” – C4	
54		“(…) try to work around it so as not to enter any sensitive data.” – C6	
15		“I just try to avoid entering (...) data, that I keep it as anonymous as possible.” – C7	
14		“(…) simply not write any names, no numbers, no important things (...)” – C9	
15		“You can always put fake numbers in there. Any fake names (...) you probably can't trace it back to a project with us (...)” – C10	
46		“So I think it's always very important that you at least don't copy in any customer names (...) here is somehow their annual turnover (...), but perhaps formulate it more as a general problem without going into any specific things, so (...) that it simply can't be traced back to that.” – C11	
22		“(…) no sensitive data, no real names, everything is rather abstract.” – C12	
15		“And you definitely don't include company names or numbers or leave out the real names.” – C13	
45		“If I really have the feeling that ChatGPT is helping me, but I can't put the data in there, then I would try to remodel the data so that you can't see that it's somehow company-specific.” – C15	
45		“(…) I still wouldn't put the sensitive data in or, as I said, choose a workaround.” – C16	
53	13	“(…) data protection is simply an issue (...) if different companies enter different data and one company then asks the other something, then it has the data, so it is incredibly difficult to differentiate (...)” – C6	
45		“(…) you simply shouldn't use certain sensitive data in an external GPT. Because of course you don't know where all the data is going.” – C8	
45		“(…) you should be careful with customer data, for example, and of course you shouldn't put it in there.” – C8	
15		“(…) on the subject of data protection, I think it also depends on the context. So, I would never write down any confidential data and confidential, I mean by mentioning something by name, some kind of identification number.” – C10	

46		“(…) it's now the case that many companies are developing their own internal Ai platforms and that's also there. Everything is a little bit more assured that data protection is also complied with.” – C11	
22		“I haven't uploaded many documents there so far, but rather written prompts myself. I want to be careful and not upload anything personalised.” – C12	
42		“And data protection is also a huge issue, so you can't just bang things in there (…) especially when it comes to the customers, the data with names (…)” – C14	
45		“Well, I would never put or copy company-specific or confidential data into a tool like that, absolutely not.” – C15	
45		“You can then use the general or reasonably non-sensitive data, but I still wouldn't put the sensitive data in.” – C16	
46		“As we have the advantage of being a large company with the corresponding specialists behind it, I believe that data protection is guaranteed to the extent that you can at least theoretically upload or use the non-sensitive.” – C16	
13		“That's exactly why I think data protection plays a role with external tools.” – C18	
13		“(…) it's data protection that's more relevant to me than ethical concerns.” – C18	
17		“There are simply taboos that are not uploaded, that are not analysed. All forms of personal data, customer data or similar things are simply not uploaded.” – C19	
44	8	“Biased answers are of course also an important issue, although to be honest I haven't really noticed this yet.” – C1	Bias and accuracy
48		“I always do a proof check (…) and I try to formulate everything as broadly as possible.” – C3	
43		“(…) ask more generalised questions that are a bit more high-level.” – C4	
15		“To be honest, I've never really thought about biased answers in that sense (…) I always try to keep the questions I have very broad or the statements very broad.” – C7	
14		“I don't know if it is so biased and that doesn't influence my decision-making process that much. Maybe in the end, because I don't have a situation where such a bias would be a problem at all.” – C9	
15		“Biased answers so I don't know exactly (…) but a friend (…) she wrote her master's thesis on biases in AI, for example, if the code in AI is written by men, that's just a bias if it's written by white people, that there's a bias that people might be discriminated against, etc.” – C10	
47		“(…) people were asking for pictures of German soldiers from around 1939/1940 (…) it just delivers historically incorrect images. That's because they're trained not to be racist and so on, and from then on it's always a bit of a question of when it's racist and when it's historically incorrect.” – C17	
13		“I would read over it again and at least I have the feeling, the way I've used the tool so far, that the answers were mostly very, very correct.” – C18	
44	9	“If I worked in a consultancy that only used ChatGPT, for example, the whole thing would of course look completely different again.” – C1	Avoiding external AI use
57		“(…) if I didn't have an internal GPT, I don't think I would know exactly how to deal with it.” – C2	
48		“But if I were to imagine working in a company without an internal GPT, then of course I would be more concerned.” – C3	
54		“Yes, we're preventing ChatGPT from being used (…)” – C6	
45		“Yes, I think we got a very good guideline from [our company that you simply shouldn't use certain sensitive data in an external GPT. Because of course you don't know where all the data is going.” – C8	
14		“I always have a bit of respect for what you put in Chat GPT because everyone can use it.” – C9	
22		“If [our GPT] didn't exist, we wouldn't actually be allowed to use ChatGPT. And if that were still the case, then I don't think I would do it either. I'd be too worried that something would end up somewhere it shouldn't.” – C12	

47		“I mean in the beginning you could also use Chat GPT, then of course with the professional e-mail address and of course with the instruction not to upload there.” – C16	
13		“But if it's somehow a public tool, ChatGPT just like that, I would be careful what data I enter there. I wouldn't want it to be leaked somehow, or sensitive data to end up on the server where it doesn't belong.” – C18	
45	4	“(…) content is already being created that can be really dangerous for politicians or private individuals, whose heads are then somehow used for something.” – C5	Concerns about AI development
46		“(…) it's now the case that many companies are developing their own internal Ai platforms.” – C11	
42		“It goes through university and I think it also goes into work, that you have to create boundaries so that you don't say, here's AI (….) you also somehow say that it still can't completely replace the human brain.” – C14	
47		“(…) sometimes I'm not quite sure whether the companies that develop them actually have any idea what they're doing. Yes, even if it's a bit mindless, I sometimes have the impression that it's just OK, the AI/genAI trend is somehow here now and the last one to bite the dogs, which means it's simply being developed further without giving much thought to whether we actually need it and where it's actually all leading and it's just being developed in a completely mindless way.” – C17	
45	13	“I think there are a lot of things where you really have to be careful, these imitation voices or these constructed videos with real people are also super dangerous in my opinion (….) I would say that I definitely have concerns about this topic, or where I have concerns.” – C5	General caution / common sense
15		“(…) use common sense and simply check and before you submit this request, that you really read through it again and see if there's anything in there that shouldn't be accessible to this public AI, yes.” – C7	
45		“I think you should think twice about what sensitive data you enter there and where you have it analysed.” – C8	
14		“I always have a bit of respect for what you put in ChatGPT because everyone can use it.” – C9	
15		“I'm very careful about that, I'd say.” – C10	
46		“(…) of course you have to pay attention.” – C11	
15		“(…) took great care to ensure that the context wasn't recognisable to outsiders.” – C13	
45		“I would just be extremely careful with ethical things, I mean, there are now also instructions on how to build a bomb, for example, that don't work.” – C15	
47		“I think you have to be really careful.” - C17	
47		“I do have concerns all the time.” – C17	
13		“I would be careful what data I enter there (….)” – C18	
17		“(…) you have to keep an eye on it, but for me it's just part of the normal process, just like you somehow check results, also looking in that direction every now and then to see whether it's somehow biased or steers in any particular direction, but as I said, for me it's part of the normal process.” – C19	
Code: Future Expectations			
Code description: describes a possible future outlook of AI			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
52	17	“(…) its use will increase significantly over the next few years, especially in the consulting sector, as it can take over many tasks.” – C1	Enhanced integration and efficiency
61		“The use of AI in consultancies will become more and more widespread (….)” – C2	
56		“AI is simply becoming more and more important. It will probably become more and more important, even in the consulting industry.” – C3	
51		“(…) we already have our own GPT and I think most other companies are also setting something like that up.” – C4	
58		“I believe that the use of AI or GPT models is becoming more and more widespread and yes, it's also being used in a different way.” – C6	

17		“(…) the topic will become increasingly dynamic in companies, especially in larger companies.” – C7	
49		“definitely see the increasing integration of AI in the consulting industry (…)” – C8	
17		“I definitely think that it will be used more, especially when there are actually a lot of meeting minutes in consulting.” – C9	
17		“The general trend in the consulting industry is that AI offers many opportunities to make our work easier.” – C10	
50		“(…) many consultancies or many companies are developing their internal system, their internal AI system, I think that's becoming a bigger and bigger thing.” – C11	
50		“(…) becoming more and more something that is actively integrated into everyday working life. It's not that we hide it from our customers and conceal the fact that we use it, but it's also quite open, we know from our customers that many are now using it.” – C11	
24		“(…) will become more and more relevant. I think it's also becoming more and more important to use it (…)” – C12	
18		“So I think there will definitely be much, much, much more.” – C13	
50		“(…) it will continue to develop, it's already working quite well and it will continue to develop in the future.” – C14	
49		“You can already see that things have improved a lot in the last few months.” – C15	
51		“It will definitely remain a fixed factor in the consulting industry.” – C16	
21		“(…) that's going to be crazy. So far, it's actually only been used as a way for consultants to write something in or basically for a few use cases, but it's not really integrated yet.” – C19	
52	14	“(…) summarising, writing emails, finding initial points of reference for a structure, etc. It would be cool, which would save us consultants a lot of time, if PowerPoint presentations could be created with AI.” - C1	Automati on of routine tasks
61		“(…) the annoying tasks that younger consultants in particular deal with on a daily basis will probably be taken over at some point.” – C2	
56		“(…) if at some point it would be possible to create entire PowerPoint slides (… other things such as protocols, so that you could perhaps simply let it run in the meeting (…))” – C3	
51		“(…) something like uploading a presentation that the AI can somehow pass over, you can then somehow get inspiration on what could be in the backlog, what questions people could ask based on this presentation (…)” - C4	
49		“(…) that many tasks will be eliminated, but also tasks that are annoying, especially for young consultants (… preparing things, summarising and so on.” – C5	
49		“I also believe that this, what we now call a large part of the day-to-day work of a consultant, this really scrubbing slides, will become less and less over time.” – C5	
17		“AI will take over a large part of what tends to be simpler and more repetitive tasks in the future.” – C7	
17		“(…) there are actually a lot of meeting minutes in consulting (… time can be saved by having it transcribed and then automatically uploading the text again (…))” – C9	
17		“Especially when it comes to repetitive things like writing a management summary, for example, or actually creating slides.” – C10	
24		“(…) emails are simply pre-formulated, presentations are more or less created automatically, protocols can be created automatically (… going to make work a lot easier and it's going to be even more like my personal intern/assistant.” – C12	
18		“(…) feed the AI bot with information and perhaps have better sparring as a result and don't have to be in constant contact with the project leaders every day.” – C13	

50		“(…) perhaps even AI can build you complete dashboards, calculation tools and I think that would be a really great added value for the consulting industry.” – C14	
49		“Well, I hope that you can have entire PowerPoint presentations created, so that there will be a lot more graphically.” – C15	
51		“(…) having PowerPoint slides created by yourself, filling them with content, probably also having objects aligned somehow (…)” – C16	
52	13	“(…) creating slides would be great (…)” – C1	Enhance ment of complex processes
61		“(…) can then concentrate on the more complex issues.” – C2	
56		“When it comes to analytical things and the topic of research (..) that you can rely on it more.” – C3	
51		“(…) it will still take a while for the AI to really understand what you want and how you need it.” – C4	
49		“(…) it will be even more about really interpreting results, presenting them, discussing them and not only finding solutions, but also implementing them well.” – C5	
58		“I can concentrate on more complex tasks.” – C6	
50		“(…) the topic of outline is all about giving ideas, how you can maybe put it on the slides, but again, the finish has to be done by the person, I think there's a lot going on there too.” – C14	
49		“I believe that we can make our very repetitive processes or things much easier and faster at every step.” – C15	
51		“(…) in the future there will be the possibility of accessing data or databases on certain topics and having an initial mark-up made.” – C16	
51		“AI can definitely take over a lot of research work and things like that.” – C17	
17		“(…) keeps track of it and makes suggestions or that you can simply say here I would like to generate this and that value from line X and line Y.” – C18	
21		“So now it's an intermediate station where you put in a bit of input, you get an output and then process it further into the end product, and this step (..) will definitely no longer be necessary in the future. So you already have the option of building the first models for slides, for example.” – C19	
52		7	
62	“(…) topic of image generation, that it will simply get better and better, become more reliable and you'll get cool things out of it.” – C2		
56	“(…) when it comes to analytical things and the topic of research with the references (..) the coolest thing for me would be the PowerPoint presentations, if at some point it would be possible to create entire PowerPoint slides.” – C3		
17	“But this transcribing function doesn't work at all yet. If this is somehow perfected, I think a lot of time can be saved.” – C9		
50	“(…) a new AI tool is probably coming onto the market every day, I think that there will definitely be further progress.” – C11		
24	“But I think that will also take the whole thing to another level (…)” – C12		
17	“So I think there's also a copilot from Office, but it's only in the test phase, there were videos on LinkedIn.” – C18		
63	13	“I think the AI could soon be able to support me by entering the CV (..) There are a few studies on this that show it's a bit difficult to use in recruiting (..) this will be solved somehow in the future and will save us a lot of time in this respect.” – C2	Impact on job role and efficienc y
56		“(…) it can also make many tasks easier for us.” – C3	
56		“That would simply save an incredible amount of time.” – C3	
51		“(…) the speed and efficiency, I say, of a consultant can be increased.” – C4	
49		“So you can save a lot of time and hopefully put this time into tasks where you can provide even more added value yourself.” – C5	
58		“(…) that's always a bit of a fear, that jobs will disappear and be replaced by AI (..) jobs such as consultants will also disappear, which is quite clear, because as soon as AI starts building slides. Then it will be over very quickly” – C6	
17		“It's always the case that people, especially those who don't deal with the topic, fear that AI can completely replace their jobs.” – C7	

17		“(…) it won't be able to take away any jobs in consulting in any way, because it's always more of an aid to finding ideas, but it doesn't really give you a perfect solution, you really have to put a lot into it.” – C9	
24		“(…) it's simply going to make work a lot easier and it's going to be even more like my personal intern/assistant (…)	
49		“(…) it will probably replace a lot of our work, there are other tasks that result from it, so I have more time to think about more complex topics.” – C15	
51		“(…) still have a basis for the initial work, which you can work with instead of having to do everything initially (…)	
51		“(…) a project doesn't end up with 2 top consultants sitting together with 6 juniors and 20 interns, but that it's really a consultant with 2-3 interns (…)	
21		“Yes, and of course, that would definitely change the day-to-day work of consultants.” – C19	
63	12	“You have to be a bit careful that it is compliant with data protection regulations and that the AI's answers are not biased in any way.” – C2	Challenges and limitations
56		“So in terms of data protection, I wish that I could use it a bit more loosely, that there is still a lot to come in that direction, even if I work in another company without an internal tool.” – C3	
51		“In concrete terms, it will still take a while for the AI to really understand what you want and how you need it.” – C4	
49		“So as I said, I personally don't think it's that good yet, of course it's also a matter of taste, but I think we'll learn a lot about it over the next few years.” – C5	
17		“But this transcribing function doesn't work at all yet.” – C9	
17		“It's always very important how the prompt is written, that makes a huge difference in the answers you can get.” – C9	
17		“(…) hope that it can always be implemented in the company in compliance with data protection regulations.” – C10	
50		“You can't rely on what comes out of it or it can't do the maths, it can't do this, it can't do that.” – C11	
49		“It just needs to become more established.” – C15	
51		“(…) even if a large part may be wrong or not one hundred per cent.” – C16	
51		“I don't think that AI will be able to take over the final intimate consultation with the customer itself, because consulting also has a lot to do with empathy and that this human factor is becoming stronger and stronger and that companies also want to be advised by people.” – C17	
21		“(…) these are developments that (…)	
Code: Recommendations			
Code description: describes recommendations on how to integrate genAI better at the workplace			
#	Frequency	Identified sentence	Subcode
56	20	“(…) it should be mandatory to take part in at least one, because I think people who aren't quite so enthusiastic about the topic won't sign up otherwise.” – C1	Workshops and trainings
69		“(…) need to offer workshops to demonstrate the use cases, but also to explain exactly how to use it (…)	
60		“(…) offering workshops or training courses, especially in the area of prompting and simply providing information about AI.” – C3	
59		“Exactly, so then offering workshops for employees to really train them.” – C4	
57		“(…)workshops and so on, but maybe something more obligatory, so to speak, obligatory is too silly, but to go to the department and say, hey, we're going to do this today with everyone in a standard all-hands meeting or something.” – C5	
67		“So that involves a lot of announcements, explaining expert knowledge, workshops and so on (…)	
17		“Especially with the topic of prompting, I think there are now various training courses for that, so that you learn that so that people don't get too frustrated.” – C7	
53		“(…) for example with training courses and workshops like we do here.” – C8	

19		“(…) you definitely have to offer workshops to employees, but simply say that you have to take part in a mandatory one.” – C9	
19		“These trainings are just important. Not boring training sessions, but rather smaller bits at shorter intervals and explaining what is actually behind an AI.” – C10	
49		“(…) to provide training, to educate people about it and to introduce it officially rather than having everyone use it under the table somewhere.” – C11	
28		“I don't know, but I always think training is good (…) we also have this prompting training (…) so that employees know how to really use the tools in the best possible way, because just because a tool is there doesn't mean that it really increases efficiency.” – C12	
20		“Definitely training and further education. That's a big point (…)” – C13	
54		“(…) offer prompting workshops (…)” – C14	
54		“Well, like at our Discover AI conferences or prompting workshops (…)” – C15	
56		“(…) you should offer workshops for employees (…)” – C16	
55		“Extensive training in any case. So that everyone knows what they are actually doing and what these things can do.” – C17	
17		“(…) in terms of skills, offering training for consultants, training them, somehow highlighting the top use cases or holding a competition or something like that, providing them with specific training and drawing their attention to how it can help them in their day-to-day consulting work (…)” – C18	
26		“(…) train the employees through workshops in the direction of prompting.” – C19	
58		“Consulting firms would greatly benefit from the organisation of comprehensive workshops and training sessions. These workshops should cover a range of topics (…)” – C20	
56	13	“(…) the best or useful use cases should be presented regularly so that everyone can see that AI can bring benefits and that it makes sense to deal with it.” – C1	Presenting use cases
70		“And I would say that perhaps the use cases should be presented on a regular basis, either in a meeting or on the intranet.” – C2	
61		“(…) present the best use cases (… each department usually has a meeting with everyone every week or every two weeks, so maybe it's just integrated that one use case is presented per meeting (… to see what can be done with it.” – C3	
53		“So finding out a bit more about what the really cool use cases are (…)” – C5	
62		“(…) workshops to somehow perhaps also demonstrate the use cases so that they can really see that it can help.” – C6	
19		“(…) say once a month, you maybe present the best use case, so that maybe people then show, OK, this and this are the points, this is how you can use AI.” – C7	
19		“(…) integrate one or two use cases of the week into our bi-weekly (…)” – C9	
54		“(…) that you simply point out, OK, we can use it for this, maybe we'd better leave it for this (…)” – C11	
54		“(…) we look at what the best cases are (…)” – C14	
54		“(…) needs to be present as much as possible, so that you emphasise things like this in existing routines from time to time, that managers set an example.” – C15	
56		“(…) know what the different purposes or use cases are for which it could add value.” – C16	
17		“(…) highlighting the top use cases or holding a competition (…)” – C18	
60	16	“To say it simple, it is important to involve the employees and take them along in the process.” – C1	
69		“(…) you definitely have to make sure that you get people involved, especially the older generation.” – C2	
60		“(…) the most important thing is to get all employees on board (…)” – C3	
57		“(…) introduce employees to it as well as possible and give them a sense of security, because many are naturally afraid.” – C5	
62		“(…) trying to familiarise employees with it (…)” – C6	

19		"(...) address people's problems or where they perhaps don't know what to do themselves." – C7	
53		"(...) you just need people who are familiar with the whole project, who can accompany the integration and who can help other employees who are perhaps not so tech-affine to understand it and implement it properly." – C8	
19		"It just needs to be better communicated what you can use it for and how you can use it, which perhaps means mandatory training for the tool in any case." – C9	
54		"(...) it's also important that every employee knows that you can use it so that you don't end up with a performance gap where one person is a high performer and the other is really bad, but one person only does it with AI. I think you have to establish a fair level." – C11	
28		"Taking a user-centred approach to the whole thing, looking at what my employees actually need, what really benefits customers, so which tools do I really recommend to employees (...) Being informed about what's available." – C12	
20		"And then also, so to speak, building pilot projects and prototypes to test that everything works." – C13	
54		"(...) you just have to take them with you. I feel like that starts with me, even though I grew up with it. But also the older generations." – C14	
58		"(...) support the employee in this and not to think that the employee is actually being completely replaced and that I as an employee am somehow being cheated." – C15	
60		"(...) empower the employees in this respect (...)" – C16	
59		"(...) the fact that people are being taken by the hand by those who, let's say, are now integrating it." – C17	
23		"Speaking for us, however, I would have said that there is definitely the opportunity to acquire it if you need it." – C19	
60	16	"(...) makes sense for every company to have an own gpt that internal company data can be used (...) own department must somehow be able to set this up." – C1	Technical and financial resources
75		"(...) you need money... and the personnel capacity to set up your own GPT" – C2	
61		"I would also recommend setting up a separate GPT for the topic of data protection." – C3	
55		"(...) would be most helpful, of course, if you have your, if your company has its own GPT, that you really give the support general information." – C4	
53		"(...) you can't do that yourself if you don't have a tech background, but that someone supports you a bit (...)" – C5	
67		"(...) first have to look at the processes and how sensible it is to implement AI in certain processes and which ones are not so sensible." – C6	
58		"(...) it always depends on the data, so perhaps not just the size of the company, but also liquidity and economic strength, I say." – C8	
17		"You really need a separate department (...) which is completely dedicated to developing these use cases (...)" – C9	
17		"I think money and capacity are simply the resources that are needed to integrate it better." – C10	
54		"It would be good, I think, if you have your own tool, which of course costs money (...)" – C11	
26		"(...) financial resources (...) to make the whole thing usable under data protection law, so (...) that the whole thing is okay under data protection law (...) You simply have to have resources in hand in the form of employees, but also money." – C12	
20		"(...) creating their own bot and not just somehow simply using Chat GPT. For data protection reasons alone. And it's also best to have it created externally, so that you really know that it's really compliant with data protection, not such a big risk (...)" – C13	
58		"(...) of course it will also save you time and money (...)" – C14	

55		“(…) technical support in the sense of also having an own IT or security department in the future, which is familiar with integrating genAI (…)” – C16	
19		“(…) have your own application, but if you remove this data security hurdle and brand it a bit and keep trying to promote it (…)” – C18	
26		“(…) you really have to consider whether you can implement your own AI model somehow and that's only possible and sensible above a certain size.” – C19	
67	11	“(…) informing yourself a little so that you don't make the same mistakes and that you also have a contact person and can simply exchange ideas.” – C3	Knowledge management and communication
59		“(…) create a framework, establish a clear process and perhaps also have a kind of knowledge management system where best practices are shared (…)” – C4	
19		“(…) integrate use cases of the week into our bi-weekly (…).” – C9	
19		“(…) and explaining what is actually behind an AI.” – C10	
59		“(…) develop a knowledge base yourself (… get expert opinions, that you perhaps get an AI representative in the company or from I don't know IT.” – C11	
20		“(…) regular contact with all your colleagues, to really ask for regular feedback on where there might still be improvements, development potential.” – C13	
58		“(…) provide good communication support (…)” – C15	
56		“(…) handle it somehow or know what the different purposes or use cases are for which it could add value.” – C16	
59		“The communication has to be right, otherwise people will panic (… Simply being able to arouse a bit of enthusiasm for it.” – C17	
19		“(…) brand it anyway, as a tool from your own company (…)” – C18	
23		“(…) knowledge transfer was actively pursued (… is simply essential.” – C19	
76	9	“(…) exchange ideas with other consultancies of the same size to see how they do it, whether they already have any tips and to learn from the mistakes.” – C2	Collaboration and learning from others
66		“(…) learn from the mistakes of others by really engaging in dialogue with other companies. Preferably of the same size so that you can see what is possible.” – C3	
67		“(…) look through each department to see how it works and how they understand it in the meantime or whether it is accepted and then do follow-ups again.” – C6	
19		“(…) a certain working group will sit down and work on this problem and that in 2, 3, 4 months (… you can perhaps implement it (…)” – C7	
57		“Perhaps seek dialogue with other companies of a similar size that have already introduced it.” – C8	
55		“(…) you have to find out about it first, you might have to create documents, you have to have someone to communicate it (…)” – C11	
20		“(…) simply generally for companies that have perhaps already integrated it, simply to be in regular contact with all your colleagues (…)” – C13	
54		“(…) exchange formats (…)” – C14	
55		“(…) support companies in the area of digital AI etc., to implement and select something like this.” – C16	
56	15	“(…) the best or simply useful use cases should be presented regularly so that everyone can see AI can bring benefits and it makes sense to deal with it” – C1	Creating a supportive culture
70		“(…) people, perhaps the older ones, wouldn't necessarily sign up for a workshop like this if they weren't forced to, because they just aren't that interested.” – C2	
60		“(…) many people see the whole thing as a time-saver yet, but rather have a bit of respect for using it, especially when it comes to the older generation.” – C3	
59		“AI is not a sure-fire success, even if you can, of course, interact with normal people, but of course you only ever get back what you somehow give it (…)” – C4	
57		“(…) convey to them that it's fun and that the work can be easy.” – C5	
67		“The point is to make the work easier, to make the work more effective, to make it faster and yes, to relieve the employees (…)” – C6	
19		“(…) I think it's also a cool project where you can take a whole lot with you and which could also help the company as a whole in some way.” – C7	

59	“(...) educate people about it and introduce it officially rather than having everyone use it under the table somewhere. So I think it would become a company standard in the sense that it would really be an established work tool and not something where you secretly turn down the screen brightness and then use it so that nobody sees it.” – C11
20	“(...) strategic planning, so the direction, the vision, the strategy (...)” – C13
54	“We do the whole thing with gamification and we also award prizes to those who have brought this into their everyday lives in a cool way.” – C14
54	“(...) that it is also emphasised by the management board, the topic or, yes, sometimes you have to force people to be happy.” – C15
60	“(...) pick up the employees concerned on a broad scale (...)” – C16
59	“(...) if it is announced in some big way that we are now switching to AI on a large scale, whether in internal production processes or simply in day-to-day use, that everyone will be brought on board.” – C17
17	“(...) get rewarded when you use it and that there's an understanding that it may take a little longer the first or second time (...)” – C18
26	“(...) with strategic topics, you really work on the open heart of companies and accordingly, you can't just share the company-internal ones that are there.” – C19

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Welcome and thank you for participating in this interview. I, Antonia Heemann am conducting this interview as part of my Master Thesis at Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics, under the supervision of Ana Filipa Martinho de Almeida.

Please answer as honest as possible. All answers will be kept strictly confidentially and anonymous. This means there will be no way to link your responses to your identity. The information collected will be used for research purposes only. There are no expected side effects of participating in this study. If you wish, you are free to leave the interview at any point in time without providing a reason.

Do you agree to participate in this study by being interviewed by me?

Do you confirm that this interview gets recorded for research purposes only?

Hereby I agree and confirm:

Signature

Antonia Heemann

Appendix D: Interview Transcripts

The complete interview transcripts are available here:

https://ucppt.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/MasterThesisAntoniaJohannaHeemann/E14mUSuvevdKu8x8CMXcMAAB7x_Rmoy0_sumbsQnszxe8g?e=d3atua