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CONSULTING 4.0: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE AND POTENTIAL
OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE CONSULTANCY OF TOMORROW

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly Generative AI (GenAI), has catalyzed significant shifts across business sectors, revolutionizing traditional operational models. This study focuses on the consulting industry, a key player in AI integration and advancement. It explores AI's impact in four domains: establishment in consulting, application areas, internal process effects, and ethical considerations. Utilizing triangulation, combining Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and qualitative interviews, this analysis comprehensively understands AI's diverse effects on the consulting industry. It reveals the current state of AI deployment, highlighting its business value and transformative influence in the consulting sector.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Consulting; AI in Consulting; GenAI; Strategies with AI

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1. Introduction

The consulting industry is at the dawn of a new era in which artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly relevant. Through its explorative growth phase in 2023, Generative AI has ensured that at least a third of companies use the technology in at least one business function (McKinsey, 2023). Large Language Models (LLM), such as Chat GPT, attracted a million users in five days and 100 million requests in two months (Reuters, 2023). From another perspective, the transition of topics from technical departments to the focus on corporate management is becoming clear (McKinsey, 2023). In this context, the consulting industry plays a key role, as it is an essential value driver for other industries (Cerruti et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the question remains about how the consulting industry will deal with this technological progress. Christensen et al. (2013) have already highlighted the change in the consulting industry, which manifests itself in a stronger focus on software- and technology-based solutions. This development points to a fundamental transformation of the consulting industry, in which traditional approaches based on human expertise are increasingly complemented and enhanced by innovative, technology-based methods (Lemus-Aguilar & Hidalgo, 2014).

Recent studies show that using AI impacts the business model (Kanbach et al., 2023). Using AI in the consulting industry can increase efficiency (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023) but also entails increased ethical risks (Genguta et al., 2023). However, there are currently only a limited number of studies that look at the holistic impact of AI on the consulting industry. The purpose of this research is to give a comprehensive overview of how AI influences the consulting industry by examining four main areas: the degree of establishment of AI in consulting, areas of application of AI in consulting, effects on internal processes, and effects on ethical risks and concerns using AI.

This paper is structured as follows: The theoretical background introduces the topic and explains the most important definitions. Subsequently, the research questions are first answered with the help of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and then further illuminated and expanded with in-depth qualitative interviews. Using triangulation, the results of both methodologies are combined. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results, including limitations and directions for future research. This study is one of the first to merge the combinatorics of the consulting industry with AI technology.

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical background defines important terminologies and insights into the consulting industry and the current state of AI usage at work.

2.1. Artificial Intelligence & GenAI

The academic and management literature does not provide one clear definition of AI. The academic consensus of AI can be seen as a new way of programming computers so that they ultimately think humanly (Sarker, 2022). Huang et al. (2019) defined AI as a field that uses algorithms and computational approaches to machine intelligence that were previously only used by humans. Sophisticated decision-making processes such as automatic control and predictive analytics utilize AI systems far superior to humans. In particular, machine learning, including deep learning and neural networks, enables a system to learn without explicit programming (LeCun et al., 2015).

The emergence and application of AI technology impact almost all areas of life and the economy and are arguably one of the most significant phenomena in science and contemporary history (Zhang & Aslan, 2021). The research literature also reflects an annual increase of 23% in the number of publications on this topic (Baruffaldi et al., 2020). Interestingly, however, building blocks of this phenomenon were developed many decades ago, in the mid-twentieth century, when mathematician Alan Turing coined the concept of “intelligent machines” (Turing, 1950, p. 459). The first academic paper on the subject of "artificial intelligence" was

published by McCarthy et al. (1955). An academic winter occurred between 1970 and 1990 (Caner & Bhatti, 2020). At the beginning of the 21st century, Generative AI, often abbreviated as GenAI (Kanbach et al., 2023), revolutionized the progress of this technology as a subfield of artificial intelligence. This branch was revolutionized with the introduction of Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) by Goodfellow et al. (2014), which have the remarkable ability to generate highly realistic images, text, and other artifacts, often indistinguishable from human-generated content, based on previously learned patterns and data inputs. Another notable milestone on the road to GenAI has been the development of Large Language Models (LLMs), such as the Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT) series, which demonstrate an impressive ability to understand and generate human-like text and assist in tasks ranging from writing assistance to conversation simulation (Radford et al., 2019). These models learn from massive datasets, allowing them to capture nuances of language and a wide range of knowledge, facilitating their use in various applications. As Generative AI continues to evolve, its potential to reshape industries and the nature of creativity is increasingly recognized. Ethical discussions about authenticity, copyright, and potential for misuse are also intensifying, highlighting the need for responsible use and governance of GenAI technologies (Zhang & Aslan, 2021). The development of GenAI is a step towards AI that analyzes data and enriches the human experience with novel creations.

2.2. Consulting industry

Consulting is an intricate, adaptive, and innovative industry. The land of consulting as we know it today dates back to the beginning of the 20th century when Frederick W. Taylor developed his principles of scientific management (Kipping & Clark, 2012). Consulting, or management consulting, is a professional service experienced consultants provide to an organization to achieve operation performance objectives through complete and accurate analysis of all business problems affecting organizations, thus making improvement plans (Kubr, 2002). Over the years, the field has expanded and diversified to cover strategy consulting, management consulting,

operations consultancy services, IT consultancy services, and many more specializations.

Nowadays, the consulting industry is experiencing a digitalization turn – the changes that affect all business spheres are occurring (Christensen et al., 2013). Innovation supported by artificial intelligence is becoming the critical value-add of consulting firms whose clients' demands are growing and must be met (Davenport et al., 2020). Data analysis tools are seen as essential tools in consulting, as they analyze large amounts of data quickly and, therefore, have the potential to improve customer expectations where necessary (Bughin et al., 2017).

The consulting industry faces increased niche providers amidst the democratization of information access and the requirement to consult in a world market (Greiner & Ennsfellner, 2010). Thus, consulting firms must improve their internal operations and develop inventive, client-sensitive approaches to remain competitive.

The prospects for the future development of the consulting industry hinge on more profound AI and other high-tech integrations, transforming not just the content of consulting services but also the structures and strategies followed by consulting firms (Nissen, 2019).

2.3. AI usage at work

Artificial intelligence adoption is common in different industries like manufacturing (Rizvi et al., 2021), marketing (Martínez-López & Casillas, 2013), entertainment (Nader et al., 2022), medicine (Paul et al., 2021), and finance (Guo & Polak, 2021) among others. Such keywords, e.g., neural networks, machine learning, or deep learning, are often associated with business terms like decision-making, industry 4.0, or business transformation (Ruiz-Real et al., 2021). Adopting these technologies typically aims to improve efficiency by streamlining business processes or enhancing company decision-making. (Borges et al., 2021).

This is achieved by transforming traditional work processes to incorporate AI, including automating routine tasks and affecting decision-making (Davenport et al., 2020). The technological shift gives rise to the automation of unskilled jobs, replaced by new roles calling for different skills and creating new workplace dynamics (Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is very difficult to implement the technology with these kinds of non-routine tasks since such tasks demand creativity, problem-solving, and complex communication (Priya et al., 2022).

Generally, it is evident that AI, as a developmental force, offers both an opportunity to associate workers and risks. AI integration effectively balances possible technical approaches and corresponding morals (Sidorenko et al., 2021). This work depicts these factors and how they are now reflected in the consulting industry.

3. Research methodology

This section describes the methodology used to answer research questions through triangulation, including a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and qualitative interviews.

3.1. Research questions

This research is based on several well-defined research questions (RQs) that seek to answer the varied functions of AI in the consulting practice. The questions are crafted to capture the core issues surrounding AI inclusion into consultancy that relate to contemporary problems and forthcoming trends in the field:

- **RQ1:** How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?
- **RQ2:** In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?
- **RQ3:** How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?
- **RQ4:** What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?

The aim of each of these questions is to ensure that this study encompasses as comprehensive an understanding of the role and potential of AI in shaping the consulting industry as possible and covers all aspects of AI influence in a business context.

3.2. Triangulation

The study utilizes the methodology of triangulation, which refers to using multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of complex

phenomena (Patton, 1999). Due to the multifaceted nature of the AI impact on the consulting industry, it is necessary to create a theoretical foundation and comprehensive overview of the existing literature using an SLR and obtain in-depth and detail from practitioners' opinions through qualitative interviews (Jack & Raturi, 2006). Both data and method triangulation are used to ensure a comprehensive and robust research process (Guion et al., 2011). Data triangulation is achieved using diverse information, including scientific literature and expertise. The triangulation method combines insights from the SLR and qualitative interviews to create a holistic understanding and utilize the two methodological logics (Patton, 1990). This approach aligns with the recommendations of Denzin (1978), who emphasizes the importance of using multiple data sources for a comprehensive analysis.

3.3. Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

The method of conducting SLR is adaptive, as used by Tranfield et al. (2003) and Gough et al. (2013). This methodology has been previously applied in some information systems (Al-Emran et al., 2018), technology applications (Ali et al., 2018; Gupta et al., 2018), and operations research studies (Martins et al., 2019). For example, Caner and Bhatti (2020) adopted this method to identify AI strategies deployed in the business industry. The SLR consists of three steps: "Planning the review," "Conducting the review," and "Reporting on the review." The initial stage involves finding whether there is a necessity for responding to the abovementioned research questions. There is a need to review what is currently known in the area due to the transformative nature of artificial intelligence (AI) in diverse business domains (Caner & Bhatti, 2020), including consulting, and the increasing interest in professional services firms to adopt AI capabilities (Bezuidenhout et al., 2022). Especially given the new requirements, technological opportunities, and ethical considerations facing consulting firms (Christensen et al., 2013).

3.3.1. Planning the review

Informed by the research questions and drawing from the theoretical background of AI, information technology, and the consulting industry, this study focuses on the following key

terms: "artificial intelligence", "machine learning", "deep learning", "neural networks", "consulting", "consultancy", "professional service firms", "KIBS", "digital transformation", "change management", "digital strategy", "digital", "demand" and "ethics". The search was conducted at the title level, combining title, abstract, and keywords. The specific combinations of the key terms are detailed in Table 1 of the Appendix.

The digital databases consulted for this study include Web of Science, Scopus, Science Direct, and Emerald, each widely used in previous literature (Agarwal et al., 2019; Busalim, 2016; Rekik et al., 2018). A supplementary search was conducted using Google Scholar to cover broader scholarly perspectives.

Aligning with the guidelines by Kitchenham et al. (2009), the inclusion criteria for this review were as follows: (i) Journal and conference papers that discuss artificial intelligence and consulting or cover topics related to digital transformation even without explicitly mentioning AI, containing the terms in title, abstract, or keywords, (ii) Peer-reviewed articles, ensuring the research has undergone quality assessment (iii) Papers published since 2009 to align with emerging trends in AI and consulting (López-Robles et al., 2019). Exclusion criteria were established to exclude: (i) Studies that mention artificial intelligence only tangentially without direct relevance to consulting, (ii) Non-peer-reviewed sources, such as blogs or opinion pieces, and (iii) Full articles not available electronically.

The PRISMA approach (Moher et al., 2015) was used for quality assessment, providing a standardized method for evaluating the relevancy and credibility of the studies reviewed. Data extraction was planned to align with the research questions and highlight differences and similarities among study outcomes. The extracted elements include the source of publication, year of publication, author(s), functions of AI technology in the consulting context, ethical considerations in AI application, method of research, impacts of AI, target consulting sub-industry, and challenges to AI adoption if available.

For the research synthesis phase, the studies were examined through the lens of the established research questions. Methods for synthesizing and integrating the findings from different studies were tailored to highlight how each addresses or relates to the specific research questions. This approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the role and impact of AI in the consulting industry.

3.3.2. Conducting the review

The search aimed to systematically identify and summarize the fragmented literature on the role of AI in the consulting industry. The process involved the following stages:

- Initially, search terms were applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords without constraints. The metadata—the title, authors, abstract, publication year, keywords, source title, document type, and language—were exported directly into EndNote for efficient duplicate removal.
- After this preliminary step, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were stringently applied. Now, meeting the requirements, the selected articles were exported from EndNote to Microsoft Excel for additional analysis. This involved screening the abstracts and forming further classifications to identify the relevance to the research questions.
- Finally, data extraction was based on the full content of each selected article. A star-rating system was used to gauge the relevance of each article to the research questions: 1 Star for general relevance based on all inclusion criteria; 2 Stars for potential to answer a research question indirectly; 3 Stars for direct relevance to a research question.

3.4. Qualitative research

For this review to suffice in exploring the deeply embedded nature of AI within the consulting industry, it must exceed what is currently available in ambition and insight (Myers, 2019). Though there is some incorporation of insights from SLR, a lack of explicit research on the augmentation of AI and consulting still exists. In particular, qualitative approaches are especially well-suited to the research of these emerging and rapidly evolving industries and

firms such as AI and consultancy (Neuman, 2014). This research applies an interview-based methodology to seek consultation with the experts on how AI has specifically impacted their work and experiences (Taylor et al., 2015). This study applies the inductive coding methodology from the Grounded Theory perspective (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) since AI implementation is nascent in the consulting industry. Although primarily inductive, the research questions, informed by the theoretical background, introduce a structured, deductive element to the interview guide, ensuring a comprehensive approach. This approach was instrumental in guiding the development of themes and in understanding the role played by AI through data analysis (Gioia et al., 2013). Applying an inductive technique in this study is expected to uncover findings and unique patterns, including AI applications in consultancy. The findings of this study using the Gioia Methodology are presented in the present paper, which offers a comprehensive analysis of how AI is shaping up in management consultancy.

3.4.1. Sample selection

This study selected a set of interviewees who could capture the impact of AI on consulting. In line with Patton's (1990) suggestion to choose a heterogeneous sample of participants, professionals from AI Strategy Consulting, Strategy Consulting, Management Consulting, Pricing Consulting, M&A Consulting, and Foresight Consulting were selected. Figure 1 Appendix shows how the interviews were conducted targeting junior and senior executives to explore the impact of AI across the organization. The individual semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to go into depth about personal experiences and opinions; thus, this approach could better explore the nature of the topic. For example, Guinan et al. (2019) show that they could measure the effects of digital disruption on consulting (Guinan et al., 2019). This paper uses the recommendations of Marshall et al. (2013) regarding the selection of interview partners so that it collects data up to reaching data saturation.

3.4.2. Data collection

For this study, 15 professionals were interviewed to obtain diverse perspectives on consulting practice (Refer to Table 2 Appendix for detailed statistics). The mean professional tenure was 8.5 years. A conscious effort was made to interview individuals in higher hierarchical positions since they possess greater involvement in the strategic planning of AI. The interviews, with a duration of around 30 minutes each, were carried out employing a structured and flexible methodology that aligns with known techniques of qualitative research (Patton, 1990). At the commencement of each session, a concise overview of the subject matter was provided to provide the framework for the ensuing discourse. The research questions meticulously crafted the interview guide to guarantee targeted talks (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The inquiry employed most queries and processes to ensure comparability in the similarity of topics. Nevertheless, if a participant lacked understanding of a particular subject, questions were excluded, and, on certain occasions, further questions were posed for clarification.

3.4.3. Data analysis

After conducting all interviews, the statements of all participants were documented in Excel according to the questions asked (see interview insight tables in the Appendix). The insights were then documented inductively using the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2013). The Gioia method's application, grounded in ontological and epistemological principles, is appropriate for this study. It adopts a constructivist view, acknowledging subjective realities shaped by interviewees' experiences, and an interpretivist stance, recognizing that understanding the industry's adaptation to AI emerges from deeply exploring these subjective experiences (Gioia, 2007). For this purpose, the statements on first-order concepts were formed, summarizing the probands' key phrases and ideas. A total of 27 first-order concepts were found. These were then grouped into broader, more interpretive categories with a higher abstraction level, forming the second-order themes. Nine second-order themes were developed. These were then brought into

four aggregate dimensions, which answered the research questions in their content. The entire procedure is documented using the horizontal tree diagram.

4. Analysis and findings

This section presents the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) followed by the findings from the qualitative interviews. The triangulation results compare the outcomes of both approaches.

4.1. SLR results

The literature review findings follow the research methodology outlined by Kitchenham et al. (2009) and Tranfield et al. (2003). Figure 1 graphically illustrates the remaining references for each database after duplicates were removed and the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied. Additionally, Table 3 Appendix categorizes the papers according to their relevance to the four research questions under investigation. The subsequent analysis elucidates how these classified papers address the various research questions.

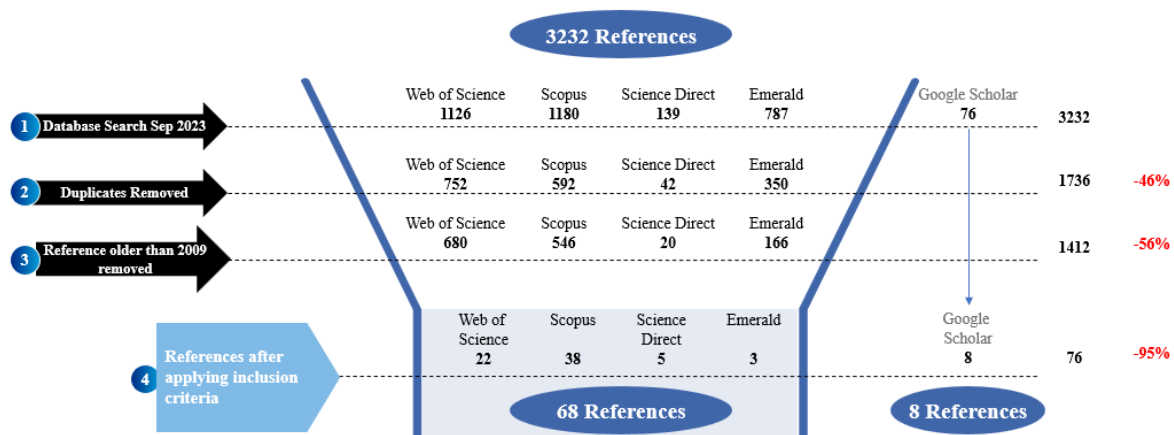


Figure 1: Number of papers in each phase of the selection process

4.1.1. RQ1 - Prevalence of AI technology

The growing interest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) is readily observable within academia, as evidenced by a remarkable number of 1,000 to 86,829 publications depending on the database under scrutiny (Refer to Figure 2 Appendix for detailed statistics). Likewise, the consulting sector has not been overlooked by scholars, boasting a range of 386 to 7,453 publications. However, the intersection of these two domains—AI and consulting—has received relatively

scant academic attention. A mere 76 papers combining these areas of inquiry were identified per the criteria specified in Section 3.2.1.

These articles' abstracts reveal that only a small share of them, 11.84% (9 articles), directly address AI in consulting (details Figure 3 Appendix). For example, Watanabe et al. (2020) mention using text mining techniques, a form of artificial intelligence, to analyze customer information. Others include Sheybani and Javidi (2019) on the role of data analytics in cybersecurity threat detection and prevention, Rafat and Ezeldin (2023) on cost estimation (using machine learning methods) in the context of project budgeting and taxation (Pavlova & Knyazeva, 2022).

The larger underlying pattern among these papers is that they concentrate more on “digitalization” and consulting. Digitalization is discussed in connection with consulting, Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS), or professional service firms by about 34.2 % (26 papers). The most notable sub-domains under this domain include “Digital Transformation,” which accounts for 41,6% (or 15 articles) (details Figure 4 Appendix). This inference is particularly relevant given that approximately 76% of the selected papers were published post-2018, a period marked by increased attention to AI in various industries (details Figure 5 Appendix). Larsson et al. (2019) underscore this point by shedding light on the growing inclination among consultants to incorporate not only analytical tools but also embrace the general adoption of big data analytics (BDA) (as observed in Oyewo et al. (2022) into their professional practices.

Furthermore, Nissen and Seifert (2015) explore the innovative concept of virtualization to optimize consulting processes, leveraging state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Similarly, Klochan et al. (2021) investigate using digital platforms to transform strategic consulting. In a broader context, it becomes evident that the consulting industry is undergoing significant transformation, encompassing shifts in its business models

and the adoption of various technological innovations (Dodgson et al., 2022; Fielt et al., 2019; Jeronimo et al., 2019). Finally, it is noticeable that most publications, especially in the field of management consulting, contain more qualitative studies (60.5 % see Figure 6 Appendix).

4.1.2. RQ2 - Areas of consulting

This research aims to determine which functions and hierarchical levels in the consulting industry use AI the most or where academia sees the highest potential—with this said, this analysis looks into different structural departments, including the front office, middle office, and back office (De Jong & Van Eekelen, 1999). The front office entails client-facing business and project delivery; the middle office includes support services such as knowledge management and marketing; the back office includes administrative functions such as general office administration, accounting, IT, HR, and project planning (Dollarhide, 2021). This helps to establish whether AI technology has been distributed well without being concentrated in specific areas. The front office also looks at the use of AI during the different project stages of analysis, design, and implementation to identify trends that reveal how AI supports the consulting life cycle (Stumpf, 1999).

According to Davenport and Ronanki (2018), it is generally known that current AI technology is primarily involved in automating repetitive tasks and more rule-based tasks. Since middle and back-office areas are particularly affected, it can be assumed that the fastest impact over time occurs here.

Even though there is currently little literature on AI's impact on back-office activities in the consulting sector, it is evident that there is an increased potential, especially for repeating tasks such as document processing, payroll management, and employee onboarding (Palos-Sánchez et al., 2022) According to Votto et al. (2021), the highest applicability of these technologies remains in the areas of employee performance and satisfaction by e.g. providing performance feedback and employee discipline management where AI technology is used for measuring the risk of leaving a company (Rathi, 2018).

The middle office, which is not relatively as routine as the back office, can use AI technologies primarily for data analysis in knowledge management (Jarrahi et al., 2023), customer segmentation, and targeted marketing campaigns (Wang, 2022). Watanabe et al. (2020) highlight using AI in text mining for client company state recognition—this middle office task benefits from AI's ability to process and analyze large volumes of data.

The transformation of the front office area would increase the most significant impact. The front office is mainly characterized by activities that require a higher level of creativity, problem-solving, and human interaction, where current AI technologies reach their limits (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023). Concerning the last point, Tavoletti et al. (2022) emphasize that human interaction is crucial, especially in the consulting industry's strategic decision-making and client relationship. The evaluation of the existing SLR shows no decisive differentiation regarding using AI technologies on different hierarchical levels. It can only be assumed that AI generally influences how all parts of an organization work. Finally, Larsson et al. (2019) say that digital technologies in the front office environment are increasingly used in the initial phase, i.e., the project analysis stage.

4.1.3. RQ3 - Organizational effects on work processes

The use of AI technologies can lead to an increase in the efficiency of work performance in many areas of consulting (Bezuidenhout et al., 2022). Dell'Acqua et al. (2023) most recently showed in their study that the use of AI, or more specifically, LLMs, leads to a significant increase in the productivity and quality of consultants. Strategy consultants could complete tasks within the so-called "frontier" faster and with higher quality. However, when asked to perform tasks outside the frontier, i.e., requiring high levels of problem-solving, creative and innovative thinking, and ethical judgment, consultants using AI technologies performed even worse, again demonstrating the need for human expertise and the limitations of current AI technologies (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023). This aligns with older studies confirming that AI increases efficiency in the consulting industry, especially for repetitive tasks, allowing consultants to focus on more strategic tasks

(Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022; Rajput et al., 2016; Watanabe et al., 2020). The increased use of AI technologies also changes the traditional business model and service delivery (Jeronimo et al., 2019; Mamedova et al., 2022). Krüger and Teuteberg (2018) describe how the increased use of transformative technologies, including AI, leads to more data-driven methods and rapid prototyping in the consulting industry. On the other hand, the increase in these technologies can also lead to job losses, especially for routine areas (e.g., accounting and financial analysis) (Genguta et al., 2023).

On the other hand, it also demands new jobs in consulting, primarily in areas of IT and with higher skill sets, especially for human-robot collaboration (Malik et al., 2021; Pandit & Naseem, 2022). However, as the introduction of AI technologies is very recent, there is little literature on how the impact of AI is changing the demand for consulting services. It is striking that the demand for IT consulting, in particular, has risen dramatically in recent years (Bode et al., 2022).

4.1.4. RQ4 - Ethical governance in AI integration

Finally, this study examines how using AI relates to ethical risks and concerns within the consulting industry. The dimensions of ethical risks are multi-layered or consist of, for example, the fears of bias and discrimination, the lack of transparency and accountability, as the output of AI is often perceived as a "black box," the loss of creativity and ownership, as well as social manipulation and misinformation through the use of AI (Liang et al., 2021; Wright & Schultz, 2018). Even though the topic is of great importance, an analysis of the SLR shows that there is little literature available for the business context alone (Attard-Frost et al., 2023). Genguta et al. (2023) are, according to current knowledge, the latest paper that illustrates that in the consulting industry, the most significant ethical issues for the cautious use of AI are, above all, the high implementation costs, fear of potential job loss and lack of human-robot interaction. On the other hand, data privacy is paramount in the consulting industry, as the most sensitive client data is analyzed (Malik et al., 2021). In addition, consultants must always be transparent about how insights are gained, which is also not always compatible with the output of AI technologies

(Kamaruddin, 2023). Finally, there is a lack of general standards, such as general business contacts on how to deal with AI technologies (Sidorenko et al., 2021).

4.2. Qualitative research results

The results of the qualitative analysis are summarized in Figure 2 and are now explained using the four aggregate dimensions which reflect the four research questions.

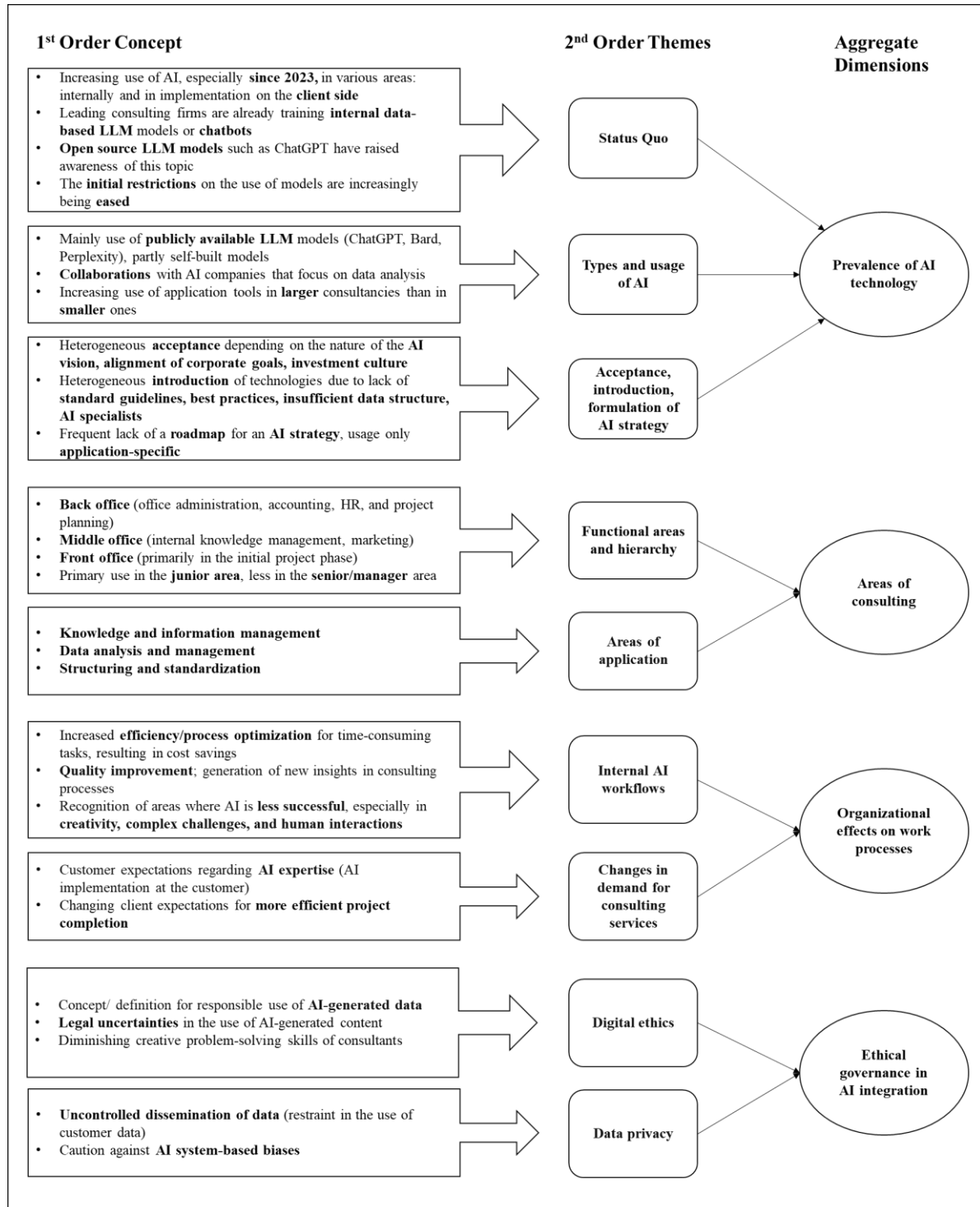


Figure 2: Qualitative Data Structure reproduced from Corley and Gioia (2004)

4.2.1. RQ1 - Prevalence of AI technology

Regarding the current **status quo**, the analysis of the interviews shows that AI technologies have already been available in the consulting industry for some time. Almost all interviewees have already been involved with these technologies, and the use of AI in the consulting industry has been increasing exponentially since 2023. However, most interviewees tend to implement the technology at their clients. In-house use of AI is still somewhat sporadic, although open-source LLM models have raised awareness of this topic as they offer a simple user interface without the need for technical expertise. The partially restrictive use can be attributed to the fact that management levels often block initial public AI technologies from use. These restrictions are increasingly being lifted.

The analysis also differentiates between the **types and usage of AI** technologies. When using AI tools, most interviewees mainly use publicly available language models such as ChatGPT, Bard, or Perplexity. Only large consulting firms have developed their own language models, primarily trained with internal data or using customer data, as they are processed in a protected environment. They also frequently partner with specialized AI companies that provide a software solution for the requested use case. It can be observed that AI is used significantly more in larger consulting firms than in smaller companies. Reasons for this are briefly summarized in Figure 3.

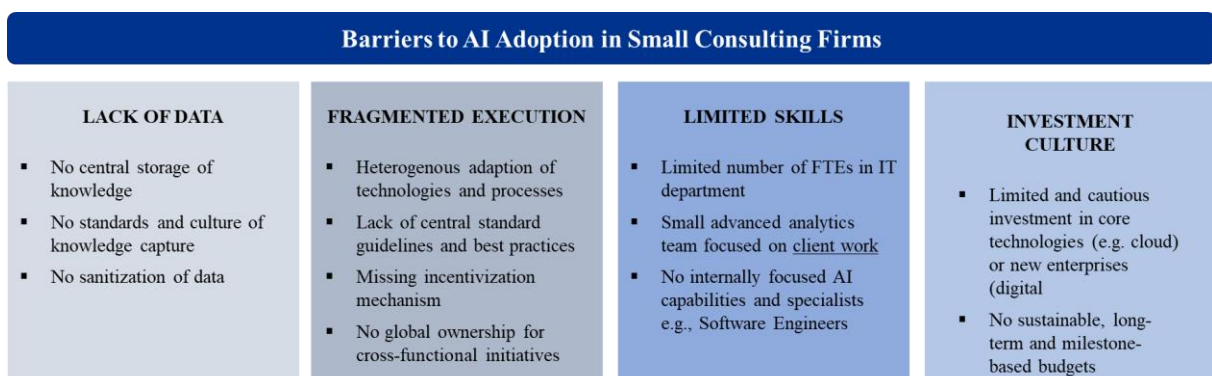


Figure 3: Overview of barriers to the adoption of artificial intelligence in small/ medium-sized consulting firms

The general **acceptance** of AI technology is rather heterogeneous among the companies surveyed. This depends very much on the characteristics of the AI vision of the individual company, their corporate goals, and the investment culture. In particular, the lack of in-house AI

specialists, standardized guidelines, best practice information, or an inadequate data storage and access structure often blocks the rapid **introduction** of the technology. The survey of interviewees showed that almost all companies lack a transparent **formulation** of their AI strategy and that the use of AI tends to be on a case-specific basis.

4.2.2. RQ2 - Areas of consulting

When asked about the general application areas of AI technology in the consulting industry, a distinction is made between **functional areas** and **hierarchy** as well as areas of application.

The application of AI technology differs within the company in the **functional areas** of the front office, middle office, and back office. The interviewees explained that the back office, in particular, sees excellent potential for AI technology and that some of it is already being used for activities in the office administration, accounting, HR, and project planning departments. In the middle office functional area, AI is primarily used to manage internal knowledge and support the marketing department. The interviewees also stated that in the front office, which reflects the tasks of consulting, the focus for using AI tools is mainly in the analysis phase of projects (brainstorming and conceptualization). In general, the interviewees indicated an increased use of AI technologies in junior positions, but they are only used hesitantly in senior positions.

Regarding specific **areas of application**, respondents stated that AI is already being used to help with information procurement (knowledge acquisition, knowledge synthesis) and information management (making information usable). In particular, the participants use it for research and analysis (evaluation of large amounts of data). In addition, AI is successfully used for structuring and standardizing processes. For example, a list of identified use cases can be found in Figure 4.

Front Office	Middle Office	Back Office
Meeting Transcription, Summarization (1)	Knowledge Sharing Bot (8)	Contract Review (15)
Text Generation/Editing (2)	Data Support (9)	Contract Creation (16)
Coding Support (3)	Stock Photo Generation (10)	Staffing (17)
Data Analysis and Model Development (4)	Project Anonymization (11)	Resume Review and Scoring (18)
Document Review (5)	MR Creation for Surveys (12)	Financial Analytics and Forecasting (19)
Idea Generation / Brainstorming (6)	Graphic Design Automation (13)	Scheduling (20)
Presentation Generation (7)	Lead Management (14)	Invoice Management (21)

Figure 4: Use cases of artificial intelligence in the business areas of consulting

4.2.3. RQ3 - Organizational effects on work processes

All interviewees confirmed correctly that using AI in the specified task areas influences **internal workflows** and leads to more efficient process design (acceleration of process flows). This contributes to process optimization, especially in time-consuming routine tasks, thus saving costs. In some regions of application, such as data analysis or the creation of forecasts, the interviewees already recognize an improvement in quality through AI. In addition, new ways of thinking and insights have been generated in some cases through AI tools. However, the interviewees also made it clear that AI can be used less in areas of application that place high demands on creativity and solving complex issues. In addition, the interviewees do not yet see AI being used for human interaction (exchanging topics, recommendations, etc.).

The second area within the "Effects on Work Processes" dimension is the change in demand for consulting services. So far, none of the participants have perceived a general shift in demand for consulting services. However, it is striking that customer expectations concerning AI expertise are increasing, particularly about AI implementations (e.g., for automation issues at manufacturing companies). In addition, respondents report that clients' expectations of the consulting firm in terms of project efficiency are increasing; in particular, clients expect projects to be completed more quickly due to the use of AI technologies.

4.2.4. RQ4 - Ethical governance in AI integration

Finally, the study considered **digital ethics** and **data protection** issues about using AI technology in the consulting industry. The interviewees' analysis shows significant concerns regarding **digital ethics** in using AI technologies and their long-term impact on humanity. How can protecting human rights (e.g., discrimination) and privacy be guaranteed? For the interviewees, AI systems often operate as a "black box," in which these systems can only be interpreted and explained to a limited extent. It is difficult to understand how they work, how they arrive at certain decisions, or who is responsible for them. Some interviewees are concerned about what happens if the AI systems make mistakes or cause damage. Therefore, some

consulting companies are defining concepts for the responsible handling of AI-generated data so as not to jeopardize customer trust. In addition, the interviews showed that some consulting companies are clarifying legal issues, particularly how copyright can be protected as a service with AI-generated data. A final legal clarification regarding property rights and any infringements is still pending.

The survey also revealed that younger advisors find that the regular use of GenAI technologies reduces their ability to solve problems creatively in the short term and that AI technologies are often used too hastily to find solutions quickly.

Another critical reason AI technologies are still being used hesitantly in the consulting industry is the issue of data protection. All respondents expressed significant concerns regarding publicly available language models considering the unknown way the information is collected, stored, and used, particularly the use of client data and the resulting uncontrolled disclosure of this data. There are also concerns about unauthorized access to sensitive information and how security precautions can be taken against data breaches. Since AI systems are trained with vast amounts of data in which social prejudices are embedded, the interviewees also see problems due to distortions or "misinformation" by AI systems that could lead to misinterpretations.

4.3. Triangulation results

The triangulation results should combine the findings of both methods, thereby providing a comprehensive perspective that considers findings from existing literature and direct industry insights. Both approaches confirm that the adoption of AI technologies is in its infancy but is increasing, with the qualitative research specifically highlighting that AI is more often explored in client consulting than for internal purposes. Furthermore, both methods show that AI is primarily integrated into routine activities (cf. Kapoor & Ghosal, 2022) to increase efficiency, while human expertise is still indispensable for creative and complex tasks. However, comparing data from the two methods also reveals that there are hardly any diverging opinions. This can be due to the novelty of the subject and the fact that much of the existing literature is

still in the early stages of investigation. Thus, further research is needed. Triangulation, especially in qualitative studies, provides significant new insights. These include specific areas of AI application: The qualitative study offers detailed insights into specific areas of AI application by showcasing different use cases of potential AI application between the different departments of consulting and seeing a higher potential for usage in the junior positions—specifics that are not that detailed in the SLR. Ethics and confidentiality are also highlighted in the interviews. Specifically, the interviewees are concerned regarding data protection and ethical responsibility in handling AI, mainly when dealing with sensitive company and client data – aspects less emphasized in the SLR. Additionally, the qualitative research underscores the reliance of consulting firms on human expertise and experience. While AI can perform specific analytical tasks, it cannot replace the strategic insight and creativity offered by experienced consultants. This shows resistance to change in many industries, including consulting, where introducing AI often requires significant efforts to adapt workflows and organizational structures. Furthermore, many consulting firms may lack sufficient knowledge and expertise to integrate and utilize AI technologies effectively. Besides, cost and ROI are considered when it comes to AI adoption. AI adoption is potentially costly, and the return on investment is not immediately apparent, especially for smaller consulting firms.

5. Discussion

This section summarizes the study's findings, limitations, contributions to future research, and practical implications.

5.1. Limitations and considerations

This work has achieved essential findings, but it is crucial to acknowledge prevalent limitations. The limitation to four specific databases, a fixed combination of search terms, and the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria may lead to an incomplete coverage of the topic area. Given the topic's novelty, unpublished or non-peer-reviewed sources may not fully capture the latest trends. However, the databases used are widely recognized in information technology

(Borges et al., 2021). Despite a systematic approach to the literature research, a certain degree of subjectivity remains, particularly in selecting works relevant to the research questions. Qualitative interviews were also conducted to do justice to the topicality of the subject matter. Although the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) and the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2013) were used, both inductively and partly deductively, the data interpretation is often subjective, especially since the design of the questionnaire can lead the interviewees to make certain statements (Denzin et al., 2006). The interview participants were based exclusively in Germany, which could lead to a bias towards the German market. However, due to globalization, especially for large companies, it can be assumed that the findings are also transferable to other markets and remain relevant outside Germany. Although the sample size is relatively small, it is considered sufficient for qualitative research until data saturation is reached (Morse & Doberneck, 1995)

5.2. Directions for future research

Research needs to be done on this aspect of the application because of its newness. For instance, AI in consulting should be studied with attention paid to business model transformation and competitive positioning aspects. Additionally, the effect of AI ought to be analyzed from the perspective of separate domains to learn about each sector's specific issues and needs. Future research could examine what skill sets the consultants require in the new scenario whereby AI is used to change work processes that have worked for most companies in the past without any significant complications. Further, an examination of the impact of AI on client relationships could be informative. In this connection, the altering influence of AI on client–consultant communication and interpersonal relations, along with the change in the classical consulting lifecycle, can be studied here. Larger scale quantitative study analysis might also be applicable in analyzing firm performance, such as the financial effects, among other implications.

5.3. Managerial implications

Practitioners should focus on finding AI technology solutions that align with their company vision and strategy, creating long-term business value rather than just short-term cost reductions. AI can be used at all functional levels, so piloting use cases is a good way to see results. Instead of relying on one specialized AI leader, gathering opinions on AI usage from all company levels, from junior to senior level, is better. Currently, AI technologies are best suited for repetitive tasks and helping to structure large data sets. However, it's becoming even more crucial for consultants to understand specific client problems to conceptualize hands-on client-facing solutions with a creative mindset.

5.4. Conclusions

This study investigated the current state of AI's impact on the consulting industry through a comprehensive analysis of the current status quo of the way AI is currently used in the consulting industry. It also examined the areas where it is most widely used within the business and how it impacts ethical concerns. The study used the triangulation methodology with an SLR and qualitative interviews to answer these questions. Firstly, the combinatorics allows for a functional initial analysis through the SLR, and secondly, a more explorative knowledge acquisition through qualitative interviews. The implementation of AI is very heterogeneous, especially after applying an AI strategy. Larger consulting firms (here related to the number of FTEs) are more proactive in the implementation than smaller companies, which is confirmed by previous literature (Stancu & Duțescu, 2021). Application mainly works in administrative solid tasks, as Kapoor and Ghosal (2022) confirmed. Although existing papers have already confirmed that the use of, e.g., GPT 4.0 increases the efficiency of consultants (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023) or that the use of AI also leads to increased ethical risks (Genguta et al., 2023), this paper is the first to contextualize all the different aspects of the application of AI in the consulting industry.

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7. Appendices

Table 1: Search Words Combinations

Detail level	Search Word Combination
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Artificial Intelligence" OR AI) (Consulting OR Consultancy AND ("Machine Learning" OR "Deep Learning" OR "Ethics" OR Neural Networks")) (Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND ("Artificial Intelligence" OR AI)
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Digital Transformation") (Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Change Management") (Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Digital Strategy") (Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND Digital (Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND Demand (Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND Innovation
Broad	Consulting OR Consultancy "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI

Table 2: Summary of respondent profiles in the consulting sector

Persons	Hierarchy	Position	Specialization
Person 1	Junior Level	Data Strategy Consultant	AI Strategy Consulting
Person 2	Mid-Level	Jr. Engagement Manager	Strategy Consulting
Person 3	Mid-Level	Manager - Consulting	Management Consulting
Person 4	Upper-Mid-Level	Practice Operations Manager	Pricing Consulting
Person 5	Senior Executive	CEO	AI Strategy Consulting
Person 6	Senior Executive	CEO	AI Strategy Consulting
Person 7	Upper-Mid-Level	Project Manager	M&A Consulting
Person 8	Senior Executive	Senior Partner	Management Consulting
Person 9	Mid-Level	GenAI Lead for EMEA	AI Strategy Consulting
Person 10	Mid-Level	Strategy and Foresight Consultant	Foresight Consulting
Person 11	Junior Level	Junior Consultant	Management Consulting
Person 12	Junior Level	Junior Consultant	AI Strategy Consulting
Person 13	Senior Executive	CEO	M&A Consulting
Person 14	Senior Executive	Partner	Management Consulting
Person 15	Senior Executive	CEO	Management Consulting

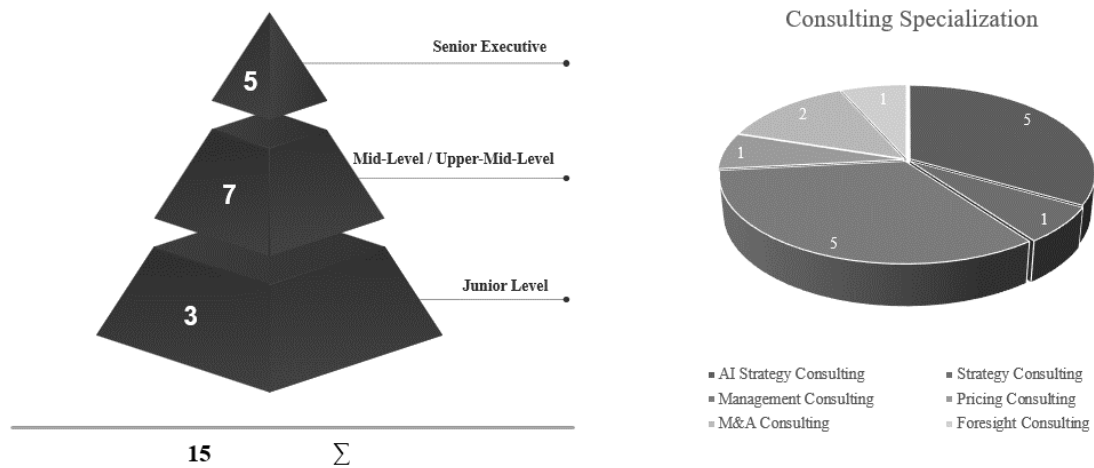


Figure 1: Distribution of hierarchy levels and specializations of the interview partners in the consulting sector

Table 3: Number of documents per Research Question (Papers can answer multiple RQs)

Research Questions (RQs)	Identified Paper (Count)
RQ1	22
RQ2	27
RQ3	30
RQ4	6

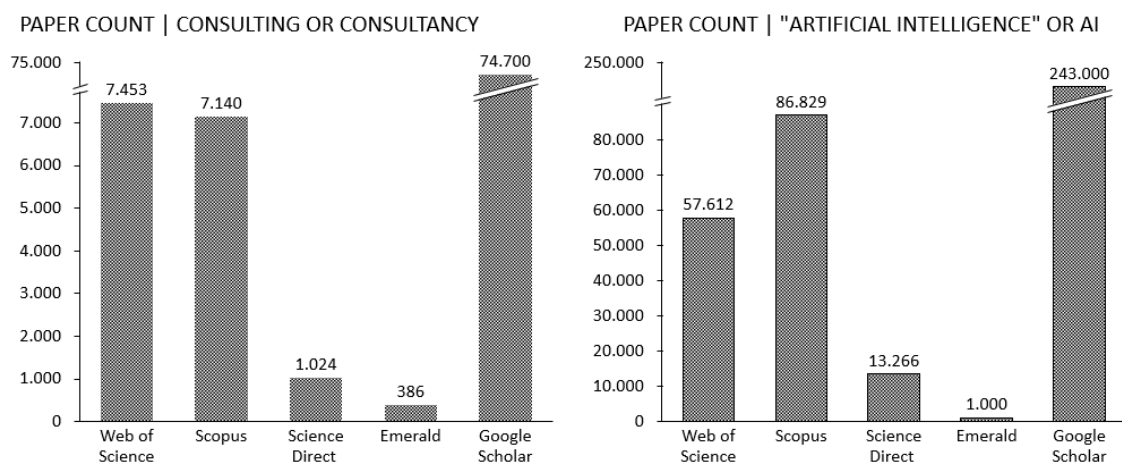


Figure 2: Comparison of the number of published papers on 'Consulting' and 'Artificial Intelligence' in different scientific databases

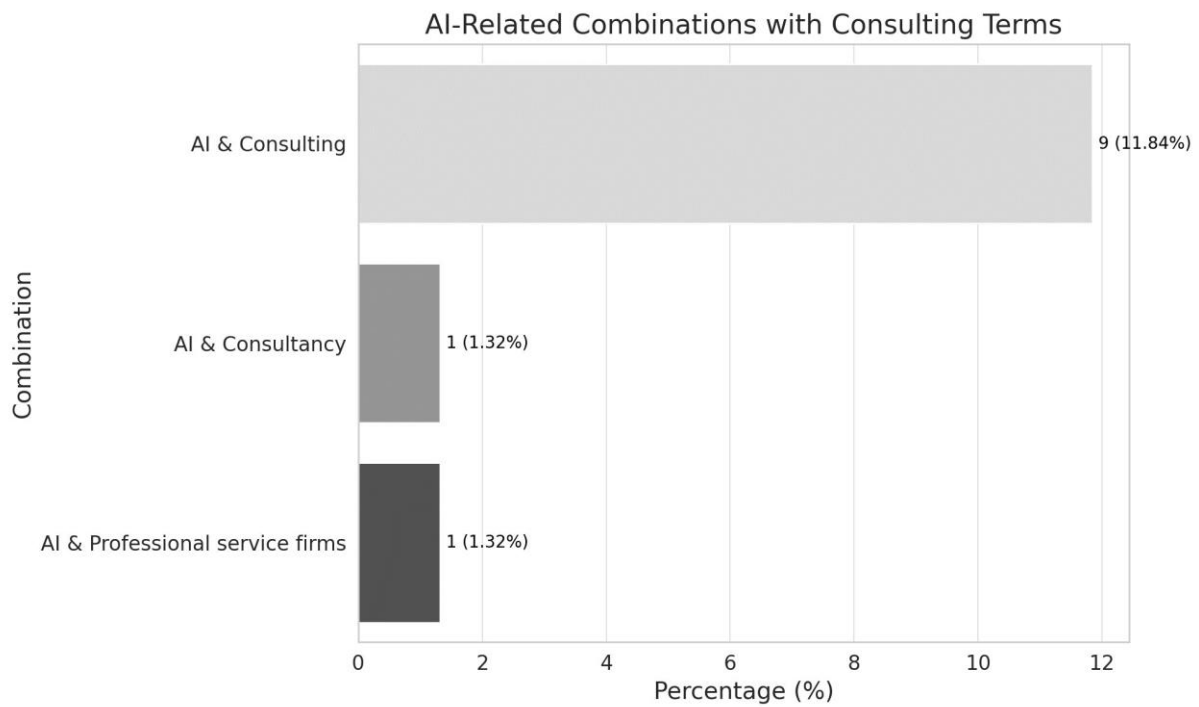


Figure 3: Python analysis on AI-related combinations with consulting in selected Papers

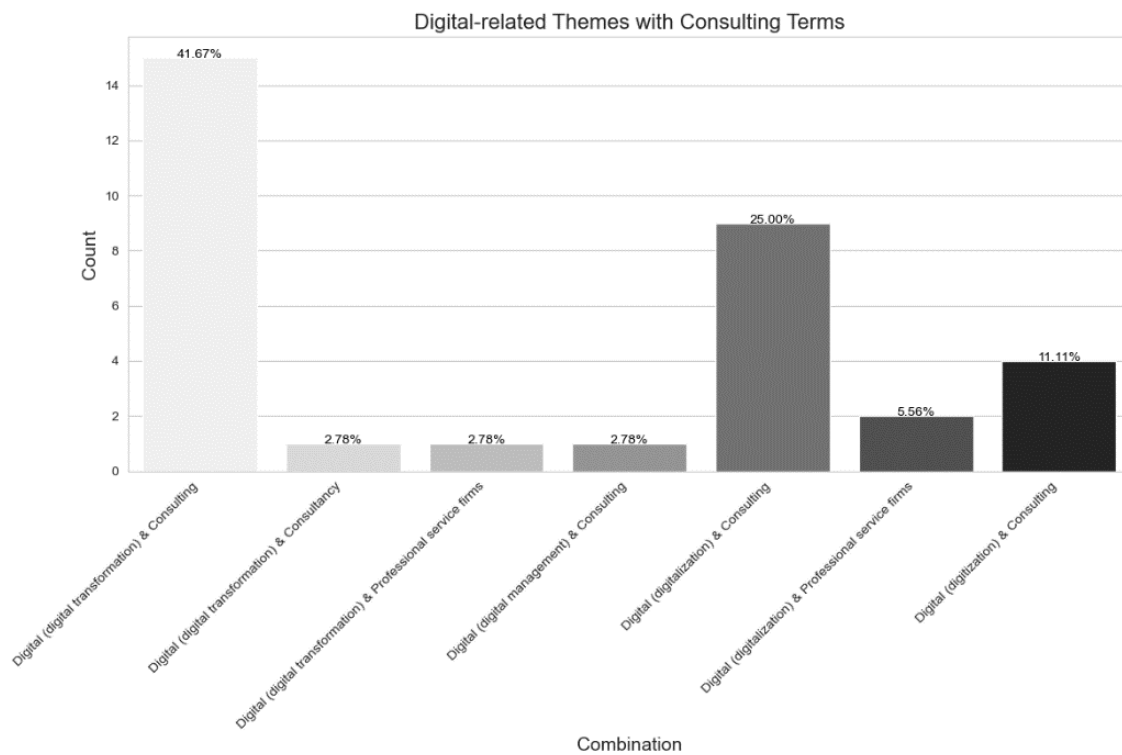


Figure 4: Python analysis on digital-related combinations with consulting in selected Papers

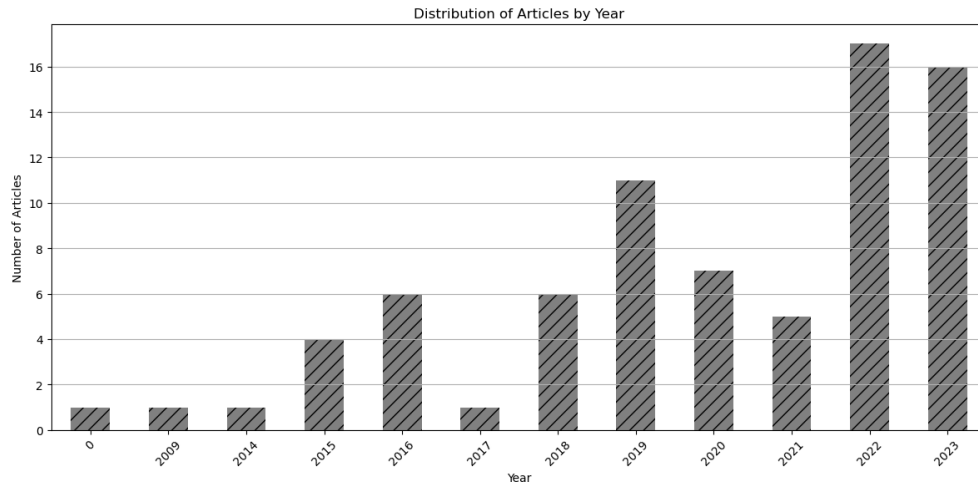


Figure 5: Python analysis on the distribution of selected articles by year

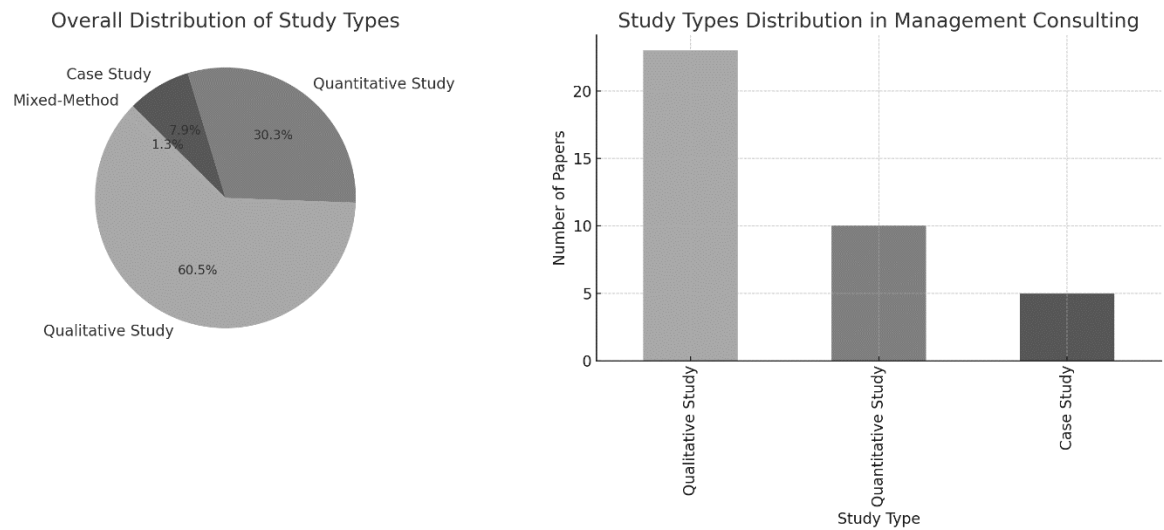


Figure 6: Python analysis on the distribution of study types

Detail level	Search Words	Title Search					Average Result
		Web of Science	Scopus	Science Direct	Emerald	Google Scholar	
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Artificial Intelligence" OR AI)	6	10	1	0	76	23
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy AND ("Machine Learning" OR "Deep Learning" OR "Neural Networks")	9	0	2	0	31	10
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND ("Artificial Intelligence" OR AI)	7	14	1	1	78	25
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Digital Transformation")	7	13	1	1	90	28
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Change Management")	2	7	0	6	58	18
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Digital Strategy")	0	1	0	0	5	2
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND Digital	48	80	2	7	408	136
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND Demand	16	19	3	2	113	38
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS) AND Innovation	50	184	17	21	767	256
Broad	Consulting OR Consultancy	7,453	7,140	1,024	386	74,700	22,420
Broad	"Artificial Intelligence" OR AI	57,612	86,829	13,266	1000	243,000	97,110

Figure 7: Analysis of search results for keyword combinations in the title search of scientific databases (with potential duplicates)

		Title, Abstract Keywords Search					
level	Search Words	Web of Science	Science Direct	Scopus	Emerald	Average Result (title only)	Average Result
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Artificial Intelligence" OR AI)	15	8	32	21	5	23
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy AND ("Machine Learning" OR "Deep Learning"))	31	4	5	0	3	12
Detailed	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS)	19	8	42	34	7	32
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Digital Transformation")	19	1	38	9	7	22
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Change Management")	14	0	29	78	5	40
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy) AND ("Digital Strategy")	1	1	2	1	0	1
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS)	121	10	145	73	45	113
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS)	197	40	138	295	12	210
Medium	(Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR KIBS)	171	39	257	238	85	222
Broad	Consulting OR Consultancy	36,650	29,262	22,707	82,000	4,993	47,119
Broad	"Artificial Intelligence" OR AI	156,588	47,696	382,715	41000	48,480	193,434

Figure 8: Analysis of search results for keyword combinations in the title, abstract or keyword search of scientific databases (with potential duplicates)

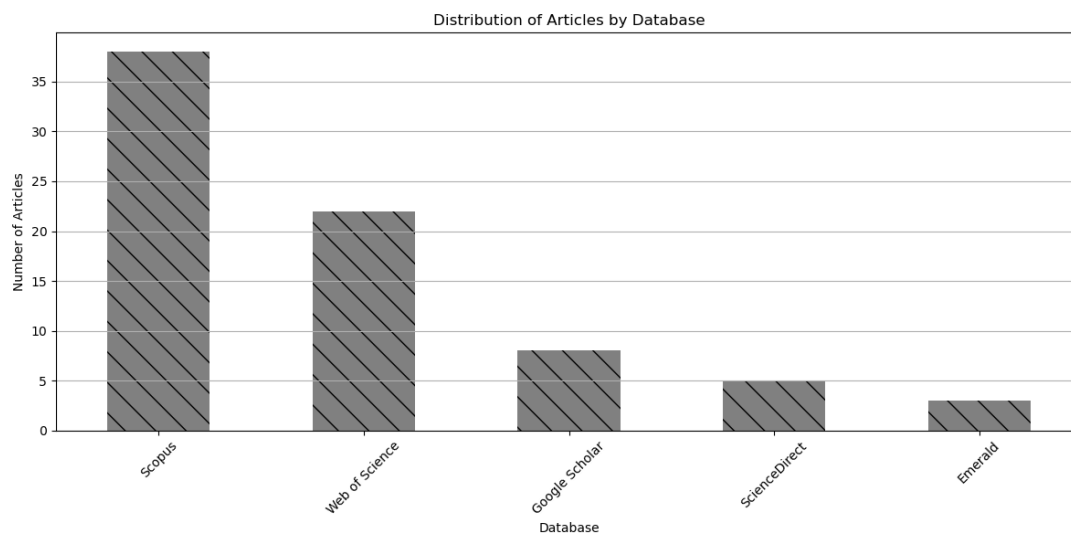


Figure 9: Python analysis on the distribution of articles by document type

TITLE Scopus 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (7) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Deep..." (0) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (1) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (5) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (4) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (1) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (37) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (6) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" ... (113)	TITLE Science Direct 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (0) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Deep..." (1) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (0) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (0) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (0) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (1)
TITLE Web of Science 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (2) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Deep..." (8) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (1) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (5) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (1) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (0) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (28) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (9) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (35)	TITLE Emerald 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (0) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Deep..." (0) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (1) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (2) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (0) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (2)

Figure 10: EndNote results after deletion of duplicates at title level

ABSTRACT KEYWORDS TITLE Science Direct 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (1) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Deep..." (1) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (0) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (1) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (0) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (2) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (2) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (5)	ABSTRACT KEYWORDS TITLE Emerald 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (11) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Deep..." (0) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (5) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (3) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (18) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (0) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (16) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (66) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (22)
ABSTRACT KEYWORDS TITLE Web of Science 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (5) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Dee..." (15) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (1) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (6) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (0) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (39) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" ... (123) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (0) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" ... (361)	ABSTRACT KEYWORDS TITLE Scopus 1 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Artificial Intelligence" OR AI (18) 2 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Machine Learning" OR "Dee..." (10) 3 Detailed Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" OR... (1) 4 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Transformation" (9) 5 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Change Management" (24) 6 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy AND "Digital Strategy" (0) 7 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (30) 8 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" O... (87) 9 Medium Consulting OR Consultancy OR "Professional Service Firms" ... (140)

Figure 11: EndNote results after deletion of duplicates at title, abstract & keywords level

The following tables contain the interview questions together with the written statements provided by each interviewee. As a result of the sensitive nature of the required information, the interviews were not recorded, hence no precise transcripts are accessible.

Area	Questions	Person 1 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	'- Data & AI Team of Accenture - Strategy Capability
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	'provides consulting services primarily for large companies (no specific area of expertise), but the consulting is more technical consulting.
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	'- less than a year
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	'AI technology can be used everywhere on the customer's side.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'In the business area for the customer, mainly Microsoft Azure solutions are implemented, which also incorporate AI technologies. In addition, internal AI tools are used for resource planning and staffing.
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	'Customers are already making intensive inquiries about AI projects, while internal use relies heavily on manual documents without AI implementation. A guideline for the use of AI tools is still missing.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	The interviewee is not aware if there is a specific AI strategy in the company, but in his introduction, he was instead briefed to be very careful with these technologies.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	AI technologies are still rarely used internally in his environment, and when they are, they tend to be used for back-office tasks.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	As already mentioned, AI technology has hardly been used for projects so far but rather for back-office tasks such as recruitment (matching procedure: possible candidates for defined criteria). Unfortunately, he does not know what is actually being used here.
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	'There is an internal chatbot for employees that can answer questions. However, it is rarely used by the interviewer. The chatbot is integrated into Teams.
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	It is still relatively low for normal analyst work (most work is done in MS Office). This could probably lead to increased efficiency in analysis work so that internal processes are optimized.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'- did not use ChatGPT so far because he is afraid of giving the LLM too much client/company relevant information (Caution) ' potential usage: organizing notes from meetings/e-mails/summaries
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	Probably yes - the impact of AI can affect all types of services. '- Customers are interested in AI projects (e.g., automation, data strategy (customers want analysis because they have too much data)
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are ethical considerations critical when integrating AI into consulting?	It is difficult to understand how AI tools work and how they arrive at results and decisions. More information should be provided here, including on legal issues. - Training during onboarding for the job on how to use AI tools and, above all, when to use them
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, mainly when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	Caution in use, internal data protection practices, documentation, No use of ChatGPT and Deepl with customer information
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	No experience

Area	Questions	Person 2 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Engagement Manager
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	'-Strategy Consultant /Manager
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	Three years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Use has been relatively low so far - but is now increasing significantly. Internal tool (Lillie) from summer 2023/ every six months for the entire company
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'-Use of public tools e.g. ChatGPT - own LLM model (similar to ChatGPT, i.e., LLM, Lilli) - Data tool (especially for production companies), but also for special departments (Quantum Black) --> smoothing of processes, automation, energy saving
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	We are a large consulting company and quickly got to grips with the topics of OpenAI and ChatGPT when they came up in November 2022
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	The company has an AI strategy. Unfortunately, the details are not yet known.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	Knowledge and information management, especially for back-office work, possibly saving employees from repetitive work --> Now with AI.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'- general productivity/efficiency tool for all phases of consulting projects - primarily for very operational tasks (e.g., analysis), but also to improve quality when coordinating with clients
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	'Internal process optimization, as faster implementation of AI tools than Excel with complicated macros'
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	Sometimes, unconventional answers do not come directly from a human being. These may provide new insights. Internal processes could be better structured and standardized.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'- pre-structuring of a (client) - problem /search engine (within the firm, because it has its knowledge management of the company) - pre-guessed answers (formulating of text) - data analysis (python script, excel formulas, excel macro)
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	It is not enough to simply reproduce existing knowledge. Instead, knowledge will become increasingly important and more accessible through AI.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	Yes; the concept of values must be reconsidered. Principles, values, and norms for use should be regulated to protect values (human rights and privacy). The answers provided by the AI tools are provisional and must constantly be reviewed.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, mainly when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	'- Only use with generic data - Major concerns about uncontrolled sharing of data -Concerns about systemic bias (how neutrally the data is evaluated and decisions made)
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	Dilemmas could arise when gathering information, forming opinions, and dealing with disinformation.

Area	Questions	Person 3 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Manager in the Value Chain Transformation Team
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Mostly Strategic Logistic Topics
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	5 Years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	For the past 1 to 2 years, the topic has increasingly become the focus of attention within the company. Its use is increasing rapidly. He himself uses technologies rather sporadically.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	- participant uses public tools, mainly ChatGPT - on the other hand, the company has developed its own LLM model (similar to ChatGPT KAIchat), which can also be used with customer data
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	Rapid adoption as soon as the topic of OpenAI and ChatGPT came up in November 2022. Use is steadily increasing.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	The company has an AI strategy. Unfortunately, the participant does not know any details about it as it is not communicated company-wide
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	In the back office for routine administrative tasks AI tools are often used for initial brainstorming in a specific case. Otherwise, more AI technologies can be used for data-intensive matters.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	- in information management - - finding initial concepts (with the help of keywords) - usually at the start of a project (data analysis) - to standardize internal processes
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	Development of an own AI tool (BI tools) --> own decision-making - Customer Journey; Customer Satisfaction (Automation, with Chatbots)
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	Up to now, most tasks have been very human-centered. With more use of AI, work processes could be optimized/improved.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	- brainstorming (trial and error approach) - Perhaps AI can lead to new ideas
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	- currently similar demand for consulting services with the same/similar scope, BUT they offer more AI-based consulting assistance (customer requests for AI expertise increasing)
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	Sees concerns about the unknown nature of data processing and sharing. Standards should be introduced for digital systems to safeguard moral and social principles. Legal clarifications (e.g., ownership rights to evaluations)
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, mainly when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	ChatGPT and Deepl are not used with customer information due to the unknown, possibly uncontrolled disclosure of data.
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	No experience

Area	Questions	Person 4 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Practice Operations Manager & Chief of Staff
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	He is not primarily doing consulting projects—more general value proposition knowledge management for consulting companies.
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	6 Years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	AI is also becoming increasingly important in the consulting sector. AI has been an issue in the company for some time, but the project to develop an internal AI strategy was only launched around six months ago.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	- Participants mainly use public tools (ChatGPT) - already used an AI tool called "Marvin" in the US to collect data from qualitative interviews (automatic transcript of interviews) - development of an internal knowledge management chatbot based on AI BUT: more focused on the strategy and less on the usage of one specific technology; potential usage of LLMs (which are not public)
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	The introduction of AI is often still hesitant in the industry. Depending on the company and its objectives, as well as the willingness to invest in the introduction of AI The Following reasons are why the company has a slow adoption rate. - LACK OF DATA (No central storage of knowledge; No standards and culture of knowledge capture; No sanitization of data) - FRAGMENTED EXECUTION (Heterogenous adaption of technologies and processes; Lack of central standard guidelines and best practices; Missing incentivization mechanism; No global ownership for cross-functional initiatives) - LIMITED SKILLS (Limited number of FTEs in IT department, Small advanced analytics team focused on client work, No internally focused AI capabilities and specialists, e.g., Software Engineers) - INVESTMENT CULTURE (Limited and cautious investment in core technologies (e.g., cloud) or new enterprises (digital), mostly lacking behind the market ~5 years No sustainable, long-term, and milestone-based budgets)
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	- At the beginning of the project, muscular problems of structuring --> Learning more robust thinking of use case: for which project could you use GenAI - identification of areas of opportunity through data collection by surveys within the company (front office, back office, middle office) --> can potentially be used in all areas of consulting
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	AI technology can be used in all departments of consulting companies. It is more important to check when and how specifically the technology can be implemented.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	' First, they thought of implementing along the value chain but then realized that this approach did not work out (needs too much capacity to track performance) Current focus: Examining AI opportunities for front, middle, and back offices and how they can benefit from AI together. Further, they assume that AI will be used more by a consultant in the entry position to help them do their tasks more efficiently (Knowledge management and data analysis)
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	I purchased software that can record meetings and create summaries a year ago.
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	AI technology will undoubtedly affect all areas to some extent; it is more a question of when this will happen. In principle, efficiency optimization will be achieved. I see less support for complex consulting challenges and human interactions (especially in management)
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future	Potential: - chatbot on websites (middle office) - marketing assets (middle office)

	applications?	- slide creation (front office) - proposal writing (front office)
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	'- From Client site: some but infrequent customers ask for support in AI implementation (always very use case-based) --> a lot of pro bono work. You generally expect more demand for consulting services, the client probably expects a more efficient project completion
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	Responsible use of AI-generated data (protection of personal data and possible discrimination), handling of possible errors in AI systems
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	There is no use of AI technologies when it comes to customer data, as it is unclear whether it is copy-protected if it was generated by a machine (unauthorized access, uncontrolled disclosure - data breaches).
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	When using text data generated by AI, it is unclear if it is not copyrighted when produced by a machine.

Area	Questions	Person 5 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Project Manager
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Project manager in the field of M&A and, in particular, the sale of insolvent/distressed companies
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	Five years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Fundamentally substantial increase - in use for us for half a year generally substantial increase - in use for us for half a year
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'ANALYSIS The "Asprin" tool is mainly used at the beginning of the analysis and was acquired for all employees as a corporate license. Communication with the tool works via Teams or e-mail. Tools build financial KPIs from different databases. ChatGPT is mainly used for personal use but related to work (e.g., creative ideas, inspiration, market classification, structure development) DeepL DUE DILIGENCE Intralinks and data site: AI tool that blacklists personal data & firm data within the virtual data room
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	This may vary depending on the consulting firm. 'ChatGPT can only be used to a limited extent with current data and is therefore difficult to use for evaluation purposes. We are a small consulting firm without AI specialists; we still lack a general strategy for using AI tools and do not know which data structure is necessary.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	'AI technology should be used primarily with the aim of general cost efficiency (so that, for example, an intern can be eliminated) or the intern does not have to do such manual work.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	The participant sees most use in numerical applications at the beginning of a project.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'Artificial intelligence is primarily used at the start of an M&A process (analysis stage) Processes that require much manual work can now be implemented more quickly and efficiently.
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	blackening of documents Analysis of financial KPIs
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'AI technologies should be used primarily for very time-consuming tasks so that they can be implemented more quickly. WHERE AI cannot be used: Understanding of complex issues where several data contexts and personal opinions come together
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	Improved information management, data management, forecasting
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	'Demand is not yet influenced, as AI only serves as an aid, but the consultant is responsible for the entire picture.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	Guidelines and framework conditions for using AI in advisory services should be drawn. Uncertain effects when processing AI-generated data (how reliable is it and how are the results generated). Legal clarification of property rights and possible infringements

	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	No usage of open, not licensed AI technologies when it comes to client data
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	No experience

Area	Questions	Person 6 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Strategy and Foresight Consultant
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Manager in the Foresight & Strategy Consulting Foresight planning is the consultancy of future scenario prediction.
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	4 Years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Still very low in the normal consulting sector, but likely to increase rapidly.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	Mainly publicly available models: ChatGPT(web scrapping, visualization, trends rating, text controlling (of things that may be missed out) ; Perplexity (for scenario analysis)
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	AI technologies have been used very quickly for day-to-day work in recent years, and there is also ongoing training on the current tools available on the market. However, we lack AI specialists.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	We do not yet have an AI strategy in the company.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	Back office and middle office
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	Mainly in the back office for administrative tasks and in human resources There are helpful tools for junior tasks, but I do not think AI is used in management yet.
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	So far, we have mainly used AI in projects for research (knowledge management) and data analysis—a little for scenario structuring.
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	We hope for greater efficiency and, thus, cost savings in the medium term.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	- web scrapping - visualization - scenario structuring
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	'Higher request for foresight projects, because their services clients require, is a niche event.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	Responsible handling of AI-generated data in consulting is extremely important, especially with AI-generated results based on customer data. Companies probably need to use their own data models and define concepts for handling AI-generated data. There is a lack of legal clarification.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	AI should only be fed with anonymous data, as information on the storage and transfer of data and protection against unauthorized access is still lacking.
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	AI is based on data and shows little empathy, which is extremely important when providing advice to take customers along in the processes.

Area	Questions	Person 7 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Lead Generative AI Data Scientist in a big consultancy company.
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Doing many projects in digital transformation
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	4 Years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	It is becoming increasingly important, and the initial reluctance to use AI tools is waning.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	Mainly publicly accessible models, such as 'Chat GPT (to stay efficient) GitHub Copilot (especially for coding) Bard (Google)
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	Currently still low due to a lack of human resources: "Employees always have to work on projects and do not have time to implement internal projects with AI, and there are AI specialists who could take care of AI topics internally. For his teams, he demands that consultants get to grips with AI technology and use it (especially for developers).
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	There is no uniform AI strategy: On the contrary, company management initially banned open LLM models, and only the company's project team leaders could implement individual use cases (allowlists) after consulting with management. These restrictions are slowly being lifted. At the moment, they started having discussions about using firm licenses (like Azure)
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	Back office: Especially in the HR area (recruitment: CVs are matched with the job description using LLM models) But also for project planning. AI is still used very little at the manager level.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	High potential in project preparation, research, and marketing Rather, application-specific about the overall consulting project: - Writing code - Text structuring
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	Used AI in a project for personalized product packaging where users could upload their own images --> marketing purposes
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	Projects can be carried out faster or more efficiently, resulting in cost savings. Presumably, new findings from using AI tools can also improve the quality of advice.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	Project processing is faster (so that more projects can be carried out).
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	Yes, the general demand for AI projects and AI expertise from the consulting firm is increasing. The client also expects the project to be completed more quickly.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	No one currently knows what impact AI will have on humanity. This is the beginning of a new era, and no one knows the exact process of these systems. In principle, it is essential to use AI tools responsibly so as not to jeopardize customer trust. I do not believe that a specific AI model will conquer the market. AI models also respond in a very nuanced and not-so-polemical way.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	Caution when using customer data. How the AI collects and stores data and protects it against unauthorized access is unknown. In addition, AI analyses could lead to misinformation.
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	Increased efficiency - data breach

Area	Questions	Person 8 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	CEO of the AI & Data Science consultancy
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	No industry focus, offer consulting for AI & Data Science for all areas, build customized AI models
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	5 Years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Here, in the context of adoption in the standard industry, senior executives became aware of the topic around 3-5 years ago and started to ask more for consultancy services; the most significant shift was (in November 2021 - release of ChatGPT) and now the average employees became aware of the technology.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	We use both free and licensed AI tools for internal applications.
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	Our company specializes in AI consulting, so the introduction of AI technology was quickly adopted.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	The company's front office is divided into a data engineer (who implements the AI models) and an AI consultant (who conducts the workshops) An AI strategy for internal use has not been developed. However, the AI applications are used on an ad hoc basis.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	Back Office and Middle Office
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	Many tools are used in marketing/office organization/accounting and for programming and project and capacity planning. AI technology is used in all company hierarchies but with different use cases. AI is rarely used in the manager area, as complex decision-making processes that AI does not yet cover are often required.
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	We specialize in AI implementations. Therefore, it is used in every project.
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	Communication between the different roles is becoming increasingly important as you work with two very different roles. On the one hand, some consultants need to understand the customer's overall goal. On the other hand, some data engineers need to understand all the implementation details. If the communication is successful, we have a significant process optimization in project execution.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	General striving for further optimization/automation of internal processes, resulting in cost savings
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	Our customers expect AI expertise, especially when it comes to implementation.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI into consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	The use of AI always leads to distortions. The aim must be to ensure that the data is balanced. Mechanisms must be built in to check the quality of the output. However, a particular bias is always present in the data, so beware of misinterpretations.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	When using open licenses, no sensitive customer data is imported into the systems.
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	Lack of legal certainty, clarification of property rights, and what happens in the event of violations

Area	Questions	Person 9 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Entry Position in the Strategy & Consulting Position (Department Data & AI)
	Consulting Focus: (If any)In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Data & I, but no particular industry focus
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	1 Year
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	The use of AI tools has so far only been used hesitantly in the general consulting industry. However, this is now likely to increase exponentially. Restrictions on the use of AI in the consulting industry appear to be easing.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'Person has purchased ChatGPT 4 at his own expense; the creative tool the company took over Midjourney due to the project costs. Further, the company has its own LLM model (but not powerful enough) if compared with ChatGPT. Use Cases: - visualization - text generation (brainstorming) - translation
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	We are a large consulting firm and have now developed our models. Larger consulting firms probably have more capacity to deal with AI and test the meaningful use of the tools. We, too, often lack the time and AI specialists to integrate AI tools more intensively into our processes.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	I am not aware whether the company has an AI strategy. However, it would be essential to be able to adapt the data structure accordingly.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	In human resources (recruitment) and project planning. But also in marketing
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'Can be used daily (especially for slide building) In the back office for routine tasks and more efficient project planning In the middle office for structured organization of knowledge and information, partly for brainstorming
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	Preparation for an AI Workshop. Preparation of AI-generated pictures(for merchandise, visualization etc), Slides
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'No specific answer to this question
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	AI is always used on the employee's initiative in various areas and not based on detailed instructions from a superior. Future potential: AI increases daily work efficiency but also harbors the risk that one's creativity and ability to solve complex issues will decrease because people are too quick to use this technology without thinking for themselves.)
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	There is no general change in demand for consulting services. However, clients increasingly expect projects to be completed more quickly due to the availability of AI tools.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	Responsible handling of AI-generated data. Regulations on copyrights - who owns the AI-generated data
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	It is partly unclear how the AI-generated data may be stored and used. E.g., what the images may be used for from a legal perspective; sensitive customer-specific data may not be used
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	Possible misinterpretations due to AI analyses

Area	Questions	Person 10 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Independent consultant with background from a lot of tier 1 consultancy companies
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Advice on how companies can become more data-driven at a highly strategic level
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	>20 years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Most adaptations occur at the junior level and not at the senior level, as many strategic decisions must be made and problems solved in senior positions.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	Mainly publicly accessible tools such as ChatGPT, I have noticed that some consulting firms are looking to collaborate with AI experts. <u>AI tools are handy for building up your knowledge management.</u>
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	In smaller consulting firms, it can be seen that they are only slowly using this technology. Consultants have little time. As a result, the speed at which AI is introduced in the consulting industry often depends on management, their corporate goals, and their willingness to invest.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	I have hardly noticed uniform strategies for data management, IT topics, or even AI in consulting companies. Company-wide implementation will most likely be bottom-up rather than top-down.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	In knowledge and information management and for routine tasks
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	sees the potential primarily in the use of back-office activities (CV screening - match to recruitment criteria) The use of AI technologies is primarily very application-specific for the respective topics of consulting activities and, on the other hand, for the development of knowledge management, especially in subordinate positions
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	Quick creation of a visual image-heavy presentation with dalle-e
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	It makes work more effective (accelerating processes), thereby saving costs.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'in the future, AI will lead to the automation of internal processes and more productive internal processes. Concentration of work on more value-added services
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	There is hardly any change in consulting services/demand, as consultants continue to act as an external party that can provide the company with confirmation for certain decisions. Customer expectations regarding AI implementation (e.g., for manufacturing company automation issues) will likely increase.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	'no significant ethical concerns because consultants are trained to judge independently if an opinion/statement is correct/ needs adaption <u>A potential problem could be "theft of knowledge" by using AI technology.</u>
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	There is a lack of information on how AI collects, stores, and analyzes data. There is also no specific information on how the data is passed on. I would, therefore, be careful with sensitive customer data when using the AI tools. Misinterpretations may lead to incorrect recommendations.
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	Legal clarification of AI-generated data (property rights, infringements, etc.)

Area	Questions	Person 11 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Managing Partner of mid-sized consultancy (connected-business), data management, Head of GenAI task force
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	see above
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	>20 years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	'No specific answer to this question
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'Bing Chat used to be inspired by texts or build generation.
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	'No specific answer to this question
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	'Aim of the AI strategy: to use technology in such a way that the best solutions can be built for clients and remain competitive skillbuilding(um im arbeitsalltag besser zu werden)
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	'No specific answer to this question
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'understanding the problem, structuring the problem, data collection, knowledge acquisition, knowledge synthesis, communication of results --> AI can be used everywhere.
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	'No specific answer to this question
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'No specific answer to this question
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'No specific answer to this question
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	'No specific answer to this question
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	'No specific answer to this question
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	No specific answer to this question
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	so far no specific oversavtion

Area	Questions	Person 12 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Managing Partner of a minor restructuring and reorganization consulting
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	No industry-specific industry focus; focuses on the topics of developing strategy, enhancing performance and efficiency of companies
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	>10 years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	AI technology has hardly been used in its sector; many are observing the market, but hardly any consulting firm has used much AI technology in the restructuring sector or made a name for itself.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'See answer above, hardly any use of tools, partly checked the possibility space with ChatGPT, but no licenses were acquired.
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	'AI technology is currently hardly used within the industry where the "obligation to provide evidence" applies. AI technologies are not accepted by "specialist congresses." In addition, projects are carried out under tremendous time pressure, and a pilot or experimentation with these technologies has not been possible in recent times due to time pressure.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	'They do not have an AI strategy but are explicitly observing the market and talking to other consultancies about possible applications.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	'Areas of application, especially in the initial phases of projects
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'Possible areas of application, especially in the front office. Here, it is 1) for restructuring reports where initial work is very descriptive and 2) for corporate and liquidity planning. Here, AI technologies can be used primarily for the evaluation of large amounts of data (also from different kinds of sources)
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	No application because of no usage
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'The desire is that future use will primarily result in an increase in efficiency and that this will also lead to cost savings, e.g., through fewer junior staff. On the other hand, the use should also increase the quality of work by improving the plausibility of data. On the other hand, data/incidents are very heterogeneous, which makes further use by humans indispensable.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'At the moment, there is no specific use, but regarding roles, the company could imagine hiring some consultants with some affinity for AI topics so that this person could implement some technology within the company. However, it is essential that the person can also do regular day-to-day business.
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	No change in demand for the service
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	'Sees the opportunities of AI more than the dangers. However, caution must, of course, be exercised when entering customer data.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	No specific answer to this question
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	so far no specific oversavtion

Area	Questions	Person 13 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Entry-level consultant in a large management consulting company. Person mainly deals with topics in process optimization and data optimization.
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Most consultancy services are in the logistics sector.
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	Three years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	AI technologies are used for both mandates and internal issues. It is an everyday topic, and people are also advised to use the technologies developed in-house in particular.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'ChatGPT must not be used, so the company has developed its own LLM, which should be as strong as ChatGPT. The company's tool has also been used for a year and is particularly suitable for knowledge management to understand how other projects proceeded. Internal tools have also been purchased for specific application areas, such as the implementation of work processes or general data preparation.
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	'Relatively fast adaptation since the introduction of ChatGPT. Own tools have been developed due to strict data protection regulations.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	'has no direct insight into the strategy design due to its position. However, the company provides regular newsletters that provide information on the latest changes/tools and also about AI. The company also offers training on AI technologies for employees.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	'Can be used in many application areas of consulting, but is heavily used in the area of process optimization and data optimization and thus often at the beginning of a project
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'Proprietary AI technologies are used in all application areas. However, previous use cases are more for operational/ repetitive tasks (e.g., setting up e-mails, translating, and screening several thousand documents).
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	See answer above
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'It makes many internal processes more efficient. By using AI technologies, you have to do fewer repetitive tasks and have more time for intellectual tasks. This is also advantageous in junior positions, as they can now take on significantly more strategic issues. AI leads to fewer loops in the quality control of work statuses. In the past, activities were checked using the 6-eyes principle, but now, using our LLM is often only a 4-eyes principle.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'As there are now fewer operational activities, more projects can be carried out more quickly.
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	Sees no danger in demand for their consulting services, as the problems that arise at the customer often occur for the first time, and AI models are not yet familiar with these problems
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	'In the company, it is communicated that the responsibility for the output of the AI always lies with the user, which means that it is necessary to build sufficient control loops.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	As mentioned above, the company attaches great importance to the fact that only internally licensed tools may be used for the work.
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	so far no specific oversavtion

Area	Questions	Person 14 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Partner and managing director of a medium-sized management consultancy
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Focus on the areas of purchasing and supply chain management.
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	17 years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	In the last 3–4 years, both by customers and consultants, AI technology has been used increasingly as "big data," and increasing "data transparency" in the value chain has become increasingly important, especially in the SCM area.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'So far, the most vigorous use of publicly available AI technologies such as ChatGPT for text formulation, creation of summaries, topic research, or with DeepL as a translation tool. Partial acquisition of licenses and also the use of AI technologies in the initial phase of a project, but then by purchasing the technology in cooperation
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	'Relatively fast adoption since the introduction of better LLM models and weekly meetings within the board to discuss trends in the market. AI is sometimes not used as much in consulting because it is not yet good enough for interpersonal relationships or consulting, so there is less need for it.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	'No dedicated AI strategy, as AI is also so fast-moving and the need for a long-term strategy is not seen. But weekly meetings to exchange information on the trends in the market
	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	'The most common use is at the beginning of a project when the customer provides data that can be analyzed efficiently.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'Highest utilization potential in the analysis phase of a project, it is still possible to use the technologies, e.g., for initial brainstorming in the conception phase to work on the solution model, but in the end, recommendations have to be developed by humans; on the other hand, all hierarchical levels can also use AI technologies, but highest utilization rate in the junior area due to the urgent task fields (partly more repetitive)
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	Use of an acquired AI tool that records the client's need to spend in the purchasing department
	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'This allows you to work faster and more efficiently, but the final control loop remains with the consultant.
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'as mentioned above, creating texts, data analysis, and data insights from big data, translation, and brainstorming.
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	In the medium to long term, he sees parts of the business model of traditional consulting in danger because fewer young consultants are needed. However, these generate the highest profit for a partner in the project, so projects may be less expensive to sell in the long term. However, he sees less of a threat to regular demand for consulting services, as the maturity level of mandates in AI is often very rudimentary.
	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	'No specific answer to this question
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	No usage when it comes to client data
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	No specific answer to this question

Area	Questions	Person 15 Answers
Demographic Data	Role in Company: Can you please describe your role within the company?	Self-employed consultant and trained computer scientist founded his consultancy ten years ago and knew the general consultancy market well.
	Consulting Focus: (If any) In which field or sector do you primarily offer consulting services?	Focus on IT management, ERP tendering, and lean management strategy topics.
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you have overall?	>20 years
RQ1: How established is artificial intelligence adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Can you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry?	In his direct environment, very few consultants use AI technologies for their projects, as the subject areas are significantly "know-how" driven and can only be advanced through long-term expertise.
	AI Types: What types of AI technologies are commonly used in your experience? Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?	'ChatGPT was partly used to develop an initial proof of concept, but there was no direct use for mandates. On the other hand, he built neural networks, e.g., with "TensorFlow," but this was only possible because he studied computer science.
	Adoption Rate: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector? Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?	'Most consulting firms have made little use of AI technology, as there is a lack of internal resources to set up these technologies (especially for smaller/medium-sized consulting firms), and the financial resources for this are also lacking or have not yet been raised.
	AI Strategy: How do you want to implement AI in your company? How does your internal strategy look like	'He is not aware of AI strategies.
RQ2: In which areas of consulting is artificial intelligence most prominently applied?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience, in what areas of consulting have you observed the most significant applications of AI?	AI technologies can help create an "initial framework," thus structuring a problem. However, when it comes to elaboration, a higher creative process is necessary that AI technologies cannot currently solve.
	Areas of Application in Consulting Projects: At what stages of a consulting project is AI most often applied? In which areas of the company (front office, middle office, back office) or areas of responsibility is AI technology increasingly used? In which hierarchical level is AI most likely to be used	'can also be used primarily in the back office, e.g., in the HR area for screening CVs, in the front office area rather than for mechanical areas such as "ERP tenders," which often follow a similar pattern
	Successful Applications: Can you share any examples of successful AI implementation in specific consulting projects?	No application because of no usage
RQ3: How does artificial intelligence affect inner processes inside consulting companies and the demand for their offerings?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you think AI affects internal processes within consulting firms?	'The interviewee thinks that too frequent use of AI tends to worsen internal processes, as it loses proximity to the customer, similar to the development of video call applications.
	Personal Use and Future Potential: In which internal processes have you used or seen the use of AI within your firm? Do you see the potential for future applications?	'person is currently not actively using AI technology daily.
	Demand Influence: Do you think the integration of AI has changed the demand for consulting services? In what ways? Do you see this trend continuing in the future?	In the medium to long term, this may impact consulting, as standardized or technical processes, in particular, will be carried out more by the customer, resulting in an increased focus on strategic issues.
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there ethical considerations that you think are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting?	'The use of AI technologies always harbors the risk of biases (e.g., ethic bias, etc.), so consultants must be careful when recommending technologies. In addition, the output is often too opaque ("out as a black box"), and there is a need for increased transparency from the training data.
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	Great emphasis on data protection; therefore, no use with customer data
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations about ethical dilemmas in AI consulting?	Using an audio-text application is only possible with internet access; question what exactly happens with the data.