

The BEST Framework for Gen AI

How and when to build
AI into your research
processes

MRS Delphi Group

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About MRS Delphi Group

The Group is led by a coalition of respected thinkers in the marketing and research sectors. The Group delivers **valuable insight** across a range of important business, social and political issues. The Steering Board includes: Colin Strong, Ipsos (chair), Rose Tomlins, Virgin Money; Gemma Proctor, Sparkler; Adrian Sanger, Behaviorally; Patrick Alcantara, AXA; Tatenda Musesengwa, Savanta; Zoe Ruffels, Mars Pet Care; Rhea Fox, Ted Baker; Dr Mark Thorpe, Truth Consulting; Jane Frost, CEO of MRS.

Acknowledgements

MRS would like to thank all the contributors included in this report including the MRS Data Analytics Council. Particular thanks are due to Colin Strong, lead author and creator of the BEST Framework, and chair of the MRS Delphi Group.

Introduction from Jane Frost, CEO , MRS

AI continues to dominate the headlines; everyone seems to have some version of heaven and hell to sell us, with jargon that sometimes obfuscates more than it enlightens.



According to recent research from the British Chambers of Commerce, out of more than 700 mostly SMEs, almost half of respondents (48%) had no plans to use AI (page 32). But AI is no short term trend, and it offers growth opportunities to early investors in technology. In today's economic climate such growth is increasingly illusive. But knowing how and where to invest is difficult in an emerging (and much hyped) sector.

The real key to success with any new technology is to have a clear definition of what outcomes you want to achieve, and therefore what type of AI you want to deploy.

What really excites me here is the unveiling of the BEST Framework. This framework will help us all think about how and when to use AI, and when not to. The examples of 'AI in Action' in the second half of the report do much to clarify and define what 'generative' AI is, and what is merely programmed logic.

Of course, ours is not a sector to shy away from technology, and machine learning and data has been a critical component of our work even before the arrival of the internet. With our particular combination of machine and human intelligence, we should

expect to see some of the best examples of AI-in-business to emerge from the research sector.

We found in the writing of this report several excellent examples of agencies that have built generative AI into their research tools and processes; examples from clientside insight teams were harder to identify. We know that within many client organisations the lead on AI lies with the legal department while concerns about data confidentiality are addressed. Clients are frequently developing their own in-house AI systems (page 26).

Most of the agency solutions fall into the early adopter category - we've called that category 'Boost' in this report. These AI implementations are predominantly focused on process automation and improved efficiency.

There are some words of caution to get our houses in order first (page 28). Companies should build as a priority the foundations of a data driven culture, and avoid shoehorning AI into their processes just to keep up with the zeitgeist. However, there is plenty of aspiration to move along the maturity curve towards the most advanced category which we have called 'Transform' - a space in which

'AI and humans can co-create new landscapes of knowledge'.

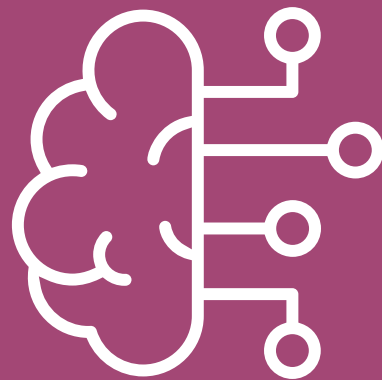
A key differentiator for this sector is our deep experience in handling personal data. Applying meaningful AI regulation in such a fast moving context may be difficult, but there is plenty of robust privacy regulation to lean on. Researchers also understand the nuanced ethical ramifications of representation and bias, which are even starker when employing AI to do work hitherto overseen by humans. To that end, the new MRS AI Guidance (page 7) is the perfect companion to this report.

I would like to thank all the contributors included in this report including the MRS Data Analytics Council, led by Jake Steadman. Particular thanks are due to Colin Strong, lead author, and chair of the MRS Delphi Group.

With our AI conference in January 2024, as well as new training and guidance, our bank of resources is growing rapidly. If you are not an MRS member, our global news publication Research Live will provide frequent updates in the AI space.

Regards,
Jane Frost CBE

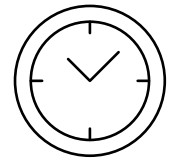
How to approach AI



How to approach AI

Our current environment

AI is the new clock, the cyber tool that both measures but also changes what is measured.



Do you know what time it is? If you do then this is not because of an internal mental skill you have but because we can glance at our wristwatch or, more likely, look at our phone or computer. The repository of information about time is not in our heads but instead derived from machines, objects which are exterior to us. This is hardly anything new of course – we have always relied on our tools to understand the world and generative AI (generative AI) is no different. Just as we outsource complex calculations to a spreadsheet and think nothing more of it, then perhaps we do the very same thing with this wave of AI. This is a tool that is at our disposal that we use to engage with the world.

Of course, the lines are always blurred between the person and the instruments they use. This is what philosopher Andy Clarke argues: the tools we use mean we have always been ‘cyborgs’, and we cannot always find a clear line between humans and the technologies that we deploy.¹

Whilst it has always been the case that the way we look at and understand the world is shaped by the tools we use, technology academics Brett Frischmann and

Evan Selinger argue that the scale (number of people affected), scope (the range and types of message), influences (power to persuade) and architectural extension (the degree to which the technology fits within and bridges different environments) means that digital is different.² Just as the telescope arguably ushered in a time where we understood the world through maths and physics rather than through Gods and spirits, what are the ways that generative AI might change not only how we measure the world but also how we see it?³

But alongside the consideration of the transformative power of generative AI as a tool, we also need to recognise it is not just the tools that are in rapid evolution but the world itself is one that is fundamentally changed. The world is always changing, but today we are faced with a new reality where the basic premises on which we base our lives have irrevocably fallen away. A combination of Covid (and the risk of other infectious diseases), climate change and technology disruption means we live in a precarious world without predictability or security. As one commentator suggested, we inhabit a time of ‘radical novelty and uncertainty, thrown into a state of ‘ground-zero empiricism’.⁴

This means we have a double whammy – the tools we use are changing at a speed and scale we have arguably not encountered before but also the world is rapidly changing to one we are struggling to recognise. And the very tools that we are using to understand the world are in part not only reshaping how it is organised but maybe also even the way we think and how we behave. This means generative AI is more than a tool – it is a cyber-tool, not only giving us the means to understand the world, whilst simultaneously operating as a co-constituent of the way we live our lives, shaping human behaviours, attitudes and identities.

The recursive nature of AI means it is shaping the world at the same time as we are being shaped by it. In the same way, once different towns in the same country would have different times, the invention of clocks unified our experience of time and with that ushered in a much greater sense of nationhood. The clock is both a measurement tool but also a tool that organised our lives and shapes the world. AI is the new clock, the cyber tool that both measures but also changes what is measured.

How to approach AI

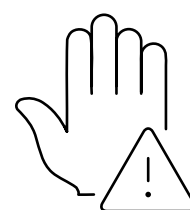
How the industry approaches AI

It is this backdrop that makes the subject of AI such a challenging one for the market research industry. We are in the business of understanding humans – can we use the very tool to understand humans that is simultaneously changing the very people we seek to measure? There are no easy answers here but we do need to find ways to generate some perspective on this confusing landscape.

This short paper is designed to offer a means by which the research professional can have a conceptual guidance of the way generative AI could be applied, elevating the discussion from what can feel like a scatter gun of possible applications into a strategic decision-making framework that helps to support its use. In the process, we intend to highlight what good might look like, alongside possible pitfalls and risks.

The work is based on inputs and insights from senior thought leaders across the industry – which offers a good starting point for this discussion. This is a fast-moving area to which we intend to return, refining and revising as we get ever more examples of the way in which people are making use of this exciting new tool.

The role of the framework is to classify the different sorts of problems we face as practitioners.



The principles of applying generative AI

One of the key challenges of using any tool is understanding when and how to apply it. For example, we understand that to screw a shelf to the wall we need a screwdriver, not a hammer. We could of course use a hammer, but the outcome may be that the shelf falls down. In just the same way that if we want to undertake a market sizing exercise we are better placed to use survey based tools rather than qualitative methods – the latter might offer us something but of course it is not fit for purpose.

Knowing what tools to use for what sort of job is therefore a critical job for any practitioner. Identifying what generative AI is good for as well as when we need to be careful of its limitations is something that needs urgent attention. To some extent this will be worked out dynamically in the real world of course – and it is that experience we are seeking to capture in this brief paper. But to help us we are using a framework. The role of the framework is to classify the different sorts of problems we face as practitioners, and with that we can then consider ways in which we might use the tool of generative AI to good effect, as well as understanding what considerations and reservations it would be useful to consider.

How to approach AI

New AI ethics guidance from MRS



Debrah Harding

Managing Director, MRS

Practitioners must think harder than usual about the ethical principles they use in the application and development of AI.

AI ethics are the parameters and guardrails that determine the design, use and outputs from the use of AI and go beyond the legal requirements. Ethics are essential when using AI and related technologies since the foundation for AI and related technologies is data, much of which is drawn from human behaviour. One of the key weakness of AI and related technologies is the input data of earlier large data systems, particularly owing to the level of inaccuracy and frequent bias of the input data.

If AI and related technologies are used without consideration for ethics, the output from AI can emphasize and amplify human biases which could result in harm to individuals, business, and society. Conversely, if AI is

positively managed with ethical principles at its core the potential of its possibilities can be maximised.

Ethics are essential for any profession, and any approach by MRS needs to complement the MRS Code of Conduct. MRS has produced detailed guidance, based upon the 12 principles of the MRS Code, to help practitioners act legally and ethically when using AI and related technologies.

The intention is that the guidance will be updated and enhanced regularly to keep abreast of this rapidly evolving policy area, particularly as regulatory frameworks develop.

MRS has referred to other AI ethics frameworks in compiling its guidance to ensure that the MRS approach is compatible with other business, legal and societal frameworks. **[Click here to view the draft guidance.](#)**

How to approach AI



How to approach AI

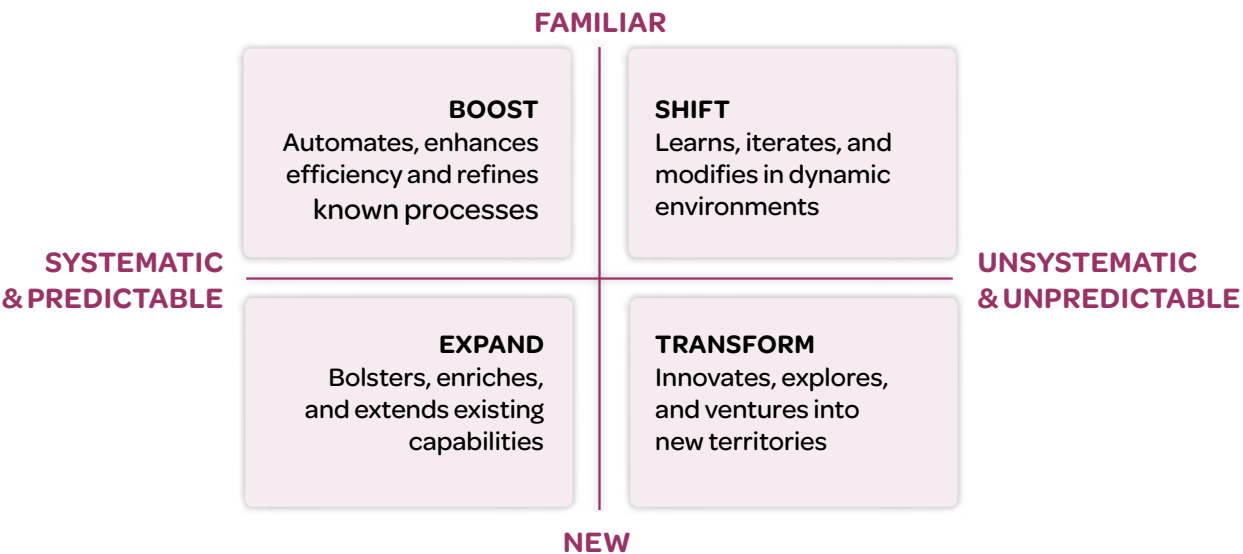
The BEST Framework: A framework for generative AI application

We have developed a simple framework – the BEST framework - for the application of generative AI, as shown below. It is based on two axes – systematic and predictable versus unsystematic and unpredictable, and familiar versus new. The reason for the axes is both related to the underlying technology used, but also the rapidly changing environment we are in.

One reason for this choice of axes is the nature of the tool itself, arguably reflecting its relative strengths and weaknesses.

Systematic / predictability:
In more systematic and predictable environments AI has significant training data meaning that patterns can be discerned, learned, and then replicated or extrapolated upon with consistency. We should also note of course that it can be used in more unsystematic and unpredictable environments to discover novel patterns and connections, thus inputting creative solutions or content.

Familiar / New
This is a related challenge to the above but with some important differences. In familiar contexts, generative AI has a wealth of data to learn from which enables it to produce outputs with high fidelity and accuracy, mirroring what it has been trained on. In new environments there will be little or no prior training data so the AI’s outputs may be more experimental and less reliable. Nevertheless it can merge patterns from its previous learning with new data, leading to fresh insights or creations.



How to approach AI

The other reason for this choice of axes is the 'poly crisis' world we inhabit. This means that an increasing number of questions are asked that involve working in unpredictable and novel situations - the bottom right Transform quadrant. Having tools in that scenario that offer solutions will be increasingly important.

Why this approach?

Much has been written about generative AI. A great deal of the focus has been on the wider societal, employment and commercial implications of the technology. Less is written about when, where and how to apply.

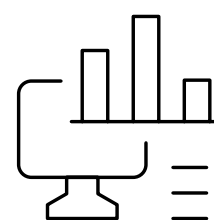
We avoid:

- ▲ making specific assertions about what works / does not work rather we help people to ask the right questions
- ▲ making predictions about what will happen (or not happen).

We encourage:

- ▲ people to consider the nature of the challenge they are seeking to address and then think through the way in which AI tools might be helpful
- ▲ thinking about when and how to apply rather than assuming it is always the answer / or one size fits all.

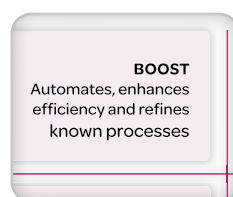
In familiar contexts, generative AI has a wealth of data to learn from which enables it to produce outputs with high fidelity and accuracy.



Review of the quadrants

Let's review each of the quadrants in turn, characterising the types of challenges they represent and how generative AI can be used. We will draw on our conversations with industry leaders to develop and illustrate these.

A: Boost



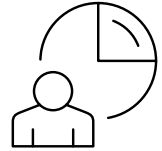
Here AI is a precision tool designed to enhance and optimize well-established and predictable processes. The principle here is similar to the way digital spreadsheets, now so familiar, which replaced the much more laborious ledger book full of huge sheets of paper that were filled out and calculated by hand.

What these have in common is that the role of technology is clearly defined, as the tasks are systematic. It is replacing an existing activity and the technology offers automation, resulting in efficiency improvement. Given that the environment is familiar, and the tasks are systematic, this allows AI to perform with high accuracy and reliability.

The practitioners that we spoke to for this report identified a wide range of applications for AI in this context. This can include, for example, bid and report drafting and information summarising (meetings, documents, image libraries). There was a general sense of enthusiasm for these applications and a feeling that AI can offer solutions that are as good as anything that a human can do. In fact, this is considered to be an opportunity to operate at greater speed and accuracy than we might do otherwise.

How to approach AI

It is therefore important to build-in oversight and ensure the content is of the right focus and quality and avoid the passive reception of AI's benefits.

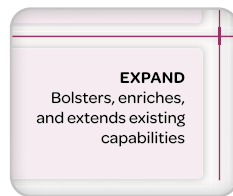


There are some considerations here for the way in which we use AI in this context:

- ▲ We need to ask if all the relevant material is being summarised – in meetings for example a minute taker might note the emphasis conveyed by tone and the status or role of the speaker, nuances that might not be reflected in the notes used by generative AI alone.
- ▲ We can also ask if the purpose of the output is clear. Sometimes we might want a persuasive case to be made rather than a simple summary of what is said as delivered via generative AI.

Given these points it is therefore important to build-in oversight and ensure the content is of the right focus and quality and avoid the passive reception of AI's benefits. Any tool has upsides and downsides – there is a clear role for active human participation to ensure the outputs are meaningful.

B: Expand



The Expand quadrant is one where the problems encountered are new – so the role of AI is no longer simply that of summarising what we know and playing it back to us but instead is used to help us to understand the new landscape we inhabit.

We are also working on the basis that this is an environment that is understandable – it operates to a set of principles and dynamics. But we need to identify what principles these are, suggesting that a systematic and rigorous analysis of AI will be helpful. In a sense then, this is about extending our understanding of the world as new questions and challenges arrive.

Examples of using generative AI here include enriching audience segmentations and identifying in greater detail the attitudinal, behavioural and lifestyle characteristics of a distinct customer segment. In insurance, for example, this could be used to help identify which segments

are more (or less) likely to make claims and then adjust customer support to meet the needs of these segments.

Another example is relating to idea and concept generation. The materials that are generated can potentially draw on a wider frame of reference and slightly broader range of possibilities than we might find ourselves.

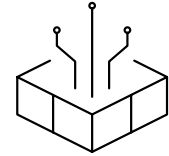
A final example is agile interviewing: entirely different interviews might be possible that we might not otherwise get to in a human based interview, allowing us to move 2-3 steps away from the initial guide.

There are some considerations for the use of generative AI in this context:

- ▲ It can be tempting to consider the use of AI as somehow better than the human hand as it is 'neutral' and 'free from bias'. This has in fact long been established as highly contested with the widely held view that, AI reflects the bias of the materials that are being referenced and the programming of the methods used to derive the outputs. It is simply harder to see.⁵

How to approach AI

Generative AI can adapt to what might be rapidly changing data, helping in real-time analysis and prediction, so enhancing response strategies.



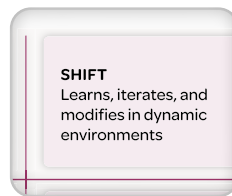
- What we look for at times are the idiosyncratic and unconsidered discoveries that can capture the imagination. AI by design will draw on what has gone before and provide outputs based on probabilities of the past. This means we are reliant on past associations and relationships in data to shape the outcomes.

Being aware of the potential of these possible boundaries is important not least as this is the zone where there is a great deal of excitement about AI within the industry. Indeed, it fits with the current mandate of the research industry; research is generally commissioned to understand new considerations, explore things that are not already understood. But there is an assumption that these new areas can be measured; that they are understandable.

In this sense then AI has a more active role in the research process, being deployed in a way that moves from summarising and describing, to one which is proposing how to extend our knowledge.

With the reservations that brings to mind, we need to take care that we maintain the importance of reflective human thought and active human engagement in the problem solving, rather than offloading to the AI tools.

C: Shift



This area is characterised by familiar environments that become unpredictable. A good case in point is the introduction of electric vehicles – what we know of the dynamics of the car industry are rapidly being cast aside both as a result of new regulations as well as new technology. This means that a new set of rules and ways of behaving are being adopted whilst continuing to be subject to change and volatility. In this environment it can at times be hard to see the dynamics at work and see what is shaping the behaviour, attitudes and values of the population, or the different segments within it.

Here we are using AI to understand the deviation from historic data, identifying new patterns and signals. Locating the ‘signals’ amidst the ‘noise’ is something that AI is well designed to provide, as this can be difficult or time-consuming for humans to identify.

An example is where an OTC pharma company is losing market share to natural health brands (despite lower efficacy of solutions). Although this is a familiar category with very familiar market dynamics, the introduction of a new innovation in the category means that consumers, responses are unpredictable using the past body of knowledge.

Generative AI can adapt to what might be rapidly changing data, helping in real-time analysis and prediction, so enhancing response strategies. This allows us to adapt and modify existing processes in real-time as conditions change, meaning that organisations can adapt their marketing strategies, messaging, and policies on the fly to mitigate risks and navigate the dynamic environment.

Perhaps a key consideration about the use of generative AI in this context is for the degree to which the change we are seeing is something that generative AI is equipped to navigate. Much of the way we live as humans is based on shared *unspoken meanings*.

For example, what we understand by terms such as ‘natural’ or ‘wellness’ are contested and nuanced – issues that AI may struggle to navigate. A critical

How to approach AI

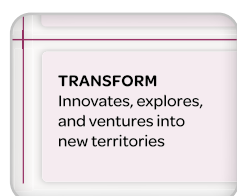
AI is moving from being a mere tool to being almost a 'partner'.



requirement is identifying the way in which AI can support but where human interpretation is required.

But at the same time, we can see this area as one where AI is moving from being a mere tool to being almost a 'partner' where both human and machine have the potential to create a new space of person-machine collaboration and adaption in a rapidly changing context.

D: Transform



While Shift can still draw upon existing data and knowledge, albeit adaptively, Transform requires building understanding from scratch, seeking to make sense of unpredictable environments while relying only on emergent data and insights.

In many ways we could consider this to be the direction for much of the work of the research industry as the challenges of a polycrisis world means this is the reality of what we are increasingly tasked with navigating.⁶ In this quadrant AI is even more of a co-explorer in this space of

innovation, exploration, and transformation - a space where AI and humans navigate the unruly edges of the unknown.⁷

An example might be where a highly infectious fungal disease has emerged, posing a significant threat to public health. There is limited existing knowledge or data on its behaviour, transmission, or treatment, leading to an unpredictable and new challenge. AI can be employed to rapidly analyse real-time data from various sources, including hospitals, laboratories, and on-the-ground reports to understand the disease's spread, impact, and potential containment measures. Machine learning models can predict the disease's trajectory, identify potential hotspots, and suggest interventions.

AI can also assist in researching and developing treatment protocols by exploring potential drug repurposing or aiding in the design of new pharmaceutical interventions. It can facilitate the rapid sharing of information globally, enhancing collaborative efforts to combat the disease.

The considerations for how we use AI perhaps at once offer a provocation as well as a challenge. First, in terms of provocation we can see that these new landscapes

alongside the tools we have available call for radically new ways of exploring and understanding the world. Indeed, historian Mary Poovey goes so far to say that we may start to see the 'fact' as just one 'epistemological unit'.⁸ While that might appear challenging, we can start to see other ways to understand and explore the world where 'facts' are often not the currency that are shaping the way we live. Perhaps we can use AI to explore other facets of the world such as 'rhetorical power', as evidenced by much of the way conspiracy theories and mis or disinformation spreads.

This is an exciting space as we can see new ways that AI and humans can co-create new landscapes of knowledge where traditional human-machine boundaries are not just blurred but are reimagined.⁹ Again, however, we need to take care that we do not defer too much to an AI led perspective – recall the point that the tools we use influence the way we see the world but also the way the world is shaped. To this end we stress the need for critical reflection, ethical engagement, and democratic participation to navigate the complexities and uncertainties of this exciting space.

Concluding thoughts: A cyborg revolution?



Colin Strong,

Lead author of this report

Head of Behavioural Science,
Ipsos

Chair of the MRS Delphi
Group

Are we in the midst of a cyborg revolution? The tools we use to understand people are changing, but are people changing too?

One school of thought is that humans are becoming more machine like – and on that

basis machines are the means by which we perhaps more readily understand people. Another school would suggest that a defining characteristic of humans is the way we live through shared meanings and social facts and that we are not entirely predictable and measurable. To this end we will always need humans to understand humans.

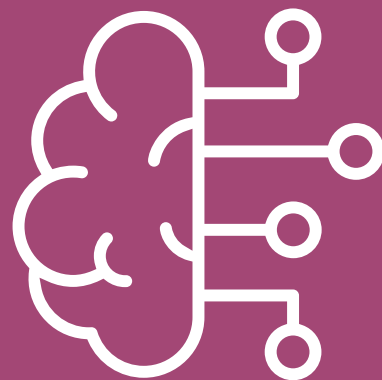
What does this mean in terms of the ways in which we can use AI within the research industry? Whilst the rapidly changing environment means there will be no ready answers in the short term, we can see that an eco-system is emerging.

Our conversations identified a range of ways people are using and intend to use generative AI in their work. Much of this is necessarily in an organic way, with ground up experimentation and collaboration. Perhaps this is the best way for us to identify the use cases and value proposition.

But at the same time, we need to have the means to strategize where and how AI can and should be used; the challenges and opportunities it creates. Practitioners are typically 'alchemists', transforming data and observations into insights, blending different research methods to create something new, frequently breaking down established categories and boundaries.

The recursive nature of AI - in terms of its use as knowledge production but also how it changes the fundamentals of how we live - throws up a wide range of practical, ethical and philosophical challenges. Rather than shrink from these, we need as an industry to consider the very practical job we have of understanding people and how these play out. There are plenty of reasons why we should be cautious and careful but as much, if not more, why there are reasons for excitement and optimism.

AI in action

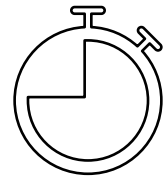


AI in action

How to get started

Any new tool requires us to think about how best to use it. This is the case for generative AI as much as for anything else we have used before (such as spreadsheets). And whilst the nature of generative AI is such that it feels as if we can use it for pretty much anything; just when and how we use it is something that we shall spend a little time considering carefully.

Generative AI is such that it feels as if we can use it for pretty much anything; just when and how we use it is something that we can spend a little time considering carefully.



STEP 1: Question identification

Begin by clearly identifying and understanding the nature of the question you're addressing. To get started with the model we first need to play at the centre the question we are seeking to find answers for – and then to ask if we are looking at this the right way. Are we articulating the question in a way that is referencing known ways to address an issue (Boost) in which case generative AI probably has a role to support us in automating what we do, or do we need to think about this as a question of how we manage in new and unpredictable landscapes, in which case generative AI may have a much more 'Transformational' role. Avoid jumping and thinking about the tool; instead ask yourself what type of question are we dealing with – and while this may often be clear, more frequently it is ambiguous and merits some time and consideration.

STEP 2: Appropriate application

Choose the right mode of generative AI application, ensuring it matches the specific needs and context of the task. It is only then that we can start to consider how to make best use of generative AI in these different environments – and be aware there are specific sorts of tools for specific jobs. You would not use a sledgehammer to put up a picture nail, nor conversely use a pin hammer to knock down a wall. The same principle applies to generative AI – different modes of application are required of it which need to be thought through carefully, so that it is fit for purpose.

STEP 3: Limitations

Recognise the limitations of generative AI in each instance, avoiding overestimation of its capabilities, and be prepared to supplement it with other resources when necessary. Finally we need to think of the limitations of the tool we are using in each instance. Every tool has its limits and we need to take care not to overclaim. We would not start to use a hammer to measure a wall, and while we may be able to use it as such, it would not be as accurate and optimised for use in the way that a tape measure is. In just the same way, we need to be thoughtful about limitations of generative AI in the particular instances we are operating and find ways to operate within these. We need to know when to supplement AI with other tools we have available to us, such as expert knowledge and human judgement.



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Supercharging the research process

Jack Wilson

Innovation Lead, 2CV



In an ever-evolving landscape of market research, where adaptability and innovation are paramount, 2CV has embarked on a transformative journey in the way we use generative AI. We have forged partnerships with AI experts, invested in state-of-the-art technology, created internal safeguards, policy and training, and, most importantly, fostered a culture of innovation that drives us to push the boundaries of research.

In many ways, the BEST framework can be considered as a continuum of AI adoption – the more we use AI, the more ideas we have for ways that we can boost, expand, shift and (eventually) use AI in truly transformative ways. With the BEST framework in mind, we have provided a few examples of ways we are using AI within our research practice:

Boost:

- ▲ Incorporated AI tools into our writing process for inspiration and editing
- ▲ Used AI-assisted analysis tools for rapid and in-depth qualitative analysis at scale
- ▲ Used AI and machine learning to gain efficiencies in survey open end coding

- ▲ Created custom AI agents to conduct quality assurance checks on survey data
- ▲ Used AI to speed up the video editing process – editing video via transcripts.

Expand:

- ▲ Utilized chatbot surveys with conversational AI and projective questioning abilities
- ▲ Leveraged generative AI probing on open-ended questions within online surveys.

Shift:

- ▲ Used generative AI-art tools to create visual representations of participant verbatim.

A great example of our AI-assisted approach to research is the pro-bono project we ran for Vireo (a start-up providing hydroponic garden programs to schools). With the support of our partners, Nexxt Intelligence and DASH MR, we used an innovative chatbot survey approach to engage 795 Gen Z participants across the USA.

During project setup, we used AI assistance to input ideas for questions and codes. We then incorporated conversational AI into the data capture process to probe on our scripted open-ends. We used AI to process and analyse the data - doing AI-assisted QA

and streamlining our coding and qualitative analysis process. Finally – we used generative AI to create artwork using participant verbatim from projective questions as fuel for our prompts.

Although we believe AI has the capacity to supercharge the research process, we strongly believe it plays a supporting role - we leverage AI throughout the process to enhance our researcher's capabilities, not replace them. As we use AI more and more, our understanding of its strengths and weaknesses continues to evolve.

We also understand the concerns some clients have around the applied usage of AI for research. To that end, we have three key caveats about our use of generative AI:

- ▲ Security: We use research-specific, closed systems built to rigorous standards with our industry's needs in minds
- ▲ Accuracy: We must remain mindful of the limitations and flaws of AI – ultimately it is a tool and should be treated as such - keeping the human in the loop is essential
- ▲ Flexibility: The use of AI tools on our projects is not mandatory – usage is optional for our client.

AI in action

Using ChatGPT for audience segmentation

Louisa Livingston

Co-Founder, Audience Strategies

Member of the MRS Data Analytics Council





Generative AI can really boost insights in many different ways; from improving your report writing through to visualising your segments. At Audience Strategies we leverage ChatGPT often to improve our research process with clients. We really believe ChatGPT can make you better, clearer and more efficient in your work via process enhancements, drafting and editing support which allows us to increase our time spent on strategy. It's not just us saying this. Reputable institutions such as MIT, Boston Consulting Group, Warwick University and Harvard (among others) have all published studies that support this view. In fact BCG have quantified this impact: they estimate that across hundreds of consultants those using AI produce 40% higher quality work.

But how? Practically understanding where to use generative AI and ensure you use it well is harder. One example that we have used often is to conduct a foundational layer of work on audience segmentations. A strong, robust segmentation including qualitative and quantitative can be costly and is often out of reach of smaller businesses

who might not do any audience research or worse, do it in a reductive way to save costs. Often a qualitative phase is missed out and thus teasing out underlying issues can be lost. There are also logistical limitations to multi country approaches. As part of our discovery phase with clients we now often create 'PROMPT segments'. We use ChatGPT as a window into the thoughts, feelings, dreams and output of the internet. It can help us

map out a potential market and understand the underlying human needs of a specific category, and hypothesise how segments might map across that marketplace. An early challenge with ChatGPT is that its content was only available up to late 2021, however with the browser version this is no longer a limitation to desk research. But it's not enough to ask ChatGPT to 'segment the audience of a topic' - what you get is thus simple (see below).

 segment wine drinkers

 Segmenting wine drinkers can be done in various ways, depending on the criteria you want to use for classification. Here are some common ways to segment wine drinkers:

- 1. Wine Knowledge and Expertise:**
 - Novice Wine Drinkers: Those who have limited knowledge about wine and may choose wines based on price or label.
 - Intermediate Wine Drinkers: People with some wine knowledge who can differentiate between types and regions.
 - Wine Enthusiasts: Those who are well-informed about wine, including grape varieties, vintages, and wine regions.
- 2. Wine Preference:**
 - Red Wine Drinkers: Those who predominantly prefer red wines like Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Pinot Noir.
 - White Wine Drinkers: People who favor white wines such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling.
 - Rosé Wine Drinkers: Those who enjoy rosé wines, often in warm weather or as an aperitif.
- 3. Wine Occasion:**
 - Casual Wine Drinkers: Individuals who enjoy wine occasionally, perhaps with meals or social gatherings.
 - Formal Wine Drinkers: People who treat wine as a special occasion beverage and may collect or cellar wines.

AI in action

This approach is not going to move the dial for your project on such a nuanced topic. Therefore you need to get more proficient at prompting with better context and understanding, and specifically delving deep into the required knowledge. For example; we start by exploring underlying needs (see below).

Immediately it's evident how the depth of information has evolved, equipping us with Insights that can substantially inform a audience segmentation project and deliver foundational understanding of a market and an audience, thus enriching the final dataset and strategic recommendations.

Of course, these need to be validated. With one client project we conducted traditional primary research and discovered 10 key segments for our client to target. They wanted the segmentation rolled out in 12 other countries but the costs and timelines were prohibitive so we re-created the segments in ChatGPT and tried to create country understanding of how the headline segmentation would turn up in each of the 12 countries. There are an infinite number of 'true' segmentations and it's not called 'art & science' for nothing, but in our investigations we never missed out a strategic macro segment which had been identified in the original project. Over multiple iterations this gave us the confidence to develop a multi country segmentation afterall.

In summary, ChatGPT can play a pivotal role in ensuring the accuracy and relevance of any proposed audience segmentation strategies by providing an extensive knowledge base for comparison. This textual information aids us in uncovering patterns and trends that might not immediately be evident and boost our hypothesis generation efforts leading to more effective audience segmentations.



What are the 20 most important deep and underlying needs that drive wine drinkers.

I'm looking for the most important deep underlying human needs that determine / influence / drive people's behaviour to drink wine. (These could be JTBD or Physiological, Safety, Love/Belonging, Esteem, Self-Actualization, Cognitive, Aesthetic, Transcendence needs or many, many other deep-underlying needs.)

Give each an emoji, a snappy title and a concise description of how it influences behaviour



Certainly! Here are 20 deep underlying needs that drive wine drinkers, along with emojis, snappy titles, and concise descriptions of how each need influences their behavior:

1. 🍷 **Pleasure Seekers:**
 - Need: Sensory Pleasure
 - Description: Wine offers a delightful sensory experience through taste, aroma, and texture, fulfilling the need for pleasure.
2. 🍷 **Social Bonding Enthusiasts:**
 - Need: Love and Belonging
 - Description: Wine facilitates social connections and fosters a sense of belonging during shared moments.
3. 🍷 **Status Sippers:**
 - Need: Esteem and Recognition
 - Description: Wine can symbolize social status, sophistication, and achievement, fulfilling the need for esteem.
4. 🍷 **Exploration Aficionados:**
 - Need: Curiosity and Variety
 - Description: Wine exploration satisfies the desire for new experiences and diverse flavors.

AI in action

Sensory chatbots and conversational data

Dr Ansie Collier

Global Innovation Director, MMR



The best brand experiences – the ones that connect deeply and linger in your memory – do a lot of hard work subconsciously.

This is where sensory experience comes in – the ability to power the consumer’s product experience across all senses. Armed with generative AI and leveraging 30 years of deep product and sensory expertise, we recently launched our first Sensory Chatbot.

Chatbots allow us to meet consumers where they are: in their mobile, always-on, connected world. But chatbots have been around for a while, so what makes our Sensory Bot different?

Our Sensory Chatbot is fundamentally exploratory in its design as an AI-powered human-like guided conversation. It feels intuitive, responsive, curious, and personal and because it encourages openness and authenticity in the stories people share.

Furthermore, in this context, advances in generative AI have made it possible to support a very dynamic and adaptive exchange in real-time. No need to pre-define response and subsequent probing

questions! And importantly, as we steadily move away from general AI models to domain-specific proprietary models, we can better direct AI’s focus during the bot conversation. This is significant. We can now layer in our long-standing sensory expertise, embedding it into every bot interaction to intelligently steer probing to where it matters most. In turn, this allows us to uncover the sensory journey with remarkable nuance.

To better understand the power of such a targeted application, let’s look at how one participant shared their story about an everyday product, chewing gum: “The first chew is harder due to the tougher outside layer of the gum. The menthol immediately reaches my nostrils actually opening my airways. After a few seconds and chews, the flavour tones down... You can still taste the mint once you stop chewing.”

This is such a perfect illustration, captured in this consumer’s own words, of the peak-end rule, whereby people tend to remember the peak of an experience, and how it ends. Exceptional peaks, like such an intense flavour explosion, have the power to create lasting positive memories of the whole experience. But why does this matter? Because

an optimised sensory experience offers a way to establish a deeper connection with consumers.

“I chew gum when I want a kick of freshness in my mouth and if I feel self-conscious about something I ate or drank. The fresh mint gave me confidence to speak directly to someone close up. So, I can give a good impression to people.”

There is power in the intensity of the sensory experience. Power means confidence, and confidence represents a deeper level of reward for the consumer. This is what gives a product the power to disrupt, what makes it less substitutable; this is why it matters.

When we access people’s fully nuanced sensory product journey in this way, when we start to better understand the role a product plays in their lives, it becomes possible to identify ways to optimise the product, providing invaluable guidance into how to bring to life these benefits through resonant brand communication too. These are all areas where traditional surveys notoriously lack deep diagnostic power. Yet, with an intelligent, expertly tailored Sensory Chatbot, nuance and depth of insight are within our reach.

AI in action

Streamlining report production, deeper data insights

Maciek Ozorowski

Head of Innovation, Ipsos UK



Data Liberation, an Ipsos owned data analytics and reporting platform, has been integrating generative AI to streamline and enhance its services. This case study will delve into the specifics of these features, their strategic alignment with the Boost and Expand quadrants of the BEST framework, and the potential impact on the industry.

The Data Liberation platform helps streamline analysis and reporting by allowing users to create data tables and editable PowerPoint slides straight from the cloud-based platform. The new AI features enable users to automatically generate data table commentary, by interpreting and generating paragraphs with written descriptions of results. AI can help interpret the findings in the context of the goal of the study. Given that Data Liberation allows the creation of editable PowerPoint slides straight from the platform, users can quickly generate commentary for hundreds of slides in a matter of seconds. They can also populate slide headlines using AI.

Additionally, thanks to large language models (LLMs) translation capabilities, users can generate draft reports in multiple languages with a click of a button

– a very relevant feature in the context of international studies, with stakeholders across multiple geographies. These features can significantly streamline the production of research study reports.

In addition to automated data summaries, Data Liberation also offers a new coding feature for open-ends. This feature allows users to generate code frames for any open-ended verbatim responses in the survey and subsequently code the data using LLMs. This feature will significantly enhance users' capabilities to analyse verbatim responses by allowing them to tap into more spontaneous reactions to stimuli in a research study. It also offers users the ability to interrogate data in a more agile way using an iterative approach to text analytics, where applying an initial code frame to the data leads to new hypotheses that can be further tested and validated by subsequent frameworks designed specifically for that purpose.

The automated data summaries feature fits into the Boost quadrant of the BEST framework, as it helps users to more efficiently complete a task that they were already doing. The open-ends

coding feature fits into both the Boost and Expand quadrants, as it gives users the flexibility to create multiple code frames depending on developing hypotheses.

While we are in the early stages of rolling out these features, preliminary data indicates significant reductions in reporting time and deeper data insights. An upcoming early adopters' test aims to quantify the productivity gains from using the new AI-enabled features.

Data Liberation envisions a future where AI is seamlessly integrated into their platform. The roadmap includes a natural language interface for data, an AI assistant to help interpret results in a broader context, and integration with other data platforms to support multi-source data analysis.

In conclusion, the integration of generative AI into Data Liberation is set to revolutionise the way users interact with and interpret data. By aligning these features with the BEST framework, Data Liberation aims to create a more systematic and scalable approach to data analytics - one that is adaptable and transformative in nature.

AI in action

Industry perspectives



AI in action

Disinformation and being 'confidently wrong'

Jatin Aythora

Director of Research & Development, BBC



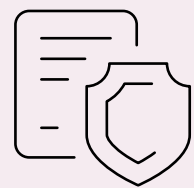
The BBC announced this year that it has taken steps to prevent web crawlers like those from Open AI and Common Crawl from accessing BBC websites. The organisation says it has done this in the public interest, to protect its content while it develops new ways to ensure that AI and generative AI add value for its audiences.

"We have been researching and exploring AI for many years," says Jatin Aythora, Director of BBC Research & Development. "BBC content is valued and trusted worldwide and using our content, we are able to conduct research in AI that helps us to develop a better understanding of improving workflows, developing new capabilities and delivering insights."

Generative AI delivers new opportunities for creators, but the nature of large language models (LLMs) and their training on huge, freely available datasets means outcomes can be unreliable. The result is a convincing synthesis of information on any topic which can be questionable for being "confidently wrong".

Trust is vital for reputable news organisations. It's a priority area for BBC R&D, much of whose AI work is closely aligned to delivering increased safety and explainability. Trust, along with transparency, is

Generative AI has accelerated the need for provenance alongside the need for clear regulation to protect AI consumers.



the impetus behind the formation of the BBC Verify team in BBC News which works closely with their R&D colleagues. With the rapid advancement in AI, stakes are high, and many fear the outcomes of a tsunami of targeted disinformation which can now be generated at scale and include convincing deepfakes.

"One key tool is what we refer to as 'media provenance', says Aythora. "We want to make sure that any consumer can check whether content really does originate from where it appears to. BBC R&D has been a prime mover in the global consortium dedicated to this work - Project Origin. The aim is to enable anyone to click on any piece of content and see its source and its history including any modifications. This aspiration extends beyond the BBC content to all content creators, and we have been working and will continue to work with a range of partners to deliver this."

Generative AI has accelerated the need for provenance alongside the need for clear regulation to protect AI consumers.

As Aythora notes: "Many governments have called for more accountability and responsibility from the technology organisations that are developing AI capability. That's a big shift. And the BBC, with its public service ethos and values is well placed to ensure this work develops responsibly."

Could there ever come a day when BBC content is generated substantially by AI?

"Absolutely not", says Aythora: "We will get the best value we can from these tools but we believe that there's something special about human creativity and experience that AI cannot replicate - and we shouldn't want it to."

AI in action

Say hello to your new AI colleague

Dr Marty Herbert

Director Customer & Operations, UK Head of Experience Transformation, KPMG LLP



Whilst forms of AI have been with us for years, ChatGPT has heralded a new wave of large language models (LLMs). The result is a potentially dramatic impact on operating cost, colleague experience and customer value across almost every part of every enterprise.

Many executive teams are treating this as an important technological challenge, akin to cloud computing, blockchain or the metaverse, and are experiments running in parts of their businesses. Not all of these are destined for success: Gartner predicts that as many as 85% of AI projects will fail to meet their objectives¹⁰.

Others see AI as best devolved to a series of functional opportunities: new features to be experimented with and ultimately “switched on” in marketing, operations, and their back-office teams. Whilst this has advantages of pace, it potentially heralds a new era of disconnection - with multiple LLMs and discrete systems magnifying the dysfunctionality and risk in every organisation.

At KPMG we can see that AI should be viewed as a new virtual colleague, one that is rewriting the rules of customer experience

excellence. This is present across each of the Six Pillars of experience - Personalisation, Integrity, Expectations, Resolution, Time and Effort, and Empathy - improving outcomes for both customers colleagues and organisations.¹¹

The Six Pillars, when applied together, provide a powerful mechanism to help organisations understand how well their customer experience is delivered across channels, industries and organisation types. Leading organisations demonstrate mastery of these pillars and are outstanding at all of them.

When we look at how generative AI is being used to dissect consumer emotions during brand interactions. Cutting-edge AI technologies such as natural language processing (NLP) to decipher sentiments from consumer feedback can be combined with Computer Vision which interprets facial expressions from user-generated content to enhance the research process.

AI enabled sentiment analysis, emotion detection, and deep learning models can provide more precise emotional insights, boosting and enhancing researchers understanding of nuanced consumer responses.

As researchers increasingly apply AI to ‘Boost’ and ‘Expand’ this application should be conducted within the context of creating enterprise-wide value. The organisation’s strategy will be delivered through value streams – it is here that cost reduction and value creation opportunities exist. All value streams should be considered to now be AI-enabled and can help organisations achieve their strategic goals. Value streams map out the steps involved in delivering a product or service to the customer, while customer and/or colleague journeys detail the experiences of customers and colleagues as they interact with the organisation.

In practical terms this means identifying where the virtual AI colleague can be “staffed on” to customer and colleague journeys that are connected to organisational value streams, and measuring performance before and after the introduction of AI. Researchers now have a new virtual, always on, indefatigable colleague working alongside them to boost and enhance the research process - freeing up time for more reflective and insightful analysis.

AI in action

Build the foundations first

Konstantinos Maragkos

Founder / Director, OMOiKANE

Member of the MRS Data Analytics Council



Generative AI has certainly garnered substantial attention in recent years. The hype and FOMO surrounding generative AI are reminiscent of past technological revolutions, such as the advent of the internet, the development of the first company websites, the introduction of email, on-premise databases, data-driven decision-making, the emergence of business intelligence, machine learning, and even blockchain. Throughout history, the tech world has been no stranger to buzzwords that promise to revolutionize the way we live and work. However, it's important to approach generative AI with a level-headed perspective and recognize it as just another tool in the ever-evolving technological landscape.

First and foremost, it's crucial to understand that generative AI is not a panacea that can magically solve all problems. Just as with any tool, it must be carefully evaluated and considered within the context of the specific challenge at hand. The effectiveness of generative AI depends on the nature of the problem it is applied to. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

In the current landscape, traditional machine learning and straightforward data analytics are still underutilised in many organisations. These foundational

tools often remain untapped resources, and companies would be wise to first focus on building their capabilities in these areas. Generative AI can complement these efforts by serving as a helpful assistant, facilitating the process of extracting insights from data and creating more human-like interfaces to communicate complex information to non-technical stakeholders.

However, before organisations rush to adopt generative AI or any advanced technology, they must ensure that the right infrastructure, data literacy, and foundational building blocks are in place. This includes collecting high-quality data, establishing robust data management practices, and fostering a data-driven culture within the organization. Without these prerequisites, the full potential of machine learning or generative AI cannot be realised.

Furthermore, the importance of security, privacy, and ethics cannot be overstated in the context of generative AI. The generation of content by AI models raises concerns about the spread of disinformation and deepfakes. Privacy breaches and misuse of AI-generated content can have severe consequences. It is incumbent upon both the developers and users of

generative AI to take a proactive approach to addressing these issues. Clear guidelines, regulations, and responsible AI practices must be put in place to ensure that generative AI is employed ethically and securely.

In conclusion, generative AI is not the first technology to captivate the imagination of any industry, and it certainly won't be the last. It is essential to recognize it as a tool—one among many—that should be carefully assessed and applied in the right context. Traditional machine learning and data analytics, which are still underutilised in many organizations, should be the primary focus for building data-driven capabilities. Generative AI can play a supportive role, serving as a bridge between technical and non-technical stakeholders, or a moderated content generator.

Before any technological adoption, organisations must ensure they have the necessary foundations in place and prioritize security, privacy, and ethics. Generative AI, like all technologies, has the potential to drive progress and innovation, but its responsible and effective use hinges on the willingness of individuals and organisations to ask the right questions and choose the right tools for the job.

AI in action

Navigating the Opportunities and Challenges of AI in Market and Social Research

Dr Aji Ghose

Vice President of Data & Research, Chattermill



In the rapidly evolving landscape of market and social research, the integration of generative AI, based predominantly on advances in large language models (LLMs) like BERT, GPT-4 and Bard, has ushered in a new era of possibilities and complexities.

Opportunity “The Last Mile of Insights” (Shift and Expand)

Imagine a world where researchers can harness the power of reliable quantitative research findings and accurate analyses while seamlessly engaging with the data through a natural language interface. This is the essence of the “Last mile of insights” opportunity presented by generative AI. By generating a narrative layer on top of meticulously collected and analysed data, AI empowers research and CX practitioners to qualitatively interact with information in a “Q&A” format, enhancing their ability to derive meaningful insights. This is exceptionally powerful and democratises data analysis across the organisation. Generative AI is especially adept at generating qualitative insights during the exploration and hypothesis-generation phase of market research.

In natural language processing (NLP), an interdisciplinary field of computer science and linguistics, one of the first rudimentary Q&A systems was The Lunar Sciences Natural Language Information System from 1972¹², which geologists could query with questions like ‘What is the average concentration of aluminium in high alkali rocks?’. Although this is an example of classical symbolic AI or GOFAI (“Good old fashioned artificial intelligence”), where the natural language system was built with a specific database and taxonomy of questions and answers, it provides a glimpse of the history of such systems dating back to the origins of computer science and the long desire for such systems which have only, in a more generally applicable and widespread sense, appeared with the advent of OpenAI’s ChatGPT.

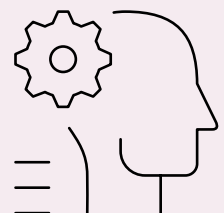
Shift:

The application of AI in this context represents a significant shift from traditional research methodologies. It enables researchers to move beyond rigid statistical reports and engage with data more dynamically and intuitively, but ideally with ‘under the hood’ statistical rigour provided by other systems supporting the LLM-based AI. This shift allows for greater adaptability and responsiveness to changing research needs.

Expand:

Generative AI expands the capabilities of research professionals by offering a bridge between quantitative and qualitative analysis. It enriches their toolkit, enabling a more holistic understanding of complex data sets. This expanded

Generative AI expands the capabilities of research professionals by offering a bridge between quantitative and qualitative analysis.



AI in action

capability can drive innovation in research methodologies beyond merely hybrid qual-quant but more towards a seamless fusion of methods for answering research questions. However, it is essential to tread cautiously in pursuing this opportunity. While generative AI holds promise, it also poses challenges that require careful consideration.

Challenge

“Being Confidently Wrong” (Shift and Transform)

One of the fundamental challenges of employing LLMs in research is the risk of being “confidently wrong.” This paradoxical phrase reflects the reality that AI outputs, while highly human-readable and believable, are not guaranteed to be correct. This challenge arises from the reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF) framework used to train these models.

Shift:

The RLHF approach represents a significant shift in how AI models are trained. It leverages human feedback to optimise model behaviour, making AI responses more aligned with human expectations. However, this shift introduces uncertainty regarding the accuracy of AI-generated insights.

Transform:

Addressing the challenge of being “confidently wrong” requires a transformative approach. It demands innovation in the way AI models are developed and evaluated. Research and insight practitioners must actively explore new territories in AI ethics and research validation methods to ensure the reliability of AI-generated insights.

In the contemporary landscape of generative AI research and applications, it is crucial to acknowledge that LLMs play a dominant role. They have the

potential to boost efficiency, expand capabilities, shift research paradigms, and even transform the way insights are generated and applied. However, these advancements must be accompanied by a commitment to maintaining the integrity and reliability of research findings.

As the market and social research sector grapples with deciding when and how to integrate AI into their practices, it is imperative to adopt a balanced approach. Embracing the “Last mile of insights” opportunity while addressing the “Being confidently wrong” challenge necessitates a thoughtful blend of innovation, ethics, and validation. This approach will enable research professionals to harness the true potential of generative AI, enhancing their ability to provide valuable insights in today’s dynamic and data-driven world.

AI in action

AI makes research better, not just faster and cheaper

Phil Sutcliffe

Managing Partner, Nexxt Intelligence



For the last 10 years or so, the mantra of ResTech (research technology) has been better, faster, cheaper. However, I'd argue that most of the impact of ResTech to date has been in automation, making research faster and cheaper but rarely better and, on the contrary, sometimes efficiency and speed have come at the cost of quality. The emergence of generative AI changes this for market research. Whilst, to date, many of the early applications of generative AI for research sit in the 'Boost' quadrant of the framework of this Delphi report, the game-changing potential of generative AI for researchers will be found in the other quadrants. That's why I believe that generative AI will have the biggest impact on the research industry since the advent of online research in the early noughties and, most likely, even more impact – because it will deliver BETTER insight, as well as faster and cheaper.

We're already seeing generative AI applications emerge that deliver this. For example, knowledge management systems such as Market Logic and Lucy have integrated generative AI so that users can ask natural language queries and the AI will interrogate all the knowledge held by the

organisation in real time to give an answer backed up by the evidence. And analysis tools are also starting to enable natural language querying. Combining the capabilities of large language models (LLMs) with advanced computational power will mean that researchers will be able to ask a question such as, "what are the key factors that drive users to choose (competitor X) rather than my brand?", and analysis that previously took marketing science teams hours or days will be provided in seconds.

Further examples are the capabilities we have developed at Nexxt Intelligence | inca to enable generative AI probing of answers people give to open-ended questions at scale and speed. Inserting this SmartProbe capability in surveys via API integration leads to answers that are richer and more considered, unlocking more differentiated findings and more actionable insights. This enables us to 'Expand' what can be delivered by enriching and extending survey research capabilities. However, we are also going further to 'Transform' what has hitherto been possible with market research. Using a chatbot to repeatedly probe answers, akin to how a moderator would probe in a depth

interview, integrating projective techniques and using AI for rapid synthesis and quantification of unstructured data creates a new type of research by blending the depth of insight of qual with the scale and robustness of quant. This is an example whereby, as this report says, "AI and humans can co-create new landscapes of knowledge".

As this Delphi report explains, an intriguing factor of generative AI is its recursive nature, a "tool that both measures but also changes what is measured". As such for market research, generative AI both threatens what we do but can also enhance what we do. A prime example of this is the use of generative AI to create synthetic data. This undoubtedly poses a threat to survey research by offering insight which, in some cases, will be a valid alternative, delivered faster and cheaper. Yet if primary research is to counter the threat of synthetic data, it will also require the industry to use generative AI. Blending qual and quant to conduct research in new ways is one way to achieve this, helping us understand people better by providing deep insight about them in their own words at huge scale.

AI in action

How generative AI can save quant research

Rónán Dowling-Cullen

Co-Founder and Co-CEO, Bounce Insights

Member of the MRS Data Analytics Council

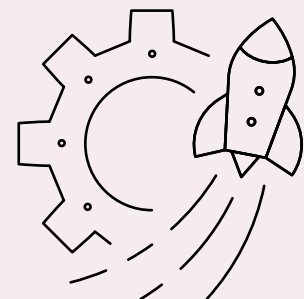


Quantitative technology has failed the market research industry.

Technology promised us speed, agility, low cost and democratisation of insights. Instead it gave us wasted resources, misaligned expectations from management and, worst of all, lower trust in data quality than ever before (Global Data Quality initiative).¹³

As Albert Einstein once said, “If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.” The most important aspect of any research project is to understand the right questions to ask to solve business problems. Technology failed the market research industry because it failed to understand the human element of research. Quant technology thus far has focused only on the solution (making it easy to script surveys and view data) and not on the proper questions to solve business problems.

Generative AI is going to transform quant research technology so it can drive real value for businesses.



This is where generative AI can come to the rescue. generative AI is going to transform quant research technology so it can drive real value for businesses. Instead of platforms that allow us to script surveys and view basic data visualisation dashboards, it will give us tools that recommend what research to run and how to analyse the primary data to solve real business problems. In the design phase it will recommend the best methodology to answer the business question, the best audience to run the research to and the best survey questions to pull out those nuggets of insight we are all looking for. In the analysis phase it will crunch datasets in minutes and recommend the key insights to answer the business problem.

Through constant learning, generative AI can supercharge researchers and decision makers. This means that businesses will re-discover that quant research can drive real value and enable them to understand their customers in ways they never thought possible. It can achieve this by working hand in hand with businesses and shift their focus to new, evidence-based research methodologies.

Believe in the future of research through generative AI. Researchers and generative AI together are going to transform the research industry.

AI in action

SMEs on the sidelines of the AI revolution

David Bharier,

Head of Research, British Chambers of Commerce



The digital revolution is advancing at a seemingly exponential rate. Even in the last 12 months, we've seen leaps taken in the development of AI technology, particularly large language models and deep learning. We can see this with AI generated content that is getting hard to distinguish from the real thing.

Yet, amid this remarkable innovation, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) find themselves on the sidelines of the digital revolution due to infrastructure limitations, skills gaps, and insufficient guidance on technology adoption.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), the UK's leading network of more than 50,000 businesses, recently conducted research on AI adoption in business through its Insights Unit, shedding light on the current landscape and the opportunities and challenges associated with it.

One striking finding is that 48% of the 715 businesses surveyed – mostly SMEs – tell us they have no plans to incorporate AI into their operations. By contrast, larger firms with over 50 employees, seem more open to exploring AI's potential, with only 37% expressing no intention to adopt AI. This distinction underscores the role

that a business's size, resources, and skills play in determining its willingness and ability to engage with AI. A promising sign is that 22% of businesses not currently using AI express an interest in exploring AI's potential in the future.

In terms of practical AI applications, chatbots, like ChatGPT, are the most favored choice, used by 18% of respondents. These chatbots streamline customer interactions and operational processes. Additionally, other AI technologies, such as machine learning, speech recognition, and virtual agents for customer service, are gaining traction.

The motivations behind adopting or avoiding AI vary. Businesses embracing AI find it invaluable for coding, data analysis, language translation, and content creation. AI aids decision-making, boosts productivity, and sparks innovation.

On the other hand, those hesitant to adopt AI cite valid concerns, including perceived irrelevance, high investment costs, reliability issues, limited understanding, and worries about scams and privacy breaches. These concerns are legitimate, as AI adoption indeed requires commitment and a learning curve. Firms in the consumer-facing sectors, such as retail and hospitality, are less likely to see a relevant application to their business.

The impact of AI on employment remains uncertain. When asked whether they think AI will have a net change on employment in their sector, 26% of respondents expect net job losses, particularly in B2B firms (29%), while 36% are unsure, and only 12% anticipate AI to lead to a net increase in jobs.

The BCC sees major opportunities for both businesses and policymakers in this space, and its newly created Digital Revolution Challenge, which counts the MRS as a member, seeks to highlight AI's pivotal role in enhancing productivity, improving decision-making, enhancing customer experiences, and fostering innovation. AI will be essential for maintaining competitiveness in today's global business landscape.

At the BCC, leadership by digital pioneer Martha Lane Fox, as both an entrepreneur and policy influencer, is shaping the direction of AI adoption. With the right guidance and practical recommendations, we can bridge the gap between AI's potential and business readiness. Fully harnessing AI's opportunities requires a partnership between policymakers and the business community, fostering inclusive dialogue and setting clear national ambitions.

See here for more information about the BCC's research into AI adoption.

AI in action

Where next? Find out more about AI in research

Jake Steadman

Global Head of Market Research & Data, Canva

Chair of MRS Data Analytics Council



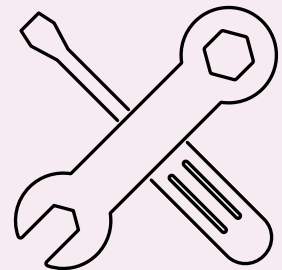
There is A LOT written about the potential impact of AI on the research and insight industry. As always when a new technology becomes available, there are a lot of questions and not a small amount of nervousness about the potential impact. But currently there is not a lot of evidence, case studies or practical advice about specific applications.

As others have set out elsewhere in this paper, the reality is that AI is just another (very clever) tool that we have available to us as researchers. Ultimately our job is to use data and insight to help businesses make the right decisions, and having AI on our side to empower us in a more efficient, effective and impactful way feels like a good thing.

I think what we all need is clarity in terms of exactly what AI is and how it will benefit us and our work. To that end, the team at MRS have (re)launched the MRS Data Analytics Council, and I'm delighted to be chairing that group on their behalf. Our priority to begin with is to create a body of

work including thought leadership, case studies and expert interviews with people who are leading the charge for AI in the research industry. We hope to demystify and derisk the conversation, routing it in practical advice and examples that we can all learn from. I'm excited!

You can learn more about us and our work [here](#).



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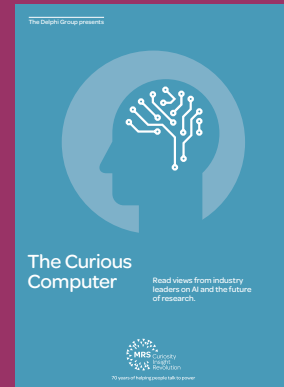
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