

**Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in  
Marketing and Advertising Agencies:  
Challenges, Benefits and Strategic Responses**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the marketing and advertising industry on a global scale, it is changing everything about creativity, data analysis, and how to optimize campaigns. While the global trends in adoption are well understood, there has been little research to date that explores how these developments are playing out within Ireland. To do so, this study assesses the presence of AI in Irish marketing and advertising agencies, the organisational and cultural forces influencing its adoption and ethical considerations for it.

Building on the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework, this research is qualitative and mono-method. Six semi-structured interviews with professionals who are in creative or digital field leadership roles within Dublin based agencies were conducted. Thematic analysis was applied to identify similarities and differences in adoption approaches, leadership influence, adoption strategies, client and competitor pressures, and governance practices.

The results show that although AI is widely used, its strategic approaches vary significantly between agencies. The leadership vision, organizational culture and market dynamics are key enablers whereas the skills gaps, ethical considerations and governance requirements remain challenges. The study contributes to academic understanding by providing a national market AI adoption context and provides agencies with useful advice on how to successfully integrate AI while striking a balance between innovation, compliance, and long-term strategic objectives.

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# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT AREA AND THESIS

### 1.1 Background to the Study

#### *1.1.1 Artificial Intelligence in Marketing and Advertising*

Artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved from a specialist technology to a central driver of innovation in global business. In marketing and advertising, AI-powered tools influence activities such as audience segmentation, predictive analytics, generative content creation, and campaign optimisation (Wiese *et al.*, 2024; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). The growth of machine learning, natural language processing, and image generation technologies has enabled marketers to combine data-driven insights with creative ideation at unprecedented speed (Pinto *et al.*, 2024). These developments are reshaping the skillsets required in marketing roles, introducing new efficiencies, and prompting debates about creativity, authenticity, and the future role of human judgment (Alka'awneh *et al.*, 2025).

#### *1.1.2 The Irish Marketing and Advertising Landscape*

Ireland is a vibrant mix of multinational agency networks, independent creative firms, and in-house teams looking after domestic and international brands, spanning the marketing communications spectrum. Ireland is home to many multinational technology firms, which has driven the industry towards early adoption of AI capabilities, particularly in idea generation and production, as well as targeted campaign delivery (Pinto *et al.*, 2024; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021). But the rate of adoption is not uniform. Although, there are some agencies adopting AI in many stages of their workflows, others are still experimenting with it due to factors like low funds, the cautiousness of leadership and lack of technical knowhow (Alka'awneh *et al.* 2025; Wiese *et al.*, 2024; Tornatzky and Fleischer 1990). It highlights an important need to have insights into why and how organizational contexts and external pressures affect the AI within detachment.

### ***1.1.3 Opportunities and Challenges of AI Integration***

The potential benefits of AI in marketing include faster production timelines, deeper customer personalisation, and enhanced decision-making through data analytics (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Pinto et al., 2024; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Generative AI in particular offers opportunities for rapid prototyping and creative exploration. Yet these opportunities are accompanied by challenges, including intellectual property uncertainties, data privacy concerns, and the ethical implications of algorithmic decision-making (Alka'awneh *et al.*, 2025; Wiese *et al.*, 2024; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). Organisational readiness, cultural attitudes, and workforce skills gaps can further limit effective adoption. Addressing these issues requires an approach that considers not only the technological potential of AI but also the organisational structures and environmental factors influencing its sustainable use.

## **1.2 Gaps in the Literature**

### ***1.2.1 Limited Context-Specific Research in Ireland***

While there is a well-established literature on AI adoption in marketing, there is a notable lack of in-depth research on the marketing and advertising sector in Ireland. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on international or multi-industry contexts (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Pinto et al., 2024), which cannot fully account for the particularities of the Irish market. Local industry characteristics, such as the predominance of small-to-medium-sized agencies, long-standing client relationships, and a strong connection to multinational technology firms based in Ireland, may create unique drivers and constraints in AI integration. Moreover, literature using a quantitative methodology to examine the Irish context often looks at the adoption rates as measured for some of these tools. However, this view does not provide information on how professionals perceive and understand the process of integration (Alka'awneh *et al.*, 2025; Wiese *et al.*, 2024). This gap in the exploration and analysis of how organizations adopt AI qualitatively on a context basis has severely limited our understanding of the organizational implications of AI, strategic considerations for AI adoption, managing the internal transformation associated with AI implementation and response to evolving client demand within an Irish context. Dealing with this challenge will help to provide a much deeper and subtle interpretation of what AI signifies in creative industries in Ireland.

### ***1.2.2 Underexplored Organisational and Cultural Influences***

In addition to the lack of context-specific studies, the prevailing literature overlooks organisational culture, leadership vision and governance frameworks as expressions of how AI adoption takes place in marketing agencies. While there is research indicating a cultural readiness, committing leadership on digital transformation is needed for success (Wiese *et al.*, 2024; Alka'awneh *et al.*, 2025; Pinto *et al.*, 2024). A scarcity of empirical evidence as to how these factors can be identified in the creative industries provided the motivation for this study. Whether AI is seen as a strategic asset or disruptive threat depends on organisational culture, both within an organisation and in the summation of parts which makes up a global identity to clients. Similarly, how leadership positions AI adoption as a slow incremental progression or as an after-hours response to competitive pressure affects its sheer implementation, depth and longevity. This is also picked out in the wider literature on technology adoption, but certain ethical issues such as AI rights, data privacy, algorithmic biases and transparency featured here too (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) yet no comprehensive understanding of how few Irish agencies have developed firm formation policies linked to these were explained. Understanding how these organisational, cultural and ethical tensions influence one another are essential in developing frameworks for adoption that not only encourage its implementation but also ensure this is done through the lens of professional standards, client confidence and societal expectations.

## **1.3 Academic Justification**

In doing so, this paper contributes a focused examination of AI adoption in the little studied context of the Irish marketing and advertising sector to advance academic knowledge on the topic. Through the utilisation of the Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990), this study aims to fill two main gaps: limited qualitative disciplinary understanding comes from integration on AI in Ireland and there is a lack of research unlocked and taken about organisational, cultural and ethical drivers that reverse advancing advantageous outcomes. Prior research has highlighted the disruptive impact that AI may have in marketing (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021; Pinto *et al.*, 2024), but little is known about how these technologies become integrated into the workflows, decision-making processes, and strategic visions of national market orientated agencies.

Our research takes a qualitative approach, going beyond mere adoption metrics and getting at the lived experience of implementing creativity, digital technology and leadership through semi-structured interviews with practitioners in the field. This meets a demand in literature for research that marries technical aspects and human and organizational factors (Alka'awneh *et al.*, 2025; Wiese *et al.*, 2024). In addition to contributing to AI marketing theoretical perspectives, this work serves as groundwork for future comparative research with different geographies and industry settings. Placing the Irish experience in a global debate, this work will refine theoretical models and provide lessons for how to maintain innovation, compliance, yet also prevent cultural readiness backsliding.

## **1.4 Research Aim of the Study**

This research studies how marketing and advertising agencies in Ireland are adopting artificial intelligence (AI), and the organizational, cultural or environmental factors which affect its rollout. Specifically drawing on the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework developed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990), this study proposes to investigate the opportunities AI affords for strategic advancement along with the challenges surrounding technical readiness, workforce capability, leadership mindfulness, as well as ethic-legal considerations. The endeavor aims to capture the views of professionals in creative, digital and leadership roles, in order to generate nuanced and context-appropriate findings that support both academic knowledge and industry practice. This grounding is the basis for much of the research questions that inquire into the myriad dimensions which affect how AI might be implemented and maintained sustainably across marketing and advertising firms in Ireland.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

This research will provide an opportunity to explore different facets of the organizational, cultural and environmental dimensions of AI adoption in the context of Irish marketing and advertising agencies through a set of core questions designed to cover up some gaps identified in the literature. Each question deals with an area in either the theory or practice of data sharing where current academic work falls short, with the purpose of shedding light on issues that are theoretically important and have practical implications. The questions have been designed based on the Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) framework (Tornatzky and

Fleischer, 1990) to maximize technology aspects but still, factors from organization and environment will not be missing.

1. What AI tools are currently being used in Irish marketing and advertising agencies, and which they recognise as the most useful and innovative?
2. How are agencies solving the technical challenges with AI, integration in existing workflow systems and training of staff?
3. How leadership attitudes and strategic priorities affect AI adoption and implementation in marketing and advertising agencies?
4. How does agency culture, training resources, and skills of workforce affect the successful application of AI technologies?

How does agency culture, training availability and workforce skills impact how intentionally AI projects are implemented?

5. What outside forces, such as client needs, competition and external market drivers are driving agency decisions on how they use AI in their efforts?
6. Which ethical, legal, and data challenges arise from AI adoption and what measures are agencies taking to address these responsibilities?

These research questions lay the groundwork for the research objectives described in the methodology chapter that operationalise each question with specific, measurable goals for primary data collection and analysis.

## 1.6 Methods and Scope

Using semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study and research question examines the organizational, cultural, and environmental factors that influence the adoption of AI in Irish marketing and advertising agencies. The study adopted a qualitative approach, rather than quantitative or mixed methods designs, to provide rich and detailed perspectives of the experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes of participants instead of focusing only on trends that could be measured (Chintalapati and Pandey 2022; Pinto et al.). The interview guide was developed around the Technology–Organization–Environment (TOE) framework (Alka’awneh *et al.*, 2025; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) which includes topics such as technological readiness, organizational leadership and culture, as well external pressures. In this study, the purposive non-probability sampling technique was used to sample participants who had a professional experience of AI adoption. Though it is not statistically generalizable, this method ensures rich contextual insights relevant to the research questions explored and leads to both theoretical and practical contribution (Ahmed, 2020).

### 1.6.1 Primary Research Sample

Six professionals representing positions like Senior Art Director, Art Director, Creative Graphic & Motion Designer, Head of Digital, and two Managing Directors from marketing and advertising agencies in Dublin made up the primary research sample. A purposive sample design was used to bring unique perspectives across creative, digital and leadership-delivery functions representative of both operational execution through to strategic decision making (Bevilacqua *et al.*, 2025). Recruitment was affected by the summer holiday season when many professionals were on leave, and for others the period was known as a peak time leading to more duties. This said, the sample is indicative across different types of agencies and sizes. Microsoft Teams was used to conduct the interviews, which were then verbatim transcribed for thematic analysis after being consentingly recorded (Pinto et al., 2024).

### ***1.6.2 Scope of the Study***

This research focuses exclusively on marketing and advertising agencies operating within Ireland, analysing how they integrate AI into creative, operational, and strategic processes. Framed by the TOE model (Alka'awneh *et al.*, 2025; Pinto *et al.*, 2024), it examines technological readiness, organisational factors, and environmental pressures. It excludes client-side marketing teams, other industries, and agencies outside Ireland. The study does not examine implementation of AI tools, nor calculate ROI (McElheran *et al.*, 2024). Instead, it aims to catalogue experiences in the lives of industry professionals and reflect on their strategies ones which should be taken contextually but with relevance debates.

## **1.7 Dissertation Structure**

### ***Chapter 1 – Introduction***

This chapter introduces the research subject and some background information about how AI is contributing towards marketing and advertising focusing more in a precise way into the Irish environment. It discusses the research purpose, aims, highlights the academic justification of the study, and shows a literature gaps. After a brief description of the methods used and scope, follow a synopsis of the dissertation structure.

### ***Chapter 2 – Literature Review***

This chapter uses the Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) framework to scan systematically academic and industry research on AI adoption in marketing. Based on this body of work, a critical review was conducted to identify the gaps that informed our research questions regarding organizational factors, technological readiness, and environmental pressures.

### ***Chapter 3 – Methodology***

It outlines the research methodology, research approach and philosophy, including the strategic map. That also justifies the use of a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews as sole data collection method. Furthermore, the chapter details other aspects of conducting interviews, such as selection criteria of participants, methods for data collection and analysis as well ethical dilemmas and limitations.

#### ***Chapter 4 – Research Findings and Discussion***

The results of six interviews are presented and examined in this chapter in an organized way by themes corresponding to the objectives of this study. Pairing participant quotes with related academic literature reveals important patterns, discrepancies and insights to develop links to the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework.

#### ***Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations***

The final chapter wraps around the main findings to show how effective research objectives and questions have been addressed. This study provides implications for industry practitioners and avenues of future research which may enhance academic contribution and practical applicability.

# CHAPTER 2:

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has quickly become an impactful factor that is changing the foundations of industries, extensively redesigning the way organizations work, communicate with its customers, and generate value (Mossavar-Rahmani and Zohuri, 2024). The transition can be felt no less than at marketing and advertising teams where the use of AI-technology toolkits comprising ChatGPT, DALL-E, or predictive analytics data hubs reimagines productivity, creativity, and the planning capacities of professionals (Forcelli, 2025). Although AI undoubtedly can bring important gains such as hyper-personalization, content automation or better decision-making, it also presents issues regarding ethics, data privacy, integration, and employee preparedness. With agencies traversing through this changing environment, it is important to take a critical look into the impact of the adoption of AI on practices in organizations, competitive forces and consumer demands.

Through the literature reviewed, it is identified that the application of AI can speed up the campaign performance and unlock new capabilities but also gives rise to significant risks such as the algorithmic bias, lack of transparency and skills gaps that impair the effective application (Bahangulu and Berko, 2025). Innovation and ethical accountability are always found to clash as most organizations are unable to accommodate advances in AI practices to the currently set up systems, laws, and culture (Kashefi *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, although tools like the Technology Organization Environment (TOE) model can give a helpful perspective to interpret adoption motives, current studies tend to disregard the complexity of technical, organizational, and environmental drivers of innovation in the creative industries. The current thesis will look into – *“How are marketing and advertising agencies adopting artificial intelligence, and what are the key challenges, benefits, and strategic responses associated with its implementation?”*

In order to deal with these problems, this review is structured around the prominent themes. It starts with a history and tracing of the definition of AI in marketing and this is followed by global trends and the disadvantages and advantages of applications of AI in the creative pages. Further areas look at the technological influences, including system compatibility and expertise in skills, organisational considerations encompassing leadership, culture and training and

environmental stress, including customer expectation, rivalry and regulatory conformity. In combining knowledge in these fields, this review sets a solid reason as to why future research should be conducted on how marketing agencies can implement AI in a manner that allows them to face a balance in productivity, innovation, and ethical responsibility.

## **2.2 The Development of AI in the Marketing and Advertising Industry**

### ***2.2.1 Definition and History of AI and Automation***

Understanding the definition and historical development of AI and automation is essential for contextualising their current and potential applications in marketing and advertising agencies. Artificial intelligence (AI) means computer systems that carry out the activity normally demanding human intelligence, i.e., perception, language understanding, study, and decision-making (Parycek *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, automation is the use of rules to automate predefined tasks on a large scale without human intervention (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2019). AI can do automation, but automation does not necessarily mean AI (Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), 2020). The historical progression of adoption in the industry has progressed through initial rules and expert systems to data driven machine learning, accelerated by deep learning, and most recently to generative AI that can generate both text, images, and audio (Anantrasirichai and Bull, 2022; Stix, 2022).

The same progression can be seen in the world of marketing and advertising in terms of rule-based segmentation, rules-driven workflow automation led to programmatic media buying (Haleem *et al.*, 2022) and predictive analytics-based targeting (Enache, 2020) and scripting to ultimate generative tools, that help with ideation, copy and creative versions (Masnita *et al.*, 2024). The modern examples of such transformative shifts include the frameworks like ChatGPT that integrate language-based understanding and generation directly into the workflows of the campaign and build the frontier of automation beyond operational efficiencies into creative assistance (Tafesse and Wien, 2024; Anantrasirichai and Bull, 2022).

By means of this definitional and historical perspective, it becomes easy to understand why there is such a mix of deterministic automation (e.g., bidding, scheduling) (Haleem *et al.*, 2022) and probabilistic AI (e.g., dynamic personalization, content generation) interventions (Masnita *et al.*, 2024) on the agency landscape today and why the following analysis of roles, benefits, risks, and adoption drivers within the sector is to follow.

### ***2.2.2 The Role of AI in Marketing and Advertising***

Exploring how AI is currently applied in marketing and advertising reveals the breadth of its functions, from personalization to campaign optimization, while highlighting existing research gaps. The research article by Masnita *et al.* (2024) performs a thorough literature review to find the trends and future directions of AI-driven marketing but only uses secondary sources of information, which lacks practical insights into marketing application. Enache (2020) in a rather conceptual approach addresses the topic of AI tools in advertising with narrow empirical confirmation and without the opinion of stakeholders. In both sources, there is no primary data and analysis in relation to an industry in agencies. This thesis is relevant to fill these gaps by using qualitative interviews with builders of marketing to examine the practicalities and the advantages, and implementations of the AI that might be strategic.

Gao *et al.* (2023), through a mixed-methods study, utilized interviews with managers in the sphere of advertising to identify the application of AI in personalization and advertisement optimization. Although they have much to offer in terms of understanding, their sampling was confined to big multinational companies thus not addressing issues in smaller agencies. In the same note, Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) advanced the implications of AI using case examples but not empirical data, a reason that highlighted an urgent need to conduct a study on real-life strategic responses as was done in this research.

### ***2.2.3 Global Trends and Industry Evolution***

The quick development of artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing and advertising gave way to an increasing number of studies investigating the global shifts, technological incorporation, and the consequences of the wider scope of the industry. Deckker and Sumanasekara (2025) use the systematic review method, as they summarise the recent research on AI application in digital advertising all over the world. Their conclusions underline that there is a quick transition to hyper-personal ad targeting, programmatic purchases, and predictive analytics, and point out the regulatory, ethical, and transparency issues. The reason why the study is important is that it is a well-organised guide to both research and corporate evolution, where new opportunities, such as AI-enabled optimisation of creativity, as well as threats, such as algorithmic bias, are observed. Conversely, Krutikov (2025) applies a conceptual discussion with a market trend analysis to present how digital marketing innovations are stimulated by the global economic and socio-political changes. Their results revolve around the convergence of AI, big data, and immersive technologies highlighting the need of resilience and adaptability as the competitive

necessity. Krutikov (2025) is less methodologically rigorous, but still important because it puts the adoption of AI into a larger macroeconomic and geopolitical context.

Huh *et al.* (2023) draw a more scholarly commentary in which they examine the effects that ChatGPT has on advertising research, pedagogy, and creative practice. Their conclusion implies that AI technologies can contribute to the greater efficiency, ideation, and audience reach, yet raise questions related to academic integrity and brand story authenticity. The importance lies in the idea to place AI as not only a disruptive machine but a catalyst to revise advertising education. However, Chintalapati and Pandey (2022) use a systematic literature review of twenty years of AI in marketing applications studies. They single out dominant topics, including ones such as predicting consumer behaviour, recommendation systems, and content generation, together with methodological fragmentation and insufficient development of ethical aspects. Their value is in tracing the development of AI marketing scholarship and establishing an agenda of the research position, providing an empirical scope in contrast to the conceptual one of Huh *et al.* (2023).

#### ***2.2.4 AI's Advantages and Risks for Creative Industries***

Assessing the advantages and risks of AI in creative industries uncovers its dual potential to enhance productivity and creativity while introducing significant ethical and operational challenges. The comprehensive review published by Anantrasirichai and Bull (2022) synthesises both technical progress and creative AI use cases. However, it is based primarily on secondary information without empirical evidence provided by marketing firms. Masnita *et al.* (2024) on the other hand provide a well-structured literature review on the topics of marketing-related AI applications, but their study does not give primary data regarding how creative specialists experience the use of such instruments. This thesis fills these gaps through obtaining primary evidence involving employees of the said agencies in order to gain first-hand information about operational, as well as creative effects.

Karagoz (2024) provides a detailed examination of both generative AI ethics and the technical issues associated with it without reliance upon industry case studies. Whiting (2024) includes the views of experts on the ability of AI to democratize the creation of content and eliminate jobs but says nothing about systematic empirical assessment. This current thesis was conducted by complementing the analysis process and interviews with practitioners, filling a gap in solving the dual value and threat of AI in creative marketing practice through the grounded knowledge gathered.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework: Understanding Technology Adoption**

### ***2.3.1 Overview of the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Framework***

The TOE framework offers a structured lens through which to analyse the adoption of new technologies like AI, considering technological, organisational, and environmental factors. Malik *et al.* (2021) base their examination on the broader TOE model to examine blockchain adoption in Australian organizations through a mixed-methods approach by drawing on survey and qualitative (thematic analysis) data collected in interviews. The two-strategic approach improves the validity but is situational and narrow in its scope to discuss blockchain exclusively and not on the level of industry. Conversely, Jere and Ngidi (2020) use a qualitative case study in studying the adoption of ICT among SMEs in Pietermaritzburg. Although their localized analysis provides them with abundant data in the different environmental and organizational barriers, their results are limited by small size sample and restricted to developing country context. Although both works are informative, they do not take into consideration the dynamics of adoption of AI in creative sectors such as marketing and advertisement which are the themes of this thesis paper.

Likewise, Ahmed (2020) employs conceptual analysis and investigates the adoption of cloud computing in terms of TOE, with primary attention to the technical and organizational aspects but limited relevance to empirical data. Prakash (2025), instead, performs a systematic review of TOE's applications in a range of technologies and locates its advantages in the flexibility it has and weaknesses in its inability to capture dynamic, fast-changing environments. Nevertheless, neither of the studies adopt first-hand information, nor consider sociotechnical complexities peculiar to AI. This thesis addresses this gap by empirically testing the application of the TOE framework to a new phenomenon AI adoption in marketing agencies that merge the perspective of organizational behaviour and innovation management.

### ***2.3.2 Relevance of TOE for Analysing AI Adoption in Organisations***

The TOE (Technology-Organization-Environment) model is adopted to investigate the way organisations embrace new technologies, transforming value chains such as AI. It proposes a structured approach to understand how technical, organisational and environmental factors impact upon the decision-making process. On the technical level, the structure includes perceived benefits and compatibility of AI devices with existing technologies. As Pinto *et al.*

(2024) highlighted, “technological readiness and integration capability, is frequently the source of the ‘make or break’ characteristics of the uptake process of AI innovation.” This is especially true in marketing and advertising, where companies may need to determine efficacy of an AI system such as content generation tools or automated analytics. On the other hand, the organisational dimension describes internal capabilities, leadership backing, and human resources. According to Pinto *et al.* (2024), the successful implementation is usually due to the vision of the management and the ability of the organization to train and to manage the change. Without strategic alignment and the engagement of employees, AI efforts simply come up short. The environmental dimension consists of external forces such competition, industry practices and government regulations. Zielonka and Heuser (2024) discerned that the environmental stakeholders were central players in the process of generative AI adoption by entrepreneurial firms. This is consistent with adoption not only being a product of internal processes, but also a function of market and regulatory pressures. By utilizing the TOE model, in this thesis, we critically examine how the three elements associated with AI adoption are interrelated, assisting agencies in getting ready for the AI adoption and minimizing potential challenges.

### ***2.3.3 Comparison of TOE with Other Models (e.g., AI Readiness, TAM, Diffusion of Innovation)***

Comparing TOE with other adoption models such as TAM and DOI highlights differences in focus, scope, and applicability to the creative marketing and advertising sectors. Alka’awneh *et al.* (2025) compare the theory of understanding the TOE framework with the diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory hinting at theoretical understandings lacking the confirmation phase of the adoption of AI. The differences in approach are quite revealing in their study as TOE focuses on structural and contextual reasons whereas DOI targets the nature of innovation and types of adopters. In the meantime, Abulail *et al.* (2025) introduce an integrated model of TOE and DOI with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to find out how to move to AI adoption in higher education. They show important predictors of AI adoption intentions, whereas the methodology is a quantitative survey-based one. Nevertheless, the research is limited to the education sector and excludes marketing and advertising situations. Both sets of authors do not provide qualitative and context-rich learning, particularly the creative industries, as this thesis is dedicated to applying these frameworks in marketing agencies by interviewing practitioners.

Stenberg and Nilsson (2020) developed a qualitative study of AI adoption readiness using the TOE framework in the Swedish government agencies. Their study provides excellent contextual understanding and accentuates organization preparedness and opposition, but this governmental nature restricts its applicability to the vibrant fast paced world of marketing. In comparison, Phillips (2025) relies on the generational aspect of the DOI framework to perform surveys and interviews regarding diffusion of artificial intelligence in higher education institutions in the United States. Despite its innovative character the study does not include the comparative analysis of other models like TOE or TAM. In this current thesis, these gaps are filled by comparing the applicability of TOE with other frameworks in various organizational systems and levels of preparedness in marketing agencies.

Walton and Ozcan (2024) consider the concept of organizational AI readiness through a survey-based assessment model and determine such obstacles as technical and cultural readiness. Instead, Pinto *et al.* (2024) carry out a meta-analysis of studies on TOE-based adopting AI and measure the effect of technological, organizational, and environmental factors. There is value in both of these metrics but they lack the ability to capture the subtlety of real-time marketing professional experiences. The thesis will fill that gap by addressing first-hand qualitative information to assess the influence of practical, strategic, and behavioural variables on how AI is adopted and compare it against TOE with other frameworks in a business with a high-innovation level.

## **2.4 Technological Influencing Factors of AI Application in Agencies**

### ***2.4.1 Challenges in Integration and System Compatibility***

Technical integration and system compatibility challenges often determine whether AI adoption in marketing agencies succeeds or fails. Machireddy and Rachakatla (2023) performed a conceptual analysis with case studies within the industry to recognize major challenges of AI integration, such as data fragmentation and a complex to systems changes. Rosário and Raimundo (2025), in their turn, employed a systematic literature review of the 72 articles to draw a roadmap of how AI and IoT convergence worsen compatibility problems among platforms. In as much as both studies provide useful summaries on the barriers to integration, none presents actual experiences of marketing agency workers. The difference

constrains knowledge of how practitioners practically address the technical and organizational challenges of deploying tools such as ChatGPT or AI-Based CRM systems. This is dealt with in the current study by retrieving primary data on the lived experiences of employees regarding the incompatibility and the adaptation of systems.

The study by Baranikumar *et al.* (2024) used survey data related to digital marketing managers and investigated perceived challenges in this area, and they identified insufficient training and standardization of processes as significant barriers. Labudová (2024) in their turn resorted to quasi-qualitative interviews provided by European marketers in order to depict how isolated legacy systems could hamper a smooth implementation of AI solutions. Although the quantitative method implemented by Baranikumar *et al.* (2024) was able to provide valuable general patterns, it is not sufficient to discuss context-related barriers. The results of Labudová (2024) are more narrative in nature but have a geographical limitation. By mixing the insights of both and applying it to the problem of a broad variety of agencies, this thesis will contribute a more comprehensive, global perspective on the issue of integration.

The study conducted by Haleem *et al.* (2022) was literature-based and divided the technical limitations into groups, including interoperability progress and data security, whereas the study by Kalita *et al.* (2024) addressed future implications represented by the necessity to establish uniform AI governance standards. Technicalities in both articles are largely descriptive as they exhaustively track technical barriers without providing details on how to counterbalance them in marketing practice. This creates a critical blank on practical measures that the agencies can adopt in order to strike a balance between innovation and integration. The present thesis will seek to bridge this gap by not only outlining the problems but also those solutions and operational processes that facilitate an easier implementation of AI without resulting in a loss of creativity and productivity.

#### ***2.4.2 Skill Complexity and Learning Curve***

The complexity of AI-related skills and the steep learning curve present significant barriers to its effective use in marketing and advertising agencies. Paleyes *et al.* (2022) surveyed case studies across several industries related to deployment difficulties in machine learning, highlighting that a high learning curve and the absence of standard workflows commonly interfere with a successful implementation. Their approach combined the perspectives of various industries, instead of targeting marketing and advertising per se, which hindered the analysis of how deep industry-specific requirements on skills are. Differently, a qualitative

study by Öztürk (2023) conducted a series of interviews with marketing practitioners to determine how AI and analytics change the composition of skills needed in running campaigns. Although the study by Öztürk (2023) possesses the crucial practitioner insights, the paper focuses on data analysis skills and does not raise the subject of creative practices like model-based content creation with ChatGPT or DALL-E. This gap supports the necessity of the well-defined research that will focus on skill development issues within the context of creative agency, which would be introduced in this thesis.

Alhalwachi *et al.* (2024) provided a conceptual framework to survey the existing trends and challenges in the digital marketing transformation by pointing to the lack of training and aversion to AI embodiment. Nevertheless, they make use of the synthesis of secondary data, thus restricting the empirical verification of the mentioned barriers. On the other hand, Tafesse and Wien (2024) performed topic modelling on their academic writings to spatialise the use of ChatGPT in marketing to provide high-level structured knowledge on how generative AI tools impact skills across the disciplines. Even in this contribution, they lack direct contact with the practitioners to confirm the practical implication of learning curves. This study will support a more precise interpretation of skill complexity within practical marketing contexts by combining both expert sources that work within the agency setting and analysis of generative AI.

## **2.5 Organisational Context of AI Adoption in Agencies**

### ***2.5.1 Leadership and Strategic Vision for AI Integration***

Leadership commitment and a clear strategic vision are critical drivers of successful AI integration in marketing and advertising agencies. Central in justifying AI adoption to organisation goals, creating innovative corporate culture while maintaining operational stability (Parker, 2023) is through the leadership. As per Naples (2024), an engaged leadership affects not only the speed of adoption but serves to condition the organisation's mindset in experimentation, risk appetite and ethical use of AI. Research by Bevilacqua *et al.* (2025) demonstrates that top management teams with AI's participation in decision-making processes are more agile, data-oriented and can outperform their rivals. This is also substantiated by O'Dwyer and Murphy (2024) who are overemphasising the fact that forward-thinking CEOs do actively reengineer internal processes and governance to leverage AI's potential. Yet, resistance to change and the lack of clear responsibilities remain a challenge in many

organisations, an issue which is discussed by Schmitt (2024) who proposes that having a Chief AI Officer (CAIO) can bridge the gap between leadership and the technical part. Moreover, Sahlool (2024) highlights strong strategic leadership that is needed for technology adoption and to maintain brand equity in a situation where AI driven automation may overtake governance. McKinsey & Company (2025) and Thomson Reuters (2025) note that vision, transparency, and ethical commitment by management are fundamental to building trust in and adopting AI. To move forward in a sustainable way, agencies need to: (1) designate a full-time AI leader (or CAIO); (2) develop AI governance based on core values; (3) communicate strategy in a clear and consistent manner to their workforce; and (4) invest in the leadership that is needed to make decisions adaptively, ethically, and with confidence.

### ***2.5.2 Skills Gaps and Need for Upskilling***

The growing AI skills gap is the main challenge to its successful implementation in marketing and advertising agencies, where a large part of the workforce lacks experience in analytics, real-time engineering, or strategic use of AI. A global survey shows that although 81% of professionals believe they can use AI, only around 12% actually have the necessary skills (Pallardy, 2024). CEDEFOP (2025) calculated that more than 60% of the EU workforce could go through task changes due to AI without having received enough training. Marketing-focused studies are showing that more than 50% of marketers are already adjusting their job descriptions as a result of working with AI, but formal training is yet to catch up (MacRae, 2024). According to Estes (2025), only 6% of companies have launched comprehensive AI upskilling programs, though those that do, report up to 40% gains in performance. Employees are keen and willing to learn and 41% expect that AI will change one in four tasks they do within a year (McKinsey & Company, 2025). To fill this gap, agencies should adopt a phased upskilling model: starting with AI literacy, followed by hands-on tool use, and establishing leadership integration, in a similar manner to Estes' (2025) 90-day approach. Role-based assessment needs to identify necessary skills that span from basic (e.g., assistant) to advanced (e.g., leader) positions and include both technical and soft competences (e.g., digital literacy, ethics) (Mäkelä and Stephany, 2024). Recommended actions: monitor staff preparedness and AI competencies, invest in specific training modules, schedule time for practice or "AI labs," and support ongoing learning through peer coaching and supplement instruction of AI tools with responsible use and digital ethics. A strategic, inclusive approach to upskilling turns the skills gap from a liability into an engine for agency growth and longevity.

### ***2.5.3 Organisational Culture and Resistance to Change***

A firm's organisational culture can significantly influence the failure and success of AI implementation in marketing and advertising companies. Impediments against change are typically caused by rigid hierarchies, fear of job loss and missing psychological safety to experiment (Wiese *et al.*, 2024). Through the lens of the agencies, where a learning culture does not proliferate, staff are less likely to adopt AI tools even if they are available. According to Taofeek *et al.* (2024), resistance is exacerbated by miscommunication, lack of clarity about their purpose and role and a sense that roles may be threatened by AI. Übellacker (2025) states that in considering an employee's individual concerns, the fear of what they cannot do is a strong force driving organisational readiness. When people do not have confidence in or comprehend what AI is capable of and not capable of doing, resistance can become institutionalized across the board. Ratanjee and Royal (2024) emphasize the active role that companies should take in creating cultures conducive to innovation, trust and learning and cites cultural mismatch as a major source of failures in AI strategies. One example is CarGurus, which established an AI experimentation task force that empowers employees to play with tools in a low-risk environment and raise their concerns (Knight, 2025). This tactic helped alleviate fear and increased how involved employees were in AI adoption. Agencies should examine their current culture to find blockers to AI adoption, engage employees in the co-designing of AI processes, deliver clear education on AI's role and establish "safe spaces" to try out AI. Leaders need to make sure that they create an environment of support that fosters innovation, where failure is looked upon as a learning opportunity.

### ***2.5.4 Internal Communication and Training for AI Tools***

Effective internal communication and training are essential for the successful adoption of AI in marketing agencies. Research by Florea and Croitoru (2025) confirmed the role of AI in promoting communication such as education, message reception, acceptance, and reaction, resulting in improved employee performance and a reduction in transmission errors in organizational contexts. Likewise firm-level insights across the Davos 2025 company indicated that firms were employing AI assistive agents internally, to assist employees with finding the right information, and to speed up communication among employees, but that a human still is being needed to ensure accuracy and trust (Phillips Mocek, 2025). Training is just as important:

new research on AI-based conversational training has shown that managers appreciate adaptive simulations which allow them to develop communicational skills in a safe environment before being deployed in the real world (Wilhelm *et al.*, 2025). Another case study on industry technology adoption behaviour indicates that employees frequently prefer learning from an informal, peer to peer context to formal training, and that structured human-led pathways may be more useful for learning outcomes, than passive video modules (Sahni and Chilton, 2025). Together, these findings show that successful AI integration depends on clear communication strategies, active training methods and coordination between technology deployment and human learning. Agencies should design internal campaigns explaining AI's role and limitations; implement AI-based chat tools with guidance and oversight; offer hands-on, context-specific training simulations (like CommCoach) that allow safe practice of AI- assisted communication; promote peer-based learning communities; and gather regular feedback to refine both tools and training. By combining transparent messaging with experiential and collaborative training approaches, agencies can foster AI competence and confidence across the organisation.

## **2.6 Environmental Context of AI Adoption in Agencies**

### ***2.6.1 Customer's Expectation and Competitive Tension***

Evolving customer expectations and competitive pressures are key external forces driving AI adoption in marketing and advertising agencies. While both Wilson *et al.* (2024) and Chandrakumar (2024) address the issue of AI-driven personalization, the scope of the problem and methodological depth thereof are quite different. Wilson *et al.* (2024) take a theoretical stance, integrating secondary sources to elucidate how AI can make targeting and engagement most efficient, but they lack empirical data to prove these arguments in certain demographic groups. On the contrary, Chandrakumar (2024) presents the survey to Gen-Z consumers, which offers useful quantitative data regarding the anticipation of personalized experiences. Nevertheless, the specific nature of Gen Z limits the opportunities of generalizing the study to the wider audience or agency conditions. This thesis can fill these gaps by combining interviews with marketing experts and exploring a variety of customer groups to evaluate the impact of personalization pressure on agency processes and human functions.

PayPal (2024) provides a case study more focused on practitioners of successful AI personalization efforts in e-commerce, providing more examples of what is working but with little mention of longer-term analysis of effects. Graham (2025) discusses how competing tensions and shrinking growth push agencies to shift to AI quickly, however, it lacks empirical studies of internal organizational responses. Interviews and qualitative research with focused interrogation into agency practices will enable this thesis to go beyond the anecdotal to gain greater insights into the dynamics of how competitive pressures and customer needs and expectations fuel the trend toward AI implementation and change in marketing agencies.

### ***2.6.2 Industry Trends and Innovation Race***

The accelerating race to innovate in the advertising industry is reshaping how agencies adopt and adapt to AI technologies. The study by Poleac and Ionescu (2024) adopts a qualitative methodology that uses qualitative interviews with senior advertising professionals to discuss attitudes toward the adoption of AI. They have found a range of reactions, ranging between resistance, owing to fears of creative displacement, to pragmatic adaptation including skills upskilling and working alongside AI. The relevance of the study is any branch of knowledge is unable to develop to meet these large shifting demands without the innovation adoption process. The study concentrates on the human aspect of innovation adoption, which provides some insight into the role of accepting innovation based on experience, security of roles and organisational cultures. Conversely, McElheran *et al.* (2024) employ macro-level quantitative studies of data on U.S. firms to plot the trend of AI adoption. They discover that adoption concentrates in bigger, technology savvy companies in data intensive industries and cluster geographically in innovation centers. This macro perspective is relevant in the study of structural factors which influence competitive advantage in innovation race in the field of AI. Cillo and Rubera (2024) use a literature review design, which incorporates conceptual approach to advance the design of a research roadmap of generative AI on innovation and marketing processes. They find niche areas in creativity enhancement, rapid prototyping and personalised connectivity and they pursued the importance of having governance frameworks. This is a prospective view that is important in determining the scholar and managerial agenda. On the other hand, Osadchaya *et al.* (2024) employ a multi-country qualitative research, the stakeholders in the industry to study paradoxes of generative AI in advertising: efficiency vs creativity, innovation vs ethics and automation vs human judgment. They are valuable by

providing a subtle insight into tensions that the practitioner needs to steer through and thus close the gap between theory and confronting the reality of innovation races in the industry.

### ***2.6.3 Ethics in AI-Driven Advertising (Data Bias, Transparency)***

Ethical considerations such as data bias and transparency are central to responsible AI adoption in marketing and advertising. The conceptual analysis of ethical AI is also given by Alabi (2024) that focuses on theoretical approaches to fairness and transparency, but it is not empirically justified based on case studies or data in the industry. Conversely, Ntoutsis *et al.* (2020) present a systematic survey examining more than 100 AI systems in order to group types of bias and mitigation methods by sectors. Their work is very detailed, yet it is ultimately descriptive and not quite indicative of marketing-related applications. The present thesis combats this failure through studying the effects of bias and transparency issues on the flow of work and decisions made by advertising agencies and the trust of consumers.

In addition to using questionnaire-based surveys of marketing professionals, Rodgers and Nguyen (2022) leverage the use of scenario-based experiments on the belief they hold about ethical AI in purchasing decisions. Yet, they are only limited to North American companies, and thus they may not be generalizable to different cultural and regulatory environments. In their turn, Ferrara (2024) provides a narrative review of the literature on the origin of algorithmic bias and fairness issues but do not venture into the realities of operation in advertising. This research blocks these gaps by exploring the practical experience of the agencies in using AI solutions, such as ChatGPT and DALL-E, explaining how ethical issues can be interpreted as tactical or operational dilemmas in diverse markets.

### ***2.6.4 Compliance and Protection Against Data Accidents (e.g., GDPR)***

Compliance with data protection regulations like GDPR is a critical factor influencing how agencies design and manage AI-driven marketing strategies. In order to understand the limitation of GDPR concerning the innovation of AI, the European Parliamentary Research Service (2020) used foresight analysis that incorporated legal interpretation with policy review. On the contrary, the advisory opinion of the European Data Protection Board (2024) was founded on an analysis of regulatory cases and consultation with stakeholders. Although both offer important principles by which to view compliance, both overlook the day-to-day

implications of GDPR requirements on marketing efforts and the creative process itself, gaps this thesis will fill by discussing their practical applications of agency life.

Quantitative tracking experiments were adopted in the work by Lukic *et al.* (2025) to gauge the impact of GDPR on the online behavioural advertising and provided strong information about the flow of consumer data. The study by Wulf and Seizov (2023), however, conducted a qualitative content analysis study of AI transparency notices to assess levels of compliance clarity. Though every study reveals the problem of accountability, none of them explores how creative teams cope with the process of compliance amid the use of tools such as ChatGPT and DALL-E. This study will fill that gap by looking at compliance pressure in the operational and strategic levels in the marketing agencies.

## **2.7 Literature Gap**

Although a considerable number of studies have been done to address the topic of AI in marketing and advertisement, much more needs to be done. Much of the literature has concentrated more on the technical potential of AI tools, including automation, target precision, and individualization and so often loses the more subtle method in which those technologies redefine human tasks, the creative approach, and ethical conduct within agencies. Although adoption factors can be well understood, based on the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) system and other related systems, little empirical data exists relating to the interplay of these dimensions in practice within agencies where creativity, innovation and brand differentiation becomes paramount.

In addition, since ethical issues, such as data privacy, biases, transparency, and many others are already widely recognized, research often studies them in a vacuum not focusing on how they influence culture, clients trust, and sustained competitive advantage that organizations may have. It also does not provide any available practical advice on how to handle skill shortages, how to use AI in combination with legacy systems and maintain employee motivation through high technological change speed. This lack of holistic, situational based works presents an indication of the importance of continuing research on the issue that not only looks at the positive outcomes but also the impact and the strategies agencies will have to come up with. The need to fill this gap is crucial to how marketing organizations can take advantage of such potential offered by AI but in a manner that would not interfere with their creative integrity as well as ethics.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The literature review conducted has shown that AI is transforming both marketing and advertising through hyper-personalization, automation, as well as data driven decision making. Although these innovations are highly beneficial by increasing the productivity and customer engagement, they present serious challenges. Studies have demonstrated that compatibility problems, skill shortage, and change reluctance are not uncommon phenomena, which damage the successful implementation of AI systems. Furthermore, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and transparency are ethical issues, which represent reputational and regulatory risks that most agencies are completely unprepared to deal with.

The review also pointed out that the current theoretical frameworks, such as the TOE model, were good ways to view technology adoption, but they seldom afforded a clear picture of the nuances of the creative industries where innovation must be weighed against ethical responsibility. Practical rules of conceptualizing AI strategies to an organization and developing employees are also deficient.

The results, overall, unveil a persistent issue: as agencies turn increasingly to the use of AI to compete, research on how agencies can use it in a manner that preserves creativity, safeguards consumers, and maintains trust is not yet readily available. This gap highlights the necessity of additional research to design holistic guidelines and preconceptions on AI implementation that comply with the technological advancement and ethical principles of marketing and advertisement.

# **CHAPTER 3:**

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Research methodology is the type of approach utilized for conducting research, informing the structure behind a research project's design, and the rationale and objectives that further underpin the methods of when and how the collection, analysis and interpretation of data can occur in a structured and logical way (Creswell, 2014). It is broader than methods in that it covers not only the tools and techniques used in collecting data but also the philosophies/assumptions that underlie the conduct of the research (Shiferaw *et al.*, 2022). A transparent approach enables the researcher to account for methodological decisions as well as align the research goals, questions and methods applied. Writing from a quantitative method perspective, an articulated method increases the credibility, replicability and relevance of the study, but that is true of qualitative methods too (Bryman, 2011).

### **3.2 Research Aims and Objectives**

The research methodology intended to inform this study was chosen by identifying the data collection strategy and philosophy that best enabled an examination of AI in marketing and advertising agencies. With a qualitative methodology, this study seeks to achieve rich, insightful data with depth through semi-structured interviews with creative professionals and strategic professionals in the agency working roles (Flemming and Noyes, 2021). This study adopts the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework as a conceptual lens to explore how internal capabilities, organisational culture, and external pressures influence AI implementation in this dynamic industry. Grounded in the assumption that AI adoption is not purely technical but also shaped by leadership, employee readiness, and market expectations, this research investigates how agencies are adapting to technological disruption while navigating ethical and operational challenges. The following research objectives have been developed to fulfil this aim (see Table 3.2).

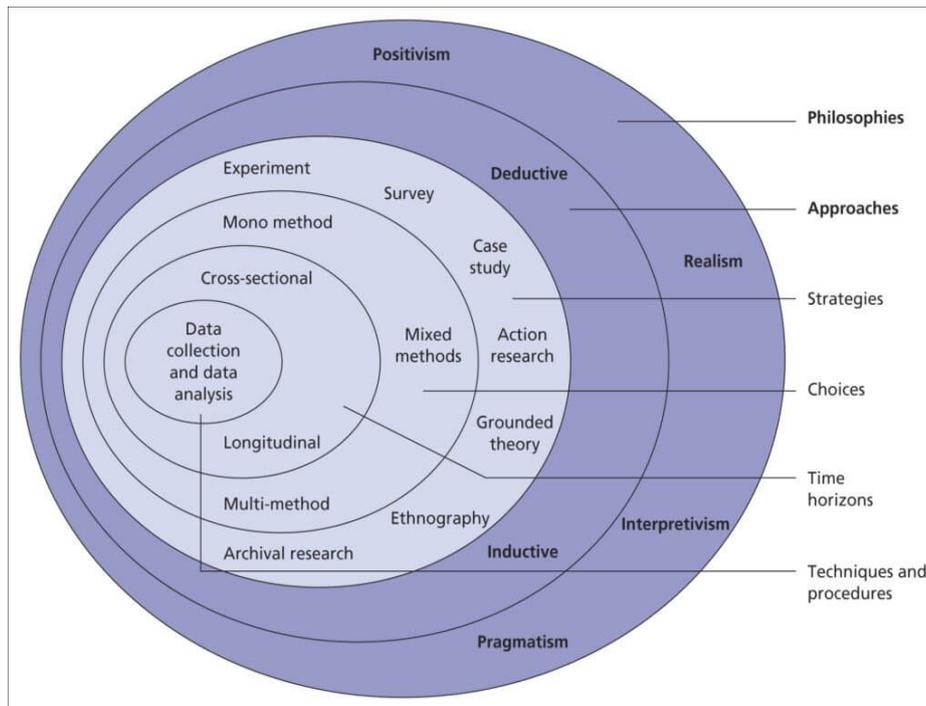
<b>Research Objective 1</b>	To better understand the AI tools currently being used in marketing and advertising agencies and how people perceive these tools in terms of usefulness and innovation.
<b>Research Objective 2</b>	To study the technical challenges agencies face in adopting AI, such as how to integrate AI into existing systems and to ensure staff members know how to use the tools effectively.
<b>Research Objective 3</b>	Evaluate how leadership in a marketing agency drives or inhibits AI adoption and how strategic priorities influence its implementation.
<b>Research Objective 4</b>	To understand how workforce skills, training opportunities, and agency culture affect AI technologies' adoption and effective use.
<b>Research Objective 5</b>	To evaluate how external pressures, such as client demands, competitive dynamics, or market expectations, affect agencies' decisions regarding AI adoption.
<b>Research Objective 6</b>	To identify the ethical, legal, and data-related concerns that influence AI adoption and how agencies are responding to these responsibilities.

**Table 3.2: Research Objectives**

### 3.3 Proposed Research Methodology

The focus of this study is to investigate how marketing and advertising agencies are taking on board artificial intelligence (AI), with an emphasis on the technological, organisational and environmental forces driving this. The research also aims to explore perceived potential benefits, challenges and strategic responses to AI adoption, with the TOE framework as a lens to interpret possible levers. Considering the exploratory characteristic of the study, a qualitative methodology being conducted enabled to extract insights from agency professionals through in-depth interviews with a semi-structured form. This method allows the researcher to listen to participants' lived experiences, contextual knowledge, and subjective meanings related to the use of AI in their agencies (Creswell, 2014).

The research design and methodology of this study has been guided by the research onion framework of Saunders *et al.* (2023) (see Figure 3.1), which outlines the structure of the methodology through its stages of research philosophy, approach, strategy, and design concerning data collection methods. The selected approach is based on research questions, the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher and the desired contribution to knowledge (Collis and Hussey, 2021; Al-Ababneh, 2020).



**Figure 3.3: Research Onion**

(Source: Saunders *et al.*, 2023)

The research onion model depicts the various layers from which researchers may make informed decisions for a methodological approach from a philosophical standpoint to data collection methods, in order to maintain coherence throughout the study. According to Saunders *et al.* (2023), as an onion, the research topic must be “unwrapped” and this process starts from the philosophical axioms of the researcher to the details of data collection and analysis to the research problem and the specific research methods. This systematic process is especially beneficial in qualitative enquiry where the fit between the worldview of the researcher and the selected methodology is critical (Collis and Hussey, 2021; Al-Ababneh, 2020).

Although the research onion provides a versatile and all-inclusive model for research design, it is accused of oversimplifying the complexities of decision-making in actual research situations. For example, the linearity of the onion figure could suggest that there is a strict order convincing practice (Shiferaw *et al.*, 2022; Bryman and Bell, 2011), though, in practice, it is not unusual for researchers to shift between layers. However, its popularity and pedagogical transparency make it an important learning aid for novice researchers.

### 3.4 Research Philosophy

Being the initial stage of Saunders' research onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2023), the philosophical position determined the framework of further design decisions. The study used an interpretivism philosophy since the phenomenon being studied, namely how marketing and advertising agencies perceived, embraced and implemented AI, was deeply enshrined in a socially constructed meaning, which was created on the foundations of roles, culture, and context (Pillay, 2024). Instead of trying to identify law-like regularities, the study focused on thick, local descriptions of the practitioners and their accounts, language and sense-making.

Interpretivism influenced that work in justifying approaches with the ability of bringing out nuance and plurality (Tanwir *et al.*, 2021). The insider views on the changes in workflows, skills, governance, as well as in the nature of the clients, were elicited through semi-structured interviews (Dewi, 2021). This position also corresponded to the theory or scaffolding used in the study (e.g., Technology-Organisation-Environment), where the influences on adoption outcomes were mediated via leadership frames, organisational culture, environmental pressure, which could best be reached via subjective interpretations of participants. This was further justified by the fact that similar qualitative research, e.g., Achmat (2024); Al Saadi (2025); Lycke and Berg (2025), into digital transformation and AI-in-practice in the contexts of creative and professional services had also used interpretivism to describe emergent practices, contentious meanings, and context-relativity.

Other philosophies were considered and discarded. Positivism (and narrowly post-positivist variants) were put aside as the goal was not hypothesis-testing or the quantification of stable relationships, but rather an empathetic grasp of changing meanings and practices; a quest to impose generalisable, context free laws would just have blinded one to the most important things (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022). Critical realism was regarded as applicable to getting at the mechanisms behind it all but it was excluded as the work under focus placed emphasis on lived meanings and organisational sense-making processes than explanation regarding stratification of causes (Zhang, 2023). Pragmatism was also ruled out, even though it would have legitimised mixed methods, the study privileged its depth of interpretation ahead of methodological diversity and its limitations in terms of resources would also support a consistent qualitative design (Turyahikayo, 2021; Creswell and Clark, 2017). Lastly, a purely constructivist classification was avoided in order to retain a focus on an interpretive understanding to continue engaging organisational and environmental structures.

The adoption of interpretivism thus provided philosophic and methodological integrity with an inductive method and qualitative design that guided credible (context-specific) knowledge about AI adoption among agencies.

### **3.5 Research Approach**

The study used inductive approach from the second layer of the research onion. The induction was transferred to general trends and even temporary explanations, and meanings could be discovered through the narrations of the agency workers themselves about the ways AI was perceived, tried, and integrated into their working processes. This was best applicable to a molten, emerging transforming phenomenon where the tools, skills and governance practices were still taking shape (De Paoli, 2024).

It was a decision made in substantive and methodological reasons. Substantively, the discipline was deprived of steady constructs and rested ties; thus, the beginning with lived experiences of people and developing concepts was justified more reasonably than artificially trying data into fixed variables. Methodologically, an inductive approach was the logical accompaniment to the interpretivist stance and qualitative approach which had already been expressed, allowing flexible, probing interviewing and reflexive therapeutic analysis (De Paoli, 2023). The data produced codes that were then iteratively categorised into themes and only then was linked back to sensitising concepts like the TOE lens. Comparable qualitative studies of digital transformation and AI-in-practice of creative and professional services, e.g., Achmat (2024); Alsaadi (2025); Lycke and Berg (2025), had similarly utilised inductive designs to observe arising practices, evolving meanings and context-sensitivity, which added support to the soundness of this decision.

Alternate approaches had been evaluated and discarded. A deductive orientation was put aside as it would have necessitated a pre-existing hypotheses and tightly-specified measurements and exposed them to the problem of construct under-specification and forfeiting innovative and field-specific subtleties. A thoroughly abductive procedure where data are continually interchanged with existing theory at high frequency was also determined to be less suitable initially, although there was inevitably some abductive refinement during interpretation, favouring theoretical know-how too soon was likely to have curtailed discovery and confirmation bias. In its main inductive approach, the study maintained a receptiveness to stimuli which went beyond the expected pattern (e.g. pathways of skill specification within a

role, constraints occasioned by clients, workaround governance arrangements) and returned results which are context-sensitive, reliable and credible.

### **3.6 Research Strategy**

The research strategy was the third tier of the research onion and it converted the interpretivist, inductive approach into practical operational steps. To emphasize depth, context, and meaning with regards to how agency professionals made sense of AI adoption, a qualitative approach was adopted. Although quantitative methods were powerful in quantification, comparability and statistical generalisation, they might involve premature fixation of constructs and possibly rob the phenomenon of situational aspects, which this developing phenomenon was all about. On the other hand, qualitative inquiry offered the possibility of investigation of emergent practices, perspectives based on roles, and organisational sense-making (Gray *et al.*, 2007). Its frequent critiques of limited generalisability, subjectivity, and the influence of the researcher, were addressed by having a clear audit trail, being cautious in its reflexivity, and a methodical coding process. Other researchers of digital transformation and AI-in-practice, e.g., Achmat (2024); Alsaadi (2025); Lycke and Berg (2025), had used comparable qualitative methods to reveal the dynamics of processes and cultures that otherwise could only have been indicated through surveys.

In methodological terms, in-depth semi-structured interviews were applied in the study with a view to providing flexibility without compromising much on comparability. Purposive sample of agency roles (e.g., creative, strategy, account/client Service, data/tech and leadership) were recruited to provide cross-function dimensions of perceptions of tools, workflows, skills, governance, and client pressures. Open prompts were followed to conduct interviews, which were recorded at the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim. Data were subsequently analysed reflexively to enable themes to emerge out of the narrations and get successively grouped into superordinate themes which were then interpreted using sensitising notions like the Technology-Organisation-Environment perspective.

Other courses of action were considered and rejected. An exclusively survey-based plan was ruled out early due to the dynamism of constructs and the demand of insinuation to be rich in context (Ghanad, 2023). Due to concerns of conformity, and disclosure threats on competitive practices, the use of focus groups was avoided. The ethnography through a single organisation was not practicable and too specific in respect of the sector. All in all, the qualitative, interview-

based approach was the most comprehensive and believable path to the comprehension of AI adoption enactment, negotiation, and governance that appear in marketing and advertising agencies.

### **3.7 Qualitative Data Primary Collection**

In this chapter, the practical process of collecting primary qualitative data is discussed, which implies conducting semi-structured interviews with practitioners in the marketing and advertising field in Dublin. As mentioned in the research philosophy and approach, this data collection method is suitable for the current study, which is guided by the purpose of describing the issues, advantages, and strategic reactions to AI implementation.

The primary data source for the current study was semi-structured interviews, which is most appropriate for interpretivist research and can be used for exploratory purposes. Semi-structured approaches allow for consistency in terms of questions that are asked while being flexible enough to adapt to each respondent. The interview guide was already developed using the open-ended questions identified with the TOE Framework as the base. The interviews were performed using the Microsoft Teams platform due to the flexibility it provides and the comfort of the environment it creates. The meetings were set up as video calls and the platform recorded in audio and video. The video content was not used for the analysis to protect the respondents' identity. The transcripts were generated electronically by the platform automatically. This approach is beneficial from the practical perspective as it offers the researcher and the participants access to a transcript immediately and lets a less experienced interviewer focus on the discussion. The formal invitation was sent via email to participants, which included the description and the link to join the meeting to ensure the participants were aware of the necessity of sharing this information.

The flow of the open-ended questions directed to the interviewees was based on the six thematic segments that reflected the conceptual framework of the study. Specifically, prompts explored: (1) AI tools and capabilities in current use and perceived usefulness; (2) complexity/technical challenges and integration with existing systems; (3) leadership support and strategic intent; (4) workforce skills and culture, including readiness, training, and resistance; (5) client expectations and industry trends shaping adoption; and (6) regulatory and ethical considerations such as privacy, bias, and transparency. This framework guaranteed that

technological, organisational and environmental aspects were covered but also allowed issues that were not foreseen to emerge.

The research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide (questionnaire for interviews), which included strong questions and possible probes. Questions were stated in simple language that lacked two-part construction and began with low-sensitivity descriptive questions (what is a role, how is one exposed to AI) to advanced and increasingly thought-provoking questions (about governance, ethics). The guide was able to strike a balance between comparability in interviews and flexibility to follow up emergent lines of inquiry. The interviews were conducted online using 10-20 minutes depending on the experience of the participant and the recording took place with their permission with transcription done verbatim. Field notes included contextual information along with initial analysis memo.

One professional in the agency (who did not make the final sample) was interviewed to pilot how clear, logical, and time-efficient everything was. Two questions were separated to eliminate a “double-barrel” formulation and jargon was decreased (e.g., replacing tool brand names with definitions and reference points), based on pilot feedback, in order to reduce the level of experience-far language. The sequence was also modified to generate the initial experience-related subjects followed by the subjects of ethics and strategy. These modifications increased the understandability and minimized respondent burden, and increased face validity of the instrument.

### **3.8 Population/Sample**

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used with the criterion that participants had to have working experience in a marketing or advertising industry role and have been exposed to AI on how agencies operate. The technique can be useful in qualitative research where the intention is gathering in-depth, rich and comprehensive information from people with specific experiences or observations about the entity being measured (Shiferaw *et al.*, 2022; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The research involved six professionals practicing in Dublin based agencies. Attendees were from across disciplines such as creative, strategy and leadership, providing a diversity of perspectives and responsibilities. This cross-disciplinary voice enabled the study to evaluate AI adoption across various levels of an organisation and points in decision-making.

The sample included individuals from companies from Ireland’s advertising sector. The company names were not mentioned due to the anonymity concern of interviewees. Their professional backgrounds are presented in the following table:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Company</b>
Interviewee 1 (IV1)	Female	Senior Art Director	Javelin
Interviewee 2 (IV2)	Female	Art Director	Pluto
Interviewee 3 (IV3)	Male	Creative Graphic & Motion Designer	Pluto
Interviewee 4 (IV4)	Male	Head of Digital	Verve The Live Agency
Interviewee 5 (IV5)	Male	Managing Director	The Tenth Man
Interviewee 6 (IV6)	Male	Managing Director	FEED by TBWA

Each participant was identified on the basis of their role in creative strategy, digital leadership or business management and is therefore an appropriate source to comment upon both operational (e.g. execution) and strategic aspects of using AI within agencies. Their diverse roles made it possible to capture perceptions on tool usability, effects upon workflow, leadership perspectives and external market expectations; objectives that match well the research purpose.

Due to the limited time factor, sampling was approached through professional networks and convenience in getting hold of people who could participate at a given moment from those relevant to our domain. Although the sample size is limited, which is typical of qualitative work (Saunders *et al.*, 2023), it allowed for in-depth insights to be gained by the researcher as well as fostering trust between interviewees and interviewer, something that contributes greatly towards an interpretivist enquiry.

### **3.9 Analysing Qualitative Data**

All six interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams, then recorded and automatically transcribed by the researcher. The researcher then checked every transcript to ensure that the text corresponded to the participant’s actual intended meaning. This method not only provided a reliable basis for further analysis but also ensured focused participant interaction during the interview (Shiferaw *et al.*, 2022; Creswell, 2014).

Participants’ identities were anonymized using the identifiers interviewee 1, interviewee 2, and so on. The transcripts constituted the study’s qualitative data set. Subsequently, the data were

analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible, widely accepted method for identifying recurrent areas of meaning within qualitative data that is well-suited to the interpretivist stance and inductive strategy underpinning the current study. Thematic analysis was selected for its ability to retain the depth, focus, and multifaceted nature of the experiences, while also understanding how AI is implemented in the various roles within the marketing and advertising agency.

The analysis involves the process of the following 6 phases of Braun and Clarke (2023):

- 1) Data familiarisation
- 2) Generating initial codes
- 3) Searching, identifying and grouping themes
- 4) Reviewing themes
- 5) Defining and naming key themes
- 6) Producing report in a coherent narrative that aligned with the research questions and the literature reviewed.

This process facilitated the development of themes directly from the data, highlighting key concepts and experiences and eliminating prior assumptions, in line with the exploratory purpose of the study. The identified themes were subsequently classified into the technical, organizational, and environmental categories of the TOE framework. To ensure rigour, the researcher cross-checked transcripts, maintained consistency in coding, and triangulated findings with the literature. Care was taken to minimise bias and maintain a balanced interpretation, following guidelines by Saunders *et al.* (2023).

Upon finishing with the interviews, audio files were transcribed verbatim, cross-checked with the actual recordings, and pseudonymised (unique IDs; removal of names, client identifiers). The researcher first engaged in familiarisation by reading every transcript several times with initial comments and recording of brief analytic memos to reveal early hunches offsetting some assumptions in line with the role of the interpretivist stance known as bracketing.

Thereafter, a line-by-line inductive coding was undertaken. Short and descriptive codes were given to portions of the text on a semantic level (what was said) and a latent level (underlying presumptions) where appropriate. At the same time, a living codebook was also created which documented each code, its label, definition, inclusion/exclusion criteria and placeholders where illustrative extracts may be added. Constant comparison made codes more precise throughout transcripts to ensure there was no redundancy and extreme/deviant cases were not omitted.

Corresponding codes were, therefore, amalgamated into categories and further uplifted into tentative themes that represented patterned meaning among the participants. Coded extracts and the entire data set were iteratively compared with themes in order to establish their coherence, distinctiveness and coverage (Chakma and Li, 2025). Themes were only inductively developed before being mapped to sensitising concepts used as part of the research study (e.g. technology, organisation, environment) so as to not force the data into beforehand defined boxes.

In order to explore variation, a simple matrix was seen which compares theme prevalence and nuances between roles and agency sizes. Descriptive decisions were also documented in the form of an audit trail (versions of the codebook, memos, decision notes) throughout. Working files and data were kept in a highly secure folder which needed restricted access. Results were then ready to be reported by choosing anonymised, representative extracts to prove each theme without interfering with interpretation based on words of participants without revealing identity.

### **3.10 Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues play an integral part in the research process to ensure that research subjects are treated with dignity, justice, and respect (Bryman and Bell, 2011). All participants in this study have been administered in line with the ethical guidelines set by the National College of Ireland. An Ethics Review Application form was submitted and approved before commencing this study. This form documented the measures put in place to protect the research subjects, such as informing them about the research, confidentiality, and informed voluntary participation.

Each participant was contacted through an email with a summarized explanation of the study, its goal and the requirements. An informed consent form was attached at the end of the email, emphasizing their consent's voluntariness control. This design, guided by the ethical estimates, ensures transparency among the researcher and the participant.

Every interviewee agreed that their interview was to be recorded using the Microsoft Teams app and that the conversation was to be automatically transcribed. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and anonymity of their identities, as shown by the use of aliases during the analysis and reporting stages as recommended by Saunders *et al.* (2023).

All audio, video, and transcription folders with the participants' interviews were password protected and would be permanently deleted after the submission of this dissertation. This step

is geared toward GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) standards and uphold ethical standards of data care.

Because marketing and advertising are a multi-billion-dollar commercial discipline, the researcher acknowledged that some responses might contain commercially sensitive data. Therefore, all participants were assured that no company-oriented or commercially sensitive data would be divulged in this study. Rather, generalized labels and vague descriptions were used to protect their identities in alignment with guidelines set out by Bryman and Bell (2011).

### **3.11 Limitations to Research**

Although this research was developed and conducted carefully, the data collection process faced several limitations that could impact the depth of the data. First, the sample included six professionals from the Dublin-based marketing and advertising agencies. Although for qualitative research aiming at depth, the sample size is believed to be enough, a larger sample could potentially provide more insights or diverse opinions (Saunders *et al.*, 2023). However, the saturation of the data was achieved to the extent that distinct patterns were found across almost all of the interviews. The additional limitation was related to the availability of the participants during the summer season. Several approached representatives were on vacation or overloaded with work, meaning that they were not able to participate in the interviews. Thus, the researcher adjusted to the schedules of the participants and accepted the fact that relevant voices would need to be eliminated from the final data set. Finally, the research unfolded within the framework of the postgraduate dissertation project, which identified a certain limited time frame. Thus, the interviews needed to be completed shortly, and the analysis was subsequently developed rapidly. Given the time, the researcher would probably consider following up on interviews to explore the discovered themes and validate the interpretations, as suggested in similar qualitative studies.

While some precautions, such as the audio recordings or transcript verification, had been taken to minimize bias, the interpretivist judgement is inherent in the qualitative research type. Therefore, the results may be affected by the researcher's biases regarding the participants' lived experiences, which is viewed as one of the possible limitations of the findings' objectivity (Creswell, 2014).

### **3.12 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the methodological framework used to investigate the challenges and opportunities and strategic responses to AI implementation in marketing and advertising agencies have been presented. The choice of the interpretivist philosophy, inductive approach, and qualitative method via semi-structured interviews was justified. The participants of the study were professionals working for Dublin-based agencies, who employed AI tools. The interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams; permission was given and artificial transcription was used to obtain accurate scripts. The data was subject to thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke's (2023) six-phase approach. It was possible to single out the patterns corresponding to the TOE framework. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, anonymization, and secure data storage in compliance with NCI and GDPR requirements were ensured during the process. Among major limitations were the sample size, summer holidays, and the subjectivity of interpretation. It is believed that this approach would establish a coherent theoretical framework for the discussion in the next chapter.

# **CHAPTER 4:**

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of six semi-structured interviews with professionals in creative, digital, and leadership roles within marketing and advertising agencies in Ireland. The research studied AI tools adoption and usage in these institutions, examined the challenges in implementation directions being taken. The findings of the study are reported in terms of six themes corresponding to each specific objective also align with the TOE framework that guided the literature review and methods (Abulail *et al.*, 2025; Pinto *et al.*, 2024). The data were approached using inductive thematic analysis allowing dominant patterns, contradictions and new insights across participant experiences.

Each section of this chapter combines primary data with academic literature to interpret how technological capabilities, organisational readiness, and environmental factors shape the role of AI in modern agency practice. In order to amplify the voices of participants and validate discussion of each theme, verbatim quotes are included. This chapter will therefore present not only the findings of this study, but it will also provide a critical reflection on what these findings mean in an existing academic discourse and how they may impact practice among both practitioners and decision makers in a new digital marketing landscape.

### **4.1 Qualitative Research Findings**

These questions were developed following a specific and detailed set of objectives grounded within the Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) conceptual framework, from which there are six specific categories that have helped bring about these guiding general research themes for pertinent decision making as well as informativeness. The framework followed in this study makes the researcher to explore the experiences of agency when adopting AI as a cause and effect network. Each of the six participants reported that their agencies had initiated

efforts to incorporate AI technologies, however this incorporation was pursued to a although the extent and purpose of use varied significantly. While some consider AI a beneficial complement to creative and analytical workflows, others question the quality of legal clarity or trust. These findings, similar to those of Pinto et al. (2024), which complement the present results, where some argue that organizational and technological preparation are fundamental requirements for integrating AI into digital spaces.

#### ***4.1.1 Objective 1: “To explore how marketing and advertising agencies are currently adopting AI tools and technologies.”***

Each of those six said their agency has implemented some level of AI-based tools into its operations. They used tools like ChatGPT, MidJourney, Runway and platform-specific solutions like Omni AI to ideate, generate visuals, test campaigns & draft content. With different agencies using AI to diverse extents, some using it universal across departments and others more selectively in the case of creative work or as a research tool. Many also expressed AI as a “kickoff” or “back up tool” instead of seeing it as the mere replacement of humans. This is in accordance with the study conducted by Haleem *et al.* (2022), who highlight the increased relevance of AI in digital marketing but still stress how human intervention is required for complex processes.

##### ***4.1.1.1 CURRENT AI TOOLS IN USE WITHIN AGENCIES***

Interviews revealed that all participating agencies have incorporated AI tools into their operations, although the scope, frequency, and purpose of their use oscillate. Creative teams most frequently reported using ChatGPT for ideation, drafting content, and brainstorming, while visual teams used MidJourney, DALL·E, Runway, and Adobe Firefly for image generation and concept visualisation. Some agencies also relied on advanced or proprietary platforms; for example, the Managing Director at TBWA explained, “We’re part of Omnicom, so now we’re using Omni AI, a tool that synthesises various providers and is licensed for commercial use” (IV6). Pinto et al. (2024), argue that access to advanced tools and integration into existing workflows are critical enablers of AI adoption.

Several respondents emphasised the strategic combination of tools rather than relying on a single platform. The Managing Director of The Tenth Man described a diversified toolkit: “We use Perplexity Pro, Runway, VEO 3, MidJourney, Adobe Firefly, and Gemini... we’ve actually attracted new clients because of how we integrate AI into our workflows” (IV5). While adoption was generally positive, choices were sometimes guided by performance differences. For example, IV5 added, “We chose Perplexity over ChatGPT because it’s more accurate with sources.” The notion of preferring more reliable tool outputs is consistent with the idea that selection for novelty is not a primary factor in predicting blade shape use.

The data was in line with the hypothesis that AI tools are likely to be perceived as accelerators of creative effort as opposed to substitutes for creativity. As one participant explained, “It’s a really great starting point... it makes things faster and lets us focus more on strategy” (IV6). This aligns with Haleem *et al.* (2022), who point out that AI improves scalability in productivity and idea generation but still requires human oversight for placing the final product in contextual and cultural contexts.

#### **4.1.1.2 PERCEIVED USEFULNESS AND INNOVATION OF AI TOOLS**

Across the interviews, indeed challengers reiterated that AI tools were intended to boost in terms of speed, efficiency and as well for areas of creative discovery. A number of them were seen as foundational tools to help with first draft producing, initial visual concept generation, or just refining design assets. The Senior Art Director at Javelin explained how Adobe Photoshop’s generative fill and Firefly streamline production: “It’s really handy... especially now with so many different formats. You can build out the background quickly for tall, narrow, or wide formats, and it saves so much time” (IV1). This reflects the argument by Haleem *et al.* (2022) AI allows content to be transformed quickly into whatever format is needed, streamlining existing core creative workflows.

The value of innovation was often measured in terms of the ways for new potentials of creative vision to unfold. Generative visual systems like MidJourney and Runway just helped me think of new things to do (IV5): “You get results you wouldn’t have thought of yourself... sometimes it’s the spark for the final concept.” However, AI can play a

role in realising ideas more quickly, agreed most participants in our discussion forum, but does not replace human concept innovation. As IV1 noted, “I wouldn’t use it to come up with the idea... it’s for realising the concept once you’ve got it.” This aligns with Pinto et al. (2024) highlighting the innovation that AI adoption can bring, but in a way that encourages automation and human-led imagination.

#### **4.1.1.3 REASONS FOR REJECTING CERTAIN AI TOOLS**

Although participants recognised the advantages of AI overall, they also articulated reasons as to why they would avoid or discontinue specific tools. One question was its output reliability at scale. Some participants mentioned that the AI-generated results were not properly contextually accurate or lacked creative nuance. The Managing Director of The Tenth Man explained, “We chose Perplexity over ChatGPT because it’s more accurate with sources” (IV5). This reflects Pinto et al.’s (2024) point that the adoption of a tool was not just for its novelty value; it also related to robustness and reliability in output.

Another factor was limitations in creative capability. While visual generators like MidJourney were praised for imaginative outputs, they were sometimes set aside when results became too stylised or impractical for client use. As IV3 noted, “Sometimes it’s impressive, but not on-brand... it takes more time to fix than to just start from scratch.” This finding is consistent with the results of Haleem *et al.*’s (2022). While more powerful models enable efficiency gains, they increase the volume of rework if their outputs fall short of brand or client expectations

#### **4.1.2 Objective 2: “To study the technical challenges agencies face in adopting AI, such as how to integrate AI into existing systems and to ensure staff members know how to use the tools effectively.”**

The interviews confirmed that the integration of AI is indeed increasing and facing substantial technical and operational challenges, despite advances in its adoption by marketing and advertising agencies. One recurring point was that each platform needed significant time and effort to integrate with the other systems, workflows, as well as client processes. The Head of

Digital at The Verve explained, “You can’t just drop an AI tool into the workflow and expect it to work. You need to integrate it with the platforms you’re already using, and that takes time and technical expertise” (IV4). This aligns with Paleyes *et al.* (2022), who remark that since deploying AI often requires complex adaptations to infrastructure as well as data pipelines just so it can deliver some value.

Respondents also flagged restrictions in terms of tool functionality, for example when working with complex creative briefs or industry-specific requirements. As IV3 observed, “Sometimes the tools are brilliant for simple jobs, but the moment you ask them to do something more complex, you spend more time fixing the results than you save.” These frustrations reflect Pinto *et al.*’s (2024) findings that technological capability must be matched with problem-specific adaptability for AI to be effective.

Client constraints, on the other hand, proved to be another major constraint Agencies also often work within very strict brand guidelines, legal requirements and confidentiality agreements which limit the abilities of AI. As IV6 explained, “Until recently, we weren’t even allowed to use AI-generated images for clients because of licensing issues.” This is in line with the claim of European Data Protection Board (2024) that legal compliance can hamper AI integration, particularly in industries where intellectual property and data protection are essential.

#### ***4.1.2.1 TECHNICAL CHALLENGES IN AI ADOPTION***

The adoption of AI tools into agency workflows has been hindered by multiple pragmatic and technological gatekeepers. The most frequently mentioned issue was the incompatibility of an organisation's AI platforms with their existing creative or project management system. The Head of Digital at The Verve explained, “We’ve had to spend a lot of time figuring out how to connect the AI output to the tools we already use. It’s not plug-and-play; it needs a lot of testing” (IV4). who argue that successful AI adoption depends on ensuring compatibility between new technologies and existing infrastructure.

Participants also described inconsistencies in output quality, which can undermine productivity gains. The Creative Graphic Designer at Pluto noted, “It can be great for quick jobs, but when the brief is complex, the results often miss the mark, so you end

up redoing the work manually” (IV3). Such limitations echo Pinto et al.’s (2024) findings that AI effectiveness varies significantly depending on task complexity and available training data.

Another barrier was data security and compliance. Agencies operating under strict brand and legal requirements faced restrictions on AI-generated content. As the Managing Director of TBWA stated, “Until recently, we weren’t allowed to use AI-generated images for clients because of licensing issues, so that held us back” (IV6). This view that mandates of regulatory compliance can impede innovation in regulated domains is consistent with the opinion expressed by the European Data Protection Board (2024).

#### ***4.1.2.2 STAFF KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING IN AI TOOLS***

A theme that emerged across all the interviews was mixed levels of understanding on AI among agency staff. Many said they felt their teams were competent and curious, but also cited a lack of formal training or importance placed on self-learning. The Senior Art Director at Javelin shared, “There’s no official training... people just explore tools on their own when they have time” (IV1). This informal approach often meant that adoption was driven by personal initiative rather than structured organisational planning.

Some participants mentioned that time constraints did not allow for any skill development. The Managing Director of The Tenth Man remarked, “We’re so busy delivering projects that training on AI becomes something you do after hours, if at all” (IV5). If new tools were turned on, but without dedicated learning sessions, then the usage rates of these newer tools went down as staff reverted to business-as-usual processes. This mirrors Pinto et al.’s (2024) finding, AI-readiness of organizations is not limited to only have access to technology, but also ability to invest in employee upskilling.

By contrast, the more leadership support and experimental a culture agencies had, the faster their adoption of critical skills. As the Head of Digital at The Verve explained, “When leaders encourage testing and share what works, the learning spreads much

quicker” (IV4). Based on the observations above, it seems likely that the process is then some way off success and validates our hypothesis that AI is only going to work well if there are structured avenues to learning about and training in it, rather than leaving things to chance.

### ***4.1.3 Objective 3: “To evaluate how leadership in a marketing agency drives or inhibits AI adoption and how strategic priorities influence its implementation”***

Findings show a significant role of leadership in the adoption of AI within an agency. Adoption was faster and more holistic where leaders intentionally created an environment that made experimentation safe. This creates momentum, as the Head of Digital at The Verge explains with the following words : “When leaders give the green light to test tools and share results, it builds momentum” (IV4). This supports Pinto et al. (2024), who emphasise that leadership vision is crucial for innovation.

By comparison, low leadership involvement typically restricted applications of AI to isolated projects. The Art Director at Pluto observed, “If management isn’t interested, AI just becomes something a few people use quietly” (IV2). Strategic priorities were a factor with forward-thinking leaders considering AI as an investment in the future. The Managing Director of The Tenth Man explained, “We see AI as part of our future service offering” (IV5).

#### ***4.1.3.1 LEADERSHIP ATTITUDES TOWARDS AI ADOPTION***

Participants agreed that AI is, ultimately, simply a byproduct of leadership attitudes that shape the way AI is viewed and experienced in organizations. Soon enough, AI adoption was taking place of its own without any hint of being forced upon the system because leaders showed some positive impulses and were willing to experiment with the tool wherein it also became part of day-to-day process. The Head of Digital at The Verge explained, “When leaders encourage testing and share successes, it spreads quickly across teams” (IV4). In line with these results, Pinto et al.’s (2024) leadership support is a significant predictor of organizational readiness for technological change

Other leaders took a practical view and backed AI efforts that matter to clients, as well as company strategy. As the Managing Director of The Tenth Man commented, “We’re not using AI for the sake of it... it has to improve what we deliver to clients” (IV5).

This suggests that leadership support has the potential to be more impactful with a strong understanding and perspective of how AI can contribute towards business outcomes.

#### ***4.1.3.2 AI IN LONG-TERM ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY***

The level of AI integration into an organization's long-term strategy saw variation, with leadership vision and client demands being the most influential factors in this regard. Agencies with a forward-looking approach are embedding AI into strategic planning to secure future competitiveness. The Managing Director at TBWA observed, “AI is not just a tool for campaigns; it’s becoming part of how we think about creative processes in the next five years” (IV6). This observation reflects the TOE framework’s organisational dimension, where asserts that successful technology adoption is dependent on strategic intent and resource commitment (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). Leaders manifesting AI adoption with customer stickiness and more value-add proposition. As The Verve's Head of Digital puts it, “We have to anticipate where the market is going, so AI is factored into how we pitch and plan for big accounts” (IV4). This view is along the lines of Chatterjee *et al.* (2021), who note that AI can drive competitive advantage when integrated into long-term strategic objectives.

Others emphasised a gradual adoption strategy to minimise operational disruption. As the Art Director at Pluto remarked, “We’re still figuring out where AI fits best without changing everything overnight” (IV2). This reluctance is in line with the guidance from Dwivedi *et al.* (2021) that phased implementation enables organisations to adapt while reducing risks.

#### ***4.1.4 Objective 4: “To understand how workforce skills, training opportunities, and agency culture affect AI technologies' adoption and effective use.”***

AI adoption appears to be strongly influenced by workforce skills, training availability and organizational culture. The vast majority of respondents were largely self-taught with only limited formal training. This observation is inline with what Senior Art Director at Javelin said, “There’s no official training... people just explore tools on their own” (IV1), echoing Chatterjee *et al.* (2021) on the need for structured skill development. As the Managing Director of The Tenth Man noted, "Training on AI becomes something you do after hours" (IV5), time

constraints frequently limited learning opportunities. According to Pinto et al. (2024), these restrictions slow the spread of innovation.

#### ***4.1.4.1 WORKFORCE READINESS FOR AI INTEGRATION***

The interviews allowed detecting the different levels of readiness of the teams to introduce AI in their daily routines. In the case of the agencies actively promoting experiments, it only took the staff a few months to adapt to creative and tactical AI processes. As the Head of Digital at The Verve put it, “When leaders encourage testing and share what works, the learning spreads much quicker” (IV4). This statement is also confirmed by Dwivedi et al. (2021), who claim that the promotion of innovation fosters technology acceptance.

Some of the interviewees noticed the different performance rates of some teams. According to the interview with the Art Director at Pluto, IV2, “Some people jump in and try everything, others prefer to stick with what they know” (IV2). According to Pinto et al. (2024), such disparities can create gaps in adoption, limiting organisational benefits.

#### ***4.1.4.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND OPENNESS TO INNOVATION***

One of the biggest influencing factor on how quickly and deeply AI permeates through a company is culture. Faster integration and more creative use of AI tools can be observed in the agencies that foster a culture of experimentation and cross-team learning. The Managing Director of The Tenth Man explained, “We’ve built a culture where trying new things is encouraged, so people are less afraid to make mistakes” (IV5). This aligns with Wiese *et al.* (2024), who clarify that adopting AI technologies in business operation requires a recognition of innovation, and due to this cultural context. Conversely, when AI is applied in a culture that fears risk then the use of AI is often limited to point solutions which severely limits its adoption. As the Art Director at Pluto noted, “If the agency isn’t pushing it, AI just becomes something a few people use quietly” (IV2). Similarly, Pinto et al. (2024) suggest that AI may go underused within well-resourced organizations if there is not mandated cultural reinforcement.

#### **4.1.4.3 EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE TO AI ADOPTION**

The majority of participants said their teams were amenable to experimenting with AI, there were still some areas of resistance, frequently stemming from worries about job security or a perceived loss of creative control. The Art Director at Pluto noted, “Some people just prefer to stick with what they know... they’re not convinced AI can match human creativity” (IV2). This coincides with Wiese *et al.* (2024) who state that resistance is based on limited understanding what new technologies imply for a professional role.

Differences between generations also surfaced; one managing director noted that younger employees, who are typically thought to be more flexible, occasionally showed greater concern about how AI would affect their careers “I think people are probably correct to be a little bit scared that it’s going to take jobs... I’ve no doubt it will take some jobs from people in agencies over the next couple of years” (IV6). According to Pinto *et al.* (2024), highlight that such fears may become obstacles for uptake without appropriate communication and support.

A number of participants emphasized how crucial it is to present AI as a tool for collaboration rather than as a substitute. The Head of Digital at The Verve explained, “When people see it’s there to help, not to take over, they relax and start using it” (IV4). Alka’awneh *et al.* (2025) similarly emphasise that change management strategies must address both technical and emotional aspects of adoption.

#### **4.1.5 Objective 5: “How external pressures, such as client demands, competitive dynamics, or market expectations, affect agencies' decisions regarding AI adoption.”**

External pressures, namely client demand and market trends, have played a big role in pushing AI into adoption. Many also reported that most of their clients are starting to expect AI-supported results. The Tenth Man's Managing Director said, “We’ve actually attracted new clients because of how we integrate AI into our workflows” (IV5). Competitive pressures also influenced adoption. The Head of Digital at The Verve explained, “We have to anticipate where the market is going, so AI is factored into how we pitch and plan” (IV4). This observation

agreed with Pinto et al. (2024) note that environmental variables in the TOE lens often shape strategic decision.

#### ***4.1.5.1 CLIENT AND COMPETITOR PRESSURE TO ADOPT AI***

Results indicate that competitor activity and customer expectations are significant factors influencing the adoption of AI. Proposals and briefs from some participants indicated a growing need for AI-driven solutions. In line with Pinto et al.'s (2024) contention that market expectations can prompt the modernizing of technology, the managing director of The Tenth Man revealed, "Some clients will come to us specifically with an AI brief" (IV5).

Innovation-focused clients, for example one client, "demand us to be at the cutting edge of innovation and AI" (IV6), leading agencies to build projects that require highest skill set from both companies. This is further compounded by the efforts of competition; IV5 describes a "pressurized race to show who's leading in the sector." Adoption may be accelerated by these outside factors, but if internal preparedness isn't matched, reactive tactics may be at risk.

#### ***4.1.5.2 FUTURE ROLE OF AI IN THE INDUSTRY***

Most participants acknowledged that AI will move from being an optional addition to a required capability in the marketing and advertising sector. The Creative Graphic Designer at Pluto predicted, "It's going to be part of everything... not just for speed, but to try ideas we wouldn't have thought of ourselves" (IV3). This aligns with Chatterjee *et al.* (2021), who suggest that AI can broaden creative scope while improving efficiency. The Head of Digital at The Verve anticipated that "in a couple of years, it'll be unusual for an agency not to have AI in their workflow. Clients will expect it as standard" (IV4), which supports the assertion made by Pinto et al. (2024) that market forces can swiftly elevate new technologies to the level of industry norms.

However, others claimed that machine learning will play a larger part but that it would still be necessary to have a human overview to ensure quality and content fits with the

brand. As the Senior Art Director at Javelin cautioned, “It’s a really great starting point, but you still need that creative judgment to make it right” (IV1).

#### ***4.1.6 Objective 6: “To identify the ethical, legal, and data-related concerns that influence AI adoption and how agencies are responding to these responsibilities.”***

The adoption of AI has been significantly influenced by ethical, legal, and data-related factors. Due to licensing concerns, a number of participants mentioned limitations on AI-generated content. The Managing Director at TBWA explained, “Until recently, we weren’t allowed to use AI-generated images for clients because of licensing issues” (IV6). Data security issues were also prevalent, as the Head of Digital at The Verve pointed out, “You can’t just upload client assets into a third-party tool... you have to be sure where that data is going” (IV4).

Some agencies used proprietary or licensed platforms to solve these issues and guarantee brand safety and compliance. The Senior Art Director at Javelin stated, “I stick with Firefly because it’s ethical... the images are from Adobe’s paid library” (IV1). These findings align with Pinto et al. (2024) and Dwivedi et al. (2021), who stress that transparency, intellectual property compliance, and secure data handling are central to responsible AI integration.

##### ***4.1.6.1 ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONCERNS AROUND AI USAGE***

When using AI tools, participants frequently cited copyright, licensing, and ethical risks as important factors. As stated by the TBWA Managing Director, “Until recently, we weren’t allowed to use AI-generated images for clients because of licensing issues” (IV6), this statement reflects the opinion of Pinto et al. (2024) that adoption may be constrained by intellectual property concerns until legal clarity is established.

A second major concern was about responsibly sourcing training data. The Senior Art Director at Javelin explained, “I stick with Firefly because it’s ethical... the images are from Adobe’s paid library” (IV1), confirming Dwivedi et al.'s (2021) assertion that in order to maintain brand integrity, transparent, licensed platforms ought to be utilized.

Others define recommended or required internal policies to control use, reduce risks and ensure compliance with client contracts and laws. For some agencies, it appears

that AI adoption will be limited in part by their ability to comply with legal and ethical principles, in addition to having the technical capacity.

#### ***4.1.6.2 POLICIES FOR ETHICAL AI USAGE***

Many of the participants said that their agencies have established internal frameworks to guide ethical artificial intelligence use, which are in sync with, and often exceed legal requirements. These regulations usually required the use of licensed or proprietary platforms, prohibited the uploading of sensitive client assets into third-party tools, and demanded that clients be informed about the role of AI. The Head of Digital at The Verve noted, “We have rules about what we can and can’t put into AI tools... it’s about protecting the client and ourselves” (IV4). Similarly, Javelin's Senior Art Director emphasized the ethical sourcing of Firefly, saying, "The images are from Adobe's paid library" (IV1). For example, these actions align well with the results of Pinto et al. (2024) and Dwivedi et al. (2021), who noted that innovative practices must be balanced with compliance, brand safety, and trust through the use of clear governance frameworks.

## **4.2 Study Limitations**

Despite a number of limitations, this study offers insightful information about the application of AI in Irish marketing and advertising agencies. Although they are diverse, the six individuals who were sampled from leadership, digital, and creative roles do not accurately reflect the entire industry. However, participant recruitment was difficult due to summer holidays, while others faced heavy workloads, limiting the range of perspectives gathered. The research took place in a rapidly evolving technological environment, where AI tools, policies, and practices change quickly, making some findings time-sensitive (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Additionally, the short dissertation period limited opportunities for longitudinal analysis and prolonged engagement. In addition, the self-report narratives of participants were collected during semi-structured interviews which may have introduced response biases as well as selective recall. Larger sample sizes should be used in future research to present data quantitatively and temporally through longitudinal studies that explore how AI is developing within the industry.

# **CHAPTER 5:**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

This study highlights organizational, cultural and ethical aspects having an impact on a successful application of artificial intelligence (AI) in Irish marketing and advertising agencies as well as moments that are problematic during the implementations. This qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews with six creative, digital and leadership professionals framed using the Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) framework. This process-oriented approach enabled an examination of lived experiences, key planning insights and thoughts around the implications of AI in practice.

This of course will be different among agencies, varying in terms of degree and the form AI is being woven into their system, influenced greatly by things like market competition, client requests, internal culture and leadership vision. While recognizing the possibilities of how AI could empower both creative and efficient ways to be more competitive, participants also pointed out challenges related to skills-how to remain relevant as work shifted towards digital automation/data privacy and respect for intellectual property rights or ethics. By integrating practitioner insights with scholarly literature, this study shows how Ireland's AI affects the country's marketing landscape, now and in the future.

#### ***5.1.1 AI adoption is growing but varies in depth and strategy***

According to the findings, AI is quickly gaining traction in Irish marketing and advertising firms, as all parties involved admit to utilizing several of them, including ChatGPT, MidJourney, Firefly, and Runway. These technologies are primarily applied in idea generation, content drafting, image and video creation, and campaign testing, helping agencies streamline processes and explore creative possibilities. However, the scale and strategic depth of adoption differ markedly between organisations. Some agencies have integrated AI across multiple functions, embedding it into long-term planning and client offerings, while others use it selectively for specific creative or research tasks. Factors such as organizational readiness, resources at hand, leadership commitment and the concurrence of capabilities align with goal

setting will vary this in each specific case. In line with Pinto et al. (2024) and Chatterjee *et al.* (2021), and in line with the TOE framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990), agencies that incorporate AI into a purposeful, organizational-wide strategy stand a better chance of realizing its transformative potential than those that adopt a more haphazard, tool-by-tool approach.

### ***5.1.2 Leadership, culture, and external pressures are decisive***

The findings of this study suggest that without leadership commitment and organizational culture AI implementations are less likely to succeed. Faster and deeper integration occurred in agencies where leaders actively supported experimentation in collaboration with others who could allocate resources, compared to agencies with cultures resistant toward risk, which inhibited the pace of adoption. Furthermore, leaders who presented AI as a strategic differentiator enhanced their team's readiness to accept the change in addition to encouraging tool adoption. Cultural elements of experimenting, sharing information and failing in the process were equally crucial for creating a testable and improvable environment for AI. External factors also played a significant role; longer adoption cycles were caused by client demands, competitive developments, and new industry standards. In order to remain competitive in the market, agencies often found themselves vying to incorporate AI capabilities into their pitches and output. This conclusion is consistent with Wiese *et al.* (2024), who emphasize that leadership vision and cultural readiness are just as crucial as technical capability in achieving sustainable adoption outcomes, and Pinto et al. (2024), who point out that environmental drivers can shape strategic priorities.

### ***5.1.3 3. Ethical, legal, and skills considerations shape sustainable adoption***

The study found that agencies consider a range of ethical, legal and competency issues when designing and deploying AI systems. These were followed by the most commonly discussed topics at Copy Right, Licensing and Data Privacy. Key obstacles were rules on AI created content due to ambiguity concerning both ownership and also conformity dangers. As a result, many agencies were using licensed or proprietary platforms to alleviate these pain points and forming internal governance policies to protect their clients while also creating transparency. Just as important were competencies and labor-market preparedness. With these types of creative and operational benefits come the need for employees to feel confident in using the tools, which means that training has to go hand-in-hand when looking at AI. When agencies made training investments and positioned AI as a collaborative tool, resistance decreased,

regardless of whether it was because of concerns about job security or a lack of familiarity. These results are consistent with the conclusion of Dwivedi et al. (2021), who argue that trust requires governance, and to the work by Chatterjee *et al.* (2021), who highlight that the primary benefits of AI integration can only be realized by concomitant investment in human capabilities.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

### ***5.2.1 Recommendations for future research***

This study was a qualitative exploration of AI adoption in Irish marketing and advertising agencies, so significant opportunities remain for further academic investigation to build on the insights generated here. A mixed-methods approach, combining the depth of qualitative insights with the breadth of quantitative analysis, might be helpful for future research. Although this study, by employing in-depth interviews with six industry professionals while beneficial does not lend itself to making generalizable results that can reach the sector as a whole, larger-scale surveys are however able to measure the prevalence of observed patterns and broad themes (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021). Since research was conducted in an environment of fast pace technology change, longitudinal studies are encouraged to further complement the findings. The tracking of the same set of agencies from one year to the next would allow us to determine if AI adoption is deepening (as it appears currently), peaking, or being diverted due to market, technological or regulatory shifts (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This would tackle the timeliness of current findings and offer a moving view on how AI fit into the industry. It may be possible to investigate AI adoption in organizations of different scales and market environments. Although smaller agencies or client-side marketing departments may face a different set of opportunities and challenges, this study focuses on larger agencies with established creative and digital teams. Comparative studies could show how organizational structure, strategic priorities, and resource availability support adoption (Pinto et al., 2024). A fourth, quite related issue in determining adoption strategies, are the ethical and legal considerations. A further area of future investigation should include more substantial research in governance frameworks, intellectual property and data privacy, with a qualitative contrast done on the approaches of Irish agencies and those across other jurisdictions. Such state of the art research studies would

allow to discover best practices and promote academic discussion and industrial policies (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990).

Finally, workforce readiness, skills development, and cultural attitudes warrant targeted research. In experiments, one could test different extents of training to investigate how this may affect adoption rates and the confidence of colleagues in performing post-training tasks. Similarly, studies examining role-based or generational differences in assimilation may have academic and managerial uses (Wiese *et al.*, 2024). In conclusion, in terms of the pure application related to AI in a marketing/ advertising context, further research is needed when we look at aspects like time period of study, approach and environment so that new avenues can be understood. Developing such undertakings would reinforce a broader set of theoretical bases and at the end allow more informed strategies for both scholars and practitioners.

### ***5.2.2 Recommendations for professionals***

Use of AI by marketing and advertising agencies should be part of a strategic vision for realizing the goals for their future business, rather than an attempt to execute disconnected experiments. This should entail partaking roles of AI which can positively impact, for example creative production, campaigning testing and even data-centric personalisation and linking these channels to more extensive business goals (Pinto, 2024). With leadership commitment play the importance role in encouraging fast adoption and encourage employees to buy into what AI can do. One tactic to consider is internal adoption, experimentation, and promotion of success cases may be a way to push the AI vision into broad applications amidst fear of adoption upheaval (Wiese *et al.*, 2024).

It includes work programs and information disclosure between departments to increase workforce competence and confidence (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2021). According to Dwivedi *et al.* (2021), AI systems should be designed to run on an ethical and legal governance framework with a backdrop of strong data privacy rules and client transparency policies to provide the maximum statutory protection. And the iteration in learning about new technological and industry trends also helps keep assuaged through the constant uncertainties (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). But by balancing innovative thinking with strong governance, practitioners can use AI to truly support both creativity and strategy.

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# APPENDIX 1 - CONSENT FORM

## Participant Consent Form

### Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Marketing and Advertising Agencies: Challenges, Benefits and Strategic Responses

#### Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves participation involves taking part in a recorded semi-structured interview lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes, during which I will be asked questions about my experiences and opinions regarding the use of AI in marketing and advertising agencies.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being video-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the MSc dissertation submitted to the National College of Ireland, future academic presentations or potential published academic papers. No personally identifying information will be used.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original video recordings will be retained in a password-protected folder on the researcher's personal computer, accessible only by the researcher. These materials will be retained until the National College of Ireland confirms the final results of the dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a period of two years from the date the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

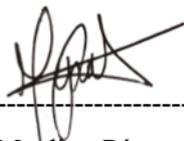
*Signature of research participant*

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Signature of participant

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03/08/2025

*Signature of researcher*

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study



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Meyling Pérez  
MSc Marketing Candidate  
National College of Ireland

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03/08/2025

## **APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE**

1. What AI technologies or platforms (e.g., ChatGPT, Midjourney, automation tools) does your agency currently use in marketing or advertising initiatives?
2. How do you evaluate the usefulness and innovation level of these tools in your daily work?
3. Is there any tool or technique you experimented with but decided not to use? If not, explain why.
4. What are the most significant technical challenges your agency has faced to incorporate AI tools into its current systems or workflows?
5. How do you enable staff to contribute effectively with AI tools? Has there been a learning curve?
6. How would you describe leadership's attitude to the use of AI in your department: more conservative or more pioneering?
7. Has your agency integrated a long-term strategy or innovation roadmap for AI adoption?
8. How ready do you think your own team is for using AI tools? What sort of training, what support did they get?
9. Do you think that your organisation's culture is experimental and open to innovation, with a particular emphasis on new technologies, such as AI?
10. Has there been any resistance or hesitation among staff when it comes to using AI tools?
11. Do you perceive increased pressure from clients, or even competitors, to adopt AI-based solutions? If so, in what ways?
12. How do you expect the role of AI in your sector to change in the next 3-5 years?
13. What ethical, legal and other considerations have become relevant within your agency regarding the use of AI (e.g., data privacy protection, bias, transparency)?
14. What principles or policies has your organisation adopted to reinforce the ethical use of AI?