



NAWA-DIGIT report on:

AI in Marketing: Opportunities and Risks from a Practitioner's Perspective

September 2025



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the way people analyze data, manage campaigns, and generate content in marketing. This report examines marketers' perspectives on the challenges and benefits of AI. It adopts a human-centric approach to recent technologies, highlighting the positive outlook of marketers on this technology, while also signaling that regular use of AI is necessary to navigate AI-driven changes in the industry.

1. Introduction

The implementation of AI is transforming how organizations operate — offering both opportunities for increased efficiency and challenges related to adaptation. According to global research, 80% of executives report that AI tools help employees work more efficiently and make better decisions (Carufel, 2023). By automating repetitive tasks and enhancing data analysis, AI allows teams to focus on activities that require creativity, critical thinking, or human interaction.

Despite these advantages, attitudes toward AI at work are mixed and often ambivalent. While many employees and managers recognize the benefits of AI and its potential to enhance work quality, there are also concerns about job displacement, ethical issues, and the speed of technological change. Both employers and employees tend to assess the current impact of AI on efficiency and working conditions positively (OECD, 2023). However, longer-term uncertainties remain. Many individuals worry that automation will reduce the number of available jobs or alter the nature of work entirely. Ernst & Young (2023) reports that 71% of U.S. employees experience some level of anxiety about AI. Key concerns include the potential for unethical use of AI, legal liability, and the risk of job displacement through automation. Business leaders also express unease. According to Carufel (2023), 39% of executives identify algorithmic bias as a significant risk, while 48% cite data privacy and security as substantial barriers to implementing AI.

This report examines the increasing presence of AI in marketing teams, which creates a competency gap and heightens the demand for AI-related skills. It presents how marketers perceive the opportunities and risks associated with implementing AI and what competencies they find essential to face them. This relates to our previous report, which highlighted AI trends that will influence the work of marketers. The findings are based on a survey conducted among 178 marketing managers from US and UK.

Marketing faces changes caused by the analytical, predictive, and generative powers of AI. This report aims to guide marketing professionals to navigate the evolving role of AI. It is intended for those who seek to understand better how AI is influencing their industry — and how they can prepare their organizations to leverage this technological shift.



The structure of this report reflects key areas explored in the survey. It begins with an analysis of how AI affects performance in marketing roles, focusing on perceived gains in productivity, efficiency, and creativity. The second part examines expectations regarding the future impact of AI on marketing within the next three years, highlighting anticipated transformations and areas of uncertainty. The third section addresses concerns about the potential threats AI poses to marketing jobs, including issues related to automation, ethical risks, and job security. The report concludes with a summary of key findings and implications for marketing leaders and organizations.

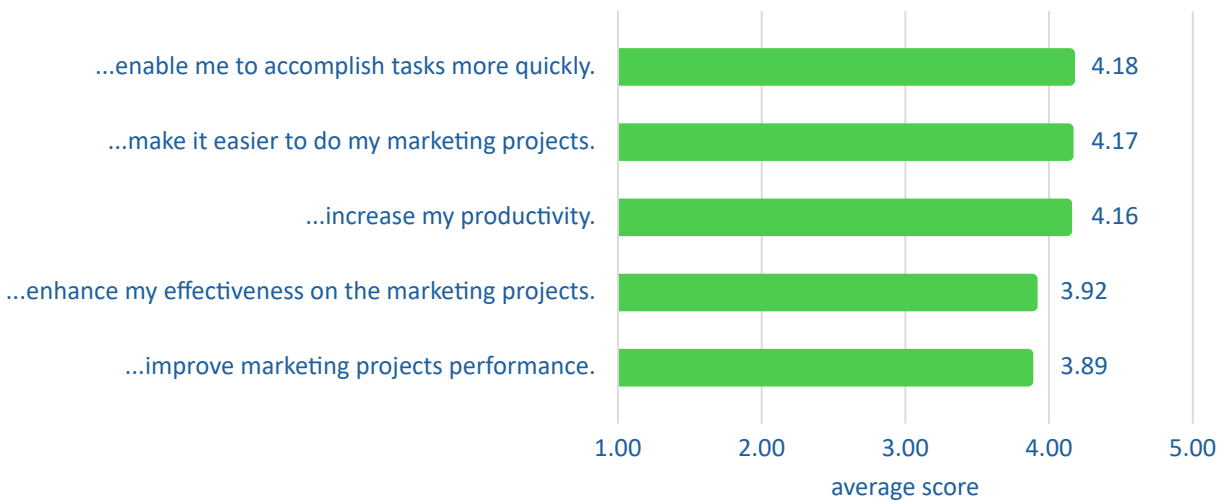
2. How does AI affect performance in marketing jobs?

Understanding how AI influences daily work is essential to evaluating its practical value in marketing. In this section, we present the results of survey questions focused on the perceived impact of AI on individual and team performance (Chart 1). Respondents rated on a scale from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”) how artificial intelligence could affect several aspects of their task efficiency, and project work precision.

Respondents expect that using AI in marketing projects would increase their efficiency. They perceive AI as a tool that allows them to work faster, makes work easier, and increases productivity. Study participants relate the benefits of using AI in marketing more to their individual work than to teamwork.

Chart 1. Influence of AI on marketing work performance

Using AI in marketing projects would...



Source: Own elaboration

The results clearly show that marketing professionals perceive AI as a valuable tool that enhances both individual and team performance. Most respondents believe that AI can improve task efficiency, support better decision-making, and simplify everyday marketing work. High percentages of positive responses across all areas indicate strong optimism about the role of AI in boosting productivity and creativity in marketing contexts.





Marketing's stance on AI is pragmatic optimism: frequent users report higher gains and fewer fears, evidence that hands-on practice reduces friction and amplifies value. Over the next three years, "democratized intelligence" and an emerging algorithmic reality will matter more than any single tool, reshaping content, workflows, and expectations of authenticity. The risk, however, is efficiency myopia i.e., celebrating speed while underinvesting in creative renewal, governance, and brand trust. To tackle this, AI adoption should reflect a disciplined, human-centered practice: equip teams for continuous learning and for spotting manipulation, build tools that can be explained, and judge progress by quality, originality, and customer trust, not speed alone. When power-user mentoring and simple, responsible-AI routines become everyday habits, today's early optimism can grow into durable advantage.



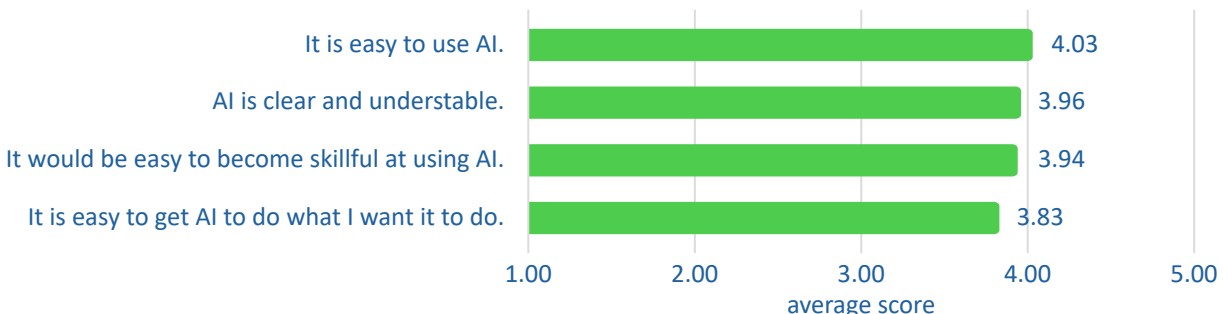
FH-Prof. Dr. Piotr Kwiatek

Professor of Sales and Sales Management, Pedagogic Coordinator, Deputy Head Study Programmes Global Sales and Marketing, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, School of Business and Management

We found that the more often marketers use AI, the better they evaluate the performance of that technology. Those who use AI daily assessed its performance as relatively strong (average 4.3), those who do it a few times a week or a few times a month, evaluated it lower (4.0 and 3.8, respectively). Marketers using it less often assessed the influence on their performance as moderate (3.2). We did not find a similar correlation between gender, age, B2B, or B2C markets.

As marketers perceive AI as beneficial to their performance, they were asked to rate on a scale from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree") the ease of using AI (Chart 2). Respondents consider AI to be relatively easy to use, and it is also understandable to them. They think their competencies are good enough to leverage the potential of AI, and they are relatively optimistic about getting from AI what is needed.

Chart 2. Perception of the ease of use AI in marketers' work



Source: Own elaboration

In the case of the perception of ease of using AI, we again found that experience matters. Using AI was much easier for marketers who do it daily (average 4.2) or a few times a week (average 3.8) than for those who do it occasionally (average 3.2). We did not find any significant correlation between the perception of AI and gender, age, or working in B2B or B2C markets.

3. How much will AI influence marketing in the next three years?

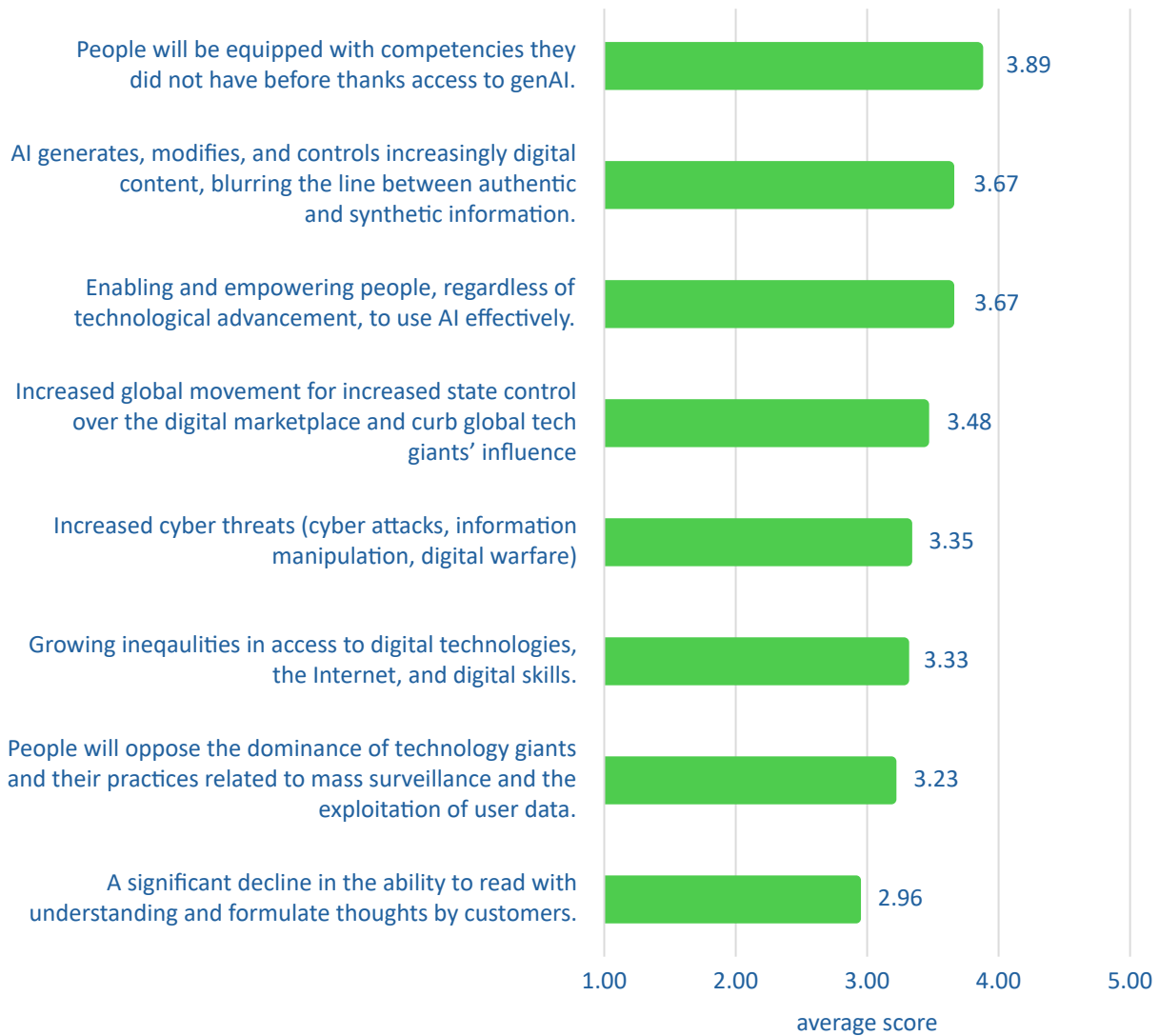
To assess expectations on the future role of artificial intelligence in marketing, respondents were asked how much trends related to AI are likely to influence three key areas over the next three years: marketing operations, marketing strategies, and marketing research. We asked them to evaluate the significance of the following trends¹ on a scale from 1 (“not significant”) to 5 (“very significant”):

- **Increased Cyber Threats** – increased cyberattacks, information manipulation, and digital warfare on brand perception and consumer behavior.
- **Algorithmic Reality** – AI generates, modifies, and controls increasingly digital content, blurring the line between authentic and synthetic information.
- **Growing Digital Inequalities** – growing disparities in access to digital technologies, the Internet, and digital skills.
- **Literacy Crisis** – a significant decline in the ability to read with understanding and formulate thoughts.
- **Democratized Digital Intelligence** – enabling and empowering people, regardless of technological advancement, to use AI effectively.
- **The Fight for Power** – a global movement for increased state control over the digital marketplace and to curb global tech giants' influence.
- **Digital Rebellion** opposes the dominance of technology giants and their practices related to mass surveillance and the exploitation of user data. It manifests itself in tightening privacy regulations.
- **Creativity Reimagined** – increased, widespread access to generative artificial intelligence, thanks to which people will be equipped with competencies they did not have before.

Marketers consider changes in how people use and will use AI as the most significant consequence of AI development. Access to increasingly powerful generative AI will allow many people at work, but also consumers, to do in the near future what has not been available recently. The second trend that is also perceived as thrilling for marketing work is also related to generative AI – its power to generate, modify, and control digital content, which will blur the lines between authenticity and synthetic or fake information. Another AI that is perceived as influential by marketers is enabling and empowering people to use AI tools effectively. That might be related to the accessibility of increasingly sophisticated tools as well as the development of technologies based on agents.

¹These trends were identified in: Antczak et al. (2025). NAWA-DIGIT report: Opportunities and Threats of AI for Marketing, <https://osf.io/42drw/files/osfstorage/67eb8ee3df70700a466ddfa7>

Chart 3. AI trends' influence on work in marketing



Source: Own elaboration

Other megatrends that are not directly related to the use of AI at work are perceived as moderately significant, including increased state control over AI, cyber threats, inequalities in access to AI, and users' opposition to using their data. The least important was assigned to customers' decline in the ability to read with understanding and formulate thoughts. The findings reveal that marketing professionals are preparing for a noticeable shift in how AI will influence their field. Operational functions are expected to change the fastest, while strategic planning and research are also likely to evolve, though with more variation in how those changes are perceived.

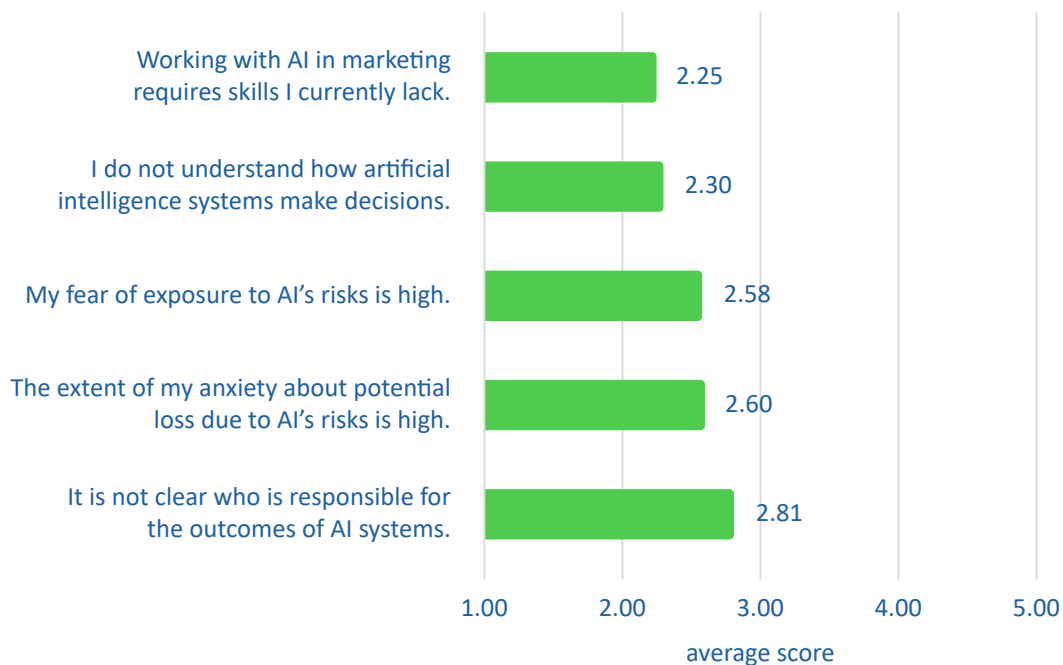
We again observed that the perception of the influence of AI-related trends on marketing trends depends on experience. Marketers, who extensively use AI, are more convinced (than those who use it rarely) that their work will be significantly affected by people equipped with new competencies thanks to having access to AI, and by people using advanced AI more and more effectively. We did not find any significant correlation between the perception of AI trends and gender, age, or working in B2B or B2C markets.

4. How does AI threaten marketing jobs?

Although artificial intelligence brings measurable benefits to marketing teams, it also raises concerns about job security, ethics, and adaptability. Respondents evaluated several statements related to the risks, difficulties, and uncertainties they associate with AI in their work environment (on a scale from 1 - “Strongly disagree” to 5 - “Strongly agree”).

The results show marketers have no severe concerns about AI in marketing. First, they do not think that they lack the skills needed to use that technology effectively. They do not report on the challenges of the black box of AI and the need to develop explainable AI. They also disagree that they fear risks related to using AI, nor feel anxiety. Marketers also do not signal stronger concerns about sharing responsibility with AI in decision-making.

Chart 4. Concerns about using AI in marketing work



Source: Own elaboration

These numbers indicate that most marketing professionals do not perceive AI as an immediate threat to their jobs. The results suggest that usability barriers are relatively low due to the growing availability of intuitive interfaces and no-code solutions tailored for non-technical users. The majority feel confident in their ability to learn and use AI tools, and emotional resistance is limited.

However, the lack of fear of using AI depends on the frequency of using AI in marketing work. Those who do it daily (average 2.4), a few times a week (2.4), or even a few times a month (2.6) have significantly fewer concerns about algorithms than marketers who use it rarely (3.3). Like in previous analysis, we did not find any significant correlation between the fears of AI and gender, age, or working in B2B or B2C markets.

5. Recommendations

The integration of artificial intelligence into marketing practice highlights a crucial distinction between individual and organizational experience. Employees often engage with AI tools in a fragmented, experimental manner, which does not automatically translate into organizational learning. While early adopters may quickly accumulate digital competencies, this creates asymmetries within teams—initially in skills and later potentially in influence and informal power. From an HRM perspective, this uneven diffusion of competencies necessitates deliberate managerial intervention to promote peer-to-peer learning and prevent divisions that undermine collaboration.



Managers thus play a dual role. First, they must facilitate collective learning by institutionalizing opportunities for mutual training and experimentation, ensuring that AI-related know-how does not remain the isolated asset of a few individuals. Second, they must act as risk stewards. The enthusiasm of frequent AI users often leads to a blindness toward broader organizational and societal risks, such as data leakage, ethical misuse of company information, or unintended harm to external stakeholders. HRM practices—such as competency frameworks, moral training, and performance evaluations—should therefore explicitly integrate awareness of these risks, aligning individual behavior with corporate responsibility.



The absence of perceived threats reported by AI-enthusiast managers may reflect a cognitive bias: the prioritization of personal productivity gains over collective accountability. In this sense, human resource management must embed AI-related competencies not only in terms of skills but also in terms of attitudes and values (critical reflection, digital responsibility, ethical sensitivity). Otherwise, organizations risk mistaking experimentation for innovation, while overlooking systemic vulnerabilities.





Marketers' perceptions of AI reveal a strong sense of optimism, but this sentiment is not evenly distributed across organizational contexts. The findings suggest that while frequent users quickly embrace AI as intuitive and performance-enhancing, the diffusion of such competence is uneven, creating knowledge gaps and informal hierarchies within teams. This fragmentation risks limiting AI's transformative potential to the experiences of "power users" rather than elevating collective practice. The results also highlight that efficiency gains, though celebrated, may conceal deeper questions about creativity, authenticity, and the evolving role of human judgment in marketing. AI is not only a tool for accelerating routine tasks but also a medium that reshapes how professionals define originality, trust, and consumer engagement. From this perspective, the absence of fear among most respondents should not be misread as a sign of full readiness; instead, it reflects a cognitive bias that prioritizes short-term usability over long-term adaptation.



Moreno Frau, PhD

Associate Professor,
Department of Marketing
Management, Corvinus
University of Budapest



As marketers focus mainly on functional aspects of AI, they can underestimate its broader influence on customers, markets, and jobs. It might be beneficial to broaden that view by activities that help thinking beyond efficiency and understand the strategic, ethical, creative, and organizational implications of AI in marketing. That might be achieved by:

- Scenario planning and foresight workshops that will encourage "what if" thinking.
- Developing AI literacy programs to upskill marketers in prompt engineering, data interpretation, and collaboration with AI.
- Exploring the role of AI as a creative partner and encouraging projects beyond efficiency, such as new product ideation, local community engagement, and adding AI-based functionality to products or services.
- Observing what customers feel about using AI and finding insights that could strengthen trust and brand authenticity.
- Establishing a framework for responsible AI use and auditing how AI is used with reference to ethical standards.

The expectation that AI will bring unmitigated progress in the near future reflects a form of “technological optimism” that HR managers must strike a balance with. Rather than focusing on futurology, firms should invest in high-performance HR practices—such as selective staffing, continuous training, and reward systems—that build resilient competencies to handle both the opportunities and risks of AI. This is especially urgent because protecting sensitive organizational knowledge from uncontrolled diffusion into AI systems will become an increasingly core HRM challenge over the next three years.



6. Summary

The report provides an overview of how marketing professionals perceive the growing role of Artificial Intelligence in their work. The findings show that AI is widely viewed positively. It is a tool that enhances marketers’ efficiency and simplifies everyday tasks. Most respondents probably built their opinions on propitious experiences with AI tools and express confidence in their ability to learn and use them effectively. This approach to AI is distributed equally regardless of gender, age, or working in B2B or B2C markets.



While few see AI as a direct threat, many recognize the need for thoughtful implementation of AI in marketing. However, concerns about job security, ethical responsibility, and the broader consequences of AI remain present, especially among those with less hands-on experience. If companies do not want to lose them in the AI revolution, they could reduce the distance between marketers and AI. It can be achieved by delivering guided onboarding to AI technology, hands-on training, and encouraging the use of AI in safe, non-critical tasks. We also suggest identifying early AI adopters and sharing their success stories. If organizations seamlessly integrate AI into everyday workflow, some concerns will decrease, as AI will not be perceived as an extraordinary technology.

7. Methodological note

The survey presented in this report aimed at exploring marketing managers' perceptions of opportunities and threats related to the use of AI in professional work. Specifically, the study aimed to understand how professionals assess the usefulness of AI, identify the challenges they encounter, and evaluate the preparedness of their teams to adapt to this technology.



The survey was prepared in English and distributed internationally via the Prolific platform to its US and UK members in May 2025. It was targeted at marketing managers who have at least three subordinates and at least 1 year of experience in a managerial position. Prolific is used to reach specific groups of professionals for online research (Palan and Schitter, 2018). Researchers have found that Prolific participants demonstrate greater attentiveness and honesty in research participation than users of MTurk or CloudResearch (Eyal et al., 2021).



The study involved 178 participants, representing both the B2B and B2C sectors. The sample was deliberately diverse in terms of gender, age, size of marketing teams, and frequency of using AI-based tools. The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis, including tests of significance of differences and correlations. All between-group differences and correlations highlighted in the report are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Project Overview

DIGIT (People and algorithms in organizations: competencies for working in the digital environment) is the NAWA Strategic Partnership project focused on understanding and developing the competencies needed to work with AI and manage AI-enabled work in marketing environments.

The primary objective is to identify and develop the competencies to work with AI in marketing contexts, manage AI-enabled work processes, and adapt to Marketing 5.0 environments.

Authors of the NAWA Report

Doris Antczak, Marcin Gurtatowski, Grzegorz Leszczyński, Maciej Ławrynowicz, Anna Rogala, all from Poznań University of Economics and Business.

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The report is based on primary and secondary sources, including reports, scholarly articles, and analytical publications that provide additional context and validation of findings. The selection of secondary sources was guided by the following criteria: information quality, broad and diverse coverage across the research, business, and educational sectors, a global perspective on digital trends and their implications, and publication dates between 2020 and 2024 to ensure relevance and up-to-date information.

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Contact:

nawa-digit@projekty.ue.poznan.pl

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