



A Qualitative Analysis of the Attitudes that Marketing Strategists have about Human-AI Collaboration in Brand Communication



Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies at The
Independent Institute of Education, IIE MSA

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16 / 10 / 2025

DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in
Communication and Media Studies IEMSA Johannesburg, 2025

The author hereby declares that this whole thesis or dissertation, unless specifically
indicated to the contrary in the text, is her own original work.

Grace Muleja Kayowa

Master of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies

DEDICATION

To my younger self

The dreamer who carried books bigger than her hands, the girl who always carried within her a deep love for learning and an unshakable belief in the power of education. You were the one who dreamed beyond limitations, who filled notebooks with curiosity, and who trusted that one day all your sacrifices, patience, and perseverance would mean something greater. You always knew that the path of learning would not be easy, yet you walked it with grace, courage, hope, and faith.

The past two years of this Master's journey have been filled with challenges. Long, countless sleepless nights, doubts, tears, fears, and the weight of responsibilities. But through it all, I held on to you. I carried your dreams, discipline, and hunger for knowledge with me every step of the way.

And now, here we are. We made it. Together. I took the hopes you placed in me and turned them into reality. Every page of this dissertation is proof that your vision was never in vain, and that your sacrifices were not forgotten.

I made you proud. This achievement belongs to you as much as it belongs to me. You are the foundation, the spark, and the reason I never gave up.

Here is to you, my younger self. Your courage, faith, and love for knowledge carried me here. May this be a reminder that dreams, no matter how small or distant they may feel, are always within reach when we believe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to sincerely thank everyone whose cooperation and support were vital in completing my dissertation.

Foremost, I am grateful to God for the gifts of good health, wisdom, and success.

My deepest gratitude goes to my mother, Mrs. Marie-Josée Kabedi, who persuaded me to enroll in the master's program, and whose unwavering love, financial sacrifice, prayers, and encouragement have carried me through every stage of this degree. Thank you for your steadfast belief in me, and for being my constant source of strength and inspiration.

Sincere gratitude and appreciation go to my fiancé Mr. Elie Ngoie, whose presence in my life has been a blessing beyond measure. Thank you for standing by me through thick and thin, and for celebrating, as well as motivating me in moments of exhaustion. Your love and support gave me courage and joy.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Joanah Gadzikwa and co-supervisor Dr. Marchant Van Der Schyff for their steadfast support, expertise, and invaluable guidance. Your encouragement, patience, and feedback sharpened my thinking and strengthened the quality of this research. I could not have done it without you graciously standing beside me. This Master of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies is as much yours as it is mine. My gratitude is profound.

To my research participants, thank you for generously sharing your insights and expertise, which are valuable assets to this study.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my family and friends for their love, encouragement, unwavering support, and prayers during my studies.

To all who stood by me in this journey, I say thank you.

ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought new possibilities and challenges in brand communication, yet little is known about how brand strategists perceive and respond to its integration in professional practice. This study addressed the gap by exploring the brand strategists' attitudes towards human-AI collaboration in brand communication. The research problem was embedded in the limited understanding of how generative AI influences strategic communication, creativity, and ethical consideration, which impede the accumulation of best practices in the field.

Guided by the medium theory and the symbolic convergence theory, the study assessed how brand strategists balance risks and opportunities when adopting AI tools. The medium theory the symbolic convergence theory provides insights into the shared narratives and fantasy themes that brand strategist co-create to make sense of AI's role in their professional identity and collaborative processes.

A qualitative research design was used, using semi-structured interviews with six brand strategists based in Pretoria. Participants were purposively selected based on involvement in brand communication, and varying levels of experience with generative AI. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and thematically analysed using Brawn and Clarke's six-steps approach.

A total of five major themes emerged: Views of AI integration in brand communication, the necessity of human oversight in AI-generated content, practical challenges and risks in implementation, the skill shift from creator to curator, and balancing standards as well as ethical boundaries.

The findings suggest that while AI provides clear benefits in efficiency and conceptualisation, brand strategists remain committed to protecting authenticity, creativity, and ethical responsibility in brand messaging. The study contributes to the communication field by; contextualising AI adoption in brand practice, extending medium theory into the field of generative technologies, and by pointing out cognitive tensions in professional use.

The study's limitations include the small, demographically narrow sample of six participants, which constrains generalisability. Future research should; include a more diverse population, assess cross-cultural contexts, and must explore how gender and race intersect with professional identity to shape AI adoption.

Recommendations are provided at both professional and scholarly levels. For practice, brand strategists and organisations should develop governance frameworks to guide ethical AI use, invest in training to enhance prompting and tool literacy, and embrace disclosure practices that build client trust. For academia, further research should investigate demographic influences, test AI outputs across multiple brand sectors, and critically examine how AI reshapes notions of creativity and authenticity in communication.

Key terms: Brand communication, brand strategy, human-AI collaboration, attitude, generative artificial intelligence

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	I
DEDICATION.....	II
ABSTRACT.....	IV
LIST OF TABLES	X
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the study.....	2
1.3 Problem statement.....	4
1.4 Purpose statement.....	5
1.5 Research questions and objectives.....	5
1.5.1 Research questions	6
1.5.2 Research objectives.....	6
1.6 Rationale.....	6
1.7 Outline of the study	7
1.8 Conceptualisation of key terms.....	7
1.9 Research orientation & underlying assumptions.....	8
1.10 Ethical considerations.....	9
1.11 Limitations of the study.....	9
1.12 Conclusion.....	9
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION.....	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Theoretical foundation	10
2.2.1 Symbolic Convergence Theory.....	11
2.2.2 The medium theory	13
2.3 Conclusion.....	15
3. LITERARURE REVIEW.....	17

3.1 Potential uses of AI technologies in brand communication.....	17
3.2 Effectiveness of human-ai collaboration in enhancing brand communication.....	18
3.3 Benefits of artificial intelligence technologies in brand communication.....	20
3.4 Challenges of artificial intelligence technologies in brand communication.....	20
3.5 Strategies for enhancing human-ai collaboration in brand communication	21
3.5.1 Education or training for human-AI collaboration	23
3.5.2 Explainability in human-AI collaboration.....	24
3.5.3 Sustainability in human-AI collaboration	24
3.6 Conclusion	25
4.1 Introduction.....	26
4.2 Research paradigm.....	26
4.3 Research approach.....	30
4.3.1 Tenets of the research approach	31
4.4 Research design.....	31
4.5 Population of the study.....	33
4.5.1 Unit of analysis.....	33
4.5.2 Population parameters	33
4.5.3 Target population	34
4.5.4 Accessible population.....	34
4.6 Sampling.....	34
4.6.1 Sampling method	35
4.6.2 Sample size.....	36
4.7 Data collection	37
4.7.1 Data Instruments.....	37
4.8 Data analysis.....	39
4.8.1 Data analysis application	42
4.9 Trustworthiness of the study.....	42
4.10 Ethical considerations.....	43
4.11 Conclusion	44
CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS.....	45
5.1 Introduction.....	45
5.2 Demographic and biographic information	45
5.3 Process of qualitative findings.....	47
5.4 Presentation of findings.....	47

5.4.1 The thematic map for the study.....	47
5.5 Theme 1: views of ai integration in brand communication.....	49
5.6 Theme 2: The necessity of human oversight in ai generated content.....	51
5.7 Theme 3: practical challenges and risks in implementation.....	54
5.8 Theme 4: The skill shift: from creator to curator.....	57
5.9 Theme 5: Balancing standards and ethical boundaries.....	59
5.10 Conclusion	60
 CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS.....	 62
6.1 Introduction.....	62
6.2 The purpose of the study	62
6.3 Key findings of the study.....	62
6.4 Discussion of findings in correlation with theories	63
6.4.1 Alignment with symbolic convergence theory	63
6.4.2 Alignment with medium theory.....	64
6.5 Findings addressing literature review.....	65
6.5.1 Views of AI integration in brand communication	65
6.5.2 The need for human oversight in AI generated content.....	66
6.5.3 Practical challenges and risk in implementation.....	66
6.5.4 The skill shift: From creator to curator.....	67
6.5.5 Balancing standards and ethical boundaries.....	67
 CHAPTER 7: ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	 68
7.1 Introduction.....	68
7.2 Findings for the research problem.....	68
7.3 What are the perceived benefits of using generative AI in communication processes?	69
7.4 What concerns or challenges do brand strategists have regarding the implementation of generative AI on communication strategies?.....	69
7.5 What significance do brand strategists perceive the generative AI to have on the creative aspects of brand messaging?.....	70
7.6 What factors influence the willingness of brand strategists to adopt generative AI technologies in communication processes?	71
7.7 Conclusion	71
 CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	 73

8.1 Introduction	73
8.2 Limitations and delimitations of the study	73
8.3 Recommendations for practice and future studies	74
8.3.1 Recommendations for professionals	74
8.3.2 Recommendations for future research	75
8.4 Anticipated contributions	75
8.5 Conclusion	76
REFERENCE LIST	77
ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	89
ANNEXURE B – PARTICIPANT OR RESPONDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM	91
ANNEXURE C: PROPOSAL APPROVAL AND ETHICAL	94

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Qualification, age, and titles of participants	41
Table 2: A representation of views of AI integration in brand communication theme as per research questions 1 and 4.....	45
Table 3: A representation of the necessity of human oversight in AI generated content theme as per research questions 1, 2, and 3.....	47
Table 4: A representation of practical challenges and risks in implementation theme as per research questions 2 and 4.....	50
Table 5: A representation of practical challenges and risks in implementation theme as per research questions 3 and 4.....	52
Table 6: A representation of practical challenges and risks in implementation theme as per research questions 2, 3 and 4.....	54

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Gender distribution of participants.....	41
Figure 2: The thematic map for the study	43

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the evolving environment of communication, branding and marketing, the collaboration between human creativity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has come up as a significant force reshaping the industry (Petrescu and Kristen, 2023). The rapidly changing technology environment has made the brand management landscape more complex (Agersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020). The merging of human creativity and AI technologies can bring new avenues for innovation, effectiveness, and efficiency thereby creating compelling brand experiences and narratives.

The 21st century has witnessed outstanding technological advancement and improvement which has influenced areas such as managerial and socio-economic development through artificial intelligence (Darangwa, 2021). Artificial intelligence is transforming all industries, nonetheless, humans should not fear that robots will supersede human employees. The environment has become extremely susceptible to advanced technology and digitalisation, resulting in changing demands and consumer behaviour. Thus, organisations must; raise the stakes, elaborate stronger strategies, and develop a better understanding of the consumers' demands and offer holistic satisfactory solutions to survive.

Kolbjornsrud (2024) argues that artificial intelligence has been steadily embraced globally, and it is in demand in the financial industry because of its potential to assist in the automation of business operations and in the transformation of brands and organisations in agile, fast, and collaborative hallmarks of organisational intelligence. There is an increase of competition in industries, demanding them to be strategic with a view to make the best decisions and stay competitive in the market. Presently, both AI and humans have made several contributions to this aim and assisted industries enormously to achieve their goals. Therefore, human-AI collaboration is a key element that marketing and brand management professionals need. Wilson and Daugherty (2018) argue that the partnership between AI and humans is poised to improve several aspects of organisational functioning, including but not limited to operational flexibility, speed, scalability, decision-making capabilities, and the capacity to personalise products and services. This collaboration necessitates not only the adoption of AI

technology but also the cultivation of employees who can effectively operate at the interface between machines and humans. Additionally, this collaboration is anticipated to boost employees' creativity, particularly in the setting of branding initiatives.

1.2 Background of the study

In today's fast-changing digital environment, AI has become a game-changer in the marketing field. The significance of AI in transforming communication and marketing practices as well as strategies has become a subject of deep importance as brands and organisations encounter challenges of an increasingly data-driven and digital environment (Senpayar, 2024). The idea of AI was first framed in a Dartmouth college. The definition of AI at the time was the ability of machines to think and understand like humans, thus proposing the possibility of computers being capable of imitating human intelligence (Iskel, 2022). Today, AI goes beyond human strengths in many ways and is considered as an important element in the fourth industrial revolution.

According to Agersborg, Mansson and Roth (2020), AI is remarkably transforming several industries, such as the fields of communication, business, branding, and advertising, marketing. For instance, AI has improved and created increased demands in brand communication, brand image, reputations, and relationships (Agersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020). Gao, Wang, Xie, Hu and Hu (2024) note that AI has brought significant insights that allow professionals in creating more successful strategies which improve the efficiency of decision-making, process and advertisement information. Furthermore, it has enhanced the field of marketing through automation, thereby allowing marketing professionals to concentrate on more creative and strategic activities (Agersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020).

The historical progress of AI technologies in the creative field has been marked by remarkable developments and milestones (Lee, 2022). Researchers started exploring the potential of including computers in creative endeavours such as literature, music composition and art generation. Moreover, the author points out that early experiments focused on simple algorithms to develop basic compositions. In recent years, AI technologies have been increasingly incorporated into creative industries, increasing human creativity and streamlining workflow (Deng, Dong, Socher and Li, 2009). The authors highlight that organisations, brands, and artists are adopting AI as a tool and

collaborator for creative operations, thus leading to new opportunities and challenges in the creative industry.

Creative branding and brand communication involve the marketing strategies used by brands or organisations to provide customers everyday with innovative methods (Florea, 2014). The author asserts that brand communication plays an important role in fostering brand loyalty, tailoring consumer perceptions and driving market success by fostering distinctiveness, building brand identity, enhancing values and by fostering innovation. Senyapar (2024) argues that although AI has a promising and high potential future in marketing, this progress is constrained by noteworthy challenges in areas like data privacy, ethical standards and security.

Wilson and Daugherty (2018) point out that to effectively benefit from AI, organisations and brands must redesign organisational processes. After identifying areas for improvement, such as scalability, speed, operational flexibility, as well as personalisation of services and products, organisations and brands can implement appropriate solutions. This implies not only adopting and implementing AI technologies but also designing educational resources and training for all employees at a larger scale. Thus, the researcher explored the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication to help brands drive growth and take advantage of the competitive market.

While much of the existing studies on artificial intelligence in branding and marketing is dominated by studies conducted in North America, Europe, and parts of Asia, recent research indicates a growing and contextually distinct engagement with AI within South Africa's communication and marketing industries (Du Plessis and Swart, 2025V4). South African organisations operate within a unique socio-economic, regulatory, and cultural environment characterised by digital inequality, ethical sensitivity, and rapid technological adoption across uneven infrastructure (Du Plessis and Swart, 2024; Kshetri and Dwivedi, 2023). Within this context, brand communication practitioners are increasingly required to balance global technological trends with local audience expectations, regulatory frameworks such as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), and culturally embedded notions of trust, authenticity, and representation (Du Plessis and Stuart, 2024; Mohamed, Matimbwa

and Banzi, 2025).

This study was further delimited to Pretoria as primary research site due to its concentration of advertising agencies, corporate communication firms, public sector communication units, and brand consultancies operating at both national and international levels. Pretoria-based brand strategists frequently work across diverse sectors, balancing global standards with local market realities, making them well positioned to reflect on the opportunities and constraints of integrating AI into brand communication practices (Du Plessis and Stuart, 2024; Sterz, Langner and Fischer, 2024). Focusing on Pretoria allowed for contextual depth and practical access while acknowledging the time-intensive nature of qualitative engagement with senior communication professionals.

1.3 Problem statement

AI has transformed many industries including brand management and marketing. AI technologies and solutions have brought flexibility for businesses to create targeted marketing campaigns, automate various tasks, and examine consumer behaviour (Agersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020). However, AI, like any technology, has limitations, particularly in communication processes that include creating and managing brands with brand strategists. Conick (2017, as cited in Agersborg, Mason and Roth, 2020) notes that while AI can automatically control several tasks, such as customer segmentation and data analysis, it cannot reproduce human creativity and empathy. Despite its evolution, AI lacks common sense. This simply means that AI does not follow any unspoken rules that people generally agree on and lacks an understanding of the environment they function within. For instance, when a company hires a communication agency to create a publicity stunt, both parties implicitly understand that the marketing campaign should not jeopardise human lives or violate the law.

In the realm of AI, however, there is no assumption of such implicit understanding. AI does not recognise and understand human emotions which is considered as one of the difficulties or concerns in practice (de Bryun, Viswanathan, Beh, Brock and Von Wangenheim, 2020). This is supported by Koerselman (2023) who examines contemporary generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT and highlights how these

systems struggle to accurately interpret and respond to emotional nuances, thereby leading to potential gaps in effectiveness and reliability in human-centred applications. Koerselman (2023) further points out that AI also presents limitations in the banking and marketing sectors, such as the high costs of maintenance and repair, high costs of the implementation, the requirement of technical expertise; potential bugs in the system and the use of chatbots which can present potential inaccuracy of some answers. Eriksson (2022) states that a brand is more than a product or logo; as it looks at the emotional connection between brands and its consumers. Since AI cannot offer the human element needed for building emotional brand connections, its potential is best realized as a tool augment human divergent thinking, not as a replacement for human creativity (Cropley, 2023).

As the adoption of generative AI technologies becomes increasingly prevalent in various industries, brand strategists are faced with concerns when it comes to integrating these tools into communication processes. There is limited knowledge of how brand strategists apprehend and respond to the use of generative AI in crafting and delivering brand messages. This poses a problem as it hinders the accumulation of knowledge and best practices in the fields of communication and marketing when using AI. Hence, the study sought to explore the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication by looking at their attitudes toward using AI to ensure all marketing materials, messaging, and customer interactions reflect brand position.

1.4 Purpose statement

The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes that brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication.

1.5 Research questions and objectives

To explore the attitudes brand strategists, have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, this study had four research questions and four objectives.

1.5.1 Research questions

RQ1: What are the perceived benefits of using generative AI in the communication

processes for South African brand strategists?

RQ2: What concerns or challenges do South African brand strategists have regarding the implementation of generative AI in communication strategies?

RQ3: What significance do brand strategists perceive generative AI to have on the creativity of brand messaging?

RQ4: What factors influence the willingness of South African brand strategists to adopt generative AI technologies in communication processes?

1.5.2 Research objectives

The study set the following research objectives to answer the research questions:

RO1: To explore the advantages and disadvantages that South African brand strategists associate with the use of generative AI in communication processes.

RO2: To analyse the potential obstacles and affordances that South African brand strategists have about integrating generative AI into communication strategies.

RO3: To investigate the significance of generative AI on the creative aspects of brand communication.

RO4: To explore the factors that influence the South African brand strategists' readiness to implement generative AI technologies in communication processes.

1.6 Rationale

Artificial intelligence has made significant inroads into various fields, transforming how businesses operate and interact with customers. For instance, with the help of AI, marketing professionals can personalise their audiences' marketing messages and product recommendations. The advertising industry has noticed improved Return of Investment (ROI) due to programmatic advertising. Furthermore, AI has helped the financial industry to identify fraud, analyse and anticipate financial risks, as well as to improve operation efficiency and customer experience. Lastly, the brand communication field has also witnessed significant AI impact on content optimisation, audience segmentation, sentiment analysis and crisis management. The importance of this study is the potential of exploring the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication.

The study of human-AI collaboration is significant because it provides knowledge into

how AI and humans can effectively operate together to enhance performance, creativity, and decision-making across various fields. As AI has been increasingly incorporated into domains like brand communication, understanding this collaboration helps to optimise how AI tools are used to contribute human skills rather than replace them. The results from this study may present insight into effective improvement on the company's communication processes that marketing professionals can employ in brand positioning. Moreover, the study's findings will also provide insight into consideration of the brand strategists attitudes towards the use of AI tools. In addition, the discoveries of this study can help the brand strategists or even other professionals who work in the creative industry to develop innovative solutions and effective communication strategies to assist to maintain a positive brand and attain brand success. Additionally, this study's results can lead to potential opportunities and growth in developing new successful and effective brand communication strategies to keep companies running in the competitive market.

1.7 Outline of the study

Chapter one consists of the introduction, the background of the study, the problem and purpose statement, the research questions, the research objectives, the rationale, and the study's outline. The next chapter is the theoretical framework, followed by the literature review chapter. Chapter four presents the study's methodology while chapter five outlines the presentation and the interpretation of the research findings. Chapter six provides a through discussion and analysis of the findings, chapter seven answers the research questions. Finally, chapter eight presents the summary of the entire dissertation and recommendations.

1.8 Conceptualisation of key terms

Human-AI collaboration: Petrescu and Krishen (2023) refer to and define human–AI collaboration as hybrid intelligence: “Hybrid intelligence”, a concept that combines the strengths of both human intelligence and artificial intelligence to achieve better outcomes than either could achieve alone. In the context of this study, human-AI collaboration relates to how brand strategists work alongside generative AI tools in developing, refining, and delivering brand communication strategies.

Brand strategy: is a long-term plan that defines how a brand positions itself, differentiates from competitors, and builds relationships with its target audience through consistent messaging and identity (Arundati, 2024; Cid, Blanchet, Ribichaud and Kinuani, 2022). This study examines brand strategy as the professional space within which brand strategists decide whether, how, and to what extent generative AI can support strategic brand objectives.

Brand communication: refers to the strategic process through which organisations convey their brand identity, values, and messages to internal and external stakeholders using various communication platforms (Cornelissen, 2020). In relation to this study, brand communication focusses on how generative AI is integrated into the creation and dissemination of brand messages and how this influences meaning-making and audience engagement.

Generative artificial intelligence: refers to all AI systems capable of producing new content such as text, images, and ideas based on patterns learned from large datasets (Dwivedi, Hughes, Ismagilova, Arsts & Coombs, 2021). In this study, generative AI includes tools such as ChatGPT that are used by brand strategists to support ideation, content drafting, and creative processes in brand communication.

Attitude: refers to an individual's evaluative predisposition toward an object, idea, or behaviour, encompassing cognitive beliefs, effective responses and behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 2020; Eagly & Chaiken, 2025). In human-technology contexts, attitude is shaped by perceptions of usefulness, trust, and perceived risk.

1.9 Research orientation & underlying assumptions

This study was grounded in an interpretivist research paradigm, which assumes that reality and meaning are socially constructed through human experience. From this perspective, knowledge is shaped by context, interaction, and subjective interpretation rather than objective measurement.

The study assumed that brand strategists' attitudes toward generative AI emerge through their lived experiences and ongoing sense-making processes. Human-AI collaboration is therefore understood as a socially situated phenomenon shaped by

organisational environments, professional identities, and individual meaning-making. An exploratory qualitative approach was adopted to capture depth, nuance, and contextual understanding rather than statistical generalisation.

1.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations guiding the study included informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible data management. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities were de-identified through the use of coded identifiers during transcription and analysis. All digital data were securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.

1.11 Limitations of the study

This study was delimited to brand strategists operating within Pretoria, which limited the transferability of findings to other geographic or professional contexts. The exploratory qualitative design and small sample size prioritised depth of insight over breadth of representation. These limitations are consistent with the interpretivist orientation of the study, which values rich, contextual understanding of lived experiences rather than generalizability.

1.12 Conclusion

The chapter provided an introduction of the research study, followed by the background, the problem and purpose statement, the research questions and objectives, and the rationale. Finally, it presented the study outline and the key concepts, assumptions, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. The next chapter focuses on the theoretical foundation of the study.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature review. The chapter begins with the theoretical foundation, followed by the general literature review. In the general literature review, the potential uses of AI technologies in brand communication, the benefits and challenges associated in integration of AI technologies in brand communication, effectiveness of human-AI collaboration in enhancing brand communication and strategies for enhancing human-AI collaboration are discussed. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary.

2.2 Theoretical foundation

A theoretical framework or foundation is one of the most significant elements in a research process as it brings a foundational base for the literature review (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Nhan (2020) points out that a theoretical foundation is simply the use of a theory in a study which conveys the values of a researcher and brings a direction for how the study will analyse new knowledge. Several theories have been used in the field of marketing, such as the media richness theory which seeks to elucidate how several communication channels can differ in the ability to carry information effectively (Deryl, Verma and Srivastava, 2023).

The uses and gratification theory is based on mass communication and media consumption that centre on how individuals actively utilise media to fulfil specific needs or wants (Xie, Wang and Cheng, 2022). The theory of cognitive dissonance on the other hand refers to a situation involving conflicting beliefs, behaviour, and attitudes (Delen, 2022). Another theory is the actor-network theory which explores dynamic interactions or relationships among actors (both human and non-human) within networks (Bencherki, 2017). The medium theory focuses on how the characteristics of communication media shape human perception, understanding, and social interactions (Littlejohn, Foss and Oetzel, 2021). Lastly, the diffusion of innovation theory focuses on explaining how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread (Rogers, 1962). From the provided definitions, the study adopted the symbolic convergence theory and the medium theory.

2.2.1 Symbolic Convergence Theory

Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), originally developed by Ernest G. Bormann, provides a valuable interpretive lens for explaining how meaning, emotion, and shared understanding emerge through communication within professional groups (Bormann, 1972). At its core, SCT explains how individuals participating in collective communication come to share symbolic meanings that shape a “rhetorical vision” or shared reality. In this study, SCT was particularly relevant for understanding how brand strategists collectively make sense of generative AI within agency environments, where meanings around creativity, ethics, professional identity, and collaboration are continuously negotiated (Fu, Bin & Liang, 2024; Salma, Hijon-Neira, and Pizarro, 2025). Rather than focusing on persuasion or message effects, SCT foregrounds group consciousness, which aligns with this study’s interpretivist aim to explore how brand strategists construct meaning around AI through interaction, reflection, and shared professional discourse.

Brand communication operates largely within symbolic systems where meaning, identity, and emotional resonance are continuously negotiated. Brands function as cultural contexts that rely on storytelling, imagery, tone, and shared values to create coherence and differentiation in competitive markets (Erikson, 2022; Kirby, Baumgarth & Henseler, 2025). From this perspective, brand strategists are not merely message designers but symbolic mediators who translate organisational values into narratives that audiences can identify with (Du Plessis & Stuart, 2024). SCT aligns with this understanding by positioning communication as a process through which shared realities are formed rather than transmitted, reinforcing the interpretive and relational nature of brand meaning construction (Foss, Littlejohn & Foss, 2019).

The growing integration of generative AI into brand communication introduces new symbolic dynamics into meaning-making process. Recent studies suggest that AI systems increasingly participate in creative workflows, influencing ideation, language construction, and narrative framing (Davenport & Mittal, 2024; Hemmer, Kuhl & Goutier, 2023). Salma et al. (2025) argue that human-AI collaboration functions as a co-creative system, where meaning emerges through interaction rather than unilateral control. In such contexts, generative AI contributes symbolic material that practitioners interpret, refine, and contextualise, reinforcing the relevance of SCT’s emphasis on

shared symbolic realities rather than isolated technological outputs.

Through the lens of SCT, human-AI collaboration in brand communication can be understood as an evolving process of symbolic negotiation. As AI-generated outputs do not carry inherent meaning; instead, is constructed when brand strategists evaluate these outputs against brand identity, professional judgment, and contextual relevance (Fu, Bin, Liu & Zhang, 2024; Kirby, Baumgarth & Henseler, 2025). This interpretive process mirrors SCT's concept of symbolic convergence, where shared understanding develops through interactions and repeated framing (Bormann, 1972; Griffin, Ledbetter & Sparks, 2019). Consequently, AI functions not as an autonomous communicator but as a contributor to a broader communicative ecosystem shaped by human interpretation.

One of the major strengths of SCT lies in its alignment with qualitative inquiry. The theory foregrounds lived experience, meaning construction, and interpretive depth, which are foundational principles of interpretivist research paradigms (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Littlejohn & Foss, 2021). SCT allows researchers to explore how practitioners make sense of emerging technologies within their professional environments, rather than measuring adoption through purely functional or instrumental metrics. This made the theory particularly suitable for examining brand strategists' attitudes toward generative AI, where emotions, values, uncertainty, and professional identity strongly influence perceptions (Mohamed, Matimbwa & Banzi, 2025).

However, SCT also presents limitations when applied to human-AI collaboration. The theory was originally developed to explain human-to-human communication and does not fully account for the non-sentient nature of algorithmic systems (Fallstrom, 2025; Hemmer et al., 2023). The authors further note that AI does not participate in meaning-making through intention or consciousness, which creates conceptual tension when interpreting convergence processes. Additionally, SCT places limited emphasis on power relations, technological governance, and algorithmic bias, factors increasingly recognized as critical in AI-mediated communication environments (Kshetri, Dwivedi & Davenport, 2024; Sterz, Muller & Henkel, 2024). These limitations necessitate a cautious and reflexive application of the theory.

Despite these constraints, SCT remains a valuable when positioned as a framework for understanding human interpretation of AI-generated symbols, rather than AI agency itself. When integrated with contemporary human-AI collaboration literature, the theory offers a meaningful way to examine how brand strategists construct understanding, negotiate uncertainty, and maintain professional coherence within technologically mediated creative processes (Salma, Hijon-Neira & Pizarro, 2025; Kirby, Baumgarth & Henseler, 2025). As such, SCT supported the study's objective of exploring attitudes, sense-making, and meaning construction in brand communication practices shaped by generative AI.

2.2.2 *The medium theory*

Coined in the 1960s by Marshall McLuhan, the medium theory is a theory in communication and media studies that seeks to analyse or examine how the communication media affects certain content (messages). In this study, the medium theory provided a strong and significant framework for understanding the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. Littlejohn and Foss (2011) note that when it comes to media effects, the medium theory posits the attributes of a medium that remarkably impacts how information is received and interpreted. In the case of the attitudes that the brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, this principle proposes that the choice of AI technologies can have a radical impact on the creative process and results. This stipulates that through an analysis of how AI mediums impact some creative aspects, marketing professionals can collect significant evidence on the limitations and efficacy of AI-driven creativity. Additionally, it is important for marketing professionals and brand strategists to ensure that brands sustain authenticity and make sure that all contents or activities generated by AI-systems remain consistent with brand values and identity.

According to Natale (2020), the medium theory assists in understanding how meaning is produced through the collaboration of humans and AI, as well as the societal, individual, and cultural implications of human-AI communication processes. At its core, McLuhan (1964) emphasises that the medium is the message. This stipulates that the medium through which a message is transmitted shapes its reception and

meaning (Littlejohn and Foss, 2011). Thus, this highlights that the incorporation of AI technologies into the creative process positions the brand's commitment to innovation, the adoption of technology and customer engagement. Guzman and Lewis (2020) highlight that when it comes to human-AI collaboration, technology is perceived as the medium. Meaning that, it is not just a channel but also a producer of communication.

Furthermore, technology being a medium in human-AI collaboration entails that the focal point is placed on the meaning that is produced in the interaction between individuals and technology and their involvements for society and people. Therefore, using this foundational base of the medium theory, marketing professionals can scrutinise how consumers view brands that use AI in creative ventures, activities, or operations, by bringing forth evidence of the medium's influence on a brand's identity and customer relationships.

Another core element in the medium theory is medium ecology. In the medium theory, McLuhan (1964) points out that medium ecology is the interrelationship of human behaviour and media environment (Guzman and Lewis, 2020). In the given context, brand strategists can examine how AI-systems engage with existing communication channels and consumer preferences. Furthermore, by exploring the medium ecology of AI-driven brand creative initiatives, brand strategists can discover opportunities and strategies for enhancing creative results and audience engagement. In the given context, generative platforms such as websites, social media, chatbox or AI assistants can become part of the medium ecology through which brands or organisations can engage with their targeted audience. Consequently, it will enhance brand accessibility and visibility while enabling an easy interaction between human-driven and AI-driven touchpoints.

The researcher posits that the medium theory provided the base of exploring the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. Additionally, the medium theory helped to craft strategies that the marketing professionals, brands, and organisations as a whole can utilise to harness the innovative potential of AI technologies while guaranteeing alignment with the brand's values, identity, objectives, and audience preferences.

One of the enduring strengths of medium theory lies in its capacity to redirect attention from message content to the characteristics and effects of the medium itself, which helps explain how communication technologies shape human experience and social structures rather than merely transmit information (Podara, 2025). McLuhan's notion that media environments configure patterns of perception and interaction has proved particularly insightful in contemporary media ecology scholarship, where digital platforms fundamentally influence how audiences consume and interpret communication (Li, 2025; Podara, 2025). By foregrounding the medium's structural impact, McLuhan's theory encourages researchers to consider technology as an active participant in communication environments, not merely a neutral conduit, which strengthens qualitative inquiry into how brand strategists experience and interpret AI in their work (Cheriti, 2025; Podara, 2025).

Despite these strengths, medium theory also faces significant limitations when applied to the complexities of modern communication phenomena. Kahar (2025) and Podara (2025) note that McLuhan's ideas, developed in a mid-20th century media landscape, tend to be highly general and descriptive rather than analytically precise, often lacking the detail needed to account for power dynamics, content regulation, and contextual influences that shape media effects today. Critics have argued that McLuhan's focus on technological determinism downplays the role of human agency and the social construction of meaning, suggesting that individuals and institutions actively shape how media are used and understood rather than being passively affected by them (Kahar, 2025; Podara, 2025). Furthermore, while the foundational insight of "the medium is the message" remains influential, it requires reinterpretation and supplementation with contemporary frameworks that address algorithmic agency, ethical concerns, and power relations in digital systems, factors that are highly relevant when studying generative AI tools in professional settings like brand communication (Cheriti, 2025; Li, 2025). These limitations underline the need to adapt McLuhan's theory within a broader theoretical mix when analysing human-AI collaboration and its implications for meaning, identity, and personal practice.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the study provided a background into the field of marketing and

communication, as well as laid a foundation on the collaboration between humans and AI. Furthermore, SCT and the medium theory were the relevant theories to build a stronger theoretical foundation for the topic. Using SCT demonstrated that despite the constantly evolving digital and competitive environment, brand strategists can still enhance brand communication by adopting AI technologies. Additionally, the medium theory pointed out that organisations and brands can effectively and positively enhance brand communication through the use of AI-systems to leverage a brand's identity and audience engagement.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is an inclusive summary of previous research on a topic, with the aim to gather pertinent research linked to a chosen topic (Maree, 2019). A profuse body of knowledge exists in the field of marketing. Several studies on AI have been published. This section looks at the potential uses of AI technologies in brand communication, followed by the effectiveness of AI technologies in enhancing brand communication, the benefits, and challenges of AI technologies integration in brand communication, and the strategies for enhancing human-AI collaboration in brand communication. Lastly, a summary of the chapter is provided. The literature review is explained according to the research objectives to answer the research questions.

3.1 Potential uses of AI technologies in brand communication

In today's ever-changing, commercial environment, AI has become a catalyst power in the field of marketing (Senyapar, 2024). It has come out as a thoroughgoing force in the ever-changing perspective of digital technology, particularly in marketing. Velykyte (2023) describes creativity as a significant element of brand building as it aids to distinguish a brand from its competitors and develop a unique identity in the minds of consumers. Whereas brand communication looks at the way an organisation conveys its brand identity, values, and messages to its audience (Agersborg, Mansson and Roth, 2020). Ameen, Sharma, Tarba, Rao and Chopra (2022) note that in a marketing context, creativity is considered as the creation of new and valuable ideas. Creativity has been recognised as the future of marketing (Darangwa, 2021). Thus, it is necessary for marketing professionals, brand strategists and organisations to invest in creative tools to acquire a competitive advantage in the market.

Wernersson and Person (2023) state that experts suggest that AI is a catalyst that will reinforce human creativity and play an important role for creative professionals. Additionally, experts have recognised that with the rapid development of AI, things will keep on evolving, thereby leading to a fulfilment of creative expectations. This is evident as brands and organisations globally and in South Africa are adopting the idea of AI in various operations. According to Accenture (2024), AI technologies have the potential to transform brand creativity and communication by bringing innovative insights and tools to develop personalised, engaging experiences that align with consumers.

There are many potential uses of AI technologies in brand communication. These are the strengths and capabilities of AI that can be used in distinct areas of marketing such as in decision making, positioning, brand storytelling, customer services, personalisation, content creation, creative collaboration tools, and in predictive analytics (Ameen et al, 2022). Currently, a noteworthy challenge is to solve and understand large amounts of data, let alone transform it into valuable consumer insights, thereby guiding brand managers and marketing professionals to use AI for assistance (Agersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020).

Despite the fact that intuitive tasks such as creativity are assumed to remain the responsibilities of humans even in the future, AI also possesses creative potential, or at least the potential to be an instrument for creativity (Boni, 2021). According to Yu (2020), computer and information technology has become a significant tool in marketing and brand management. The author further argues that AI applications not only impact the implementation and formulation of a brand management strategy, as they also become important elements to dictate the brand competitive advantage.

Davenport et al. (2019) note that AI offers opportunities to increase revenues and decrease costs through the automation of more simple marketing activities. However, the execution of AI also organisations of risks and challenges that require to be recognised by companies (Agersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020). There are multiple applications of AI such as AI assistants, ChatGPT, contana, and copilot that can help with optimising performance, strategic planning, optimising communication efforts on various media and giving consumers a personalised experience of the brand (Agersborg, Mansonand Roth, 2020). Borrowing from the principles of TCD and the medium theory, brand strategists can use AI technologies to positively leverage a brands' identity and take advantage of the ever-changing competitive market.

3.2 Effectiveness of human-ai collaboration in enhancing brand communication

Hybrid intelligence, also considered as human AI collaboration, is a notion that merges the abilities of both artificial intelligence and human intelligence to attain significant results than either could reach alone (Petrescu and Krishen, 2023). Co-creativity can be described as a creative activity in which at least one individual and one AI agent

interact with each other, responding to each other's actions while working on a creative task (Karimi, et al., 2018). Kolla and Kumar (2019) point out that human-AI collaboration is useful for understanding the customer emotions which AI on its own cannot achieve. The authors further state that AI and human intelligence can achieve marketing and creative tasks for which they have relative strengths at different levels.

Petrescu and Krishen (2023) suggest that AI can analyse customer data, preferences, and behaviours to offer valuable information, while human judgment is essential for crafting pertinent and engaging content, offers, and interactions. This combination enables a more personalised and customised approach to marketing and creative branding (Petrescu and Kristen, 2023). Additionally, hybrid intelligence enhances analytics and campaign management. AI can handle automation, optimise decisions, and generate insights, while human expertise remains vital for strategy development, result interpretation, and decision-making. This collaboration pilots more effective and efficient campaign management (Petrescu and Krishen, 2023).

Machine partnerships seem to offer a considerable enhancement to team collaboration. However, the feasibility of teams often comes into question, prompting an exploration of the necessary characteristics for effective human-machine collaboration. Mahmood (2022) suggests that as AI technology advances, robots are increasingly capable of independent decision-making, hence influencing various aspects of the decision-making processes. This underscores the potential for AI to either entirely replace, enhance, or supplement human decision-making. The optimal approach involves merging the logical capabilities of machines with the intuitive faculties of humans. Therefore, the individuals making decisions alongside AI must continually update their understanding of AI and hone their analytical abilities.

McDermott (2017) highlights the necessity for machines to gain human trust as autonomous technologies progress, emphasising the ongoing need for human oversight. Mahmood (2022) elaborates that the successful collaboration between humans and AI requires transparency from machines and consistent interaction with humans to adapt to changes in the environment. At various stages of technological advancement, human intervention is crucial for adjusting system objectives. Madni and Madni (2018, as cited in Petrescu & Krishen, 2023) stress the importance of

addressing factors such as knowledge sharing, joint performance, task delegation, consultation, accessibility, and sustaining collaborative activities between humans and AI when designing adaptive collaboration models.

3.3 Benefits of artificial intelligence technologies in brand communication

The adoption of AI technologies is important for brand communication as it will allow brands to stand a chance to be noticed (Velykyte, 2023). There are benefits of AI that can be used to leverage brands in many ways. AI can help brands to produce a more structured customer service that strengthens the consumers' perceptions and relationships with brands. Furthermore, it can allow brands to develop a better understanding of the consumers (Abersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020). AI has the potential to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of the marketing team, its managers, and the entire organisation (Iskel, 2022).

Senyapar (2024) points out that one of the most important contributions of AI in marketing is its strength to personalise customer experience. This simply means that AI allows brands to design personalised contents by leveraging data to tailor services, products, or content to individual preferences. Consequently, this strengthens customer loyalty and satisfaction. AI plays a very important role in understanding and predicting market trends (Iskel, 2022). The author argues that AI's predictive abilities are a remarkable shift for marketing professionals and brand strategists from reactive marketing to a proactive approach.

3.4 Challenges of artificial intelligence technologies in brand communication

In AI, communication and marketing academia, there is not enough discussion on what the benefits and challenges of AI are in the field of marketing and communication (Nurm, 2019). The author argues that there are discussions around this topic, however, they are in the popular sciences. Marketing and communication are also fields where creativity and innovation play a significant function. Iskel (2022) highlights that if the marketing department is not equipped with the right capabilities to detect marketing trends, it is likely to generate profitable growth.

There are several challenges that come with integrating AI technologies in brand communication. Senyapar (2024) points out that there will be an increased demand

for ethical practice and transparency in marketing once AI technologies are integrated in brand communication and consumers are aware of how their information is utilised. Therefore, brands and marketing professionals must include clear communication about AI to guarantee that customer information is handled responsibly. Another challenge of AI technologies in brand communication is dependency on data. Senyapar (2024) notes that consumer data will increasingly grow posing serious challenges of data management.

Cost and resource constraints are other challenges that come with integrating AI technologies in brand creativity. The implementation of AI technologies into brand communication demands noteworthy investments in talent acquisition, technology infrastructure, ongoing training, and development (Abersborg, Manson and Roth, 2020). Small and medium-sized brands, in particular, may encounter challenges in allocating resources to AI projects during competitive priorities. Nurm (2019) highlights that with the prevalence of AI, organisations will be challenged when it comes to quality control. AI-systems lack creativity, nuance, and emotions that human-generated contents possess. Consequently, this demands constant and careful intervention and monitoring. Moreover, it will be difficult for brands to control these machines if they are programmed to act with autonomy.

One of the foremost challenges of AI technologies in brand communication is ethical considerations. Ethical standards will be more challenged especially as AI technologies are getting more autonomous and complex, and they can also present bias (Vives, 2023). Therefore, brands should proactively address and avert bias to make sure ethical and inclusive creative outputs. Finally, the effective integration of AI technologies in brand communication demands an effective and close collaboration between human and AI technologies. This collaboration will potentially leverage brands and gain competitive advantage.

3.5 Strategies for enhancing human-ai collaboration in brand communication

Companies are increasingly incorporating AI technologies into operations (Wilson & Daughtery, 2018). Accenture's (2018) report indicates that while some tasks will be exclusively handled by either individuals or AI, the majority of upcoming roles will involve collaborative efforts between machines and humans. Accenture (2018)

identifies natural, high-level intelligence as crucial for fostering the growth of human/machine collaboration, drawing from extensive research aimed at enhancing human capital. Nearly half of the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) surveyed in Accenture's (2018) study identified the widening skills gap as one of the top three factors influencing their employment strategies. There exists a notable disparity in perspectives between workers and corporate executives regarding this skills gap. To bridge this gap and reconcile differences, Accenture (2018) suggests in its study that employers and workers engage in various collaborative approaches to expedite the implementation and development of essential skills, training and education necessary for human-AI collaboration, thereby gaining a competitive advantage.

To enhance human-AI collaboration in brand communication requires elaborating strategies that leverage the strengths of both AI technologies and humans while alleviating respective limitations. In their research, Wilson and Daugherty (2018) found out that organisations or brands achieve the most remarkable performance improvements when humans and AI work together. This collaborative intelligence actively improves each other's complementary strengths such as teamwork, leadership, creativity, and social skills for the former, and speed, scalability, and quantitative capabilities for the latter. Holm, Hain, Jurowetzki and Lorenz (2023) argue that to successfully augment AI, AI technologies can improve what humans do best and recreate business processes to support the partnership. There is evidence to this. In 2018, Discovery bank reported that the use of AI technologies in enhancing the investment process allowed financial advisers and fund managers to provide better results for their clients.

According to Wilson and Daugherty (2018), individuals (brands and organisations) need to perform three significant roles. This includes training machines to execute certain tasks, explaining the outcomes of those tasks particularly when they are controversial, and sustaining the responsible use of machines to avert robots from harming humans. Similarly, Fuller et al. (2020) weigh that to attain full potential of AI, brands and organisations must reshape the workforce, reinvent work, and prepare workers.

3.5.1 Education or training for human-AI collaboration

The goal of AI creativity is to improve human creativity (Ameen et al., 2023). Fuller et al. (2022) point out that understanding how to handle innovation is crucial, particularly when innovation is important for competitive advantage and corporate growth. Elfa and Dawood (2023) highlight that the creative sector requires significantly different levels of innovation and skill sets compared to routine behaviours. Looking at employee skills being far behind AI, it can be deduced that there is a need for education and training. It was found that only 3% of banking institutions are investing in re-training employees to get them ready for the AI workplace (Morandini, Fraboni, De Angelis and Puzzo, 2023). Thus, there is a need to retrain current employees because of rapidly changing technology.

Fuller et al. (2022) suggest that attracting the right individuals with the required mindset and skills is important for every innovative organisation. Moreover, AI-based innovation projects demand individuals with appropriate sets of expertise and skills. Training should aim for potential AI adopters (marketing professionals, brand managers and organisations) with a more technical background and employees at a large scale. When considering the foundations of TCD, some employees may be resistant to innovative change. Thus, it is significant for brands or organisations to include training and educational resources for all employees to fully benefit from innovation.

Providing training and educational resources allows marketing professionals and brand managers (including other employees) to understand AI technologies and how to incorporate them in work. This comprises of teaching them how to make use of AI-powered tools, interpret AI generated insights and collaborate with AI-systems effectively. Additionally, Wilson and Daugherty (2018) highlight that it is necessary to train AI technologies how to carry out work they were created to do. They will also be taught how best to engage or collaborate with humans. Within this collaborative intelligence, AI agents will act as human assistants by supporting and extending human creativity, such as the case of ChatGPT and contana (Houssemand & Gubernico, 2023).

3.5.2 Explainability in human-AI collaboration

AI systems often need experts in a certain field to explain behaviours to users (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). In human-AI collaboration, explainability is the ability to interpret and understand the recommendations and decisions made by AI technologies. It includes transparency and clarity regarding how AI systems formulate conclusions, generate content, or provide insights (Theis, Jentzch, Deligiannaki, Berro, Raul & Bruder, 2023). The authors assert that explainability plays a significant role in human-AI collaboration, as it empowers professionals or humans to improve the potential of AI technologies effectively while guaranteeing that AI-driven solutions align with a brand's identity, objectives, values, and ethical standards.

Theis et al. (2023) say that when it comes to human-AI collaboration in brand communication, explainability is important for many reasons. The first reason being to build trust. Marketing professionals and brand managers are likely to trust and adopt AI technologies as significant collaborators only when they learn how AI technologies work and how they can contribute to the creative process. In TCD, Festinger (1957) refers to this as seeking new information in modes of resolution of dissonance. The other reasons are improvement and learning. Explainability enables improvement and learning by allowing marketing professionals and brands to know how AI tools work and how they can leverage them more effectively.

Ethical implications are very important when it comes to human-AI collaboration. Theis et al. (2023) argue that it is important for marketing professionals and organisations to make sure that AI-generated recommendations and contents align with ethical standards by not causing harmful biases or misinformation. Furthermore, when considering reasoning or explanations behind AI-driven solutions, marketing professionals can alleviate risks and ensure responsible use of AI technologies.

3.5.3 Sustainability in human-AI collaboration

Besides having individuals who can explain AI outcomes or recommendations, brands and organisations must have “sustainers” who are the employees who constantly work to make sure that AI systems are working safely, properly, and responsibly (Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). The authors note that sustainers are different types of experts who are usually considered as safety engineers. Their emphasis is on foreseeing and

preventing damages that can be caused by AI systems. The authors further point out that sustainers or these experts can also revise the analysis conducted by explainers (explainability) when AI causes damage. Other types of sustainers must ensure that the AI systems used by the brands or the organisation are aligned with ethical standards.

3.6 Conclusion

Literature proved that AI is a catalyst which will reinforce human creativity in the field of marketing and communication. Research demonstrated that there are many potential uses of AI technologies in brand communication, such as in decision-making, positioning of brands, storytelling, customer services, personalisation, content creation, and in the increase of revenues or profit. It was also found that for human-AI collaboration in brand communication to be effective, there is a need for both humans and AI to leverage each other's strengths and capabilities. This collaboration requires transparency from AI technologies and consistent interactions with humans for adaptability purposes and changes in the environment.

From the literature, the benefits, and challenges of integrating AI technologies in brand communication were found. One of the greatest benefits includes personalisation of customer experience which will help overcome the cognitive dissonance. When it comes to challenges, ethical practice and transparency pose the biggest challenges as customer information will be involved and used. Literature also points out that cost and resource constraints will be challenges as AI technologies require ongoing maintenance, development, and training.

For an effective and successful collaboration between humans and AI, organisations have to implement certain strategies that will allow them to benefit from this innovation. This includes leveraging both humans (employees) through educational programmes and training AI technologies to carry tasks and collaborate effectively. Furthermore, implementing explainability assists in building trust between consumers and brands. Lastly, there is a need for sustainability in this collaboration, to prevent the damages that can be caused by AI systems. The following chapter, methodology, details the specific paradigm, population of the study, sampling methods, data collection and data analysis used to address the research gap identified in this review.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Research methodology involves the structured approach of strategising, implementing, and assessing scientific research. It encompasses the methods, techniques, and instruments used by researchers to explore a particular topic or inquiry and to collect pertinent data (Maree, 2019). The researcher's paradigm significantly impacts the research's nature, serving as the perspective through which they perceive the world, a culmination of their beliefs and the genuine purpose driving the research.

This chapter delves into the methodology used in the research. Initially, it outlines the research paradigm using the research onion framework proposed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009). Following the sequential structure delineated by the research onion, the first segment addresses the research philosophy (paradigm) used for the study. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the research approach utilised in the study. Finally, it elucidates the methods employed for collecting and analysing qualitative data for the research.

4.2 Research paradigm

Researchers hold their perspectives on the nature of knowledge and reality, which influence their thinking, beliefs, assumptions about society and themselves, and their perception of the world. The framework, referred to as a paradigm by social scientists (Nnachi, 2021), constitutes a set of beliefs or assumptions about fundamental aspects of reality, giving rise to a specific worldview (Maree, 2019). Moreover, a paradigm encompasses a coherent system of interconnected practices and thoughts that delineate the essence of researchers' inquiries, incorporating three fundamental dimensions or assumptions. These dimensions comprise of ontology, which examines the nature of the reality under scrutiny and what aspects are worth knowing; epistemology, which delves into the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and the subject of inquiry; and methodology, which delineates the

practical approach through which the researcher may investigate what they deem knowable (Blanche, Durrhein & Painter, 2006). As noted by Kivunja and Kiyuni (2017), a paradigm thus carries important implications for every decision made throughout the research process.

In research, there are three dominant paradigms mainly, positivism, interpretivism and critical realism (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). The positivist paradigm focuses on the discovery of causal relationships with the aim to predict and control events. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on describing and understanding meaningful social actions and experiences. The critical realist paradigm seeks to empower people with the aim to change society radically. This study, however, followed the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm seeks to study and understand the world as it is experienced by others. Interpretivists assert that social sciences research should describe and study meaningful social actions (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). This study could be considered meaningful as it attempted to explore the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication.

Nnachi (2021) points out that this paradigm lies on the basis that knowledge comes from individuals' perceptions and thus research ought to consider how human subjects perceive the world. Interpretivists assert that human beings and objects cannot be examined in the same way, as individuals are prone to change and the environment, they operate in influences them (Payton, 2021). In this study, the environment in which businesses or brands operate is subject to constant change and experiences different innovations or changes which influence organisations' reactions and next steps. According to Mungai (2019), the interpretivist paradigm emphasises the role humans play as social actors. As a result, the studies that use interpretivism tend to conduct in-depth qualitative insights on small samples.

Ontology from an interpretivist's viewpoint is a meaningful reality that is created in and out of interaction between humans and their world and it is established and transmitted in social context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mungai, 2019). This position rejects the notion of one universal truth and instead acknowledges that individuals experience and interpret reality differently depending on their social roles, professional contexts, and lived experiences. In the context of this study, human-AI collaboration in brand

communication could not be understood as a uniform or technologically deterministic process. Brand strategists do not engage with generative AI in identical ways; instead, their realities are shaped by factors such as professional experience, organisational culture, ethical beliefs, creative identity, and perceived risks associated with AI use. As argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2018), interpretivist ontology is particularly suited to studies that seek to understand how professionals construct meaning around emerging technologies rather than measuring technological performance itself.

Regarding what constitutes knowledge, interpretivism's epistemological assumption suggests that common-sense knowledge is valuable as it helps guide individuals in their everyday lives (Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel, 2017). According to this perspective, to comprehend people's behaviour, it is essential to know what they view common sense. This understanding could be achieved by examining the attitudes of brand strategists towards human-AI collaboration in brand communication. As noted by Schwandt (2015), interpretivist epistemology prioritises understanding meaning rather than explaining casual relationships. This epistemological stance is particularly appropriate for research exploring attitudes, perceptions, concerns, and professional sense-making, which are inherently interpretive phenomena.

The interpretivist metatheoretical assumption necessitates the use of theory as theories help to acquire an in-depth understanding of other people's realities (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). To acquire an in-depth understanding of the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, the researcher used the symbolic convergence theory and the medium theory. Scotland (2012) defines a methodology as an articulated and informed approach to production. From the aforementioned approach, the study adopted a qualitative methodology. From the interpretive methodology, Rehman and Alharti (2016) note that methodology directs a researcher in deciding what type of data and data collection tools are suitable for the purpose of a study. Therefore, using the interpretive methodology helped the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the study by interviewing brand strategists who were the appropriate tools or variables.

4.2.1 Strengths of the paradigm

One of the primary strengths of this paradigm is its capacity for deep contextual insight. Because interpretivist research focusses on lived experience and meaning rather than surface observation or statistical relationships, it is particularly effective in uncovering how individuals interpret complex and social phenomena (Sithole, 2025). This depth of understanding is especially valuable in studies of professional practice, culture and communication, where behaviour is shaped by subjective interpretation and contextual factors. In the context of this study, this paradigm enables a nuanced exploration of how brand strategists make sense of human-AI collaboration within their professional environments, rather than treating attitudes towards AI as fixed or measurable variables.

This paradigm also supports methodological flexibility and strong philosophical alignment between epistemology and method. Sithole (2025) argues that the use of open-ended interviews, thematic analysis, and narrative approaches allows researchers to remain responsive to emergent insights and participant meaning-making, which is essential when examining emerging or under-theorised phenomena. This flexibility facilitates the production of rich, nuanced accounts that capture complexity and depth beyond the reach of purely quantitative approaches (Liam, 2025).

4.2.2 Limitations of the paradigm

Despite its analytical strengths, interpretivism is frequently critiqued for its limited generalizability. Because interpretivist studies typically rely on small, context-specific samples, their findings cannot be readily extended to broader populations, which can be problematic when wider theoretical or policy implications are expected (Kevin Chow, 2020). The prioritisation of the depth over breadth means that insights are deeply situated within particular social and professional contexts, and this contextual specificity is sometimes interpreted by positivist-oriented audiences as weak external validity rather than as an intentional epistemological choice.

This paradigm is also vulnerable to concerns around researcher subjectivity, structural blindness, and practical feasibility. Since the researcher plays an active role in interpreting meaning, there is an inherent risk that findings may reflect the researcher's assumptions unless reflexivity is applied rigorously and transparently (Pervin &

Mokhtar, 2022). In addition, critics argue that interpretivist research can underemphasize broader social structures and power relations, such as institutional hierarchies or technological bias, by focusing primarily on meaning-making (Academic writing UK, 2024). Finally, the approach is often time-and resource intensive, requiring sustained engagement and iterative analysis, which can pose practical challenges in terms of feasibility and researcher capacity, particularly in studies within limited timeframes or access constraints (Academic Writing UK, 2024).

4.3 Research approach

The research approach is a framework used for activities that acts as a bridge between the research questions and the execution of the research (Blanche et al., 2006). There are several research methods utilised in social research which are qualitative, quantitative, and multi-method research or mixed methods research (Maree, 2019). The difference between the qualitative and quantitative research approaches is based on the choice, collection, analysis, and interpretation of the information that will serve as evidence (Payton, 2021). The qualitative approach or method presents interpretive data, while the quantitative methods present statistical or numerical data (Nnachi, 2019). On the other hand, the mixed-method combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. This study adopted a qualitative method.

Qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meaning associated with phenomena (Bezuidenhout and Strydom, 2021). It is convenient to adopt qualitative research methods when the researcher aims to scrutinise unique characteristics, properties, values or needs to improve understanding (Werth, 2019). Moreover, Payton (2021) notes that researchers make use of the qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding and analysis of descriptive questions. In a bid to achieve the various objectives of this study, the researcher adopted the qualitative research approach.

In qualitative research, the researchers collect data in a natural manner, such as by engaging directly to participants after designing and creating semi-structured, open-ended questions. Thus, the researchers have a very essential part to play in qualitative research (Werth, 2019). Payton (2021) notes that qualitative research is more appropriate for focusing on human and organisational operations and mirrors the human experience. Therefore, the qualitative method was the most suitable approach

to better understand the attitudes brand strategists have about the collaboration between human and artificial intelligence in brand communication because of its understanding and deeper discovery level.

4.3.1 Tenets of the research approach

A central tenet of qualitative research under interpretivism is the recognition of the researcher as an active participant in the knowledge-production process rather than a detached observer (Payton, 2021). Interpretivist inquiry explicitly acknowledges that data are co-constructed through interaction between the researcher and participants, making reflexivity a methodological necessity rather than a limitation (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Sithole, 2025). Reflexive engagement with the researcher's assumptions, positionality, and interpretive lens enhances analytical transparency and strengthens the credibility of findings (Sithole, 2025). In this study, reflexivity was particularly important given the interpretive nature of exploring brand strategists' attitudes toward generative AI, where professional identity, expertise, and prior beliefs shape both participant responses and analytical interpretation.

Qualitative research informed by interpretivism further emphasizes depth, context, and richness of data over numerical representation or statistical generalisation (Payton, 2021). Rather than aiming for generalisability in the positivist sense, interpretivist qualitative research seeks analytic and theoretical transferability by generating deep, contextually grounded insight that insights that may resonate with similar professionals (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2024; Lim, 2025; Yin, 2018). This approach aligned with the exploratory nature of the present study, which sought to understand how brand strategists construct meaning around human-AI collaboration with specific organisational and communicative contexts.

4.4 Research design

The research design focuses on the complete strategy applied to address research questions (Maree, 2019). Social research can hold several aims. Amongst the most known and useful motives are exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Maree, 2019; Babbie, 2011; Blanche et al., 2006). Exploratory research is considered as a study that seeks to explore or address a phenomenon. Its aim is to recognise key notions,

confirm assumptions, or identify if the research problem has repercussions, by allowing the researcher to gain new insights and explore unknown areas (Blanche et al., 2006; du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2019). Descriptive research has purpose to explain phenomena, while explanatory research aims to give causal explanations of phenomena (Blanche et al., 2006; Babbie, 2011). This research focused on the use of artificial intelligence, as it implicated an exploration, analysis, and evaluation of the organisations' use of AI technologies. Thus, exploratory research was the suitable research design for this study given the few participants and the complexity of the topic under investigation.

Exploratory research is viewed as a study that seeks to explore or address a phenomenon (Singh, 2021). Benzuidenhout and Davis (2021, as cited in Du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2021) state that exploratory research aims to find key elements, confirm assumptions, and find if the research problem has repercussions, by allowing the researcher to gain new insights and explore unknown areas. This study adopted an exploratory research design to explore the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, as this is an unknown area. This approach is recognised for its ability to rigorously test credibility and innovation through its reliance on empirical evidence (Iskel, 2022).

There are two types of reasoning in research, namely inductive and deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning starts from a general claim to a narrow claim and to a specific conclusion, while inductive reasoning begins from the specific to the general and applies findings to more abstract and broad theoretical constructs (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). The researcher adopted a deductive line of reasoning to explore the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication by using the theory of cognitive dissonance and the medium theory as they have a general assumption and attempted to reduce the subject of artificial intelligence in enhancement of communication processes.

When it comes to study designs, there are two types, a cross-sectional design, and a longitudinal design. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021) state that a cross-sectional study aims to develop an overall idea of a phenomenon by gathering information from many people at a single point of time, while a longitudinal study is adopted when there is a

need to gather factual information on a continual basis. This study adopted a cross-sectional study because the study was done at a single point in time over a short period of time where data was gathered through semi-structured interviews.

4.5 Population of the study

A study population is described as a cluster of the element of a study (individuals or artefacts) from which a sampling unit is selected (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). Onyinye (2019) states that a study population is also considered as the totality of members who have met the requirements of the research design. For this study, brand strategists were the population of the study. This population was suitable because of their knowledge and expertise in working with AI, which helped achieve the aim of the study.

4.5.1 Unit of analysis

Babbie (2011) defines a unit of analysis as the 'what or whom' that is being investigated. Moreover, a unit of analysis is considered as the smallest entity under observation (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). The unit of analysis in this study was people because of their knowledge and experience in using AI and the researcher's need to compile primary information as this is an area that has not been extensively studied. Casteel and Bridier (2021) note that choosing a suitable unit of analysis is crucial as it can affect the choice of sampling elements and methods, the sample size and the data collection and analysis methods.

The study chose brand strategists due to their principal role in shaping brand narratives and guaranteeing consistency across all communication channels. While marketing strategists and brand managers may also take part in brand messaging, brand strategists are uniquely positioned at the junction of market positioning, creative development, and strategic oversight, thereby making their attitudes towards AI particularly influential.

4.5.2 Population parameters

Population parameters consider all shared features of a number of individuals of the research population (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). This can, therefore, look at specific features, size and nature of the population. For this study, the population parameters

consisted of brand strategists who held a role directly involving brand communication strategy or had exposure to or experience using generative AI tools in their work, with a minimum of one year experience, and with a professional qualification in marketing, communication, or business to ensure that they had the necessary theoretical grasp of the concepts in the study. The researcher used participants who met these criteria because they had proficient and proven knowledge about AI technologies to answer the overarching research question. Those who were not directly involved in brand messaging or did not have any exposure to AI tools were excluded.

4.5.3 Target population

A target population is viewed as the specific bounded group of potential participants that meets the designated set of criteria to achieve the purpose of a research study (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). For this research study, the target population consisted of brand strategists in South Africa. The researcher selected these target populations because they were credible and helpful to the research especially when it came to the understanding of AI technologies in enhancing communication processes.

4.5.4 Accessible population

An accessible population refers to the choosing of the population that the researcher can reach and that can be included in the study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). The accessible population was brand strategists in Pretoria. While the initial choice was influenced by time and financial constraints, the selection is justified by the vibrancy of the advertising and corporate communication sector in the province of Gauteng. Pretoria serves as a central hub for numerous national and international agencies, providing a dense and relevant context for studying AI interaction. Although the researcher conducted interviews via Zoom, focusing on this specific geographical hub allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the professional culture and systemic pressures such as tight client deadlines and high-pressure environments that characterize this specific market.

4.6 Sampling

Sampling involves selecting research participants from a larger population, which entails decisions regarding which settings, individuals, and social processes to

observe (Blanche et al., 2006). Onyinye (2021) highlights sampling as the process of identifying a small subset of the population to evaluate the characteristics of the broader population. In research, sampling methods are typically categorised into two types: non-probability and probability sampling. Probability sampling methods adhere to basis of randomness and probability theory, whereas non-probability methods do not (Maree, 2019). For the purpose of this study, non-probability sampling was utilised.

Non-probability sampling is preferred when identifying the entire population is impractical (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). This approach was suitable for the current study because the researcher selected a sample that aligned with the population parameters based on their judgement.

4.6.1 Sampling method

Purposive and snowball sampling methods which are non-probability sampling techniques were used in this study. The possibility of selecting participants due to availability and accessibility was considered when deciding for the relevant sampling method used in this study. To choose participants for this study, the researcher used purposive and snowball sampling. Payton (2021) notes that researchers adopt a purposive sampling method to successfully select participants to obtain a more detailed perception into the study's phenomena. Thus, the researcher purposefully set the parameters (characteristics) that the participants needed when taking part in this study. On the other hand, snowball sampling uses referrals to reduce the sample size (Pascoe, 2021). The snowball sampling technique was appropriate in this study because of its flexibility and low-cost. Additionally, this sampling technique was used when it was obvious that the researcher needed to ask selected participants if they could assist in referring other brand strategists which increased the sample size. The difficulty the researcher encountered in recruiting brand strategists is discussed in the next section.

The purposive sampling technique was relevant for this study in choosing brand strategists with proven and proficient AI technologies knowledge to answer the overarching research questions. These sampling methods were suitable due to the sector where these professionals are notorious workaholics with extremely tight

schedules. The researcher used of LinkedIn and Google search to look for brand strategists working in Pretoria, holding a role directly involving brand communication strategy, and had exposure to or experience using generative AI tools in their work, with a professional qualification in marketing and with a minimum of one year experience. After finding the relevant participants, the researcher chose participants who met the criteria and waited for ethical clearance before reaching out to them. Furthermore, these methods were essential given the difficulty of getting brand strategists to sit down for one-on-one sessions as many potential participants frequently cancel or failed to arrive for scheduled meetings due to professional pressures and deadlines.

4.6.2 Sample size

A sample size is defined as a particular set of individuals who are chosen from a population (Gravetter & Forzaro, 2015). In qualitative research, a sample size is referred to as the number of participants needed to address a research problem (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). To reach the purpose of the research, and to explore the brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, the researcher aimed to interview eight participants or to stop when data saturation was reached. Data saturation refers to the point in the research process when there is no new information found in the data collection phase (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017; Pascoe, 2021). This sample size allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of the topic.

A sample of six brand strategists was selected through voluntary participation. Of these brand strategists, two women and four men were selected and interviewed in this study. This was due to several reasons such as time limitations that the researcher faced because of the time given by the institution to conduct the research and to complete the degree. Another reason was due to the fact that some identified participants did not meet some criteria required to participate in the study. The researcher also faced challenges such as the lack of response from some participants after being contacted or reached out to.

4.7 Data collection

Data collection is the systematic collecting of information and evidence from diverse sources to address research questions or objectives (Maree, 2019). It is an essential and methodical step in research, aimed at acquiring pertinent data for analysis to derive insights and conclusions. Collecting data stands as a significant step in any research endeavour (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). This importance stems from the fact that inaccurately gathered data can yield invalid outcomes and conclusions. Qualitative interviews act as a means for researchers to delve into, gather, and reinterpret events from the perspectives of participants, which are aspects that are often inaccessible through quantitative research methods (Payton, 2021). Similarly, Faryadi (2019) emphasises that data collection constitutes a comprehensive procedure including the collection, measurement, and interpretation of data with the goal of uncovering answers to research questions.

Given the nature of the study, a qualitative data collection approach was adopted. Kabir (2016) asserts that qualitative data collection methods are instrumental in evaluation, as they provide valuable insights to comprehend the procedures underlying observed outcomes and to examine changes in individuals' perceptions of their well-being. Therefore, employing this method in the present study enabled the researcher to attain a profound understanding of the subject matter based on the participants' perspectives through the utilisation of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection instrument.

4.7.1 Data Instruments

According to Maree (2019), a semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method where the interviewer asks open-ended questions but retains the flexibility to dig deeper into responses or explore new topics as needed. The author notes that this approach allows researchers to prepare open-ended questions in advance while also adapting them as the interview progresses, thus making the process both efficient and adaptable. For this study, semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method. This approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain a deeper understanding of the subjective meanings and personal perspectives of brand strategists, as well as provided a detailed exploration of the topic (Du Plooy-

Cilliers, 2021). Additionally, it facilitated two-way communication, aiding in the interpretation of both verbal and non-verbal feedback.

The first process in the data collection was obtaining ethical clearance from the institution. Once ethical clearance was obtained from the school, the researcher used LinkedIn (which is a social media platform for professionals) to look for brand strategists who were suitable for the study based on the established parameters or criteria. The researcher initially identified and contacted the brand strategists who met the criteria, and explained to them the aim of the research, what it would involve, and gave them a consent form to sign once they approved (see Annexure B on page 85).

From the above process, 14 participants were identified, but only a few accepted. To address the challenge, the researcher asked the initially selected participants for referrals of other interested brand strategists. This process successfully yielded six final participants (two women and four men). The researcher emphasized that their involvement was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. While acknowledging that the “first come, first serve” selection basis limited the sample’s diversity, the inclusion of both male and female brand strategists was used to provide a satisfactory level of diversity in responses for the study’s aim. entirely voluntary and that any time during the process they were free to leave if they no longer wanted to participate. However, as previously mentioned, the aim of the study was not to generalise findings to a broader context, but rather to explore the attitudes that brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication.

After approval, a consent form was sent and signed by each participant. After receiving signed forms, the researcher scheduled individual interviews with each participant based on their availability (specified places, times, days, and dates) and how they preferred the interviews (face-to-face or via zoom). The researcher conducted and recorded each interview through Zoom and also took notes in a journal. Zoom Video Communications is a platform commonly utilised for video and audio conferencing (Hurst, 2020, as cited in Payton, 2021). Payton (2021) notes that semi-structured interviews are significant in qualitative study.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were asked with the intent of recalling answers that were meaningful and exploratory in nature. Open ended

questions allow participants to share and elucidate their knowledge and experiences in their own perspectives and words (Nnachi, 2021; Werth, 2020). A total of 12 open-ended questions were created in line with the research objectives in correlation with literature. The questions began from demographic information and ended up with specific to general questions, such as: What types of AI tools or platforms do you currently use in your strategies? Can you describe their main functions and purposes? What are your initial impressions of AI technologies in the context of brand communication? Do you see them as more of an opportunity or a challenge? These questions were asked to the participants with the objective to explore the advantages and disadvantages that brand strategists associate with the use of generative AI in the communication processes. All the interview questions can be found on Annexure A on page 83.

On the day of the interviews, the researcher told participants about the topic of the study, as well as the purpose of the research and were guaranteed confidentiality and that they would not be hurt in any way, although these were mentioned in the consent form. A total of six participants were interviewed via zoom. When using zoom for interviews, the researcher was not able to interpret the whole-body language. The researcher was able to interpret the facial expressions or cues displayed by the participants which also contributed to the study. The interviews were conducted via Zoom due to the participants' busy schedule and mostly during lunch time. Each interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. The entire data collection process took two months.

4.8 Data analysis

According to Payton (2021), data analysis involves the interpretation of both explicit and implicit information collected, including observations, interviews, and the review of written and visual documents. For this study, a qualitative analysis method was adapted. Qualitative analysis entails the non-numerical assessment and interpretation of observations, targeted at uncovering underlying patterns and meanings of relationships (Babbie, 2011). Under the interpretive umbrella, various qualitative analytic traditions exist, such as the grounded theory, phenomenology, thematic analysis, semiotic analysis, and conversational analysis (Blanche et al., 2006).

Thematic analysis is a method applied to discover, examine, and present patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2021). It entails systematically arranging and interpreting textual or visual data to reveal significant themes that reflect the fundamental ideas, beliefs, or experiences of participants (Nnachi, 2021).

Thematic analysis aims to depict the common themes within gathered data and analyse the dataset for patterns (Nnachi, 2021). In qualitative research, this method aids in interpreting and understanding lengthy responses by condensing them into comparable content (Walsh, 2020). Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) contend that thematic analysis is valuable for analysing the perspectives of diverse research participants, highlighting differences and similarities, as well as uncovering unexpected insights. To attain the aims of this study, thematic analysis served as the chosen method for data analysis. This method of data analysis was deemed more suitable for this study as it facilitated the identification and exploration of subjective ideas and the interviewees' comprehension of the subject, aspects that may not be discernible through other analytical approaches.

The researcher did not have an existing system of pre-coding. Hence, the thematic analysis followed Brawn and Clarke's 2022 six steps framework to examine the data using the Nvivo12 software and also a manual analysis done by the researcher.

1. Familiarisation with data

The researcher began the analysis by converting all raw interview data (notes and recordings) into written digital text using an organized, systematic procedure. This transcription process made the data comprehensive and structured, helping the researcher to analyse it and gain a deeper understanding of the research topic (Naeem, Oxuem, Howell & Ranfagni, 2024).

2. Selection of key words

In this step, the intended analysis was broken down into basic coding (Naeem et al., 2024). The researcher defined these units as numbers, single word and short sentences to create more manageable content. The researcher then examined different concepts and ideas that were expressed in varied ways by the study participants.

3. Developing codes

This stage involved creating codes categories by grouping together similar and related coding units. A conceptual framework was used to assist with the data coding process. To name and label the code categories, the researcher used common characteristics found within the analysed text (Naeem et al., 2024). The study essentially grouped similar participants answers into specific categories, which the researcher then labelled to facilitate easier analysis and the identification of similar themes.

4. Theme development

Theme development involves critically examining the coded data to form overarching themes and subthemes. This is a fundamental process that groups codes that share similar meaning and criteria (Naeem et al., 2024). The researcher identified and analysed five themes and their corresponding subthemes (as referenced in Figure 2 on page 42).

5. Conceptualisation

Interpreting the data involves three steps (Naeem et al., 2024). Explaining the relationships found in data (e.g., the collaboration between humans and AI). The second step is considering extraneous information (any element mentioned by participants that any other elements that were not relevant to brand communication). Finally, accounting for factors that could influence results (e.g. a participant's illness affecting their answers).

6. Development of conceptual model

The process applied on analysing and interpreting the data should be done in a truthful, accurate and complete way (Naeem et al., 2024). The study's data was in digital format, and all that the researcher's final task was to formulate a complete, accurate, and truthful conclusion regarding the study. This conclusion determined whether the research question had been answered and if the research problem was solved.

4.8.1 Data analysis application

For the aim of this study, P1= Participant 1, P2= Participant 2, P3= Participant 3, P4= Participant 4, P5= Participant 5, and P6= Participant 6.

Below is an example of how the themes were developed from the findings.

Question 1: What types of AI tools or platforms do you currently use in your strategies?
Can you describe their main functions and purposes?

P1: “I mainly use **ChatGPT**. And I usually more often than not, like I’ll have an idea, not sure how to **articulate** it. So, I tend to use ChatGPT to help me **conceptualise the idea** in terms of ...in a **written** manner”.

P3: “Just like I said, you know, things that could have taken hours, or copy, for example, that could have taken you about four to five hours to write, I will **write** it to you **in a matter of seconds**. And that alone is something to upload”.

4.9 Trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. These are essential criteria for ensuring the rigour and validity of qualitative research studies (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). Here’s a breakdown of what each criterion entails:

Credibility assesses whether the researcher interpreted the participants’ data accurately. Interaction with participants helps ensure accurate interpretation by giving the researcher better insight participants’ experiences therefore boosting credibility (Koonin, 2021, as cited in du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021). The researcher was able to accurately interpret the data because interview recordings served as proof of all statements made.

Transferability looks at whether the findings can be applied to a similar study and give a similar result (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). In terms of this study, the researcher suggests that further studies can be carried out to explore the attitudes brand strategists have about human-AI collaboration in brand communication and to grow the body of knowledge in this area.

Dependability is the quality of the process used to interpret the data, including the different collection methods, analysis, and the theory produced (Koonin, 2021). The researcher presented all methodological steps clearly and dedicated time to transcribing and coding of data to ensure the findings were trustworthy and truthful.

Confirmability refers to whether the gathered data supports the researcher's interpretations and findings of the researcher's study (Koonin, 2021). To ensure confirmability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research so that other researchers could potentially replicate the process and find similar results. Additionally, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with credible participants.

4.10 Ethical considerations

Ethics refer to the principles and guidelines which the researchers must adhere to as they conduct research (Louw, 2021). High ethical standards were ensured by the researcher by implementing the following ethical codes: participation in the study was voluntary. Written consents were sent to inform participants as well as to get their approval when participating in the research. The respondents signed a consent form before they were exposed to the research instruments, and their right to withdraw from the study was communicated to them prior. The interview questions did not have any offensive or prejudicial language.

The researcher used confidentiality to help protect the identity of the participants and the sensitive information that they would give. The researcher ensured that the participants' identities, responses, and personal information were not made available and were not disclosed to anyone through the provided consent form. To guarantee the confidentiality of the participants' identity, the researcher replaced their names or any other related personal information by alphabetical letters or numbers such as P1 (Participant 1). Biassed questions were avoided to ensure that questions were easy for participants to understand. To properly and ethically acknowledge sources, the Harvard referencing style was used for all external works cited within the research. The researcher also took steps to make sure participants were comfortable during the interview. The researcher ensured that data gathered was used specifically for the purpose of this study only. The researcher also sought for an ethical clearance from

the institution in line with the policies regarding human subjects in research.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter focused on justifying the methodological steps that the researcher adopted to conduct the study. Qualitative methodologies were used as effective methods to determine how the chosen group of participants was ranked. This study used an exploratory design as the topic is an unknown area. The study applied non-probability purposive sampling and convenience sampling as the best suited sampling methods, along with semi-structured interviews as data collection methods and thematic analysis as a data analysis method. The study followed the ethical requirements by getting full consent from participants, as indicated in Annexure H on page 88. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were addressed too. The study's findings and analysis of data are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. This chapter presents the findings derived from research methodology and considerations discussed previously. The section is structured into three main parts: first, a discussion on the biographic and demographic information of the participants for context; second, a focus on the qualitative thematic analysis findings, highlighting brand strategists' perspectives from the literature review and how those perspectives align with human-AI collaboration in brand communication; and finally, a conclusion that provides recommendations for future research.

5.2 Demographic and biographic information

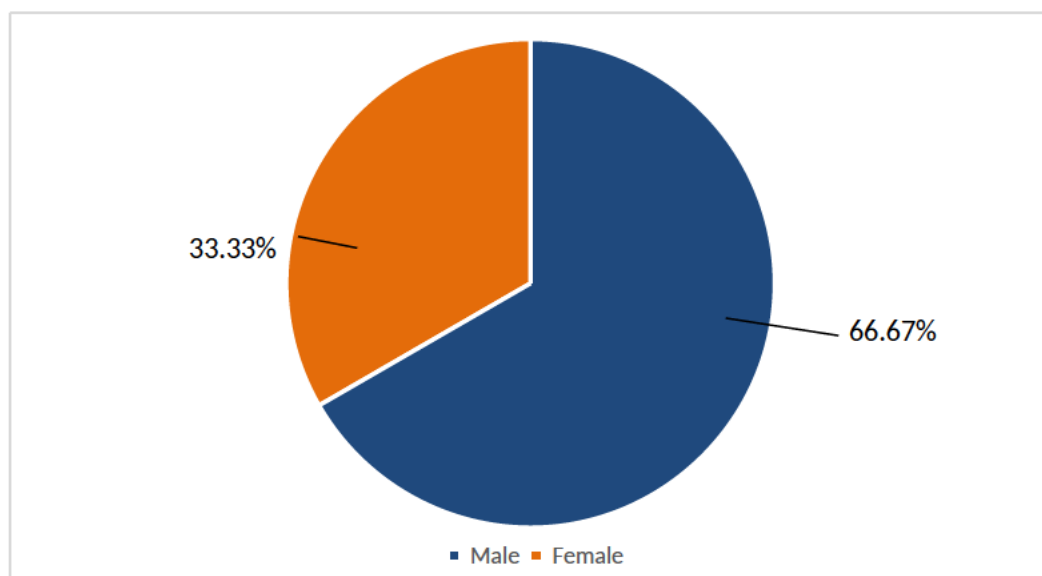
This section of the findings provides a high-level profile of the participants, detailing their years of experience, current industry and organizational roles, gender, and race distribution, which is further illustrated in the accompanying table, histogram, and pie charts. The research used semi-structured interviews with six participants. Regardless of the then current roles of some participants, they all met the research criteria (worked as brand strategists before). The interview notes were later transcribed, coded, categorized, and analysed by the researcher, both manually and using Nvivo 12 software. Table 1 presents specific details such as the qualifications, age, and titles of the participants.

The age, years of experience and position group findings as showed on Table1 show that the interview participants were between the ages of 25 and 35 years, with experience starting from two months to seven years. All the participants were possession of a BA qualification. Of the interviewed participants, the most common number of years of experience was one to two years, followed by seven years. This indicates that the majority of the participants were not new entrants into the working world, nor had the majority served lengthy working terms.

Table 1: Qualification, age, and titles of participants

Code	Qualification	Age Groups	Years of Experience	Title
P1	BA Hons in Strategic Brand Communication	25-35	1 year and 2 months	Marketing director
P2	BA in Strategic Brand Communication	25-35	2 months	Social media manager
P3	BA in Business Management	25-35	7 years	Founder & Brand Strategist
P4	BCom Honours	25-35	4 months	Brand strategist and coordinator
P5	BA Hons in Strategic Brand Management	25-35	2 years and 6 months	Junior brand Strategist
P6	BA Hons in Strategist Brand Management	25-35	1 year and 2 months	Mid-seight Brand Strategist

However, it is also important to note that the provided years of experience of some participants were based on the organisations that they were working in. The responses provided were based on the question: How long have you been working in the current organisation? Some participants had worked as brand strategists previously in other organisations. Such as the case of P2. While others stayed longer in the same organisation.

**Figure 1: Gender distribution of participants**

The majority of the participants were male, a fact that was considered when reviewing the results and extracting gender-specific insights. Appropriate ratios were applied during the analysis of responses from both male and female participants. The overall findings, however, were viewed through the lens of the male majority, which may have potentially skewed the results.

5.3 Process of qualitative findings

Interviews were achieved with six participants; some had worked as brand strategists in previous roles, while others were currently in position. A total of six interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks following ethical approval, with each interview lasting 30 to 45 minutes. An interview guide containing 12 questions was designed based on the research questions to ensure that all interviewees were asked similar questions. The collected data was transcribed and thematically analysed. Transcripts were then coded to identify recurring patterns and themes. The qualitative methods applied in this study successfully gathered that rich and in-depth information from the participants, which improved the understanding of the phenomenon and the transferability of the qualitative findings.

5.4 Presentation of findings

When it comes to presenting findings, it is all about presenting the collected data. This includes the researcher selecting quotes from participants that are most representative of the research findings (Maree, 2019). This section presents the findings that were gathered to achieve the purpose of this study which was to explore the brand strategists' perspectives about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. Semi-structured interviews were achieved with six participants. The six participants answered 12 open-ended questions relating to human-AI collaboration in brand communication that can be found in Annexure A. Below is a map of the thematic analysis.

5.4.1 The thematic map for the study

The gathered data was analysed using a thematic analysis with the support of a Nvivo 12 software program and a manual analysis done by the researcher. Based on similarities within the gathered data the following thematic map, as presented in Figures 3 and 4 below, was created to demonstrate the structure of the thematic

findings of the study.

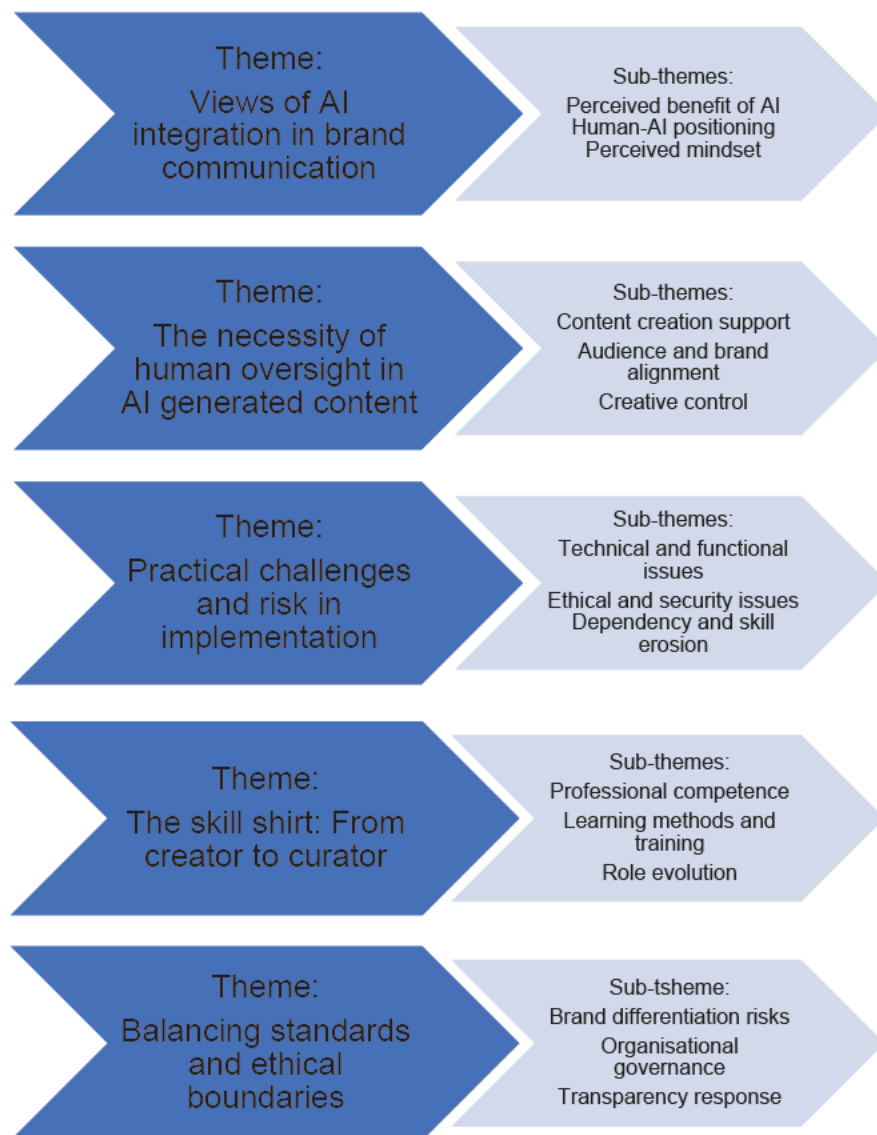


Figure 2: The thematic map for the study

Working within an interpretivist paradigm, analysis focuses on subjective experiences and the understanding of individuals (Blanche et al., 2006). The proposed paradigm underlined the importance of language as an object of study and how broader patterns of social meaning are encoded in language. The data in this study was analysed following Brawn and Clarke's 2022 framework of thematic data analysis.

When analysing the data, the researcher first transcribed the audio-recorded data, by

changing it into a means by which the research could start analysis. Throughout this process, the researcher ensured that all ethical criteria and issues were addressed. During the familiarisation step, the researcher read and reread the raw data with the purpose to check if the participants were saying the same thing, or to find the divergences or similarities within the participants' answers. Furthermore, the researcher looked for the meanings that the participants kept on bringing up.

From there, the researcher grouped recurring patterns or terms by designating them as keywords. Following this, codes and categories were then created to guide the inclusion and exclusion of data, ensuring the research remained focused. The next crucial step was developing and constantly refining themes. This involved a critical exploration of the properties and relationships between categories to uncover underlying meanings. Once the researcher was satisfied with the interpretation of the data, they proceeded to write the discussion section and formulate conclusions based on the analysed findings.

This section only presents the findings of the study. The next section addresses a thorough discussion of the findings in relation to the theories used and the literature review.

5.5 Theme 1: views of ai integration in brand communication

The thematic analysis revealed views of AI integration in brand communication as the theme emerged in Table 2 below.

The theme on views of AI integration in brand communication is presented in three sub-themes that elaborate brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. It is important to explore how these views contribute to brand strategists' use of AI technologies.

Table 2: A representation of views of AI integration in brand communication theme as per research questions 1 and 4.

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
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Efficiency and speed	Perceived benefits of AI	Views of AI integration in brand communication
Task support		
Enhanced productivity		
AI as a complementary tool	Human-AI positioning	
Support tool not replacement		
Fallback use		
Opportunity versus threat	Perceived mindset	
Strategic interest		

Sub-theme 1: Perceived benefits of AI

There are various benefits that are linked to the use of AI in brand communication. This ranges from conceptualisation of ideas, digital innovation, resources, and streamlining of many processes.

“Just like I said, you know, things that could have taken hours, or copy, for example, that could have taken you about four to five hours to write, I will write it to you in a matter of seconds. And that alone is something to applaud” P3.

“I mainly use ChatGPT. And I usually more often than not, like I’ll have an idea, not sure how to articulate it. So, I tend to use ChatGPT to help me conceptualise the idea in terms of ...in a written manner” P1.

These answers are supported and confirmed by other participants that using AI technologies has benefited their work in several ways.

Sub-theme 2: Human-AI positioning

The findings showed that the participants used different AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Gemini Pro, Dolly, Claude, Microsoft Copilot, and Canva AI for diverse purposes such as articulation, generating image, and copywriting. Some participants indicated that AI is a supplementary tool rather than the main creative engine. They described and positioned themselves as decision-makers, using AI for support rather than for concept generation and creation. A participant also indicated that AI is not beneficial for brand strategists and brand communication.

“So, I often use, use it as my baseline. I don't know if baseline is the right word, but my first point of research. And then most of my research I do myself. Because I don't believe that AI can see all the things that I can see or the nuances that I'm seeing” P6.

“AI is more of a module that you add to your toolbox, not something to replace the marketer or brand strategist” P3.

“This is purely a human thing. So, my job, AI tools are actually, they are not beneficial for me to truly understanding a human being and their thoughts” P2.

The findings revealed that when it comes to addressing the balance in the use of AI in strategic planning, the participants use different methods. Although the human remains at the forefront, the participants indicated that they avoid over-reliance, and rely more on paraphrasing, primary research, and use AI during tight deadlines.

Sub-theme 3: Perceived mindset

The gathered data revealed that the brand strategists disclosed mixed feelings about AI. Participants explained that AI is an opportunity for the field of brand communication, when it comes to efficiency and creativity.

“It's helpful, yes, but still needs me to direct it” P4.

“It's an opportunity...umm...but not a threat. Creativity is still human-led” P3.

“I think it's both an opportunity for efficiency, but a risk for over-reliance” P6.

The results also indicated that although the brand strategists were optimistic about the use of AI, they remained aware of its limitations or challenges. This ranges from AI generated content, over-reliance, and the lack of human connection.

“AI is a challenge for professionals. Because the use of AI cannot necessarily mean successful campaigns because of the lack of human connection” P2.

5.6 Theme 2: The necessity of human oversight in ai generated content

The thematic analysis revealed views of AI integration in brand communication as the theme emerges in Table 3.

Table 3: A representation of the necessity of human oversight in AI generated content theme as per research questions 1, 2, and 3.

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
Proofreading AI outputs	Content creation support	The necessity of human oversight in AI generated content
Rewriting content		
Reviewing for quality		
Adjusting tone and voice	Audience and brand alignment	
Ensuring brand fit		
Matching audience needs		
Humanising scripts	Creative Control	
Protecting originality		
Preserving emotional nuance		

The theme of the necessity of human oversight in AI generated content is presented in three sub-themes namely, content creation support, audience, and brand alignment, as well as creative control.

Sub-theme 1: Content creation support

Participants reported how AI facilitated content creation processes, particularly during the conceptualisation or drafting phase. However, they pointed out that AI plays a supporting, not a central role.

“For me it hasn’t been so much of a challenge. Because I find that if it’s helped me with like, half of my content, I can pretty much catch on kind of flow of writing and can kind of bounce off. It obviously where I’m editing, then I’ll edit and just make everything more cohesive” P1.

“I might not exactly take the exact copy of AI, but at least it gives me a framework in how to phrase it” P4.

While AI facilitates early-stage content creation, brand strategists still depend on their insights, tone, and structure to finalise outputs. Literature reviewed that AI capacities

offer professionals beneficial opportunities when creating content (Davenport et al., 2029; Iskel, 2022).

Sub-theme 2: Audience and brand alignment

The collected data highlighted that human oversight is at the forefront and plays a crucial and tremendous role when ensuring that AI generated content aligns with a brand's voice and values. It was noted by participants that AI often creates generic content, which demands manual adjustment to align with the platform, audience, or brand voice.

"Sometimes ChatGPT gives you things that are too long or too formal for Instagram" P1.

"AI lacks nuance and humanity to match brand voice real-time" P6.

The study's findings emphasise that the strategic role of brand alignment is a filter through which AI-generated content must go through. Moreover, it was reported by the participants that their reliance on skills, capabilities, expertise, and brand guidelines or frameworks is crucial.

Sub-theme 3: Creative control

Findings revealed that participants still preferred traditional branding practices to AI tools. This includes conducting primary research, as well as developing key messages, strategies, and campaigns. Furthermore, the participants argued that relying on traditional branding practices is important for brand authenticity and target audiences. Therefore, human connection is required to stay in touch with the audience.

"I still make it sound more like me...umm...or the brand" P1.

"AI is not people...it doesn't adopt to sudden market changes like humans do" P2.

These statements indicate that although AI may start and structure communication, the main creative authority remains with brand strategists.

When it comes to factors that influence decisions to rely on AI versus human inputs, the participants shared three main factors namely, limited resources in the agency or company, tight deadlines, and unfamiliarity with the target audience.

“I could say resources in the agency are very busy or constrained. So, then I would definitely rely on AI to help support the work that I’m producing. Tight deadlines, like when there’s a big and fast deadline approaching and I need to get work done” P5.

Findings revealed that participants indicated that copywriting, advertisement, campaign implementation, social media, and content creation are aspects of brand communication in which AI is appropriate.

“I think it’s definitely appropriate for like, you know, your short copy of advertisements, maybe your social media elements” P5.

When it comes to the limitations of AI in brand communication, some participants explained that it is up to the user. The arguments pointed out that a professional should direct AI by providing inputs to ensure that everything is correct. Other participants highlighted that community management and social media are also other aspects of brand communication in which AI presents limitations as AI cannot accurately convey brand messages to audiences.

“Anything specifically in social media and community management. I think you’ll find it. The most limitation when it comes to comms and just sorting and just like keeping things up because community management is not just responding to some, it’s much more than that” P5.

5.7 Theme 3: practical challenges and risks in implementation

The thematic analysis revealed practical challenges and risks in implementation as the theme emerges in Table 4.

Table 4: A representation of practical challenges and risks in implementation theme

as per research questions 2 and 4.

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
Platform unavailability	Technical and functional issues	Practical challenges and risks in implementation
Information omission		
Repetitive or generic outputs		
Data privacy concerns	Ethical and security concerns	
Use of confidential information in prompts		
Fear of over-reliance	Dependency and skill erosion	
Loss of creative writing skills		

The subthemes explored in this theme were technical and functional issues; ethical and security issues; as well as dependency and skill erosion.

Sub-theme 1: Technical and functional issues

Most participants reported having successful experiences with AI. These are namely when it comes to the writing process, fast production, and efficiency. However, participants also indicated frustration due to content limitations and platform reliability. Findings revealed that some platforms retrieved information, and others signaled the issue of credibility of the produced information.

“Sometimes it gives back outdated or surface-level answers” P4.

“I don’t think AI can handle real-time support; that’s the bigger weakness” P3.

These answers highlight the operational limitation that still impedes full integration of generative AI tools. Furthermore, some participants explained that the lack of prompting skills was a challenge and having several choices provided by AI platforms presented a challenge too for a team or the brand strategist when it comes to narrowing down a single choice.

“If you want to come up with different messages, now because AI, it can give you 20 messages. And now becomes a challenge sometimes between choosing those different messages especially when you have a bigger team

where one person likes this message and the other likes the another one. So, there are challenges with narrowing communication because you sometimes become overwhelmed with the choice” P4.

Sub-theme 2: Ethical and security concerns

The findings revealed several ethical and security concerns when using AI. This ranges from responsible use, confidentiality, transparency with clients, intellectual property, over-reliance, and content ownership.

“I don’t type in client names or brand names in prompt. You never know where that info could end up” P1.

The results showed that the brand strategists were hesitant to share sensitive client or brand details with AI systems because of the uncertainty about how information might be stored or used.

“Your creativity could be given to someone because the prompts aren’t private” P3.

Participants also disclosed concerns about ownership, proposing that once ideas are put into a prompt, they may no longer be considered original or private. This signals fear that creative work could be recreated or misused outside of their control. With this, ethical and security concern became a recurring barrier to the confident use of AI in brand communication.

Sub-theme 3: Dependency and skill erosion

It was found out that there was a shared fear that over-reliance on AI could decrease creativity and independent thinking. The collected data indicated that even new strategists remain concerned about long-term effects on strategic thinking and creative capabilities.

“It could reduce real-skill in junior employees” P5.

“If you could rely on AI, you stop thinking creatively” P2.

Findings highlighted that when it comes to addressing these concerns and bringing the balance when using AI tools, the participants relied mainly on conducting primary research, critical thinking, human insights, and aligning with brand messages to ensure brand distinction.

5.8 Theme 4: The skill shift: from creator to curator

The thematic analysis revealed the skill shift: from creator to curator as the theme emerges in Table 5.

Table 5: A representation of practical challenges and risks in implementation theme as per research questions 3 and 4.

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
Prompting skills	Professional competence	The skill shift: From creator to curator
Experimenting with different tools		
Self-education	Learning methods and training	
Lack of formal training		
Learning-by-doing		
Shift from execution to strategy	Role evolution	
AI assistant		
Strategist as content curator		

The subthemes included professional competence, learning methods and training, as well as role evolution.

Sub-theme 1: Professional competence

The participants mentioned that professional competence in using AI goes beyond technical use. It includes the knowledge to direct and use the tool effectively, thus making decisions about appropriate use, and interpreting outputs with critical judgment.

“Your prompt matters more than you think” P2.

“It depends how well you phrase your prompt...vague input gives vague results”

P5.

The data highlighted that competence with AI is not just about functionality, but it requires contextual awareness, strategic input and professional judgment.

Sub-theme 2: Learning methods and training

The collected data indicated that the participants reported a lack of formal training and reliance on self-guided learning.

“I’ve just been watching YouTube videos and reading articles” **P3.**

“I learnt by testing out” **P4.**

The results showed that brand strategists are independently developing the competencies required to work effectively with generative AI. One participant mentioned that their company offered informal training on AI.

Sub-theme 3: Role evolution

The participants shared how their roles have shifted from content producers to curators and reviewers. This indicates a broader professional transformation as AI tools become embedded in the workflow.

“I used to do all the copywriting by myself. Now, I think more about the message and let AI with the first draft” **P1.**

“AI helps me sketch ideas; I focus more on refining the core message” **P4.**

Findings highlighted that the participants mentioned several views on the future of AI and its advancements. Some participants mentioned that AI would bring less contact work between various parties (stakeholders), more automation, and a divide between competitors and company culture. While others anticipated AI becoming a research assistant, prompting becoming a skill, and everything becoming monotonous.

5.9 Theme 5: Balancing standards and ethical boundaries

The thematic analysis revealed balancing standards and ethical boundaries as the theme emerges in Table 6.

Table 6: A representation of practical challenges and risks in implementation theme as per research questions 2, 3 and 4.

Codes	Sub-Themes	Themes
AI-generated content sounding the same	Brand differentiation risks	Balancing standards and ethical boundaries
Brand voice dilution		
Lack of official policies	Organisational governance	
Company guidelines missing		
Need for ethical standards		
Disclosure of AI use to clients	Transparency response	
Concerns about trust		
Need for AI accreditation		

The subthemes explored were brand differentiation risks; organisational governance, and transparency response.

Sub-theme 1: Brand differentiation risks

The collected data revealed the concern of brand strategists about the uniformity of brand content and messages. Furthermore, the participants highlighted how brand uniqueness and distinction could be weakened due to the extensive use of AI tools.

“AI generated output sound the same...like...anyone could have written them”

P1.

“There is no differentiation in the brand messaging anymore” **P4.**

The participants pointed out that AI generates output that dilutes brand voice and authenticity. This highlighted concerns that if several organisations or brands use the same AI tools, their messaging becomes homogeneous. Consequently, professionals are concerned about the loss of authenticity and the competitive edge of a brand storytelling.

Sub-theme 2: Organisational governance

Findings revealed a recurring concern due to the lack or absence of institutional guidelines, policies, or frameworks in the use of AI.

“There is no official guideline on how we’re supposed to use it” P5.

“We need more structure on what to do and not to do” P6.

It was found that there is a gap in the organisational governance that could affect the ethical adoption of AI.

Sub-theme 3: Transparency response

The participants explained various levels of transparency in how they communicate their use of AI to clients. This includes not disclosing the use of AI to clients, not mentioning confidential information to AI such as brand names, and making clients aware of the use of AI in given tasks.

“I don’t always mention AI to clients just to be safe” P1.

“Some clients are sensitive, so I try not to disclose unless asked” P4.

“We’ll eventually need policies to regulate when and how AI is used” P6.

The statements above were supported by the participants to confirm that there is a need for transparency as an ethical concern that needs to be addressed. Thus, the findings signaled a tension between accountability and utility in the fast-growing adoption of generative AI tools.

5.10 Conclusion

The section above presented the results that were collected from the semi-structured interviews with six participants. A total of five themes with each having three sub-themes emerged. It appeared that the brand strategists had different views about AI integration in brand communication. While some considered AI as having more opportunities and benefits, others viewed it as challenging. Furthermore, the brand strategists shared that regardless of AI’s supplementary role, human oversight

remained at the forefront of the field of brand communication.

The participants also shared the practical challenges and risks they encountered when implementing AI. They argued that these could hinder the full adoption of AI tools in brand communication. Moreover, the results revealed that with AI use, brand strategists have witnessed a skill shift, turning them from creators to curators. Finally, the participants indicated a need for implementing institutional guidelines or frameworks which would assist in balancing standards and ethical boundaries. These results are analysed and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The discussion of several components of the study is explained in this section. The discussion starts with the purpose of the study along with explanation of its findings. Furthermore, this section determines the extent to which the findings addressed the purpose of the study. Subsequently, this section outlines the interpretation of the findings in relation with the theory of cognitive dissonance and the medium theory, as well as the past research findings.

6.2 The purpose of the study

This study sought to explore the brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. As the adoption of generative AI technologies becomes increasingly prevalent in various industries (Agersborg et al., 2020), brand strategists are faced with concerns when it comes to integrating these tools into the communication processes. Despite the prevalence of AI in several industries or fields, an extensive literature review revealed a scarcity of studies on how brand strategists perceive and respond to the use of generative AI in crafting and delivering brand messages. This poses a problem as it hinders the accumulation of knowledge and best practices in the fields of communication and marketing when using AI. Thus, the need to conduct this study.

6.3 Key findings of the study

In the current study, it appeared that the brand strategists had different views about AI integration in brand communication. While some considered AI as having more opportunities and benefits, others viewed it as challenging. Furthermore, the brand strategists shared that regardless of AI's supplementary role, human oversight remained at the forefront of the field of brand communication.

The participants also shared the practical challenges and risks they encountered when implementing AI. They argued that these could hinder the full adoption of AI tools in brand communication. Moreover, the results also revealed that with AI use, the brand strategists have witnessed a skill shift, turning them from creators to curators. Finally, the participants indicated a need for implementing institutional guidelines or

frameworks which would assist in balancing standards and ethical boundaries.

6.4 Discussion of findings in correlation with theories

The study was built on the ground of two theories, namely, the theory of cognitive dissonance and the medium theory.

6.4.1 Alignment with symbolic convergence theory

SCT offers a more appropriate interpretive lens for understanding how brand strategists collectively make sense of generative AI within brand communication practices. Rather than focusing on individual psychological discomfort, SCT explains how shared meanings, emotions, and professional interpretations emerge through communication within groups (Bormann, 1972). The mixed views expressed by participants regarding AI use in brand communication reflect not internal cognitive conflict, but a process of collective sense-making, where practitioners negotiate the symbolic meaning of AI within their professional communities.

Although many participants acknowledged AI's potential to enhance content creation, automation, and efficiency, they simultaneously articulated concerns regarding ethical uncertainty, diminished creativity, and professional integrity. From an SCT perspective, these tensions indicate the absence of a fully converged rhetorical vision around AI within brand communication spaces (Salma, Hijón-Neira & Pizarro, 2025).

. Participants' narratives reveal emerging, and sometimes competing, shared interpretations of AI as either a supportive co-creative tool or a disruptive force that threatens established creative norms. Similar patterns have been observed in professional communication environments where new technologies challenge existing symbolic frameworks and require collective reinterpretation (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2020; Salma, Hijón-Neira & Pizarro, 2025).

Several participants positioned AI as an assistive collaborator rather than a replacement for human creativity, thereby reinforcing a shared professional identity in which human judgement remains central. This positioning reflects symbolic convergence around AI as a tool that augments, rather than overrides, the creative authority of brand strategists. Others remained sceptical, illustrating partial divergence

within the group's symbolic reality. SCT explains this divergence as a transitional phase in which shared meanings have not yet stabilised, rather than as unresolved individual discomfort.

Participants also expressed ethical unease related to AI use, particularly concerning brand authenticity, originality, and content ownership. Within SCT, such ethical concerns can be understood as disruptions to the group's symbolic boundaries around what constitutes legitimate brand communication practice. When ethical frameworks are unclear or contested, symbolic convergence weakens, resulting in fragmented interpretations of professional responsibility and creative authorship (Salma et al., 2025).

A prominent theme across the data was the perceived shift in professional identity from creators to curators. Participants described how AI-mediated workflows altered how they understood their expertise and value within agencies. SCT interprets this shift as a renegotiation of group consciousness, where brand strategists collectively reassess their roles, authority, and symbolic status in response to technological change. Rather than experiencing individual psychological tension, participants engaged in shared narratives that attempted to redefine creativity, expertise, and authorship in an AI-augmented environment (Richard, 2023; Sterz, Langner & Fischer, 2024).

Overall, SCT provides a stronger theoretical alignment with the findings by foregrounding collective meaning-making, emotional alignment, and professional identity formation. The adoption of AI in brand communication emerges not merely as a technological adjustment, but as a symbolic process through which brand strategists negotiate shared realities, ethical positions, and creative legitimacy within evolving communication ecosystems

6.4.2 Alignment with medium theory

McLuhan (1964) states that the medium is the message. This changes not only the message and the structure, but the environment too. With AI being a key communication medium, it also changes how brand messages are created and shared, often by avoiding traditional designs such as TV and radio, and even human-

centred narratives. All the participants shared how AI tools such as automated messaging and chatbox are superseding traditional communication practices and media channels in brand communication. Dsouza, Verma, and Srivastara (2023) highlight that AI tools are actively participating in shaping media environments and communication processes. It could be argued that AI constitutes a change, and brands should assess what to consider as medium and what types of narratives are attainable in AI generated contents.

Recent studies by Kolsani (2023) as well as Kshetri, Dwivedi, Davenport and Panteli (2024) state that the logic and form of communication are modified by AI tools. All the participants in the study reported how automation and prompting skills guide content creation which relates to the medium theory as stated by McLuhan (1964) that the medium shapes the message. This reveals a profound change in creative control. Thus, it could be argued that human-AI collaboration and communication are based more on strategic inputs and less about intuition.

Participants pointed out a lack of emotional connection and reasoning in AI generated content hence, the need for human oversight. When considering AI as a medium, regardless of its many capacities, it lacks the emotional touch needed for brand voice and authenticity. Therefore, it could be argued that although it is rapid and vast, AI has limitations when it comes to depth. Hence, human oversight is crucial for alignment with brand messages, voice, identity, and communication.

Kirby, Baumgarth, and Henseler (2025) note that new human-AI collaboration models need human intervention in AI products within brand communication. This statement correlates to the medium theory's tenets and it was pertinent to the findings of the study especially in theme four. The participants supported the idea that there is a change in communication workflow. Thus, brand strategists are changing and embracing more roles from creators, editors, prompt engineers, and curators. It could be said that AI should be considered as a central part of brand communication, as the human role is growing and not dying.

6.5 Findings addressing literature review

A discussion of the present study's results, along with comparison to relevant existing

literature, is provided in this section. These findings are addressed in more detail below.

6.5.1 Views of AI integration in brand communication

The majority of the study's participants described having various attitudes on the integration of AI in brand communication. The subthemes explored under this theme were (1) perceived benefits of AI, (2) human-AI positioning, and (3) perceived mindset. These findings are supported by various views found in literature. Du Plessis and Swart (2024) point out AI's capacity to automate tasks and improve content, which correlated with the participants who considered AI as an important tool for efficiency. However, concern about AI's impact on creativity was raised by other participants, echoing the issues raised by Fu, Bin, Zhou, Wang, Lai, Wobbrock, and Hiniker (2024) concerning the disruption of traditional branding roles.

While past research highlighted the capacities of automation, a study conducted by Huang and Rust (2021) confirms that human acumen is necessary. Moreover, the participants in this study showed an understanding when it comes to considering AI as a supportive tool rather than the main engine. This statement was not found in the past studies that widely categorised AI as a supportive tool. The results of this study analysed how the participants described the limitations of AI support in the aspects of creativity, emotions, and ethics. The participants confirmed the effectiveness of AI, but they also shared concerns about ethical consideration and overuse.

6.5.2 The need for human oversight in AI generated content

Content creation support, audience, and brand alignment, as well as creative control were the subthemes explored under this theme. Results revealed that AI is beneficial in areas such as editing and writing, although professionals remain at the frontline. Literature supported this claim by underscoring that human oversight is needed in this collaboration to guarantee that content aligns with brand authenticity, standards, and voice. Consequently, this will create more trust between brands and audiences (Sterz et al., 2024). It could be said that human oversight plays a significant role in this collaboration between humans and AI.

6.5.3 Practical challenges and risk in implementation

The subthemes discussed under this theme were (1) technical and functional issues, (2) ethical and security concerns, and (3) dependency and skill erosion. In terms of technical and functional issues, the participants indicated a frustration due to content limitation and platform reliability. A study done by Mohamed, Matimbwa, and Banzi (2025) noted that the lack of skilled talent and ethical concerns such as IP violation, intellectual property, and plagiarism are significant challenges that hinder the effectiveness of AI adoption. Moreover, literature points out an erosion of creative and communication skills due to AI over-reliance. This claim was confirmed by all the participants. Therefore, it could be argued that AI over-reliance causes dependency and skills erosion.

6.5.4 The skill shift: From creator to curator

This theme had subthemes such as (1) professional competence, (2) learning and training methods, and (3) role evolution. Participants shared that their evolving roles included editors, creators, prompt engineers, and curators. Identical findings were noted in an article written by Fallstrom (2025) suggesting human-AI collaboration designs in which AI takes care of tasks that require less effort and professionals focusing on brand voice and communication processes. Moreover, participants stated that they depended on self-learning, peer-learning, and workshops to work alongside AI. This is consistent with a claim by Sterz et al. (2024) emphasizing the need and necessity of structured learning and training for an effective collaboration between practitioners and AI.

Findings also revealed a change in participant roles. This is supported by Hemmer, Westphal, Schemmer, Vetter, Vossing, and Satzger (2023) who indicate that AI delegation improves practitioners' satisfaction and self-efficacy when there is an intentional restructure of roles. Thus, it could be said that the skill and identity shift could be beneficial if provided with clear and structured training and roles.

6.5.5 Balancing standards and ethical boundaries

Brand differentiation risks, organisational governance, and transparency response were the subthemes explored under this theme. The findings revealed a concern on

the risk of uniformity of brand voice which would decrease brand distinction due to AI generated content. This correlated with a claim by Forbes Communication Council (2024), pointing out that AI over-reliance can cause dilution of the brand voice. Thus, the need for transparency and organisational guidelines to regulate the use of AI in this field. These claims were confirmed by all the participants in this study.

CHAPTER 7: ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. This section outlines the research problem, questions, and objectives in correlation with the research's findings.

7.2 Findings for the research problem

The research problem was that there was a limited understanding of how brand strategists perceived and responded to the use of generative AI in crafting and delivering brand messages. Hence, this study aimed to explore brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. From the findings, the researcher found a complex combination of optimism, caution, and strategic adaptation of AI from brand strategists. While many brand strategists acknowledged AI's capacities to enhance efficiency, personalise content, and automate repetitive tasks, they also shared concerns about its impact on professional identity, brand voice and creativity.

Findings also revealed that when it comes to whether to fully reject or adopt AI, most brand strategists preferred a hybrid design where human acumen controls AI tools. This proposes that brand strategists are not resisting innovation, but they are negotiating the conditions of the collaboration to guarantee that automation assists instead of replacing the ethical and creative values important to branding and communication work.

Although the findings brought forth worthwhile insights into the brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, various tensions remain unsettled. Areas such as how to strengthen brand differentiation, long-term skill impacts, governance guidelines, trust and transparency standards are yet to be extensively explored. These are further discussed under recommendations and future research sections.

7.3 What are the perceived benefits of using generative AI in communication processes?

Results revealed that brand strategists consider generative AI as a beneficial support tool primarily helping with efficiency, articulation of concepts, and idea generation. Under theme 1, the participants mentioned how AI helps to improve content creation, writing, efficiency, and automation. However, it was also found that regardless of the aforementioned benefits, AI cannot replace the emotional, strategic, and creative aspects of brand communication. This is thus referred to as augmentation, not replacement.

McLuhan's (1994) medium theory argues that technologies reshape communication practices rather than extending them. In this study, AI operated as a medium that speeds up production but also shifts how brand strategists position themselves within creative workflows. Similarly, Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory is visible in how participants balance enthusiasm for efficiency with concern for creativity. By positioning AI as complementary, brand strategists decrease the dissonance between considering efficiency and maintaining professional identity as creative experts.

These results correlate with Floridi and Chiriatti (2020), who propose that AI like GPT models are effective at creating text but are limited in originality and contextual sensitivity. In practice, this means that brand strategists can harness AI to streamline content creation but must protect human-led creativity. The benefit is thus significant, but context-specific as AI is most effective in idea generation, while final creative authority remains firmly human.

7.4 What concerns or challenges do brand strategists have regarding the implementation of generative AI on communication strategies?

It is clear from the findings drawn from the semi-structured interviews that brand strategists highlighted several concerns, found under themes 3 and 5. The most common included; technical unreliability (outdated or repetitive outputs), ethical and security risks (data privacy, IP ownership), and the fear that over-reliance on AI could reduce human creativity. Participants also mentioned systemic risks such as brand homogenisation, where AI-generated messaging starts to sound the same, thereby reducing distinction.

Theoretically, these concerns reflect the early stages of SCT, where brand strategists engage in fantasy sharing to make sense of AI's uncertainties. From a medium theory perspective, AI is not neutral, as it actively reshapes how brand strategists must sort out ethics, trust, and creativity in brand communication.

These findings reflect Shin (2021), who states that the lack of explainability and accountability in AI undermines trust. Similarly, Nieborg and Poell (2018) warn that automation risks reduce human work. For practice, this means adoption cannot be separated from ethical governance without clear guidelines as well as protections, and brand strategists will remain hesitant. Therefore, challenges are not just technical obstacles but systemic barriers that must be addressed to ensure responsible integration.

7.5 What significance do brand strategists perceive the generative AI to have on the creative aspects of brand messaging?

Results indicated that AI has a supportive but limited significance on creativity. Under themes 2 and 3, the participants mentioned that AI helps with brainstorming, idea generation, and frameworks for phrasing. However, its outputs were viewed as outdated, too formal, and repetitive, requiring human alignment and editing to reflect brand voice and audience needs. Hence, AI's role in creativity is more mechanical than imaginative.

From the lens of symbolic convergence theory, brand strategists establish a shared group of identity by creating a clear symbolic boundary between "technical" and "authentic" creativity. From a medium theory lens, AI is shifting the process of creativity; meaning that the medium speeds up early creative processes but does not redefine the meaning of creativity. Instead, it forces professionals to adapt to new workflows.

Floridi and Chiriatti (2020) argue that while GPT modes can imitate creativity, they cannot produce novelty or contextual appropriateness. The findings in this study reinforce this as it was noted that AI is significant not because it replaces creativity, but because it restructures creative work, turning brand strategists into curators who

control AI-generated content. This suggests a hybrid creative process, where human oversight ensures brand authenticity.

7.6 What factors influence the willingness of brand strategists to adopt generative AI technologies in communication processes?

Results suggest that willingness is shaped by both individual competence and institutional structures, as seen in themes 4 and 5. At the individual level, the participants highlighted prompting skills, professional judgment, and tool literacy as key factors. Those with greater competence demonstrated more confidence in embracing AI. At the organisational level, the lack of training and governance frameworks restrained willingness, as brand strategists felt uncertain about responsible disclosure and ethical boundaries.

Brand strategists acknowledge AI's potential, symbolic convergence is often hindered when ethical ambiguity erodes the group's shared trust. The medium theory also applies: AI, as a new medium, needs brand strategists to revise their roles and adapt to new forms of competence. Adoption relies not only on the tool's function but on how the medium restructures professional identity.

These findings correlate with Dwivedi, Hughes, Baabdullah, Ribeiro-Navarrete, Giannakis, Al-Debbi, and Wamba (2023), who point out the need for structured AI literacy training, and Shin (2021), who highlights governance for building trust. For practice, this signals that adoption will remain uneven unless organisations invest in formal training, clear policies, and ethical frameworks. Willingness is not determined by AI's capabilities alone but by whether brand strategists feel supported to use it responsibly.

7.7 Conclusion

The research problem, questions, and objectives were addressed through brand strategists actively studying the integration of generative AI in communication. Findings demonstrated that while AI provides benefits such as automation, speed, and efficiency, worries around ethical use, job replacement, and creativity remain. The study underscored openness to learning, experimentation, and ongoing discussion around the role of human creativity and oversight as key to accepting AI meaningfully.

For professionals and organisations, regularly evaluating the impact of AI tools and encouraging adaptive strategies will be important for building trust, creative capacity, and relevance in a rapidly evolving communication environment. The next chapter provides conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication. This chapter presents recommendations for professionals and possible directions for future research, followed by the limitations and delimitations of the study, as well as the anticipated contributions and the study's summary. The following are recommendations for professionals and future research.

8.2 Limitations and delimitations of the study

Limitations are defined as constraints in the research study that are out of the researcher's control and can hinder findings (Enslin, 2021). The following were the limitations that this study faced. The researcher faced time constraints as data was collected in less than four months. This study did not reach a larger population due to several reasons such as financial constraints, a lack of response from some participants after being reached out to, and other participants not fully meeting the study's criteria. Another limitation of this study was access to information due to a lack of previous literature on this specific topic. Moreover, limited human resources when collecting data was a limitation of this study.

A further limitation was the lack of sample representation across all marketing sectors, levels of seniority, and geographical locations which limited the transferability of the findings but offered a centred view of professionals operating in comparable market and cultural contexts.

Although the participants in this study did not mention gender during their interviews, gender remains a noteworthy demographic factor in the broader adoption of AI. Studies have pointed out that gender can impact how people engage with and view new technologies. Studies highlight a persistent gender gap; for instance, a study conducted by Deloitte (2024) discovered that women adopted generative AI at lower rates than men, with only about 33% of women using generative AI in 2024 compared to 44%. In addition, Russo, Romano, Clemence, Lacovone, Gladwin, and Panno (2025) report that women usually show higher AI-related anxiety and negative attitudes towards AI compared to men, pointing out potential affective and emotional barriers to adoption.

The lack of gendered perspectives in the current study may mirror the professional orientation of the participants, who framed their answers through the lens of their roles as brand strategists rather than personal identity markers. However, ignoring gender limits interpretive depth, especially since the literature shows that gender can shape technological readiness, trust, and ethical concerns.

Delimitations occur from definite and specific choices researchers make when deciding on the scope of a particular research study (Enslin, 2021). This study was delimited by the use of purposive sampling because the study did not give every member of the population the equal chance of being selected. Thus, the results cannot be generalised to a broader population, and yet the aim of the research in this study was still fulfilled. Another delimitation of this study was the use of a smaller sample size due to the cumbersome nature of qualitative research samples. Additionally, this challenges the notion of generalising the results of the study to a broader population. This study faced a delimitation due to the absence of triangulation as the researcher only used one data analysis method.

8.3 Recommendations for practice and future studies

The researcher provides recommendations for practice and future studies below.

8.3.1 Recommendations for professionals

The researcher encourages professionals to invest both in technological and creative skills, by considering AI tools not as an option, but as a necessity for innovation and for staying competitive. Professionals should also consider AI as a supportive tool and not a replacement as human oversight will always be required to preserve all aspects of a brand. Additionally, they should promote a culture of critical thinking and experimentation around AI. For policy-makers, the researcher recommends the establishment of clear regulations that will help control responsible use of AI in brand communication, especially around consumer consent, transparency, and data usage. Moreover, policy-makers should support AI literacy via public initiatives such as educational programmes for small and medium enterprises in the communication and creative sectors. The researcher also highlights the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration between the private sector, academia, and the government to guarantee that policies remain pertinent to the rapid evolving tech changes in the fields of

communication and marketing. The researcher also recommends that educational institutions should include AI and creativity in the curriculum, to equip students with ethical decision-making frameworks, and offer real-world exposure to AI tools (workshops, case studies, and internship).

8.3.2 Recommendations for future research

There is a need for further research into this study. While this study provided strong and significant insights into the attitudes, it did not fully explore implementation behaviours, practical strategies, and long-term impacts of AI collaboration in brand communication. Researchers, brand strategists, and organisations or agencies should consider the findings of this study to further develop innovative and newly designed strategies to fully adopt AI. Brand strategists must grasp knowledge and proficiency on AI tools and have the most updated educational resources to execute the best effective collaboration practices and strategies. Additionally, brand strategists and organisations can apply foundations of the theory of cognitive dissonance and the medium theory from this study's findings and use them in a new venture business to harness opportunities that arise from this collaboration.

As this study draws conclusions from a small and non-probability sample, further studies can triangulate the results. Furthermore, researchers can expand to a broader demographic that can produce results that put into consideration views of more female brand strategists. Further research may also involve brand strategists from a wide geographic area.

8.4 Anticipated contributions

This research study holds significant implications for workforce adaptation amidst the implementation of AI, particularly in fields like communication, marketing, and other creative industries. It focuses on providing the essential skills for re-skilling and developing workforces, thereby rendering them suitable and competitive for future labour markets. Equipped with these skills, employees can enhance long-term productivity within the organisation and advance professional careers by continually improving their capabilities. Organisations or brands that invest in enhancing their employees' skills stand to achieve higher returns on investments, streamline processes and operations, and ultimately expand their market share.

The primary objective of this study was to advocate for the implementation of a comprehensive "augmentation strategy" which involves utilising AI in work activities to complement and amplify the strengths of human workforces. This approach aims to empower employees to reach their full potential by leveraging AI to enhance capabilities and performance. Furthermore, organisations will have insight and opportunities to craft effective communication strategies or processes that will align with their brands, and put into consideration attitudes, feelings and concerns of brand strategists when using AI tools, which enable positive alignment with their brands as well.

8.5 Conclusion

This exploratory study brought a novel and exciting topic to understand the collaboration between humans and AI. By exploring the brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, new findings were observed in the fields of communication and branding. The study was achieved using purposive and snowball sampling methods. To attain the aim of the study, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants.

The results of this study demonstrated that brand strategists had a complex mix of optimism, caution, and strategic adaptation about AI integration in brand communication. Many participants shared the benefits of AI namely, efficiency, speed, and automation. They also highlighted challenges that it came with. Hence, human oversight, clear ethical and organisational frameworks, as well as training are essential for full-scale adoption.

To conclude, this study brought a unique understanding of the brand strategists' attitudes about human-AI collaboration in brand communication, by demonstrating that brand strategists perceive AI as a supportive tool rather than as a replacement. Hence, the researcher believes that this collaboration would provide great value to the field of communication.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Section A: Demographic questions

- What is your age?

1	18 – 24
2	25 – 35
3	36 – 46
4	56 – 66

- What is your title in the organisation?
- How long have you worked in the organisation?
- What is your highest qualification?

Section B: Questions related to objectives

- What type of AI tools or platforms do you currently use in your strategies?
Can you describe their main functions and purposes?
- What are your initial impressions of AI technologies in the context of brand communication? Do you see them as more of an opportunity or a challenge?
- What concerns do you have about integrating AI into brand communication?
How do you address these concerns in your strategic planning?
- What communication strategies are most effective in addressing brand strategists' concerns related to the use of AI?
- Can you describe your experiences with AI in brand communication, including any challenges or successes you have encountered?
- How do you consider the role of AI in transforming traditional methods of brand communication, and what potential benefits do you believe it offers?
- How do you balance the use of AI tools with traditional branding practices?
What factors influence your decision to rely on AI versus human input?

- How do you ensure that AI-generated content or insights align with your brand's voice and values? What role does human oversight play in this process?
- What types of aspects of brand communication do you think AI is particularly appropriate for, and where do you see the limitations of AI in this field?
- What ethical considerations do you believe are important to address when integrating AI into the creative process of brand communication?
- How do you see the future of human-AI collaboration evolving in the field of brand communication? What changes or advancements are you anticipating?
- Can you describe any training or resources you or your team have utilised to better understand and leverage AI in brand communication? How have these contributed to your approach?

ANNEXURE B – PARTICIPANT OR RESPONDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is Grace Muleja Kayowa and I am a student at IIEMSA. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Joanah Gadzikwa about the exploration of attitudes brand strategists have about the human-Artificial Intelligence (AI) collaboration in brand communication. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of AI technologies in enhancing brand creativity and providing opportunities and strategies that will leverage the field of marketing as a whole.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. To explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because your knowledge and experience will contribute to gaining a deep understanding in the collaboration between humans AI in brand creativity. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interview you and record information that you will provide or share.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly, find that it is helpful to talk about the collaboration between humans and artificial intelligence in brand communication. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Detail the potential risks and how it will be managed by the researcher. Indicate how the ethical considerations will be applied in the context of the study.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research, and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, and I as well as possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE MSA, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Master of Philosophy in Communication and Media Studies. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Grace Muleja Kayowa

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisors are as follows: Dr. Joanah Gadzikwa

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dr. Marchant Van Der Schyff

[REDACTED]

Participant or respondent Informed Consent – Audio and Visual Recordings.

I agree to participate in the research conducted by Grace Muleja Kayowa about an exploration of the human-Artificial Intelligence collaboration in brand creativity

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to participate in this research and be recorded for the purpose of data collection.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private and confidential.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.

- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

ANNEXURE C: PROPOSAL APPROVAL AND ETHICAL



Our Ref: M. 561124
Enquiries: research@iie.ac.za

08 November 2024



Proposal Approval and Ethical Clearance for Master of Philosophy in Arts.

Student name: Grace Muleja Kayowa
Student number: ST10461725
Brand and campus: IIEMSA



Dear Grace,



We are pleased to inform you that the Higher Degrees Committee considered and approved your research proposal titled: *A Qualitative Analysis of The Attitudes that Marketing Strategists have about Human-AI Collaboration in Brand Communication* with minor revision.



Your ethical clearance application has been approved as well. This means that you may proceed with data collection once you have revised the proposal to the satisfaction of your supervisor.

You are reminded to inform the IIE's Higher Degrees Committee of any changes made to the research methodology or title of the research prior to examination. Kindly ensure that all ethical considerations are duly applied whilst collecting, analysing and interpreting the data for the completion of your research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your programme team or supervisor directly.

All the best with your research.

Dr Reza Hosseini
Chair: Higher Degrees Committee

ANNEXURE D: LANGUAGE EDITING



You Write. **We Edit.** You Love it.

8 October 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REF: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING SERVICES: GRACE MULEJA KAYOWA

I confirm that I have done language editing for Grace Muleja Kayowa's dissertation titled:

A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ATTITUDES THAT MARKETING STRATEGISTS HAVE ABOUT HUMAN-AI COLLABORATION IN BRAND COMMUNICATION

The dissertation now conforms to the expected academic language editing standards.

Yours sincerely



Lynn N. Sibanda Moyo

Tel: 011 050 0376

Mobile: 071 989 0983

Email: lynn@lovetoedit.co.za

Member of the [Professional Editors Guild](#)



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