EXPLORING THE ROLE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Several marketing activities have benefitted from the adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools and thus, shifted how digital content marketing (DCM) activities are approached by experts. The purpose of this study is to explore what kind of roles humans and GAI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot have in DCM. This study deployed qualitative research methods and conducted semi-structured interviews with eight professionals from various levels of seniority working with DCM to determine how they view the role of GAI.

The first key result of this study is that while individuals and firms have adopted GAI into their content creation processes, human editing and writing is still needed. This is leading firms to develop their own GAI tools that are trained with company data and can produce content with even less human oversight. The second key result of this study is that it highlights how companies have not been able to implement GAI tools into their customer relationship management (CRM) and marketing automation (MA) systems. Therefore, the role of GAI has been limited in marketing activities related to customer data. By implementing GAI into their current systems, firms will require less manual work towards extracting customer insights and optimizing customer journeys. The third key result is that firms have utilized GAI for enhancing their organic visibility on both social media and information search channels. The main applications for GAI stems from content production for these channels by using GAI programs to create visuals and texts and contribute to supporting activities such as keyword research.

This study contributes to the GAI in marketing literature and DCM literature streams by answering calls for research on the role of GAI and furthers the extant knowledge on how GAI is used for specific marketing activitiess related to DCM such as SEO. The main implication of this study to managers is to actively look for opportunities to adopt a GAI tool for internal firm use and implement tools with GAI features specifically designed for certain tasks such as SEO.

Keywords	
Digital content marketing, generative artificial intelligence	
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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	
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Tiivistelmä

Generatiivisia tekoälyä (GAI) sisältävien työkalujen käyttöönotto on muuttanut, miten asiantuntijat lähestyvät digitaalisen sisältömarkkinoinnin aktiviteetteja. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tutkia GAI-työkalujen, kuten ChatGPT:n ja Microsoft Copilotin, roolia digitaalisessa sisältömarkkinoinnissa. Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettiin laadullisia tutkimusmenetelmiä ja tehtiin kahdeksan puolistrukturoitua haastattelua digitaalisen sisältömarkkinoinnin parissa työskentelevien, eri tasoilla toimivien ammattilaisten kanssa sen selvittämiseksi, miten he näkevät GAI:n roolin digitaalisessa sisältömarkkinoinnissa.

Tutkimuksen ensimmäinen keskeinen tulos on, että vaikka yksilöt ja yritykset ovat ottaneet GAI:n käyttöön sisällöntuotantoprosesseissaan, ihmisen tekemä editointi ja kirjoittaminen on edelleen tarpeen. Tämä on johtanut siihen, että yritykset kehittävät omia GAI-työkalujaan, jotka on koulutettu yrityksen datalla ja pystyvät tuottamaan sisältöä entistä vähemmällä ihmisen manuaalisella työllä. Tutkimuksen toinen keskeinen tulos on, että yritykset eivät ole onnistuneet ottamaan GAI-työkaluja käyttöön asiakkuuksien hallinta- ja markkinoinnin automaatiojärjestelmissään. Näin ollen GAI:n rooli on ollut rajoitettu asiakasdataan liittyvissä markkinointitoiminnoissa. Ottamalla GAI käyttöön nykyisissä järjestelmissään yritykset tarvitsevat vähemmän manuaalista työtä asiakasdatan analysoimisessa ja asiakaspolkujen optimoimisessa. Kolmas keskeinen tulos on, että yritykset ovat hyödyntäneet GAI:ta parantaakseen orgaanista näkyvyyttään sekä sosiaalisen median että tietohaun kanavissa. GAI:n pääasialliset sovellukset tässä kontekstissa liittyvät sisällöntuotantoon näille kanaville, käyttäen GAI-ohjelmia visuaalisen ja tekstisisällön luomiseen sekä tukitoimintoihin, kuten avainsanatutkimukseen.

Tämä tutkimus edistää sekä tekoälyyn liittyvää markkinointi- ja digitaalinen sisältömarkkinointi-kirjallisuutta vastaamalla kutsuihin tutkia GAI:n roolia sisällöntuotannossa ja laajentaa nykyistä tietämystä siitä, miten GAI:ta käytetään digitaaliseen sisältömarkkinointiin liittyvissä markkinointitoimenpiteissä, kuten hakukoneoptimoinnissa. Tutkimuksen pääasiallinen johtopäätös johtajille on aktiivisesti etsiä mahdollisuuksia ottaa käyttöön GAI-työkaluja yrityksen sisäiseen käyttöön, jota voidaan kouluttaa yrityksen omalla datalla. Tämän lisäksi suosituksena on käyttää GAI-ominaisuuksia sisältäviä työkaluja, jotka on suunniteltu tiettyihin tehtäviin, kuten hakukoneoptimointiin.

Asiasanat: sisältömarkkinointi, generatiivinen tekoäly

Säilytyspaikka
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CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

1   INTRODUCTION

A shift from traditional advertising to digital content marketing (DCM) has raised expectations from marketing departments. Marketers have been scrambling to pivot from sales-oriented messaging to providing genuinely interesting content for their customers. The domain of this study is digital content marketing, which is a strategic marketing approach that is applied by over 70 percent of B2C and B2B marketers (Rose, 2023; Stahl, 2023).

As can be derived from the term *digital* content marketing, the role of digital tools and technology in DCM is substantial. With over 9 900 marketing technology solutions (Brinker, 2022) available and with the emergence of new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence, marketers have changed their approach to content creation and other digital marketing processes related to DCM. The recent technological developments in GAI have allowed marketers to outsource parts of their content generation process to programs such as ChatGPT. Due to this shift, marketers are starting to have more resources for both content creation and personalization. In 2023 GAI was reportedly used by 45 percent of US companies and 33 percent are planning to use it in the future for marketing purposes (Advertisers, 2023).

Existing literature (Terho et al., 2022) has pointed out that reacting to new technologies is an important antecedent to the success of DCM efforts and driving business outcomes. There have also been initial studies on GAI in marketing literature (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kshetri et al., 2023; Wahid et al., 2023), which have pointed out various ways GAI is being used and hypothesized potential future use cases.

The research gap that exists in the current literature is the lack of published empirical research on how the adoption of GAI into marketing processes has affected the way DCM key activities (Terho et al., 2022) are performed. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap and increase understanding of how the adoption of GAI affects DCM processes by interviewing experts in the field and answering the following research questions:

Primary research question:
How is GAI being utilized by firms for DCM?

The primary research question is supported by two sub-questions questions:

What roles do humans and GAI play in performing DCM key activities?
What benefits are perceived from adopting GAI into DCM activities?

This study synthesizes extant literature on both DCM and GAI, adopts a framework for the DCM process (Terho et al., 2022) and maps out the use cases

for GAI in the key DCM activities outlined in the framework. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study, which included experts ranging from the roles of specialists and senior marketers to marketing managers from different sectors of business. The firms that participated in this study included both B2B and B2C businesses. By including companies and individuals with varying levels of maturity and experience with DCM and GAI, this study aims to provide a view of the applications for GAI in DCM efforts and to estimate the future effects of GAI technology on DCM processes. The data analysis found that most companies are developing internal GAI tools to use and while companies have developed some internal policies for use, the utilization of GAI mainly depends on individual users.

This study found several key DCM activities where GAI is currently applied by marketers including content creation, enhancing visibility, personalizing marketing messaging and leveraging customer data for insights. These findings extend the existing knowledge on how to conduct key DCM activities effectively with the use of new technology and outline best practices found by companies experimenting with GAI. The overall structure of this paper follows a logical sequence of first examining the definitions of both DCM and GAI, introducing the theoretical framework for this paper (Terho et al., 2022), outlining the qualitative research strategy chosen for this study and finally presenting the results and conclusions.

AI usage statement:

Several AI-based programs were used for this study for different purposes. *Elicit*, (n.d.) was used for creating an outline of a literature table and finding additional linked studies. Downloaded PDF documents of studies were uploaded to Elicit, which compiled a CSV table with data extracted from the PDF documents. The data in this table was then manually checked line-by-line to verify validity. The free version of *Grammarly*, (n.d.) was used for polishing language inside the Word document. *DeepL Translate*, (n.d.) was used for polishing language and looking for synonyms. *Microsoft Teams*, (n.d.) meeting transcription features were used for creating written transcriptions of all eight interviews in the data collection phase. *ChatGPT*, (n.d.) was prompted for ideas on several issues such as generating potential research questions, interview questions, potential thesis titles, summarizing text and text structure for paragraphs.

1. Example prompt: List 10 research questions I can use in my semi-structured interviews. 3 questions need to be main questions and they need to address generating intelligence about the customer journey, creating a portfolio of valuable content and engaging customers with content sharing.
2. Example prompt: Summarize this paragraph for me "…"
3. Example prompt: What key issues should I touch on in a sub-section on the data collection methods of my master's thesis?

2 THEORY

2.1 Key concepts

The two key concepts in this study are digital content marketing (DCM) and generative artificial intelligence (GAI). These key concepts are discussed in this sub-chapter through the lens of previous research and the key conceptualizations of DCM are presented in Table 1.

2.1.1 Digital content marketing

Table 1: Key conceptualizations of DCM

Paper	Definition of DCM
Terho et al. (2022, p. 8)	A digital marketing communication approach that generates intelligence about customer journeys, develops a valuable content portfolio that facilitates problem-solving for key buyer personas at different journey stages and engages customers by sharing content matched to their timely needs
Hollebeek & Macky (2019, p. 1)	DCM is the creation and dissemination of relevant, valuable brand-related content to current or prospective customers on digital platforms to develop their favorable brand engagement, trust and relationships
Holliman & Rowley (2014, p. 17)	DCM involves creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying consideration processes, such that it encourages them to convert to a business-building outcome

Holliman & Rowley (2014, p. 17) defined DCM as follows: "*Digital content marketing involves creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying consideration processes, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome.*" A study by Hollebeek & Macky (2019) built on that definition by emphasizing the role of building engagement, trust and relationships with brand-related content. Most recently, Terho et al. (2022) adopted the DCM definition proposed Holliman & Rowley (2014), but highlighted that data related to the customer journey is imperative when an organization is starting its DCM efforts. This view from Terho et al. (2022) DCM is adopted in this thesis.

Notably, there is a consensus that content creation and content sharing are two essential parts of the definition of DCM. Holliman & Rowley (2014) argued that content created with a DCM approach does not try to directly sell a product or service to the customer, but rather help or educate them on a topical issue that they are interested in. They referred to this type of content as "valuable content". Holliman & Rowley (2014) also emphasized that to create this type of content, firms need to understand what their customer's information needs are and the individual customer's point in the customer journey. Hollebeek & Macky (2019) added to this that firms can create informational or experiential content. They showed that valuable content can try to resolve their customers' problems with informational content but that it can also be experiential content that merely tries to entertain. Terho et al. (2022) extended the knowledge on content creation by elaborating that firms should focus on creating a content portfolio. This would include content that frames or solves the customer's problems. They also argue that content creation includes connecting different pieces of content to create synergistic content paths, which would cater to the customer at different points in the customer journey.

Content sharing is mentioned in multiple definitions of DCM (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Terho et al., 2022). These authors also argue that it is an essential part of the DCM process. One of the main contributions of the study Holliman & Rowley, (2014) was their addition of content sharing into the DCM definition. They characterized content sharing as an inbound marketing technique that typically involves sharing content for free to get customers to the firm website. This study does not go into detail about the tactics used to share content, but they argued that content sharing includes reaching the customer at an appropriate time and that this can be done through social media and website content for example and also characterized content sharing to be a part of DCM that is done passively by allowing customers to find it and consume it when they choose to.

Terho et al. (2022) extended the knowledge on how content should be shared in DCM. They argued that content sharing is one key activity of DCM that includes three sub-activities. The first sub-activity is gaining organic visibility for content digital channels, which includes marketing activities such as search engine optimization (SEO), being present in the same channels as the customers and firm employees sharing marketing messages. The second sub-activity is delivering relevant content pieces in a timely manner to the customer. This includes personalizing content delivery per customer through marketing automation and expanding content delivery from individuals to firm-wide messaging. Thirdly, they mentioned nudging buyers forward in their customer journeys to be a part of content sharing. This includes automating content sharing through marketing technology to provide relevant content to the customer and including calls-to-action in content pieces to nudge the customers to take the next step in their journey. In this thesis, we adopt the DCM definition Terho et al. (2022) as it provides a recent and well-rounded way of defining DCM. Their definition also fits into this thesis well as they emphasize the role of technology.

2.1.2 Generative artificial intelligence

Published peer-reviewed papers on generative artificial intelligence are currently scarce and use varying definitions for the technology including different abbreviations such as GAI and GenAI (Kshetri et al., 2023; Peres et al., 2023). However, there seem to be common elements in GAI definitions used in marketing literature (see Kshetri et al., 2023; Peres et al., 2023; Wahid et al., 2023) such as that GAI is an umbrella term for multiple artificial intelligence technologies such as Large Language Models (LLM), which ChatGPT is based on. But also, that GAI generates content that seems new and that the produced content can be of different forms including text, images and video.

For example, the paper by Kshetri et al. (2023) adopted their definition for GAI from an information systems literature study by Susarla et al. (2023). Susarla et al. (2023) characterized GAI to broadly refer to a class of various AI models that create new content that seems new and that this content can be in the form of text, images, or other media. Kshetri et al. (2023) also thinks that GAI encompasses programs such as ChatGPT, Copy.ai and Midjourney. They also mentioned that these programs are used for different marketing activities. The study reported that ChatGPT's use cases to include content creation, personalization and generating ideas, Copy.ai to include crafting text such as marketing copy and Midjourney to include picture creation from text prompts.

Alternatively, Peres et al. (2023) used a similar definition which mentions that the common element that combines GAI tools is that they generate content that appears to be new and that it generates the content in response to a human prompt. In a paper by Wahid et al. (2023) a similar definition was adapted from Cremer et al. (2023) where GAI was defined as a new set of artificial intelligence technologies that generate new digital content based on prompts inserted by users.

In this study, the following definition of GAI is adapted from the study by <u>Kshetri et al. (2023, p. 1)</u> *"GAI denotes a category of AI systems capable of creating apparently new content through text, images, or other forms of media"*. This definition was picked as the paper also discusses implications of GAI in digital marketing processes directly related to DCM. The paper by Kshetri et al. (2023) is also used to estimate the potential effects of GAI on DCM processes in the theoretical framework sub-chapter of this study.

2.2   Theoretical framework

This sub-chapter discusses the theoretical framework (Figure 1) that is selected for this thesis. Constructs within the framework are discussed through the lens of previous research in the field and used to consider the potential effects of GAI on DCM activities. This chapter also presents the extant research on DCM-related GAI studies (See Table 2).

The chosen framework is adapted from Terho et al. (2022) which visualizes DCM as a concept through different activities. This framework was chosen for its recent peer review and publication, making it a relevant and authoritative source on DCM processes. The framework's key message is that DCM comprises three core principles: inbound logic, personalization and journey facilitation and three main activity dimensions, which include nine key activities.

Inbound logic in the DCM context means that firms should prioritize gaining the attention of customers and be discoverable for them on their terms, rather than trying to force their attention with intrusive advertising (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). To accomplish this, firms should find customer segments relevant to their business and create content that is relevant, engaging and valuable enough for the customers to want to consume (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Wang et al., 2019).

Personalization refers to the ongoing scenario where customers have specific needs in their lives that need to be met by the sellers when sharing content (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Wang et al., 2019). Firms have two ways to accomplish this with DCM, by creating content that helps solve their customers' issues and by disseminating their content in a timely manner (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016).

Holliman & Rowley, (2014) found that customer journeys should be facilitated with content marketing. They found that especially in B2B purchase cycles, the informational needs of the customers change depending on the stage of their journey. Hence, there is a need to target different content pieces in different stages of the customer journey, which is why journey facilitation forms the third key principle for the DCM framework by Terho et al. (2022).

The key activities in DCM are gathering intelligence on customer journeys, creating a portfolio of valuable content and using content sharing to engage customers. These key activities and principles include sub-activities, which together form the framework for both conceptualizing and implementing DCM.

DCM key principles

	Inbound logic	Personalization	Journey facilitation
Generating intelligence about customer journeys	Formation of buyer personas by identifying key buyer center members and their core business problems	Mapping customer journeys to understand key touchpoints and information needs of different personas at different journey stages	Analyzing customer engagement to assess the stage of the purchasing process
Creating a portfolio of valuable content	Creating thought-provoking content that helps buyer personas frame their business problems	Creating content that supports personas' problem solving at different stages of their journey	Crafting synergistic content paths by linking individual content pieces for journey facilitation
Engaging customers through content sharing	Enhancing organic content visibility in digital channels used by buyer prsonas for information search	Timely delivery of relevant content pieces tailored to buyer personas	Nudging customers forward on their journeys to generate conversions

DCM activity dimensions

Figure 1: Conceptualization of DCM in B2B markets based on activities (adapted from Terho et al. (2022)

2.2.1 Generating intelligence about customer journeys.

In their research, Terho et al. (2022) found that generating intelligence about customer journeys is done by forming buyer personas, mapping customer journeys and analyzing customer engagement. They found that identifying the needs of customers at an organizational level is not enough to segment potential customers, which is why *forming buyer personas is essential*. They also think that especially in business markets, multiple people in customer organizations affect purchase decisions, which is an issue that needs to be reflected in the formation of buyer personas. Therefore, a need exists to identify individual people who usually influence purchase decisions at the targeted customer segments. Multiple sources and methods of data collection should also be used in creating buyer personas to get a detailed understanding of the customers. Potential sources for touchpoint data can include a customer relationship management (CRM) tool as it is usually the first place a customer submits their contact information (see Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016), listening to social media, as social content affects purchasing journeys (Vieira et al., 2019) and interviewing customers and employees who work with customers. The buyer personas that are built should include information on key business problems, targets, motivations, purchase criteria and

personal values for the individuals who typically have an impact on purchase decisions.

Terho et al. (2022) think that marketers need to systematically *map customer journeys* to understand the most important touchpoints and information needs of different individuals at various journey stages. They found that mapping the stages target customers usually go through during the buying process allows marketers to personalize content accordingly. However, they also found that firms should map points after the initial purchase of the customer to facilitate marketing communications that aim for cross-selling or upselling in the future. This way DCM can aid not only in customer acquisition but also in raising customer lifetime value.

Terho et al. (2022) also think that *analyzing customer engagement* forms another essential part of generating intelligence on customer journeys and that it should be tracked in real-time. They found that using marketing automation and CRM tools to track customer engagement with content and building lead scoring systems into CRM tools, allows for better estimation of the stage of a prospect's purchasing process. To supplement the process of customer engagement analysis, data can also be accumulated from web analytics and analyzed with machine-learning techniques (Gregoriades et al., 2021; Salminen et al., 2019). Finding insights on what content the customer finds relevant, compelling and timely also enables managers to create the correct types of content for different journey stages (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). These estimations get more precise as the customer engages with more content. Hollebeek & Macky, (2019) also emphasized the importance of market research for managers to determine what ratio of educational, entertaining and hybrid content is best for their target audience. Previous research has also shown that a high rate of content consumption is an indicator of an approaching purchase decision (Vieira et al., 2019) and that in a B2B context, this effect is compounded by the buyer's job title level (Wang et al., 2019).

Kshetri et al. (2023) found that GAI tools such as ChatGPT and Salesforce's Einstein GPT are being used to track and analyze behavioral data such as purchase histories to serve product and service recommendations. They also reported that ChatGPT can be used in lead-scoring systems to help with estimating customer maturity. They also reported that CRM tools such as Microsoft's Dynamics 365, which utilizes GPT4, can be used to learn about new customer segments to target. Saura et al. (2021) also argue that AI-based CRMs increase business performance through data collection, generating sales predictions and analyzing customer data.

As GAI is being used to form new customer segments, track and analyze engagement and supplement lead-scoring systems, there seem to be clear applications for GAI in the first dimension of DCM activities. First, GAI could be used to create customer segments and customer personas for targeting. Second, GAI is more accurate at analyzing engagement than previous technologies, leading to more precise insights into the customer journey than what was previously possible. Third, using GAI for tracking engagement and lead-scoring may lead to better personalization of marketing efforts. Fourth, there could also be applications

for GAI in visualizing customer journeys with accumulated data on customer touchpoints.

2.2.2 Creating a portfolio of valuable content.

Terho et al. (2022) think that there are three sub-activities included in creating a portfolio of valuable content. The first sub-activity is *creating content for buyer personas that frames their business problems in a way that provokes their thinking*. They found that this can be achieved by constantly creating content that utilizes current industry insights and new knowledge on curated content themes. They also found that this type of content is especially important in the early stages of the customer journey to influence purchasing criteria later in the buying process. They also found that there does not need to be a direct link to a firm's offerings in this type of content. The goal for this type of content is to ultimately get the buyer to think about their business differently and become more aware of issues they might have. Previous research on engagement has shown that this type of content that elicits a cognitive or an emotional response in the customer, has the potential to foster further content consumption and other business-building behaviors (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

The second sub-activity for content portfolio creation Terho et al. (2022) found is *creating problem-solving content*. They argue that problem-framing content should be supported by problem-solving content that helps buyer personas in different stages of their journey. They characterize this type of content with two aspects, that it is personalized to support individual buyer personas' efforts in problem-solving and addresses informational needs at various steps of their journey. Earlier research into customer journeys has found a need to deliver this type of journey-specific content (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). Terho et al. (2022) note that problem-framing content can be used to cater to wider audiences that are in the early stages of their customer journey. The way problem-solving content differs from problem-framing content is through customer maturity as it can be used to attract buyers who are already aware of their core business problems. Making this distinction and creating different content types is important to be able to effectively reach customers through different channels (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). The authors emphasize that intelligence about customer journeys needs to be in place when creating this type of content. The reasoning for this is that customer journey intelligence facilitates the personalization of content to specific buyer personas. Being able to solve topical issues at different stages of the customer journey elicits responsiveness to the content and fosters engagement.

Terho et al. (2022) think that the third sub-activity in content portfolio creation is *facilitating the customer journey with synergistic content paths*. They think linking related content pieces together to create content paths facilitates a better customer journey as it allows the buyer to consume content. They found that to create these types of content paths, marketers need to understand the goal of each

content piece and their relationship with other pieces of content. When this pre-requisite is fulfilled, content can be linked together to form paths that give the buyer an easy way of navigating through content relevant to their informational needs.

There are several applications for GAI in the DCM dimension of creating a valuable content portfolio. It is widely recognized that GAI can help marketers by assisting in writing processes by generating new content ideas (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Garvey et al., 2021; Kshetri et al., 2023; Wahid et al., 2023), translating text (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022) and generating written content (Kshetri et al., 2023). Kshetri et al., (2023) argued that GAI is an effective tool for content creation for both textual and visual content. They found that text-based marketing content such as ad copy, blog posts and product descriptions can be generated with tools such as Copy.ai, Jasper.ai and ChatGPT. They also reported that there is an op-portunity for marketers to leverage their content with GAI as they can use tools such as DALL-E2 to create infographics or other forms of images from previously generated textual content. They also reported that alternative tools for DALL-E2 include Midjourney and Stable Diffusion. They also think that video tools based on GAI technology can be used to generate "high-quality" videos for marketing purposes, however, they do not mention any specific tools for this purpose.

Content personalization has also been recognized as a use case for GAI (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kshetri et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2019). Salesforce's Einstein GPT is one of the reported tools that can leverage existing customer data in the firm CRM to create personalized content for pro-spects (Kshetri et al., 2023). Kshetri et al., (2023) also argue that ChatGPT can be used to personalize content for individual users, especially if using the more re-cent version of the tool, GPT-4, which has upgraded language generation abilities from the previous GPT-3.5.

GAI could also be used when designing content paths, as it can give initial ideas on potential content links from data analysis on previous content, or sug-gest future content related to a specific theme. Kshetri et al. (2023) also think that tools such as ChatGPT can be used to do this type of data analysis on customer behavior, leading to more accurate content suggestions and therefore, more per-sonalized and effective content paths.

2.2.3 Engaging customers through content sharing.

Terho et al. (2022) think that three main sub-activities comprise engaging customers through content sharing. Firstly, as buyers use digital channels to search for information, *increasing the visibility of organic content on the channels used by the buyer personas* becomes increasingly important. They found that getting more organic visibility for content can be accomplished by investing in SEO, building a presence on social media channels that the buyer personas frequently use and utilizing social selling by encouraging employees to share firm content with their profiles.

Secondly, Terho et al. (2022) think that to foster engagement with content sharing, *the content that firms deliver to their buyer personas needs to be personalized and relevant to their current stage of the customer journey*. They found that technology has a crucial role in this activity as marketing automation and CRM technologies allow firms to continuously track content engagement, deliver content to buyer personas, track engagement and use engagement data to optimize future content delivery. The mention of content being relevant to the current stage of the customer journey was also emphasized in a study by Salonen et al. (2024). They were the first to show empirical evidence that by providing timely content, firms can drive engagement in business markets. Salonen et al. (2024) also underscore the importance of gaining insights on when exactly firms should share their content and propose that firms should try to utilize technology in targeting content delivery based on individual customer's behavior. In addition to using CRM technology to track and analyze engagement, previous research by Gregoriades et al. (2021) has found that machine learning technology can be used to analyze electronic word of mouth (eWOM) data (e.g., customer reviews on a website) to extract content topics. They also argue that this approach can help managers create more personalized content around the topics, increasing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Lastly, Terho et al. (2022) found that firms try to expand their reach from individuals to other personas from target companies whenever possible to have more influence on future purchase decisions.

Thirdly, Terho et al. (2022) think that *customers should be nudged forward on their customer journeys to generate more conversions*. They found that this can be accomplished by including call-to-action elements in content pieces to encourage the buyer to engage further. This can manifest in the buyer consuming more content, leaving their contact information, or taking some other form of action, where the goal is to lead them closer to a purchase decision. However, the authors do note that this does not mean an overt sales approach, but a more customer-centric approach where the idea is to offer content that genuinely supports the buyer's decision-making process. Previous research by Järvinen & Taiminen, (2016) has shown that marketing automation can be used to deploy nurturing campaigns. They found that these campaigns can be repeated multiple times to gather more data on what the customer is interested in to get a better view of where they are in the funnel and to try to move the customers forward in their journey. They also found that this helps the sales team know if the customer might be ready to be contacted.

There are several applications for GAI in this dimension of DCM activities in enhancing organic visibility and delivering timely content. First, it seems clear that visibility on organic channels would increase as companies are able to push out more content. Garvey et al. (2021) argue that GAI can be used to analyze social media posts and auto-generate text suggestions. They think that this will help managers in creating more content that engages customers on social media channels. However, gaining visibility on social media channels organically might become increasingly difficult as more firms start utilizing GAI for content generation and the amount of content on different channels grows exponentially.

Second, GAI is being used to get better results from organic information search channels such as Google Search by conducting keyword analyses (see Kshetri et al., 2023) and generating content for human editors to optimize for search engines (see Reisenbichler et al., 2022). Reisenbichler et al. found that the SEO content generated by GAI and edited by humans not only differed from content generated by SEO professionals but also outperformed human-written content in search results. The previous findings from Reisenbichler et al. (2022) and Kshetri et al. (2023) might be especially useful for marketers in fields where there are multiple keyword themes or groups that they need to work with, for example in retailing.

Third, the paper by Kshetri et al. (2023) highlights that firms that have integrated GAI tools into their CRM system can see valuable benefits. They found that Salesforce's Einstein GPT tool can create insights from data gathered from different touchpoints. They argue that this in turn facilitates the creation of cold outreach campaigns, in which a substantial number of potential customers are contacted simultaneously. However, they do not mention which GAI tools specifically can be used to automate these types of campaigns. Additionally, they found that the Einstein GPT can write sales messages that acknowledge relevant customer data, leading to more personalized messaging. GAI use for paid campaigns has also been researched in a study by Arango et al. (2023) who suggest a cautionary approach to adopting AI-generated ad images into paid marketing campaigns.

Table 2: Extant knowledge of GAI activities and tools in DCM dimensions

DCM dimensions	GAI activities	Tool(s)	Study
Generating intelligence about customer journeys	Conducting customer data analysis and generating sales predictions	AI-based CRMs	(Saura et al., 2021)
	Generating market and customer insights from touchpoint data	Salesforce's Einstein GPT	(Kshetri et al., 2023)
	Lead qualification	ChatGPT	
	Learning about potential customer segments to target	Microsoft's Dynamics 365 Customer Insights	

	Generating market statistics and demographic targeting data	ChatGPT	(Dwivedi et al., 2023)
Creating a portfolio of valuable content	Generating ideas for content and assisting in creating written content	ChatGPT	(Dwivedi et al., 2023) (Kshetri et al., 2023) (Wahid et al., 2023) (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022; Garvey et al., 2021)
	Creating written content (e.g., blogs and ad copy)	ChatGPT Copy.ai Peppertype. Ai Jasper.ai Salesforce's Einstein GPT	(Kshetri et al., 2023)
	Translating text	DeepL Translator	(Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022)
	Creating images and art	Midjourney DALL-E2 Stable Diffusion	(Kshetri et al., 2023) (Peres et al., 2023)
	Generating video content	-	(Kshetri et al., 2023)
	Personalizing content with customer data	ChatGPT Salesforce's Einstein GPT	(Dwivedi et al., 2023) (Kumar et al., 2019) (Kshetri et al., 2023) (Chintalapati & Pandey, 2022)
Engaging customers through content sharing	Analyzing and generating engaging social media content	-	(Garvey et al., 2021)

Conducting keyword research and generating keyword suggestions	ChatGPT	(Dwivedi et al., 2023) (Kshetri et al., 2023)
Content creation for SEO with human editing	GPT-2	(Reisenbichler et al., 2022)
Automating cold outreach campaigns	-	(Kshetri et al., 2023)
Delivering timely and personalized messaging	Salesforce's Einstein GPT	(Kshetri et al., 2023)

3   DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the decisions on methodology that were made during this study. The methodological decisions were based on the aim of the study, which is to understand how generative artificial intelligence technologies affect digital content marketing processes currently and in the future. Therefore, the study explores a relatively new phenomenon without creating new rules and aims to uncover patterns and generate new ideas rather than test existing theories. Figure 2 presents the methodological process and main points of research strategy, key informant selection, data collection and data analysis.

Research Strategy
- Qualitative research
- Abductive approach

Key informant selection
- Purposeful sampling
  - Firm has invested into DCM and is looking into GAI opportunities
  - Informant has key responsibilities in DCM processes

Data collection
- Semi-structured interviews
  - Eight key informants
  - Interview organized in themes adopted from theoretical framework
    - Conceptualization of DCM (Terho et al., 2022)

Data analysis
- Coding approach adopted from O'Gorman & MacIntosh, (2015, p. 141)
  - Open coding of transcriptions
  - Axial coding of generated codes
- Open codes linked to lower-order themes found during axial coding
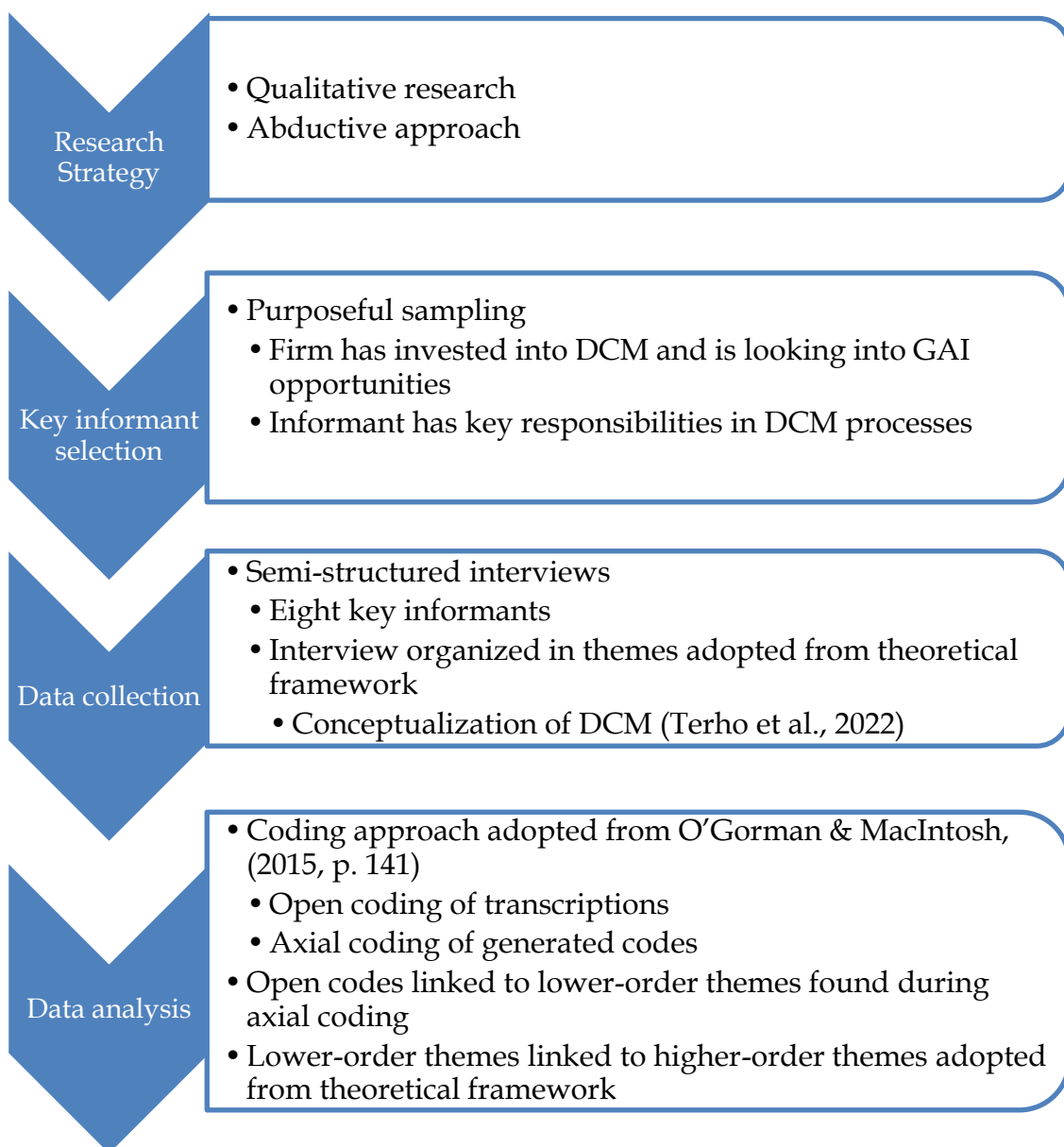- Lower-order themes linked to higher-order themes adopted from theoretical framework

Figure 2: The methodological process of this study.

3.1   Research strategy: Qualitative research

Qualitative research describes how the informants experience reality (Adams et al., 2014, p. 6). Qualitative research tends to be exploratory and is especially relevant in cases where the extant research on a particular phenomenon is scarce (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 4–9). In qualitative research, the focus is usually on rigorous analysis of relatively small sample size (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). These three aspects of qualitative research align with the research gap introduced in this thesis as the role of GAI and humans in DCM lacks extant research and calls for exploratory research on how managers' experiences on GAI and DCM. Additionally, several previous studies on DCM have relied on qualitative research. Therefore, a qualitative research strategy was adopted for this thesis.

Theory itself can be approached inductively, deductively, or abductively. Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008, pp. 11–24) describe how abduction involves a process in which common descriptions and interpretations used by people are moved to categories and concepts that allow form a foundation for explaining or understand the described phenomenon. When conducting research with an abductive approach there is a need to pinpoint a theoretical position, which is modified and tested with additional collected data (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163). Saunders et al. (2012) also described that exploratory research can be done in several ways, however, the process usually includes conducting a literature review on the topic and interviewing individuals or focus groups. This thesis is conducted as a field study, where the primary empirical data is collected from semistructured interviews conducted during January, February and March of 2024. This study is driven by existing theory and utilizes the DCM framework by Terho et al. (2022) to find what effects GAI has on DCM processes outlined in the framework. Therefore, this thesis also has an abductive approach. This approach is also seen in this thesis in the methods used that are discussed in this chapter.

3.2   Data collection

3.2.1 Key informant selection

According to Daymon & Holloway, (2011, p. 212) the two main questions regarding sampling is what and how to sample. They think that there should be inclusion and exclusion criteria in use to support decision making for whom to include or exclude from the study. Ultimately, who is selected into the study, the place and the time depend on the decisions of the researcher, which in turn are guided by the purpose of the study itself. This they call "purposive" or "purposeful" sampling. Inclusion criteria can include attributes such as job titles or participation in a process relevant to the study. They also think that one of the goals in

the study is not to generalize populations, but to understand a specific issue in its setting. Daymon & Holloway mention several sampling methods in their work, out of which snowball sampling they note as one of the most important types. Snowballing is a method that is variation of purposive sample, where the idea is to find more participants through the ones you have already interviewed.

The selection of informants in this thesis is based on purposeful sampling and uses the professional network of the author to find credible experts in the field of DCM and deploy snowballing to find additional informants. This helps the researcher to ensure that the informants have enough expertise and firsthand experience in DCM to provide meaningful insights into the subject.

Because GAI and DCM penetrate multiple industries, this should be represented in the selection of the key informants. *The criteria for informant selection are that the firm has invested heavily in DCM and is either looking to or has already adopted GAI into its digital marketing processes.*

The individuals selected need to have key responsibilities in the DCM processes, either in generating customer journey intelligence, content creation, or sharing content. Including key informants from diverse roles within different industries, organizations and departments adds practical relevance to the data of the study by offering insights from different perspectives. *The individuals can be from various departments such as marketing or sales* and can have titles such as CMO, marketing specialist, sales director, head of content, or copywriter.

In addition to sample type, decisions on sample size need to be discussed. Daymon & Holloway, (2011) think that in qualitative studies there are no specific rules in place for sample size. However, they note that most researchers consider sample sizes between 4 and 40 informants. They also think that the sample size is not a rigid number but can be adjusted during the data collection and analysis of the study. In this thesis, the preliminary goal is to conduct 10-20 interviews and assess the data after each interview to assess current data saturation. This way it is possible to adjust the number of interviews depending on if it is likely or unlikely to provide new insights. This can also be characterized as an iterative process where the need for further interviews can be decided after the initial analysis of data from each interview. Seventeen people were contacted for participation in the interviews for this thesis of which 10 were scheduled. Ultimately, eight interviews were conducted and two interviews were canceled due to a scheduling conflict and a potential conflict of interest due to the employer of the researcher and the informant's firms working in the same field. After the initial data analysis of the eighth interview, the data set was seen as sufficient and further interviews were unlikely to uncover additional insights.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview

After deciding on the methodology and key informant selection, the data is gathered and analyzed. In this study the data comes from eight semi-structured interviews, which are recorded and transcribed. According to (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015, p. 51) data can be gathered in qualitative studies with multiple

methods including interviews, focus groups, diaries, ethnography and observation. They list interviews into three categories, unstructured, structured and semi-structured. These categories are characterized by how rigid the questions are. They think that interviews in general can be used to acquire exploratory data. They also think that semi-structured interviews are useful when the interviewer is not experienced, informants can express their views freely and can respond in language that is natural to them.

For this thesis, semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow the inexperienced interviewer to follow a topic guide and allow the informants to express their views freely during an informal dialogue (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). By using a semi-structured interview method, the researcher also can ask additional and clarifying questions during each interview to pursue any interesting issues that arise (Adams et al., 2014). Both the structure of the interviews and questions are developed based on the DCM framework from (Terho et al., 2022). The interview questions (see APPENDIX 1   Semi-structured interview questions) were formulated by taking into account the research questions and the dimensions of the theoretical framework: generating intelligence on customer journeys, creating a portfolio of valuable content and engaging customers through content sharing. The theoretical background formed the main three themes of the interview topic guide. Three main questions were developed according to the themes and were supplemented by additional questions to guide the interview process. By conducting semi-structured interviews in this manner, the researcher can make sure that all critical issues were covered during the interviews. This in turn helps fulfill the research objectives of the study.

O'Gorman & MacIntosh, (2015, p. 120) note that interviews can be conducted with different approaches, including video, telephone, or face-to-face. For practical reasons such as easier access to informants, the interviews in this thesis are conducted via video remotely on Microsoft Teams and are both recorded and transcribed. Choosing the interviews to be conducted remotely with Microsoft Teams also eliminates issues such as not seeing facial expressions and body language of the informants. Additionally, it enables a sample that is not geographically bound to a single place.

The data collection process started with the researcher creating a list of potential informants from companies conducting DCM and engaging in discussions with digital marketing consultants to find additional relevant informants, known for their DCM expertise. Potential informants from identified firms were contacted on LinkedIn or via email to inquire their interest in participating in this study. During the interview sessions, the researcher used snowballing techniques to find additional informants to contact and avoid selection bias.

Table 3 presents the data sample including the number of interviews conducted, length of the interviews, informant job title, their employer firm size and industry categories. The firm size categories are adopted from OECD, (n.d.)

which defines small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as enterprises that employ less than 250 people and large enterprises as companies that employ more than 250 people. In this study the large enterprises as referred to as simply enterprises. The industry segmentation is adopted from a manual created by Occupational Safety and Health Administration, (n.d.). The companies are also all doing business in Finland and in some cases internationally in addition to Finland.

To comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) explicit consent was asked from each informant for recording the interviews and collecting their personal data. The privacy notice and research notifications were both submitted to the informants at least two days before the interview to give them sufficient time to review the documents. Consent for recording the interviews was recorded in the transcriptions and videos of each interview at the start of the interview. The beginning of the interview also included reminding the informants on what data would be collected, how their data is handled and their data privacy rights including the right to withdraw their participation in the study.

Table 3: List of interviewees

Firm #	Interview length (min.)	Firm industry	Title	Firm size category
Firm 1	63	Finance and insurance	Content manager	Enterprise
Firm 2	50	Telecommunications	Senior Marketing Expert	Enterprise
Firm 3	54	Business services	Content Marketing Specialist	Enterprise
Firm 4	48	Manufacturing	Marketing Manager	Enterprise
Firm 5	53	Real estate	Head of Marketing	SME
Firm 6	42	Manufacturing	Marketing Director	Enterprise
Firm 7	57	Business services	Content Strategist	SME
Firm 8	56	Telecommunications	Senior Content Manager	Enterprise
N = 8	53			

3.3   Data analysis

This sub-chapter discusses the data analysis methods this study uses. After gathering data, the next stages in research are coding and analyzing the data (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). Kaplan & Maxwell, (2005) think that the goal in the data analysis process is to understand or interpret a particular phenomenon. This can be accomplished by deploying an iterative process where data is collected, an initial understanding is developed and further data collection and analysis is done until it is estimated that the analysis is adequate.

Usually, the large amount of data in qualitative analysis proves to be the toughest challenge for researchers (Adams et al., 2014). Due to the nature of interview transcriptions, the data set to be analyzed is large. Therefore, a qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti is used to assist in the iterative analysis process.

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen, (2008, pp. 11–24) deductive and inductive are the two general data analysis approaches to social science research. Deduction is an approach where research is used to test theories by forming hypothesis and do an empirical analysis. Eriksson & Kovalainen think that this type of approach is not always suitable for qualitative analysis due to its strict form. Induction they describe as an approach where theories are an outcome of empirical research and research continues from empirical research to theoretical results. In addition to these two, they also note that some researchers prefer to use abduction in their research, which is an approach that adopts ideas from both deductive and inductive logic. This thesis uses abductive logic as its data analysis approach, which means a theoretical concept is used to describe and analyze codes and meanings related to the codes from empirical data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 115–136). In this study, higher-order themes are adopted from the theoretical framework and represent the three dimensions of DCM.

The coding approach followed the methods outlined by O'Gorman & MacIntosh (2015, p. 141) open and axial coding. Open coding involves splitting the data into smaller parts to identify and refine concepts. In this study, the interview transcription data was read through several times in ATLAS.ti, this process included reducing irrelevant parts of the interviews from the transcription documents. These irrelevant parts of the data were transcribed parts of the interview that were unrelated to the subject and for example, words that were repeated multiple times consecutively. During this part of the analysis each line of relevant data were first added as a quotation in ATLAS.ti and placed under the corresponding higher-order themes which were adopted from the theoretical framework. The coding approach for these quotations was conducted in a data-driven manner to refine concepts found in the quotations. The second stage of the coding process included axial coding, which refers to identifying different links between codes or data. During this process, the codes generated during open coding were analyzed to find links, which were then used to either refine or merge existing codes to create lower-order themes (See Figure 3) The coding process was an iterative process, in which, for example, first-order codes and lower-order themes were switched under from one higher-order theme to another if found that the codes or themes matched better.
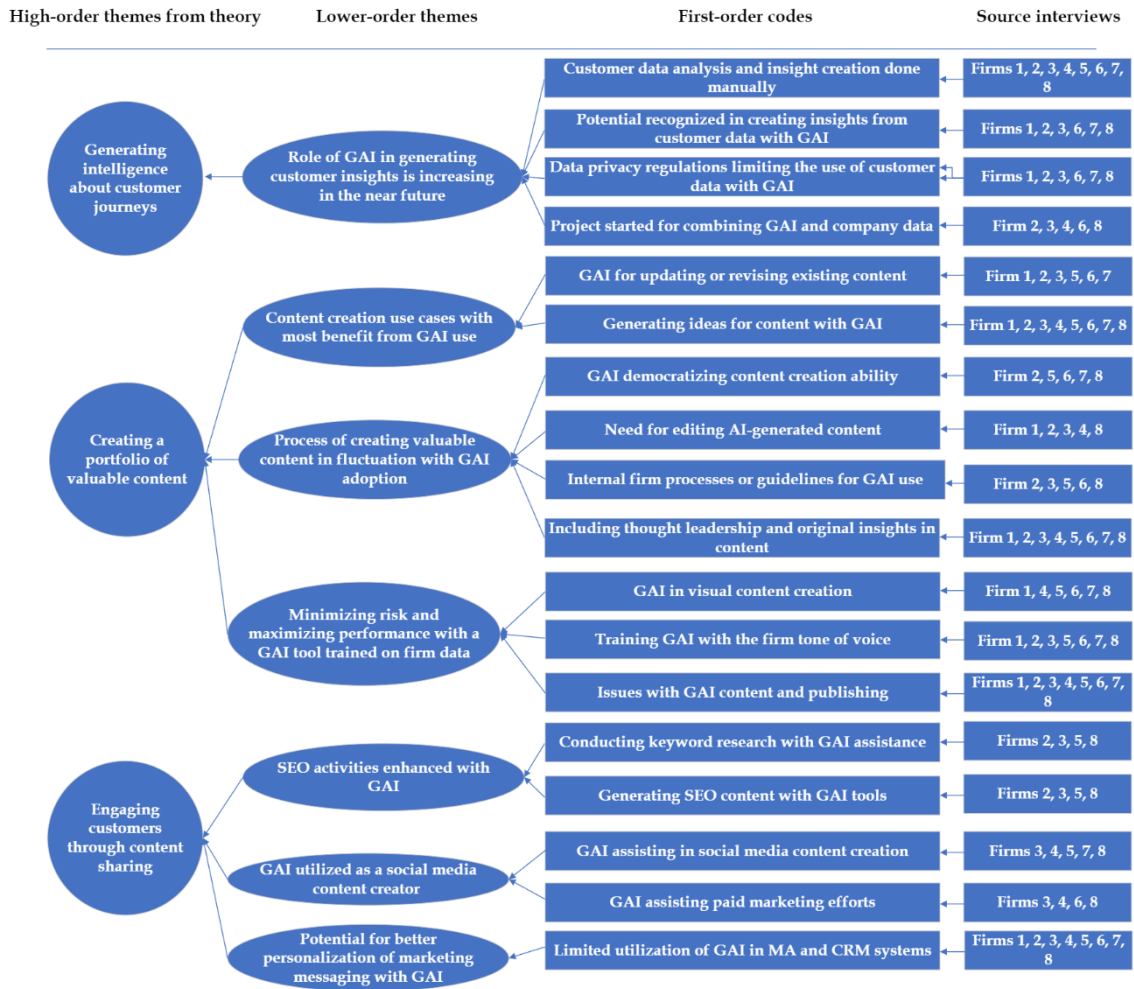
Figure 3: Coding scheme

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Analysis of the interviews revealed that the role of GAI within DCM relies on two key factors: individual user perceptions of GAI and the extent to which companies integrate GAI functions and tools into their existing processes and software. **<u>Informants consistently viewed GAI as a valuable tool within DCM, considering it an emerging technology with untapped potential across all three DCM dimensions</u>**. Notably, all eight informants emphasized GAI's current role as assisting in content generation tasks, highlighting how its use for content creation also benefits other key activities such as SEO and social media marketing. However, they also stressed the necessity of human oversight and editing for content produced by GAI. This need for scrutiny over AI-generated content was particularly emphasized in technical fields, where content often includes original insights from subject matter experts interviewed by the firm.

All informants mentioned utilizing GAI tools in their work. However, the frequency of GAI usage varied among informants, aligning with their respective positions within marketing departments. Particularly, those closely involved in content creation, who have integrated task-specific GAI tools into their workflows, underscored the benefits they have perceived from using GAI. Furthermore, all eight informants expressed they anticipate GAI use to expand from content generation tasks to customer data-related activities. This issue of combining customer data and GAI was highlighted particularly by five informants whose companies had started a development project for implementing GAI tools and functions with their existing CRM and MA tools. This was seen as a potential way to optimize content delivery personalization and to allow GAI to create customer insights, which managers could leverage for future marketing efforts.

4.1 Generating intelligence about customer journeys

Role of GAI in generating insights customers is increasing in the near future

All eight informants implicitly indicated that the role of GAI in generating customer insights is expected to grow in the near future. This is partly because creating customer insights is still heavily reliant on manual work, despite the availability of GAI programs designed for this purpose. A major limiting factor in combining GAI with customer data is information security and data privacy rights, which six informants mentioned either explicitly or implicitly. There were notable differences in how firms are addressing this issue. Only five informants from enterprise-sized firms noted that their companies had initiated projects to integrate GAI with customer data.

All eight interviews underscored that within the DCM dimension of generating intelligence about customer journeys, many key activities are still characterized by manual work. This was a recurring issue in the interviews, that mapping of customer journeys is done manually by humans analyzing customer data from various sources, which includes touchpoint data such as chat interactions, interview data, search data and web analytics to identify key touchpoints and typical stages of the journey.

> *"It is still very manual labor and it would be really interesting to know how AI could be used better in that (creation of buyer personas)."* (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist.)

> *"Then we have done analytics, for example, to support content paths, where we sort of analyze those specific contents and try to see, like, OK. Do the customers move from the first content to the second, third and fourth and so on? But yes, practically, these are done using Google Analytics for website content tracking."* (Firm 4, Marketing Manager)

> *"We build a physical chart in which we outline all the different phases of the customer journey and think about what content is suitable for each phase… But we get almost over ten thousand leads a year so we can't track them all in a very detailed way."* (Firm 4, Marketing Manager)

These three quotes manifest how various activities related to this DCM dimension are characterized by manual labor. Zero informants mentioned using GAI tools for activities such as creating buyer personas, analyzing customer engagement or mapping customer journeys.

Six informants underscored that there is potential for creating insights from customer data with GAI. They highlighted several potential use cases for using GAI in activities related to customer data that are currently being either performed by humans or some form of automation.

> *"Yes, in the future, GAI will play an even stronger role in gathering information related to customer journeys. Website tracking is already quite advanced; you can monitor a person through their purchasing process. However, regarding what happens before you buy, for example, product X — what kind of content and how certain content attracts a person to the purchase journey from the very beginning and the collection of this information and data from different sources — I firmly believe that GAI will have a larger role in that."* (Firm 1, Content Manager)

> *"Our organization is heavily looking into those (Microsoft Dynamics 365 GAI) features because when we are talking about generative artificial intelligence, it is a good pairing with customer data… to know what type of content we should*

show them at each stage of the journey… I see that automating for example traditional lead scoring would allow us to utilize it (GAI) more in marketing." (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

"For sure it (GAI) can be useful for data analysis. … for example, you could use your own data set and prompt it to tell you what sort of a person would buy this product and what would his title be. I do see that it (GAI) can already perform these types of tasks." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

These quotes reveal several avenues for GAI to have a larger role in generating intelligence about customer journeys and that how expanding the use of GAI in this DCM dimension is recognized. A key issue that was implicitly expressed in the interviews was that there already are GAI tools available for these activities, however firms have not been able to deploy them yet. Future use could include combining data from various sources such as web analytics, CRM and paid campaigns and using GAI to provide insights on trends across the buyer journey. Updating existing processes such as lead scoring would also assist in better targeting and personalization of marketing messages, especially relevant in nudging B2B buyers forward in their customer journeys.

Six informants highlighted how information security issues need to be addressed and how they currently limit the use of customer data with common GAI programs. They also underscored that preventing sensitive data such as customer information from leaking outside the organization is a significant concern.

"We're considering implementing Copilot at an organizational level. It would also address security concerns better, as we have some limitations with using ChatGPT. We have guidelines in place that restrict the information that can be inputted, for example, firm-related data cannot be included. All organization names and similar details need to be altered. In marketing, it's not as restrictive because most texts are public, so it has been okay to use it in that context." (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

"With ChatGPT, it's essentially a matter of security for us. It's not recommended to use it, especially for anything related to customer data or similar." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"Well, of course, especially when we delve into the aspect of customer data, considering which systems are allowed to read and analyze it and how they can utilize it, that's a whole different matter in itself." (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

These quotes illustrate how regulations set in place restrict the use of commonly used GAI programs with sensitive data such as customer information. Therefore, companies have had to create guidelines for third-party GAI program use and approach adopting new GAI tools carefully to respect data privacy.

A total of five informants, all notably working in enterprises, highlighted that their firms have started a project where GAI features or tools are being integrated with the firm's data or CRM system. They also underscored that this is a relatively new development that is happening and only one interviewee claimed that their firm has developed a GAI program that can be used with virtually any data.

> *"But we have our own self-developed copilot in use. It was introduced towards the end of last year and is still quite undeveloped. Personally, I don't really like using it yet. On the other hand, it should be used so it can learn faster, but there's not really time to train it."* (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

> *"Yes and in our marketing, we have an AI pilot in use. However, I don't know which tool it uses since it's not my area. But we use it to enrich lead information, meaning we try to leverage machine intelligence to gather information from incoming leads."* (Firm 4, Marketing Manager)

> *"Well, I know that, especially in the Microsoft environment, some of us have access. We have pilot groups that have already gained access to those features. But I definitely see that the utilization is at a level where it is absolutely worth distributing the access widely."* (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

> *"...we have developed our own chat model as a content marketing tool, for instance.... with our company's chat, you can input any company information or data and it will create from that. So, it's much more efficient when companies can adopt such a model, as it becomes effective and functional."* (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

These quotes depict how firms have begun adopting GAI programs that are taught with customer data for various tasks. It is also clear that firms are in different stages of adoption at this point in time as in the best case that was found during the interview process only one firm had successfully launched an internal chatbot. This means that the firm can use sensitive data with the chatbot for content marketing tasks. One key issue that should be addressed is that the GAI program the firm is adopting has an effect on this process. Some programs are launched for the whole firm to use and to provide learning data, alternatively, other programs can be adopted by individual users in the firm before distributing use more widely.

4.2 Creating a portfolio of valuable content

Generating new content in the form of visuals and text is an integral part to both the output GAI can create and the second dimension of DCM; creating a portfolio of valuable content. Therefore, the data analysis was able to find the most applications and a significantly larger role or GAI in this dimension over the other two.

The informants characterized the texts they had generated with GAI as usually being mediocre, as they included factual mistakes and missed the firm tone of voice. Therefore, the informants highlighted the importance of internal processes for best practices such as sharing prompts and that no content should be published without human proofreading and editing. The informants also noted that training the GAI program with existing branded content had a significant effect on the quality of the output. In terms of business outcomes, the managers underscored that they do not yet know what the results of adopting GAI for various DCM activities and content creation are, as they are still at an early stage of adoption for this technology.

Content creation use cases with most benefit from GAI use

Six informants highlighted how they have found GAI useful for updating or revising existing content. They underscored how they perceived the process of prompting a GAI tool with previously published content and using it to create new content.

> *"We use it to some extent nowadays in firm 2 and what I used it for earlier was for translation, especially when we need to create language versions. So, it's pretty good at translating Finnish text into English and also adjusting its tone when it comes to English-language text, whereas with Finnish, it doesn't seem to grasp that tonality at all, based on my experience."* (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

> *"So when the character limit exceeds, then it's quite handy in terms of figuring out how to shorten it, but rarely does anything come out of it ready-made in that sense, so I use it more as a tool. It saves time in many things."* (Firm 5, Head of Marketing)

> *"If we have article a, of which there already exists six articles, then based on those it (GAI) can write a couple more, so this type of work is of course easier."* (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

These quotes illustrate how different types of content can be used to guide a GAI tool to create another version of previously published content. The informants mentioned how several types of content can be used both in the prompt as

a learning data set and as the wanted output. These included creating shorter posts out of published articles or translating content to other languages.

Process of creating valuable content in fluctuation with GAI adoption

All eight informants mentioned how they have used GAI for generating ideas for content. These included creating suggestions for new content pieces, headlines, alternative structures for website content.

> *"For finding the best headline or phrasing, AI can probably also analyze which headline or text is the most creative or effective or directs the best."* (Firm 1, Content Manager)

> *"And another area where AI helps in content production is if, for example, you need headline ideas or this type of assistance. If you want help with headlines or shorter snippets, or if you want to phrase something differently, it helps with that. For instance, I often ask for five headline ideas. However, you have to be a bit careful with that too, because AI can sometimes make things up, producing content or headline suggestions that may not be in the actual article. So you still have to be careful with it."* (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

> *"But I know that good results have been achieved. Especially in planning and brain-storming. In these kinds of tasks, it's quite easy to grab useful ideas from there."* (Firm 4, Marketing Manager)

These quotes manifest how GAI has been found useful for creating ideas. The informants also mentioned how they have prompted GAI to produce multiple variations of a new idea or headline. The informants perceiving GAI as a useful tool in this context could be due to the ease of use of common GAI tools as the prompts for creating ideas can be produced quickly. The informants mentioning ChatGPT especially in this context also points to issue that they have not needed an internal GAI tool taught with firm content to create these ideas. It is also logical that when generating shorter texts such as headlines versus lengthy articles, it is easier to include the firm tone of voice.

Process of creating valuable content in fluctuation with GAI adoption

Five informants discussed how GAI has democratized content creation ability for more office workers. The informants highlighted how they have seen this phenomenon take place on social media and in their firms internally where more people are taking part in content sharing and creation.

> *I could imagine that at an organizational level, <u>the people who were not good at producing some specific types of content are now a lot better at it than before.</u>*

"So, it helps those people raise their level a bit and I can also vouch that an increase in productivity has occurred." (Firm 6, Marketing Director.)

"But unfortunately, you can clearly see it in LinkedIn posts. If you've ever made them yourself and tried to produce, because I've tried myself, of course. You can see that this content is now generated by some automation. So, does one really want to go there?" (Firm 7, Content Strategist)

"So, because of AI and generative AI in general. One of my colleagues said that it democratizes expertise and a certain kind of expertise diminishes, but it emphasizes that you need to know how to use that AI tool. Then you can have whatever expertise and AI will provide you with that knowledge, but you need to know how to ask the right questions." (Firm 8, Senior Content Marketer)

These quotes illustrate how the content creation abilities have democratized and that this issue also elicited polarizing statements from the informants. While GAI is perceived to enhance productivity and democratizing even subject expertise, it also raises concerns about authenticity especially if the person creating the content is pursuing thought leadership in their field.

Five informants underscored how AI-generated content needs to be edited before publishing. However, there were differences in how the informants approached editing AI-generated content as some highlighted only fixing small parts of the text while others reported a need for rewriting larger parts of the text.

"Surely it already is to some extent, that quite a few might produce content pretty much as it is, then I'll tweak some colloquialism from there, I believe and know that this is already the case to some extent." (Firm 1, Content Manager)

"Then there's probably a much lighter review process (For SEO content), with a lot of it being text trimming and fine-tuning." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"But then if you want to create impactful content, I think you have to do something unique and if you publish the text directly generated by AI, will it be the best it can be? Personally, I see that in content production, GAI can be used for generating such framework text and then you yourself start shaping it from there." (Firm 4, Marketing Manager)

As previously discussed, AI is valued especially for generating frameworks and drafts for content, but the informants highlight a more balanced approach to content creation with GAI where a human-editor is used for each piece of content. The data also suggests that there is nuance to the extent to which content should be edited as there are differences between the informants' firms' GAI tools, how well they have learned the tone of voice and naturally, the type of content being

created. Content made for the purpose of entertainment or SEO might require less human input than content aimed at building thought leadership.

Five informants highlighted how their firms have developed internal processes or guidelines for GAI use. These have been used to distribute information on how to best utilize the new technology and to avoid potential misuse.

> *"We might not have very controlled processes for this yet (GAI use), ... the usage may not be very organized."* (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

> *"I have created prompts that can be easily edited according to the situation. When I get a new idea for content related to one of our services, I talk with the person responsible for that service about the target audience, the goal for the content and other basic stuff. Then I feed those into the prompt. When it (GAI) creates the first version I just start editing that… And since each of us prompts a bit differently, we've sort of brought together these tried and tested prompts for common use, so it helps to standardize the experience and the output that comes from it."* (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

> *"For us, in terms of content strategy, it perhaps hasn't reached that level of updating yet and for us, perhaps at firm X (previous workplace), there was also this aspect where we were sort of seeking that firm policy on what exactly artificial intelligence is. At one point, there was also a ban on using ChatGPT and then it was allowed."* (Firm 5, Head of Marketing)

> *"… when we start thinking about organization-wide practices and such, then it usually follows such a 'by the book' process. And by that, I mean it's a conscious decision and process from the entire organization on how it proceeds. But in most companies at the moment, it's more like there's a user here and another there, who then adopt it themselves. But of course, as long as it goes through individuals like that, it can't become an efficient operational model."* (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

> *"I think we're quite ahead of other companies in this regard and of course, being a big tech firm, the use of artificial intelligence has been incorporated into our corporate personnel strategy... So, the key might be, in a way, how well one can provide those instructions. That's where skill development for prompting comes in. And we have a structured model for that. We document all the best practices and prompts…"* (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

Theses quotes illustrate how processes and guidelines varied across different firms as some had no firmwide policies or guidelines for adopting GAI tools. Common themes in this include the need for clear policies for GAI use and collaborating with colleagues for developing the needed skills for utilizing GAI

effectively. If these issues are addressed by firms, they are better able to adopt GAI into content creation processes.

Including thought leadership and original insights in firm content was raised as a key issue by all informants. All informants underscored the importance of having subject expertise by humans instead of GAI to stand out with content and developing thought leadership.

> *"It still requires that expert, but perhaps the expert's role in it changes. They become more of a fact-checker."* (Firm 1, Content Manager)

> *"It hasn't affected that. Perhaps the challenge we've encountered is that if we want to produce content where experts are interviewed and so forth, in that situation, AI may not speed it up because, well, the writing of the prompt itself, sharing all that background material with it, is usually almost more cumbersome than doing it yourself."* (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

> *"…however, we would like to invest in high-quality content that isn't superficial and I think artificial intelligence might be better now for creating exactly that kind (superficial) of content. That's why I feel like we haven't perhaps yet gained as much benefit from AI as we would hope."* (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert.)

> *"I'm not sure if AI could produce a technical whitepaper for experts. Could it create content that is better (than human-created)? It's not really that absolute peak content; it's more average what comes out of it. It will probably evolve and take big leaps forward, but I don't know if this is the use case for it to produce this kind of technical content. The text it produces is very generic, it fetches information from web sources and it can't delve into individual human thoughts, so it's ultimately based on digital sources. "*(Firm 4, Marketing Manager)

These quotes illustrate how GAI is perceived to be limited in its ability to create content characterized as high-quality or technical. The informants also highlighted how GAI does not speed up the content creation process in this context as it fundamentally does not have the needed data to create the content and that prompting for this type of content is seen as a cumbersome effort. Therefore, human expertise in the topic of the content and creating it is still needed to maintain high quality standards especially when establishing thought leadership.

Minimizing risk and maximizing performance with a GAI tool trained on firm data

Six informants highlighted developments in visual content creation with GAI. Similarly, to creating text-based content, they had recognized that training an AI-model with firm data is needed to create consistent output.

"I can see the graphic designers are really excited about it (GAI) as well, that it brings richness to their work a lot. And yes, when I've talked with them, they are extremely excited about it. Not at all like our work is going away, but rather more, "Wow, this adds more levels to our own work, which has been interesting." And I believe it (Graphic designers adopting GAI) also brings a bit of a new element to content that's meant as entertainment, for sure." (Firm 1, Content Manager)

"We have a pretty good process on the visual side. I can tell you that we have been able to dissect our brand pictures for diffusion and text models. This enabled us to create images according to our brand guidelines without consistency issues." (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

"For example, StoryKit... you can test it on their website. You put all the firm's brand and visual guidelines in there and then you can use it to create visualized PowerPoint presentations or even videos, so to me, it's kind of like a new content format. So when you have your own elements in there, then it becomes like your firm's look. And it's also easy to use and it has that creative AI text feature, we had an example of this StoryKit person, they just took our press release and asked the AI to group it and then it sort of went through different slides and then some music came in and certain elements came in different orders and then there was a bit of video in between and so on and then it ends with intros and outros, so then you have a ready-made video." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

These quotes illustrate a positive reaction towards visual content creation with GAI and how value has been extracted by being able to create new types of content and improving efficiency of the process. Interestingly this form of content creation was not seen as negatively as creating text-based content, but more as an asset for creative work and managers looking to enhance their content. What can be inferred from the interview data is also that visual content is not seen as sensitive data, which could be a key enabling factor for creating data sets and prompts for GAI tools to create new visuals.

Seven informants underscored that training GAI with the firm tone of voice is seen as a key issue. A GAI tool developed only for internal use in the firm was seen as one of the best ways to be able to include the tone of voice in content.

"We are planning to adopt Copilot. That would be a closed environment tailored specifically to our organization and apparently, it would be possible to develop a language model so that it could speak in our tone of voice, for example. With it, we could significantly improve content production with our limited internal resources." (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

"We have an interesting project going on right now... they (external partner) would be able to create, or they are now in the process of creating for us, an AI

model based on our self-written content. It teaches the AI to produce text in our tone of voice. And probably within the next few weeks, we will get to test it. But then it's really interesting to see that, At least the examples they showed, it really looks like it's written by a human and it's fascinating that it's based on the content genuinely created by our people. It will be interesting to see what kind of content it starts producing. If it works well, it would enable a much more efficient content production process." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Expert)

"I don't know, there was also consideration that companies, or now it's like companies can sort of... you can have your own artificial intelligence. And, well, Firm X had a lot of that kind of... in a way, it's about managing the content. It could be a great tool in certain respects if it were just within the firm itself and even for things like HR induction, you could ask it anything and find all sorts of brand messages and such." (Firm 5, Head of Marketing)

"And it (Chat-based GAI program trained by the firm) creates posts for us, any kind of text and it has been trained quite a lot, so it understands our tone of voice quite well. You can give it the length you want and so on and it can be asked to make as many versions as you want... The key is that the AI tools are in-house, so to speak. Tailored." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

These quotes manifest how implementing the tone of voice of the firm into a GAI tool is seen to enhance the efficiency of content creation by maintaining the tone of voice across different types of content. Firms have approached this issue by developing their own tool with their content or using an external partner. Increasing the efficiency of content creation by addressing this issue was seen as especially important when the firm's marketing team had limited resources. This is most likely because training a GAI tool this way would have implications for speeding up prompting. There would be less need for creating lengthy prompts with background information such as the tone of voice, but also previous content pieces as examples, making GAI easier to use for individuals.

All eight informants underscored various issues with the current GAI tools that they have used, spanning from copyrights and inclusivity to factual mistakes in output and the pricing of the tools. Most issues reported by the informants were closely related to the content created by GAI and potential repercussions related to publishing it.

"If asked for that text, even if the organization's name isn't mentioned, does it then use that text somewhere else, so will there be a semi-copy of the same content from a competitor soon after it's prompted in a similar way, then we have identical contents so maybe uniqueness can suffer there". (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert.)

"AI may not yet be integrated partly because we have so many different marketing tools that we are used to handling things with and for now, they seem to work quite well compared to if we were to handle these things with something like ChatGPT. It seems quite cumbersome compared to using the existing tools and processes we already have." (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert)

"If you're just generating text with AI and not doing anything to it. When it's posted like that, I don't know. Does Google, for example, have systems to check that text, its structure and language? Is it already doing that, or will it start penalizing in search results at some point, for example, if a text is identified as AI-generated?" (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

These quotes illustrate the several concerns and considerations the informants have for using GAI in content creation and publishing. Previously mentioned issues of mediocre output and tone of voice were commonly mentioned in the interviews, but there were also concerns over how consumers and other firms could react to seeing AI-generated content. In general, there seems to be uncertainty over what will happen if AI-generated content is published. However, these concerns will most likely be addressed by regulatory bodies and other key operators in the marketing field such as search engines.

4.3 Engaging customers through content sharing

The third dimension of DCM is engaging customers through content sharing, in which the data analysis found several applications for the use of GAI. However, the applications are closely linked to content creation as the informants stated that leveraging GAI features and tools have mainly been used in this context to gain visibility in organic channels. They also mentioned that adopting new GAI features in their MA and CRM systems would allow them to both personalize their content marketing and facilitate customer journeys better. However, this has not been possible yet.

SEO activities enhanced with GAI

Four informants highlighted how GAI can be used for conducting keyword analyses. However, they reported different ways they use GAI in this process and there were differences in how useful and reliable they perceived GAI for this task.

"In our SEO we use a tool called Ahrefs which has (G)AI implemented. It is specially added to the keyword research function so you can give it a topic and it will give you keyword suggestions based on that topic." (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert.)

"That got me thinking about SEO and it's actually quite good for that too. For instance, I've asked about keywords or topics that people search for" (Firm 5, Head of Marketing)

"For example, if I was starting to search for keywords for a piece of content by asking ChatGPT, I don't even know what it bases those on, these keywords, as it doesn't reveal any sources there, where these keywords have been taken from, if these are even the more effective ones." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

"Tools like BrightEdge and others require a lot of use to become proficient. For all the keyword analyses and such, it would be great if you could just ask, 'I want to promote this topic, what would be the best possible keyword to achieve a top 3 organic search result?' And I believe it will get to that point and that's what I'm hoping for." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

There is a significant contrast among informants regarding the use and perception of GAI for keyword research. Generally, GAI is seen as a beneficial tool for generating ideas. However, commonly used GAI tools like ChatGPT face a drawback: marketers are often unaware of the data sources behind the keyword suggestions. On the other hand, dedicated SEO tools with GAI capabilities can access relevant keyword data, such as search volume and relative competition, providing more reliable results for keyword research. While GAI is found to be useful overall, dedicated SEO tools are often perceived as difficult to use, whereas common GAI tools, designed for ease of use, struggle to provide trustworthy results.

The four informants that worked closely with SEO mentioned that they have used a GAI tool for generating new SEO content. Generating SEO content with GAI tools was found to be a time efficient way to create new website content that can rank on search engines.

"…for example, webstore texts or similar, where it is common practice to just copy and paste a product's technical information on the product page and those don't rank on Google almost at all. We have asked it (GAI) to optimize that same text or write it differently and then publish it. We have seen that it performs better than just the technical text. …Previously producing this type of copy for all products has not been possible with our resources." (Firm 2, Senior Marketing Expert.)

"The other side of this is SEO-optimized text. It's essentially mass production and we use a tool called Byword for it. Basically, you can input the keyword you want to optimize for and then it can generate some sort of text from that. (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"Then there's probably a much lighter review process (For SEO content), with a lot of it being text trimming and fine-tuning." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"The nature of that text is such that it doesn't really matter if it sounds like it's from AI, because its basic goal is just to boost the visibility of that particular keyword in Google search results, driving traffic. The point is that when someone lands on that page, there's a lot of other more interesting content surrounding it related to the topic." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"When we were doing SEO for our international online store. We had an SEO agency and they told us that ChatGPT was really good for this and instructed us to use it. From ChatGPT, we then got some SEO copy, which I thought was absolutely terrible text. At that time, I felt it was really irresponsible and as a content marketing person, I found it shameful because, in my opinion, it was specifically the kind of text that no one was supposed to read. I wouldn't want to produce content that is only for search engines on websites. I don't understand why we produce any content in this world that has no value to any human being." (Firm 5, Head of Marketing)

These quotes illustrate that an underlying goal for generating SEO text is in some cases not to create compelling content, but to capture traffic. Therefore, the task of generating this type of content is seen as a mundane task to which GAI tools have been adopted quite far. The role of GAI here is to create both a structure and most of the text by itself, which then goes through a human editor. There is also a clear difference on how content generated this way is perceived between the informants whose one main responsibility is generating SEO traffic to their website and the informants to whom SEO is just one tactic that they need to deploy. This type of content that is more geared towards gaining search engine ranking goes against the core principles of content marketing, which is to create valuable content. However, if generating this type of content allows the firm to serve other helpful content and information to their customers, it could be viewed as positive.

GAI utilized as a social media content creator

Five informants highlighted how they have utilized GAI for creating social media content creation. However, the informants implicitly referred to content in this context as text creation. This is an important distinction when considering the role of GAI in this activity, which could be characterized more accurately as a copywriter than a content producer.

"We have done some exercises, for example, with well-performing but since forgotten blogs. We have run them through AI and asked it to create, say, five different highlight snippets from the same content. Then, we might ask it to highlight

two snippets with a bold claim or a 'hot take' type of statement and to highlight one point that would generate the most discussion, like an open question. This way, we breathe new life into them. So far, we've only used this on social media, but we've talked about starting to create more follow-up and other content like this." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"If you prompt it (ChatGPT) with something like 'Write me 5 alternative Instagram feed posts', it recognizes the conventions quite well. However, sometimes they can be a bit cliché." (Firm 5, Head of marketing)

"It's (Internally developed GAI tool) quite handy. I have to say it has been surprisingly good and it keeps improving the more you use it. We have a dedicated team and individuals developing it. As we feed it with real material used in actual advertising and other content, it continues to get better and better. It doesn't necessarily have to create the final text; you can edit it a bit yourself. We've mainly utilized it for posts." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

These quotes manifest how GAI has been used by most of the informants for creating social media content. However, even though GAI has a large role in creating content for social media, again the informants highlighted how the content should be edited by a human before publishing. These quotes also underscore the role of the underlying data set the GAI tool is based on. While common tools are also used for social media content creation, an internal GAI tool taught with the firm's content seems to be superior to minimize time needed for editing and prompting.

Four informants found GAI useful for assisting in creating paid marketing campaigns. GAI has been used for several campaign content creation tasks from building landing pages to the ads themselves.

"I have a couple of new campaigns launching and related to them, creating the campaigns' landing pages and their structure. This (structure of the landing page) has also been outlined with the help of AI, so that. If I have a large number of things like text that I have produced, to figure out what would be worth highlighting and in what way." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"We've had several campaigns, two or three, where we've included AI-generated images. Our advertising agency has been enthusiastic and pioneering. They've been very active and specifically focused on learning about prompting a lot, figuring out how to produce eye-catching images." – Marketing Manager, Firm 4

"In today's world, your own advertising message quickly becomes saturated. If you can change and refresh the message itself, it keeps the effectiveness of advertising better, which in turn means that yes, with the help of artificial intelligence,

we can achieve better results, because you can simply produce more variations."
(Marketing Director, Firm 6)

These quotes illustrate how the informants have used GAI to produce content for different parts of the customer journey for paid marketing campaigns. Overall, the informants found GAI useful for making content for paid marketing purposes. However, the use cases between informants are fragmented into different content creation activities varying from landing page creation to generating variations for ad visuals. Also, it is noteworthy that even though the informants have recognized data analysis and insight creation as potential use cases for GAI in a different context, it was not mentioned related to paid advertising. These issues make it difficult to determine the exact role of GAI in this activity. It is however able to assist in multiple tasks and is far from being fully utilized.

Potential for better personalization of marketing messaging with GAI

All informants underscored that there has been limited utilization of GAI functions in MA systems. Only one informant highlighted that their firm has used Salesforce's Einstein-GPT in the timely delivery of content and that the current applications are limited to delivery time optimization for marketing messaging such as emails and SMS texts.

"We have discussed internally that we want to utilize data better, especially if the customer is on a newsletter list, we could customize the content and delivery. Thus far we have defined those automations manually." (Firm 3, Content Marketing Specialist)

"We have some of those Einstein features in use on the (Salesforce) marketing cloud side, but they are mostly related to the delivery optimization of marketing messages." (Firm 8, Senior Content Manager)

"This is me just hypothesizing the future… but let's say you are working on an email and you have a tool that has the customer's information such as what they are interested in and it would automatically give you a copy suggestion." (Firm 6, Marketing Director)

These quotes illustrate how the informants have recognized the opportunity GAI has in optimizing content sharing via email and marketing automation. The managers emphasized that an important opportunity for GAI in this DCM dimension is to combine CRM software data with GAI to help sales departments by suggesting relevant content such as email copy that they can use to deliver highly targeted messaging. To sum up, acquiring the potential of GAI in accurate content sharing would require allowing GAI access to customer data

and using it to create accurate messages and optimizing other activities such as send times.

5   CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter of this study presents the main empirical findings in relation to previous literature (see Table 4), discusses how the findings relate to previous studies and implications the findings contain for managers. Finally, the limitations of this study are discussed and future research avenues are proposed.

Table 4: New empirical insights

DCM dimension: Generating intelligence about customer journeys	
Summary of extant knowledge	New empirical insights
Third party GAI tools and integrated GAI features in CRM systems can be used for lead qualification, learning about potential customer segments and analyzing touchpoint data to create customer insights and predict sales.	The role of GAI in generating customer insights is increasing in the near future when firms have successfully combined customer data and GAI. Concerns over data privacy sets certain limits for customer data use with GAI tools, which has led to manual work still characterizing work in this DCM dimension. However, firms have recognized the potential GAI has in reducing human work in these processes and some firms have already started projects to combine GAI with sensitive data.
DCM dimension: Creating a portfolio of valuable content	
Summary of extant knowledge	New empirical insights
Several GAI programs can be used to create a more efficient content creation process. Use cases for GAI in content creation includes generating ideas, translating text, creating new written content such as blog posts and ad copy, creating visuals such as images and video and personalizing content with customer data.	Managers have integrated several GAI tools into their content creation processes, but human editing and writing remain necessary. Consequently, firms are exploring better ways to leverage GAI for creating valuable content. Training a GAI tool with the firm's data is viewed as the optimal method to maximize performance and minimize risks associated with GAI-enhanced content creation. As a result, firms are developing policies for GAI use and undertaking projects to build internal GAI tools.
DCM dimension: Engaging customers through content sharing	

Summary of extant knowledge	New empirical insights
GPT-based GAI tools can be used for SEO, social media marketing and delivering personalized messaging. SEO use cases include conducting keyword research and writing optimized content with a human editor. For social media, GAI can be used to analyze and produce content. If integrated into the firm's CRM system, GAI can be used to generate personalized and timely messaging.	Firms have been able to integrate GAI into their processes related to SEO and social media. Managers found dedicated SEO tools with GAI features more reliable than commonly used GAI tools for both keyword research and content production. Firms have used GAI as a content producer for social media, resulting in more efficient processes producing organic and paid social media content. GAI utilization has been limited in delivering personalized and timely messaging through channels such as email. This is due to firms not yet adopting GAI tools in their CRM and MA systems.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study makes three theoretical contributions to the extant literature on the role of GAI in DCM. This study also provides nuanced understanding on how and why firms are adopting this new technology into their existing processes for generating customer insights, creating new content and sharing content.

The first theoretical contribution is extending the previous knowledge on how firms utilize GAI in processes related to customer data. This study found that work related to customer data is in most cases still characterized by manual work due to firms reacting to the issue of customer data privacy. Therefore, the role of GAI in generating intelligence about customer journeys is currently minimal, while firms are looking for ways to combine customer data and their CRM systems with GAI. As firm have not been able to utilize customer data with GAI, they have also had limited possibilities to enhance the delivery of personalized and timely messages with GAI. Extant research (Kshetri et al., 2023; Saura et al., 2021) on this issue is limited to literature reviews. These studies recognized the opportunity for firms to utilize various GAI tools and features to leverage customer data for gaining insights from customer journeys and enhancing content delivery.

The second theoretical contribution is that this paper extends knowledge on the role of GAI in content creation processes. This study found that content generation is mainly done in collaboration with humans and GAI. Especially when creating valuable content which includes original insights from subject experts, human oversight and writing is needed. However, GAI had a larger role than humans when writing less impactful content such as social media and search engine optimized content. These types of content were found to depend less on human writing and editing. This contribution answers to the call for a study by Wahid et al. (2023, p. 7) on which tasks in content creation are done by GAI, humans, or by both.

The third theoretical contribution this study makes is that the main benefit firms and individual employees are experiencing from adopting GAI into DCM activities stems from an enhanced content generation ability. This ability enables to firms adopting more channels for content sharing, including information search such as Google and Bing and social media channels. This contributes to a call for studies by Dwivedi et al. (2023). to research how GAI technology can aid in activities such as content curation, development, lead generation and promotional activities.

5.2   Managerial contributions

The results of this empirical study yield several managerial implications for expanding the role of GAI in DCM activities. Addressing these implications will allow managers to improve the efficiency of their DCM activities while adhering to regulations and staying at the forefront of GAI development.

Firstly, there are three main tracks of GAI adoption that have been found in this study, which require different levels of monetary resources. The most cost-effective way, although also the most limited way to utilize GAI is to adopt commonly used tools which has cheap licenses. For example, ChatGPT can be used by businesses to brainstorm strategies and create content. The drawback in this approach is that firms are not able to leverage sensitive data such as customer information to create more valuable content and customer insights.

The second method of adopting GAI into existing processes includes acquiring tools dedicated to certain DCM activities such as SEO or visual content creation. Tools such as Byword, Ahrefs and BrightEdge are function specific, include GAI features and are more reliable in their output. Furthermore, training a GAI tool such as Midjourney to produce visual content incorporating the firm's brand elements offers cost-effective solutions for content creation. This extends to both organic content and the fast production of advertising materials for testing purposes. By leveraging such tools, organizations can maintain brand consistency across various digital platforms while optimizing resource allocation.

Thirdly, implementing GAI tools trained on firm-specific data (e.g., Microsoft Copilot for Microsoft Dynamics 365 CRM) can yield significant benefits

while avoiding risks such as leaking sensitive information to third parties. By training a GAI tool with firm data such as customer data and existing content reflecting the firm's tone of voice, organizations can enhance their marketing activities in all three DCM dimensions. This enables the extraction of precise insights from customer data, facilitating more accurate understanding and segmentation of customer journeys. This is particularly advantageous for large organizations with extensive customer datasets, this approach also streamlines content creation processes by ensuring the firm's tone of voice stays consistent. Implementing a GAI tool into the firm CRM system also empowers sales departments to leverage existing content and customer data effectively. By suggesting tailored email copy and enriching lead data with additional insights, GAI-enhanced CRM tools facilitate personalized communication with customers, thereby improving engagement and conversion rates.

To optimize DCM practices, organizations should consider their internal policies and guidelines for GAI use. Fostering a culture of learning, sharing and experimenting could enable quicker adoption of GAI tools as both people learn to use the tools and the tools get better through continuous learning. These policies could also address democratization of content creation facilitated by GAI. This phenomenon could have major implications for firms as more people can partake in both content creation and sharing through their own professional networks. However, emphasizing the importance of valuable content through original insights and thought could allow the firm to stand out in the market. This could be especially important as the quantity of mediocre content grows on various channels.

5.3   Limitations and future research

This paper adopts the classic criteria of good quality research which includes the concepts of validity, reliability and generalizability. Validity in qualitative research refers to the report being correct, which in this study has been done through the triangulation of data. This method of triangulation refers to gathering evidence from multiple empirical sources to cross-check findings. Reliability in this context means that another researcher should be able to replicate the results made in this study. This has been considered by documenting the methodology used in this study in detail and adding descriptive figures to demonstrate the used data collection and analysis methods. (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 290–297)

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, GAI usage in marketing is a new theme in research and companies are still getting started with its utilization. Therefore, replicating this study a few years later would yield different results. The sample size and composition also create some constraints on the generalizability of the findings. The interviews mainly target

enterprises, which skews the representation towards a larger organizational context. All interviewed informants also represent companies based in mainly Finland. Moreover, all participants are individuals from marketing departments with varying levels of experience with GAI. Such a limited scope may limit finding broader insights into GAI adoption across organizational activities, such as aligning sales and marketing. The responsibilities also varied between the informants as some informants had key responsibilities over distinct activities such as SEO, while others had the main responsibility over strategic planning and execution of content marketing. Therefore, it is logical that there is variety in which GAI tools the informants had tested, adopted and found useful. Additionally, as the literature review focuses primarily on core DCM papers and GAI in marketing, this review may overlook the most recent developments for a comprehensive understanding of GAI's role in DCM.

Moving forward, several promising avenues for future research emerge from this study's findings and limitations. Firstly, research into enterprises that have successfully integrated GAI into their CRM and MA systems could offer valuable insights into expanding the role of GAI in DCM. Furthermore, exploring the agency perspective on GAI utilization in marketing services could reveal novel industry trends. Studies into companies with in-house expertise in GAI development also presents an opportunity to explore internal capabilities driving GAI adoption. Additionally, studies interviewing senior professionals and specialists from specific industries could give novel insights and best practices in GAI integration into various DCM activities.

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APPENDIX 1   Semi-structured interview questions

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Finnish, which is why these questions were translated after they were drafted.

Introduction
How would you define content marketing?
How would you define generative artificial intelligence?

Generating intelligence about customer journeys
How does your organization currently gather information about customer journeys?
What is your experience in utilizing GAI in the process of generating information about customer journeys?

Creating a portfolio of valuable content
Describe the role of GAI in the ideation and creation of content.
Has it influenced the type of content you generate?
How?

Engaging customers through content sharing
How do you utilize GAI for content sharing and enhancing customer engagement?
In your experience, how has the use of GAI influenced the level of personalization in content delivery?
Can you provide examples of instances where GAI-generated content has led to increased customer interaction and sharing?

Supplementary questions
What do you consider to be significant internal or external barriers to utilizing GAI in DCM?
What steps have been taken to evaluate the effectiveness of GAI in your organization?
How do you measure the impact of GAI on content creation efficiency and overall resource utilization within different stakeholders?
Can you elaborate on the ethical considerations your organization takes into account when using GAI in content creation, especially in terms of transparency, bias and user privacy?
To what extent do you involve human creativity and oversight in the GAI-generated content creation process?
Can you share any specific instances where insights derived from GAI about customer journeys led to adjustments in your content marketing strategy?
What were the outcomes of these adjustments?

How do you address concerns related to the potential homogenization or lack of authenticity in content created with GAI?

What strategies do you employ to maintain a genuine connection with your audience?

What are the key competencies or skills that your digital marketing team has developed or enhanced as a result of incorporating GAI into content creation processes?

How did your organization choose the GAI tools they have adopted?