

## **Title: Artificial intelligence (AI) competencies for organizational performance: A B2B marketing capabilities perspective**

This article is based on the growing interest in AI in business-to-business (B2B) marketing. Indeed, AI holds great promise for improving operational efficiency and providing vital insights into customer behavior and market trends. However, there is a gap in understanding how organizations should cultivate AI skills to boost organizational performance. The aim of this research is therefore to study the effect of AI skills on organizational performance, but also to identify the mechanisms by which these AI skills influence organizational performance. Importantly, the study draws on core competency theory to conceptualize AI competence as an essential organizational asset that enables creative and effective AI deployment. Hypotheses derived from the research model are tested using survey data collected from 155 senior IT executives in the Nordic countries.

In business-to-business (B2B) marketing, it's important to build trusting relationships between organizations. B2B transactions are complex, requiring high levels of trust and reliability. Marketing capabilities (MC) play a crucial role in B2B success. These capabilities are difficult for competitors to imitate, and are classified into internal, external and extension capabilities. Extension capabilities integrate internal and external processes, such as the management, planning and implementation of marketing information. Recent discussions and research indicate that the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into B2B marketing operations is being done: either through automation or augmentation, facilitating improved customer insight, personalization and overall customer experience.

Historically theoretical, AI has evolved towards practical applications thanks to advances in data production and computing power. AI encompasses technologies designed to solve complex problems and mimic human intelligence. Organizations often struggle to leverage AI effectively. The concept of AI competence goes beyond technical capability to encompass effective orchestration, transcend individual business units and be difficult for competitors to imitate. An AI competence must take into account technical mastery, organizational breadth and continuous innovation to confer a competitive advantage.

The research model and associated hypotheses highlight the complex interplay between AI competence, B2B marketing capabilities and organizational performance.

The empirical study used a robust survey methodology to collect data from Nordic organizations, ensuring reliability and validity. Through rigorous measurement and analysis, the study aimed to provide empirical support for proposed hypotheses concerning the relationships between AI skills, B2B marketing capabilities and organizational performance.

In the measurement model study, reliability and validity tests are carried out to confirm the validity of the measures used. The results show that AI skills are valid and reliable for assessing the concepts studied. In the structural model study, the path analysis results confirm the significant and positive impact of AI skills on B2B marketing capabilities and their subsequent effect on organizational performance. Information management capabilities are particularly influenced by AI skills. But on a research level, the study broadens the understanding of AI skills beyond the technical and highlights the importance of each organization developing AI skills in its own unique way. On a practical level, practitioners are encouraged to promote experimentation and train their teams in the creative use of AI. Enhancing B2B marketing capabilities with AI is highlighted as a means of gaining competitive advantage. Finally, the limitations of the study, including sample specificity and methodological limitations, are discussed, and avenues for future research are suggested, including the use of more dynamic data collection methods