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**O PAPEL DAS EMPRESAS DE
CONSULTORIA DE NEGÓCIOS NA ERA DA
INTELIGÊNCIA ARTIFICIAL**

**THE ROLE OF BUSINESS CONSULTING
FIRMS IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE**

resumo

O paradigma das capacidades da IA está a redefinir a estratégia das empresas de consultoria, desbloqueando uma nova fronteira de inovação. As tecnologias de IA, em particular os LLMs, estão a impulsionar mudanças sem precedentes que não só estão a reformular as práticas de consultoria e a potenciar ganhos de eficiência nunca antes alcançados, como também exigem que os consultores desenvolvam novas competências para se manterem relevantes num mercado cada vez mais competitivo e dinâmico.

Deste modo, compreender estas dinâmicas exige uma abordagem abrangente. Este estudo assenta numa *scoping review* com base no modelo de Arksey & O'Malley (2005), que permite mapear o conhecimento existente, identificar tendências, lacunas e implicações para o setor. Este enquadramento teórico é complementado por uma análise detalhada do mercado de consultoria em Portugal, recorrendo às bases de dados ORBIS (orbis-r1.bvdinfo.com) e base.gov (www.base.gov.pt), com o objetivo de clarificar a estrutura do setor, os principais *players* e a tipologia dos serviços mais prestados.

Um dos contributos principais desta investigação é o desenvolvimento de uma matriz de vulnerabilidade, que permite classificar os serviços de consultoria consoante a sua exposição à possibilidade de automatização ou internalização de conhecimento por parte dos clientes, destacando as áreas com maior valor estratégico a longo prazo. Paralelamente, entrevistas qualitativas a stakeholders do setor oferecem perspetivas relevantes sobre a forma como as empresas estão a responder à transformação digital estimulada pela IA, procurando equilibrar a inovação com considerações éticas e operacionais.

Os resultados evidenciam o potencial transformador da IA na produtividade e na inovação, fornecendo recomendações práticas para apoiar as empresas de consultoria na sua transição tecnológica e na consolidação da sua vantagem competitiva.

The following table contains the interview questions for the general plan together with the follow-up questions based on the outputs provided by ChatGPT-4o and Gemini 2.0 Flash Thinking Experimental 01-21.

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: What is your current role and responsibilities at [Company Name]?	-
	Consulting Focus: (If any) What is your consulting focus or area of expertise?	-
	Professional Experience: How many years have you been working in the consulting industry or related industries?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How would you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry overall?	-
	AI Technologies: Based on your experience, what types of AI technologies are commonly used in consulting?	Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?
	Perception of Adoption Speed: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector?	Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: How is your company currently implementing AI in its operations or service delivery?	Has your company defined an internal strategy for AI adoption? If so, how does your internal strategy look like? Would you say it's a reactive or proactive approach?
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	How would you describe the evolution of the consulting market in Portugal?	
	What trends do you currently observe in the Portuguese consulting market?	Is there a growing interest in AI-related consulting projects?
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In what areas within consulting firms is AI having the biggest impact on automation of tasks and processes?	-
	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: Do you see AI enabling clients to internalise knowledge more effectively and potentially become less reliant on consultants?	Do you see the potential for future applications?
	Impact on Service Demand: Is AI changing the types of consulting services clients demand or how services are delivered?	If yes, in what ways?
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there any ethical considerations that you believe are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting practices?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you assess the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	-
	Specific Risks: Can you share any experiences or observations of ethical dilemmas that have arisen in the context of AI use in consulting?	-

The following tables contain the interview questions for the specific interview scripts together with the follow-up questions based on the outputs provided by ChatGPT-4o and Gemini 2.0 Flash Thinking Experimental 01-21.

Senior Executives from Consulting Firms

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: Could you briefly describe your current role and responsibilities at [Company Name]?	-
	Consulting Focus: (If any) What is your primary consulting focus or area of expertise within [Company Name]?	-
	Professional Experience: How many years of professional experience do you bring to your role in the consulting sector, and specifically at [Company Name]?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How would you describe your general perception of AI adoption within the consulting industry overall?	-
	AI Technologies: Based on your experience, what types of AI technologies are commonly used in consulting?	Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?
	Perception of Adoption Speed: Considering [Company Name]'s global perspective, how do you assess the speed of AI adoption within the consulting sector?	Lack of adoption: Why didn't you use AI technology that much at the moment?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: Could you provide some insights into [Company Name]'s strategic approach to implementing AI within its own operations and client service delivery?	Has your company defined an internal strategy for AI adoption? Would you describe the overall approach as primarily proactive in shaping the market, or reactive to emerging client demands?
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	How would you describe the evolution of the consulting market in Portugal, particularly in relation to technological advancements?	
	What are the most prominent trends you are currently observing in the Portuguese consulting market?	Are you seeing a noticeable increase in client interest within Portugal specifically for consulting projects that are centred around AI?
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In what areas within consulting firms is AI having the biggest impact on automation of tasks and processes?	How is this impacting the roles and skillsets of Accenture's consultants?
	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: Do you see AI enabling clients to internalise knowledge more effectively and potentially become less reliant on consultants?	-
	Impact on Service Demand: Is AI driving a shift in the types of consulting services [Company Name] offers to clients?	If yes, in what ways?
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there any ethical considerations that you believe are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting practices?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: How does [Company Name] assess the ethical considerations	-

	surrounding data privacy, especially when client-specific information is processed by AI systems?	
	Specific Risks: Are there any specific ethical dilemmas or challenges that [Company Name] has already encountered or is anticipating in the context of using AI in consulting practices?	How is [Company Name] preparing to navigate these ethical complexities?

AI Specialists and Data Scientists within Consulting

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: What is your current role and responsibilities at [Company Name]?	-
	Consulting Focus: Within [Company Name], what are the main industry sectors or types of consulting projects where you apply your AI and Data Science skills?	-
	Professional Experience: How many years of experience do you have working specifically in AI and Data Science?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How mature do you see the adoption of AI technologies being within the consulting projects you're involved in and the broader industry?	-
	AI Technologies: Which specific AI technologies are you directly working with in [Company Name] projects?	Have you personally used any (e.g., ChatGPT), and if so, in what areas have you found them most useful?
	Perception of Adoption Speed: Based on your hands-on experience in projects, how would you rate the practical speed of AI integration into consulting solutions?	What are the biggest technical or data-related challenges you typically encounter when trying to implement AI solutions within consulting projects?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: How well-defined and consistently implemented is [Company Name]'s overall AI strategy at the project level?	In the projects you're involved in, is the application of AI typically driven by a proactive identification of AI opportunities, or is it more often reactive to specific client requests?
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	how would you describe the evolution of demand for AI-driven consulting solutions in the Portuguese market?	-
	What specific AI trends do you currently observe in the Portuguese consulting projects?	Can you share any examples of recent or ongoing consulting projects in Portugal where you've applied AI?
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In what areas within consulting firms is AI having the biggest impact on automation of tasks and processes?	-
	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: Do you see AI enabling clients to internalise knowledge more effectively and potentially become less reliant on consultants?	How is this influencing the design and delivery of AI solutions at [Company Name]?
	Impact on Service Demand: Is AI changing the types of consulting services clients demand or how services are delivered?	If yes, in what ways?

RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Are there any ethical considerations that you believe are particularly important when integrating AI into consulting practices?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: What specific technical safeguards and practices does [Company Name] employ to ensure ethical data handling and client data privacy when using AI, especially when processing sensitive information?	-
	Specific Risks: Have you encountered any specific ethical dilemmas or challenges in your technical work on AI consulting projects?	-

Mid-Level Consultants and Associate Managers

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: Could you briefly describe your current role at [Company Name]?	-
	Consulting Focus: What are the typical industry sectors or service areas you work within [Company Name]?	-
	Professional Experience: How many years have you been working in the consulting industry or related industries?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Based on your project experiences at within [Company Name], how established would you say AI adoption is within the actual consulting projects you've seen or worked on?	-
	AI Technologies: In the projects you've been involved in, what types of AI technologies are being applied most frequently?	Are you directly using AI tools in your day-to-day consulting work? If so, which ones?
	Perception of Adoption Speed: From your perspective working on projects, how would you describe the speed at which AI is being integrated into consulting project delivery?	What are some of the main obstacles you've observed that might be slowing down or hindering the integration of AI into consulting projects at the project level?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: How is your company currently implementing AI in its operations or service delivery?	In the projects you've worked on, is the use of AI typically planned proactively from the project outset, or does it tend to be more of a reactive response to emerging project needs or client requests?
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	How would you describe the evolving demand for consulting services related to AI and digital transformation in the Portuguese market?	-
	What are the main trends you're currently seeing in consulting projects within Portugal?	In your interactions with clients in Portugal, are you observing a growing level of interest and willingness to invest in AI-related consulting projects?
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In what areas within consulting firms is AI having the biggest impact on automation of tasks and processes?	-
	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: Do you see AI enabling clients to internalise knowledge more effectively and potentially become less reliant on consultants?	-

	Impact on Service Demand: Are you noticing any changes in the types of deliverables or solutions that [Company Name] is providing to clients in projects, potentially driven by AI?	If yes, in what ways?
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: In your experience delivering consulting projects, what are the most important ethical considerations that you and your project teams need to be mindful of when incorporating AI into project work?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do you ensure ethical handling of client data and maintain data privacy within your consulting projects, especially when using AI which often relies on data analysis?	-
	Specific Risks: Have you encountered any specific ethical challenges or dilemmas in your consulting projects that relate to the use of AI?	-

Clients of Consulting Services

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: Could you briefly describe your role and responsibilities at [Company Name]?	-
	Industry Sector: In what industry sector does your company operate?	-
	Experience with Consulting Services: Has your company engaged consulting services? If so, in what areas or for what types of projects?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: From your experience engaging with consulting firms, how aware are you of AI technologies being used by consultants in their services or approaches?	-
	AI Technologies: Have you observed or been made aware of specific ways that consulting firms are using AI in the projects your company has engaged them for?	If so, can you give some examples of AI applications you've seen in consulting?
	Perception of Adoption Speed: From your perspective as a client, how quickly do you expect or hope to see consulting firms integrating AI into their services?	What factors, positive or negative, might influence your company's perception of AI adoption by consulting firms?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: Have consulting firms you've worked with discussed their AI strategies or approaches with your company?	Do you feel consulting firms are proactively suggesting AI-driven solutions and approaches, or is the use of AI more often discussed reactively, perhaps in response to specific problems you, as a client, raise?
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	From your company's perspective operating in Portugal, how would you describe the evolution of your company's needs and expectations from consulting services in recent years, especially in relation to technology and digital transformation?	
	What are the most important trends or priorities for your company when engaging consulting services in Portugal today?	Is your company seeing or anticipating a growing need for consulting projects specifically focused on AI
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in	-	-

terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: With the rapid advancements in AI and the increasing availability of information through open resources, do you believe your company can now access and leverage knowledge more directly than before?	Do you anticipate that this increased access to information might potentially reduce your company's need to rely on consulting firms for knowledge transfer or expertise in certain areas in the future?
	-	-
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: From your company's perspective as a client of consulting services, what are the most important ethical considerations or concerns you have regarding consulting firms using AI in their work for you?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: How concerned are you about the ethical handling and security of your company's data when consulting firms use AI, especially if sensitive data is involved?	-
	Specific Risks: Are there any specific ethical issues related to AI in consulting that are particularly important to your company?	-

Technology Providers and AI Solution Vendors

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: Could you briefly describe your role and responsibilities within [Company Name]?	-
	Company Focus: What type of AI solutions or technologies does your company provide or specialize in?	-
	Client base: Does your company work with consulting firms as clients?	If so, what percentage of your client base would you estimate are consulting organizations?
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How established do you perceive AI adoption to be within the consulting industry as a whole?	-
	AI Technologies: What specific AI technologies or solutions from your portfolio are you seeing the most interest in or uptake from consulting firms?	For what specific use cases or consulting service areas are consulting firms typically utilizing your AI solutions?
	Perception of Adoption Speed: How would you rate the speed at which consulting organizations are adopting AI solutions?	Lack of adoption: From your perspective, what are the key factors that are driving or potentially hindering the faster adoption of AI solutions by consulting firms?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: From your interactions with consulting firms, do you get a sense that they have well-defined AI strategies for their own operations and client services?	Are consulting firms generally proactively seeking out AI solutions to enhance their services, or is their demand for AI more often reactive to client requests or specific project needs?
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	How would you describe the evolution of demand from Portuguese consulting firms for AI solutions in recent years?	-
	What are the main trends you are currently observing in the Portuguese consulting market regarding the adoption and application of AI solutions?	-

RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you see your AI solutions enabling consulting firms to automate their internal processes or enhance the automation of services they offer to their clients?	-
	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: Do you believe that the use of AI solutions could potentially empower clients to become more self-sufficient and potentially reduce their reliance on traditional consulting services for certain types of expertise?	-
	Impact on Service Demand: What role do technology providers play in the evolving value landscape of the consulting industry?	-
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: What are the most important ethical considerations that you believe technology vendors should be addressing to ensure the responsible and ethical use of AI in consulting practices?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: How do your AI solutions address data privacy and security concerns, particularly when consulting firms are using your technology to process sensitive client information?	-
	Specific Risks: Have you observed or become aware of any specific ethical challenges or dilemmas that have arisen within the consulting industry related to the use of AI?	-

Regulatory and Policy Stakeholders

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role in the Company: Could you briefly describe your role and responsibilities within [Company Name]?	-
	Area of Regulatory Focus: What is the primary area of regulatory or policy focus for your organization, particularly as it relates to technology, innovation, or AI?	-
	Engagement with Consulting Industry: To what extent, if any, does your organization currently engage with or oversee the consulting industry, particularly regarding their adoption of new technologies like AI?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: From a regulatory and policy standpoint, how established do you perceive AI adoption to be within the consulting industry?	-
	AI Technologies: Are there specific types of AI technologies or applications within the consulting industry that are currently of particular interest or scrutiny from a regulatory perspective?	-
	Perception of Adoption Speed: From a regulatory preparedness standpoint, how would you assess the speed at which the consulting industry is adopting AI?	Is the regulatory landscape keeping pace with this adoption, or are there areas where regulation needs to catch up?
	-	-
RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	How would you describe the recent evolution of the consulting market in Portugal, particularly in relation to the adoption of AI and digital technologies?	-

	What are the main policy priorities or regulatory trends you are currently observing in the Portuguese consulting market, especially concerning the integration of AI-driven services?	Is there a growing level of regulatory or policy interest in Portugal specifically regarding consulting projects that involve AI and digital transformation?
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	-	-
	-	-
	-	-
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: What are the most pressing ethical considerations that need to be addressed to ensure the responsible and ethical integration of AI into consulting practices?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: What regulatory frameworks or policies are in place, or need to be developed, to ensure the ethical and secure handling of client data when consulting firms use AI, especially when processing sensitive information?	-
	-	-

Industry Analysts or Academics Specializing in Consulting and AI

Areas/ RQs	Questions	Follow-up Questions
Demographic Data	Role and Affiliation: Could you briefly describe your role and affiliation?	-
	Area of Specialisation: What is your primary area of specialisation or research focus, particularly concerning the consulting industry and the intersection of AI?	-
	Professional Experience: Could you briefly describe the nature of your research or analysis related to the consulting industry and AI adoption?	-
RQ1: How established is AI adoption within the consulting industry?	Initial Open-Ended Question: Based on your research and analysis of the consulting industry, how established would you assess AI adoption to be across the sector currently?	-
	AI Technologies: What types of AI technologies are you observing as having the most significant impact or uptake within the consulting industry?	-
	Perception of Adoption Speed: How would you rate the speed of AI adoption in the consulting sector?	In your expert opinion, what are the primary factors that are currently accelerating or hindering the broader and deeper adoption of AI within the consulting industry?
	AI Strategy and Implementation: Do you observe a consistent strategic approach to AI implementation across consulting firms?	Would you characterize the overall strategic approach of the consulting industry towards AI as primarily proactive, shaping the market, or more reactive, responding to client demands and technological advancements?
	How would you describe the evolution of the consulting market in Portugal?	

RQ2: What are the current trends in the consulting market in Portugal?	What trends do you currently observe in the Portuguese consulting market?	Is there evidence to suggest a growing interest or investment in AI-related consulting projects specifically within the Portuguese market compared to broader European trends?
RQ3: How does AI affect the business of consulting firms in terms of automation and internalisation of knowledge by clients?	Initial Open-Ended Question: How do you analyse the impact of AI-driven automation on the business model and operational structure of consulting firms?	-
	Internalisation of Knowledge by Clients: Do you see a discernible trend towards clients becoming more self-sufficient and potentially less reliant on external consultants due to AI and improved knowledge access?	-
	Impact on Service Demand: Are you observing a clear evolution in the types of consulting services that are now in demand or are being developed in response to AI capabilities?	-
RQ4: What ethical risks and concerns are associated with integrating AI in consulting?	Initial Open-Ended Question: What do you consider to be the most critical ethical considerations that the consulting industry needs to address proactively when integrating AI into their practices?	-
	Data Privacy Concerns: What are the key data privacy challenges and risks that arise specifically within the consulting industry's use of AI, particularly regarding client data and sensitive information?	-
	Specific Risks: Have you identified or analysed any specific ethical dilemmas or challenges that are particularly prevalent or concerning in the context of AI use within consulting?	-

The following link contains the prompts and interactions with ChatGPT-4o to conduct the synthetic pilot interview.

<https://chatgpt.com/share/67ec5fec-5ce8-8003-84d2-e3aba4cef3c7>