HI + AI in QUALITATIVE for Unlimited Understanding

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming industries worldwide, and market research is no exception. Tasks traditionally reliant on human effort, such as moderating focus groups and conducting analyses, are now within AI's capabilities. Ipsos' data reveals that over three-quarters of respondents view the age of pervasive AI positively, signifying its inevitable integration into mainstream society. This prompts a crucial question: what are the core strengths of human intelligence (HI) in the AI era, and how can we adapt to this transformative wave?

How AI is Utilized in Qualitative Research

Qualitative market research, from setting objectives and engaging in consumer interviews to analyzing data and providing clients with key insights and actionable recommendations, has historically been a time-intensive and labor-intensive process. AI offers distinct advantages in handling administrative tasks, data analysis, translation, and even designing interview outlines, often exceeding human capabilities in both speed and efficiency. Moreover, AI can generate novel ideas and uncover hidden insights that might be missed due to researcher bias.

To adapt to evolving market trends, Ipsos has embraced AI across various business areas, categorizing its application in qualitative market research into three levels: Improving Productivity, Enhancing Existing Services, and developing New Service.

AI can rapidly process large volumes of audio recordings and transcripts, facilitate real-time translation during interviews or focus groups, and automatically synthesize summaries and generate insights following these sessions. This significantly reduces the time researchers dedicate to processing raw data, ensuring the timely delivery of research findings.

Furthermore, AI empowers existing qualitative research products, such as online community and workshop, by expanding their reach to a broader audience, improving the immediacy of respondent interaction, and maximizing the overall value of these platforms.

Combination of Human Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence

The integration of AI provides powerful tools for qualitative market researchers and marketers, offering data-driven insights for efficient and informed decision-making. However, human intelligence (HI) remains essential. While AI's effectiveness depends on the researcher's precise instructions, continuous training, testing, and insightful questioning, the combination of AI and HI is not merely additive; it creates a synergistic effect. This synergy arises from human intelligence possessing four key qualities that AI currently lacks:

A. **Creativity and Innovation:**
   AI's "creativity" stems from analyzing existing data and researcher input, lacking the independent learning and out-of-the-box thinking inherent in human intelligence. Human researchers can conceptualize new research directions, propose innovative solutions, and formulate bold hypotheses to guide research exploration.

B. **Emotional Empathy:**
   AI cannot fully grasp the nuances of human emotion and empathy, which are crucial for understanding consumer motivations while conducting qualitative research. Human empathy allows researchers to connect with consumers on an emotional level, design human-centric research methods, and develop marketing strategies that resonate with target audiences.

C. **Ethical/Cultural Judgment:**
   AI's decisions are based on data and algorithms, lacking ethical and cultural considerations. Human intelligence, guided by ethical values, ensures responsible AI usage, assesses the societal impact of research findings, and avoids biases or discriminatory practices.

D. **Strategic Thinking:**
   In a future rife with uncertainty, AI struggles to predict all possibilities. Human strategic thinking allows for a holistic perspective, leveraging experience, intuition, and judgment to formulate long-term strategies and make critical decisions in situations with limited information.
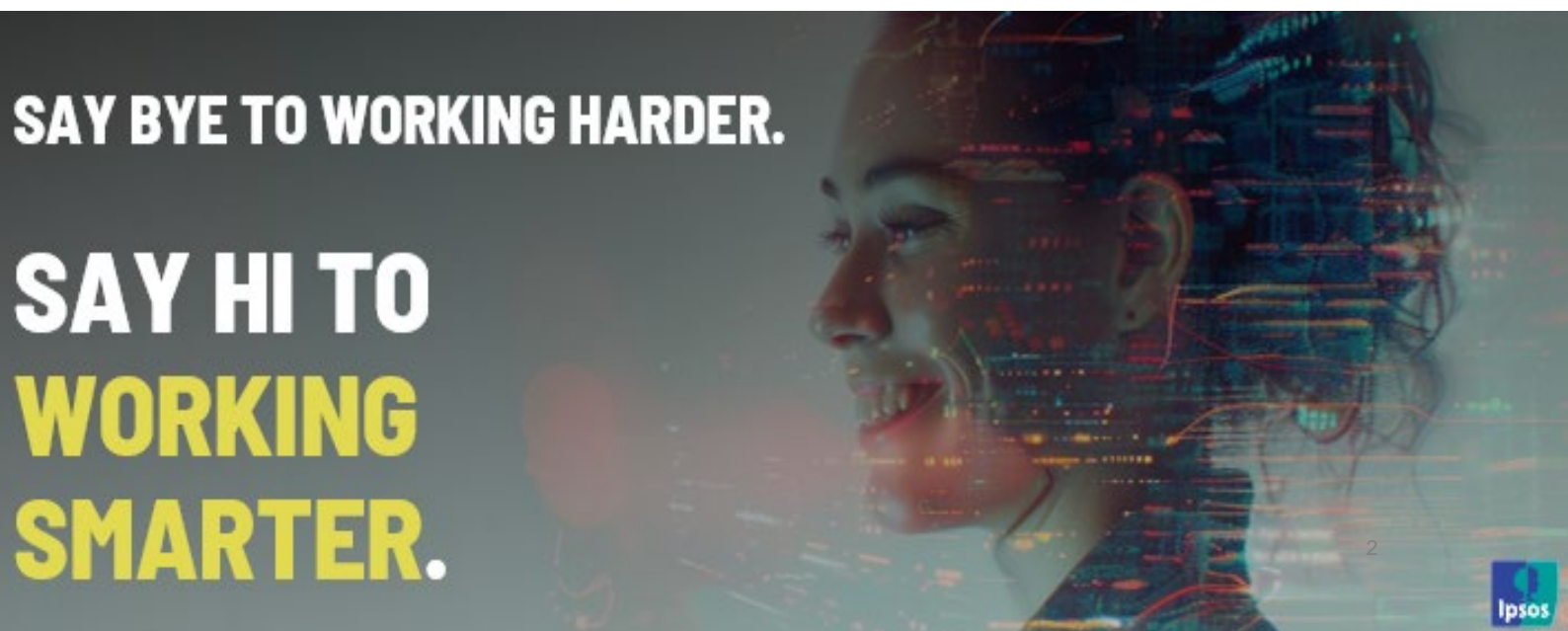
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Conclusion and future development

The rise of AI presents new possibilities for qualitative market research. Previously time-consuming and labor-intensive processes are now more efficient and insightful with AI assistance. However, despite AI's rapid advancements, HI remains indispensable in qualitative research, possessing qualities like creativity, empathy, ethical judgment, and strategic thinking that AI currently cannot match. The future of qualitative market research lies in human-AI collaboration, combining AI's efficiency with human intelligence's insightful capabilities to generate more valuable research outcomes.

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