

A dark blue, semi-transparent background image showing two men in a meeting room. One man is standing and gesturing, while the other is seated and looking at him. The room has large windows with blinds and a whiteboard.

Bennett Hofland

How do decision-makers of SME+ organisations perceive the business applications of AI?

1. ,

7 August 2025 at 14:20:50

Great potential to optimise processes and increase efficiency, both of which directly benefit organisations

How do decision-makers of SME+ organisations perceive the business applications of AI?

- Not just a gimmick tool
- Transformative technology with advanced data capabilities
- Master thesis in combination with Data & AI partner Little Rocket

How do **decision-makers** of SME+ organisations perceive the business applications of AI?

Research has been conducted from the viewpoints of:

- Society^[1]
- Consumers^[2]
- Employees^[3]

[1] Haupt et al. (2025), Alessandro et al. (2024)

[2] Yam et al. (2025), Burton et al. (2020), Dietvorst et al. (2015)

[3] Chuang et al. (2025), Chen & Li (2024), Sadeghian et al. (2024)

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7 August 2025 at 14:49:21

Larger companies may have well-established AI teams / strategies or face lower (financial) barriers to create these[1], providing less input for limitations and future possibilities

How do decision-makers of **SME+ organisations** perceive the business applications of AI?

- 1 • < 1.000 employees*

*Based on indication by Little Rocket ; Limitation: Company headcount does not directly translate to degree of development
[1] Kgakatsi et al. (2024)

Method

How do **decision-makers of SME+ organisations** perceive the business applications of AI?



Data collection

14 Participants
1 Hour interviews



Data reporting

By common themes

Background theory

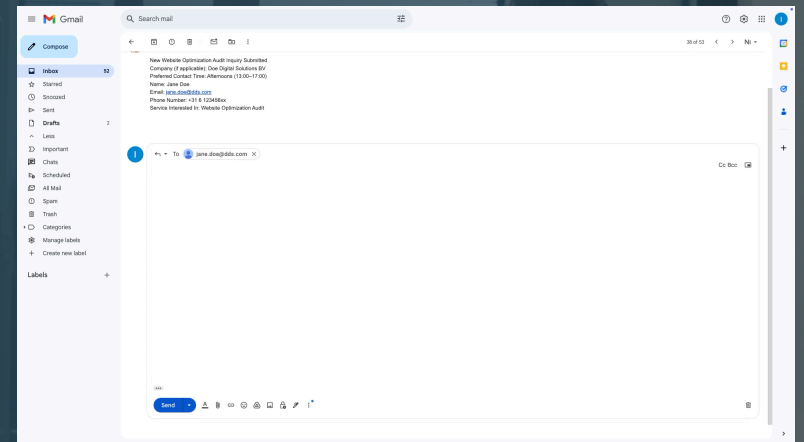
Two goals

1. How does AI create business value?
2. How is it perceived by employees?

How does AI create business value?

Operational processes

- Process efficiency^[1]



[1] Enholm et al. (2022)

How does AI create business value?

Operational processes

- Process efficiency^[1]
- Insight generation^[1]

[1] Enholm et al. (2022)

ChatGPT

```
Terminal
'Tilburg University', 'Eindhoven University of Technology'
),
'satisfaction': [
  3.87, 3.88, 3.99, np.nan, 4.1, 4.16, np.nan, 3.9, 3.97, 3.9, np.nan, 3.81, 3.88, np.nan
]
)
df = pd.DataFrame(data)
# Create bar chart for satisfaction
plt.figure(figsize=(10,6))
x = np.arange(len(df))
values = df['satisfaction']
valid = ~values.isna()
plt.bar(x[valid], values[valid], color='steelblue')
plt.xticks([valid, df['Universiteit']][valid], rotation=90)
plt.title('Studenttevredenheid (NSE-score) per universiteit')
plt.xlabel('NSE-score (1-5)')
plt.tight_layout()

output_path = '/home/oai/share/satisfaction_increment.png'
plt.savefig(output_path)
plt.close()
print(output_path)
#
/home/oai/share/satisfaction_increment.png
chatgpt-agent % LIVE
```

How does AI create business value?

Transformation of labour

- Automation
- Augmentation

[1] Enholm et al. (2022)

How is AI perceived by employees?

Perception of **employees**

- Productivity per employee increases
- Threat of redundancy / retraining^[1]
- Lower job satisfaction^[1]

^[1] Chuang et al (2025), Chen & Li (2024), Schwabe & Castellaci (2020)

Interview results

- Viewpoints of AI
- Current and anticipated usage
- Realised benefits of AI implementation
- Perceived disadvantages and barriers
- Employee perspective
- Human strengths over AI

Realised benefits of AI implementation

Theory

Process efficiency

- How efficiently the products and services of an organisation can be produced^[1]

Insight generation

- Collecting information for data-driven decision-making^[1]

Results

Process efficiency

- How efficiently the products and services of an organisation can be produced^[1]

+ Increase in quality

- The quality of the products and services of the organisation

^[1] Enholm et al. (2022)

Realised benefits of AI implementation

Theory

Process efficiency

- How efficiently the products and services of an organisation can be produced^[1]

Results

+ Increase in quality

- The quality of the products and services of the organisation

“Where in the past, reporting was a goal, it has now become a means, thanks to AI”

- Joost van Middelkoop

[1] Enholm et al. (2022)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

Theory

AI has a democratising effect^[1]

- Providing data access
- Lower skill barrier
- Lower cost barrier

Results

[1] Hattali (2024)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

Theory

AI has a democratising effect^[1]

- Providing data access
- Lower skill barrier
- Lower cost barrier

Results

- AI tools have become so accessible and cost friendly...

- 1** • that there exists an abundance of choice and possibilities

“you get **eight, nine, ten suggestions** that all claim they are the best [...]. **It's a jungle [...], which holds me back from diving in**”

- Rens Kovaksen

[1] Hattali (2024)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

Theory

AI has a democratising effect^[1]

- Providing data access
- Lower skill barrier
- Lower cost barrier

Results

- AI has become so easy to use for employees...
- that organisations lose oversight where and when it's used
- Demand for new skill: strategic use of AI and linking AI tools into automated systems

[1] Hattali (2024)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

Theory

AI has a democratising effect^[1]

- Providing data access
- Lower skill barrier
- Lower cost barrier

Results

- While costs of AI tools have decreased...^[2]
- AI management skills are in high demand and have thus seen inflated costs

“It costs nothing for us to have the membership [...] But you need to hire somebody who's an expert on it [...] It gets very expensive”

- Amara Solano

[1] Hattali (2024)
[2] Maslej et al. (2025)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

Theory

AI has a democratising effect^[1]

- Providing data access
- Lower skill barrier
- Lower cost barrier

Results

- Paradoxically, the democratisation of AI has led to new barriers and limitations for SME+ organisations, potentially negating the original democratising effect.

[1] Hattali (2024)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

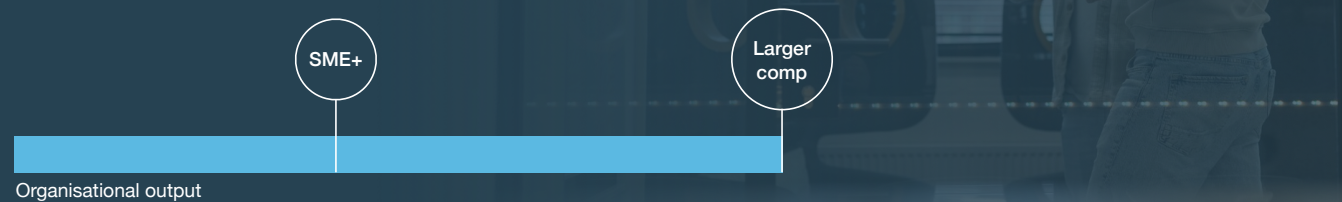
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[1] Hattali (2024)

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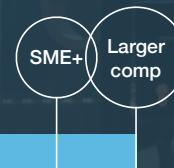
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Organisational output

[1] Hattali (2024)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

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[1] Hattali (2024)

Perceived disadvantages and barriers

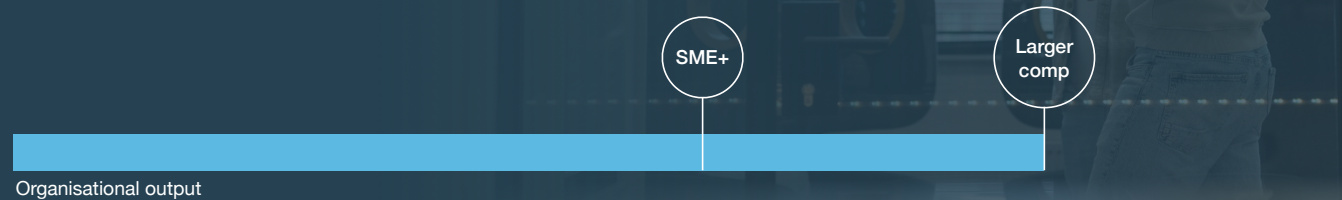
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[1] Hattali (2024)

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7 August 2025 at 11:55:37

AI would increase job satisfaction for employees, who will be able to focus on higher value activities and have more meaningful job

Employee perspective

Theory

- AI leads to a lower job satisfaction for employees ^[1] because of the threat of redundancy / retraining^[1]

Results (CXO perception)

- AI would increase job satisfaction for employees
- Higher value activities

[1] Chuang et al (2025), Chen & Li (2024), Schwabe & Castellacci (2020)

Human strengths over AI

Results

- Product physicality and physical labour
- Creativity
- Interpersonal contact
- Expert validation
- Agency, responsibility and accountability

Practical implications

Human strengths over AI

Results

- Product physicality and physical labour
- Creativity
- Interpersonal contact
- Expert validation
- Agency, responsibility and accountability

Practical implications

Positioning and brand strategy

Human strengths over AI

Results

- Product physicality and physical labour
- Creativity
- Interpersonal contact
- Expert validation
- Agency, responsibility and accountability

Practical implications

Process management

Question round

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