

Embracing Hybrid Intelligence: An Exploratory Study on AI Adoption in Content Creation Among Romanian Marketing Professionals

Iulia POSTOLACHI

Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration, Alexandru Ioan Cuza
University of Iași
pasiunni@gmail.com

Irina-Constanța THEODORU

Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration, Alexandru Ioan Cuza
University of Iași
irina.theodoru@gmail.com

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping marketing practices, particularly in content creation. This exploratory study examines how Romanian marketing professionals integrate generative AI tools into their workflows and how they perceive collaboration with these technologies. Based on an exploratory survey of 53 participants, the study reports respondents' practices and their evaluations of human-only, hybrid (human + AI), and AI-only content creation approaches. Results show that AI is most commonly used for research, drafting, and SEO-related tasks, with respondents reporting time savings and improved structure. Overall, the hybrid approach is most frequently rated as offering the best balance between efficiency and authenticity, while preserving human creative oversight. These findings point to an emerging Hybrid Intelligence pattern, where human expertise and AI capabilities complement each other in professional content work. The study provides early empirical evidence on how practitioners navigate the trade-off between automation and the human elements of creativity in marketing communication.

Keywords: Hybrid Intelligence, Augmented Generative AI, content marketing, emerging technologies.

JEL classification: M31, C83, O33.

Introduction

Content marketing emerged as a distinct managerial practice in the 1990s, with many accounts tracing the phrase “content marketing” back to a 1996 roundtable moderated by John F. Oppedahl at the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Serrano, 2023). In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has shifted from a niche capability to an operational layer in marketing. Generative tools now enable scalable content production, and forecasts suggest that large organizations will synthetically generate a substantial share of marketing messages by 2025 (Gartner, 2022). Viewed through Moore’s Crossing the Chasm model, AI adoption appears to be moving beyond early enthusiasts toward a more pragmatic majority that demands reliability, demonstrable value, and risk mitigation (Moore, 2014). In this transition, content professionals are asked not only to deliver faster but also to preserve coherence, creativity, and brand voice.

Practitioners consistently report efficiency gains and greater stylistic consistency when using AI tools, yet they also raise concerns about creativity, brand authenticity, and sustained audience engagement. While case examples and vendor narratives abound, the field still lacks comparable evidence on how AI is adopted across lifecycle segments in marketing and where trade-offs emerge between speed, perceived quality, and relevance. Empirical studies rarely place side-by-side human-only, AI-only, and hybrid (human + AI) workflows on common

outcomes such as time savings and perceived quality, and they seldom situate such comparisons in a technology adoption lifecycle. Moreover, the literature offers limited guidance on Hybrid Intelligence (HI) — the deliberate orchestration of human judgment and AI capabilities as augmentation rather than substitution within content workflows (Dellermann et al., 2021). These gaps are particularly visible in local contexts, such as Romania, where adoption is growing but remains uneven.

Against this backdrop, the present study pursues three aims. First, it assesses the level and stage of AI adoption among Romanian marketing professionals, anchoring the analysis in a lifecycle perspective inspired by Moore (2014). Second, it compares time efficiency and perceived content quality across human-only, AI-only, and hybrid workflows, providing like-for-like evidence on outcomes that matter for practice. Third, it maps complementary human–AI roles across the content pipeline - from strategy and research to drafting, editing/SEO, and performance monitoring - clarifying where augmentation delivers value and where human oversight remains essential. By bringing these elements together, the study frames AI not as an abstract technology but as part of concrete, everyday routines in content work.

The study contributes in four ways. It positions AI uptake within a clear adoption framework, explicitly acknowledging Moore’s model. It reports comparable empirical evidence on efficiency and perceived quality across workflow types, moving beyond descriptive accounts to structured contrasts. It synthesizes day-to-day benefits and constraints reported by practitioners, highlighting the conditions under which HI outperforms pure automation. Finally, it derives managerial implications for “crossing the chasm” from opportunistic trials to scaled and responsible deployment in content marketing, where human expertise remains central to creativity, authenticity, and strategic coherence (Moore, 2014; Dellermann et al., 2021).

1. Literature Review

Content marketing’s purpose is not merely to inform but to guide prospects through product adoption by shaping how they understand their needs and available solutions. Traditionally, this process has been carried out through text and imagery that build desirability and a perceived necessity for the offer (Rainmaker Digital, 2016). Against this backdrop, the rapid diffusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into marketing has catalyzed a broad research conversation. To situate our study, we review four interrelated strands: (i) AI’s roles and implications for content creation and marketing outcomes; (ii) human–AI collaboration framed as Hybrid Intelligence (HI); (iii) the impact of AI tools on personalization and productivity; and (iv) ethics, authenticity, and the continuing need for human judgment.

1.1. AI in Content Creation and Marketing

Scholars describe AI as a dual-edged, general-purpose technology: it expands efficiency, decision quality, personalization, customer experience, and innovation, while simultaneously introducing risks related to ethics, labor dynamics, and regulation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). Within content domains, recent evidence shows that AI’s role is not neutral with respect to consumer perception. For social-media branding, generative AI can diminish perceived brand authenticity, with effects moderated by consumers’ identity motives (Brüns & Meißner, 2024). At the same time, AI-generated ads can elicit more favorable attitudes when they deploy agentic appeals — an effect contingent on task self-efficacy. In contrast, human-created ads may benefit from communal appeals mediated by social self-efficacy (Chen, Wang, Hill, & Li, 2024). Overall, these findings suggest that AI’s value in content is contingent on message framing and audience psychology, not only on technical quality.

1.2. Hybrid Intelligence and Human–AI Collaboration

A growing stream of research argues that the most durable gains arise from Hybrid Intelligence (HI) — the deliberate orchestration of complementary strengths, in which humans contribute creativity, emotional and ethical judgment, and ambiguity resolution, while AI contributes pattern detection, scale, and speed (Dellermann et al., 2021). Effective HI systems evolve over time as roles, interfaces, and oversight practices adapt to context. Marketing is a natural test bed for HI because content work spans ideation, drafting, optimization, and evaluation — stages that map cleanly to augmentation rather than substitution. This complementarity is echoed in marketing analytics and managerial foresight, which recommend combining human domain knowledge with AI’s computational leverage (Petrescu & Krishen, 2023; Makridakis, 2017). From this perspective, the central question is less whether AI will replace creators and more how teams design human-in-the-loop workflows that preserve brand voice and strategic coherence while capturing efficiency.

1.3. Personalization and Productivity Effects of AI Tools

Predictions about AI’s share of online content vary widely, but analysts agree on a steep acceleration in synthetic media production. For instance, Schick has argued that a large proportion of online content could be AI-generated in the near term — a forward-looking prediction rather than a fact — driven by rapid advances in generative platforms across text, audio, image, and video (Chartwell Speakers, 2024). Empirical and managerial research indicates where concrete productivity gains already occur. In advertising and content operations, AI supports audience targeting, dynamic creative optimization, product descriptions, and social posts, while automating distribution, A/B testing, and performance tracking (Kietzmann, Paschen, & Treen, 2018). Case-based studies show that firms can integrate AI for real-world value through bounded, well-scoped use cases such as recommendation, classification, and conversational assistance, rather than monolithic automation (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). As a decision aid, AI augments both operational and strategic choices by synthesizing large, fast-moving datasets — again pointing to a symbiotic model in which human judgment remains decisive for interpretation and action (Jarrahi, 2018).

1.4. Ethics, Authenticity, and the Role of Human Judgment

Productivity and personalization benefits also heighten responsibility. Scholars emphasize privacy, transparency, fairness, and the avoidance of manipulation as non-negotiable criteria for responsible AI in marketing (Hermann, 2022). Broader frameworks in digital ethics argue for principles such as beneficence — promoting human well-being — and translate them into practical requirements like clear disclosure about data use and about the involvement of AI in content creation (Floridi & Cowls, 2019). Public reception of AI-generated creative work is still evolving. Recent experimental work, for example, shows that lay audiences can rate AI-generated poetry as equal or even superior to human work on rhythm, beauty, and emotional resonance (Porter & Machery, 2024). Such findings complicate simple assumptions about authenticity and suggest that perceived quality is audience- and context-dependent rather than intrinsically tied to human authorship. Industry analysts expect governance to rise on the CMO agenda, with ethical AI in marketing forecast to become a top priority in the near term (Gartner, 2022; Gartner, 2024). For practitioners, this implies formalizing human oversight, disclosure practices, and brand-voice safeguards within HI workflows, so that experimentation with AI is anchored in clear ethical boundaries.

Synthesis and implications for the present study. Viewed together, these strands of literature converge on three points that shaped our research design. First, AI’s impact on content is conditional: outcomes depend on message framing, audience characteristics, and the

workflow's division of labor rather than on technology alone. Second, Hybrid Intelligence offers a constructive lens for designing content processes that join AI's speed and scale with human originality and ethical judgment instead of treating the two as substitutes. Third, ethical and authenticity considerations need to be embedded in everyday practice — in how teams brief, review, and publish content — rather than appended post hoc as a compliance step. In light of these insights, our empirical work focuses on adoption stages among Romanian marketing professionals, on like-for-like comparisons of human-only, AI-only, and hybrid workflows for time efficiency and perceived quality, and on mapping complementary human–AI roles from strategy through SEO and monitoring, thereby setting up the methodology that follows.

2. Methodology

2.1. Design and Purpose

This study employed an exploratory, cross-sectional survey to capture current practices and perceptions about AI use in content marketing among Romanian professionals. Given our aims to obtain both measurable patterns and practitioners' own perspectives — we used a lightweight convergent mixed-methods design: quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the same instrument, analyzed separately, and then interpreted together (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Bryman, 2016). This design is suitable for an emerging topic in which experimental control is limited, but professionals can already report concrete experiences with AI in their day-to-day work.

2.2. Research Design, Data Collection, and Sample

Data were collected via a Google Forms questionnaire disseminated through professional and academic networks (LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp groups), complemented by snowball sampling to reach additional practitioners and invitations at marketing-related events and workshops. In total, this strategy yielded 53 valid responses from roles directly involved in content work (copywriters, content managers, SEO specialists, digital strategists, marketers). The sampling approach is convenience-based and appropriate for an exploratory study in a relatively small professional niche; results should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than as population estimates (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; de Vaus, 2014).

Within the sample, 43.4% reported a content-creation role (e.g., copywriter/creator/storyteller), 35.9% managed content (content manager/director), and 45.3% identified as marketers; 22.2% held at least two of these roles, most commonly manager–marketer overlaps, followed by copywriters who also managed content. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Before starting, respondents were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and data confidentiality. Data collection took place between 27 October 2024 and 17 March 2025.

2.3. Survey Structure

The instrument comprised 21 items (estimated completion time: 7–10 minutes) organized into four thematic sections and combined closed- and open-ended questions:

1. **Professional background.** Roles in content/marketing, experience, frequency of writing/editing, and familiarity with AI tools.
2. **Frequency and context of AI usage.** Stages of use across the workflow (research, ideation, drafting, editing, SEO), with usefulness/perceived impact measured on five-point Likert scales.
3. **Comparative evaluation.** Time to complete a typical blog article with and without AI (predefined intervals: under 1 hour; 1–2 hours; 3–5 hours; over 5 hours); perceived

quality/creativity/engagement/SEO for human-only, AI-only, and hybrid (human + AI) approaches.

4. **Open-ended reflection.** A free-text item on the future of AI in content marketing (benefits, risks, expectations).

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of marketing professionals to ensure clarity and logical flow before broader distribution, in line with established recommendations on survey design (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014).

2.4. Measures and Coding

For time comparisons, ordered categories were mapped to mid-points to approximate interval values in analysis (e.g., “under 1 hour” → 0.5; “1–2 hours” → 1.5; “3–5 hours” → 4; “over 5 hours” → 6). For perceived quality, single-item ratings (Likert 1–5) were used with and without AI for comparable tasks. Treating Likert-type items as approximately interval is common in exploratory work; results are therefore interpreted with caution, and the emphasis is placed on direction and effect sizes rather than on strict threshold decisions (Norman, 2010). AI-use modalities were captured as self-reported tendencies toward human-only, AI-only, or hybrid workflows.

2.5. Analytic Strategy

The dataset was exported to SPSS and Excel for analysis. Analyses proceeded in three main steps. First, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize roles, experience, AI familiarity, and usage patterns. Next, “with AI” versus “without AI” conditions for time and perceived quality were compared using paired t-tests, and Pearson correlations among key variables were inspected where appropriate (Field, 2013). Given the modest sample and exploratory scope, exact p-values are reported, and the focus is on effect sizes (e.g., Cohen’s *d*, correlation *r*) to aid practical interpretation (Cohen, 1988). Where distributional assumptions were visibly strained, patterns were cross-checked with non-parametric alternatives (e.g., Wilcoxon signed-rank tests) to ensure that conclusions did not hinge on a single choice of statistical test (Field, 2013; Norman, 2010).

For qualitative data, responses to the single optional open-ended question — “How do you think AI could change the future of content marketing in the coming years?” — were imported into ATLAS.ti. Given the modest volume of text, which consisted mainly of respondents’ own opinions, ideas, and short predictions based on their experience, we generated a simple word cloud (not reproduced here) to highlight recurrent terms and expressions. The word cloud was used descriptively, as a visual summary of how participants talk about the future of AI in content marketing and about perceived opportunities and risks, rather than as the basis for a full thematic analysis (Heimerl, Lohmann, Lange, & Ertl, 2014).

2.6. Integration and Scope

Quantitative and qualitative elements were integrated side by side: statistical results describe patterns in time savings and perceived quality, while the word cloud offers brief qualitative context by highlighting the language respondents use when they discuss the future of AI in content marketing, including expectations, opportunities, and concerns. Consistent with an exploratory, convenience-sample design, results are positioned as initial evidence that can inform subsequent research and managerial experimentation rather than as population-level estimates (de Vaus, 2014). The analyses are therefore intended to open up questions about AI adoption stages and Hybrid Intelligence in content marketing, not to close them.

3. Data Analysis

This section examines how AI affects content workflows using descriptive statistics and targeted comparisons between human-only and AI-assisted (hybrid) creation. The analyses address three objectives: (1) to estimate the effect of AI use on time efficiency and perceived quality; (2) to assess how professionals view AI's contribution to creativity and SEO; and (3) to clarify the perceived balance between human oversight and automation as a basis for Hybrid Intelligence in content marketing.

The section is organized into four parts. First, we profile respondents by AI-usage frequency (4.1). Second, we estimate time differences between AI-assisted and human-only workflows (4.2), examine perceived content quality (4.3), and analyze SEO-related perceptions of the three methods (human-only, AI-only, hybrid) (4.4). Third, we consolidate advantages and challenges reported in multi-select items (4.5–4.6). Finally, we close with a brief qualitative overview of future expectations regarding AI in content marketing (4.7).

Note on sample handling. The survey included 53 respondents. For comparative analyses that explicitly assess the impact of AI use on time, perceived quality, or SEO, three non-users of AI were excluded, and metrics were recalculated on $N = 50$. Descriptive summaries that do not depend on AI usage report results for the full $N = 53$. This distinction is indicated where relevant to ensure analytic consistency.

3.1. Classification of Respondents by AI Usage

Using an adoption-curve lens inspired by *Crossing the Chasm* (Moore, 2014), respondents were grouped according to how often they use AI in content creation. In the full sample ($N = 53$), AI Enthusiasts (Early Adopters) form the largest segment ($n = 35$; 66.0%). They report frequent or exclusive use of AI to generate initial ideas, accelerate research, and structure early drafts; most rate these tools as useful or very useful, mainly for time savings and rapid access to information. Occasional Users (Early Majority) represent $n = 15$ (28.3%). They typically apply AI for research and ideation and describe its utility as moderate to high, especially for speed and breadth of sources. A small segment, AI Critics/Non-Adopters (Laggards), accounts for $n = 3$ (5.7%) and reports not using AI, citing satisfaction with established methods or reservations about adoption. For the comparative analyses involving AI use, non-users were excluded ($N = 50$).

This usage-based profile sets the stage for the comparative analyses that follow. We begin with time efficiency (3.2), then turn to perceived quality (3.3) and SEO (3.4), before integrating broader advantages and challenges (3.5–3.6) and a qualitative view of the future of AI in content marketing (3.7).

3.2. Time Savings

Time is one of the most visible dimensions on which AI can reshape content workflows. Professionals who have worked in content creation both before and after the spread of generative tools often describe a clear difference in the time and effort required to produce comparable pieces. At the same time, many remain attached to their own creative processes and prefer not to rely excessively on automation, especially for more complex or strategic texts.

The time required to produce content also depends on the nature of the task: a short blog article differs substantially from an in-depth analytical piece. To obtain a like-for-like comparison, the survey focused on a typical blog article and contrasted three approaches to content creation — human-only, AI-only, and hybrid (human + AI). Respondents were asked two items: (3) “How long does it take you to complete a blog article without using AI?” and (4) “How long does it take you to complete a blog article using AI?”. Answers were given in four time ranges (under 1 hour; 1–2 hours; 3–5 hours; over 5 hours), which were then converted

into approximate midpoints (0.5, 1.5, 4, and 6 hours) to construct two variables: **TimeWithoutAI** and **TimeWithAI**.

For respondents who reported using AI (N = 50), results indicate that, on average, AI-assisted workflows required about 1.9 hours less than human-only workflows. A paired t-test confirmed that this reduction was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating a consistent pattern across respondents: AI support is associated with shorter completion times for blog articles. In practice, participants primarily linked these time savings to the research and drafting stages rather than to final editing.

Open-text comments and usage patterns suggest that AI was most frequently used to reduce the time spent searching for ideas, building outlines, or polishing initial drafts. Editing, refining tone, and adding creativity still required substantial personal input. Many respondents described AI as a way to “get started faster” or to avoid spending long periods on routine steps, while reserving the final say for themselves.

When asked to rate the statement “Using AI improves efficiency and productivity in content creation,” about 83% of participants assigned high scores on the five-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree; 5 = completely agree), with only a small minority remaining neutral or disagreeing. This pattern confirms a broadly positive attitude toward AI’s contribution to saving time and streamlining workflow.

Overall, the findings indicate that AI plays a substantial role in enhancing productivity, mainly by automating repetitive or time-consuming steps such as topic research and first drafting. Human involvement remains essential for editing, nuance, and creativity — the elements that give content its authenticity and emotional resonance. Together, these results illustrate an emerging balance of Hybrid Intelligence, in which technology accelerates production, while human insight ensures meaning and quality.

3.3. Content Quality

Beyond time efficiency, an important aspect of AI adoption in marketing is how it influences the perceived quality of content. While AI can produce grammatically correct and well-structured text, quality in marketing goes beyond technical precision and encompasses creativity, tone, and the ability to connect with readers.

To explore perceived quality, the survey included two items: (5) “How do you rate the quality of content generated exclusively by you (without AI)?” and (6) “How do you rate the quality of content generated with AI assistance?” Both questions used a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated *very poor*, and 5 indicated *very good*. From these items, two variables were defined: **QualityWithoutAI** and **QualityWithAI**, and a difference score, **QualityDifference** ($\text{QualityWithAI} - \text{QualityWithoutAI}$). An analogous difference score, **TimeDifference** ($\text{TimeWithoutAI} - \text{TimeWithAI}$), was constructed for time. Descriptive statistics for both indices are reported in Table 1.

When comparing the two quality ratings, most respondents evaluated AI-assisted texts slightly higher than those written entirely by themselves. For **QualityDifference**, the mean was 0.26 (SD = 1.03, range = -2 to +2), indicating noticeable variation among respondents. A paired t-test did not show a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.079$), so the improvement cannot be generalized beyond this exploratory sample. Some participants felt that AI made their writing clearer and better structured, others perceived little or no difference, and a few preferred the originality and tone of their own work.

Open responses and usage patterns suggest that AI is perceived as particularly helpful for organising ideas, improving clarity, and keeping writing consistent, especially with respect to structure or SEO optimization. At the same time, several respondents noted that AI-generated text can sound neutral or somewhat mechanical, lacking the emotion or creative spark that makes a message memorable. As one participant put it, “AI helps me polish the content, but it

still needs my personality.” Taken together, these impressions indicate that AI mainly supports the technical and structural aspects of writing — improving coherence, organization, and flow — while human perspective, intuition, and creativity remain central to authenticity and voice.

We also examined whether time savings were linked to perceived quality. As shown in Table 2, the correlation between **TimeDifference** and **QualityDifference** was weak and slightly negative ($r = -0.038$, $p = 0.792$). Faster completion, therefore, did not systematically lead to higher or lower perceived quality. In other words, gains in efficiency and assessments of quality appear to operate on partly independent dimensions within hybrid workflows.

Overall, the results suggest that AI contributes substantially to workflow speed and structural clarity, but only modestly to perceived content quality. The most favorable outcomes seem to arise when both elements work together: AI provides structure and optimization, while humans add context, depth, and emotional nuance. This balance reflects the practical logic of Hybrid Intelligence in content marketing.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for TimeDifference and Quality Difference variables

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TimeDifference	50	1.00	4.50	1.9000	1.40698
QualityDifference	50	2.00	2.00	.2600	1.02639
Valid N (listwise)	50				

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics (analysis performed by the authors)

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship between TimeDifference and QualityDifference.

Correlations			
		TimeDifference	QualityDifference
TimeDifference	Pearson Correlation	1	-.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.792
	N	50	50
QualityDifference	Pearson Correlation	-.038	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.792	
	N	50	50

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics (analysis performed by the authors)

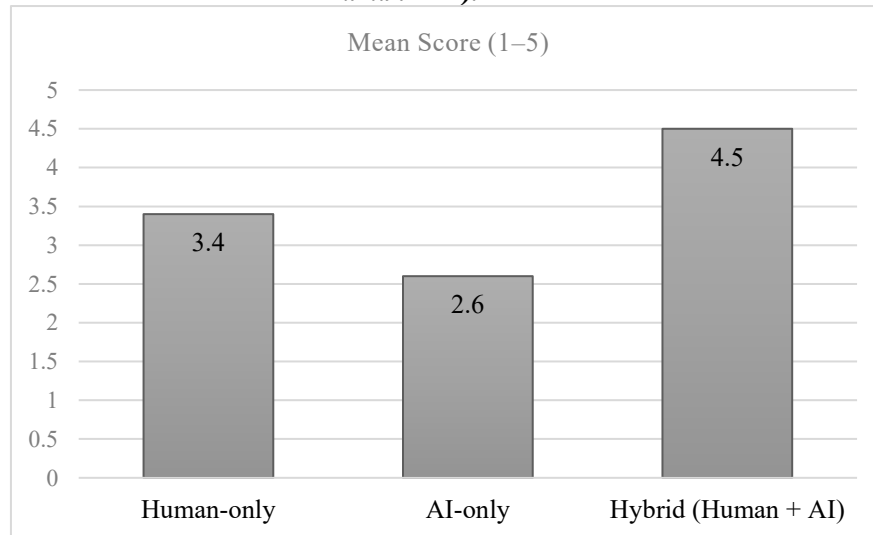
3.4. SEO Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) represents one of the most measurable and data-driven areas in digital marketing and a natural field in which AI tools can demonstrate tangible value. To explore this aspect, respondents were asked to rate how effective they considered three approaches to be for SEO optimization (1 = not at all, 5 = very much): human-only, AI-only, and hybrid (human + AI) content creation.

The results reveal a clear preference for hybrid workflows, which were rated as the most effective method for achieving SEO goals. Over 85% of participants evaluated the hybrid

model as effective or very effective (scores 4–5). By contrast, the AI-only approach attracted markedly lower confidence: more than 60% of respondents rated it between 1 and 3, suggesting that fully automated optimization is still perceived as unreliable or incomplete. The human-only approach received moderate scores (mean ≈ 3.4), implying that human expertise benefits considerably from AI support in technical SEO tasks and monitoring. Figure 1 illustrates the average perceived SEO effectiveness of the three methods.

Figure 1. Perceived SEO efficiency of different content-creation methods (Human-only, AI-only, Hybrid Human + AI).



Source: Authors' own processing of survey data

Across open comments, respondents consistently highlighted that AI is valuable for keyword research, content structuring, metadata generation, and readability analysis, but less attuned to tone, brand identity, and audience intent. Several noted that *AI helps with optimization but risks making the text too mechanical*, reinforcing the importance of editorial supervision and final human review.

A complementary item examined the perceived importance of the human role relative to AI in content creation more broadly. A substantial 70.4% of respondents described the human role as “very important”, and 24.1% as “important”, while only 5.5% viewed it as moderately or slightly important. From a Hybrid Intelligence standpoint, this pattern is consistent: AI contributes analytical precision and scale, while humans provide strategic alignment, contextual judgment, and authenticity. The hybrid model, therefore, emerges as the most sustainable approach for SEO-driven content marketing, combining technical optimization with brand-consistent communication.

3.5. Advantages of AI-Assisted Workflows

Respondents were asked to select all advantages that apply with a multiple-response item; therefore, percentages represent the share of respondents selecting each option and do not sum to 100%. In the full sample ($N = 53$), the most frequently selected benefit was time savings ($n = 48$; 90.6%), followed by rapid access to large amounts of information ($n = 38$; 71.7%). Nearly half indicated idea generation support ($n = 25$; 47.2%), while improved structure and logical flow was also commonly reported ($n = 22$; 41.5%). SEO optimization was selected by about one-third of respondents ($n = 16$; 30.2%). Overall, the pattern suggests that practitioners primarily value AI for efficiency and information breadth, with a substantial subset also highlighting creative support and improved text organization.

3.6. Challenges and Risks of AI Adoption

While respondents recognized clear benefits in efficiency and workflow improvement, they also reported challenges that shape how AI is integrated into day-to-day content production. Using a multiple-response (select-all-that-apply) item, the most frequently cited concern was the fear of losing authenticity or the brand's "voice" (n = 43; 81.1%, N = 53). This indicates that, even when AI can approximate tone or style, many practitioners remain skeptical about its ability to convey nuance, emotion, and context-sensitive meaning in a way that aligns with brand identity.

A second major challenge was the need to frequently edit and correct AI-generated text (n = 30; 56.6%), which can partially offset the time saved during early drafting. Difficulties in capturing the right context or tone were selected by n = 24 (45.3%), and concerns about the accuracy of generated information by n = 23 (43.4%). Ethical and moral concerns—including risks related to misinformation, over-automation, or insufficient transparency—were also reported (n = 17; 32.1%). SEO-related issues were less common (n = 9; 17.0%), but respondents who selected this option noted potential tendencies toward over-optimization or formulaic output.

Overall, these responses suggest that efficiency gains do not automatically translate into trust. For many professionals, AI is perceived as a productivity aid that still requires careful supervision rather than a system that can be relied on without review. Interpreted through the lens of Hybrid Intelligence, the pattern supports complementarity rather than replacement: AI contributes speed and structure, while human oversight remains central for safeguarding authenticity, contextual appropriateness, factual reliability, and ethical accountability. Taken together, the advantages and challenges summarized in Sections 4.5 and 4.6 portray a balanced reality—AI can amplify human capabilities, but it does not remove the need for human judgment and narrative control—setting the stage for the future-oriented perspectives explored in the next section.

3.7. AI and the Future of Content Marketing (Qualitative Insights)

To understand how professionals anticipate the evolution of content marketing under the influence of AI, we examined the open-ended answers to Question 21 — “How do you think AI could change the future of content marketing in the coming years?” — completed by 22 respondents. These answers consist mainly of practitioners' own opinions, ideas, and short predictions based on their experience. A word cloud generated in ATLAS.ti highlighted recurrent terms related to speed, support, efficiency, creativity, and risk, which we used as a starting point for a brief qualitative review of the responses.

Overall, participants expect AI to become a routine layer across the workflow, particularly for research, brainstorming, and first-draft synthesis. Several emphasized faster information access and accelerated drafting cycles: “AI already accelerates many tasks” (R7, translated). Others anticipate broad adoption for documentation and repetitive steps, noting that such support will “make content creation easier” and streamline updates to existing materials (e.g., R13, translated). In this sense, respondents see AI as gradually normalized in everyday content work rather than as an exceptional tool.

A consistent thread is collaboration rather than substitution. Respondents frequently depict daily human–AI cooperation in which tools assist and humans decide: “The marketer and AI collaborate, every day” (R2, translated). Even where substantial change is expected, AI is framed as an instrument that augments professional judgment rather than replaces it. This position echoes the quantitative findings that emphasize operational benefits while preserving the centrality of human oversight.

At the same time, answers articulate quality risks and the possibility of stylistic homogenization. Several respondents warn of “a flattening of style and topics” with a likely

reduction in diversity and the personal character of communication if outputs are not carefully edited (R5, translated). Others stress that improvements in accuracy, tone of voice, and emotion handling are prerequisites for broader trust: greater reliability and better sensitivity to context would make AI “an important instrument in marketers’ work” (R3, translated). While many acknowledge that systems “respond quickly and have extensive knowledge” verification remains necessary to ensure precision and credibility (R16, translated).

The responses also point to expected shifts in skill profiles. Access to larger knowledge bases may help produce higher-quality content more easily, yet differentiation will depend on the ability to orchestrate tools — prompting, reviewing, and aligning outputs with strategic goals and audience needs. As one respondent observed, advantage will accrue to those “who know how to use AI” (R12, translated). A minority raises ethical and societal considerations, cautioning against over-automation and reduced independent thinking, and calling for transparency when AI contributes to research-based content (e.g., R9, R20, translated).

Taken together, these qualitative insights support a trajectory of Hybrid Intelligence by design. Respondents expect AI to provide speed, structure, and scalability, while humans retain responsibility for contextual understanding, tone calibration, persuasion, and ethical integrity. Rather than eliminating professional roles, AI is seen as redefining them toward higher-order tasks — managing systems, curating sources, and safeguarding brand identity and audience relevance. These views align with the quantitative patterns reported in Sections 4.2–4.6 and help clarify the conditions under which AI is most likely to add durable value in content marketing.

4. Ethical Considerations

The survey was conducted anonymously and in line with standard ethical guidelines for social research. Before beginning the questionnaire, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the way their data would be used. By proceeding, participants provided informed consent for their answers to be used exclusively for academic purposes. No personal or sensitive data (e.g., name, age, or direct identifiers) was collected in the main dataset. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents could optionally provide an email address if they wished to be informed once the study results are published. These contact details were stored separately from survey responses and were not used in the analysis.

5. Limitations

This study should be read as a first step rather than a final word on AI in content marketing. The sample is modest in size and was reached mainly through professional groups and personal networks. In practice, this means that the results reflect the views of a particular circle of marketing professionals and cannot be treated as statistically representative of all practitioners.

Our questionnaire focused on how people actually use AI tools and how they evaluate time, quality, and SEO in human-only, AI-only, and hybrid workflows. Inevitably, other important aspects remained in the background. We did not, for instance, look systematically at how personal attitudes towards technology, ethical sensitivities, organizational rules, or budget constraints shape adoption decisions. These dimensions would be better explored through follow-up work based on interviews, case studies, or larger and more diverse samples.

The context is also quite specific. All respondents work in Romania, where AI in marketing is gaining visibility but is still unevenly adopted across companies and sectors. Professionals in other countries, or in different industries, may face different pressures, tools, and expectations. Comparative studies across markets would help clarify how Hybrid Intelligence takes shape under different institutional and cultural conditions.

A further limitation is the pace of technological change itself. New tools, plug-ins, and workflows appear almost continuously, and what respondents considered “AI use” at the time of data collection may already look different a year later. The findings, therefore, capture a moment in time — a snapshot of how practitioners were experimenting with AI during the data-collection window — rather than a stable state of practice.

Even with these caveats, the study adds something concrete: it shows how a group of Romanian marketing professionals currently combine human and AI capabilities in their content work, where they see clear gains, and where they remain cautious. We hope this evidence can serve as a starting point for more detailed research and as a prompt for practitioners to reflect on how they design their own hybrid workflows.

6. Call for Further Research

This study opens more questions than it answers, and future work can build on its exploratory findings in several ways. Researchers can follow content teams over time to see how hybrid (human + AI) workflows actually stabilize in daily practice and how time savings and perceived quality relate to concrete performance indicators. Experimental and survey-based studies can also examine how audiences perceive human-only, AI-only, and hybrid content, and whether they attach different levels of credibility, trust, or engagement to each.

Further research can look more closely at the human side of Hybrid Intelligence. Scholars can explore how content creators understand their role and sense of agency when AI becomes part of their creative process, which skills they consider most valuable, and how they renegotiate authorship and ownership. By addressing these questions, future studies can clarify what Hybrid Intelligence really means for innovation, authenticity, and professional identity in content marketing.

Conclusions

This study examined how Romanian marketing professionals integrate AI into content workflows and how they experience human-only, AI-only, and hybrid approaches. The results show that AI is already a common support tool for research, ideation, drafting, and SEO, and that it significantly reduces the time needed to produce a typical blog article. At the same time, respondents continue to value their own judgment and creativity, and most see the hybrid model — where humans and AI work together — as the most effective and sustainable option.

In terms of outcomes, AI contributes most clearly to speed, structure, and technical optimization, while perceived quality improves only modestly and remains strongly tied to human input. Professionals describe AI as helpful for organizing ideas and polishing drafts, but still rely on themselves for tone, nuance, and brand voice, and many worry about loss of authenticity or stylistic homogenization. These patterns are consistent with a Hybrid Intelligence perspective, in which algorithms handle repetitive or analytical tasks, and humans retain responsibility for meaning, persuasion, and ethical boundaries.

For practice, the findings suggest that the main question is not whether to use AI, but how to design workflows in which AI support and human oversight reinforce each other. Marketers need skills not only in writing and strategy, but also in prompting, reviewing, and integrating AI outputs in ways that respect brand identity and audience expectations. If these elements are in place, AI can act less as a replacement and more as an amplifier of human creativity, helping professionals deliver content that is both efficient to produce and recognizably human in voice and intent.

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