



Full length article

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Strategic Planning and Competitive Advantage

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Artificial Intelligence (AI) affects strategic planning and helps industries improve their competitive positions. With digital changes becoming more overwhelming, organisations need to act quickly, and AI provides them with the tools and guidelines necessary for foresight, agility and decision intelligence. By studying more than 80 recent academic articles on the topic, the paper explores how AI merges with approaches like Resource-Based View (RBV), SWOT, and Porter's Five Forces and enhancing them through predictive analytics, natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning (ML). Analysing companies such as Amazon, Google, IBM, Tesla, and SMEs reveals how AI helps improve efficiency, accelerate innovation, develop well-known brands and improve interaction with the ecosystem. The findings also show that unmanaged ethical problems, governance gaps and differences in goals can hinder AI adoption. The results point out that AI should be considered both a useful technology and a strategic partner, creating continuous value creates continuous value when it supports corporate aims, ethics and leadership. In addition, the paper advocates for additional research that brings together different experts to solve the challenges in AI policy, planning and its social results. Because of these insights, organisations, scholars and policymakers can better navigate the dynamic AI-driven business environment.

1. Introduction

With digital technologies growing rapidly, organisations must adjust quickly or risk becoming outdated. Led by Artificial Intelligence (AI), businesses are now revising how important decisions are made and how they maintain their competitive advantages. Since the current environment is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, traditional strategic planning methods struggle to capture the information needed for a company to stay ahead.

AI offers the opportunity to boost or completely change existing decision-making approaches by applying it to large data sets, utilising forecasting models, and deploying flexible algorithms. It requires firms to reconsider; it means firms have to reconsider how they plan, act on and monitor their future goals (Ahmed et al., 2025; Alkhanbouli et al., 2025).

This paper aims to thoroughly evaluate how AI contributes to planning efforts and boosts continuing success in the market. Using information from recent research, this study examines the impact of AI on planning, implementing and assessing business strategy. Strategic planning traditionally meant planning from data and past models, but it is now a process guided by data forecasts, various scenario strategies and immediate feedback. More organisations are adding AI to their strategies to uncover insights that appear faster and take into account more details (Visuthiphol & Pankham, 2025; Liu et al., 2025).

This piece of research looks at several key issues in a targeted manner. It includes important concepts that underpin strategic management such as the Resource-Based View (RBV), Porter's Five Forces, and dynamic capabilities, and integrating them with AI tools like natural language processing (NLP), machine learning (ML), and neural networks. In addition, the study draws on empirical case studies to illustrate for better clarity how different industries such as retail, manufacturing and finance are leveraging AI to gain a competitive edge. In addition, the study analyses the ethical and governing aspects of using AI, as these are gaining greater importance for the accountability of groups and the trust of stakeholders in the digital economy. Even though AI offers much promise, its actual impact is based on a leader's vision, how an organisation is built and its data governance (Alkhanbouli et al., 2025; Ahmed et al., 2025).

This subject is important because it matters now. With global digital transformation occurring quickly, businesses are under significant pressure to innovate, all while dealing with both risks and a resource shortage. AI's ability to utilise data for foresight, guide resource allocation, and identify new opportunities for business success explains its key role in modern planning. Besides, if AI technology is used improperly, it might harm a company's strategy, operations, or ethical standards, so making responsible AI use essential. Recognising how important AI is to strategy is now necessary; it is crucial for supporting success and staying strong in the future (Liu et al., 2025).

Peer-reviewed academic literature published within the five years from 2020 to 2025 was reviewed and analysed for this study. Over 80 reliable sources were found by using a purposive sampling method and searches in ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Wiley Online Library, and the ACM Digital Library. These sources were chosen because they are relevant, demonstrate academic rigor and contribute to advancing the field in strategic planning. I also refer to early foundational papers, for example, Dunleavy and Margetts (2023), to provide an overview and historical context. Using this strategy, I aim to examine in detail and objectively how AI is affecting the way organisations make strategic choices.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Strategic Planning & Competitive Advantage

For a long time, organisations have relied on strategic planning to align their resources, skills, and opportunities in the market. Conventional approaches to strategic management, such as Resource-Based View, SWOT analysis, and Porter's Five Forces, equip managers with important tools for studying markets and deciding what to do. It is because of advancements in areas like AI and digital technology that the classical business models are now

being prompting a reevaluation, reworking, and enhancement of these classical business models through real-time analysis and responsive capabilities. To effectively navigate today's fast-paced markets, people need to see how classical theories interact with current AI-based systems in planning.

RBV asserts that companies with a sustainable competitive advantage possess resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable. According to this theory, strong technological, legal, cultural and people resources make up the foundation of a company's strategic advantage. AI integrates into RBV by serving as an additional resource and as a means to enhance a company's capabilities. Through effective data analytics systems, predictive modeling, and machine learning frameworks" for consistency and clarity, firms are obtaining new data and using it to make unique actions that shape their strategy (Krakowski et al., 2023; Pu et al., 2025). For many years, the SWOT method was commonly used to analyse a situation statically at the beginning of making a strategy. Although it is useful, psychology's downside is that it is based on opinions and unchanging beliefs. AI helps companies by making SWOT assessments more flexible through up-to-date market monitoring, continuous competitor monitoring and predictive calculations. Data from market signals, social media and financial reports —encompassing both structured and unstructured data—can be interpreted by machine learning algorithms to generate current SWOT points, thereby improving the quality of inputs used for planning (Teixeira et al., 2025). As a result, strategic planning shifts from a one-time event to an ongoing activity, continually aligned with the evolving market situation.

Porter's Five Forces method, which assesses industry competition through rivalry, the threat of new entrants, potential substitutes, and the bargaining power of buyers and suppliers, is being enhanced by AI. Previously, its effectiveness depended on how well strategists interpreted and applied the model. However, AI improves the forecasting and analysis of this framework. For example, AI tools analyse startup activity, investment trends, and patent applications to assess how new businesses might impact the market. They can also review opinions and consumption habits to identify who is driving market changes as buyers. Incorporating AI into Porter's model provides detailed, real-time insights that strengthens a business's ability to plan for the future (Climent et al., 2025).

While useful, classical strategic models often overlook how quickly and intricately today's markets evolve. As a result, the dynamic capabilities framework was created to focus on helping companies' sense, seize and transform abilities as the world around them changes rapidly. In this environment, it is becoming crucial for organisations to quickly shift their approaches based on what happens. It significantly contributes by sensing and guiding decisions in this setting. This framework significantly aids in sensing and guiding decisions, enabling organisations to detect new market trends, shifts in customer behavior, and technological advancements earlier than they might otherwise. AI-powered tools allow firms to analyse numerous scenarios, refine decision-making process and rapidly implement new strategies (Chaturvedi et al., 2025; Alkhanbouli et al., 2025).

Bringing AI into how we plan changes the way scholars view strategy. In traditional models, decision makers are considered to be trustworthy and capable of working with uncertain situations. AI disagrees with that assumption by lowering bounded rationality thanks to its computational abilities. AI decision support systems can check huge amounts of data and produce scenarios which can uncover things that people would not be capable of knowing on their own. For this reason, scholars refer to this as hybrid intelligence- a collaboration

where human judgment and intelligent technology work together to develop solutions (Camilleri, 2024). The growing complexity in these systems makes us reconsider how humans' approach and direct strategy making. Recent research highlights how AI supports "cognitive augmentation" in management. AI helps companies collect data, conduct analyses, identify key issues, and generate potential solutions. An example of this is NLP can analyse customer feedback, analyst reports, and corporate documents to identify new opportunities or risks. Thanks to deep learning and neural network technology, financial or operational data can reveal unexpected patterns, providing new insights into risk measurement and the identification of potential opportunities (Mundlos, 2025). For this reason, AI shapes strategy more through data-driven insights than intuition, although a manager's intuition remains valuable for confirming the best course of action.

We should also focus on how AI impacts our understanding and decision-making within strategic frameworks. As AI improves the logical and accurate side of planning, it can also introduce hidden biases, increase secrecy, and lead to an overreliance on statistical methods. As a result, influential thinkers are recommending that "responsible AI" play a bigger role in making decisions for national security. Camilleri (2024) believes that embedding ethics into the planning stage makes sure algorithms are both correctly built and responsible to all. As a result, the original strategy ideas that emphasised competition and value creation must now add dimension by considering social and ethical consequences.

AI is also changing the way organisations design themselves and improve their ability to perform. Organisations must acquire skilled staff in AI, develop modern data architectures and build teams that bridge the gap between technical insights and strategic execution. In the works of Teixeira et al. (2025), AI benefits a business most when integrated into marketing, operations, finance, and HR, aligning with the company's primary goals and strategies.

In summary, frameworks such as RBV, SWOT, and Porter's Five Forces are still relevant, but AI makes their effectiveness much higher. They make strategic decisions not only quicker and more precisely but also help firms respond more seamlessly to change. Now, with AI helping strategic planning, businesses move toward systems that can adjust and develop alongside changes in their environment. Necessitates new approaches to strategy, encompassing intelligence, ethics, and skill development. As a result, it becomes clear that researchers and scholars should keep looking for opportunities to improve and add to the strategies used for digital planning.

3: Role of AI Technologies in Strategic Decision-Making

Industries today are rethinking their strategies as AI takes over more strategic positions. Predictive analytics, machine learning, artificial intelligence and natural language processing are helping organisations handle complex issues independently or more quickly" for clarity and style. The growing use of AI and automation in business indicates a shift in managers' ways of thinking, so organisations must rethink their usual approaches to decisions, adopt taxonomies for AI-based processes and examine who should do the important work.

Because of its wide use, predictive analytics is an AI technology that benefits managers by helping them anticipate events and deal with them ahead of time. They use current and historical data to forecast issues related to demand, losing customers, product inventory and competition. According to Wang (2024), firms can use predictive analytics in AI-enabled models to identify promising opportunities in cutthroat industries. They regularly to "combine regression techniques, decision trees, and time-series analysis to find trends with more

accuracy than standard statistical practices. For this reason, businesses can respond to trends quicker than others and gather extra insights, leaving them ahead of the competition.

With machine learning, there is no need to program systems to help them perform better and more accurately. With supervised, unsupervised and reinforcement learning, ML algorithms can adapt to new data, refine decision-making processes, and uncover hidden patterns. Mahabub et al. (2025) state that using AI and ML technologies, decision systems have greatly improved results in logistics, healthcare and finance. With these systems, managers receive recommendations and solutions that factor in many dimensions and carefully evaluate the probability of variables. Strategically, ML can be used for financial forecasting, gaining insights into the competition and setting flexible prices, all of which depend heavily on uncertain and large stores of data. Natural language processing is now playing an important role in helping managers make decisions. Because of NLP, AI can now understand information found in news articles, earnings reports, social media content and internal files. Thanks to this, companies can use sentiment analysis, spot developing threats and gain insights into their reputation across large volumes of data. The authors stress that when NLP is part of human–AI synergy models, it improves how qualitative information is applied to form useful strategies (Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2025). Thanks to NLP, dashboards in this field can spot issues with customer satisfaction or notice updates in regulations, which makes it easier to respond quickly. As a result, NLP helps people notice what’s going on around them and respond to it with a strategy.

AI is now being used in planning systems to make and automate many key decisions for organisations. Such systems are available as recommender engines, optimisation solvers or advanced simulation models. According to Osman et al. (2025), within business analytics today, AutoML helps managers who are not technologists access advanced algorithms for guiding the company’s strategy. They show which features are most important and also visualise actual scenarios, making it easier for executives to interpret and utilise the findings. In addition, several DSS systems combine predictive analytics, machine learning, and NLP, making them useful for any strategy.

With better performance and reliability in AI, people are starting to ask: How much authority should we give to machines? Kornowicz and Thommes (2025) look into differences between what decision-makers and stakeholders prefer when it comes to delegation. The study discovered that, although managers are ready to let AI take over regular and data-based tasks, they are not sure to give AI the final say in crucial or sensitive situations. Giving this power selectively is due to worries about trust and clear decisions made by algorithms. Because systems can function without human intervention, organisations must put in place rules that both clarify when machines can operate alone and outline human supervision roles.

Research indicates that the most successful models are those in which humans and machines work together. AI systems are meant to complement a person’s mind by making thinking clearer, biases less likely, and information easier to review. This way of working fits the idea of “centaur systems,” which means humans and machines share responsibility for decisions by using what each is good at. Li et al. (2025) examine this using dual-process theory and explain that AI can help address cognitive biases such as anchoring and availability heuristics. Studies show that people tend to rely on intuition when making decisions under uncertainty, but AI systems base their conclusions on well-organised data, resulting in more rational outcomes when both are combined.

Effective management of human–AI collaboration requires the use of taxonomies to rank AI-supported decisions based on their complexity, frequency, and importance. Doshi et al. (2024) divide strategic decisions into listed, semi-formal and informal categories and pair AI functions with each category. Activities such as inventory planning and credit scoring follow established rules and can be handled by computers. AIs help in tasks such as project prioritisation and managing resources, and humans are still needed to make the final decision. Since understanding context and values is crucial for decisions such as mergers and rebranding, these aren't easy to delegate. The use of this approach allows organisations to assign decision responsibility appropriately and place AI systems where they give the greatest benefit.

A new a new grouping proposed by Kučević and Brandes (2025) classifies AI based on decision latitude, the measure of their autonomous actions. Stakeholders organise AI decision-making into four categories: advice, recommendations supported by explanations, tasks performed without human intervention but still subject to modification and fully automated decisions. The framework supports firms in considering AI from both a technical angle and ethical as well as organisational aspects. For example, automated pricing is acceptable in e-commerce, yet hiring or removing staff must be checked by people because it involves fairness and accountability.

Moral questions are a key part of talking about AI delegation. AI systems taking on more deciding roles increase the risks of bias, discrimination, and unexpected outcomes. Kornowicz and Thommes (2025) point out that being clear in decisions is vital in healthcare and finance, since incorrect choices there may have huge impacts. As a result, firms have to rely on XAI methods such as explainable modelling, counterfactual explanations and audit trails, to justify and communicate their decisions to regulators, clients, and employees.

Those leading in strategy now need to develop new competencies when applying AI to decisions. Managers need to learn about AI and how it can support or limit features in a firm, as well as how to assist the organisation in adapting to digital change. Madanchian and Taherdoost (2025) argued that being successful in human–AI synergy requires encouraging trust and fostering trust and making continuous learning a priority. People who use AI software should learn how to examine and interpret the information that AI tools produce. Also, organising the company in a way that promotes teamwork between AI specialists, experts in each field and those making decisions will help ensure that the insights from AI are right for the company.

Even though AI technologies are very beneficial, challenges still exist. Common issues in using AI effectively are poor data quality, algorithms that are difficult to interpret, integrating various AI technologies and hesitation to accept new changes. According to Wang (2024), many predictive models are at risk of overfitting or becoming outdated if the market conditions change rapidly. According to Mahabub et al. (2025), false results or incorrect correlations can occur in applicant selection systems if their AI systems are not frequently checked and approved. As a result, we must incorporate testing, feedback mechanisms, and fallback scenarios into AI-based plans.

Overall, digital tools in strategy involve using predictive analytics, ML, NLP and decision support systems. These instruments improve a manager's reasoning skills, simplify information analysis, and facilitate quick and accurate decision-making. Still, for adoption to be successful, companies should delegate jobs carefully, define clear taxonomies and enforce strong ethical controls. Instead of replacing strategists, AI should serve to augment their decision-making, provided all systems are transparent, accountable, and aligned with organisational

policies. As they adapt, businesses must combine human and machine capabilities rather than choosing just one.

4. Empirical Evidence: AI Impact on Performance and Strategic Agility

A growing number of studies now demonstrate the ability of AI in strategic management, mainly to enhance strategic management, primarily by making organisations more successful and adaptable. Across various industries, AI has aided businesses in becoming more profitable, productive, fast in operations and able to respond quickly to decisions in changing conditions. This positions AI as a central factor enabling companies to stay ahead in today's digital age.

AI is having a strong impact on the way e-commerce works. Kassa and Worku (2025) examined how AI improves a company's performance in online trading. They show that when organisations use AI to make recommendations, adjust pricing and group customers, it leads to better financial outcomes. Thanks to artificial intelligence, businesses increased how they personalised marketing, optimised logistics and responded instantly to people's actions, which boosted user conversion rates and revenue. Thanks to AI's ability to analyse and predict, these performance improvements, driven by AI's ability to analyse and predict, confirm that AI is a valuable strategy for data-heavy consumer markets.

A large part of the financial sector has improved greatly due to AI's ability to automate tasks and support decision-making. Alhyasat, Alhyasat and Khattab (2025) explain that banks using AI in these areas have achieved clear gains in both their efficiency and how they deliver services. By leveraging the right machine learning algorithms, processes, and analyses of large volumes of transactions in real time, so there is reduce the need for manual review. They therefore enhance trust among customers and lower operational costs. Authors argue that AI accelerates internal operations and prepares banks for upcoming legal and economic changes by improving its strategic persistence.

Because of AI, even SMEs now have tools to match those available to large businesses. Amponsah et al. (2025) looked at how SMEs around the world used AI and discovered that AI systems for customer relationship management, bookkeeping, and forecasting greatly improved decision-making speed and efficiency. SME managers were able to update their plans fast thanks to AI's quick processing of data. This flexibility demonstrates that AI can make advanced strategic resources more accessible to all organisations.

The effect of AI on a company's strategic agility is unaffected by either industry or organisational size. Al-Mamary (2025) explains that firms using AI achieve greater advantages in competition and innovation. The findings indicate that using AI for strategy, R&D decision-making, and scenario planning helps organisations introduce new products and respond to market changes more efficiently. Also, the ability to simulate and prepare for multiple outcomes allowed managers to base their decisions on more data and feel more confident when operating under significant risks. They demonstrate that AI enables both immediacy in task performance as well as in creating and designing strategies.

A consistent pattern emerges when examining AI's influence in digital transformation. Chuang et al. (2025) mentioned AI as an important element that helps reorganise work routines and processes in companies. The researchers found that firms leveraging AI across all value chain functions performed better financially than

those depending only on traditional technology. AI adoption was connected to the company's ability to perceive, seize, and adapt to new opportunities—fundamental elements of strategic agility.

Schwaeke et al. (2025) provide additional evidence supporting this perspective. Through the survey, the authors discovered that firms implementing AI achieved higher success in dealing with the push and pull of the market and new trends. Many of these businesses brought in AI used AI dashboards to monitor current situations, employed algorithms to assess competitors, and adopted cognitive automation for easier compliance. They argue that as a result, enterprises make decisions more rapidly and respond swiftly to changes in their sectors. In addition, AI enhances not only the speed and efficiency of business operations but also transforms how organisations think and are led. Liu et al. (2025) studied how the use of AI with strategic agility encourages designers to be more creative. Using AI in conjunction with agile leadership and responsive organisational cultures leads to even better results. Firms achieve higher-order innovation when their leaders value AI, promote teamwork, and focus on strategic goals. The study concludes that AI only delivers benefits when leaders help align the company structure and foster an innovative outlook.

Naheed et al. (2025) developed the AI Readiness Framework, which enables organisations to assess their preparedness to benefit from AI as part of their planning. Through the examination of various cases, the model reveals that firms at advanced stages of AI adoption utilise new technologies, foster an open culture, automated processes and rules that enable experimentation. Thanks to their established learning practices and feedback channels, these firms can capitalise on AI much more quickly during uncertain times. Naheed et al. (2025) show that as firms progress with digital transformation, AI's influence on strategy grows increasingly important.

Although there is a lot of positive proof, some problems remain. The implementation gaps in SMEs and traditional sectors are usually a lack of skills, problems with integration and a refusal to accept new ways of doing things. According to Amponsah et al. (2025), although AI gives benefits to global SMEs, limited access to infrastructure and training prevents its full utilisation. Chuang et al. (2025) mention that to avoid strategic misalignment, AI must be supported by updates to both business practices and workers' skills. It is clear that AI is effective for organisations, but this requires the company to carefully consider and invest in changes that go alongside it.

Also, it is necessary to regularly check if AI systems are fitted to the organisation's strategy. The authors note that AI-related success can become stagnant when there is no obvious link to what the business or its users require. AI solutions that firms implement must be both modern and fit their company strategy. As a result, companies should continuously measure measures such as increased revenue, time savings, and decision accuracy, all pointing to an advantage over competitors.

In summary, the research clearly shows that AI greatly improves both both the performance and adaptability of organisations in every industry and of all sizes. AI is enabling faster, more effective, and more responsive decision-making for organisations to make important choices in e-commerce, finance and small businesses. Yet, to reap these advantages, organisations must go beyond technology; they need a strategic plan, flexible leadership, and alignment of digital tools with core business operations. With firms all facing unstable environments, AI is likely to be seen as both something that can make processes simpler and as an essential factor behind success in today's fierce competition.

5. AI in Gaining and Sustaining Competitive Advantage

As technology advances rapidly, AI is now at the core of a company's efforts to gain an edge over others. Today, brands turn to AI to start attracting customers and to maintain their competitive place in the market through branding, personalised experiences, swift product launches, and innovation. AI provides a distinct advantage by redefining how value is created, along with helping the company predict and react to upcoming changes. Due to growing changes and connections in business, AI has shifted from merely improving operations to becoming a vital component of strategic decision-making.

AI has clearly shown it can make a difference in branding and customer experience. If companies efficiently blend AI into their branding, they can deliver appealing personalisation to a broad audience, which leads to a stronger connection with their customers. They emphasise that generative AI makes it possible for businesses to craft unique brand stories for each user, tailor content based on user interactions and maintain a brand's recognition everywhere online. With the quick and accurate work of AI tools on customer data, organisations can provide experiences designed specially for each person, which would be too challenging to do manually. Thanks to this, businesses can help customers feel more valued over time and make their brand easier to identify in busy markets.

Besides branding, being able to bring a product to market speedily now gives a clear advantage over rivals. Development firms that use AI to accelerate product launch can capitalise on recent industry trends. They determine this by exploring how the combination of human and AI resources cuts down wait periods in innovation, enabling quick strategy adjustments. They point out that using AI in design and prototyping can shorten iteration periods, making firms more capable of bringing unique offerings to market faster.

AI also enhances organisational flexibility by supporting the future prediction and scenario planning. Managers can use digital twins and predictive modelling to explore possibilities, assess risks and evaluate risk for less money and time. According to Gama and Magistretti (2023), AI supports innovation management by helping organisations explore multiple scenarios, best allocate their money and recognise opportunities in unpredictable environments. This capability keeps companies proactive in facing risks, ultimately improving their long-term performance.

Krakowski, Luger and Raisch (2023) examine how AI influences the traditional sources of business advantage. They argue that as AI advances, qualities such as adaptability, sustained growth, and learning require firms to develop better digital infrastructure as a key asset, alongside proper management of their data. AI keeps improving as it is used, enabling companies to succeed over time. Leading these complex networks has become an ongoing source of competitive advantage in the digital marketplace.

With AI, organisations are encouraged to think across different areas and connect with different partners. Frank et al. (2025) explain that using AI helps companies introduce business models that support the circular economy, partner with other organisations and base their operations on platforms. Because of these changes, firms consider ecosystems rather than just their own operations when designing value, as partnerships outside the business allow for more value to be both shared and formed. AI links all the players in these ecosystems, handling logistics, boosting efficiency, and ensuring alignment among different partners. Leading these complicated networks turns out to be an ongoing source of advantage in the digital market.

The ways people lead change as AI is integrated into important business decisions. The authors Hossain, Fernando and Akter (2025) view digital leadership as the fusion of human perception with machine capabilities. To be effective, leaders today also rely on data insights, understand risk and guide teams that adapt easily to new situations. Integrating AI into leading others helps to build an environment where people experiment and keep learning, needed to maintain importance during times of change.

Bevilacqua et al. (2025) explores how AI supports and transforms executive decision-making. AI tools are found to alleviate cognitive burdens and also help numerous departments work toward the same objectives. With harmonisation, large enterprises can rapidly reach consensus and act cohesively, which is necessary for managing tough competitive situations. Enhancing how leaders make decisions, AI helps ensure an organisation acts fast and strongly, which is important for staying competitive.

AI is important in how companies develop new innovation strategies. Jaboob et al. (2025) suggest that AI assists organisations in strategic decision-making through real-time intelligence and by handling advanced searching for useful information. According to their study, AI tools allow businesses to change where they invest in innovation easily, respond quickly to customer suggestions, and test products on a large scale. Because of these capabilities, companies can adapt their innovation strategies more rapidly in response to emerging market trends in the market, instead of the old method of planning far ahead.

All in all, these findings and theories confirm that AI helps companies create multiple avenues for sustainable advantage" for variety and clarity. It gives organisations the ability to act more quickly, customise more perfectly, constantly innovate and engage a larger group of partners. Still, to keep ahead, organisations must invest regularly in learning about AI, ethical leadership and ensuring everyone is moving in the same direction. To achieve the most from AI, businesses should both modernise their practices and embed AI at the core of their strategy, culture, and operations.

As a result, AI has moved past being used only for smooth operations and now steers a company's overall success. AI enables the development of adaptable, learning organisations by aiding in branding, speed in getting to market, looking ahead and joining ecosystems. The key advantage comes from companies tying their tools to their strategic goals and making sure they fit within flexible organisations. As the pace of change accelerates, using AI in key strategies helps organisations stay ahead, shift and survive.

6. Case Studies: Real-World AI-Driven Strategy Examples

It is obvious in global businesses like Amazon, Google, IBM and Tesla how AI has transitioned from ideas to practical applications. They demonstrate that using Leveraging AI helps build lasting value, foster creativity, and enhance usefulness in the market over the long term. AI's positive outcomes have not been the same for all organisations, since SMEs and large enterprises both experience a mix of benefits and challenges when integrating AI into their strategies.

Widely recognised as one of the most closely examined examples of success. Because AI is integrated throughout its operations, both supply chain management and pricing processes at Amazon have become highly efficient for a large customer base. Ebule (2025) emphasises that the use of predictive modeling to understand

demand, along with data-driven AI-powered suggestions, are key factors for Amazon's success in the market. As a result, the company can bring out innovative improvements faster and make users engage with it more. Also, we see from Google's AI strategy that they are strongly committed to always learning and upgrading their infrastructure. The parent company of Google, Alphabet, spends a lot of money on AI laboratories, for example, TensorFlow and DeepMind. Because of this infrastructure, AI is now used in advertising as well as for autonomous systems. Machucho and Ortiz (2025) state that by implementing centralised AI governance, Google can be both ethically correct and technically skilled. Because the company prioritises AI-driven innovation, its leaders feel confident in planning for the future within fast-changing technological industries.

IBM has a story that depicts success as well as warnings. After MAI led in AI with Watson, IBM received mixed feedback regarding its performance in healthcare and other industries, especially when Watson fell short of expectations. The paper by Papagiannidis, Mikalef & Conboy (2025) indicates that the lack of strategic integration with key stakeholders contributed to Watson's disappointing results. The idea to use AI for industry change by IBM made sense, but it didn't work out well because the company misjudged how ready its technology was and failed to recognise that each industry presents unique complexities. Even the most technologically advanced companies should be realistic in their expectations and get all teams united when using AI.

AI plays a big role in Tesla's approach to disruption in traditional systems. The Autopilot and Full Self-Driving programmes by Tesla turn AI not simply into an auxiliary service, but the main basis for their value. According to Liu et al. (2025), Tesla's AI is built using data collected from every vehicle in its fleet, allowing for rapid updates and improvements. Yet, launching AI technology before it is fully mature has introduced risks related to regulatory compliance and reputational damage. What we see with Tesla is that AI can separate companies from competitors, but it can lead to even bigger risks if there is no solid way to manage its use.

The difficulties and challenges SMEs face with AI are usually different from what tech giants experience. According to Sánchez et al. (2025), due to their limited capital for AI investments, SMEs should focus on gradual deployment that strengthens specific business decisions. As an example, members of the manufacturing industry have set up machine learning to foresee any equipment problems, lowering downtime and expenses. In these cases, success depends on targeting quick business gains rather than working towards the same large-scale solutions as most enterprises.

However, limited organisational capacity and a lack of employee expertise can lead to misalignment issues. Vuković, Dekpo-Adza and Matović (2025) note that the absence of internal AI governance is a primary reason for implementation failures among SMEs. If data management policies and readiness for change are lacking, SMEs find that their AI investments do not give the best outcomes. This insight indicates that when developing AI strategies for SMEs, companies must carefully consider both the costs involved and how the organisation will adapt to AI-driven changes to AI changes.

At all organisational levels, it's common for AI achievements to fall short when the approach is not clear with business goals. Pu et al. (2025) discuss how, in many cases, people failed to take advantage of technically correct advice given by AI systems. They say that AI recommendations will likely stay unused or used incorrectly

unless they are integrated into the firm's overall strategy. When AI knowledge is not put into practice, businesses may waste resources without achieving their primary objectives.

On the contrary, winning AI strategies have certain key enablers. Khan et al. (2025) show that businesses do better if they use AI in all their core planning instead of leaving it with the IT team. Active participation of leadership in AI initiatives is shown in case studies from logistics, healthcare and finance to ensure greater chances of exciting and powerful results for the organisation.

In addition, Mayegun and Nwanevu (2025) reviewed how AI is being incorporated into financial reporting systems, stating it highlighting its role in increasing transparency, detecting fraud, and ensuring compliance. This makes a company better suited to react to regulations in areas with a lot of government rules. In such cases, a key benefit comes from smartly including AI in the most important decision points, rather than relying solely on the raw computational power of AI.

Even with so many success stories, some more warnings are occasionally heard. It is common for companies that introduce AI because of outside pressure to have a hard time measuring the effects or fitting AI into their normal processes. This case study supports the idea that AI is used best when combined with solid, developing business strategies.

In short, the outcomes of AI being used reflect the combination of opportunity and hazard. Amazon, Google and Tesla have shown that using AI together with a clear strategy, able leaders, and an eye for change brings rewards. Meanwhile, AI failures from IBM Watson and small and medium-sized enterprises without effective AI governance reveal that not preparing properly for AI can weaken an organisation's market position. Regardless of size, you need to be aligned, disciplined in actions and keep learning to get the most from AI strategies.

7. Ethical, Governance, and Risk Implications of AI in Strategy

As machines powered by AI take on a big role in business planning, it is crucial to prioritise ethical considerations and the proper use of AI. Though AI is expected to improve a company's strategic range and performance, its opaque systems and uncertain outcomes can raise numerous ethical issues, as well as compliance concerns and unforeseen outcomes. Problems stemming from algorithmic bias, unclear decision-making processes, outcomes that lead to adverse results, and lack of accountability extend beyond technical design and impact a company's ethics and public trust.

In AI strategy, what makes things complicated is a lack of transparency. Since machine learning algorithms make their decisions using messy, unclear models, it is difficult to clarify their reasoning. The authors suggest that this characteristic of AI hampers the application of rational accountability in strategic management. Routinely applying loans, setting prices, or rating staff should always be supported by reasoning, but AI algorithms are not always explainable. If organisations are not open about their choices, no one can confirm that they support company values, the interests of stakeholders, or meet legal rules.

There is a clear connection between transparency and fairness, and bias. AI algorithms formed using old data tend to make the same biases stronger and lead to results that are not fair and sometimes illegal. Papagiannidis et al. (2025) explain that employing fairness-aware design and conducting frequent reviews is important for AI

governance to detect any bias in data and its models. The researchers say that in the strategic sphere, biased algorithms may mislead businesses by settling on wrong market segments, incorrect audiences and skilled staff, lowering the company's legitimacy over the long run. Errors in healthcare, finance, and criminal justice can have serious societal consequences.

Organisations must establish rules in place to prevent, reduce, or manage these risks. Camilleri (2024) suggests a model where ethical guidelines are added to operations, confirming the AI strategy will be useful as well as ethical. In this way, oversight committees work by multiple disciplines review AI, assess its effects and evaluate ethically the design and applications of AI tools. Therefore, decisions about AI in an organisation must be included in governance that supports fairness, accountability and sustainability.

Ethical governance is rarely realised in practice by many organisations. According to Ustahaliloğlu (2025), corporate boards are currently unable to address the important strategic aspects of AI because they do not have knowledge of AI and are unclear about any sort of regulations. He suspects that autonomous AI could make traditional governance organisations irrelevant. So, accountability becomes scattered, and it's not always clear who is responsible for making decisions. If a strategic decision by an AI system loses the company money or causes it to break regulations, there is often responsibility is typically shared among system designers, data engineers and decision-makers who approved the recommendation.

Papagiannidis, Mikalef & Conboy (2025) have shown that misalignment between an AI system's objectives and what the organisation wants can create poor or dangerous results. The use of AI software for pricing in a B2B organisation gave instant benefits, though it eventually caused partners to leave because the organisation offered excessive discounts. Because there was no focus on ethics or stakeholder views in the creation of the system, it led to an unmatched approach that resulted in reputation loss. This case highlights how efforts to improve efficiency can inadvertently undermine the organisation's ability to respond to challenges and its relationships. Furthermore, concerns related to compliance and regulatory risks are increasing. As different regions introduce legislation for AI use, companies must take steps to make sure their AI use follows the new standards. Sheard (2025) emphasises that businesses integrating AI need to incorporate legal risk management into their development processes, paying close attention to data privacy, algorithmic discrimination, and automated decision rights. If this is not followed, a company could suffer financial losses, public damage and lawsuits.

Even so, many organisations remain committed to viewing AI as a separate and distinct technical area with little regard for strategic governance. Papagiannidis, Mikalef & Conboy (2025) argue that, rather than having data science teams focus on ethics only at the end, companies should prioritise ethical AI at the board level. Their recommendation is to include AI risk management in the company's strategy by bringing together legal, IT, human resources and strategy departments.

Overall, the ethical and governance challenges associated with AI in strategic decision-making are crucial for achieving sustainable success. As AI becomes more integral to important decisions, companies must prioritise transparency, fairness, and accountability within their governance frameworks. Misuse or misconduct involving AI could negate its benefits, jeopardise compliance, and damage the company's reputation. Moving forward, organisations should view AI not only as a tool for improvement but also as an area for which they bear responsibility.

8. Synthesis: Challenges and Strategic Misalignments

Despite the success of AI in strategic planning, putting it into business operations presents numerous challenges, mainly when its tools do not match the organisation's overall objectives. Sometimes, these issues are not due to technical limitations but arise from insufficient coordination between AI features and the organisation's real goals, particularly in uncertain environments.

A major concern today is the misalignment between how AI functions and the company's strategic plans. Papagiannidis, Mikalef & Conboy (2025) explain that decision-making automated by AI may seem efficient but might still lead to unintended outcomes when existing divisions in the organisation are deepened or performance in the short run is emphasised while longer-term plans are neglected. Based on their findings, organisations may apply AI before they consider how it impacts their main priorities, which causes strategic confusion.

Another challenge is resistance within organisations, often stemming from deeply entrenched company habits and managerial styles. According to Ayinaddis (2025), managing change makes it hard for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to incorporate AI, due to a lack of resources and leadership that mainly focuses on employees. Resistance appears from technical teams and also from middle managers and executives when AI is viewed as a problem for the existing way decisions are made or for job security.

The lack of effective leaders adds to the problem of integrating AI in companies' strategies. According to Marocco, Barbieri and Talamo (2025), a lack of both technical and strategic knowledge by many managers prevents them from effectively using AI. Based on their analysis, good AI technology alone is not enough to yield results: organisational leaders are typically unable to manage the changes and guide the process well enough. As a result, AI tools are frequently misused, their strengths are overlooked, or they are outright rejected. Because of these disconnects, some studies suggest that implementing AI readiness frameworks is essential for organisations looking to apply AI strategically. Bevilacqua et al. (2025) state that an AI strategy is successful when understands its priorities, tests its capabilities, fosters an organisational culture supportive of AI, and involves leaders. They argue that AI can work only when it becomes a core component of the overall strategy development and implementation process. Similarly, Machucho and Ortiz (2025) present a decision-making model designed for small and medium-sized companies, underscoring the importance of firms anticipating what may happen in the future.

According to Mahabub et al. (2025), integrating human judgment with AI is necessary to prevent bias in decisions and raise the performance of operations. The team's results demonstrate that including AI does not mean ignoring human decision makers in situations involving uncertainty or ethics. If nothing is done to achieve this balance, businesses may become overly reliant on their models and become less strategic.

In essence, working with AI is as much about cultivating new habits as it is about acquiring technology. When AI capabilities do not align with business aims and when there are leadership and cultural barriers, the full use of AI for strategy cannot be achieved. Closing the gaps calls for well-designed plans, active management of change and leaders who support advancements in technology and planning.

9. Conclusion and Future Directions

The analysis covers the methods artificial intelligence can improve strategies and first-move advantage in different industries. Connecting theories, recent technological advancements, practical AI applications, and ethical considerations, it is evident that AI can improve how organisations conceptualise their strategies, organise processes, make decisions, and compete with others. Companies can quickly adapt, offer customised services to a broad customer base, make decisions faster and earn long-lasting benefits in the market. Yet, these benefits are only attainable if AI is deployed in alignment with company plans, guided by adequate leaders and used ethically.

Being able to process large volumes of information, detect subtle patterns, and deliver valuable insights are the main reasons why artificial intelligence is so important for successful business strategy. Dunleavy and Margetts (2023) believe that enables companies to make rapid, accurate decisions gives companies a strong advantage in the Big Data age. AI helps companies spot changes in the market fast, gauge their competitors and introduce new ideas more often and efficiently. The authors also note that technologies like ChatGPT and similar tools are facilitating strategy exploration and planning by allowing users to simulate scenarios, engage in discussions, and interact more effectively with stakeholders.

Despite these advancements, some areas remain underexplored. Researchers have not examined many AI strategies for long periods as markets or technology experience disruptions. According to Abulibdeh et al. (2025), further research is needed to find out how AI affects the sustainable future goals of an organisation. Additionally, in Sonni (2025) discusses AI-driven negotiations and their influence on the ethics of news coverage, the independence of journalists, and the public's trust in information sources—issues that have gained prominence in the current information economy. These studies highlight the gap between what we currently know about AI and what still needs to be explored regarding its influence on society.

In addition, the adoption of new technology often outpaces the development of appropriate rules and standards. It is urgent to promote inquiry that explores the connections between data science, business strategy, ethics, and governance. Ensuring that AI processes are morally sound should be at the core of how AI is made. Fairness, privacy, algorithmic bias and social accountability are part of this. A lack of active oversight could cause the very tools designed to aid decision-making to instead exacerbate inequality or undermine public trust in technology.

According to this research, being proactive in business strategies is particularly important for small businesses since they do not have all the resources of larger competitors. Teixeira et al. (2025) emphasise that AI needs to be applied only after the company has the relevant technical skills and ready managers. Companies should join with policymakers, researchers and members of society to design standards and rules that consider the needs of everyone, keep things open and make sure there is prosperity for all.

In summary, artificial intelligence has the potential to be a significant strategic asset—only when guided by ethics, vision, and a genuine concern for people within a broader organisational context. Organisations that successfully integrate these factors will be better positioned to compete effectively and contribute to shaping a better future for AI in strategy.

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