ANALYSIS

Strategic impact or AI hallucination? How to deal with the data clutter?

How companies organize AI research, ensure data quality, and translate information into viable strategic decisions.

> **Short answer:** AI accelerates research, but not automatically the decision. Strategic impact only arises when sources are validated, contradictions are classified and findings are consistently translated into options for action.

More information - but not automatically more knowledge

It has never been easier to gather information about markets, competitors and technologies. AI systems create market overviews, competitor lists and future scenarios in seconds. That sounds like a strategic paradise. In practice, however, something else often arises: an almost uncontrollable data jumble.

Sources contradict each other, market sizes vary considerably and seemingly precise figures cannot be traced. AI can structure information, but it can also create convincing-sounding connections that are not factually reliable. The decisive question is therefore no longer: How do we get as much information as possible? But: What information is reliable, relevant and strategically usable?

Research actionism is understandable - but risky

Many companies respond to uncertainty with additional research. Further studies are ordered, internal presentations are created and new AI tools are tested. This impulse is understandable: no one wants to make a strategic decision on an information basis that is too narrow. However, more research does not necessarily lead to more orientation.

Different levels of knowledge in the use of AI exacerbate the situation. While some employees critically examine results, others adopt market sizes, competitive information or forecasts almost unfiltered. This gives rise to several supposed truths. This is not a failure of individuals, but often a consequence of a lack of standards: Which sources are considered reliable? What is fact, what is hypothesis? And who translates the findings into a recommendation for action?

The Difference Between Information and Market Intelligence

Professional market intelligence begins where pure research ends. The aim is not to collect as many data points as possible, but to check, classify, connect and align relevant information with a specific strategic question.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

From the search loop to a reliable decision

The real bottleneck is rarely access to information, but rather its prioritization. What development is actually changing the business model? Which number is relevant to the decision, which is only interesting? What assumption needs to be tested by primary research? An external institute creates a clear frame of reference, separates evidence from circumstantial evidence and prevents teams from getting stuck in ever new search loops.

IN-HOUSE RESEARCH ON THE CUSTOMER SIDE	EXTERNAL MARKET-INTELLIGENCE-INSTITUT
• Quick access to internal information	✓ Combining internal knowledge with an independent external perspective
• Often selective or event-related research	✓ Systematic, methodologically structured research process
• Different standards in sources and AI use	✓ Uniform quality, plausibility and validation standards
• Risk of unconsciously confirming existing assumptions	✓ Independent testing of hypotheses and market assumptions
• Limited access to external market participants	✓ Access to experts, decision-makers and relevant industry players
• High effort for search and data preparation	✓ Focus on densification, valuation and strategic impact
• Results remain partly at the information level	✓ Translation of findings into options and prioritized actions

Reliable data needs human classification

DTO B2B Research & Strategies combines reliable data sources, a grown network of experts, primary research and an experienced in-house perspective. Secondary data is not simply adopted, but checked for origin, plausibility and strategic relevance. Expert discussions help to classify figures, understand market mechanisms and make blind spots visible.

At the same time, DTO knows the reality on the customer side: time pressure, internal coordination and the desire for quickly usable results. External analysis is not intended to replace internal competence, but to supplement and relieve it in a targeted manner. AI remains an important tool - but not the last resort. Strategic impact is created through data quality, market understanding and independent evaluation.

If you only research faster, you don't make better decisions.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions about AI, data quality and market intelligence

The following questions show how companies can meaningfully classify AI research and develop a reliable basis for decision-making from a growing amount of information.

QUESTION	CLASSIFICATION
How do you recognize a possible AI hallucination?	A statement is critical if concrete sources, survey period or methodology are missing. In particular, it should be possible to trace market sizes, forecasts and competitor data back to verifiable original sources. Until then, the result is to be treated as a hypothesis.
Isn't in-house research often enough?	With clearly defined questions, good internal context and available sources, it can be perfectly sufficient. External support becomes particularly valuable when independence, primary research, international markets or robust strategic prioritization are required.
What role should AI play in market intelligence?	AI is suitable for structuring, initial hypotheses, source search, and pattern recognition. The examination of sources, the classification of contradictory data and the derivation of strategic consequences remain the tasks of experienced people.
How can research activism be avoided?	Through a precise decision-making question, defined quality criteria, clear responsibilities and a conscious stop point. Not every additional piece of information increases security. The decisive factor is whether it confirms or refutes an assumption or changes a concrete option.
What does DTO B2B Research & Strategies offer in concrete terms?	DTO combines reliable secondary sources, a grown network of experts, primary research and an experienced in-house perspective. The goal is not a larger data package, but a comprehensible and prioritized basis for strategic decisions.

Do you want to sharpen your market intelligence? Get in touch with us.

Author

Kai Wichelmann

Senior Manager | DTO - B2B Research & Strategies

Kai Wichelmann has been with DTO since 2015 and, as a senior manager, supports B2B companies in market, competition and potential analyses. With a degree in business psychology and a journalistic background, he combines reliable research with clear strategic classification. His focus is on preparing complex data in a critical, understandable and decision-oriented way.

Source author profile: DTO - B2B Research & Strategies Management page.