

HOW DO THE ATTITUDES OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT AFFECT THE ACCEPTANCE OF AI IN THE FLEMISH FOOD INDUSTRY?

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1 INTRODUCTION



The rise of **artificial intelligence (AI)** has presented new opportunities and challenges. While large corporations often have the resources to explore and integrate new technologies, **small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** may face hurdles in doing so. This thesis focuses on the **Flemish food sector**, and the role that **senior management** plays in AI adoption.

2 OBJECTIVE

This study explores the perspectives of senior management in Flemish food SMEs to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential role in promoting sustainability. To answer the main research question, the following questions were drawn up:

- **SQ1:** What are the key drivers and barriers to AI adoption in Flemish food SMEs?
- **SQ2:** How does the mindset of senior executives affect AI integration in Flemish food SMEs?
- **SQ3:** How can AI adoption in Flemish food SMEs contribute to sustainability in alignment with SDG 12?

4 RESPONDENT TABLE

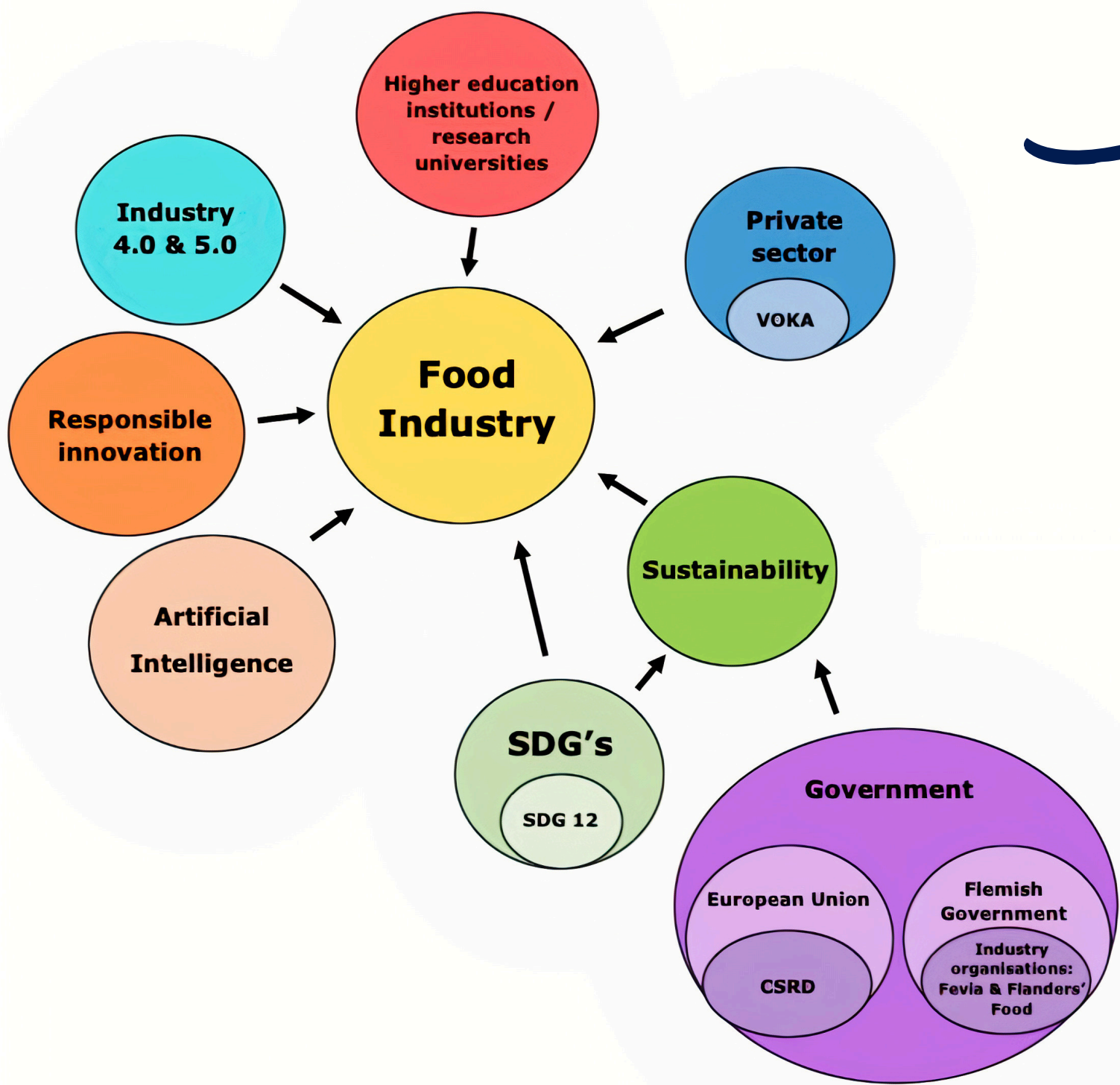
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CEO food company	7
CSO	2
CTO	1
CEO ESG Platform	1
Executive board member	1

3 METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative research
- 10 semi-structured interviews
- 538 minutes of interviews
- 81 - page research paper

5 VISUAL SUMMARY



6 FINDINGS

- **Enablers:** potential **beneficial effects** (cost savings & efficiency gains)
- **Barriers:** implementation costs, limited AI knowledge, workforce resistance, lack of data, and transparency issues.
- Attitudes are shaped by **personal characteristics** (age, risk tolerance, etc.)
- Sustainability initiatives are initiated by customer & regulatory pressure. **AI is not seen as an enabler of sustainability.**
- CSRD reporting is an **administrative burden**. Potential of AI to streamline reporting, but concerns about accuracy **limit strategic value.**

7 CONCLUSION

Top management's attitudes significantly influence AI adoption in Flemish food SMEs. Factors such as past experiences, age, personal beliefs, and risk aversion play a role. This often leads to a cautious, wait-and-see approach, especially with concerns about cost, expertise, and AI's "black-box" nature.

Key recommendations include:

- **Integrating AI** into **education**
- Promoting **lifelong learning** for employees
- Ensuring **AI transparency**
- **Improving data collection**
- **Reducing the administrative burden** of CSRD reporting.