

Generative AI and Knowledge Creation: Comparing Proposals for Revising the SECI Model

Enrico Scarso¹ and Kathrin Kirchner²

¹Department of Management and Engineering - University of Padua, Vicenza, Italy

²Department of Engineering Technology - Technical University of Denmark, Ballerup, Denmark

enrico.scarso@unipd.it

kakir@dtu.dk

Abstract: The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is deeply impacting all Knowledge Management (KM) processes. In particular, due to its ability to generate new content in different forms, the new technology is deemed capable of deeply transforming the knowledge creation process, which is considered the highest and most impactful stage of KM processes. Despite this, a comprehensive understanding of how companies can leverage GenAI to create organizational knowledge is lacking, both empirically and theoretically. Regarding the latter, scholars have recently underlined that prior research has yet to focus on the transformation of the SECI model and Ba theory, the most widely used conceptual frameworks for interpreting the organizational knowledge creation process, in the era of human-intelligence interaction. However, in the last two years, some studies have examined whether the SECI model needs to be revised in light of GenAI. Based on a review of the 19 systematically identified articles on Scopus, the present paper identifies, discusses, and compares the three different conceptual approaches adopted by scholars in dealing with the topic in question: a) applying the SECI model in its original version; b) adapting the original SECI model with small adjustments; c) developing a new SECI-based model. The paper compares the three approaches, highlighting how they assume different notions of the role of GenAI in the knowledge creation process and the types of knowledge involved. The academic and practical implications that arise from the study are discussed in the conclusions.

Keywords: GenAI, Knowledge creation, SECI model, Theoretical framework, Literature review

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is profoundly reshaping all Knowledge Management (KM) processes (Alavi et al., 2024). In particular, due to its remarkable ability to generate new content across various formats, including text, images, code, and multimedia, this technology is deemed capable of fundamentally revolutionizing the knowledge creation process, which is widely recognized as the most sophisticated and strategically impactful stage within KM frameworks (Cerchione et al., 2026). Despite growing interest and emerging applications, a comprehensive understanding of how organizations can leverage GenAI to enhance organizational knowledge creation remains notably absent, both empirically and theoretically (Yan et al., 2026). Concerning the latter, Zhang et al. (2025) have recently emphasized that prior research has yet to systematically address the transformation of the SECI and Ba theory - the most influential and extensively applied conceptual frameworks for interpreting organizational knowledge creation processes (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka et al., 2000) - in the emerging era of human-AI interaction and collaboration. Nevertheless, within the past two years, a growing body of scholarly work has begun to critically examine whether the traditional SECI model requires substantial revision or adaptation in light of GenAI's capabilities and implications. Drawing upon a systematic review of the relevant academic literature, this paper identifies, analyses, and critically compares three distinct conceptual approaches adopted by scholars when addressing this pressing issue:

1. Application of the original SECI model without modification. Scholars adopting this approach contend that the original SECI framework remains sufficiently robust and flexible to accommodate and explain the impact of GenAI on organizational knowledge creation processes, requiring no fundamental alterations.
2. Adaptation of the original SECI model with targeted adjustments. Proponents of this approach argue that while the foundational structure of the SECI model remains valid, specific modifications and refinements are necessary to adequately capture and interpret the nuanced ways in which GenAI influences knowledge creation dynamics.
3. Development of a new model derived from the SECI framework. Advocates of this approach maintain that the disruptive nature of GenAI necessitates a substantially revised or entirely reconceptualized model to achieve a comprehensive and accurate understanding of how GenAI fundamentally alters organizational knowledge creation processes.

This study compares these three theoretical approaches from both conceptual and practical application perspectives, focusing on their different assumptions regarding: (a) the specific role GenAI assumes within the knowledge creation process (e.g. as a tool, collaborator, or autonomous agent); (b) the types of knowledge involved; and (c) the management implications that emerge. Rather than proposing a new conceptual framework grounded in existing literature, this paper aims to offer conceptual reflections that may inform and inspire future research on the role of generative AI in knowledge creation.

2. Background: GenAI and Organizational Knowledge Creation

Due to its multifaceted capabilities - including the autonomous creation of virtually any type of content, the sophisticated analysis of massive volumes of data and information, and the provision of intelligent support for creative and innovation processes - GenAI is increasingly recognized as a transformative force with the potential to fundamentally reshape the entire landscape of Knowledge Management (Sumbal and Amber, 2025). In particular, GenAI is unanimously regarded by both scholars and practitioners as capable of radically transforming the way organizational knowledge creation processes unfold, primarily because it can successfully perform complex cognitive tasks previously considered the exclusive domain of human intelligence and expertise (Dai et al., 2026).

This transformative potential explains the surge of scholarly interest in recent years, with an increasing number of KM researchers seeking to systematically analyse and understand the multifaceted effects this technology can exert on organizational knowledge creation processes (Cerchione et al., 2026). However, given that this field of inquiry remains in its infancy, a coherent and comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding these impacts is conspicuously absent.

Addressing this gap, Brown et al. (2024) critically observe that the prevailing discourse surrounding GenAI frequently lacks a robust theoretical foundation, thereby highlighting the urgent necessity for either refining existing theoretical frameworks or developing entirely new conceptual models. Similarly, Schaetzle et al. (2025) emphasize that a structured, theoretically grounded guide on how organizations can strategically integrate these powerful technologies within their KM remains notably absent from the literature.

Focusing explicitly on organizational knowledge creation, He et al. (2026) assert that prior research has yet to systematically address the necessary transformation of the SECI model and Ba theory in the contemporary era of human-AI interaction, particularly within contexts characterized by AI-enabled knowledge processes. They further emphasize that the paramount challenge confronting the field lies in developing theoretical models that are simultaneously theoretically parsimonious - avoiding unnecessary complexity while maintaining explanatory power - and empirically grounded in real organizational practices, thereby accurately capturing the evolving and dynamic nature of knowledge creation in an increasingly AI-integrated technological environment.

However, in recent years, the academic literature has begun to produce important reflections on the need to revisit the foundational theoretical models of KM in light of GenAI's capabilities and implications. Particular attention has been directed toward the SECI model, which remains the most widely recognized, and practically applied framework for understanding organizational knowledge creation processes.

Hence, it is intellectually appropriate and practically useful to conduct a systematic and critical analysis of the trajectories that this theoretical reflection is currently taking, which has motivated the present work.

3. Study Goals and Methodology

This study analyses the state of theoretical reflection regarding the need of revising the SECI model in light of the impacts that GenAI usage can have on organizational knowledge creation processes. It compares perspectives present in the literature on the possibility that the SECI model can still serve as an analytical framework for exploring the transformative potential of GenAI in the domain of knowledge creation.

The study is based on a critical review of papers that have addressed the topic of GenAI and its impact on organizational knowledge creation, using the SECI model as a conceptual interpretative lens. Since scholars have only recently begun to address this topic, relatively few papers were considered in this study. Indeed, a Scopus search using the query "SECI AND (GenAI OR generative AI OR generative artificial intelligence)" yielded only 11 (both journal articles and conference) papers, all of which were included in our study. Unsurprisingly, the first paper dates back to 2024. In addition to these, the study also considered other papers found through a broader Scopus search using the query "SECI AND artificial intelligence". The first article retrieved through this second

search dates back to 2022, confirming that scholarly interest in this topic is very recent. Overall, a total of 19 papers were reviewed.

4. Findings

The analysis of the papers identified three distinct approaches authors use when applying the SECI model to interpret the impact of GenAI on organizational knowledge creation:

- *Adopting the SECI model in its original version.* Authors who follow this approach assume that the original SECI model provides an adequate framework for understanding the impact of GenAI on organizational knowledge creation.
- *Referring to the original SECI model with minor adjustments that do not alter its fundamental structure.* Authors who adopt this approach believe that, with non-radical revisions, the original SECI model can effectively explain the impact of GenAI on organizational knowledge creation.
- *Proposing a new model based on the SECI framework.* Authors who follow this approach argue that a more substantially revised SECI model is necessary to fully understand the impact of GenAI on organizational knowledge creation.

In what follows, these three perspectives will be discussed and subsequently compared with each other.

4.1 Using SECI as is

Scholars following this approach contend that the original SECI model can be applied directly to investigate the impact of integrating GenAI within organizational knowledge creation processes, as it effectively identifies both the benefits and challenges of employing GenAI tools to support the four knowledge conversion modes: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization.

Reflecting on the evolution of the SECI model of organizational knowledge creation in the age of AI, Ichijo (2022) concludes that the process (and its interpretative model) remains fundamentally unchanged, while its speed changes significantly, because when supported by AI, externalization and combination modes can become faster and more accurate than they currently are.

In the same vein, Sumbal and Amber (2025) employ the SECI model as an interpretative framework to explore how ChatGPT can enhance organizational KM capability through the combination of tacit and explicit knowledge. The authors claim that organizations should adopt a ChatGPT-enhanced SECI model - the original SECI framework in which knowledge conversion processes leverage the functionalities offered by this GenAI tool. Barreto and Abarca (2025) can be added to the authors who follow this approach, as they use the SECI model to identify the factors that contribute to the optimal development of conversion modes through the use of ChatGPT.

Jain et al. (2026) employ the original SECI model to compare and contrast the creative capabilities of GenAI and human intelligence, concluding that this emerging technology can be considered a participant in contemporary knowledge creation models. The findings of their study are summarized in a SECI-based figure that describes the traits, enablers, and challenges of each conversion mode resulting from GenAI integration.

Similarly, Yan et al. (2026) refer to the original SECI model in performing thematic coding on 82 academic articles to analyse how AI facilitates the four key processes of knowledge creation, concluding that although the SECI model remains crucial for understanding organizational knowledge creation, it no longer fully captures the changes brought about by AI. However, the AI-enabled SECI model they propose as an extension of the original is essentially the traditional framework with the addition of AI effects on the individual conversion modes.

Liccardo and Cerchione (2025) use the SECI model to analyse the results of a case study on the influence of GenAI, particularly its benefits and risks, on knowledge generation processes. It should be noted that in the conclusions, the authors underline the need of revisiting and possibly extending the model. Mardarovici et al. (2025) reach a similar conclusion about the need to revise the SECI model after applying it to investigate five cases of AI-enhanced KM systems.

Lastly, Nakash and Bolisani (2026), recalling that recent KM research has examined the impact of AI on the operational application of the SECI model, affirm that it probably should be revised in a form that explicitly incorporates the role of AI.

In summary, a substantial number of scholars (8 papers) have used the SECI model to understand the effects of GenAI on organizational knowledge creation processes, finding it useful for this purpose. Generally, these authors tend to share a rather optimistic vision, which emphasizes benefits more than challenges, of using GenAI to create new knowledge. Although preserving the original structure of the model has the advantage of referring to well-established concepts parsimoniously and linearly expressed, it has the disadvantage of forcing the innovative features of GenAI into a framework that did not anticipate such advanced technological capabilities. As a result, deeper questions about shifts in agency, power relations, and the transformation of the knowledge creation process may not be sufficiently explored.

4.2 Adjusting SECI

Although they still consider the SECI model substantially useful for investigating the impact of GenAI on the knowledge creation process, another group of scholars believes that its interpretative ability can be improved by introducing some minor modifications.

Böhm and Durst (2026) propose an extension of the original SECI model, called GRAI (Generative, Receptive Artificial Intelligence) that considers the machine as a participant capable of playing either an active or passive role. The GRAI model incorporates two actors (human and machine) within the four modes of the original SECI model, resulting in eight different interaction fields (human-to-machine and vice versa in each mode). Essentially, it is a SECI model in which human-machine interactions are explicitly expressed. The model does not include machine-to-machine interactions, although the authors indicate these as a possible future development.

Matsumoto et al. (2024a, b) advance a new knowledge transfer model termed the Human-AI-Collaboration SECI model, characterized by the presence of two cognitive loops. The first loop consists of the process by which humans provide their tacit knowledge to AI and then use and revise the explicit knowledge provided by the AI. The second loop involves the process whereby humans visualize the knowledge accumulated in the AI and then introspect it to enable their tacit knowledge to evolve. This model is logically very similar to the GRAI model.

Dai et al. (2026) draw inspiration from the results of investigating the opinions of fifteen experts about how GenAI affects the four knowledge conversion processes, developing a theoretical extension of the SECI model that includes the concept of “dark knowledge” as an additional dimension that interacts with traditional knowledge conversion modes. This concept, defined by Burnett and Lloyd (2020), refers to the knowledge that AI masters through machine learning that is difficult for humans to understand and interpret. Explicit knowledge acts as a bridge between dark knowledge and tacit knowledge in human-AI interaction, and the transformation of dark knowledge and explicit knowledge is key to the new context of knowledge creation and management. GenAI dark knowledge is integrated with the SECI model in that externalization and combination shape GenAI learning, while dark knowledge influences externalization and combination through the content (explicit knowledge) created by GenAI.

Zhang et al. (2025) propose a new paradigm for the AI-based SECI model in which Dialoguing Ba (referred to as Interacting in the original work of Nonaka and Konno, 1998) is replaced by Interpretation Ba, and Systemizing Ba by Decision-making Ba. The author assumes that AI enables participation in learning processes that ultimately transmit evaluated knowledge to individuals to enhance their decision-making. This is possible because AI not only enhances Originating and Exercising Ba but also deeply transforms Dialoguing and Systemizing Ba, thus generating multiple target decisions for knowledge demanders.

In a somewhat similar way, He et al. (2026) do not modify the original SECI model but extend it by introducing a new form of (AI-mediated) Ba, the Reflective Ba, which is added to the four existing Ba. This “new” Ba acts as a safe cognitive space during the initial emergence of knowledge, where individuals can engage in private exploration, sensemaking, and framing without the immediate pressures of organizational evaluation. It appears to function as a sort of “personal” Ba used to trigger the knowledge spiral.

In summary, these authors (7 papers) converge on the idea that to fully understand the impact of GenAI on the knowledge creation process, the new technology should be integrated into the original SECI model. In the revised framework, GenAI would no longer be seen merely as a passive tool, but rather as an active actor with which humans interact dynamically throughout the different phases of knowledge creation and sharing. Considering GenAI as a new actor leads the authors to highlight that its effective integration into the knowledge creation process requires a human-in-the-loop approach, where humans are actively involved in the AI-driven process, rather than allowing the system to operate fully autonomously. While adjusting the SECI model represents a meaningful theoretical contribution, most revisions remain close to the original SECI logic, often multiplying actors, interaction spaces, or Ba without rethinking the assumptions of knowledge conversion. GenAI is

primarily framed as augmenting or mediating existing human-centered processes, rather than as reshaping the nature, boundaries, and ownership of knowledge itself. These frameworks still leave open questions about the agency, opacity, and power asymmetries introduced by AI systems that operate beyond direct human understanding or control.

4.3 New SECI-based Model

The third approach consists of substantially revising the SECI model and, consequently, developing a new one based on this revision.

Cerchione et al. (2026) argue that GenAI is not just a tool that supports traditional knowledge management, but it has become an active, non-human participant in knowledge creation. To capture this shift, they propose a hybrid SECI model (Figure 1) with two parallel layers: a human dimension (the original SECI model) and a machine dimension, which overlaps with it and covers how data is converted into artificial knowledge and back. In some cases, GenAI naturally fits into the existing SECI framework. For example, it helps users turn tacit ideas into structured outputs (externalization, Figure 1, n. 2) and supports learning through scenario simulation (internalization, Figure 1, n. 4). In other cases, however, GenAI follows a different logic. Conversational prompting mimics some aspects of socialization (Figure 1, n. 1), while GenAI's ability to generate synthetic datasets and identify patterns across them (Figure 1, n. 3) represents a form of combination that works independently of human thinking. These differences suggest that GenAI is not simply joining human knowledge cycles. It is creating new knowledge dynamics through its own, machine-driven loop-

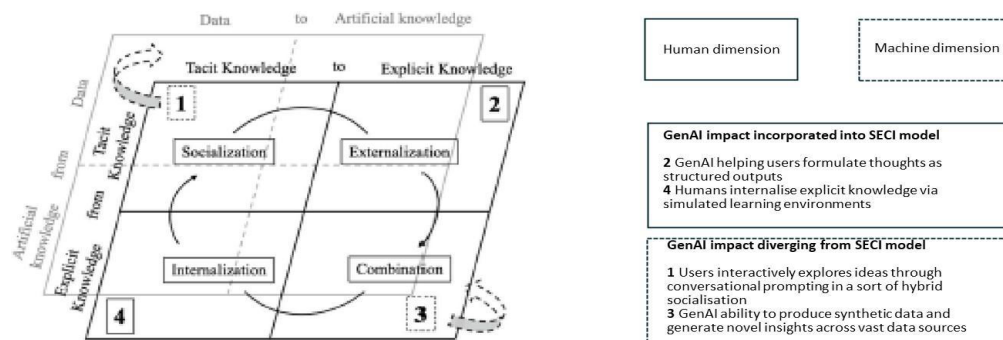


Figure 1: Hybrid SECI model with two dimensions (from: Cerchione et al., 2026)

Based on the experience derived from action research concerning the development of an Informed Artificial Intelligence application, Harfouche et al. (2023) propose the Recursive Theory of Knowledge Augmentation (the KAM model), which explains how tacit and explicit knowledge held by individuals and organizations can be simultaneously enlarged and enriched through the recursive process enabled by human-in-the-loop Informed AI. The model (Figure 2) extends the original SECI model, which the authors still consider essential, by incorporating AI as a new actor and artificial knowledge as a new type of knowledge. Compared to the original SECI model, the KAM model involves five additional knowledge conversion modes (referred to as “situations” by the authors) as follows:

- *Alimentation*, where tacit human knowledge is converted into artificial knowledge.
- *Aggregation*, where explicit knowledge is converted into artificial knowledge.
- *Amplification*, where the knowledge created through AI is converted into explicit human knowledge. This amplification of knowledge is central to human-AI interaction, as humans can learn from the output produced by the AI.
- *Reflection*, where knowledge created through AI is converted into tacit human knowledge. The results produced by AI can stimulate humans’ reflection on their methods and question their knowledge while experiencing new situations.
- *Fusion*, that concerns 1) the recursive transformation of tacit and explicit knowledge that occurred while feeding the AI and 2) the enrichment of knowledge that results from the human learning process that occurs during the interaction of humans with an AI.

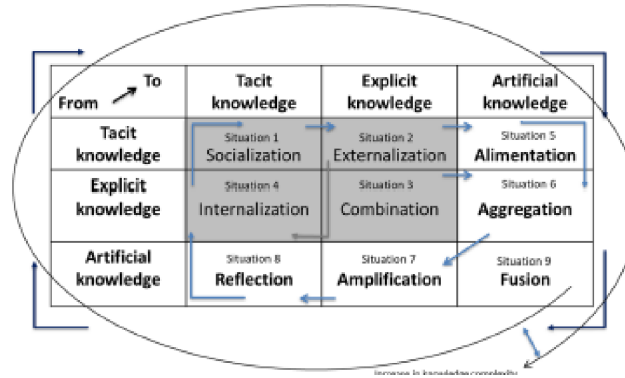


Figure 2: KAM model (from: Harfouche et al., 2023)

The model highlights a two-way relationship between humans and AI. On one side, humans feed AI with their intuition and knowledge, helping it analyze data, recognize patterns, select better responses, and explain its outputs (*first two conversion modes*). On the other side, interacting with AI enriches both the explicit and tacit knowledge of humans (*last two conversion modes*).

In conclusion it should be underlined that the KM model has not been developed to understand the impact of GenAI on the knowledge creation process, but rather as a “prescriptive” model that should be used as a guide to develop Human-Centric AI. Furthermore, it should be noted that the fusion situation does not involve conversion from artificial-to-artificial knowledge, contrary to what is represented in Figure 2, and that the authors do not define artificial knowledge explicitly.

Taking into account that recent literature underlines that GenAI can be considered a new actor/player in the organizational knowledge creation process and artificial knowledge a new type of knowledge, Kirchner and Scarso (2026) develop a new SECI-based model, named AKI (Artificial Knowledge Integration), that considers three types of knowledge: tacit, explicit, and artificial, where the latter is the GenAI-generated one (Bratianu and Bejinaru, 2026). In light of this, the model includes nine knowledge conversion processes, as illustrated in Figure 3, and consequently nine Ba.

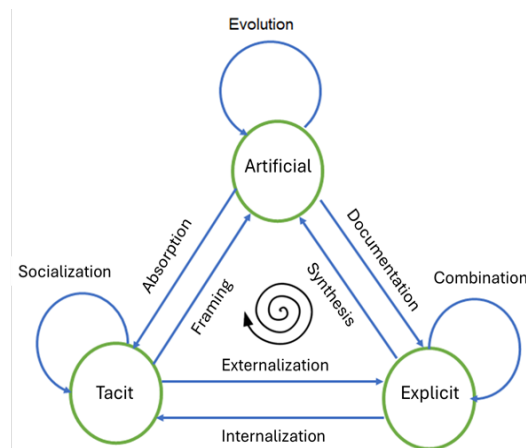


Figure 3: The AKI model of organizational knowledge creation (from: Kirchner and Scarso, 2026)

Unlike the original SECI model, which only considers human-to-human interactions, the AKI model introduces two additional types: human-to-machine and machine-to-machine. As a result, the knowledge creation spiral now evolves through the interplay of three dynamics: human-to-human, human-to-GenAI, and GenAI-to-GenAI. Another key feature of the AKI model is its flexibility. In fact, it can accommodate a wide range of scenarios: from knowledge creation processes that rely heavily on GenAI to those where its role is minimal or absent entirely.

The SECI-MAP model proposed by du Plessis and Britz (2025) differs significantly from the previous ones because it does not modify the SECI model but rather integrates it into the new model as the inner layer of three layers. The outer layer, i.e., the machine layer, capitalizes on the strengths and unique contributions of machines. It consists of two elements: machine intelligence, which refers to the ability of machines to learn and think in a way that mimics human cognition, and representation, which provides the input to the machine learning

process. In the middle resides the human integration layer, which depicts the symbiotic and synergistic partnership between humans and machines. Such an integration is based on creative and experiential thinking as well as analytical and contextual thinking of humans. The basic assumption of the model is that increased potential emerges when humans and machines interact.

In summary, the authors who follow this approach (4 papers) argue that the integration of GenAI into the knowledge creation process introduces a series of new and challenging concepts that cannot be fully captured by the original model. Notions such as artificial knowledge, dark knowledge, human-machine partnership, and the idea of GenAI as an active actor in the knowledge creation process represent novel phenomena that go beyond the explanatory boundaries of the traditional SECI framework. As a result, they advance a substantial revision of the model itself to accommodate the complexity and transformative potential that GenAI brings to the way knowledge is created, shared, and internalized within organizations. While these substantially revised models better acknowledge the transformative potential of GenAI, they also introduce added complexity. The inclusion of new knowledge types, conversion modes, actors, and layers makes them harder to operationalize and to compare across different contexts.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study has compared how different conceptual approaches based on the SECI model are used in the literature to investigate the influence of GenAI on knowledge creation processes. As research progresses, there is a growing need to dive into the evolving role of the SECI model in AI-shaped knowledge creation processes.

One particular point emerging from the above analysis deserves to be highlighted. Even scholars who do not propose revising the SECI model (whether completely or partially) agree that GenAI is a new actor in the process and that the knowledge it handles represents a new form of knowledge. Those who do not revise the model, or revise it only in part, believe that the new actor and the new type of knowledge can be incorporated into the original model as additional tools or artefacts; whereas those who deeply revise the model argue that a further dimension must be assigned to the new actor and the new type of knowledge. Regarding the latter, some authors refer to it as “dark knowledge” and others as “artificial knowledge”, but with different meanings. How can this be interpreted?

If we regard GenAI as a new actor, we might consider that, similarly to human actors, GenAI has its own “tacit” knowledge and “explicit” knowledge. The former could be the “dark knowledge” - the knowledge GenAI develops through unsupervised learning - and the latter the “artificial knowledge” - the knowledge GenAI produces in various forms (text, images, etc.) in response to a prompt. This assumption suggests that, just as humans generate explicit knowledge drawing on the tacit knowledge they hold, GenAI produces artificial knowledge drawing on the dark knowledge residing in its “artificial mind”, itself shaped through unsupervised learning. Furthermore, as noted by a couple of authors, just as humans learn, updating their pool of tacit knowledge, from the artificial knowledge produced by GenAI, so too does GenAI learn, updating its pool of dark knowledge, through the feedback provided by humans when interacting with it.

5.1 Academics and Managerial Implications

From an academic perspective, this study represents a valuable starting point for researchers who intend to develop a more comprehensive theoretical model of the knowledge creation process that takes into account the distinctive characteristics of artificial knowledge and the growing role of GenAI. By reviewing the existing literature, the study shed light on some fundamental concepts that any future theoretical reflection on the impact of GenAI on knowledge creation cannot afford to overlook. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for a more structured and rigorous academic debate on how traditional frameworks, such as the SECI model, need to evolve in response to the challenges and opportunities posed by artificial intelligence.

The study also offers some managerial insights, with particular reference to the issues related to artificial and dark knowledge, two new components of the knowledge creation process. The first is generated by GenAI to respond to user requests, while the second is “internally” developed by the system (as a result of its training) and is used by the system to generate the first. The responsible use of GenAI requires that users not only carefully verify and critically evaluate the content produced but also develop a genuine awareness of the risks associated with dark knowledge and actively contribute to mitigating them. One concrete way to do so is to provide meaningful and consistent feedback to the system, allowing it to correctly update and enrich its underlying knowledge base over time. This human-in-the-loop dynamic is essential to ensure that the AI system

evolves in a reliable, accurate, and ethically sound direction. Such responsibility becomes especially crucial when organizations develop proprietary GenAI systems grounded in their internal knowledge repositories.

5.2 Future Research Directions

This study did not aim to provide answers, but rather to stimulate the debate on the need to revisit the SECI model and, therefore, to formulate meaningful questions to further deepen the investigation on the impact of GenAI on the knowledge creation process. In light of this, we advance here some possible research questions for future studies.

- What is the role of GenAI in the knowledge creation process? Is it a new actor, or is it still a tool like other software used in knowledge management processes?
- What is the nature of the knowledge possessed and produced by GenAI?
- What are the boundaries between human-created knowledge and GenAI-created knowledge?
- How can humans maintain agency in the creation of hybrid human-AI knowledge?

Finally, it goes without saying that while conceptual reflections are stimulating, empirical validation is needed, something that is currently missing.

Ethics declaration: We did not need ethical clearance for the research referred to in this paper.

AI declaration: We used GenAI tools to correct and refine part of the written text.

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