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“Elevate Your Hospitality Game”

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FRISCO

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COLLEGE OF MERCHANDISING,
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM
Department of Hospitality,
Event & Tourism Management



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The West CHRIE 2025 Conference is a wrap! Based in Frisco, Texas and hosted by the University of North Texas, this year's theme "Elevate your Hospitality Game" provided a sports-related backdrop to an area that is known as "Sports City USA". We send out a huge thank you to M.T. Hickman and the rest of the UNT team for creating engaging content, terrific networking activities, and coordinating all of the on-the-ground logistics that are essential to a successful event.

More than 107 registered attendees gathered to share their innovative research on a broad range of topics including technology (lots of technology!), education, consumer behavior, organizational behavior, food and beverage, marketing, travel and tourism, and so much more. The conference shared more than 60 presentations, posters, and general sessions. Thank you to all authors and reviewers and other speakers who contributed their passion, time, and effort in advancing hospitality and tourism education, and ensuring the high quality of the work presented. I am confident that the insights shared in these conference proceedings will further enrich our discussions on impactful teaching and education, and innovative research.

Regards,

Michelle Millar, PhD
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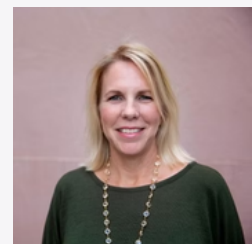
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COMPLETED RESEARCH

LEVERAGING AI FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Introduction

The hospitality and tourism (HT) industry is increasingly adopting artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance operational efficiency and guest experiences while prioritizing sustainability. This research explores the intersection of AI and sustainability in hospitality, focusing on AI's potential to drive eco-friendly practices and resource management. As environmental consciousness grows, tourism operators are seeking innovative ways to reduce their carbon footprint (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). AI offers powerful tools for optimizing energy consumption and personalizing sustainable experiences (Gretzel et al., 2020). However, AI raises concerns about data privacy and job displacement (Ivanov & Webster, 2017). This study aims to explore AI's current utilization in promoting sustainability, identify challenges and opportunities, and assess the impact of AI-driven initiatives on efficiency and guest satisfaction. By leveraging AI, HT can potentially achieve a more sustainable and responsible tourism sector (Tussyadiah, 2020), contributing to the growing literature on AI applications within sustainability frameworks.

Methods

This study integrates the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and the Sustainability Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1997) to examine AI adoption in sustainable hospitality. A systematic literature review following PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) analyzes peer-reviewed articles from 2020-2024. Content analysis identifies key themes in AI applications for sustainability, with inter-coder reliability ensured using Cohen's kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960). This approach examines AI's role in sustainable hospitality, identifying trends and research gaps.

Results/Discussion/Implication

AI in hospitality enhances sustainability through energy management, waste reduction, and personalized experiences. Machine learning algorithms optimize energy usage, predicting needs based on historical and real-time data (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). Smart systems automatically adjust thermostats and lighting, potentially reducing hotel energy consumption by 30% (TTG Asia, 2024). These technologies contribute to sustainability goals and cost reduction in the industry.

AI technologies in hospitality waste management use machine learning to predict resource needs, reducing food waste and overprovisioning (Ivanov et al., 2024). AI systems enhance recycling efficiency and minimize environmental impact (Gretzel et al., 2020). Natural Language Processing (NLP) powered chatbots provide personalized eco-friendly recommendations, improving guest satisfaction and promoting sustainable behavior among travelers (Khan et al., 2024). These applications demonstrate AI's role in advancing sustainability in hospitality and tourism.

Machine learning plays a significant role in enhancing sustainability in hospitality by enabling predictive maintenance and energy forecasting, which helps in reducing energy consumption and operational costs. Similarly, Internet of Things (IoT) sensors contribute to sustainability efforts by providing smart room controls and resource monitoring, thereby optimizing resource use and minimizing waste. Natural Language Processing (NLP) is utilized in chatbots to offer eco-friendly recommendations, which not only enhance guest awareness but also promote sustainable practices. Additionally, computer vision technology is applied to waste sorting and recycling processes, leading to improved waste management efficiency. Together, these AI technologies demonstrate substantial potential for advancing sustainability within the hospitality industry.

Implementing AI for sustainability in hospitality faces challenges such as high initial costs, lack of expertise, and data privacy concerns (Gursoy et al., 2019; Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). Despite these obstacles, AI offers substantial benefits, enhancing sustainability efforts through real-time data and task automation (Tussyadiah, 2020). Consumer acceptance of AI in service delivery suggests a positive outlook for AI-driven sustainability initiatives (Gursoy et al., 2019). As AI becomes more accessible, its role in balancing environmental responsibility with operational efficiency is expected to grow, especially when integrated with technologies similar to IoT (Štilić et al., 2023).

This research has significant implications for theory, practice, and policy in AI-driven sustainability initiatives in Hospitality and Tourism. It extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to include sustainability considerations, offering insights for practitioners on integrating AI into sustainability strategies. For policymakers, it highlights the need for balanced regulations that encourage responsible AI implementation while addressing challenges such as data privacy and potential job displacement. The findings underscore the importance of collaboration among stakeholders to develop best practices for sustainable AI adoption in hospitality and tourism.

References are available upon request

AI-EMPOWERED MEEC: PERSPECTIVES FROM LEADING AI TECHNOLOGIES

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Introduction

The Meetings, Exhibitions, Events, and Conferences (MEEC), also known and previously popular as Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry, is experiencing a transformative shift due to the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies. This evolution is reshaping how events are designed, managed, and experienced. This study explores the multifaceted impact of AI on the MEEC sector, focusing on enhancing attendee experiences, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), addressing ethical considerations in event management, and identifying essential workforce skills for the future. AI facilitates hyper-personalization of attendee interactions and allows for real-time adjustments to event logistics based on participant feedback (Neuhofer et al., 2020). While AI presents numerous opportunities for innovation and efficiency in the MEEC industry, it raises critical ethical issues that must be addressed to ensure trust and transparency among stakeholders (Jobin et al., 2019).

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach, interviewing five leading AI models: ChatGPT 3.0, Gemini 1.5, Microsoft CoPilot, Llama, and Claude, chosen for their advanced natural language processing capabilities. The research design aimed to comprehensively understand AI's potential impact on MEEC and event management. Four targeted questions were formulated covering key aspects of AI in MEEC.

1. How can AI enhance attendee experiences and support personalization?
2. What skills should the MEEC workforce develop to effectively collaborate with AI?
3. How can AI contribute to promoting DEI in the MEEC industry?
4. What are the ethical considerations for using AI in large-scale MEEC events?

A thematic analysis of AI-generated responses identified recurring themes and patterns, followed by a comparative analysis and synthesis of insights from different AI models, highlighting areas of consensus and potential gaps in AI understanding of MEEC industry challenges.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study revealed significant potential for AI to enhance attendee experiences and support personalization in MEEC events. AI-powered recommendation systems can suggest relevant sessions, networking opportunities, and exhibitors based on individual preferences and behavior patterns. AI can \ facilitate real-time event adjustments, such as managing crowd flow or optimizing session schedules, to improve overall event efficiency and satisfaction. T

The AI models consistently highlighted data-driven personalization. ChatGPT emphasized AI-powered chatbots for personalized event navigation, while Gemini suggested leveraging

predictive analytics for tailored content recommendations. Microsoft CoPilot proposed using AI for real-time translation services, enhancing accessibility for international attendees. Llama and Claude emphasized AI's potential in creating immersive experiences through augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies, aligning with recent research on extended reality integration in events. Regarding workforce skills for AI collaboration, the models identified several key areas: data literacy and analysis, AI systems management and integration, ethical AI deployment and governance, human-AI interaction design, and adaptive problem-solving and critical thinking. These findings align with research on evolving job roles in the industry. The models emphasized the importance of a hybrid skill set combining technical proficiency with strong interpersonal and creative abilities.

Artificial Intelligence shows significant potential in promoting DEI within the MEEC industry. It can be utilized to identify and mitigate biases in event planning and execution, from speaker selection to attendee engagement strategies. However, the models emphasized the importance of careful design and ongoing monitoring to ensure AI systems do not perpetuate or exacerbate existing biases. Claude and Llama highlighted AI's potential in creating more inclusive environments through personalized accessibility features and real-time language translation. Gemini and ChatGPT suggested using AI to analyze diversity metrics and provide actionable insights for improving representation across all aspects of MEEC events.

The study identified several key ethical considerations for using AI in large-scale MEEC events: data privacy and consent, algorithmic transparency and accountability, fairness and non-discrimination in AI-driven decision-making, balancing personalization with individual autonomy, and responsible AI deployment with human oversight. These findings align with the growing body of research on AI ethics in various industries. The AI models emphasized the need for clear ethical guidelines and governance frameworks to ensure responsible AI integration in the MEEC sector.

This study offers valuable insights into AI's potential impact on the MEEC industry, highlighting opportunities for enhancing attendee experiences, promoting DEI, and addressing ethical considerations. The findings suggest that AI integration can significantly transform event management practices while underscoring the importance of responsible deployment. The research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on AI in the MEEC sector and provides practical implications for industry professionals. Event organizers and stakeholders can leverage these insights to develop strategies for effective AI integration, workforce development, and ethical AI governance. Future research should focus on empirical studies validating AI-driven solutions in real-world MEEC events and longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of AI integration on industry practices and outcomes.

References are available upon request

VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES FOR PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY MESSAGES: USING EYE-TRACKING TECHNOLOGY, SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

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Introduction

The hotel sector contributes approximately 1% of global carbon emissions, according to the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. In response, the trend of green hotels has gained momentum within sustainability practices. Virtual reality (VR) presents a unique opportunity to create immersive experiences that effectively communicate sustainability messages and enhance knowledge. This research aims to evaluate the design of VR hotel experiences and to test the impact of VR experiences on increasing awareness of sustainable hotel practices. An innovative research design was adopted including eye-tracking technology, surveys, and interviews.

Literature Review

According to selective attention theory (Carrasco, 2011) and the stimulus-organism-response model (Vieira, 2013), dedicating focused attention to sustainability features enhances understanding and awareness of eco-friendly practices (Van Loo et al., 2015). Therefore, incorporating compelling and visually engaging sustainability messages into VR hotel experiences is essential for effectively communicating eco-friendly offerings. Incorporating multi-sensory congruency and gamification mechanisms is essential for enhancing virtual experiences as well. Congruency refers to the alignment of different components within the service environment (Demoulin, 2011). A well-aligned product presentation can capture attention and foster inspiration. Furthermore, Helme Falk and Hultén (2017) emphasize that adding auditory stimuli to a visually dominant environment is more effective than introducing additional visual stimuli alone. Among various game mechanics, rewards stand out as powerful external elements that enhance enjoyment, especially in treasure-hunting games. The use of rewards turns in-game objectives into an engaging and memorable journey, significantly enriching the appeal of virtual experiences (Shen et al., 2020).

Methodology

Three virtual experiences were designed to showcase a hotel with sustainability messages. The first virtual hotel experience incorporates nature sounds, such as flowing water and bird chirps, to reinforce the sustainability and nature theme. The second condition includes cheerful light music to align with the theme of a hotel in the city. The third experience is a gamified virtual adventure that features a treasure-hunting theme. In this condition, participants who found all 17 sustainability messages would win a coupon as a reward. A total of 120 participants were recruited and randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions. Participants first completed a brief survey to assess their initial knowledge of sustainability practices in hotels. And then, they wore an eye tracker and explored the VR hotel experiences at their own pace. In all conditions, participants were informed about the 17 sustainability icons, and they could choose to find as many or as few as they wished. The eye-tracking session was followed by a second survey and an in-depth interview to further evaluate their experiences.

Results

Eye tracking data indicate that participants favored nature sounds for their relaxing and calming qualities. This condition helped sustain participants' attention and led participants to spend more time reading the sustainability messages compared to the city music condition. The nature sounds not only facilitated participants' focus on the visuals but also enhanced their understanding of the details. As Participant #63 explained, "The nature sounds made me feel more relaxed and it provided a sense of tranquility and added to the simple natural atmosphere that they're going for." Participants also particularly paid attention to features such as the floor-to-ceiling green plant wall, the Beyond Burger highlighted as the first of its kind in Asia, and the hotel's sustainability practices involving recyclable soap and coffee cups. The compelling images and text on the information page further captured their interest.

The gamification element further sustained participants' attention, with 34 out of 40 participants in the gamified condition motivated to locate all 17 sustainability icons. "I feel like the gamification and coupon helped me find the messages and I probably wouldn't have clicked on them without the icons" (Participant #68).

Survey and interview data revealed that participants gained sustainability knowledge by experiencing the VR hotel. Participant #29 said that "I learned all the different aspects that go into making a sustainable hotel environment. I didn't realize how much could be done." The perceived importance of sustainability practices significantly increased before and after. These practices included features such as the green wall and roof, food donation initiatives, ORCA technology, soap recycling, wall-mounted bathroom amenities, and coffee capsule recycling.

Conclusion and Discussions

The VR hotel experience significantly enhanced participants' awareness of the hotel's sustainability practices. The inclusion of nature sounds, such as flowing water and bird chirps, not only helped participants maintain focus on the visual elements but also deepened their comprehension of the details presented in the text. This auditory-visual synergy allowed participants to associate the calming nature sounds with the environmentally friendly features of the hotel. Additionally, the integration of gamification elements further enhanced participants' engagement and motivation. It encouraged them to actively seek out and absorb information. These combined sensory and interactive elements facilitated higher information processing. It results in a better understanding of sustainability practices. This research also demonstrates the potential of VR experiences as powerful tools for effectively communicating eco-friendly initiatives.

References are available upon request

Acknowledgments

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UTILIZING BERT AND LLMs FOR ANALYZING HOSPITALITY DATA: INSIGHTS FROM A PILOT STUDY OF REDDIT POSTS

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Introduction

The use of the J-1 visa program is growing in the U.S. education, hospitality, and healthcare fields to promote the exchange of people and knowledge. The temporary nature of J-1 workers particularly benefits the hotel industry by addressing seasonal labor shortages. However, one limitation of the J-1 visa within the hospitality sector is its non-extendable nature, capped at a maximum of 12 months (Hospitality Placements USA, 2019). In contrast, in fields such as research or medical graduate programs, J-1 visa extensions can last five to seven years (Visa Nation, 2023). Many hotel J-1 workers are treated as cheap labor and not afforded the same investment and opportunities as peers with established careers. They are often overlooked for permanent roles due to additional barriers that hinder their success.

Ryan and Silvano (2023) interviewed administrators within host organizations and focused on the isolation of J-1 worker communities and their underlying political motivations. However, this study primarily concentrated on visiting scholars in universities and camp counselors in educational camps. Ahmad and Scott (2021) focused on the hotel industry in Malaysia where five-star hotels are increasingly employing international workers, ranging from managers and laborers to student interns. However, there is a lack of research examining J-1 workers as socialized individuals. Drawing from the theoretical lens of liminality (Thomassen, 2016), our study seeks to explore the unique experiences of J-1 visa workers in the U.S. hotel industry, an area that remains largely unexamined.

Methods

First, we used the Reddit API to collect posts related to hotel J-1 workers. Second, we applied a large language model (LLM) to filter the Reddit results for posts relevant to the J-1 experience in the hotel industry. Specifically, the task described below was given to ChatGPT to assign a value of 1 (relevant) or 0 (not relevant) based on our criteria:

“Background: You are provided with a list of Reddit posts. Each post is a concatenation of the post title, the main text, and the top five comments (if any). The goal is to identify posts containing relevant information about working or interning in the hotel industry under a J1 visa. *Task:* For each Reddit post, determine whether it contains relevant information about working or interning in the hotel industry under a J1 visa. Note that the term "hotel" might not be explicitly mentioned. Posts about working at a resort should also be considered relevant. Posts solely about J1 visa experiences in other industries (not related to the hotel industry) are not relevant. Posts only about the hotel industry without any mention of the J1 visa are also not relevant.”

Third, we used BERT to extract embeddings from the Reddit textual data. After generating the embeddings, we applied the Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise (DBSCAN) algorithm to cluster them into distinct groups. Themes were then identified by analyzing the different clusters.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Two main themes were identified: the vulnerability of J-1 interns from their own perspective and the strain on permanent staff as viewed by their permanent coworkers.

J-1 interns often endure overwork, poor management, excessive workloads without proper compensation, and unstable schedules. Their dependence on a single employer and fear of losing their visa make them vulnerable to exploitation, with limited ability to challenge unfair practices.

Permanent staff also experience increased stress due to reliance on temporary, often undertrained interns, leading to job insecurity and added responsibilities without sufficient support. These issues reflect a broader power imbalance and a lack of accountability within management, contributing to an unhealthy work environment that necessitates stronger legal protections and fair treatment for all employees.

These findings bridge individual experiences with broader stakeholder perspectives, such as those of coworkers. The results highlight the structural and relational challenges faced by J-1 workers in the hotel industry.

This study highlights how the temporary status of J-1 workers, viewed through the theory of liminality (Thomassen, 2016), affects their work and social experiences. Positioned between being guests and workers, J-1s face unique challenges that impact their integration and interactions. Recognizing their role as more than temporary labor, but as individuals with career and cultural goals, is crucial. The findings stress the need for fair treatment and stronger support for J-1 workers to promote a sustainable, respectful work environment that benefits both them and permanent staff.

References are available upon request

Do not include references in this submission.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

FACULTY PREPAREDNESS FOR AI INTEGRATION IN HOSPITALITY AND BUSINESS EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming higher education (HE), particularly in hospitality and business fields. As AI technologies become increasingly prevalent in these industries, there is a growing need for faculty to integrate AI into their teaching practices and curricula. This systematic review aims to examine the current state of faculty preparedness for AI integration in hospitality and business education.

AI can significantly enhance education by personalizing learning and improving engagement (Srinivasan, 2022). Successful implementation hinges on faculty competence, which is influenced by attitudes, intentions, and demographics (Alnasib, 2023). Digital leadership plays a crucial role in overcoming integration barriers (Cheng & Wang, 2023), while metaverse technologies present new educational possibilities (Qiu et al., 2023). Professional development is essential for enhancing faculty preparedness, as it positively correlates with self-preparedness and AI integration among students (Medina et al., 2024). Moreover, teacher confidence is vital for readiness to teach AI (Ayanwale et al., 2022). Facilitating conditions and contextualized learning are key to successful adoption (Habibi et al., 2024; Luckin et al., 2022).

This review synthesizes literature on faculty attitudes, technology adoption surveys, and professional development programs. It aims to identify preparedness levels, gaps, and strategies for enhancing AI integration in hospitality and business education. This research-in-progress will inform policy-makers and educators about necessary steps for effective AI implementation. Are hospitality and business faculty prepared for AI integration in higher education?

Methods

The search strategy adheres to PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, ensuring methodological rigor and transparency (Moher et al., 2009). Multiple databases, including Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar, will be searched to maximize coverage (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). Search terms will be developed from the research question, employing a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary. Boolean operators will be used strategically to broaden or narrow the search as necessary (Covidence, 2021).

The inclusion criteria for this review are studies that focus on HE faculty, address AI adoption or readiness in educational settings, are empirical in nature, and are published in peer-reviewed journals between 2010 and 2024. Studies will be excluded if they are non-relevant, opinion pieces, duplicates, non-empirical works, or outside the specified timeframe or context. The search strategy will be tested iteratively to confirm its reliability and effectiveness. This approach allowed for a focused yet comprehensive review, ensuring that only high-quality and

pertinent studies were included (University of Miami Libraries, n.d.). All stages of the search process will be meticulously documented following Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009).

Implication

The implications of this systematic review are far-reaching and significant. The findings will underscore the need for educational policy-makers and curriculum developers to align programs with advancing AI technologies. A critical implication is the necessity for comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs for faculty, focusing on enhancing AI literacy, technical skills, and pedagogical strategies for AI integration. Institutions should prioritize creating tailored training programs and invest in robust technological infrastructure, AI-focused learning spaces, and industry partnerships to overcome adoption barriers.

The review will also point to several areas for future research, including longitudinal studies on AI integration's impact on student learning outcomes, comparative analyses of AI preparedness across disciplines and regions, and investigations into ethical considerations and best practices. By addressing these implications through a holistic approach encompassing targeted policies, professional development, institutional support, and continued research, educational institutions can better prepare students for the AI-driven future of their respective industries.

References are available upon request

AWARENESS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: USING SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS (SNA)

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is progressing as the driving force of the modern world (Xu et al., 2023). The hospitality industry must integrate AI to enhance guest satisfaction by data driven anticipating needs, offering personalize service and mitigating financial, security and risk in daily operation leveraging advanced analytics, machine learning, large language model of AI mechanism (Li et al., 2021). As the saying goes, “there is no unmixed blessing on earth”, there is a lack of research on AI in the hospitality industry and how to leverage AI by diverting threats into opportunities (Limna, 2023; Ruel & Njoku, 2020; Drexler & Lapré, 2019). The hospitality industry is a human labor-intensive industry, and AI utilization may lead to a reduction in the workforce. However, if businesses are not skilled with certain AI-based operations, they may lose business overnight (Huang et al., 2021). On the contrary, the overuse of AI can impact upscale hospitality brands since emotional intelligence and human interaction is an essential focus of the industry (Bowen & Morosan, 2018). There are previous studies on AI technologies in the service industry and operation (Huang et al., 2021); however, those studies lack a strong theoretical background from the adoption perspectives and lack research on the specific industry or customer-based awareness about the AI based services in the field of hospitality (Ruel & Njoku, 2020; Drexler & Lapré, 2019). Hence, the research is the demand for the time before hospitality industry invest major capital for installing AI based services. The research will be grounded in diffusion of innovation theory to analyze the acceptance and adoption process of AI in the hospitality industry (Bowen & Morosan, 2018). The study will use social network analysis (SNA) tool NodeXL to investigate AI trends in hospitality through X network analysis (Xu et al., 2023). The research aims to reveal the diffusion structure of AI adoption within the hospitality network discovering opinion leaders and market mavens in defining AI acceptance the finding will be provide the hospitality businesses an insight about the social perspective on AI based hospitality operation and expected satisfaction.

Methods

The study employed quantitative research strategy that aims to discover the understanding of AI and expected satisfaction through AI based customer service in hospitality sector. Data was collected from X’s Application Programming Interface (API). The research investigated how the social media platform “X” is helping to communicate and promote AI with the power of hashtags. Hashtags such as #aiinhospitality, #hospitalitytech and #aihotel were used to collect data from the network 3.0 with the help of Boolean search option ‘Or’, Boolean search is a useful tool for improving the gathering and processing of social media data (Drexler & Lapré, 2019).

Kaminski et al. (2003) mentioned Quantitative analysis relies on dependent and independent variables to identify causal correlations. The study is grounded on Diffusion of Innovation theory of E.M. Rogers in 1962. The theory identifies that independent variable such as awareness, perceived utility, perceived ease of use, social impact, and facilitating conditions have influence of dependent variables such as adoption rate, intent to use, and consumer approval to integrate new technology for this research it is integrating AI in hospitality (Kaminski et al., 2003). NodeXL enables network analysis to display user connections and discover significant

influences, subgroups of same interest people. Word and content analysis will detect common and most discussed topics which are disseminating related information about AI in hospitality. Sentiment analysis will be performed on tweets to determine industry and consumer views about AI adoption. Time series analysis examines tweet volume and patterns over time to uncover peak activity periods and trends in AI-related conversations.

This comprehensive approach enables a in depth insight of AI literacy and awareness in the hospitality sector, providing an understanding of the adoption process of AI within the hospitality business.

Results

The semantic analysis of social network data identified three major subgroups within the AI in hospitality industry network each group is interconnected based of their common interest around Ai integration in the hospitality industry. In social networks, a subgroup is a cluster or community of nodes that are more tightly connected to one another than the remainder of the network. The identification of subgroups supports researchers in understanding community development and interaction patterns inside complicated networks to discover the most discussed concerns or opinion in a complicated network (Kim & Chakraborty, 2023).

The first subgroup's discussions focused on AI literacy, highlighting the importance of AI literacy to implement technology effectively in the hospitality industry. The second subgroup mostly tweeted about cognitive effect on contactless services, emphasizing how the industry is going to manage the experience of human touch of hospitality through AI. The third subgroup's focal concern is about safeguarding personal information and cybersecurity concerns associated with AI application in the hospitality industry. This finding is consistent with the broader trends in the use of AI technologies, where confidentiality and safety remain critical issues (Xu et al., 2023).

This continuing study will explore sentiment analysis to assess the social perspectives about implementing artificial intelligence, which will most likely indicate both optimistic and pessimistic insights of the customer and industry.

Conclusion

This study investigates AI adoption in the hospitality business, uncovering a complicated environment using social network analysis and sentiment evaluation. It outlines the following key concentration domains: AI literacy, contactless services, and preserving human compassion. The study emphasizes the role of opinion leaders in encouraging literacy in AI and uncovers mixed feelings about AI's possible benefits and drawbacks. The findings highlight the importance of an integrated approach to AI integrating, embracing effectiveness advantages while maintaining human interaction and guaranteeing security of data. This study lays the groundwork for future research and practical applications, directing the industry toward an AI-enhanced future that complements rather than eliminates the human touch.

ENHANCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF ADULT LEARNERS IN AN ONLINE CLASSROOM – A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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Introduction

The landscape of higher education has undergone significant transformation with the rise of online learning, particularly in catering to adult learners. This research aims to explore effective strategies for enhancing the understanding and engagement of adult learners in the online classroom environment. As noted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), online students are predominantly adult or non-traditional learners, necessitating a reevaluation of teaching methods to better serve this unique student population.

The growth of online education has been substantial, with over 9 million students in the United States taking at least one online course (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2024), there were 3,984 degree-granting postsecondary institutions that primarily offered online or distance learning programs during the 2021-2022 academic year. This list includes for-profit, nonprofit, public, and private colleges and universities. Additionally, a search on the College Navigator, provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), identified 78 colleges or universities offering at least one online hospitality program.

Adult learners, typically defined as students aged 25 and older, constitute a significant portion of this online student population (Cercone, 2008). The purpose of this study is to explore effective strategies for enhancing the understanding and engagement of adult learners in the online classroom environment, specifically within online hospitality management (HM) programs. By examining strategies tailored to adult learning principles, this research seeks to address the gap in understanding how to effectively engage adult learners in online environments that align with the practical and experiential needs of online HM students.

Methodology

This qualitative study explores strategies for enhancing adult learners' engagement in online HM programs, guided by the overarching research question: What strategies, grounded in andragogical theory, effectively enhance the understanding and engagement of adult learners in an online HM program? A qualitative approach was chosen to capture the rich, nuanced experiences of adult learners that quantitative methods might overlook (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study will focus on formal undergraduate university programs with participants recruited to represent diverse demographics including age (25 years old or older), gender, work experience, and prior online education exposure.

Semi-structured interviews with adult online learners in online HM programs will be the primary data collection method. Participants will be recruited from various HM online learning programs, with the sample size determined by data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing, lasting 60-90 minutes, addressing topics such as motivation, perceived benefits and challenges, preferred learning strategies, and the role of prior experiences (Patton, 2015). The interview questions, will be phrased in layman's terms to ensure participant comprehension.

Audio-recorded interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Specifically, NVivo software will be used for coding to ensure

systematic and rigorous analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and participant anonymity, will be prioritized (Cohen et al., 2018). While the qualitative nature may limit generalizability, the rich data obtained will provide valuable insights into adult learners' online experiences, contributing to the development of more effective engagement strategies for online HM programs.

Expected Outcomes

This research aims to yield several significant outcomes that will contribute to the field of online education for HM adult learners. The study is expected to identify effective strategies for applying andragogical theory in online teaching, providing educators with practical approaches to engage HM adult learners more effectively. Through the analysis of participants' experiences and perspectives, the research will develop a comprehensive framework for facilitating transformative learning experiences in the online classroom. This framework will help instructors create more meaningful and impactful learning environments for adult learners. Additionally, the study will propose innovative methods for integrating experiential learning into HM online courses, addressing the unique needs and preferences of adult learners. By synthesizing the findings from semi-structured interviews and grounding them in andragogy theory, this research will provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing online teaching practices specifically tailored to HM adult learners. These outcomes will collectively contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of online education for adult students, potentially leading to increased engagement, satisfaction, and learning outcomes in virtual learning environments.

Significance

By addressing the unique challenges and needs of HM adult online learners, this research has the potential to significantly improve the quality of online education. The findings will contribute to the growing body of literature on adult learning in the HM online environments and provide practical guidance for educators and institutions serving this demographic.

Limitations

This qualitative study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size and focus on specific online HM programs may limit the generalizability of findings to other educational contexts or disciplines. Second, the reliance on self-reported data through interviews introduces potential bias, as participants' recollections and perceptions may not fully capture the complexity of their experiences. Third, the study's qualitative nature makes it more susceptible to researcher bias in data interpretation, despite efforts to maintain objectivity. Fourth, the use of video conferencing for interviews, while necessary, may have impacted the depth of rapport and non-verbal cues compared to in-person interactions. Finally, the study's cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of participants' experiences at a single point in time, potentially missing longitudinal changes in perceptions or challenges faced by adult learners in online programs. Despite these limitations, the rich, detailed data obtained through this qualitative approach offers valuable insights into the experiences of adult learners in online HM education.

References are available upon request

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: HOW FAMILY-OWNED HOTELS NAVIGATE CHALLENGES AND THRIVE IN THE MODERN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Introduction

With major hotel chains and international booking platforms setting high expectations for branding, worldwide reach, and digital strategies, the hospitality sector is characterized by intense rivalry. Family-run hotels provide guests with an experience that is becoming uncommon in the age of corporate chains by emphasizing individualized service, local heritage, and community connections.

Many iconic U.S. hotel brands were started by families. The Pritzker family owns the Hyatt brand, while Marriott International was founded by the Marriott family and remains under their leadership. The Hilton brand originated with the Hilton family in the early 20th century (Heg, 2024). Members of the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA) own approximately 60% of U.S. hotels, contributing about 1.4% to the nation's GDP.

Small family-owned hotels (FOH) face challenges like limited market visibility due to low marketing budgets and financial constraints, leading to issues with staffing and service quality (Baric et al., 2022). They encounter difficulties with high operational costs, regulatory policies, aging infrastructure, declining customer numbers, and succession planning (Aziz et al., 2012). These hotels rely on guest relationships and local authenticity rather than brand power. Yet, they must adapt to shifting guest preferences and economic fluctuations to remain viable.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies that FOH employ to remain competitive. Its research questions include: (1) What are the key challenges that family-owned hotels face in the modern hospitality industry? (2) How do these challenges impact the operations and long-term sustainability? (3) What specific strategies do family-owned hotels use to navigate these challenges and adapt to the evolving industry landscape? (4) What factors enable family-owned hotels to sustain their operations and thrive amidst industry competition?

Methods

This study will utilize a multiple case study approach, combined with a micro-level inductive method (Hayrapetyan & Simon, 2024). Purposive and convenience sampling will be used to select 6 to 8 family-owned hotels in the Southwest region of the US. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and follow-up prompts serve as the primary data collection method. Interview questions will focus on three main themes: Key challenges that family-owned hotels face, impact of the challenges on the operations and long-term sustainability, and navigation strategies. The interview data will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis with Atlas-TI software.

Results/Discussion/Implications

Findings are expected to highlight the significance of community connections, challenges faced, impacts of the challenges and navigating strategies. The findings may help government and industry groups create tailored support initiatives, like grants or workshops on financial planning, that improve the resilience and sustainability of family-owned hotels in the industry.

References are available upon request

ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF RESIDENTS' COMMITMENT AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE AT THE CAPE COAST DESTINATION IN GHANA.

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Introduction

Tourism serves as a critical driver of economic growth, cultural exchange, and societal development worldwide. In Ghana, tourism ranks as the fourth-largest revenue source, following gold, cocoa, and oil (Mensah-Ansah et al., 2011). The government's initiatives, such as the 2019 'Year of Return' and its successor, 'Beyond the Return,' have bolstered Ghana's appeal as a cultural and heritage tourism destination, particularly within the diaspora community. These initiatives have led to significant growth in international arrivals, from 915,000 tourists in 2022, an increase of 47% over the previous year, to a projected revenue of \$3.4 billion in 2023, generating 50,000 jobs (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2022). Cape Coast, the capital of Ghana's Central Region, embodies a rich blend of cultural, historical, and natural attractions, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as Cape Coast Castle and Kakum National Park. The city's significance is underscored by high-profile visits from global leaders like former U.S. President Barack Obama, which have further solidified its status as a premier tourism destination.

Sustainable tourism, which balances economic growth with environmental preservation and social inclusivity, has become essential in maximizing tourism's benefits while mitigating its adverse impacts (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). The key to this balance is the involvement of local residents, whose attitudes, behaviors, and commitment significantly influence the sector's sustainability (Anokye, 2022; Choi & Sirakaya, 2005). The role of residents' prosocial behaviors and voluntary actions that benefit others and their commitment to tourism development is increasingly recognized as vital to fostering sustainable tourism, particularly in destinations within developing countries (Ribeiro et al., 2017). However, existing research often focuses on developed countries, leaving a critical gap in understanding how these dynamics play out in destinations like Cape Coast (Nunkoo et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2016).

This study, grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), seeks to investigate how residents' prosocial behaviors and commitment influence sustainable tourism development in Cape Coast and, subsequently, their quality of life. SET suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in and support initiatives when they perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs (Thibault & Kelly, 1959). In the context of tourism, this theory highlights the importance of perceived benefits such as economic gains and improved infrastructure in fostering residents' support and participation (Nunkoo & So, 2016). Conversely, if residents perceive tourism as causing disruptions or environmental degradation, they may resist further development (Yayla & Dimanche, 2023).

Cape Coast presents a compelling case for examining these relationships, given its dual identity as a historical hub and an emerging tourism hotspot. The city's notable attractions ranging from the emotionally powerful Cape Coast and Elmina Castles to natural wonders like Kakum National Park draw both domestic and international visitors. Beyond tourism's economic contributions, these attractions serve as cultural touchpoints, connecting the African diaspora with their ancestral roots and fostering cultural exchange.

Methods

To address the gaps in existing research, data will be collected from 350 residents of Cape Coast using a structured questionnaire designed based on a critical review of the literature. A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the clarity of the questionnaire items and assess the feasibility of the proposed survey instrument. Data will be collected from simple random sampling. Questionnaires were designed on Qualtrics and administered to residents of Cape Coast using four distribution channels (1) through Google forms by scanning QR code or sent to emails, (2) through face-to-face by investigators (hired by the researcher who are hospitality students from a University in Cape Coast) (3). through embedded links in social media groups consisting of Cape Coast residents (4) approaching respondents at random in streets, residents' houses, churches, funerals, offices, public parks, etc. compare Independent Samples T-test will be used to determine whether the socio-demographic characteristics (in this case – gender) of the respondents influence their attitudes (prosocial behavior and commitment) towards sustainable tourism ANOVA Will be run to determine whether (age, income, and educational level) of respondents influence their prosocial behavior and commitment towards Sustainable tourism development. Structural equation modelling using a maximum likelihood estimation approach with robust standard error will be employed to ascertain the path analysis

Implications

This study will provide several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it will expand Social Exchange Theory by integrating prosocial behavior as a critical antecedent to sustainable tourism and quality of life. It is expected that residents' perceptions of tourism's impact on their quality of life significantly influence their commitment and prosocial behaviors. For instance, residents who perceive tourism as contributing positively to their economic well-being and community infrastructure are more likely to support sustainable tourism practices. Conversely, concerns about overcrowding, environmental degradation, and cultural commodification may diminish residents' support, underscoring the need for inclusive and adaptive tourism management strategies.

Additionally, it will highlight the multifaceted relationship between resident attitudes, perceived tourism impacts, and sustainability outcomes in a developing country context. Practically, the findings will inform destination management organizations, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders in Cape Coast on how to foster residents' commitment and prosocial behaviors. By actively involving residents in tourism planning and decision-making, managers can enhance the sector's sustainability and ensure that its benefits are equitably distributed.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of residents' prosocial behaviors and commitment to driving sustainable tourism development and improving the quality of life in Cape Coast. As the tourism industry continues to grow, aligning development initiatives with residents' needs and values will be crucial in ensuring a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship between tourism stakeholders and host communities. By shedding light on these dynamics, the study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism in developing countries and offers actionable insights for fostering inclusive and sustainable growth in Cape Coast and similar destinations.

References on request

POSTER

INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENROLLMENT IN HOSPITALITY PROGRAMS AT THE HIGHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is an important sector in the global economy, offering diverse career opportunities in hotel management, tourism, event planning, and food and beverage services (Oladipo, 2024). Despite its growth potential and valuable competencies, hospitality education struggles to attract high school students (Pinto & Nakatani, 2022). Parental perceptions regarding job stability, industry reputation, and alignment with family values significantly influence students' career choices.

This study examines how parental perceptions affect high school students' decisions to enroll in post-secondary hospitality programs. By analyzing parental values, concerns, and attitudes, this research provides insights to help higher education institutions develop targeted strategies. Findings will contribute to addressing parental concerns, promoting hospitality careers, and increasing enrollment in hospitality education.

Literature Review

Parental influence plays a crucial role in shaping students' choices in hospitality and tourism management (HTM). Research highlights that parental support, concerns about job stability, and industry reputation strongly affect students' interest in hospitality careers (Wong & Liu, 2010). Additionally, parents with higher education backgrounds exert greater influence on their children's career decisions (Thomas, 2003).

Although parental encouragement is important, studies suggest that students' perceptions of the hospitality industry tend to decline as they progress through their studies due to concerns about work conditions and career progression (Kumar, 2015). Cultural values further impact career choices in Hong Kong where peer influence dominates HTM program selection, followed by family and educators. Confucian and collectivist values support parental influence in decision-making (Ho & Law, 2021).

Most research studies on parental influence in hospitality education focuses on Asian contexts, leaving a gap in understanding Western parental perspectives. This study addresses that gap by examining how Western parents' perceptions affect their children's enrollment in hospitality programs, offering a broader cross-cultural understanding of parental influence on hospitality education.

Methodology

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore parental perceptions across various U.S. regions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Data will be collected from three institutions offering hospitality programs in different states, ensuring regional diversity and broader applicability (Patton, 2014).

The quantitative method involves structured surveys targeting 100 parents per institution (300 total). The survey will use Likert-scale questions to assess perceptions of job stability,

industry reputation, and alignment with family values. Moreover, this survey allows for cross-institutional comparisons, identifying both overarching trends and location-specific differences. The qualitative method consists of in-depth interviews with 10 parents from each institution (30 total). These structured interviews will explore parental beliefs, biases, and personal experiences regarding hospitality careers. By drawing participants from three states, the qualitative data will complement the quantitative findings, providing a deeper understanding of parental support or hesitation toward hospitality education.

Implications

The findings of this study will provide important insights for higher education institutions, career counselors, and industry stakeholders seeking to enhance enrollment in hospitality programs. By understanding the role of parental perceptions, this research can inform outreach strategies to address concerns related to job stability, industry reputation, and career growth.

Additionally, findings will influence marketing efforts for hospitality programs, helping institutions develop campaigns that highlight career diversity, showcase alumni success, and emphasize long-term opportunities. High school career counselors can also use these insights to engage parents through workshops and informational sessions, educating them on the benefits and transferable skills gained in hospitality education.

By examining Western parental perspectives, this research fills a critical gap in hospitality education literature. The findings will inform global outreach strategies, ensuring culturally responsive approaches to engaging parents and increasing enrollment in hospitality programs.

References are available upon request

HOW CULTURAL ROOTS INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE FOOD SAFETY BEHAVIOR IN DINING HALLS

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Introduction

Reducing foodborne infections is a public health priority (WHO, 2024), especially in dining halls where large numbers of people are served each day. Food handlers have been the primary contributors to food-related illnesses in the food service industry (Jackson, 2011). Employee attitudes regarding actions have been identified as indicators of overall conduct and food safety practices (Pilling et al., 2008). Research indicates that food service employees often possess adequate knowledge and positive attitudes about food safety. This study identifies a persistent gap between their knowledge and actual practices (Sneed et al., 2004), which shows that knowledge alone is insufficient to drive consistent food safety behavior. There is a need to analyze employees' cultural backgrounds, specifically their nationality, and how these characteristics may influence compliance with food safety standards to address this gap.

Culture significantly shapes behavior and acts as an invisible force that guides perceptions and actions (NeuroLaunch, 2024), which implies the possible impact of cultural background on food safety behaviors and makes it essential to consider cultural factors when developing food safety practices. Cultural influences, reasoning, and motivation for a certain activity may influence poor food safety practices in some employees, resulting in widespread cultural misconceptions about food safety (Neal et al., 2015). According to Allafi et al., (2020), attitudes towards food safety are influenced by cultural background and cultural practices and training affect behavior towards food. This study investigates how cultural differences affect dining hall personnel's behavior and adherence to food safety regulations. The study will identify determinants of food safety behaviors and will determine measures to increase compliance in culturally diverse environments.

Methods

This study will use a mixed-methods approach that will combine quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to investigate the influence of cultural background on food safety attitudes among dining hall employees in a university setting. A sample of 100 employees will be selected using a non-random convenience sampling method to ensure a representation across different cultural groups. The sample will consist of dining hall employees from diverse cultural backgrounds working in a university setting based on their nationality. A structured survey will be used to assess participants' knowledge, attitudes, and compliance with food safety standards. A semi-structured interview will be conducted with a subset of 20 participants to collect qualitative data to understand the influence of cultural beliefs on food safety behavior. This study's dependent variable is dining hall employees' compliance with food safety regulations. The independent variables are the cultural background, beliefs, and attitudes of the employees related to food safety.

The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression to identify relationships between cultural background and compliance with food safety standards of the quantitative data. The qualitative data will be analyzed through thematic coding to identify cultural factors influencing food safety practices. It hypothesizes that cultural background,

beliefs, and attitudes regarding food safety can impact employees' behaviors related to food safety compliance. The participants will be informed about the study's purpose and consent will be obtained before participation.

Please do not include tables, figures, or any other images in this submission. Please try to avoid using special characters, or symbols. Define abbreviations and acronyms wherever possible.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study will identify cultural determinants impacting food safety practices and develop recommendations for culturally tailored interventions to improve compliance with food safety standards in diverse dining environments. It will identify knowledge-practice gaps between food safety knowledge and practical application, especially in the context of cultural factors that could help institutions develop more effective food safety protocols. The findings could guide policymakers in creating food safety standards to consider cultural diversity in the workforce and make food safety management more effective across institutions. This could also support food safety policies in other sectors with culturally diverse staff, such as hospitals and schools.

References are available upon request

LET'S BE REAL: HOW DOES DEEP-LEVEL DIVERSITY AFFECT HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES?

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Introduction

This study aims to examine the impact of diversity on hospitality employee outcomes by exploring the connections between deep-level diversity and diversity management. The hospitality labor force is becoming more diverse with globalization (Gursoy & Maier, 2023; Singal, 2014). This emphasizes the importance of effective diversity management, as it can positively impact employees (Sabharwal, 2014). While prior hospitality research focused on surface-level diversity, such as race and gender (Madera et al., 2023), there is a lack of research focusing on deep-level diversity and employee outcomes (Manoharan & Singal, 2017; Yang et al., 2022). Drawing from the social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), this study aims to close this gap by evaluating the impact of deep-level diversity on hospitality employees' perceptions of authenticity at work, intention to stay, and quality of work-life. Authenticity at work will be investigated as a mediator, and diversity management will be tested as a boundary condition.

Deep-level diversity refers to individuals' different attributes that are not immediately visible (Olukayode & Ehigie, 2005), and it is impactful for organizational culture and employee outcomes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). By investigating the effect of deep-level diversity and diversity management, organizations can improve employee outcomes, such as authenticity at work (Fletcher & Everly, 2021). A work culture that embraces diversity and encourages self-expression promotes employee authenticity (Kuntz & Abbott, 2017).

Social identity theory proposes that organizations can shape individuals' social identity, influencing their behaviors (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). When deep-level diversity is increased, employees' organizational social group identifications can be enhanced, fostering positive social behaviors (Song et al., 2020). Based on this theory, it can be assumed that a high deep-level diversity can encourage employees to be more authentic. When employees strongly identify with their social group and feel that their identity is acknowledged, they are more likely to have higher authenticity and positive work outcomes (Maunz & Glaser, 2022).

Methods

A two (high vs. low deep-level diversity) by two (diversity management present vs. absent) between-subjects experimental design study will be conducted. Scenarios were created based on diversity literature (e.g., Madera et al., 2018). The participants have to be employed in the U.S. hospitality sector, fluent in English, aged 18 and older, and will be recruited via Prolific. A minimum of 180 responses will be collected for statistical validity (Cohen, 1992). Respondents will be randomly assigned to one of the four scenarios. They will imagine that they are working for a hotel where deep-level diversity and diversity management will be manipulated. The scope of deep-level diversity includes religion, sexual orientation, and educational background. Then, they will answer questions on authenticity at work (12-items, Van Den Bosch & Taris, 2013), intention to stay (3-items, Nacarrow et al., 2014), and quality of work-life (13-items, Snell et al., 2015). Data will be analyzed using SPSS Process, controlling for age, gender, race, and

hospitality work experience. T-test will be used to test H1, F-test for H4, and model 7 for H2, H3, and H5.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Examining intention to stay and quality of work-life while considering can resolve issues in the hospitality industry, including high turnover rates and low levels of well-being (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024; Yousaf et al., 2019), as it can demonstrate the benefits associated with deep-level diversity using diversity management strategies as a potential solution. As such, organizations can implement diversity management initiatives that support deep-level diversity for positive employee outcomes, such as providing diversity and inclusion training and affinity groups. This study expands what is known in the hospitality diversity literature by investigating the impact of deep-level diversity on employee outcomes, as previous studies mostly focused on surface-level diversity (Manoharan et al., 2023) and extends the scope of diversity management research.

References are available upon request

HOW MUCH DO WE PAY? ANALYZING MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS FOR CHOICE OF PRESENCE FOR A HYBRID ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

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Introduction

The fate of academic conferences has drastically changed with the rise of COVID-19 and technological advancements (Falk et al., 2021; Oester et al., 2017). Traditionally, academic conferences were held in person with people traveling from different walks of life to participate in this activity (Rommel, 2021). In-person events describe the traditional method of attending conferences where participants or attendees converge at a physical building or venue to embark on scheduled conference activities. Virtual Conferences, on the other hand, have their primary mode of presentation and communication through the World Wide Web (Gichora et al., 2010; Thatcher, 2006) or Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), such as Zoom and Google Meet. Virtual Conferences are not a new concept; they were institutionalized years ago but have seen a rise in awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic (Falk et al., 2021). Virtual conference attendance has presented positive benefits, including reducing carbon footprint and the cost of organizing an event (Sa et al., 2019).

Dua et al. (2021) raised concerns about the potential decline of in-person events post-COVID-19 alongside a rising preference for virtual options. This is attributed to the benefits of virtual events. Virtual conferences have recorded extensive and diverse audiences, resulting in the ease of reaching people from different walks of life. The Association of Women Surgeons recorded a consistent attendance growth from 2017- 2020, reflecting a preference for virtual conferences (Guetter et al., 2022). The Union of International Associations (2024) reported that 8,486 conferences were recorded in 2023 and that there was an increase in hybrid and virtual events from 2020 to 2023. This confirms increased acceptance for virtual and hybrid conferences with a broader reach to a larger geographic area (Guetter et al., 2022).

The disadvantages of virtual events include difficulty in identifying actively tuned-in attendees, measuring accurate attendee engagement, missed-out opportunities for socializing, networking, meeting new staff and creating lasting memories with pictures and videos, longer screen time, and difficulty in staying focused during events (Guetter et al., 2022). Dumbell (2019) explained that the primary benefits of in-person events include social impact, described as the opportunity to socialize during session breaks, and an affective impact, referring to the confidence and value associated with attendees' participation in traditional in-person events.

Inclusivity and equal participation are essential for the success of both in-person and virtual conferences, as they significantly impact the overall experience and effectiveness. While in-person conferences offer valuable networking opportunities, they can encounter challenges related to cost, accessibility, and safety, which may extremely affect marginalized groups and individuals from low-income backgrounds. Virtual conferences address issues of travel, cost, and carbon emissions; however, they are often perceived as less effective for networking (Olechnicka et al., 2024; Raby & Madden, 2021).

Emerging technologies cannot entirely replace in-person events, highlighting the need for hybrid conferences where attendees select their participation mode (Valenti et al., 2021; Hanaei

et al., 2020). Hybrid events integrate both online and in-person components to mitigate their limitations (Ram et al., 2024). Although they offer balanced platforms, organizing them involves various cost challenges, such as venue, logistics, catering, technology, production, security, and managing attendees (Belman-Adams, 2024). These complexities necessitate strategic planning to ensure the success of hybrid academic events conferences.

On matters of cost, the American Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) recorded an average of \$107,000 to \$225,000 for their 2023 hybrid academic conference (Carte et al., 2024). Further analysis of the Deep Blue Sea Symposium identified issues with higher costs in an organization, which were transferred to the registration fee to cover the increased expenses incurred. Critics around the symposium were primarily concerned about the inaccessibility of some participants to afford such costs and transparency issues during the organizational phase (Guetter et al., 2022). It is safe to say that there is an increased cost in organizing hybrid events (Doran et al., 2024), which concerns the future of organizing a satisfactory hybrid conference.

Cost, maximum attendee engagement, and satisfaction have been the focus of event organizers and stakeholders in planning hybrid events (Hamm et al., 2018). Cost minimization for hybrid events demands effective planning, which includes forecasting attendees' needs and choices with data retrieved from past conferences. Accurate forecasting is essential to confirm the successful completion of conferences, which also entails intense knowledge of planning and organizing events (Al-Zwainy & Hadal, 2016). For this reason, this study will analyze factors influencing attendees' choice of presence in a hybrid conference. This data will aid event stakeholders in forecasting attendees' needs to minimize costs incurred in organizing academic hybrid conferences. It will also serve as a reference for planning future events.

Methods

A quantitative method will collect data on the motivating factors driving choices and analyze participants' preferences and needs at hybrid academic conferences. To assess the opinions of hybrid conference attendees, a survey through purposive sampling will be provided using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To aid data collecting, researchers will work with event organizers to distribute surveys to attendees. The Push-and-Pull Theory (Lee, 1966) will serve as the theoretical lens for this research. Push factors motivating people to attend an in-person or virtual event will be divided into demographic and psychological categories.

Demographic criteria will include age, gender, and income, while psychological factors will include participant's experience and personality qualities. Pull factors that entice people to specific events and will be divided into Situational and Geographical categories. Situational considerations will include health and time availability, while geographic elements will consider the event's location and the attendees' proximity. This structured method will allow for an in-depth analysis of the primary motivational drivers for selecting a particular format for attending a hybrid conference.

Results/ Implications/Discussions

The expected results will provide industrial knowledge to event organizers for planning future hybrid conferences.

References are available upon request

IS ANGER ALWAYS DESTRUCTIVE? INVESTIGATING ANGER'S POSITIVE EFFECT UNDER PARADOXICAL AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

It is not uncommon for the emotion of anger to be expressed, observed, and/or experienced by employees, employers (managers), and clients in hospitality and tourism, since work pressures arise as a consequence of the high expectations of customers and employers. There have been several studies conducted to examine the influence of angry and unsatisfied clients on hospitality and tourism businesses (Sánchez-García and Currás-Pérez, 2011; Ekiz et al., 2012; Torres et al., 2017; Drewery and McCarville, 2022). Some studies have focused on the sources and consequences of anger amongst employees (Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013; Moreo et al., 2020; Yang, 2020; Li et al., 2021). Others investigated the anger caused by management and its consequences, such as potential harassment and negative impacts on employee emotions (Buick & Thomas, 2001; Ram, 2018; Hight et al., 2019; Stollberger et al., 2020). Other authors again have explored ways in which managers and employees can manage and ultimately overcome anger (Li et al., 2021; Ahmed, 2022). In these previous studies, anger has always been examined as a destructive emotion that needs to be harnessed.

Anger can however also be understood as a constructive emotion. A study by Lench et al. (2023) showed that anger increases the likelihood of success in challenging situations through increased creativity and goal attainment. Anger can also serve as a driver that leads to the achievement of success. This concept is conveyed succinctly in an episode of the Ted Lasso television series (Sudeikis et al., 2021) as follows: “The great Roy Kent. You are old now, and slow, and your focus drifts. But your speed and smarts were never what made you who you are. It is your ANGER. That’s your superpower. That’s what made you one of the best midfielders in the history of this league”. Despite this stream of thought, scholars has not investigated whether anger expressed by hospitality and tourism leaders who display different leadership styles can also produce positive outcomes. The current study sheds light on this topic by exploring whether and how anger leads to increased work engagement under different leadership styles. Specifically, we examine the impact of expressions of anger by leaders exercising paradoxical and ethical leadership respectively on employee anger and on (increased) work engagement.

When leaders express anger in the workplace, this can provoke anger amongst employees (Schwarz Müller et al., 2018). The literature suggests that being angry with oneself over outcomes can lead to increased creativity and focus (Lench et al., 2023). Since the increased work focus is associated with better work engagement, anger may also lead to greater work engagement. Additionally, even if an employee is not initially angry, they may work harder to satisfy their manager in response to his or her expression of manager. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Leader anger expression positively affects employee anger.

H2: Employee anger positively affects their focus at work.

H3: Leader anger expression positively affects employee focus at work.

It has been shown that ethical and paradoxical leadership are effective in the hospitality and tourism context (Rescalvo-Martin et al., 2021; Hoang et al., 2023). Paradoxical leadership is more suited to complex environments since it is based on the premise that leaders should change their behaviors to accommodate different situations (Zhang et al., 2015). On the other hand, ethical leadership, as defined by Brown et al. (2005, p. 120), is “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion

of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.”

Ethical leaders who prioritize moral conduct and integrity may view the expression of anger as a negative emotion (Brown et al., 2005). Furthermore, employees may not expect to experience expressions of anger from their leaders. Therefore, if an ethical leader were to express anger, it may violate employee expectations by making a connection between the leader’s expression of anger and anger on the part of employees. Paradoxical leadership by contrast suggests that leaders should adapt their behaviors in different situations (Zhang et al., 2015). In the case of such paradoxical leaders, employees may expect expressions of anger in certain situations when desired outcomes are not fulfilled. Thus, paradoxical leadership may weaken the relationship between expressions of anger by leaders and employee anger, since employees are prepared. Based on this, we hypothesize that:

H4: Paradoxical leadership moderates the relationship between the expression of anger by leaders and employee anger such that the more paradoxical the leader, the less anger that results from the leader’s expression of anger.

H5: Ethical leadership moderates the relationship between the expression of anger by leaders and employee anger such that the more ethical the leader, the more anger is results from the leader’s expression of anger.

Research Method

An online survey will be used to collect data in this study, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be deployed to test the proposed hypotheses. The Paradoxical Leadership Behavior Scale (Zhang et al., 2015) will be used to measure Paradoxical Leadership, the Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al., 2005) will measure Ethical Leadership, the Spielberger Anger Expression Scale (Knight et al., 1988) will measure Leader's Expression of Anger, the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 2010) will assess Employee Anger, and the Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006) will be used to measure Positive Outcomes (Employee Work Engagement).

The value of this study is to illuminate the prospectively positive effects of expressions of anger in the workplace. It also contributes to the leadership literature by showing the varying effects of expressions of anger according to different leadership styles. This is one of the first studies to examine the positive aspects of anger in the workplace.

References are available upon request