Conference Proceedings

The 31st Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism

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Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

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Preface

On behalf of the Graduate Conference Organizing Committee at Auburn University, we are delighted to present the proceedings of the 31st Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism, held at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center, Auburn, Alabama, from January 8–10, 2026. This year's conference was proudly hosted by the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management at Auburn University.

The 2026 conference attracted 246 submissions, of which 144 were accepted as stand-up presentations and 102 as poster presentations. These submissions were managed by nine track chairs representing eight higher education institutions. Each paper underwent a rigorous review process, with at least two reviewers per submission, totaling 256 reviewers this year. Detailed feedback was provided to authors to help refine and strengthen their research. These proceedings reflect the collective efforts and scholarly contributions of authors, reviewers, and track chairs.

The success of this year's conference is the result of the dedication of many individuals and organizations. We extend our sincere appreciation to the sponsoring schools and industry partners for their generous financial support. Our gratitude also goes to the nine track chairs, whose commitment and tireless efforts in coordinating reviewers ensured a smooth and efficient review process. Special thanks to the 256 reviewers for their invaluable feedback and insights, which were instrumental in maintaining the high academic standards of this conference.

We would like to give distinctive recognition to the Best Paper Selection Committee, comprised of Dr. Kaye Chon, Dr. Dennis Reynolds, and Dr. Martin O'Neill, for their thoughtful evaluation of nominated papers and recommendations for award recipients. Last, but certainly not least, we acknowledge the talented planning committee, colleagues, and student volunteers from the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management at Auburn University, whose countless hours of hard work made this event possible.

A special note of gratitude goes to Dr. Kaye Chon, whose vision and foresight initiated this meaningful conference more than 30 years ago. His leadership has created a valuable platform for emerging hospitality and tourism scholars to share cutting-edge research, develop innovative ideas, and build networks with peers, faculty, and administrators from leading programs worldwide.

Congratulations to all authors whose papers were accepted for presentation at the 31st Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism. We hope these proceedings inspire continued research excellence and collaboration in the field.

Baker Ayoun, PhD, Yee Ming Lee, PhD & Demi Deng, PhD
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MIX-AND-MATCH OF LOW AND HIGH-STATUS ELEMENTS IN LUXURY HOSPITALITY CONTEXT

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Introduction

From food to leisure to fashion, we see examples of intentionally combining traditionally low-status items with high-status elements. "The Gourmet Cracco Crisp", a collaboration dish by a Michelin-starred Chef, elevates store-bought potato chips with refined recipes (Bellezza & Berger, 2020). The Kardashian family goes on a "Do it yourself (DIY) camping", except that it comes with a private chef (Seacrest, 2025). But why would fine-dining chefs, celebrities, or other high-status actors choose low-status cues? Is the strategy of mixing low and high-status cues beneficial?

Luxury signals constantly evolve as traditional luxury symbols lose their signaling power (Thomas, 2007; Bellezza, 2023). When the luxury symbol becomes too mainstream, its scarcity declines, prompting new alternative status signals (Cesareo et al., 2023; Berger & Ward, 2010; Bellezza & Berger, 2020). According to the trickle-round theory, the intentional mix of low and high-status cues has emerged as a distinctive, alternative status signaling method among high-status actors. Despite ongoing research into new status signaling methods, its impact on customer-based brand equity (CBBE) in luxury hospitality services has received limited attention. More specifically, the effect of mixing low and high-status cues in shaping customers' willingness to pay a premium (WTPP) remains unexplored. Thus, we ask the following questions: 1. Can mixing low and high-status elements increase the WTPP in luxury restaurants? 2. If so, what is the underlying psychological mechanism? To address these questions, the study examines the effect of status element on customers' WTPP and identifies the mediating effect of perceived uniqueness (PU) founding on the theory of uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977).

Methods

This study employed a between-subjects design experimental study with one independent variable, status element, with four levels: low, middle, high, and mix. The manipulation stimuli were designed as restaurant menu that portrayed different levels of status elements. 200 participants, recruited via Prolific, were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and asked to rate WTPP (Zhang & Bloemer, 2011), PU (Franke & Schreier, 2008), and demographic measures. The study also measured perceived attractiveness to rule out possible alternative explanations.

Results/Discussion/Implication

A one-way ANOVA test revealed that status elements have a significant positive effect on PU ($F(3,195)=16.36$, $p<.001$), such that the mix condition was perceived significantly more unique than the low, middle, and high conditions. Further comparing the high and mix conditions ($n=104$), the mix condition showed significantly higher PU ($b = .93$, $SE = .33$, $p=.006$, 95% CI [.28, 1.58]) than high condition and PU positively predicted WTPP ($b = .57$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.38, .75]). Then, Hayes PROCESS model 4 confirmed that the relationship between status elements and WTPP is mediated via PU ($b = .53$, $SE = .22$, 95% CI [.15, .99]). The findings indicate that the mix-and-match strategy increases WTPP by enhancing perceived uniqueness. Theoretically, this study extends the trickle-round theory (Bellezza & Berger, 2020) to the hospitality context by showing how CBBE can be created through mixing status cues in an experiential context. From a managerial perspective, the study demonstrates the strategic value of the mix-and-match strategy in enhancing brand equity among luxury hospitality brands.

LIKE REAL, BUT AI COULDN'T COPY: CUSTOMERS' RESPONSES TO AI DISCLOSURE IN RESTAURANT ADVERTISEMENTS

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Introduction

In restaurant advertisements, exaggerated or fabricated food images are often used to make the offerings appear more attractive. However, when consumers recognize the difference between the advertisement and the actual product, they tend to respond negatively. Therefore, understanding the dual impact of unauthentic images in restaurant advertising is crucial.

Since the emergence of generative AI, many companies have utilized it to create advertisements. Although AI-generated content offers significant operational advantages, consumers often exhibit ambivalent attitudes toward this type of content. Moreover, only a few studies have examined the impact of AI disclosure in the advertising context. Building on these points, this study investigates how AI disclosure influences consumers' value perceptions (Entertainment, Irritation, Credibility, and Informativeness) and attitudes toward restaurants. The findings of this study can provide practical guidance for marketers by highlighting the potential negative consequences of using AI in advertisement creation.

Methods

This study employed an online survey with a single-factor between-subjects design (AI disclosure absent vs. present). The sample population consisted of individuals 18 years of age or older who reside in the United States. As a stimulus, we created an advertisement for a burger restaurant (in the absence of an AI disclosure condition) and added "AI-generated image" to the bottom of the ad (in the presence of an AI disclosure condition). After seeing the ad, participants answered the measurement scales adopted from previous studies.

Results/Discussion/Implication

AI disclosure has an impact on irritation only, with no significant effects on entertainment, credibility, or informativeness. To be specific, even though participants showed a more positive attitude toward the ad that included AI disclosure compared to those who received ads without AI disclosure, they expressed more irritation toward the ad. Regarding perceived value and attitude toward the ad, credibility and informativeness positively influence attitude, while irritation has a negative impact on attitude. However, the impact of entertainment was not significant. Finally, the positive impact of attitude on intention to visit the restaurant is also confirmed.

This study extends the theory from ad delivery to content creation, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumers' ad value perceptions in the context of AI disclosure. The findings of this study align with the advertising value framework, except that the impact of entertainment on perceived value was not supported. Moreover, we show that AI disclosure could lead to more favorable attitudes toward the ad.

This study demonstrates the advantages of AI disclosure in the restaurant advertisement context. Being honest about AI use seems to lead to ambivalent responses, such as more irritation, but more favorable attitudes toward the ad. Based on this, marketers should also consider the potential implications of AI disclosure in relation to the objectives of their advertising campaigns.

AI AS A REVIEW CURATOR: WHAT FORMAT DO CUSTOMERS PREFER?

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Introduction
The recent rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has prompted online review platforms to aggressively implement AI-driven features, such as AI-generated summaries of customer reviews. As inconsistent comments generated by various reviewers create a significant cognitive burden to process this wealth of information (Tsai et al., 2020), effective summarization has become increasingly critical in helping customers extract essential insights (Nielsen Norman Group, 2025). In consideration of the benefits, online platforms are providing their customers with AI summarization. Against this backdrop, the current research aims to explore answers to the research question, “What is the optimal configuration for AI-summarized reviews?” through a conjoint analysis to determine customers’ preferred format for AI-summarized reviews.

Methods
To address the proposed research question, we employed a Choice-based Conjoint (CBC) analysis, which consisted of four attributes (i.e., Filter, Format, Valence, Recommendations) and comprised a total of twelve levels. Data were collected via a crowdsourcing survey platform.

Results/Discussion/Implication
The analysis revealed that among the four attributes, Filter exerted the greatest influence on customer preference (52.4%), followed by Valence (34.5%), Format (9.3%), and Recommendations (3.8%). Among the filter types, the *Highest rating* was the most preferred, implying that users value information emphasizing the strength when viewing summarized reviews. Besides the highest rating, the *Helpful/Useful votes* filter was also positively evaluated, indicating that social proof influences preferences. The *Newest* filter showed a negative part-worth utility, suggesting that participants did not prefer summaries based solely on recency, potentially due to a perceived lack of representativeness. Regarding format, users preferred reviews written in complete sentences over those with keywords, which likely stems from the limitations of keyword-based summaries in conveying the broader context. Regarding Valence, users preferred summaries that distinguish between positive and negative content over those that do not. Finally, the presence or absence of Recommendations did not affect user preference, suggesting that additional information from recommendations may not add meaningful value.

The findings offer theoretical implications, as the study expands the domain of online review research by incorporating AI-summarized content as a meaningful object of userevaluation. Further, the study offers practical implications by identifying optimal configurations for presenting AI-generated summaries based on customer-shared reviews.

DIGITAL NUDGES FOR GREEN DINING: SHAPING SUSTAINABLE CHOICES ON FOOD DELIVERY PLATFORMS

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Introduction

The proliferation of third-party food delivery (TPFD) platforms has revolutionized food consumption but also intensified sustainability concerns due to packaging waste and delivery-related emissions. Recognizing these challenges, platforms have begun integrating eco-friendly features, yet little is known about how digital persuasion can effectively guide sustainable consumer choices in this context. Drawing on persuasion theory, the Cognitive–Affective Processing System (CAPS) framework, and Wilson's dichotomy of motivation, this research distinguishes between internally motivated strategies (e.g., reciprocity, commitment, scarcity) and externally influenced strategies (e.g., social proof, authority, liking). The purpose of this study is to examine how digital persuasion strategies influence consumers perceived persuasiveness and pro-environmental behavioral intentions on TPFD platforms. By doing so, this study tried to answer: (1) How do digital persuasion strategies affect consumers' pro-environmental behavioral intentions when using TPFD platforms? (2) What moderating roles do green self-identity and social norms play? (3) Which cognitive, affective, and contextual factors drive eco-friendly decisions?

Methods

After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, three empirical studies were conducted using U.S.-based adults recruited via *Prolific* who had ordered through TPFD apps within the past three months.

Study 1 tested internal motivation strategies (reciprocity, commitment, and scarcity), with green self-identity (GSI) as a moderator.

Study 2 examined external social influence strategies (social proof, authority, and liking), with social norms (SN) as a moderator.

Study 3 extended the framework through the Value–Attitude–Behavior (VAB) model, replacing attitude with perceived persuasiveness (PP) and examining the effects of biospheric and egoistic values on personal norms and behavioral intentions.

Participants viewed simulated in-app messages featuring persuasive cues and completed validated 7-point Likert scales measuring PP, norms, and behavioral intentions. Data were analyzed using SPSS 26, Hayes' PROCESS macros, and AMOS. Across all studies (total n = 696), mediation and moderation analyses assessed relationships among constructs.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Across three studies, reciprocity and social proof were the most persuasive strategies. Reciprocity and social proof significantly increased PP, which fully mediated its effect on sustainable dining intentions, while commitment, scarcity, authority, and liking showed negative effects. Besides, biospheric and egoistic values further strengthened PP, which together with norms that influencing pro-environmental intentions, confirming the modified Value-Attitude-Behavior model.

Theoretically, the study demonstrates that reciprocity and social proof enhance sustainable dining through perceived persuasiveness, extending the Cognitive-Affective Processing System framework to digital contexts. Practically, TPFD platforms should employ authentic eco-reward and social endorsement cues while avoiding manipulative scarcity or authority appeals. Transparent eco-labels and credible sustainability information can further strengthen consumer trust and long-term engagement with eco-friendly restaurants.

COLOR LIGHTNESS AS A SENSORY MARKETING CUE: IMPLICATIONS FOR GUEST DECISION-MAKING

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Introduction

Hotels are increasingly incorporating diverse colors, such as decorative pillows, into the white-dominant bedding look, suggesting that color functions as a relevant visual cue to signal comfort, improve quality, and enhance image. In investigating the color-comfort relationship, empirical research demonstrates that color lightness shapes perceptions of tactile comfort (Yazdanparast & Ketron, 2023). In hospitality services, however, comfort has mainly been studied through environmental factors (Borowski et al., 2022), with little focus on bedding, the core element for comfortable hotel stays. Moreover, most findings on the effects of color originate from manufacturing contexts (Yazdanparast & Ketron, 2023). Considering the fundamental differences between goods and hospitality service and the critical role of bedding in hotel experience, more academic attention is warranted.

Drawing upon Accessibility-Diagnosticity Theory, this study addresses this research paucity by answering two research questions: (1) How does the color lightness of hotel bedding influence guests' perceptions and behavioral intentions toward hotels? and (2) What mechanism explains the effects of color lightness on customers in hospitality service? This research sheds new light on how hotels can leverage color strategically to attract guests.

Methods

We conducted two studies to examine how the color lightness of hotel bedding influences guests' perceptions and behavioral intentions, as well as the underlying mechanisms driving these effects. Study 1 used a one-factor (light vs. dark) between-subjects experimental design to investigate the effect of color lightness on perceived comfort. Study 2 employed the same design to examine its impact on brand image and willingness to pay (WTP), as well as the serial mediation of brand image and perceived comfort between color lightness and WTP.

Results/Discussion/Implication

In Study 1, controlling for pillow importance, an ANCOVA revealed a significant effect of color lightness on perceived comfort. Dark-colored bedding led to significantly higher perceived comfort than light-colored bedding. In Study 2, controlling for pillow importance, a MANCOVA showed a significant effect of color lightness on brand image and WTP. Dark-colored bedding led to a higher brand image and WTP than light-colored bedding. A PROCESS Model 6 analysis further indicated a significant serial mediation: color lightness influenced brand image, which in turn affected perceived comfort, ultimately leading to changes in WTP.

This research contributes significantly to sensory marketing by demonstrating how color lightness shapes consumer perceptions at both the brand and experiential levels, influencing key behavioral intentions. Unlike studies on manufactured goods, where comfort derives from intrinsic product qualities, this study emphasizes the service context, where comfort results from service experience design and then results in revenue efficiency. The research findings offer practical insights for hotel operations and visual communication strategies. While white remains dominant in hotel amenities, incorporating darker neutral tones can signal professionalism and comfort, thereby enhancing guests' willingness to pay.

STAY SAFE, STAY LOYAL: THE ROLE OF PLATFORM SAFETY IN P2P ACCOMMODATIONS' BRAND LOYALTY

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Introduction

Recent literature has extensively examined various dimensions of platform safety in P2P accommodations, including privacy and security, service guarantees, host responsiveness, and booking/check-in procedures (Birinci et al., 2018; Ju et al., 2019; Liang et al., 2018; Mao & Lyu, 2017; Moon et al., 2019; Priporas et al., 2017; So et al., 2018; Tussyadiah & Zach, 2017; Yang et al., 2019). However, limited attention has been paid to potential remedies for platform safety concerns and how their effectiveness may vary across different tourist segments. Three key gaps remain. First, while financial incentives such as discounts and giveaways can help mitigate negative perceptions of accommodations (Han et al., 2024), the interactive effects of financial value and platform safety on consumer trust are still underexplored. Second, business and leisure travelers differ in how they perceive value, with business travelers generally being less cost-sensitive (Kashyap & Bojanic, 2000; Lockyer, 2005). Yet, little research has examined whether financial incentives can compensate for platform safety failures among business tourists in the P2P accommodation. Third, safety disruptions can increase feelings of vulnerability (Gao et al., 2021), yet the role of platform safety in shaping trust and long-term loyalty remains under researched. Addressing these gaps is essential for enhancing consumer trust and ensuring the sustainability of P2P accommodation platforms (Kumar et al., 2018).

Methods

Guided by organizational trust theory (Mayer et al., 1995), this study proposes a three-way moderated mediation model to examine how platform safety, financial value, and travel purpose interact to influence trust. Data were collected from 735 adults with experience using P2P accommodations via an online panel. Analyses were conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4, 7, 11). Results showed that trust mediated the relationship between platform safety and brand loyalty. Financial value and travel purpose moderate the direct impact of platform safety on trust and its indirect effects on brand loyalty. Platform safety had a stronger effect for leisure (vs. business) tourists who rated the accommodation offered lower financial value than those with high financial value.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study advances the understanding of how platform safety contributes to building customer trust and loyalty. Theoretically, it extends organizational trust theory by introducing new constructs and identifying key moderating factors. Practically, it provides platform managers with actionable insights to enhance customer trust and foster long-term brand loyalty toward the platform. Platform managers should emphasize cost-saving options for non-business travelers while highlighting premium safety features for business travelers. The study was limited in that it was conducted in United States, limited its cultural generalizability.

References are available upon request

CULTURAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CO-BRANDING IN LUXURY HOSPITALITY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER REVIEWS

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Introduction

Co-branding, a form of strategic alliance, enables luxury hotels to enhance market differentiation through collaborations that convey exclusivity, authenticity, and emotional value. In contemporary hospitality, cultural and sustainability partnerships have emerged as critical signals that shape guest perceptions and redefine luxury experiences. While prior research focuses on mass-market co-branding, limited attention has been paid to how luxury hospitality brands leverage cultural and sustainability cues to create social and emotional value. This study explores how such co-branding initiatives influence guest evaluations, perceived authenticity, and loyalty in luxury hotels through thematic analysis of customer reviews.

Methods

A purposive sample of 100 guest reviews was collected across 10 luxury hotels recognized for cultural or sustainability-driven initiatives (i.e., Park Hotel Tokyo, Bellagio Las Vegas, Park MGM Las Vegas, Atlantis The Royal, Six Senses Douro Valley, 1 Hotel Mayfair, Anantara Siam, The Silo Hotel, Torel Avantgarde, and The Joseph a Luxury Collection Hotel). Data were imported into NVivo for coding under major nodes including cultural co-branding, sustainability, service quality, luxury signals, and guest experience. Coding reliability was ensured through cross-checking and word frequency analysis. The study employs Signaling Theory, Selective Attention Theory, and Cue Utilization Theory to interpret how guests perceive and process co-branding cues in high-involvement service contexts.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings reveal that cultural co-branding (art installations, concert residencies) and sustainability initiatives (biophilic design, F&B sourcing) are dominant themes shaping perceptions of modern luxury. Guests interpret these cues as authentic and emotionally engaging, overshadowing traditional luxury markers such as design or exclusivity. Hotels like Six Senses and 1 Hotel Mayfair exemplify credible sustainability-driven branding, while properties like Bellagio and Park MGM demonstrate the experiential impact of cultural immersion. However, spectacle-driven branding without consistent service quality risks perceived inauthenticity and value dilution.

The results support Signaling Theory by showing that co-branding cues reduce uncertainty and enhance perceived quality; Selective Attention Theory by highlighting guests' focus on standout cultural or sustainability features; and Cue Utilization Theory by confirming that extrinsic cues drive perceived authenticity when intrinsic features are similar.

Managerial implications emphasize that co-branding should be a long-term identity strategy embedded in operations and staff culture. As luxury evolves toward cultural and ecological authenticity, hotels that integrate these values holistically will enhance loyalty and competitive differentiation.

References available upon request

NAVIGATING CSR COMMUNICATION: A MODERATED MODERATED MEDIATION OF CSR INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY, ESG DISCLOSURE, AND PERCEIVED DISCREPANCY ON HOTEL BRAND LOYALTY THROUGH COGNITIVE PROCESSING ROUTES

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Introduction
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a strategic priority in the hospitality industry, aiming to enhance brand loyalty (Syed, 2017). However, CSR effectiveness depends not only on content, but also on how CSR information is accessed, cognitively processed, verified through credible signals, and interpreted in terms of perceived discrepancy. As such, explaining these cognitive processing mechanisms requires an integrative, multi-theoretical lens. To explain such processes, Information foraging theory posits that individuals seek to maximize informational gain while minimizing cognitive effort, highlighting accessibility in engaging with CSR (Pirolli & Card, 1999). Building on this, the elaboration likelihood model distinguishes between central and peripheral cognitive routes, clarifying how accessible CSR information prompts systematic or heuristic processing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Additionally, signaling theory suggests that ESG disclosure functions as a credible signal, reducing information asymmetry and strengthening trust (Spence, 1978). Complementing these insights, schema congruity theory highlights that perceived discrepancies between CSR and ESG information trigger deeper elaboration, as consumers attempt to reconcile inconsistencies (Mandler, 1984). The purpose of this study is to address these gaps by investigating how CSR information accessibility influences hotel brand loyalty, considering the underlying cognitive mechanisms, grounded in information foraging theory, elaboration likelihood model, signaling theory, and schema congruity theory.

Methods
Four-study experimental studies were conducted using U.S. consumer samples recruited via Prolific (Study 1: n = 88; Study 2: n = 349; Study 3: n = 449; Study 4: n = 612) (Hayes, 2018). CSR information accessibility was manipulated as easy vs. difficult. Study 1 tested the main effect of CSR information accessibility on brand loyalty. Study 2 assessed mediation via central and peripheral elaboration (PROCESS Model 4). Study 3 examined ESG disclosure as a moderator of direct and indirect effects (PROCESS Model 15). Study 4 investigated the joint moderating role of ESG disclosure and perceived discrepancy (PROCESS Model 19).

Results/Discussion/Implication
Study 1 confirmed that accessible CSR information increases brand loyalty. Study 2 demonstrated full mediation through central and peripheral routes, indicating that accessibility promotes cognitive elaboration. Study 3 showed no moderated mediation by ESG disclosure alone; however, Study 4 revealed significant moderated moderated mediation. The effects of CSR accessibility on loyalty, both direct and indirect, depended jointly on ESG disclosure and perceived discrepancy. Specifically, CSR accessibility without ESG disclosure reduced brand loyalty under low perceived discrepancy, whereas with ESG disclosure, perceived discrepancies triggered deeper elaboration, enhancing the effect of CSR accessibility on loyalty. These findings advance understanding by conceptualizing CSR accessibility as a cognitive trigger that interacts with credibility and consistency cues. Practically, hospitality managers should ensure CSR information is easily accessible, maintain transparent ESG reporting, and actively manage discrepancies between CSR claims and ESG information to strengthen customer loyalty.

FEELING THE HEALING OF HOSPITALITY: THE ROLES OF INTERPERSONAL MINDFULNESS AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE THROUGH A BROADEN-AND-BUILD THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Modern tourists increasingly seek experiences that restore psychological balance and foster social well-being, positioning hospitality as a domain of emotional healing rather than mere service delivery. Drawing on the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), this research examines how interpersonal mindfulness—a mindful awareness of others' emotions and cues—enhances guests' perceptions of customer-based service team (CBST) emotional competence. We define CBST emotional competence as a hotel service team's collective ability to recognize, understand, and regulate guest emotions. We propose that interpersonal mindfulness increases perceived emotional competence, which, in turn, enhances the experience of hospitality and generates restorative outcomes such as reduced loneliness and heightened social well-being. Furthermore, we test whether age, social expressiveness, and social sensitivity moderate these relationships.

Methods

Data were collected from 326 tourists visiting five-star hotels in Dubai. Using established multi-item scales, we measured interpersonal mindfulness (Khoury et al., 2022), CBST emotional competence (Delcourt et al., 2016), hospitality experience (Pijls et al., 2017), loneliness (Kim et al., 2005), social well-being (Feng et al., 2023), social expressiveness, and social sensitivity (Oldmeadow et al., 2013). Variance-based structural equation modeling (VB-SEM) with 10,000 bootstrap samples tested the structural and moderating effects. Reliability and validity were verified through Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$, AVE > 0.50, and HTMT < 0.85.

Results/Discussion/Implications

Interpersonal mindfulness positively predicted perceived CBST emotional competence ($\beta = 0.269$, $p < .001$), which strongly predicted the experience of hospitality ($\beta = 0.623$, $p < .001$). Hospitality experience further increased social well-being ($\beta = 0.521$, $p < .001$) but did not significantly reduce loneliness. Age strengthened the link between mindfulness and emotional competence ($\beta = 0.106$, $p < .01$), indicating that younger guests benefit more from mindful awareness when evaluating service teams. Social sensitivity moderated the hospitality-to-well-being relationship ($\beta = -0.164$, $p < .01$); highly sensitive guests experienced weaker well-being gains, likely due to over-interpretation of social cues or self-consciousness.

The findings extend the broaden-and-build framework to hospitality, demonstrating that mindful social awareness promotes recognition of socio-emotional cues, enabling guests to perceive hospitality as emotionally competent and restorative. Practically, hotels can enhance guest well-being by training service teams in mindfulness and emotional competence, fostering empathic communication and attunement to guest emotions. Tailoring approaches for age or sensitivity differences can further optimize the healing potential of hospitality experiences.

References are available upon request

WHEN ROBOT GENDERING MEETS SERVICE FAILURES: SHOULD ROBOTS HAVE A GENDER IN SERVICE ROLES?

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Introduction

Gendered service robots have been drawing increasing academic attention in recent years (Huang et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2025; Seo, 2022). Robot gender significantly influences consumers' perceptions of robots (Eyssel & Hegel, 2012). In the context of a robot service failure, prior studies have mainly investigated how robot features such as gender, anthropomorphism level, cute design, and humor impact customer responses (Fan et al., 2020; Lv et al., 2021; Song et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2022). However, existing literature does not clearly examine the underlying psychological mechanism of the robot gender effect or its impact on consumer behavioral responses. Drawing on gender schema theory, role congruity theory, this study aims to examine the effect of gender (in)congruity between customers and service robots on consumer responses to a service failure. Specifically, it addresses three research questions: (1) How does robot gender attribute influence customers' perceptions of human-likeness and their responses following a service failure? (2) How does gender (in)congruity between robots and customers influence customers' reactions to service failures? and (3) what is the underlying psychological mechanism through which robot-customer gender dynamics influence customers' post-failure responses?

Methods

An experimental research design was employed in this research. In Study 1, a one-factor between-subjects experiment was conducted to test the effect of robot gendering (male vs. female vs. non-gendered) in a hotel check-in setting. Study 2 employed a 3 (robot gender: male vs. female vs. non-gendered) ×2 (robot anthropomorphism: humanoid vs. non-humanoid) between-subject design to test the interaction effect of humanoid design and robot gendering on customer responses in a restaurant service failure context. Study 3 focuses on examining the effect of consumer-robot gender congruity on post-failure responses and the moderating role of consumer gender in a restaurant dining context.

Results/discussion/implication

This study reveals that customers are more tolerant of gendered robots than non-gendered ones in service failure encounters, and the indirect effect of robot gendering on post-failure responses is stronger for humanoid robots than for non-humanoid robots. Furthermore, consumers show fewer negative responses for service failures from opposite-gender robots, with such effects being more pronounced among male customers than female customers. This study contributes to the literature on gender stereotyping and robot service failure by addressing how gender (in)congruity between consumers and service robots influences consumers' post-failure responses in the hospitality context. Practically, service providers may consider incorporating gender identity cues into service robots to more effectively handle robot service failures. It is also recommended to employ opposite-gendered robots for service encounters to help mitigate negative customer responses.

WHEN REPUTATION SUBSTITUTES TRANSPARENCY: TRUST AND LOYALTY FORMATION IN IRAN-IRAQ MEDICAL TOURISM

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Introduction

Medical tourism has grown rapidly in culturally proximate corridors such as Iran-Iraq, yet cross-border patients face significant information asymmetry regarding quality and safety, prompting hospitals to use quality-disclosure tools to build trust and reduce uncertainty. Trust, perceived quality, and cultural competence strongly shape loyalty in medical-tourism settings, but existing research has not clarified how quality disclosure interacts with hospital reputation, which may either reinforce or substitute for transparency depending on patients' prior knowledge and experience.

Drawing on service transparency, signaling theory, and patient-trust research, this study proposes that quality disclosure positively influences trust and loyalty, reputation exerts direct effects, and strong reputation may weaken the impact of disclosure, with these patterns differing between first-time and repeat medical tourists. This framework reflects regional conditions in the Iran-Iraq corridor and motivates an integrated model linking disclosure, trust, loyalty, reputation, and patient experience, tested in the following Methods section.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey to examine how quality disclosure shapes trust and loyalty among Iraqi medical tourists in Iran, with hospital reputation modeled as both a predictor and moderator. Data were collected from 331 patients across major medical centers in Tehran, Mashhad, and Qom using a structured questionnaire administered by bilingual field researchers.

Structural equation modeling was used to test the direct, mediating, and moderating relationships in the proposed model. All constructs, quality disclosure, trust, loyalty, and reputation, were measured with validated multi-item Likert scales. Reliability and validity were assessed through confirmatory factor analysis, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, and results demonstrated strong psychometric soundness of the measurement model.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results show that quality disclosure significantly increases trust and loyalty, with trust partially mediating this relationship, highlighting transparency as a critical mechanism for reducing uncertainty among medical tourists. Hospital reputation also directly strengthens trust and loyalty, but moderation tests reveal that strong reputation reduces the marginal effect of disclosure, indicating a substitution pattern in which reputational signals can overshadow formal transparency. Multi-group analysis further shows that first-time visitors rely more heavily on disclosure, while repeat visitors depend more on reputation, underscoring the need for differentiated communication strategies.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that disclosure, trust, loyalty, and reputation operate as interconnected drivers of patient behavior, advancing theory by integrating mediation, moderation, and experiential differences while offering practical guidance for hospitals seeking to attract and retain international patients.

SHOULD RESTAURANTS ADOPT VIRTUAL WAITING? HOW PERCEIVED RATINGS, VISIT TYPES, AND SURROUNDING ATTRACTIVENESS MATTER

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Introduction
While technology has been widely adopted in the restaurant industry to enhance operational efficiency and customer experience, its true effectiveness remains ambiguous. Despite 83% of restaurant owners integrating technological solutions, only 28% reported improved profitability (NRA, 2025). This discrepancy suggests that many adoptions are driven by institutional pressure and herd behavior rather than strategic or contextual fit, often resulting in ineffective or reversed implementations (Fantozzi, 2025). While Virtual Queue Management System (VQMS) exemplifies this trend, offering operational convenience, the psychological and contextual processes that shape customers' perceptions of waiting has been underexplored. This study reconceptualizes VQMS as a psychological mechanism shaping customers' value justification for waiting. Study 1 develops a framework explaining how virtual waiting affects perceived waiting costs and perceived benefits via restaurant ratings that form perceived waiting worthwhileness. Study 2 examines contextual variation by comparing how daily versus vacation customers recalibrate their perceived cost threshold when using virtual waiting. Study 3 further explores person–context interactions by investigating how exploratory tendencies and location attractiveness moderate the effect of virtual waiting on reducing perceived waiting costs.

Methods
Study 1 employed a 2×2 scenario-based experimental design. Each scenario manipulated waiting type (physical vs. virtual) and restaurant rating (high: 4.6 vs. low: 2.5). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions and completed a questionnaire assessing their perceptions of the waiting situation. Study 2 employed a 2×2×2 experimental design manipulating waiting type (physical vs. virtual), visit type (daily vs. vacation), and restaurant rating (high vs. low), using the same questionnaire as Study 1. Study 3 focused on a daily context and manipulated only waiting type (physical vs. virtual). Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions and completed the same questionnaire as in Studies 1 and 2, with an additional measure of exploratory tendency. To measure location attractiveness, the Location Quotient (LQ) 71 index (e.g., entertainment density) was used for each respondent's location. All three studies collected data via Prolific (Study 1: n = 423; Study 2: n = 438; Study 3: n = 300).

Results/Discussion/Implication
Regression results showed that virtual waiting significantly reduced perceived waiting costs (β=–.15, t=–3.17, p<.001), while higher restaurant ratings increased perceived benefits (β=.43, t=9.82, p<.001). Moderation analyses revealed for vacation customers, virtual waiting consistently and significantly reduced perceived waiting costs across all levels of perceived restaurant rating. For daily customers, the benefit of virtual waiting was significant only when the perceived rating was low (b = –0.36, p = .05 at a rating of 2.0) and became nonsignificant at moderate or high levels of rating (p > .05). A three-way interaction (PROCESS Model 3) showed stronger effects among individuals with high exploratory tendencies in highly entertainment-dense areas (Z=1.42; b=1.14, p<.001) than in moderately dense areas (Z=1.00; b=0.41, p=.03). Collectively, these studies provide a multi-layered understanding of how technological, contextual, and psychological factors jointly shape customers' perceptions of waiting in technology-mediated restaurant experiences.

SIZE IN CALM, STRUCTURE IN CRISIS: EWOM NETWORKS AND RESTAURANT OUTCOMES

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Introduction

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has been widely recognized as a critical driver of consumer decision-making and firm performance in restaurants. However, most existing research treats reviews as isolated, independent observations rather than as elements of an interconnected social system, and primarily focuses on review-level attributes such as volume, valence, and variance. To bridge this gap, this study reconceptualizes eWOM as a form of social capital embedded in reviewer networks and examines how network strength—measured by size, density, cohesion, and centrality—affects restaurant performance and resilience. By highlighting the relational dynamics of eWOM, the study advances theory on eWOM as social capital and offers practical guidance for managers seeking to strengthen online communities and enhance recovery from market disruptions.

Methods

This study used two primary datasets: the Yelp Open Dataset and SafeGraph point-of-interest (POI) data. The Yelp Open Dataset provided detailed records of user activities, business profiles, and review histories, while SafeGraph POI data provided monthly aggregated consumer spending information, including total spending, number of transactions, and number of unique customers, based on credit and debit card transactions at specific POIs. The merged panel comprised 627 restaurants in Florida from January 2019 to January 2022. Restaurant-level network strength was measured using four metrics—size, density, cohesion, and centrality. To test the effect of eWOM networks on restaurant performance and resilience, the study employed fixed-effects panel regressions. Restaurant performance was assessed by total spending, transaction volume, and customer counts, while resilience was measured by cumulative recovery between April 2020 and March 2021.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results reveal that network size consistently enhances both performance and resilience, whereas structural features—particularly cohesion and centrality—are critical only during crises. These findings highlight a sharp contrast between normal and crisis contexts. Under stable market conditions, the scale of participation serves as the dominant driver of restaurant performance, while structural characteristics emerge as critical during shocks, reflecting their importance in reinforcing credibility, diffusing demand within tightly connected groups, and thereby accelerating recovery.

This study reframes eWOM from a set of messages to a configuration of ties, demonstrating that the economic value of network properties is contingent on market conditions. Managerially, the results recommend state-contingent eWOM strategies—expanding reviewer reach during stable periods and fostering cohesive, influencer-centered communities during shocks.

WHEN AI IS TALKING LIKE A FRIEND: THE ROLE OF AI LANGUAGE STYLE AND LANGUAGE–PRODUCT FIT ON CONSUMER RESPONSES

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Introduction
Artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly shapes hospitality decision-making, yet limited research explains how an AI's language style (casual vs. formal) influences consumer behavior. Drawing on Information Processing Theory and Congruency Theory, this study introduces AI language–product fit: the alignment between an AI's tone and the formality of the service context. High fit is expected to increase processing fluency, relational warmth, and persuasive impact. This research examines how fit affects perceived intimacy, AI–user trust, purchase intention, and impulsive buying across dining and travel settings.

Methods
Two online scenario experiments were conducted with U.S. adults recruited from Prolific (N = 182 per study). In each study, participants read an AI recommendation using either a casual or formal tone paired with a casual or formal service context (restaurant or travel destination). They then completed established scales measuring perceived intimacy, AI–user trust, purchase intention, and impulsive buying intention. Manipulation checks confirmed correct perception of AI tone and context. Analyses included ANOVA and mediation tests using PROCESS to examine direct and indirect effects of language–product fit.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Across both studies, fit consistently predicted stronger consumer responses than tone alone. High language–product fit increased purchase and impulsive buying intentions across dining and travel contexts. In the dining setting, fit influenced purchase intention both directly and indirectly: fit enhanced intimacy, which increased trust, and both variables predicted purchase intentions. A sequential pathway (intimacy → trust → purchase intention) also emerged.
Impulsive buying was driven mainly by the direct effect of fit.

In travel, purchase intention was fully mediated by intimacy and trust, while impulsive buying again showed only a direct effect. These results reveal two mechanisms: a reflective relational pathway driving deliberate purchases and a fast, affective pathway underlying impulsive actions.

Theoretically, this study advances congruency and information-processing perspectives by demonstrating that AI persuasion depends on tone–context alignment. Practically, results highlight the need for adaptive AI communication design. Casual language enhances warmth and engagement in informal dining or leisure travel settings, whereas formal language strengthens credibility in luxury or high-involvement services. Hospitality managers should calibrate AI tone to service context to support trust, improve guest experience, and increase conversion outcomes.

NOT ALL NEGATIVE REVIEWS ARE EQUAL: PATHWAY-SPECIFIC INSIGHTS INTO CONSUMER REVENGE

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Introduction

Consumer revenge behavior in digital contexts has become a critical issue as online platforms enable consumers to retaliate widely against service failures (Obeidat et al., 2018). Revenge is a deliberate response to perceived injustice, characterized by emotional intensity and intent to harm (Aquino et al., 2006; Grégoire et al., 2010). Despite increasing study, limited research has clarified the psychological mechanisms driving online revenge or its impact on brand equity, and how these mechanisms manifest in specific consumer behaviors (Wilson et al., 2022). This study examines Yelp reviews to identify distinct revenge behaviors and underlying psychological pathways, addressing these gaps. This study asks how consumers' emotional and cognitive responses to service failures translate into different forms of online revenge, and how understanding these patterns can help firms respond more effectively.

Methods

We analyzed nearly 7 million Yelp reviews using a semi-supervised Large Language Model (LLM) classification approach. Starting from a small set of seed keywords related to revenge, we expanded to a lexicon of 300+ terms capturing diverse expressions of retaliation. Our model classified reviews into revenge behavior categories, enabling scalable analysis of emotional, reputational, and legal retaliation patterns.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings reveal three key consumer groups: Direct Confronters, who express intense anger and demand immediate resolution aligning with Affective Events Theory; Reputational Attackers, who justify public criticisms as protective actions consistent with Neutralization Theory; and Legal Escalators, who pursue formal complaints reflecting rational-emotive motives (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Wilson et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022). This classification advances beyond descriptive typologies, demonstrating how distinct affective and cognitive processes drive different revenge behaviors. Managers should adopt pathway-specific recovery strategies to mitigate brand damage proactively. This study integrates psychological theories with AI-enabled text mining to clarify the complex mechanisms of consumer revenge online. By identifying distinct revenge pathways, it informs both theoretical understanding and practical interventions for service recovery. Limitations include exclusion of cultural variables, which future research should explore. Early detection and response tailoring can enhance firm resilience in the digital marketplace.

CUSTOMER-BASED INNOVATION ADVANTAGE: LINKING PERCEIVED INNOVATIVENESS TO FIRM PERFORMANCE

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Introduction

Service innovation has been receiving attention in hospitality and tourism management (So & Li, 2023; So et al., 2023; Keiningham et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2025). With the advancement of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies (Naeem et al., 2024), firms must continuously innovate to attract customers and enhance the value of their offerings (Sorescu & Schreier, 2021; Rubera & Kirca, 2012). Service innovation is defined as the improvement through new or enhanced services, delivery methods, or business models, which enhances customer satisfaction, firm performance, and competitiveness (Verma et al., 2008; Toivonen & Tuominen, 2009). Understanding the antecedents and outcomes of innovation is important for maintaining long-term success in this rapidly evolving industry.

As a human-centered field, customers' perceptions of firm innovativeness play a crucial role in shaping competitiveness. However, prior studies largely focus on organizational perspectives, limited research measures innovation effectiveness from the customer's perspective (Park et al., 2023; Shin & Perdue, 2022; So et al., 2023). Therefore, this study examines how customer perceived firm innovativeness influences marketing outcomes and firm performance, highlighting innovation's role in value creation and customer engagement.

Methods

This study used a quantitative survey approach to collect customers' perceived firm innovativeness (CPFI) and customer-related marketing variables (e.g., customer perceived brand authenticity, emotional brand attachment, competitive advantage, etc.), and then linking them with secondary financial data. We selected 30 publicly listed hospitality and tourism firms through S&P Capital IQ, and used Return on Assets (ROA) as the dependent variable, firm performance.

The survey was collected through online platforms, MTurk and Prolific. 150 pilot tests and 900 formal responses were received. All the measurement scales were adapted from previous research. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS 4 for descriptive statistics, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), and regression analysis.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Reliability and validity of constructs were tested for the measurement model. Survey results validated CPFI as a higher-order construct based on five lower-order constructs: product, technology-based service, experiential, promotional, and social innovativeness. We then assessed R^2, Q^2, and path significance. All R^2 and Q^2 values exceeded 0.8. Path coefficients and T values, estimated via bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples), confirmed predictive relevance. All hypothesized paths (H1–H5) were statistically significant. Regression analyses examined the relationship between consumer-related marketing variables and firm performance. Among the five consumer-related marketing variables, Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) was found to have a significant positive impact on firm performance.

This study offers theoretical and practical insights into how customers' perceptions of firm innovativeness, reflected in multiple dimensions, influence customer-related marketing outcomes and firm performance.

References are available upon request

THE ROLE OF SERVICESCAPE CUES ON CUSTOMERS' MOTIVATION TO TIP BEFORE SERVICE IN FAST-CASUAL RESTAURANTS

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Introduction

Tipping has long served as an important economic and social mechanism in the hospitality industry, traditionally offered by customers as a discretionary reward for satisfactory service rendered (Hsiao et al., 2022). Despite its growing prevalence, pre-service tipping remains
underexplored in hospitality scholarship (Fan et al., 2024), especially in contexts where tipping occurs before the service experience fully unfolds. To address these gaps, the current research draws the from Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and servicescape theory (Bitner, 1992) to answer the question: "What service environment elements cause customers to experience specific emotions that lead them to tip before receiving service?"

H1-H2: *Physical environment and personnel service positively influence customer gratitude.*
H3: *Customer gratitude has a positive influence on motivation to tip.*
H4: *Customer gratitude mediates the relationship between a) physical environment, b) personnel service, and motivation to tip.*

Methods

A questionnaire using a scenario-based design was designed on Qualtrics and distributed to participants via Prolific, yielding a total of 306 responses retained for further analysis. To ensure that responses reflected realistic tipping behavior, participants who indicated that they did not consider tipping appropriate in fast-casual restaurants were excluded. Data was analyzed using SmartPLS.

Discussion and Implications

The results suggest that early encounters with the service environment (physical environment, personnel service) function as affective events that elicit emotional responses with downstream behavioral consequences. These results align with previous research which showed that ambient conditions, layout, and symbolic cues shape customer satisfaction, pleasure, and approach behaviors (Jang et al., 2011). Furthermore, the effect of personnel service on tipping motivation was fully mediated by gratitude, suggesting that employee demeanor alone does not directly drive tipping unless it is appraised as benevolent and worthy of appreciation. The theoretical contributions of this study extend beyond the restaurant sector, as pre-service payment and tipping become increasingly common in a variety of service contexts such as coffee shops, ride-sharing platforms, and even salons or spas that request digital tips during pre-payment. Managers may also consider embedding micro-moments of care into the service script.

References are available upon request

Completed Research:

Consumer Behavior, Tourism

TOASTING THE EXPERIENCE: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION OF EXPERIENCESCAPE, CUSTOMER, INSPIRATION, AND DRINK STATUS IN CRAFT BEER TOURISM

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Introduction
Craft beer tourism (CBT) has become an increasingly prominent segment of cultural and experiential tourism, integrating brewing craftsmanship, storytelling, and community-based participation (Carrillo & Barbieri, 2025; Murray & Kline, 2015). Unlike mass brewery tours, it emphasizes authenticity, sensory engagement, and local identity, contributing to a global market valued at over USD 10.58 billion (Grand Review Research, 2025). At the same time, immersive experience—involving physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement—has emerged as a core construct for understanding meaningful tourism experiences (Han et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2023). However, current research on CBT remains fragmented. First, existing studies lack an integrated framework explaining how experiencescape elements—both physical and interpersonal—jointly shape immersion. Second, while drinking status is central to alcohol-related tourism, its moderating influence on emotional immersion and subsequent behavioral intention remains underexplored (Sayette, 2017). To address these gaps, this study integrates Customer Inspiration Theory (Böttger et al., 2017) and the experiencescape framework (Pizam & Tasci, 2019) to develop a multidimensional model of CBT immersion.

Methods
A mixed-methods design was adopted. Study 1 conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with brewers, taproom owners, and tourists to identify core dimensions of CBT immersion and contextualize the moderating role of drinking status. Study 2 surveyed 307 respondents recruited via Prolific, applying PLS-SEM, Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), and Artificial Neural Network (ANN) for cross-method validation. The research tested how physical and interpersonal experiencescapes influence the four immersion dimensions and how emotional immersion predicts repurchase intention.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Findings reveal four immersion dimensions—environmental, sensory, interactive, and narrative–cognitive—that jointly contribute to emotional immersion, a higher-order psychological state of delight, belonging, and attachment (Visch et al., 2010; Lim et al., 2020). Both physical and interpersonal experiencescapes significantly influenced immersion dimensions (βs = 0.318–0.554), and emotional immersion strongly predicted repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.822$). Drinking status moderated these paths: tipsy participants exhibited greater sensory sensitivity and emotional openness, whereas heavy intoxication reduced immersion (Sayette, 2017). IPMA and ANN confirmed sensory and interactive immersion as the strongest predictors of emotional engagement. Theoretically, this study advances immersion theory by linking experiencescape and inspiration into a two-stage inspired-to and inspired-by model and introducing drinking status as a contextual moderator. Practically, it provides strategies for designing multisensory, participatory, and emotionally resonant CBT experiences—such as guided tastings, storytelling, and moderate alcohol management—to enhance tourists' emotional connection, safety, and loyalty (Nelson, 2024; Zhou & Wang, 2024).

DETERRENT FAKE ONLINE REVIEWS BEFORE TRAVEL: THE ANGLE FROM WINE TOURISTS

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Introduction

Online reviews have become a vital source of information for travelers forming pre-trip expectations, particularly within wine tourism (Brochado et al., 2021). Prior studies have examined online reviews as managerial tools for understanding visitor satisfaction, value creation, and service improvement (Gao et al., 2022; Shin & Nicolau, 2022). However, a critical gap remains in understanding how wine tourists cognitively process online review information before travel. Specifically, existing research rarely explains how different review characteristics affect perceived usefulness and how this perception shapes tourists' pre-trip expectations. Furthermore, while deceptive or fake online reviews have been recognized as a growing threat to consumer trust, their role in impacting how tourists adopt information and form their expectations received limited empirical attention. By extending the Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Sussman & Siegal, 2003), this study therefore addresses these gaps by posing three research questions: (1) How do review volume, quality, and source credibility influence perceived usefulness and subsequently expectation formation? (2) Does tourist expertise moderate the relationships between review characteristics and perceived usefulness? and (3) To what extent do tourists' concerns about fake reviews weaken the adoption of online information during pre-trip planning?

Methods

A questionnaire survey was conducted with 284 U.S.-based wine tourists (152 females and 130 males) who had visited at least one winery within the past year. Over half of participants (57%) self-reported that Google Review is the major resource where they read reviews. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test hypothesized mediation and moderation effects, with bootstrapping applied to confirm indirect pathways.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results revealed that perceived usefulness fully mediated the effects of review volume and source credibility on pre-trip expectations and partially mediated the effect of review quality. Higher review volume and credible sources enhanced tourists' perceptions of usefulness, which in turn strengthened their expectations about forthcoming experiences. Additionally, taking tourists' concerns about fake reviews into account, it is demonstrated that skepticism can undermine the impact of otherwise informative or persuasive reviews. Boundary effects of tourist expertise are found that novice tourists tend more to judge the usefulness based on reviews' quality than those knowledge tourists. These findings advance theoretical understanding of information processing in tourism by integrating the moderating role of misinformation concern into the Information Adoption Model. Rather than rigidly adhere to investigate what characteristics of information can influence the way which tourists adopt information, the study pioneers to emphasize how misinformation can prevent tourists adopting information. Practically, the study suggests that destination marketers should prioritize authenticity and transparency in online communication. Instead of focusing on the prevalence of reviews, the managers should realize either positive or negative reviews could be considered false information, which eventually lower down the pre-trip expectations. Technologies like blockchain are recommended to utilized, which could effectively enhance the trustworthiness of the online reviews.

COMPARING VALUE CO-CREATION DYNAMICS IN RIDE-HAILING AND PEER-TO-PEER CAR-SHARING: AN ACTOR-NETWORK AND STRUCTURAL TOPIC MODELING APPROACH

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Introduction

The sharing economy has transformed urban mobility and tourism, with ride-hailing and P2P car-sharing emerging as major service models. Ride-hailing platforms are centrally managed, while P2P systems rely on decentralized peer interactions (Khodayari et al., 2025; Tian et al., 2024). Despite their growing significance in mobility and tourism, limited research directly compares how value is co-created and evaluated across these two models. Research also largely relies on operationalizes motives for car sharing through surveys with predefined reasons such as cost, convenience, environmental concern (Nansubuga & Kowalkowski, 2021). To address this gap, this study integrates value co-creation theory and Actor-Network Theory to better explain how governance structures shape value, satisfaction, and service outcomes in car-sharing ecosystems.

Value co-creation views values as emerging from interactions among users, providers, and platforms (Altinay & Taheri, 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2008), while ANT extends this perspective by recognizing human and non-human entities (e.g., technologies) as influential actors in socio-technical networks (Latour, 2005). Together, value co-creation and ANT reveal how technological and human actors jointly produce or disrupt value in car-sharing ecosystems, particularly during service failures that expose network fragility.

The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) to identify value-related themes that emerge across ride-hailing and P2P platforms; (2) to governance structures shape the salience of these themes; and (3) to evaluate how these themes relate to user satisfaction as reflected in star ratings.

Methods

To achieve these objectives, we employ Structural Topic Modeling (STM) on a large data set of user-generated online reviews. STM identifies latent themes from unstructured textual data and estimates how often each theme appears across documents (topic prevalence) as a function of document-level covariates, such as platform type (P2P vs. ride-hailing) (D'Acunto et al., 2024; Mariani & Borghi, 2020; Roberts et al., 2019; Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2018).

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results indicate that while convenience and efficiency are valued across both models, governance structures shape how users articulate positive and negative experiences. Ride-hailing reviews highlight operational consistency such as drivers, applications, and time-related concerns, whereas P2P reviews reflect more polarized experiences driven by trust, host interactions, and dispute resolution.

Building on the theoretical integration, we demonstrate that non-human actors (i.e., applications, algorithms, and vehicles) together with human-based mechanisms such as host-guest interactions and personalized social ties, constitute core value creators and shape car-sharing service experiences. Also, our findings indicate that P2P platforms should strengthen trust-based interactions and vehicle quality, while ride-hailing services would benefit from immediate compensation and automated refund systems.

References are available upon request

TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEYS IN VOLUNTEER TOURISM: A GROUNDED THEORY AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEARNING, IDENTITY, AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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Introduction

Volunteer tourism (VT) has grown rapidly as an alternative to mass tourism, blending travel with service activities that contribute to poverty alleviation, environmental restoration, and community development (Hallmann & Zehrer, 2016; Garrison, 2015; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). Its transformational nature aligns closely with Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), a ten-step framework that explains how individuals shift their worldviews through reflection, skill development, dialogue, and new role adoption (Cranton, 2016; Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Lo & Lee, 2011). However, despite VT's strong potential to foster profound personal change, research applying TLT remains limited, often emphasizing post-experience outcomes while neglecting the sequential processes through which transformation unfolds (Brown, 2005; Coghlan & Weiler, 2018; Knollenberg et al., 2014; Soulard et al., 2021). To address this gap, the purpose of this study is to examine how individuals experience and interpret TLT's ten stages as they transition from tourists to volunteers.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design that integrated Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry to capture how volunteer tourists experience transformative learning, allowing for both inductive theme development and rich, identity-focused storytelling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Fourteen participants were recruited through purposive sampling via Prolific, social media, and email, meeting criteria of being U.S. adults who visited their destination before volunteering (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Semi-structured virtual interviews (~60 minutes) were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. Data were analyzed in NVivo using constant-comparative methods (Charmaz, 2014), progressing from open coding to axial coding, aligned with Mezirow's ten phases, and finally, to selective coding, which integrated themes into a cohesive model of transformation.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings revealed five overarching categories of transformative learning: 1) Trigger and Internal Shift, 2) Interpersonal Growth, 3)Skill-Building and Action, 4)Integration, and 5) Transformational Outcomes, each reflecting stages of Mezirow's TLT. Participants described disorienting dilemmas involving poverty or cultural dissonance, followed by reflective dialogue that fostered interpersonal connection and exploration of continued involvement. As they built confidence, skills, and plans for volunteering, they enacted new roles and integrated revised perspectives into their daily lives. Ultimately, participants experienced lasting transformations in their identity, emotions, cognition, and social interactions, often shifting from "tourist" to "global citizen" with renewed purpose and a long-term commitment to social action. This study extends TLT by streamlining the ten stages into a clearer, sequential model that shows how disruption, reflection, action, and integration unfold in VT. Theoretically, the findings demonstrate that transformation involves interconnected shifts in cognitive, emotional, relational, and identity aspects. Practically, the results suggest VT programs should design immersive experiences, structured reflection, and post-trip support to strengthen and sustain transformative outcomes.

References are available upon request

DO TOURIST CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DESTINATIONS MATTER?

DESTINATION ATTRIBUTE SENTIMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON TOURIST ARRIVALS

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Introduction
Destination image influences tourists' visit intentions (Liu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024), and user-generated content (UGC), such as online reviews, increasingly shapes this image. Prior research shows that destination images evolve from designative attributes such as natural and cultural resources (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1993), which enhance both destination image (Eid et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2018) and behavioral intentions (Basaran, 2016; Woosnam et al., 2020). However, few studies have empirically examined how online sentiment toward these attributes affects actual tourism demand (Song et al., 2023). Addressing this gap, the present study analyzes Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan's major destinations, to explore the impact of destination attribute sentiment on international arrivals. Specifically, it examines (1) which designative attributes are most salient in online reviews and (2) whether attribute-level sentiment predicts international tourist arrivals, thereby linking tourists' perceptions with real-world outcomes.

Methods
This study analyzed TripAdvisor reviews from March 2010 to May 2025 (182 months) for Tokyo and Kyoto's top attractions. Using sentiment analysis, sentiment scores were computed with the VADER algorithm, which effectively captures polarity in text (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014). Principal Component Analysis (PCA), well suited for large-scale review datasets (Jolliffe & Cadima, 2016), then clustered attractions by shared designative attributes. Subsequently, a Seasonal Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average with Exogenous Variables (SARIMAX) model assessed how attribute-based sentiment affected tourist arrivals by capturing recurring annual patterns (Song et al., 2019).

Results/Discussion/Implication
Sentiment analysis and PCA revealed distinct attribute clusters. In Tokyo, the clusters were "Heritage Sites," "Contemporary Landmarks," and "Urban Contrasts," which together explained 62.6% of the variance. In Kyoto, the clusters "Scenic Heritage," "Commercial Heritage," and "Iconic Shrine" explained 56.1% of the variance. SARIMAX modeling showed that in Tokyo, only sentiment for Contemporary Landmarks significantly predicted arrivals ($\beta = 0.336$, $p < .01$) with a four-month lag, whereas in Kyoto, Scenic Heritage sentiment had a significant positive impact ($\beta = 0.572$, $p < .01$) with a three-month lag. Seasonal patterns were evident in Kyoto but not in Tokyo, suggesting contextual differences in how tourists respond to destination attributes.

The findings advance destination image theory by empirically linking online sentiment to real-world visitation, demonstrating that attribute-based effects are destination- and time-specific. For Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), the results emphasize the importance of monitoring UGC sentiment to dynamically adapt marketing strategies. Tokyo should highlight its contemporary attractions to sustain interest, while Kyoto should focus on managing demand peaks associated with scenic heritage sites. Overall, the study underscores the strategic potential of integrating sentiment analytics and time-series modeling to inform data-driven and sustainable destination marketing

ENHANCING DESTINATION MARKETING THROUGH VIRTUAL REALITY: THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED AFFORDANCE ON EXPERIENTIAL FIDELITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTION IN EXHIBITION SETTINGS

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Introduction

Destination marketing organizations have been leveraging destination Virtual Reality (VR) as a marketing strategy to enhance the destination image and drive visitors' engagement. The VR design features influence users' satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Brown et al., 2024; Chang & Seo, 2025; Lee et al., 2020). Design capability in virtual environments is critical to visitors' perceived affordance which is defined as a sensory cue for object use from the user's perspective (Norman, 1999). Hartson (2003) categorized affordance of IT into four dimensions: sensory, functional, physical, and cognitive, which are characterized as the specific digital cues. The psychological process of VR users is associated with their interpretation of VR design capabilities.

The potential visitors of the travel destinations might be influenced by VR's realistic representation of the destinations. The vivid response to VR users' actions within the virtual environment is also can be explained by the concept of fidelity that leads to the state of presence in the VR content. The fidelity is defined as degree of realism in replicating real-world interactions and sensory experiences (McMahan et al., 2012). The fidelity of VR includes eight constructs (i.e., action, detection, transfer, simulation, rendering, display, perceptual, and experiential). The experiential fidelity is an ultimate stage of the sites from the VR users' perspectives (Belga et al., 2025; Bonfert et al., 2025; Shafer, 2021). Thus, it is necessary to investigate how VR users' perceived affordance influences the experiential fidelity in the events and exhibitions to promote the travel destinations. While the quality of VR experience depends on users' capabilities of VR design (Jacob H et al., 2019) , familiarity is positively related to the value of experience(Kim et al., 2021). Additionally, this study attempts to examine how VR users' perceived affordance and experiential fidelity influence their engagement and intention and the moderating effect of familiarity between perceived affordance and experiential fidelity.

Methods

The self-administered online survey was administered on Qualtrics and recruit 250 Koreans who attended a trade show. They were required to visit a VR tour to Los Angeles before responding all questions. To test the study's conceptual framework, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used by using Smart PLS 4.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results showed that all perceived affordances had positive impacts on experiential fidelity, leading to a positive effect on engagement and intention. Familiarity with VR had no moderating effects on the relationship between perceived affordance and experiential fidelity. A high level of VR affordance enhances experiential fidelity, regardless of the users' familiarity. This study empirically demonstrates the direct influence of these affordances on fidelity.

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EXPERIENTIAL NARRATIVE RESTRAINT: A DUAL-MECHANISM MODEL OF ONLINE COMMENTARY BEHAVIOR

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Introduction

Online reviews are an integral part of consumer decision-making, shaping perceptions of destinations, hotels, and restaurants. While prior research has largely focused on information and persuasiveness of review content, less attention has been devoted to how reviewer's experience influences the tone and structure of their commentary (Bigne et al., 2021). Evidence suggests that reviewers' emotional or rational expressions are often rooted in their prior hedonic experiences (Su et al., 2025), raising an important but underexplored question: how prior experience influences whether reviewers rely on emotional expression or engage in more complex narrative construction. Thus, the present study investigates how prior hedonic experience reviews influence subsequent reviews' ratings and narrative transportation. Drawing on reviews from Hong Kong and Italy, this study develops the dual mechanism framework, Experiential Narrative Restraint (ENR), integrating hedonic recalibration that tempers emotional intensity and narrative transportation that fosters sense-making. By situating online reviewing in these psychological processes, the study advances understanding of how user-generated content reflects not only consumption experiences but also deeper patterns of emotional adaptation and narrative construction.

Methods

This study analyzed 96,135 online reviews from Google across two cultural contexts (Hong Kong and Italy) and three hedonic service domains (tourism attractions, hotels, and restaurants) to examine psychological mechanisms in hedonic consumption evaluation. The primary independent variable, review count, captures consumers accumulated experience, while the dependent variable, review polarity, measures the extremity of experience evaluation. Hedonic recalibration, reflecting emotional intensity and affective regulation, was quantified using a fine-tuned large language model to detect conflict sentiment within comments. Narrative sense-making, representing cognitive construction and linguistic complexity, was calculated using LIWC. The multilevel linear mixed models with restricted maximum likelihood estimation were employed to account for inter-reviewer variance.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between accumulated experience and review polarity ($r = -0.194$, $p < 0.001$). A robust Multilevel Linear Mixed Model confirmed a significant negative relationship between accumulated experience and commentary polarity ($\beta = -0.080$, $z = -37.367$, $p < 0.001$). Mediation analysis further showed that narrative sense-making partially explains this effect, suggesting that experienced users not only rate differently but also write differently. Their commentary shifts from purely emotional expression toward more cognitive processing, causal reasoning, and nuanced sense-making. These findings highlight that reviewing behavior evolves with accumulated hedonic experience. Practically, platforms and tourism managers should proactively classify and prioritize reviews based on reviewer experience levels. This empowers consumers to discern credible, nuanced feedback from narrative structure and enables practitioners to refine service strategies with more reliable insights.

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WHY WOULD YOU GO THERE? USING GROUNDED THEORY TO UNDERSTAND TOURIST MOTIVATIONS FOR VISITING IRAQ AS IT EMERGES FROM WAR

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Introduction

When most people hear words like travel, vacation or tourism, they think of surf, sun and sand like the Mediterranean or an exciting urban destination like Paris. Thousands of such destinations exist, overwhelming travelers, an issue for the tourism sector. (Park and Jang, 2011).

Yet what makes someone travel to a former or current locations of conflict, an understudied but important aspect of tourism redevelopment? Travel to conflict areas invites peacebuilding and reconciliation, economic revitalization, and improved living standards for residents of countries as they rebuild. Prior work suggests that tourists may be interested in destinations associated with conflict due to novelty, (Blom, 2000; Jang & Feng, 2007; Urbonavicius, 2021) history and remembrance (Isaac & Çakmak, 2016), curiosity (Ashworth, 2004; Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005; Weaver et al, 2017), or how it relates to individual tourists' identities and self-perceptions. (Mahrouse, 2016)

This article uses qualitative analysis from a Grounded Theory approach to better understand how potential tourists view war-torn locations, through open-ended interviews with nine recent visitors to Iraq. This experimental, preliminary work seeks an approach for a larger study on Iraq and other locations that can be of value within academia, government, business and other disciplines. This research may have practical implications in helping countries more quickly recover their tourism sector after war.

Methods

This was a Qualitative study via a semi-guided questionnaire, with Risk-Taking (Zhang, et al, 2018) behavior, demographics, and number of countries a participant visited before going to Iraq also collected. The interview answers were categorized into loose themes, using a Grounded Theory approach, with commentary highlighted as well as a general sense of repeated themes. Participants were recruited in two major ways: a boutique travel agency specializing in difficult travel destinations and via a Facebook advice group focused on Iraq travel.

Results/Discussion/Implication

As can be the case in a Qualitative Study, there was a broad range of answers to similar questions, where the personalities of individuals and their unique experiences in the same environment came through. The nine interviews also varied tremendously in length, from 45 minutes to over two hours, creating issues in parsing out salient points.

Using a Grounded Theory approach however, where themes speak for themselves, several topics emerged, to a degree also formed by the questions themselves. These include: *Travel as a form of identity, Mitigation of risk while traveling, Sense of travel contagion, Sense of authority and expertise, Overcoming biases and fears*. Limitations include the small size of the cohort, the very small number of women in the group and that most came from upper income backgrounds. However, as one of the first studies of its kind, it points in the direction of further research possibilities for Iraq and other countries emerging from war wishing to rebuild their tourism sector

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE TRAVEL BUCKET LIST MEANING AND ITS MEASUREMENT

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Introduction

The "bucket list" has become a symbolic way to express individuals' life aspirations, and in academia, it refers to a list of experiences and achievements an individual wishes to complete before they die, with travel experiences often at its core (Thurnell-Read, 2017). These travel items ranged from witnessing natural wonders to visiting world-renowned landmarks, allowing people to realize psychological achievements through tourism. Despite such lists being popular, the meaning of travel bucket lists remains underexplored in academic research (Bosangit et al., 2015; Thurnell-Read, 2017). Understanding this meaning is critical as it offers insight into the psychological and motivational foundations of meaningful travel. Through a literature review, two gaps were identified in the bucket list research. First, prior studies examined why people create bucket lists (Zascerinska et al., 2022), but no study had conceptually defined what a "travel bucket list" actually means from the tourists' perspective. Second, there was no empirically validated measurement instrument to quantify the meaning of a travel bucket list. Without such a tool, cumulative theory building was limited.

This research aimed to address two research questions: (1) For tourists, what is the meaning of a travel bucket list? and (2) How can this construct be measured? By answering these questions, the study would provide a reliable and valid measurement tool for future researchers to test relationships between bucket-list meaning and its outcomes.

Methods

Two studies were conducted using a mixed-method approach. Study 1 collected surveys from 511 respondents via CloudResearch, in which asking the meaning of bucket list travel. Thematic analysis was used in Study 1a to conceptualize and identify the dimensions of the construct. Study 1b used ChatGPT to validate dimensions by examining 1,500 actual bucket list items submitted by participants. Study 2 followed the framework proposed by Churchill and Gilbert (1979) to develop and refine a scale measuring the meaning of the travel bucket list.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Study 1a adopted means-end theory (MET) to conceptualize the meaning of travel bucket list and identify six underlying dimensions: travelers describe the attributes of desired activities (unique experiences, travel and exploration, personal growth), the consequence they expect to achieve (lifetime achievement), and the values that ultimately motivate their aspirations (time urgency, legacy). Study 1b double confirmed the dimensions of the construct using ChatGPT. Based on the above results, Study 2 developed and purified a measurement scale using data from 103 online survey respondents, resulting in a 12-item validated scale.

This study contributed to enriching tourist behavior literature by conceptualizing the construct of "bucket list travel meaning." Additionally, it offered a theoretically grounded and psychometrically tested measurement tool. Finally, it utilized the Generative AI prompt engineering to verify thematic analysis results to establish a level of congruence between human responses and AI-generated responses.

TRAVELLING QUIETLY: EXPLORING THE MEANING AND MANIFESTATIONS OF QUIET LUXURY IN LUXURY TOURISM

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Introduction
Quiet luxury represents a cultural shift in affluent consumer behavior, emphasizing discretion, quality, and emotional depth over conspicuous consumption. While traditional luxury tourism has long-celebrated opulence and visual status symbols, an emerging class of high-net-worth travelers seeks experiences that are aesthetically refined, socially inconspicuous, and emotionally resonant. Grounded in signaling theory (Berger & Heath, 2007) and Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction, this study explores how quiet luxury is defined, enacted, and interpreted within the context of luxury travel.

Methods
This study used a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), enabling inductive theme development from rich qualitative data. 15 participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling based on their self-identification as quiet luxury fashion consumers; individuals who prefer understated, quality and heritage-driven, and non-logo-centric luxury goods. Once recruited, participants were interviewed in-depth using a semi-structured guide that explored how their aesthetic and value preferences extended into the realm of travel and tourism. Interview topics included perceptions of quiet luxury, travel behaviors, brand interactions, sensory preferences, and identity expression while traveling. Data were transcribed and analyzed through iterative coding phases; initial, focused, and theoretical, to build conceptual categories grounded in the data.

Results/Discussion/Implications
Findings reveal 3 interrelated themes that define the quiet luxury travel experience. First, emotional and sensory intimacy was central. Participants described moments of stillness, awe, and connection, achieved through tactile considerate design, natural landscapes, or thoughtful service as the essence of luxury. These intimate experiences offered personal restoration and distinguished quiet luxury from traditional luxury's excess. Second, status signaling occurred through cultural capital and expert discernment rather than simply logos or price. Travelers sought rare or unusual destinations, boutique accommodations, or spaces with bespoke service that subtly broadcasting their taste and insider knowledge. This aligns with Bourdieu's notion of symbolic distinction and extends signaling theory to include understated design paired with meaningful brand communication. Third, participants actively rejected mainstream luxury aesthetics, favoring anonymity, privacy, and intentionality. This anti-signaling behavior helped them differentiate from mass-affluent tourists to those who assert belonging to a more exclusive, culturally literate elite.

These insights provide several practical implications: for luxury brands, success depends on designing emotionally resonant, aesthetically understated, and narrative-rich experiences. Marketing should shift from visual maximalism to editorial-style subtlety. Product design should emphasize slowness, texture, and ambiance. Even digital platforms can adopt more curated, private communication strategies to appeal to this audience. Ultimately, quiet luxury is not a rejection of luxury itself, but a redefinition; one that whispers rather than shouts.

ALL-WOMEN CO-LIVING TRAVEL IN CHINA: CONSTRUCTING A COLLECTIVE HEALING FRAMEWORK THROUGH FEMINIST PRACTICES IN TOURISM

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Introduction

In recent years, a new phenomenon–all-women co-living travel –has emerged in China, integrating tourism with feminist ideals. Unlike traditional women-only tours or acquaintance-based girlfriend getaways (Gibson et al., 2012; Berdychevsky et al., 2016), it emphasizes co-living among strangers, where women share spaces and build communities beyond familial ties, thus embodying a feminist practice (Rishi Tej, 2023; Sargisson, 2000). Such practices echo global women-only co-living models that foster women's empowerment (Fernández, 2021; Jalan, 2022; Myers, 2024) and resonate with historical Chinese precedents like Zi Shu Nv (Zheng, 2021). Amid misogyny and digital censorship (Han, 2021; Xie, 2023), Chinese women utilize leisure travel as a feminist context to negotiate empowerment. This study explores how all-women co-living travel constructs feminist experiences within China's evolving gender landscape.

Methods

This study employed netnography to explore all-women co-living travel on Xiaohongshu (RedNote), where online discussions of this phenomenon are embedded within broader feminist and gender discourses in contemporary China. Following the six established steps and three guiding priorities of netnography (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023), the study ensured methodological rigor. Using purposive sampling and information power (Malterud et al., 2016), 22 posts (12,205 characters; 195 images, June 2023–May 2025) were analyzed in MAXQDA (2024). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) examined textual narratives while the researcher continuously reflected on their identity, positionality, and knowledge background. Multimodal critical discourse analysis, a visual-focused approach (Bouvier & Rasmussen, 2022), analyzed images. To enhance trustworthiness, five authors were contacted for member reflections, and negative case analysis was conducted (Savin-Baden & Major, 2023).

Findings and Implication

Nine themes were identified to explain how women construct experiences through all-women co-living travel. Four describe participant-constructed practices: guiding by feminism; a women-only community with a collective posture; ecofeminist practice; and enacting collective health practices. The other four capture the tourism context that enables these practices: tourism as liminal space; infrastructures for co-living; ecological immersion; and tourism as a value frame aligned with feminism. Together, these themes converge in one overarching outcome: collective healing. Theoretically, this study extends discussions of tourism as a transitional or liminal space (Turner et al., 2017), revealing its potential as an alternative environment for feminist practice—a domain where feminist exploration can unfold under the guise of leisure rather than activism. Within such relaxed contexts, serious concerns of identity, gendered anxiety, and collective empowerment are addressed organically, making feminist transformation not only emotionally resonant but also practically feasible and readily participatory. Practically , the identified model of collective healing within the tourism context highlights tourism's capacity to integrate leisure, reflection, and social change, offering guidance for tourism practitioners to design inclusive, healing-oriented travel experiences that support women and other groups seeking identity affirmation and collective well-being.

IMPROVE AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT: MARKETING LOCAL EVENTS AND LEISURE AMENITIES TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN A MIDWEST COLLEGE TOWN

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Introduction

College towns are economically and culturally tied to their universities but often face slow growth and population decline (Ben Miloud & Hugo, 2024). College towns rely on universities for economic and cultural vitality, yet students are often overlooked as consumers in local tourism (Bertsch et al., 2022). This overlooks a significant opportunity, as student engagement can shape both campus life and community development. Limited research has examined university students' awareness of and engagement in local events and leisure amenities. To address this gap, this study investigates students' awareness and participation in local events and leisure amenities in a Midwestern college town, with the objectives of identifying engagement patterns and exploring strategies to enhance participation.

Methods

This study was conducted in a Midwestern college town using a two-phase mixed-methods design. Phase I included 16 semi-structured interviews with students to explore perceptions of local events, participation barriers, and suggested improvements. Thematic analysis identified key patterns that informed the survey instrument. Phase II involved an online survey distributed to 10,981 juniors and seniors through the university email list. After data cleaning, 621 valid responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, complemented by thematic coding of open-ended responses.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings revealed two significant gaps in student engagement. The first is an awareness–participation gap; for example, while over 90% of students knew of the Farmer's Market, only 44.9% attended. The second is a visibility gap, where many students were entirely unaware of available opportunities; for example, over 60% had never heard of specific local parks or wilderness areas. These findings highlight that engagement is constrained by both limited participation and a lack of visibility. Thematic analysis identified five key participation constraints: time constraints stemming from academic/work demands and event scheduling conflicts; information gaps, such as not knowing when or where events occurred; perceived relevance; social barriers, such as a preference to attend with friends; and logistical challenges, including transportation, parking, and cost. Students relied on word of mouth (82.4%) and university social media (57.8%); community platforms had low reach.

Practical implications suggest that local tourism bureaus and university partners can enhance engagement by improving event visibility across campus-based platforms, expanding evening and weekend transportation, and adjusting event schedules to better align with student lifestyles. Addressing safety concerns and perceptions of accessibility would further encourage participation. This study contributes to tourism and town–gown literature by positioning students as an important local tourism market segment. Strengthening this connection could not only enhance students' sense of community but also support graduate retention and the broader social and economic sustainability of college towns.

References are available upon request

"TRAVELING" WITHOUT MOVING:

HOW OPEN-WORLD GAMES RESHAPE TOURISM EXPERIENCES

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Introduction

Virtual tourism has evolved from a supplementary marketing tool into a distinct experiential domain that increasingly demonstrates the potential to rival real-world travel (Bilynets et al., 2024). With advances in VR, AR, the metaverse, and video games, virtual environments increasingly offer immersive experiences that go beyond mere representation (Dubois et al., 2021). While many studies emphasize their complementary role in stimulating real-world curiosity and destination visits (Zhu et al., 2024), recent research has noticed their substitutional potential under conditions of limited mobility, budget, or convenience (Calisto & Sarkar, 2024). However, beyond contexts of substitutive or compensatory, the way open-world game players describe virtual maps as "places" and their gameplay as "travel" suggests that virtual travel experiences can operate as autonomous and creative destinations in their own right.

Drawing on postmodern perspectives on authenticity, which emphasize that authenticity is not tied to objective reality but is instead constructed through individuals' emotional and performative engagement (Baudrillard, 1994; Wang, 1999), this study explores:

RQ1: How do players perceive open-world gameplay as "travel," and does it complement or substitute physical tourism?

RQ2: How might virtual adventures represent a "future form" of travel detached from physical mobility?

Methods

This study used a qualitative exploratory design with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to capture how open-world players frame gameplay as travel. Data were collected from the *Genshin Impact* subreddit (2022–2025), comprising approximately 155,000 posts and comments. After cleaning and applying travel-related and affective keyword filters, about 900 entries were retained. Inductive coding was leveraged to identify recurrent discourses of travel, authenticity, and motivation.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Seven key themes emerged: exploration as travel, learning and cultural discovery, destination linkage, authenticity, immersion, affective enjoyment, and motivation, revealing a continuum between complementary and autonomous forms of virtual travel. While destination linkage and motivation reflected the familiar complementary logic that connects virtual experiences to real-world tourism, themes such as exploration as travel, immersion, authenticity, and affective enjoyment pointed to a more autonomous mode of engagement in which players experienced the game world itself as a genuine site of travel.

Taken together, these patterns illustrate how open-world gameplay embodies the full continuum of virtual travel experiences, from those that inspire and extend physical tourism to those that blur the boundary between virtual and real travel. Within this spectrum, players' emotional and cultural engagement reveals the potential of virtual worlds to emerge as creative destinations of their own, inviting new understandings of travel as an affective and symbolic practice detached from physical mobility.

EXPLORING SERENDIPITOUS EXPERIENCES AND PLACE ATTACHMENT IN URBAN RUNNING

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Introduction

Running is widely recognized as an accessible leisure activity that provides both physical and psychological benefits (Hindley, 2022; Lee et al., 2014). Its popularity has increased further as outdoor exercise gained importance during the COVID-19 pandemic (McCormack et al., 2023). In South Korea, this trend has taken shape through the rise of *running crews*, community-based groups that gather to run together in shared urban spaces (Lee & Kim, 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Moon, 2024). While prior studies have highlighted the interpersonal and social motivations of running (Entin & Entin, 2023; Gerasimuk et al., 2021), comparatively less attention has been given to the lived and personal experiences that unfold during the act of running itself (Hitchings & Latham, 2017).

This study explores how young adults in Seoul encounter serendipitous moments while running in their everyday urban environments, and how these moments relate to place attachment. Serendipity, defined as the accidental discovery of something valuable (Cunha et al., 2010), has been studied across various fields, yet remains underexplored in the context of everyday leisure. Based on Seamon's (2020) concept of *place release*, this study examines how unexpected moments during running reshape perceptions of the city and deepen emotional bonds with place.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach. Participants were recruited through criterion-based sampling and consisted of individuals in their 20s and 30s who had at least one year of running experience and engaged in running at least once a week. A total of four participants were interviewed through online semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. To enhance external validity, additional interviews will be conducted, followed by supplementary survey or text-mining studies.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Interview findings revealed three key themes: (a) **moments of self-discovery and inner reflection**, where participants described running as a means of self-awareness and emotional release; (b) **unfamiliarity and novelty in everyday spaces**, where familiar environments were re-experienced as new and even touristic; and (c) **deepening place attachment**, where serendipitous moments transformed ordinary urban spaces into personally meaningful places.

These findings, emerging from running as a casual leisure activity, underscore the blurred boundaries between the everyday and the touristic, and suggest a new direction for leisure research in contemporary urban contexts. This study also suggests that urban and regional planners should consider how to foster environments that support diverse experiences in the city. While serendipity cannot be designed or predicted, cities that are open, inclusive, and rich in sensory and social stimuli are more likely to enable such unexpected and meaningful encounters.

References are available upon request

MULTI-GENRE CONVENTIONS-WHO LET THE NERDS OUT?: A SOR PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Conventions are a key element of the MICE framework; however, some convention subtypes have received limited attention in current research. One such subgenre is fandom conventions. Fandom conventions form a global market valued at $6.1 billion, with the U.S. accounting for about 40% of that, or $2.4 billion in 2024. Currently, there is little research on this topic in existing literature (MarketIntelo, n.d.). In 2025, an estimated 1,370 fandom conventions are expected worldwide (Fancons.com, n.d.). This study investigates the definition of multi-genre conventions (MGC), emphasizing the distinct differences between fandom conventions and the more specialized MGC. The research applies the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) framework, as proposed by Mehrabian and Russel (1974). This study extends SOR-based tourism research by exploring attendees' cognitive and emotional responses (Kim et al., 2020). The model fills a gap in the literature by explaining consumer motivations during conventions and the behaviors that follow, such as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and revisit intentions among attendees.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative survey to gather data from a convenience sample of MomoCon 2025 attendees, both on-site at the event and online afterward through MomoCon's email list. After cleaning the two data files, the dataset provided 619 responses. The variables tested in accordance with the established model included: (S) Escapism (ESC), Novelty (NVT), Sense of Community (SCM), Self-Development (SDT); (O) MGC Satisfaction (CST), MGC Delight (CDT); and (R) Revisit Intention (RVI), eWOM (WOM). Involvement (INV) was examined as a moderator for the relationship between CST and CDT. The researcher used SEM to analyze these relationships.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The survey results show that the following relationships were supported: SCM positively impacted SDT; SCM positively impacted CDA; SDT positively impacted CDA; CST positively impacted RVI; CST positively impacted WOM; CST positively impacted CDA; CDT positively impacted RVI; and CDT positively impacted WOM. The following relationships were unsupported: ESC to CST generated no significant relationship; ESC to CDA generated no significant relationship; NVT to CST generated no significant relationship; NVT to CDA generated no significant relationship; SDT to CST generated no significant relationship. INV significantly moderated the relationship between CST and CDT, such that greater INV weakened the positive association between CST and CDT.

Firstly, this study establishes a foundation for the term "multi-genre convention." Although conventions are already included within MICE frameworks, the MGC has not previously been identified as a sub-genre in the literature. This study provides insight into the motivational factors among MGC attendees, such as self-development and community building. By leveraging these factors, organizers can encourage higher attendance through repeat visits, improve attendee satisfaction and enjoyment, and stimulate eWOM to promote their convention. While MGCs continue to grow in popularity in the US, there is a notable lack of empirical research supporting this expanding sector of the convention industry. This study addresses this gap and lays the groundwork for future research in the MGC field.

References are available upon request.

BIG BEND, BIG MEANINGS: INSIGHTS FROM USER-GENERATED REVIEWS

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Introduction

Cultural ecosystem services (CES) represent the non-material benefits people derive from nature, such as recreation, spiritual enrichment, aesthetic appreciation, and cultural identity, making them especially significant in national parks where visitors seek experiences that go beyond ecological or economic values. This study focuses on Big Bend National Park (BBNP) in Texas by examining its cultural ecosystem services (CES) through Google Reviews. BBNP was selected as the study site for two main reasons. First, despite its growing popularity, no prior research has systematically analyzed visitor experiences using Google Reviews or similar feedback platforms. Second, the park's unique location along the Texas–Mexico border creates a distinctive cultural and ecological context that sets it apart from other U.S. national parks. Accordingly, the study was conducted with the aim of finding answers to:

RQ1: How do the user generated reviews reveal the attributes of CES at BBNP?

RQ2: In what ways do pandemic-related restrictions, seasonal visitation cycles, and management interventions influence the expression of CES attributes in visitor reviews?

Methods

To achieve the purpose of the study, a big data approach was taken. The sample for the study was the online user-generated content (i.e., consumer reviews) of BBNP. Big data enables analysis of trends over time, which is crucial for understanding consumer perception, patterns of visitation etc. A web-based Google Maps scraper was utilized. Specifically, Google Maps Application Programming Interface (API) was used to collect publicly available customer reviews, star ratings, user profiles of the reviewers etc. Two major approaches were used to achieve the study purpose, namely structural topic modeling (STM) and the image analysis along with data visualization to present the findings. STM is a powerful R package for topic modeling that incorporates document-level metadata. Moreover, the STM models were developed along with several analytical techniques, such as topic distribution and topic correlation to better understand the salient topics and their relationships.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The topic modeled themes were interpreted by the lens of Cultural Ecosystems services (Romanazzi et al., 2023) concept. Accordingly, the highest number of reviews represented the element of aesthetic values, and then the recreation and eco-tourism element. The least number of reviews represented the element of spiritual and religious values which can be general as BBNP is known for recreation and nature related activities. It can be concluded that overall, BBNP's cultural benefits are led by aesthetic values, recreation and eco-tourism, inspiration and social relations moderated by access, amenity and heat management constraints.

Based on the analysis of visitor reviews, it can be suggested that future applications of the CES concept in national park settings should be more precise, with particular attention to accessibility, heat, and seasonal variations in the region.

References are available upon request

Completed Research:
Finance & Economics

HOW DO INVESTORS HERD IN HOSPITALITY STOCKS?

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Introduction

The Efficient Market Hypothesis (Fama, 1970) argues that investors behave rationally and that stock prices fully reflect available information. However, research in behavioral finance has shown that markets frequently deviate from rationality. Findings on overreaction (De Bondt & Thaler, 1985) and momentum effects (Jegadeesh & Titman, 1993) reveal that asset prices often depart from fundamental values. Within this literature, herding behavior has received substantial attention. Herding arises when investors imitate others instead of relying on private information and independent judgment (Spyrou, 2013). Such collective behavior weakens market efficiency, heightens volatility, distorts valuations, and increases systemic fragility (Deng et al., 2018).

Despite extensive research on herding in global financial markets, several gaps persist. Much prior work focuses on broad market indices, offering limited insight into industry-specific patterns, including the hospitality sector, which is both volatile and highly sensitive to external shocks. Research has also seldom compared herding across hospitality sub-sectors (e.g., hotels vs. tourism stocks) or across exchanges such as the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SZSE), which differ in liquidity and investor profiles. Moreover, although herding is recognized as time-varying, little is known about its long-term trajectory or cyclical behavior. The role of firm size also remains ambiguous, with mixed evidence on whether small-or large-cap firms herd more.

This study seeks to address these issues by conducting a comprehensive investigation of herding behavior in China's hospitality stocks between 2001 and 2022. First, it provides a sector-specific focus on hospitality finance, thereby complementing prior research that has primarily emphasized aggregate market dynamics. Second, it compares herding across hospitality sub-segments and across the SSE and SZSE, offering insights into structural and institutional differences in investor behavior. Third, it examines herding under asymmetric market conditions and across four key sub-periods, including the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, while also identifying a recurring five- to six-year cycle. Fourth, it analyzes herding across large and small portfolios in order to clarify the role of firm size.

Methods

This study analyzes daily data for 20 A-share hospitality stocks (2001–2022) and 4,994 broader A-share stocks from CSMAR. Herding is tested using the nonlinear CSAD model of Chang et al. (2000). Hypotheses are examined across markets, conditions, periods, and firm sizes to capture multiple herding dimensions.

Results/Discussion/Implication

For academia, this study advances hospitality finance by demonstrating that herding is a sector-specific phenomenon shaped by crises, seasonality, and firm size within hospitality stocks. For industry, it provides investors and hospitality firms with evidence on how herding in hotel and tourism stocks influences portfolio allocation and risk management. For society, it offers insights into collective behavior in hospitality markets, supporting financial stability, investor education, and regulation in an industry vital to economic development and employment.

Event Tourism Competitiveness in Hong Kong: A Dual Macro-Micro Perspective

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Introduction

In the globalized and experience-driven tourism economy, event tourism has become a key dimension of destination competitiveness, shaping image, demand, and value creation (Getz & Page, 2016). Destinations such as Singapore and Seoul have demonstrated how infrastructure, service professionalism, and coordinated marketing strengthen global standing (Enright & Newton 2005; Davidson, 2019). Once a regional leader, Hong Kong now faces intensified competition and institutional challenges, calling for a comprehensive evaluation of its event tourism competitiveness (Jones & Li, 2015; Liu & Wilson, 2014).

Existing studies largely focus either on macro-level event impacts or on micro-level managerial factors, leaving limited integration between the two (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; He et al., 2020). This study proposes a dual-perspective framework linking macroeconomic event performance with stakeholder perceptions and visitor preferences to assess how competitiveness is constructed and perceived in Hong Kong's event tourism sector.

Methods

The research adopts a three-stage mixed-methods design. Firstly, at the macro level, an event-study method assessed the short-term tourism effects of meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions (MICE), sports, festivals, and concerts using daily arrival and departure data from the Hong Kong Immigration Department. Secondly, at the micro level, 23 semi-structured interviews with organizers, exhibitors, suppliers, visitors, and government representatives explored perceived competitiveness attributes. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure diverse representation. The data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through iterative initial and focused coding to identify recurring competitiveness dimensions. Thirdly, a discrete choice experiment (DCE) derived from interview results measured visitor preferences and willingness-to-pay for event attributes among Mainland Chinese visitors (n = 245) via an online platform. Choice modeling techniques (McFadden, 1974; Train, 2003) were employed to estimate participation likelihood and willingness-to-pay for key competitiveness attributes.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings reveal multi-layered insights into Hong Kong's event tourism competitiveness. The event-study analysis showed that concerts generated the strongest short-term increases in arrivals, while exhibitions mainly extended visitor stays but failed to attract new demand. Sports and festivals played minor roles, contributing primarily to brand image. Interviews identified six competitiveness dimensions, including Professionalism and Facilities, Accessibility and Convenience, Internationalization and Diversity, Uniqueness and Differentiation, Socio-cultural Environment and Inclusiveness, and Resource Synergies. The discrete choice experiment confirmed that Professionalism and Resource Synergies significantly increased participation intentions, with income-related variations in price sensitivity. Collectively, the results show that Hong Kong's competitiveness relies on combining professional infrastructure with innovation and audience differentiation. The study proposes a dual-perspective framework linking macro event performance with stakeholder and visitor insights, extending destination competitiveness theory. Practically, findings suggest diversifying event portfolios, enhancing innovation, and reinforcing cross-sector collaboration to sustain Hong Kong's position as a global event hub.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL INTEGRATING PARTNER SELECTION CRITERIA AND ANCILLARY FACTORS IN HOSPITALITY STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

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Introduction

As competition in the hospitality industry intensifies (Kumar et al., 2024), firms increasingly pursue strategic alliances to maintain competitiveness (Ruiz-Fernandez et al., 2025). Strategic alliances—defined as "long-term cooperative arrangements between two or more independent firms for mutual economic gain" (Tsang, 1998, p. 209)—enable access to critical resources and performance enhancement through specialization. About 60% of U.S. publicly traded hospitality firms have engaged in such alliances or joint ventures (Dewally & Gordon, 2022). Although their popularity and potential benefits are well documented (Abdulmawla et al., 2024; Musili & Deya, 2023; Tajpour et al., 2024), frequent alliance failures have also been reported (Pfammatter et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2022).

A prominent alliance form in hospitality is the partnership between hotel owners and operators. Owners typically control real estate assets, while operators—pursuing asset-light strategies—focus on management expertise (Seo & Soh, 2021). This interdependence highlights the importance of partner selection, often deemed the most critical stage of alliance formation (Tajpour et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2022). Selecting appropriate partners is widely viewed as a prerequisite for success (Martínez-Noya et al., 2025; Yu & Shi, 2022). Yet, limited research explores how hotel owners select management companies as alliance partners (Cho, 2004; Vaishnav & Altinay, 2009; Xiao et al., 2008). Existing studies suggest that, beyond explicit selection criteria, ancillary factors may also shape decisions (Altinay & Okumus, 2010). To address these gaps, this study investigates: What criteria do hotel owners use when choosing management companies, and what ancillary factors influence this partner selection process?

Methods

This study employed grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) to explore hotel owners' partner selection criteria. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 12 hotel owners and analyzed using constant comparative analysis to identify, refine, and relate emerging categories and themes.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study identified 38 partner selection criteria grouped into three categories: strategic criteria, organizational criteria, and management contract terms and conditions. It also revealed 18 ancillary factors influencing the decision-making process. Furthermore, a conceptual model is proposed to explain the partner selection process in hospitality alliances. Theoretically, the study contributes to the empirical development of hospitality strategic alliance theory. Practically, it enhances mutual understanding between hotel owners and operators, fostering more stable and effective partnerships. A key limitation of this study lies in the challenges associated with locating and engaging hotel owners for participation.

References are available upon request

THE PRICE OF AMATEURISM: BEHAVIORAL BIASES AND SYSTEMATIC UNDERPRICING IN THE HOME SHARING ECONOMY

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Introduction

In the home-sharing market, professional rental service providers (e.g., multi-unit hosts leveraging dynamic pricing tools) coexist with "amateur" hosts, who rent out their properties occasionally or at their own discretion. In fact, nonprofessional individual hosts vastly outnumber professional hosts in the home-sharing market (Li et al., 2019). While hotels benefit from centralized management and abundant resources, individual hosts operate with limited information and weak risk-hedging capacity, making them more susceptible to psychological and behavioral biases. Such biases may lead hosts away from revenue-maximizing strategies, resulting in suboptimal pricing behavior and market inefficiencies. By leveraging property-level daily pricing data for short-term rental (STR) units in Chicago, this study aims to test whether host behavior aligns with optimal pricing policies and, if not, to identify key sources of bias.

Methods

This study used property-level daily pricing data for the short-term rental market in Chicago obtained from AirDNA, covering the period from January 2023 to December 2024. The dataset included detailed daily operational information for each listing as well as property- and host-level characteristics. The final dataset comprised more than 1.9 million daily price records from 6,161 unique properties in Chicago. Multi-unit versus single-unit status was used as a proxy for host professionalism. Additionally, the study incorporated hotel average daily rate data to capture price reference effects and city-level lodging demand data provided by Smith Travel Research to control market demand.

The study employed a two-stage control function approach to address potential endogeneity in hosts' pricing decisions in the short-term rental market. In the first stage, a price-setting equation was estimated, and in the second stage, the demand function was modeled as a booking probability. Based on this demand function, the optimal price for each listing and date was derived by maximizing expected revenue. Finally, the derived optimal price was used to measure pricing bias by comparing it with the actual price set by each host.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings reveal that hosts consistently exhibit underpricing behavior, which is particularly pronounced during the summer peak season. This pattern indicates that, despite opportunities to price more aggressively when demand is high, hosts adopt conservative pricing, potentially due to risk aversion or cognitive limitations. From a theoretical perspective, the results suggest that traditional hotel revenue management (RM) principles, which are built on a rational, revenue-maximizing logic, do not fully apply to the short-term rental market. Hotel dynamic pricing models typically assume fully rational decision-makers and overlook bounded rationality, which is particularly relevant among nonprofessional hosts. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for decision-support tools that assist individual hosts in making more informed and effective pricing decisions.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESTAURANT FOOT TRAFFIC AND CUSTOMER SPENDING: THE MODERATING ROLES OF DWELL TIME AND TRAVEL DISTANCE

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Introduction

This paper examines how visitor arrivals influence per-customer spending, and why that influence changes depending on whether a restaurant is too quiet, comfortably busy, or overcrowded. Using four years of monthly data for restaurants in Massachusetts from 2019 to 2022 and differentiating between full-service and limited-service restaurants, we find support for a non-linear S-shaped relationship for full-service restaurants: spending per customer (SPC) initially declines when early diners face an empty room, rises as social proof encourage confidence, and declines again when overcrowding strains service capacity. Two behavioral variables moderate this S-shaped relationship: Longer median dwell times and greater travel. For limited-service restaurants, we find inconsistent non-linearity, likely because product familiarity diminishes the effect of ambient density cues. The findings caution operators against blindly chasing traffic. More broadly, the study demonstrates the value of combining foot traffic figures and spending data to understand the behavioral economics of everyday service encounters.

Methods

We link Advan mobile-location foot-traffic metrics (visitor counts, median dwell time, median travel distance) to SafeGraph spending data at the same POIs via PLACEKEY. The dependent variable is SPC, and the main predictor is log(Visitors). We have 218,089 observations.
Moderators are *Median Dwell Time* (minutes) and *Distance from Home* (km). Control variables primarily include STR hotel data (occupancy rate and ADR) and American Community Survey macroeconomics data (unemployment rate, labor force participation rate, work-from-home rate, leisure & hospitality jobs percentage, and poverty rate). We estimate two-way fixed effects (suggested by Hausman tests) panel regressions with heteroskedasticity-robust clustered SEs, comparing linear, quadratic, and cubic specifications. Model selections are validated with log-likelihood ratio tests and Wald tests, favoring the S-shaped cubic form. To address endogeneity and simultaneity concerns, we run Granger-causality tests and re-estimate with one-year-lagged traffic to confirm that traffic precedes SPC and our findings are not artifacts of simultaneity.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Based on the regression results, the following patterns emerge. When using *Median Dwell Time* and *Distance from Home* as moderators, a "down-up-down" S-shaped relationship between SPC and log(Visitors) consistently appears in the full-service restaurant models. Both moderators also exhibit flattening effects, indicating higher levels of these moderators tend to smooth out the curve. However, for limited-service restaurants, the S-shaped pattern disappears when moderated by *Median Dwell Time*, and a fixed "down-up-down" S-shaped curve appears under *Distance from Home*, suggesting no flattening or steepening effects in limited-service restaurants.

ENDOGENEITY IN PANEL ANALYSIS: EXPLORING THE GAUSSIAN COPULA METHOD

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Introduction

Establishing a causal relationship is the main focus of empirical studies in social science because causality enables theory advancement by ruling out other possible explanations (Bliese et al., 2020; Antonakis et al., 2010). A primary threat to causal inference is endogeneity, which occurs when an explanatory variable is correlated with the error term, typically due to simultaneity, omitted variables, or measurement errors (Wooldridge, 2010). This type of bias is unpredictable and can cause either overestimation or underestimation of coefficients, leading to potential model misspecification and invalid conclusions (Hill et al., 2021).

In hospitality and tourism (H&T) research, particularly within strategic management and finance, secondary panel datasets are widely used because they capture firm-level dynamics over time, such as financial performance (FP), governance structures, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives. Yet, the non-experimental nature of these data makes relationships among constructs (e.g., the ESG-FP link) highly susceptible to simultaneity and omitted variable bias. Addressing endogeneity is therefore essential to ensure credible inference; otherwise, even theoretically grounded models may produce biased and misleading results (Wooldridge, 2010).

Therefore, our study examines the Gaussian Copula Method (GCM), an instrument-free approach for cross-sectional data proposed by Park and Gupta (2012) that targets endogeneity by defining a joint distribution between the endogenous regressor and the error term. However, when GCM is applied directly to fixed-effects (FE) transformed panel data, its underlying assumptions are violated. To address this, we introduce Haschka's (2022) extension of GCM to H&T research, as existing studies applying GCM to FE-transformed panel data often overlook this issue and thereby violate the method's assumptions.

Methods

To illustrate the significance of applying the appropriate GCM considering the data structure, we analyze the ESG-FP link in the H&T industry. Data is collected from the London Stock Exchange Group, and the years span from 2002 to 2024. Three models are estimated and compared: a conventional FE model without correction (N-GCM), an FE model incorporating the Park and Gupta (2012) GCM correction (PG-GCM), and an FE model applying Haschka's (2022) extension for panel data (H-GCM). This comparison highlights both the importance of applying the correction and the implications of doing so correctly. Two proxies for FP are used: Tobin's Q (TQ) and return on assets. The potentially endogenous regressors are firms' environmental (E), social (S), and governance (G) scores. Leverage, firm size, and firm and year effects are controlled.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The differing results across models empirically illustrate how endogeneity can distort parameter estimates. This underscores the importance of properly addressing endogeneity, as discrepancies arise not only between N-GCM and the two GCM models but also between PG-GCM and H-GCM. For FE-transformed data, Haschka's method yields more consistent and unbiased estimates, highlighting the need for correction procedures aligned with the data's structure.

Economic Policy Uncertainty and Tourism Demand: Evidence from U.S. State-Level Outbound Travel

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Motivation
Economic policy uncertainty (EPU) is a major driver of macroeconomic fluctuations, shaping investment, employment, and household spending. While prior research shows that EPU reduces international tourism and affects hospitality performance, little evidence exists on its impact on
U.S. state-level outbound travel, particularly domestic trips that represent short-term discretionary consumption. Understanding this margin is important given recurrent uncertainty shocks and states' varied reliance on tourism.

Research Gap
Existing studies focus on national tourism flows or firm-level outcomes and do not assess how households adjust travel decisions to state-specific uncertainty. The mechanisms linking EPU to outbound travel, especially the role of labor market conditions, also remain insufficiently documented. This study addresses these gaps by combining state EPU measures with domestic and international outbound passenger flows.

Data and Empirical Approach
We compile a balanced state–year panel (2008–2023) linking state EPU indices, T-100 outbound passenger flows, and macroeconomic covariates including unemployment, GDP, PCE, population, and COVID-19 policy stringency. Two-way fixed-effects models quantify the baseline effects, heterogeneity is assessed via tourism dependence, and causal mediation analysis evaluates unemployment as a transmission channel. Robustness is tested using two-step Difference GMM.

Key Findings
Higher EPU significantly reduces outbound travel, with domestic flows showing larger declines than international flows, suggesting that easily postponed trips are the first margin of adjustment. Unemployment is a central mechanism: roughly one-quarter to one-third of the total EPU effect operates indirectly through deteriorating labor market conditions. The negative impact strengthens under tighter COVID-19 policy environments, where the indirect channel accounts for nearly the full decline in total outbound flows. Tourism-dependent states exhibit greater sensitivity to uncertainty shocks.

Contributions
This study provides the first state-level evidence on how policy uncertainty shapes outbound travel within the U.S. By integrating fixed-effects estimation with moderated mediation and GMM checks, it clarifies how uncertainty and labor markets jointly influence discretionary mobility and highlights the heightened exposure of tourism-dependent states.

INTERNATIONALIZATION, ASSET-LIGHT STRATEGY, AND THE LEVERAGE TRADE-OFF IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Introduction

Internationalization has been widely adopted in the hospitality industry (Lee et al., 2014; Sun & Lee, 2013), and as such gained momentum amongst researchers (Assaf et al., 2016; Berbel-Pineda et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Rhou & Koh, 2014; Song & Lee, 2020; Woo et al., 2023). However, it is still unknown how it influences access to financial markets while considering the nowadays-common hospitality business model, being asset-light, fee-oriented (ALFO) strategy.

While in case of hospitality firms, internationalization is often accompanied by ALFO, and accordingly less operating leverage, empirical research has failed to examine if the internationalization effects on leverage are solely due to operational diversification or also business model (here ALFO). This is while the hospitality context provides a rich example for such investigation as well as the risk complementarity hypothesis. The partialed-out contribution of internationalization and ALFO to financial risk and overall hospitality firm risk profile enrich both theory and practice as this industry is characterized by significant exposure to external factors. This study then attempts to uncover if hospitality ALFO substitutes or complements internationalization leverage effects, and also which one does moderate the relationship between financial and operating leverage. Due to being an important leverage factor in internationalization literature (Chkir & Cosset, 2001; Doukas & Pantzalis, 2003), this study also employs the agency conflict theory to examine how that affects these dynamics.

Methods

This research employs winsorized financial COMPUSTAT and hand-collected data from 10-k's for the period 2000-2024. Moreover, while the main models were estimated using two-way fixed-effect (Wooldridge et al., 2016), to check the robustness and address endogeneity concerns, two-step system generalized method of moments were employed (Greene, 2012; Wooldridge et al., 2016). Plus, agency conflict subsample analysis was performed using each model.

Results and Implication

Results indicate that ALFO properties and fee-income ratio substitute internationalization effect on financial leverage. Results further suggest the substitutability only applies to the case of high agency conflict for the ALFO properties. Findings regarding risk complementarity hypothesis indicate that only the ALFO properties aspect of ALFO strategy affects the complementarity between operating and financial risk. Subsample analyses also reveal that all the three strategies moderate the relationship between financial and operating risk in low-conflict models. Finally, robustness models are mostly supportive of these findings.

These results imply that despite others, in hospitality industry, internationalization leverage effects can be explained by the ALFO strategy, which possibly increases the director's power by reducing debt disciplinary mechanism. Results may also suggest that the cheaper debt adopted by the internationalized/ALFO firms thanks to their improved and less risky cash flows is used to cover domestically-sourced fixed costs. Future research can introduce the source of ALFO (domestic vs. international) to investigate this. Moreover, results also suggest that agency conflict plays a major role in this.

Completed Research:
Human Resources, Leadership & Education

A PILOT STUDY ON MANAGERIAL BACKSTABBING AND ITS EFFECTS ON VICTIMS' REPUTATION AND MENTAL HEALTH IN HOTELS

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Introduction

Hotels depend on effective collaboration among departmental managers, with their reputation for integrity and dependability vital to both team functioning and guest satisfaction (Ferris et al., 2003; Patiar & Mia, 2009). However, subtle acts of managerial backstabbing such as spreading rumors, exaggerating mistakes, false reporting, or withholding information pose a significant yet underexplored threat to managerial well-being (Malone & Hayes, 2012). Unlike overt bullying, managerial backstabbing operates covertly through opportunistic, indirect behaviors that are hard to detect but may severely erode reputation and mental health (Azim & Hakemzadeh, 2022).

This study explores the observed costs of managerial backstabbing in full-service hotels, focusing on reputational and mental impacts among departmental managers in New Mexico. The goal is to ensure feasibility in research, show the presence and pattern of backstabbing behaviors among managers rather than assert direct causality.

Methods

The study used a descriptive exploratory survey design conducted with departmental managers across 40 full-service hotels, yielding 22 usable responses representing various hotel functions. The study utilized a 17-item adaptation of Azim and Hakemzadeh's backstabbing behavior, reputation used six items from Hochwarter et al. (2007), including integrity, respect, excellence, and reliability. Mental health used the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) and social desirability bias check used the overclaiming scale test to validate response honesty. The sample demographics revealed more experienced managers, with most reporting over 16 years of industry tenure. The majority were women and worked in chain hotels. Analysis of the data used IBM SPSS focusing mainly on the descriptive statistics which evaluated frequencies, means, and standard deviations for all items.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings reveal that the most prevalent forms of managerial backstabbing were management failures (such as not performing assigned duties and setting unrealistic expectations) rather than explicit deceit (false reporting or outright credit theft), with mean frequency ratings of 3.5 versus 2.2-2.5. Reputational harm appeared mainly as a decline in recognition for excellence and creativity (mean = 3.73), while dependability and integrity remained relatively robust (means= 4.36, 4.27). Mental health effect on managers reported low collegial energy, motivation difficulties, and heightened irritability, with depression and stress more salient than anxiety. These patterns suggest that backstabbing may quietly undermine prospects and wellness even when fundamental reliability seems preserved.

The study highlights implications like advancing social undermining theory in peer managerial contexts and reinforcing the imperative for hospitality organizations to foster ethical leadership and transparent communication to mitigate subtle aggression. Limitations include sample size, gender and chain dominance, and cross-sectional design, suggesting the need for larger, more diverse, and mixed-method future studies.

BALANCING GOOD AND BAD LEADERSHIP: PARADOXICAL LEADERSHIP, ABUSIVE SUPERVISION, AND INDUSTRY TURNOVER IN HOSPITALITY

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Introduction

With an average of 1 million job openings per months in 2024, the U.S. Leisure and Hospitality industry consistently has one of the highest numbers of unfilled position across industries (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024). These rates show an industry-wide problem of labor shortage. Scant research has examined the link between leadership and industry turnover, leaving it unclear whether a single bad boss in one organization can contribute to talent loss across the entire industry. Moreover, little research has looked at how coexisting but conflicting leadership styles combine to impact hospitality workers, calling for studies on how leadership styles interact together (Guchait et al., 2023). This study draws on the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and proposes a moderated sequential mediation model that examines how paradoxical leadership influences employees' decisions to leave the hospitality industry via the sequential mediating roles of burnout and career satisfaction. Additionally, we argue that this pathway depends on the level of abusive supervision. The direct and indirect effect of paradoxical leadership can be mitigated by abusive supervision.

Methods

A time-lagged survey was used to test the proposed model. A total of 198 hospitality employees were recruited from Prolific. Participants first rated paradoxical leadership using the 22-item scale from Zhang et al. (2014), and abusive supervision with the 15-item scale from Tepper (2000). One month later, they reported their burnout with the 9-item from Maslach and Leiter (2016), career satisfaction with the 5-item scale from Smith et al. (2018), and industry turnover intention with the 3-item scale adapted from Kelloway et al. (1999).

Results/Discussion/Implication

The proposed moderated sequential mediation model was tested using path analysis in Mplus 7.3. and conditional indirect effects were examined with 50000 bootstrapping with parametric bootstrapping (Preacher et al., 2007). Results supported the proposed model: paradoxical leadership was negatively associated with burnout ($b=-.27$, $p<.05$), burnout was negatively associated with career satisfaction ($b=-.24$, $p<.001$), and career satisfaction was negatively associated with industry turnover intention ($b=-.49$, $p<.001$). The sequential indirect effect was significant (indirect effect=-.05, 95% CI=[-.10, -.002]). Abusive supervision moderated the relationship between paradoxical leadership and burnout ($b=.20$, $p<.05$), such that paradoxical leadership was more effective at reducing burnout when abusive supervision was low. The conditional indirect effect was significant when abusive supervision was low (-.05, 95% CI=[-.11, -.01]) but not high (-.02, 95% CI=[-.06, .01]).

This study contributes to leadership and turnover literature by illustrating how resource advantages from paradoxical leadership can be weakened by abusive supervision, which causes resource loss. Practically, the study highlights the importance of leadership training to reduce hostility and promote paradoxical leadership as a retention strategy. Future research should replicate this model using longitudinal or experimental studies across different cultures.

AI ADOPTION IN HOSPITALITY: INSIGHTS FROM EMPLOYEES ACROSS CULTURES

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Introduction

AI adoption in the service industry is rapidly increasing (Kong et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2025), yet integration remains difficult (Lu et al., 2025). While many hospitality employees recognize AI's benefits, others fear job loss (Koo et al., 2021), making it essential to understand attitudes toward adoption. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), this study examines perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000), alongside concerns about automation threats, job insecurity, and workplace pressure (Kong et al., 2021; Maurer, 2024; Osiceanu, 2015), emphasizing the need to balance innovation with employee acceptance.

Organizational and social influences also play key roles. Management support reflects leaders' commitment to technology (Hsu et al., 2019), organizational support provides resources and encouragement (Chiang and Hsieh, 2012), and subjective norms, or peer and supervisor influence, shape attitudes (Black et al., 2021; He et al., 2020). Strong support and social cues facilitate AI adoption.

Most hospitality AI adoption studies focus on either Western (Ali et al., 2025; Casaló et al., 2025) or Eastern contexts (Leong et al., 2025; Li et al., 2019), leaving cultural differences underexplored. Drawing on Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance framework (Hofstede, 1980, 2011), this study examines individual tolerance of uncertainty (Hillen et al., 2017; Reizer et al., 2022) and compares employees in the United States and Taiwan.The research questions are:

1. How do TAM and perceived risks affect employees' attitudes toward AI in hospitality?
2. How do management support, organizational support, and subjective norms influence AI adoption intentions?
3. How does tolerance of uncertainty moderate attitudes and intentions in the United States and Taiwan?

Methods

For TAM, four items each assessed perceived usefulness and ease of use (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Perceived risks were measured with three items each (Ali et al., 2014; Al-Ansi et al., 2019; Currás-Pérez et al., 2013; Kim & Damhorst, 2010). Management support (four items; Alam et al., 2016; Ali & Titah, 2021), organizational support (five items; Eisenberger et al., 2001), subjective norms (two items; Venkatesh et al., 2000), attitudes (three items; Lee, 2009), tolerance of uncertainty (twelve items; Carleton et al., 2007), and intention to use (three items; Venkatesh et al., 2012). All items used a seven-point Likert scale, and demographics were collected.

Two online surveys were conducted with hospitality employees in Taiwan and the U.S. A total of 302 valid responses were obtained in Taiwan and 306 in the U.S. after exclusions.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results show that perceived usefulness strongly drives employee attitudes toward AI in both Taiwan and the U.S. While ease of use has no effect and psychological time-loss risk weakens attitudes. Organizational support matters only in the U.S., and subjective norms positively influence attitudes in both countries. Additionally, tolerance of uncertainty moderates behavior in Taiwan but not in the U.S., indicating cultural differences in AI adoption sensitivity.

FROM HINDRANCE TO CHALLENGE? INCLUSIVE WORKGROUPS AND THE APPRAISAL PATHWAYS LINKING ACCULTURATIVE STRESS TO EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

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Introduction

Globalization has made hospitality and tourism one of the most culturally diverse sectors, employing many women, immigrants, and racially diverse individuals who must adapt to new languages, social norms, and service expectations (Lefrid, 2019). While diversity can enhance knowledge sharing, innovation, and service quality, it can also create subgroups and tensions that increase task conflict and reduce well-being. In diverse teams, this often leads to acculturative stress, resulting in greater exhaustion (Suwarto et al., 2024).

Despite its advantages, diversity alone does not guarantee positive outcomes without genuine inclusion. Inclusive workgroups foster a sense of belonging, psychological safety, and support, which helps buffer stress and facilitate collaboration (Li & Tang, 2022; Shore et al., 2018). According to the transactional theory of stress, employees evaluate job demands as challenges or hindrances, influencing their engagement and well-being (Folkman & Lazarus, 1986). Available resources and workplace context influence these evaluations (Pindek et al., 2024), and inclusion provides social support to shape these appraisals (Dhanani et al., 2024). While inclusion relates to trust, psychological capital, and contract fulfillment, its influence on employee appraisals in hospitality and tourism remains understudied (Umrani et al., 2024).

This study examines how inclusive workgroups influence employees' perceptions of cultural demands and their overall well-being. It integrates inclusion as a key resource within the transactional theory of stress, focusing on its effect at the secondary appraisal stage, and provides practical recommendations to minimize hindrance appraisals, convert cultural diversity into a resource, and promote job satisfaction while reducing burnout.

Methods

Frontline hospitality employees in the U.S. served as the target population for this study. Following IRB approval, data were collected using Qualtrics and distributed through Prolific in July 2025, resulting in 354 usable responses. All constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with items adapted from previous research (Chung et al., 2020; Searle & Auton, 2015). A pretest with 30 participants confirmed the validity and internal consistency of the measures (Hair et al., 2019). Data analysis was performed in AMOS 29, and moderation effects were examined using the PROCESS macro in SPSS 29.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study examines the impact of acculturative demands on employee well-being, with cognitive appraisals serving as a key mediating role. We found that cultural demands are broadly construed as hindrances, which significantly decrease job satisfaction and increase burnout. This dual mediation pattern highlights the importance of reframing demands as challenges to achieve potential gains. While perceived inclusion delivers reliable direct benefits, its limited moderating effect indicates that underlying structural issues persist in causing strain. By extending the Transactional Theory of Stress, our findings demonstrate that appraisals play a pivotal role in determining the effects of demands. Therefore, organizations operating in multicultural contexts should implement culturally competent HR policies, effective communication channels, and training that encourages cognitive reframing of challenges to mitigate burnout.

Organizational Signals in Hospitality Recruitment: The Role of Leadership and Awards

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Introduction

Recruitment in the hospitality industry is characterized by high turnover and constant demand for skilled workers, making organizational attractiveness a critical factor. Job seekers increasingly rely on online recruitment materials, websites, postings, and social media as signals of organizational values.
Drawing on signaling theory (Spence, 1973; Connelly et al., 2011) and identity threat literature (Emerson & Murphy, 2014), this study examines how leadership representation and diversity awards interact to influence applicant perceptions. Prior research suggests visible representation reduces identity threat, yet skepticism toward diversity initiatives raises questions about whether representation requires external validation. Because hospitality organizations serve a global clientele and depend on frontline service employees, recruitment practices that foster belonging and inclusion are vital for competitiveness and retention.

Methods

A 3×2 experimental design tested the effects of leadership representation (3%, 23%, 53%) and organizational awards (diversity vs. innovation) on identity threat, organizational attractiveness, and intent to apply. A total of 290 participants, including hospitality employees and job seekers, were recruited via Prolific and randomly assigned to one of six scenarios. Manipulation checks confirmed participants accurately perceived representation levels and award type. Validated scales measured identity threat (Kroeper et al., 2022), organizational attractiveness (Highhouse et al., 2003), and intent to apply (van Birgelen et al., 2008), all showing strong reliability. Hayes' PROCESS Model 83 analyzed moderated serial mediation effects, clarifying how signals combine to shape applicant outcomes.

Results/Discussion/Implications

Findings revealed that representation alone did not reduce identity threat. When paired with a diversity award, higher representation significantly lowered threat, which increased organizational attractiveness and boosted intent to apply. This demonstrates that representation requires credible third-party validation to influence applicant perceptions. Theoretically, the study extends signaling theory by showing that organizational signals interact rather than operate independently. Practically, hospitality organizations should combine visible leadership diversity with external recognition to attract talent.
Recruitment materials should highlight diverse leaders, showcase awards, and include authentic employee testimonials. Demonstrating career progression pathways for underrepresented groups further enhances attractiveness and intent to apply. Beyond hospitality, these insights can inform recruitment strategies in other service industries where inclusion and credibility are central. Future research should explore how different types of awards or validations interact with representation across cultural contexts.

NOT JUST ONE-TIME HEROES: CULTIVATING EVENT VOLUNTEER LONG-TERM RETENTION THROUGH A CHAIN MEDIATION MODEL

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Introduction

The event sector thrives due to mutual economic benefits for organizers, exhibitors, and audiences, but its short-cycle and long-interval characteristics lead to shortages of full-time and part-time staff (Novcic, 2014). Volunteers, with their flexibility and altruism, have become a critical human resource for the event industry. However, low retention rates and high turnover among volunteers persist, largely attributed to insufficient support from event managers (Cavallin et al., 2022). Grounded in Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) Theory (Alves et al., 2016; Walk et al., 2019), Social Exchange Theory (Kim & Cuskelly, 2017), and Self-Determination Theory (Zievinger & Swint, 2018), this study explores the mechanism through which human resource management practices (training & support, recognition) influence event volunteer long-term retention, addressing the gap in understanding sustained volunteer participation.

Methods

A conditional process analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 80 with 5000 bootstrap samples to test the chain mediation model. Key variables were measured via validated scales: Training & Support (7-item), Recognition (4-item), Volunteer Functional Inventory (6-item, motivational mediator), Job Satisfaction (7-item, mediating variable), and Volunteer Retention (3-item, dependent variable). The study demonstrated strong reliability and validity: overall Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.957$, KMO = 0.931 ($p < 0.001$); all constructs had Composite Reliability (CR) >
0.7 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5, meeting rigorous statistical standards.

Results/Discussion/Implications

Results confirmed that Training & Support had a significant direct positive effect on Volunteer Retention (β=0.249, 95% CI = [0.071,0.426]). It also exerted indirect influence through two independent mediating paths (Volunteer Functional Inventory: $\beta = 0.176$; Job Satisfaction: $\beta = 0.178$) and one chain mediation path (Training & Support → Volunteer Functional Inventory → Job Satisfaction → Volunteer Retention, $\beta = 0.082$). In contrast, Recognition had no significant direct effect on Volunteer Retention ($\beta = 0.159$, 95% CI = [-0.009,0.327]) but indirectly impacted retention via full mediation of Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.171$) and a chain mediation path (Recognition
→ Volunteer Functional Inventory → Job Satisfaction → Volunteer Retention, $\beta = 0.090$).

This study enriches event volunteer management literature by revealing the sequential psychological mechanism (intrinsic motivation activation → satisfaction enhancement → retention promotion) underlying volunteer retention. It provides actionable insights for event organizers by investing in systematic training and timely support, which strengthens volunteer competence and adaptability, while diverse recognition strategies (such as informal thank you, and public acknowledgment) improve emotional experiences. By satisfying volunteers' basic psychological needs, consisting of competence, belonging, and value realization, organizers can effectively boost long-term retention, addressing staffing challenges in the event sector.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN HOTEL EMPLOYMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES (ID): PARENTS' AND MENTORS' PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) experience significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, requiring ongoing educational, vocational, and social supports (AAIDD, 2021). Although disability inclusion has advanced, the hospitality sector presents unique barriers for workers with ID due to its emphasis on aesthetic and emotional labor, rapid customer adaptation, multitasking, and irregular schedules (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013). These demands, combined with persistent stereotypes about capability, contribute to disproportionately low employment rates for individuals with ID globally. In the United States, only a small fraction of adults with ID participate in competitive employment, and similar patterns are observed in Europe, despite evidence that employees with ID demonstrate strong task performance, reliability, and retention when appropriately supported (Tucker & Nash, 2025). Families and mentors play a decisive role in shaping employment pathways, as policy frameworks such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997/2004) emphasize collaborative transition planning and sustained support across education and work settings. However, hospitality research has largely overlooked these stakeholder perspectives, focusing primarily on employers and customers. To address this gap, this study examines opportunities and barriers to employment in the hotel industry through in-depth interviews with parents and mentors, using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to explore how multi-level contexts shape inclusive employment outcomes.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design, guided by an interpretivist paradigm to explore the subjective experiences of families and mentors supporting individuals with ID. Thirteen participants (six parents and seven mentors) were recruited and semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom or in person, lasting 45–90 minutes. Data were analyzed using a two-stage process. First, reflexive thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework to generate initial codes and interpret emerging patterns. Second, Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Non-Negative Matrix Factorization (NMF) were applied to the focused codes to support and cross-validate theme development.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and a qualitative design, we identify five themes across ecological levels (individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem. Findings show that immediate supports (family, job coaches, peers) improve readiness and performance, yet organizational practices (hiring pipelines, scheduling, role design) and policy/infrastructure gaps (inclusive policies, transportation) constrain access and retention. Furthermore, we argue for multi-level alignment, linking hotel HR practices with education and disability services, to translate inclusion commitments into sustained, competitive employment.

How Employee Well-Being Fuels Grassroots Hospitality Green Innovation

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Introduction

While corporate sustainability initiatives are often designed top-down, frontline employees ultimately determine whether they succeed. Drawing on the Capability–Opportunity–Motivation–Behavior (COM-B) framework (Michie et al., 2011) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), this study examines how employees' subjective well-being (SWB) moderates the COM-B mechanisms driving workplace pro-environmental behavior (PEB). Employees with greater psychological resources are theorized to translate capability, opportunity, and motivation into sustainable action more effectively than those with higher SWB.

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 300 U.S. hospitality employees via Prolific in June 2025 (283 valid responses). All constructs were adapted from validated scales: capability (physical and psychological), opportunity (physical and social), motivation (reflective and automatic), workplace PEB, and SWB (WHO-5; Topp et al., 2015). Items were rated on 7-point Likert scales. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM; SmartPLS 4.0) with 5,000 bootstraps. Reliability and validity thresholds were met (AVE > 0.50, CR > 0.80, HTMT < 0.90). Harman's single-factor test (38.5% < 50%) indicated no serious common method bias.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The PLS-SEM analysis supported the COM-B framework's validity for workplace PEB. Capability ($\beta = 0.216$, $p = 0.003$), motivation ($\beta = 0.394$, $p < .001$), and opportunity ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predicted PEB, with motivation emerging as the strongest driver. Capability ($\beta = 0.263$, $p < 0.001$) and opportunity ($\beta = 0.616$, $p < 0.001$) also increased motivation, confirming its mediating role. SWB did not directly predict PEB ($p = 0.222$) but significantly moderated key COM-B relationships: strengthening the capability–behavior link ($\beta = 0.133$, $p = 0.013$) yet weakening the motivation–behavior link ($\beta = –0.236$, $p = 0.006$), while its interaction with opportunity was non-significant ($p = 0.226$).

These findings indicate that employees' well-being shapes how personal and contextual resources translate into action. Consistent with COR theory, high-SWB employees more effectively mobilize their capabilities into sustainable actions, illustrating a resource gain spiral. Conversely, low-SWB employees rely more on motivational stimuli, demonstrating a compensatory resource mechanism whereby resource-depleted individuals respond more strongly to motivational cues. The absence of moderation for opportunity suggests it serves as a contextual buffer, equally facilitating PEB across well-being levels.

Theoretically, the study bridges COM-B and COR theory by showing that well-being functions differently depending on resource type, enhancing internal resource use (capability) while compensating for deficits (motivation). Practically, hospitality organizations should tailor sustainability interventions: capability-building for high-SWB employees and motivational programs for those with lower SWB.

WHAT MY COWORKERS TOLD ME INFLUENCED MY PERCEPTION: THE ANTECEDENTS OF PERCEIVED OVERQUALIFICATION IN THE ADJUSTMENT AND SOCIALIZATION PHASE

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Introduction
Perceived overqualification (POQ), where employees feel their education, knowledge, and abilities surpass job requirements (Maynard et al., 2006), has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes, especially in the hospitality industry, with many entry-level positions and limited skill requirements (Yu et al., 2025). While prior studies have emphasized the consequences of POQ, few have examined its antecedents (Erdogan & Bauer, 2021). Drawing on the sensemaking with social influence framework (Lamertz, 2002), the present study examines how newcomers' POQ develop through social cues from coworkers. Specifically, it investigates how coworkers' organizational identification and occupational commitment influence newcomers' perceptions of liking their organization and perceptions of career opportunities, which in turn form their POQ.

Methods
Study 1 aimed to examine the sense-making process using Prolific. Data were collected from 300 employees who were randomly assigned to one of four scenario-based experimental conditions, which involved coworkers having either positive or negative perceptions of their organizations and occupations. Data from Study 2 included 119 newcomers and 389 coworkers at four- and five-star hotels in China. Surveys were conducted at three one-month intervals to track adjustment changes. Coworkers reported their organizational identification and occupational commitment in the first month. Then, newcomers reported their liking of the organization and perceived career opportunities after two months, and their POQ after three months. All items used five-point Likert scales and were translated via back-translation (Douglas & Craig, 2007). Multi-level analyses with Mplus 7.2 tested the nested structure of serial mediations and moderating effects.

Results/Discussion/Implication
First, the results of study 1 showed that coworkers' perceptions of their organizations and occupations significantly influenced employees' views in these areas. However, only perceptions related to occupations had a significant indirect effect on perceived overqualification. Building on previous findings, Study 2 showed that coworkers' organizational identification and occupational commitment positively affect newcomers' organizational liking and perceived career opportunities. While perceived career opportunities reduced POQ, organizational liking did not. The similarities between coworkers and newcomers enhanced social influence, linking their organizational identity, job commitment, and perceptions of liking and career opportunities. These findings highlight POQ as a social construct and advance its literature by uncovering social mechanisms behind misfit perceptions during newcomer adjustment. Notably, positive perceptions of the organization did not influence POQ, highlighting the strong significance of occupational perspectives in relation to POQ. These perspectives are more closely linked to shared views of role identity and growth than to organizational context. Practically, aside from the organizational factor, actively fostering occupational commitment among staff can help newcomers feel connected, reduce POQ, and enhance retention in the hospitality industry.
References available upon reques

EXPLORING WORK-LIFE DYNAMICS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

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Introduction

Hospitality and tourism face persistent staffing challenges, with work-life issues frequently cited as a core driver of attrition. For example, Croes et al. (2021) found that poor working conditions, especially lack of work-life balance, were a primary reason employees left and did not return to industry after the pandemic. However, despite the ongoing challenges faced by employees, comprehensive understanding of work-life issues remains limited. Existing literature often treats conflict and balance separately, limiting integrative understanding. Thus, this study aims to map the intellectual structure and evolution of work-life research in hospitality and tourism by integrating both positive (e.g., balance) and negative (e.g., conflict) aspects to provide a holistic view and identify gaps for future inquiry.

Methods

Anchored in prior HTM reviews (e.g., Kim and So, 2022; Legendre et al., 2024), this study used Web of Science (April 2025) as the primary database and followed PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). A comprehensive search strategy employing variants of "work-life" terms was applied. English-language publications from hospitality and tourism journals were retained, along with selected management journals to contextualize the field's evolution. After identification, screening, and eligibility checks, 302 articles were included. Bibliometric analyses covering venue trends, temporal growth, and keyword co-occurrence were conducted to trace research trajectories and cluster themes.

Results

Work-life research first emerged in the 1980s, accelerated after 2006, and surged again from 2019 to 2025. In leading HTM outlets, the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* and the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* together account for nearly half of publications, signaling a stronger emphasis on hospitality than tourism. Keyword co-occurrence mapping revealed four thematic clusters: (1) work-family conflict and boundary management (e.g., roles, gender, boundaries), (2) job demands/resources and well-being (e.g., burnout, emotional exhaustion, stress, COR/JD-R), (3) quality of working life and retention (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, perceived organizational/supervisor support), and (4) antecedents and outcomes (e.g., performance, involvement, strain). Overall, the field remains rooted in conflict/strain but is shifting toward resource-based explanations, support mechanisms, and retention outcomes.

Discussion/Implication

Integrating conflict and balance clarifies how resource loss and gain shape employee well-being and downstream outcomes (e.g., commitment, turnover intentions). Practically, organizations should (a) strengthen boundary management and supportive supervision, (b) invest in resource-replenishing practices to curb burnout, and (c) tailor policies to sector realities. Future research should examine non-family life domains (e.g., leisure, community, health), tourism-specific roles (e.g., flight attendants, cruise staff), and digital connectivity's effects on detachment and recovery.

WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE UNWRITTEN: CONCEPTUALIZING IMPLICIT IN-ROLE BEHAVIOR

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Introduction
Employee behavior has long been categorized into in-role and extra-role activities (Williams & Anderson, 1991). However, this distinction is increasingly blurred in service contexts such as hospitality, where the quality of work relies on emotional labor and personalized service (Kim & Jang, 2023). Employees frequently perform behaviors that are not formally documented yet are widely regarded as necessary for their jobs. This study introduces the concept of *implicit in-role behavior*, defined as tasks, responsibilities, or behaviors that are not officially written in job descriptions but are internalized as essential parts of one's role. Unlike organizational citizenship behavior, which is voluntary (Ma et al., 2023), implicit in-role behavior reflects internalized obligation and social learning that make unwritten expectations feel mandatory. Understanding this construct helps clarify how employees interpret the boundaries of their work roles and provides a more refined taxonomy of employee performance.

Methods
A grounded theory approach was used to explore this construct (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Twenty Japanese hospitality employees from luxury hotels, resorts, and ryokans participated in semi-structured Zoom interviews lasting about an hour. Participants varied in age, role, and department. Transcripts were coded via open, axial, and selective coding with the constant comparative method. Two coders independently analyzed the transcripts, resolved discrepancies through discussion, and aimed for theoretical saturation.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Three core dimensions were identified as *implicit in-role behavior*. First, *internalized obligation* reflects employees' perception that unwritten tasks are part of their job duties, even without formal recognition. Second, *variable emotional tone* highlights that these behaviors evoke both pride and fatigue depending on employees' value alignment and organizational support. Third, *subjectivity* shows that what is perceived as part of one's role varies among individuals and contexts. Antecedents of *implicit in-role behavior* emerged across three levels. At the individual level, factors such as customer orientation (Donavan et al., 2004), organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1979), and personality traits such as altruism and diligence were prominent. At the team level, leadership modeling (Belschak & Hartog, 2025), teamwork norms (Eby & Dobbins, 1997), and peer influence (Hackman, 1992) reinforced unspoken expectations. At the organizational level, service-oriented climates and ambiguous job descriptions encouraged employees to define implicit boundaries of their work (Griffin et al., 2007). This study clarifies *implicit in-role behavior* as a distinct construct connecting formal and discretionary actions, enhancing understanding of the gray area between in-role and extra-role behaviors. It encourages managers to recognize and clarify implicit expectations, which can improve service quality but may also cause employee strain if unacknowledged. Managers should promote transparent communication and fair evaluation to support both service excellence and employee well-being. Future research should empirically validate this construct across different cultural and industry conte

BEHIND THE KITCHEN DOORS: NAVIGATING OCCUPATIONAL STIGMA IN CULINARY PROFESSIONALS OF NEPAL

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Introduction

Occupational stigma is a prevalent issue among culinary professionals in the hospitality industry. Kini et al. (2025) emphasize that kitchen staff face considerable challenges, including time pressure, high business volumes, multitasking, unpredictable order flow, and the constant demand to meet customer expectations (p. 1). Culinary occupations are often perceived as "socially undesirable" and "unskilled" (Mouf et al., 2023; Shigihara, 2018). Despite the availability of advanced education or training, these positions are frequently dismissed as women's work and lack societal respect (Moufakkir, 2023). As observed by Shigihara (2018), restaurant jobs are generally perceived as inferior, suited only for the unskilled or less educated. Frontline hospitality and tourism workers similarly face stigma due to associations with 'dirty work' (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Lv et al., 2024), which can undermine the perceived meaningfulness and social worth of their roles (Huang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Most existing research into occupational stigma in hospitality has been conducted in Western contexts (Kusluvan et al., 2023; Wen et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Soral et al. (2025), in their study of Indian beauty salon professionals, expanded the destigmatization literature and called for further empirical research on diverse occupations, including culinary professionals, and across different cultural settings, such as Nepal. In response, this paper examines both the stigma experienced by culinary professionals and the processes of destigmatization within this occupational context.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 16 culinary professionals to investigate occupational stigma. Through purposive sampling, researchers conducted in-person interviews with participants from diverse settings, including star-rated hotels, restaurants, and academic institutions, to ensure varied perspectives. To minimize bias, interviewers avoided explicit words such as "dirty" or "stigma" (Soral et al., 2025) and instead focused on inquiries regarding societal perceptions, professional challenges and advantages, efforts to alter public opinion, and observed changes in attitudes. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) reflexive method, was employed to transcribe and code responses, identifying both explicit and underlying themes through several rounds of discussion. Attention to reflexivity supported the overall credibility of the findings.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Occupational stigma is prevalent among culinary professionals in Nepal, primarily due to low occupational prestige, bias, cultural barriers, and misconceptions about the hospitality industry. On the other hand, recognition of the profession is increasing as respect and opportunities for advancement improve. Our findings contribute to the destigmatization literature, demonstrating that empowered identities, adaptable career mindsets, resilient professional practices, and shifting societal attitudes all influence occupational stigma. These insights can help culinary professionals advance their careers and improve their profession's image through effective policy and social marketing.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Introduction
Organizational communication encompasses both formal (e.g., annual reports) and informal channels (e.g., Google Reviews) to convey intentions to internal (e.g., employees) and external (e.g., vendors) stakeholders (e.g., Madera, 2013; Zhang et al., 2026). Additionally, diverse demographics (McKinsey & Company, 2023) have influenced how organizations communicate their intentions, values, and characteristics (Willis, 2021). As diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have developed over recent decades, they continue to serve as fundamental organizational principles and span multiple scholarly disciplines (Madera, 2013; Madera et al., 2024). Several review articles have explored general diversity and diversity management research (e.g., Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017; Koç et al., 2025; Madera et al., 2023; Manoharan & Singal, 2017), each contributing uniquely to understanding the DEI research. However, little attention has been given to organizational identity and the communication of DEI. To examine the intersection of organizational communication and diversity management practices, this study combines a scoping review with a bibliometric analysis of existing literature, highlighting emerging trends and future research directions.

Methods
The dataset was retrieved from Scopus using “diversity” and “organizational communication” keywords from 2010 to 2025. This focused examination's initial search resulted in 201 articles, with 128 articles remaining after the removal of duplicates and articles not relevant to the objective. Analyses were conducted using VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Following best practices in bibliometric mapping, keywords were condensed to singular form, spelling variants were standardized, and merging of standard terms was explored with common abbreviation harmonization.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Eleven clusters emerged from this network, consisting of 65 items that comprise the dataset's corpus. These themes include: (1) demographics, (2) organization, (3) organizational behavior and workforce dynamics, (4) organizational identity, culture and inclusion, (5) communication,
(6) diversity and learning, (7) communication infrastructure and strategies, (8) culture, (9) industry practices and diversity management, (11) policy, (12) leadership, and (13) spirituality. The demographics and organization of the top two clusters were analyzed. The demographic cluster (12 items) includes terms such as “female”, “male”, “social class”, and “happiness”, highlighting the importance of demographic attributes in organizational communication. The organization clusters (11 items) includes terms such as “diversity”, “organizational communication”, “paradox”, “community organizing”, “corporate social responsibility”, and “social justice”. Future research could explore how organizations convey their values across
different levels and how various channels can be used to align mission, values, and actions with their DEI practices.

References are available upon request

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY: AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND COWORKER SUPPORT ON COMMITMENT

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Introduction

Sexual harassment is pervasive in hospitality and food and beverage (F&B) settings, where late hours, alcohol, low pay, and power imbalances heighten vulnerability (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Sherwyn & Wagner, 2018). Tipped workers, dependent on customer goodwill, often tolerate misconduct to protect income, while the "customer is always right" mentality normalizes inappropriate behavior (Booyens et al., 2022; Dawson et al., 2023). Such cultures render harassment an accepted job characteristic (Min et al., 2023). Limited formal support (e.g., organizational policies and training) and insufficient informal support (e.g., emotional backing from colleagues) further discourage reporting (Mensah, 2019; Mitsakis et al., 2025). For example, although formal interventions such as training and policy initiatives are common, their effectiveness remains unclear (Johnson & Madera, 2018; Moreo et al., 2022). Therefore, drawing on Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction (BNS; Deci & Ryan, 2000) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978), this study examines how sexual harassment undermines employees' needs and how formal and informal support may buffer its negative effects.

Methods

This project includes two online scenario-based experiments on workplace sexual harassment. Study 1 used a 2 (harasser: customer vs. coworker) x 3 (formal support: training vs. policy vs. control) design, while Study 2 used a 3 (harassment source: customer vs. coworker vs. none) x 2 (informal support: support vs. none) design. U.S. hospitality workers (Study 1: $n = 394$; Study 2: $n = 251$) completed demographic questions, read scenarios, and rated key variables. AI-generated images depicted harassers and supportive coworkers to standardize stimuli and ensure ethical realism (Ricker et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024). Analyses included CFA, SEM, and moderated mediation regressions conducted in Python using pandas, semopy, statsmodels, and pingouin.

Discussion

Findings revealed consistent and meaningful patterns across both studies. In Study 1, neither formal sexual harassment training nor policy significantly altered the relationship between harassment and BNS, suggesting organizational-level interventions alone may have limited short-term impact. In contrast, Study 2 highlighted the critical role of informal support: employees who experienced supportive peers reported higher BNS, whereas those in unsupportive environments felt greater relational strain. Supportive coworkers buffered the negative effects of harassment, while unsupportive colleagues intensified them. Overall, interpersonal support plays a more immediate and powerful role in mitigating the emotional and motivational consequences of harassment than formal structures. Mediation findings show that harassment undermines employees' BNS, which in turn erodes commitment and increased turnover intentions. Together, these results underscore that while formal systems matter, cultivating supportive coworker relationships may be the most effective way to protect employee well-being and retention.

References available upon request

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND GREEN HRM: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ETHICAL CLIMATE AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

Tourism, one of the world’s most resource-dependent industries, faces growing pressure to operate sustainably while maintaining service quality (World Tourism Organization & United Nations Development Programme, 2017). As many sustainability efforts rely on voluntary employee engagement, understanding drivers of organizational citizenship behavior for the environment (OCBE)—discretionary actions that reduce environmental impact—is essential (Boiral & Paillé, 2012). Guided by Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), this study examines how ethical climate (EC) and green human resource management (GHRM) influence organizational commitment (OC) and self-actualization (SA), and how these factors jointly shape OCBE. EC reflects shared ethical norms, while GHRM embeds sustainability into HR practices (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Dumont et al., 2017). This study extends SIT by exploring how ethical climate and OCBE foster employee identification and pro-environmental behavior in Hawai‘i’s tourism sector.

Methods

A quantitative, cross-sectional design examined relationships among EC, GHRM, OC, SA, and OCBE. Data were collected between October 2023 and May 2024 through an online survey distributed via statewide tourism and business associations. The final sample included 232 employees from hotels, airlines, and other tourism-related organizations across Hawai‘i.

Established seven-point Likert scales were adapted from prior studies: EC (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012), GHRM (Dumont et al., 2017), OC (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993), SA (Sheldon et al., 2001), and OCBE (Boiral & Paillé, 2012). Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) following Hair et al. (2021). Reliability and convergent validity were confirmed through Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was confirmed using Fornell-Larcker criteria.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings supported the proposed hypotheses. An other-focused EC increased OC, while a self-focused EC reduced it. GHRM increased SA but did not directly influence OC. OC positively affected SA, and SA, in turn, enhanced OCBE. Mediation results showed that OC and SA each transmitted the effects of EC-self and EC-others to OCBE, indicating that SA is a key identity-based pathway through which EC and OC shape OCBE.Theoretically, this study extends SIT by demonstrating that self-actualization fosters ethical and GHRM foster sustainability-oriented behavior. Practically, tourism organizations can promote engagement by embedding GHRM systems and cultivating climates of fairness, integrity, and care. Supporting employees’ sense of purpose and growth can advance behaviors that align with Hawai‘i’s sustainability goals.

References are available upon request

CONSISTENCY IS KEY: UNPACKING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYER BRANDING AND HOTEL EMPLOYEE BRAND PERFORMANCE

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Introduction

In hospitality, where employee performance directly shapes guest experiences, employer branding serves as a strategy to position organizations as desirable workplaces and enhance engagement and service quality (Theurer et al., 2022). This study examines how employer branding is most effective when it aligns with employees' lived experiences, shifting evaluation from image-based to experience-based perspectives. The strategic value of a strong employer brand is espoused in literature, yet this logic assumes consistency between employer brand promises and actual employee work experiences (Saini et al., 2022).

From a psychological contract perspective, employer branding functions as an implicit promise; when unmet, it can lead to diminished trust and organizational cynicism. Subsequently, such dissonance may cause employees to doubt or disengage from brand values (Mignonac et al., 2023). Accordingly, this study investigates whether perceptions of employer brand dimensions influence employee brand performance indirectly through organizational cynicism.

This research adopts a process-based framework grounded in Bowen and Ostroff's (2004) HRM system strength model, conceptualizing employer branding through three dimensions: distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus. Distinctiveness reflects perceived uniqueness, consistency reflects congruence between brand messages and managerial behavior, and consensus represents shared employee agreement about the brand. The study hypothesizes that consistency is the strongest predictor of brand-supportive behaviors.

Methods

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, with a sample of 525 hotel industry professionals. Constructs were measured with previously validated scales. Using PLS-SEM, the research model tested the direct impact of employer brand (EB) process elements (distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus) on employee brand performance, together with the mediating role of organizational cynicism.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The hypotheses received mixed support, indicating complex relationships between EB dimensions and employee outcomes. EB distinctiveness and consistency significantly enhanced brand performance and reduced organizational cynicism, while consensus showed no meaningful effects. Cynicism negatively affected performance, supporting its role as a barrier to brand-aligned behavior. Overall, consistency emerged as the most influential EB process dimension, suggesting that coherent and reliable branding messages are more effective than shared perceptions (i.e., consensus) alone in fostering employee alignment with an employer's brand identity.

The findings contribute to employer branding theory by emphasizing internal alignment over external image and recommend for practitioners that employer branding strategies should prioritize ensuring work experiences reflect brand promises.

PEELING THE ONION: UNDERSTANDING THE LAYERS OF WORKPLACE STIGMA FOR EMPLOYEES WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES, A JOB COACHES' PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

For the hospitality industry, recruitment, selection, and retention are critical priorities where persistent turnover and labor shortages demand creative workforce solutions. While efforts often target turnover reduction, untapped talent pools such as individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) remain overlooked. This study investigates employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities (EIDD) in the hospitality industry by engaging with key yet understudied stakeholders: job coaches. The interviews reveal that stigma and self-stigma strongly influence disclosure, confidence, and long-term retention, shaping the challenges job coaches encounter and the opportunities for inclusion in the hospitality industry.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews to explore job coaches' perspectives on placing IDD individuals in the hospitality workforce. The critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) served as a framework, identifying significant positive and negative events. Seventeen interviews were conducted, lasting approximately 30 minutes (13 to 66 minutes). This sample size was determined by theoretical saturation, when no new themes or insights emerged (Strauss, 1987). Participants were asked about their role as a job coach, job requirements, and the job placement process. Thematic analysis was conducted using Dedoose to identify patterns systematically.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The key themes that emerged from the interviews are the stigma and underestimation that IDD individuals encounter, resulting in the common practice of nondisclosure of other challenges. Job coaches described IDD individuals as facing stigma in their personal and professional lives. On the job, they are seen as different and have challenges integrating with co-workers. At home it is common for families and caretakers to diminish their abilities and aspirations.

To better understand these patterns, stigma theory provides a useful interpretive lens. Stigma involves processes of labeling, stereotyping, social separation, status loss, and discrimination operating within everyday relationships and institutions (Zhang et al., 2021).
Commonly discussed forms include anticipated, perceived, and internalized/self stigma (Moore et al., 2018).

A subsequent challenge that stems from the stigma and underestimation that IDD individuals face in the job market is their tendency not to disclose other issues, to employers as well as job coaches, that may limit them. The interviews highlight the importance of intersectionality, emphasizing how overlapping marginalized identities interact to produce unique barriers, often compounding stigma (Crenshaw, 1989; 2013).

The findings suggest that stigma, self-stigma, and intersecting marginalized identities are central factors influencing the employment experiences of EIDD in the workplace. The challenges identified by job coaches extend beyond skills training or workplace logistics and are connected to broader social perceptions, family attitudes, and structural inequities that influence EIDD disclosure, confidence, and long-term success.

COPING WITH CUSTOMER INCIVILITY: A LATENT PROFILE ANALYSIS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Introduction

Frontline hospitality employees frequently experience customer incivility, which is defined as low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Such encounters negatively affect well-being and service performance and require employees to regulate emotions while maintaining service standards. The transactional model of stress and coping views coping as individuals' cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage appraised stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Most studies have examined single coping strategies, yet employees commonly use several strategies at once. To address this gap, the present research uses a person-centered approach to identify naturally occurring coping profiles and examine how these configurations relate to well-being and employee response performance. The study also investigates whether perceived supervisor support and event intensity shape employees' likelihood of adopting specific coping patterns.

Methods

Two online studies were conducted with service employees who recalled a recent experience of customer incivility (Melloy et al., 2024). Participants then rated five coping strategies: distancing, social support, reinterpretation, restraint, and active coping (Carver et al., 1989). Study one (n = 276) identified coping profiles using latent profile analysis. Study two (n = 302) replicated the profiles and tested antecedents and outcomes using the three-step mixture modeling procedure described by Asparouhov and Muthen (2014). Perceived supervisor support and event intensity were assessed as predictors, and vitality and service recovery performance were examined as outcomes.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Latent profile analysis in both studies identified four coping profiles. The Problem Solver profile reflected high use of problem-focused strategies. The Balancer profile reflected moderate use across strategies. The Super Coper profile reflected high levels of all coping strategies. The Drifter profile reflected minimal use of coping strategies. Event intensity predicted a greater likelihood of enacting the Drifter profile rather than the Problem Solver or Super Coper profiles, suggesting that highly intense encounters reduce employees' capacity to engage in effortful coping. Perceived supervisor support predicted the use of Problem Solver, Balancer, and Super Coper profiles rather than the Drifter profile, indicating that supportive supervision provides resources that enable more active coping. Super Copers reported the highest vitality and service recovery performance, while Drifters reported the lowest. Problem Solvers reported vitality levels similar to Super Copers, consistent with the idea that problem-focused coping restores a sense of control. These findings show that coping with customer incivility is best understood as a set of configurations rather than isolated behaviors. Training programs that build employees' coping repertoires and strengthen supervisor support may enhance both resilience and service recovery.

References are available upon requ

READY TO LEAP? THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL ANXIETY ON EMERGING HOSPITALITY LEADERS

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Introduction

Today's college students are grappling with raised social anxiety in recent years due to pressure to succeed from increased testing or unprecedented input from smartphones (Flannery, 2018). Increased social anxiety is detrimental to the hospitality and tourism industry. Despite the increased use of technology, hospitality remains centered around an intangible product because of its inseparability from the guest (Amissah et al., 2022; Kumari & Oman, 2024; Perdue, 2002). Therefore, social aspects of service interactions are crucial skills for all future managers to learn. As the host- today's student, the future hospitality leader must be ready to assert themselves and take care of the guest, train staff and manage conflict.

The cognitive theory of social anxiety explains how individuals distort their thinking to downplay their strengths and see social interactions as threats. The current three-part study seeks to address social anxiety in emerging hospitality leaders. Specifically, college-level students studying hospitality management and other related majors. The goal of the study is to determine the effect of levels of anxiety on students' capability to lead in their newly acquired managerial roles. The first phase of the study sought information directly from students through self-report study. This paper addresses the second phase with direct observer report by internship supervisors. The three-part study has an expansive viewpoint compared to prior social anxiety research by examing multiple stakeholders of the work readiness question, addressing a critical gap in the research.

Methods

Direct supervisors of students completing their internship were sent a survey questionnaire in mid-summer 2025 to be completed within the last weeks of the student internship experience. One hundred and five supervisor responses were collected and used for analysis.

Survey scales included questions on skill sets identified for work readiness (Hoque et al., 2023). Each question employed a 4-point Likert scale, as well as an option for "Not Observed". The questionnaire was developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.

Results/Discussion/Implications

In the first phase of the three-part study, the authors showed significant findings of self-reported student anxiety and its negative effects on their work readiness. All work readiness skills were found to be statistically significantly higher than the mean p=.001 except for the skill of leadership p=.061. By observer ratings, there was a statistically significant number of students with strong levels of work readiness. Based on the analysis of results of the current study, H1 and H2 are supported. The means reported from observer ratings show that, on average, students who have completed their internship experiences have adopted early application of the work-readiness skills, indicating support for H3.

There is an impact of increased levels of social anxiety on work readiness of hospitality management students. The outcomes of this research provide insight into the current social skillset of future hospitality leaders. Theoretical implications include a confirmation of the social anxiety that exists despite the socialization that exists on a typical university campus.

HOSPITALITY CULTURE IN ORGANIZATIONS: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Organizational culture is widely recognized in strategic management as a source of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). One form of organizational culture that appears in the extant literature is *hospitality culture*, a phenomenon that to date lacks a strong theoretical explanation. As a result, the term is often invoked without conceptual precision; sometimes as a set of contextual aspects that characterize the hospitality industry (e.g. Dawson et al., 2011), and other times as one of the dimensions of "experiencescape" (e.g. Shen et al., 2024; Hu & Chen, 2024), leaving its meaning ambiguous. This study addresses that gap by clarifying the boundaries of *hospitality culture* in the commercial context and proposing a working definition that can serve as the foundation for future theoretical and empirical research.

Therefore, this paper (1) systematically reviews the literature on *hospitality culture*, (2) clarifies its boundaries in relation to service culture, (3) proposes a working definition, (4) situates *hospitality culture* within organizational culture theory, and (5) develops propositions to guide future theoretical and empirical work.

Methods

Two search strategies were used: (1) systematic review of the extant *hospitality culture* literature as well as (2) review of foundational works in organizational culture. (1) We searched for the exact phrases "hospitality culture" and "culture of hospitality" in Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, limiting the search to titles, abstracts, and keywords. After screening the results to ensure relevance to the commercial hospitality context, the final corpus comprised 22 articles.

(2) To situate *hospitality culture* within broader management theory, we also reviewed foundational works on organizational culture (e.g., Schein, 1985, 2004; O'Reilly, et al., 1991; Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Denison et al., 2003) and on service culture as a related construct.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Efforts to define *hospitality culture* remain fragmented. Dawson et al. (2011) introduced the Hospitality Culture Scale (HCS) to operationalize the construct but conflated industry contextual traits with the deeper meaning of hospitality. Similarly, Tepeci and Bartlett's (2002) Hospitality Industry Culture Profile (HICP) mapped prevailing values without theorizing the concept. Pizam (2021) offered the only explicit definition; it remains underspecified. Drawing on its etymological and historical roots, the proposed working definition reframes *hospitality culture* as *a pattern of organizational behaviors and practices grounded in shared values, beliefs, and assumptions that prioritize care, generosity in relational exchange, and ethical service. These behaviors aim to make the "stranger"—whether guest, employee, or stakeholder— feel welcomed and valued, providing the foundation for meaningful and memorable experiences.*

Within organizational culture theory, *hospitality culture* intersects but does not fit neatly within existing frameworks. Based on these insights, seven propositions are proposed to guide future research, highlighting *hospitality culture's* distinctiveness, ethical and experiential focus, relational scope, and strategic potential as a differentiating organizational capability.

CONTEXTUALIZING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

Sexual harassment remains one of the most damaging and persistent workplace problems, producing negative psychological, physical, and career consequences for employees as well as legal and reputational risks for organizations. Employees in hospitality and tourism settings are especially vulnerable due to customer service norms, emotional labor expectations, aesthetic requirements, and limited protections that together normalize harassment. Research following the #MeToo movement has expanded, but many reviews treat context as background rather than a central factor shaping how harassment occurs and is understood. We draw upon Johns's (2006) organizational context framework to explain how sexual harassment in hospitality is defined, experienced, and influenced by multilevel conditions. This review examines how harassment has been measured, which contextual conditions shape its meaning, and how integrating context can strengthen both theory and practice.

Methods

Searches were conducted in Web of Science and Scopus using keywords related to sexual harassment, hospitality occupations and settings, amongst others. Forward and backward citation searches complemented the database search. Studies were included if they were empirical, peer-reviewed, written in English, and published in indexed journals. After removing duplicates and screening 4,821 titles and abstracts, 1,018 full texts were reviewed. The final dataset included 108 empirical articles published between 1982 and 2025. Articles were coded for definitions, perpetrators, outcomes, theoretical frameworks, and contextual features aligned with Johns's omnibus (who, where, when) and discrete (social, task, physical, temporal) dimensions.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The reviewed literature reveals distinct patterns across Johns's omnibus and discrete contextual dimensions. At the omnibus level, the "who" of context is dominated by frontline women and younger workers, with customers and supervisors most often identified as perpetrators. Perspectives of managers, executives, men, and sexual minorities remain limited. The "where" dimension reflects the hospitality segments or settings in which the studies were conducted (e.g., hotel, restaurant). The "when" dimension reflects legal changes and societal events that shape how harassment is recognized and reported.

At the discrete level, social context includes customer entitlement and tip dependence. Task context includes emotional labor and precarious work arrangements. Physical context involves guest rooms, uniforms, and back-of-house spaces that reduce visibility. Temporal context includes night shifts and unstable schedules, which increase risk. These findings reveal that context is not merely background noise but an active force shaping the occurrence, meaning, and consequences of sexual harassment. The framework highlights the need for multilevel and cross-cultural approaches that explicitly incorporate contextual features.

References are available upon request

Completed Research:
IT Adoption & Application

THE COST OF CONFIDENCE: HOW ASSERTIVE AI TONE UNDERMINES CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT ACROSS DIFFERENT AI DISCLOSURE TIMING

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Introduction

Service organizations increasingly deploy AI agents that speak in confident, directive language on the assumption that confidence signals competence. Yet our multi-study project shows this intuition can be misleading: in service encounters where trust, collaboration, and repeated use matter, assertive AI tone may erode the very engagement firms seek to build. Drawing on warmth–competence and psychological reactance perspectives, we propose that assertive phrasing (e.g., "you should…") lowers perceived warmth and authenticity, which then weakens satisfaction and continued usage intention. We further examine whether common design levers identified in industry practice—especially AI identity disclosure timing—can buffer this relational cost, and whether transactional cues such as financial incentives or users' general AI preference can offset the harm of an overly confident AI.

Methods

We first ran a pretest to validate the tone manipulation (assertive vs. unassertive) in an AI recommendation scenario. We then conducted four studies progressing from controlled to realistic settings. Study 1 used a 2 (tone) × 2 (context) design to test mediation through warmth and authenticity. Study 2 expanded to a 2 (tone) × 3 (financial incentive: 0%, 5%, 15%) × 2 (AI preference: low vs. high) design to probe boundary conditions. Study 3 embedded tone in a functional AI food recommendation app and added disclosure timing (before, after, none). Study 4 field-tested the effects in a browser-based AI service with behavioral outcomes (clicks, time on page). All key constructs were measured on 7-point scales and analyzed with ANOVA and mediation models.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Across the pretest and four studies, assertive AI tone consistently reduced satisfaction and especially continued usage intention. Study 1 showed that assertive tone significantly lowered warmth and authenticity and that both cues transmitted the effect to continued usage. Study 2 identified a three-way interaction: the negative tone effect disappeared when users both received financial incentives and had high AI preference. Study 3 found that disclosure timing did not meaningfully repair the effect—users cared more about how the AI spoke than when it disclosed. Study 4 replicated the pattern with behavioral metrics: unassertive AI generated more clicks and longer session duration. Together, these findings challenge the industry instinct to "sound confident."

A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK AND SCALE DEVELOPMENT FOR AI ANTHROPOMORPHISM

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are increasingly embedded in customer-facing roles across sectors such as healthcare, retail, and hospitality (e.g., Xu et al., 2024). Firms often incorporate anthropomorphic cues into AI to improve efficiency, mitigate labor shortages, and enhance service quality (e.g., Mehmood et al., 2024). Yet the effects of AI anthropomorphism remain mixed. Although anthropomorphic features can enhance trust and engagement (e.g., Lu et al., 2019), emerging studies also report unintended negative consequences, such as identity threat and privacy concerns, that contradict managerial expectations (e.g., Tojib et al., 2023).

A key reason for these inconsistent findings lies in the incomplete conceptualization of AI anthropomorphism in prior research (e.g., Kim & Im, 2023). When foundational definitions are partial, measurement becomes equally limited. Important humanlike characteristics remain underrepresented. For example, morality, central to ethical judgment and fairness (Haslam & Longhnan, 2014), is rarely emphasized, and fallibility, the human imperfection that fosters relatability (Reason, 1990), is almost entirely absent. Without these dimensions, existing frameworks risk underrepresenting the construct and restricting theoretical and practical insights. This research addresses these gaps by reconceptualizing AI anthropomorphism as a multidimensional construct. First, to overcome the limitations of context-specific approaches, we propose a framework integrating both extrinsic and intrinsic humanlike traits across AI types (robot vs. chatbot) and service contexts (normal service vs. service failure). Second, the framework incorporates both human virtues and vices, capturing morality and fallibility alongside appearance, cognition, and social intelligence. Third, the framework is grounded in theory, guided by one overarching and four dimension-specific perspectives. Fourth, using a rigorous six-step scale development process with 2,944 participants, we validate a parsimonious 40-item, six-dimensional Scale of AI Anthropomorphism (SAIA).

Methods

The study followed a rigorous six-step scale development process. We conceptualized AI anthropomorphism from six theories, specified SAIA as a reflective scale, generated 155 items through literature review and focus groups, refined items via two EFAs, validated the six-dimensional structure through CFA, and established nomological validity using four datasets and SEM analyses across diverse AI-enabled service contexts.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This reconceptualization and validation yield contributions for multiple audiences. For academia, the study provides a generalizable and theoretically grounded framework that addresses the fragmentation of prior research and establishes a stronger basis for cumulative theory building. For industry, it highlights which anthropomorphic features should be emphasized, adapted, or avoided depending on AI type and service context, thereby helping managers design and deploy AI more strategically. For society, it underscores the importance of morality and transparency in AI design, ensuring ethical adoption and preventing over-trust or misuse.

DESIGNING ENGAGEMENT: HOW INTERFACE MODES SHAPE YOUNG ADULTS' FLOW AND ACCEPTANCE IN 360° VIRTUAL TOURS

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Introduction

Digital visualization technologies have transformed destination marketing and visitor engagement. Among them, 360° virtual tours (VTs) have become accessible tools that combine photographic realism with interactive exploration (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). However, most existing studies either treat 360° VTs as equivalent to immersive VR or rely on retrospective surveys that fail to capture immediate psychological states (Kim & Hall, 2019; Rahimizhian et al., 2020). This study integrates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with flow theory to examine how usability and intrinsic motivation jointly influence user engagement with VTs. Young adults were selected as the focal group because they represent digital-native users most familiar with interactive visual technologies. The study aims to identify (1) how psychological factors such as concentration and curiosity contribute to continued usage intentions, and (2) how different interface designs shape flow experience and perceived usefulness.

Methods

A concurrent mixed-methods design combined quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews was employed. 115 participants experienced two laboratory sessions featuring two 360° VTs with contrasting interface designs: (1) a travel-simulated mode (Summer Palace) emphasizing spatial navigation and audio guidance; and (2) a webpage-style mode (Mogao Caves) emphasizing textual richness and linear browsing. Each session lasted three minutes (Zhang et al., 2023). After each session, participants completed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. Quantitative data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), while qualitative data were examined via thematic analysis to identify patterns of attention, curiosity, and hedonic responses.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results confirmed the validity of the integrated TAM–flow framework. For the travel-simulated VT, the dominant path was perceived ease of use → perceived usefulness → concentration → hedonic pursuit → continued usage intention, reflecting the synergy between usability and spatial immersion. For the webpage-style VT, curiosity replaced concentration as the key mediator, indicating that text-based navigation stimulated exploratory engagement. Qualitative findings showed that participants valued clear maps and audio guides for orientation but found long narrations fatiguing, while others appreciated concise text and keyword highlighting for efficient learning. Both interfaces enhanced hedonic enjoyment and positive attitudes toward virtual tourism.

This study advances theory by linking TAM constructs with distinct flow dimensions (concentration and curiosity), offering a nuanced view of how design affects psychological engagement in non-immersive environments. Practically, the results suggest that destination managers should align interface design with user intent (travel-simulated tours for presence and immersion, webpage-style tours for information and curiosity. Future research should examine actual behavioral outcomes (e.g., revisit or booking intentions) to link digital engagement with real-world tourism benefits.

MORAL CHOICES IN BIASED AI: THE ROLES OF MORAL DECOUPLING IN AI RECOMMENDATION ACCEPTANCE

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Introduction

While AI enhances decision-making, its growing digitalization raises ethical concerns. Gender bias is common in marketing: men often devalue brands with feminine cues or products labeled as "lady's cut" (White & Dahl, 2006). Yet such bias does not always provoke rejection; consumers often overlook inequity when performance remains strong. While addressing technical causes of bias (Fazil et al., 2023), less attention has been given to the psychological and behavioral outcomes and their broader implications. This gap is crucial in hospitality and tourism, where fairness and inclusivity are core values.

AI inherits gender bias from male-dominated development teams and data that reflect societal inequalities (Nadeem et al., 2022). AI is judged by competence and warmth (McKee et al., 2023). These traits influence moral reasoning, as individuals may justify unethical behavior when performance is high. Grounded in system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), moral decoupling explains how users separate morality from its performance to rationalize continued use of biased systems (Fernbach et al., 2013). When AI is viewed as competent, gender bias prompts stronger moral decoupling, allowing users to overlook ethical flaws for functional benefits. When framed as warm, bias violates fairness expectations, reducing decoupling. As consumers often prioritize performance over ethics, moral decoupling is proposed to mediate the effect of AI bias and perception on acceptance of AI recommendations. Drawing on the stereotype content model and system justification theory, this study examines how AI gender bias interacts with perceived competence and warmth to shape moral decoupling and acceptance of AI recommendations.

Methods

A 2x2 between-subjects experiment examined the interaction effect of AI gender bias (representational bias vs. no bias) and AI perception (competence vs. warmth). In the bias condition, AI recommendations overrepresented male figures (e.g., "male diners"), while the no-bias condition used gender-neutral phrasing (e.g., "the diners"). AI competence was operationalized through the descriptions of technical superiority, whereas AI warmth highlighted caring and friendliness. Participants (N=222) were U.S. residents over 18 with prior AI usage in the past week, recruited via Prolific. All constructs were assessed with the validated measures. Prior to the main study, a pretest (N=136) validated manipulations and realism.

Results/Discussion/Implication

When AI is perceived as competent, gender bias (vs. no bias) increases moral decoupling. In contrast, when AI is framed as warm, gender bias does not affect moral decoupling. Moral decoupling also mediates acceptance of AI recommendations. Competent AI with bias triggers stronger moral decoupling and higher acceptance, whereas warmth framing eliminates this effect. The study advances AI ethics literature by examining gender bias in consumer-facing contexts. It integrates the stereotype content model and system justification theory, showing that AI bias elicits distinct moral responses from human bias. Practically, firms should minimize gender bias through pre-adoption screening and algorithmic audits. When bias cannot be fully avoided, emphasizing functional competence over warmth may better preserve trust and mitigate reputational risks.

TRUSING THE BLACK BOX? ADOPTION OF EXPLAINABLE AI FOR PRIVATE CLUBS' FOOD AND BEVERAGE SATISFACTION

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping hospitality by supporting data-driven strategies that improve service quality, personalize guest experiences, and predict satisfaction (Lee & Whaley, 2018; Roy et al., 2017; Sharma et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2023). Machine learning (ML) is especially effective at modeling complex consumer behavior, yet its lack of transparency hinders adoption in practice (Rai, 2020; Hassija et al., 2021). Explainable AI (XAI) helps overcome this by providing global explanations and local explanations (Doshi-Velez & Kim, 2017; Samek & Müller, 2019; Lundberg & Lee, 2017).

Although XAI is gaining traction in hospitality, existing applications are largely hotel-focused and emphasize global insights (Shin et al., 2023; Gómez-Talal et al., 2025). This study shifts the focus to private clubs, where highly localized service and repeat interactions create a unique context for dual-level analysis. In this setting, food and beverage (F&B) play a central role in shaping member experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. Unlike other services, F&B involves subjective, immediate, and recurring evaluations influenced by individual taste, expectations, and context (Jang & Ha, 2014; Han & Ryu, 2009). Utilizing an XAI-driven framework, this study aims

(1) to identify the influential predictors of F&B satisfaction at the global level and (2) generate local explanations that clarify satisfaction drivers for individual members.

Methods

This study followed a four-phase methodology. First, it analyzed 7,006 valid responses from 13 private clubs in Florida, collected between 2022 and 2023, and binarized overall F&B satisfaction based on the empirical distribution (McMahon, 2020; Lee & Whaley, 2019). Second, eight ML models were trained: Decision Tree, Random Forest, XGBoost, LightGBM, CatBoost, Support Vector Machine, K-Nearest Neighbors, and Multi-Layer Perceptron. Third, models were evaluated using accuracy, precision, recall, F1 score, and AUC, with hyperparameter tuning via grid search (Pedregosa et al., 2011; Peretz et al., 2024). Fourth, SHAP, a powerful XAI method, was applied to the best-performing model to interpret both global and local contributions of F&B attributes (Shapley, 1953; Lundberg & Lee, 2017; Cunha & Barbosa, 2024).

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study developed a ML framework integrated with XAI to predict and interpret F&B satisfaction in private clubs. Among the eight ML models tested, CatBoost demonstrated the highest predictive performance across evaluation metrics and was selected for interpretation. SHAP analysis showed that food-related attributes had the strongest influence on satisfaction, with global explanations revealing consistent positive associations. Local SHAP results uncovered member-specific variations, including counterintuitive cases where low friendliness scores contributed positively, suggesting that minimal interaction may be preferred in private club domain. This study extends XAI to a less-explored private club settings, showing its strength in modeling nonlinear, personalized satisfaction. It offers private club managers transparent, data-
driven insights for strategic and tailored service delivery, aligning with Responsible AI for more effective, member-focused decision making.

References are available upon request

GAMING FOR JUSTICE: ADVANCING A GAMIFIED STORYTELLING APPROACH TO ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN HOSPITALITY

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Introduction

Human trafficking affects millions of lives around the globe (U.S. Department of State, 2025). In the 2024 National Human Trafficking Hotline report, more than 32,000 signals (e.g., calls and texts) were received, where the hospitality industry (especially hotel sectors) appears as the hotspot for this crime. As a sensitive topic, human trafficking creates information barriers for people to access and study (Aston et al., 2022). The hospitality businesses worry that failing to raise customer awareness may leave companies vulnerable to lawsuits when such crimes occur (Polaris, 2024).

It is apparent that no research has examined anti-human trafficking initiatives on hospitality customers' response competence, and more interactive intervention methods are needed to improve individuals' response competence (Savoia et al., 2023). Gamification is an effective engagement tool that involves game elements (affordance) to facilitate behaviors in non-game contexts (Deterding et al., 2011), and storytelling is a key element in gamification (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). To address the noted research gap, this study tested the impact of gamified storytelling about anti-human trafficking on hospitality customers' response competence in anti-human trafficking initiatives, applying the gamification affordance-psychological outcome-behavioral outcome framework (Xu et al., 2022) and cognitive-experiential self-theory (Epstein, 1998).

Methods

378 participants who are hotel customers were recruited from Prolific, played the game, and answered the questionnaires. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM following Hair et al. (2019).

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study found that gamified storytelling effectively enhanced hospitality customers' competence in responding to human trafficking through parallel affective and cognitive systems. By incorporating Aristotle's rhetoric: ethos (avatar identification embodied presence), logos (narrative structure), and pathos (vividness and interactivity), it makes learning fun while shaping cognitive load by adding meaningful challenges and reducing unnecessary information. As a result, gamified storytelling improves learning, competence, and bystander helping intention.

Theoretically, this study fills a gap in anti-human trafficking literature by examining interactive interventions among hospitality customers. By integrating Aristotle's rhetoric, gamified storytelling, and the gamification affordance-psychological-behavioral framework, this study unpacks the affective and cognitive mechanisms shaping hospitality customers' psychological and behavioral responses, thereby enriching hospitality literature in the endeavor against human trafficking. Practically, gamified storytelling strengthens customer competence and confidence in identifying and responding to trafficking through engaging avatars and narratives at the individual level. For hospitality businesses, it offers a cost-efficient tool to address sensitive topics, enhance social responsibility, and ensure compliance. Societally, it supports scalable public interventions by raising awareness and promoting collective action through adaptable storytelling formats across platforms.

FROM INTEGRITY TO INVESTMENT: HOW CORPORATE DIGITAL RESPONSIBILITY INFLUENCES DIGITAL TRUST AND COMMITMENT

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Introduction
Digital transformation has redefined the hospitality industry by enhancing efficiency and personalization but also by introducing ethical challenges related to data privacy and transparency. As hotels increasingly rely on digital services such as AI, cloud systems, and analytics, consumers face growing concerns about how their personal data is collected, used, and protected (Cheng & Zhang, 2023). Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) provides a framework for organizations to ensure ethical, fair, and secure management of digital data and technology (Wirtz et al., 2022). Building upon Trust-Commitment Theory, this study investigates how CDR practices, specifically data privacy, influence consumers' digital trust, affective commitment, loyalty, and willingness to pay in the lodging industry. The study proposes: (H1) CDR practices positively impact digital trust; (H2) Digital trust positively impacts affective commitment; (H3a) Affective commitment positively impacts loyalty; and (H3b) Affective commitment positively impacts willingness to pay. This study contributes to hospitality research by linking digital practices with behavioral and financial outcomes.

Methods
Data was collected from 637 U.S. hotel consumers using Prolific in June 2025. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) tested the proposed model using established scales: CDR practices (15 items on data privacy dimensions: collection, errors, unauthorized secondary use, improper access; Smith et al., 1996), digital trust (3 items; Kim et al., 2007), affective commitment (4 items; Fullerton, 2003), loyalty (5 items; Zeithaml et al., 1996), and willingness to pay (3 items; Lee et al., 2010). Reliability, validity, and structural relationships were assessed following Hair et al. (2022). The measurement model was evaluated with composite reliability, AVE, and discriminant validity through HTMT. The structural model evaluated direct effects of CDR practices on digital trust and subsequent relationships among affective commitment, loyalty, and willingness to pay.

Results/Discussion/Implication
All hypotheses were supported. CDR practices significantly enhanced digital trust, which strongly predicted affective commitment. Affective commitment, in turn, positively influenced loyalty and willingness to pay. These findings demonstrate that responsible digital practices foster trust and emotional attachment, leading to behavioral and financial value for hotels. Theoretically, this study extends Trust-Commitment Theory by positioning CDR as an antecedent of digital trust and affective commitment, offering a framework for understanding how ethical data practices drive consumer relationships in digital service contexts. The strength of affective commitment as a mediator underscores its role in transforming trust into tangible outcomes such as brand loyalty and price inelasticity. Practically, the study highlights that transparency, accountability, and secure data management can strengthen guest confidence and loyalty. Future research should explore broader CDR dimensions such as algorithmic fairness, digital inclusion, and environmental responsibility to further contextualize ethical technology use within hospitality and service ecosystems.

ROBOT ROLE OVERRIDES HUMAN ROLE: SHAPING PERCEPTIONS OF AUTOMATION IN HOSPITALITY

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Introduction
Integrating robots into hospitality operations is a strategic imperative to enhance guest experiences, operational efficiency, and profitability. These "automatically controlled, reprogrammable, multipurpose manipulators" (ISO, 2025) are transforming service delivery, yet they simultaneously reshape employee experiences, affecting job satisfaction and well-being (Xu et al., 2023) and presenting challenges for human-robot collaboration (Paolillo et al., 2022). Robots are increasingly adopting assistive, equal, and supervisory roles previously exclusive to humans. Despite this widespread adoption, the nuanced power dynamics of human-robot interactions across different employee levels remain underexplored. This study examines how assistive, equal, and supervisory service robots influence hospitality employees' perceptions of trust, fairness, and emotion, considering organizational level and prior experience of employees.

Methods
This study used an experimental design to examine how a robot's role influences hospitality employees' job attitudes. A total of 262 U.S. hospitality employees were recruited via Prolific and randomly assigned to one of three scenarios: assistive (n = 89), imagining a restaurant server supported by a robot; equal (n = 87), working alongside a robot performing identical front desk duties; or supervisory (n = 86), with a robot overseeing housekeeping staff. Participants reported their trust, perceived fairness, and emotions towards managerial decisions to employ robots in their respective roles using 7-point Likert scales (Lee, 2018).

Results
A two-way MANOVA examined how robot roles (assistive, equal, or supervisory) affected hospitality employees' perceptions of fairness, trust, and emotions. Results showed a significant multivariate effect of robot role, $F(16, 494) = 4.271$, $p < .001$, with follow-up ANOVAs revealing higher fairness, trust, and positive emotions for assistive and equal robots versus supervisory robots. However, MANCOVA results, accounting for employee position and prior robot experience, indicate that these factors did not significantly influence perceptions of fairness, trust, or emotional responses.

Discussion and Implication
This study investigates how service robots in assistive, equal, or supervisory roles influence hospitality employees' perceptions of fairness, trust, and emotions, considering employees' organizational position and prior robot experience. The findings indicate that the robot's role significantly influences employee job attitude, whereas employee position and prior experience with robots do not influence employee job attitude.

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EXAMINING THE ROLE OF DIGITAL LITERACY TRAINING FOR ALGORITHMIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR HOTEL HOUSEKEEPING STAFF

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Introduction

Algorithmic management (AM) systems such as HotSOS and Quore automate task allocation and communication in hotel housekeeping (Spektor et al., 2023). While these systems increase efficiency, they increase the need for digital literacy skills to navigate platforms and use digital tools confidently. Housekeeping staff often receive limited technology training, and existing adoption models (TAM, UTAUT, TRI) rarely examine multilingual, low-wage workers who directly interact with AM systems. This study investigates how digital literacy training shapes technology readiness, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, comfort, and job readiness.

Methods

A mixed-methods design was used, and the study was conducted at a hospitality training center in the southwestern United States. Pre- and post-training surveys (n = 79 paired responses) measured constructs from TRI, TAM, and UTAUT using five-point Likert scales. A 68-minute semi-structured focus group with six multilingual trainees provided qualitative depth. Data were thematically coded and integrated using a convergent parallel design.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Training led to significant improvements in technology readiness, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and comfort. Participants described the AM system as useful for communication and task tracking but noted challenges related to English-only interfaces, similar icons, and limited practice time. They requested more hands-on support and short video guides.

Findings extend technology adoption models to an understudied workforce and show that successful adoption depends on confidence, comfort, and accessibility, not only perceived usefulness. Practical implications include the need for multilingual design and inclusive training. Future work should expand to multiple sites.

References available upon request.

SERVICE ROBOTS IN CARIBBEAN HOTELS: THE MODERATING ROLE OF CULTURAL FAMILIARITY IN THE CAC MODEL

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Introduction

The Caribbean, home to over 2,000 hotels and resorts, remains one of the world's top tourist destinations (CTO, 2023; Staff, 2024). To stay competitive, hotels are adopting innovations such as service robots to boost efficiency, provide contactless service, and address labor shortages (Ivanov & Webster, 2019; Tuomi et al., 2020). While robots are widely used in markets such as Japan and the United States (Reis et al., 2020; Hu, 2023), their acceptance in the Caribbean remains uncertain, given the region's deep-rooted culture of personalized, emotionally warm hospitality (Papadopoulos & Koulouglioti, 2018).

Using the Cognitive-Affective-Conative (CAC) framework, this study examines how cognitive evaluations and affective responses influence guests' acceptance of service robots in Caribbean hotels and how cultural familiarity moderates these relationships. Specifically, it explores: (1) which cognitive attributes generate emotions, (2) whether emotions shape acceptance, and (3) how cultural familiarity affects this relationship. The findings will provide insights into how cultural context influences technology adoption in hospitality.

Methods

The sample includes U.S. residents aged 18 and above who stayed in a hotel within 12 months of the survey. At the beginning of the survey, participants were informed of the type of robot services available at a Caribbean Hotel. 443 responses were collected through Prolific, and 415 were deemed valid. 41 items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted by following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach: contemporary factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM).

Results/Discussion/Implication

The analysis showed a good model fit with reliable and valid constructs. Utility, coolness, and autonomy significantly influenced guests' emotions toward service robots, while courtesy and interactivity did not. Emotion strongly predicted acceptance, confirming that positive emotional experiences drive guests' willingness to adopt service robots. Cultural familiarity moderated two relationships: utility had a higher emotional effect among guests highly familiar with Caribbean culture, while coolness had a stronger effect among those with low familiarity.

These findings highlight the importance of emotion in understanding guests' acceptance of service robots in Caribbean hotels. Guests value functional and aesthetic attributes that evoke positive feelings, while social features such as courtesy and interactivity appear less impactful, likely because the region emphasizes authentic human connection.

This study advances hospitality research by applying the CAC model and introducing cultural familiarity as a moderator. Results demonstrate how emotional responses link cognitive evaluations to acceptance, offering new insight into how culture impacts the cognitive assessment of technological features. The findings also present the importance of designing and marketing service robots that evoke positive emotions through efficiency and perceived coolnes

ROBOT SERVICE EXPERIENCE QUALITY, BRAND FACTORS, AND BUSINESS OUTCOMES IN RESTAURANTS

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Introduction
Robots are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in the hospitality and tourism sector, in some cases replacing human labour (Acar et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2025), fulfilling functional, supportive, emotional, and social roles (Roy et al., 2024). Despite the growing use and research interest on service robots in hospitality services, it remains unclear whether robots can deliver enhanced customer experiences than human staff, given customers' need for human touch and their dissatisfaction with service robots (Solnet et al., 2019). Most existing research merely examined experience quality in human-to-human service contexts (Alnawas & Hemsley-Brown, 2019; Song et al., 2025), leaving a gap regarding experience quality in human-robot interactions. Moreover, studies on customer experience with robot services are fragmented and focus mainly on robot functionalities, with no comprehensive and valid tool to assess robot service experience quality from functional, emotional, and relational perspectives. To fill this void, the current study aims to conceptualize and propose a robot service experience quality (RSEQ) scale in the robot-service restaurant setting and to explore its effect on brand and business outcomes.

Methodology
The study employed a mixed-method design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach, which included interviews and reviews by experts and experienced customers, was used to validate the face and content validity of the RSEQ scale. Furthermore, based on a sample survey of 804 customers from robot service restaurants in South Korea, the quantitative approach was utilized to determine the dimensionality, reliability, and validity of the scale, as well as to explore the scale's effect on brand-related and business outcome variables. In so doing, EFA, CFA, and structural equation modelling SEM were conducted using SPSS and AMOS statistical software.

Results/Discussion/Implications
The results confirmed that robot service experience quality is a multidimensional scale encompassing hedonic, educational, functional, anthropomorphic, and safety and security experience quality factors, all of which demonstrated appropriate psychometric properties. Furthermore, the RSEQ factors were found to have a positive impact on customers' brand equity perceptions, which in turn were positively related to brand trust. Besides, brand trust was found to have a significant impact on business outcomes. In doing so, the study provides a customer-centric experience management tool to measure and enhance the quality of robot-provided services, offering both managerial and business relevance.

References

References will be available upon request.

EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION MODALITY ON AI SERVICE ADOPTION: A COGNITIVE–EMOTIONAL APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

Customers experience artificial intelligence (AI) not as an abstract concept but through the ways it communicates. Yet, research on AI in services has focused on efficiency, personalization, and trust while treating communication modality as peripheral (Bhuiyan, 2024; Della Corte et al., 2023; Gursoy & Cai, 2025). Communication modality fundamentally shapes how users perceive and adopt AI systems (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976; Ling et al., 2021). Voice interfaces feel natural but may lack precision (Le Bigot et al., 2007; Akdim & Casaló, 2023), text provides clarity but less social engagement (Sun et al., 2025), and touchscreens offer control yet falter in complex tasks (Fan et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025).

Drawing on Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) and Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976), this study argues that modality determines how customers interpret AI. Prevailing models such as TAM (Davis, 1989), UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003), and AIDUA (Gursoy et al., 2019) overlook this factor, assuming interface homogeneity. To address this gap, the AI Communication Modality Appraisal (AICMA) framework integrates communication theories with adoption research, proposing that modality influences users' cognitive and emotional appraisals. Nine experiments across service contexts test how touch, text, and voice modalities interact with task complexity to shape AI adoption.

Methods

Four studies tested how communication modality and task complexity shape users' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses in fast-food and hotel contexts. A pilot (N=457) validated manipulations; the main study (N=1,332) on Credamo used nine conditions combining modality (touch, text, voice) and task complexity (low, high). Participants viewed service scenarios and rated perceptions of intelligence, naturalness, control, expectancy, emotion, and willingness to use on established Likert scales.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Guided by the AICMA framework, four studies show that users react not only to "AI" itself but to its communication mode (Touchscreen, Touchscreen with Text, Touchscreen with Voice). Touchscreens emphasize control and efficiency, text supports analytical reasoning, and voice evokes social and intuitive responses. As tasks grow more complex, users shift from affective heuristics to cognitively elaborated evaluations centered on intelligence and performance.

Findings yield four key insights. First, communication modality independently shapes user perception and adoption: voice and touchscreen enhance willingness to use for different reasons. Second, task complexity exerts a stronger main effect, higher complexity reduces willingness, though richer modalities mitigate this decline. Third, the interaction of modality and complexity reorders preferences: voice interfaces remain most adaptive under cognitive strain. Fourth, adoption mechanisms evolve from effort-based heuristics under simple tasks to cognitively integrated reasoning under high complexity.

Theoretically, this study integrates appraisal, media richness, and social presence perspectives. Practically, firms should match modality to task demands and develop adaptive multimodal systems to enhance user control, empathy, and engagement.

GENERATIVE AI IN DESTINATION MARKETING: HOW LABELING AND FRAMING SHAPE PERCEPTIONS OF PROMOTIONAL DESTINATION VIDIEOS

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Introduction
The global market for generative AI in content creation reached $11.6 billion in 2024, with tourism accounting for 31.5% (MMG, 2024). Despite the efficiency and realism of the latest advancement of AI-generated promotional content (Zhu et al., 2024), its effectiveness in influencing tourist engagement remains uncertain. Although AI-generated content can match or even surpass traditional outputs in quality, skepticism and heuristic biases toward AI's role in creative fields persist (Jia et al., 2025). While efficiency and quality are evident, whether AI-generated content translates into meaningful tourist behaviors remains underexplored. To address these gaps, grounded in Cue Utilization Theory (Olson & Jacoby, 1972), Study 1 investigates the effectiveness of AI-generated destination promotional videos by examining labeling effects, specifically whether further information seeking and visit intentions differ. Furthermore, promotional ads are typically framed in two ways: information-focused and emotion-focused, which appeal to audiences through cognitive and affective mechanisms, respectively (Chi et al., 2024). Given that tourism marketing relies heavily on vicarious experiential and sensory appeal rather than solely on utilitarian information, framing holds particularly strong implications for responses and engagement by altering content processing. Therefore, built on Congruence Theory (Fiedler, 1964), Study 2 examines the moderating effect of framing on the labeling effect.

Methods
A series of experimental designs was employed. In Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions of the same video clips from existing Switzerland tourism videos with different labeling: 1) human-created and 2) AI-generated. In Study 2, a 2×2 experimental design was employed. Two Switzerland tourism videos were selected to represent distinct framing types: information-focused (presented the top five tourist destinations) and emotion-focused videos (narrative storytelling to evoke emotional appeal). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Participants completed manipulation check items and questions assessing their information seeking and visit intention. Data collections were conducted via Qualtrics and distributed through Prolific (Study 1 Human: n = 75; AI: n = 70; Study 2 Info_H: n = 51; Info_AI: n = 68; Emo_H: n = 58; Emo_AI: n = 65).

Results/Discussion/Implication
Independent t-tests showed that human-labeled videos led to higher information-seeking ($M_H = 3.57$; $M_A=3.13$) and visit intentions ($M_H = 3.79$; $M_A= 3.39$), supporting H1a–b. Moderation analysis (PROCESS Model 1) confirmed that framing moderated the labeling effect (Information seeking intention: b = 0.57, se = 0.28, t = 2.01, p < .05; Visit intention: b = 0.68, se = 0.24, t = 2.83, p < .01), thereby supporting H2a and H2b. Conditional effects analysis revealed that the negative impact of AI labeling was significant in information-focused videos (b = –0.57, p < .01; b = –0.54, p < .01) but not in emotion-focused ones. These findings suggest that potential tourists expect informational content to be more credible when human-created, while emotional framing mitigates AI skepticism as the immersive and affective qualities of the video overshadow concerns about production origin.

GEN-AI ADOPTION IN TRAVEL: AN INTEGRATED DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION AND THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

The growing integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), particularly Large Language Models (LLMs), is reshaping how travelers plan, customize, and execute their journeys (Li & Lee, 2024). While current studies provide important insights into how users interact with LLMs such as ChatGPT, they often apply isolated models, such as the Technology Acceptance Model or communication frameworks, without integrating innovation-based perceptions with behavioral intention theories (Christensen et al., 2025).

The Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory provides a useful framework for understanding how innovation characteristics influence the adoption of new technologies (Rogers et al., 2014). Moreover, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers a strong foundation for explaining travel planning behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Shi et al., 2024). Hence, the purpose of this study is to develop and empirically test an integrated theoretical model that explains travelers' behavioral intentions to adopt GenAI tools for travel planning. Specifically, this study combines relevant constructs from DOI and TPB to examine how travelers' perceptions of innovation attributes influence their attitudinal, normative, and control beliefs. This research provides actionable insights for tourism businesses seeking to implement GenAI tools in customer-facing operations and contributes to the advancement of technology adoption theories by empirically integrating DOI and TPB.

Methods

This study used a two-phase survey design to explore travelers' adoption of GenAI tools for trip planning. The sample included U.S. residents aged 18 and older who had used tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or Grok to plan at least one trip in the past year. Participants were recruited via Prolific. In Phase 1, a screener survey identified eligible respondents based on GenAI usage and recent travel behavior, who were then invited to complete the main survey. The main survey featured a structured online questionnaire measuring constructs on 5-point Likert scales adapted from established studies. A pilot study confirmed clarity and reliability of measurement items.

Demographic data, including age, gender, and travel frequency, were collected.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study examined the adoption of GenAI tools for travel planning by integrating constructs from the DOI theory and the TPB using structural equation modeling. Relative advantage emerged as the strongest predictor, significantly influencing attitudes and social norms.

Complexity positively affected perceived behavioral control, indicating that ease of use enhances confidence. Trialability influenced subjective norms, suggesting that opportunities to experiment improve acceptance, while compatibility showed no significant effect.

Within the TPB, attitudes and social norms predicted travelers' intentions to use GenAI tools, while perceived behavioral control did not. Intention strongly predicted actual usage, confirming it as the most immediate determinant of behavior. These findings highlight the importance of perceived benefits, simplicity, and social influence in technology adoption. Hospitality providers should emphasize usefulness, intuitive design, and hands-on experiences to encourage traveler adoption of GenAI.

WHEN IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY MEETS NARRATIVE: TOWORD A UNIFIED FRAMEWORK FOR IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING

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Introduction

When narratives are delivered through immersive media, user engagement and emotional involvement are amplified (duBois, 2024; Verhulst et al., 2021). This convergence has produced the concept of immersive storytelling, which integrates technological platforms with narrative structures to create multisensory and emotionally compelling experiences (Barreda-Ángeles et al., 2020; Polydorou, 2024). In hospitality and tourism specifically, immersive storytelling has become an increasingly valuable tool for enhancing guest and visitor experiences. Various applications illustrate not only the growing relevance of immersive storytelling in practice but also the need for a clearer theoretical foundation to guide future research in hospitality and tourism contexts (Iversen et al., 2023; Popoli & Derda, 2021; Spence, 2021; Zidianakis et al., 2021).

However, despite its widespread application, consensus on its definition and classification remains underdeveloped (Li et al., 2022; Spence, 2021). Despite the growing use of immersive storytelling in both practice and research, there is currently no widely accepted conceptual foundation or classification system that captures its evolving characteristics and applications across various domains. Since the same term can carry different meanings across disciplines, achieving conceptual clarity is essential for effective scholarly communication (van Mil & Henman, 2016). Therefore, given the theoretical ambiguity and inconsistencies in terminology, this study addresses the gap through a systematic literature review and framework development.

Methods

To address the lack of conceptual clarity, a systematic literature review was undertaken using the Web of Science. A comprehensive query with keywords such as "immersive storytelling," "interactive storytelling," and "VR storytelling" retrieved 952 records. No temporal restrictions were imposed, as the goal was to capture the full trajectory of scholarship. After screening, approximately 200 studies were retained for in-depth analysis, reflecting the subset that engaged directly with definitions, conceptualizations, or applied interpretations of immersive storytelling.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The review found that previous studies conceptualize immersive storytelling as the integration of immersive technologies and narrative elements, with variations depending on the types of technology, story, and user interaction involved. Defining immersive storytelling is thus complex, requiring consideration of how technological and narrative components work together to shape user engagement and meaning. To address this, the study proposes a unified framework consisting of three key dimensions: technological platforms (AR, VR, MR, and others), story types (fiction, creative nonfiction, nonfiction), and narrative agency (system-guided, semi-active, user-driven). This multidimensional approach establishes immersive storytelling as a holistic construct, promoting theoretical clarity and consistent application across disciplines while distinguishing it from related concepts like immersive journalism and interactive storytelling.

References are available upon request

WHAT CAN AI DO TO DRIVE REAL ADOPTION? FROM SOCIAL CUES TO ACTUAL USAGE BEHAVIORS

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved from a functional technology to a socially embedded actor with emotional resonance. Voice assistants (VAs) such as Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri, and Google Assistant demonstrate this transformation by acting not only as practical tools but also as social companions in everyday life (Huang & Rust, 2018; Puntoni et al., 2021). Despite rapid advances, most studies on AI adoption have emphasized cognitive and utilitarian factors—trust, ease of use, and efficiency—while neglecting socio-emotional dimensions of human–AI interaction. This study addresses that gap by investigating how social cues (friendly and attentive communication styles, natural speech, and perceived intelligence) shape user perceptions and behaviors. Drawing on signaling, social presence, and social response theories, this research explores how these cues influence empathy and presence, how perceived benefits and costs mediate these effects, and how ownership length moderates user evaluation and actual adoption of VAs.

Methods

A three-stage mixed-method design was used.

Study 1 conducted a text-mining analysis of 5,566 verified Amazon Alexa reviews (2020–2025) using LIWC-22 to uncover linguistic patterns related to empathy, social presence, and cost–benefit perceptions.

Study 2 consisted of a two-wave longitudinal survey (Wave 1: N = 615; Wave 2: N = 380 after four weeks), testing the proposed model via SmartPLS 4.1. Constructs included perceived social cues, empathy, presence, perceived benefits (utilitarian, hedonic, symbolic, social), perceived costs (privacy concern, human identity threat), and behavioral intention, later linked to actual usage behaviors such as frequency and intensity.

Scales were adapted from validated prior work (e.g., Epley et al., 2008; Guha et al., 2022; Liu-Thompkins et al., 2022). All constructs met reliability and validity criteria (loadings > .70, AVE > .50, Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results confirmed that attentive and friendly communication styles significantly enhanced both empathy and social presence, whereas natural speech showed smaller yet meaningful effects, and intelligence was nonsignificant. Empathy and presence, in turn, predicted utilitarian, hedonic, symbolic, and social benefits. Presence also reduced privacy concerns but had no effect on identity threat. Sequential mediation analyses revealed that empathy and presence jointly mediated the effects of social cues on user intention to use VAs. Longitudinal results demonstrated that intention significantly predicted actual behavioral usage ($\beta = .406$, $p < .001$), confirming the conversion of social responses into real adoption.

This research contributes to theory by integrating socio-emotional mechanisms into technology adoption models, showing that social cues foster emotional connection and sustained engagement. It advances signaling and social presence theories by revealing how communicative signals translate into tangible user behaviors. Practically, designers should prioritize warmth and authenticity—attentive listening and natural tone—while exercising caution with overly intelligent or intrusive features. Firms can leverage empathetic design and transparent privacy practices to encourage both initial acceptance and continued use of AI-powered voice assistants.

FROM SMART TO INTELLIGENT: THE EVOLUTION OF SMART TOURISM IN THE AGE OF AI

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Introduction

Tourism, one of the world's largest industries, has experienced profound transformation driven by rapid technological advancements. Early research conceptualized smart tourism as the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance efficiency, governance, and service innovation (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Gretzel et al., 2015). However, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and generative systems marks a paradigmatic shift toward intelligence-augmented ecosystems that reshape value creation, organizational capabilities, and tourist experiences (Buhalis, O'Connor, & Leung, 2023; Chen et al., 2021). Despite numerous studies mapping technological applications, existing reviews often overlook how the field has evolved structurally from ICT-based smartness to AI-anchored intelligence. This study addresses that gap through a longitudinal synthesis of 2010–2025 literature, exploring how AI redefines smart tourism's conceptual, methodological, and practical foundations.

Specifically, it identifies how "smart" and "intelligent" paradigms coexist, overlap, and diverge, and whether theoretical frameworks from the ICT era remain applicable to the age of AI.

Methods

A systematic and bibliometric review was conducted on 531 peer-reviewed articles (2010–2025) drawn from nine flagship tourism and hospitality journals, including Tourism Management, Annals of Tourism Research, International Journal of Hospitality Management, and others using keywords such as "smart tourism," "AI," "robotics," "IoT," and "technology." After de-duplication and relevance screening, data were coded for publication year, journal, research context, and method. Bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer mapped co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence networks, identifying core contributors, methodological trends, and thematic evolution. Quantitative mapping was complemented with qualitative synthesis to interpret conceptual transitions from ICT-enabled to AI-driven tourism. Two temporal phases were defined: Smart Tourism (2010–2020) and AI-Driven Intelligent Tourism (2021–2025).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings reveal a clear shift from data-centric smart systems toward cognition-driven intelligent ecosystems. Between 2010 and 2020, studies centered on ICT infrastructure, destination governance, and efficiency. Since 2021, research has increasingly focused on AI, robotics, generative systems (e.g., ChatGPT), and ethical governance, signaling a reorientation toward human–AI collaboration and responsible innovation (Gursoy et al., 2023; Sigala, 2024).

Keyword analyses show that Robotics, AI & Intelligence, and Smart Systems have replaced earlier anchors such as Data Analytics and Sharing Platforms, while new human-centered themes—Trust, Ethics, Privacy, and Governance—have gained prominence. Methodologically, the field evolved from surveys and conceptual papers to experiments, big-data analytics, and mixed-method approaches, reflecting a maturing discipline responsive to AI's complexity.

The study concludes that AI marks not an incremental but a paradigmatic transition—from efficiency-oriented "smartness" to cognition- and ethics-oriented "intelligence." Theoretical implications highlight the need to reframe tourism research through human–AI co-creation, algorithmic transparency, and sustainable innovation. Practically, the findings guide policymakers and industry leaders toward integrating AI responsibly while preserving human agency and equity in the digital tourism ecosystem.

From Robotic Servers to Baristas: A Framework of Human-Robot Interaction in Food and Beverage Services

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Introduction

Service robots are rapidly transforming the hospitality landscape, particularly within food and beverage establishments. While most hospitality robotics research has focused on hotels, the F&B context presents fundamentally different and often more promising dynamics, as interactions in such contexts are typically shorter and more standardized, thus allowing for robots to be seamlessly integrated into F&B's repetitive workflows. Despite these distinctive features, existing scholarship often treats hotels and restaurants as interchangeable under the broad "hospitality robots" label, risking generalized conclusions that may obscure the very different demands placed on robots in each context (Chan & Tung, 2019; Shin & Jeong, 2020). For instance, lessons from robotic receptionists at hotel front desks do little to inform the challenges faced by service contexts involving robotic bartenders such as *Tipsy Robot* in Las Vegas, where aspects such as entertainment value dominate the interaction. Consequently, the present review addresses this gap by focusing specifically on human-robot interaction in F&B service contexts from both customers' and employees' perspectives, synthesizing insights from the current literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of this rapidly evolving field.

Methods

This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple academic databases, and the search strings combined terms related to robots with those related to F&B contexts. Only peer-reviewed journal articles directly examining robots within F&B contexts were considered. Conference proceedings, editorials, book chapters, research notes, tutorials, and opinion pieces, were excluded from the final dataset. The final dataset consisted of 118 papers included in the analysis

Discussion and Implications

Many studies treat "restaurant" as a single category, overlooking differences among quick service, casual dining, and fine dining, which are segments that entail distinct expectations for warmth, efficiency, and authenticity. Research also largely centered on dining rooms, neglecting robot contexts where robots have bartender or kitchen chef tasks (Seyitoğlu et al., 2025). Future research should broaden to more roles within F&B contexts (e.g., chefs, bartenders), but also examine service process combinations in tasks where robots contribute to the making of the product (e.g., human-made cocktail vs. robot-made cocktail). Comparing such effects in customer-robot versus customer-human contexts would help clarify how beverage service contexts such as coffee shop or bar dynamics shape customer experience.

References are available upon request

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AS AN OPERATIONAL RESOURCE IN RESTAURANTS: EVIDENCE FROM CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND EFFICIENCY

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Introduction

Digital transformation (DT) has become a strategic driver of innovation across industries, yet its impact on firm performance remains mixed. While prior studies argue that DT enhances profitability and innovation capability (He et al., 2023; Warner & Wagner, 2019), others highlight its limited or even negative outcomes due to integration issues and human capability erosion (Probojakti et al., 2025). In the restaurant industry, where operational efficiency and customer experience are tightly linked, the role of DT remains underexplored. Unlike manufacturing sectors that use DT for new value creation, restaurants operate under narrow profit margins, making DT's value as an operational resource particularly relevant.

Drawing on the resource-based view (RBV), this study examines how DT affects (1) customer experience, captured through online engagement and service quality and (2) operational efficiency, reflected in labor productivity and inventory turnover. Moreover, guided by socio-technical (STS) theory, it also examines the moderating effects of service type (quick service vs. full service) and executive digital expertise as social factors shaping DT effectiveness.

Methods

The study analyzed 47 publicly traded U.S. restaurant firms (1995-2024), yielding 328 firm-year observations. DT intensity was measured via a dictionary-based text analysis of 10-K filings, using the frequency of DT-related keywords within the MD&A section. Financial and operational data were obtained from COMPUSTAT, social media engagement data from Facebook, and service review data from Yelp. A two-way panel regression was employed to test hypotheses.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results show that DT significantly improves online engagement and service reliability, confirming its role in enhancing customer experience. The interaction between DT and QSR is positive, suggesting that DT is particularly beneficial for quick-service restaurants, improving both reliability and responsiveness.

In terms of operational outcomes, DT positively affects labor productivity and inventory turnover, indicating that DT adoption strengthens efficiency through improved workforce management and supply-chain coordination. However, the moderating effect of executive digital expertise is not significant, implying that DT's value in restaurants arises from operational integration rather than top-level leadership.

The findings suggest that DT in restaurants functions less as a source of radical innovation and more as a resource that reinforces efficiency in both customer-facing and back-of-house area. For practitioners, investing in DT should prioritize embedding digital tools in day-to-day operations over hiring digitally specialized executives. Theoretically, this study extends RBV by showing that in service industries with tight margins, DT's strategic value stems from optimization of existing operations rather than new value creation

Completed Research:
Lodging Management & Service Quality

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS FOR FAMILY-OWNED HOTEL BUSINESSES

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Introduction

Small and medium-sized family-owned hotel businesses hold significant economic importance, both nationally and internationally, particularly in the tourism sector. These enterprises not only contribute to economic growth but also play a pivotal role in sustaining local communities and enhancing cultural exchange (Pérez Brito et al., 2023). However, hotels run by families confront several challenges that threaten growth.

Despite growing consumer interest in unique, experience-driven accommodations (Mann et al, 2024), there remains a significant research gap concerning the success strategies of family-owned hotels. This research gap reflects a broader issue identified by Thomas et al. (2011), who observed that despite the significant role small businesses play in the global tourism system, these businesses remain relatively under-researched and under-theorized within tourism studies.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the strategies that family-owned hotels employ to overcome challenges and remain competitive and successful in an industry dominated by corporate owners and management companies.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design, suitable for exploring “how” and “why” questions in context (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Purposive and convenience sampling were used to select hotels that could provide rich insights into the central themes of the research. Hotels were chosen based on similar criteria used by Engeset (2020): (1) family-owned and family-managed (Birdthistle & Hales, 2023); (2) open all-year round, and (3) direct involvement of family members. The 10 participants included six owner-managers and four general managers, representing both independent and brand-affiliated family-owned hotel businesses.

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, which allowed for both consistent data across cases and the flexibility to explore unique and rich insights from each participant (Paradis et al. 2016). A pilot study informed adjustments to the interview guide. Zoom interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti software offered a structured way to organize and provide detailed descriptions of the data, while also interpreting different facets of the research subject (Cruzes et al., 2015).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Family-owned hotels face intertwining internal and external challenges, including succession issues, limited capital, labor shortages, and rising operational costs. Despite these constraints, they exhibit resilience through cost control, diversification, and cautious expansion supported by industry networks. Familiness, defined as the unique bundle of resources derived from family involvement (Habbershon & Williams, 1999), and socioemotional wealth, representing non-financial benefits that fulfill family identity and legacy needs (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007), shape their adaptive strategies. These strategies balance financial prudence with innovation while leveraging family values to sustain loyalty and trust. By improving succession planning, professionalization, and digital marketing, family-owned hotels can be more successful.

PATHS TO WELL-BEING:

HOW BIOPHILIC HOTEL DESIGN FOSTERS TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE IN OLDER ADULTS

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Introduction
Transformative experiences and psychological well-being are increasingly recognized as essential in hospitality research, particularly among senior travelers seeking renewal and meaning. Although the benefits of biophilic design are well documented, most research has emphasized passive restoration rather than active psychological transformation. Consequently, a critical gap remains in understanding how nature-centric design fosters transformative outcomes for seniors and which factors amplify these effects. This study addresses this gap by (1) examining how different levels of biophilic design influence guests' transformative experiences and psychological well-being, (2) investigating the mediating roles of affective and cognitive connections to nature in linking biophilic design with these responses, and (3) exploring how spiritual intelligence and wellness program engagement moderate the relationships between biophilic design, affective and cognitive connections to nature, and the resulting indirect effects. This study offers theoretical, managerial, and societal insights within wellness hospitality.

Methods
This research employed a scenario-based, between-subjects design across two experiments (Study 1 and Study 2). U.S. residents aged 55 years or older were recruited through Prolific. After providing consent and completing screening questions, participants were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions in which they read a scenario and viewed a corresponding video. They then completed realism, manipulation, and attention checks, followed by measures assessing biophilic design, transformative experience, psychological well-being, connection to nature, spiritual intelligence, wellness engagement, and demographics. Spiritual intelligence ($M = 5.4$) was median-split into high and low groups. Data were analyzed using a 2×2 ANOVA and moderated mediation procedures in SPSS (version 28).

Results/Discussion/Implication
In Study 1 ($N = 202$) and Study 2 ($N = 192$), most participants were Caucasian (78.2% and 77.6%) and aged 55–64 (61.4% and 67.7%). The results of the manipulation and realism checks confirmed their effectiveness in both studies. ANOVA results showed significant main effects of biophilic design on transformative experience and psychological well-being in Study 1 and Study 2, supporting *H1*. PROCESS analyses further indicated that affective and cognitive connections partially mediated these effects in both studies, supporting *H2* and *H3*, with cognitive connection emerging as the stronger pathway. The results of moderating effects revealed that spiritual intelligence strengthened cognitive processing but not affective processing, supporting *H4b* but not *H4a*. In addition, moderated mediation indicated significant effects through the cognitive pathway but not the affective pathway, partially supporting *H4c* and *H4d*. In Study 2, engagement strengthened both affective and cognitive responses to biophilic design and amplified indirect effects on transformative experience and well-being, supporting *H5a–H5d*. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that biophilic design fosters seniors' transformative experience and well-being by activating reflective and emotional connections to nature, reinforcing its role as a psychologically interpretive medium for healthy aging.

EXPLORING HOTELS AS SOCIAL HUBS: A NEW MARKET APPROACH TO ENHANCING WELL-BEING FOR LOCALS AND NEWCOMERS

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Introduction

Texas experiences significant migration, with 2023 seeing a net gain of 134,000 domestic residents and over 272,000 international migrants, primarily from California, New York, and Florida (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). This influx, while boosting economic growth and diversity, creates challenges in cultural adaptation and social integration. A key issue is the lack of inclusive spaces for minority and newcomer populations. This study proposes that hotels can serve as social hubs that foster community belonging and integration, using a campus hotel and a faculty club as a model.

Historically, hotels have been important community spaces, facilitating social interaction (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007). While their focus has shifted to travelers, hotels still offer amenities that can support social cohesion (Aquino et al., 2021; Wiltshier, 2020). However, research on how hotels can foster local engagement and support newcomers' well-being is scarce. This study addresses this gap by examining hotels as "third places" that promote social integration and well-being for newcomers.

The research focuses on a Texas Triangle hotel, located on a university campus, that already hosts social and academic events. It aims to explore how such spaces can enhance community integration and create new revenue streams for hotels. The findings provide insights into how hotels can balance business goals with community-oriented practices.

Methods

A qualitative approach was used, involving in-depth interviews with seven assistant professors and six hotel managers. The data were analyzed thematically to identify key issues, opportunities, and strategic recommendations related to the formation and management of faculty clubs within hotel environments.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings reveal that assistant professors face a lack of peer support and community engagement, which could be alleviated by the creation of a faculty club. Hotel managers see value in using existing facilities to support such initiatives. Benefits include improved well-being, networking, and a sense of belonging for faculty, while hotels gain stronger community ties and increased revenue. Notably, interviews revealed that the hotel has already fostered informal communities, such as football fan groups and cooking clubs, demonstrating its potential as a social hub and contributor to community building.

This study contributes to the hospitality literature by providing insights into how hotels can engage local communities, offering both theoretical and practical implications for the industry's role in community building, well-being, and the development of new markets through informal clubs.

References are available upon request

STAGING THE HUNT: OUTFITTERS BLAZE THE TRAIL TO MEMORABLE HUNTING EXPERIENCES FOR TOURISTS

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Introduction

This study aims to examine the typical practices of outfitters in Texas for delivering their services, with an emphasis on the managerial aspects of the planning and delivery processes. It seeks to document the activities within the Texas hunting culture and compare them with the Aspects of a Memorable Hunting Experience framework to evaluate key factors that influence client satisfaction and engagement.

While the existing literature on memorable experiences predominantly focuses on the visitor's perspective as a guest or participant, this study introduces a novel approach by concentrating on the management perspective. It aims to scrutinize the processes employed by managers and identify potential areas for enhancement, utilizing the previously mentioned aspects of a memorable hunting experience as a framework.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach to achieve its objective. It involves analyzing online guest reviews in the Texas outfitting industry.

A Google search was conducted for companies offering hunting outfitting services in Texas. From that search, five ranches were randomly chosen from different regions across the state: one from the Brazos Valley, two from Central Texas, one from South Texas, and one from the Panhandle. Eight customer reviews from each ranch were randomly selected from Google Maps to analyze their content, totaling forty reviews analyzed.

The analysis involved identifying the topics and characteristics mentioned in the review. Those characteristics were grouped into five categories: Guides/Staff, Property, Facilities/Lodging, Food, Animals, and Hospitality/Service.

Results/Discussion/Implication

After analyzing the insights from these reviews, it was discovered that the selected framework demonstrates partial universal applicability.

Although it can be used as a tool to understand and develop this industry worldwide, it still requires local adaptation tailored to the cultural context. In this case, specific aspects should be added and/or modified to reflect the Texas hunting culture, so it could assist guides, managers, and landowners in enhancing their business models.

The results of this review analysis make it clear that companies should primarily focus on aspects related to the quality of guides and lodging offered to guests, as these two specific areas have the most significant impact on the majority of the final evaluation of the experience offered to clients.

References are available upon request

Completed Research:
Marketing

BLENDING BRAND AND BORROWED CONTENT: TRUST TRANSFER IN HYBRID HOTEL WEBSITE ENVIRONMENTS

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Introduction

Active sharing of user-generated content (i.e., UGC) on social media inspires brands to adopt it as a marketing source and display it on the official website. In this process, brands have curated the UGC by selecting, evaluating, and deciding how to present it on the official website (Influrr, 2024). This curated UGC increases website traffic by converting the hotel website, which is a firm-generated platform, to a hybrid content environment where content generated by the firm and users are presented together (Chae et al., 2025). To better understand the impact of curated UGC on the hotel website, the current study proposes the trust transfer process triggered by curated UGC (Steward, 2003), which can impact customers' attitudes toward the hotel.

Furthermore, the moderating effect of customers' decision confidence due to the mixed or positively skewed reviews on third-party websites has been tested for the trust transfer process.

Methods

Two scenario-based experimental studies have been conducted to test proposed research hypotheses. Study 1 conducted a one-factor (curated UGC: yes vs. no) between-subject experimental design to test the impact of curated UGC on customers' attitude toward the hotel and trust transfer process triggered by curated UGC. A one-way ANOVA supported a statistically significant effect of curated UGC on customers' hotel attitude ($F_{(1, 119)} = 5.415$, $p = 0.02$, $M_{curated\ UGC}=5.4$, $SD_{curated\ UGC}=1.2$, $M_{no\ curated\ UGC}=5.0$, $SD_{no\ curated\ UGC}=1.0$). PROCESS MODEL 6 (5,000 samples and 95% confidence intervals) (Hayes, 2022) revealed the serial mediation effects between curated UGC and customers' attitude through trustworthiness toward the hotel website and the hotel (b = .27, SE = 0.13, CI = [.0352, .5448]).

Study 2 adopted a 2 (curated UGC: yes vs. no) x 2 (customers' decision confidence: low vs. high) between-subjects experimental design to investigate the moderated serial mediation effect of customers' decision confidence level between curated UGC and customers' attitude toward the hotel through the trust transfer process. PROCESS Model 83 (5,000 samples and 95% confidence intervals) (Hayes, 2022) by controlling the liking of the hotel website, demonstrated the moderated serial mediation effect (b = .19, SE = 0.10, CI = [.0099, .4202]). When customers' decision confidence was low, the serial mediation effect was reduced (b =-.20, SE = 0.09, CI = [-.3987, -.0464]) while no difference for higher decision confidence (b =-.01, SE = 0.06, CI = [-.1240, .1023]).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings support the positive effect of curated UGC on customers' attitudes toward the hotel by transferring trust from the hotel website to the hotel. However, this trust transfer process is diminished when customers' decision confidence level is low due to mixed review valence on the third-party website. Findings not only extend the trust transfer theory into the brand content types but also propose a situational factor of the trust transfer process, which is the customers' decision confidence level. Additionally, the current study reveals the positive effect of a hybrid content environment for hotel websites by inducing customers' positive attitudes. Hotel managers can utilize the findings by adopting curated UGC on their official websites, but avoiding the adoption of curated UGC when there are mixed valence of customer reviews on third-party websites.

MAPPING SERVICE INTERACTION VULNERABILITY WITH SERVICE ROBOTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW FROM AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Service robots have rapidly transformed frontline service delivery in hospitality, from robotic concierges to automated restaurant systems (Shanks et al., 2025). Although these technologies improve efficiency and reduce labor costs, they also generate unintended consequences for both customers and frontline employees (FLEs), including emotional, relational, and psychological strain during robot-mediated encounters. Existing research has primarily examined customer or employee experiences separately, focusing on adoption, acceptance, and functional trade-offs. Yet service robots are reshaping frontline encounters into complex triadic interactions among customers, FLEs, and socially intelligent technologies (De Keyser et al., 2019). Limited attention has been given to the service interaction vulnerabilities that arise in these multi-actor, robot-integrated environments.

To address this gap, we draw on the concept of service interaction vulnerability, defined as a dynamic, situational susceptibility to harm triggered by the integration of service robots (Beatson et al., 2023), to examine how vulnerabilities emerge, distribute, and accumulate across interaction types. Accordingly, this study investigates: (RQ1) what types of vulnerabilities arise in customer–robot, employee–robot, and customer–employee–robot encounters; (RQ2) how these vulnerabilities are distributed across the human–robot service triad; and (RQ3) what conceptual and empirical gaps persist in existing research. In addressing these questions, we introduce the Human–Robot Service Interaction Vulnerability Framework, offering a synthesized model of core vulnerabilities in robot-integrated service environments.

Methods

This study employed a hybrid systematic literature review guided by the SPAR-4-SLR protocol. A domain-based approach was used to capture interdisciplinary research on service robots across marketing, management, hospitality, information systems, and organizational behavior. Articles published between 2015 and February 2025 were searched across FT50 journals, SERVSIG outlets, and leading hospitality and tourism journals. After applying exclusion criteria for duplicates, non-English works, and studies unrelated to embodied service robots, 54 articles were retained. A framework-based synthesis structured findings across customer–robot, employee–robot, and customer–employee–robot interactions, while thematic coding captured interaction-specific and shared vulnerabilities. To enhance analytical rigor, manual coding was supplemented with Non-Negative Matrix Factorization (NMF) topic modeling to validate emerging vulnerability patterns.

Results/Discussion/Implication

We identify five recurring themes through a triadic lens: emotional and psychological vulnerability, job and role vulnerability, maladaptive coping and deviant behavior, social and identity vulnerability, and trust and security vulnerability. We propose the Human–Robot Service Interaction Vulnerability Framework, offering new insights into triadic service encounters and advancing both theory and practice.

ANCILLARY REVENUE DIFFERENCES FOR PAID MEMBERSHIPS VERSUS LOYALTY PROGRAMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL HOTEL BRANDS

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the risks of relying solely on room-based revenue in hotels, identifying the need to diversify revenue streams through ancillary revenue (Shin et al., 2022). Ancillary revenue is estimated to grow by roughly 10% annually (Torres, 2024), driven by subscription-based models such as paid memberships. Unlike traditional loyalty programs that reward repeat purchases over time (Chen et al., 2021; Bombaij & Dekimpe, 2020), paid memberships provide immediate and tangible benefits (Shin et al., 2022). While loyalty programs are well-studied, less is known about paid memberships' role in driving ancillary revenue, especially across global versus regional hotel brands. This study therefore examines: (1) whether paid membership programs outperform loyalty programs in generating ancillary revenue; and (2) whether this effect differs between global and regional hotel brands.

Methods

Financial and annual reports from 24 hotel companies (12 with paid memberships and 12 with loyalty programs) were analyzed. Each company was classified as global (operations in ≥ 3 world regions; Levitt, 1983) or regional. The dependent variable was the ratio of ancillary revenue to total revenue. Membership type was coded 1 = paid membership, 0 = loyalty program; Global presence = 1 for global brands, 0 for regional A gamma regression model was applied: $AncillaryRevenueRatio_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Membership)_i + \beta_2(Global)_i + \beta_3(Membership \times Global)_i + \varepsilon_i$, where ε_i is the error term. The gamma model was chosen due to the positively skewed nature of the dependent variable (Shapiro–Wilk $W = 0.817$, $p < 0.01$). Key parameters estimated the effects of membership type (β_1), brand presence (β_2), and their interaction (β_3).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Paid membership programs significantly increased ancillary-to-total revenue ratios ($b = 2.675$, $p < 0.01$), equivalent to 14.5× higher ancillary revenue relative to loyalty programs. The interaction term ($b = –1.678$, $p < 0.05$) indicated that this positive effect weakens for global brands, confirming the studies' two objectives. Thus, paid memberships are more effective in generating ancillary revenue overall, and more advantageous for regional hotels.

This study contributes to hospitality marketing and ancillary revenue management by empirically confirming paid memberships as a distinct, more effective strategy than loyalty programs. It also extends brand presence research, demonstrating that global brand presence may diminish the positive effect of paid memberships due to weaker localized identification (Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004). Hotel managers should view paid membership as a viable alternative to traditional loyalty programs. These programs can encourage ancillary spending through psychological ownership and the sunk cost effect (Kahneman et al., 1990; Morewedge et al., 2009), as members perceive immediate ownership of benefits. Regional and independent hotels may therefore find paid memberships a more effective strategy for maximizing ancillary revenue than traditional loyalty programs.

References are available upon request

HOW AESTHETIC PERFECTION IN AI TOURISM AMBASSADORS INCREASES TRUST AND ADVERTISEMENT SATISFACTION

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Introduction

AI-generated tourism ambassadors are increasingly used to humanize destination advertising. Earlier versions of this project assumed that aesthetic perfection (symmetry, flawlessness) would enhance trust and, in turn, advertisement satisfaction (AdSat). Our newest experimental evidence refines this view: while perfection signals professionalism, a standardized, marketing-like smile is the visual cue that most reliably elicits positive affect and then boosts AdSat and visit intention. Using the stimulus–organism–response (S–O–R) perspective, we identify which visual element actually works and consider when contextual cues (e.g., AI disclosure, ambassador gender) may weaken this effect.

Methods

We ran four between-subjects experiments using AI-generated tourism ambassador images. **Study 1** used a two-condition between-subjects design that compared (1) an **imperfect face with a non-standard smile** and (2) a **perfect face with a standardized smile. Study 2** introduced a third image, namely an **imperfect face with a standardized smile**, to examine whether adding a standardized smile to the imperfect face would reduce the difference observed in Study 1. **Study 3** used a 2 × 3 design (AI disclosure: disclosed vs. not disclosed × the three image conditions) to test whether disclosure attenuates the smile-based effect. **Study 4** used a 2 × 3 design (ambassador gender: female vs. male × the same three image conditions) to assess generalizability. No tables or figures were used.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Study 1: the standardized-smile condition raised affect and, via Affect → AdSat → Visit, outperformed the imperfect/non-standard condition (SEM: $\chi^2(50)=67.73$, RMSEA=.07, CFI=.984, TLI=.979), while perfection itself was non-significant. Study 2–4: We expect once smiles were standardized the perfection gap disappeared, and disclosure slightly weakened but gender did not overturn the smile-based route.

WHAT DRIVES VISIT INTENTION IN SHORT-FORM TOURISM CONTENT?

THE DOMINANT ROLE OF DESTINATION COOLNESS

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Introduction

Short-form video has transformed destination marketing by replacing long-form storytelling with fast, affective impressions that circulate through social media feeds. Such formats increase exposure and are processed more fluently on mobile with relatively low cognitive effort, particularly in vertical orientation (Mulier et al., 2021). In this symbolic environment, aesthetic and cultural cues play a growing role in determining appeal, and coolness has emerged as a central appraisal of value in tourism and consumer culture (Warren & Campbell, 2014; Kock, 2021; Chen & Chou, 2019). Through meaning transfer, popular culture can imbue destinations with cultural value, as observed in K-pop content that extends symbolic associations to featured places (McCracken, 1989; Lee & Bai, 2016). However, when marketing cues become overly commercial, perceived autonomy and authenticity may be undermined, weakening coolness appraisals (Warren & Campbell, 2014).

Building on this premise, the present study investigates how specific features of short-form tourism videos, including video length, viewing format, and destination information, affect appraisals of destination coolness, K-pop coolness, and authenticity, and how these appraisals in turn shape visit intention.

Methods

A 2 × 2 × 2 between-subjects experiment examined the effects of destination information (present vs. absent), video length (30 s vs. 3 min), and video format (vertical vs. horizontal). Prolific participants were randomly assigned to one of eight conditions and completed measures of destination coolness (Chen & Chou, 2019), K-pop coolness (Kim et al., 2015; Ashfaq et al., 2021), authenticity (Kock, 2021), and visit intention (Zhang et al., 2016). ANCOVA tested experimental effects, and OLS regression assessed how the three appraisals predicted visit intention, controlling for age, gender, and familiarity.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Analysis of 362 participants showed that formal video features such as length and orientation had limited effects on evaluations or behavioral intention. Including destination information enhanced visit intention, especially with longer clips. Shorter videos appeared slightly more authentic, yet informational clarity was more influential than style. Among the three appraisals, destination coolness and authenticity predicted visit intention, while K-pop coolness did not, underscoring the primacy of the destination itself.

Informational substance, rather than surface form, drives persuasion in short-form tourism media. Destination exposure increased visit intention even when it slightly reduced authenticity or K-pop associations, indicating that informational clarity and recognition outweigh reductions in symbolic appeal. Destination coolness emerged as the strongest predictor. These results challenge dual-process views emphasizing peripheral cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, 1980) and align with perspectives on information quality and meaning transfer (Ajzen, 1991; Keller, 1993; McCracken, 1989).

WHO INFLUENCES BEST? EVALUATING INFLUENCER EFFECTIVENESS IN F&B MARKETING BY INTEGRATING CONSUMER DECISION FUNNEL STAGES

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Introduction

Influencer marketing has become a major force in consumer decision-making (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). In the food and beverage (F&B) service industry, where experiences are intangible, influencer-generated content on platforms like YouTube allows consumers to visualize offerings, anticipate the atmosphere, and form expectations before visiting a restaurant. Even a single viral video can reshape brand perceptions and behavior (Abidin et al., 2021).

Despite its growth, research on influencer effectiveness in hospitality remains limited. Most studies classify influencers by follower scale, overlooking role-based distinctions such as the differences between celebrities, chefs, and general influencers who differ in authority, expertise, and relatability (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Prior work has mainly emphasized exposure and engagement, with limited attention to cost-effectiveness, which is important for business decisions (De Veirman et al., 2017).

To address these gaps, this study examines how different influencer types shape consumer responses at various stages of the decision funnel: awareness, consideration, and conversion (Court et al., 2009), and further evaluates which types generate these outcomes most efficiently when cost is considered. By comparing behavioral responses and cost-adjusted performance across influencer roles, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of influencer effectiveness in F&B marketing.

Methods

YouTube data were collected in South Korea, where video platforms dominate F&B content consumption (InterAd, 2025). Twenty-seven influencers with verified cost data were analyzed, covering 1,920 F&B-related videos uploaded between February 2024 and January 2025.
Awareness was measured by views, consideration by engagements (likes and comments), and conversion by the proportion of action-oriented comments (e.g., “will buy,” “went there”). All variables were examined in both absolute and cost-adjusted terms, and results were compared across influencer types with controls for posting interval, video duration, and content type.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Celebrities had the highest costs but lower activity and engagement. Chefs gained the most views and comments despite posting less often, while general influencers were more active and achieved higher engagement at lower costs. Across stages, Chef and General influencers generated greater awareness than Celebrities, and General influencers showed stronger conversion through more action-oriented comments, confirming their overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness in driving consumer responses. This study shows that influencer effectiveness in F&B marketing differs by type and decision stage. General influencers generated higher awareness, stronger conversion, and greater impact, making them the most effective for practical returns. Celebrity-focused strategies should be reconsidered, as celebrities mainly enhance visibility but lack impact relative to their high cost. Chefs showed no clear advantage, suggesting that expertise alone is insufficient without consumer relevance or emotional connection. Overall, the findings underscore the need for strategic use of each influencer type to balance visibility, engagement, and effectiveness.

Completed Research: Restaurant & Foodservice

BRIDGING NUTRITION LITERACY GAPS THROUGH AR/AI MENU TECHNOLOGIES: PRIOR RESEARCH FROM HISPANIC AND NON-HISPANIC WHITE DINERS IN TEXAS

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Introduction
The Hispanic population, now the largest ethnic minority in the United States, accounts for 40.2% of Texas residents compared to 39.8% Non-Hispanic Whites (Widjaya & Shah, 2024). Nearly 17% of all Mexican restaurants nationwide are in Texas. Hispanics tend to dine out more frequently, strengthening family and cultural connections but also facing elevated diet-related health risks. Emerging digital technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can improve nutrition literacy by visualizing portion sizes, offering bilingual support, and encouraging healthier dining choices. Guided by nutrition literacy and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this study explores: (RQ1) differences in literacy and dining behaviors between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White consumers, and (RQ2) how literacy influences acceptance of AR/AI-powered menus.

Methods
The questionnaire, developed from prior literature and refined by the research team (Alkonda, 2023; Baker et al., 1999; Diamond, 2024; Fernandez et al., 2011; Fuster et al., 2020; Guttersrud et al., 2013; Vrinten et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023), included three sections: (1) nutrition literacy and dining preferences, (2) technology perceptions, and (3) socio-demographics. All items used 5-point Likert scales. The English survey was translated into Spanish and approved by the University IRB. Reliability was good to excellent: functional literacy (α=.82), interactive (α=.75), critical (α=.72), technology acceptance (α=.95), and preference (α=.83).

Results/Discussion/Implication
Our results reveal meaningful differences in nutrition literacy and dining preference across Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White diners in Texas. While both groups showed similar functional literacy, disparities at the interactive and critical levels were more pronounced. The literacy gap is therefore selective: basic knowledge is shared, but applying and critically evaluating nutrition information remains uneven. Addressing such gaps requires interventions that go beyond general knowledge to target higher-order skills for engaging external information and assessing nutrition claims.

Beyond literacy and behavior, findings reveal a double divide between nutrition literacy and technology adoption. Hispanic consumers reported lower acceptance of AR/AI menu technologies alongside lower literacy scores. Yet interactive literacy was the strongest predictor of technology acceptance, creating a paradox: those most in need of technological support are least likely to adopt it.

This dual gap signals risk. Without culturally and economically tailored designs, AR/AI tools may reinforce disparities. Bridging this divide requires investment in nutrition literacy and low-barrier, bilingual, culturally relevant technologies. By doing so, restaurants can promote healthier dining while advancing equity and sustainability. Future research will extend this work by testing a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework.

References are available upon request

DINING HALL EMPLOYEES' FOOD WASTE AND SAFETY CONCERNS

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Introduction

Food waste is a significant concern in institutional dining environments, such as university dining halls, where substantial amounts of food are prepared and served daily. Silva et al. (2021) highlight that millions of people continue to go hungry every day, even though billions of tons of food are wasted each year. Every year, approximately 30-40% of the food supply in the United States is wasted, with college students generating an average of 142 pounds of food waste per person (Johnson, 2024). Food waste is a serious issue because it contributes to the adverse impacts of the vast resources required to produce and prepare food that remains wasted.

Employees in dining halls play a crucial role in food waste reduction initiatives, as their attitudes, peer/supervisor expectations, and confidence in waste management directly influence their behavior (Stefan et al., 2013). Food safety issues can also lead to increased waste, as employees may discard healthy food out of caution (Gunders, 2012). This study examines employee behavior towards food waste and the impact of food safety concerns using the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Specifically, the study examines employees' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on food waste behavior, with food safety concerns as a moderating factor.

Methods

The study employed a quantitative design, with self-reported behavior and behavioral intention as dependent variables, and attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control as independent variables, with food safety concern as a moderator. Data from 102 dining hall employees were collected via Qualtrics and analyzed in SPSS 30.0 using descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and moderation analysis.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Participants were primarily young (18–24: 60.8%), mostly male (56.9%), largely part-time employees (80.4%) with under one year of work experience (59.8%), and received food safety (96.1%) and waste training (84.3%). All constructs demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.764–0.908$; AVE = 0.529–0.682). Attitude ($B = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$), subjective norm ($B = 0.196$, $p = 0.009$), and perceived behavioral control ($B = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predicted behavioral intention, with perceived behavioral control the strongest predictor and subjective norm the weakest. Behavioral intention ($B = -0.613$, $p = 0.003$), food safety concerns ($B = -0.799$, $p < 0.001$), and their interaction ($B = 0.239$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predicted self-reported behavior. Food safety concerns weakened the intention-behavior relationship. Demographics did not significantly predict intention or behavior. These results are consistent with Ajzen (1991) and Aktas et al. (2018), indicating that attitudes and perceived behavioral control influence intentions, while food safety concerns can weaken the link between intention and behavior. The study suggests that organizations should provide training that integrates food safety and waste reduction and implement policies that ensure sustainability efforts do not compromise food safety.

DESIGNING THE PLATE, DESIGNING THE CHOICE: AESTHETIC CUES AND CUSTOMER DECISION-MAKING

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Introduction

Aesthetics influence consumer decision-making (Vermeir & Roose, 2020). In food contexts, visual appearance drives preferences, as consumers often reject unattractive yet edible produce in favor of visually appealing options. Research shows that consumers frequently pay an "aesthetic premium," favoring visually appealing products and foods even over well-known brands (Sharif et al., 2017). Aesthetics have been conceptualized through SERVICESCAPES (Bitner, 1992) and atmospherics (Jang & Namkung, 2009), limited attention has been given to food aesthetics themselves and their influence on perceptions of attractiveness and healthiness.

Object size influences judgment through the "bigger is better" heuristic. Larger presentations enhance liking, and this effect strengthens under high color contrast, which amplifies visual appeal (Silvera et al., 2002). Perceived healthiness varies by food type. Essential foods evoke stronger health associations than indulgent foods (Maehle et al., 2015). Visual cues further modify these perceptions: larger plates reduce perceived portion size, while vivid colors lower perceived healthiness (Mead & Richerson, 2018). Based on these rationales, this study examines how plate size, color contrast, and food type jointly interact to influence perceived attractiveness and food healthiness, ultimately shaping purchase intention and willingness-to-pay premium. By positioning plating aesthetics as a measurable construct, this research advances theory, reveals underlying psychological mechanisms, and offers practical insights for health-oriented restaurant branding and policy design.

Methods

Study 1 employed a 2 (plate size: large vs. small) × 2 (color contrast: low vs. high) between-subject experimental design. Plate size was adjusted by the food-to-plate ratio, and color contrast by the similarity between the plate and food color. Study 2 extended the design to 2 × 2 × 2 by adding food type (essential vs. indulgent) as a moderator. Participants (Study 1: N=175, Study 2: N=370) were U.S. consumers recruited via Prolific who met eligibility criteria (dining experience, no food allergies, not vegetarian, no vision impairments). All constructs were assessed with the validated measures. Manipulations were successful across all factors.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Plate size and color contrast jointly shape food attractiveness, influencing purchase intention and willingness to pay. Under high color contrast, larger plates enhanced attractiveness, consistent with evidence that vivid cues amplify aesthetic appeal. Under low contrast, this effect disappeared. It shows that size-based heuristics depend on contextual cues, refining the "bigger is better" bias. Food type further moderated these effects: for essential foods, larger plates under low contrast increased perceived healthiness and purchase intention, whereas indulgent foods showed no effect. The findings position food plating as a measurable aesthetic construct and highlight that aesthetic judgments are context-dependent and cue-driven. We extend health perception literature by revealing that aesthetic cues vary across product categories, qualifying the universal "health halo" effect. Practically, strategic use of visual design can enhance attractiveness and support health-oriented positioning in ways that encourage portion control and minimize leftovers. Overall,
the study bridges aesthetic design, consumer psychology, and behavioral economics.

SCALING SUSTAINABILITY: A PROCESS ECO-INNOVATION MODEL FOR FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

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Introduction

Food waste remains one of the most pressing global sustainability challenges, with foodservice operations responsible for over one-quarter of total waste (UNEP, 2024). Institutional pressures, especially those derived from the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) 12.3, are compelling organizations to embed waste reduction into their core operations. However, how such mandates translate into organizational action remains unclear. Guided by institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), this study examines how on-site foodservice management companies respond to these pressures through process eco-innovation (PEI), which is the redesign of internal workflows and technologies to minimize environmental impact. While eco-innovation has often focused on products and technologies, this study emphasizes the organizational and process dimensions critical for service-intensive sectors.

Methods

A qualitative method with twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers and executives from on-site foodservice management companies and technology solution providers. Participants represented diverse operational environments including higher education, healthcare, and airports. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, supported by inter-rater reliability checks and negative case analysis to ensure rigor. Triangulation and maintenance of an audit trail enhanced credibility and confirmability, while transferability and dependability were ensured as well.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings culminate the Process Eco-Innovation (PEI) Model that explains how institutional pressures are translated into organizational change. The process begins with inception, where global mandates such as the UN SDGs create legitimacy imperatives that drive sustainability alignment. Clean technology development follows, through either internal task forces or external partnerships, enabling the design of systems for waste monitoring and reduction. Structural redesigning then embeds these technologies into daily operations, ensuring genuine compliance rather than symbolic adoption. Testing and integration occur through pilot programs that refine technology, workflows, and employee practices before broader rollout. Finally, ongoing monitoring and control sustain institutional legitimacy through continuous feedback and adaptation. Across these phases, challenges emerged in human, operational, financial, and cultural dimensions, alongside external structural disintegration due to differing regional infrastructures and regulations. Despite these barriers, organizations reported reduced waste, enhanced operational efficiency, and strengthened legitimacy under ESG frameworks.

The study contributes theoretically by linking institutional theory with eco-innovation, showing how organizations interpret, adapt, and operationalize sustainability mandates. Practically, the PEI Model offers a roadmap for policymakers and managers seeking to scale sustainability practices, highlighting the need for institutional alignment, cultural engagement, and adaptive scaling strategies.

EXPLORING THE SOMMELIER EFFECT ON ORGANIC WINE ORDERING BEHAVIOR: A MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

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Introduction

The global organic wine market is projected to reach USD 21.48 billion by 2030, reflecting a robust annual growth rate (Grand View Research, 2024). Organic wine purchases in restaurants, bars, and hotels have been steadily increasing, reflecting a meaningful driver of this wine market segment (Fortune Business Insights, 2024). However, many consumers struggle to decide whether to buy it because of uncertainty about its quality and taste (Corduas et al., 2013).

In restaurants, wine sales are a key driver of overall profits, and a sommelier is a key person who leads them. Despite the importance of promoting organic wine in the restaurant industry (Han et al., 2019), limited research has examined which consumer attributes affect organic wine ordering intention. Wine is not only a high-involvement beverage, but also a symbolic good (Bruwer et al., 2019). Therefore, consumers' wine knowledge and green self-identity could affect purchase intentions. Furthermore, wine can be promoted based on consumers' characteristics (Hall et al., 2001), which highlights the role of sommeliers. Thus, based on the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model and the social influence theory, the study examined the relationships among wine knowledge, green self-identity, attitude toward organic wine, purchase intention, and sommeliers' recommendations.

Methods

This research uses a one-by-two (recommendation vs. non-recommendation) scenario-based quasi-experimental design, with a survey administered via Prolific. Only participants aged 21 or older who had ordered a bottle of wine in a restaurant were eligible for the survey (n = 315). A manipulation, realism, and comprehension check about scenarios, and *wine knowledge* (Dodd et al., 2005), *green self-identity* (Becerra et al., 2023), *attitude toward organic wine* (Sarabia-Andreu & Sarabia-Sánchez, 2018), and *intention to order organic wine* (Chi et al., 2021) were measured. A Chi-square test was conducted for the manipulation check, and Hayes's (2017) SPSS PROCESS Macro model 7 with 5,000 bootstrapping was used to test the model.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results showed that wine knowledge negatively influences intention to order organic wine through attitude, and the moderated mediation effect of sommeliers' recommendations was significant in this relationship, attenuating the adverse effect. Also, the green self-identity positively affects intention to order organic wine through attitude. However, the moderated mediation effect of the sommeliers' recommendations was not significant in this relationship.

This study pioneered integrating the social influence theory into the SOR model and examined the moderating effect of sommeliers' recommendations in the restaurant context. The study supports the theory by demonstrating that the impact of personal wine knowledge depends on the presence of a credible social information resource, namely the sommelier's effect (Manske & Cordua, 2005). Also, the study offers practical insights for restaurant operators on developing and executing sales strategies tailored to consumer attributes. Lastly, the study has a limitation in a scenario-based experiment. Thus, future research should validate these findings in a field setting.

SYSTEMIC CONSTRAINTS IN PROFESSIONAL KITCHENS: REFINING THE THEORY OF CONSTRAINTS FOR FOOD WASTE REDUCTION

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Introduction

Globally, the foodservice industry is the second-largest contributor to global food waste, generated about 290 million tons of food waste in 2022—nearly 27% of the global total—which could feed 783 million hungry or 25 million food-insecure individuals (UNEP, 2024; FAO, 2023). Within the foodservice industry, professional kitchens—where core operational activities take place—generate up to two-thirds of the total food waste (Filimonau et al., 2024; McAdams et al., 2019), highlighting the importance of reducing food waste in professional kitchens.

Previous studies on food waste in professional kitchens examined how chefs manage food waste, addressing the issue as an individual responsibility (e.g., Filimonau et al., 2024; Reardon et al., 2024). While valuable, this approach oversimplifies the issue by ignoring how systemic interactions between operational constraints and behaviors shape outcomes. For example, customer demands for speed and variety drive overproduction, while labor shortages and strict safety rules hinder reduction efforts, despite staff awareness or training. To address this gap, this study applies the Theory of Constraints (Goldratt, 1990) to identify key workflow barriers that impede effective food waste reduction in professional kitchens.

Methods

This study employed a two-phase interpretivist qualitative design, adopting structured observations in Phase 1 and semi-structured interviews in Phase 2. Observations were conducted in two U.S. restaurant kitchens over two weeks in February 2025, with four-hour sessions across varying time slots to capture full workflows. Two trained researchers independently documented constraints using structured observation rubrics, field notes, and photos of key waste events.

Subsequently, 36 kitchen staff, including chefs and managers, from the same restaurants participated in in-person interviews (average 25 minutes). Data were collected in March and April 2025 and analyzed through deductive content analysis using a predefined codebook, categorizing constraints into resource, policy, market, and behavioral. Two researchers conducted iterative coding in NVivo 15, yielding substantial intercoder reliability (Cohen's Kappa values = 0.84).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Triangulating observations and interviews revealed both convergent and divergent food waste constraints in professional kitchens. Systemic barriers—such as inadequate equipment, limited training, rigid recipes, large portions, poor FIFO adherence, and careless handling—were consistent across data. While observations exposed normalized practices (e.g., overuse of oil, poor cleaning), interviews highlighted perception-based issues (e.g., budget limits, lack of incentives). Overall, these findings revealed that resource shortages hindered efficiency, policy rigidity limited flexibility, market pressures fueled overproduction, and behavioral lapses amplified waste constraints and operational bottlenecks, enabling managers to systematically assess practices and prioritize improvements..

By applying the TOC framework, this study reframes food waste in professional kitchens as the outcome of systemic, independent constraints across workflows rather than isolated chef practices, addressing a longstanding gap in hospitality research. Additionally, this study provides a diagnostic framework for identifying kitchen waste reduction constraints and operational bottlenecks, enabling managers to systematically assess practices and prioritize improvements.

HOW DOES TRANSPARENCY IMPACT SATISFACTION? AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF PREPARED DISHES DISCLOSURE IN FAST-CASUAL RESTAURANTS

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Introduction
Prepared dishes, semi-finished or preprocessed food items, are increasingly common in restaurants, driven by needs for labor efficiency, supply stability, and consistency (Lan & Chen, 2024; Božić & Milošević, 2021). Central kitchens further enhance scalability for both independent and chain operators (Cintron, 2022). However, the growing use of prepared dishes raises concerns about authenticity, freshness, and trust, especially in cultures that value craftsmanship and freshly made food (Fu et al., 2024). In March 2024, Chinese policymakers encouraged restaurants to disclose the use of prepared dishes. While such disclosure promotes transparency, it may also trigger negative disconfirmation by lowering perceived authenticity even when customers' expectations of the restaurant remain unchanged (Shu et al., 2024). This study integrates the Expectancy–Disconfirmation Model (EDM) and Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT) to examine how disclosure affects satisfaction and how customers compensate across attributes.

Methods
This study analyzed 14,513 online reviews from 38 outlets of a leading Chinese fast-casual restaurant chain collected between January 2023 and April 2025, covering both pre-disclosure (January 2023–March 2024) and post-disclosure (April 2024–April 2025) periods. Each review contained a star rating and textual feedback. After removing duplicates and non-Chinese content, the texts were segmented using Jieba and standardized through stop-word removal and synonym substitution. Prepared dish disclosure was coded as 0 (before) or 1 (after April 2024). Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) identified four topics; three, price value, food quality, and service, were retained (coherence = 0.54). Sentiment scores ranging from 0 to 1 were generated using SnowNLP to produce attribute-specific sentiment measures. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression tested the main disclosure effect and interaction terms to assess how attribute sentiments moderated customer satisfaction.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Regression results indicate that prepared dish disclosure had a significant negative effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$). From an Expectancy–Disconfirmation Model (EDM) perspective, such disclosure acts as a performance shock, leading to negative disconfirmation. However, consistent with Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT), the disclosure effect varied across attribute evaluations. Price value ($\beta = 1.19$, $p < 0.001$), food quality ($\beta = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$), and service ($\beta = 1.49$, $p < 0.001$) sentiments were all positively associated with satisfaction. Interaction terms show that strong perceptions of price value ($\beta = 0.25$), food quality ($\beta = 0.36$), and service ($\beta = 0.20$) significantly mitigated disclosure's negative impact. These findings suggest that while transparency can trigger performance violations, positive evaluations across key attributes can compensate for its adverse effects, demonstrating that EDM and MAUT jointly explain both the mechanism and boundary conditions of disclosure outcomes.

DECODING MICHELIN-STARRED RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE:

A THEORY-DRIVEN, TOPIC-SENTIMENT WEIGHTED ANALYSIS OF ONLINE REVIEWS

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Introduction
Michelin-starred restaurants offer more than just culinary excellence. However, most studies continue to apply the quality-satisfaction-intention framework narrowly, focusing primarily on atmospheric, food, and service qualities while overlooking the emotional and symbolic dimensions central to luxury experiences. In addition, conventional survey-based approaches are often constrained by limited sample sizes and potential social desirability bias. To address these problems, this study employs user-generated reviews to capture authentic guest expressions and empirically validate an extended quality-experience-satisfaction-intention framework in the context of high-end dining.

Methods
A total of 28,882 TripAdvisor reviews from 96 Michelin-starred restaurants in California and New York were analyzed using a theory- and data-driven approach. Seed keywords representing five established constructs (i.e., atmospheric, food, service quality, satisfaction, and revisit intention) were first derived from the hospitality literature. Next, bigrams that frequently co-occurred with these seed terms were extracted from the review corpus to capture richer contextual meanings. To explore additional constructs, bigrams of the predefined dimensions were filtered out. This inductive process revealed two emergent constructs: wine quality and experience, which capture symbolic and holistic aspects of fine dining.

GuidedLDA was employed to estimate topic proportions for each construct, and VADER was used to quantify sentiment polarity. Because topic proportions reflect thematic salience without accounting for evaluative orientation, the two measures were integrated to produce topic-sentiment weighted scores, offering a more comprehensive and behaviorally meaningful representation of consumer perception. These scores were then analyzed using GSEM to validate the extended quality-experience-satisfaction-intention framework, controlling for restaurant- and year-level effects.

Results/Discussion/Implication
All quality constructs significantly influenced experience, which subsequently enhanced satisfaction and revisit intention. The findings support the structural validity of the extended quality-experience-satisfaction-intention framework and illustrate how customers synthesize multiple quality cues into a holistic evaluation. Theoretically, the study advances hospitality research by (1) identifying wine and experiential quality as distinct dimensions of fine dining, (2) introducing topic-sentiment weighting as a robust measurement technique for consumer perception, and (3) demonstrating the empirical adequacy of user-generated content for theory testing. Practically, the findings offer managers data-driven insights for monitoring customer sentiment, refining service design, and fostering repeat patronage in luxury restaurant contexts.

References are available upon request

WHEN WASTE BECOMES FOOD: MITIGATING STIGMA IN UPCYCLED FOOD THROUGH VISUAL ILLUSTRATION AND APPEAL

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Introduction

Upcycled food transforms surplus ingredients, by-products, and imperfect produce into new value-added products, providing a promising route toward sustainable consumption (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2023; Legendre et al., 2020). However, despite its environmental and social benefits, consumer adoption remains limited due to the stigma associated with "waste-derived" products. Negative emotions such as disgust and unease often lead to lower evaluations of quality and value (Hellali et al., 2023; Thorsen et al., 2024). Drawing on Feelings-as-Information (FaI) theory (Schwarz & Clore, 2007), this research argues that consumers misattribute these incidental negative feelings to upcycled food itself. The study examines whether visual illustration style (artistic versus photographic) can attenuate this stigma and how perceived visual appeal mediates consumer evaluations.

Methods

Three experimental studies were conducted using national U.S. online samples. Each employed a between-subjects design featuring a realistic takeout meal package labeled either as "upcycled" or as a control with no label. Study 1 ($N = 165$) tested the main effect of upcycled labeling on overall attitude and perceived value. Study 2 ($N = 237$) examined the moderating role of visual illustration style (photo versus artistic), while Study 3 ($N = 304$) investigated perceived visual appeal as a mediator using moderated mediation analysis (PROCESS Model 7; Hayes, 2022). Across all studies, dependent measures included overall attitude, perceived value, and perceived visual appeal (all $\alpha > .90$). Manipulation and realism checks confirmed the validity of the experimental stimuli and the robustness of the findings.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results across the three studies reveal a consistent pattern. In Study 1, labeling food as upcycled significantly reduced both attitude and perceived value ($p < .001$), confirming affective misattribution predicted by FaI theory. Study 2 showed that illustration style moderated this effect: artistic illustrations mitigated the negative impact of upcycled labeling compared to photographic depictions (interaction $p < .005$). Study 3 further demonstrated that artistic illustrations enhanced perceived visual appeal, which in turn improved consumer evaluations (index of moderated mediation: attitude = .91, perceived value = .71).

Theoretically, this research extends FaI theory into the domain of food sustainability by demonstrating that incidental affect from stigma can be redirected through design cues. Visually aesthetic framing can alter the diagnosticity of consumers' negative feelings and responses to stigmatized foods. Practically, the findings suggest that aesthetic interventions such as using artistic illustrations on packaging, menus, and promotional materials, can mitigate disgust and enhance the perceived value of upcycled food. These insights offer actionable guidance for marketers, designers, and sustainability advocates seeking to normalize upcycled food and promote sustainable consumption behaviors.

APPLYING THE VALUE-BELIEF-NORM FRAMEWORK TO FOOD WASTE REDUCTION: CHEFS' PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

Food waste remains a persistent sustainability challenge in hospitality foodservice, where overproduction, portioning, and service standards generate avoidable waste (Appel et al., 2025; Okumus et al., 2020). Existing studies have mostly emphasized guest behavior, menu design, or corporate rules, but less is known about how chefs' intrinsic attributes, values, beliefs, and moral responsibility, shape their practices toward food waste (Filimonau et al., 2024). The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory (Stern, 2000) explains how pro-environmental behavior originates from deeply held values, passes through environmental beliefs (awareness of consequences and ascription of responsibility), and results in personal norms that motivate action. However, in professional kitchens, this chain may be interrupted by menu standards, cost controls, or guest expectations that reward abundance over prevention, showing that chefs can feel a moral obligation to reduce waste but still be unable to act (McAdams et al., 2019; Sezerel & Filimonau, 2023). Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine how chefs' intrinsic attributes shape their practices toward food waste, using the VBN framework.

Methods

This research will use a qualitative, interpretive design to capture chefs lived experiences with food-waste decisions in real kitchen contexts. Semi-structured interviews (30-45 minutes) will be conducted with 15-20 chefs from hotels (upscale, midscale, limited service) and restaurants (casual and fine dining). Purposeful and snowball sampling will be used to reach chefs who routinely manage buffet or high-variety service formats. The interview guide will probe four VBN components, values, ecological beliefs, awareness of consequences, and personal norms, and then ask how these are enabled or blocked by organizational procedures (portion policies, brand standards, labor, cost targets). All interviews will be audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis to develop a VBN-informed model of food-waste behavior in professional kitchens. Trustworthiness will be ensured through member checks, reflexive journaling, and peer debriefing.

Implications

Theoretically, this study will clarify how chefs' internal characteristics relate to observable practices with regards to food waste but also show how organizational-based rules and service formats can enable or limit action. On the practical side, this research will help identify concrete guidelines for adjustments to standard operating procedures that align daily routines with waste prevention, without sacrificing quality of the foodservice operation.

References are available upon request.

THE ECONOMICS OF OVERSERVICE: COMPENSATION STRUCTURES AND THE AGENCY BEHIND SERVING INTOXICATED PATRONS

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Introduction
The continued prevalence of serving intoxicated persons (SIP) represents a significant and persistent public health and legal concern, contributing to elevated risks of impaired driving, injury, and mortality. Despite decades of investment in responsible beverage service (RBS) training and enforcement mechanisms, overservice rates remain persistently high. Conventional interpretations frame this problem as an individual-level compliance failure; however, this perspective neglects the broader structural and economic conditions that shape employee decision-making. In particular, tipping-based compensation models introduce a conflict between financial self-interest and regulatory compliance, discouraging servers from refusing service.

To address this complexity, this study introduces *Situational Agency Theory (SAT)*, a contextual extension of *Behavioral Agency Theory (BAT)*, to conceptualize SIP as boundedly rational behavior shaped by economic incentives, organizational norms, and institutional constraints.

Methods
A systematic review and meta-analysis were conducted under PRISMA guidelines. Included were peer-reviewed Pseudo-Intoxicated Patron (PIP) studies from 1999–2024 that reported refusal rates pre- and post-intervention and described wage or policy contexts. Each study was coded for tipping status, intervention type, region, and publication year. Analyses included Welch's *t*-tests for mean differences, inverse-variance weighting (IVW) meta-analysis, and fixed-effects regressions with robust standard errors to assess tipping versus fixed-wage systems.

Results, Discussion, and Implications
RBS interventions were markedly less effective in tipping environments. Post-intervention service rates were higher in tipping systems ($M = 0.840$) than in non-tipping systems ($M = 0.652$), $t(26) = 2.91$, $p = .008$. In other words, 84% of pseudo-intoxicated patrons were served in tipping settings, compared to 65.2% in fixed-wage contexts. Meta-analytic estimates confirmed higher overservice rates in gratuity-dependent workplaces ($p < .001$).

Findings support SAT propositions that loss aversion from gratuity income, affective labor norms, and multi-level agency conflicts reduce adherence to service laws. Stronger conformity appeared in jurisdictions with fixed or mixed pay structures. The results extend BAT by integrating behavioral economics and organizational incentive theory into hospitality compliance research.

RBS training alone cannot overcome disincentives when earnings depend on beverage sales. Reducing overservice requires aligning compensation models, management practices, and public health goals. Future research should test how fixed or hybrid pay systems influence compliance and workplace culture, clarifying how payment design shapes decision-making in alcohol service operations.

References available upon request.

FEAST OR FAMINE: A BIG AND DEEP DATA APPROACH TO EVENT IMPACTS ON RESTAURANT REVENUE

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Introduction

Tourism is a key strategy for fostering local economic development, with planned events often serving as cornerstone initiatives (Getz, 2008), but their actual returns are contested, often failing to account for economic displacement (Crompton et al., 2001). This ambiguity stems from methodological limitations (Dimitrovski et al., 2023). Our study addresses this via the restaurant sector, a sensitive proxy for event-driven consumer behavior. Drawing on consumer theory (Babin et al., 1994), we posit that events reshape, not just increase, demand, triggering differential impacts across the hedonic-utilitarian spectrum.

This study pioneers a "big and deep data" approach by integrating high-frequency geospatial transaction data from SafeGraph with a panel of planned events from PredictHQ. We employ an AI-powered NLP workflow, transforming semi-structured text data into theoretically grounded variables. Contributions include: 1) introducing a robust NLP workflow for econometric variable engineering; 2) providing the first large-scale empirical evidence of how events reconfigure dining demand; and 3) addressing selection bias with a large panel dataset.

Methods

We integrate two large-scale datasets to create a property-day level panel of 41,913 Texas restaurants from 2019 to 2022, totaling over 41 million observations. We employ high-dimensional fixed-effects regression, controlling for unobserved property- and day-specific shocks. The core innovation is our AI-powered variable engineering workflow. We use spaCy (Honnibal et al., 2020) to create a "Hedonic-Utilitarian Score." This continuous variable is derived from the semantic similarity of a restaurant's labels to theoretical concepts: hedonic and utilitarian. This newly engineered variable is used as an interaction term to test how a restaurant's orientation on the hedonic-utilitarian spectrum moderates the economic impact of events.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Our analysis reveals a nuanced "feast or famine" dynamic. Initial models using NAICS codes show a statistically significant polarization: a 1% increase in events enhances (0.204%) the daily revenue for full-service restaurants while diminishing revenue (0.038%) for limited-service restaurants. However, this baseline finding masks the true mechanism. Using the AI-generated "Hedonic-Utilitarian Score," our model reveals that the positive revenue impact is stronger for restaurants on the utilitarian end and systematically diminishes for more hedonic restaurants.

This refines consumer theory, suggesting that for most attendees, the event itself serves as the primary hedonic experience (Quan & Wang, 2004), relegating most dining occasions to a supporting, utilitarian role. Consequently, the economics of time and convenience channel most transactions toward high-velocity, utilitarian establishments. For managers, this suggests that operators of utilitarian restaurants should focus on maximizing throughput, while hedonic restaurant managers must position their experience as a complementary "peak" moment, not a competing one. For policymakers, this serves as a crucial caution that the economic benefits of events are not uniform and that different business models play distinct rol

EMPLOYEE-TOURIST INTERACTION AND WORD-OF-MOUTH INTENTION: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WELL-BEING IN THEMED RESTAURANT EXPERIENCES

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Introduction
Food experiences have become a vital component of contemporary tourism, shaping destination image, tourist satisfaction, and post-visit behavioral intentions. In themed restaurant settings, the interaction between employees and tourists serves not only as a service encounter but also as a medium for cultural communication. Yet, limited research has examined how ETI shapes tourists' word-of-mouth (WOM). Existing studies have largely treated well-being as a outcome rather than a psychological process connecting social interaction and advocacy behavior. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Broaden-and-Build Theory (BBT), this study investigates how ETI affects WOM through tourists' well-being. The research explores: (1) whether ETI influences tourists' WOM intention; (2) how ETI enhances tourists' well-being; and (3) how well-being mediates the relationship between ETI and WOM.

Methods
A mixed-methods design combining qualitative exploration and quantitative validation was adopted. Study 1 analyzed 688 user-generated restaurant reviews from the Xiaohongshu app using grounded theory. Sixteen initial concepts were categorized into five subdimensions and two core dimensions, namely interaction intensity and interaction quality, which together constituted the ETI construct. Study 2 employed a structured survey conducted in Chengdu's dining districts (n = 635 valid responses). Measurement scales for ETI, community and spiritual well-being, and WOM intention were adapted from prior studies and assessed using five-point Likert scales. Structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS 21 was used to test the direct and mediating relationships.

Results/Discussion/Implication

SEM results show that ETI does not directly predict WOM intention but significantly enhances community and spiritual well-being. Both dimensions strongly predict WOM, confirming their mediating roles. Overall, H1 was unsupported, whereas H2a–H4b were supported, validating the indirect effect of ETI on WOM through well-being.

Theoretically, this study integrates SDT and the BBT to position tourist well-being as a mediating psychological mechanism linking interaction and advocacy. It extends motivation and well-being theories from individual contexts to service encounters, demonstrating how well-being generated through employee-tourist interaction can transform into WOM behaviors. The study also refines the multidimensional concept of overall tourist well-being, emphasizing its community and spiritual pathways. Managerially, themed restaurants should design emotionally resonant encounters that convey community identity, local culture and authenticity. Story-driven interactions and personalized services can enhance well-being and stimulate WOM.

Limitations include a geographically specific sample and predominantly young respondents. Future studies should extend the concept of employee-tourist interaction to include anthropomorphic robot-tourist interactions, test cross-cultural applicability, and explore moderators such as personality traits and destination maturity.

Completed Research:
Tourism & Sustainability

SIMULATING HOW LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS WILL SHIFT TRAVEL PATTERNS

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Introduction
Despite the rapid growth of LLM usage in the tourism context, uncertainty remains about how these changes will shape tourism's future. Some warn that LLMs can suppress destinations' uniqueness and undermine the sustainability of tourism (Lehto et al., 2025; Mellors, 2025). Unfortunately, there exists little empirical evidence to determine whether LLMs will indeed have such impacts on tourism, and what those impacts exactly look like (Gössling & Mei, 2025; Mellors, 2025). This knowledge gap creates ambiguities for destinations seeking to prepare for LLMs' impact on their tourism businesses and local communities, or to determine whether such preparation is even necessary.

In this study, we provide one of the first empirical analyses of how LLMs can reshape tourism patterns. We do so by using scenario-based projection models that simulate domestic tourist visits in the US. The projections show how tourist flows will look under the following scenarios: when tourists make completely random decisions, when they show similar behavior to current tourism patterns, and when they completely rely on LLMs to make their travel decisions.

Methods
We use scenario-based projection models that answer the following question: *What will happen if all tourist flows are determined by LLMs?* We simulate one million US domestic tourists using two different LLMs, Gemini 2.5 Flash and GPT 4.1 Nano. Subsequently, their characteristics are assessed by comparing them to the null model and empirical-based simulations.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Our research demonstrates that LLMs produce tourist flow networks that diverge from the empirical tourist flow patterns. Both LLMs produced more seasonal and more concentrated tourist flows. Such scenarios would increase the difficulty destinations face in managing demand imbalances between peak and off-peak seasons. Additionally, currently popular domestic tourist destinations would gain further popularity, while less popular destinations would experience reduced tourist arrivals.

Other characteristics of the LLM-based simulations are dependent on the LLM used. Gemini 2.5 Flash Lite produced tourist flows that the occurrence of intra-state tourism is similar to the empirical-based scenarios. Contrarily, GPT-4.1 Nano produced tourist flows with a higher intra-state travel ratio. The two LLMs further diverge in travel distance and travels to bordering states. Gemini 2.5 Flash Lite tends to assign more distant destinations and shows stronger preferences for neighboring states. GPT-4.1 Nano primarily recommends destinations within the same state and is less affected by distance and border effects. Consequently, one scenario projects increased long-haul tourism, while the other anticipates more short-haul tourism.

This study provides empirical evidence that the adoption of LLMs has the potential to change the patterns of tourism at large. As society increasingly adopts LLMs, their influence will extend broadly across industries, including tourism and hospitality sectors.

References are available upon request

MINDFUL DEVOTION IN PILGRIMAGE TOURISM: A MINDFULNESS-TO-MEANING THEORY PERSPECTIVE ON VOLUNTEERS IN DAJIA AND BAISHATUN MAZU PILGRIMAGE

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Introduction

Pilgrimage tourism is an enduring form of global travel, with millions participating in events like the Hajj to Mecca and the Christian pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (Rinschede, 1992; Parker et al., 2024). In Taiwan, the Dajia and Baishatun Mazu pilgrimages are key cultural phenomena; the Discovery Channel named the Dajia pilgrimage one of the world's three major religious festivals (Kuo, 2024; Xie, 2022). While most research focuses on the pilgrims (Albera & Eade, 2016), the perspectives of volunteers who provide essential support remain underexamined (Katić & Eade, 2023). This paper addresses that gap by investigating the motivations and meaning-making processes of volunteers in these two Mazu pilgrimages. This study draws on the mindfulness-to-meaning theory (Garland et al., 2015), which posits that mindfulness fosters positive emotion and a profound sense of meaning, to examine how volunteers' altruistic actions contribute to personal transformation and a sense of purpose.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate volunteer mindfulness and devotion in the Dajia and Baishatun Mazu pilgrimages. Publicly available YouTube videos and their associated comments were the primary sources of data. The videos were selected using keywords (e.g., "Dajia Mazu," "Baishatun Mazu," and "Mazu Snack Station"), yielding a refined dataset of 109 videos that featured volunteer interviews and activities. The qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, aiming to capture authentic and nuanced volunteer perspectives.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Qualitative analysis identified six primary motivational themes: religious and spiritual; cultural and heritage; social and community; altruistic and humanitarian; personal fulfillment; and event-specific. These themes contribute to a conceptual understanding of mindful devotion within volunteer experiences. Many volunteers connected their service to personal life experiences, such as praying to Mazu for a family member's recovery and later volunteering as an expression of gratitude. Through this mindful engagement, participants reported feelings of joy, emotional satisfaction, and a more profound sense of purpose. Theoretically, this study extends the mindfulness-to-meaning framework into the collective cultural domain of pilgrimage tourism, offering insight into how mindfulness supports sustained volunteer engagement. Practically, the results guide pilgrimage organizers in designing programs that promote mindful reflection, enhance volunteer satisfaction, and strengthen community cohesion. Encouraging volunteerism as a spiritually meaningful practice may further support long-term cultural preservation and social well-being within host communities.

References are available upon request.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF BEACH NOURISHMENT PROJECTS ON FLORIDA'S TOURISM ECONOMY

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Introduction

Beach nourishment is the replenishing of eroded shorelines and is a widely used strategy to mitigate coastal erosion, storm surge damage and sea level rise impacts. In Florida, beaches are the cornerstone of the state's tourism economy attracting millions of visitors annually and generating approximately $23.3 billion in state and local tax revenues (Houston, 2024).

However, 56% of Florida's sandy shorelines are critically eroded (ASCE, 2016), posing risks to the tourism sector which depends heavily on beach quality and accessibility. The economic impact of these projects on tourism remains relatively underexplored. This study analytically examines how beach nourishment projects influence tourism related revenues across Florida's coastal counties. The purpose of this study is to quantify the economic impacts of nourishment projects on Florida's tourism economy. It seeks to estimate the changes in county-level tourism related revenues around nourishment interventions by asking, "do beach nourishment projects generate measurable short-term or long-term gains in tourism revenue?"

Methods

This study utilizes a county-by-month panel dataset that integrates economic and environmental data across Florida's coastal regions. The dependent variable is monthly gross sales from tourism-related sectors sourced from the Florida Department of Revenue. The independent variable is the completion of beach nourishment project, identified through completion records from the state of Florida's Beaches, Inlets, and Ports Program (BIPP). A fixed-effects panel regression model was applied to control for unobserved heterogeneity across counties and over time. Beach nourishment activities were coded as a binary variable with six-month lead and lag indicators, enabling assessment of changes in tourism revenue before and after project completion. Additional control variables, such as the U.S. Consumer Sentiment Index, were incorporated to account for broader economic fluctuations. This approach, using the ecosystem services framework, isolates the relationship between nourishment projects and tourism sales, providing empirical estimates of economic changes associated with each intervention.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results provide evidence-based insights for policy makers, coastal managers and tourism industry stakeholders involved in sustainable coastal development and resilience planning.
Findings indicate that beach nourishment projects produce significant, multimillion dollar positive effects on local tourism economies before and after completion. Across Florida's coastal counties, the completion of nourishment projects was associated with an average gain of approximately $32 million in tourism-related revenues, with higher impact on months after completion. These results confirm that nourishment projects not only protect coastal infrastructure but also enhance economic performance across the tourism value chain. Future research efforts could explore policy effectiveness of nourishment compared to alternative coastal adaptation strategies or incorporate social dimensions, such as residents' perceptions of nourishment and community resilience.

References are available upon request

HASHTAGS VS. HABITATS: EXAMINING THE GREEN PARADOX IN INSTAGRAM'S SUSTAINABLE TOURISM NARRATIVES THROUGH A MULTIMODAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Digital tourism marketing increasingly relies on sustainability cues to encourage responsible travel choices. Yet, influencer-driven luxury imagery often amplifies desire for high-carbon experiences, a phenomenon known as the green paradox, where sustainability advocacy inadvertently fuels consumption (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993). Guided by Framing Theory and the AIDA model, this study explores how sustainability framing and luxury aesthetics interact to shape user engagement with sustainable tourism narratives on Instagram. Prior research suggests gain frames are more persuasive than loss frames for pro-environmental behavior (Bhattacharyya et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024), while vivid visuals that trigger attention, interest, and desire drive higher engagement and behavioral intentions (Lee et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024). Building on this literature, the present study investigates whether combining sustainability and luxury cues enhances online engagement, revealing a potential manifestation of the green paradox in digital destination marketing.

Methods

A multimodal content analysis was conducted using 24 public Instagram posts collected between July and September 2025 under #ecotourism, #sustainabletravel, and #greenluxury. Posts were purposively sampled to include travel influencers, eco-lodgings, and organizations promoting sustainability. Captions were coded by message frame gain (benefits), moral (duty/avoid harm), or hedonic (pleasure-oriented), based on established typologies (Entman, 1993; De Vreese, 2005). Two binary indicators captured (1) luxury cues (presence of exclusive or high-end imagery/language) and (2) sustainability cues (explicit eco-claims or conservation references). Engagement was operationalized as the sum of likes and comments. Intercoder reliability exceeded 90% for all variables. A factorial ANOVA ($3 \times 2 \times 2$) was performed using message frame, luxury cue, and sustainability cue as fixed factors, with hashtag treated as a control variable. Significance was set at $p < .05$.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Engagement varied significantly across hashtags, with #greenluxury posts showing the highest mean interaction. Results revealed that luxury cues ($F = 10.58$, $p = .005$) and sustainability cues ($F = 26.88$, $p < .001$) both independently increased engagement, while message framing showed no significant effect ($p = .993$). Importantly, there was a strong interaction between luxury and sustainability cues ($F = 10.49$, $p = .005$), indicating that posts combining both elements achieved the greatest engagement. These findings highlight a social-media-level expression of the green paradox: sustainable messages wrapped in aspirational luxury imagery attract more attention but may also intensify travel desire. Future research should test these relationships experimentally and explore whether online engagement translates into actual visitation patterns.

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING GREEN FATIGUE: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Introduction

Climate change poses a profound threat to human health, ecosystems, and social stability (World Health Organization, 2018). Because tourism is both highly dependent on natural resources and a contributor to environmental impacts, sustainability messaging has become central to marketing and operations across destinations, hotels, and airlines. Eco-labels, certifications, and "green" brand identities now dominate industry communication (Velaoras et al., 2025; Chaturvedi et al., 2024).

However, as travelers encounter a constant stream of sustainability claims, they may experience green fatigue - a state of weariness, demotivation, or skepticism triggered by repetitive or contradictory environmental messages. Although this term is gaining attention in both public discourse (Tuttle, 2008) and academic research, its definition remains inconsistent due to overlapping terminology. For the tourism and hospitality industries, understanding this phenomenon is crucial, as green fatigue may undermine engagement with sustainability initiatives and weaken trust in environmental communication.

Methods

A review protocol was developed following the Population/Context/Concept (PPC) framework (Pollock et al., 2023) and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018). Systematic searches were conducted across five electronic databases: EBSCO, PubMed, ProQuest, Scopus, and Web of Science. Given the lack of consensus on terminology, a broad search strategy was employed to capture related concepts. Searches were limited to English-language, peer-reviewed publications. After screening and manual searching, studies meeting the inclusion criteria were retained for analysis.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings indicate that green fatigue encompasses three core dimensions: (1) information overload from frequent or contradictory messages (Strother & Fazal, 2011; Devi et al., 2025), (2) negative emotional responses, including guilt, hopelessness, and confusion (Pol & Dorothée, 2023; White et al., 2019), and (3) behavioral disengagement, such as withdrawal from sustainability programs or skepticism toward green initiatives (Moscardo & Pearce, 2019; Mosher et al., 2025). Measurement approaches remain varied, with few validated instruments available (Devi et al., 2025; Pearce & Moscardo Gianna, 2025).

For tourism practitioners, these findings suggest that hotels, destinations, and tour operators that rely heavily on eco-friendly marketing may inadvertently contribute to consumer overwhelm, thereby threatening sustainable tourism initiatives and pro-environmental tourist behavior. Interventions should be tailored to prevent message overload, and staff training is essential to prevent employee burnout from resource-intensive sustainability efforts. Lessons from the health communication domain, such as managing fatigue in COVID-19 or obesity messaging (So & Alam, 2019; Sun & Lee, 2023), can inform strategies to reduce sustainability message overload.

References are available upon request

THE FUTURE OF SPACE TOURISM: SCENARIO PLANNING FOR THE LAST FRONTIER

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Introduction

One day, the journey to space could be as ordinary as boarding an airplane. Currently, this once inaccessible place is now accessible to private travelers, driven by technological advances and commercial company ambitions. Space tourism is now offering experiences that range from orbital flights to sub-orbital adventures (e.g., short-term trips). The unprecedented growth of space tourism is being driven by international cooperation, technological innovation, and more contributions from the private sector, including private investment opportunities. Given the challenges associated with space, including environmental threats and space debris, alongside the public's growing concern for sustainability, there is a necessity for regulations that compel major entities within the space sector, including private companies, to engage in sustainable practices and disclose their impacts.

This discussion makes it clear that it is essential to study the future of space tourism and the framework that space companies need to adopt to ensure its sustainable development. The goal of this study is to identify likely scenarios for the development of space tourism. These scenarios will be useful to identify possible futures and play a foundational role in better preparing the industry for future development. Scenarios will help create a mindset that not only prepares for the future but also responds to a range of possible futures (Yeoman & Davies, 2012).

Methods

Considering space tourism's future sustainable development, this study will use scenario planning as a methodology. Scenario planning is a method for constructing multiple possible future situations (Postma et al., 2024), for strategic planning (Lindgren & Bandhold, 2009). The study takes place in five phases: 1) it begins with a conversation to ask for experts' opinions, 2) followed by ranking the trends based on their importance and likelihood; 3) developing a matrix, drafting scenarios, and 4) assessing the feasibility of scenarios. For this study, purposive sampling will be used. This sampling technique helps the author first, having access to a recognizable population (e.g., actors in Space), and second, a representative sample of the population. The recruiting process will involve communication via LinkedIn profile and in-person contacts. These experts will be listed based on their expertise in particular fields (Dabeedooal, 2022), such as tourism, space, academic background, etc.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Space is indeed governed mostly by governments, but as industry develops, the private sector's role is getting bigger and bigger, and understanding the sustainable development of the industry, particularly space tourism, becomes a concern.

This analysis provides a foundation for future analysis. It gives a deeper understanding of issues for the sustainable development of space tourism. It provides insights into the future trajectory of the space industry. Additionally, it offers corporations clear frameworks to guide their efforts toward environmental responsibility (e.g., sustainability practices). As a result, it paves the way for future developments that ensure the sustainable development of industry, both on Earth and in space.

FROM ISOLATION TO INTEGRATION: HOW DOES RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOP TOURISM THROUGH ENTERPRISE-LED CO-CREATION?

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Introduction

Rural revitalization has positioned rural tourism as a key driver of sustainable development, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. The global rural tourism market is projected to grow from USD 118.03 billion in 2025 to USD 193.41 billion by 2032 (Doshi, 2025). International efforts, such as the UN Tourism "Best Villages" program, reflect the growing commitment to promoting rural destinations (UN Tourism, 2024). As tourists seek authentic, experience-based travel, traditional top-down models of rural tourism with limited community engagement and homogenized offerings struggle to remain competitive (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015).

While prior studies (Zhao & Getz, 2008; Buonincontri et al., 2017) highlight government and community collaboration, they often overlook enterprises' dynamic role as orchestrators of stakeholder engagement, resource integration, and experience innovation. Moreover, applications of value co-creation theory in rural tourism often remain conceptual (Buhalis &Sinarta, 2019), lacking empirical grounding in emerging economies. This study explores how enterprises employ co-creation strategies to drive collaborative rural tourism development through the Buguli Project in China to address the aforementioned research gap.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative single-case design grounded in value co-creation theory, supported by stakeholder and tourism system theories. The Xiangban Buguli Project in Zhejiang, China, was purposively selected for its relevance to rural tourism innovation and stakeholder diversity. Data were collected through 17 semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes each), on-site observations, and secondary data sources, such as development plans and social media posts. Maximum variation and snowball sampling ensured a diverse stakeholder representation. The data were analyzed by thematic coding in NVivo to identify patterns and relationships across stakeholder perspectives.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is found that the Xiangban Buguli Project exemplifies an enterprise-led, multi-stakeholder co-creation model in rural tourism, transforming fragmented development into an integrated system. Despite challenges such as tensions in profit sharing and infrastructure-heritage conflicts, the enterprise maintains progress through participatory coordination and continuous adaptation. The discussion emphasizes that enterprises can serve as long-term leading integrators in rural revitalization, mediating diverse stakeholder interests while promoting sustainable development. Theoretically, this study extends the application of value co-creation theory by highlighting the enterprise's coordinating role within rural governance networks. Practically, this study offers insights for policymakers and practitioners to design inclusive, collaborative, and context-sensitive models for rural tourism development.

EXPLORING THE BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL REALITY TOURISM

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Introduction

The emergence of virtual reality (VR) has introduced a new form of tourism, VR tourism (Lash & Urry, 1993), defined as engaging in tourism-related activities through immersive head-mounted displays. As technology advances and costs decline, VR tourism is becoming increasingly accessible, offering not only market potential (Market Data Forecast, 2024) but also social value (Rendever, 2025), such as reducing isolation among older adults. However, most prior studies have viewed VR tourism mainly as a marketing tool (Lo & Cheng, 2020) or examined factors shaping user experience (Huang et al., 2020), leaving its intrinsic benefits to individuals largely unexplored. To address this gap, the present study adopts a grounded theory approach to explore the benefits people gain from VR tourism. By identifying and theorizing these benefits, the study aims to provide deeper insights into the value of VR tourism beyond destination marketing. The findings not only contribute to the literature by addressing a critical gap but also provide meaningful practical implications for the development and application of VR tourism.

Methods

A two-stage qualitative design combined online user review analysis and semi-structured interviews. In the first phase, 2,715 reviews (May 2019–Aug 2024) from Meta Platforms covering four VR tourism applications were analyzed using thematic analysis (Creswell, 2011). Open coding captured key concepts related to the perceived benefits of VR tourism, which were iteratively grouped into themes to develop a preliminary framework. In the second phase, interviews with individuals who had experienced VR tourism in the past year were conducted via Prolific to refine and extend the framework. Each 45–60-minute interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed until thematic saturation was reached. The same coding approach was applied to the transcripts, and emerging themes were compared with the review data to validate and enrich the findings.

Results/Discussion/ Implications

Analysis revealed a hierarchical structure of codes, themes, and higher-order themes, representing three overarching domains of benefit, utilitarian, hedonic, and eudaimonic. Utilitarian benefits emphasize functionality, including accessibility, flexibility, and informative value, demonstrating how VR tourism removes physical and financial barriers while enabling efficient learning about destinations. Hedonic benefits highlight emotional and sensory pleasure through positive emotions, aesthetic appreciation, restoration, and escape, showing VR tourism's power to evoke joy and relaxation. Eudaimonic benefits reflect deeper psychological fulfillment, such as self-reflection, personal growth, and a renewed sense of meaning. These findings suggest that VR tourism provides not only entertainment but also meaningful psychological and social outcomes. By enhancing accessibility and promoting well-being, VR tourism can serve as an inclusive leisure form for individuals with mobility or health constraints. This study contributes a comprehensive framework for understanding VR tourism's multidimensional benefits, guiding future research and the design of human-centered virtual tourism experiences.

MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) PERFORMANCE OF CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION (C&E) CENTERS IN THE UNITED STATES: ATTENDEES' AND OPERATORS' PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) has become recognized as an essential framework for evaluating organizational sustainability beyond financial metrics (Back, 2024). In the MICE industry, convention and exhibition (C&E) centers host large-scale events and serve as key sites where sustainability should be measured (Tan & Law, 2021). U.S. C&E centers lack appropriate tools to measure perceptions of sustainability practices. This gap makes it difficult for organizations to evaluate and align their operations with established sustainability standards. Although a measurement scale was recently developed for use in Hong Kong, no validated instrument exists for the U.S. context. This study addresses this gap by validating a measurement approach for assessing sustainability perceptions in U.S. C&E centers. To capture a comprehensive view, perceptions were measured separately for operators and attendees. Operators tend to emphasize operational efficiency, while attendees focus more on visible sustainability practices such as waste reduction or recycling (Xiao & Shailer, 2022).

Methods

The measurement used in this study was originally developed for C&E centers in Hong Kong. The instrument is designed to assess perceptions about ESG practices. Study 1 focused on attendees of U.S. C&E centers, while Study 2 examined perceptions among operators. In Study 1, the Hong Kong–based ESG scale was administered to U.S. attendees. Participants were recruited via Prolific. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate whether the instrument's original multidimensional factor structure was statistically supported among U.S. attendees. In Study 2, C&E center operators were recruited through Prolific, and the same ESG instrument was used as in Study 1. However, CFA results indicated poor model fit with the original structure; therefore, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify a revised factor structure better suited to operators' ESG perceptions.

Results/Discussion/Implication

For attendees, CFA confirmed that ESG perceptions formed distinct environmental, social, and governance factors. These domains were further divided into subdimensions organized around visibility, referring to how directly attendees could observe or experience sustainability practices. In contrast, CFA failed to identify a comparable structure for operators. EFA showed that operators instead grouped ESG practices functionally, aligning them with internal workflows, resource use, and organizational strategy. These findings reinforce the need for group-specific ESG assessments. Theoretically, this study provides empirical evidence that stakeholder groups interpret ESG differently. While prior research viewed ESG as a uniform construct, this study underscores the need for group-specific models and measures, extending stakeholder theory in the ESG context. This research helps managers identify areas of ESG performance that need improvement, leading to more effective and balanced sustainability strategies.

The study found that attendees and operators perceive ESG differently, suggesting that managers should design and communicate ESG efforts tailored to each group's perspective rather than relying on a single approach.

DELIBERATE SEEKING OR SERENDIPITOUS ENCOUNTER? ENVIRONMENTAL CONTENT EXPOSURE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Introduction

Tourism contributes heavily to environmental degradation through pollution, resource depletion, and habitat loss (Steiger et al., 2024). Promoting pro-environmental behaviors (PEBs) is essential to mitigating this impact (Chen et al., 2023). Effective environmental communication helps raise awareness and motivate sustainable actions, and social media is often seen as an ideal channel due to its broad reach, interactive features, and peer influence. However, while most research examines how content exposure shapes attitudes and behaviors, exposure itself is shaped by users' existing values, attitudes, and behaviors. On social media, two types of exposure occur: selective exposure, where individuals seek information consistent with their beliefs, and incidental exposure, where they encounter environmental messages unintentionally (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014; Feldman & Hart, 2018). Selective exposure reinforces existing orientations, whereas incidental exposure has greater potential to reach less environmentally engaged users. This study investigates how environmental knowledge and daily PEBs influence exposure to environmental content among tourists and how social media intensity moderates these relationships.

Methods

A cross-sectional survey was conducted via Pollfish among U.S. social media users who had recently traveled or planned upcoming travel. Established scales measured environmental knowledge (Ellen et al., 1997), daily PEBs (Larson et al., 2015), and social media intensity (Ellison et al., 2007). Exposure to environmental content was assessed for both selective and incidental modes. Data were analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 15) to test moderated mediation effects. Reliability and multicollinearity checks confirmed measurement validity.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results show that social media intensity moderates the relationship between environmental knowledge and both selective ($\beta = 0.199$, $p < .05$) and incidental exposure ($\beta = 0.168$, $p < .05$). Individuals with greater knowledge and higher social media use were most exposed to environmental content. For low-intensity users, knowledge influenced exposure indirectly through daily PEBs, but this effect weakened with increased social media use. Overall, environmentally oriented individuals were more likely to encounter such content.

These results suggest that exposure patterns largely reflect users' existing environmental orientations and engagement habits. While algorithms may reinforce these tendencies, exposure ultimately depends on users' preferences and prior behaviors. The study refines understanding of environmental communication by linking individual predispositions with different exposure modes and underscores the challenge of reaching low-awareness audiences through organic content. Practitioners should adopt targeted approaches, such as influencer partnerships and interactive messaging, to increase incidental exposure among less engaged users.

FROM GROWTH TO INCLUSION: HOW GREEN ECONOMY EFFICIENCY SHAPES TOURISM'S IMPACT ON URBAN–RURAL INEQUALITY

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Introduction

While tourism is widely recognized as a driver of inclusive regional development, especially in reducing urban-rural income disparities (Li et al., 2016; Blake et al., 2008), the mechanisms through which tourism achieves these effects remain unclear. The green economy has attracted attention for its capacity for productive resource use, low-carbon innovation, and targeted employment generation. Its internal efficiency—in allocating financial capital, reducing environmental externalities, and scaling sustainable industries—enhances the transmission of tourism gains into socially and spatially inclusive outcomes (UNEP, 2011).

This study proposes a conceptual and empirical framework in which the efficiency of the green economy enables it to act as a mediating mechanism between tourism development and urban–rural income redistribution. By embedding this mediator within an asymmetric spatial econometric model, the study captures both direct and indirect effects of tourism development, as well as asymmetric spillover dynamics across neighboring regions. In doing so, it sheds light on how the efficient functioning of green economy mechanisms, such as green finance, ecological compensation, and renewable energy systems, facilitating a more equitable and cost-effective redistribution of tourism benefits.

Methods

The proposed framework brings together the three pillars of sustainable development — economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection — within a single analytical structure (UNEP, 2011). To empirically examine the pathways through which tourism development affects urban–rural income disparities—both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of green economy efficiency and moderating effects, this study employs a dynamic spatial Durbin model (SDM) with the consideration of the asymmetric spillover effects between regions. This approach is well-suited to capturing the temporal and geographic spillovers inherent in regional development processes.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Tourism development generally widens the urban–rural income gap in the short run. Although local inequality tends to narrow over the long term as tourism matures, cumulative spatial spillovers keep the overall long-run effect positive. Green economy efficiency helps reduce income disparities, but its mediating role is heterogeneous and conditional. The spatial diffusion of tourism and the uneven distribution of green efficiency jointly shape regional inequality, with developed cities acting as both drivers and transmitters of inequality across space.

The contributions of this study are threefold. First, it enriches the tourism inequality literature by identifying the green economy as a mediating mechanism, thereby advancing theory on tourism-induced redistribution. Second, it applies a spatial spillover approach to unpack how tourism's benefits diffuse beyond local boundaries, addressing the externality structure previously overlooked (Liu et al., 2025). Third, it innovates methodologically by embedding a mediation test within an asymmetric Spatial Durbin Model — a rare integration in tourism studies — thus offering robust insights into causality and interaction and a more precise account of how inequality diffuses across regions.

COLLAPSE OR THRIVE? MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE HAZARDS ON SHORT-TERM RENTAL MARKETS USING SPATIAL PANEL MODEL

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Introduction

Local hospitality relies on stable climatic conditions, making the sector particularly vulnerable to the escalating risks of climate hazards (Huang & Medeiros, 2021). Social vulnerability—the identification of communities at risk of struggling to respond to, manage, and recover from crises—clearly cannot be separated from the economic aspects of a local industry (Cutter et al., 2003). Its role within the private sector, specifically the lodging industry, has not been sufficiently researched (Rufat et al., 2019). Thus, this study examines how diverse climate hazards affect the performance of short-term rentals (STRs) in Florida and how these relationships are conditioned by community-level vulnerability using spatial panel econometric models.

Methods

This study employs a balanced panel dataset of 67 Florida counties observed monthly from May 2014 to October 2024. The dependent variables are four Airbnb performance indicators obtained from AirDNA: blocked days, reservation days, occupancy rate, and revenue. The key independent variable is property damage from the SHELDUS. To account for heterogeneity in adaptive capacity, hazard damage was interacted with the CDC SVI. Additional control variables are COVID-19 case rates and the location quotient (LQ) for the leisure and hospitality sector (NAICS 7). Empirical estimation proceeds in two stages. First, we estimate two-way fixed-effects panel regressions with county and month effects. Second, we account for spatial dependence by constructing a queen contiguity spatial weight matrix and estimating a Spatial Durbin Panel Model (SDPM) via maximum likelihood.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The total hazard damage has a generally positive and statistically significant impact on both revenue and reservations. The role of SVI is consistently negative, with interaction terms between total hazard damage and SVI showing that counties with higher social vulnerability experience amplified negative consequences, with hazard-induced gains dampened or reversed. Table 2 shows clear differences across hazard types. Severe storms and flooding consistently generate positive effects on revenue and blocked days, particularly in the first month after an event. Spatial effects in the SDPM highlight the importance of geographic interdependence. Severe storm and flooding show positive direct effects on revenue and reservations but negative and significant indirect effects on neighboring counties, indicating spatial substitution effect.

The findings highlight a paradoxical dynamic: climate hazards generate both temporary surges in accommodation demand and significant supply-side disruptions. These findings substantially advance economic resilience theory in the tourism and hospitality. STRs exhibit dual resilience characteristics: they act both as shock absorbers of displaced demand and as vulnerable nodes subject to supply disruption. This provides empirical validation of the conceptual distinction between static resilience—maintaining functionality during crises through emergency housing provision—and dynamic resilience—adapting operations and restoring market position post-disruption (Briguglio et al., 2009; Martin & Sunley, 2015). For policymakers, these results emphasize the need for regional coordination in disaster response and recovery planning.

SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES IN AGRITOURISM: A RESOURCE-BASED AND BRAND EQUITY PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Agritourism provides supplementary income for farmers and supports the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental resources (Ammirato et al., 2020; Campbell & Kubickova, 2020). As the sector grows, sustainability has become a central pillar that shapes market perceptions (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2024). "Green image" is a key determinant of consumer trust and loyalty (Mercadé Melé et al., 2020). Similarly, "green competitiveness" allows businesses to differentiate themselves and maintain an advantage (Zameer et al., 2021). However, current literature often treats sustainability initiatives and marketing results as distinct areas. This study addresses the gap by connecting Agritourism Sustainability Practices (ASPs) to perception and performance. We use Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) as guiding frameworks. RBT suggests firms gain advantage through resources that are valuable and rare (Barney, 1991). CBBE emphasizes that brand strength comes from consumer perceptions of quality and loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). This study asks which practices shape green image and competitiveness.

Methods

This study adopted a sequential mixed-method design. We first conducted a literature review to identify existing knowledge gaps. Phase 1 involved qualitative interviews with experts. We used Thematic Content Analysis to identify dominant themes from the data. Phase 2 utilized a structured survey instrument based on these themes and prior literature. We established content validity through expert review and construct validity through exploratory factor analysis. Finally, we used multiple regression models to test the effects of practices on green image and green
competitiveness.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Qualitative analysis identified seven key ASPs: eco-friendly farming, traditional agricultural practices, community involvement, technology measures, marketing strategies, investment, and educational initiatives. Regression analysis indicated that eco-friendly farming, traditional practices, technology, and marketing predict green image and competitiveness. However, educational initiatives showed a negative relationship. This suggests current programs lack effective delivery mechanisms. The study extends RBT by showing sustainability practices function as rare resources. Practices like community involvement are difficult to imitate because they rely on local contexts. This provides a long-term advantage. The study also links these internal resources to external consumer outcomes. Managerial implications suggest operators should prioritize eco-friendly and traditional practices to strengthen brand perceptions. Additionally, managers must evaluate educational initiatives to ensure they align with visitor expectations.

References are available upon request

SUSTAINABLE LUXURY PRODUCT SHOPPING VALUES IN TOURISM AND CONSUMERS' BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES

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Introduction

The luxury goods and lifestyles market has seen a strong comeback, with consumer spending rising back to pre-pandemic levels despite ongoing global economic issues (Roberts, 2023). Along with this growth, wealthy consumers are increasingly looking for sustainable premium products (Carranza et al., 2023). Although there has been more research on sustainable consumption aligned with the UN's SDGs (Matharu et al., 2020; Kapoor et al., 2023; Spaargaren, 2020; Sun et al., 2021), important gaps remain. First, most studies focus on sustainable consumption of low-involvement goods and ignore the luxury sector (Essiz & Senyuz, 2024). Second, research on luxury shopping rarely considers sustainability factors, leaving sustainable luxury tourism largely unexplored (Luna-Corté et al., 2022; Jain et al., 2023). Third, there is a shortage of reliable measurement tools for sustainable luxury shopping in tourism (Jain et al., 2023). To fill these gaps, this study examines sustainable luxury shopping during travel through a consumption values lens and develops a reliable scale to measure sustainable luxury product shopping values (SLPSVs) in tourism, and examines how these values relate to consumers' behavioral intentions.

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to develop and validate a scale to measure SLPSVs in tourism. The qualitative phase featured semi-structured interviews with academics, luxury practitioners, and shoppers to confirm and refine the value constructs from the literature. The quantitative phase involved gathering survey data from a sample of 1059 US luxury shoppers and analyzing it using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) in SmartPLS to examine relationships between sustainable luxury shopping values and outcome variables.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings reveal that SLPSVs in tourism are a multidimensional construct, comprising functional value, social value, experiential value, eco-friendly value, and ethical value. Further, the study reveals that SLPSVs in tourism affect shoppers' attitudes, satisfaction, cognitive well-being, and a meaningful life, as well as their transformation toward sustainability. Theoretically, this study introduces and validates a multidimensional scale for sustainable luxury shopping value, enriching the theoretical understanding of the intersection between sustainability and luxury consumption. Practically, luxury tourism brands can use the new scale to tailor offerings that appeal to sustainability-minded consumers.

References are available upon request

RISK, RESTRICTION, AND REPUTATION: MEDIA FRAMING OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL UNDER U.S. TRAVEL POLICIES IN 2025

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Introduction
International travel is deeply influenced by political decisions that shape both regulatory boundaries and narrative environments. In January 2025, the second Trump administration reinstated restrictive travel policies limiting entry from nineteen countries, reigniting debates about security, discrimination, and economic loss (American Immigration Council, 2025). These measures, while legal in scope, also generated extensive media discourse that framed the United States as a risky or unwelcoming destination. Drawing from the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (Kasperson et al., 1988), this study explores how media representations of travel restrictions magnify perceptions of insecurity and exclusion. By integrating risk communication and tourism crisis literature (Baker & Cameron, 2008; Ritchie & Faulkner, 2004), the study explains how institutional signals influence traveler sentiment, destination image, and mobility intentions.

Methods
A qualitative content analysis was conducted using 160 newspaper articles collected through the Lexis-Nexis database. The search, limited to January–September 2025, employed the keywords "Trump," "international travel," and "risk." Following purposive sampling, articles were coded in two rounds: open coding to identify key narratives (e.g., "visa denial," "tourism losses," "detained at border"), and axial coding to connect these concepts into broader themes. The analysis focused on how policy measures and media framings intersected to produce recurring narratives of restriction, economic impact, traveler perception, and political justification or critique.

Results/Discussion/Implication
The analysis identified four dominant frames: (1) restriction and exclusion, emphasizing entry suspensions for nineteen countries; (2) economic repercussions, including projected declines in arrivals and tourism revenue; (3) traveler perceptions of risk, particularly among international and LGBTQ+ travelers reporting fear of detention or harassment; and (4) competing political narratives balancing national security and discrimination claims. Media discourse amplified perceived travel risk by transforming policy actions into emotionally charged "risk signals" (Kasperson et al., 1988). These narratives elevated perceived severity and vulnerability while lowering self-efficacy (Rogers, 1975; Rosenstock, 1974), resulting in deterrence behaviors such as trip cancellations and destination substitution. The findings highlight that restrictive travel policies function not only as legal mechanisms but as communicative events shaping global reputation and traveler trust. For tourism practitioners, effective crisis communication and reassurance strategies are essential to counteract risk amplification and mitigate long-term reputational harm.

Work-In-Progress:

Consumer Behavior, Hospitality

ACTIVE SENIORS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: REDEFINING SENIOR CONSUMERS IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Introduction

With the increasing digitalization of hospitality services, restaurants have rapidly integrated technologies such as kiosks, mobile ordering, and service robots to enhance customer experiences (Cha, 2020). However, seniors are often stereotyped as less capable of adopting such technologies (Jang et al., 2024). As the aging population grows and older consumers increasingly dine out (Kim & Jang, 2019), seniors also represent a growing and influential segment of the hospitality market. For example, consumers aged 55 to 64 have been shown to spend more money on dining out than other age groups (Mahadevan & Risse, 2019; Lahue, 2000), reflecting both their financial stability and willingness to engage in consumption. This trend suggests that seniors are not merely passive participants in the market but active contributors whose expectations and preferences shape service innovations. Therefore, it is necessary to move beyond a homogeneous view of seniors. To fill this gap, this study introduces the concept of active seniors, defined as individuals aged 50 and above who maintain active lifestyles, demonstrate digital proficiency, and pursue post-retirement engagement through social, leisure, and technology-based activities. Unlike traditional seniors, active seniors embrace technology as part of their daily lives, making them a distinct and influential group in the hospitality market (Han & Chong, 2024). The goal of this study is to redefine and characterize active seniors based on their interaction with technology-driven restaurant services and explore how this interaction reflects their broader attitudes and behaviors.

Methods

A qualitative approach using semi-structured, in-depth interviews will be conducted to explore active seniors' perceptions of technology-based services in restaurants. Participants aged 50 and above will be recruited through purposive sampling, focused on lifestyle and digital engagement rather than chronological age. Screening questions (e.g., interest in technology, post-retirement activity level) will ensure alignment with the study's conceptual definition of active seniors. Data will be analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to active seniors perceive their aging, technology services, and post-retirement engagement.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study will contribute to clarify the definition of active seniors, examine their specific traits, and illustrate their characteristics, including demographic information, to better specify, categorize, and define them based on their interaction patterns with technology services in the restaurant industry. The findings will contribute to hospitality literature by redefining the senior market not as technology-averse but as increasingly diverse and adaptive. From managerial perspective, understanding active seniors' technology interactions will enable restaurants and hospitality service providers to design more inclusive and user-friendly digital services, improving accessibility, satisfaction, and well-being. By redefining seniors through their technology engagement, this study promotes a more inclusive and sustainable approach to aging consumers in the digital era.

References are available upon request

LIKE REAL, BUT AI COULDN'T COPY:

CUSTOMERS' RESPONSES TO AI DISCLOSURE IN RESTAURANT ADVERTISEMENTS

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Introduction

In restaurant advertisements, exaggerated or fabricated food images are often used to make the offerings appear more attractive. However, when consumers recognize the difference between the advertisement and the actual product, they tend to respond negatively. Therefore, understanding the dual impact of unauthentic images in restaurant advertising is crucial.

Since the emergence of generative AI, many companies have utilized it to create advertisements. Although AI-generated content offers significant operational advantages, consumers often exhibit ambivalent attitudes toward this type of content. Moreover, only a few studies have examined the impact of AI disclosure in the advertising context. Building on these points, this study investigates how AI disclosure influences consumers' value perceptions (Entertainment, Irritation, Credibility, and Informativeness) and attitudes toward restaurants. The findings of this study can provide practical guidance for marketers by highlighting the potential negative consequences of using AI in advertisement creation.

Methods

This study employed an online survey with a single-factor between-subjects design (AI disclosure absent vs. present). The sample population consisted of individuals 18 years of age or older who reside in the United States. As a stimulus, we created an advertisement for a burger restaurant (in the absence of an AI disclosure condition) and added "AI-generated image" to the bottom of the ad (in the presence of an AI disclosure condition). After seeing the ad, participants answered the measurement scales adopted from previous studies.

Results/Discussion/Implication

AI disclosure has an impact on irritation only, with no significant effects on entertainment, credibility, or informativeness. To be specific, even though participants showed a more positive attitude toward the ad that included AI disclosure compared to those who received ads without AI disclosure, they expressed more irritation toward the ad. Regarding perceived value and attitude toward the ad, credibility and informativeness positively influence attitude, while irritation has a negative impact on attitude. However, the impact of entertainment was not significant. Finally, the positive impact of attitude on intention to visit the restaurant is also confirmed.

This study extends the theory from ad delivery to content creation, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumers' ad value perceptions in the context of AI disclosure. The findings of this study align with the advertising value framework, except that the impact of entertainment on perceived value was not supported. Moreover, we show that AI disclosure could lead to more favorable attitudes toward the ad.

This study demonstrates the advantages of AI disclosure in the restaurant advertisement context. Being honest about AI use seems to lead to ambivalent responses, such as more irritation, but more favorable attitudes toward the ad. Based on this, marketers should also consider the potential implications of AI disclosure in relation to the objectives of their advertising campaigns.

EXPLORING CONSUMER PERCEPTION AND RESPONSE TO AI FOOD SAFETY SYSTEMS

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Introduction

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is expected to bring an important shift in the hospitality industry, enhancing the guest experience (Zahidi et al., 2024). In the digital age, AI is transforming the hospitality industry, offering new opportunities for efficiency while also posing challenges related to implementation and cost (Limna, 2022). In the food service industry, AI applications such as image recognition for contamination detection, predictive analytics for temperature monitoring, and anomaly detection in food handling enhance safety monitoring beyond traditional sensor-based systems (Hassoun et al., 2023). The AI-driven food safety revolution is transforming industry practices, making it essential for companies to invest in integrated systems that ensure both food safety and consumer trust (Burt, 2025), highlighting the need to understand how this shift affects consumer trust. Research on AI in hospitality and food service primarily focuses on operational efficiency, consumer experience, and supply chain transparency (Dhal & Kar, 2025; Zatsu et al., 2024). However, there is limited research on consumers' awareness, concerns, and comfort levels with AI in food safety, as well as the disclosure practices that may influence their trust. It is critical to understand consumer awareness, concerns, and comfort regarding AI-based food safety systems, given the growing importance of food safety in shaping consumer trust and commitment in hospitality. This study explores these aspects using the Trust–Commitment Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) to understand how disclosure strategies shape consumer trust and commitment toward hospitality brands.

Methods

The study will utilize a qualitative exploratory approach to gain insight into consumers' awareness, concerns, and comfort regarding the use of AI in food safety in restaurants and their comfort with different disclosure strategies. Data will be collected through 5–6 focus groups using a purposive sampling strategy to ensure diversity in demographics. Each group will comprise 4–5 participants and will follow a semi-structured interview guide to explore perceptions of AI-based food safety systems and reactions to disclosure methods such as awareness messages, brand communication, or labeling. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed with participants' approval, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project. Trustworthiness and credibility will be ensured through member checking and maintaining an audit trail. Thematic analysis will be employed to identify patterns and trends in consumer responses, providing an understanding of consumer awareness, concerns, and comfort levels with disclosure strategies that influence trust and commitment toward hospitality brands.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study will provide insights into consumer perceptions of AI-based food safety systems, focusing on their awareness, concerns, and comfort with different types of disclosure. The focus groups might identify specific factors that promote consumer comfort and trust, such as clear labeling or transparency regarding safety procedures. Consumer trust in AI will likely vary depending on how knowledge is communicated, whether through simple messaging, brand communication, or labeling.

DINING UNDER PRESSURE: HOW SOCIAL SETTING AND SENSORY CUES INFLUENCE STRESS AND FOOD DECISIONS

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Introduction

Food consumption decisions are influenced not only by personal preferences but also by contextual factors within the dining environment. Prior research shows that sensory cues such as lighting, décor, and music shape consumers' affective and behavioral responses (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). Among these, background music sets emotional tone and pace (Pantoja & Borges, 2021). Beyond sensory elements, social dining context and time pressure play key roles. Time pressure in restaurant settings refers to the perceived limitation of dining or ordering time, such as feeling rushed by staff, limited lunch breaks, or crowded environments that encourage faster turnover (Godinho et al., 2016). In this study time pressure is manipulated through scenario wording ("You have limited time to order and finish your meal before your next commitment") versus ample-time conditions ("You feel relaxed, knowing that you can take your time without any need to rush").

Although upbeat music can sometimes energize and relieve tension, when combined with crowded or shared dining conditions, it may heighten arousal and perceived tension, triggering stress responses. Hence, this study examines the interaction between music tempo and social dining context, expecting that stimulating music may amplify the stress effect primarily when people dine with strangers, whereas calm music in solo dining may promote relaxation.

Methods

A 2 (social context: solo vs. shared table) × 2 (background music: calming vs. stimulating) × 2 (time pressure: high vs. low) between-subjects experiment will be conducted online with approximately 200 participants randomly assigned to one of eight scenario-based conditions.

Each condition presents café images and audio clips to enhance realism. Pretests ensure manipulation validity for time pressure, music perception, and dining realism before the formal experiment. Key variables include perceived stress, food choice (hedonic vs. utilitarian), portion size (small vs. large), and dining satisfaction. Analyses will use ANOVA, logistic regression, and PROCESS mediation and moderation models.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is anticipated that participants experiencing shared dining with stimulating music under high time pressure will report higher perceived stress and select more hedonic and larger-portion options. Stress is theorized to activate reward-seeking systems and reduce self-control, prompting preference for energy-dense comfort foods (Adam & Epel, 2007). On the other hand, calm music in a relaxing environment may lower arousal, supporting more deliberate, health-conscious food decisions. Therefore, this study expects a mediating role for stress, linking Servicescape environmental cues to food outcomes, and a moderating role for time pressure, which intensifies these effects.

Theoretically, this research advances the Servicescape and consumer-stress frameworks by integrating social, sensory, and temporal cues into the study of dining behavior. In practice, it offers guidance for hospitality managers on designing dining spaces through pacing, music, and seating that minimize stress, foster mindful eating, and enhance customer well-being.

References are available upon request.

HARMONIZING SOUNDS AND SIGHTS: THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN DESTINATION MARKETING

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Introduction

Nowadays, destination brand images are increasingly delivered to travelers through social media using short videos to better convey experiences and emotions (Li & Zhang, 2023). Destination image can be categorized into two types: relaxing destinations involving low effort, challenge, and risk; and exciting destinations requiring high effort, challenge, and risk (Su et al., 2020). To effectively promote destination images through short videos, it is important to choose the music aligned with the mood or story that the destination delivers (Li et al., 2025). One way to distinguish music genres is to classify them as hard (fast tempo, firm-uneven rhythms, dissonant harmony, and more variations) and soft (slow tempo, smooth-flowing rhythms, consonant harmony, and fewer variations) (Imschloss & Kuehnl, 2017). Previous literature noticed that a match between a relaxing destination and slow video enhances visit intention (Su et al., 2025). Therefore, drawing on the Congruence theory (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955), the current study focuses on the interaction effects between music genres and destination images to identify the optimal match between destination image (exciting vs. relaxing) and music genre, aiming to explore whether the congruence between music type and destination image enhances destination visit intentions.

Methods

We've conducted two studies. To identify the music samples that represent the desirable music genre, a pre-test was conducted to examine the effect of music type (soft vs. hard) on arousal. A preliminary study of 2 (music type: hard vs. soft) by 2 (destination image: exciting vs. relaxing) between-subject experiment design was conducted to explore the effect of congruence between music type and destination image on visit intentions.

Results/Discussion/Implication

In the pre-test, controlling for significant covariates age(p=.015) and gender(p<.001), the one-way ANCOVA showed that hard music resulted in significantly higher arousal changes than soft music, indicating that the tested music samples represent the desirable genre ($F_{(1,107)}=5.02$, $p<.001$, $M_{hard}=0.46$, $SD_{hard}=1.30$, $M_{soft}=0.04$, $SD_{soft}=0.88$). In the preliminary study, controlling for age and gender, the ANCOVA results showed that the interaction effect between destination image and music type was insignificant ($F_{(1,71)}=2.89$, $p=.093$). However, exploratory mean comparisons showed a marginally significant match effect between relaxing destination and soft music to enhance visit intention ($p=0.052$, $M_{hard}=4.78$, $SD_{hard}=1.21$, $M_{soft}=5.39$, $SD_{soft}=0.95$).

The current study provides a novel perspective on destination marketing by investigating the interaction between music genre (non-content type) and destination image (content type) on the audience's emotions (Su et al., 2025), highlighting the potential matching effect between content and non-content elements. Practically, the findings are expected to provide actionable implications for marketers on selecting background music that aligns with different destination images when producing communication videos. While the preliminary test didn't yield a significant interaction effect, the marginal result provides promising evidence for future research. Future studies should expand the sample size and explore the potential mediators to better explain the observed patterns.

HOW DO NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL DISPLAYS BY MANAGERS OR OWNERS INFLUENCE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION? A STUDY OF TWO INDEPENDENTLY OWNED RESTAURANTS SERVING AUTHENTIC SICHUAN CUISINE

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Introduction
The restaurant industry is highly competitive, with a dramatic increase in the number of outlets. Under such fierce competition, ensuring customer satisfaction is crucial to motivate repeat business (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Previous research has identified employees' emotional displays as a key factor affecting customer satisfaction (Ashtar et al., 2024; Otterbring, 2017; Zhao et al., 2014). However, most existing research focuses on the emotions displayed by frontline employees (Du et al., 2011; Pugh, 2001; Sicilia et al., 2021), while there is a dearth of research examining the emotions displayed by restaurant managers or owners. Furthermore, few studies have examined the factors that can buffer the influence of negative emotional displays on customer satisfaction. To fill this research gap, the current study investigates how negative emotional displays by restaurant managers or owners influence customer satisfaction and identify factors (perceived food quality, uniqueness, and authenticity) that can mitigate this effect.

Methods
A questionnaire will be developed for this research, divided into two sections. The first section will comprise five parts, each utilizing a 7-point Likert-type scale, investigating the following factors: negative emotional displays by managers or owners, perceived food quality, perceived uniqueness, perceived authenticity, and customer satisfaction. Three items for negative emotional displays will be adapted from Du et al. (2011). Six items for perceived food quality will be adapted from Namkung & Jang (2007). Four items for perceived uniqueness will be adapted from Dwivedi et al. (2018). Four items for perceived authenticity will be adapted from DiPietro & Levitt (2019). Five items for customer satisfaction will be adapted from Namkung & Jang (2007) and Zhong & Moon (2020). The second part taps into the demographic information, including age, gender, education, residency, dining frequency, and monthly income.

The data will be collected through an online survey from customers of two small, independently owned restaurants in Sichuan, China. A multiple regression analysis will be conducted using Haye's PROCESS MACRO (Model 1), followed by the Johnson-Neyman analysis to probe the interaction effects.

Discussions
We expect that negative emotional displays by managers or owners will have a negative impact on customer satisfaction. However, this effect will be mitigated by the perceived quality, uniqueness, and authenticity of the food.

This study contributes to the hospitality literature by focusing on the negative emotional displays of managers or owners, which are often overlooked yet are a significant factor in the dining context. From a practical perspective, the findings will provide actionable insights for restaurant managers or owners on enhancing customer satisfaction by recognizing the importance of negative emotional displays and their interaction with perceived food quality, uniqueness, and authenticity. Given the study context, the findings of this study will be limited to China.

LUXURY MEETS RESPONSIBILITY: SUSTAINABILITY AND SERVICE COMMUNICATION IN LUXURY HOTELS

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Introduction

Luxury hospitality has grown rapidly, driven by global affluence and a shift toward experiential consumption (D'Acunto, 2024). The luxury hospitality sector, projected to reach $369 billion by 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2025), is challenged to reconcile its traditional focus on exclusivity and service (Peng & Chen, 2019) with growing traveler expectations for genuine social and environmental responsibility (Dolnicar & Greene, 2025). This conflict creates a consumer "say–do gap" (Batool et al., 2025) and heightens skepticism due to greenwashing (Font et al., 2025). Current research is overemphasizing environmental practices while neglecting the Social and Economic pillars of sustainability (Tölkes, 2018). Research on sustainability marketing lacks clarity on how hotels communicate these messages, with most studies emphasizing environmental practices over message type, credibility, or trust (Tölkes, 2018). This imbalance overlooks social aspects, which may be effective in building trust (Gillovic and McIntosh, 2020). Methodologically, scholars call for more experimental study (Dolnicar & Greene, 2025). This study addresses these gaps using an experimental framework. This study will test three communication types (Environmental, Social, and Service Control), examining their impact on booking intention through the sequential mediating effects of perceived authenticity, perceived brand prestige, and perceived service quality, which ultimately build brand trust.

Methods

This study will run a preregistered online experiment with adults who stayed in or plan to stay in four- and five-star hotels. N=360 from Prolific will be randomly assigned to one of three ads for a fictitious luxury hotel: (1) environmental sustainability, (2) social sustainability, or (3) service-focused control. After viewing one ad, participants will rate brand authenticity, prestige, service quality, trust, and booking intention using proven scales. We will include manipulation checks and remove inattentive, low-quality responses before analysis. Data will be tested with CFA and SEM, plus ANOVAs for group differences.

Expected Results / Discussion / Implication

This study expects both sustainability messages to outperform the service control on authenticity, perceived service quality, brand trust, and booking intention, with any differences between the social and environmental frames being explored as a key finding. Authenticity, prestige, and service quality should build trust, which then raises booking intention, mainly through indirect effects. This is a work in progress; results and conclusions will be added after data collection and analysis.

BEYOND COMPLIANCE: RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING MESSAGES FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION AND BRAND TRUST

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Introduction

The gambling industry faces increasing scrutiny as gambling-related harm is recognized not only as a public health issue (Livingstone & Rintoul, 2020) but also as a governance challenge threatening the industry's legitimacy (Leung, 2019). Responsible gambling (RG) communication has thus emerged as a critical tool for casino operators to protect consumers (Hing et al., 2018) and foster brand trust that sustains long-term relationships (Gainsbury et al., 2013). However, most RG messages remain compliance-oriented, resulting in limited persuasive effectiveness (Lole et al., 2019; Newall et al., 2022). To address this gap, this study conceptualizes RG communication as a governance-based strategy that integrates transparency, narrative, and framing to strengthen consumer protection and corporate legitimacy within an ESG framework.

Methods

Two studies are designed to examine how RG message design influences consumer protection and brand trust. Study 1 adopts a 2×2×2 between-subjects experiment manipulating transparency (high vs. low), narrative (presence vs. absence), and framing (gain vs. loss). Participants will be randomly assigned to eight conditions. Responsible Gambling Intervention Effectiveness (RG-IES) and brand trust will be measured using validated scales, and MANOVA will test main, interaction, and moderating effects of gambling experience. Study 2 extends the framework by decomposing the RG-IES process into underlying psychological mechanisms. Transparency and narrative are expected to enhance attention and engagement, which subsequently foster brand trust and shape attitude toward responsible gambling. Finally, attitude and subjective norms are hypothesized to predict intention toward responsible play. Structural equation modeling will test these sequential pathways and compare alternative causal models.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Preliminary expectations suggest that high transparency, narrative presence, and gain framing enhance RG message effectiveness by increasing attention, engagement, and trust. These effects likely interact, indicating that message features work synergistically. Experienced players may respond more to detailed transparency, while novices rely more on narrative engagement. Study 2 is expected to show that attention and engagement foster brand trust, which shapes attitudes and intentions toward responsible play. Theoretically, this study advances persuasion and governance research by integrating transparency, narrative, and framing into a unified framework and positioning RG communication as a value co-creation mechanism aligned with ESG principles. Practically, the findings offer casino operators in crafting messages that build trust, encourage responsible play, and strengthen brand legitimacy beyond compliance.

EMBRASING UNCERTAINTY: UNWRAPPING SERENDIPITOUS ENCOUNTERS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EXPERIENCES

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Introduction

Serendipity has attracted growing research interest across different fields and has been examined in contexts such as marketplace encounters, organizational management, and online shopping environments (Busch, 2024; Grange et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2021). However, no consensus has been reached on the definition of serendipity in service encounters within hospitality and tourism (Huang et al., 2014; Mieli, 2024), let alone on how serendipitous encounters influence consumers and shape corresponding outcomes. Furthermore, within hospitality and tourism, empirical research investigating whether serendipitous encounters foster positive behavioral intentions and clarifying their influence mechanism and boundary conditions remains scant. Therefore, to address the research gaps, this study aims to examine the following research questions: (1) How do consumers in hospitality and tourism define serendipity, and how do serendipitous encounters shape their experiences and responses? (2) Do serendipitous encounters increase emotional arousal and elicit an Aha! moment, thereby promoting behavioral intentions (i.e., satisfaction, word of mouth, revisit intention)? (3) Do hedonic-utilitarian consumption goals strengthen these indirect effects via emotional arousal and the Aha! moment? (4) Does consumption mode heighten these indirect relationships through the same mediators?

Methods

This study employs a mixed-method study design to gain both qualitative and quantitative data. In Study 1, approximately 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews and a focus group will be conducted to uncover how consumers define serendipity and perceive its influences. Study 2 includes three experimental approaches. Specifically, in Study 2a, a one-factor between- subjects experiment was conducted to test the main effect of serendipitous encounter. In Study 2b and 2c, 2 × 2 between-subjects experiments will be conducted to test the moderating roles of consumption motives (utilitarian vs. hedonic) and consumption modes (joint vs. solo) on the main effects of serendipitous encounter. Study 3 will further investigate the effects of serendipitous encounter by employing Electroencephalography (EEG) with biometric measurements to detect emotional arousal and Aha! moment through changes.

Results/discussion/implication

This study contributes to serendipity literature by revealing the definition of serendipity in hospitality and tourism and how its influence is perceived from the consumer's viewpoint. By employing expectation disconfirmation theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and emotional contagion theory, this study contributes to the marketing literature in hospitality and tourism by providing empirical evidence on how serendipity in service encounters induces positive consumer responses. It also offers practical implications for hospitality and tourism practitioners on strategies to prepare for and maximize the value of serendipitous experiences to consumers.

EXPLORING EMOTIONS AND PARTICIPATION INTENTIONS IN OLYMPIC CEREMONIES: A TOPIC MODELING APPROACH TO YOUTUBE COMMENTS

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Introduction

Olympic opening and closing ceremonies serve as cultural showcases that communicate national identity and evoke strong emotional engagement among global audiences (Garcia, 2011; Geurin & Naraine, 2020). With the rise of digital media, YouTube has become a significant platform where spectators not only view but also actively comment on these ceremonies, resulting in a vast archive of audience comments (Eagleman et al., 2014; Möller et al., 2018). Prior research has primarily relied on sentiment analysis, capturing affective responses but overlooking whether viewers also articulate participation intentions, such as attending future Games or visiting host destinations. This study applies topic modeling to approximately 160,000 YouTube comments from Olympic ceremonies between 2010 and 2024 to identify both emotion-related and participation-intention themes and explore their distribution across ceremonies, Games, and time. Particular attention will be given to co-occurrences of emotions and participation signals.
Findings are expected to broaden event research, provide practical insights for organizers, and demonstrate the methodological value of topic modeling in mega-event contexts.

Methods

The dataset will include comments posted under full-length Olympic opening and closing ceremony videos on the official Olympic YouTube channel between 2010 and 2024, totaling about 160,000 entries from eight Games. Data will be collected through the YouTube Data API, and preprocessing will remove duplicates, spam, and irrelevant or non-English comments to ensure a representative global sample. The study applies topic modeling to uncover latent themes, grouping them into (a) emotion-related and (b) participation-intention categories such as attending future Games or visiting host destinations. Comparative analysis will examine how these themes vary across opening and closing ceremonies, Summer and Winter Games, over time.

Significance of the Study

This study will broaden the scope of event research by demonstrating that digital audience discourse includes more than emotional expressions. By identifying participation-related topics alongside affective themes, it will expand understanding of how ceremonies inspire both symbolic interpretation and potential behavioral engagement. The findings will have implications for the International Olympic Committee, host cities, and sponsors, as organizers can adapt marketing and communication strategies when participation-related discourse appears more prominently in certain contexts. Monitoring YouTube comments may also provide early indicators of audience interest in attending future Games or visiting host destinations, supporting event planning and tourism initiatives. The study will highlight the advantages of topic modeling for analyzing user-generated content in mega-event contexts, revealing hidden structures that reflect both affective responses and behavioral intentions beyond sentiment analysis and emphasizing the analytical value of digital trace data.

DISASTER SALIENCE AND ACCOMMODATION PERFERENCES: COMPARING TRAVELERS' WILLINGNESS-TO-PAY FOR SAFETY AND TRUST ATTRIBUTES

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Introduction

Earlier studies on lodging field have highlighted price-quality trade-offs under normal conditions. However, in the face of imminent threats such as hurricane warnings, travelers' decision-making processes fundamentally shift. Prospect theory suggests that under such high-stakes uncertainty, individuals become loss-averse and reference dependence, prioritizing features that minimize potential losses over those that maximize gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Several theoretical mechanisms, such as signaling effects, trust transfer, and protection motivation, offer insights into how hazard warnings influence accommodation preferences (Spence, 1973; Stewart, 2003; Rogers, 1975). However, these perspectives remain fragmented and lack integration into a unified framework. Therefore, we investigate how hurricane warnings reshape travelers' valuation of accommodation attributes and the resulting competitive dynamics between hotels and Airbnb based on the several theoretical mechanisms.

Methods

We will conduct a discrete choice experiment using a 2 (normal vs. hurricane warning; between-subjects) × 2 (Airbnb vs. hotel; within-subjects) design. Respondents will be randomly assigned to one scenario and complete choice tasks for both lodging types, with block orders randomized to control for order effects. We will specify lodging-specific attributes and levels based on platform conventions and prior literature. Attributes for each lodging type are summarized in Table 1, and sample choice cards are shown in Figure 1.

Given the non-identical attribute sets, we will estimate separate mixed logit models for Airbnb and hotel choices, avoiding direct cross-attribute comparisons between lodging types. To construct manageable choice sets, we will employ a D-efficient fractional factorial design, with a Bayesian D-efficient. Scenario effects will be tested by interacting the scenario indicator with attribute coefficients in each model. WTP is computed as the ratio of each attribute coefficient to the negative price coefficient. To complement attribute-level inference, after completing both blocks respondents make a forced binary choice (Airbnb vs. hotel) under their assigned scenario; we will test scenario differences in the final lodging preference.

Expected Results/Discussion/Implication

We anticipate that hurricane warnings will substantially shift travelers' attribute valuations, with safety, flexibility, and trust signals commanding higher WTP. Among these, emergency preparedness and flexible cancellation policies are expected to exhibit the largest increases, reflecting heightened loss aversion under uncertainty. The magnitude of these shifts should vary across lodging types: hotels are likely to benefit more from institutional trust signals, whereas Airbnb properties may receive greater premiums for interpersonal trust indicators and safety preparations. This study contributes to multiple research streams by offering the first systematic quantification of accommodation attribute valuations under disaster conditions. Theoretically, it integrates signaling, trust, and protection motivation theories into a unified framework for understanding choice behavior under uncertainty. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights for risk management, enabling lodging industry to strengthen disaster-response strategies and optimize positioning.

CALI-SOBER: Current Consumption Trends and On-Premises Demand for THC Beverages

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Introduction

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 legalized hemp products with less than 0.3% delta-9 THC, sparking rapid growth in hemp-derived THC beverages. Marketed as wellness-oriented alcohol alternatives, these products have gained traction among U.S. consumers, with surveys showing overlap between hemp beverage buyers and alcohol or non-alcoholic beer consumers.

States vary in allowing regulations, and businesses face liability challenges from delayed intoxication, limited monitoring of overconsumption, and exclusions from liquor liability insurance. Notably, 19% of "Dry January" participants reported substituting alcohol with THC beverages, highlighting consumer interest. This study investigates the relationship between current on-premises beverage habits and consumer interest in THC beverages, providing insight into adoption potential within hospitality venues.

Methods

Data will be collected via a Qualtrics survey and local polling at the University of South Carolina. Questions cover demographics, prior THC use, frequency and location of non-THC beverage consumption, and anticipated THC beverage use. Respondents rate consumption frequency on a five-point scale across venue types. An optional open-ended question invites suggestions for other venues. Analysis will use ordinal logistic regression to test whether existing consumption patterns predict interest in THC beverages at similar venues.

Expected Results

We expect higher alcohol consumption at a venue to predict stronger interest in THC beverages there, consistent with overlap between alcohol and THC consumers. Coffee and tea consumption are expected to show little correlation. Multicollinearity among beverage types will be tested, with dimensional reduction applied if needed. Strongest predictive relationships are anticipated between alcohol-related behaviors and THC interest.

Significance

This study clarifies whether current beverage habits can indicate demand for THC beverages in hospitality settings. Findings will help operators assess consumer interest, liability risks, and menu fit. By testing assumptions about declining alcohol use and wellness trends, results will provide evidence-based guidance for businesses and policymakers, reducing uncertainty and supporting future segmentation analyses to identify demographics and venues best suited for THC offerings.

Work-In-Progress:
Consumer Behavior, Tourism

SELF-REPRESENTATION OF ASIAN LGBTQIA2S+ SOLO TRAVELERS

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Introduction

The uniqueness of our Earth is exemplified by the existence of human beings. Their remarkable presence is a testament to the diversity and novelty that our world has to offer. Although all humans are inherently similar, we are distinguished by our natural characteristics and gender. Remarkably, humans have created divisions among themselves based on ethnicity, skin color and language. Academic discourse has extensively discussed gender-related topics, with one of the current trends being the intersection of gender with sexual orientation. This intersection includes individuals who self-identify as LGBTQIA2S+, where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual and two-spirit. Despite some Western countries legalizing and accepting this community and treating them as equal to other genders, sexual harassment, violations and stigmatization continue to be a problem in most countries. Many societies restrict the ability of these individuals to live their lives freely and authentically. The question arises: Is there something distinctive about being a part of this community? If so, what is it that society sees as distinctive about them? There are no clear answers to these questions. Moreover, in most Asian countries, this community is not recognized, and its members are treated as a curse on society. Due to this prevalent mentality, members of this particular community are hesitant to reveal their true identities. They resort to living a fake life to fulfill their social needs and mingle with society. In the context of travel, a significant number of these individuals yearn for the destinations that provide them with an environment conducive to genuine self-expression and authentic living.

Methods

The study employs a phenomenological methodology. The interviews are being conducted in Thailand from March 2025 to the present. The study employs experience-based snowball sampling and criterion sampling strategies to select participants, e.g. individuals who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ and are of Asian origin, necessitating the identification of a location that is free from bias and discrimination. In this respect, the researcher has chosen a destination, Thailand, which welcomes tourists without any form of prejudice. The data collection is ongoing, with interviews conducted in direct contact with participants and online, as requested. The collected data will be analyzed through a pluralism analysis technique, including the Hermeneutic Cycle (HC) and Thematic Analysis (TA).

Results/Discussion/Implication

In the tourism literature, several studies have primarily explored travel motivations, identity constructions, challenges, travel preferences, as well as concerns related to travel well-being. There is also a widely held notion that individuals from this community prefer to travel in groups rather than alone. However, there is an interesting line of inquiry to explore in-depth, which pertains to individuals from this community who come from societies that discriminate against them and how they might represent themselves while traveling alone. Considering the perspectives and experiences of individuals who identify with this community and travel alone is imperative. It can provide us with insightful knowledge of how they present themselves during their solo travels, which can be utilized to better address the needs of this significant and growing community.

TOURIST-DESTINATION CONGRUITY AMONG GEN Z TRAVELERS ON INSTAGRAM: THE MODERATING ROLE OF ADVERTISEMENT TYPE

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Introduction

Social media have transformed destination marketing through visually engaging content that shapes travelers' perceptions and behaviors (Chu et al., 2020; Ghaderi et al., 2023). As a highly visual platform, Instagram enables destinations to inspire global audiences and foster meaningful engagement with potential visitors through photos and videos (Su et al., 2024). Marketers increasingly use visually appealing imagery to capture attention, resonate with audiences, and foster positive attitudes that will hopefully encourage visitation to destinations (Byun & Jang, 2015; Šegota, 2024). This approach is especially influential among Generation Z (Gen Z), digital natives born between 1997 and 2012, who use Instagram actively for travel inspiration and self-expression (Statista, 2024).

Grounded in self-congruity theory, which suggests that individuals evaluate destinations more favorably when the destination's image aligns with their self-concept (Sirgy, 1985; Sirgy & Su, 2000), this study examines how two types of Instagram advertisements, destination-attribute-focused and user-imagery-focused, interact with self-congruity to shape tourist-destination congruity and influence Gen Z travelers' attitudes toward the advertisement, the destination, and visit intentions.

Methods

A scenario-based experiment will be conducted with 400 U.S. Gen Z Instagram users, aged 18 or older, who have traveled within the past six months, recruited via Prolific. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of two advertisement conditions: destination-attribute-focused (Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge) or user-imagery-focused (a person snorkeling in the Great Barrier Reef). Both stimuli will be adapted from Tourism Australia's official Instagram account (@Australia) to help ensure objectivity and content validity (Sigstad & Garrels, 2021).

After reading a scenario, participants will complete measures of actual and ideal self-congruity (Sirgy et al., 1997; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), attitudes toward the ad (Close et al., 2009), attitude toward the destination (Reitsamer et al., 2016), and visit intentions (Su et al., 2020; Xu & Pratt, 2018) using a 7-point Likert scale. Data will be analyzed using Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrap samples. Model 6 will test the serial mediation of ad and destination attitudes between self-congruity and visit intentions, while Model 83 will examine whether ad type moderates the effect of self-congruity on ad attitude.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is anticipated that actual self-congruity will enhance ad and destination attitudes, as these visuals convey authenticity and reduce perceived risk (Šegota, 2024). Conversely, ideal self-congruity is expected to generate stronger responses to a user-imagery ad that reflect aspirational motives. Potential findings will provide empirical support for self-congruity as a key psychological mechanism through which advertising design shapes Gen Z's travel attitudes and visit intentions. Practically, the findings will offer insights for destination marketers by suggesting ways to leverage authenticity in destination-attribute ads and aspiration in user-imagery ads to create more targeted and compelling campaigns.

WELLNESS TOURISM: THE ROLE OF EXPERIENCE QUALITY, SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND BRAND LOVE IN SHAPING SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

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Introduction

Wellness tourism, or travel focused on maintaining or improving well-being, is among the fastest-growing sectors in global travel, valued at USD 651 billion in 2022 and projected to grow by 16.6% annually (Global Wellness Institute, 2023). Post-pandemic travelers, especially Millennials and Gen Z, seek experiences that include mindfulness, spirituality, and connection. However, few Western studies examine emotional and communal factors that influence loyalty. This research is guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). It investigates how experience quality (QoE), sense of community (SoC), and brand love (BL) affect satisfaction and the likelihood of returning, while considering how wellness knowledge, perceptions of luxury, and accessibility moderate these relationships. This study advances wellness tourism theory by incorporating psychological and situational factors that drive loyalty.

Methods

A cross-sectional online survey was conducted among 98 wellness tourists who recently participated in spa, yoga, or retreat experiences. The 41-item questionnaire used seven-point Likert scales and validated measures: SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) for QoE; SCI-2 (Chavis et al., 2008) for SoC; So–King–Sparks and Bagozzi for BL; and Sheth et al. (1991) for satisfaction. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in SPSS tested reliability and validity ($\alpha > 0.85$; KMO = 0.851). Although the sample meets basic SEM requirements, its small size limits generalizability and highlights the need for further research with larger, cross-cultural samples.

Results / Discussion / Implication

Findings supported all hypotheses: QoE, SoC, and BL each significantly predicted satisfaction ($p < .01$), which in turn predicted the intention to return. BL showed cross-loadings across affective and behavioral factors, consistent with its dual emotional and motivational nature. Moderating effects indicated that wellness knowledge and luxury strengthened the satisfaction–loyalty links, while accessibility reduced travel barriers. The study clarifies how emotional and communal factors shape satisfaction and loyalty. Collectively, these findings connect consumer motivation with brand trust and support sustainable growth in wellness tourism.

References available upon request.

SENIOR TOURISM: THE MODERATING ROLE OF COGNITIVE PROCESSES ON VALUE-MOTIVATION-SERVICE QUALITY-SATISFACTION OUTCOME IN THE LIFESTYLE RESORT SETTING

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Introduction

As travel industry expands, seniors are increasingly driven by longer life expectancy, improved health, and financial independence. Resort lifestyle emphasizes experiences that offer wellness, safety, social connection, and environmental appeal (Liu et al., 2024). In a high-contact tourism settings, understanding the drivers behind the travel choices and satisfaction is increasingly critical as high service quality enhances the emotional and functional dimensions of satisfaction and supports long-term loyalty. Simultaneously, seniors with greater cognitive involvement engage in more reflective, risk-averse decision-making and are likely to be more discerning in assessing service experiences (Wu et al., 2018; Park et al., 2002). The Push–Pull Theory (Dann, 1977) describes how internal (push) motives interact with external (pull) factors to shape travel behavior. Perceived value represents how senior tourists evaluate psychological comfort, sensory pleasure, social connection, and environmental quality dimensions essential to their lifestyle and health-conscious travel goals (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Nimrod, 2008). Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) complements this by explaining that satisfaction arises when travel experiences meet or exceed expectations shaped by perceived value. This study proposes an integrative framework examining how perceived value influences motivation, which in turn affects service quality and satisfaction, with cognitive processing acting as a moderator.

Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research design using survey measured on a 5-point Likert scale. A total of 500 U.S. senior tourists aged 65+ will be recruited through Facebook groups and senior travel networks and screened for resort experience within past 2 years. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will test hypothesized relationships (H1–H3), while latent moderated SEM will evaluate the moderating role of cognitive process (H4). Travel frequency and duration will serve as control variables.

Implications

This study offer both conceptual and practical contributions to senior tourism research. Conceptually, it integrates Push–Pull Theory and Expectation Confirmation Theory, introducing a multi-dimensional model of perceived value that includes psychological, social, sensory, and environmental factors. It also advances understanding of how cognitive processing and service quality moderate the links between perceived value, motivation, and satisfaction, addressing current gaps in the literature. Practically, findings can inform resort managers in developing senior-centered services, emphasizing staff training, accessibility, and personalized experiences. Insights on cognitive processing may guide marketing strategies to use trusted sources and peer testimonials that support seniors' reflective decision-making. Additionally, the research can assist policy-makers in shaping age-inclusive tourism infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the senior market.

EXAMINE FAN PILGRIMAGE TOURISM EXPERIENCE (FPTE) HOW FPTE, WELL-BEING AND PLACE ATTACHMENT INFLUENCE DESTINATION SPILLOVER

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Introduction

Fan travel has increasingly evolved into fan pilgrimage, where visits to sites linked to celebrities or media content carry emotional and symbolic weight (Jang, 2020). Though rooted in leisure, fan pilgrimage mirrors religious pilgrimage through ritualistic behaviors but is primarily driven by affective devotion, identity expression, and community belonging (Brooker, 2007; Couldry, 2003; Tian et al., 2023). A notable case is BTS and their fandom, ARMY, who travel to Seoul not only for concerts but to visit iconic locations such as music video sets and themed cafés (Magramo et al., 2023; Kwak, 2018). These journeys are often transformative, eliciting joy, awe, and deep emotional resonance.

Frameworks like the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and Memorable Tourism Experiences (Kim et al., 2012) explain how such travel fosters both hedonic pleasure and eudaimonic well-being, enhancing identity, meaning, and emotional fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Filep & Laing, 2019). These outcomes contribute to place attachment, the emotional bond with a destination (Altman & Low, 1992). Based on excitation transfer theory and the spillover effect, emotional arousal can intensify attachment and encourage continued engagement or visits to related places (Zillmann, 1971; Zhou et al., 2022). Furthermore, parasocial relationships—one-sided emotional ties with celebrities—can amplify these effects (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Yuan et al., 2022). However, research often overlooks fan pilgrimage's unique emotional dynamics. This study will examine how fan pilgrimage enhances well-being, fosters place attachment, and drives destination spillover, considering the moderating role of parasocial relationships.

Methods

This study will employ a quantitative research design to examine structural relationships among fan pilgrimage experience, well-being, place attachment, and destination spillover. All constructs will be measured using validated 7-point Likert scales (Bond, 2016; Diner, 1984; Gong & Li, 2019; Kim et al., 2012; Kyle et al., 2004; Oh et al., 2007; Ryff, 1989; Wong et al., 2019; Yuksel et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2022). Data will be collected from 400 adults who have visited BTS-related sites, using purposive sampling via online fan communities. Structural Equation Modeling will test the hypothesized paths. Parasocial relationships will be examined as a moderator using Latent Moderated Structural Equations. Model fit will be assessed using CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

Expected Implications

This study will contribute to theory by framing fan pilgrimage as a distinct, emotionally and symbolically rich experience, beyond general tourism. It introduces a multidimensional framework addressing psychological depth, highlighting how hedonic and eudaimonic well-being shape place attachment. The inclusion of destination spillover offers new insights into behavioral intentions within fan tourism. Practically, the findings will guide destination marketers, planners, and fan industries in designing immersive experiences. Understanding the spillover effect supports strategic collaboration among related sites, promoting sustainable tourism development through emotionally meaningful, fan-driven travel patterns.

References are available upon request

STEWARDSHIP OR OBJECTIFICATION: THE AMBIVALENT EFFECTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP IN DRONE TOURISM

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Introduction

The drone tourism market is experiencing rapid growth (Data Horizon Research, 2025). As aerial photography technology, drones exert a dual impact on tourism destinations (Afridi et al., 2025; Vujičić et al., 2022). On the one hand, drones capture slow-panning footage from a bird's-eye perspective, enabling visitors to establish novel relationships with destinations (Ritter, 2024). On the other hand, drone operations may be detrimental to the environment, such as noise pollution and the disruption of animal habitats (Afridi et al., 2025; O'Donnell, 2021).

Despite the growing importance of drones in the tourism industry, related research remains scarce (Sevilla-Sevilla et al., 2023). The limited tourism research focuses on commercial applications of drones rather than the behavioral or psychological aspects of travelers (Donaire et al., 2020). When travelers use drones to explore their surroundings, they not only gain insight into the natural world but also engage in a form of self-expansion (Pierce et al., 2003). Through intimate contact with nature and a sense of agency with the drone, travelers may develop a psychological perception of "nature as mine." At this point, travelers may feel like "owners" or "managers" of the environment, thereby influencing how they treat the natural surroundings (She et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the antecedents influencing psychological ownership of nature in the context of drone tourism, as well as the resulting double-edged sword effect.

Methods

This study aims to collect data through a questionnaire targeting travelers who have used drones during their trips. The research seeks to obtain 500 valid responses using a snowball sampling method. The scales will be drawn from established research and appropriately adapted for the context of drone tourism. Structural equation modeling will be employed to analyze the data.

Results/Discussion/Implication

During tourism, the sense of agency, spatial presence, and engagement evoked by drones will stimulate psychological ownership of nature, leading to both positive and negative pathways toward the environment. The positive pathway fosters environmental stewardship by evoking feelings of the small self, while the negative pathway triggers environmental objectification through a sense of psychological entitlement. Additionally, mindset plays a crucial moderating role. Travelers with a growth mindset are more likely to activate a sense of smallness before nature; conversely, travelers with a fixed mindset tend to exhibit possessive attitudes toward nature.

This study extends psychological ownership of nature to the context of drone tourism by exploring both its positive and negative effects. Furthermore, it introduces mindset into the mechanism of psychological ownership (Dweck, 2006, 2013). In addition, this study aims to provide actionable recommendations for tourism destinations. It suggests that destinations can foster a growth mindset through guided tours and promotional campaigns, thereby positively transforming ownership experiences.

DISSATISFACTION DERIVED FROM DISSONANCE: TOURISTS ARE ANNOYED BY ONLINE REVIEWS

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Introduction

Analysis towards online reviews posted by wine tourists plays a crucial role in investigating tourists' satisfaction according to different attributes (Wu et al., 2024). Existing evidence has found that wine tourists actively construct their own experiences through multisensory involvement (Brochado et al., 2021). What has also revealed the relationship between tourists' expectation and their post-trip satisfaction. For example, Shin and Nicolau (2022) demonstrated that tourists would feel dissatisfied if they were providing lower-than-expected service and further argued that it could not be equally neutralized by another higher-than-expected service. However, what has been overlooked is what role online reviews play in shaping tourists' expectations. Besides, whether the mismatch of expectation and experience could lead to cognitive dissonance which further contributes to tourists' dissatisfaction is underexplored. In other words, current knowledge failed to understand whether tourists are dissatisfied with the service itself, or their dissatisfaction comes from dissonance. What remains underexplored is the role of online reviews in shaping these expectations. Specifically, it is unclear whether dissatisfaction arises directly from the service itself or from cognitive dissonance triggered by unmet expectations, possibly inflated by exaggerated or misleading reviews. This gap raises critical questions about how expectation–experience mismatches contribute to tourist dissatisfaction.
Accordingly, this study has two objectives:

1. To investigate how online reviews shape wine tourists' pre-trip expectations.
2. To measure the extent to which wine tourists engage in dissonance after choosing a winery and their dissatisfaction.

From these objectives, the guiding research question is: Do wine tourists experience dissonance and dissatisfaction when their expectations do not align with their actual experiences?

Methods

This study will adopt an experimental design in which participants are presented with online reviews of two unnamed wineries. Expectations will be measured through curated sets of reviews drawn from independent travel platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor). Review content reflects attributes identified in prior research as central to winery satisfaction: wine products and tastings, wine education, and scenic views (Brochado et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2024).

Two review scenarios will be created. One winery will be associated with predominantly positive reviews (7 positive, 3 negative), while the other will feature predominantly negative reviews (7 negative, 3 positive). After exposure to the reviews, participants will be asked to imagine planning a wine trip in the United States. They will rate the likelihood of choosing each winery on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "extremely unlikely," 5 = "extremely likely"). The purchase is framed as nonrefundable, after which participants must make an unchangeable choice of one winery to visit. Cognitive dissonance will then be measured using the eight-item scale developed by Koller and Salzberger (2007). Example items include: "Perhaps I should have spent the money on something else" and "I am not quite sure about my decision." Eventually, demographic variables will be collected at the conclusion of the survey.

TERROIR TOURISM, PLACE ATTACHMENT, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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Introduction

Terroir embodies the interaction between environmental and human factors—such as soil, climate, topography, and traditional practices—that shape the sensory and cultural identity of place-based products (Van Leeuwen & Seguin, 2006). Extending beyond viticulture, terroir tourism offers immersive encounters with landscapes, cuisine, and culture, enabling multisensory experiences that engage visitors cognitively and emotionally. Such experiences—rooted in esthetics, escapism, entertainment, and education (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)—may foster place attachment, the affective and symbolic bond individuals form with destinations (Williams & Vaske, 2003). Drawing from Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) and Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985), this study posits that terroir environments enhance psychological well-being by promoting reflection, fascination, and emotional renewal. Visitors may attribute their sense of restoration and connection to specific terroir attributes (e.g., climate, soil, landscape, scenery), which strengthens place attachment and overall well-being. Despite increasing attention to wellness tourism, limited research empirically links terroir experiences to cognitive restoration and emotional clarity. This study aims to (1) examine the relationship between tourism experiences and place attachment; (2) assess the influence of place attachment on psychological well-being; and (3) investigate the moderating role of terroir attributes among these relationships.

Methods

A quantitative research design will be employed using validated scales to measure experience economy dimensions (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), terroir attributes (Van Leeuwen & Seguin, 2006), place attachment (Williams & Vaske, 2003), and psychological well-being (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Responses will be recorded on 7-point Likert scales. Data will be collected from over 500 visitors to New York's terroir-based destinations (e.g., Finger Lakes, Long Island) through online panels and in-person surveys. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will test the hypothesized relationships, and Latent Moderated Structural Equations (LMS) will examine moderation effects of terroir attributes.

Implications

The study is expected to demonstrate that tourism experiences strengthen place attachment, which in turn enhances psychological well-being. Theoretically, it integrates Attention Restoration Theory and Attribution Theory to explain the restorative and emotional mechanisms of terroir tourism. It contributes to advancing wellness and experiential tourism literature by positioning psychological well-being—not merely satisfaction or loyalty—as a core outcome of place-based experiences. Practically, the findings can inform destination planners, winery managers, and rural tourism operators in designing sensory-rich experiences that highlight terroir, deepen emotional bonds, and promote visitor wellness—aligning terroir tourism with the growing wellness and lifestyle tourism market.

REGENERATIVE TOURISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF GEN Z TRAVELERS

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Introduction

Prior to COVID-19, mass tourism was a major driver of global economic growth but also caused widespread environmental and social issues in destinations worldwide (Corral-Gonzalez et al., 2023; Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2021). Although sustainable tourism emerged to mitigate these impacts, it has been criticized for offering short-term fixes and prioritizing industry survival over destination well-being (Becken & Kaur, 2021; Bellato, Frantzeskaki, & Nygaard, 2022; Krippendorf, 1987; Sharpley, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the fragility of traditional demand-driven tourism and accelerated calls for a more transformative approach (Ali, 2022; Gibson, 2021; Lew & Cheer, 2017).

In response, regenerative tourism (RT) has emerged as a model that moves beyond minimizing harm to proactively restoring, revitalizing, and enhancing destinations' ecological, social, and cultural systems (Bellato et al., 2022; Corral-Gonzalez et al., 2020). It views destinations as living systems and promotes locally grounded, community-centered practices that encourage tourists to leave destinations better than before they arrived by restoring ecosystems, empowering local communities, and building resilience through initiatives such as reforestation, coastal cleanups, renewable energy adoption, and cultural heritage protection (Ateljevic, 2020; Bellato et al., 2022; Luong et al., 2024; Mathisen et al., 2022; Pung et al., 2024).

Despite growing attention, RT research remains largely conceptual and supply-driven, with limited focus on consumer perspectives (Zaman et al., 2023). This study addresses this gap by examining the psychological and digital factors influencing Generation Z (Gen Z) travelers' willingness to engage in RT through an extended Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework. The study posits that awareness, environmental concern, and AI/digital influence (stimuli) shape travelers' attitudes (organism), which in turn drive their willingness to engage in RT (response). Perceived cost is proposed as a moderator between attitude and willingness to test how their perception about cost may strengthen or weaken this relationship. The S-O-R framework is suitable for this study, as it explains how external stimuli translate into internal states and behavioral responses, offering a holistic lens to understand Gen Z's engagement with RT.

Methods

This quantitative, cross-sectional survey targets Gen Z travelers (aged 18–29) in the U.S. who actively use AI and digital platforms for travel decisions. Using purposive sampling, 350–400 participants will be recruited via Prolific. A structured questionnaire will adapt existing validated scale items to the regenerative tourism context. Data will be analyzed using SPSS, PROCESS (Hayes, 2018), and AMOS to test mediation, moderation, and overall model fit through SEM.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This work-in-progress study addresses calls for more consumer-focused empirical research in RT (Corral-Gonzalez et al., 2023; Zaman et al., 2023) and offers practical insights for destination marketers and policymakers to design strategies that enhance Gen Z engagement with RT.

SMALL BUSINESS TRUST IN MEGA-EVENT HOSTS: AN EXPLORATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED-METHOD STUDY OF THE FIFA WORLD CUP

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Introduction

Mega sporting events, such as the FIFA World Cup, offer substantial opportunities and challenges for host cities and nations. While these events are often promoted as drivers of economic growth and enhanced global visibility, their localized effects, particularly on small businesses, are less well understood (Kaplanidou et al., 2020; Leopkey & Parent, 2017). Small enterprises are integral to local economies and community engagement; however, they are frequently marginalized in planning processes primarily governed by institutional actors, leading to tensions rooted in trust issues.

Trust, defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to another party (Mayer et al., 1995), is fundamental to stakeholder collaboration and perceived legitimacy in mega-event contexts.
When small enterprises perceive organizers as competent and transparent, trust facilitates engagement and support for legacy outcomes. Conversely, deficiencies in transparency or fairness diminish confidence and reduce participation (Yoshida et al., 2021). Despite the significance of this relationship, limited research explicitly investigates trust among small business stakeholders, with most studies prioritizing larger corporations (Preuss, 2015).

This study addresses this gap by employing a sequential mixed methods design to examine how small enterprises perceive and build trust in FIFA World Cup organizers, thereby promoting inclusive and transparent governance of mega-events.

Methods

This study employs a convergent parallel mixed methods design, simultaneously collecting qualitative and quantitative data and integrating findings during the analysis phase. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 20–25 small business stakeholders in two Texas World Cup host cities, selected deliberately from the hospitality, retail, and service sectors.
These interviews aim to explore perceptions of trust towards both local and international organizers, with a focus on communication, inclusion, and fairness (Yoshida, Gordon, & Heere, 2021; Leopkey & Parent, 2017). Utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis within NVivo, transcripts will be examined for patterns related to transparency, accountability, and legacy expectations (Kaplanidou & Al-Jenaibi, 2018; Taks et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2019). A survey of approximately 300 small business stakeholders across U.S. host cities will incorporate Likert-scale items derived from validated trust measures. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and regression techniques will be employed to assess how trust influences satisfaction, perceived benefits, and future engagement (Heere, Walker, & Yoshida, 2019), thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of trust in the context of mega-events.

Expected Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings are anticipated to demonstrate that transparency, inclusion, and early engagement cultivate trust among small business stakeholders, whereas limited communication may increase skepticism. It is expected that higher levels of trust will be associated with greater satisfaction and continued engagement. This will contribute to stakeholder trust theory and guide event organizers seeking to implement more equitable, community-centered governance for mega-events.

MEDIA, AUTHENTICITY, AND THE MALLEABILITY OF NATIONAL STEREOTYPES IN TOURISM

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Introduction

In today's hyper-mediated global environment, people often encounter foreign nations through mediated portrayals such as Netflix dramas, travel vlogs, and influencer posts, which have become primary sources of destination knowledge (Urry & Larsen, 2011; Govers & Go, 2016). These portrayals shape how audiences form impressions long before actual travel, filtered through existing social schemas and stereotypes that influence trust, emotional connection, and travel decisions (Fiske et al., 2002; Bartlett, 1995).

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM) provides a useful framework for understanding these dynamics. It posits that perceptions of social groups are organized along two universal dimensions: warmth, which reflects friendliness and sincerity, and competence, which reflects capability and efficiency (Fiske et al., 2002). These dimensions predict emotional and behavioral outcomes such as admiration, trust, and visit intention (Chattalas et al., 2008). Media representations can activate and reshape these dimensions through selective framing, visual aesthetics, and narrative cues, guiding how viewers attribute warmth and competence to nations. However, empirical research has rarely explored how such media-driven stereotype changes occur within tourism contexts.

This study reframes national stereotypes as dynamic and media-malleable schemas rather than fixed cultural beliefs. Using South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, which represent distinct stereotype profiles and levels of media visibility within the same cultural region, it examines how media features such as framing, visual appeal, narrative coherence, and authenticity reshape warmth and competence perceptions. In doing so, the study integrates stereotype content theory with media and tourism research, identifying the mechanisms through which mediated portrayals influence destination image and travel intention.

Methods

A sequential experimental design will examine how media framing and presentation shape national stereotypes and destination image. A pre-study will establish baseline warmth and competence perceptions of South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Three experiments will then sequentially test the effects of framing congruence, visual quality, and narrative format, with authenticity serving as a moderating factor. This design allows both internal and external validity by combining controlled manipulations with cross-cultural comparisons.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Results are expected to show that congruent framing reinforces existing stereotypes, while incongruent portrayals create cognitive tension that facilitates stereotype reevaluation. High-quality and coherent visual content is anticipated to enhance both warmth and competence, whereas fragmented portrayals may lead to subtyping or disengagement. Narrative formats are expected to heighten perceived warmth more effectively than factual ones, particularly under conditions of high authenticity. Collectively, the findings will demonstrate that national stereotypes operate as dynamic and media-responsive schemas that shape destination image and behavioral intention. This work is expected to advance theoretical understanding at the intersection of media psychology, stereotype content theory, and tourism marketing.

Work-In-Progress:
Finance & Economics

FROM PASSION TO BOOTH: UNDERSTANDING FANTREPRENEURS' IDENTITY IN FAN EVENTS

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Introduction

Fan-driven events such as anime conventions have evolved into significant cultural spaces distinct from large-scale commercial festivals. These gatherings rely on fans' creativity and engagement, serving as platforms for cultural production and community building. Within these spaces, some fans transform their passion into entrepreneurial practice by becoming 'fantrepreneurs'—booth operators who merge fandom and business. While prior studies highlight creativity and social bonding in fan culture, less is known about the motivations and identity tensions of these individuals. Guided by a social entrepreneurship perspective, this study explores fantrepreneurs as cultural social entrepreneurs who balance passion and profit, seeking to create community value rather than purely financial gain.

Methods

Given the exploratory nature of the study, a qualitative research design will be used. Data will be collected from booth operators participating in anime conventions through semi-structured interviews and on-site observations. Initial recruitment will take place at the Kansas City Anime Expo in March 2026, followed by online interviews via fan networks and social media.

Interviews will focus on motivations, identity balance, and sustainability strategies. All interviews will be transcribed and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. Codes and themes will be developed both deductively from the literature and inductively from participants' narratives.

Expected Results

Preliminary expectations suggest that fantrepreneurs are motivated primarily by passion, creativity, and community contribution, with financial goals being secondary. Their booths act as cultural spaces for sharing, belonging, and identity reinforcement. At the theoretical level, the findings will position fantrepreneurs as cultural extensions of social entrepreneurs, integrating cultural and symbolic value into social entrepreneurship frameworks. Practically, the study will offer insights for event organizers and convention managers to support fantrepreneurs beyond financial aid—through mentorship, networking, and creative space facilitation—to sustain community-based cultural economies.

FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING LITERACY AS DRIVERS OF RESILIENCE AND PERFORMANCE IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SMALL ENTERPRISES

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Introduction
Small enterprises, including those in the hospitality and tourism sector, form the backbone of global economies, representing 95 percent of firms worldwide and providing 60 percent of total employment (Financial Literacy for SMEs, 2023). In the United States, SMEs have consistently contributed between 43.5 and 50.7 percent of gross domestic product since the late 1990s, while the 28 million American SMEs account for nearly two-thirds of net new private-sector jobs (Lucy, 2024). While financial literacy and small enterprise performance have drawn growing attention, most research considers these issues separately, leaving gaps in understanding how financial and accounting literacy jointly influence resilience and outcomes in hospitality and tourism. This study addresses these gaps by examining how financial and accounting literacy among owner-managers affect resilience and financial performance, while also identifying barriers to the adoption of formal systems.

Methods
Sample design: This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine relationships between financial literacy, accounting practices, and performance outcomes among hospitality and tourism small enterprises. The survey will gather information regarding independent and dependent variables. Structured questionnaires will be distributed to owner-managers of restaurants, lodging establishments, and event service firms in several U.S. states, specifically in New York, Illinois, and Oklahoma. Sampling will be purposive, focusing on small enterprises defined by employee and revenue thresholds consistent with U.S. Small Business Administration guidelines (ACCA, 2010). Expected sample size is 20.

Research instrument and variables: The instrument(questionnaire) contains six sections: demographics of the owner-manager, demographics of the business, a financial literacy assessment, an evaluation of accounting practices, indicators of business resilience, and identification of barriers to adopting financial systems. Independent variables include financial literacy, such as investment, cash flow, and budgeting knowledge (Ventre et al., 2024). Accounting literacy such as the ability to interpret financial statements, control costs, and analyze profitability (Adela et al., 2024). Dependent variables include resilience scores in terms of financial literacy—the ability to withstand crises such as COVID —and maintain operations (Ventre et al., 2024), and financial performance indicators such as return on assets, profitability, and customer retention (Chen et al., 2012) (Mittal et al., 2023) (van Triest et al., 2009).

Data Analysis: Data analysis will be conducted using IBM SPSS, employing descriptive statistics (for examining the reliability check; Cronbach's alpha for multi-item scales), Pearson correlations to examine the relationship among variables, multiple regression to find out the strength and direction of the relationship among the variables, independent sample t-tests, and chi-square tests(goodness of fit test, test of independence).

Expected Results and implications
Several outcomes are anticipated. Financial literacy among owner-managers is expected to correlate positively with business resilience, with literate managers demonstrating stronger adaptive capacity. Hospitality and tourism SMEs with higher levels of accounting knowledge are likely to show stronger financial performance, including profitability and revenue growth.

References are available upon request

ESG AND FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT TO HOSPITALITY FIRMS: INVESTOR PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is characterized by high leverage, high demand volatility, and high fixed costs. The nature of the industry emphasizes the importance of managing insolvency risk as a strategy for securing firm value. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) enables quantification and systematic management of ESG risks, which can contribute to reducing costs, mitigating reputational and regulatory risks, and securing a competitive advantage. However, the existing literature exploring the influence of ESG on hospitality management is often limited to correlational studies, leaving gaps in causal exploration. In the case of ESG and bankruptcy risk, there is a lack of empirical evidence on whether ESG actually reduces bankruptcy risk in the hospitality industry. This study aims to employ Auto-regressive Integrated Moving Average with Exogenous Variables (ARIMAX) and two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression analysis to address the aforementioned gap. By utilizing these two respective analyses, the study examines how financial indicators influence the probability of bankruptcy (PB) among hospitality firms over time, as well as the exogenous variation in ESG performance that reduces bankruptcy risk.

Methods

Financial data will be collected and computed from the WRDS/COMPUSTAT database (e.g., PB, ROA, debt-to-equity ratio, free cash flow, & revenue). ESG performance data will be collected from Morningstar, Inc.'s Sustainability Index. Analysis 1 will utilize ARIMAX modeling to control for autocorrelation and trends in PB, and then estimate the time-variant impacts of ROA (a proxy for asset efficiency), the debt-to-equity ratio (a proxy for leverage), free cash flow (a proxy for financial flexibility), and revenue (a proxy for firm size). Analysis 2 will use a 2SLS regression to estimate the causal effect of ESG on PB while addressing endogeneity issues such as reverse causality and omitted variables. Instrument validity is confirmed through IV strength and over-identification tests, with additional robustness checks for model specification and stationarity.

Results/Discussion/Implication

First, a higher debt-to-equity ratio is expected to increase PB, while higher ROA, free cash flow, and revenue are expected to decrease it, indicating that financial fundamentals function as early warning signals for bankruptcy risk. Second, improvements in ESG performance are expected to significantly lower PB; even after controlling for profitability and leverage, the buffering effect of ESG remains.

Academically, this study verifies the causal mechanism between ESG performance and bankruptcy risk within the hospitality context by combining time-series analysis with an instrumental-variable two-stage design. Practically, firms should treat ESG as a form of insurance that mitigates regulatory, reputational, and operational risks, while lowering capital costs and reducing bankruptcy likelihood. Using ARIMA-based financial indicators to track and respond to rising risk enhances financial resilience, and investors can integrate ESG-driven risk signals into default-risk assessments for a clearer view of firm stability.

References are available upon reques

EFFECTS OF PLEASURE VACATION ON BOREDOM: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF BIG FIVE PERSONALITY TRAIT

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Introduction

The alleviation of boredom has long been recognized as one of the central motives for pleasure vacation. It was first identified as a subfactor of tourist motives by Crompton (1979) and was later conceptualized as a distinct construct within tourists' motives by Crompton (2025). Motivation is not a discrete event but a dynamic process that continually rises and falls. Disequilibrium Theory provides the conceptual foundations for this process by positing that boredom constitutes a form of psychological disequilibrium that propels individuals to seek restoration. Despite decades of recognition of boredom alleviation as a motive, little empirical research has examined whether vacations in fact succeed in reducing boredom. This raises an important yet unresolved question: Do pleasure vacations offer demonstrable relief from boredom?

This is a critically important question. If simply engaging in one's daily routine or pursuing within the comfort of one's home environment provides a similar level of relief from boredom as a pleasure vacation, then the investment of time/or budget may be unwarranted in the context of alleviating boredom. This interest leads to whether pleasure vacations effectively alleviate individual boredom.

Methods

We compare state boredom across three randomly assigned scenarios: (1) engaging in ordinary daily life, (2) spending a day in a vacation destination, and (3) engaging in the same activities as in Scenario (2) but within the home environment of Scenario (1). By contrasting these randomly assigned scenarios and including personality traits, we aim to identify the causal effect of pleasure vacations on boredom.

$$SB_i = \alpha + \sum_{s=2}^{3} \tau_s S_{is} + \sum_{k\in\{O,C,E,A,N\}} \pi_k T_{ik} + \sum_{s=2}^{3} \sum_{k\in\{O,C,E,A,N\}} \delta_{sk}(S_{is} \cdot T_{ik}) + X_i^{\top}\beta + \varepsilon_i$$

where,
SB_i is the mean score of state boredom for individual i,
S_{is} are scenario dummies (with ordinary daily life as the baseline, $s = 1$),
T_{ik} represents the Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism),
$S_{is} \cdot T_{ik}$ refer to the interaction effects between scenario assignment and personality traits,
$\boldsymbol{X_i}$ is a vector of socio-demographic control variables (age, gender, household income, marital status, household size),
ε_i is the error term.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Although pleasure vacations are assumed to restore equilibrium, this assumption has not been empirically tested. This study not only identified the causal relationship between pleasure vacations and boredom but also demonstrated the significance of incorporating personality traits into the model of tourist motivation.

THE MODERATING ROLE OF BRAND DIVERSIFICATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CEO OPENNESS AND FIRM PERFORMANCE IN THE U.S. LODGING INDUSTRY

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Introduction

This study examines how CEO openness affects firm performance and how brand diversification moderates this relationship in the risk-laden and reputation-sensitive hospitality industry, where environmental dynamism and uncertainty demand agile leadership (Khairy et al., 2023; Melián-Alzola et al., 2020; Singal, 2015). The industry's high leverage and cyclical demand expose firms to performance volatility (Lee et al., 2024), highlighting the need for strategic adaptability. Drawing on Upper Echelons Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), the Behavioral Theory of the Firm (Cyert & March, 1963), and Portfolio Theory (Markowitz, 1952), this study argues that CEO openness—a disposition toward information scanning and adaptive sensemaking—shapes strategic risk-taking and resilience. While openness enhances awareness and flexibility, excessive openness may heighten volatility when managerial discretion exceeds organizational absorptive capacity (Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014). Brand diversification can buffer volatility and stabilize performance (Aaker, 2004; O'Neill & Mattila, 2010) but may also cause brand dilution or cannibalization (Choi et al., 2011). Understanding how openness influences performance and how diversification mitigates or magnifies this link is vital for strategic risk management in the lodging industry.

Methods

The sample includes U.S. lodging firms publicly traded under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 721110. Firm performance is measured by Tobin's Q (Choi et al., 2011), supplemented with accounting-based indicators such as ROA for robustness. Following Datta et al. (2003), CEO openness is proxied by age, tenure, and education. Brand diversification, following Choi et al. (2011), reflects the distribution of brand properties across a firm's portfolio. Financial data are obtained from Compustat, and brand data from firms' 10-K reports. A fixed-effects model controls for unobserved firm heterogeneity, with potential endogeneity addressed through instrumental-variable techniques (Wooldridge, 2010). Analyses are conducted using STATA with panel data.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Preliminary results show that CEO openness enhances flexibility and risk-taking, though its effects differ under volatility (Herrmann & Nadkarni, 2014). Brand diversification buffers openness-related risks while amplifying benefits (Choi et al., 2011), helping disperse risks and stabilize performance (Aaker, 2004; O'Neill & Mattila, 2010). Theoretically, this study extends Upper Echelons Theory by linking executive traits and structural strategies to resilience. Practically, open CEOs perform best when diversification translates bold initiatives into sustainable results. Future research may explore asset-light, franchising, or geographic diversification as additional mechanisms.

Work-In-Progress:
Human Resources, Leadership & Education

BRIDGING THE GAP: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO BEVERAGE INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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Introduction

The U.S. beverage industry is experiencing rapid growth, contributing to increased economic activity and job creation. Over the past five years, employment in the beverage sector has grown by approximately 10% (Conroy & Hallowell, 2025). Employment in the U.S. beverage sector is projected to grow steadily, reaching about $41.93 billion by 2028 (ReportLinker, 2024). The sector is also transforming because of changing customer demands (e.g., wellness value, premiumization) and new technologies (PublicisSapient, 2025).

Despite this rapid evolution, hospitality programs have not kept pace with the changing needs of the workforce. Few U.S. institutions offer minors or specialized programs focused on beverages; most curricula emphasize culinary studies or general topics. Studies on the development of beverage education are scarce. There is little evidence connecting the beverage industry's rapid growth to the preparedness of hospitality graduates. To address this gap, this study seeks insights from beverage professionals to inform more relevant, innovative, and effective higher education beverage curricula.

Methods

This study employs a semi-structured interview to elicit rich insights from beverage industry professionals. A purposive snowball sampling strategy and interview protocols were carefully designed, grounded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), to recruit beverage professionals with at least two years of experience in the three-tier system: producers, distributors, and retailers. Data collection will continue until data saturation is achieved.

To analyze the contextual data, two-cycle coding manuals were utilized, following Saldaña (2021). ATLAS.ti software was used to code the data based on its merits (Kalpokas & Radivojevic, 2022). To ensure data accuracy, triangulation was applied (Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Initial findings indicated a strong need for curriculum modules that bridge the gap between students' career goals and the practical realities and specific qualities of the beverage industry. Based on the findings, these modules should be designed to convey the specific beverage knowledge and an understanding of its distinctive working styles and conditions, covering topics such as emerging beverage trends, hands-on experience, and market analysis. Additionally, interviewees' responses revealed a deficit in certain soft skills, underscoring the need for a curriculum that prioritize training in problem-solving and resilience to prepare students for navigating complex industry challenges and opportunities.

In theory, the findings enriched beverage education research, grounded in self-determination theory. In practice, the results provided valuable insights for designing more effective beverage education programs that support students' long-term success.

References are available upon request

FROM BARRIERS TO BEST PRACTICES: NATIVE HAWAIIAN LEADERSHIP MOBILITY IN HAWAIʻI'S HOSPITALITY SECTOR

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Introduction

Native Hawaiian culture is central to Hawaiʻi's hospitality identity, yet Native Hawaiians remain underrepresented in management and executive roles, facing disparities in advancement and earnings (DBEDT, 2025). Native Hawaiian hospitality workers hold 6.6% of managerial positions despite comprising over 20% of the industry workforce (DBEDT, 2025). This study explores (RQ1) what perceived barriers constrain Native Hawaiian advancement to senior roles and (RQ2) what strategies and best practices enable upward mobility. Guided by role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), the research examines how Western corporate norms may undervalue Indigenous leadership styles grounded in community and collective responsibility. Comparative perspectives, such as the "bamboo ceiling" and "Black ceiling," help determine whether these disparities are unique to Hawaiʻi or reflect broader systemic inequities in hospitality.

Methods

An exploratory qualitative design using semi-structured interviews will identify perceived barriers and enabling practices among Native Hawaiian professionals in Hawaiʻi's hospitality sector. Participants will include upper-level leaders (e.g., general managers, directors, executives) and middle-level managers or supervisors across the major Hawaiian islands: Oʻahu, Maui, Hawaiʻi Island, and Kauaʻi. Eligibility requires self-identifying as Native Hawaiian and a minimum of three years of hospitality experience, as prior research shows employees typically expect promotion after about 3.67 years (Ngan & Vong, 2018). Interviews will be conducted in person on Oʻahu and via Zoom for participants on neighboring islands to ensure equitable access and confidentiality when discussing career experiences.

The interview protocol applies career-timeline mapping logic to guide questions about participants' entry into the hospitality industry, promotion stalls, mentorship or sponsorship experiences, and encounters with external hires. Adapted from qualitative timeline-mapping methods (Kolar et al., 2015), this approach encourages reflection on key turning points while maintaining a natural narrative flow. Interview data will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns in barriers, enabling factors, and recommendations for equitable career mobility.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Preliminary findings suggest that barriers can be both generic to the industry (i.e., tokenism, role incongruity), and Hawaiʻi-specific (i.e., limited internal mobility, reliance on external hires, and undervaluation of culturally grounded leadership). Anticipated best practices include mentorship, transparent promotion criteria, and culturally responsive leadership development.

The study extends leadership diversity and glass ceiling literature through an Indigenous, Hawaiʻi-based perspective. Addressing these barriers can help employers strengthen recruitment, retention, and advancement of Native Hawaiian professionals—enhancing authenticity, representation, and cultural stewardship across Hawaiʻi's hospitality industry.

References available upon request

WHICH CULTURE MATTERS? CULTURAL DISTANCE AND THE APPRAISAL OF WORK DEMANDS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

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Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry depends on a globally mobile workforce (Choe & Lugosi, 2022). Immigrant employees are crucial for service delivery, yet they encounter unique challenges as they adapt to new languages, norms, and workplace expectations (Lee et al., 2024). This acculturative stress—a psychological strain—has been shown to decrease well-being (He & Hao, 2022). Importantly, stress is not always negative; the way individuals perceive demands, as either challenges or hindrances, influences whether stress harms or supports their well-being (Pindek et al., 2024).

While acculturative stress and its appraisal have been widely explored, the impact of national culture distance between employees' home and host countries has received less attention (Akhimien & Adekunle, 2023; Schmitz & Schmitz, 2022). National culture, through deeply held norms and values, shapes how individuals interpret their environment (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023). Greater cultural distance can intensify acculturative stress and shift appraisals toward viewing identical demands as hindrances rather than challenges.

This study proposes that dimension-specific cultural distance, rather than aggregate indices, best explains how immigrant hospitality workers perceive acculturative stress (Akhimien & Adekunle, 2023). We focus on uncertainty avoidance (UA), power distance (PD), and individualism–collectivism (IDV), as these dimensions map onto appraisal mechanisms: UA influences primary appraisal under ambiguity (threat vs. manageability), while PD and IDV shape secondary appraisal by affecting perceived control, voice, and coping. Masculinity–femininity is excluded due to mixed replication and workplace construct ambiguity. Long- and short-term orientations are out of scope, as our emphasis is on immediate appraisals rather than those with a time horizon.

Methods

The study population consists of immigrant frontline employees in the U.S. hospitality sector, encompassing hotels, restaurants, and tourism services. This group offers an ideal context, as these workers engage in daily cultural interactions and represent a variety of home cultures. Structural equation modeling (SEM) will be utilized to test the hypothesized relationships. Challenge and hindrance appraisals will serve as parallel mediators between acculturative stress and well-being. Dimension-specific cultural distances will be included as moderators of appraisal.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Theoretically, this study clarifies how different types of cultural distance affect the stress process: Uncertainty Avoidance (UA) distance tends to bias primary appraisal toward perceiving situations as hindrances. In contrast, Power Distance (PD) and Individualism/Collectivism (IDV) distances shape secondary appraisal by influencing perceived resources. In practice, the findings can inform targeted interventions in the hospitality industry, such as providing structured procedures and clear goals for individuals from high-UA cultures, promoting empowerment and credible channels for employees from high-PD cultures, and ensuring accessible language and proactive social support for those with collectivist backgrounds who might otherwise avoid seeking help. These measures are likely to reduce negative appraisals and enhance both employee well-being and service quality.

BEYOND PAY AND POLICY: THE EMOTIONAL CONTAGION THAT DRIVES HOSPITALITY WORK

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Introduction

The hospitality industry operates as an emotional ecosystem where service extends beyond transactions into deep interpersonal connections among employees. While previous research has emphasized how employee emotions influence customers, little is known about how emotions circulate among coworkers within the organization. This study focuses on the internal emotional dynamics of restaurant settings, particularly peer emotional contagion the automatic spread of emotions from one employee to another and how it shapes job satisfaction, perceived performance, and turnover intentions. Guided by Emotional Contagion Theory (Hatfield et al., 1994) and Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), this research positions job satisfaction as the emotional bridge that connects shared affective experiences to work outcomes. The study also introduces emotional intelligence (EI) and perceived organizational support (POS) as moderators that either buffer or amplify the influence of emotional contagion. This work aims to expand the understanding of emotional processes among peers, moving beyond the employee–customer lens to reveal the internal affective mechanisms that shape organizational well-being.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. Data will be collected through a structured survey distributed to restaurant employees working a minimum of twenty hours per month. The survey will include validated scales measuring emotional contagion, job satisfaction, emotional intelligence, perceived organizational support, perceived performance, and turnover intentions. The proposed model consists of eleven hypotheses examining direct, mediating, and moderating effects among these constructs. Data analysis will be conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which enables simultaneous testing of multiple relationships and estimation of indirect effects. SEM is particularly suitable for this research because it allows exploration of both emotional and behavioral pathways, providing a comprehensive understanding of how emotions travel among peers and influence job-related outcomes.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Although the study is ongoing, it is expected that positive emotional contagion will enhance job satisfaction and perceived performance, while negative emotional contagion will diminish satisfaction and increase turnover intentions. Furthermore, employees who possess high emotional intelligence or perceive greater organizational support are expected to demonstrate resilience against the negative effects of emotional contagion. These findings are anticipated to reveal that emotional contagion is not only an interpersonal phenomenon but also a strategic element influencing motivation, performance, and retention. Theoretically, the study contributes to expanding Affective Events Theory and Emotional Contagion Theory within hospitality contexts by addressing peer-to-peer emotional influence. Practically, it offers insights for managers to foster emotionally intelligent workplaces that safeguard service employees from negative affective spillover while amplifying positive emotional exchanges that nurture satisfaction and performance. In essence, this study underscores that emotions are not peripheral to hospitality they are the pulse that drives its people, its service, and its sustainability.

References available upon request.

LEADING THE SHIFT: HOW LEADERSHIP STYLES INFLUENCE HOTEL EMPLOYEES' AI ADOPTION AND BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is transforming through artificial intelligence (AI) integration in operations and service delivery (Ivanov & Webster, 2019). While AI enhances efficiency and personalization, employee readiness and engagement are critical for successful adoption (Noe et al., 2014). Concerns about job displacement often create resistance (Liu & Cheng, 2025). Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping employee attitudes and influencing behavioral outcomes such as service performance and retention (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Few studies have examined how leadership styles; transformational, transactional, servant, and adaptive affect employees' AI readiness and engagement. This study explores these relationships in hotel settings, offering insights for leaders to guide AI-driven transformation effectively.

Methods

A mixed-methods design will integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches. Semi-structured interviews with hotel managers and employees will explore how leadership behaviors influence readiness and engagement with AI technologies. Thematic analysis will identify mechanisms and contextual factors. A subsequent survey across multiple hotels will test these relationships using structural equation modeling (SEM), examining how leadership styles affect AI readiness, engagement, and behavioral outcomes while accounting for moderating variables such as job type and tenure.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is expected that transformational and adaptive leadership will foster greater readiness, engagement, and performance through innovation and resilience. Servant leadership may reduce resistance by emphasizing employee development, while transactional leadership may secure compliance but offer limited motivation. Findings will guide hotel managers in selecting effective leadership practices to support AI adoption and workforce development. Academically, this study advances understanding of leadership's role in technological change within service-oriented industries.

References are available upon request.

JOB DEMANDS, RESOURCES, AND BURNOUT IN THE CONVENTION EVENTS INDUSTRY: A WORK IN PROGRESS STUDY

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Introduction

The convention and events industry are a vital component of the hospitality and tourism sector, providing substantial economic benefits to destinations worldwide. However, the profession is often characterized by unpredictable workloads, client volatility, and long, irregular hours that can increase the risk of chronic stress and burnout. Event professionals must simultaneously manage logistical, emotional, and creative demands while maintaining service excellence.
Despite widespread recognition of these challenges, limited empirical research has applied the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework to this unique occupational setting.

The JD-R theory posits that high job demands, such as time pressure, workload, and emotional labor, lead to strain and burnout, whereas job resources, such as autonomy, feedback, and social support, foster motivation and buffer negative outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Although this framework has been widely validated in healthcare and general hospitality contexts, its relevance to convention event professionals remains underexplored. This study investigates how event-specific job demands contribute to burnout and whether job resources can mitigate these effects, extending the application of JD-R theory to a high-stress, yet under-researched, segment of the hospitality industry.

Methods

This study will employ quantitative survey method is a structured research approach that collects numerical data through standardized questionnaires to measure and analyze relationships among variables. The study will collect responses from 200 event planners. It enables statistical analysis and generalization of findings to a wider population, ensuring objectivity and reliability.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is anticipated that high job demands will be positively related to stress and burnout among convention event managers, while job resources will be negatively associated with burnout and positively linked to job performance. The moderation analysis is expected to show that resources buffer the impact of demands on burnout, indicating that managers with greater autonomy, coworker support, and feedback experience less burnout even under high-pressure conditions.

Theoretically, this study extends JD-R theory by incorporating event-specific variables into the health impairment and motivational pathways. Practically, the findings will guide organizational interventions that enhance the well-being and retention of event professionals.
Strategies such as leadership support, workload balance, and team-based resource sharing can improve resilience and reduce turnover in this economically significant sector. Understanding how job resources alleviate burnout is essential for sustaining the vitality of the convention events industry and ensuring long-term workforce stability.

References available upon request.

GREEN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING: THE MEDIATING ROLES OF GREEN MOTIVATION, GREEN WORK ENGAGEMENT, AND THRIVING AT WORK

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Introduction

Human activities across industries significantly contribute to ecological damage (Uslu et al., 2023). Among the sectors contributing significantly to ecological degradation, the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry stands out due to its extensive consumption of natural resources and rapid global expansion (Suleman et al., 2025). According to World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2025), the H&T sector is projected to contribute a record-breaking $11.7 trillion to global GDP in 2025, accounting for 10.3% of the total. This marks an all-time high, with international visitors spending expected to reach $2.1 trillion, surpassing the pre-pandemic level and prior record of $1.9 trillion in 2019. Moreover, employment in the sector is forecasted to support 371 million jobs worldwide, adding 14 million more compared to previous years (WTTC, 2025).

This strong growth has created major ecological challenges, especially in the hotels where everyday operations consume large amounts of energy, water and other resources, often leading to waste (Filimonau et al., 2024). These pressures have triggered a sustainability pivot in hospitality firms (Munawar et al., 2022). While industry grapples with sustainability, it simultaneously faces internal challenges related to employee well-being where long hours under stressful conditions can undermine employees physical and psychological health (He et al., 2019). Thus, firms have turned toward green HRM, to integrate ecological practices into HR policies (Renwick et al., 2013).

Although previous studies confirm the role of green HRM in promoting pro-environmental behavior and performance (Shahzad et al., 2025), yet its impact on employee well-being remained less explored, specifically in the US context. Despite increasing importance of green HRM, there is limited research on how these green practices affect employee well-being (Dumont et al., 2017). In this study, we test a mediation model linking green HRM to employee well-being through green motivation, green work engagement and thriving at work, integrating the socially embedded model of thriving and resource-based-view theoretical framework with support theories.

Methods

This is a "Work-In-Progress" quantitative study. We will adopt an online survey design, targeting full-time hospitality employees in hotels across the USA.

To ensure sample validity, participants must work in hospitality sector, having at least six months of tenure in operational or service roles. Screening questions will confirm eligibility, and a structured questionnaire will include validated scales. A sample size of (300-400) employees are targeted, using a five-point Likert scale. Data will be analyzed via PLS-SEM, suitable for complex models with modest sample sizes (Ali Memon et al., 2021).

Results/Discussion/Implication

The expected results will be discussed and included after data collection and analysis. The findings are expected to show that green HRM positively affects employee well-being directly & indirectly through green motivation, green work engagement, and thriving at work. This study will contribute to extant literature by extending green HRM outcomes beyond environmental and performance, to employee well-being, which is an underexplored area in the hospitality sector.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION BEHAVIOR IN SHAPING SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP STYLES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HOTEL, RESTAURANT, AND CLUB MANAGERS

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Introduction

Hospitality is commonly referred to as people's business (Dlamini et al., 2017).
Therefore, leadership is the single most important factor in every sector of hospitality to run a successful business while creating a memorable experience for the customers or guests and the employees(Carter & Baghurst, 2013).In hospitality industry generalizing the common factors for longer-lasting leadership success is challenging because of the diverse nature of niches within the sector such as hotel management, restaurant, club management etc. (Testa, 2006; Carter & Baghurst, 2013). It is widely argued that leaders are born, they cannot be made. However, the researchers found that awareness about the skills set needed to be successful and intentional development has positive impact on leadership style (Dlamini et al., 2017). information about nature of the business and the well-defined skillset it requires can make that person successful (Carter & Baghurst, 2013).

Theory of transformational leadership affects transparency regarding interaction, purpose information, and clarity about roles, which affects views on how satisfied employees are towards the manager and the effectiveness of the leader (Tracey & Hinkin, 1996). Theory of situational leadership provides paradigm for successful leadership, ranging from interpersonal communication methods to situational approaches (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2014). These theories will support the research with defining the leadership style and its impact on organizational success.

Methods

A survey based quantitative study will be conducted among managers from hotel, restaurant and clubs, after that multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and structured equation model (SEM) to examine the underling factors of their leadership style and the managers information behavior on successful managerial performance using comparative analysis of successful leadership style among three different fields of hospitality industry aiming to identify exclusive and inclusive leadership traits with business nature. The research aims to find out the following answers by designing appropriate instruments and methods of analysis: 1) What are the common managerial styles across hotel, restaurant and club industry for a successful leader in those fields and what are the industry specific traits an efficient leader needs to focus on? 2) At what level does information technology adoption affect successful leadership in the hospitality industry? 3) Is there any generational impact information behavior on the employee and new leaders that can re shape the success factors in the hospitality industry?

Implication

The novelty of the research is the comparative approach to find successful leadership style across various fields within hospitality industry. While focusing on field specific managerial styles among hotel, restaurant and club management, allows to dive deep into the different nature of the business based on the customer's needs. The opportunity to deep dive into the differences of the managerial style will allow research to find an efficient management style in cross-industries which will widen the knowledge of the successful styles of leadership. Also, the findings will allow us to generalize the successful style of leadership in people centric service industry.

EXPLORING STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON CULINARY COMPETENCIES IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION: A SURVEY STUDY IN FLORIDA

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Introduction

Florida's hospitality industry employs thousands and generates billions annually, with culinary professionals central to service quality and innovation. Traditional education emphasized technical proficiency, but current demands extend to managerial, entrepreneurial, sustainable, and digital skills (Hegarty, 2005; Ottenbacher et al., 2009). Although organizations such as the ACF and Worldchefs outline competency frameworks, many underrepresent technological literacy and innovation (Minor, 2024). This study explores how students, educators, and industry professionals perceive the importance of these competencies to guide curriculum design and workforce readiness.

Methods

A quantitative cross-sectional survey will collect data from Florida culinary students, educators, and professionals using purposive sampling through associations and institutions. An online Qualtrics questionnaire will assess six domains—technical, managerial, creativity/innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and digital/technological based on established models (Horng & Lee, 2009; Testa & Sipe, 2012). Responses will use a five-point Likert scale. Data will be analyzed through descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, and ANOVA/MANOVA. Importance–Performance Analysis (Martilla & James, 1977) will identify gaps between perceived importance and curricular emphasis.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Technical and managerial competencies are expected to rank highest, while technology and sustainability may be rated highly but underrepresented in curricula. Industry professionals may emphasize management and digital fluency, educators technical skills, and students creativity and entrepreneurship. Findings will inform curriculum updates, strengthen education–industry alignment, and support workforce development in Florida's hospitality sector. This research contributes a replicable model for evaluating competencies and advancing digitally integrated, sustainability-oriented culinary education.

References are available upon request.

BRIDGING GENERATIONS: DOES DELPHI TECHNIQUE HOLD THE KEY FOR REVERSE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER?

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is rapidly evolving with technological advancements and the growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) across operations. The entry of Generation Z employees, who are digitally fluent and innovative-oriented, introduces new workplace dynamics and learning opportunities (Goh & Lee, 2017). These shifts highlight the potential for reverse knowledge transfer (RKT), where junior employees contribute contemporary knowledge in digital tools, AI, and social media to senior staff. However, entrenched hierarchies and limited organizational mechanisms often restrict such upward learning (Carpenter et al., 2023). This study aims to identify structured approaches that enable hospitality organizations to capture and utilize juniors' insights to enhance learning, adaptability, and strategic decision-making.

Methods

Two complementary mechanisms are examined: Reverse Training (RT) and Structured Insight Collection (SIC).

An experimental design will be implemented in a partnering hotel, involving about 30 professionals evenly split between junior (under 25) and senior (over 50) employees. For RT, three delivery modes will be compared: (1) shadowing, (2) junior-led workshops, and (3) digital tutorials. Surveys will assess knowledge transfer effectiveness across five dimensions: engagement, seniors' acceptance, juniors' confidence, ease of implementation, and knowledge gained (LaRocca et al., 2012; Ardichvili, 2008) using 5-point Likert scales.

For SIC, the Delphi Method (DM) (Hsu & Sandford, 2007) will be compared with traditional feedback loops using an Importance–Performance Analysis (IPA). Mean attribute scores will determine each variable's placement on the matrix, allowing visual comparison of both methods' strengths. Additional dimensions such as clarity and interactivity will be analyzed to determine their effect on knowledge sharing and insight generation.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The research anticipates that RKT effectiveness will depend on both method and context. Junior-led workshops and DM are expected to enhance engagement, confidence, and creativity by reducing hierarchical pressure and enabling open dialogue. Integrating RT and DM may yield a scalable framework for two-way learning, allowing organizations to leverage juniors' technological and adaptive expertise while maintaining senior employees' experiential knowledge. The study's outcomes are expected to contribute to intergenerational learning and guide hospitality leaders in fostering inclusive, knowledge-driven cultures that enhance innovation and workforce agility.

RE-HUMANIZING THE FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES: THE EFFECT OF FUN ACTIVITIES ON SELF-OBJECTIFICATION AT WORK

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Introduction

Self-objectification is viewing oneself as instrument-like rather than fully human, with denied humanness and reduced attribution of mental states (Baldissarri & Andrighetto, 2021). In hospitality, repetitive and other-directed work often leads frontline employees to internalize mechanistic roles (Gip et al., 2023), which could result in burnout, disengagement, and turnover (Belmi & Schroeder, 2021). Although reducing self-objectification is vital for employee well-being and service sustainability, research on how to prevent it remains limited.

Drawing on Interaction Ritual Chains (IRC) theory (Collins, 2004), this study proposes that fun activities, which promote socializing among employees, enjoyment, leisure, and play (Becker & Tews, 2016), can generate emotional energy to reduce self-objectification. Emotional energy is a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action (Collin, 2014). In fun activities which are IRs, frontline employees could experience collective effervescence and generate emotional energy, allowing them to experience themselves as human with emotions, agency, capable of autonomous action, and feel socially recognized by the collective (Collins, 2014), rather than merely objectified tools for completing organizational tasks. As a result, fun activities could reduce self-objectification by increasing emotional energy. However, not all fun activities are equally effective. Manager-initiated fun may appear forced or hierarchical, while self/peer-initiated fun may promote authentic emotions (Fleming, 2005; Celestine & Yeo, 2021). In stratified rituals, higher-status participants earn more emotional energy, while lower-status participants in controlled rituals may experience depleted emotional energy, leading to feelings of depression, alienation, and demotivation (Collins, 2014).

Thus, this research further investigates whether the impact of manager-initiated fun activities on emotional energy differs from self/peer-initiated fun activities.

Methods

This research will include two quantitative studies: (1) Study 1 will employ a three-wave survey (two-week intervals) among 500 hospitality employees to test the relationships among fun activities (T1), emotional energy (T2), and self-objectification (T3) using structural equation modeling; (2) Study 2 will use an experiment where participants are randomly assigned to manager-initiated or peer-initiated fun conditions to test differences in emotional energy.

Expected Results/Discussion/Implication

Fun activities will reduce self-objectification by increasing emotional energy, and peer-initiated fun activities will yield higher emotional energy than manager-initiated fun activities.

Theoretically, this research extends the self-objectification literature by identifying fun activities as a mitigating factor and advances IRC theory by positioning emotional energy as the mediating mechanism that links fun activities to self-objectification.

Practically, findings will guide hospitality organizations in designing authentic, employee-driven fun activities to reduce self-objectification among frontline employees, thus enhancing well-being, motivation, and retention.

GENERATIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD AI RECRUITMENT: NAVIGATING THE HUMAN-DIGITAL BALANCE IN HOSPITALITY

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is rapidly adopting AI-powered recruitment tools, challenging its traditional foundation of human connection and personalized service (Acikgoz et al., 2020; Langer et al., 2020). As organizations seek efficiency and objectivity through automation, concerns arise about the impact on candidate experiences and employer brand authenticity, especially given the sector's reliance on people-centric values (Marinakou et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023). Moreover, generational differences shape responses to technology adoption, underscoring the importance of understanding diverse attitudes for effective talent acquisition (Calvo-Porral & Pesqueira-Sanchez, 2020).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative narrative inquiry approach using reflexive thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with hospitality job seekers from Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X. Participants will be purposively sampled to reflect varying levels of technology familiarity and prior exposure to AI-driven recruitment (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Interview topics will include emotional responses, fairness perceptions, and suggestions for improving human-AI balance. Data analysis will follow a six-phase thematic approach, complemented by the critical incident technique for identifying moments of dehumanization or positive engagement (Flanagan, 1954).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Expected findings include generationally distinct attitudes toward AI recruitment. Gen Z is anticipated to value digital efficiency, Millennials may prefer flexible tech-human integration, and Gen X is likely to stress transparency and interpersonal connection (Calvo-Porral & Pesqueira-Sanchez, 2020; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000). The analysis is also expected to reveal universal themes of procedural justice and candidate trust, extending these theories into AI-enabled talent acquisition. Findings will inform practical strategies for hospitality employers to balance technological efficiency with human-centered values, guiding future recruitment design and employer branding. The qualitative study will lay the foundation for a subsequent quantitative phase testing emergent relationships on a larger scale (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

References available upon request.

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE EFFECT – A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF CAREER LONGEVITY AMONG HOSPITALITY DEGREE HOLDERS

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Introduction

With talent retention a persistent challenge in the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry (Chang & Busser, 2020; Haldorai et al., 2019) empirically assessing if tertiary educational experiences lead to long-term retention is a critical area of inquiry. This study proposes that career development programs (CDPs) play a key moderating role in the relationship between tertiary educational experiences and long-term commitment to the H&T industry. There is a lack of theoretically grounded models for assessing the mechanism through which they influence retention intentions (Gong & Jia, 2022). Addressing this gap, the present study draws on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), in keeping with calls from the scholarly community (Akosa et al., 2025; Krishnan & Rathakrishnan, 2025), to examine the moderating effect of career development programs within the career interest-retention relationship. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:
RQ1: What is the relationship between hospitality graduates' educational experiences and their intention to remain in the industry?
RQ2: How do career development programs influence the relationship between educational quality and retention intentions?

Methods

The target population includes U.S. citizens who graduated between 2018 to 2025 from U.S. four-year bachelor's and master's programs in hospitality, tourism, events, culinary arts and related fields. Participants must be employed for at least six months with current employer. Target sample size is 300-400 respondents to ensure adequate power for planned analyses (Hair et al., 2019). This study proposes a 2-phase sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017):

- Phase 1: Quantitative – An online survey will be distributed through university alumni databases. Data will be analyzed using structural equation modeling to test the proposed TPB model (Byrne, 2016).
- Phase 2: Qualitative – Follow-up semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 15-20 survey respondents representing diverse career trajectories. Interviews will explore the decision-making processes underlying TPB relationships. Data will undergo thematic analysis to identify patterns in career decision-making processes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Under the lens of the TPB it is anticipated that CDPs will significantly strengthen the relationship between educational experiences at the tertiary level and long-term retention in the hospitality and tourism industry. This study will inform evidence-based retention strategies for hospitality education programs. Further, results will provide actionable insights for industry stakeholders seeking to improve workforce retention.

References are available upon request

THE COST OF FALSE GREEN: LINKING GREENWASHING TO TURNOVER INTENTION IN HOSPITALITY THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

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Introduction

76% of hospitality staff are more likely to stay with employers that impact the environment positively (Peach, 2024). As sustainability becomes a fundamental principle of corporate identity, the hospitality industry faces a critical challenge: a growing disconnect between advertised 'green' initiatives and actual practice. Greenwashing, where organizations exaggerate or misrepresent their environmental efforts, has been widely studied for its effects on consumers, yet its impact on employees remains underexplored (Santos et al., 2025). This study investigates the impact of perceived greenwashing on turnover intention among employees in the hospitality industry. Perceived greenwashing occurs when employees detect discrepancies between an organization’s environmental claims and its actual practices (Xiang et al., 2024), potentially fostering perceptions of hypocrisy (Robertson et al., 2023). Such perceptions may disengage employees from pro-environmental behaviors, including employee green behavior, actions contributing to sustainability (Tao et al., 2024), and organizational citizenship behavior for the environment, which are discretionary efforts to enhance environmental performance (Li et al., 2022), increasing their desire to leave the organization (Srivastava et al., 2024).

This research also examines the moderating role of environmental values (Li et al., 2022), suggesting that employees with stronger eco-conscious beliefs may feel more deceived by greenwashing, amplifying turnover intention. By focusing on the hospitality industry, this study fills a critical gap (Santos et al., 2025), shifting attention from consumers to organizations.

Proposed methodology

This study will employ a sequential mixed-methods approach to investigate the relationship between greenwashing, turnover intention, and employee well-being in the hospitality industry. A quantitative online survey will be distributed through Prolific to 350 hotel employees from different hotel chains in the first phase. This survey will utilize validated scales from existing literature to measure the study's key variables. This relationship will be examined using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

In the second phase, a qualitative component will be integrated through interviews with a subset of the survey participants. The interviews will be used to validate quantitative findings, provide rich insights (Creswell, 2007) and explore the nuanced experiences of employees. The final stage will involve integrating both quantitative and qualitative data.

Expected findings:

The expected findings of this study suggest that employees will stay longer with eco-friendly companies. Sustainability practices will improve employer branding and attract talent.
Additionally, the importance of authentic sustainability practices in fostering employee engagement in environmental initiatives will be highlighted, and companies’ ethical credibility will be linked to workforce stability.

DIFFUSION OF REGENERATIVE AGRITOURISM EXPERIENCES THROUGH THE CO-CREATION PROCESS

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Introduction

Regenerative tourism has been gaining momentum as a transformational approach to enhance the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic well-being of destinations (Bellato et al., 2023). Scholars advocate for recognizing its foundations in other fields, such as regenerative agriculture and integrating regenerative agritourism (Addinsall et al. 2024). Despite this growing interest, the adoption of regenerative agritourism remains limited. Barriers such as a lack of awareness about the concept and uncertainty about where to find regenerative experiences (Hajarrahmah et al. 2024) contribute to this challenge.

This study seeks to bridge that gap by examining how regenerative agritourism is diffused among visitors. Specifically, this study explores the role of co-creation in the diffusion and adoption of regenerative agritourism. The central research questions guiding this study are:
(1) How are regenerative agritourism experiences designed, diffused, and adopted among visitors? and (2) In what ways does co-creation contribute to the success of regenerative agritourism experiences?

Methods

A multi-method qualitative approach was employed. This involved using multiple qualitative data collection and analysis techniques within a single study.

The research unfolded in two primary phases: (1) an initial review and ten on-site field visits to regenerative farm tours, and (2) a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews via Zoom, phone, or in-person with 73 key stakeholders, including 34 regenerative farmers providing agritourism, 30 visitors participating in regenerative agritourism, and 9 supporting organizations.

Results/Discussion/Implication

There are five stages in the diffusion of regenerative agritourism that we identified in this study, adapted from Diffusion of Innovation and value co-creation theory: knowledge, persuasion, decision and implementation, post-experience integration, and institutionalization of regenerative practices. The co-creation and iterative feedback loops also occur throughout the process.

Theoretically, this research advances a more nuanced understanding of the Diffusion of Innovation theory within the context of regenerative agritourism by integrating the concept of value co-creation. This approach reconceptualizes innovation as a dynamic, iterative process driven by multiple actors rather than a linear, top-down transfer of knowledge. In particular, it challenges the traditional view of visitors as passive recipients, instead positioning them as co-creators and active participants in shaping regenerative tourism experiences.

Practically, this study provides recommendations for designing compelling agritourism experiences that align with visitor needs while remaining fun and impactful. Farmers can demonstrate regenerative practices through storytelling and add multisensory experiences that include hands-on farm activities (e.g., foraging plants and tastings of farm-grown food). For DMOs, the focus is on orchestration: facilitating collaboration among diverse stakeholders; providing grants that reward regenerative agritourism; co-creating a visitor stewardship program with the community; and developing a regional Regenerative Agritourism Trail.

FROM PERFORMATIVE TO TRANSFORMATIVE: HOW DEI MESSAGING SHAPES PERCEIVED AUTHENTICITY AND BRAND ATTRACTIVENESS IN HOSPITALITY

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Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) communications are attraction signals that candidates use to assess firms (Spence, 1973). Applicants scan available cues for values fit and credibility and are distrusting of “diversity washing” (Gillberg, 2024). Perceived authenticity, alignment of message and action, predicts favorable evaluations (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014), and mismatches trigger skepticism and lower evaluations (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Keilmann & Koch, 2023; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). This study adapts the Brands Approaches to Diversity Typologies (BADT) framework, defined by entry-timing (early/late, and depth of commitment (surface/deeper), yielding Passive, Transformative, Performativem, and Adaptive conditions (Burgess et al., 2022) to examine DEI messaging in a hospitality talent context. Because hospitality applicants currently skew heavily Gen Z and Millennial, and these age cohorts place greater weight on fairness, inclusion, and values to practice alignment, they are expected to be more attuned to authentic signals in employer messages.

Hypotheses

H1 (Depth). Deeper (policy embedded) DEI messages will increase perceived authenticity more than surface messages, holding timing constant.
H2 (Timing). Early entry will increase perceived authenticity more than late entry, holding depth constant.
H3 (BADT rank order). Transformative > Adaptive > Passive > Performative on perceived authenticity and on employer attractiveness.
H4 (Mediation). BADT effects on employer attractiveness occur indirectly via perceived authenticity.

Methods

This study will utilize a 2x2 vignette experiment targeting Retail, Hospitality, & Tourism college seniors (N=400) crossing Entry Timing (early vs. late) and Depth/Commitment (surface vs. deeper), operationalizing the four BADT typologies (Burgess et al., 2022) and measuring Perceived Authenticity (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014) and Brand Attractiveness (Highhouse et al., 2003).

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study contributes to the literature through adapting the BADT framework to the hospitality attraction context, linking message strategy to talent outcomes (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013) and address calls for employee-focused DEI evidence (Im et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2025).

Findings can shed light on whether a depth-first strategy, with specific, implemented policies, resonates more with Gen Z/Millennial candidates than generic value statements. Results can help recruiters and organizations decide what to highlight in employer-brand materials and campus outreach, and whether early entry offers an edge or if late adopters can close the authenticity gap through their actions.

WHEN DIVERSITY HURTS: THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED DIVERSITY AND INTERPERSONAL STRESS IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Introduction

The hospitality industry represents a unique psychosocial working environment where diverse individuals must collaborate to deliver exceptional guest experiences. Perceived diversity (PD)—the subjective judgment and categorization of others based on readily detectible attributes and group stereotypes that extend beyond cultural, ethnic, sex, or generational differences to include perceived dissimilarities in underlying attitudes, values, and beliefs (see Christensen and Muhr, 2018; Shemla, et. al., 2016)—plays a critical role in shaping workplace dynamics. Drawing from Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory (SIT), we consider how these dynamics often generate identity-based tensions in the workplace, where individuals experience feelings of exclusion or resentment based on how their differences are perceived by others, leading to boundary violations, mismatched expectations, and interpersonal stress at work (ISW).

While employee's perceptions of diversity have been studied across various fields including educational (e.g., Hentschel et al., 2013) and corporate settings (e.g., Christensen and Muhr, 2018), this study is among the first to examine how hotel employees—whose jobs inherently involve diverse interactions—perceive and respond to workplace diversity. This research further addresses the hotel industry's persistent retention challenges by examining how employee's perception of diversity influences voluntary turnover intentions (VTI) through stress management pathways rather than focusing on compensation, advancement opportunities, or job embeddedness.

Methods

This study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, combining survey-based quantitative methods with qualitative interviews. The quantitative survey will be built in Qualtrics and distributed by Prolific. Our target sample is comprised of current US hotel employees. Approximately 300 participants will be recruited. Collected data will be analyzed using PROCESS to test our hypotheses. Following this, 20 structured interviews will be conducted, and inquiries will be analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results/Discussion/Implication

We expect that PD will be positively associated with ISW, which in turn will be positively related to VTI, with ISW being the mediator. Additionally, stress-coping behaviors (SCB) are anticipated to moderate these relationships, with adaptive coping strategies weakening the connection between PD and ISW more than *maladaptive* strategies. Furthermore, this study addresses the call to operationalize the Job Demands and Resources model (JD-R) in more specific contexts (Balducci et al., 2011). Findings will inform stress-coping strategies that hospitality human resources managers can utilize to address psychosocial and psychological demands in diverse workplaces.

References are available upon request

SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP AND GHRM: DRIVERS OF MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOR AND WELL BEING IN CHAIN VS INDEPENDENT HOTELS

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Introduction

Global tourism generates about 6.5% of total greenhouse gas emissions, with hospitality contributing 3% and hotels alone responsible for 1% annually, underscoring the urgency for sustainable operations (WTTC,2023; Deloitte 2022). As a high-resource and labor-intensive sector, the hotel industry plays a vital role in achieving environmental goals through ethical leadership and strategic human resource management (Varma et al., 2025, Faraz et al., 2024). Employees' attitudes toward environmental issues and engagement are central to implementing green initiatives and attaining sustainability goals (Boiral, 2009; Zhang et al., 2014; Boiral et al., 2015). Guided by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and Attribution Theory (Kelley, 1973), this study examines motivational factors driving employee participation in green behavior. When intrinsically motivated, employees are more inclined to engage in pro-environmental behavior, experience greater well-being (Luu, 2018; Paillé et al., 2014), and strengthen their organizational commitment and loyalty (Akgunduz et al., 2023). Despite growing recognition of sustainable leadership and GHRM in hospitality, limited empirical attention has been given to the motivational mechanisms linking these constructs, particularly in chain and independent hotels. Addressing this gap, this study contributes to understanding how leadership and HR systems foster authentic environmental engagement and employee well -being recognizing that these dynamics may differ between chain and independent hotels due to variations in resources, structures and sustainability cultures. The following research questions will be examined:

1. How does sustainable executive leadership influence green HRM in hotel settings?
2. What aspects of GHRM practices affect employee motivations in hotels settings?
3. To what extent does employee motivation affect employee green behavior, and how does employee green behavior affect their well-being?
4. How do these proposed relationships vary between the chain and independent hotels?

Methods

This study employs a quantitative survey design targeting 500 hotel departmental managers in the U.S. Managers' contact information will be obtained via a database available through the American Hotel and Lodging Association. Approximately 5,000 surveys will be mailed with prepaid return envelopes (anticipated response rate: 10%). Measures include and adapt from executive green leadership (Wang et al. 2023); Green HRM (Tang et al. 2018); Harmonious environmental passion, green self-identity, and autonomous motivation (Tao 2024); Green employee behavior and employee well-being (Zhang et al. 2021). All measures will be assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The survey will also capture demographics, hotel size, and affiliation (chain vs. independent). Data will be coded in SPSS and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS.

Implications

Theoretically, the study is expected to enrich sustainability literature by linking sustainable leadership and GHRM with employee motivation and behavior through integrated theories. Practically, it will provide insights for hoteliers to implement suitable green strategies that enhance organizational sustainability, employee well-being and agility to shifting consumer demands.

References are available on request

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF WORK WITH SELECTIVE OPERATING HOURS

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Introduction

There has been tremendous effort and attention on the labor shortage in the hospitality industry in recent years. The current study explores one conduit to work-life balance – a company's operating hours.Operations determine their operating hours based on several factors including the menu and economics. Yet another reason is employer values. Servant leadership is one example of employer values which asks for the internal customer (employees) to be a major consideration in how one leads in their business (Parris & Peachey, 2013). A likely response to servant leadership can be a more committed staff. The operation that has employees that are engaged and committed to the organization can raise productivity and profits, and reduce their turnover (Juliantara et al., 2020). There is a knowledge gap regarding company value-based decisions. This study willevaluate businesses in the United States which consider employee implications in their selective operating hours decisions nd organizational identification, to assess the impact on employee organizational commitment.

Based on the theories applied, the following research questions have been formed for analysis:

- RQ1 - Will employees have a stronger organizational identity with food service organizations that have selective operating hours?
- RQ2 – Does role enrichment mediate a relationship between work/life balance and organizational commitment?
- RQ3 - Through examination of food service operations with selective operating hours, does this context influence employee attitudes of organizational (affective and continuance) commitment and job satisfaction?

Proposed Methods

Due to the introductory context of the study, the research questions will be explored through mixed methods. Data triangulation will be achieved through interviews with owners, managers, and employees. Two restaurants have been identified for case study with a search for additional restaurants to include in the study sample.

Expected Results/Implications

Expected results include restaurants with selective operating hours, will have staff who will have reported work/life balance. If the relationship exists, it is expected to positively influence organizational identity which will influence organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Additionally, role enrichment is expected to make connections between work-life balance and organizational commitment.

Aims include expansion of boundary conditions regarding organizational identity. The study can provide a new work/life balance measurement. Further, the current study introduces a new term differentiating value-based selective operating hours from economic/market-based decisions. Practically, implementation of selective operating hours can be an effective path to increased job satisfaction, helping to address the urgent issue of retention of hospitality labor.

Work-In-Progress:
IT Adoption & Application

TASTING THE FUTURE?: CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF AI-GENERATED BEER RECIPE

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Introduction

AI has been helping the brewing industry since the 1990s across a variety of applications such as process optimization, customer feedback analysis, and quality management (Schlechter, 2024). In recent years, since the release of generative AI applications such as ChatGPT, breweries have begun incorporating AI into more aspects of the brewing process. For instance, global beer brands such as Beck's or small craft breweries like Atwater Brewery are making beers using AI-generated recipes (Doering, 2023; Ting, 2025).

Recipe development represents a critical component of F&B production (Kim et al., 2025); however, the usage of AI in this process remains controversial (Bueno et al., 2024; Garcia, 2024). While a growing body of research has been found to investigate the application of generative AI in the food area, focusing on consumers' evaluations on AI-generated food recipes (e.g., Califano et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2025), the potential influence of this technology on brewery innovation and product development remains unknown to customers. To address this gap, our research aims to investigate how AI-generated beer recipes influence consumers' evaluations and behavioral intentions grounded in the stimulus-organism-reaction (SOR) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and how their evaluations are conditioned by perceived functional value in different contexts.

Methods

To test the proposed hypotheses, two between-subjects experiments were conducted. Study 1(N =100) compared consumer responses to beer recipes described as either AI-generated or brewer-generated. Building upon the findings, Study 2 will employ a 2 (AI recipe vs. Brewer Recipe) x 2 (Functional value: presence vs. absence) online experiment in a different consumption context to ensure generalizability and robustness of the findings. Participants were recruited through Prolific, with all the established measures adapted from prior literature. Age, gender, beer knowledge, and beer preference were included as controlling variables.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Study 1 indicated that a beer recipe attributed to an AI source (vs. a brewer) was significantly associated with a less favorable attitude and lower perceived quality, in turn, leading to a lowered purchase intention. For study 2, we expect a significant moderating role of perceived functional value in buffering the negative role of a beer recipe attributed to an AI source, thereby resulting in higher purchase intention.

The findings of this study will enrich the limited academic understanding of AI-generated recipes, offering new perspectives on consumer perception. Additionally, the results will provide valuable and timely input for the brewing industry, shedding light on effective strategies to promote AI-generated beer products.

References are available upon request

EMPOWERING DECISIONS: THE IMPACT OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY ON LODGING EMPLOYEES' DECISION CONFIDENCE AND WORK PERFORMANCE

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Introduction

In the hospitality industry, emerging technologies are being widely adopted and profoundly impacting employees' work conditions. They improve service quality and increase employee job satisfaction and morale (Kasavana, 1982). However, some technologies may have negative impacts on employees, including raising concerns about job insecurity (Im & Kim, 2022), growing psychological stress and health risks (Limna, 2023), and higher turnover rates, which undermine organizational competitiveness (Tian, 2024). Therefore, hotels should strike a balance between efficiency and employees' perceptions of technology appropriateness.

Appropriate Technology (AT) was first introduced by Schumacher (1973), emphasizing the enhancement of human productivity rather than manpower replacement. Due to its multidimensional nature, the role of AT varies across contexts (Tharakan, 2017). Past articles mostly tended to focus on assessing AT (Bauer & Brown, 2014; Sharif & Sundararajan, 1984) and its causal factors in agriculture (Date, 1984), economics (Patnaik & Tarei, 2022), healthcare (Brook et al., 1986), and technology (Khazanchi, 2005). However, there is scant literature exploring the AT in the lodging industry. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by conceptualizing AT in hospitality settings and exploring how AT affects lodging employees' self-efficacy and other outcomes, using task-technology fit theory. This theory states that individual performance improves when the characteristics of technology are well-matched to task requirements (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995). In detail, it proposes that (1) AT positively affects employees' self-efficacy; (H2) Self-efficacy positively affects employees' work performance; (H3) Self-efficacy positively affects employees' decision confidence.

Methods

This study will employ a survey method to explore proposed relationships, targeting 300-500 frontline hospitality employees who have used technology in their work over the past 12 months. After screening, participants will answer questions regarding AT, self-efficacy, decision confidence, and employees' work performance (Babin & Boles, 1998; De Jone et al., 2006; Karatepe et al., 2006), which are measured on a 7-point Likert scale, and socio-demographic questions. PLS-SEM and SPSS will be used to test hypotheses.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The expected results show that AT has a positive impact on employees' self-efficacy, decision confidence, and work performance. This research provides new insights and fills the research gap on the concept of AT, exploring how it enables employees and the management team to make better decisions and enhance their work performance in the hospitality industry through the lens of TTF. Additionally, the results can help companies identify the importance of using AT and how to utilize technology effectively in the hospitality industry.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN LUXURY HOTELS: HYPERPERSONALIZATION, ECHO CHAMBERS, AND LOSS OF AUTONOMY

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Introduction

Luxury hotels have increasingly integrated artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as AI concierges, chatbots, and other Internet of Things (IoT) devices to enhance operational efficiency and guest experiences (Mishra et al., 2024). Integrating these features into luxury hotels yields hyper-personalization. Unlike traditional personalization, where hotels tailor services to individual guests, utilizing basic historical and demographic information (Baloglu & Bai, 2023), hyperpersonalization leverages both Artificial Intelligence (AI) and big data to deliver experiences tailored to each guest's preferences and current needs (Nira, 2025; Patil et al., 2025; Desai, 2022). The AI features achieve this by analyzing a large amount of guest data, including dining preferences and preferred activities, and providing hotels with the opportunity to predict guests' needs (Al-Hyari et al., 2023). While hyperpersonalization enhances efficiency and guest satisfaction, it creates echo chambers that reduce novelty and lead guests to feel overly influenced by algorithms, potentially limiting their sense of autonomy over time (Mathews et al., 2025; Lu, 2024).

Research on hyperpersonalization has addressed privacy, ethics, echo chambers, and autonomy in retail and tourism but remains limited in hospitality (Nira, 2025; Florido-Benitez, 2024). Guided by Psychological Reactance Theory (Clayton et al., 2019) and Autonomy Theory (Sankaran & Markopoulos, 2021), this study answers how AI-driven hyperpersonalization creates echo chambers and affects guest autonomy and satisfaction in luxury hotels. The model proposes that hyperpersonalization engenders echo chambers and reduces autonomy, increasing psychological reactance and lowering guest satisfaction.

Methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the impact of AI-driven hyper-personalization in luxury hotels. Phase 1 involves a quantitative survey of 300–400 guests who have experienced AI-driven personalization features. Constructs such as hyper-personalization, echo chambers, loss of autonomy, psychological reactance, and guest satisfaction will be measured using 7-point Likert scales adapted from established studies and analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 29. Phase 2 comprises semi-structured interviews with 15–20 luxury hotel managers in the USA, selected through purposive and snowball sampling. NVivo (Version 14) will be used for thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. Findings from both phases will be integrated to validate the model and provide strategic insights for balancing AI personalization with human interaction.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study extends hyperpersonalization research in luxury hospitality by empirically examining its links to echo chambers, loss of autonomy, psychological reactance, and satisfaction. Using a mixed-methods design, it integrates quantitative testing with qualitative insights from guests and managers. Findings will provide strategies to balance AI personalization with human interaction, preserve guest autonomy, and minimize echo chambers while enhancing guest experiences.

References are available upon request

GIS, GEOAI, AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS IN HOSPITALITY, TOURISM, AND RECREATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW (2016–2025)

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI) has transformed the way research is conducted in hospitality, tourism, and recreation. By enabling researchers to collect, integrate, and analyze georeferenced data, these technologies provide powerful tools for data-driven decision-making, forecasting, and spatially explicit management. With the rise of big data, machine learning, and location-based services, spatial analytics have expanded beyond traditional mapping to support tourism destination planning, hospitality operations, and recreation resource management.

However, existing studies remain fragmented and lack a cross-sector synthesis linking GIS and GeoAI applications to managerial and economic contexts. This study aims to fill this gap through a systematic literature review (SLR) of peer-reviewed research published between 2016 and 2025, offering a consolidated understanding of thematic trends, methodological progress, and future research directions. The study situates these developments within the broader framework of spatial intelligence and smart tourism ecosystems, emphasizing the growing role of artificial intelligence in evidence-based tourism management.

Methods

Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), a comprehensive literature search was conducted across 18 academic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and IEEE Xplore. The Boolean search string was defined as: (GIS OR GeoAI OR "spatial analysis") AND (tourism OR hospitality OR recreation) AND (business OR economic OR management). Publications were limited to English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles from January 2016 to June 2025.

After removing duplicates, screening abstracts, and conducting full-text reviews, 338 studies were identified for final analysis. Each article was coded for its methodological approach, research theme, and spatial scale. Data synthesis and screening were conducted using Covidence, ensuring transparency and reproducibility.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Three thematic areas emerged: (1) Nature-Based Tourism; (2) Hospitality Operations; and (3) Recreation and Community-Cultural Planning. From the analysis, seven dominant methodological categories were identified, including spatial pattern analysis, spatial econometrics, GWR/MGWR, PPGIS, MCDM and suitability analysis, geotagged data and GPS traces, and GeoAI-driven intelligent analytics. Collectively, these approaches reveal how spatial intelligence supports adaptive tourism governance and enhances predictive capabilities.

The review highlights notable research gaps, including limited integration of GeoAI in participatory contexts, underuse of advanced spatial econometrics, insufficient longitudinal analysis, and minimal attention to ethical considerations. The study underscores the potential of GIS and GeoAI to build spatially intelligent, resilient, and ethically grounded tourism systems.

SEEING BEFORE TASTING:

HOW AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) FOOD MENUS SHAPE DINING EXPERIENCES AND BEHAVIORS IN RESTAURANTS

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Introduction

Technological innovation is reshaping the hospitality industry, transforming how restaurants engage with guests. Augmented Reality (AR) food menus, among the most promising advancements, allow diners to visualize lifelike 3D representations of dishes, ingredients, and portions before ordering. These immersive tools enhance confidence, interactivity, and decision-making (Amin et al., 2023; Rajgopal et al., 2024). Grounded in Pine and Gilmore's (1999) Experience Economy framework, AR menus provide entertainment through novelty, education through nutritional detail, esthetics through vivid visualization, and escapism through digital immersion. However, few studies have empirically examined AR dining experiences using validated constructs. Prior research has focused mainly on engagement and brand image (Batat, 2021; Tom Dieck et al., 2024), overlooking behavioral outcomes like decision confidence, waste awareness, and sharing. This mixed-methods study evaluates how AR menu experiences influence satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and sustainability awareness.

Methods

A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine diners' experiences with AR food menus in restaurant settings. The quantitative phase, grounded in the Experience Economy framework, measures four experiential constructs including entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism using validated scales from Oh et al. (2007) and Ryu and Han (2010). Outcomes include satisfaction, revisit intention, and recommendation, analyzed through confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling using responses from about 250 diners. The qualitative phase follows with 30 semi-structured interviews and focus groups from survey participants, exploring perceptions of AR menus related to decision-making, portion awareness, sustainability, and social sharing. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will interpret and enrich quantitative findings, providing a holistic understanding of how AR menus influence diners' behavioral responses.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Preliminary expectations suggest education and esthetics will be the strongest predictors of satisfaction and recommendation intentions (Amin et al., 2023; Rajgopal et al., 2024), while entertainment and escapism enhance social sharing and novelty (Elshahawy et al., 2021). Qualitative findings are expected to reveal AR menus as decision-support tools that reduce uncertainty, promote sustainability awareness through portion visualization, and serve as marketing assets fostering emotional connection and brand differentiation (Batat, 2021). Theoretically, this study extends the Experience Economy framework into digital dining contexts, demonstrating how its constructs manifest within AR-mediated restaurant experiences. Practically, it offers restaurateurs a roadmap for implementing AR menus to enhance satisfaction, strengthen engagement, and sustainability, positioning AR menus as catalysts for immersive, educational, shareable dining experiences.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP IN ROBOTAXI USE: PATHWAYS TO LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT

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Introduction

Robotaxi is an innovative urban transportation mode that enhances urban mobility and expands tourism opportunities (Cohen & Hopkins, 2019). Despite their experiential promise, current research has mainly focused on initial acceptance among non-users, neglecting how actual users form enduring engagement intentions. Consequently, this study investigates users' sustained behavioral intentions: transition intention and tourism usage intention.

Developing consumer psychological ownership of robotaxis addresses how to enhance sustained engagement (Guo et al., 2025), but current knowledge remains limited regarding specific mechanisms to cultivate it. Following three classical pathways for fostering psychological ownership: (a) perceived control, (b) intimate knowing, and (c) self-investment, recent study failed to cultivate psychological ownership to robotaxi among non-users (Guo et al., 2025). Therefore, this study investigates pathways for eliciting psychological ownership of robotaxi.

Furthermore, consumers experiencing strong psychological ownership toward interactive technologies often engage in cognitive absorption, a state characterized by deep immersion and enjoyment (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Delgosha & Hajiheydari, 2021). Cognitive absorption offers greater explanatory power by highlighting intrinsic motivations like curiosity rather than extrinsic motivations. As such, this multidimensional framework enables a rich understanding of how users emotionally engage with robotaxi experience.

To comprehensively explore consumer experience with robotaxi, this study empirically examines how psychological ownership and cognitive absorption influence long-term intentions of adopting robotaxi.

Methods

This study adopts an exploratory mixed-methods approach. Study 1 employs online reviews to identify key themes related to psychological ownership and cognitive absorption, revealing new routes of psychological ownership and delineating multiple dimensions of cognitive absorption. Informed by study 1, study 2 then validates the emergent themes among robotaxi users.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The results confirmed that traditional routes can trigger psychological ownership in robotaxis and provided novel evidence highlighting interpersonal anonymity as a previously overlooked antecedent that enhances psychological ownership in shared autonomous vehicle contexts (Guo et al., 2025). Moreover, this study demonstrates that psychological ownership toward interactive technologies actively fulfills psychological needs, efficacy, self-identity, and belongingness (Karahanna et al., 2018), directly promoting cognitive engagement and sustained user involvement. This theoretical clarification suggests that ownership not only precedes but also dynamically reinforces immersive cognitive states over time.

References are available upon request

WEEKEND GETAWAY OR ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME JOURNEY? TRAVEL INVOLVEMENT AS A MODERATOR IN HUMAN VS. AI CONTENT ADOPTION

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT-style assistants) can auto-generate full itineraries, raising a core question of source trust: are AI plans as credible and adoptable as expert-crafted ones (Carvalho & Ivanov, 2024; Han et al., 2024)? Travelers often remain cautious about AI accuracy and bias, with broad surveys noting limited full trust and widespread verification behaviors (Seyfi et al., 2023; Meliana, 2025). By contrast, human or peer sources benefit from established credibility cues (Cheung et al., 2009). Drawing on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), we argue that trip involvement, stakes/importance, moderates source effects. High involvement should increase central processing and magnify any human-over-AI advantage; low involvement should shift evaluation toward convenience/heuristics, potentially shrinking or reversing that gap (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). We test: H1 human plans > AI plans on perceived reliability; H2 human plans > AI on adoption intention; H3 involvement (low vs. high) moderates these effects.

Methods

We conducted a 2×2 between-subjects experiment with online participants ($N \approx 80$; ~20/condition): Content Source (human-generated itinerary vs. AI-generated itinerary) × Trip Involvement (low weekend getaway vs. high once-in-a-lifetime trip). Participants read a standardized itinerary vignette; only the source label (professional travel consultant vs. ChatGPT-like assistant) and involvement scenario varied. Measures: trip involvement (semantic differentials; Zaichkowsky, 1985), perceived reliability (trustworthiness/accuracy; Gefen et al., 2003; Filieri, 2016), and adoption intention (use/recommend; Venkatesh et al., 2003). All Likert items used 1–7 scales. Stimuli text was held equivalent across source conditions to isolate labeling effects. We computed construct means and ran one-way ANOVAs as omnibus tests across the four cells, followed by Tukey HSD for planned pairwise comparisons; alpha = .05.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Manipulation check confirmed higher involvement ratings in the high-stakes scenarios ($F(3,76) = 4.44$, $p = .006$), validating the scenario design (Zaichkowsky, 1985). For perceived reliability, ANOVA indicated significant differences ($F(3,76) = 12.70$, $p < .001$). Contrary to H1, under low involvement the AI itinerary was rated more reliable than the human itinerary; under high involvement, human and AI were equally high and statistically indistinguishable. For adoption intention, ANOVA was significant ($F(3,76) = 26.75$, $p < .001$). High-stakes scenarios (both sources) produced substantially higher intentions than low-stakes scenarios; within low involvement, AI tended to exceed human, while within high involvement, AI and human did not differ. Thus, H1 and H2 were not supported; H3 was supported in directionality, involvement moderated source effects, but the pattern reversed expectations: the AI label did not suffer a penalty at low stakes and was competitive (or advantaged) there, while high-stakes decisions elevated both sources to parity through deeper content scrutiny (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

WHEN AND WHY CONCRETENESS ENHANCES PERSUASION IN AI CHATBOT COMMUNICATION: PROPOSING AND EXAMINING A MODERATED MEDIATION MECHANISM

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Introduction

Chatbots have become integral to service and marketing communication, yet their persuasiveness depends on how users perceive them. Prior research shows that concrete language generally increases trust and satisfaction, while abstract language can weaken persuasive impact. Drawing on construal level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), this study proposes that machine-like chatbots evoke greater psychological distance, prompting reliance on heuristics such as perceived accuracy and objectivity. Consequently, concrete information may appear more persuasive under machine-like perceptions but less so when chatbots are perceived as human-like. This research aims to clarify when and why concreteness enhances persuasion in AI communication by integrating construal-level and heuristic processing perspectives within hospitality contexts.

Methods

Two experimental studies examined the effects of message concreteness and AI perception on persuasion. Study 1 (N = 222) used a hotel recommendation scenario with participants randomly assigned to concrete versus abstract message conditions. Study 2 (N = 210) replicated the design in a restaurant recommendation context and added perceived objectivity as a mediator.

Participants evaluated the chatbot's persuasiveness and rated their perception of its human-likeness or machine-likeness. Both studies employed Hayes's PROCESS models (Model 1 and Model 8) to test moderation and moderated mediation effects.

Results/Discussion/Implications

Study 1 confirmed that concrete content increased persuasion ($b = .330$, $p < .05$), particularly when the chatbot was perceived as machine-like (interaction $b = –.015$, $p < .01$). Study 2 found similar patterns: concreteness enhanced persuasion at low levels of AI human-likeness, but this effect disappeared when the chatbot was seen as more human-like. Moreover, perceived objectivity mediated this effect—concreteness heightened objectivity and, consequently, persuasion only under machine-like perceptions (index of moderated mediation = –.007, 95% CI [–.014, –.001]). These findings demonstrate that linguistic cues in AI communication are not universally persuasive; their effectiveness depends on psychological framing shaped by AI perception. Theoretically, this study bridges construal-level and heuristic reasoning by showing that machine-like chatbots trigger representativeness-based expectations of accuracy, making concreteness a persuasive cue. Practically, designers should match chatbot language to its perceived humanness: when systems appear mechanical, concrete detail strengthens persuasion, whereas human-like agents can rely on more abstract or relational communication styles.

References are available upon request

CONGRUENCE OF MENU TYPEFACE AND CHEF ROBOTS ON CONSUMER ATTITUDES

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Introduction

The global hospitality robot market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 14.19% between 2023 and 2028, reaching $471.77 million (PR Newswire, 2024). Restaurants are increasingly adopting service robots in chef roles to improve efficiency and reduce labor costs. Prominent examples include Chipotle's "Chippy" robot for cooking and seasoning chips (Wasserman, 2023) and White Castle's "Flippy 2" robot for burger preparation (Canham-Clyne, 2022). However, consumers remain ambivalent toward robot-prepared food (BusinessWire, 2024), raising the question of how to encourage customers to accept service robots in these new roles. Because restaurants rely on tangible elements of the servicescape to enhance consumer responses, this research focuses on one of the first tangible cues in the dining experience—the menu. Menus are a primary communication tool in restaurants, and typeface conveys powerful symbolic meanings such as tradition, modernity, and technological sophistication (Childers & Jass, 2002). Drawing on congruency and processing-fluency lens (Alter and Oppenheimer, 2009), this study examines how menu typeface (traditional vs. futuristic) interacts with chef type (human vs. robot) to shape consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. I propose that chef robots heighten uncertainty due to novelty and increase consumers' reliance on congruent cues; therefore, congruency between menu typeface and chef type should be more diagnostic and impactful when the chef is a robot than when the chef is human.

Methods

A The study will be a 2 (chef type: robot vs. human) × 2 (menu typeface: futuristic vs. traditional) between-subjects experimental design. A total of 350 U.S. adults recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) will participate in the study. Participants will read an instruction to imagine themselves in a hypothetical scenario in which they intend to dine at a casual restaurant. While browsing through an online reservation platform, they encounter a restaurant named Bistro Kitchen (a fictitious restaurant). Chef type (robot vs. human) will be manipulated through pictorial stimuli featuring actual robotic chefs used in real-world restaurants (Bronic, 2023). Similarly, menu typeface will be manipulated by using specifically designed menu samples. Following scenarios, participants will complete their attitudes towards the menu (Schroll et al. (2018), capturing dimensions such as dislike/like, bad/good, and appealing/unappealing. Participants will also complete perceived congruency scale adapted from Lin and Mattila (2010). Perceived realism and other control variables will be measured.

Results/Discussion/Implication

We expect a significant two-way interaction between chef type and menu typeface. Specifically, participants in the robotic chef condition are expected to exhibit more positive consumer responses when the menu typeface is futuristic. In contrast, participants in the human chef condition are expected to show more positive responses when the menu typeface is traditional. The perceived congruency will mediate the impact of the menu typeface and chef type on consumer responses

CAN WE PLAN MEGA EVENTS USING AI?

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Introduction

Mega events such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, and the Hajj pilgrimage pose unique challenges due to their massive scale, logistical complexity, and societal impact. These events require coordination across infrastructure, security, transportation, and sustainability.
Traditional planning methods, often reactive and manual, struggle to address such dynamic, high-stakes conditions. Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal innovation, enabling predictive, real-time, and data-driven decision-making. Evidence from Paris 2024 shows how digital twins simulate venue layouts, optimize crowd flows, and reduce coordination costs (Intel, 2024). In the Hajj, AI applications have enhanced mobility management and health monitoring for millions of pilgrims (Khan & Shambour, 2025). This study investigates the transformative potential of AI in mega event management through a systematic synthesis of recent scholarship and real-world case studies.

Methods

This research adopts a two-phase design: a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines and a multiple case study analysis. The SLR draws from Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCO databases, focusing on peer-reviewed publications from 2019–2025.
Keywords include "mega event," "Olympics," "FIFA World Cup," and "Hajj" combined with "artificial intelligence," "planning," and "management." Twenty-five high-quality sources were selected and evaluated using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). The case studies analyze the Paris 2024 Olympics, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and the Hajj 2024–2025, emphasizing digital twins, real-time data analytics, and AI-based crowd forecasting to identify scalable applications, governance challenges, and ethical implications in event management.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings highlight four central outcomes: (1) predictive logistics that optimize transport and crowd movement, (2) generative content that automates scheduling and marketing, (3) real-time governance systems for health, safety, and sustainability, and (4) post-event learning through digital twin feedback loops. The study contributes theoretically by bridging event management and AI ethics and practically by offering evidence-based frameworks that improve operational efficiency, transparency, and managerial trust. By aligning technological innovation with ethical leadership and managerial trust, this study supports resilient mega events for future h

EXTENDING THE TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL FOR AI TRAINING: THE MODERATING ROLE OF DEHUMANIZATION IN HOSPITALITY

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is undergoing a significant technological shift, with artificial intelligence (AI) training platforms such as Strivr and Attensi now central to workforce development. These platforms offer immersive, scalable, and cost-effective training, yet employee acceptance is essential for successful implementation. Hospitality work traditionally relies on emotional labor and human connection, which technology-based systems may struggle to replicate. This tension underscores the challenge of balancing efficient AI-driven training with service culture values, especially when employees perceive such technologies as dehumanizing.

Methods

This study uses a cross-sectional survey targeting hotel employees who have completed AI-based training. Respondents are sourced via Amazon Mechanical Turk and screened for relevant experience. Measurement tools include Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) scales for technology acceptance, adapted 5-point Likert scales for training quality based on Kirkpatrick's framework, and dehumanization scales (both mechanistic and animalistic) from Caesens et al. (2017). Data analysis comprises confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling using SPSS and AMOS.

Results, Discussion, Implications

The study expects that specific training quality dimensions, content relevance, engagement, and practical application mainly shape perceived usefulness, while platform effectiveness and delivery/design most strongly affect perceived ease of use. Traditional TAM relationships should be maintained, with added explanatory power by including antecedents of quality training.
Perceived dehumanization is hypothesized to moderate these relationships, diminishing positive effects when employees feel less human. Moderation impacts may be greatest in engagement/interpersonal domains. The findings will have practical implications by demonstrating how organizations can design blended approaches (e.g., integrating human mentorship) to mediate dehumanization risks while leveraging AI efficiency. Theoretically, the study advances TAM by revealing critical boundaries in technology acceptance and by bridging the pedagogical and innovative literatures in hospitality settings.

References available upon request

THE AESTHETIC BIAS IN FOOD CONSUMPTION: TESTING STORYTELLING AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE EATING WITH 3D-PRINTED UGLY PRODUCE

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Introduction

As the global population grows, the demand for food increases, and so does food waste (Ahmadzade et al., 2024). This paradox is a significant challenge for achieving food security and sustainability (Pai et al., 2025). According to the 2024 Food Waste Index Report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), approximately 1.05 billion tons of food produced for humans were wasted in 2022 (UNEP, 204). While produce is among the most wasted types of food in the United States, a significant portion of this waste stems from the strict appearance standards (Madan et al., 2025). One promising solution to address these challenges within the U.S food service industry can be the application of 3D food printing technology, which enables transforming visually flawed produce into standardized and visually appealing food forms (Seo & Shigi, 2024).

However, few studies have extended research into the realm of consumer sensory evaluation in either laboratory or real-world dining contexts to understand how actual consumers evaluate the taste, texture, and aroma of upcycled 3D-printed food, an essential consideration for broader market acceptance.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining whether consumers perceive differences in sensory attributes, overall liking, and purchase intentions between 3D-printed pancakes made from ugly versus perfect produce (apple, banana, carrot). It also investigates whether storytelling can offset heuristic bias against ugly produce in a real food context and influence consumers' sensory evaluation, liking, and purchase intention of 3D-printed pancakes.

Methods

This study adopts a 2 × 2 between-subjects factorial experimental design to examine whether fruit appearance (ugly vs. perfect) influences consumers' sensory evaluation, overall liking, and purchase intentions of fruit pancake prepared by a 3-D food printer. It also investigates the moderating role of narrative framing (sustainability storytelling vs. neutral).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Consumers' sensory evaluations, liking and purchase intention of the 3D printed food will be negatively affected when they the food is prepared by ugly ingredients. In addition, the negative impact of ugly appearance on sensory evaluation, liking, and purchase intention is weaker when consumers are presented with sustainability storytelling compared to a neutral narrative.

This study contributes to the literature by extending consumer behavior and sensory evaluation research and connecting sensory evaluation, storytelling, and heuristic bias in food consumption. It also contributes to practice by providing restaurants, on-site food services, and food manufacturers with sustainable marketing strategies to normalize the use of ugly produce

References are available upon request

AI-POWERED SMART TRAVEL APPS: A PROTECTION MOTIVATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence is transforming the travel and tourism industry by enhancing customer experiences through personalized services and improving operational efficiency (Chauhan & Jishtu, 2025). Tourism stakeholders, such as hotels, airlines, and airports, are using AI-powered smart travel apps to provide personalized experiences for tourists, including custom itineraries, real-time navigation, and local recommendations (Chauhan & Jishtu, 2025). For example, Trip.com, a Singapore-based online travel agency, uses an AI-powered chatbot to suggest flights, hotels, and other travel services to its users (Xu et al., 2024). These features have been found to improve user satisfaction and perceived ease of use (Gursoy et al., 2019; Li et al., 2023).

Despite the benefits of AI-powered smart travel apps, concerns about data privacy and security risks persist (Afolabi, 2020; Sharma et al., 2024), underscoring the need to examine this issue from a protection motivation theory (PMT) perspective (Rogers, 1975). This theory is well-suited for examining privacy concerns because it explains how perceived threat vulnerability, perceived threat severity, self-efficacy, response costs, and response efficacy influence protection motivation, which, in turn, influences behavior (Floyd et al., 2000; Maddux & Rogers, 1983; Rogers, 1975). However, while the protection motivation theory is well aligned with this study, there are still gaps in understanding how incorporating perceived risk and trust (Chauhan & Jishtu, 2025) into the theory predicts behavior.

Previous research has mainly examined consumers' ability to use chatbots (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020), overlooking protection motivation as a key predictor of adoption. Other studies have focused on AI travel app qualities that influence adoption, such as anthropomorphism (Chauhan & Jishtu, 2025), personalization (Zhang et al., 2024), and perceived intelligence (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020), but have ignored protection motivation. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by proposing a comprehensive approach that combines perceived threat vulnerability, perceived threat severity, self-efficacy, response costs, response efficacy, protection motivation, trust, and risk to predict AI-powered smart travel app adoption.

Methods

The study will focus on consumers who have used AI-powered smart travel apps to plan their trips. Data will be collected from an online platform. All measurement items will be adapted from validated scales from existing research. Reliability and validity will be confirmed through expert review and pilot testing of the instrument. Partial least squares structural equation modeling will be employed to test the hypotheses, as it is well-suited for examining complex models involving multiple pathways in theoretical frameworks. (Hair et al., 2019).

Results/Discussion/Implication

Theoretically, this examines how interactions among protection motivation, perceived risk, and trust influence adoption. Practically, it provides actionable insights for AI-based travel platforms on addressing risk and trust, improving service quality by mitigating threats, and increasing user self-efficacy and response efficacy through AI transparency.

IT DOESN'T STOP AT THE OUTPUT: RETHINKING GENAI LITERACY FOR HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES

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Introduction

Advancements have rapidly shifted Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) from theory to practical application, transforming sectors like social media, education, and healthcare (Al Naqbi et al., 2024; Laupichler et al., 2023). Within the hospitality industry, Gen AI offers significant potential, enhancing operations through personalized interactions, streamlined reservations, and real-time traveler support (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Sigala et al., 2024).

However, many hospitality employees, often lacking formal training, are now required to use these Gen AI tools (Ricci, 2022). This need, with the workforce's diverse educational backgrounds, highlights a critical skills gap. While general AI literacy exists (Wu et al., 2024), a hospitality-specific Gen AI literacy framework is urgently needed. This paper addresses this gap by critically examining existing AI literacy definitions to determine their suitability for the hospitality workplace. The core aim is to define the necessary abilities for a hospitality employee to be considered Gen AI literate. This analysis will establish the foundation for outlining key components and developing effective, tailored training programs to ensure ethical use, manage risks, and maintain the industry's competitive edge.

Methods

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to investigate hospitality employees' judgment regarding Generative AI (Gen AI) outputs. Data will be collected via Qualtrics from 350 participants recruited via Prolific, restricted to current or recent hospitality employees who have used or evaluated Gen AI for work in the past year.

Participants will describe a task, then complete TPB-based measures, and report behavioral outcomes, including categorical judgments (used as-is, edited, or rejected) and likelihood ratings. Data will be analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate constructs and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test hypothesized relationships, providing a robust assessment of how attitudes, norms, and control influence Gen AI literacy judgments in hospitality. Multinomial regression confirms that non-technical factors explain judgment variations, extending Gen AI literacy frameworks with TPB-grounded insights.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings are expected to confirm that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are distinct factors in Gen AI use, validated by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is anticipated to show that all three TPB components significantly predict an employee's judgment to use Gen AI outputs, with attitude emerging as the strongest determinant. Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are also expected to influence whether outputs are accepted (used as-is), edited, or rejected.

While traditional AI literacy focuses on technical skills and ethics, this study suggests that hospitality Gen AI literacy must include a crucial judgment stage. Service appropriateness, cultural fitness, and organizational standards crucially influence employees' integration of AI-generated content in service.

TRUST AND OPPORTUNITY IN AI ADOPTION FOR MEDICAL TOURISM: A QUALITATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an essential part of healthcare, helping providers deliver faster and more personalized services while improving patient experience (Basirat et al., 2025; Gholipour & Esfandiar, 2024). In medical tourism, AI tools such as kiosks, chatbots, and virtual assistants are increasingly used for reservations, translation, and real-time guidance, creating smoother and more accessible experiences for patients (Reshadi & Chehragh, 2025).

Despite these advantages, many patients remain hesitant. Concerns about privacy, accuracy, and ethical transparency continue to shape their level of trust in AI systems (Chew & Achananuparp, 2022; Kauttonen et al., 2025). Such concerns may become even stronger when medical services cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. Few studies have examined how trust and perceived opportunity influence the acceptance of AI in this setting (Wang et al., 2025).

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore patients' experiences and perceptions in depth, aiming to identify how emotional and cognitive factors shape their willingness to accept AI in medical tourism.

Methods

This study adopts a semi-structured qualitative design to explore how trust, opportunity, and customer adoption influence the acceptance of AI in medical tourism (Kallio et al., 2016). Participants consist of 15 to 20 adult patients who have received medical examinations or treatments abroad for medical tourism purposes within the past 12 months. They will be selected through purposive sampling, and the final number may vary depending on data saturation (Guest et al., 2006).

Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes, conducted either in person or via an online platform. The interview questions focus on participants' perceptions of trust, anxiety, convenience, and perceived opportunities while using AI-based systems such as kiosks, chatbots, and booking platforms. With participants' consent, all interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis using the Framework Method (Gale et al., 2013). To ensure the credibility of interpretation, peer debriefing and an audit trail will be implemented throughout the analysis process to maintain transparency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results/Discussion/Implication

In medical tourism, the acceptance of AI is expected to depend largely on patients' trust. Participants are likely to recognize the efficiency and convenience of AI systems but may also express hesitation due to concerns about data privacy, lack of transparency, and emotional distance. Trust can be strengthened through clear information, visible security measures, and transparent consent procedures, while complex interfaces, unclear data handling, and language barriers may undermine it.

The opportunities of AI are realized only when sufficient trust is established. This study extends technology acceptance models (TAM, UTAUT) by integrating emotional and cognitive factors to explain how trust and perceived opportunity influence AI adoption in medical tourism. It also offers practical implications for fostering trust and enhancing patient acceptance of AI technologies, contributing to more sustainable adoption in medical tourism.

AI-POWERED TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION AS A MODERATOR OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN HOSPITALITY:

A WORK-IN-PROGRESS META-ANALYSIS OF 4-AND 5-STAR HOTELS

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Introduction

Hotels are among the most energy-intensive businesses in the service sector, with luxury properties typically exhibiting higher consumption due to amenities. Although five-star hotels are generally assumed to consume more energy than four-star hotels (Arenhart et al., 2024), some evidence shows that standardized operations and data-driven management can narrow this gap (MacAskill et al., 2023). These inconsistencies highlight the need to identify technological factors explaining variation in energy performance. This study examines how artificial intelligence (AI) energy management technology moderate differences in energy use between four- and five-star hotels. Traditional "smart" systems rely on automation or sensors, whereas AI-powered technology employs more advanced techniques to optimize performance dynamically (Borowski & Zwolińska, 2020; Gajić et al., 2024).

Grounded in two theoretical lenses, the Resource-Based View (Barney, 2001), and the Technology-Organization-Environment framework (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990), this study conceptualizes AI adoption as a boundary condition influencing energy outcomes and efficiency dynamics. Together, these frameworks explain how technological capability, and organizational readiness drive implementation of AI-powered technology that enhance operational efficiency and energy performance.

Methods

Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021), this meta-analysis synthesizes empirical and simulation-based studies on hotel energy performance. The population includes four- and five-star hotels; the intervention is AI-powered energy technology, and the comparators include hotels with limited or no AI adoption. Outcomes are standardized energy metrics. Searches span across various databases using Boolean strings. Effect sizes will be calculated (Hedges' g) and analyzed with random-effects models (Viechtbauer, 2010).

Moderator analyses will be tested via Egger's regression (Egger et al., 1997).

The use of meta-analysis is justified by the proprietary and non-standardized nature of hotel energy data as primary datasets are often inaccessible or incomparable across brands.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is expected that five-star hotels will demonstrate higher baseline energy consumption than four-star hotels, however, adoption of AI-powered energy technologies is anticipated to significantly reduce or even reverse this gap. Theoretical perspective, this research advances understanding of how AI-powered technology reshape the relationship between hotel classification and energy performance. Practically, it will help hotel executives and policymakers assess returns on AI-driven energy optimization technologies and their impact on operational efficiency. This work-in-progress meta-analysis establishes a methodological foundation for future validation using large-scale hotel performance data.

References are available upon request

BENEFITS OF THE USE OF AGENTIC AI IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Introduction
The hospitality industry is currently facing a lot of challenges, including worker shortages, higher guest expectations, and the need for more personalized service. Many hotels still use older automated phone systems that can feel slow and frustrating for guests. Agentic AI offers a more advanced solution because it can understand what guests want, plan several steps ahead, and complete tasks on its own. For example, instead of just giving information, an agentic AI system can suggest restaurants, book the reservation, and send reminders. This study explores how agentic AI can help hospitality businesses improve efficiency, support staff, and create better guest experiences.

Methods
This study will use a qualitative research design to better understand how both hospitality employees and guests feel about agentic AI. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with hotel managers, front-line staff, and frequent travelers. Participants will be recruited through a snowball method to find people who have experience with or opinions about AI in hotels.
Interviews will be held over Zoom, recorded with permission, and transcribed for accuracy.

Interview questions will be based on the Technology Acceptance Model, focusing on topics like usefulness, ease of use, trust, and service quality. After collecting the interviews, a thematic analysis will be used to identify common ideas and patterns. Two researchers will code the data separately to improve reliability. This approach will help highlight both the opportunities and concerns people have about using agentic AI in hospitality.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Based on the literature, agentic AI is expected to benefit hotels in several ways. First, it may help reduce stress on staff by taking over routine tasks and improving response times.
Second, it can create more personalized guest experiences by completing multi-step tasks automatically. Third, agentic AI may give hotels a competitive advantage by offering modern, efficient services that appeal to guests.

However, there are also challenges. Some guests and employees may feel unsure about AI because it lacks human empathy or because they worry it might replace human workers.
There are also concerns about privacy, since agentic AI systems use personal data to make decisions. Understanding these concerns is important so hotels can introduce AI in a responsible and effective way.

As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, these findings suggest that technology and human service do not have to compete. Instead, agentic AI can act as a supportive tool that works alongside staff, helping them manage their workload and focus more on meaningful guest interactions. By using AI to handle routine or time-consuming tasks, employees can spend more time improving the guest experience, which may help balance efficiency with the “human touch” that hospitality is known for.

This study is meaningful because it can help hospitality managers make better decisions about when and how to use agentic AI. It also adds to academic research by exploring a newer form of AI that goes beyond basic chatbots and service robots.

Work-In-Progress:
Lodging Management & Service Quality

WHEN PROACTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE PERFORMANCE LEADS TO CUSTOMER RETENTION: CUSTOMER-EMPLOYEE FIT AND INTROVERSION AS MODERATORS

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Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry has consistently sought ways to enhance the service experience to gain a competitive advantage. In this pursuit, proactive customer service performance (PCSP) has attracted significant attention among scholars (Ali & Khan, 2025; Yan et al., 2023; Wen et al., 2025). PCSP is defined as a self-starting, long-term-oriented, and forward-thinking approach to service delivery (Raub & Liao, 2012, p. 651). While PCSP is generally valued in hospitality and service industries (Yan et al., 2023), Lieu et al. (2025) highlight its complex dual nature, noting that PCSP can be positive up to an optimal point but may become negative beyond that threshold—a topic that remains largely unexplored. Prior congruence literature (person-environment fit) suggests that customer-employee fit is critical to the service experience (Hong et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2017; Straus et al., 2025). Yet, the significance of customer-employee fit in PCSP literature remains unaddressed (Yan et al., 2023). Additionally, while customer retention is generally considered an outcome of customer satisfaction (Simanjuntak et al., 2020), the effects of individual customer characteristics, such as introversion, and employee behaviors, such as PCSP, on customer retention have not been adequately studied. Therefore, this study aims to investigate dynamic customer-employee fit and PCSP in relation to customer satisfaction and retention.

Methods

This study follows Fong et al. (2021) and consists of three experimental studies designed to test three specific hypotheses. In Study 1, participants will view two scenarios illustrating customer-employee fit (high vs. low), and we will measure customer service satisfaction and retention. Study 2 introduces PCSP at three levels (high, medium, low) alongside customer-employee fit (high vs. low), and again measures customer service satisfaction and retention. Study 3 aims to replicate Study 2's findings, measuring introversion, customer-employee fit, customer service satisfaction, and customer retention using the same set of scenarios. Participants will be recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A pre-test will evaluate the vignettes. To address potential method variance, we will use a marker variable and conduct confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ensure measure appropriateness. We will test Hypothesis 1 with Model 4, Hypothesis 2 with Model 7, and Hypothesis 3 with Model 11 of the Hayes Process Macro Model.

Expected Results/Discussion/Implication

This study proposes that achieving an optimal mix of PCSP and customer-employee fit enhances customer satisfaction and retention. We anticipate that higher PCSP among employees will increase customer retention, an effect explained by improved customer service satisfaction. Furthermore, customer-employee fit is expected to intensify the impact of PCSP on customer retention by influencing satisfaction. Lastly, we posit that customers' introversion traits will further moderate this interaction, affecting how customer-employee fit and PCSP together influence retention through satisfaction. These insights will help hospitality managers prioritize customer-employee fit and PCSP to satisfy and retain customers effectively.

THE COST OF FINANCIAL DISTRESS IN THE HOSPITALITY & TOURISM (H&T) INDUSTRY

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Introdution

The hospitality industry is one of the largest employers of a very diverse group of individuals, making diversity management (DM) practices commonplace and critical for organizational success (Madera et al., 2023). Specifically, DM refers to structured efforts by organizations to promote fairness in hiring, accessibility, belonging, and inclusivity, with well-documented benefits for both individuals and firms (Hebl & King, 2024; Olsen & Martins, 2012). For example, employees in inclusive environments report stronger attitudes toward coworkers, higher job satisfaction, and skill development, while organizations benefit from greater employee retention, stronger performance among underrepresented groups, and improved organizational climate (Castillo et al., 2011; Ehrke et al., 2014; Harrison-Bernard et al., 2020). Despite these benefits to individual and organizational performance, DM initiatives are frequently met with resistance (Gündemir et al., 2024; Nittrouer et al., 2025). Much of this resistance has been attributed to demographic variables (e.g., political affiliation, race, gender, education); however, relatively little scholarly attention has been given to psychological factors and how they may impact an individual's perception of DM in their workplace. To address this gap, the current study investigates the potential relationship between an individual's level of financial distress and their perception of DM in their workplace. Financial distress is a salient psychological factor in the H&T industry, given that H&T employees are undervalued and underpaid compared to their peers in other industries (Baum, 2019) with over half of frontline workers having reported feeling distressed about daily expenses (Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2024). Drawing from Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the current study examines financial distress and its association with perceived utility of DM.

Proposed Methods

The current study proposes a serial mediation model to explain any potential relationship between financial distress and an individual's perception of DM practices in the workplace. Specifically, we propose that job apathy (i.e., reduced motivation, emotional withdrawal, and detachment from one’s work) and intergroup apathy (i.e., indifference toward inclusion efforts or issues of inequity experienced by individuals from marginalized backgrounds) will mediate the relationship between financial distress and perceived DM utility. For data collection, we plan to recruit participants via Prolific's online platform, and data will be analyzed using PROCESS for RStudio.

Significance of Study

This study makes several contributions. First, it expands the DM literature by moving beyond demographic predictors of resistance to consider psychological and economic factors. Identifying financial distress as an antecedent of DM valuation highlights the hidden costs of economic insecurity on organizational change. Second, by testing job apathy and intergroup apathy as potential mediators, our study connects resource scarcity to disengagement from broader social issues, offering a new mechanism to explain resistance to DM.

References available upon request.

REFLECTIONS OF INNOVATION: EXPLORING PRIVACY AND GUEST VALUE IN HOTEL SMART MIRRORS

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Introduction

There is tremendous competition in delivering unique facilities to the guests inside and outside the hotel (Tyagi & Patvekar, 2019). To stay competitive, hotels are increasingly implementing innovative technologies to provide seamless guest experiences (Ivanov & Webster, 2019). Recent developments in hotel technology have led to the smart rooms, which are digital innovations intended to improve guests' comfort (Gretzel et al., 2015). Within this context, smart mirrors are one of the innovative technologies (Handoyo et al., 2020) that allow guests to control rooms, enhancing convenience during their stay (Stringam & Gerdes, 2021). Unlike traditional mirrors, it integrates sensors and touch controls, enabling seamless interaction and personalized information delivery (Colantonio et al., 2015).

Smart mirrors have been utilized in various sectors, including healthcare, retail, and home environments. They can monitor emotions, promote healthy lifestyles, and create interactive experiences (Bianco et al., 2021; Colantonio et al., 2015). These applications highlight their potential to enhance user experiences; however, evidence from other sectors may not generalize to hotels due to variations in operational settings and guest expectations. Existing research has focused on other smart technologies, such as AI-powered systems, mobile apps, and smart room controls (Ivanov & Webster, 2019; Tyagi & Patvekar, 2019), leaving guests' perceptions of hotel smart mirrors unexplored. Furthermore, privacy concerns, including data collection, unauthorized access, and misuse (J. Kim et al., 2017), may hinder guest acceptance of smart mirrors, as these technologies collect sensitive personal data, but this issue has not yet been explored. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for hoteliers, enabling them to make informed decisions about adopting such technologies to maximize guests' intention to use and engagement. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate guest' perception of smart mirrors and their intention to stay at hotels equipped with them, with particular emphasis on how privacy concerns influence their intention to use smart mirrors

Methods

A quantitative survey will be conducted with 400 hotel guests via MTurk using a 7-point Likert scale. Data will be analyzed through descriptive statistics and CFA for validity and reliability, followed by SEM to test relationships among perceptions, intention to use, and stay (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings of this study will offer valuable insights into how smart mirrors influence guest decision-making and provide practical strategies to support their seamless adoption. By addressing privacy concerns, these contributions will enhance operational efficiency and accelerate technology adoption, enabling hotels to deliver innovative and secure experiences while fostering long-term loyalty and competitive advantage.

AI VS. HUMAN TOUCH IN HOSPITALITY: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON SERVICE SATISFACTION

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Introduction
The hospitality industry is leveraging AI to increase operational efficiency and improve service delivery. AI-based tools such as chatbots and automated check-in systems simplify operations and improve guest convenience (Chung et al., 2017; Koo et al., 2015). However, while AI promises efficiency, concerns remain about limited emotional capacity and the potential inconsistency with hospitality's core, "hospitableness," which encompasses warmth and genuine care delivered by humans (Golubovskaya, Robinson & Solnet, 2017). Previous studies provide mixed findings. Some highlight skeptical views, pointing to limited emotional capacity in AI-based services, while others demonstrate positive reviews, especially when safety and efficiency are emphasized (Ivanov et al., 2018; Qiu et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021). While recognizing that many service encounters are hybrid (blending AI and human elements), this study establishes a foundational comparison of distinct service modalities to understand their core effects. Against this background, this study uses an experimental design to investigate guest responses to human-provided and AI-based services. By considering perceived service quality as a mediator and service interaction preference as a moderator, this research aims to clarify when AI-based efficiency can match human services and when the human touch remains indispensable.

Methods
This study uses a scenario-based experimental design, with scenarios constructed and pre-tested to ensure a clear and believable distinction between service modalities, to investigate customer responses to hotel services provided by human and AI. Participants (n=300) will be randomly assigned to conditions that manipulate service modality (human vs. AI). After reading the scenario, participants will evaluate perceived service quality, which mediates the relationship between service modality and behavioral intention. Furthermore, service interaction preference is measured as a moderator that shapes the strength of this pathway. Data will be analyzed using ANOVA to test main and interaction effects, followed by PROCESS models for mediation and moderated mediation.

Results/Discussion/Implication
It is expected that guests will evaluate AI-based services more positively when efficiency is high, while human-provided services will be preferred when emotional warmth is high. Perceived service quality is expected to mediate the influence of service modality on behavioral intention, with this relationship moderated by the customer's service interaction preference. This study contributes to hospitality literature by enhancing the understanding of how customers evaluate AI-based versus human-provided services and provides theoretical insights into the psychological mechanisms of technology acceptance. From a management perspective, the findings will help practitioners understand the foundational trade-offs of distinct service types, offering a baseline for future research on more complex hybrid models. This supports strategic decisions on service design and guest experience management.

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Work-In-Progress:
Marketing

BEYOND PASSIVE TOURISM:

HOW ACTIVE LEARNING AND INTERGENERATIONAL SHARING TRANSFORM OLDER ADULTS' TOURISM PARTICIPATION INTENTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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Introduction

As the global population ages rapidly, adults aged 55 and older account for approximately 37% of tourism consumers, with the "silver tourism" market representing an estimated $1.78 trillion in annual global spending as of 2023, projected to reach $7.08 trillion by 2033 (Market.us, 2023; The Senior List, 2023). In United States, people over 50 drive close to 60% of travel and tourism spending, averaging over $6,600 per year on travel (AARP, 2023; Checkfront, 2022). This growing economic influence underscores the importance of designing tourism experiences that engage older adults and enhance their well-being. However, existing tourism research has largely focused on travel motivations and constraints, with limited attention to specific experience design elements that foster engagement and well-being (Chang et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2025; Otoo & Kim, 2020). Particularly, studies reveal gaps in understanding older adults' well-being through eudaimonic aspects like personal growth and self-actualization (Chang et al., 2022). Research also shows that age alone insufficiently explains tourism behaviors among active older adults (Kim et al., 2025), and more in-depth scholarly investigation is needed to explore what tourism experience design may better attract older adults as well as helping to improve their psychological well-being from the tourism experience. To address this recognized research gap, the current study utilizes gerontology research (e.g., Lou & Dai, 2017; Staudinger & Kunzmann, 2005) and tourism experience literature (e.g., Totsune et al., 2021) to examine how active learning and intergenerational sharing embedded in tourism experience may enhance older adults' tourism participation intentions and their psychological well-being through the mediating mechanism of personal growth.

Methods

Following an experimental design study approach, a 2×2 between subject design study will examine the interaction effects of intergenerational sharing (manipulated: with/without) and active learning tendency (measured: high/low) on tourism participation intention and well-being, with personal growth as the underlying mechanism, among older adult participants aged 55 years old or above. Intergenerational sharing is expected to enhance both behavioral and psychological outcomes through perceived personal growth from the tourism experience, with stronger effects among older adults with high level of active learning tendency.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study advances senior tourism research by identifying personal growth as a key mechanism connecting intergenerational sharing experience with behavioral and well-being outcomes and addressing gaps in understanding psychological mechanisms beyond motivations and constraints. For practitioners, the study informs tourism experience design targeting older adults.

UNCOVERING MOTIVATION PROFILES OF FANDOM EVENT PARTICIPANTS: A LATENT PROFILE ANALYSIS

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Introduction
Fandom events, such as anime conventions and doujinshi fairs, are fan-driven gatherings emphasizing identity expression and community belonging. Unlike large commercial festivals, these grassroots events are organized by fans and hold both cultural and economic significance for local communities. Previous research highlights their role in shaping social identity and cultural exchange (Ho et al., 2022; Lundberg & Ziakas, 2018). However, most studies use variable-centered approaches focusing on group-level outcomes, which overlook participant heterogeneity. To address this gap, this study applies a person-centered approach, Latent Profile Analysis (LPA), to uncover distinct motivation profiles among fandom event attendees. By revealing these profiles, this study aims to deepen understanding of diverse engagement patterns and provide implications for event design and management.

Methods
Survey data will be collected from attendees of fandom events (e.g., anime conventions, doujinshi fairs). The questionnaire includes multiple motivation indicators: entertainment, social bonding, identity/belonging, creative expression, relaxation/escape, and learning/skill. Additional questions capture participation behaviors such as frequency, time, and volunteer or cosplay involvement. Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) will be used to identify hidden subgroups of participants based on motivational orientations. Competing models with two to six classes will be compared using BIC, AIC, entropy, and likelihood-ratio tests (LMR/BLRT). Final model selection will be based on fit indices, parsimony, and interpretability.

Results/Discussion/Implication
It is expected that three to four distinct participant profiles will emerge, such as socially driven and identity-oriented fans, entertainment-focused participants, multi-motivated groups, and low-motivation attendees. These profiles are likely to differ in satisfaction, loyalty, and intention to participate in future events. Identifying motivation-based segments will highlight the heterogeneity of fandom event participants and inform tailored strategies for event planning and management. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of fan-driven cultural events and provide practical insights for enhancing attendee engagement and sustaining community-based event development.

MARKETING MIX REVISITED IN MARINE TOURISM: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

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Introduction
Marine tourism involves recreational travel centered on the marine environment (Garcia & Cater, 2022) and is projected to generate US $777 billion and 8.6 million jobs by 2030 (Deely, 2022).
Despite this growth, research remains limited, focusing largely on macro-level economic valuation (Brown et al., 2021; O'Malley et al., 2013), sustainability and conservation (Dimitroviski et al., 2021; Fakfare et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022), climate resilience (Moreno & Amelung, 2009), and sectoral definition (Miller, 1993; Fernández-Macho et al., 2024). This macro-orientation underscores the need for strategies that attract tourists while safeguarding ecological integrity. Although marketing-mix scales exist in sectors such as healthcare and technology (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2020; Lim 2021; Cha et al., 2009), applications in marine tourism are scarce. Existing studies lack a micro-level marketing-mix framework that operationalizes how destinations can balance growth and sustainability, as well as an integrated lens linking sustainability behavior with the 7Ps. This study addresses that gap by developing a marine tourism-specific marketing-mix scale to enhance visitation, economic outcomes, and ecological stewardship.

Methods
Building on Churchill (1979) and Netemeyer et al. (2003), this study follows established steps for scale development. First, item generation will be conducted through a comprehensive literature review to create an initial item pool. Content and face validity will then be evaluated by expert panels to ensure alignment with the intended constructs. Next, for item purification, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) will be applied to remove low-performing items and to assess internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. For scale refinement, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be used to examine construct reliability and validity and to establish the measurement model. Scale validation and model testing will then be carried out within a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework to confirm the factor structure. Finally, nomological and predictive validity will be assessed to determine whether the scale predicts key outcomes such as visitation, economic benefits, and sustainability needs (So et al., 2014).

Results/Discussion/Implication
This study is expected to establish and validate a reliable marketing mix scale designed for marine and coastal tourism. The resulting scale will offer a framework for marketers to assess, compare, and refine strategies while establishing destination-centric sustainable decisions. By using the 7Ps, the scale is expected to provide deeper insight into how destinations can attract tourism and manage growth responsibly. Although the tradition 4Ps remain an option for marketers to use, the 7Ps provide a broader scope by inclusion of people, process, and physical evidence in order to guide sustainable decision-making. Ultimately, the scale will improve understanding of the marketing mix for marine visitation, economic benefits, and long-term ecological stewardship.

References are available upon request

FROM SCREENS TO SCENES:

THE ROLE OF VIEWING CONTEXT AND NARRATIVE ENGAGEMENT IN DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY

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Introduction

Destination branding increasingly intertwines with media consumption, as films, dramas, and animations shape how potential tourists perceive and evaluate places (Dašić & Kostadinović, 2022; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). Netflix's 2025 animated *K-pop Demon Hunters* (KDH) illustrates this dynamic by showcasing Seoul's cityscape and Korean culture while blending K-pop performance with folklore narratives. Its popularity aligns with evidence that cultural symbols and scenic imagery embedded in media spark curiosity, foster emotional bonds, and ultimately influence destination brand equity (DBE) (Quintal & Phau, 2015; Riley & Van Doren, 1992). The strength of these effects depends not only on narrative content but also on the social context of consumption. Co-viewing with family or friends can heighten narrative engagement through emotion sharing, synchronization, and collective meaning-making compared with solo viewing (Harwood, 1999; Nabi & Clark, 2008; Zhu et al., 2014). Prior knowledge further conditions outcomes by activating schemas when recognizable Seoul landmarks and folklore are present, especially among viewers already familiar with Korea as a destination brand (Green & Brock, 2000). This study proposes that viewing context and prior knowledge influence DBE indirectly through narrative engagement, extending research on narrative persuasion.

Methods

This study will employ an experimental design to examine how viewing context influences destination brand equity (DBE) through narrative engagement, with prior knowledge serving as a moderator. Adult participants will be recruited via an online platform and randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) solo viewing of a *K-pop Demon Hunters* (KDH) video, (2) co-viewing of the same video with a group, or (3) a control video with minimal brand-related content. Following exposure, participants will complete validated measures of narrative engagement, DBE, and prior knowledge of Korea as a destination.

Expected Results/Discussion/Implication

Findings are expected to show that viewing context influences DBE, with narrative engagement serving as the mediating process. Co-viewing is anticipated to promote stronger engagement, which in turn enhances DBE. Prior knowledge of Korea is also expected to strengthen the relationship between viewing context and engagement. Viewers with higher prior knowledge are more likely to interpret cultural cues effectively, immerse more deeply in the narrative, and contribute positively to DBE.

This study contributes theoretically by identifying narrative engagement as the central mechanism linking viewing context and DBE, and by demonstrating the amplifying role of prior knowledge. It moves beyond content-centered perspectives to include contextual and cognitive factors, thereby advancing destination branding research. Practically, it suggests how media-based storytelling can be leveraged to enhance awareness, associations, and loyalty toward tourism destinations.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF TOUR GUIDES ON STORYTELLING FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TOURISM

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Introduction
Since 2000s, tourism has transitioned from a largely passive form of observation to an active, co-created experience, with storytelling serving as a critical element in enhancing engagement and co-creation (Pera, 2017). As innovative and effective co-creation process requires involvement of multiple agents for an experience to be created and co-created (Windrum et al., 2016), designing and implementing storytelling is, therefore, a complex process that is multi-dimensional, multi-phased, and involves diverse stakeholders (Zhang & Ramayah, 2024). Thus, Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) can serve as a foundation of involvement of various stakeholders for communication through stories and storytelling. On the other hand, stories are utilized for various reasons such as destination promotion, tourism planning, and experience management (Moscardo, 2020), which implicitly address some aspects such as emotional, conditional, and functional dimensions. The Theory of Consumption (Sheth et al., 1991), therefore, is considered another theoretical foundation to investigate the tour guides' knowledge, motivation, and practice of storytelling. Due to the exploratory nature of the investigation inquiry, this study applies qualitative method and descriptive and thematic content analysis.

Methods
The interview questions were already established based on study purpose, the theoretical foundation of this study, previous literature, and expert opinions. After the final revision of the questions, and IRB approval from the first author's institution, initial interviews was conducted as pilot study to ensure the flow of the questions. The ultimate data will be collected via snowball sampling method from official and under-training tour guides via snowball sampling method until the saturation point where the themes, and point of views becomes similar, and where further data would not provide new information or new insights (McGinley et al., 2021). The results will be analyzed primarily through descriptive and thematic content analysis, while Leximancer will be used as a supplementary tool.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Initial pilot interviews and literature review reveal that there are still need and room for in-dept understanding and application of storytelling in practice in hospitality and tourism context.
According to the initial findings, the stories still refer myths, traditional and local narratives, religious phenomenon, where the certain aspects are still under-investigated and insufficiently utilized. Also, the initial findings, already supported by the previous literature, reveal a need for training of stakeholders on stories, storytelling marketing and effective communication of storytelling.

References are available upon request

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"WHERE TO GO": HOW INFLUENCER MARKETING SHAPES DINING DECISIONS

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Introduction

Mobile technologies have transformed customer–brand communication into more personalized and interactive engagement involving influencers and online communities (Ye et al., 2021). Influencer marketing has rapidly expanded and is projected to reach $30 billion in the U.S. by 2025 (Ross, 2025), reflecting strong influence on consumer behavior. For instance, 54% of U.S. TikTok users watch product recommendations, and 25% identify this as their main reason for using the platform (Faverio, 2024), while 41% of social media users aged 18–29 report having made purchases based on influencer content (Pew Research Center, 2022). In the hospitality sector, influencer content and electronic word-of-mouth have been shown to shape intentions to visit restaurants (Rathjens et al., 2024). Yet, while prior work highlights attribute-based recommendations such as price, ambiance, and food quality (Kim et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2019; Zou et al., 2024), limited research has examined how influencers foster interactive engagement among followers. To address this gap, this study examines customer engagement with influencer-generated restaurant content from both individualistic and collectivist perspectives (Jin et al., 2019; Ndasi & Cheung, 2026).

Grounded in the Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz et al., 1973; Sangwan, 2005) and the Expectation-Confirmation Model (Bhattacherjee, 2001), this research investigates how consumers use and evaluate influencers' recommendations when choosing restaurants, and how these experiences differ across local versus chain restaurant contexts. Accordingly, this study explores:

RQ1. How do consumers experience and evaluate influencers' recommendations when deciding to visit restaurants?

RQ2. In what ways do these experiences differ between local and chain restaurants, considering both individual and collective dynamics?

Methods

The target population consists of U.S.-based social media users aged 18+ who follow at least one influencer and have visited a restaurant based on an influencer's recommendation. Participants will be recruited via Prolific and complete an online Qualtrics survey. Measurement items are adapted from prior research and assessed on five- and seven-point Likert scales. ECM constructs include satisfaction, perceived usefulness, trust, and community identification. UGT constructs include perceived information quality, self-expression, interpersonal connectivity, and visit intention. Data will be analyzed using SPSS 28.0 and AMOS 18.0.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study is expected to show that influencers' recommendations influence restaurant visit intentions by fulfilling both individual motivations and community-based engagement needs. By integrating ECM and UGT, the research will clarify how followers evaluate influencer content, form trust and identification, and translate these perceptions into behavioral intentions. The findings are expected to contribute new theoretical insight into influencer-driven restaurant marketing and offer practical guidance for restaurants and marketers seeking to strengthen customer engagement and visibility through strategic influencer partnerships.

THE ROLE OF VALUES-DRIVEN DIGITAL STORYTELLING ELEMENTS IN FOSTERING BRAND EQUITY

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Introduction

With increasing competition and digital technological advancements, the hospitality industry has progressed from simply selling hotel rooms or dining services to selling their brand through stories. Recent research shows that telling stories through social media and YouTube is an effective way for brands and marketers to attract their target consumers (Khosla, 2025). For this study, digital storytelling is interpreted as online brand content. This study applies the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework to examine how values-driven digital storytelling (stimulus) evokes emotional responses and attitudes (organism) that influence perceived brand equity (response).

Perceived value in this study is operationalized using three dimensions adapted from the PERVAL scale (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001): functional value, social value, and emotional value. Emotional value refers to the positive emotions a brand elicits from a story, such as joy, awe, or inspiration (Green & Brock, 2000; Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Holak & Havlena, 1998; Haidt, 2003). Altruistic cues are treated as part of emotional and social values, as they signal that the brand cares about the well-being of others, which strengthens emotional bonds and nurtures brand affection (Manthiou, Kang, Hyun, & Fu, 2018). These value cues embedded in storytelling are expected to evoke positive emotional responses that shape brand attitudes and perceived brand equity.

Prior research has significantly focused on examining the direct effects of digital storytelling on brand equity variables, often neglecting the exploration of consumers' emotional responses to the digital story content. This study aims to examine how values conveyed in brand storytelling evoke specific positive emotions (such as joy, awe, and inspiration) and in turn influence brand equity perceptions among hospitality consumers.

Methods

U.S.-based adult social media users will participate, as social media is widely used for brand discovery and evaluation, with YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok among the most active platforms for engagement (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025). Participants who have viewed a hospitality brand's online story in the past three months will be recruited through a reputable online panel and complete an online survey via Qualtrics. Screeners will exclude current or recent employees of the featured brands.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study advances the understanding of how values-driven digital storytelling evokes positive emotions shaping brand equity and contextualizing this framework within the hospitality sector. Practically, it offers guidance for marketing professionals in the hospitality industry on designing stories that encourage brand loyalty. The findings of this study will guide practitioners to intentionally integrate functional, social, emotional and altruistic values into digital content strategies to foster brand equity.

References are available upon request

SOCIAL PRESSURE AS A DUAL PATHWAY: HOW FEAR OF MISSING OUT AND JOY OF MISSING OUT SHAPE GENERATION Z HOTEL CHOICE INTENTIONS

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Introduction

Generation Z travelers use social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to search for hotels. They often experience two emotional reactions when viewing others' travel posts. The first is fear of missing out (FOMO), feeling worried that others are having good experiences while the individual is not (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO arises from social comparison and pressure to stay connected. The second is joy of missing out (JOMO), feeling content about disconnecting from social media and prioritizing personal wellbeing over external validation (Rautela & Sharma, 2022). Research shows FOMO increases travel intention (Kim & Wongsa, 2025), while JOMO relates to mindful decision-making. Recent studies indicate Gen Z travelers feel caught between these emotions, wanting social validation while also valuing authentic experiences (Ristova Maglovska, 2025).

However, researchers do not know how one factor—social pressure (feeling pushed to choose hotels that look good to others)—affects both FOMO and JOMO and their influences on hotel choices. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory, social pressure undermines the autonomy needed for JOMO (Zhang, 2025), while triggering social comparison that intensifies FOMO. This study examines social pressure as a common antecedent affecting both emotions and hotel choices. Using Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), this study will test whether social pressure is positively associated with FOMO and negatively associated with JOMO.

Methods

This study will use an online survey targeting Generation Z leisure travelers aged 18-27 who have stayed at a hotel in the past 12 months. The planned sample is 200 people. Validated scales will measure social pressure (operationalized as social comparison orientation), FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013), JOMO (Rautela & Sharma, 2022), and hotel choice intentions ranging from aesthetic-driven to value-aligned preferences (adapted from Ristova Maglovska, 2025). Structural Equation Modeling will test how social pressure is associated with both FOMO and JOMO and their effects on hotel choices.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Social pressure is expected to be positively associated with FOMO (Kim & Wongsa, 2025), accelerating decisions toward trendy hotels (Samsura & Rufaidah, 2025). Social pressure is also expected to be negatively associated with JOMO by undermining the autonomy needed for voluntary disconnection (Zhang, 2025). Travelers who maintain stronger JOMO despite social pressure are expected to prefer wellness hotels (Rautela & Sharma, 2022).

This study contributes by showing how a single external factor (social pressure) may drive two emotional pathways (FOMO and JOMO) that shape different hotel choice intentions among Gen Z travelers. Findings can help segment Gen Z travelers into those prioritizing social image versus personal wellbeing. Hotels can create different strategies: visual appeal for FOMO-driven guests, and wellness programs with digital detoxes for JOMO-oriented travelers.

References are available upon request

Work-In-Progress:
Restaurant & Foodservice

WHAT'S IN THE BOX: THE INFLUENCE OF TO-GO FOOD CONTAINER DESIGN ON COLLEGE STUDENT CHOICES

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Introduction
Food insecurity continues to affect 20–40% of U.S. college students (Bruening et al., 2017), while campuses collectively discard approximately 22 million pounds of food each year (Poon, 2015). In response, some universities have developed food recovery programs that repackage surplus dining hall meals for distribution through campus pantries; however, limited research has explored how the design of these to-go containers may influence students' perceptions and choices within such systems. A point-based pantry allows students to "shop" freely using a fixed number of monthly points, assigning each item a perceived cost and value. Within this context, packaging characteristics, such as size, shape, color, and material, may alter how large, fresh, or worthwhile a meal appears, potentially shaping decision-making when resources are limited. This study examines how to-go container design affects perceptions of portion size, meal value, and selection likelihood in a campus pantry distributing recovered meals.

Methods
This study will employ a quasi-experimental design within the campus food pantry to examine how container design influences student perceptions and choices. Four to-go container types will be compared: standard Styrofoam clamshell (control) (Figure 1), green clear plastic clamshell (Figure 2), tall rectangular eco-friendly fiber box (Figure 3), and short round eco friendly fiber bowl (Figure 4). Each container will hold the same pre-weighed meal with identical food labels to ensure consistency. Because the study is conducted in a point-based pantry system without random assignment to treatment groups, all participants will be exposed to each of the four containers, with order randomized to reduce bias. Before the evaluation phase, participants will complete a pre-test survey to collect demographics, pantry usage patterns, and sustainability beliefs. During the evaluation, students will view the standardized meal in each container and provide ratings of perceived volume, expected satiety, perceived freshness, perceived quality, packaging sustainability, and overall value relative to pantry points. In the selection phase, students will choose one of the four containers to redeem for one pantry point, simulating real pantry behavior. Data analysis will assess whether container shape and proportion influence perceptions and choice, and whether sustainability beliefs moderate these effects.

Results/Discussion/Implication
It is anticipated that container design will significantly affect how students perceive meal size, quality, and value. Consistent with prior research, taller rectangular containers are expected to appear larger and more filling than short, wide ones of equal weight (Van Ittersum & Wansink, 2012). Transparent packaging may enhance perceived freshness, while eco-friendly fiber containers may be rated higher by students with strong sustainability values. Students who prioritize environmental responsibility are expected to assign greater overall value to eco-friendly containers, even when portions seem smaller, while others may prefer designs that look more substantial. Understanding these dynamics can reveal how subtle packaging cues shape students' satisfaction and engagement in campus food pantries. Findings from this study will provide actionable insights for universities seeking to improve food recovery practices, reduce waste, and enhance student well-being through intentional packaging design

EYES ON THE TRAY: AN ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION PROCESSING OF PATIENT TRAY CARD USING EYE-TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

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Introduction

As Americans continue to age and life expectancy increases, hospitals and long-term care facilities are becoming increasingly important in our culture (Jones & Dolsten, 2024; Raj et al., 2024). These facilities serve as the residents' home, but staff are also expected to meet stringent health, nutrition, and food safety standards. To ensure the health and overall satisfaction of the patient, it is essential that medical orders for therapeutic diets, allergens, texture modification, and preferences are followed. This information provided by medical professionals is distilled down into a single tray card for each resident and is used to guide the food service employee in properly assembling resident meal (Zhao, 2001).

Given the variety of menus utilized, type of service, and the tight timeframes under which patient trays are assembled (Sherer, 2011; Negrete-Rousseau, 2018) there is an increased chance of errors occurring. While seemingly simple, food-related errors can be as deadly as medical errors (Austria et al., 2024). Technology used in other food service research, eye-tracking software, can provide insight for how tray cards are read by employees. This will allow for a greater understanding of how food service employees read the tray card before assembling the resident's meal.

Proposed Method

This study intends to measure eye-tracking movement of food service employees when reading a tray card and how they process the information under time constraints. Based on the cognitive load theory, which focuses on the limits of working memory (Sweller et al., 1998), eye-tracking software will be utilized to understand how the layout of the tray card impacts employee comprehension and recall.

Expected Results & Significance

Eye-tracking technology will provide insight on how participants view tray cards, assessing gaze time of the information on the card, and compare the results of the comprehension questions. This can provide guidance for the industry to develop layouts of tray cards that assist the food service team with limiting errors from reading tray cards.

Eye-tracking software has primarily been utilized from the point of view of the customer. This study would be the first to understand menu tray card reading from the employee's point of view. Food is essential and directly impacts resident and patient safety. Tray cards provide the information necessary for accurate meal assembly. Understanding how employees focus their attention will provide guidance for designing tray cards that improve information processing, reduce error rates, and ultimately improve safety.

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE BUFFET DINING: APPLYING GOSL-SYSTEM THEORY TO REDUCE CUSTOMER PLATE WASTE

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Introduction
Food waste is a critical sustainability challenge in hospitality, particularly in buffet-style dining where the "all-you-can-eat" model encourages over-serving and unfinished food (Appel et al., 2025; Chang, 2022; Wu & Teng, 2023). This issue causes both environmental—responsible for nearly 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Dolnicar et al., 2020)—and financial—raising operating costs and damaging the industry's reputation for sustainability (Okumus et al., 2020).
To reduce food waste in buffet dining, previous interventions mainly targeted operational tactics such as smaller plates (Wansink & van Ittersum, 2013), modified service styles, or added incentives (Chang, 2022). Though effective, these often diminish dining satisfaction and neglect the psychological dynamics of buffet behavior, where guests juggle goals like variety, value, and finishing food. Common frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Norm Activation Model (NAM) (e.g., Appel et al., 2025; Zhu & Liu, 2024) do not fully explain real-time goal conflicts during dining. To address this, the study employs Goal-Systems Theory (GST) (Kruglanski et al., 2018) to examine how competing goals—goal-priming ("finish what you take") and multi-final means ("taste first")—reduce consumer individual plate waste.

Methods
This study employs a field experiment in a U.S. buffet restaurant using a 2 (goal-prime vs. control) × 2 (tasting-first tools vs. control) between-groups factorial design. Diners will be randomly assigned to one of four conditions: control (no intervention), goal-prime (a sign at the plate station), multi-final means (tasting spoons and mini bowls with a cue), or a combined (both interventions).
Data will be collected across multiple meal periods in a U.S. buffet. Individual plate leftovers will be measured by weighing returned plates and subtracting tare weights.
Manipulation checks will be conducted using a short survey to assess whether the sign reminded them to finish their food and whether the tasting tools helped them sample without over-serving. A two-way ANOVA will test the main and interaction effects of interventions on plate waste, with planned contrasts between conditions.

Results/Discussion/Implication
Upon completion, this study advances both theory and practice. Theoretically, it contributes to existing hospitality sustainability research by introducing Goal-System Theory beyond the more commonly applied frameworks like TPB and NAM. By focusing on how diners manage competing goals in real time, GST offers another lens for understanding buffet dining behavior.
Practically, this study offers buffet operators practical strategies to address one of the most visible sources of food waste in hospitality. Goal-priming signs and tasting-first tools are inexpensive, easy to implement, and require no major changes to service. By reducing plate waste through subtle behavioral nudges rather than restrictive measures, these interventions can lower food costs, improve operational efficiency, and contribute to sustainability goals. Such strategies can also support policy compliance and sustainability reporting by providing measurable waste reduction outcomes

GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EMERGING RESTAURANT DELIVERY METHODS

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Introduction

Drone food delivery has emerged as a major innovation reshaping traditional delivery (Kumar et al., 2024; Leong & Koay, 2023). Using unmanned aerial vehicles to transport food directly to consumers, drones provide faster, contactless, and efficient service (Hwang & Kim, 2019), reducing delivery times and improving sustainability and satisfaction (Ko et al., 2024; Mathew et al., 2021). Drone delivery also significantly lowers carbon emissions (Hwang & Kim, 2019).

However, research on generational acceptance of drone delivery remains limited. Generation Z generally shows strong technology adoption (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022), whereas Baby Boomers may feel less secure with technology and perceive lower usefulness, leading to lower acceptance (Camargo et al., 2024; Kim & Kim, 2023). They may favor in-person delivery, where human interaction builds trust and satisfaction (Chen et al., 2014).

Despite growing industry interest (Mathew et al., 2021; Nunkoo et al., 2024), no study has compared Baby Boomers' and Generation Z's perceptions of drone versus in-person restaurant delivery. Drawing on consumption value theory (Sheth et al., 1991) and generational theory (Strauss & Howe, 1997), this study addresses:

1. How do Baby Boomers and Generation Z differ in their perceptions of drone versus in-person restaurant delivery?
2. Which consumption values (functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional) shape each generation's acceptance?

Methods

This study will use a qualitative approach to explore research questions in depth. Focus groups will collect data through group interactions (Patton, 2014), offering insights into participants shared perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

Purpose sampling will recruit baby boomers (N =15) and Generation Z (N =15), with three focus groups for each cohort. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for themes, with each participant receiving a $10 Target gift card.

Two trained researchers will independently code the transcripts, which will be cross-checked by two project investigators. The coding process will follow Strauss and Corbin's (1990) open and axial coding procedures to identify key concepts, group similar codes into categories, and derive broader themes. Inter-coder reliability will be assessed, and discrepancies will be resolved through consensus discussions (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study is expected to reveal generational difference in drone delivery acceptance. Generation Z may favor drone delivery for its novelty, convenience, and speed, while Baby Boomers may prefer in-person delivery for its reliability and human interaction that foster trust and satisfaction (Chen et al., 2014).

These insights extend the theory of consumption values (Sheth et al., 1991) by showing how generational differences shape hospitality service adoption and may refine existing assumptions.

FROM SURPLUS TO SERVICE: RESTAURANT PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD REDISTRIBUTION APPS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Introduction

Food waste remains a pressing sustainability and social equity challenge, with about 40% of the U.S. food supply wasted annually, resulting in over $400 billion in economic losses (USDA, 2021; Kohli et al., 2024). Restaurants contribute substantially through overproduction and plate waste (Kaman et al., 2024). At the same time, millions of Americans face food insecurity (UNEP, 2021). Although donation programs exist, adoption barriers persist (Papargyropoulou et al., 2014). Technology-enabled redistribution apps could help reduce waste and hunger, but restaurant managers' willingness to adopt such tools remains underexplored.

Grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Environmental Values Theory (EVT), and Green Signaling Theory (GST), this study examines how perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, environmental values, and green signaling benefits influence attitudes toward food waste mitigation and toward the use of redistribution apps. Together, these frameworks capture functional, moral, and reputational motivations for sustainable technology adoption (Davis, 1989; De Groot & Steg, 2007; Connelly et al., 2011).

Methods

A quantitative survey design will target 300 restaurant managers across U.S. dine-in establishments. Contact information will be obtained from the National Restaurant Association database, with 3,000 mail-out surveys (expected 10% response). Constructs will be measured using established scales: perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989), environmental values (De Groot & Steg, 2007), attitudes toward mitigation and apps (Lu et al., 2005), green signaling (Berger, 2019), and willingness to adopt (Taylor & Todd, 1995). Responses will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS, with descriptive and reliability analyses in SPSS.

Results/Discussion/Implication

All hypothesized relationships are expected to be positive and significant, with variation by restaurant size, prior donation history, and affiliation. Smaller and independent restaurants may encounter operational barriers consistent with earlier findings (Filimonau & Delysia, 2019). Theoretically, the study integrates TAM, EVT, and GST to advance understanding of multidimensional sustainability adoption in hospitality (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Practically, it provides insights for app developers to improve usability and reputation-enhancing features. Socially, it highlights how redistribution technology can align business efficiency with community impact, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 12.5 on responsible consumption and production (UNEP, 2021).

CONSUMER-PERCEIVED SUSTAINABILITY FOR RESTAURANTS: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF USER-GENERATED IMAGES AND TEXT

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Introduction

There are many ways restaurants can demonstrate their sustainability efforts, such as through ESG ratings and companies owned media platforms (Kerber, 2024). However, discrepancies may exist between firms' intended sustainability messaging and consumers' actual perceptions of corporate sustainability endeavors (Ding et al., 2026). Understanding consumers’ standpoint not only reveals what aspects of sustainability they notice and value, as online review platforms have become primary spaces for sharing dining experiences, these perceptions may further significantly influence the decision making of other prospective customers.

Existing literature involving online reviews centers around the impact of extracted features consumers’ satisfaction, loyalty or visit intention (Bigne et al., 2019; Li et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Lv et al., 2024). As such, the literature focusing on sustainability attributes in the context of restaurants’ online review is limited. Additionally, implementing sustainability is costly for restaurants (Park & Jang, 2014). To bridge the gap, this study sets out to achieve two main objectives: (a) to extract sustainability-related attributes from textual and image content of restaurants’ online reviews and (b) to examine the impact of various attributes on customer ratings and review helpfulness.

Methods

The study collected data from 8,448 restaurants in Houston, Texas, which is known for its diverse cuisine and top foodie destination in the United States, from TripAdvisor in September 2025 (Tersch, 2023). The study has two main parts. The first part of the study involves the application of the Large Language Models (LLMs) to identify diverse themes associated with sustainability perceptions from online review text and images (Hurst et al., 2024). The robustness check will be employed to compare sustainable perceptions of human and LLM to validate the set of distinct attributes reflecting sustainability perceptions in online review. The second part of the study will focus on the impact of various extracted attributes on online review ratings and helpfulness by adopting regression analysis.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The expected results will include three levels of output. First, dispersed words and phrases are extracted separately from texts and images. Second, higher-level factors or attributes are identified through dimensional reduction of the textual and visual data. Third, the key factors that most strongly influence customers’ ratings and prospective consumers’ decision making are examined using regression analysis.

This study will contribute to the literature by revealing consumers’ perception and decision-making of different sustainability cues perceived from textual and visual data under the dual-coding theory. From a practical standpoint, restauranteurs can include and highlight these sustainable elements to better promote their businesses. This study is not one without limitations as data comes from only one online review site and focuses on restaurants in Houston, Texas.

FOOD ALLERGY AND DIETARY RESTRICTION MANAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY DINING: EMPLOYEE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, TRAINING, AND PRACTICES AT OSU

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Introduction

Food allergies pose a growing public health concern, affecting millions globally and leading to severe health consequences such as anaphylaxis (Sicherer et al., 2023). Institutional dining environments, particularly universities, face unique challenges in accommodating diverse dietary needs due to high meal volumes and frequent staff turnover. While training programs have been implemented in commercial foodservice operations, limited research has examined how university dining employees understand and apply allergen management practices (Choi & Rajagopal, 2013; Shafie & Azman, 2015). Inadequate employee knowledge or inconsistent application of protocols can result in accidental exposure and eroded guest trust (Lee & Sozen, 2018).

This study aims to evaluate employees' knowledge, attitudes, and training practices related to food allergy and dietary restriction management within Oklahoma State University (OSU) Dining Services. Specifically, it seeks to (1) assess employees' understanding of common allergens and dietary restrictions, (2) examine the perceived effectiveness of existing training programs, (3) identify gaps in knowledge, communication, and implementation, and (4) recommend improvements to enhance guest safety, inclusivity, and dining quality.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional mixed-methods design (Setia, 2016; Creswell, 2014) will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from OSU Dining employees. The quantitative survey, adapted from validated instruments (Choi & Rajagopal, 2013; Shafie & Azman, 2015), includes four sections: demographics, knowledge, attitudes, and perceived training effectiveness.
Following the "five participants per item" rule, the study will target 150–200 responses from culinary, service, and managerial staff. Data will be analyzed using SPSS with descriptive and inferential statistics; reliability and validity will be verified through Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis.

The qualitative phase will involve 20–25 semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected employees across different roles. Interviews will examine operational barriers, communication practices, and training experiences. Data will be analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2020) six-step approach. Integration of both phases will provide a comprehensive understanding of allergen management practices in OSU Dining Services.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study is expected to identify employees' current knowledge of food allergens and dietary restrictions, as well as their ability to distinguish allergies from intolerances and manage allergy-related inquiries. Findings will highlight variations in perceived training effectiveness, confidence, and communication across roles. Results will establish a baseline for improving training content, policy implementation, and leadership support. The outcomes are anticipated to strengthen OSU Dining's food safety culture and promote inclusive dining practices applicable to broader hospitality contex

GREEN CHOICES IN QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANTS: THE ROLE OF ECO-LABELS AND DIGITAL ORDERING

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Introduction

The quick-service restaurant (QSR) sector is a major contributor to packaging waste, adding to the 82.2 million tons of containers and packaging generated in the US each year (EPA, 2023). As consumers increasingly expect sustainable options, QSRs face pressure to communicate environmental responsibility without compromising speed and convenience. Eco-labels have become a tool to promote sustainable consumption, yet their effectiveness in the fast-paced QSR context remains uncertain.

This study will combine three frameworks to explain sustainable consumer behavior in QSRs. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model views eco-labels and ordering platforms as stimuli shaping thoughts and emotions, while the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) highlights differences in message processing across settings. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) framework will examine how technology perceptions influence the link between intention and actual behavior (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Together, they will offer a clear view of how psychological and technological factors drive green choices in QSRs.

This study will investigate how eco-labels and ordering platforms influence sustainable purchase behavior in quick-service restaurants. It will examine when and how these sustainability cues shape consumer decision-making and how technology-related factors may moderate their effects, offering insights to advance environmentally responsible practices within the QSR sector.

Methods

A 2 (eco-label: present vs. absent) × 2 (ordering platform: digital vs. in-person) between-subjects experimental design will be used. Participants will be recruited through online QSR communities. A minimum of 200 participants will be recruited based on power analysis ($\alpha = .05$, power = .80, medium effect). Eco-label stimuli will be adapted from the USDA BioPreferred and How2Recycle programs to ensure authenticity. Constructs will be measured using validated scales for eco-label credibility, purchase intention, and selected UTAUT dimensions. Statistical analyses, including ANCOVA, and hierarchical regression, will test direct, interaction, and moderating effects.

Expected Implications

The research will contribute to the application of the S–O–R model to the QSR context and integrating technology-acceptance constructs to bridge the gap between sustainability communication and behavioral outcomes. It also aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 (i.e., Responsibility Consumption and Production) by exploring behavioral strategies that can reduce packaging waste in food-service operations.

The findings will contribute to theoretical insights by clarifying how message framing and ordering context interact to shape green decision-making in QSRs. From a managerial perspective, the findings will guide QSR operators in designing eco-labeled packaging and digital ordering systems that encourage sustainable choices without compromising efficiency or customer satisfaction.

THE ALLERGY TRUST GAP: EVALUATING SAFETY AND INCLUSION IN UNIVERSITY DINING SERVICES

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Introduction

Food allergies have become an increasingly significant public health concern, affecting over 10.8% of U.S adults (Gupta et al., 2019). College students face a higher risk and are more vulnerable due to new environments and changes in eating conditions, which heightens the risk of anaphylaxis (Bingemann et al., 2024). Although federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), protect students with allergies, there are enforcement gaps and discrepancies between policy and practice, leading to anxiety and social isolation (Krebs, 2019). Previous studies have focused on institutional policies (Rajagopal & Strohbehn, 2011), yet the current research includes the student voice to offer a broader picture of managing food allergies in college.

Methods

The mixed-method case study will be conducted at Oklahoma State University (OSU), selected for its diverse student population and convenience. This design was chosen to build upon Rajagopal & Strohbehn's (2011) institutional-level research by integrating both administrative policy and student lived experiences. Document analysis will be used for data collection and will entail reviewing allergen management policies, training manuals, and menu labeling systems. Semi-structured interviews with students will also be conducted to explore their lived experiences and challenges.

Finally, an online survey will be used to evaluate policy awareness, dining safety, and satisfaction using a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically, and quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. All procedures will follow the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Ethical standards.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The findings will reveal inconsistencies between the written policies and students' lived experiences. Barriers include inconsistent labelling, inadequate staff training, and poor communication. Qualitative themes may include anxiety, self-advocacy, stress, and social isolation, while survey data will capture students' levels of trust and satisfaction with OSU Dining Services.

This study will provide insights into inclusive eating practices in higher education by bridging the gap between food allergy policies and students' experiences. By incorporating student viewpoints, it expands on previous studies and offers practical guidance for improving allergy control, instruction, and communication in university dining services.

References are available upon request

Work-In-Progress:
Tourism & Sustaina

ROUTINE TO GREEN: PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AND SUSTAINABLE DECISION-MAKING

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Introduction

Sustainability has become a pressing issue over the past decade, sparking interest among researchers from various disciplines to learn about and understand the relationship between sustainability and consumer behavior (Barbu et al., 2022; Minh and Quynh, 2024; Syed et al., 2024). However, many studies focused on how internal factors (e.g., perceived risks, knowledge) or external factors presented in the space (e.g., atmosphere) influence consumers' pro-environmental behavior (Sharma et al., 2024; Xue and Li, 2026).

Despite the expanding scholarly research on perspective taking, empirical studies have predominantly been conducted in the areas of human resources and organizational behavior (Hung and Wyer, 2009; Lee and Madera, 2021; Lu and Meng, 2025; Strong and Martin, 2014). Thus, by applying perspective taking to sustainability, it can help enhance the reasoning behind consumers' decision-making from a new viewpoint. This study aims to understand consumers' choice under the influence of perspective taking and compare the effect of when the view the environmental deterioration through human versus nature lenses.

Methods

There are two parts in the study. Study 1 employs a 2-conditioned between-subjects design (perspective taking: control vs. yes) in study 1 to test the main effect of perspective taking on green choices. Scenario manipulation is adopted from a study in workplace diversity management by Madera (2018) and the measurement of green choices (ECOINDEX) is adopted from Lee and Kim (2024). Study 2 employs a 2 (perspective taking: control vs. yes) x 2 (target victim: nature vs. human) between-subjects design to explore the interaction effect of perspective taking and target victim on consumers' green choices. To enhance the robustness of the manipulation, images were used in place of text, following the approach by Strong and Marting (2014). Data collection is done through Prolific. Participants are required to be over 18 years old and currently resides in the United States to be part of the studies. Additionally, those who participate in study 1 will not be eligible to take part in the second study.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study reveals the impact of perspective taking on consumer green choices and whether the impact of target victim has any influence on the main effect. The study contributes to the sustainability field theoretically and practically. This study extends the organizational behavior theory to the sustainability literature by using perspective taking to explain how consumers make green choices. For its managerial implications, companies that are transitioning from regular to more sustainable products can adopt the perspective taking into their marketing and communication material to heighten the willingness to adopt green options.

MORE THAN PARTICIPATION, TRAVELING FOR CONNECTION: HOW ACTIVE SPORT-EVENT TOURISM BUILDS SOCIAL NETWORKS IN MID AND LATER LIFE?

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Introduction
Loneliness in later life has become a major public health concern associated with cognitive decline, chronic illness, and premature mortality (Cohen, 2000; U.S. Surgeon General, 2023; World Health Organization [WHO], 2021), underscoring the need to foster social connections for healthy aging (WHO, 2023). Tourism—particularly active sport-event tourism involving travel for organized sport event participation—offers unique potential to alleviate loneliness by expanding everyday leisure networks into tourism contexts (Chalip, 2006; Gössling et al., 2018; Green & Chalip, 1998; Hu et al., 2023). However, prior research has focused mainly on perceptual aspects of social capital while overlooking the structural formation of networks in this context (Casanueva et al., 2016; Shin, 2021; Wäsche et al., 2017). Guided by social capital theory (Putnam, 2000), the concept of strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), and socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1992), this study examines how mid-and-later-life participants develop and expand social networks through sport-event tourism in the context of the Senior Games.

Methods
Using mixed-methods design, semi-structured interviews and a network mapping activity were conducted with 14 Senior Games participants (five men and nine women, aged 59–79). The network mapping employed name generator and interpreter techniques to identify up to five individuals from participants' everyday life, leisure, and event contexts (Perry et al., 2018). Network data will be analyzed in R to examine tie strength, multiplexity, and network composition, while interview data will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to interpret the meanings of participants' social relationships.

Results/Discussion/Implication
This study is expected to identify three network types among Senior Games participants: (1) *integrated*, (2) *partially connected*, and (3) *segmented*. Integrated networks merge daily, leisure, and event ties, reinforcing bonding capital, while partially connected networks link everyday and leisure ties with weaker event-based connections that foster bridging capital (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). Segmented networks are characterized by family-centered or everyday relationships with limited overlap across contexts (Carstensen, 1992). These patterns are expected to illustrate how sport-event tourism fosters diverse types of social networks connecting everyday, leisure, and event contexts. Theoretically, the study is expected to advance understanding of how travel for organized sport event participation enhances social connectedness and supports healthy aging. Methodologically, it employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates ego-centric network analysis with qualitative inquiry to capture both structural and experiential dimensions (Casanueva et al., 2016). Practically, the findings are expected to suggest that incorporating social connection elements is crucial in designing event tourism for older adults, highlighting the importance of creating socially supportive environments (Chalip, 2006; Green & Chalip, 1998).

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MODERATING EFFECT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESIDENT SATISFACTION AND SUPPORT FOR THE OSUN OSOGBO FESTIVAL

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Introduction

Effective event management requires residents' understanding of events' positive and negative impacts (Chi et al., 2018), which informs policies that mitigate harm while enhancing community benefits (Stylidis et al., 2014). The global events industry generates substantial economic value; for instance, 3.5 million people attended music festivals in the UK in 2014, a 26% increase from 2012, contributing £39.1 billion to the economy in 2015 (Tourism Alliance, 2015). However, environmental excesses linked to the industry have raised concerns about sustainability (Derrett, 2003). Events often cause waste, pollution, and resource depletion (Gibson & Wong, 2011), while research on their ecological impacts remains limited (Mair & Whitford, 2013). The 2008 International Expo in Zaragoza, Spain, exemplified these issues, drawing criticism for environmental hypocrisy and ecosystem damage (Rollin, 2008).

Previous studies examined relationships among event impacts, quality of life, and community support (Al-Emadi et al., 2017), but few considered environmental factors. Research frequently emphasizes economic over ecological outcomes (Wang et al., 2019), despite growing calls for sustainable practices from stakeholders such as the International Olympic Committee (Getz & Page, 2016). Grounded in value orientation and social exchange theories, this study investigates how community attachment, perceived benefits, and eco-centric values influence residents' satisfaction and support for the Osun Osogbo Festival (OOF), moderated by awareness of its environmental impacts. Eight hypotheses test these interrelationships, emphasizing the moderating role of environmental awareness.

Methods

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, approximately 400 Osogbo residents will be surveyed using Poate and Daplyn's (1993) formula for sample size determination. A structured questionnaire will measure six constructs: community attachment (Jaafar et al., 2015a), community benefits (Delamere, 2001), eco-centric value orientation (Shindler et al., 1993), satisfaction (Cottrell et al., 2013), awareness of negative environmental impacts (Lee & Back, 2006), and support for conservation and development (Wang & Pfister, 2008). Responses will be rated on a seven-point Likert scale. A pilot test will assess reliability and validity. Participants will be randomly recruited at household levels, considering those aged 18 and above with at least five years of community residency. Data will be analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS 20.0 (Hair et al., 2011; 2019).

Implications

The OOF, an important ecological, spiritual, and economic site, faces threats from over-tourism and environmental degradation that endanger its sustainability and UNESCO World Heritage status. This study will contribute to sustainable event management by clarifying how residents' community attachment, perceived benefits, and eco-centric values affect satisfaction and support for cultural events when moderated by environmental awareness. The findings will inform policy initiatives promoting local participation and environmental sensitization, ensuring that cultural tourism and heritage conservation evolve sustainably. Ultimately, it will explain the pivotal role of residents' environmental awareness in safeguarding the OOF's long-term viability.

Managing Stakeholder Tensions in Hallmark Events: A Case Study of the Jerash Festival in Jordan

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Introduction

Hallmark events are particularly significant because they deliver both measurable economic returns and symbolic value, enhancing a destination's market position while reducing potential negative impacts on host communities (Getz et al., 2012; Chiengkul et al., 2022). However, despite these advantages, hallmark events also pose complex challenges that affect their economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability (Moisescu et al., 2019). One key reason is stakeholder engagement in the planning process. Their planning process is not straightforward; they possess conflicting attributes that require a non-standardized management model. As Todd et al. (2017) emphasize, such events cannot be managed solely through planning efforts but require flexible strategies that involve multiple stakeholders. Moreover, hosting hallmark events often places a heavy demand on the host community's resources, especially when there is no clear stakeholder management plan, which can significantly affect all three essential dimensions of sustainability - economic, social, and environmental (Getz et al., 2012). This issue becomes even more severe when events are centralized and exclude key stakeholders from decision-making.

The case study focuses on a hallmark event, the Jerash Festival, Jordan's most prominent hallmark event, which has been celebrated since 1981, and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually (Memphis Tours, 2025), where the organizing process happened within a specific stakeholder more than others (centralized). Therefore, we believe stakeholder theory (ST) and Todd et al. (2017) typology offer a useful framework for understanding and balancing the needs, wants, and demands of diverse groups. Therefore, potentially provides a lens for addressing the sustainability challenges the event creates for the host community and offering solutions.

Methods

This study adopts a case study method focusing on the Jerash Festival, drawing on qualitative secondary data from government reports, media coverage, and stakeholder testimonies (Fidel, 1984). Archival resources from 2021 to 2025 were examined due to the current relevance of sustainability issues in Jordan and the evolving context of the event. These materials, including news articles, official reports, and municipal documents, provided insights into stakeholder perspectives, event governance, and sustainability challenges.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Preliminary findings suggest that while the Jerash Festival generates substantial economic and cultural benefits (e.g., empowering artisans, attracting tourists, enhancing Jordan's image), it simultaneously creates negative impacts on sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. Furthermore, this case study expects to demonstrate that these tensions stem from a highly centralized governance structure and the marginalization of the host community.

Treating the host community as a primary stakeholder and reducing centralization are anticipated to reduce conflicts and make the festival more sustainable.

References are available upon request

DOES GREEN ADVERTISING REALLY WORK? THE MARKETING EFFECT AND MECHANISM OF GREEN ADVERTISING IN THE CONTEXT OF ECOTOURISM

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Introduction

The overdevelopment of tourism has led to environmental pollution, resource depletion, and ecosystem degradation, underscoring the need for sustainable tourism (Das & Chatterjee, 2015; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Ecotourism, which balances economic growth with ecological protection, has gained attention for its emphasis on nature, education, and sustainability (Wondirad et al., 2020; Beall et al., 2021).

High-quality services, interpretive experiences, and supply chain incentives enhance tourists' environmentally friendly behaviors (Aseres & Sira, 2020; Khan, 2003). Ecotourism also promotes environmental protection, local economic development, and environmental ethics (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2012; Hunt et al., 2015). However, despite extensive research on the antecedents and outcomes of ecotourism, studies on advertising and marketing remain limited. Most research focuses on supply-side constraints, such as competitive dynamics, weak cooperation, and uneven service quality (Wondirad et al., 2020; Mgonja et al., 2015), overlooking the demand side that drives ecotourism. As a market-driven and interdisciplinary concept, ecotourism's sustainability depends on understanding tourists' preferences, needs, and behaviors (Khanra et al., 2021).

Green marketing is vital for ecotourism (Agarwal & Kumar, 2021), yet price, service quality, and greenwashing often hinder the conversion of green intentions into practice (Segev et al., 2016; Luo et al., 2020). Therefore, this study investigates: (1) the effectiveness of green tourism ads, (2) the psychological mechanisms through which ad types influence intentions, and (3) the boundary conditions of these effects.

Methods

Study 1 utilizes TripAdvisor secondary data, collected through Python web scraping, to investigate the relationship between green tourism advertisements and ecotourism intentions. Study 2 adopts an experiment on Rednote, a social media platform for travelers, to verify the effects of green ads and explore the underlying psychological mechanisms. Study 3 employs virtual destination video ads to test the moderating role of culturally derived power, contrasting socialized and personalized message framing.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study is expected to show that green tourism advertisements enhance ecotourism intentions by increasing collective efficacy, whereas non-green ads influence intentions through perceived informational utility. Moreover, culturally derived power moderates these effects: socialized power strengthens the influence of green ads, while personalized power strengthens the impact of non-green ads. Theoretically, the study expands the understanding of ecotourism advertising mechanisms and contributes to debates on the effectiveness of green marketing. Practically, it provides strategic insights for promoting sustainable tourism and enhancing destination marketing practices.

TOURISM WITHOUT TENANTS? – THE RISKY COST OF MIAMI'S GROWTH

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Introduction

The use of tourism-driven development and public-private partnerships has long been a key strategy for urban revitalization and economic growth (Novy & Colomb, 2019). These models, which leverage public capital to attract private investment, are often justified by a "trickle-down" theory where initial development is expected to spur widespread economic benefits, from job creation to increased tax revenues (Georgia Institute of Technology, 2024; UN-Habitat, 2012). However, in Miami, this rapid high-end development model has created an unsustainable business environment. Over the last decade, a surge in luxury hotels and short-term rentals fueled by public-private partnerships has driven up property values and rental costs at an unprecedented rate (Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2024). This has led to a widening affordability gap and the displacement of essential service workers, the very people needed to sustain the hospitality economy. As housing costs rise, these workers are being priced out of the city, forced into longer commutes, and placing critical strain on the local labor supply (Day, 2003). While housing affordability and workforce challenges in Miami have been studied, little prior work has directly measured the impact of tourism-focused development patterns on affordable housing access and labor market sustainability. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the financial relationship between tourism-driven real estate development and the city's affordable housing supply, demonstrating how the failure to invest in workforce housing is creating a systemic risk to the long-term profitability of Miami's tourism economy.

Methods

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive, data-driven analysis for industry leaders and policymakers. The author will conduct three key analyses: Policy & Investment Analysis, Market Performance Analytics, and Workforce Sustainability Assessment. The author will evaluate the flow of public capital into tourism projects by examining county records and financial reports from 2015-2025. This phase will pinpoint specific tax incentives, bond issuances, and public-private partnerships that have subsidized development. Using time-series data from property, housing, and labor databases, the author will analyze key performance indicators (KPIs). This includes correlating metrics such as new hotel permits and short-term rental growth with rising housing costs, rental rates, and public housing waitlists to quantify the market impact. Lastly, the author will model the economic viability of the tourism sector's workforce. By comparing service-sector wages against current rental costs, the author will identify the affordability gap and demonstrate the long-term unsustainability of the current labor model.

Results, Discussion & Implications

This study intends to present a clear, data-backed model that quantifies the risk to the hospitality industry. I anticipate revealing a direct link between the proliferation of tourism-focused real estate and rising housing costs, creating a significant labor supply challenge. The findings are expected to show that the current economic model is inefficient, as public funds are being used to fuel growth that ultimately destabilizes the local workforce. The findings expected to provide key insights for hoteliers and investors on how to mitigate future operational risks. The insights from this report will enable industry leaders to make informed decisions that support sustainable growth and ensure the long-term health of Miami's hospitality economy.

FROM DESIGNATION TO DESTINATION (D2D): ESTIMATING THE BRANDING IMPACT ON VISITOR VOLUME INCREASE FOR THE NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

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Introduction

The U.S. National Park System, often hailed as "America's Best Idea," symbolizes democracy, conservation, and public enjoyment (Duncan & Bums, 2009). Since Yellowstone's establishment in 1872 (Jackson, 1942), it has expanded to over 400 units protecting natural and cultural heritage (Sellars, 2007). Beyond preservation, national parks shape identity and stimulate tourism (Frost & Hall, 2009; Mowatt, 2019). As a global brand, the "National Park" label conveys scenic grandeur (Li, 2022), ecological integrity (Timko & Innes, 2009), and recreational opportunity (Laitos, 1996), strengthening destination value and visibility (Omolo, 2016). Studies show that redesignation to "National Park" status significantly increases visitation (Weiler & Seidl, 2004a), driven by branding rather than infrastructure. Media coverage and digital engagement further amplify this effect (Wichman, 2024a; Marcotte & Stokowski, 2021; Phillips et al., 2022). Newly redesignated sites, such as New River Gorge and Indiana Dunes, illustrate this brand power (Stats Report Viewer, n.d.). After its 2020 redesignation, New River Gorge's visitation rose nearly 50%, confirming the national park brand as a strategic asset enhancing awareness, trust, and economic benefits (Ferretti-Gallon et al., 2021). This raises an important empirical question: to what extent is the observed increase in visitation attributable to the redesignation as a national park?

Methods

This study assesses the renaming effect through two complementary methods. A before-after analysis compares annual visitation trends (2015-2024), using 2020 as the intervention point. The 2015-2020 period provides a counterfactual baseline, with forecasts generated by a Kernel Extreme Leaming Machine (KELM) model to simulate a "no-renaming" scenario. The net impact equals the difference between predicted and actual visitation from 2020-2024.

Building on the four-site comparative framework, this study employs a Dynamic DID event study design to capture the temporal evolution of the 2020 redesignation effect of New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Annual visitation data from 2010-2024 are used to estimate dynamic coefficients relative to 2019, examining pre- and post-treatment trends. Using Indiana Dunes NP, White Sands NP, Big South Fork NRRA, and Obed WSR as control sites, the model identifies whether visitation diverged significantly after redesignation and tests the parallel-trend assumption while tracing the persistence of the branding impact over time.

Results/Discussion/Implication

The study is expected to demonstrate that the 2020 redesignation of New River Gorge from a National River to a National Park and Preserve generated a distinct and measurable branding effect on visitor volume.

The Dynamic DID and event study estimations will likely reveal a statistically significant post-renaming increase, clearly exceeding the counterfactual trend projected from pre-2020 visitation patterns. The magnitude of growth is anticipated to range between 20% and 30%, aligning with similar increases observed in other recently upgraded U.S. national parks. Dynamic event coefficients are expected to show that the strongest growth occurs one to two years after the redesignation, coinciding with heightened national recognition, media coverage, and marketing exposure. In contrast, benchmark parks such as Big South Fork NRRA and Obed WSR are expected to exhibit relatively stable visitation trends, confirming that the observed increase at NRG primarily reflects the net branding effect rather than broader regional or economic fluctuations.

FROM WASTE TO RESOURCE: ESTABLISHING A CLOSED-LOOP FOOD ECONOMY AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

Universities are increasingly positioned to model sustainable practices and educate future leaders on food-system challenges. One emerging approach is the circular food economy, which seeks to minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency (Ellen McArthur Foundation, 2019). At Florida International University's (FIU) at the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, students in food and beverage management courses generate pre-consumer food scraps during hands-on culinary training. Instead of discarding these materials, they now deposit them into designated compost bins as part of an ongoing circular bioeconomy initiative. The resulting compost is used to enrich the soil in on-campus gardens, where vegetables and herbs are grown and later incorporated back into the same hospitality courses—creating a fully closed-loop food cycle. Launched in 2021, the project has progressed across four phases: (1) testing compost-to-soil ratios for optimal crop growth; (2) designing a closed-loop model connecting hospitality courses, composting, and agroecology; (3) establishing pilot raised garden beds at FIU's Modesto A. Maidique Campus; and (4) relocating the garden to the Biscayne Bay Campus (BBC) to deepen integration with hospitality operations. This initiative demonstrates how urban universities can implement circular food systems while enhancing experiential learning (Leal Filho et al., 2021). The project also equips hospitality students with knowledge and values that support sustainable food sourcing and operational stewardship (Barth et al., 2020).

Methods

A qualitative case-study approach documents the design and implementation of FIU's circular food system. Data collection includes compost weigh-ins and weigh-outs, crop performance, compost-to-soil ratios, and materials used per growing cycle. Field observations assess composting practices, contamination issues, student participation, and garden maintenance. As the project transitions to FIU's BBC campus, data additionally examine expected benefits such as greater student involvement due to garden proximity, reduced transportation emissions, and the integration of the campus food court into the organic waste diversion system. Together, these data provide a comprehensive understanding of the operational, environmental, and educational components required to maintain a closed-loop food system within an urban university setting.

Results/Discussion/Implication

Preliminary findings indicate that developing a closed-loop food economy in an urban university is both feasible and beneficial. Testing compost-to-soil ratios will help identify conditions that maximize crop yields, while compost weigh-ins allow assessment of carbon-emission reductions achieved through waste diversion. The project also explores educational impacts, evaluating how student engagement in composting, gardening, and culinary applications influences sustainability awareness and attitudes toward local and seasonal sourcing. Operational analysis examines labor, resource needs, and logistical challenges across phases of the initiative. Relocating the garden to the BBC hospitality campus is expected to improve operational efficiency. Beyond campus benefits, the findings also offer broader implications for the hospitality and tourism industry, demonstrating how circular food systems can be incorporated into restaurant operations to strengthen environmental stewardship (Baldwin & Dripps, 2012). Ultimately, this case provides a model for other universities aiming to develop sustainable, closed-loop food syste

FROM ISLANDS TO SMALL TOWNS: TOURISMPHOBIA AND THE ECONOMICS OF VISITOR TAXES IN HAWAII AND MAINE

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Introduction

Hawaii and Maine offer contrasting examples of how tourism affects local economies and communities. In Hawaii, year-round visitation sustains jobs and cultural attractions but also strains infrastructure and fuels resident concerns over congestion and environmental stress. To address these impacts, the state introduced a "Green Fee" in 2025 to fund conservation and climate resilience (Honoré, 2025). Maine, by contrast, faces seasonal tourism surges that boost local economies yet pressure housing and services, as seen in the summer 2024 influx of nearly eight million visitors (Grover, 2025). Research shows that fiscal tools such as visitor taxes can help manage visitor flows, generate funding, and reduce social tension (Sharma et al., 2020; Anguera-Torrell et al., 2025). Guided by Social Exchange Theory, which links resident support to perceived costs and benefits (Qi et al., 2025), this study compares both destinations to evaluate how taxation policies influence economic outcomes and community attitudes.

Methods

Guided by Social Exchange Theory, which posits that residents assess tourism based on perceived costs and benefits (Qi et al., 2025), this study examines how fiscal policies and visitor activity influence local communities. Using secondary data such as visitor arrivals, lodging tax revenues, and resident surveys, descriptive analyses will identify trends in tourism impacts and community sentiment. Comparing Hawaii and Maine will reveal differences in how year-round and seasonal destinations respond to taxation measures, offering practical, evidence-based insights for policymakers seeking to balance economic benefits with resident well-being.

Results/Discussion/Implication

It is expected that visitor taxation can be an effective approach to managing tourism pressures while generating revenue for essential services, infrastructure, and environmental protection (Sharma et al., 2020; Anguera-Torrell et al., 2025). These findings will provide valuable guidance for policymakers and tourism managers seeking to balance economic growth with resident satisfaction and long-term sustainability. The comparison between Hawaii and Maine highlights how local context shapes the effectiveness of fiscal policies. Hawaii's high-volume, year-round tourism creates ongoing infrastructure strain, whereas Maine's seasonal tourism leads to concentrated pressures during peak months. From a theoretical standpoint, the study will add to existing research on tourismphobia and sustainable destination management by showing how fiscal tools influence resident attitudes and community tolerance (Qi et al., 2025). Overall, the findings are expected to emphasize that well-designed, context-specific taxation strategies, grounded in quantitative evidence, can strengthen economic resilience while protecting community well-being and environmental integrity.

References are available upon request

GUIDING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM THROUGH THE LENS OF INSTAGRAM INVESTIGATING BARRIERS TO VISITOR USE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT USING DEEP LEARNING: EVIDENCE FROM O‘AHU, HAWAI‘I

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Introduction

Tourism destinations have long faced sustainability challenges, with transportation playing a key role in shaping their sustainability. Public transit has garnered significant attention in the transportation field for its potential to improve sustainability; however, it has received relatively limited focus within the context of tourism. (Gutiérrez & Miravet, 2016; Hall et al., 2017; Le-Klähn et al., 2014).

Traffic congestion is more severe in tourist cities due to large numbers of visitors. For instance, Honolulu is the 19th most congested city in the U.S. (INRIX, 2024), yet its population ranks only 55th in the nation. Therefore, local government agencies have recognized the role of public transit in encouraging greater use among visitors to support sustainable transportation and tourism. Prior studies suggest that more visitors who adopt sustainability-oriented attitudes are increasingly inclined to use public transit when travelling (Budeanu, 2007; Nowacki et al., 2023). Nevertheless, public transit use by visitors remains relatively low in U.S. tourist cities, such as Hawaii. Therefore, extra and deliberate effort is needed to nudge visitors toward public transit as part of their multimodal travel choices. To encourage greater use, recognizing visitor needs and the barriers that discourage transit use is therefore critical.

Over the past decades, public transit has been increasingly studied from an engineering perspective without separating/segmenting locals and visitors, leading most public transit systems to fail to attract visitors due to their complex user experiences. Despite many studies focusing on transit usage by visitors in popular tourism destinations in Asian and Europe, public transit in U.S. cities, especially in Hawaii, has received little attention in academia, thus leaving an unfilled gap in understanding visitor travel behavior and the decision-making process behind their modal choice towards an island-based, traffic-intensive context. Therefore, this study focuses on understanding the mechanisms that hinder potential visitors' adaptation to the Hawaii public transit system, using their travel profiles to improve their public transportation experiences and encourage sustainable modal choices for Hawaii tourism.

Methods

Deep learning methodology has been gaining attention in recent years for tourism-related studies (Antolini et al., 2025; Núñez et al., 2024). Compared to traditional models, XGBoost remains effective when the data are both categorical and quantitative, offering a useful approach for uncovering complex relationships and assisting in explaining visitors’ public transit usage behavior. To capture the nonlinear relationship between visitors' travel profiles and their reasons for not using public transit, this study employed a deep learning method (XGBoost) and the SHAP (Shapley Additive exPlanations) to quantify and interpret the nonlinear impacts of various factors on the barriers.

Results/Discussion/Implication

This study aims to capture nonlinear relationships among visitor travel profiles and their underlying barriers to not using public transit during their Hawaii trips. Contributing to the deeper understanding of behavioral patterns and identifying potential visitor market segments to nudge the use of public transit to facilitate sustainable travel.