



Exploring Guest Attitudes and Adoption Patterns in Contactless Service Utilization in the Hospitality Industry

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Introduction

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a profound transformation in consumer behavior, particularly within the hospitality sector, necessitating swift adaptations to mitigate health risks while delivering seamless guest experiences (Gretzel et al., 2020). Central to this evolution is the emergence of contactless services as a pivotal response, offering an innovative solution that addresses safety concerns and enhances operational efficiency within the hospitality industry.

Context and Background

In the wake of the pandemic, the implementation of contactless services has become a strategic imperative for hotels and accommodations globally, aiming to minimize physical interactions and curb the transmission of infectious diseases (Aguiló et al., 2021). Contactless technologies encompass a range of solutions, including mobile check-ins, digital room keys, touchless payments, and smart room controls, creating a frictionless and hygienic guest experience (Al-Ansi et al., 2021).

Impact on Consumer Behavior

The growing demand for contactless services in the post-COVID era is rooted in guests' heightened hygiene consciousness and a preference for reduced physical touchpoints in their interactions with hospitality services (Chathoth et al., 2021). Beyond aligning with evolving guest expectations for safety, these services offer operational advantages by streamlining processes, reducing wait times, and enhancing overall guest satisfaction (Kim et al., 2021). Moreover, the ubiquity of smartphones and increasing digital literacy among consumers have further fueled the demand for contactless services, making them more accessible and user-friendly (Sigala et al., 2020). The convenience, efficiency, and perceived safety associated with contactless technologies

have contributed to their growing popularity, transforming them from a temporary necessity to a permanent fixture in the hospitality landscape.

Strategic Integration in the Recovery Phase

As hotels globally navigate the recovery phase and aim to rebuild guest confidence, the integration and advancement of contactless services have become integral to their success (Gretzel et al., 2020). This shift towards contactless solutions not only aligns with current health imperatives but also signifies a fundamental transformation in the way guests interact with and perceive hospitality services.

Transformative Surge in Contactless Services

The hospitality industry, driven by imperatives of safety, convenience, and evolving guest preferences, has witnessed a transformative surge in contactless services post-COVID-19 (Gretzel et al., 2020). Technologies, ranging from mobile check-ins and digital room keys to touchless payments and smart room devices, have redefined the guest experience, offering streamlined interactions and enhanced safety measures across various hotel environments.

Theoretical Literature Review

A theoretical literature review aims to explore and synthesize existing academic frameworks and theories related to consumer behavior, technology adoption, and service innovation within the hospitality industry. The review will encompass the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Service Innovation Theory, and Consumer Behavior models, providing a comprehensive understanding of theoretical underpinnings.

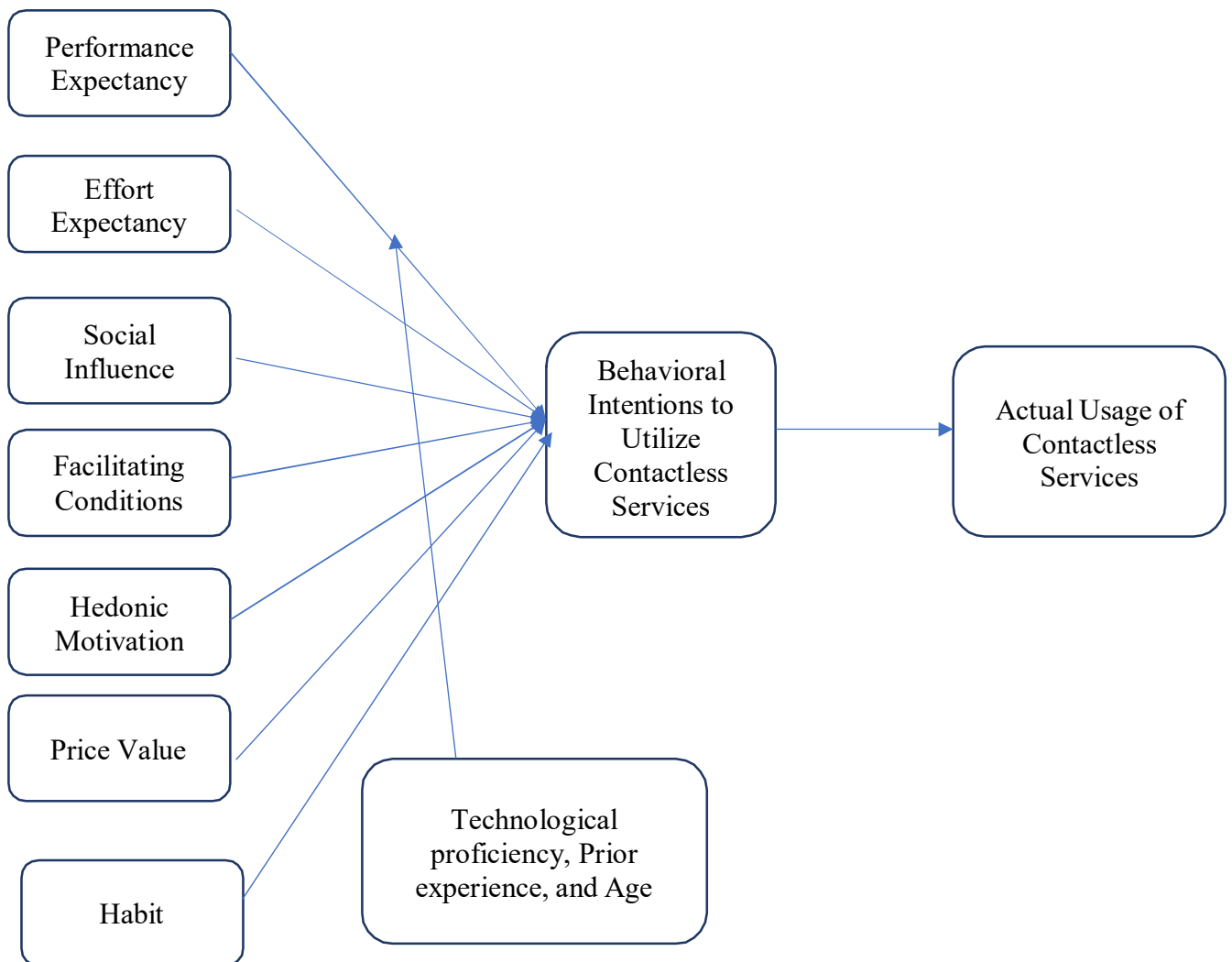
Existing Knowledge Gap and Geographical Focus

Despite advancements in contactless services, a notable research gap exists within the Tricity region-encompassing Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali-regarding the specific influence of UTAUT2 constructs on guests' attitudes and behaviors towards the adoption of contactless services. This study aims to contribute by comprehensively exploring the UTAUT2 constructs' role in shaping guest attitudes and adoption patterns within the Tricity region, considering guests who might have visited various hotels across India.

Theoretical Framework

The exploration of guests' behavioral intentions towards and adoption patterns of contactless services aligns with the overarching theme of enhancing guest experiences and service delivery (Suski, 2020). This exploration is guided by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) framework. Guests' behavioral intentions are shaped by factors such as effort expectancy, performance expectancy, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, and price value (Hao, 2021).

Conceptual Model and Hypothesis



Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a positive relationship between UTAUT2 constructs (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, habit, hedonic motivation, and price value) and guests' behavioral intention towards the adoption of contactless services in hospitality.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Guests' behavioral intention towards adopting contactless services positively influences their actual usage behavior within the hospitality setting.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Guest characteristics such as technological proficiency, prior experience with contactless services, and age moderate the relationship between UTAUT2 constructs, behavioral intention, and usage behavior of contactless services in the hospitality industry.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to analyze the realm of contactless service utilization within the contemporary hospitality landscape. The specific objectives include:

1. Investigating the influence of UTAUT2 constructs on guests' behavioral intention towards contactless service adoption in hospitality.
2. Analyzing the relationship between guests' behavioral intention and actual usage behavior of contactless services.
3. Investigating the moderating role of guest characteristics (technological proficiency, prior experience, and age) on the relationship between UTAUT2 constructs, behavioral intention, and usage behavior.

Methodology

The research methodology will involve a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and interviews with guests who have engaged with contactless services in hotels across different Indian locations. The inclusion of diverse encounters enriches the study's capacity to discern nuanced differences in guest preferences and adoption patterns of contactless services within the broader Indian hospitality context.

Expected Contributions and Outcomes

The study's outcomes will provide valuable insights for hotel managers and marketers in making informed decisions regarding service innovation, technology adoption, and guest-centric strategies. The insights derived from this study can guide the industry in adopting long-term strategies to enhance resilience in the face of evolving guest preferences and technological advancements.

Significance of the Study

The study's significance lies in its potential to unveil insights into how contactless services impact guest experiences within the hospitality sector. Analyzing attitudes and adoption patterns aids in tailoring services to meet guest preferences, ultimately enhancing service quality and satisfaction. The study contributes to filling existing knowledge gaps within the hospitality industry, adding valuable insights to the field's literature.

Conclusion

In summary, this concept paper outlines the rationale, objectives, and significance of exploring guest attitudes and adoption patterns in contactless service utilization within the hospitality industry. The study's theoretical foundation, research objectives, methodology, and expected contributions align with the dynamic landscape of the hospitality sector, aiming to drive enhancements in service strategies, operational efficiencies, competitiveness, and knowledge advancement.

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