



SUPERIOR
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ICMR
16th International Conference
on Management Research

16th ICMR

Sustainable Tourism Management in the Era of Digitalization:

Trends, Challenges, and Innovative Solutions

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS 2025

17th - 24th October 2025



Uzbekistan Bukhara Chapter



Foreword

ICMR 2025

The Superior University, in partnership with New Uzbekistan University and Asia International University, proudly invites scholars, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and students to participate in the 16th International Conference on Management Research (ICMR 2025). This year's conference focuses on the critical intersection of Sustainable Tourism Management and Digital Transformation, providing a platform for global dialogue on innovative solutions, emerging trends, and pressing challenges shaping the tourism industry in a rapidly evolving digital world. Our collaboration with New Uzbekistan University has significantly enriched the academic quality of the conference. The active participation of distinguished academics, industry experts, and students created dynamic discussions, bringing depth to debates on sustainable tourism, digital innovation, and contemporary management challenges. These proceedings capture the intellectual rigour, scholarly contributions, and innovative spirit of ICMR-2025. We hope this volume serves as a valuable reference for future research, policy development, and practice in tourism management and digital transformation.



Prof. Dr. Sumaira Rehman
Rector, The Superior University

Patron's Message

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warmest greetings on the occasion of the 16th International Conference on Management Research (ICMR), being held for the very first time on an international platform in Uzbekistan. This milestone reflects our vision of transcending boundaries, building global academic linkages, and promoting meaningful dialogue among scholars, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. The chosen theme, "Sustainable Tourism Management in the Era of Digitalization: Trends, Challenges, and Innovative Solutions," is both timely and relevant. As the world continues to recover from unprecedented global challenges, tourism stands as a vital industry that not only supports economies but also fosters cultural exchange and understanding. Digitalization, meanwhile, is reshaping how we experience, manage, and sustain tourism worldwide. This conference aims to explore innovative strategies that ensure tourism's growth aligns with principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and technological advancement. I am confident that this gathering will serve as a catalyst for new ideas, collaborative research, and actionable insights that address both local and global challenges. I look forward to witnessing the impactful discussions and outcomes that will emerge from this landmark event.



Dr. Sami Ullah Bajwa
Dean Faculty of Business Management Sciences

Dean's Message

It is a matter of great pride to announce that the 16th International Conference on Management Research (ICMR) will be hosted for the first time internationally in Uzbekistan. This milestone is a testament to Superior University's commitment to fostering global academic collaborations and creating platforms where knowledge transcends borders. The theme of this year's conference, "Sustainable Tourism Management in the Era of Digitalization: Trends, Challenges, and Innovative Solutions," reflects our dedication to addressing issues that are not only academically significant but also vital for shaping resilient societies and economies. Tourism, being one of the fastest-growing global industries, requires innovative frameworks to balance growth with sustainability. With the power of digital transformation, we now have the opportunity to reimagine tourism as a driver of inclusive development, cultural preservation, and economic prosperity. ICMR 2025 provides a unique opportunity for researchers, policymakers, industry experts, and academicians to engage in meaningful dialogue, share cutting-edge research, and develop actionable solutions that can influence policy and practice worldwide. I firmly believe that this conference will open new avenues for international partnerships and inspire collective efforts for a sustainable future.



Conference Chair's Message

It is a distinguished honour to welcome you to the 16th International Conference on Management Research (ICMR 2025), being hosted for the first time internationally in Uzbekistan. This significant milestone marks an important progression in the evolution of ICMR and reflects the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences' unwavering commitment to strengthening global academic engagement and advancing cross-cultural knowledge exchange. The conference theme, "Sustainable Tourism Management in the Era of Digitalization: Trends, Challenges, and Innovative Solutions," underscores our collective resolve to address critical issues at the intersection of sustainability, technological transformation, and tourism development. In collaboration with New Uzbekistan University and Asia International University, this conference convenes leading scholars, industry experts, and policymakers to deliberate on emerging trends and propose evidence-based, future-oriented strategies. I am confident that the scholarly contributions and partnerships cultivated through ICMR 2025 will generate meaningful impact and advance academic and professional practice globally.

Prof. Dr. Nadia Nasir

Professor / Director Post Graduate
Program of Business Administration



Conference Manager's Message

I am delighted to share that the 16th International Conference on Management Research (ICMR 2025) will be held for the first time beyond our borders, in Uzbekistan, marking a remarkable expansion of ICMR's global footprint. Hosting this prestigious event internationally highlights the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences' commitment to building meaningful academic bridges and promoting research-driven dialogue across continents. The conference will revolve around the theme, "Sustainable Tourism Management in the Era of Digitalization: Trends, Challenges, and Innovative Solutions." This focus reflects the growing need to harmonize digital advancements with sustainable tourism practices. In an industry that shapes economies and cultures worldwide, rethinking tourism through a lens of innovation, sustainability, and responsibility has become more essential than ever. Our collaboration with New Uzbekistan University and Asia International University transforms ICMR 2025 into an influential gathering where researchers, practitioners, and policymakers can collectively explore emerging trends and co-create solutions for the future of global tourism. As a Conference Executive, I look forward to the fresh perspectives, research contributions, and strategic partnerships that will emerge from this year's discussions. ICMR 2025 promises to catalyze new ideas and impactful collaborations that will benefit both the academic and professional community worldwide.

Dr. Mahwish Zafar

Director CARBS Policy Lab

Conference Program

ICMR 2025

**Bukhara
Chapter**

The opening session comprises the formal welcome, introductory remarks, inaugural address, and Guest of Honor speeches. It establishes the conference's objectives, underscores its significance, and frames the central theme of ICMR-2025.

Conference Program-Bukhara Chapter

Tuesday 21 October 2025

Sr	Time Sot	Activity	Name of Person	Any Other Detail
1	10:30 AM	Welcome	TBD - AIU Master of the Ceremony	
3	10:30 - 10:45 AM	Welcome Note	Rector , AIU	
4	10:45 - 11:00 AM	Inaugural Speech	Prof. Dr Sumaira Rehman Rector Superior University	
5	11:00 - 11:15 AM	Chief Guest Speech	TBD by NUU	
6	11:15 - 11:20 AM	Arrangements for Panel Discussion		Chairs/Seating Arrangement
7	11:20 - 12:00 PM	Panel Discussion	Moderator: TBD Panelist 1: Dr Sami Bajwa, Superior University Panelist 2: Dr Samina Khalid Panelist 3: TBD by AIU Panelist 4: TBD by AIU	
8	12:00 - 12:15 PM	Souvenir Exchange	Superior University will present a souvenir to the Chief Guest AIU is requested to present souvenirs to the Chief Guest, Panel Discussion members	
9	12:30 - 2:00 PM	Parallel Paper Presentations in 4 Rooms		
10	12:30 - 2:00 PM	MOU Signing Ceremony (We will keep on updating details as MOUs are finalized)		
11	2:00 - 3:00 PM	Lunch		

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Presentation Paper Sessions

The paper presentation sessions at the Bukhara Chapter of ICMR-2025 feature research spanning four key thematic areas: digitalization, artificial intelligence, and smart tourism; sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable development goals; consumer experience, marketing, and behavioral insights; and leadership, human resource management, and organizational dynamics. These sessions showcase rigorous research, innovative methodologies, and practical insights that advance knowledge and practice in tourism, hospitality, and organizational management. Each session is chaired by distinguished academics, ensuring scholarly depth, engaging discussions, and the dissemination of high-quality research.

Session 1: Digitalization, AI & Smart Tourism

Time: 12:30 PM-2:00 PM | **Venue:** Room-1

Session Chair: Muhammad Shahzad Hanif

Sr	Authors	Research Paper Title
1	Amara Awan	Investigating the role of AI technologies and AI delusion in tourists' decision-making process towards ecotourism
2	Tayyaba Syed	Intellectual capital, open innovation, and AI capability for sustainable tourism performance: Evidence from SMEs in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
3	M Imran Khan	Smart Tourism Governance through AI: A quantitative study of the public sector in Punjab, Pakistan
4	Arooj Zahra	Digital disruption in tourism: A qualitative thematic literature analysis of challenges and opportunities for sustainable development
5	Zunaira Sharif	Tourism in Transition: How digital technologies reshape sustainability challenges and solutions
6	Dr Aisha Ismail	Unveiling digital footprints in smart tourism: A technology readiness perspective
7	Dr. Noreen Zahra Salimova	From reviews to revenue: Investigating the influence of user-generated content on the co-creation of travellers' value for startups
8	Sarvinoz Fazliddin kizi	The role of modern digital technologies in developing tourist routes

Session 2: Sustainability, CSR, SDGs in Tourism and Hospitality

Time: 12:30 PM-2:00 PM | **Venue:** Room-2

Session Chair: Dr. Rizwan Qaiser Danish

Sr	Authors	Research Paper Title
1	Dr. Samina Khalil	An Analysis of Headway on the SDGs: Status of SDGs Progress locally and globally
2	Dr. Qamaruddin Matilo	Survival or sustainability? Strategic energy choices at Nishat Mills (NML) in Pakistan's textile industry
3	Dr. Rizwan Qaiser Danish	Role of corporate social responsibility in the development of brand loyalty and customer satisfaction: An evidence from hotel and restaurant industry of Pakistan
4	Muhammad Musarrat Nawaz	Impact of AI-powered digital assistants on customer luxury brands' online experience
5	Mahwash Rafiq Sheikh	Impact of CSR on commercial banks in Pakistan
6	Hassan Raza	Media sentiment and tourism demand in Pakistan: A news and web-scraping approach
7	Istamkhuja Olimovich Davronov	Sustainable hotel industry development: challenges and opportunities in Bukhara
8	Kurbanova Zebiniso Azimovna	The role of creative industries in the sustainable development of tourism

Session 3: Consumer Experience, Marketing, and Behavioral Insights

Time: 12:30 PM-2:00 PM | **Venue:**

Session Chair: Dr. Muhammad Sajid

Sr	Authors	Research Paper Title
1	Afsheen Hassan	Courage as a driver of transition and self-reinvention: the moment of escape
2	Ramish Moeen	Towards sustainable hospitality performance: Leveraging digital literacy and strategic-operational controls
3	Beram Khan Sumbal	Customer experience as the Crown: Qualitative insights from the aesthetics and cosmetology sector
4	Rabeea Ishaq	Empowering innovation: How client engagement, marketing prowess, and technological advancements fuel employee curiosity and job crafting
5	Ozodova Farida Zarif kiz	The significance of tourism and marketing strategies in the context of market integration
6	Fazal Elahi Awan	Leveraging standardized performance-based rewards system to enhance team productivity in educational SMEs
7	Tooba Javid	Leveraging emerging technologies for sustainable tourism entrepreneurship in developing economies: Insights from Nepal and Pakistan

Session 4: Leadership, HRM, and Organizational Dynamics

Time: 12:30 AM-2:30 PM | **Venue:** Room 4

Session Chair: Dr. Shazia Nauman

Sr	Authors	Research Paper Title
1	Dr. Shazia Nauman	The dark side of leadership: How exploitative leadership drives project turnover intention in it projects
2	Mian Sajid Nazir	The interplay of information asymmetry, risk, project governance, and trust in agile project environments
3	Dr. Majid Ali	Ethical leadership and employee agility in banking sector: The mediating role of adaptive performance
4	Dr Sana Fayyaz	The role of sustainable human resource management practices on women's job performance: The moderating effect of reward systems in Pakistan's higher education sector
5	Ehtisham Ameer	Organizations as Rock Bands: Developing a metaphorical understanding of postmodern entrepreneurial ventures
6	Musab Mumtaz	Exploring the impact of strategic human resource practices on project performance: The role of the project team agility and the moderating role of transformational leadership – Evidence from BRICS Economies
7	Sidra Azim	The double-edged sword of AI: Digital overload, psychological safety, and employee mental health

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Paper Abstracts Presentation

The abstracts presented in this section highlight the scholarly contributions shared at the Bukhara Chapter of ICMR-2025. They reflect rigorous research, innovative approaches, and insights across sustainable tourism and digital innovation.

Session 1

Digitalization, AI & Smart Tourism

Investigating the role of AI Technologies and AI Delusion in Tourists' Decision-Making Process towards Ecotourism

Amara Awan¹, Dr. Mahwish Zafar², Dr. Kashif Hussain³

Superior University Lahore, Pakistan^{1,2}, Virtual University of Pakistan¹, Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia³

Abstract

Reducing environmental impact of tourism is crucial to achieve sustainable development goals. One possible solution lies in adopting AI technologies that can optimize eco-friendly travel planning. Accordingly, the current study investigates the role of AI-based technologies in shaping tourists' behavioural intentions towards ecotourism. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the DeLone and McLean model of information system success, the research examines the influence of tourists' psychological factors on prior experience with AI technologies and perceived quality attributes, which foster satisfaction and subsequent adoption intentions. Additionally, the moderating role of AI delusion is also investigated. Data were collected from 310 Pakistani tourists using convenience sampling. Descriptive analysis and PLS-SEM were applied to analyze data and to test the hypotheses. The results reveal that tourists with stronger green attitudes and supportive subjective norms are more inclined to engage with AI-enabled green technologies. This engagement enhances satisfaction, which significantly strengthens tourists' intention to adopt AI for travel planning. The findings highlight the significant mediating role of satisfaction in the technology adoption decision process. The study contributes by integrating behavioural theory with information systems success model to explain technology adoption in sustainable tourism. Implications of the study underscore the need to formulate policies that encourage investments in tourism-specific AI technologies, enabling ecotourism by suggesting optimal routes and accommodations, aligning with SDG 9 of building resilient infrastructure and promoting innovation.

Keywords: behavioral intention, anthropomorphism, personalization, pro-environmental attitude, satisfaction, AI delusion

Intellectual Capital, Open Innovation, and AI Capability for Sustainable Tourism Performance: Evidence from SMEs in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

Dr.Tayyaba Syed

Virtual University of Pakistan

Abstract

Sustainable development in the tourism industry is a critical challenge that requires the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders. To address this, tourism enterprises must adopt sustainable business practices and enhance overall performance. Based on the resource-based view and dynamic capability theories, this study proposes a mediated moderation model to analyze how the components of intellectual capital (IC) contribute to improving tourism performance and achieving sustainability in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan. The study also investigates the mediating role of open innovation (OI) and the moderating role of artificial intelligence capability (AIC) in the OI–tourism performance relationship. Despite increasing academic interest, the connection between IC components and tourism performance remains unclear, and the integration of OI and AIC in this area is underexplored. Using a purposive sampling method, 300 structured questionnaires were distributed to tourism SMEs, with 220 valid responses analyzed through SMART-PLS 4.0. Results show that IC significantly impacts tourism performance, with OI serving as an essential mediator. Additionally, AIC strongly moderates the relationship between Open Innovation and tourism industry performance, suggesting that AI-enabled capabilities boost the influence of innovation and promote sustainability. This study adds to the literature by clarifying the impact of IC, OI, and AIC on the performance of tourism SMEs and provides practical insights for developing economies. Future research should explore the role of AI in enhancing open innovation during turbulent market conditions.

Keywords: intellectual capital, open innovation, artificial intelligence capability, sustainable tourism performance, SMEs, resource-based view, dynamic capability theory, Pakistan

Smart Tourism Governance through AI: A Quantitative Study of Public Sector Punjab, Pakistan

Muhammad Imran Khan

Superior University

Abstract

This study explores the factors affecting the acceptance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for smart tourism governance in the public sector of Punjab, Pakistan, and its impact on automated decision-making (ADM) performance. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Resource-Based View (RBV), and Institutional Theory, a structural model was developed to understand the relationships of technological readiness (IT assets, IT capabilities) and organizational enablers (leadership support, culture of innovation), and institutional pressures (horizontal and vertical), on perceived usefulness (PU), and perceived ease of use (PEOU). It was assumed that through these mediators, AI would be used by more people, leading to better ADM outcomes in tourism governance. This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional methodology across public sector departments related to tourism governing agencies in Punjab. We analyzed the data with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The measurement model had adequate reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.735$ – 0.913 ; composite reliability = 0.830 – 0.933) and convergent validity, AVE = 0.544 – 0.732 ; discriminant validity was largely demonstrated.

In terms of structure, results showed vertical institutional pressure to be the dominant variable positively influencing both PU ($\beta = 0.763$, $p < .001$) and PEOU ($\beta = 0.340$, $p < .001$). Horizontal pressure ($\beta = 0.333$, $p < .001$) and IT capabilities ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < .001$) were significant positive influences on PEOU, and contrary to expectation, IT Assets, leadership, and culture made no significant contributions to the parameters of TAM. PEOU was a strong predictor of AI adoption ($\beta = 0.503$, $p < .001$), although PU had a weak influence ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = .084$). The use of AI was a significant positive contributor to ADM performance ($\beta = 0.329$, $p < .001$), displaying its ability to enhance accuracy, efficiency, and responsiveness in tourism governance. The findings indicate that institutional factors, particularly vertical mandates, are the factors that are more important than any other factors in terms of the amount of readiness the public tourist sector has to engage with and utilize AI. The data also indicate that perceived ease of use is the most important factor in the transition of readiness to actual adoption. Theoretical contributions of this research enrich the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in the context of bureaucratic and tourism governance by merging institutional and resource-based perspectives. The practical implications suggest that policymakers should incorporate legislative directions while committing to capability developments and user-focused design to accelerate adoption and realize performance gains in smart tourism governance.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, smart tourism governance

Digital Disruption in Tourism: A Qualitative Thematic Literature Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development

Arooj Zahra¹, Syeda Aneeqa Tauseef², Darakhshan Muslim³

Virtual University of Pakistan ^{1,2,3}

Abstract

The fast technological improvement of the digital sphere is changing the face of the tourism sector, affecting the marketing of destinations, the way services are offered, and the sustainability objectives that are achieved. As a conceptual analysis, this paper defines the challenges and opportunities posed by digital disruption in the tourism sector with specific reference to sustainable development. Based on secondary data collection of peer-reviewed articles, industry-specific reports, and published case studies in the last five years, the thematic analysis method was utilized to establish the commonalities and new trends. The conclusions indicate that digital innovations, including artificial intelligence, online booking systems, virtual reality experiences, and big data analytics, help to perform more operations with a smaller carbon footprint and make the services accessible to different groups of travellers. Nonetheless, the review also indicates some severe limitations, such as extreme implementation costs, shortages of skills, and threats to the authenticity of cultures. The paper concludes that neither the use of digital tools nor sustainable practices can exist independently in the long-term viability of the tourism industry. This paper synthesizes the available evidence, thus presenting a condensed framework that guides policymakers, practitioners, and researchers through the dynamics of digital transformation in tourism.

Keywords: digital disruption, sustainable tourism, thematic literature analysis, innovation, tourism management

Tourism in Transition: How Digital Technologies Reshape Sustainability Challenges and Solutions

Zunaira Shareef

Abstract

Tourism is enduring a fundamental transition directed by data analytics, digital platforms, computerization and immersive resources. These technologies can make progress towards sustainability, which shields the environment, supports society and state long-term economic benefits by increasing visitor flows, reducing in use of resources, endowing local communities and crafting greener mobility choices, but they can also heap on risks such as over tourism, reverberation effects, confidential destruction and unfair distribution of benefits. This paper integrates key digital developments which redesign the tourism surface for the foremost sustainability challenges. A descriptive and analytical approach will be used to examine how emerging digital technologies influence sustainability outcomes. Secondary data, i.e., Case studies, Peer review journal articles & reports published by international organizations, i-e, United Nations, WTO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, and the World Travel & Tourism Council, will be used. Data will be examined using thematic analysis to identify patterns in the adoption of digital technologies and their implications for sustainable tourism. The findings will categorize under three primary dimensions: digital trends driving sustainability, challenges & risks associated with digitalization and innovative policy & governance solutions. This study will contribute to a practical implementation roadmap and research program for destinations, operators and policymakers.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, smart destinations, digitalization, sustainable tourism, visitor flow management.

Unveiling Digital Footprints in Smart Tourism: A Technology Readiness Perspective

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Abstract

Technological changes are profoundly reshaping the tourism landscape, from traveller behaviour to destination management. With this changing tourism landscape, smart tourism is emerging as the development of traditional tourism featuring the extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT). Smart tourism allows an interactive flow of information among stakeholders through smart devices, which fosters digital engagement among travellers. Now tourists can use smart devices to acquire necessary information, save costs, achieve flexibility and personalization, and ensure their safety during travel. Therefore, the use of smart devices in tourism has opened numerous opportunities for all stakeholders. It can help service providers to improve service quality based on tourist feedback and reviews through digital engagement. Smart tourism is also a step towards sustainable tourism, and it is possible if all stakeholders are ready to use technology. More specifically, the role of tourists as key members in fostering smart tourism is critical; their technology readiness greatly affect the transition journey from traditional to smart tourism. In the current era, where smart devices are acting as the lifeblood for smart tourism, the role of tourists' readiness to use smart devices in increasing their digital engagement is magnified. Therefore, it is important to explore the readiness of tourists towards using smart devices before, during and after a tour. This study takes the lens of the technology readiness index (TRI) and the perceived value theory to unveil the factors affecting the readiness of tourists to use smart devices in their travel. Using a qualitative approach, the study will also explore the role of smart devices in promoting digital engagement among tourists in Pakistan. In the context of Pakistan, the efforts towards smart tourism have gained momentum in recent years, and the findings of the study will help policymakers and service providers to know about the readiness level of the tourists, their preferences and the perceived risks they attach to the use of smart devices in travel. The findings of the study will also help service providers in the tourism industry to improve their services, content on digital platforms and to take effective steps towards smart tourism.

Keywords: technology readiness, smart tourism, smart devices, digital engagement

From Reviews to Revenue: Investigating the Influence of User-Generated Content on the Co-creation of Travellers' Value for Startups

Dr. Noreen Zahra

Virtual University of Pakistan

Abstract

The tourism industry is undergoing a transformation due to the proliferation of digital technologies, enabling actors to co-create value. Smart tourism leverages intelligent systems through mobile apps, location-based navigation, online booking platforms, social media communities, cloud computing, and social media integration. It also includes data analytics for forecasting, personalised recommendations, chatbots, and virtual reality for interactive experiences. Smart tourism is operated by two leading actors: service providers and travel agencies that generate content. Recent studies suggest that travel actors who create User-Generated Content (UGC), such as social media posts, reviews, star ratings, vlogs, and hashtags, are often considered more reliable and cost-effective than service provider content. The UGC, a catalyst of value co-creation, is viewed as honest, relatable, up-to-date, and independent, with a richness of real-life experience, hence generating revenues for start-ups. To date, smart tourism lacks a focus on why travel startups are relying on UGC for co-creating travellers' value and generating actual revenues; this paper aims to fill this gap.

This study employs a grounded theory methodology to gain a deeper understanding of travel startups' perspectives on the influence of UGC on the co-creation of travellers' value. Purposive and theoretical sampling are employed to recruit 12 startup entrepreneurs for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In comparison to large tourism companies, travel startups face challenges, including securing funding and investment, maintaining upscale standards, and accessing resources. Hence, the study shows that the travel startup heavily relies on smart tourism tools for cost efficiency. The UGC, as a source of value co-creation, is fetching revenues for startups. Results show that UGC influences travellers' decisions regarding destination image, reduces perceived risk, provides social proof, fosters brand engagement, and enhances satisfaction at a minimal financial cost. In the future, the actual financial data from startups' digital marketing campaigns and the impact of UGC can be measured and compared to validate the proposed proposition. The findings of this study are significant for travel startups and digital marketers in strategizing their travel campaigns and scaling up their startups.

Keywords: user-generated content, value co-creation, startups, smart tourism, actors

The Role of Modern Digital Technologies in Developing Tourist Routes

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the impact of modern digital technologies—such as GIS, VR/AR, social media, and online platforms—on the planning and development of tourist routes. It highlights how digitalization enhances efficiency, flexibility, and user experience in tourism route management, while also examining infrastructure, data security, and human resource challenges. This research is based on a qualitative-descriptive analysis using secondary data from scientific journals, policy documents, and case studies. Key sources include UNWTO reports, national tourism development programs, and academic works (e.g., Pencarelli, 2020; Fu et al., 2024). A comparative approach was applied to examine the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and online booking technologies in sustainable tourism route planning across different countries and contexts.

The integration of digital technologies has become a cornerstone of modern tourism development, enabling destinations to evolve into intelligent, data-driven ecosystems. Specialists of the Tourism 4.0 concept highlight that technologies such as GIS, VR/AR, social media, and online platforms not only optimize operational processes but also promote sustainability, accessibility, and innovation within tourism systems (Pencarelli, 2020). These tools are particularly crucial in the planning, management, and marketing of tourist routes, which form the structural backbone of regional and cross-border tourism.

Keywords: modern digital technologies, tourist routes, GIS, VR/AR,

Session 2

Sustainability, CSR, SDGs in Tourism and Hospitality

An Analysis of Headway on the SDGs: Status of SDGs Progress Locally and Globally

Samina Khalil
University of Karachi

Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals 2025 marks a decade of tracking progress-& delivers a sobering message: only 17% of SDG targets are on track. While millions of lives have improved since 2015, we in Pakistan are far behind the pace needed to meet the 2030 deadline. There are clear gains: 54 countries achieved universal electricity access, 5 countries eliminated at least one neglected tropical disease, and under-five and neonatal mortality rates declined. Renewable energy sources are the fastest-growing power source. Digital connectivity and internet access have expanded. Yet the cracks are widening: Over 800 million people still live in extreme poverty, 1 in 11 people face hunger; 2 billion experience food insecurity, Anemia affects 30.7% of women aged 15-149, climate impact, conflict, debt & inequality are reversing progress, only 1 in 5 countries is on track to 1/2 poverty by 2030. Where are we falling short? Progress remains unequal & fragile. Vulnerable groups-esp. women, people with disabilities & those in fragile states are being left behind. Social protection is still patchy & debt servicing is limiting national capacity to invest in development. Six priority areas for urgent actions: Food systems: for nutrition, equity & resilience Energy access: to unlock opportunity & climate gains. Digital transformation: to drive inclusion & innovation, Education: to equip the next generation, Job and Social Protection: to reduce poverty & build stability, Climate and biodiversity: to protect our shared future. These are not siloed goals-they are multiplier investments. Success in one accelerates success in others. What needs to happen now? Scale up SDG finance: Bridge the \$4 trillion/year gap via blended finance, private sector leadership & debt relief. Prioritize equity: Put vulnerable groups at the centre of all strategies. Invest in Data & accountability: Disaggregated data & peer learning will drive smarter decisions. Use Tech Responsibly: Deploy AI & digital tools to serve-not sideline-equity& inclusion. Foster global cooperation: Multilateralism remains essential for shared solutions. The next 5 years will determine whether the 2030 agenda become a historic success or a missed opportunity. Bold, inclusive& accelerated action is the only path forward.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, 2030

Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Development of Brand Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction: Evidence from the Hotel and Restaurant Industry of Pakistan

Rizwan Qaisar Danish¹, Muhammad Musarrat Nawaz², Ibrar Mansoor³

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to vigor organizations to apply the concept of corporate social responsibility, which represents the potential of enhancing brand loyalty and customer satisfaction in the restaurant and hotel business in the world generally and in Pakistan, specifically. This particular study addresses a challenge which the restaurant and hotel industry is facing in creating customer satisfaction. This quantitative study utilizes structural equation modeling through AMOS based on the data of 250 respondents who were visitors to restaurants and hotels. Inferential results were obtained to validate and test the hypotheses. Results indicate that CSR and customer satisfaction are strongly connected with brand loyalty; both factors play a vital role and serve as the backbone of restaurants in Pakistan. These variables are the strongest predictors of brand loyalty. This research explains the importance of corporate social responsibility for restaurants and hotels for their growth and development in the tourism context. Interestingly, analysis shows that CSR is associated with and without a mediator to brand loyalty, evidence of partial mediation.

The study participants are limited by area due to certain constraints, and only a few selected variables, CSR, BL and CS were utilized. The major responsibility of loyalty lies with top management to introduce strategies which help to maintain corporate social responsibility and enhance customer satisfaction. Leaders can use their knowledge and skills to enhance corporate social responsibility. This study contributes to the existing literature as well as helps managers in understanding the problems of the restaurant and hotel industry in Pakistan. The study also extends the CSR and brand loyalty literature through a novel mediation mechanism of customer satisfaction.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, consumer satisfaction, brand loyalty

Impact of AI Powered Digital Assistants to Customer Luxury Brands

Online Experience

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^{2,3}Institute of Business Administration, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how AI-powered digital assistants influence customers' online experiences with luxury brands, focusing on customer engagement, brand perception, and purchase intentions. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 320 participants who had prior experience using AI-based digital assistants for online shopping. Data were analyzed using reliability tests, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling to assess direct and indirect effects. The findings demonstrate that AI-powered assistance significantly enhances customer engagement, positively shapes brand perception, and improves luxury online shopping experiences. Moreover, customer engagement and brand perception were found to partially mediate the relationship between AI assistance and overall customer experience, highlighting their pivotal roles. The study concludes that AI technologies, when integrated thoughtfully, can foster trust, loyalty, and long-term engagement with premium brands. However, the results also underline the necessity of balancing technological efficiency with human interaction to preserve exclusivity and authenticity. Future research should explore cross-cultural contexts and ethical concerns, such as data privacy, while practitioners are advised to adopt hybrid AI–human strategies to strengthen consumer relationships. This study contributes to the literature by examining how AI-powered digital assistants can enhance customer experience in the luxury retail sector, offering insights into improving customer engagement, brand perception, and online shopping behaviors. The findings underline the potential for combining AI technologies with human touch to foster long-term loyalty in premium brands.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, customer engagement, brand perception, luxury retail, digital assistants

Media Sentiment and Tourism Demand in Pakistan: A News Data and Web-Scraping Approach

Hassan Raza

SZABIST University Islamabad Campus

Abstract

Tourism in Pakistan has long been shaped by media narratives, yet little empirical work has examined how news sentiment influences tourism demand. The influence of published news—whether in mainstream or social media—plays a decisive role in shaping the tourism industry of any country, and its impact is particularly significant in emerging economies like Pakistan. This study set out to fill that gap by using web-scraping and natural language processing (NLP) to analyze how media coverage affects tourism trends. We compiled a multi-year dataset of tourism-related headlines and articles from leading national newspapers (DAWN, The News, Express Tribune, The Nation) as well as international outlets (BBC, Reuters). Using this corpus, we applied an NLP pipeline that combined sentiment analysis (VADER and BERT-based classifiers), topic modelling (LDA and BERTopic), and event tagging focused on security issues, visa policies, and cultural festivals. The extracted sentiment and themes were then linked to indicators of tourism demand, including Google Trends for Pakistani destinations, TripAdvisor review volumes, and official tourist arrival statistics from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and UNWTO. To test predictive power, machine learning models (Boost and LSTM) were applied. The results showed clear connections between media sentiment and tourism flows, highlighting how shifts in coverage can influence interest in travel to Pakistan. These findings not only extend tourism management and data science research but also provide practical insights for policymakers, media organizations, and industry stakeholders seeking to promote tourism through more effective narrative management.

Keywords: tourism in pakistan; media narratives; news sentiment; natural language processing (nlp); web scraping; sentiment analysis; topic modeling; machine learning; google trends; tripadvisor reviews; tourism demand forecasting

Sustainable Hotel Industry Development: Challenges and Opportunities in Bukhara

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Abstract

This study analyses priority pathways, existing opportunities, and practical solutions for advancing the sustainable development of the hotel sector in the Bukhara region. The relevance stems from the area's hot-arid climate—marked by high summer temperatures and water scarcity—its rich cultural heritage, and pronounced seasonality in tourist demand, all of which make sustainability a strategic necessity. The research aims to assess the extent to which sustainability practices are implemented across environmental (energy efficiency, water stewardship, waste reduction), social (employment quality, professional development, community engagement), and economic (operational efficiency, revenue resilience) dimensions, and to identify opportunity spaces and actionable measures to address emerging challenges. A mixed-methods design was employed: a structured survey of hotel general and operations managers; semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (public authorities, utilities, certification/consulting bodies, and suppliers); and a review of official reports and statistics. Findings indicate broad uptake of low-cost “quick wins” (e.g., LED lighting, linen-reuse programmes, low-flow fixtures), but limited diffusion of capital-intensive solutions (e.g., photovoltaic systems, heat pumps, greywater reuse) due to financing constraints, technical capacity gaps, and unclear implementation standards. Properties with stronger management systems and routine monitoring tend to report lower resource intensity and more favorable guest feedback. The study's contribution is a Bukhara-specific integrated model of sustainable hotel management and a staged roadmap: short-term quick wins, medium-term modernization, and a long-term trajectory towards near-zero waste. The roadmap is supported by standardized indicators to guide operators and inform policy design.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, hotel industry, Bukhara, energy efficiency, water management, waste reduction, eco-label, green financing, EMS/BMS, stakeholders.

The Role of Creative Industries in the Sustainable Development of Tourism

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Abstract

Tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and cultural exchange. However, the rapid expansion of mass tourism has created challenges such as environmental degradation, cultural homogenization, and unsustainable resource use. As a result, sustainable tourism development, integrating economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection, has emerged as a global priority. Within this context, creative industries have gained increasing recognition as an important driver of sustainable tourism.

This study explores the role of creative industries in achieving sustainable tourism development by examining how creativity, culture, and innovation contribute to economic diversification, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. The research adopts a qualitative analytical approach based on secondary data obtained from reputable sources, including the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and national tourism statistics from selected countries such as Uzbekistan, Indonesia, and Spain. A systematic review of academic literature, policy documents, and international case studies was conducted using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework, specifically focusing on SDGs 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The findings indicate that creative industries enhance tourism sustainability by promoting authentic cultural experiences, supporting local entrepreneurship, empowering women and youth, and encouraging environmentally responsible practices through innovation and digital solutions. Despite challenges related to policy coordination, limited infrastructure, and risks of cultural commodification, creative industries demonstrate strong potential for building inclusive, resilient, and competitive tourism systems. The study concludes that integrating creative industries into national tourism strategies can foster balanced tourism growth while ensuring long-term cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

Keywords: creative industries; sustainable tourism development; cultural heritage; community empowerment; creative economy; SDGs

Session 3

Consumer Experience, Marketing, and Behavioral Insights

Courage as a Driver of Transition and Self-Reinvention: The Moment of Escape

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Abstract

More than half of new ventures in developed economies are initiated through hybrid entrepreneurship, where individuals maintain wage employment while simultaneously engaging in entrepreneurial activity. This phenomenon is equally pervasive in developing countries, though it remains underexplored in such contexts. While hybrid entrepreneurship offers a means of risk-hedging, the decisive shift from secure employment to full-time entrepreneurship involves navigating profound uncertainties. Drawing on narrative accounts of twelve women entrepreneurs, we explored the critical decision of the “moment of escape”—a pivotal juncture at which the perceived security of employment is abandoned in favour of entrepreneurial autonomy. Our findings reveal that prior employment experiences cultivated courage through emotional resilience, enabling these women to confront adversities and overcome societal taboos. This courage becomes central to their capacity to reinvent themselves and redefine their professional identities in the turbulent waters of entrepreneurship. This study contributes to the hybrid entrepreneurship literature by extending entrepreneurial learning theory through highlighting courage as a driver of entrepreneurial transition, reframing decision-making under risk as both an emotional and rational process and offering rare empirical insights from a developing-country, gendered context.

Keywords: women hybrid entrepreneurs, courage, emotional resilience, self-reinvention and moment of escape

Customer Experience as the Crown, Qualitative Insights from the Aesthetics and Cosmetology Sector

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Abstract

The aesthetics and cosmetology sector has emerged as a dynamic service industry in which customer experience is a critical determinant of organizational competitiveness. This paper investigates the role of customer experience as a source of sustainable competitive advantage, drawing upon the Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL) as its primary theoretical framework. SERVQUAL emphasizes five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, which together provide a structured basis for evaluating how customer interactions influence satisfaction and loyalty. Using a qualitative research design, the study draws upon semi-structured interviews with Aesthetics & cosmetology Patients and managers in Pakistan, supported by observations of service encounters. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns regarding customer expectations, experiences, and loyalty behaviors. Findings highlight that empathy and assurance emerge as dominant factors shaping customer trust and repeat patronage, while tangibles and digital touchpoints strengthen initial perceptions. The analysis also reveals that personalized experiences and consistent service delivery are perceived by customers as indicators of quality and brand reliability. The paper concludes that customer experience, managed through the SERVQUAL framework, can be systematically leveraged as a sustainable source of competitive advantage in emerging markets.

Keywords: customer experience, competitive advantage, SERVQUAL, service quality, aesthetics & cosmetology, consumer loyalty

Empowering Innovation: How Client Engagement, Marketing Prowess, and Technological Advancements Fuel Employee Curiosity and Job Crafting

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the effects of client, marketing, and technology-focused innovation capabilities on the job crafting behavior of employees in the IT industry. A quantitative, purposive sampling technique and a time-lagged approach were used to collect data from 385 employees occupying middle- and lower-level managerial positions in the IT industry. The results showed that client-, marketing-, and technology-focused innovation capabilities directly affect employees' job crafting behavior. Furthermore, I-Type and D-Type epistemic curiosity mediate this direct relationship between innovation capability dimensions and job crafting behavior. Organizations may benefit from a creative labor force by enhancing client-, marketing-, and technology-based innovation capabilities, thereby facilitating employees' proactive crafting of an inspiring and practical work environment. Thus, the current study is the first to inspect the direct effects of client, technology and marketing-focused innovation capabilities on job crafting, as well as the mediating role of epistemic curiosity dimensions between innovation capabilities and job crafting behavior.

Keywords: client-focused innovation capabilities, technology-focused innovation capabilities, marketing-focused innovation capabilities, D-type epistemic curiosity, I-type epistemic curiosity, epistemic curiosity, and job crafting behavior

The Significance of Tourism and Marketing Strategies in the Context of Market Integration

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Abstract

This article explores the significance of marketing strategies within the context of tourism activities and market integration. The core functions of marketing strategies — including enhancing brand awareness, attracting and retaining customers, achieving effective market positioning, and increasing sales and profitability — are thoroughly examined. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the impact of processes such as market research, customer relationship development, adaptation to digital transformation, and the measurement of marketing performance on the overall success of enterprises.

Keywords: marketing strategies, brand awareness, customer acquisition, market positioning, sales and revenue, market research, customer relationship management, digital marketing, marketing performance measurement, business competitiveness, tourism.

Leveraging Standardized Performance-Based Rewards System to Enhance Team Productivity in Educational SMEs

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the impact of standardized performance appraisal policies on perceived reward practices among teachers in educational SMEs. The research aims to align individual performance management with organizational goals to enhance productivity and motivation. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to investigate the effectiveness of performance-based rewards in private sector educational SMEs in Pakistan. A standardized appraisal policy was developed and implemented, with participants divided into experimental and control groups for comparative analysis before and after the intervention. Results indicate a significant positive change in the perceptions of performance-based rewards among teachers in the experimental group following the implementation of the standardized appraisal policy. In contrast, the control group exhibited no notable changes in perceptions. Qualitative insights further validate these findings, revealing a strong link between systematic appraisal processes and enhanced job satisfaction and motivation and eventually productivity. The findings underscore the importance of transparent and equitable performance appraisal systems in educational settings. By implementing standardized policies, educational SMEs can foster a culture of high performance and accountability, ultimately improving teacher satisfaction and productivity.

Keywords: standardized performance-based rewards system, team productivity, educational SMEs

Leveraging Emerging Technologies for Sustainable Tourism Entrepreneurship in Developing Economies: Insights from Nepal and Pakistan

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Abstract

The tourism sector, across developing economies, faces the dual challenge of achieving economic vitality while safeguarding natural and cultural heritage. Technological advances—including IoT-enabled resource management, smart destination systems, immersive media storytelling, mobile-based financial transactions, and digitally networked entrepreneurship platforms—are reshaping tourism business models. In Nepal and Pakistan, these innovations are elevating service quality while addressing sustainability concerns through resource optimization, heritage conservation, and enhanced market reach. Yet, the mechanisms through which such technologies enable sustainable entrepreneurial practices remain underexplored. Adopting a grounded theory design with purposive and theoretical sampling, this study conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 24 stakeholders—comprising tourism entrepreneurs, tech developers, and policymakers from both Nepal and Pakistan. Conversations investigated integration processes, operational impacts, and systemic factors influencing adoption. Findings reveal that IoT applications improve energy and water efficiency in hospitality operations. Smart tourism solutions—ranging from interactive navigation to integrated digital payments—enhance visitor satisfaction and strengthen operational resilience. Immersive technologies, including virtual and augmented reality, foster cultural connection and participatory tourism. Digital platforms act as entrepreneurial enablers, supporting innovation and adaptability. However, infrastructure gaps, low digital competencies, and fragmented institutional support continue to obstruct adoption. Tourism SMEs are encouraged to begin with accessible, high-impact technologies such as mobile payments before advancing to IoT or immersive systems. Policymakers should prioritize broadband expansion, targeted digital training, and supportive regulatory frameworks. Meanwhile, technology designers must focus on affordability, cultural relevance, and scalability to enable sustainable adoption among SMEs in developing regions.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, emerging technologies, IoT, smart destinations, entrepreneurial resilience, Nepal, Pakistan.

Session 4

Leadership, HRM, and Organizational Dynamics

The Dark Side of Leadership: How Exploitative Leadership Drives Project Turnover Intention in IT Projects

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Abstract

Exploitative leadership, a form of destructive leadership, has received limited attention in project management research despite its potential to undermine project team effectiveness. This study investigates how exploitative leadership influences project turnover intention among information technology project team members, focusing on the mediating roles of emotional exhaustion and competitive psychological climate, and the moderating role of perceived human resource support climate. Grounded in conservation of resources theory, the study argues that exploitative leaders deplete team members' psychological and emotional resources, creating stress and fostering competitive work environments that increase turnover intentions. Using purposive sampling, data were collected through a time-lagged survey from 307 professionals working on information technology and software projects in Pakistan. The results revealed that exploitative leadership significantly increases project turnover intention, with both emotional exhaustion and competitive psychological climate mediating this relationship. Contrary to expectations, human resource support climate amplified rather than buffered the relationship between exploitative leadership and turnover intention, suggesting that support mechanisms may unintentionally heighten sensitivity to exploitative behaviors. The findings advance understanding of the dark side of leadership in project contexts, highlighting how destructive leadership dynamics erode team stability. Practically, the study underscores the need for leadership development and human resource strategies that prioritize employee well-being and retention in information technology project environments.

Keywords: exploitative leadership; emotional exhaustion; competitive psychological climate; HR support climate; project turnover intention

The Interplay of Information Asymmetry, Risk, Project Governance, and Trust in Agile Project Environments

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Abstract

During the last decades, both researchers and practitioners have grappled with the persistent issue of low efficiency and poor performance in IT projects. Prior studies have sought to identify various critical factors—such as project governance, project risk management, and agile project methodology—that can enhance project outcomes. The concept of information asymmetry has been widely applied across different domains and subfields of management research, serving as a foundational element in several prominent organizational theories, including agency theory. Despite its relevance, this area remains relatively underexplored in the context of project performance. This study aims to investigate the influence of project governance and agile methodology on project performance, considering information asymmetry and project risk as mediating variables and trust as a moderating variable. A total of 374 responses were collected from professionals in Pakistan's IT industry. Data analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro and IBM SPSS. The findings reveal that project governance and agile methodology both have a significant positive effect on information asymmetry. Moreover, a significant relationship was observed between information asymmetry and project risk. However, the serial mediation and moderation effects were found to be statistically insignificant. The study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical application in this emerging research area. It offers valuable insights for IT firms in developing countries seeking to enhance their project performance through improved governance mechanisms and agile practices.

Keywords: project governance, risk management, agility, information asymmetry

Exploring the Impact of Strategic Human Resource Practices on Project Performance: The Role of Project Team Agility and the Moderating Role of Transformational Leadership – Evidence from BRICS Economies

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced project environments, particularly within emerging economies like those of the BRICS nations, aligning human resource strategy with project goals is more crucial than ever. This study explores how strategic human resource practices (SHRPs) contribute to enhanced project performance, emphasizing the dynamic roles of project team agility as a mediator and transformational leadership as a moderator. Drawing on data collected from 527 project professionals across Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, the research applies a moderated mediation model to unpack these relationships. Findings reveal that SHRPs significantly boost project outcomes, not only directly but also through fostering agile, responsive teams. Furthermore, the influence of SHRPs on team agility becomes even more pronounced under transformational leadership, suggesting that leaders who inspire, empower, and support innovation create the conditions for HR practices to flourish. This research underscores the importance of viewing HR and leadership not as isolated functions but as interwoven forces that shape project success. By bridging insights from strategic HRM, project agility, and leadership theory, the study offers both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for organizations navigating complex, high-stakes project environments in the Global South.

Keywords: strategic human resource practices, project performance, project team agility, transformational leadership

The Double-Edged Sword of AI: Digital Overload, Psychological Safety, and Employee Mental Health

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Abstract

The rapidly expanding use of artificial intelligence (AI) at work is raising concerns for employee well-being owing to a digital overload. Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study investigates how AI-enabled task support and digital overload influence employee mental health outcomes through psychological safety. Our survey, based on established measures, reports results from 135 professionals in Pakistan. Specifically, our results show that digital overload increases burnout. On the other hand, AI task support acts as a resource gain that enhances employees' psychological well-being. Further, employees who perceive AI as supportive are more likely to preserve resources, and consequently, experience reduced burnout and better well-being. The study contributes to organizational behavior literature by highlighting the dual role of AI in shaping employee mental health and well-being outcomes. It underscores the importance of psychological safety as a mechanism that determines whether AI adoption functions as a stressor or a resource. Implications for organizations adopting AI-driven practices are discussed, particularly regarding the design of environments that safeguard employees' mental health.

Keywords: digital Overload, AI task-support, AI at work, psychological safety, employee burnout, employee well-being.

