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Let the Devil Speak for Itself: Should ChatGPT be Allowed or Banned in Hospitality and Tourism Schools?

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Over the last 40 years, hospitality and tourism education has experienced significant growth (Goh & King, 2019). Most of this growth is attributed to how technology has transformed hospitality education delivery for student engagement (Goh & Wen, 2021). As per Daniel et al. (2017), this growth is confirmed by the increasing interest in hospitality and tourism education research. Despite this growth, research in hospitality and tourism education still makes up a small portion of the hospitality and tourism literature. A study of 2868 scholarly tourism articles in the top 12 journals by Ballantyne et al. (2009) indicated that only 2% were related to tourism education and training. Researchers such as Goh and Okumus (2020) and Goh and Wen (2021) have also called for more research on hospitality and tourism education to emphasize this underdeveloped segment.

Despite the growing complexity of the hospitality and tourism industry, Frawley et al. (2019) postulated that research in hospitality and tourism education had been overlooked. Hospitality and tourism organizations expect graduating students to have non-technical skills such as reflection, critical thinking, and communication, as well as technical skills such as being well-versed with upcoming technologies (Goh & Okumus, 2020). Nonetheless, hospitality and tourism schools are criticized for being slower in reacting to technological advances, falling short of providing students with the necessary preparation for careers in hospitality (Goh & Wen, 2021; Kim & Jeong, 2018).

For over 20 years, the importance of equipping hospitality and tourism students with recent technological advancements and industry trends through their curricula has been recognized (Lugosi & Jameson, 2017). To this end, scholars have suggested incorporating online learning tools such as electronic forums and live chats and utilizing industry-specific software such as property management and point-of-sales systems (Davis et al., 2019). With the widespread use of technology in education and society, institutions must also invest in information and communication technologies to keep up with the demands of the industry (Lee et al., 2016).

Integrating these technologies in the classroom can enhance teaching while providing students with the necessary skills to thrive in a rapidly changing workplace (Goh & Wen, 2021; Meija, 2020).

One example of such technology is a chatbot - a computer program designed to simulate conversation with human users, especially over the Internet. Chatbots are useful technology applications that can facilitate interpersonal communication and learning. They can serve as personal assistants and provide knowledge and information through interactive and user-friendly interfaces (Muniasamy & Alasiry, 2020). They can understand natural language inputs, respond with relevant information, or perform actions based on predefined rules and algorithms (Poncette et al., 2020). With the growing popularity of mobile devices, chatbots' interactive learning style and flexibility to be used anywhere and anytime make them increasingly favored (Zhou et al., 2020). In recent years, there has been a surge in research exploring the use and impact of chatbots in education. Findings from these studies highlight the benefits of using chatbots in educational settings, such as creating a positive learning experience through real-time interaction, developing peer communication abilities, and increasing learners' efficiency (Hwang & Chang, 2021).

One of the most famous chatbots, launched recently by OpenAI, is ChatGPT. It utilizes machine learning to understand and generate human language. ChatGPT aims to support tasks requiring natural language interaction, such as answering questions and providing information. Although it is not a human, it is designed to communicate and interact with individuals in a human-like manner. ChatGPT is a continuous learning system constantly improving and is ready to assist with any inquiries or information needed. Like in-class usage of other technologies such as mobile phones and laptops, divergent opinions from hospitality and tourism schools are coming about ChatGPT. This debate is more critical as ChatGPT is not a typical chatbot that can answer questions; instead, it can generate articles, summaries, essays, or code in seconds. A recent paper published by Wharton Business School discussed ChatGPT's performance on the final exam of a typical MBA core course - Operations Management. The quality of responses was better than most of the actual students and could have earned it a B to B- grade on the exam (Terwiesch, 2023). Of course, this creates an exciting debate around the usage of ChatGPT in higher education institutes with polarizing views. Those in favor cite several benefits, including (1) access to information, (2) personalized learning, and (3) improved efficiency. Those against it provide justifications including (1) lack of critical thinking, (2) accuracy concerns, and (3) privacy and security of student data. Those against using ChatGPT by students also refer to its unethical usage and potential adverse effects on students' learning and objectives if misused (Cano et al., 2023). It raises an important question: *Should ChatGPT be allowed or banned in Hospitality and Tourism Schools?*

Situations like this present a challenge for hospitality and tourism schools equally. However, instead of viewing ChatGPT as a danger, we should consider its benefits and leverage them to help students reach their learning goals. To understand how ChatGPT can be proven as an essential tool for hospitality and tourism students, it is crucial to understand what makes the hospitality and tourism industry unique. The hospitality and tourism industry encompasses various businesses, including hotels, resorts, restaurants, cafes, bars, and more, each with unique offerings. Several unique selling points characterize it, including its focus on personalized services, flexibility in terms of cultural awareness and accommodating guests with various backgrounds, round-the-clock (24/7) operations, and focus on technology integration (Gallan et al., 2021; Tews & Van Hoof, 2011). In line with these specific

characteristics of the hospitality and tourism industry, ChatGPT can be integrated into hospitality and tourism schools to the benefit of students in several ways, including:

- 1) *Automated customer service simulations:* ChatGPT can simulate customer interactions in hospitality settings, allowing students to practice customer service skills in a controlled and safe environment.
- 2) *Language training:* ChatGPT can help students practice and improve their language skills, especially in hospitality, where clear and effective communication is essential.
- 3) *Personalized learning:* ChatGPT can provide customized and personalized learning experiences for students in hospitality education, allowing them to focus on the topics and skills most relevant to their needs and interests.
- 4) *Virtual reality experiences:* ChatGPT can be integrated with virtual reality technology to provide students with immersive and interactive experiences in hospitality environments.
- 5) *Industry knowledge:* ChatGPT can be programmed to provide students with up-to-date information on the latest trends and developments in the hospitality industry, helping them to stay informed and prepared for their careers.

In addition to students, ChatGPT can also be beneficial for the faculty in hospitality and tourism schools. These include:

- 1) *Creating educational resources:* ChatGPT can provide faculty members with resources to create engaging content for a better student learning experience. These can include example cases, scripts, examples, etc.
- 2) *Repetitive tasks:* ChatGPT can also help faculty members complete repetitive tasks such as creating announcements, providing generic feedback to students, grading, providing instructions for assignments, and developing some generic course content such as definitions, guidelines for activities, etc.
- 3) *Language Training:* Faculty members can integrate ChatGPT into their assignments so that students can develop their language skills and write better essays.
- 4) *Better Engagement:* ChatGPT has the potential to increase participation and engagement in online education by boosting students' drive and interest in asynchronous sessions.

Having an assessment of its pros and cons, it is also essential to consider the ethical aspects of using ChatGPT.

- 1) *Bias:* ChatGPT is trained on a massive corpus of text, which can include biased or misleading information. It can lead to ethical concerns around fairness and representation in educational contexts, mainly if ChatGPT is used to generate content or grade student work.
- 2) *Privacy:* ChatGPT generates responses based on the input it receives, which can include personal information. It raises questions about the protection of student privacy and the responsible use of student data.
- 3) *Lack of accountability:* ChatGPT operates autonomously, without direct human oversight. It can make it difficult to determine responsibility in the event of errors or biases in the output.

- 4) *Reliance on technology:* The increasing use of ChatGPT in education raises concerns about the role of technology in learning and the potential for it to displace human interaction and creativity.
- 5) *Intellectual property:* ChatGPT is a proprietary technology owned by OpenAI, and its use in educational contexts raises questions about ownership and control over the generated content.

The use of ChatGPT by hospitality and tourism schools is a complex issue with pros and cons. On the one hand, ChatGPT can provide several benefits, such as access to quick and accurate information, simulating of real-world scenarios, allowing students to practice and apply what they have learned, and training students to use AI. On the other hand, using ChatGPT can lead to a lack of critical thinking and creativity, and the output generated by ChatGPT may not always be accurate or appropriate. In conclusion, using ChatGPT as the sole source of information is not a good idea. Instead, it may be more appropriate to use ChatGPT to support and supplement students' learning and research while encouraging them to evaluate the information they receive critically. Hospitality and tourism schools should allow open discussion about using such tools among stakeholders, mainly the students and faculty members. These discussions should primarily emphasize the ethical use of AI and such tools as a complement to, rather than a supplement to, traditional teaching methods. Hospitality and tourism schools may choose to allow the use of ChatGPT in specific contexts while also implementing safeguards and guidelines to ensure that its use aligns with their values and educational goals. Ultimately, the decision on whether to allow the use of ChatGPT in universities will depend on several factors, including the institution's goals, the needs of students and faculty, and the ethical and legal considerations involved.

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