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CHATGPT AND OTHER GENERATIVE AI: A REVOLUTION OR A SETBACK IN H&T RESEARCH PUBLISHING

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Abstract: This study explores the key factors influencing hospitality and tourism researchers' intentions to integrate GenAI like ChatGPT into their research practices through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). While prior studies highlight GenAI's transformative potential in hospitality and tourism, there remain gaps in understanding its adoption challenges. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with twenty-two H&T researchers, purposefully selected from four universities in the UK. The analysis of the interview data was conducted within the procedural framework of a six-step thematic analysis. Researchers perceive GenAI as a dual-facet assistant. The thematic reflects four key factors: 'Perceived Usefulness', 'Perceived Ease of Use', 'Trust vs. Mistrust' and 'Cultural and Ethical Concerns'. Although the interface is simple to navigate and the responses are quick, there are notable negative implications concerning ethics, cultural biases, and trustworthiness. The study found that the researchers' actual use patterns vary from full adoption to entire avoidance. This study is transformative because it provides a foundational understanding of the TAM applied to one of the latest technologies, GenAI. It further opens a discussion on how GenAI can promote publishing within the hospitality and tourism research communities while also highlighting potential limitations, such as ethical considerations, over-reliance on AI, and the shifting role of human expertise in academic settings. The study also offers a guide that directs the research community, such as higher education and research institutions (HERs), to establish clear policies that support researchers in efficiently using technology and enhancing their research skills and knowledge.

Keywords: ChatGPT, Generative AI, TAM, Trust vs. mistrust, Cultural and ethical concerns, H&T research community

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, concerns have been raised about the increasing pressure on hospitality and tourism (H&T thereafter) academics to meet institutional publication expectations. In response, researchers adopted various strategies, including prioritising short-term projects over long-term studies, collaborating with large research teams to secure co-authorship, and engaging in reciprocal authorship exchanges, where credit is given to non-contributors in anticipation of future benefits (Lee & Benjamin, 2023). These practices led to widespread calls for systemic reform in university-based research, with critics arguing that the current emphasis on research metrics incentivises the rapid production of publications at the expense of genuine knowledge advancement (Benjamin et al., 2024; Dolnicar, 2025). This metric-driven culture has resulted in the proliferation of review articles with limited novel contributions, issues characterised by extensive cross-citations, and low-risk papers designed to maximise output rather than drive significant innovation (Dolnicar, 2025).

Emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are changing academic publishing. ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Gemini, Grammarly, Grok, and Perplexity have gained attention. Its rising use in academia has sparked interest in how AI can support various research activities (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Mariani & Dwivedi, 2024; Hughes et al., 2025).

This can be attributed to its benefits, like time efficiency, logical reasoning capabilities (Adeshola & Adepoju, 2023; Yan et al., 2023; Altun et al., 2024; Camilleri, 2024), and ability to refine and rewrite texts for non-native English speakers (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023). This attention has led to debates about how researchers rely on artificial intelligence tools (AI) for writing articles, either in whole or in part (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2024b; Sop & Kurçer, 2024; Altinay et al., 2024). Wenzlaff & Spaeth (2022) emphasised the challenges researchers face in distinguishing whether their explanations were directly taken from ChatGPT or were the result of processing their inputs through AI.

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The ongoing debate about AI's role in H&T scholarly dissemination, such as Ali & OpenAI (2023), has also grown to include ChatGPT as a co-author in academic publications (Sop & Kurçer, 2024). Some H&T studies looked at GenAI as a participant, an expert, or a source of data. In 2024, Elmohandes and Marghany interviewed ChatGPT to see how useful it would be for hiring people, with a focus on its advantages and limitations. Sop & Kurçer (2024) conducted another study that looked at ChatGPT's ability to give the same answers to questionnaires that were similar to a specific sample size, while also highlighting ethical issues related to possible data manipulation. Altinay et al. (2024) used the PRISMA tool to evaluate ChatGPT usage and its challenges in H&T research, with an emphasis on the beneficial role of ChatGPT as an educator alongside its challenges that include providing false information and legal and ethical concerns.

With growing ethical concerns around AI-generated content, many publishers updated their submission guidelines and now require authors to explicitly disclose any AI support used in their research, for example, Elsevier policies. To strengthen integrity in academic publishing, plagiarism detection tools equipped with AI-specific algorithms have been introduced to assess the extent of AI involvement in submitted manuscripts (Turnitin, 2023) to mark a broader shift toward transparency (Sop & Kurçer, 2024). While ChatGPT is a valuable tool for content creation, its limitations, including accuracy, timeliness, and vulnerability to misinformation and bias, remain areas for improvement (Altinay et al., 2024; Camilleri, 2024). Despite the increasing integration of GenAI into academic tasks, there is still a notable gap in understanding H&T researchers' behavioural intentions toward its adoption. Existing studies primarily focus on outputs produced by AI, such as papers and datasets (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Sop & Kurçer, 2024), rather than exploring why H&T researchers are using these tools and how they may shape the future of academic publishing.

This study aims to explore the factors affecting H&T researchers' intentions to use GenAI in their research. The study employs the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical framework, which is generally acknowledged and frequently used in user information behaviour research and technology adoption and usage (Scherer et al., 2019; Li et al., 2024). Although some studies focused on GenAI in relation to TAM within the education sector from students' perspectives (Saif et al., 2024), linked GenAI with educators and lecturers without a theoretical lens (Altun et al., 2024; Dalgıç et al., 2024; Ray, 2024), or GenAI to TAM in the context of travellers or tourists (Solomovich & Abraham, 2024), there remains a lack of research that particularly applies and explores TAM factors to GenAI within the H&T research community (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2024a), highlighting the insights of researchers that may be different. Unlike previous studies (Saif et al., 2024; Solomovich & Abraham, 2024), this study lets H&T researchers interested in GenAI offer thoughts via in-depth qualitative interviews. This study aims to offer an answer to the following research question: What drives H&T researchers to adopt and integrate GenAI in academic publishing? Theoretically, this study advances TAM by applying it to AI adoption in academia, identifying key factors shaping researchers' intentions to use ChatGPT. It highlights both opportunities and challenges associated with its integration into scholarly work. Practically, the findings provide relevant stakeholders, such as artificial intelligence developers and higher education and research institutions, with insightful analysis of ChatGPT's academic applications, thus guiding their choice of organisational and implementation strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. GenAI and H&T Academia

OpenAI is an American Artificial Intelligence (AI) research laboratory and developed ChatGPT as an advanced AI chatbot. Large Language Model (LLM) belongs to the generative pre-trained transformer (GPT) family (OpenAI, 2023a). This process uses techniques from reinforcement learning and supervised learning (OpenAI, 2023b), and through the training of machine learning algorithms to analyse extensive datasets, understand language structure, and produce relevant content (Lund & Wang, 2023). Since its inception, the users' base of ChatGPT has expanded and reached over 400 million active users weekly (Singh, 2025). Individuals use it to provide text instructions and receive text responses (Wong et al., 2023; Carvalho & Ivanov, 2024). The latest versions can handle various forms of input, such as text and images (Sop & Kurçer, 2024). The system enhances human-level performance in professional and academic evaluations (Bubeck et al., 2023). Within academia, students have some benefits of ChatGPT in education, for example, freedom to learn, which liberates learners from relying solely on traditional methods like textbooks (Wairisal et al., 2023). However, they highlighted some concerns, like ethical issues and problems with reliability and accuracy (Altun et al., 2024). According to Van Dis et al. (2023), researchers can use ChatGPT to generate research ideas, improve academic writing skills, facilitate hypothesis formation, advance theoretical foundations, create survey scales, and use statistical analysis tools. In a similar vein, the findings of Ivanov & Soliman (2023) align with Van Dis et al.'s (2023) study about the benefits of ChatGPT for tourism researchers. However, Ivanov & Soliman identified adverse outcomes associated with ChatGPT usage, like fake citations that lack existence, the inability to identify the material being employed, and the repetitive pattern of the writing style. Further, plagiarism and cheating have also drawn attention in recent studies (Adeshola & Adepoju, 2023; Eke, 2023; Skavronskaya et al., 2023; Rice et al., 2024). Iskender's (2023) study featured an interview with ChatGPT to evaluate its influence on higher education, and he found that although ChatGPT can assist with academic tasks, it still falls short of achieving the true creativity and originality that come from humans. Also, Aydın & Karaarslan (2022) pointed out that, going forward, academic publishing might end up needing less direct human input. Similarly, Hughes & colleagues (2025) cautioned about risks, including potentially low academic standards, changing the role of teachers, and raising questions about the integrity of academic work in higher education.

2. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and H&T Academia

TAM aims to forecast and elucidate the technology acceptance that is contingent upon two separate yet interconnected beliefs: Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) (Davis, 1989). PU refers to how an individual holds

the belief that utilising a specific system would improve their job performance. The PEOU means how an individual perceives that utilising a specific system would require minimal physical and mental exertion (Davis, 1989; Li et al., 2024). According to Davis (1993) and Venkatesh et al. (2003), the influence of PEOU on PU is significant. The significance of PU in influencing usage behaviour is greater than that of PEOU (Davis, 1989; 1993). This power of PU and PEOU became varied based on the contextual and external factors (Li et al., 2024), like accessibility and trust (Tom et al., 2017).

Although TAM is a significant model, it has some limitations. One of them is the dearth of practical guidance to managers (Lee et al., 2003). Further, TAM may be becoming obsolete due to its reliance on a simplistic model that lacks contextual and temporal factors relevant to modern technology adoption (Mogaji et al., 2024). However, it is still a widely used model for technology adoption (Huang et al., 2019; Pereira et al., 2022; Li et al., 2024). TAM received significant empirical support when compared to alternative technology models (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The model got a reputation as concise, accurate, and strong (Liu, 2009). The usage of the model was clear in some recent studies for technology acceptance in education (Saif et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2024) and professional business contexts (Li et al., 2024).

Previous H&T studies examined GenAI on various aspects, such as tourism and hospitality marketing enhancements (Remountakis et al., 2023; Cunha et al., 2024), staff recruitment (Elmohandes & Marghany, 2024), and AI integration in the H&T domain (Saleh, 2025). Although there is an increasing amount of literature on the use of AI language models in academic research (Altun et al., 2024; Sop & Kurçer, 2024; Ma et al., 2024), there has been limited focus on researchers' intentions across academic fields (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Ivanov & Soliman (2023) indicated that in the context of disruptive innovation, it is essential to outline the positive and negative impacts of ChatGPT for H&T researchers.

One further research area involves conducting an inductive research design to explore the research participants' in-depth opinions through interviews and evaluate their ChatGPT experiences (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Altun et al., 2024; Camilleri, 2024). Another area highlights investigating the behavioural intentions of tourism researchers regarding the adoption and use of ChatGPT in their academic endeavours (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Additionally, studies suggested employing relevant technological theories, such as TAM, to predict adoption behaviour when examining the actual or intended adoption of technology, like ChatGPT, in tourism (Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Camilleri, 2024).

For example, Erdős et al. (2025) highlighted in their systematic literature review that AI is shaping tourism research, stressed the role of some theories like TAM, and recommended that hospitality education incorporate AI literacy to prepare the workforce of the future. Similarly, Fathy et al. (2025) focused on a systematic literature review on the adoption of ChatGPT in H&T education; the study found that the research trends can be better understood by applying TAM as a model that can facilitate technology use. Our study represents one of the first qualitative studies using the TAM framework, which investigates what influences H&T researchers to use GenAI, aiming to bridge the knowledge gap by understanding their drivers for integrating this tool into their research. Moreover, it extends the TAM model by adding factors that are captured from the H&T researchers, which provide more in-depth understanding than survey-driven studies.

RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Sampling and Data Collection

This study uses a qualitative approach for gaining in-depth insights into personal experiences and contextual influences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Our study used a purposive sampling technique to ensure the inclusion of participants who not only specialise in H&T research but also engage with GenAI within their academic endeavours. Before recruitment, potential participants were asked to confirm their use of GenAI tools in their research, or scholarly writing workflows to ensure that the study included those with direct experience to enrich the study with comprehensive and relevant insights. The participants are classified into two groups: (a) early-career researchers (ECRs) are doctoral, postdoctoral, or independent researchers (UK Research & Innovation, 2024) and (b) mid-career researchers who have held an academic position for over 5 years and have possessed their PhD for at least 10 years (The British Academy, 2023).

The study also responded to previous research recommendations to study technology use and TAM through different methods, such as interviews (Mogaji et al., 2024). Table 1 illustrates the sample's composition. The study obtained the ethical approval, and we contacted potential participants via email, followed by regular reminders and clarification of the interview protocol (e.g., the study's purpose, research questions, etc.). Our study included no risks, allowed participants to withdraw anytime, and was only for research purposes. All participants signed the consent form before interviews. Participants were assigned coded identifiers (e.g., P1) to maintain confidentiality and accuracy. We collected data through twenty-two semi-structured online interviews conducted with H&T researchers from universities. We adopted a data saturation approach, in which no new codes, categories or themes emerged from interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). After coding and reviewing each transcript, a saturation table was maintained to track emerging themes.

By the eighteenth interview, no additional insights or themes were identified, indicating that saturation had been reached. We conducted four additional confirmatory interviews to ensure robustness and confirm that no new information emerged regarding recent developments of GenAI tools within the H&T research community.

Table 1. Participant profiles (Source: Created by authors)

P.no	Status	Background	Gender	Location
1	Early-Career	Hospitality	M	England
2	Early-Career	Hospitality	M	England
3	Mid-Career	Tourism	F	Wales
4	Early-Career	Hospitality	F	Wales

5	Early-Career	Tourism & Leisure	F	England
6	Mid-Career	Hospitality	M	Wales
7	Mid-Career	Hospitality	F	Wales
8	Early-Career	Hospitality	M	England
9	Early-Career	Hospitality	F	England
10	Early-Career	Hospitality	M	England
11	Early-Career	Tourism	F	England
12	Mid-Career	Tourism	M	Wales
13	Early-Career	Tourism & Leisure	M	Wales
14	Early-Career	Hospitality	M	Wales
15	Early-Career	Tourism	F	Wales
16	Early-Career	Tourism	F	England
17	Early-Career	Tourism & Leisure	M	England
18	Mid-Career	Hospitality	M	Wales
19	Early-Career	Tourism	F	Wales
20	Early-Career	Tourism & Leisure	F	England
21	Early-Career	Hospitality	M	England
22	Early-Career	Tourism & Leisure	M	Wales

2. Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the interview data was conducted utilising the procedural framework of 6-step thematic analysis (see Figure1) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to assist in an assessment of thematic analysis, the interviews were transcribed. During the coding process, we conducted a manual analysis of the data to identify initial codes by selecting relevant words and phrases. In the third and fourth stages of the thematic analysis, the data engaged with the sub-themes and then with the emerging main themes through iterative review cycles and peer cross-checking.

In the fifth step, the main topics were again analysed, organised, and classified. Subsequently, these themes were given as findings for reporting in the concluding stage. Collaboratively, we reviewed and identified the key themes and carefully verified all the themes and quotations from the transcripts. During the coding and theme identification process, we thoroughly verified and deliberated on the significance of the codes and themes created.

The authors also presented the initial findings of this study at the Tourism, Hospitality & Events International Conference (THE INC 2024) for further academic discussion. Our study followed the approach of trustworthiness by the ways of thick description, peer review, and external auditing to ensure the credibility in our analytical interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Creswell & Báez, 2020).

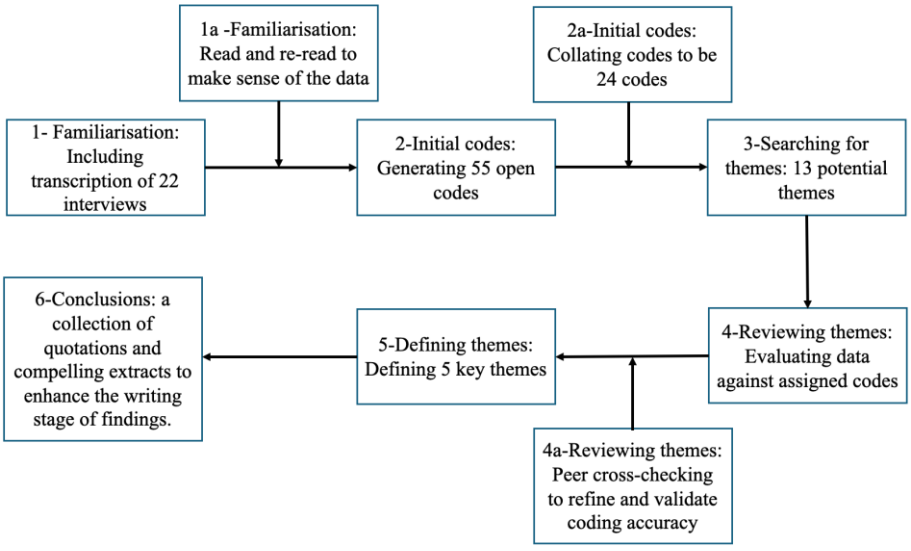

Figure 1. The thematic analysis process (Source: Created by authors)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis revealed important factors influencing H&T researchers' intentions to use GenAI in academic research (Figure 2). Participants expressed different views about GenAI, recognising it as a beneficial AI research assistant while also highlighting significant ethical, cultural, and emotional issues.

The findings highlighted the negative impacts of ethics, culture, societal and trustworthiness while acknowledging GenAI's approachable features, rapid responses, and user-friendliness. Four factors have been recognised: (1) Perceived Usefulness, (2) Ease of Use, (3) Trust vs. Mistrust, and (4) Cultural and Ethical Concerns.

The findings reveal actual use patterns of GenAI, where researchers explain between full adoption, integration, or avoidance to see its enhancement or replacement of their traditional research practices.

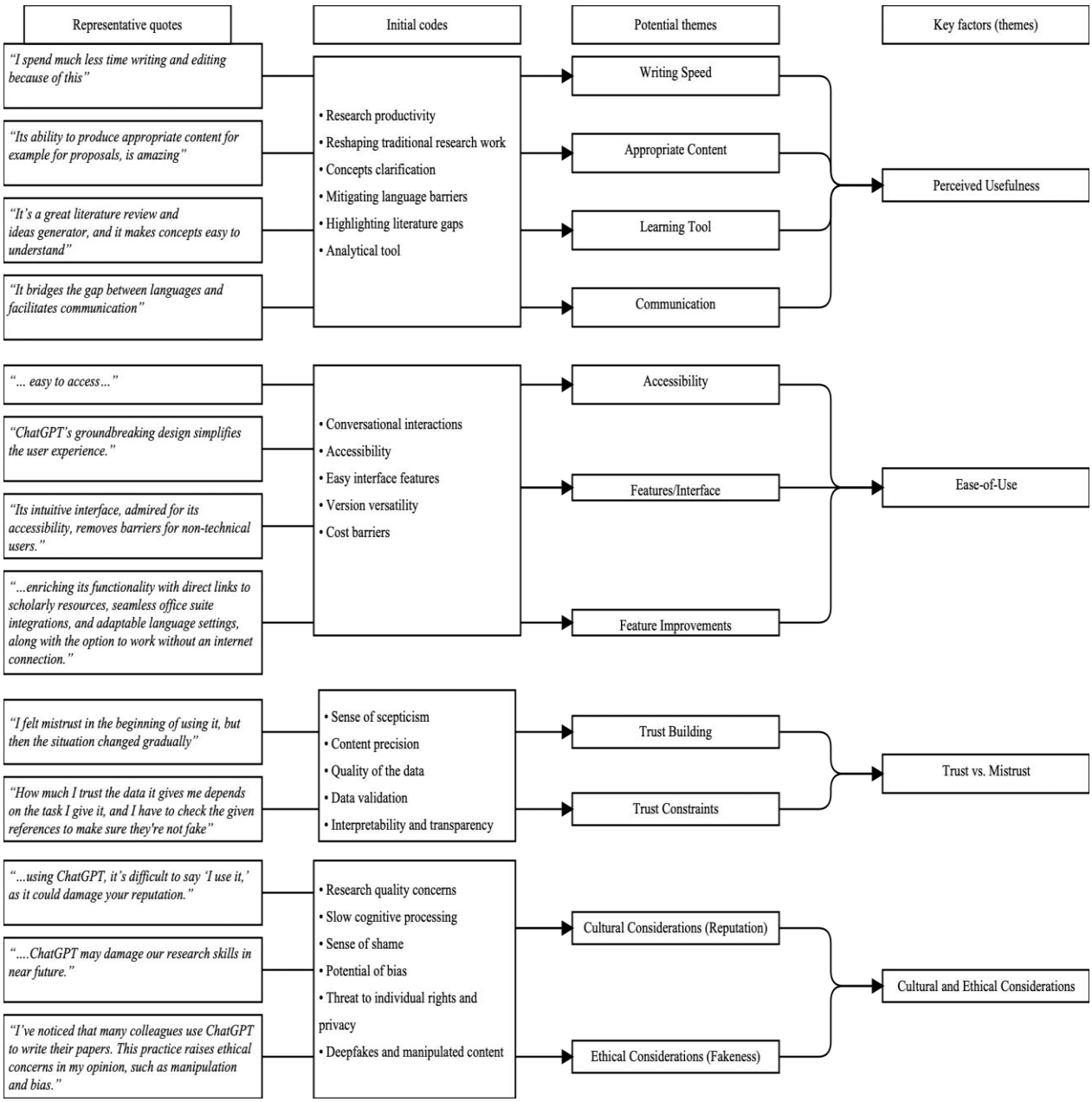

Figure 2. Factors affecting GenAI adoption in research settings (Source: Created by authors)

1. GenAI Perceived Usefulness (PU)

H&T researchers view GenAI as a significant research assistant that boosts efficiency, elevates content quality, and streamlines research workflows. In addition to its time-saving capabilities, GenAI is seen as a powerful tool for transforming the way researchers conduct literature reviews and analyse data. P3, *"For me, GenAI rapidly generates high-quality text, thereby streamlining the work process. This reduces the amount of time I spend drafting and revising."* Functions as a multifaceted collaborator, allowing participation in generating ideas or clarifying concepts, serving as a valuable ally during the innovative and analytical stages of academic inquiry. One participant emphasised the significant benefits of utilising this tool for conducting literature reviews and data analysis, particularly in ChatGPT, due to its ability to efficiently analyse large volumes of data, extract crucial findings, and provide concise summaries. P10, *"ChatGPT supports coming up with ideas and making concepts clearer. Its quick data processing and clear summaries make literature review and data analysis easy; the paid version is better in these features."*

GenAI has the potential to enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration by overcoming language barriers and helping researchers in effectively communicating intricate concepts to individuals without specialised knowledge, thus fostering a more holistic understanding of their research pursuits. Although there are potential biases and limitations inherent in AI, it has been perceived as an effective instrument that can augment their productivity, stimulate innovation, and ultimately expand the frontiers of knowledge within their respective domains.

P1 "…breaks down language barriers and helps people from different fields work together by explaining complicated ideas to people who aren't experts in them. Despite its known shortcomings, I see it as a powerful tool that can improve efficiency and light up creativity while also expanding the boundaries of knowledge in many areas."

By rapidly examining an extensive collection of scholarly works, it can detect pivotal articles, generate succinct overviews, and allow researchers to remain current with the most recent advancements in their respective disciplines. GenAI can additionally facilitate the synthesis of data from sources, thereby helping researchers in establishing connections among studies and identifying deficiencies in the current body of literature. P12 reflected on this, *"to identify connections between studies and gaps in the existing literature."*

H&T researchers present a viewpoint on the application of GenAI, considering it a significant AI tool for delivering relevant content, enhancing writing quality and precision, clarifying concepts, pinpointing gaps in the literature, and reducing language errors. The findings align with the TAM (Davis, 1989), emphasising PU as a crucial factor in the adoption of technology. Previous research in customer service (Shi et al., 2018), tourism (Pereira et al., 2022), education (Saif et al., 2024), and hospitality (Huang et al., 2019) highlights the usefulness of AI tools in improving productivity and efficiency. This study builds on earlier research by showcasing GenAI's contribution to collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the progress of interdisciplinary research (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Also, although some academics have expressed worries regarding AI's impact on academic positions, our findings strengthen the perspective that GenAI serves to enhance scholarly expertise (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Hughes et al., 2025), serving as a cognitive enhancer, allowing researchers to improve their work while still necessitating human supervision, critical analysis, and intellectual input.

Our study offers a comprehensive insight into GenAI's function in H&T research and highlights it as a groundbreaking tool that improves efficiency, fosters research collaboration, and facilitates knowledge discovery. The incorporation of AI in academic work signifies a significant shift in the way research is conducted. This emphasises a partnership between humans and technology aimed at fostering innovation in academic endeavours.

2. GenAI Ease-of-Use

The GenAI user interface is designed with utmost intuition and prioritises ease of use. Notable features include a search bar, a sidebar that systematically records interaction history, an easy swap icon between models, and functional options for sharing, deleting, or renaming chats. All these features contribute to the platform's practicality and overall user experience. Further, recent models boast an advanced feature that significantly enhances versatility by enabling direct uploads, browsing advanced versions, and the ability to discover custom versions that combine instructions, extra knowledge, and a combination of skills.

P4 "I personally see its interface isn't complicated and doesn't take long to get used to. It needs no effort, training, or time from you to be familiar with. It features a straightforward search bar for ease of access. The side bar presents an organised record of the user's interaction history, along with functional options that enable the user to share, delete, or rename conversations. With options to initiate a new chat and upload attachments."

Compared to AI models, ChatGPT stands out as having more robust features. However, participants mentioned some areas that require improvement to increase ChatGPT's usability and researcher satisfaction. By integrating features like voice input, chat history search, text highlighting, writing font adjusting and grouping various chats in one file, ChatGPT's accessibility in different contexts can be broadened, and individuals can manage their interactions more effectively, ensuring a personalised and secure experience. While ChatGPT is unique in the AI landscape, H&T users' evolving needs and expectations demand its continued improvement and adaptation.

P7 ".... ChatGPT is better than any other AI tool like Gemini, Claude, and Co-pilot. But needs more features, like chat history search, highlight texts, adjust the writing font, collaborating different chats in one file on the system and chat editing option to delete specific questions."

P6 ".... features, such as incorporation with scholarly databases, integration with emails and Microsoft office package, multilingual support, offline functionality, and ability to modify responses to be short, long, or simple."

The findings align with the PEOU (Davis, 1989). This indicates that users are more likely to embrace technology that is easy to use. This study expands on earlier research (Pereira et al., 2022; Saif et al., 2024) by identifying specific usability factors relevant to H&T researchers like interface simplicity and cross-platform functionality. Regarding the accessibility, such tools hold the promise of allowing academics to explore ideas and concepts that extend beyond the limits of their immediate resources (Lund & Wang, 2023; Altun et al., 2024). However, users should pay subscriptions to get the advanced features. Participants argued that vital resources for educational progress ought to be freely available to everyone, suggesting a system similar to offering Microsoft Office to both academic personnel and students. This highlights the conviction that as AI tools gain importance comparable to traditional software suites, it is essential for institutions to provide support for their integration into the academic toolkit. P11 stated, *"It should be free to use, like Microsoft Office is free for staff and students, with an official email. It is indispensable."*

3. Trust vs Mistrust

Many concerns about over-reliance on GenAI, which could weaken critical thinking, reduce research literacy, and deskill scholars (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2024b; Hughes et al., 2025). Our findings suggested that trust in GenAI's accuracy and reliability is not immediate but develops over time. At first, participants were sceptical and asked whether an AI-generated response could be trusted and about policies governing GenAI use. The lack of transparency in how sources and structures information caused some hesitations. P12 captured, *"Trust in its content accuracy evolves. Initial scepticism arises because of AI's automated nature, but confidence grows later. The model's coherence, contextual relevance, and consistent accuracy in producing summaries build trust in its capabilities."* This aligns with

Shankar et al. (2021), who identified interpretability as a key determinant of AI trust. Even with considerable trust, numerous participants expressed the need for verification by cross-checking outputs with reliable sources. P3 stated, *"Cross-referencing with authoritative sources helps to validate GenAI output."* This is consistent with Altun et al. (2024), which indicated that trust in AI is not absolute but led by users verifying its content.

Participants acknowledged its potential to improve efficiency while also reflecting on its limitations, especially with complex or niche topics. Some considered it beneficial for research resources, whereas others expressed apprehensions. P5 stated, *"I view it as a valuable research tool, despite its limitations."* An observable increase in reliance on its dependability is evident; however, cross-validation is essential due to the limited capabilities. This highlights that trust in AI is conditional, which is shaped by experience, continuous evaluation, and the availability of human oversight to ensure accuracy.

4. Cultural and Ethical Concerns

The notion that AI-assisted content creation presents a cultural challenge, as it lacks the depth of traditional research methods. P9 stated, *"I utilise GenAI, but I never tell the truth to my colleagues."* This is due to the perceived academic prestige in our scholarly community and the worries about the impact on professional reputation such as peer stigma, which means negative judgement or disapproval from colleagues or peers. Researchers are trying to find a balance between the efficiency they gain from AI and the integrity of their research endeavours. This debate connects with previous discussions on authorship concerning the publications of gaming and gifting (Lee & Benjamin, 2023; Benjamin et al., 2024), which have come to the forefront due to GenAI research tools such as ChatGPT that streamline the publication process.

While the findings highlighted its efficiency, aligning with the theme of 'perceived usefulness'. Concerns exist regarding the impact of GenAI on research skills, as it may reduce cognitive engagement and promote a more passive attitude towards knowledge creation. Some researchers express concern that GenAI offers ready information, which may hinder critical thinking and deeper analysis. There exists an emotional aspect, as certain participants expressed feelings of guilt because of cultural focus on originality and intellectual effort. P7 expressed, *"Utilising GenAI to enhance my work seems like a compromise to scholarly integrity; it's quite disappointing."*

The discussions regarding the ethical issues associated with AI use occurred in both H&T educational contexts (Skavronskaya et al., 2023; Altun et al., 2024) and non-educational contexts (Morosan & Dursun-Cengizci, 2024). Our study emphasises the ethical issues related to potential bias in AI-generated outputs, which could happen when GenAI tools examine information sourced from existing data, which can reinforce societal biases and lead to biased or discriminatory content. This could be solved by implementing careful oversight, utilising diverse data sources, and providing critically neutral input, which ensures the fair and responsible use of AI. P2 stated, *"It is crucial to use diverse data sets, and your inputs should stay neutral…avoid cultural assumptions and language that could be offensive or exclusionary."* This emphasises the researcher's role in reducing bias by carefully framing AI-generated content and maintaining ethical responsibility.

The potential for inadvertent exposure of personal or sensitive data raises concerns among the participants. AI-generated false citations, altered content, and deepfakes add complexity to these ethical discussions. The growing complexity of AI presents difficulties in differentiating between genuine and AI-produced content that highlight the importance of transparency and verification within academic environments. P14 cautioned, "Ethical concerns, such as AI transparency, privacy, and the responsible use of data, and the issue of fakeness, are significant." These highlight the importance of institutional guidelines for AI usage to ensure ethical considerations are integrated. This aligns with Skavronskaya et al. (2023), Altun et al. (2024), and Hughes et al. (2025), all support a more inclusive strategy for AI governance (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Additionally, these guidelines should emphasise the need for using AI responsibly and recognising its limitations to prevent over-reliance on automated output.

5. GenAI Use Patterns: Full Adoption, Integration, or Avoidance

GenAI appears like other emerging technologies. Users in academia have the choice to embrace or dismiss it (Saif et al., 2024). Three GenAI use patterns have been shared during the interviews. The first pattern focuses on GenAI ability to lead publications, capturing contemporary concepts and generating research papers from start to finish. Traditional research methods might become outdated in the near future, leading to a diminished role for the human element in the research process. P16 expressed, *"AI research tools are crazy; AI may reduce our role in research, and a complete embrace of it may change the established rules."* Another said, *"No one knows; AI tools might become the researchers of the future."*

The second emphasises the consensus among participants that GenAI serves as a significant enhancement and can blend with traditional research approaches. This relates to its functions and features that position GenAI as assistants in education and academia. P18 mentioned, *"It doesn't replace my skills - it enhances them. It helps me quickly connect ideas and move my research forward."* P9 emphasised, *"I see it a research partner - always there, making the research journey smoother and more productive."* P12 confirmed, *"Using AI in my research is like having an extra set of hands; it clears away the repetitive tasks and gives me space to think deeper."* P7 stated, *"I only use it for certain parts of my work, like generating outlines or summarising papers, but I don't rely on them for full drafts or final writing."* The findings are consistent with earlier studies showing GenAI's potential to transform academic practices (Aydın & Karaarslan, 2022), assist in academic tasks (Iskender, 2023), and enhance logical reasoning abilities (Altun et al., 2024; Camilleri, 2024). Our study confirms that while participants value GenAI, its integration remains partial, as it is used in repetitive tasks, drafting outlines, and summarising content.

The final pattern touches on the avoidance of using GenAI, suggesting that if could limit human creativity by promoting 'ready-to-use' information, akin to an 'addiction.' P2 expressed, *"It's tempting to keep using AI for quick solutions, but I fear it could become addictive and limit my critical thinking."* Another reason for avoidance is the 'hallucination' of AI tools and

their inability to deliver accurate information. P18 shared, *"The potential for misinformation keeps me away from it."* This confirms the theme of ethical concerns and earlier studies' discussion about the accurate results of AI tools (Skavronskaya et al., 2023; Altun et al., 2024). Additionally, a lot of AI research tools make it challenging to stay aware of each one. P7 said, *"With endless AI options available, I focus only on tools I'm comfortable with - I can't possibly manage them all."*

The word cloud analysis (Figure 3) offers insights into the use of GenAI in research work, highlighting three patterns: full adoption, integration, and avoidance. The frequent mention of terms such as "Research" (n=40), "ChatGPT" (n=39), "Integration" (n=37), "Enhancement" (n=27), and "Responsible" (n=25) shows researchers' tendency to view GenAI as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for human-led research. Other recurring words like "Collaboration" (n=22), "Workflow" (n=21), "Synergy" (n=15), and "Customisation" (n=13) demonstrate perceived benefits of using AI to optimise processes and achieve more accurate results. The visibility of "Part-use" (n=18) highlights that many researchers apply GenAI selectively at particular research stages, while terms like "Precision" (n=15) and "Simplification" (n=14) emphasise its role in improving efficiency. Less frequent but significant words, such as, "Ethical" (n=11), "Trust" (n=9), and "Transparency" (n=7), signal ongoing caution and ethical reflection. Finally, broader terms like "AI" (n=15), "Sustainable" (n=13), "Innovation" (n=11), and "Generative" (n=9) point to GenAI's transformative role in shaping technological and academic advancement. These frequencies illustrate a nuanced adoption pattern, where enthusiasm for GenAI's potential is tempered by responsibility and critical engagement.

Figure 3. Word Cloud of common terms and views on GenAI use patterns in research setting (Source: Created by authors)

CONCLUSION

1. Theoretical implications

The research re-shapes the TAM model's main factors alongside adding two new factors to fit the adoption of GenAI in research settings (Figure 2). This leads to develop researchers understanding of the factors affecting H&T researchers' intentions to use a transformative technology. Its qualitative nature allows for sharing insights and nuances about GenAI usage within the H&T research community. Notably, it is among the first to integrate the TAM with GenAI in this context with a qualitative approach to respond repeated calls from prior studies (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Ivanov & Soliman, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2024a; Mogaji et al., 2024). First, the study confirms the relevance of the TAM framework and its components PU and PEOU, in shaping researchers' intentions. PU, shaped by H&T researchers, includes delivery of relevant content, enhanced writing quality, clarity of concepts, identification of research gaps, and overcoming language barriers, collectively transforming traditional research practices (Aydın & Karaarslan, 2022; Altun et al., 2024; Camilleri, 2024). Meanwhile, PEOU focuses on user-friendly elements like easy interface design, easy accessibility, and multiple functional versions. Further improvement areas for PEOU were suggested as reducing subscription costs and incorporating additional supplementary features to increase accessibility.

Second, the TAM model, in our study, has been extended by two new factors: 'Trust' and 'cultural-ethical considerations'. This extension provides a robust framework in academia that focuses on the intersection of transformative technology, academic integrity, and researcher autonomy. Trust includes various characteristics within the H&T research community like data validation, content accuracy, interpretability, transparency, and cross-referencing. Although previous literature acknowledges ethical implications (Altun et al., 2024), the inclusion of cultural-ethical dimensions in our study highlights the complexity of AI adoption and addresses concerns like cognitive, research integrity, emotional and societal impacts, privacy violations, potential biases, misinformation risks, and deepfake content.

Third, this study highlights the different patterns of GenAI usage, from complete adoption to selective integration and avoidance to reveal how researchers balance efficiency benefits and potential cultural-ethical implications. The outcomes highlight the cultural-ethical factors that shape researchers' choices and the conflict between cutting-edge AI-driven methods and conventional academic standards related to rigour and reputation. Our study deepens the comprehension for researchers as they balance the substantial productivity and collaborative benefits while maintaining their critical thinking and originality. The study further adds to the current discourse surrounding human-AI collaboration (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Sop & Kurçer, 2024; Hughes et al., 2025), which researchers typically regard GenAI as a supportive partner that enhances their research activities. Consequently, this highlights a broader cultural dialogue within academia that balances technological innovation with longstanding scholarly values and ethical standards.

2. Practical implications

Our study provides some practical implications. First, higher education and research (HER) institutions should establish clear policies to support researchers in using technology efficiently and strengthening their own research skills and knowledge. Policies need to encourage researchers to use AI as a helpful tool to enhance writing or streamline tasks, not as a replacement for human judgement or expertise. Over-reliance on AI could lead to inaccuracies in research or weaken

critical thinking and writing skills. To set these policies, it may lead to a big challenge for HER leaders and policymakers, who must figure out how to uphold academic integrity in an era where traditional oversight methods might not be enough. The rise of AI left many researchers feeling uncertain about how to balance innovation with ethics. This is why HER institutions need a thoughtful strategy for managing GenAI integration. HER institutions are encouraged to prioritise training their staff on GenAI to bridge the knowledge gap and facilitate the full integration of it into research practices. This way, AI becomes a smart partner in research, not a threat to the human elements that make scholarship meaningful.

Second, H&T researchers must approach the use of GenAI and maintain a careful balance to ensure research quality. The 'willingness to balance' suggests using GenAI for proofreading, editing, or refining ideas. It is not for a source of reliable academic references or a substitute author. This study aligns with previous research calling for a thoughtful approach to publishing in the H&T field to promote the notion of 'slowing down' the publication and shifting away from the pressure of 'publish or perish' (Lee & Benjamin, 2023; Benjamin et al., 2024; Dolnicar, 2025).

Although GenAI could reduce the practice of 'gaming' or 'gifting' co-authorship, it also risks becoming another shortcut to increase publications that lack genuine novelty or quality. The central argument here is clear: research excellence is about depth and original contribution rather than publication volume. This echoes David Fennell's (2013) view that "Good papers, like good wine, require good time" (p.424).

Third, AI developers should understand the H&T researchers' demands. If AI services are tailored to meet the specific demands and challenges encountered in H&T research, this could enhance the usefulness of academic work within the field. For instance, participants in the current study suggested that OpenAI developers should offer free subscriptions with advanced features, including integration with scholarly databases, integration with emails and the Microsoft Office package, multilingual support, and offline functionality. Developers can add options for looking for suitable journals and provide detailed information about submissions, like aim and scope, word count, format, and referencing style. Also, AI developers can collaborate with publishers to add the option of searching on databases like Emerald, Elsevier, etc., or collaborate with partners like Google to create an option of co-scientists for more accurate content and hypotheses. To put AI technology to use in the real world, developers should talk to researchers by surveying them, setting up feedback loops that keep going, or holding workshops, internships, and training sessions to find out what they need.

3. Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations. The study focused on some universities that may reduce generalisability. Future research needs to diversify institutions across countries, explore institutional policies, and use broader demographics or mixed methods to generate deeper H&T specific insights. Other sectors, such as airlines, hotels, and restaurants, would offer deeper insights into GenAI use based on work tasks. Researchers should also consider other theories like UTAUT, IDT, or AIDUA and examine motivations for using GenAI tools. This approach could provide an understanding of AI adoption in both academic and non-academic settings and its impact on user engagement with interactive technologies.

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