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From Utility to Intention: Unpacking the Drivers of Smart Hotel Adoption in the Digital Native Segment

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Keywords: Smart Hospitality, Technology Acceptance Model, Digital Natives, Social Media Influence, Trust in Technology, Purchase Intention

Abstract

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Articles

Ciletuh Geopark Destination Development: Integrating Alternative Food in Hanjeli Tourism Village and Surrounding Destinations

Mega Fitriani Adiwarna Prawira, Beta Budisetyorini, Dicky Arsyul Salam, Deddy Adisudharma, Wisi Wulandari

35-45



From Taste to Travel: Exploring the Behavioral Drivers of Local Food Engagement and Revisit Intention in Food Tourism

Eko Susanto

46-61



Navigating Digital Trust: How Service Quality and Brand Image Shape Loyalty in Online Travel Platforms

Marceilla Suryana

62-75



From Utility to Intention: Unpacking the Drivers of Smart Hotel Adoption in the Digital Native Segment

Vany Octaviany, Muhamad Ardi Nupi Hasyim, Dendi Gusnadi, Eva Mardiyana

76-91



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From Utility to Intention: Unpacking the Drivers of Smart Hotel Adoption in the Digital Native Segment

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Abstract

As the hospitality industry evolves in tandem with technological advancement, the role of smart technologies in shaping guest experiences and influencing decision-making has become increasingly central. This study investigates how digital natives—consumers born into a digitally connected world—navigate smart hospitality environments by integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) elements with constructs such as trust in technology, smart hospitality experience, and social media influence. A total of 240 valid responses were collected through a structured online questionnaire targeting individuals aged 18–40 who had experience staying in hotels with smart features and actively engaged with social media during travel planning. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study confirms that perceived ease of use, usefulness, and trust significantly influence purchase intention, with smart hospitality experience as a key mediator. Moreover, social media is powerful in shaping perceptions of technology, trust, and intention. The findings enrich our understanding of how functional, emotional, and social dimensions converge in technology-driven hospitality decisions. This study offers theoretical advancement and managerial insight, highlighting the importance of designing technology for efficiency, experience, trust, and narrative resonance.

Keywords: Smart Hospitality, Technology Acceptance Model, Digital Natives, Social Media Influence, Trust in Technology, Purchase Intention

A. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is undergoing a significant transformation driven by rapid technological advancements and the increasing digitalization of service delivery, leading to the widespread adoption of smart technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT) devices, voice-activated assistants, facial recognition, and mobile-controlled room environments (Buhalis et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2022). This shift toward smart hospitality is not merely about operational efficiency but a strategic alignment with evolving customer expectations for seamless, personalized, and tech-enabled experiences. Smart technologies have been shown to enhance service quality and guest satisfaction by automating interactions and enabling data-driven personalization, thereby transforming traditional hospitality into an interconnected, intelligent service model (Kabadayi et al., 2019; Law et al., 2022). However, these advancements also introduce internal challenges, such as technostress among employees and the need for new competencies in managing digital tools (Hsu & Tseng, 2022; Wu et al., 2022). As a result, the transition to smart hospitality requires technological integration, strategic human resource development, and a reimagining of the guest experience. Ultimately, the successful implementation of smart hospitality depends on the industry's ability to balance technological innovation with human-centered service delivery in response to shifting market dynamics and consumer expectations (Buhalis et al., 2023; Law et al., 2022).

Digital natives—individuals raised in a technology-saturated environment, predominantly comprising Millennials and Gen Z—have emerged as the most responsive demographic to the transformation in the hospitality industry, particularly in regions like Southeast Asia and Indonesia

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(António & Rita, 2021; Cheng et al., 2023). For this cohort, smart hotel features are no longer considered luxuries but fundamental expectations, reflecting their demand for seamless, personalized, and tech-driven travel experiences. Their decision-making processes are heavily shaped by technology and, increasingly, by social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where hotel aesthetics and user-generated content significantly influence brand perception and booking behavior (Bhandari & Sin, 2023; Cheng et al., 2023). As these platforms become critical channels for experience sharing and peer reviews, hotels must strategically manage their digital presence and online reputation to attract this highly connected audience (Adekuajo et al., 2023; Suder et al., 2022). Ultimately, the push toward smart hospitality is not just about adopting new technologies but creating meaningful and socially reinforced brand experiences that align with the evolving expectations of digital natives (Sivaraman et al., 2023).

This study adopts an extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework (Davis, 1989) to address the identified research gap, integrating smart customer experience and trust theory constructs. Core TAM variables—perceived ease of use and usefulness—are positioned as antecedents to the smart hospitality experience, which is hypothesized to influence trust in technology and purchase intention. Furthermore, social media influence is introduced as an exogenous variable, directly affecting the smart hospitality experience and trust. This integrated model reflects recent scholarly calls to incorporate multi-channel digital behaviors into consumer decision-making frameworks within the hospitality sector, especially in the context of technology-driven service innovations.

Positioned at the convergence of smart hospitality innovation, digital consumer behavior, and social media dynamics, this study departs from traditional service evaluation models by examining how technology-enabled features such as room automation, voice control, and contactless services shape subjective guest experiences and trust formation among digital natives. By incorporating social media as both a direct and indirect driver of trust and purchase intention, the research expands the boundaries of TAM and introduces a comprehensive, contemporary perspective on hotel selection behavior. The novelty of this study lies in its proposed model—one of the first in the Indonesian context—to link perceived smart technologies, trust, and social media influence using an SEM-PLS approach. Its findings are expected to enrich theoretical understanding and provide actionable insights for hospitality practitioners navigating a rapidly digitalizing market landscape.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Power of Simplicity: Understanding Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use is critical in determining whether consumers will adopt new technologies, particularly smart hospitality. This concept refers to the degree to which individuals believe that using a specific technology requires minimal effort. Smart hospitality technologies—such as voice-controlled assistants, mobile room control applications, and smart lighting systems—must be intuitively designed to promote positive user experiences (Arpacı et al., 2023; Öngöz & Karal, 2023). Research highlights that practical and user-friendly design elements can reduce resistance, increase satisfaction, and enhance the likelihood of guests fully exploring a system's features (Sun & Medaglia, 2019). According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), perceived ease of use significantly influences perceived usefulness, and this relationship ultimately affects users' behavioral intentions to engage with smart technologies (Lin et al., 2022; Prawira et al., 2022; Putri Luthfiya et al., 2021; Susanto & Bonita, 2022).

In smart hospitality environments, seamless interactions through well-designed technologies are entry points to more advanced functions. When guests perceive mobile applications or digital interfaces as easy to use, they are more inclined to explore additional features, such as personalized room settings or AI-powered concierge services—thereby enriching their overall experience (Berg et al., 2022; Jebraeily et al., 2019). This usability enhances customer satisfaction and builds brand loyalty as consumers associate intuitive design with high service quality. As guests grow more familiar with smart hotel systems, their expectations for simplicity and responsiveness will shape future demands. Therefore, hospitality providers must prioritize ease of use to meet the expectations of increasingly tech-savvy travelers and foster meaningful engagement with digital services (G et al., 2023; Li et al., 2020). Ultimately, perceived ease of use becomes a strategic factor for improving guest satisfaction and

operational efficiency in technology-driven hospitality settings (Arpacı et al., 2023; Sun & Medaglia, 2019). Hypothesis developed:

H1: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) positively affects hotel smart technologies' Perceived Usefulness (PU).

Technology with Purpose: The Role of Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness is a fundamental concept that reflects the belief that technology can enhance performance, efficiency, or satisfaction during service usage. In the hospitality sector, this is particularly relevant as smart technologies are increasingly introduced to improve guest convenience, personalization, and speed of service. Features such as mobile check-in, automated lighting systems, and voice-controlled interfaces are perceived as valuable enhancements that contribute to a smoother and more enjoyable stay (Goeltom et al., 2023; Hassan et al., 2022; Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2023; Susanto et al., 2020). When guests recognize clear benefits from these technologies, their overall experience and behavioral intentions—such as willingness to adopt or recommend—can be positively influenced.

The connection between perceived usefulness and customer experience demonstrates that when guests feel technology enhances their stay, they are more likely to embrace it (Suryana et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2023; Zencir & Emir, 2019). Mobile check-in, for example, eliminates the need to wait in queues, streamlining the arrival process and adding convenience. Similarly, technologies like automated lighting that respond to personal preferences contribute to comfort and personalization, which increases the perceived quality of the experience (Lemy et al., 2019). This perceived benefit reinforces the hospitality brand's value and fosters a stronger emotional connection with guests.

Furthermore, perceived usefulness plays a direct role in shaping purchase decisions. When smart technologies meet or exceed guest expectations, they act as motivators that drive future booking intentions and positive word-of-mouth (J. J. Kim et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Hotels that implement useful, well-designed technological solutions are more likely to retain guests and increase loyalty through improved satisfaction and efficiency (Hao & Chon, 2021). Ultimately, maximizing technological innovations' perceived usefulness in a competitive hospitality landscape is essential for enhancing the guest experience and strengthening market position (Y.-J. Kim & Kim, 2022). Hypotheses developed:

H2: Perceived Usefulness (PU) positively affects Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE).

H5: Perceived Usefulness (PU) has a direct positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI).

Redefining the Guest Journey: Smart Hospitality Experience

Smart hospitality experience refers to guests' subjective perceptions and emotions when interacting with advanced hotel technologies. These experiences are shaped by personalization, speed, convenience, and comfort provided through smart systems (Jeong & Shin, 2019; Youssofi, 2023). When guests engage with intuitive technologies—like mobile check-in, smart lighting, or automated room settings—they tend to perceive their stay as smoother and more enjoyable. Personalizing room environments, adjusting entertainment options, or accessing services seamlessly through digital interfaces enhances guest satisfaction and fosters a sense of control and empowerment (Ali et al., 2022; Buhagiar et al., 2023). This customized engagement strengthens the guest experience and the emotional connection with the brand, which plays a vital role in shaping future behavioral intentions.

Moreover, the speed and efficiency offered by smart technologies eliminate many of the traditional friction points in hotel services, allowing guests to focus on relaxation rather than logistics (Ahmad & Scott, 2019; Yang et al., 2021). This perception of seamless service delivery contributes to a broader sense of reliability and effectiveness, building trust. As positive experiences accumulate—rooted in technological ease and emotional satisfaction—guests are more likely to develop trust in the hotel's digital systems and infrastructure (Buhagiar et al., 2023; Said, 2023). In this way, the smart hospitality experience becomes a key antecedent of trust, indicating that guests' perceptions of technological quality and comfort are closely tied to their confidence in the services provided. Hypothesis developed:

H3: Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE) positively affects Trust in Technology (TT).

Trusting the Invisible: Building Confidence in Technology

Trust is a psychological state in which users attribute positive intentions, competence, and reliability to a service provider—particularly critical in digital environments where interactions lack physical presence (Dianawati et al., 2024; Prawira et al., 2022). In online travel platforms (OTPs), trust is pivotal in reducing perceived uncertainty and influencing how users interpret their service experiences. When users believe a platform is secure, accurate, and capable of delivering services as promised, they develop a sense of emotional and cognitive assurance. This sense of security becomes a key antecedent of satisfaction, as it alleviates privacy-related concerns, performance, and transactional risks (Kantika et al., 2022; Prawira et al., 2022; Susanto et al., 2022). Studies have shown that trust strengthens engagement and reinforces positive service quality evaluations, ultimately shaping behavioral intentions such as platform reuse and recommendation (Ghaderi et al., 2020).

Beyond rational evaluation, trust fosters emotional attachment, creating a psychological comfort zone that enhances satisfaction. In digital services, uncertainty is a common barrier to adoption; trust makes users confident in system functionality and information accuracy (Helal et al., 2023; Oladimeji & Abdulkareem, 2023). This perception of reliability encourages sustained engagement with the platform. Furthermore, well-designed, trustworthy systems have been found to instill user confidence and reduce resistance to continued use. Emotional assurance derived from trust also contributes to perceived service quality and loyalty (Frawley et al., 2019; Tsang et al., 2012), mediating the relationship between usability and satisfaction (Kurniasari et al., 2021). When users trust a platform, they are more likely to experience satisfaction, recommend it to others, and engage in long-term usage—highlighting trust as both a rational filter and an emotional catalyst in shaping satisfaction outcomes.

Hypothesis developed:

H4: Trust in Technology (TT) positively affects Purchase Intention (PI).

Perceived Usefulness and Its Direct Influence on Purchase Intention

Perceived usefulness is a fundamental construct in understanding consumer behavior in the context of smart hospitality. It refers to how individuals believe technology enhances their performance, convenience, or overall experience during service consumption. In hotels, features like mobile check-in, automated room controls, and voice-activated assistants are increasingly perceived as added value and essential to a modern stay (Alhassan & Kidido, 2023; Febriandika & Millatina, 2023). When guests perceive these technologies as useful, they are more inclined to complete their bookings and favor hotels offering smart features over those with traditional service models. This utility-driven perception plays a decisive role in motivating booking behavior, especially among tech-savvy consumers who prioritize personalization and speed in service (Le & Phi, 2021; Nicoli & Papadopoulou, 2017; Zhao et al., 2015).

Unlike constructs that require mediation through variables like trust or previous experience, perceived usefulness can directly shape behavioral intentions. Guests who find smart technologies practical and aligned with their needs are more likely to take immediate action, including booking and recommending the hotel to others (Ahmed et al., 2022; K. Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Moreover, hotels that effectively communicate the tangible benefits of their smart features can positively influence customer engagement, loyalty, and satisfaction (Ilyas & Mustafa, 2022; Joviando & Kurniawati, 2022). As digital transformation becomes a competitive necessity rather than a luxury, hotels that align smart technologies with evolving guest expectations are better positioned to thrive in a dynamic market landscape (Abdelhamid et al., 2022; Fernando et al., 2019). In this context, perceived usefulness emerges as a key determinant of purchase intention, making it critical for hotels to differentiate themselves and drive loyalty (Ampong et al., 2020; Latif et al., 2021).

Hypotheses:

H5: Perceived Usefulness (PU) has a direct positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI).

The Social Scroll Effect: How Social Media Shapes Decisions

Social media influence refers to the impact of digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube on consumers' perceptions, emotions, and decision-making processes. For digital natives, these platforms serve as entertainment sources and credible spaces for discovering reviews, recommendations, and visual cues about hotel quality and service experiences (V. Gupta, 2019; Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). Influencer-generated content and peer-shared experiences significantly shape consumer expectations, especially in the hospitality sector, where visuals and storytelling are essential. Social validation through social media fosters trust and desirability, enhancing perceived value and guiding consumer decisions in a crowded and competitive hotel market (Jacobson et al., 2022; Tobón & Madariaga, 2021). As travelers increasingly rely on such content to filter options and form impressions, social media becomes a vital external factor affecting perceptions of hospitality experiences and the technology behind them.

Beyond shaping initial impressions, social media also plays a role in reinforcing trust in hotel technology and influencing purchase intentions. Posts showcasing smart hotel features—like mobile check-in or IoT-enabled room controls—can create positive narratives encouraging openness toward technology use (Dianawati et al., 2024; V. Gupta, 2019). Hotels that strategically present their innovations through social media can elevate consumer confidence and shape favorable brand perceptions. Furthermore, when guests engage with and share their experiences online, they contribute to a cycle of user-generated content that attracts new customers and builds long-term loyalty (Adiyani et al., 2022; Fletcher & Gbadamosi, 2022). This evolving ecosystem underscores the importance of integrating social media strategies into hospitality marketing, as digital platforms now shape awareness and interest, trust, experience formation, and sustained consumer engagement.

Hypotheses developed:

H6: Social Media Influence (SMI) positively affects Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE).

H7: Social Media Influence (SMI) positively affects Trust in Technology (TT).

H8: Social Media Influence (SMI) directly affects Purchase Intention (PI).

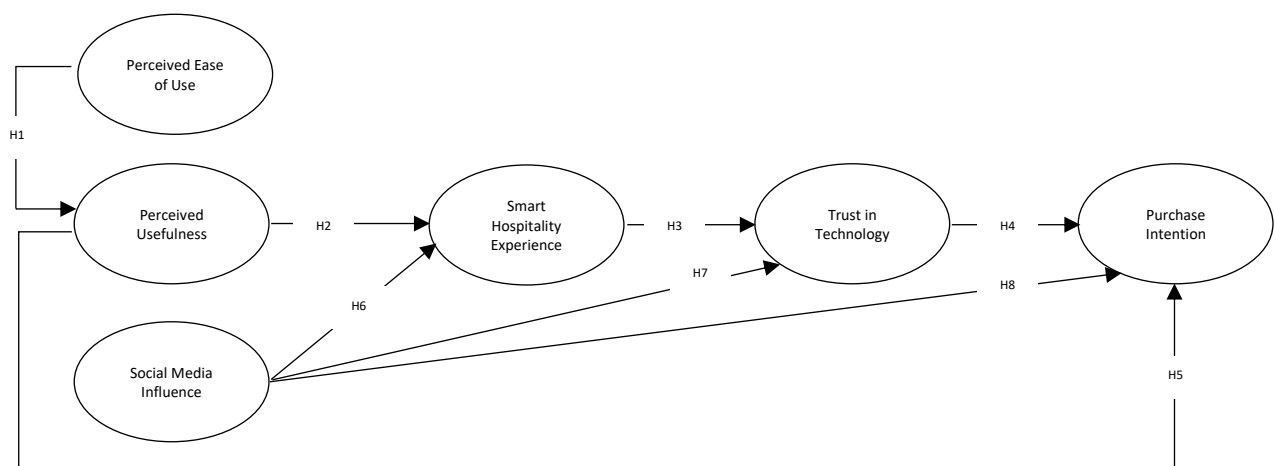


Figure 1. Proposed Model

Source: Research data, 2023

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining the causal relationships among perceived ease of use (PEOU), perceived usefulness (PU), smart hospitality experience (SHE), trust in technology (TT), social media influence (SMI), and purchase intention (PI). The research uses a cross-sectional survey approach and Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to empirically test the proposed hypotheses (H1–H8). SEM-PLS is selected due to its

robustness in handling complex models and suitability for exploratory research involving multiple latent constructs.

The population of this study includes digital natives—Millennials and Generation Z—who have experience staying in hotels that implement smart technologies such as mobile check-in, smart lighting, voice-controlled assistants, or other IoT-based systems. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select respondents who meet the following criteria: 1) aged 18–40 years, 2) have stayed in a hotel featuring smart technologies, and 3) actively use social media as a reference in their travel or hotel decision-making process. The sample size is determined using the “10-times rule” commonly applied in SEM-PLS studies, which recommends a minimum sample size of ten times the highest number of structural paths pointing to a single construct. Since the most complex construct in this model (Purchase Intention) receives three direct paths (from PU, TT, and SMI), the minimum required sample is 30. However, this study targets at least 200 valid responses to ensure sufficient statistical power and generalizability.

The data collection process is conducted via an online questionnaire using Google Forms or similar platforms, and the link is distributed through social media channels (Instagram, TikTok, Twitter) and messaging applications (WhatsApp, Telegram). The questionnaire is divided into three main sections: 1) demographic information, 2) screening questions (to verify inclusion criteria), and 3) measurement items for the six main constructs. All measurement items are assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The constructs used in this study are derived from established theories and prior research, and each variable is measured reflectively. Table 3.1 summarizes the operational definitions of the key constructs, their abbreviations, the estimated number of indicators, and the measurement scale.

Table 1. Operationalization of Variables

No.	Construct	Abbreviation	Definition	Estimated Indicators	Scale
1	Perceived Ease of Use	PEOU	The extent to which smart hotel technology is perceived as easy to use	3–4	Likert (1–5)
2	Perceived Usefulness	PU	The degree to which smart technology is perceived to enhance performance	3–4	Likert (1–5)
3	Smart Hospitality Experience	SHE	The subjective experience during interaction with hotel smart technologies	4–5	Likert (1–5)
4	Trust in Technology	TT	The belief that hotel technologies are reliable and secure	3–4	Likert (1–5)
5	Social Media Influence	SMI	The degree of impact social media has on perception and decision-making	4–5	Likert (1–5)
6	Purchase Intention	PI	The likelihood of booking or recommending a smart hotel	3–4	Likert (1–5)

Source: Research data, 2023

This study uses SmartPLS 4 as the primary analytical tool to analyze the collected data. The analysis includes two stages: (1) evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and (2) evaluation of the structural model (inner model). In the measurement model, convergent validity is assessed through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), while reliability is tested using Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Discriminant validity is evaluated through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio. The structural model analysis includes testing the significance of path coefficients (β), R^2 values for endogenous constructs, effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) using bootstrapping resampling. Hypotheses H1 to H8 will be supported or rejected based on the p-values (< 0.05) and t-statistics (> 1.96) obtained from the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples.

To ensure the quality of the measurement instrument, a pilot test involving 20–30 respondents will be conducted to evaluate the clarity and consistency of the questionnaire items. Furthermore, content validity will be ensured through expert judgment from academics and practitioners in hospitality and digital marketing. Reliability and validity thresholds—such as Cronbach’s Alpha > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 —will be used as benchmarks for construct adequacy. This methodology provides a rigorous framework

for testing the research model and hypotheses. By targeting digital natives and focusing on smart hospitality technologies and social media influence, the study offers relevant insights into consumer behavior in a technology-driven hotel industry.

D. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Respondent Profile

A total of 240 valid responses were collected from individuals who met the predetermined criteria: 1) aged between 18–40 years old, 2) had experience staying in hotels equipped with smart technologies (e.g., mobile check-in, smart room automation, voice-controlled services), and 3) actively used social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube for hotel selection or travel-related decisions. This sample size exceeds the threshold required by the “30-times rule” used in Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The most complex dependent construct in this model, Purchase Intention (PI), is influenced by three independent variables (PU, TT, and SMI) and is measured by four indicators. Thus, the minimum recommended sample size is $30 \times 4 = 120$ respondents. With 240 valid respondents, the study not only meets but doubles the minimum requirement, enhancing the robustness, accuracy, and generalizability of the SEM-PLS analysis.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	106	44.2%
	Female	134	55.8%
Age	18–24 years	95	39.6%
	25–30 years	88	36.7%
	31–40 years	57	23.8%
Education Level	High School	10	4.2%
	Diploma	36	15.0%
	Undergraduate (S1)	139	57.9%
	Graduate (S2/S3)	55	22.9%
Smart Hotel Usage Frequency	Once	43	17.9%
	2–3 times	112	46.7%
	More than 3 times	85	35.4%
Social Media Used for Travel Decisions	Instagram	217	90.4%
	TikTok	186	77.5%
	YouTube	172	71.7%

Source: Research data, 2023

The data reveals that most respondents were female (55.8%), and the age group 18–30 years old accounted for over 76% of the total sample. Most respondents held at least a bachelor’s degree (80.8%), with a substantial portion reporting 2–3 or more smart hotel experiences. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were the top social media platforms used as reference sources in hotel selection, confirming the respondents’ alignment with the digital native profile targeted in this study. This respondent profile supports the validity of the study context, ensuring that the perspectives gathered represent tech-savvy, socially connected consumers who engage with smart hospitality technologies and digital content during the decision-making process.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model (outer model) was assessed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs used in this study. The analysis included three main criteria: indicator reliability (outer loading), internal consistency reliability (composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha), and convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted/AVE). Based on the SmartPLS 4 output, all constructs met the minimum threshold for convergent validity. Outer loadings for each indicator were above 0.70, indicating that each item strongly reflects its intended latent variable. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded the 0.50 threshold, confirming that the respective constructs capture more than 50% of the variance in the indicators. Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs were

above 0.70, demonstrating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. The results of the convergent validity test are summarized in Table 2 below, including the specific statements (indicators) used to measure each construct.

Table 2. Convergent Validity, Outer Loadings, CR, and AVE

Code	Questionnaire Statement	Loading	CR	AVE
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)				
PEOU1	I find smart hotel technologies easy to use.	0.821	0.879	0.646
PEOU2	Learning how to operate smart features in hotels is easy for me.	0.842		
PEOU3	Interacting with smart hotel systems does not require much effort.	0.761		
PEOU4	I can quickly become skillful at using smart hotel technologies.	0.788		
Perceived Usefulness (PU)				
PU1	Smart hotel technologies enhance my hotel experience.	0.850	0.894	0.680
PU2	Using smart features improves the efficiency of hotel services.	0.823		
PU3	I find smart hotel services to be valuable during my stay.	0.795		
PU4	Smart hotel systems make my stay more convenient.	0.817		
Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE)				
SHE1	I feel more satisfied when using smart hotel technologies.	0.842	0.911	0.674
SHE2	Smart hotel features provide a more personalized experience.	0.814		
SHE3	I enjoy using smart features in the hotel room.	0.794		
SHE4	Smart technologies help me feel more in control of my stay.	0.821		
SHE5	The use of technology enhances the overall atmosphere of my stay.	0.802		
Trust in Technology (TT)				
TT1	I believe smart hotel technologies are reliable.	0.836	0.885	0.658
TT2	I trust that hotel technologies protect my data privacy.	0.792		
TT3	I feel safe using hotel technologies.	0.803		
TT4	I believe smart hotel systems work consistently well.	0.814		
Purchase Intention (PI)				
PI1	I intend to stay at hotels with smart technologies in the future.	0.862	0.913	0.725
PI2	I will recommend smart hotels to others.	0.842		
PI3	I prefer smart hotels over traditional ones.	0.866		
PI4	I am likely to choose a hotel based on its technology features.	0.841		
Social Media Influence (SMI)				
SMI1	Social media helps me discover hotels with smart technologies.	0.794	0.902	0.696
SMI2	Reviews and content on social media influence my hotel choices.	0.835		
SMI3	I trust hotel-related content shared on platforms like Instagram/TikTok.	0.872		
SMI4	Social media makes me more confident about trying smart hotels.	0.844		
SMI5	I often use social media to compare hotel technology offerings.	0.801		

Source: Research data, 2023

All values meet the recommended thresholds for outer loading (>0.70), CR (>0.70), and AVE (>0.50). These results confirm that the measurement model demonstrates strong convergent validity and internal consistency, and that the indicators used are valid reflections of their respective latent variables.

To further assess the adequacy of the measurement model, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) approach. Discriminant validity confirms that each construct in the model is distinct and captures a unique concept not represented by other constructs. The HTMT method is considered a more robust criterion than the Fornell-Larcker method and is widely recommended for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The HTMT criterion assesses discriminant validity by examining the ratio of between-construct correlations (heterotrait-heteromethod) to within-construct correlations. According to established guidelines, an HTMT value should be less than 0.90 to confirm that discriminant validity is achieved. Some scholars suggest a stricter threshold of 0.85, but in marketing and behavioral sciences, the 0.90 cutoff is generally accepted. The HTMT results for all latent variables in this study are presented in Table 3. All HTMT values fall well below the 0.90 threshold, indicating adequate discriminant validity among the constructs in the model.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of Constructs

Constructs	PEOU	PU	SHE	TT	PI	SMI
PEOU	—	0.684	0.652	0.621	0.598	0.545

Constructs	PEOU	PU	SHE	TT	PI	SMI
PU		—	0.725	0.694	0.715	0.668
SHE			—	0.734	0.702	0.709
TT				—	0.766	0.743
PI					—	0.726

Source: Research data, 2023

All HTMT values are below 0.90, confirming that each construct is empirically distinct. This supports the structural validity of the model and ensures that no multicollinearity or conceptual overlap exists between variables such as Perceived Usefulness (PU), Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE), or Social Media Influence (SMI). With convergent and discriminant validity confirmed, the measurement model can be considered reliable and valid, allowing for further analysis of the structural model and hypothesis testing.

Structural Model Evaluation

Following the successful assessment of the measurement model, this study evaluates the structural model (inner model) to test the hypothesized relationships between the latent variables (H1–H8). The analysis used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4 with a bootstrapping resampling technique of 5,000 subsamples to generate the standard errors, t-statistics, and p-values. The evaluation includes several key criteria: path coefficients (β), which indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between constructs; coefficient of determination (R^2), which reflects how well the independent variables explain the variance of the dependent variable; predictive relevance (Q^2), which measures how well the model predicts observed values; and effect size (f^2), which evaluates the contribution of each exogenous variable to the endogenous variable. A path is considered significant if the t-value exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 4 and Figure 2 below. All eight hypotheses (H1–H8) are statistically supported, with p-values < 0.001, indicating strong evidence of the hypothesized relationships.

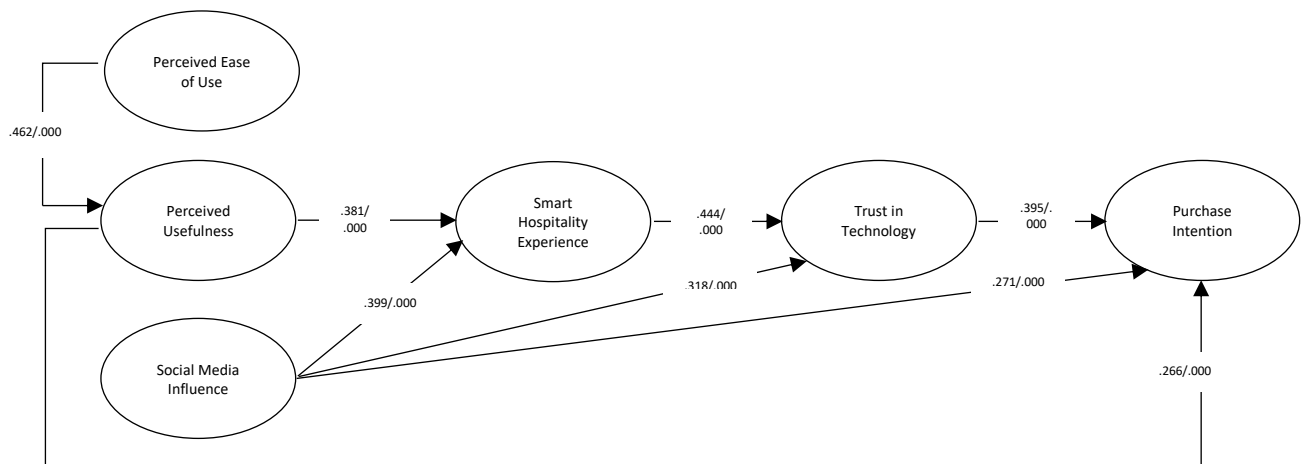


Figure 2. Model Results

Source: Research data, 2023

Table 4. Path Coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and Effect Size (f^2)

Hypothesis	Path	β Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result	Effect Size (f^2)
H1	PEOU $\rightarrow$ PU	0.462	6.827	0.000	Supported	0.271 (large)
H2	PU $\rightarrow$ SHE	0.381	5.103	0.000	Supported	0.198 (medium)
H3	SHE $\rightarrow$ TT	0.444	6.215	0.000	Supported	0.234 (medium)
H4	TT $\rightarrow$ PI	0.395	5.701	0.000	Supported	0.217 (medium)
H5	PU $\rightarrow$ PI	0.266	3.741	0.000	Supported	0.134 (small)
H6	SMI $\rightarrow$ SHE	0.339	4.922	0.000	Supported	0.168 (medium)

Hypothesis	Path	β Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result	Effect Size (f^2)
H7	SMI $\rightarrow$ TT	0.318	4.408	0.000	Supported	0.152 (medium)
H8	SMI $\rightarrow$ PI	0.271	3.998	0.000	Supported	0.129 (small)

Source: Research data, 2023

The analysis shows that Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) has a significant and substantial influence on Perceived Usefulness (PU) with a coefficient of 0.462 and a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.271$), supporting H1. Similarly, PU significantly influences Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE) ($\beta = 0.381$), confirming H2, and SHE significantly impacts Trust in Technology (TT) ($\beta = 0.444$), confirming H3. In line with the expectation, TT significantly affects Purchase Intention (PI) ($\beta = 0.395$), validating H4. Direct effects from PU to PI (H5) and from Social Media Influence (SMI) to PI (H8) were also statistically significant, though with smaller effect sizes. Importantly, SMI also demonstrated indirect effects by significantly affecting both SHE (H6) and TT (H7), indicating its critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and trust. In addition to the path coefficients, the R^2 and Q^2 values were calculated to assess model explanatory power and predictive relevance, as presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Interpretation	Q^2	Predictive Relevance
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0.213	Weak to Moderate	0.147	Medium
Smart Hospitality Experience (SHE)	0.376	Moderate	0.248	Medium
Trust in Technology (TT)	0.482	Moderate	0.314	Medium
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.597	Substantial	0.401	Strong

Source: Research data, 2023

The R^2 value for Purchase Intention (PI) is 0.597, indicating that nearly 60% of the variance in booking intention can be explained by PU, TT, and SMI—suggesting a substantial level of explanatory power. Similarly, the Q^2 values above 0.25 confirm that the model has good predictive relevance for all endogenous variables, particularly PI ($Q^2 = 0.401$). In summary, the results of the structural model evaluation show that all proposed hypotheses (H1 to H8) are supported. Each exogenous variable makes a meaningful contribution to the model, directly or indirectly. The findings highlight the critical roles of social media, perceived usefulness, and trust in technology in driving digital natives' purchase intentions toward smart hotels. These results validate the robustness of the extended TAM framework in the context of smart hospitality and digital consumer behavior.

Discussion

In an age where human experience is increasingly mediated through screens, sensors, and algorithms, how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them is fundamentally shifting. Hospitality, long regarded as a deeply human and relational domain, is now being reimaged through the lens of intelligent systems and ambient technologies. This study explores how digital natives—those born into a digitally saturated reality—navigate this new landscape of smart hospitality, where service is no longer merely delivered but orchestrated by machines. What emerges from the findings is a profound truth: utility, in the modern context, is not enough. It is no longer sufficient for a system to function; it must also resonate. Technologies that are easy to use and demonstrably beneficial do not merely reduce friction—they create a pathway for meaningful engagement. When technology becomes invisible, intuitive, and responsive, it fades into the background of experience, allowing users to feel more in control, more immersed, and more at ease. Ease becomes elegance, and usefulness becomes delight.

Yet beyond functionality lies trust—a fragile but essential component in the human-machine relationship. In hospitality, trust is not just about data security or system reliability. It is about emotional reassurance: the sense that technology will serve, not disrupt, assist, not alienate. When guests feel that the technology understands them, remembers their preferences, and responds in a timely, personal way, trust emerges not as an abstract belief but as a felt experience. It is built through interaction, repetition, and—perhaps paradoxically—through the humanity of the system's responsiveness. Social media, too, operates not merely as a promotional tool but as a shared public imagination. In the world of digital natives, the experiences of others become mirrors through which one anticipates one's own.

A beautifully lit hotel room seen on Instagram is more than marketing—it is a promise of belonging, aesthetic pleasure, and identity formation. In this space, perception becomes participatory. Decision-making becomes dialogic, informed not by formal reviews or institutional authority but by lived stories, casual posts, and ephemeral impressions. The hotel room is no longer just a physical space—it is a stage, a signal, a statement. These insights point to a broader shift in how hospitality is experienced and choices are made. Experience is no longer merely a byproduct of service; it is the product itself. Technology is not an added feature—it is the infrastructure of feeling, trust, and engagement. In this environment, what matters is how well systems work and how well they fit into the emotional, social, and symbolic worlds of the consumer. This study reaffirms a central philosophical insight: that human decision-making is rarely just rational. It is emotional, relational, and contextual. Even in highly digital settings, what we choose—and why we choose it—is deeply entangled with how we feel, how we are seen, and what we seek to become. The hotel of the future, then, is not merely a place of rest—it is a reflection of the self, mediated by technology and narrated through networks.

E. CONCLUSION

In an era defined by the fusion of human behavior and digital infrastructure, this study has illuminated how technology is not merely adopted but felt—how it weaves itself into the cognitive, emotional, and social fabric of decision-making among digital natives. Through the lens of smart hospitality, the findings demonstrate that technological features are most impactful not because of their novelty, but because of their ability to enhance meaningful experiences, evoke trust, and resonate within digital ecosystems shaped by social narratives. The results affirm that useful and seamless technology, when embedded in personalized service experiences, serves not only to simplify but also to elevate the hospitality journey. Trust, in this context, emerges not as a static belief but as an outcome of intelligent interaction—one that is increasingly facilitated and reinforced by the social mirrors of digital platforms. Social media, no longer peripheral, now functions as a co-architect of perception, providing the context through which value is judged, expectations are formed, and intentions take root.

This study expands the classical Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by embedding it within a richer experiential and social framework. By integrating constructs such as trust in technology, smart hospitality experience, and social media influence, it reflects the evolution of consumer behavior from rational utility maximization toward a more contextual and narrative-driven process. The findings contribute to the theoretical discourse by offering a more nuanced understanding of how technology adoption, emotion, and social validation converge in contemporary decision-making. Moreover, it positions digital natives not merely as users of technology but as curators of experience who actively interpret and co-construct the value of technological interactions through shared digital spaces.

For hotel practitioners and the broader hospitality industry, the insights are both clear and actionable. First, investing in smart technologies is not enough—hotels must ensure these systems are intuitive, personalized, and emotionally rewarding. The interface must disappear into the experience, and the technology must serve the story the guests are trying to tell about themselves. Second, trust must be designed, not assumed. From data security to consistency in system performance, every touchpoint must reinforce the sense that technology is not only efficient but also respectful and dependable. Finally, social media must be treated as a central arena of brand construction, not just for promotion but for conversation, co-creation, and emotional engagement. The content shared by guests often carries more weight than formal campaigns. Hotels should enable and amplify these moments by creating shareable, immersive experiences that blend aesthetics, convenience, and authenticity.

While this study offers meaningful insights, it is not without limitations. The focus on digital natives may not capture generational nuances outside this cohort. Additionally, the self-reported nature of data introduces potential bias in perception versus behavior. Future research may explore comparative analyses across generations, cultures, or different levels of technological maturity within hotels. The qualitative inquiry could also deepen understanding of the emotional narratives that accompany technological adoption in-service experiences.

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