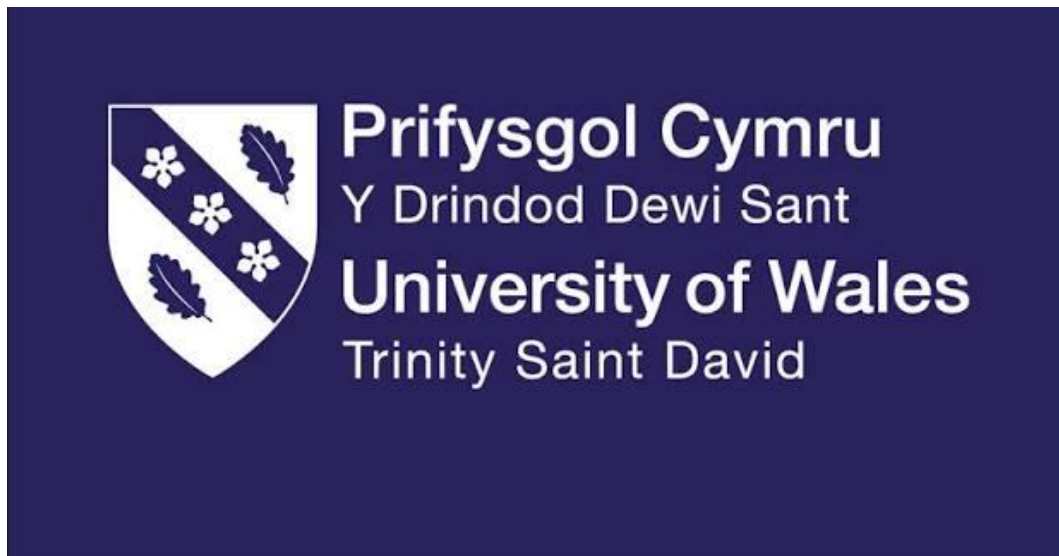




BA (Hons) Leadership and Management Skills for the Workplace

Research Methods for Business (LCLM6004)

Assignment Title: Leveraging Technology to Enhance Customer Service and Service Quality in Hospitality - A Case Study of Hilton Hotel.

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Introduction

This study will examine the effectiveness of Hilton Hotel's current technological innovations, including mobile applications, digital check-in, digital key technology, and smart-room systems. It will evaluate how these technologies influence customer satisfaction, employee performance, and overall service quality, while identifying opportunities for future technological improvements.

The hospitality industry is experiencing rapid **digital transformation**, driven by technological innovation and changing customer expectations. Today, delivering high-quality service is essential for maintaining competitiveness, as guests increasingly expect seamless, personalised, and convenient experiences supported by digital technologies (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985; Cobanoglu et al, 2021).

Hilton Worldwide has responded by investing in **technologies such as the Hilton Honors app**, digital check-in, digital room keys, and Connected Room features to improve customer experience and operational efficiency (Hilton, 2024). However, after reviewing the literature, I found that the increasing use of technology also creates challenges. While automation improves convenience, it may reduce the personal interaction that many guests value (Bowen and Morosan, 2018). In addition, labour shortages and rising operational costs have encouraged hotels to adopt **AI and self-service technologies**, but poor integration between these systems can negatively affect service quality (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023).

Therefore, this research aims to investigate how Hilton can effectively use digital technologies to improve customer service and service quality while maintaining the personalised hospitality experience expected by guests.

Problem Statement

Although Hilton Hotel has invested significantly in digital technologies to improve the guest experience, there is limited understanding of how these innovations affect customer service and service quality. The challenge is to integrate technology while maintaining the personalised service that is central to the hospitality industry.

In addition, issues such as operational efficiency, data security, and customer privacy continue to influence the successful adoption of digital solutions. Therefore, this study aims to examine how Hilton can optimise its use of technology to improve customer service and deliver consistent, high-quality guest experiences.

Research Objectives

The main **aim of this research is to investigate** how Hilton Hotel can use technology to improve customer service and service quality.

The objectives are to:

1. Identify the main technologies used by Hilton to enhance customer service.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of these technologies from both customer and employee perspectives.
3. Examine the challenges and opportunities associated with technology adoption in Hilton's service operations.
4. Provide recommendations for improving technology integration to enhance service quality and customer satisfaction.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

1. What technologies has Hilton implemented to improve customer service and service quality?
2. How do customers and employees perceive the effectiveness of these technologies?
3. What challenges does Hilton face when integrating technology into its service delivery?
4. What opportunities exist to further improve customer service through technology?
5. What recommendations can help Hilton optimise its technology strategy to improve service quality?

Critical Literature Review

The **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** explains that technology adoption depends on **Perceived Usefulness** and **Perceived Ease of Use** (Davis, 1989). While TAM effectively measures user acceptance of digital technologies, it does not fully consider emotional and interpersonal aspects of hospitality. Therefore, combining TAM with **SERVQUAL** provides a more comprehensive understanding of how technology influences both customer satisfaction and service quality.

This study addresses that gap by investigating both guest and employee perspectives to evaluate how technology can enhance service quality without replacing the human.

Research Gap

The literature demonstrates that digital technologies improve efficiency and customer convenience. However, there remains limited empirical research investigating how Hilton successfully balances technological innovation with personalised hospitality.

Previous studies have also largely focused on customer perspectives while overlooking employee experiences, despite employees being responsible for implementing and supporting these technologies. Furthermore, relatively few studies combine service quality models, such as SERVQUAL, with technology adoption models, such as TAM, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of digital transformation within hotels.

These gaps indicate the need for further research examining both customer and employee perspectives within a leading international hotel brand.

Contribution of the Present Study

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how Hilton's digital technologies influence customer service and service quality from both customer and employee perspectives. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research will collect quantitative data from **50 Hilton Honors guests** and qualitative data through interviews with **10 Hilton managers and supervisors**. Integrating the SERVQUAL Model with the Technology Acceptance Model will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how technology affects both service quality and technology acceptance.

The findings will contribute to existing knowledge by demonstrating how technology can enhance operational efficiency while preserving the personalised human interactions that remain essential to hospitality. In addition, the study will offer practical recommendations that Hilton and other international hotel organisations can use to improve digital service strategies without compromising customer satisfaction.

This section reviews existing research on technology adoption, customer service, and service quality within the hospitality industry. It draws on established theories, including the **SERVQUAL Model** (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) and the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** (Davis, 1989), to provide the theoretical foundation for the study.

The **SERVQUAL model**, developed by **Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985)**, is one of the most widely used frameworks for measuring service quality. It evaluates customer perceptions across five dimensions: **Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy** (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990). In the hospitality industry, these dimensions help assess how guests evaluate service quality throughout their stay.

This study applies the SERVQUAL framework to examine how Hilton's digital technologies influence customer satisfaction while maintaining high standards of personalised service.

Research Methodology

The aim of this research is to investigate how the adoption of digital technologies can enhance customer service and service quality at Hilton Hotel, while maintaining the personalised hospitality experience that guests expect.

This study will use a **mixed-methods research approach** to investigate how Hilton uses digital technology to improve customer service while maintaining personalised hospitality. A convergent parallel design will be adopted, allowing both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected and analysed together to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Research Aim	Research Objective	Research Question	Expected Outcome
Investigate how technology enhances customer service and service quality at Hilton Hotel	Identify Hilton's digital technologies	What technologies has Hilton implemented?	Clear understanding of Hilton's technological infrastructure
Evaluate the effectiveness of technology	Assess the impact on customers and employees	How effective are Hilton's technologies?	Evidence of technology's influence on service quality
Explore implementation challenges	Investigate operational barriers	What challenges exist?	Identification of technological and organisational issues
Develop practical recommendations	Recommend improvement strategies	What improvements can Hilton make?	Evidence-based recommendations for enhancing customer service

Table 1. Research Methodology

Research Philosophy and Approach

4. Research Philosophy and Approach

Selecting an appropriate research philosophy is a fundamental stage in any research project, as it shapes how knowledge is generated, interpreted, and applied throughout the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Given that this research aims to investigate how technology can improve customer service and service quality within Hilton Hotel while addressing practical organisational challenges, a **pragmatist research philosophy** has been adopted.

Pragmatism is considered particularly appropriate for business and management research because it prioritises finding practical solutions to real-world problems rather than adhering to a single philosophical viewpoint (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Unlike positivism, which focuses exclusively on objective measurement, or interpretivism, which seeks to understand subjective experiences, pragmatism recognises that complex business issues often require multiple forms of evidence.

Consequently, researchers are free to combine quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

In the context of Hilton Hotel, improving customer service cannot be fully understood through numerical performance indicators alone. While quantitative data can measure customer satisfaction, technology usage, and service **quality scores**, **qualitative evidence is equally important for exploring guests' experiences, employee perceptions**, and organisational challenges associated with implementing new technologies. Therefore, adopting a pragmatist philosophy enables this study to examine both measurable outcomes and human experiences, providing findings that are academically robust while remaining relevant to hospitality practitioners.

Research Approach

This study adopts an **abductive research approach**, which combines elements of both deductive and inductive reasoning. Abduction is increasingly recognised within business research because it allows researchers to move iteratively between existing theory and empirical observations when investigating complex organisational issues (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The research begins by drawing upon established theoretical frameworks, particularly the **SERVQUAL Model** (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) and the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** (Davis, 1989), to understand how technology influences customer service quality within hospitality. These theories provide an initial conceptual framework for analysing Hilton's digital innovations, including mobile check-in, Digital Key technology and Connected Room services.

However, rather than testing these theories in isolation, the research also seeks to identify new insights emerging from participants' experiences. Data collected from Hilton guests and employees may reveal operational challenges, customer expectations or implementation issues that existing theories do not fully explain. Consequently, the researcher will continuously compare empirical findings with established literature, refining interpretations and developing practical recommendations throughout the research process.

This iterative movement between theory and observation is the defining characteristic of abductive reasoning and makes it particularly suitable for investigating rapidly evolving environments such as the hospitality industry, where technological innovation continually reshapes customer expectations and organisational practices (Bryman, 2016).

Unlike a purely deductive approach, which focuses on testing predefined hypotheses, or a purely inductive approach, which generates entirely new theory, abductive reasoning allows the researcher to explain unexpected findings by integrating existing knowledge with real-world evidence. This flexibility is especially valuable when examining digital transformation within Hilton Hotel, where technological innovation, customer behaviour and employee experiences interact in complex and dynamic ways.

Overall, the combination of a **pragmatist philosophy** and an **abductive research approach** provide a rigorous methodological foundation for this study. It enables the research to generate evidence-based findings that are theoretically informed, practically relevant and capable of supporting strategic decision-making within Hilton Hotel and the wider hospitality industry.

Data Collection Methods

This study adopts a **mixed-methods approach**, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of how technology influences customer service and service quality at Hilton Hotel (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data will identify trends in customer satisfaction, while qualitative data will provide deeper insights into employees' experiences and operational challenges.

Sampling Strategy

A combination of **convenience** and **purposive sampling** will be used.

For the **quantitative research**, approximately **50 Hilton guests** who have used the Hilton Honors application or other digital services within the previous months will complete an online questionnaire. The survey will use a five-point Likert scale based on the SERVQUAL dimensions to measure customer perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988).

For the **qualitative research**, **10 Hilton employees and managers** will be selected using purposive sampling. Participants will include front-office staff, supervisors and managers who have experience using Hilton's digital technologies. Semi-structured interviews will explore how these technologies affect customer service delivery, employee performance and operational efficiency (Silverman, 2020).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the **50 questionnaires** will be analysed using descriptive statistics in **Excel** to identify customer satisfaction levels and perceptions of Hilton's digital services. Qualitative data from the **10 interviews** will be analysed using thematic analysis to identify common themes relating to technology adoption, service quality and customer experience (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

The research will follow standard ethical guidelines by ensuring **informed consent, voluntary participation**, and **participant confidentiality**. All personal information will remain anonymous, and no confidential Hilton business information will be collected or disclosed (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the **SERVQUAL Model** (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) and the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** (Davis, 1989) to evaluate how technology influences customer service quality at Hilton Hotels.

Methodology and Implementation Plan

This study will adopt a **mixed-methods approach**, combining quantitative data from **Hilton Honors app ratings and guest satisfaction surveys** with qualitative data collected through interviews with hotel managers and front-line employees. Using both methods provides a more comprehensive understanding of how technology influences customer service quality and the overall guest experience (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

To minimise operational risk, Hilton should implement the proposed technologies through a **phased rollout**, beginning with pilot programmes in selected flagship hotels before expanding across its global portfolio. This approach enables the company to evaluate performance, gather feedback, and make improvements before full implementation.

Overall, the study argues that technology should **enhance rather than replace** human interaction. By automating routine administrative tasks, digital solutions can allow employees to focus on delivering personalised, high-quality hospitality, ultimately improving customer satisfaction and service quality.

Business Relevance and Practical Implications

Technology is transforming the hospitality industry by improving operational efficiency and enhancing customer experiences. However, hotels must ensure that digital innovation complements rather than replaces personalised service.

This research is relevant to Hilton Hotel because it will provide practical recommendations on how technology can improve customer service while maintaining the human interaction that guests value. The findings may also support strategic decision-making for other hospitality organisations seeking to balance digital transformation with service quality.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how Hilton's digital technologies influence customer service and service quality from both customer and employee perspectives. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research will collect quantitative data from **50 Hilton Honors guests** and qualitative data through interviews with **10 Hilton managers and supervisors**. Integrating the SERVQUAL Model with the Technology Acceptance Model will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how technology affects both service quality and technology acceptance.

Technology has significantly transformed the hospitality industry by improving operational efficiency and customer convenience through innovations such as **mobile applications, AI and contactless services** (Cobanoglu *et al.*, 2021). However, researchers argue that while these technologies enhance efficiency, they may also reduce the personalised interactions that are essential to hospitality, creating a challenge for hotels to balance digital innovation with human service (Bowen and Morosan, 2018).

The **SERVQUAL Model** (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) remains one of the most widely used frameworks for evaluating service quality through five dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy. Although originally developed for traditional face-to-face services, it can be adapted to assess how digital technologies influence service quality in modern hotels (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990).

The findings will contribute to existing knowledge by demonstrating how technology can enhance operational efficiency while preserving the personalised human interactions that remain essential to hospitality.

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