

GENERATIVE AI TOOLS (CHATGPT*) IN TOURISM RESEARCH: AN EXPERIMENTAL CONVERSATION

Abstract

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Purpose - This research aims to explore the transformative role of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, specifically ChatGPT, in enhancing tourism research methodologies and practices.

Methodology/Design/Approach - The study employs an experimental design, engaging in systematic conversation with AI, researchers evaluate the effectiveness of generative AI in producing relevant, coherent, and contextually rich responses.

Findings - Findings indicate that generative AI tools augment the research process, enhancing the efficiency of literature reviews and demonstrating potential in facilitating data synthesis.

Originality of the research - The study has drawn upon a real-time conversation with ChatGPT and retrieved responses directly taken for analysis to generate the report for publication.

Keywords Generative AI, ChatGPT, tourism research

Viewpoint

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INTRODUCTION

ChatGPT, a machine learning-based generative AI tool, is a recent addition to academic research, alongside popular tools like Grammarly, rTutor, and Research Rabbit, which are used in fields like tourism. These technological advancements are well supported by global tech leaders like Google, Microsoft, Apple, OpenAI, and have potential to surpass the traditional academic belief in the superiority of 'texts' as the essence of knowledge. This raises critical questions about whether academic research should be human-centric or machine-centric?. Conversely, contemporary academia has witnessed a shift from 'text' to 'thought' through these disruptive technologies in academia. The rapid growth of generative AI like ChatGPT, underscores the need for universities and academic journals to restructure their ethical guidelines. However, apart from attribution policies, academia has remained silent on broader implications of these technologies in research. This viewpoint discusses the current trend of employing ChatGPT in tourism research (Nautiyal et al., 2023).

1. ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE OF AI GENERATED KNOWLEDGE

To begin with, measuring the knowledge expertise of an generative AI tool functioning on NLP (natural language processing) is meaningless. As said, "Truth is a metaphysical, as opposed to the epistemological, notion: truth is a matter of how things are, not how they can be shown to be" (Glanzberg, 2018), and the same applies to knowledge. The truthfulness of information generated by generative AI (like ChatGPT) reflects the perceived truth derived from conversations created by human AI trainers, who played both roles: the user and the AI assistant. Hence, it answers the user's queries from the available trained data, which may be plausible-sounding but incorrect or nonsensical responses. Additionally, humans often incorporate this generative AI (ChatGPT*) information into their work without providing authorship or acknowledgment. However, the real critical issue to be addressed is the effect of convincing unauthenticated fabricated content from generative AI (ChatGPT*) in escalating knowledge to the next level by adding inappropriate information to an existing body of knowledge. Moreover, an AI tutor or AI research assistant (like ChatGPT) aiding knowledge addition without valid sources can lead to chaos in knowledge generation. This conversational nature of ChatGPT encourages researchers to engage in questions and answer exchanges, fostering deeper personal introspection.

2. GENERATIVE AI IN RESEARCH

The research community seems diplomatic, as the topic is novel and needs more exploration. While researchers deploy generative AI tools to generate prompt text and summarising, they neither recognise the content nor credit the source. They point out that generative AI (ChatGPT*) can be considered as a "quasi co-author" and, at the same time, raise the issue of how to credit the generative AI (ChatGPT*) text, even though it has co-author-like skills (Nautiyal et al., 2023). The triggering

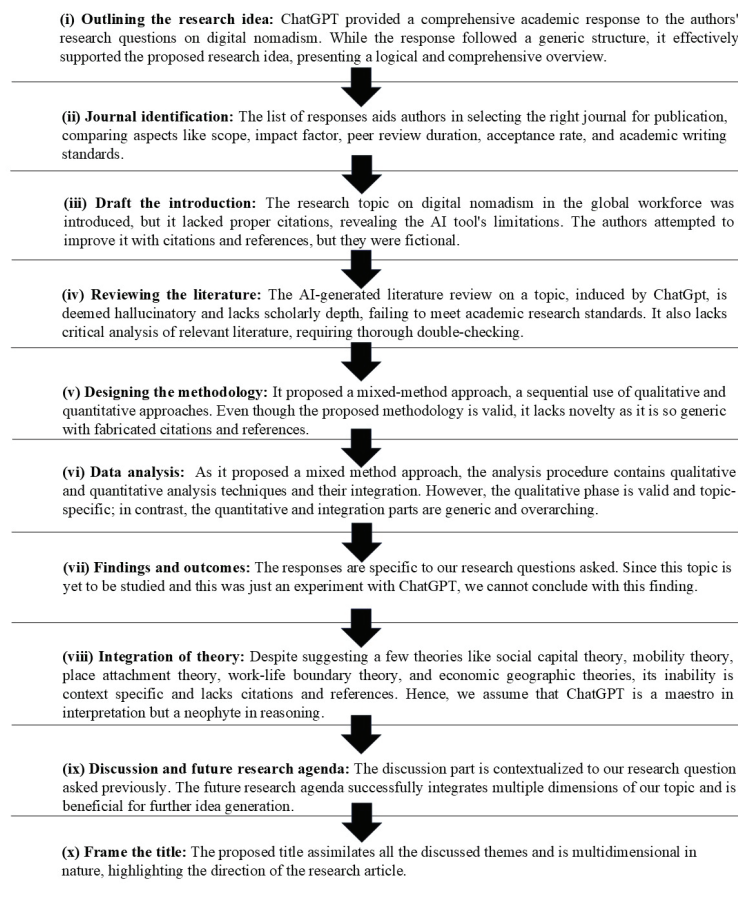
thought is: Are human and generative AI ethics the same? It can be debatable if it leads to co-authorships where a human author attributes human characteristics to an AI chatbot and addresses it as 'Dr Jack' or 'Mr. Jack', like giving a living entity title. Hence, a hybrid mode will replace conventional tourism research practices. This calls for revamped plagiarism policies for publishers and journals. Nevertheless, the critical consideration is the conscience of the researcher, but not 'something', the so-called 'something' is generative AI (ChatGPT*). However, the long-term rewards of these tools are yet to be explored, which may even devalue the real essence of knowledge production in various disciplines like tourism.

3. GENERATIVE AI IN TOURISM RESEARCH

Researchers frequently argue that tourism has evolved as an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of research from its inception. Despite these arguments, the epistemological and methodological approaches in tourism are bounded by dominant power dynamics and reflect global knowledge production and dissemination based on the "Western/Anglo-centric Standards" from the occidental culture (Wijesinghe et al., 2017). Such power systems have a long tradition, extending prior to colonization and progressing by neo-colonialism, the most recent form of authority and control associated with globalization, conclusively resulting in 'intellectual slavery' (Wijesinghe et al., 2017). The adoption of generative AI (ChatGPT*) in tourism academia needs debate since it has been trained with an algorithm utilizing a massive dataset mainly based on the "Western/Anglo-centric Standards", which will draw and exacerbate existing power dynamics in the results.

4. EXPERIMENT 1: A TEN-STEP STRUCTURE FOR INVESTIGATING DIGITAL NOMADISM IN TOURISM RESEARCH

Figure 1: Experiment with ChatGPT



While summarising our results, highlighting its potential for proofreading manuscripts and providing deeper insights into research contexts. While it cannot replace human logic and cognition, ChatGPT can help find and assess alternative problem-solving methods. The critical challenge of generative AI (ChatGPT) is "hallucination," where outputs are unfaithful or nonsensical, undermining reliability. This problem likely stems from training on mixed factual and fictional datasets, leading to frequent inaccuracies. Hence, scholars can use generative AI (ChatGPT) in tourism research to analyse data such as TripAdvisor reviews, sentimental analysis, image content, geospatial data, etc. However, this generative AI (ChatGPT*) cannot perform alone, as it requires problem formulation, hypothesis testing, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, necessitating human intervention and monitoring.

5. AI-POWERED TOURISM RESEARCH

The high-paced transformations of generative AI ignited a disruption in the global research community to the tourism discipline, bringing debates on the pros and cons of generative AI (ChatGPT*). Since the inception of computer technology, the world has never seen such an explosion of academic thirst for an information technology (IT) tool. Thus, the whole research community must unite for this dynamic realm of technology equipped with competence and immense potential. As the AI-generative contents are untraceable from human-generated contents, which can raise 'AI-doppelganger effects (DEs)', AI tools mimic human writings in research. It is momentous for the academic research community, including tourism, to set research guidelines for encouraging ethical employability in scholarly work apart from existing acknowledgment. If we researchers are not speculative but imaginative, a new article type like "AI-generated articles" with specific guidelines (Robonomics, n.d.). Ironically, such AI adoptions in knowledge production may become a new normal in academic research. Hence, the research fraternity should critically evaluate and validate the knowledge processed through the chats with ChatGPT. Further, it can help define the role of ChatGPT in academic research through comprehensive ethical frameworks.

CONCLUSION

Even though generative AI could disrupt the existing academic research, a new approach for the integration of human-centred approaches and information technology, i.e., "digital humanism" (Werthner, 2022), for a new dimension in research can be adopted. The research ecosystem must consider their role in framing a set of guidelines weighing the potential benefits and repercussions of using AI tools in tourism research and shaping it further and a conducive for responsible and optimal use of AI inputs in research. ChatGPT can be used in tourism research as an additional tool for constructive writing, exploring the information, and rephrasing the language. The concern needs to be addressed that since the tourism discipline is constantly being updated based on global events, scholarly research may envisage ChatGPT to report such events spontaneously; however, this can lead to initial reporting rather than much-needed critical thinking and evaluation of the actual cause. As technology continues to outpace us, researchers should review and adapt their honour codes to ensure the benefit of these innovations to aid knowledge generation.

Note:

The experiment with ChatGPT is available at the following link:
<https://chat.openai.com/share/be588a7a-cfbb-4f97-855b-f9912946e2d9>

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