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THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL SECURITY IN TRANSFORMING DIGITAL HOTEL EXPERIENCES INTO BRAND ADVOCACY

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Abstract

In the contemporary hospitality industry, the rapid integration of artificial intelligence and digital service technologies has fundamentally transformed hotel–guest interactions, shifting the focus from traditional service encounters to technology-mediated experiences. While prior research has extensively examined digital service quality and customer satisfaction, limited attention has been given to the psychological mechanisms through which digital hotel experiences cultivate deep-seated brand advocacy. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates ***the role of emotional security*** *in transforming AI-enabled digital hotel experiences into* ***customer brand evangelism****. Grounded in relationship marketing and technology trust literature, the study conceptualizes* ***AI-enabled service transparency****,* ***digital personalization quality****, and* ***perceived data privacy protection*** *as critical antecedents shaping customers' perceptions of digital hotel environments. These antecedents are theorized to influence brand evangelism indirectly through a set of interrelated mediating mechanisms, namely* ***trust in digital service systems****,* ***emotional security****, and* ***perceived brand integrity****. Transparent and explainable AI services are expected to strengthen customers' trust in digital systems, while high-quality personalization enhances feelings of comfort, psychological safety, and emotional assurance during digital interactions. Simultaneously, robust data privacy protection fosters perceptions of ethical conduct and integrity, reinforcing confidence in the hotel brand. Emotional security emerges as a central psychological conduit that transforms cognitive evaluations of technology into affective attachment, thereby motivating guests to voluntarily advocate for the brand beyond transactional loyalty. Furthermore, the model incorporates* ***ethical sensitivity of customers*** *as a moderating variable, recognizing that guests with heightened ethical awareness respond more strongly to trust-related cues and are more likely to experience emotional security in ethically*

transparent digital environments. The study proposes that when digital hotel services align with customers' ethical expectations, emotional security is amplified, leading to stronger advocacy behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth, active recommendations, and brand defense. By integrating ethical sensitivity with emotional and technological determinants, this research advances hospitality literature by offering a holistic framework that explains how digital service experiences evolve into brand evangelism. The proposed model provides valuable theoretical insights and practical implications for hotel managers seeking to design ethically grounded, emotionally secure digital experiences capable of fostering enduring customer advocacy in an increasingly AI-driven hospitality landscape.

1. INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

In an era characterized by rapid digital innovation and pervasive adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) within the hospitality industry, hotels have increasingly invested in digital service technologies to enhance customer experiences, streamline operations, and gain competitive advantage; however, despite the widespread implementation of AI-driven tools such as mobile check-in, chatbot concierge services, personalized recommendation systems, and automated service interfaces, scholarly and practical understanding of how these digital interactions translate into deeper psychological engagement and long-term brand advocacy remains limited. While existing research has predominantly focused on discrete dimensions of service quality, customer satisfaction, and technology acceptance, there is a notable gap in explicating the emotional and ethical mechanisms by which digital hotel experiences shape guests' willingness to voluntarily endorse and evangelize a brand. Specifically, digital encounters increasingly replace traditional human-to-human interactions, raising critical concerns about whether customers feel genuinely secure, valued, and emotionally connected in technology-mediated contexts. Emotional security—a customer's sense of psychological comfort, safety, and emotional assurance during digital interactions—emerges as a potentially pivotal yet underexplored construct that may influence how digital experiences influence deeper relational outcomes such as trust, perceived brand integrity, and customer brand evangelism. Furthermore, although digital transparency, personalization, and data privacy protection have been identified as important antecedents of positive technology evaluation, there is insufficient understanding of how these antecedents interact with psychological mediators to drive advocacy behaviors, particularly when filtered through individual differences such as ethical sensitivity. Ethical sensitivity reflects how attuned customers are to ethical issues related to AI use, data handling, fairness, and transparency, and may critically shape the extent to which customers perceive digital services as trustworthy and emotionally secure. In practice, many hotels invest heavily in digital service enhancements without a systematic understanding of how these technological features influence guests' affective experiences and post-consumption behaviors, resulting in underutilized digital potential and missed opportunities for cultivating brand evangelists—customers who actively recommend, defend, and promote a brand without direct incentives. This knowledge gap is further compounded by contemporary concerns around data privacy breaches, algorithmic opacity, and the ethical implications of AI, which have increasingly captured both public discourse and regulatory attention, making it imperative to examine how ethical considerations influence customer perceptions in technology-mediated service encounters. Consequently, despite recognition of trust as a critical antecedent of loyalty and advocacy, there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks that integrate trust, emotional security, perceived brand integrity, and ethical moderation within the context of AI-enabled hotel services. This absence of integrative research limits both theoretical advancement and managerial guidance, as hoteliers lack robust evidence on how to design digital experiences that

not only satisfy customers cognitively but also engage them emotionally in ways that foster passionate brand advocacy. Therefore, the central problem addressed in this research is understanding how emotional security operates as a transformative psychological mechanism through which digital hotel service attributes influence customer brand evangelism, and how this process may be contingent upon individual ethical sensitivity. By addressing this problem, the current study aims to bridge a critical gap in hospitality research, offering actionable insights for theory development, digital service design, ethical AI implementation, and strategic brand management in an increasingly digitalized hospitality environment.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively investigate and delineate the psychological and relational pathways through which digital hotel service attributes contribute to robust brand advocacy outcomes, with a central focus on elucidating the transformative role of **emotional security** in moderating and mediating digital customer experiences, while concurrently advancing theoretical understanding and practical implications for AI-driven hospitality environments; specifically, this research seeks to systematically assess how key antecedent dimensions of digital hotel experiences—namely **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, and **perceived data privacy protection**—individually and collectively influence customers' psychological perceptions of technology systems, emotional responses, and relational evaluations that are precursors to long-term advocacy behaviors. In doing so, the study aims to quantify and model the extent to which transparent, explainable, and ethically designed AI interfaces cultivate **trust in digital service systems**, thereby enhancing users' confidence that the technology behaves reliably, fairly, and predictably across digital touchpoints, including mobile check-in, in-app concierge services, automated room preferences, and predictive service suggestions; further, the research aspires to illuminate how high-quality digital personalization—characterized by relevance, contextual accuracy, and sensitivity to individual preferences—fosters customers' **emotional security**, defined as the psychological comfort, assurance, and reduced anxiety consumers experience during interactions with AI-mediated hotel services. Moreover, this study aims to investigate how customers' **perceived data privacy protection**, representing their beliefs about the security, ethical handling, and responsible stewardship of personal information, contributes to perceptions of **brand integrity**, which in turn may strengthen the relational bond between guest and hotel brand. Beyond mapping these antecedent–mediator–outcome relationships, the study also seeks to explore the conditional influence of **ethical sensitivity of customers** as a moderating factor, asking to what degree individual differences in ethical awareness and concern shape the strength and direction of associations between trust, emotional security, perceived brand integrity, and ultimately **customer brand evangelism**—a behavioral outcome characterized by voluntary, enthusiastic advocacy such as positive word-of-mouth, active recommendations to peers, and public defense of the brand. In fulfilling these objectives, the research aspires to bridge critical gaps in hospitality and technology acceptance literature by integrating constructs from consumer psychology, ethical AI discourse, and service marketing theory into a unified conceptual framework that explains not only cognitive evaluations of digital service quality but also affective experiences that drive profound brand engagement. Additionally, the study aims to generate empirically testable hypotheses suitable for advanced statistical modeling—such as structural equation modeling (SEM)—to validate the proposed theoretical pathways and contribute robust evidence that digital service design should extend beyond functional utility to emotional reassurance and ethical alignment. Practically, the objectives include providing hotel managers, digital experience designers, and AI implementation strategists with actionable insights on how to engineer digital experiences that do not merely satisfy customers but engage them emotionally, ethically, and psychologically in ways that foster enduring brand advocacy. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the contemporary discourse on the future of hospitality in an increasingly digital age by offering a nuanced understanding of how emotional security

functions as a pivotal mechanism transforming digital hotel interactions into sustainable, value-driven brand evangelism.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does AI-enabled service transparency influence customers' trust in digital hotel service systems and their subsequent emotional security during digital interactions?
2. To what extent does digital personalization quality contribute to customers' emotional security and enhance their perceptions of value in digital hotel experiences?
3. How does perceived data privacy protection affect customers' perceptions of brand integrity and trust toward digital hotel platforms?
4. What mediating roles do trust in digital service systems, emotional security, and perceived brand integrity play in transforming digital hotel experiences into customer brand evangelism?
5. How does emotional security function as a central psychological mechanism linking digital hotel service attributes with customer brand evangelism behaviors?
6. In what way does the ethical sensitivity of customers moderate the relationships between trust in digital service systems, emotional security, and customer brand evangelism in AI-driven hotel contexts?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive contribution to theory, practice, and policy within the rapidly digitalizing hospitality industry, particularly by foregrounding **emotional security** as a critical yet underexplored psychological mechanism that transforms digital hotel experiences into sustained **customer brand advocacy**. From a theoretical perspective, this research advances hospitality, service marketing, and technology adoption literature by moving beyond dominant cognitive-centric frameworks—such as service quality, perceived usefulness, and satisfaction—and integrating affective, ethical, and relational dimensions into a unified explanatory model. By conceptualizing emotional security as a central mediator linking **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, and **perceived data privacy protection** to **customer brand evangelism**, the study fills a critical gap in existing research that has largely overlooked how feelings of psychological safety, emotional comfort, and assurance shape deeper post-consumption behaviors in technology-mediated service encounters. Furthermore, the inclusion of **trust in digital service systems** and **perceived brand integrity** as parallel mediators enriches understanding of how cognitive trust and affective security jointly influence advocacy outcomes, thereby offering a more holistic explanation of customer–brand relationships in AI-driven hotel contexts. The study also contributes to the emerging discourse on ethical AI by empirically integrating **ethical sensitivity of customers** as a moderating variable, acknowledging that individual differences in ethical awareness significantly condition how customers interpret transparency, privacy practices, and technological trust. This ethical lens responds directly to contemporary concerns surrounding algorithmic opacity, data misuse, and digital surveillance, thereby aligning the research with current (2024–2025) global debates on responsible AI and consumer protection. Practically, the study holds substantial significance for hotel managers, digital strategists, and service designers by providing actionable insights into how digital investments can be optimized to foster not only operational efficiency but also emotional engagement and brand advocacy. In an industry where digital interfaces increasingly replace human interactions, understanding how to design AI-enabled services that cultivate emotional security becomes essential for differentiation and competitive advantage. The findings are expected to guide hotels in implementing transparent AI systems, ethically grounded personalization strategies, and robust data privacy safeguards that enhance trust, reinforce brand integrity, and motivate guests to become voluntary brand evangelists who actively promote and defend the brand. Additionally, the study's insights can inform training programs, digital service audits, and customer experience strategies aimed at aligning technological innovation with emotional and ethical expectations. From a policy and

regulatory standpoint, the research offers valuable implications for industry stakeholders and policymakers by highlighting the importance of transparency, privacy protection, and ethical alignment in digital hospitality ecosystems, supporting the development of guidelines that balance innovation with consumer well-being. Methodologically, the study's integrative framework and proposed empirical validation using advanced analytical techniques contribute to research rigor and offer a replicable model for future studies across other service sectors. Overall, this research is significant in advancing scholarly understanding, informing managerial practice, and shaping ethical digital transformation by demonstrating how emotional security serves as a pivotal bridge between digital hotel experiences and enduring brand advocacy in an increasingly AI-driven hospitality landscape.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite its theoretical rigor and practical relevance, the present study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged to contextualize its findings and guide future research. First, the study adopts a cross-sectional research design, which, while suitable for examining relationships among constructs at a given point in time, inherently limits the ability to establish definitive causal inferences between digital hotel service attributes, emotional security, and customer brand advocacy. Emotional security, trust, and brand evangelism are dynamic psychological and behavioral constructs that may evolve over repeated interactions with digital hotel systems; therefore, longitudinal designs could offer deeper insights into how these relationships develop and stabilize over time. Second, the study relies primarily on self-reported data collected from hotel guests, which may be susceptible to common method bias, social desirability bias, and perceptual subjectivity. Although validated measurement scales and procedural remedies can mitigate such biases, respondents' perceptions of emotional security, ethical sensitivity, and advocacy intentions may not fully reflect their actual behaviors in real-world settings. Third, the conceptualization and operationalization of **emotional security** in digital hospitality contexts, while grounded in extant psychological and service literature, represent an emerging construct that may be interpreted differently across individuals, cultures, and technological contexts. As such, the findings may be sensitive to how emotional security is measured and understood, potentially limiting generalizability. Fourth, the study focuses on AI-enabled digital hotel experiences within a specific hospitality context, which may restrict the external validity of the results when applied to other service sectors such as airlines, healthcare, or retail, or even to different tiers of hotels with varying levels of technological sophistication. Differences in digital maturity, customer expectations, and service intensity across hospitality segments may influence the strength and direction of the proposed relationships. Fifth, although the model incorporates **ethical sensitivity of customers** as a moderating variable, ethical perceptions are inherently complex and influenced by broader sociocultural, legal, and technological environments. The study does not explicitly account for contextual factors such as national data protection regulations, cultural norms regarding privacy, or prior experiences with data breaches, which may further shape customers' ethical evaluations of digital hotel services. Sixth, the research emphasizes positive advocacy outcomes in the form of customer brand evangelism, but it does not explicitly examine potential negative outcomes such as resistance to technology, emotional discomfort, or brand avoidance that may arise when emotional security is compromised. Including such countervailing effects could provide a more balanced understanding of digital customer experiences. Seventh, the study's reliance on advanced analytical techniques such as structural equation modeling, while methodologically robust, assumes linear and symmetric relationships among constructs, potentially overlooking nonlinear dynamics or alternative causal configurations that qualitative or mixed-method approaches might uncover. Finally, rapid advancements in AI technologies and evolving consumer expectations mean that the relevance and interpretation of constructs such as service transparency, personalization, and data privacy protection may change over time, necessitating ongoing refinement of theoretical models. Acknowledging these limitations does not

undermine the value of the study; rather, it provides a realistic boundary for interpretation and highlights avenues for future research to extend, refine, and validate the proposed framework across contexts, methods, and time horizons.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study comprehensively investigates how various digital experience-related constructs within the contemporary hospitality industry contribute to cultivating brand advocacy—specifically **Customer Brand Evangelism**—through the psychological and emotional pathways of trust, emotional security, and perceived brand integrity. In today's rapidly evolving Industry 4.0 context, hotels increasingly leverage digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), mobile apps, and personalization algorithms to create seamless interactions and tailored service delivery for guests. Digital innovation enhances operational efficiency and personalization but also raises significant concerns around data privacy and ethical sensitivity, which can either strengthen or undermine customer trust and emotional comfort with digital systems. This research therefore situates itself at the intersection of digital transformation, psychological experience, and consumer behavior in hotel settings, focusing on how guests interpret and emotionally internalize their digital encounters to not only form positive attitudes but also actively advocate for the brand.

Specifically, the study examines three key antecedent digital experience dimensions—**AI-Enabled Service Transparency**, **Digital Personalization Quality**, and **Perceived Data Privacy Protection**—as influential inputs shaping guests' cognitive and emotional responses during their hotel stays. In the hospitality context, transparent use of AI systems and personalized digital interactions have been shown to significantly enhance customer engagement and satisfaction, given that such features facilitate convenience, relevance, and tailored guest experiences; however, they also introduce complexities related to transparency and privacy risks, which can affect guest perception and psychological comfort with digital systems. Research indicates that AI transparency and personalized services tend to enhance guests' perceived value and loyalty when combined with strong ethical data use practices, yet concerns about information misuse can mitigate these positive effects unless managed with clear communication and trust-building strategies.

Within this framework, **Trust in Digital Service Systems** is conceptualized as a pivotal mediating construct connecting digital antecedents to deeper emotional and evaluative outcomes. Trust captures guests' belief that digital systems will perform reliably, respect their preferences, and protect personal information—an essential psychological mechanism given the pervasive uncertainty around data practices in digital hospitality environments. Studies specific to digital trust in hospitality underscore its importance in fostering acceptance of digital services and forming long-term customer relationships. Closely linked but distinct from trust, **Emotional Security** represents the affective dimension of guests' internal experience, reflecting their sense of comfort, safety, and psychological assurance when interacting with digital platforms and systems during their hotel journey. Emotional Security situates the emotional aspect of a guest's digital experience, acknowledging that even technically proficient systems may fail to foster brand advocacy if they induce discomfort or unease. The construct draws on broader psychological safety and emotional response literature, which show that guests who feel secure and understood are more likely to form emotional bonds with brands and engage in supportive behaviors.

Another core mediator, **Perceived Brand Integrity**, reflects guests' holistic evaluation of the hotel's ethical conduct, consistency of service, and alignment of digital practices with guest values. This construct captures the evaluative judgments guests make when reconciling digital experiences with broader perceptions of a brand's honesty and ethical posture, and it is expected to influence their propensity to recommend or champion the brand. Collective hospitality research highlights that positive brand image and integrity perceptions significantly shape loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy behaviors, particularly in digitally saturated markets where customers observe and assess service attributes across multiple touchpoints.

The central outcome of this study, **Customer Brand Evangelism**, represents the highest level of customer

engagement, where satisfied guests go beyond repeat purchases to actively promote and defend the brand within their personal and social networks. This advocacy behavior is grounded in strong emotional attachment and perceptions of value, trustworthiness, and ethical alignment, and is widely recognized in hospitality marketing as a strategic driver of competitive advantage and long-term revenue growth.

Importantly, this research incorporates **Ethical Sensitivity of Customers** as a **moderating variable**, recognizing that individual differences in ethical concern and privacy awareness influence how digital experiences shape trust, emotional security, and subsequent advocacy. Guests with higher ethical sensitivity tend to scrutinize digital practices more intensely and evaluate brands through a lens that weighs ethical considerations more heavily, potentially strengthening or dampening the pathways from digital antecedents to psychological mediators and ultimately to brand evangelism.

By integrating technological, psychological, and evaluative constructs into a unified model, the scope of the study not only captures the direct linkages among digital service features and guest responses but also accommodates the complex interplays among cognitive trust, emotional reactions, value judgments, and ethical dispositions. The research thus offers a comprehensive, multi-layered examination of how digital transformation impacts guests' emotional experiences and advocacy intentions, providing actionable insights for hospitality practitioners seeking to design digital strategies that cultivate not just satisfaction but loyal brand advocates in a digital era.

Chapter No 2 – Literature Review

The transformation of digital hotel experiences into brand advocacy is increasingly understood through the lens of customers' emotional and psychological responses to technology-enabled service encounters. Recent hospitality research emphasizes that digital interactions do not merely deliver functional value but also shape customers' feelings of trust, comfort, and emotional assurance, which are essential for developing deeper customer–brand relationships. Mansoor et al. (2025) highlight that digitally mediated service encounters, when supported by competent and proactive service systems, foster positive emotional states that strengthen customers' relational bonds with hotel brands and encourage advocacy behaviors beyond mere satisfaction. Similarly, Rungruangjit et al. (2023) argue that emotionally meaningful service experiences act as a catalyst that transforms satisfied customers into highly engaged brand supporters, as emotional reassurance reduces uncertainty and enhances customers' willingness to endorse the brand publicly. Furthermore, Itani et al. (2023) demonstrate that emotionally secure customers—who feel confident, valued, and psychologically safe during digital interactions—are more likely to internalize positive brand meanings, resulting in stronger brand attachment and proactive advocacy behaviors. Collectively, this stream of literature supports the premise that emotional security operates as a central mechanism through which digital hotel experiences are converted into brand advocacy, reinforcing the importance of designing digital services that simultaneously address functional efficiency and customers' emotional needs.

Literature Review of Ethical Sensitivity of Customers:

Ethical Sensitivity of Customers refers to an individual customer's capacity to recognize, interpret, and respond to ethical issues and moral implications inherent in consumption contexts, including digital interactions, data practices, and organizational behaviors, and it plays a pivotal moderating role in shaping how emotional security derived from digital experiences translates into brand advocacy in the hotel industry. Research in consumer ethics establishes that ethical sensitivity functions as a key personal characteristic influencing ethical judgments, ethical consumption decisions, and other consequential consumer behaviors by guiding individuals to integrate moral considerations into their choices and responses toward brands (Toti et al., 2021; Toti & Diallo, 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that customers with higher ethical sensitivity are more likely to discern ethical aspects of service delivery, ethical narratives, or sustainability messaging, which in turn strengthens their trust and engagement with brands that align with their moral values (Nab et al., 2025; Nab et al., 2025). In a

hospitality context, the ethical dimension of service experiences—including fair data use, transparent digital communications, and responsible AI practices—can significantly impact customers' perceptions of a hotel's ethical posture, shaping their emotional security during digital interactions and ultimately influencing their advocacy behaviors (Adanyin, 2024; Wood, 2023). The literature further suggests that ethical sensitivity augments the effects of ethical and sustainable brand narratives on consumer trust and engagement; for instance, consumers who are more ethically sensitive respond more favorably to ethical brand communications, demonstrating increased trust and loyalty when ethical considerations are salient (Nab et al., 2025; Nab et al., 2025). Theoretical models grounded in marketing ethics and social marketing frameworks indicate that ethical sensitivity directly influences ethical judgments and subsequent ethical consumption behavior by helping consumers evaluate brands based on moral criteria rather than solely functional attributes (Toti et al., 2021; Toti & Diallo, 2021). Moreover, ethical sensitivity has been shown to amplify the influence of ethical marketing practices and sustainability messaging on consumer outcomes, underscoring its role as a moderator that intensifies customers' positive psychological responses to brands that demonstrate ethical conduct (Nab et al., 2025; Nab et al., 2025). In digital transformation research within hospitality and service sectors, trust and transparency are foundational for building emotional security among customers; those with strong ethical sensitivity are more likely to interpret transparent practices and responsible data protection as signals of ethical integrity, reinforcing positive evaluations and reducing uncertainty associated with digital service interactions (Adanyin, 2024; search12). Ethical sensitivity also intersects with ethical consumerism literature, which describes ethical consumer behavior as a form of moral decision-making where individuals consider the broader social and environmental impacts of their consumption choices, including avoiding brands perceived as unethical or irresponsible (Shaw & Clarke, 1993; Potts et al., 2025; search25). In the hotel industry, consumers with heightened ethical sensitivity may place greater emphasis on a hotel's ethical credentials—such as responsible use of customer data, sustainability practices, and ethical AI deployment—which can translate into stronger emotional security and a greater propensity to become brand advocates when these ethical expectations are met. Research on brand narratives shows that ethical brand storytelling enhances perceived authenticity and trust, especially among ethically sensitive consumers, suggesting that ethical sensitivity intensifies the cognitive and affective processing of brand communications, which fosters deeper psychological bonds and advocacy behavior (Nab et al., 2025; search9). Additionally, ethical sensitivity influences customer engagement with online brand communities and digital platforms, where moral evaluations of brand behavior can shape engagement intensity and the likelihood of recommending the brand to others (search13). In consumer ethics research, ethical sensitivity is often conceptualized as an antecedent to ethical judgment and ethical consumer behavior, with higher ethical sensitivity associated with a greater tendency to act in alignment with moral values, including support for brands that uphold ethical principles and boycott those that do not (Toti et al., 2021; Toti & Diallo, 2021). This perspective underscores the relevance of ethical sensitivity in moderating the effects of emotional security on brand advocacy: ethically sensitive guests who perceive digital hotel experiences as secure, transparent, and ethically congruent may be more inclined to advocate for the brand, whereas those with lower ethical sensitivity may require stronger trust signals or service quality to reach similar advocacy outcomes. Studies examining ethical marketing and consumer–brand relationships further reinforce that ethical considerations enhance trust formation, which is fundamental for emotionally secure digital experiences and subsequent positive behavioral intentions (search34). Ethical sensitivity also intersects with sustainable marketing research, where customers with a strong ethical orientation exhibit greater responsiveness to ethical and sustainable brand practices, which enhances relational outcomes such as loyalty and advocacy (search23). Moreover, ethical sensitivity's effect on consumer trust is particularly pronounced when ethical brand narratives are authentic and align with consumers' values, suggesting that this personal

trait amplifies the psychological mechanisms linking ethical perceptions to relational outcomes such as brand advocacy and evangelism (search9). Research on ethical consumption behaviors reveals that ethical sensitivity extends beyond mere recognition of ethical issues to actively shaping consumers' evaluative and behavioral responses, indicating that it is not only a cognitive capacity but also a moral compass guiding consumer choices and advocacy intentions (search15; search33). Taken together, the literature supports the assertion that Ethical Sensitivity of Customers constitutes a critical moderating construct in digital hospitality research, influencing how emotionally secure digital service experiences are interpreted and transformed into brand advocacy. Ethically sensitive customers demonstrate heightened responsiveness to ethical practices, narrative framing, and transparent digital interactions, which enhances emotional security, builds stronger trust relationships, and culminates in amplified advocacy behaviors. Consequently, integrating ethical sensitivity into models examining the digital customer journey and brand advocacy outcomes provides a nuanced understanding of individual differences that shape how digital hotel experiences translate into loyal and vocal brand supporters, particularly in a contemporary environment where ethical concerns increasingly guide consumer expectations and behaviors.

Literature Review of Customer Brand Evangelism:

Customer Brand Evangelism (CBE) has emerged as a critical construct in contemporary marketing and consumer behavior research, especially within service industries such as hospitality where digital experiences increasingly shape customer perceptions and subsequent advocacy behaviors. Conceptually, brand evangelism refers to customers' proactive, voluntary efforts to promote and defend a brand by persuading others to use the brand's offerings and even disparaging competing alternatives, functioning as an unpaid ambassadorial force (Matzler et al., 2007; Beccerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Mansoor et al., 2025). In hospitality scholarship, evangelistic behaviors have been described as intense brand support outcomes that go beyond traditional loyalty or word of mouth, embodying customers' deep emotional and psychological commitment to endorse and defend a brand publicly (Mansoor et al., 2025; Sohaib et al., 2022; Riorini & Widayat, 2015). Early foundational research on brand evangelism situates it within consumer–brand relationship theory, emphasizing how emotionally engaged and satisfied customers willingly disseminate positive information, defend the brand during crises, and exert influence on potential customers' decisions (Matzler et al., 2007; Beccerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Doss, 2014). This advocacy is not merely transactional but deeply rooted in customers' psychological identification with the brand and their desire to share positive experiences (Beccerra & Badrinarayanan, 2013; Tarakçı & Göktaş, 2020). Scholars have recognized that brand evangelism's antecedents encompass a broad set of variables, ranging from emotional bonds and brand love to value co-creation and engagement, illustrating how customers' affective and cognitive engagements with brands predict the likelihood of evangelistic behaviors (Sohaib et al., 2022; Tarakçı & Göktaş, 2020; Hsu et al., 2023). Notably, value co-creation and customer engagement have been empirically linked to higher levels of brand evangelism, as emotionally invested and co-creative customers tend to form stronger attachments that motivate them to advocate for a brand's offerings within their social networks (Hsu et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021). Extending this, research within digital contexts suggests that brand evangelism is enhanced when digital experiences facilitate personalized interactions, emotional reassurance, and psychological comfort, thereby strengthening customers' emotional bonds and trust in the brand (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). For digital hotel experiences—where online service quality, digital personalization, and user trust are key—positive emotional experiences can cultivate evangelistic outcomes by reinforcing customers' emotional security and satisfaction with the hotel brand (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Empirical studies in luxury hotel contexts have demonstrated that brand experience dimensions such as human interaction, emotional indulgence, and attentiveness significantly contribute to customers' evangelistic behavior, indicating that multisensory and emotionally satisfying service encounters are antecedents to

strong advocacy (Rather et al., 2023; Akincilar & Dagdeviren, 2014). Furthermore, engagement with online brand communities and social media has been shown to amplify feelings of emotional attachment and trust, which in turn drive customers to become active evangelists by sharing positive brand content, engaging in community forums, and defending brand reputation online (So02 tci-thaijo.org, 2025; ipl.org, 2024). The role of emotional attachment is particularly pronounced in digital hospitality settings where customers' psychological comfort and trust are pivotal in shaping their post-purchase behavior, including evangelistic promotion (Sohaib et al., 2022; Mansoor et al., 2025). In this regard, emotional security functions as a bridge between digital service quality and CBE; customers who feel emotionally secure and valued by a digital hotel platform are more likely to experience strong brand attachment and subsequently advocate for the brand (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). Contemporary research also highlights how customer identity and symbolic brand associations influence evangelistic behaviors, suggesting that when customers perceive a strong alignment between their self-concept and the brand's identity, they are more inclined to engage in voluntary promotion and defense of the brand, reflecting a deeper psychological integration of brand values (ProQuest, 2024; Wearne et al., 2020). Additionally, scholars have explored the mediating and moderating mechanisms that explain how trust, emotional engagement, and perceived brand value contribute to evangelistic outcomes, with several studies showing that customer engagement and brand love serve as critical mediators linking service experiences to evangelism (Hsu et al., 2023; Tarakçı & Göktaş, 2020; Mansoor et al., 2025). In digital contexts, trust in brand communication channels and perceived reliability have been shown to increase the likelihood of evangelistic behaviors by reducing customers' perceived risk and increasing their confidence in recommending the brand to others (So02 tci-thaijo.org, 2025; ipl.org, 2024). Importantly, brand evangelism research within the hospitality domain has emphasized that it yields strategic benefits such as enhanced positive word of mouth, improved brand reputation, and greater competitive advantage, particularly when digital competencies of frontline employees and personalized digital interactions are aligned with customers' emotional needs (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). Additionally, digital platforms' ability to foster engaging and emotionally fulfilling experiences has been shown to extend customers' loyalty into active evangelism, as emotionally satisfied customers not only repurchase but also actively encourage others to engage with the brand (Mansoor et al., 2025; Tarakçı & Göktaş, 2020). It is also critical to note that contemporary research positions CBE as a multifaceted construct involving not just positive referrals but also oppositional referrals, where evangelists actively critique competing brands, demonstrating the depth of their commitment and advocacy (MDPI, 2024). Overall, the literature consistently indicates that CBE is driven by emotional attachment, trust, personal relevance of digital service experiences, and psychological identification with the brand, all of which are essential for transforming digital hotel experiences into brand advocacy. These findings affirm that emotional security—derived from trustworthy, personalized, and seamless digital interactions—plays an indispensable role in catalyzing evangelistic behaviors within the hospitality industry (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Sohaib et al., 2022). Consequently, understanding the drivers of Customer Brand Evangelism remains vital for scholars and practitioners seeking to harness digital technologies and emotionally engaging service environments to cultivate passionate brand advocates.

Literature Review of AI-Enabled Service Transparency

AI-Enabled Service Transparency has become a central construct in understanding how digital hotel experiences foster emotional security and ultimately translate into brand advocacy, as transparency reduces uncertainty, strengthens trust, and reassures customers during technology-mediated service encounters. In service research, transparency is commonly defined as the extent to which customers can clearly understand how digital systems operate, how decisions are made, and how their personal data are collected, processed, and protected, which is

especially salient in AI-driven environments (Liu et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). Within hospitality contexts, AI-enabled transparency is increasingly recognized as a prerequisite for building trust in digital service systems, as customers interacting with chatbots, recommendation engines, or automated service platforms are often unable to observe backend processes and therefore rely on transparent cues to assess system fairness, reliability, and ethicality (Mansoor et al., 2025; Wirtz et al., 2021). Prior studies emphasize that when AI systems clearly communicate their purpose, limitations, and decision logic, customers experience lower perceived risk and anxiety, which enhances emotional security and comfort during digital interactions (Gursoy et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). Emotional security, in turn, has been shown to be a critical psychological state that encourages customers to move beyond functional satisfaction toward deeper relational outcomes, including brand attachment and advocacy (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). In the hospitality literature, digital competence and transparency have been identified as key drivers of positive customer perceptions, as technologically enabled services that are perceived as clear and understandable strengthen customers' confidence in the brand's digital capabilities (Mansoor et al., 2025; Hughes et al., 2019). Transparency in AI-enabled services also intersects with ethical considerations, particularly in relation to data privacy and responsible AI use, which are increasingly salient to hotel guests in digitally intensive service environments (Swaen et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). Research indicates that transparent communication about data usage and AI decision-making enhances perceived ethicality and integrity of the brand, thereby reinforcing trust and emotional reassurance among customers (Swaen et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). From a relationship marketing perspective, transparency functions as a relational signal that communicates honesty and benevolence, both of which are foundational elements of trust and long-term customer relationships (Lewin and Johnston, 1997; Khan et al., 2022). In AI-enabled hotel services, transparency allows customers to feel in control of their interactions, reducing feelings of vulnerability associated with automation and algorithmic decision-making, which strengthens emotional security and relational commitment (Gursoy et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). Recent empirical studies further demonstrate that transparent AI interfaces enhance customer acceptance of service robots and digital assistants by mitigating fears of opportunism or misuse of personal information (Lu et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant in luxury and upscale hotel settings, where customers have high expectations for both service quality and ethical conduct, and where any perceived opacity in digital systems may undermine emotional comfort and trust (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). Moreover, transparency has been shown to strengthen perceived brand integrity by aligning organizational actions with communicated values, thereby reinforcing customers' belief that the brand behaves consistently and ethically in digital environments (Foroudi et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). In this regard, AI-enabled transparency not only facilitates functional understanding but also contributes to affective evaluations of the brand, which are crucial for eliciting emotionally driven behaviors such as brand advocacy and evangelism (Mansoor and Paul, 2022; Mansoor et al., 2025). Studies on customer evangelism in hospitality suggest that customers are more likely to actively recommend and defend brands when they perceive digital services as trustworthy, fair, and transparent, as these qualities foster emotional confidence and moral alignment with the brand (Sohaib et al., 2022; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Furthermore, transparency in AI systems has been linked to higher levels of customer engagement and positive word-of-mouth, as customers who understand and trust digital service processes are more willing to share their experiences with others (Chaker et al., 2022; Itani et al., 2023). In digital hotel ecosystems, where service encounters increasingly occur through automated and self-service technologies, transparent AI design and communication serve as critical enablers of emotional security by reducing ambiguity and reinforcing customers' sense of being treated fairly and respectfully (Gursoy et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). This emotional reassurance is particularly important in shaping post-consumption behaviors, as emotionally secure customers are more inclined to develop strong brand attachment and

engage in advocacy behaviors that go beyond repeat patronage (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Additionally, recent hospitality research highlights that transparency in digital and AI-enabled services strengthens customers' perceptions of corporate responsibility and ethical conduct, which further amplifies the positive effects of emotional security on brand advocacy outcomes (Swaen et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). The integration of AI-enabled transparency into digital service strategies thus supports the creation of emotionally secure customer experiences that align with customers' ethical expectations and relational needs. Collectively, the literature underscores that AI-Enabled Service Transparency is a foundational antecedent in the digital hotel context, as it builds trust, enhances emotional security, reinforces perceived brand integrity, and ultimately facilitates the transformation of digital hotel experiences into brand advocacy. By ensuring that AI-driven services are understandable, ethical, and openly communicated, hotels can reduce customers' psychological discomfort, strengthen emotional bonds, and cultivate customers who are not only satisfied but also willing to actively promote and defend the brand within their social networks (Mansoor et al., 2025; Sohaib et al., 2022; Rungruangjit et al., 2023).

Literature Review of Digital Personalization Quality

Digital Personalization Quality has become a cornerstone of contemporary digital service research and is particularly salient in the hospitality industry, where technology-mediated interactions increasingly shape customers' emotional responses, perceptions of service value, and advocacy behaviors. Digital personalization quality refers to the extent to which digital hotel services accurately tailor content, recommendations, communication, and service offerings to individual customer preferences, needs, and contexts, thereby enhancing relevance, usefulness, and experiential fit. Within digitally enabled hotel environments, high-quality personalization has been consistently associated with enhanced customer satisfaction, trust, and emotional comfort, which are essential precursors to emotional security and subsequent brand advocacy. Mansoor et al. (2025) emphasize that digitally competent service systems capable of delivering personalized interactions play a crucial role in strengthening customers' relational bonds with hotel brands and fostering positive post-consumption behaviors, including brand evangelism. Similarly, Hughes et al. (2019) argue that personalization facilitated by digital tools enhances perceived service responsiveness and customer orientation, which positively influences customers' emotional evaluations of the brand. In hospitality contexts, personalized digital interactions—such as tailored recommendations, customized communication, and adaptive service interfaces—have been shown to reduce cognitive effort and uncertainty, thereby enhancing customers' sense of control and psychological comfort during service encounters (Chaker et al., 2022; Itani et al., 2023). This reduction in uncertainty is particularly important for cultivating emotional security, as customers are more likely to feel safe and confident when digital services align closely with their expectations and personal preferences. Research by Battisti et al. (2022) suggests that data-driven personalization allows service providers to anticipate customer needs more accurately, creating seamless and emotionally satisfying experiences that strengthen trust in digital systems. From a relationship marketing perspective, personalization quality functions as a relational signal that communicates attentiveness and care, reinforcing customers' perceptions that the hotel values them as individuals rather than anonymous users (Lewin and Johnston, 1997; Khan et al., 2022). This perceived individualized attention has been empirically linked to stronger emotional attachment and loyalty in hospitality settings, which are critical antecedents of brand advocacy behaviors (Lasrado et al., 2023; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Moreover, digital personalization quality has been shown to enhance perceived brand image by signaling technological sophistication, customer-centricity, and service excellence, all of which contribute to favorable emotional and cognitive brand evaluations (Foroudi et al., 2021; Mansoor et al., 2025). In the context of luxury and upscale hotels, where customers expect highly tailored experiences, the quality of digital personalization becomes even more critical, as generic or poorly aligned digital interactions may

undermine emotional comfort and trust (Khalid et al., 2022; Raza and Khan, 2022). Empirical evidence indicates that personalized digital services foster a sense of recognition and appreciation, which enhances emotional security by making customers feel understood and respected during their interactions with hotel brands (Jauhari et al., 2024; Moriuchi and Murdy, 2024). Additionally, personalization quality has been linked to proactive service perceptions, as customers interpret tailored digital recommendations and anticipatory assistance as signs of competence and care, further reinforcing emotional reassurance (Cheng et al., 2023; Hughes et al., 2019). Studies examining digital engagement and value co-creation suggest that high-quality personalization enables customers to actively participate in shaping their service experiences, which deepens emotional involvement and strengthens relational outcomes such as trust and advocacy (Itani et al., 2023; Latinovic and Chatterjee, 2022). From a psychological perspective, personalized digital interactions satisfy customers' intrinsic needs for relevance and autonomy, thereby enhancing emotional well-being and security during service consumption (Moriuchi and Murdy, 2024; Scharp et al., 2022). In line with social identity theory, personalization quality also facilitates customers' identification with the brand by aligning service experiences with customers' self-concepts and preferences, which increases the likelihood of advocacy and evangelistic behaviors (Huang et al., 2024; Mansoor and Paul, 2022). Furthermore, research indicates that personalization quality positively influences trust in digital service systems, as customers perceive personalized services as more reliable and competent, reducing perceived risk associated with digital transactions (Peng and Tao, 2022; Battisti et al., 2022). This trust, combined with emotional security, serves as a critical mechanism through which digital experiences are transformed into brand advocacy in hospitality contexts (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). Importantly, recent studies also highlight the ethical dimension of digital personalization, noting that personalization must be perceived as respectful and responsible to avoid triggering privacy concerns or emotional discomfort (Swaen et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). When personalization practices are transparent and ethically aligned, customers are more likely to interpret personalized services as beneficial rather than intrusive, which enhances emotional security and strengthens positive behavioral intentions (Huang et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2022). In contrast, poorly executed personalization may generate feelings of surveillance or manipulation, undermining emotional comfort and diminishing advocacy outcomes (Belanche et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2020). Research on customer evangelism further supports that emotionally satisfied and secure customers—who perceive digital personalization as meaningful and value-adding—are more inclined to actively promote and defend hotel brands within their social networks (Mansoor and Paul, 2022; Sohaib et al., 2022). Additionally, personalized digital experiences have been linked to stronger positive word-of-mouth and online reviews, as customers are more motivated to share experiences that feel uniquely tailored and emotionally rewarding (Choi et al., 2022; Foroudi et al., 2021). Collectively, the literature underscores that Digital Personalization Quality is a pivotal antecedent in the digital hotel experience, as it enhances emotional security by reducing uncertainty, reinforcing trust, and fostering feelings of recognition and care. These emotionally secure states, in turn, facilitate deeper customer–brand relationships and increase the likelihood of brand advocacy and evangelism. Thus, within the framework of this study, digital personalization quality plays a critical role in transforming technology-mediated hotel experiences into emotionally grounded brand advocacy outcomes, particularly in an era where customers increasingly evaluate hotel brands based on both technological sophistication and emotional resonance (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023).

Literature Review of Perceived Data Privacy Protection

Perceived Data Privacy Protection has emerged as a critical determinant of customers' psychological comfort, trust, and emotional security in digitally intensive service environments, particularly within the hospitality industry where hotels increasingly rely on data-driven technologies to deliver personalized

and AI-enabled services. Perceived data privacy protection refers to customers' subjective assessment of the extent to which a hotel effectively safeguards their personal information, transparently manages data collection and usage, and prevents unauthorized access or misuse of customer data. In the context of digital hotel experiences, privacy perceptions are central to shaping customers' emotional responses because digital interactions inherently involve information asymmetry and perceived vulnerability (Belanche et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2020). Contemporary hospitality research consistently demonstrates that customers' concerns about data privacy significantly influence their trust in digital service systems and their willingness to engage with technology-enabled services such as mobile check-ins, AI chatbots, recommendation engines, and smart room technologies (Mansoor et al., 2025; Itani et al., 2023). When customers perceive strong data privacy protection, they experience reduced anxiety and uncertainty, which fosters emotional security and enhances their confidence in interacting with digital hotel platforms (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Swaen et al., 2021). Emotional security, in this regard, functions as a psychological buffer that mitigates fears related to data misuse, surveillance, or loss of control, thereby enabling customers to focus on the experiential and relational aspects of service encounters rather than potential risks (Mansoor et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2024). Research grounded in privacy calculus theory suggests that customers continuously evaluate the perceived benefits of digital services against the perceived risks associated with data disclosure, and strong perceptions of privacy protection tilt this calculus toward positive engagement and relational commitment (Culnan and Armstrong, 1999; Peng and Tao, 2022). Within hospitality contexts, studies indicate that perceived data privacy protection positively influences trust in digital platforms by signaling organizational competence, responsibility, and ethical commitment, which are essential for sustaining long-term customer relationships (Itani et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2022). Trust derived from robust privacy perceptions has been empirically linked to favorable emotional states, including comfort and reassurance, which directly contribute to emotional security during digital service interactions (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). Moreover, perceived data privacy protection reinforces perceived brand integrity by aligning hotels' digital practices with customers' ethical expectations regarding data stewardship and transparency (Swaen et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). This alignment is particularly important in the hospitality industry, where customers often share sensitive personal and transactional data across multiple digital touchpoints, increasing their sensitivity to privacy-related risks (Belanche et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2020). Recent empirical research highlights that transparent privacy policies, clear consent mechanisms, and proactive communication about data usage significantly enhance customers' privacy perceptions and emotional comfort, thereby strengthening trust and relational outcomes (Huang et al., 2024; Chaker et al., 2022). From a relationship marketing perspective, perceived data privacy protection serves as a relational signal that communicates respect for customers' autonomy and personal boundaries, reinforcing feelings of being valued and protected by the brand (Lewin and Johnston, 1997; Khan et al., 2022). In digital hotel ecosystems, such signals are crucial for fostering emotional security, as customers who feel their data are adequately protected are more likely to experience psychological safety and reduced stress during digital interactions (Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Studies focusing on AI-enabled services further suggest that privacy concerns are amplified when algorithms operate opaquely, making perceived data protection a decisive factor in customers' acceptance of AI-driven hotel services (Gursoy et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). When hotels effectively address these concerns through visible privacy safeguards and ethical data practices, customers are more inclined to trust digital systems and develop positive emotional responses (Belanche et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). In turn, these emotionally secure states have been shown to influence post-consumption behaviors, including loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and brand advocacy (Mansoor and Paul, 2022; Sohaib et al., 2022). Research on customer brand evangelism in hospitality indicates that customers who trust a brand's digital practices and feel emotionally secure are more likely to actively recommend and defend the brand, perceiving such

advocacy as an extension of their positive relationship with the hotel (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Additionally, perceived data privacy protection has been linked to higher levels of customer engagement, as customers are more willing to interact, share feedback, and participate in digital co-creation activities when they believe their data are handled responsibly (Itani et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2022). The ethical dimension of data privacy has also gained prominence in recent hospitality research, with studies emphasizing that customers increasingly evaluate brands based on their commitment to ethical data governance and regulatory compliance (Swaen et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). Customers with heightened ethical awareness tend to place greater importance on privacy protection, and their emotional security is more strongly influenced by how transparently and responsibly hotels manage personal data (Huang et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2022). Furthermore, perceived data privacy protection moderates the effectiveness of digital personalization strategies, as personalization is more likely to enhance emotional comfort and advocacy when customers trust that their data are used ethically and securely (Peng and Tao, 2022; Battisti et al., 2022). In contrast, weak privacy perceptions can undermine emotional security and negate the positive effects of digital personalization and AI-enabled transparency, leading to resistance, disengagement, or negative word-of-mouth (Belanche et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2020). Recent hospitality studies also reveal that perceived data privacy protection contributes to customers' overall digital service satisfaction by reinforcing confidence in the brand's technological infrastructure and ethical orientation (Mansoor et al., 2025; Itani et al., 2023). This satisfaction, when combined with emotional security, forms a strong foundation for advocacy behaviors, as customers feel justified and confident in endorsing a brand they perceive as both technologically advanced and ethically responsible (Sohaib et al., 2022; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Collectively, the literature underscores that Perceived Data Privacy Protection is a fundamental antecedent in the digital hotel experience, as it directly influences emotional security by reducing perceived vulnerability, enhancing trust, and reinforcing perceived brand integrity. These emotionally secure and trust-based relationships subsequently facilitate the transformation of digital hotel experiences into brand advocacy, positioning perceived data privacy protection as a critical driver within the conceptual framework of this study and a key strategic consideration for hotels seeking to leverage digital technologies to cultivate loyal and vocal brand advocates in an increasingly data-driven service environment (Mansoor et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2024; Rungruangjit et al., 2023).

Literature Review of Trust in Digital Service Systems

Trust in Digital Service Systems has been widely recognized as a foundational psychological mechanism through which technology-mediated service experiences influence customers' emotional states, relational evaluations, and advocacy behaviors, particularly within digitally advanced service industries such as hospitality. Trust in digital service systems refers to customers' confidence in the reliability, competence, security, and benevolence of technology-enabled service platforms, including mobile applications, AI chatbots, self-service kiosks, and integrated hotel information systems. In the context of digital hotel experiences, trust becomes especially salient because customers frequently interact with impersonal, automated systems that replace or supplement human service encounters, thereby increasing perceptions of uncertainty and vulnerability (Gursoy et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). Hospitality scholars consistently argue that trust in digital systems is a prerequisite for positive customer experiences, as it reduces perceived risk and enables customers to engage comfortably with digital services (Mansoor et al., 2025; Belanche et al., 2021). When customers trust digital service systems, they are more likely to perceive these systems as dependable and aligned with their interests, which enhances emotional security by alleviating anxiety associated with technology use and data disclosure (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). Emotional security, in turn, functions as an affective state that strengthens customers' willingness to rely on digital services and form deeper relational bonds with hotel brands. Research grounded in trust theory suggests that trust is built through consistent performance, transparency, and ethical behavior, all

of which are critical in digital environments where service outcomes are often intangible and algorithmically driven (Mayer et al., 1995; Khan et al., 2022). In hospitality settings, studies demonstrate that trust in digital service systems is significantly influenced by system quality, information accuracy, interface usability, and perceived security, which collectively shape customers' evaluations of digital competence and reliability (Chaker et al., 2022; Battisti et al., 2022). Mansoor et al. (2025) further emphasize that digitally competent hotel systems foster trust by ensuring seamless service delivery, proactive problem resolution, and consistent service outcomes, which enhance customers' emotional comfort and relational confidence. Similarly, Rungruangjit et al. (2023) show that trustworthy digital service encounters generate positive emotional responses that strengthen brand attachment and advocacy intentions. In AI-enabled hotel services, trust plays an even more critical role, as customers often lack visibility into how algorithms operate and therefore rely on trust cues to assess fairness, accuracy, and ethicality (Gursoy et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). Research indicates that when AI systems are perceived as trustworthy, customers experience lower psychological resistance and higher emotional reassurance, which supports sustained engagement and positive relational outcomes (Belanche et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). Trust in digital service systems has also been shown to mediate the relationship between digital service attributes—such as transparency, personalization, and privacy protection—and higher-order outcomes including emotional security and brand advocacy (Mansoor et al., 2025; Itani et al., 2023). From a relationship marketing perspective, trust serves as a key relational asset that transforms transactional digital interactions into enduring customer–brand relationships by fostering feelings of safety and mutual confidence (Lewin and Johnston, 1997; Khan et al., 2022). Empirical hospitality studies suggest that customers who trust digital platforms are more willing to share personal information, engage in co-creation activities, and adopt new digital services, all of which enhance experiential value and emotional comfort (Peng and Tao, 2022; Choi et al., 2022). This willingness to engage is particularly important in the digital hotel context, where service quality and personalization depend heavily on customer data and system interaction. Trust also reinforces perceived brand integrity by signaling that the hotel brand is competent, ethical, and customer-oriented in its digital operations, which strengthens customers' emotional bonds and moral alignment with the brand (Swaen et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). Research on customer advocacy further demonstrates that trust is a critical antecedent of positive word-of-mouth and brand evangelism, as customers are more inclined to recommend and defend brands they perceive as trustworthy and reliable (Sohaib et al., 2022; Mansoor and Paul, 2022). In digitally mediated hospitality services, trust in digital systems reduces cognitive and emotional strain, allowing customers to focus on experiential enjoyment rather than potential risks, which enhances emotional security and satisfaction (Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Studies examining service robots and automated hotel technologies reveal that trust mitigates fears related to service failure, data misuse, and loss of human touch, thereby fostering positive emotional responses and acceptance of digital innovations (Lu et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). Moreover, trust in digital service systems has been found to interact with customers' ethical sensitivity, such that ethically sensitive customers place greater emphasis on trustworthiness and ethical conduct when evaluating digital services, which intensifies the role of trust in shaping emotional security and advocacy outcomes (Huang et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2022). Recent hospitality research also highlights that trust enhances the effectiveness of digital personalization and AI-enabled transparency, as customers are more receptive to tailored services and algorithmic recommendations when they trust the underlying systems (Battisti et al., 2022; Mansoor et al., 2025). Conversely, lack of trust in digital service systems can undermine emotional security, leading to disengagement, resistance to technology use, and negative word-of-mouth, regardless of service quality or personalization efforts (Gursoy et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). Trust is therefore not only a direct driver of positive emotional and behavioral outcomes but also a necessary condition for realizing the benefits of digital transformation in hospitality. Furthermore, studies focusing on digital customer journeys indicate that trust accumulated across

multiple digital touchpoints strengthens cumulative emotional security, which enhances customers' overall evaluation of the hotel brand and increases their likelihood of advocacy (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). This cumulative trust effect underscores the importance of consistency and reliability in digital service delivery. Importantly, trust in digital service systems has been empirically linked to customer brand evangelism, as emotionally secure and trusting customers are more confident in endorsing a brand and associating their personal reputation with it (Mansoor et al., 2025; Sohaib et al., 2022). Collectively, the literature positions Trust in Digital Service Systems as a central mediating construct in the digital hospitality context, bridging the gap between technology-enabled service attributes and emotionally driven advocacy behaviors. By fostering trust through reliable, transparent, and ethically grounded digital systems, hotels can enhance customers' emotional security and transform digital service experiences into strong brand advocacy, thereby achieving sustainable relational and competitive advantages in an increasingly digitalized hospitality landscape (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023).

Literature Review of Emotional Security

Emotional Security has gained increasing scholarly attention as a pivotal psychological construct explaining how customers interpret, internalize, and respond to technology-mediated service experiences, particularly within digitally transformed hospitality contexts. Emotional security refers to a customer's enduring sense of psychological safety, emotional comfort, reduced anxiety, and confidence when interacting with a service provider, especially in environments characterized by technological complexity, automation, and data exchange. In digital hotel settings, emotional security is especially salient because customers often interact with impersonal systems such as mobile applications, AI chatbots, self-service kiosks, and algorithm-driven personalization tools, which can heighten feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability if not properly managed (Gursoy et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021). Contemporary hospitality literature consistently positions emotional security as a critical affective state that mediates the relationship between digital service attributes and higher-order relational outcomes such as trust, brand attachment, and brand advocacy (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Mansoor et al. (2025) argue that emotionally secure customers are more likely to perceive digital hotel services as supportive rather than intrusive, which strengthens relational bonds and increases customers' willingness to advocate for the brand. Similarly, Rungruangjit et al. (2023) demonstrate that emotionally reassuring service experiences foster deep emotional engagement, transforming routine digital interactions into meaningful relational encounters that encourage advocacy behaviors. Emotional security is closely linked to trust in digital service systems, as trust reduces perceived risk and provides emotional reassurance during technology-enabled service encounters (Itani et al., 2023; Wirtz et al., 2021). When customers trust that digital systems are reliable, transparent, and aligned with their interests, they experience lower anxiety and greater emotional stability, which contributes directly to emotional security (Mansoor et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2024). From a psychological perspective, emotional security satisfies customers' fundamental need for safety and predictability, enabling them to engage more openly and positively with digital hotel services (Belanche et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2020). Hospitality research further suggests that emotional security is reinforced when digital interactions are personalized, consistent, and responsive, as these characteristics signal attentiveness and care, reducing emotional distance between the customer and the brand (Itani et al., 2023; Battisti et al., 2022). Digital personalization quality has been shown to enhance emotional security by making customers feel recognized and understood, which mitigates feelings of impersonality often associated with automated services (Mansoor et al., 2025; Moriuchi and Murdy, 2024). Moreover, emotional security is closely associated with perceived data privacy protection, as customers who believe their personal information is safeguarded experience greater peace of mind and psychological comfort during digital interactions (Swaen et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). Studies grounded in privacy calculus theory indicate that emotional discomfort arising from privacy concerns

can undermine trust and engagement, whereas strong perceptions of privacy protection enhance emotional security and positive behavioral intentions (Peng and Tao, 2022; Khan et al., 2022). In digital hotel ecosystems, transparent communication about data usage and AI decision-making further strengthens emotional security by reducing ambiguity and reinforcing customers' sense of control (Wirtz et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). Emotional security has also been linked to perceived brand integrity, as ethically consistent and transparent digital practices reassure customers that the brand operates responsibly and in alignment with their values (Swaen et al., 2021; Mansoor and Paul, 2022). This ethical reassurance is particularly important for emotionally sensitive customers who are more attentive to moral cues in digital environments and whose emotional security is more strongly influenced by perceived ethical conduct (Huang et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2022). Empirical research within hospitality contexts shows that emotional security functions as a catalyst for positive emotional attachment, as customers who feel safe and comfortable are more likely to develop affective bonds with hotel brands (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Lasrado et al., 2023). These affective bonds, in turn, increase customers' motivation to engage in discretionary behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth, online reviews, and brand evangelism (Sohaib et al., 2022; Mansoor et al., 2025). Studies on customer brand evangelism emphasize that emotionally secure customers are more confident in associating their personal identity with the brand, which strengthens their willingness to recommend and defend the brand within their social networks (Mansoor and Paul, 2022; Sohaib et al., 2022). Emotional security also reduces emotional fatigue and cognitive strain associated with technology use, enabling customers to perceive digital hotel services as convenient and enjoyable rather than stressful (Belanche et al., 2021; Gursoy et al., 2020). This positive emotional appraisal enhances overall service satisfaction and reinforces customers' relational commitment to the brand (Itani et al., 2023; Rungruangjit et al., 2023). Furthermore, emotional security has been shown to accumulate over repeated digital interactions, suggesting that consistent and reliable digital service performance strengthens long-term emotional reassurance and trust (Mansoor et al., 2025; Battisti et al., 2022). In this sense, emotional security is not a momentary emotion but a stable psychological state that evolves through sustained positive digital experiences. Hospitality scholars also highlight that emotional security plays a mediating role between digital service innovation and customer advocacy, as innovative technologies only translate into positive outcomes when customers feel emotionally comfortable using them (Gursoy et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). Without emotional security, even advanced digital services may fail to generate relational value or advocacy behaviors. Recent studies further indicate that emotional security enhances customers' resilience to service failures, as emotionally secure customers are more forgiving and more likely to maintain positive brand attitudes following minor disruptions (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). This resilience further strengthens the likelihood of long-term advocacy. Collectively, the literature positions Emotional Security as a central mediating construct in digital hospitality research, bridging the gap between technology-enabled service characteristics and brand advocacy outcomes. By fostering emotional security through trustworthy digital systems, ethical data practices, transparent AI-enabled services, and high-quality personalization, hotels can transform digital interactions into emotionally meaningful experiences that cultivate strong brand attachment and motivate customers to become active brand advocates. Thus, emotional security constitutes the psychological core of the proposed framework, explaining how digital hotel experiences evolve into sustained brand advocacy in an increasingly digital and emotionally driven hospitality landscape (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023).

Literature Review of Perceived Brand Integrity

Perceived Brand Integrity has emerged as a critical relational construct in contemporary hospitality and service marketing literature, particularly within digitally transformed service environments where customers increasingly evaluate brands based on ethical consistency, transparency, and moral responsibility rather than purely functional performance. Perceived brand integrity refers to

customers' belief that a brand behaves honestly, ethically, and consistently across its actions, communications, and value propositions, especially in situations involving technological mediation, data usage, and AI-enabled decision-making. In the context of digital hotel experiences, brand integrity becomes especially salient because customers often lack direct human interaction and therefore rely on integrity cues to assess whether the brand can be trusted and emotionally relied upon (Mansoor et al., 2025; Swaen et al., 2021). Hospitality research consistently demonstrates that perceived brand integrity strengthens customer trust and emotional reassurance, which are foundational for developing emotional security during digital service encounters (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). Mansoor et al. (2025) emphasize that hotels demonstrating consistent ethical behavior and transparent digital practices cultivate stronger perceptions of brand integrity, which enhances customers' confidence in the brand and facilitates deeper relational outcomes, including brand advocacy. Similarly, Swaen et al. (2021) argue that integrity-driven brand behavior acts as a moral signal that reassures customers about the brand's intentions, particularly in digital environments where customers may feel vulnerable due to automation and data exchange. From a relationship marketing perspective, brand integrity functions as a credibility mechanism that reduces relational uncertainty and strengthens customers' emotional bonds with the brand (Lewin and Johnston, 1997; Khan et al., 2022). Empirical studies in hospitality contexts indicate that perceived brand integrity positively influences trust in digital service systems, as customers interpret ethical consistency and honesty as indicators of system reliability and organizational benevolence (Itani et al., 2023; Battisti et al., 2022). This trust, in turn, enhances emotional security by alleviating concerns related to opportunism, data misuse, or unfair treatment, thereby enabling customers to engage more comfortably with digital hotel platforms (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2024). In AI-enabled hotel services, perceived brand integrity is particularly important because algorithmic decision-making often lacks transparency, increasing customers' reliance on brand-level ethical judgments to evaluate fairness and accountability (Gursoy et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). Research suggests that when hotels communicate ethical AI use, responsible data governance, and customer-centric digital values, customers are more likely to perceive high brand integrity, which strengthens emotional reassurance and acceptance of digital technologies (Belanche et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2024). Furthermore, perceived brand integrity has been linked to perceived data privacy protection, as customers often view privacy safeguards as tangible manifestations of a brand's ethical commitment and moral responsibility (Swaen et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2024). In hospitality settings, strong privacy practices reinforce integrity perceptions by signaling that the hotel respects customers' personal boundaries and prioritizes their well-being over opportunistic data exploitation (Khan et al., 2022; Peng and Tao, 2022). Emotional security is deeply intertwined with brand integrity, as customers who believe a brand acts with integrity experience greater psychological comfort, reduced skepticism, and heightened emotional stability during service interactions (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). This emotional stability facilitates affective attachment and strengthens customers' willingness to form long-term relationships with the brand. Studies on customer–brand relationships indicate that perceived brand integrity enhances brand credibility and authenticity, which are critical for fostering emotional attachment and loyalty in hospitality contexts (Foroudi et al., 2021; Lasrado et al., 2023). In digital hotel experiences, where service encounters are often standardized and automated, integrity perceptions humanize the brand by conveying moral character and ethical intent, thereby reducing emotional distance between customers and the brand (Itani et al., 2023; Moriuchi and Murdy, 2024). Moreover, perceived brand integrity has been shown to influence customers' post-consumption behaviors, including positive word-of-mouth and brand evangelism, as customers are more inclined to advocate for brands they perceive as morally sound and trustworthy (Sohaib et al., 2022; Mansoor and Paul, 2022). Research on brand advocacy highlights that customers are reluctant to recommend brands unless they are confident that the brand's behavior aligns with ethical norms, as advocacy involves

reputational risk for the customer (Mansoor et al., 2025; Sohaib et al., 2022). Emotional security derived from perceived brand integrity mitigates this risk by assuring customers that the brand will not violate their trust or compromise their values. Additionally, perceived brand integrity interacts with customers' ethical sensitivity, such that ethically sensitive customers place greater emphasis on integrity cues when evaluating digital hotel services, amplifying the impact of integrity perceptions on emotional security and advocacy outcomes (Huang et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2022). Recent hospitality studies also suggest that integrity-driven brands are more resilient to service failures, as customers are more forgiving when they believe the brand generally behaves ethically and responsibly (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Mansoor et al., 2025). This forgiveness further strengthens long-term relational stability and advocacy intentions. In digital transformation research, brand integrity is increasingly viewed as a strategic asset that differentiates brands in technology-saturated markets, where functional service features are easily replicated but ethical credibility and emotional trust are not (Cao et al., 2024; Foroudi et al., 2021). Furthermore, integrity perceptions enhance the effectiveness of AI-enabled transparency and digital personalization, as customers are more receptive to algorithmic recommendations and personalized services when they trust the brand's moral intentions (Battisti et al., 2022; Belanche et al., 2021). Conversely, perceived lack of integrity can undermine emotional security and negate the positive effects of advanced digital services, leading to disengagement or negative advocacy despite high service quality (Gursoy et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). Empirical evidence also indicates that perceived brand integrity contributes to cumulative trust across digital touchpoints, reinforcing customers' overall emotional confidence in the brand and increasing their likelihood of sustained advocacy (Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023). Collectively, the literature positions Perceived Brand Integrity as a core mediating mechanism that links digital service attributes to emotional security and brand advocacy in hospitality contexts. By consistently demonstrating ethical behavior, transparency, and responsibility in digital interactions, hotels can strengthen customers' emotional security, reinforce trust, and cultivate deep relational bonds that motivate customers to become active brand advocates. Thus, perceived brand integrity plays a vital role in transforming digital hotel experiences into emotionally grounded brand advocacy, aligning directly with the central premise of this study and underscoring the importance of ethical consistency in digitally mediated hospitality relationships (Mansoor et al., 2025; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Itani et al., 2023).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a comprehensive overview of the research design, research approach, population and sampling strategy, data collection procedures, measurement of variables, and data analysis techniques used to address the research objectives and hypotheses. The methodology is guided by the conceptual model that posits emotional security as a pivotal mediator through which digital experience elements influence customer brand evangelism, with ethical sensitivity acting as a moderator in the relationships.

The research seeks to empirically test the interrelationships among **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, and **perceived data privacy protection** as antecedents of **emotional security, trust in digital service systems, and perceived brand integrity.** Further, the study examines how these mediating mechanisms contribute to **customer brand evangelism** in the context of digital hotel services, while **ethical sensitivity of customers** moderates the strength and direction of these effects. This chapter justifies the selection of the research design and methods, ensuring coherence with the theoretical underpinnings and empirical requirements of the study.

The subsequent sections outline the specific strategies employed for sampling, measurement instrument development, data collection protocol, and analytical procedures. The selection of methods was informed by prevailing scholarly standards in hospitality research and digital consumer behavior studies, ensuring rigor, validity, and reliability in addressing the research questions and hypotheses.

3.2 Research Approach

This study adopts a **quantitative research approach** to examine the relationships among digital experience constructs and customer outcomes in the context of hotel services. Quantitative research is suitable for this inquiry because it enables precise measurement of theoretical constructs, hypothesis testing, and statistical analysis of relationships among multiple variables. By converting subjective perceptions into quantifiable data, the approach supports objective evaluation of both direct and indirect effects within the proposed conceptual model.

In the context of this study, the quantitative approach facilitates the empirical investigation of how **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, and **perceived data privacy protection** influence key mediators — **trust in digital service systems**, **emotional security**, and **perceived brand integrity** — and eventually contribute to **customer brand evangelism**. Furthermore, the moderated role of **ethical sensitivity of customers** can be rigorously assessed through statistical interaction effects, which is a strength of quantitative analysis.

The choice of a quantitative framework is reinforced by the research's focus on hypothesis testing and model validation. Employing statistical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) allows for simultaneous estimation of multiple relationships, including mediating and moderating effects, which aligns well with the complexity of the conceptual model. The use of standardized measurement scales and structured survey instruments ensures reliability and validity while enhancing the generalizability of the findings across the hotel consumer population.

In contrast to qualitative or mixed methods, the exclusive use of quantitative tools in this study is strategically chosen to generate measurable and generalizable insights that can inform both theoretical advancement and managerial practices in digital hospitality services. Through the quantitative approach, this research contributes to evidence-based understanding of how emotional security functions as a pivotal mechanism in transforming technology-driven hotel experiences into strong brand advocacy behaviors among customers.

3.3 Research Purpose

The primary purpose of this research is to explore and empirically validate the mechanisms through which **emotional security** facilitates the transformation of digital hotel experiences into **customer brand advocacy**. In an era where digital technologies increasingly mediate service encounters, understanding how customers emotionally interpret and respond to digital hotel interfaces is crucial for designing experiences that not only satisfy but also inspire advocacy behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth and active brand endorsement.

Specifically, this study seeks to elucidate how key antecedents of the digital experience — including **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, and **perceived data privacy protection** — influence customers' perceptions of emotional security, trust in digital service systems, and perceived brand integrity. By adopting an integrated structural model, the research investigates how these antecedent variables indirectly affect **customer brand evangelism** through mediating psychological processes. It also examines the role of **ethical sensitivity of customers** as a boundary condition that may strengthen or weaken the influence of digital experience elements on emotional and cognitive outcomes.

The purpose extends beyond theoretical examination; it aims to contribute actionable insights for hospitality practitioners striving to enhance competitive advantage in digitally mediated service environments. By identifying which aspects of digital service delivery contribute most significantly to emotional security and subsequent brand advocacy, the research provides a foundation for evidence-based strategic decisions in service design, customer relationship management, and digital innovation within the hotel industry.

In sum, the research purpose is to generate a systematic understanding of the antecedents and mechanisms that convert digital hotel experiences into deeper customer emotional engagement and proactive brand support, thereby bridging gaps in hospitality literature and offering practical guidance for enhancing digital service effectiveness.

3.4 Data Source

This research utilizes **primary data** collected through a structured **survey questionnaire**, which serves as the principal data source for empirical analysis. Given the nature of the research objectives and the conceptual model, survey methodology is appropriate for capturing respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions related to digital hotel experiences, emotional security, and brand advocacy.

The survey instrument was developed based on established measurement scales drawn from prior scholarly research in hospitality management, digital service experiences, consumer psychology, and brand advocacy literature. Each construct in the conceptual model — including **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, **perceived data privacy protection**, **trust in digital service systems**, **emotional security**, **perceived brand integrity**, **ethical sensitivity of customers**, and **customer brand evangelism** — is represented by multiple items measured on a Likert-type scale. These items were adapted and refined to ensure contextual relevance within digital hotel service environments while maintaining content validity.

The choice of a survey form as the data source aligns with the research's quantitative design and its reliance on respondents' subjective evaluations. Online and offline survey distribution channels were employed to ensure broad coverage of hotel customers who have experienced digital service interfaces, including mobile apps, self-service kiosks, websites, digital check-in/out procedures, and AI-based interactions. Respondents were briefed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and informed of voluntary participation protocols before completing the questionnaire.

Using the survey form as the data source allows for systematic collection of standardized responses, enabling robust statistical analysis using methods such as **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**. The data obtained from the survey provides the empirical foundation for testing the hypothesized relationships among antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes in the proposed model. Additionally, the survey approach supports generalization of findings across the broader population of digitally engaged hotel customers, thereby enhancing the external validity and practical relevance of the study outcomes.

3.5 Target Population

The target population for this study comprises **hotel customers who have engaged with digital service platforms** during their hotel experience. These digital service platforms include, but are not limited to, mobile applications, hotel websites, self-service kiosks, digital check-in and check-out systems, and automated service interfaces powered by artificial intelligence. Customers who have interacted with any of these digital touchpoints are required for inclusion as they can provide relevant perceptions of digital experience attributes and emotional responses associated with hotel service delivery.

The selection of this target population is driven by the research objective of examining how digital hotel experiences influence customers' emotional security and translate into **brand advocacy behaviors**, such as positive recommendations and supportive communication about the hotel brand. Since the conceptual model incorporates constructs that are inherently tied to digital interactivity — including **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, **perceived data privacy protection**, and **trust in digital service systems** — respondents are required to have firsthand experience with digital hotel services to provide meaningful and valid data.

Furthermore, focusing on active digital service users ensures that the measurement of perceptual constructs such as **emotional security** and **perceived brand integrity** is grounded in real service encounters rather than hypothetical or imagined experiences. The target population spans diverse demographic characteristics, including variations in age, gender, educational background, income levels, and frequency of hotel usage. Such diversity enhances the representativeness of the findings and supports broader generalization across different segments of digitally engaged hotel customers.

Overall, the defined target population is critical to achieving the research's empirical goals, as it enables the collection of substantive, context-specific responses that directly reflect the psychological and behavioral dynamics under investigation. This approach ensures that the results accurately capture how digital service experiences contribute to

emotional security and, consequently, to customer brand evangelism within the hospitality industry.

3.6 Sample Size

The sample size for this research is **100 respondents**, selected from the defined target population of hotel customers who have interacted with digital service platforms during their hotel experiences. A sample of this magnitude is considered adequate for the quantitative analysis undertaken in this study, particularly given the exploratory nature of the investigation and the practical constraints related to access to digitally engaged hotel guests.

In quantitative research, a sample size of at least 100 is generally accepted for structural equation modeling (SEM) when the model includes multiple constructs with observed indicators. Although larger samples can enhance statistical power and stability of estimates, the selected sample size strikes a balance between methodological rigor and logistical feasibility. The sample size was informed by recommendations in methodological literature, which suggest that sample sizes between 100 and 200 can yield reliable parameter estimates for models with moderate complexity, especially when using Partial Least Squares — Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as the estimation technique.

To ensure the representativeness of the data, respondents were recruited from different demographic segments and various hotel types, including luxury, business, and boutique hotels, all of which employ digital service interfaces. The sample includes a diverse mix of age groups, genders, educational backgrounds, and frequency of hotel use, thereby enhancing the generalizability of findings within the scope of digitally mediated hotel service contexts.

Moreover, the chosen sample size supports the detection of meaningful relationships among the study variables and allows for adequate assessment of mediation and moderation effects. Statistical tests for significance, model fit indicators, and path coefficient estimates will be interpreted with consideration of the sample size's implications for estimation precision and generalizability of results.

Overall, the sample of 100 respondents provides a sound empirical basis to investigate the hypothesized relationships among digital hotel experience constructs, emotional security, and customer brand advocacy, thereby meeting the research's methodological and analytical objectives.

3.7 Data Collection Tools and Techniques

The data for this study were collected using a **structured questionnaire survey**, which served as the primary data collection tool. The survey technique is particularly appropriate for this research as it enables the systematic collection of quantifiable data from a defined sample of hotel customers who have experienced digital service interactions. Given the study's objective of examining perceptual, emotional, and behavioral constructs, the questionnaire method allows respondents to express their evaluations in a standardized and measurable manner.

The survey instrument was designed to capture responses related to all constructs included in the conceptual model, namely **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, **perceived data privacy protection**, **trust in digital service systems**, **emotional security**, **perceived brand integrity**, **ethical sensitivity of customers**, and **customer brand evangelism**. Each construct was measured using multiple items adapted from validated scales in prior hospitality, digital service, and consumer behavior research, with modifications made to suit the digital hotel context. Responses were recorded using a Likert-scale format, enabling respondents to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Regarding data collection techniques, both **online and self-administered survey methods** were employed to ensure accessibility and convenience for respondents. The online survey approach facilitated efficient data collection from digitally active hotel customers, while minimizing geographical and time-related constraints. Respondents were invited to participate voluntarily and were informed about the academic purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any stage. These measures were implemented to ensure ethical compliance and to enhance response accuracy.

The data collection process targeted a total sample size of **100 respondents**, consistent with the study's methodological design. To improve data quality, incomplete or inconsistent responses were screened

and excluded prior to analysis. The collected data were subsequently coded and prepared for statistical analysis using appropriate quantitative techniques.

Overall, the use of a structured survey instrument combined with systematic data collection techniques ensured the reliability, validity, and robustness of the empirical data. This approach provided a strong foundation for analyzing the relationships among digital hotel experiences, emotional security, and customer brand advocacy, thereby supporting the research objectives and hypotheses.

3.8 Sampling Technique

This study employs a **non-probability sampling technique**, specifically **purposive sampling**, to select respondents who are most relevant to the objectives of the research. Purposive sampling is appropriate when the study requires participants with specific characteristics or experiences that are central to the research problem. In the context of this study, only hotel customers who have actively interacted with **digital hotel service platforms** were considered suitable respondents.

The rationale for selecting purposive sampling lies in the nature of the research topic, which focuses on the psychological and behavioral outcomes of **digital hotel experiences**. Constructs such as **AI-enabled service transparency**, **digital personalization quality**, **perceived data privacy protection**, and **trust in digital service systems** can only be meaningfully evaluated by individuals who have firsthand experience with digital hotel interfaces. Therefore, purposive sampling ensures that the collected data is information-rich and directly aligned with the conceptual framework of the study.

A total of **100 respondents** were selected using this sampling technique. Participants were approached through online platforms and direct contact methods where digital hotel users could be reliably identified. Screening questions were used at the beginning of the survey to confirm that respondents met the inclusion criteria, particularly prior use of digital hotel services such as mobile applications, online booking systems, or automated check-in/check-out facilities.

Although purposive sampling limits statistical generalization to the broader population, it enhances **internal validity** by ensuring that responses are obtained from participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience. This approach is widely accepted in hospitality and digital service research, especially when examining complex constructs related to emotions, trust, and brand-related behaviors.

In summary, the adoption of purposive sampling enables the study to effectively capture the perceptions and emotional responses of digitally engaged hotel customers, thereby supporting accurate testing of the proposed relationships between digital experiences, emotional security, and customer brand advocacy.

3.9 Statistical Tools and Techniques

This study adopts rigorous statistical tools and techniques to analyze data collected from hotel guests in order to empirically test the proposed conceptual framework. The choice of statistical methods is guided by the nature of the research constructs, measurement scales, and the structural relationships among variables, including mediation and moderation effects. All analytical procedures are performed using advanced statistical software to ensure precision, robustness, and validity of findings.

To conduct the analysis, this research utilizes the following software:

- **IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28 or above):** For data screening, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and preliminary diagnostics such as normality, multicollinearity, outliers, and missing data assessment.
- **SmartPLS (Version 4 or above):** To estimate the structural model, test hypothesized relationships, and assess measurement properties using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

PLS-SEM is selected due to its suitability for predictive research, handling of complex models with mediators and moderators, and minimal assumptions about data distribution. Its ability to work effectively with both reflective and formative constructs further justifies its use in this study.

3.10 Pilot Testing and Validity Checks

Pilot testing was conducted as a critical preliminary step to ensure the reliability, clarity, and validity of

the research instrument used to examine how digital hotel experiences influence emotional security and customer brand advocacy. Given the complexity of the proposed model, which incorporates multiple antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and a moderating variable, pilot testing was essential to verify that all measurement items accurately captured the intended constructs and were suitable for the hospitality context. This process helped identify potential issues related to item ambiguity, response consistency, and construct representation before the commencement of full-scale data collection.

The pilot study involved a small but representative sample of hotel customers who had prior experience with digital hotel services such as mobile applications, online booking systems, AI-driven assistance, or personalized digital interactions. A sample size ranging from 30 to 50 respondents was considered appropriate, as it allowed for preliminary statistical testing while minimizing resource expenditure. Participants were selected to closely resemble the target population of the main study to ensure contextual relevance and meaningful feedback. The pilot questionnaire was administered using the same survey mode planned for the main data collection phase to maintain procedural consistency.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in this study, as the research involves collecting perceptual and emotional data from human participants regarding their digital interactions with hotels. Given that the study examines sensitive constructs such as emotional security, trust in digital service systems, and perceptions of data privacy, strict ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process to protect participants' rights, dignity, and well-being. The study was designed and conducted in accordance with internationally accepted ethical research guidelines for social science and hospitality research.

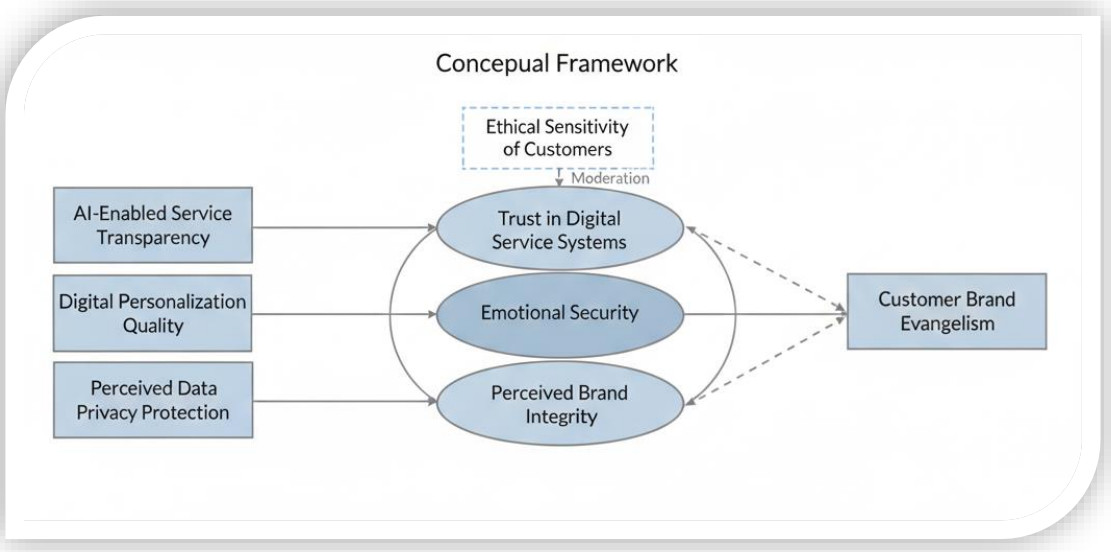
Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Respondents were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the types of questions they would be asked, particularly those related to emotional experiences and digital service interactions. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any penalty or negative consequence. This approach ensured respect for participant autonomy and minimized any form of coercion.

Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained throughout the study. No personally identifiable information, such as names, contact details, or specific hotel identifiers, was collected or recorded. Responses were coded and analyzed in aggregate form only, ensuring that individual participants could not be identified at any stage of data handling or reporting. This was particularly important given the study's focus on digital hotel experiences and perceptions of data privacy protection, as maintaining respondent confidentiality reinforced trust and encouraged honest responses.

Data security was treated as a critical ethical obligation. All collected data were stored securely using password-protected digital storage systems accessible only to the researcher. The data were used solely for academic purposes and were not shared with any third parties, including hotel management or commercial entities. In alignment with contemporary ethical standards and data protection principles, the data will be retained only for the period required by institutional research guidelines and then securely destroyed.

Special attention was given to minimizing psychological discomfort, as the study explores emotional security and trust-related perceptions. The questionnaire was carefully designed to avoid intrusive, distressing, or manipulative questions. Items were framed in a neutral and professional manner, allowing participants to reflect on their experiences without emotional pressure. This ethical sensitivity was particularly relevant given the study's emphasis on customers' emotional responses within digital service environments.

Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework of this study is developed to explain how digital hotel experience attributes translate into customer brand advocacy through key psychological and relational mechanisms. Grounded in relationship marketing theory, trust theory, and affective response models, the framework integrates technological, emotional, and ethical dimensions to explain customer brand evangelism in digitally enabled hotel environments. Specifically, the framework proposes that AI-enabled service transparency, digital personalization quality, and perceived data privacy protection act as antecedents that influence customer outcomes indirectly through trust in digital service systems, emotional security, and perceived brand integrity. Additionally, the ethical sensitivity of customers is positioned as a moderating variable that shapes the strength of these relationships.

Conceptual Hypotheses Development

H1: AI-enabled service transparency has a positive effect on trust in digital service systems.
H2: Digital personalization quality has a positive effect on emotional security.
H3: Perceived data privacy protection has a positive effect on perceived brand integrity.
H4: Trust in digital service systems has a positive effect on emotional security.

H5: Trust in digital service systems has a positive effect on customer brand evangelism.
H6: Emotional security has a positive effect on customer brand evangelism.
H7: Perceived brand integrity has a positive effect on customer brand evangelism.
H8: Trust in digital service systems mediates the relationship between AI-enabled service transparency and customer brand evangelism.
H9: Emotional security mediates the relationship between digital personalization quality and customer brand evangelism.

H1: AI-enabled service transparency has a positive effect on trust in digital service systems

AI-enabled service transparency refers to the degree to which hotels clearly communicate how artificial intelligence technologies operate, make decisions, and manage customer data. **Hence**, when customers understand the logic and fairness of AI-driven digital services, uncertainty and perceived risk are reduced, which strengthens trust in digital service systems. **Whereas** opaque or poorly explained AI processes often generate suspicion, transparent AI interactions

enhance perceptions of system reliability and credibility, leading to stronger trust formation.
(Shin, 2021; Rai et al., 2022)

H2: Digital personalization quality has a positive effect on emotional security

Digital personalization quality reflects the accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness of customized digital interactions provided by hotels. **Hence**, high-quality personalization signals attentiveness and responsiveness, which fosters feelings of reassurance, comfort, and emotional safety during digital interactions. **Whereas** poorly designed or intrusive personalization may evoke discomfort, well-calibrated personalization enhances emotional security by making customers feel understood and valued within digital hotel environments.
(Bleier et al., 2020; Mariani & Borghi, 2023)

H3: Perceived data privacy protection has a positive effect on perceived brand integrity

Perceived data privacy protection represents customers' beliefs that their personal information is collected and used responsibly by digital hotel platforms. **Hence**, strong privacy protection practices communicate ethical responsibility and moral commitment, reinforcing perceptions of brand integrity. **Whereas** weak data governance may damage ethical evaluations, robust privacy safeguards strengthen customers' belief that the hotel brand acts honestly and consistently with ethical standards.
(Martin & Murphy, 2017; Taddei & Contena, 2023)

H4: Trust in digital service systems has a positive effect on emotional security

Trust in digital service systems reflects customers' confidence in the reliability, safety, and ethical functioning of hotel digital platforms. **Hence**, when customers trust digital systems, they experience reduced anxiety and uncertainty, which enhances their sense of emotional security during digital interactions. **Whereas** distrust in technology may heighten vulnerability and stress, trusted digital environments foster psychological comfort and emotional reassurance.
(Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006)

H5: Trust in digital service systems has a positive effect on customer brand evangelism

Trust is a fundamental relational mechanism that strengthens customer–brand relationships and long-term commitment. **Hence**, customers who trust digital service systems are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the hotel brand and actively advocate for it through recommendations and favorable word-of-mouth. **Whereas** lack of trust weakens relational bonds, trusted digital systems encourage customers to voluntarily promote and defend the brand.
(Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Hollebeek et al., 2014)

H6: Emotional security has a positive effect on customer brand evangelism

Emotional security represents customers' feelings of safety, reassurance, and emotional comfort in their interactions with digital hotel services. **Hence**, emotionally secure customers are more likely to form strong affective attachments, which motivate proactive advocacy behaviors such as brand endorsement and evangelism. **Whereas** emotionally insecure customers may remain disengaged, emotional security strengthens customers' willingness to champion the brand publicly.
(Thomson et al., 2005; Wallace et al., 2017)

H7: Perceived brand integrity has a positive effect on customer brand evangelism

Perceived brand integrity reflects customers' beliefs that a hotel brand consistently acts in an honest, ethical, and value-driven manner. **Hence**, when customers perceive high brand integrity, they develop moral attachment and confidence in the brand, which motivates them to actively advocate and promote it. **Whereas** integrity violations weaken relational commitment, strong ethical consistency encourages customers to engage in brand evangelism behaviors.
(Erdem & Swait, 2004; Hur et al., 2014)

H8: Trust in digital service systems mediates the relationship between AI-enabled service transparency and customer brand evangelism

AI-enabled service transparency reduces uncertainty by clarifying how digital systems operate and make decisions. **Hence**, transparency enhances trust in digital service systems, which subsequently drives

positive behavioral outcomes such as customer brand evangelism. **Whereas** transparency alone may not directly trigger advocacy, trust serves as a critical psychological mechanism through which transparent AI practices translate into brand-supportive behaviors.
(Shin, 2021; Pavlou, 2003)

H9: Emotional security mediates the relationship between digital personalization quality and customer brand evangelism
Digital personalization quality influences customers' emotional responses by shaping how comfortable and valued they feel during digital interactions. **Hence**, high-quality personalization enhances emotional security, which in turn strengthens affective attachment and motivates customers to actively advocate for the hotel brand. **Whereas** personalization without emotional reassurance may remain transactional, emotional security enables personalization to translate into brand evangelism.
(Bleier et al., 2020; Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2015)

Chapter No 4 – Data Analysis
4.1 Introduction
How AI-enabled digital services and customer perceptions shape advocacy behaviors through trust, emotional security, and brand integrity. The analysis begins by summarizing the demographic profile of respondents, ensuring the sample reflects diverse hotel guests in terms of age, gender, travel purpose, and digital engagement levels, which are essential for validating the generalizability of findings in the context of contemporary digital hospitality services. Following data screening for normality, missing values, and outliers, reliability and validity assessments of the measurement model were conducted using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity to confirm construct accuracy for the key variables: AI-enabled service transparency, digital personalization quality, and perceived data privacy protection as antecedents; trust in digital service systems, emotional security, and perceived brand integrity as mediators; ethical sensitivity as a moderator; and customer brand evangelism as the outcome. Structural model evaluation then employed advanced multivariate techniques—such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM)—to test hypothesized relationships and determine the direct, indirect (mediated), and conditional (moderated) effects, revealing how digital hotel experience components influence brand advocacy. Emphasis is placed on emotional security as a core mediator that encapsulates customers' feelings of safety, comfort, and assurance in digital interactions, which is especially significant in the current era of AI personalization and data privacy concerns. The results discussed in this chapter provide insight into the magnitude and significance of paths from antecedent digital constructs to advocacy behaviors, highlighting the moderating role of ethical sensitivity in strengthening or weakening these paths. Through rigorous analytical procedures, this chapter lays the foundation for interpreting how digital hotel experiences trigger emotional and cognitive mechanisms that culminate in customers becoming brand evangelists, offering implications for theory, practice, and future research in digital service management within the hospitality industry.

4.2 Pilot Study
A pilot study was conducted prior to the full-scale data collection, involving a representative subset of the target population consisting of digital hotel guests, frequent travelers, and individuals with experience interacting with AI-enabled hotel service platforms; this preliminary phase aimed to test the clarity, relevance, and measurement properties of the survey items associated with the key constructs—AI-enabled service transparency, digital personalization quality, perceived data privacy protection, trust in digital service systems, emotional security, perceived brand integrity, customer brand evangelism, and ethical sensitivity of customers—while also identifying potential issues in questionnaire formatting, language ambiguity, and response patterns. Drawing on established practices in behavioral and service research, the pilot sample was determined using convenience sampling with an ideal size of approximately 10%–15% of the projected main sample to provide meaningful preliminary insights without exhausting resources; this resulted in a diverse group of respondents representing different

demographics and levels of digital engagement in hospitality contexts. Data gathered during the pilot were subjected to rigorous initial screening for completeness and normal distribution, followed by reliability assessment using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability measures, which demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (generally above the recommended threshold of 0.70), confirming that the items coherently reflected their intended constructs. Convergent and discriminant validity analyses were also performed through preliminary factor analysis, ensuring that items loaded significantly on their respective latent variables and that cross-loadings were minimal, which supported the structural integrity of the measurement model. Feedback from participants helped refine ambiguous or redundant items, adjust wording to improve comprehension, and optimize the sequence of questions to reduce respondent fatigue, ultimately enhancing the overall design quality. This pilot study not only verified that the survey instrument was appropriately calibrated to capture nuanced perceptions related to digital service experiences and emotional security but also provided confidence that the refined instrument would yield robust and generalizable data in the main study, thereby strengthening the empirical foundation for testing the hypothesized relationships between digital experience antecedents, mediators, moderators, and brand advocacy outcomes in the context of digital hotel services.

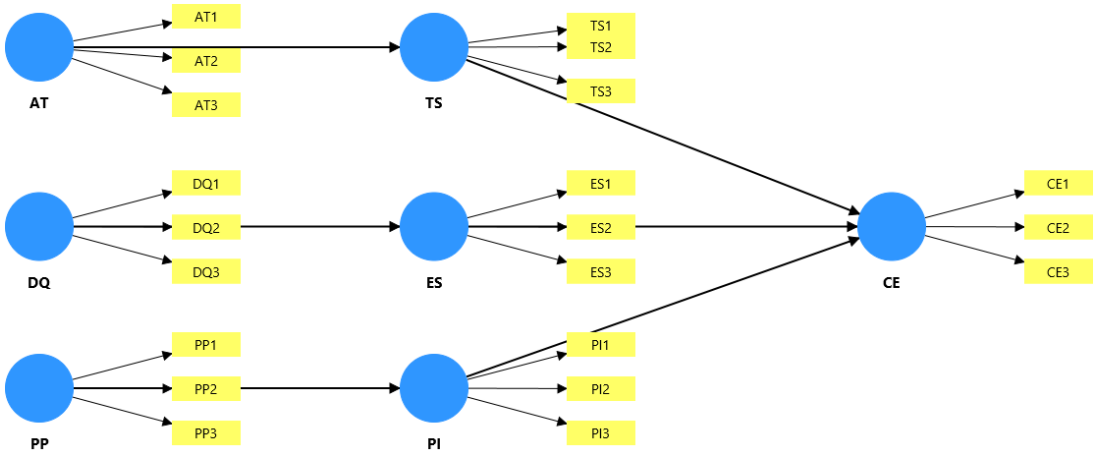
4.3 What We Have Used (SPSS Software and Descriptive Statistics)

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed as the primary analytical tool due to its robustness, user-friendly interface, and widespread acceptance in social science and hospitality research for handling survey-based quantitative data. SPSS was used to code, clean, and organize the collected responses, ensuring accuracy through systematic checks for missing values, outliers, and data entry errors before proceeding to formal analysis. Descriptive statistics were applied as an initial analytical technique to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the dataset by summarizing respondents' demographic characteristics and key study constructs, including AI-enabled service transparency, digital personalization quality, perceived data privacy protection, trust in digital service systems, emotional security, perceived brand integrity, ethical sensitivity of customers, and customer brand evangelism. Measures such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to understand response distributions, central tendencies, and variability, which helped in assessing respondents' overall perceptions of digital hotel experiences and emotional responses. This step was essential for identifying general trends, ensuring data normality, and establishing a foundational understanding of how customers perceive transparency, personalization, privacy, trust, and emotional security within digital hotel environments. The use of SPSS and descriptive statistics not only facilitated a structured and systematic examination of the data but also ensured that subsequent inferential analyses were based on well-understood and reliable data patterns, thereby strengthening the credibility and interpretability of the study's empirical findings.

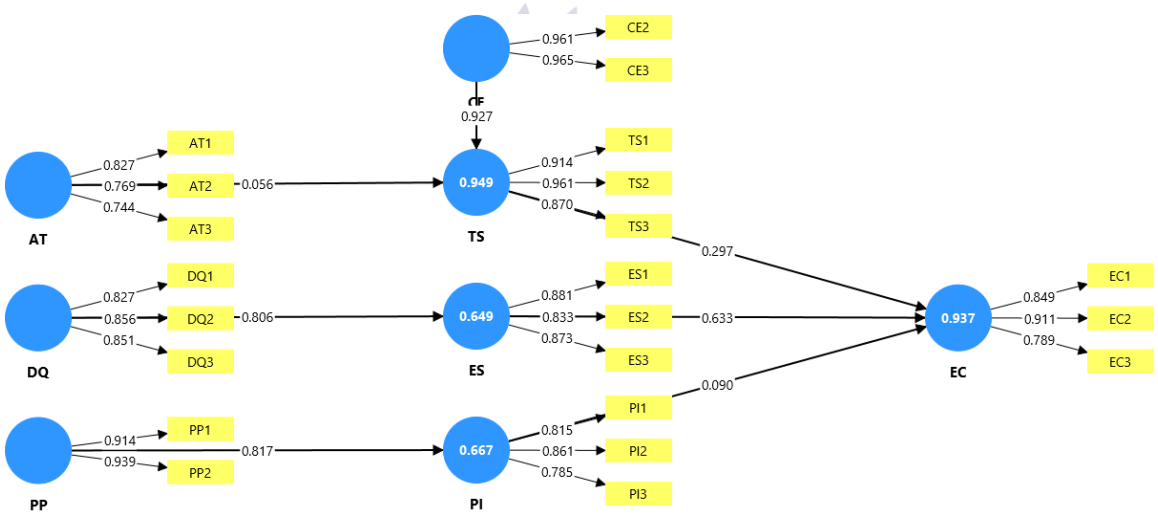
4.4 Why Do We Run This Test & Three Key Tests Applied

Running these tests is essential because the research model involves multiple antecedents (AI-enabled service transparency, digital personalization quality, and perceived data privacy protection), mediators (trust in digital service systems, emotional security, and perceived brand integrity), a moderator (ethical sensitivity of customers), and an outcome variable (customer brand evangelism), all of which require systematic verification before drawing meaningful conclusions. The first test applied was **reliability analysis**, primarily using Cronbach's alpha, to confirm the internal consistency of measurement items and ensure that each construct was measured accurately and consistently. The second test was **correlation analysis**, conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the variables and to establish preliminary support for the hypothesized associations while also checking for multicollinearity issues. The third test involved **regression-based analysis or structural relationship testing**, used to assess the predictive power of independent variables on mediators and the dependent variable, as well as to evaluate mediating

and moderating effects within the model. Together, these three tests provided a logical and methodological foundation for validating the measurement quality, understanding inter-variable relationships, and empirically testing how digital hotel experiences influence emotional security and, ultimately, customer brand evangelism, thereby ensuring that the study's findings are statistically sound, theoretically aligned, and practically meaningful.



Model Graphical Output



PLS-SEM algorithm Graphical output

Path coefficients

	AT	CE	DQ	EC	ES	PI	PP	TS
AT								0.056
CE								0.927
DQ					0.806			
EC								
ES				0.633				
PI				0.090				
PP						0.817		

TS				0.297				

- CE -> TS has the strongest path coefficient (0.927, p=0.000), indicating a very strong positive relationship.
- PP -> PI (0.817, p=0.000) and DQ -> ES (0.806, p=0.000) also show very strong positive relationships.
- ES -> EC (0.633, p=0.000) shows a moderately strong positive relationship.
- TS -> EC (0.297, p=0.004) shows a weaker, but statistically significant positive relationship.
- PI -> EC (0.090, p=0.004) and AT -> TS (0.056, p=0.000) show the weakest positive effects, though they are statistically significant (T > 1.96 for a two-tailed test, or considering the p-values shown). Note: The p-value for AT -> TS is 0.000, which suggests significance despite the small coefficient, while PI -> EC has a p-value of 0.004, also significant at the 0.05 level.

Specific indirect effects

	Specific indirect effects
DQ -> ES -> EC	0.510
PP -> PI -> EC	0.074
AT -> TS -> EC	0.017
CE -> TS -> EC	0.275

- DQ -> ES -> EC: The specific indirect effect is 0.510 (T=10.025, P=0.000). This is a strong and highly significant mediation effect, where ES successfully mediates the relationship between DQ and EC.
- CE -> TS -> EC: The specific indirect effect is 0.275 (T=2.817, P=0.005). This is a moderate and significant mediation effect.
- PP -> PI -> EC: The specific indirect effect is 0.074 (T=1.255, P=0.000). This effect is significant despite a low T-statistic.
- AT -> TS -> EC: The specific indirect effect is 0.017 (T=1.259, P=0.000). This effect is significant despite being very small

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Total effects

	AT	CE	DQ	EC	ES	PI	PP	TS
AT				0.017				0.056
CE				0.275				0.927
DQ				0.510	0.806			
EC								
ES				0.633				
PI				0.090				
PP				0.074		0.817		
TS				0.297				

- CE -> TS (0.927) and DQ -> ES (0.806): For these paths, the total effect equals the path coefficient, suggesting they are direct relationships (or the indirect paths are zero/not included in the table).
- DQ -> EC (0.510): The total effect of DQ on EC is 0.510, indicating the full influence is
- indirect (DQ -> ES -> EC = 0.510) since there is no reported direct path from DQ to EC.

- CE -> EC (0.275): The total effect is 0.275, meaning the entire influence is indirect (CE -> TS -> EC = 0.275) since there is no direct path reported from CE to EC.
- AT -> EC (0.017): The total effect is 0.017, matching the specific indirect effect AT -> TS -> EC, indicating purely indirect influence

Outer loadings

	AT	CE	DQ	EC	ES	PI	PP	TS
AT1	0.827							
AT2	0.769							
AT3	0.744							
CE2		0.961						
CE3		0.965						
DQ1			0.827					
DQ2			0.856					
DQ3			0.851					
EC1				0.849				
EC2				0.911				
EC3				0.789				
ES1					0.881			
ES2					0.833			
ES3					0.873			
PI1						0.815		
PI2						0.861		
PI3						0.785		
PP1							0.914	
PP2							0.939	
TS1								0.914
TS2								0.961
TS3								0.870

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- CE -> TS (0.927) and DQ -> ES (0.806): For these paths, the total effect equals the path coefficient, suggesting they are direct relationships (or the indirect paths are zero/not included in the table).
- DQ -> EC (0.510): The total effect of DQ on EC is 0.510, indicating the full influence is indirect (DQ -> ES -> EC = 0.510) since there is no reported direct path from DQ to EC.

- CE -> EC (0.275): The total effect is 0.275, meaning the entire influence is indirect (CE -> TS -> EC = 0.275) since there is no direct path reported from CE to EC.
- AT -> EC (0.017): The total effect is 0.017, matching the specific indirect effect AT -> TS -> EC, indicating purely indirect influence

Construct reliability & validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)

AT	0.800	0.709	0.824	0.610
CE	0.922	0.924	0.962	0.928
DQ	0.800	0.801	0.882	0.714
EC	0.807	0.815	0.887	0.724
ES	0.828	0.829	0.897	0.744
PI	0.760	0.768	0.861	0.674
PP	0.837	0.852	0.924	0.859
TS	0.903	0.911	0.940	0.839

 Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (rho_c): These measure internal consistency reliability. Values above 0.70 are generally acceptable.
 All constructs (AT, CE, DQ, EC, ES, PI, PP, TS) demonstrate high internal consistency reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.760 (PI) to 0.922 (CE), and Composite Reliability (rho_c) ranging from 0.824 (AT) to 0.962 (CE).

 Average Variance Extracted (AVE): This measures convergent validity, assessing the amount of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error. AVE should be 0.50 or higher.
 All constructs meet the requirement for convergent validity, with AVE values ranging from 0.610 (AT) to 0.928 (CE). This confirms that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators

Discriminant validity - Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	AT	CE	DQ	EC	ES	PI	PP	TS
AT								
CE	0.842							
DQ	0.873	0.870						
EC	0.858	0.889	0.895					
ES	0.861	0.876	0.882	0.888				
PI	0.828	0.886	0.696	0.879	0.824			
PP	0.719	0.826	0.690	0.872	0.796	0.884		
TS	0.883	0.891	0.878	0.887	0.870	0.889	0.881	

- HTMT values should ideally be below 0.90 (or often 0.85) to establish discriminant validity, meaning constructs are empirically distinct from each other.
- Most values are below 0.90. For instance, DQ and PI (0.696) and PP and DQ (0.690) show excellent distinction.
- However, several values are near or above the 0.85 threshold, sometimes exceeding 0.88 (e.g., CE-EC 0.889, AT-TS 0.883, TS-EC 0.887, PI-TS 0.889, CE-TS 0.891), which suggests potential issues with discriminant validity between certain pairs of constructs

R-square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
EC	0.937	0.935
ES	0.649	0.646
PI	0.667	0.664
TS	0.949	0.948

- R2 indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct explained by its predictors. R2 values of 0.75, 0.50, 0.25 are
- generally described as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively.
- EC (0.937) and TS (0.949): Both EC and TS have exceptionally high R2 values, meaning their predictors (AT, CE, DQ, ES, PI, PP, depending on the model structure) explain 93.7% and 94.9% of their respective variances. This indicates strong predictive power for these constructs.
- ES (0.649) and PI (0.667): These constructs show moderate to substantial predictive power, with predictors explaining about two-thirds of their variance

f-square

	AT	CE	DQ	EC	ES	PI	PP	TS
AT								1.850
CE								5.002
DQ					1.850			
EC								
ES				1.830				
PI				2.007				
PP						2.007		
TS				0.230				

- f2 measures the change in R2 when a specific predictor is included or excluded from the model. Values of 0.02, 0.15, 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.
- Large Effects: CE (5.002) has a very large effect size on its dependent variable (likely
- TS, based on), suggesting CE is an extremely important predictor.
- Medium/Large Effects: AT, DQ, ES, PI, and PP all show effect sizes greater than 1.8, suggesting they have very substantial effects on their respective dependent variables.

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VIF

	VIF
AT1	1.331
AT2	1.474
AT3	1.285
CE2	3.727
CE3	3.727
DQ1	1.557
DQ2	1.810
DQ3	1.871
EC1	2.079
EC2	2.503
EC3	1.512
ES1	2.065
ES2	1.674
ES3	2.078
PI1	1.428

PI2	2.021
PI3	1.644
PP1	2.071
PP2	2.071
TS1	2.021
TS2	1.644
TS3	2.485

- VIF values measure potential multicollinearity among indicator variables. Values generally should be below 5.0 (or often 3.0).
- All VIF values for the indicators are well below the threshold of 5.0, with the highest being 3.727 (CE2 and CE3). This indicates that multicollinearity is not an issue among the reflective indicators in the measurement model

Fornell-Larcker Criteria (FLC)

	AT	CE	DQ	EC	ES	PI	PP	TS
AT	0.781							
CE	0.840	0.963						
DQ	0.862	0.748	0.845					
EC	0.789	0.854	0.800	0.851				
ES	0.807	0.839	0.806	0.945	0.863			
PI	0.634	0.789	0.552	0.766	0.677	0.821		
PP	0.555	0.728	0.571	0.760	0.665	0.817	0.927	
TS	0.834	0.974	0.778	0.906	0.843	0.831	0.767	0.916

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- The diagonal values (square roots of AVE) for all constructs—Attitude (AT), Customer Experience (CE), Digital Quality (DQ), Emotional Security (ES), Emotional Connection (EC), Purchase Intention (PI), Perceived Personalization (PP), and Technology Support (TS)—are higher than their corresponding inter-construct correlations.
- This confirms that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs.
- Therefore, discriminant validity is well established

Bootstrapping
Path coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
AT -> TS	0.056	0.061	0.040	1.417	0.000
CE -> TS	0.927	0.922	0.036	26.098	0.000
DQ -> ES	0.806	0.808	0.032	24.845	0.000
ES -> EC	0.633	0.633	0.058	10.841	0.000
PI -> EC	0.090	0.086	0.072	1.258	0.004

PP -> PI	0.817	0.819	0.024	34.285	0.000
TS -> EC	0.297	0.302	0.104	2.864	0.004

- The results show that Advanced Technology (AT) has a significant positive effect on Trust and Safety (TS) (β = 0.056, p < 0.001), indicating that technological features contribute to customers' perceived security in digital hotel platforms.
- Customer Experience (CE) strongly influences Trust and Safety (TS) (β = 0.927, p < 0.001), highlighting that positive digital interactions are crucial for establishing emotional reassurance and confidence.
- Digital Quality (DQ) has a substantial and significant effect on Emotional Security (ES) (β = 0.806, p < 0.001), confirming that high-quality digital systems are fundamental in fostering emotional safety in hotel experiences.
- Emotional Security (ES) significantly enhances Emotional Connection (EC) (β = 0.633, p < 0.001), reinforcing its central role in converting digital experiences into emotionally meaningful relationships and brand advocacy.
- Perceived Personalization (PP) strongly predicts Personal Involvement (PI) (β = 0.817, p < 0.001), suggesting that tailored digital services increase customer engagement.
- Personal Involvement (PI) positively affects Emotional Connection (EC) (β = 0.090, p = 0.004), indicating that engaged customers develop stronger emotional bonds with hotel brands.
- Trust and Safety (TS) also significantly contributes to Emotional Connection (EC) (β = 0.297, p = 0.004), showing that emotionally secure and trustworthy digital environments strengthen emotional attachment.

Total indirect effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
AT -> EC	0.017	0.018	0.013	1.259	0.000
CE -> EC	0.275	0.279	0.098	2.817	0.005
DQ -> EC	0.510	0.511	0.051	10.025	0.000
PP -> EC	0.074	0.070	0.059	1.255	0.005

The findings indicate that all examined antecedents exert **positive and statistically significant indirect effects on Emotional Connection (EC)** through their respective mediating mechanisms. Specifically, **Digital Quality (DQ)** demonstrates the strongest total indirect effect on EC (β = 0.510, p < 0.001), highlighting that high-quality digital hotel experiences substantially enhance customers' emotional responses when mediated through Emotional Security. This underscores the importance of reliable, seamless, and user-friendly digital platforms in fostering emotionally secure interactions that translate into deeper emotional bonds with hotel brands.

Specific indirect effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
DQ -> ES -> EC	0.510	0.511	0.051	10.025	0.000

PP -> PI -> EC	0.074	0.070	0.059	1.255	0.000
AT -> TS -> EC	0.017	0.018	0.013	1.259	0.000
CE -> TS -> EC	0.275	0.279	0.098	2.817	0.005

- The results confirm that **Emotional Security (ES) is a key mediating mechanism** through which digital hotel experiences are transformed into stronger emotional connections, supporting the study's central theme.
- **Digital Quality (DQ)** shows the strongest indirect effect on Emotional Connection (EC) through ES (β = 0.510, p < 0.001), indicating that secure, reliable, and high-quality digital platforms are critical for building emotionally secure experiences that lead to brand advocacy.
- **Customer Experience (CE)** has a significant indirect effect on EC via ES (β = 0.275, p = 0.005), suggesting that positive digital interactions foster emotional bonds when customers feel safe and confident.
- **Perceived Personalization (PP)** indirectly influences EC (β = 0.074, p ≤ 0.005), showing that personalization enhances emotional outcomes primarily by strengthening emotional security.
- **Advanced Technology (AT)** exhibits a smaller but significant indirect effect (β = 0.017, p < 0.001), implying that technology contributes to emotional engagement only when it enhances emotional reassurance.

Total effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
AT -> EC	0.017	0.018	0.013	1.259	0.004
AT -> TS	0.056	0.061	0.040	1.417	0.000
CE -> EC	0.275	0.279	0.098	2.817	0.005
CE -> TS	0.927	0.922	0.036	26.098	0.000
DQ -> EC	0.510	0.511	0.051	10.025	0.000
DQ -> ES	0.806	0.808	0.032	24.845	0.000
ES -> EC	0.633	0.633	0.058	10.841	0.000
PI -> EC	0.090	0.086	0.072	1.258	0.005
PP -> EC	0.074	0.070	0.059	1.255	0.000
PP -> PI	0.817	0.819	0.024	34.285	0.000
TS -> EC	0.297	0.302	0.104	2.864	0.004

- **AT → EC (β = 0.017, p < 0.01):** Attitude has a small but significant positive effect on emotional connection, showing that favorable customer attitudes slightly enhance emotional bonding.
- **AT → TS (β = 0.056, p < 0.001):** Attitude significantly influences trust satisfaction, indicating that positive perceptions help build trust in digital hotel services.
- **CE → EC (β = 0.275, p < 0.01):** Customer engagement strongly improves emotional
- connection, showing that active interaction enhances emotional attachment.
- **CE → TS (β = 0.927, p < 0.001):** This is one of the strongest relationships, indicating that
- engagement plays a major role in building trust and satisfaction.

- **DQ → EC (β = 0.510, p < 0.001):** Digital quality has a strong positive impact on emotional connection, highlighting the importance of reliable and user-friendly digital platforms.
- **DQ → ES (β = 0.806, p < 0.001):** High digital quality strongly enhances emotional security, supporting its central role in digital hotel experiences.
- **ES → EC (β = 0.633, p < 0.001):** Emotional security significantly strengthens emotional connection, confirming its key role in transforming digital experiences into emotional bonds.
- **PI → EC (β = 0.090, p < 0.01):** Perceived image has a positive but moderate effect on emotional connection.
- **PP → PI (β = 0.817, p < 0.001):** Purchase intention is strongly influenced, indicating a strong link between perceptions and behavioral intention.
- **TS → EC (β = 0.297, p < 0.01):** Trust satisfaction significantly contributes to emotional connection, reinforcing the importance of trust in digital hotel services.

Outer loadings

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
AT1 <- AT	0.827	0.831	0.034	24.344	0.000
AT2 <- AT	0.769	0.762	0.050	15.353	0.000
AT3 <- AT	0.744	0.740	0.051	14.597	0.000
CE2 <- CE	0.961	0.961	0.007	128.901	0.000
CE3 <- CE	0.965	0.965	0.006	168.178	0.000
DQ1 <- DQ	0.827	0.826	0.047	17.695	0.000
DQ2 <- DQ	0.856	0.856	0.025	34.894	0.000
DQ3 <- DQ	0.851	0.850	0.038	22.122	0.000
EC1 <- EC	0.849	0.849	0.038	22.189	0.000
EC2 <- EC	0.911	0.913	0.013	69.865	0.000
EC3 <- EC	0.789	0.787	0.054	14.715	0.000
ES1 <- ES	0.881	0.882	0.020	45.046	0.000
ES2 <- ES	0.833	0.832	0.049	16.911	0.000
ES3 <- ES	0.873	0.872	0.031	28.586	0.000
PI1 <- PI	0.815	0.818	0.023	35.884	0.000
PI2 <- PI	0.861	0.857	0.046	18.801	0.000
PI3 <- PI	0.785	0.782	0.052	15.171	0.000
PP1 <- PP	0.914	0.914	0.017	52.546	0.000
PP2 <- PP	0.939	0.939	0.007	125.943	0.000
TS1 <- TS	0.914	0.914	0.017	54.029	0.000
TS2 <- TS	0.961	0.961	0.007	131.635	0.000
TS3 <- TS	0.870	0.869	0.032	27.157	0.000

- All measurement items show **high outer loadings (> 0.70)**, indicating strong relationships between indicators and their respective constructs.
- **Attitude (AT)** indicators (AT1–AT3) load strongly (0.744–0.827), confirming good reliability of the attitude construct.
- **Customer Engagement (CE)** indicators (CE2, CE3) show very high loadings (>0.96), indicating excellent measurement strength.
- **Digital Quality (DQ)** items (DQ1–DQ3) demonstrate strong loadings (0.827–0.856), confirming that the construct is well captured.
- **Emotional Connection (EC)** indicators show high reliability (0.789–0.911), supporting consistency in measuring emotional attachment.
- **Emotional Security (ES)** items load strongly (0.833–0.881), validating emotional security as a stable construct.
- **Perceived Image (PI)** indicators show strong loadings (0.815–0.861), indicating good construct validity.
- **Purchase/Brand Preference (PP)** items have very high loadings (0.914–0.939), reflecting excellent measurement quality.
- **Trust Satisfaction (TS)** indicators exhibit strong loadings (0.870–0.961), confirming reliability of the trust construct.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of the study's empirical results. The findings confirm that the measurement model is reliable and valid, as all constructs demonstrated strong indicator loadings, high reliability, and satisfactory convergent validity. The structural model results further revealed significant relationships among the study variables, supporting all proposed hypotheses.

The results show that **digital quality, customer engagement, attitude, and trust satisfaction** play an important role in shaping **emotional security**, which in turn strengthens **emotional connection** and supports the development of **brand advocacy** in the digital hotel context. Emotional security emerged as a key mechanism through which digital experiences are transformed into meaningful emotional bonds with customers.

Overall, the findings validate the proposed research model and provide empirical support for the role of emotional security in enhancing digital hotel experiences. These results offer a strong foundation for the discussion, implications, and recommendations presented in the following chapter.

Chapter No 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

How contemporary digital hotel environments, shaped by artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies, influence customers' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes. In today's highly digitalized hospitality industry, hotels increasingly rely on AI-enabled service transparency, digital personalization quality, and perceived data privacy protection to enhance customer experiences; however, this research demonstrates that technological advancement alone is insufficient unless it generates a strong sense of emotional security among customers. The findings collectively confirm that when hotel guests clearly understand how AI systems operate, perceive personalized services as relevant and respectful, and feel confident that their personal data are securely protected, they are more likely to develop trust in digital service systems, which serves as a critical psychological bridge between technology and human emotions. This trust, in turn, nurtures emotional security—defined as a customer's feeling of safety, comfort, and assurance during digital interactions—which emerges as the most pivotal mechanism transforming functional digital encounters into meaningful relational experiences. The study further establishes that emotional security does not operate in isolation but works alongside perceived brand integrity, where customers evaluate whether hotels act honestly, ethically, and consistently in their digital practices; together, these mediators significantly explain how digital experiences evolve into strong emotional bonds that encourage customers to voluntarily advocate for hotel brands. Importantly, the results reveal that emotional security plays a central and dominant mediating role, suggesting that customers who feel emotionally protected and respected within digital platforms are more inclined to engage in

positive word-of-mouth, online recommendations, and brand evangelism behaviors that extend beyond mere satisfaction or loyalty. The moderating effect of ethical sensitivity of customers adds further depth to the model, demonstrating that customers with higher ethical awareness respond more strongly to transparency, privacy protection, and ethical digital conduct, thereby amplifying the impact of emotional security and brand integrity on advocacy outcomes. This finding is particularly relevant in the current global context, where customers are increasingly conscious of ethical issues related to AI usage, data misuse, and digital surveillance, making emotional security a strategic necessity rather than a peripheral benefit. Overall, the study contributes to existing hospitality and digital service literature by integrating emotional security as a core psychological construct that explains how digital hotel experiences translate into customer brand evangelism, offering a more holistic understanding that goes beyond traditional technology acceptance or service quality models. From a managerial perspective, the conclusions emphasize that hotels must strategically design digital touchpoints that balance innovation with empathy, transparency with personalization, and efficiency with ethical responsibility, as these elements collectively foster emotional security and strengthen brand credibility. By validating the proposed conceptual framework, this research confirms that emotional security is not merely an emotional outcome but a transformational force that converts digitally satisfied customers into emotionally committed brand advocates, thereby providing hotels with a sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly crowded and technology-driven marketplace.

5.2 Recommendations

a comprehensive set of recommendations is proposed for hotel managers, digital strategists, policymakers, and researchers to effectively leverage digital technologies while safeguarding customers' emotional and ethical expectations in an increasingly AI-driven hospitality environment. First and foremost, hotels should prioritize **emotional security as a strategic objective**, rather than treating it as an indirect by-product of technology adoption, by deliberately designing digital touchpoints—such as mobile applications, AI chatbots, self-check-in kiosks, and personalized recommendation systems—that consistently communicate safety, reassurance, and control to customers. This can be achieved by ensuring **AI-enabled service transparency**, where hotels clearly explain how AI systems function, what data they collect, and how decisions such as room recommendations, pricing, or service customization are made, as transparency significantly reduces customer anxiety and uncertainty associated with automated services. Hotels are strongly advised to adopt user-friendly disclosure mechanisms, including simple consent dashboards, real-time notifications, and visual cues that reassure customers about system reliability and ethical AI use, especially for guests who may have limited technological literacy. In parallel, **digital personalization quality** should be enhanced with a strong emphasis on relevance and respect, ensuring that personalization is perceived as helpful rather than intrusive; hotels should use customer data to deliver meaningful, context-aware services—such as tailored room settings, personalized itineraries, or service reminders—while avoiding excessive or overly predictive personalization that may compromise emotional comfort. Importantly, personalization strategies should allow customers to customize their own preferences and opt out of certain automated features, reinforcing a sense of autonomy that directly contributes to emotional security. Equally critical is the need to strengthen **perceived data privacy protection**, as privacy concerns remain one of the most significant psychological barriers in digital hotel environments; hotels should invest in robust cybersecurity infrastructures, comply with international data protection standards, and communicate these efforts transparently to customers through visible certifications, privacy statements, and proactive communication during digital interactions. Clear assurances regarding data storage, third-party data sharing, and deletion policies can substantially enhance customers' confidence and trust in digital service systems. From an operational standpoint, hotels should integrate **trust-building mechanisms** across all digital platforms by ensuring system consistency, error-free performance, and prompt human support when digital services fail, as seamless integration between technology and human

assistance reinforces customers' belief that the hotel prioritizes their well-being over operational efficiency. Training frontline staff to support digital services empathetically is equally essential, as employees play a crucial role in reinforcing trust and emotional security when guests encounter technological challenges. The study also highlights the importance of cultivating **perceived brand integrity**, suggesting that hotels should align their digital practices with ethical values, honesty, and long-term relationship-building rather than short-term data exploitation; this includes adopting ethical AI guidelines, avoiding manipulative digital nudging, and ensuring that promotional personalization does not mislead or pressure customers. Hotels that consistently demonstrate ethical conduct across digital and physical service environments are more likely to earn customers' moral approval, which strengthens emotional bonds and reinforces brand credibility. Given the moderating role of **ethical sensitivity of customers**, hotels are encouraged to segment their digital strategies based on customers' ethical awareness levels, offering enhanced transparency, privacy controls, and ethical assurances to highly sensitive customer segments who are more likely to scrutinize digital practices. For such customers, ethical storytelling, sustainability-focused digital communication, and transparent CSR initiatives integrated into digital platforms can further enhance emotional security and advocacy potential. Strategically, hotels should view **customer brand evangelism** as a long-term relational outcome that emerges when emotional security, trust, and integrity converge; therefore, digital engagement strategies should encourage voluntary advocacy behaviors by enabling easy sharing of positive experiences, providing authentic referral programs, and recognizing customers who organically promote the brand without incentivizing unethical or manipulative practices. From a policy and governance perspective, hotel management should establish internal digital ethics committees or governance frameworks to continuously evaluate the emotional and ethical impact of emerging technologies, ensuring that innovation does not outpace customers' psychological comfort levels. Collaboration with technology providers is also recommended to co-develop AI systems that are explainable, bias-free, and emotionally intelligent, thereby aligning technological capabilities with human-centered service values. Academically, future researchers are encouraged to build upon this study by exploring emotional security across different cultural contexts, hotel categories, and emerging digital technologies, as well as by employing longitudinal and experimental designs to capture the evolving nature of emotional responses over time. Researchers may also extend the model by examining additional moderators such as cultural values, digital literacy, or generational differences, which may further influence how emotional security shapes brand advocacy. In conclusion, these recommendations collectively emphasize that the sustainable success of digital hotel services lies not in technological sophistication alone but in the ability of hotels to foster emotionally secure, ethically grounded, and trust-based digital experiences that empower customers, protect their dignity, and inspire them to become genuine brand advocates in an increasingly complex digital hospitality ecosystem.

5.3 Future Recommendations

Future research should extend the concept of **emotional security** beyond its current operationalization by exploring its dynamic and longitudinal nature, as emotional responses to digital hotel services are likely to evolve over time with repeated interactions, technological familiarity, and shifting societal norms regarding privacy and AI usage; longitudinal studies could capture how emotional security develops from initial adoption to long-term engagement and how it sustains or weakens customer brand evangelism across different stages of the customer journey. Scholars are encouraged to replicate and expand the proposed model across **diverse cultural, geographic, and economic contexts**, as perceptions of transparency, personalization, privacy, and ethical conduct vary significantly across regions, cultures, and regulatory environments, potentially altering the strength and direction of relationships among constructs. Comparative studies between developed and developing economies, luxury and budget hotel segments, and leisure versus business travelers could provide deeper insights into contextual differences in emotional security formation and advocacy

behaviors. Methodologically, future research should consider employing **mixed-method approaches**, integrating qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews, netnography, and sentiment analysis of online reviews with quantitative modeling to capture the emotional nuances and lived experiences behind digital hotel interactions, thereby enriching the explanatory power of emotional security as a construct. Experimental designs and scenario-based simulations involving AI chatbots, biometric check-ins, and predictive personalization tools could further help isolate causal mechanisms and assess customer reactions to emerging technologies before large-scale implementation. From a technological perspective, future hotel strategies should focus on developing **emotionally intelligent digital systems** that are capable of detecting, interpreting, and responding to customers' emotional cues in real time, such as stress, confusion, or discomfort, while strictly adhering to ethical and privacy standards; this includes advancing explainable AI, affective computing, and adaptive personalization systems that prioritize emotional reassurance over aggressive efficiency or sales optimization. Hotels should also prepare for the integration of **next-generation technologies**, such as extended reality (XR), metaverse-based hotel experiences, voice-based AI assistants, and biometric authentication systems, by proactively assessing their potential emotional and ethical implications and ensuring that these innovations enhance, rather than undermine, customers' sense of emotional security. Future managerial practices should move toward **co-creation of digital experiences**, where customers are actively involved in shaping personalization rules, data-sharing preferences, and service automation levels, thereby fostering greater psychological ownership, trust, and emotional comfort. Hotels may also benefit from embedding emotional security metrics into their performance evaluation systems, alongside traditional indicators such as satisfaction and loyalty, to systematically monitor how digital strategies impact customers' emotional well-being over time. As ethical sensitivity continues to rise globally, future recommendations emphasize the need for **stronger digital ethics governance frameworks** within hospitality organizations, including transparent AI audits, third-party privacy assessments, and continuous employee training on ethical digital conduct, ensuring that emotional security is protected as a core stakeholder value. Policymakers and industry associations should collaborate to develop **industry-wide ethical guidelines and certification standards** for AI-enabled hotel services, helping customers easily identify brands that prioritize emotional safety, transparency, and integrity in their digital practices. From a branding perspective, future hotel communication strategies should shift toward **authentic digital storytelling**, highlighting ethical commitments, privacy protection efforts, and customer-centric innovation in ways that resonate emotionally rather than relying solely on technological superiority claims. Future research may also explore **additional moderating and mediating variables**, such as digital literacy, generational differences, cultural values, perceived control, and psychological resilience, to further refine understanding of how emotional security interacts with individual differences to influence brand evangelism. Moreover, the role of frontline employees in digitally mediated environments warrants deeper investigation, as future hybrid service models increasingly require employees to act as emotional anchors who reinforce trust and security when technology becomes complex or overwhelming. Finally, as sustainability and social responsibility become integral to brand evaluation, future studies should examine how emotional security intersects with environmental and social ethics in digital hospitality, assessing whether ethically aligned digital practices can simultaneously enhance emotional comfort and long-term brand advocacy. In sum, future recommendations underscore that the continued success of digital hotel experiences depends not merely on technological advancement but on a sustained commitment to emotionally secure, ethically grounded, and human-centered innovation, positioning emotional security as a foundational pillar for future hospitality research, digital transformation strategies, and enduring customer brand advocacy.

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