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Hospitality Students' Adoption of E-Books During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Developing Country Perspective

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Hospitality students' adoption of e-Books during the COVID-19 pandemic: A developing country perspective

Abstract

Educational institutions worldwide faced a myriad of challenges and disruptions in teaching and learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The transition from a formal mode of teaching to online teaching created a challenge in access to library and learning resources. E-Books are considered a viable option for printed books that facilitate remote access to learning resources. The present study uses the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to identify the factors that may influence hospitality students adoption and behavioural intention of e-Books. Data for the study were collected from 237 hospitality students using an online survey questionnaire. The result of the study reveals that facilitating conditions, social influence and performance expectancy have a positive impact on hospitality student's adoption of e-Books during the pandemic. The study has significant implication for educational administrators, e-Book publishers and academic librarians in hospitality educational institutions in India.

Keywords: EBook, Hospitality Students, UTAUT, Behavioural Intention, Facilitating Conditions, India

Introduction

Covid- 19 pandemic caused by corona-virus affected various sectors with education being one, also being affected. It led to the closure of educational institutions across the world, impacting the developing countries more than the developed nations. With the sudden lockdown announced by the government, the student and the educators initially lost considerable time for instruction and studies as the delivery mode altered from physical to digital. The education system changed significantly from face to face learning to online learning where both teaching and learning was done with the help of digital platform (Li & Lalani, 2020). The transformation in the education system happened from the elementary level to the tertiary level as the entire education moved towards online education as that was the only option available (Mishra, Gupta & Shree 2020). Online education allowed the uninterrupted academic activity of teaching and learning while both the education system stakeholders stayed safe at their homes. The students and the faculty adapted to the virtual mode of content delivery, but all supportive resources and learning aids such as books, journals, and magazine were not available as libraries of all institutions were closed indefinitely. For any discipline, the learners depend on the library to obtain appropriate and additional information on their subject (Piramanayagam & Seal, 2020). Access to books for the students was also impossible, as all libraries were closed during the pandemic.

Earlier during the twentieth-century printed books were the only source of knowledge both for the teachers and the students, but the scenario changed with the advent of e-Books. With an increase in the rate of e-Books usage by the students, it may be concluded that the students are adopting e-Books (Body, Willoughby, Body & Tamandja, 2018). Hospitality education being a multidisciplinary study do include core operational and other management subjects. Indian hospitality education is dependent on books published in western countries as the body of knowledge has been developed by them (Piramanayagam & Seal, 2020). Currently, there are e-Books available for hospitality but are not accessible to all students as some are only accessible to the students in the library. The pandemic has taken away the library access from the students, leaving them inaccessible to printed books and more relying on e-Books (Kshama, Vyas & Parikh, 2020). . As e-Book become the primary resource source of learning, there is a need to understand and evolve strategies to facilitate the increased adoption of e-Books by academic administrators, publishers and academic librarians. While many researchers have studied the adoption of e-Book among the students of various field of study, there is little known about hospitality students' adoption and behavioural intention towards e-

Books, specifically during the pandemic (Piramanayagam & Seal, 2020). This study aimed to examine the factors that influence hospitality students adoption of e-Books using UTAUT in India, a developing economy, considering the lack of research.

Literature Review

An e-Book is made by creating a digital replica of the print book (Fu, Zhang & Yan, 2018). For the development of e-Book readers, there have been efforts in digitising publications especially which changed the e-Book phenomenon (Wang & Bai, 2016). The increased presence of the internet and the emergence of smartphones have given great impetus to the reading experience through e-Books. There is growing interest among various academic disciplines in using e-Books as a reading material (Body, Willoughby, Body & Tamandja, 2018). The librarians also do e-Books as they help them solve a lot of their logistic issues such as keeping the books on the respective shelf, issuing and receiving books, and replacing the volumes that are either damaged or lost (Hanz & McKinnon, 2018). Past studies have concluded that e-Books do expand the students' information and repossession skills. The studies also concluded that with the passage of time, both faculty and the students had gained proficiency and satisfaction with the usage of e-Books. The perceived benefit of using e-Books helps in easy searchability and handiness (Gueval, Tarnow & Kumm, 2015). Considering the benefit of e-Books, many libraries worldwide have started investing in e-Books during the last decade. The penetration of e-Book has been slow as there is limited availability of printed books in the electronic format, restriction on digital copyright management, technological barriers and usage restriction (Vogus, 2020).

With the pandemic, there was very less option amongst the teachers, students, and librarians than accepting e-Books. Considering it, a study was conducted to understand the acceptance of e-Book by the students of hospitality management and culinary by the help of UTAUT model. The UTAUT model conceptualised by (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003) identifies performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions to be directly determinant of behavioural intention and adoption of technology based products and services. The model is being followed in various educational environments like virtual learning, cloud-based virtual learning, and tablet-PC for classroom instructions. In view of the usefulness of the model and its wide application in the education setting, the same is used to understand the students' behavioural intention towards e-Book in hospitality education during the pandemic.

Performance Expectancy

The performance expectancy is defined as "the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help to attain gains in job performance" (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). In the present scenario, the performance expectancy states the student's belief that e-Books in hospitality education are valuable and a substitute for the printed book (Piramanayagam & Seal, 2020). As there was a pandemic and the students do not have an option for printed books or access to the library, the students had to opt for e-Books in hospitality education considering the literature, the study, therefore, posits that

H₁ - The performance expectancy does have a positive effect on students' behaviour intention to use e-Books in hospitality education

Effort Expectancy

The effort expectancy is defined as "the degree of ease associated with the use of the system" (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). This study considers the efforts expectancy as students' belief that using e-Books will help them understand their subject easily and help link theory with practice (Hsu, Chen, Lin, Chang and Hsieh, 2014; Koenig & Zorn, 2002). It indicates the level of expectation the students have from the e-Books, which includes the efforts put by the students to find how easy or complex it is to retrieve information from the eBooks as compared to the printed books. The usage of technology will enable students to be imaginative, knowing about hospitality worldwide, thereby promoting effective learning. It has also been found that it creates emotional and cognitive skills along with a greater sense of empathy and cultural sensitivity (Hunter & Hunter, 2006). Hence the hypothesis is proposed that

H₂. The effort expectancy has a positive effect on the hotel management students' behavioural intention to use e-Book

Social Influence

Social influence is defined to be as "the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe he or she should use the new system" (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003) with an indication of the presence of facilitating condition. There is a complex role of social influence in the adoption of technology. Social influence has been considered a significant predictor of the usage of new technology-based products and innovations (Abbad, 2020; Potnis, Deosthali, Zhu & McCusker, 2018). An individual does conform with the social

influence that leads to the intention of use. In the present condition, the availability of e-Books for hospitality students from the institute to create an appropriate learning environment is considered. Considering it, a hypothesis is proposed

H₃- The social influence has a positive effect on the students' behavioural intention to use e-Books

Facilitating conditions

The facilitating conditions are defined as "the degree to which an individual believes that organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support the use of the system" (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). The facilitating conditions have found to be a direct determinant of the behavioural intention with the use of technology. The prior studies in e-learning have found that facilitating condition construct have a significant relationship amongst the constructs (Alrawashdeh, Muhairat & Alqatawnah, 2012). The facilitating condition significantly influences behavioural intention in developing nations compared to the developed nations (Yaqub, Bello, Adenuga, & Ogundeji, 2013). In the present condition facilitating condition is the accessibility of e-Books which are either freely downloadable from various websites or institutional support for providing e-Books to the students. From this above discussion based on the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed that

H₄ - The facilitating conditions have a positive effect on students' behavioural intention to use e-Books

Behavioural Intention

Researchers have stated that behavioural intention is an important determinant of actual behaviour of an individual. Behavioural intention is defined as "the person's subjective probability that he or she will perform the behaviour in question" (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). Behavioural intention has been found to be a significant predictor of actual behaviour with utilising the technology. Prior studies do state that there are various factors that influence behavioural intention. In the current study, the four primary constructs of the UTAT, namely Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence and Facilitating Conditions, are being considered (Abubakar, Muhammad, Ahmad & Hartini, 2013). Considering the literature, the following hypothesis is formulated

H₅ – The behavioural to use E-Books has a significant positive effect on hospitality students actual use of e-Books.

Methods

The study undertakes a quantitative approach with a questionnaire. A convenience sampling method was adopted, and the questionnaires were distributed both online and offline mode. The survey was distributed among students who are studying hospitality courses across the country, and their education was affected by the pandemic. A total of 266 filled questionnaires were received. All the participants did not complete the survey, so the same was excluded from the study. A total of 237 responses are used as a final sample in the study. A structured questionnaire developed had two sections. The first section of the question is used to collect the students demographic profile. The second section of the questionnaire consists of 18 statements that aimed to collect the data on various constructs under the study. All the statements to measure the study constructs are developed from previous studies that adopted the UTAUT model (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis & Davis, 2003). All the statement are measured on 7 points Likert scale where one denotes strongly disagree, and seven denotes strongly agree. The actual usage of e-Books during the pandemic is measured in a five point scale where one denotes the never used e-Book, and five denotes that students have used it very frequently. The quantitative data collected through a survey was analysed using IBM SPSS AMOS statistical package software supporting descriptive data analysis and structural equation modelling. The reliability, validity of the proposed conceptual model, are tested before estimating the effects of hypothesised constructs.

Demographic profile of the respondents

The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sociodemographic profile of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	135	56.9
Female	102	43.1
Age		
Average	22.6	
Minimum	19	
Maximum	37	
Program		
Undergraduate – Hospitality	153	64.6
Undergraduate – Culinary	56	23.6
Post Graduate – Hospitality	28	11.8
Frequency of usage of eBooks		
Very Frequently	32	13.6
Frequently	59	24.8
Occasionally	146	61.6

Out of 237 respondents, 57 per cent were males, and 43 percent were female hospitality students. The average age of the respondents is 22.6. The minimum and maximum age of the respondents are 19 and 37, respectively. While 67 per cent of the respondents were pursuing their undergraduate degree and 33 per cent of respondents were pursuing their hospitality program. Among the undergraduate students, 74 per cent of the students were pursuing their hotel management, and 24 per cent of the students were pursuing their undergraduate culinary education. In terms of actual usage, most of the students occasionally used the e-Books for their education during the COVID-19 pandemic. About 38 per cent of the respondents have used eBooks frequently for their education.

Data Analysis and Results

The descriptive statistics, Reliability and Test of Normality

Structural equation Modelling was adopted to test the conceptual model evolved through a review of the literature. The proposed conceptual model is tested using a two-stage process. Initially, a measurement model was developed to test the relationship between latent and manifest variables in the study (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). After testing the validity and factor loadings of the variable using the measurement model, a structural model has been used to test the relationship between various constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and students' behavioural intention using eBooks. The descriptive statistics such as Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Composite reliability of various constructs in the study are presented in Table 2. The result of the calculated Cronbach's alpha (α) value between 0.827–0.931 indicates that all the constructs in the study have good reliability. The Skewness and Kurtosis value of all variables fall between ± 2 indicate that all the variables in the study are normally distributed (George & Mallery, 2010).

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Normality of the Constructs

Students' adoption of eBooks	Mean (Standard Deviation)	Cronbach Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis
Performance Expectancy		0.865		
I find using eBook is useful during the pandemic	5.94 (0.78)		-0.463	-1.233
E books enables me to accomplish my learning tasks during pandemic	5.11 (1.32)		-0.482	-1.090
Using eBook for study increases my academic performance during pandemic	4.90 (1.12)		-0.353	-1.237
EBook usage during pandemic increases my chances of getting a good grade during the pandemic	4.74 (1.10)		-0.300	-1.271
Effort Expectancy		0.861		
My interaction in using eBook is clear and understandable during the pandemic	4.44 (1.30)		-0.401	-0.998
It is easy for me to become skillful at using eBooks during the pandemic	4.32 (1.22)		-0.484	-0.990
Learning using eBooks is easy for me during pandemic	4.65 (1.11)		-0.234	-1.202
It is easy to use eBooks rather than printed books during the pandemic	5.00 (1.39)		-0.519	-1.028
Social Influence		0.931		
People who influence my behaviour think that I should use eBooks	5.82 (0.84)		-0.235	-1.046
Teachers in my course think that I should use eBooks	6.24 (0.76)		-0.607	-0.867
People who are important to me think that I should use eBooks	5.64 (0.78)		-0.385	-1.605
Facilitating conditions		0.827		
I have enough eBook resources necessary for my field of study	5.98 (0.76)		-0.223	-1.266
I have the knowledge necessary to use eBooks	6.02 (0.92)		-0.561	-1.038
Out institution has supported the use of eBook	6.12 (0.45)		-0.652	-0.800
A specific person (or group) is available for assistance with difficulties in finding eBooks for my study	5.92 (0.85)		-0.317	-1.186
Behavioural Intention (BI)		0.877		
I intend to use eBooks in the future too	5.71 (1.33)		-0.504	-0.980
I would recommend my friends to use eBooks during their course]	5.36 (1.13)		-0.413	-1.240
I would say positive things about using eBooks	5.42 (1.29)		-0.340	-1.322

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

The convergent and discriminant validity of various study constructs was tested by estimating the Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). While the estimated square root of the AVE valued more than 0.5 indicates adequate discriminant validity, the CR value of more than 0.7 suggests that good convergence among various items in all the constructs used in the study. The CR, AVE, Correlation, and the Square root of AVE are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Composite Reliability, Correlation and Average Variance Extracted of study constructs

Constructs	AVE	CR	1	2	3	4	5
Performance Expectancy	0.523	0.892	0.944				
Effort Expectancy	0.528	0.878	0.240	0.937			
Social Influence	0.592	0.941	0.374	0.226	0.970		
Facilitating conditions	0.514	0.846	0.545	0.238	0.645	0.920	
Behavioural Intention	0.522	0.894	0.552	0.207	0.656	0.722	0.946

Note: The square root of AVE has appeared diagonally in bolded letters

Evaluation of Measurement Model

The study has five constructs that consist of 17 items or statements. The cut off value of factor loading and fitness measures are evaluated against the standards proposed (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The measurement model of various constructs is presented in Figure 1. The measure of goodness of fitness such as Chi-square to the degree of freedom ($X^2/Df = 2.01$), Goodness (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) (GFI =0.911, AGFI = 0.793, CFI =0.954, RMSEA = 0.62) indicates that good fit of measurement model (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

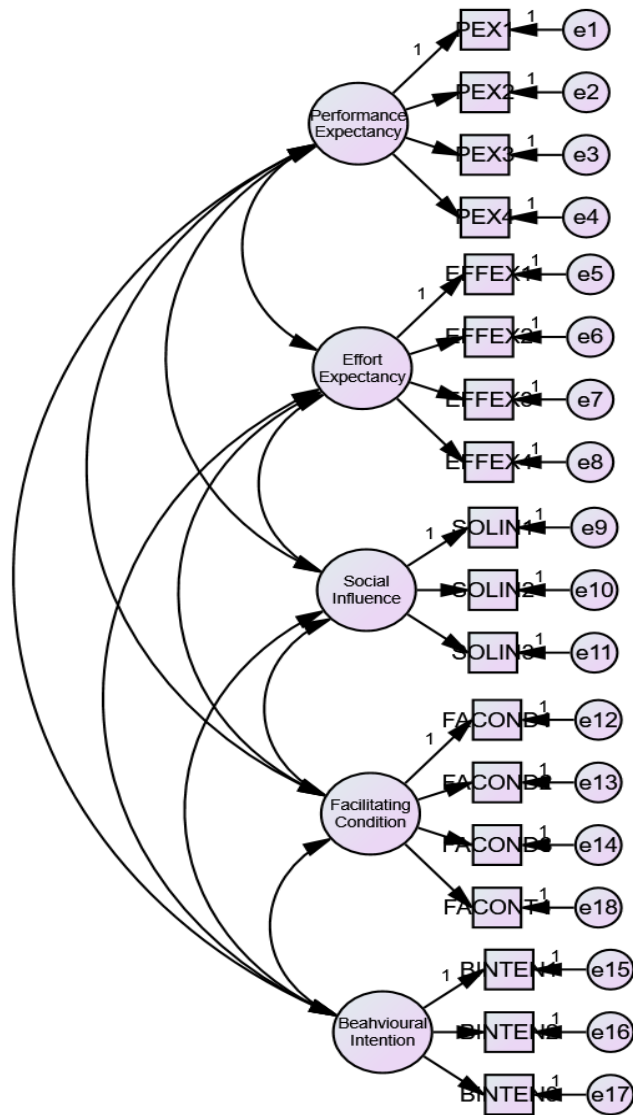


Figure 1 Measurement Model

Testing of Structural Model and Hypotheses

The various hypotheses developed through a literature review were estimated using structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM is a multivariate statistical analysis model used to explain the relationship between different constructs. The uniqueness of SEM is that it can be adopted to examine the series of relationship between constructs concurrently. The fitted model is presented in Figure 2.

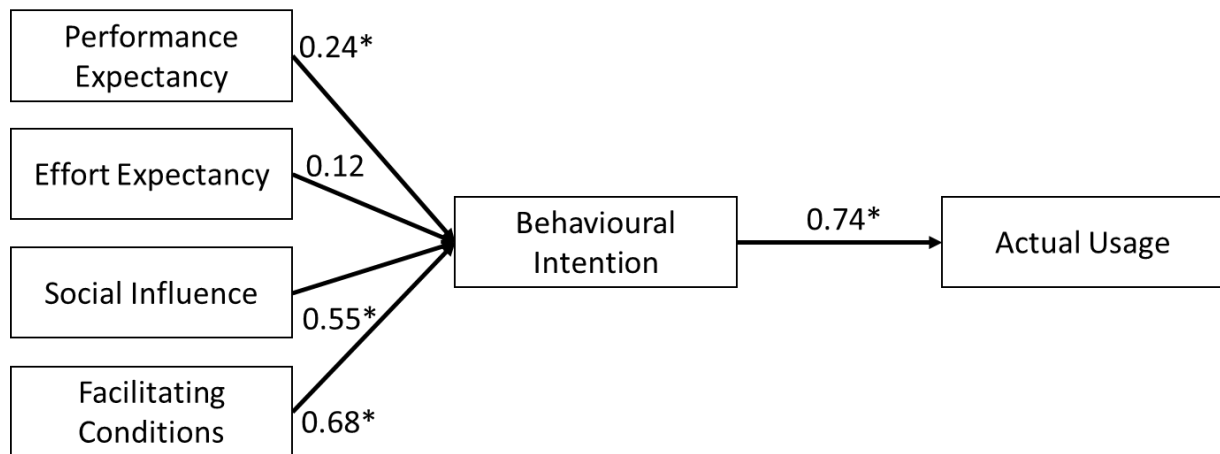


Figure 2: Structural Model

The structural model is developed to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. The result of the hypothesis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: The result of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Beta Coefficient	P-Value	Result
Performance Expectancy → Behavioural Intention (H1)	0.242	0.006	Accepted
Effort Expectancy → Behavioural Intention (H2)	0.121	0.199	Accepted
Social Influence → Behavioural Intention (H3)	0.549	0.000	Rejected
Facilitating Conditions → Behavioural Intention (H4)	0.683	0.000	Accepted
Behavioural Intention → Actual Usage (H5)	0.741	0.000	Accepted

The result of the structural model on the adoption, behavioural intention and usage indicate that performance expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions have a statistically significant positive impact on student's behavioural intention to adopt e-Books. Subsequently, students' behavioural intention strongly impacts the actual usage of e-Books by hospitality students. Among the three determinants that influence e-Book adaption during COVID-19 pandemic, the facilitating condition able to explain 68.3 percent of variation in behavioural intention to use e-Books and the social influence can explain 49 per cent variation in the behavioural intention among hospitality students adoption of the e-Book. The result also indicates that effort expectancy does not act as a determinant in hospitality students adoption of e-Books during the pandemic. Except for the hypothesis that effort expectancy has a significant impact on behavioural intention, all other hypotheses are accepted as their p-value is less than 0.05.

Discussion, Implication and Conclusion

Pandemic changed the way we live, interact, do business, teach, and learn. The impact of the pandemic is much more severe in education. As the mode of teaching has been transferred to online, the need for learning resource is continued. As students were forced to leave the campus, students found themselves scrambling to find the right learning resources as academic libraries were closed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, academic libraries were unable to deliver print books, a major source of learning. E-Books have become a significant alternative source of learning to manage the transition from face to face learning to online. However, there are various limitations in the adoptions of e-Books, as they are plagued with copyright, restrictive license, and the limited availability of titles (Vogus, 2020).

The primary objective of current research is to identify the various factors identified through the UTAUT model as antecedents for adoption, usage, and behavioural intention towards e-Books by hospitality students in India. The result implied that facilitating conditions was the most powerful predictor of hospitality students' adoption and behavioural intention during the pandemic. Our research finding is in accordance with previous research findings (Yaquub, Bello, Adenuga, & Ogundeji, 2013). The result emphasises that institutions support using the e-Book, students' knowledge and availability of enough e-Book resources in the field of study are necessary to encourage the e-Book adoption among hospitality students. The next important predictor of e-Book adoption is social influence. The usage of e-Book was encouraged by the course teachers and others who influence students' behaviour. The finding clearly indicates that course teachers' support is very vital to adopt e-Books. Our results are in line with the findings of (Potnis, Deosthali, Zhu, & McCusker, 2018) in the context of e-Book adoption.

The next statistically significant predictor of hospitality students' behavioural intention to use e-Book is performance expectancy. The result reveals that hospitality students perceive that adopting e-Book is useful, essential to accomplish the learning task, increase academic performance, and get good grades during the pandemic. Our findings are aligned with the previous research findings (Potnis, Deosthali, Zhu, & McCusker, 2018; Body, Willoughby, Body & Tamandja, 2018). In terms of effort expectancy, it has no significant impact on the behavioural intention and adoption of e-Book among hospitality students. The statements related to effort expectancy in the descriptive statistics indicate that students have moderate agreement to use e-Books interactiveness and become skilful in using e-Books and e-Books as an alternative to print books. Our study results are similar to the finding of (Body,

Willoughby, Body & Tamandja, 2018), however contradicting with the conclusions of (Hsu, Chen, Lin, Chang and Hsieh, 2014). As established in various previous research on the adoption of e-Books, behavioural intention is a strong predictor of students usage of e-Books (Potnis, Deosthali, Zhu, & McCusker, 2018; Body, Willoughby, Body & Tamandja, 2018; Yaqub, Bello, Adenuga, & Ogundeji ,2013).

The finding of this study has major implications for academicians, e-Book publishers and Academic librarians in the hospitality education institutions in India. First, the result indicates that facilitating an environment is very important for e-Book adoption by hospitality students. Identification of adequate e-Book resources in the field of hospitality, investing on e-Books, creating awareness and knowledge on the use of e-Books, and encouraging faculty to use and suggest the use of e-Books by the students in the specific courses are vital especially to fulfill their promise to deliver quality education during pandemic. As e-Book development and distribution is very costly affair, institutions must develop a comprehensive list of textbooks and references to rationalise their investment on e-Books. Second, the publisher who have copyrights of printed books must consider developing e-Books as an alternative to ensure the supply of quality academic contents. Publishers must identify a mechanism to control e-Book lending among libraries by negotiating with authors and academic libraries or at the university to control issues related to copyrights. When it comes to design, a publisher must ensure a higher level of interactiveness and supporting resources and online tools that make reading of e-Books experience more interesting. Third, Librarians in academic institutions should support the teaching faculty to identify very relevant e-Book resources with supportive online resources, facilitating the faculty in the teaching and evaluation process. Librarians must negotiate for inter-library lending with the university to reduce the budgeted burden of institutions investing in e-Books.

Although this research is the first attempt to study the hospitality students adoption of e-Books using a UTAUT model, it has limitations. The cross-sectional design of current research limits the generalisation of findings as the data collection is done during the second wave of the pandemic in India, which may be unique from the first wave of pandemic that may significantly impact the adoption of e-Books an over period of time. The replicability aspect of the study lacks due to the unique context of geography and the academic field of hospitality. There is a possibility of social desirability bias and under-reporting by the student as the researchers follows the self-reported questionnaire through online and social media platforms. Despite these limitations, this research helps the academic administrators, e-Book publishers

and academic librarians of hospitality academic institutions to formulate strategies and encourage the adoption of e-Books to overcome, not only the present challenges of COVID-19 pandemic but any crisis that restricts the access to academic libraries in the future.

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