

AI-Assisted Recruitment in Hospitality: Drivers of Candidate Satisfaction and Perceptions of Recruiter Credibility

Abstract

Purpose – Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted recruitment is evolving in the hospitality industry. However, a critical gap persists in understanding what recruiters expect from AI tools and how these tools can be designed to meet those expectations. To address this gap, this study adopts a dual-perspective approach, examining the drivers and outcomes of AI-assisted recruitment logistics from the viewpoints of recruiters and recruits.

Design/methodology/approach – We employed a mixed-method approach across two studies. Study 1 consisted of 12 interviews with hospitality managers to explore their desired outcomes of using AI tools in the recruitment process. Study 2 involved the development of a chatbot-based scheduling system, followed by a survey with 256 participants to examine what drives desirable AI-assisted recruitment outcomes from the candidates' perspective.

Findings – Study 1 reveals that beyond operational efficiency, recruiters use AI tools to enhance candidate satisfaction with the recruitment experience and to improve recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness. Study 2 demonstrates that the key drivers of these outcomes are perceived usefulness, trust, and enjoyment.

Practical Implications – AI tools that assist the recruitment process should be designed to enhance candidate satisfaction and positively influence perceptions of recruiter credibility. To achieve this, their design should prioritize perceived usefulness, address privacy and security concerns, and offer an enjoyable user experience.

Originality/Value – This study investigates real user interactions with a functioning scheduling chatbot, offering a more authentic and valid assessment. Moreover, it extends the application of AI tools in hospitality beyond customer service, shedding light on their role in recruitment logistics.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Chatbots; Recruitment; Usefulness; Trust; Enjoyment; Attitude; Satisfaction; Recruiter Credibility.

Paper Type: Research Paper.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry faces persistent human resource (HR) challenges due to its demanding and fast-paced nature, which contributes to high employee turnover (Croes *et al.*, 2025). Long working hours, intensive roles, and comparatively low wages make it difficult for firms to attract and retain qualified staff (Cajander and Reiman, 2023). As a result, hospitality firms are compelled to recruit continuously, heightening the need for more effective approaches to streamline recruitment processes, particularly regarding logistical tasks (Kim *et al.*, 2021).

Technological advancements have significantly transformed recruitment practices, replacing costly and time-consuming traditional methods with more efficient, scalable digital solutions. Within this shift, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted recruitment has become increasingly prominent in contemporary human resource management (HRM) (Chen *et al.*, 2025). AI tools (e.g., chatbots) are now widely used to support administrative tasks such as scheduling and initial communication, thereby improving process efficiency (Black and van Esch, 2020) and aligning with the expectations of younger, digitally savvy job seekers (Mistry *et al.*, 2025).

Building on this evolution, we examined prior literature through two complementary approaches: (1) a comprehensive mapping of existing research on AI-assisted recruitment (mainly chatbots), and (2) a review of key works in recruitment and technology adoption. The mapping underscores the substantial body of research on chatbot implementation, its operational benefits and implications, revealing the technology's growing role in reshaping recruitment processes (Web Appendixes A & B). This mapping indicates that prior studies document both advantages and challenges associated with AI use in HR contexts (Balçioğlu and Artar, 2024; Budhwar *et al.*, 2022), consistently highlighting the capacity of chatbot-based systems to enhance operational efficiency – an outcome that remains central in current discussions (Allal-Chérif *et al.*, 2021).

Moreover, the review of key works reveals deeper and underexamined gaps. First, research drawing on traditional technology adoption models (e.g., Technology Acceptance Model; TAM) primarily emphasizes ease of use and usefulness as drivers of adoption (e.g., Almeida *et al.*, 2025) but rarely incorporates affective or relational constructs such as social presence, trust, and enjoyment, which may be highly relevant

in recruitment interactions. Second, although scholars increasingly call for organizations to leverage digital recruitment not only to improve efficiency but also to enhance user experience and strengthen employer image (Carpentier *et al.*, 2019; Malik *et al.*, 2023), most existing studies focus narrowly on outcomes such as candidate acceptance, fairness perceptions, or openness to AI-based recruitment tools (Acikgoz *et al.*, 2020; Köchling and Wehner, 2023; Lavanchy *et al.*, 2023). Much less attention has been devoted to how AI-assisted recruitment tools might influence broader, strategically important outcomes such as overall satisfaction and candidates' perceptions of recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness. This gap is especially pronounced in the hospitality sector, where the role of AI in recruitment logistics and its influence on candidate-facing outcomes remain insufficiently understood (Law *et al.*, 2023).

Taken together, these insights show a clear need to better understand how hospitality recruiters perceive AI-assisted recruitment, what they expect beyond operational efficiency, and how AI tools (e.g., chatbot-based scheduling systems) shape candidates' attitudes and key evaluative outcomes. To address these gaps, this study aims to (1) develop a research framework that extends beyond traditional technology adoption models, which may not fully capture the complexities of AI-assisted recruitment (Black and van Esch, 2020), and (2) empirically test this framework to identify the factors that shape recruits' responses to AI-assisted recruitment.

To achieve this, we adopt a dual-perspective, mixed-method approach across two studies. Study 1 involves in-depth interviews with 12 hospitality managers to explore their expectations of AI-assisted recruitment. This study revealed that, beyond operational efficiency, recruiters view AI tools as a means to enhance candidates' satisfaction with the recruitment process and to positively influence perceptions of recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness. Study 2 builds on these insights by developing a chatbot-based scheduling system and testing it with 256 participants. This study shows that perceived usefulness, trust, and enjoyment are the key antecedents of these outcomes.

Overall, our findings advance theoretical understanding of AI-assisted recruitment by moving beyond traditional acceptance models to incorporate strategic candidate-facing outcomes such as satisfaction, recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness, and show the main drivers of these outcomes. Furthermore, the results offer actionable guidance for

hospitality managers using AI tools in administrative phases of hiring by identifying how chatbot systems can be designed to optimize desirable outcomes.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1. AI-Assisted Recruitment

The recruitment landscape has undergone a significant transformation, shifting from costly, analog processes with limited reach to digital methods that offer greater efficiency and access to a broader talent pool (Black and van Esch, 2020). Within this shift, AI recruitment has emerged as a central development, demonstrating strong potential to reduce the time and costs associated with hiring processes. However, early iterations of AI systems faced limitations, for example, in managing complex hiring needs and handling administrative interactions efficiently (Maree *et al.*, 2019).

Although these limitations have been progressively addressed, the rapid evolution of AI technologies requires firms to continually refine their recruitment strategies to maintain a competitive edge (Ore and Sposato, 2022).

AI recruitment broadly encompasses three distinct categories: (1) AI screening and assessment systems, (2) AI-assisted recruitment, which includes AI administrative and scheduling tools, and (3) AI sourcing and matching technologies (Van Esch *et al.*, 2019). Our study focuses specifically on the second category, which supports logistical tasks within the recruitment process. A key example of tools used in AI-assisted recruitment is the integration of chatbots, which increasingly facilitate recruitment-related administrative functions. These chatbots have been designed and refined to ensure suitability for human interaction and communication (Allal-Chérif *et al.*, 2021). As a result, chatbot-assisted recruitment is now used for tasks such as information collection, interview scheduling, and initial candidate interactions (Agarwal *et al.*, 2023).

Despite these technological advancements, a critical gap remains in understanding recruiters' expectations regarding candidate-facing chatbot technology, particularly beyond operational efficiency. Furthermore, to fully understand the implications of chatbot-assisted hiring, it is essential to examine how recruits perceive and respond to these AI-based administrative tools.

2.2. Chatbots in Tourism and Hospitality

Chatbots are increasingly being adopted across the hospitality sector, offering significant potential for process innovation and enhancing customer service delivery (Huang and Gursoy, 2024; Park *et al.*, 2025). Although there is a growing body of literature on chatbot applications in this industry (Doborjeh *et al.*, 2022), studies have focused on chatbots as customer-facing service tools, with considerably less attention given to their role in recruitment. As chatbots continue to evolve through advances in AI and find application in less-explored domains such as recruitment, further research is needed to support their effective implementation across various management areas (Flavián *et al.*, 2022), particularly within HRM (Priksat *et al.*, 2023).

To better understand the current state of the literature on AI-assisted recruitment, particularly concerning chatbots, we conducted a research mapping exercise using Scopus AI. This analysis identified the major conceptual dimensions and semantic connections characterizing existing scholarship on chatbot applications in HR, based on a dataset of 5,279 documents. To strengthen and validate these insights, we complemented the semantic mapping with a PRISMA-guided bibliometric procedure (Donthu *et al.*, 2021; Page *et al.*, 2021). Specifically, Dimensions.ai and VOSviewer were employed to analyze topic intensity patterns and keyword co-occurrences, resulting in a Research Map Tree (Web Appendix A) and a Network Visualization Map (Web Appendix B) that together depict the intellectual structure and thematic clusters within the field.

The research mapping exercise highlights that existing scholarship largely concentrates on the operational benefits of AI tools in recruitment, such as process optimization, enhanced employer outcomes (Priksat *et al.*, 2023), and the promotion of equity, fairness, inclusivity, and bias reduction in hiring practices (e.g., Chen *et al.*, 2025; Lavanchy *et al.*, 2023). It also reflects the increasing interest from both academia and industry in these tools, reinforcing their strategic importance in streamlining HR functions (Kelan, 2024). However, the visualization also points to a critical gap: limited research addresses what recruiters expect beyond efficiency gains. In particular, there is a lack of focus on whether AI tools such as chatbots can enhance outcomes such as candidate satisfaction and perceptions of recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness.

2.3. Outcomes of Chatbots in Recruitment

To design effective chatbots that can assist the recruitment process, it is crucial to establish the desired outcomes of their implementation first. This study focuses on positive attitude and its mediating role in shaping key outcomes of recruit satisfaction and recruiter credibility, particularly regarding trustworthiness and attractiveness.

Attitude, defined as an individual's predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward an object, entity, or process (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1977), is a critical determinant of technology adoption (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013), including AI tools usage (e.g., chatbots) (De Cicco *et al.*, 2025). Moreover, attitude serves as a predictor of other essential outcomes, such as satisfaction and perceived credibility (Suh and Youjae, 2006). Therefore, fostering a positive attitude toward the recruitment process is imperative, as it can enhance satisfaction and strengthen the recruiter's credibility.

Satisfaction is a widely recognized indicator of technological success, reflecting the extent to which users perceive a system as meeting their expectations (Soares *et al.*, 2022). Beyond its role in enhancing user experience, satisfaction serves as a key performance metric for managers, signaling the effectiveness of a technology or a process. Satisfaction can stem from product-based factors (product satisfaction), or experiences associated with service interactions (Evanschitzky *et al.*, 2004), including chatbot-facilitated processes (Soares *et al.*, 2022). In this context, satisfaction is defined as "the degree to which a user perceives that a chatbot effectively meets their expectations and needs, providing a seamless and valuable recruitment experience, such as appointment scheduling" (See: Ashfaq *et al.*, 2020; Evanschitzky *et al.*, 2004).

Finally, this study considers recruiter credibility as a critical outcome of the AI-assisted recruitment. Credibility encompasses key dimensions such as trustworthiness and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990), which reflect the extent to which candidates perceive a hiring firm as reliable (Min *et al.*, 2024) and appealing (Acikgoz *et al.*, 2020; Osburg *et al.*, 2020). The adoption of chatbots in recruitment, such as appointment scheduling, has the potential to influence candidates' perceptions of a recruiter's credibility, either positively or negatively. As such, it is imperative to examine whether chatbot-assisted hiring processes enhance or undermine these credibility dimensions. Ensuring that chatbot implementation reinforces, rather than diminishes, trustworthiness

and attractiveness is essential for maintaining a strong employer brand and fostering positive candidate perceptions (Köchling and Wehner, 2023; Styvén *et al.*, 2022).

2.4. Determinants of a Successful AI-Assisted Recruitment Process

As highlighted in the preceding section, this research focuses on outcomes such as attitude, satisfaction with the recruitment process, and recruiter credibility dimensions. Within this scope, various studies have identified key determinants of these outcomes in technological contexts, including chatbots.

2.4.1. *Perceived Ease of Use and Usefulness*

Key factors in this context are drawn from TAM, which serves as a foundational framework for understanding user adoption and utilization of new technologies (Davis, 1989; Mogaji *et al.*, 2024). At the core of TAM are two primary constructs: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, both of which significantly influence an individual's intention to engage with a given technology (Davis, 1989). As organizations increasingly integrate AI tools (e.g., chatbots) into their recruitment strategies, assessing these dimensions becomes essential, as they shape users' overall acceptance and satisfaction with such tools (Pillai and Sivathanu, 2020).

While prior research has predominantly examined the impact of ease of use and usefulness on technology acceptance, the context of AI-assisted recruitment logistics, such as information collection or interview scheduling, introduces a unique consideration. In such scenarios, acceptance may not be optional. Candidates may be required to engage with the chatbot as part of the application process. In this case, the central question is not whether the technology is accepted, but whether ease of use and usefulness remain critical drivers of outcomes such as satisfaction and perceptions of recruiter credibility. We argue that perceiving an AI tool as easy to use and useful fosters a more favorable attitude toward the recruitment process, which in turn enhances satisfaction. Additionally, this favorable perception may reflect positively on the recruiter's credibility, increasing perceptions of trustworthiness and attractiveness. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H1a. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived ease of use on satisfaction with this recruitment process

H1b. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived ease of use on recruiter trustworthiness.

H1c. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived ease of use on recruiter attractiveness.

H2a. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived usefulness on satisfaction with this recruitment process

H2b. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived usefulness on recruiter trustworthiness.

H2c. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived usefulness on recruiter attractiveness.

2.4.2. Social Presence

Drawing on the Computers Are Social Actors (CASA) paradigm, users often respond to digital entities in ways akin to human interactions (Xu *et al.*, 2022). Within this framework, social presence refers to the extent to which an interface of an AI tool (e.g., chatbot) conveys a sense of human-like interaction, engagement, and warmth, making users feel as though they are interacting with a socially aware entity rather than a machine (Konya-Baumbach *et al.*, 2023). It captures the chatbot's ability to simulate human cues, which has been found to enhance user experience (Tsai *et al.*, 2021).

While the concept of social presence has been widely examined in contexts such as retail and customer service (e.g., De Cicco *et al.*, 2025), its relevance in AI-assisted recruitment remains underexplored. One could argue that recruitment is a formal, high-stakes process, distinct from shopping or customer service, where a less socially expressive AI tool may signal professionalism. Nevertheless, existing research strongly supports the idea that social presence enhances positive attitudes, which in turn leads to favorable outcomes (Tsai *et al.*, 2021). Building on this perspective, we propose:

H3a. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived social presence on satisfaction with this recruitment process.

H3b. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived social presence on recruiter trustworthiness.

H3c. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of perceived social presence on recruiter attractiveness.

2.4.3. Trust

Trust has long been recognized as a critical determinant of technology adoption (Lei *et al.*, 2021; Srivastava *et al.*, 2010), particularly in domains such as retail and customer service (e.g., Santiago *et al.*, 2024; Silva *et al.*, 2023). However, its specific role in the context of AI-assisted recruitment remains relatively underexplored. Trust plays a pivotal role in determining whether users will engage with a given technology (Langer *et al.*, 2023), especially in AI tools (e.g., chatbots) interactions where issues such as data privacy and security may deter user engagement (Gu *et al.*, 2021).

Whereas trust in retail environments is often built through brand familiarity, previous experience, or website design (Ameen *et al.*, 2021), the recruitment context introduces additional challenges (Hofeditz *et al.*, 2022; Min *et al.*, 2024). Applicants may be unfamiliar with the hiring organization, the AI-assisted recruitment tool's design, or the recruitment process itself, heightening the importance of trust in shaping initial perceptions (Allal-Chérif *et al.*, 2021). We contend that trust is a particularly salient factor in AI-assisted recruitment, influencing attitudes toward the process and satisfaction with the experience (Klotz *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, trust in the chatbot is likely to inform judgments about the recruiter's credibility (Hofeditz *et al.*, 2022) and attractiveness (Koch-Bayram and Kaibel, 2024), consistent with prior research highlighting the role of trust in shaping firm perceptions (Viktoria Rampl and Kenning, 2014). Accordingly, we propose:

H4a. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of trust on satisfaction with this recruitment process.

H4b. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of trust on recruiter trustworthiness.

H4c. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of trust on recruiter attractiveness.

2.4.4. *Enjoyment*

Users interact with technology not solely for task completion but also for the pleasure derived from the interaction (Abou-Shouk *et al.*, 2024). Prior research has shown the positive influence of enjoyment on technology adoption (Li *et al.*, 2024) and associated outcomes, such as satisfaction and perceived attractiveness (Pereira and Tam, 2021). However, these insights primarily stem from leisure-based contexts, such as shopping or entertainment (e.g., Huang *et al.*, 2024), leaving a gap in our understanding of enjoyment's role in more formal settings, such as AI-assisted recruitment.

While recruitment is traditionally framed as a structured and utilitarian process, we argue that enjoyment remains a relevant factor influencing user attitudes, satisfaction, and perceptions of recruiter credibility (Hofeditz *et al.*, 2022). First, evidence suggests that even AI-powered utilitarian experiences benefit from affective elements such as enjoyment, which enhances attitudes and engagement (Elmashhara *et al.*, 2024). Second, enjoyment can reduce stress and anxiety commonly associated with hiring processes (Gloor *et al.*, 2022). By mitigating these negative emotions, candidates may develop more favorable perceptions of the process, ultimately boosting satisfaction and enhancing the recruiter's credibility (Min *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, we propose:

H5a. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of enjoyment on satisfaction with this recruitment process.

H5b. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of enjoyment on recruiter trustworthiness.

H5c. Positive attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process mediates the effect of enjoyment on recruiter attractiveness.

Figure 1 summarizes our proposed research model.

[Figure 1]

3. Overview of Studies

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach and reports findings from two complementary studies. Study 1 employed a qualitative design, using in-depth

interviews with 12 hospitality recruiters. The primary aim of this study was to identify the key outcomes that recruiters seek to achieve from AI-assisted recruitment beyond operational efficiency. Study 2 followed a quantitative design, collecting data through surveys administered to 256 recruits after their interaction with a real-life chatbot-based scheduling system developed specifically for the purposes of this research. The main objective of Study 2 was to examine the scheduling chatbot design features that contribute to achieving the outcomes identified in Study 1.

Both studies received ethical approval and were conducted following all relevant ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, assured that their identity would remain confidential, and that their data would be used anonymously for research purposes only. Data were securely stored on protected servers and will be deleted upon publication. Participants were also informed that there were no associated risks from taking part in the research.

4. Study 1: Desirable Outcomes of AI-Assisted Recruitment

This research seeks to uncover the motivations that drive managers to adopt AI technologies in hiring, as well as to clarify their expectations regarding how these tools should be implemented and perform. Such insights allow the identification of key design considerations for AI systems that support recruitment, ultimately fostering the development of solutions that achieve the intended outcomes.

4.1. Research Design and Data Collection

We conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 hospitality managers from Europe, the United States, Mexico, India, and Brazil (4 females; average age = 47.9 years; age range = 32-65). All participants possessed substantial experience in hospitality recruitment and acknowledged the increasing relevance of AI tools such as chatbots within their organizations. The participants were recruited via internal referrals (n = 6) and LinkedIn (n = 6). All interviews were conducted online and ranged in duration from 23 to 37 minutes.

The interview protocol began with a brief introduction to the use of AI tools to support the recruitment process, followed by questions designed to explore managers' motivations for adopting such AI tools, their perceived benefits for both organizations and applicants, and concerns about candidate experiences. Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy. We observed thematic saturation at the eighth interview; however, four additional interviews were conducted to ensure the robustness and completeness of the data (Lowe *et al.*, 2018).

Transcription and coding followed the approach outlined by Gioia *et al.* (2013). A codebook was iteratively developed to guide the process. Two authors independently coded all transcripts, compared emerging themes, and engaged in triangulation to ensure consistency of interpretation (Natow, 2020). Inter-coder reliability was strengthened through iterative comparison of coding outputs; any discrepancies were discussed in consensus meetings, during which category definitions were refined and interpretations aligned. All transcripts were anonymized using unique identifiers (M1-M12). The data were then analyzed thematically, guided by theoretical underpinnings and the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Web Appendix C provides a summary of first-order constructs, second-order themes, and aggregated dimensions.

4.2. Results

The analysis revealed that HR professionals are increasingly prioritizing automation to streamline the recruitment process. The discussions particularly centered on the role of AI tools such as chatbots, with strong emphasis placed on their impact on operational efficiency, especially in terms of process optimization and time savings. However, beyond these operational efficiency outcomes, the findings also indicated that managers expect AI-assisted recruitment processes to enhance the overall candidate experience by increasing recruits' satisfaction with the recruitment process and application journey. Interestingly, managers further underscored the strategic value of AI tools in shaping perceptions of the hiring firm. Specifically, they noted the importance of using AI-assisted recruitment to position the organization as a trustworthy and attractive recruiter.

The emergent themes were organized into four overarching dimensions – operational efficiency, perceived satisfaction, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Web Appendix C)

– which together provide a comprehensive view of the perceived value of AI tools integration in hospitality recruitment.

4.2.1. Operational Efficiency

The analysis reveals that hospitality managers widely perceive recruitment AI tools such as chatbots as valuable, especially in the early stages of the hiring process. Chatbots are considered instrumental in streamlining recruitment by automating repetitive tasks, reducing manual workloads, and enhancing overall efficiency. Interviewees emphasized time and cost savings as major advantages, noting that automating the initial recruitment phase enables HR professionals to focus on more strategic aspects of the recruitment process. On average, respondents estimated that chatbots could save approximately seven hours per week in initial screening alone.

“Chatbots can optimize processes and save time and money. Just imagine how much time we usually spend screening applications ... And yes, it’s also super helpful for candidates – they don’t have to wait around for us to call them for an interview. They can simply book a slot whenever it suits them, based on what’s available” (M9 – Male, 52 years old, Regional Manager, Mexico).

“It will save me time if I can automate the process and avoid contacting candidates until the final stage. It’s also useful for the candidates, as it speeds up the overall process. They can apply to more positions without worrying about interview clashes or being called for multiple interviews at the same time” (M10 – Male, 41 years old, Owner, India).

Participants further noted the effectiveness of chatbots in filtering applications based on predefined criteria such as years of experience or language proficiency.

“If a chatbot could collect the minimum technical prerequisites of candidates, it would make browsing through applications much more useful for HR recruiters” (M3 – Female, 48 years old, IT Manager, Italy).

Nevertheless, concerns were raised about the limitations of chatbots in assessing soft skills like communication abilities and cultural fit.

“A chatbot would not be able to capture the English level of the candidate just by interaction through chat... Sometimes we want to hire someone for a specific role,

but we also need to make sure they'll fit into our company culture. That's a tricky thing to assess, and I don't think a chatbot can quite get that" (M10 – Male, 41 years old, Owner, India).

4.2.2. Perceived Satisfaction with the Recruitment Process

Participants highlighted the significance of creating a positive user experience for both recruiters and candidates. AI tools like chatbots were credited with enhancing candidate satisfaction by facilitating a simple and time-efficient application process. Real-time communication and immediate feedback emerged as key adoption and satisfaction drivers.

"Candidates prefer to go through an easy process, and if something is truly friction-free, they will appreciate it" – and – "The chatbot should be as user-friendly as possible to satisfy all parties involved" (M11 – Male, 62 years old, IT Manager, Hungary).

The ability to guarantee rapid responses and maintain equitable treatment for all applicants was particularly valued and highlighted as a recruit satisfaction indicator.

"Chatbots ensure every applicant receives a quick response and a fair, unbiased experience. Overall, this leads to a more valued hiring process and greater candidate satisfaction" (M7 – Male, 60 years old, Operations Manager, USA).

However, some participants expressed concern about potential exclusionary effects on satisfaction, especially for older candidates or those less familiar with digital technologies.

"Technology might not be well-received by everyone, especially in traditional hospitality settings or among certain age groups. I think older candidates might still prefer a phone call to communicate, ask questions, or even schedule interviews. Transitioning from a traditional process to such a high-tech one might not sit well with everyone. As recruiters, we need to keep this in mind" (M12 – Male, 39 years old, Manager, China).

4.2.3. Trustworthiness of Recruiter

Participants emphasized that recruitment AI tools contribute not only to operational efficiency but also to organizational credibility and fairness in hiring. By standardizing

screening criteria and minimizing human biases, AI tools, such as chatbots, were viewed as mechanisms to promote objectivity and trustworthiness.

“Having a recruitment process via AI tools, like chatbots, can reduce human bias in the initial stages ... I believe this will also make us, as recruiters, seem more reliable and trustworthy. Candidates will think, 'Okay, there's no networking or favoritism here – these guys just want to hire the right person, and that's it” (M8 – Male, 65 years old, Board Member, Estonia).

Transparency in chatbot processes was essential for building trust with applicants.

“It is important to ensure transparency in chatbot processes to set the right expectations. I want candidates to see the recruitment process as transparent and fair” (M5 – Male, 41 years old, Operations Manager, Spain).

Despite these advantages, a few participants expressed concerns that while chatbots may enhance trust, they could also lead to the potential depersonalization of the recruitment experience.

“Chatbots seem credible, but candidates may fear a lack of equity if they cannot explain their unique experiences when using such AI tools to apply for jobs” (M12 – Male, 39 years old, Manager, China).

4.2.4. Attractiveness of Recruiter

The implementation of recruitment AI tools was perceived as a strategic asset in enhancing employer branding and signaling organizational innovation, particularly to younger, digitally literate candidates. Chatbots were associated with modernity, tech-savviness, and responsiveness – traits that enhance organizational attractiveness.

“Using chatbots enhances our reputation as a contemporary and forward-thinking employer. I believe recruits will find us sexier than traditional recruiters” (M4 – Female, 32 years old, Operations Manager, Portugal).

“Recruits, especially the younger ones we're targeting, will trust us more and find us more attractive compared to other recruiters. Today's generation doesn't just judge a company on its logo, ads, or similar things. They judge based on how up-to-date a company is. Using technology like chatbots shows that a company isn't just modern in its customer interactions but also in other areas like recruitment

and internal processes. As a candidate, you'd think, 'Oh, this is a company I want to work for'' (M2 – Female, 39 years old, HR Director, Portugal).

However, there was recognition that AI- or chatbot-based processes might alienate candidates who value more personal, human interaction.

“Candidates might miss the human touch, which is still important in our industry”
(M10 – Male, 41 years old, Owner, India).

4.3. Result Discussion

Four key dimensions emerged: operational efficiency, satisfaction, perceived trustworthiness, and attractiveness, which together offer a multidimensional understanding of expected AI-assisted recruitment outcomes. AI tools are seen not only to enhance operational efficiency but also to contribute to a fairer, more standardized candidate evaluation (Langer *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, they help position organizations as modern and attractive employers (Styvén *et al.*, 2022), particularly for younger candidates. However, concerns persist around inclusivity, depersonalization, and the inability to evaluate nuanced human qualities such as communication style and cultural fit (Chen *et al.*, 2025). These insights suggest that while AI tools hold significant promise for streamlining recruitment, a hybrid approach that retains some degree of human touch may be necessary to ensure equitable hiring experiences.

In Study 2, we build on the findings from Study 1 and test the proposed model from the perspective of recruits. This second study serves as a direct extension of the qualitative findings, examining the factors that drive the strategic outcomes identified by recruiters – beyond operational efficiency – and assessing how candidates respond to AI-assisted recruitment in practice.

5. Study 2: Factors Influencing Desirable Outcomes of AI-Assisted Recruitment

5.1. Research Design and Data Collection

Study 2 aims to examine the effects of perceived ease of use and usefulness, social presence, trust, and enjoyment on three key recruitment-related outcomes from the

applicant's perspective: (1) satisfaction with the AI-assisted recruitment process, (2) perceived trustworthiness and (3) perceived attractiveness of the recruiter. These relationships are examined through the mediating role of the applicant's attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process.

To simulate a realistic AI-assisted recruitment experience, we designed a functional chatbot-based scheduling system tailored to a context relevant to our target population – individuals under the age of 35 seeking part-time employment. Specifically, the chatbot was framed as assisting with the recruitment of part-time staff for a fast-food chain's night shift. This scenario was particularly fitting, given that younger people and students frequently seek flexible, part-time opportunities that accommodate their lifestyle or academic schedules.

The chatbot was developed using *Whimsical*, an online tool used to create flowcharts and decision trees. The chatbot flow, depicted in Figure 2, initiates with questions about personal details, work experience, and availability. Based on their responses, participants are directed either to (1) a scheduling sequence where they choose a preferred interview day and time slot from a list of available options or (2) an automated rejection message if they indicate unavailability for night shifts. In the latter case, participants were offered the option to provide information for future opportunities. Throughout the interaction, users retained the ability to revisit previous steps or exit the process at any point.

[Figure 2]

Following the simulated experience, the chatbot concluded with a prompt inviting users to participate in a brief survey about their experience. Only participants who consented were redirected to the questionnaire. This methodological approach moves beyond research that relied primarily on hypothetical scenarios or static screenshots, offering experiential engagement with a dynamic chatbot interface (Silva *et al.*, 2023).

To ensure data quality, attention-check items were embedded in the survey, and respondents failing these checks or completing the survey unrealistically quickly were excluded. Snowball sampling was employed to recruit students and individuals under the age of 35 who were seeking part-time employment, all of whom reported prior experience using chatbots. This age group was selected due to its relevance to the designed recruitment scenario and its alignment with the target demographic for such

part-time roles. Clear task instructions were provided to ensure participants understood the purpose and scope of the simulation.

A total of 285 responses were initially collected. After excluding 24 participants for inattentive responding or implausibly short completion times, and an additional 5 based on Mahalanobis d -squared analysis to identify multivariate outliers, the final dataset consisted of 256 valid responses ($M_{\text{age}} = 24.96$; Age range = 18-35; 57.7% Female; 93% held qualifications beyond high school).

5.2. Scale and Pretest

To ensure the validity and reliability of our measurements, we employed well-established scales adapted from prior literature. The specific items and their original sources are presented in Table 1. Before launching the main survey, a pretest was conducted with a sample of 15 university students. The pretest was administered in an open-ended format, allowing participants to provide qualitative feedback on the overall design of the survey. Based on the participants' feedback, only minor wording adjustments were made to improve clarity. Ease of use, usefulness, social presence, trust, and satisfaction constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree"; 7 = "strongly agree"). While enjoyment, attitude, and recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness were measured using seven-point semantic differential scales (e.g., 1 = "very unpleasant"; 7 = "very pleasant").

AMOS 29 was used to analyze the data. First, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess model fit, followed by Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses.

5.3. Results and Discussion

5.3.1. Assessment of the Measurement Model

CFA indicated an acceptable model fit according to the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999): $\chi^2 = 950.058$, $df = 506$, $\chi^2/df = 1.878$, CFI = 0.949, TLI = 0.940, IFI = 0.949, SRMR = 0.0542, and RMSEA = 0.059 [90% CI = 0.053; 0.064]. Reliability and validity diagnostics further confirmed the strength of the constructs. Cronbach's alpha values for all variables exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003),

indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Further, composite reliability values ranged from 0.85 to above, confirming the constructs' reliability. Convergent validity was established, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs ranged from 0.66 to 0.90, surpassing the minimum threshold of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2019) (Table 1).

[Table 1]

Discriminant validity was confirmed through the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion: the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its corresponding inter-construct correlations. To ensure the absence of multicollinearity, collinearity diagnostics were conducted. Tolerance values ranged from 0.42 to 0.73 – well above the recommended cut-off of 0.10 – and the associated Variance Inflation Factors ranged from 1.38 to 2.42, below the critical threshold of 5 (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Discriminant validity results and multicollinearity statistics are presented in Web Appendix D.

5.3.2. Assessment of the Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, SEM was conducted. The model demonstrated an acceptable fit based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) criteria: $\chi^2 = 1145.504$, $df = 524$, $\chi^2/df = 2.186$, CFI = 0.928, TLI = 0.919, IFI = 0.929, SRMR = 0.0740, RMSEA = 0.068 [90% CI = 0.063; 0.074]. Table 2 presents the regression weights and indirect effect results, while the direct effects are reported in Web Appendix E. The findings indicate that usefulness, trust, and enjoyment significantly influence satisfaction with the AI-assisted recruitment process, recruiter trustworthiness, and recruiter attractiveness through the mediating role of attitude. However, no significant indirect effects were found for ease of use and social presence. Thus, hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, H4a, H4b, H4c, H5a, H5b, and H5c are supported, whereas H1a, H1b, H1c, H3a, H3b and H3c are not supported.

[Table 2]

6. General Discussion

AI technologies are transforming all industries, including hospitality, by streamlining operational processes, with recruitment being a prime example. Our study investigates AI-assisted recruitment through the lens of chatbot technology, exploring two key perspectives: (1) the recruiter's viewpoint, to understand the expected and desirable

outcomes from implementing such tools to support the recruitment process; and (2) the recruit's perspective, to identify the underlying factors that drive these outcomes. This dual focus aims to inform the design of more effective AI-assisted recruitment processes that optimize recruiter objectives while improving the candidate experience.

Findings from Study 1 reveal that hospitality managers perceive AI recruitment tools as highly valuable, especially in improving efficiency during the early stages of hiring. Beyond reducing administrative burden and enhancing operational speed, recruiters also hope that AI-assisted recruitment processes will positively influence candidates' perceptions by increasing satisfaction with the recruitment experience, enhancing the trustworthiness of the organization, and elevating the recruiter's overall attractiveness (Theurer *et al.*, 2018). These insights extend existing literature on the role of AI in organizational operations (Black and van Esch, 2020) and recruitment specifically (Allal-Chérif *et al.*, 2021), by offering two main contributions. First, they shed light on an underexplored domain: AI-assisted recruitment in the hospitality sector. Second, they identify novel, image-related outcomes (Kull *et al.*, 2021) – recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness (Koch-Bayram and Kaibel, 2024) – that some managers already desire, and others should consider when implementing AI-assisted recruitment.

While Study 1 identifies key managerial expectations, Study 2 examines which factors shape these outcomes during the AI-assisted recruitment process. Our findings demonstrate that candidates' positive attitudes toward the AI tool (chatbot) are crucial for driving satisfaction, perceived trustworthiness and attractiveness. Specifically, attitudes are positively influenced when chatbots are perceived as useful, trustworthy, and enjoyable. These results reinforce the established importance of perceived usefulness in technology adoption, as suggested by TAM (Davis, 1989; Pillai and Sivathanu, 2020) and align with broader literature emphasizing trust as a central factor in successful technology design (e.g., De Cicco *et al.*, 2025; Langer *et al.*, 2023) – particularly in an age marked by increasing consumer concerns about digital privacy and manipulation (Gu *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the importance of enjoyment in shaping AI-mediated experiences resonates with findings from studies on both digital interfaces (Li *et al.*, 2024; Pereira and Tam, 2021) and formal experiences (Gloor *et al.*, 2022), and appears especially pertinent for younger users, who increasingly expect interactions – even in formal contexts – to be engaging (O'Brien *et al.*, 2022).

Conversely, ease of use and social presence did not significantly predict attitudes or downstream outcomes in our model. We interpret these non-significant effects through the lens of both our study population and the task-oriented nature of the context. Given that our sample consisted of younger participants with high digital fluency, a chatbot-based scheduling system process may have been perceived as routine or effortless, rendering ease of use largely irrelevant in shaping attitudes. This aligns with research suggesting that when users hold strong functional expectations and view a system as a basic utility rather than a novel or hedonic experience, ease of use becomes a baseline assumption rather than a differentiating attribute (Krey *et al.*, 2019). Concerning social presence, although the CASA paradigm predicts a positive effect (Xu *et al.*, 2022), our findings align with work on task-oriented AI interaction contexts, where efficiency and informational clarity outweigh relational or socio-emotional cues. In formal, transactional settings such as scheduling job interviews, users prioritize effectiveness over interpersonal warmth (Wang *et al.*, 2025). Thus, the role of social presence may be less pronounced compared to contexts where relational engagement is central, such as online shopping or customer service (Duarte *et al.*, 2025; Tsai *et al.*, 2021).

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study is among the first to examine AI-assisted recruitment within the hospitality industry, offering several important contributions to the literature. First, the research provides novel insights by exploring the desired outcomes of AI-assisted recruitment processes from the perspective of hospitality managers – an angle that has been largely overlooked. Our findings reveal that managers do not merely view AI as a tool to streamline operations, but to enhance the candidate experience, particularly by increasing satisfaction with the recruitment process. Importantly, this study also uncovers a broader managerial expectation: that AI-assisted recruitment can bolster perceptions of recruiter trustworthiness and attractiveness. These three outcomes – satisfaction, recruiter trustworthiness, and attractiveness – represent relatively underexplored constructs in the context of AI-assisted recruitment. This understanding informed the development of our conceptual model, which shifts the conversation beyond traditional technology adoption frameworks that primarily emphasize intentions to use. In an era where AI integration is no longer a matter of “*if*” but “*how*”, our work

contributes by focusing on how to optimize the quality of candidate experiences and maximize the benefits of AI use in recruitment processes.

Second, our study draws on insights from adjacent domains such as retail and service management to identify and test key factors influencing candidate responses to AI tools used to support recruitment logistics, such as scheduling and other administrative tasks. In doing so, we demonstrate that perceived usefulness, trust, and enjoyment are the primary drivers of positive outcomes, operating through the mediating role of attitude toward the AI-assisted recruitment process. These findings offer a contextualized understanding of how psychological and experiential drivers shape candidate responses in AI-assisted recruitment – particularly within hospitality settings.

Third, our study challenges assumptions in prior literature by showing that certain traditionally important factors, such as ease of use and social presence, may play a lesser role in formalized AI-assisted recruitment contexts. This insight is particularly salient when considering younger job seekers who are typically highly digitally literate and less sensitive to interface simplicity or interpersonal warmth in formal processes such as job applications or interview scheduling. Our results suggest that research and design efforts should move beyond these conventional usability considerations and prioritize factors that shape perceptions of value, trust, and enjoyment.

Finally, our study confirms the mediating role of attitude – frequently identified in technology adoption literature – as a central mechanism linking antecedents such as usefulness, trust, and enjoyment to critical AI-assisted recruitment outcomes. This reinforces the importance of targeting attitude formation in the design and implementation of AI-assisted recruitment systems.

6.2. Managerial Implications

In light of our findings, we offer several recommendations for hospitality managers seeking to implement AI tools into their recruitment processes. While AI tools are often introduced primarily to streamline operations and increase efficiency, managers should also recognize the opportunity to leverage these technologies for additional strategic outcomes at two key levels: enhancing candidate satisfaction with the recruitment experience, and potentially contributing to an improved organizational image by helping position the recruiter as more trustworthy and attractive in the eyes of applicants.

To achieve these outcomes, our results highlight three critical areas that should be prioritized when designing and deploying AI tools used to support recruitment logistics, such as scheduling and other administrative tasks. First, candidates must perceive the AI tool as useful compared to traditional methods. This can be achieved by ensuring that such tools genuinely save time and improve the efficiency of the application process. Second, the AI tools must be perceived as trustworthy. This requires ensuring the accuracy of interactions and addressing concerns regarding data security and privacy. Third, the recruitment experience must be enjoyable. “Enjoyable” in this context may involve a combination of features, such as a friendly and conversational tone, light elements of humor when appropriate, or gamification elements (e.g., progress bars or interactive prompts) that make the interaction feel less transactional and more engaging. For example, a chatbot that uses polite and approachable language, offers encouraging feedback during task completion, or provides subtle visual cues to signal progress can foster a positive response from candidates. These design choices help ensure that the experience remains engaging and pleasant while supporting a more positive overall perception of the employer brand as modern and candidate-oriented.

Finally, we caution managers – based on the insights from our interviews with recruiters – to be mindful of the potential challenges associated with AI tools in recruitment. These concerns, raised by managers rather than derived from our Study 2, include the inability of most AI tools to assess soft skills, communication abilities, and cultural fit, as well as potential exclusionary effects, mainly toward older candidates who may be less comfortable with AI interfaces. These concerns should be thoughtfully addressed either through the design of the AI tool itself or by incorporating complementary measures in earlier or subsequent stages of the recruitment process.

6.3. Limitations and Future Research

Notwithstanding the contributions of this study, a few limitations present valuable avenues for future research. First, while our Study 2 participants engaged in real-time interactions with an actual chatbot, the experience was limited to a single point in time and represented a simulated AI-assisted recruitment scenario. Therefore, future studies could build on this by examining AI-assisted recruitment processes through longitudinal designs or in real-world organizational settings. These approaches may yield more

robust insights, especially regarding the development of trust over time, and can mitigate potential biases introduced by self-reported, cross-sectional data.

Second, our Study 2 sample comprised participants under 35 who were already familiar with chatbot technologies. While this demographic focus is practical – given the high adoption of AI tools among younger, digitally fluent candidates – it restricts the generalizability of our findings. Younger applicants typically demonstrate greater confidence and comfort when interacting with AI systems (Min *et al.*, 2024), which may result in more favorable attitudes than those of older or less digitally proficient candidates who represent a substantial segment of the hospitality labor market. This difference suggests that age- and experience-related digital fluency may meaningfully shape reactions to AI-assisted recruitment tools. To address this, future research should adopt more inclusive sampling strategies that reflect wider demographic diversity, including variations in age and digital literacy.

Third, while our empirical investigation identifies three key drivers of successful AI-assisted recruitment outcomes – usefulness, trust, and enjoyment – it does not delve into the differential effects of these factors under varying design scenarios. For example, future research could explore how different chatbot designs best elicit enjoyment during interactions, thereby offering prescriptive insights for practitioners. Moreover, although our study focused on core drivers, it did not consider additional variables that may significantly influence the success of AI-assisted recruitment. Elements such as AI tool personality and communication style represent promising directions for future inquiry.

Fourth, our findings are explicitly limited to AI-assisted recruitment tools that perform administrative and scheduling functions, rather than AI-powered screening or evaluative systems. Future research could extend this work by comparing candidate reactions across different types of recruitment AI, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of how technological roles shape applicant perceptions and outcomes.

Finally, future research should examine the broader organizational implications of AI tools used to support recruitment logistics. This includes their potential influence on employer branding, recruitment efficiency, and long-term employee retention (Dineen *et al.*, 2023). Further investigation into how recruitment AI tools integrate with existing HR infrastructures and AI-powered analytics tools could offer a more holistic understanding of their strategic value in hospitality and beyond.

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