Human–AI Collaboration in The Restaurant Industry: Exploring Employee Acceptance, AI Readiness and Service Quality in The Digital Era

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***Abstract*—The present study analyses how human-AI collaboration contributes to the restaurant industry by analysing employee acceptance of AI, AI readiness, and the effectiveness of AI-supported work practices. It examines how employee acceptance of AI builds the foundation for human–AI collaboration and how AI readiness changes the way employees interact with AI technologies in powerful ways. The study uses the quantitative, exploratory design with primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from the employees of restaurants in Punjab, India. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics including correlation and regression. The results showed that employee acceptance of AI was directly linked with human-AI collaboration and that the level of AI readiness was a significant influence on how well employees were able to collaborate with AI. Employee readiness, technological skills and abilities, and training, as well as supportive infrastructures and the ongoing human element, were identified as crucial to effective service provision and successful integration of AI in the restaurant sector.**

***Index Terms*—*Human-AI Collaboration, Artificial Intelligence, Employee Acceptance, AI Readiness, Restaurant Industry, Service Quality, AI Integration*.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Human-AI collaboration is the intentional interaction between human and artificial intelligence systems with the goal of achieving a task, solving a problem, making a decision, and/or enhancing organisational or individual performance. In contrast to methods that see AI as a replacement for human labour, collaboration highlights the shared capabilities of man and machine (Dellermann, D., et al., 2021). The role of the AI system is to handle large amounts of data, find patterns, make predictions, do repetitive tasks and give rapid analytical insight while a human being will add creativity, contextual understanding, ethical thinking, emotional intelligence, critical thinking and judgement. Human-AI collaboration, therefore, is one in which AI supports but does not replace human capabilities (Wilson, H. J., & Daugherty, P. R. 2018). This concept is especially significant in today's work, educational, healthcare, research, business, and public service landscapes, where AI tools are becoming deeply involved with decisions and knowledge-driven tasks. The successful collaboration relies on the appropriate distribution of tasks, user supervision, transparency, trust and being able to understand and reflect on the outputs created by AI (Duan, Y., et al., 2019). There will be a continued need for human participation as AI systems can produce inaccurate or biased, incomplete, or contextually inappropriate results. Therefore, the process should be construed as one that is iterative and involves both parties: humans offering the targets, context, and assessment, and AI offering the computational support, recommendations, and analytics (Dellermann, D., et al., 2019).

1.1. Emergence of AI in the Restaurant Industry

As an essential part of the hospitality sector, restaurants are leveraging AI to boost efficiency, personalization, and customer service (Reynolds, 2026). While AI certainly has a potential to revolutionize restaurant operations, in many cases the actual implementation within the restaurant falls short of the anticipated ROI, as a result of the disconnect between the way employees work and how the AI system is designed. The implications of this also fuelled discussion regarding whether AI is focused more on service quality, or operational cost reduction (Huang & Rust, 2021).

AI technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, chatbots, and robotics are reshaping restaurant operations by automating ordering, reservations, customer assistance, and personalized recommendations (Prentice et al., 2020). These technologies can improve service efficiency while allowing employees to focus more on hospitality and customer experience. AI adoption is also transforming traditional labour models by automating complex processes and improving resource allocation (Wang & Wang, 2026). AI-based predictive staffing systems analyse historical and real-time data to match workforce levels with customer demand, helping restaurants address labour shortages and control costs. Restaurants using AI therefore increasingly combine technological automation with human capabilities to improve operational performance (Meeprom & Suttikun, 2024).

1.2. Employees Acceptance of AI:

The element of employee acceptance of AI in workplace is driven by its perceived benefits, attitudes, workplace circumstances, and a range of concerns related to the use of AI systems. The critical elements of personalisation, interactivity, perceived intelligence, perceived anthropomorphism, perceived trust and perceived brand image of AI are specified as the main drivers of employees' acceptance of AI (Islam, T., & Zhou, E. 2024). Personalisation helps an AI assistant to provide information and services that meet the unique needs of employees while interactivity allows a two-way interaction between employee and an AI assistant through an immediate response. Likewise, perceiving AI as intelligent, accurate, reliable, and capable to solve work-related problems can make employees more receptive to AI assistants. Moreover, human-like features of an AI assistant can induce perceived familiarity and positive affect among employees (Cai, D., Li, H., & Law, R. 2022).

Meanwhile, several barriers can create employee resistance to adopting AI, which affects their acceptance. This reveals that perceived risk, language barriers, technology insecurity, lack of good infrastructure, and lack of confidence of how to recover from a service failure are all factors considered important deterrents from AI adoption (Drexler, N., & Lapré, V. B. 2019). Employees may worry of AI systems sharing personal or work-related data with them, about the risk of errors and biases, and about possible changes in their job roles or employment responsibilities. Language barriers can hinder communication effectiveness, especially if AI systems lack knowledge of organizational-specific terminology, accents, or frequently used phrases (Makridakis, S. 2017). Technology anxiety can compound the reluctance of employees to use new AI technologies and poor technological infrastructure, as well as a lack of resources within their organisations, may limit the effective adoption. There are also concerns about using AI as a sole point of reference in scenarios that are weighted towards emotion and judgment where third-party customized interactions are significant (Mirbabaie, M., et al., 2022).

➢ Aim of the study:

The study aims at examining the acceptance rate and preparedness of workers for the implementation of AI in the restaurant industry. It seeks to examine how a positive employee acceptance affects it, and how being an AI ready employee helps them be able to work with AI technology. The study also emphasizes their significance in facilitating AI implementation in the restaurant environment that prioritizes the employees.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Subbarao, A., et al., (2026) The "Food and Beverage (F&B)" industry has seen the integration of several "Artificial Intelligence (AI)" technologies, indicating a substantial shift in its operational model. The study covers the most important elements such as EPE (estimated performance expectancy), EEE (estimated effort expectancy), anthropomorphic properties and perceived anthropomorphic properties. The study was carried out using qualitative approach and purposive sampling technique. The focus group of the study was in Klang Valley, Malaysia and a sample of 107 people. Data analysis was carried out using the computer program "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)" version 29 supplied by the IBM Company. The findings shows that people can have positive and negative attitudes towards the acceptation of AI, depending on the circumstances.

Wang, P. Q., et al., (2026) identified the difference within each generation regarding the scope of human-AI relations before, during and after the arrival of AI.

The overall goal of the study was to create a generational approach to learning about AI engagement and to better understand the differences in the modes of interactions and collaborations as they change from generation to generation. In this study, the conceptual approach was applied as research design with four factors which is Performance expectancy, Effort expectancy, social influence and Facilitating conditions from "Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)". The results indicated that perceived and behavioural attitudes towards an AI were found to be influenced by generational characteristic. So, the study results were themed as "intergenerational workers" values and interaction preferences need to be aligned in effective integration of AI.

Almokdad, E., et al., (2025) explored the psychological and social implications of adaptive adoption of "self-service technologies (SSTs)" implemented in the hospitality and tourism sector in South Korea, with a focus on perceptions of service dehumanization among different age groups. The numerical methodology was used, and the data used in this study was collected from 300 Korean people (150 senior citizens, 150 young people). This study used the PROCESS Macro to investigate the mediation of reduced human interaction, empathy, and authenticity as well as the moderation of staff presence on the perception of reduced dehumanization. According to these findings SSTs could improve the operational efficiency, but the widespread use of SSTs could have negative implications for customer satisfaction, especially for the elderly customer.

Rulandari, N., & Silalahi, A. D. K. (2025) analysed that how AI tools are being integrated into government services in Indonesia and the effects of using AI on efficiency and the welfare of government officials. The researchers aimed to assess the impact of these factors on operational effectiveness and if they interact with human-AI collaboration (HAIC). The research method used was a quantitative approach and the number of respondents was 616 government officials in Indonesia. The research method used in this study used was Partially Least Square (PLS SM) and Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA). Results indicated that the degree of access and response time plays a significant role in enhancing the services' efficiency, while the degree of resources' utilization plays less of a role. The study also revealed that operational effectiveness was a key success driver in employees' satisfaction and that HAIC resulted in positive outcomes related to efficiency.

Nayaju, S. (2026) examined customer views and expectations on the integration and use of AI robots and voice assistants in their restaurant services in Finland in the future. A quantitative method was used in this research. It was gathered in a Survey which focused on patrons of the Finnish Dining Sector. The respondents included restaurant patrons who experienced or heard about AI technologies in restaurants. The results of the surveys were aggregated and analysed statistically to assess customer awareness, attitudes, acceptance, expectations and worries about AI robots and voice assistants. The findings from the investigation revealed that factors such as trust, ease of use, and perceived effectiveness played significant roles in client acceptance of AI technologies. Overall, the results indicated that effective and secure use of AI technologies can greatly improve the consumer and eating experience.

Islam, T., & Zhou, E. (2024) explored the "Behavioural Reasoning Theory (BRT)"', the perspective and sensitivity of staff towards the AI-based service assistants as well as their readiness for and enthusiasm in adopting the AI. 50 professionals from the hotel industry, including HR managers and line managers, comprised the research sample, which was based on behavioural reasoning theory. It considers the "justifications for" as well as the "justifications against" adoption in the context of a least developed nation (LDN). The study provides practical insights into the adoption of AI assistants for hotel workers (managers and staff) and system architects/developers designing AI-based hotel services. The study is the first to use behavioural reasoning theory to examine how hotel employees perceive and plan to use an AI service-helper. This is a cross-sectional study, carried out in specific industrial sectors in the specific context of limitation.

➢ Research Gap

The current studies mentioned in the literature have largely been about the acceptance of the AI, adoption of the AI technology, customers' perceptions,

efficiency and innovations within the services. Major factors that affect the adoption of AI are identified as generational differences, trust, perceived usefulness, ease of use, effort expectancy, and performance expectancy (Subbarao et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2026; Nayaju, 2026).

However, the experiences of human-AI partnerships from the employee's perspective have been largely overlooked on an empirical basis apart from the combined impacts of two constructs (acceptance and readiness) on service quality.
Past studies also tend to narrow down to either customer-centred experiences or a more general hospitality environment and not specifically to the interaction between employees and AI in the restaurant landscape (Blöcher & Alt, 2021; Prentice et al., 2020; Islam & Zhou, 2024).

Human-AI collaboration has been conceived as a complementary pairing between human capabilities and AI systems (Dellermann et al., 2021), but it has not been fully examined in a restaurant service context. Thus, it contributes to the research by focusing on human-AI collaboration in the restaurant industry with regard to employee acceptance, AI Readiness, and service quality.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the relationship between employee acceptance of AI and Human-AI collaboration in restaurant operations.
2. To evaluate the impact of AI readiness on employees' effectiveness in collaborating with AI technologies.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was used to study human–AI collaboration in the restaurant industry in Punjab, India. The target population comprised restaurant employees who currently use AI and other digital technologies, and a purposive sample of 150 participants was selected. To achieve the stated objectives, this research adopts an exploratory design and uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a self-structured, close-ended questionnaire that assessed employees' acceptance of AI, AI readiness, human–AI collaboration, and effectiveness in collaborating with AI technologies. The dependent variables are human–AI collaboration and employees' effectiveness in collaborating with AI technologies, while the independent variables are employee acceptance of AI and employee readiness for AI, respectively. The collected data were analysed in MS Excel and SPSS 27 using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) to test the relationships and impacts proposed in the hypotheses.

V. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This section provides a concise summary and interpretation of the obtained data. The data are systematically presented and analysed by categorising them according to demographic factors, study aims, and hypotheses. Tables have been included to elucidate findings, followed by explanations to explain the results. The tables and the interpretations are presented in relation to the study goals and the developed hypothesis.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Demographic Variables	Characteristics	N	%
1	Gender	Female	87	58.0%
		Male	63	42.0%
2	Age	18–25 years	35	23.3%
		26–35 years	48	32.0%
		36–45 years	34	22.7%
		46–55 years	22	14.7%
		Above 55 years	11	7.3%
3	Education Qualification	Secondary & Higher Education	49	32.7%
		Diploma/Vocational	29	19.3%

		Graduate	51	34.0%
		Postgraduate	21	14.0%
4	Job Position	Front Office	24	16.0%
		Waiter/Service Staff	42	28.0%
		Kitchen/Culinary Staff	36	24.0%
		Supervisor/Team Leader	27	18.0%
		Managerial Staff	21	14.0%
5	Work Experience in Restaurant Industry	Below 1 year	25	16.7%
		1–3 years	47	31.3%
		4–6 years	38	25.3%
		7–10 years	25	16.7%
		Above 10 years	15	10.0%

Table 1 presents a demographic profile of the 150 respondents revealing a fairly diverse group of restaurant employees. The majority of the respondents are females of 58.0% and males make up 42.0% of the respondents. The age structure indicates that one fifth, or 32.0%, of the population is aged 26-35 and more than a fifth, 23.3%, aged 18-25. There is considerable age structure with employees aged 18-25 (23.3%) and 36-45 (22.7%). As far as qualification is concerned, graduates form the largest group (34.0%), followed by respondents with secondary and higher secondary education (32.7%), diploma/vocational qualifications (19.3%), and postgraduates (14.0%). In terms of job position, Waiter/Service Staff is the largest number of respondents (28.0%), Kitchen/Culinary Staff is 24.0%, Supervisors/Team Leaders is 18.0%, followed by Front Office Staff with 16.0%, and lastly Managerial Staff, with 14.0%. In terms of work experience, the highest proportions are 1-3 years (31.3%), 4-6 years (25.3%) and below 1 year (16.7%) experience with fewer than 10% in the participant group with over 10 years' experience. The samples presented, in general, a reasonable representation of the genders, age ranges, educational level, types of occupations, and the experience students had with the industry.

H1: There is a significant relationship between employee acceptance of AI and human-AI collaboration in restaurant operations.

Table 2: Correlation Table

Hypothesis	Factor	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation [r]	Sig. Value	Hypothesis Result
H1	Employee Acceptance of AI	18.4267	3.21458	.682**	.000	Supported
	Human–AI Collaboration	17.8933	3.48721			

Table 2 correlation analysis presents a significant positive correlation between the variables, Employee Acceptance of AI and Human–AI Collaboration. The means of Employee Acceptance of AI and Human–AI Collaboration are 18.4267 and 17.8933, respectively, with standard deviations of 3.48721 and 3.21458, respectively.

There was a strong positive correlation between collaboration with humans and acceptance of AI ($r = .682$): as the level of collaboration with humans increased, the level of acceptance of AI increased. The result of the significance value ($p = .000$, $p < .001$) indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

Hence, H1 is accepted; indicating that the acceptance of the use of AI among employees clearly has a positive relationship with human-AI collaboration.

H2: There is a significant impact of AI readiness on employees' effectiveness in collaborating with AI technologies.

Table 3: Regression Table

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis Result
H2	AI Readiness → Employees' Effectiveness in Collaborating with AI Technologies	.584	.341	76.626	8.754	.000	Supported

Table 3 shows that the regression analysis results are statistically significant with a positive effect, meaning that AI Readiness positively regulates employees' performance in using AI technologies to collaborate with employees. As the AI readiness increases, its associated reg coefficient (0.584) shows a strong correlation with AI collaboration effectiveness.

With this R^2 value of 0.341, this value represents the portion of variance that is explained by the presence of AI Readiness among employees' collaborating capability of AI technologies. Besides, this model is statistically significant (F value = 76.626, t value = 8.754, p value = < 0.001) which indicates that the relationship is not random. Therefore, a positive correlation is confirmed between H2 and workers' ability to cooperate with the tools and technologies of artificial intelligence, with a high correlation rate, cannot be denied that cooperating with AI technology is related with workers' ability to cooperate with AI technology.

VI. DISCUSSION

According to the literature, human–AI collaboration in the restaurant and hospitality sector has become a topic of growing research, rather than merely technology adoption, involving the interaction of employee acceptance, readiness for AI and service quality. Previous studies show that AI and robotics can restructure tasks and the way they are performed in the hospitality sector, which suggests the need for AI adoption that goes hand-in-hand with the roles, skills and work practices of employees (Mingotto et al., 2021). Similarly, Nguyen and Malik (2022) suggest that the AI service quality influences both the employees' satisfaction with the AI and the specific effect of AI on service level in two different ways depending on the job levels and roles, which indicates employee involvement in service delivery with AI. Wong et al. (2023) support this human-centred viewpoint by providing evidence that staff still matter in AI-enabled service encounters due to the fact that customers might also desire human intervention along with the technological.

More recently, Sardesai et al. (2024) embeds the shared value of AI driven and customer service quality into the value proposition to influence customer satisfaction and retention. Strengthen the conviction that AI should enhance, rather than replace, human-to-human interactions with customers. The systematic review by Kumawat et al. (2025), comprehensively reviewed 80 empirical studies addressing hospitality to identify critical factors that impact on the way that hospitality organizations can utilize AI. Likewise, Jerez-Jerez (2025) concludes that employee preparedness and acceptance plays an important role in AI adoption and is related to positive employee outcomes, suggesting that organizational employee readiness is important for AI implementation. In summary, AI readiness and employee acceptance are crucial to effective human-AI collaboration. Service quality, is turn by a balance of human and technological capabilities supported by employee training, communication, and continued employee engagement.

V. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that acceptance and readiness for AI is important factors for successful Human–AI collaboration in the restaurant sector. The results show that workers have very positive attitudes toward AI usage and with AI-based technologies. Likewise, employees' effectiveness in collaborating with AI is associated positively with AI readiness, accounting for 34.1% of the variance in the effectiveness in collaboration. These findings reflect the role that preparation, training, and versatility play in the successful adoption of AI. They highlight that the success of AI implementation must rely on employees' readiness, training, and willingness to work with AI technologies as part of their jobs. AI is not a replacement for the human element but can be a complement to its skill with empathy, its professional

knowledge and expertise, and its interpersonal abilities. Thus, combining AI tools with a human element can prove to be beneficial for restaurant organisations in terms of streamlining, better employee–technology interaction, efficiency in services and better customer experiences.

- Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

The study reveals the importance of employees embracing not only the model but also readiness for AI technology, training, and their continued pivotal role in achieving effective human-AI collaboration and service outcomes. The results suggest that organisations should enhance technological skills of employees and offer encouraging environment for the implementation of AI. This study is limited to restaurant workers in the Punjab with a relatively small sample of 150, which may not apply to other areas and hospitality institutions. Future studies could use larger and more diverse samples and non-longitudinal studies in other states and countries, or a longitudinal or mixed-method design to look at change in employee acceptance and AI readiness across time. Furthermore, the job role, custom-made support from the organisations for role-players as well as perceptions and anxiety of the customer of the use of AI and customer trust and customer service can be investigated further to gain insights into sustainable human-AI collaboration.

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