



# AI in TRAVEL MARKETING

**From hype to action:  
Navigating innovation while  
preparing for strategic adoption**



A playbook by  
**Edoardo Monetti**

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## Executive Summary - Foreword

Dear Marketer,

After attending several international conferences focused on Travel, Advertising and Artificial Intelligence, diving into industry publications, and engaging in insightful conversations with industry peers and innovative startups, one thing has become clear: change is happening at an unprecedented pace, yet **a balanced approach is essential**.

AI is already reshaping how users discover information, companies have started adapting their marketing workflows and advertising agencies are reviewing their business models. Meanwhile, the number of vendors and startups developing AI solutions is booming.

The potential -from content creation at scale, to personalization, automation and beyond- is immense.

Yet, while the appetite to experiment with AI solutions remains high, marketers today are still tasked with allocating budgets and resources across a vast array of initiatives, with **ROI optimization** remaining among the top priorities.<sup>1</sup>

In this context of rapid change and endless options, **strategic prioritization** is emerging as a key asset to gain competitive advantage.

This playbook is designed to be a **compass** accompanying you with thought starters, fresh perspectives and practical next steps to navigate innovation, while preparing for strategic implementation of AI and genAI in your organization.



**Edoardo Monetti**  
Founder, Strategy Advisor

# Who This Playbook is For & What You'll Learn

Marketers in travel and hospitality have a challenging task: Drive demand for a high-value service, in a competitive market and within a fragmented distribution ecosystem, strongly dependent on cross-border dynamics and seasonality patterns.

While it's hard to envision a future where the foundational elements that define travel and the aspirations driving travelers will change, it's fair to assume that AI will, to some extent, reshape how demand and supply meet.

In a landscape filled with countless predictions, this guide tries to **cut through the noise**. We'll explore three macro-areas in particular that we believe will play a strategic role and that travel marketers should act on or follow closely: **Brand Discovery**, **Creative Content Creation** and **Distribution**.

In an attempt to **balance visionary and pragmatic approaches**, we will combine insights from authoritative sources, real-world use cases and fresh perspectives from across (and beyond) marketing and the travel industry.

Therefore, whether you're a do-it-yourself marketer in an emerging business, or have a strategic role in a larger organization, you might find something useful in this guide.

**It's not too late to take action:** 61% of marketers say their company hasn't rolled out fully-functional gen-AI projects yet.<sup>2</sup>

This playbook will also provide you with an **actionable framework** to strategically think and start integrating generative AI into your marketing efforts.

## About the Author of this Playbook

My name is Edoardo Monetti and I'm an experienced marketer, mentor to AI startups and founder of an agile consulting company specialized in marketing and commercial innovation in Travel and Hospitality.

In my career I've driven a broad range of initiatives with global reach across marketing, brand and distribution and managed up to 7-figure budgets, working with industry leaders like Booking.com and Qatar Airways, cooperating with top-tier partners in tourism, media and advertising and earning several industry certifications.

By combining global insights, fresh perspectives and proprietary frameworks like my *4-Dimensional Customer Journey Audit* or *Content Impact+*, I help leaders solve common challenges, while inspiring them to re-think marketing, brand and distribution to stand out in a competitive market.



### Let's connect!

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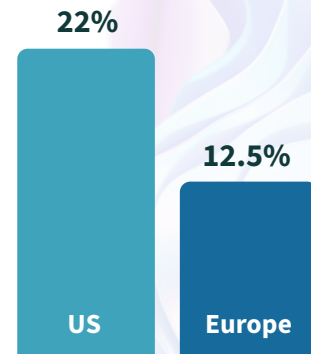
 [em-marketingconsulting.com](http://em-marketingconsulting.com)

# 1) Brand Discovery

The rapid adoption of conversational AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is **reshaping how users seek information**: By 2026, 21% of global search queries across all categories could happen on ChatGPT<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile Google -where 90%<sup>4</sup> of all searches are still happening today- introduced *AI overviews*, using LLMs (Large Language Models) to summarize information from different web sources directly in the search results and *AI Mode for Search*, with more advanced reasoning and multimodality.

In the months following the launch, several publishers reported drops in organic website traffic and CTR. As a response, a variety of strategies and experimental tactics to upgrade traditional SEO emerged, for example *GEO* (Generative Engine Optimization) or *AEO* (Answer Engine optimization).

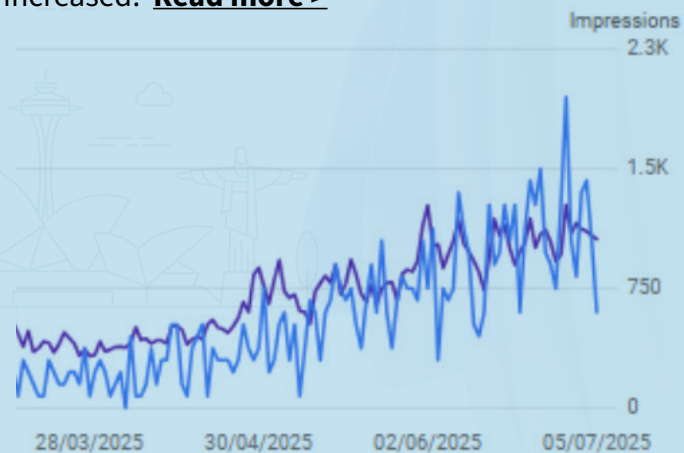


**Usage of AI-generated results for travel planning still varies across regions**

*Own elaboration, based on Phocuswright data (Europe=UK, Germany, France)*

## "SEO in Travel is dead!" ...or is it?

I've tracked the actual impact of AI search on organic traffic on a webpage built using traditional SEO techniques. Over 14 months, organic CTR decreased and traffic quality increased. [Read more >](#)



But while these shifts might sound like an urgent call to action, it's important to put them into perspective:

- **Just 8% of travelers<sup>5</sup>** today find inspiration on search engines, while they consult many more sources before booking a trip;
- **Major differences exist in availability and adoption of AI search across regions.** For example, usage of AI-generated search results for trip planning in Europe is still half compared to the US<sup>6</sup>; while *AI-mode for search* hasn't been rolled out to all countries yet;
- **Drops in organic traffic aren't necessarily a bad thing**, when metrics like time on page stay the same or increase.

Multiple sources today still recommend a balanced approach between AI integration and traditional SEO across all verticals.<sup>7,8</sup>

Some companies might find that now is the right moment to **re-think the role of SEO** within the whole discovery journey, rather than limiting it to a function often managed externally.

In fact, several signals point out that channels like social media or 3rd party review websites will become increasingly important trust signals both for LLMs and travelers seeking information.

### For a more strategic approach to brand discovery, consider breaking down your strategy into 3 levels:



#### SEO

Ensure SEO basics are in place, while experimenting with new keyword strategies (e.g. intent-based, conversational)



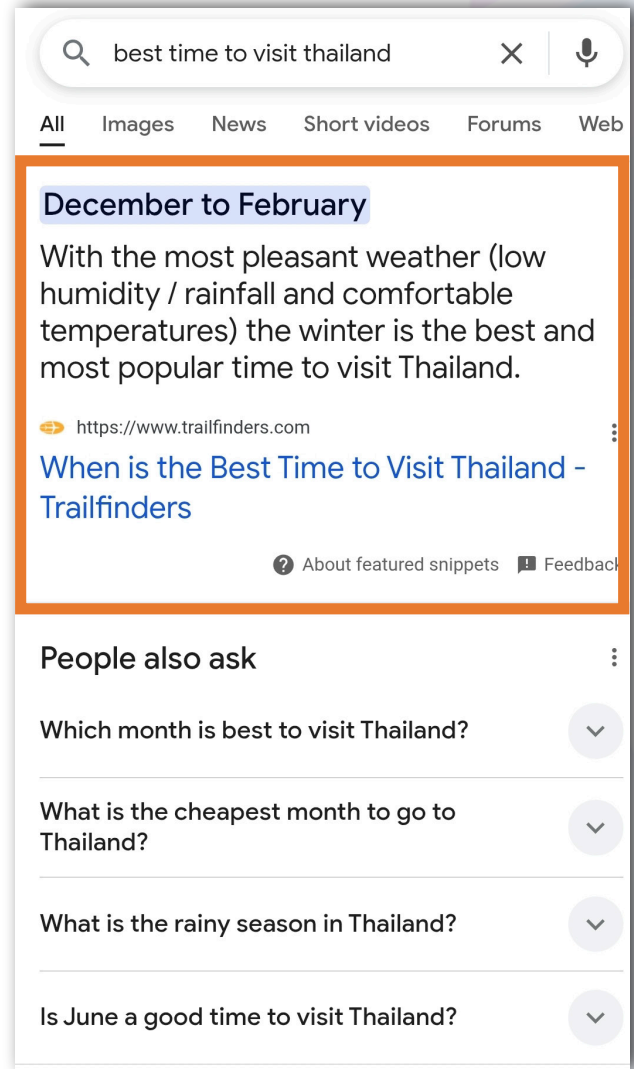
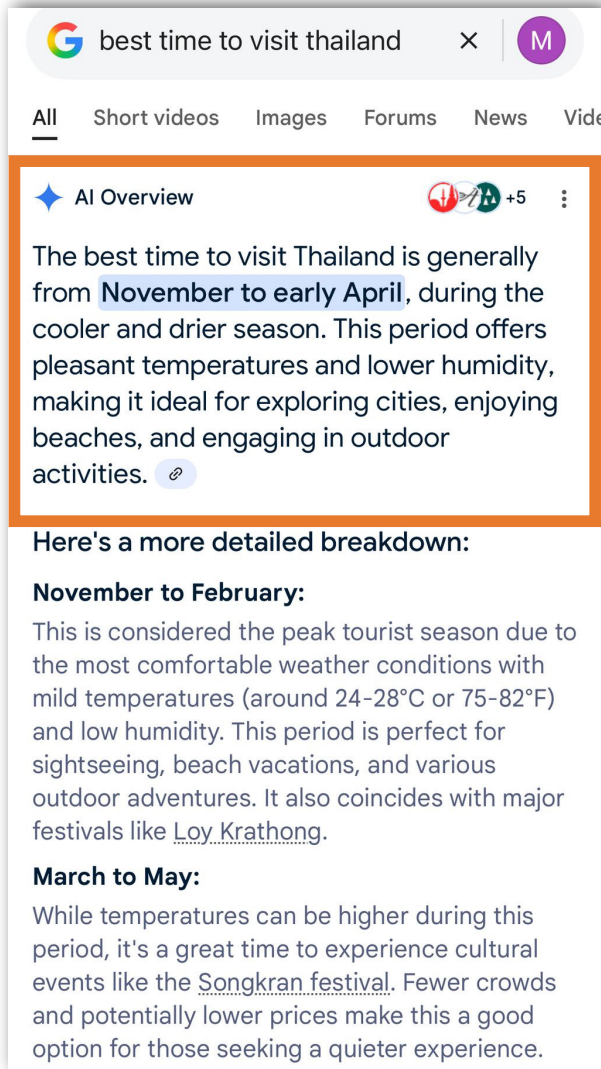
#### Content

Consistently focus on authentic, traveler-centric, fresh content in your content strategy



#### Traveler Journey

Ensure alignment and consistency across all potential touch points



**Same query, different outputs:** Google's *AI Overviews* referencing multiple sources (left screenshot) vs *Featured snippets* referencing one source (right screenshot). Availability of AI search functionalities still varies across regions and languages.

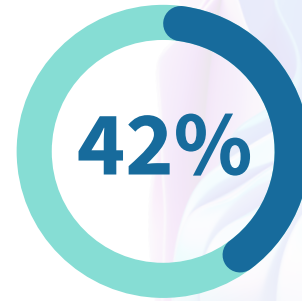
## 2) Creative Content Creation

Creative content creation is one of the most powerful use cases for generative AI: It presents a significant opportunity to unlock **creativity at scale** and produce high-quality assets more efficiently than ever before.

This matters especially to marketers in the travel industry, where social media -a notoriously *content-hungry* channel- has become the primary source of inspiration for travelers.

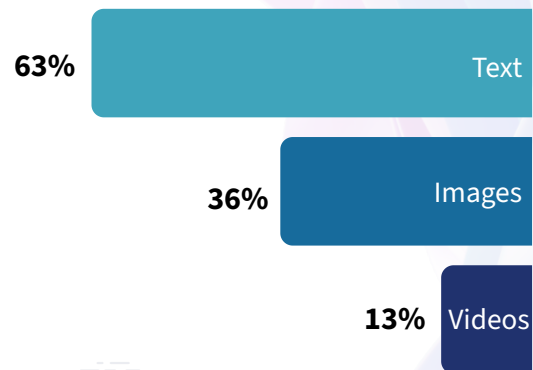
While some industry leaders envision that generative AI will one day collapse the gaps between creative strategy and execution, data reveals that today its most common use by marketers is **far more focused**: writing content. In fact when it comes to content creation, the majority of marketers still use genAI mainly for copywriting<sup>9</sup>.

But the opportunities, especially in the travel industry, are immense.



**of travelers find inspiration on Social Media**

Source: SKIFT State of travel 2025



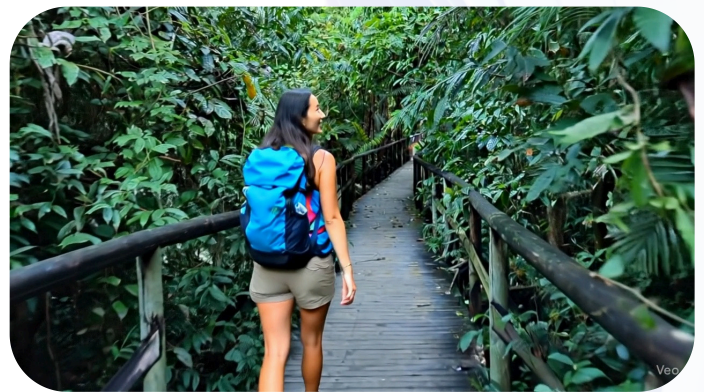
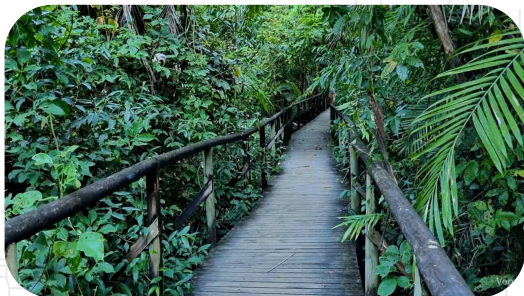
**How organizations are using genAI for content creation today**

Own elaboration, based on McKinsey data

For example, **imagine transforming a normal picture** of a hotel room into a short, dynamic video. A person could be seen walking through the space, even interacting with objects, and bringing the scene to life.

This type of application, already made possible by specialized agencies and software like *Veo*, can dramatically **reduce the cost and time** associated with producing engaging video content -especially for small- and medium-sized travel and hospitality businesses that are traditionally lacking fresh visuals.

While the opportunities are virtually endless, there are some challenges, too.



In this example, a low-resolution picture was transformed into a high quality video with a character



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One of the biggest ones is what the creative industry calls the "*sea of sameness*", where AI-generated content starts to look and feel indistinguishable.

Therefore, as AI becomes more sophisticated, it's essential to ensure your content still feels **genuine** and representative of your brand's unique identity.

Whether you're creating content in-house or working with an agency, adopting generative AI should be paired with a **robust brand strategy** that aligns to business goals, ensuring that every piece of content is aligned with your brand's values, voice, and visual identity.

If you don't already have a clear brand strategy, now it's perhaps the best time to start developing one.

***"With AI you need to become even more disciplined in your brand strategy"*** <sup>10</sup>

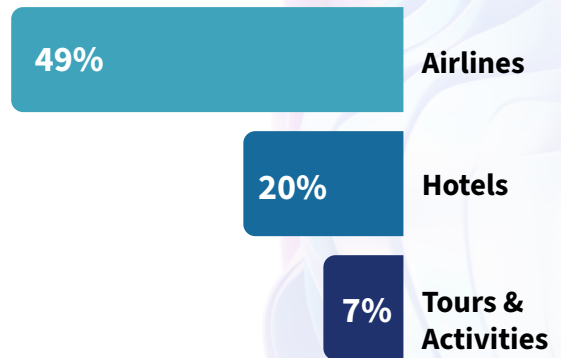


### 3) Distribution in the Agentic Era

The travel distribution landscape has become **increasingly fragmented** over the last years, with online penetration overall growing and distribution strategies still varying significantly across channels.

In this context, AI could further contribute to reshaping how demand and supply meet. Consumer-facing AI Agents for example, such as OpenAI's *Operator* or Perplexity's *Comet browser*, will be able to understand complex queries, plan multi-step tasks, and execute them on behalf of customers by interacting with different services and websites.

While initial results from these early agents have been mixed, some experts are betting on an **Agent-to-Agent** and **zero-click** future in travel distribution, where bookings would be handled entirely by AI agents communicating with each other, rather than by humans.



**Online penetration varies significantly across Travel & Hospitality**

*% of direct channel bookings on total.  
Own elaboration, source:  
Phocuswright<sup>11</sup>, SKIFT<sup>12</sup>*

***"The real reinvention comes when AI is applied to create simpler end-to-end journeys" <sup>13</sup>***

An agent-driven ecosystem could rewrite the distribution landscape, re-framing the role of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) and brand websites, opening up new opportunities for travel and hospitality providers to **sell their inventory directly**.

Innovate or be forgotten? Not so fast. While autonomous agents optimizing operations already exist, the timeline for a consumer-facing agentic future remains unclear, as it depends on factors such as wider user adoption and implementation of universal protocols enabling customers' and suppliers' Agents to speak directly to each other (like *Google's A2A* and *Anthropic's MCP*).

Moreover, the perceived value of autonomous agents might vary significantly across segments and purpose of travel: While wider adoption in B2C leisure travel - where **discovery** and **inspiration** remain key components of trip planning - seems challenging, Autonomous Agents might gain more traction in B2B environments. Think of last-minute business travelers, traditional travel agents, or agencies negotiating large volumes.

Why does this matter to marketers? Because in a “zero-click” scenario, **the customer journey** would collapse: An autonomous AI agent might handle the entire booking process, drastically reducing the number of touch points where brands can engage with customers -therefore removing one of the key advantages of direct bookings.

Meanwhile **AI-powered chatbots** (often referred to as agents), are widely available and can already augment the capabilities of traditional website chats, adding features like up-selling and cross-selling which marketers can leverage in their strategies.

***"Innovate or be forgotten?"***



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# From Hype to Action: A Framework

Here are four steps that travel marketers can start implementing today to navigate innovation while preparing for strategic implementation of AI:

## 01 **Assess the Impact of AI in your Context**

The impact and speed of adoption of AI will vary significantly across different countries, customer demographics, trip purposes, and travel verticals.

Before committing to major investments in new AI solutions or overhauling your strategy or workflows, take time to critically evaluate: How could this technology and new product launches really affect your sector and more specifically your business over the next one to three years?

## 02 **Cultivate a Culture of Experimentation**

Regardless to which extent your business will be exposed to the advancements in AI, start laying down the foundations by fostering a culture of experimentation. In fact, the companies that are best positioned to innovate are those that can iterate quickly, encouraging trial and error rather than striving for immediate perfection.

Consider integrating essential practices like A/B testing, unbiased measurement and feedback loops. By establishing a framework or even a *sandbox*<sup>14</sup> for rapid testing and learning, you can more effectively adapt to new technologies as they emerge.

## 03 **Select (and implement) AI tools that align to your goals**

Despite high-profile investment, only 5% of enterprises managed to integrate AI tools in workflows at scale, one recent study found out.<sup>15</sup> Therefore when selecting new AI tools, it's important to ensure they closely align to your broader marketing and business objectives.

The range of available tools is vast, but without a clear strategy behind selection and implementation, there's a risk of getting sidetracked from what truly matters to your business.

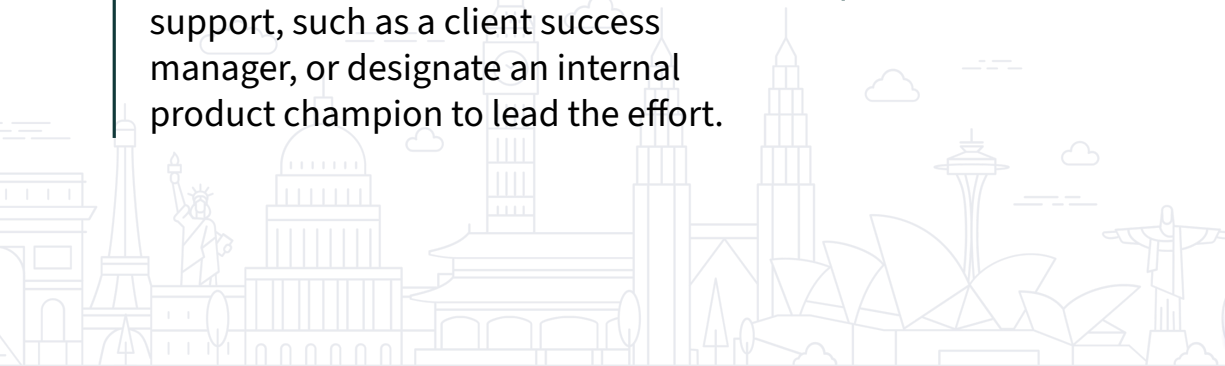
For example, higher volumes of content production enabled by genAI will necessitate more dynamic approval workflows. Make sure your solution vendor offers implementation support, such as a client success manager, or designate an internal product champion to lead the effort.

## 04 **Think along the entire customer journey**

AI and genAI could have an impact across the entire traveler journey, from discovery to booking and post-trip. How will you leverage this opportunity as a marketer?

Channel orchestration isn't enough anymore: BCG for example recommends rethinking the role of agencies and hiring broad-skilled marketing teams.<sup>16</sup>

Whether your company manages all channels in-house, or is outsourcing some of them, now could be the right moment to re-think ownership of the customer journey and ensuring close alignment between marketing channels and other business functions, like distribution and sales.



## How I can help

In this playbook we have seen how strategic alignment, holistic perspective, experimentation culture and traveler-centric approach will be some of the key assets for travel marketers in the age of AI.

As a multi-skilled marketer and strategy advisor I've driven initiatives from strategy to execution, working with senior stakeholders and external agencies and navigating change in fast-paced environments. Whether you're an emerging business, or a larger organization in travel and hospitality, here are some areas I can help you with:

### **Audit of the online traveler journey**

How do customers find you online? With my *4-dimensional Customer Journey Audit*® I use multiple POVs to identify gaps and opportunities in your brand's online presence, from website to 3rd party channels and AI search, providing actionable next steps for teams and agencies.

### **Develop or refine a brand strategy**

In the era of AI, brand-building will become an essential element for travel and hospitality companies that want to stand out. Using effective collaborative techniques and frameworks, I accompany marketers and leaders on a journey to define a brand strategy that connects to real business goals.

### **Implement AI solutions for marketing**

I work with teams and leaders to assist them on discovering, selecting and integrating AI solutions for marketing, bridging gaps between internal stakeholders and external vendors.



### **Get in touch!**

Send me a message to schedule a free intro call:

[info@em-marketingconsulting.com](mailto:info@em-marketingconsulting.com)

## Sources

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.emarketer.com/content/marketers-bet-on-ai--seo-still-drives-results>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai>

<sup>10</sup> Quote from a WPP executive at Cannes Lions Festival 2025

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