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# 25 irrefutable truths about AI for destination marketing

Explore the current state—and the not-too-distant future for tourism bureaus everywhere.



# The misconceptions

Separating AI hype from reality-and the myths that could lead us in the wrong direction.



**Myth: AI is just a smarter version of Google.**

**Truth: Google returns links, AI returns answers.**

**Myth: If it's on Google, AI will find it.**

**Truth: AI prioritizes clarity, structure,  
and repetition-not just existance.**

**Myth: Third-party travel sites matter more than DMO websites.**

**Truth: AI looks for authoritative sources, and DMOs are uniquely positioned to be one.**

**Myth: SEO tactics alone will protect visibility.**

**Truth: AI values usefulness, credibility, and completeness over keywords.**

**Myth: Losing traffic means losing value.**

**Truth: Influence now matters more than visitation.**



# The present state

Where we are right now—the tools, the shifts  
and the ground that's already moved beneath us.



**AI doesn't replace your brand voice—it amplifies it, for better or worse.**



**Your visitors are already using AI to plan trips. The question is how your destination shows up.**

**ChatGPT is now your visitors' default  
travel agent.  
You never opted in.**

**If your content isn't training AI,  
your competitor's content is.**



**AI tools are only as good as the data  
you feed them—  
garbage in, garbage out.**

**Most DMOs are using AI to save time,  
not to think bigger.  
That's a missed opportunity.**

**AI can write 100 blog posts.  
It still can't tell your destination's  
human story.**

**Your website is now competing  
against AI itineraries  
that never send you a single  
visitor...and they're winning.**

**The DMOs winning with AI  
aren't the biggest—  
they're the quickest to experiment.**

**Your visitors' AI assistants  
are reading your website.  
Are you writing for them?**

**AI can tell you what travelers want  
before they know it themselves.**



**Staff fear of AI is a leadership problem,  
not a technology problem.**

An aerial photograph of a city waterfront. On the left, modern high-rise buildings with glass facades line the shore. In the center, a large body of water, possibly a bay or harbor, stretches across the frame. On the right, a smaller island or peninsula is densely packed with residential houses, many with red roofs, and surrounded by lush greenery and palm trees. The sky above is a mix of deep blue and lighter, hazy blue, with scattered white clouds. A solid blue horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

# The tension and the risk

The uncomfortable truths about what AI gets wrong, what it can't do, and the risks of moving too fast or too slow.

**Authenticity is now your most  
defensible competitive advantage—  
AI can't manufacture it.**



**AI-generated content without human editorial oversight is a brand liability.**

**AI is about to pour more visitors to Orlando, Miami, and The Keys faster than ever – unless we use it to spread them out.**

**The destinations that share the most data will get the most from AI.  
Privacy walls have a cost.**

**If your communities aren't represented well in the data—your communities may be invisible.**

**AI doesn't understand place. You do.  
Never let it forget that.**





# The near future

What's coming in the next 2-5 years—and why the decisions you make today will determine your position tomorrow.



**Within 3 years, most people planning a Florida vacation won't start with Google. They'll start with an AI agent. Will it recommend you?**

**Agentic AI will book the entire Florida trip - flight, hotel, tickets – without the visitor ever seeing your website.**

**Dynamic, AI-personalized destination guides will replace static visitor maps and brochures.**

**Your next best marketing hire  
might be a prompt engineer  
who's never worked in tourism.**



**The DMOs that build  
proprietary data assets today  
will have an insurmountable  
AI advantage tomorrow.**

**AI-powered forecasting shifts shoulder  
season from reactive to intentional.**

**The line between marketing and operations will dissolve—AI connects both in real time.**



# The mindset shift

The deepest truths—the ones about leadership, culture and how you must think differently to lead in the AI era.



**AI isn't a department.**  
**It's an operating system**  
**for your entire organization.**



**The biggest AI mistake  
a DMO can make is waiting  
until it's perfect before starting.**

**Measuring AI ROI the old way will  
make it look like it's failing.  
Redefine what success looks like.**

# So, what now?

1

## Run a “How AI Sees Us” snapshot

Have one person ask the same 20-25 travel-planning questions in ChatGPT, Claude, Google AI Overviews:

- “Plan a weekend in [Destination]”
- “Best time to visit [Destination]”
- “Is [Destination] crowded?”
- “Hidden gems in [Destination]”

2

## Designate an internal AI owner (not a team)

Tomorrow, assign **one named person**—not a committee—to:

- Track AI mentions of the destination
- Coordinate learnings across marketing, comms, and content
- Bring 1 insight per month to leadership

3

## Add a simple “AI lens” to planning meetings

Tomorrow, add one standing question:

- *“How would AI explain this to a traveler?”*

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**Thank you!**

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