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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THREATS OR OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM?

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Purpose of the article: is to determine and discuss advantages and disadvantages to using artificial intelligence (AI) services in tourism and hospitality. Robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) are growing and advancing in tourism and hospitality industry that are considered one of the first industries to adopt them. Most travel agencies, tourist companies, airlines, hotels, restaurants, museums, car rental and resorts expected to perform their business accurately and efficiently and to bring great benefits providing high quality customer services on the base of AI technologies. The most important discussed question is: Does AI bring threats or opportunities for tourism and hospitality industry?

Methodology: research methods such as analysis (to reveal the pros and cons of adopting AI in tourism and hospitality), induction (to identify the main trends and the sequence of changes) and synthesis (to formulate conclusions) were used.

Conclusions: the application of AI services has many advantages for tourists, such as: speed, ease of use, efficiency, accuracy, answering clients' questions in their own languages, enhance tourists' experiences, save time and money, eliminate human error and providing many tasks at the same time. On the other hand, disadvantages to using AI services can be found.

Originality: an attempt is made to determine the changes of tourism service marketing in context of opportunities and obstacles with artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Tourism and Hospitality, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Advantages and Disadvantages, Threats and Opportunities.

Introduction

The incorporation of artificial intelligence into the tourism industry is a sophisticated and multifaceted process. On the positive side, it creates vast opportunities for innovation and enhancement of customer service quality. The advantages of utilizing AI in tourism and hospitality can be encapsulated as increased speed, intuitive and user-centered interfaces, greater efficiency in operations, and precise execution of tasks. Moreover, AI technologies are highly effective in addressing customer inquiries instantly, optimizing workflows, and managing multiple functions concurrently, fundamentally transforming service delivery methods [16].

It is essential to recognize potential challenges associated with AI integration in tourism and to establish strategies for mitigating risks effectively. Artificial intelligence is rapidly gaining significance within the tourism industry, revolutionizing areas ranging from travel planning to on-site customer support. By offering innovative tools, AI enhances operational workflows and elevates the traveler experience, underscoring its growing role in this sector.

Today, numerous travel enterprises—including airlines, hotels, restaurants, museums, car rental agencies, and resorts—are leveraging AI technologies to streamline their operations and deliver superior services. From personalized travel recommendations to efficient customer support systems, these advancements demonstrate how AI can enable businesses to operate with greater precision, reliability, and customer satisfaction. According to the research by TravelTech Show, 80% of travel companies

surveyed plan to increase their use of AI in 2025 [10]. This indicates the growing role of AI in this industry.

This study aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of integrating AI technologies into the tourism and hospitality industries, recognizing its significance as a hallmark of modern technological advancement. The research investigates how AI influences business operations within these economic sectors, examining whether its adoption presents opportunities or challenges for the industry.

To achieve this objective, the study employs a combination of analytical methods. Analysis is used to identify the benefits and drawbacks of implementing AI in tourism and hospitality. Inductive reasoning highlights emerging trends and the sequence of transformative changes brought by AI. Finally, synthesis integrates these insights to draw comprehensive conclusions about the role and impact of AI on these sectors.

Materials and methods

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly revolutionizing various facets of modern life, with the tourism sector being no exception. Advanced technologies such as machine learning, sophisticated data analysis, and neural networks are redefining how we plan, experience, and interact with travel. By offering tailored recommendations and automating repetitive tasks, AI is transforming the travel and hospitality landscape, presenting both groundbreaking opportunities and notable challenges.

The incorporation of AI in tourism and hospitality manifests in diverse forms, catering to a wide range of applications. Cutting-edge developments include AI-powered chatbots, immersive virtual reality tools, digital assistants, and robotic systems. Self-service innovations, such as automated check-ins, digital kiosks, and interactive service stations, enable customers to independently access services, reducing dependence on human personnel. Notable applications include seamless online booking for flights and accommodations, automated hotel check-in and check-out systems, electronic boarding solutions at airports, and food orders via AI-driven chatbots. These technological advancements significantly boost operational efficiency, enhance customer convenience, and contribute to a frictionless travel experience [9].

Travel businesses are actively using AI and are benefited greatly from it. The share of revenue impacted by AI has increased globally from 9% in 2018 to 21% in 2021. And it is projected to reach 32% in 2024 [19].

Table 1. Main areas and tasks of AI use

Working with clients	56% of companies are using AI for customer service and 46% for CRM. Using AI for customer service requests can result in up to 30% cost savings.
Working with feedbacks	AI qualitatively processes feedbacks, groups it into categories, analyzes survey results, and forms conclusions.
Marketing	AI suggests methods and channels for implementing a marketing campaign and generates reports, as well as: • tracks user behavior on social networks; • tracks comments on user's pages and suggestions for new posts and accounts to follow; • analyzes massive data sets to understand the behavior and preferences of tourists; • researches trends; • creates targeted marketing campaigns.
Content creation	35% of companies already use AI to write texts and create images. This saves time and gives the opportunity to have a completely unique image, not downloaded from a photo bank that hundreds of other people can use, but truly unique – with your subtext and in your style.

Compiled by the authors. Source: [20]

According to research published by Forbes Advisor:

- **97% of entrepreneurs** acknowledge that tools like ChatGPT can significantly benefit their business operations.
- **64% of organizations** recognize the potential of AI in boosting overall productivity.
- **44% of companies** utilize ChatGPT for tasks such as crafting website content and translating it into multiple languages.
- **64% of business leaders** believe AI is instrumental in strengthening customer relationships [15].

The integration of artificial intelligence in customer service is revolutionizing industries, including travel and hospitality. Numerous businesses, including airlines, hotels, restaurants, museums, and car rental agencies, are harnessing AI technology to optimize workflows, enhance operational efficiency, and provide outstanding customer experiences.

A 2023 survey by Forrester further emphasizes this shift, reporting that **three-quarters of travel-related businesses** plan to increase their investments in AI over the next two years. This growing focus on AI highlights its pivotal role in driving innovation, improving competitiveness, and shaping the future of the tourism and hospitality sectors.

The most popular uses of AI are:

- real-time translation and language support (46.4%),
- personalized recommendations for tourist attractions, restaurants and other activities (24.8%),
- navigation and transportation assistance (18%).
- more accessible tourist information (30.7%),
- simplification of booking landmarks and events (29%),
- providing personalized recommendations (24.3%),
- improved transportation options for visitors (15.4%).

An important element for a country seeking to expand the destinations preferred by international tourists is that AI can help them discover unknown and interesting places (29.7%). As it can make it easier for them to plan and implement a trip to the country (27.8%), as well as make the experience more personal and enjoyable (25.2%) [13].

For businesses in the travel and hospitality sectors, one of the most sought-after uses of artificial intelligence (AI) is providing seamless online customer assistance. Advanced technologies such as smart

home systems, robot assistants, chatbots, and guest data analytics are becoming increasingly prevalent in modern hotels. These innovations aim to enhance customer experiences while improving operational efficiency.

A report by Vero Solutions predicts that by 2030, robots will largely replace human staff in hotel check-in processes [14]. For instance, the Henn-na Hotel in Nagasaki has already made history as the first hotel fully staffed by multilingual robots, primarily responsible for check-in and check-out services [11]. Similarly, Connie a humanoid robot employed at the Hilton McLean Hotel in Virginia, represents another milestone in AI integration within hospitality.

AI is also transforming travel with predictive technologies. These tools analyze historical data and trends to forecast travel disruptions, such as flight delays, with remarkable accuracy. By combining historical patterns with real-time weather forecasts, AI provides actionable recommendations, helping travelers and businesses avoid potential issues.

In addition, AI-driven services like **Booking Experiences**, introduced by Booking.com, allow tourists to plan leisure activities and skip lines in major world capitals using a QR code [7]. Furthermore, leading cruise companies such as Royal Caribbean and Carnival utilize AI to anticipate customer demand and refine their procurement processes, ensuring a superior guest experience and optimized inventory management [6].

These advancements underline AI's pivotal role in reshaping the travel and hospitality industry, offering convenience, personalization, and enhanced efficiency to both businesses and customers.

Results and discussions

AI has significantly improved tourism, offering many benefits to both, travelers and businesses:

Table 2. Advantages of AI in tourism.

1	**Improved customer service and personalized experience**	Artificial intelligence enables around-the-clock customer support through virtual assistants and chatbots. These tools deliver tailored recommendations and promptly address user concerns, ensuring a seamless experience. This personalized approach enhances customer satisfaction by offering customized services that align with the unique preferences and expectations of each traveler.
2	**Improving the efficiency of logistics and travel planning**	Artificial intelligence enhances travel logistics by efficiently organizing schedules, forecasting potential delays, and optimizing travel routes. This ensures a more seamless journey for customers while enabling travel companies to allocate and manage their resources more effectively. The application of AI not only improves operational efficiency but also contributes to a higher quality of service, making the overall travel experience more enjoyable and hassle-free.
3	**Cost savings**	AI-driven systems for dynamic pricing and intelligent booking enable travelers to access the most competitive deals in real-time, while empowering travel companies to optimize their revenue by adjusting prices in response to fluctuations in demand. Furthermore, the automation of routine operations significantly lowers operational expenses for travel businesses, boosting efficiency and profitability while enhancing the customer experience.
4	**Dynamic pricing**	Adapting prices to market needs in real time regime. In fact, hotels and airlines are constantly adjusting room or flight prices based on the availability of places and changes of demand.
5	**Tour guide.**	Multimedia tour guides represent an evolution of GPS with real-time updated geo-referenced information.

6	**Enhanced wildlife excursions.**	Are used to detect objects in real time mode to identify animals and plants, providing tourists with detailed information about the species they encounter. This makes encountering wildlife more educational and engaging, promoting a deeper perception of nature.
7	**Safety.**	AI systems detect suspicious behaviors and alert security authorities. As a consequence, this reduces the risk of crime within tourist destinations.
8	**Improved visual search.**	Tourists can utilize their smartphone cameras to capture images of landmarks, artworks, or various objects. By leveraging computer vision technology, these images can be analyzed to accurately identify the objects and offer comprehensive details, historical insights, or personalized suggestions. This functionality adds a layer of interactivity and depth to the exploration experience, making it more engaging and educational for travelers.
9	**Virtual travel assistants and chat bots.**	With round-the-clock availability for managing hotel bookings and responding to customer inquiries, AI-driven tools ensure instant automated replies, significantly cutting down on response times. In many instances, these intelligent systems can enhance the overall travel experience more efficiently than traditional human assistance, offering faster, more accurate, and tailored support.
10	**Hospitality and accommodation.**	AI is being leveraged to enhance guest services in hotels, with smart systems and virtual concierges delivering tailored experiences, streamlined check-in processes, and personalized recommendations. These innovations contribute to a more comfortable and convenient stay, ensuring that each guest enjoys a high level of satisfaction and convenience throughout their visit.
11	**Improving tourist attractions.**	AI is transforming visitor experiences by enhancing attractions with virtual tours and augmented reality. This technology offers a more interactive and immersive way to explore landmarks, museums, and historical sites, deepening visitors' understanding and enriching their enjoyment of each destination. By combining digital innovations with physical exploration, tourists can engage with locations in dynamic new ways that were previously unimaginable.
12	**Preservation of monuments.**	AI can significantly enhance conservation efforts by monitoring and adjusting environmental conditions, analyzing data to foresee potential issues, and preserving digital records. This allows for proactive management of preservation tasks and ensures that valuable heritage sites or objects remain protected from deterioration. By leveraging AI, we can maintain a more accurate, responsive, and sustainable approach to safeguarding cultural and natural resources.

Compiled by the authors. **Source: [19]**

The advantages of integrating AI into the tourism industry are clear, offering opportunities to streamline operations, analyze trends effectively, and enable businesses to treat travelers as unique, highly valued customers. Through advanced data analytics, companies gain precise insights into customer preferences and behaviors, allowing for tailored services that meet individual needs. Beyond enhancing traveler satisfaction, one of the most significant benefits of adopting AI in tourism is its potential to boost company revenues by driving efficiency and creating more compelling offerings.

The adoption of AI and digital technologies has also transformed the consumer's role within the tourism market. Travelers are no longer passive buyers; they are active participants, often referred to as

"prosumers" (a blend of "producer" and "consumer"). This shift reflects their involvement not only in consuming services but also in co-creating them. Travelers now contribute to the development of tourism services by sharing feedback, participating in online reviews, and shaping personalized experiences, making them integral to the value chain.

This evolution underscores the critical role of AI in enabling businesses to forge closer relationships with their customers while maximizing operational and financial performance [12]. Thus, in modern conditions, customers can search for information about a destination or book a flight through chat-bots on the websites of travel companies, which can provide information about available offers, weather changes, answer the necessary questions and explain unclear information and details [18].

Threats of Artificial Intelligence in Tourism

Despite its incredible usefulness, the integration of artificial intelligence into the travel and tourism industry can have its drawbacks for travelers and for businesses. Some of these threats include.

Data privacy and security challenges. AI systems process a huge amount of personal data of tourists. If data protection is insufficient, there is a risk of data leakage, which can lead to financial losses, fraud and loss of trust in travel companies.

Workplace diminishing. Automation of routine tasks and changes of qualification requirements could lead to job cuts in the tourism industry.

Inequality of access. Not all tourists have equal access to modern technology. As a result, some tourists may be cut off from the benefits provided by AI.

Social inequality. AI can exacerbate existing social inequalities by providing more personalized services and offers to wealthy tourists.

Dependence on technologies. AI system failures can lead to serious inconveniences for tourists, such as canceled bookings, data loss, etc.

Acceptance. One of the biggest challenges for artificial intelligence in tourism is its acceptance by customers and companies within the sector. Travelers may not necessarily like the idea of relying on an automated system to organize their vacations, and companies, in their turn, may be concerned about the cost and effort involved in implementing this technology.

Ethics. In addition, AI can also create ethical issues related to privacy and the use of personal data. Therefore, it is important to ensure that companies using AI in tourism comply with privacy and data security regulations.

Competitiveness. AI can help increase the efficiency of tourism businesses, which can reduce costs and improve customer service. However, it can also lead to increased AI competitiveness and potential job losses.

Dependence on technologies and loss of personal touch. Excessive reliance on AI technologies can diminish the personal connection that many travelers appreciate. The value of human interaction and tailored service remains a vital part of the travel experience, aspects that AI may struggle to completely replicate.

Challenges in processing complex, unstructured travel queries. While AI excels at performing straightforward tasks, it often encounters difficulties when addressing more intricate, open-ended travel inquiries that require nuanced understanding and judgment. This limitation underscores the need for a synergy between AI systems and human expertise, allowing for more comprehensive handling of diverse customer needs.

Recently, much attention has been paid to the risks and negative consequences of using artificial intelligence. Active discussions are underway on the issues of job development or elimination, bias and objectivity of AI in decision-making.

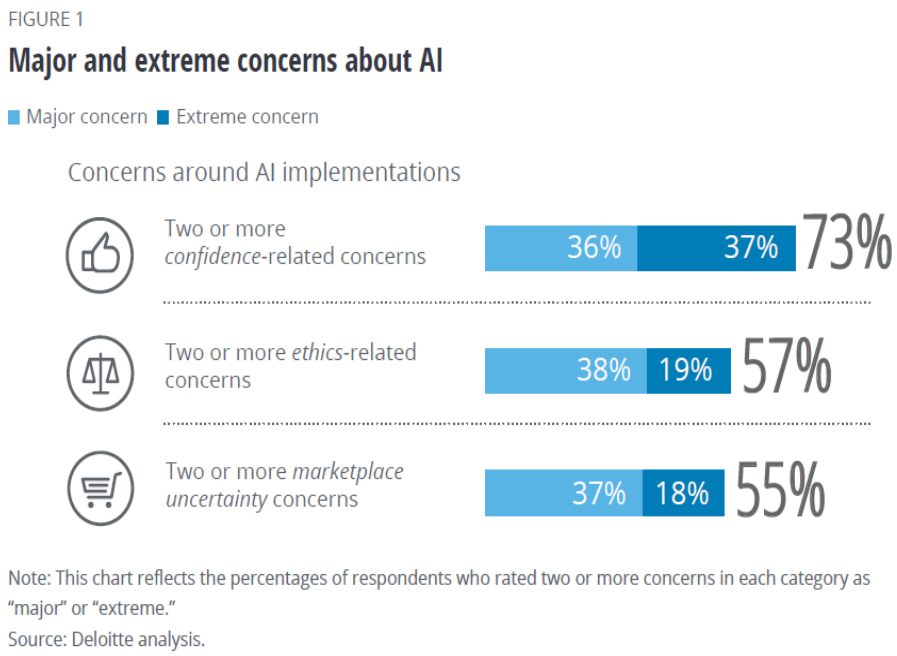


Fig.1. Importance of threat factors regarding AI.

The rapid integration of AI into various industries has raised significant concerns that revolve around several key factors, including trust in AI's decision-making, ethical issues surrounding data usage, and the uncertainty within the market. Trust, in this context, involves a company's confidence in the reliability of AI systems, the security of these tools, and the transparency of the decision-making process. Ethical concerns focus on whether AI's deployment benefits society, alongside issues such as privacy, bias, fairness, and the potential impact on employment. While these issues are not directly related to the performance of AI itself, they significantly influence the feasibility and acceptance of its use. The importance of these factors is clearly highlighted in survey results, demonstrating how they shape the adoption of AI technologies.

- 73% of respondents state that risks associated with trusting artificial intelligence are important. These concerns are most closely related to the quality of the products and services that the company provides, and thus affect the company's reputation.
- 57% of respondents noted the importance of the ethical component of using AI. The peculiarity of the ethical problem of using artificial intelligence is that the data used for decision-making may be incomplete and biased.
- 55% of respondents indicated the importance of market uncertainty and the resulting questions about the feasibility of investment. This category includes a wide range of issues: from public opinion to an ambiguous regulatory framework. Concerns are raised about new rules and regulations regarding data protection, facial recognition and transparency of decisions. Companies using artificial intelligence are concerned about the public reaction to AI errors, as well as employee attitudes towards the use of AI.

Recognition of the importance of using AI technologies by companies has increased by 10% within a year. However, there are a number of concerns about the pace of AI adoption. 56% of organizations surveyed say they plan to slow down or are already slowing down their adoption of AI due to emerging risks.

The researchers say that most AI-related risks (51%) arise from the work of systems themselves, rather than human actions (34%). At the same time, 65% of risks arise after the AI model has already been trained and deployed, and only 10% before that.

The professional community discusses risks related to the safety, failures and limitations of AI systems (76%), socio-economic and environmental damage (73%), and discrimination and toxicity (71%). Less attention is paid to human-computer interaction (41%) and misinformation (44%).

ISO: The independent international organization for standards has issued an international standard ISO/IEC 42001:2023. The document is the world's first standard that defines requirements for the creation, implementation, maintenance and continuous improvement of an artificial intelligence management system (AIMS) in organizations.

The standard is intended for organizations providing or using AI-based products or services to ensure the responsible development, evolution, and use of AI systems.

The standard provides a structured way to manage the risks and opportunities associated with AI, balancing innovation with governance, and provides guidance on how to manage AI technologies in areas such as ethical considerations, transparency, and continuous learning.

Unfortunately, reliable data on the usage of AI in the tourism and hospitality sector in the Republic of Moldova is not available. However, several barriers can be identified that hinder the full realization of AI's potential in this field:

- **Shortage of skilled personnel** there is a noticeable lack of AI experts and specialists in Moldova, making it difficult to implement and manage AI-driven innovations.
- **Insufficient funding** there is a notable lack of financial resources dedicated to the growth and development of AI technologies in the region.
- **Absence of a regulatory framework** Moldova lacks comprehensive laws and regulations governing the use of AI. To address this, new legislation is needed to establish guidelines for its application and ensure ethical and safe use.

Despite these obstacles, the adoption of AI in the tourism and hospitality sector holds significant potential. AI implementation can lead to increased productivity, enhanced service quality, and the creation of new employment opportunities, which could serve as a catalyst for economic growth in the country.

Conclusions

Artificial intelligence is poised to become one of the fundamental catalysts for the growth of the tourism sector in the coming years. However, its successful integration will require a careful and strategic approach to address both opportunities and challenges. While there are limitations to its adoption, as of 2024, the advantages of AI significantly outweigh the drawbacks.

In tourism and hospitality, the nature of interactions is gradually shifting from traditional human-to-human engagement to human-machine and eventually to human-robot communication. AI is expected to play a pivotal role in automating and streamlining numerous operations, thereby reducing the workload on industry employees. Despite this, the expertise and oversight of human professionals remain essential in guiding and validating AI-driven decisions. Moreover, a considerable segment of customers continues to favor direct human interaction, especially during trip planning, where emotional understanding and nuanced judgment are critical. For example, families seeking customized itineraries often value the insights of an experienced travel consultant over recommendations generated by algorithms.

Tourism and hospitality industries are deeply rooted in human connection, and while AI can enhance efficiency, it cannot fully replicate the emotional intelligence and personalized touch inherent in human interactions. This underscores the enduring significance of the human element, particularly in scenarios where trust and empathy are paramount, such as creating optimal travel experiences for families with young children.

Overall, artificial intelligence presents immense potential to propel the tourism industry toward greater innovation and efficiency. However, the industry must also focus on identifying and mitigating associated risks by implementing robust security protocols and establishing ethical guidelines.

Future research directions may include examining the influence of AI-powered technologies such as robotics and virtual reality on tourists' behavior, satisfaction, and overall experiences [17].

Investigating how demographic factors shape tourists' perceptions of AI services could provide valuable insights. Additionally, unexplored areas like the economic impact of AI, its role in enhancing service quality, and its legal and ethical implications deserve further academic and industry attention.

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