REPORT

The Big Idea

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and What It Means for Business Travel Management

AI is transforming our lives in countless ways both personally and professionally. The Big Idea session at GBTA APAC and GBTA Europe conference addressed what AI means for our industry, the opportunities for Business Travel in terms of enhanced service, who has most to gain and the impact on the travel program, travel manager and traveler experience.

THE PRESENT

How are organizations currently using AI across the board and in the travel category?

1. Content Creation and Communication

- Emails: Streamlining and automating emails and correspondence.
- Meeting notes: Enhancing documentation through automation.
- Marketing content: Boosting efficiency in content generation.
- Communication operations: Optimizing overall communication processes.

AI is harnessed to streamline content creation and communication processes. From crafting emails and documenting meeting notes to generating marketing content, it enhances operational efficiency in various communication facets.

2. Automation and Operational Efficiency

- Excel sheet automation: Streamlining spreadsheet tasks efficiently.
- Budget recommendations: Providing intelligent financial insights.
- Expense management: Streamlining expense tracking and reporting.
- Knowledge bank updates: Ensuring timely and accurate information.
- Data collection: Facilitating efficient and seamless data gathering.

In the realm of operational efficiency, AI serves as a powerful tool for automation. It automates tasks such as Excel sheet management, provides intelligent budget recommendations, streamlines expense management, updates knowledge banks, and facilitates seamless data collection, contributing to overall operational excellence.

3. Language Translation and Personalization

- Better translation options: Elevating language services for accessibility and global travelers.
- Personalized content delivery: Tailoring content for enhanced user experiences.

AI innovations extend to language services, offering improved translation options. Moreover, it enables the delivery of personalized content, ensuring information is presented in bespoke languages efficiently and cost-effectively, thereby enhancing user experiences.

Two Main Applications of AI:

Back Office
Behind-the-scenes technology.

Front Office
Traveler-facing technology.

4. Customer Interaction and Support

- Chatbots addressing queries: Providing 24/7 assistance for the efficient handling of travel or policy-related queries.
- Post-trip feedback: Gathering valuable insights for continuous improvement of services.
- Interaction with customers for service-related questions: Engaging effectively with customers to address service-related enquiries.

AI's impact on customer interaction is notable, with chatbots efficiently handling queries, gathering valuable post-trip feedback, and engaging in meaningful interactions with customers to address common service-related questions. This significantly elevates the overall traveler experience.

5. Data Analysis and Intelligence

- Data sets and reviews for sales and marketing: Offering insights for targeted interactions.
- Predictive analytics: Enhancing decision-making for anticipating and adapting to future trends.
- Data classification and comparison: Ensuring accurate categorization and nuances for comprehensive analysis.

AI plays a pivotal role in data analysis and intelligence, providing insights for sales and marketing efforts. It excels in predictive analytics, ensuring data is classified accurately and facilitating nuanced comparisons, thereby empowering data-driven decision-making.

6. Financial Operations and Compliance

- Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A): Aiding strategic financial decision-making.
- Fraud detection: Safeguarding operations through proactive identification.
- Compliance with regulations: Ensuring adherence to legal requirements.
- Credit limit underwriting: Assessing credit risk for prudent financial management.

In the financial domain, AI is a strategic ally. It aids in Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A), detects, and prevents fraud, ensures compliance with regulations, and underwrites credit limits by assessing previous spend, payment history, and credit history. This ensures financial processes are not only accurate but also aligned with regulatory requirements.

7. Software Development and Industry Transformation

- Code generation by AI: Improving software development productivity.
- Industry-wide productivity boost: Transforming operational efficiency across sectors.

AI's prowess extends to software development through code generation, marking a significant leap in productivity. This transformative capability is anticipated to reshape the entire industry, not solely confined to the travel sector, marking a new era in technological advancement and efficiency.

Business Travel Use Cases

Rate Comparison

AI's data classification capabilities identify identical hotel room and bed types. Data comparison functionalities facilitate rate assessments across diverse sources, encompassing room and bed types. The predictive capabilities of AI can anticipate market trends.

Expense Management

AI seamlessly matches transactions with credit card data. The benefit is considerable time savings compared to manual processes. Additionally, AI addresses discrepancies in transaction amounts, such as those resulting from currency exchange fluctuations, ensuring accuracy in financial records.

Content Creation

AI has the capacity to streamline the content creation process and can craft impactful and compelling content for communications and marketing purposes, in your desired tone. Whether it's formulating clear and engaging service descriptions, or efficiently articulating travel policies or email marketing messages.

Email Classification

AI identifies 5 intents (new booking, change, cancel, resend invoice/itinerary, general customer service) and directs emails to specialized teams or automation, excluding nonactionable ones. It achieves 97% accuracy on "resend invoice" and 95% accuracy on trip cancellation. Human touch points are integrated for quality assurance.

24/7 Traveler FAQ

An AI-powered chatbot employs Conversational AI (Natural Language Processing, Generative AI) for seamless interaction: travelers utilize a chat to enquire about their company's travel policy. The technology significantly improves the traveler experience by providing accessibility at any time, thereby liberating the travel manager from repetitive enquiries and allowing them to allocate time more efficiently.

Medical and Security Alerts

The imperative lies in the rapid delivery of alerts to ensure timely information. Stringent quality control measures are in place, mandating 100% accuracy in data input for heightened reliability of alerts. Recognizing the importance of precise communication with travelers, emphasis is placed on improving translation for clearer messaging. A focus on personalization underscores the provision of tailored health, security, and advisory services to enhance the overall travel experience.

Market Highlights
Prominent uses of AI

APAC
personalization and data

Europe
data and operations

By 2025, 45% of service organizations will be using generative AI to improve operational efficiency.

Gartner 28 August 2023 - ID G00796452

THE PRESENT

Industry Sentiment Check

Different Stages in the Travel Managers' AI Journey:

| Not using AI at all in their program. | → | Are in an exploration phase. | → | Already using AI to some extent. | → | Are in an initial pilot or already have solutions up and running. |
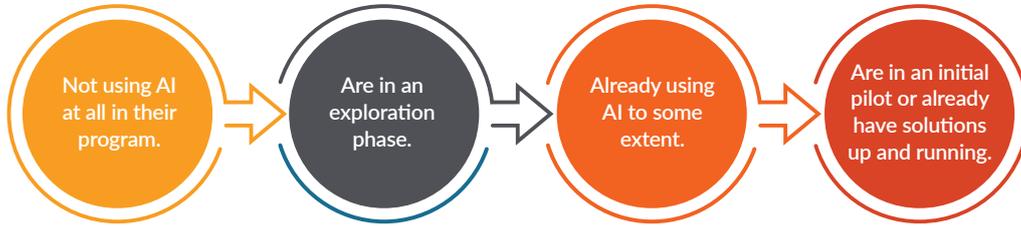
Three travel manager personas stand out:

THE EXPERT
Certain industries show greater advancements than others, with notable progress observed in IT, banking, pharmaceuticals, consulting, and service-oriented businesses. Some of these sectors maintain dedicated teams to further augment their capabilities. Travel managers benefit from this company culture.

THE SUPPORTER
They embrace the opportunity to integrate AI within their organizations. They understand it serves to complement rather than replace human efforts, enhancing skills and enabling them to work more efficiently and intelligently to avoid redundancy by automated processes.

THE GATEKEEPER
AI is considered beneficial for fundamentals but not imperative for these travel managers. In customer service, AI can handle basic tasks but requires a human touch for nuanced interactions. They position AI more as a future prospect than an immediate impact on tasks.

The Benefits of AI for Travel Programs

Automation
Realize enhanced operational efficiency by automating low-value tasks.

Time saving
Achieve significant time savings through streamlined processes.

Compliance
Facilitate compliance adherence with AI-driven monitoring and reporting.

Cost saving
Realize cost savings through optimized resource allocation.

Efficiency
Enhance overall efficiency, encompassing productivity, speed to market, and communication.

Inventory Management
Optimize travel inventory management for improved control and resource utilization: right offer, at the right time, for the right traveler.

Traveler Experience
Elevate traveler experience through AI-driven enhancements.

Traveler Safety
Empower travel safety through proactive risk assessment, surveillance, and emergency response, alongside personalized travel assistance for a comprehensive safety approach.

Data Security
Ensure robust data security with fraud detection, encryption, and behavioral analysis for anomaly detection.

THE FUTURE

The AI Empowered Travel Program / Traveler Experience

A few areas where travel programs may be transformed by AI were discussed. Here are a few scenarios:

Sourcing and Contracting

In the AI-driven landscape of travel sourcing and contracting, sourcing strategies dynamically adapt based on market conditions and company objectives.

Traveler Servicing

AI revolutionizes traveler servicing, automating for example the identification for visa needs and applications, and dynamically managing risks in evolving situations. It introduces language translation, crucial for conferences and emergency alerts for example, ensuring seamless communication tailored to individual preferences.

Distribution and Booking

Distribution undergoes a transformation with multichannels. The Online Booking Tool (OBT) is not the unique point of entry anymore. AI's predictive capabilities anticipate travel needs, enabling policy-compliant suggestions even in the absence of an OBT. Multichannel booking becomes more efficient, predominantly for simple bookings, emphasizing the cost benefits of increased online transactions.

Booking Enhancements

AI redefines the booking experience with seamless anticipatory capabilities (not OBT related), simplifying the process for travelers. The prevalence of online bookings rise, reducing costs through fewer offline transactions. The integration of conversational solutions (chat) and personalized recommendations further enhances the user experience. Chat takes over voice.

Strategy Implementation

AI interprets voice, messages, and data for valuable insights into the travel experience, providing actionable feedback for strategy refinement.

Analytics and Data Integration

In the digital era, AI links disparate data points to identify issues. It brings together digital information to provide comprehensive analytics, enhancing decision-making capabilities.

Governance Dynamics

AI introduces flexibility into policy application, allowing for real-time adjustments based on market conditions or corporate objectives. It adapts contracts, sourcing approaches, and overall processes to align with evolving business needs.

In the digital era, AI links disparate data points to identify issues.

Obstacles & Concerns

Technology Maturity and Trust Dynamics

As technology matures, the acceptance of technology being able to comprehend enquiries (including tone of voice, body language) and technology-driven decisions, and the tolerance for occasional mistakes, just like humans make mistakes, are two concerns.

Authenticity and Human Touch Integration

Preserving authenticity and integrating a human touch remains pivotal to enhance the users' experience.

Data Copyright and IP Rights

The use of copyrighted material in training datasets leads to questions on the ownership of the content generated.

Corporate Policy

The interplay of corporate policies, regional differences, and sector-specific needs becomes evident. A deeper understanding of these nuances is crucial for tailoring the technology to diverse organizational landscapes.

User Privacy and Confidentiality

There is an inherent tension between harnessing the capabilities of AI and safeguarding user privacy.

Information Security and Regulatory Landscape

Addressing cyber threats, confidentiality, and regulatory gaps is critical for reliable usage. Legal frameworks that adapt to the evolving landscape of AI technology are needed.

Integrity and Ethical Considerations

Guarding against data manipulation and external influences: ensuring the integrity of data and responses, avoiding potential manipulation and external influences (bias). For example, how does user feedback or paid content influence the output?

Accountability and Liability

Clear protocols for addressing mistakes and assigning responsibility must be considered.

Transparency in Data Usage and Ownership

Ensuring clarity about data sources: what data is being used or shared, who owns the data, and what are the sources of outputs?

Job Security

Programs should emphasize an AI focus on improving the traveler experience rather than solely economizing the supply chain.

Key Lessons

1 Find Effective Business Applications

- Are there places in your program where AI can start to make a difference?
- Top tip: it doesn't have to be a high impact scenario nor a huge effort. Don't just implement AI for the sake of it.

2 Testing Is Key

AI is an ongoing journey; it is in constant evolution. Start small by implementing AI supported by human touchpoints, with processes in place to make sure of the accuracy of the technology.

3 Adoption Will Depend On a Few Key Factors:

- Corporate culture.
- Traveler culture.
- Risk tolerance.

Market Highlights
Top Concerns

APAC
data accuracy, data privacy, job security

Europe
data privacy

The Big Idea Session in Numbers

More than
700
GBTA members have collaboratively reflected on this topic.

More than **30** nationalities represented.

2
Regions:
Europe & APAC.

Made Possible by **BCD travel**

GBTA Global Business Travel Association