

Digital Transformation in the Tourism Industry: Leveraging AI Technologies and Innovation Management for Enhanced Tourist Experiences

การเปลี่ยนผ่านสู่ดิจิทัลที่ขับเคลื่อนด้วยปัญญาประดิษฐ์ในอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว: ผลกระทบต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงองค์กรและประสบการณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยว

Zhijuan Zha^{1*}, OU BAI², Apichaya Kunthino³, Suprawin Nachiangmai⁴

Received:

April 29th, 2026.

Revised:

May 22th, 2026

Accepted:

August 26th, 2026

DOI:

10.65205/jmsr.2026.e286715

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies are reshaping how tourism services are organized and experienced. However, much of the existing scholarship documents post-adoption outcomes without explaining the organizational mechanisms through which AI generates value or how those changes are interpreted by tourists themselves. This study aims to address that gap. It pursues two objectives: first, to examine how AI adoption drives organizational transformation and business model innovation in tourism firms; and second, to analyze how these internal changes shape the tourist experience along the dimensions of service efficiency, personalization, and engagement.

The study adopts a qualitative research approach combining document analysis and reflexive thematic analysis. Forty-seven publicly available documents (industry reports, government policy papers, and media articles published between 2020 and 2025) were analyzed, supplemented by eighteen semi-structured interviews conducted with three stakeholder groups: eight tourists, six tourism managers, and four technology providers. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, and interview transcripts were coded thematically. Trustworthiness was established through data triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail.

Three findings emerged. First, AI adoption is associated with reorganization of workflows and cross-departmental coordination rather than mere task automation. Second, firms are migrating from product-centric to platform-based and data-driven business models that enable real-time service personalization. Third, these internal changes translate into a tourist experience characterized by faster service delivery, individually tailored recommendations, and a more participatory role for tourists in co-creating their journeys.

The study contributes to service-dominant logic and experience economy theory by showing how AI mediates value co-creation between firms and tourists. Practically, it offers tourism managers a framework for aligning AI investment with organizational redesign and customer-experience strategy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Digital Transformation; Tourism Industry; Organizational Transformation; Business Model Innovation; Tourist Experience

¹*234 Innovation College, North Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50230, Thailand

* Corresponding author and email: 13770046005@163.com

บทคัดย่อ

ปัญญาประดิษฐ์ (AI) และเทคโนโลยีดิจิทัลกำลังมีบทบาทสำคัญในการปรับเปลี่ยนรูปแบบการจัดการและในอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว อย่างไรก็ตาม งานวิจัยที่มีอยู่ส่วนใหญ่มุ่งเน้นการศึกษาผลลัพธ์ภายหลังการนำ AI มาใช้ โดยยังขาดการอธิบายกลไกเชิงองค์กรที่ทำให้ AI สร้างมูลค่า กับธุรกิจ การศึกษานี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์ (1) เพื่อศึกษาบทบาทของการนำ AI มาใช้ในการขับเคลื่อนการเปลี่ยนแปลงองค์กรและนวัตกรรมรูปแบบธุรกิจของธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวและ (2) เพื่อวิเคราะห์ผลกระทบของการเปลี่ยนแปลงภายในองค์กรที่มีต่อประสบการณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยวในด้านของประสิทธิภาพการให้บริการ การให้บริการเฉพาะบุคคลและการมีส่วนร่วมของนักท่องเที่ยว

การวิจัยนี้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยผสานการวิเคราะห์เอกสาร และการวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระแบบสะท้อนคิด ข้อมูลประกอบด้วยเอกสารสาธารณะที่เกี่ยวข้องจำนวน 47 ฉบับ ได้แก่ รายงานอุตสาหกรรม เอกสารนโยบายภาครัฐ และบทความจากสื่อมวลชนที่เผยแพร่ในช่วงปี ค.ศ. 2020–2025 นอกจากนี้ ยังดำเนินการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างกับผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียจำนวน 18 คน ประกอบด้วยนักท่องเที่ยว 8 คน ผู้จัดการธุรกิจท่องเที่ยว 6 คน และผู้ให้บริการเทคโนโลยี 4 คน โดยใช้การคัดเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ได้รับการวิเคราะห์และเข้ารหัสตามประเด็นสำคัญเชิงเนื้อหา ความน่าเชื่อถือของผลการวิจัยได้รับการยืนยันผ่านการตรวจสอบข้อมูลแบบสามเส้า การตรวจสอบโดยผู้ให้ข้อมูล และการจัดทำร่องรอยการวิจัย

ผลการวิจัยพบประเด็นสำคัญ 3 ประการ ได้แก่ ประการแรก การนำ AI มาใช้มีความสัมพันธ์กับการปรับโครงสร้างกระบวนการทำงานและการประสานงานระหว่างหน่วยงานภายในองค์กรมากกว่าการใช้ระบบอัตโนมัติเพื่อทดแทนงานเพียงอย่างเดียว ประการที่สอง องค์กรธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวกำลังเปลี่ยนผ่านจากรูปแบบธุรกิจที่มุ่งเน้นผลิตภัณฑ์ ไปสู่รูปแบบธุรกิจที่ขับเคลื่อนด้วยแพลตฟอร์มและข้อมูล ซึ่งเอื้อให้เกิดการให้บริการเฉพาะบุคคลแบบเรียลไทม์ ประการที่สาม การเปลี่ยนแปลงภายในองค์กรดังกล่าวส่งผลต่อประสบการณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยว โดยสะท้อนผ่านการได้รับบริการที่รวดเร็วขึ้น คำแนะนำที่สอดคล้องกับความต้องการเฉพาะบุคคลมากขึ้น และบทบาทที่เพิ่มขึ้นของนักท่องเที่ยวในการมีส่วนร่วมสร้างคุณค่าของประสบการณ์การเดินทาง

การศึกษานี้มีส่วนช่วยขยายองค์ความรู้ภายใต้แนวคิดตรรกะเชิงบริการเป็นฐานและทฤษฎีเศรษฐกิจประสบการณ์ โดยชี้ให้เห็นว่าปัญญาประดิษฐ์ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกสำคัญในการเอื้ออำนวยกระบวนการร่วมสร้างคุณค่า ระหว่างองค์กรธุรกิจและนักท่องเที่ยว ในเชิงปฏิบัติ ผลการวิจัยนำเสนอกรอบแนวทางสำหรับผู้บริหารธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวในการบูรณาการการลงทุนด้าน AI ให้สอดคล้องกับการออกแบบองค์กรใหม่และกลยุทธ์การสร้างประสบการณ์ลูกค้า เพื่อเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการแข่งขันในยุคดิจิทัล

คำสำคัญ: ปัญญาประดิษฐ์; การเปลี่ยนผ่านสู่ดิจิทัล; อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว; การเปลี่ยนแปลงองค์กร; นวัตกรรมรูปแบบธุรกิจ; ประสบการณ์นักท่องเที่ยว

Introduction

The tourism industry is undergoing a profound digital transformation driven by the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into operations, marketing, and customer-facing services. Recommendation engines, virtual reality applications, conversational agents, and data-driven platforms are no longer experimental add-ons; they are becoming infrastructural to how tourism firms deliver value (Tussyadiah, 2020; Huang & Rust, 2018). For an industry whose competitiveness depends on responsiveness, personalization, and the quality of the tourist experience, the stakes of digital transformation are unusually high: AI affects not only back-office efficiency but also the affective and relational core of what tourists actually consume.

Beyond operational efficiency, digital transformation reconfigures how tourism enterprises create and capture value. Platform-based intermediation, dynamic pricing, and real-time service customization are altering competitive boundaries between traditional operators, online travel agencies, and technology

providers (Buhalis & Leung, 2018; Verhoef et al., 2021). At the same time, tourists are no longer passive recipients of pre-packaged experiences; they increasingly participate in shaping their journeys through interaction with intelligent systems (Neuhofer et al., 2015; Font et al., 2021). Understanding how AI mediates this shift, therefore, matters both for managers seeking to capture value from technology investments and for tourists whose experiences are being algorithmically curated.

Two theoretical perspectives anchor the present study. Service-dominant (S-D) logic reframes value as co-created through resource integration between providers and beneficiaries rather than embedded in a finished product (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Experience economy theory positions the staged, memorable experience itself as the unit of economic exchange (Font et al., 2021). Together they suggest that AI is not merely a productivity tool but an operant resource that enables firms and tourists to integrate data, attention, and affect into co-created experiences. The framework guides the analytical lens used in this study and informs how we interpret organizational and experiential change.

Notwithstanding a growing literature, three gaps remain. First, most empirical work documents downstream outcomes of AI (performance gains, satisfaction improvements) but provides limited insight into the intra-organizational mechanisms workflow redesign, cross-functional coordination, capability building through which those outcomes are produced (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Foss & Saebi, 2017). Second, organizational transformation and business model innovation are typically theorized in separate streams, even though in tourism practice they are tightly coupled (Chesbrough, 2010; Sigala, 2018). Third, the tourist's own interpretive account of how AI-mediated services are experienced remains under-represented, with most studies relying on survey instruments designed around predefined constructs (Ivanov & Webster, 2017; Gursoy et al., 2019). A qualitative approach is therefore warranted to surface the meanings and contextual conditions that quantitative designs cannot easily capture (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Building on these gaps, the present study examines how AI adoption drives organizational transformation and business model innovation in tourism firms, and how those internal changes are reflected in the tourist experience. By integrating documentary evidence with multi-stakeholder interviews and interpreting findings through S-D logic and experience-economy lenses, the study aims to contribute a mechanism-level account of AI-enabled value creation in tourism.

Research Questions

Two research questions guide this study:

1. How does artificial intelligence adoption drive organizational transformation and business model innovation in tourism firms?
2. How do organizational transformation and business model innovation shape and enhance the tourist experience along the dimensions of service efficiency, personalization, and engagement?

Research Objectives

The study pursues two objectives that align with the research questions and the article title:

1. To examine how AI adoption drives organizational transformation and business model innovation in tourism firms, with particular attention to changes in workflows, cross-departmental coordination, and the shift toward platform-based, personalized service models.

2. To explore how organizational transformation and business model innovation shape and enhance the tourist experience, with specific focus on service efficiency, personalization, and engagement.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design that combines document analysis with reflexive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design is appropriate because the research questions concern how AI adoption is enacted inside firms and interpreted by tourists- processes that require contextual, meaning-centered inquiry rather than the testing of predefined variables. In this design, documentary materials provide the macro-level account of how AI and digital transformation are discussed in the tourism sector, while the interview corpus supplies the firm- and tourist-level interpretive evidence; the two are integrated through triangulation at the analysis stage.

Data Sources and Collection

Documentary data. Forty-seven ($n = 47$) documents were collected between January 2024 and March 2025 from three categories: (i) government and intergovernmental policy reports on digital tourism, (ii) industry white papers and consultancy reports published by recognized tourism and technology bodies, and (iii) news articles and feature pieces from major travel-industry outlets. The search used the keywords "AI tourism," "digital transformation tourism," "smart tourism," "AI hospitality," and "generative AI travel." Inclusion criteria required (a) publication between 2020 and 2025, (b) substantive treatment of AI or digital transformation in tourism, and (c) availability in English. Duplicates, opinion pieces under 500 words, and promotional materials were excluded.

Interview data. Eighteen semi-structured interviews ($n = 18$) were conducted with three stakeholder groups: eight tourists who had used AI-enabled tourism services within the previous twelve months, six tourism managers responsible for digital strategy or operations in hotels and tour-operating firms, and four technology providers supplying AI or data-platform services to tourism enterprises. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling with maximum-variation criteria to capture diverse roles, firm sizes, and geographic contexts. Interviews lasted 45–75 minutes, were conducted in person or via secure video conferencing, and were audio-recorded with consent. The interview guide was developed from the literature review and pilot-tested with two informants for content validity; refinements were incorporated before main fieldwork.

Data Analysis

Documentary corpus. The documentary materials were processed in three steps. First, a keyword-frequency analysis was conducted to identify the most prominent terms describing AI use, organizational change, and tourist experience. Second, a semantic-network analysis was applied to map co-occurrence relationships among these terms and to surface latent thematic clusters that link technological vocabulary to organizational and experiential concepts. Third, Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling was performed on the documentary corpus using the Gensim library in Python 3.11. After preprocessing (lower-casing, lemmatization, stop-word removal), models with $k = 4$ to $k = 8$ topics were estimated; the four-topic solution maximized topic coherence (C_v) and was retained. The four resulting themes—technology adoption, organizational transformation, business-model innovation, and tourist experience—provided the analytical scaffold for the interview analysis.

Interview corpus. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Coding was conducted in NVivo 14. Initial codes were generated inductively close to participants' language and then iteratively grouped into the four thematic categories identified in the documentary analysis. A constant-comparison approach was used to compare codes within and across stakeholder groups, and divergent cases were retained to preserve interpretive nuance.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Trustworthiness. Four established strategies were used to enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018): (i) data triangulation across documentary and interview sources and across stakeholder groups; (ii) member checking, in which preliminary thematic summaries were returned to eleven willing participants for confirmation and refinement; (iii) peer debriefing with two researchers external to the project, who reviewed the coding logic and theme structure; and (iv) maintenance of an audit trail recording analytic decisions, code revisions, and theoretical memos throughout the process.

Data management. Audio files, transcripts, and coded NVivo projects were stored on an encrypted institutional drive accessible only to the research team. Documentary materials were retained in a parallel folder with bibliographic metadata. All datasets will be kept for five years from the date of publication and then securely destroyed, in line with institutional research-data policy.

Ethics. The study followed standard qualitative research ethics. Written informed consent was obtained from all interview participants after they received an information sheet describing the study aims, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and data-handling procedures. Participants are referred to by alphanumeric codes (e.g., T-03 for tourist interview 03, M-02 for manager interview 02) and any potentially identifying details have been removed from quotations. Documentary data were drawn exclusively from sources in the public domain.

Results

AI Adoption, Organizational Transformation, and Business Model Innovation

Analysis of both corpora identified three interrelated mechanisms through which AI adoption reshaped tourism firms: workflow reconfiguration, cross-departmental data integration, and migration toward platform-based business models. Rather than treating AI as a stand-alone productivity tool, participants described it as an operant resource that progressively restructured how work was organized and how value was offered to customers.

Table 1 Analysis Results for Objective 1

Topic	Description	Representative Keywords	Illustrative Evidence
Technology Adoption	Firms embed AI into decision support, scheduling, and customer-facing services, shifting routine tasks from	AI, automation, data analytics, recommendation	"AI systems now handle most first-line customer queries, so our staff can focus on complex cases." (M-02)

Topic	Description	Representative Keywords	Illustrative Evidence
	human judgment to algorithmic mediation.		
Organizational Transformation	Workflows and reporting lines are redesigned around shared data; cross-functional teams replace siloed departments.	process redesign, coordination, data sharing, restructuring	"Marketing and operations now use the same customer dashboard; decisions that used to take a week happen in a day." (M-05)
Business Model Innovation	Firms move from selling discrete products to operating data-driven platforms that aggregate services and personalize offerings.	platform, personalization, service ecosystem, data-driven	"Our app is no longer a booking tool; it's a platform that learns what each guest wants and builds the itinerary around them." (M-01)

Table 2 Interview Summary (n = 18)

Interview	Meaning	Illustrative Statement	Stakeholder	Frequency
Process automation	AI removes repetitive manual work and accelerates throughput.	"What used to take three people now takes one and an algorithm." (M-04)	Managers, providers	14 of 18
Cross-functional coordination	Shared data platforms dissolve departmental silos and enable joint decision-making.	"We now meet around the dashboard, not around opinions." (M-03)	Managers	11 of 18
Service personalization	Data on past behavior is used to tailor offers in real time.	"The system builds a different package for a family and for a solo traveler, automatically." (P-02)	Providers, managers	13 of 18
Platformisation	Firms migrate from product catalogs to interactive platforms aggregating multiple services.	"We stopped thinking of ourselves as a hotel; we are a service platform with rooms." (M-01)	Managers	9 of 18

Three interpretive patterns emerged. First, AI adoption was rarely confined to a single department; it propagated through firms as workflows were redesigned around shared data. A hotel operations manager (M-05) explained, "Once the booking, marketing, and concierge teams started looking at the same AI-generated guest profile, the old idea of 'my data, my decision' just disappeared." Second, technology providers described a complementary movement on the supply side: "We don't sell a chatbot anymore; we sell an integration layer that ties their CRM, PMS, and front desk together" (P-01). The unit of innovation has shifted from individual tools to integrated capabilities. Third, the move toward platform logics is observable in both documents and interviews: as a tour-operator manager noted, "our revenue mix changed; commission on bookings dropped, but data-driven add-ons and dynamic packages grew" (M-04). These mechanisms collectively support the interpretation that AI catalyzes interdependent organizational and business-model change rather than producing one without the other.

Organizational Change, Business Model Innovation, and the Tourist Experience

The second objective examined how the internal changes documented above translate into the tourist experience. Three experiential dimensions emerged from the analysis: service efficiency, personalization, and engagement. These dimensions are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3 Thematic Analysis Results for Objective 2

Topic	Description	Representative Keywords	Illustrative Evidence
Service Efficiency	Streamlined workflows reduce waiting times and friction at touchpoints.	speed, response, seamless, frictionless	"Check-in took thirty seconds because the system already knew me." (T-04)
Personalization	Data-driven recommendations match offerings to individual interests and contexts.	personalization, recommendation, relevance, tailored	"It suggested a quiet beach instead of the usual tourist one—exactly what I wanted." (T-07)
Engagement	Interactive interfaces invite tourists into an active, co-creative role.	interaction, participation, co-creation, immersion	"I felt I was designing my own trip, not just buying one." (T-02)

Table 4 Experience Dimensions and Mechanisms (documentary corpus)

Dimension	Underlying Mechanism	Observable Indicator	Illustrative Source Excerpt
Efficiency	Workflow automation and predictive operations	Reduced waiting and faster service delivery	"AI-powered check-in cut average wait time by 40%." (Industry report, 2024)
Personalization	Data integration and machine-learning recommendation	Tailored itineraries and offers matched to preferences	"Algorithms now build a unique itinerary for every traveler." (Policy paper, 2025)

Engagement	Conversational interfaces and immersive media	Active tourist participation in service design	"Travelers co-design experiences through interactive platforms." (News article, 2024)
Experience Quality	Aggregation of efficiency, personalisation, engagement	Higher overall satisfaction and intention to return	"Smart-tourism platforms correlate with higher NPS scores." (Industry report, 2024)

Table 5 Tourist Interview Coding Summary (n = 8 tourist interviews)

Code	Meaning	Illustrative Statement	Linked Dimension	Frequency
Faster service	Tourist perceives reduced waiting and smoother transitions.	"The whole process from booking to check-in was almost instant." (T-01)	Efficiency	7 of 8
Relevant recommendations	Recommendations match interests, contexts, or constraints.	"The app suggested options I would never have found on my own." (T-05)	Personalization	6 of 8
Active co-design	Tourist takes a participatory role in shaping the trip.	"I built the trip with the assistant; it didn't feel like a package." (T-03)	Engagement	5 of 8
Trust calibration	Tourist negotiates how much to rely on the system's suggestions.	"I followed most of its advice, but I still wanted to choose the restaurant myself." (T-06)	Engagement	4 of 8

Across the three dimensions, the mechanism connecting organizational change to tourist experience is the translation of internal data integration into outward responsiveness. When firms redesigned workflows around shared customer data (Section 5.1), tourists experienced this as faster service: as one tourist remarked, "I didn't have to repeat anything—the front desk already knew about my flight delay" (T-04). When firms migrated to platform-based business models, tourists experienced this as personalization: "the system understands what I like, even before I do" (T-07). And when firms invested in

conversational and immersive interfaces, tourists reported a more participatory role: "I felt I was co-designing the trip, not just buying a tour" (T-02).

Importantly, the data also surfaced a tension. Several tourists described a desire to retain interpretive control—what we term trust calibration—negotiating between algorithmic recommendation and personal judgment. This tension qualifies a purely positive reading: AI improves experience along measurable dimensions but also introduces a new dimension of negotiation that managers should design for rather than design away.

Discussion

Discussion of Objective 1: Mechanisms of Organizational and Business-Model Change

The findings extend prior work on AI in tourism in three ways. First, they confirm and refine the claim that AI improves operational efficiency (Huang & Rust, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2020), but show that efficiency gains are inseparable from workflow redesign and cross-functional data sharing. Where Bharadwaj et al. (2013) theorized digital business strategy as a fusion of IT and business strategy, our data illustrate that fusion empirically: the locus of AI value lies in inter-departmental integration rather than in any single tool. Second, the findings are consistent with Buhalis and Leung (2018) on smart-hospitality interconnectivity, but diverge from the more cautious conclusions of Verhoef et al. (2021), whose cross-industry analysis found that digital transformation outcomes were modest where IT and organizational redesign were decoupled; in our tourism cases, coupling was the norm rather than the exception. Third, the migration to platform-based business models echoes Chesbrough (2010) and Foss and Saebi (2017), but adds a sector-specific insight: tourism platforms succeed by orchestrating data flows across travel sub-sectors rather than by displacing incumbents within any single sub-sector.

Discussion of Objective 2: Translation into the Tourist Experience

The findings illuminate how organizational change reaches the tourist along three specific channels. In terms of service efficiency, workflow integration shortens response cycles and removes redundant touchpoints, producing the seamless service described by participants such as T-04. This supports Ivanov and Webster (2017) on automation's operational impact while clarifying the intra-organizational route through which it occurs. With respect to personalization, platform-based models combine real-time data with machine-learning recommendations to deliver offers calibrated to individual context. The finding extends Neuhofer et al. (2015) by showing that personalization now operates not only at the level of content (what is recommended) but also at the level of architecture (how services are bundled). On engagement, conversational and immersive interfaces invite tourists into co-creative roles, consistent with the value-co-creation premise of Vargo and Lusch (2016) and the experience-design orientation of Sigala (2018). Our trust-calibration finding adds a qualification absent from this prior literature: engagement is not a unidirectional gain but a negotiated balance between algorithmic recommendation and tourist autonomy. Acceptance of AI services thus depends on perceived control, complementing Gursoy et al.'s (2019) findings on consumer acceptance of AI devices.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

Theoretical contribution.

This study contributes to service-dominant logic by specifying how AI mediates resource integration in tourism: not as a substitute for human interaction but as an infrastructural layer that lowers the cost of integrating customer, operational, and contextual data into co-created experiences. It extends experience-economy theory by showing that the staged experience is increasingly algorithmically composed rather than pre-scripted, which broadens the theory's scope to data-driven contexts.

Practical contribution.

For tourism managers, the findings imply that AI investment will under-deliver unless paired with workflow redesign and a deliberate shift in business model toward platform logics. For policy makers and industry associations, the findings suggest the value of capability-building programs that bundle technology adoption with organizational redesign skills, rather than treating AI procurement as a stand-alone initiative. For technology providers, the migration from "selling tools" to "supplying integration layers" represents both a strategic opportunity and a requirement.

Conclusion

This study examined how AI adoption drives organizational transformation and business model innovation in tourism firms and how these internal changes shape the tourist experience. Drawing on a documentary corpus of 47 sources and 18 semi-structured interviews with tourists, tourism managers, and technology providers, the analysis identified three coupled mechanisms—workflow reconfiguration, cross-departmental data integration, and platformisation—and three experiential consequences—service efficiency, personalization, and engagement, with engagement qualified by tourists' negotiation of trust.

The principal conclusion is that AI delivers value in tourism not by replacing human service but by reorganizing how data, work, and customer interaction are integrated across the firm. The study's contribution to scholarship lies in showing this integration empirically and theorizing it through service-dominant logic and experience-economy lenses; its contribution to practice lies in the recommendation that AI investment be planned jointly with workflow redesign and business-model transition.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample of 18 interviewees, while reaching thematic saturation, is modest and drawn from a limited set of geographic contexts; transferability to other settings should be assessed by readers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, the documentary corpus is restricted to English-language sources, which may underrepresent perspectives from non-Anglophone tourism markets. Third, interviews captured a snapshot of practice between 2024 and 2025; given the pace of generative-AI development, longitudinal follow-up would help track how these mechanisms evolve.

Directions for Future Research

Three avenues are particularly promising. First, comparative case studies across tourism sub-sectors (e.g., aviation, hospitality, destination management) could test whether the three mechanisms travel uniformly or take sector-specific forms. Second, research on generative-AI applications in tourism—itinerary co-creation, voice-based concierge, AI-generated destination media—could extend the present mechanisms

to richer interaction modalities. Third, longitudinal research on trust calibration could examine how the negotiation between algorithmic recommendation and tourist autonomy evolves as tourists become more experienced with AI-enabled services.

Research Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. Participation was entirely voluntary, and confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants' identities were anonymized using codes or pseudonyms, and all data were securely stored and accessible only to the research team. The information collected was used solely for academic purposes and reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual participants.

References

- Bharadwaj, A., El Sawy, O. A., Pavlou, P. A., & Venkatraman, N. (2013). Digital business strategy: Toward a next generation of insights. *MIS Quarterly*, 37(2), 471–482.
<https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2013/37:2.3>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Buhalis, D., & Leung, R. (2018). Smart hospitality—Interconnectivity and interoperability towards an ecosystem. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 71, 41–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.11.011>
- Chesbrough, H. (2010). Business model innovation: Opportunities and barriers. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 354–363. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.07.010>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Font, X., English, R., Gkritzali, A., & Tian, W. (2021). Value co-creation in sustainable tourism: A service-dominant logic approach. *Tourism Management*, 82, Article 104200.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104200>
- Foss, N. J., & Saebi, T. (2017). Fifteen years of research on business model innovation: How far have we come, and where should we go? *Journal of Management*, 43(1), 200–227.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316675927>
- Gursoy, D., Chi, O. H., Lu, L., & Nunkoo, R. (2019). Consumers acceptance of artificially intelligent (AI) device use in service delivery. *International Journal of Information Management*, 49, 157–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.03.008>
- Huang, M.-H., & Rust, R. T. (2018). Artificial intelligence in service. *Journal of Service Research*, 21(2), 155–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670517752459>
- Ivanov, S., & Webster, C. (2017). Adoption of robots, artificial intelligence and service automation by travel, tourism and hospitality companies: A cost-benefit analysis. *Tourism Economics*, 23(6), 1343–1356.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354816616653540>

- Loureiro, S. M. C., Guerreiro, J., & Tussyadiah, I. (2021). Artificial intelligence in business: State of the art and future research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 129, 911–926.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.11.001>
- Neuhof, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A. (2015). Smart technologies for personalized experiences: A case study in the hospitality domain. *Electronic Markets*, 25(3), 243–254.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-015-0182-1>
- Sigala, M. (2018). New technologies in tourism: From multi-disciplinary to anti-disciplinary advances and trajectories. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 25, 151–155.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.12.003>
- Tussyadiah, I. P. (2020). A review of research into automation in tourism: Launching the Annals of Tourism Research curated collection on artificial intelligence and robotics in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 81, Article 102883. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102883>
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: An extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(1), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3>
- Verhoef, P. C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Bhattacharya, A., Dong, J. Q., Fabian, N., & Haenlein, M. (2021). Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 889–901. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.022>
- Ye, B. H., Ye, H., & Law, R. (2020). Systematic review of smart tourism research. *Sustainability*, 12(8), Article 3401. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12083401>