

AI in
Hospitality

The 2025 Reality and the 2026 Horizon



A new AI era

The hospitality industry has entered an AI-defined era faster than most anticipated. Discovery, distribution, guest behavior, and hotel operations are shifting at a pace that renders traditional strategies outdated before they reach full implementation. The gap between hotels that adapt and those that hesitate shows in performance metrics and, more visibly, in the guest journey itself.

These are the trends that matter for 2026.

Trend 1

Rich Hotel Schema Becomes the Foundation of Digital Visibility

AI systems do not crawl the web the way humans browse. They parse structured data at scale and prioritize sources marked with detailed, semantic schema. Hotels relying on visually appealing pages instead of machine-readable context are losing ground.

Search engines now interpret granular hotel schema to build visually rich, contextually relevant result blocks that blend images, availability, pricing patterns, amenity details, and location information. The content surfacing in these results comes almost entirely from structured markup, not from the human-friendly copy many websites have relied on for years.

Every page matters. Every room type matters. Every amenity, policy, offer, and experience needs structured markup.

This is no longer optional.

It is the prerequisite for visibility in both traditional search and AI-driven discovery. Hotels without fully implemented schema risk exclusion from recommendations before travelers begin comparing properties.

Rich schema is not an SEO tactic. It is the foundation for discoverability, distribution, and agent-to-agent communication across the AI ecosystem.

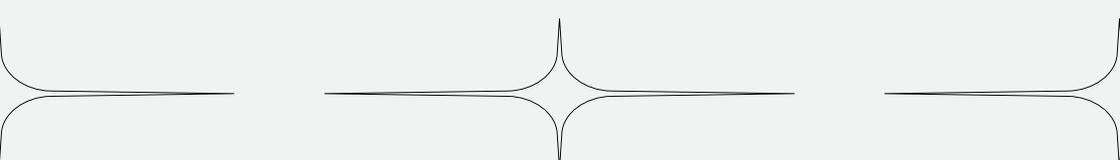
Trend 2

Discovery Moves Away From Search Before Hotels Are Ready

Travelers no longer work through long lists of links. They ask AI systems for answers and expect instant curation. Planning has collapsed into conversational requests. Research now happens inside AI environments that rarely send users to external sites unless necessary.

Browsing behavior has shifted to delegated research. Click paths have become answer paths.

When travelers ask for a boutique hotel near a museum, a wellness property with steam rooms, or a resort for families, AI systems source the best match based on structured data, authority signals, and content relevance. Hotels lacking machine-readable detail fall out of the candidate set.



**This is the beginning of a visibility crisis.
The models are now the gatekeepers. If a hotel
cannot be read by AI, it cannot be
recommended by AI.**

Trend 3

AI Overviews Reshape Organic Traffic and Filter the Funnel

Generative summaries in search results have permanently changed organic traffic structure. The era of ten blue links is over. Search platforms now synthesize content into direct, conversational responses that resolve many queries before users click.



These summaries are built from the highest authority pages across the web. Optimization becomes a two-part challenge. Hotels must earn traditional organic visibility to be included in training signals. They must also produce content that directly answers questions in formats the models can interpret.

Organic traffic is not declining because travelers are less interested. It is declining because AI overviews satisfy questions before the click. Hotels relying solely on inbound organic discovery are seeing thinner funnels and fewer conversion opportunities.

This becomes the new normal. Traditional SEO feeds AI overviews. AI overviews feed traveler decisions.

Trend 4

AI Platforms Become the New Travel Discovery and Booking Layer

Generative AI has changed how travelers search for hotels, and increasingly, where that search happens.

Travel planning is shifting away from traditional search engines and into AI platforms. Travelers now ask conversational questions, refine preferences in real time, and expect curated results instead of long lists of links. Discovery and decision-making are collapsing into a single AI-driven experience.

This shift is accelerating as AI platforms introduce native apps and integrations that surface travel content and inventory directly inside these environments. Online travel agencies have already moved quickly. Platforms like Expedia and Booking.com now operate within AI ecosystems, ensuring their hotels appear when travelers ask for recommendations or availability.

AI platforms are becoming a new front door to travel. If a hotel is not visible there, it is increasingly invisible at the moment decisions are made.

This makes AI visibility a strategic requirement. Hotels must ensure their rates, availability, amenities, and policies are accessible in formats AI systems can clearly read and surface.

Solutions like [Connect AI](#) help hotels meet this shift by extending discoverability across AI platforms while reinforcing the direct channel.

Trend 5

MCP Turns AI Into an Operational Force Multiplier

The industry has discussed AI for years. The shift happens when AI can act. Model Context Protocol enables AI systems to securely access hotel data and trigger operational actions without custom integrations. It is the connective layer that turns AI from conversational to functional.

With MCP-style architectures, AI systems can pull live availability, check real-time rates, trigger updates in distribution systems, generate proposals using CRM and PMS data, modify reservations, populate contract templates, personalize campaigns using guest profiles, and monitor performance indicators while acting automatically.

This eliminates lag between insight and execution. Hotels adopting MCP-ready systems will experience a step change in operational speed. Hotels continuing with siloed tools will remain manually constrained.



Trend 6

Voice AI Becomes Mandatory Infrastructure for Revenue Capture

Voice AI agents have crossed from novelty to necessity. Hotels continue missing too many calls, especially during peak check-in windows and early evening demand spikes. Every unanswered call represents a lost direct booking, a lost upsell, or a frustrated guest who books elsewhere.



Modern voice AI solves this with immediate, conversational, multilingual response. It handles reservations, modifications, amenity questions, group inquiries, and rate explanations without hold times and without drop-off.

This is not an enhancement. It is revenue insurance.

Once hotels experience zero missed calls, there is no going back. In 2026, voice AI will become the first line of guest engagement and the last defense against OTA leakage.

Trend 7

Synthetic Mystery Shopping Becomes the Only Scalable Quality Control

As AI takes over more guest interactions, manual spot-checking breaks down. No hotel can realistically review thousands of chatbot transcripts or hundreds of voice interactions daily.

Synthetic evaluation solves this by automating quality control. Synthetic personas simulate real guests, testing different scenarios across chat, voice, booking flows, and service queries. Examples include a business traveler modifying plans, a family requesting connecting rooms, a luxury guest evaluating spa recommendations, a loyalty member asking for late checkout, and a last-minute traveler checking availability in another language.



These tests run continuously, uncovering issues before real guests encounter them. They verify brand voice, accuracy, tone, policy alignment, and operational logic. Hotels embracing synthetic testing will control their AI experience. Hotels that do not will lack visibility into how their AI behaves.

Trend 8

Hyperpersonalization Expands Across Every Channel

AI personalization has moved from optional enhancement to performance requirement. Travelers expect instant relevance. Generic experiences now feel outdated.

Hyperpersonalization uses real-time signals, behavioral patterns, location context, stay history, preference tags, and predictive scoring to shape content across website, chat, email, and voice channels.

The result is a website that adapts to each visitor, a chatbot that knows what matters to that guest type, a voice agent that tailors recommendations, and a booking engine that serves context-aware offers instead of static promotions.

This is not about gimmicks. It is about commercial impact. Personalized user journeys consistently drive higher conversion rates, longer stays, and greater brand connection.

Trend 9

Agent-to-Agent Distribution Becomes the New Battleground

The next evolution of the direct channel will not be human-to-hotel. It will be agent-to-agent. Guest-side AI agents will negotiate booking details with hotel-side AI systems directly. This requires machine-readable inventory, availability, offers, policies, fees, experiences, and upsells.

Distribution becomes a language problem rather than a marketing problem. Hotels failing to supply the right data in the right format will be invisible to the systems shaping traveler decisions.

The OTA era taught the cost of missing a platform shift. The agent-to-agent era gives hotels another chance to correct course.

Trend 10

AI Literacy Becomes the Hardest Limiting Factor

The models are powerful. The tools are available. The barrier is human capability. Most hotels underestimate the training required to operate in an AI-first environment. Teams need fluency in prompting, evaluation, risk handling, automation oversight, workflow design, and cross-system orchestration.

The largest AI deployment failures come from skipping the literacy layer. The most successful implementations come from organizations that build training into strategy, not as afterthought.

AI does not replace people. It changes what people do. Without training, staff cling to old workflows that undermine tool value. With training, staff shift into higher-judgment roles that elevate service, strengthen brand consistency, and unlock efficiency.

AI literacy is no longer professional development. It is operational survival.

The Mandate for 2026

Rich schema for full discoverability. AI-optimized content for visibility. Agentic infrastructure for distribution. Synthetic testing for brand control. Voice AI for revenue protection.

Hyperpersonalization for conversion. First-party data for ownership. AI literacy for scale.

Hotels that act now will define the competitive landscape. Hotels that wait will spend years trying to recover visibility, relevance, and direct demand they could have protected.

About The Hotels Network

The Hotels Network is an inventive technology company working with over 20,000 hotels around the globe. Boasting an international team of specialists with deep expertise in hospitality, product design and consumer marketing, the company offers clients a full-stack growth platform to power their direct channel. By leveraging a series of integrated tools and analytics, hotel brands can attract, engage and convert guests throughout the user journey.

In addition to price comparison, reviews summary, and a suite of personalization options, THN's Direct AI Suite is deeply integrated in their platform, from predictive analytics to generative AI. Predictive Personalization uses machine learning to predict user behavior and automatically tailor messaging and offers for each user. BenchDirect's benchmarking tool provides unmatched competitive data for the direct channel. Recent innovations include KITT, an AI-powered receptionist, and Loyalty Lite, a seamless guest login tool for personalized booking experiences.

[Contact us](#) today to find out more.

The leading growth platform for the direct channel

THN is proud to have been recognized for the company's product innovations, rapid growth, and unique workplace culture, most recently named the [Best Direct Booking Tool for 2026](#) for the fourth year in a row in the prestigious HotelTechAwards.



About Vivander Advisors

Vivander Advisors specializes in helping hotels adopt AI technology effectively. Their approach includes providing strategic and hands-on tactical guidance, expert consultations, and comprehensive education to support companies in navigating the complexities of AI integration. By partnering with Vivander Advisors, hotels can transform the challenge of adopting AI into a valuable opportunity for success.

[Contact Vivander Advisors](#) today.

About Michael J. Goldrich

Founder & Chief Advisor

Michael J. Goldrich, founder and chief advisor of Vivander Advisors, excels in digital and AI strategies, driving transformative growth. His expertise in generative AI establishes him as a prominent figure in this fast-growing field. He developed a five-step process to guide companies in AI transformation. Goldrich further extends his influence by serving as Chief Experience Officer at The Hotels Network, an organization driven by AI and data. His expertise in "predictive personalization" has established him as a sought-after consultant and a pivotal figure in shaping the future of customer engagement within the hospitality sector.

Discover a unique exploration of Generative AI and its transformative impact on the business world in Michael's latest book, [Too Many Hats, Too Little Time](#).