



10th Edition 2025



28th October



Dear Reader,

Personalization has gone from buzzword to baseline in travel and hospitality. The industry has been told to “personalize or perish,” and by 2025 it’s no longer optional, it’s table stakes. Travelers are seeking unique journeys that align with their individual quirks and passions rather than generic itineraries. Hoteliers have taken note: 85% now consider personalization a key driver of value, with tailored experience boosting revenue by up to 5%. In short, delivering relevant, customized experiences has shifted from a nice-to-have perk to a core strategic priority. Looking ahead, this hyper-personalized approach will shape how every travel business competes in the next decade.

Beneath this shift are rapidly evolving traveller expectations. Today’s travellers expect every recommendation and offer to fit their needs – and they quickly lose

patience if it doesn't. One global survey found 71% of consumers expect companies to deliver personalized interactions, and 76% feel frustrated when that doesn't happen. People have grown accustomed to Netflix-style suggestions and Spotify-curated playlists; they now want the same treatment when booking a hotel or tour. In fact, 91% of consumers prefer brands that remember their preferences and provide relevant recommendations. From curated itineraries to in-room amenities set just right, personalization has become synonymous with good service. For Gen Z and other digital-native travellers especially, one-size-fits-all travel just doesn't cut it anymore.



SPEAKER
A. PATRICK IMBARDELLI
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Tech That Knows You: AI's Role in Customizing Travel

Technology is the engine making this personalization possible. Artificial intelligence and big data now sift through countless variables to tailor travel options in real time. For example, Expedia's platform crunches an astonishing 1.26 quadrillion data points (from hotel prices to room preferences) to serve up custom trip recommendations for each user. Major travel brands are investing heavily in these capabilities: Marriott has committed \$1 billion to digital transformation, including AI-driven systems for personalized room bookings. And new AI tools like OpenAI's ChatGPT are being integrated into trip planning, allowing travellers to literally chat with an app to craft a custom itinerary. From predictive algorithms that anticipate guest needs to chatbots acting as virtual concierges, AI is turning "mass personalization" into a reality.

Where the Smart Money Goes

Investment trends in travel tech are echoing this focus on personalization. Venture capital and corporate investors are pouring funding into startups that promise individualized, tech-enabled travel experiences. In 2024, travel startups globally secured unprecedented investment, with billions of dollars flowing into innovative companies revolutionizing the industry. Many of the biggest deals went to platforms leveraging AI and data to personalize the traveller journey. Analysts note that tech-enabled personalization and seamless experiences have emerged as

prime growth areas, attracting significant attention and capital. In fact, startups centred on personalized travel are seen as poised to lead the next wave of industry disruption. The takeaway is clear: personalization is where much of the innovation and investment in travel is headed.

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Where It's All Headed: Designing Travel for the Individual

Looking ahead, personalization is set to redefine every aspect of the travel experience. Travelers will come to expect journeys that are dynamically tailored from start to finish, and brands that deliver will win lasting loyalty. According to market research, the global customisation and personalisation in travel market is expected to reach new heights by the early 2030s, driven by demand for bespoke “just-for-me” experiences. We’re already seeing signals of this future: Booking.com’s latest survey reveals a shift towards ultra-personalized trips that reflect each traveller’s individual interests and quirks. Hotels are even experimenting with immersive tech like augmented reality to customize guest experiences on the fly. The next decade in travel & hospitality belongs to those who can marry high-tech intelligence with human-centric service, turning data into delight at every step.

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