

Interviewer:

Hi, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are conducting a study as part of our course at Linnaeus University. The purpose is to explore how generative AI, such as ChatGPT, influences customer experiences within digital services, particularly in the travel and hospitality services. The interview will be recorded so that we can transcribe it accurately afterward. All information will be anonymized, meaning that no personal details such as name or workplace will be included in the report. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes and there are no right or wrong answers. I am only interested in your own experiences. Do you consent to participate in the interview and for it to be recorded?

Participant:

Yes, that's fine.

Interviewer:

Thank you, then we'll begin.

Interviewer:

Can you describe a specific situation in your service experience where you interacted with or utilized a GenAI-driven tool?

Participant:

Yeah, absolutely. The most recent example I can think of was actually just a few months ago when I was planning a trip to Italy with two of my friends. We had this idea of going somewhere warm, with good food but we didn't really have a clear plan. Normally, I would spend hours going through blogs, YouTube videos and different booking sites trying to figure out where to go, what areas to stay in and how to structure the trip. But this time I decided to try using a generative AI tool, specifically something like ChatGPT to help me plan everything from scratch.

So I started by giving it a pretty general prompt, like we are three friends in our late twenties, we want a mix of beach, culture and nightlife in Italy for about a week and we have a mid range budget. What impressed me immediately was how quickly it responded with a structured itinerary suggestion. It recommended splitting the trip between Naples and the Amalfi Coast, gave reasons for why those places fit our preferences and even suggested specific neighborhoods to stay in.

Then I kept refining the conversation. I asked follow up questions like which areas are safest, what kind of transportation options are available and even things like where do locals eat? The AI would generate detailed answers, including restaurant suggestions, travel times and even rough cost estimates. It felt less like searching and more like having a conversation with a very informed travel advisor.

What really stood out was that it helped me connect everything together. Instead of jumping between ten different websites, I had one place where I could ask all my questions and build a complete picture of the trip. It didn't replace the booking platforms entirely but it made the planning phase much more efficient and honestly less stressful.

Interviewer:

In this situation, what specific problem or task was the GenAI intended to solve?

Participant:

The main problem it solved for me was information overload. I think that's a big issue when planning trips today. There's just too much information available about reviews, blogs, TikTok recommendations, booking platforms and it can be really overwhelming to filter out what's actually relevant for you.

Before using GenAI, I would spend hours comparing hotels, reading reviews and trying to piece together an itinerary. But the problem is that all these sources are fragmented. One site tells you about hotels, another about attractions, another about restaurants and you have to connect everything yourself, which takes a lot of time.

The AI helped solve that by synthesizing information. Instead of me doing the filtering, it did that work for me. It could take my preferences and generate a tailored response that already felt curated. So instead of starting from zero, I started from something complete and then I just adjusted it.

Another task it helped with was decisionmaking. For example, we were unsure whether to stay in one place or split the trip. The AI explained the pros and cons in a very clear way, which made it easier for us to decide. So it wasn't just about giving information it was about structuring that information in a way that made decisions easier.

Interviewer:

How has the introduction of this GenAI tool changed the way you interact with service providers?

Participant:

It has definitely changed my behavior quite a bit. I would say I'm now much more prepared before I interact with any service provider. For example, before I even go on a platform like Booking.com or Airbnb, I already have a shortlist of areas, types of accommodations and even price expectations.

Before, I would rely more on the platform itself to guide me. I would browse, filter and gradually figure things out. Now, I kind of reverse that process. I use AI first to understand what I want and then I use the platform more as a transactional tool to confirm availability and make the booking.

It has also made me more critical of the information provided by service providers. Since I already have a baseline understanding from the AI, I can compare what the platform is

showing me with what I expect. If something doesn't match, I'm more likely to question it or look for alternatives.

Another interesting change is that I feel less dependent on customer support. Previously, I might contact a hotel or a platform if I had questions. Now, I usually ask the AI first. It's faster and available instantly. Only if the question is very specific like something about a particular booking do I reach out to a human.

Interviewer:

Can you describe a moment where the GenAI did not perform as expected? How did you handle it?

Participant:

Yes definitely. It's not perfect and I've experienced situations where it gave me misleading or outdated information. During that same Italy trip, I asked for restaurant recommendations in Naples. The AI gave me a list of places that sounded great, with descriptions like popular among locals and authentic experience.

When I later checked those restaurants on Google Maps, I noticed that some of them were either permanently closed or had very mixed reviews. That made me realize that the AI doesn't always have the most up to date or accurate information, especially for things that change frequently like restaurants.

Another example was transportation. It suggested a route that seemed efficient, but when I checked the actual train schedules, the timing didn't match. So it was more of a general guideline rather than something you could follow exactly.

To handle this I basically use the AI as a starting point, not as a final authority. I always verify important details through other sources like official websites, Google Maps or booking platforms. So my approach has become more hybrid. I combine the speed and convenience of AI with the reliability of traditional sources.

Interviewer:

To what extent do you feel GenAI technology has changed the human element of your service experience?

Participant:

I think it has changed it, but not necessarily in a completely negative way. It has reduced the amount of direct human interaction in the early stages of the service experience. For example, I no longer feel the need to talk to travel agents or customer support as much as before.

I don't think it has removed the human element entirely. Instead, it has shifted it to later stages. When I actually arrive at a hotel or interact with staff during the trip, those human interactions still matter a lot. In fact, I would say they become even more important because they are less frequent.

There's also a difference in the type of interaction. AI is very efficient and informative, but it lacks emotional understanding and personal touch. For example, it can recommend a hotel, but it can't replace the feeling of being welcomed by friendly staff or receiving personalized service. So I would say GenAI has reduced routine human interactions but hasn't replaced meaningful ones. If anything, it makes the human interactions that do happen more noticeable and valuable.

Interviewer:

Looking ahead two to three years, what is the most significant change you anticipate GenAI will bring to your travel planning or service experience?

Participant:

I think the biggest change will be deeper personalization and integration across platforms. Right now, AI tools feel a bit separate from booking platforms. You use one tool for planning and another for booking. But in the future I think these will merge.

For example, I can imagine a scenario where a platform already knows my preferences, budget, travel style, past trips and can automatically generate personalized travel plans that are directly bookable. So instead of searching manually, I might just review and adjust a suggested plan.

I also think real time assistance will become more advanced. For example, during a trip AI could help with things like rebooking flights, suggesting nearby activities based on weather, or even translating and communicating with locals.

Another change could be more proactive recommendations. Instead of me asking questions, the system might anticipate my needs and provide suggestions automatically. That could make the entire experience more seamless.

Interviewer:

In what way does generative AI influence your decisions when choosing travel destinations or accommodation?

Participant:

It influences my decisions quite a lot, especially in the early stages. When I'm undecided about where to go, AI helps narrow down options based on my preferences. It can suggest destinations I might not have considered which expands my perspective.

For accommodation, it helps me understand what to look for. For example, instead of just choosing the cheapest or most popular option, I can ask about the pros and cons of different areas or types of accommodation. That makes my decisions more informed.

It also reduces uncertainty. Travel decisions often involve risk you don't know if a place will meet your expectations. AI helps reduce that uncertainty by providing structured and detailed information. However I still make the final decision myself. I don't follow AI recommendations blindly, but they definitely shape my thinking and guide my choices.

Interviewer:

Do you feel that AI replaces human service or does it function more as a complement? Why?

Participant:

I would say it functions more as a complement rather than a replacement. AI is very good at handling information based tasks like answering questions, comparing options and generating recommendations. But it lacks the emotional and social aspects of human service.

For example, if something goes wrong during a trip like a delayed flight or a problem with a hotel, I would still prefer to talk to a human. There's a level of empathy and flexibility that AI can't fully replicate.

At the same time, AI improves efficiency. It reduces waiting times and makes information more accessible. So instead of replacing humans it allows them to focus on more complex and meaningful interactions.

In that sense, I see AI as a tool that enhances the overall service experience rather than replacing it. The best experience in my opinion, is a combination of both efficient AI support and high quality human interaction when it really matters.

Interviewer:

Thank you very much for your detailed answers. That concludes the interview.

Participant:

Thank you!