

**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, absolutely, 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, I actually use GenAI quite a lot when it comes to traveling, especially because I travel on a student budget and I try to maximize value while minimizing costs. One specific situation that stands out was when I planned a multi city trip across Eastern Europe last autumn. I had about ten days and wanted to visit three different countries, but I had a very tight budget and also limited time.

Initially, I didn't even know if it was realistic to visit multiple cities within that timeframe. Normally, I would go on sites like Skyscanner, Booking.com and Reddit threads to figure it out but that process can take hours, sometimes days especially when you're comparing prices, routes and logistics.

So I turned to ChatGPT. I started by explaining my constraints very clearly I told it my budget, the number of days, that I prefer trains or buses over flights when possible and that I'm interested in cultural experiences but also nightlife. What I found really interesting was that it didn't just give me a list of destinations it created a kind of optimized route.

It suggested starting in Budapest, then moving to Vienna and finishing in Prague. It explained that these cities are well connected by train, relatively affordable compared to Western Europe and offer a mix of history, culture and social life that fits a student profile. It also suggested how many days to spend in each city which I found extremely helpful because time allocation is always something I struggle with.

Then I started going deeper. I asked it things like what is the cheapest way to travel between these cities? Should I book trains in advance or on the spot? It gave me both general advice and specific tips, like checking certain local train providers or considering overnight buses to save on accommodation costs.

Another thing I used it for was accommodation strategy. Instead of just asking for cheap hotels, I asked what kind of accommodation makes the most sense for a solo student traveler. It suggested hostels but also explained what to look for like location, social atmosphere and safety. That level of explanation was something I hadn't really gotten from traditional platforms. So overall, in that situation, GenAI wasn't just a tool it became part of my entire planning process. I used it iteratively, almost like a conversation partner, from the initial idea all the way to the final booking decisions.

**Interviewer:**

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

**Participant:**

I would say the main problem was optimization under constraints. Traveling as a student is always about balancing multiple factors cost, time, experience and convenience. And usually, improving one of those means compromising another. Before using GenAI, I would approach this in a very fragmented way. I would search for cheap flights, then look for accommodation, then try to figure out logistics and it often felt like solving a puzzle without seeing the full picture. It was time consuming and honestly quite stressful.

The AI helped by bringing everything together. It didn't just answer isolated questions, it helped me understand how different decisions affect each other. For example choosing a certain city impacts transportation costs, accommodation prices and even the overall experience. Another problem it solved was lack of experience. Even though I travel a lot, I don't always have knowledge about every region. Eastern Europe was relatively new to me, so I didn't know what to expect. The AI filled that gap by that felt personalized.

It also reduced uncertainty. When you're planning on a budget, mistakes can be costly. Booking the wrong accommodation or choosing an inefficient route can have a big impact. The AI helped me feel more confident in my decisions by giving structured recommendations.

**Interviewer:**

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

**Participant:**

It has changed my behavior quite significantly. I think the biggest change is that I now approach service providers more strategically. Before, I would rely on platforms like Booking.com or Hostelworld to guide me. I would browse, filter and gradually figure out what works. Now, I usually do my thinking with AI first. By the time I go to a platform, I

already have a clear idea of what I want. So instead of browsing endlessly, I go in with the purpose of searching for a hostel in a specific neighborhood with certain features.

It has also made me more critical of the information on these platforms. For example, if a hostel has very high ratings but the AI suggested that the area might not be ideal, I'm more likely to question that and investigate further.

Another change is that I rely less on reviews alone. Reviews can sometimes be biased or inconsistent and AI helps me interpret them better. For example I can ask, why might this place have mixed reviews? and get a more nuanced understanding.

I also interact less with customer support. Previously, I might message a hostel or hotel with questions. Now, I usually ask the AI first. Only if I need confirmation or something very specific do I contact the provider. I would say my interaction has become more efficient, more informed and less dependent on the platforms themselves.

**Interviewer:**

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

**Participant:**

Yes, definitely. One situation that comes to mind was related to nightlife recommendations in Prague. I asked the AI for authentic student friendly nightlife spots and it gave me a list of places that sounded really good. But when I actually visited some of them, they felt very tourist oriented, not really what I was looking for. Some were overpriced and others didn't match the vibe that was described.

Another issue was with pricing expectations. The AI suggested that certain activities or meals would be within a certain price range but in reality prices were higher especially in more central areas. I think the core issue is that AI tends to generalize. It can give a good overview, but it doesn't always capture the current or local nuances. To handle this, I started combining AI with other sources. For example, I would use Google Maps, recent reviews and even TikTok or Instagram to get a more up to date and realistic picture. I see AI as a first step rather than the final answer. It gives direction, but I always validate before making decisions.

**Interviewer:**

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

**Participant:**

I think it has reduced the need for human interaction in the planning phase quite a lot. I rarely ask friends or family for travel advice anymore and I don't use travel agencies at all. But during the actual trip, I don't think the human element has decreased in fact, it might even be more important.

For example, staying in hostels involves a lot of social interaction and that's something AI cannot replace. When something unexpected happens, a problem with a booking or a delay I still prefer human interaction. There's a level of understanding and flexibility that AI doesn't have. So I would say AI has shifted the human element rather than removed it. It has taken over the informational part, but the experiential and emotional parts are still very much human.

**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 automation of the entire planning process. Right now, you still have to ask questions and guide the AI. But in the future, I think it will become more proactive. For example, it could automatically generate travel plans based on your calendar, budget and preferences. It might even integrate with booking platforms so you can go from idea to booking in one seamless process. I also think personalization will become much deeper. The AI will learn from your past trips and continuously improve its recommendations. Another change could be real time assistance during trips. For example, if something changes, the AI could instantly adapt your itinerary and suggest alternatives.

**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. It helps me discover destinations that I might not have considered otherwise. For accommodation, it helps me understand what actually matters. Instead of focusing only on price, I think more about location, social environment and overall experience. It also makes me more confident in trying new things. For example, I might choose a less obvious destination because the AI explained why it could be a good fit.

**Interviewer:**

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

**Participant:**

I definitely see it as a complement. AI is great for efficiency and information, but it cannot replace human interaction. Travel is a very human experience it's about meeting people, experiencing cultures and creating memories. AI can support that but it cannot replace it. So I think the best experience is a combination of both AI for planning and efficiency and humans for connection and experience.

**Interviewer:**

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

**Participant:**

Thank you, this was really interesting.