

White paper

AI and the business traveler

Trends shaping the future
of business travel



serko



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What to expect from this report

Your travelers are already using AI, whether your program is ready for it or not. From itinerary planning to expense help, AI tools are creeping into the business trip. This report, based on the findings of Serko's latest AI business traveler study, uncovers the patterns behind that shift, showing you where adoption is growing, where resistance exists, and how those behaviors will shape your travel program.

Here's what you can expect:

- **How AI is enhancing business travel:** how business travelers are using AI right now to create frictionless journeys.
- **What's driving AI adoption:** from personalization to speed, how AI boosts compliance, satisfaction and uptake.
- **Potential pitfalls and areas for opportunity:** the barriers travelers experience and how to turn them into wins.

You'll also hear from Kara Brayton, a global corporate travel lead in the fintech sector, and Senior Director of Global Travel at Salesforce, Dorian Stonie. As industry leaders putting AI into practice for their corporate travelers, they'll share what's working, what's not, and where AI in business travel is heading next.





How AI is reshaping the journey

In our 2025 AI business traveler study, we asked travelers to tell us how they're using AI, and more specifically how it is being used for business travel.

When it comes to business travel and AI, the requirements for ease, speed and personalization are consistent across employees from businesses of every size, stage and sector.

Here's what we heard...

AI adoption

AI use is already high in both work and personal life, but just 35% of travelers surveyed say they use it to plan or manage business trips. While this rises to 46% in the 18 – 44 age segment, it's a big opportunity to bring everyday AI habits into the business travel experience.

Right now, most travelers who use AI for business trips are doing it on their own, not because their company requires it. Only 11% of respondents were using AI through business mandates. With 88% of travelers agreeing that AI will become more integrated in business travel, they are clearly ready for the change, but most businesses haven't caught up.

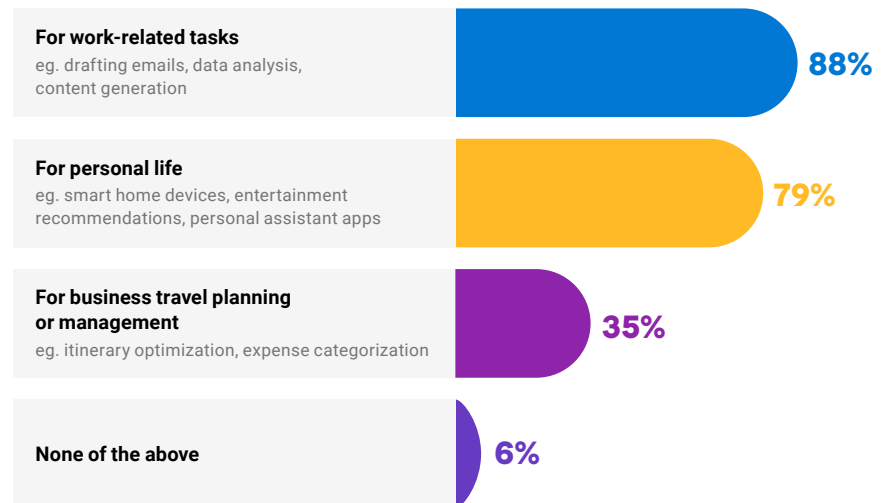


Utilize the tools travelers are already using, focusing on the experience there, instead of creating new products.

Kara Brayton, Global Corporate Travel Lead

Business traveler AI use in the last 12 months

Q: In the past 12 months, have you personally used AI for any of the following purposes?



AI usage

Business Travelers turn to AI for two main phases of the trip:

- **Research and pre-trip booking**
- **Post-trip admin**

Why? Because travelers want business trips that are easy to personalize. From planning that's effortless to simple solutions that ease the burden of post-trip admin, AI is

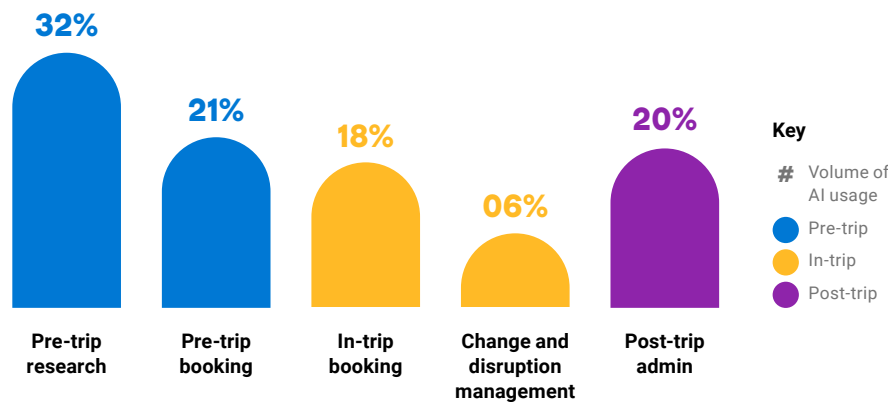
shaping the expectations and requirements of business travelers.

AI for pre-trip research was often practical, with many travelers telling us they used it to secure well-located and quality hotels so they could work more conveniently and comfortably. We heard that ability to search for “optimal location of hotels”, or “hotels with a gym” and “accommodations within walking distance of the meeting facilities” were all reasons for utilizing AI tools.

According to a study conducted by Cornell University in July 2023¹, being able to use natural language during searches, and submitting more complex queries, means quicker answers and higher satisfaction. Travelers are showing the value they place on speed and ease through their adoption of AI-enabled technology.

When it comes to post-trip admin, again we're seeing that speed and ease take priority. For frequent travelers, AI speeds up manual tasks, from receipt matching to compiling reports, so the trip ends on a positive note. For some, the AI tools are embedded within existing corporate expense tools, but platforms such as ChatGPT and Microsoft's Copilot feature heavily in this phase of the trip too.

Areas of AI usage in business travel



With AI, service is faster and more aligned with the need of the traveler. For us it's about how to make business travel easy and our travelers more productive.

Dorian Stonie
Senior Director of Global Travel at Salesforce

AI tools are enhancing traveler experience and improving compliance

Simply put, business travelers want to be at the center of the program. They want to be treated as individuals, with their preferences, nuances and requirements known and anticipated. They expect business travel to feel as seamless, and enjoyable, as leisure travel.

According to a report by Roomex, 60% of workers say travel arrangements have either led them to quit a job or made them consider doing so². Understanding the motivations and desires of your travelers, and providing them with the tools to meet these needs, has the potential to positively impact your talent retention and acquisition.

Alongside improvements in traveler experience and employee retention, traveler-centric AI actively strengthens compliance.

As Dorian Stonie puts it: “90% of travelers want to do the right thing. But, when they have booked outside of program, more times than not, they weren’t aware of it. What AI is going to be able to do, as we integrate it into our systems, is make travelers more knowledgeable on what’s permissible in the company and what’s not.

In November 2024 Salesforce launched their own, in-house Slackbot. Currently, it answers 30% of travel queries instantly, with 85% accuracy. The travel team and champions step in to refine responses, but the result is faster

answers, fewer manual hours, and a smoother traveler experience. Ultimately, Salesforce is aiming for the Slackbot to cover 75% of queries with 95% accuracy, a huge step forward in speed, service, and satisfaction for their 25,000+ business travelers.



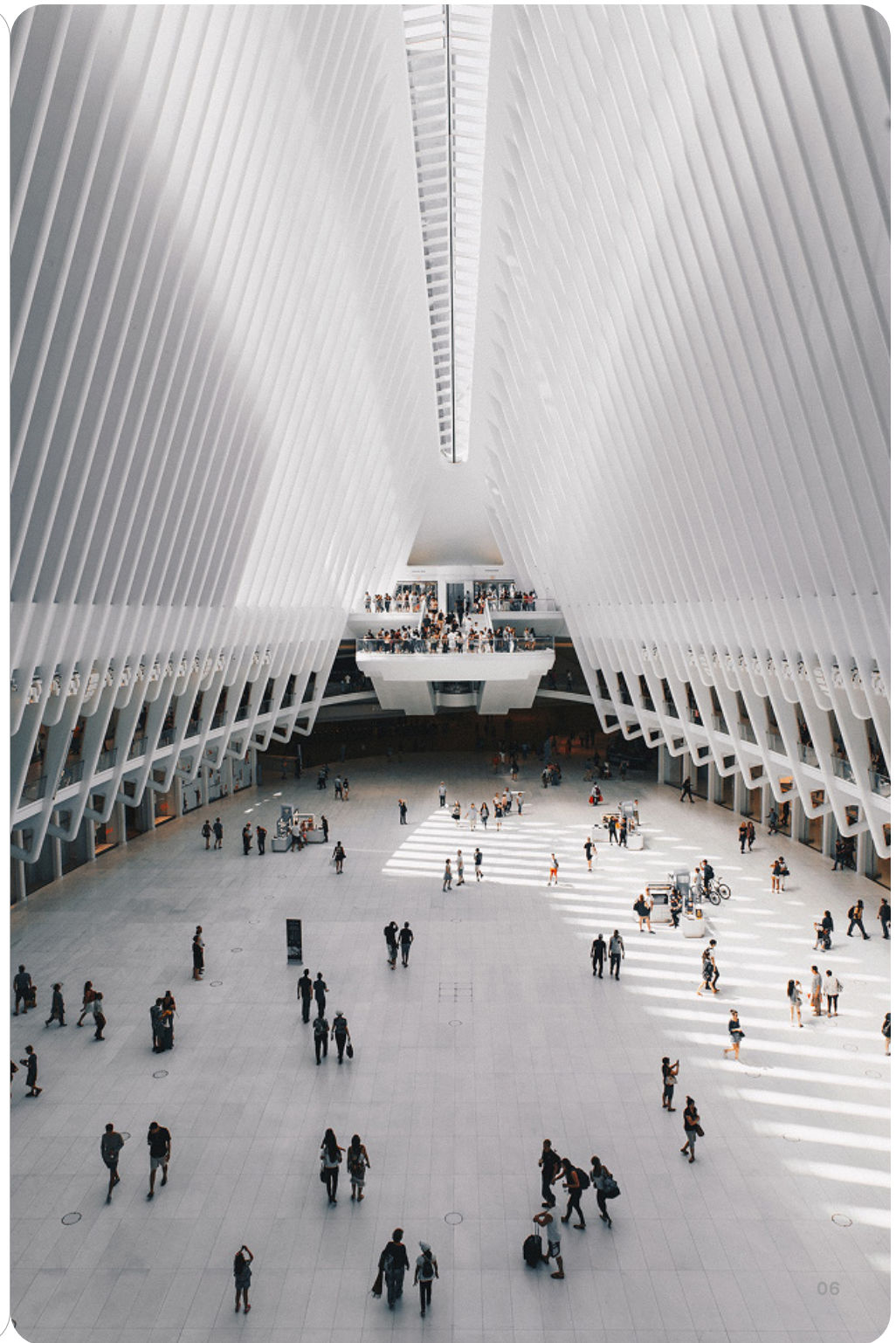
AI is going to bring things to the next level. It’s not going to replace our travel community, travel team or our travel champions, but what it will do is add an even higher level of real time response that’s going to also then leverage our travel policy and other resources internally.

Dorian Stonie

AI opportunities for you and your travelers

AI is already reshaping the traveler experience, making it faster, easier, and less stressful. Yet many travelers and businesses aren't taking full advantage.

That gap represents a real opportunity for organizations ready to bring AI into their travel programs. The potential to improve both traveler satisfaction and business outcomes is significant.



Adoption and expectations

Only 35% of travelers surveyed might be using AI tools for business travel right now, but 89% said that they believe AI will become more integrated in business travel, making it more efficient for employees (75%) and enabling more personalized experiences (71%).

There's also a clear expectation for businesses to adopt AI solutions for managing business travel, with 85% of respondents agreeing that this will happen.

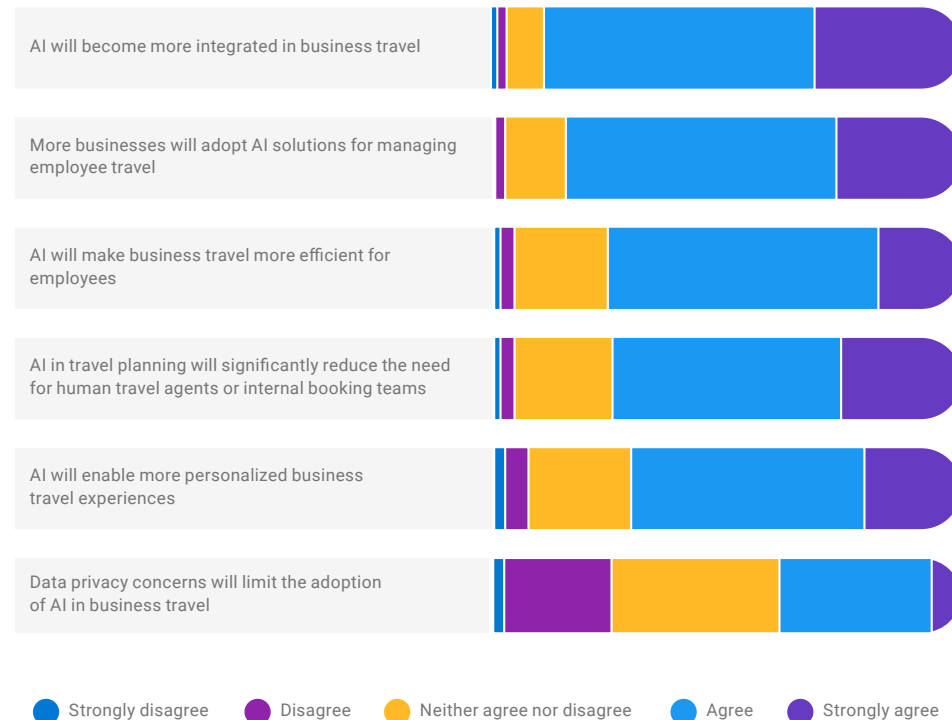
The result is a clear gap: between travelers' expectations for future AI integration and the reality of where most are today.

"There is a huge learning curve to all this", says Kara Brayton. "So many people that are wanting to use AI and just don't know the applications. It feels like a really big, scary, daunting task but you just need to start somewhere. Even the teams with the most education and resources are still learning and experimenting."

Given that global AI usage has increased by more than 40% over the past 12 months (Stanford

Business traveler AI use expectations

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business travel?





AI Index 2024³) adoption is likely to naturally increase as tools become more available to travelers – both inside and outside of their travel program.

As with all travel technology advancements, education is going to play a key role for all parties, in both the adoption, and the correct usage, of AI moving forward.

Dorian Stonie has this advice for travel professionals: “Learn about AI. Learn about agents. Learn about the multi facets of AI technology. And then also look at doing hands on experiments, pilots. Talk to your colleagues that have implemented AI programs. It’s still very early on in the industry. We love to be able to share best practice, but nothing helps more than hands on learning.”

And when it comes to the travelers themselves? What role does education play in building confidence and adoption?

“As AI becomes more embedded, travelers will become more comfortable using it and we as companies, and travel management programs, will do a much better job, making sure that we’re ensuring the integrity of the results coming back, and the applications of the AI internally,” explains Dorian Stonie.



None of us have this figured out. It’s important to remind people of that, otherwise you feel so behind the learning curve it intimidates people further.

Kara Brayton

Change management

Our study reported that 45% of travelers are either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with change and disruption management and only 31% of business travelers are satisfied or very satisfied.

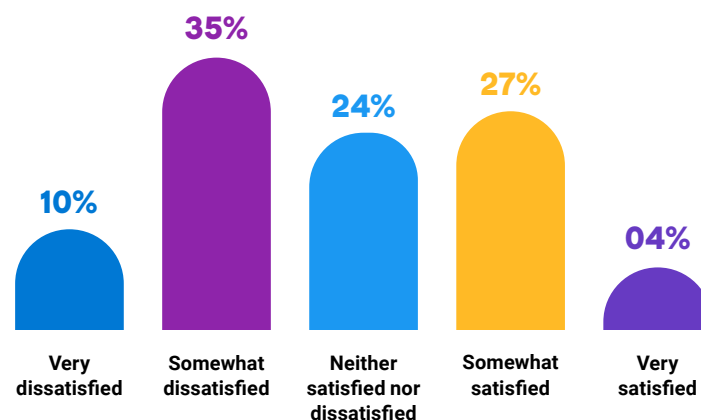
Change and disruption management is a critical driver of overall trip satisfaction, but it's also where travelers see the least benefit from AI today. While 90% believe AI can improve pre-trip research, fewer than two in three feel the same about disruption management. That gap represents one of the biggest opportunities for AI to make a meaningful difference.



We know there's on-trip friction. How do we use predictive analytics to avoid friction in the first place? That's where I feel like we are right now.

Kara Brayton

Trip satisfaction: Change and disruption management



Presently, AI is working to help manage change and disruption through predictive analytics. “We don’t need to reinvent the wheel; we need to meet travelers where they’re at” explains Kara. “Delayed flights, missed connections, hold time etc. – all of that is friction. In our booking tool we have the analytics to see at booking if a flight is delayed 50% of the time. Travelers can then plan the journey in a smarter way to begin with using the AI tools we have at our disposal.”

Looking forward, AI will soon be able to organize trips autonomously. Travelers or travel managers will no longer need to ‘manage’ disruptions, as AI will continuously adjust the trip in the background, reducing friction without requiring travelers to take action. However, this will rely heavily on the ability to personalize the results to keep changes within policy and budget.



There needs to be a way to make disruption management hyper configurable. You might not make the same decision for a senior employee as another employee. Maybe we would spend thousands of dollars to book a partner on a flight to get them there 30 minutes early, but we might not do that with everyone. I haven't seen that today, but I do think it is very possible.

Kara Brayton, Global Corporate Travel Lead

Expenses

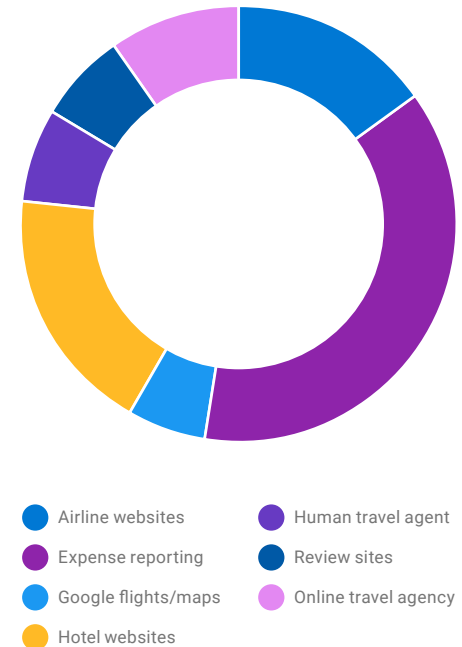
As we've already heard, the use of AI post-trip is helping tech savvy travelers quickly and efficiently match receipts and sort expense claims. Of those already using AI for business travel, 71% utilize tools such as Expensify, Emburse and Coupa for post-trip admin.

There is an opportunity to increase AI adoption among travelers for post trip admin. Some told us they don't use AI at all during their trips, while others described only very limited use, such as searching online for a business after misplacing a receipt. Closing that gap could unlock significant time savings and reduce post-trip frustration

Kara Brayton suggests that integrating AI or changing post-trip processes could be "daunting for many teams". She goes on to explain, "As an industry, we've not adopted AI for expenses well. There's amazing technology that exists to support this, but it is really daunting for accounting teams to go through and change. Expenses, sometimes more than travel, are extremely nuanced, so it's a lot of time to spend configuring things in the right way – but it is possible."

Travelers consistently tell us they want ease, simplicity and less complications. AI in expense management has the potential to deliver exactly that, yet internal processes and systems can still act as barriers. Removing those hurdles is key to unlocking the full benefit of AI for both travelers and businesses.

**AI users:
Post-trip administration**



“

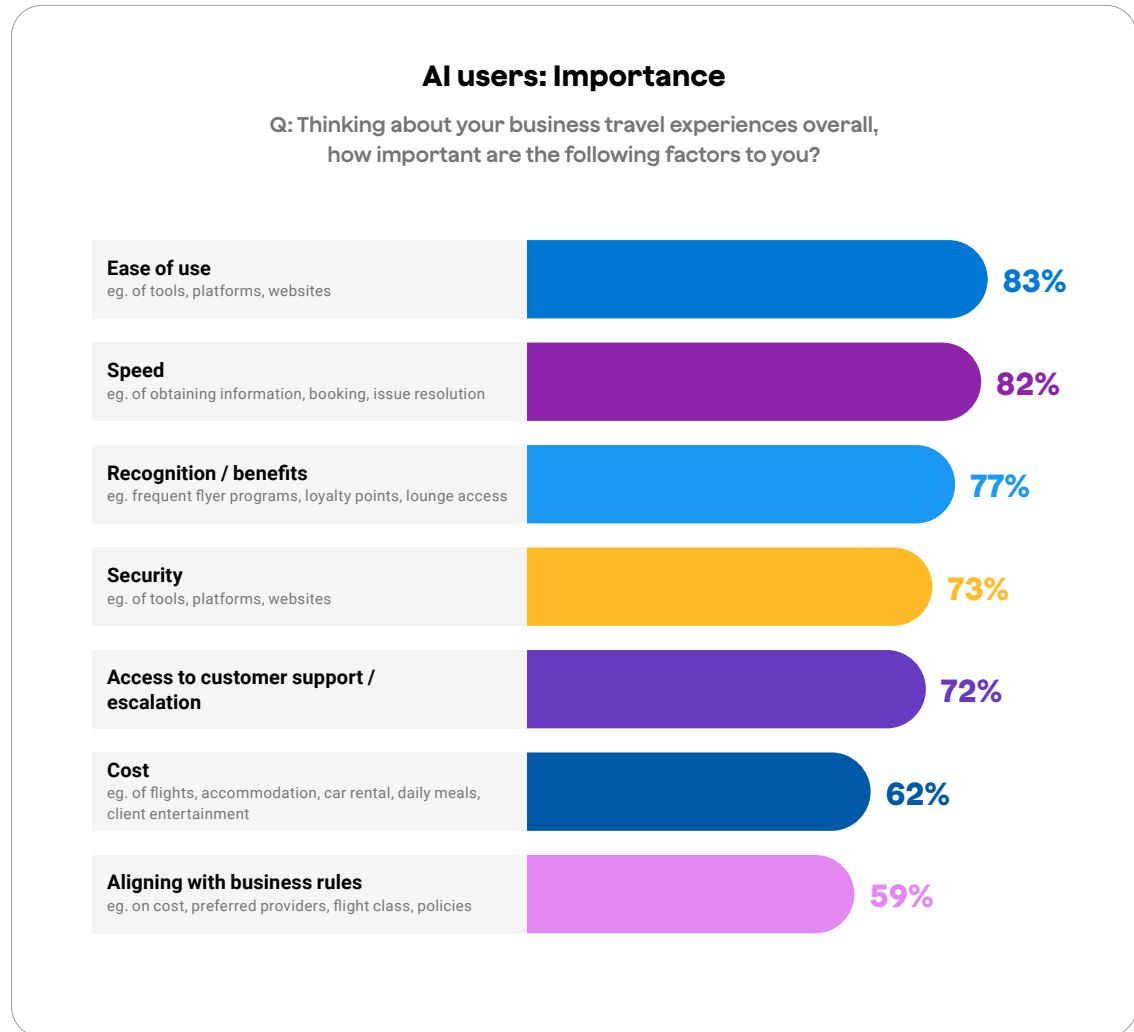
Travelers, if they know it's one less thing for them to do, they will love that and embrace that. I don't see friction there. But if internally there is resistance; you're causing your own friction. We can solve friction points within our team, but our travelers can't if they're not given the tools that they need to succeed.

**Kara Brayton,
Global Corporate Travel Lead**



Compliance

When asked how important certain factors in a trip were to them, travelers placed far greater significance on speed and ease than cost or compliance.



Analysis shows that travelers already using AI share very similar priorities with those yet to adopt it. Both groups place ease of use and speed at the top of their list, with compliance seen as less of a driver. This suggests that potential and current AI users approach business travel in much the same way, highlighting an opportunity to engage both audiences with solutions that emphasize simplicity.

“By reducing friction, providing more real time, in-depth responses we’re making our employees more productive,” states Dorian Stonie. But there’s another huge benefit - it also helps improve compliance.

Compliance has long been an issue in travel management, with program leakage leading to concerns from duty of care to budget management. As the focus on simple, quick solutions increases, the concern is that compliance could become an even greater issue, unless we start to meet the travelers where they are.

For Salesforce, traveler experience is baked into their culture.

“We have a traveler centric program within Salesforce. In the past 16 years we have developed our program around the employees – how to make business travel easy. How to make business travel more productive. There are so many synergies between AI and being able to deliver that personalized and real time service.”

To strengthen compliance, travel programs need to start with the traveler: placing their

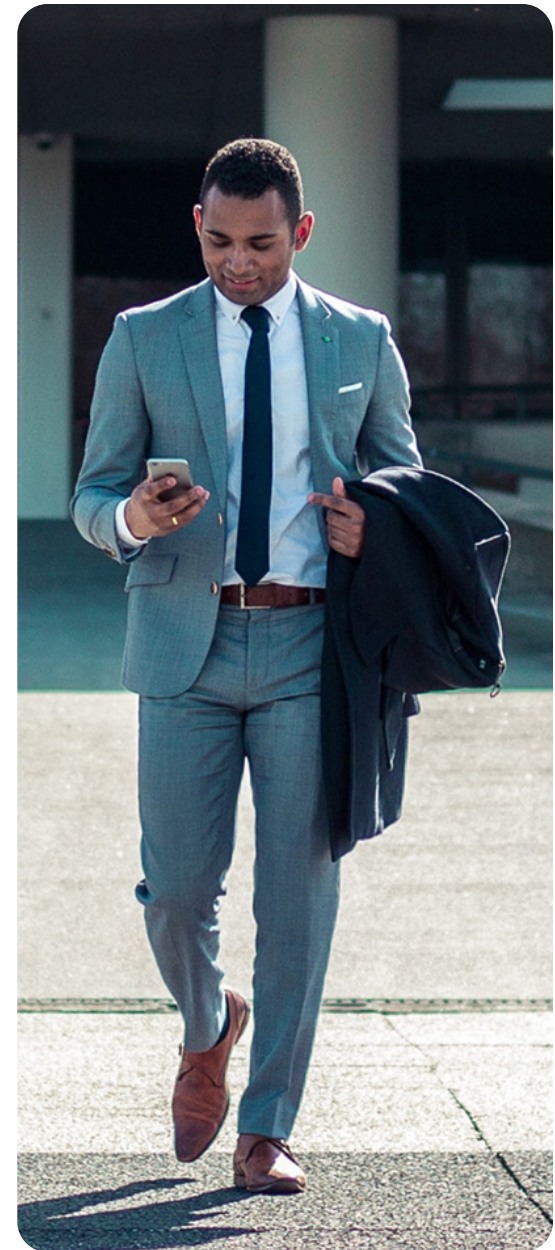
needs at the center of the program and equipping them with tools that reduce friction and boost satisfaction. When programs are built this way, compliance follows naturally.

AI is perfectly placed to help with this. Looking forward, AI will enable companies to make compliance invisible. Integrating AI into new or existing tools will mean travelers are guided by natural language, with policies adapted in the background to individuals. The old mindset of rule enforcement will be replaced with aligning traveler experience with company policy, meaning compliance happens naturally. It will no longer be travelers lacking knowledge or choosing to book outside of program – the tools will lead them to make the right, compliant, choice each time.



We’re always looking for ways to be able to integrate AI into the tools our travelers are already using: our online booking tool, our TMC services – any part of the journey that touches our travelers.

Dorian Stonie





Speedbumps and solutions

Positive sentiment around AI in business travel is strong. 83% of the travelers surveyed for our AI study said their opinion of AI had improved in the past three years. 89% believe AI will become more integrated into business travel and 75% believe it will make business travel more efficient.

So far so good. However, satisfaction with data security (50%) and policy compliance (44%) are significantly lower compared to ease of use or speed.

Speedbumps and solutions

Speedbump

Data security

Only 50% of travelers were satisfied with the security of their personal or business data

Areas to consider

Guardrails

Do you need to implement your own tools? What boundaries have you set for travelers using AI tools outside of your program?

Partner selection

Do your existing partners have AI integrations? What are their privacy and security standards?

Education

What training have you provided to travelers on handling sensitive and private information when working with AI tools?

Speedbump

Compliance

Only 44% of travelers were satisfied that their AI usage was compliant with their company's policies

Areas to consider

Usage

Should you require the use of company approved tools with built in privacy and safety?

Education

Do you communicate the ongoing AI advancements and how internal tools will ease current friction points? Do your travelers know which tools can help them?

Traveler centricity

Are your tools designed for the traveler, with their pain points in mind? How easy are these tools to access and use?



Any travel managers that are pursuing an AI strategy need to assess their own internal cyber security and data privacy, and the sentiment of the travelers. You need to learn from that and tailor your AI solutions to meet the needs of that population base at your company.

Dorian Stonie



You don't need new tools for your travelers. You need to meet them where they're at – create better automation in the tools they're already using.

Kara Brayton



Where AI takes us next

When it comes to AI and the business traveler, the survey insights tell us that speed, ease and experience are the key drivers for change.

AI is already being widely used by the business travel community, and this adoption is set to increase, powering more and more business travel decisions – both from a traveler and program perspective.

Travelers are beginning to realize the potential of AI. Positive sentiment has grown rapidly over the past three years and is set to further increase in the short to mid-term. While there are still bumps in the road – data privacy and compliance being the main two – the results show that adoption will continue.

For travel professionals this is an inflection point. Once again, we are being asked to balance security and compliance with experience and personalization. Only this time the rate of change is faster, and the demand from travelers is stronger.

AI is here to stay. Just as online booking reshaped the industry in the 1990s, we now need to embrace this next transformation, unlocking new ways to enhance experience, reduce cost and save time, freeing travel professionals to get out of the weeds and start looking at the bigger picture.

Final thoughts

Thank you to everyone involved in the production of this report. To our industry experts, Kara and Dorian, and temoji for their independent insights.



From our industry experts



Dorian Stonie
Senior Director of Global Travel at Salesforce

"I have never been so excited about technology advancements in the industry and the opportunities that AI brings to us to really elevate the service levels, to both our travelers and our companies. AI is going to be transformational in our industry. We're going to look back and think, "how did we live without that?" It's going to be a "win / win" for suppliers, companies, travelers and our travel programs. We just need to better understand the technologies, how we apply them, how we fine tune them and how we find the most optimal way to embed them into our travel programs."



Kara Brayton
Global Corporate Travel Lead

"Travel is so personal. I am an expert traveler, but I still umm and ahh – 'Do I want this? Or do I want that?' I've got to see what is available. People like to see options. Yes, AI gives options that are more customized, but I think where AI will succeed is focusing on helping me determine which option is best. I don't want AI to just book me the one trip it thinks is best – I want to see the options. People still want that human element. Even if AI was 100% correct in what it is recommending, it makes someone feel more validated to have the final say."

About us

About Serko

Whether you have 50 or 50,000 employees, Serko's solutions simplify the process of booking and managing business travel. With GetThere, Zeno or Booking.com for Business, travelers can shop and book from millions of flight, accommodation and ground transport options with all the tools they need to start their trip online and stay online through change and disruption. Listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange Main Board (NZX:SKO) and Australian Securities Exchange (ASX:SKO), Serko is headquartered in New Zealand, with offices across the United States, India, China and Australia.

For more information, visit serko.com.

About temoji

temoji is a consulting and marketing specialist in the global corporate travel and meetings industry. We work with travel suppliers who thrive on continually improving how they serve their clients and travelers. temoji is the special ingredient to help travel suppliers connect deeper and deliver better to your clients, prospective customers and wider stakeholders. We're the secret sauce.

And we believe that every challenge faced by our industry is solvable through the creation of better "Social and Intellectual Capital".

For travel's emotive journey, find out more at temoji.co.uk.

Footnotes

1. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2307.03744>
2. <https://roomex.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Full-Report-Reinventing-the-journey.pdf>
3. <https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report>



Appendix: Discover the data

Study details

We surveyed 177 US-based business travelers that:

- Travelled for work on a trip requiring an overnight stay at least 6 times in the past year
- Their travel included flights

We set soft quotas on state, so that no US state could provide more than 20% of respondents.

Demographic profile

Who we spoke to

Age



18–34	5%
35–44	29%
45–54	44%
55–64	18%
65+	4%
Est. median age:	50

Company size



1–9	4%
10–49	17%
50–249	25%
250–999	22%
1,000–4,999	11%
5,000–9,999	6%
10,000+	15%

Household income



Under \$100,000	4%
\$100,000–\$149,999	17%
\$150,000–\$199,999	25%
\$200,000–\$249,999	22%
\$250,000 or more	11%
Prefer not to say	6%

Industry



Finance & Insurance	19%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	15%
Information (e.g., software, data, telco)	13%
Health Care & Social Assistance	9%
Manufacturing	9%
Retail Trade	6%
Construction	5%
Educational Services	5%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	4%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	3%
Transportation & Warehousing	3%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	2%
Accommodation & Food Service	2%
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil and Gas Extraction	2%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2%
Wholesale Trade	2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	1%
Public Administration (Government)	1%
Utilities	1%

Business travel profile

Business trips in L12M

Fewer than 6	Screened out
6 to 8	36%
9 to 11	26%
More than 11	44%
Average trips:	10.6

Air travel

0%	Screened out
1% to 70%	24%
71% to 90%	31%
91% to 100%	45%
Average %	77

Domestic / International

100% domestic	44%
80% to 99% domestic	19%
51% to 80% domestic	24%
50/50 split	3%
51% to 80% international	7%
81% to 99% international	1%
100% international	3%
Average split	
	Domestic 81%
	International 19%

Booking management

I manage and book my own trips independently	69%
Through a corporate travel management company (TMC)	20%
Through my company's internal booking team/department	11%

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