Propellic Releases First Statistically Validated Study on Traveler Behavior

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Propellic, a leading travel marketing agency, has released the first statistically validated user-experience study examining how travelers research, plan, and book trips when interacting with Google?s emerging AI Mode. As AI-driven search continues to evolve, the study provides a data-backed look at the shifting decision-making patterns of travelers, along with the growing influence of machine-generated summaries during the planning process. The findings are being made publicly available to travel brands, researchers, and industry professionals through Propellic?s travel industry research hub at the company?s website.

Google?s AI Mode is expected to become a major component of search in the coming years, yet its impact on real-world consumer behavior has been largely speculative until now. Propellic?s study was designed to fill that gap, and it observes how participants evaluated AI-generated recommendations. It also observed how they compared the results to traditional organic listings, and how each result influenced their final booking decision.

The study drew from a broad sample of traveler interactions and applied validated measurement methods to help ensure reliability and repeatability. According to the published research, travelers showed a strong

tendency to rely on AI Mode for early-stage planning, reporting that AI summaries helped reduce time spent on reviewing multiple sites, making it easier to form an initial understanding of their options.

At the same time, the study also observed that direct bookings remained an important part of the traveler journey, echoing similar findings reported by travel industry outlets such as Travolution and PhocusWire. While AI Mode helped shape the discovery process, many travelers still turned to official airline, hotel, and tour websites before completing a booking.

?This is the first time the industry has been able to look at how travelers behave in AI Mode using a statistically rigorous framework rather than assumptions or anecdotal observations,? said Brennen Bliss, CEO of Propellic and industry-recognized expert on travel marketing. ?Our goal was to create a clear picture of what travelers actually do when AI becomes part of their search workflow, and how those behaviors differ from traditional search patterns.?

The study also highlights several technological implications for travel brands, as AI Mode summaries pull information from multiple sources. As a result, accuracy, content clarity, and structured data become increasingly important factors influencing visibility. When presented with AI-generated recommendations, travelers often compare only the top few options suggested to them.

This compressed comparison window suggests that brands positioned well within AI recommendations may become even more visible, while those excluded may see reduced discovery opportunities. In many ways, this is similar to search engine optimization.

?AI search will not eliminate traditional search behavior, but it is already reshaping it,? Bliss added. ?Travelers still value direct booking and brand verification, but they increasingly rely on AI summaries to guide what they review first. Understanding that shift early can help travel brands adapt their content strategies, data structures, and customer experience to meet these new expectations.?

Industry analysts expect AI Mode to play a growing role in travel planning as Google expands the feature and as users become more comfortable with AI-driven guidance. Propellic?s study suggests that this shift will not simply change how travelers find information, but also how they evaluate trust, authority, and relevance in the digital travel landscape.

By providing validated behavioral data, the findings aim to support the broader travel sector as it navigates an environment increasingly shaped by automation and intelligent search tools. Full details of the study, including methodology, user-flow observations, and behavioral insights, are available at Propellic?s website.

Propellic is the leading full-service travel marketing agency, leveraging AI across brand, creative, search

engine, and LLM optimization, paid media, analytics, and performance marketing to grow travel brands worldwide.

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