# ADAPTATION OR REPLACEMENT? HOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS RECALIBRATING ROLES IN TOURISM

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The tourism industry is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the ever-increasing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies. The new technologies are already having a visible impact on jobs and the way in which tourism services are provided, offering opportunities but also posing challenges for employees. In this context, a crucial question arises: will AI support the development of the workforce through retraining or will it gradually replace certain functions?

### AI and the transformation of roles in tourism

AI is currently being used in tourism to optimise the customer experience and improve processes through automation and data analysis. Virtual assistants, chatbots, personalised recommendations and booking automation are just some of the technologies that are on the rise. Traditional roles such as travel agents, receptionists or customer service representatives are changing as some of these tasks are being taken over by artificial intelligence systems.

We can say that AI allows employees to focus more on the creative and complex aspects of their work and encourages the adaptation and development of new skills. This allows employees to move from repetitive tasks to activities that require intensive human interaction, creativity and decision-making.

### Retraining or displacement?

While AI brings efficiency and personalisation, it also brings the risk of job displacement. In the face of this challenge, retraining is essential. Tourism employees need to develop new skills, including digital and AI skills, to remain relevant in the labour market. Retraining needs to be supported both by companies through training and adaptation programmes and by public policy, which can help develop upskilling strategies.

### How can AI add value to the work of employees?

Tourism will always remain an industry that relies heavily on human interaction and empathy. Human tasks that require empathy, creativity and critical thinking are more difficult to automate, and AI can help improve the work experience by taking over routine tasks.

AI can also provide valuable insights to employees in the tourism industry by giving them a deeper understanding of customer preferences and market trends, which can help them provide personalised and high-quality services.

### The future of work in tourism

So let us remain optimistic: AI is not necessarily a threat to tourism workers, but rather a catalyst for change. The future of the industry depends on the ability of companies and workers to adapt and invest in the development of new skills. Through a balanced approach where technology complements the human role, AI can contribute to more efficient operations for customer-centred tourism.

To summarise, while AI can significantly change the structure of work in tourism, the success of this transformation will depend on the balance between the use of technology and investment in people. Adaptation rather than replacement will be the key to a thriving and sustainable tourism industry.

In this context, tourism faculties have a great responsibility to prepare future professionals for a changing labour market. By adapting the curriculum, collaborating with the industry and focusing on training, they can equip graduates with the comprehensive skills they need to take advantage of AI and

support the industry's adaptation rather than replace human roles. The role of faculties, then, is to enable sustainable adaptation and intelligent recalibration of human resources in tourism.

We believe it is worth discussing some suggestions for the role of faculties as facilitators.

### Integrating technology into the curriculum

Tourism faculty curricula should include courses in digitalisation, artificial intelligence, data management and automation. Students need to understand how the technologies that impact the sector work and acquire practical skills in their application. Through modules in data analytics, digital marketing and customer experience management, faculties can help future graduates become competent in the use of technology and understand its impact on the tourism industry.

### Development of transversal and soft skills

Special attention must also be paid to the development of 'soft' skills – such as empathy, communication, creativity and critical thinking – which become increasingly valuable as technology takes over repetitive tasks. The tasks that require intensive human interaction will continue to be among the most important in tourism, and faculties must prepare graduates to fulfil these complex tasks.

### Promoting further education and reskilling

Adapting to technological change does not stop after graduation. Therefore, tourism schools should offer continuing education courses and certifications for those who wish to upskill during their careers. These can be offered in collaboration with industry partners and include short but intensive modules on new topics such as data analytics, integrating AI into services and managing technological change.

### Collaboration with industry for practical experience and innovation

Close collaboration with tourism and technology companies would facilitate understanding of current trends and could provide students with practical experience. These goals could be achieved through internships focussing on digital technologies, collaboration on applied research projects and case studies on the use of AI in tourism. Partnerships between schools and industry are an effective way to better prepare students for the labour market and its specific requirements.

### Stimulating entrepreneurship and innovation

AI and automation offer new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship in tourism. Faculties could promote entrepreneurship through courses in innovation, project management and strategic thinking. Tourism graduates can be trained to develop new solutions in tourism and start their own businesses focussing on the use of technology to improve tourism experiences.

In summary, in a world of tourism characterised by artificial intelligence, faculties are not only educational institutions, but also architects of a new generation of professionals capable of embracing change and redefining the human experience in the digital age.