



INDUSTRY STUDY · MAY 2026

# AI is rewriting travel search

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What 86 travel professionals told us about their approach to GEO, as travellers move their search to AI.

A Vamoos study into GEO readiness across the travel industry



## ABOUT THIS STUDY

# Why we ran this study

Travellers are starting their search somewhere new. Instead of a list of blue links, more and more journeys now begin with a question typed into ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity or Google's AI Overviews - and an answer that names a handful of companies and leaves everyone else out.

We saw that shift up close while preparing a webinar with Google on the changing landscape of AI travel search. To ground the conversation in real industry sentiment rather than assumptions, we ran a live poll with the travel professionals who attended - five quick questions on how they're thinking about Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO), the practice of making sure your business is part of those AI-generated answers. This report shares what they told us.

86

travel professionals polled live

5

questions on GEO readiness

May 2026

fielded during the live webinar

A note on reading the numbers: every attendee could answer every question, but not everyone answered all five. Responses run from 86 on the opening question to 61 on the last, so the later questions reflect the most engaged part of the room. Percentages are shown as a share of those who answered each question.

## Five things travel companies should know

- 1 Travel companies are watching AI search - most of them, anyway.**

Two thirds checked how they show up in AI search within the last month. But roughly one in four has never looked, or didn't know they could - a blind spot in plain sight.
- 2 GEO is understood in theory, not yet in practice.**

Around 60% are either new to GEO or have read about it without acting. Just 16% have an active strategy or are measuring results - so the field is still wide open for early movers.
- 3 The biggest traffic channels are also the most exposed.**

Referrals and repeat clients are the largest single source of inbound at 36%. But Google - organic and paid combined - drives 52%, and that is exactly the surface AI is reshaping fastest.
- 4 The loudest worry is simply not knowing.**

Losing organic traffic to AI-generated answers is the top concern at 32%, followed closely by not knowing whether they're visible in AI search at all. You can't manage what you can't see.
- 5 GEO is already on the priority list.**

More than three quarters rank GEO a mid or top priority, and nearly half say they're ready to start in the near future. The appetite is there - what's missing is a clear first step.

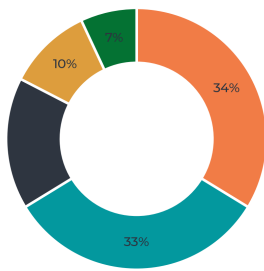
## THE FINDINGS IN DETAIL

# Question by question

Each of the five poll questions, the full breakdown of responses, and what we read into it.

### FINDING 1 OF 5 · 86 OF 86 ANSWERED

When did travel companies last check their AI search visibility?

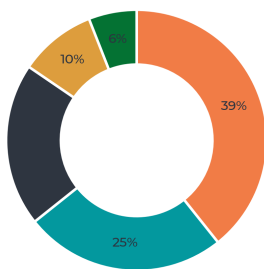


<span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> This week	33.7%
<span style="color: #1abc9c;">■</span> In the last month	32.6%
<span style="color: #2c3e50;">■</span> Never	16.3%
<span style="color: #f1c40f;">■</span> Didn't know I could	10.5%
<span style="color: #27ae60;">■</span> Months ago	7.0%

Awareness is the good-news story: two thirds had looked within the last month. The worry is the long tail - a combined 27% have never checked or didn't know they could, and in AI search, invisible is the same as absent.

### FINDING 2 OF 5 · 84 OF 86 ANSWERED

How well do travel companies understand GEO right now?

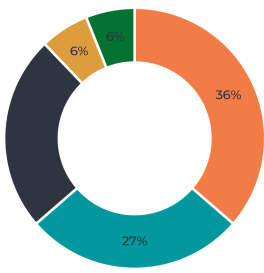


<span style="color: #e67e22;">■</span> New to me, here to learn the basics	39.3%
<span style="color: #1abc9c;">■</span> We're experimenting but it's early days	25.0%
<span style="color: #2c3e50;">■</span> I've read about it but haven't done anything yet	20.2%
<span style="color: #f1c40f;">■</span> We have an active GEO strategy in place	9.5%
<span style="color: #27ae60;">■</span> We're measuring it and seeing results	6.0%

This is the gap the report turns on. Nearly four in five are still learning or experimenting, and only 16% have something live and measured - so visibility is still there for the taking.

FINDING 3 OF 5 · 66 OF 86 ANSWERED

### Where does inbound traffic come from today?

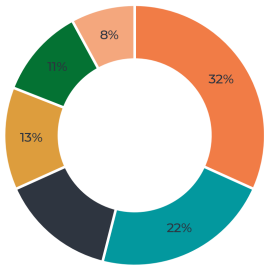


Referrals or repeat clients	36.4%
Organic Google search	27.3%
Google Ads or paid search	24.2%
Social media	6.1%
Honestly, not sure	6.1%

Referrals remain the backbone of travel inbound. But organic and paid Google together make up 52% - the half of the funnel most directly in the path of AI-assisted search.

FINDING 4 OF 5 · 63 OF 86 ANSWERED

### What worries travel companies most?

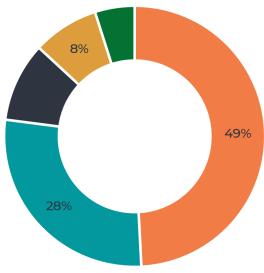


Losing organic traffic to AI-generated answers	31.7%
Not knowing if we're visible in AI search at all	22.2%
Not sure where to start	14.3%
Our content not being structured for AI to use	12.7%
Google Ads spend not delivering like it used to	11.1%
Competitors getting ahead while we figure it out	7.9%

The top two worries are both about visibility, and one is about not even knowing. Together they account for over half of responses - and the first step out is a measurement, not a campaign.

FINDING 5 OF 5 · 61 OF 86 ANSWERED

## Where does GEO sit on the priority list?



Mid priority: ready to start this in the near future	49.2%
Top priority: actively investing time and budget	27.9%
Low priority: watching from the sidelines for now	9.8%
We haven't invested in SEO or GEO	8.2%
We invest into SEO but GEO isn't on our radar yet	4.9%

Whatever the uncertainty, GEO has earned its place on the roadmap. 77% call it a mid or top priority, and the biggest single group is ready to start in the near future.

## From findings to first moves

Read together, the five findings point to a clear moment. Awareness is high, action is low, and the appetite to start is already there. Here is what we'd take from it.

### **There's a window - and it's open now.**

High awareness, low action and most companies still learning means GEO isn't crowded yet. The companies that move while the field is thin are the ones AI engines will name first.

### **Start with measurement, not a campaign.**

The most common worry is simply not knowing whether you're visible. Checking how you show up across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity and AI Overviews is the first move - everything else follows from what you find.

### **Protect the half of the funnel that's exposed.**

Referrals stay golden, but Google drives 52% of inbound and that's the surface AI is reshaping fastest. GEO isn't replacing what works - it's defending it.

### **Treat GEO as a roadmap item, not an experiment.**

Three quarters of the industry already calls it a mid or top priority. Giving it a clear owner and a first deadline turns that intent into visibility.

If you'd like a structured starting point, there's a GEO action plan on the Vamoos website built to walk travel companies through exactly these first moves.

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The travel companies that get found in AI search won't be the ones who saw it coming. They'll be the ones who looked.



## ABOUT VAMOOS

# The app for travel companies

Vamoos has been helping travellers get the most from their trips since 2014. We help hotels and travel companies grow by exciting travellers and guests before, during and after a trip - transforming the way travel information is delivered, and giving companies a direct, branded line to their clients at every stage of the journey.

Staying visible as travel search changes is part of the same story: helping travel companies be found, chosen and remembered.

[Book a personalised demo](#)

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