

The Future of Destinations: Insights from Travel Dreams 2026

From economic uncertainty to AI driven discovery, the rules of destination competitiveness are changing fast. **Destinations are no longer defined by what they offer — they're competing on how they make travelers feel.**

This report draws on key insights from **Travel Dreams 2026**, curated specifically for **Destination Management Organizations (DMOs)**, highlighting what's shaping demand — and what destinations need to do next.

Amadeus — It's how travel works better.

www.amadeus-hospitality.com

Key Trends for DMOs

1. Volatility as a Data Advantage

Insight

In a more dynamic global environment, destinations that succeed are those that can **see demand forming earlier and respond with confidence**. Shifts in geopolitics, economics, and traveler behavior are accelerating the need for DMOs to move from reactive planning to **data-driven, forward-looking decision-making**. Access to timely, forward looking data enables destinations to identify emerging markets, adjust investment in near real time, and prioritize demand that delivers both volume and value.

Destination perspectives

“Changing global conditions demand a more adaptable structure than ever before, one that can make quick decisions and execute them rapidly. “To boost the resilience of our tourism industry, we are working to diversify markets, promote a range of products across different destinations tailored to each target market, and maintain year-round tourism activity nationwide. Through these efforts, we are not easily affected by challenges; rather, we have built resilience against all kinds of obstacles.”

– **Sinan Seha Türkseven**,
Türkiye Tourism Promotion
& Development Agency

What this means for DMOs

Uncertainty doesn't reduce opportunity — it raises the bar for intelligence.

Action: Use forward looking travel data to diversify source markets, smooth seasonality, and focus investment on demand that supports resilient, sustainable destination growth.

2. Destinations as Emotional Experiences

Insight

Travelers no longer choose destinations based on what there is to see, but on how a place makes them feel. Emotional outcomes now define the “dream destination.” When planning a trip, travelers are primarily motivated by a desire for freedom, connection, discovery and ease:

- Freedom, space, and open itineraries — **29%**
- Connection to local culture — **24%**
- Discovery and exploration — **22%**
- Ease and reduced decision making — **17%**

On return, travelers most value

- A refreshed mind and calmer nervous system — **41%**
- A clearer, lighter sense of self — **18%**

What this means for DMOs

If your destination is still marketed by attractions alone, you're invisible to emotion led travelers.

Action: Reframe destination branding around emotional outcomes — freedom, connection, discovery, and ease — not checklists.

Destination perspective

“Destination management organizations are today architects of how a location makes a traveler feel during a vacation. Travel Dreams 2026 data reveals travelers now want freedom, connection, discovery, and ease. They want to disconnect from their phones, recharge their mental health, and feel genuinely alive, not just tick off landmarks. Those who intentionally craft journeys that deliver personal growth, wellbeing, and authentic connection will become indispensable partners to hotels, brands and destinations alike.”

– **Sol Freixa**,
Vice President, Commercial,
Destinations, Amadeus



3. Personalization at the Destination Level



What this means for DMOs

Personalization isn't messaging — it's journey design..

Action: Design flexible, intent based journeys that adapt to traveler motivation, origin market, seasonality, and repeat visitation.

Insight

Personalization is no longer just about hotels or offers — it's a destination wide expectation. across every stage of the traveler journey:

- **74%** of travelers say personalization is important
- Travelers are willing to pay more for experiences that save time, reduce friction, or deliver emotional value

At the destination level, personalization means:

- Designing journeys by traveler intent (wellbeing, culture, discovery, ease)
- Offering flexible, modular itineraries rather than fixed routes
- Differentiating experiences for first time vs. repeat visitors
- Supporting dispersion across regions and seasons

Destination perspective

“We identify and understand our target audiences through extensive global research, segmenting global travelers into distinct profiles based on their motivations and behaviors, and identifying the size and opportunity of these segments in each of our 25 key source markets. We then build detailed profiles for each, tracking everything from their preferred travel months and accommodation style to their media consumption habits and what they value most in a destination, such as safety or climate. The resulting playbooks are a key component of our research and part of a wider, continuous program of data analysis and market intelligence that informs our strategic decisions, allowing us to tailor marketing, partnerships, and product development.”

— **Abdulla Yousuf**,
Department of Culture & Tourism –
Abu Dhabi

4. AI is Reshaping Destination Discovery

Insight

AI-driven discovery is now reshaping inspiration, planning, and decision making across every stage of the traveler journey:

- Planning and research — **42%**
- Inspiration and discovery — **36%**
- During the trip — **35%**

Importantly:

- 69% of travelers say AI summaries provide enough information to make decisions without further research
- Chatbot use for travel inspiration has tripled—from 6% five years ago to 18% today.

What this means for DMOs

AI isn't just shaping how people search — it's shaping how they decide.

Action: Structure destination information so it's clear, consistent, and optimized for AI powered discovery — not just human readers.

What Destinations Need to Do

DMOs: Destination Experience Architect

Insight

The modern DMO is no longer just a promoter of places, but an orchestrator of experiences — shaping flows, aligning stakeholders, and delivering long term value.

DMOs increasingly shape:

- Visitor flows and dispersal
- Seasonality and demand smoothing
- Alignment between public and private stakeholders
- The coherence of the destination experience

Destination perspectives

“Destination management organizations are today architects of how a location makes a traveler feel during a vacation. Travel Dreams 2026 data reveals travelers now want freedom, connection, discovery, and ease. They want to disconnect from their phones, recharge their mental health, and feel genuinely alive, not just tick off landmarks. Those who intentionally craft journeys that deliver personal growth, wellbeing, and authentic connection will become indispensable partners to hotels, brands and destinations alike.”

— **Sol Freixa**,
Vice President, Commercial, Destinations, Amadeus



What this means for DMOs

Growth without coordination creates friction — for residents, visitors and the destination itself.

Action: Act as experience architects: use data and intelligence to align public and private stakeholders, manage dispersal, and design journeys that balance growth with wellbeing. Leading destinations such as Singapore are already doing this.

Search, SEO, and GEO as Key Enablers

Insight

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) are no longer tactical levers — they are core brand infrastructure, foundational to destination visibility. Destinations report that appearing in search engines and AI platforms is now the **most critical driver of demand**.

What this means for DMOs

If your content isn't structured for AI generated summaries, it won't surface where decisions are made.

Action: Govern destination content for consistency, structure attributes clearly, and audit how your destination appears in AI driven environments.

See how the [Netherlands](#) leveraged location based data to capture sustainable inbound demand.



Destination perspectives

“The Travel Dreams 2026 research shows us the variations in what people are looking for and the importance of understanding target audiences when launching a marketing campaign or serving their needs on the ground. Travelers want personalized, flexible, and emotionally satisfying experiences, which vary by age and background. Using data and technology wisely is essential to understand who guests are, what they want, and when they want it, enabling hotels to reimagine the guest journey and deliver meaningful, tailored stays without overcomplicating operations.”

— **Dan Ciocoiu**,
Head of Advertising Solutions, Amadeus

From Data Gaps to Data Advantage

Insight

Today, the most difficult data to access across the ecosystem includes:

- Forward looking demand indicators — **39%**
- Comparative market performance — **36%**
- Actionable behavioral insights — **33%**
- Origin market and traveler purpose data — **26%**

What this means for DMOs

Reporting the past won't prepare you for what's next.

Action: Combine air, hotel, and forward looking data to move from hindsight to forecasting — supporting smarter, more sustainable decisions.

Destination perspectives

“When it comes to data, we work to acquire raw data, including from Amadeus, and then internally manage this to generate insight. Comparing different sources of data, as well as our own information and surveys, allows us to compare and contrast, creating a stronger overview. This provides us with valuable information to develop business cases and understand what is happening within the market. We use this data to explain the decisions we take to different stakeholders across the destination. Our work is driven by rational insight – and this is strategically very important.”

– **Rodrigo Esponda Cascajares**, Visit Los Cabos





In 2026, the most successful destinations won't be those that promote the most — but those that **understand demand earliest**, appear where decisions are made, and design journeys that resonate emotionally.

By combining **Travel Intelligence** to anticipate where demand is coming from, **Advertising solutions** to activate the right audiences at the right moment, and **AI ready**

content strategies to stay visible across search and discovery, destinations can move from reactive marketing to **intent-led growth**.

The future of destination marketing lies in turning **data into insight, technology into trust, and visits into meaningful, human-led experiences** that are not only visible, but chosen.

Want to see how your destination performs across these trends — and where opportunity is emerging next?

Let's talk ↗

For further information, visit us at amadeus-hospitality.com or speak to your Amadeus Account Manager today.

Find us on:



Photos: supplied | © Amadeus IT Group and its affiliates and subsidiaries