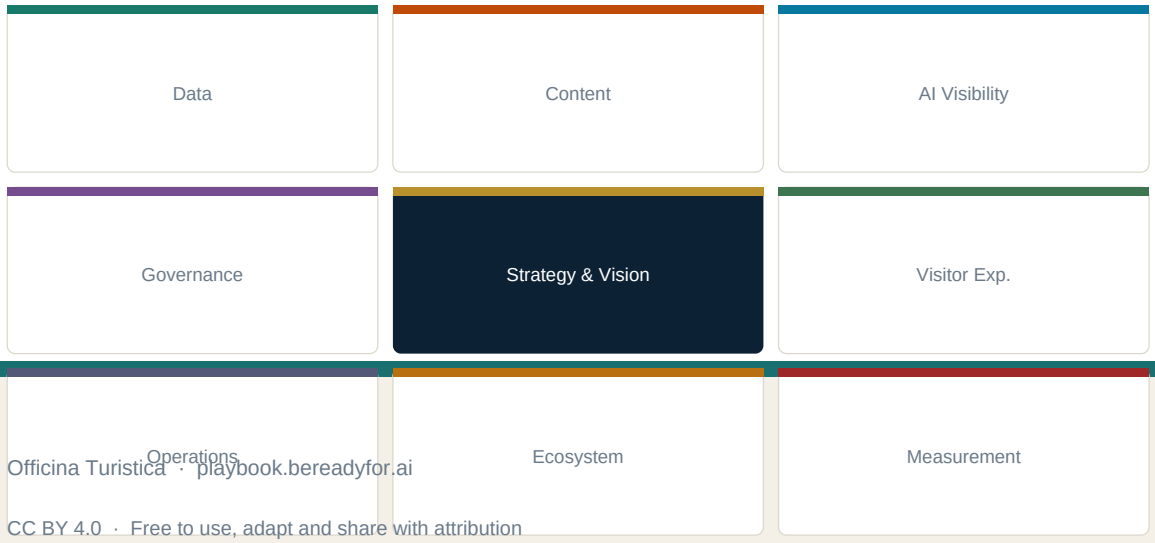
Destinations AI Canvas

Complete Framework Guide

A strategic self-assessment for Destination Management Organisations.

9 dimensions · 5 maturity stages · 135 priority actions



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CONTEXT & EVIDENCE

Before You Deploy the Chatbot

What three years of documented AI adoption reveal about where destination organisations actually stand

By Mirko Lalli, Officina Turistica · May 2026

Ask a roomful of DMO professionals whether AI matters and every hand goes up. Ask who has a written AI policy and most hands come down. Ask who has a formal AI strategy with budget, ownership, and milestones and you are usually left with two or three tentative gestures. This gap, between genuine enthusiasm and structural readiness, is the defining feature of where destination organisations are right now.

That is not a criticism. It is a description. The ETC study published in September 2025, drawing on data collected from European NTOs in April of that year, found that none of the surveyed organisations had a formal AI strategy in place. Only 14% had a policy of any kind. Staff curiosity was high, overt resistance was low, but the institutional infrastructure to support sustainable AI adoption was largely absent. What had grown fast was experimentation. What had not grown was governance.

The Destinations AI Canvas exists because of this pattern. Not to celebrate the organisations ahead of the curve, and not to judge those still finding their footing. It exists because there is now enough documented, verified evidence across geographies and organisation types to map the terrain clearly. And the terrain is more varied than conference presentations tend to suggest.

What the 2025 data actually shows

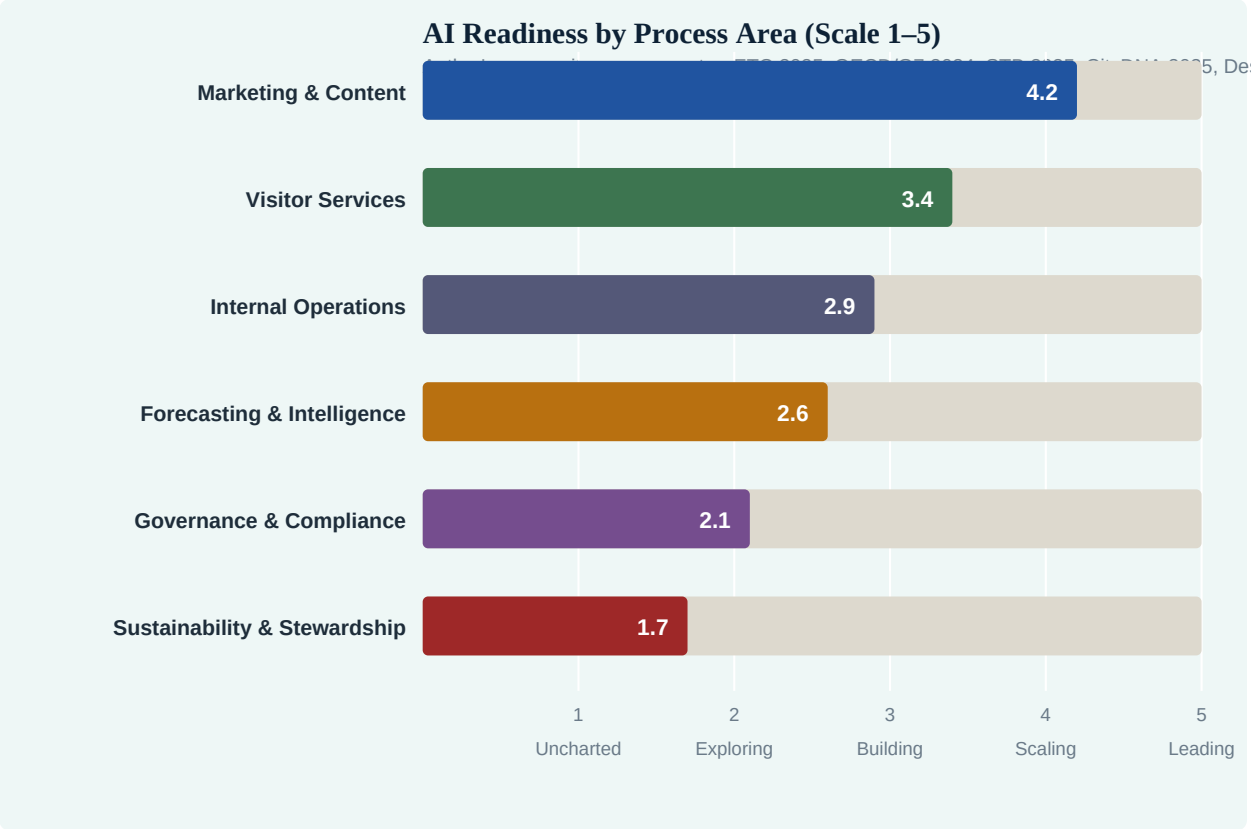
The ETC study is worth reading carefully because it is methodologically sound. Produced by Kairos Future and covering ETC member national tourism organisations, it assessed two dimensions simultaneously: organisational readiness for long-term AI deployment, and the usefulness already perceived from AI tools in practice. The segmentation it produces, beginners, untapped potential, opportunistic users, and early adopters, is useful precisely because it shows how wide the distribution is even within a relatively homogeneous set of European institutions.

The most consistent finding across the report is that marketing departments are ahead of research departments by a significant margin. Seventy-two percent of marketing teams cited AI use in copywriting. Research teams found the technology useful in theory but could not point to operational adoption with the same confidence. The main barriers were not technical: limited AI expertise, sparse training, and the absence of a strategic roadmap. These are organisational constraints, not technological ones.

This tracks with what AI Opener for Destinations, the community learning programme run by Miles Partnership with ETC and CityDNA as partners, has been documenting through its 2025-2026 cohort. The organisations that get the most from shared learning are not the ones with the largest budgets. They are the ones that come in with a specific question rather than a general curiosity. Framing the problem clearly before picking the tool is apparently harder than it sounds.

The OECD G7 policy paper on AI and tourism, endorsed by Tourism Ministers in November 2024, provides the broader context. It identifies market intelligence, visitor flow optimisation, and sustainability management as the highest-potential AI application areas for destinations, while noting that adoption rates remain uneven and that many organisations lack the data infrastructure to act on that potential. This is not a paper about chatbots. It is about structural readiness for a different kind of destination management.

FIGURE 1



Author's composite assessment combining documented deployment maturity, organisational prerequisites required, and available sector guidance. Sources: ETC 2025, OECD/G7 2024, STB 2025-2026, CityDNA/VisitAarhus 2025, Destinations International 2025. Full source list on final page.

Three models generating real evidence

Not everything is cautious experimentation. Three distinct approaches have now produced enough publicly documented evidence to draw lessons from.

The most architecturally ambitious is Singapore Tourism Board. Over several years, STB has built what it calls a Learn-Test-Scale system: the Tcube innovation hub, an AI playbook for tourism businesses, grant and procurement support via the Tourism Development Fund and affiliated government programmes, a data infrastructure layer called STAN, and open innovation challenges. In July 2025, STB signed a memorandum of understanding with OpenAI, making it the first national tourism organisation in Asia to formally adopt OpenAI technology as part of its Tourism 2040 roadmap. The 2026 pilot programmes, multilingual AI guides at Sentosa and Mandai, represent the visitor-facing output of years of organisational preparation. The technology is not why this case is interesting. The architecture around it is.

The most widely replicated model in 2024-2025 is the visitor assistant. Destination Toronto's 6ix is the clearest documented case: launched in October 2024 and built on GuideGeek technology from Matador Network, it operates across the official website, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. In the first two months it handled more than 7,500 messages from over 2,700 users, a figure VP of Global Marketing Paula Port offered as

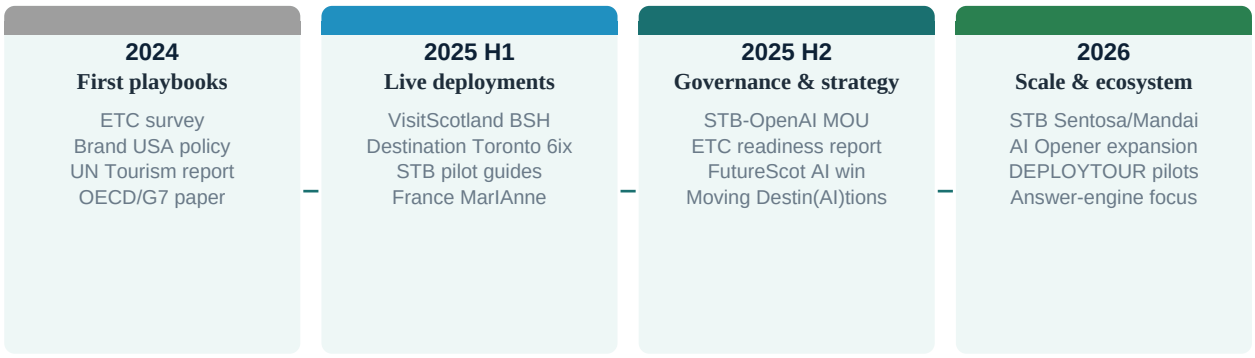
evidence of genuine continued engagement. France's MarIAnne on France.fr, Switzerland Tourism's AI-assisted travel companion integrated into the 2025-2027 strategy, and assistants deployed by destinations from the British Virgin Islands to Discover Santa Clara in Silicon Valley follow the same template. The formula is fast time to market, familiar vendor ecosystem, good fit for inspiration and itinerary use cases. The constraints are also consistent: vendor dependency, shallow content integration, and no established method for connecting engagement data to economic outcomes.

The third approach, organisational learning, is less visible publicly but arguably the most transferable. VisitAarhus, through Denmark's Moving Destin(AI)tions programme alongside VisitDenmark and sector partners, ran ten destination AI pilots and documented what went wrong as carefully as what went right. A custom GPT built to democratise internal knowledge ran immediately into security and privacy requirements more complex than anticipated. The project slowed, brought in an external provider, recalibrated. The published conclusion: every AI experiment needs defined objectives, evaluation criteria, and genuine openness to learning when the outcome is not what you hoped for. VisitScotland took a similar principled approach with its Business Support Hub AI chatbot, launched in May 2025, which draws only from the official knowledge base to reduce hallucination risk. In November 2025, VisitScotland won the FutureScot AI Challenge at Digital Scotland for a multilingual travel companion concept built on the same logic.

FIGURE 2

AI Adoption Timeline in Destination Management

Key milestones across documented NTO and DMO programmes · 2024–2026



Key documented milestones across DMO and NTO AI programmes. Timeline reflects publicly verified deployments and announcements. Sources cited on final page.

What consistently gets skipped, and why that matters

The adoption pattern across documented cases is not random. Organisations move first into content and visitor assistance because the use cases are legible, the vendor ecosystem is mature, and the outputs are visible. They move last, often not at all, into the areas that require the most institutional pre-work: governance, data foundations, AI-ready content architecture, measurement frameworks, and ecosystem enablement.

Brand USA's approach to this problem is instructive. Its internal AI framework, documented in the 'Agents of Change' policy deck, is built on three questions: what does the organisation provide to employees (tools, guidance, safe spaces to experiment), what does it protect (personal data, brand integrity, copyright, legal exposure), and what does it expects (transparency about AI use, human review of outputs, accountability for errors). This framework came before any public-facing AI deployment. The logic is plain: before you put an AI system in front of visitors or partners, you need a clear answer to what your organisation will do when it gets something wrong.

VisitAarhus learned this empirically. Dozens of other organisations have launched assistants and then discovered that their content was not clean enough, structured enough, or accurate enough to support reliable outputs. The hallucination problem in visitor-facing AI is not primarily a model problem. It is a content governance problem. Clean content, official and current, structured with schema markup and verifiable facts, is the prerequisite that nobody announces at a conference.

DEPLOYTOUR, the EU-funded initiative building a European Tourism Data Space under the Digital Europe Programme, addresses the infrastructure layer that most DMO AI deployments quietly depend on but rarely invest in. With five active pilots testing interoperability, data sharing, and AI analytics across destinations and operators, it is working on the prerequisites that make the higher-value use cases, visitor flow management, dispersal, sustainability optimisation, technically feasible at destination scale. Infrastructure work is slow. It is also the work that makes the rest durable.

The readiness gradient

The evidence from 2025 and into 2026 produces a clear readiness gradient across process areas. Marketing and content sit at the high end: clear use cases, measurable outputs, growing staff capability. Visitor services are next: real deployments exist and engagement is measurable, but integration depth is shallow and economic attribution remains weak. Internal productivity is growing but the evidence base is thin, partly because back-office wins are less visible publicly. Forecasting and market intelligence have strong potential but weak data prerequisites and variable skill levels. Sustainability, visitor management, and destination stewardship sit at the bottom: highest strategic potential, highest organisational prerequisites, fewest mature deployments.

The governance and AI readiness dimensions cut across all of this horizontally. Only 14% of European NTOs had a policy in April 2025. Few organisations have a clear AI procurement framework. Even fewer have defined what success looks like for any specific initiative in terms that would survive scrutiny from a board or funder.

This is not a failure of ambition. Most DMOs that engage seriously with AI understand what it could do for them. It is a sequencing problem. Organisations are deploying the visible layer, the assistant, the content generator, the planning tool, without the structural layer that makes that deployment reliable, governable, and measurable over time. The OECD paper is direct on this: the realisation of AI's potential in tourism depends on market intelligence infrastructure, skills development, regulatory frameworks, and data quality. Build those first and deployment becomes purposeful. Skip them and you get impressive demos that do not compound into anything.

The visibility shift nobody has fully solved

There is a dimension of AI readiness that most frameworks miss entirely, and which the evidence from 2025 is starting to make urgent. Call it answer engine readiness. Travellers are asking ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity where to go, what to eat, where to stay. The answers they receive are drawn from the collective digital presence of every operator in a destination, not from the official DMO website. A destination with a polished chatbot and unstructured, outdated, inconsistently formatted content across its operator ecosystem is already losing ground in AI discovery.

Destinations International has been documenting this shift in its 2025 publications on the new search economy. The transition from keyword search to conversational AI retrieval changes what content needs to look like, what KPIs matter, and what the DMO's role is. Switzerland Tourism's 2025-2027 strategy explicitly integrates an AI-assisted travel companion connected to real-time data sources. STB is building the data infrastructure that makes destination-wide AI representation reliable. These are not just chatbot plays. They are bets on what it means to be a trusted, machine-readable source of truth about a place.

The DMO's unique function in this environment is not content production. It is orchestration. No individual operator can represent the full destination to an AI platform. The DMO is the only actor with the mandate and the reach to raise the AI visibility of the entire ecosystem, small hotels, local guides, niche experiences, off-peak periods and secondary regions alike. This is why the Destinations AI Canvas includes AI Visibility and Stewardship as a standalone ninth dimension. It is the one that most frameworks built before 2025 did not need to include.

A map for the transition

The Destinations AI Canvas is a structured response to the gap between enthusiasm and readiness. Not a checklist, not a compliance audit, and not an argument that every DMO should immediately invest in every dimension. A map.

Nine dimensions, arranged so that strategy sits at the centre and the surrounding eight reflect the full scope of AI readiness for a destination organisation: internal capability covering operations, governance, data foundations, and measurement; external impact covering visitor experience, content, ecosystem, and AI visibility. Each dimension runs from Uncharted to Leading across five maturity stages, described in terms of actual organisational behaviour rather than aspiration. Each has diagnostic indicators, questions designed to produce honest rather than optimistic answers, and specific next steps calibrated to where you currently are.

The organisations that have generated the most sustained progress with AI, Singapore, VisitAarhus, VisitScotland, Brand USA, Destination Toronto, share one characteristic that precedes their technology choices. They invested in knowing where they were before deciding where to go. Some ran formal assessments. Some ran internal workshops. Some failed on a small pilot and used that failure to frame the next decision more clearly. The mechanism varies. The discipline is the same.

The best-positioned destinations in 2027 will not be the ones that deployed the most impressive chatbot in 2025. They will be the ones that became, and remained, the most credible, machine-readable, AI-legible source of truth about their territory. Getting there requires work across all nine dimensions. The canvas is a tool for deciding where that work starts.

Sources

All claims in this article are based on publicly accessible primary sources, verified by direct HTTP check or confirmed via press coverage. Sources returning 403 in automated checks are access-restricted but confirmed via press releases and secondary reporting. Pre-2025 sources are included only where no 2025-2026 equivalent covers the same claim.

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Introduction

The Destinations AI Canvas is a strategic self-assessment tool for Destination Management Organisations. Inspired by the Business Model Canvas, it maps AI readiness across the nine dimensions that matter most for destination management in an AI-first world.

It is not a compliance checklist and not a maturity audit. It is a structured mirror — a way to see your organisation clearly, have the right conversations, and make deliberate choices about where to invest next.

The ninth dimension — AI Visibility and Stewardship — is unique to this framework. It recognises that a destination is not made of the DMO website alone, but of the collective digital presence of every hotel, restaurant, attraction, and operator in the territory. The DMO's role in an AI-first world is to orchestrate that presence across the entire ecosystem. This is the conceptual contribution that distinguishes this canvas from any other AI maturity model in the sector.

Three ways to use this framework

01

Self-Assessment

Complete the assessment alone. Use your radar chart and priority actions to prepare for a strategy review, annual planning cycle, or funding conversation. Be honest — the canvas is only as useful as it is truthful.

02

Team Workshop

Each participant completes the assessment independently, then the team compares results. Gaps between individual assessments reveal assumptions and blind spots that are often more valuable than the scores themselves. See the companion Workshop Kit for full facilitation guidance.

03

Consulting Diagnostic

Use the Canvas as a structured intake instrument with a DMO client. The nine dimensions create shared vocabulary, and the documented baseline gives your engagement a clear starting point and a measurable outcome to revisit.

The Five Maturity Stages

Each dimension is scored from 1 (Uncharted) to 5 (Leading). Total scores range from 9 to 45 and map to an overall maturity profile. The stages describe organisational behaviour, not ambition — choose the description that most honestly reflects where you are today, not where you aspire to be.

1 Stage 1 · Uncharted

Total score 9–17 · Per-dimension score: 1

AI is largely absent from your organisation's strategy and operations. The right move is not to rush to catch up but to establish honest baselines, appoint clear ownership, and make deliberate first moves. Organisations that build durable AI capability start with clarity, not speed.

2 Stage 2 · Exploring

Total score 18–26 · Per-dimension score: 2

Experiments are underway, but they lack a framework to connect them into organisational learning. Your priority is to move from scattered experimentation to deliberate strategy — even an informal one. The act of writing down priorities changes behaviour.

3 Stage 3 · Building

Total score 27–35 · Per-dimension score: 3

Meaningful foundations are being laid. You have real AI activity in several dimensions, but unevenness across the canvas creates friction and limits impact. Focus on strengthening your weakest dimensions — they set the ceiling for everything else.

4 Stage 4 · Scaling

Total score 36–42 · Per-dimension score: 4

AI is delivering measurable value. The task shifts from adoption to extension — spreading value across the full ecosystem, enabling partners, and orchestrating destination-wide visibility. You are becoming the organisation others learn from.

5 Stage 5 · Leading

Total score 43–45 · Per-dimension score: 5

You are operating at the frontier of AI adoption in destination management. Your role has shifted from internal adoption to sector leadership — setting standards, enabling others, and actively shaping how AI represents and serves your destination.

The Nine Dimensions

The following pages provide the complete reference for each of the nine dimensions: description, why it matters, diagnostic indicators, stage-by-stage descriptors, key diagnostic questions, and priority next steps for each maturity level.

#	Dimension	Core focus
1	**Strategy & Vision**	AI leadership, organisational roadmap, resource commitment, and alignment with strategic goals.
2	**Data Foundations**	Data infrastructure, quality, first-party data assets, system integration, and AI-readiness.
3	**Content & Creativity**	AI-assisted content production, asset management, personalisation at scale, and editorial quality control.
4	**Visitor Experience**	AI-powered touchpoints across the full traveller journey — pre-trip, on-trip, and post-trip.
5	**Internal Operations**	AI embedded in daily DMO workflows, team productivity, staff AI capability, and process documentation.
6	**Governance & Ethics**	AI use policies, data privacy compliance, ethical standards, bias awareness, and stakeholder transparency.
7	**Partnerships & Ecosystem**	The AI capability of your destination operators, suppliers and partners — and your role in building it.
8	**Measurement & ROI**	KPIs, attribution methodology, efficiency measurement, and the business case for AI investment.
9	**AI Visibility & Stewardship**	How your destination — and every operator within it — is discovered, represented and amplified across AI platforms. The DMO as ecosystem AI orchestrator.

Strategy DIMENSION

1 Strategy & Vision

AI leadership, organisational roadmap, resource commitment, and alignment with strategic goals.

Why this dimension matters

AI adoption without strategic intent produces scattered experiments that never scale. Organisations that extract lasting value from AI treat it as a strategic priority, not an IT upgrade. Strategy sets the frame within which all other dimensions become purposeful.

Key diagnostic indicators

- A named AI owner or champion with senior visibility
- A written AI roadmap, even if informal
- A dedicated budget line for AI experimentation
- AI referenced in organisational KPIs or annual objectives
- Leadership participates actively in AI decisions

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	AI is discussed informally but no strategy exists. Leadership treats it as an IT matter. No budget, roadmap, or ownership.
2 Exploring	A few enthusiastic individuals experiment without budget or mandate. The organisation reacts to AI trends rather than directing them.
3 Building	An informal AI roadmap exists. Leadership is engaged. Some budget allocated. Priorities aligning with organisational goals.
4 Scaling	Formal AI strategy aligned with objectives. Clear leadership accountability. Dedicated resource. Quarterly reviews.
5 Leading	AI is central to organisational identity. Board-level accountability. Strategy refreshed annually. Recognised sector visibility.

Diagnostic questions

- ■ Who is accountable for AI in your organisation today?
- ■ Does your annual plan reference AI explicitly?
- ■ Have you allocated budget specifically for AI in the past 12 months?
- ■ Has leadership participated in any AI decision in the last quarter?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Appoint an AI Champion from leadership • Run a half-day AI literacy session for senior staff • Define 3 AI priorities for the next 12 months

2 · Exploring	• Document current experiments and extract learnings • Draft a 12-month AI roadmap with milestones • Build a business case for dedicated AI budget
3 · Building	• Align AI roadmap to organisational KPIs • Establish quarterly AI governance reviews • Define which AI decisions require leadership sign-off
4 · Scaling	• Position AI as an external strategic differentiator • Publish an AI strategy summary for stakeholders • Mentor peer DMOs on AI planning
5 · Leading	• Share your AI leadership model as a sector resource • Contribute to national AI tourism policy discussions • Create open AI strategy materials for the ecosystem

Data DIMENSION

2 Data Foundations

Data infrastructure, quality, first-party data assets, system integration, and AI-readiness.

Why this dimension matters

AI is only as good as the data it runs on. Destinations that invest in data quality and first-party data collection create a durable competitive advantage that AI tools can immediately leverage. Without solid data foundations, AI produces impressive-looking outputs that are unreliable in practice.

Key diagnostic indicators

- Clear ownership of key destination datasets
- Active first-party visitor data collection
- At least partial integration between major systems
- Documented data governance with named responsibilities
- Data quality standards defined and monitored

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	Data is fragmented across disconnected systems. First-party data barely exists. Decisions are largely intuition-based. No data strategy in place.
2 Exploring	Some data assets identified. Basic analytics in place. Data quality inconsistent. Limited system integration.
3 Building	A data strategy exists. First-party data collected intentionally. Some integration. Data informs key decisions.
4 Scaling	Unified data infrastructure. High-quality first-party datasets. Real-time access. AI-ready pipelines for priority use cases.
5 Leading	Data is a strategic asset. Proprietary destination datasets feed predictive analytics. Responsibly shared with ecosystem partners.

Diagnostic questions

- ■ Can you name your three most important data assets?
- ■ Are you actively collecting visitor data competitors cannot buy?
- ■ Which of your key systems talk to each other automatically?
- ■ When did you last run a data quality audit?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Audit existing data assets and document gaps • Start collecting first-party visitor data • Define a single source of truth for destination metrics

2 · Exploring	• Implement basic data integration across key platforms • Set data quality standards with named ownership • Document all data assets in a simple governance register
3 · Building	• Build AI-ready pipelines for 2-3 use cases • Expand first-party data collection across touchpoints • Introduce predictive demand modelling for planning
4 · Scaling	• Create proprietary destination data products • Enable controlled data sharing with partners • Publish an annual destination data report
5 · Leading	• Establish a destination data commons for the ecosystem • Contribute to open data standards for tourism • Use destination data to actively shape policy

Content DIMENSION

3 Content & Creativity

AI-assisted content production, asset management, personalisation at scale, and editorial quality control.

Why this dimension matters

Content is the surface through which most travellers encounter a destination. AI dramatically changes the economics of content production — enabling personalisation, multilingual adaptation, and scale that were previously impossible for most DMOs. Quality control and editorial judgment remain essential human contributions.

Key diagnostic indicators

- At least one AI tool used consistently in a content workflow
- A shared prompt library or AI content guidelines for the team
- Documented editorial standards for AI-assisted output
- Measurable output gains from AI-assisted production
- Content structured for AI discoverability (Q&A;, schema)

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	All content is 100% human-created. No AI tools trialled. No awareness of how AI changes content economics.
2 Exploring	Individual team members experiment with AI tools ad hoc. No shared editorial guidelines or usage policy.
3 Building	AI used in defined workflows — drafting, translation, adaptation. Editorial standards documented and followed.
4 Scaling	AI-assisted content at scale with systematic prompting. Efficient multi-channel repurposing. Measurable gains.
5 Leading	AI enables content personalisation at destination scale. Modular system feeds multiple channels and AI discovery engines.

Diagnostic questions

- ■ Which content tasks does your team use AI for regularly?
- ■ Do you have written guidelines for AI-assisted content?
- ■ Have you measured time saved by AI in your content workflows?
- ■ Is your content structured for AI platform discoverability?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Identify 3 repetitive content tasks AI could assist with • Run a team workshop on AI content tools • Define editorial voice guidelines for AI-assisted output

2 · Exploring	• Create a shared prompt library for common content tasks • Publish a simple internal AI content policy • Measure time savings over a 30-day AI sprint
3 · Building	• Build modular content architecture for multi-channel repurposing • Train all content staff on advanced prompting • Implement AI-assisted translation for priority markets
4 · Scaling	• Develop a personalisation system tied to visitor segments • Audit content for AI-discoverability: structured data, Q&A;, schema • Publish a content production playbook for partners
5 · Leading	• Build a destination-wide content ecosystem for AI discovery • Lead a destination content co-op with operators • Share your content AI framework as a sector resource

Visitor Exp. DIMENSION

4 Visitor Experience

AI-powered touchpoints across the full traveller journey — pre-trip, on-trip, and post-trip.

Why this dimension matters

The traveller journey is changing faster than most DMOs realise. AI is becoming the first point of contact for trip planning. Destinations that invest in AI-powered visitor experience tools capture first-party data that compounds over time.

Key diagnostic indicators

- At least one AI-powered visitor-facing tool is live
- AI assistant integrated with real visitor data (not just static FAQs)
- Personalised recommendations based on visitor intent or behaviour
- Post-trip AI engagement to capture feedback
- Measurable improvement in visitor satisfaction or engagement

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	No AI in visitor-facing services. A static website and traditional channels define every interaction.
2 Exploring	Basic automation exists (a simple FAQ bot) but not integrated with CRM or data. Very limited personalisation.
3 Building	AI-powered tools are live. Basic personalisation using segments or stated intent.
4 Scaling	Integrated AI across multiple touchpoints. Data-driven personalisation. Measurable satisfaction improvement.
5 Leading	Seamless AI-augmented journey from inspiration to post-trip. Real-time orchestration. Continuous improvement loop.

Diagnostic questions

- ■ What is the first thing a visitor encounters when seeking information digitally?
- ■ Does your AI assistant know anything specific about the visitor it talks to?
- ■ At which point in the journey are you most absent?
- ■ What happens after a visitor returns home?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Map the visitor journey and identify 3 AI opportunity gaps • Evaluate chatbot options for your top 20 visitor queries • Establish a visitor satisfaction baseline
2 · Exploring	• Deploy a pilot AI assistant for top visitor FAQs • Integrate visitor data with your CRM • Define personalisation goals for at least 2 visitor segments

3 · Building	• Expand AI to cover pre-trip and on-trip phases • Implement a recommendation engine for experiences or routes • A/B test AI-personalised vs standard content for one segment
4 · Scaling	• Build a unified AI visitor experience layer across all channels • Enable real-time adaptation using live event and weather signals • Integrate partner platforms into the visitor AI journey
5 · Leading	• Co-create an AI visitor platform with operators • Publish your visitor experience AI framework for the sector • Lead on accessible and inclusive AI visitor design

5 Internal Operations

Operations DIMENSION

AI embedded in daily DMO workflows, team productivity, staff AI capability, and process documentation.

Why this dimension matters

AI in internal operations is often the quickest win and the clearest route to building organisational confidence. Every hour saved on administrative tasks is an hour redirected toward strategic work. Organisations that build AI into daily workflows develop institutional AI capability faster.

Key diagnostic indicators

- Multiple staff use AI tools regularly in their daily work
- At least one workflow has been formally redesigned around AI
- An internal AI usage policy exists and staff have read it
- Time savings from AI use are tracked and reported
- Training in AI is part of the regular programme

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	No AI tools in daily operations. Traditional workflows unchanged. No training offered. Staff unaware of productivity potential.
2 Exploring	Some staff use AI tools informally. No policy, shared practice, or training programme. Benefits informal and untracked.
3 Building	AI adopted in specific defined workflows. Basic training provided. Guidelines documented. Time savings tracked.
4 Scaling	AI embedded across departments. Documented productivity gains. Regular upskilling. AI is the default for appropriate routine tasks.
5 Leading	AI-optimised operations with continuous improvement culture. Staffing model reflects AI augmentation.

Diagnostic questions

- ■ What are the five most time-consuming routine tasks in your team?
- ■ How many team members used an AI tool this week?
- ■ Does your organisation have a written AI usage policy?
- ■ When did you last offer your team AI training?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Identify the 5 most repetitive tasks AI could assist with • Run a hands-on AI tools session for all staff • Draft a one-page AI usage policy

2 · Exploring	• Pilot AI in 2-3 core administrative workflows • Track time savings weekly for 30 days and share results • Build a shared internal prompt library
3 · Building	• Expand adoption to all departments with role-specific training • Integrate AI into project management and reporting cycles • Create an internal AI champion network
4 · Scaling	• Redesign workflows from scratch around AI capabilities • Publish quarterly AI productivity metrics for leadership • Contribute to sector AI benchmarking
5 · Leading	• Share your AI operations playbook as an open resource • Advise peer DMOs on AI workflow design • Contribute to sector AI competency frameworks

Governance DIMENSION

6 Governance & Ethics

AI use policies, data privacy compliance, ethical standards, bias awareness, and stakeholder transparency.

Why this dimension matters

Organisations that govern AI responsibly from the beginning build durable trust. Governance is not a constraint on AI adoption — it is a foundation for it. Stakeholders will increasingly ask how your organisation uses AI, and they deserve a clear answer.

Key diagnostic indicators

- A written AI use policy that all staff have acknowledged
- GDPR/privacy implications of AI tools reviewed
- Staff trained to recognise hallucination, bias, and error
- Disclosure practices for AI-assisted public-facing content
- An ethics review process for new AI tools

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	No policy, training, or governance. AI use unmonitored. Privacy implications of tools in use not reviewed.
2 Exploring	Informal awareness of risks among some staff. Ad hoc self-education. No formal policy, no GDPR review.
3 Building	A basic AI use policy has been published. GDPR reviewed. Disclosure practices emerging. Staff receive basic risk training.
4 Scaling	Comprehensive governance framework in place. Regular ethics reviews. Bias risks actively managed. Transparent to key stakeholders.
5 Leading	Governance is a competitive advantage. The organisation contributes to industry AI policy and sector standards.

Diagnostic questions

- Can any staff member today tell you what your organisation's AI policy says?
- Has a qualified person reviewed GDPR implications of AI tools you currently use?
- What is your process when an AI tool produces something factually wrong or biased?
- Do you disclose when visitor-facing content has been AI-assisted?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Draft a basic AI use policy — one clear page is sufficient • Review GDPR obligations for AI tools currently in use • Create a simple risk checklist for evaluating any new AI tool

2 · Exploring	• Publish the policy and confirm all staff have read it • Train staff on hallucination, bias, and verification practices • Define disclosure requirements for AI-assisted content
3 · Building	• Establish quarterly AI ethics reviews as a fixed calendar item • Adopt a public AI transparency standard • Create AI vendor procurement guidelines
4 · Scaling	• Publish your AI governance approach externally as a trust signal • Engage key stakeholders in governance conversations proactively • Contribute to regional AI tourism policy development
5 · Leading	• Become the reference organisation for ethical AI in destination management • Co-author sector AI governance standards • Publish your governance framework as an open resource

7 Ecosystem DIMENSION
Partnerships & Ecosystem

The AI capability of your destination operators, suppliers and partners — and your role in building it.

Why this dimension matters

A DMO's strength is ultimately the strength of its destination. If hotels, restaurants, and attractions cannot describe themselves clearly to AI platforms, the destination suffers — regardless of how advanced the DMO itself has become. The highest-value DMOs will be those that actively raise the AI floor of their entire ecosystem.

Key diagnostic indicators

- You have surveyed or assessed AI readiness of key partners
- You have delivered at least one AI training programme for operators
- At least one co-created AI initiative exists with a partner
- A shared data or infrastructure initiative enables partner AI use
- The DMO is recognised by the ecosystem as an AI enabler

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	No awareness of how AI-ready the destination ecosystem is. AI seen as each organisation's own responsibility.
2 Exploring	Growing awareness of partner AI challenges. Informal conversations. No structured programme.
3 Building	The DMO actively supports partner AI literacy through workshops and resources. First co-created initiatives emerging.
4 Scaling	A structured ecosystem AI capability programme with measurable partner adoption. Shared data. DMO recognised as AI enabler.
5 Leading	The DMO operates as the AI accelerator for the entire destination. Cross-sector governance. Standards-setting. Visible impact.

Diagnostic questions

- Do you know how AI-ready your top 10 operators are?
- Have you ever delivered AI training or resources for your ecosystem?
- Is there any shared AI infrastructure that operators in your destination can access?
- Would operators describe you as a helpful partner in their AI journey?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Survey your top 20 partners on AI use, barriers, and interest • Share this canvas framework directly with key operators • Identify 3 operators who could be early champions

2 · Exploring	• Host a free AI literacy workshop for destination operators • Create a simple AI starter guide for small destination businesses • Connect AI-ready partners to share learnings
3 · Building	• Launch a formal destination AI capability programme • Create a shared AI toolkit or resource library for operators • Pilot at least one collaborative AI initiative with 2-3 partners
4 · Scaling	• Establish a formal destination AI coalition or working group • Create an AI readiness certification for operators • Develop shared data infrastructure the ecosystem can build on
5 · Leading	• Publish your ecosystem AI model as a replicable framework • Lead cross-destination AI collaboration at regional or national level • Advocate for destination AI investment in public funding

Measurement DIMENSION

8 Measurement & ROI

KPIs, attribution methodology, efficiency measurement, and the business case for AI investment.

Why this dimension matters

Organisations that cannot demonstrate AI value will eventually lose the budget and mandate to pursue it. Measurement converts AI from a cost centre into a strategic investment. The organisations that measure well today will have the evidence they need to scale tomorrow.

Key diagnostic indicators

- AI KPIs defined for at least one active use case
- A method for attributing outcomes to AI actions exists
- Time savings from AI use are actively tracked
- An ROI estimate has been shared with leadership
- AI contribution features in regular organisational reporting

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	No measurement of AI impact. No KPIs defined. The value of any AI investment cannot be demonstrated.
2 Exploring	Benefits occasionally documented anecdotally. No consistent methodology. Investment cannot be justified with evidence.
3 Building	Basic KPIs defined for priority use cases. Time savings tracked. Initial ROI understanding forming. AI value in some reporting.
4 Scaling	Comprehensive measurement framework. Clear attribution methodology. AI ROI prominent in leadership and stakeholder reporting.
5 Leading	Predictive measurement models in use. AI investment value integral to organisational performance management. Sector benchmarking.

Diagnostic questions

- ■ If your funder asked today to justify AI investment, what data would you show them?
- ■ Do you know how much staff time AI saves your organisation each week?
- ■ Have you defined what success looks like for any AI initiative in measurable terms?
- ■ Does AI feature in your annual impact report or equivalent?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions
1 · Uncharted	• Define 3 KPIs for your most active AI use case • Start tracking time saved from AI weekly — a spreadsheet is fine • Assign a named owner for AI measurement

2 · Exploring	• Build a simple AI value dashboard leadership can review • Calculate a cost-per-output comparison between AI and traditional approaches • Present a first AI ROI estimate to leadership
3 · Building	• Create a formal measurement framework covering all active AI initiatives • Establish baselines for AI contribution to visitor outcomes • Integrate AI metrics into your annual report
4 · Scaling	• Develop predictive models for AI value • Benchmark your AI ROI against comparable DMOs • Publish AI value evidence to funders and stakeholders
5 · Leading	• Contribute to sector-level AI productivity benchmarking studies • Commission independent research on AI impact in your destination • Advocate for AI investment publicly using rigorous evidence

AI Visibility DIMENSION

9 AI Visibility & Stewardship

How your destination — and every operator within it — is discovered, represented and amplified across AI platforms. The DMO as ecosystem AI orchestrator.

Why this dimension matters

AI search is happening now. Travellers are asking ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity where to go, what to do, and where to stay. Your destination's presence in those answers is determined by how well your content and data ecosystem is structured for AI ingestion. A destination is the sum of its operators — the DMO's unique role is to orchestrate destination-wide AI visibility.

Key diagnostic indicators

- You regularly monitor how AI platforms represent your destination
- Your website uses structured data (schema.org) for attractions, events, and tourism info
- Content is structured to answer the questions travellers ask AI
- You have an active programme to improve AI visibility for ecosystem operators
- The DMO is working toward being recognised as an authoritative destination source by AI platforms

Maturity stage descriptors

Stage	Description
1 Uncharted	No awareness of how AI platforms discover or represent the destination. Strategy is SEO-only. AI-powered search is not on the radar.
2 Exploring	Growing awareness of the shift to AI search. Occasional monitoring of what AI says. No coherent strategy or programme.
3 Building	Active content optimisation for AI discoverability — structured data, Q&A; format, schema markup. Systematic monitoring. Beginning to guide partners.
4 Scaling	A destination-wide AI visibility strategy. Structured data across key operators. Regular audits. Formal partner enablement programme running.
5 Leading	The DMO is the authoritative orchestrator of the destination's AI presence. Ecosystem-wide standards. Recognised by AI platforms as a trusted reference source.

Diagnostic questions

- Ask ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity about your destination — what do they say?
- Does your website use structured data that AI platforms can read and trust?
- What are the 20 most common questions travellers ask AI about destinations like yours?
- How would a hotel in your destination improve their AI discoverability today?

Priority next steps by stage

Stage	Recommended actions

1 · Uncharted	• Ask major AI platforms about your destination and document what they say • Identify the top 10 questions travellers ask AI about your destination • Audit your website for structured data and schema markup coverage
2 · Exploring	• Create content to answer 20 most common AI travel queries about your destination • Implement basic schema markup: LocalBusiness, TouristAttraction, Event • Set up a regular monitoring process for AI platform representation
3 · Building	• Conduct a full destination AI visibility audit — DMO site and top 20 operators • Build a structured data implementation guide for ecosystem partners • Develop an AI-first content strategy: answers, lists, facts
4 · Scaling	• Create a comprehensive destination information package for AI platform reference • Launch a formal partner AI visibility programme • Work toward establishing the DMO as a verified authoritative source in AI platforms
5 · Leading	• Convene a destination AI visibility working group across the ecosystem • Develop open standards for destination data structured for AI consumption • Directly engage AI platform providers to recognise your destination as a trusted reference

Reading Your Results

Your radar chart maps your scores visually. A balanced profile — roughly circular — indicates consistent development across dimensions. An uneven profile with sharp spikes and dips is common and reveals where energy has been concentrated and where it has not. Both patterns are informative.

The lowest scores on your radar usually hold the key to unlocking the dimensions where you are already strong. A score of 5 in Content & Creativity built on a score of 1 in Data Foundations means your content engine is running on assumptions, not evidence.

From assessment to action

1 **Tackle the floor, not the ceiling**

Improving your weakest dimension typically unlocks more value than going from 4 to 5 in your strongest. The canvas compounds — each dimension enables others.

2 **Look for dependencies**

Data Foundations enables Content, Visitor Experience, and Measurement. Governance enables everything. Strategy sets the direction for all. Some dimensions are multipliers.

3 **Set a 90-day horizon**

Choose 2-3 concrete actions across 2-3 dimensions. Assign owners. Schedule a retake of the assessment in 90 days. Progress is more motivating than perfection.

4 **Share the results**

The assessment is more powerful when the team has seen the same data. Disagreement about scores is information — it means you do not yet have a shared picture of where you are.

Credits & Licence

The Destinations AI Canvas was developed by **Mirko Lalli** at **Officina Turistica** as a companion to the **AI Tourism Playbook** — "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)".

The ninth dimension — AI Visibility and Stewardship — is an original conceptual contribution positioning the DMO as the orchestrator of its entire destination's AI presence across all operators and stakeholders.

Framework author	Mirko Lalli, Officina Turistica
Companion resource	AI Tourism Playbook — playbook.bereadyfor.ai
Organisation	Officina Turistica — officinaturistica.com
Licence	Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International
Version	1.0 — May 2026
Key data source	Sojern, State of Destination Marketing 2026 (n=359 DMOs)