

The AI-Ready Destination: Hawai'i Hospitality Workforce Transformation



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA
SHIDLER COLLEGE
OF BUSINESS
SCHOOL OF TRAVEL
INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT



TEXAS A&M
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Hawai'i Tourism Conference
Monday, Sept. 22, 2025
3:15-4:30 p.m.



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What is AI and Generative AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

“The development of intelligent software capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence.”

- Ride-sharing apps
- Email spam filters
- Medical diagnostic tools
- Service robots, autonomous cars

Generative AI (GenAI)

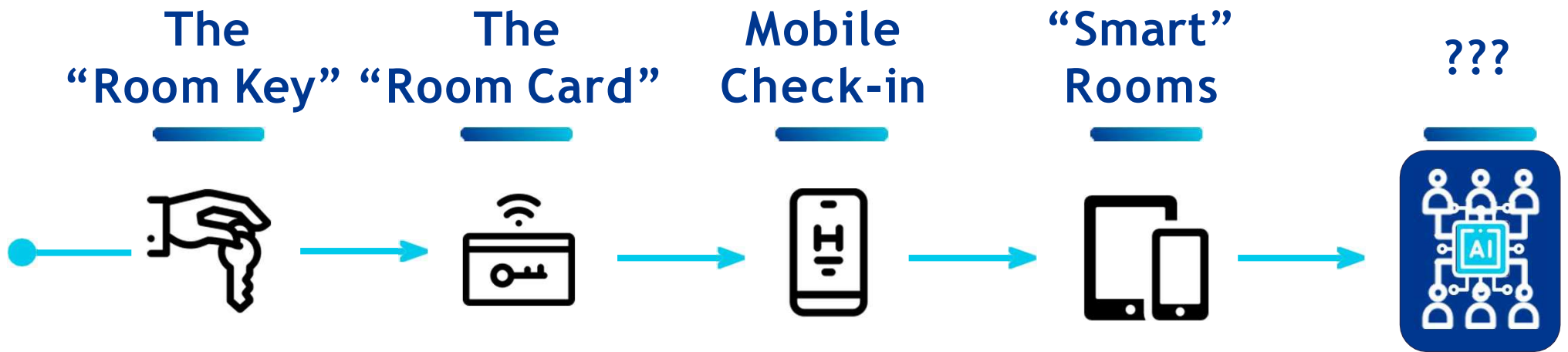
“An artificial intelligence (AI) technology that automatically generates content in response to prompts written in natural-language conversational interfaces, drawing on existing content.”

- Text-to- text, -images, -video
- Generate audio, music, presentations, multimedia, 3D objects, and more!

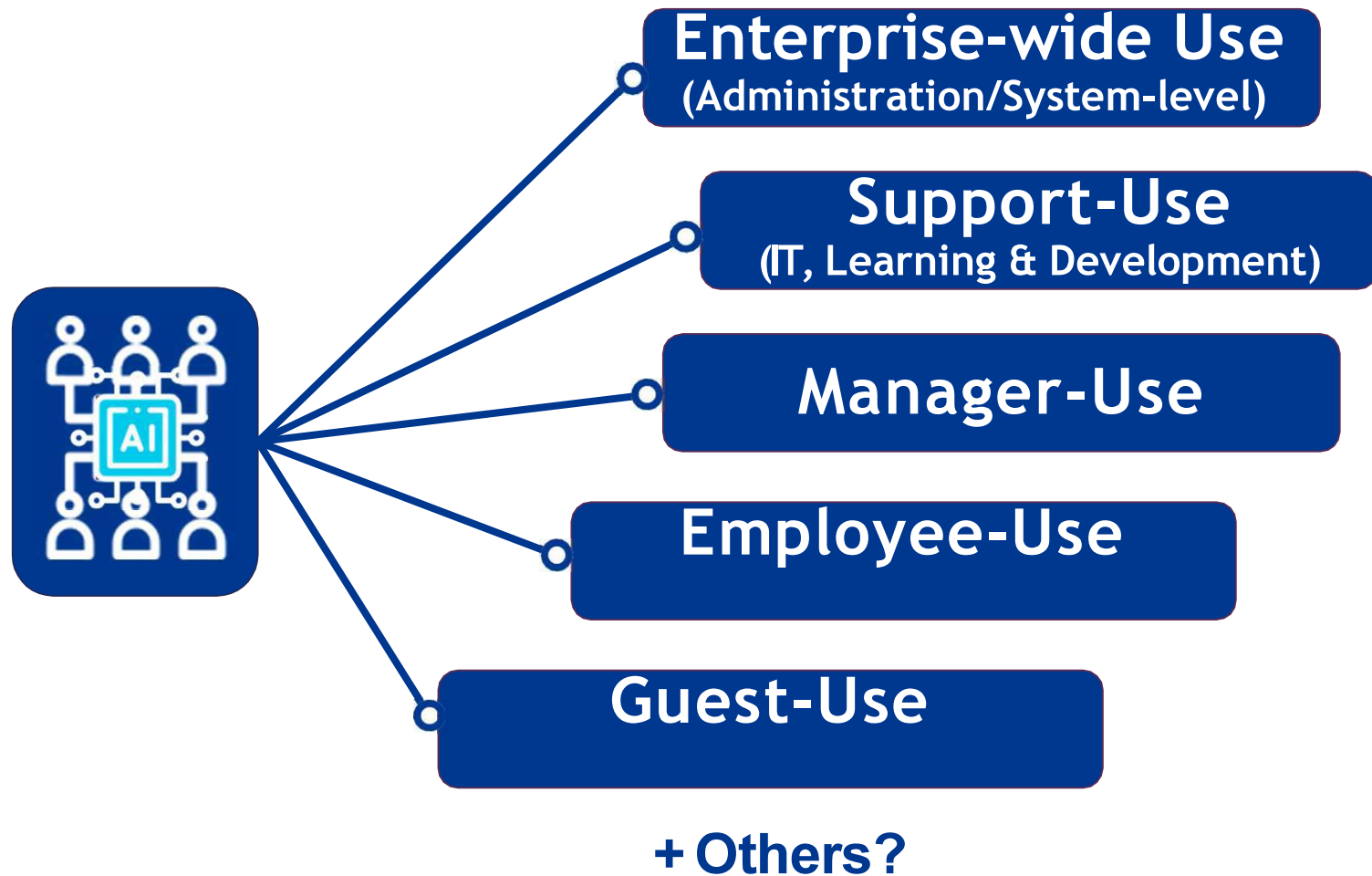
Resources: [UH Online Generative AI](#) (webpage) and UNESCO [Guidance for generative AI in education and research](#) (PDF)



The Evolving Role of Technology in Hospitality and Tourism



Spectrum of AI Usage: Hospitality and Tourism



AI Applications in Tourism

- **Generative AI (GenAI) tools** (e.g., ChatGPT, DALL-E, Adobe Firefly, MidJourney, Canva)
- **AI-Powered Solutions**
 - ◆ AI-Based Guest Experience Platform (e.g., Mya, Talla, Myma, Canary) with intelligent assistants, customer service chatbots, personalized guest communication, etc.
 - ◆ Front-desk concierge robots
 - ◆ In-person customer assistance
- **Legacy AI tools** (Revenue Management, Data Analytics, Customer Sentiment Analysis)



Considerations

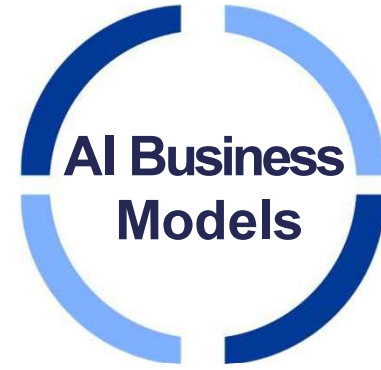
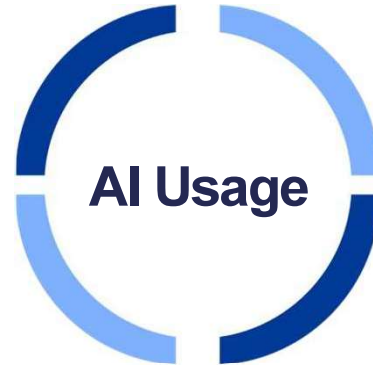
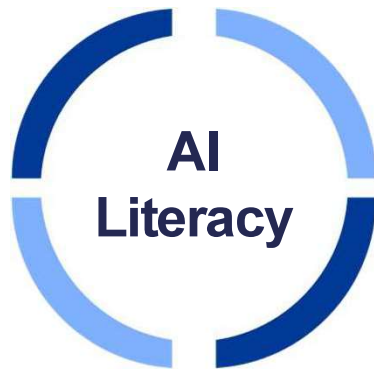
Hallucination

Bias & Ethics

Privacy
& Security

Professional
Integrity

AI Implementation Challenges



**Further research
is needed to
understand:**

- how to engage tourism workforce in human-machine hybrid work
 - achieve necessary levels of AI literacy
 - critically evaluate the risks and limitation of AI-related innovations
 - understand the changing tourism business models and employee roles
 - and broad AI impacts on organizational processes
- (Bowen & Morosan, 2018; Mingotto et al., 2021).

Study Overview

The purpose of the study is to better understand the personal- and institutional- level perceptions of AI adoption in the Hawai'i visitor industry, and investigate factors impeding the integration of AI in tourism organizations.

- **Dates:** January-February 2025
- **Sample:** Executives from tourism, hospitality, and transportation sectors in Hawai'i
 - **Invited:** n=221
 - **Responded:** N=45
 - **Response Rate:** 20.4%

The Who: Industry Sector & Department

Airlines, Transportation

4.9%

Retail

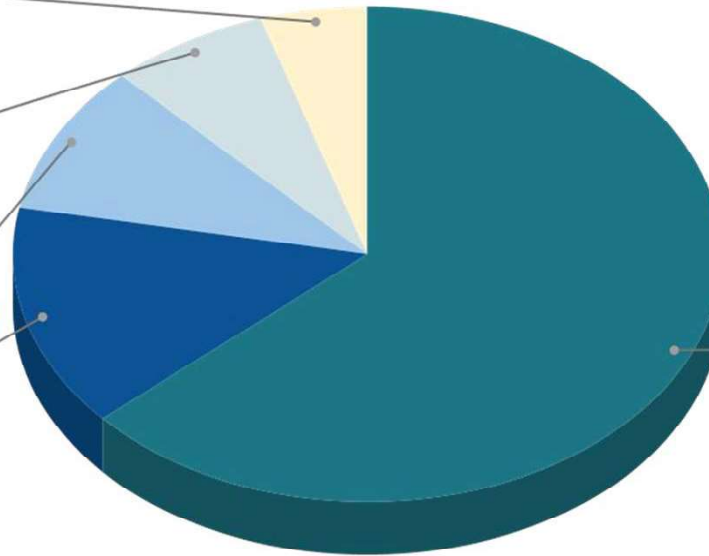
7.3%

Restaurants

9.8%

Tourism (+Destination Mgmt.)

14.6%



Hotel, Resorts

63.4%

**Human Resources, Sales & Marketing
(80.5%)**

**Operations, Finance,
Information
Technology (IT)
(19.4%)**

The Who: Demographics

Years of Experience



~80%
6+ years

Gender



75.6%
female

Ethnicity



78.1%
White, Asian, Mixed

Education



78%

Bachelor's or Above



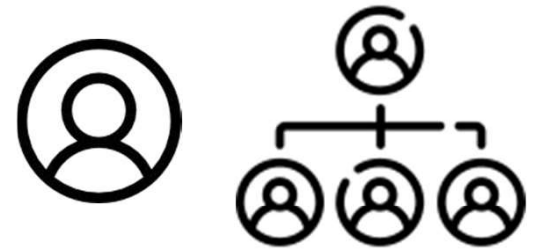
The What: Topics Surveyed



AI Literacy



AI Usage (at work)
and Extent of Usage



Individual and
Organizational Use



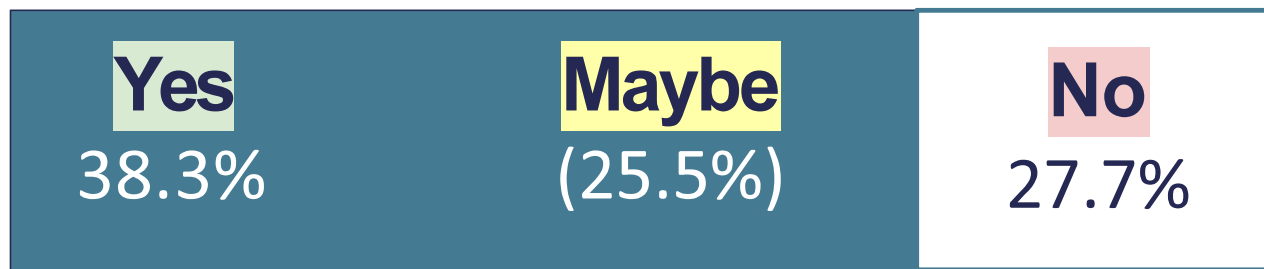
Results: What motivates you to continue using AI at work?



Created using NVIVO R14.23.4

Organizational Usage of AI

Does your organization use Artificial Intelligence (AI)?



Generative AI



Chat-Bots & Virtual Assistants

= 94.6%



What We Discovered



Majority of respondents work for organizations with no policies regarding AI usage.

Organizational AI literacy is low

Practitioners don't think AI will cause a major organizational change.

"It is still new to me so there is a lot I don't know."

What department do you think will be most affected by organizational change related to AI?

- 1) Information Technology (IT)
- 2) Sales and Marketing; Finance



Company AI Literacy

From your perspective, on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (to full extent), to what extent do employees in your organization:



Item (min 0, max 10)	Mean	SD
Understand the general knowledge of AI	3.92	2.04
Apply AI technologies in daily work	3.83	2.06
Evaluate or create AI	2.17	2.30
Apply ethics while using AI	4.17	2.96
AI Literacy (overall)	3.52	1.89

Results: In your opinion, what are some opportunities to use AI in your organization?



Created using NVIVO R14.23.4

Threats and Barriers to Adoption



Theme 1: Responsible Use

HR Director (Airlines/Transportation): *"...so that AI is used responsibly and with an aim for it to assist, not create any particular end product..."*

HR Director (Hotels/Resorts): *"Misuse of course, as with this or anything that can be used for good or bad."*



Theme 2: Privacy

HR Director (Tourism): *"I feel that people are often far too casual about providing industry, organization, and customer data to AI; large language models and other [GenAI] are, by their natures, hungry for data."*

HR Director (Hotels/Resorts): *"...keeping Company data safe and ethical in how we handle data about individual colleagues..."*



Theme 3: Communication

Sales and Marketing (Hotels/Resorts): *"...loss of marketing creativity... Other organizations will deploy similar messaging."*

Director of Merchandising (Hotels/Resorts): *"Not seeming genuine to clients. Repeated ideas and not original ideas."*

HR Director (Hotels/Resorts): *"Not personalized to the individual guest/associate needs"*

Practical Implications

- **Improve AI Literacy:** Focus on general knowledge, application, and ethical use.
- **New Training Focus:** Managers must prioritize training on evaluating AI output
- **Managerial Action:** Address concerns about privacy and responsible use to leverage the benefits of AI for productivity, communication, and creativity.



Future Topics:

- Strategies or solutions on how to build AI literacy at a scalable level.
- Identify what organizations need to do to prepare for seamless AI adoption.





AI at the University of Hawai'i



UH Online Innovation Center (UHOIC)

- **Artificial Intelligence** Resources & Training page (UHOIC)
 - AI News in the UH Community
 - Resource Repository
 - AI-focused Events
- **Professional Development Programs/Events**
 - AI Explorer Badge
 - AI 2 Xcelerate
 - Innovation Playground
 - UH Online Unconference

University of Hawai'i System

- **Artificial Intelligence** page (Information Technology Services & Data Governance)
 - UH Guidance and Best Practices & AI Tool Decision Guide
 - ITS Sponsored Tools
 - AI Decision Tree
- **Teaching & Learning**
 - AI Recommendations for Faculty, Staff, and Students
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) Resources for Teaching and Learning (Google Doc)

Subscribe to the
UHOIC newsletter!
<https://go.hawaii.edu/W7a>

Recent Enterprise AI Initiatives (UH News)

- UH launches systemwide approach to artificial intelligence
- "Bow the Bot" AI student success chatbot
- New office to lead AI, tech integration across all campuses



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Mahalo (Thank you)!

Any nīnau (questions)?





Presentation (Google Slides)

<https://go.hawaii.edu/mAj>

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Let's Connect!



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