



The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Tourism, with Particular Attention to Deepfake

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Abstract: Modern technology is having a significant impact on tourism. This is particularly true for tourism companies, as nowadays, almost everything from transport to hotels to program management is done digitally. Concurrently, the role of traditional travel agencies is diminishing. This trend has many positive effects, but its potential dangers should not be overlooked. While the development of technology has made services available from anywhere in the world, and it is easy to compare prices and the quality of services, it is also essential to avoid over-reliance on online content. While the importance of online consumer reviews is growing, consumers can be easily misled by false positive reviews. Moreover, the explosion in these fake reviews can, in many cases, be attributed to the use of artificial intelligence. The use of deepfake videos and images to generate interest is rising. Some deepfake methods are morphing (identifying patterns between two photos and dynamically transforming one image into another), and others are warping (digitally altering the shape of a part of the image for creative purposes). However, artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques also play a significant role. As a result, there is a loss of trust in media content published online. Deepfake technology also raises significant privacy concerns. Deepfake can, therefore, play a dual role. Besides the dangers outlined here, it should not be forgotten that it allows for much more information than before. Deepfake can be used to make tourism programs more visually attractive, and there are many untapped areas for virtual reality in addition to its existing uses (e.g., 3D presentations of hotels, virtualization, and interactivity of museums). Following a general introduction to deepfake technology, this paper will describe its application in tourism, highlighting the benefits and potential threats.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study mainly reviews literature and case studies to analyze the effects of artificial intelligence, especially deepfake technology, on the tourism sector. The research discusses various issues raised by artificial intelligence and deepfake technology, such as fake tourism promotions, deceptive accommodation, manipulated online reviews, and social destabilization factors. Based on previous literature, the analysis presents the possible consequences of each problem area in the tourism sector, highlighting the ethical and trust challenges tourism actors face.

2. THE DANGERS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In September 2024, Spanish authorities arrested a criminal organization that defrauded two women of more than \$350,000 on behalf of Brad Pitt. The fraudsters contacted the victims through a Brad Pitt fan page and made them believe that the actor was personally interested in them. During longer communications, the fraudsters pretended to be in a romantic relationship and convinced their victims that Brad Pitt offered them investment opportunities. The two women made transfers totaling more than \$350,000, believing they supported the actor's investment projects.

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The Spanish police had an operation titled “Bralina” in which they caught five people and later started an investigation against another ten people due to fraud. During the investigation, they found out that the criminals created psychological profiles about the victims, exploiting their emotions of vulnerabilities. The actor’s representative condemned the fraud and emphasized that Brad Pitt has no official social media profile and warned the fans to be cautious when they are found with such solicitation (People, 2024).

The deepfake technology used to commit the crime was so authentic that the fraud went unnoticed for a long time, and the victims did not notice that they were not communicating in real terms. This case draws attention to deepfake technology’s risks for public figures and celebrities, as fraudsters can use their manipulated identities for financial gain. Since the credibility of deepfake content is high and often difficult to recognize, protection against deception is a challenge for both individuals and authorities.

Deepfake technology for criminals can be used against the tourism sector alongside many other areas. This can also be useful since, e.g., high-quality 3D content can be created to present a specific hotel, but it can also be hazardous (Lin et al., 2021). The purpose of this study is to present the dangers of these deepfakes after a brief overview.

3. THE CONCEPT AND MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF DEEPAKE

A deepfake is a video, audio, or other content (e.g., image) that is entirely or partially fabricated or created by manipulating existing, accurate content (Van der Sloot et al., 2022). As Delfino puts it, with the help of deepfake, its creators make a “false reality” (Delfino, 2023). The term is attributed to a Reddit user whose username was “deepfakes” (Meskys et al., 2020). In late 2017, “Deepfakes” swapped the faces of many famous actresses with the faces of actors in sexually explicit films (Cole, 2017) as if these famous actresses had starred in sexually explicit films. What was unique about this was not that they replaced the faces of the characters in the original films, but that it was all done extremely quickly, efficiently, and with open-source learning tools (e.g., TensorFlow) freely accessible to anyone (Goggin, 2019).

The possible advantages and disadvantages of deepfake are summarized in the following table based on the study by Chesney and Citron (2019, p. 1772):

Table 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Deepfake Technology

Advantages	Disadvantages	
1. Education	Damage to individuals or organizations	Damage to society
2. Art	1. Exploitation	1. Distortion of democratic discourse
3. Autonomy	2. Sabotage	2. Manipulation of elections
4. Other		3. Deterioration of trust in institutions
		4. Aggravation of social divisions
		5. Undermining public safety
		6. Undermining diplomacy
		7. Endangering national security
		8. Undermining journalism
		9. The Liar’s Dividend

Source: Chesney and Citron (2019, p. 1772)

Deepfake has many advantages. For example, it provides an opportunity to use a more modern, fundamentally different teaching method from the classical education system (Chesney & Citron,

2019). Furthermore, there are also considerable possibilities in the field of art in the application of deepfake; it is enough to refer to the cases when dead performers were brought to life and created in their name more recent works. Among the advantages of deepfake, the appearance of parodies is usually mentioned if they are within the boundaries of not infringing another person's dignity (Baker, 2014). Deepfake can also help injured and sick people to achieve a better quality of life. Thus, e.g., people with certain forms of paralysis (e.g., amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), (HuffPost, 2019) In recent years, we have also seen great advances in voice technology. These developments have made it possible for people with speech disabilities (e.g. Duchenne muscular dystrophy) (Gábor, 2023) to communicate using synthetic versions of their original voices. (Moëll & Aronsson, 2025). Deepfake can also be beneficial for law enforcement, e.g., if they catch a child molester red-handed with fake child pornography.

On the other hand, deepfakes may pose many dangers as well. Some can be harmful to individuals and organizations and others to society. One of the most significant dangers of deepfakes is that, with their spread, public trust in video, image, and audio recordings (and thus indirectly in the media) will be shaken (Mráz, 2021).

4. THE DANGERS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DEEPAKE IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

In this chapter, we will discuss the possible dangers related to deepfakes. We would like to highlight the following risks associated with deepfakes without being exhaustive:

- fake tourism promotions,
- Deceptive accommodations,
- Fake travel regulations and information,
- Fake promotions by influencers and celebrities,
- Manipulated online reviews and testimonials,
- Social destabilization and panic-mongering,
- Falsification of travel documents.

4.1. Fake Tourism Promotions

The use of deepfake technology in the tourism sector is a new and more widespread phenomenon that can manipulate the visitor's intentions and influence the destination's reputation. These deepfake videos can show places realistically, and travelers can believe they are authentic. Using this technology in tourism promotions can significantly increase the visitor's interest, and the risk of fraud is also increasing (Kwok & Koh, 2020).

The manipulation possibilities of deepfake recordings include presenting scenes that do not correspond to reality and creating more attractive images and videos for visitors (Leung et al., 2017). This technology is particularly effective in social media, where visitors make travel decisions based on visual content. An example of this was when the Lithuanian National Tourism Agency used manipulated images during its promotional campaigns, which could hurt tourism in the long term due to the loss of credibility (BBC, 2017).

One of the negative consequences of fake promotions is that the consumer's trust will weaken, which can distort the tourism market. (Yoo et al., 2009). The misinformation spread by deepfake videos may create disappointment for the visitors when they see that reality differs from what was previously seen. Due to the development of the rich content of the media and online spaces,

tourists may believe these contents are authentic, which can result in an increased intention to visit these places; therefore, the use of deep fake technology in tourism creates significant challenges to maintaining authenticity. (Boté-Vericad & Vázquez, 2022).

4.2. Deceptive Accommodations

Deepfake technology, which uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to create realistic but fake videos and images, allows hotels to share more attractive images and videos of themselves, primarily online (but also in brochures). However, these contents are often misleading, falsely presenting the facility's condition, location, or services. For example, an advertisement for accommodation may present a luxurious setting and a fantastic view, while the place is much simpler and does not offer such an experience (Tuomi, 2021).

With deepfake content, more and more authentic-looking fake videos and images are created, which can also be used in marketing to deceive. Due to the wide availability of such technology, it is a fundamental question of how well consumers can recognize these manipulated contents since deepfakes are often more visually convincing than traditional advertising materials (Sivathanu et al., 2024).

The loss of trust due to promotions made by deepfake technology can significantly impact the tourism industry. Tourists increasingly rely on online advertisements and opinions when deciding which accommodation to choose (Pestek & Sarvan, 2020). When the scenes, pictures, and videos do not describe reality, the clients will be disappointed, which can negatively influence the concrete accommodation and the whole region's reputation. Furthermore, consumers may be less inclined to trust online content, so the sector's future income will decrease (BBC, 2017).

The industry's response to the challenges posed by deepfake is increasingly based on detection technologies and regulatory initiatives. Although content created with artificial intelligence can become part of business marketing, companies operating in the hospitality industry must follow transparent and ethical practices (Kietzmann et al., 2020). Introducing verification and certification systems for the realism of images and videos on accommodation booking sites could be a potential solution (Boté-Vericad & Vázquez, 2022).

The problem would be that the pictures the visitors see will not match reality, and because of this, the visitors will give negative feedback about these accommodations. Consequently, the evaluation of online accommodation does not match reality, and the reputation of these places will be breached. And lastly, due to the reasons above, guests will be unable to find adequate information about the places they intend to visit.

4.3. Fake Travel Regulations And Information

The application of deepfake technology in manipulating travel rules and information significantly impacts travelers' information and fundamentally affects trust in tourism and the credibility of destinations. Fake content created with the help of artificial intelligence makes it possible to publish manipulated travel regulations, visa requirements, quarantine measures, or even health regulations, which tourists often believe to be accurate. This false information can spread quickly and widely through social media and other online platforms, thus exerting a significant influence on travelers' decisions (Sivathanu et al., 2024).

One of the most well-known examples of fake travel information based on deepfake is when it may seem to travelers that the epidemiological regulations or other types of health requirements are in

force in each country rather than in reality. This can be particularly dangerous, as travelers may leave with a false sense of security, which may also affect the tourism of the given destination. Tourists can be misled in many ways by these deepfake videos. One example could be when a fake video shows no need for vaccination or a visa in the destination country. As a result, tourists can face many problems if they plan according to the misinformation provided by the deepfake video (Tuomi, 2021).

Another consequence of the manipulation of the rules of travel is that these fake contents can influence the reputation of the destination. Maliciously intended deepfake videos can create false security information about the place's safety, deterring tourists from a specific region. This can be particularly problematic in those regions where they heavily depend on the tourism sector as a primary source of income. As a result, in the eyes of the public, these places will be less attractive destinations in the long term (Kwok & Koh, 2020).

In addition to providing reliable sources of information, tourists must learn to look critically at the content they see and recognize manipulated information. For this, it is essential to launch media and digital literacy campaigns and prioritize authentic sources of information in the travel industry.

4.4. Fake Promotions by Influencers and Celebrities

The implementation of deepfake technology in fake promotions made in the name of influencers and celebrities has become increasingly widespread in tourism, as visually convincing, artificially generated content is an effective tool for influencing tourists (Van der Veen & Song, 2014). Deepfake technology uses artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to create images and videos of celebrities and influencers that appear to recommend a particular destination or accommodation. Such manipulated content is often produced with such detail and authenticity that travelers perceive them as honest opinions. Thus, they can influence their travel decisions, even if the celebrities and influencers are not involved in the campaign (Boté-Vericad & Váñez, 2022).

Including celebrities and influencers in advertising is highly effective, as their followers develop a strong attachment to them and greatly influence their decisions. Therefore, a well-known influencer or celebrity appearing in a travel ad often directly impacts the audience's intention to travel. Such deepfake content is viral on social media, where tourists come across similar recommendations daily and may be unable to distinguish between genuine and artificially generated reviews. For example, an influencer's face can be used to promote an exotic destination that will attract tourists without the influencer having ever visited the location (Sivathanu et al., 2024).

Such false promotions hurt the industry and consumer confidence in several ways. First, when tourists discover that the influencer they follow did not recommend the accommodation or destination, they will be disappointed and may lose confidence in that brand and the entire industry. Secondly, this kind of manipulated content can reduce the credibility of accommodations in the long term, as travelers find it difficult to distinguish between real and fake recommendations, which makes them more suspicious of online advertisements (Kwok & Koh, 2020).

The cost-effectiveness and easy availability of deepfake technology allow tourism companies to produce convincing but fake content quickly and in large quantities. This is often related to the media richness theory, which states that visually rich, multi-channel communication content makes a more profound impression on consumers, increasing interest in products and services. Based on this theory, deepfake content can be easily deployed in tourism, as rich visual content helps consumers believe what they see and is more likely to choose the advertised location.

4.5. Manipulated Online Reviews and Testimonials

The use of deepfake technology in manipulating online opinions and recommendations is a significant problem in tourism, especially in accommodation marketing. Deepfake fake reviews and testimonials can deceive potential guests and appear authentic despite being generated by artificial intelligence and machine learning (Ayeh et al., 2013). Such reviews are visually and contentally very similar to honest feedback, which increases their credibility and influence on consumer decision-making. These deepfake reviews and testimonials are often designed to evoke emotions and tell personal experiences, so readers tend to believe them.

Manipulated online reviews significantly impact tourism, as travelers rely heavily on online reviews and recommendations when making decisions (Akhtar et al., 2019). Opinions generated with deepfakes can present positive feedback about a specific accommodation, or they can express negative criticism of competitors, thereby manipulating the choices of potential guests. Some research has shown that guests tend to base their decisions on authentic detailed reviews, and manipulated feedback can increase trust in accommodations, even though they convey an untrue image.

Deepfake technology is a cost-effective and fast tool for hotels and tourism companies to multiply positive reviews, which can cause severe distortion in the online space. These deepfake reviews can appear in large quantities and in a short time, and thus, some accommodations can quickly achieve favorable reviews without providing a high-quality service (El-Said, 2020).

This deception can create uncertainties and mistrust among travelers to the entire tourism sector about the trustworthiness of online reviews (Cui et al., 2014). More and more manipulated reviews and recommendations will create can I have the ability problems for the sector, and it will become necessary for companies to consider implementing strict control mechanisms on online platforms to detect and remove fake AI-generated reviews; such systems can often filter out the linguistic and stylistic patterns characteristic of deepfake content, although these solutions are still under development. However, here, too, the development of consumers' media and digital literacy, which was emphasized earlier, can be significant.

4.6. Social Destabilization and Panic-Mongering

Using deepfake technology in tourism can cause social destabilization and panic, leading to a long-term loss of trust in the travel industry (Woolley, 2020). This artificial intelligence-based technology makes it possible to create images and videos that are very realistic but carry false information, easily misleading people. With the help of deepfake content, for example, manipulated news can spread about the alleged dangers of specific destinations, false safety warnings, epidemic measures, or other travel regulations. These false contents can cause serious social tensions, primarily through social media's rapid information dissemination effect (Kwok & Koh, 2020).

There are also dangers with deepfake videos spreading online on social media platforms. Occasionally, these videos can create such emotional responses in the masses, resulting in panic. For example, if there is a video talking about unreal dangers in a destination country, tourists may avoid visiting it, which can result in significant economic losses for the tourism sector in that place. This is especially problematic for countries that rely heavily on tourism revenue. Such fake content may influence travel decisions and create negative stereotypes, and even aggravated cases result in social destabilization (Tuomi, 2021).

The impact of deepfake manipulations on social stability is particularly evident in social media, where users often share such content without criticism. Fake videos appear authentic and can easily provoke an adverse reaction from the public, undermining a given destination's perception and economic stability (Fedeli, 2020). In addition, if tourists avoid a place because of fake content, it can lead to the economic decline of that area, which can create new tensions among the local population.

4.7. Falsification of Travel Documents

Deepfake technology creates new opportunities for forging travel documents such as passports and visas, which poses a significant security challenge for tourism and border security. With the help of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms, deepfake technology can create realistic forged documents that are difficult to recognize with traditional methods. These fake documents can be hazardous, as they can grant entry to certain countries to people who would otherwise not be allowed to. Through deepfake technology, even real passports and other identification documents can be manipulated, including biometric identification data, such as a facial image or fingerprint. This can be of particular concern at border crossings and airports where document control is crucial to maintain security (Sivathanu et al., 2024).

Fake documents created by deepfake technology provide opportunities for some criminal groups to commit illegal immigration, terrorism, and other crimes. Realistic fake passports allow travelers or criminals to bypass traditional controls and enter countries they would otherwise not be able to enter. Technological abuse can undermine trust in authorities and create significant economic and security risks, especially in tourism, where free movement across borders is essential.

Developing biometric systems in borders and recognition technology based on artificial intelligence can help decrease the risks associated with deepfakes. Such systems can help authorities check travel documents' validity more accurately and recognize documents before they impose real societal risks (Sivathanu et al., 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the widespread use of deepfake technology in tourism increases accessibility and attractiveness but threatens realistic and ethical promotions. Addressing this phenomenon requires improvements in detecting fake content and increasing media and digital literacy so tourists can distinguish between manipulated and accurate content. The use of deepfake technology in accommodation marketing poses severe challenges to the tourism industry, especially regarding consumer trust and ethical issues. In the same way, the manipulation of travel rules and information poses a severe threat to both the safety of tourists and the economy and reputation of destinations.

In terms of fake promotions made in the name of influencers and celebrities, deepfakes pose a severe challenge to tourism and the hospitality industry. We should also not forget about manipulated online reviews and recommendations, which threaten the credibility of the tourism industry and the maintenance of consumer trust in the long term. Such misleading content may benefit hotels in the short term, but in the long term, it damages the reputation and credibility of the industry.

Using deepfake technology in tourism can also lead to severe social destabilization and panic if misleading content is spread on social media and other online platforms. The falsification of travel documents poses serious security and economic challenges for tourism.

Adequate regulation, technological developments, and increasing consumer awareness are essential to minimize the adverse effects of deepfake technology on tourism in the future. This is the only way to ensure that tourists make decisions based on reliable information and that accommodations can sustainably compete on the market.

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