Press release

Searching for a hotel? Google doesn't answer, it sells ads

Berlin, 29 October 2026. When people search Google for somewhere to stay in Germany, Austria or Switzerland, 89.4 percent of searches show ads, but only 0.6 percent show an AI answer. When they research a destination, it is the other way round: 89.4 percent AI answer, 17.8 percent ads. These are the findings of the Tourism Visibility Matrix DACH, published today by the Berlin online marketing agency Argo.berlin.

The study covers 360 German-language travel searches from six phases of the travel decision in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It analyses 1,080 Google result pages on which ads, organic results and the AI answer (AI Overview) were recorded at the same time. Every website found was assigned to one of twelve provider types, from independent hotels to booking platforms.

Independent hotels have all but disappeared

In accommodation searches, the website of an independent hotel appears in only 11.1 percent of organic result lists and 6.7 percent of ad blocks. Booking platforms appear in 99.4 percent of organic lists and 86.7 percent of ads. They account for more than half of all ads measured.

Cited in the AI answer, but often not on page one

37.8 percent of the sources Google cites in travel AI answers are not among the organic results of the same search. Most citations go to editorial content (31.1 percent) and tour operators (30.5 percent); individual hotels are almost never cited (0.2 percent). The most cited single source is YouTube with 13.5 percent.

"Whether investing in AI visibility pays off depends on the phase of the travel decision in which your own guests are searching," says Dietmar Fischer, Managing Director of Argo.berlin. "For a destination, it is the key question. For a city hotel whose guests are looking for a room, there is currently nothing to gain there. The problem lies one level earlier, with the platforms."

The markets differ too: in Germany, Google shows an AI answer for 52.5 percent of travel searches, in Austria for 40.0 and in Switzerland for 35.6 percent.

The dataset and methodology are freely available under the CC BY 4.0 licence at argoberlin.de/studien/en/tourism-visibility-matrix.

About the data Collected on 4 September 2026 from Google result pages, language German, markets Germany, Austria and Switzerland, without location or personalisation. Only answers with actual source citations count as AI answers. Publisher: Argo.berlin. Authors: Roman Lange and Dietmar Fischer.

About Argo.berlin Argo.berlin is an owner-managed online marketing agency based in Berlin. Roman Lange and Dietmar Fischer and their team work for companies in tourism and hospitality, SMEs and the non-profit sector. Services range from Google Ads and search engine optimisation to social media advertising and web analytics with Google Analytics and Matomo. A particular focus is how companies stay visible and citable in AI-assisted search. To this end, the agency collects its own data series on the German-speaking market.

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