

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO):

A new frontier for search visibility





Introduction

The rapid rise of generative AI is reshaping how users find information online. Instead of just scrolling through traditional search engine results, many searchers are now posing questions to AI chatbots or AI-enhanced search tools or engines and are receiving direct, conversational answers. For SEOs and marketers in general, this shift demands a fresh approach to digital strategy. **Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)** has emerged as the term for an approach that emphasizes optimizing your content so that it's visible and favored by AI-driven search engines and answer engines. In this POV, we'll explain what GEO is, why it matters for hotels and resorts, how it differs from traditional SEO, and what practical steps we can take to remain visible in an AI-driven search landscape.





What is Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)?

Generative Engine Optimization, or **GEO**, refers to the process of adapting a website and content to boost its visibility in AI-driven search results. In other words, it's about **positioning your brand to appear in AI-generated answers** when users ask questions or seek information through tools like ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Bing's AI chat, or other conversational engines. Just as traditional SEO aims to get your site ranking high on a search engine results page, GEO aims to get your content **featured as a trusted source** within an AI's response.

To illustrate, consider how a user might search today. A traditional Google search for "family-friendly hotels in Orlando" would return a list of links for hotels or travel sites. With generative AI, a user might instead ask a more conversational query, *"What are some affordable, family-friendly hotels near Orlando's theme parks?"* The AI will then synthesize information from various websites to answer in a few sentences, often citing its sources. **GEO is about ensuring that your hotel's content is among those sources cited in the AI's answer.** This means your content needs to be not only relevant but also formatted and presented in a way that the AI deems credible and useful.

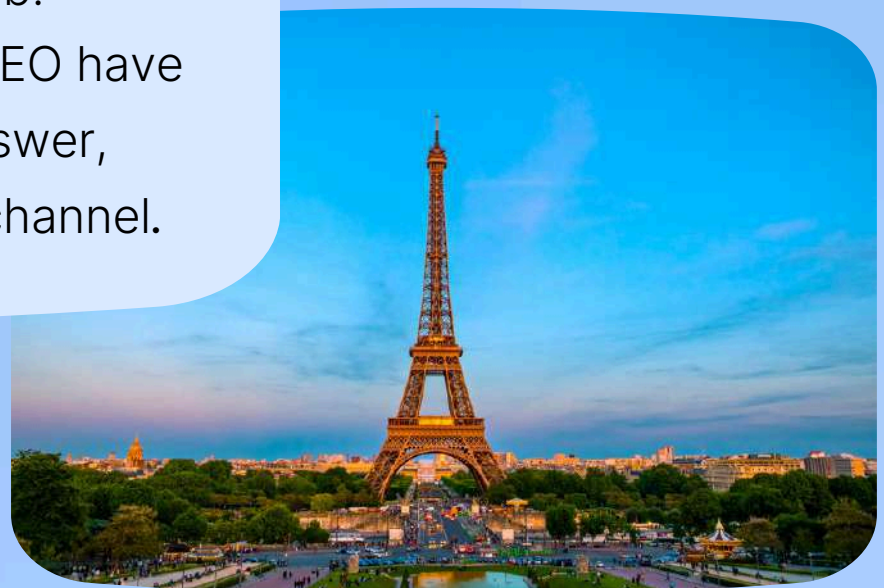




Why GEO matters to hotels

Generative AI search isn't a far-off concept – it's here now and growing fast. Recent studies show that **millions of consumers have already begun using AI chatbots as a primary search tool**, and that number is projected to balloon in the coming years. For hotels, this trend has big implications:

Shifting search behavior: Users are starting to use AI assistants to plan trips, ask for hotel recommendations, or find localized travel tips. If a potential guest asks an AI, *“Which boutique hotel in Paris has the best view of the Eiffel Tower?”*, the answer might highlight a hotel and pull in descriptions or reviews from the web. Brands that have optimized their content for GEO have a higher chance of being mentioned in that answer, whereas others might be invisible in this new channel.



Reduced traditional traffic: As AI tools give users direct answers, fewer people may click through to websites (“zero-click” searches). Early observations suggest that AI-generated answers could **significantly increase zero-click queries**, where the user's question is satisfied without ever visiting a hotel's site. If a guest's question about your destination or property is fully answered by an AI snippet, they might not visit your website at all. This makes it crucial to have your brand at least *present within the answer itself*, rather than relying solely on traditional click-through traffic.



Winner-takes-all dynamics: In a conversational answer, an AI might only mention one or two sources by name. This raises the stakes. If your competitor's content is the one cited and not yours, that competitor essentially "wins" the visibility for that query. Industry insiders warn of a potential "**winner-takes-all**" scenario in AI search, where a single brand garners the lion's share of exposure because the AI consistently pulls from its content. For hotels, being the one hotel that an AI recommends (versus appearing as one link among many on a Google page) could dramatically impact bookings and brand awareness.

New touchpoints in the guest journey: AI-driven search will influence earlier stages of travel planning. For example, travelers might use AI for inspiration ("*What are some off-the-beaten-path honeymoon destinations?*") or for direct advice ("*Find me a hotel in Tokyo with a kids' play area and late checkout*"). Hotels need to ensure they are **visible at these AI-driven inspiration and planning moments**, not just competing for clicks on a traditional search page.



In short, **GEO matters** because it's about maintaining and growing your digital visibility as consumer search habits evolve. Hotels that adapt will continue to capture interest from potential guests even when those guests rely on AI tools to make decisions. Those that don't adapt risk losing visibility to more agile competitors or third-party channels.



GEO vs. traditional SEO: What's the difference?

It's helpful to understand how Generative Engine Optimization differs from (and overlaps with) classic Search Engine Optimization. In many ways, GEO builds upon the foundations of SEO, but there are a few key differences in focus:

Goal and outcome:

Traditional SEO focuses on securing a high ranking on a search engine results page (SERP) and specifically getting your link as close to the top of Google's listings as possible. GEO, on the other hand, focuses on getting your content **directly integrated into AI-generated answers**. Instead of just a link, your goal is to have your information woven into the response an AI gives a user.



Presentation of results:

SEO deals with a list of links that the user can choose from. GEO deals with a synthesized answer. For example, a Google SERP might show ten pages for "luxury hotels in New York," while an AI answer might say: *"I recommend the Peninsula New York for its rooftop spa and Central Park views (source: example.com) and The Plaza for its historic grandeur (source: anotherexample.com)."* The **AI's answer is succinct and selective**, so the optimization strategy is about being **the chosen source** rather than one of many links.



Ranking factors vs. selection factors:

In SEO, you optimize meta-tags, include target keywords, earn backlinks, improve site speed, and so on to satisfy a search engine's ranking algorithm. **These factors still matter for GEO** (since AI often pulls content from top-ranked pages), but generative engines use additional criteria. Large Language Model (LLM) based engines don't just match keywords; they interpret context and meaning. This semantic understanding means they **value content that is clear, factual, context-rich, and authoritative** over content that merely repeats keywords. In practical terms, an AI-driven engine might favor a well-structured, evidence-backed article about "family travel tips" over a thin page that happens to have the phrase "family travel" many times.



User intent handling:

SEO has traditionally required you to think about user intent (navigational, informational, transactional queries, etc.) and create content to match those intents. GEO takes this a step further – AI is getting better at **interpreting nuanced or multi-part questions**. So, whereas an SEO strategy might target specific keyword phrases, a GEO strategy needs to anticipate and answer the broader or follow-up questions a user might ask. For instance, a user might ask an AI, *"Is it better to stay in a hotel or an Airbnb in London for a week?"* A GEO approach would ensure your content can address such comparative or advice-driven questions (maybe a blog post discussing hotels vs rentals for week-long stays), so the AI might draw from your insights in its answer.



Metrics of success

With SEO, success is measured in clicks and traffic to your site from search engines. With GEO, success might also include your **brand being mentioned or your content being quoted**, even if the user doesn't immediately click through. The nature of AI answers means brand impressions can happen without a click. This is a new way of thinking – it elevates the importance of brand messaging and accuracy in the content itself (since the user might only see a snippet with your brand name attached). Of course, we still ultimately want the user to visit and book, but **GEO's first "win" is earning that mention in the AI's response.**



Importantly, GEO is not about abandoning SEO. Instead, think of it as **an extension or evolution of SEO**. Many fundamentals of good SEO practice – quality content, relevant keywords, technical soundness, and authority building – are still relevant for GEO. GEO can be considered a “specialty of SEO” that should be integrated into your overall search strategy. The next section covers how to do exactly that.



How brands can adapt for Generative AI Search

Adapting to GEO may sound complex, but it boils down to **enhancing your content strategy** and some technical fine-tuning. At Cendyn, we advise hotels and resorts to approach GEO as an opportunity to sharpen their digital content for both humans and AI. Below are several actionable strategies that can be implemented to remain visible in AI-driven search results:

1



Double-down on SEO fundamentals: Make sure you continue following best practices for traditional SEO as they are still the baseline for GEO. High domain authority and strong organic rankings increase the likelihood that generative AI will see your site as a trusted source. Ensure your site is fast, mobile-friendly, well-indexed, and filled with relevant, high-quality content. Many AI answers still pull from the **top results in Google** as sources, so maintaining or improving your search rankings is step one of GEO.

2

Publish authoritative, in-depth content: AI-driven engines gravitate toward content that demonstrates expertise and depth. Aim to be the subject matter authority in your niche of hospitality. For example, if your hotel is known for eco-friendly practices, publish comprehensive content about sustainable travel in your region. Publish longer-form articles or guides that thoroughly cover a topic (long, well-structured text tends to perform well). Use an **authoritative tone** and make definitive, confident statements in your writing – generative models often prefer content that sounds precise, certain, and informative. By producing rich and authoritative content, you increase the chances that an AI will quote your text as a trustworthy source.



3

Incorporate data, facts, and figures: Back up your points with concrete data. Including relevant **statistics, numbers, or research findings** can make your content more credible in the eyes of an AI model. For instance, if your resort has awards or survey results (e.g., “95% of families say they’d return to our resort”), weave that into your content. If you mention travel trends or local facts (“Over 10 million visitors came to our city last year”), include the stat and its source. These factual elements not only build trust with human readers but also align with AI’s preference for verifiable information.

4

Cite reputable sources (and be one yourself): Don’t be afraid to reference outside authoritative sources within your content and ensure **your own content is well-referenced elsewhere**. Just as you’d cite sources in a research paper to show credibility, citing sources in your blog articles or website copy can signal that your content is well-founded. For example, if you have a destination guide on your hotel blog, you might cite a statistic from your city’s tourism board or quote a travel industry report. This practice shows that you’re providing accurate info, which can improve how an AI perceives your page’s trustworthiness. Additionally, we recommend working on earning backlinks and mentions for your site (digital PR, partnerships with travel blogs, etc.), as these remain signals of authority – the more the web recognizes your site as a reputable resource, the more likely an AI will do the same.



5

Use a clear, structured format: Structure your content in a logical, **easy-to-digest format**. Break up text with headings and subheadings, use bullet points or numbered lists for steps (just like this list), and clearly delineate different topics in your content. AI algorithms analyze content structure to understand context. For instance, a well-organized FAQ page or a “Top 10 Questions about Visiting ____” blog post can be very GEO-friendly – each question and answer is a clear, separate piece of information that an AI could pull individually to answer a user query. If you have long-form content, consider adding a brief summary or conclusion that an AI might use as a concise answer.

6

Answer real questions in a conversational tone: Think about the actual questions searchers might ask and make sure your content provides direct answers to those questions. Adopting a Q&A approach in some of your content can be beneficial. For example, create a blog post titled “**What’s the best time of year to visit [Your Destination]?**” and answer it in a natural, conversational way within the post. Use a tone similar to how you’d speak to a guest, rather than overly promotional or keyword-stuffed language. Generative AI is trained on natural language, and it favors content that reads like human conversation and directly addresses user queries. By aligning your writing style with how people actually ask questions, you make it easier for AI systems to surface your content when those questions arise.



7



Keep content fresh and updated: AI models and search engines alike give weight to content recency. Regularly update key pages and blog posts with new information, dates, or latest tips. For instance, if you have a “Local Events Guide,” refresh it each season. An outdated piece from 2018 about “upcoming events” is less likely to be selected by an AI than a 2025 updated guide. Being current is part of demonstrating reliability – one strategy expert noted that **generative search engines seem to favor recent content as a sign of credibility**. Set a calendar reminder to review and update content like hotel descriptions, amenity lists, and blog articles at regular intervals.

8

Stay objective and trustworthy: While marketing content naturally highlights your brand’s strengths, try to maintain an informational and balanced tone, especially for educational content. If you’re writing a city guide or comparing options (hotels, neighborhoods, etc.), **avoid overly biased or overly salesy language**. Generative AI may downrank content that reads purely like advertising. In fact, for certain queries like “best hotels in __,” AI answers might lean on neutral travel review sources or aggregate sites to avoid bias. You can counter this by making your content genuinely helpful and impartial in relevant contexts. For example, an article on “Choosing the Right Wedding Venue in Hawaii” could mention different types of venues (beaches, resorts, gardens) and pros/cons of each, rather than only touting your property. Showing that you put the user’s interest first – even if it means mentioning a competitor or alternative – can improve your content’s legitimacy. The takeaway: be the *trustworthy advisor, not just the self-promoter*.



9

Differentiate your content (stand out): In the era of AI-synthesized answers, uniqueness is an asset. If every hotel blog in your city has the same “Top 10 Attractions in [City]” list with similar phrasing, an AI might just pick one source or mash up generic info. Try to provide a different angle or more depth than others. This could mean leveraging your unique data (e.g., insights from your guest surveys), storytelling from your staff, or niche expertise. Maybe you can write about “Hidden Gems Only Locals Know Near Our Hotel” or provide an interactive map, an infographic, or high-quality images in your content. Distinctive content is more likely to get noticed and picked up by generative algorithms that are summarizing multiple sources. If your content offers something new or special, **AI may include it to add value to its answer**. In short, don’t just rehash what’s already out there; contribute original insights that set your content apart.





10

Leverage structured data and technical SEO: On the more technical side, continue using **schema markup and structured data** on your site. Mark up your location, reviews, FAQs, etc., with appropriate schema (e.g., Hotel schema, FAQPage schema). This practice helps search engines and AI better understand the context of your content. For example, marking up your hotel’s name, address, star-rating, and guest reviews could make that information more readily pulled into a rich snippet or an AI answer about “best-rated hotels in [City].” Technical SEO elements like this, along with maintaining an XML sitemap and clean site architecture, ensure that AI systems have clear signals about your content’s meaning and relevance.

By implementing these strategies, you’re essentially making your content **AI-friendly while staying human-friendly**. GEO isn’t about tricking the AI – it’s about aligning with what the AI is looking for, which, as it turns out, is largely the same as what genuinely useful content looks like to a human reader: clear, authoritative, up-to-date answers to real questions.



Conclusion: Embracing the future of search

The evolution of search from strictly listing links to AI-generated answers is one of the most significant shifts in digital marketing in recent years. For hospitality brands, this shift brings both challenges and opportunities. The challenge is clear: you must compete in an environment where being merely present online is not enough – your content needs to be deemed excellent by AI standards to get visibility. The opportunity, however, is that forward-thinking hotels can gain an edge by adapting early. If you tailor your content strategy with Generative Engine Optimization in mind, your brand can become a go-to source that conversational AI tools trust and recommend.

At Cendyn, we view GEO as a natural extension of the customer-centric SEO & content strategies we've championed for years. It's about speaking **to your audience's needs** (now with AI as the intermediary) and building digital authority through quality content and data-driven insights. Hospitality is a highly competitive space, and how travelers search is changing – but the winners will be those who change along with it. By understanding GEO and implementing the practical steps outlined above, hotel marketing leaders (from CMOs to digital teams) can ensure their properties remain visible, relevant, and compelling in the age of generative AI search.

In this new era, optimizing for search means optimizing for answers. Hotels that provide the best answers will win the attention – and the bookings – of tomorrow's guests. Embrace GEO now, and you'll be positioning your brand at the forefront of where search is headed. The future of search is generative, and with the right strategy, it can also be bright for those in hospitality who are ready to evolve.



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about how Cendyn can support
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