



AI Helps Rental Seekers Find Homes That Match Their Aesthetic Preferences

Consumers increasingly have an expectation of superior, more personalized service based on their own particular needs and wants, and the luxury travel space is no exception: a 2024 survey found that 66 percent of respondents sought personalized, tailor-made trips. Meanwhile, AI technology in the hospitality market is growing quickly, with projections of reaching a valuation of \$8 billion by 2033, up from \$90 million in 2023.

It's in this environment that vacation rental company StayMarquis launched its first-ever AI tool, called Aesthetic Profile, using real-time design preferences to match guests with highly curated properties.

Aesthetic Profile helps renters sift through their options much faster by bringing the properties that will most likely resonate with them to the top of their search list, said Bryan Fedner, a co-founder and managing partner at StayMarquis.

“The feedback that we heard from guests booking through our platform was that the amount of properties on our platform result in option overload, and it's really difficult for them to drill into five to 10 to 20 properties when we have 650 that are presented on our website,” he explained. “On every website, Airbnb included, the ways that the listings show are not based on aesthetics or decor or furniture or style; they're based on location, they're based on the number of bedrooms.

“Maybe there are some physical amenities, like a pool and a tennis court, but it's missing so much of a personal aesthetic that renters really care about,” Fedner continued. “Aesthetic Profile just makes the search process so much more seamless and user friendly.”

Using Aesthetic Profile

When using Aesthetic Profile, visitors are prompted to like five random images of different parts of the house: kitchen, living room, bedroom, bathroom, exterior. As the renter likes and dislikes images, the AI learns what the user may or may not like about the image, using that to learn about the renter's aesthetic preferences in terms of styles, colors, decor and features.

Once the renter selects aesthetic preferences, StayMarquis is able to automatically match that style with properties on its platform, allowing it to be ultra-targeted. It also uses the renter's Aesthetic Profile to scan properties that are not yet listed on StayMarquis.

"It's using visual similarity recognition, so it's pulling in all of the images that that user personally liked, and it's tagging over 600 different elements within any individual image, and then it's pulling out the commonalities between the images that that person liked. But, beyond that, it then matches up the images that they liked with all other properties on our platform and beyond," Fedner said.

"So, the AI is basically scanning and then says, 'Well, this image, or this property, is most similar to the 25 images that this person liked.' It uses that AI technology to suggest the properties that most similarly visually represent the profile that the person created."

Since launching the product two months ago, Fedner says it has generated over \$300,000 in revenue from people who have submitted an Aesthetic Profile and then went on to book a property.

Notably, those users booked their vacations unassisted, meaning they didn't speak with a reservationist or a travel specialist prior to making the reservation. By contrast, 70 percent of reservations made on the platform involve a renter interacting with a member of the team.

"This says to us that people are finding properties easier, and they're feeling that they don't need to speak with a reservationist," Fedner said.

"This tool just makes it a lot more efficient for the guests to find the properties themselves and book, but also then gives our team, the travel specialists, a really good idea of what properties they should be recommending based on what their profile is."

Perfecting the Vacation Rental Experience

Founded in 2018, StayMarquis says its mission is to perfect the vacation rental experience for both guests and owners.

For guests, the company offers fully vetted vacation homes, ranging from bungalows to 12-bedroom beachfront estates, as well as a range of concierge services to bring the hospitality to the home, including grocery delivery, dog sitting/walking, private chefs and babysitting.

Owners, meanwhile, can choose between two programs depending on their desired level of involvement: The Elite program is for owners who want to be more hands-on, where the company handles all marketing and booking efforts on their behalf but then allows them to handle the guest experience.

The other program, Marquis Collection, is for owners who want to be more hands-off, where the company handles marketing, booking and rental management, including managing guest communication, pre-stay and post-stay inspections, cleaning and laundry services, and conducting quarterly walk-throughs and replenishing supplies to make sure the homes are guest-ready year-round.

Currently, StayMarquis has approximately 650 vacation homes on its platform, all in the Hamptons and North Fork regions, while effectuating 2,000 reservations across the platform annually.

AI in the Vacation Rental Space

Aesthetic Profile is just the beginning for StayMarquis when it comes to AI, Fedner said, and the company already has plans for additional services, including chatbots to help answer guest questions.

“The easiest way to integrate AI into any vacation rental business is really to help guest services if a renter has an issue at a property or they have a question about a property,” Fedner explained.

During the onboarding process for a home, StayMarquis documents everything about the property, down to the type of thermostat it has. So, if a guest is having an issue with the air conditioning over July or August, its guest relations team is able to answer those questions.

An assistant will have all of that information and will be able to craft a response automatically that provides links that can help with troubleshooting remotely; for example, it can craft a response that provides links to the website of the thermostat’s maker.

“One example of where it could really help out is just helping guest relations answer questions and issues in real time with extreme accuracy,” he said.

In addition, the Aesthetic Profile tool is just the first iteration of getting much more granular with how people find and search for properties based on their specific preferences.

“Down the road, as we learn more about consumers’ booking behavior, what properties they’ve looked at and liked, what properties they shared, potentially even other things like what type of cars they drive, or what type of stores they shop at, it will allow us to drill in further into the types of properties that they would like, and make the recommendation engine even stronger,” Fedner said.

“Down the road, there’s a lot more opportunity for even more improvement for this recommendation engine. Really, this is the first phase of it. And, so far, it’s working pretty well.”