ChatGPT Apps for airlines are ready for takeoff

How conversational AI and agentic commerce will shape the future of air travel booking

Executive Summary

Conversational AI is reshaping how travelers plan and book. As consumers increasingly rely on natural language tools like ChatGPT for travel planning and booking, airlines face a critical strategic question:

How can we maintain brand presence, influence consumer decisions, and protect direct bookings in a conversational AI environment?

OpenAI recently announced the launch of [ChatGPT Apps](), allowing users to interact with third-party applications like Expedia and Booking.com directly within the ChatGPT interface. This marks a significant shift in how supplier content will be accessed by consumers and helps lay the foundation for [agentic commerce](). ChatGPT Apps let airlines connect first-party data to the world's largest conversational platform and deliver accurate, real-time results in an experience that is already familiar and popular with many consumers.

These apps are built on [Model Context Protocol (MCP)](), a standard supported by all major LLMs, including ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude. MCP standardizes integration, provides long-term stability, and enables agentic experiences that go far beyond current web search results.

This white paper explains why ChatGPT Apps matter, what the experience could look like for an airline, and why early adoption creates an advantage. It also outlines the development and approval process, its challenges, and how Mobi.AI can help your airline succeed in this next wave of digital commerce.

The shift toward conversational and agentic commerce

Shifts in traveler behavior and online commerce are well underway:

- McKinsey found that by 2030, the US B2C retail market alone could see up to $1 trillion in orchestrated revenue from agentic commerce, with global projections reaching as high as $3 trillion to $5 trillion.[1]

- An Accenture study of active AI users (those using a generative AI tool weekly) found that 93% considered the ability to shape their own travel experiences to be important to their personal connection with a brand. 42% said they would switch to a brand that could proactively provide solutions to improve their experience while planning.[2]

When travelers express their needs in natural language, they reveal intent more clearly than through structured forms or filters. LLMs streamline discovery, summarize complex choices, and help travelers make faster decisions. As the technology matures, these LLM apps will not only answer questions, they will perform actions, connect to systems, and complete tasks on the traveler's behalf. This evolution forms the foundation of agentic commerce.

For airlines, this shift creates both urgency and opportunity. As travelers adopt LLM-driven planning, brands that aren't participating with their own LLM apps risk losing direct bookings to intermediaries. A brand-specific ChatGPT App keeps an airline's content, inventory, brand voice, and recommendations in front of the traveler and helps preserve control of the customer relationship and the final transaction.

# What a ChatGPT App is and why it matters

Unlike a ChatBot, a ChatGPT App is a full app experience that users can launch right inside ChatGPT. It connects to an airline's first-party data to search for flights, recommend options, and support direct bookings. Your ChatGPT App lives inside an ecosystem where hundreds of millions of users already search and interact conversationally. These apps provide a user interface on top of Model Context Protocol (MCP), the standard that governs how LLMs connect to external data and tools. MCP ensures these interactions are structured, secure, and reliable.
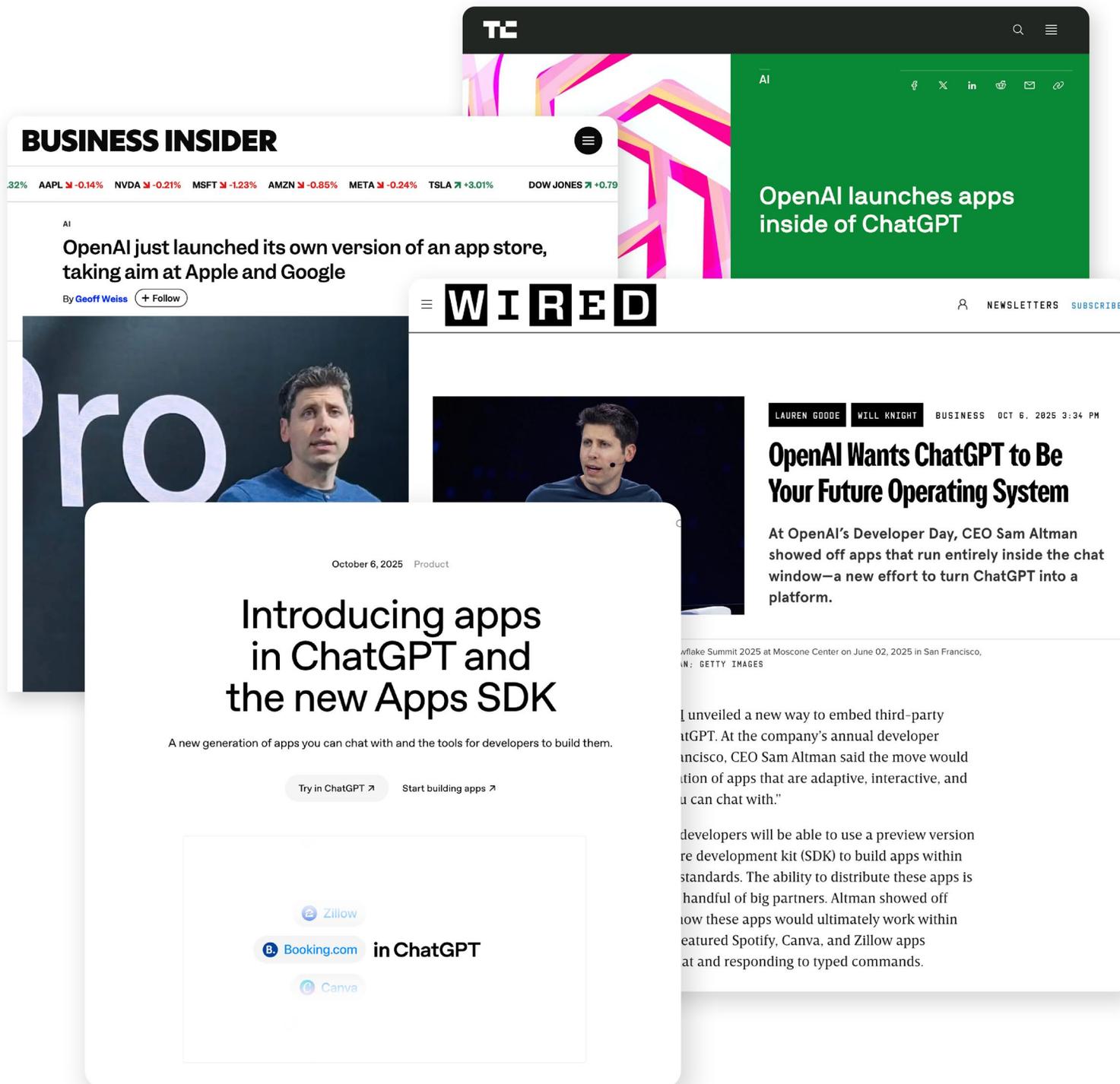
Mobi's ChatGPT App for airlines

A ChatGPT user searches for flights and your airline's app is recommended to answer
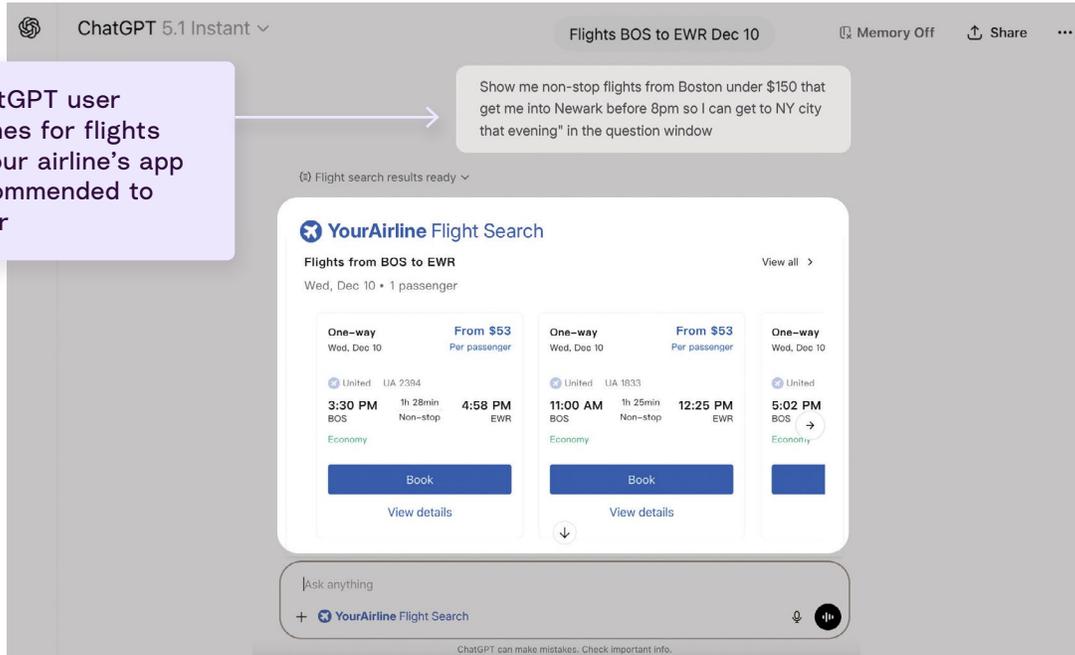
Above is the response to a person who has asked from within ChatGPT "Show me non-stop flights from Boston under $150 that get me to Newark before 8pm so I can get to NY City that evening"

The customer is presented with options and guidance based on their criteria and can easily complete the direct booking without leaving ChatGPT
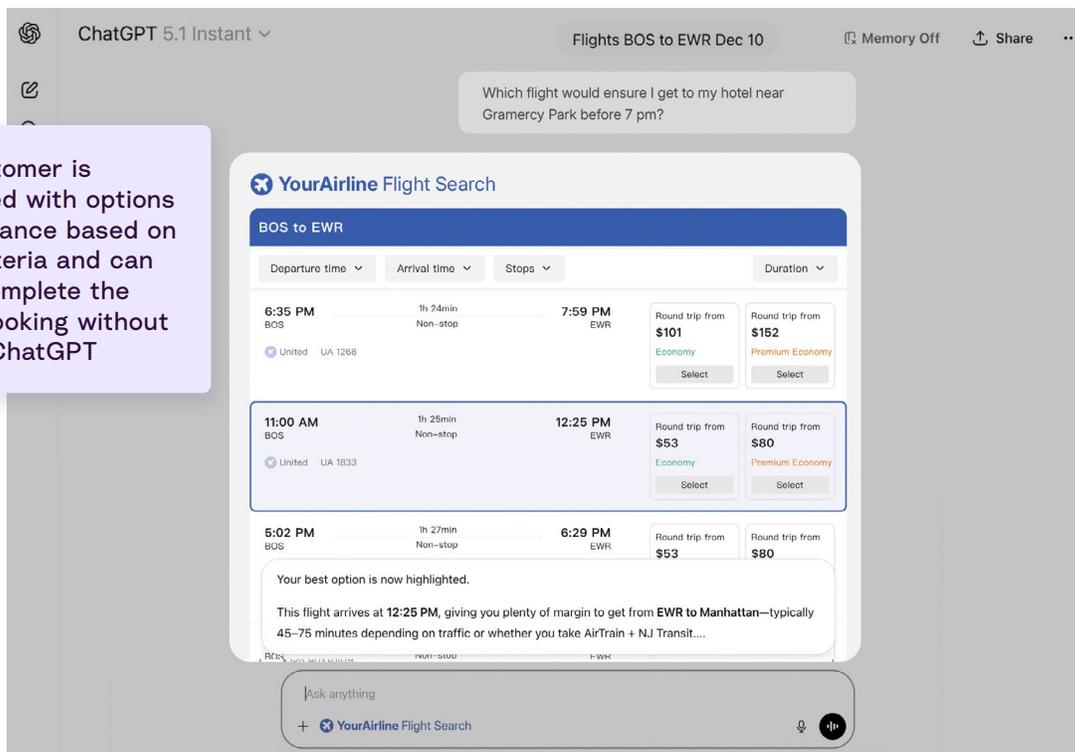
With the ChatGPT app, the user gets the full power of natural language to interact with the results shown, making it easier for them to find the flight they are looking for

Understanding MCP

Model Context Protocol (MCP) is a set of tools that enables secure, structured communication between LLMs and external systems. MCP was developed with cross-model adoption in mind, and has already been embraced by OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, Meta, and others. As a result:

- Apps built on MCP are easily portable between LLM vendors
- The protocol should be a long-term foundation that survives future platform updates
- Airline integrations are less likely to become obsolete due to shifting APIs or architectural changes

In the airline context, MCP tools may include generating offers in both revenue and points, as well as flight details, baggage policies, and airport information. LLMs can then use those tools to interpret a traveler's natural language request and generate the right response. MCP enables greater levels of personalization, creating the ability to marry customer intent with existing data to help an airline create personalized offers.

Model Context Protocol

is an open protocol that standardizes how AI models interact with external tools and data sources

✦ **Broad Support**
Supported by Claude, Google Gemini, and ChatGPT

✦ **Preserves Rich Data (Context)**
Users type paragraphs & MCP lets you respond with full understanding of that context

✦ **Common AI Infrastructure**
Single set of tools which powers agentic commerce with your first party content

✦ **ChatGPT Apps**
An immersive user experience layer built on top of MCP infrastructure that runs inside of an LLM

What a ChatGPT App can do for an airline

A ChatGPT App lets travelers plan, shop, and decide with far less friction. Below are examples that illustrate what a Mobi-powered experience could look like.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO:

Natural language flight shopping

"Find me the best round-trip flight from London to New York on Thursday. I prefer nonstop options and want to stay under $450. Also, tell me which flight gets me to Times Square before 7pm."

A ChatGPT app will:

1. Interpret the traveler's request.
2. Retrieve flight search data using appropriate caching, rate limits, and controls to avoid unnecessary system load.
3. Identify nonstops, connections, or alternate dates.
4. Sort results by the traveler's stated priorities.
5. Provide a short explanation of tradeoffs (price, schedule, connection time, etc.)
6. Hand off directly to the airline's booking flow.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO:

Loyalty support

"How many miles do I need to upgrade to Premium Economy from Seattle to Tokyo?"

A ChatGPT app will:

1. Fetch the traveler's mileage balance.
2. Retrieve available upgrade options using appropriate caching and controls to avoid unnecessary system load.
3. Explain eligibility, requirements, or tradeoffs.
4. Offer a link to complete the transaction or complete it within the AI interface.

Note: This doesn't replace an airline's booking engine. It simply adds a conversational layer on top of the systems already in place.

Why airlines need to act NOW

The shift toward conversational shopping is already underway, and OTA participation in the initial ChatGPT Apps launch poses an immediate risk to airlines' direct booking share. Conversely, airlines that launch a ChatGPT App early can gain several advantages:

1. **Protection of direct booking share**
   If airlines aren't present in these conversational channels, intermediaries will answer on their behalf. A ChatGPT App ensures the airline controls what is presented to the traveler and directs the booking back to the direct channel.

2. **Early visibility and placement in the App ecosystem**
   Apps are discovered by ChatGPT App suggestions based on the user input. If an airline does not have an app, an OTA may be suggested instead. Early entrants have more time to refine their experience and benefit from higher visibility.

3. **MCP groundwork benefits other initiatives**
   A ChatGPT App may be the first production use case for MCP, but the underlying work delivers broad value. The same MCP infrastructure can support customer-facing AI experiences across the airline's web and mobile apps.

4. **Commercial upside from early adoption**
   Early adopters will learn faster, influence platform evolution, and set the standard for the industry. With AI-driven planning expected to accelerate, being early will position your airline to shape consumer expectations.

5. **Peace of mind**
   Using Mobi to create, submit, and manage your ChatGPT App enables your airline to deploy quickly without long-term risk or heavy internal investment. This lets you move ahead while keeping future options open and avoiding the cost of inaction.

Building a ChatGPT App with Mobi

A production-ready ChatGPT App is built through a structured process that aligns goals, prepares MCP capabilities, and ensures reliability. Below is Mobi's approach.

1. **Align with Mobi on goals and requirements**
   Define KPIs, brand tone, and determine what the app should excel at (destination discovery, booking conversion, loyalty support, other). Then establish timelines and identify participating team members.

2. **Define architecture, security & privacy requirements**
   Design how the app will function within the airline's environment. This includes selecting which systems to expose through MCP, defining load, security and privacy requirements, and ensuring compliance is consistently met.

3. **Enable MCP foundations**
   Identify the correct data sources to use. Work with Mobi to define the methods by which the data can be made accessible to and understood by LLMs.
   Note: Mobi already operates a production-grade MCP server environment and maintains baseline configurations for common airline capabilities.

4. **App build and fine-tuning**
   The ChatGPT App is developed and refined through iterative testing to ensure outputs are reliable, on-brand, and aligned with operational expectations. During this step, the UX is created, and LLM instructions, guardrails, and error states are implemented.

5. **App submission, approval & go-live**
   ChatGPT Apps must be reviewed by OpenAI for quality, safety, and correct use of MCP. Navigating this process is far easier with a partner who has completed it before and participates in the working groups shaping future standards. After approval, the app is deployed according to the airline's rollout plan.

Why build with Mobi

Mobi is built for this moment. Major airlines already rely on Mobi for fast, secure, low-risk paths into the AI ecosystem.

- **Travel industry expertise**
  Mobi has deep expertise in both AI and airline retail, strengthened by best practices gained from working with many airlines worldwide. The team understands air shopping funnels, airline IT systems, and the unique challenges of bringing travel content into an LLM environment.

- **Speed to market**
  Mobi has already built a production MCP infrastructure at scale. This accelerates time to market and avoids months of internal architecture.

- **Intelligent load-aware design**
  Mobi incorporates load-aware design principles that anticipate when core systems may be under stress and dynamically optimizes the request strategy, preventing capacity issues before they impact performance or Look-to-Book ratios.

- **Security as a foundational principle**
  Mobi is engineered with security woven into app designs and the platform itself, ensuring security safeguards and regulatory compliance are foundational capabilities in every product and integration we deliver.

- **Predictable costs**
  Mobi keeps costs predictable with fixed licensing fees and a services model designed to reduce financial risk. Your airline gains early market presence while Mobi absorbs the ongoing technical investment and monitoring. As standards evolve, Mobi ensures your apps and MCP framework evolve with them.

- **Technical depth across airline systems**
  Mobi works with NDC, Amadeus, Sabre, and proprietary airline APIs. The team knows how to structure flight content so an LLM can interpret it accurately.

- **Relationships across the LLM ecosystem**
  Mobi maintains executive relationships across AI and participates in the working groups shaping MCP and ChatGPT App standards. This provides early visibility into changes and the ability to influence how travel use cases evolve.

- **Product and UX specialization**
  Generative AI interfaces require careful prompt design, error handling, and guidance. Mobi brings deep expertise in product thinking, UX design, and conversational grounding to ensure the app drives real engagement.

Conclusion

Airlines have a rare opportunity to get ahead of a shift that will redefine travel discovery and decisions. ChatGPT Apps are poised to become a primary way consumers explore options and act on travel intent. Airlines that establish a presence early will benefit from higher visibility, better engagement, and stronger control over direct channels.

To explore how a ChatGPT App could work for your airline, schedule a discovery conversation with Mobi. Our team will walk you through the opportunities, technical requirements, and outline your path to a successful launch. Now is the time to take ownership of your presence in conversational AI. Mobi can help your airline move quickly, confidently, and with reduced risk.

To learn more, please contact:

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