

A Week of Rising Pressure in Online Travel as Pricing Rules Advance and Platform Competition Evolves

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Good Sunday afternoon from Seattle . . . For those of you who follow American football, Happy Superbowl Sunday (apparently the number one sports betting day of the year). Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, February 6, 2026, is below. This week's Update features a new story from the Technology Travel Association on state efforts to regulate technology pricing. I've also included an update on the much discussed collective action against Booking.com and offer further evidence as to why I believe Google will inevitably become the most widely used AI platform - even for travel. Enjoy.

Travel Technology Association Defeats Proposed Pricing Technology Legislation. You might ask why we are featuring a story this week on the Travel Technology Association's successful defeat (at least for now) of proposed pricing technology legislation in Virginia. The story is only one of several important updates on pricing legislation that we received last week, including a detailed national overview of current state efforts to regulate the use of pricing technology by AH&LA's Sarah Bratko. According to Sarah, 17 states have pricing legislation currently pending (not including already enacted legislation in California and New York). (So much for the Trump Administration's attempt to restrict state-level regulation of AI.) If you've haven't looked into this issue or its potential effects on your loyalty program or targeted promotions, I encourage you to do so. If you have questions, please let me know.

Siteminder Releases Annual Hotel Bookings Trend Report. This past week, Siteminder released its annual [Hotel Bookings Trend](#) report for 2025. Highlights in this year's report include (a) revenue share among booking channels stayed relatively flat (95% of markets reported only a 1.5% change over last year), (b) AI and OTAs are gaining share on research, but directly bookings remain stable, (c) among available channels (direct, wholesale, GDS and OTA), bookings generated through direct bookings produced the highest value per booking (\$516) and (d) by 2030, Asia will account for 3.5 billion middle class travelers - approximately two thirds of the global total.

Hoteliers File Collective Action Against Booking.com. For the past year, we have had stories about a possible collective action by European hoteliers against Booking.com over its allegedly anti-competitive contracting practices (namely, parity). This past week, the Dutch foundation representing the hotels formally initiated action before an Amsterdam Court. While "several thousand" hotels were part of this initial filing, Hotrec reports that extensions of the collective action will be brought later this year to add

more hotels.

ChatGPT and Booking.com Launch SME AI Accelerator. While the majority of announcements over the past year regarding artificial intelligence and travel have focused on leisure travel, last week's announcement by ChatGPT's and Booking.com changed that dynamic. This latest ChatGPT/Booking.com partnership intends to help small and medium sized enterprises use AI to boost business (according to European reports, only 17% of European small businesses have adopted AI). Apparently, Booking.com hopes to capitalize on the effort by including corporate or managed travel in the list of AI-enabled functions. The program is available to business owners in 6 European countries - France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Ireland and the U.K. Just another attention grabbing headline with little to no likelihood of meaningful success? I think so.

Have a great week everyone. Go Seahawks.

Travel Tech Encourages Balanced Approach to Pricing Technology Policy in Virginia Senate Bill 615

February 5, 2026 via Travel Tech Association

Last week, the Travel Technology Association, the trade association promoting and protecting the travel tech industry, shared its perspective on Virginia Senate Bill 615 and its potential effects on the travel marketplace.

Google Earnings: AI Search Is Changing Travel Discovery, Even Before Booking Tools Arrive

February 5, 2026 via Skift

Google's AI search is changing how travelers find trips. The booking tools aren't here yet, but the traffic dynamics are already shifting - and the rules for capturing demand are shifting with them. Google's fourth-quarter earnings call on Wednesday made one thing clear: the company is moving from ...

Hotel Direct Bookings Remain Stable Despite Rise of AI

February 2, 2026 via PhocusWire

Direct bookings are "holding steady" for hotels, a recent report from SiteMinder revealed. The company's annual Hotel Booking Trends report found that, in 2025, revenue share stayed within 1.5 percentage points of the previous year in 95% of surveyed markets. This was despite predictions that artificial intelligence (AI) would either ...

Google's Latest AI Search Features Look Like a Personalized Travel Concierge

February 2, 2026 via Skift

Google is stitching its AI search features into a single workflow. For some users, that means a smarter, more personalized experience, with AI that shapes responses based on real travel preferences without leaving search. Google announced a string of AI updates recently that are coalescing into a revamped ...

Booking Sees Hoteliers File Antitrust Collective Claim in Dutch Court

January 30, 2026 via MLex

European hoteliers' trade association Hotrec has started formal litigation against Booking.com at the

Amsterdam District Court. It is leading a collective action, seeking compensation for European hotels allegedly

OpenAI, Booking.com Launch Program to Boost AI Adoption Among Europe's SMEs

January 30, 2026 via PhocusWire

OpenAI has announced the launch of a program to train 20,0000 small and midsize enterprises (SMEs) across Europe with artificial intelligence (AI) skills. In partnership with Booking.com, OpenAI is introducing an "SME AI Accelerator," which is intended to help SMEs use AI to boost productivity and business.

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