

# AI Visibility Emerges as Travel's New Marketing Benchmark

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Good Sunday afternoon from Seattle . . . Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, June 28, 2026, is below. It was another relatively quiet week in the online travel world unless you are Trip.com, in which case you probably wish it had been even quieter. Enjoy.

**China's Trip.com Braces for Regulatory Fallout.** In its recent first quarterly earnings release, China-based Trip.com Group warned of the possible financial effects of the ongoing anti-trust investigation into the OTA's contracting and business practices. According to Trip.com, the investigation, which began in January by the State Administration for Market Regulation, could result in significant fines, penalties or forced changes to its business practices. The timing of the investigation's conclusion and possible penalties is unknown. The investigation has thus far focused on Trip.com's rail ticketing services (add-on charges and misleading booking practices). What the investigation and penalties might mean for the hotel industry is unclear. More to come.

**Visibility Is Becoming the New Tell-tale Indicator of Online Marketing Success.** 5W Research released a [report](#) this past week suggesting that visibility is the new metric for online marketing success in this AI-enabled world. Not a big surprise. What was far more surprising are the report's findings regarding what most contributes to AI visibility. For example, size matters, but perhaps not as much as you might think. Hyatt vs. Wyndham. Interestingly, OTAs did not fare well in the study. According to 5W, the direct answers that popular AI platforms provide may allow users to bypass traditional OTA searches all together (and as a result collapse the traditional sales funnel). Ongoing direct booking efforts may also be playing a role.

**AI-Driven Traffic Continues to Grow Quickly.** According to a newly released Adobe [report](#), AI-driven traffic to U.S. travel and retail sites has increased 194% YOY (and 2200% since October 2024 when Adobe began measuring). Other notable findings from the report include (i) AI-referred visitors show higher intent and engagement than those referred from traditional sources and (ii) notwithstanding their higher intent and engagement, these AI-referred visitors continue to convert at lower rates (28%) than those referred through traditional sources (though the gap is closing quickly). According to Adobe, hoteliers are already doing quite well in AI accessibility, but they can do better (over a third of hoteliers' webpages are still not readable by the most popular AI platforms). Conversely, airlines have nowhere to go but up.

Have a great week everyone. For those of you in the United States, I hope you have a great 4th of July holiday weekend. We'll be back in two weeks

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