

# Booking.com's Ongoing Legal Battles, Alibaba's Travel Restructuring & the Rise of AI in Hotel Visibility

06.28.25 06.02.26

Good Saturday evening from Seattle . . . Our Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, June 27, 2025, is below. This week's Update features news of yet another claim being brought against Booking.com over its commercial practices and updates on Alibaba's planned restructuring of its travel platform, Fliggy. Going forward, expect to see more stories on social media and its use as legitimate distribution channel. While the industry (and world) is focused on AI and its influence, don't overlook the power and influence of social media. I know I have. Enjoy.

- **Dutch Consumer Groups Announce Plans to Bring Claims Against Booking.com.** The news of competition authority claims and fines and potential private class actions never seems to end. Buoyed by the EU court's recent determination that Booking.com's parity provisions could be anti-competitive (which is the same decision allegedly serving as EU hoteliers' new claims against Booking.com), two Dutch consumer groups announced this past week that they were seeking affected Dutch travelers to serve as claimants in a claim against Booking.com over its (allegedly) over-inflated hotel prices.
- **Cloudbeds Offers Insight into Hotel AI Visibility.** Ever wonder what hotels can do to improve the likelihood of being featured in the recommendations provided by the leading AI platforms - ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity? In a post search / keyword world, I field this question often (or conversely, how do I stop OTAs from being featured). Cloudbeds recently released a report titled, "The Signals Behind Hotel AI Recommendations," which tries to address that question. A few key takeaways for me . . .
  - Branded hotels have far greater visibility than independent hotels.
  - OTAs (Expedia, Booking.com and TripAdvisor) are dominant in AI generated recommendations. Shouldn't be a surprise to anyone given the number of recently announced partnerships between the leading AI platforms on these three OTAs.
  - Reputation is critical. Recommended hotels all maintained "excellent guest ratings" and a large number of online reviews on the major platforms.
  - Broad online visibility is a quality indicator to the AI platforms. Recommended properties were on YouTube (98%), travel blogs (97%) and Reddit (95%).

As you think about third parties' competing AI initiatives, keep in mind that OTAs, metasearch sites and tour operators are likely seeking to leverage these same points and may be far better equipped to succeed.

- **Google to Introduce AI Overviews to YouTube.** By now, everyone should be familiar with AI Overviews and their widespread use in Google's traditional search engine results. Google is now testing similar overviews on YouTube (at least for a select group of premium users). According to Google, the new feature will produce a video carousel and short narrative description for premium users searching in the areas of shopping, places or things to do in specific location. A short video demonstrating the new feature is available [here](#).

Finally, for anyone interested in reading a copy of the Booking.com book, *The Machine* (which I wrote about briefly in a prior Update), our amazing firm marketing coordinator found me a copy of the book available online in English. Let me know if you want the details. I cannot wait to read it. Yes, I'm officially a distribution geek.

Have a great week everyone.

### **Dutch Consumer Groups Prepare Legal Action Against Booking.com, Alleging Inflated Hotel Prices**

*June 27, 2025 via Hospitality Net*

Two Dutch consumer groups said on Wednesday they are seeking affected customers for a legal claim against Booking.com (BKNG.O), one of the world's largest online travel agencies, over what they described as inflated hotel prices since 2013. The Consumer Competition Claims Foundation (CCC) and the Consumers' ...

### **How Hotels Should be Thinking About Their Visibility on AI Platforms**

*June 26, 2025 via Phocus Wire*

Cloudbeds study delves into how hotels appear in AI search results.

### **Online Travel Veterans on Travel Technology Evolution and What's Next**

*June 26, 2025 via Phocus Wire*

In a special session at Phocuswright Europe, online travel vets Mauricio Prieto and Gillian Tans shared their thoughts on the state of the industry and where it's headed amid the age of AI.

### **Agoda CEO on Why Price Is Still the Best Loyalty Program**

*June 26, 2025 via Skift*

Agoda's playbook is clear: move fast, stay cheap, and think local. They're not betting on the next big trend. They're betting on knowing what their customers and partners want, before anyone else. While many travel companies are busy reinventing loyalty programs with layers of points and perks, Agoda CEO Omri ...

### **YouTube Search Gets its Own Version of Google's AI Overviews**

*June 26, 2025 via The Verge*

Google is bringing an AI Overviews-like feature to another product: YouTube. The video streaming platform may now show an "AI-powered search results carousel" when some YouTube Premium members in the US make searches related to "shopping, travel, or things to do in a specific place," ...

**Introducing Travel Weekly's 2025 Power List**

*June 23, 2025 via Travel Weekly*

Travel Weekly's annual ranking of the biggest sellers of travel is 70 agencies strong this year. Here's who they are, their accomplishments, priorities — and how much travel they sold.

**Alibaba Folds Delivery App and Travel Agency into E-Commerce Group**

*June 23, 2025 via South China Morning Post*

CEO Eddie Wu said the restructuring 'marks a strategic upgrade from an e-commerce platform to a comprehensive consumer platform' ...

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## Authored by

[Greg Duff](#)

[Principal|Seattle](#)

[206.816.1470](tel:206.816.1470) [greg.duff@foster.com](mailto:greg.duff@foster.com)