

4 Charts on Travel Media Network Opportunities

As commerce media grows, travel media networks (TMNs) are carving a unique path by leveraging deep loyalty relationships, high-intent audiences, and the ability to engage consumers across complex purchase journeys far removed from typical shopping experiences. From rich first-party data to collaborative partnerships spanning the entire travel experience, TMNs offer advertisers access to engaged audiences.

1. Travel media ad spend will exceed \$2 billion in 2026

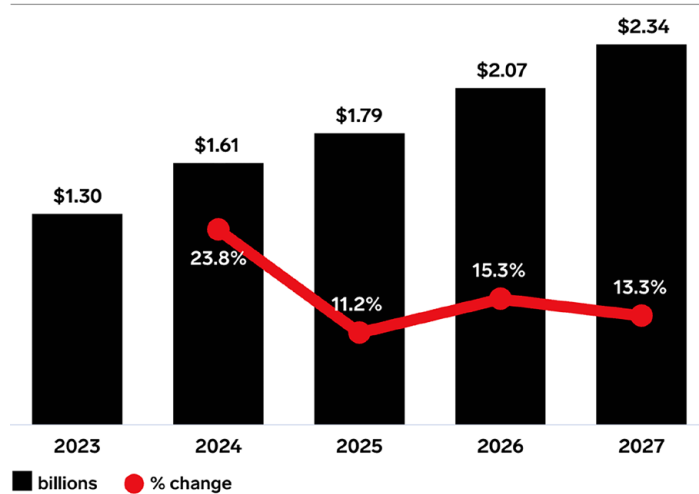
The channel will grow from \$1.30 billion in 2023 to \$2.34 billion by 2027, per EMARKETER's September 2025 forecast.

This consistent double-digit growth, reaching 23.8% in 2024 and maintaining 13.3% through 2027, demonstrates sustained advertiser demand for travel media's unique audience attributes. As travel companies refine their media offerings and expand beyond owned platforms, they're proving that loyalty-driven first-party data can fuel substantial advertising revenue at scale.

The travel media landscape includes key players across multiple categories: airlines like United Airlines' Kinective Media, hotels like Marriott's Riott Media, online travel agencies (OTAs) like Expedia Media Solutions, and rideshares like Uber Ads. Each brings distinct strengths, from airlines' deep loyalty data to OTAs' rich search and booking data.

Travel Media Network Ad Spending

US, 2023-2027



Note: Digital advertising that appears on websites, apps, or screens that are primarily engaged in travel services or is bought through a travel services provider's media network or demand-side platform (DSP) utilizing first-party data for real-time targeting; includes ads purchased through travel media networks that may not appear on travel services sites or apps; excludes purchase-dependent marketing partner offers

Source: EMARKETER Forecast, September 2025

INDUSTRY VIEW



James Rothwell

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
MARKETING, LOYALTY & MEDIA,
UNITED AIRLINES

"Travel is one of the few moments in modern life where brands can engage with a truly captive and present audience. When someone is thinking about travel or in transit, they're in a discovery mindset. Travel expands horizons and opens people up to new ideas, cultures, and possibilities. There are also sustained periods of time and engaging screens throughout the journey. That's what makes traveler media such a powerful environment for brands. You're connecting with people when they're most receptive, when they're seeking out ways to enrich their lives, and when they have time and attention to spare. These are moments of openness and intention that few other channels can offer."

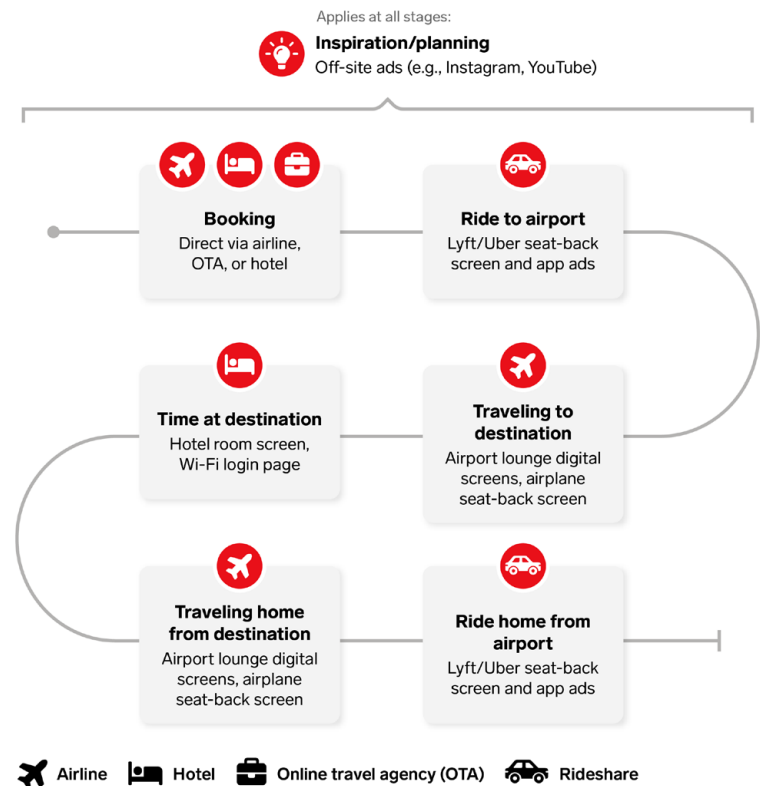
2. Travel media touchpoints cover the full traveler journey

Unlike retail media, where the bulk of engagement concentrates around a single homepage or store location, TMNs engage consumers across multiple touchpoints throughout an extended journey. Airlines, hotels, rideshares, and OTAs each play distinct roles, from inspiration and planning through booking, travel, and the return home.

This creates opportunities for advertisers to reach the same high-intent audience multiple times across complementary platforms. Because these travel companies operate in adjacent spaces, they can collaborate on unified campaigns in ways most retailers can't.

This results in brand storytelling that follows consumers through their entire travel experience, from off-site inspiration ads on Instagram and YouTube, to booking moments on airline and hotel sites, to in-transit engagement via airport lounge screens and airplane seat-back displays, to rideshare ads on the way home.

Travel Media Networks Can Create Continuous Ad Touchpoints Along the Customer Journey



Source: EMARKETER, October 2025

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"The real advantage of traveler media is in creating a connected journey. Brands can tell a cohesive story across multiple moments: at the planning and purchasing stage, welcoming travelers in the airport and in the club, reinforcing that message onboard, and re-engaging them when they land. Each touchpoint builds on the next, creating both frequency and emotional resonance.

We've seen brands use this to incredible effect. For example, a partner using website and app display to spark curiosity during the planning phase and then inflight placements to deepen engagement, ultimately driving visitations and bookings. It's sequential storytelling in motion, and it's where traveler media really shines."

3. Nonretail commerce media outpaces smaller retail networks

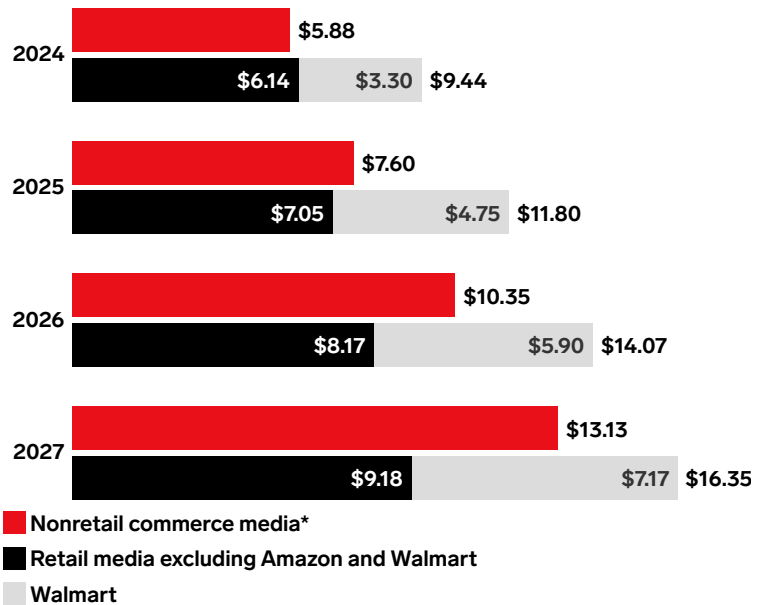
Travel media is part of a broader shift in commerce media expanding beyond traditional retail engagements and behaviors. Nonretail commerce media, which includes travel-related businesses and financial services, will surpass smaller retail media networks (RMNs) in ad spend starting in 2025.

By 2027, nonretail commerce media will reach \$13.13 billion, per EMARKETER's forecast. And in 2025, nonretail commerce media surpassed the combined spend of all non-Amazon and non-Walmart RMNs. These benchmarks show that first-party data and commerce expertise aren't exclusive to retailers. Travel companies possess equally valuable audience insights and purchase intent signals.

Through 2029, more than 70% of retail media ad spend will go to on-site ads, according to EMARKETER's forecast. Using their rich first-party data, TMNs have the opportunity to extend their reach beyond owned and operated properties to off-site channels like connected TV (CTV), social media, and the open web to fuel broader campaigns.

Nonretail Commerce Media Will Eclipse Smaller Retail Media Networks in Ad Spending This Year

billions in US nonretail commerce media vs. non-Amazon retail media ad spending, 2024-2027



*Note: commerce media is digital advertising that appears on websites or apps owned and operated by companies primarily engaged in selling products or services or that is bought through a commerce company's media network or demand-side platform (DSP) utilizing first-party data for real-time targeting; retail media appears on websites or apps that are primarily engaged in retail ecommerce or is bought through a retailer's media network or DSP; includes ads purchased through retail media networks that may not appear on ecommerce sites or apps; *commerce intermediary, financial, and travel media*

Source: EMARKETER, October 2025

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"Retail media networks are excellent at driving lower-funnel performance for limited categories, but traveler media networks bring something different: full-funnel impact for all advertisers.

Because of the scale and emotional context of travel, we can help brands build awareness and drive measurable outcomes—all within one ecosystem. Travelers spend meaningful time with our content across long journeys, so we can foster brand affinity and engagement in ways that retail environments just can't replicate.

We see relevance for all industry categories based on the scale and value of our audience, the engagement of our screens and the strength of our own brand. And with the data we have, we can close the loop between awareness, engagement, and conversion—giving advertisers the ability to measure true business outcomes beyond impressions and clicks."

4. Loyalty programs unlock rich audience access

Loyalty sits at the heart of travel media's value proposition. Airlines, hotels, and OTAs have spent decades cultivating expansive loyalty programs that capture granular data on customer preferences, travel frequency, destinations, spending habits, and ancillary purchases.

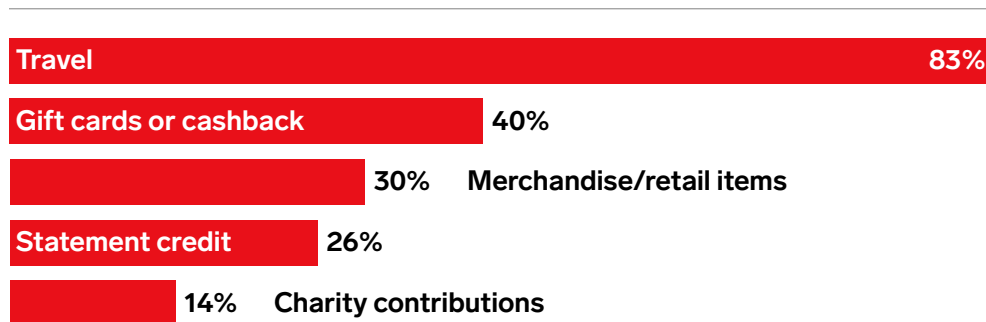
March 2025 data from Expedia Group's Traveler Value Index shows 83% of adults worldwide want to redeem loyalty points for travel, more than double the next category (gift cards or cash back at 40%). This demonstrates the emotional and financial value consumers place on travel loyalty programs, which translates into highly engaged audiences for advertisers.

These loyalty ecosystems give TMNs some of the richest first-party data in advertising. Unlike retail, where loyalty programs often focus on transaction frequency and basket size, travel loyalty data reveals deep intent signals across long, complex purchase journeys, spanning destination research, booking patterns, seasonal travel preferences, and premium service upgrades.

For brands seeking high-intent consumers, travel loyalty members represent a valuable audience segment that's actively planning significant purchases and open to discovering new products and experiences along their journey.

What Adults Worldwide Want to Redeem Loyalty Points For, March 2025

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: Expedia Group, "2025 Traveler Value Index," May 20, 2025

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"Loyalty is at the heart of travel; it's literally how our business was built. We work relentlessly to drive brand loyalty and to create value for our most loyal customers through MileagePlus. The combination of loyalty and media working in unison is very powerful for partner brands.

And traveler media networks tap into that loyalty dynamic. We're not just reaching audiences; we're engaging members—people with deep relationships and emotional connection with the brand. That creates a flywheel effect: the more personalized and relevant the advertising experience, the more value travelers see in engaging with it, enriching their journeys and everyday lives, which in turn strengthens loyalty across the ecosystem."

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