Who AI Recommends: Airlines

How ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews rank 28 airlines across ten travel questions, and what it takes to be the airline they name first.

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ENGINES
ChatGPT · Gemini · Google AI Overviews
United States · October 2026

PLEASE READ FIRST

Important notice and disclaimer

Please read the terms on the last page before using, sharing or quoting this report.

AT A GLANCE

The airline category in numbers

30
AI answers analyzed
10 travel questions × 3 engines

28
airlines named
by at least one engine

3 of 10
questions where all three engines agree
on the #1 airline

3.4%
of citations point to airlines' own websites
5 of 147 sources

87%
of answers mention United
the most of any airline

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is part of the Answer Engine Daily AEO Index. Every month we ask ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews the same buying questions and record which brands they recommend, the order they put them in, and the sources they cite. This edition covers airlines, with ten questions running from budget and domestic flights to first class and rewards programs.

None of the questions names a brand, so every brand starts on equal terms.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delta is AI's default airline, and United is named everywhere but never first

AI has a clear favorite airline. Delta leads the index, wins four questions and is the main subject of 26 of the pages the engines cite. United shows up in more answers than any rival, yet is never ranked first. Third parties supply 96.6% of citations.

KEY FINDINGS

1 **Delta leads by a clear margin.**
Delta tops the index with an AI Rank Score of 54.3 and is ranked first in 11 of 30 answers, more than any other airline. It wins four questions outright: best airline, domestic flights, reliability and business travel. Southwest (43.3) and JetBlue (35.7) are next.

2 **United is everywhere and never first.**
United appears in 87% of answers, the highest visibility in the index, and all three engines name it on 8 of the 10 questions. It is never ranked first. On Google AI Overviews it is the most named airline of all.

3 **Different airlines own different trips.**
Six airlines share the ten #1 spots. JetBlue wins families and legroom. Southwest wins budget travel and American wins rewards programs. The international flights and first class questions go abroad, to Qatar Airways and Air France.

4 **The engines rarely agree.**
ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews pick the same top airline for only 3 of the 10 questions. Google AI Overviews looks abroad more often: it ranks Singapore Airlines first three times, while ChatGPT and Gemini never do.

5 **AI learns about airlines from video, blogs and travel sites.**
Of the 147 sources the engines cited, 96.6% belong to someone other than the airline. YouTube is the most cited site, with 15 citations covering all ten questions. Google AI Overviews takes 33.8% of its citations from video, social and forum sites, including Facebook and Instagram.

6 **American is missing from the broadest question.**
No engine names American for "best airline", although it wins the rewards program question and is ranked first 4 times overall. Hawaiian is missing from 2 of the 7 questions where we expected it.

1 · THE AIRLINE LEADERBOARD

Delta leads the AI shelf for airlines, ahead of Southwest and JetBlue

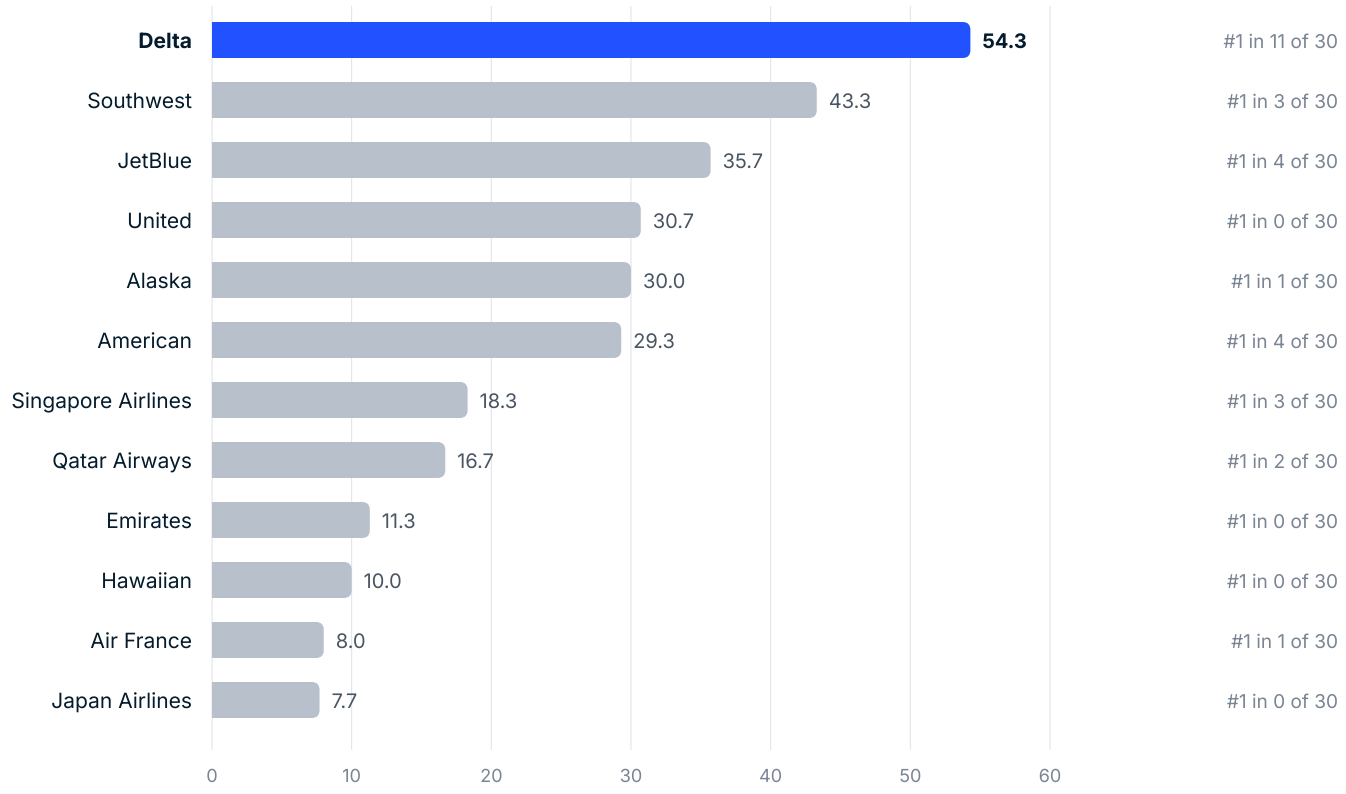
The AI Rank Score measures how high each engine places an airline in its recommendations across all ten questions. To score 100, an airline would need to be named first by all three engines on every question. With questions that run from budget fares to first class, nobody gets close. Delta's 54.3 is the highest score in the category.

Delta has four outright wins and 11 first places, as many as JetBlue, American and Southwest combined. Southwest is second on its budget win and broad visibility (73% of answers). JetBlue wins families and legroom. Below the six big U.S. carriers, scores drop to 18.3 or lower. Foreign airlines score mostly on international and first class travel.

Exhibit 1

Delta ranks first on the AI Rank Score, with Southwest second.

AI Rank Score, airline category, top 12 brands (0–100)



Figures on the right show how many of the 30 answers rank the brand #1.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

United is named in 87% of answers and ranked first in none

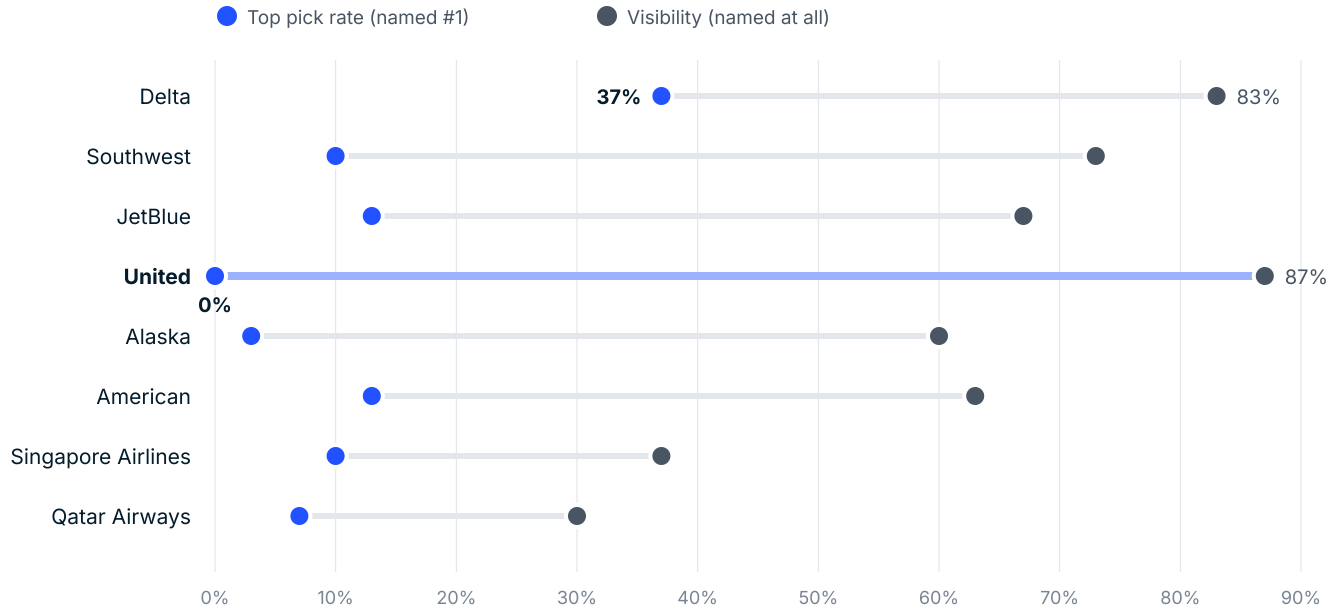
Visibility counts how often an airline is named at all. The top pick rate counts how often it is named first. The gap between the two tells you whether an engine sees an airline as the answer or as one more option on the list.

United has the widest gap in the index. It is the most visible airline overall and on Google AI Overviews, yet no engine ranks it first on any question. Southwest and Alaska show milder versions of the same pattern. Delta turns visibility into first places far more often. It ranks first in 37% of answers.

Exhibit 2

United is named more often than any rival, but never first.

Visibility and top pick rate, % of 30 AI answers, top 8 brands



Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

Why first place matters

AI answers are short lists. A traveler who asks for "the best airline for families" tends to read the first name or two and stop there. Airlines in fourth or fifth place still get seen, but they rarely get the booking.

2 · WINNERS AND LOSERS, QUESTION BY QUESTION

Six airlines share the ten #1 spots, and Delta holds four of them

Below the overall ranking, the wins spread out. Delta takes the broad questions: best airline, domestic flights, reliability and business travel. Narrower needs go to the airline the engines link with that need, such as JetBlue for legroom and Southwest for budget fares. Foreign carriers win the international and first class questions.

Exhibit 3

Delta wins four questions, and five other airlines win one or two each.

AI Rank Score by question (0–100), top 8 brands; bold = question winner; – = not named by any engine

	Best overall	Interna-tional	Budget	First class	Families	Domestic	Legroom	Reliabil-ity	Rewards	Business travel
Delta	**77**	40	–	30	67	**100**	47	**100**	7	**77**
Southwest	50	–	**93**	–	70	50	80	60	17	13
JetBlue	17	–	63	3	**80**	40	**100**	3	17	33
United	40	40	–	23	37	37	17	37	20	57
Alaska	30	3	–	3	10	67	53	60	63	10
American	–	50	–	37	47	7	23	10	**87**	33
Singapore Airlines	37	57	–	53	–	–	7	–	3	27
Qatar Airways	30	**70**	–	–	3	–	3	–	27	33

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

What this means for airlines

You do not have to lead the category to win a question. JetBlue takes families and legroom with a lower overall score than Delta or Southwest. Pick the trip types where you have a real case and build coverage around them. Broad carriers should check each question for gaps. American is absent from "best airline" despite its rewards win.

Exhibit 4

Winners and losers on every airline question.

Winner and runner-up by AI Rank Score

#	QUESTION	WINNER (SCORE)	RUNNER-UP	DETAIL
1	Best airline	**Delta 77**	Southwest 50	p. 9
2	Best airline for international flights	**Qatar Airways 70**	Singapore Airlines 57	p. 10
3	Best budget airline	**Southwest 93**	JetBlue 63	p. 11
4	Best first class airline	**Air France 60**	Singapore Airlines 53	p. 12
5	Best airline for families	**JetBlue 80**	Southwest 70	p. 13
6	Best airline for domestic flights	**Delta 100**	Alaska 67	p. 14
7	Best airline for legroom	**JetBlue 100**	Southwest 80	p. 15
8	Most reliable airline	**Delta 100**	Alaska 60	p. 16
9	Best airline rewards program	**American 87**	Alaska 63	p. 17
10	Best airline for business travel	**Delta 77**	United 57	p. 18

Each question has its own page with the full list of brands, engine positions and sources (see the Detail column).

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

QUOTE IT

#1 in AI answers for "Most reliable airline": Delta (AI Rank Score 100/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

Results apply to October 2026 only and are subject to the Important notice and disclaimer on the last page.

2 · QUESTION 1 OF 10

"Best airline"

Delta is the clear AI pick for airlines overall

14	77	2 of 3	24
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Delta	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, 1 from brand sites

Delta scores 77. Two of the three engines rank it first. Google AI Overviews puts it at #5 and picks Singapore Airlines instead. Southwest is a distant second at 50. In total 14 brands are named, and the top three take 53% of all brand mentions.

Exhibit 4.1

Delta scores 77, out of 14 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Delta	77	**#1**	**#1**	#5	25.8%	3/3	2/3
2	Southwest	50	#3	#2	#7	12.1%	3/3	0/3
3	United	40	#2	#5	#6	15.2%	3/3	0/3
4	Singapore Airlines	37	–	#12	**#1**	4.5%	1/3	1/3
5	Alaska	30	#5	#3	–	7.6%	2/3	0/3
6	Qatar Airways	30	–	#9	#2	4.5%	1/3	0/3
7	Emirates	20	–	–	#3	3.0%	1/3	0/3
8	ANA	17	–	#11	#4	7.6%	1/3	0/3
9	JetBlue	17	–	#4	#8	7.6%	2/3	0/3
10	Spirit	13	#4	–	–	6.1%	1/3	0/3

4 more brands named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

youtube.com	1	1	2
forbes.com	1		1
thepointsguy.com	1	1	
prnewswire.com		1	

Plus 15 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE Hawaiian

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline": Delta (AI Rank Score 77/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 2 OF 10

"Best airline for international flights"

Qatar Airways leads AI answers for international flights, ahead of Singapore Airlines

13	70	None	12
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Qatar Airways	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, none from brand sites

Qatar Airways scores 70, although only Gemini ranks it first. Singapore Airlines follows at 57. Each engine picks a different #1: ChatGPT chooses Delta, Gemini Qatar Airways and Google AI Overviews Singapore Airlines. The field is wide open: 13 brands are named and the top three take only 32% of mentions.

Exhibit 4.2

Qatar Airways scores 70, out of 13 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline for international flights"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Qatar Airways	70	#5	**#1**	#2	13.0%	3/3	1/3
2	Singapore Airlines	57	#6	#3	**#1**	11.7%	3/3	1/3
3	American	50	#3	#2	#9	7.8%	3/3	0/3
4	Delta	40	**#1**	#10	#7	13.0%	3/3	1/3
5	United	40	#2	#5	#8	13.0%	3/3	0/3
6	Emirates	33	–	#4	#3	6.5%	2/3	0/3
7	Japan Airlines	17	–	#7	#4	11.7%	2/3	0/3
8	ANA	13	–	#6	#5	7.8%	2/3	0/3
9	British Airways	13	#4	–	–	5.2%	1/3	0/3
10	Air France	7	–	#8	#6	5.2%	2/3	0/3

3 more brands named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

cntraveler.com	3
going.com	1
nerdwallet.com	1
notesfromeurope.com	1

Plus 6 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE British Airways

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline for international flights": Qatar Airways (AI Rank Score 70/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 3 OF 10

"Best budget airline"

Southwest is the clear AI pick for budget travel

8	93	2 of 3	11
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Southwest	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, none from brand sites

Southwest scores 93. Two of the three engines rank it first. ChatGPT puts it at #2 and picks Spirit instead. JetBlue is a distant second at 63. In total 8 brands are named, and the top three take 49% of all brand mentions.

Exhibit 4.3

Southwest scores 93, out of 8 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 8 brands for "Best budget airline"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Southwest	93	#2	**#1**	**#1**	17.0%	3/3	2/3
2	JetBlue	63	#5	#2	#2	17.0%	3/3	0/3
3	Frontier	50	#3	#5	#3	15.1%	3/3	0/3
4	Spirit	47	**#1**	#4	–	7.5%	2/3	1/3
5	Breeze	33	#6	#3	#5	15.1%	3/3	0/3
6	Allegiant	30	#4	#6	#4	13.2%	3/3	0/3
7	Avelo	10	#7	#7	#6	13.2%	3/3	0/3
8	Japan Airlines	3	–	#8	–	1.9%	1/3	0/3

Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

going.com	1	1
explore.com		1
insidehook.com	1	
kiplinger.com	1	

Plus 6 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE None of the expected brands.

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best budget airline": Southwest (AI Rank Score 93/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 4 OF 10

"Best first class airline"

Air France leads AI answers for first class, ahead of Singapore Airlines

14	60	None	12
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Air France	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, 1 from brand sites

Air France scores 60, although only Gemini ranks it first. Singapore Airlines is close behind at 53, so this question could change hands next month. Each engine picks a different #1: ChatGPT chooses American, Gemini Air France and Google AI Overviews Singapore Airlines. The field is wide open: 14 brands are named and the top three take only 28% of mentions.

Exhibit 4.4

Air France scores 60, out of 14 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best first class airline"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Air France	60	–	**#1**	#2	9.8%	2/3	1/3
2	Singapore Airlines	53	–	#3	**#1**	7.3%	2/3	1/3
3	Emirates	47	–	#2	#3	11.0%	2/3	0/3
4	American	37	**#1**	#9	–	11.0%	2/3	1/3
5	Delta	30	#2	#6	–	19.5%	2/3	0/3
6	Japan Airlines	23	–	#4	#5	8.5%	2/3	0/3
7	United	23	#3	#10	–	13.4%	2/3	0/3
8	Etihad	13	–	–	#4	1.2%	1/3	0/3
9	ANA	10	–	#5	–	4.9%	1/3	0/3
10	Alaska	3	–	#7	–	3.7%	1/3	0/3

4 more brands named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

youtube.com	1	1
aa.com	1	
facebook.com		1
forbes.com	1	

Plus 7 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE ANA, Etihad, Cathay Pacific and Lufthansa

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best first class airline": Air France (AI Rank Score 60/100, recommended by 2 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 5 OF 10

"Best airline for families"

JetBlue leads AI answers for family travel, ahead of Southwest

10	80	None	8
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for JetBlue	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, none from brand sites

JetBlue scores 80, although only Gemini ranks it first. Southwest follows at 70. Each engine picks a different #1: ChatGPT chooses Southwest, Gemini JetBlue and Google AI Overviews American. In total 10 brands are named, and the top three take 59% of all brand mentions.

Exhibit 4.5

JetBlue scores 80, out of 10 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline for families"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	JetBlue	80	#3	**#1**	#2	19.7%	3/3	1/3
2	Southwest	70	**#1**	#2	#5	18.3%	3/3	1/3
3	Delta	67	#2	#3	#3	21.1%	3/3	0/3
4	American	47	#4	–	**#1**	8.5%	2/3	1/3
5	United	37	#5	#4	#4	19.7%	3/3	0/3
6	Alaska	10	–	#5	–	2.8%	1/3	0/3
7	Cathay Pacific	3	–	–	#7	1.4%	1/3	0/3
8	EVA Air	3	–	–	#6	2.8%	1/3	0/3
9	Emirates	3	–	–	#9	2.8%	1/3	0/3
10	Qatar Airways	3	–	–	#8	2.8%	1/3	0/3

Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

newsweek.com	1
reddit.com	1
smartertravel.com	1
timeout.com	1

Plus 4 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE Alaska

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline for families": JetBlue (AI Rank Score 80/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 6 OF 10

"Best airline for domestic flights"

Delta is the clear AI pick for domestic flights

11	100	All 3	7
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Delta	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, none from brand sites

Delta scores 100 and is the first pick on all three engines. Alaska is a distant second at 67. In total 11 brands are named, and the top three take 48% of all brand mentions.

Exhibit 4.6

Delta scores 100, out of 11 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline for domestic flights"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Delta	100	**#1**	**#1**	**#1**	21.1%	3/3	3/3
2	Alaska	67	#4	#2	#2	11.3%	3/3	0/3
3	Southwest	50	#2	#4	#5	15.5%	3/3	0/3
4	JetBlue	40	#5	#5	#3	15.5%	3/3	0/3
5	United	37	#3	#6	#4	15.5%	3/3	0/3
6	Hawaiian	23	–	#3	#6	2.8%	1/3	0/3
7	American	7	#6	#7	–	8.5%	2/3	0/3
8	Allegiant	3	#7	–	–	2.8%	1/3	0/3
9	Breeze	3	–	#8	–	4.2%	1/3	0/3
10	Frontier	3	–	#10	–	1.4%	0/3	0/3

1 more brand named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

facebook.com	1
going.com	1
onemoresteptravels.com	1
smartupworld.com	1

Plus 3 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE None of the expected brands.

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline for domestic flights": Delta (AI Rank Score 100/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 7 OF 10

"Best airline for legroom"

JetBlue is the clear AI pick for legroom

16	100	All 3	24
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for JetBlue	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, 1 from brand sites

JetBlue scores 100 and is the first pick on all three engines. Southwest is a distant second at 80. The field is wide open: 16 brands are named and the top three take only 34% of mentions.

Exhibit 4.7

JetBlue scores 100, out of 16 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline for legroom"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	JetBlue	100	**#1**	**#1**	**#1**	13.7%	3/3	3/3
2	Southwest	80	#2	#2	#2	11.0%	3/3	0/3
3	Alaska	53	#3	#3	#4	9.6%	3/3	0/3
4	Delta	47	#4	#4	#3	6.8%	3/3	0/3
5	American	23	#7	#5	#5	5.5%	2/3	0/3
6	United	17	#5	#6	#6	8.2%	3/3	0/3
7	ANA	10	#10	#9	#16	8.2%	1/3	0/3
8	Emirates	10	#11	#10	#12	4.1%	1/3	0/3
9	Frontier	10	#8	#12	#8	5.5%	2/3	0/3
10	Japan Airlines	10	#6	#8	#13	8.2%	2/3	0/3

6 more brands named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

instagram.com		3
youtube.com	1	1
smartertravel.com	1	1
reddit.com	1	1

Plus 15 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE Hawaiian

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline for legroom": JetBlue (AI Rank Score 100/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 8 OF 10

"Most reliable airline"

Delta is the clear AI pick for reliability

10	100	All 3	20
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Delta	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, 2 from brand sites

Delta scores 100 and is the first pick on all three engines. Alaska is a distant second at 60. The field is narrow. Only 10 brands are named, and the top three take 61% of all brand mentions.

Exhibit 4.8

Delta scores 100, out of 10 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Most reliable airline"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Delta	100	#1	#1	#1	29.8%	3/3	3/3
2	Alaska	60	#2	#3	#4	10.5%	3/3	0/3
3	Southwest	60	#4	#2	#3	21.1%	3/3	0/3
4	United	37	#3	#4	#8	10.5%	2/3	0/3
5	Allegiant	30	–	#6	#2	7.0%	2/3	0/3
6	Hawaiian	23	#5	#9	#5	8.8%	2/3	0/3
7	American	10	–	#5	–	3.5%	1/3	0/3
8	Frontier	7	–	#7	#6	3.5%	1/3	0/3
9	JetBlue	3	–	–	#7	1.8%	0/3	0/3
10	Spirit	3	–	#8	–	3.5%	1/3	0/3

Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

delta.com	2
airlinegrades.com	1
nerdwallet.com	1
travelwisetech.com	1

Plus 15 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE American and JetBlue

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Most reliable airline": Delta (AI Rank Score 100/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 9 OF 10

"Best airline rewards program"

American is the clear AI pick for rewards programs

20	87	2 of 3	18
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for American	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, none from brand sites

American scores 87. Two of the three engines rank it first. ChatGPT puts it at #3 and picks Alaska instead. Alaska is a distant second at 63. The field is wide open: 20 brands are named and the top three take only 33% of mentions.

Exhibit 4.9

American scores 87, out of 20 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline rewards program"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	American	87	#3	**#1**	**#1**	17.9%	3/3	2/3
2	Alaska	63	**#1**	#12	#2	12.3%	3/3	1/3
3	Hawaiian	47	#2	–	#3	2.8%	2/3	0/3
4	Qatar Airways	27	–	#2	–	2.8%	1/3	0/3
5	United	20	#7	#7	#4	11.3%	3/3	0/3
6	Japan Airlines	20	–	#3	–	1.9%	1/3	0/3
7	Southwest	17	#5	#6	#8	10.4%	3/3	0/3
8	JetBlue	17	#4	–	#7	2.8%	2/3	0/3
9	Air France	13	–	#15	#5	2.8%	2/3	0/3
10	British Airways	13	–	#4	–	4.7%	1/3	0/3

10 more brands named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

nerdwallet.com	2	1
usnews.com		2
baggagepolicies.com	1	
blacklane.com		1

Plus 11 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE None of the expected brands.

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline rewards program": American (AI Rank Score 87/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

2 · QUESTION 10 OF 10

"Best airline for business travel"

Delta is the clear AI pick for business travel

11	77	2 of 3	11
brands named across the three answers	AI Rank Score for Delta	engines agree on the #1 brand	sources cited, none from brand sites

Delta scores 77. Two of the three engines rank it first. Google AI Overviews puts it at #5 and picks Qatar Airways instead. United is a distant second at 57. The field is narrow. Only 11 brands are named, and the top three take 71% of all brand mentions.

Exhibit 4.10

Delta scores 77, out of 11 brands named.

AI Rank Score and engine positions, top 10 brands for "Best airline for business travel"

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS	SHARE OF VOICE	RECOM-MENDED	#1 PICK
1	Delta	77	**#1**	**#1**	#5	31.5%	3/3	2/3
2	United	57	#2	#2	#6	23.3%	3/3	0/3
3	American	33	#5	#3	#7	16.4%	3/3	0/3
4	JetBlue	33	#3	#4	–	11.0%	2/3	0/3
5	Qatar Airways	33	–	–	**#1**	2.7%	1/3	1/3
6	Singapore Airlines	27	–	–	#2	2.7%	1/3	0/3
7	ANA	20	–	–	#3	2.7%	1/3	0/3
8	Cathay Pacific	13	–	–	#4	1.4%	1/3	0/3
9	Southwest	13	#4	–	–	2.7%	1/3	0/3
10	Alaska	10	–	#5	–	4.1%	1/3	0/3

1 more brand named with lower scores. Engine columns show the brand's position in each answer (– = not named). Share of voice = share of all brand mentions in the three answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

SOURCES BEHIND THESE ANSWERS

aviationa2z.com	1
awardfares.com	1
flightcentre.co.uk	1
foxnews.com	1

Plus 7 more sites.

WHO IS MISSING

NAMED BY ONLY 1 ENGINE Southwest and Alaska

QUOTE IT. #1 in AI answers for "Best airline for business travel": Delta (AI Rank Score 77/100, recommended by 3 of 3 AI engines). Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026, powered by markaeo.com

3 · THE ENGINES DISAGREE

The three engines agree on the top airline for only three questions

ChatGPT, Gemini and Google AI Overviews name the same #1 airline for 3 of the 10 questions: domestic flights, legroom and reliability. On international flights, first class and families, each engine names a different airline. Gemini writes the longest answers (about 1,039 words) and names 10.5 airlines per answer. Google AI Overviews averages about 220 words and still names 8.2.

ChatGPT and Gemini favor Delta, ranking it first 5 and 4 times. Google AI Overviews ranks Delta first only twice and puts Singapore Airlines first three times. United is named in 80% to 90% of each engine's answers and is never ranked first by any of them.

Exhibit 5

Engines split on seven of the ten airline questions.

Airline ranked #1 by each engine, by question

QUESTION	CHATGPT	GEMINI	GOOGLE AI OVERVIEWS	
Best airline	Delta	Delta	Singapore Airlines	Split
Best airline for international flights	Delta	Qatar Airways	Singapore Airlines	Split
Best budget airline	Spirit	Southwest	Southwest	Split
Best first class airline	American	Air France	Singapore Airlines	Split
Best airline for families	Southwest	JetBlue	American	Split
Best airline for domestic flights	Delta	Delta	Delta	✓ All agree
Best airline for legroom	JetBlue	JetBlue	JetBlue	✓ All agree
Most reliable airline	Delta	Delta	Delta	✓ All agree
Best airline rewards program	Alaska	American	American	Split
Best airline for business travel	Delta	Delta	Qatar Airways	Split

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

Visibility and #1 picks by engine, top 6 brands (% of each engine's 10 answers / number of #1 picks)

BRAND	CHATGPT	GEMINI	AI OVERVIEWS
Delta	90% / 5×#1	90% / 4×#1	70% / 2×#1
Southwest	80% / 1×#1	70% / 1×#1	70% / 1×#1
JetBlue	60% / 1×#1	70% / 2×#1	70% / 1×#1
United	90% / 0×#1	90% / 0×#1	80% / 0×#1
Alaska	50% / 1×#1	90% / 0×#1	40% / 0×#1
American	70% / 1×#1	70% / 1×#1	50% / 2×#1

4 · WHERE AI LEARNS ABOUT AIRLINES

A third of AI Overviews' airline citations come from video and social sites

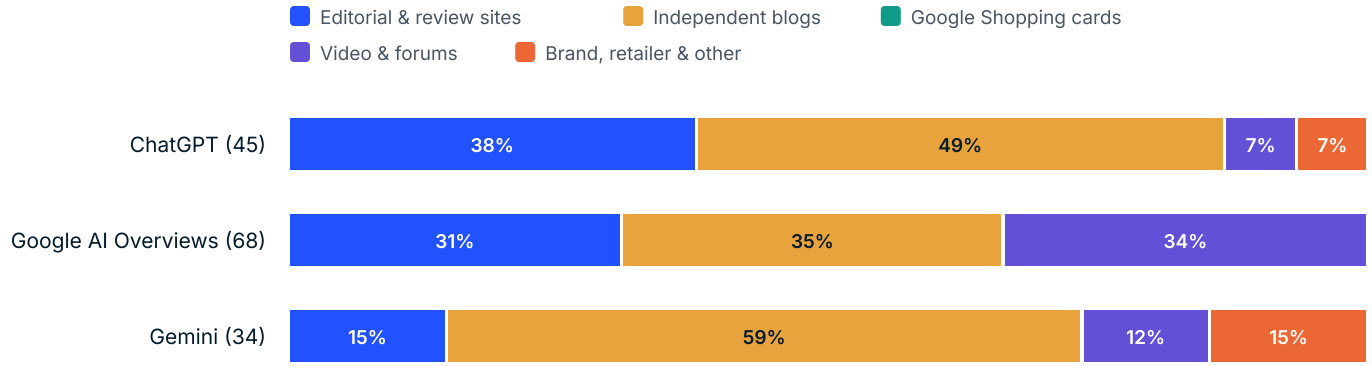
Across the ten questions, the engines cited 147 sources from 89 websites. Only 5 of those citations (3.4%) go to an airline's own website. Google Shopping plays no part here, so the citations come from blogs, travel and personal finance publishers, video, social media and forums.

The engines lean on different sources. ChatGPT relies on blogs and editorial sites, Going above all, and cited Reddit or YouTube only 3 times. Google AI Overviews takes 33.8% of its citations from YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Reddit. Gemini cited sources in just 3 of its 10 airline answers, which makes it the hardest engine to influence through sources.

Exhibit 6

Outside sources supply 96.6% of the citations behind AI airline recommendations.

Share of cited sources by type and engine, %



Figures in brackets show how many sources each engine cited across the 10 questions. Gemini cited sources in 3 of its 10 answers.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

3%	3	34%	3 of 10
of citations come from brands' own websites	Reddit or YouTube citations by ChatGPT in this category	of AI Overviews' citations are video and forum posts	Gemini answers that cite any source

Delta is the main subject of more cited pages than any rival

We read the 82 cited articles we could open. Delta is mentioned on 89% of them and is the main airline on 26, twice as many as Southwest. United appears on 73% but leads only 8. We think that goes some way to explaining its missing first places.

Exhibit 7

Delta appears on 89% of cited pages and leads 26 of them.

Share of 82 cited articles that mention each airline, articles where it is the main airline, and #1 picks

BRAND	MENTIONED ON CITED PAGES	PAGES WHERE IT IS THE MAIN BRAND	#1 PICKS (OF 30)
Delta	89%	26	11
Southwest	72%	13	3
JetBlue	61%	5	4
United	73%	8	0
Alaska	52%	3	1
American	65%	5	4

Based on the 82 of 115 cited article pages we could open. Video, social and Google Shopping links are excluded. A brand counts as the main brand on a page when it is mentioned more often than any other.

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

Exhibit 8

YouTube carries the most weight in AI answers about airlines.

Most cited domains across 30 answers, with the engines that cited them and the airlines they feature most

ChatGPT · Gemini · Google AI Overviews · Number = citations by that engine

WEBSITE	CITATIONS	CITED BY	QUESTIONS	BRANDS IT FEATURES MOST
youtube.com	15	3 · 1 · 11	10	Video and discussion (not analyzed)
going.com	6	5 · 1	5	Southwest, Spirit, Frontier, United
facebook.com	5	5	5	Video and discussion (not analyzed)
reddit.com	5	3 · 2	4	Video and discussion (not analyzed)
nerdwallet.com	5	3 · 2	3	Delta, United, American, Southwest
thepointsguy.com	4	1 · 1 · 2	3	Delta, United, American, Southwest
instagram.com	4	4	2	Video and discussion (not analyzed)
qz.com	3	1 · 2	3	Page could not be opened

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

5 · WHAT LEADERS SHOULD DO NOW

What leaders should do now

CEOs

- Track AI recommendation share next to market share and customer satisfaction scores.
- Ask your team for the top pick rate. United's 87% visibility with no first place shows how mentions flatter.
- Fund this as a standing program. The engines change their answers every month, so a single campaign will fade.

CMOs

- Choose the trips you have to win ("best airline for families", for example) and measure each engine on its own.
- Plan for video and social. Google AI Overviews takes 33.8% of its airline citations from video, social and forum sites.
- Give travel and points sites accurate, current details on seats, fees and loyalty perks.

Brand & PR teams

- Put travel and points sites (Going, NerdWallet, The Points Guy, SmarterTravel) ahead of general news coverage.
- Support honest flight reviews on YouTube, which all three engines cite, and join real Reddit discussions.
- Before chasing new placements, fix the pages where you are mentioned but a rival airline is covered first.

Agencies

- Report on a fixed set of questions, engine by engine, with the AI Rank Score and the top pick rate.
- Track the Facebook and Instagram posts AI Overviews cites alongside editorial coverage.
- Benchmark results every month against the Answer Engine Daily index.

The airline citation playbook: where to get cited

Every source below was cited by at least one engine while answering this month's ten airline questions. The number in brackets is how often it was cited.

Must win

Cited across engines and questions

- YouTube (15 citations, 10 questions)
- NerdWallet (5)
- The Points Guy (4, all three engines)
- SmarterTravel (3, all three engines)

Editorial

Shapes ChatGPT's and AI Overviews' shortlists

- Going (6, mostly ChatGPT)
- Quartz (3)
- Forbes (3)
- World Airline Awards (3, AI Overviews)
- Condé Nast Traveler (3, AI Overviews)

Social & community

Feeds Google AI Overviews and Gemini

- Facebook (5, AI Overviews only)
- Instagram (4, AI Overviews only)
- Reddit (5, Gemini and AI Overviews)

See the full picture for your brand

The public index shows where your brand stands this month. A private markaeo audit goes further. It benchmarks you against the competitors you name across hundreds of questions, tracks each engine every week and lists the exact pages behind each competitor's #1 picks. It also ties AI visibility to your traffic and revenue. **markaeo.com**

APPENDIX

Brand scorecard: the 20 highest ranked airline brands

Exhibit A1

All eight index metrics for airline.

Percentages are shares of the 30 AI answers. Missing counts questions where the brand sells in the segment but no engine named it

#	BRAND	AI RANK SCORE	VISIBILITY	RECOM-MENDATION	TOP PICK	SHARE OF VOICE	ALL 3 ENGINES	SHOPPING CARDS	OWN-SITE CITES	MISSING
1	**Delta**	**54.3**	83%	83%	37%	18.4%	7/10	0	2	0 of 9
2	**Southwest**	**43.3**	73%	73%	10%	10.2%	7/10	0	1	0 of 8
3	**JetBlue**	**35.7**	67%	63%	13%	8.8%	4/10	0	1	0 of 8
4	**United**	**30.7**	87%	83%	0%	13.3%	8/10	0	0	0 of 9
5	**Alaska**	**30.0**	60%	57%	3%	6.6%	4/10	0	0	0 of 7
6	**American**	**29.3**	63%	60%	13%	8.8%	4/10	0	1	1 of 9
7	**Singapore Airlines**	**18.3**	37%	30%	10%	3.4%	1/10	0	0	0 of 2
8	**Qatar Airways**	**16.7**	30%	23%	7%	2.9%	1/10	0	0	0 of 1
9	**Emirates**	**11.3**	30%	23%	0%	2.9%	1/10	0	0	0 of 2
10	**Hawaiian**	**10.0**	30%	20%	0%	1.6%	1/10	0	0	2 of 7
11	**Air France**	**8.0**	20%	20%	3%	2.1%	0/10	0	0	0 of 1
12	**Japan Airlines**	**7.7**	33%	27%	0%	3.6%	1/10	0	0	–
13	**Spirit**	**7.7**	27%	20%	3%	2.6%	1/10	0	0	0 of 1
14	**ANA**	**7.3**	33%	23%	0%	3.4%	1/10	0	0	0 of 2
15	**Frontier**	**7.0**	30%	20%	0%	2.1%	2/10	0	0	0 of 1
16	**Allegiant**	**6.3**	20%	20%	0%	1.8%	1/10	0	0	0 of 1
17	**Breeze**	**3.7**	13%	13%	0%	1.5%	1/10	0	0	0 of 1
18	**Cathay Pacific**	**3.3**	17%	13%	0%	1.0%	0/10	0	0	0 of 1
19	**British Airways**	**3.3**	13%	7%	0%	1.5%	0/10	0	0	0 of 1
20	**KLM**	**1.3**	13%	10%	0%	0.7%	0/10	0	0	–

Source: Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 · 10 questions × 3 engines (ChatGPT, Gemini, Google AI Overviews), 30 answers · analysis powered by markaeo.com

METHODOLOGY

How the index is built

Questions	Ten fixed buying questions that never name a brand.
Engines	ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google) and Google AI Overviews, run on 21 October 2026. One answer per question per engine, 30 answers in all.
Location	All answers were collected from a single city in the United States. AI engines tailor answers to where the user is, so people asking the same questions from other cities, states or countries may see different brands, rankings and sources.
Brand detection	We match brand names and their product lines in each answer and checked samples of the matches by hand. AAdvantage counts as American, and Atmos Rewards counts as Alaska.
Rank	A brand's position in the engine's list of recommendations. If an answer has no list, we use the order in which brands are named.
AI Rank Score	Points by position (#1 = 10, #2 = 8, #3 = 6, #4 = 4, #5 = 3, lower = 1, not named = 0), added up across engines and questions and scaled to 100.
Visibility	Share of the 30 answers that name the brand.
Recommendation rate	Share of answers that include the brand in the AI's list of picks.
Top pick rate	Share of answers that rank the brand #1.
Share of voice	The brand's share of all brand mentions in the category.
Missing	A major brand that sells in the segment but that none of the three engines named for that question.
Sources	We classified all 147 citations by type and read the 82 article pages we could open to see which brands each one covers.
Limitations	One run per engine, from one U.S. location. AI answers vary between runs, over time and by location. Gemini returned sources for 3 of its 10 airline answers. The results describe what AI engines say, which is a separate question from product quality.

THE TEN AIRLINE QUESTIONS

1. Best airline
2. Best airline for international flights
3. Best budget airline
4. Best first class airline
5. Best airline for families
6. Best airline for domestic flights
7. Best airline for legroom
8. Most reliable airline
9. Best airline rewards program
10. Best airline for business travel

ABOUT

About this index

Answer Engine Daily

answerenginedaily.com

Answer Engine Daily publishes a free monthly U.S. index of how AI engines rank brands. It tracks 200 buying questions across 20 consumer categories, including footwear, skincare, credit cards and airlines.

markaeo

markaeo.com

markaeo runs private AEO audits for brands and agencies. It benchmarks a brand against named competitors across hundreds of questions and tracks each engine separately. It also connects AI visibility to traffic and revenue.

How to cite this report

Brands named #1 may quote their result if they include the question, the month and a link, for example: "#1 in AI answers for 'Most reliable airline', Answer Engine Daily AEO Index, U.S., October 2026 (answerenginedaily.com), powered by markaeo.com."

This report records how AI engines answered a fixed set of questions on one date. It says nothing about product quality. Brand names are trademarks of their owners and appear here for identification only. Results will move from month to month as the engines update.

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2. One location, one date

All answers were collected on 21 October 2026 from a single location in one city in the United States, with one query per question per engine. AI answers are personalized and change with location, time, device, account history, language and model updates, and the same question asked twice can produce a different answer. People in other cities, states or countries, or on other dates, may see different brands, rankings and sources. The findings describe these answers only. They are not representative of all users, all locations or the market as a whole.

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