

New Study: AI Recommends Booking Portals, Not Hotels — 98% of Answers

CiteLens analyzed 481 AI hotel answers in Turkey: 98% cited booking portals while hotel sites barely appeared — a visibility gap SEO can't fix.

EDIRNE, TURKEY, June 24, 2026

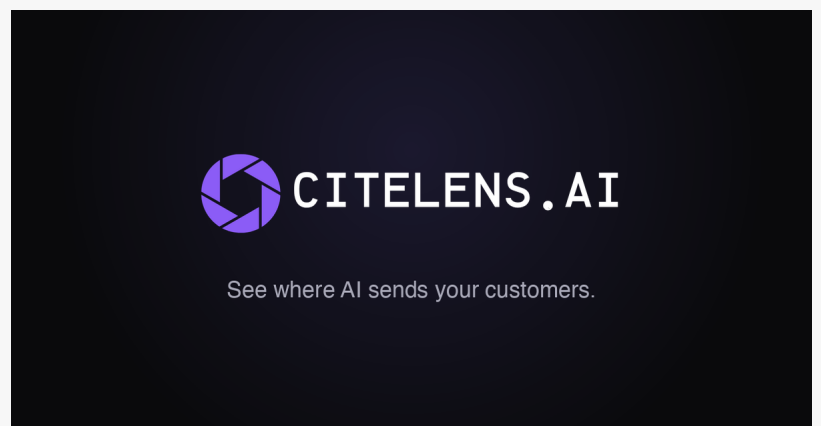
/EINPresswire.com/ -- EDIRNE, Turkey — When travelers ask an AI assistant "what are the best hotels in Istanbul?", the answer almost never points to a hotel's own website. According to new research from CiteLens, an [AI visibility analytics platform](#), 98% of AI hotel recommendations cite a booking portal such as Booking.com, Agoda or Expedia — with Booking.com alone appearing in 74% of answers.

The study, part of the company's [open Research Lab](#), ran 510 commercial hotel queries across 30 Turkish destinations and 17 hotel types through Google's AI Mode, tallying every source cited across 481 answers.

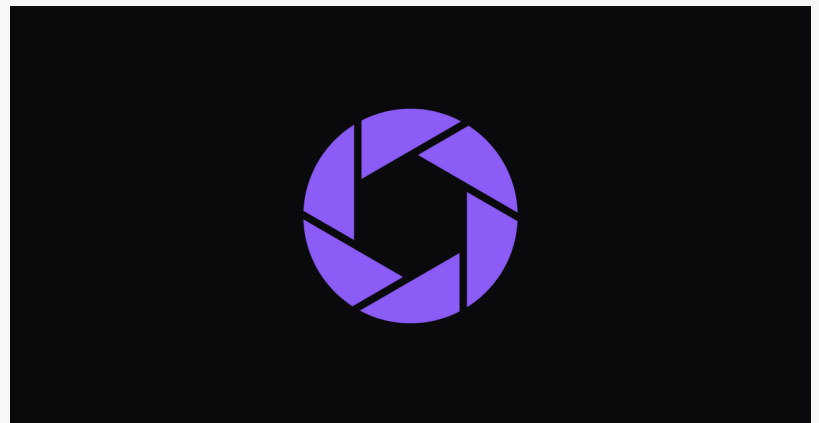
The finding was decisive: individual hotel websites rarely surface directly. Instead, a hotel's presence, ratings and photos on third-party portals are what feed the AI's recommendation.

"For hotels, AI visibility no longer runs through your own website — it runs through the platforms the AI trusts," said Alper Tekin, Founder of CiteLens. "You can have perfect SEO and still be invisible in AI answers. That's a blind spot most brands don't even know they have yet."

The pattern extends far beyond travel. In a parallel study, CiteLens found that 60% of the domains an AI Overview cites for a given query are not in Google's organic top 10 — meaning brands optimizing only for traditional search results miss most of what AI actually reads. A



CITELENS.AI Logo



CITELENS.AI Icon

separate analysis showed that 74% of AI answers cite YouTube, underscoring how heavily generative engines lean on user-generated content over branded pages.

These shifts have given rise to a new discipline known as [Generative Engine Optimization \(GEO\)](#) — the practice of measuring and improving how often AI engines name a brand. CiteLens tracks how frequently ChatGPT, Claude and Perplexity cite a company versus its competitors, identifies the exact source pages where rivals appear and a brand is missing, and recommends prioritized steps to close the gap.

"We publish measurements, not opinions," Tekin added. "The AI answer layer is becoming the front door to every brand. Companies that measure it now will own their category later."

CiteLens operates from its headquarters in Edirne, Turkey, with regional offices in Istanbul and Dubai. Its full research findings, including methodology and downloadable data, are openly available.

About CiteLens

CiteLens is an AI visibility and GEO intelligence platform that helps brands understand and improve how they appear in AI-generated answers across ChatGPT, Claude and Perplexity. Learn more at citelens.ai.



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