



EVENTS REPORT: MASTER BILLING, RECONCILIATION, AND CHARGEBACK DRIVERS

As global business travel spend is projected to reach \$1.62 trillion in 2026, organizations must pivot from post-pandemic recovery to tech strategic optimization to eliminate the costly logistical friction and administrative leaks eroding their margins.

By the drvn research team.



The global business events and mobility landscape in early 2026 stands at a critical inflection point, moving away from the post-pandemic "rebound" phase toward a more calculated era of strategic optimization and digital accountability. As organizations face a projected \$1.62 trillion in annual business travel spending by the close of 2026, the focus has shifted toward the rigorous redefinition of travel value and return on investment (ROI). This transition is occurring against a backdrop of persistent economic volatility, where moderate inflation and labor constraints continue to pressure margins.

With travel spend on the rise, attention is shifting to the structural friction points that erode event budgets, specifically in the "last mile" of passenger ground travel coordination. The industry is currently witnessing a stark divergence in performance between large enterprises, which are pulling back on trip frequency to manage costs, and the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sectors, which remain primary growth engines. Data indicates that logistics disruptions currently strip more than one month of operational capacity from over 52% of companies worldwide, while manual reconciliation errors in the transport sector carry an administrative burden exceeding \$72,000 annually for typical enterprise-scale programs.

PROJECTED \$1.62 TRILLION IN ANNUAL BUSINESS TRAVEL SPENDING BY THE CLOSE OF 2026

Furthermore, the travel and hospitality sector continues to grapple with the highest average chargeback values globally, currently averaging \$120 per dispute.

Corporate finance departments are now looking to crack down on these financial leaks, forcing companies to either cut-back on enterprise travel spend, or by adopting tech-enabled travel systems, such as drvn's VIP Platform. Organizations must now transform ground travel into a reliable part of their mobility strategy. The key implication for stakeholders is that the ability to manage complexity through technology is now a requirement for protecting margins and maintaining brand trust in 2026.

Segment-Level Performance Analysis

The recovery of the business travel and events sector has been remarkably uneven across various segments, creating a patchwork of demand drivers.

The Large Enterprise Pullback and the SME Surge

The corporate segment is currently experiencing a transition in leadership. A study by Deloitte reveals that while three in four travel managers are expanding budgets, the largest organizations (annual travel spends exceeding \$7.5 million) are showing signs of a calculated downshift. Specifically, 20% of these large companies cut spending in 2025, compared to only 6% of organizations with smaller budgets.

The Growth of MICE and Incentive Travel

The MICE industry segment has emerged as a high-growth sector, with conference travel projected to grow by 7-9% in 2026. Incentive travel has also transitioned into a strategic lever for talent retention. The global incentive market is projected to surge from 42\$ Billion in 2021 to over \$216 Billion by 2031, reflecting an annual growth rate of 12%.

Primary Demand Drivers, and Cost Dynamics

Currently, travel coordination is managed and directed by behavioral preferences, ROI imperatives, and technology enablement.

Behavioral and Economic Drivers

Behaviorally, the market has shifted toward high-impact networking. While trip frequency was lower in 2025, the incidence of conference attendance reached 65% of travelers. Approximately 39% of travelers cite sales meetings as their primary motivation for travel. Because each trip is viewed as an investment, disruptions in ground travel arrangements directly impact the bottom line. As per-attendee costs increased another 3.7% in 2025, organizations were seeking tech-enabled logistics to maximize efficiency.

The Cost of Unexpected Disruptions

Last-minute orders or upgrades are common hidden costs in event planning. For ground travel, switching vehicle categories, such as from a sedan to a passenger van, can incur labor costs that are 50% higher than regular rates due to overtime. Planners mitigate this by building a contingency buffer into their budgets.

The No-Show Revenue Gap

The cost of a "no-show" extends far beyond the missed ride. A study indicates that an 18% average no-show rate can lead to a 16.4% loss in net gain.

Impact Analysis: Unmanaged Add-ons and Billing Reconciliation

The Hidden Trap of Add-ons

Planners often encounter invisible costs such as taxes and gratuities, which can add up to 31% to a budget in certain destinations. Additionally, unanticipated Wi-Fi costs affect 22% of planners.

The Cost of Manual Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a significant time-sink; 83 percent of business travelers struggle to reconcile trip expenses. Manufacturing and transport departments processing invoices manually face error rates between 12% and 15%.

IN 2025, GLOBAL CHARGEBACK VOLUME REACHED ABOUT 261 MILLION TRANSACTIONS

These errors cost between \$15 and \$40 per invoice to resolve. For a program processing 2,000 invoices monthly, the administrative burden can exceed \$72,000 annually.

Escalating Dispute Costs

In 2025, global chargeback volume reached about 261 million transactions. Travel and hospitality have the highest average chargeback value (\$120). Friendly fraud, legitimate transactions disputed by the customer, accounts for 60-80% of all chargebacks.

Future Outlook and Forecast

Short-Term

In the next 12 to 24 months, slowing inflation is expected to increase travel opportunities.

Technology will become the primary assistant, with 95% of business travelers open to using

AI for itinerary recommendations.

Medium-Term Outlook

By 2028, global business travel spending is forecast to surpass \$2 trillion.

Conclusion

The 2026 ground travel industry has moved into a phase of operational precision. The "Events Report: Master Billing, Reconciliation, and Chargeback Drivers" highlights that the hidden costs of last-minute changes and manual errors are no longer acceptable risks. By prioritizing reliability and control through specialized platforms, organizations can turn ground travel into a predictable part of their mobility strategy.



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