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Vision & Intelligence

EVIDENCE BRIEF
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EVIDENCE BRIEF · TECHNOLOGY AND AI

Smart Starts With Wi-Fi

Do smart technologies improve festival experience?

Research on smart technology at events peaked after the pandemic, but festival visitors judge it on the basics. Studies of festivals in Serbia, Spain and Northern Ireland show that connectivity and information come first, and that usefulness and trust decide whether visitors welcome personalized services.

By Eventamin · How we work 12 November 2026 Serbia, Spain, UK, Worldwide

●●●● **4 studies**

smart festival | festival technology | event Wi-Fi | festival apps | personalization | smart events | augmented reality | immersion | festival loyalty | smart tourism

Also in Attendee behaviour

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KEY FINDING

Festival visitors value basic smart technologies such as Wi-Fi, apps and online information far more than advanced tools like augmented reality, and the basics often underperform. Where technology is useful and trusted, visitors are open to personalization, which goes with stronger expected immersion and loyalty.

Four studies, 2018–2026

Key findings

- **The basics matter most and perform worst.** At the EXIT festival in Serbia, visitors rated free Wi-Fi the most important smart technology, at 4.58 out of 5, but its performance the lowest, at 3.26[1].
- **Advanced tools matter least.** Augmented reality ranked last in importance among 28 smart technologies, at 2.78 out of five[1].
- **Overall smartness was low.** Visitors rated the festival's technologies between 3.22 and 4.37 out of 5, highest for tools they used themselves, such as e-tour maps, online booking and electronic entry[1].
- **Usefulness and trust open the door to personalization.** Among 338 festivalgoers in Spain, usefulness and trust were the main drivers of openness to personalized services, which went with stronger expected immersion and loyalty[2].
- **Research focuses on basic technology.** Of 59 studies on smart technologies at tourism events, 46 percent dealt with information and communication technology, 10 percent with virtual reality and five percent with AI[3].

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FOR THE MARKET

Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Organisers & associations	Connectivity, a working app and clear online information are the foundation visitors judge a smart festival on; advanced features add little until these work. Personalization succeeds where it is visibly useful and the organizer is trusted with data.
Venues & destinations	Free Wi-Fi capacity is the most valued and most underperforming service at festival sites, especially when crowds post on social media at the same time.

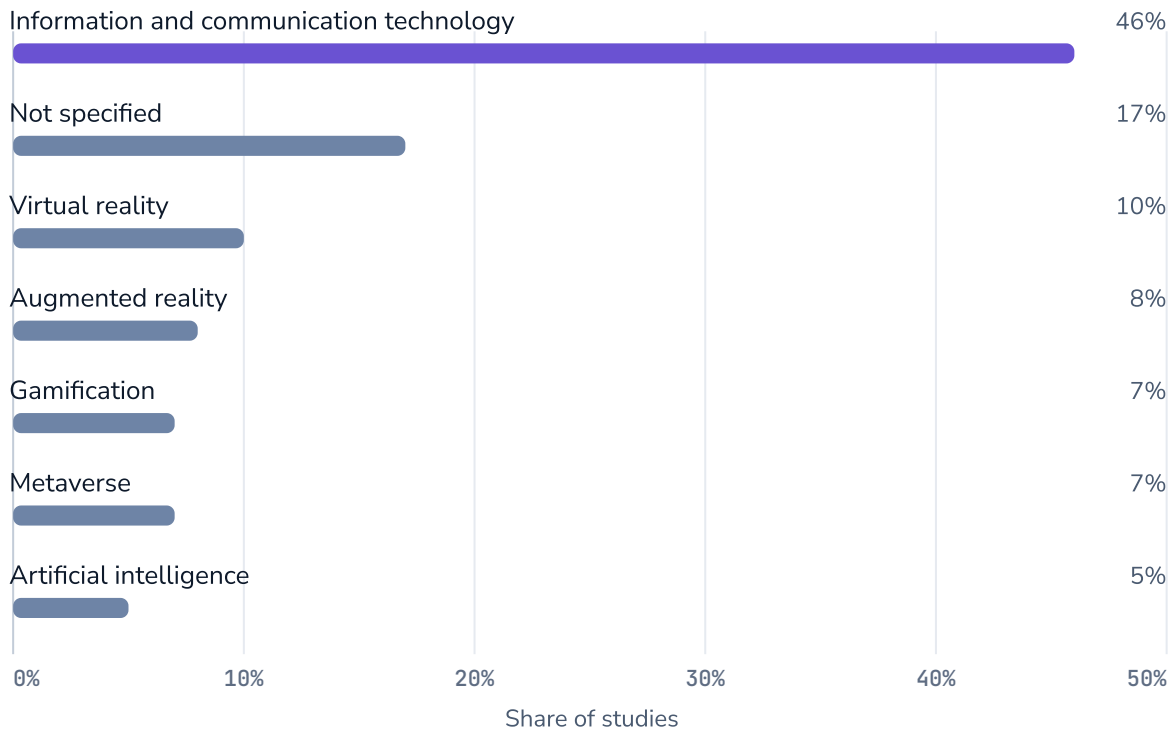
Smart technology at events

Research on smart technology at events grew quickly after the pandemic. A review of 59 studies on smart technologies at tourism events found the number of publications peaking in 2022, with 15 studies, and most work on business events and festivals[3]. 46 percent of the studies dealt with information and communication technology such as apps and websites, 10 percent with virtual reality, eight percent with augmented reality and five percent with AI[3].

Studies of festival visitors show which of these technologies matter to the people who use them.

Studies on smart technologies at tourism events, by type of technology

Share of studies.



Source: Urul & Holmes · Release date: 2025 · Region: Worldwide · Number of studies reviewed: 59 (2013 to 2025)

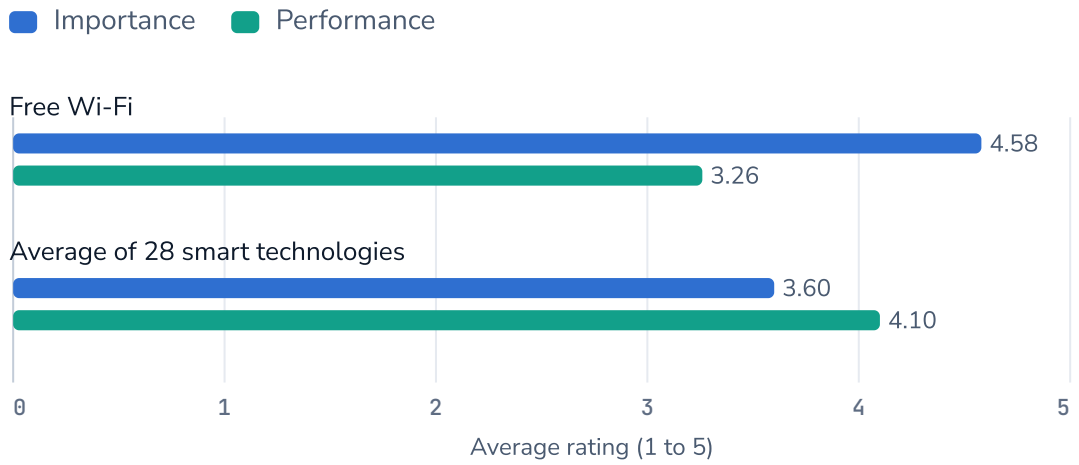
What visitors value at a festival

Visitors judge a smart festival on connectivity and information. Among 200 tourists surveyed at the 2017 EXIT festival in Novi Sad, Serbia, free Wi-Fi was the most important of 28 smart technologies, at 4.58 out of 5, but rated lowest for performance, at 3.26[1]. Augmented reality was the least important, at 2.78[1].

The festival's overall level of smartness was low, with technologies rated between 3.22 and 4.37 out of five[1]. The best-rated tools were those visitors used themselves, such as e-tour maps, online booking, electronic entry and weather apps, while monitoring of visitor flows scored lowest[1]. Many first-time visitors did not know some of the available services[1].

Importance and performance of free Wi-Fi compared with all smart technologies at the EXIT festival in Serbia

Average rating on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).



Source: Cimbaljević et al. · Release date: 2019 · Region: Serbia (Novi Sad) · Survey period: 2017 · Number of respondents: 200

Priorities for festival technology

Comparing importance with performance shows where a festival should invest. At EXIT, the festival home page, mobile app, free Wi-Fi, online information, guiding service, mobile payment, activity forecasts and traffic safety were important to visitors but underperformed[1]. Advanced applications such as augmented reality performed better than visitors needed[1].

PRIORITY	IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE	TECHNOLOGIES
Concentrate here	Important, underperforming	Home page, mobile app, free Wi-Fi, online information, guiding service, mobile payment, activity forecast, traffic safety[1]
Keep up the good work	Important, performing well	E-tour map, smart education, online booking, weather forecast[1]
Possible overkill	Less important, performing above need	Advanced applications such as augmented reality[1]

From usefulness to loyalty

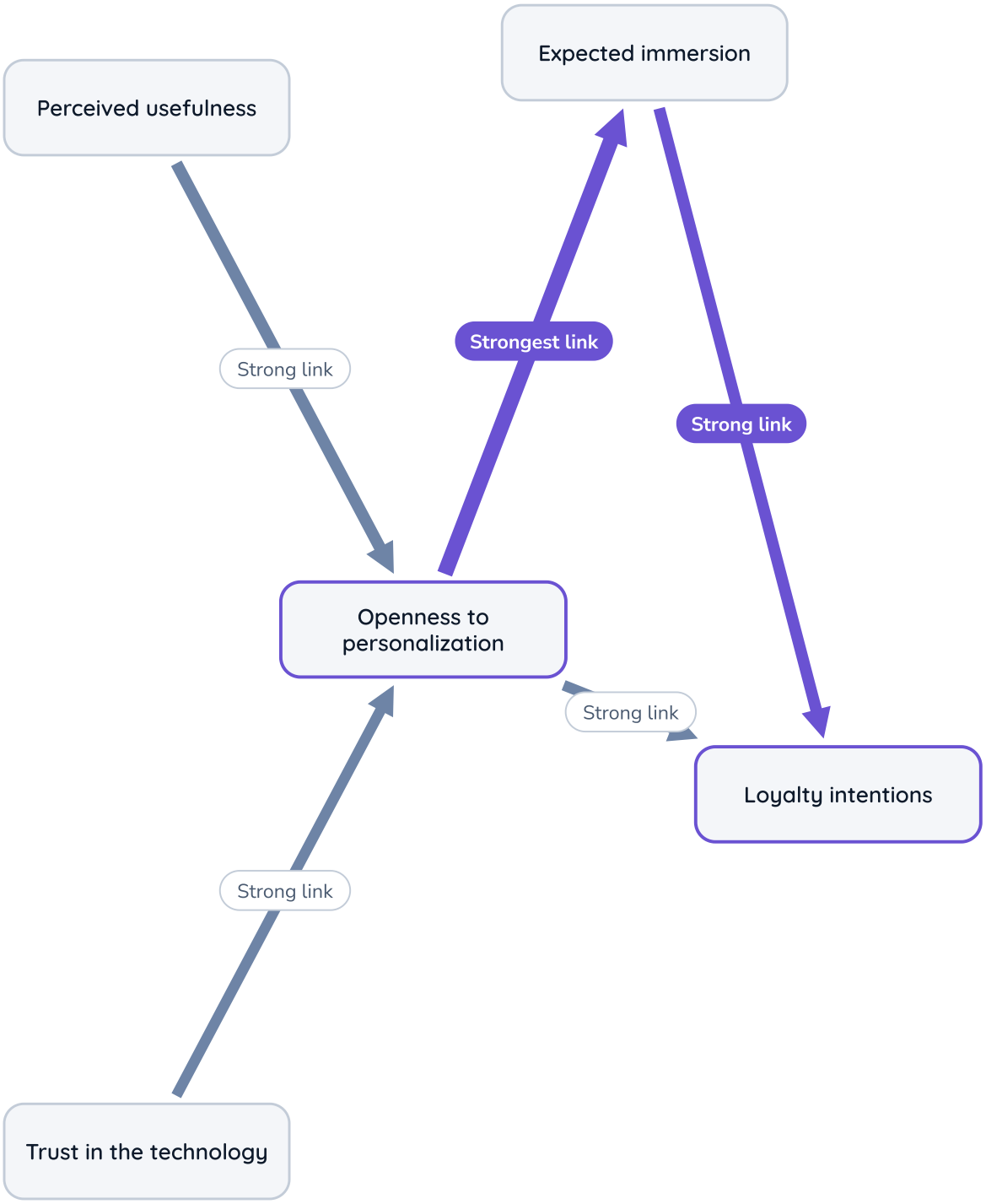
Useful, trusted technology makes visitors open to personalization. Among 338 festivalgoers surveyed in Spain between November 2025 and February 2026, perceived usefulness and trust in smart festival technologies were the main drivers of openness to personalized services[2]. That openness was strongly linked to the immersion visitors expected and to their intention to return and recommend[2].

The pattern held for visitors who had never used smart festival technologies, who made up 36.1 percent of the sample[2]. The survey measured expectations and intentions rather than actual behavior[2].

Links between usefulness, trust, openness to personalization, expected immersion and loyalty among festivalgoers in Spain

Strength of each link as an index: strongest link = 100.

Main route Other links Thicker arrow: stronger link · dashed: no measurable link



Source: Fernández-Bo et al. · Release date: 2026 · Region: Spain · Survey period: November 2025 to February 2026 · Number of respondents: 338

The smart event experience

Technology changes how spectators experience an event, not only how they navigate it. Online focus groups with spectators of the North West 200 motorcycle road race in Northern Ireland described the event app as part of a wider smart experience built on four elements: people, processes, personalization and places[4]. The experience extended to rituals before the race, reliving it afterwards and sharing it with others[4].

Notes on the data

The figures are based on four studies published between 2018 and 2026: a survey of 200 tourists at one edition of the EXIT festival, five online focus groups with spectators of one road race, an online survey of 338 mostly young Spanish festivalgoers, and a review of 59 studies[1–4]. Ratings are self-reported, and the Spanish survey measures intentions rather than behavior. Index values compare links within the Spanish survey only.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Cimbaljević, M., Stankov, U., Demirović, D., & Pavluković, V. (2019). Nice and smart: creating a smarter festival – the study of EXIT (Novi Sad, Serbia) [Journal article]. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2019.1596139 First-hand

2 Fernández-Bo, M., Parra-Meroño, M.-C., & González-Vidal, A. (2026). Smart Technologies in Festival Experiencescapes: Personalization Receptivity, Anticipated Immersion, and Loyalty Intentions [Journal article]. *Tourism & Management Studies, 22(4), 19–36*. https://doi.org/10.18089/tms.20260402 First-hand

3 Urul, T., & Holmes, K. (2025). Enhancing the experience economy, marketing and sustainability in tourism event stages through smart First-hand

technologies [Journal article]. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-05-2025-0391

4 Bustard, J. R. T., Bolan, P., Devine, A., & Hutchinson, K. (2018). The emerging smart event experience: an interpretative phenomenological analysis [Journal article]. *Tourism Review*. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-10-2017-0156 First-hand

The evidence

4 studies

SAMPLE

Four studies: surveys of 200 festival tourists and 338 festivalgoers, five online focus groups and a review of 59 studies

YEARS

2018–2026

METHOD

Visitor surveys at the EXIT festival in Serbia and among festivalgoers in Spain, focus groups at a road race in Northern Ireland, a review of smart technology at tourism events

About Eventamin

Eventamin reads the peer-reviewed research on events, exhibitions and hospitality, sets it against industry data and states what it means for the market. Every brief is published by Eventamin as an organisation: its sources, method and corrections are open.

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