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Vision & Intelligence

EVIDENCE BRIEF
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EVIDENCE BRIEF · TECHNOLOGY AND AI

The Privacy Paradox Holds

Is privacy a barrier to personalisation?

AI matchmaking is the most common AI feature exhibition companies offer, and personalization at events and hotels runs on attendee data. Studies of UK travelers, Spanish festivalgoers and a Swiss hotel show that privacy concerns do not stop people from sharing; the type of data and the benefit offered decide.

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

3 studies · 1 industry source

privacy paradox | data privacy | personalization | biometric data | guest data | attendee data | GDPR | trust | smart hospitality | data sharing

Also in Attendee behaviour

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KEY FINDING

Privacy concerns do not block personalization. Willingness to share depends on how sensitive the data are and what the personalized service offers: travelers refuse biometric data but share preferences and behavior, concerned people share behavioral data more rather than less, and trust and regulation lower concern.

Three studies, 1,023 respondents, 2015–2026; industry data 2026

Key findings

- **Biometric data stay off-limits.** UK travelers rated their willingness to share biometric data at 1.69 out of 5, compared with 2.39 for behavioral data and 3.61 for personal preferences[1].
- **Concern does not stop sharing.** Privacy concerns did not reduce travelers' willingness to share biometric data and went with greater willingness to share behavioral data[1].
- **Benefit and sensitivity decide.** The benefit of personalized service raised willingness to share, while the sensitivity of the data lowered it[1].
- **Trust and regulation calm concerns.** Trust in providers, a sense of control and data protection rules lowered privacy concerns; awareness and knowledge of privacy issues had no measurable effect[1].
- **Festivalgoers show the same paradox.** Among 338 festivalgoers in Spain, privacy concerns had a small positive link with openness to personalization, not the expected negative one[2].

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FOR THE MARKET

Market outcomes

What the studies mean for each part of the industry.

Organisers & associations	Attendees trade data for clear benefits: preferences and behavior for better matchmaking and programs, but rarely biometrics. Stating the benefit and the protection side by side does more than reducing data collection across the board.
Hotels	Personalization rests on aggregated guest data, mobile access for staff and real-time updates; being recognized by name counts as much as tailored services. Guests generally share information when it improves service.
Venues & destinations	Biometric entry and tracking meet the strongest resistance. Opt-in designs and visible data protection matter most where data are most sensitive.

Personalization runs on data

Personalization has become a product in events. In UFI's Global Exhibition Barometer of July 2026, AI matchmaking was the most common AI feature that exhibition companies offered their customers[3]. Matchmaking, tailored programs and personalized hotel stays depend on what attendees and guests reveal about themselves.

A hotel case shows what personalization requires. Hotel Lugano Dante in Switzerland, a four-star hotel with 83 rooms and around 750,000 guest interactions a year, runs one platform that combines reservations, operations and

guest data on staff mobile devices[4]. Personalized experiences rested on three technical requirements: aggregated information, mobile access everywhere and real-time synchronization[4].

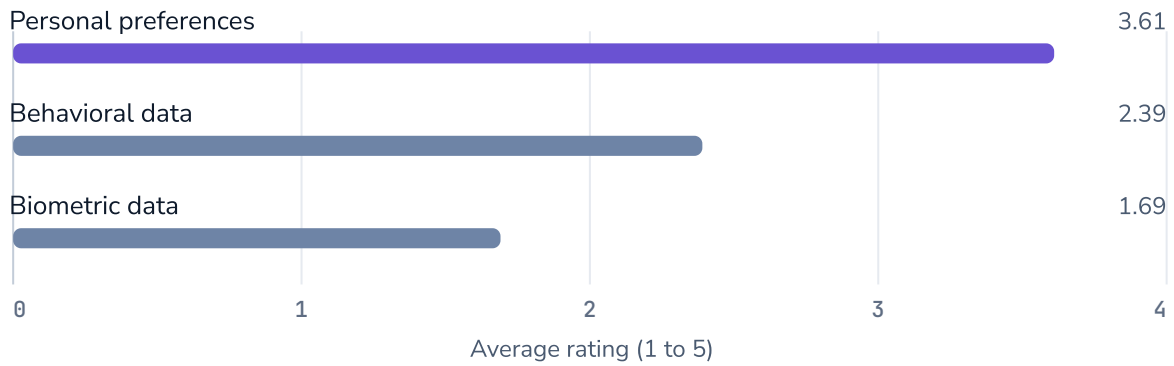
ELEMENT	WHAT IT INVOLVES
Technical requirements	Aggregated guest information, mobile access for staff, real-time synchronization[4]
Level 1: personalized services	Services customized to known preferences[4]
Level 2: personal interaction	Staff recognize and greet guests by name[4]
Operational targets	Accurate reservations, check-in in under five minutes, no billing errors[4]
Results	Added value, loyalty, repeat visits and word of mouth[4]

What travelers will share

Willingness to share depends on the type of data. In a May 2019 survey of 685 UK travelers who had booked flights or accommodation online, biometric data were rated highly sensitive, with fingerprints at 4.69 out of 5, and behavioral data less so, at 3.40[1]. Willingness to share followed the same order: 1.69 out of five for biometric data, 2.39 for behavioral data and 3.61 for personal preferences[1].

Willingness to share personal data with travel providers among UK travelers in 2019, by type of data

Average rating on a scale from 1 (not willing) to 5 (very willing).



Source: Ioannou et al. · Release date: 2020 · Region: United Kingdom · Survey period: May 2019 · Number of respondents: 685

Why concerned people still share

Privacy concerns are not the gatekeeper. Among the UK travelers, the sensitivity of the data was the strongest brake on sharing, and the benefit of personalized service the strongest driver[1]. Privacy concerns did not reduce willingness to share biometric data and went with greater willingness to share behavioral data, a pattern known as the privacy paradox[1].

Concern itself has clear sources. It was driven mainly by a person's general disposition toward privacy and, to a lesser extent, by bad experiences; trust in providers, a sense of control and data protection rules lowered it[1]. Awareness and knowledge of privacy issues made no measurable difference, and respondents felt protected by regulation, likely because of the GDPR[1].

Influence of selected factors on UK travelers' willingness to share data, by type of data

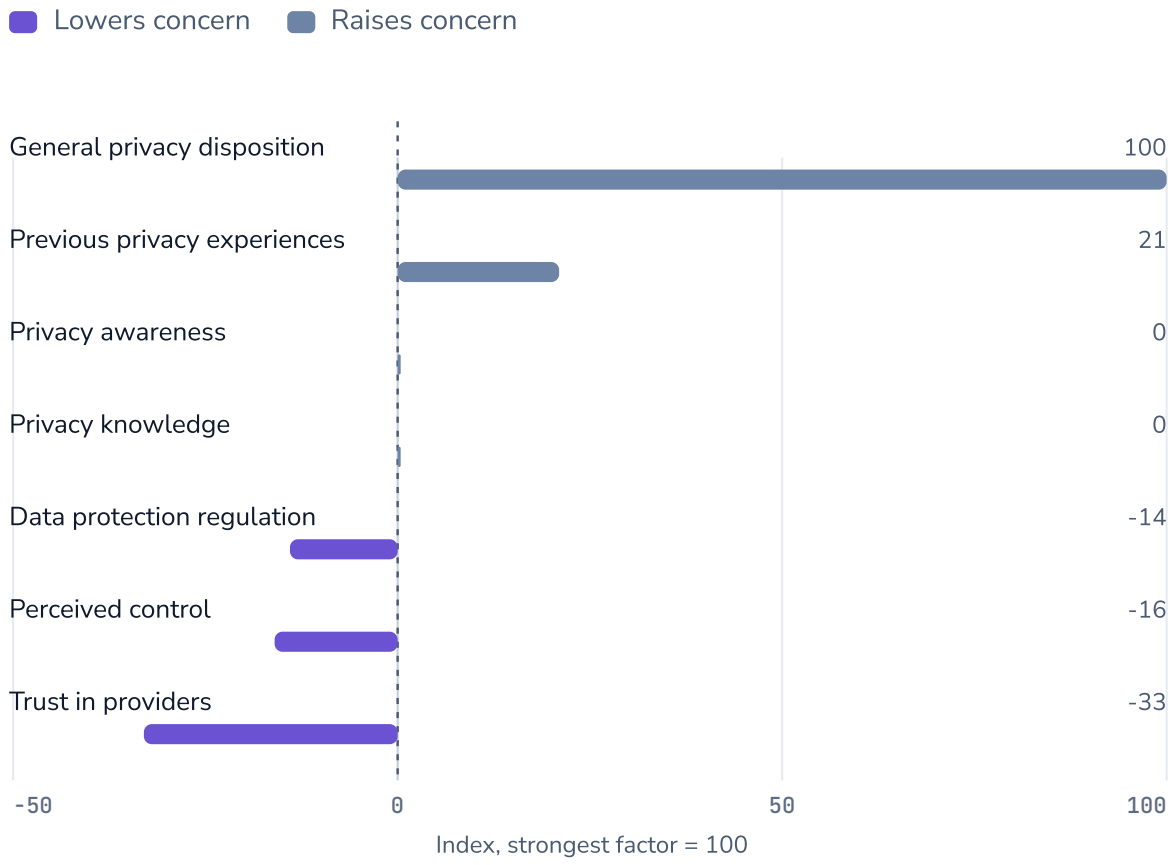
Index of influence: strongest effect = 100; negative values reduce willingness.



Source: Ioannou et al. · Release date: 2020 · Region: United Kingdom · Survey period: May 2019 · Number of respondents: 685

Influence of selected factors on privacy concerns among UK travelers in 2019

Index of influence: strongest factor = 100; negative values lower concern.



Source: Ioannou et al. · Release date: 2020 · Region: United Kingdom · Survey period: May 2019 · Number of respondents: 685

The same paradox at festivals

Festivalgoers behave like travelers. In a survey of 338 festivalgoers in Spain, conducted between November 2025 and February 2026, privacy concerns had a small positive link with openness to personalized festival services, the opposite of what the researchers expected[2]. The link was unstable and disappeared when usefulness was taken into account, while usefulness and trust were the main drivers of openness[2].

Notes on the data

The figures are based on three studies published between 2015 and 2026: an online panel survey of 685 UK travelers, an online survey of 338 mostly young festivalgoers in Spain and a single hotel case study[1,2,4]. Willingness to share is self-reported, which may differ from actual behavior. Index values compare effects within the UK survey only.

Sources

● Study ○ Industry source

1 Ioannou, A., Tussyadiah, I., & Lu, Y. (2020). Privacy concerns and disclosure of biometric and behavioral data for travel [Journal article]. *International Journal of Information Management, 54, 102122*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102122 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 UFI. (2026, July). Global Exhibition Barometer, 37th edition [Survey report]. Retrieved November 7, 2026, from ufi.org First-hand

4 Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A. (2015). Smart technologies for personalized experiences: a case study in the hospitality domain [Journal article]. *Electronic Markets, 25(3), 243–254*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-015-0182-1 First-hand

The evidence

3 studies · 1 industry source

SAMPLE

Three studies: surveys of 685 UK travelers and 338 festivalgoers in Spain, a hotel case study; one industry survey

YEARS

2015–2026 (studies); 2026 (industry data)

METHOD

Online panel survey in the UK, festivalgoer survey in Spain, case study of a hotel guest relationship platform in Switzerland

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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