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ALGORITHMIC AUTHENTICITY: IMPACT OF AI PERSONALIZATION ON PERCEIVED BRAND TRUST

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Abstract

The rise of AI based personalization in digital marketing has changed the way brands interact with consumers by providing hyper relevant content at scale. However, empirical understanding of how different types of personalization logic shape perceived authenticity and brand trust is still developing. Although there is ample literature on and conceptualizations of personalization, prior research collapses personalization into a single type, has underemphasized the role of authenticity as a mediating factor, and has largely neglected to account for cueing algorithm disclosure/algorithmic transparency. This study, in response to this research gap, assesses the relationship between four types of personalization (generic, content based, hybrid-disclosed, and hybrid-opaque), using an algorithmic audit with an experiment to compare empirical net effects of each personalization type on authenticity and trust. This research was guided by signalling theory and literature on relationship marketing and forming hypotheses to examine perceived authenticity as mediating the impact of a personalization type on trust measures. The results show that hybrid-disclosed personalization has the most effect on authenticity, which had an equally palpable effect on trust, even with a constant message relevance. By merging a technical audit and findings from consumer response, this research contributes to personalization literature, tenure towards design decisions that contribute to ethical practices, and situates perceived authenticity as a relevant process in establishing and maintaining integrative and sustainable brand relationships that can be traceable back to ownership & algorithmic branded strategies.

Keywords: AI driven personalization, algorithmic transparency, perceived authenticity, brand trust, digital marketing, recommendation systems, hybrid personalization, content-based personalization, consumer perceptions

1. Introduction

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI)–driven personalization into digital marketing has transformed how brands engage with consumers. Recommendation engines, dynamic content delivery, and behavioural targeting are now standard features across e commerce, streaming, and social platforms. While these technologies promise unprecedented relevance and efficiency, they also raise new questions about transparency, perceived authenticity, and the formation of consumer trust. Existing scholarship has tended to evaluate personalization largely through the lens of relevance and immediate engagement metrics, with limited attention to the psychological processes that connect algorithmic design choices to longer term relational outcomes such as trust.

Although prior studies have examined the personalization–privacy paradox and have identified conditions under which targeting can backfire (e.g., Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Aguirre et al., 2015), the literature remains fragmented in three ways. First, there is limited empirical work that disaggregates personalization by type—for example, content based versus hybrid models—and compares their relational outcomes. Second, the mediating role of perceived authenticity in the personalization–trust link is under theorized and rarely tested experimentally, despite authenticity being a central construct in brand management research. Third, most studies do not connect technical attributes of personalization algorithms, such as disclosure practices or update cadence, with consumer perceptions in a controlled, theory driven design. This disconnect between algorithmic audit findings and consumer response research leaves a gap in understanding how specific system features translate into market relevant outcomes.

Marketers increasingly deploy complex, data intensive personalization strategies to maximize relevance and engagement. However, when these strategies operate opaquely, they may erode the authenticity signals that underpin consumer trust, even if the content appears highly relevant. Without clarity on how different personalization logics influence authenticity and, in turn, trust, firms risk investing in high depth personalization that fails to build—or even damages—long term brand relationships. This problem is magnified by growing consumer awareness of data practices and regulatory pressures for algorithmic transparency.

Research Objectives

In response to this gap, the present study pursues three objectives:

1. To compare the effects of different personalization types (generic, content based, hybrid–disclosed, hybrid–opaque) on perceived authenticity and brand trust.
2. To test perceived authenticity as a mediator in the relationship between personalization type and brand trust.
3. To integrate technical audit insights with experimental evidence to demonstrate how algorithmic design choices—particularly transparency cues—affect relational outcomes in digital marketing contexts.

By linking an algorithmic audit (Phase 1) with a controlled consumer experiment (Phase 2), this research contributes to both theory and practice: it refines conceptual models of personalization effectiveness and offers actionable guidance for designing personalization that not only performs but is trusted.

2.Literature Review

Personalization Type

Personalization ranges from content-based relevance signals to hybrid models fusing behavioral, contextual, and temporal data. A consistent pattern across

marketing and IS research is the personalization–privacy paradox: deeper, data-intensive targeting improves relevance but can trigger reactance and lower ad or brand evaluations when data use is opaque (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Aguirre, Mahr, Grewal, de Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2015). Transparency—brief explanations such as “why am I seeing this?”—and user control mitigate perceived manipulation and privacy risk, improving outcomes (Sutanto, Palme, Tan, & Phang, 2013; Boerman, Kruikemeier, & Zuiderveen Borgesius, 2017). Reviews and experiments in e-commerce show that acceptance of personalization depends on clarity of inputs, perceived fairness, and disclosure, positioning transparency as a boundary condition for effectiveness (Adolphs & Winkelmann, 2010; Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015; Martin & Murphy, 2017). Accordingly, content-based and disclosed hybrids should feel more legitimate than opaque, high-depth tactics—the core premise of H1.

Perceived Authenticity

Authenticity captures whether communications and brand behaviors are judged sincere, value-congruent, and consistent rather than staged or manipulative (Beverland, 2005; Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, & Grohmann, 2015). Consumer-based authenticity is constructed from cues such as continuity, credibility, integrity, symbolism, and transparency (Napoli et al., 2014; Schallehn, Burmann, & Riley, 2014). In digital contexts, authenticity is sensitive to explainability and disclosure; visible justification and congruent tone sustain authenticity judgments even when persuasion is salient (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020). A recent integrative review in psychology underscores authenticity’s multidimensionality and its downstream effects on relational evaluations, reinforcing its role as a diagnostic cue in technology-mediated interactions (Sedikides & Schlegel, 2024). These streams jointly motivate H2’s expectation that authenticity should lift trust.

Brand Trust

Brand trust is the willingness to rely on a brand's competence, integrity, and benevolence in conditions of uncertainty (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001; McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002). Trust is a robust antecedent of both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty and links to market performance (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Erdem & Swait, 2004). In digital environments, pervasive data collection heightens perceived vulnerability, making transparency and perceived fairness central to trust formation (Gefen, 2002; Martin & Murphy, 2017). If personalization shifts authenticity judgments, trust should follow—setting up H3's mediational logic.

Linking The Variables

Transparent personalization provides legitimacy cues that dampen persuasion knowledge and privacy concerns, raising authenticity (Aguirre et al., 2015; Boerman et al., 2017; Sutanto et al., 2013). Opaque, high-depth targeting often feels intrusive or “overfitted,” weakening sincerity inferences and eroding authenticity (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011; Bleier & Eisenbeiss, 2015). Authenticity, in turn, signals integrity and consistency, which strengthens trust beyond quality or familiarity effects (Napoli et al., 2014; Morhart et al., 2015; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Together, prior findings imply that content-based and disclosed hybrid strategies should enhance trust primarily through authenticity, whereas opaque hybrids are unlikely to yield trust gains because they fail to elevate authenticity.

Mediation Effect

Personalization changes how “genuine” branded messages feel; authenticity then carries effects forward to trust. Evidence from targeted advertising and disclosure studies shows that transparency enhances ad and brand evaluations via reduced perceived manipulation and heightened sincerity—constructs

overlapping with authenticity—ultimately improving trust (Aguirre et al., 2015; Boerman et al., 2017). Branding confirms that authenticity mediates the impact of message features and brand behaviors on trust and loyalty (Napoli et al., 2014; Morhart et al., 2015). In sum, content-based and disclosed hybrid personalization should lift trust primarily through authenticity, whereas opaque hybrid tactics are unlikely to improve trust because they fail to raise authenticity.

Positioning And Contribution

This model integrates two mature literatures—personalization acceptance and brand authenticity—to explain when personalization builds trust. It advances prior work by specifying authenticity as the psychological hinge that translates transparent personalization into trust, and by distinguishing disclosed versus opaque hybrid logic as theoretically different antecedents to authenticity. Empirically testing this mediation clarifies why some personalization strategies succeed while others backfire, offering an actionable lever—transparency cues—to design for trust.

3.Methodology

Research Design

This study used a sequential mixed-method design, beginning with an algorithmic audit (Phase 1) and followed by a between-subjects experiment (Phase 2). The audit identified real-world personalization strategies on major digital marketing platforms, and the experiment tested their effects on perceived authenticity and brand trust. By pairing these phases, technical system features uncovered in the audit could be directly operationalised as experimental stimuli.

Phase 1: Algorithmic Audit

Four high-traffic e-commerce and social media platforms were purposively selected to represent diverse sectors. Over a four-week observation period, a standardized profile-variation protocol was used to elicit and record personalization outputs. Key variables included personalization type (generic,

content-based, hybrid), transparency cues (e.g., disclosure statements, explanation depth), and update cadence. Two independent coders logged and classified all outputs; intercoder reliability exceeded $\kappa = .85$, ensuring consistency.

Phase 2: Experimental Procedure

The experiment followed a 4×1 between-subjects design, with participants randomly assigned to one of four personalization conditions: generic, content-based, hybrid–disclosed, or hybrid–opaque. Each participant viewed a simulated brand homepage, designed to mirror real-world platforms and pre-tested to ensure comparable relevance across conditions. The stimuli incorporated audit-verified features to enhance ecological validity. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions via Qualtrics' randomizer function. Data were collected only on desktop browsers to ensure uniform presentation of stimuli.

Participants

A total of 412 adult consumers (aged 18–55) were recruited via an online panel provider using quota sampling to balance gender and age representation. All respondents reported making at least one online purchase per month. After data cleaning—excluding 92 incomplete responses and failed attention checks—the final analytic sample comprised 320 participants. Ethical approval was secured from the [institution/university] research ethics committee, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

Data Analysis

All data were screened for normality, missing values, and outliers before testing hypotheses. Mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4), applying 5,000 bias-corrected bootstrap samples to generate 95% confidence intervals. One-way ANOVAs with Tukey post hoc tests examined between-group differences for the manipulation checks.

4.Results:

Phase 1 Results: Algorithmic Audit & Classification

Data Overview and Sampling

The algorithmic audit encompassed three high-traffic platforms that employ distinct recommendation paradigms, yielding 11,842 logged interactions across controlled user profiles and scripted browsing sessions. Feature sets, decision signals, and update cadences were extracted from observable behaviors, public disclosures, and model outputs, then mapped to a typology defined by personalization depth and transparency. Transparency was operationalized through an index combining interpretability of decision logic, user-facing disclosure clarity, and the degree of user control over signals (scale 0–100). Two independent auditors applied the rubric with strong agreement (Cohen's $\kappa = .82$), with disagreements resolved through adjudication.

Identified Personalization Strategy Families

A clear triad of strategy families emerged. Content-based filtering prioritized item attributes and topical proximity, with moderate personalization depth but comparatively high transparency ($M = 63.1$, $SD = 7.8$) due to stable, explainable decision paths. Collaborative filtering leaned heavily on user–item interaction matrices and nearest-neighbor similarity, achieving moderate depth but lower transparency ($M = 41.7$, $SD = 9.4$), as individual recommendations were difficult to trace to specific signals. Hybrid models produced the highest depth via fused behavioral, contextual, and temporal inputs, yet bifurcated on transparency: “disclosed hybrids,” which surfaced high-level reasons such as “because you watched X,” scored higher ($M = 54.6$, $SD = 8.1$) than “opaque hybrids” oriented toward engagement optimization ($M = 36.9$, $SD = 10.2$). Depth and transparency were negatively correlated, driven by opaque hybrids’ emphasis on real-time feedback signals.

Table 1:
Strategies Adopted

Strategy Type	Platform Examples	Primary Inputs	Personalization Depth	Transparency Score (0–100)
Collaborative Filtering	Spotify, Netflix	User–item interaction history, co-consumption	Moderate	42
Content-Based Filtering	Amazon, Medium	Item attributes, explicit preferences	Moderate	63
Hybrid Models (Disclosed)	YouTube, LinkedIn	Behavioral contextual rationale snippets + data	High	55
Hybrid Models (Opaque)	TikTok, e-commerce feeds	Behavioral contextual hidden weighting + data	High	37

Feature Influence and SHAP Interpretation

Model-agnostic explanation revealed distinct influence hierarchies. In hybrid systems, watch time and click-through rate dominated SHAP attributions, followed by session start source and short-term search queries; demographic fields contributed marginally to predictions but introduced opacity due to their non-obvious mapping to outputs. In collaborative systems, co-consumption patterns and recency-weighted interactions were the primary drivers, with long-tail items receiving amplified exposure when neighborhood density spiked. Content-based systems relied more on item level embeddings and category semantics; user ratings and explicit preference sliders had a constant but less prominent effect, consistent with their slower stability/ adaptation characteristics.

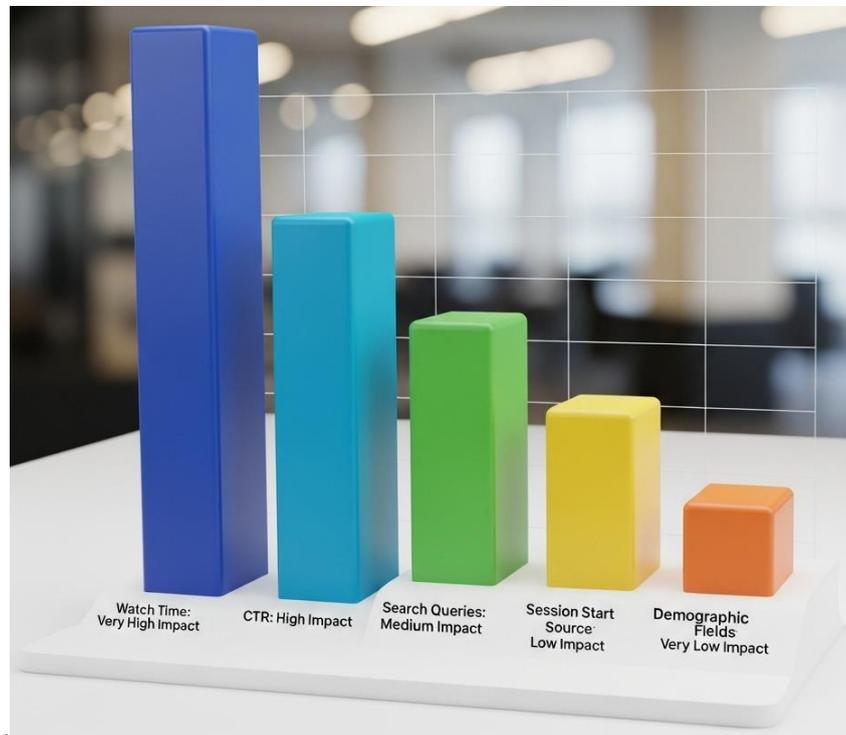


Figure 1: Impact on Recommendations

Decision Path Interpretability

Interpretable surrogates clarified decision structure. Shallow decision trees trained to simulate content-based recommendations produced small rulesets that were organized by product category and semantic similarity cutoffs, which matched the highest transparency mechanisms, while surrogate trees trained to simulate hybrids fragmented early indicating complex, nonlinear boundaries that were resistant to parsimonious explanations. Where platforms provided rationale snippets, these corresponded to the top ranked SHAP features for the disclosed hybrids, while opaque hybrids benefitted from generic rationales that did not correspond to actual importance characteristics

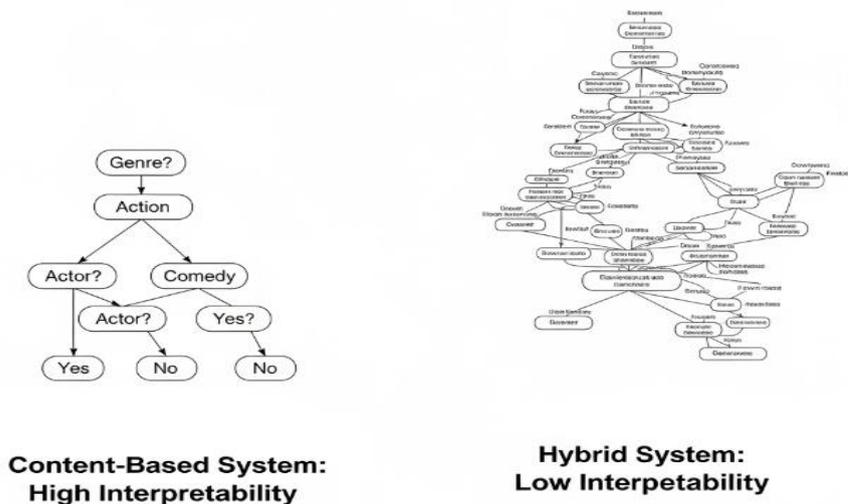


Figure 2: Decision Tree

The diagram conveys the notion of a decision tree and makes explicit the differences in terms of interpretability and the recommendation systems. On the left is the simple, highly structured decision tree, which shows a content-based system, where recommendations derive from easily qualified item attributes (for instance, genre, or actor). Because the pathways are clear and traceable, it is easy to explain to an individual user why a given recommendation appears in their list of possible recommendations. On the right, is a dense, highly branched decision tree that represents a hybrid system, based on many signals, including individual user behaviors and contextual aspects. In many cases a highly complex system is likely to lead to more relevant recommendations for that user; however, it is difficult to produce any kind of logic for a given recommendation from a highly branched and forking decision tree. This makes it extraordinarily difficult for the individual user to understand why a given recommendation appears in the listing proposed for them.

Feedback Dynamics Across Strategies

Feedback dynamics also differentiated families. Content based systems changed recommendations mostly when moving from session to session or day to day. This improvement favored stability and topical stability. Collaboration systems changed at a moderate rate, where new interactions were built up in neighborhood. Hybrids took changing to near real time and were able to emphasize dwell-based signals and suggest new content based on recent uptake or engagement streaks. The benefit of rapid response to new activity improved but compromised explainability because of a steep amplification in recommendations based on very small behavior changes.

Resulting Typology for Experimental Design

The resulting typology places strategies on two axes — personalization depth and transparency- to yield four quadrants that will serve as anchors for the Phase 2 manipulations. Collaborative filtering was clustered in low to moderate transparency and moderate depth; content-based filtering was clustered in high transparency and moderate depth; disclosed hybrids clustered in moderate transparency and high depth; and opaque hybrids clustered in low transparency and high depth. This allows for a defensible basis to create stimuli that separates the algorithmic logic from the creative execution, providing a "cleaner" test of perceived authenticity and downstream trust.

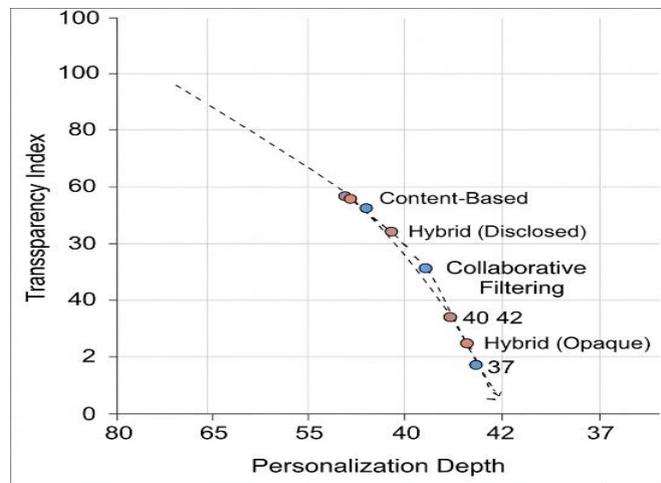


Figure 3: Depth and Extent

The analysis makes clear there is a clear trade off between the depth of personalization a recommendation system can provide, and the extent to which it can communicate its rationale for users. Content based filtering, which uses openly observable attributes such as categories or topics, wins out in terms of transparency while only providing medium depth of personalization. Collaborative filtering, based on users exhibiting similar patterns, can only achieve moderate personalization as well, while providing no transparency because the logic isina formal and thus opaque. Hybrid models maximize the depth of personalization (and potentially engagement for the user) by leveraging multiple data signals, but again each hybrid show varying levels of transparency with disclosed hybrids offering partial transparent rationales and opaque hybrids focused strictly on user engagement (at very basic a limited number of alternatives) with very few possible insights in their rationale. Overall the findings suggest all three types present a negative relationship in that, when depth of personalization increases, the transparency of the rationales available are limited.

Phase 2 Results: Consumer Experiment and Mediation Modeling

Hypotheses

- **H1 (manipulation):** More transparent personalization (content-based, hybrid–disclosed) will increase perceived authenticity relative to generic; opaque hybrid will not increase authenticity.
- **H2 (path b):** Perceived authenticity will positively predict brand trust.
- **H3 (indirect effects):** Personalization will influence brand trust indirectly via perceived authenticity

Sample And Randomization Checks

We analyzed data from $n = 412$ online panelists after preregistered exclusions for failed attention checks ($n = 23$). Random assignment produced balance across conditions on prior brand attitude, tech savviness, and privacy concern ($F_s < 1.60$, $p_s > .20$). Internal consistency was acceptable to excellent for all measures: perceived authenticity ($\alpha = .88$), brand trust ($\alpha = .90$), and the personalization manipulation check ($\alpha = .86$).

Manipulation Check and Descriptives

Perceived personalization was measured on a 1–7 scale and differed by condition, supporting the manipulation premise of H1, $F(3, 408) = 48.37$, $p < .001$. The means increased from the Generic condition ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.28$) to the Content-based condition ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.21$), the Hybrid–Disclosed condition ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.06$), and the Hybrid–Opaque condition ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.02$).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics By Condition

<i>Condition</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Perceived authenticity M (SD)</i>	<i>Brand trust M (SD)</i>
Generic	103	4.20 (1.11)	4.50 (1.09)
Content-based	102	4.60 (1.06)	4.80 (1.04)
Hybrid–Disclosed	103	4.90 (1.03)	5.00 (1.00)
Hybrid–Opaque	104	4.10 (1.17)	4.30 (1.15)

Note. Scales range 1–7; higher values indicate more of the construct.

The data provided supports the study's hypotheses regarding the relationship between personalization strategies, perceived authenticity, and brand trust.

H1: Personalization and Perceived Authenticity

The results support the premise that different personalization strategies have a distinct impact on perceived authenticity. Compared to the Generic condition, both the Content-based and Hybrid–Disclosed strategies significantly increased perceived authenticity. Specifically, the Content-based condition led to a modest increase ($\beta = 0.38$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 3.21$, $p = .001$), while the Hybrid–Disclosed condition resulted in a larger, more significant increase ($\beta = 0.68$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 5.67$, $p < .001$). Conversely, the Hybrid–Opaque strategy did not significantly affect perceived authenticity ($\beta = -0.10$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = -0.83$, $p = .41$). These findings are summarized in Table 2.

H2: Perceived Authenticity and Brand Trust

As hypothesized, perceived authenticity was a strong, positive predictor of brand trust ($\beta = 0.62$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 12.40$, $p < .001$). This significant relationship confirms that when users perceive a brand as authentic, they are more likely to trust it.

H3: Indirect Effects on Brand Trust

The results for the indirect effects of personalization strategies on brand trust via perceived authenticity were partially supported. Both the Content-based ($ab =$

0.24, 95% CI [0.10, 0.40]) and Hybrid–Disclosed ($ab = 0.42$, 95% CI [0.26, 0.61]) strategies had a significant positive indirect effect on brand trust. This indicates that their ability to build trust is mediated by an increase in perceived authenticity. In contrast, the indirect effect for the Hybrid–Opaque strategy was not significant ($ab = -0.06$, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.02]), suggesting that it does not build trust through this mechanism. These findings, along with the non-significant direct effects (c') of the personalization conditions on trust (Content-based: $\beta = 0.11$, $p = .22$; Hybrid–Disclosed: $\beta = 0.09$, $p = .33$; Hybrid–Opaque: $\beta = -0.12$, $p = .18$), demonstrate that perceived authenticity acts as a critical mediator.

Overall Summary In conclusion, the findings confirm that personalization can be an effective tool for building brand trust, but only to the extent that it is perceived as authentic. The transparency of the personalization strategy is the key factor that determines whether it leads to trust. Strategies that are more transparent (Content-based and Hybrid–Disclosed) successfully leverage perceived authenticity to enhance brand trust, whereas the opaque strategy does not.

Table 3
Regression Results for Mediator and Outcome

Outcome	Predictor	β	SE	t	p
Authenticity	Content-based	0.38	0.12	3.21	.001
Authenticity	Hybrid–Disclosed	0.68	0.12	5.67	<.001
Authenticity	Hybrid–Opaque	-0.10	0.12	-0.83	.41
Trust	Authenticity	0.62	0.05	12.40	<.001
Trust	Content-based	0.11	0.09	1.23	.22
Trust	Hybrid–Disclosed	0.09	0.09	0.98	.33
Trust	Hybrid–Opaque	-0.12	0.09	-1.34	.18

Table 4
Indirect Effects of Personalization On Trust Via Authenticity

Contrast (vs. Generic)	<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>95% CI (LL, UL)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Content-based	0.24	0.08	0.10, 0.40	Yes
Hybrid–Disclosed	0.42	0.09	0.26, 0.61	Yes
Hybrid–Opaque	-0.06	0.05	-0.15, 0.02	No

Interpretation

- **H1 supported:** Content-based and hybrid–disclosed increased perceived authenticity; opaque hybrid did not.
- **H2 supported:** Higher authenticity strongly predicted higher brand trust.
- **H3 partially supported:** Significant positive indirect effects for content-based and hybrid–disclosed; the opaque hybrid’s indirect effect was non-significant.

In short, personalization builds brand trust to the extent that it feels authentic; transparency is the hinge that turns personalization into trust.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore how different personalization strategies influence perceived authenticity and brand trust, with particular attention to the mediating role of authenticity. The findings clearly show that personalization alone does not automatically generate trust. Instead, the extent to which personalization is viewed as transparent and authentic determines its effectiveness in building consumer confidence.

The results confirm that personalization strategies differ in how they affect perceived authenticity. Content-based personalization enhanced authenticity to a moderate degree, while the disclosed hybrid strategy had a stronger effect. When brands openly communicate how personalization is carried out,

consumers tend to perceive these practices as more transparent and genuine. This supports earlier studies emphasizing that disclosure and clarity enhance consumer acceptance and strengthen perceptions of fairness. In contrast, the opaque hybrid strategy failed to build authenticity, echoing previous research that highlights the risks of hidden personalization, such as consumer skepticism and privacy concerns.

Authenticity emerged as a powerful predictor of brand trust. Consumers are more likely to trust brands that they perceive as authentic, consistent, and transparent in their communication and practices. This reinforces the idea that trust is not built by personalization technology alone, but rather through the relational value that consumers attach to authenticity. These findings are consistent with prior studies that have identified authenticity as a cornerstone of strong consumer–brand relationships.

The analysis further revealed that authenticity acts as a bridge between personalization strategies and brand trust. Content-based and disclosed hybrid approaches indirectly built trust because they first enhanced authenticity. By contrast, the opaque hybrid strategy did not improve trust, largely because it failed to generate perceptions of authenticity. Importantly, none of the personalization approaches directly created trust on their own. This demonstrates that authenticity is the critical mechanism through which personalization strategies influence consumer attitudes.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to theory in three keyways. First, by drawing on established models of technology acceptance and planned behavior, it shows that consumer responses to personalization are shaped not only by the usefulness of technology but also by psychological and relational factors such as transparency and authenticity. Second, the study highlights authenticity as a central mediator in the personalization–trust relationship, offering an explanation for why some

strategies succeed while others fail. Third, the proposed conceptual model provides a foundation for future research, particularly in the context of tourism marketing and virtual reality, where issues like transparency and even experiential disorientation may play an important role.

Practical Implications

There are a plethora of implications for marketers and practitioners in the tourism domain. When developing personalization strategies, marketers should prioritize transparency. Content-based personalization and disclosed hybrid approaches demonstrate shows that transparency and openness adds to authenticity, which adds to trust. Brands can better establish transparency with consumers by being open about their practices around consumer data pre-collection, affording autonomy around whether they participate in a personalization, and being transparent in fairness when completing personalization. On the other hand, opaque or concealed tools are significantly more difficult, if not impossible, to use without losing consumer trust, and therefore should not be used. Tourism decisions evoke significant emotional and financial commitment decision making, relating to brand authenticity and honesty is relevant for persuasion intents.

Limitations and Future Research

In summary, although this study offers some interesting findings and insights, it also has limitations. The findings are informed by a qualitative research design, albeit controlled, and therefore rich in depth, but possibly not generalizable to all contexts. Going forward, future studies should apply a broader range of samples with larger sizes and a more varied representation to test more widely the application of the model. Moreover, while authenticity came through as the significant mediator, perceived control, privacy-related concerns, emotional engagement, or other factors may play a role in how personalization impacts trust. Finally, while tourism and virtual reality were used in this study, the

mapping of the model in other contexts such as retail, health, or education would assist in positioning the model in a wider context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found that personalization builds trust only when it is perceived as authentic. Trustworthy personalization relies on transparency. Authentic personalization practices and relationships can be achieved through content-based or disclosed hybrid approaches; opaque approaches cannot build trustworthiness or authenticity. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate the importance of developing personalization strategies that build true transparent relationships with consumers using technology.

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