

BIOMETRICS COULD ACCELERATE THE TRAVEL GROWTH



Paperwork - that is what many travelers try to get away from on the holiday, only to be bombarded by it once they get to the airport. Showing your documents first at the check-in counter, then security, then at the gate, only to be asked again when landing. But what if this could all be avoided, and we could make traveling much easier? Thanks to biometric travelers may soon not even need to show any form of identification at all.

The World Travel & Tourism Association (WTTA) is fighting hard for the incorporation of biometrics in all airports around the globe, and for good reason. **The International Air Transport Association projects that the number of air passengers will grow by nearly 80% over the next 18 years**, from 4.6 billion this year to 8.2 billion in 2037. With that much of travel growth that fast, it is hardly feasible for the size of airports to expand at the same rate. Something must be done and the WTTA believes that cutting down on the time travelers spend in the airport might be the answer.

According to Forbes, the U.S. has been experimenting with biometrics since late 2017 and is expected to expand to 97% of all airports in the U.S. by 2023. The WTTA wants to take this one step further and push for it to go fully international, and they have the research to back it up. Their studies suggest that 80% of travelers would be on board with biometrics being used in this manner, and if they get their way, it might not stop at airports.

The WTTA believes that biometrics, specifically facial recognition, could be used in every facet of traveling. So even hotels, restaurants, and taxis could use the same facial recognition process! This doesn't seem too far off either when you consider that with something like Apple Pay all you need is a fingerprint and your phone to make a purchase.

However, with all technological advancements there comes some push back. There are activist groups such as 'Fight for the Future' which oppose technology that involves biometrics and facial recognition. This is mainly because they believe that putting this information out there makes them vulnerable to third parties, or the government, getting to their private information. **Their argument is fair considering what can be done with such information, but the WTTA states they believe that the benefits outweigh the risk of privacy loss.**

So, a future without passports may be a fiction story, but the idea that travelers won't have to take it out on their next vacation is not so far off. It's something that, for now, is reserved for those with private jets. But if travel trends continue like they are expected, travelers may one day be able to jump in a taxi to the airport, walk through like they own the place, and get greeted at the gate, all without pulling out a single form of identification. And that is truly a vacation.

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