



**AFP** ●

**CONTENT AS A SERVICE**

*VOICE OF THE 2021 MARKET*



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## FOREWORD



**PATRICE MONTI**

*SALES AND MARKETING DIRECTOR*

*AFP*

For many brands – companies, institutions, NGOs – content is no longer used just to communicate about a product or a company's values but has become an integral part of the product, the service and the mission achieved.

This refocusing profoundly alters the way brands position content in their value chain. The role of editorial content in digital communication and marketing strategies is limited to that of a promotional tool which is sometimes strategic and sometimes secondary, and in a growing number of sectors of activity it is considered a necessary part of the product and brand promise.

Certain sectors have been and remain forerunners in the advent of a new relationship between content and brand, so much so that the value provided by content has rapidly become a central element in the success of the business and in its innovation. The business becomes distinct from the competition through its ability to establish a relationship of trust with its audience based on its reliable and high-quality editorial content. This is the case in the world of transport in general and air transport in particular. The provision by airlines of a choice of content to passengers through, firstly, a few collective screens in the cabin and then through groundbreaking individual screens inserted in seats, is certainly one of the most significant demonstrations of the transformation of the service provided to the customer using content.

In this venture, the screen manufacturer, the developer of the software interface, the content producer and, most recently, the third party analysing the data about content consumption by end customers, all have a critical and complementary part to play in the quality of the service offered to the passenger. As a result, the content producer must also provide guarantees of reliability and trust in the integrity of the editorial material provided - all the more so as content which spreads rumours and false information circulates everywhere and at very high speed, creating a new type of operational risk for brands using this type of content.

This new concept of Content as a Service (CaaS) continues to spread in a wide variety of sectors, from retail operators to edutech and the world of connected devices, where each player is looking for the right content for its market and for its audience. The right content is the one which best integrates with its screen, its product or service, its brand and brings the most value to its customers.

Like any supplier and partner, producers of information or entertainment content evolve with these new markets and must think about finding a balance between respect for the integrity of editorial work and the ability to reach new audiences. As Content as a Service becomes an industry-wide reality, dialogue must be strengthened between brands and content producers in order to build a relationship of trust which will ultimately benefit the customer, the consumer and individual members of the public.

We felt it was important to play our part in this dialogue by giving a voice in this white paper to those involved in Content as a Service in order to better understand the trends which will shape the relationship between brands and content producers in the months to come.

## METHODOLOGY



**LAURENT NICOLAS**

*MARKETING GROUP CHIEF*

*CORPORATE MARKETS AFP*

We are very pleased to be able to offer this first white paper to read which is entirely dedicated to the new forms and new uses of Content as a Service.

The following pages reflect first and foremost a strong empirical approach. Those expressing their views use integrated content experiences on a daily basis in their market area and create value for their customers. It is also for this reason that we have chosen an interview format, so that the dialogue can be as meaningful and open as possible, and so that the discussion initiated here can continue beyond this first publication.

The other choice made in terms of the structure of this white paper is to depict a variety of markets. We wanted to give an overview of examples of use drawn from very different and sometimes surprising markets. Naturally, the pioneering transport market is well represented with interviews with Eurostar and Flixbus, but we have also touched on the subject of Chinese edutech with LingoChamp®, public screens in companies with Seenspire, conflict prevention with Union Africaine and smart household appliances for the general public with Thermomix®.

We want to openly share the following regret at the time of publishing this collection of experts' views. In spite of numerous requests, we have not been able to achieve an equal balance between male and female experts. We hope to continue to document developments and trends in this market and would like to be able to interview more women in the future. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to invite female managers to contact us to share their experiences on the challenges of Content as a Service.

As feedback from professionals in the sector is not so common, we hope that the experiences and the projects which experts report on will be useful to all stakeholders, whatever their position in the community, their area of business or their nationality.

# **VOICE OF THE 2021 MARKET**

# DENTSU

Fourth largest communication group in the world, dentsu specialises in all areas of communication, from marketing communication strategy and digital performance to content creation, media strategy consulting, data management and events.

In France, dentsu is made up of several leadership brands such as Carat, Isobar, iProspect and dentsu X and has a staff of nearly 1,000.

Pierre Calmard is Chairman of the group in France and in the MENA zone.

Dentsu is present in 145 countries and has nearly 66,000 employees worldwide.



**PAULA LEFÈVRE**

*EDITORIAL DIRECTOR*

## **Why do brands benefit from having content at the heart of the customer experience? Which criteria do they use to choose the most appropriate content?**

There are many reasons for a brand to create its own content. It can be to build a relationship of trust with clients, as well as to create a strong link with wider audiences (a driver for visibility and recruitment). Some companies decide to communicate their *raison d'être* and usefulness, as well as their commitment and values as a social player by producing content based on substantiating their claims.

There may also be a need to have a presence in the digital world and to stand out from the competition with a unique message, or to shift consumer conversations so that they are about the experience and not just the product.

This last point could even allow some brands to eventually explore new business models where the added value is generated by the brand content more than by the product itself. For example, Peloton interactive bikes work by integrating the product with the exclusive content, which is accessible by subscription only. In the future, we could imagine a similar model for cars, household appliances, etc.

To choose the most appropriate content, you need to refocus on the brand's values, its history and its DNA, while taking a close look at the interests and needs of its audiences, and then combine the two. It is by offering content in line with the brand and its audience that a lasting relationship based on authenticity / entertainment / utility / service can be developed.

## **As a company with a presence in 145 countries around the world, do you observe different approaches by brands to their content depending on their country of origin?**

A common misconception is that content is merely an optional, 'on top' element of a marketing strategy. As is now the practice in the United States, the content must be merged into the brand's global strategy. It must be integrated as far upstream as possible in order to offer consumers a consistent, seamless experience at all points of contact.

In addition, our studies have confirmed differences in content consumption and purchasing behaviour according to geographical area. Cultural factors and habits have a strong impact on the way Internet users will search for content and consume it.

In France, brands currently use essentially an SEO approach, and it is still difficult to push upstream marketing content strategies. The major risk here is sending a conflicting message due to varying content approaches by the company's different departments (social media, communication, marketing, e-commerce, acquisition, etc.). Few place importance on a truly holistic content strategy.

*« Peloton interactive bikes work by integrating the product with the exclusive content, which is accessible by subscription only. In the future, we could imagine a similar model for cars, household appliances, etc. »*

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However, this is what we recommend at dentsu – to use a methodical approach based on data, insights and knowledge of audiences, combined with a thorough understanding of the brand’s strengths. We are convinced that by offering integrated, high-performance and unique editorial concepts on all platforms – including special campaigns, media partnerships and influencer marketing strategies – brands will emerge stronger and, above all, more visible.

The aim is to convey the brand’s ‘media personality’. That is why we talk more about editorial than content. Content has become a catch-all term and the definitions of inbound marketing, content marketing and brand content overlap. Putting the editorial back at the heart of marketing strategies means thinking of media in the truest sense of the word i.e. as a process which allows messages to be disseminated and communicated.

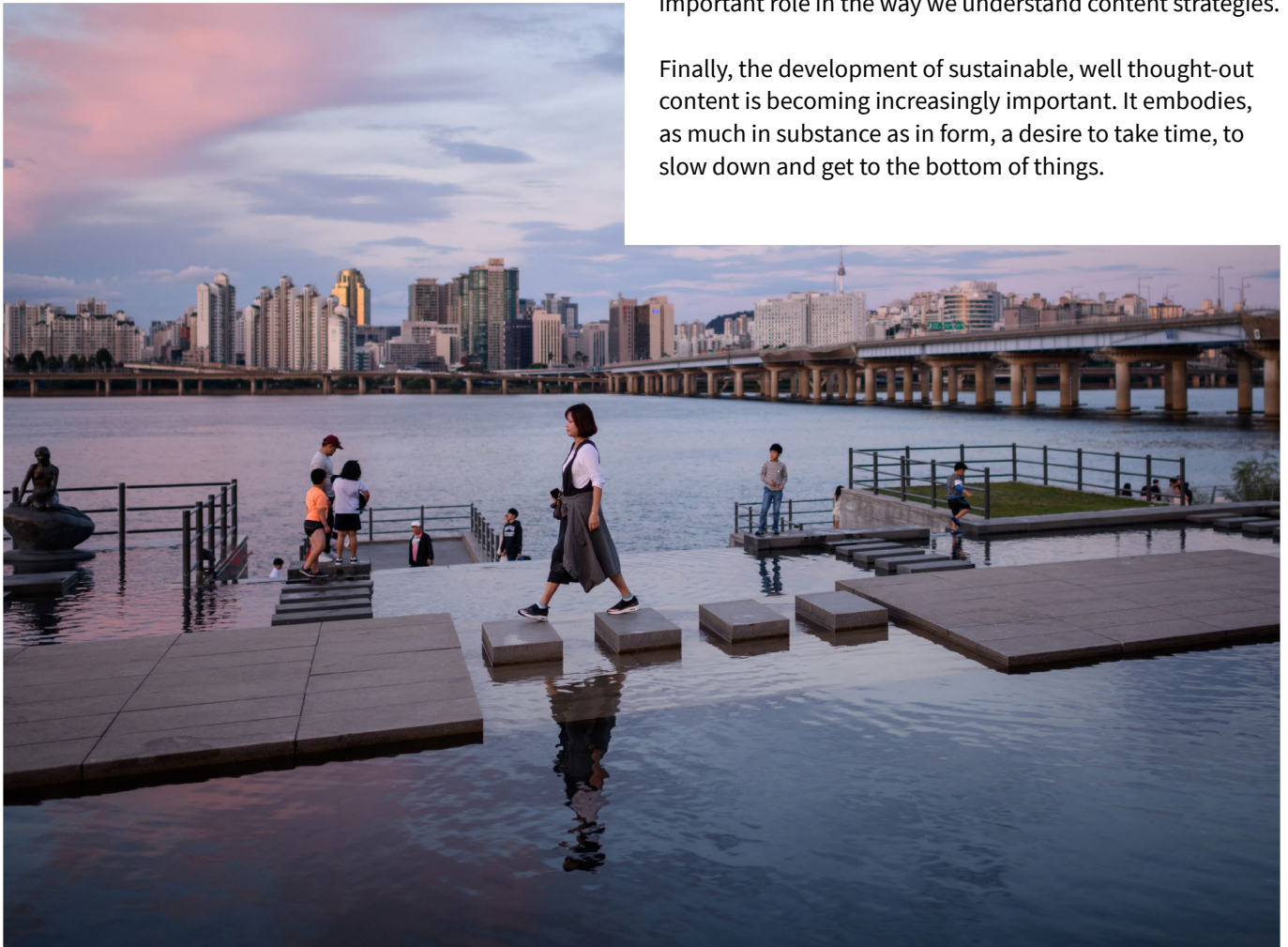
## **Do brands have a different strategic approach to their content today compared to a few years ago? How do you see this approach changing in the future?**

Where, in the past, brands invested more in so-called SEO/visibility content with an emphasis on short-term performance, there has been a shift in global content strategies, especially for DNVB (Digital-Native Vertical Brands) as well as for some large groups who have understood the benefits for their business. Gradually opinions are shifting to a more integrated approach and putting meaning and creativity at the heart of systems.

Today, the aim is to offer business models where content is at the heart of the brand’s value proposition and is a point of differentiation and preference.

In addition, data has now come into play and has an important role in the way we understand content strategies.

Finally, the development of sustainable, well thought-out content is becoming increasingly important. It embodies, as much in substance as in form, a desire to take time, to slow down and get to the bottom of things.



## Are there any other ways of thinking which you think might be of interest?

The emergence of content as a defining element of brand culture in addition to its communication (media brand, sounding board for the brand's media personality) should be emphasised. For some companies, this is a question of developing a more service-oriented, more transparent and less product-centred approach, which will fuel their *raison d'être* and commitment to society.

In addition, the idea of a multi-faceted flow (UX editorial / workflow / governance) is a particularly interesting notion when it comes to content which will benefit the brand.

Seeing content as the basic structure of the brand's ecosystem and that of a company means imagining an entire organisation based on content strategy. We can then develop fluid editorial experiences, creating user paths based on editorial branding and once again positioning content as a major and fundamental element in all communication. As a result, a company must put in place effective and sustainable content governance, which is truly integrated in order to facilitate distribution, simplify decisions through content management tools and

guarantee strong editorial consistency. Everything must revolve around a clear and accepted content strategy, from the e-commerce site, to the CRM, packaging, the employer brand and the CSR policy.

Finally, knowledge of the public is now more than ever an area of potential differentiation. Beyond traditional brand knowledge and marketing skills, it is crucial to identify and exploit both the strong and weak indicators which the digital world allows us to observe. This includes a detailed analysis of data from searches, social listening and forums, as well as the more traditional research using audience panels. The results, combined with our knowledge of the brand as well as pressure from competition, give guidance for posts and context-specific public communication in order to best meet consumer expectations.

If this analysis is carried out by editorial experts who are also trained in storytelling techniques, then the brand has all the assets needed to create a strong and sustainable ecosystem.





# EUROSTAR

Eurostar operates the only international high speed passenger rail service connecting the United Kingdom to France, Belgium, the Netherlands and beyond. Having recently celebrated it's 25th Birthday, Eurostar offers a relaxed and enjoyable travel experience and enjoyable alternative to flying with city centre to city centre connections and Paris just 2 hrs and 15 minutes away. They offer 3 different classes of service and in normal times, operate more than 70 services a day giving customers the flexibility to truly enjoy their trip from the moment they board the train.



**MATT LOVELL**  
*DIRECTOR OF DATA  
INSIGHT & ANALYTICS*

## **At Eurostar, for how long are you proposing content as a service now? What kind of content is it?**

Eurostar has been producing content for a long time whether it's information about destinations (to drive inspiration) or details about the Eurostar experience.

What has changed in recent years is that we now have more of a focus around better understanding the customers who travel with us so that this content can then be tailored to things they would like to know. This has resulted in the creation of more bespoke pieces of content and an increased focus on things that are more immediately relevant, whether that content around seasonal events or immediately relevant content around the launch / opening of new events, restaurants etc.

## **As head of data analytics and insights, what makes content increasingly strategic for transportation companies to succeed?**

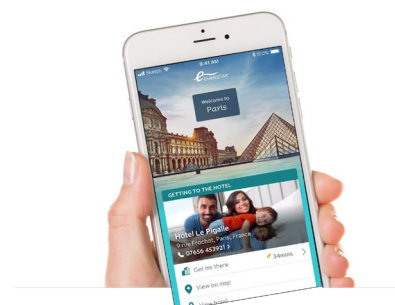
For us there are two key components when it comes to content.

The first is around utilising content to both bring customers to our website and then using this content to encourage them to want to visit our destinations and travel with Eurostar as part of their trip in order to drive our conversion rate and ultimately deliver incremental revenue to the business.

The second is around providing content as part of their experience so that from the moment they've booked until the point they return from their journey; their needs are met. This could be anything from information about the weather in their destination through to map content to help facilitate them once they arrive in destination not to mention any details of offers or vouchers for anything from hotels and transfers to attractions or experiences during their stay.

More generally, I think content already exists across most industries, however the focus obviously varies from one industry to another. In some industries, it's also more difficult to create content a customer is going to actively want to engage with. As an example, in the finance industry while most companies offer information about their products, doing anything more inspirational or producing content that a customer wants to engage with is more challenging (the best efforts I've seen in that space is Barclays with their [barclayslifefskills.com](http://barclayslifefskills.com) website where they have tried to position themselves as an advice service to support their product offering).

Within travel and leisure however, it has become almost inevitable that companies need to offer content as a service to the customers. Most brands have been doing this for



*« All the content we offer through Eurostar App is free for now but there is an ongoing discussion whether we should or not charge for some content such as Amazon Prime or Netflix, with the view of being able to offer the latest shows. »*

a long time now at the most basic level (with pages with generic information about their destinations) however it feels like this progress has slowed in recent years with no one brand standing out in terms of providing a true customer experience through this content so this is an area where we're really keen to lead the way.

### **Can you tell us about the Eurostar App's content, how does it work, who uses it?**

Eurostar's App is designed as a travel companion with the focus of the App varying depending on the stage of your Eurostar journey. This stretches from offering inspiration and a simple booking journey pre booking (with easy functions to facilitate repeat booking for regular customers) through to connectivity to our onboard entertainment solution (digital magazines, movies, TV and audio series') while travelling alongside content to support a customer's arrival in destination for when they arrive. It's also used to house their tickets and we've talked about future developments including loading in virtual passports / ID cards so that everything is in one place to make things as simple as possible.

All the content we offer through Eurostar App is free for now but there is an ongoing discussion whether we should or not charge for some content such as Amazon Prime or Netflix, with the view of being able to offer the latest shows (and potentially enabling customers with their own accounts to these services to simply log in and not pay).



### **What does the app's data tell you about the passenger's experience and what do you do with that knowledge, how do you action it?**

The data received from each of the App, Website and Onboard Entertainment system is becoming increasingly important to us for understanding each individual's customers' needs and being able to offer them the best experience possible with us.

We've recently undertaken a massive project to segment our customer base and really understand what the motivations and needs are of each customer type. As a result, we're looking to pull this content engagement data together alongside information about their previous purchases, email behaviours and any other customer attributes we have to give us as rich a view of as possible of them so that we can personalise their interactions with the brand as much as possible.

### **What other sources of data do you have to get closer to your customers?**

Across the business we have a wide range of data sets from ticketing information through to any interaction's customers have with our contact centre (be those via email, live chat, phone or social media) not to mention responses to a wide range of surveys we conduct throughout the year plus all of the areas we've mentioned above.

*« Next step of content development is to build a platform where both our staff and customers will be able to help us to produce content as a service themselves. »*

## What kind of technologies could help you in your job?

The main thing here for us would be around further improvements to WIFI signals within the tunnels our trains travel through and 4G and 5G signals across the countries we travel through to enable customers to be able to enjoy the content that has been made available. This is something we continue to work closely with our WIFI solution and signal provider on and we should see significant improvements to the connection as you pass through the tunnels south of London across the next year.

We're also looking at how we can harness continued developments in terms of onboard tech to store and download / upload content both in our stations and as the trains travel, meaning content can be stored on servers onboard the train or on a customer's device (if they choose the content they want to enjoy pre departure) limiting the strain on our WIFI connection across the journey. This is particularly pertinent when you talk about 'live' content such as news, sport or say the likes of recent election results – far better we facilitate a connection to content that

many customers can use than we try to facilitate hundreds of people connecting to different sources (and the delays and problems this results in their experience).

Then, it's not about technology but next step of content development is to build a platform where both our staff and customers will be able to help us to produce content as a service themselves. This could include rating places they visit, saying for who it is suitable for and uploading photos or videos. We want to enable wider sharing of content and experiences to help our customers uncover unforgettable experiences. This is also strategic because it allows our travellers to become ambassadors of the Eurostar brand and it will allow us to offer the latest (curated) content for each destination in close to real-time through the Eurostar App.



# LINGOCHAMP®

LAIX Inc. is an artificial intelligence (AI) company in China that creates and delivers products and services to popularize English learning. LingoChamp® is the sub-brand of LAIX. The flagship mobile app of LAIX, English Liulishuo, is operated under the LingoChamp® brand. Utilizing the deep learning and adaptive learning artificial intelligence technologies, users are provided with customized pronunciation correction, grammar correction, vocabulary notebook and other courses, supplemented by services provided by the online studying advisors.



YUXI CHEN

CONTENT TEAM LEAD

## LingoChamp® is ‘an AI powered English learning app’: can you tell us how it works?

The birth of the LingoChamp® stems from a vision of the three founders: hope everyone can learn English to empower themselves, stimulate their potential, and become global citizens. LingoChamp® provides customized, accessible, and effective learning experiences for everyone in more than 175 countries. It offers to our users an authoritative phoneme-level pronunciation analysis to help improve speaking without teacher’s help!

Our product doesn’t involve AI technology per se. It’s a subsidiary app providing intensive and extensive reading of English articles and books, involving adaptive algorithm when testing users’ English vocabulary within our product.

AI technology is mainly being used in our app’s speaking & listening courses where users can boldly practice oral conversation with the LingoChamp® coach Alix. The AI English teacher is equipped with proprietary speech recognition and scoring engine, multi-dimension, multi-granularity speech evaluation engine and real-time personalized feedback system. Utilizing the deep learning and adaptive learning artificial intelligence technologies, users are provided with customized pronunciation correction, grammar correction, vocabulary notebook and other courses, supplemented by services provided by the online studying advisors.

## What kind of content do you use in your app and what role do they play in the learning process?

In a few words, we select news articles, cut them short, and expound them to Chinese users. We currently have 10 different content providers for this app, that’s enough to provide the quantity of news articles we want for our customers.

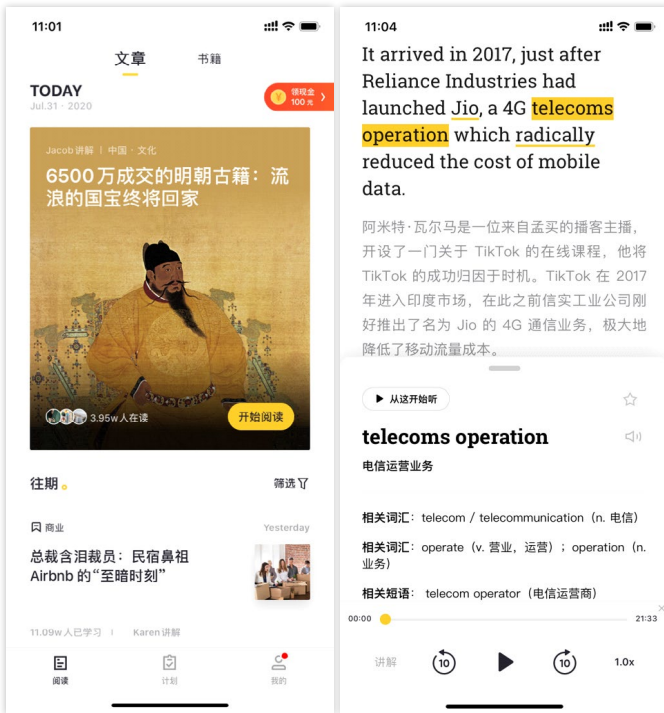
These news articles are very important in their learning process since it allows them to read quality content, on various topics and in different levels of language.

In the context of our work, we choose and sometimes adapt the news articles and books, by shortening them so there’s no need for real-time content feed as of now.

*« For us at LingoChamp®, we expect content to help us keep users, meaning that they would stay connected longer when they open the app, and hopefully they would open it more often. »*

## Have you met any challenges finding the right balance between the free and the premium content available to users on LingoChamp®?

We don't intentionally balance them. Users who pay a membership fee have access to everything, while those who don't can only read original English articles. We charge for the features we offer, including translation, reading comprehension, exercise and additional information on that topic.



## Why do you think so many brands, including LingoChamp®, put content at the heart of their product?

For us at LingoChamp®, we expect content to help us keep users, meaning that they would stay connected longer when they open the app, and hopefully they would open it more often.

Then quality of content is key. There are many digital acquisition channels you can play with to catch potential users for your service, but those you do catch will stay only if they find quality in your product and in the content it uses.

Quality is of course a relative notion that can be only appreciated and defined for every brand and product.

« *These news articles are very important in their learning process since it allows them to read quality content, on various topics and in different levels of language.* »

## Does 'quality' content help meet customers' expectations?

The trustworthiness of the content we use, the variety of topics, the relevancy for our users, all these criteria lie at the heart of the value we provide.

Authenticity and big names matter. Users can be drawn by, say a daily article from The Economist or New York Times.

Not only quality content contributes to user satisfaction rate, it also facilitates the work of content developers. Quality content also enhance our working experience. Quality articles provide more space for critical reading. For example, if it's well-structured, we can talk about how to write news, the rationale behind author's arrangement and common news writing structures, etc. Or if a higher-level word is used instead of a common one, we can look at the subtle differences and analyze the word's multiple meanings.

When chosen carefully, content do enhance the customer experience. You can sense how this is a critical mission for us as intensive reading to learn English is what we deal with in our app. Content is at the core of the experience.

## What's next chapter: how could future uses and innovations in Content as a Service help you build an even better experience?

I'm thinking of an 'i+1' model for content distribution. Right now, AI seems to confine people to their own information cocoon, so maybe it's time we borrow the linguistic theory of i+1 or input hypothesis, and expose people to not only the information they choose, but also the info beyond their understanding.

But generally, I believe however the technology develops, quality content remains the core of a product.

# THERMOMIX®

The core business of Vorwerk, a family-owned company founded in 1883, is the direct sale of high-quality products. These include the multifunctional Thermomix® kitchen appliance, which has been simplifying everyday cooking for more than 50 years. The special combination of various cooking functions and modes in one appliance, which can be expanded via constant updates, and thousands of recipes tailored to the Thermomix® with a guarantee of success, now inspires around nine million users worldwide. The Thermomix® Division is active in a total of 15 countries in Europe, Asia and North America with its own national subsidiaries.



**THOMAS GERLACH**

*DIGITAL PRODUCT MANAGER COOKIDOO®*

## **Could you describe the milestones of the Thermomix® experience since the beginning? And explain what is Cookidoo® in that context?**

The first Thermomix® was launched in 1961 already. In 2014, the TM5 was the first appliance with a display and with digital recipes available as accessories (Recipe Chips). Together with the TM5 we also launched the first Thermomix® Recipe Platform to provide and organize guided cooking recipes.

In 2016, we relaunched the recipe platform as Cookidoo® connected it with the TM5 through the WIFI accessory Cook-Key®. Recipe collections from Cookidoo® could be synchronized to the TM5 and we introduced our subscription model for digital recipes. We also started to provide TM5 firmware updates over-the-air.

Our latest model TM6 has Cookidoo® integrated. TM6 and Cookidoo® get better over time through software updates, new functions, and a continuously growing treasure of recipes.

*« It is not only about new features of the hardware appliances but about extending the cooking experience in general. The era of the smart kitchen has just started. »*

## **TM6 has now WIFI, Bluetooth and a big touchscreen integrated so the device allows much more than cooking. How would you define this new ‘cooking experience’ ?**

With integrating Cookidoo® into the Thermomix®, you can search recipes, access your weekly planner or own recipe lists effortlessly on the TM6. You do not have to use your phone or tablet in the kitchen to get inspired, see what’s on your agenda. At the same time Cookidoo® is in your pocket when you are at the supermarket to check what you have to shop. Cookidoo® is with our customers wherever they are and to simplify their lives along the whole cooking journey from “What am I cooking today?” to Guided Cooking.

## **Integrating Cookidoo® platform directly into the TM6 device is one of the major changes compared to TM5. Why is it increasingly important for the brand to put content at the heart of the product?**

It is important for us because it is important for our customers. They do not want to first search for their phone or tablet before they can start cooking. They may even get inspired on what to cook next while they are cooking another recipe. Our customers should have access to Cookidoo® wherever they are. The simpler and seamless the user experience, the higher is the usage and the more our customers recommend the Thermomix® and Cookidoo® to their friends and relatives.

## Do these new touch points allow you to learn differently from customers' expectations?

Yes. We are now able to find out about how the customers are using our products, which recipes they prefer, where they vary the cooking steps, and which search queries have no results. We learn from that where we can improve our content and how we can support our users to achieve optimal results. All that helps us to optimize the individual experience of our customers.

## What are all the different types of content offered by the brand Thermomix®?

Our recipes are the fuel of the whole customer experience. Our customers are enjoying them in cookbooks, our magazines, cooking classes and on their TM6 with Cookidoo integrated. Cookidoo® is offering over 60;000 Guided Cooking recipes with success guarantee and we are adding new recipes every week. In addition to our recipes, we provide articles, videos and tools for organizing, preparing and serving food. And we love to engage with our community on social networks.

## How do you explain that content has become such a huge part of your business model?

It has always been extremely important. To get most value out of your Thermomix, customers need recipes and inspiration. The cooking journey is always starting with "What am I cooking today?". The easier it is to get inspired, the more customers discover new culinary worlds and enjoy cooking. The seamless fusion of our hardware with recipes has consequently not only addressed a strong customer need but has also increased even further the importance of content.

## Cookidoo® is available in more than 45 countries, so how do you choose the right content to offer to your 3.3M subscribers?

Culinary content is very regional and emotional. Therefore, our experienced marketing organizations in all our main countries have local teams to develop local content.

Many customers also appreciate the option to discover new culinary words and browse through recipes of other countries. Those insights and the growing treasure of over 60.000 international Guided Cooking recipes allow us to provide more personalized suggestions and to foster creativity.

*« The seamless fusion of our hardware with recipes has consequently not only addressed a strong customer need but has also increased even further the importance of content. »*

## What is the next level of 'cooking experience'? What kind of technological improvements or future uses could improve it?

We believe that our customers are expecting more individualized content and a continuously improving user experience. It is not only about new features of the hardware appliances but about extending the cooking experience in general. The era of the smart kitchen has just started, and we strongly believe that recipes play a very important role to keep it easy and fun for customers.



# SEENSPiRE

Seenspire is the first unified content streaming service to provide access to editorial and user-generated content for public TV screens in places where people work, wait and buy.



**SAMUEL MEKONEN**

CEO AND CO-FOUNDER

## What are the challenges for organizations that leverage public displays as a part of their communication strategy?

In order to communicate successfully, an organization needs different channels to share its message with one channel that reinforces the other. Organizations are constantly looking for the silver bullet that will enable them to communicate effectively with all levels of the organization.

The relevance and quality of content will be the determining factor for any channel to attract the attention of their audience, no matter how sophisticated the technology behind the channel. Today's fast-paced business environment dictates a continuous content creation which is a universal challenge for effective digital signage.

However, continuous content creation takes time and resources. To solve this problem, organizations of all sizes, from small retail to large corporate offices, need to understand how they can maximize the impact of their digital signage channel.

## How does content enhance the viewers' experience (VX) for public displays within organizations?

As mentioned above, content is the driving force behind what makes a communication channel effective. Your audience will only acknowledge a public display when it offers the same diverse and dynamic content as they are used to from their home TV experience.

*« Today's fast-paced business environment dictates a continuous content creation which is a universal challenge for effective digital signage. »*

The difference is that public displays are always-on yet non-intrusive, which makes them a popular communication channel. However, the organization will need to consider around 2000 hours of airtime per year with traditional opening hours from 9 to 5.

## Who are typically the stakeholders involved to make the digital signage communication channel successful?

IT will usually take up the role to set up the network of screens, and when done involve other stakeholders like, social media managers, marketing & communications managers, leadership (HR, CEO) who have a message worth sharing and amplifying it through the use of public displays.

Within all layers of the organization there are different levels of engagement and also different types of content that are required to attract the attention of the viewer.


Imagine a screen in any public space where people work, wait or buy. For example, if the audience at HQ is comprised of visitors and employees, it is important that your content is different than the day-to-day operational communication you would communicate in factories and warehouses.



# Maximize the impact of your digital signage communications


Create a diverse and automated content playlist

**Your CMS**



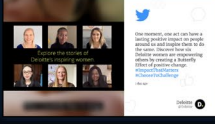
**Your Custom Content**

**Infotainment Feeds**



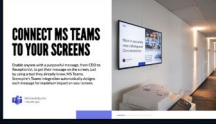
**Editorial Content**  
**Local Weather and Traffic**  
**Financial Markets**  
**Nature Clips and Digital Art**

**Social Media Feeds**




**Corporate Social Media Account**  
**Branch Social Media Account**  
**User Generated Content**  
**Industry News Content**

**Teams Content Feeds**



Use Microsoft Teams for:

**Employee Generated Content**  
**Customer Testimonials**  
**Leadership Updates**  
**Announcements**



20 min - Content Playlist

As a marketing & communications professional, digital signage enables you to leverage content that reaches the right audience at the right time through a mix of company announcement, social media, employee generated content and editorial content from trusted sources.

### How promising is the digital signage market?

Everyone is constantly trying to draw the attention of their audience to their message. However, many messages are delivered through a channel that is overloaded with content from various sources, making these channels overcrowded information highways. These channels are mobile phones and desktop computers. Furthermore, it is the audience that controls how they navigate these channels, not the messenger.

Firstly, Stakeholders involved in the use of digital signage have learned to appreciate public displays as an alternative communication channel over an overcrowded email inbox and other channels used to deliver information through Mobile Phones and Computers.

Secondly, hardware and software now fit into every organization’s budget, regardless of its size and industry, from small retail to large corporate offices and educational facilities.

Lastly, as the technology becomes more accessible, user-friendly and integrated, you no longer need to be technically proficient to get started with digital signage. The only requirement is having access to a variety of content that is cost-effective and designed to bring awareness to your screens and attention to your message.

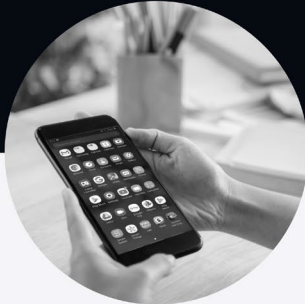
### Content is driving the adoption of the medium digital signage. Why?

As with many new technologies, Corporate America was also the first to adopt and introduce digital signage to the rest of the world.

However, for a long time, the lack of access to “digital signage first” content, was holding back further adoption and left operators with videos and images, repurposed PowerPoint slides and unreliable RSS feeds. This didn’t lead to the success needed for further adoption of digital signage across the whole organization.

This shouldn’t come as a surprise as content is always the driver of adoption. Whether it’s music, movies, or TV shows, giving users unlimited access to content has been critical to the adoption of many streaming services.

## A communication channel that is always on, yet non-intrusive



**Mobile Phone**



**Digital Signage**



**Computer**

This disruptive shift in the consumer market, also led to Seenspire's model of a content streaming service for digital signage, enabling end-users to solve their biggest challenge by giving access to unlimited content.

The main difference between the US, the UK, Australia and mainland Europe is, of course, the different languages we had to take into account in Europe. In the course of sourcing and licensing more regional and multilingual content, we have seen that this leads to a further adoption of Seenspire in the European Market.

# AFRICAN UNION

The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002.

The Peace and Security Department (PSD) supports the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in the exercise of its responsibilities under the PSC Protocol. Within the PSD, the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division focuses on the anticipation and prevention of violent conflicts in Africa.



## TAYE ABDULKADIR

*INFORMATION SYSTEMS OFFICER, CONTINENTAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (CEWS),  
CONFLICT PREVENTION AND EARLY WARNING DIVISION, PEACE AND SECURITY  
DEPARTMENT, AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION*

### **As the Information Systems Officer at the Peace and Security Department of the African Union, can you explain what exactly your job entails?**

CEWS stands for Continental Early Warning System. CEWS is one of the pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture that supports the conflict prevention efforts of the African Union, which is an inter-governmental organisation. The Situation Room is the primary hub, in charge of collecting and monitoring the data. We operate 24 / 7, allowing for real-time monitoring of information.

In our Department, we monitor many data and news sources to better understand unfolding events and rapidly evolving situations, and analyse which ones are the most critical. Our 'clients' if we may say are decision makers at the African Union (AU) including Commissioner Peace and Security, Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Peace and Security Council (PSC) whom we engage in various ways, including through early warning reports, briefings (verbal and written), regular Horizon scanning briefings, situation updates etc. These products use raw data and information collected through the different mechanisms put in place.

The announcements made by the Chairperson on key developments on the continent are also informed by information / flash reports disseminated by the Situation Room.

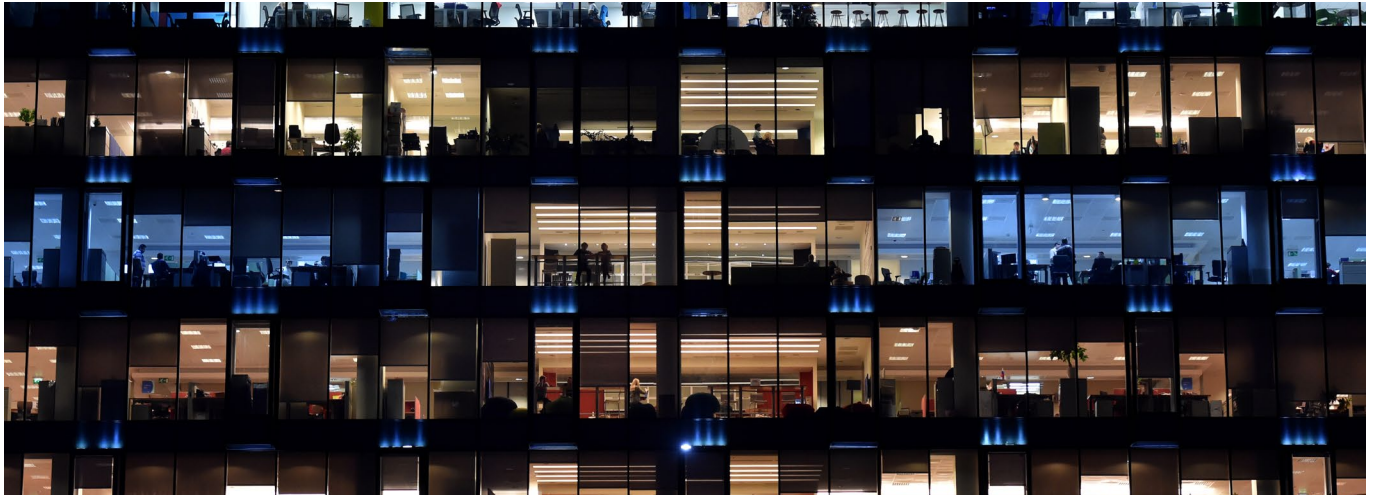
### **What kind of content do you use? And how do you use it?**

Different types of data, or content, arrive from many different sources. The first important data sources are open sources that include subscribed wires, news websites, blogs, etc. The monitoring of this data is automated through a well-developed categorisation system for us to separate content into different subject matter areas. Then the data is presented on a unified dashboarding tool, then processed to detect possible threats for stability on the African continent. The main challenge here is to organise the content and find the most value.

The most important content we use is text. News wires such as AFP are integrated into our unified dashboard tool where data collected from open sources and subscribed wires is automatically tagged to different curated subject matter areas. In addition, the Situation Room analysts use multimedia content to further understand the issue.

The other sources of information we rely on is field data gathered from the grassroots through civil society organizations via the submission of incident and situation reports via pre-defined templates.

**« The data is presented on a unified dashboarding tool, then processed to detect possible threats for stability on the African continent. »**



Almost all our products utilise text to deliver information to the intended audience (such as decision makers). Inputs in the form of charts, maps and other graphics are also used to give clarity to the issue at hand.

**Which criteria do you use to source and choose your content suppliers? How many do you have?**

The subscription to content delivery is mainly driven by the “real-time” nature of the service, its African coverage and language diversity. In this regard, we have subscription to two News Wires providers, two Analytic Product providers and local content transcription services into English for easier integration with our dashboard.

But, as we developed very matured text mining technologies, we do monitor in real-time more than 4,000 non-subscribed open-source news sites and blogs. We have also the capacity to monitor Twitter using Hashtags, Lists and by following specific accounts.

About trustworthiness, the human factor is always taken seriously. That is why we have Situation Room analysts that filter, triangulate and check trustworthiness of

a particular news before using it in the different products. The computer aided data gathering that collect information from many sources helped in categorization of these information in a number of contexts and subject matter areas. It is a human process afterwards. In addition to our Situation Room staff, we do have analysts covering each region and thematic area to produce a detailed analytic product.

**How long has real-time data been available to you in Africa? How did you manage monitoring before that?**

Our use of news wires including AFP dates back more than 15 years. That is related to the creation of our Situation Room which is tasked with real-time information gathering. This content used to be delivered through satellite in the past, but now, with the advent of the Internet, we are using real-time FTP services. In addition, latest developments in data mining and machine learning provide great leverage for us to automate the real-time information gathering process within CEWS.

# FLIXBUS

FlixBus is a German brand that offers worldwide intercity bus service. It is owned by FlixBus GmbH, which also operates FlixBus Charter, FlixBus Train and FlixBus Car.

FlixBus Charter is the BtoB segment of FlixBus specialized in group transportation (schools, associations, clubs) and operates in 10 major countries in Europe.



## FRANÇOIS HOEHLINGER

HEAD OF FRANCE, BELGIUM  
& LUXEMBURG FLIXCHARTER

**Since its creation in 2013, FlixBus has built Europe's largest long-distance bus network and is helping to change the way millions of Europeans travel. What is the significance of the 'passenger experience' at FlixBus and what role does content play in this experience?**

The experience of FlixBus passengers, or their 'customer journey', can be assessed in scenarios before / during / after the time of the journey. 'Before' the journey – the challenge here is to offer a seamless transition from finding out the information to the act of purchasing the transport service.

The FlixBus experience 'during' the journey – our commitment is to provide our customers with a minimum amount of stress for optimum transport quality. Anything that helps to reduce one and increase the other contributes to this and, of course, the content is a fundamental element here as it allows us to inform, provide a service and entertain.

We endeavour to provide all the information relating to the journey itself and to present it to the customer in the best possible circumstances in order to limit the stress and uncertainty inherent in any travel. The service aspect is reassuring because it allows the traveller to play an active role in his or her journey (insurance, cancellations, on-board services, etc.). Finally, entertainment is, of course, an essential requirement in order to offer our customers an immersive experience supported by quality content (videos, music, etc.).

'After' the journey – our commitment continues throughout the after-sales service and through our professional retention system to make FlixBus a leading brand recognised by our users. After-sales service is the cornerstone of a successful service company. It needs to be constantly improved through the use of technology in particular.



« *Content is a fundamental element as it allows us to inform, provide a service and entertain.* »

### **Are you aiming to offer a content service to your passengers in your B2B buses? Why are you focusing part of your long-term strategy on content distribution?**

In our B2B markets, customers travelling on our network are generally groups with a common goal and a common reason to travel. Our approach in this case is to adapt the content to this end. We are working with the Dutch application developer, Close, to design a login platform where our clients can easily access specific content. This promising development is currently under review with some of our key customers.

For example, we transport a lot of people to sporting events, such as football and rugby matches, and these groups expect sports content. We have entered into partnerships which will enable us in the future to provide club audiences with a travel experience which matches this moment of fellowship and passion engendered by sport. What we are looking for as a result of this commitment and investment is, first and foremost, the satisfaction of our customers, which we measure at FlixBus and FlixBus Charter via Net Promoter Score (NPS). Of course, our primary focus is on the core of our business – transport – but we are convinced that improving the experience, particularly in terms of content, increases customer satisfaction.

### **What challenges did you face when creating this portal and its interface?**

From the outset, we have focused our attention on two points in particular. The first is certainly technical, but is at the heart of value proposition. This is the ability to connect our real-time information flow (geolocation and bus tracking, real-time prices, etc.) to our application's infrastructure and interface.

The other major challenge is obviously the ability to update both the portal and the content, i.e. the functionality and interface of the portal on the one hand, and the information, service and entertainment offer on the other. It is an ongoing job!

### **Does this digital portal also allow you to get to know your customers better?**

The 'profiling' of users, made possible in particular by login access, is indeed a major advantage, as we know who we are communicating with and we can offer content which is better adapted to customer expectations.

In our B2B activities, thanks to the use of the portal by passengers, we will have a more detailed customer segmentation, while getting to know each member of a group, whether they are rugby fans, a scout group or an association.

The granularity of this data also proves very useful for our B2B customers and the organisers of these trips. They gain a better understanding of the profiles and uses of the members of their group – always with the objective that we can reduce the blind spots in our data as much as possible.

« *The experience of FlixBus passengers can be assessed in scenarios before / during / after the time of the journey.* »

### **What drivers can be used to further enhance the on-board passenger experience on the FlixBus network in the future - technology with the advent of 5G for example, or content? Or both?**

Both, for sure. Our customers will be more satisfied with FlixBus and FlixBus Charter every time we can offer them a more personalised, tailored experience which is even better suited to the content they want to consume at any given time, such as videos, music and information, as well as suggestions for restaurants, activities, etc.

However, the technical challenges for our products are also numerous to be able to successfully deliver this level of experience: 5G (faster, better coverage), messaging in the bus, geo-tracking, or connectivity between journeys.

# CREDITS

## PHOTO

Cover Photo: David McNew / AFP

Page 7: Ed Jones / AFP

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Page 11: Tolga Akmen / AFP

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