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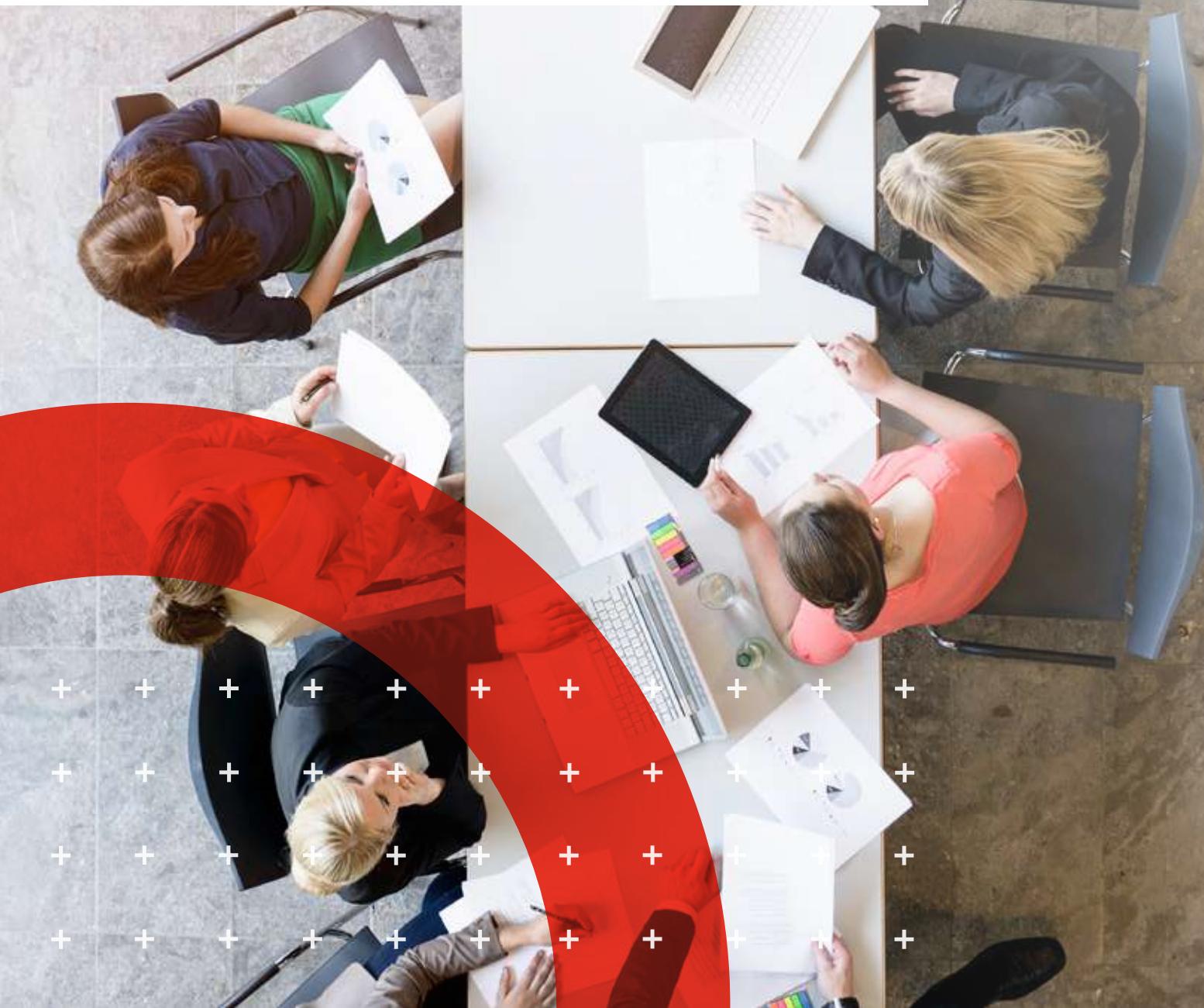
by exagis



ANALYST REPORT

Effectively managing content's life cycle:

Strategies taken by market leaders





WHAT WE KNOW

Digital advances and the plethora of services resulting from them, have simplified the customer experience, but have also created more complexities due to technology requirements and silos - especially when it comes to omnichannel communication to customers. Mastering content is now the key differentiating factor for companies and their brands, whether it's brand content, product content, or content marketing. Content is central to improving the customer experience, from acquisition to conversion and retention.

The proliferation of channels and mobile interactions, recognizing new ways to reach an audience, instant updates, managing content's impact while bearing local and geographic differences in mind, and even integrating content generated by customers - it's all rapidly changing the landscape.

Businesses at the forefront of their sectors have understood this and are tailoring their approaches accordingly both at an organizational level, by implementing a "content engine" and adopting processes specific to their situation, and by keeping up with the technological tools needed to deal with these new issues.

What are the main challenges that these forward-thinking companies face when it comes to creating and managing digital content? How do they make it as simple as possible while optimizing their strategies? What technology stacks do they prefer?

This Expert Report, written on behalf of Sitecore by analysts from the independent research company MARKESS by exægis, looks at these key points to consider for effective content creation and management, drawing inspiration from best practices identified across the market. It is based on feedback from C-level executives working for businesses or trail-blazing brands in this area, and on foresight analyses from the Customer Experience & Digital Strategies research program by MARKESS by exægis.

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A close-up photograph of a young woman with long, dark, textured braided hair. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth, and looking slightly to her left. She is wearing a black and white horizontally striped tank top. Her right arm is bent, and she is holding a light blue, cylindrical object, possibly a mug or a small container, near her chest. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a wooden shelf with various items like books and decorative objects.

#1

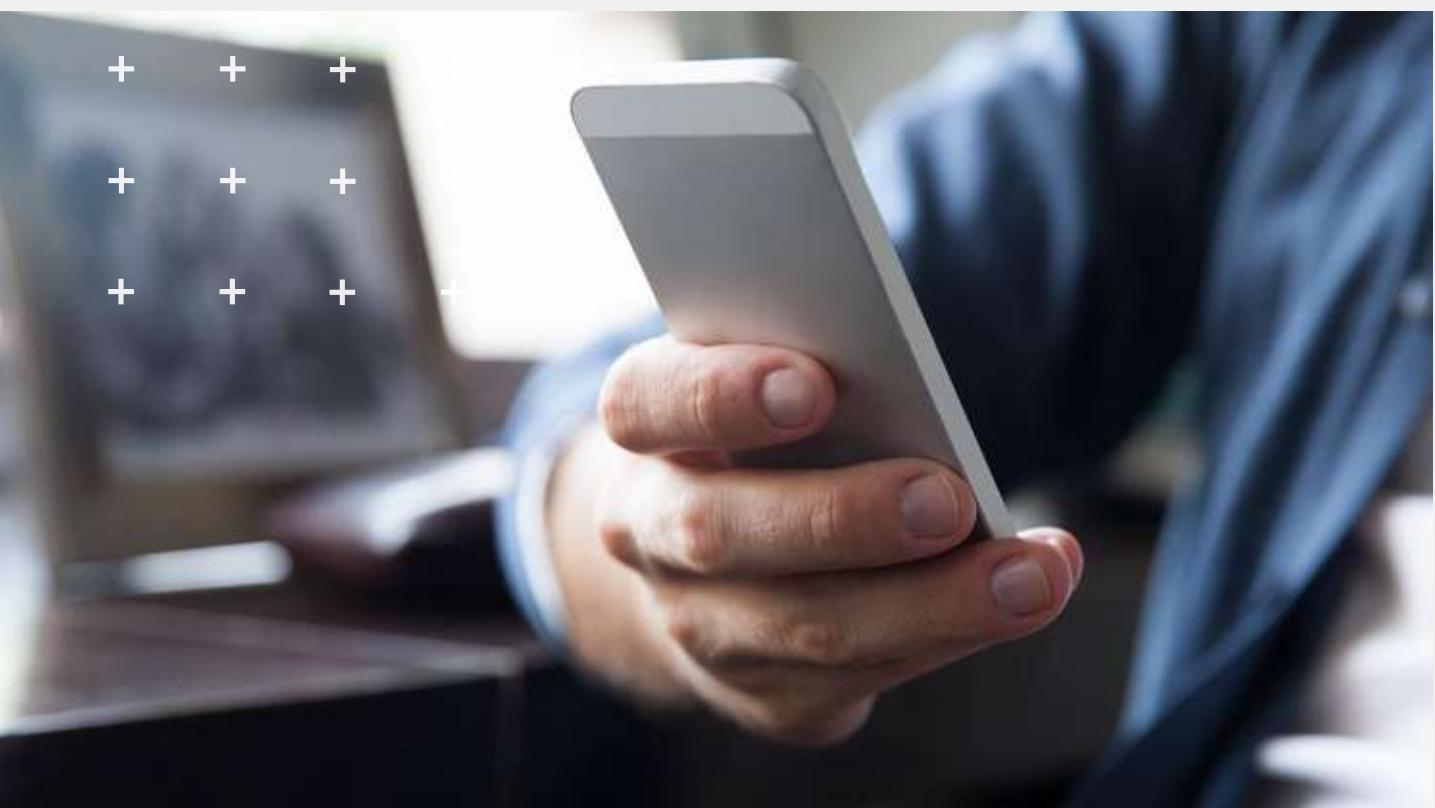
**Content, a vital factor in
improving customer experience**

To reach consumers who are becoming ever more digital in their shopping habits and to give them an unrivalled experience, content now takes center stage. And this is even more so if the products or services being marketed require a strong sense of commitment from the consumer. Guidance and reassurance are essential during the customer journey.

Depending on the objectives set by companies and their brands, content may be subject to different issues and practices, or vary according to channel. Mapping out these objectives in advance helps to correctly position content on the expected value chain:

- Brand content, for example, seeks to establish brand preference by playing on the emotions in its wording or on the brand's commitments in a particular area.
- Product-oriented communication, on the other hand, will promote content aiming to break down obstacles in public opinion or to highlight specific features.

In the agro-food sector, brand content may be used to provide reassurance in certain categories (such as industrial products and prepared or frozen foods), to encourage consumption by inspiring customers with recipes, to make preparation easier by offering product tips, or to publicize educational content about production methods (absence of preservatives, no health risks, etc.).



Key Goals with Content in Customer Experience Processes

MEDIA & BRAND COMMUNICATION	PRODUCTS / SERVICES COMMUNICATION	FIELD MARKETING
Developing brand preference	Raising emotion	Reassuring on products and services
Increasing awareness	Making discovery	Expanding product consumption
BRAND CONTENT	PRODUCT CONTENT (& DESIGN)	CONTENT MARKETING
CORPORATE WEBSITE MEDIA CAMPAIGNS (TV, RADIO, SOCIAL, ONSITE ADS...) MAGAZINES (PAPER, WEB...)	PRODUCT OR SERVICES WEBSITES CATALOGS CUSTOMER REVIEWS - FEEDBACKS	MARKETING CAMPAIGNS MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL COMMUNITIES ATTRIBUTION SEO/SEM - INFLUENCE

Source: MARKESS by exægis

In sectors where the commodity is not tangible (distribution, travel, hospitality, online banking, etc.) but there are still physical customer contact channels, content management must be able to take on an omnichannel dimension including web, voice calls, emails, social networks, and stores or physical sites. All these customer experience channels must be appealing and customer-friendly, regardless of the type of relationship (B2C, B2B, B2B2C). In this situation, rich high-value-added content – published as part of the customer journey on a website or e-commerce site, to optimize SERPs¹ for example – must link directly to the relevant product areas on the site with a precise CTA.² It needs to be on the site for a relatively long time, with other “cold” content (a product’s technical details, photo or 360° video, demonstration, assembly instructions, etc.), or “hot” content (verified consumer reviews, recommendations, etc.) while taking consumers’ personas into account, which requires thorough knowledge of their tastes and habits. This all calls for ever more fine-tuned and effective content management within the time constraints and software capabilities.

The analysts at MARKESS by exægis have found that how critical content management is to an organization depends on the type of business. Irrespective of sector, the basic issues remain roughly similar. Specifics that may emerge are more likely to be linked to companies’ and their brands’ own situations, and mainly concern:

- The nature of the buying process (short vs. long, impulsive vs. considered);
- The type of market and the ecosystems involved (very competitive markets vs. regulated);
- Marketed products and/or services (general goods vs. high-profile brands, lower or higher repeat purchase rate).

¹ Search Engine Result Page

² ‘Call to action’ or ‘Click to action’



Strategies for improving and optimizing the customer experience within content creation and management will vary according to these factors.

Factors Influencing Content Creation and Management in Customer Experience Processes

RETAIL	Short buying process	Impulsive shopping	Competitive markets	Unmarked products and services/ Commodities	Recurring products and services
TRAVEL - LEISURE - TOURISM					
SERVICE OPERATOR					
MEDIA - B2C SERVICES - TRANSPORTATION					
CPG - FOOD					
AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY					
RETAIL BANKING - INSURANCE					
OTHER INDUSTRY & B2B SERVICES					
FINANCE - HEALTH					
NATURE OF BUYING PROCESSES, MARKETS, PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SOLD					
	Purchasing process rather long	Non-impulsive shopping	Regulated markets	Well-known brands	Products and services with low recurrence

Source : MARKESS by exægis



The landscape is changing with a growing share of business online

In retail, and in sectors with similar business models (such as travel, tourism, hospitality, energy supply, telecoms, transport, media, CPG, retail banking, etc.), the proportion of business that takes place online is constantly growing, and has been in double figures for several years now (+12.6% growth in the 2nd quarter of 2019), and the number of active websites is increasing fast (+18% this year).

At this pace, French e-commerce turnover should exceed 100 billion euros by the end of 2019, according to Fevad. Médiamétrie estimates that the e-commerce sector has gained 1.5 million new cyber shoppers this year in France, which is proof of its dynamism and strategic significance.

This growth is undeniably changing the landscape when it comes to creating and managing digital content for these business developments.

#2

Overcoming main challenges for content creation that stands out





The C-level executives interviewed by MARKESS by exægis identify six major challenges throughout the whole content management life cycle relating to content production and further down the line with content consumption.

Verification and quality control

"97% of marketers say producing enough content to meet their organization's needs is their biggest concern."

Content production can require a lot of communication, both internally and with external agencies, which slows down the publishing, promoting, and updating processes. In 2019, 80% of C-levels interviewed use external agencies to create and manage their content. Agencies can be involved with the verification and compliance assessment of content to be published. The amount of internal and external communication can also lead to errors – potentially leading to legal problems – as well as having an impact on the quality of content produced.

Businesses working in regulated markets (such as banks, insurance, agro-food businesses, energy suppliers, etc.) are legally responsible for the content they produce and promote. All content must be checked and verified before it is published. These legal validation stages are very important. Finding the right people to produce compliant content without making outsourcing too complex is a very real challenge for these businesses. This is why some of them choose to produce their content internally. Regulatory validation can certainly be complex when a third party becomes involved. A digital agency or content creation agency might not always be the best answer in this case. For this key process to go smoothly whilst remaining high-quality, it is vital that the brief is understood and adhered to. In this specific legal context, the main difficulty is getting the services involved validated on schedule (for example quality, compliance, product marketing, digital, etc.).

Fast, continuous production

The operational processes in place for verifying product content are still far from smooth within businesses. Many still work with shared files via collaborative online tools, which were not originally designed with this in mind. The most popular approach uses the following process: defining an editorial team and verifying content by repeatedly sending files that integrate comments from all the parties involved until the final version is verified and approved by everyone for publication. This sort of approach undeniably lengthens production cycles with all the risks of pitfalls and possible errors that a process like this can entail.

Yet in retail, for example, creating and publishing content quickly, with agility, and with potential translations for each country's language across channels (e.g. Facebook posts, Pinterest, etc.), is a very real challenge.

For products or services with a very long sales cycle or a lower repeat purchase rate (cars, loans, a house purchase, etc.), it is vital to know how to produce continuous content to keep the audience coming back and to "nurture" the consumer.

Digital Customer Experience

Top 6 Major Content Production Challenges

Validation Process / Quality Control

- Legal entities - compliance with regulation (see allegations)
- Entities with product knowledge (see product marketing)
- External partners (see agencies)

Accelerated & Continuous Production

- Sharing and collaborating around content and editing processes (comments, additions, deletions...)
- Speed of creation - adaptation in real time
- Integrating processes

Differentiation

- Enriched content
- Personalized content
- User-friendly content
- Differentiating content (see commodity products and services, SEO optimization)

Content Broadcast Context

- Centralized vs. Decentralized(by country, brand...)
- Consistency on available channels, segmentation, and targeting
- Syndication - intermediation

(Re)Usage

- International - translation into different languages
- Local - representative practices and local habits
- Easy to pick up and broadcast whatever the tools - the channels

Digitalization & New Formats

- Digitalization of catalogs and product listings, on site content, packaging, etc.
- New video-based formats, narrative content, customer-based content, etc.

Source: MARKESS by exaegis



Promoting content in different ways

The channels used and the formats, reading habits, and potential constraints involved (e.g. variety of systems for receiving and reading content, ad blockers, protection against cookies, spam filters, etc.), are elements to bear in mind when creating content. Some content must also go through a process of legacy management, which involves following its history and its life cycle right up to its archiving and deletion.

It is essential to be able to create content that can easily be rolled out and tailored to every country where a company or its brand is operating. Once this content has been written, translation into English or into any other local languages may be necessary. Content has to reflect every country's different customs (eating habits, banking, social, etc.).

Specific content can be created to promote certain products in a precise context (e.g. recipes or product details on digital platforms or "click & collect" websites). This may mean that testing beforehand and coordination between the channels are necessary.

Standing out from the crowd

Further down the line, the biggest challenges linked to promoting content involve the personalization process, available data, and optimized omnichannel management, with all the issues of coherence and a consistent rollout. Content personalization is fundamental to e-commerce; a message tailored to the customer's profile and context (previous customer or new, value, repeat purchase rate, price sensitivities, etc.) undoubtedly has more impact. Personalization not only requires the right tools for implementing it, but also segment and differentiate content, suitable for each customer profile.

All content must be SEO friendly – even more so if the brand is up against a very competitive market. To stand out from the crowd, all the C-levels interviewed work with natural referencing for product content, to attract an audience and steer them towards their site(s).

In some sectors, such as banking and insurance, website experience is narrow: customers mainly visit the site to manage their online account. But there still needs to be targeted content under dedicated headings with customer loyalty as an objective rather than winning over customers to well-known, established brands.

"Publishing personalized content faster or more cost effectively is a priority for over 95% of global marketing leaders."

Sitecore and SoDa: rapport *Trends in Personalization 2019*:
[<https://www.sitecore.com/landing/corp/2019-sitecore-soda-trends-in-personalization-research-report>]

Digitalization and new formats

In many "traditional" retail and industrial companies, the process of digitalizing brochures and product details is still a manual task. Until recently, product marketing teams enter items by their references. Now, they have to develop new skills and move towards richer product information to make them stand out on websites, beyond mere pricing.

New formats are being adopted, such as video: this example was highlighted by 55% of the professionals involved in online commercial projects interviewed by MARKESS by exægis.³ It is being used for customer support, store visits, etc., and can be adapted for various channels - digital (websites, mobile apps, social media) as well as physical.

Lastly, it is essential to know how to create user-generated content as well as product content from the brands themselves, for B2B as well as for B2C.

#3

Learning from the approaches taken by market leaders





Responding to these challenges requires coherent coordination between all the parties concerned and at all the different stages of content creation and promotion whilst recognizing that the objectives they want to achieve might not necessarily be the same:

- Marketing managers will be addressing issues specific to the management of their operational campaigns (generating traffic, moves to create, and raise, interest in products and services, building on commitment, nurturing, etc.).
- Corporate communications managers will be pushing for a differentiation in content through creativity, that will use emotion and storytelling to appeal to customers.
- E-commerce management will be looking above all at the logic in content management, working towards conversion optimization throughout the order process.



- + The analysts at MARKESS by exægis have found that the most advanced companies have a structured working process for content creation and management, in the form of teams or partnerships between these different departments. For example, in a major travel company, the managers steering digital business and its connections with other channels (e.g web-to-call, web-to-shop, etc.) work alongside the branding management and content and design management teams. This synergy is essential for coordinating new content formats (videos, narrative content, etc.), which are key to sales in this market.
- + They generally have well-defined, segmented, and complementary attitudes in terms of products and services, as well as customer experience. They have clear editorial policies for making a difference to the customer experience, for justifying "value for money", and for distinguishing what is specific to their customer experience.

Summary of Preferred Approaches to Creating and Managing Customer Experience Content

APPROACHES

RATHER EXTERNAL

MIXED

RATHER INTERNAL

SUBCONTRACTING TO DIGITAL AGENCIES
OUTSOURCING SPECIFIC APPLICATION DEVELOPMENTS

1. Internal development of certain applications or functions to create and manage content or delegation of these developments to agencies
2. Broadcast content across a selected number of channels (digital and/or physical)
3. Centralization of content creation

THROUGH INTERNAL AGENCIES AND/OR RELEVANT SERVICES
STRONG USE OF MARKET-BASED APPLICATION SOLUTIONS

1. Existence of internal data factory and data science expertise to valorize customer data
2. Search for omni-channel coherence
3. Decentralization of some local content

Source: MARKESS by exægis

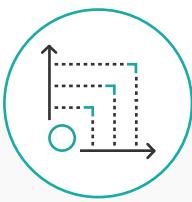
Even if the master content is steered centrally, it can be tailored for digital channels, according to local issues for example. There is autonomy, even though some processes may be centralized in terms of content, products, or brands.

Market leaders make use of appropriate, high-performance content management tools. The systems and solutions they use are also usually multi-market, or rolled out to each market with a certain degree of personalization depending on content, rights, or the market in question. The major travel company mentioned previously, for example, uses a CMS (Content Management System) for video content and descriptive content, which is created and managed with a DAM (Digital Asset Management) tool. This means content can be personalized on every channel. Depending on the range of products, it can be managed on a global, regional, or local level. Every marketing campaign follows the same process. This configuration is leading to a trend, which can be seen with the emerging use of CMP solutions (Content Marketing Platform), which are dedicated to managing all the content before it even reaches a CMS.

Trends in Content Creation and Management Among Pioneers



OPTIMIZING THE UTILIZATION OF AVAILABLE CUSTOMER DATA



CONTROLLING THE VOLUME OF CONTENT TO BE CREATED & MANAGED



ACTUAL OR ONGOING CONTENT CUSTOMIZATION



EVOLUTION TO NEW CONTENT FORMATS

VIDEOS NARRATIVE CONTENT CUSTOMER BASED-CONTENT



PROJECTS TO MONETIZE CONTENT

These market-leading businesses are interested in strategies, which let them value and monetize content, particularly content considered as assets, to be used by different applications internally and within the ecosystem. For example, one digital manager from a major industrial company discussed content syndication among stockists. The retail sector is pushing for content to be monetized in this way. Retailers are looking for new sources of revenue linked to promoting content on their digital platforms, which are now used as the prime displays in their stores. Techniques relating to this, such as retail media, are being developed. Retail media helps retailers to generate incremental revenue and to attract e-commerce or trend marketing budgets from the big CPG names, who are keen on these approaches as they can steer customers closer to the sales funnel.

The quest for omnichannel coherence is also close to their hearts. They are concerned about ensuring all the content promotion is consistent between different channels, and that it is tailored to each digital channel, and they systematically measure the overall impact.

“**The best-in-class companies, when it comes to content creation and management, place great importance on experimentation, “test & learn”, automation, analysis of the customer journey, and new optimization strategies.**”

The choice of whether to delegate content creation and management to external agencies bears no relation to companies' maturity in this area, even if it does seem to be the most advanced ones that tend to favor their internal resources. The decision to keep it in-house may in fact come down to complex verification processes that need pre-emptive legal advice (e.g. regulatory compliance issues). Going to external agencies may, in some circumstances, lengthen production and validation time for some content (e.g. going back and forth with packaging and product photos); setting up internal content engine-type structures can solve this problem and bring marketing teams closer to content teams.



#4

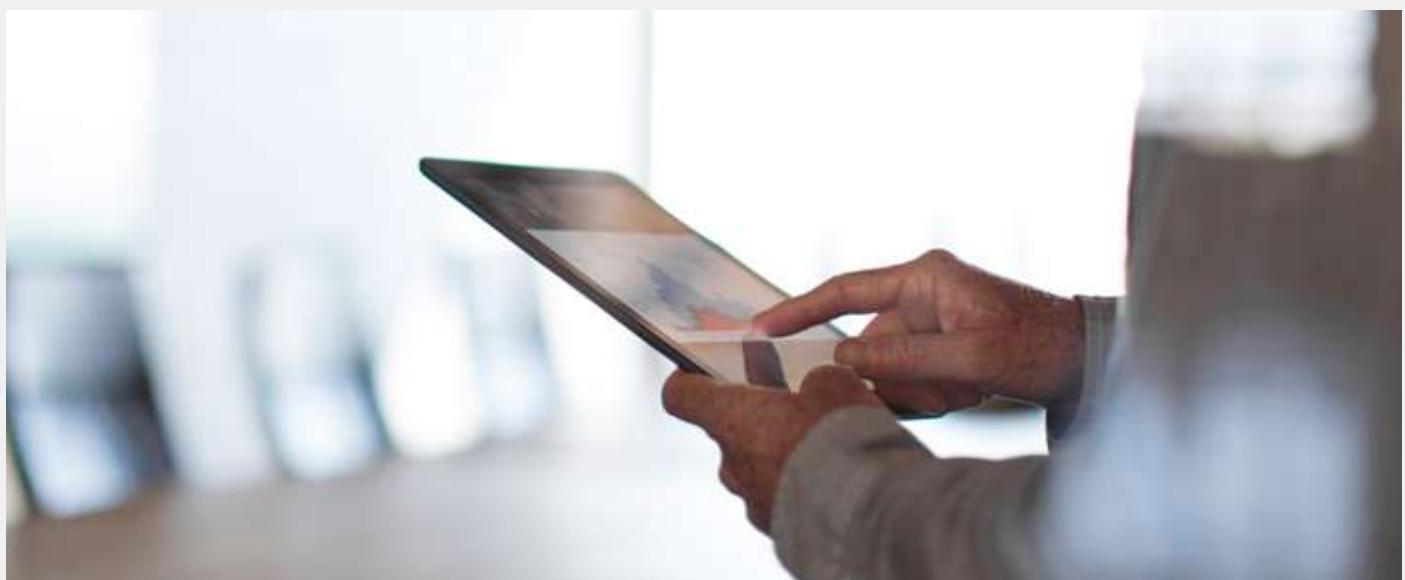
**Integrating the central role of
data for personalization and
better targeting**



"By personalizing interactions, a brand creates a close two-way relationship with customers, which ramps up their commitment and their loyalty. Social networks are emblematic of this phenomenon, with more and more customers keen on reading brand content on this channel, such as Snapchat 'stories.'⁵

Customers are demanding: they want to receive offers that correspond to their needs, on the channel of their choice, at the right time. To meet these expectations, businesses are focusing on projects to personalize interactions and the content that is consumed. Personalization and contextualization of the interactions within the customer journey have become key elements for a successful customer relationship. The 85% of professionals interviewed by MARKESS by exægis attach great importance (31%) or very great importance (54%) to the steps they are taking to improve the customer experience. From the main contributions that personalization and contextualization bring to the customer experience, 60% of the professionals mention their capacity to offer relevant offers at the right time and on the right channel, and 54% mention creating unique experiences and promoting customer commitment.⁴ Content plays an ever more determining role with this latter point.

In retail and e-commerce, 78% of professionals rely on digital technology to help them personalize content and messages to their clients and leads.⁵ The 39% of professionals interviewed, over all the sectors combined, indicate that personalization allows them to better identify content most likely to attract customers' attention.⁶



⁴ Foresight analysis by MARKESS by exægis 'Personalising & contextualising interactions within the customer journey', 2019 (French Report)

⁵ Strategic analysis by MARKESS by exægis: 'Intelligent online commerce: key digital issues and strategies to the end of 2020' (French Report)

⁶ Strategic analysis by MARKESS by exægis: 'The customer experience driven by data: approaches, issues and trends 2021' (French Report)

But there is definitely scope for content to be better consumed by customers than it is at the moment. And personalization, through the data available, will contribute to this. Having up-to-date, relevant customer data leads to improved audience segmenting, improved messaging, and a more personalized experience. But, while the function is often requested in the CMS tools used, personalization modules are far from being offered as a standard. And if they are, they are barely used. In 2019, few CMS tools on the market have integrated content personalization. If logic is to move towards an enriched customer experience thanks to personalization and commitment through content, DXP-type solutions (Digital Experience Platform) may be the way forward. In fact, only 60% of C-levels interviewed by MARKESS by exægis say they make effective use of the personalization modules offered by their content management solution.

Why is this rate so low? Several reasons account for it:

- Organizational processes are still mainly in silos, which means a 360° view of customers is not possible
- Personalization is carried out by using functions from other tools rather than the ones offered by the companies' CMS tools
- Companies are taking it one step at a time and want to have a unified customer database before starting a personalization project
- The various technological solutions used do not inter-operate with each other systematically and therefore an overall view of useful data is not available

Businesses do have tools for targeting and segmenting, to avoid spreading themselves too thinly and to maximize their return on investments from the impact of the content they promote. On the other hand, they are still far from having tools capable of personalizing their content throughout the digital phase and in real time, and cross-fertilizing elsewhere. Where it is available, personalization is carried out on the basis of elements sent via forms, and of navigation of a website, which the internet user has previously visited (e.g. cookies). And when it is effective on websites or e-commerce sites, it is generally less so on other channels such as mobile or voice channels. On mobile channels, personalization is generally only possible if the app that customers connect to is capable of recognizing them. If the customer switches to the voice channel (e.g. asks for the details of an offer), it is often difficult to personalize subsequent voice interactions because the agent in the call center will not usually have access to all the information.

Content personalization is far from straightforward for businesses that are at the very first stages of these projects; they say they lack, in most cases, the data essential to carry them out.

"By the end of 2021, 51% of the professionals interviewed by MARKESS by exægis foresee that they will make the task of personalization on their websites and e-commerce sites a priority."

#5

Standing out from the crowd through choice of technology stack



All the C-level executives interviewed by MARKESS by exægis rely on software to create and manage their content. Their priorities vary enormously in terms of functional modules and software. From a list of fifteen solutions or technology stacks on the market that can create an optimal digital customer experience, the decision-makers interviewed picked out seven types of tools that they say they need the most. These are, in descending order:

- CMS (Content Management System)
- DRM - DAM (Digital Rights Management - Digital Asset Management)
- Data Analytics
- Marketing Campaign & Automation
- Predictive Personalization and A/B Testing
- CDP - DMP (Customer Data Platform - Data Management Platform)
- PIM (Product Information Management)

By the end of 2020, 40% of professionals in the retail sector, and in companies in a similar economic field, say they will have more specific requirements for PIM solutions that will let them manage their product information better, and 35% mention DAM solutions for managing their digital assets.⁷ A DAM solution is often regarded as being necessary for managing a wide range of content.

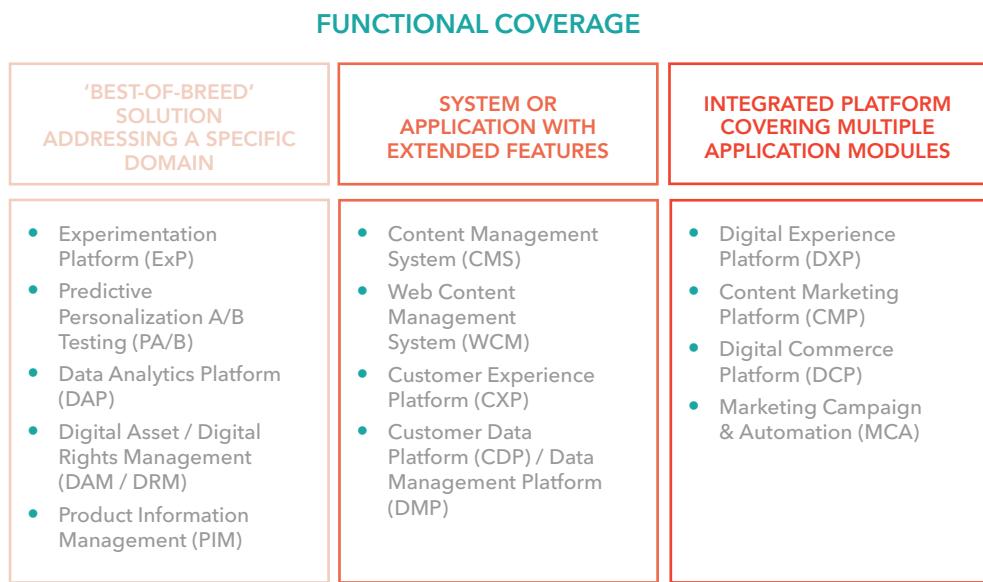
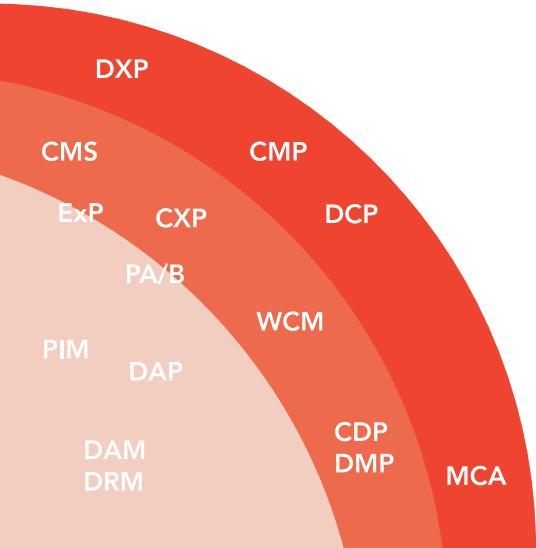
These solutions, which are often combined, can be distinguished from each other in two ways: their typology (front-end or back-end systems) and their functional coverage (from specialization in a precise functional area to platforms with extended functionalities, which can be integrated to varying degrees).



⁷ Strategic analysis by MARKESS by exægis: 'Intelligent online commerce: key digital issues and strategies to the end of 2020' (French Report)

Digital Customer Experience

Key Technology Stacks to Create, Manage and Deliver Content



Source: MARKESS by exaegis

In 2019, French businesses prefer to make use of best-of-breed solutions that may address cutting-edge functional specializations (such as "searchandizing"⁸), or systems with more widespread functions, in particular using CMS or WCM (Web Content Management) tools.

The most mature companies are starting to invest in integrated or unified platforms covering a wider spectrum of application modules within one solution; this could be a DXP - Digital Experience Platform⁹, a CMP - Content Marketing Platform or a DCP - Digital Commerce Platform. These platforms - using DXP as an example - can address different audiences with a coherent approach, regardless of touchpoint. They have integrated advanced functions for personalizing content and application services. By enabling a transversal and unique approach, they can help companies and their brands to improve product content sharing as well as the accompanying customer data, breaking down the silos that constrain them and that, in some cases, damage the coherence of what they are doing. They have different levels of response, depending on their origins (CMS or content portal for DXPs, marketing for CMPS, and business for DCPs).

Some companies focus on the integration that their "Marketing Campaign & Automation" solution provider can offer with the other solutions in its range. For these companies, their provider's ability to offer effective data analytics functions seems to be the key factor.

⁸ Search engine integrated within a site, allowing content to be personalized according to the internet user's preferences ⁹ Also called digital experience management platforms

⁹ Also called digital experience management platforms



More specifically relating to content management architecture, there is a trend that seems to be emerging: the “headless CMS” or “decoupled CMS”. Content management professionals are more and more keen on this, as it can mean they do not need to tie themselves to a monolithic technical model that may be difficult to upgrade. The headless CMS can decouple the link between the front-end systems (display and content publication) and back-end systems (content creation and storage) that they have to interact with. Headless CMS allows for two distinct layers; contents are created and modified at the back end, then broadcast for publication on any type of front end user experience via application microservices or APIs.¹⁰ The same content can be broadcast over very varied environments (websites, smartphones, connected devices, terminals, PWA (Progressive Web Apps), etc.) without any difference to the content of the user experience. This architecture means companies can concentrate on content creation without having to worry about display and publication compatibility. It is more flexible, can mean faster content publication, and is more versatile in terms of upgradeability.

All the C-level executives interviewed by MARKESS by exægis who are familiar with a headless CMS attach great importance to it. One digital manager from a large retail company said he believes the headless CMS means increased agility, particularly from the point of view of technical and IT teams, as well as increased speed, with faster site and application changes. He thinks it means they can avoid the problem of “launching expensive projects, which are never-ending.”

Being in control of the costs associated with digital content creation and management is another major challenge that businesses have to face. The choice of underlying technology stack undeniably plays a role in the payback period for the investments made.

The last thing to note is the increase in the use of SaaS-type solutions (Software as a Service). For example, 70% of professionals working within retail or similar areas (e.g. travel, tourism, hospitality, transport, retail banking, CPG, etc.) will be using this sort of solution by the end of 2020.¹¹

“The choice of technology stack depends more on companies’ current situations and whatever their priorities may be.”

¹⁰ Application Programming Interface

¹¹ Strategic analysis by MARKESS by exægis: ‘Intelligent online commerce: key digital issues & strategies to the end of 2020’ (French Report)

CONCLUSION

How critical digital content creation and management is depends very much on the type of business. Digital content plays a key role – especially in very competitive markets, for very general items, where the purchasing process may be impulsive, and when it's often repeated on a short-term, regular basis. It revolves around using content for strategic advantage, including to defend the position of a brand of product or service, to justify prices, to convince customers of their brands' value proposition, or to offer assurances about their impact in terms of consumption or use.

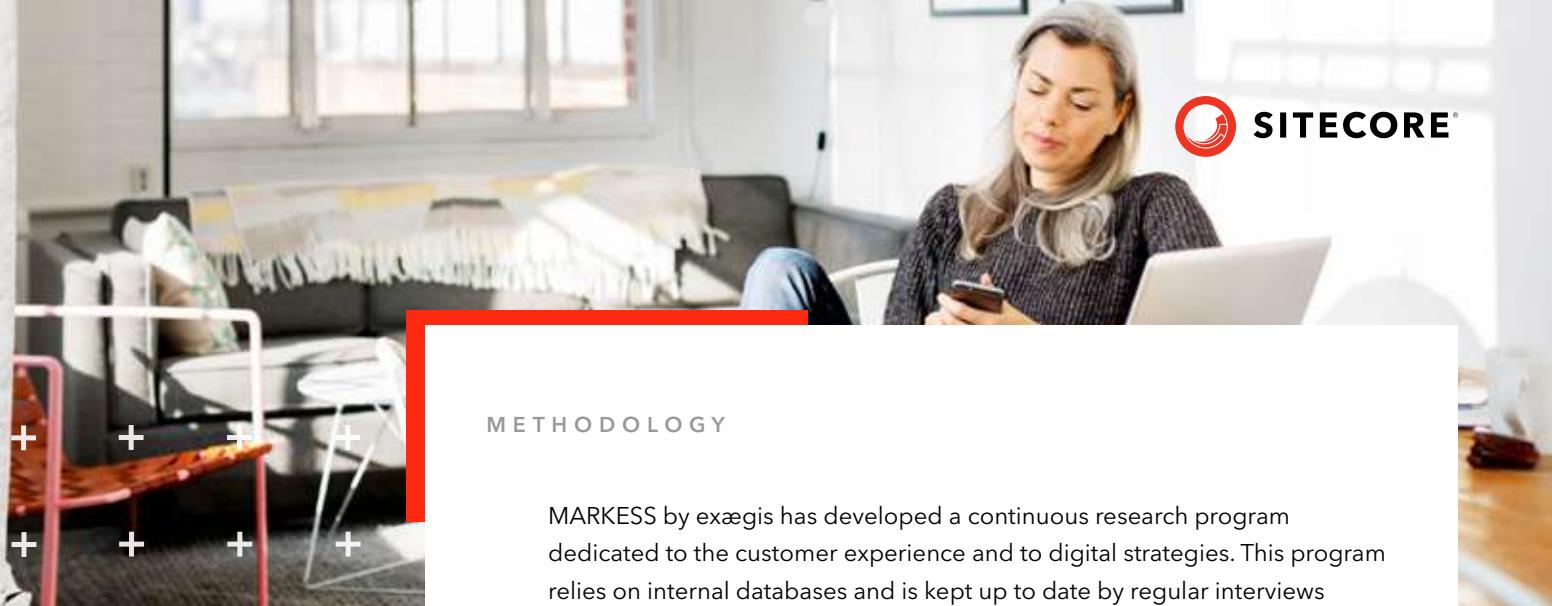
Regardless of a company's sector or goals, challenges with digital content production, and its consumption throughout its life cycle, remain pretty much similar. Businesses need to overcome six main challenges: improving the processes of validating product content and its quality control; speeding up content production and being able to produce it continuously; improving its broadcasting and using it in different ways; standing out with their user experience; and embracing the use of new digital formats.

The most mature businesses adopt inspiring strategies for creating and managing their digital content. Among other things, they work towards coherent cooperation between all the parties concerned, prioritizing anything that helps them stand out from the crowd through their customer experience and through their unique selling points, agility in their content adaptation and promotion (according to target groups, countries, and markets), using appropriate, high-performance content management tools, and adding value to product content.

They put customer data at the center of their systems, particularly for better targeting and personalizing content.

In terms of back-end organization, they implement a “content engine” with the aim, among other things, of speeding up their content planning, creating, and validating processes (before going to distribution channels). With this in mind, they are keen on headless-type approaches. As for the front end, their “Digital Factory” is in charge of industrializing customer experience production and scenarios across every channel. They rely on tools that enable them to supply engaging, personalized content at the right time and on the right channel, in other words taking the context and the available customer data into account.





METHODOLOGY

MARKESS by exægis has developed a continuous research program dedicated to the customer experience and to digital strategies. This program relies on internal databases and is kept up to date by regular interviews with management teams (marketing, sales, communication, e-commerce, customer relations, etc.) as well as with DSI and digital management. The data mentioned in this document put together for Sitecore comes from two sources:

- Online interviews conducted with a total of over 400 decision-makers working within marketing, e-commerce, digital, customer relations, and IT management. These interviews were conducted in 2018 and 2019 as part of annual surveys by MARKESS by exægis. These surveys included questions relating in particular to personalization and contextualization of interactions within the customer journey as well as online commerce.
- Five 60-minute telephone interviews conducted between the end of July and the end of August 2019 with C-level executives¹² whose work covers critical problems with content management, relating to the customer experience. These C-levels have high-level decision-making duties within their companies: Digital Manager, Head of Digital Marketing, Group Chief Digital Officer, Deputy CEO, etc. They work for large companies in the sectors of retail, travel and tourism, retail, banking, and industry (agro-foods and automotive).

As some information communicated within these interviews may deal with strategic matters, MARKESS by exægis is committed to respecting the confidentiality of these interviews.

Given the size of their companies and their level of responsibility, these C-levels have extensive knowledge of the subject in question. Other stakeholders in their companies may also, however, be concerned with the subject and have problems specific to their scope of responsibility.

All the decision-makers interviewed by MARKESS by exægis for their strategic and foresight analyses have responsibilities within private companies or public organizations based in France, some operating internationally.

¹² People at a decision-making level within their organisations. The C stands for 'Chief'. The C-levels generally have a position of management or responsibility within their organisations (at a management, service, department or project level, for example).

BIOGRAPHY OF THE ANALYST

This report was written by Emmanuelle Olivié-Paul, Associate Director of MARKESS by exægis. Emmanuelle Olivié-Paul has over 25 years of experience in the world of digital and information technology, specializing in digital uses, software markets, and IT services.

She is head of research and manages foresight analyses and strategic consultancy projects (benchmarks, digital innovation, best practice identification, understanding new digital business models, positioning of providers and competitive analysis, market evaluation and segmentation, partner identification, etc.) within the company. Her main expertise is in the fields of digital marketing and the customer experience, cloud computing, and the innovations underlying this model, mobile use and connected devices, analytics, and artificial intelligence.

Before joining MARKESS by exægis, Emmanuelle Olivié-Paul worked not only for national and international consultancy firms but also within the electronics industry.

About MARKESS by exægis

MARKESS by exægis is an independent research company specializing in market analysis and digital transformation strategies in companies and organizations. The company carries out several thousand interviews with decision-makers and contractors each year to help user organizations to better understand, and take advantage of, digital technology, while supporting providers at a strategic and operational level to speed up their growth in the French market. Since May 2018, the company has been part of the exægis Group, the ratings and operational guarantee advising agency in the digital sector. You can find out more at www.markess.com.



Why Sitecore

At Sitecore, our team of experts has been building enterprise software for more than 20 years, so we've pretty much seen it all.

As the most flexible and connected digital experience platform, we empower the world's biggest brands to create truly personal relationships with their customers by unifying content, commerce and data with a built-in superpower – always-on personalization. As consumers have evolved to buying experiences, not just products, brands can't afford to stay stagnant and still be competitive.

Partnering with Sitecore provides you with industry-leading tools and unmatched support that will allow you to build brand loyalty with your customers like never before.

Sitecore's ability to personalize digital experiences is second to none.

We learn from all interactions – online, offline and anonymous – and we apply that data and insight in real time across channels at scale. No one else can do this – it's just one of our key differentiators. Let's talk about the others.

For more information, follow us at [@sitecore on Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) or visit [sitecore.com](#).

Sitecore is the global leader in experience management software that combines content management, commerce, and customer insights. The Sitecore Experience Cloud™ empowers marketers to deliver personalized content in real time and at scale across every channel—before, during, and after a sale. More than 5,200 brands—including American Express, Carnival Cruise Lines, Dow Chemical, and L'Oréal—have trusted Sitecore to deliver the personalized interactions that delight audiences, build loyalty, and drive revenue.

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