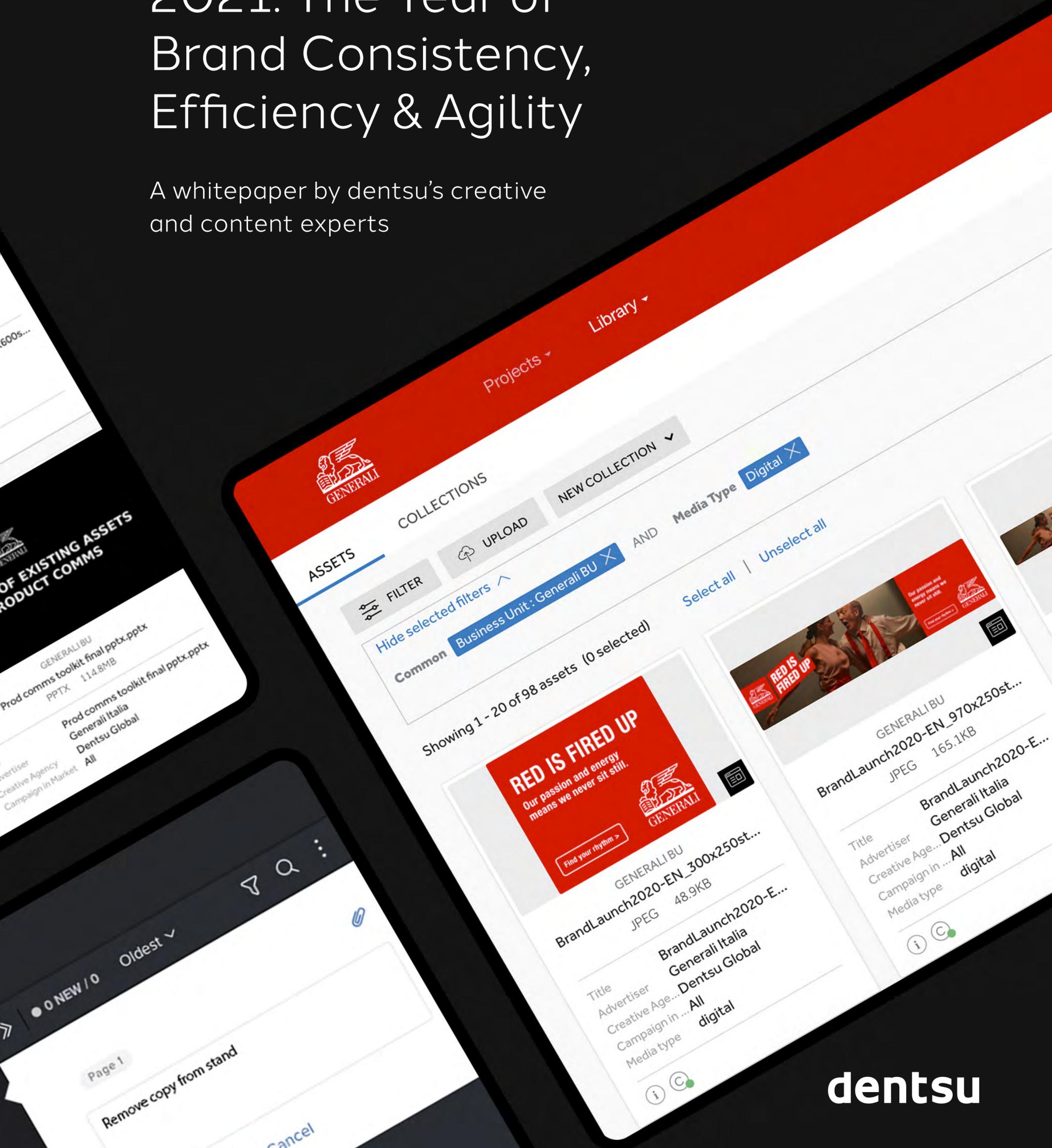
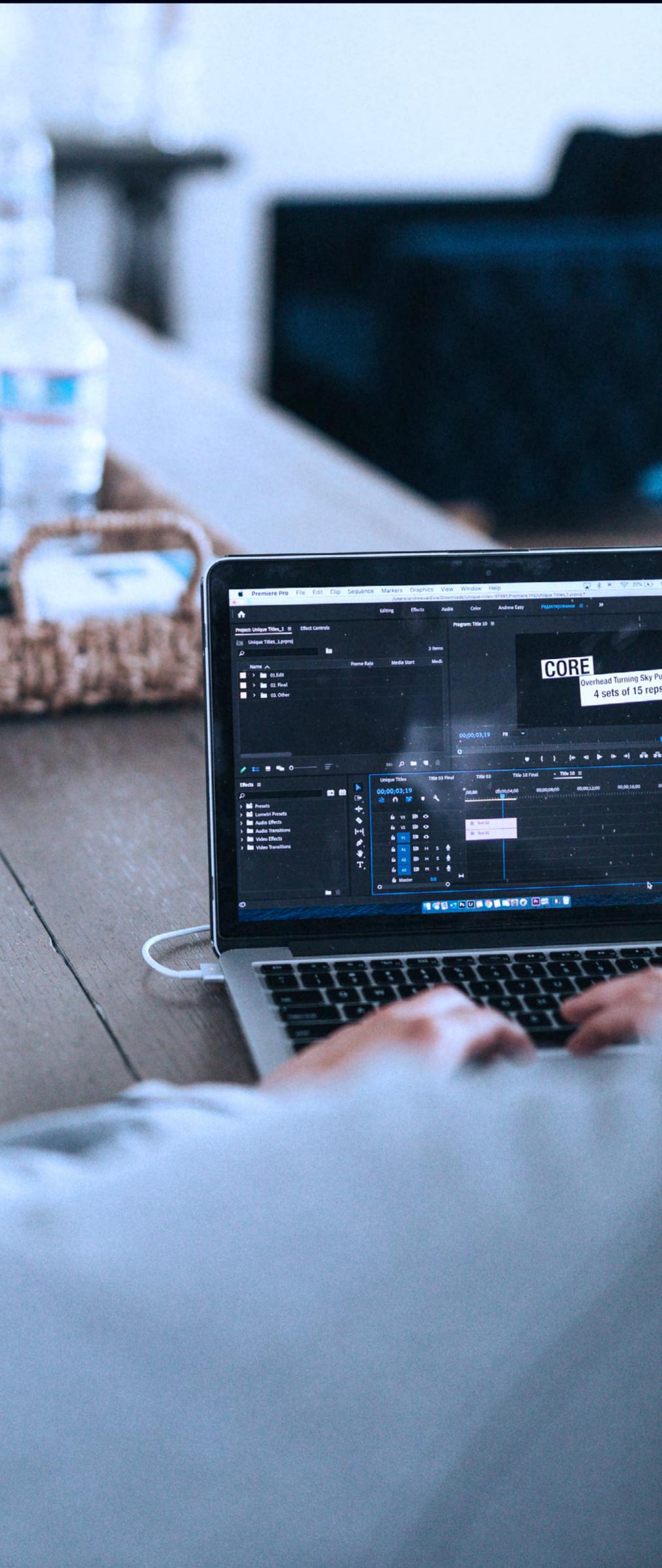




2021: The Year of Brand Consistency, Efficiency & Agility

A whitepaper by dentsu's creative and content experts





The last few years has seen a revolution in content; from the demands and expectations of the consumer to the advances in technology and process that support new levels of innovation from marketers. When Covid-19 swept the globe in 2020, leaving a lasting impact on all business, the increased reliance on digital accelerated this revolution.

In February 2021, dentsu conducted a survey across 200 marketers in the UK and US to understand the current climate and how the pandemic had contributed to its changes. Our results reveal that brand consistency and quality remain dominant themes. However, consumer expectation, heightened by the pandemic and the reliance on digital, created a strengthened focus on efficiency and agility with the need to deliver content that is relevant, fast. With many brands facing challenges in complexity of agency resource and process that had built up prior to Covid, there is strong agreement that a content solution is required to ensure the priorities of the 2021 marketing climate are met.



There is a content revolution underway. Consumer behaviour has been evolving steadily over the last few years, with increased global connectivity and cutting-edge technology influencing how we interact with brands and creating opportunities for new, creative and immersive experiences.

In 2020, the pandemic created an acceleration in this evolution. With in-person activity restricted, digital became the primary means of engaging people. The demand increased for highly personalised content, brand authenticity and the agility to quickly adapt to changing circumstances, all the time while providing a consistent, high-quality brand experience. To remain relevant, marketers needed to align their strategies with the new climate, harnessing content solutions that meet these adjusted priorities to retain their market share.

To achieve a deeper understanding of the challenges facing marketers in 2021, Dentsu commissioned a research study amongst marketing decision-makers across a range of industry sectors and company sizes in the UK and US. This report presents our findings, collated from 200 online surveys. It evaluates how these results can support CMOs and marketers in their decision-making, leveraging solutions to help navigate the content revolution of 2021.

Changes in customer behaviour and expectations have been gradually gaining momentum over the last few years. To engage consumers and drive growth, brands need to offer a seamless experience across all touchpoints and in all markets. While new technologies, such as AR, VR and mixed reality experiences, provide opportunities to capture audiences' imagination, these expectations, heightened by the rapidly changing circumstances of Covid-19, have made it critical for brands to be agile and adapt their content quickly to stay relevant and appropriate.

A wide range of challenges

The marketing decision-makers, who participated in our survey, reported a wide range of challenges experienced in the current climate. However, ongoing themes emerged, such as delivering quality and consistency at scale and managing multiple stakeholders, channels, and processes to achieve their objectives in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

Generating consistent content

The power of brands has been a dominating theme over the last few years. Consumers want more than just disjointed transactional experiences. Instead, they seek meaningful interactions, engaging with brands that consistently demonstrate values that align with their own across all their interfaces. The importance of brand consistency was strongly reflected in the opinions of the marketers, with 88% recognising that this aspect of their content creation was crucial to maintain. As consumers expect to be met with the same brand experience across all touchpoints, which in themselves have become more numerous thanks to the digital revolution, it is unsurprising that maintaining consistency is an area of concern for many marketers. 84% of our respondents reported seeing content generation in the current

environment as a challenge, and three quarters have seen it get more demanding over the last 12 months.

Focusing on efficiency

In dentsu's [CMO survey 2020](#)¹, being accountable for the growth of its customer base was a core metric for CMOs. With a shrink in consumer spending as a result of the pandemic, predictably, efficiency is taking precedence for marketers in 2021. Our study revealed that two-thirds of marketing decision-makers ranked marketing and workflow efficiencies as a top priority. When evaluating where these inefficiencies were currently found, managing multiple partners across production and distribution (42%) and inconsistent use of workflows across markets (41%) were two areas frequently identified.

With the demand for content increasing rapidly over the last few years, brands have onboarded tens to hundreds of siloed agencies and incorporated multiple processes and disconnected tech platforms. This immediate solution for increasing content needs has left brands with a complexity of web of partners and formats that are hindering efficiency. Harnessing a content solution that brings together agencies, assets and workflows and centralises them for greater visibility and control would help brands to streamline their content generation and also deliver greater brand consistency when working at scale. Most marketers are already familiar with using sharing points to support brand consistency. Just over half report using some form of a brand hub, accessed via a shared intranet, and/or collaborate via cloud-based technology. Therefore, improving upon this technology and taking on board a centralised, cloud-based platform, accessed by all stakeholders, would not be a significant leap in working methods but could offer substantial benefits.



— A STRENGTHENED FOCUS ON OTHER CONTENT PRIORITIES

2020 was a turbulent time for many businesses, and, as new strategies are put in place for recovery and growth, our research showed that marketers do not perceive these changes as insignificant or transient. In fact, 85% of brands are looking to transform their business for the long-term.

The need for speed and relevance

A climate of rapidly changing global circumstances has seen over three-quarters of marketers experience a change in their content production requirements, with a similar proportion recognising the difficulty in responding to cultural events within an effective timeline. As many current content solution models rely on a complex web of partners, using a hybrid strategy of outsourcing expertise and leveraging in-house capabilities, the expectation to deliver relevant content in a quickly changing environment is understandably challenging.

When exploring a brand's media strategy, 86% of those asked reported a change incurred by the pandemic. Covid-19 was seen to be a determining factor in the need for high-quality, creative content that resonated with people (85%) and the importance of creating it quickly (84%). Furthermore, to fulfil these demands, over eight in ten marketers revealed an increased reliance on technology to automate processes.

Utilising technology, such as content management platforms, will enable the automation of many functions within workflows, harnessing creative expertise and making it more accessible across markets, which, in turn, will ensure more efficient turnarounds.

Consolidation of resource to gain visibility and control

Efficiency and consistency persist as themes throughout our research, with eight in ten respondents looking to consolidate their agency partners, as the inefficiency of different markets having differing workflows is recognised. Meanwhile, a strong 84% see an opportunity to leverage content production platforms to improve brand perception. Both these objectives will enable marketers to gain full visibility of brand activity, optimise ROI and steer the company towards growth.

The required solutions

Centralising infrastructure to deliver quality and consistency at scale

Moving forward, 84% of marketers surveyed agreed that a high-quality, consistent brand experience was essential for sales performance and business growth. With over three-quarters of our survey respondents reporting that the quality of their content suffered as production was scaled up, and eight in ten marketers identifying a need for a centralised infrastructure, it is unsurprising that 85% of respondents agreed a solution that fulfilled the demand for creative content at a global scale was required. In harnessing a centralised platform, brands could benefit from:

- Visibility & control of all content generation across markets to support quality and brand consistency
- Consistency in workflows & infrastructure
- Adaptability for appropriate localisation
- A centralised access point for all marketing assets
- Agility and speed in adapting to changing circumstances

\$30.7B

AR, VR & MR market will reach \$30.7B in 2021.

Maximising the opportunities offered through AI technology

AI is another vital element of the solution to managing brand content challenges in the future. Statista forecasts that the global augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR) market will reach \$30.7 billion in 2021, with an increase to \$300 billion in 2024. Although three-quarters of marketers surveyed report having the AI technology in place today to manage their content production, this technology is sure to evolve rapidly and having the infrastructure in place to roll it out to all markets consistently will be invaluable.

\$300B

Increasing to \$300 billion in 2024.

Moving forward

Last year has undoubtedly shown us that change can happen quickly and with significant impact.

As business activity begins to strengthen again, the lesson learned for marketers from 2020 must be agility across their content generation.

Attitudes overall are positive. Three-quarters of marketers surveyed expected to see improvements in the challenges faced. However, the need for transformation is evident. Nearly two-thirds of UK marketers are considering investing in production or content management platforms and, with 70% of UK respondents looking to streamline their marketing plans, it is deduced that these investments are being made to better deliver on priorities such as efficiency, consistency and agility established over the last twelve months.

3/4

Of marketers surveyed expected to see improvements in the challenges faced

2/3

Of the marketers we surveyed are considering investing in content management platforms

Content Symphony is a world-class production services solution from dentsu.

Working with multiple global leading brands, dentsu has seen how the organic build-up of content solutions has led to challenges for its clients. The fragmentation and complexity of agencies and processes were hindering control and visibility, leading to problems with brand consistency and efficiency, even pre-pandemic. In the current climate, these challenges have been amplified.

In recognising this need, dentsu has developed Content Symphony; a world-class production services solution, purpose-built to access the best creative global talent while comprehensively centralising every element of the content lifecycle.

Content Symphony is a dentsu International service and solution created by dentsu's creative, content and production agencies that provides brands with integrated production services, globally enabled by technology and powered by delivery excellence. It aggregates all content data under one technology ecosystem, making automated and optimised marketing a reality.

It responds to marketers call for flexibility and control, but also provides them and the procurement teams with transparency through live data and reporting on spend and costs.

The Content Symphony offering provides an integrated modular solution and always-on right-on shoring model, with a revolutionary technology ecosystem that -aggregates all data from creative, media performance and production performance.

This provides automated optimisation across all marketing activities and unified data reporting that enables global visibility, control as well as constantly driving ROI.

To date, it has delivered 75,000 project files, handles 4,000 library assets with 47,000 deliveries via ad stream across 36 markets globally.

There are two main components: the production services and the platform.

The production services

The Production Services leverage a right-shoring model, where your work is produced by the experts who know it best, driving maximum value and efficiency. With 30 studios that include 2,000 artists in larger hubs for efficiency (Argentina, CEE, India) and smaller teams on prem studios for high-touch creative work, through Content Symphony our production services offer 24/7 access to creative talent around the globe and in all markets. This set-up supports a 'big organising idea' or Theme, for global brand consistency, while also enabling Variance for local relevance.

The platform

The platform is a cloud-first, integrated set of AI-enabled tools that use innovation and automation to offer best-in-class technology, solutions and a seamless workflow that delivers on scale and flexibility.

From creation to distribution and analysis, all of a brand's marketing assets and workflows are managed through the platform. While delivering a 'single source of truth' that ensures brand consistency, the platform also supports variance in local markets. Content Symphony integrates the latest technology, including AR, VR and MR, and has the scope to evolve alongside future developments to ensure brands continually deliver experiences that are innovative in the market. Integrating these two components, Content Symphony provides a more efficient, consistent content production solution that harnesses global creative talent for high-quality results while offering complete visibility and control to enable the best possible ROI for a brand's marketing strategies.

To learn more about Content Symphony, please follow the link below to download our [e-book](#).

RED JUMPS UP



— CASE STUDY

Operating in over 60 countries, via 450+ companies and with 80k employees, Generali is an extremely complex organisation that has grown organically over time to include a wide variety of brands and markets.

The challenge

Generali saw the need to have a more centralised approach to their communications, to help create more efficiency, consistencies and cost saving across markets. Local markets are using different platforms, with various levels of technology that may or may not have been capturing data. Visibility was lacking, particularly when seeking a holistic overview of the content solutions. The result was marketing inefficiencies and inconsistent messaging, that, in turn, led to missed opportunities to further scale the business and attract new customers. A platform was needed to offer a consistent approach to marketing, to reduce inefficiencies, scale their business and attract new customers.

The solution

Content Symphony provided a fully integrated solution across the entire lifecycle of their content requirement, bringing together Creative, Content Production and Media Buying on one platform.

From the platform, we created the master campaign strategy and then localised and adapted across different markets.

How this was achieved

From the best-in-class global design, we leveraged consumer and industry insight to learn about the clients' unique challenges and adapted the platform set-up and workflows to meet their requirements.

Content Symphony's production model of Theme (the globally consistent master idea) and Variation (localised market nuances) were embedded from the start. We approached the Global master tool kits with a modular production mindset. We then took the modular content and generated adaptation assets across 22 markets. Included were all the assets for local markets to use as building blocks to create their own local versions of the content. The master assets provided consistency in approach with the flexibility to select the most appropriate content set for relevance in each local market.

Assets are all delivered from the same platform to the relevant media destinations. All rights of the assets are tracked, and unpublished or disabled should the usage rights expire or not be covered in a designated local market.

The benefits for the client

With Content Symphony allowing for a single source of truth, all global markets can be accessed in one place. In post-Covid times, secure global access to toolkits and assets, anywhere at any time, is proving extremely valuable. Assets can be created and AI-tagged, using comprehensive data that support easy retrieval by different markets as and when required. With approvals, tracking and annotation all actioned from the platform, there is a centralised management and version control over the assets for correct and timely delivery. The integrated workflow, and visibility it provides, allows for a tracking of project status and key milestones hit for each market from a holistic dashboard view to ensure everything is always on track.

Distribution of assets from the platform completes the end-to-end visibility. Intelligence on the usage and performance of the assets can be accessed via real-time data reporting, and, with an integration of finance data, the ROI can also be measured.

The tracking of usage rights solves a key challenge faced by global industries, avoiding breaches and subsequent hefty fines.



3K

Total Assets

471

Master Assets

120

Team Members

Appendix:

Sources

1. dentsu CMO survey 2020

<https://www.dentsu.com/our-latest-thinking/>

2 Statista Research Department, Forecast augmented (AR) and virtual reality (VR) market size worldwide from 2016 to 2020, November 2020

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/591181/global-augmented-virtual-reality-market-size/>

About dentsu International

Part of dentsu, dentsu international is made up of leadership brands - Carat, dentsu X, iProspect, Isobar, dentsumcgarrybowen and Merkle and supported by its specialist brands. Dentsu International helps clients to win, keep and grow their best customers and achieve meaningful progress for their businesses. With best-in-class services and solutions in media, CXM, and creative, dentsu international operates in over 145 markets worldwide with more than 45,000 dedicated specialists.

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