INTRODUCTION

There are diverse opinions in literature on the meaning of the term ‘content’ going by the different definitions encountered in the course of writing this book. The lack of unanimity on what constitutes ‘content’ suggests that the definition of ‘local content’ is most certainly not cast in stone. This chapter first begins by unpacking the concept of content, before proceeding to local content, and how they can be applied to enhance the business values of SMEs in the global digital economy. Some literature tends to suggest that if an idea, or information, knowledge or data, is not in digital format, then it is not content. Siemens (2003) falls into this category, believing content to consist of e-journals, images, graphics, videos, movies, websites, online databases, emails, online news, software, and animations, among others. Claiborne (2005) simply defines content as the “stuff on your site”. Some definitions do not differentiate between the media and content, while others perceive
content to be recorded information or knowledge. Other definitions gleaned from the Web follow: content is everything included in a collection (WordReference, 2008); content refers to material that is of interest to users, such as text, images, music and movies (The Linux Information Project, 2005); content refers to information and experiences that may provide value to an end-user/audience (Wikipedia); and content is published information and experiences found in novels, movies, music, games, web pages, presentations, organised data, etc (Wiktionary). In their diversity, these varied definitions provide a framework for redefining the term ‘content’ on the one hand and ‘local content’ on the other.

From the definitions provided, one can notice a shift from the previously held notion that the format has to be digital in order for the object to be considered content. This notion may have perhaps arisen out of the tremendous impact of ICT and the Internet on content creation and distribution processes since the 90s, when the Internet revolution took off. During the last decade, there have been growing calls to generate content and make it available through new media in order to empower communities and create an inclusive knowledge society (UNESCO, 2005). Thus, in latter day definitions of content, there is less emphasis on the media or conduit (container) and more on the ‘containee’. It is now more stringently acknowledged that the process of generating content (product, process or service) inevitably involves human or intellectual effort. What is ‘content’ must also be of use to the end-user.

It is important when redefining content to exercise caution so that media or conduits are not confused with the term. For example, a computer is not content, but the data stored in it is; a mobile phone is not content, but short message services (SMSs) are; and a book and website are not content, but the information contained within them are. Similar interpretations can apply to blogs, social networking sites, digital libraries, digital repositories, TV, radio, newspapers, etc; which are often perceived as content, when in fact they are media or conduits.

Consequently, ‘content’ is defined in this chapter as an intellectual process that results in a product (e.g. information, knowledge, website, song, dance, record, design, artefact, system, etc); process (e.g. engineering procedure, an algorithm, workflow, rules, etc); and service (e.g. public service broadcasting, news, advertisements, presentations, content scrapping, video on demand, animations, etc).
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