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Abstract

In the media industry, high-quality content is difficult to design, develop, and manage. Any success prediction is hardly possible (besides high production values). Within media economics, content (e.g., movies and books) is conceptualized as an experience good. Its quality, emotional utility (enjoyment, etc.), and functional value (information, entertainment, etc.) are unknown until consumed. Audience approval is highly uncertain and difficult to predict in advance. The authors propose a model to guide content practioners.

Box 10.1 Learning Objectives

- Explain why content strategy is central to media entrepreneurship in contemporary, platform-driven media environments.
- Describe how, in the creator economy, content functions as a dynamic, evolving process rather than a fixed media product.
- Identify key principles of strategic entrepreneurship and link them to media enterprises.
- Link the seven pillars of the Content-as-an-Entrepreneurial-Strategy (CaaES) model to describe how audiences, platforms, and feedback influence content decisions in digital media entrepreneurship.
- Describe how content strategy helps media entrepreneurs manage uncertainty, resource constraints, and growth.
- Apply basic content strategy concepts such as goals, audiences, platforms, and content models to the analysis of media enterprises.

Introduction

In the media industry, high-quality content is difficult to design, develop, and manage. Any success prediction is hardly possible (besides high production values). Within media economics, content (e.g., movies and books) is conceptualized as an experience good. Its quality, emotional utility (enjoyment, etc.), and functional value (information, entertainment, etc.) are unknown until consumed. Audience approval is highly uncertain and difficult to predict in advance.

This uncertainty is even more pronounced in contemporary, platform-based media environments. The value proposition of services like Shazam (a music identification app) cannot be fully understood before use. Unlike the relatively stable outputs of legacy media—such as a printed newspaper—contemporary media offerings are dynamic, interactive, and continuously evolving. Content is not a finished product but a living experience that unfolds over time through user interaction, personalization, and platform-mediated engagement. By sensing audience needs, building brand identity, fostering collaboration, and creating real-time value, content is an ongoing process.

Historically, much has changed since Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates famously popularized the phrase “Content is King” in 1996, when he predicted the internet would become a massive marketplace for information and entertainment, with valuable content driving revenue (Gates, 1996). At the time, the claim was an optimistic take on the internet’s ability to reward creativity through expanded and democratized access to audiences.

Since then, the “Content is King” phrase has taken considerable (yet controversial) ground in media and journalism thinking and practice. One impact of this idea has been the development of research on strategies content creators may use to reach their audience more effectively. This approach is called *content strategy*.

One might be tempted to say that great stories, shows, music, articles, books, or films drive success, and quality has historically prevailed (Ferguson, 2018). In practice, however, popularity has been supported by the significant power of centralized control of mass media, which has complete control of distribution and access. Under these conditions, quality was filtered and amplified through centralized gatekeeping rather than discovered organically.

In today’s media environment, success is hence less clearly linked to content alone. Distribution *platforms*, algorithm curation, branding, and audience data often matter just as much—or more. The “Content is King” mantra is now largely complemented by “Technology is Queen.” While content drives engagement and value, technology serves as the foundation that enables content to be distributed and monetized. In other words, content alone is not enough to be successful.

As indicated above, in the digital *creator economy*, *content* is defined as any creative process and output that is not principally mass-mediated but crafted by creators operating outside of standardized legacy media workflows.

In entrepreneurship research, “content” is not typically used in this way, not because entrepreneurs do not create content, but because entrepreneurial researchers do not discuss content in the same way; they use “content” to refer to substantive elements of entrepreneurial activity—opportunities, ideas, value propositions, resources, and actions—rather than the media products through which those elements are expressed. “Content” in the context of *entrepreneurship* is not easily distinguished from the materials that constitute entrepreneurial activity.

On the other hand, in media and communication studies, “content” is used more familiarly. It describes a bundle of messages, narratives, or information encoded in various media formats and delivered through specific channels to fulfil audience needs or organizational objectives. In media management, “content” is the *primary product* that media companies create, package, distribute, and monetize, and is thus discussed as a core economic asset and strategic resource.

The “*creator economy*” draws from both traditions but doesn’t neatly fit into either. In it, “content” includes any form of symbolic, informational, or entertainment material produced for an audience, yet it is created through decentralized, platform-mediated practices rather than through the standardized production systems of mass media or the abstract resource frameworks of entrepreneurship theory.

Let us offer two examples: A news blogger’s content generally refers to any material they publish that reports on, analyzes, or comments on current events. Unlike traditional journalism, news blogging is often more informal, quicker-paced, and opinion-laden. Somebody who shares content on Instagram creates an identity around self-expression, builds an audience, or promotes an idea or else. Because Instagram is visual-first, the content type revolves heavily around photos and videos.

In the academic discourse, *mass media content* is categorized into format/genre-based (text, audio, visual, video, interactive, hybrid, etc.; and news, documentary, action, etc.), function-based (information, education, entertainment), audience-based (all types of segmentation), and platform-based categories (streaming series, TikTok challenges, etc.).

Content in the *creator economy* is categorized differently, based on length (short form, long form, live streams), format/type (video, audio, text, art, games, courses), purpose (entertaining, educational, inspirational), monetization model (ads, subscriptions, products, sponsored value), audience journey stage (awareness, nurturing, conversion), all supported by *platforms* (YouTube, TikTok) and tools (AI, analytics) that facilitate creation and distribution, ultimately aiming to build communities and generate income. Seemingly, this all fits better with an overall business strategy. This emphasis on content as a product has necessitated a focus on specific niche audiences and their needs as opposed to a general audience.

For example, Gary Vaynerchuk, a serial entrepreneur and expert in digital marketing and social media, as well as chairman of New York-based communications company VaynerX and CEO of VaynerX subsidiary VaynerMedia, describes his *content strategy* as follows.

“My *content strategy* is predicated on a ‘reverse pyramid’ model. It starts with a piece of ‘pillar content.’ With my personal brand, it takes the form of a daily vlog, a keynote, a Q&A show, or another video that I do. Since I start from video, my team can repurpose that one piece of content into dozens of smaller pieces of content, contextual to the platforms that we distribute them to. This could take many different forms — for example, if you’re not comfortable on video, you could record a podcast. You might even film yourself recording the podcast so you could have a video out of it as well. And from that video or audio clip, you can create content for *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, and more. Personally, I create a ton of content. I publish a new episode every day on the GaryVee Video Experience, which is distributed on my *YouTube* channel, *Facebook Watch* Page, and *IGTV*. I then also have a daily podcast called the GaryVee Audio Experience, which is distributed on *iTunes*, *Overcast*, and *Stitcher*, amongst some other *platforms*. In addition to what I just mentioned, I continually post *micro content*, that is distributed to my *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, *LinkedIn*, *Quora*, and many of my other social channels. *Micro content* is created from each episode and is used to drive awareness back to the original long-form content. Long story short, I am constantly creating and posting as much content as possible and in a way that is contextual to each platform” (GaryVee, 2019).

Indeed, entrepreneurial content creation/distribution is difficult to manage. It can only be understood when considering the dynamisms of technological, industrial, organizational, and individual factors—among others.

Unlike traditional media organizations, which historically relied on stable revenue streams and mass audiences, modern creators (or entrepreneurs) face volatile markets, fragmented audiences, short attention spans, platform affordances, and algorithmic systems that shape not only content composition and choices but also how creators perceive their own **authenticity** and digital selves (see Chap. 3).

What is Content Strategy?

Content strategy equips media entrepreneurs with a structured method for planning, producing, and managing content in environments shaped by rapid technological change and evolving audience expectations (Getto et al., 2023).

At its core, **content strategy** is the disciplined practice of coordinating goals, audiences, formats, channels, workflows, distribution methods, and measurement activities so that content consistently supports the broader objectives of an entrepreneurial venture. This definition situates **content strategy** not as a marketing function or a branding exercise but as an **operational system** that guides how content is created and sustained across platforms.

In entrepreneurial and creator-oriented environments, content strategy refers to the systematic organization of all decisions related to content creation, publication, and governance (Bailie & Urbina, 2013; Clark, 2016). It differs from content marketing because it is not limited to promotional messaging. It also differs from branding, which focuses on the identity an organization communicates, and from editorial planning, which focuses on specific stories or campaigns. **Content strategy** brings these activities together and situates them within a coherent framework that aligns content activity with organizational purpose.

The essential components of a **content strategy** include goal setting, audience identification, **content modeling**, channel selection, workflow planning, distribution management, and performance evaluation. Each component contributes to the stability and coherence of a media venture's content environment. Without such a structure, organizations often experience content silos in which individual creators develop materials that are inconsistent, duplicative, or disconnected from organizational goals.

This challenge has long been documented in professional practice. Rockley and Cooper (2012) describe how organizations frequently struggle when content activities are dispersed across teams with little coordination, resulting in misaligned outputs and inefficient processes.

Media entrepreneurs are particularly vulnerable to these issues because they operate with resource constraints, lean teams, and high publication demands. A clear **content strategy** allows them to articulate what content is for, who it serves, and how it supports the venture's goals. It reduces redundancy, improves consistency, and ensures that limited resources are used effectively. This systematic approach enables entrepreneurial ventures to maintain coherence in environments that are otherwise highly unstable.

In this chapter, we argue that media entrepreneurs, defined as digital creators in the news and entertainment media sector, are better off using content *strategically*. Optimally, this will make them unique, cultivate loyal communities, meet audience needs, optimize platform use, and generate revenue. We show how a **content strategy** aligns a digital creator's activities with **entrepreneurship**, alongside its key themes. Obviously, a well-planned **content strategy plan** then becomes indispensable.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, principles of strategic entrepreneurship are introduced. Then, the generic "Content-as-an-Entrepreneurial-Strategy" (CaaES) model is proposed. Further, a typical **content strategy plan** in the **creator economy** is presented, and its basic elements are discussed. Fourth, media entrepreneurship and management as a field of study and practice is more robustly defined. Finally, a conclusion is drawn, and key takeaways are formulated.

Media Content Production

Traditionally, the management of **media content production** and distribution has followed a "Fordist logic," a model that divides labor and assumes that content can be produced via predictable, repeatable, linear strategies, much like building cars on an assembly line. Within this Fordist logic, strategy itself was organized in a similarly linear and hierarchical manner.

In **Porter's value chain model** (1985), the **content strategy** is defined by managers and produced by editors and journalists. Executives decided which markets to target, selected talent for predefined roles, and developed monetization pathways. The content itself was simply the "stuff," an output that populated the structures. In these frameworks, content was an output with value that was realized only after release through ratings, circulation figures, advertising yields, and other market responses.

Although the media sector is very heterogeneous and has various branch-specific features, media management research, particularly the work of Wirtz (2020), shows that media value creation follows a similar, consistent set of activities.

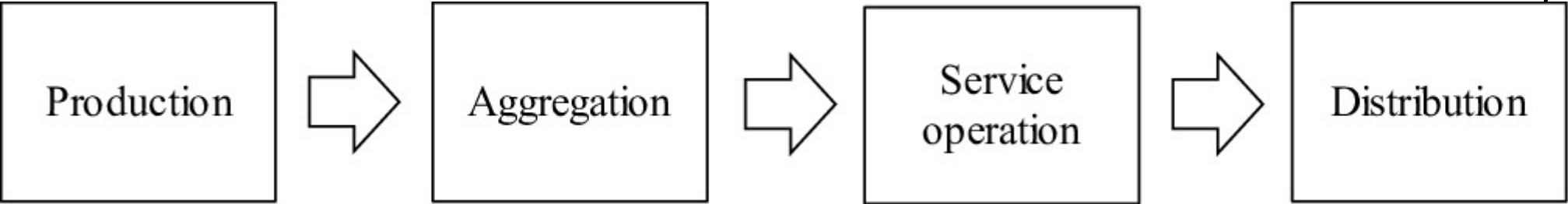
The media industry value chain represents the linear, end-to-end process of content creation, management, and consumption, evolving from traditional, linear models to digital, audience-centric ecosystems. Key stages include content creation (ideation/production), editing/packaging, distribution (streaming/broadcast), and consumption. This chain transforms raw ideas into monetized products, increasingly enhanced by AI and data analytics. Figure 10.1 below shows a simple value chain model as applied to the media industry.

Fig. 10.1

The media value chain.

Alt Text

The flow chart illustrates a sequence of five stages in a process: Production leads to Aggregation, which leads to Service operation, followed by Distribution, and finally Consumption. Each stage is connected by a right-pointing arrow, showing the progression from the creation of goods or services through their combination, operation, delivery, and ultimate use by consumers. This diagram highlights the linear flow of activities in a supply or service chain.



The key stages are:

- [Production](#) involves developing (or acquiring) ideas, producing films, or creating digital content, which can be done by studios, independent producers, or influencers.
- [Aggregation](#) involves editing raw content, formatting, and packaging (e.g., creating playlists, editing videos) to suit specific platforms.
- *Service operation* refers to the management, monitoring, and support of the IT and digital systems that deliver content to consumers.
- [Distribution](#) involves the content delivered to consumers via various channels, including streaming services, traditional TV, or social media platforms.
- [Consumption](#) involves the audience engaging with the content, often through subscription, advertising, or pay-per-use models.

Today, value creation and delivery in the media and creative industries have become much more complex. There are now sector-specific value chain paths (Wirtz, 2023; Jäckel et al., 2008), and content has become one, albeit distinct and essential, feature of value creation systems (Wirtz, 2020) and value ecosystems (Hearn et al., 2007). Still, Porter’s value chain heuristic forms the basic principle (Zamora, 2025).

In the old model, executive managers decided which markets to target, selected talent for predefined roles, and developed monetization pathways. The content was simply the “stuff,” an output that populated the structures. In these frameworks, content was valued only after release through ratings, circulation figures, advertising yields, and other market responses. Today, content is a living system, an accelerator of value.

The rise of digital media has dramatically shifted the role of content (Bleier et al., 2024; Edeling & Weis, 2024). Rather than serving as the terminal output of a managerial process, content now functions as a strategic input, a mechanism through which creators test ideas, engage audiences, refine identity, and discover opportunities. Put another way, rather than strategy dictating what content should be made, content becomes the site where opportunities are recognized, markets are shaped, audiences are assembled, and value propositions are tested (Peres et al., 2024).

The [creator economy](#) exemplifies post-Fordist production logics. There, value emerges through iterative experimentation, continuous deployment, and integrated feedback loops rather than pre-defined plans executed in linear stages. Similar transformations have occurred in non-media spaces; the “DevOps” culture in IT development, for example, that is the approach to building and running software, whereby developers and operations teams work together more efficiently and speedily, has transformed the traditional waterfall process by enabling continuous delivery and user feedback loops.

Similarly, lean and just-in-time manufacturing seek to replace centralized planning with real-time responsiveness. These shifts parallel changes that have occurred within entrepreneurship itself: Classical entrepreneurship assumes there was an external opportunity that was discovered through market research (or through an “Eureka” moment); in that scenario, value was created through the delivery of products into existing markets, as when we ship an innovative new mousetrap design. Contemporary entrepreneurship, instead, assumes that action generates opportunities and that markets are best engaged through continuous testing and innovation.

These entrepreneurs might instead engage the market with a **Minimum Viable Product (MVP)**, a term coined and defined in 2001 by Frank Robinson and then popularized by Eric Ries in his book *Lean Startup*, to exemplify that entrepreneurs may start with a low-cost prototype, test what resonates, then scale only the winning formats (Ries, 2011). Doing so, they **co-create the market** by gathering data on existing behaviors and uses, ultimately finalizing their mousetrap design only after learning from how people actually catch mice.

In an environment where markets are increasingly mediated through digital [platforms](#), entrepreneurs must understand how content operates within the [creator economy](#) because content has become a primary vehicle through which they encounter audiences, shape demand, and articulate value. A useful way to understand this evolving landscape is through the lens of strategic entrepreneurship (Hitt

et al., 2001; Ireland et al., 2003). This field delivers the conceptual vocabulary to explain how content functions not just as communication but as an entrepreneurial resource.

In what follows, we model content as an entrepreneurial strategy by treating *content* (information, narratives, knowledge, symbols, or experiential material) as a strategic resource that entrepreneurs intentionally design, deploy, and manage to shape opportunity development, stakeholder perceptions, and competitive advantage.

Content-as-an-Entrepreneurial-Strategy (CaaES)

In this chapter, we aim to advance our theoretical understanding of how content creates entrepreneurial value in the media and creative industries. For this, we triangulate insights from multiple theoretical angles, such as content design (Halvorson & Rach, 2012; Halvorson, 2018) and content marketing theory (e.g., branding and meaning-making; Alzaanin, 2020), and, regarding media content more particularly, media and communication (e.g., media effects) and journalism studies, among others (e.g., news value, agenda-setting). These streams provide evidence that content can have significant planned-for value on various levels of a media organization because, essentially, media entrepreneurs can then better adapt their plans to market requirements and audience preferences.

Hence, when applied to media entrepreneurship, *content strategy* means devising a clear plan to create valuable, relevant, and consistent content (text, video, audio) that builds authority, and, in the case of news, is trustworthy and evidence-based, attracts a specific audience, fosters trust, and drives business goals (leads, sales) through consistent delivery, smart distribution across platforms, and adapting content to audience needs, focusing on pillars, clusters, and the consumption journey for measurable results of entrepreneurial activity (Audretsch et al., 2025).

At its core, the CaaES model posits that content success is not an incidental outcome but a strategic construct shaped by deliberate choices in content design, delivery, and adaptation. In this sense, CaaES reframes content as the engine of strategic action, an instrument through which creators sense markets, construct identities, collaborate, and create value over time. In this model, content is not the outcome of strategy; it is the process through which strategy is continuously formed, tested, and renewed. Ideally, it is data-driven and builds on historical data, behavioral signals, and AI models to anticipate what content an audience will want next and deliver it before they actively ask for it. These predictive models are well known from the legacy media industry (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2019; Schwartz & Ungar, 2015).

The CaaES model is based on seven pillars. Each of these pillars provides an opportunity for explaining how content functions as an entrepreneurial resource.

Pillar 1: Opportunity Recognition

In strategic entrepreneurship, *“opportunity recognition”* refers to identifying needs and wants and translating those into entrepreneurial action (Ireland et al., 2003). In classical entrepreneurship, these opportunities were identified by market research. Content existed primarily to support commercialization; it was the advertising, documentation, and press releases that accompanied the launch. In the case of our mousetrap, it would be the marketing, the instructions, the store displays, and the packaging.

The *creator economy* reverses this sequence. *Opportunity recognition* now occurs through content itself: Posts and livestreams act as probes that reveal audience preferences, identities, and problems (Edeling & Wies, 2024; Kreuzer et al., 2022).

Creators gather real-time feedback, including sentiment analysis and retention, which enable them to detect value (Bleier et al., 2024; Perreault & Ferrucci, 2020). Audiences do not validate (or invalidate) pre-existing strategy; they generate the strategic direction in partnership with the entrepreneur. In our mousetrap example, the entrepreneur might begin by posting videos about household pest frustrations, studying reactions to learn what people hate about existing mouse-catching solutions. If they found, for example, that a key discomfort was dealing with the dead mouse, their solution could specifically target this problem. The audience then helped the entrepreneur fully recognize the opportunity and what the mousetrap ought to be.

Pillar 2: Authenticity

In strategic entrepreneurship, a “competitive advantage” refers to developing a market position that competitors cannot easily imitate (Hitt et al., 2001). Historically, organizations have established an advantage through ownership of distribution channels, privileged access to talent, and economies of scale. Brand identity was managed centrally and detached from the work of individual creators. Running-shoe companies, for example, have gained advantages through specialized sole technologies, sponsored partnerships, and retail shelf dominance. Identity plays a role, but sponsorships and campaigns change, and Nike remains Nike.

The *creator economy* reverses this logic. Competitive advantage is no longer derived from scale or assets but from a recognizable identity and *authenticity* grounded in personal narrative, tone, values, and worldview (Edeling & Wies, 2024). Rather than crafting a uniform institutional voice, creators embed their subjectivity into content, transforming identity into a strategic resource. In doing so, they align with the Resource-Based *View* (RBV) of strategy (see Chap. 16), which holds that sustainable advantage stems from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Ireland et al., 2003). Consider the success of *MrBeast*, whose actual products are viable not because they are technically superior, but because his publicly performed identity as an obsessive experimenter and philanthropist has become the strategic asset audiences trust and follow.

Platforms amplify this shift. Algorithms privilege content that signals *authenticity*, rewarding creators whose style and persona foster emotions and “parasocial” familiarity. Identity is not simply how creators present themselves; it is the mechanism through which audiences decide who to follow, trust, and purchase from. In this paradigm, identity is infrastructure, the basis for a competitive

advantage that unfolds across time as a compelling narrative that encourages additional engagement (Cotter, 2018; Lim & Rasul, 2022).

Pillar 3: Continuous Experimentation

In entrepreneurship, experimentation is typically referred to as the ongoing development and refinement of new products, processes, or market approaches (not isolated breakthroughs or episodic leaps) (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Innovation occurs behind closed doors and relies on long development timelines and insulation from audience response. Content is perfected before release, and feedback—when it arrives—functions primarily to validate (or criticize) decisions already made rather than shape them. This is the model in which an isolated inventor spends months perfecting a kitchen gadget in secret, convinced their revolutionary vegetable slicer will reshape the market.

The creator economy, instead, embraces continuous experimentation. Digital platforms often reward novelty, iteration, and responsiveness with their algorithms, making experimentation a requirement for visibility and growth (Bishop, 2019). Because the cost of publishing new content is low and audience feedback is instantaneous, creators innovate publicly; they test tones, formats, and tools, then adapt based on analytics such as retention curves and click-through rates (Bleier et al., 2024). In this vision, our vegetable slicer is not unveiled after months of secrecy; it materializes over dozens of Instagram posts as viewers suggest new blades, safety features, and use-cases, or maybe point out that no one needs a device to replace their existing choppers. Innovation is no longer what happens before the audience arrives; it happens because the audience is already there.

This approach is uncomfortable for traditional companies and requires a combination of creative skill and an openness to working with audiences as co-designers (Edeling & Wies, 2024). “Success” is measured in audience-driven metrics and is achieved through experimentation that aligns creative efforts with audience response. Creators normalize innovation as an everyday practice (Dubois et al., 2025).

Pillar 4: Lean Infrastructure

“Resource orchestration” refers to how entrepreneurs acquire, configure, and deploy resources to exploit opportunities and generate competitive advantage (Sirmon et al., 2007). Historically, a resource advantage derived from ownership: Firms controlled production studios, talent contracts, syndication networks, and intellectual property, enabling them to coordinate resources internally and exclude competitors structurally. A classic example of this was the old Hollywood studio system, in which companies like MGM and Warner Bros. had exclusive contracts with actors and owned both production spaces and distribution channels.

The creator economy destabilizes this vision of ownership. Most creators still do not own the infrastructures they depend upon. But now they strategize their use of platform ecosystems, including algorithms, editing suites, analytics dashboards, recommendation engines, and monetization architectures (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). Platforms function simultaneously as production environments, distribution channels, and market governors. The strategic task is no longer about accumulating assets (the few needed assets are relatively inexpensive) but configuring resources that are externally provided, and constantly evolving (Bleier et al., 2024).

Advantages now rise from understanding what each platform affords, how its algorithms prioritize content, and which features convert attention into value. Creators leverage platforms for their strengths. For example, a creator might use TikTok for initial conversion, YouTube for providing depth, and Discord for participation. The creator’s competitive position derives not from what they own, but from how they navigate, recombine, and mobilize systems owned by others.

Pillar 5: Risk-Taking

In strategic entrepreneurship, “risk management” refers to structuring actions so that the pursuit of opportunity is balanced with mechanisms that mitigate potential losses (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Legacy media firms addressed risk through long development cycles, institutional hierarchies, and sunk investments. Adaptation was slow, and deviation from the plan was treated as failure rather than learning. Consider how TV pilots work. Networks develop scripts, hire casts and crews, and film one or more episodes before any audience feedback is gathered. The costs were sunk, and if no one liked the show, it was simply a loss for the network; it was the scale of the networks that protected them from catastrophe.

In the creator economy, risk is more difficult to avoid or buffer. Platforms change algorithms without warning, terms and conditions change, and audiences migrate, and any of these changes can have profound impacts on the income stream (Bleier et al., 2024). In 2017, the *YouTube “Adpocalypse”* (advertisers boycotted *YouTube* due to concerns about extreme content) led to an overnight collapse in revenue for many creators; those who survived were able to adapt by building or promoting other revenue streams.

Risk is simply a design condition of entrepreneurial life rather than an anomaly to be controlled (Edeling & Wies, 2024), and adaptability is thus a core competency. Rather than developing a single strategy and executing it linearly, creators interpret signals and adjust direction while maintaining a coherent identity. This agility mirrors the opportunity–advantage tension identified in strategic entrepreneurship research: opportunity-seeking behaviors reveal where value may exist, while advantage-seeking behaviors structure action so the creator can sustain that value over time (Ireland et al., 2003).

Pillar 6: Networking

In strategic entrepreneurship, partnerships expand an entrepreneur’s capacity beyond what their own resources can offer. Through partnerships, they can gain access to complementary capabilities, legitimacy, and new markets (Ireland et al., 2001). Historically, such collaboration occurred institutionally inside firms or between organizations, coordinated through hierarchical structures rather than

through individual creative actors. A classic example here is the 1997 partnership between Burger King and *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, a massive, costly multi-media traditional collaboration of a sort only available to companies that already possess significant scale and capital.

In the creator economy, networks are not optional add-ons; they are both desirable and essential. Platform affordances like TikTok’s duet chains, where a chef posts a recipe, a nutritionist adds commentary, a comedian tells a joke about it, and a musician scores the result, serve to build the audiences of all the creators in the chain as each inherits the prior creator’s audience. Co-creation here automatically drives discovery, enabling creators to jointly produce content at near-zero cost (Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

Value then emerges through ongoing interactions among creators, platforms, advertisers, and audiences, each simultaneously shaping and extracting value from the other (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Networks distribute labor, enable reputational transfer, lower discovery costs, and offer creators access to symbolic and economic capital they cannot develop alone (Edeling & Wies, 2024). In this paradigm, the entrepreneur is a node in a value network. Strategy isn’t solely about individual assets and becomes relational. Understanding who to collaborate with, how value flows between partners, and how co-creation expands what any one actor could achieve alone.

Pillar 7: Ethical Responsibility

Strategic entrepreneurship seeks to create value that is economically viable and socially legitimate (Ireland et al., 2003). In legacy media systems, ethical responsibility was largely codified through editorial standards, compliance regimes, and corporate governance structures. Individual creators were shielded from direct moral accountability; the organization carried the ethical burden, as when traditional media outlets police their contributors using explicit ethical codes that mandate fact-checking, govern the use of anonymous sources, and avoid conflicts of interest.

In the creator economy, personal affect, identity, and community become resources to be monetized (Sirmon et al., 2007). Sustainability, therefore, hinges on a creator’s capacity to manage the moral and emotional consequences. Because creators function simultaneously as strategist, producer, distributor, and public persona, ethical practice becomes inseparable from entrepreneurial identity, and an ethical lapse can result in significant personal consequences, as when creators are sued for misinformation and, regardless of the result of the suit, lose credibility with their audience. Sponsorship decisions, disclosure norms, personal boundaries, and audience engagement practices are no longer administrative details; they are strategic determinants of trust and reputation (Edeling & Wies, 2024).

Platforms intensify this condition. As Peres et al. (2024) note, creators operate in ecosystems where platform governance, monetization rules, and visibility algorithms directly affect well-being, compensation, and legitimacy. At the same time, the cultural industries demand relational labor, which exposes creators to burnout and boundary erosion (Dubois et al., 2025). Sustainable value creation thus involves cultivating practices that protect not only market position but psychological and ethical integrity.

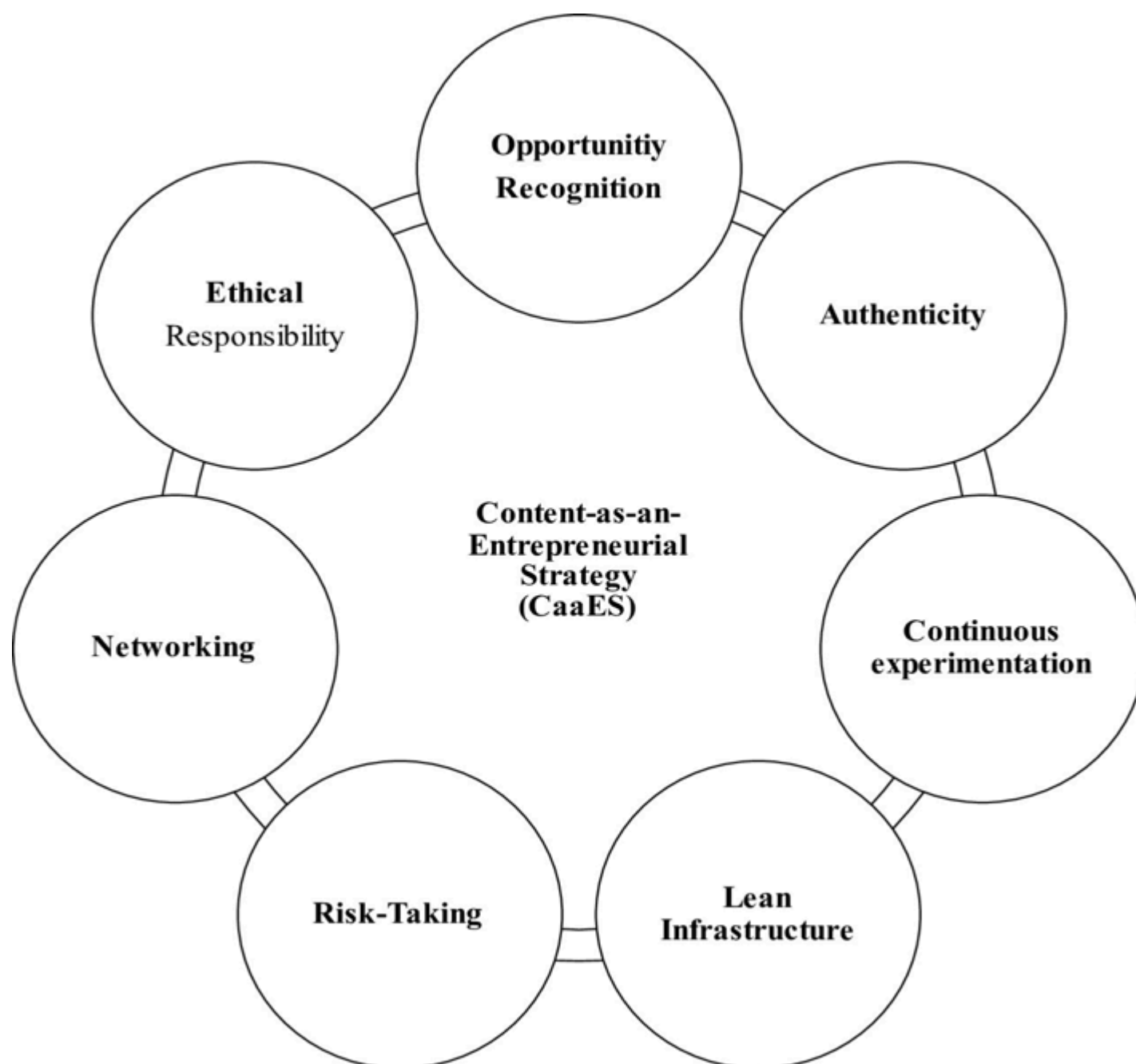
Taken together, these seven pillars, shown in Fig. 10.2, demonstrate that content strategy in the creator economy is not a linear process of production and distribution but an entrepreneurial system in which content becomes the core mechanism of opportunity discovery, identity formation, innovation, resource orchestration, risk adaptation, networked value creation, and ethical stewardship (Fig. 10.2).

Fig. 10.2
The Seven Pillars CaaES model.

Source own elaboration

Alt Text

A circular diagram presents seven key elements of a strategy called Content-as-an-Entrepreneurial Strategy, or CaaES. The elements are arranged in a ring, showing their connection and equal importance. The elements are Opportunity Recognition, Authenticity, Continuous Experimentation, Lean Infrastructure, Risk-Taking, Networking, and Ethical Responsibility. This diagram highlights the main components needed to approach content creation with an entrepreneurial mindset, emphasizing ongoing learning, genuine engagement, and responsible networking.



Why Media Entrepreneurs Need a Content Strategy

Within the broader **CaaES** model, **content strategy** provides the operational system that activates each pillar. Vision establishes direction, but content strategy transforms that vision into actionable practices. Audience understanding identifies who the venture seeks to reach, but **content strategy** determines how content should be structured and delivered to those groups. **Platforms** provide the technical context in which content circulates, while **content strategy** clarifies which platforms are most appropriate and how content must adapt to each one. The business model defines how the organization creates and captures value, and the **content strategy** aligns content outputs with those value-generating activities.

In this sense, **content strategy** functions as the connective tissue of the 7-pillars model. It translates strategic pillars into daily routines and decisions, enabling entrepreneurs to operationalize their mission through coherent, purposeful content.

Within the broader **CaaES** model, which emphasizes **opportunity recognition**, **authenticity**, **continuous experimentation**, **lean infrastructures**, **risk-taking** behavior, **networking** and **ethical responsibility**, **content strategy** provides the operational system that activates each pillar. **Opportunity recognition** identifies emerging needs and audience signals, and **content strategy** transforms those signals into actionable practices by structuring how creators test, refine, and shape content in response to what audiences reveal. **Authenticity** serves as a competitive advantage in the **creator economy**, and **content strategy** determines how that identity is expressed consistently across formats, channels, and workflows. **Continuous experimentation** allows ventures to test ideas in public, and **content strategy** provides the models, processes, and measurement practices that make such experimentation sustainable.

Lean infrastructures describe how entrepreneurs navigate **platform** ecosystems and configure externally provided resources. **Content strategy** clarifies which platforms are most appropriate and how content must adapt to the affordances of each. **Risk-taking** behavior reflects the volatility of platform-driven environments, and **content strategy** aligns content outputs with mechanisms that reduce unnecessary exposure and support adaptability. **Networking** highlights the relational nature of value creation in contemporary media, and content strategy structures how collaborations, co-creations, and shared content practices can be integrated into the broader system of production. **Ethical responsibility** reminds entrepreneurs that sustainable value must be both economically viable and socially legitimate, and **content strategy** operationalizes this responsibility through guidelines, governance, and review practices that shape content decisions. In this sense, content strategy functions as the connective tissue of the **CaaES** model. It translates strategic pillars into daily routines and decisions, enabling entrepreneurs to operationalize their mission through coherent, purposeful content.

Media entrepreneurs work in environments frequently defined by **platform** volatility, audience fragmentation, and shifting patterns of media consumption. Research on channel use illustrates how audiences distribute their attention across diverse platforms with different expectations and behaviors. Entrepreneurs cannot rely on a single channel or a single mode of communication. They must create content that travels across multiple formats, each with its own conventions.

Resource constraints intensify these challenges. Small media ventures and creator-led operations lack the staff or financial capacity to sustain inefficient or inconsistent content practices. They must make deliberate choices about what to produce, when to produce it, and

where it should be published. **Content strategy** helps stabilize this environment by coordinating goals, workflows, and distribution activities. It provides a foundation for ongoing experimentation while ensuring that experimentation does not undermine coherence or quality. It also enables growth by establishing production systems that scale as audiences expand and platform opportunities evolve. This dynamic can be seen among independent YouTube-based creators. Creators who try to publish frequently across multiple formats and platforms can overextend themselves, resulting in uneven quality and loss of audience enthusiasm. But creators who adopt a clear **content strategy** that includes a regular publishing cadence and the use of analytics to drive subsequent strategy, are better able to sustain quality and achieve growth.

Overall, **content strategy** equips media entrepreneurs with a structured approach to creative work. It allows them to manage complexity, maintain consistency, and align content activities with strategic goals. This definition and conceptual grounding prepare readers for the more applied sections that follow.

The **Content Strategy Plan**

The following activity is designed to help you begin applying the principles introduced in the definition section. It provides a structured way to map a simple content system for a media venture of your choosing. Working through these steps will give you a clearer understanding of how **content**, **audiences**, **platforms**, and **goals** interact within an entrepreneurial **environment**. The purpose here is not to create a fully developed strategy but to begin identifying the foundational elements that shape content decision-making.

The Activity Encompasses the Following Eight Steps.

Step 1: Select a Media Venture

Begin by choosing a media venture that you know well. This could be your own project, a creator account that publishes regularly, a small startup making digital content, a nonprofit newsroom, or any other venture whose content practices you can observe. Selecting a familiar example will help you work with realistic constraints and patterns.

Step 2: Identify the Core Audience or Audiences

Next, identify the core audience or audiences the venture aims to reach. Focus on the groups that consume the venture's content most consistently or for whom the content is primarily intended. Try to name one or two audiences instead of listing many possibilities. This will make the subsequent steps more manageable.

Step 3: Identify the Primary Platform

Identify the primary **platform** through which the venture distributes its content. This might be a website, a social media channel, a podcast platform, a newsletter service, or another distribution point. The primary **platform** should be the one that receives the most consistent production effort or serves as the central hub for **audience engagement**.

Step 4: Identify Two Content Genres

Identify the two content genres that the venture produces most frequently. A content genre is a specific combination of content types and delivery channels. Examples include a short-form social video, a podcast episode, a newsletter issue, or a standard webpage update. Select two genres that represent routine, ongoing work. This will help you understand how the venture structures and organizes its content ecosystem.

Step 5: Identify One Business Model Goal

Identify one business-model goal that the venture seeks to support through its content. The goal might relate to audience growth, sponsorship attraction, subscription development, donor engagement, or another outcome tied to value creation. Keeping the focus on a single goal helps clarify how content contributes to the organization's broader strategy.

Step 6: Draft a Basic Content Model for One Genre

Choose one of the genres identified above and draft a basic content model for it. A content model outlines the structural elements that the genre must include. Identify the components that appear in every instance of this genre. These might include a title, summary, main text block, call to action, image, metadata fields, or other recurring elements. You do not need to produce a detailed model. The goal is simply to name the essential components and understand how they fit together.

Step 7: Identify One Risk That **Content Strategy** Could Mitigate

Finally, identify one risk that the venture faces in producing or managing content. Examples include workflow bottlenecks that slow production, overreliance on a single platform, inconsistent quality across content pieces, or difficulty maintaining a predictable publication rhythm. Naming the risk will help you understand how **content strategy** can provide stability and structure in future planning.

Step 8: Define Three Outputs

Completing this activity will provide three immediate outputs. First, you will create a beginner content model for one genre. This model will help you see how structure guides content creation and ensures consistency across platforms. Second, you will gain a preliminary understanding of how content aligns with goals, audiences, and platforms. This relationship sits at the center of **content strategy** because it determines whether content efforts support the venture's strategic direction. Third, you will produce a simple systems map

that illustrates the interactions among the venture’s audiences, platforms, genres, and goals. By working through these steps, you set the foundation for deeper strategic thinking about content within entrepreneurial contexts.

Conclusions and Key Takeaways

Audiences crave great content, experiences, and value. Lacking these three elements, the customer experience is poor, or even worse, and hence negatively affects audience engagement. Media companies drive customer engagement by offering great content and a unique experience.

In the creator economy, content has become a central, if not the central, component of market success. The model moves well beyond a narrow definition of journalistic production (news articles, TV shows, films, podcasts, social media posts, games, etc.), only later to be distributed via various channels to multiple audiences. Instead, content becomes a substantive element and integrated process (and governance) of activities that include all the elements of entrepreneurial spirit and acumen described above.

In conclusion, successfully managing the process of creating valuable content is a fundamental skill that media entrepreneurs, managers, editors, journalists, and producers must master. They are the craftsmen of quality content. Media entrepreneurs understand that impactful storytelling, compelling visuals, and strategic distribution are essential for capturing and sustaining attention (Malmelin & Villi, 2017; Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Harrison et al., 2022).

Still, a winning content strategy in the creator economy excels traditional content marketing and communications strategy thinking and practice. Our model is built on opportunity recognition, authenticity, continuous experimentation, lean infrastructure, risk-taking behavior, networking, and ethical responsibility. We argued that although content strategy may potentially drive entrepreneurial success, this would remain contingent upon context.

By reviewing the scholarly debate in content strategy, we also claimed to analyze relations between content strategy and entrepreneurial activity. Essentially, in this chapter, we developed a generic content strategy model (CaaES) based on human agency to show how media entrepreneurs best design and build content as planned for audience value in a shifting media ecosystem. Doing this, we developed some first principles of a conceptual model analyzing the efficacy of entrepreneurial behavior in the creator economy. It is this nexus of these considerations that motivated this work.

We conclude from the review of current literature that strategizing entrepreneurial content is a complex and ambiguous concept. It must be considered heterogeneous, covering a broad area of tools, processes, and practices in entrepreneurial activity.

Three key takeaways stand out. First, content strategy is most effective when it is understood as a system. It is not a collection of isolated tactics or one-off decisions. Instead, it provides an organized framework that shapes how content is planned, developed, and maintained across an organization. Treating content strategy as a system ensures that individual content decisions support broader goals and that daily activities remain connected to the venture’s long-term direction.

A second takeaway concerns the role of content modeling. Content modeling introduces structure into environments where multiple platforms, formats, and audience expectations shape the work. By identifying the core components of each genre of content, content modeling helps creators maintain consistency and coherence when publishing across channels. This order is especially valuable for entrepreneurs who must balance creativity with operational demands.

Third, audiences rarely behave the same way across channels. A strategy is needed to ensure that content aligns with these different behaviors. Understanding the contexts in which audiences consume content makes it possible to adapt tone, format, and timing appropriately. Without this alignment, content may fail to reach the intended audience or may not achieve the desired impact. Editorial workflows are also a central consideration. For small teams that need to publish consistently, clear workflows prevent confusion, reduce unnecessary rework, and support a steady production rhythm. When workflows are not defined, creators often fall into reactive modes of production, which can undermine quality and strain limited resources.

The absence of a plan has predictable consequences. Content can become fragmented, inefficient, or misaligned with the organization’s mission. This kind of drift makes it difficult for a venture to build trust with audiences or maintain a coherent identity across platforms. A clear content strategy counters these tendencies by providing structure and direction.

The strategic benefits of such a system are substantial. Content strategy helps ventures use their limited resources more effectively, since decisions are guided by clear goals and consistent processes. It enables faster iteration, as structured systems make it easier to test, evaluate, and refine content. It strengthens brand identity by ensuring that content reflects consistent patterns and values. A well-articulated strategy also provides a scalable infrastructure that supports growth, allowing the organization to expand its content activities without losing coherence. Finally, a stable strategy improves resilience to platform shifts, since structured content and workflows make it easier to adapt to new environments or technologies.

Box 10.2 Key Concepts

- Authenticity.
- Content-as-an-Entrepreneurial-Strategy (CaaES).
- Content modeling.
- Creator economy.

- Cross-platform storytelling.
- Content strategy.
- Content strategy plan.
- Continuous experimentation.
- Editorial workflows.
- Ethical responsibility.
- Gary Vaynerchuk.
- Lean infrastructure.
- Mass media content.
- Media content production.
- Micro content.
- Minimum Viable Product (MVP).
- Networking.
- Opportunity recognition.
- Platform proliferation.
- Porter's value chain model.
- Resource-Based View (RBV) of strategy.
- Risk-taking behavior.

Box 10.3: Review Questions

- 10.1 The chapter opens by suggesting that "content is a moving target" in the era of media entrepreneurship, arguing that it is more dynamic than it was in legacy media. Explain this claim and provide an example of how content has become more dynamic.
- 10.2 The chapter argues that in the creator economy, content is not the output of strategy but is the mechanism through which strategy forms. Explain this claim in your own words and give an example of how content can function as a "strategic input."
- 10.3 Compare the linear, hierarchical model of legacy media production with what the chapter calls the "post-Fordist" creator-economy. What changes in platforms, audiences, and feedback loops have made the older logic less effective?
- 10.4 Wirtz (2020) adapted Porter's value chain (1985) to media enterprises. What is gained and lost when we apply value-chain thinking to media value creation?
- 10.5 Explain the Content as an Entrepreneurial Strategy (CaaES) model in one paragraph. What problem is it trying to solve for media, and does it claim to advance our theoretical understanding of content strategy?
- 10.6 Choose two of the seven pillars of CaaES (opportunity recognition, authenticity, continuous experimentation, lean infrastructures, risk-taking & adaptation, networking, ethical responsibility). For each one: (a) define it as used in the chapter, and (b) describe one concrete content practice from your experience or reading that explains how that pillar operates.
- 10.7 The authors claim that in the creator economy, audiences help generate strategic direction rather than merely validating a pre-existing plan. What does this mean, and how might audience signals (e.g., retention, comments, shares) lead a creator to revise their value proposition?
- 10.8 What does the chapter mean by lean infrastructure in the creator economy, and how does it destabilize traditional visions of ownership? Give an example of how a creator might use multiple platforms (e.g., TikTok, YouTube, Discord) as a deliberately configured "infrastructure."
- 10.9 What is a "content strategy"? Define the term and describe why the authors assert that a content strategy is essential for contemporary media entrepreneurship.
- 10.10 Define content modeling and explain why it is described as a structural "foundation" for content strategy. What are the risks of publishing across platforms without content models?

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