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You're listening to Futur et médias, a podcast series on emerging trends in the media and entertainment industry.

I'm Catherine Mathys.

[♪♪♪]

For our second season, we will be focusing on various ways the screen industry has demonstrated its resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, today's episode was recorded before we were all told to stay inside. You know, back in the days when we could welcome our guests in the studio, and the pandemic wasn't the only topic of conversation.

Still, the topic discussed in this episode remains quite timely and, well, topical. Today, we will be talking about discoverability. Ever since people have been stuck at home, we've witnessed a dramatic increase in media consumption, especially online. The interesting thing, however, is that viewers' appetite isn't limited to new releases. Indeed, there has been quite an interest in back catalogue content – which means that it's more important than ever to make sure said content can be discovered online.

In the audiovisual sphere, where content travels – and sometimes even comes to life – directly online, how can we assess the level or potential for discoverability of a particular type of content?

In an effort to answer such a question, the Association des producteurs francophones du Canada (APFC)launched a project called "Au coeur de la découvrabilité"("At the heart of discoverability").

The goal of the study is to provide a diagnostic of various ongoing productions, such as "Tout simplement country", from producer Marcel Gallant at Connections Productions.

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However, in order to understand the concept of discoverability, I'd like to welcome Véronique Marino and Andrée Harvey, both consultants at LaCogency, who led this series of diagnostics.

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01:37

- **Véronique Marino (VM)** LaCogency is an agency that specializes in digital strategies. This includes the concept of discoverability, which we have been involved with quite a bit over the past year, year and a half. This allowed us to truly explore what discoverability is all about, and to start developing tactics and strategies and then make them available to creators.

– **Catherine Mathys (CM):** Let's start from the beginning and agree on the terminology used. Because my feeling is that, from the start, what comes to mind is the notion of digital marketing. We conclude that discoverability is about making content accessible online. But is that really what we're talking about here?

– **Andrée Harvey (AH):** Actually, for us, there are really two notions of discoverability. There's what I would call "wide discoverability", which includes several activities as well as the concept of digital discoverability. Our focus is mostly on this concept. However, since digital discoverability is part of this larger component called wide discoverability, we need to get involved with each pillar. We identified four pillars within

the wide discoverability. There's what we call traditional promotion, that is, advertising you would find in newspapers, magazines, on the radio, etc. That's the first pillar used to bring visibility to your content. It's really a way to let people know your content or products exist.

- **CM:** This type of approach remains quite important and valuable.

- **AH:** Absolutely. Newspapers, TV shows – they all remain relevant and useful. The second pillar is digital marketing. This includes social media, keyword purchasing, programmatic, etc. Both of those pillars are used when we are targeting people. We are therefore in an environment of web interfaces and screens.

The two remaining pillars, that's where digital discoverability comes into play. The third pillar is what we call SEO, search engine optimization. When you do a Google search, everything that appears on the left of the screen, all those links, that's the result of website indexing. And the fourth pillar, the most recent, what we could truly refer to as digital discoverability, is all the structured and linked-open data. With those last two pillars, we are talking to machines, to algorithms.

The first two pillars happen in a brief window of time. They're all about promotion, about announcing a new product. As for the remaining two pillars, they're about digital discoverability. We're talking long-term.

04:28

- **CM:** OK. Still, my feeling is that, for those who are listening right now, the first two pillars were enough. We are familiar with them, we understand them. Whereas the other two pillars seem to require a certain expertise. You have been using terms not everybody is familiar with. Indexation, structured data and all that. Véronique Marino, it seems this is an area not everyone is able to work in, correct?

- **VM:** Yes and no. That's the good news. If you look at the APFC project, we determined that many people can work within this

digital environment. Let me use an example that might help to demystify those last two pillars, that might otherwise…

- CM: Scare people! [Laughs]

- VM: Right, those pillars that deal with machines. Let's travel a little bit. I'm going to let you put on your thinking cap. Let's say that tomorrow, you're going on vacation and you want to buy a book. You only have a week to read it. You happen to love Icelandic literature. However, you have no idea what book to get, since you don't have the time to research possible titles. You go to your small, local bookstore and tell the owner: "I'm looking for a good book that would only take a week to read. Something simple. Is there anything you can recommend?" He's going to give it some thought and choose something he has in store. He's going to pick a book that you never even knew existed. He's going to grab the book, put it in your hand and say, "Read this. You'll love it."

Two things are happening here. One, a bookstore owner has been informed of the existence of a certain content. He got information about said content. He might not have read the book, but he knows what it's about. So he's able to establish a connection between what he has learned from you and his response: "For you, I recommend that particular book for your week-long holiday in Cuba". That's what we call discoverability.

Our job has been to identify how our little bookstore owner can acquire knowledge about our content, and then to make sure that the machines are able to bring the book to the user. That's an image you can have in your mind. The work here relates to what is found *within* the web, not *on* the web. What you get on the web is stuff you've seen before, the web pages, the advertising. The seduction part. What you find within the web is stuff that will last. It's about documentation.

Thus, the idea is to turn Google into our small bookstore owner, who suddenly becomes quite familiar with what we have done. So that he's able to say: "Oh, I know what you're looking for. I'll show you stuff and you become part of the answer." It's not that

list of links on the left of your page, where your brain is
expected to go through the list and determine that the sixth
result is the right one for you. Our bookstore owner will go
even further. He'll say: "I know you don't have time to think
this through, so I'll help you find the answer." In this
situation, both lower dials are anchored in the long-term and
are part of the conversation with the machines.

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07:27

- **CM**: Véronique Marino and Andrée Harvey, both consultants at
LaCogency agency, have analyzed the discoverability strategy for
the TV show "Tout simplement country", produced by Marcel
Gallant at Connections Productions.

- **Marcel Gallant (MG)**: Connections Productions was founded in
1996 by ex-owner François Savoie. I bought the company along
with my partners Marc Savoie and Chris Goguen 5 or 6 years ago,
and we have been producers there ever since. Our catalogue is
quite eclectic. Several musical variety shows, documentaries,
animated shows. We're always looking for stories that we find
interesting, and that a wide audience might enjoy.

- **CM**: Indeed, quite an eclectic track record, with many shows
that have been key to the development of your company. Tell me
about that foray into country music that began with *Pour l'amour
du country* and led to *Tout simplement country*.

- **MG**: *Pour l'amour du country* aired for 16 seasons. That's
something you don't see every day, a TV show that lasts for 16
seasons. It had a great run over the years. Then, in 2019, at
the request of the broadcaster, who wanted to keep the show
going, we did a reboot with a goal to give the audience
something new to enjoy. It's not that the show itself wasn't
good the way it was. It's just that we wanted to create
something fresh that would justify an extra season.

09:31

- **MG**: *Tout simplement country* is a musical celebration. That's how we like to describe it. The show is hosted by singer Guylaine Tanguay. We invite three or four Canadian country music artists as guests, people from Alberta to Newfoundland and anywhere in between, if we can find them. Everyone gathers on stage in Alderney Landing, Nova Scotia, where the show takes place. Then it becomes an evening of country music. There are interviews, guest artists share their influences, etc. But above all, music remains at the forefront of the show. We hear no less than 11 songs per show. There's a house band called Fureur. Our goal is to get a country party going, something you might find in a bar in Nashville. We're trying to replicate that sort of vibe here in Canada.

- **CM**: Did you have discoverability in mind when you created *Tout simplement country?*

- **MG**: We'd been hearing about discoverability for a couple of years already, about its usefulness for TV shows. We went to several workshops over the past years. However, in this particular instance, with the CMF ordering *Tout simplement country*, the timing was perfect, since we were starting a new show with this reboot. It was an opportunity to use the tools we had previously acquired, and to integrate them to this project.

[♪♪♪]

11:18

– **CM**: So when we're talking about discoverability, it's often a collaboration between various partners. In this case here, a collaboration between producer and broadcaster is essential. As you said, it's a team approach. Tell me about your experience with ARTV.

– **MG**: When working with broadcasters, it's obviously very important to get started early in the process. You can't have a last-minute approach with them. It really is a collaborative process, since what is good for us might not necessarily be good for their own ecosystem. Since broadcasters are usually large companies, it's all the more important to work with them as a team, and not to impose requests on them. You have to determine what is possible, that is, what we would like to achieve and why. If you approach a broadcaster without a clearly defined plan, it's easy for them to say no, since they won't see any reason to proceed. Yes, their shows enjoy some visibility and stuff. However, it's very important to collaborate with them, to explain what your plan and your goals are. Of course, getting things going with broadcasters can sometimes take a while. Hence the importance of starting early in the process.

12:42

– **CM**: When do you start considering this notion of discoverability? Once the product is completed? Meaning TV shows. Once the show is delivered? Or earlier in the process?

– **AH**: Indeed, Catherine, things must begin early in the process. In fact, as early as when you find a title for the show.

– **CM:** Really?

– **AH**: Yep. As an example, when we were working on the APFC project, there was this one show called *Ballade à Toronto*, which

has since been simply retitled *Ballade*. However, when you do a search for "Ballade" or "Ballade à Toronto", the results you get are…

- **CM:** What, a ride on a horse-drawn carriage?

- **AH:** Nope, the title of a song by Quebec signer Jean Leloup!

- **CM:** That's wonderful for him, but less so for the TV show. [Laughs]

- **AH:** The same goes for *Tout simplement country*. When you do a web search with that title, you get an old song from signer Pier Béland. Just like Jean Leloup. Those two artists benefit from a long-established heritage, a solid presence on the web. That's why they show up at the top of the search results.

- **VM:** In terms of discoverability, our two shows had to elbow their way through such a presence. If you type in "Tout simplement country", in all likelihood, that's what you're looking for.

- **AH:** It's harder when you have a name that is already established, with a solid presence on the web. It makes it more difficult to be featured among the top search results.

- **CM:** So you ended up suggesting another title, is that what you're saying?

- **VM:** Ultimately, yes. At least, we would have been able to assess the title's vibrations. You know, like, "How does it rank?"

- **CM:** Wow, how poetic! [Laughs]

- **VM:** Poetic indeed! In fact, you need to think about it in those terms, by wondering, "Who would I be in such an ocean if that's what I was called?" So then you go ahead and try to get an answer, and then ask yourself, "How can we play with that?"

- **AH:** Exactly. It's not a question of changing the title. If you like it, keep it. However, you must remember that it then becomes another obstacle. Then, at the discoverability phase, you're going to have to get the machine to understand that there's not just one, but two…

- **VM:** "Tout simplement country."

- **AH:** Correct. One is a song, the other is a TV show. So then you're going to want to make sure the algorithm understands the difference between the two titles, and what that difference is.

- **CM:** How do you do that?

- **VM:** [Laughs] By explaining the difference to the machine. By describing it, in fact. We're going to tell it who we are. There are languages we can use for that. Some are more technical than others. If you start adding a bit of technological language in the process, we can say there is a conversation protocol in

place between content and machine. That protocol is recognized by the W3C as a whole. We are talking specifically about codes that allow us to codify the content and its related explanation, and deliver everything in a language that is accepted and recognized by every search engine.

- **CM:** Okay.

- **VM:** So by using the Schema code, we are able to talk to Google, Bing, Yahoo and others.

- **CM:** And they can all understand each other.

- **AH:** It's a standard.

- **VM:** It's a standard that becomes a way to talk to every search environment available. Then, we have another way to create something that makes sense. That's what we're really doing here. When we say "Tell us who you are", it's creating the meaning of who you are. At the same time, we have the dynamic of the dimension we call pure metadata, which is more associated with Wikipedia, Wikimedia, Wikicommons, IMDb and others. With television, we have an incredible data generating vehicle, stuff that tells us who you are.

- **CM:** Right. I was going to explain what we mean by metadata. It's all this information related to specific content.

- **AH:** Yes. It's basically information that documents content. For example, the title of a movie or a TV show constitutes

metadata. It's a metadata that is above the product it describes. Same thing with the director and the rest of the production team. Everyone's name and title become metadata associated with the film or TV show.

[Excerpt from *Tout simplement country*]

16:55

- **CM:** Let's start with an example, since you've analyzed a whole bunch of TV shows for your APFC study on discoverability. Let's focus on *Tout simplement country*. Tell me about the diagnostic you made for that particular show, and what came out of it.

- **AH:** Sure. As we said earlier, when it came to the title, we saw that we had an extra level of difficulty, since it was also the title of as song by Pier Béland that invariably found its way at the top of search engine results.

We also discovered that they had created a website. In fact, they planned to launch a truly amazing website, what we call an enriched website for the TV show, featuring contests and other things. You could program a calendar pertaining to the broadcast of each episode and insert it into your own calendar. It was truly a website rich in extra content, but it ended up being integrated to ARTV's own website. When we did a search to find that website, we couldn't access it directly. We had to go through the broadcaster's own website, so it took two or three clicks to get to what we were looking for. That's something we found in our diagnostic.

On social media, the show performed strongly on Facebook. They redesigned the page which, for 16 years, had featured singer Patrick Normand. The page already had some 25,000 fans. They reskined the Facebook page to give it the new *Tout simplement country* brand image. They were able to take advantage of that.

- **CM:** Is that an advantage, to become a second version of a show like that?

- **VM:** Yes, because you're not starting from scratch. You already have an existing brand, and an entire community that related to that brand. You already have a conversation with that community.

- **CM:** That said, people must be able to make the connection.

- **VM:** Right. That's why we need to guide them. Connections did this very well. Furthermore, I think the passing of the baton from Patrick Normand to Guylaine Tanguay went very smoothly. There were many factors that put us in a favourable environment, so the transition went very well. Also, for example, in the diagnostic, Connections wasn't part of the Wikipedia environment.

- **AH:** True. So they created their own page for *Tout simplement country*, featuring the title of every episode. They launched themselves on Wikipedia thanks to that project.

- **VM:** Right. So these added presences allowed for the appearance of links between the property and what it was really about. The job then became to appear in places where we were totally absent. It was a freestanding mission. Plus, we also have sort of a niche audience. When dealing with discoverability, niche markets can be a plus, but you also have to consider a larger audience. With the APFC's pilot project, we need to consider the audience. Where is it? Can we find it elsewhere as well? Can I understand it better? Ultimately, discoverability is all about a click. It becomes socio-demographic data on a website or a YouTube channel. So we need to have a discussion about who we

are targeting and who is approaching us, and where they come
from.

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20:36

- **CM:** The potential seems incredible. This a TV show about
country music. It's at the core of the show. There's a very
captive audience for that type of content.

30:00 **VM:** And that audience is already there and quite loyal.
The show itself is doing well. We are also preparing for the
future. Because remember: discoverability isn't about promoting
a show. Promotion forms part of discoverability; however,
discoverability means that, once the promotion is done, that we
have something new and that, say, there's a French-speaking
person outside Quebec who's into country music, there exists a
place on the web that provides access to various content. That's
what we want. That this thing keeps working and yielding results
even when we're not involved.

Discoverability is a vision that leads to the notion of
catalogue management instead of promotion. That's what's
interesting about it. And that's why distributors and
broadcasters are an important part of the discoverability
process. They will help generate sense and allow content to be
displayed. Ultimately, though, we are thinking about all this
and that's where producers come in. We're also approaching this
from their point of view. *Tout simplement country* isn't just a
flash in the pan. It's something that needs to last.

- **AH**: So in using discoverability, we are preparing for the
future, for dematerialization and the semantic web and vocal
assistants and all that. We are positioning ourselves in that

environment. We want to be at the right place when planning for the future. That's one of the reasons why we recommend discoverability.

- **VM:** Because the goal of an algorithm or a Google is to grab our attention for as long as possible. Why? Because they sell advertising. So what becomes important is to ask: "OK, how does their business model impact me?" God knows that's a major topic of discussion in the audiovisual field. It's also a process we just can't stop. We are the first to generate it. We are the first agents of change. That change, that's each and everyone of us here today. Because when we look at our smartphone and we do a Google search, we are happy to be getting a result with a short description link, a link for the content and, below, a direct access on your phone. What is that? That's how Google works. How it understands the question you asked.

When you say: "Hi Google, what will the weather be like today in Montreal?", someone, somewhere added some information on the web saying that it's going to snow today in Montreal. That's a piece of data. It's not a link. That's the type of data we need to produce so that if, tomorrow, someone says "Play the latest song from Guylaine Tanguay", what you'll get is the actual latest song from Guylaine Tanguay.

[Excerpt from the song *Partons la mer est belle* sung by Guylaine Tanguay]

23:48

- **CM:** So discoverability is a set of techniques and strategies that help something get visibility, help it get known and recognized on the web. For those who are listening and who are wondering, "Where do I start? How can I improve the discoverability of my content on the web?", what would you tell them?

- **AH:** I would say make a diagnostic of your digital presence. Do a web search of your name, yourself, your product. Then, look at the results. See what's there and what's missing.

I often compare promotion to a straw fire that produces heat. An intense, sudden and brief fire that dies out very quickly. Discoverability is a log fire in a fireplace. You keep throwing logs in, and the fire keeps burning.

[Excerpt from the song *Partons la mer est belle* sung by Guylaine Tanguay]

24:54

- **MG:** I think the one thing that stands out for me is that, at the beginning, we thought we were doing an OK job.

- **CM:** But then again, maybe not? [Laughs]

- **MG:** In the end, when we saw where we were and that we were able to find our results online, it became obvious that, when you're the one searching your own stuff, your methods will be different than those of someone who is simply trying to find you. We were involved in this process day in, day out. So it became quite important to be able to rely on an external point of view, someone that could tell us, like, I couldn't find your company on Google. I can't find your show or your website. I had to use three different portals to get to your website. Or to find you somewhere other than Facebook. You're not present here, nor there. That's quite an eye opener. You realize, wow, that's true. You learn a lot about how search engines find the information you need.

- **CM:** So I guess you've learned lessons that will be useful for all your future productions?

- **MG:** Absolutely. Already, we are reaching new audiences, something that hadn't happened with previous shows. It's a win-win situation for everyone. Plus, as I said, we immediately applied this process to our other productions. So when we tried something with *Tout simplement country*, we did the same thing with our six other productions so we could add the entire content. It's quite a lot of work at the beginning, but now, it's really just maintenance.

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24:55

- **AH:** Yes. Also, there's an important element we forgot to mention: discoverability doesn't mean popularity.

- **VM:** Indeed.

- **AH:** It's very important to understand this. You can do everything you need to do with discoverability. However, that doesn't mean the target audience will enjoy your show. And if no one's watching it, no one will share it. Sure, you'll have a presence over time. People will know that the show once existed. However, discoverability will never replace popularity. Because a popular product can thrive without the need for discoverability. Word of mouth will make sure of it. You need to be able to make the distinction between the two. It isn't magic. Sometimes, people can expect a lot with discoverability, like, I'll apply it and my…

- **VM:** …my show will become popular. No, what you want is to become discoverable. Then, you can have a conversation about

that last section of the road, which is: "Does the audience who managed to find your product actually enjoy it?" So popularity isn't an element that is based on discoverability. It'll certainly help discoverability, but discoverability won't necessarily generate popularity.

- **CM**: First, the show needs to be good and people have to enjoy it.

- **AH**: There you go.

- **CM**: That's great. I feel we now have a much better understanding of what discoverability is all about. Thank you for spending these last few minutes with us. It was quite an enlightening conversation. Thank you again, Véronique Marino and Andrée Harvey, co-founders of LaCogency.

- **VM**: Thank you.

- **AH**: Thank you, Catherine.

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28:25

That's it for this episode of Futur et médias, a podcast series presented by the Canada Media Fund.

Thank you to our guests Marcel Gallant from Connections Productions, and Véronique Marino and Andrée Harvey from LaCogency agency.

To get the production notes or a transcript of this episode, or to subscribe to our Watch Report newsletter on the screen-based industry, visit our CMF Trends website.

Some time in 2020, you will also find on our website the results of the APFC's study, titled "Au coeur de la découvrabilité", a project supported by Canadian Heritage, The Canada Media Fund and the Bell Fund.

And finally, if you enjoyed this episode, I invite you to rate the podcast series on Apple Podcasts, and thus contribute to the discoverability of Futur et médias.

I'm Catherine Mathys. Thank you for listening.