Frankfurter Allgemeine

Partnership

As one of the top-read national German newspapers, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung has a strong focus on providing excellent service to their readers and subscribers. F.A.Z. established an Artificial Intelligence (AI) / Machine Learning (ML) driven solution that delivers editors' predictions on which articles will work best behind the paywall.

F.A.Z. operates a freemium paywall model, offering some content for free but requiring a subscription for complete access. Therefore it is important for the publisher to optimize the conversion performance of the paywall. The subscription articles must create an added value for the reader and encourage them to subscribe.

Overview

F.A.Z. GmbH publishes the German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, described as "the go-to German daily with the largest global audience", reaching an impressive 148 countries and 17.3 million readers each month. Frankfurter Allgemeine is one of the most renowned media brands in the world. It is known and trusted for political, economic and societal relevance as well as a commitment to journalistic excellence.

"Subscriptions are the most essential part of our business," explains Nico Wilfer, Chief Product Officer at F.A.Z. The business' goal is to achieve 300,000 sustainable digital subscribers by 2025. "We are growing our digital readership and subscriber base a lot. Thanks to the Google News Initiative we were able to realize some of our innovation project ideas."

AUTHORS:

- **Gerrit Rabenstein**
  Head of News & Publishers Partnerships, DACH | EMEA Partnerships Solutions

- **Nico Wilfer**
  Chief Product Officer | F.A.Z.

F.A.Z.: Paywall Content Selection Using AI

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung utilizes an AI and ML service to predict which articles will have the best conversion performance.

The Project

Previously, F.A.Z. approached the challenge of choosing which articles to place behind the paywall retrospectively, by looking at past records and figuring out through trial and error what articles perform best based on experience. The new AI tool relies on different sources such as the conversions of all previous paid articles, including some metadata like author, department and date of publishing. All texts are analyzed with Google's BERT technology to provide more accurate comparability. BERT is Google's neural network-based technique for natural language processing (NLP). BERT stands for Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers. In short, BERT can help computers understand language more similarly to the way humans do.

Wilfer adds, "In line with our editorial rules, the algorithm makes the suggestion but does not decide automatically which articles are placed behind the paywall. The element of human choice is an important role in our considerations when implementing Artificial Intelligence in our products."

The new AI tool relies on different sources such as the conversions of all previous paid articles, including some metadata like author, department and date of publishing.

> 66 We know that the industry is experimenting with Artificial Intelligence to improve conversion rates; I think in the end each publisher has to find their own approach." says Wilfer. "I do not think anyone has one solution to improve subscription conversion rates across the board. The rate depends on conditions that vary, such as the subscription model, traffic sources and to which degree AI is used in the process. 99
>
> **NICO WILFER, CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER AT F.A.Z.**

PERSONALIZED ARTICLES
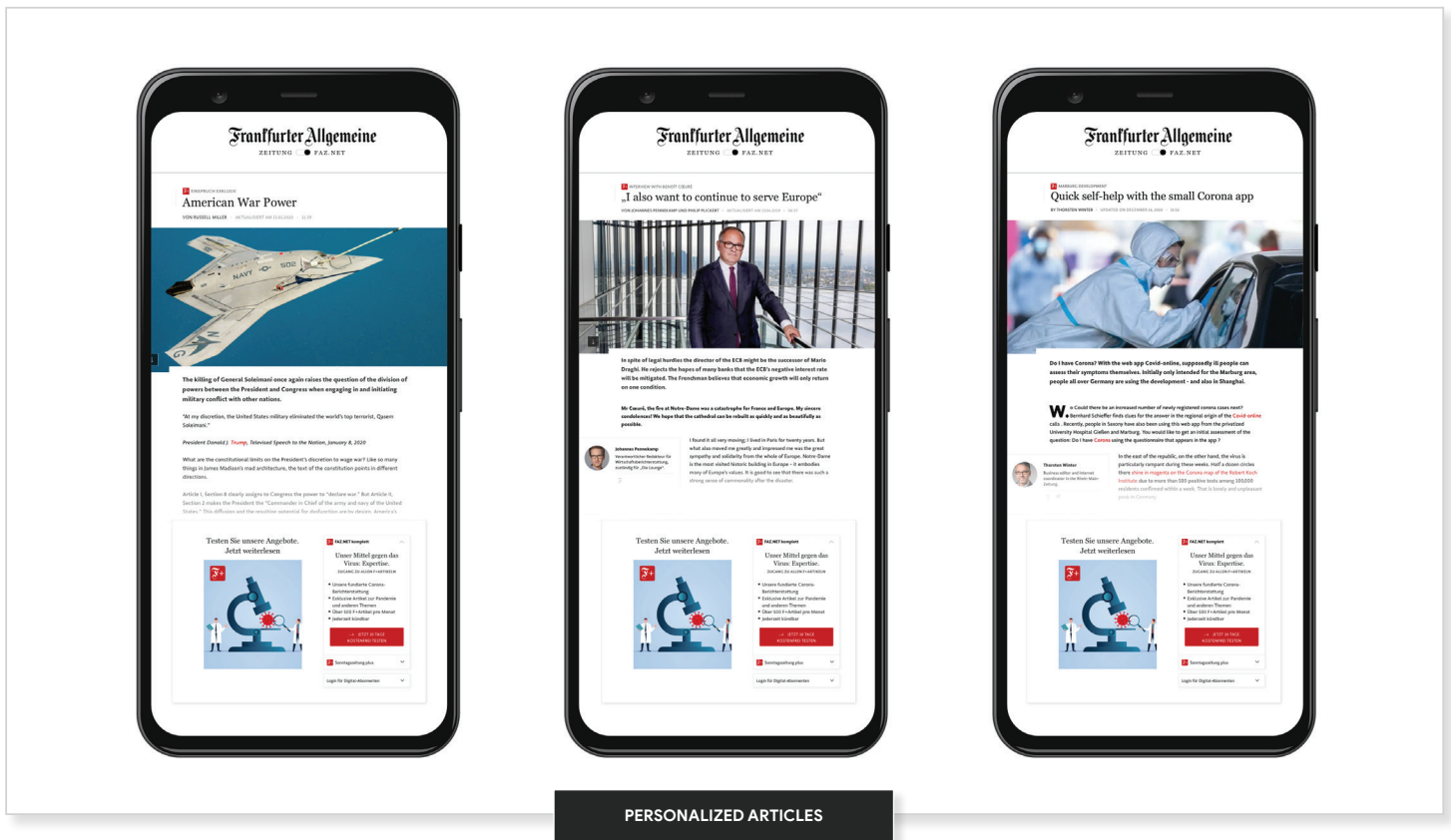
The Results

As well as overall subscription growth, F.A.Z. tracks the quality of the AI tool and checks the variance of the suggestion against the final conversion rates. This tracking measures the quality of the tool's predictions. Results to date show that the AI tool is very effective at predicting future article conversions, with almost half of all predictions nearly 100% accurate.

Wilfer says that F.A.Z. 's editors are very interested in the use of an AI service that supports their daily work and are learning how to make the most of the tool.

Learn more www.faz.net