
DISCUSSION AT TCMEA19: THE GREAT IMPACT OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The 5th Telematics Conference Middle East & Africa was held in Dubai end of March 2019. The main topic this year was Advanced Telematics in Fleet Management. The event also hosted 2 panel discussions, which provided a great insights into the current situations of fleet management and telematics industry.



From left: Volha Smirnova, Ivor Wheeldon, Mohammad Al Saraira, and Juan Uruburu Alonso. (Photo: Ergo Institute)

The 2nd panel discussion titled 'The Great Impact of New Technologies' was moderated by Volha Smirnova, Business Development Manager at Location Solutions. The discussion gathered companies and speakers whose work is contributing to the level of technological transformation in the GCC region and beyond: Mohammad Al Saraira, Senior Director of Business Development at du (UAE), Juan Uruburu Alonso, Head of Sales Middle East, Commercial Vehicle Tires at Continental Middle East (UAE), and Ivor Wheeldon, Head Customer Operations, Enterprise IoT at HERE Technologies (UK).

The business and technology community of the GCC is built of various international players, with success stories from each corner of the world and high penetration factors in their respective countries. This shows a certain pace, and illustrates technology (IoT) adoption factors, which are stronger in certain geographies, and weaker, or shaped differently in others. When bringing technologies from all over the world into the GCC, "even when the most manifested technology enters the region, it needs to undergo a series of changes and transformations to cater for the local needs", as Volha stated. The GCC has its own definition of "innovation" in mind.

This brings us to the question:

Should we really be accelerating the level at which we are developing in the GCC? If you come to think of the idea of the IoT or technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Blockchain -- then in the GCC these concepts have had their time, and lived through a range of conferences and professional discussions. Now these days even blockchain has gone from being a mysterious source of scams to having its own thriving startup ecosystem. In blockchain, however, the GCC projects are still experimental, but they're ambitious, making those who are still striving to work with the technology very jealous.

Whereas, in AI and digitalisation -- we are facing complete transformations in organisations large and small. Thanks to AI, automation and collaborative platforms we get more established tools such as vehicle tracking and paperless job-scheduling, this makes operations managers in particular more prone to innovation and to incorporating yet another IoT product into their corporate realms.

Company Continental was represented by Juan Uruburu Alonso, Head of Sales Middle East, Commercial Vehicle Tires at Continental Middle East. The organisation is known mostly as a tyre

legend, yet they have entered the GCC with a set of technologies that are turning trucks into mobile devices. This has definitely opened doors for Continental into a wider range of customer segments, and created the foundations for new technology partnerships. "There's nothing closer to roads than tyres," said Juan, "governments and organisations large and small are looking for ways to reduce the damage to roads, and most importantly improve the durability of their mobile assets. Tyres are still one of the most important components of this ecosystem". Juan mentioned their innovative ContiPressureCheck and the scalability of data it shows even in combination with tyres of other manufacturers. Juan mentioned the success of the organisation in the region due to a set of partnerships, and their corporate vision to keep making the roads of the GCC safer.



From left: Ivor Wheeldon (HERE Technologies), Mohammad Al Saraira (du), and Juan Uruburu Alonso (Continental Middle East). (Photo: Ergo Institute)



The discussion was moderated by Volha Smirnova, Business Development Manager at Location Solutions. (Photo: Ergo Institute)

Company du serves as an enabler of a range of technologies for a number of players in the GCC, and sort of pre-determines the speed at which businesses will move in the region. During the panel Mohammad Al Saraira, Senior Director of Business Development at du provided his reflections on the subject, and agreed that if we want to live in a world of connected vehicles - certain infrastructures, enabled by telcos, need to be created. With a massive transformation in fleet management, there's been more demand in NB-IoT already. The business model of NB-IoT is happening globally but the consumer is a little behind in adoption. The market is evolving very fast and by 2020, the UAE market will be ready for mass adoption. At ADNOC petrol stations already there are parking sensors communicating through LPWAN in test regime, this ensures safety and can facilitate the penetration of technology in other areas.

Mohammad mentioned that a lot of projects that company du administers are currently ongoing in the form of POCs, since du is a very calculated risk-taker, with IoT and AI being the areas where one cannot be too safe. Another important growth pillar, massively stimulate by du as telco, is the 5G technology. Now that 5G is revolutionizing the technology space, consumer segment will benefit, of course, however the target is always B2B. The position of du will always remain very risk-averse, and they will support innovations as soon as these innovations can be scaled.

Now that connectivity is there, we need safer maps as part of imbedded IoT infrastructure, or as part of a first-response ecosystem. Ivor Wheeldon, Head Customer Operations, Enterprise IoT at HERE Technologies, was there to contribute. One of the important questions we touched upon was: how can businesses derive greater value from their data and what are the steps to take on this journey?

Ivor spoke about the value data, and claimed that they are seeing companies in all industries realizing the value of the data they collect or have access to. But often one data source in isolation has limited value, the real value from a location angle is where the data is reference spatially and then combined with other sources to answer business problems. HERE Technologies recognized this as the way forward some years ago and have been developing an ecosystem to support the ingestion of multiple difference disparate data sources to provide new services. This is called the Open Location Platform.

In terms of steps businesses need to take, Ivor suggested that there must be an open and collaborative approach in using the business knowledge companies have to their own advantage by embracing the new technologies. For example AI and machine learning coupled with location data has some real benefits. For a last mile delivery scenario, where we understand that 50% of a businesses costs to offer this service is made up for the last part of the delivery.

The panel discussion of a synergy of views and opinions, and one of the concepts that was commonly shared was that organisations especially in the GCC are starting to realise that the big data and knowledge they have can be leveraged and utilised for the benefit of corporate growth when added into an AI and machine learning environment. Business partnerships and a complete understanding of the local infrastructure are important elements of growth, which happens as long as the new technology learns to assimilate with the existing environment, instead of disrupting it.



Audience at Telematics Conference in Dubai, March 2019. (Photo: Ergo Institute)