

Interview with BigBrother: “We provide the connection between the digital and real world”

BigBrother is a Dutch security and technology company bringing innovative solutions to the fuel retail market, including license plate recognition. Aart Van Rooijen, Commercial Director at BigBrother, discusses the use of CCTV in the forecourt of the future.



Aart van Rooijen

Aart van Rooijen is an MBA graduate from IE business school (Madrid). For more than twenty years, Aart has been working in fuel retail and in securing the risks involved with the fuel station business. He has been working at BigBrother since 2005.

What is going to be more important when discussing the future of the forecourt, the technology available or the customer's behaviour?

We believe that it is not the technology that will determine the future but the customers. How are they looking to interact with fuel stations – that is the question. The technology will be used to enable the desire of the future customer. The customer of the future will determine the stations of the future.

When we look at the future we look at how we can help our direct customers, the fuel stations; and in an indirect way that is influenced by what the end user wants. With that in mind, we see some interesting things. First, the digitalization of the customer journey. It is not so much about technology but with the customer wanting a personal approach. For gas stations, the challenge is that they will have to create a personal experience on a mass scale as there are thousands of different experiences every day at a site.

How does CCTV technology tie into that approach?

Through camera technology you can identify a customer in real life [through license plate recognition] and make it available for digital platforms – that is where we see our place in this discussion about innovation and new ways to interact with customers. We can tell [retailers] who is at your site to

support the digital customer journey if they are part of a program (loyalty program, an app, a card...) – we provide the connection between the digital and real world.

What if they are not part of a program?

That is our second pillar. Our technology can support the ‘unknown’ customer, those that are not part of loyalty programs or similar. It is important for the retailer to know how many of your customers are not part of any program. You cannot get much data due to privacy regulation but there is still useful information to be obtained. It is interesting to see how many of these customers you can convert to loyal clients.



Privacy has become one of the key topics of discussion when it comes to new technologies, especially in Europe. How does that affect the possibilities of analysis?

In Europe, more and more we are limited in how we can use the acquired data. You can question whether female and male roles still apply. Instead of getting that information from an image, we believe in connecting databases with each other. If a software programme is analysing with back-office information, creating certain profiles based on market analysis, what we can do is connect that to the license plate. You can then easily target certain promotions. By connecting databases to each other you already have an accurate profile of the customer. So you stay away from the discussion of how you can identify elements of customers (age, gender, etc.).

You say that the main objective of your services is still security.

Camera technology is there in the first place to provide security and safety to customers. Marketing should not be the first use for cameras. The forefront of the future will provide big challenges in terms

of security due to the energy mix. We just saw a [hydrogen station exploding last week](#). The energy mix will raise the risk of a site. That is our philosophy – providing security first, assisting the customer journey second.

What do you make of the modern c-stores that use facial recognition to go in and out, to shop, etc. Is it applicable to forecourts?

There are two things. First, you need the complete consensus of your customers. You have the Amazon model where all your customers are already part of a program, meaning that customers not included in that program are excluded, which doesn't really work for a forecourt. Second, there is still a lot to gain from the lower automation level to better understand your customers.