Identify as smart

by Kadri Haufe, *Head of Smart Port Advisory, Nortal*

Even if most ports aren't yet 'smart,' smart port technology is well known. But digital identity verification, which can elevate that smartness to new heights, is a solution that fewer port professionals are aware of.

A smart port is one where nothing is expected of a driver or passenger beyond following foolproof directions. Nowhere will someone wonder which way to turn. Nowhere will a passenger be asked to fill in a form. And they never have to present their identification.

In port operations, the benefits of smart are also fairly well recognised. Manual work is eliminated in terminal traffic management, vehicle classification is done effortlessly, and paper disappears from the system just as port congestion (and CO_2) is massively reduced, not to mention precisely measured.

But it's possible to make this seamless experience even better – for passengers, cars, cargo, and those who manage the entire process.

Much more than just an add-on

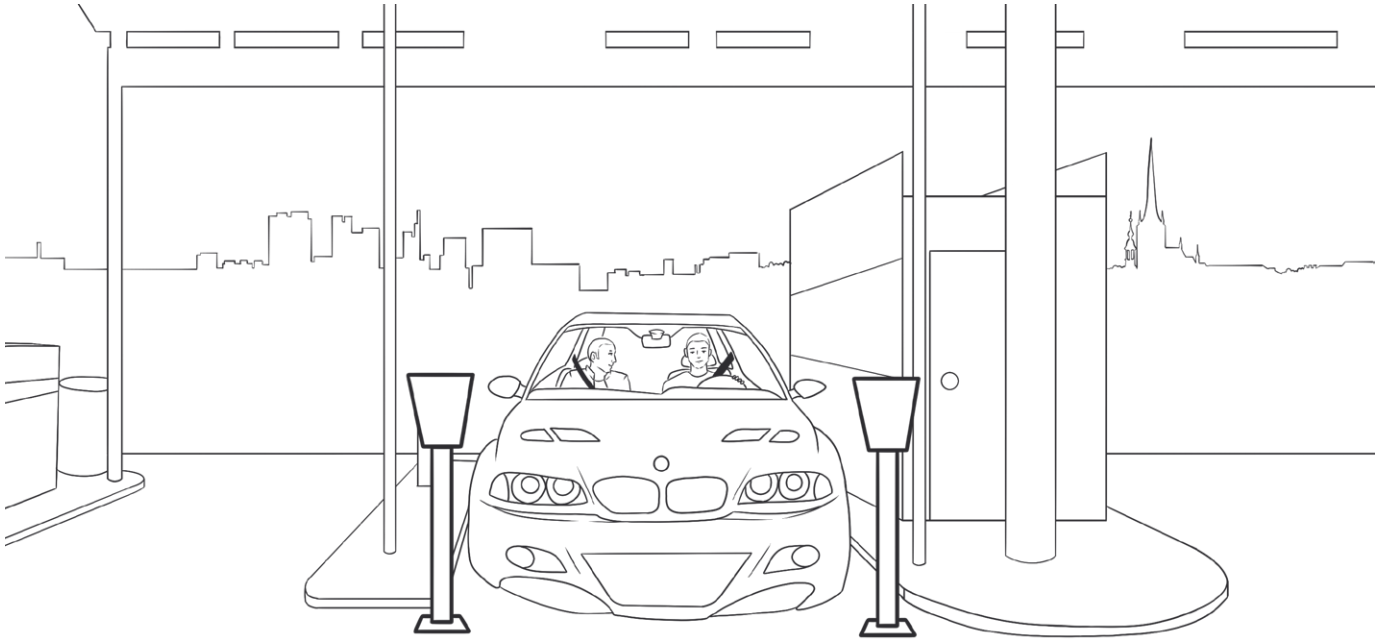
Digital biometric identity verification solutions can be used to identify passengers and drivers in free flow during check-in and customs procedures. They can pre-enrol online by uploading a photo of their passport or driver's license or do so in the port (at smart registration/enrollment kiosks, aka totems) before entering check-in. It gives commercial drivers the added benefit of linking digital identity verification with vehicle registration for a swift entry process.

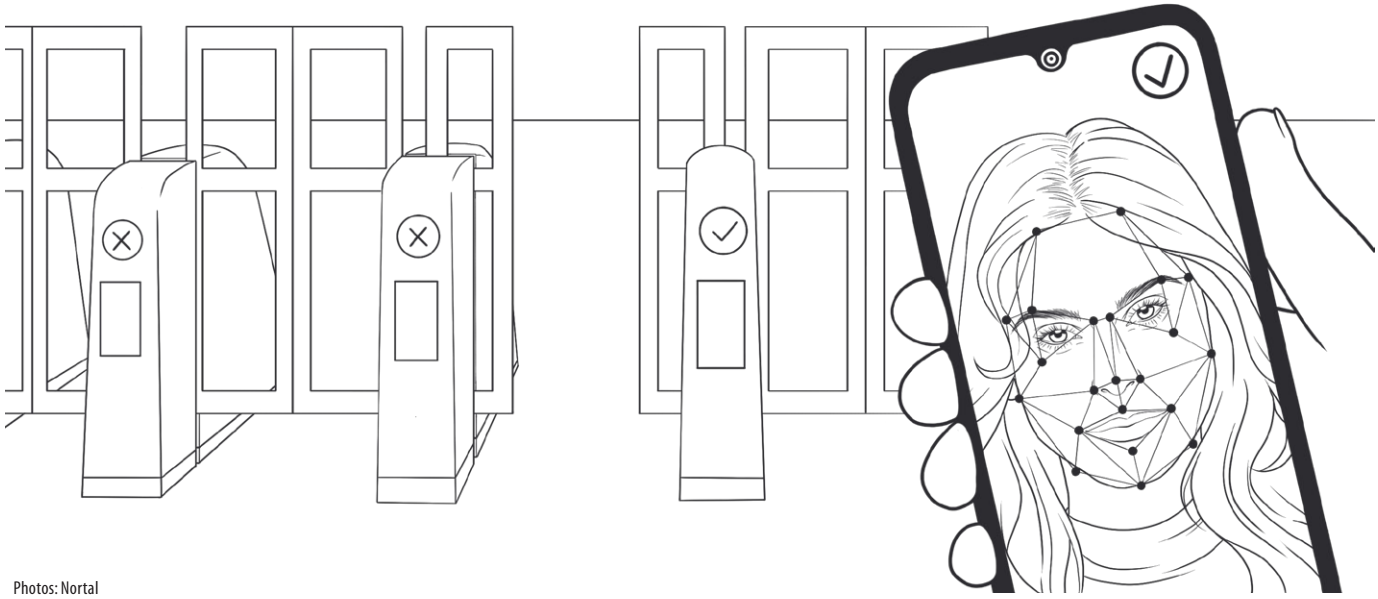
The technology can also be used to give (and restrict) staff and contractor access to the terminal (restricted zones or operational centres) – and even equipment (beyond zone access, biometric identity verification ensures only certified employees operate specific machinery, ensuring compliance with safety regulations). Port security is improved, and humans are no longer needed to lock and unlock doors.

The solution can boost revenues, enable the upselling of personalised services for passengers, and offer discounts on food and drink to frequent customers (rewarding them with exclusive offers or expedited processing for enhanced loyalty). Travellers opting for personalised services receive a warm welcome by name and tailored recommendations for onboard amenities or retail deals.

On board, the technology can also regulate passenger access to cabins or spas, eliminating key cards (thus freeing up personnel that otherwise would have to issue them). Integration with onboard service systems allows passengers to use biometric data for personalised entertainment, cashless purchases, or booking wellness treatments and restaurant reservations.

As we grapple with the complexities of managing identity verification – a task demanding considerable resources – the maturity of digital identity technologies presents a timely solution. The urgency is further amplified by external factors, such as the new Entry/Exit System requirements at European borders and the need for robust border controls amidst a complicated





Photos: Nortal

geopolitical landscape (the technology allows for connecting biometric data with international security databases to swiftly identify potential security risks).

These scenarios illustrate just a fraction of the potential that digital identity verification holds for transforming the operations and experiences in smart ports and ferries (only creativity sets limits for new use cases!). Digital identity verification isn't just an add-on; it is a fundamental shift towards secure, efficient, and personalised maritime travel and trade. Furthermore, in a world still reeling from a global pandemic, the role of digital identity verification in disease prevention – be it through mask detection or health passport validation – cannot be overstated.

Yet, transitioning to digital transformation doesn't come without its challenges. Intelligent biometric systems are just one piece of a larger puzzle. Successful transitions require seamless integration with existing applications, robust business rules, stringent cybersecurity measures, and leveraging data for continuous improvement. It may sound laborious – demanding, above all, a holistic approach for successful implementation – but it is by far and large doable and has what it takes to make a port truly smart. ■

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