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OTT Success Series: Making OTT video smarter

When cognitive analytics meet digital video platforms, amazing things happen

IBM Cloud Video

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In today's OTT technology landscape, analytics have become analogous to spokes on a bicycle wheel: prevalent, necessary and presumed in advance. Rare is the online video provider that can't spin out an elaborate report detailing the relationship between stream quality and session duration, or the causality that seems to be at play when device integration meets subscriber retention.

But it's important to recognize that these relatively crude comparisons are now mere table stakes for participating in the OTT 2.0 evolution. They're as common to OTT video as garden-variety transcoding or rudimentary metadata capabilities.

The more appealing news for premium content providers is that analytics are becoming, well, more analytical. Drawing on larger, more diverse and revealing data sets, a new breed of OTT video analytics promises to deliver richer insights that will have a much larger, deeper impact on business success than the early-generation approaches that have sustained the industry to date.

Nuanced understanding

One example: the ability to become more effective at identifying and communicating with prone-to-purchase subscribers in the SVOD space. Blending external data sets with more intricate, thorough knowledge about viewing selections – such as which customers tend to gravitate to certain characteristics within broad content libraries – can allow for a more nuanced understanding of which consumers are likely to be compelled by a particular product or content offer. Here, it's possible to make interesting connections among multiple data sources that can render otherwise unattainable insights – in real time.

For instance, an SVOD provider might identify patterns that reveal relationships between social media conversations, lifestyle indicators and content preferences, thus making it possible to craft highly personalized, relevant recommendations and messaging for specific audiences.

This transcends the well-worn approach of merely "recommending" certain shows or movies based on past selections. Instead, it creates a fabric of understanding woven from a richer, wider and arguably more human set of indicators – such as personality, tone and emotion – resulting in a more genuine, natural way to identify and engage predisposed customers.

Another example relates to search. Today, most OTT video searches merely examine underlying metadata – the textual descriptions that attempt to convey details about a particular show or content offering. Cognitive technologies allow much deeper, more detailed searches into the video content itself. Imagine there's a scene in which a favorite actor or character mentions their affinity for a particular melody within a specific song. That exact moment – a pairing of personality and music – can be identified and served with cognitive-powered search that goes far beyond the limitations of traditional metadata, along with just about any other combination of in-asset information.

Fuel for innovation

While improvements in search and discovery are significant, the true impact of cognitive analytics will be most evident when it comes to administering and optimizing OTT video services. Cognitive analytics offer an unprecedented opportunity to crack the intelligence hidden inside unstructured video data and disparate data sets, in essence serving as an engine for continuous and transformative innovation.

Take content creators, for instance, who are now poised to gain visibility into what types of viewers selected certain content; whether (and when) viewers rewound and re-watched particular scenes; and even whether or why they abandoned viewing sessions. By providing new layers of detail about how users interact with video, content providers can implement a more responsive feedback loop between the creative process and end consumption of video content. And in doing so, improve their ability to balance content investments against viewer satisfaction.

In addition to making more informed content development or acquisition decisions, content providers armed with data and cognitive analytics are better able to:

- Align retail price points with budget sensitivities
- Adjust on-screen content and menu presentation to appeal to different customers
- Deliver highly targeted advertising in fresh, viewer-relevant ways
- Out-perform competitors by sustaining highly personalized offerings that conform with preferences and lifestyles exhibited by both customers and potential new customers

These capabilities represent a sample of the cognitive analytics work that IBM Cloud Video is already conducting on behalf of some of the world's best-recognized premium video brands, across a global footprint. There is natural symmetry between IBM's Watson cognitive technology and the world of premium digital video, where rich data sets drawing from any combination of video, audio, textual, transactional, behavioral or demographic attributes can be examined and evaluated in new, often-revealing ways. In fact, OTT video is optimally situated to benefit from cognitive analytics, partly because providers have so much data about usage patterns and preferences, and the resulting impact on the industry should not be underestimated.

The bottom line: As premium content providers gear up for business success in a more demanding, more expansive marketplace, the players that will lead the category are those that can successfully leverage cognitive analytics and owned data to produce intelligence and uncover truths that remain obscure to other providers. The fundamental building blocks of OTT video are already in place and working well: digital encoding/transcoding, networked delivery, device compatibility, metadata management and content security.

The next leap forward in OTT video will revolve around intelligence. What providers know about behaviors, patterns and relationships, and how they subsequently use that information to produce marketplace advantages will become strategic differentiators in a world where similarly minded offerings frequently compete. In the world of OTT video 2.0, knowledge truly is power.

IBM Cloud Video

IBM Cloud Video delivers reliable and scalable video streaming services globally. Combining robust video functionality and exceptional cognitive abilities, IBM Cloud Video provides one of the most comprehensive video offerings available today. For more information on IBM Cloud Video, please visit www.ibm.com/cloud/video.

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