

M+E

JOURNAL

Risks & Rewards



The opportunities before media and entertainment are unprecedented. So too are the threats.

OUR CHANGING INDUSTRY

The roadmap to media and entertainment's future is paved with innovation

LOCALIZATION

Content localization is a worldwide, need-it-now business. Here's how to keep pace

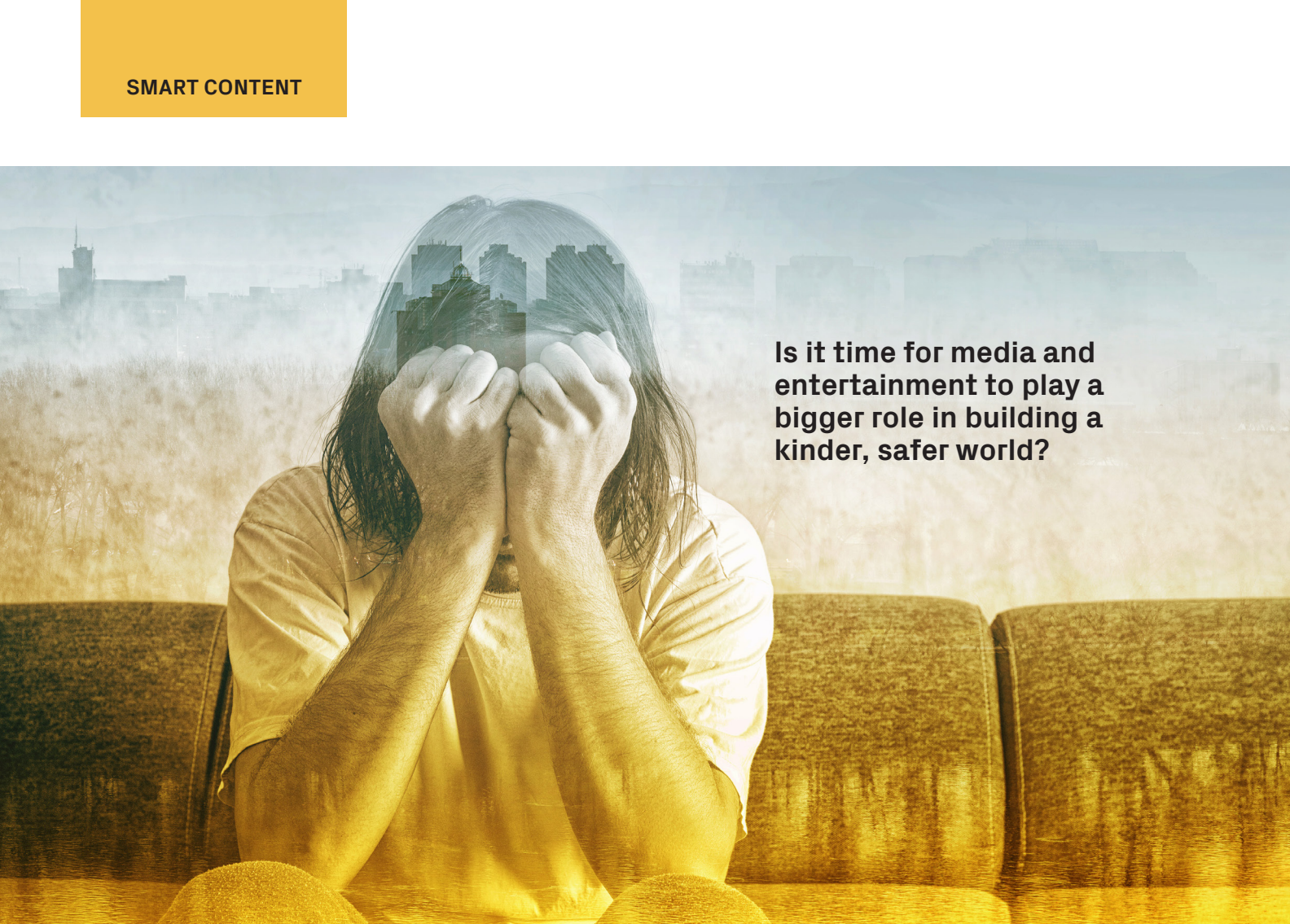
WORKFLOWS AND THE CLOUD

Cloud workflows are proving crucial for media productions today

SMART CONTENT

It's a data-driven content reality, and all the tools are there to realize success

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Is it time for media and entertainment to play a bigger role in building a kinder, safer world?

DATA'S POTENTIAL FOR HEALTHIER CONTENT CONSUMPTION

ABSTRACT: Due to the internet and an abundance of in-home entertainment options, social isolation was a mental health concern long before the pandemic hit, and after nearly two years of lockdowns and social distancing, the problem has become even worse. Media and entertainment companies, with the massive amount of viewer data they have on hand, have a unique opportunity to identify potential mental health issues, and offer help.

By **Brajesh Jha, SVP, Global Head of Media, Publishing, Entertainment, Genpact**

During most of the past two years, acts of kindness have swept across the world. While the world grappled with a virus that disrupted life and business, individuals and organizations worked together to find innovative ways to make the world a better place. And media and entertainment did its part.

The industry harnessed the very best of human creativity and ingenuity to quickly deploy technology and drive exceptional user experiences through new digital platforms, content, and business models. As the world drifted apart under social distancing rules and lockdowns, the ubiquitous availability of streaming shows and social media kept us engaged and connected.

However, there's a flip side. Our multi-modal consumption habits have fueled a sharp increase in screen time: according to Zuora's Subscription Economy Index Report the global subscription growth rate for OTT video streaming companies grew seven times in March 2020 in comparison to the growth rate over the previous 12 months. People are spending longer hours binge-watching their favorite shows or scrolling through social media, causing health experts to flag concerns about increasing isolation and mental health issues in societies around the world. As Noreen Hertz pointed out in her thought-provoking book "The Lonely Century," we were already going through a "social recession," and months of lockdowns have made this problem only worse.

HEALING EFFECTS OF POSITIVE MEDIA

For years, the research on the impact of media was focused on the negative. Whether in establishing a correlation between aggression and media violence or about increase in societal bias related to racial and gender stereotypes, the goal was mostly to protect consumers from harmful content. However, in recent years, attention has shifted toward the positives.

According to a study conducted at Pennsylvania State University, films can also elicit a warm and uplifting feeling when we see someone performing an act of gratitude, generosity, or loyalty. In the study, a group of students was asked to recollect movies that were particularly meaningful, and they came up with examples that told stories of altruism, fairness, and social justice. This study and additional body of research is covered, "Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research," a recent book on positive media psychology.

Uplifting, feel-good content is a genre to itself, of course. Movies and shows such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Zootopia* and *The Pursuit of Happyness* and books such as Matt Haig's "The Midnight Library" have been hailed as antidotes for today's troubled times.

The key question then is whether such media could play a role in addressing the combined effects of loneliness and mental health on society.

WHAT IF this existing infrastructure were to take on the additional objective of identifying viewer behavior that could point to potential mental health issues and trigger a positive intervention? This could involve media platforms picking moments in content that could touch viewers in a positive way and address clinical issues.

CREATING A HEALTHY DIET OF CONTENT CONSUMPTION

The majority of content platforms today are built with underlying recommendation engines. These engines track the genre, quality, category, and other key attributes of shows chosen by a uniquely identified viewer linked to the account. This enables them to capture a massive amount of data about viewer preferences, stickiness, and repeat viewing tendencies. The engines then leverage this rich data to build accurate user personas and drive content optimization and curation to deliver a hyper-personalized experience and maximize the commercial appeal of content.

What if this existing infrastructure were to take on the additional objective of identifying viewer behavior that could point to potential mental health issues and trigger a positive intervention? This could involve media platforms picking moments in content that could touch viewers in a positive way and address clinical issues, or even content and social media platforms collaborating to combine first party and third-party data to create richer personas that encompass mental health attributes.

As physical health is better understood than mental health, let's bring in an analogy from the world of food and nutrition to illustrate this point. If we were to label gritty, realistic, graphic or potentially triggering social and relationship issues as carbohydrates (satisfying and



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essential, but to be consumed in moderation), inspirational or informational content as healthy protein, and user-generated social media content as junk food, recommendation engines could play a role in ensuring users consume a balanced content diet that promotes wellbeing and happiness.

Of course, this is easier said than done, as such attempts will directly conflict with the prevailing algorithms which are designed to maximize engagement. On the other hand, privacy concerns will require careful handling of sensitive, individually identifiable data.

However, if there is a level playing field with checks and balances in place, a wellness-focused content strategy may gain greater acceptance. It would require users and platforms to share information identified as psychological attributes relevant to mental health. Likewise, the implementation would have to be consistent across platforms.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A MEDIA UNIVERSE THAT WORKS BETTER FOR PEOPLE

While a media ecosystem that tracks and promotes mental wellbeing may seem futuristic, technological assets that are currently in use can serve as the foundational framework to support the concept. These fall into the following three key areas:

■ **First** is the ability to carry out rich labeling of content attributes at the most granular level. This should be embedded in all media that is freshly created as well as decades of historical content that could find its way onto platforms. This is possible given the immense capabilities that firms such as Genpact bring to the table in sifting through tons of content everyday across multiple platforms and tagging them with appropriate tools. They deploy a combination of artificial and human intelligence to accomplish this today and it can be easily extended to include psychological data based on industry standards.

■ **The second** involves building a rich unified view of consumers. With the exponential growth in customer data, companies are relying on customer data platforms (CDPs) to build the right customer experience. Genpact regularly works with media organizations in rolling out CDPs as they move away from a channel centric to a consumer centric approach. This is a critical piece for all successful content platforms as they look to maximize their investments. It also means we already have a key building block in place where consumer profiles are being managed and maintained. These just need to be

enhanced with additional psychological data.

■ **The third** important area involves creating algorithms to detect bad habits that affect mental health negatively as well as ones that gently nudge consumption habits toward positive, healing choices. The computing expertise is already in place, the challenge here would be building partnerships with mental health professionals to design strategies that work.

The good news as a result of the renewed attention on social media's impact on users, researchers are amassing a wealth of information that should be readily deployable to drive positive outcomes for users.

FUTURE POSITIVE

Rolling out such a solution will require significant cooperation across content creation, distribution, and entertainment companies. In addition, public policy experts, mental health specialists, media consumption researchers, and many other entities will need to come together to make this a reality.

The world of streaming, gaming, and social media are all converging. Imagine a scenario where the safety and security of individual consumers and society as a whole is not an afterthought but a key consideration at the heart of all media products and strategy. In this new ecosystem, automatic safety alerts trigger timely action to safeguard the user from harmful content or behavior. Immersion and engagement algorithms tap into the natural human instincts of building meaningful relationships with others and drive a healthy mind-body balance for consumers.

The invisibility of mental health issues often leads to late detection and action. But we see the impact played out in the form of gun violence and polarization.

It is time that the media and entertainment industry does its part in tackling this problem. As a service provider catering to this industry, we are committed to helping media be a beacon of hope and positivity. ■