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Changing the game with Metadata

in the age of heightened consumer expectations

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Metadata, put simply, is data that describes content.

Metadata is the key driver for the management and discovery of content in the broadcast industry today. When applied to television and streaming, it's important to define the two main forms it can be delivered in. The first is technical metadata that provides a basic level of insight to inform systems and users about a piece of content. This will include information about video, audio and images assets, plus compression rates, codec information, duration, aspect ratios, encryption, rights and more.

While all of this information is important, and always has been, it's the second form of descriptive metadata that is becoming particularly crucial in the sector. Data that provides information such as alternative titles, synopses, running times, ratings, themes, cast, crew and awards can help expectant customers find the relevant content for them, and ultimately enhance their experience when watching a film or series. More content providers and broadcasters are leveraging these insights to keep eyeballs on their platform, but there are a number of challenges that can complicate the smooth deployment of metadata services to end users.

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Simple on the Surface

When looking to harness metadata, a common challenge among providers is the increasing complexity that comes with offering a wide range of insightful data elements to consumers. For example, it can be simple enough to map out titles and descriptors for content, but it can be more challenging to apply specific data, such as different languages, to the same film or series.

Aggregation of linear and VOD metadata can also be a difficult project to manage, particularly if there is legacy technology in the eco- system that needs to be dealt with. Many major broadcasters are usually working to different standards when incorporating content from multiple sources, and a lot of producers and distributors are often providing unique industry identification for different pieces of content resulting in them inventing their own classifications.

'In the near future, generative metadata will be produced in real-time'

The value of AI

Machine learning (ML), a subset of artificial intelligence (AI), is now increasingly being applied to content to automatically understand and categorise it. In the past, companies have tried to use tags or labels within content, which have been able to help viewers recognise a celebrity and identify them across different types of content in which they appear, for example.

However, in the near future, generative metadata will be produced in real-time as AI capabilities improve, with elastic intelligence coming to the fore. A viewer may subscribe to a topic of interest, such as ice skating, and a combination of metadata and AI will suggest content of a similar nature, such as ice hockey. Now, we're already starting to see base layers of standardised metadata that can be shared across a group of broadcasters within a particular region, helping to simplify the process.

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Supporting short form content

Metadata is also opening up opportunities in other areas. Technology innovations are now allowing providers to break up long-form content into shorter chunks with relevant metadata. These videos are then ideal for deployment on social media platforms such as TikTok, or can be used to advertise the full length episode. Edited clips of the same topic can also be combined together to create an episode around one particular topic.

An opportunistic world

The user experience has become ever more important, and providers must harness information such as viewing habits and demographic information to identify bonds between cohorts of consumers and different types of content. To meet consumer expectations, a generative approach to metadata is opening up opportunities for real-time insights when displaying content.

Next Generation Content Management Systems (CMS) that more effectively store and surface the metadata will need to be built with designers and consumers at the heart of their construction. Metadata creators and aggregators will provide the data that matches the system. The value provided by ChatGPT and other AIs may give insight as to how metadata will be provided in the future, with data generated from huge amounts of information in a more freeform and elastic way.

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User experience is now the primary focus and driver for engagement and so we will see a greater focus being placed on personalisation with better tagging and better metadata. This is why content providers and broadcasters need to be thinking of their consumers first, and implementing solutions that allow metadata to be properly utilised, while also keeping viewers interested in what's happening on the screen. The operators who make use of these new tools will be those that increase platform performance, reduce operational costs and still manage to keep consumers thoroughly engaged with their content.

The role of Merapar

We've worked on a number of metadata projects with clients since 2017, helping them set out their long term metadata strategies. This has included designing and building metadata frameworks and complete solutions that allow them to leverage the latest AI tools and metadata content services, giving them the opportunity to adapt their offerings over time.

We've helped our clients achieve:

- A **90%** reduction in operational running costs
- A **500%+** increase in performance
- **Fast delivery** of new features thanks to futureproofed and extensible designs

Check out our recent examples of client successes:

- Delivering a personalisation service based on ML algorithms for NBC Universal's Hayu
- Designing a cloud-based Metadata plane for a large international Cable operator
- Metadata enrichment for a large Cable operator
- Delivering serverless video metadata management for a Global broadcaster

How can Merapar help you? Get in touch with us here.