The past few years have seen widespread adoption of various information and communications technology (ICT) solutions across the media and entertainment industry. Organisations across the industry are increasingly deploying new-age technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things (IoT), machine learning, (ML) and blockchain, among others, in an effort to improve their business efficiency and deliver better quality services to their customers. Siddhartha Roy, COO, Hungama Digital Media, shares his views on the key ICT trends shaping the sector, significant technology adoption and the challenges faced along the way...

What are the key ICT trends shaping the media and entertainment industry?

The advent of 4G and inexpensive data plans turned out to be a game changer for the industry. Digital content consumption has increased by leaps and bounds. Video consumption, in particular, has grown considerably. The country today has over 30 over-the-top (OTT) platforms. This is in addition to social networks, which are also a leading source of video consumption. About 325 million people viewed videos online in 2018 and this trend is not going to fade away any time soon.

What are the ICT solutions deployed by your organisation and how have they benefited business performance and efficiency?

A lot of emphasis at Hungama is on big data, AI and ML. Consumer data helps us understand the trends and this is instrumental in making important business and content decisions. AI and ML help us to know consumers' usage habits, their preferences and accordingly, in giving them recommendations that they are likely to implement. These insights have helped us improve the user experience and consumer engagement.

How is the growth in video consumption and emergence of multiple platforms transforming business requirements of enterprises in this industry?

Heightened competition has made it important for players to collaborate with others within the same industry. Telecom companies, original equipment manufacturers, DTH providers and other players have played a key role in this. Such associations have enabled OTT players to reach a wider audience. For instance, Hungama Play's content is available for users to stream

through Vodafone Play, Idea Movies & TV, Airtel Xstream, Amazon Fire TV Stick, Tata Sky Binge, SHAREit and Android TVs. Hungama's association with Xiaomi also enables consumers to watch our content through Hungama Play on Mi TV.

Besides collaborations, platforms have also stepped up their focus on developing and improving their UI. The most obvious transformation has occurred in the kind of content that OTT platforms create and release. Content available online has to be unique, differentiated and unavailable on the traditional medium. Owing to audience demand, digital content creators are offering stories that explore unique narratives and genres.

How has the adoption of new-age technologies such as big data analytics, AI, IoT, blockchain and ML been transforming the industry? What are your future plans regarding these?

The industry has been quick to adopt new technologies. With increased competition, there is a need to offer the best services to consumers and these technologies help in improving business efficiency and enhancing user experience. At the same time, this also simplifies and makes back-end operations smoother. At Hungama, we lay strong emphasis on big data, AI and ML, and will continue to do so in the future.

What are the key challenges in the deployment of new technologies and the existing IT and telecom infrastructure management?

Data and network consistency is extremely important for a streaming service. There exist pockets within the country that have a patchy network. Most of us have tried to circumvent this issue by allowing users to download content and watch it in the offline mode.

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