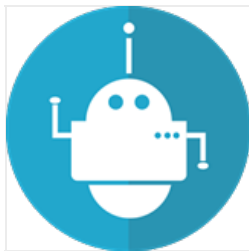


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Bots Bring Personalization to Publishing

Ruksana Hussain
Apr 30, 2018



Chatbots are all the rage. Marketers and customer service professionals can't get enough of them, but chatbots are also popping up somewhere that is, perhaps, less expected. No less a venerable media institution than the BBC is using in-article chatbots to introduce readers to

complex topics. In an attempt to spread adoption among users and reporters, the BBC News Labs and the BBC Visual Journalism team has a custom bot-builder application designed for reporters to build chatbots and insert them into stories.

According to [Nieman Labs](#), [Grant Heinrich](#), the BBC developer leading the organization's bot efforts (and one of the creators of the BBC's previous Brexit Bot), says bots represent a new way for the BBC to reach readers "not deeply engaged in complicated news stories," and helps demystify topics that people struggle with understanding.

Quartz Digital News also announced its new Facebook Messenger experience in March this year. Quartz on Messenger taps into the knowledge of the Quartz Bot Studio, established in 2016 with the support of a Knight Foundation grant. In the last two years, the company has observed readers enjoying journalism in a conversation format and has learned to write for that kind of interface. Quartz now leverages the nuances of the Messenger platform to deliver a new kind of personal messaging experience, ranging from special projects to intelligent message notifications.

Several media behemoths including the *New York Times*, Reuters, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian* are integrating chatbots and artificial intelligence into their news distribution. In fact, *The Washington Post's* Heliograf intelligent automated storytelling agent and ModBot automatic comment moderation technologies each took first place in the 2018 Global BIGGIES Awards which recognize best practices in big data and artificial intelligence products and strategies by media companies from around the world.

Heliograf won in the category of "Excellence in Use of Bots" while ModBot took the top prize for "Excellence in Use of Artificial Intelligence" in these awards that are administered by The Big Data & AI for Media Association.

"Data driven AI is a powerful tool that not only has the potential for making money using advertising and subscriptions but also for saving money by automating important but mundane tasks in news and media organizations. The technology more than pays for itself once it has been created and optimized," says Martha Stone, CEO of the World Newsmedia Network and founder of the Big Data For Media Conference.

According to Beerud Sheth, CEO and founder of Gupshup, a smart messaging platform, "Challenges such as fake news, personalization, monetization, advertising, etc. will see new and innovative solutions being deployed. Text- and voice-based chatbots will dramatically accelerate the trend toward a high quality and personalized news and content experience."

Gupshup's bots and bot development platform are used by over 30,000 businesses, including Google and Facebook, and Sheth has developed chatbots for media outlets including *Paste Magazine* and *All About Jazz*, a jazz music website that aggregates, publishes, and syndicates a variety of jazz-oriented content daily.

On the topic of fake news though Stone shares that it is an uphill battle despite many media companies attempting their own [AI driven fake news remedy](#). "Addressing even some of it is better

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than not trying at all but by no means has anybody come up with a silver bullet yet." She is, however, optimistic for the revenue and cost savings chatbots and AI present and the levels of sophistication in technology that media companies are witnessing as a result.

"Personalization is where the sweet spot is, we must create personalized ad campaigns, and content recommendation and more delightful experiences on websites or customers will go to a place where that is offered," says Stone. "AI and data allow us to deliver content on the right channels, to the right people, at the right time - this was the promise of the Internet long ago and it isn't being realized until now."

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If you ask Elon Musk, artificial intelligence (AI) should be feared. "I don't think most people understand just how quickly machine intelligence is advancing," Musk said on stage at Vanity Fair's New Establishment Summit: The Age of Innovation. He also sponsors open AI, "a non-profit AI research company, discovering and enacting the path to safe artificial general intelligence." Despite Musk's misgivings, AI is infiltrating just about every corner of our lives and the digital content industry.

[Go With Your Gut: When You Can Ignore the Algorithms](#)

A Harvard Business Review case study recently posed a provocative question: when should humans listen to algorithms vs. when should they trust their own experience and intuition? For this case study, the issue related to which of two employees to choose for a promotion. But, given the widespread applications for the use of big data and the power of predictive analytics, the question could be applied to any field or area of business practice—including content marketing.

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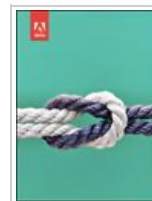
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