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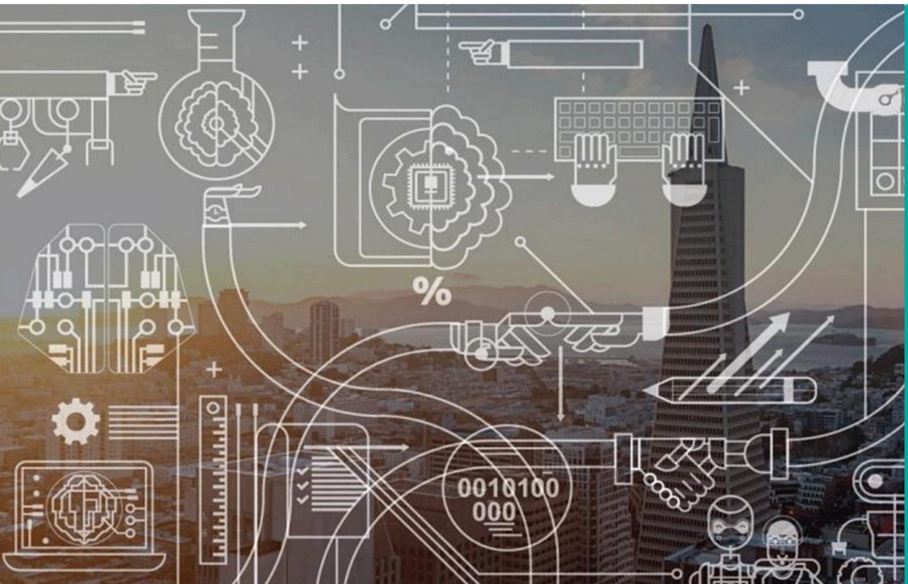

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

E-commerce can spur intra-South Asia trade: World Bank

Amid rising competition, Zomato, Swiggy play the differentiation game

Google Maps now filters searches for EV charger plug types

Indian B2B food tech startup HungerBox raises $12M from Paytm and others

Union Budget 2020: Sitharaman discusses Big Data use cases with startups

Today's View

Affective Computing

Increasing usage of tech-enabled devices is often blamed for depriving emotional interaction among human beings. Considering the importance of the emotions in our daily lives, several firms have strived hard to make their products emotionally engaging. Thanks to emergence of technologies like big data, robotics and machine learning, we are entering an era of artificial emotional intelligence, better known as 'Affective Computing'.

Affective Computing is an area of study within cognitive computing and artificial intelligence that measures human emotions based on facial, voice and body language. In order to gain better understanding, **MIT Affective Computing Research Group** is doing research on this novel concept to explore how people can communicate via affective-cognitive states as well as new ways to assess frustration, stress and moods.

As per **Industry Today** report, the Global Affective Computing market is valued at around 200 million USD in 2017 and is expected to reach about 3500 million USD by the end of 2025, growing at a CAGR of 43% between 2017 and 2025.

Various fintechs are taking steps to leverage affective computing's potential. For example, Chinese fintech and e-commerce giant **Alibaba** is teaming up with **Tsinghua University** to research and develop human-computer interaction technologies like affective computing to study the ways in which

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Myntra expects End of Reason event to net 60% growth in sales

Flipkart-owned Myntra is expecting 60% year-on-year growth in sales during its four-daylong End of Reason Sale (EORS) that starts on December 22.

Source – The Economic Times

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Date – 17th December, 2019

computers could read human emotions and interpret mannerisms, and even simulate those human characteristics on their own.

Automobile firms are exploring this technology for building an in-car emotion sensor that can identify when driver is drowsy or distracted, and can take action in an emergency situation by alerting a friend or family member. Even info-tainment companies including the **BBC, CBS** and **Disney** are partnering with companies like **Affectiva**, to test the effectiveness of advertisements, and how viewers react to film trailers and TV shows using affective computing technology.

Considering the wide range of potential applications of affective computing, it won't be a surprise if we get to see more such products being developed for general public using this technology. However, the firms need to tread a cautious path considering the data security and privacy concerns to make such products engaging as well as safe to use.

Today's News

Union Budget 2020: Sitharaman discusses Big Data use cases with startups

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Monday (December 16), started the government's pre-budget consultations with different stakeholder groups on economic revival in New Delhi. Her first meeting, which comes on the heels of the upcoming General Budget 2020-21, was with stakeholder groups including experts from the digital economy, fintech and startup community.

During her discussion, Sitharaman focused on areas such as the use of new-age technology, including big data for small and medium enterprises (SME) sector and unleashing its power for public governance as well. Other topics that were discussed in the meeting were the country's digital infrastructure and role of government, regulation of digital economy especially in privacy, financial regulation, infrastructure gaps for digital India, taxation issues, among others.

Source – Inc42

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Indian B2B food tech startup HungerBox raises $12M from Paytm and others

HungerBox, an Indian food tech startup that has courted 10 of the 11 largest companies in the country to use its services, today announced it has raised $12 million from Paytm and others as it looks to sign clients in Southeast Asia. The three-year-old startup's new financing round, a Series C, was funded by a consortium of Indian and international investors, including payments firm Paytm and NPTK, an Asian VC fund that invests in emerging firms. Existing investors Sabre Partners and Neoplux also participated in the round, which pushes the Bangalore-based startup's to-date raise to $16.5 million. HungerBox offers management services to companies and institutions to improve and run their in-house cafeterias and canteens. HungerBox also enables its clients to connect with food partners through an app and get real-time updates of their order.

Source – TechCrunch

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This News Letter has been prepared with the assistance of Preeti Patil and Manish Kulkarni

E-commerce can spur intra-South Asia trade: World Bank

E-commerce can become a driver of growth across South Asia and boost trade among the region's countries, but its potential remains largely untapped, says a new World Bank report. This report, Unleashing E-Commerce for South Asian Integration, notes that although e-commerce has grown significantly in South Asia, online sales accounted for a mere 1.6 per cent and 0.7 per cent of total retail sales in India and Bangladesh, compared to 15 per cent in China and around 14 per cent globally.

Source – The Hindu Business Line

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Licious raises $30M to grow its meat and seafood e-commerce platform in India

Licious, a Bangalore-based startup that sells fresh meat and seafood online, has secured $30 million in a new financing round as it looks to expand its footprint in the nation. The new financing round, dubbed Series E, for the four-year-old startup was led by Singapore-based Vertex Growth Fund, it said Monday. Existing investors 3one4 Capital, Bertelsmann India Investments, Vertex Ventures Southeast Asia and India and Sistema Asia Fund also participated in the round. The Series E pushes Licious' to-date raise to $94.5 million. Licious operates an eponymous e-commerce platform to sell meat and seafood in cities in India (Bengaluru, NCR, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Panchkula, Mohali, Mumbai, Pune, and Chennai).

Source – TechCrunch

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Google Maps now filters searches for EV charger plug types

Google Maps has added a new feature that lets you search for electric car charging stations according to which plug types they work with. Now, when you search for a place to charge your car, you'll see an option to specify the exact plugs you're looking for in the filter bar directly below the search box. These include CHAdeMO, CCS, Type 2, or Tesla's proprietary plug type. The new feature was first reported by Android Police. The functionality should make it much easier to find a charging station that supports your car's specific standard, of which there are a few competing options. Nissan and Mitsubishi use CHAdeMO, while the likes of Jaguar and BMW use CCS, for example. Once you search for EV chargers, you can tap the menu option to specify which plugs your vehicle supports. You can also specify which plugs are useful to you using a new "Electric vehicle settings" option in the app's Settings menu. The new feature builds upon Google Maps existing EV charger functionality, which was first added in October last year.

Source – The Verge

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BMW-Daimler ride-hailing venture steps up Uber challenge

FreeNow, the ride-hailing venture owned by Daimler AG and BMW AG, expects to double revenue this year and next in a fresh challenge to Uber Inc in Europe and Latin America. FreeNow's so-called gross merchandise volume, which mirrors revenue, is forecast to reach about 2.4 billion euros ($2.7 billion) in 2019, Chief Executive Officer Marc Berg said in an interview in the venture's glass-walled office space overlooking Hamburg's Elbe Philharmonic Hall. The German carmakers on Monday unveiled a new holding structure for the partnership, which includes cars-sharing and other mobility services. "We know it is aggressive and really ambitious, but we want to double our revenue again next year while further improving our pro-fitability," Berg said. Half of the 130 cities in Europe and Latin America where the company that was previously named MyTaxi currently operates are already profitable, he said.

Source – The Economic Times

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Masayoshi Son's bankers worried about their favorite client

Masayoshi Son's bankers are taking a hard look at their most important client. After the costly rescue of office-sharing startup WeWork and a series of other high-profile setbacks for Son, senior executives at two of Japan's biggest banking groups have said privately they've grown less comfortable with the eccentric billionaire's management of SoftBank Group Corp.'s $100 billion Vision Fund. One executive, speaking in mid-November, said his firm wants to see a convincing turnaround plan for WeWork before lending more money to SoftBank. A rival said around the same time his bank is taking a cautious approach toward the company and has doubts about Son's strategy of investing big sums in highly valued startups. The two lenders are among those approached by SoftBank for a roughly $2.7 billion loan. While neither of the bankers, who asked not to be named, signalled a dramatic reduction in ties with SoftBank, their misgivings highlight how perceptions of Son are changing — even among his most reliable supporters.

Source – Japan Times

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Amid rising competition, Zomato, Swiggy play the differentiation game

The two big brands in the business, Zomato and Swiggy, are striking out in many directions. While Zomato is streaming videos (food-related shows) and building a sustainable framework for its operations, Swiggy has rolled out a pilot project for concierge services, offering to pick up everything from lost keys to groceries, for patrons. Both Zomato and Swiggy are being propelled by the huge volumes that the apps now generate, not just in big towns but also the tier-2 and 3 cities, and the need to expand and differentiate their services.

Source – Business Standard

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Gojek closes in on deal to buy 5% of taxi operator Blue Bird

Gojek, the Indonesian all-purpose super app provider, is nearing an agreement to buy 5 percent of top local taxi operator PT Blue Bird, according to people familiar with the matter. Gojek would pay about US$30 million, the people said, asking not to be named discussing a private matter. That implies a price of more than 20 percent above what Blue Bird closed at in Jakarta on Monday and would value the company at about $600 million. The deal would build on an existing partnership — closely held Gojek already offers taxi reservations for Blue Bird's taxis on its app — as the companies face mounting competition from Singapore-based Grab Holdings Inc.

Source – The Jakarta Post

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