

DIGITAL TSUNAMI

Will AI be the job creator for India?

Training AI agents could well lead to a second wave of outsourcing for India



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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is like a baby. An adult has to be around as it takes wobbly steps. Teaching AI is another story. You can show a human baby the photo of a dog in a picture book. Very soon, the baby will learn to identify all the different breeds of dogs he or she will come across. When you show a human being the photo of a cat wearing glasses and playing the piano, they do not get fooled by the disguise.

The AI engine will need to be trained on hundreds (actually millions) of photos before they reach the same conclusions as human. ImageNet, a data set of more than a million images, has become a go-to resource for training computer vision AI. Training AI agents will need an army of people who will have to do the tedious, repetitive task of identifying, tagging and labelling photos and video. It may well lead to the second wave of outsourcing for countries like India.

Self-driving cars

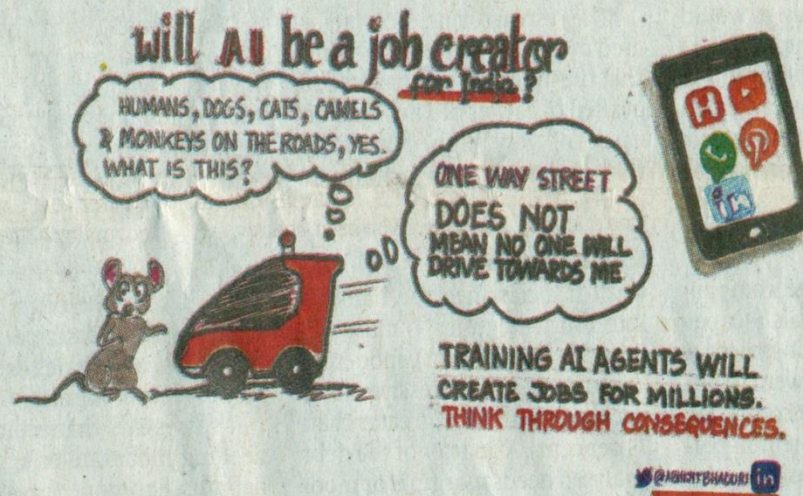
Will self-driving cars replace all the drivers we have? If so, what will happen to those displaced by

technology? To be able to launch self-driving cars, the machine will need to be trained. It will have to be trained on the various objects that the self-driving car will encounter on the road. In India, the clothing that people wear varies dramatically across every State and changes according to the weather. Training AI to identify men, women and children will not be enough.

The machine will have to be trained to understand that on Indian roads you could expect to see cows, dogs, cats, monkeys and a variety of birds. Above all, just because the traffic light is red, it does not guarantee that someone will not dash across the road. "One way" does not assure the driver that no one will be driving against the traffic. If training AI to understand rules takes time, imagine how many training hours it will need before it can be brought in to power autonomous vehicles for Indian roads.

Safe for your eyes

People watch a billion hours of video every day on YouTube, 100 million hours on Facebook. While AI tracks and removes objectionable content from these channels, it is often a fine line that separates free speech from garbage. An algorithm may find it hard to distinguish footage of meat carving on a cookery show from an honour



killing video. Several companies use humans in what is called Commercial Content Moderation to scrub content uploaded to social media sites.

Should one expose the world to live feeds and imagery of human brutality as a way of heightening awareness and in support of free speech? Several citizens upload crime videos as a way of pleading to the world to intervene. It needs humans to decide whether it can stay in the public domain.

These jobs are already being done by several people in India. Content moderation jobs have a high incidence of burnout, PTSD and long-term trauma. Exposure to the dark side of human beings is the essential element of the job. They keep our children and us safe from watching that one video that could haunt you forever. As social media sites such as Facebook become platforms for family members to stay connected, it becomes an attractive option for some to share objectionable

content, for the same reason - guaranteed viewership. The number of content moderators scrubbing the world's social media sites, mobile apps, and cloud storage services runs to "well over 100,000", according to Gizmodo.

A million jobs a month

India needs to add a million jobs a month every year to feed the youth who are entering the workforce. Every AI agent will need to be trained through millions of iterations. As more AI applications emerge, the need for training AI will grow exponentially. Labour arbitrage will make India an attractive destination for jobs that involve training AI. A study has found six areas where the use of robots will create new jobs: automobiles, electronics, renewable energy, skilled systems, robotics and food and beverage. Jobs such as robot psychologist and robot ethicist did not exist earlier. Technology will be the Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva of the job market. It will destroy some jobs. But it will also nurture many new ones. But they may not always be the ones we aspire to.

(Abhijit Bhaduri is a coach and leadership development consultant)