Monetization strategies and audience data for online video. The case of Atresmedia

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Abstract

The audiovisual market has changed dramatically. Thanks to the digital revolution, the consumption of video is becoming increasingly popular and broadcasters have started to offer online content, both free and paid. The purpose of this paper is to analyse how broadcasters can monetize the videos they offer online, paying attention to the audience data they need. The ultimate goal is to obtain recommendations related to audience data. We will use Atresmedia as a case study. The methodology is based on a combination of an analytical observation of the digital strategy, an analysis of internal reports and personal interviews.

Keywords

Broadcasting, advertising, big data, revenue, online strategy, social media.

Resum

El mercat audiovisual ha patit un canvi radical. Gràcies a la revolució digital, ha augmentat la popularitat del consum de continguts en vídeo i els organismes de radiodifusió han començat a oferir contingut en línia gratuït i de pagament. L'objectiu d'aquest estudi és analitzar com poden monetitzar els organismes de radiodifusió la seva oferta de vídeo en línia, posant atenció a les dades d'audiència que necessiten. L'objectiu final és obtenir recomanacions relacionades amb les dades d'audiència. Ens centrarem en l'exemple d'Atresmedia. La metodologia d'aquest estudi es basa en la combinació d'una observació analítica de l'estratègia digital, l'anàlisi dels informes interns i entrevistes personals.

Paraules clau

Radiodifusió, publicitat, dades massives, ingressos, estratègia en línia, mitjans socials.

1. Introduction

The audiovisual market has changed dramatically over the last thirty years and even more so since the implementation of digital terrestrial television throughout Europe. New suppliers of audiovisual content have appeared and audiences have fragmented. Broadcast television is therefore losing its capacity to attract big audiences. On the other hand, thanks to the digital revolution, the consumption of video is becoming increasingly popular. Digital content can be watched on different devices and in different formats and legacy television companies are trying to adapt their products to these new devices (Doyle 2010; Medina et al. 2011; Weeds 2015), offering both free and paid online content. Television viewing habits have shifted so the traditional television ecosystem is changing.

The loss of big audiences implies a reduction in advertising revenue that can affect the traditional broadcasting business

model. Operators might look for new income related to direct payment or micropayments for content, or new advertising formats. At this point audience data is essential to make money from this business (Bogart 1995; Berné et al. 2013). Consequently there's a new challenge in media research because traditional ratings are not enough and online audiences using a variety of devices should be also measured.

The purpose of this paper¹ is to review how broadcasters can monetize their online videos, paying attention to the audience data they need for this task. As outlined by Webster (2005: 380), "before we can understand the diet of media consumers, though, we need to look beyond the usage statistics of any one medium and study people's exposure to specific types of content across all media".

We will use the case study of Atresmedia in Spain. This is one of the private pioneer television companies and has won several prizes for its digital strategies (Medina & Prario 2013; Medina et al. 2015; *Atresmediadigital* 2015).

The questions we want to answer through this case study are:
a) how a broadcaster offers online video content; b) how this content is monetized; and c) what data are required to make money from the online video business. The ultimate goal is to obtain recommendations related to audience data in order to effectively monetize videos delivered online.

In the next section we will review the recent academic research related to online video consumption, the monetization of digital content delivery and the improvements in media audience research since the digitalization of media content.

2. Literature review

Broadcast TV has lost most of its audience (Farhi 2008). In Spain, according to the Orange Foundation (2014), 62% of the population spent less time watching TV in order to surf the internet in 2013. The time spent on watching videos for entertainment, sports and news is becoming greater on other devices and IP distribution than on broadcast TV (Europa Press 2014). Attention has become fragmented (González & López 2012) and has moved from broadcasting to online delivery.

This movement from broadcast TV to online video is even greater among young people. Following Jang and Coffey's study (2014: 46), "the 18-49 age group – the most coveted TV audience – has made the leap from traditional media to online platforms, ahead from other age groups". That's why Pomerantz (2006) questioned whether such a commercial target is still attractive for advertisers. Digital content on online platforms can therefore be seen as a threat for broadcasters' business (Ventosa 2016).

On the other hand, Chan-Olmsted et al. (2005) proved that heavy online users are very much involved in other media as well. So, as Yang and Coffey (2014: 44) said, "network executives should stop viewing web platforms as a threat to TV programming, but rather a complementary channel to attract more viewers". Ha et al. (2013), Phalen & Ducey (2012) and Weprin (2008) also showed how online audience can complement television audiences. According to comScore, multiplatform viewers spend more time engaging with content than single platform viewers (ComScore 2015). So broadcasters should find ways to obtain revenue from these new audiences apart from the traditional ones.

The traditional revenue stream for the broadcasting industry has been advertising and its goal is to maximise audiences. That's why Napoli (2010) talks about "audience products". Media products can be described as dual goods (Picard 1989) with two basic dimensions: they are content for audiences and generate attention-time by such audiences for advertisers, so to some extent audiences have enjoyed free-of-charge television programmes by giving part of their time (Nieto 2000).

To facilitate the buying and selling of advertising, the media

market needs accurate information about the audience (Portilla 2007; Napoli 2010; Webster 2014). These data set prices and therefore serve as currency for the advertising market (Buzzard 2012). For TV the predominant system of measuring audiences is based on meter panels, such as those used by Nielsen, Kantar Media, Gfk and Ipsos (Portilla 2015).

As the nature of TV consumption has changed, the first question to be answered is how to monetize online audiences (Zucker 2008). Contrary to the disruption theory and "displacement effect" (James et al. 1995), some authors see online consumption as complementary to television viewing. As pointed out by Medina et al. (2015), from a media economics perspective, it seems clear that there are enough reasons to believe in multiple synergies between broadcasters and online video delivery. Engagement and branding seem to be the most valuable benefits which should be monetized. Where there are opportunities for additional consumption and additional audience value (Doyle 2010: 444), there are ways to monetize.

The aim of windowing strategies is to achieve maximum economic profit from a single product by distributing it in different windows and at different times (Owen & Wildman 1992: 26-38). The existence of such strategies proves that the value of a television product does not come to an end with its first broadcast (Dunnet 1990: 39).

There are therefore new sources of revenue and new audience data are needed. If there are multiple ways in which audiences can access the same content, traditional audience measurement should change (Bermejo 2009; Taneja & Mamoria 2012; Echegaray & Peñafiel 2013).

Laptops, tablet devices, smartphones and smart TVs are alternative screens which allow audience mobility (Schneiderman 2012; Council for Research Excellence 2013; Diego et al. 2014; Hassoun 2014) and generate "place shifting" (Buzzard 2012). We can also view programmes at any time and the traditional meters, which "took into account the programme's hour of emission in order to measure the audience" (Portilla 2015: 78), are not useful anymore.

Audience measurement review

Broadcasters need to know their audience in order to offer the best content in the most appropriate schedule and reach the most valuable audiences (Balnaves 2011; Berné et all 2013). Audience data also facilitate the buying and selling of advertising in commercial media markets (Portilla 2007; Napoli 2010; Webster 2014), setting prices for the advertising market (Buzzard 2012). Offering reliable audience data is therefore fundamental for the commercial television market (Webster et al. 2014). If online video content aims to achieve commercial revenue, then audience data are required. However, measurement in the digital era is not easy because videos are consumed on a range of screens and at different times.

There are various systems to measure the audience of online video content. One possibility is the Audio Matching System (AMS), identifying content with audio data. The most recent systems assign an identifier or tag (an audio watermark) to each piece of content that is matched with the channels broadcasting in order to identify the content viewed (Unitam 2009; Kantar 2012; Nafría 2016). In the UK, BARB is already testing the use of identifiers to report "consumption of online TV content in TV players controlled by the broadcasters" (Barb 2015). The project is called *Dovetail* and is being carried out by Kantar Media and Nielsen. The data are based on tags and a combination of internet census data and demographics from the panel (Barb 2015; Portilla 2015). This is called hybrid measurement. Kantar Media and comScore are also testing this combination of data and the use of tags (Goode 2015).

Portable people meters (PPM) are another possibility (Portilla 2007). Ipsos's *MediaCell* captures exposure to encoded audio signals by uploading software into the panellists' smartphones. The advantage of the cell is that people take the meter everywhere without requiring any extra device, unlike previous portable people meters (Portilla 2007). Nielsen is also testing mobile/web apps to replace paper diaries to measure TV audiences in the US local market (Shagrin & Link 2013). The problem is that the audience figures generated by traditional meters and newer passive devices can vary, sometimes considerably (Green 2011).

Kantar Media also tested a PC meter system to measure online activity, installing software among some of their Spanish television meter panellists (Nafría 2014). This is Kantar's Virtual Meter technology. However, Kantar has since moved from this project to hybrid measurement with comScore, combining census data from the internet plus demographics from a panel of users (comScore 2015; Nafría 2016).

In brief, the measurement of online video consumption across multiple screens is still a challenge and the main market research companies that measure audiences are still trying to find the best system. At the same time advertisers are also taking a close look at the proposals because they do not want new metrics. Advertisers are promoting projects that use the existing metrics for cross-platform audience analysis (ESPN 2013). Achieving a consensus among participants in the media market is therefore the key.

3. Methodology

Our general proposal is to carry out a critical analysis of the audience data needed to monetize online video content. This critical analysis will follow the inductive methodology used in previous papers (Medina & Portilla 2015). The case of study will be Atresmedia. We will study its digital development, its monetization strategies related to online video and the data required to do so.

We will combine the direct observation of the digital strategy of the group with an analysis of internal reports and sales brochures from May 2015 up to May 2016. This information is completed with seven personal interviews and meetings.

Three executives from Atresmedia (González-Pacheco 2015; Mira 2015; Larrainzar 2016) provided an overview of the company's digital strategy and also commercial information from Atresmedia Digital (2015). Four executives from the media industry (García-Lastra 2016; Martínez 2016; Ventosa 2016; Vega 2015), experts in media, audience research and online strategies (García-Lastra 2016; Martínez 2016; Ventosa 2016; Vega 2015), provided an external view to validate the strategies and proposals of Atresmedia.

4. The case of Atresmedia

The origin of Atresmedia was Antena 3, a television channel that started in 1989. As a result of the digital switchover, in 2010 it launched another three digital terrestrial channels and in 2012 merged with another private television company Gestora de Inversiones Audiovisuales La Sexta and its four digital channels (Atresmedia 2012). Since then, the group has increased not only its number of television channels but also video deliveries and radio stations.

In this section we present the digital strategy of the broadcaster Atresmedia in chronological terms. Afterwards we will explain how the group is monetizing its online video content and the audience data used by Atresmedia for its strategies.

Atresmedia's digital strategy

In 2007 Atresmedia launched different online services and started its *Multimedia Division* with 50 employees, around 2% of the overall workforce (Antena 3 2007). It was the first television company in Spain - second in Europe after the BBC - to launch a channel on YouTube. It also launched Tuclip.com, a platform for videos sent by viewers, and a channel called Tucanalty, composed of the finest videos from Antena 3, such as news, humour and entertainment. In addition, partners were incorporated with a revenue model providing new income for these companies while also increasing traffic for the Antena 3 group. This represented a way to provide access to all the audiovisual material available online.

Since 2009 it has developed a *strategy 3.0*, delivering content through three different platforms: television, internet and mobile devices. With this strategy, the company has tried to show viewers that it's not just a television channel but also a multimedia company. Interactivity and cross-consumption were developed.

By 2010 most households in Spain had a digital television set. Each company received a multiplex license, allowing them to own and manage four separate channels. As a result Antena 3 developed three other specialized channels: Nova for adults, Nitro (now Mega) for young adults and Neox for children. In 2012 it acquired the channels of La Sexta, a relatively new television company owned by the producer Globomedia and the sports rights agency, Mediapro. All the digital channels were marketed by Atresmedia Publicidad.

The group produced online series such as *Desalmados* and *Diarios de la webcam*. The latter was so successful on the internet that it was subsequently broadcast on *Neox*.

In 2010 the company launched a new site called www.antena3.com, where it was possible to access to catch-up TV. A Community Manager was also hired to manage all these sites and posts.

Social media became a new tool to interact with the audience. According to the internal data of *Atresmedia* from *Socialbakers* (Atresmedia 2015: 18), in 2015 all its official accounts on Facebook achieved 4 million fans and 3.1 million followers on Twitter. These social media accounts made it possible to send comments to the channel and share content with other users.

The company also developed several blogs that became vertical portals. Some of them were related to its own content or different general topics such as fashion, current affairs and sports. To increase interactivity and audience participation, video-meetings were created to chat with actors, singers and

writers, and to play online games related to the TV shows.

The company created two apps for mobile devices. In 2012 Atresmediaconecta appeared, offering access to extra content related to television programmes. In 2013, Atresplayer was launched, giving access to all its television channels. The same year the group changed its name from Antena 3 to Atresmedia.

The company started to experiment with premium content through Nubeox, which was an online video store that could be used directly through a Smart TV. However, this was absorbed by Atresplayer premium, which is a pay service for international fans of the Antena 3 series.

In 2014 the group launched new alternative windows such as Atrestube, a multichannel by Atresmedia on YouTube, with more than thirty channels with in-house produced content. According to the internal data of Atresmedia from Socialbakers, in 2015 the Atrestube channels reached 1.7 million subscribers (Atresmedia 2015: 18). In June 2014, Atresmedia launched Aunia, which is a joint venture with Mediaset, its direct

Table 1. Atresmedia digital products (2015)

Platform to deliver digital content	Type of content	Commercialization	
Broadcasting Antena3 Neox Nova Mega La Sexta Atreseries	TV content: own and commissioned	Advertising	
Social media			
Facebook Twitter	Dialogue and links to content	Amplify Twitter amplify*	
Atrestube Flooxer	TV content	Advertising	
Blogsand vertical portals (13)**	TV Content	Advertising	
	UGC		
	Third parties (commissioned)	Sales	
www.antena3.com http://www.lasexta.com/ http://nova.atresmedia.com/ http://neox.atresmedia.com/ http://mega.atresmedia.com/ http://atreseries.atresmedia.com/	Information and links to content	Advertising Product Sales	
Apps			
AtresPlayer	TV content	Advertising	
Atresconecta	Extra content	Email marketing	
Other	Other	PPV or subscription fee	

^{*} Twitter Amplify enables media companies and brands to capture the excitement on TV and distribute it to fans and audiences across *Twitter*, beyond their followers (https://biz.twitter.com/es/twitter-amplify)

Source: authors, based on the internal reports (Atresmedia Digital 2015).

^{** &}lt;a href="http://anime-manga.atresmedia.com/">http://anime-manga.atresmedia.com/; http://www.antena3.com/se-estrena/; <a

competitor, to manage the programmatic sales of their online services. The same year it also created Atresmedialab to explore new forms of multiplatform advertising. In 2015 the newcomer was Flooxer, an online channel for short videos produced by the company or others.

Table 1 summarizes the company's digital strategy, the content delivery and the business based on the different products. In the next section we will describe the three main commercialization strategies the company is developing for its online products.

Monetization strategies and audience data

Concerning business model innovation, Atresmedia seems to be quite active in the digital market (García-Lastra 2016). We can distinguish three monetization strategies: a) advertising, b) data-based and c) direct payment. These strategies for the monetization Atresmedia's online video content are summarized in Table 2.

a) Advertising

The first strategy used by Atresmedia to monetize its online video is through *advertising*. It uses videos to attract more visitors to its websites and digital platforms. To monetize online videos through advertising, Atresmedia uses data from comScore. This is the company selected by the association of media, advertisers and agencies to measure internet audiences since 2011 (AIMC 2011). comScore offers user profiles from panel data and census data on website pages from web analytics. This hybrid methodology is supervised by AIMC, the joint industry committee for media research.

According to comScore, in January 2015 unique users totalled 8.6 million (Atresmedia Digital 2015: 4). In the comScore ranking Atresmedia ranks 11th in terms of unique users (Atresmedia 2015: 13). Thanks to these good figures, Atresmedia offers advertisers high visibility of digital content.

As part of this strategy, Atresmedia provides free access for three weeks, looking to get the highest number of users, with viewers having to pay from then on (Larrainzar 2016). The purpose is to achieve reach, traffic and visibility that can provide word-of-mouth recommendations and, as a result, more audience for television. The number of users attracts advertisers to Atresmedia websites and digital platforms while social media accounts are also used as a marketing tool, leading users towards online video content.

According to the group, comScore provides the necessary data, including the number of visitors, pages, average visit time and also the demographic profiles of PC and mobile users (Atresmedia 2015: 17). However, the IOS mobile panel in Spain is not complete and the tablet panel will not be ready until 2017 (Agulló 2016).

Data coming from digital consumption is also used to develop *programmatic sales*, a real-time marketplace thanks to knowledge of consumers. Online consumption therefore contributes to more qualitative sales and to achieving zero television consumers (Mira 2015).

The cost per thousand (CPM) for video is $\[\in \]$ 10-12 and for graphic $\[\in \]$ 2-4; obviously much cheaper than for traditional broadcasting. Atresmedia reached 96.1 million video downloads in April 2015. For Antena3.com the figure is 30 million downloads and for Lasexta.com the figure is 1.3 million (Atresmedia 2015:15-16). The rest of the downloads come from other brands of the media group related to radio.

These videos can include commercials, so the company can sell online video as an advertising medium. At the moment the download figures are given by comScore for PC and mobile but not for the growing tablet market. Here the "Total View" data provided by the Kantar Media and comScore hybrid proposal would be very useful as they would aggregate the cross media audience data for video content (Nafría 2016), but as Martínez (2016) outlined recently, these are not yet available.

Atresmedia also relies on internal data on visitors and downloads minute by minute. However, internal information is not a reliable source for advertisers; data cannot come solely from the supplier itself as this will always try to give the highest figures in order to ask for the highest prices. To guarantee the validity and objectivity of the data, Atresmedia should look for certification of the figures by a respected external bureau. With external support, Atresmedia could offer its digital videos as a commercial platform.

b) Data-based

Besides comScore information, Atresmedia also has its own census data. The digital division knows how many downloads are requested from each server. The company can use this information to manage its content. For example, Atresmedia can see when a video has become worn-out on one platform, with no downloads at certain times. If there are no more requests, Atresmedia could remove the video from the platform and try to sell it to other digital platforms.

Atresmedia requires *registration* for the consumption of some digital content and this extra information can provide a better picture of the audience. This is the way the Atresplayer application works. According to Atresmedia (2015:14), Atresplayer has 2 million registered users and the group provided nearly 400 million online videos in 2014. This means that Atresmedia has information from two million people, not only their profiles but also the content they prefer.

With the data from the video platform users (registered or not registered), Atresmedia can make recommendations of videos to users according to their interests, improving their experience and engagement. Users continue to consume videos and might recommend the platform to other users, increasing audience size.

Besides the marketing strategy, all these data can also be used for promotional activities. Atresmedia offers an email marketing service based on these data (Atresmedia 2015: 34). The company offers brands the possibility of sending messages to a well-defined segment of users, maintaining ownership of the data. This segmentation could even take content consumption

into account. For example, if a segment of the audience is interested in content related to travelling, this group might be an interesting target for travel agencies. This information can also be integrated with other data, such as the location data generated by mobile devices. An app like Atresplayer can register location. If its users agree to give this information, Atresmedia can segment the audience by city, type of restaurant visited or other location data (García-Lastra 2016; Mobile Marketing Association 2015). The most difficult task for Atresmedia is to manage this big data, especially when the information comes from its different online platforms (Zelenkauskaite 2016).

The data are therefore becoming increasingly valuable and this has not gone unnoticed. As a result, in 2016 Atresmedia created the Atresdata department as an "audience finder" to achieve greater affinity (Andrés 2016). Such data can be used for all its marketing and promotional activities but not to price advertising. Internal audience data need to be audited by an external institution to be reliable for establishing prices in the advertising market.

c) Direct payment

Some services such as Atresplayer premium or accessing Atresplayer from outside Spain require a payment (Atresmedia 2016), so Atresmedia also has subscribers and pay-perview products. Again, recommending videos based on these subscribers' interests can help to keep and also increase subscriptions. This entails the need to maintain and increase direct payments.

To recommend content, Atresmedia requires a continuous and automatic analysis of data. Again, it needs to manage big data and this task is really challenging.

In brief, as we can see in table 2, the revenue from online video can come from nine different business strategies associated with four targets. However, the data available can be improved in all these cases, a task that is the responsibility of market research companies but also of Atresmedia, which has a real chance to increase its revenue by taking full control of its internal data.

5. The Spanish case

The future of digital business in terms of broadcasters is still uncertain for the Spanish group because only 5% of the group's audience comes from digital, according to González-Pacheco (2015), General Manager of *Atresmedia Digital*. However, this is expected to grow and the reliable measurement of audience figures on the different platforms is fundamental in order to monetize the digital business.

In Spain, comScore provides data about the online use of broadcasters' websites and online video consumption. However, this online content is also offered on TV sets, so cross-media measurement is needed. One good option is the Kantar and comScore hybrid measurement based on tagged content that can be identified irrespective of the screen where it is displayed (Goode 2015; Nafría 2016). This kind of measurement needs the collaboration of broadcasters as they have to tag their videos

Table 2. Strategies for online video monetization. Atresmedia

	Advertising	Data-based strategies			
		Commercialization of content	Without registration	With registration or subscription	Direct payment
Business strategies	 Ads on websites and digital platforms Achieve large audiences by giving free access and promoting through social media Programmatic sales Ads in online videos 	Offer worn-out content on other platforms	keep users a ones Offer onl	vant content to and attract new line video related of interest to	 Payment from subscribers Payment from pay- per-view
Targets	 Users of online plat- forms Video users	Video users Registered us Subscribers		ers	
Data available	 Visitors Online activity	VisitorsOnline activityDownloadsValuable content		ProfilesOnline activityDownloadsValuable content	
Source	comScoreInternal sources	Internal sources			
Challenges related to data	 Better coverage of mobiles and tablets in the comScore panel Certification needed for internal data 	Management of big data			

Source: authors, based on the internal reports of Atresmedia (2015).

so as to know what is being watched and when (Goode 2015). The problem of tags is that a common standard is required for this to be useful for market participants, implementing an open standard to identify video content but also ads (CIMM 2014). 'Currently, there is no open method for embedding persistent content identifiers (e.g., watermarks, fingerprints, etc.) into content, so that it survives, no matter how that content gets to the consumer' (Lennon 2014: 3). A standard measurement system with recognized currency throughout the platforms is required (CIMM 2014; Edwards 2012): a 'single currency and an Any Time, Any Where, Any Device (ATAWAD) measurement for all audiovisual content' (Egta 2014: 4) is required by advertisers.

Meanwhile, *Atresmedia* could use its data generated by its digital content to get advertising revenue. However, as we mentioned before, its internal information cannot be used automatically for the advertising market, requiring certification from a respected external bureau to endorse the figures.

These internal data could also be used for other activities. The group could study content downloads, make suggestions to users and increase consumption, visibility and engagement. And adequate study of the data regarding online video downloads can therefore be used to keep users and obtain new ones. Atresmedia could also segment online audiences and offer these to brands to send direct promotional messages. This is part of the third strategy based on the use of data. However, such strategies require the management of big data: a large volume of information, in different formats and generated at great speed.

6. Conclusions

According to Ala-Fossi and Lax (2016, 365), "a number of recent reports suggest the life expectancy of broadcasting as a free-to-air television platform may be no more than 15 years". Vega (2015) agrees with this idea, asserting that DTT will disappear in ten years and will be taken over by online TV. In this situation, content will become independent from the medium. Companies will become producers and commissioners of content and they will have to develop multimedia distribution techniques and bundling strategies. National broadcasters will become multimedia international delivery companies.

This multimedia content still includes ads, so this source of revenue will not disappear. However, it requires data on the new audiences. As Grece et al. (2015) point out, the audience measurement industry is in a state of flux. Technological developments and new consumer behaviours have led to a number of changes in the way audiences are measured. There are two main challenges for multi-screen audience measurement today: finding a device-independent measurement solution and reaching a market consensus on the methodology to be used. But "the system will not function if each media organization tries to use their own metric as the currency for their operations in the

advertising market" (Portilla 2015: 82). Moreover, participants in the media market need to achieve a consensus about tags and not only in their national markets but also internationally, because online content has no borders.

The revenue of media companies also comes from supplying high quality content and valuable services and offering branded content on the broadcaster platform should also be considered. The challenge for audiovisual companies is to generate recommendations, thereby increasing visitors and engagement. More online video users and more engagement can generate more revenue from subscription and advertising.

The third source of revenue for broadcasters comes from the data provided via online consumption. This information is of great value for internal decisions but also other activities such as direct marketing actions for advertisers. Broadcasters need to realize the value of data obtained from users of their online platforms, registered users and subscribers. Using broadcasters' data sets for other activities as targeted marketing can increase revenue and amplify their business. Broadcasters have to learn how to manage the valuable big data generated in their interaction with their online audiences.

Note

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