

Making machines smart

Have you ever wondered how appliances are made “smart?” How they can anticipate or analyze or mimic human behavior? How can a car operate without a driver? Part of the answer is “data annotation,” explains Neville Patel, entrepreneur and chief executive officer of Poona based Qualitas Global Services (QGS), a limited liability partnership. In data annotation, it is the work of human annotators to label, tag, transcribe or process a set of photos, videos or text. For example a road scene will be titled a road scene and the actual road, the cars, drivers, pedestrians, traffic signals, trees, etc would be so labeled. Mention would also be made whether the scene is of day or night. A data annotator’s job can be tedious and arduous.

“Without data annotation, every image would be the same for machines as they don’t have any inherent information or knowledge about anything in the world,” stated Patel in an interview with *Parsiana* on January 25, 2023. Once the objects are so identified for the computer/machine they can store and recog-

Top: Neville Patel; along-side: example of captioning of an image Photo: Wikipedia; below: office of Qualitas Global Services



nize them. Once they are programed, they can venture to predict developments.

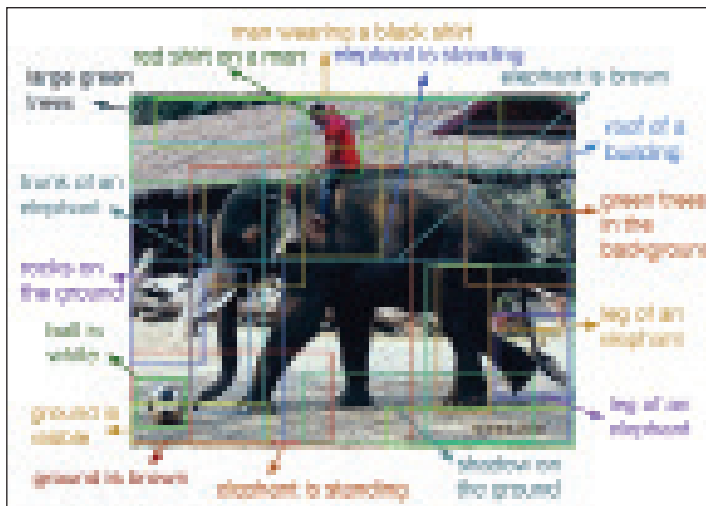
Taking the example of the automobile industry, Patel noted, “We are all aware of how driverless cars have become a reality in the West... An autonomous car relies on its ability to perceive its surroundings for safe driving... Annotators annotate videos and images of the road to enable a car’s computer system to accurately measure the distance, dimensions of objects on the road like other cars, pedestrians, bicyclists and signals.”

A more common application is the Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), explains Patel. “These are safety systems implemented in the car to remove human error while operating them,” said Patel. Some common ex-

amples are systems that warn of driver fatigue, collisions and lane departures.

QGS has invested over Rs 1.20 crores in developing ADAS in partnership with the Automobile Research Association of India and ministry of heavy industries “and is on the way to invest another five crore rupees in the next three years to make this technology cheaper and easily available... On completion of this project, QGS would hold the intellectual property for these products for three years after which the intellectual property would be shared between QGS and the government.” Patel intends that lower costs will enable this technology to be retrofitted in trucks and vehicles.

Sports is another field where data annotation is used extensively, noted Patel. “The annotators use video footage of matches to process” the data which “can help players and coaches”



to take decisions on game strategies, the tech entrepreneur noted. Providing insights into athlete performance and predicting player health, these intelligent models help the coaches and team owners understand which players to bid for in auctions and at what price. “The impact made by (such) analytics is so huge that studies predict that by 2024 the market for sports analytics will be worth USD 5.2 billion (nearly Rs 43,000 crores) with a 22% growth rate



from 2019 where it was worth USD 1.9 billion (Rs 15,717 crores).”

Image annotation in agriculture aids in the recognition of crops and fruits so that farmers may make appropriate choices. “Data annotation helps in detecting crop type, health, ripeness and even assist in livestock management,” he stated. Data annotation is used in a variety of other industries including retail and fashion, security and surveillance, logistics and construction.

About 95% of QGS’s staff comprises information technology graduates. “We hire mostly from Tier II and III cities,” Patel told us. Proud of retaining staff, he revealed that “everyone who is a manager has been with me since 2014,” when he started the company.

The pandemic was a bad time for QGS. The systems they were developing for the autonomous car manufacturer (Apple)



were put on hold for security reasons. As work from home became the norm “companies do not like their data going to people’s homes.” Apple moved their business from India to East Europe once the rigors of the pandemic were lessened. “We had over 300 staff members working on Apple alone,” Patel rued. “We will now focus more on sports—we are training our people on data annotation for most sports.”

A commerce graduate from Bombay University, 49-year-old Patel is married to Khushnuma. The Patels have a son Nadir (17). Moving to Poona in 2001, he worked in “similar industries” till he ventured into entrepreneurship and set up Qualitas.

Neville says he visits Udvada every Behram roz. “I would consider myself



Above: R. K. Film Studios, Chembur; alongside: Godrej RKS, proposed residential project; below, l: Khushnuma and Nadir Patel



very traditional in my thoughts on intermarriage and disposal of the dead... Parsis should marry Parsis or stop staying in baugs and going to court for permission to enter fire temples... If it was possible I would invest in forming an army of traditional Parsis that can work on an out of court solution, amicable or not, to settle such issues!”

Of studios and future hotels

Real estate developer Godrej Properties Limited has bought film legend Raj Kapoor’s bungalow in Bombay’s Chembur, state news reports. “They are aiming at converting it into a premium residential project,” stated *The Financial Express* (FE) on February 20, 2023. The deal value has not been disclosed, but the newspaper quoted a Moneycontrol report that the property registration documents accessed by (online property aggregator) Zapkey.com said it is worth Rs 100 crore. The bungalow sits on an area of 4,265.50 sq m.



Raj Kapoor’s son Randhir Kapoor told FE: “This residential property in Chembur has been of great emotional and historical significance to our family. We are happy to once again associate with Godrej Properties to take forward this rich legacy for the next phase of development for this location.”

“With an estimated worth of Rs 500 crore, the Kapoor family sold the RK Studios land to Godrej Properties in 2018. The project is expected to be delivered in 2023,” noted FE.

The A. H. Wadia Trust has sold a nearly 5.7-acre land parcel in Andheri, Bombay, to a privately-held company, Global Eco Hotels for nearly Rs 71 crores, noted *The Economic Times* (ET) of February 17, 2023. The news report stated that the trust had started efforts to sell the land parcel in 2009 and had invited bids for the same. In 2010, Global Eco Hotels had emerged as the highest bidder with its offer of Rs 51 crore for the plot but the transaction could not be completed for some reason. “The entire consideration of nearly Rs 71 crores includes the bid amount of Rs 51 crore and an additional compensation of over Rs 19.96 crores,” stated ET.

Global is involved in hotels, camping sites and short-stay accommodation, stated *The Times of India* of February 18.

Fund managers Chintan Haria (alongside, center) and Sandip Santdasani (far r) of ICI-CI Prudential Asset Management Company spoke to the members of the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) on February 3 and 10, 2023 at the Ripon Club (below) on how to invest wisely. The

meeting was organized by Xerxes Dastur (below, l), WZCC Mumbai chapter chair.



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