An AI system in India finds new use case in Saudi

Camcom team

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A few years ago, Saudi Arabia's municipal authority introduced an app that would allow citizens to take pictures of civic issues – things like pavement cracks, missing manhole covers, construction debris lying uncovered – so that the authorities could take action. A contact centre was set up to manage the complaints. Within months, the number of incidents being reported had touched 2.5 million – impossible for the contact centre to handle.

The govt realised it needed automated systems, and last year, it mandated global management consultancy Kearney to find a solution. Kearney ran a search around the world, and one of the firms it came to was Bengaluru-based Camcom. Camcom's co-founder Ajith

STARTUP STORIES

Nayar was initially hesitant. The venture, founded in 2017, was focused on using computer vision technologies to help automotive companies like Mahindra and TVS to identify defects in components and products on assembly lines, and to help insurance companies like Bajaj Allianz, HDFC Ergo, and SBI General to simplify motor insurance claims by allowing customers involved in minor accidents to take pictures of the vehicle for damage estimation instead of sending assessors to the spot.

"I told Kearney our system was not designed to do what the Saudi govt wanted, that it was designed to find metal, plastic, and glass defects during production, and in damage in the after-market. But they said, try it," Ajith says.

Kearney sent some 700 mobile phone images of things like missing manhole covers and broken lamppost glass, which Camcom ran through its system. "We reported 82.5% accuracy (in identifying defects) with zero training on our models," Ajith recollects. "I couldn't believe it. Then I looked at it more closely, and found that the common thing (in what the Saudis wanted and in the work Camcom was doing) is metal, plastic and glass. 63% of the products in this world are made of metal, plastic and glass," he says. Add concrete, bitumen, and rubber, and this becomes 90%. So, all that Camcom needed to do to improve the system for the Saudis was to undertake a little more training of the system, including enabling the system to understand the specific scenarios in a civic setting.

The moment the pilot was done, Ajith and team were called to Riyadh to sign the contract. Today, 60% of Camcom's revenue comes from Saudi Arabia.

Meeting UN SDG goal

Ajith, who did a Bachelor's in hotel management and a Master of Science in hospitality information management, started his career with Wipro in its hospitality & leisure business. He founded Camcom together with two engineers – Umesh, with whom he had worked previously in Wipro, and Mahesh Subramanian, a serial entrepreneur. The three realised that defect/damage visual inspections are labour intensive and therefore subjective, slow and prone to error. Their AI-powered visual inspection platform has today carved a significant presence in India's automotive segment, and even has customers in Europe, Mexico and South East Asia. Their system does 3 million inspections every year on automotive damage for insurance companies alone.

> We have a data lake that is growing at 580 million images per annum. We are now working to build a large vision model. Our algorithms are able to extract 90% of the metadata in a picture. The system looks at a picture and it's able to understand the scenario in which it is.
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> **Ajith Nayar** | CO-FOUNDER, CAMCOM

The Saudi deal has turbocharged the team. Just in the last quarter, the system handled 6.5 million civic incidents, automatically generating tickets into the municipality system, and sending it to the right department.

A press release the Saudi govt issued on the alliance – presented as a global first association by a nation to tackle visual pollution using AI and leading the way to achieving the UN SDG goal of building sustainable cities – caught international attention. "We are now getting enquiries from Abu Dhabi, Harris county in Texas, Mauritius," says Ajith.