



“Artificial intelligence is a cocktail shaker in which we mix all the data”

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Albert Isern, CEO of Bismart, points to predictive capacity as the next step in Big Data



On a Tuesday when the doors of the IoT Solutions World Congress open in Barcelona it is difficult to find a moment to talk to Albert Isern. CEO of Bismart, top world partner of Microsoft in the sphere of Big Data, he presents to this congress a new digital robot that aims to become the best personal shopper, providing recommendations even through the mirrors of changing rooms. “It is like Alice in Wonderland. We pass through the mirror and get to a world full of specialised gifts,” Isern tells VIA Empresa.

This publication gets a call from him when he has just finished presenting Bismart’s solutions to the sales people of Microsoft Ibérica so that “they can address the market with real cases of use and not just as simple sellers of licences.” The rest of the week will focus on the world congress of the Internet of Things, where Bismart is a finalist for a prize and where Isern will give a talk on Wednesday.

In this IoT Solutions World Congress Bismart is presenting a digital robot. What does it consist of?

Imagine being in a shop and that the smart mirror detects your face, interests and recommends the product that is best aligned with your lifestyle. It is the best product for you, for that date or important day. It is a spectacular thing that improves the experience of shopping. The world of data analysis comes from the descriptive sphere: what is happening and why. And now it is moving towards the predictive world: what will happen and what I can do to make it happen. We

make this prediction in relation to data on shopping history, demographics, the types of dwellings in the area, etc. We correlate this information to be able to recommend the best product for you.

And a practical example?

Let's imagine that someone goes into a shop or to an e-commerce site looking for a television. The company that distributes electronics offers them the model that is on sale this month; but if I know your profile and that you live in a large house, with a big living room, a numerous family, with high purchasing power... I can offer you the latest curved television model with the latest gadgets you are looking for. The offer can be personalised and go from mass marketing to marketing completely based on each person's tastes and preferences.

How will each consumer experience this?

It is a bot, a digital smart robot that uses Bismart's artificial intelligence algorithms to allow it to communicate with you and offer you the best recommendation at any time. The means of interacting with it can be via chat on a website or through a smart mirror in the shop. We are already working with a large retail company for these mirrors to be installed in its shops, to identify the image, and if you have given it permission to access your loyalty card, it will be able to offer you a personalised product. Yet, always being very careful to respect your privacy. A physical robot can even be used with the interaction through voice. It is the best personal shopper, the one that best knows you and helps you in your shopping experience.

How is the bot monetised?

All of the machine learning behind it is a service we offer to companies. The machines learn and can make decisions for themselves.

Will artificial intelligence be the star theme of this IoT Solutions World Congress?

Without a doubt; it is a cocktail shaker in which we put all the ingredients that are the huge quantity of data we mix together. With Big Data we take all the complex information and machine learning applies it to the predictive model. Artificial intelligence has this cognitive side, this humanised interface that allows for interaction with the machine via text, voice or image.

Are we ready to take on this relationship with machines?

We are already doing it; we shouldn't be frightened of anything! We now look to see what restaurants are nearby, where the festival we want to go to is... and we do it naturally with machines, through mobiles, tablets or smart TVs. Every day we are interacting with this Big Data and with this machine learning. What we do is get the most out of it and democratise it so that it reaches all types of companies in all types of sectors and that helps the public in their everyday lives.

Is this a good moment for Big Data and the Internet of Things?

Yes, it is a very sweet moment. The large companies, financial institutions, retail, etc., are putting a lot of money into Big Data to develop platforms that offer a better service to their clients. And they are doing so with the support of companies like ours.

How important is it for Catalan companies in the sector to have a congress like this here?

It is a spectacular shop window for the world, this and others like the Mobile World Congress. Our participation has opened up opportunities in Germany, with an automotive firm who bought a pilot from us; or in Asia. To be able to work from Catalonia with the shop window provided by Acció in these fairs is fantastic for local talent. Catalan talent can hold its own against the rest of the world. In fact, on the contrary, we are in a leading position in the world.

A year and a half ago, with the change of local government in Barcelona, you told VIA Empresa that you expected that "common sense would prevail and Barcelona would establish its position as a world leader." Is that how it has gone? Just recently we saw the news that the Cisco a Ca l'Alier project had been taken up again, and it seems like they are getting it off the ground. It is great to see that they are keeping the Smart City Expo and the Mobile World Congress. We

cannot afford to give up this shop window on the world for Catalan business and high quality employment. It is to be expected that all governments have to go through a process of adapting, but now that this has been done it is time to put our foot down on the gas and keep these positions. If not, this entire window will disappear to other continents and we will lose a great opportunity to generate high value jobs. If we want to grow as a people and provide the best opportunities to our citizens, we need this type of congress and for Barcelona to be number one in the world.

Has Barcelona en Comú's indecision over Smart City and Big Data had an affect on Bismart's commercial activity? Yes, clearly we have seen something of this slow down by the city council. We hope that it is reactivated and we can once again pick up these inspiring projects that, at the same time, were a shop window for the city. We have been contacted from all over the world and I have gone to give talks in New York, Warsaw, Berlin, Amsterdam and Dubai to show them the innovative Big Data projects that we are doing in the city of Barcelona. We think about the importance of all that in creating opportunities for Catalan talent! This symbiosis was magical.

Beyond Catalonia, Bismart has just opened an office in Singapore. What potential does the Asian market offer? A lot! It is the fastest growing market in the world, we have Microsoft who for years have been asking us to open an Asia-Pacific office and for us to put it in Singapore, where they also have theirs. Our team had moved to Qatar, and our best talent has gone to Singapore to open the office. It is a new dream come true for us.

What types of projects are you developing?

We are working on Big Data opportunities for smart cities, which are the first we have identified with Microsoft in countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.