Personalizing what viewers see and hear, ‘perceptive media’ inches toward reality

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Perceptive media is video or audio content that customizes itself based on data collected about the person or people experiencing it, one way in which we could see Hyper-Personalization (one of our 10 Trends for 2011) manifesting. The concept took a step closer to reality last month when the BBC’s R&D department launched a demo, an audio track with partially animated illustrations. “Breaking Out” tells the story of a woman stuck in her apartment building’s elevator—a narrative impacted in part by the user’s location, local weather and news, and social networks logged into (as long as the user opts in). The personalization, which works only for U.K. users, is more subtle than last year’s Take This Lollipop, the Facebook app that created a personalized film.

Possible uses for the technology include a TV set that would automatically identify a viewer and deliver relevant content, and radio and TV shows that tailor music to individual preferences. Needless to say, the potential for marketers is huge. Investment firm Veronis Suhler Stevenson forecasts that U.S. companies will spend $1.4 trillion on targeted media (everything from text messages to product placements) by 2015, up significantly from a forecast $200 billion last year. Perceptive media could provide unprecedented accuracy for advertisers via interactive TV spots and interstitial app advertising, among other examples.

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