



Yann Chevalier,
CEO,
Intersec Group

In recent years, there has been much talk about 'Big Data' in more developed markets and how organisations can use it for their gain. Mobile operators across the world are sitting on huge amounts of this so-called Big Data which they have amassed about their subscribers.

They can analyse this in order to get meaningful insights into their customers' behaviours and then launch targeted services to prop up their flagging ARPU's.

That's certainly the thinking behind Intersec, the France-based company that designs solutions for mobile operators to capture and monetise their network value through Big Data collection. In 2014, it introduced *Insighted*, its latest Big Data analytics software for telcos which is claimed to have the ability to analyse a huge amount of data from many sources in real-time, and can help the telecoms industry turn such data into valuable knowledge.

Yann Chevalier, Intersec Group's CEO, explains how the new software came about: 'We've been into customer base management, micro segmentation and targeted campaign management for some time now, and we've also been into location services by tapping into the location of subscribers in the network. But our customers were a little bit frustrated because they didn't have any first-hand access to the Big Data that we were storing in the databases that we had deployed with them.'

'So we designed and developed *Insighted* in order to give them that first-hand access to the data, giving them the ability to detect patterns or make observations and correlations between, for example, the location of people and their profile, or their behaviour as a consumer of mobile services. It gives operators access to a web interface, enabling them to have an idea of what's happening on the network precisely in real-time, get information about subscribers, what offers they might be interested in, etc.'

Insighted was developed in collaboration with MNOs. As well as acting in real-time, Chevalier says the software can also collect, store and analyse any available historical data to help operators understand subscriber behaviour, enhance business efficiency, and explore new sources of revenues.

According to Intersec, *Insighted* detects relevant patterns related to customer behaviour, automates geo-marketing analysis, and generates customised dashboards to improve marketing productivity, network

planning and fraud detection on a daily basis. The firm goes on to claim that the platform is 'hundreds of times' faster than open source analytics software, and enables operators to pursue data-driven decisions whilst discovering new customer insights to enhance their decision-making process.

While Intersec has been talking about subscriber analytics for a number of years, one of the challenges that even developed markets are currently facing is a lack of Big Data experts. That problem is likely to be exacerbated in Africa where a shortage of experts with technical skills has long been an issue. So does Intersec have all the skills needed to promote Big Data analytics on the continent? Chevalier says there are two different issues here.

'First, you need to have the technology to get access to the data, and that's what we've been working on over the past years. Second, you need to be able to use the data, and there can be two different approaches here.'

'The first one is hard data management which is a complicated job when it comes to detecting patterns, trends, predictions, etc. Or you can have a simplified approach. Let's take the example of churn prediction. You can either use complicated mathematical algorithms in order to predict who are the churners, or you can use an easy method where you score subscribers and give them points if they have a lot of credits or if their usage is declining. You can implement your own algorithm. In which case, the software is easier to use - so much so that any marketer can use it without needing training.'

He goes on to explain that Intersec can offer data analysis using either of those two approaches, but adds that the one operators choose to adopt will depend on what kind of resources they want to allocate to using the product. 'For operators with a very large subscriber base, such as 10-20 million customers, it makes sense to invest in [their own] skills and have on site, permanent resources that are able to use those algorithms. But if you're only a small operator with two, three or five million subscribers, you still need product that is easy enough to use to enable you to do the same campaigns. It's slightly less efficient than having your own data scientists but still very efficient to develop the ARPU's, reduce the churn, etc.'

Chevalier says that there are currently ongoing trials, proofs of concept and demonstrations of *Insighted* going on with operators in Africa. 'I can't say who they are with but they're existing customers so that gives you a good sense of who they might be. Our three pillar customers today are Orange, Etisalat, Morocco Telecom

and subsidiaries in Western Africa. That represents more than 35 different customers on the continent, and means that we are working in more than one out of two countries in Africa.'

Are operators ready for Big Data?

So does Chevalier believe the continent's operators are mature and sophisticated enough to see the value in Big Data?

'While our historical footprint is more in North and West Africa, we are also seeing more traction in southern countries. Customers are seeing the value [of data analysis]. In the past, African customers have tended to opt for a subscriber loyalty solution rather than a subscriber base management solution.'

He goes on to say that at first operators could not see the obvious benefits of using data analytics that looked at, for instance, the subscriber's location. But now, he says they are starting to use such solutions in coordination with their customer base management platforms to carry out context related product campaigns.

'So now, the operators can get closer to all of their customers and they can propose relevant offerings to them. Or they can detect where the subscriber lives, see if they have bad coverage, and then analyse how many people are in the same situation and perhaps invest in new antennas for that location.'

'All African operators know that they are strong in some areas and less so in others, but previously they didn't have the means to understand why they were strong. This might be a question of resellers, the number of resellers, cell coverage, or it can be more of a cultural question such as is my advertising relevant to an area or not?'

'Using data analytic products, all these questions can become really easy for the operator to answer. They can create different layers about the network - for instance, about how many resellers they have in a particular area, how many cells there are, understand their weaknesses, and try to adapt the situation in order to gain extra customers.'

Chevalier adds that the open analytics Intersec now offers with *Insighted* is giving operators real access to everything that happens on the network. 'Four years ago they only had access to data through the data warehouse and it was difficult and slow to get - each time you asked the IT department to give you some insights about what's happening, you had to wait for three or four weeks. But marketers today are totally autonomous; they have access to a web interface which enables them to do everything they want.'