
A reality unlike anything you've ever seen.

Remember those days when you wished you could see what a dress would look like on you before you purchased it? Or that time you wanted to get a new radical haircut but since you couldn't tell before-hand whether or not it worked for you, you decided against taking the risk altogether? Well THAT my friend, was before Augmented Reality was born. Welcome now, to an age where you'll



Source: www.thedesignjunction.co.uk

see kids sporting radical hairstyles by the day, where every shopper will buy clothes knowing exactly what to expect from them, and where all our realities will first be tried out virtually. Simply because we now can!

Augmented reality is out to change the way each of us view the world. This technology blurs that line which differentiates

between what's real and what's virtual, and enhances everything we feel, see, hear, or even smell. And the best part? AR technology finds application in nearly everything everyone is doing- From tourists, to soldiers, to video game enthusiasts, to NASA. In fact, if you look up "Augmented Reality" on Wikipedia, it lists out 23 different applications for the technology!

AR applications for smartphones in particular, include a GPS which pinpoints the user's location, and the phone's compass which detects the device's orientation. More sophisticated AR programs in use by the military also include object recognition, machine vision, and technology capable of gesture recognition.

So how does AR work?

Augmented reality works in real time by simply integrating digital information with the user's environment. Virtual reality on the other hand, creates a completely artificial environment. What makes augmented reality way cooler, is it uses the existing environment and overlays new information on top of it. In fact, some argue that augmented reality lies somewhere in between real life and virtual reality- A mixed reality if you will.



Source: www.pinterest.com

As futuristic as the technology seems, it's surprising to note that augmented reality has been a concept for several decades now- The 60s to be more specific. Over the years, what started as a system which made use of computer graphics to display simple wireframe drawings, has grown into today's HoloLens Developer Kit and Meta 2 Developer Kit, both augmented reality DIYs developed by Microsoft. The investments made in both Augmented Reality and Virtual reality technology has now reached over \$ 1 billion. And to think, the term "Augmented Reality" wasn't even coined until 1990.

Let's now talk about where augmented reality is in use.

There are probably over a hundred example I can take, of very cool augmented reality apps, tools and innovations. Consider smartphone applications like Wikitude and Netherlands' Layar. With Layar, users look through their smartphone camera at the world and see transparent webpages with layers of extra information added on top. Wikitude on the other hand, offers users an application called World Browser, which again overlays useful information about landmarks and other points of interest, as seen through the camera phone.

Despite all of this, the present state of augmented reality is still finding its feet. There however are some very clear signs of the direction in which this technology is heading. It's only a matter of time



Source: www.theguardian.com

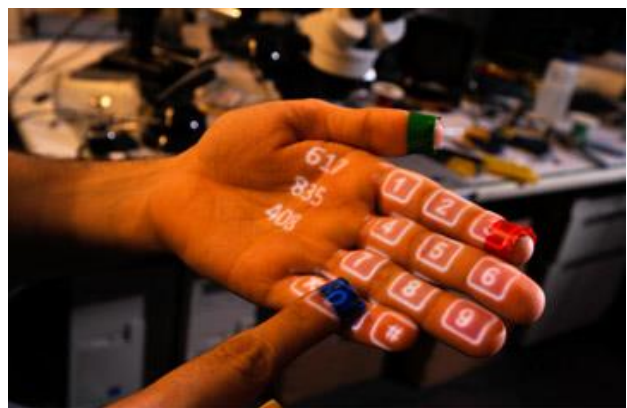
in my opinion. And a very short duration of time at that.

Experts are out there predicting that in as little as five years from now, we could expect some very significant advances in AR technology. For one, we'll definitely see more of it being integrated in our everyday lives. Within no time, we'll also find ourselves asking "What do I do with this,

exactly? The immediate future for Augmented Reality is in a pair of AR-enabled glasses though, and there already is enough evidence of the work being done in this direction.

Talking from a business perspective alone, there is huge potential yet to be realized in AR. Take the field of marketing for example. Exciting strides are already being made in AR, and has piquing marketers' interest, more so because of the potential it has to bring in a whole new dimension to consumer experiences- From how people discover new products, to how they settle on the ones they want to buy. In order for this massive potential to be realized, companies have to be prudent enough to resist that urge to jump into creating AR apps, but should instead focus on understanding how consumers are going to interact with this technology more.

At the end of it all, let's not forget that the real mission for commercial AR is to integrate the technology in such a way, that it enhances the overall user/customer experience, making it easier, convenient, and simultaneously loads of fun. Just imagine all those things you can do if you could seamlessly integrate AR into your everyday life! I, for one, know I'm going to find out if shaving half my hair and sporting a Mohawk with the rest of it is going to work or not!



Source: www.hswstatic.com

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