

Snap Back to Reality - the Future of AR

03/08/2016 17:36 |

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I am not sure about you but I think its time for the world of augmented reality to have a dose of reality. Right now this burgeoning industry is offering products ranging from £80 to over £3000, with applications in a vast number of areas. This level of differing products suggests an industry in flux, a market that has yet to find its equilibrium.

So far the only AR technology to break into the mass market has been Pokemon GO. This app has taken the world by storm with its combination of geo-positioning, AR and an existing strong brand, though it remains to be seen if this momentum can be maintained. This is just the first mover in what is shaping up to be the exciting new technology. Yet, the applications of augmented reality technology go well beyond AR games and beyond even sight.

Already augmented reality is being applied to what we hear. Products such as 'Here' are allowing people to modify the sound they hear from the outside world. I recently took this to a concert and could change the sound like I was sitting at home listening to music. Short of a few strange looks it was a great experience.

And yet, none of the applications of augmented reality technology really have yet to touch on what will ultimately change our lives - access to information.

In the next two years as augmented reality is accepted by mainstream consumers the move away from gaming and leisure applications will increase.

Imagine a combination of augmented reality sight, hearing and on screens all around you. All combining with Big Data, to bring you up to date information on your surroundings, see something interesting and want to know more? Your AR devices will tell you. No more need to get out your phone and google the information.

All this technology exists today in one form or another. Hyperloop Transportation Technology (the non-Musk hyperloop company) is already displaying its concept of on-screen augmented reality, coming into a city the train passengers of the very near future will be able to get all the information they need just by looking at the window. Companies like Navdy and Hudway are developing heads up displays for our cars, providing information in front of our eyes in a safe and efficient format.

In today's world we are used to information being right at our fingertips, only a few taps of a screen away. But this in itself takes us away from reality. We are looking down at our screens not up into the world. Augmented reality, short of taking us away from the world, will actually bring us closer to our surroundings.

No more screen addiction, no more viewing the world through the prism of our phones. Information will be right in front of our eyes, in our ears and all around us.

For decades technology has allowed us to access more information in more efficient ways but through the mediums decided by designers. With AR we will take a zero user interface approach. Our eyes and ears become the medium.

I have lost track of the amount of times I have heard predictions that people will want augmented reality to change how they interact with the world. Equally it seems barely a month goes by without someone saying humanity is no longer happy with reality as we see it.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The rise and rise of augmented reality will snap us back to reality, away from devices and into the world.

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