

» Immersive content or the end of our boring lives

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In 1945, actor and director Robert Montgomery found himself face-to-face with Humphrey Bogart, who had recently arrived to film the mythical *Casablanca*. It was a brief conversation where he proposed to do something which, until then, nobody had ever done: to star in a film recorded entirely with a subjective camera. The actor accepted and the result was *Lady in the Lake* (1947).

While this film wasn't the biggest success for either of them, it became the benchmark for a style that are already amassed a few attempts. There are numerous examples, the fast paced slapstick chases, that put us right in the passenger seat driving like mad through the traffic, the advanced experiments like "Berlin, Symphony of a great city" or the flying cameras that Abel Gance installed on rockets and launched an during the filming of his film *Napoleon* in 1927.

These examples are still benchmarks for illustrating some of today's most popular content. Content that, **in cinema, video games, Internet, as well as advertising and communication, shows us heroes and protagonists** capable of flying, crashing, solving mysteries, discovering worlds and, in general, **capable of turning into people that can do a thousand and one things that we, at least until now, cannot.** The spectator's immersion into the action through these kinds of tools show us that, despite what many people think, **the first-person perspective was not invented by the videogame, they evolved it.**

Nevertheless, for many of those born during the era of virtual games, it's normal to believe that the egg came before the chicken. We have grown up with video games like **Wolfenstein 3D or DOOM,**

great successes of idSoftware that in 1993 had an entire generation shooting at Nazis or monsters or travelling in **worlds where you were the protagonist, in those in where you were the hero.**

These games, which posed as a milestone in the industry, already foresaw some of the trends that dominate the world of video games today. According to David Kushner in his book *Masters of DOOM* techniques such as "first person shooter (FPS), cooperative gameplay, shareware, mods, violence...the list is endless", were born with this title. But the most important is that John Carmack, the DOOM's creator, opened the door to an immersive, interactive and controllable reality.

THE BANKRUPT SURFER

Until recently, cinema and videogames allowed us to live experiences, worlds and incredible adventures through the eyes of another person. All these evocations had unbearable costs for a non-specialist company and even less so by any individual. Hence, as with all technology, **the big change came when these budget constraints were reduced, opening up the possibilities for the public at large.**

The first of the great re-revolutions in the content world that are featured in this review arrived with the dream of a bankrupt surfer, Nick Woodman, who managed to raise money by selling shells and belts in the midst of the "dotcom" crisis. His idea not only involved the **emergence of small off-road cameras that could easily be carried around, but also and especially, a new perspective** and a completely different way of seeing and producing content.

GoPros didn't invent the First Person POV (point of view), but they did take something that already existed and desired by all, taking it one step further and making it real, tangible and accessible. A new filming concept was introduced that has allowed us to consume videos and, above all, situations and sensations that were until then limited to the privileged few.

This new filming perspective has allowed us to discover how it feels to jump from the stratosphere like Felix Baumgartner and Red Bull, what the world looks like when you do a backflip on a bicycle above Colorado Canyon or to skid through the city like Ken Block with the aid of Monster energy drink. With this perspective, **we are no longer the co-pilot or the spectator as before, we can now be the driver thanks to real heroes and brands that support them in their challenges.**



¹ Die Symphonie der Grosstadt, documentary directed by Walter Ruttmann in 1927

The development of these first person videos implied start of an era of immersive content which led GoPro to be the best YouTube channel of 2014 according to Adweek and helped to transform our lives, as its slogan states, *"be a hero,"* in something quite extraordinary. Every one of their experiences has been shared by millions and millions of people in the form of views, replicas and camera sales (GoPro achieved a turnover of 1000 million dollars in 2014).

But why do we find a first person jump into a void so exciting? The answer is in our mirror neurons. They allow us to feel the adrenaline and sensations of these trips, of these jumps, of these flights and any other experience so that we perceive it as our own. But this ability to experience sensations and be part of the experiences is not all positive. These sensations surprise at first, but they have spoiled us to the point that **we get used to the incredible**. To put it another way, **our level of demand for this type of content has spiralled to infinity, which means that once the WOW effect of the technology has subsided, brands then have to focus on the quality of their stories when using it.**

Proof of the speed at which the development of market's moves is that, even before this content boom, in 2012, the **second great re-revolution in content consumption and immersive experiences** was being generated in a garage. When the general public started to enjoy first person videos, **Oculus Rift raised 2.5 million dollars in Kickstarter to develop the first virtual reality glasses.**

THE DOOM FAN

Palmer Luckey is the creator of Oculus Rift and, incidentally, a great fan of the videogame DOOM. It's immersive possibilities and total control inspired him to create the first prototype at 19 years of age, and which is now about to change the world. These first virtual reality glasses which were secured with insulation tape, reached the hands of John Carmack, the father of DOOM who, surprised by this project, decided to use them for the demonstration of DOOM 3 at the E3 in Los Angeles. **One year later Carmack left Id software and joined forces with Luckey as technology director of Oculus VR.**

For this reason, it could be said that **in 2012, Oculus Rift marked the beginning of the massive virtual reality market.** It was this company that laid the foundations of what many dreamed of and turned what seemed impossible into reality: to experience new realities and new worlds as if they were our own.

Shortly afterwards, Facebook consecrated this trend with the acquisition of Oculus Rift for 2 billion dollars in 2014, Google popularised it with Cardboard, a carbon device which can transform any mobile phone into immersive virtual reality glasses and Sony, HTC or Intel have just established it as the **trend in consumption for audiovisual content in the coming years.**

But virtual reality is much more than first person videogames, virtual worlds or pornography (one of the first industries to use it). **Virtual reality**, like all of the great technological changes, presents a **new tool for those in charge of marketing and communication in the fight for consumer attention.**

Immersive experiences allow something that until now could not be done: **demonstrate instead of promising.** In the era of transparency, the opportunity to visit a factory, to be in the entertainment venue of a sports team or visit a refugee camp enable transparency promises to be fulfilled.

“Some experts believe that virtual reality and immersive experiences could even change and improve the world”

THE EMPATHY MACHINE

In the study *"The Effect of mere touch on Perceived Ownership"*² published by the Journal of Consumer Research, showed that **consumers who were able to touch a product would be prepared to pay double for it.** But what is more interesting, is that these same consumers who imagined that they had touched it, were still prepared to offer a larger amount than those that hadn't.

It is precisely this imaginary effect that virtual reality offers to those in charge of major brands, and they are putting it to use. Companies such as Audi, Under Armour, Coca-Cola or Inditex **know that they are in possession of the tool that had been until now impossible: an empathy machine.**

This ability to generate empathy is demonstrated in projects like "The machine to be another" a work of art built by Philippe Bertrand which enabled participants to see through another person's eyes and **experience the feeling of looking in the mirror as a child, a woman, a disabled person or a refugee.**

Whilst the star gift this Christmas will undoubtedly be the PlayStation VR, Google has evolved the functional and well-designed Daydream and Samsung Gear VR and continue to extend their reign. This is not only a high-speed race to capitalise the market, it is also an open alliance warfare to see who can offer the best content and the best franchises for their devices.

The almighty Disney has made inroads to VR with a \$65 million investment in the company Jaunt. This means including virtual reality in films such as *Marvel, Star Wars*, the Disney classics, and television channels like ABC or the future of sport through ESPN.

Just like Disney, PlayStation VR and Sony Pictures are preparing to expand their VR and 360° content and be able to bridge the gap between personal experiences and virtual simulations. A new world of possibilities as we have seen in the creation of the *Ghostbusters* virtual experience. *Dimensions*, an experience designed to promote the new film. This implies great things for the future of Sony Pictures, as with VR it is expected that the promotional experiences that we are already used to seeing will be enhanced even further. The possibilities that are opening up for franchises such Spiderman and Men in Black are endless.

Google, for its part, has preferred to join forces with Netflix, HBO or Hulu to offer its content and to show the possibilities of immersive fiction presented the "Fantastic Beasts" experience, developed in collaboration with J.K. Rowling which introduces us to the magic world of Harry Potter and allows our remote control to act as a magic wand. The most important is that Google, together with its 50 partners, is not only preparing itself for passive consumption of content, but also to allow us to interact with it. To this end they will include games, adventures and above all, **educational experiences.** And the fact is, beyond entertainment and hands-on experiments, **some believe that virtual reality and immersive experiences could even change and improve the world.**

In this context, there is a movement of experts headed by Palmer Luckey (creator of Oculus Rift) that consider it a **"moral obligation" to take virtual reality to the social masses.** They argue that virtual reality enables the reduction of the gap and to bring experiences to people who until now have not had access to them, for example, bring the Louvre to art-lovers without leaving their house or visit the Great Barrier Reef without getting wet.

² Joann Peck (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin School of Business) and Suzanne B. Shu (University of California, Los Angeles-Anderson School of Management)

The new pilot program developed for schools by Google, based on this line of thinking, was launched in September of last year and has already reached a million children across 11 countries.

The project, Google's Expedition Pioneers Programme, aims to take a whole class on the trip that the school bus would never be able to. Through a teacher-led system, children can visit the inside of the White House, see what a city was like a century ago or discover a village in the Amazonian jungle.

Due to experiences like this, and not just because they enable us to feel like a F18 pilot, mean that **virtual reality and immersive experiences are considered by Deloitte as "a billion-dollar niche"**. The numerous possibilities that exist in the immediate future for education, health, science or culture immeasurable. From treatments to overcome the fear of flying or vertigo to improvements such as enabling a doctor to navigate between cancer cells are already in development.

With this knowledge, big companies are investing and preparing their devices, platforms and spaces to embrace the forthcoming revolution. Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Sony or Samsung have entire teams dedicated to virtual reality. Another 230 companies like Meta, Void, Atheer or Lytro are working on hardware improvements. The advances are happening faster each day for this reason the companies try to go above and beyond. The most immediate step and one which we should undoubtedly look out for is the one which YouTube and Facebook have been preparing for some time. **Now it's not enough just to record content and post it. The human being adapts very quickly, is sociable and likes to share moments.** All this leads us to the next trend of the live streaming of virtual reality content.

The first great example was developed by YouTube with the **live 360° streaming of Coachella Festival**. But the possibilities that this provides are endless, such as seeing football World Cup final from the middle of the field or watch a concert from the drummer's seat.

REVOLUTION IN THE PALM OF OUR HAND.

Some time ago, to interact and surf the Internet from the palm of our hand seemed impossible but now it's a fundamental part of our daily life. Only one year ago Pokémon was a simple game that captivated us as children with its feisty mascots but has now taken

one step further in the content revolution. Nobody would have imagined that more than 45 million people would go out onto the streets to catch these little monsters with their mobiles and that they would again change the way of we interact with the world.

This not so new technology, (it started in the early 90s) is anticipated to be the preparatory step for the future. The reason for is that, whilst virtual reality requires an additional device or hardware, augmented reality requires in device that 2 thousand million people already have: a smartphone.

Even though it already started with the videogame industry (with examples such as Ingress and Pokémon GO), augmented reality will quickly and drastically affect many more sectors and industries, both consumer and business to business. It is estimated that between 2016 and 2020 the accumulated growth of augmented reality will reach almost 180 % and more than 60 % of content (software) in this segment will be dictated by the user and end consumer.

SO NOW WHAT?

The biggest innovation will come in the near future from Magic Leap, a company that has raised \$1.4 trillion dollar in the largest founding round ever. This company is responsible for prompting all of the world's most important CEO's to catch a plane to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to test drive the next great step: Mixed Reality

A long way off from being perfect, this technology enables us to mix our reality, seen through normal glasses, with augmented reality graphics. Elements such as graphics, models, robots or games have already been developed for a technology that has captivated all of the major players in the technological sector.

The true end of our boring lives will come when, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we can indulge in any world, any place or any experience however and whenever we wish. Although it may seem like a long time off, the technological change will take no longer than 10 years, and could affect all areas of our lives to the extent that it is beyond our understanding. In the middle of this content revolution, something that seems to be going to keep the same is the need of telling great stories. More than ever, stories in which we become future superheroes, explorers or villains.



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