

Augmented Reality

Immersive Apps and Campaigns by Broadcasters

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Over the past couple of years, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) have become hot topics in the technology market and have emerged as valuable tools for all kinds of industries. While VR appears to be the hot technology creating most buzz at the moment, AR is actually catching on more quickly and is even said to be the primary driver of VR. Although AR has been around for quite a while, only in the last year has the technology gathered steam. With the release of the hit mobile gaming app 'Pokémon GO' in July 2016, the enormous potential of AR was put in the spotlight and demonstrated high consumer interest in the technology.

For now, the primary drivers will likely be Snapchat Lenses and Facebook Camera Effects. But also tech giants like Microsoft (HoloLens) and the two biggest players of the smartphone industry, Apple (ARKit) and Google (ARCore), are betting on the technology and have introduced competing AR developer platforms and products, which might define the future of augmented reality. Thus, AR technology has an enormous user base, enabling AR app developers from different fields to create engaging, innovative and immersive experiences.

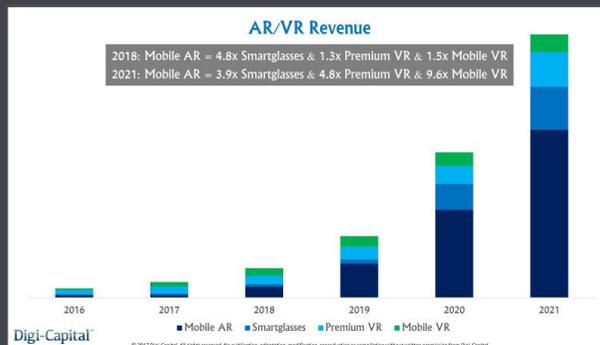
Augmented reality has become a powerful and versatile tool for a wide range of industries, including gaming, architecture and interior design, retail, healthcare, education and training, entertainment, marketing and communication. Especially marketers have been very keen to start leveraging AR and create unique, immersive campaigns that aim to engage and wow users. Most of the TV and film industry still seems to talk about and focus their attention on its cousin VR, but some broadcasters have already been successfully experimenting with AR as well. This paper will highlight recent examples of promotional AR campaigns and applications by broadcasters, which cover the range of possibilities the technology currently holds for promotion and fan engagement. It kicks off with a general overview of the mobile AR market and recent technological developments. Afterwards, it highlights some recent and noteworthy examples of augmented reality usage by channels like Fox, FX, and AMC.

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Market Overview

AR technology allows computer-generated images or extracted real-world sensory input, like sounds, videos or graphics, to be superimposed on the real world in real-time and offers users an altered view of the physical world. Other than VR, which requires costly and often bulky head-mounted displays, AR is more accessible to consumers, as it can either be accessed via less heavy AR spectacles, or via smartphones.

A recent report from research firm Digi-Capital indicates that mobile AR dominates the AR/VR market for the foreseeable future. According to the report, mobile AR has more than twice as many users in 2017 than the entire AR/VR headset market will have by 2021. By then, the number of mobile AR users could grow up to 3 billion. Another report by research company eMarketer predicted that this year alone 40 million people in the US will engage with AR at least monthly. This reflects the gradual mainstream adoption and rapid traction among consumers.



Copyright: Digi-Capital

Taking a look at the overall market value further supports this. A report from A to Z Research suggests that the global AR market will reach approximately US\$133.78 billion in 2021, compared to being valued at around US\$3.33 billion in 2015.



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Niantic's unrivaled, state-of-the-art AR game 'Pokémon GO' can definitely be defined as one of the main drivers of AR technology. It broke all records for the speed of take up and reached US\$600 million in revenue in just a few months, according to market researcher App Annie. The game was not only a money-spinner but also revolutionized the way we perceive reality. The physical world is no longer separated from the digital world of the internet, the lines between the two are now blurred, enabling users to alter or even enhance physical objects in the real world. 'Pokémon GO's' success highlights the high interest consumers have in the technology.

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Another company to hugely impact mainstream AR adoption is Snap, Inc. The company's messaging app Snapchat has made a steady push in AR over the past couple of years, experimenting with geofilters and the lens feature, which allow users to add a real-time effect to their photos and videos. The lens feature was introduced in September 2015 and is still hugely popular among users. In spring 2017, the company added the World Lenses feature to the app, which lets users augment the physical world with real-time virtual camera effects. The new feature adds AR elements to any environment that is captured with the smartphone's camera, not only a user's face. On October 3, 2017, Snapchat introduced another AR feature, an AR art platform that allows users to view AR sculptures in hotspots around the world.



Copyright: Taylor Lorenz

For the first project Snapchat partnered with renowned artist Jeff Koons to place five giant AR art sculptures in nine different places across the globe.

The platform will include further artists and hotspots in the coming months. This project once again, blends the real world with the digital one. Users are encouraged to explore real-life places in the physical world that are enhanced by a digital experience.

But Snapchat isn't the only social media platform utilizing and driving the tech. Instagram and its parent Facebook have also been eagerly developing camera lenses and filters for their social platforms. At F8, the annual developer conference in California in April, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that in the upcoming years AR will be a big part of the social network. Additionally, Zuckerberg told Recode that the company was also working on AR hardware such as eyeglasses (Facebook just recently patented Oculus AR glasses). Facebook's first augmented reality platform, however, are not glasses, but its Camera Effects platform, which turns smartphone cameras into AR platforms.



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The open Camera Effects platform includes two creative tools for artists and developers, Frame Studio and AR Studio, which let them build their own camera effects ranging from animated frames and masks to interactive AR experiences.

The launch of Google's ARCore and Apple's ARKit platforms feed the hype around AR as well, making it more accessible to developers and consumers alike and turning the technology into the next big thing after smartphones. In September, Apple announced new iPhone models alongside an iOS software update that includes AR apps in the App Store. The applications were built with ARKit, the platform that allows developers to easily create unique AR experiences. The advanced technological capabilities of the new iPhone's camera make it even easier for users to interact with AR creations. To further evolve communication far beyond basic text-based interaction, the company introduced the Animojis, animated emojis that move with a user's face.



Copyright: Apple Inc.

Google has also begun baking AR directly into their new smartphones. After the company had announced its ARCore software platform in August, which is similar to Apple's ARKit, the new Pixel phones introduced on October 4 feature optimized and calibrated cameras that enable the phones to deliver high-quality AR experiences. A variety of AR gaming apps were also showcased during the official presentation. The new AR Sticker feature includes sponsored character stickers that can interact with each other.



Copyright: Microsoft

Currently, mobile AR is and will be the primary driver of the AR market, since affordable "true" AR glasses might still be years away. At the moment, the most well-known AR glasses are Google Glass, Snap's Spectacles (which are very basic compared to other devices) and Microsoft's HoloLens. The first already debuted back in 2013, it can be considered as a flop, however, as it delivered less than it promised, and discontinued in 2015. In July this year, Google Glass was reborn, but this time positioned clearly as an enterprise tool.

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AR Lenses, Filters and Camera Effects

Glass for Enterprise is now a practical workplace tool that saves time and money in factories. Microsoft's HoloLens is also not really a consumer device yet and more of a business-oriented device. What most headsets currently on the market have in common are the heavy price tag (except for the Spectacles) and a bulky, unappealing design for public use. Both Facebook and Apple have reportedly filed patent applications that revealed they are working on the development of augmented reality glasses as well, but it is unclear when they might see the light of day. Industry experts are already confident that their glasses will likely be built for a mass market with associated price tags.

Other companies that are on the forefront of augmented reality and make headlines with their glasses include Meta and Google-backed Magic Leap. All these major developments bring the digital future to life and seem to mark the beginning of new ways of communication that we haven't even fully begun to understand. With all the major tech giants betting big on bringing the technology to mainstream consumers, the AR market seems to be in the midst of even more revolutionary growth. Who will truly lead this revolution remains to be seen in the near future. It is clear, however, that AR has enormous potential. Layering, altering and enhancing real-world objects will turn our reality into a hybrid one in which experiences aren't linear anymore. The opportunities of AR have also been recognized by the TV industry and some broadcasters have already been experimenting with the technology to bring marketing material to life, provide unique experiences and engage fans.

AR LENSES, FILTERS AND CAMERA EFFECTS

Since Facebook introduced and launched its Camera Effects platform in March, more and more broadcasters have started to incorporate AR filters, lenses, stickers and camera effects into their promotional campaigns for upcoming shows. Several networks created new and innovative AR effects that engage fans and enable them to bring the shows to life in their personal environments. Viewers can either immerse themselves directly into the shows or create unique photos and videos with an AR effect in the style of the show.

FACEBOOK CAMERA EFFECTS (HBO / MTV / FOX / ABC)

Among the first broadcasters to make use of Facebook's Camera Effects were HBO and MTV. Often, the effects on Facebook are more interactive and reactive than the sponsored lenses and filters that have been launched on competitor Snapchat in the past. HBO, for example, created a Night King camera effect to get viewers even more excited about the "Game of Thrones" season 7 finale. Fans could transform into the leader of the army of the dead.



Copyright: Home Box Office, Inc.

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AR Lenses, Filters and Camera Effects

The animated filter also featured a never-before-heard song from the series' composer Ramin Djawadi. Similarly, MTV launched a Moon Person camera effect ahead of the annual "Video Music Awards", which put users in an astronaut's helmet and additionally featured sound effects and a countdown to the awards show. In the following weeks, Facebook Camera Effects were also used to promote new and returning shows of the US fall TV season. Fox, for example, introduced a karaoke camera effect to fuel excitement for the returning musical dramas "Empire" and "Star". Fans could sing along to the song "You're So Beautiful" from the "Empire" cast while wearing golden and/or purple headphones with the series' logos on them. ABC tapped into Facebook's Camera Effects as well to help promote new series "The Good Doctor" and its returning "TGIT" lineup of "Grey's Anatomy", "Scandal" and "How to Get Away With Murder". With the effect for "The Good Doctor", fans can experience how protagonist Shaun Murphy, a young doctor with autism, sees and maps systems in our bodies. The network's Thursday night-lineup was promoted with a gamified effect that lets fans catch popcorn with their mouth.



Source: Adweek

THE WALKING DEAD ENCOUNTER (AMC)

In September, AMC launched an official augmented reality app for its hit series "The Walking Dead". 'The Walking Dead Encounter' is presented by Mountain Dew and brings the walkers from the show to life by letting users place them in the real world for photos and videos. The free AR app, which was first previewed at AMC's 'Deadquarters' activation at San Diego Comic-Con, is available for iOS and Android devices.



Copyright: Simon Landon

The app was developed by Trigger and provides users with two modes. 'Create a Scene' lets them place a walker into their real-world environment to take a photo or video. The AR creations can easily be exported and shared on social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more. In the second mode, 'Scare Me!', the app randomly places the walker in the user's surroundings. Users have to look around until the walker suddenly pops out. In both modes, the app plays sound effects. In the beginning, the app comes with only two walkers, one male and one female.

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Gamified AR Apps

Users can unlock and collect additional walkers - 20 different in total - by scanning limited edition "The Walking Dead"-branded Mountain Dew packaging or by watching the new episodes of the series' eighth season. Every week, fans will be able to unlock new walkers through a code in the Mountain Dew commercials during "The Walking Dead" episodes. The app is a fun and simple way to engage the show's enthusiastic and passionate fanbase. It lets them get up and close with characters from their favorite series - though most probably not the ones they would like to encounter in real life - and brings them to their home.



Copyright: Next Games / AMC Film Holdings LLC

Soon, AMC will go one step further with the release of 'The Walking Dead: Our World', a location-based augmented reality experience similar to 'Pokémon GO' for iOS and Android devices. At the time this whitepaper was compiled, no exact release date has been set, but the developers from Next Games promise that fans of the series will soon be able to fight walkers wherever they are with the help from their favorite "The Walking Dead" characters.

GAMIFIED AR APPS

This more advanced approach to engage fans with their favorite shows via augmented reality was already taken by broadcasters like TBS, Syfy or FXX. The networks released distinct AR gaming apps that sent fans on scavenger hunts or allowed them to playfully interact with augmented characters and objects. Users were rewarded with additional bonus content or real-life prizes by collecting, catching or slaying objects.

CATCH COCO (TBS)

Most certainly inspired by the 'Pokémon GO' craze last summer, TBS's late night show Conan joined forces with AT&T for the location-based AR app Catch Coco. Instead of catching Pokémon, players were on the hunt for collectible Conan O'Briens eating deli sandwiches that were scattered around New York City. Just like 'Pokémon', the Conans first had to be captured by flicking one of his signature desk ornaments at him. The first ten people to collect all Conans won tickets to a taping of the show in New York City.



Copyright: Team Coco Digital LLC

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Gamified AR Apps

Fans could experience the game from home as well and enter a sweepstakes for AT&T gift bags. It is actually surprising that there have not been many more apps and experiences launched yet that capitalize on the hype around 'Pokémon GO'. The concept of the popular game is quite easily applicable to marketing campaigns, which was demonstrated by this app. Sending fans on show-inspired scavenger hunts for objects in AR can be applied by other shows – fictional or factual – as well and the experiences do not need to have the dimension and scale of Pokémon Go to be fun and engaging.

SHARKNADO SHARKMENTED REALITY (SYFY)

In anticipation of the premiere of "Sharknado 5: Global Swarming", Syfy teamed up with AR production company AR Glimpse to debut the augmented reality mobile game 'Sharknado ShARKmented Reality' for iOS and Android devices. The AR game, powered by Xfinity, comes with an update of the 'Go Shark Yourself' app, which was already released back in 2014.



Copyright: NBCUniversal Media, LLC

After the update, users are able to turn their environment into virtual "Sharknados" and fight flying sharks. The game became available in mid-July, roughly one month prior to the premiere of "Sharknado 5" on August 6, and rolled out in different countries across the globe. In the AR experience users must help the main characters Fin and April defeat the flying sharks in virtual "Sharknados", for which they are armed with a variety of virtual weapons. New shark types and weapons are unlocked when players complete a level. The weapons and sharks can additionally be used as stickers and filters in the app's photo booth. The AR game is as fun, absurd and crazy as the movies and a great fit for the franchise as it gives fans the opportunity to immerse themselves in the weird world of "Sharknado".

ARCHER P.I. (FXX)

Prior to the eighth season of animated spy sitcom Archer, FX Networks launched the augmented reality app Archer P.I. in mid-March 2017, which allowed users to become private investigators and solve cases themselves. The app let fans interact both with the new episodes on screen as well as real-world objects. To activate new clues that helped solve the mysterious cases, fans had to point their phone cameras at targets on screen or in real life, which would then come to life as animations, collectible objects and games. The app was also not just for fun – by collecting coins, players could enter a sweepstakes for the chance to win gift cards and other prizes. The app enhanced the fans' viewing experience in a fun and innovative way and kept them engaged during and in-between new episodes of the series.

Gamified AR Apps

For Archer's creators and marketing team, the app was a logical extension of their continuous fan service that consists of hidden clues in scenes, Easter eggs and bonus content. Archer P.I. was a clever strategy to make dedicated fans pay even more attention to what is happening on screen and even rewarded them with a hidden story that complemented season eight. Overall, this is an exciting concept that could also be applied by other TV shows to drive fan engagement.



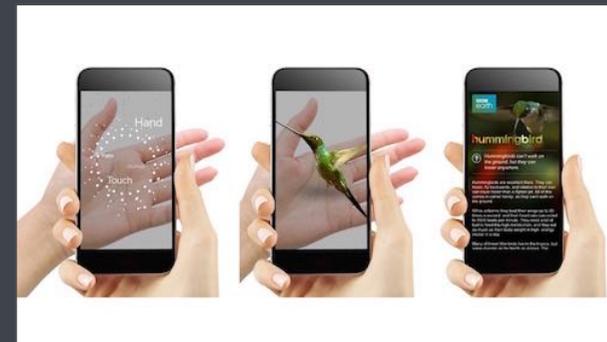
Copyright: FX Networks, LLC

BRINGING MARKETING MATERIAL TO LIFE WITH AR

AR doesn't only place virtual objects into the real world, it also allows users to scan real-world objects with their phone's camera in order to bring these objects to life digitally. Several networks have launched dedicated campaigns that bring outdoor material to life and offer additional content across platforms. Dedicated fans could scan AR-enabled billboards, print ads, murals or common objects to unlock exclusive AR experiences or extended content. While the BBC and FX collaborated with Blippar, FOX partnered with Shazam to benefit from the wide reach of these apps and bring unique experiences to viewers.

PLANET EARTH II AR EXPERIENCE (BBC)

The Sir David Attenborough-narrated natural history series "Planet Earth II" was a huge success for the BBC and aired with impressive ratings in countries all over the world. To promote the series in Asia and provide people with the most immersive wildlife documentary experience to date, BBC Worldwide partnered with Blippar for an AR campaign tied to the series that let people engage with and learn about animals in a unique way. The AR experience launched at the end of December last year and was available in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Vietnam.



Copyright: BBC Worldwide Ltd. / Blippar

Using the Blippar app, users could scan 19 common objects - such as shoes and apples - to unlock a short AR experience that led them to the "Planet Earth II" section in the app. There, they got entertaining and educational facts about an animal and also learned how that animal is connected to the object the user "blipped". Short videos from the documentary series were included in the app as well.

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Alternatively, users could also scan their hand to see the animals come to life in the palm of their hand. The multimedia interactive experience demonstrated that AR can also be used to extend documentaries and add playful elements as new tools for storytelling.

BEAT SHAZAM EXPERIENCE (FOX)

In March 2017, music recognition app Shazam introduced new in-app AR features for brands that can now bring their marketing materials to life by letting app users scan special Shazam codes. One of the companies to collaborate with Shazam and make use of the feature was Fox, which promoted its new gameshow Beat Shazam in May with an OOH campaign incorporating the app's capabilities.



Copyright: FOX

By scanning the Shazam codes on billboards in New York or on print ads in magazines like People and Entertainment Weekly, users could access a play-along AR experience in which a virtual version of gameshow host Jamie Foxx challenged them to guess the name of a featured song.

For the first time, Shazam was not only built into a show, but also formed a major part of its marketing campaign. The campaign not only brought Fox's marketing materials to life but managed to transport the show and its host to the users, who got a unique preview of the gameshow and its accompanying play-at-home experience.

AUGMENTED REALITY MURALS (FX)

To promote its highly anticipated Marvel-related superhero series "Legion", FX launched five AR murals across the US in January. The AR-enabled murals, which complemented a three-day art exhibit in New York City, could be found in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco. In order to bring the murals to life, people had to download the visual discovery app Blippar and then frame the art. The unlocked clips 'revealed the power of David Haller's mind' and let fans experience his thoughts and visions. After the animations played, fans additionally had access to the show's trailer and interactive Tumblr website, which included an evaluation quiz to find out if they were a mutant, too.



Copyright: FX Networks, LLC.

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Unique Outdoor Experience

The murals, which were impressive promotional artworks on their own and also worked for app-free passersby, demonstrated how simple yet effective AR can be for marketers and fans. The campaign showed that marketing material like posters can now be more than simple advertising and immediately bring up more information.

UNIQUE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

While promotional campaigns that make use of mobile AR enable broadcasters to gain a wide reach, location-based AR experiences provide a great opportunity to create unique, one-time experiences that let fans dive deep into a show. Annual events like festivals or conventions offer such opportunities and broadcasters have begun seizing these.

SESSIONS - THE LEGION MIXED REALITY EXPERIENCE (FX)

At this year's San Diego Comic-Con, fans of FX's "Legion" were then able to further step into the fragmented mind of lead character David Haller with the mixed reality HoloLens experience 'Sessions:



Copyright: FX Networks, LLC.

The Legion Mixed Reality Experience'. The 10-minute piece was created by immersive studio Here Be Dragons and let users experience scenes from the series' first and second season. On the show, David Haller is diagnosed as schizophrenic but soon discovers that he actually has telekinetic and telepathic abilities. With the AR experience, fans were able to get a glimpse of how David Haller lives. The installation was set up like a hospital and visitors received a medical band upon entering. They were greeted by actors in lab coats and first had to face an interrogation that included questions about whether they remember where or who they are. Afterwards, visitors got a HoloLens headset put on their head and were escorted into a tiny office. While another actor dressed as a doctor started another interrogation, the AR experience began and users started seeing glowing holograms all over the room. A training session then began and users were asked to move the AR objects around the room. After a while, voices known from the show were added to the HoloLens experience, giving users special instructions. Similar to some experiences David Haller faces on the show, users were soon unable to distinguish between the instructions given within the AR experience and the ones given by the live actors. The experience recreated the sense of chaos and confusion as seen on the show.

The mixed reality experience was the first exposure to the technology for many fans and demonstrated that AR can transport viewers to other worlds just as well as VR, especially when live actors are thrown in the mix.

About VAST MEDIA:

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