

The New 'Tech' Market Is Offering Exceptional Experiences To Customers

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It is very important for companies to utilize the upcoming technology in brands for customer satisfaction to stick out in the forefront of a highly competitive marketing scenario.

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The need of marketing brands to provide more real-time, hassle-free and palatable experiences to customers has been emerging along with the rapid advancement of technologies.

Considering the rising customer-driven need to save time, avoid travel, access to fast and convenient methods of acquiring goods and services, the marketers these days are binging on latest and unique technologies in order to gain a competitive edge in a rapidly upgrading scenario. In the last few years, this strategy has led such brands provide not only more interactive environment for customers but also highly efficient solutions for using the products, hence a massive upswing of sales. Here are a few examples:

1) Virtual Assistants: These mobile-embedded devices have exploited the capability of AI to become conversant with the customer's needs and provide the desired services. They have the capability of doing everything from voice interactions, play audio books, reminding important appointments and providing real-time information to controlling smart devices as a home automation system.

Using automatic speech recognition and natural language understanding feature of this cloud based service, companies are enabling their customers to interact in their voice with any content, services, devices. For example, Amazon's Alexa Presentation Language makes it possible to combine voice with images, audio and video streaming, and touch control to deliver complete, intuitive, and engaging experiences across a wide range of device types. Apple's Siri, Google Assistant and Microsoft's Cortana are the other leading examples in the pack of next-generation digital personal assistants.

Inspired by the growing demand amongst the customers for such auto-adaptive devices, the automobile company, BMW has integrated with Amazon Alexa in launching personal voice assistant for cars in March 2019. This automotive equivalent to Amazon's Alexa enables you to control all of the standard in-car features by voice such as rolling down the window or changing the temperature in the cabin without taking your hands off the wheel of the car. It also checks tire pressure, oil level and other engine settings.

Using machine learning, the smart assistant not only takes care of your preferred settings but is also capable of learning more about you, so as to have a casual conversation with you, change the ambience of your car and give suggestions for restaurants, movie, songs and amenities on the basis of your mood!

2) VR in Shopping: Dubious changing rooms, lack of information and influence of pushy salesmen remained to be persistent hitches in shopping until the introduction of VR (Virtual Reality) in shopping malls to give a far more convenient and informative medium for customers. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) is going to bring a scenario nobody could ever visualize. Once the retail slabs are connected on IoT, it is easy to show the details of every piece of cloth in a visual image that can be seen with VR glasses or mobile screen. Further, this visual image can be projected as new outfit on the person's image. Imagine, with one click on the mobile screen, the virtual world would show you in the chosen outfit of your size, further giving the option for changing the colors and size.

This means no need to carry armloads of clothing into the trial room, tolerate the jargon of sales people and peruse endless aisles of goods only to end up with nothing relatable! Imagine someone who wears AR (Augmented Reality) glasses passing through a shopping aisle gets an alert that he has passed something he recently viewed online or what if you could get product reviews and details if you spend unusually long time looking at an object in the store.

Once such technology started fulfilling the functional requirement of clothing retailers, the brands which trade in home interior, furniture, decoration, accessories have now started to install the VR/AR devices which scan everything and allow the customers to fiddle with as many options they want before making a decision.

'Happy Goggles' launched by the iconic fast-food chain McDonald's, Sweden and Shanghai Roastery by Starbucks using Alibaba's VR are some of the leading setups. IKEA is one of the first retail companies to launch a VR Platform on its website which can help one in remodeling the kitchen, home makeovers and even playing around with VR. The user can interact with

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objects just like you were there, scan the contents of the drawers and find the ones that can be opened, pick up a frying pan, place it on the stove and cook anything picked from the recipe book, recycle the vegetable waste in the waste sorting station, etc. If you want to change the home interior, scan the area using the mobile screen or AR tab and the 3-D projection of the home shall appear. Now the colors of the visual walls or the furniture can change in one click on the screen, giving the realistic depiction of every modification you want to make.

3) Virtual Hiking Trail: Imagine sitting in a VR lab in your local city from where you could fully experience the walk over rickety bridges, climbing the hills and explore the valleys of your preferred destination without any need of booking calendar dates, spending in travel tickets, packing bags and risking your life for daredevil adventures! What if such experience becomes few clicks away with no compromise on the realism?

Merging the Combining the effect of virtual reality headset called Oculus Rift and motion capture technology, tourism brands have come up with the idea of immersive VR hiking simulator which is a new playground for tourists and adventure lovers. The first commercial product was launched by outdoor apparel brand Merrell and its advertising agency, Hill Holliday which teamed with Framestore's new VR. The outcome was named 'Trailscape', the first ever walk-around commercial VR System.

Trailscape combines the Rift's highly immersive display with OptiTrack's 3D tracking technology to map users' physical movements to their position and perspective within the virtual environment. The launch which took place in 2015 Sundance Film Festival in Utah, changed the conventional idea of tourism by creating an artificial installation for the users, giving them the thrills and potential risks of a high altitude hike. As they moved in the simulated environment, they could fully experience the walk over rickety bridges, climbing the hills, explore valleys and overcome obstacles.

4) Visual storytelling: The ease of use of VR technology has transformed the storytelling experience for the YouTube viewers who become part of an environment with an incentive to act and respond to the events they encounter. National Geographic, for instance has used natural sound and contextual display to walk users through the wild habitats of Okavango River Basin, which stretches from southern Angola, through a narrow strip of Namibia, and into the delta of Botswana which is a home to savanna elephants. In the 360-degree videos designed in collaboration with you-tube, one can walk through the forest wilderness and get very up close and personal with its most iconic creatures.

With visual storytelling, customers have begun to find themselves at the ground reality of things attributed to different places and conditions. This real-time approach is slowly propagating the education sector to help students visualize rather than react

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Conclusion

No matter what business the brands are doing in the present, the shifting patterns in technology are going to create higher customer expectations. Hence, the brands are adopting to the new technology aligned business objectives failing which they may need to pay a big price in the future. These emerging technologies offer immersive experiences to customers and the organizations who are agile to adopt them would get an advantage over the one's who are slow to adopt, eventually leading to survival over extinction.

Students, faculty, artists, and filmmakers, both in and outside higher education, are experimenting with new solutions.

Failure is part of the learning process for immersive storytelling, as is bold experimentation. Storytelling does not embrace a new medium overnight; the conventions and structures develop incrementally through an ongoing conversation with cultures looking for new ways to understand themselves. Higher education can provide the space for this creative process.

As we move into this new era of immersive storytelling, it will impact a wide range of disciplines. These projects demonstrate the need for an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together subject experts, engineers, artists, and media specialists. In the end, it's not just about continuing the long tradition of storytelling but about giving our students the skills they need to tell their own stories and solve the pressing problems of the future.

Regardless of how businesses implement this technology, they should do it now. There are small ways to dip a toe into this ever-expanding pool, and doing so at the beginning will make for a more seamless transition. The transition for both consumer and retailer will be important, if online shopping has taught us anything.

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