

Why brands can dive deeper into augmented reality in 2017

By [Etienne de Villiers](#)

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In 2016, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) stepped directly into mainstream consciousness, with both businesses and consumers alike putting their money behind new devices and applications.



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For businesses in particular, augmented and mixed reality applications became more tangible and commercially viable, paving the way for increased investment in a fast moving sphere. Leading investment bank, Goldman Sachs, has predicted that the augmented and virtual reality industry will be worth a whopping \$80 billion by 2025.

"...as the technology advances, price points decline, and an entire new marketplace of applications (both business and consumer) hit the market, we believe VR/AR has the potential to spawn a multibillion-dollar industry, and possibly be as game changing as the advent of the PC," the bank's analysts noted.

In South Africa, rapid smartphone penetration is making AR and VR applications far more viable for brands and businesses looking to leverage its capabilities. Armed with the massive computing power that every smartphone now possesses, consumers can delve into and fully immerse themselves in compelling AR experiences. For savvy brands, the technology offers a unique way to bridge the divide between physical and digital worlds, provided there is a worthy reason for linking the two...

Hardware makers to spur adoption

Looking ahead, developers in the virtual and augmented reality realm are anticipating major smartphone makers such as Apple to throw their considerable weight behind new AR capabilities. Already, [Business Insider has reported](#) that Apple has a team of people working on integrating AR functionality into the iPhone's camera app. The publication noted that Apple's goal is for consumers to be able to 'point the phone at a real-world object and have that object be recognised'.

"Recent rumours have suggested Apple's ultimate augmented reality ambition may be a set of smart glasses, which would connect wirelessly to the iPhone and display "images and other information" to the wearer," reported the popular Mac Rumors site.

A more 'in-depth' experience

In 2017, the planned introduction of depth-sensing camera technology into more smartphones and mobile devices will extend the possibilities for developers looking to create ever more immersive AR and VR experiences.

Take, for example, indoor navigation. If your smartphone has the ability to sense the local context and map out your immediate environment (using depth-sensing cameras), an AR application could potentially lay virtual pathways or displays to direct you in a mall – or even in an airport. This same depth-sensing capability – within a specific context or location – can be harnessed for countless other applications, such as interior design.

First movers stand to win

For prescient South African brands and businesses, AR and VR applications present a unique way in which to reach their consumers through targeted and relevant activations. The key is always to have a compelling brand reason for linking the physical and the digital realms. But for brands that can get it right, the first mover advantage will pay dividends in terms of brand building and consumer awareness. As with any digital activation, savvy brands will incorporate social media into any new AR or VR app, given that online users are always eager to share their experiences and engage with their networks online.

With new and innovative AR capabilities on the horizon, local businesses and brands have an opportune moment to get a head start on what promises to be a transformative computing technology.

ABOUT ETIENNE DE VILLIERS

Etienne de Villiers is the lead programmer at Fuzzy Logic. Etienne has been creating interactive experiences for over 15 years and has worked at some of the top multimedia and game development companies in South Africa and the UK. As the lead programmer at Fuzzy Logic, he has helped grow the company from small beginnings five years ago to one of the leading mobile development companies in SA. He has a passion for technology that helps people connect with the real world.

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