

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

These industries are leveraging the power of VR to deliver a better experience

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When products like the Oculus Rift and HTC Vive hit the shelves four years ago, it seemed that virtual reality was at last hitting the mainstream. That's not quite proved to be the case, at least from a gaming perspective. Even with the affordable VR functionality of today's top smartphones, the phenomenon has not caught on the way we expected, and it remains a niche area.

Although we are not spending all of our leisure time on the equivalent of the *Star Trek* holodeck, VR nevertheless provides businesses with a unique opportunity to provide customers and potential customers with an enhanced experience. This is all the more pertinent given the unprecedented challenges that 2020 has presented. Here, we take a look at five very different industries and how they are quietly contributing to the VR revolution.

Indulging in the Arts

Over recent months, galleries have hurried to find ways to engage with visitors in cyberspace due to lockdown and social distancing restrictions across the globe. Of course, VR presents possibilities here, with virtual exhibitions and the like.

However, VR technology's use within the arts runs far deeper. Some are actually creating works of art in virtual reality, using tools like the Tilt Brush from Google. These result in multi-dimensional creations that you can explore and interact with from every angle. The [Synthesis Gallery](#) in Berlin contains some great examples.

Casino nights

A few months ago, the sight of Las Vegas in lockdown brought home just how serious the global situation had become. In fact, it had the eerie look of a scene from some post-apocalyptic movie. Of course, there are already plenty of online alternatives available for those who simply want to try their luck on the slots or at the blackjack table. The downside has always been that these cannot replicate the experience of being in a real casino.

In the highly competitive iGaming sector, providers are constantly seeking ways to tempt new members through their virtual doors by making their casino games more immersive. The most popular way of doing so is through live dealer casino gaming. If you've never tried it, you can [read more information here](#) on how it works. In brief, though, a live table connects the player with a real human dealer or croupier who turns the cards, spins the wheel or rolls the dice via webcam. This

makes the game a more interesting and realistic experience than simply watching cards flash up on a screen. The player can also interact with the dealer via a chat window, just as you might exchange a joke or two with the dealer at a table in Vegas.

The possibilities that virtual reality present here are plain to see, and VR casinos are certain to be the next major trend in the sector. From walking into the virtual foyer to sitting and watching the cards turn or the roulette wheel spin, the effects are relatively simple compared with some of the VR games being developed. Yet the result is to further close the gap between visiting a real casino and one in cyberspace.

Some retail therapy

There are parallels between those casinos and the retail business. Shopping, like gambling, has gone online to a large extent, but does not necessarily provide such an enjoyable experience. There are also far more returns when items are purchased online, as there is only so much information to be gleaned from reading a description and viewing photographs on a screen.

Some industry experts predict that the age of e-commerce is [soon to be superseded](#) by what is being termed v-commerce. Lowes, North Face and Alibaba are three examples of retailers who have incorporated VR into their marketing strategies, building virtual stores where customers can browse the shelves, then check out using the conventional ecommerce apps.

The technology is still at a developmental stage, but the possibilities are endless. Even major supermarkets and retail chains like Tesco and Ikea are also exploring VR tours for their customers.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of V-commerce in action, however, comes from US optician America's Best. They pioneered the [virtual try on](#) concept way back in 2012. The shopper uploads an image of his or her face and can then try on different frames. Of course, eight years ago, this was a fun but somewhat clunky piece of technology. But it is one that VR is now taking to the next level.

Viewing the home of your dreams

The real estate market is one that faced unique challenges over the past few months. After all, setting up distance markers and sanitizing stations in a store or leisure facility is one thing. Ensuring government guidelines are followed when escorting people around somebody else's house is another matter entirely.

Video tours have been an obvious alternative, and many agents have been providing them for years. Yet these are really only a small step above viewing a selection of photographs. VR, however, places the viewer within a virtual model of the home, allowing him or her to explore at leisure and to form that all-important emotional attachment with the property. For example, it provides an opportunity to really appreciate the size of the rooms, the quality of wood finishes and so on.

An even more exciting application of the technology is with new builds. With VR, a prospective homeowner can walk around a property that does not even exist yet. For custom builds, it means they can consult with the architect and design team on creating what is, quite literally, the house of their dreams.

See the world without leaving your living room

How many of us have had travel plans ruined this year? With flights delayed or cancelled, and more rules than ever to follow if you do manage to get on board, cyberspace seems like a highly compelling destination.

360 VR tourism uses real images as opposed to a computer-generated model, which are captured using conventional cameras. It then effectively places the tourist in the shoes of the person taking the video. The concept is primarily designed as a marketing tool to give prospective visitors a taste of what they will experience. However, much like those casinos mentioned earlier, many are adopting virtual travel as a realistic alternative to the real thing, especially under the current conditions.

And many more

These are just five examples of industries that are leveraging the power of VR to deliver a better customer experience. Others such as education, medicine and engineering are taking similar strides. The VR revolution could be closer than we think.

Photo by [stephan sorkin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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