Stepping into the screen

WinWin: How will mixed realities change the advertising equation?

Jez Jowett: I think the big opportunity that we will see for advertising and media agencies will be the opportunity to move from creating impressions on behalf of our clients to creating expressions, and the opportunity for us to create a lot more intimate relationships on behalf of our brands. Traditionally, consumers have a tendency to sort of lean back from a screen, and the opportunity now is to literally step into that screen. If you are walking along and you see these beautiful 4K television sets on display in shop windows, imagine the ability to step into that experience. That enables us to create a more meaningful relationship with the consumer, because you are fully immersed in that experience. Once we enable a consumer to step into the world of a brand, step into the DNA of what the brand is about, it becomes more powerful. The more powerful it is, the more impressionable it is, and the more shareable it is.

A tight window

WinWin: What sorts of advertising opportunities do you see as emerging for AR?

Jowett: With augmented reality (AR), the opportunities that we are currently developing & prototyping will be enabling us to put a layer on top of the real-life situation. That would be geo-location, advertising spots. They will be time-sensitive spots. They will be personalized spots based on where you are. We have been developing these ad formats for a while, and we are looking at how to do them in a richer and more immersive format.

If I’m honest with you, that’s not where we as advertisers are focusing our efforts right now. If you see the latest augmented reality devices, the window that you see through, the area that gets augmented, is really small. We can often be misled by these beautiful social media videos which get created, which enable you to think that the whole environment will become augmented. The reality is not there at the moment. Until the technology evolves and the viewing...
A very broad canvas

VR is very similar to what online video did to the media landscape about 15 years ago. Many of the formats and opportunities we’re looking at with virtual reality will tend to follow similar formats to online video. So, we’ll see YouTube. We’ll see pre-rolls. We’ll see post-rolls. We’ll see product placements. We’ll see interactive hotspots. We’ll see all of those traditional online video formats being used within VR. And, of course, there will be a whole new range of formats that we have yet to explore, and so we won’t know what they will be.

One of the things to bear in mind is that when we talk about virtual reality, there’s two sides of virtual reality. There’s the opportunity for you to step inside a world that is computer-generated, which is very much a gaming-led opportunity. But there’s another side and it’s that side that we as advertisers are focusing upon, and that’s the opportunity to step into a 360-degree cinematic experience with real video footage.

WinWin: What sorts of advertising opportunities exist for VR?

Jowett: VR is very similar to what online video did to the media landscape about 15 years ago. Many of the formats and opportunities we’re looking at with virtual reality will tend to follow similar

WinWin: What VR opportunities is your company exploring?

Jowett: There are two formats that we’re exploring right now. One is how, being the largest platform for video
content that exists, will YouTube be exploring advertising opportunities? So if we could consider the pre-roll opportunity, there will be pre-rolls which will be VR. So, before I access the content and before I click through to watch that beautiful virtual reality content, an advertiser might take me through to that content. So, a pre-roll might enable me to actually step into a car. I might actually have to step into an Audi car to travel to my content. And we’ll be able to do that through virtual reality.

There will also be the opportunity for us to embed products within the virtual environment. We’ll see 360-degree product placement, and we’ll see 360-degree brand placements as well within those environments. The other interesting thing for us as advertisers and marketers is that with this emergence of this 360-degree world, consumers and brands will need to access content through 360-degree websites. The websites we know currently, which are very flat and very two-dimensional, will become 360 degrees. So brands will need to start exploring how they will create a website which is all around me, because the last thing that I want to do is to step into a 360-degree environment and watch a traditional 2D advert or website.

WinWin: What concrete moves towards virtual media have happened recently?

Jowett: Big moves that we’ve seen towards VR this year have been all the key manufacturers and all the key technology partners announcing that they are developing their own virtual reality devices. In addition, we’ve seen the likes of YouTube announce the launch of the first-ever 360-degree version of their platform. That means I can now go to YouTube and use one of my devices and now start to actually view content through that VR device. So, we’ve seen the manufacturers make their announcements. We’ve seen the products in development, and that will obviously start hitting the marketplace within the next six months, and certainly across next year. We’ve seen the platforms where people will go to view the content now making their platforms enabled to produce & stream VR content. We’ve seen YouTube do that. We’ve also started to see all the other manufacturers. So I can now, for example, go through to Firefox or Safari. I can now start
Getting a second life

WinWin: What other immersive opportunities are you looking at?
Jowett: We are exploring at the moment how we can genuinely start to produce the world’s first truly immersive advertising platform. How can we produce a solution so that publishers and content producers can actually benefit from this new world, and what will those formats be? It could be, for example, that we create branded pop-up shops in 360 degrees, so that when I’m in an environment, I’m in a piece of content, I can choose to step into a Lacoste shop. I can choose to step into that shop and buy virtual products and I can step into that shop and buy products virtually which appear in my real life. I think many of us who have been passionate about virtual reality for the last 15 years were very active in Second Life, and Second Life created its own economy for advertisers and brands, and we’ll see the exact same opportunities exist in the next generation of virtual reality.

Ready for takeoff

WinWin: Do you see mixed realities ubiquitizing to the level of smartphones today?
Jowett: By 2018, the prediction is that there will be 500 million active users of virtual reality. And to put that into context, VR will scale six times faster than the iPhone.

By 2018, the prediction is that there will be 500 million active users of virtual reality. And to put that into context, VR will scale six times faster than the iPhone.

By 2018, the prediction is that there will be 500 million active users of virtual reality. And to put that into context, VR will scale six times faster than the iPhone.

Jowett: By 2018, the prediction is that there will be 500 million active users of virtual reality. And to put that into context, VR will scale six times faster than the iPhone.

...