



# 360° of User Engagement

According to Jez Jowett, Global Head of Creative Technologies at Havas Media, immersive technologies represent both a broader canvas for brand messaging and a more intimate means for customer relations. Is your company ready to engage users from literally any angle? Read on.

By Jason Patterson



## 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. I think we often talk about storytelling; that's been one of the big buzzwords in advertising over the last three-to-four years. And we see the opportunity with virtual reality (VR) and also augmented reality (AR) to not just

bring storytelling to life, but to actually enable consumers to actually live the story as well. So, we see the opportunity to move from storytelling to "story-living."

And at the heart of this is the technology, which enables us to create that really intimate opportunity for the consumers. We've never had the opportunity to have such an intimate and unique relationship with the consumer – the ability to create a brand experience that is literally wrapped around your face. 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



### About Jez Jowett

Jez Jowett is Global Head of Creative Technologies at Havas Media. In his words, “My role is to identify the latest innovations related to technologies and use those in a meaningful way to create a more intimate connection between consumers and brands.” To date, Jez has produced more than 500 campaigns, with digital & disruption at their core, and has generated more than two billion “earned media” views.

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window becomes more encompassing, there's a lot of work to be done by the technology and device manufacturers.

So that's why we're focusing on virtual reality, because VR does present a real opportunity for us at the moment, and that's where we are exploring. We're exploring immersive advertising – how we can create brand opportunities within existing content and create brand opportunities which take you on a journey through that immersive experience.

## A very broad canvas

### **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

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.

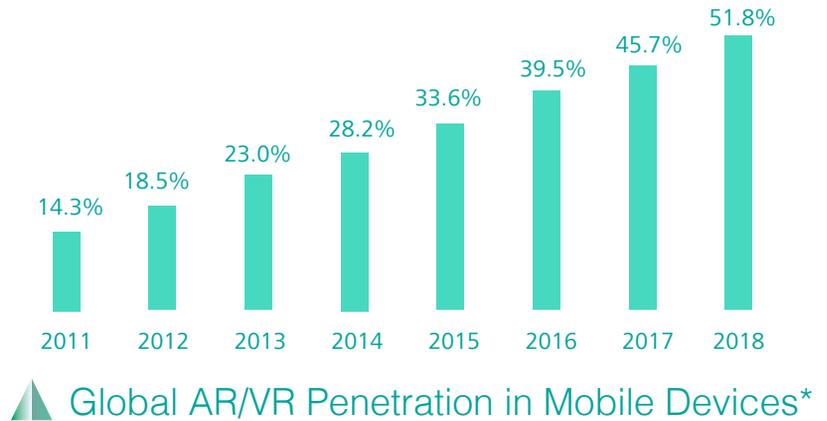
One of the things to bear in mind is that when we talk about virtual reality, there's two sides of virtual reality. There's the opportunity for you to step inside a world that is computer-generated, which is very much a gaming-led opportunity. But there's another side and it's that side that we as advertisers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

### **WinWin: What 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



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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.

## The pieces await a gameboard

**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

to view VR content through their browsers. So, browsers will be able to stream or serve specific virtual reality content, whether it be CGI content or 360-degree content. So, the technology is there. The platforms are there. The content is now there, and that's the other big thing as well.

All the big content producers and all the big independent content communities are starting to make their own content. If I want to make my own VR content, many of these platforms and publishers will actually provide me with a kit, free of charge, for me to then go and make my own content. So there is a rush on for people to make content because the platforms are there. The only thing that isn't there yet is the actual physical devices. But a point to bear in mind is that the operating system and the device which will enable a majority of mainstream audiences around the world to engage and watch VR content already exists, and it exists in their pocket – a smartphone. One of the big, big opportunities that we see in the future will be the enjoyment of the virtual reality web via mobile device.

## 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

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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 ubiquitousizing 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. So if we consider the penetration that the iPhone has made upon us, and if we consider that virtual reality will do exactly the same but six times faster, that puts into context what will happen. The device exists in our pocket already. The mobile VR web will be a huge area for us because it's very accessible. I can access the content by simply slipping the phone into a Google Cardboard-type device.

Will my grandmother or mother walk around wearing headsets? No, they won't. But I'm sure that when we

gather as a family, on occasion, they will put on the headsets, because I'll be showing them the christening that they didn't get a chance to go to. I'll take them around the school that their granddaughter is going to. We see VR being relevant for all audiences. It's not going to be massively adopted by the older generation, but we certainly see an interest from that audience in experiencing the same things that their teens and families are. So, I can share what I'm doing with my grandmother. I can share where I've just been.

That's one of the reasons why Facebook made their large investment in Oculus. And they said it very, very clearly. Facebook was started because, in the old days, they wanted people to be able to share their experiences. And we share our experiences through Facebook by simple text or by an image or video. And the future will be that people will share a 360-degree experience. So, I won't just share my picture. I'll actually share the experience that I had, and I'll enable you to step into that experience as well. And in the future we'll see real-time sharing of experiences in virtual reality, and we've already seen technology partners looking at it.

And it's not just a visual opportunity. Virtual reality is very much seen as a head-mounted display in which you have wraparound content. Increasingly we're seeing the opportunity for sound and smell and touch and taste to be part of this in the consumer or brand story. It creates something really different from what we traditionally have. And for our brands and advertisers, that is a really, really exciting area because it creates a really emotional connection for consumers, which traditional 2D experience fails to do. It creates a 360-degree impact. And if we can impact the consumer in a more emotional way, then it's a more memorable experience. And if it's a more memorable experience, then consumers are more likely to care and more likely to share." 

