

THE FUTURE 100

TRENDS AND CHANGE TO WATCH IN 2017

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Augmented reality evolves

In January 2016, the BBC heralded the new year as the one where “VR goes from virtual to reality.” But it’s another technology, often discussed in the same breath, that has truly gone viral: the surprise success of Pokémon Go has put augmented reality (AR) in the pockets of millions.

Apple is rumored to be planning a major AR push. The company’s new iPhone 7 Plus has two cameras, which would allow the device to intelligently sense depth and vastly improve its capacity for AR applications. Without announcing specific plans, CEO Tim Cook gushed about AR in a July earnings call: “We are high on AR for the long run, we think there’s great things for customers and a great commercial opportunity.” Meanwhile, Alibaba created a location-based AR mobile game to promote its Singles’ Day shopping event.

“The geolocative technology has been around since 2010, but people haven’t really found a use case for it until Pokémon Go,” says new-media artist Tamiko Thiel. “The question is, what will they find that really makes use of it?”

Brands are trying to use AR to enhance online commerce. For 2016’s September London Fashion Week, online retail platform Lyst created “Humannequins,” a window installation featuring scantily clad models who could be “clothed” with the help of an AR app.

Why it’s interesting: AR is more accessible than VR and offers a less totalizing sensory experience. By definition, it blends with the real world. Now that consumers have a sense of what it’s like, brands can explore new ways to use AR at scale in retail and beyond.

