

# INNOVATION IN MAGAZINE MEDIA 2016-2017 WORLD REPORT

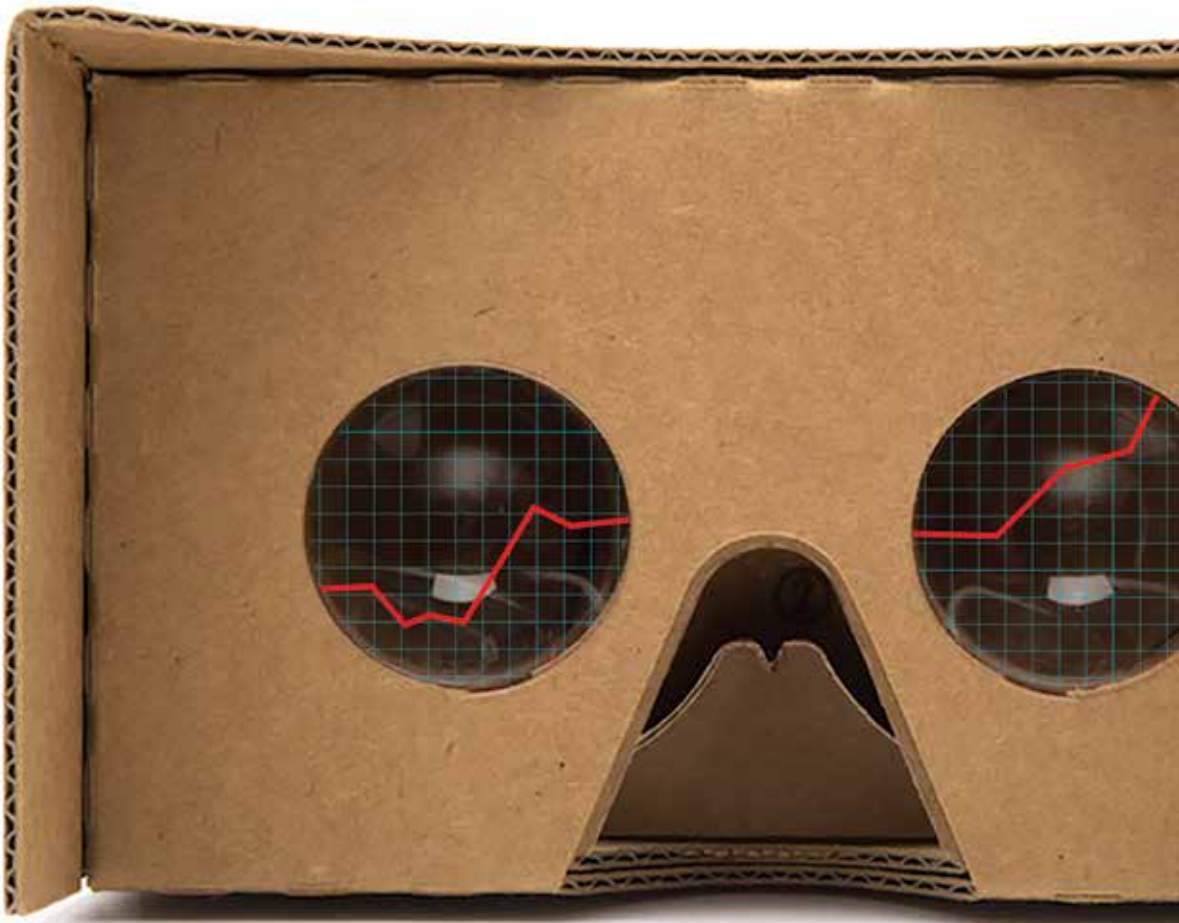
A SURVEY BY INNOVATION MEDIA CONSULTING  
FOR FIPP – THE NETWORK FOR GLOBAL MEDIA

**JUAN SEÑOR**  
**JOHN WILPERS**  
**JUAN ANTONIO GINER**  
EDITORS



# How to spot (and profit from) a trend

It could be as simple as just taking a step back  
and watching what's going on right under your nose



## A

ll of the chapters you have read before this one focused on “how to”: How to fight ad blockers, how to produce cost-efficient video, how to create mobile-first content, how to use data wisely, how to maximise distributed content, how to create a micro-payment system, etc.

We can pretty much guarantee that all those how to instructions will work.

Not this next one: Trend spotting.

How do you hitch your wagon to the next big thing and make a zillion bucks?

Greater minds than ours have tried, and their track record is, well, spotty.

In our industry, magazine closures over the last seven years have gone from twice the number of launches to half. That’s a good sign, but there are still too many “sure things” for magazine investors that have gone bust.

In consumer goods, the graveyard of “Next Big Things” is populated by some pretty impressive companies and some pretty memorable flops – the Apple Newton PDA, Google Glass, Betamax, New Coke. There have been other less well known “locks” that attracted a ton of investment that now seem silly in retrospect – Bic Disposable Underwear, Harley Davidson Perfume, Cheetos Lip Balm, Cosmo Yogurt.

So what’s a publisher to do to get ahead of the next big trend?

At the risk of having these suggestions come back to haunt us (my father always said never put advice on paper), here are two “can’t miss” things that might be worth a side bet, or bigger.

Monitor trending hashtags. Pay attention to what your younger staffers are wearing, talking about, doing in their spare time (if you allow spare time). Attend the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. Watch for start-ups in your niche (if there are a bunch in one field, you may be on to something). Keep an eye on consumer goods’ sales figures. Go to the mall but don’t shop, just find a bench and watch people go by. Don’t talk about yourself at cocktail parties; ask other attendees what they’ve been doing and enjoying lately.

We could go on, but you get the idea. Open your eyes and ears to something other than the crisis of the moment at work.

One of the trends you would have noticed lately if you’d had your ear to the ground is virtual reality (VR).

Google’s virtual reality viewer, a cardboard box with some lenses and a magnet, was introduced as a gift at last year’s I/O conference.

Credit Peter Earl McCollough for The New York Times



## How to choose a VR headset

From cardboard to futuristic tech, and from US\$14 to US\$3,000, virtual reality is reachable

If we're going to be creating all this fantastic VR content, we need to know how our audiences will be experiencing it. Unlike most new technologies, there are actually some low-cost versions (Google's Cardboard at US\$24.99 fits in almost anyone's budget). But you can also go high-end, spending up to US\$6,000 for Microsoft HoloLens. What's the best VR headset for the best VR experience? The variety of VR cameras pales in comparison to the number of VR headsets consumers can choose from to enjoy a VR experience. Here are some options:

### 1 Google Cardboard

PRICE: US\$24.99 from Google's website



**Pros:** For cutting-edge technology, it doesn't get more accessible than this. While Google's product might seem more disposable than dependable, the real selling point here is accessibility. This product costs virtually nothing to make, and allows huge numbers of consumers to experience virtual reality with nothing more than their smart phones. Plus, Google Cardboard offers customisation, easy replacement, and appealing novelty while still remaining a pretty decent virtual reality viewing experience. Certainly proving to be more than the sum of its parts, this little box is propelling VR technology into the digital mainstream.

**Cons:** A downside to many low-cost gadgets is often comfort, and Google Cardboard is no exception. If you intend to watch a two-hour documentary, Cardboard might not be the easiest vehicle, especially because you have to hold it with your hands as it does not come with a headband. Bespectacled users have complained of problems using the device. Other users have criticised the limited field of vision which obstructs the corners of the smartphone screen. But, hey, it's only US\$25!

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## The not-so-new new "thing"

Yeah, we know virtual reality has been around for a while – under-delivering since 1968, believe it or not! But with the early 2016 launch of the Oculus Rift (purchased by Facebook for US\$2bn in 2014), VR's time might have finally arrived for publishers.

It appears to be a great consumer product at a price that's not totally out of reach for early adopters (still high at US\$599), and it offers an environment that might be gangbusters for advertisers.

There are cheaper VR devices out there: Samsung Gear VR (US\$199) and Google Cardboard (US\$24.99 including shipping or as low as US\$5 on Amazon). But as one reviewer delicately put his review of Google Cardboard: "It kinda sucks".

Critics can sniff, but the *New York Times* distributed 1.31 million Google Cardboard devices to home subscribers in November 2015 to use to watch a VR video of the life of three refugee children. It quickly became the NYT's most successful app launch ever and delivered proof of concept, according to the company.

"Given that the average time spent within the NYT VR app is close to 15 minutes – an unheard of metric for digital media – it is clear that this experience resonated with viewers," NYT Magazine SVP/advertising and publisher Andy Wright told *The Media Briefing*.

The 10-minute video followed three refugee children in a camp in Lebanon. Viewers walked with them through fields, sat with them amidst rubble, and ran with them in a mad, chaotic dash to grab aid packages dropped from a plane while other desperate refugees ran past them in a panic.

The brilliant video aside, the real brilliance was to put more than a million free entry-level VR devices into the hands of more than a million people. "People understood the concept, were intrigued and excited by it, tried it out and enjoyed it enough that they kept it in their homes," NYT CEO Mark Thompson told Beet.tv.

"We hope people see this as the moment when VR went mainstream," New York Times Magazine editor Jake Silverstein told *The Media Briefing*. "Not when early-adopters, gamers, people who already know got it, but



when those without exposure to it realised what this new medium can do.”

Officials from The Times also pointed out that the project was sponsored by GE and vehicle manufacturer Mini, whose branded content was part of the app experience.

The NYT also used VR to take viewers through the streets of Paris after the November terrorist attacks, and released a short VR film in December called “Take Flight” that took viewers through the night sky.

Other media companies pushing VR include Discovery (creating weekly VR content for its VR app), the Associated Press (created its first VR video in November 2015, “Seeking Home: Life Inside the Calais Migrant Camp”, a story about the largest migrant camp in Northern France), and *The Wall Street Journal* (its first VR video, also in November, was about an American Ballet Theatre principal dancer).

Called the “Godmother of VR”, Emblematic Group CEO Nonny de la Peña has produced some of the best VR work to date, including “Project Syria” (viewers live through a recreated terrorist attack in Aleppo), “Hunger in Los Angeles” (recreating a dramatic medical



Ben C. Solomon (left) and Imraan Ismail preparing to film in the wreckage of Oleg Teryokhin's school in eastern Ukraine. Credit Garry Curtis



Ismail and Solomon hiding as the cameras record Oleg and his friends. Credit Garry Curtis



On 8 November 2015, around one million Google Cardboard viewers arrived with The New York Times' Sunday edition on doorsteps across America. “This piece of cardboard will take you halfway around the world,” read the bright blue bag containing the newspaper and accompanying DIY virtual reality (VR) viewer.

## How to Choose a VR headset

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### 2 Homido Mini VR Glasses

PRICE: US\$14.99



**Pros:** The Homido Mini VR Glasses are not only more comfortable than Google Cardboard, they also offer a far greater field of vision. A smartphone compatible headset, it is far more discreet than its competitors, allowing you to slip it into your jacket pocket or bag, and experience VR viewing in public without looking like you've wandered out of an arcade.

**Cons:** These VR specs were created as more of a smartphone accessory than a piece of cutting edge VR technology, but that is reflected in the price point. The biggest criticism seems to be that it is not hands free, which may be a deal-breaker at the price, but it's good to know and to take into consideration depending on what a consumer intends to do with it.

### 3 Samsung Gear VR

PRICE: \$99.99



**Pros:** At four times the Cardboard price, the Samsung Gear VR not surprisingly offers a much higher quality mobile-phone-based VR experience. Additionally, there is a trackpad built into the headset, as well as volume and "back" control buttons. For the bespectacled crowd, the headset is wide enough to fit comfortably over glasses.

**Cons:** Unfortunately for Apple aficionados, this device is only compatible with four Samsung Galaxy model phones, meaning none of the fun for iPhone users, or even Android users with different phone brands. For those with compatible devices, the selection of available apps is also rather limited, paling in comparison with the array of options for its competitor, Google Cardboard.

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emergency in a food line), and "Use of Force" (the recreation of the murder of a Mexican immigrant by US Border patrol agents). The popularity of the less-than-perfect quality of the graphics proved that viewers will tolerate below-Hollywood standards if the experience is engaging enough.

### Where to next?

"The challenge right now in VR and breaking news is sensationalism," *Economist* business development and innovation vice president Ron Diorio told *Digiday*. "Everything about VR is hype; the danger is in mistaking the hype for the story."

Hype or gold? Like any trend spotting situation, the answer comes down to three questions:

1. Is there, or will there soon be, a sufficiently large user base?
2. Can they be monetised?
3. What are the costs of production?

In the United States, the number of years before a quarter of the population adopts a new technology is fast decreasing, according to *The Economist* and [singularity.com](http://singularity.com). And the time it takes for a new technology to hit a user base of 50 million is also shrinking.

VR consultancy firm KZero is predicting there'll be more than 40 million active users of VR by 2016. Digi-Capital predicts the VR market will be worth \$30 billion in 2020. And Statista, being perhaps a bit irrationally exuberant, anticipates a global VR userbase of 171 million by 2018.

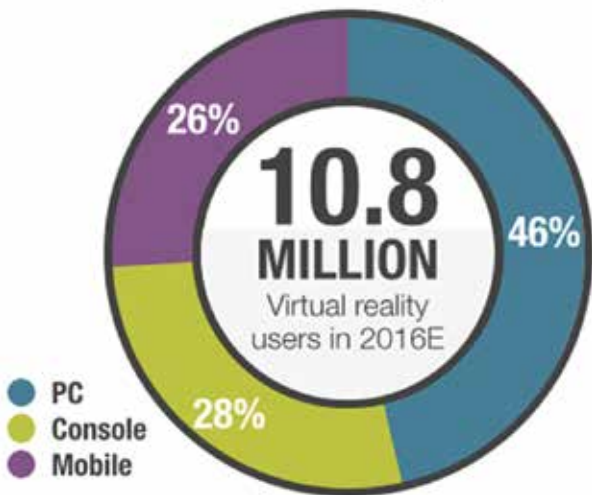
So if we have scale, if the market is big enough, can it be monetised?

Well, VR could be the right tool in the right place at the right time. As users, especially young consumers, are looking for more interactivity, as publishers seek a replacement for the failed display ad model, and as brands are looking for a way to engage consumers, along comes VR with its high-impact immersive experience.

As is often the case, the advertisers and brands are ahead of the publishers. British Columbia's tourism office, Destination B.C., has invested more than half a million US dollars in an Oculus VR video to attract tourists from around the world.

'You don't have to simply lean on telling

# Virtual reality will reach 11MM users by 2016E

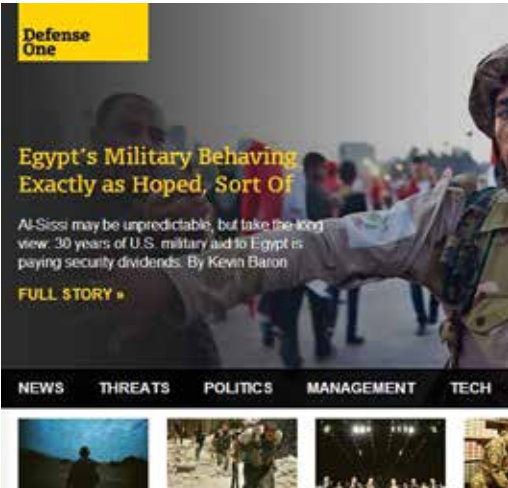


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consumers things like, 'The trees are this big.' That sense of being there is such a powerful tool," Destination B.C.'s Janice Greenwood-Fraser told AdWeek. "It brings it to life in a way that no photo or regular video can."

When Oculus offered agencies, brands, and vendors a developer kit back in 2014, more than 100,000 took them up on the offer, including Hearst's *Elle* (planning a VR live-stream of a fashion show).

"It's going into environments that the consumer heretofore never had access," Kevin O'Malley, senior vice president and publisher of *Elle*, told AdWeek. "That could be a tiki hut jutting over gentle waters in Polynesia, or it could be front row at a fashion show that they normally only see on TV, where they can see the celebrities who are there. It's quite another thing to be front row, and when you turn to your left you are sitting next to celebrity X, Y or Z.



Niches are hot, and so are magazines' niche pubs. Atlantic Media launched Defence One, targeting the defence industry.



Hearst's *Elle* used Oculus headsets like these to offer a VR live-stream of a fashion show



## How to Choose a VR headset

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### 4 Avegant Glyph

PRICE: \$599



**Pros:** At quintuple the price of the Samsung Gear VR, we're taking a quantum leap up in terms of both quality and comfort with the Avegant Glyph. (A "glyph, by the way, is a carved symbol or, in the Avegant case, an oh-too-clever name for a VR viewer). Reviewers rave about the Glyph, calling it a "personal theatre". Roughly the same size, shape, and weight as a pair of Beats Headphones, the Glyph is hands-free, micro-USB chargeable, featherweight (.4 kilograms), and boasts a four-hour battery life. Another aspect that charms tech-heads is the ability to connect to any and every HDMI-compatible device, giving users the ability to plug into anything from PC to gaming console to smart phone.

**Cons:** If you're looking for a strictly games-focused VR headset, this may not be your first choice. The Glyph has been marketed more as an "HMD" (head mounted device) with VR capabilities, than a strictly VR device. Consumers can watch 360-videos and have a "theatre" experience, but it's not a VR experience like the Rift or Gear.

### 5 Oculus Rift

PRICE: \$599



**Pros:** This little device has arguably the best reputation in the world of virtual reality. Considered to be one of the first big consumer-targeted VR products, Oculus shipped the third generation Rift model in March of 2016. Equipped with a positional tracking system called "Constellation", Rift headsets use infrared tracking sensors which track a user's every movement when wearing the device — expanding the potential for gaming interaction and movement. Each headset is shipped with a wireless Xbox One controller — a pretty heavy-handed (albeit smart) cross promotion.

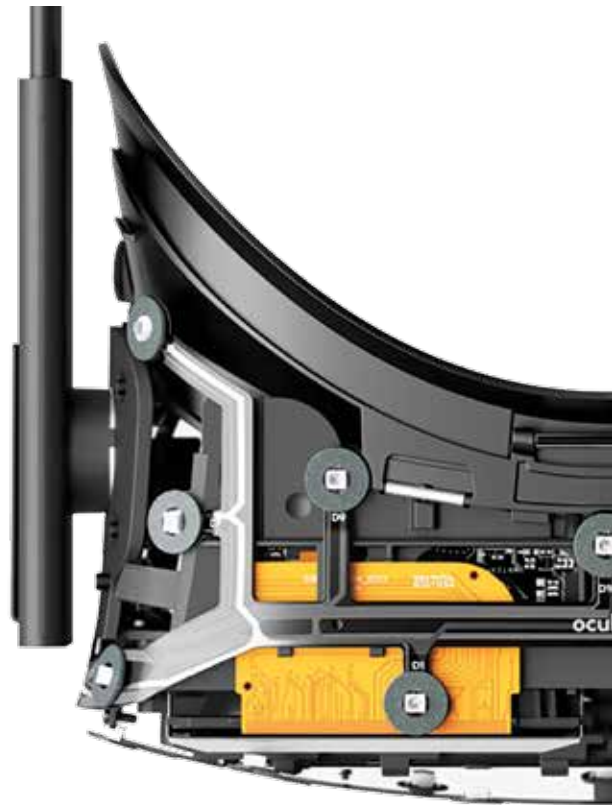
**Cons:** The drawback of this VR heavy hitter is that it is not a stand-alone device like the Glyph. The Oculus must be connected to a PC in order to operate. Also, the Rift is only compatible with Microsoft Windows operating systems.

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"We are moving quickly on this," O'Malley said. "Why is that? What do advertisers want most? Engagement with a captive audience. I would say that is a core competency for virtual-reality content."

The NYT VR experiment and subsequent VR videos are already not just producing some token ad revenue, they're actually beginning to contribute to the bottom line. "VR is already margin-positive for us. We're making money out of VR. We expect to make money from VR again in 2016," Thompson told Beet.TV.

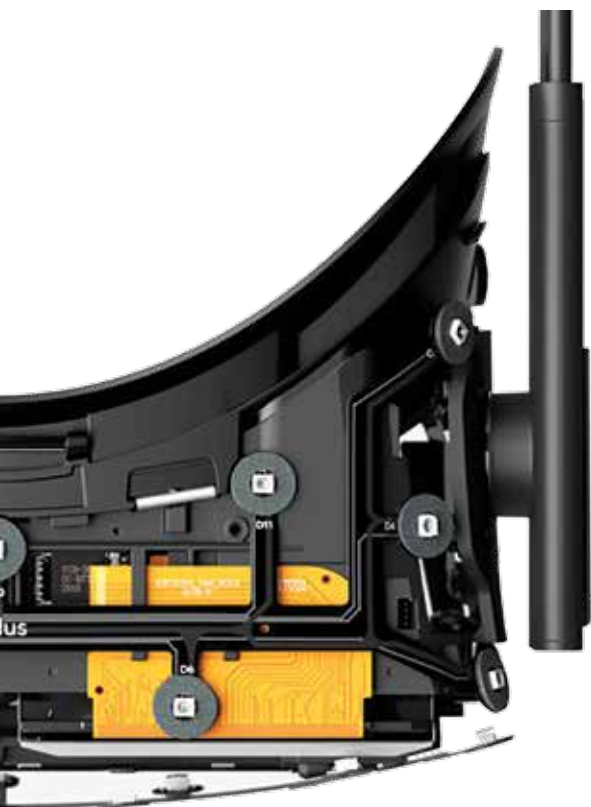
Publishers are also looking at revenue possibilities from branded content. The NYT has produced four branded content VR films and the *Wall Street Journal* announced it could sell a dozen bespoke VR branded content campaigns in 2016. So, if reader interest is





*"It's great the NYTimes and Google are teaming up. But it will be better if you joined in this disruption, too! And chances are, after just some experimentation, your VR work can be as good as the shining stars of the industry."*

**Robert Hernandez**  
Journalism professor  
University of Southern California



*"The ability to put viewers inside a scene, to be placed inside an event, is a massively compelling experience."*

**Nic Mithan**

co-founder of We Ar VR, a VR streaming and content delivery service, speaking to The Media Briefing.

proven and advertisers are on board, it comes down to the cost of equipment and production, right? If so, there's good news.

Sure, you can spend as much as US\$60,000 for one camera (the Nokia Ozo), and some marketing agencies have targeted the cost of a three-minute VR video at as much as US\$1m, according to *AdWeek*.

But perfectly functional cameras or camera rigs can cost from a couple of hundred to three thousand dollars. Here are some:

- Ricoh Theta (US\$350)
- V.360 (US\$449)
- Giroptic (US\$499)
- Bubcam (US\$799)
- Six GoPros (US\$200-\$400 each) with the Freedom 360 GoPro Mount (US\$499)

You'll need software to stitch all the video together. "There are a couple out there, but I've been using Kolor's suite of software," wrote University of Southern California journalism professor Robert Hernandez on *Medium*. "That costs money. But you can download it for free to test it out, although videos will have watermarks."

"All together this goes for around \$5,000," Hernandez wrote. "With that, you are ready to take on the big players like the *NYTimes*. I'm serious. It's great the *NYTimes* and Google are teaming up. But it will be better if you joined in this disruption, too!"

"And chances are, after just some experimentation, your VR work can be as good as the shining stars of the industry," wrote Hernandez.

Once you produce your VR videos, you can publish them on platforms ranging from YouTube to VRideo or Kolor Eyes.

But who on your staff can do this stuff?

Some publishers, in a hurry to get started, have gone to outside VR companies like Jaunt for VR expertise. But others, like Gannett in the US, are training staffers at various publishing sites.

"If somebody goes to Jaunt, they're spending a lot of money for those third-party relationships," Mitch Gelman, vice president of product for Gannett Digital, told *Digiday*. "We're spending a lot less money, and we're spreading the capability across now 12 of those markets [where staffers have been trained]."

Distribution of VR content should not be a problem, either.

YouTube has added a "cardboard" viewing

## How to Choose a VR headset

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### 6 Microsoft HoloLens

PRICE: \$3,000



**Pros:** If virtual reality headsets were cars, it's safe to say that the HoloLens would be a Rolls Royce. Microsoft's premier holographic device goes WAY beyond being just a VR headset and is, in truth, more of a stand-alone, wireless, cordless (Windows 10) computer, contained in a pair of smart glasses. Cool, right?

**Cons:** The pesky issue of wearing eyeglasses. Visuals fail to cover a user's full field of vision, but rather exist in a small box with limited peripherals in front of the user's eyes. Furthermore, this device was created with developers in mind as a platform for them to create even more high-quality VR technology. That does not mean you should expect to pick up one next Christmas. Why? Well, It's \$3,000 for starters. It's also being distributed in limited releases to developers and Microsoft insiders. It is actually the first step in Microsoft's plans to develop its "Windows Holographic" platform of the future.

mode for videos watched on Android devices. And app stores offer VR apps for free or low cost. Basically, if a reader has a relatively new smartphone, they can be a VR consumer.

### It's the niche, stupid

Just as VR had been around for decades before only recently becoming a "thing", niche publishing has been around forever, too.

Lately, however, it is experiencing a renaissance of sorts by providing curated depth delivered to (sometimes rabid, in a good way) communities of shared interest in a time of information overload.

The term "niche publishing" used to be a bit of a pejorative ("Oh, they're in niche publishing!"). But what was once equated with "small" and "insignificant" can now instead translate into "opportunity" and "profit".

No publisher has more aggressively adopted the niche strategy than *The Boston Globe*. In a little over 12 months, the newspaper publisher launched three stand-alone niche sites:

- *Crux* (all things Catholic Church)
- *BetaBoston* (all things tech innovation)
- *STAT* (all things life sciences, health and medicine)

"These are the things for which Boston is known for and what we think we can own," Boston Globe Media Partners CEO Mike Shee-

Virtual reality investment has changed from a trickle of US\$15m in 2012 to a flood of US\$2b in 2015, according to SuperData's research report: "Virtual Reality Market Brief 2016". (Photo courtesy of Sony)



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han told *Digiday*. “When we go into verticals in which we’re dominant, it expands our overall audience, which helps boost everything else. You’re never going to see us start a site focused on consumer packaged goods.”

Atlantic Media also launched niche publications recently: Quartz and Defence One, targeting international business people and the defence industry respectively.

And if streaming shows and binge watching isn’t a trend, we don’t know what is. But

viewers are often befuddled about what to watch and how to find it. In New York City, that’s not a problem thanks to the niche publication of *The New York Post* which launched the appropriately titled site *Decider*.

The folks who successfully brought *Politico* to Europe last April (they’re at a million uniques a month) knew a niche when they saw one, both last year and in 2007 when they launched Politico in the US.

“Our overall philosophy of publication is

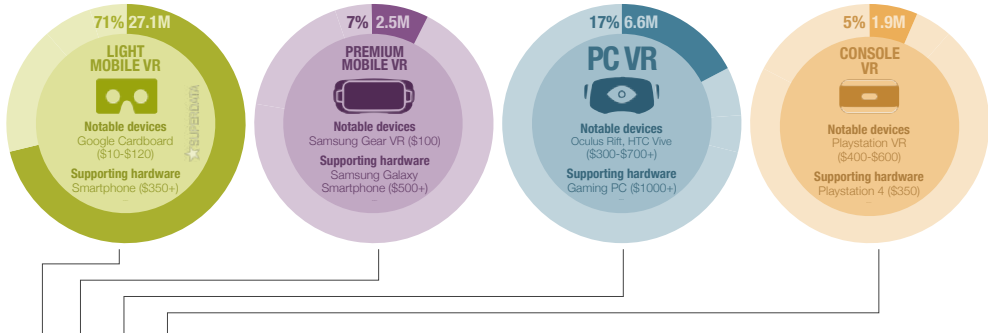
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## Virtual Reality will reach over 55M users in 2016E

Oculus has partnerships with developers and studios to ensure content is available by Oculus Rift’s release date.

VIRTUAL REALITY VALUE CHAIN PARTICIPANTS		
INVESTORS	<p><b>Private Equity Investors:</b> Investors providing capital to VR and AR companies in exchange for equity. E.g., Andreessen Horowitz, Boost VC, Google, Rothenberg Ventures</p> <p><b>Tech Development Investors:</b> Companies that develop or partner with VR/AR companies in order to expand their own hardware and/or software businesses. E.g., Steam, Microsoft, Sony, Facebook, Samsung</p>	<div>Audience</div> <div>Virtual Reality Users, 2016E</div> <div>55.8</div> <div>million</div> <div>★SUPERDATA</div>
CONTENT PLATFORMS	<p><b>Game Content Marketplaces:</b> Marketplaces where VR/AR users can download games for their HMD. E.g., Google Play, The Rift Arcade, Steam VR, PlayStation Store</p> <p><b>Secondary Content Marketplaces:</b> Marketplaces where VR/AR users can view/download non-gaming entertainment content compatible with their HMDs. E.g., Netflix, Hulu, Twitch</p>	
HEADSET MANUFACTURERS	<p><b>Virtual Reality Devices Manufacturers:</b> Companies making head mounted displays (HMDs) used to create Virtual simulations for gaming, cinema, Virtual tourism and other purposes. E.g., Oculus Rift, Samsung Gear VR, Google Cardboard, Fove</p> <p><b>Augmented Reality Device Manufacturers:</b> Companies creating head mounted displays (HMDs) used to project Virtual simulations in reality. E.g., Microsoft HoloLens, Sony SmartEyeglass, MagicLeap</p>	
NON-HEADSET HARDWARE MANUFACTURERS	<p><b>Platform Hardware Manufacturers:</b> Manufacturers that create the hardware necessary to operate an HMD Device. E.g., PlayStation 4, Oculus-Ready PCs, Samsung Smartphones</p> <p><b>Peripheral Manufacturers:</b> First and Third party manufacturers creating hardware to enhance the use of VR/AR through better motion capture and controllers. E.g., Xbox controller, Omni Treadmill, nod controller</p>	
CONTENT DEVELOPERS	<p><b>Game Makers:</b> Game developers and publishers developing content specifically for VR/AR HMDs. E.g., Microsoft, CCP Games, Sega</p> <p><b>Other Entertainment Providers:</b> Companies and institutions creating VR content such as cinema (20th Century Fox, Oculus Story), live sports (NBA), educational videos (The New York Times, Mattel, Immersive Education) and environmental simulations (The British Museum, Marriott Hotels).</p>	

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# 38.9M

Virtual Reality hardware install base worldwide, 2016E

PC and console VR's high barrier to entry will cause three in four early adopters to opt for more affordable mobile devices. Asia's 2.5B smartphone users leads the mobile VR march, causing hardware like the Google Cardboard to account for almost 80% of devices installed next year. Western markets with large PC and console user bases will ignite device sales for the two platforms: American gamers interested in VR look most forward to console and PC devices as a third intend to purchase a Playstation VR and 13% look to buy the Oculus Rift<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Hardware prices based on manufacturer announcements and estimates | <sup>2</sup>Q: Which of the following VR or AR devices do you plan on purchasing?

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that the future is niche as opposed to generalist,” Europe executive editor Matthew Kaminski told *Press Gazette*. “We prefer to go deeper than wider. And if we go wider we will go deep too... We want to be better than anyone else at politics and policy. That’s all.”

Another great example of hopping on a hot niche is *Il Mio Papa*, the Mondadori 2014 start-up that hitched its wagon to the global fascination with the new pope. It launched with a press run of three million copies and hasn’t slowed down since.

Between the heavily Catholic population in Italy and the 1.2bn Catholics worldwide, *Il Mio Papa* has an enviable potential circulation base.

The editors feed the pope frenzy on a weekly basis, often treating the pope like a pop star (pull-out pope posters, pope trinkets, and bookings for trips to the Vatican). But the editors try to keep it on the serious side with profiles of saints and serious examinations of the pope’s pronouncements.

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## Virtual Reality investment will reach \$3B in 2016E and keep growing

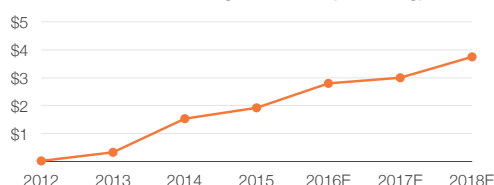
Investments in Virtual and Augmented Reality reach a combined \$6.1B between 2012 and 2015.

# \$1.9B

Funding raised by Virtual and Augmented Reality companies, 2015E

Virtual Reality investment has changed from a trickle of \$15M in 2012 to a flood of \$2B in 2015\*. VR investments more than quadrupled after Oculus VR’s \$91M funding rounds in 2013. Funding comes from a variety of sources, which not only highlights immense industry interest, but means funding will continue to steadily roll in through 2018E.

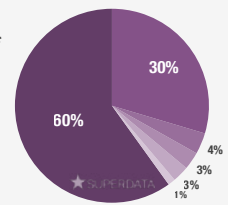
Investment in Virtual and Augmented Reality technology, billions\*



\*Does not include Facebook’s 2014 2.2B Acquisition of Oculus | <sup>2</sup>Crowdfunding accounts for less than 1%

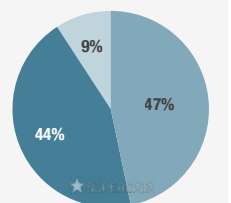
### Investment Ratios by VR Sector, 2012-2015\*

- Game Development
- Camera Tech
- Peripherals
- 3D Engines
- Social VR
- Headsets



### Investment Ratios by Funding Type, 2012-2015†

- Acquisitions
- Private Equity
- Internal R&D



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One of the hottest new niche publications was the wildly successful 2014 launch of *Il Mio Papa* covering the new pope's every move and word.

### Not everyone can do a Pope-azine

So what niche can you profit from if the pope doesn't live in your backyard?

Look at some of the magazines launched in 2015 in the US, and you'll see a pattern of identifying what's hot and jumping on it:

#### 2015:

- **Marijuana Ventures:** How to grow, market and sell pot
- **Ballistic:** Firearms and survival lifestyles
- **Mornings with Jesus:** Picking up on the growing religious fervour in the US
- **Roadkill:** So-called Automotive Chaos Theory fixing up old cars and hitting the road
- **Sip:** Riding the coattails of the fascination with exotic cocktails
- **Cool Tech:** C/Net goes from digital-only to print
- **Do:** Crafts, colouring and gift-making in a meditative way
- **Eat This Not That:** Healthy consumption through black-and-white decisions

#### 2014:

- **Craft Beer & Brewing Magazine:** Taking advantage of the craft beer explosion
- **Live Happy:** Banking on people's desire to counteract all the bad news with the "science of positive psychology"
- **Modern Pioneer:** Feeding the back-to-our-roots passion of people seeking to escape the modern world
- **Mud & Obstacle:** Elite obstacle course racing has blossomed into a serious fad
- **Rescue Me:** Feeding the desire of people to save abandoned pets from kill shelters
- **Vapor Lives:** The popularity of vapour cigarettes drives this consumer magazine along with a partner title for the vapour industry.

So, go get yourself a cheap VR camera, train one of your staff, and shoot some editorial and advertising VR videos. And then put them in your latest niche publication. You'll be latching on to two hot trends at once.

Good luck!

## How to choose a VR camera

Sure, you can spend as much as US\$60,000 for one camera (the Nokio Ozo), and some marketing agencies have targeted the cost of a three-minute VR video at as much as US\$1m, according to AdWeek. But perfectly functional cameras or camera rigs can cost from a couple of hundred to three thousand dollars.

### 1 Ricoh Theta S

Price: \$349.99

**Pros:** The newest model from Ricoh, the Theta S now offers the ability to capture up to 25 minutes of continuous shooting, as well as live-streaming capabilities. One of the biggest advantages of this device is the ability to transfer all data collected (in full 1080 HD) directly to one's phone or mobile device, without having to download to a computer! Other notable pluses include: a micro HDMI port and the always intriguing long-exposure shot capabilities.

**Cons:** Unlike its predecessor, the Theta M15, this camera only comes in one colour. Which, if you're a fan of the more "vibrant" looking 360° cameras, might be a drawback. Relatedly, the Theta S is larger and heavier than the Theta M15. But in an industry where convenience and durability are key, this could be a drawback for potential consumers.



### 2 Bubcam

Price: \$799.99

**Pros:** Finally, a 360° camera with no blindspots! Bubcam uses its own software to stitch together images internally, eliminating the extra steps usually required in VR image capturing. Very developed web and mobile app plug-ins emphasise the social-focus of this product. Its design makes it ideal for tripod mounting, and with the use of Bubcam's mobile app (available for iOS and Android), users can even use their mobile devices as remote controls for the device. Cool!

**Cons:** Photos can only be uploaded to the cloud one at a time. Which, depending on the magnitude of one's projects, could become very tedious. Relatedly, if the camera's battery happens to die while recording, that file will be deleted. Oh, and it doesn't ship to the US (yet!)



### 3 Nokia OZO

Price: \$60,000

**Pros:** As far as professional VR capturing, this camera sets the bar. With eight cameras and eight microphones, the OZO has cutting-edge capabilities. Equipped with interchangeable digital cartridges, recording time can be optimised for over 45 minutes/cartridge.

**Cons:** Price - It's \$60,000. That's hardly a Christmas present for your tech savvy family member. Also, its 4.2kg (9.3lbs), roughly the size and weight of a cantaloupe melon. Then again, if you're in the business for the top-of-the-line VR equipment, this is as good as it gets.



## 4 V.360

Price: \$449

**Pros:** More consumer-based than professional. This VR camera from VSN Mobile is intended for sport and athletic use. Equipped with Bluetooth, WiFi, USB, and Micro HD capabilities, the V.360 has no lack of ways to get connected. The V.360 is completely wind, dust, and waterproof making it perfect for documenting extreme experiences.

**Cons:** This device only shoots in 1080p, no 4K capabilities like most of its competitors. It needs a remote in order to be powered on, and early users have remarked that the clear plastic cup section around the lens tends to scratch rather easily.



## 5 CENTR

Price: Estimated retail, \$399

**Pros:** Created by former Apple camera engineers, this consumer-based product is the newest rival to the GoPro camera. It fits in the palm of one's hand and is roughly the size and shape of a roll of scotch tape. Compared to the more bulky VR cams, the CENTR weighs just 250g (9 oz). It also comes with an internal digital bubble level that levels and stabilises the camera during filming.

**Cons:** Still in development, it is not available for mass consumption yet. Also, its max battery life is only two hours. As is the case with any tech of this size, it is delicate and quite easy to lose track of if you're not careful.



## 6 Sphericam II

Price: \$2,499

**Pros:** While comparable in tech specs to most of its competitors, the real distinction is the eight tripod mounts within the body of the camera, making it possible to be mounted on virtually anything. This is a cheaper, more consumer-based take on the Nokia OZO, boasting six lenses, six image sensors, and four microphones.

**Cons:** The Sphericam doesn't offer the option of capturing still frame photographs, only video. And it won't currently be available to purchase until February/March of 2016. Also, the Sphericam II is branded as a personal, non-professional apparatus, but the price point begs to differ.

