AR FOR MANUFACTURERS

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THE BUYER EXPERIENCE IS MOST IMPORTANT IN SALES AND MARKETING FOR PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS

Whether they are in the Business-to-Customer (B2C) or Business-to-Business (B2B) market. It is vital for product manufacturers and sellers to ensure that buyers understand what the product is all about, how it can be applied or operated, and how it will fit the needs of the prospective buyer.

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This is especially true in highly evolved competitive markets or in complex B2B markets.

Another aspect that influences buyer experience is digitization. Today's prospective buyers are mostly online; they are using digital technologies; are technology-savvy., and expect an engaging customer experience.

While products have been marketed for quite some time in the digital space–whether on the web or by email, with imagery, video, or animation–very little has been done to date to provide potential buyers with an immersive, almost "hands-on" level of pre-purchase product experience.

That is now changing with an evolved "would-be" buyer expecting a more interactive, informative and immersive product purchasing experience. Interacting with product is becoming a major point in determining buyer engagement, particularly in recent examples of consumer isolation.

Research shows that interactive content is more effective at grabbing people's attention than static content, and 88% of marketers reveal that interactive content is more effective in differentiating their brand from the competition.

How products are presented can have a tremendous impact on buyer experience, which ultimately determines the purchasing decisions of the buyer.

One recent technology that is showing a lot of promise in helping marketers gain greater levels of interaction and engagement throughout the product purchasing process is Augmented Reality (AR).
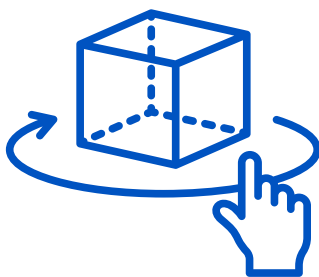
WHY AR

Augmented Reality, which adds digital content over physical environments, is already finding application in manufacturing for a vast number of processes ranging from product design and prototyping to final production and assembly.

It is also being used in the safety of workers, prevention of risks and hazards and in delivering training and employee instruction.

For marketing of products, AR provides an opportunity for potential buyers to interact with a product, to view it from different angles and to access vital product information all from the comfort of their own office or home..

Marketers can engage target customers with immersive experiences that involve animation, 3D models, or any combination of images, sound and video, at any stage in the buyer's journey. This way, product manufacturers can increase customer satisfaction, which is one of the key drivers of customer purchase decisions.

According to research by Oracle, 61% of businesses using virtual or augmented reality have increased customer satisfaction metrics as a result of using immersive technologies. When asked, 84% agreed that the virtual and augmented reality experiences their companies offer over the next five years will have a bigger impact on customer experience metrics than experiences in the physical world.

A report by Ventana aptly summarises the problems faced by product manufacturers in satisfying customer's need for product information. Product manufacturers–those selling physical products in B2C or B2B markets and those involved in industrial manufacturing have to find a way to deliver complete product information to their target market.

This can prove challenging for online markets and industrial manufacturers. They present products to customers at trials, demonstrations and trade shows and have to ship products, which can be time-consuming, expensive and sometimes cumbersome due to the nature of the product.

The research by Ventana has also shown that 46% of organisations view mobile technologies as playing a critical role in the delivery of product information. This is where AR technology comes into play with industry research showing that one-third of the customers are using some form of it already.

AR technologies can show products, provide value, improve customer experience, and deliver a significant return on investment.

With AR, product manufacturers can substantially reduce expenses on non-differentiated marketing and sales efforts, including cost of shipping and transport of products and experts, while increasing their reach across local and global markets with the use of digital and mobile technologies.

In terms of sales of products and customer preference, a report by Retail Perceptions, shows that 61% of shoppers prefer stores which offer augmented reality experiences, 71% would return more often to shop and 40% would pay more for a product if they could experience it in AR.

In fact, AR reduces the sales cycle as it delivers all product information and boosts buyer confidence.

It is estimated that by 2022 there will be 3.5 billion augmented reality users, projecting a rise for the use of AR across many industries, including manufacturing and marketing of products.

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WHY AR

Let us look at how manufacturers are using AR technology to promote and sell their products.

PRODUCT PRESENTATIONS

Product manufacturers are in the unique position to use AR for product demonstrations, especially where direct product presentations are not possible or feasible.

Most product manufacturers are already working with 3D and CAD files for their product lines, both of which. These can easily be converted into the right format to render as a 3D model for delivery on mobile devices.

AR platforms like UnifiedAR enable product manufacturers to create immersive AR product demonstrations, which can assist sales teams better present a full product range without the need of carrying costly or cumbersome physical products. AR technology enables manufacturers to show entire products, from their actual dimensions, to colours available, including other product information at sales meetings, events, demos, trade shows, and even online. All this with just the use of a smartphone or tablet.

This is especially useful when displaying large products like industrial machines, or for demonstrating how a product works and how potential buyers can use it.

Take the example of Toyota. The company uses AR to enable customers to 'see inside' the C-HR model and understand the inner workings of the Hybrid drivetrain by overlaying graphics onto actual physical vehicles.

At a recent event, showcasing Samsung's latest product range, visitors could interact with Samsung's latest and upcoming product range in real-time augmented reality, alongside the live-streamed event.

PRODUCT INFORMATION

AR technology is not only useful in delivering product information but it also enables buyers to try a product or customise it to suit their requirements, thus increasing buyer reach and improving customer buying experience.

For example, the BMW iVisualizer app enables interaction with certain BMW models. Viewers can choose assorted colours, interiors and wheels, and preview the car at any location they want.

AR is a major game changer in online shopping where personalisation of product and virtual product demonstration are vital aspects.

Companies like Lenskart, one of the early adopters of AR, are using AR to deliver real-life interactive experiences where potential buyers get to try on various eyewear and frames aligned to their face in real-time.

AR apps are also being used to see what's inside the packing box, compare product colours and models and to order products directly from the AR app.

According to Shopify, the return rates in e-commerce are approximately five times higher than brick-and-mortar stores. One of the primary reasons for returns is because the product did not match the online image or description.

Companies like Rolex and Formex use AR technology to address this by enabling customers to virtually try their luxury watches before buying, while IKEA has developed an AR app that enables buyers to visualise how various furniture will look in their house.

ENHANCE PRINT COLLATERAL AND MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Print marketing collateral is still a vital tool for sales and marketing of products.

Business like Australian Innovative Systems and Hewlett-Packard are harnessing the power of AR to enhance their print marketing–from magazines and catalogues to printed ads and direct mail campaigns.

AR technology platforms like Unified AR enhance marketing campaigns in real-time and deliver tangible results as marketers and product manufacturers can quickly access live metrics like engagement and conversion data. Marketing campaigns can easily be tweaked on the go so it resonates with the target audience, reaches more potential buyers and delivers the kind of buying experience that drives positive purchase outcomes.

Please contact UnifiedAR if you would like more information on the use of augmented reality for manufacturers or if you would like to see how the UnifiedAR platform can help take your product sales to the next level.

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