

Preface: 3D3C Platforms: Let's Shape the Future

Yesha Sivan

Dr. Grace Augustine: Is the avatar safe?
Jake Sully: Yeah it's safe. You are not gonna believe where I am!
From the movie Avatar

The 3D3C Factors: The Case of Facebook Paying US\$2bn for Oculus Rift

In March 2014, Facebook snapped up Oculus Rift at the US\$2 billion price tag. What led a software-only firm to assign such value to a hardware firm that serves as a gateway to the 3D universe?

Let us look at the history of the Rift. Following a demonstration of the Oculus Rift prototype at E3 game show in June 2012, on August 1, 2012, the company announced a Kickstarter campaign for the product. Within 4 hours, Oculus secured its intended amount of US\$250,000, and in less than 36 hours, the campaign had surpassed US\$1 million in funding, eventually ending with US\$2,437,429.

About 12 months later, on June 19, 2013, Oculus Rift announced a US\$16 million Series A funding. The round was co-led by Spark Capital and Matrix Partners. After about 6 more months, on December 12, 2013, the firm announced a \$75 million Series B funding, led by Marc Andreessen who joined the company's board on behalf of his VC firm Andreessen Horowitz. In March 2014, Facebook snapped up Oculus Rift at the US\$2 billion price tag. Why?

My answer: Facebook needed the 3D factor to complete its 3D3C strategy. Facebook has the Community factor (in the form of almost a billion users), the Creation factor (albeit in a very limited sense, by allowing its community to post, add videos, share, etc.), and the Commerce factor. The first factor of any 3D3C strategy was missing and Facebook was eager to have it. Oculus Rift gave Facebook the opportunity to own a key to the ultimate 3D3C platform. In essence, they own the mouse for windows—the gateway to a new operating system of the twenty-first century.

The claim of this book is simple: we are entering an age where these four factors (3D, Community, Creation, and Commerce) join forces to create a new era of sharing, communicating, shaping, shopping, learning, dancing, traveling, etc.—a new era of being.

Motivation: Preparing for a Long-Term Paradigm Shift

Around 1990, a disruptive technology—the Internet—emerged. New businesses, like eBay, Amazon, and Google that embraced the Internet in innovative ways, thrived, while companies like Tower Records, Barnes & Noble, and Rand McNally, which failed to embrace the Internet early, were less fortunate. (Tower folded, Barnes & Noble missed the online business that now belongs to Amazon, and Rand McNally failed to capture the online mapping business.)

Circa 2008, another disruptive technology—smartphones—emerged. A new generation of mobile phones, led by the iPhone and Android brands, is changing the communication and application markets. Apple, the leader of the field, and Motorola, leader in embracing the Android operating system, are winning—Nokia and Microsoft are losing. Thousands of application developers are harnessing the value of the new market of smartphones.

Every 10–20 years, we witness a technology shift, comparable in magnitude to that of the Internet or smartphones. Such paradigmatic shifts can break older firms, reshape entire industries, and create enormous value and wealth. Missing such a shift, however, could be detrimental to businesses and IT suppliers alike: the shift from mainframe computers to mini-computers (which IBM missed and Digital captured); from mini-computers to PCs (which Digital missed and Compaq captured); and from PCs to the network computer (which Microsoft missed and Google captured).

I claim that 3D3C platforms will—in due course—offer such a paradigm shift. What we see now with google Glass and Oculus rift (2014) is just a beginning. In comparison to the Internet age, we are at the “Gopher” stage (Gopher was a pre-browser method to view hyperlinked materials).

The timing of full impact of 3D3C platforms is not yet set. We observed a spike of interest in 2006/2007. The years 2008–2009 were more social in nature with Facebook-like technologies catching our attention. The years 2009–2010 seem to be more mobile in nature with smartphone technologies at the center of the public's focus. The following years, the growth of 3D TVs and the emergence of phone-based augmented reality seem to re-push the field of virtual reality. In any event, time is ripe for research to explore the field and suggest policies, technologies, and applications that will make use of the field, and/or advance it.

Handbook on 3D3C Platforms
Applications and Tools for Three Dimensional Systems
for Community, Creation and Commerce
Sivan, Y. (Ed.)
2016, XXVIII, 507 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-22040-6