



PHOTO: HONGMEI LOU

DANCE STUDIES STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

AUGMENTED REALITY AND 3D VIDEO AS A DRIVING FORCE IN DANCE MARKETING

BY EVELINE CHUNG-YU WONG

A visiting scholar with The University of Auckland's Dance Studies Department this year, Eveline Chung-Yu Wong from Hong Kong shares her research on the potential of Virtual Reality (VR) or 3D video, and Augmented Reality (AR) for promoting dance.

How to attract people from screen to a real theatre atmosphere? Especially Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2015, age 4-24), who grew up with a smartphone.

That is one of the main challenges for artistic organisations all around the world. Yet, technology is evolving so rapidly, beyond imagination from the past, especially since the first release and development of the smartphone. We are undoubtedly attached to our 'artificial limb'. We can leave our wallet at home but never put down the smartphone because people can withdraw, pay and earn money on it; settle work

schedules and appointments; and input all the phone numbers of friends, family, colleagues, etc. No wonder Generation Z cannot survive without it, and definitely, we all know the importance of the smartphone in our life.

As a performing arts marketer...

In an innovative industry, we always need to think about: how to use the technology to promote the programme wisely today; how to educate the public properly, and expand the audience base, simply because we are the bridge to connect artists and

the public. As such, delivery of content that lives up to the audience's standard without divergence from the artistic concept is the paramount goal and responsibility when putting a marketing plan in action.

So... Why AR and 3D video?

HUMANS ARE VISUAL CREATURES; AND WE LOVE TO SEE SOMETHING EYE-CATCHING, EXHILARATING, INNOVATIVE, BEAUTIFUL.

Besides, technology and digital devices, especially the smartphone, are feeding us all we need within a mystery box; including knowledge, entertainment, news and communication. For audiences, the aesthetic senses of dance mostly focus on visual, and our brains always intuitively rely on sight first and foremost. AR and three-dimensional video (3D/VR) allow an immersive experience in a real physical world through the use of devices. It is attractive for the youngsters, especially Generation Z who grew up with the smartphone, because they can have fun quickly and it allows easy access. The prominent growth of the smartphone can be attributed to its user-friendliness.

I have been exploring and trying to design and produce AR movies and 3D dance videos since 2018; also conducting experimental research on using Snapchat filters for marketing. I brought the project to the University of Auckland during my visit to the Dance Studies Department this spring. AR and VR are high-

tech products in the eyes of the majority; they may think that it is something demonstrated on the stage, being part of the performance, but not for marketing promotion. However, I found a positive response when demonstrating my AR movies and providing VR glasses (or Google cardboard) to students, teachers and people in the dance industry, inviting them to see the 3D videos with their smartphones during class.

IT IS NOT EASY TO SEE A DANCER'S FACIAL AND MUSCLE MOVEMENT IF THEY PERFORM ON THE STAGE, BUT WE CAN REVEAL THESE DETAILS THREE-Dimensionally WHEN WATCHING THE VR VIDEO. IT TRULY ALLOWS YOU TO FOLLOW, TO INTERACT WITH THE DANCER, IN AN IMMERSIVE WORLD, LIKE THE REAL WORLD WITHOUT ANY DISTANCE OR OBSTACLES.

Moreover, AR can add on digital objects or elements to a live scene by using the camera on a smartphone, like Pokémon Go, Snapchat and Facebook Messenger filter. People love to play AR because it is easy to access, and you can enjoy making your own AR design. The only thing needed is a smartphone. In the past, we needed to use software for building models before creating the AR design. Now, things are getting easier. One of the biggest smartphone companies based in Korea¹ just launched the latest model, and the AR design function

THE IMPERIAL RUSSIAN BALLET COMPANY PRESENTS

The Nutcracker
& DON QUIXOTE

TOURING NZ IN 2020
ON SALE MARCH 2020

www.russianballet.co.nz



DANCE STUDIES STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND



EVELINE CHUNG-YU WONG PRESENTING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

has already been inserted. You can build the digital elements by 3D camera scanning the real objects and then click the button to transform them into an AR model. In addition, you can choose the camera sensor; the AR model will then follow people's body movement, like dancing with you in reality.

The only thing you need is a smartphone. Next, create the AR design yourself for your dance performance promotion to attract people to get an eye on your show. Both AR and 3D dance videos are an attractive marketing tool to explore for dance productions, dance appreciation and education programme promotion in this era.

About the research survey

I've collected 75 samples from Auckland; the interviewees targeted were mainly from Generation Z. Here are some of the preliminary results.

In the survey, we asked if students were interested in seeing a live dance performance after watching a 3D dance video. 66.7% of the interviewees said YES, 30.7% said MAYBE, only 2.6% of them were NOT interested. We received similar results with the application of AR; over 66% were interested to see a live dance performance after they saw the AR demo, 29% indicated MAYBE, and just 4% said NO. These figures are impressive, and show that VR and AR could be a capable marketing driving force for dance promotion.

According to the report, *State of World Population 2014*, by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA)², 1.8 billion young people are alive today, contributing to

the largest global youth population in human history, and the number will grow exponentially.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE ECONOMIC INCENTIVE OF THE FUTURE. THEREFORE, IT MAKES SENSE TO TARGET YOUTH AS POTENTIAL AUDIENCES FOR ARTS MARKETERS.

Meanwhile, the young, educated, creative, and social dynamics will soon be the most profitable customer. Thus, we arts marketers have to seek innovative and relevant strategies for these targeted audiences and justify the marketing direction. Philip Kotler nicely put it as "the goal is to be relevant to young people's lives and therefore to gain access to their growing wallets"³. More importantly, we need them to accompany us like a friend, a witness who enlightens our future pathway in the performing arts industry.

Keep up with the times

This is not the end of this research; it will continue in Hong Kong and Taipei as a three-cities research project supported by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC). As we are working in an innovative industry, trying to jump out of the comfort zone is quite challenging, but worth the action. Creativity is not an exclusive patent for dancers, choreographers, producers, but also for arts marketers. Furthermore, we need to turn a stumbling block into a stepping stone, continue lifelong learning and keep up with the times.

Are you ready for the high-tech marketing strategy? ■

¹ Watch Samsung Galaxy Note 10 Live Event (YouTube, 2019, 00:57:16-1:02:48). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuLo9p6kPis&t=3509s>

² *State of World Population 2014: The power of 1.8 billion: adolescents, youth and the transformation of the future* (UNPFA, 2014). https://www.unpfa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/EN-SWOP%20EX%20SUM-Final-web_0.pdf

³ Philip Kotler, Hermanwan Kartajaya, Iwan Setiawan, *Marketing 4.0: Moving from Traditional to Digital* (US: Wiley, 2017), p.33.