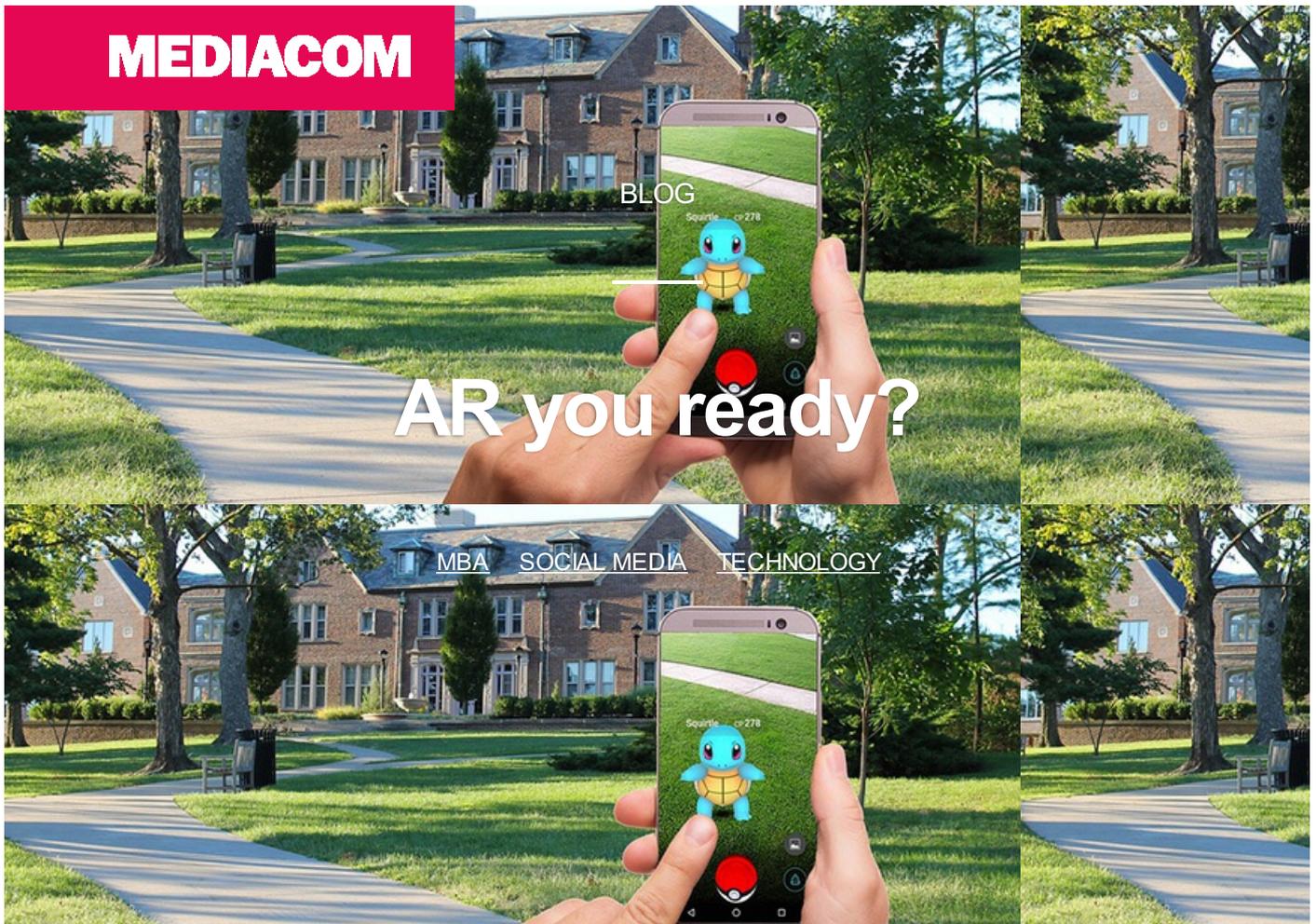


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AS AR CONTINUES TO INFILTRATE MAINSTREAM MEDIA, THE LONG-LAUDED POSSIBILITIES ARE BECOMING A REALITY.

First things first, let us clarify something that still causes some confusion; what exactly is AR? 'Augmented Reality', is not to be confused with VR (Virtual Reality). It allows consumers (sorry, 'people') to 'augment' a view of the physical world around them, as opposed to stepping inside a completely virtual one. Mainly by using their phone camera. Remember Pokémon Go? Of course you do. In their simplest forms, think Snapchat lens Vs. plastic or cardboard contraption you pop on your head. No doubt, you've heard both acronyms bandied about (a lot) in the last year or so.

The thing is, neither of these terms are new concepts. And they've been trying to crack the

mainstream for some time now. You might even remember Craig Charles' popular TV show '[Cyber Zone](#)' telling us [we'd all be using VR soon](#) in the early 90s. And it's only now, 25 years later that it's on the tip of everyone's tongues.

The same goes for AR. While the first description of what we now know as AR was in the 1994 novel 'Virtual Light', it's been appearing in various applications since not long after the turn of the Millennium. With one of the bigger commercial players 'Blippar' trying to crack the mass market for the past half-decade or so, and helping brands to try and do the same. But in reality, only causing a few ripples on the surface of the vast consumer ocean. However, it seems the tides of those waters are finally beginning to turn. If like me, you've lately received videos from technologically befuddled family members (who are most definitely not Millennials) featuring them as dogs or wearing some kind of crown, you know the mainstream have been sucked into the swirling AR whirlpool.

While many have been aware of 'filters' or 'lenses' for a while now, thanks predominantly to Snapchat and a handful of other apps; Instagram's launch of 'Face Filter's in May this year has introduced them to over half a billion users. And unsurprisingly, Insta's parent company Facebook followed shortly behind. The inevitability of Lord Zuckerberg's babies rolling out such a feature was sealed over a year ago when Facebook acquired the AR app MSQRD ('Masquerade') and instantly applied the brakes to its meteoric ascent.

The creative possibilities of AR have been put to good use by the likes of Gatorade's Super Bowl [Snapchat campaign](#) in 2016, and more recently [Bacardi's UGC music video](#), or [HBO's Game of Thrones secret filter](#). And proved that it offers a new way to engage a notoriously difficult younger audience and get them to spend longer with a brand online. But until recently, the AR media touchpoint has only really been accessible for brands to use at scale on Snapchat. While other app based options haven't quite hit the download heights required to surf the wave of the tech adoption curve.

The launch of Apple's AR Kit, has opened the technology up to more developers (FYI – if you didn't see the [A-Ha 'Take on me'](#) video replicator, it's well worth a play). This means we're going to see even more applications of augmented reality flooding our small screens soon. And speaking of which, the likes of Blippar's new [browser-based banners](#), means

there will be more and more ways to interact with AR without the need to download an app at all. We're even seeing huge apps such as [Shazam](#) (with over a billion users), introduce functionality that allows users to augment the world around them with a simple point and click, without the need to download an app they don't already have.

What all of this means, is that AR is now a viable way to connect with people at scale, without some of the barriers that have hitherto held brands and consumers back. Facebook has recently started rolling out their first branded Face Filters; and their latest (which launched this week), for Gucci fragrance 'Bloom' was produced by [MediaCom Beyond Advertising](#). This means, the doors to world's largest social network have been opened for AR. Which could mean the world is indeed, finally ready for it. AR you?

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