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HISTORY TOLD LIVE IN LIVING COLOR

The start-up Urban Timetravel turns (hi)storytelling into an experience with AR and VR technology aiming at cultivating and preserving cultural heritage.

People love stories, especially those from the past, if they are told in an exciting way. Cities and municipalities, cultural institutions, traditional companies, many have an interest in ensuring that their **historical past is not forgotten**. Archive material and documents of various types are collected, catalogued, and maintained. The actual goal, however, namely that guests, customers, and other target groups consume, understand, and remember the information with enthusiasm, represents a challenge for most.

The company Urban Timetravel S.A. from Luxembourg offers the solution, it tells the stories of its customers in a particularly creative way using innovative technology. History is brought to life with “Augmented Reality” (AR) and “Virtual Reality” (VR). They are the **first company worldwide** to have succeeded in combining a **virtual reality experience with GPS tracking**. Since 2019, for example, guests have been going on a real-time moving image journey in Luxembourg City. Using geo-tracking-based technology, time travellers are enabled to see the past of the same location they are through VR glasses. To do this, they get on an upgraded minibus, put on VR glasses which are connected to a powerful computer in the vehicle, and travel back to 1867. On the roughly 30-minute journey, the current reality mixes with the historical. The past comes to life while the bus is driving on cobblestones in the present. House facades, lettering on small shops, nature, people, animals - you can see and hear the life of more than 150 years ago.

Barrier-free added value for tourist offers

Listeners become part of the story and not only understand it, but they also take in the information in a playful way and will remember it. Similar effects can be found with Augmented Reality applications for castles in the Middle Rhine Valley, called “Sagenhafte Rheinromantik” (“Legendary Rhine Romanticism”), which will be launched in 2021. Here, gaming elements complement the tour of discovery and pass on history in a playful way, even leaving room for



participation. As legends are known to be not entirely fact-based, they therefore, invite us to use our imagination. A little more than a hundred kilometers to the east, visitors of Frankfurt am Main can use a postcard AR app to add virtual 3-D models of historical buildings with information to the current city map and get a more vivid picture of the history than purely through plans of an archive.

Thanks to Urban Timetravel, cultural heritage can be preserved, and history can be told with added value and **in new formats**. On one hand, this creates new forms of city tours, on the other hand, guided or individual tours of sights are given added value. The technologies used also include people with physical or mental disabilities as both, a bus and an app, can overcome physical and mental access barriers.

Customer and creative workshops, research work...

And what happens in the **tech-studio of Urban Timetravel**? The work begins with extensive customer meetings and workshops, thorough archive research, expert discussions, and the creation of a foundation of the story. With great sensitivity and creativity and based on historical recordings and documents from the archives, it was then digitally “built”. For VR time travel a digital basic model, the so-called “mesh”, is being developed, then the surfaces of houses, streets and other objects along the way are designed together with the detailed reproduction of the surroundings. In this way the tech creators breathe life into animals, people, and things with animation so that the journey resembles a movie. Let the journey through time begin...

Urban Timetravel S.A. was founded in 2017, is based in Luxembourg, is the winner of the Lux Tourism Innovation Award and proudly carries the label “Made in Luxembourg”. Urban Timetravel started with four team members and has grown to 15 employees in 2020. The Management Board is made up of four senior managers who, in addition to IT and design, also cover the disciplines of economics and business psychology and therefore bring broad-based expertise to the business.

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