

Will Meta Quest 3 and Apple Vision Pro headsets push VR to another level?

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Credit: Matthew Modoono/Northeastern University

Virtual reality and augmented reality headsets are still niche products, mostly used by gamers.

However, with the announcements of the release of Meta's Quest 3 headset and Apple's Vision Pro, Northeastern experts believe the industry that has struggled to gain ground in the mainstream is making incremental steps in moving the technology forward.

The [average person](#) is not ready to change how they interact with computers, says Blair MacIntyre, a professor at the Khoury College of Computer Sciences at Northeastern University.

"But that said, I don't think (the industry) is dying," Blair says. "I think it's sort of stagnating."

The industry is growing, according to Statista, with the global VR market size projected to increase from less than \$12 billion in 2022 to more than \$22 billion by 2025.

However, AR and VR devices still aren't quite as in-demand as other electronics like smartphones or smartwatches. But many companies such as Microsoft, Google, Intel and Sony have all invested in the technology, showcasing there is still some potential.

In 2022, 14.94 million of these devices shipped globally, a 54% increase from 2021's 9.69 million. Most of these were VR devices, representing 91% of the total number of VR and AR devices expected to be shipped out last year.

However, there are still some downsides in the headsets, says Wallace Lages, assistant professor at Northeastern. For example, if the tracking system isn't good, the image the user sees will not correspond with their movements, making them feel sick with nausea or headaches. Or, as Lages put it, "cybersickness."

Headsets also can be heavy, says Lages, making users not want to wear

them for long periods.

It is also a large leap for someone who is used to sitting on the couch watching TV or on their phones on [social media](#) to putting on a headset and going into a 3D world, says MacIntyre.

But, there are niche cases where [virtual reality](#) is useful, such as management training, exposure therapy or practicing surgical procedures.

"VR isn't going to go away and because of those things, I think, only gets better," says MacIntyre. "The augmented reality side is still frustratingly far away in many cases."

Last week Meta announced the Quest 3 headset, with pricing starting at \$499. The company says it will feature color mixed reality, combining VR and AR elements.

On Monday, Apple announced another mixed-use headset called Apple Vision Pro. The device is controller-free, and you browse rows of app icons in an operating system called visionOS by looking at them. You can tap to select and flick to scroll, and also give voice commands.

"I think people were waiting with bated breath to see what Apple would do," says Mark Sivak, an associate teaching professor at Northeastern. "Honestly, in some ways, it is surprising, but in some ways is not."

The announcement came in June at the developers conference, but it won't be available for preorder until the beginning of next year. Plus, the starting price is \$3,500. Apple is giving itself a lot of room to make changes.

"It definitely brings the industry forward," says Sivak. "Because this will

be the first consumer device that is not, at least in marketing, is not meant as a gaming device."

The Vision Pro will serve as a more compact laptop because it's like a pair of ski goggles, allowing users to bring it with them. The main difference is that the Vision Pro doesn't have any controllers or a mouse and keyboard.

Plus, Apple is ready to create a seamless ecosystem with a VR headset, allowing it to connect to other Apple products, which gives it a leg up in terms of content, says MacIntyre. A 3D game for a phone can easily translate to a VR headset.

"The big question is, can they find the one niche thing that will make it a must-have, right?" asked MacIntyre. "There is still no killer app for these devices."

In terms of regular everyday people switching to using these headsets, Sivak says, "Not yet." But in five to 10 years, maybe.

Provided by Northeastern University

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