Volvo, Microsoft develop vehicle technologies

Volvo Cars and Microsoft have recently revealed how Microsoft HoloLens, the world's first fully untethered holographic computer, might be used in future to redefine how customers first encounter and explore a car.

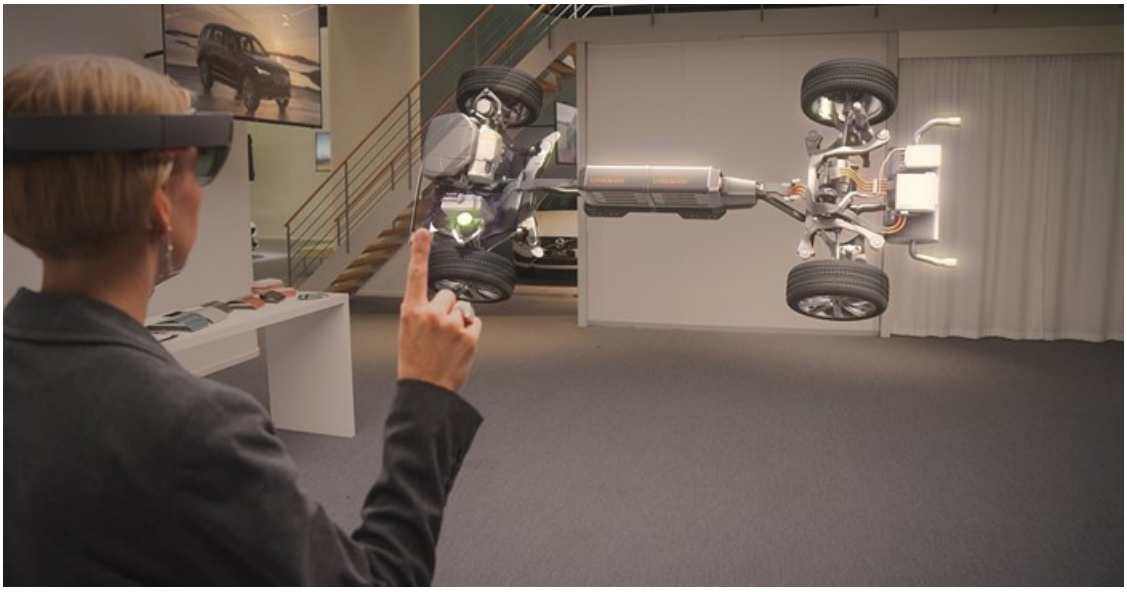

Image source: blogs.windows.com

Areas of future collaboration between the two companies could include autonomous driving technologies and the utilisation of data generated from connected cars to create new services.

The recent HoloLens demonstration was conducted at Microsoft's global headquarters in Redmond, USA, and showed how mixed reality might be used by customers to configure cars in three dimensions. With HoloLens, a powerful, wearable computer, holograms are mixed into the physical world.

"HoloLens offers the freedom to create a bespoke experience which customers can steer themselves. Imagine using mixed reality to choose the type of car you want - to explore the colours, rims, or get a better understanding of the features, services and options available," said Björn Annwall, senior vice-president for marketing, sales and service at Volvo Cars.

New sales channels

He added that HoloLens technology might also liberate dealers from more traditional sales environments and allow them to take a car configurator out on the road in small pop-up stores, shopping malls or on the high street, opening up new sales channels and introducing cars to a far larger potential audience.

At the HoloLens demonstration, participating journalists were also given a mixed reality preview of Volvo's new S90 premium sedan, which will be unveiled in reality at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in January.

This event offered an indication of the potential of mixed reality to transform the relationship between the customer and the car. Journalists were able to experience Volvo's new sedan and its latest autonomous driving technology in 3D before the car has even been built and launched.

"We are thrilled to be working with Volvo Cars to reimagine what is possible in car design, discovery and purchasing. We are excited to be at this intersection of technology and human-centric design with Volvo," Scott Erickson, senior director of Microsoft HoloLens.

Long-term cooperation

The HoloLens demonstration marks the beginning of longer term cooperation between Volvo and Microsoft that will embrace a range of new technologies, all of which have implications for the automotive industry.

One area of focus will be autonomous driving. Volvo Cars is a pioneer in car safety and is leading the way when it comes to connected cars and autonomous driving. It has announced a programme called Drive-Me in which 100 self-driving and connected cars will be given to real customers on real roads around the Swedish city of Gothenburg by 2017, the world's largest autonomous driving experiment.

Other areas of cooperation are expected to include how information gathered by cars and their drivers can be used to enhance the driving experience and the possibility of using predictive analytics to improve safety.