

Germany's Photo Industry Association sees potential for growth

The relevance of imaging

At the beginning of 2017, according to Germany's Photo Industry Association (PIV), the imaging segment is on course for growth. This emerges from a recent news release that identifies a number of promising areas of business for the future. Most of these areas are, however, not in the consumer segment but involve commercial and industrial applications in the B2B segment.

In the consumer market, it is primarily emerging technologies that should stimulate business. "The consumer imaging market, which covers the entire workflow, from image capture and editing, to image transfer, storage and output, is now stable with clear growth potential for the future," said the Association's Chairman, Rainer Fuehres. "Smart



Rainer Fuehres, Chairman of Germany's Photo Industry Association: "The imaging eco system is gaining greater relevance through innovations."

innovations are at the focus of current technological progress." They include 360° cameras and the emerging segment of Virtual Reality (VR). The Association also sees further growth opportunities with multi-

copters and drones, which are now also conquering the underwater world (see CES-report in this issue). They should add further stimulus to a segment that will show, according to the market research company, GfK, a positive development over the next few years.

The growing number of imaging apps will, according to the German Photo Industry Association, increasingly generate added value downstream. In order to master the rapidly growing volume of



With this lively graphic, the Photo Industry Association has depicted the numerous market segments for imaging technologies.

image and video data, smart storage solutions should make a decisive contribution to data security and to the user-friendly management of the images.

Analog renaissance

The surprisingly strong demand for instant photography, which has been going on for several years now, should, in the view of the Photo Industry Association, continue in the coming years. In addition, because of the recently announced re-introduction of several AgX-films, a renaissance of analog technologies is expected – as has happened in the music industry with vinyl records.

In the opinion of the PIV, the output segment is really taking off. The printing of pictures on all kinds of different media is more in demand than it has been for many years, says the news release. This includes standard prints as well as large-format prints on acrylic glass and aluminum, wood or canvas, not to forget the high-quality photo books.

Imaging in the smart home

The Association expects that digital transformation will trigger a rapidly growing importance of images in new fields. The smart home segment, for example, is being enriched by a variety of image capturing systems such as built-in cameras in refrigerators or similar retrofit solutions. Other trend topics include robots equipped with cameras, and connected 360° indoor cameras. This, says the PIV,

will produce "a further topic of the future with enormous market potential".

This is also true of security technology in public and private places. At present, the daily production of surveillance cameras is put at 170,000 pieces, which, according to an estimate from the PIV, makes for a annual world market volume of over 62 million units. They are being increasingly incorporated into smart systems consisting of software and displays. In Germany, the PIV says, Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) and the German government have agreed to jointly invest 85 million euros in the expansion and modernization of imaging and video technology up to the year 2023. In the field of image capture, mobile cameras such as body cams will also play a key role for greater security in public spaces. In Germany, for example, they will supplement the 5,000 or so security cameras installed at the 700 railroad stations.

Industrial applications

Industrial and commercial applications in the B2B segment offer, in the opinion of the PIV, promising potential for the imaging industry in several areas. Augmented Reality (AR) is about to make a breakthrough on the mass market, it says. Whereas the developers of the eyewear needed for this are currently concentrating on business applications, the technological infrastructure for AR solutions already exists. On the latest smartphones, for example, applications can already be carried out without special data eyewear.

Robots, too, are becoming increasingly equipped with image capturing systems. According to the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), there are already 301 robots for every 10,000 employees in the manufacturing sector in Germany. Particularly car manufacturers have been relying for some time now on their mechanical employees. The PIV expects an increasing amount of work to be carried out on artificial intelligence in connection with robotics. This technological evolution will be very much faster and more targeted than the biological evolution, the Association pointed out. For the Chairman, Rainer Fuehres, these are good news: "The digital transformation is having an impact and is providing for growth. Imaging players are driving their development forward, turning pure hardware specialists into specialists for software and services, too, and they will increasingly also offer imaging solutions for B2B. The whole imaging eco system is gaining greater relevance through innovations connected with the smart home, automotive, robotics and security technology."