

The Virgin Islands Consortium

The Digital Age Arrived 30 Years Ago

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The Digital Age officially began in 1989 with the internet becoming widely available to ordinary people. What was originally viewed as a streamlined way to communicate faster and obtain hoards of information from anywhere in the world has transformed into something that is much more complicated - it's now a powerful global economy that grows stronger as more people join the web. The scale, flexibility, and growth potential of a digital economy is virtually limitless. However, the U.S. Virgin Islands has not fully embraced nor is it adequately prepared for a shift that started nearly 30 years ago.

Before you shut me out or dismiss this piece, I'd like you answer a few questions. All of which should be directed to yourself, a family member or close friend. How often do you come in contact with technology everyday? Do devices like phones and computers

regularly stress you out? Do devices like phones and computers enhance your quality of living? Why is technology viewed as evil by so many people?

If you answered these questions favorably, this article is for you. If you answered the questions with a negative view toward technology, this article is also for you.

If you compared life in 1955 to life in 2017, the differences are astonishing. Technology was much simpler. New breakthroughs and innovations were incremental, giving ordinary citizens time to learn new systems and keep up with an always advancing world. Here's a brief history:

1908 - American engineer Henry Ford launches the Ford Model T, the world's first truly affordable car.

1912 - Gilbert Lewis invents Lithium-ion batteries

1920's - LCD televisions, and space rockets are invented

1928 - Air Conditioners and refrigerators are introduced

1930's - Radar is developed

1942 - The first nuclear chain reactor is developed at the University of Chicago

1950s - Microwaves ovens and satellites are developed

1969 - Man landed on the moon

1973 - The first mobile phone is developed

1980's - James Dyson invents vacuum cleaners.

1989 - Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web

It took over 80 years to develop the technology that has been mentioned above. Some of which are essential parts of our livelihood today. Ordinary people have been using the internet for about 28 years today. Since its birth, technology has exploded and consumed virtually every aspect of our lives.

The innocent birth of the internet has destroyed entire industries, fueled religious extremism and continues to alter the global economy every day. Around 40% of the world's population has an internet connection today. In 1995 that percentage sat modestly at 1%. That means there are over 3 billion internet users today. In turn, the internet has created many industries to replace the ones it's killed.

Branding the Virgin Islands as backwards, out of touch or even disconnected, is not the main point of this article. The Virgin Islands' economy has significantly slowed and the collective unemployment rate for the territory sits at about 11%.

Despite the bleak outlook in that statistic, there is an elite group of brands and businesses that are redefining what it means to do business in the Virgin Islands. Companies and brands like [GLG Plants and Produce](#), [Made in St. Thomas \(MIST\)](#), and

[St. Thomas Food Tours](#) are shaking the very foundation of brand identity and purpose in the territory.

All three companies use Instagram to highlight their brands. Often taking their followers behind the scenes to see large barrels of cucumbers being harvested, new merchandise or the best places to eat on island. There are more than a dozen companies duplicating this same marketing formula, with St. Croix housing the largest sum.

Made in St. Thomas is without argument, the most recognizable and distinct brand owned by a Millennial ([Cody Richardson](#)) in the Virgin Islands. His brand shows how technology can be leveraged to run a successful business, almost entirely online.

Submitted on Monday by: Amaziah George, founder and editor in chief of State of the Territory News.

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