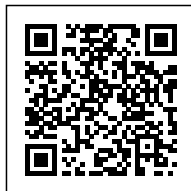


THE NEW 'BIG FOUR' - ROCA JUNYENT

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Category: [Corporate](#)



When encountering a reference to the “Big Four” one undeniably used to think of the biggest four accounting firms in the world. Recently though, it might be necessary to check the context, as the reference could perfectly be made to the four largest “tech” companies in the world (Facebook, Google, Apple and Amazon).

However, are these “Big Four” only “tech” companies? Bankers and car-makers may not agree.

Facebook is entitling users to make payments through its messenger service, Apple introduced Apple Pay, Google invested in sector-disruptive Uber and - like Apple - is investing heavily in self-driving cars. This, though, seems to be only the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, as venture capitalist Marc Andreessen already forecast in 2011, "software is eating the world" or at least, that seems to be what investors think.

In July 2016, for the very first time in history, the five largest world companies by market capitalisation were all "tech" companies – the "Big-Big Four" plus Microsoft. Moreover, the tech industry seems to be looking at [artificial intelligence](#) as the future in terms of development and business growth. And again, not only do the "Big-Big Four" have the muscle, knowledge, familiarity and boldness that gives them an undeniable edge, but they also control the "food" that shall feed the artificial decision making machinery – that is, '[Big Data](#)'. With millions of users around the world, the "Big-Big Four" hold (though some will argue they own) plenty of information about the tastes, whereabouts, tendencies and strengths of practically all of us.

Who would like, or be able, to stop this "neo-feudal" system as it is often labelled? A lawyer would tell you to look at the antitrust and/or data protection authorities. The task they have, though, seems titanic.

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