Metaverse(s)

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Traditional virtual worlds

• The basic idea:
  – Persistent space built in a computer software
  – You are represented by your “avatar” (digital self)
  – You can move around and
  – Interact with virtual objects and other avatars

• Origins:
  – MMORPG-s (morpegs): massively multi-player online role-playing games
    • World of Warcraft
    • Grand Theft Auto
    • …
  – Have been around for decades
  – Defined environment
  – Defined goal
Defined universes
Fortnite: a revolution in the gaming universe?
Paradigm shift: ‘Making not slaying’

• New concept: virtual worlds entirely generated by users

• Example: Second Life
  – Owner: Linden Labs
  – Founded by Philip Rosedale after ‘Snowcrash’
  – Launched in 2003
  – Explosive growth in summer 2006
  – Stalled since 2008
  – Today: ~1 million active users (50-80k any time)

• No defined goal and environment:
  – people can build and do anything
  – own their virtual assets (can trade)

• SL is remarkable because it incorporates all interactive features of existing Internet platforms (social networks, games, streaming, voice, chat, etc.)
Go to parties!
They socialize with stars like Susan Vega and Bob Dylan playing live.
They shop
They build!
They go to church!
And may get married!
They also need a home!
There are cities!
They do everything…and more

- Culture – museums, cinemas, theaters, concerts..
- Sports - races, adventures
- Entertainment: film festivals, reality shows
- Nightlife – gambling, sex, parties…
- Shopping, shopping, shopping….
- Work – top incomes are ~$200k
- Business - thousands of profitable businesses
- Crime – gunshots, retail fraud, terrorism
- Politics – democracy, independence movements
- Currency, real estate, stock markets
- …..
Endless creativity…
Major organizations join…

- Starwood Hotels – showrooms/reservations
- Toyota, Nissan – sell virtual cars
- American Apparel – setup a virtual store for clothes
- U2, Duran Duran, Susan Vega - concerts
- IBM – business solutions (owns >15 islands)
- Intel – tech conferences, product information
- Reuters – permanent correspondent
- Sweden, Estonia have an embassy
- Presidential candidates’ headquarters (Mark Warner, Sarkozy, Royale)
- US congress – investigates taxable income earned
- FBI investigates illegal gambling
- …
E-commerce
5449
California Fleece Track Pant

6364
Sheer Jersey Chemise
Other (old) metaverses

• Club Pinguin (Disney)
• Eve Online
• …..
Question: Is the metaverse the ultimate media platform?
Backlash

• Fraud
  – Illegal gambling and casinos
  – Phony banks and Ponzi schemes
  – Real (virtual) estate bubble

• Scandals
  – Huge sex industry (18% of real estate)
  – Violent political clashes
  – ‘Terrorism’ and cyber vandalism

• Bad media coverage
  – “There is nothing to do […], except […] try to get laid” (Forbes)
  – Time includes SL in its “5 worst websites” list.
...and corporations leave...

Lively: Google’s failed virtual world

American Apparel closed
What happened?

• Was it just too early?
  – Technology is not ready
  – No portable/mobile interface
  – Bandwidth and latency issues

• Was it badly managed?
  – Lack of quality control and certification
  – Lack of search capability(ies)
  – Lack of identity and accountability…
  – …and, therefore, lack of trust?

• Is it a fundamentally flawed as a “MASS” medium?
  – Too virtual/free/immersive…
  – Platform rivalry….
  – Lack of foreseeable government coordination

Is this changing with
- better tech/Al/sw?
- No cross-platform availability?
- VR?

Is this changing with
- Meta?
- Fortnite?
- blockchain?

Decentraland?
Meta’s metaverse
The “new” metaverse ecosystem: $ billions of investment

Source: Newzoo’s 2021 Global Games Market Report | Into the Metaverse trend report
newzoo.com/globalgamesreport