



Building the Metaverse: Why Tech Giants Like Facebook & Microsoft Are Building 3-D Virtual Environments ?

A woman with long dark hair is wearing a VR headset and reaching out to touch a glowing, semi-transparent globe of the Earth. The globe is positioned in the center-left of the frame, and the woman is on the right side, looking towards it. The background is a dark, gradient blue.

What if the Internet was a place?

This is the question that makes up this article, which is to discuss the vision of the tech giants about internet as a place, which they refer to as the "Metaverse". The term "Metaverse" was first originated from a science fiction novel *Snow Crash* written by Neal Stephenson in the year 1992. The metaverse is an interconnected virtual reality world where people can be who they want to be, explore without restrictions, and communicate with others from around the world. The metaverse is an evolution of existing web technologies including augmented reality (AR), mixed reality (MR), and virtual reality (VR). Basically, the metaverse is the formation of a virtual universe in which human avatars will be present through technology. Organizations can develop such metaverses for a variety of reasons, including entertainment, education, and business. Let's understand the metaverse with an example. Recently, due to Covid-19 outbreak many employees were forced to work from their homes. But now after two years employees are yearning to get back to their workplace. Now, the reasons could be that they are missing the workplace atmosphere, the team lunches, and the coffee machine banter. Now, what if Zoom developed a virtual 3D atmosphere, which could replicate the office environment while you're sitting at the desk in your home. It won't be exactly like the real office, but it'll be near, and as technology advances, it'll become even more so. Hence, in such cases metaverse could be a boon for these employees.

At a recent time, Caribbean nation Barbados has become the first sovereign nation with an embassy in the metaverse. Barbados' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is also working on various deals with metaverse platforms like Somnium Space and Superworld to make this happen. As per the news by CoinDesk, the metaverse embassy, which is scheduled for launch in January 2022, will consist of identifying and purchasing land & developing infrastructure to provide services such as "e-visas".

All of this may appear futuristic, but tech giants like Facebook and Microsoft have started working on it actively. In fact, according to globenewswire, the metaverse market reached USD 21.91 billion in 2020 and is expected to rise at a staggering 41.7 % CAGR from 2021 to 2030. And with so many of us living in our digital worlds, it's no surprise that tech giants are competing to create the best solutions for it. Here are some of the interesting details on how Facebook and Microsoft are all developing their own versions of this technology.

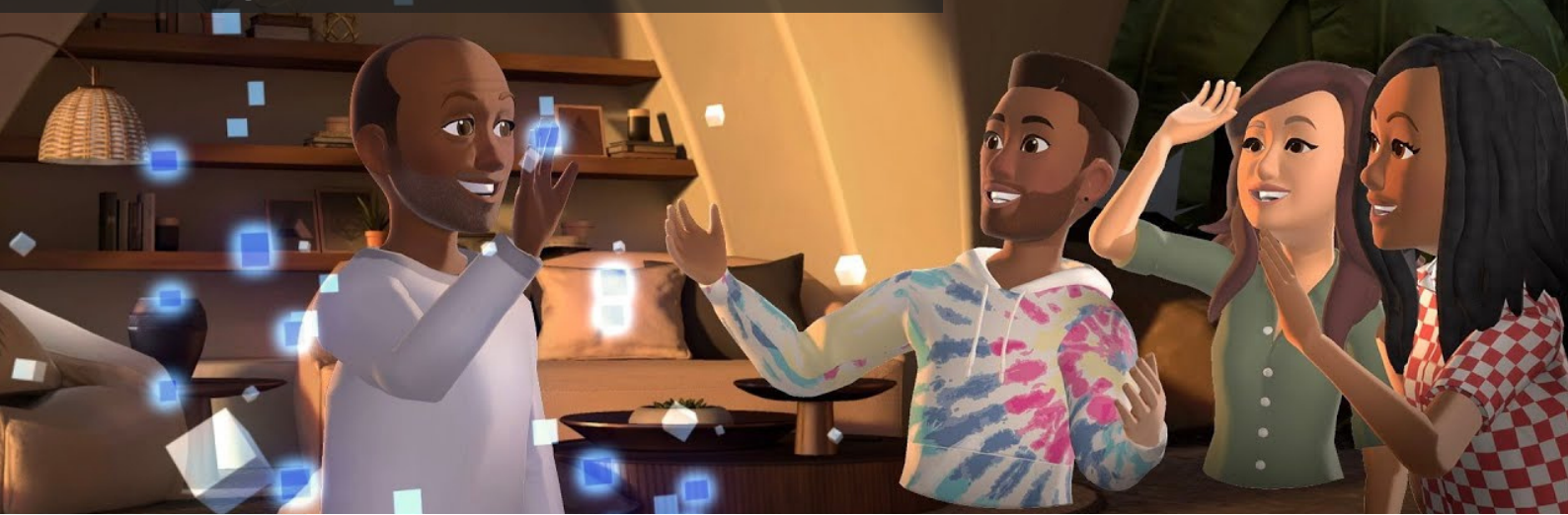
Facebook's Metaverse

Mark Zuckerberg, outlines his "Metaverse" as a virtual world concept, which is about "connecting with people". Mark Zuckerberg's company had picked up pace in this direction after acquiring the Oculus VR headset for \$2 billion in 2014. Recently on Oct. 28 2021 Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg made an announcement at Facebook Connect, stating that the company would rebrand as "Meta" to reflect its significant investment in the metaverse.



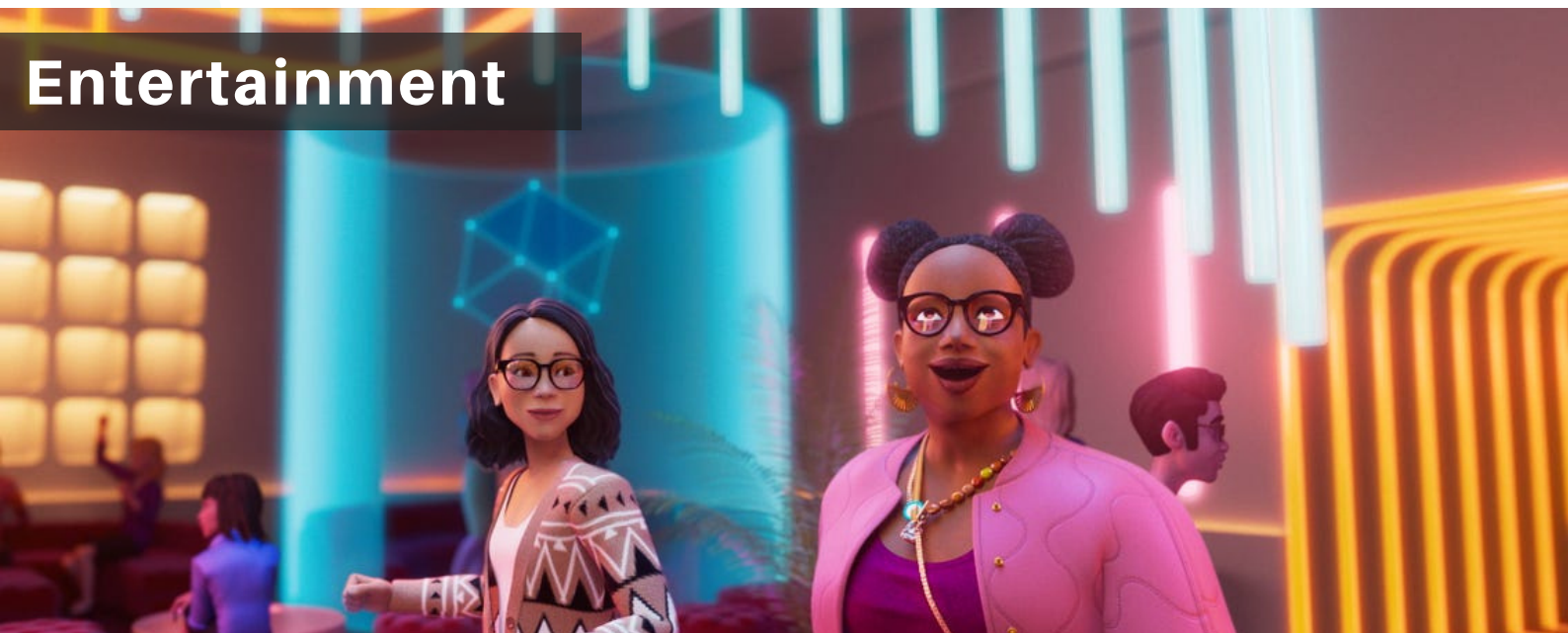
Also in October, Facebook CEO said it will spend about \$10 billion over the next year developing technologies to build the metaverse. Recently, the founder has been promoting the metaverse, which is an integrated online experience that integrates work and life across a variety of platforms, including VR headsets and AR deployments. Zuckerberg envisions 3D spaces in the metaverse which will allow us to socialize, learn, collaborate and play in ways that go beyond what we can imagine. Let's take a look at Facebook's ambition for bringing the metaverse to life, which includes everything from making social connections to advanced learning.

Making social connections



Facebook states that social connections in metaverse would be an experience to live in the "present", right there with the people no matter how far apart we actually are. For instance, if we send a party video to our parents they're gonna feel like they're right in the moment with us, and not peering through a little mobile window.

Entertainment



Facebook describes entertainment in metaverse, as one can be present in a live concert and enjoy company with close friends while sitting at home. For instance, imagine your best friend is at a concert somewhere across the world and what if you can be there with your friend to dance. Creators & artists would be able to connect their audiences in new ways & bring them into these shared experiences.

Gaming in metaverse



Facebook believes that gaming can provide the most immersive experiences in the metaverse. According to Mark Zuckerberg gaming in the metaverse is going to span from fantasy worlds to bring in simple games like playing chess in our everyday life. Currently, Popular gaming platforms like Fortnite and Roblox allow people to create their own worlds and games within its wider metaverse.

Workout



According to Facebook, in metaverse we will be able to workout in completely new ways. At a recent time, a lot of us are already using Oculus Quest for home fitness workout. In the metaverse, Facebook has stressed on VR headsets using which one can do anything from taking boxing lessons to sword fighting and maybe one can get some friends together for cycling exercise. Recently, Supernatural on Oculus Quest has added boxing to their lineup, & also Player 22, developed by Rezzil on Oculus Quest for athletes to perform bodyweight exercises.

Corporate working



For the past year and a half, a lot of us working in offices have gone remote and miss the office atmosphere. In the metaverse, you will still have that sense of presence, shared physical space and useful interactions which will make your day all accessible from anywhere. Now imagine that you have a perfect worksetup with less distractions to focus on the tasks at hand. And when you are ready to share what you are working on, you can showcase it as if you present there right with the team to discuss. We can already see some of these elements in the “Horizon Rooms” launched by Meta Platforms a couple of months ago.

Education in metaverse



Facebook states that one can learn anything in the metaverse just by bringing things closer to the physical space. For instance, you can learn astrophysics and write a research paper in the metaverse if you want to. In the metaverse, you will be able to not just teleport the place but time as well. Imagine standing on the streets and visiting the markets to get the sense of rhythm of life over 2000 years ago. Let's say if you are a medical student, then you will be able to learn new techniques in surgery first hand and practice it until you get it right or if you are learning earth science, then you could swim through the Great Barrier Reef and get up close to earth's mightiest insects with your instructor.

Microsoft's Metaverse

It's been more than a year and a half since a global pandemic pushed people all around the world to leave their workplaces and learn how to cooperate online. According to Microsoft, remote workers are more productive than the majority of corporate employees who work in offices, but miss each other in various aspects. For example, employees miss the nonverbal communication across the conference room table that says things which can't be said otherwise.



“Mesh for Microsoft Teams” is Microsoft's solution to this challenge, and it will be available in 2022. Mesh for Microsoft Teams aims to make collaboration in the ‘metaverse’ more personal and fun. This solution integrates Microsoft Mesh mixed-reality features with Microsoft Teams' productivity tools, which will allow people in different physical places to participate in interactive and shared holographic experiences. This will also allow people to participate in virtual meetings, send conversations, collaborate on shared documents, and more.

According to Jeff Teper, Microsoft's corporate vice president, Mesh extends Teams features like Together mode and Presenter mode, which make remote and hybrid sessions more engaging and immersive. He also said that users will have a number of options to design and join a Teams meeting as a unique, personalized avatar when Mesh for Teams is in preview in the first half of 2022.



Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella thoughts about the Metaverse

Satya Nadella speaking at the company's Ignite 2021 conference, said that "he can't overestimate on how much of a revolution" the metaverse is. He said that there have been discussions about creating digital representations of the world for years, and "we now have the opportunity to go into that world and engage in it."

Recently, Harvard Business Review's Editor-in-Chief Adi Ignatius sat down for a video call with CEO Satya Nadella to discuss the subject of "the metaverse". In the call the CEO said that Microsoft is developing a completely new platform layer, where the digital and real worlds converge. Nadella added that It's no longer only about gazing at the camera view of a situation but now people can be present in the same room with the coworkers rather than just videoconferencing with them. He used "Mesh for Microsoft Teams" as an example, demonstrating how real-world aspects are transformed into a digital format.

Why are the tech giants talking about “Metaverse” ?

The tech giants are hoping to establish popularity for its AR and VR gadgets by putting metaverse at the front and center. As a social media platform, Facebook is interested in bringing people together to build strong social connections. And because of the fact that metaverse can be accessed remotely from anywhere, it makes it easier for them to connect individuals. It also reduces the amount of noise and distractions they encounter through their digital gadgets, & allowing them to focus more on



engaging with people. Facebook's recent developments in metaverse surely draws one thing, that Meta doesn't want to be known solely as a social media platform. Microsoft on the other hand is more focused in developing metaverse to achieve seamless corporate connections and aims to bring out more productivity from the people working remotely. Microsoft wants people to meet and collaborate in the Teams immersive world by styling up in their favorite avatars. The organization believes that over 250 million Teams platform users will now have an access to a new approach to remote and hybrid work.

So, what can we conclude from the above article?

The conclusion that we draw from the above article is metaverse is not new to the digital world. At the same time, when the metaverse was first mentioned, it did not gain much traction. In the recent past the metaverse has picked up pace in terms of how people across the world could engage in a virtual 3D atmosphere. From the introduction of "Meta" from Facebook to Microsoft's new development i.e, "Mesh for Microsoft Teams" has developed immense curiosity amongst the tech geeks.

There are numerous possibilities that can be accessed through metaverse from the visions outlined above. From fantasy worlds in the games to Immersive business, the metaverse could take you to places you never imagined. So, currently metaverse is still in its early stages but nothing seems too far fetched in a world where technology is shaping our lives everyday.

Stay tuned for the next article, until we bring in more insights on latest trends, innovations and industry collaborations with regards to metaverse and also to keep curiosity alive.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to your rising knowledge.

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