Exploring Metaverse in Future from Experts Perspective

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Abstract

In a sense, the meta-universe is the emergence of a new kind of global media. As the latest form of Internet development, the new global media society, the metaverse, is bound to bring about a change in the form of media communication, and will also bring about a new communication pattern for global communication in the new media era. The main purpose of this study is to explore the experts' perception on metaverse in and issues that have been existed. A qualitative research approach was used to explain the concept of metaverse in the media context, the function of metaverse, how virtual and reality are connected, and how society adopts metaverse through four emerging sub-themes. It is concluded that with the advent of the metaverse era, the new global society will inevitably usher in a change in the form of communication and its platform.

Keywords: *Metaverse, Virtual reality, New media, Global communication*

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Meneroka Metaverse pada Masa Depan dari Perspektif Pakar

Abstrak

Meta-universe menandakan kemunculan bentuk media global yang terbaharu. Oleh kerana ianya tercetus dari proses pembangunan pesat Internet, metaverse, pasti akan membawa perubahan dalam bentuk komunikasi media, dan akan membentuk corak komunikasi baharu dalam jaringan komunikasi global pada era media kontemporari. Tujuan utama makalah ini ditulis adalah untuk meneroka persepsi pakar bidang di China terhadap konsep metaverse dan meneroka beberapa isu yang muncul akibat ledakannya yang semakin merebak ke merata pelusuk dunia. Pendekatan kajian kualitatif digunakan untuk menerangkan konsep metaverse dalam konteks media, fungsi metaverse, bagaimana dunia maya dan realiti disambungkan, dan bagaimana masyarakat menerima pakai metaverse melalui empat sub-tema yang dicanai dari dapatan temubual. Kesimpulannya, kemunculan era metaverse meletakkan masyarakat global dalam posisi untuk menerima dan menyesuaikan diri akibat perkembangan terkini dalam bentuk komunikasi dan platform baharu.

Kata kunci: *Metaverse, Realiti Maya, Media Baharu, Komunikasi Sejagat, Komunikasi Global.*

Introduction

The advent of the global communication era and the advancement of online technology have affected the development of both traditional and new media. People can't even imagine what the media will look like in 10 years. However, based on the general judgment, it is believed that the new media in the future world will focus more on the perception of people and the world and spread the feeling. Information will be both equal and unique to people, media will break through specific physical forms and exist in every corner of our lives, and the medium that connects it all is the metaverse.

To date, there is much controversy about the concept of virtual worlds, but due to rapid development, the economic and cultural framework of virtual worlds is now linked to the physical world. Some people believe that the Metaverse will be the future of human society, and they believe that the universe includes the real society and the virtual universe, and that the two worlds are parallel. However, the scientific position of the Metaverse has not been fully given by scholars so far, and various researchers have expressed their opinions.

In the new era, the metaverse global communication phenomenon is rapidly developing in the context of global communication. On the other hand, the multifaceted influence of metaverse received mixed reactions from public with more people disbelieved in the concept of metaverse, and they hardly accept it because of the insignificant to their current life. The perception is that metaverse is merely a concept (Jin, 2022). This perception is intertwined with commercial purposes. People believe that metaverse is merely a tool used by conglomerate to raise money and gain profit (Jin, 2022). Moreover, the metaverse hides all traces of its own manipulation with unprecedented power and effect, and then suppresses and stifles all possibilities (Jiang, 2021). On the other hand, the arrival of the metaverse will bring global communication into a comprehensive "new" era. On this basis, people can further realize doing things in any scenario. Almost everything offline will be moved online and realized in a more efficient, exciting and imaginative way, that is, the scenario era of metaverse communication (Jiang, 2021).

Of late, there is still more debate about the metaverse, and it seem to be full of perceived benefits for many people, with more advanced technology overcoming many of the drawbacks of earlier virtual worlds and giving people greater hope (Jiang, 2021). No one knows how the metaverse will eventually look like, before its ultimate nature is determined. Thus, it is important to have unbiased perspectives to contribute to the development in making the metaverse more understandable to the public (Jin, 2022).

Hence, this study seeks to explore the following questions: What are the experts' perspectives on the metaverse and its future?

Literature Review

To quote the executive director of the New Media Research Center of Tsinghua University, a scholar advocates that metaverse is a new social reality and Internet application, a cutting-edge technology built by fusing virtual reality with a wide range of content (Sun, Y., 2022). The metaverse is not a deliberately hyped concept, but an explosion brought about by years of technological accumulation and the continuous development of global communication.

The implementation of technology is the core element of the virtual e-world, and the tools of communication have changed radically with the change of technology carriers and recording vehicles; quantum mobile communication + IoT + AI constitute the communication system in the hypermedia era. The metaverse merges and updates many technologies that already exist. Researchers have found that with the rapid advancement of 5G technology, society will see a revolution in the new media industry in the future, thus entering the hypermedia era (Jiang, 2021).

The year 2021 is the first year of metaverse. Domestic and international Internet platforms have joined the metaverse project and invested heavily in it, and a large amount of capital has also poured into the metaverse investment market, and the metaverse boom is rapidly sweeping the world (Kim, 2021). In addition, the metaverse is no longer defined as a purely virtual space, just as “the Internet has profoundly changed the way humans communicate, and social concepts, social psychology and social behavior have profoundly changed the universe”. At the same time, the connotation of content production and communication is constantly developing and updating, and synchronization, openness, sustainable development and system closure are the core features of the metaverse.

Synchronization is reflected in the synchronization and interaction between the virtual world and the real world, as well as the production and dissemination of content in the virtual world: in the virtual world, reality

and virtual are closely connected, and the virtual space presents almost the same as the real world, i.e., the full picture of the real world. (Chen , 2022) synchronized with the virtual world's virtual reality fusion space, and in this context, the scope of content production and dissemination is extended to the real space. In the future, with the gradual maturation of cutting-edge technologies, more industries will implement the content production and dissemination metaverse (Zhang, 2022). Content is produced simultaneously in the real world and virtual world (Yan & Shen, 2022). Traditional mass media is dominated by the use of new technologies such as 6G and XR to realize the co-dissemination of virtual and reality.

Application of agenda setting theory into this study

This study uses agenda-setting theory related to the research topic. This is because the media has an agenda-setting function. Lippmann famously asserts that "the content produced by the news media can influence what people think about images, and Cohen suggests that "the mainstream media can tell people what to think" (Liu, 2018). In news and information dissemination activities related to the metaverse, the media influences how people communicate about the metaverse and how the world views it. As the metaverse concept is hotly hyped by the capital market, the media naturally does not let go of this high-traffic area.

The metaverse is a relatively new concept to the mainstream media, and media outlets with different positions have different angles of coverage. Just because the concept of metaverse is still inconclusive (Cao & Liao, 2021), the more media outlets disseminate it, the higher the audience's attention and enthusiasm will be. However, through the findings of this study, we know that due to the polarization of the media's perspectives on the coverage of the metaverse, people are influenced by the different perspectives of different media, with some people firmly disbelieving in the metaverse and others believing that the metaverse is the future of humanity. Simply put, the more the media emphasizes metaverse communication, the more the public is concerned about the issue. Below is the conceptual framework of this study based on agenda-setting theory.

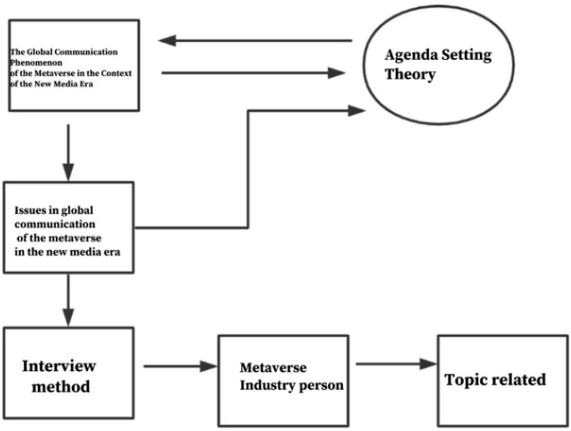

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

This study used qualitative research methods to interview eight virtual reality research experts from the new media industry and the Internet technology industry (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Their backgrounds as individuals may have a significant impact on global communication and the spread of the virtual universe phenomenon, and the insights gained from the interview process will help the researchers understand the latest developments in the metaverse and its persistent problems in development. Using semi-structured interviews, researchers will have major themes to examine based on interview guides (Horsburgh, 2003). The informants selected from relevant experts in the field of metaverse in China, and interviews were recorded, summarized, transcribed, and coded using thematic analysis to answer the research question.

Selection of informants

In this study, a snowball sampling method was used, and the experts' informants were selected from the metaverse industry in northern China. The researcher looks for specific individuals who meet the criteria as a

sample through online forums, postings, and QQ groups related to the metaverse, and then the researcher was introduced to the new group of prospect informants.

Data Analysis

Using thematic analysis, the researchers transcribed the interviews in order to analyze the perspectives of experts' informants on metaverse and its future. Further analysis allowed coding of four emerging themes - perception on metaverse, the functions of the metaverse, virtual-reality interconnection and the society adoption towards metaverse.

The data analysis process is shown in Figure 2.

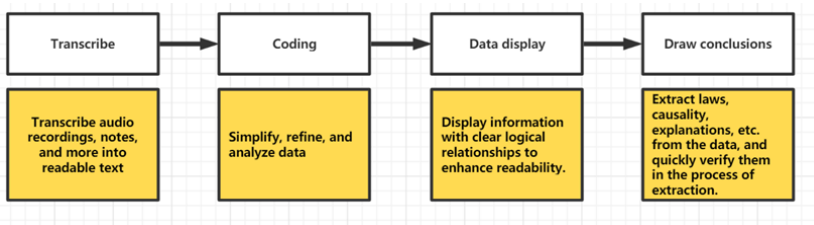

Figure 2: Data processing

Findings and Discussion

In this study, we identified the main themes of the interview as the recent developments in metaverse in new media and its persistent problems in the development of metaverse. Four themes emerged from the study - perception on metaverse, the functions of the metaverse, virtual-reality interconnection and the society adoption towards metaverse.

Perception on Metaverse

Most of the informants believed that the biggest function of the real world is to keep the body running, while the remaining think that after

the globalization of new media, people can do whatever they want in the metaverse. In contrast some of the informants believed that the virtual world is a parallel universe that coexists with the real world.

This shows that most expert are optimistic about the future of the metaverse. They believe that in the context of global new media communication, the functions of the real world have become very single and limited, where only the physical problem of food and clothing needs to be solved, and everything else can be done in the virtual world. The excerpt that supported the finding is as follows:

> *We only need to eat to maintain body function.*
>
> (Respondent 4)

The functions of the metaverse

Most of the informants have the perception that the metaverse mainly solves the function of leisure and entertainment such as doing the shopping, fitness and travel. The statement is supported by the excerpt from the interview as follows:

> *Entertainment in the virtual world, without the constraints of time, space and physical conditions.*
>
> (Respondent 3)

The rest of the informants think it is mainly related to social, educational and work-related functions. Isolated perception thought the metaverse could do anything in each individual life. This shows that most people believe that the main function of the metaverse so far is to solve some basic leisure and entertainment needs of people. In the world of metaverse, people can enjoy shopping, playing games or even traveling, so that the real world will not become such monotonous.

Virtual-Reality Interconnection

Majority of the respondents think the virtual world is connected to the real world. The excerpt from the interview is as follows:

> *Users can choose virtual 3D nodes as avatars in the metaverse.*
>
> (Respondent 6)

This shows that in the new global media context, virtual and reality are interconnected, which can be verified with the support of technological and economic development. This finding is high in trustworthiness because the informants are knowledgeable and long-time practitioner in the relevant industry, thus answers are more representable. Meanwhile, others think that the virtual world is not real, and the remaining believed the virtual world and the real world are independent of each other.

The Society Adoption towards Metaverse

Most of informants believe that people will naturally accept the metaverse in a commercialized environment, and they will gradually accept it when it has an impact on their conservatives' consumption habits and ideology. Some of the informants believe that people will naturally accept the metaverse if it spreads globally. While the remaining informants believe that laggards will actively participate in and accept the metaverse.

The experts emphasized that laggards always prefer to follow their own way, and do not follow the communication trend of the times and are not willing to accept new things but one has to admit that the metaverse is the most new and technical concepts in global communication Thus, the concept is currently difficult for many people to understand and accept, especially the laggards. In the rapid process of global communication, the society will have to embrace it, but it is only a matter of time. The gradual commercialization of metaverse communication will speed up the process of public acceptance.

Conclusion

This paper looks at the four sub-themes above – perception on metaverse, the functions of the metaverse, virtual-reality interconnection and the society adoption towards metaverse. While the metaverse brings new experiences, users in the new media era need new experiential contents in the global communication of metaverse. The first is the new experience of sensory upgrading from two-dimensional to three-dimensional space is the most basic. Thus, the integration of reality and imagination can bring advantages and disadvantages. In addition, interaction co-creation needs to be developed between industry and end users. The real-time dynamic feedback through the metaverse boundary system can bring a new upgraded vision and experience, so that people can get more immersive interaction in the process of globalising communication through metaverse.

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