



The Lost Communities vs Metaverse

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Due the prolonged pandemic, most of us are forced to limit our interactions with other people. For some people, this condition is conducive for work, but for some others isn't. People who got used to regular meetings with their communities, such as choirs, bands, basketball team, etc. rather would get over it or miss it badly. According to a research from Boston University published in medical journal The Lancet Regional Health, depression rates tripled over the course of the first year of the pandemic. During the pre-pandemic, about 8% of U.S. adults experienced depression. However, in a survey of 1,161 people taken between March and April of 2020, that statistic jumped to 28%. Then, when researchers surveyed the same people a year after that, they saw a jump to 32% (CNBC, 2021). Normally, depression rates rise at the beginning of a traumatic event but depletes over time, but not in this case. We do not have any clue how or, to be exact, when will this pandemic end. The uncertainty consumes our mind and body and makes us wonder if this going to last forever.

As we know, one of humans' needs is the feeling of being connected with others. This need

unfortunately cannot be compensated effectively by the situation of pandemic. Maybe some people can still meet their friends or lovers even during this pandemic, however, the connection with community seems like forgotten nowadays. What makes it worse is the fact that people are now getting comfortable of being out of any communities. Based on a survey that the author conducted in December 2021 in his English classes, 92% of the students agreed that they felt comfortable with the online learning. However, when the author asked whether they miss their extracurricular activities, 80 % of them agreed. These data imply that most of the students in STARKI miss being around their communities, however, they are reluctant to have the old daily routines to the school. A question is then arisen, how do they compensate their needs to be connected? The answer is predictable; the internet.

The internet has taken over most of our communications during the pandemic. Since pandemic shuts down schools, businesses and workplaces and forced millions to stay at home for extended lengths of time, people are turning their face to another possible way to stay connected

with their communities (Pew Research, 2021). For some, technology played a lot of parts in this transformation. From video conference platforms to the development of Virtual Reality (VR) technologies, people are proven to always find a way to stay connected with their communities. This phenomenon is believed to impact the ways of people in communicating in the future.

How about the old communities such as choir groups, bands, basketball teams? Are they going to be left cold by people? Will they be forgotten and lost? It's not impossible these communities would transform themselves and adapt with the changes in the future. After the Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the company's new name, Meta, during a virtual event on Thursday, Oct. 28, 2021, everything changes. Mark announced that his company would rebrand as Meta to signal its key investment in the metaverse (Meta Universe). This event is followed by many responses from investors and public figures. They strongly believe that humans interactions in the future will not be limited to any physical restraints. Instead, we can connect better and stronger with our communities

using technology. This "pandemic-friendly" alternative way of communicating has potential to become extremely valuable in the future because of its sensation of reliability. Cathy Hakl, an author, said that, "Just because it happens in a virtual space doesn't make it less real" (Time, 2021).

Available on most desktop and mobile platforms, it is simultaneously a venue for free games, a creation platform that lets users to generate new activities of their own, and a marketplace to sell those experiences, as well as side products like outfits for a personalized avatar. One day, universities, a choir course, or even a capital city could be built in the metaverse. Therefore, the author believes that this Metaverse could one day replace the way people doing business and earn money, advertise their products, entertain themselves with various games, even to become who or whatever they wanted. Thus, it is highly essential for us to stay informed and updated about metaverse so we are not going to be left behind by the changes of how people would define a community in the future./AR/

References

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