

Initial data released on consumer views of the metaverse

Consumers look to the metaverse for more intimate digital experiences

DECEMBER 15, 2021 - [National Research Group](#) (NRG), a leading global insights and strategy firm with 40 years of media, entertainment and technology expertise, released a new study, [For Meta or For Worse: The Promise and Perils of the Metaverse](#), that reveals consumers' hopes and fears for the metaverse.

The majority of consumers—two in three—are excited about the metaverse. To a large extent, that optimism is the product of a desire to reconnect with friends and family after almost two years of living through a pandemic. **80% of consumers say COVID-19 has made me more appreciative of the value of shared experiences with friends and family.** Increasingly, consumers are taking the view that you might be able to have meaningful shared experiences even when it's not possible to be physically present with loved ones. The metaverse, at its best, is seen as a technological bridge for facilitating those connections and injecting more authenticity into our digital lives; **57% of consumers believe that the metaverse has a key role to play in addressing the social problems created by the pandemic.**

But despite this general sense of optimism, there are still some widespread anxieties about the impact the metaverse could have on individuals and society as a whole. **58% of consumers believe that, ultimately, the metaverse will replace social media and become social media 2.0.** As a result, there are widespread fears that the metaverse will fail to address, or could even amplify, the negative effects of social media. Most notably, **80% of consumers believe that social media has made it harder to disconnect from technology and be present in the real world, which is also consumers' top concern about the metaverse.**

To mitigate these concerns, designers of metaverse platforms and services will need to take full advantage of technologies that replicate the sensation of human touch and the experience of in-person interactions. **56% of consumers say the metaverse will be better than existing social media platforms because it will more closely resemble physical interactions.** These technologies could determine how we treat each other in the metaverse; **79% of consumers believe that when people have the ability to physically interact with each other, they treat each other more kindly.**

“Creating a more hopeful Metaverse means resisting the temptation to ‘optimize for attention’ in its design. Instead, the builders of the Metaverse must ‘optimize for intimacy’ and look for ways to enable relationships to be as vibrant and authentic as possible,” says Lauren Xandra, Vice President, Head of Global Marketing, National Research Group.

“If the architects of the Metaverse are willing to embrace the right philosophy, then it has enormous potential to push humanity in a more positive direction, and to repair the threads of our society that have been under so much strain over the past two years,” says Marlon Cumberbatch, Senior Vice President, Head of Global Insights, National Research Group.

CONSUMERS HAVE ALREADY STARTED ENGAGING WITH THE METAVERSE

- 65% of parents are considering purchasing a VR device or other metaverse related gifts (e.g. virtual tokens or digital assets) for their children this holiday season.
- 63% of consumers prefer attending work-related meetings virtually rather than in-person.
- 46% of consumers say they intend to spend more time in the metaverse in the future.

THE METAVERSE IS EXPECTED TO HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON SOCIETY

- Two in three consumers want a new social media where we can engage in a virtual world as if we were there in person.
- 63% of consumers say *the metaverse will have a positive impact on my ability to educate myself and learn new skills.*
- 63% of consumers agree *virtual reality technology can help compensate for the loss of physical interaction caused by the pandemic.*

AUTHENTICITY AND INTIMACY WILL BE KEY TO MAKING THE METAVERSE A SUCCESS

- 84% of consumers say *the ability to physically touch and interact with others makes me feel more connected to them and makes my interactions with them feel more authentic.*
- 78% of consumers say *when interacting with people virtually, I miss the ability to physically touch and interact with them.*
- 61% of consumers are interested in virtual collaborative experiences with tactile or 'touchable' interaction.

"A hug, a touch from your partner, a brush on the shoulder - these are critical human experiences. For the Metaverse to become a milieu for human culture, then we need to solve for personal sensation; presence means more than 360 degrees of vision, the ability to control an individual avatar, and a rumble pack" says Matthew Ball, VC, who contributed expertise as part of the study.

"Our biggest hope for the 'metaverse', is that it delivers better and more engaging ways to connect and bond with others. Online, we miss non-verbal cues, body language, sensory experiences, and we're limited in ways to communicate emotions. Perhaps the greatest opportunity this presents is to enable meaningful shared experiences rich in moments that matter: holding your mother's hand in a moment of need, hi-fiving your kin in celebration, using your hands to feel and explore fantastic worlds with your friends, and playing with superpowers you can physically feel." says Mauricio Teran, Co-Founder of Emerge.

METHODOLOGY

From March-May 2021, NRG conducted a study on behalf of Emerge, a metaverse start-up. In November-December, NRG independently conducted follow-up studies building on the original insights. The quantitative surveys reached over 4500 consumers ages 18-64 in the United States.

ABOUT NATIONAL RESEARCH GROUP

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