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Avatars and Identity in the Metaverse: Navigating the Potentials and Pitfalls of Digital Self-Representation

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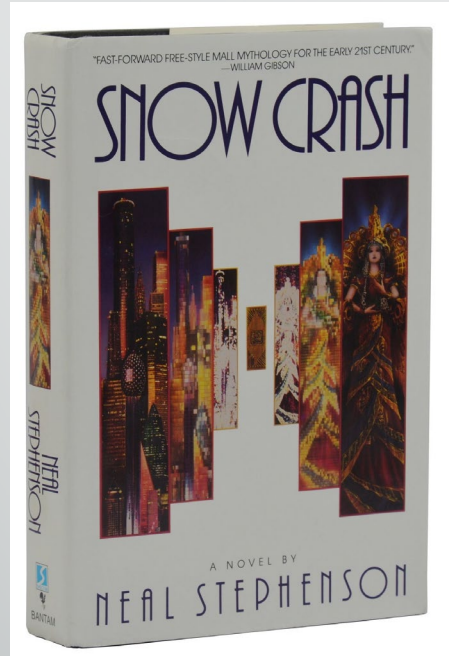


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Myrto Dimitriou is a social anthropologist, origami artist and inspirational coach.

- Holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Policy and Social Anthropology from Panteion University (with a scholarship from the State Scholarship Foundation)
- Master's in HR & Business Organization from Rome Business School
- Business Coaching at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.
- Holds a diploma from the Nippon Origami Association and is a two-time Guinness Record Holder for creating the largest origami mosaics.
- With over 15 years of experience, she has impacted over 160,000 people through her educational programs and seminars focusing on team-building and personal development.
- Myrto's work integrates origami with team efficiency, fostering motivation, self-awareness, and team cohesion, following her interest in exploring the team dynamics and examining the impact of creativity on productivity.

What is the Metaverse?



Meta=
Beyond



(Uni)
Verse

A massively scaled and interoperable network of real time rendered 3D virtual worlds that can be experienced synchronously and persistently by an effectively unlimited number of users with an individual sense of presence, and with continuity of data



The global metaverse market is expected to grow to \$936.57 billion by 2030

Grandview Research

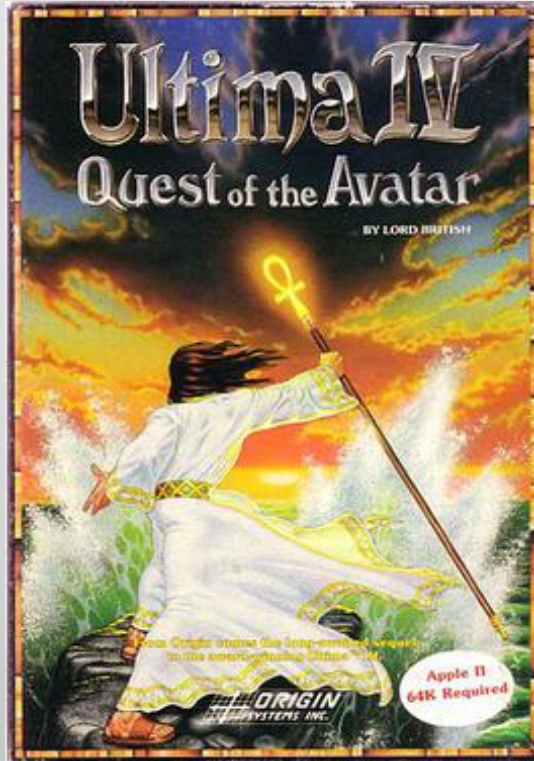
Avatars: definition and types

“Avatar” comes from the Sanskrit word avatāra meaning “descent”.

Within Hinduism, it means a manifestation of a deity in bodily form on earth: “an incarnation, embodiment, or manifestation of a person or idea”.



Avatars: definition and types



Avatars: definition and types

In computing, an avatar is a graphical representation of a user, the user's character, or persona.

In the metaverse, avatars are digital representations of yourself, tied to your identity or digital account. They can take the form of humans, animals, or even inanimate objects



Identity and self-representation

Erikson's definition of identity: "Ego identity, then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate community."

Avatars and self-representation

According to Lin and Wang (2014) there are four core patterns of motivation to create avatars:

1. Self-expression: Avatars can serve as a medium for self-expression, allowing users to present their desired image or identity to others.
2. Socialization: Avatars can facilitate socialization and relationship-building by enabling users to interact with others in virtual environments.
3. Role-playing: Avatars can allow users to explore and experiment with different roles and identities in a safe and controlled environment.
4. Identity exploration: Avatars can provide a space for users to explore and understand their own identities, as well as the identities of others.

Avatars and self-representation

The Proteus effect describes a phenomenon in which the behavior of an individual, within virtual worlds, is changed by the characteristics of their avatar.

The Proteus effect proposes that the visual characteristics and traits of an avatar are associated with specific behavioral stereotypes and expectations. When an individual believes that others will expect certain behaviors from them because of their avatars' appearance, they will engage in those expected behaviors.

Avatars and self-representation

- People behave more confidently with taller avatars (Yee & Bailenson, 2007; Yee et al., 2009)
- Individuals may act friendlier if their avatars are more attractive (Messinger et al, 2008; Yee & Bailenson, 2007)
- Individuals may report more negative and aggressive thoughts if their avatars are dressed in black or in Ku Klux Klan outfits (Peña, Hancock, & Merola, 2009)
- Individuals may report less aggression if their avatars are males facing females in battle (Eastin, 2006)
- Participants who wore sexualized avatars internalized the avatar's appearance and self-objectified, reporting more body-related thoughts than those wearing nonsexualized avatars. (Fox et al., 2013)



The emergence of the Metaverse represents a significant evolution in the digital landscape, offering unprecedented opportunities for interaction, identity exploration, and immersion in virtual environments.

The role of critical thinking becomes pivotal as it guides us through this voyage, enabling us to navigate the complexities of this new world thoughtfully and effectively.



MEET ME
IN THE
METAVERSE

Thank you!