

# Video Games as Narration and Applying Video Game Mechanics: Metaverse the next step of social media and narration

Harsha A G, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

**Abstract:** Video games are the most versatile of narrative forms, as they amalgamate the narrative structures of both virtual narration and written narration. Video game mechanics have been utilised in many fields to create new technology. The Metaverse employs video game mechanics to create a virtual online world in the form of virtual reality and augmented reality, where people interact by creating and transferring information. Will the Metaverse emulate problems of financial systems, gender disparities and class inequalities, in its drive to emulate the real world?

**Keywords:** Metaverse, Class, Gender, Narration, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality.

Video Games just like comics and movies have been ignored from literary studies for a long time because they have been considered as nothing more than entertainment for children. Janet Murray in *Hamlet in the Holodeck* explains how narration changes with the change in technology. What was once an oral tradition evolved into written narratives because of the invention of paper and later the printing press. Janet Murray in 1997 predicted the future of narration will be through the digital medium and in the form of video games. Video games during the time of her prediction relied on less graphic intensive technology compared to the technology available in 2021. It is also a fact that the gaming industry in one of the fastest growing industry and may overtake the revenue of sports and movies combined in the near future. The appeal in video games unlike other narrative mediums is the branching story model which most recent games follow. Depending on the choices the player takes, the narrative of the game changes. But even this form of narration has its limitations. In the game *Fallout 4* the narrative can end in four ways, depending on the choices of the players. The limitation is that narration cannot have infinite consequences based on the choices of the players, but a finite number of options as coded by the developers. Using the concept of narration in video games, Facebook is trying to create a virtual world where people can create

narration without limitations. In other words, Facebook is trying to create a virtual emulation of the real world where people are in control of everything they create.

Video Games in their early stages catered to a limited audience of children and in particular male gamers. But video games have rocketed in popularity, parallel to that of technological advancement. The quality of graphics has simultaneously boosted the consumer base of video games. There has been a steady increase in female and adult gamers in the early 90s and the 21st century. This is due to the increase in availability of gaming devices and internet access. Another reason for the increase in consumer base is because of video games mirroring the narrative structure of movies with the added element of control of characters by the player. Movies are linear and the audience have no control of how the story progresses or don't control the actions of the characters. Video games have improved this narrative style by using cut scenes to narrate crucial parts of the plot and giving players control of characters in between cutscenes. This gives an illusion of immersion and the role-playing element (projection of a player's personality) in games unlike that of movies. But the most notable innovation in narration is the branching story line concept prevalent in most narrative video games. This allows players to make choices in the game which in turn will affect the outcome of the plot.

I find myself anticipating a new kind of storyteller, one who is half hacker, half bard. (HOTH 23)

Janet Murray viewed people with coding skills as a new form of digital artists who would change the way the world functions. But recent sandbox technology in video games has allowed players to create without having to learn coding. Although it has limitations in its current form, it can allow anyone to create virtual content within virtual worlds like the metaverse. Video games might become the primary source of entertainment in the future because of the socializing element added to it by connecting with other players through the internet (with internet getting faster, there's barely any latency, and it takes a fraction of a second for player's actions on one device to be projected onto another device). This technology has been utilised by Zuckerberg's 'Metaverse Project' which will create a virtual world accessed through various devices. There are endless ways in which the meta

world can be used by people. As an example, take the game Skyrim which has virtual books scattered across the game, players can pick up these books and read them like they would in the real world. This same concept can be used in the Metaverse to create a virtual library where people can meet each other and read books in the library together. This is just the tip of the iceberg, the applications are endless. The Metaverse can create cities with buildings for specific purposes. People can buy land and property in this virtual world just like in the real world. If this acquires a huge base, it could potentially mean people will live 2 lives, one in the real world and another in the virtual (This isn't to say that people don't already live 2 lives, but the Metaverse in its prime will blur the line between the virtual and real). The time and resources it takes people to gather in one place to do their business can be significantly reduced with the metaverse, but it does come with its fair share of issues which need to be addressed.

The perpetual feedback between a player's choice, the computer's almost-instantaneous response, the player's response to that response, and so on- is a cybernetic loop, in which the demarcating the end of the player's consciousness and the beginning of the computer's worlds blurs. (CDSSS 1999)

Friedman states the immersion computer games have on the players. But with metaverse this immersion will blur out the line between the real and the virtual. People already use the virtual world for narration, and it had become the dominant mode of communication. Politicians in today's world reach out to their support base through social media platforms. Because of the pandemic people across the world moved online video platforms for academic learning. If paper is made redundant in the distant future, it is safe to predict the dominance of the virtual world as the primary mode of narration and information transfer. Games like Hell blade Senua's Sacrifice VR and Half Life Alyx are adaptations of popular video games into VR. Drama in its early form was tangible and performed in front of a live audience. Drama later transformed into the modern entertainment system we see in the form of TVs and PCs (from the tangible to the virtual). If Metaverse becomes the primary form of entertainment and communication of the future, it can transform the current narrative structures and emulate them in the form of AR and VR medium. This can further be complicated by further technological developments in the form of wearable's which enable the user to feel virtual objects in the real world (like in the movie Ready Player One).

On October 28th 2021 Mark Zuckerberg in a virtual meeting announced Facebook's switch Meta. Although this move by the company can be attributed to the whistle blower incident which revealed Facebook's carelessness towards mental health. Most critics see this as

a rebranding to save the company's falling approval rating. But Zuckerberg also announced the launch of the Metaverse alongside the rebranding of the company. Top executives of Facebook have made it clear Metaverse will take time to build, Facebook's senior executive made it clear it would take the company 15 years for Metaverse to come into fruition.

The main focus is on Zuckerberg's announcement of the medium through which people will connect to the metaverse. According to him Metaverse will rely on VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality) to connect people to one another. VR is completely a virtual world created by anyone who can code and AR will rely on integrating real world with that of the virtual world using hologram technology (Hologram tech is still in nascent stage and is too expensive). VR tech is already used in games and there already exists VR socialising spaces like VRChat. An example of AR is depicted in the Marvel movie Ironman, Tony Stark uses AR when designing his suit. The other most significant announcement was Metaverse will allow people who have already do work remotely, to work through the metaverse.

If the next step to social media is the metaverse, it'll have larger implications and a unique set of issues as well as advantages. It comes as no surprise the implications' metaverse will have on people of low-income groups. Anyone who don't have the access to technology and fast internet to run the metaverse will be left out of the metaverse. Even within the metaverse people of lower income groups might have a significant disadvantage compared to people of high-income groups. Pay to win games have created an uneven playing field for players who cannot afford extra game mechanics or paid game advantages. If the same model is followed in the metaverse, it'll create a class divide within the virtual world. The advantage current social media platforms have is that anyone can participate as long as they have a device with internet. If the metaverse follows the same business model as pay to win games with micro transaction, it'll create a new form of class divide in the virtual space. This could essentially mean that the lower income groups will get into the metaverse in the later stages and will have a significant disadvantage in competing with people who have already established themselves in the virtual space. In other words, the virtual world will just be an emulation of the real-world social hierarchies. Gamers already exchange in game currency with fiat currency and crypto currencies have proven the validity people give to virtual assets; metaverse will make this a new norm where virtual currency is just as valuable as fiat currencies issued by governments.

A day when we would log on to a 3-D virtual space via the internet travel about in it, and conduct business and other important parts of our daily routines in it. (Stephenson 1992)

This was envisioned by Stephenson in his novel Snow Crash. Fiction writers like Stephenson saw the potential in internet and its eventual evolution from the real to the virtual. Face book Inc's Nick Clegg stated Face book's metaverse would take 15 years to come into fruition. There is no doubt as to the next step of the evolution of the internet, it's now only a question of when and what are implications it'll have on the real-world.

Video games since their inception have catered primarily to a male audience and have created a gender divide. But this divide has been steadily narrowing due to various reasons. One of the obvious reasons is the market potential game companies have in tapping into the female consumer base. The other reason for the increased female participation in video games is the phenomenon of female video game streamers, who have a significant influence on the video game market. According to Forbes the numbers of female gamers in Asia constitute 40-45% of the market and this number varies depending on the country. Because video games are completely dependent on technology, people in low-income countries will not have an even ground and women in particular will be disproportionately affected. There are other factors such as genres which influence the gender gap in video games. Metaverse will have to make sure not to repeat the mistake video game developers did in the early stages. Because Metaverse integrates social and economic lives of people, it will be disastrous if it creates a gender gap.

Laws and policing regarding virtual content are still vague and there aren't enough laws, resources or personnel to monitor and police online crime. Metaverse is the concept of creating an entirely new world, with its own complexities and needs completely different laws to monitor and maintain order. Monitoring the virtual world is fragile as it fringes on privacy breach, and it is difficult to determine the extent to which individual companies or governments can access people's information, in order to maintain the rule of law. If metaverse is rushed without a proper safety net and laws to govern it. The social disparities of the real world will be replicated in the virtual world. This is complicated by the issue of privacy and how much control corporations and governments have on the information generated by the people.

## REFERENCES

- Murray, Janet Horowitz; Hamlet on the holodeck: the future of narrative in cyberspace. New York: Free Press, 1997.
- Friedman, Ted; Civilization and Its Discontents: Simulation, Subjectivity, and Space, 1999.
- Mukherjee, Supantha. "Facebook working on ways to protect users in the 'metaverse' - senior exec Clegg." November 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/facebook-working-ways-protect-users-metaverse-senior-exec-clegg-2021-11-02/>
- Yokoi, Tomoko. "Female Gamers Are On The Rise. Can The Gaming Industry Catch Up?" March 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomokoyokoi/2021/03/04/female-gamers-are-on-the-rise-can-the-gaming-industry-catch-up/?sh=14809758f9fe>

### How to cite this article?

**Harsha A G** " Video Games as Narration and Applying Video Game Mechanics: Metaverse the next step of social media and narration", International Journal of Trends in English Language and Literature (IJTELL) 2(4), PP: 36-38, 2021, DOI:<http://doi.org/10.53413/IJTELL.2021.24010>