

Will Metaverse be NextG Internet? Vision, Hype, and Reality

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Abstract—Metaverse, with the combination of the prefix “meta” (meaning transcending) and the word “universe”, has been deemed as the next-generation (NextG) Internet. It aims to create a shared virtual space that connects all virtual worlds via the Internet, where users, represented as digital avatars, can communicate and collaborate as if they are in the physical world. Nevertheless, there is still no unified definition of the Metaverse. This article first presents our vision of what the key requirements of Metaverse should be and reviews what has been heavily advocated by the industry and the positions of various high-tech companies. It then briefly introduces existing social virtual reality (VR) platforms that can be viewed as early prototypes of Metaverse and conducts a reality check by diving into the network operation and performance of two representative platforms, Workrooms from Meta and AltspaceVR from Microsoft. Finally, it concludes by discussing several opportunities and future directions for further innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although the term Metaverse has been around for almost 30 years since it was coined by Neal Stephenson in his 1992 science fiction novel *Snow Crash*, we are still in the early stage of actually building the Metaverse, which envisions an immersive successor to the Internet. The development of Metaverse has gone through several stages. Retrospectively, the text-based interactive games, such as MUD (multi-user dungeon) that emerged in the late 1970s, could be viewed as the earliest prototypes of Metaverse, even before the term was literally introduced. They define a multiplayer virtual world with role playing, interactive fiction, and online chat. The second phase happened during the postmillennial decade with the development of commercial virtual worlds such as Second Life¹. It then embraced fully 3D virtual worlds such as OpenSimulator², which is largely compatible with Second Life.

In the current stage, with the flourishing of 5G and mobile immersive computing [5], there has been a surge of research & development on the Metaverse in both industry and academia. We have now entered an open development phase of the Metaverse, which is widely considered as a collection of 3D virtual worlds connected via the Internet [4] and enabled by various immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality (MR) [13], which are often collectively referred to as extended reality (XR). While there is still no unified

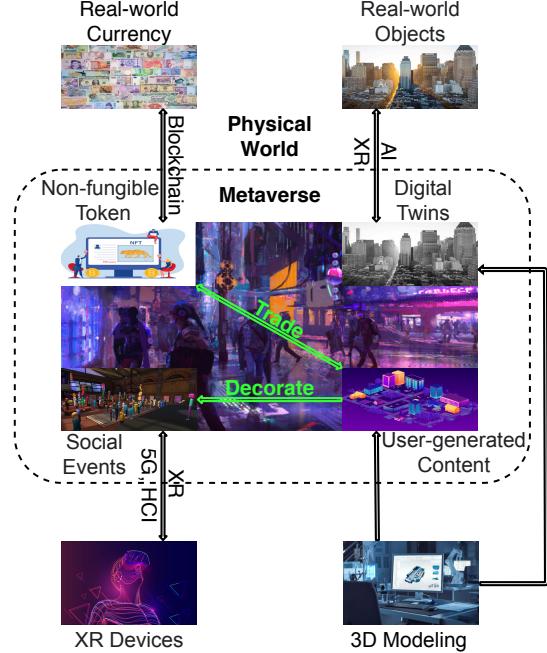


Figure 1: Elements of the Metaverse and their interaction with the physical world.

definition of the Metaverse, it is broadly deemed as the next-generation (NextG) Internet.

Figure 1 illustrates the basic elements in the Metaverse and how they interact with the physical world. In general, users with XR devices access the Metaverse and participate in its various social events, whose smooth execution is enabled by techniques such as 5G and HCI (human-computer interaction). Users are free to create their own content via 3D modeling to decorate social events in the Metaverse. The content can be traded using non-fungible token (NFT) through a decentralized blockchain. Physical objects can be presented in the Metaverse as digital twins that are generated via 3D modeling and consumed with XR devices assisted by artificial intelligence (AI).

In this article, we present our vision of the Metaverse by discussing its key technical requirements (Section II). We then review recent advances in the industry and introduce the advocates of various key players (Section III). After that, we provide an overview of existing social VR platforms, the early prototype of Metaverse that combines online social networks and VR technologies, and compare their unique features (Section IV). We then conduct a first-of-its-kind reality check to understand the networking protocol usage and system performance of two represent-

¹<https://secondlife.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

²<http://opensimulator.org/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

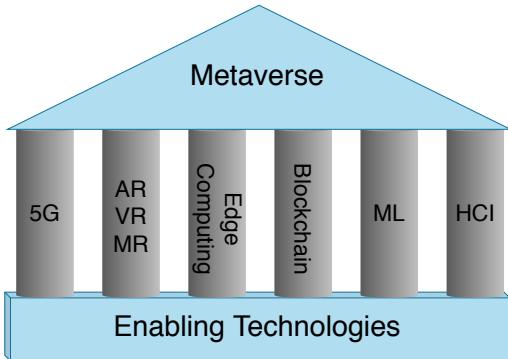


Figure 2: Enabling Technologies of the Metaverse.

ative platforms, Meta’s Horizon Workrooms³ (referred to as Workrooms) and Microsoft’s AltspaceVR⁴ (Section V). Finally, we discuss the technical challenges, opportunities, and directions for future research activities (Section VI) and conclude this article.

II. DEFINING METAVERSE

Existing Definitions and Enabling Technologies. Metaverse has been viewed as a new type of online social network, and arguably NextG Internet. It would be the convergence of digital second life (to “escape” to) and virtual reality (for exploration), mimicking user interaction in the real world. A narrow definition of Metaverse is thus a universal virtual world focusing on social interaction, which connects multiple 3D virtual environments via the Internet (*i.e.*, a network of virtual worlds [4]). We envision that the Metaverse should evolve to *seamlessly integrate the physical world and the virtual space*, for example, via digital twin and digital economies (*e.g.*, cryptocurrencies).

Objects in the physical world can interact with the Metaverse. They can generate their digital twins through 3D modeling and keep their digital twins presenting the same state as what is happening in the real world. Conversely, after the digital twin is manipulated/processed in the Metaverse, its physical-world state will be changed accordingly. For example, BMW has used Omniverse⁵ from Nvidia to construct a fully functional digital twin of its automobile factory, reducing manufacturing costs and increasing productivity.

While there is no consensus on the definition, as shown in Figure 2, it is commonly agreed that the Metaverse is built on and integrates technologies such as 5G, XR, edge computing, blockchain, machine learning (ML), and HCI.

- **5G** provides a faster, lower latency, more scalable network than 4G. According to the frequency bands, 5G can be divided into low-band (below 1 GHz), mid-band (between 1 and 6 GHz), and high-band (millimeter-wave,

³<https://www.oculus.com/workrooms/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

⁴<https://altvr.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

⁵<https://www.nvidia.com/en-us/omniverse/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

mmWave, from 24 to 39 GHz). Low-band 5G is used for extensive coverage and is ideal for deployment in rural areas. Mid-band 5G has been commonly deployed in metropolitan areas. High-band 5G can reach a maximum throughput of, in theory, 10-20 Gbps. However, it works in only a small radius, and thus is more useful in urban areas and crowded locations (*e.g.*, shopping malls).

- **AR/VR/MR** augment or supplant our view of the world, and are a key to the success of Metaverse [11]. VR makes people fully immersed in the virtual world, and social VR is widely considered an important component of the Metaverse. AR enables digital twins in the Metaverse to be overlaid on physical objects in a perceptible way, effectively connecting the Metaverse with the physical world. MR allows users to interact with virtual objects, by creating more connections and collaborative relationships among the physical world, virtual space, and users [13].

• **Edge Computing** is a computing paradigm that moves computation and data storage closer to users. The advantageous performance of edge computing in reducing latency for XR has made it an important backbone for building the Metaverse. Several telecom carriers have undertaken a project called HoloVerse to test the best 5G edge network infrastructure for efficient deployment of services in the Metaverse⁶. Meanwhile, Niantic, the producer of *PokémonGo*, has joined forces with telecom carriers to explore how 5G edge computing can enhance the quality of experience (QoE) for AR games⁷.

- **Blockchain** ensures the security of data records and generates trust without requiring trusted third parties. It is closely related to user-generated content (UGC) such as digital assets that can greatly enrich the Metaverse [12]. For example, NFT, which is used for trading in the Metaverse, is a data unit on the blockchain. Defining the ownership of UGC in the Metaverse is a practical challenge, as digital assets can be copied and reproduced. NFT provides an effective way to prove that UGC is unique and non-fungible (*i.e.*, non-interchangeable). It enables owners of digital content to sell/trade their property via smart contracts in the decentralized crypto space (*e.g.*, using cryptocurrencies),

• **Machine Learning**, especially deep learning (DL), is an important branch of artificial intelligence (AI) that enables machines to learn from massive amounts of data. Undoubtedly, the Metaverse will generate huge amounts of complex data, providing rich opportunities for DL. For example, we can use digital twins in the Metaverse for intelligent healthcare. Laaki *et al.* [8] designed a prototype for remote surgery using digital twins of patients. Surgical operations on the digital twin will be repeated on the patient using a robotic arm assisted by DL.

- **HCI** focuses on the interaction between users and computers. Given that the final stage of the Metaverse

⁶<https://yaho.it/3AD6dsu> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

⁷<https://bit.ly/3L1Uj0r> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

will interconnect the physical world and digital twins, it is, therefore, necessary to enable users to interact with digital twins in real-time and in multiple ways. The most important problem to be addressed is user input. The key limitation of existing input devices (*e.g.*, mice and keyboards) is that they cannot free the users' hands and accurately reflect their body movements. Recently, researchers have begun to study freehand manipulation that allows more intuitive and concrete interaction in the Metaverse. These techniques often rely on computer vision and brain-computer interfaces.

Our Vision. Next, we present our vision of the Metaverse by illustrating three key requirements on scalability, accessibility, and security, privacy, and legal issues.

Requirement #1: Scalability. With the Internet transitioning to the Metaverse, we expect the first practical challenge faced by any Metaverse platform is the scalability issue. As our preliminary investigation in Section V shows, currently Workrooms, an early prototype of the Metaverse, can hardly scale up to tens of participants. When more participants access Workrooms, the corresponding uploading and downloading demand increases proportionally. The platform, either serving just as a relay or performing further content processing in the middle, will quickly become a bottleneck.

As can be expected, the bandwidth requirement of Metaverse could be huge. On one hand, compared to traditional 2D videos, the bandwidth for transmitting up to 16K 360-degree panorama [15] or 3D volumetric content [6] to XR headsets could be high. On the other hand, the Metaverse is full of social elements, which further increases the bandwidth requirement. Currently, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines the standard broadband service as 25 Mbps in downlink and 3 Mbps in uplink [9]. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to guarantee the scalability of Metaverse by leveraging advanced networking techniques.

Requirement #2: Accessibility. Today's Internet access does not need specific devices. For the Metaverse, however, users are required to wear headsets for better interaction in the virtual world. It greatly limits the accessibility of the Metaverse, mainly due to the inconvenience of such access. We envision that in the future, new "interfacing" devices should be developed for accessing the Metaverse without wearing any additional device, and glasses or contact lenses would replace the cumbersome headsets [11]. Moreover, interaction techniques, other than just display would need to be in place so that users can not only see in the virtual world, but also feel, smell, taste, *etc.*, like what we do in the physical world [4].

Besides the interfacing devices of the Metaverse, another potential obstacle is network accessibility. The average 25 Mbps downlink bandwidth in the U.S. [9] is far from the demand of even a rudimentary Metaverse – the bandwidth requirement would go up with more and more user-

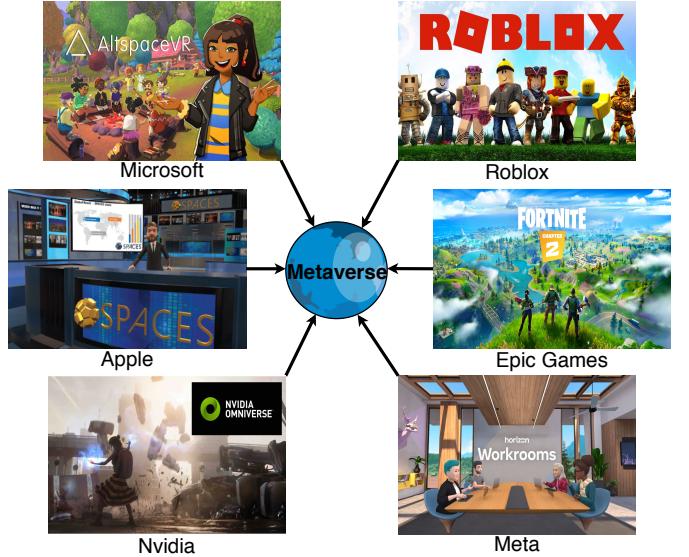


Figure 3: Current development of the Metaverse in industry.

generated content and assets in the Metaverse. Yet another issue related to accessibility is the interoperability across different implementations of the Metaverse, especially when users move from one platform to another. The user experience should be seamless without any interruption.

Requirement #3: Security, Privacy, and Legal Issues. Similar to online social networks, in the Metaverse, there will be security and privacy issues, such as attacks on user authentication and impersonation [2]. Moreover, there will be new types of challenges, for example, securing the NFT, which involves the physical world when users buy and trade assets. Moreover, online harassment can be exacerbated in the immersive environment of Metaverse by features including free avatar movements and enhanced feelings of presence and embodiment [1]. Furthermore, given that the Metaverse assets (content) are user generated, there will be copyright issues. The protection of content ownership, the detection of copyright infringement, and the licensing of such content have not been well laid out. Considering that there will be multiple Metaverse platforms, transferring users' assets from one to another is a practical issue to be addressed. Such portability and interoperability demand not only standardizations from the industry but also legal enforcement.

III. INDUSTRY TRENDS

In this section, we briefly introduce the current development of Metaverse in the industry, which is summarized in Figure 3.

Many high-tech companies have joined the Metaverse arena. Meta is conceivably the most notable among all that have invested in this space. In September 2019, Meta (named Facebook then) announced *Facebook Horizon*, a VR social platform. In July 2021, Facebook announced the transition into a Metaverse company within five years. To echo this vision, in October 2021, Facebook changed its

name to Meta. Meta considers VR as the foundation to build the Metaverse. Its VR headset, Oculus Quest 2, has sold over 10 million units, making it the state-of-the-art and best-selling VR device.

Nvidia announced a plan to create the first virtual collaboration and simulation platform called Omniverse in August 2021. This platform can be used to connect 3D worlds into a shared virtual universe and create digital twins, simulating real-world buildings and factories. Omniverse has three key components. The first one is Omniverse Nucleus, a database engine that allows multiple users to connect and create a scene together. The second one is the rendering and animation engine to simulate the virtual world. The third one is Nvidia CloudXR for streaming XR content to client devices. Meanwhile, Omniverse integrates AI to train digital twins in the Metaverse.

Epic Games, a video game company famous for its Unreal game engine, announced a \$1 billion investment to build the Metaverse. In its most popular game, *Fortnite*, which is regarded as a prototype of Metaverse, users can create their avatars, buy digital items, and enjoy movies and concerts. Roblox is another company in this arena. As the largest UGC game platform, players in Roblox can create their own games and virtual worlds. They can buy, sell, and create virtual items that can be used to decorate their avatars. However, Roblox mainly targets game players and provides limited XR support.

Although most companies embrace the Metaverse’s concepts and vision, cautions and doubts also emerge. While both Apple and Microsoft have virtual space applications⁸, they consider that seamlessly connecting the Metaverse and the physical world is a key to its success, if not more important than the Metaverse itself. They believe that the purpose of creating the virtual space is just to enable people to improve productivity and reduce production costs in the physical world.

IV. SOCIAL VR PLATFORMS

Since social VR is a major component of Metaverse, we provide an overview of several commercial social VR platforms, highlighting their key features and differences. Social VR, regarded as the future of social media, allows users to interact with each other as avatars in the virtual world, communicating and collaborating as if they are in the physical world. With the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people around the world have to stay at home and lack social interactions, leading to a surging demand for novel applications of social media. Thus, predictably, the demand for social VR will continue to grow, as it not only satisfies people’s social needs but also gives them a sense of spatial presence.

Key Features. After an extensive survey, we focus on the eight most popular social VR platforms, VRChat⁹,

⁸Apple acquired a VR company, Spaces, in 2020, and Microsoft acquired a social VR platform called AltspaceVR back in 2017.

⁹<https://hello.vrchat.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

Platforms	Browser	Smartphone	PC App	Open Source
VRChat	✗	✗	✓	✗
Rec Room	✗	✓	✓	✗
AltspaceVR	✗	✗	✓	✗
Mozilla Hubs	✓	—	✗	✓
Anyland	✗	✗	✓	✗
Cluster	✗	✓	✓	✗
Bigscreen	✗	✗	✓	✗
Workrooms	✓	✗	✗	✗

Table I: Comparison of popular social VR platforms.

Rec Room¹⁰, AltspaceVR, Mozilla Hubs¹¹, Anyland¹², Cluster¹³, Bigscreen¹⁴, and Workrooms. As a first step, we examine them from the following perspectives: i) Whether they are accessible from Web browsers? ii) Do they support smartphones? iii) Do they have PC applications? and iv) Are they open-source?

Table I presents a summary of these platforms. We find that most platforms currently have limited support for smartphones and browser-based user access. Only Mozilla Hubs and Workrooms offer browser-access options, while only Rec Room and Cluster provide smartphone applications for both Android and iOS. While Mozilla Hubs supports browser-based access on both PC and mobile devices, Workrooms enables browser access on PC only. Furthermore, although most platforms have their PC applications for Windows, only AltspaceVR and Cluster have both Windows and macOS applications. Meanwhile, Mozilla Hubs and Workrooms do not have PC applications, and thus users can use them through only browsers on PC. Finally, Mozilla Hubs is the only open-source social VR platform among them.

User Experience. We experiment with the above platforms and highlight their advantages in terms of QoE.

- **VRChat:** Users can build their own games in the virtual world. It allows an impressive amount of customization (e.g., users can upload any 3D model as the avatar).
- **Rec Room:** It enables cross-play between different users with VR headsets, PCs, and smartphones. The interaction between users with different devices is smooth.
- **AltspaceVR:** The ambient lighting of the virtual scene matches the shadows, making the lighting of the scene realistic. There are many environments and events initiated from all over the world, with a rich social element.
- **Mozilla Hubs:** Users can customize their applications with its source code and deploy their own servers. They can use Hubs through browsers without downloading any application, which is lightweight and convenient.
- **Anyland:** It is a “sandbox universe”, where users can build anything (even the avatar) they need using tools that exist in the physical world.

¹⁰<https://recroom.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

¹¹<https://hubs.mozilla.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

¹²<https://altvr.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

¹³<https://cluster.co/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

¹⁴<https://www.bigscreenvr.com/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

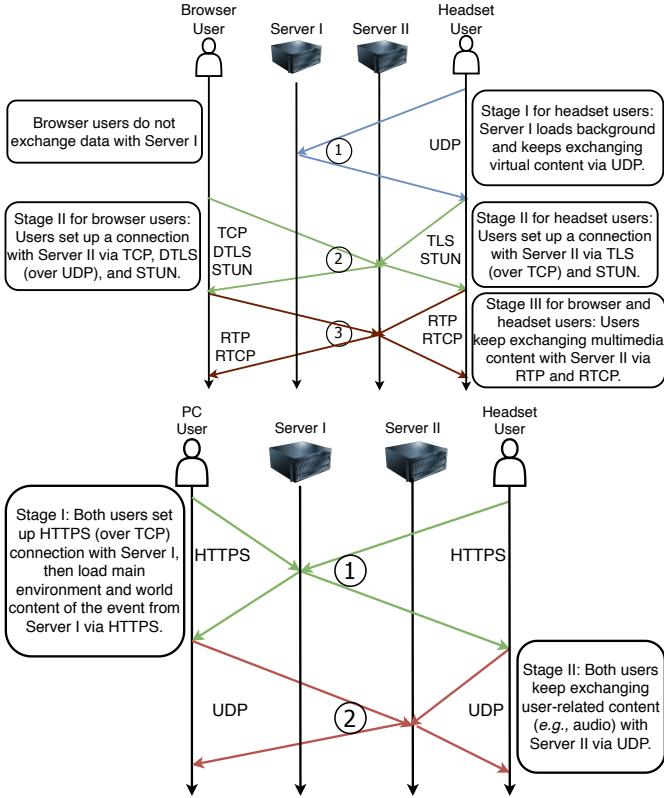


Figure 4: The process of establishing connections and exchanging data between the clients and the servers for Workrooms (top) and AltspaceVR (bottom).

- **Cluster:** It bears a large capacity for public events, with up to 500 people participating in a four-hour event at the same time, and allows people to organize events for free.
- **Bigscren:** Users can play PC games in the virtual world and watch together videos (e.g., Netflix and YouTube) played on PCs in a private or public room.
- **Workrooms:** It supports physical keyboards, which are much more convenient than the virtual ones manipulated by a controller. Moreover, users can write using the controller as a pen by flipping it around.

V. CASE STUDIES

In this section, we conduct a reality check of the Metaverse by comparing the network operation and performance of Workrooms and AltspaceVR. In our previous work [3], we have dissected how Workrooms works. Our key findings are as follows:

- Workrooms primarily employs two servers to communicate with its clients, one is for delivering virtual content and the other is for streaming/exchanging audio and video data, as shown in Figure 4 (top).
- With two headset users in Workrooms, each user's downlink throughput is about 2–3 Mbps and the uplink throughput is \sim 0.6 Mbps (Figure 5a). However, the downlink throughput linearly increases with the number of headset users, indicating that the current design of Workrooms may face scalability issues (Figure 5b).

- Workrooms does not consider situations not requiring server involvement, but simply lets the server process and forward all users' data, resulting in unnecessary communication overhead (Figure 5c).

We perform the same experiments on AltspaceVR to understand the differences between the two platforms. We conduct a series of experiments with a 3-minute duration. We use a Macbook Pro as the WiFi access point, which is connected to a high-speed home network via Ethernet for Internet access. We capture and analyze network traffic using the Wireshark packet analyzer¹⁵. We conduct most experiments with two users, U1 and U2, both using Oculus Quest 2 to access Workrooms and AltspaceVR.

Network Protocol Analysis. We first compare the network protocols employed by Workrooms and AltspaceVR. Besides headsets, we use Google Chrome to access Workrooms and the Windows application to access AltspaceVR from a PC. We find that users' devices communicate with two servers in both Workrooms and AltspaceVR. Figure 4 summarizes the process of establishing connections and exchanging data between the clients and the servers in Workrooms (top) and AltspaceVR (bottom).

In Workrooms, the connection with Server I starts during the loading period (*i.e.*, when the loading progress bar is displayed). All data exchanges are over User Datagram Protocol (UDP). We have proven that this flow transmits virtual content [3] and refer it to virtual content (VC) flow. The connection with Server II starts when users enter the meeting room. The headset and browser clients have a slightly different way of establishing connections with Server II. First, they both establish a Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) connection with Server II, while using Session Traversal Utilities for NAT (STUN) protocol to traverse network address translator (NAT) gateways. The headset and Server II then transfer 1–3 Transport Layer Security (TLS, a secure communication protocol over TCP) packets to each other. However, the browser client does not transmit any additional TCP packets, but establishes a Datagram Transport Layer Security (DTLS, a secure communication protocol over UDP) connection with Server II. Finally, both browser and headset clients use Real-time Transport Protocol (RTP) and RTP Control Protocol (RTCP) to exchange multimedia content with Server II. We refer to this flow as multimedia (MM) flow.

In AltspaceVR, however, the client-server connections work in a different way. First, the client downloads 10–20MB data from Server I using the Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) protocol, when the client screen displays “downloading world content”. Only users who join the event for the first time need to download the data. Then, the client downloads 300–500KB data from Server I via another HTTPS connection, when the client screen displays “loading main environment”.

¹⁵<https://www.wireshark.org/> (accessed on 30-January-2022)

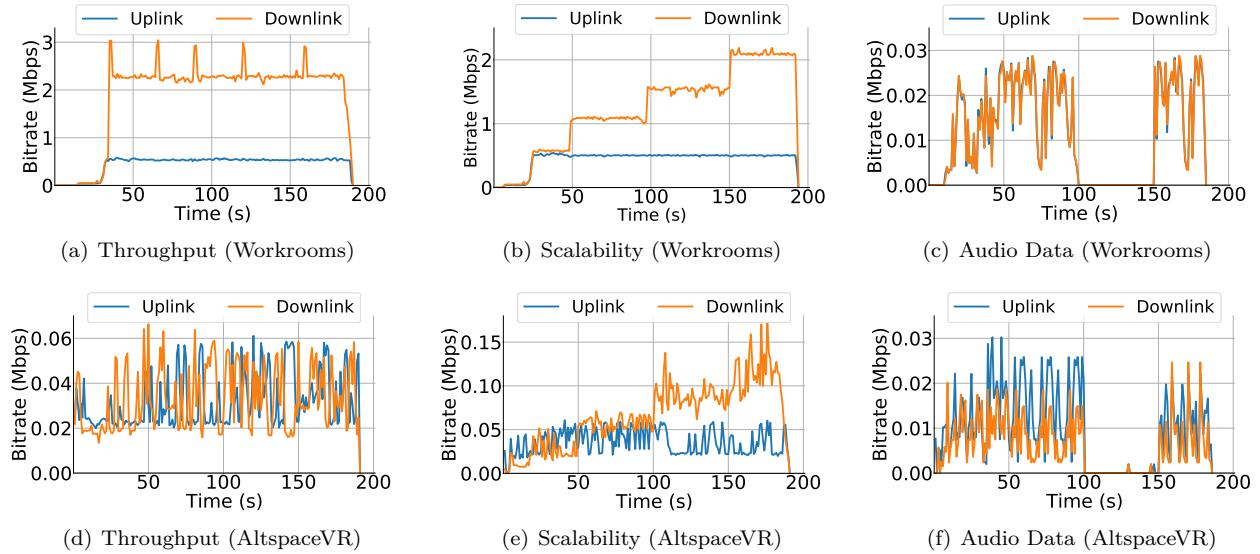


Figure 5: Comparison of throughput, scalability, audio data between Workrooms and AltspaceVR. a) and d) bitrate of UDP flow in Workrooms and Altspace VR; b) and e) bitrate of the VC flow (no change for MM flow) in Workrooms and UDP flow in AltspaceVR, three additional users join at 50, 100, and 150 s respectively; c) and f) comparison of audio data for U1’s uplink and U2’s downlink in Workrooms and AltspaceVR (both users mute from 100 to 150 s).

The connection with Server II starts when users finish loading. All data exchanges are over UDP. Since this UDP flow is the only flow after users enter the event, we speculate it is for user-related content. Through further analysis, we find that this UDP flow follows a custom protocol. The fourth byte of the UDP payload is used to distinguish the data type, such as audio data.

Network Performance. Next, we compare the two platforms based on key findings of Workrooms. Figure 5d shows the throughput (*i.e.*, bitrate) of the UDP flow in AltspaceVR. We find that since users have downloaded the event content before entering the event, the throughput (less than 0.06 Mbps) after that is much smaller than Workrooms. Figure 5e shows the throughput of the UDP flows in AltspaceVR, where we let three other headset users join the experiment at 50, 100, and 150 s, respectively. We find that AltspaceVR also faces scalability issues, with the downlink bitrate increasing almost linearly every time a new user joins (~ 0.03 Mbps). However, its increase is much smaller than Workrooms (~ 0.5 Mbps).

Figures 5c and 5f show the comparison of the audio data for U1’s uplink and U2’s downlink. In Workrooms, we observe that the bitrate on the downlink of U1 exactly matches that of the uplink of U2, and vice versa (Figure 5c). This indicates that the server simply forwards one user’s audio data to others without further processing. However, in AltspaceVR, the uplink audio data of one user does not exactly match the downlink audio data of another user, indicating that the server processes the audio data before forwarding it (Figure 5f). Also, most of the time, the downlink throughput of a user is lower than the uplink throughput of the other user, which indicates that the

server may optimize the audio data uploaded by users.

To summarize, by comparing Workrooms and AltspaceVR, we have the following findings.

- AltspaceVR requires users to download event data in advance, and transfers only user-related data after that, requiring less bandwidth consumption than Workrooms.
- Both platforms face scalability issues, although AltspaceVR does not cause significant bandwidth consumption (~ 0.18 Mbps for downlink with five users).
- Unlike Workrooms, AltspaceVR processes the data uploaded by users before forwarding it, reducing the size of data received by other users.

VI. DISCUSSION

In this section, we discuss the technical challenges of building the Metaverse and point out opportunities for further innovation.

First, the operation of Metaverse will generate a large amount of data, such as metadata created by sensors, a shared virtual space for social activities of users, and the transmission of high-resolution video streams, requiring huge network bandwidth. However, the existing 5G technology may not be sufficient to support the Metaverse. Although 5G can reach a maximum throughput of, in theory, 10-20 Gbps, considering the scalability demand, the bandwidth requirement of Metaverse may exceed what 5G can offer. To this end, a potential solution is peer-to-peer (P2P) communication techniques. As a result, user devices have to combine the content received from multiple parties and then render the virtual world accordingly.

Second, network latency is critical to the user experience. Given that users may access the Metaverse from different parts of the world, ensuring low latency when

users are across geographically distributed regions is a practical challenge. Meanwhile, sensors in the Metaverse, such as those on XR headsets and haptic devices, require latency as low as tens of milliseconds to maintain an immersive user experience [14]. Similar to the motion-to-photon latency in VR, in the Metaverse the latency between the motion of a user and its reflection perceived by others is a key metric to optimize. Remote rendering [7] of virtual content at the network edge is a promising direction for reducing the above latency.

Third, the security and privacy issues in the Metaverse deserve our attention. Although commercial social VR platforms employ secure communication protocols (*e.g.*, TLS and DTLS) to protect transmitted data, as verified in our measurement study, the Metaverse may still lead to many security concerns, such as users' identification information. Since it requires users to access with headsets, they often need to identify themselves with biometric information, which could be a target of security attacks [10]. Digital twins in the Metaverse also need our protection. There will be a large number of complex ML models for supporting digital twins, which in turn influence objects in the physical world. If these models are attacked, there will be unpredictable effects in the physical world. Moreover, user-worn headsets will continuously collect personal information (*e.g.*, biometric information and user behavior) to improve the QoE, which results in privacy concerns. Storing biometric data and digital twins of the Metaverse in the blockchain is a possible direction [12].

Finally, as the Metaverse becomes commonplace in our daily lives, user addiction will be a crucial issue. People may rely on the Metaverse to escape from the real world, just as described in the novel *Snow Crash*. Recent surveys show that 51% of U.S. adults use social media at a higher rate during the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁶. Beyond better regulation and guidance, how to effectively address this issue is still an open problem.

VII. CONCLUSION

While Metaverse has been deemed as the NextG Internet, much of the discussion, in both industry and academia, has focused on its potential. In this article, after reviewing the existing definitions of Metaverse and its enabling technologies, we present our vision by discussing the technical requirements of Metaverse. We then introduce the current hype in industry and existing social VR platforms that can be viewed as early prototypes of Metaverse. By measuring and comparing two representative social VR platforms, Workrooms and AltspaceVR, we point out the technical challenges and opportunities for future development. Given its multidisciplinary nature [11], we hope to see more initiatives emerging from not only the networking research community, but also other related disciplines such as social sciences, economics, computer graphics, AR/VR/MR, HCI, security, and privacy.

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