

# THE PREDICTED TRENDS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES ON METAVERSE

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**Abstract:** Public relations (PR) are an essential tool for businesses. It focuses on maintaining and developing positive connections between firms and various publics, especially their customers and their partners [4]. With the growth of technology in the digital era, PR activities are no longer only offline activities, but they also contain online activities in online environments [7]. The shift in the ways of operating and performing PR activities is not stopped there with the new type of digital social environment. The introduction of the Metaverse on Thursday 28th October 2021 by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg opens a new way for operating and performing PR activities [1]. No longer a simple meeting space, it would be a space like a real life which is called the second life with the engagement of modern technology which is Extended Reality (EX), including Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)/ Mixed Reality (MR) creating an immersive media [6]. Thus, this paper focuses on the exploration of the applications of PR in Metaverse and the future of PR activities on Metaverse.

**Key Words:** Public Relations, Public Relations Activities, Metaverse.

The growth of technology provides the development of how we interact in the digital environment. Years ago, we only focused on face-to-face interactions, the growth of technology at that time provided us with a new place for interaction which was the digital world. The interactions in the digital world kept rising with more diverse interactions including building the connection between firms and their customers. It is premised on PR activities in the digital environment with publishing posts and/or creating events on event pages with related hashtags and so on [7]. Performing those PR activities in the digital environment helps firms to connect more with their potential customers compared with the limitation of the number of attendants for their offline PR activities [5]. Moreover, with the growth of technology and the continued expansion of social accounts in the digital environment, firms would connect with their potential customers and/or partners fast since they need only a click to spread their messages to their potential customers and/or partners from different locations which provide a fast and convenient interaction.

The development of technology is not stopping there with the new concept of the Metaverse. The Metaverse opens a new phase for interaction in the current digital environments.

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Đến tòa soạn: 02/8/2022, chỉnh sửa: 22/8/2022, chấp nhận đăng: 15/9/2022.

Not just chatting, interacting, and/or calling, the Metaverse opens the door for the creation of a reality in the digital world which is as symmetrical as our physical world with the emulator of face-to-face interaction in the online environment [2]. Hence, the new way of interaction impacts the connection activities between firms and their customers/partners. In other words, there are new ways of operating and performing PR activities. Therefore, in this paper, we would explore the new technology in the Metaverse. Moreover, the ways that those add-ins technology would influence the trends of the PR activities when Metaverse launched with the analysis of current PR activities, that already applied those technologies.

## II. AN OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN METAVERSE

PR refers to a group of strategies and tactics used to manage how information about a person or organization is communicated to the public, notably the media [4]. Its main goals are to disseminate important business news or events, maintain a company's reputation, and lessen the impact of unpleasant events by giving them a positive spin [5]. PR can take place through a press release from the business, a news conference, journalist interviews, social media posts, or other means [5]. Although it isn't mentioned explicitly, PR is occasionally referred to as "spin," with the aim of portraying the individual, business, or brand in the most favorable light. PR, as opposed to advertising, aims to portray a person's or brand's image in a way that will seem natural, for example by securing positive publicity from unaffiliated sources and supporting commercial choices that would garner support from the public [4].

Thus, PR brings various benefits to firms [7]. Firstly, PR-related publicity improves the credibility of your business because the material is more precise and instructive. Studies show

that compared to advertising, which is perceived as being more promotional, PR gives the consumer market more visibility and credibility. Secondly, PR makes maintaining and attracting a certain audience much easier. A well-written article about your company's products and services can be much more engaging and effective than an advertisement in the same magazine. Additionally, by using a range of media outlets from a PR agency, you may effectively communicate your key messages and get closer to achieving your company goals. Thirdly, PR can provide a unique touch point and provide value to your product offering, assisting you in differentiating yourself from your competitors and strengthening your position at the top of your specific industry. PR can also increase the value of your business by increasing the visibility of your products and services, personalizing your brand, enhancing your profile, cultivating strong relationships, managing your reputation, assisting with your sales process, and enhancing the value you offer to your own clients through case studies. Finally, PR will help your entire business grow and achieve more success. When done well, PR may enhance consumers' perceptions of your brand, which may encourage more consumer involvement in your company. An unachievable business investment that will benefit your brand and clients by impacting all other aspects of your firm is a fantastic brand image.

To find and develop relationships with the media as well as to comprehend and shape the conversation being had about them, their industry, and competitors on print, broadcast, online, and social media, PR professionals engage in a variety of PR activities throughout the communications life cycle. There are five main types of PR activities [7].

- Internal communication: Planned messages were communicated to staff members by a range

of media, such as newsletters, bulletin boards, paycheck stuffers, posters, and so on.

- External Communications: Messages delivered to external audiences through owned, paid, or earned media.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Commitment of money and resources to charitable organizations in recognition of a corporation's obligations and responsibilities to communities.
- Corporate Sponsorship: Corporate support of an event or cause in exchange for the potential to boost sales, goodwill, and brand perception.
- Publicity: Information that has been shared through the news media regarding a subject, person, group, or cause because the intended audience or community will find it important.

Since the paper discusses the effects of the Metaverse on PR activities, with the Metaverse focusing on the message on the external side, the paper focuses on the case studies related to external communication and corporate sponsorship as both these types of activities have been widely applied on social media.

The term “Metaverse” was first used in 1992 by Neal Stevenson in his science fiction book *Snow Crash* [2]. It represented a second, computer-generated virtual reality environment that users could enter using headphones and goggles from anywhere in the world. The Street protocol, which serves as the information superhighway counterpart for the Metaverse, connects numerous virtual communities and locations. Users appear as avatars, which are customizable digital bodies, in the Metaverse. Stevenson's Metaverse enables events to have a genuine impact on the physical self despite being digital and artificial. A literary example of the Metaverse is *The Matrix*, virtual reality cyberspace from William Gibson's science fiction book *Neuromancer* from 1984 [2].

“Metaverse” widely spread and becomes well known to the public through the introduction of the application of the Metaverse in the Facebook environment [1]. That creates a new gate for the application of the Metaverse on a wider scale.

A Metaverse is not just a normal digital environment, it is a technological universe with endless possibilities that would be created by humans and being involved in this universe by using high-technology mediums. In detail, a Metaverse is a large group of concurrent users who experience in the first person and feel a strong sense of mutual presence and are immersed in a persistent and immersive virtual world. It might be entirely virtual (i.e., a virtual Metaverse) or it could be layers of virtual content placed on top of the real world (i.e., an augmented Metaverse) [3]. The technologies applied in a Metaverse are explained by the model of Louis Rosenberg in 2022.

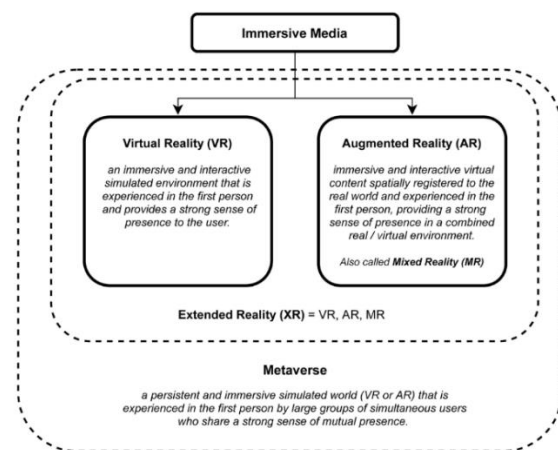


Figure 1: Immersive media of a Metaverse model

The model shows the creation of immersive media in the Metaverse with the use of XR including the combination of VR, AR, and MR [3]. Under EX, VR is a first-person, immersive, interactive virtual environment that makes the user feel very present [3]. When virtual content is physically registered to the real environment and experienced in first person as part of augmented reality (AR), the user feels very

present in a world that is both real and virtual. AR is a dynamic and interactive setting [6]. MR is the combination situation of the mixed between the physical world elements and virtual words elements [6]. In other words, MR is closed-related or like AR.

From the Immersive media model, the potential of PR on Metaverse would be the activities in a virtual environment with the engagement by applying XR technology [3]. Hence the PR on Metaverse would be the changes in the way that firms interact with their customers and partners since the interacting environment shifted to the virtual world. The Metaverse provides opportunities for PR to develop a new way of operating and performing PR activities. It contributes to the diversity of PR activities in the current digital era.

### III. TRENDS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

#### 1. Organizing and performing virtual events

Firstly, the organizing and performing of virtual events would be a trend for PR activities. No more long process of preparing and organizing PR events, with the Metaverse, the firms would prepare the events in the online environment, the online environment is close or similar to the physical environment. Moreover, the type of event is fast and convenient to organize and reduces the cost of preparing the events. This type of virtual event is possible with the assumption that the users in the digital media would use the Metaverse and build their own self in the Metaverse which leads to the similarity and unity of the physical world and digital world.

For example, SS22 NIRVANA HI! VIRTUAL RUNWAY is a collaboration event between Nirvana streetwear (a local fashion brand in Vietnam) and other influencers in the music industry including Mỹ Anh, Thịnh Suy, Piaggio and Antiantart [11]. This event is considered an external communication activity

with a collaboration with influencers to increase brand awareness with the targeted consumers who follow those influences. The format of the event is a runway to represent the collection to the public as a virtual show with the 3D render illustration and would be viewed by VR connection.



*Picture 1: The virtual environment of the runway*



*Picture 2: The 3D illustration of the influencer- Thịnh Suy*

This show provides a new method of making a runway that is never done before in Vietnam. Mostly, this type of fashion show is operated and performed offline. However, seeking to be unique, the new local brand adapts a new way of operating and performing PR activities and attracts a lot of positive comments and interactions from customers as this type of show is new and unique in Vietnam, at the moment [11]. This runway show is an event that was organized and performed in a virtual space. No need for offline space and limited seats for the customers to view the runway show. This virtual

runway show reaches more viewers compared to a traditional runway show with limited seats.

Moreover, although there is a high cost for 3D illustration for the entire show. This type of show saves various high costs for the firm such as the cost of renting a location for the fashion show, the cost of contacting and offline meetings with influences, the cost of preparing for the probs of the show, and so on. Hence, all the operating and performing in an online environment with a realistic experience of virtual technology help the firm to reduce the cost for the show and encourage a unique experience for the viewers.

## 2. Game format for PR activities

Using the game format for the PR activities would be an upcoming trend of PR activities on the Metaverse. The game, as stated, would be one of the favorite sessions in the upcoming Metaverse. It means playing games would be an attractive activity for users in the upcoming Metaverse. Thus, by applying a game format for PR activities on the Metaverse, the PR activities would receive high attention from the customers and increase their brand awareness. The evidence has been shown in the case study, with the PR activities using a game format would receive high attention from the users.

For instance, there are two successful case studies that applied game format for their PR activities which gained a lot of their customers' attentions and interactions. They are:

**LOUIS THE GAME:** On August 4, 2021, French fashion house Louis Vuitton (LV) released a mobile game named LOUIS THE GAME in a very original way to commemorate the 200th birthday of its founder [9]. This smartphone game is not your typical one. The 30 NFTs integrated within the game follow Vivienne, the mascot of the fashion company, in her adventures [9]. The wooden doll, which has the brand's floral insignia, embarks on several

excursions as it learns about Louis Vuitton's lengthy history.



*Picture 3: A scene in LOUIS THE GAME*

One of the famous planned features in Metaverse is game sectors [9]. The main reason is that the application of VR and AR is already familiar in the game industry. Hence, using the virtual game as a tool for introducing the history of a brand is an effective idea. It is an interesting external communication PR activity since it would provide an experience for players to truly interact with the brand history not just through reading posts and seeing the pictures, but a virtual reality experience like living in these virtual words and connecting with the story. It would provide a strong connection with the customers. Moreover, it makes the understanding of the brand history more interesting with highly interactive, putting customers in the view of the characters going through the journey of the game.

**BALENCIAGA X FORTNITE:** Balenciaga intended to sell four recognizable items from its line as skins and accessories for avatars as the first apparel brand to work with Fortnite. The model from Balenciaga has been turned into a digital character called "Doggo," who appears in the Fortnite battle royale wearing Balenciaga gear [8].





*Picture 4: Balenciaga skins and accessories in the Fortnite game*

The premium fashion company's creative director, Demna Gvasalia, consistently generates original concepts. Banshee dons a tiger-striped bodysuit, Ramirez sports a sequined top and frayed pants, and Knight dons a pair of armored boots from the fashion house along with a hoodie and shorts. Three further Fortnite characters also get a Balenciaga makeover. Users who shell out a lot of cash for these showy Balenciaga things in Fortnite can upload pictures of their avatars to be shown on billboards in the game's town square and enter a Balenciaga store to dance in a distinctive fashion. At the Balenciaga store in Madison Square, customers may physically purchase items from the Fortnite x Balenciaga collection [8].

Hence, this type of sponsorship activity by Balenciaga creates a huge viral effect since the game receive sponsorship from Balenciaga Fortnite. Fortnite is a gaming franchise set in a post-apocalyptic world overrun with zombies [10]. It is produced by Epic Games and uses the well-known Unreal Engine. Fortnite: Save the World, a cooperative survival shooter, and Fortnite: Battle Royale, a last-person-standing game, are the two current titles that fall under the Fortnite banner [10]. A for-profit early access version of the first was made accessible in July 2017. The game was supposed to become free to play in 2019, but Epic has now said that it will remain a premium experience. It works with Xbox One, Windows, PlayStation 4, Mac OS X, and PlayStation 4 [10]. Moreover, in 2021,

Fortnite generated \$5.8 billion rein venue 2021 for Epic Games [10]. This PR activity creates an enormous benefit for Balenciaga with an increase in reach and trying out new products for the game characters. This provides a new era of sponsorship with the benefits that could be used straight away in the game without a long offline meeting and converted code for the skins and accessories in the old way. This type of activity is fast and convenient, but it is also effective at the same time. All in all, with the help of modern technology, the PR activities with a game format make the activities interesting and highly interactive with the customers. It creates dynamic interactions with the targeted audiences.

### **3. Applying VR for PR activities**

VR would be used mainly for PR activities. At the moment, most of the current PR activities are related to VR technology such as the case studies above. All of the studies above applied VR technology. The main reason is that VR provides a realistic view and bending in the scenario [2]. It creates high interaction and connection since it related to the first viewers and is fully simulated. This would provide a fully digital experience for the customers.

### **4. Short-time events**

Short-time events are crucial to provide the best interaction experience. For instance, the common runway show would last for roughly an hour including the opening and the ending, but the case study about SS22 NIRVANA HI! is last only around 30 minutes [11]. The use of technologies such as AR and VR would make users feel tired after a long period of time since the side effects of the simulator environment. Thus, with short-time events or PR activities, the users would have a healthy interaction with the content, and it would provide a comfortable experience for the customers. The short-time

event also happened in the first case study with a length of less than an hour event.

#### IV. WHICH FUTURE OF PR IN METAVERSE?

The current trends of PR activities in a virtual world partly determine the future of PR activities in the Metaverse.

If the Metaverse of Facebook contains the technology that it mentions [1]. It includes EX technology. The future of PR activities would be similar to the current trends of PR activities in the virtual space. They include the applications of virtual events, applying game format for the PR events, and connecting events in the virtual environment. However, the future of PR activities would not be limited to the application of VR technology. In the future, with the continual development of the technology, the application of other EX technologies such as AR/MR or a combination of VR and AR/MR would be possible and convenient for the applications. Moreover, if Facebook opens the Metaverse platform, the PR activities would reach more viewers compared to the current trends, since each user would have a virtual identity, with technological advances, each user would also have the pieces of equipment to connect with the virtual space.

On the other hand, the future of PR activities would be different from the current trends of PR activities in the virtual space, if the EX does not only contain VR and AR/MR. In other words, if the EX-technologies include a new type, the methods of organizing, preparing, and performing PR activities would be different and include new ways to do the PR activities. In addition, since Facebook just introduced the Metaverse and did not publish the virtual space. In the worst case, without opening the space, the PR activities would maintain as similar to the current trends of PR activities in the virtual environment.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Technology growth has enabled us to change the way we interact with the digital world. Face-to-face interactions were what we used to prioritize most, but as technology advanced at the time, a new environment for interaction in the digital world became available to us. The quantity and variety of interactions in the digital world have grown, allowing companies to better connect with their customers. It is based on PR techniques used in a digital setting, like publishing on blogs, creating events on websites, using relevant hashtags, etc. Conducting those PR operations in the digital environment helps firms engage more with their potential customers in comparison to the small number of attendances for their offline PR events. The Metaverse's introduction has accelerated the development of technology. The Metaverse allows engagement in the current digital environment to go into a new phase. With the possibility for face-to-face communication in the online environment, beyond only chatting, engaging, and/or phoning, the Metaverse offers a means for the development of a reality in the digital world that is as symmetrical as our physical world. The new form of communication has an impact on how companies interact with their customers and business partners as a result. In other words, there are new approaches to managing PR-related responsibilities and conducting business.

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## TÊN BÀI BÁO: ĐỊNH HÌNH XU HƯỚNG CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG QUAN HỆ CÔNG CHÚNG TRÊN VỤ TRỤ ẢO METAVERSE.

**Mô tả:** Quan hệ công chúng (PR) là một công cụ quan trọng đối với các doanh nghiệp. Mục tiêu chính của PR là duy trì, phát triển, và xây dựng sự kết nối tích cực giữa công ty và công

chúng, khách hàng, đối tác của họ [4]. Với sự phát triển vượt bậc của công nghệ kỹ thuật trong kỷ nguyên số, các hoạt động PR không còn là các hoạt động trực tiếp, mà nó còn được thực hiện trên các nền tảng trực tuyến [7]. Việc giới thiệu Metaverse, vào ngày 28 tháng 10 năm 2021, bởi Giám đốc điều hành Facebook Mark Zuckerberg, mở ra một cách thức mới để vận hành và thực hiện các hoạt động PR [1]. Không còn dừng lại là một không gian mạng tương tác đơn thuần qua bài viết, hình ảnh hay video, sự tham gia của công nghệ thực tế mở rộng (EX), bao gồm thực tế ảo (VR) và thực tế tăng cường (AR) / hỗn hợp thực tế (MR) tạo ra một phương tiện truyền thông đa dạng. Đó sẽ là một không gian giống như một cuộc sống thực nhưng tồn tại trên nền tảng số [6]. Vì vậy trong bài nghiên cứu tập trung vào những ứng dụng của PR trong Metaverse và triển vọng của những hoạt động này trong tương lai.

**Từ khóa:** Quan hệ công chúng, Các hoạt động quan hệ công chúng, Vũ trụ ảo Metaverse.



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