



Gen Z Consumers' Thought on Metaverse: Insight from a Developing Country's Perspective

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Introduction and Literature Review: According to some researchers, by 2030, up to five billion people will be using the metaverse, and its economy will be worth between \$8 trillion and \$13 trillion (Kshetri, 2022). For fashion businesses, the metaverse has opened up new possibilities for extending their store space into a fully immersive virtual world (Lee & Kim, 2022). The 3D virtual world has the potential to provide not only a more engaging shopping experience but also it displayed the potential of changing the everyday life of human beings. In addition to developed nations, emerging economies are also feeling the effects of the metaverse economy. The metaverse economy has provided economic benefits, such as new job prospects, to several underdeveloped countries (Kshetri, 2022). Even in the third world, the metaverse is stimulating the business formation and new product development. Studies related to the Metaverse in the settings of a developing country are limited. Previous researchers ignored the perspectives of gen Z consumers in developing countries like Bangladesh (Su et al., 2023). The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the thoughts, expectations, and perceptions of gen Z consumers in Bangladesh about the metaverse.

Theoretical Background: The findings of this study are organized according to the diffusion of innovations theory which explains how new ideas, products, and technologies spread and are adopted by individuals and groups over time (Rogers, 1995). The adoption and diffusion of new technology are influenced by several factors, including the characteristics of the technology itself, the characteristics of the individuals or organizations adopting it, and the broader social context in which it is being adopted. In the case of the metaverse, these factors could play a significant role in determining this technology's impact, adoption, and future among gen Z consumers in Bangladesh. Firstly, the metaverse has several characteristics as a new technology that may influence its adoption, such as its perceived usability, functionality, and compatibility with other existing technologies (Lee & Gu, 2022). Secondly, from the perspective of gen Z consumers in Bangladesh, factors such as their level of exposure to technology, their perceived benefits and risks of using metaverse, and their attitudes toward technology can influence their adoption of this technology (Alfaisal et al., 2022). Finally, the broader social context in which the technology is being adopted can also influence its adoption and diffusion (Dwivedi et al., 2022). Additionally, society's cultural values and beliefs may all play a role in the adoption and diffusion of this technology among Bangladeshi gen Z consumers.

Methodology: To achieve the goal of this research, an in-depth interview (qualitative approach) was adopted with a purposive sample approach. Researchers used a snowball sampling strategy to enroll gen Z customers in Bangladesh from their preexisting network of contacts. A total of 15 interviews were conducted during Fall'22 - Spring'23. The sample size was established based on the data saturation (Hodges, 2011). Interviews were conducted both in-person and by phone and through Internet

chat/meeting tools (Zoom, WhatsApp, etc.). Among the respondents, 7 were male and 8 were female and the age range of the respondents was from 22 to 25. The participants were asked questions like “What is your expectation from metaverse?”, “How metaverse will change the shopping experience of fashion and clothing products in Bangladesh?”, and “What might be the problems/constraints/challenges of using metaverse in Bangladesh?”. Gen Z consumers' perspectives on the metaverse were examined by first transcribing all interviews and then analyzing the interview texts collectively (Su et al., 2022b). Each member of the study team contributed to the process of analyzing the data, developing codes, spotting themes, and writing up the findings (Iqbal & Su, 2021; Su et al., 2022a).

Result and Discussion: Several themes affecting the adoption and diffusion of the metaverse have emerged. The themes include the characteristics of the technology itself, the characteristics of the individuals (consumers), and the broader social context. Under each theme, multiple factors were also

Technological Characteristics	Individual (consumer) Characteristics	Broader Social Context
Everyday virtual lifestyle	Initial reflex/Future of consumerism	Threat to social interaction culture
As a Problem-solving tool	Everything everywhere all at once/ Expected Things/activities	Control of right use/possibility of unregulated use
Infrastructural barrier/ Internet speed	Consumers' Concerns towards usability	The gap in technological knowledge/knowledge uncertainty

Table 1. Major Themes and Factors

coded which are shown in table 1. From the technological characteristics theme, participant 12 (P12) mentioned that “It will be a complete online based world where everyone will be connected with each other virtually and we'll be able to fulfill most of our needs through online as well”, which highlights the everyday virtual lifestyle factor. From the individual characteristics theme, P14 stated that “As for traveling, metaverse will give me the chance to travel wherever I want without getting bothered about the distance, so these are the things which I'm looking forward to doing in the

metaverse”, which highlights the Everything everywhere all at once factor. On the other hand, participants also shared their concerns about usability, affordability, and availability based on their individual demographics. For example, P7 stated that “If it's feasible, available, and obviously not complicated to use then why not, I'll obviously take the help of metaverse”. From the broader social context, participants expressed their thought about the possibility of unregulated use of metaverse in Bangladesh. P14 mentioned that “The ethical impact can be a major problem of the metaverse, especially for the young generation, they may not understand what's right, what's wrong and can get involved in unethical activities”. Additionally, some participants raised concerns about the potential negative social and psychological impact of the metaverse. For example, P3 stated that “I think not only social there'll be psychological impact as well. It'll decrease the social interaction among people, everyone will want to find their comfort in people whom they meet virtually and while comparing both the reality and virtual reality, in this case, can hurt them emotionally”.

Implications: This study contributes to the literature on exploring the challenges and constraints of implementing the metaverse in a developing country i.e., Bangladesh, which could help researchers identify potential barriers to adoption and develop strategies. Moreover, this study sheds light on the potential applications of the metaverse among gen Z consumers beyond gaming, such as creating new

business opportunities. Finally, the findings of this study on the potential social impact of the metaverse, including its impact on mental health, social relationships, and personal identity, could inform discussions about the ethical implications of this technology in developing countries like Bangladesh.

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