

MAKING SENSE OF THE METAVERSE: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF  
REAL-TIME MULTISENSORY SOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN A NEW  
COMPUTER-MEDIATED ENVIRONMENT

**Dorothea Aliman**  
University of Münster  
**Thorsten Hennig-Thurau**  
University of Münster  
**Alina Marie Herting**  
University of Münster  
**Gerrit Cziehso**  
Münster University  
**Marc Linder**  
University of Münster  
**Raoul Kübler**  
Marketing Center Münster

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## **Abstract**

The “metaverse”, as a computer-mediated environment in which people act and communicate with each other in real-time via avatars, is one of the most striving topics in digitalization. Real-time multisensory social interactions (RMSIs) between people are considered a key element of this metaverse, and virtual reality (VR) is seen as its interface technology. New VR devices set the metaverse apart from RMSIs in existing computer-mediated environment, such as meetings via Zoom. However, the incremental value that the metaverse can offer its users is largely unclear. The authors present a conceptual model of how RMSIs in the metaverse may impact different outcomes (i.e., performance, evaluation, emotions) through interlocutors’ intermediate states (i.e., copresence, non-verbal overload, exhaustion). They test the model with a series of experiments in different contexts. Key findings point at the value potential of RMSIs in the metaverse, but also name barriers that have to be overcome.

**Keywords:** *Metaverse; Virtual Reality; Social Interactions*

**Track:** Digital Marketing & Social Media