

Second Life – A Digital Community

I began my life in Second Life. At the start, I have to admit I was discouraged and bored. But then I slowly built interest due to the interaction with people made me feel a like an Anthropologist trying to get the essence of that community, learn their language and their behavior. Yes, it was my first ever research into a digital community.

I began with a normal avatar. I was trying to stick with an integrated self, but then I went for somebody that was similar but not too similar. The simplicity was due in part to a lack of interest in spending hours to adjust my avatar.

Learning how to walk and fly was easy. Flying was nice as it gives one chance to move around the area faster.

I don't even remember where I was, but I saw another Avatar dressed as a beautiful girl looking at a place probably a store, and she is moving like she is dancing.

She is Russian by the name, so I start to chat with her. She said she is shopping. I asked for her help, and she was very friendly.

Usually girls are friendly with me when I am in my Ferrari, but in this case, I think "wow in Second Life you find friendly girls without a big car."

She sometimes types to me in Russian, and then I also see the English translation. I am not sure if it gets translated automatically, or she types in both languages. I will try to explore this functionality.

After knowing her for four minutes, I invite her to dinner. She says "why not" and accepts. In Second Life there is no

danger; people are safe, and they can pull the plug any moment. This tends to lead people to be more easy-going and approachable.

Now I can have company and some help, so I ask her what type of food she likes, and of course, she said anywhere it's okay.

Taste did not become digitalized yet, so I guess it may become pretty dull in SL to sit down in a restaurant. I think my old RL script that needs to be readapted to a more modern digitalized world.

I picked up the use of SL and RL from the community. Second life and real life I know, it's quite apparent.

I look for a beautiful place and I think about Spain, where I lived in RL, so I choose Porto Banus a lovely location in the south of Spain with a beautiful marina. I know I will be able to find a good restaurant there.

After we became friends officially in SL, I choose the location and tele-transported myself there.

The pretty girl asks through SL to be tele-transported to my location. This is the advantage of being friends – they can be tele-transported in your area.

She arrives with a different look. She totally changed her dress code adapting to the new marina beach environment. She was really fashionable and cool.

Wow, she must be Russian for sure. I can see the business, people spending real money to dress well a Second Life avatar. Now what the point of changing your mode of attire in SL? What is there in the human psyche that makes someone put time and money into making an avatar fashionable and cool?

It may be digital vanity. I should not judge if I need to study a community, but I don't have the time to shop for me in RL. If I think I need to shop for my avatar, then the avatar

is too high maintenance. I like simplicity. All this is cool but any hour spent in SL is an hour lost in RL. People want to escape RL; second life is escapism.

Getting back to my second life adventure, after we notice that the place is boring we walk up and down. There is nothing to see and no one around, so she wants to bring me to a club. Cool!

So I go with this pretty, young girl to a nice club called Vipera.

Many avatars are dancing. A DJ is speaking to people. He is actually fun, and he tells us we can suggest our favorite songs. It appears that everyone is having a good time. The place is busy, and I begin talking to people and telling them that I am doing a project for the university.

Everybody is friendly. They enjoy being interviewed, at least at the beginning. I ask them "why are you here?"

Everybody says something. The best answer I get is "this is like a Facebook in 3D or actually better".

So people have the unlimited possibility to enjoy clubbing and talk.

Some of them say Facebook is boring, and others say they usually don't invite the Facebook friend in SL.

Some people want to keep their lives separate. They all like me, and they all contribute to my questions, but they all get upset when I asked their ages. They told me I should not ask that in SL is rude; age, sex or race cannot be asked. Probably people want to feel disconnected from real life so much that they do not want to consider age differences. The question here is what pushes people to spend so much time behind a screen giving up their real life, their real love to find new virtual ones? I don't know the answer, but it's an answer

worth a \$10 billion industry.

At the end of the day, it becomes a matter of time. I saw some people probably making money in second life. They have a business where they sell things for real money. Other than that it appears that SL is for relaxation and diversion. People find their comfort zone staying within a virtual environment, and they are willing to give up their real life time to live in a virtual one.

A comfort zone is what causes people to resist improving themselves. It's the worst thing that can happen to an individual. I saw people living with a disease and trapped in a very detrimental environment for years that do not attempt to push themselves out of a comfort zone. How much could the RL be improved if the person took the time spent in the SL and used it in RL? Maybe it's all just a game. Maybe I should not be judging. But time is so valuable to me that I don't see any particular reason why I should spend some time in an SL or fantasy world. So unless I don't have to go back for assignment reasons, I will not reenter the second life world.