Second Life virtual universities: A visual analysis

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**ABSTRACT**

Apparent in the virtual construction of people and places is the integrity in maintaining real-world physicality and functionality to provide a sense of realism. **3D Graphics**

While virtual universities have the capability to fully reproduce their real life campus in 3D form, others defy convention and mix real with fantasy to create innovative architecture unfathomable in the physical world. **Avatars**

Virtual self-representations are called avatars, typically resembling the average human body. Users can customize their avatar to mirror their own appearance, adopt a different gender or alter body shape. Avatar gestures articulate facial and bodily expressions in instantaneous to imitate real life actions. **Simulations**

Simulations for practical classroom training are made possible by the physical 3D renditions and authentic avatar movements. Students in the mediated environment can visually communicate, attend class in the university’s lecture hall or practice operational skills.

**Virtual Reality Attributes**

- Computer-generated content
- 3D graphics
- Interactive medium

**Second Life Components**

- Simulation
- Sense of presence and community
- Immersive

**Linear Media**

- Structured
- Predetermined
- Inflexible
- Requires active imagination

**Non-linear Media**

- Multi-dimensional
- Endless space
- Hypertext – interactive weblinks
- Mediated environment
- Visual communication
- 3D animation to replicate natural environment
- Physical rendering of abstract information
- Media convergence

**CONCLUSION**

Distance education has long been an acceptable mode of undergraduate and graduate studies but Second Life’s virtual environment is a visually immersive virtual experience where students are not limited by physical barriers or distance to attend class. 3D visuals and animations give students a sense of realism and community, enhancing learner engagement for a fulfilling educational experience.

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