Virtual Reality Retailing in Second Life

Erika Matulich
University of Tampa

Ronald Kuntze
University of Tampa

Raymond Papp
University of Tampa

Theresa R. Crudele
University of Tampa

Daniel Reynolds
University of Tampa

ABSTRACT

Electronic retailing (e-tailing) on the web constitutes the use of the Internet for selling retail goods. The term "e-tailing" is synonymous with business-to-consumer (B2C) transactions. Virtual reality uses cyber technology to simulate physical presence in an artificial environment. Virtual reality retailing (VRR) uses cyber technology to sell both real and imaginary retail goods in an artificial environment. To our knowledge there has been very little research conducted that examines the presence of real-life (RL) corporate retailers in virtual worlds, such as Second Life. Virtual worlds are computer-based simulated environments where users can communicate synchronously over a network (Robbins and Bell, 2008). Additionally, research in the field of VRR is in its infancy. This paper, in its exploratory nature, sets out to understand both the past and present relationships that existed, or still exist, between retail and virtual reality. Specifically, this research will uncover the reality of the present day Second Life retail environment. A further exploration of the B2C virtual consumption process in Second Life will also be considered in an effort to link avatar (graphical reflections of the self or an alter ego which take on a 3D form for use in a virtual world) consumption with places beyond the workplace or home.

Keywords: virtual retailing, virtual reality retailing, e-tailing, virtual consumption