

The metaverse is taking over the world of sports and the revolution has already begun

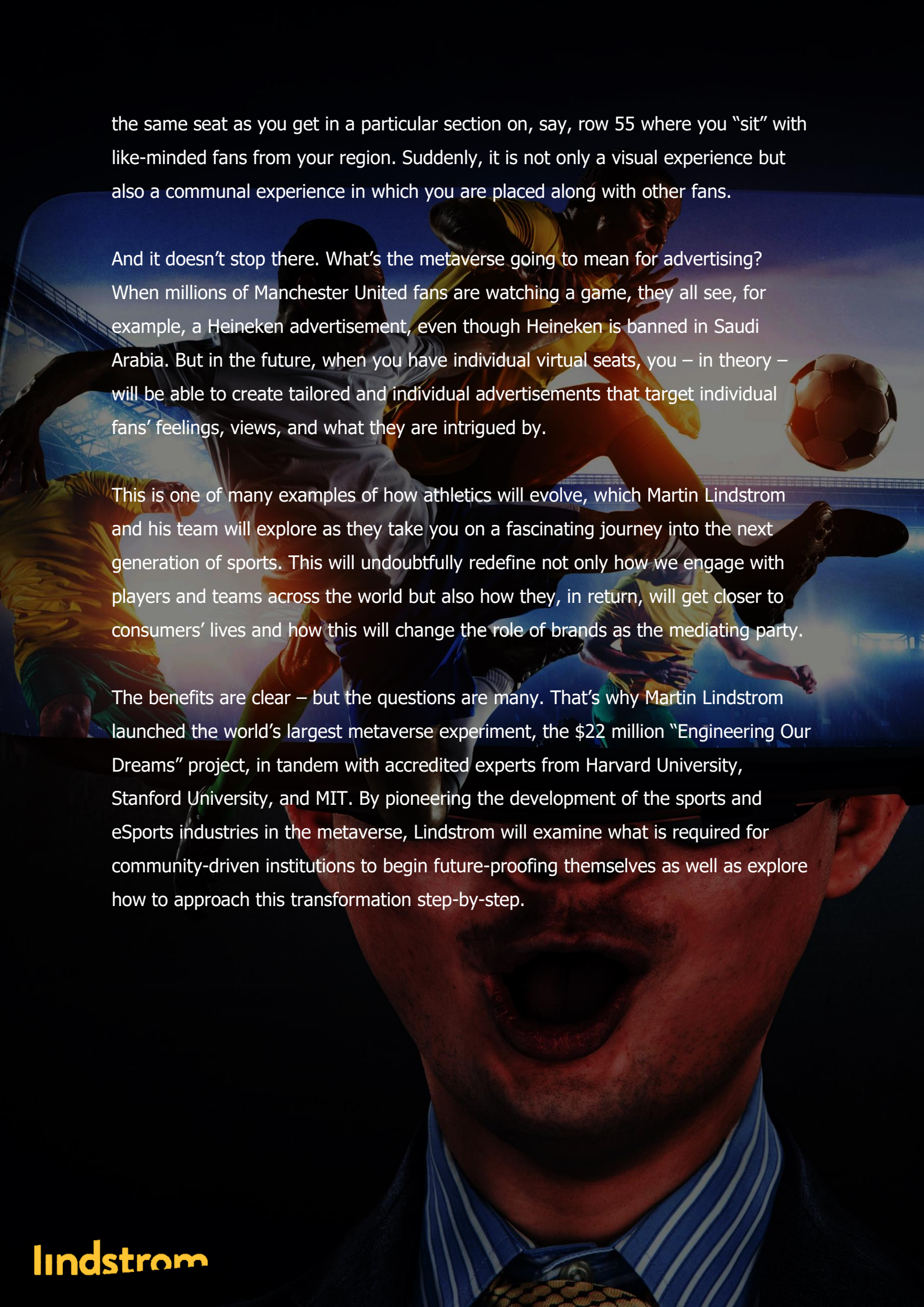
On average, an American adult spends 10.5 hours a day in front of a screen. This explains why, according to CITI, by 2030 almost 1 billion people will wear virtual reality (VR) glasses every day. In fact, global consulting company McKinsey estimates that the transactional value in the metaverse by 2030 will be \$5 trillion – equivalent to the third-largest GDP in the world. These changes in consumer behavior patterns will fundamentally reshape the world of sports. Thus, the important question then becomes: How will sports institutions adapt?

Every industry is trying to figure out how to position itself in the metaverse, and the sports world has a unique opportunity to drive innovation for the same reason that real-time game broadcasts are the last bastion of live television. The premise of the metaverse is to create shared experiences, albeit updated for a technology-infused world. This translates well to sports, which increasingly rely on data and are inherently communal.

The possibility of a more direct connection exists.

Sports and eSports will be one of the biggest industries to enter the metaverse. History shows that almost every transformation of digital media has been led by this industry, as it captures the attention and dollars of billions of people across the world. So where will this all land?

Let's take Manchester United. It's thought that the team has 1.1 billion fans worldwide, yet the club is only aware of a couple of hundred million of them at best. Even worse, they can fit only around 75,000 of them into their famous football stadium Old Trafford. So how are sports brands and leagues going to play a role in the metaverse? We will soon see every seat in the stadium equipped with a camera, which will give the team's global audience access to the game no matter if they are stuck behind closed doors in China or sitting in a bar in the US. Fans will be able to purchase a virtual "seat" along with millions of other people – in theory, purchasing



the same seat as you get in a particular section on, say, row 55 where you “sit” with like-minded fans from your region. Suddenly, it is not only a visual experience but also a communal experience in which you are placed along with other fans.

And it doesn't stop there. What's the metaverse going to mean for advertising? When millions of Manchester United fans are watching a game, they all see, for example, a Heineken advertisement, even though Heineken is banned in Saudi Arabia. But in the future, when you have individual virtual seats, you – in theory – will be able to create tailored and individual advertisements that target individual fans' feelings, views, and what they are intrigued by.

This is one of many examples of how athletics will evolve, which Martin Lindstrom and his team will explore as they take you on a fascinating journey into the next generation of sports. This will undoubtedly redefine not only how we engage with players and teams across the world but also how they, in return, will get closer to consumers' lives and how this will change the role of brands as the mediating party.

The benefits are clear – but the questions are many. That's why Martin Lindstrom launched the world's largest metaverse experiment, the \$22 million “Engineering Our Dreams” project, in tandem with accredited experts from Harvard University, Stanford University, and MIT. By pioneering the development of the sports and eSports industries in the metaverse, Lindstrom will examine what is required for community-driven institutions to begin future-proofing themselves as well as explore how to approach this transformation step-by-step.