

POTENTIAL PHD RESEARCH TOPIC

Meta-Marketing: Marketing in the Metaverse

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Abstract

Metaverse is poised to be the new reality through which customers will increasingly interact with companies in the future. The advent of virtual reality headsets is already affording various companies to design environments in the metaverse where customers can experience the brands from the comfort of their homes. Despite the fact that companies see value in investing in metaverse, there is a lack of widespread adoption of the metaverse among consumers. The study will seek to unpack the internal (customers' personalities and motivations) and external (infrastructure) barriers that impact the meta marketing. Furthermore, the project will investigate the role of artificial intelligence in marketing within the metaverse.

Further details

The metaverse is often described as a fully immersive, digital universe where people can interact with each other and their surroundings in real-time. It is not limited to a single virtual world but can encompass multiple interconnected virtual spaces (Dwivedi et al., 2023). It is a digital space that empowers users to interact socially, using digital avatars to generate value and o-create experiences (Gursoy et al., 2022). It provides three-dimensional immersive experiences and has a strong social interaction component, effectively leading toward blended living (Buhalis and Karatay, 2022). Hadi et al. (2023) define metaverse as a network of digitally mediated spaces that immerse users in shared, real-time experiences. These authors further identify five essential characteristics of the metaverse: (1) digitally mediated, (2) spatial, (3) immersive, (4) shared, and (5) real-time.

Some of the multinational tech giants like Google, Microsoft, Nvidia and Meta have invested heavily in hardware, software and infrasturcture to boost the metaverse. These organisations see business value in investing in metaverse (Gauttier et al., 2024). There is also great intrerest in the academic community to examine and make sense of this new reality. As metaverse is on the trajectory to develop and expand, it would be of great importance to examine how this new frontier revolutionise marketing. Metaverse potentially can enhance marketing in the following ways:

1. Enhancing immersive customer experiences
2. Improving customer interactions and engagement
3. Creating hyper personalization

Immersion is a key concept in metaverse that offers unique opportunities to engage and retain customers, while consistency across multiple channels can further enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2022). Dincelli & Yayla (2022) identified five drivers for immersive virtual reality in metaverse as embodiment, interactivity, navigability, sense-ability, and create-ability. Understanding the factors that contribute to consumer immersion is increasingly important for service providers aiming to deliver exceptional experiences (Kozinets, 2023).

By adopting a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the experiential qualities, social implications, and cultural dynamics surrounding automated social presence. This knowledge can inform the design, implementation, and regulation of marketing in metaverse to create more meaningful and socially acceptable interactions and experiences (Tan et al., 2023).

Some suggested research questions to explore are the following:

1. How to conceptualize and measure metaversal experiences?
2. What capabilities do customers and service employees require to effectively participate and engage in metaverse for value creation?
3. How can metaverse experiences be designed to overcome perceived technological complexity and facilitate adoption?
4. Does metaverse experience type (utilitarian vs. hedonic) and real world closeness interplay with product and industry category to shape consumers' attitudes and behaviours?
5. How should brands collaborate and co-create in metaverse environments (e.g., virtual goods, NFTs, co-experiences) to increase consumer engagement?
6. How can machine learning and/or artificial intelligence algorithms be leveraged to enhance consumer experience in the metaverse?
7. What is the role of co-creation practices and customization in updating customers' brand-related expectations and product adoption in metaverse?
8. How do personalized service experiences/encounters in metaverse affect value creation?
9. What is the role of artificial intelligence and intelligent agents in the metaverse?
10. What are the potential ethical challenges for service firms in the metaverse?

11. What are the negative ramifications and unintended consequences of metaversal experiences? How can these be measured and addressed?
12. What are the motivations for people to engage with- and interact in- metaverse?
13. How are consumer motivations to engage in metaversal experiences similar or different from those that drive engagement in other online contexts (e.g., social media and online gaming)?
14. How do social elements (e.g., personal traits, self efficacy, social identity, social ties, user-user interaction) drive consumer/user engagement in- and service interactions in the metaverse?
15. What are the constituents of consumer/user engagement and interactions in metaverse?
16. How does consumer/user engagement and interaction in the metaverse influence individual subjective well-being?
17. Do consumers strive for consistency across their physical and digital lives/experiences?
18. How does shared immersion with brand avatars in metaversal spaces influence consumer-brand relationships?

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