

METaverse MARKETING: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS AND A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR BRAND PRESENCE, COMMUNITY, AND COMMERCE

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Abstract

This article examines the conceptual foundations of metaverse marketing and proposes a research agenda centered on three core dimensions: brand presence, community, and commerce. As immersive technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, blockchain, and artificial intelligence converge, the metaverse is emerging as a transformative environment for marketing practice. Drawing on a narrative literature review across marketing, technology, and consumer behavior, this study highlights the shift from traditional digital marketing toward interactive, experiential, and participatory engagement. The findings emphasize that effective brand presence in the metaverse requires immersive experiences and virtual storytelling, while community plays a critical role in fostering social interaction, co-creation, and brand advocacy. Commerce introduces new opportunities for value creation through virtual goods, digital assets, and decentralized transactions enabled by blockchain technologies. The article proposes a conceptual framework that integrates these three pillars and identifies key interaction mechanisms, including co-creation, engagement, and transactions, which drive outcomes such as brand equity, loyalty, and economic value. Additionally, moderating factors such as technology adoption, consumer motivations, and platform trust are discussed. The study contributes by offering a holistic framework and outlining future research directions for understanding and leveraging metaverse marketing.

Keywords: *Metaverse marketing; brand presence; virtual communities; digital commerce; immersive consumer experience*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the metaverse represents a significant point in the digital landscape, driven by the convergence of advanced technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), blockchain, and artificial intelligence. These technologies have enabled the creation of immersive, persistent, and interactive virtual environments where users can socialize, work, and engage in economic activities (Dwivedi, Hughes, Baabdullah, et al., 2022). As digital experiences become more immersive, the boundaries between physical and virtual worlds are increasingly blurred. This transformation has opened new opportunities for businesses to interact with consumers in innovative ways. Brands are no longer limited to traditional digital channels but can now create fully interactive and experiential environments (Barrera & Shah, 2023). Consequently, the metaverse is rapidly becoming a new frontier for marketing. Within this evolving environment, marketing practices are undergoing a fundamental shift toward more experiential and participatory forms of engagement. The metaverse allows brands to establish a presence that goes beyond static advertisements, enabling them to create immersive experiences that foster deeper emotional connections with consumers (Kim, 2021). At the same time, virtual communities are emerging as central spaces for social interaction, co-creation, and brand engagement. Consumers are not just passive recipients of marketing messages but active participants who shape brand narratives and experiences. Additionally, the rise of virtual economies, supported by digital assets and blockchain technologies, is transforming how value is created and

exchanged (Dwivedi, Hughes, Wang, et al., 2022a). These developments highlight the growing importance of integrating brand presence, community, and commerce within a unified framework. Despite the growing interest in metaverse marketing, there remains a lack of clear conceptual foundations to guide both academic research and managerial practice. Existing studies often focus on isolated aspects of the metaverse, such as technology adoption or virtual consumer behavior, without providing a comprehensive framework that integrates key marketing dimensions (Gadekallu et al., 2022). This fragmentation makes it difficult to fully understand how brands can effectively operate in virtual environments. Moreover, the rapidly evolving nature of the metaverse introduces uncertainty regarding best practices, measurement, and long-term impact. As a result, marketers face challenges in designing strategies that are both innovative and sustainable (Lee et al., 2021). This gap underscores the need for a more structured and integrative approach to metaverse marketing.

This article aims to develop a conceptual framework for metaverse marketing centered on three core pillars: brand presence, community, and commerce. By synthesizing insights from marketing, technology, and consumer behavior, the study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of how these elements interact within virtual environments. The article also proposes a research agenda that identifies key areas for future investigation, including engagement measurement, consumer behavior, and ethical considerations. In doing so, it contributes to the emerging literature by offering a structured perspective on metaverse marketing. Furthermore, it provides practical guidance for organizations seeking to establish a meaningful presence in the metaverse. Ultimately, this study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical development and practical application in this rapidly evolving domain.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution of Digital and Virtual Marketing

The evolution of digital and virtual marketing can be traced through the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0, reflecting significant changes in how consumers interact with digital content. Web 1.0 was primarily characterized by static websites and one-way communication, where users acted as passive recipients of information (Melnyk, 2024). Marketing during this stage focused on broadcasting messages with limited interactivity or personalization. The emergence of Web 2.0 introduced user-generated content, social media platforms, and interactive engagement, enabling two-way communication between brands and consumers. This shift empowered consumers to actively participate in brand conversations and content creation. With the advent of Web 3.0, the digital landscape has become more decentralized, immersive, and data-driven, integrating technologies such as blockchain and AI (Cutler, 2022). This progression has fundamentally transformed marketing from a transactional activity into a participatory and experiential process.

The rise of immersive and interactive environments marks a key development in this evolution, as digital experiences become more engaging and lifelike. Technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality allow users to interact with digital content in three-dimensional spaces, creating a sense of presence and immersion. These environments enable brands to move beyond traditional formats and design experiences that engage multiple senses (Chicotsky, 2023). For example, virtual showrooms, interactive product demonstrations, and gamified brand experiences provide new ways to capture consumer attention. This shift also reflects changing consumer expectations, as users increasingly seek personalized and engaging digital interactions (Park et al., 2022). As a result, immersive environments are becoming central to modern marketing strategies. They lay the groundwork for the development of the metaverse as the next stage in digital marketing evolution.

Defining the Metaverse

The metaverse is commonly defined as a persistent, immersive, and interconnected virtual environment where users can interact with each other and digital objects in real time. One of its key characteristics is persistence, meaning that the virtual world continues to exist and evolve even when users are not actively engaged. Immersion is another defining feature, enabled by advanced technologies such as VR and AR, which create a sense of presence within digital spaces (Gatomatis et al., 2022). Interoperability further distinguishes the metaverse, allowing users to move across different platforms and environments while maintaining their digital identities and assets. These characteristics collectively create a seamless and continuous virtual experience that extends beyond traditional digital interactions (Marwa et al., 2025). As a result, the metaverse represents a new paradigm in how individuals engage with digital environments. The metaverse differs significantly from traditional digital platforms, which are often fragmented, static, and limited in interactivity. Conventional platforms typically operate within isolated ecosystems, where user experiences are confined to specific applications or websites. In contrast, the metaverse emphasizes integration and continuity, enabling users to navigate interconnected virtual spaces. Additionally, traditional digital

environments often rely on two-dimensional interfaces, whereas the metaverse offers three-dimensional, immersive experiences (Agbaya, 2025). This distinction also extends to the nature of user participation, as the metaverse encourages active engagement, co-creation, and social interaction. These differences highlight the transformative potential of the metaverse in reshaping digital experiences. Understanding these distinctions is essential for developing effective marketing strategies within this new environment (Haile, 2023).

Brand Presence in the Metaverse

Brand presence in the metaverse involves the creation of virtual spaces and experiences that allow consumers to interact with brands in immersive and meaningful ways. Unlike traditional digital marketing, which often relies on static content and advertisements, metaverse marketing emphasizes experiential engagement. Brands can design virtual environments such as digital stores, interactive showrooms, or branded worlds that reflect their identity and values (Gan et al., 2023). These spaces enable consumers to explore products, participate in activities, and engage with brand narratives in real time. The immersive nature of these experiences enhances emotional connection and memorability. As a result, brand presence in the metaverse goes beyond visibility to focus on engagement and interaction. This represents a shift toward more experiential and relationship-driven marketing strategies (Chatzigeorgiou et al., 2025).

Digital identity, avatars, and brand representation play a crucial role in shaping how brands are perceived within the metaverse. Users often interact through avatars, which serve as extensions of their identity and enable self-expression in virtual environments. Brands can leverage these avatars by offering customizable digital assets, such as virtual clothing or accessories, that reflect brand identity (Dwivedi, Hughes, Baabdullah, et al., 2022). This creates opportunities for consumers to incorporate brands into their virtual personas. Additionally, brand representation in the metaverse must be consistent with its real-world identity while adapting to the unique characteristics of virtual environments. This requires careful consideration of design, storytelling, and interaction. By aligning digital identity with brand values, organizations can create authentic and engaging experiences that resonate with consumers (Barrera & Shah, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a narrative literature review as its research design to explore the temporal dynamics of customer journey emotions and the application of continuous-time modeling approaches. A narrative approach is particularly appropriate for this topic due to its interdisciplinary nature, which spans marketing, psychology, and data science. Unlike systematic reviews, which follow rigid protocols and exhaustive search strategies, the narrative method allows for greater flexibility in selecting and synthesizing diverse sources. The review draws on academic journal articles from marketing, psychology, and data science, as well as relevant industry insights that provide practical perspectives on customer experience management. This combination of sources ensures a comprehensive understanding of both theoretical developments and real-world applications. By integrating insights across disciplines, the study aims to develop a holistic perspective on how customer emotions evolve over time.

The inclusion criteria for the selected literature are based on relevance to key themes such as customer journeys, emotional dynamics, and temporal or continuous-time modeling. Only sources that contribute meaningful insights into these areas are included, ensuring that the analysis remains focused and coherent. A thematic synthesis is employed as the primary analytical approach, allowing the identification of recurring patterns, concepts, and relationships across the literature. This method enables the organization of findings into key themes that support the development of a conceptual framework. However, the study is subject to limitations due to its non-systematic scope, which may introduce selection bias and limit the comprehensiveness of the review. Despite these limitations, the narrative approach provides valuable interpretive insights and facilitates a deeper understanding of complex and evolving phenomena. Ultimately, this methodology supports the integration of diverse perspectives to advance the study of customer journey emotions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Framework: Metaverse Marketing Ecosystem

The proposed metaverse marketing ecosystem is structured around three core pillars: brand presence, community, and commerce, which collectively define how value is created in virtual environments. Brand presence represents how organizations establish immersive and interactive identities within the metaverse, while community reflects the social dimension of engagement and co-creation (Bilgihan et al., 2024). Commerce, on the other hand, captures the economic layer, where transactions and value exchanges occur through digital assets and virtual goods.

These pillars are not independent but deeply interconnected, forming an integrated ecosystem that shapes user experiences. The strength of this framework lies in its ability to capture both experiential and transactional aspects of marketing. By combining these elements, it provides a holistic view of how brands operate in virtual spaces. This integrated approach is essential for understanding the complexity of metaverse marketing (Gursoy et al., 2023).

The interactions within this ecosystem are driven by co-creation, engagement, and transactions, which link the three pillars together. Consumers actively participate in shaping brand experiences through co-creation, contributing content, feedback, and ideas. Engagement occurs through immersive interactions, social participation, and shared experiences within virtual communities (Dwivedi & Hughes, 2023). Transactions represent the commercial aspect, where users purchase virtual goods or services. These interactions lead to key outcomes such as enhanced brand equity, increased customer loyalty, and the generation of economic value. Over time, these outcomes reinforce each other, creating a self-sustaining ecosystem (Buhalis et al., 2022). This framework highlights that successful metaverse marketing depends on balancing experiential, social, and economic dimensions. It also provides a foundation for future research and strategic development.

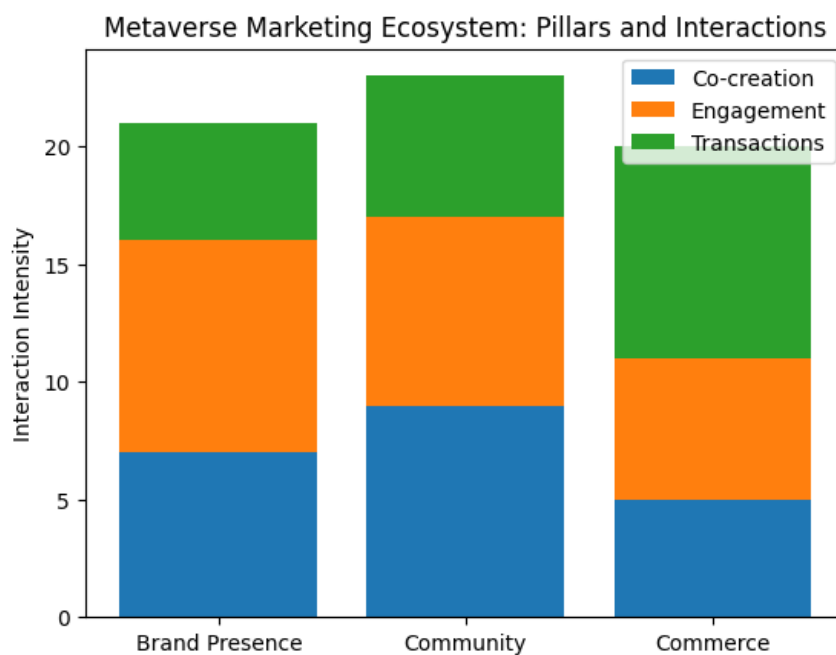


Figure 1. Double Stacked Bar Chart of the Metaverse Marketing Ecosystem: Pillars and Interaction Dynamics

The figure as shown in Figure 1 illustrates how the three core pillars of the metaverse marketing ecosystem—brand presence, community, and commerce—are driven by distinct yet interconnected interaction dynamics. Brand presence is primarily supported by engagement and co-creation, highlighting the importance of immersive experiences and active user participation in shaping brand identity. Community emerges as the most balanced pillar, with strong contributions from co-creation, engagement, and transactions, reflecting its central role in fostering social interaction and collective value creation (Koohang et al., 2023). In contrast, commerce is more heavily driven by transactions, emphasizing its function as the economic engine of the ecosystem, while still relying on engagement to sustain user interest. The stacked structure of the chart demonstrates that these interaction types do not operate independently but collectively reinforce each pillar (Luo et al., 2023). This interconnectedness underscores the need for brands to adopt integrated strategies that balance experiential, social, and economic elements. Overall, the figure highlights that successful metaverse marketing depends on harmonizing these dynamics to create a cohesive and sustainable ecosystem.

Brand Presence

Designing immersive brand experiences is central to establishing a strong presence in the metaverse. Unlike traditional digital environments, the metaverse allows brands to create three-dimensional, interactive spaces that engage users on multiple sensory levels (Schöbel & Leimeister, 2023). These experiences can include virtual stores, branded games, and interactive events that encourage exploration and participation. The goal is to create environments that are not only visually appealing but also emotionally engaging and memorable. By leveraging immersive technologies, brands can foster deeper connections with consumers (Hollensen et al., 2022). This approach shifts the focus from passive exposure to active engagement. As a result, immersive design becomes a key differentiator in metaverse marketing.

Virtual storytelling and experiential branding further enhance brand presence by enabling organizations to communicate their identity in more dynamic and engaging ways. Instead of relying on traditional advertising messages, brands can create narratives that users experience firsthand within virtual environments (Kumar et al., 2025). These narratives can unfold through interactive elements, guided experiences, or user-driven exploration. Storytelling in the metaverse allows brands to build emotional resonance and authenticity. It also encourages users to become part of the brand story, strengthening their connection. This approach aligns with the broader trend toward experiential marketing (Yao & Ren, 2025). Ultimately, effective storytelling transforms brand presence into a meaningful and engaging experience.

Table 1. Dimensions of Brand Presence in Metaverse Marketing

Dimension	Definition	Key Characteristics	Strategic Implications
Immersive Brand Experiences	Creation of interactive, multi-sensory virtual environments	3D spaces, virtual stores, branded games, interactive events	Enhances engagement and differentiation through experiential design
Experiential Engagement	Active participation of users in brand environments	Exploration, interaction, user participation	Shifts focus from passive exposure to active involvement
Virtual Storytelling	Use of narratives within virtual environments to communicate brand identity	Interactive narratives, guided journeys, user-driven experiences	Builds emotional connection and strengthens brand meaning
Experiential Branding	Integration of storytelling and immersion to create memorable brand experiences	Emotional resonance, authenticity, immersive brand identity	Increases brand loyalty and creates deeper consumer-brand relationships

The table as presented in Table 1 highlights four key dimensions that define how brands can establish a strong and meaningful presence in the metaverse through immersive and experiential strategies. Immersive brand experiences emphasize the creation of interactive, multi-sensory environments that go beyond traditional digital marketing, enabling deeper engagement. This is closely linked to experiential engagement, where users actively participate in brand interactions, transforming them from passive observers into co-creators of the experience. Virtual storytelling further enhances this process by allowing brands to communicate their identity through dynamic and interactive narratives, fostering emotional connections and authenticity (Sai et al., 2025). Experiential branding integrates these elements to create cohesive and memorable brand experiences that resonate with users on a deeper level. Together, these dimensions illustrate that effective brand presence in the metaverse relies on combining immersion, interaction, and storytelling (Munaier & Mazzon, 2025). The table underscores the shift toward experience-driven marketing, where engagement and emotional resonance are central to building strong consumer-brand relationships.

Community

Community plays a central role in the metaverse by facilitating social interaction, engagement, and a sense of belonging among users. Virtual environments enable individuals to connect with others who share similar interests, creating communities that extend beyond geographical boundaries. These interactions are often more immersive and interactive than those on traditional social media platforms. As a result, communities in the metaverse can foster stronger emotional connections and deeper engagement (Sathish & Arun, 2024). Participation in these communities allows users to co-create content, share experiences, and influence brand narratives. This social dimension is essential for building long-term relationships between brands and consumers. It also highlights the importance of designing experiences that encourage interaction and collaboration (Jiang et al., 2026). The role of

influencers and virtual communities further amplifies engagement within the metaverse. Influencers, including both real individuals and virtual avatars, can shape consumer perceptions and drive participation in brand experiences. Virtual communities often serve as hubs for discussion, collaboration, and content creation, enhancing the overall ecosystem (Mirek-Rogowska & Rączy, 2025). These communities can also act as powerful channels for word-of-mouth marketing and brand advocacy. By engaging with these groups, brands can build trust and credibility within the metaverse. However, managing these relationships requires authenticity and transparency. Successfully leveraging community dynamics can significantly enhance brand visibility and engagement (Cutler, 2022).

The radar chart as shown in Figure 2 illustrates the key dimensions that define community dynamics in the metaverse, highlighting a well-balanced and highly interactive ecosystem. Strong scores in social interaction, sense of belonging, engagement, and community advocacy emphasize that successful virtual communities are built on deep emotional connections and active participation. These elements reflect the importance of creating environments where users feel connected, valued, and motivated to contribute. Co-creation and influencer impact, while slightly lower, remain essential drivers that enhance content generation, participation, and the spread of brand narratives. The overall shape of the chart suggests that community strength in the metaverse depends on the integration of social, emotional, and participatory factors rather than any single dimension. It also indicates that fostering belonging and engagement can lead to stronger advocacy and long-term relationships. Overall, the chart underscores that effective community strategies in the metaverse must prioritize interaction, collaboration, and authenticity to sustain engagement and brand loyalty.

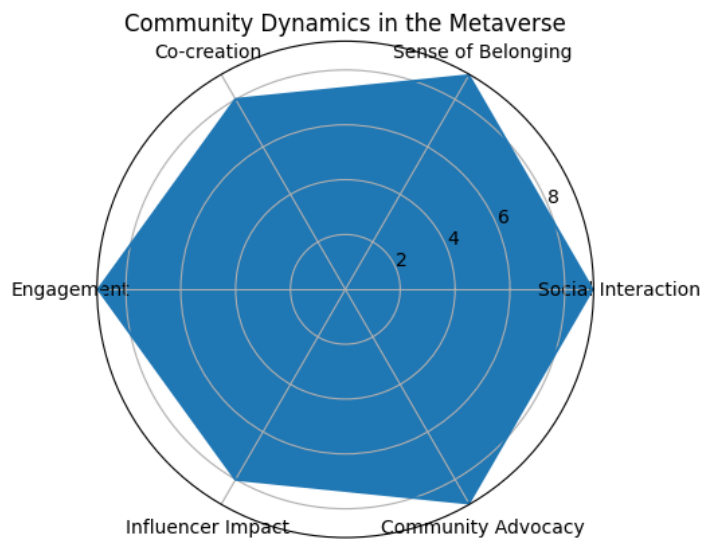


Figure 2. Radar Chart of Community Dynamics in the Metaverse Marketing Ecosystem

Commerce

Commerce in the metaverse is characterized by the emergence of virtual marketplaces and digital assets that enable new forms of economic activity. Users can buy, sell, and trade virtual goods such as digital clothing, virtual real estate, and in-game items. These transactions are often facilitated through immersive environments that integrate seamlessly with user experiences (Bilgihan et al., 2024). Virtual marketplaces provide a platform for both brands and users to participate in the digital economy. This creates opportunities for new revenue streams and innovative business models. The growth of virtual commerce reflects the increasing value placed on digital ownership and experiences (Gursoy et al., 2023). As a result, commerce becomes a central component of the metaverse ecosystem.

The integration of NFTs, blockchain, and digital currencies further enhances the functionality and credibility of metaverse commerce. NFTs enable the creation of unique and verifiable digital assets, providing a sense of ownership and scarcity. Blockchain technology ensures transparency and security in transactions, building trust among users (Dwivedi & Hughes, 2023). Digital currencies facilitate seamless and borderless transactions within virtual environments. Together, these technologies create a robust infrastructure for virtual economies. They also enable new forms of value creation and exchange that were not possible in traditional digital environments. This

integration highlights the transformative potential of technology in shaping the future of commerce (Buhalis et al., 2022).

Moderating Factors

Several moderating factors influence how effectively brands can operate within the metaverse marketing ecosystem. Technology adoption and user experience are among the most critical factors, as they determine how easily users can access and navigate virtual environments. A seamless and intuitive user experience is essential for encouraging participation and engagement (Koochang et al., 2023). Conversely, technical barriers such as complex interfaces or limited accessibility can hinder adoption. As metaverse technologies continue to evolve, improving usability will be key to widespread acceptance. This highlights the importance of designing user-centric platforms. Organizations must prioritize accessibility and ease of use to maximize engagement (Luo et al., 2023).

Consumer motivations and digital literacy also play a significant role in shaping behavior within the metaverse. Users with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to engage with advanced features and participate in virtual economies. Motivations such as entertainment, social interaction, and self-expression influence how users interact with brands (Schöbel & Leimeister, 2023). Additionally, platform governance and trust are critical in ensuring a safe and reliable environment. Issues related to data privacy, security, and regulation can significantly impact user confidence. Trust in the platform and the organizations operating within it is essential for sustained engagement (Dwivedi, Hughes, Wang, et al., 2022b). These moderating factors demonstrate that metaverse marketing success depends on both technological and human considerations.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the conceptual foundations of metaverse marketing by examining the interconnected roles of brand presence, community, and commerce within immersive virtual environments. The findings highlight that the metaverse represents a fundamental shift from traditional digital marketing toward more experiential, interactive, and participatory forms of engagement. Brand presence is no longer limited to visibility but involves creating immersive experiences and meaningful narratives. At the same time, communities play a central role in fostering engagement, co-creation, and social interaction, while commerce introduces new opportunities for value creation through virtual goods and digital assets. The integration of these three pillars demonstrates that successful metaverse marketing requires a holistic and ecosystem-based approach. Additionally, the influence of moderating factors such as technology adoption, consumer motivations, and platform trust underscores the complexity of operating in this evolving environment. Together, these insights provide a comprehensive understanding of how marketing functions within the metaverse.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes by developing an integrated framework that links experiential, social, and economic dimensions of metaverse marketing. Practically, it offers guidance for organizations seeking to establish a meaningful and sustainable presence in virtual environments by emphasizing immersion, authenticity, and user engagement. However, the study is limited by its conceptual and narrative nature, as the metaverse remains an emerging field with rapidly evolving technologies and practices. Future research should focus on empirical validation of the proposed framework, as well as the development of metrics to assess engagement, value creation, and long-term brand impact in the metaverse. Additionally, further studies could explore cross-platform interoperability, governance models, and ethical considerations in virtual environments. Ultimately, the success of metaverse marketing will depend on the ability of organizations to balance innovation with trust, creating experiences that are not only engaging but also responsible and sustainable.

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