Fast-Fashion in the Metaverse: How Virtual Worlds Shape Consumer Purchase Intention

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Abstract
The fashion industry is experiencing significant transformation as emerging technologies and virtual environment reshape consumer behavior and brand strategy. With growing consumer demand for immersive online experiences, brands are increasingly exploring innovative ways to engage with them more effectively. New technologies are transforming how companies and consumers interact and communicate. The metaverse emerges as a new network and social platform, offering additional value to consumers who expect more than just consuming products - they want to interact with and experience them within a virtual community. Although recent literature in the fashion industry has studied the metaverse's impact on consumer behavior, its effects on fast-fashion brands remain largely unexplored.Using an exploratory qualitative approach, this research investigates the metaverse's influence on the purchase intention of fast-fashion products. Our findings highlight the metaverse's critical role for fast-fashion brands and consumers, providing immersive, personalised, and interactive shopping experiences. In this highly competitive industry, the metaverse presents substantial business opportunities for fast-fashion companies. By embracing the metaverse and offering virtual fashion items, these brands can pave a path toward greater sustainability, aligning with the rising expectations of today's consumers. This shift prompts fast-fashion companies to adapt their business models to drive growth and sustain relevance in a rapidly changing industry landscape.

Today, digital transformation appears as a crucial factor in defining and implementing business models for many companies. New technologies and processes revolutionize how companies and consumers access information, interact, and communicate (Cuomo et al., 2020; Oh et al., 2023). This transformation has disrupted the market, altering production and distribution processes, and empowering consumers. As these technologies become integral to consumers' daily lives, the dynamics between brands and their target audiences shift.

The metaverse presents new challenges and opportunities for both companies and consumers. Many brands are already integrating the changes brought by this virtual realm into their strategies. Hence, in the fashion industry, several luxury brands have started to navigate the digital universe to provide new ways for their consumers to interact with and experience their high-end and craft-made products (Jana, 2022; Joy et al, 2022). These brands are leveraging virtual environments to create immersive and exclusive experiences that resonate with their commitment to exclusivity. But can these changes be applied to fast-fashion business models? Fast-fashion companies distinguish themselves from other fashion retailers by prioritizing rapid design, manufacturing, and distribution cycles ensuring they are the first to introduce the latest fashion trends to the market at low prices. While recent literature in the fashion and luxury industry (Flavian et al., 2019; Xue et al., 2020) examines the influence of the metaverse on consumer behavior, its effects on fast-fashion brands have yet to be explored.

We aim to study the impact of the metaverse on fast-fashion brands and their consumers, highlighting the broader implications for the fashion industry. Specifically, we examine whether the metaverse can elevate the perceived value of fast-fashion brands, thereby affecting consumer purchase intention. To explore this, we first investigate the evolution of new technologies in the fashion industry and analyze how the development of the metaverse can shape brand equity for fast-fashion brands, with a focus on its effect on sustainability and how that, in turn, influences consumer purchase intention. After describing our methodology, we present and discuss our research findings, along with their academic and managerial implications.

1. Theoretical Background
1.1 Metaverse Momentum
The development of new technologies has transformed how consumers engage with their favorite brands. Today, consumers have unprecedented access to vast amounts of information, enabling them to browse, receive feedback, and exert influence on, or be influenced by others. According to Bethan and Alvarado (2017), these technologies have significantly altered consumer shopping behaviours, making online purchasing and social media interactions integral to daily activities for millions worldwide. As of 2024, there were about 5.52 billion internet users

worldwide, with 5.22 billion using social media (Petrosyan, 2024), accounting for 63.8% of the global population. Given these statistics, it is not surprising that many companies are adapting their consumer journey strategies to reflect this evolution. Hence, some offer integrated digital and physical experiences, while others, like Amazon, Bonobo, or Waby Parker, prioritize a digital-native approach. Today, some brands are even pushing boundaries by managing their product offerings through the metaverse, marking a new frontier in strategic choices aimed at enhancing consumer engagement and experience.

The metaverse is defined as a network of immersive digital spaces where users can interact with each other and virtual objects in real time. It consists of interconnected platforms that allow continuous experiences, supporting personal identity and assets (Ball, 2022; Hadi et al., 2023; Yadav et al., 2024). The metaverse is a nascent area where companies and consumers benefit from advancements in new technologies such as augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence, and blockchain, to redefine interactions. Thanks to this, consumers engage in a fully immersive interactive virtual shared space where they can work, play, socialize, and shop in unprecedented ways (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Romero et al. (2025) consider that branded virtual worlds enhance consumer immersion, drives brand loyalty and purchase-related behaviors. Hence, many brands now recognize the opportunities that immersive technologies offer for presenting and selling their products to a larger audience than ever before (Pantano and Servidio, 2012; Hadi et al., 2023; Yadav et al., 2024). These technologies allow consumers to experience products in a highly interactive way and brands to create more personalised immersive shopping experiences and drive sales growth (Pantano and Servidio, 2012; Rajagopal, 2023). By embracing these technologies, brands can also reach a global audience, breaking down geographical barriers, expanding their market, and thus, staying ahead of the competition.

Originating in the gaming industry, the metaverse is now expanding swiftly across various sectors. With over a third of the global population—approximately 3 billion people—engaged in video gaming (Clement, 2022), gaming stands as a dominant form of entertainment through which companies can showcase and market their products. Businesses are quickly realizing that the metaverse presents new opportunities for both product creation and distribution. As highlighted by Jocevski (2020) the retail landscape is evolving into a multi-spaced environment, where companies and consumers interact in new and diverse ways. In response to these shifts, consumers have new expectations—they seek not only to consume products but also to engage with and experience them within their virtual communities. These interactions and experiences within digital communities play a crucial role in shaping the consumer journey and purchasing decision (Hadi et al., 2023; Jung et al., 2023; Suthongwan & Kuntonbutr, 2023, Romero et al., 2025).

Today, the metaverse appears as a new network and social platform (Jocevski, 2020) fostering new connections between brands and consumers. Moreover, brands have the opportunity to attract, into this new universe, consumers who were not originally part of their initial target audiences. According to Gartner's report (2022), it is projected that by 2026, "25% of people will spend at least one hour a day in the metaverse". Consumers will progressively engage more and more in shopping, business, and entertainment within the metaverse (Belk et al., 2022). Brands need to be where their target consumers are spending their time and developing their engagement and today, the metaverse is becoming the space to be seen, to interact, and to sell. It arouses the interest of many brands, who view it as a new touchpoint in the consumer journey. Just as establishing a social media presence was crucial for businesses to reach consumers and remain competitive a few years ago, today the metaverse presents a similar imperative. It unveils a vast array of opportunities that many brands are eager to explore and capitalize on. This new network offers three main ways for companies to engage with their target audiences and for users to showcase the items they have acquired. Users can virtually try on items on their real selves through an Augmented Reality filter; they can use bespoke fitting in which they can get dressed by a digital tailor; or they can co-create products with their favorite brand for their avatar to wear. Platforms like Roblox enable this co-creating option allowing users to try fashion items on their avatar and purchase them.

Beyond the gaming world, many, predominantly luxury, brands are venturing into the metaverse. Some of these brands have already forged partnerships with game developers to dress players within virtual environments. For instance, Balenciaga collaborates with Fortnite, and Louis Vuitton with Riot Games. As early as 2019, they both released a fashion collection featuring virtual and physical items (Jana, 2022). In March 2022, brands such as Boss, Dolce & Gabbana, and Elie Saab participated in the First Metaverse Fashion Week. While some consumers were just curious to be part of this event, others purchased runway items to dress their avatars. This event allowed people not familiar with the "traditional" runway to participate and watch their favorite brands present their new fashionable collections. In this interactive virtual world, users can navigate multiple platforms, displaying their new fashion items, and showing off their fashionable image to their peers. Many research underlines the role of fashion apparel as a means of self-expression and symbolic communication (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Eastman & Eastman, 2011). Using fashionable items as a way to express individual identity remains relevant in the metaverse. As consumers spend more time in virtual environments, they seek ways to express themselves through their virtual outfits, and the metaverse provides a new avenue for this self-expression (Yang & Chattopadhyay, 2025).

1.2 Branding in the Metaverse

Brands quickly acknowledge the benefits of being in the metaverse which also caters to their consumers' desire for social connections (Tunca et al., 2023). Hence, having an avatar wearing an item with a logo increases its brand visibility in a new and large world, and avatars positively influence consumers' attitudes toward products and purchase intention (Oh et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2024). Virtual try-ons, digital showrooms, and AR experiences can also enhance the shopping experience by blending the physical and digital worlds. Virtual try-ons allow consumers to try products anytime and anywhere. By seeing how a product looks on them, consumers can make more informed decisions before purchasing them or not. AR also enables consumers to visualize and interact with it dynamically. These technologies improve consumers' shopping experience, by making it more convenient, personalized, and engaging in an enlarged community.

For many consumers, social connections are an integral part of their shopping experiences- they are looking for feedback, reviews, likes, and sharing experiences throughout their consumer journey. They seek these exchanges to evaluate and validate their fashion choices. As mentioned by Bearden *et al*. (1989), interpersonal influences play a significant role in shaping consumer choices. Online social networks and social media platforms amplify these influences by allowing individuals to share their experiences and opinions with a broader audience (Wang, 2023). Consumers often turn to their communities for guidance on what is acceptable or desirable, impacting their purchasing decisions (Belk et al., 2022). Belonging to one or more communities is essential for fostering these desired social connections. So, why would they get fashion items they can only share with a limited number of people when they can share a collection of products with millions of people instantly? The metaverse can enhance consumer experience by offering new ways to connect and engage with their peers and their favorite brands (Steffes Hansen *et al.,* 2013; Joy et al., 2022), positively impacting brand equity (Nah et al., 2011; Colicev, 2022).

1.3 Building Brand Equity in the Metaverse

The concept of brand equity serves to account for the additional value a brand brings to a product (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996). As Keller (1993, p. 2) states, "consumer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong and unique brand associations in memory." According to Keller's (1993) conceptual model, brand equity consists of two components: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness refers to consumers' recognition and recall of a brand, while brand image involves the associations tied to the brand name that consumers may access from their long-term memory. Brand image comprises attributes related to the product, its benefits (i.e., functional, experiential, and symbolic), and attitudes. This set of associations illustrates the perceptions consumers hold in their memory about a brand. Brand image is particularly important for consumers shopping for fashion items, highlighting two main benefits: symbolic and experiential. Symbolic benefits are the extrinsic advantages of products that cater to social approval and personal expression needs, especially in fashion, where they facilitate nonverbal communication. These benefits rely on social exchange, helping consumers align with their social environment by choosing fashion styles that promote conformity among adopters (Murray, 2002). The pursuit of conformity allows individuals to be seen as part of fashionable groups, making fashion a collective social phenomenon reliant on relationships and judgments. These dynamics help people find their place in society and adapt their social identity through fashion choices, serving as a tool for self-presentation and representation (O'Cass & Siahtiri, 2013; Le Bon, 2015).

Experiential benefits refer to "what it feels like to use the product" (Keller, 1993, p. 4). In the fashion context, hedonism and ostentation are prominent, relating to the specific emotions one might experience when wearing a fashion item or choosing a fashion brand. Hedonic consumption focuses on purchasing for pleasure, enjoyment, and sensory stimulation rather than practicality (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). It emphasizes symbolic elements over tangible aspects (Voss et al., 2003), significantly influencing consumer behavior in fashion. This consumption often elicits strong emotional responses, with individuals selecting fashion products to enhance their self-esteem, express identity, or experience pleasure through variety and experimentation. Fashion's seasonal diversity allows consumers to explore different personas and worlds, heightening their enjoyment and likelihood of purchasing, while keeping them engaged and excited (Belk, 1988; Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Ostentation represents another experiential benefit of fashion product. These products often serve as a platform for social signaling, where individuals use their consumption choices to convey messages about their social identity and group affiliation (Heffetz, 2004). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced with highly visible fashion items, allowing buyers to showcase their fashionable sensibilities and signal their social standing (Han et al., 2010). Ostentation in fashion involves enhancing one's self-image through consumption, as individuals define both themselves and others based on what they own (Eastman & Eastman, 2011). This process enables consumers to adjust their self-image to align with desired social messages.

Nowadays, companies must navigate evolving consumer behaviours. With numerous purchasing options available, consumers seek more than just the product—they also desire a new and memorable experience (Harris et al., 2001). By offering new ways to connect, to experience new interactions, and to present their identity as they

choose, the metaverse may contribute to the additional value fashion brands provide their consumers. Thus, in the virtual world, consumers may use brands as symbols to define their identity and to display to others who they are or aspire to be (Steffes Hansen, 2013; Heitmann *et al.*, 2020). When consumers select a specific fashion item and brand, they convey a certain meaning and symbol to their peers showcasing their social position within their communities. Nah et al. (2011) study the experiential benefit offered by the 3D virtual world, noting that immersion in this new virtual environment increases brand equity thanks to the new experiences. Throughout the metaverse, brands can develop personalised items, create a sense of belonging, develop a new community, and maintain strong relationships with their consumers (Nah et al., 2011; Gadalla et al., 2013).

These symbolic and experiential benefits strengthen the bond between fashion consumers and their favorite brands. According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1979), attachment to a product predicts how an individual will interact with it. While typically associated with interpersonal relationships, such as in romantic relationships or friendships (Fedorikhin et al., 2006), attachment also applies to connection with brands (Thomson et al., 2005), particularly visible products like fashion, which enhance self-expression and social identity (Thomson et al., 2005; Malar et al., 2011). Fashion's distinctive and valued benefits urge individuals to develop attachment to maintain their fashionable image (Le Bon, 2015).

The metaverse, as an emerging network, has the potential to offer fashion consumers both experiential and symbolic value, fostering attachment to fashion brands. Through new interactions within this digital space, consumers can express their alignment with or distinction from their social environment by selecting fashion items they want to get each season. Steffes Hansen et al. (2013) suggest that social connections are also linked to a higher purchase intention for virtual products. Hence, by allowing consumers to experience the products, AR can add value to a brand and increase the likelihood of product purchase (Cuomo et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2023).

Some companies, such as luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Burberry, and Gucci, were quick to recognize these opportunities and ventured into the new virtual environment ahead of others (Xue et al., 2020; Amed et al., 2022). Today, fast-fashion brands such as Forever21, Shein, and H&M, are starting to see the potential of the metaverse but need to adjust it to their specific business models. Unlike other fashion brands, fast-fashion brands offer a fast production of items at low prices with fast delivery to consumers who browse, compare, decide, and purchase faster than before. The frequent release of new items every few weeks offers consumers ongoing opportunities to redefine their image as they wish. This specificity associated with this business model has become an increasing concern for environmentally conscious consumers. While fast-fashion brands quickly capture the latest trends and meet the ever-changing demands of consumers, they are criticized for the negative impact they have on the environment.

1.4 Fast-Fashion, Sustainability and Metaverse

According to De Aguiar *et al.* (2021) each year, the fast-fashion industry consumes over 98 million tons of nonrenewable resources, and only about 20% of clothing waste is reused or recycled. The convenience of online shopping and the low prices of fast-fashion products have led to mass overconsumption. However, many consumers are now recognizing that their preference for a wide selection of inexpensive clothing from fast-fashion brands has fueled an industry linked to unethical practices, including poor labor conditions, environmental damage, and wasteful production. These consumers have new expectations: they want fast-fashion products that not only help them maintain a fashionable image at a low price but also have minimal effect on the environment and labor force. To retain loyal customers, these brands had to adapt to these new demands by considering sustainability as part of their strategy (Zhang et al., 2021).

Sustainability is defined as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p.37).

Sustainability involves developing products with consideration for their potential negative outcomes across three interrelated dimensions: environmental, social, and economic, known as the "Triple Bottom Line" (Kleindorfer et al., 2009). The environmental level focuses on responsible resource management and reducing ecological impacts. The social level addresses the well-being of individuals and communities through fair labor practices and social equity. The economic level aims for sustainable growth that does not compromise environmental and social health. This framework helps the fashion industry adopt practices that minimize environmental harm, ensure social responsibility, and support long-term economic stability (Kim & Oh, 2020).

Given the growing consumer demand for more sustainable products, fast-fashion brands can meet this expectation by launching their offerings in the metaverse, thereby minimizing the environmental outcome associated with traditional garment production. This allows for more accurate demand forecasting through data analytics and customer interactions, helping brands produce only what is needed, and minimizing excess inventory and waste. The production of digital-only products eliminates the necessity for physical factories, thereby removing transportation and packaging costs. Therefore, brands can reduce both their production expenses and time to market, while simultaneously minimizing the traditionally polluting practices prevalent in the fashion industry. Evidence suggests that the carbon dioxide emissions associated with the production of a digital garment

are approximately 97% lower than those of a physical garment **(Chernsyheva et al., 2023).** Since fast-fashion brands are often criticized as the primary contributors to environmental pollution, developing collections within the metaverse can serve as a means for these brands to promote more sustainable production and consumption practices. Hence, the metaverse can provide new ways for these brands to remain the first in having the latest fashion styles, to cater to the constantly evolving global demand while offering a more sustainable alternative for their consumers.

Emerging literature explores the influence of the metaverse on consumer behavior (Bethan & Alvarado, 2017; Hadi et al., 2023; Oh et al., 2023; Rajagopal, 2023). However, it has yet to examine whether this new network and social platform will affect consumers' purchase intention for fast-fashion brands. Does the metaverse increase the brand equity including sustainable value? Does it affect consumers' attachment to fast-fashion brands? Can it influence consumers' intention to purchase fast-fashion items? The main purpose of this research is to develop a theoretical framework that captures the impact of the metaverse on the relationships between brand equity and attachment, and purchase intention. In fact, this research focuses on analyzing the positive impact of the metaverse on fast-fashion brand equity, the positive influence of the added value provided by the metaverse on the fast-fashion brand attachment, and finally the positive impact this attachment has on consumer purchase intention of fast-fashion items.

2. Qualitative Exploration

To assess the relevance of these relationships, we complement the literature review with qualitative interviews. Specifically, we conducted 29 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a sample of 17 women and 12 men, living in the United States and selected for their interest in the metaverse and fast-fashion. We continued data collection until we were confident that no new themes emerged, and we reached saturation. Saturation occurs when no additional themes, codes, or patterns arise, and further interviews only reinforce existing findings. At this stage, data collection ceases to generate new insights. As noted by Morse (2015), achieving saturation is a key aspect of qualitative research, serving as an essential indicator of research rigor.

We selected our respondents based on their report of buying fast-fashion items regularly (at least once a month) and their familiarity with the metaverse. The average age among the women is 26 years, and for the men is 29 years. The interviews spanned approximately one hour and employed open-ended questions such as how important is the metaverse in your consumer journey? How will you describe your interactions with fast-fashion brands in the metaverse? What benefits do you see in engaging with fast-fashion brands through the metaverse? How does the metaverse influence your intention to purchase fast-fashion items?

Our data analysis was conducted through thematic content analysis and cognitive mapping using NVivo software. Cognitive mapping, as a qualitative research technique, captures and visually represents the mental models people have about a particular subject (Brightman, 2003; Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). It can be beneficial in our research for understanding how consumers perceive fast-fashion brands and the metaverse. These brands operate in a dynamic environment where consumer perceptions are continually evolving, and the integration of the metaverse adds a new layer of complexity. After importing our data into NVivo, we dissected the interviews according to the relevant and meaningful themes they reveal. Hence, our coding process enabled us to determine key concepts and themes and this categorization **facilitated** our identification of patterns which is essential for understanding complex consumer perceptions. We were able to identify several common themes among our respondents such as immersive experience, interactions with others, engagement, attachment, virtual communities, and sustainability.

3. Findings and discussion

Our qualitative exploratory study underlines the influence the metaverse has on our respondents' purchase intention. Many indicate that the immersive environment of the metaverse allows them to try on clothes virtually, to see how items look in different settings, and to receive real-time feedback from friends or virtual assistants. They notice that it makes them more confident in their purchase decisions. One notes "I like to visualize clothes on me in the metaverse and receive feedback from others, so I can decide if I want to buy these products." The virtual try-ons and interactive product displays provided by fast-fashion brands in the metaverse are reported to be more engaging and informative than their offline counterparts. One claims "In the metaverse, I can see the clothes I like, try them and compare with other outfits. I can play with them and change my look, it is fun". Some respondents emphasize the importance of social interaction and community building in their metaverse experience. Hence, they notice that by creating virtual social spaces, fast-fashion brands facilitate interactions among them as users and with the brand itself. Respondents underline the immersive experience they gained through the virtual platform and the opportunity to interact directly with other consumers. The virtual community appears to foster a sense of attachment to fast-fashion brands. They highlight several benefits of the metaverse, such as an enhanced shopping experience that allows them to explore extensive collections from the comfort of their homes, personalised fashion recommendations, connections with fashion communities, and a way to reduce their

environmental impact while maintaining their fashion consumption.

The metaverse enables them to connect, share their style, and gain inspiration from others, fostering a sense of belonging in their fashion communities which influences their desire to purchase fashion items. They don't want to buy more items but desire to buy them more responsibly inside their communities. They realize that buying many items virtually and some physically doesn't prevent them from being fashionable. They recognize that the metaverse helps them to adopt a more sustainable behavior while purchasing fast-fashion items. By being able to virtually try-on fashion clothes and accessories, they can select what they really want to buy comfortably at home, eliminating the inconvenience of exchanges or returns if the products don't fit. They also acknowledge that the pleasure of showcasing their fashionable styles can be achieved virtually reducing physical consumption and lessening their environmental impact. One states, "I can have multiple items at once, dress my avatar with trendy and affordable items, and interact with my virtual communities without the guilt of polluting the environment with new fashion items every few weeks."

Our respondents also note that by offering exclusive virtual items or limited-time collections in the metaverse, fast-fashion brands create a sense of urgency and exclusivity, that push them to purchase these items, just as they would in stores or online. However, since these products are virtual, they feel less guilty about their purchases. One says, "I feel better knowing that these products won't end up buried at the bottom of my closet in a few weeks." They also indicate that virtual fashion items can become collectibles offering them new benefits. Thus, they can hold onto these items such as those co-created with famous designers, as they appreciate in value over time or decide to exchange or resell them within their communities, all without any impact on the environment.

The metaverse allows them to continue enjoying their fashion purchases in a more responsible manner. Hence, they discuss their purchasing decisions and explain how fast-fashion brands' digital showrooms and virtual try-ons provide them with more sustainable ways to buy exactly what they want. For fast-fashion companies, this approach ensures that their items are produced only after they have been purchased, thereby eliminating excess stock and reducing waste while simultaneously increasing the satisfaction of their environmentally conscious consumers. They can choose to produce certain products physically only after assessing their level of adoption in the metaverse. It narrows the gap between what the brands offer and what consumers desire, fostering greater engagement with and attachment to their favorite brands.

Therefore, fast-fashion brands can benefit from the metaverse just as luxury fashion brands do, despite their distinctive business models. Our analysis highlights the role played by the metaverse for fast-fashion brands. This new virtual and social platform provides added value, experiential and symbolic, for consumers, enhancing their attachment to these brands. It enables consumers to maintain their fashionable self-image within their virtual connections, thereby sustaining their constant desire for these brands. Therefore, the metaverse can transform the shopping experience for fast-fashion consumers. Moreover, by introducing their collections into the metaverse, fast-fashion companies can adapt their strategies to meet new demand, providing consumers with immersive, personalised, and socially interactive environments. This approach drives purchase intention and promotes more sustainable fast-fashion consumption.

By confirming these impacts, this research significantly deepens our understanding of why fast-fashion consumers are interested in virtual fashion items and why an increasing number of fast-fashion companies are investing in the metaverse.

While our study underscores the added value the metaverse provides fast-fashion brands and consumers, reinforcing brand attachment and influencing purchase intention, it also acknowledges certain limitations. Firstly, our research focuses on fast-fashion consumers living in the United States and belonging to the same age category. Fast-fashion brands operate worldwide, concern more than just one age group, and the metaverse is borderless. Therefore, it would be valuable to broaden our scope and assess whether our findings apply to a more global target. Future research should also investigate how cultural context might influence virtual fashion experiences, consumer trust and purchase intention. Secondly, we conducted this research using a qualitative methodology, which provided us with interesting insights that need to be confirmed through a quantitative approach. This will help validate our propositions and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. Additionally, studies could explore how virtual product ownership shapes consumer perceptions of sustainability and long-term purchase intentions. It should assess the environmental benefits of digital fashion and examine whether consumer engagement in virtual worlds encourages more eco-conscious behaviors and stronger brand relationships.

This research also provides valuable academic and managerial contributions by stressing the crucial role the metaverse has in adding values to fast-fashion brands and promoting more sustainable fashion consumption. It emphasizes the impact of virtual interactions on consumer-brand relationships and brand equity. It also offers guidance for companies on developing virtual fashion items that resonate with consumers, leveraging the metaverse to enhance consumer attachment and foster more sustainable purchase intention for fast-fashion items. In this industry, competition is fierce, but the metaverse can offer significant business implications for fast-fashion companies. To secure a competitive advantage, these companies should strengthen their presence in the metaverse to provide new value to consumers who are constantly seeking new experiences. This immersive environment

enables consumers to interact with a variety of products and discover fast-fashion brands' collections in a new, immersive, and engaging manner, while also mitigating their environmental impact. By integrating fast-fashion products into the metaverse, such as exclusive items or products co-created with famous designers, managers can create unique and innovative customer experiences that foster brand loyalty and attract a digitally savvy audience. This shift not only enhances brand equity but also positions fast-fashion brands as pioneers in virtual retail spaces, offering a competitive edge in the evolving digital marketplace. Moreover, the metaverse offers a sustainable alternative to traditional retail practices. By reducing reliance on physical stores and minimizing waste, fast-fashion companies can lower their environmental impact, making it possible to align consumer desires for novelty with more eco-conscious business practices. Fast-fashion companies should seize this rapidly growing opportunity to create, communicate, interact, and engage more extensively within their virtual communities while also addressing criticism regarding their environmental impact by promoting more responsible consumption.

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