Analysis of the Impact of Metaverse on the Retailer's Brand Perceptions:
The Example of Nike With Nikeland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Retailers are increasingly exploring new communication and sales channels, with the metaverse offering a promising opportunity. This study examines how Nike's presence in the metaverse, through Nikeland, impacts brand image and consumer expectations. Factors analyzed include respondent characteristics, metaverse knowledge and usage, valued Nike attributes, customer loyalty, and product quality perceptions. Data was collected with a survey of 401 respondents. Analysis using structural equation modeling revealed that most respondents view Nike's metaverse

presence as enhancing its innovative image, overall brand perception, brand aware-ness, and brand equity. Key consumer expectations for the metaverse store include attractive decoration, product quality, pleasant atmosphere, and a quality consumer experience. The study highlights the significant relationship between brand image and consumer expectations, providing strategic insights for retailers on target defi-nition and refining metaverse experiences.

INTRODUCTION

Retailers are continuously on the lookout for innovative touchpoints to engage, communicate with, and sell to their customers. In the realm of omnichannel retail strategies, innovative touchpoints present a golden opportunity to foster more in-teractions between retailers and customers, ultimately driving sales through new customers and more frequent transactions. The touchpoints used by retailers span from physical stores, websites, mobile applications (Pratas & Brito, 2019), e-marketplaces, social media platforms, to innovative technologies like the metaverse and other spatial computing platforms.

Omnichannel retailing is all about seamlessly integration and management of multiple communication and sales touchpoints, ensuring a consistent and smooth buying journey for customers, no matter which touchpoint they choose (Rosenblum & Kilcourse, 2013). These strategies are intricately linked to challenges such as digitalization and the need to adapt retail strategies to evolving consumer behavior (Kotzab et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2020).

Today's consumers are "blended" forming a unified perception of brands and retailers across various touchpoints. They navigate these touchpoints fluidly, during their interactions with brands and retailers, without distinguishing rigid boundaries between online and offline experiences. This blending of channels creates a unified brand perception, and allows the showrooming and webrooming effects (Pratas & Amorim, 2022). Consequently, integrated touchpoints are crucial for achieving positive consumer experiences, significantly impacting customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Bolton et al., 2022).

The metaverse represents a novel touchpoint and marketplace that brands and retailers can leverage to engage with consumers (Lopes et al., 2024). According to Gartner Inc. (2022), by 2026, 25% of the global population will spend at least one hour daily on metaverse platforms.

The metaverse is a dynamic, three-dimensional virtual world rooted in virtual reality, where users can live, socialize, work, and play. This immersive environment transcends the current two-dimensional cyberspace of websites, social media, and apps, creating a rich, avatar-populated landscape (Singh et al., 2024). Retailers

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