DISCOVERING THE MYTH OF METAVERSE FASHION

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TOWARDS DEFINING PROSPERITY FASHION

NATALIA BERGER
Inholland University of Applied Sciences
natalia.berger@inholland.nl
Orcid 0000-0002-4083-3133

Abstract

This study contributes to defining 'prosperity fashion' by critically examining early metaverse fashion narratives, revealing a focus on economic gain for companies rather than holistic well-being, aesthetics, and consumer needs, thus highlighting the demand for new myths that could potentially seduce consumers to shift from physical to virtual apparel, whose specific emphasis remains to be determined through further research and discourse. This paper focuses on one case study – the 2021 Roblox Gucci Garden event, specifically analysing the widely referred transaction of a virtual Gucci Dionysus Bag with Bee that sold for more than its physical equivalent. A critical discourse analysis of mass media coverage demonstrates how this single transaction evolved into the most cited example of metaverse fashion's investment potential, becoming a foundational myth in the emerging metaverse fashion discourse.

INTRODUCTION

If you do a quick search, Google will tell you that in 2024, the global metaverse had more than 600 million active users. Statista (n.d.) forecasts this number will be 2,633.0 million by 2030. Wikipedia describes *the metaverse* as a loosely defined term referring to virtual worlds in which users represented by avatars interact, usually in 3D and focused on social and economic connection (Wikipedia contributors, 2025). While the metaverse's history goes back decades, the fashion industry turned its attention to it in 2019. A virtual Gucci bag sold for a price higher than its physical counterpart in 2021 became an emblematic go-to example of a fashion label's success in the digital marketplace. Multiple brands' activity peaked on online gaming platforms like Roblox, Fortnite, and Decentraland in 2022, ceasing when OpenAI released ChatGPT in 2022. However, fashion remains a major player in the global metaverse market, including virtual and augmented realities alongside other immersive technologies. Statista (n.d) identified various possibilities and opportunities in education, entertainment, health and fitness, remote work, eCommerce, and gaming as elements forming the metaverse market structure, which is projected to experience optimistic growth according to the Global metaverse in fashion market 2024-2028 (2024) report.

Practitioners, experts, and academics view the metaverse as a novel opportunity for brands to cultivate relationships with new customers, particu-

larly considering that 80% of Roblox users—the largest metaverse platform—are younger than 16 (Huang, 2023; Statista, 2025), while also exploring its potential as an innovative business model. Often referred to as virtual or digital fashion, fashion in the metaverse "is still in its nascent phase"; its definition is not yet set and is open to modifications, stated the authors of the recently published edited volume *Digital fashion: Theory, practice, implications* (Spicher et al., 2024, p. 1). In this paper, I use the term metaverse fashion in the way it is still circulating in the public discourse – as an interchangeable synonym for virtual and digital fashion. While in actual practice, these terms are not always equivalent (not all digital/virtual fashion requires the metaverse; *phygital*[1] items simultaneously exist in pixels and in real life, and other distinctions), in the broad everyday news media discourse, the edges of these denominations are still too vague.

It is true that "academia has yet to catch up" in the digital fashion conceptualisation and theorisation, as attempted in the above-quoted book (Spicher et al., 2024). However, the novel phenomenon does not remain unnoticed by the researchers. As the authors of the comprehensive literature review on virtual reality in the luxury fashion industry explain, research on VR (virtual reality) fashion — a 'relatively underexplored area'—is a growing field (Liu et al., 2024). Recent research papers focus on metaverse fashion economics and business models, marketing and fashion non-fungible tokens – NFTs (Park & Lim, 2023; Chrimes & Boardman, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023); technological aspects of digital apparel (Joy et al., 2022), customer attitudes, and virtual goods purchase intentions (Kim, 2023; Wang, 2023; Andò, 2024); haute couture fashion in the metaverse (Armitage, 2022); impact on sustainability (Mesjar et al., 2023; Periyasamy & Periyasami, 2023).

Since its advent, the history of digital fashion has been closely linked to virtual gaming (Boughlala & Smelik, 2024), possibly due to the ability to alter the 'skins' of users' in-game characters – avatars. Scholars are still testing the waters of what motivates gamers to pursue new skins, *particularly the buying of* virtual outfits. Wang (2023) showed that "cool and interactivity have a substantial influence on purchase intention for virtual apparel", while the desire for online

self-presentation "plays a mediating role" (p. 1). Another field survey revealed that "attention-seeking and reputation act as inhibitors" to the intention to purchase digital clothing (Kim, 2023). Furthermore, academics, journalists, and pioneers in digital fashion design often emphasise that this phenomenon has an inherent "symbiotic relationship between technology and creativity" (Boughlala & Smelik, 2024, p. 12; Jana, 2022). It would be reasonable to assume that this opportunity to exercise creativity could also serve as another driver for gamers' engagement in customising avatars.

Advocates assert that pixelated clothing will enhance real-world fashion sustainability by reducing overproduction and overconsumption. The digital alternative to physical fashion "would eliminate waste, carbon footprints, and harmful chemicals from the production process," declared the founders of one of the digital-only clothing flagships, DRESSX (Spicher et al., 2024, p. xxiii). Although these expectations may sound almost self-evident to many, no one can verify that virtual fashion will mitigate harm rather than cause other environmental problems. Nevertheless, sustainability claims could serve as a compelling argument to persuade consumers, mainly Gen Z and Millennials — the primary target demographic of the Metaverse (Pangarkar, 2025) — to commit to a virtual economy. According to the World Economic Forum (2022), Gen Z prioritises sustainability more than any other generation.

Whether or not the motives for participating in digital fashion — as identified by scholars, journalists, and industry practitioners — will lead to its prosperity in the metaverse remains unpredictable and impossible to forecast with certainty. Studying the future is challenging. What we can do is learn from past and contemporary practices. Research shows that, actually, consumers aren't fully ready for the metaverse, with some firmly against it (Breiter & Siegfried, 2022). This mirrors the experience with "smart fashion" or wearables, whose presentation in public discourse in 2015–2016 was studied (Berger, 2017); despite market analysts' high growth expectations, mass consumers were not ready to accept technological additions to their apparel. In the vein of social constructionism theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), public discourse will also be vital in the case of metaverse fashion, convincing people to accept this novel medium of self-expression that, as the emerging sector promises, will lead to a more

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1   The term refers to the integration of physical and digital elements that create a seamless experience where the boundaries between reality and virtuality are dissolved (Mele et al., 2023).

planet-friendly and creative fashion ecosystem.

Due to this critical role of public discourse in shaping technological adoption, an essential theme remains little noticed by academia: the language practices that surround and construct people's perception and understanding of new phenomena such as the metaverse. While the term was coined by the end of the last century and the first true metaverse platform, Second Life, was launched in 2003, the rise and peak of the virtual world's popularity came during the COVID-19 pandemic. The novelty of this phenomenon, which has a very short history compared to fashion's tens of thousands of years, presents both challenges and opportunities. Just as myth was the first stage of constructing a worldview and human place within it, the virtual world(s) is undergoing its own mythology-building epoch. My interest lies at the intersection of these two realms – metaverse and fashion. How will the old system of fashion, which in real life (IRL) is heavily loaded with its beliefs, stereotypes, scenarios, rules and heroes, interact with the ideal square one, such as the metaverse, and, specifically, its fashion? As researchers, we are in the unique position that allows us to assess the construction of a *potentially* new *semiological structure* as conceptualised by Lotman (1990) – the metaverse fashion system – in real life! Is the system of fashion in the metaverse indeed a new semiological structure, or is it a procreation of the older system? In this latter case, we can witness how this older system roots itself in digital soil, adapting its signifying practices while maintaining core symbolic functions despite the radical material shift.

My critical discourse analysis (CDA) examines how social actors discuss metaverse fashion in news media texts, drawing from a corpus of articles classified as "News" by NexisLexis (LexisNexis, n.d.). The dataset includes general public media (daily and weekly newspapers and magazines with local, national, and international circulation) as well as specialised business and fashion publications. This emphasis on broad media coverage offers insights into how the novel semiological structure of metaverse fashion is being constructed and negotiated through language practices in real time.

An extended analysis of global media representations of virtual fashion from 2013 to 2022 reveals a mythology-making machine operating at full throttle, with this paper drawing insights from the Gucci Garden case study as part of a larger research project examining these emerging practices. A few ideas that dominate the revised public discourse should be considered the newborn myths of metaverse fashion. Notions about its "inherited sustainability", "stimulating creativity", and "democratisation" effects, as well as assertions that via metaverse, brands would finally connect to the otherwise unreachable consumer groups (predominantly Gen Z) and that assets in virtual worlds would secure investors financial prosperity – all these ideas circulate as taken-for-granted and 'natural'.

The case I will analyse in detail is what I call "The Roblox Gucci Garden event," specifically focusing on a seminal transaction in May 2021 when a virtual Gucci Dionysus Bag with Bee, offered as a "limited back accessory[2]", was sold for a price exceeding that of its physical counterpart in real life. According to my corpus analysis, this transaction became the most frequently cited in mass media examples of metaverse fashion's investment potential, acquiring a mythical status within metaverse fashion discourse.

THEORY AND METHOD

"The bourgeois, or technological, or consumer society will always recuperate myth", Barthes (Bellour & Barthes, 1980) said. For him, "everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse" because "myth is a type of speech" (Barthes, 2009, p. 131). To deconstruct how the Gucci Garden virtual bag transaction was transformed into what promises to be a foundational myth of metaverse fashion's investment potential, this study draws on theoretical observations of mythology by Barthes (1983; 2009). However, to integrally grasp the dynamics of meaning formation in metaverse fashion discourse, we must move beyond pure semiology to examine social agency and power relations. Foucault's (1981) ideas informed my analysis of how power dynamics shape the construction and circulation of myths through public discourse in the given case.

"Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message", explained Barthes (2009, p. 131). Discourse (language in use) and other "significant units of synthesis, whether visual or verbal,"

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2 According to Associated Press (2021), during the Roblox Gucci Garden event, only 851 of the bags were available during two releases for its original price of 475 Robux, about $5, "making it the rarest piece in the collection, compared with the 2.6 million wide-brim denim hats that were snapped up for free".

belong to the forms of mythical speech. Not all verbal communication can be transformed into mythical speech - only historically founded speech, not that which has evolved from the "nature" of things. According to Barthes, mythology is a part of semiology whose concern is *meaning*. As such, the argument goes, this is one of the sciences dealing not necessarily with facts (except they are endowed with significance) but with values. "The meaning contained the whole system of values" (p. 141); therefore, semiology defines and explores facts "as tokens for something else" (p. 134). In semiological analysis, the goal is to interpret myth as a semiological schema, that is, to uncover the correlation between the *signifier* (a word, image or sound), the *signified* (the concept or meaning that the signifier represents) and the *sign* ("the associative total of a concept and an image") (p. 137).

Foucault's (1981) theory of power relations as productive, neither fully top-down nor bottom-up but as a system of disciplinary pressure and counterpressures, guided my analysis of how power dynamics influenced metaverse fashion myths, particularly in media coverage of the virtual Gucci bag sale. Following Foucault, discourses are both instruments and effects of power; they shape *what* can be said and thought and who can speak with authority on a given topic. In line with Barthesian mythologisation, a third question must be addressed: to *whom* is the discourse directed? For "the fundamental character of the mythical concept is *appropriation*," that is, it "must appeal to such and such group of readers and not another" (Barthes, 2009, p. 143 [italics in original]).

As Foucault (1981) argues, "discourses must be treated first of all as sets of discursive events", emphasising that an event "is not of the order of bodies" yet "it is always at the level of materiality that it takes effect" (p. 68). Following this theoretical postulate, my research employs corpus analysis with a highly detailed coding structure developed to label and count mentions of such events. While counting is not the primary goal, it validates how concrete occurrences with real-world impacts are likely to be noticed by different groups of social actors, both those who tell and those who listen. This approach gives me evidence-based grounds to distil 'candidates' for the events with the potential to transcend into a myth.

Following Fairclough's (2013) approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA), which operationalises Foucauldian concepts through systematic linguistic analysis, this study examines texts in their social contexts across three dimensions: linguistic features, discursive practices (how texts are produced and consumed), and broader social context.

My adaptation of the CDA methodology consists of two stages: macro- and micro-level analysis. The first is a corpus[3] analysis based on a codebook constructed according to theoretical premises. I use theoretical codes (Saldaña, 2012) derived from field-specific literature, open codes from preliminary analysis, and distinct codes for social actors, genres, and rhetorical devices. Data collection parameters include temporal scope, geography of the publication, language, media types, search queries, database choices, and units of analysis (the latter are always words, phrases and sentences). Analysis via MAXQDA software reveals code distribution throughout the corpus, illuminating power dynamics and discourse patterns. The second phase is a macro-level analysis focusing on contextualisation, interpretation, and explanation of the corpus analysis findings.

As I alluded to before, the Roblox Gucci Garden event case study came out from a corpus analysis of a larger project examining public discourse around "Roblox" AND "fashion" from 2013 to 2022. This only query, used for data collection via Lexis UniAcademic, was chosen for two practical reasons: to create a manageable dataset and because Roblox is the world's largest metaverse platform. The corpus included all news accounts from the general public media without geographical or language restrictions. After cleaning and further manual selection[4], 855 texts from various countries and continents were coded. For further contextualisation of the coding results, other discursive materials, such as comments' threads on social media (YouTube, Reddit and, formerly Twitter) around a given discursive event, were used.

The first phase of critical discourse analysis of news reporting on "*Roblox*" AND "*fashion*" worldwide revealed that public discourse framed metaverse fashion primarily as a niche finance and commerce topic. Only 17% of texts appeared in mainstream newspapers and 24% in traditional media, with the remainder distributed via weblogs,

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3   Corpus is a collection of all texts eligible for examination.
4   Cleaning encompassed removing duplicates, reprints across different media, and non-mass media content such as company directories, business profiles, market research reports, and similar specialised publications.

newswires, and industry press. Corporate voices dominated the narrative — CEOs represented 45% of all social actors mentioned — while consumers were marginalised, accounting for less than 1% of social actors and typically assigned passive roles. News accounts frequently repeated sustainability claims for digital clothing and assertions about future consumer spending in the metaverse without supporting evidence, while rarely addressing the aesthetics of the fashion items themselves. The targeted audience niche appeared to be the business actors, such as venture capitalists and NFT investors. Some events, such as Gucci's Virtual 25 sneaker in 2021, brought business discourse into mainstream media but were frequently portrayed as hype or exotic. This was often associated with the speculative NFT market, and scepticism about future business prosperity in the metaverse was common.

It turned out that the Roblox Gucci Garden event is the most frequently referenced real-life incident in the corpus; since its occurrence in May 2021, this example has been cited whenever discussing the metaverse, both in fashion contexts and beyond. Given this study's focus on mythology construction through a single case study, the following section will not further discuss the complete corpus analysis results. Instead, it will examine the digital Gucci bag sold on Roblox and its transformation into a mythological signifier in the young system of metaverse fashion.

FROM A FAILED EVENT TO A LEGEND

The official Wiki section of the Roblox website (Wiki, n.d.) informs that the Roblox Gucci Garden event ran from May 17 to May 31, 2021, with Gucci as the sponsor. Players could purchase 31 branded items using the in-game currency Robux, including the Gucci Dionysus Bag with Bee, which was initially priced at the equivalent of $5.94. The event generated 286,000,000 Robux (over three million USD) from initial collectable item sales.

Vogue Business claimed to "exclusively reveal" the details of the virtual two-week art installation:

Behold, a fantastical virtual Gucci Garden to wander through, offering immersion in the everything-goes universe of creative director Alessandro Michele. <...> Visitors enter through a virtual lobby in which their avatars can view, try on and purchase digital Gucci items. Once inside the themed rooms, avatars are transformed into blank, genderless, humanoid-like mannequins (McDowell, 2021, para 1).

The author[5]'s idea was to create unique experiences by randomising visitors' entry order, allowing each avatar to develop a distinct appearance that could be screenshot and shared on social media. As one of the Roblox directors explained to *Vogue Business*, "This adds to a level of immersion that would match, if not exceed, what you see in the real world." This all was for the sake of "building brand awareness among young customers".

Despite the *Vogue Business* announcement, the public media would hardly have noticed the virtual event[6] if events had not taken an unexpected turn. One of the limited-edition items offered in Gucci Garden was sold for a price exceeding that of its real-world equivalent. This sensation was caught by specialised blogs and spread via *Newstex*[7]. This is how, most likely, the news about the niche fashion-tech event penetrated the broader public discourse.

Whereas mainstream journalists were largely unaware of the Gucci Garden event at the time it occurred, the Roblox community followed, participated in it, and actively expressed their experiences via social media. The seminal bag transaction was even recorded and published on YouTube by the gaming vlogger *SharkBlox*, with 1.45 million subscribers under the title "This Gucci bag went limited!!!" (SharkBlox, 2021)[8]. Approximately 420-450 unique users participated in the conversation and left over 2,000 comments. The overall sentiment of the discussion was predominantly negative and frustrated; most comments were fuelled with anger, disappointment ("this is the worst event ever"; "THIS EVENT SUCKS!!!"), regret and FOMO ("I never had so much regret of not buying a bag"). The common opinion was that the event was "a classic marketing stunt," with users warning others that "they are manipulating us into buying items." Many saw it as a calculated move: "Before: lol boring event, After: if you

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5   Rook Vanguard is a creator of Roblox user-generated content (UGC) who collaborated with Gucci while developing the Gucci Garden virtual environment (Hackl, 2021).

6   In the corpus, the single source – Indian Technology News – responded with a short dedicated account on May 18, 2021.

7   *Newstex* is a 'leading provider of high-quality news and commentary about emerging trends in business, law, politics, lifestyle, technology, and more' (About Newstex, n.d.)

8   All social media posts are presented with their original grammar, spelling, and punctuation preserved.

snipe a collectable thing you will get UNLIMIT-ED ROBUX!" One user pointed to the platform's transformation from "powering imagination" to "powering your mom's credit card" – a reminder about the platform's primary younger target group. Users initially dismissed the Dionysus bag when it was neither limited nor collectable, and everyone could buy it for a few Robux. The item was seen as merely "a stupid handbag with a bee," with a simple, even "ugly" design as "just a mesh with a decal", where Gucci "just slapped a bee jpeg onto this bag."

Despite the initial blowback for the event, a day later, the purses immediately became a hot commodity, as reported by *Polygon* on May 21:

Roblox scalpers started selling the purse for ridiculous amounts of money, with some people listing the purse for 1 million Robux — seemingly knowing full well that nobody would buy it at that price point. But some people did end up paying hundreds of thousands of Robux for Gucci item (Diaz, 2021, para 5).

To my knowledge, this account published by the American entertainment website *Polygon*, owned by *Vox Media*, was the only source that reported the details of the Gucci Garden Event, specifically the negative perception and disappointment among the Roblox community, and the role of speculation and price fluctuations of the celebrated bag.

However, the spectacular virtual transaction incident, summarised in the French *Madame Figaro* (Pierron, 2022) as "a virtual Gucci bag (Dionysus GG model) was sold for more in the digital world than in the real world!"[9], very soon became a habitual reference not only in metaverse fashion discourse but in the metaverse narrative in general[10].

In the corpus, from May 2021 to the end of 2022, almost one-third of the texts mentioned the Gucci name[11], and slightly more than 10 per cent of all publications referred to a "bag". No other event or specific fashion item received anywhere near as many mentions as the virtual Dionysus Bag with Bee.

Pointedly, almost from the beginning, this material discursive event started losing its factual connections; even the name of the bag (Dionysus) and its detail (bee) would often be skipped, setting aside the speculative intentions underlying the whole affair. "I wonder who in Roblox came out with the idea of promoting kids to buy some expensive Gucci drip which they cannot afford IR", questioned one of the Reddit users. Nevertheless, hardly any of the journalists or other social actors whose voices were quoted in the corpus addressed the absurdity of the situation – that Roblox is, after all, a gaming platform for children. Another peculiar fact about the virtual Gucci bag is that it has no practical use outside Roblox. Initially, the purse's 'uselessness' was emphasised in some accounts. For instance, The New York Times (Olson, as cited in Klein, 2021), in its podcast, noted that the bag "is not an NFT. You can only use that on Roblox" – a point earlier raised by internet entrepreneur and investor Alexis Ohanian on X while the Roblox event was still running, which was later quoted in other media. Soon, this utility detail was dropped, and in texts from 2022, it was not repeated. Yet, from the perspective of mythology construction, this course of discourse development is logical. "Myth is a value, truth is no guarantee for it" (Barthes, 2009, p. 147).

In the mythologisation process, a sign's historical meaning detaches from its original signifier and becomes a new signifier linked to what Barthes calls a *concept* – a higher-level signified. As Barthes explains, this concept is "a kind of nebula, the condensation, more or less hazy, of a certain knowledge" (p. 135). Therefore, the signifier has two aspects – "one full, which is the meaning" (the history of the digital Gucci Dionysus bag sold on Roblox) and "one empty, which is the form" (a mere reference to the occurrence).

As observations above reveal, almost immediately after the seminal Roblox transaction, the factual signification of the event rapidly began losing its historical details, becoming a more or less empty form – converting to the signification of something else. Let's try to decipher what this something else is. "A Gucci bag sold for more than $4,000 on Roblox, more expensive than its real version, a few months ago. An example of the appetite for fashion and luxury items" (Touzani, 2022, para. 1), noted a typical article discussing

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9 Here and further, all non-English texts has been translated into English using Google Translate.

10 During the primary data collection, I encountered articles not included in the final corpus, where the digital Gucci bag and its price were merely mentioned without any further attention to fashion. Instead, these articles focused on broad business opportunities in the metaverse.

11 The next after Gucci in popularity brand in the corpus mentions, Nike, has 1,5 times fewer counts while both companies are the industry pioneers very active experimenting in virtual fashion.

various high-value transactions in the metaverse, focusing on fashion, real estate, and digital assets. This brief allusion lacks details and is not factually accurate (the event occurred almost one year prior, not "a few months ago") – a type of temporal and price inaccuracy that became increasingly common in later texts referencing the case.

The text's authors, writing months after the event, tie the bag case to the popularity of fashion and luxury in the metaverse, overlooking the transaction's speculative aspect. The factual discourse presented in the discussions on social media during the Gucci Garden event shows that participation in the event's sale was driven by a desire to make money; one commenter said on X, "I hope there are still some items because I want one and get rich in just seconds." The spectacular deal transcended to the commenter's perception of the whole event as an opportunity to become a "millionaire pretty easily," thereby manifesting another signification turn.

The extraordinary price of the clumsy virtual replica of the iconic luxury product does not fully explain the proliferation of information about it in broad public discourse. In the history of the metaverse, one can find much more stunning spending on fashion. Take the nine-piece collection of digital NFTs, Dolce & Gabbana's Collezione Genesi, sold for a couple of million, making it the most expensive digital fashion collection to date. The case was reported, among other media, by *Le Figaro*:

In October, Dolce & Gabbana sold four virtual jackets for $400,000 each. The "Dress for a Dream" dress went for nearly $1 million — but the buyer also got a real-life replica of the garment, custom-made in the Milan ateliers (Woitier, 2021, para 5).

However, reference to Dolce & Gabbana's NFT case was never so high as to the bag with a bee. It seems that in the Roblox Gucci Bag case, nobody expected how things would go during the Roblox event; therefore, we are dealing with a *contingency*. "Myth, – wrote Barthes (2009), – has the task of giving a historical intention a natural justification and making contingency appear eternal" (p. 168). Likely, this material discursive event is already on its way to becoming a myth. For "a myth ripens because it spreads" (p. 177).

Probably coincidentally, yet remarkably, within two days after the virtual Gucci bag was sold for a record price, digital artist Mason Rothschild auctioned off an NFT called *Baby Birkin*, priced at the equivalent of $23,500.

"The Birkin Bag by Hermès is such a status symbol across the globe", explained the artist in the interview (Silbert, 2021). "The value of a Gucci bag is also mostly symbolic", a participant of one of the X conversations noted. "More than a bag itself, people desire what a Gucci bag represents to them (being rich, making it)", continued another commenter. The status symbol argument, however, appears questionable when examined closely. It is a typical taken-for-granted assumption that people need status symbols in the metaverse as they do IRL (what about children who want to play on Roblox?). The discourse of 'luxury', 'status' and 'symbol' may serve as what Barthes terms an alibi, legitimising the speculative investments that characterised metaverse fashion in 2021–2022. The future will tell whether this mythical concept of a limited/collectable luxury item as a winning investment option will further transform into a mature myth.

CONCLUSION

The metaverse fashion discourse, primarily confined to economic, business, and financial media rather than mainstream news outlets, reveals a specific mythological appropriation pattern. While Generation Z, Generation Alpha, and their parents were positioned as virtual fashion's intended users, the discourse sought legitimacy through business and financial authorities. Through the lens of Foucault's power relations theory, this dynamic is evident in three key aspects: the subject matter (predominantly financial and business-focused), the channels of distribution (business and finance media), and the privileged voices (business actors and industry experts). The corpus analysis, dominated by business actors rather than young consumers, demonstrates how commercial powers appropriated and naturalised the concept of metaverse fashion, transforming it from a potential youth cultural phenomenon into a business narrative. This appropriation process strips the phenomenon of its original (or meant-to-be) cultural context and repurposes it to serve commercial interests, making their dominance appear natural and inevitable - a manifestation of what Foucault identifies as the subtle exercise

of power through knowledge production and discourse control.

Beyond its potential transformation into a mature myth of profitable investment (or of proven desire for status symbol and luxury among the metaverse users?), the Gucci Dionysus bag case offers rich ground for mythological analysis. This first exploration of metaverse mythology merely scratches the surface of possible interpretations that this digital item, sold for more than its physical counterpart, might generate.

To secure the future prosperity of fashion, we must recognise its emerging mythologies and understand their potential harm. The fashion industry in the metaverse remains a niche phenomenon, albeit one expected to grow. The critical question is whether it will merely expand as a space for speculation or genuinely reshape fashion for the better, as some optimistically predict.

The early myth of metaverse fashion was fundamentally about money rather than the fashion itself. As my corpus analysis of public discourse from 2013 to 2022 demonstrates, the positive environmental impact of metaverse fashion remains in the realm of optimistic expectations that lack supporting evidence. Yet, the sustainability argument could be significant for metaverse fashion campaigns, as the primary target audience — young people — represents the most environmentally conscious generation. Convincing them to engage in digital fashion, thus making the entire apparel industry more eco-friendly and innovative, would necessitate contingent material events to forge new mythologies, akin to how the viral Gucci bag incident served as an effective vehicle for business narratives.

Given the power dynamics revealed in this analysis, any meaningful transformation would require a critical reassessment of how virtual fashion discourse is constructed and controlled. Further research should explore other emerging myths within the metaverse fashion discourse, particularly those surrounding "inherited sustainability," "stimulating creativity," and "democratisation."

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