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# Marketing, advertising, and branding in Fortnite: how do brands and companies connect today to audiences through the metaverse?

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## ABSTRACT

The rise of digital marketing has significantly impacted the audio-visual industry, particularly in the online video game sector. This study, focusing on Fortnite as a case study, explores the connections between brands' strategic practices and immersive gaming in the metaverse. The research adopts a qualitative methodological approach to analyze the typology of advertising and marketing efforts undertaken by brands and companies through disruptive digital platforms in the metaverse. Beyond being a simple digital entertainment, Fortnite has become a key space for socialization and experimentation for young and emerging audiences. The concept of 'transmedia' is revisited considering the revitalization that new technologies bring to the field, highlighting the importance of emotional and social bonds that consumers of this type of content practice. The study emphasizes the role of user participation and the participatory logic required by transmedia strategies as a formula to explore the interactions between brands and users in the metaverse. The fragmentary nature of metaverses, derived from the multiplicity of interfaces and environments, is also discussed. The research underscores the importance of user engagement in the narrative, as users frequently become creators and disseminators of content both within and outside the metaverse, forming a community and providing feedback on the space and narrative in which they interact with other users.

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## 1. Introduction

Digital marketing has proven to be a powerful force that can significantly influence the audio-visual industry, particularly within the online video game sector. Its impact not only alters the perception of the gaming industry but also creates new career opportunities in a field that many consider the largest entertainment sector, with annual revenues surpassing those of all other industries combined (Bonales-Daimiel et al., 2022). This underscores the transformative power of digital marketing in this area (Singh & Pillai, 2022). According to the latest digital report by We Are Social (2023), the use of cloud-connected virtual reality devices has increased by over ten points, while video console and desktop computer games have experienced a decline (p. 47). This data emphasizes the importance of video games as a major market and business opportunity (Jungherr & Schlarb, 2022; Wongkitrungrueng & Suprawan, 2024). However, there remains a significant lack of research that directly examines the connections between brands' strategic practices and immersive gaming in the metaverse, as the latter is still in its early stages of development.

The multilayered architecture of digital platforms with standardized interfaces allows companies to develop content adapted to the specific needs of each platform and the profile of each consumer, thus responding to the interaction demands of audiences. The relational dynamics among brands, users, promotional strategies, interactions, and storytelling—encompassing both corporations and games or

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metaverses—create a new paradigm of performative action in these environments (Hening-Thurau & Ogniben, 2022). Studies by Ayra et al. (2024) highlight the relevance of these new forms of interaction, emphasizing aspects such as experiential marketing, immersive commerce products (i-commerce), and their relationship with brand equity through intangible products; these are essential factors that brands must consider in metaverses.

Video games have become a vital component of the audiovisual industry, surpassing music and film as significant sources of income in digital entertainment. The main driver of this advancement is a growing user base. Today, it is inconceivable to imagine video games without online capabilities and compatibility with various devices, which increases the game's complexity and makes it easier for millions of users worldwide to connect. In addition, the reach of video games transcends the game itself, permeating social networks and offline spaces, decisively influencing not only the gaming experience but also the practices of players, even off the screens. The spectacularisation and mediatisation of video games have made them essential vectors for communication and marketing, offering new ways of interaction between brands and stakeholders.

This exploratory study adopts a qualitative methodological approach. Its main objective is to analyze the typology of advertising and marketing efforts undertaken by brands and companies through disruptive digital platforms in the metaverse.

Specifically, Fortnite has been selected as a case study, since this video game, beyond being a simple digital entertainment, has become a key space for socialization and experimentation for two types of audiences: young audiences, which mainly comprise adolescents and young adults, and emerging audiences, which include children and pre-adolescents who are beginning to integrate into the digital environment and experiment with interactive platforms such as Fortnite (Stuart, 2018; Daşdemir, 2022). These emerging audiences represent a new generation of users who forge their digital identity through their interactions in virtual environments like this one.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The word 'metaverse' was ranked second as word of the year in 2022, according to the Oxford Dictionary round of general voting (Wright, 2022). This resurgence in popularity is mainly due to the changes that Meta (formerly Facebook Corporation) implemented, adopting a new name and market strategies geared towards collective virtual experiences since the end of 2021. In addition, at the beginning of 2022, it was confirmed that Epic Games were working on an ambitious metaverse-related project, backed by \$2 billion, and supported by large companies such as Sony and Lego (Epic Games, 2022).

Bousba and Arya (2022) highlighted that the characteristics of virtual gaming allow modifications in visual content, facilitating customer interaction through the creation of GIFs, storytelling, development of small videos, and participation in challenges proposed by the brand. Payal et al. (2024) point out that the future of metaverse marketing will involve increasingly personalized practices, allowing users to purchase the right products at the right time, which will require the definition of predictive matrices that help brands improve their presence, credibility, and value in these new digital spaces. Following this line of thought, user participation is emerging as a key element, while the participatory logic required by transmedia strategies is presented as a formula to explore the interactions between brands and users in the metaverse (Martín, 2024).

The concept of 'transmedia' refers to a strategy or process that transcends the media (trans-), which encompasses both narrative expansion and the importance of the emotional and social bonds that consumers of this type of content practice (Abellán & de Miguel, 2016; Javanshir et al., 2020). Although this practice is not new, it requires revision and updating in light of the revitalization that new technologies bring to the field. Never before, the concept of transmedia made as much sense as it does now, given that the syncopated nature of transmedia stories has adapted naturally to the new multi-platform, multi-screen, and multi-device model, where metaverse experiences are implemented.

However, metaverses are not homogeneous, and their degree of immersion can vary owing to their fragmentary nature, which is derived from the multiplicity of interfaces and environments. These are collective and occasionally self-generative spaces that depend on the user's engagement with the narrative. Consequently, users frequently become creators and disseminators of content both within and

outside the metaverse, which facilitates feedback on the space and narrative in which they interact with other users, forming a community. In this context, if one of the key aspects of transmedia narratives is the involvement of the consumer/audience in the narrative to the extent of designing and expanding the universe independently and actively sharing it with the fandom, the same principle is replicated in metaverse experiences.

Arribas and Islas (2021) rescued the idea of the prosumer by highlighting its value in the current media ecosystem. Thus, the prosumer is not only an active consumer; through his production and reproduction of content, he has generated new expeditious ways for the industry based on the community logic of transmedia narratives. However, it is important to recognize that today's prosumers share certain traits, such as professionalization in the digital sphere, which makes them key agents in media environments (Islas et al., 2022), refining social and collective interactions in the immersive environments of the metaverse. Consequently, under the logic of transmedia storytelling, the prosumer expands the secondary universe, maintaining the integrity and solidity of his contributions to the community and the metaverse in which he immerses himself (Carrillo & Navarro, 2018), which ultimately contributes to strengthening engagement with the brand (Payal et al., 2024).

The logic that operates in today's metaverses has its roots in the old Multi-user Dungeons (MUD), where players assume specific roles in worlds that combine the hack-and-slash genre with interaction with non-player characters (NPCs), the exploration of worlds, and community integration through text conversations (Ball, 2022; Islas et al., 2022). The success of MUDs gave rise to variants such as Multi-User Shared Hallucinations (MUSH) or Multi-User Experiences (MUX), the latter being the ones that share the most commonalities with current metaverses, as they 'allowed participants to define the world and their goal collaboratively' (Ball, 2022, p.27). In other words, the metaverse experience materializes when there is a possibility of interacting and experimenting virtually with free will, where it is the user who determines their progress and relationships (Barnes & Mattsson, 2011; Sidorenko & Cabezuelo, 2022).

In this sense, some metaverse video games, such as Minecraft, Roblox or The Sandbox, are paradigmatic examples of the creative work that the player-user carries out for the development of the virtual world, as well as the undeniable business opportunities that arise. Notably, the Sandbox launched Lion City in June 2023, a neighborhood that mirrors the Asian giant of Singapore, where, through a crowdsourcing approach, local brands and businesses were invited to participate in the great tech metropolis. Thanks to the creation of LAND Lion City, more than 30 local companies and brands participated in a large-scale innovation event, Partner Day, where Singaporean affiliates were able to collaborate and participate in more than 512 virtual LANDS connecting with users already established in The Sandbox (Goncharenko & Savage, 2023).

Although metaverse experiences are presented under the logic of content platforms, it is not enough to affirm that any synthetic diegetic space can be considered metaverse. To understand the metaverse and consider it a transmedia formula, it is necessary to define it as a space or platform where interactions (Rampazzo et al., 2020) and experiences prevail in an open and expansive world, which allows users to explore it freely and openly using the resources and tools available in it. Castronova (2001) specifies that, although any virtual space can be metaverse, it must meet certain inexorable characteristics: real-time interactivity with all the elements and users in the virtual sphere, the corporeality of users through avatars, and persistent experiences.

As in conventional transmedia experiences, metaverse narratives are decentralized, community-based (JPMorgan Chase Bank, 2022), dilute authorship and exploitation rights, and often self-regulate, as is the case in fandom communities of a transmedia narrative phenomenon. Likewise, the persistence of the metaverse universe is a relevant aspect, similar to how the narrative canon of a transmedia story can endure and prevail in the face of interventions by different consumers.

Transmedia dynamics, when applied to brands or consumer interests, generate tension between the strategies of agents with power and the response tactics of those limited by that power (de Certeau, 1997). These relationships are manifested in the new digital scenarios, plagued by a multiplicity of formats, media, and platforms, where it is common to observe the inclusion of brands for promotional purposes and the responses that users of digital universes present, often under a logic of 'subordinate resistance' (Albal, 2007). Somehow, these limited tactics of metaverse users end up favoring changes in

the course of corporations' strategies, which adapt to the new demands that participants in these immersive environments request.

The narrative factor, which is fundamental in transmedia strategies and the creation of experiences in the metaverse, such as pervasive video games, predicts its relevance for brands: the power of interaction. Studies such as that by Soto et al. (2023) delve into the interactive nature of today's video games, highlighting their multiplatform, community, and social nature, where millions of people can participate simultaneously. Following this line, the authors stress that 'today's games are designed to offer not only occasional leisure moments, but also have the potential to create memorable experiences for consumers' (Soto et al., 2023, p.4), which can be actively exploited by brands, whether corporate or personal. Despite the fact that this interaction is articulated from non-tangible objects, such as NFTs (Scolari, 2022), the participation of both parties in these transactions.

The evolution of new technologies in communication, information, and entertainment has profoundly transformed the daily lives of younger generations, shaping their digital activities. Even before mastering traditional literacy, children effortlessly navigate technological devices.

A key factor contributing to this change is the transformation of the environment in which children and adolescents interact with mass media, from being confined to their homes to being available virtually anywhere. Unlike in the past, new generations relate to media content through diverse devices, places, and formats (Andrade & Ferreira, 2021).

Albarelo et al. (2021) pointed out that during the last decade, digital containers for videos (MOVs) have created a significant socialization space for new generations. In this sense, online interactions tend to merge with face-to-face relationships owing to the use of digital platforms. Therefore, Centennials and the Alpha generation have increased their interest in video games, as they can meet online with friends and share leisure experiences.

Navarro (2021) highlights that social interactions in large multiplayer games are not simple simulations, but real interactions in which players face challenges and scenarios together, forming a complex network of influences on behavior, community culture, incentive structures, the effects of policies and adverse events online, which change over time.

Fortnite, a massively multiplayer online battle royale game, experienced exponential growth in 2018 and has become one of the most popular digital entertainment worldwide (Carter et al., 2020). Albarelo et al. (2021), Fortnite has gone from being a simple online game to becoming a social experience and an important cultural reference in the lives of young people. This digital entertainment platform is one of the most successful in recent times, counting, according to Iqbal (2024), 126 million monthly players and 650 million registered users in total (60% are between 18 and 24 years old) and an annual turnover of approximately 4,400 million dollars.

Beyond interactions and war logic, Fortnite offers other types of experiences focused on the design of persistent virtual environments that allow real-time interaction between users and the environment. Therefore, according to Castronova (2001), Fortnite, in addition to being a video game, also fits the concept of metaverse, with an important particularity: its ability to extend to other platforms, such as video streaming and instant messaging applications that players use to communicate while playing, providing information about the latest updates to the game, mechanics, and more effective strategies.

Thus, players combine platforms and devices to experience greater immersion and dexterity in the game. In addition, networks such as YouTube and Twitch allow young people to participate in a wide repertoire of information and cultural practices related to the game. Engagement with these partner sites facilitates the development of expertise, identity, and sense of social capital (Carter et al., 2020).

It is important to note that influencers or streamers, as they are called in the field of free-to-play games, are seen as sources of information and entertainment. Therefore, they accumulate a large number of visits, exerting a significant influence on viewers. Similarly, players find streamers a source of inspiration for their own gaming experiences, as they act as motivators, showcasing exceptional gameplay, and fostering competitiveness. In addition, through their participation in the community, they encouraged collaboration, teamed up with other renowned streamers, and highlighted the pleasure of playing with friends. Likewise, the educational aspect of his videos aroused the curiosity of players who explored

YouTube channels to discover new tactics. Consequently, streamers generate excitement in players by presenting game highlights and maintaining interest through a combination of humor, high-level skills, and unique content (King & Hera, 2020).

Along these lines, Marlatt (2020) points out that Fortnite operates within a digital community that explores relationships with the contexts of social literacy and formal game learning, acting as a vehicle for social capital and identity performance, which positions Fortnite as a metaverse, beyond being a simple Videogame. On the other hand, this game is also emblematic of the freemium business model, with strong incentives to design the game in a way that maximizes microtransactions. Its commitment to continuous expansion and enduring importance is leading it to evolve from a simple video game to a content-distribution platform. Consequently, third-party entities may offer non-game-related services to players within the immersive environment of Fortnite (Baber et al., 2019).

Moreover, despite the stereotypes that influence parents' perspectives on play and the regulatory practices surrounding it, educators' views shape the broader context in which children engage in digital play. This underscores the important role of capital in the social structures of emerging generations (Carter et al., 2020).

In a similar vein, Willett (2016) delves into the influence of family dynamics and the search for autonomy among 'pre-adolescents' on the online gaming habits of children aged 7 to 11 years. He notes that the dynamics of young people's engagement with games and the culture of play have evolved. This evolution is influenced not only by game design and mechanics but also by the social maturation of young people as they navigate the changing social landscapes in which they find themselves.

For De la Hera (2019), video games are privileged instruments for persuasive communication, and Soto et al. (2023) complete this argument by indicating that Fortnite is becoming an important way to connect with audiences that are difficult to reach through other digital channels, thus transcending simple playful ideas and creating spaces for exchange and socialization. This finding is reinforced by Wu et al. (2023).

In other words, it reaffirms Castronova's (2021) conditioning factor and points to Fortnite as a platform with metaverse possibilities.

Therefore, the following initial research questions arose for the purposes and interests of this study:

- Q1. Do the messages of brands and companies have a place on this type of virtual platform?
- Q2. What specific content or strategies do brands and companies use to reach their audiences in Fortnite?
- Q3. Is there a specific commercial profile that is more popular or has an active presence on this platform?

### 3. Methodology

This research adopts an exploratory qualitative approach to examine how brands and companies use advertising and marketing strategies on the digital platform Fortnite. Beyond being just a video game, Fortnite serves as a platform for socialization and experimentation, particularly among young and emerging audiences. The study follows a case study methodology as outlined by Yin (2018), focusing on the contemporary context of Fortnite as a virtual space for marketing and branding. The main research question guiding this study is: How do brands and companies implement advertising strategies within the Fortnite platform?

The research methodology follows a case study approach, emphasizing its empirical nature and focusing on the contemporary context (Remenyi, 2012; Yin, 2018). Although the study is primarily qualitative, it incorporates a quantitative analysis of data (Codina, 2023), which will be presented through referential graphs.

The methodology follows a step-by-step approach to ensure scientific rigor. First, a thorough content analysis was conducted on promotional and corporate actions in Fortnite. Next, data was categorized based on industry scope, types of actions, and the specific virtual experiences created by brands. Finally, a quantitative element was incorporated by counting the number of actions and categorizing them by the frequency of occurrence. This structured approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the commercial strategies used on the platform.



This study will address the research questions and achieve the stated objectives through content analysis to better understand the disruptive nature of interactive communication, focusing on the actions, experiences, and virtual content provided by brands and companies within Fortnite.

The sample was determined through internet searches and direct exploration of the platform, using keywords such as 'Fortnite+brand crossover', 'Crossover', 'Brand crossover', and 'Marketing+Fortnite'. This search resulted in the identification of 148 brands with direct involvement in Fortnite from its inception in 2017 to the first half of 2023 (until June 30, 2023). Data collection was carried out between the last week of September and the second week of October 2023. Although the study relies heavily on primary data collected through this method, future research could benefit from consulting scientific databases to include academic studies on similar topics and to support the claim of novelty in the research.

Two sample analysis tables are presented, organized into the following categories. The first table consolidates data by identifying the scope or industry of the brands, companies, or content creators, such as Cinema, Sports, Music, TV Shows, Fashion, Video Games, Personal Branding (streamers, influencers, artists, etc.), digital platforms, literature, visual arts, automotive, media, board games, urban mobility, food, and comics.

The second column identifies the brand and its product (if applicable), while the third column categorizes the type of action carried out in Fortnite, such as 'Accessories', 'Avatar Customization', 'Custom Dances for Avatars', 'Special Dances for Avatars', 'Lucky Egg', 'Event', 'Concert', 'Thematic Area', 'Games and Chat', 'Virtual Space', 'Emotes for Avatars', and 'Multimedia Content'.

Based on this organization of the data and with the review of each case, it will seek to highlight the relevant elements of a narrative and aesthetic nature of the consolidated contents and experiences and to highlight the elements with which it seeks to connect with the audience.

To verify the type of actor and the number of times they resorted to Fortnite to increase their reach and carry out disruptive strategies, a second analysis table incorporates the identifying data of the brand or company, the environment in which it is developed, the brand it promotes, and the total number of actions and strategies executed in Fortnite in the period established in this study.

To validate the findings and conclusions of this study, each action and experience was cross-checked against multiple data sources, including YouTube videos and reports from game influencers, to ensure consistency and reliability. The manual categorization process, despite some limitations, was conducted rigorously, and the results were triangulated through direct exploration of Fortnite's platform in both Battle Royale and creator modes.

To allow greater contextualization of the content found, a search was also carried out on YouTube to support each result in an audiovisual way. This content, in many cases, comes from prescribers specializing in the coverage of video games, eSports, and in the specific case of Fortnite, although in some cases it is the brands and companies themselves that reinforce their strategy with the respective ad on the video platform.

This process was included because once a season or a specific experience has been held on the platform, it is impossible to experience it after its completion. Therefore, beyond the evidence found after the search process, it was necessary to leave an audiovisual record of it as support.

It should be noted that the search within Fortnite is not as exhaustive as possible, and in many cases, the results require manual filtering to identify relevant content. Despite the challenges in automating the search process, the authors ensured that all results were thoroughly reviewed and categorized based on predefined criteria. This process is the best approximation given the limitations of the platform's search functionalities.

This work is positioned as a novel study within the metaverse context, rather than the broader field of video games, as explored by previous authors such as Üstündağ (2020) and Veiga (2024). These studies have primarily focused on gaming content but have not addressed the specific role of virtual platforms like Fortnite for branding and marketing. Therefore, this research offers a new perspective on how brands use interactive digital environments, particularly in the social and collective experiences that the metaverse facilitates.

## 4. Results

The sample, comprising 148 brands present in Fortnite from its creation until the first half of 2023 (see Table 1), reveals that the business sectors making the greatest investment in communication on this

**Table 1.** Category of brand and company actions and strategies in Fortnite through the first half of 2023.

Nº	Category	Brand/person/product	Type of collaboration
1	Cinema	Avengers: Infinity War – Marvel (Disney)	Accessories and avatar customization
2	Sport	National Football League (NFL)	Avatar and dance customization
3	Cinema	Ralph rompe Internet – Disney	Lucky egg and special dance for avatars
4	Music	Marshmello	Character, accessories, avatar and concert customization
5	Cinema	Avengers: Endgame – Marvel (Disney)	Temporary game mode
6	Cinema	Star Lord & Black widow – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar customization
7	Cinema	John Wick	Avatar and accessory customization
8	Serial Content	Stranger Things – Netflix	Avatar customization
9	Moda	Air Jordan	Avatar, event and accessory customization
10	Music	Major Lazer	Avatar and concert customization
11	Videogame	Borderlands 3	Avatar and theme area customization
12	Cinema	Batman y Catwoman – DC Cómics (Warner Bros)	Avatar customization
13	Cinema	Star Wars – Disney	Avatar, accessory, special event and game pass customization
14	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	Ninja	Accesorios y personalización del avatar
15	Cinema	Aves de presa (Harley Quinn) – DC Cómics (Warner Bros)	Avatar customization
16	Cinema	Deadpool – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar customization
17	Music	Travis Scott	Character, accessories, avatar and concert customization
18	Serial Content	Punk'd – Quibi	Event
19	Digital platform	Houseparty	Games & Chat
20	Cinema	Tenet – Warner Bros	Event
21	Cinema	Aquaman – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar, accessory and event customization
22	Cinema	Capitán América – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar customization
23	Cinema	Black Manta – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar customization
24	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	Loserfruit	Avatar, accessory and dance customization
25	Cinema	Thor Nexus War – Marvel (Disney)	Battle pass, avatar customization, accessories, etc.
26	Videogame	Rocket League	Event and accessories
27	Cinema	Cazafantasmas – Sony Pictures	Avatar and accessory customization
28	Music	J Balvin	Avatar customization, special dance and concert
29	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	Lachlan	Avatar customization
30	Cinema	Joker last laugh – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Customization of avatars, accessories, special dances, etc.
31	Serial Content	The Mandalorian Star Wars – Disney	Avatar, accessory and game pass customization
32	Cinema	Kratos God of War – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
33	Videogame	Halo – Microsoft	Avatar, accessory and game mode customization
34	Serial Content	The Walking Dead – AMC	Avatar and accessory customization
35	Cinema	Royalty & Warriors – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
36	Cinema	Flecha Verde – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
37	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	TheGrefg	Avatar customization
38	Cinema	Predator – Disney	Avatar and accessory customization
39	Cinema	G.I. Joe: Sneak Eyes – Hasbro	Avatar and accessory customization
40	Cinema	The Flash – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
41	Cinema	TRON Legacy – Disney	Avatar and accessory customization
42	Videogame	Street Fighter	Avatar and accessory customization
43	Cinema	Alien – Disney	Avatar and accessory customization
44	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	LazarBeam	Avatar customization
45	Cinema	Ant-Man – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
46	Cinema	Raven – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar customization
47	Videogame	Lar Croft Tomb Raider – Embracer Group	Avatar and accessory customization
48	Cinema	Renacimiento de Harley Quinn (Batman Zero Point) – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
49	Videogame	Aloy Horizon Zero Dawn	Avatar and accessory customization
50	Sport	Neymar Jr.	Avatar customization
51	Cinema	Beast Boy – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
52	Sport	National Basketball Association (NBA)	Avatar, accessory and event customization
53	Literature	Kelsier (Mistborn) – Editorial Nova	Avatar and accessory customization
54	Serial Content	Rick and Morty – Warner Bros	Avatar and accessory customization
55	Cinema	Superman – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar customization
56	Plastic Arts	Guggimon y Janky – Superplastic	Avatar and accessory customization
57	Sport	Harry Kane y Marco Reus – Euro 2020 (UEFA)	Avatar customization
58	Cinema	Avengers: Endgame – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
59	Cinema	Loki Laufeyson – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
60	Cinema	LeBron JamesSpace Jam: A New Legacy – Warner Bros	Avatar, challenge and accessory customization
61	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	Bugha	Avatar customization

(Continued)



Table 1. Continued.

Nº	Category	Brand/person/product	Type of collaboration
62	Automóvil	Ferrari	Accessory
63	Serial Content	Gildedguy – Michael Moy	Avatar and accessory customization
64	Cinema	Suicide Squad – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
65	Music	Ariana Grande Rift Tour	Event
66	Cinema	Gamora – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
67	Cinema	Free Guy – 20th Century Studios (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
68	Cinema	Wonder Woman – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
69	Media	March Through Time – TIME	Virtual space
70	Cinema	Bad Boys For Life	Avatar and accessory customization
71	Cinema	Shang-Chi – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
72	Fashion	Balenciaga	Avatar and accessory customization
73	Cinema	Monsters: Frankenstein, La Momia, Dracula – Universal	Avatar and accessory customization
74	Plastic Arts	Skeleton & 'Kawspeely' – Kaws	Avatar customization
75	Cinema	Dune	Avatar and accessory customization
76	Music	Ariana Grande	Event
77	Videogame	Resident Evil	Avatar and accessory customization
78	Serial Content	El Chapulín Colorado – Chespirito (Televisa)	Avatar and accessory customization
79	Videogame	League of Legends	Avatar and accessory customization
80	Board game	Monopoly	Accessories and event
81	Cinema	Dark Phoenix – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
82	Serial Content	Naruto	Avatar and accessory customization
83	Cinema	Nick Fury – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
84	Fashion	Moncler	Avatar and accessory customization
85	Cinema	Spider-Man,, Carnage Venom, Mary Jane – (Sony)	Avatar and accessory customization
86	Videogame	Gears of War	Avatar and accessory customization
87	Cinema	The Matrix	Customization of avatars, gestures, dances and accessories
88	Serial Content	Boba Fett The Mandalorian – Star Wars (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
89	Serial Content	Hawkeye	Avatar and accessory customization
90	Serial Content	Cobra Kai – Netflix	Avatar and accessory customization
91	Cinema	Fennec Shand y Krrsantan – Star Wars (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
92	Videogame	Uncharted	Avatar and accessory customization
93	Cinema	Rogue y Gambito X-Men – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
94	Music	Silk Sonic	Avatar and accessory customization
95	Sport	Naomi Osaka	Avatar and accessory customization
96	Cinema	Doctor Strange – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
97	Cinema	Merodeador – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
98	Urban mobility	Segway Tour – Segway Inc	Accessory and event
99	Sport	Chloe Kim	Avatar and accessory customization
100	Videogame	Tiny Tina's Wonderlands	Avatar and accessory customization
101	Videogame	Assassin's Creed	Avatar and accessory customization
102	Plastic Arts	Jean-Michel Basquiat	Avatar customization
103	Music	Coachella	Avatar, event, music and accessory customization
104	Music	Wu-Tang Clan	Avatar and accessory customization
105	Serial Content	Bruja Escarlata – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
108	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	Chica	Avatar and accessory customization
106	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	Ali-A	Avatar and accessory customization
107	Cinema	Obi-Wan Kenobi – Star Wars (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
108	Cinema	Darth Vader – Star Wars (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
109	Videogame	Among Us	Avatar and accessory customization
110	Videogame	Galaxian	Gestures
111	Cinema	Dioses del Trueno (Thor y Poderosa Thor) – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
112	Sport	John Cena – WWE	Avatar and accessory customization
113	Cinema	Wolverine – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
114	Serial Content	Goku, Vegeta, Beerus y Bulma – Dragon Ball	Avatar, event and accessory customization
115	Music	Eminem	In-game transmitter (Multimedia content)
116	Sport	Patrick Mahomes – NFL	Avatar and accessory customization
117	Videogame	Destiny 2 – Bungie Studios	Avatar and accessory customization
118	Serial Content	Starfire – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
119	Comic	Dreamer – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
120	Cinema	Spider-Gwen – Sony	Avatar and accessory customization
121	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	SypherPK	Avatar and accessory customization
122	Cinema	Iron Man – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
123	Videogame	Rocket League	Event
124	Cinema	X-23 – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
125	Videogame	Goat Simulator 3	Avatar and accessory customization
126	Cinema	Black Adam – DC Comics (Warner Bros)	Avatar and accessory customization
127	Cinema	The Evil Dead – Reinnaissance Pictures	Avatar and accessory customization

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Nº	Category	Brand/person/product	Type of collaboration
128	Cinema	Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa y Han Solo – Star Wars (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
129	Serial Content	The Witcher – Netflix	Avatar and accessory customization
130	Videogame	DOOM	Avatar and accessory customization
131	Cinema	Hulk – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
132	Personal branding (Streamer / digital content creator)	MrBeast	Avatar and accessory customization
133	Serial Content	My Hero Academia	Avatar and accessory customization
134	Sport	Giannis Antetokounmpo – NBA	Avatar and accessory customization
135	Serial content	Kid LAROI	Event
136	Videogame	Dead Space	Avatar and accessory customization
137	Cinema	Sam Wilson (Falcon) – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
138	Cinema	Creed	Avatar and accessory customization
139	Serial content	Attack on Titan	Avatar and accessory customization
140	Cinema	Anakin Skywalker, Padmé Amidala, Darth Maul y Clones – Star Wars (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization
141	Cinema	Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse -(Sony)	Avatar and accessory customization
142	Fashion	Jumpman – Jordan	Avatar and accessory customization
143	Food	Milka	Special event
144	Fashion	Airphoria – Nike	Accessories and special event
145	Videogame	Splatoon	Avatar, event and accessory customization
146	Content Platform	IHeartland – IHeart Radio	Virtual stage and event
147	Cinema	Teenage mutant ninja turtles – IDW Publishing	Avatar and accessory customization
148	Serial content	Moon Knight – Marvel (Disney)	Avatar and accessory customization

Source: Own elaboration based on the sample obtained.

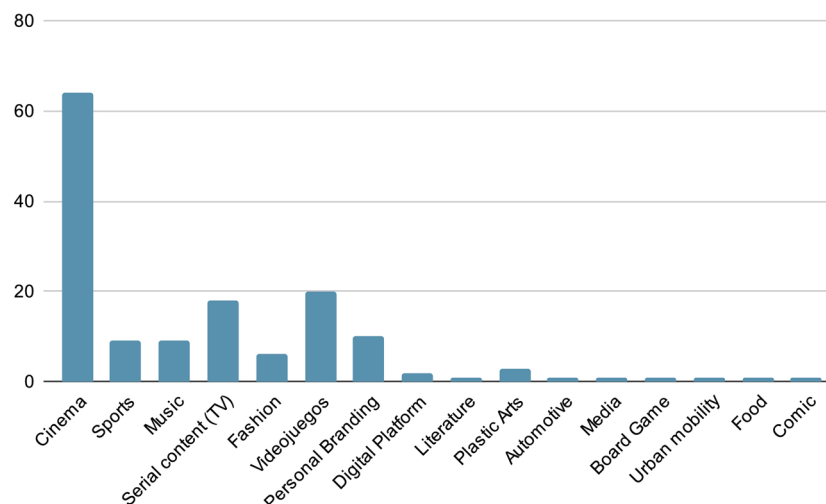


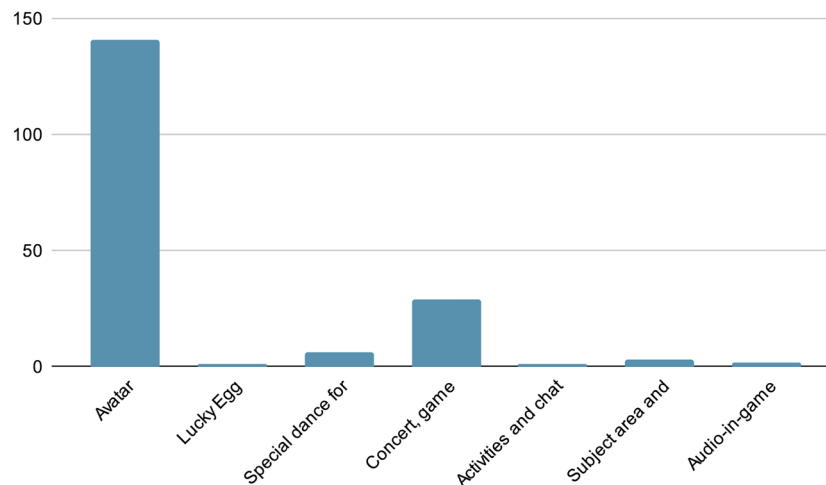
Figure 1. Categories of brand experience in Fortnite through the first half of 2023.

Source: own elaboration.

platform are Cinema, Video Games, and serial content (data simplified in Figure 1). These categories were selected based on cultural dimensions. It allows brands to resonate with the prevailing values and interests of younger generations, such as the search for identity and collaborative entertainment. This data suggests that these sectors are closely linked to entertainment and have a substantial appeal among Fortnite's largely youthful audience.

While this evidence alone may not appear highly significant, it allows for inferences regarding which types of brands and products generate the most interest among the Fortnite community. These brands predominantly belong to entertainment sectors that align with the platform's largely young demographic, a finding that resonates with previous research on consumer engagement in digital environments (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2024).

A detailed review of the strategies and actions undertaken on the platform reveals that the most common approach brands use to increase their reach and connect with audiences is avatar personalization, as seen in Figure 2. This is followed by concerts, battle passes, special events, and dances for



**Figure 2.** Categories of brand and company actions and strategies in Fortnite through the first half of 2023.

Source: own elaboration.

avatars. These actions reflect the growing trend of integrating branded content directly into user experiences, offering interactive, personalized elements that align with the platform's social nature.

These data show that the main strategy pursues an organic connection between the product and the user. For example, if Sony, through its Marvel's Spider-Man franchise (the only one it has of this brand), releases a new film or audiovisual product about the superhero, it organizes with Epic Games a season or a specific battle pass where allusive avatars, related accessories for these settings, or specific virtual experiences (depending on the case) and/or dances and gestures for avatar characteristics of the character are available. In the end, the user, if they are a fan of it, will acquire these digital products to personalize their experience on the platform, and with this, they will strengthen their relationship with the audiovisual product.

Ultimately, this dynamic mirrors behaviors in the physical world: users seek to personalize their appearance and develop a unique identity, despite collective trends. This drive for self-expression in digital environments not only enhances user engagement with the platform but also strengthens the emotional connection between users and the brands that provide these customization options. In this case, the operability of the platform allows users to personalize their digital expressions with clothing, weaponry, accessories, and even behavior. That said, it is possible to see an avatar with the appearance of DJ Marshmello, Deadpool dances, and some weaponry from the Batman battle pass or special event. However, it should be noted that all these elements expire once the season changes or the battle pass ends, so the user, despite having invested money in them, will not have their acquisition indefinitely.

And it seems to work because it is worth reiterating, it is the action that most companies and brands go to incur in Fortnite.

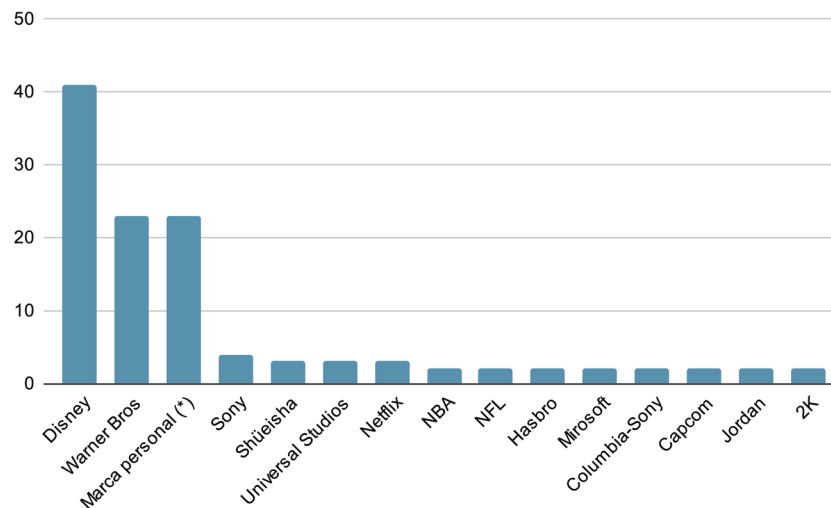
In addition to employing traditional marketing strategies, musical artists are increasingly organizing live events within Fortnite. These events not only promote their work but also allow them to reach audiences that might be inaccessible through conventional live music platforms or media. By leveraging the platform's interactive and immersive qualities, artists can engage with fans in ways uniquely suited to digital spaces, aligning with Moran's (2022) observations. This approach fosters deeper, more authentic connections, where the commercial aspect is not perceived as overtly persuasive.

As for the specific case of companies that have invested communication, marketing and advertising efforts in this platform, in the established study period and based on Table 1, to give visibility to a set of brands and products through Fortnite, 70 companies have been identified that correspond to the specific categories of entertainment, sports organizations, sports, art, publishing, fashion, fashion, information, automotive, food and mobility. All the data are collected in Table 2 (available as attached documentation), although some stand out for notably reiterating the communication efforts through this digital channel, as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Table 2.** Times in which brands and companies have used Fortnite to execute promotional, marketing, and communication actions and strategies until the first half of 2023.

Company, institution, person	Type of company, institution, person	Brand	Number of actions & strategies in fortnite
Disney	Entertainment	Marvel / Ralph rompe Internet / Star Wars / Predator / TRON / Alien / Free Guy / The Walking Dead	41
NFL	Sports organization	NFL / Patrick Mahomes	2
Marshmello	Personal Branding - Music	Marshmello	1
Lionsgate	Entertainment	Jonh Wick	1
Netflix	Entertainment	Stranger Things / Cobra Kai / The Wither	3
Jordan	Sport	Air Jordan / Jumpman	2
Major Lazer	Personal Branding - Music	Major Lazer	1
2K	Entertainment	Borderlands / Tiny Tinas	2
Warner Bros	Entertainment	DC Comics / Tenet / Rocket League / Rick & Morthy / Space Jam / DUNE / Creed / The Matrix	23
Ninja	Personal Branding - Influencer	Ninja	1
Travis Scott	Personal Branding - Music	Travis Scott	1
Quibi	Entertainment	Punk'd	1
Epic Games	Entertainment	Houseparty	1
Loserfruit	Personal Branding - Influencer	Loserfruit	1
Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures	Entertainment	Cazafantasmas / Bad Boys	2
J Balvin	Personal Branding - Music	J Balvin	1
Lachlan	Personal Branding - Influencer	Lachlan	1
Microsoft	Technology and entertainment	Halo / Gears of War	2
The Grefg	Personal Branding - Influencer	The Grefg	1
Hasbro	Entertainment	G.I. Joe / Monopoly	2
Capcom	Entertainment	Street Fighter / Resident Evil	2
Lazar Beam	Personal Branding - Influencer	Lazar Beam	1
Embracer Group	Entertainment	Tomb Raider	1
Guerrilla Games	Entertainment	Aloy Horizon	1
Neymar Jr.	Personal Branding - Sport	Neymar Jr.	1
NBA	Sports organization	NBA / Giannis Antetokounmpo	2
Editorial Nova	Editorial	Kelsier	1
Superplastic	Art	Superplastic	1
UEFA	Sports organization	Euro2020	1
Bugha	Personal Branding - Influencer	Bugha	1
Ferrari	Automotive	Ferrari	1
Michael Moy	Entertainment	Gildedguy	1
Ariana Grande	Personal Branding - Music	Ariana Grande	1
TIME	Information (Media)	TIME	1
Kering	Fashion	Balenciaga	1
Universal Studios	Entertainment	Monsters	3
Kaws	Art	Skeleton	1
Grupo Chespirito	Entertainment	El Chapulín Colorado	1
Riot Games	Entertainment	League of Legends	1
Shūeisha	Editorial	Naruto / Dragon Ball / My Hero Academy	3
Moncler	Fashion	Moncler	1
Sony	Entertainment	Spider-Man / Spider-Gwen / Uncharted	4
Silk Sonik	Personal Branding - Music	Silk Sonic	1
Naomi Osaka	Personal Branding - Sport	Naomi Osaka	1
Ninebot	Mobility	Segway	1
Chloe Kim	Personal Branding - Sport	Chloe Kim	1
Ubisoft	Entertainment	Assassin's Creed	1
Jean-Michel Basquiat	Art	Jean-Michel Basquiat	1
Coachella & Goldenvoice	Entertainment	Coachella Festival	1
Wu-Tang Clan	Personal Branding - Music	Wu-Tan Clan	1
Chica	Personal Branding - Influencer	Chica	1
Ali-A	Personal Branding - Influencer	Ali-A	1
Innersloth	Entertainment	Among Us	1
Bally Midway	Entertainment	Galaxian	1
John Cena	Personal Branding - WWE	John Cena	1
Eminem	Personal Branding - Music	Eminem	1
Bungle Studios	Entertainment	Destiny	1
SypherPK	Personal Branding - Influencer	SypherPK	1
Koch Media	Entertainment	Goat Simulator	1
Sam Raimi	Entertainment	Evil Dead	1
id Software	Entertainment	DOOM	1
MrBeast	Personal Branding - Influencer	MrBeast	1
Kid Laroi	Personal Branding - Music	Kid Laroi	1
Electronic Arts	Entertainment	Dead Space	1
Toho Pictures	Entertainment	Attack on Titan	1
Mondelez Internacional	Food	Milka	1
Nike	Fashion	Nike	1
Nintendo	Entertainment	Splatoon	1
iHeart Media	Entertainment	iHerat Radio	1
Paramount Pictures	Entertainment	Teenage Mutant Ninja Trutles	1

Source: Own elaboration based on the sample obtained.



**Figure 3.** Companies that have communicated more than once through Fortnite in the first half of 2023.  
Source: own elaboration.

To take these data into consideration, for audiovisual cases such as series and films and digital entertainment such as video games, the company in charge of their distribution has been taken into consideration, which consequently is also responsible for the promotion and marketing of the brand or product in question.

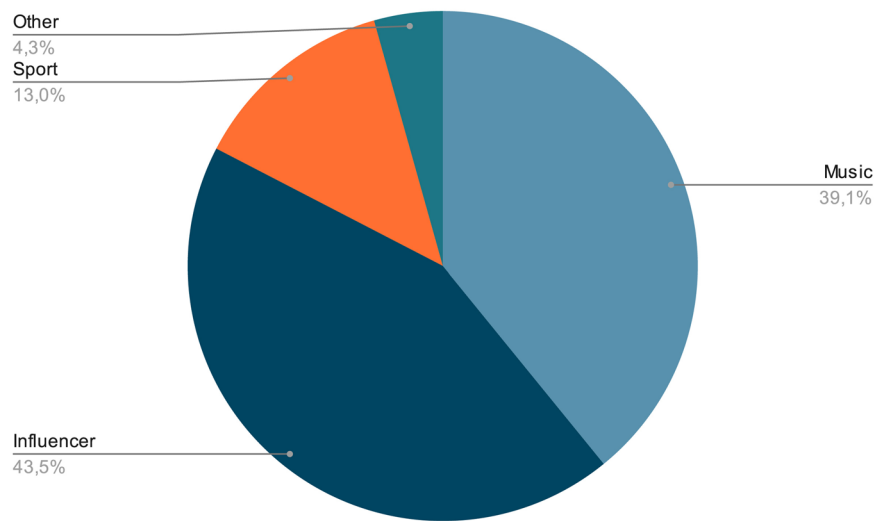
In summary, the analysis of the sample indicates that Disney maintained a significantly larger presence in brand communication on Fortnite up until the first half of 2023, followed by Warner Bros. This prominence can be attributed to their leading entertainment franchises, such as Marvel and Star Wars, as well as their extensive marketing strategies aimed at younger audiences—a demographic that Fortnite effectively engages. As illustrated in Figure 3, these two U.S. entertainment giants accounted for half of the marketing and advertising activity by brands and companies on the platform during the study period.

Corporations such as Disney and Warner Bros. invest substantial time, effort, and resources into developing content for Fortnite. These investments not only serve to promote their products but also inevitably shape cultural biases, references, and stereotypes. This dynamic highlights the soft power these companies wield, as their narratives—particularly those of superhero franchises—reinforce dominant cultural ideologies and global narratives. The interplay between soft power and digital geopolitics is especially relevant here. Superhero franchises, for instance, often present a strong dichotomy of good versus evil, with these narratives almost invariably rooted in a North American context.

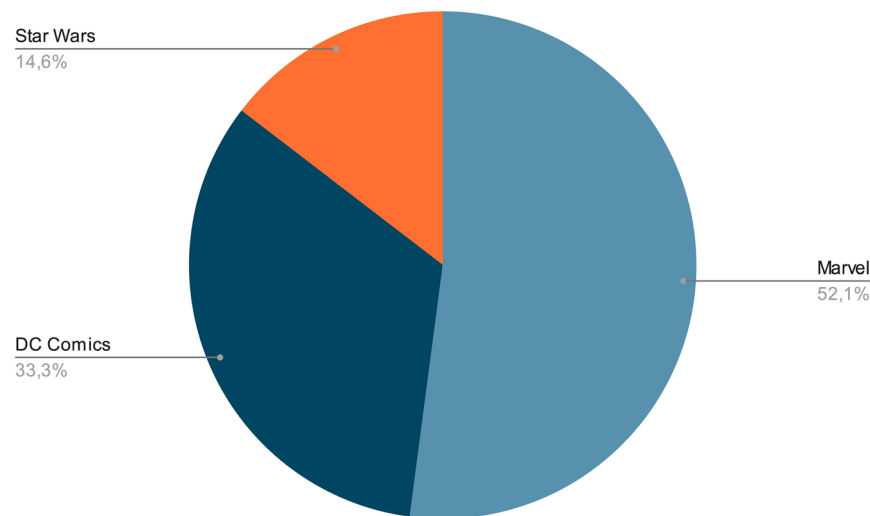
The same was true for cinema. For many years Hollywood has been the main reference in this field, with similar influences. Today, Disney and Warner have not only a significant share of this market but also serial products through their Disney+ or MAX platforms, which are direct competitors of Netflix. In the end, in these dynamics, the U.S. discourse becomes more relevant, as well as its partners, which is useful in a world that, despite globalization, faces a greater imbalance in societies, disinformation gains greater ground, and public opinion seems to be radicalized at times.

Table 2 and Figure 3 highlight the increasing relevance of personal branding within Fortnite, as seen in the cases of musicians, influencers, and athletes. These personal brands leverage the platform's immersive experiences to engage with their audiences in new ways. For instance, influencers can create unique content and virtual experiences that resonate with their followers, fostering deeper connections and expanding their reach in the digital space.

An additional fact that deserves attention is that, despite the lower evident proportion, the fourth position in Figure 3 is occupied by the publishing sector, more specifically in the field of comics. This Japanese company, as specified in Table 2, in the period studied has incurred up to 3 times to this platform to promote its products through its characters and the possibilities that these could offer if they interacted directly with reading users or potential audience. This is just another example of the



**Figure 4.** Proportion of personal brand categories communicating through Fortnite through the first half of 2023.  
Source: own elaboration.



**Figure 5.** The proportion of content corresponds to the brands with the largest presence through Fortnite through the first half of 2023.  
Source: own elaboration.

ability of conventional sectors to integrate disruptive digital channels to increase reach and gain notoriety, something that VOD platforms have also incurred, which despite being part of a digital scheme, a large part of the consumption of their products is carried out through televisions. In the same case as TIME magazine, in the end, the action is about being able to reach emerging audiences, disconnected from analog and conventional references, and try to create a hybrid experiential halo that allows brands to expand through the interactive formula, and users to come into contact with actors who, despite coexisting in their societies, unknown due to algorithmic dynamics and generational gaps.

This represents one-third of the evidence in Figure 4, of which almost half corresponds to influencers who have managed to have digital twins and personalized virtual accessories. Here is another relevant fact: as Soto et al. (2023) argue, around Fortnite, the streaming community mainly through Twitch and YouTube reinforces the power of Fortnite. Content creators build their images by analyzing, testing, and interacting on this platform.



Currently, we face the fact that these prescribers now have the possibility of replicating themselves in the virtual environment that has elevated them, reinforcing their influence with the community of users that have supported them, and reaching new ones that allow them to maintain their influence.

In this category of 'Other', it is possible to find, for example, plastic artists such as Kaws or Basquiat, whose work is used to personalize the appearance of the users' avatars, which would break with the classic paradigm of static exhibition art, to allow the artistic other to be integrated into the virtual personality of the user and the specific activity.

Finally, making a specific allusion to the brands with the greatest presence on this platform, the Marvel superhero universe (Disney) stands out, with just over half of the content corresponding to these characteristics, followed by the DC Comics universe (Warner Bros) and the Star Wars transmedia experience (Disney), as shown in [Figure 5](#).

The importance of the collected data lies in the relationship that brands and companies have been developing with young audiences, such as Alpha, but even Centennials, based on an innocuous narrative, focused on entertainment. It has been shown that not only do those 148 brands carry out promotional and communication actions in Fortnite in the period studied (see [Table 1](#)), but also that these 70 promoter companies, two large US corporations such as Disney and Warner, have invested more time, effort, and money than other actors to strengthen their image through this channel (see [Table 2](#)). Thus, imposing its discourse, stereotypes, references, and specific products when the initial proposal of the platform provides space for real-time battles between users.

Although it makes sense that the automotive industry lacks an active presence through these strategies, it highlights Ferrari's status as a benchmark for speed, elegance, and prestige. The brand's target audience is not on this channel, yet it allows the brand to maintain its reputation and notoriety without explicit action or copy (see [Table 1](#)).

Thus, the highly disruptive nature of these actions must be considered. The user interacts with the platform through a digital representation, which is the avatar. That a user voluntarily buys customizations, accessories, dances, or access to exclusive events or experiences for these avatars, and that are commercial, is perhaps the greatest success that brands and companies can score because it rethinks the logic of advertising and the associated persuasion. In other words, it is an organic and voluntary dynamic that assigns a positive character to the relationship between these actors and their audience.

## 5. Discussions

When defining Fortnite as a platform, it must be made clear that, owing to its status as a metaverse, despite the need for metrics in terms of communication tasks, there is no possibility of knowing the level of interaction and involvement of users concerning the different proposals and strategies undertaken by brands and companies through it. Content creators do not necessarily have more data to contrast the effectiveness of their actions, whether through a specific avatar or with accessories, a specific event, or a virtual world.

From the observations made, it is clear which brands and companies have been able to innovate in their marketing and advertising actions, as well as in specific actions that allow a closer approach and relationship, not only with their target audience but also with a potential audience that they cannot access through conventional channels.

Having found 148 collaborations or interventions by commercial actors in this metaverse until the first half of 2023, we can affirm that their message has a place and is relevant, which allows us to respond positively to the first research question. However, it should be clarified that in most cases, these efforts are perfectly adapted to the dynamics and call to action proposed by the platform. In other words, it represents a remarkable work of innovation and understanding of the elements that intervene between the experience/content and the user so that the message is transmitted in the most organic way possible without affecting the user experience.

However, it should be noted that, in some cases, traditional advertising persists despite 'disguising itself' as virtual. With this, it is worth mentioning the experience proposed by iHeartRadio and its 'iHeartland', a virtual world whose central square where the main activities are carried out and where the concerts are broadcast on a giant screen, is called 'StateFarm Park'. On the main screen of that location

is the visual identity of the US insurer State Farm, the sponsor of this experience, as well as the experience provided by the podcast platform in question through the Roblox metaverse.

With this, not only does iHeartRadio seek to acquire a global dimension (when its main market is in the United States) and increase its reach, especially with very young audiences, but secondary commercial actors such as those mentioned above also gained notoriety, reaching the audiences of artists who perform especially, as has already been the case with Fall Out Boy, Charlie Puth, and Ed Sheeran, just to mention a few. As noted by Sullivan (2022), State Farm obtained exclusive naming rights for iHeartland's main stage on various world-building gaming platforms, as referenced above.

Fortnite audiences encounter heterogeneous content and communication strategies of brands and companies. Table 1 lists up to nine ways in which brands and companies have a direct presence in Fortnite, although the iHeartland example allows the visualization of additional options.

However, as shown in Figure 3, the customization of avatar assets is by far the most exploited option in this channel. It should be borne in mind that the main element of user interaction with the metaverse, beyond everything that virtual worlds propose, is the avatar; it is its digital representation and therefore needs to be personalized to achieve a higher level of involvement. These data agree with the findings of Pacheco et al. (2023) and Veiga (2024), who stressed that even though the gameplay of the avatar is not affected, users invest (and sometimes a lot) in these customizations to individualize themselves (as in physical life) and boast of the possibility of having achieved these modifications, either using virtual currency obtained by achieving objectives on the platform or simply exchanging cash for virtual tokens.

The fact that a brand or company develops an avatar or specific accessories for the personalization of this type of digital representation seeks a higher level of inbound marketing strategies, strengthening the relationship between implicit advertising or corporate messages (graphic representation) and the user.

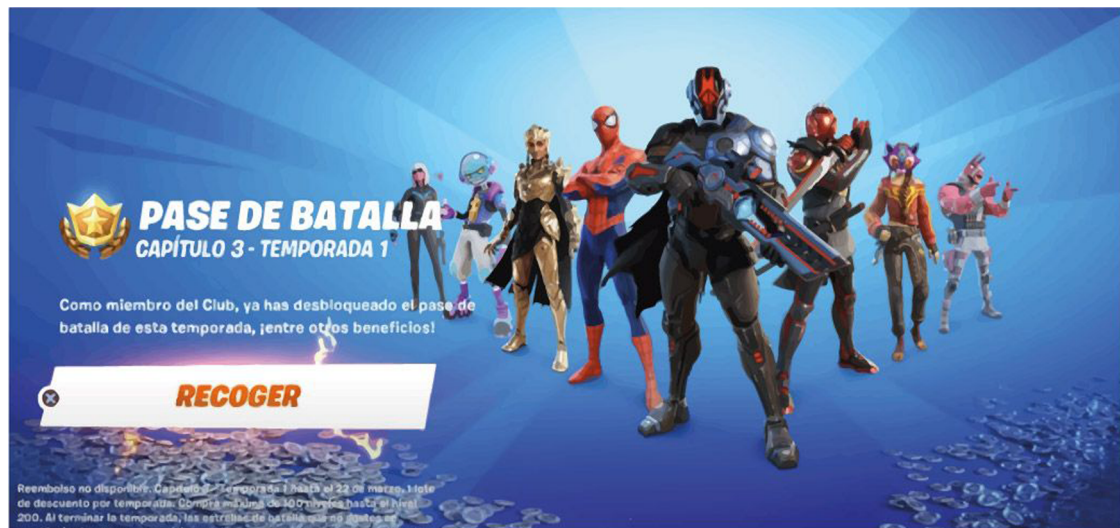
For example, in most cases of Disney and Warner-related products, regardless of movie or serial content, the customization of avatars and accessories is the main resource exploited. The superhero replica allows users to assume roles in the same manner as their antagonists. However, in the case of musical artists, it is curious, because the user interested in buying a certain avatar, muses to assume that identity, regardless of whether it is to shoot other users (a very common case with DJ Marshmello's skins).

Another curious example that deserves an allusion is that of Chapulín Colorado: a Mexican fictional character (with projection throughout Latin America) of conventional TV, which stopped being broadcast at the end of the 70s of the twentieth century and has managed in Fortnite after almost 50 years to regain prominence and become a reference for an audience that does not know her at all. We could make a comparison with the success of song Rumors by Fleetwood Mac, which gained enormous popularity on TikTok after several decades of being a mainstream phenomenon.

Music is a field that is increasingly venturing into this type of virtual platforms. Thus, it is worth highlighting that DJ Marshmello not only organized a concert and designed an avatar with his aesthetics, as well as accessories (turntables, lights, microphone) and personalized dances, but also used Fortnite to



**Figure 6.** Music video for the song 'Alone' by Marshmello, made in Fortnite, and posted on YouTube. Source: YouTube.



**Figure 7.** Battle Pass Chapter 3, Season 1 'Spider-Man Universe' in Fortnite.  
Source: Fortnite.

record a video clip with which he managed to continue to be a benchmark of electronic music for a new generation. Alpha uses YouTube in this case.

The content in question has more than 170 million views (see [Figure 6](#)).

Special dances take on a special role as they give avatars with personalities and distinctive elements, and with this, brands gain notoriety. In many of the cases we are referring to, the brand and the company are associated with pop culture, so the user will have a much higher degree of approval in this involvement since they approach it from the role of fan follower.

It should be noted that the other category of experience, which also reports repeated use by brands and companies in game passes (for battle modes) or special events, is also mainly associated with these modes. In these cases, the logic is to look for immersive experiences, where users assume the role of the superhero, or any character associated with their narrative universe and fight with them (see [Figure 7](#)). Ultimately, these characters become references, and users who are not fans will be more willing to consume other associated products, such as movies, programs on VOD platforms, and merchandising.

Fortnite is constantly evolving as a good metaverse, thus reporting notable growth in the offer of experiences generated by the user community itself through the free-to-create mode. However, it cannot be overlooked that since its birth, Fortnite has been closely associated with the playful experience of all against all, allowing players to participate organically without losing its essence and image.

Allowing users to watch episodes of *Dragon Ball* through this platform, attend a concert by Ariana Grande or Marshmello, or participate in a competition set in Gotham and the Batman universe allows transmedia communication work to be reinforced, seeking active audiences with a call to action that is very well defined by the highly gamified dynamics of this metaverse.

Finally, regarding the third research question on the evidence of a specific profile of the sender who enjoys greater popularity or has a more active presence on this platform, [Figures 3, 4, and 5](#) provide evidence.

On one hand, when referring to specific companies with greater activity in the creation of content and experiences on this platform, Disney stands out, followed by Warner Bros. Both with a specific focus on entertainment, turn to Fortnite to increase reach and generate greater interest in different conventional audiovisual products, such as movies and serial programming.

In addition, both companies have two powerful fictional franchises associated with them that compete in extension and development and, therefore, in adherence to fans, as is the case with the Marvel and DC universes. The *fandom* associated with both is global in scale and highly active in the face of any new product or associated experience. Likewise, another very powerful transmedia universe that manages to transcend time with special interest in younger audiences is *Star Wars*, which, before any

new release, whether at the cinematographic level, in video-on-demand programming, or any other category, reinforces its promotion through exclusive content in this metaverse.

Likewise, personal brands can increase their marketing through this platform. Influencers through digital twins, props, and dances for special and personalized moves stand out in this specific category. Musicians and athletes have also found new ways to remain in time.

Entertainment is the main category of brands associated with marketing and advertising in Fortnite. However, there are interesting cases such as TIME magazine, the urban mobility brand Segway, or Milka, which, through specific experiments, have also managed to generate valuable content and experiences that allow other types of audiences to discover them outside their usual environment.

In the case of TIME, the media designed a virtual world in which different challenges were arranged, archive content such as a speech by Martin Luther King or photographs of transcendental reports were reproduced, and the iconic covers of this magazine were recreated.

For its part, Segway, famous worldwide for its electric two-wheeled vehicles for surveillance, not only designed a replica of such an iconic means of transport but also organized a race with it.

Milka was perhaps a little more disruptive because it was developed for the Spanish market, where at Easter, it is traditional to search for roe as part of this festivity. However, owing to the health confinements of 2020, they could not promote this activity in person, so they turned to Fortnite to propose it through its operation and casual aesthetics. Finally, the same was designed with the Swiss Alps in the background (the brand is of Swiss origin), where the avatars could wear rabbit costumes with a decadent appearance.

Beyond specific advertising efforts, these actions reinforce branding, that is, the brand image in the users' subconscious, unless it is an objective of a company's specific strategy (confirming the criteria of Soto et al., 2023; De la Hera, 2019). This points more to actions focused on the potential audience than on the target audience, as younger audiences do not go to conventional marketing and advertising channels and demonstrate much more digital behavior through virtual and recreational platforms, increasingly reinforcing their importance, especially in the face of emerging segments.

It is important to note that apart from the message that users receive directly in the virtual experience, all these actions are reinforced by the work carried out by streamers through other digital video platforms that also have their own communities, as indicated by King and Hera (2020). The work carried out by many content creators is organic, obeys the current culture of the prosumer, and impacts the communicative reach of these brands and companies, thus constituting an earned media ecosystem.

## 6. Conclusions

Fortnite is free on seven platforms and video consoles where it is present, although the customization of avatars, special accessories for them, access to themed battle passes, and so on, correspond to additional purchases. That is, Epic Games, the parent company behind Fortnite, resorts to micropayments for these optimizations and access to content considered a premium.

This strategy not only generates significant revenue for Epic Games but also fosters an emotional relationship between users and brands. Customization and exclusive access allow users to engage more deeply with the gaming experience, making these interactions a powerful channel for marketing.

If a company like Disney or Warner, to refer to the cases that invest the most branding, marketing, and communication efforts through Fortnite according to the results obtained in this study, offers these digital products alluding to their products (movies or series, to name a few), it could be argued that users pay for advertising content.

However, this model raises important ethical questions. If users pay for content that also functions as advertising, to what extent are they aware of this dynamic? Brands must balance their strategies to ensure transparency and avoid the perception of manipulation, fostering sustainable relationships with users in the long term.

However, in this study, it could be observed that until 2023, this type of content achieved significant brand reinforcement through Fortnite, while being part of the monetization strategy of Epic Games. Organizations such as the NBA or NFL have also tried to use it to increase their reach in the face of the sustained loss of young audiences to broadcast sports competitions in conventional audiovisual formats (Sidorenko & Herranz, 2023). Not surprisingly, Fortnite's media power is reflected in its reach within the so-called e-sports with the



organization of several events and championships that, although they do not reach the level of spectacularization of the League of Legends (LOL), do have a high share of participation globally.

This cultural homogenization poses a significant challenge, especially in contexts where other narratives and cultures might be underrepresented. Exploring how local or regional brands could integrate their own cultural references into Fortnite would be a step toward greater cultural diversity within the metaverse.

Brands such as Milka, Nike, Jordan, and Segway try to reinforce and strengthen their relationship with emerging audiences in this line, although more interesting is the work of artists and prescribers who have achieved on this platform a way to retain influential figures and references for the new generations, which is an innovative process of communication, dispensing with traditional formulas, and being part of more interactive experiences through organic actions. Therefore, the paradigm of disintermediation fits perfectly with the decentralized reality of the metaverse.

While brands and artists have successfully utilized Fortnite to stand out, it is essential to consider the user's perspective. What value do players place on these personalized experiences? Understanding their preferences would help brands design more effective strategies aligned with audience expectations.

Personal brands have found in Fortnite a privileged terrain to reinforce their reach directly or indirectly, because while throughout the study it has been shown how artists and prescribers have managed to stand out through personalized avatars, there are other examples such as the allusion to the character 'Dude' from *Free Guy* where Ryan Reynolds also gains relevance for being the actor who embodies him in that movie, something that is repeated in other cases such as the character Mike Lowery (*Bad Boys for Life*) and Will Smith, Neo and Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix*, Zendaya in *Dune*, or a young Roberto Gómez Bolaños (*Chespirito*) in the role of Chapulín Colorado.

Despite the heterogeneity of products and services, companies and brands face the challenge of refining these actions and increasing them to build more sustainable relationships with their audiences, who are increasingly being configured as communities on these digital platforms.

Moreover, the metaverse opens opportunities for sectors beyond entertainment, such as education or sustainability. Designing experiences that not only promote products but also offer added value could position brands as innovative leaders in this emerging space.

The metaverse does not necessarily imply having expensive technological tools to access it, nor does it allude to a specific purpose: Users can share experiences and conversations and build a community through spaces with a more gamified character. Innovation in communication, especially with today's young audience, involves understanding these interactions without impacting user experience and avoiding promotional messages. In the specific case of marketing and advertising through virtual spaces associated with the metaverse, this must be done in a relational, empathetic, and organic manner.

Monopoly and Balenciaga have even sought to create synergies between the virtual and analog worlds through complementary experiences and products, so that users experience different levels of involvement and immersion in their products and messages (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2022).

This study has made it possible to open the field of observation of the phenomenon from the field of the metaverse and not exclusively from the video game scenario, thus allowing us to consider the prosumer aspect of the users and the possibilities of appropriating the message and then participating in the UGC, inclusive.

Future research could explore how experiences in Fortnite compare to other metaverses like Roblox or Decentraland, evaluating their effectiveness and relevance for brands. Additionally, analyzing how users perceive privacy and data usage in these interactions would address the ethical challenges associated with these strategies.

Finally, it is important to reflect on the social impact of these strategies. The use of influential figures and recognizable characters not only fosters emotional connections but may also reinforce certain stereotypes or behaviors among young audiences. Understanding these dynamics will allow brands to act more responsibly.

This opens new lines of research, for example, to compare experiences according to metaverses, and thus determine levels of effectiveness. Likewise, this research allows us to debate and reflect on the need for innovation in the communication strategies of commercial actors and their relevance according to specific cases, also assuming its possible reflection from an ethical and responsible perspective on the part of the brands. Similarly, it also invites further reflection on the level of impact of the influencers in

charge of creating content on the Fortnite platform and where they inevitably spread the messages and strategies highlighted in this research.

## Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, and María Abellán-Hernández; Data curation, Pavel Sidorenko-Bautista, Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, and José María-Herranz-de-la-Casa; Methodological design, Pavel Sidorenko-Bautista, and José María-Herranz-de-la-Casa; Formal analysis, Pavel Sidorenko-Bautista, Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, and José María-Herranz-de-la-Casa; Writing – original draft, Pavel Sidorenko-Bautista, and María Abellán-Hernández; Writing – review & editing, Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, José María-Herranz-de-la-Casa, and María Abellán-Hernández. All authors have read and approved the final work.

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## Data availability statement

Data will be provided upon request.

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