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METaverse IN DIGITAL MARKETING: THE NEXT FRONTIER OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

By Dr. Gaurav Jangra

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has continuously transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. From websites and social media to artificial intelligence and augmented reality, marketers have adopted new tools to create more personalized and interactive customer experiences. One such emerging development is the Metaverse, a virtual environment that has the potential to reshape the future of digital marketing.

The Metaverse can be understood as a network of immersive digital spaces where people can interact, communicate, work, shop, attend events and experience products through digital identities or avatars. Technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3D environments and blockchain play an important role in creating these experiences.

For marketers, the Metaverse goes beyond conventional online advertising. Instead of simply displaying an advertisement on a website or social media platform, brands can allow consumers to experience their products virtually. A customer may try on clothes through an avatar, explore a virtual showroom, attend a digital product launch or interact with branded content in a three-dimensional environment.

METaverse

CONNECT • EXPERIENCE • ENGAGE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Gaurav Jangra

Professor (Digital Marketing), MM Institute of Management, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University), Mullana. Ph.D. in Management, MBA, UGC-NET (Management & Commerce). Researcher, Author, Academic Leader and Consultant with expertise in Digital Marketing, AI, Technology Adoption and Business Strategy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Metaverse transforms marketing from advertising to experience.



It creates new opportunities for brand engagement, events, influencers and virtual stores.



Social commerce becomes more interactive, social and immersive.



Challenges around technology, privacy, security and ethics must be addressed.



The future of marketing will be more immersive, personalized and experience-driven.



FROM ADVERTISING TO EXPERIENCE

Traditional digital marketing largely focuses on attracting consumer attention through search engines, websites, emails and social media. Metaverse marketing moves one step further by emphasizing participation and experience.

For example, automobile companies can create virtual showrooms, fashion brands can launch virtual collections and educational institutions can organize interactive virtual campuses. Tourism and hospitality businesses can offer virtual previews of destinations, hotels and facilities.

Such experiences can strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and brands.



NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRAND ENGAGEMENT

The Metaverse enables companies to organize virtual events, gaming experiences, product demonstrations, exhibitions, concerts and interactive campaigns to attract digitally connected audiences.

Virtual influencer marketing and branded avatars can become powerful engagement tools. Virtual stores allow customers to explore products, receive recommendations and interact with other users while shopping.

Personalization through AI and customer data can help deliver tailored experiences, product suggestions and relevant brand interactions.



CHANGING THE MEANING OF SOCIAL COMMERCE

The Metaverse extends social commerce by combining shopping with social interaction and entertainment.

Friends can visit virtual stores together, try digital products, discuss and purchase items. Brands can also offer virtual goods such as clothing, accessories and branded objects for avatars.

This combination creates new revenue streams and strengthens customer engagement and loyalty.



CHALLENGES CANNOT BE IGNORED

Metaverse marketing involves high development costs and requires advanced technology. Access to VR devices may also limit participation.

Data privacy, cybersecurity, consumer protection and ethical advertising are critical concerns. Businesses must ensure responsible use of consumer data.

Brands must enter the Metaverse with clear objectives and a deep understanding of their audience and measurable goals.



THE FUTURE OF MARKETING WILL BE MORE IMMERSIVE

The Metaverse is no other component of the evolving digital marketing ecosystem.

Websites, search engines, social media and e-commerce remain important, while immersive environments open new ways for customer interaction.

The real value depends on how effectively brands combine technology, creativity, customer insight and meaningful experiences.



THE NEXT FRONTIER IS PARTICIPATION

Consumers now expect personalized, interactive and convenient digital experiences.

The key question is not "How can we advertise our product?" but "What kind of digital experience can we create around our brand?"

The Metaverse represents this shift from communication to participation, from advertising to experience and from digital presence to digital immersion.

“The Metaverse is not just a technological trend—it is a new way of connecting with customers. Businesses that understand this transformation and adopt it strategically may be better positioned to engage the next generation of digitally connected consumers.”





RESERVATION SYSTEM AND UGC EQUITY REGULATIONS IN INDIA:

Balancing Social Justice, Equality and Institutional Fairness

By Dr. Parveen Kumar

The UGC Equity Regulations, 2026 aim to ensure that access through reservation is matched by dignity, inclusion and equal opportunity within higher education institutions.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Parveen Kumar

Assistant Professor,
MM Institute of Management,
Maharishi Markandeshwar
(Deemed to be University),
Mullana, India.



RESERVATION: A CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Reservation is a constitutional mechanism to address historical discrimination and promote representation of SCs, STs, OBCs and EWS. In Central Educational Institutions: 15% for SCs, 7.5% for STs, 27% for OBCs and up to 10% for EWS (Articles 15(6) & 16(6)). It is not just about seats, but about building representative and accessible institutions.



FROM RESERVATION TO EQUITY

Reservation ensures access; equity ensures fair and dignified treatment within institutions. The UGC Equity Regulations, 2026 aim to eliminate discrimination and create a level playing field for all stakeholders on grounds such as caste, gender, religion, disability and place of birth.



UGC EQUITY REGULATIONS, 2026 – KEY PROVISIONS

- Equal Opportunity Centres in HEIs
- Equity Committees with diverse representation
- Grievance redressal systems and equity helpline
- Protection of complainants from retaliation
- Focus on inclusion, support and accountability



WHY THE REGULATIONS SPARKED DEBATE

The definition of “caste-based discrimination” included negative treatment based on caste. Critics feared misuse, false complaints and academic disruption. Concerns of institutional autonomy and academic freedom were also raised.



THE COURT'S INTERVENTION

The Allahabad High Court stayed key provisions in May 2026, noting concerns of vagueness and potential misuse. The UGC was asked to reconsider the regulation framework.



THE WAY FORWARD

Stronger safeguards, clear definitions and transparent processes are essential. Institutions must promote inclusion, empathy and equal opportunity to ensure both social justice and academic excellence.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Reservation opens the door; equity ensures everyone can walk through with dignity.



Institutional inclusion strengthens the purpose of reservation.



Clear policies and safeguards are essential to prevent misuse.



Balance between social justice, fairness and academic freedom is key.



Equitable institutions create empowered individuals and a stronger nation.

“Equity is the bridge that connects access to opportunity and opportunity to success.”





LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTION BUILDING



By Dr. Ajai Pal Sharma

Professor,
Department of Management Studies
Central University of Haryana
Mahendergarh

It is universally true that strong institutions are needed to build a strong nation, but some issues, whether to create new institutions or to strengthen the existing ones, remain unresolved. I am of the strong opinion that second be given priority. Leadership and institution building are fundamental pillars that determine the sustainability, impact, and resilience of any organisation, whether academic or corporate. While leadership often focuses on vision, strategy, and guiding individuals toward shared goals, institution building translates that strategic vision into durable structures, culture, and processes. Above all, institution building is the creation of governance capacities, increasing the efficiency of existing institutions, and enhancing professionalism. But many of the institutions lack on this front, and the education sector is not excluded.



THE EDUCATION SECTOR: CHALLENGES AHEAD

The education sector, which was considered a service to the nation, has become the most attractive business. Today, all kinds of institutions can be found operating and providing education, from primary to the award of PhDs. But the essential facilities/infrastructure required for such education are found missing. The responsibility and accountability for this lie with the related governing bodies that provide them the license to do so. Even ghost-writers are writing PhD theses, and the same are being awarded successfully by various universities. This may be one of the reasons leading to the degradation of the quality of education, and we are unable to find a place in the top 200 educational institutions of the world. If we have to show our presence at global level, this needs to be checked at the earliest.



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

For me, education leadership is not so simple. It requires a lot of caring, sharing, elevating, and motivating all stakeholders. Moreover, it's distinct from political or behavioural leadership. Institution building is not as simple as it looks, but one of the most difficult tasks for any academic leader. It may not be possible for everyone to build an institution, as it requires specific creative skills, commitment, sacrifice, dedication, honesty and a visionary approach. It is equally true that there is no dearth of such effective leaders, but difficult to find a combination of all the above-mentioned qualities in one person.



VISION, EXECUTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

However, the government is putting all efforts to reform the educational institutions, but such efforts may remain null and void unless the academic leadership is visionary and has a strong focus on effective execution. Academic leadership is not to be taken as a duty but should be an obligation to serve the society. If the leader has to run an already established educational institute, the job may be a little easier than starting an institution from scratch. In addition to specific skills, the second option requires sacrifices. A leader needs to come out of the comfort zone if s/he has to be effective and show a path of success to its stakeholders. Effective leaders never think of having followers, but they produce effective leaders. This attribute makes them distinct from others.



INSTITUTION BUILDING: A LONG-TERM LEGACY

Institution building is like nation building, and the leadership should always have the purpose of exploring possibilities through democratic processes. An institution must have plans to build the dreams for its future. The endeavour of any institution must be to do something extraordinary in an ordinary way to create an impression. It must have vision to excel without losing the core. Hurdles are bound to come when one has to build and govern an institution, and that's the real test for any leadership. The quest of any academic institution must be to realise its vision and mission. The future of any educational institution is directly associated with the role of its leadership. It is only the leadership which can take the institution to new heights with its dynamic and able leadership. To my mind, effective governance needs to be the major arsenal of any academic leader to lead professionally. The ultimate test of leadership is not the performance of an organisation during the leader's tenure, but its ability to survive, adapt, and excel in the long run. By prioritising institution building and good governance, academic leaders must ensure that their vision evolves from a temporary success story into an enduring legacy that serves future generations.



THE WAY FORWARD: NEP 2020 AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 may prove to be the ground-breaking step to bridge the gap between strategic vision and ground-level execution to overcome any systemic crisis in education sector. To achieve this, there is a need to establish specialised leadership development academies specifically for heads of academic institutions. Such academies should have dedicated and structured leadership development programs to train second-tier leadership who can fill the vacuums when senior education administrators retire. Government can draw a pool of such highly trained academic leaders who can be considered for future appointments.

“Leadership gives direction. Institution building ensures continuity. Together, they create lasting impact.”





FROM CHATBOTS TO AI AGENTS: THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved rapidly—from rule-based systems and machine learning to deep learning and Generative AI. Conversational AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) have made it possible to communicate with computers using natural language. Today, AI can write articles, generate code, summarize documents, analyze information, and answer complex questions. However, the next major step is the emergence of AI agents, which are designed not only to respond but also to understand goals, plan tasks, use tools, and take action.



1. FROM CHATBOTS TO AI AGENTS

A traditional chatbot generally follows a simple question → response model. An AI agent goes beyond this approach by pursuing a specific objective through multiple steps. For example, if asked to "prepare a report on recent AI developments," an agent could search for relevant information, collect sources, compare findings, organize the content, generate the report, and review the result. Thus, while a chatbot primarily answers, an AI agent is designed to achieve a goal.

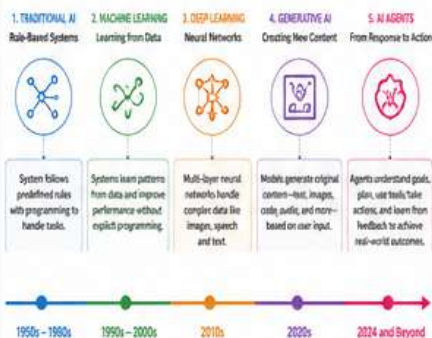


Figure 1: Evolution of Artificial Intelligence

2. HOW DOES AN AI AGENT WORK?

An AI agent combines reasoning, planning, memory, external tools, and feedback. The LLM provides language and reasoning capabilities, while tools such as search engines, databases, APIs, software applications, and code-execution environments allow the agent to interact with the world. The agent understands the objective, creates a plan, selects appropriate tools, performs actions, observes the results, and evaluates whether the goal has been achieved. If necessary, it can revise its approach and continue the process.

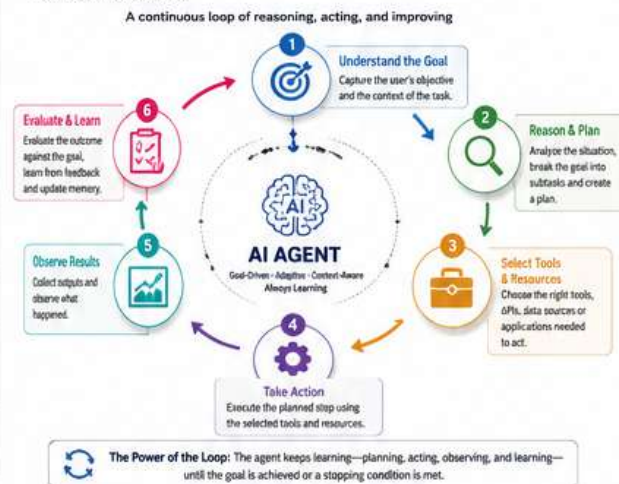


Figure 2: Basic Working of an AI Agent

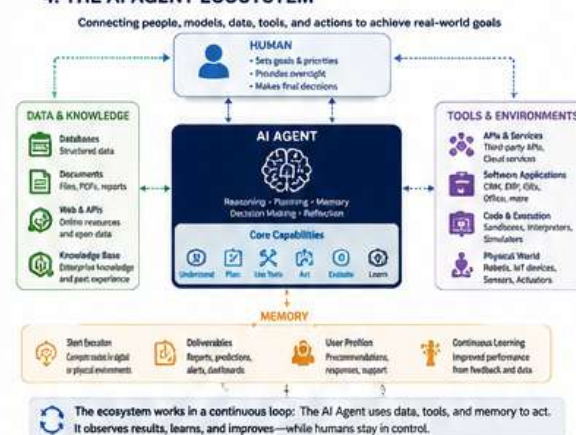
3. WHERE CAN AI AGENTS BE USED?

AI agents have potential applications across education, healthcare, software development, business, scientific research, and manufacturing. In education, they can provide personalized learning support. In software development, they can inspect code, write programs, run tests, and identify errors. In scientific research, agents could analyze literature, support experiment design, examine results, and suggest further experiments.



Figure 3: The AI Agent Ecosystem

4. THE AI AGENT ECOSYSTEM



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Kamal Dhanda

Associate Professor,
Chitkara University

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- AI agents go beyond responding—they understand goals, plan, use tools and take action.
- They combine reasoning, memory, tools and feedback in a continuous loop of improvement.
- AI agents can transform education, research, business, development and manufacturing.
- Human supervision, security and responsible use are essential as autonomy increases.
- The future lies in multi-agent systems working together to solve complex problems.

5. THE FUTURE OF AI AGENTS

The rise of multi-agent systems, where specialized AI agents collaborate on different parts of a complex task, represents another important development. However, greater autonomy also brings challenges involving reliability, cybersecurity, privacy, and accountability. Human supervision, appropriate permissions, monitoring, and verification will therefore remain essential.





THE LIKE TRAP: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE DECLINE OF HUMAN CONNECTION

By Dr Simranjeet Singh

Assistant Professor,
SVIET (Banur)

Real life is not
content. It's humanity.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Simranjeet Singh

Assistant Professor,
SVIET (Banur)

There was a time when people used to share experiences, problems and pain with an impulse nature of helping others. If a fire broke out at any place, hands reached to carry water, ropes and other material to rescue strangers to safety. They were not supposed to wait for the ambulance or any other help from the government at that time; they just believed in their responsibility to save humanity. However, if we look at today's environment, a terrifying transformation is taking place on our streets. We are witnessing a phenomenon where human suffering is treated not as an emergency to mitigate but as raw, not content to be captured to gain views and likes.

I will not be going to tell stories of ancient times but will take you to the incidents of June 2026. This problem became painfully visible during the Malviya Nagar building fire in South Delhi on June 3, 2026. A massive fire tore through a commercial building, taking at least 21 lives. Reports and videos from the scene showed terrified people trapped inside, calling for help and trying to survive smoke.

Another painful example was the Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, coaching centre fire on 22 June 2026, where a massive fire broke out inside a commercial building in Aliganj that housed an animation and training centre. At least 15 students lost their lives, while many others are injured and mentally terrified with the scene.

Do you remember the Mumbai local train incident? that took place on 23 June 2026, where a 22-year-old boy, Mayank Lohar, was murdered in a crowded local train in Mumbai, but no one came forward to protect him or to stop the conflict.

What do you think? Who was the main reason for all these tragedies? Is it the government alone? I think we have found a safer side to call it a lack of government support and facilities, but no one is calling it a lack of humanity among the people who were standing there and recording the entire scene with their phones but not trying to help the people to get out from there.

It seems like social media has taken over the moral values and the emotional connection of the people. Tragedies have just become the way to get more likes, views and attention over the social media platforms.

I have seen this in my family also, when a young boy died, and some members of the family were capturing the cremation to post it on Facebook or Instagram stories to say goodbye to that person. I am not able to understand if we are really having the feelings or if we just have trending intentions to show our grief online.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



In times of crisis, choose compassion over content.



Be the one who helps, not just the one who records.



Humanity is our real identity—not our social media profile.



Real connections are built in the real world, not in the virtual one.



Let's create a society where helping others becomes the trend.

THE LIKE TRAP: WHY HUMANITY IS DISAPPEARING



CAPTURING OVER CARING

Phones are raised faster than hands when someone needs help.



ATTENTION OVER ACTION

Likes and views bring quick attention; helping others brings real impact.



BYSTANDER EFFECT

The more people around, the less responsibility anyone feels.



DESENSITISATION TO SUFFERING

Constant exposure to tragedy online makes us numb to real-life pain.



VALIDATION CULTURE

We seek approval from strangers instead of standing by our own.

“ When one of us is in trouble, let the first thing they see be a helping hand, not a phone camera.

Be human first. The world doesn't need more content. It needs more care. ”





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“

Great leaders
don't just
build institutions,
they inspire
generations
and shape
the future.

”



SWAMI VIVEKANAND
SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY

Prof. Dr. Vinay Kumar Mittal Mittal

on his appointment as

Vice Chancellor

at



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*Wishing you continued success in your journey of
leadership, innovation, and transforming lives.*



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