

Marketing in the Immersivity Era



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Abstract

This entry explores the changing scope and characteristics of marketing in light of the emergence of the immersive economy, a conceptual extension of Pine and Gilmore's progression of economic value in which the progressive coupling of computational systems with consumer perception and cognition represents a qualitative shift in the logic of value creation. The proliferation of immersive technologies, from smartphones to smartglasses and head-mounted displays, has generated a spectrum of human-computer integration modes that act both with continuity and change on the marketing framework. Drawing on the HCInt continuum, the entry formalizes immersivity as a multidimensional condition encompassing sensory, cognitive, emotional, narrative, spatial, and digital dimensions and maps its implications across three consumer ecosystems. The central theoretical contribution is the formalization of the immersive economy as a fifth stage in the progression of economic value, characterized by a shift from

staging to coupling as the primary economic function and from sensations to experiential coupling as the primary value driver. Strategic opportunities are examined alongside the risks of AI-mediated disintermediation, consumer agency erosion, and technology-induced dependency.

Keywords

Immersive economy · Immersive marketing · Smartglasses · Spatial computing · Human-computer integration · Experiential coupling

Introduction: From Mobile Internet to the Immersive Economy

The proliferation of mobile internet connectivity has radically transformed the relationship between consumers and digital environments. What began with the smartphone, a pocket-sized device enabling deliberate, episodic access to the internet, has progressively extended to wearables, smartglasses, and head-mounted displays, creating a spectrum of technologies each capable of mediating human perception and action at varying degrees of continuity and depth. This spectrum is what the present entry designates as immersivity: a multidimensional condition in which digital layers increasingly shape how consumers perceive, experience, and act upon reality. Immersivity is a continuum, ranging from the

relatively low-immersivity augmentation delivered by a smartphone notification to the pervasive, always-on coupling enabled by smartglasses powered by ambient AI. Most contemporary technologies, in this sense, are immersive to some degree; they differ in the depth, continuity, and embodied character of the engagement they produce. This observation has direct relevance for marketing. As consumer-technology interaction intensifies and becomes more continuous, the conditions under which brands create, communicate, and deliver value are fundamentally reshaped. The engagement opportunities for firms expand considerably: brands can potentially accompany consumers throughout the day, delivering contextually calibrated content, personalized recommendations, and ambient service layers that were structurally unavailable in the screen-based paradigm. But heightened engagement also introduces significant risks and limitations. Continuous digital coupling can erode consumer autonomy, compromise preference formation, and, in more extreme cases, generate forms of technology-induced dependency and behavioral pathologies that challenge both consumer welfare and the ethical foundations of marketing practice. The relationship between human beings and their digital environments is increasingly a relationship of co-dependence, not mere tool use, and marketing scholarship must engage with both its productive and problematic dimensions.

It is against this background that the present entry proposes a theoretical extension of Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) progression of economic value. In their seminal contribution to the Harvard Business Review, Pine and Gilmore proposed that economic history could be recapitulated as a four-stage progression: commodities, goods, services, and experiences. The experience was memorable, inherently personal, external to the buyer, and revealed over a duration. The seller was a stager, the buyer was a guest, and the value driver was sensation. This original formulation was subsequently expanded: Gilmore and Pine (2007) reinforced the centrality of authenticity as the defining competitive challenge of the mature experience economy, and Pine and Gilmore

(2014) identified transformative experiences as a promising frontier for value creation within the experience economy, in which firms use staged experiences to guide consumers toward personal change.

The immersive economy proposed in this entry develops along a different, though complementary, trajectory. It is defined less by the transformative end-state of the offering than by the technological reconfiguration of the mechanisms through which value is created, mediated, and experienced. The emergence of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), mixed reality (MR), and extended reality (XR), together with the metaverse and spatial computing paradigms enabled by smartglasses and human-computer integration (HCInt), has progressively blurred the boundary between staged experience and the consumer's perceptual world. In parallel, Hoffman and Novak's (1996) foundational account of marketing in hypermedia computer-mediated environments established an early theoretical reference point for subsequent developments, anticipating the structural implications of interactive, consumer-driven digital interfaces. These convergent developments justify framing the immersive economy as a conceptually distinct extension of the progression of economic value, one defined by embodied ambience and experiential coupling as the primary value driver.

The remainder of this entry is organized as follows. The conceptual foundations are established by mapping immersivity across six analytically distinct dimensions. The technological trajectory is then traced from professional simulations to social immersive platforms and spatial computing. The discussion proceeds to examine the modular digital layer paradigm, ecosystem architecture, and voice-based AI interaction, before mapping the HCInt continuum along which the immersive economy materializes. The immersive economy is subsequently formalized as a fifth stage in the progression of economic value, and an operational definition of marketing in immersive contexts is advanced, examining the continuities and transformations that distinguish it from traditional marketing frameworks. Two empirical illustrations are provided, followed by

an examination of the strategic opportunities and structural threats of the immersive economy, including the risk of technology-induced dependency and the erosion of consumer agency. The entry concludes with a synthesis of the theoretical contributions and their implications for marketing scholarship and practice.

Defining Immersivity: A Multidimensional Framework

Before advancing an operational definition, a terminological clarification is warranted. Throughout this entry, the term *immersivity* is used deliberately to denote the broader condition under which multiple immersive mechanisms may be activated across technologies and contexts. This choice differs from the more established terms *immersion* and *immersive experience*, which are often used to refer either to a specific psychological state or to a bounded experiential episode. By contrast, *immersivity* is adopted here as an umbrella concept that captures a multidimensional configuration including sensory, cognitive, emotional, narrative, spatial, and digital components. In this sense, *immersivity* could be considered a higher-order conceptual label for the conditions under which technologically mediated environments shape perception, engagement, and action (Barrera & Shah, 2023; Ambika et al., 2025).

Immersivity encompasses a family of related but distinct phenomena that have developed across cognitive science, media psychology, human-computer interaction, and marketing. A rigorous conceptualization therefore requires disentangling these dimensions, as each captures different mechanisms of consumer engagement, different technological affordances, and different strategic implications for firms. Table 1 synthesizes six core dimensions of *immersivity* identified in the literature and clarifies their specific conceptual roles.

Two structural observations warrant attention. First, the first five dimensions, namely, sensory, cognitive, emotional, narrative, and spatial, describe experiential states produced in the

consumer by specific technological and narrative configurations. They represent properties of the subjective encounter between consumer and environment. Digital *immersivity*, by contrast, describes a socio-technical condition: the ambient, persistent integration of digital intelligence into the consumer's everyday life. It is not an experiential state but a structural feature of the interaction architecture within which all other forms of *immersivity* increasingly occur. Second, these dimensions are not mutually exclusive; the most powerful immersive marketing configurations engage multiple dimensions simultaneously. A consumer visiting a virtual brand environment in a full-immersion VR head-mounted display may experience high sensory, spatial, and emotional *immersivity* simultaneously. A consumer wearing smartglasses that provide AI-guided product information, while shopping in a physical store, experiences primarily digital and spatial *immersivity*, with lower sensory and emotional intensity. Understanding which combination of dimensions is activated by a given technology is essential for predicting its marketing effects and designing experiences appropriate to specific brand objectives.

The analytical separability of these dimensions is not merely conceptual; it is supported by empirical evidence from immersive marketing research. Barhorst et al. (2021) validate AR marketing's multidimensionality, demonstrating that flow mediates the relationship between AR attributes and consumer outcomes, which confirms that *immersivity* dimensions are empirically distinct and impact marketing results differently.

Evolving Devices, Platforms, and Interaction Paradigms

Before examining the specific technologies through which the immersive economy materializes, it is useful to locate the discussion within the broader stream of research on immersive marketing technologies. Barta et al. (2025), in a systematic review of AR experiences in consumer contexts, document how the literature has progressively shifted from isolated case studies of

Marketing in the Immersivity Era, Table 1 Dimensions of immersivity: definitions and key references

Dimension	Nature	Definition	Key reference
Sensory	Objective	Degree to which a system provides multi-sensory stimuli that simulate physical reality	Slater and Wilbur (1997)
Cognitive	Subjective	Deep mental engagement with focused concentration and loss of time awareness (flow)	Jennett et al. (2008)
Emotional	Subjective	Degree of affective involvement and emotional connection with content or environment	Brown and Cairns (2004)
Narrative	Subjective	Narrative transportation: the capacity of a story to suspend awareness of the external world	Green and Brock (2000)
Spatial	Subjective	The perceptual illusion of non-mediation: the felt sense of being physically present in a virtual or augmented environment	Lombard and Ditton (1997)
Digital	Socio-technical	Pervasive integration of digital technologies into everyday life through continuous, AI-mediated human–internet interaction	Hoffman and Novak (1996), Velasco et al. (2026)

Note: Authors' elaboration

single AR applications toward integrative frameworks that account for the full continuum of device types, consumer contexts, and experiential outcomes. Their classification confirms that the contemporary XR landscape is best understood not as a homogeneous technological domain but as a heterogeneous ecosystem of devices, platforms, and interaction paradigms, each with distinct immersivity profiles and marketing implications. The present section maps this ecosystem along three analytical axes: the evolution from closed simulations to social immersive platforms, the paradigm shift from head-mounted displays to smartglasses, and the coexistence of three distinct user ecosystems.

From Closed Simulations to Social Immersive Platforms

The history of immersive technology in commercial contexts begins with professional simulation. Flight simulators, surgical training environments, architectural visualization systems, and military training platforms established the foundational use case for immersive VR: creating a controlled, high-fidelity replica of a target environment in which professionals could learn, rehearse, and refine skills without the costs, risks, or logistical constraints of real-world practice (Burdea & Coiffet, 2003). These early applications shared a common structural feature, namely immersivity as

a deliberately entered, time-bounded, professionally purposeful state, that differed fundamentally from the ambient, everyday immersivity that characterizes the spatial computing paradigm now emerging.

The transition toward social, consumer-oriented immersive platforms occurred gradually across two decades. The early 2000s saw experimental social virtual worlds such as Second Life attract significant marketing attention, with brands establishing virtual presences and hosting events in shared three-dimensional environments (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009; Haenlein & Kaplan, 2009). While these platforms ultimately did not achieve mass adoption, they established the conceptual template for what would later be formalized as the metaverse: persistent, shared, three-dimensional virtual environments in which users are represented through avatars and can engage in social, economic, and experiential activities (Bruni et al., 2025). Dwivedi et al. (2022) map the scope, challenges, and research priorities raised by metaverse environments across marketing, information systems, and consumer behavior, identifying the coexistence of immersive realism, persistent social interaction, and programmable economic exchange as the defining novelty of the paradigm. The metaverse era of the early 2020s, associated with platforms such as Roblox, Fortnite's creative modes, and

Meta's Horizon Worlds, brought these concepts into mainstream marketing discourse, prompting major brands to establish virtual storefronts, host concerts and product launches in virtual spaces, and sell branded digital goods (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Research on metaverse marketing behavior has begun to identify the psychological mechanisms driving consumer engagement in these environments (Hadi et al., 2024). A typology of metaverse users based on their experience with VR and XR head-mounted displays reveals that intrinsic motivations such as curiosity, exploration, and social connection play a more significant role than extrinsic motivations in sustaining engagement (Bruni & Galvagno, 2025). This has direct implications for brand strategy: experiences designed primarily as transactional or promotional events generate weaker sustained engagement than those that privilege exploration, co-creation, and community.

From Head-Mounted Displays to Smartglasses and Spatial Computing

The dominant mental model of immersive technology in both popular and academic discourse has long been the head-mounted display: a device that replaces the user's visual access to the physical world with a fully rendered virtual environment. This form of VR excels at producing deep spatial and sensory immersivity and is well-suited to high-involvement experiential contexts such as virtual real estate tours, luxury brand showcases, destination previews in tourism marketing, and professional simulation (Tussyadiah et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2021). Its fundamental limitation is structural: it requires deliberate, time-bounded opt-in. The consumer must stop what they are doing, put on a device, and enter the experience. This friction limits VR's role to special-occasion, high-salience touchpoints, precluding its use as a medium of everyday brand presence.

The emergence of lightweight smartglasses and spatial computing devices represents a qualitative shift in the immersive technology paradigm. AI-enabled smartglasses, such as Ray-Ban Meta glasses, are designed to support lightweight, continuous, and socially embedded interaction in everyday contexts. By contrast, head-worn spatial

computing devices such as Apple Vision Pro are positioned as spatial computing systems that support high-fidelity mixed-reality interaction through a more immersive hardware configuration. Smartglasses overlay digital content onto the user's visual field while preserving full access to the physical environment, enabling what Velasco et al. (2026) describe as a gradual transition from symbiotic to fusion-mode human-computer interaction. The marketing significance of this shift is difficult to overstate: whereas conventional VR requires the consumer to enter a bounded brand environment, smartglasses and related spatial computing interfaces bring digital brand layers into the consumer's ongoing physical environment in more continuous, contextual, and ambient ways.

The Extended Reality (XR) Ecosystem: Entertainment, Professional Use, and Everyday Life

The contemporary XR landscape encompasses three user ecosystems: the entertainment and gaming ecosystem, the training and professional ecosystem, and the spatial computing ecosystem.

The entertainment and gaming ecosystem, which includes VR gaming platforms, location-based entertainment, and immersive arcades, represents the most mature consumer XR market and has generated the largest installed base of high-immersivity devices. Consumers in this ecosystem actively seek sensory, cognitive, and emotional immersivity as an end in itself (Kalender & Guzmán, 2025).

The professional and training ecosystem, encompassing surgical simulation, architectural visualization, engineering design review, military and first-responder training, and athletic performance optimization, uses immersivity instrumentally for skill acquisition, risk reduction, and performance improvement. This ecosystem has driven significant enterprise investment in XR technology and has produced well-validated evidence of immersivity's effectiveness in accelerating learning and reducing error rates (Howard et al., 2021). The everyday spatial computing ecosystem, currently in early commercial development and enabled by lightweight smartglasses

and ambient MR, is the ecosystem toward which marketing's strategic attention should be most intensely directed. In this ecosystem, immersivity is not sought but ambient: digital information layers are present throughout the consumer's daily environment, not as deliberate experiences but as contextual enhancements of ordinary activities such as shopping, commuting, working, and socializing.

Digital Layers, Ecosystem Architecture, and AI-Mediated Interaction

The Modular Digital Layer

One of the most significant and undertheorized aspects of the emerging immersive economy is the principle of digital layer modularity: the capacity of consumers to calibrate, in real time and across contexts, the quantity and type of digital information they overlay onto their physical environment. Unlike the binary opt-in logic of VR, in which the consumer is either fully immersed or not, the spatial computing paradigm enables a continuous spectrum of digital augmentation. A consumer might begin the morning with minimal augmentation (a smartwatch notification), transition to voice-mediated AI assistance during a commute (smartglasses providing navigation and messaging), enter a fully spatially augmented shopping environment (product overlays, price comparisons, personalized recommendations in the visual field), and end the evening with a fully immersive social VR environment. The same consumer, the same day, multiple layers, multiple devices, continuously modulated.

This modular logic has profound implications for marketing. It means that brand encounters are no longer bounded events that can be designed as discrete experiences but distributed, contextually variable interactions that span the consumer's entire day across different immersivity levels. Brand salience acquires a new spatial and temporal dimension: brands can potentially maintain a persistent ambient presence in the consumer's perceptual field, but the consumer's tolerance for, and attention to, different information densities will vary by context, mood, and task. This

multi-layered modularity progressively renders traditional marketing mix formulations insufficient. As websites and social media are joined by VR, AR, and XR channels capable of generating phygital contexts that complement physical brand environments, firms must develop alternative marketing mix configurations that account for layered touchpoints, multi-agent mediation, and the consumer's dynamic calibration of immersivity across the day. Within this layered architecture, the firm-consumer relationship is increasingly mediated by a diverse set of human and nonhuman agents, including search engines, recommendation algorithms, platforms, and digitally augmented objects, each of which may facilitate or hinder value co-creation by adding informational and experiential layers to the interaction. These agents are not neutral: they attribute or subtract value from the offering depending on the consumer's context, attention, and the density of digital mediation at any given moment.

Ecosystem Architecture and Platform Competition

The modular digital layer paradigm is architecturally determined by the ecosystem platforms through which consumers access immersive capabilities. Apple's strategy with Vision Pro—positioning spatial computing as an extension of the iPhone and Apple Watch ecosystem—exemplifies an approach in which immersive capabilities are made accessible through existing trusted devices, progressively deepening integration. Meta's approach with Ray-Ban smartglasses and Quest VR head-mounted displays reflects a different architecture: a dedicated immersive ecosystem designed to capture the most engaged early adopters and establish platform lock-in before broader consumer adoption.

Ecosystem architecture shapes how branded content reaches consumers within immersive environments. Closed ecosystems, such as Apple's, constrain behavioral targeting through strict privacy enforcement, whereas open models offer broader data access at the cost of reduced consumer trust. These platform dynamics are likely to define the marketing landscape of the next decade.

Voice Interaction and the AI Interlocutor

A specific and strategically critical dimension of the emerging immersive ecosystem is the shift from text-based to voice-based interaction with AI. In the smartglass paradigm, hands are occupied, attention is distributed across physical and digital fields, and continuous text interaction is impractical. Voice becomes the primary modality, and with it, the AI assistant becomes the primary interface between the consumer and the information environment.

This shift has profound marketing implications that are only beginning to be recognized. When a consumer asks their AI assistant (through smartglasses, a wearable, or an ambient voice interface) for a product recommendation, a restaurant suggestion, or a price comparison, the AI's response is mediated by its training, its data sources, and its commercial relationships. The consumer does not browse a set of options and choose; the AI presents a curated recommendation, or a ranked set of options, or a single suggestion. In voice-based commercial environments, this conversational logic becomes especially consequential because the interface often narrows the visible choice set. Recent work on conversational commerce has likewise shown that voice assistants may lead consumers to perceive offered choices as biased or sub-optimal, thereby reinforcing the intermediary power of the platform in the purchase process (Rabassa et al., 2022). The competitive question is no longer which brand appears first in a search result, but which brand is recommended by the AI and on what basis. Mende et al. (2023) define transhumanist marketing as commercial interaction reshaped by technology-based enhancement. As AI augments cognition, consumer agency shifts toward algorithms. Consequently, brands must target both users and AI recommendation engines, a practice that might be termed "immersive SEO," as a vital capability in the immersive economy.

The HCInt Continuum: Devices, Integration Modes, and Marketing Implications

Before articulating the theoretical structure of the immersive economy, it is useful to map the technological continuum along which it materializes. The transition from the experience economy to the immersive economy does not arrive all at once, nor is it driven by a single breakthrough device. It unfolds gradually across a continuum of integration modes, from the episodic and external (smartphone AR and wearables) to the continuous and embodied (smartglasses, electromyographic interfaces, and brain-computer interfaces). Table 2 maps this continuum and its marketing implications, drawing on the HCInt framework of Velasco et al. (2026). The table maps the current XR device landscape and supports the theoretical argument developed in the following section.

Within this continuum, two integration modes generate structurally different consumer experiences and marketing opportunities. *Symbiosis*, the mode characteristic of current wearables and smartphone-based AR, describes configurations in which humans and AI systems share agency in adaptive partnership. The consumer retains clear awareness of the system as a separate entity and can modulate, override, or disengage from it. *Fusion*, the mode characteristic of smartglasses with muscle-computer interfaces (EMG), on-skin sensors, and ultimately brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), describes configurations in which the computational system operates as a perceptual or functional extension of the human body, without the experiential distance that mediates symbiotic interaction. In fusion mode, the brand environment is not merely encountered; it is inhabited by the user as a continuous experiential condition. The marketing implications of this distinction are significant. Symbiotic configurations preserve the basic structure of consumer choice and deliberate engagement, even as they extend personalization to real-time biometric and behavioral data. Fusion configurations, by contrast, raise questions that current marketing theory has only begun to address. As brand content becomes progressively

Marketing in the Immersivity Era, Table 2 The HCInt technology continuum and marketing implications

Device/interface	Coupling mode	Integration type	Immersivity layer	Marketing implication
Smartphone/tablet AR	External, episodic	Symbiosis	Digital	Mobile AR marketing; product visualization; QR-triggered brand content
Wearables (smartwatch, fitness tracker)	Feedback and tracking	Symbiosis	Digital + sensory	Biometric personalization; health-contextualized offers; adaptive retail
Smartglasses (e.g., Ray-Ban Meta)	Ambient overlay, voice	Fusion (partial)	Digital + spatial	Always-on assistance; contextual brand prompts; lightweight phygital touchpoints
Spatial computing head-mounted displays (e.g., Apple Vision Pro)	High-fidelity mixed reality	Fusion (partial)	Spatial +sensory + digital	Immersive brand environments; advanced visualization; high-involvement phygital experiences
On-skin sensors/e-tattoos	Context-aware	Fusion	Sensory + digital	Emotion-responsive atmospherics; biometric loyalty programs
Muscle-computer interfaces (EMG)	Intent decoding	Deep fusion	Sensory + cognitive	Gesture commerce; embodied product interaction; professional simulation
Brain-computer interfaces (BCI)	Neurocontrol	Deep fusion	All dimensions	Neural-level personalization; accessibility marketing

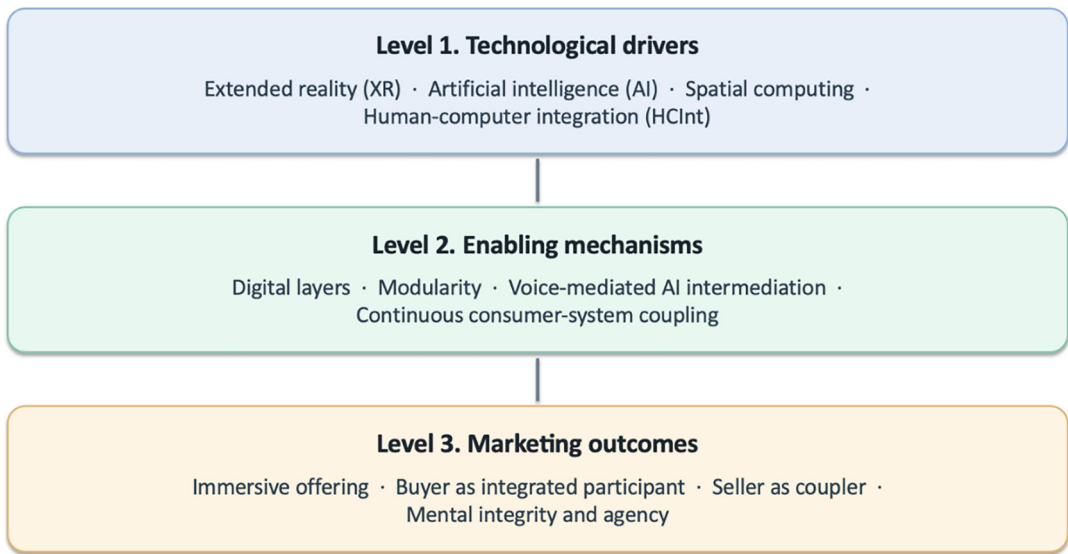
Note: Authors' elaboration on Velasco et al. (2026)

integrated into the consumer's perceptual environment via AI-mediated spatial computing, the concepts of attention, preference, and brand loyalty, developed within a paradigm of episodic and deliberate consumer engagement, may no longer retain their full analytical validity. Whether and how these constructs can be adapted to contexts of ambient, continuous brand presence represents one of the most significant open questions for the discipline.

What this continuum makes visible is that the transition under discussion is not simply a matter of more technologically sophisticated experiences. A richer interface or a more vivid simulation would remain within the logic of the experience economy if the encounter were episodic, bounded, and externally staged by the firm. The significance of the HCInt continuum lies elsewhere: it points to a progressive reconfiguration of how value is generated, delivered, and lived. As digital systems move from external tools to increasingly integrated

perceptual and cognitive layers, the offering itself becomes less event-based and more continuous, adaptive, and co-constituted through ongoing interaction with the consumer. This is why the technological developments mapped in Table 2 do not merely intensify experiential richness; they suggest the emergence of a different economic logic, one in which the firm is no longer only staging memorable episodes but configuring conditions for continuous coupling.

To synthesize the argument developed so far, Fig. 1 integrates the main technological drivers, enabling mechanisms and marketing outcomes that jointly underpin the emergence of the immersive economy. This figure shows how key technological drivers enable specific interaction mechanisms that, in turn, reshape the logic of value creation in marketing. The immersive economy emerges not simply from the diffusion of new devices but from the combination of digital layering, modularity, voice-based intermediation, and continuous coupling, which jointly produce a



Marketing in the Immersivity Era, Fig. 1 From technological drivers to marketing outcomes in the immersive economy. (Note: Authors’ elaboration)

new offering logic, new market roles, and new ethical obligations.

The Immersive Economy: Extending the Progression of Economic Value

The technological continuum mapped in Table 2, together with the conceptual foundations developed in the preceding sections, provides the empirical and theoretical basis for the central contribution of this entry: the formalization of the immersive economy as a fifth stage in Pine II and Gilmore’s (1998) progression of economic value. Table 3 presents a direct extension of Pine and Gilmore’s original framework, preserving their four stages and adding a fifth: the immersive offering. Figure 2 represents this extension along the axis of technological mediation, positioning the immersive offering as the qualitative evolution of economic value creation under conditions of continuous computational coupling between consumer and environment.

The following analysis compares experiential and immersive offerings along each defining characteristic of the model proposed by Pine and

Gilmore, as formalized in Table 3 and represented graphically in Fig. 2.

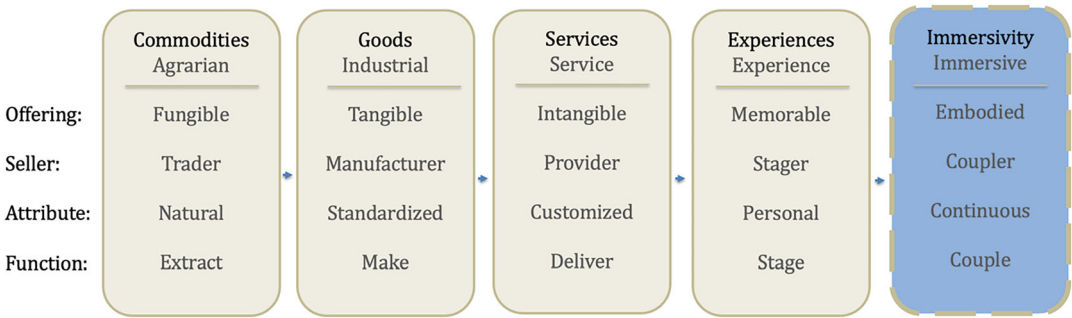
With respect to economic function, Pine and Gilmore’s stager deliberately designs and delivers a bounded encounter: the theme park, the restaurant, and the corporate event. The coupler in the immersive economy does something structurally different: it configures computational systems that become continuously integrated with the consumer’s perceptual and cognitive processes. Value is not delivered in a discrete event but generated through the ongoing adaptive interaction between the consumer’s embodied state and the coupled system. A smartwatch that continuously monitors biometric data and modulates recommendations accordingly is not staging an experience; it is maintaining a coupling.

With respect to the nature of the offering, Pine and Gilmore emphasize memorability as the defining value criterion: did the experience leave a mark in the consumer’s mind? The immersive offering is defined not by memorability but by embodiment and ambience. Its value is generated not in retrospect but in the continuous present, in the quality of the ongoing coupling between consumer and system. A consumer interacting with a well-designed ambient AR layer does not

Marketing in the Immersivity Era, Table 3 The progression of economic value extended to the immersive economy

Dimension	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experiences	Immersive offering
Economy	Agrarian	Industrial	Service	Experience	<i>Immersive</i>
Economic function	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage	<i>Couple</i>
Nature of offering	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable	<i>Embodied and ambient</i>
Key attribute	Natural	Standardized	Customized	Personal	<i>Continuous and adaptive</i>
Method of supply	Stored in bulk	Inventoried	Delivered on demand	Revealed over a duration	<i>Always-on ambient integration</i>
Seller role	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager	<i>Coupler</i>
Buyer role	Market	User	Client	Guest	<i>Integrated participant</i>
Value driver	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations	<i>Experiential coupling</i>
Competitive position	Undifferentiated	Differentiated	Customized	Staged uniqueness	<i>Embodied uniqueness</i>
Ethical obligation	Quality/safety	Product safety	Privacy/fairness	Authenticity	<i>Mental integrity and agency</i>

Note: Adapted and extended from Pine II and Gilmore (1998)



Marketing in the Immersivity Era, Fig. 2 The progression of economic value: from commodities to immersive offerings. (Source: Adapted and extended from Pine II and Gilmore (1998))

remember the interaction as a discrete event; they simply experience their environment as richer, more informed, and more responsive to their needs.

With respect to the buyer role, the consumer in the immersive economy is not a guest who enters and exits a designed environment but an integrated participant whose bodily states, behavioral patterns, and inferred intentions function as real-time inputs that co-constitute the offering itself. This notion of co-constitution extends and radicalizes the service-dominant logic proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004), according to which value is co-created through the integration of resources brought by firms and consumers alike,

generalizing the co-creation principle to its structural limit.

With respect to the value driver, Velasco et al. (2026) introduce the concept of experiential coupling to describe the dynamic interdependence through which computational systems and human perception, action, and introspection become mutually constitutive. What consumers seek is not a specific sensation delivered by a bounded event but a quality of continuous integration calibrated to their authentic needs, preferences, and context.

Marketing in the Immersivity: Conceptual Foundations and Operational Definition

When computational systems are coupled with bodily and cognitive processes and when artificial intelligence (AI) mediates perception, modulates attention, and shapes recommendation in real time, the consumer's capacity to form genuine preferences, make autonomous choices, and maintain a coherent sense of self is directly implicated. Cassinadri (2025) formalizes the right to mental integrity as a foundational ethical principle for neurotechnology governance; Velasco et al. (2026) extend this to the broader HCInt context. For marketing practice, this translates into an obligation not only to avoid deception but also to actively protect the consumer's cognitive autonomy, designing immersive systems that augment rather than appropriate human agency.

These ethical imperatives are not external constraints on marketing practice; they are constitutive features of a context in which the offering itself is co-produced through continuous interaction between consumer and computational system. An immersive offering constitutes a categorically different economic proposition, one in which value is co-created through the continuous interdependence of consumer and computational system. As the preceding analysis has established, these processes affect the marketing logics and frameworks adopted in organizations, and the transition proposed in this entry should be understood in terms of both continuity and change from traditional marketing to marketing in the immersivity.

Building on this analytical framework, an operational definition can now be advanced. Marketing in immersive contexts refers to the set of activities, processes, and institutional arrangements through which firms generate and govern value propositions within technology-mediated environments. These environments are characterized by the progressive integration of digital layers into human-computer interaction, which increasingly shapes how consumers perceive, experience, and act upon reality. What

distinguishes these contexts is that digital mediation does not merely support exchange; it also reconfigures the conditions under which exchange is experienced and enacted. Consumer experience is increasingly co-created by multiple human and nonhuman actors, including platforms, interfaces, algorithms, and other technological agents. From this perspective, immersive contexts extend the classical understanding of marketing by introducing two defining features, distributed agency across firms, consumers, and technological actors, and a layered digital architecture through which offerings become meaningful, interactive, and experientially salient. Table 4 summarizes the principal elements that remain stable in the marketing framework and those that are transformed as a result of the conditions introduced by immersive contexts.

The continuities documented in Table 4 make clear that the argument advanced here is not one of radical discontinuity but of structural transformation. This distinction is important for addressing a substantive alternative position that has recently emerged in the literature. Garaus et al. (2025) argue that AI, AR, and VR can be effectively integrated within the four experiential realms originally identified by Pine and Gilmore, enriching the experience economy rather than replacing it. The position taken here is different. The five shifts documented above do not describe variations within the existing four realms; they concern the structural relationship between firm, consumer, and technology, not the qualitative character of the experiential encounter. An AI-mediated ambient layer that accompanies a consumer continuously through the day is a different kind of economic offering altogether, one that operates outside the logic of the bounded encounter on which Pine and Gilmore's framework is built.

Two Illustrations of Coupling in Practice

Apple Vision Pro and the Spatial Computing Paradigm

Apple Vision Pro, released in the United States on February 2, 2024, at a starting price of 3499 US

Marketing in the Immersivity Era, Table 4 Continuity and change in marketing in the immersivity

Analytical dimension	Continuity in marketing	Change in marketing in the immersivity
Core logic of marketing	Marketing continues to concern the creation, communication, delivery, and governance of value propositions	These processes increasingly take place through technologically mediated environments in which digital layers shape perception, experience, and action
Consumer role	The consumer remains central to value creation and value assessment	The consumer increasingly acts as an integrated participant whose data, behavior, and context contribute to the configuration of the offering
Firm role	The firm continues to design and orchestrate value propositions	The firm increasingly configures adaptive and continuous couplings
Offering logic	Offerings remain oriented toward relevance and value for consumers	Offerings become more ambient, layered, and dynamically modulated across physical and digital contexts
Market mediation	Exchange continues to connect firms and consumers	Exchange is increasingly mediated by platforms, interfaces, AI assistants, algorithms, and immersive infrastructures
Consumer agency	Consumer choice remains a foundational assumption of marketing	Consumer agency becomes more ambivalent, as immersive systems may both augment autonomy and constrain it through algorithmic simplification and delegation
Ethical orientation	Trust, fairness, and responsible conduct remain important	Ethical priorities extend to transparency, autonomy, mental integrity, and the governance of persistent AI-mediated influence

Note: Authors’ elaboration

dollars, offers a concrete illustration of the immersive economy’s structural logic (Apple, 2024). Apple explicitly framed the device not as a virtual reality head-mounted display but as a “spatial computer,” powered by the visionOS operating system and controlled through eye tracking, hand gestures, and voice input. Unlike conventional VR head-mounted displays designed for time-bounded entertainment experiences, Vision Pro is positioned as an extension of the consumer’s existing computing environment, continuous with the iPhone, iPad, and Mac ecosystem.

From the perspective of the framework advanced in this entry, Vision Pro exemplifies the shift from staging to coupling along several dimensions. First, the coupling is embodied: the device integrates 12 cameras and multiple sensors that track eye movement, hand gestures, and voice continuously, generating a real-time interdependence between user input and system output (Apple, 2024). Second, the coupling is ambient rather than bounded: the pass-through

video capability maintains the user’s visual access to the physical environment while overlaying digital content, dissolving the binary logic of “entering” and “exiting” an experience. Third, the buyer role shifts toward integrated participation: the system continuously adapts to the user’s gaze, attention, and behavioral patterns.

At the same time, Vision Pro highlights the structural constraints of the current phase. Industry analyses indicate that Apple sold approximately 370,000 units in the first three quarters of 2024, substantially below initial expectations, and production was reportedly scaled back before being paused in early 2025 (Financial Times, 2025). The premium positioning limited installed base, and social awkwardness outside private settings indicate that ambient spatial computing remains confined to specific use contexts.

Ray-Ban Meta and the AI-Mediated Ambient Layer

Ray-Ban Meta smartglasses, launched in October 2023 at a starting price of 299 US dollars, offer a

complementary illustration of the immersive economy's emerging contours (EssilorLuxottica, 2023). Where Apple Vision Pro represents high-fidelity spatial computing with a premium positioning, Ray-Ban Meta represents the opposite strategic bet: lightweight, socially acceptable, continuously worn eyewear whose immersive capabilities are modest individually but whose ambient presence is strategically decisive. The device integrates cameras, microphones, open-ear audio, and voice-activated access to Meta AI through the "Hey Meta" wake phrase, enabling the user to query, capture, and interact with the digital environment without reaching for a smartphone. Multimodal AI capabilities added in April 2024 allow the device to process visual inputs, enabling real-time identification of objects, landmarks, and text (Meta, 2024).

The strategic significance of Ray-Ban Meta lies less in its technical specifications than in what it reveals about the AI-mediated logic of the immersive economy. The primary interaction modality is voice: the consumer asks the AI a question and receives a single synthesized response. This interaction pattern embodies the disintermediation dynamic discussed earlier: the consumer does not browse a set of branded options; they delegate the query to Meta's AI, whose recommendation logic is opaque and whose commercial incentives are not necessarily aligned with those of the brands the consumer might otherwise have encountered.

Commercial data reinforce the strategic significance of this trajectory. EssilorLuxottica reported in its Q4 2024 earnings call that 2 million units had been sold since the October 2023 launch, with sales tripling year over year in the first half of 2025, and announced an expansion of annual production capacity to 10 million units by the end of 2026 (CNBC, 2025). Ray-Ban Meta also illustrates the social and regulatory constraints that will shape the trajectory of the immersive economy. The bystander-privacy implications identified by Rauschnabel et al. (2018) remain operationally relevant: the recording indicator is subtle, the form factor is indistinguishable from ordinary sunglasses, and the social legitimacy of always-on ambient capture is still contested.

Strategic Implications of the Immersive Economy

Opportunities: Anticipation, Continuity, and Embodied Engagement

The immersive economy creates marketing opportunities that are structurally unavailable in the experience economy. The most significant is what might be termed experiential anticipation: the capacity to provide consumers with high-fidelity simulations of product or service experiences before purchase, dramatically reducing the information asymmetry and risk perception that limit high-involvement buying decisions. Hilken et al. (2017) formalize this through the concept of service augmentation, showing empirically that AR interfaces enhance decision comfort and reduce perceived risk precisely by enabling consumers to mentally simulate product use in their own physical environment. Kumar et al. (2024) map AR marketing benefits (sensory enhancement, efficiency, assessment, and discovery) onto the consumer values they ultimately serve. Coelho et al. (2023) confirm that immersive product simulations consistently reduce perceived purchase risk and increase purchase intention across categories.

A second major opportunity is experiential continuity: the capacity to maintain brand presence across the consumer's entire day through ambient digital layers, rather than relying on discrete touchpoints separated by intervals of no brand contact. The omnichannel marketing paradigm has long aspired to seamless cross-channel experience; spatial computing provides the architectural foundation to realize this aspiration at the perceptual level, embedding brand content in the consumer's visual environment.

A third opportunity, less discussed but potentially transformative, is the democratization of professional-grade immersive experiences. Technologies initially developed for professional simulation are becoming consumer-accessible, enabling brands in health care, education, financial services, and other high-stakes categories to deliver experiences of informational depth and

emotional resonance previously reserved for face-to-face expert interactions.

Threats: Disintermediation, Agency Reduction, and Technology-Induced Dependency

Against these opportunities, the immersive economy poses structural threats to brand strategy that deserve equally serious attention. The most consequential is AI-mediated disintermediation: as voice-activated AI assistants become the primary interface through which consumers navigate information and make purchasing decisions, the AI provider—not the brand—controls the critical moment of recommendation. A consumer asking their smartglass AI for a recommendation is not browsing a set of branded options and choosing; they are delegating the choice to an algorithm whose recommendation logic may or may not favor any particular brand. Huang and Rust (2021) systematize this transition by distinguishing three levels of AI in marketing (mechanical, thinking, and feeling AI), arguing that as AI progressively assumes these functions, the strategic role of the marketer shifts from executing decisions to designing the conditions under which AI systems make decisions on the firm's behalf.

A second structural threat concerns the erosion of consumer agency that accompanies ambient AI-mediated interaction. Velasco et al. (2026) describe a recursive experience programming loop: consumer behavior feeds the AI system with data; the AI system infers preferences, optimizes presentation, and shapes subsequent brand encounters; those encounters in turn modify behavior; the modified behavior feeds the system again. For marketing theory, the stakes are considerable: brand preference becomes increasingly an output of the system, shaped in real time by algorithmic curation optimized for engagement, conversion, or platform revenue. Traditional brand-equity metrics based on stated preferences may progressively lose diagnostic value, while the locus of competitive advantage shifts toward consistent surfacing within recommendation systems.

A third and increasingly urgent threat is technology-induced dependency: the gradual

erosion of cognitive and navigational capabilities that consumers delegate to AI-mediated immersive systems. Consumers who rely continuously on spatial AR navigation may progressively lose the capacity for unaided spatial orientation; those who rely on AI product recommendations may lose the capacity for independent comparative evaluation. More severely, the always-on, reward-loop architecture of immersive digital environments can produce patterns of excessive engagement, compulsive use, and behavioral dependency that share structural features with recognized addictive processes. The design logic of attention-maximizing platforms, characterized by personalized content feeds, social validation cues, and ambient recommendation nudges, may translate, in the spatial computing paradigm, into forms of immersive engagement that are difficult for consumers to regulate voluntarily. For brands, dependency can be a commercial opportunity, as switching costs rise when consumers integrate with a brand's ecosystem, but it carries significant reputational, regulatory, and ethical risk if perceived as exploitation. Marketing scholarship and practice must engage proactively with the psychological and neurological literature on digital dependency, contributing to the design of immersive environments that support healthy engagement.

Strategic Capabilities for the Coupler

The transition from stager to coupler requires a fundamental revision of the marketing toolkit. Four strategic capabilities emerge as central to competitive advantage in the immersive economy.

Ecosystem positioning refers to understanding which immersive platform ecosystems are most relevant to target consumer segments and establishing brand presence within those ecosystems in ways compatible with the ecosystem's governance and privacy norms.

Context-aware brand orchestration involves designing brand content and communications that adapt intelligently to the consumer's spatial context, activity state, and inferred needs, not as a single designed experience but as a dynamically generated ambient layer.

AI-recommendation optimization concerns developing strategies for brand presence in AI-curated recommendation environments, ensuring brand content and data are structured to enable favorable representation within AI-mediated decision environments.

Ethical design leadership involves proactively adopting design principles that protect consumer agency, transparency, and mental integrity, not only as ethical obligations but as strategic differentiators in a market where consumer trust in AI-mediated systems is highly variable and rapidly evolving (Kunz & Wirtz, 2024).

Conclusion

Pine and Gilmore concluded their 1998 article with the observation that companies unwilling to move beyond the service economy would find themselves in a commoditized business and that the question was not whether but when to enter the experience economy. A similar logic applies today, at a higher level of the value progression. Firms that define their competitive positioning solely within the experience economy, conceiving of their marketing challenge as the staging of more memorable encounters, will increasingly find that what consumers encounter is not the experience they have designed but the AI-mediated ambient layer through which that experience is filtered, curated, and often replaced. The forces driving this movement, namely, the proliferation of spatial computing devices, the maturation of AI recommendation systems, and the normalization of ambient digital intelligence, are structural and accelerating. Equally significant are the associated risks: the erosion of consumer agency, the risk of technology-induced dependency, and the ethical challenges posed by continuous AI-mediated coupling with human cognition and perception. Marketing theory's task is to develop conceptual frameworks adequate to this transition, frameworks that preserve the insights of the experience economy while extending them to conditions of embodiment, coupling, and ambient integration.

The central claim advanced in this entry is that the immersive offering may be viewed as a fifth stage in the progression of economic value, characterized by embodied ambience, integrated participation, and experiential coupling as the primary value driver.

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