FHV
Vorarlberg University
of Applied Sciences

Shop me if you can:
From Online Shopping to Immersive Commerce

**(Dr. Peter Hoffmann, November 2026,
Workshop 3 (ISC, Undergraduate))**

WhoAmI?

BERGISCHE UNIVERSITÄT WUPPERTAL

Fraunhofer IGD

UNIVERSITÄT ZU LÜBECK

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Story telling | Multi media | Hyper media

FOM Die Hochschule. Für Berufstätige.

Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences



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1 - Enter the Store

→ We are already shopping digitally today.

→ Shopping becomes spatial

→ The customer gains a physical presence

→ The company can engage directly with this digital representation

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1 - Enter the Store

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Whether via website, app, or social media, the user interacts with a **digital interface**

→ Shopping becomes spatial

Shops evolve from a mere interface into a navigable, **three-dimensional space**

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The customer is represented by an **avatar**

→ The company can engage directly with this digital representation

Welcome to the rise of **D2A commerce**

This allows for actions such as "wearing" virtual clothing, entering a car, or visiting a hotel room

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1 - Enter the Store

→ Der klassische E-Commerce:

Mensch → Website/ App → Unternehmen

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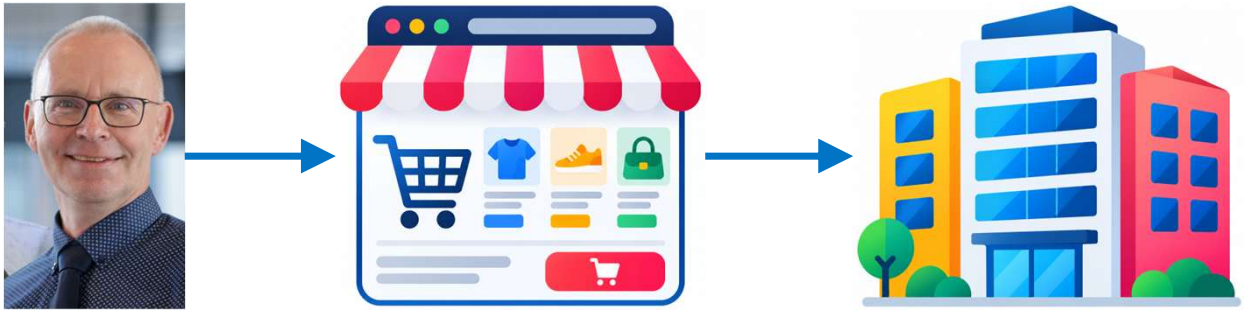
→ Immersive Commerce:

Mensch → Avatar → Virtual Environment → Unternehmen

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1 - Enter the Store

→ Der klassische E-Commerce: Mensch → Website/ App → Unternehmen



→ Immersive Commerce: Mensch → Avatar → Virtual Environment → Unternehmen



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1 - Enter the Store

→ D2A-Commerce: Unternehmen → Avatar → Mensch



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2 - How do we shop today ?

→ What is the last thing you bought online ?

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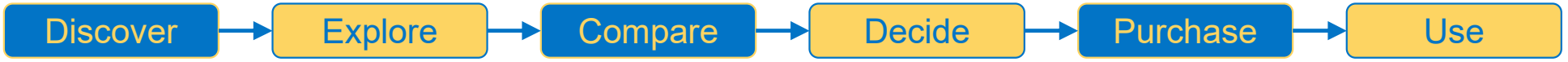
2 - How do we shop today ?

- → What is the last thing you bought online ?
  - → Where did you discover it ? (Website, app, or social media?)
  - → Did you compare products ?
  - → Did someone recommend it to you ?
  - → Did you see any advertisements for it before making the purchase ?
  - → Did you experience the product physically before buying it ?

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2 - How do we shop today ?

→ The resulting (simple) customer journey:



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2 - How do we shop today - online ?

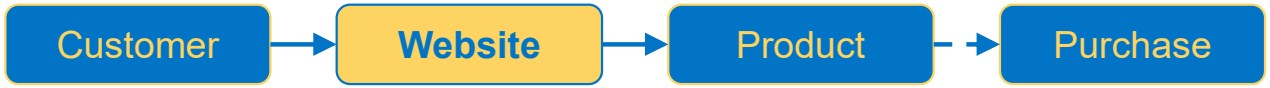
→ The resulting (simple) customer journey:



Almost everything takes now place via the screen.

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3 - From E-Commerce to Immersive Commerce

→ Web Commerce: 

Products are presented primarily through text, images, videos, and product data.
Example: Shoes in a traditional online shop.

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3 - From E-Commerce to Immersive Commerce

→ Web Commerce: Customer → **Website** → Product → Purchase

Products are presented primarily through text, images, videos, and product data.
Example: Shoes in a traditional online shop.

→ Mobile Commerce: Customer → **Smartphone** → Product → Purchase

The mobile device becomes more personal and context-aware.
Location, camera, notifications, and personal accounts become part of the shopping experience.

→ Social Commerce: Customer → **Community/ Creator** → Product → Purchase

Discovery and purchasing move closer together.
Products are no longer sought out exclusively.
Instead, they encounter the customer within social contexts.

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3 - From E-Commerce to Immersive Commerce

→ Immersive Commerce

The new metaphor: The interface becomes a place.

→ Instead of "I am looking at an image of a product on a website.",

it becomes: "I am entering a store."

"I am walking around a product."

"I am trying something on my avatar."

"I am experiencing a travel destination before booking it."

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The basic question:
Is a virtual store better than a standard website?

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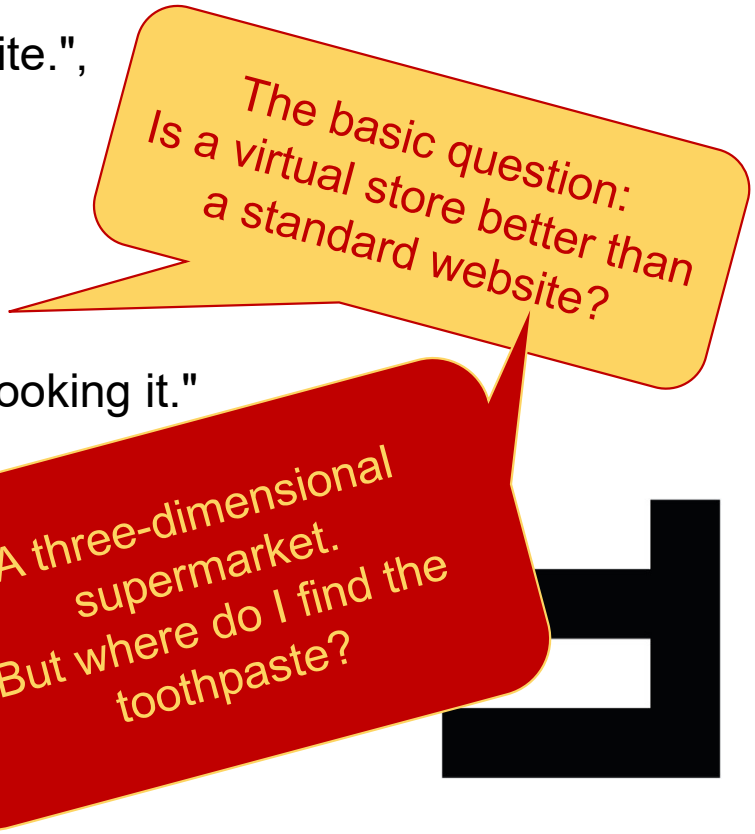
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The basic question:
Is a virtual store better than a standard website?

"Immersive" does not necessarily or always mean "better."

A three-dimensional supermarket.
But where do I find the toothpaste?

4a - Virtual products, shops … and avatars

→ Virtual Store

→ A spatial, digital retail or experiential space

→ VR is not strictly required
A virtual store can also be accessed via a laptop or smartphone.

→ Virtual Products

→ Digital representation of a physical product
→ Car, sneakers, piece of furniture, hotel room

→ Purely digital product
→ Avatar clothing, accessories, virtual items

Avatars can both …
… showcase products and …
… be users of a product
themselves!

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4a - Virtual products, shops … and avatars

→ Avatar

→ General:
An avatar is a digital representation of a user in a virtual environment.

→ From a "commercial" perspective:
From a company's point of view, however, an avatar can also become a customer touchpoint



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Who is the customer ?



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4a - Virtual products, shops … and avatars

A Gucci Handbag for Your Avatar

In 2021, Gucci offered virtual fashion items for avatars within the "Gucci Garden" on Roblox.

A virtual "Dionysus Bag with Bee" originally cost 475 Robux - approximately 6 US$. One unit was later resold on the Roblox marketplace for 350,000 Robux - that's about 4,115 US$ at that time. This was higher than the reported retail price of the physical counterpart, which was around 3,400 US$.



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Small additional detail:
the virtual bag was **NOT** an NFT and could only be used within the Roblox ecosystem.

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Would you ?

Why would someone pay real money for a handbag that only the avatar can use ?

Small additional detail:
the virtual bag was **NOT** an NFT and could only be used within the Roblox ecosystem.

4b - The Value of Virtual Products

→ Identity: "Who am I ?"

→ Virtual products allow users to express themselves through their avatars:
"This fits who I am – or who I would like to be."

Proteus effect

Examples: Clothing, hairstyles, accessories, or skins can be used to customize an avatar

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4b - The Value of Virtual Products

→ Identity: "Who am I ?"

→ Status: "What do others see ?"

→ Virtual products can convey prestige, achievement, or a sense of belonging to other users: "Others can see that I have this."

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4b - The Value of Virtual Products

- → Identity: "Who am I ?"
- → Status: "What do others see ?"
- → Scarcity: "How rare is it ?"
  - → The brand!
    "What does it represent ?"
  - → Established brands can transfer meaning, recognition, and desirability from physical to virtual products.

    "It is NOT just a virtual bag - it is a Gucci bag !"

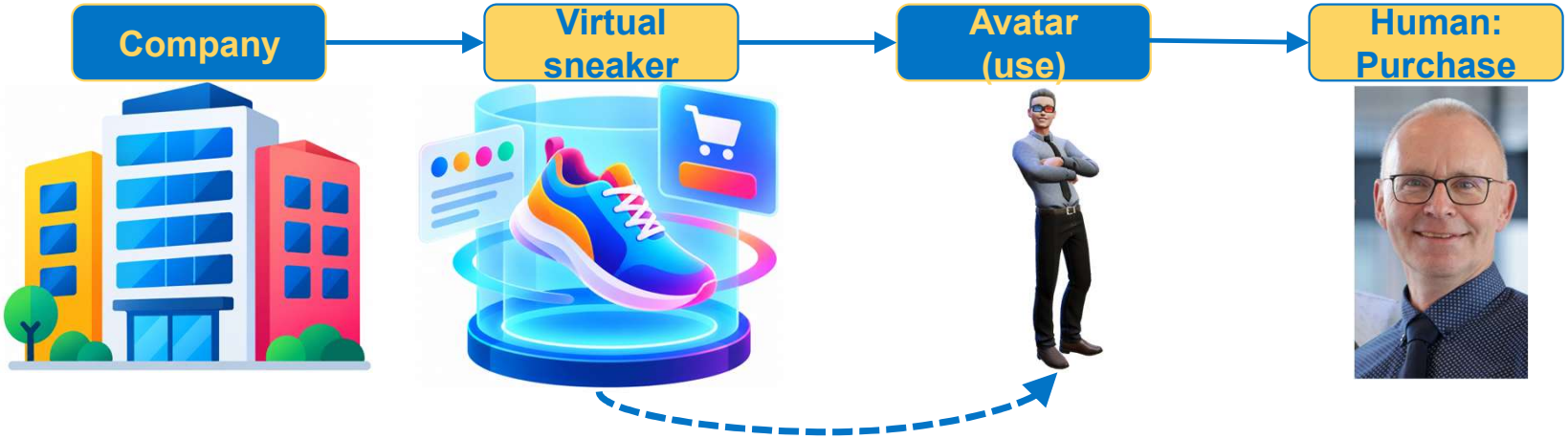
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5 - D2A-Commerce ?

Example 1 / 3:

→ The digital product **for** the avatar

→ A fashion company sells virtual sneakers.



→ Situation: The human customer pays, but the avatar uses the product.

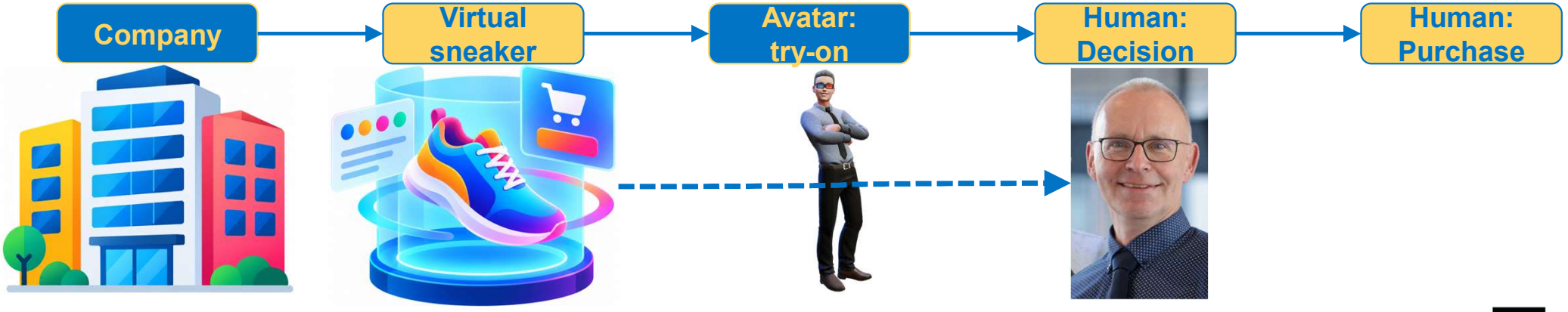
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5 - D2A-Commerce ?

Example 2 / 3:

→ The physical product **via** the avatar

→ The avatar tries on the sneakers.



→ Situation: The avatar acts as an intermediary (mediator).

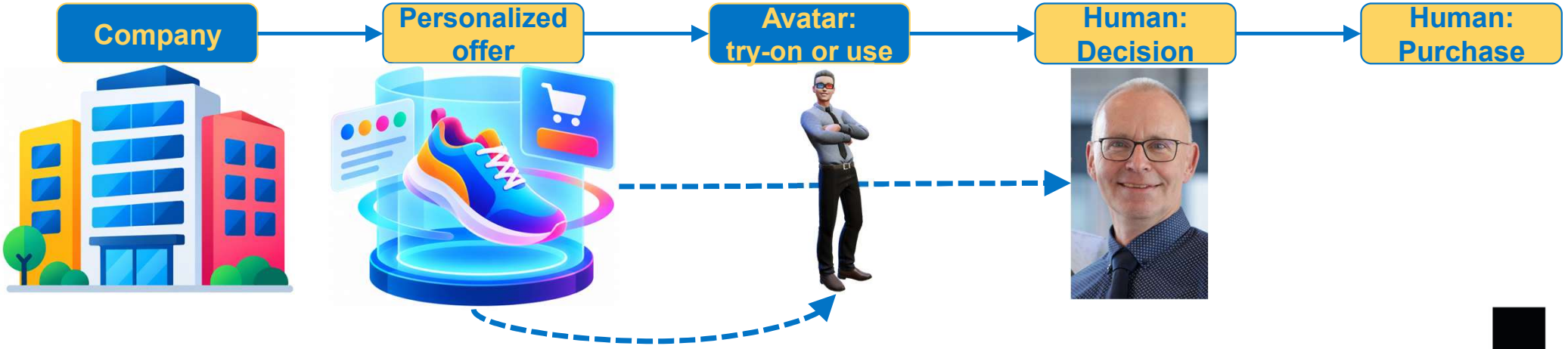
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5 - D2A-Commerce ?

Example 3 / 3:

→ Personalized experience

→ The avatar enters a virtual shop. Based on its profile, relevant products are presented.



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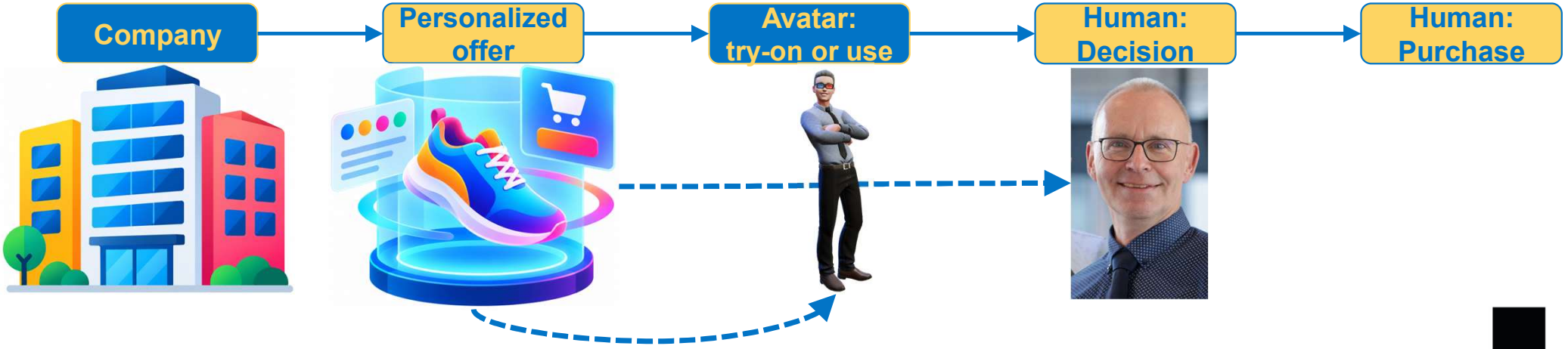
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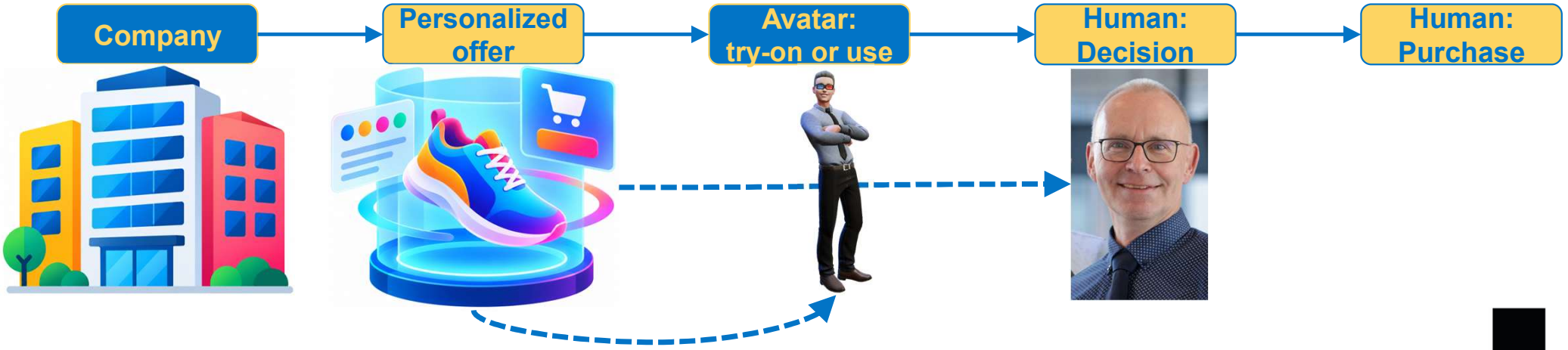
What does the company need to know about the avatar in order to be able to do this?



5 - D2A-Commerce - one more step into the future

Example 4 / 3:

→ What kind of situation might arise in the future as a result of technical development ?

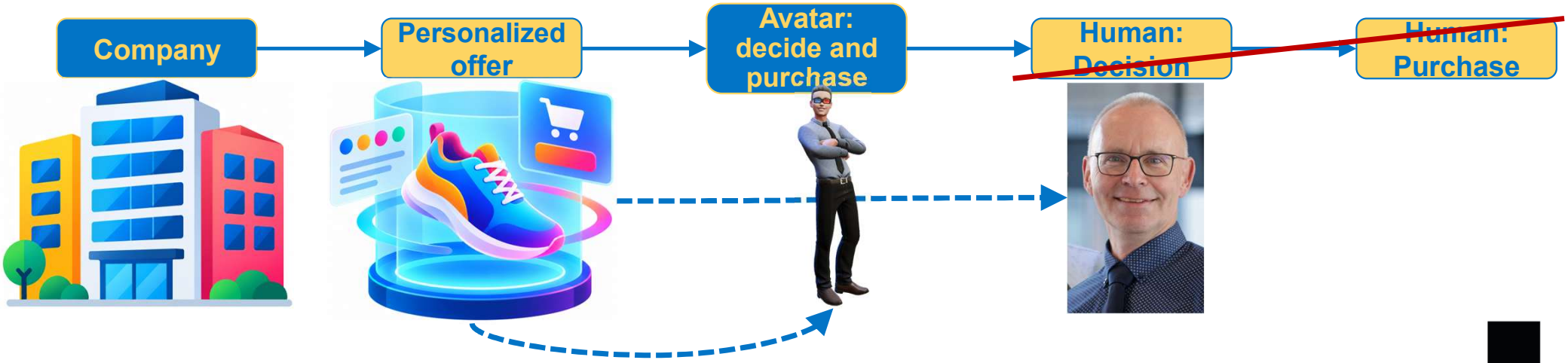


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5 - D2A-Commerce - one more step into the future

Example 4 / 3:

→ The avatar as an autonomous agent - who decides and purchases by himself …
… without the human in the loop!



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5 - D2A-Commerce ?

Back to "Dionysus" ;)

→ Traditional Gucci:



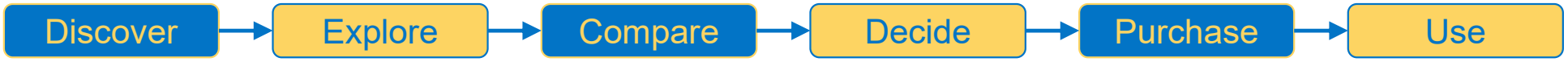
→ Virtual Gucci:



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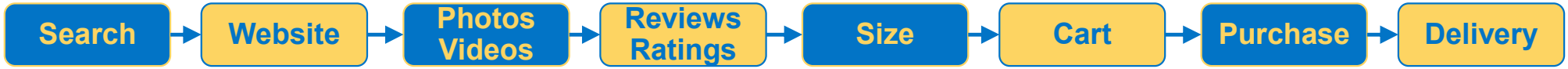
6 - Immersive Customer Journey

The typical customer journey

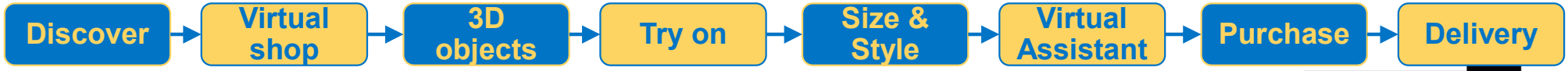


→ Buying a pair of sneakers online:

→ Classic online shopping:



→ Immersiv:



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6 - Immersive Customer Journey

Does the avatar replace the human?

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6 - Immersive Customer Journey

The avatar is an additional layer of interaction within the customer journey.

Phase	Human	Avatar (classic)	Company
Discovery	Interest aroused	Explores	Advertises
Explore	Rates	Enters virtual store	Presents
Try-out	Evaluates	Tries on the virtual good	Personalizes
Decide	Decides	Represents preferences	Recommends
Purchase	Pays	Receives the virtual good	Sells
Use	Uses the physical good	Uses the virtual good	Customer Relationship

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6 - Immersive Customer Journey

Whow would this model change with autonomous avatars ?

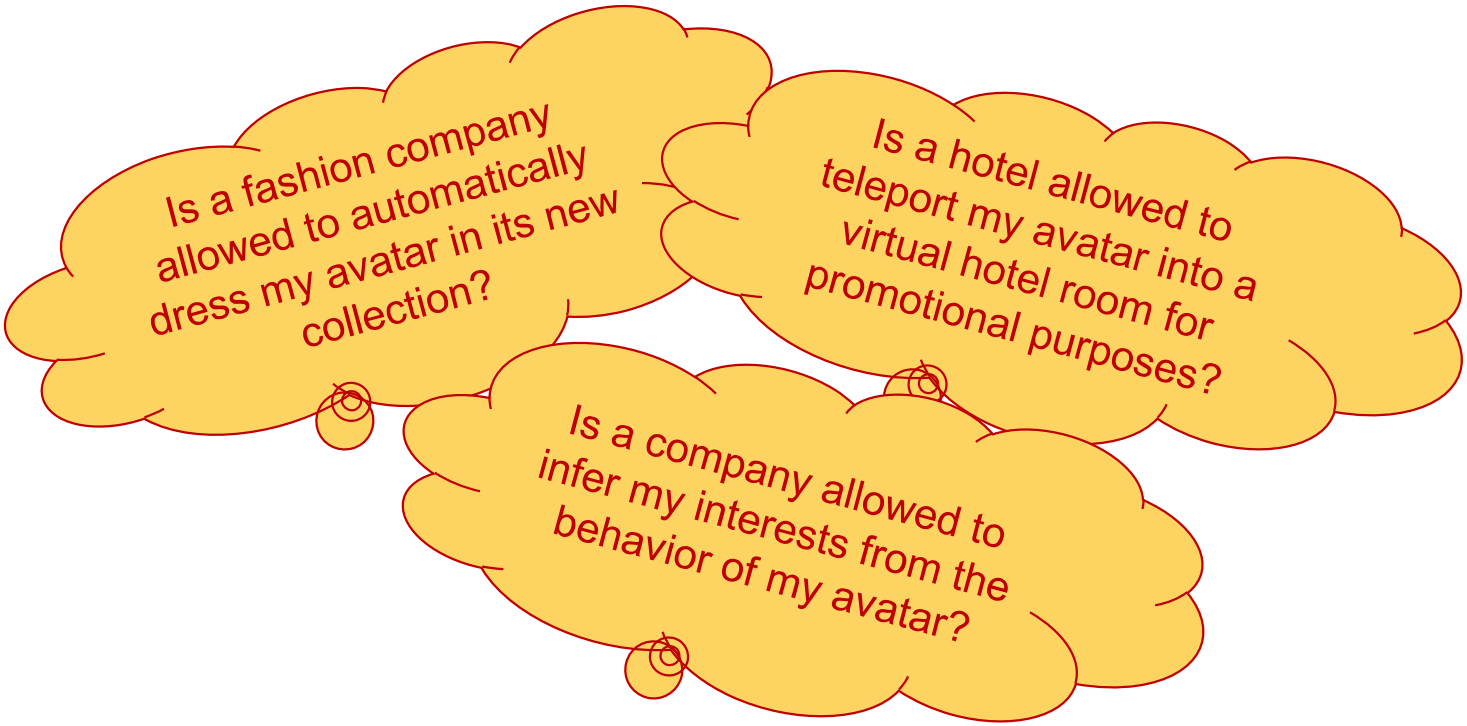
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7a - Design a Virtual Store

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9 - When does D2A become problematic ?



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Back to Dionysus:

You bought a Gucci bag for your avatar.
So far, so good.
But what if Gucci provides the handbag to your avatar for free - without even asking?

→ What if everyone else can see the handbag on your avatar ?

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→ Case 1:	You buy the Gucci bag for your avatar.	→ Product
→ Case 2:	Gucci displays your avatar with the bag to entice you to make a purchase.	→ Advertising directed at you
→ Case 3:	Gucci equips your avatar with the bag so that other users can see it.	→ Advertising through you

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9 - When does D2A become problematic ?

And it's not only the role of the object that changes:
What about the role of your avatar ?

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9 - When does D2A become problematic ?

1. Advertising to me	I see advertisements while using my avatar. This is similar to online advertising today.
2. Advertising to my avatar	The company modifies or addresses my digital representation—for instance, through virtual clothing, objects, or personalized interactions.
3. Advertising through my avatar	My avatar wears a brand logo without my consent. In this way, my own digital representation becomes an advertising medium for other users.

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That‘s IT

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