

Call for Papers for *Australasian Marketing Journal* Special Issue



Special Issue Theme: **Human-Centric Phygital Marketing: Ecosystem Innovation for Stakeholder Well-Being and Social Impact**

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The deadline for submitting a 500-word abstract proposal via the [APA Paris Summit website](#) is **November 10, 2026**.

Special Issue Editorial Team

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Special Issue Description

As digital transformation advances (e.g., Dey et al., 2018), the divide between human activities and technological infrastructure has dissolved into unified physical-digital environments, giving rise to the phygital ecosystem (Batat, 2024a). Navigating these hybrid spaces requires moving past pure technological adoption toward a human-first strategy that elevates organizational efficiency, productivity, participation, innovation, and overall quality of life. Within this paradigm, “human” encompasses the entire stakeholder network (i.e., consumers, workforce members, supply partners, and local communities) actively co-creating value within the phygital environment. Distinct from traditional multichannel or omnichannel frameworks that primarily manage connectivity across distinct touchpoints (Choi, 2020), phygital marketing synthesizes real-time human interaction, physical settings, and digital tools into a cohesive whole. Anchored in the phygital research paradigm (PRP) (Batat, 2024b) and ethical consumer-focused experience design (Addis et al.,

2022), human-centered phygital strategy acts as a catalyst for systemic innovation, generating societal value and supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG-3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG-9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG-10 (Reduced Inequalities).

To begin, a top priority is related to ecosystem innovation and stakeholder experiences in phygital business models. The expansion of phygital strategies is fundamentally altering how markets and institutions deliver information, offerings, and service experiences (McKee et al., 2025) across core domains like retail, hospitality, and healthcare (Ballina et al., 2019; Banik, 2021; Quach et al., 2026). Utilizing phygital enablers, which integrate human, media, physical, and digital interfaces (Batat, 2024a), allows organizations to orchestrate ecosystem innovations that offer responsive, tailored engagement over time. However, balancing financial returns and operational performance with the physical and mental well-being of stakeholders introduces complex organizational dilemmas. Key questions remain regarding how companies can deploy phygital models effectively without imposing cognitive overload, system complexity, or digital burnout on users and employees (Dey et al., 2018).

Furthermore, accessibility, equity, and ethical integrity in blended physical-digital experience design. Phygital environments offer significant potential to broaden marketplace participation by systematically dismantling physical and technological barriers. For instance, in retail settings, combining physical accommodations (e.g., tactile floor guides) with digital interfaces (e.g., voice-enabled kiosks) and staff assistance establishes inclusive environments tailored to diverse user capabilities. Nevertheless, blending digital mechanisms into physical spaces brings ethical risks, including deceptive sustainability claims, invasive surveillance, and systemic algorithmic bias. A pressing concern involves tokenistic accessibility initiatives, where firms introduce superficial high-tech features without resolving underlying structural exclusion. Researchers must investigate how corporate incentives, including brand positioning and regulatory requirements, can be steered toward authentic, human-centric ecosystem design.

Finally, methodological advances and theoretical frameworks for analyzing phygital ecosystems. Investigating seamless physical-digital interactions presents unique empirical hurdles for marketing researchers. Standard data collection methods often fail to capture the real-time cognitive, emotional, and social dynamics occurring across hybrid touchpoints. Addressing these gaps requires pioneering research methods, including phyginography (phygital ethnography), affective computing, biometric tracking, and hybrid research designs that combine qualitative field observations with computational models. Moreover, an ongoing disconnect exists between abstract theoretical models of PRP and actionable execution for practitioners. Marketing academics are urged to bridge this gap by translating conceptual frameworks into scalable, real-world solutions that safeguard stakeholder well-being and drive lasting social impact.

This special issue seeks contributions that investigate human-first phygital marketing strategies, ecosystem innovation, and their broader societal and psychological outcomes. We invite empirical, theoretical, and interdisciplinary submissions that analyze the economic, social, and human dimensions of phygital environments across diverse industries.

Themes and Topics of Interest for this call for papers include, but are not limited to:

- Aligning commercial performance and operational scale with consumer and employee well-being in phygital ecosystems.
- Strategies to prevent technological fatigue, cognitive strain, and user disengagement in blended commercial and workplace settings.
- Deploying phygital enablers to champion universal accessibility, equity, and social inclusion in retail, healthcare, hospitality, and education.
- Identifying, auditing, and mitigating “performative inclusivity” and ethics-washing in corporate phygital initiatives.
- Data governance, biometric ethics, predictive surveillance, and consumer privacy in smart physical-digital environments.
- Regulatory frameworks, organizational governance, and responsible deployment of AI, IoT, and spatial computing in marketing.
- Cultural, demographic, and generational variations in user adoption and resistance toward phygital experience design.
- The role of virtual agents, digital concierges, smart interfaces, and immersive technologies (AR/VR) in stakeholder relationships.
- Preserving authentic human connection, brand trust, and emotional resonance alongside automated phygital processes.
- Innovative empirical methodologies (e.g., phyginography) designed to track hybrid consumer behavior.
- Quantifying the societal, environmental, and long-term well-being impacts of phygital implementations.
- Integrating policy, ethics, interdisciplinary research, and managerial practice to guide human-first phygital ecosystems.

Submission Instructions

We invite all contributors from academia and industry to submit a 500-word abstract proposal (excluding references) with contact and affiliation details for the *American Phygital Association (APA) Summit 2027*, which will be held on February 25-26, 2027, in Paris, France. Authors should submit their abstracts via the APA Summit website here: <https://www.aibxd.com/phygital-hub/apa-paris-summit-2025>. The deadline for abstract submission to the APA Summit 2027 is **November 10, 2026**. Authors should submit their work to the APA Summit for paper development to benefit from the specialized workshops, editor mentoring, and expert feedback designed to elevate manuscript quality before full paper submission to the journal. Full article submissions will be accepted after the summit, with the submission window opening shortly thereafter (between March

5 and August 5, 2027). The deadline for submitting manuscripts for this Special Issue is August 5, 2027. The publication of the Special Issue is expected in 2028.

Submission Requirements and Information

Inquiries can be directed to the special issue editor: Professor Wided Batat: wided.batat@univ-lyon2.fr. Submissions should follow the manuscript format guidelines for the *Australasian Marketing Journal*. All manuscripts should be addressed with a cover letter and be submitted to the special issue titled: Human-Centric Phygital Marketing.

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