



> **CULTURAL**

CODES

2024


CULTURAL
CODES



> INTRODUCTION

> Identifying & updating

cultural codes for 2024



It is vital to track cultural signals on an ongoing basis, especially with a UK general election looming, the cost-of-living crisis continuing and it being an Olympic year. One thing is for sure: culture is constantly evolving, and more change is expected in 2024.

the7stars previously identified 9 themes that shaped both mainstream and emergent societal shifts in the way that people feel, behave and consume. These 9 codes require a refresh looking ahead to the 2024 landscape to predict what now sits at the heart of culture and how this transpires for the gen Z youth and millennials of today.

This will ultimately lead to the brands that we work with better understanding how best to engage this audience and tap into cultural moments that resonate this year.



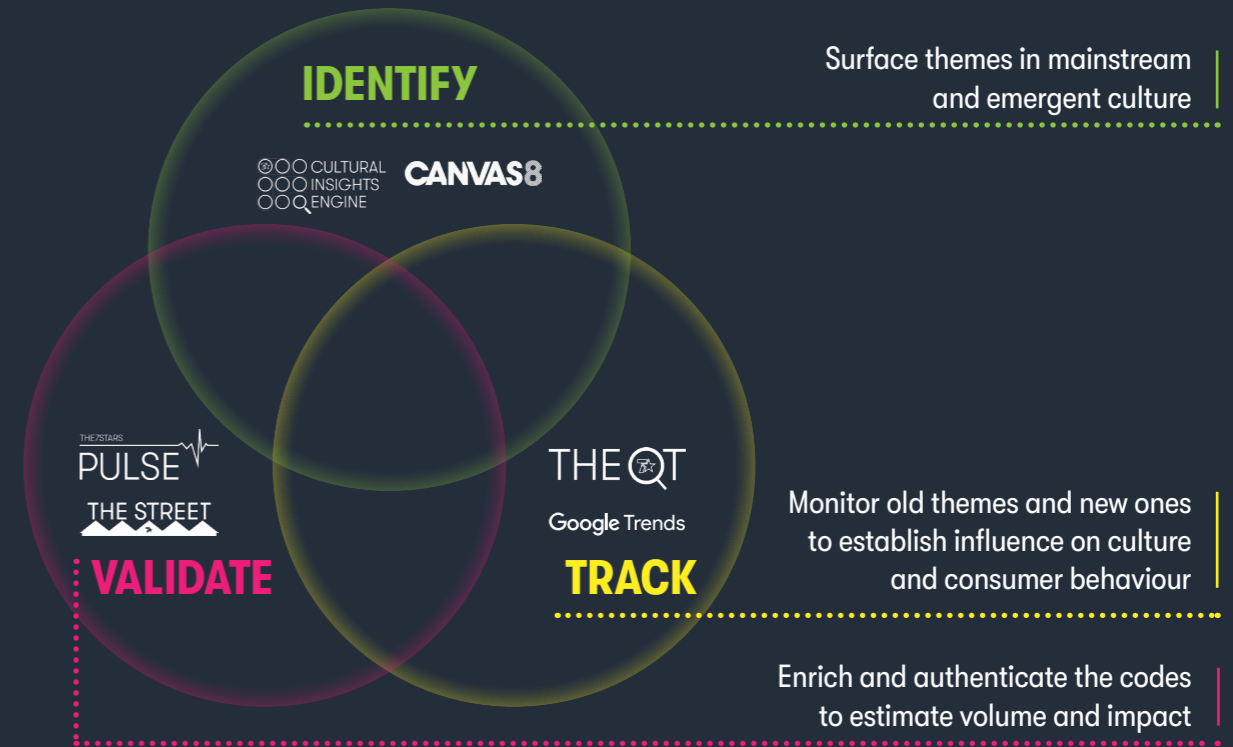
> APPROACH

> the7stars tapped into a wide range of sources ranging from our quarterly quantitative tracker (The QT), to surfacing social insights via the Cultural Insights Engine, to using our mobile panel Pulse to understand our audiences in depth. This allowed us to assess which codes still resonate this year, which ones won't be as relevant this year and which new themes are up-and-coming.



CULTURAL
INSIGHTS
ENGINE

CULTURAL INSIGHTS ENGINE





THE  QT

> STATE OF THE NATION

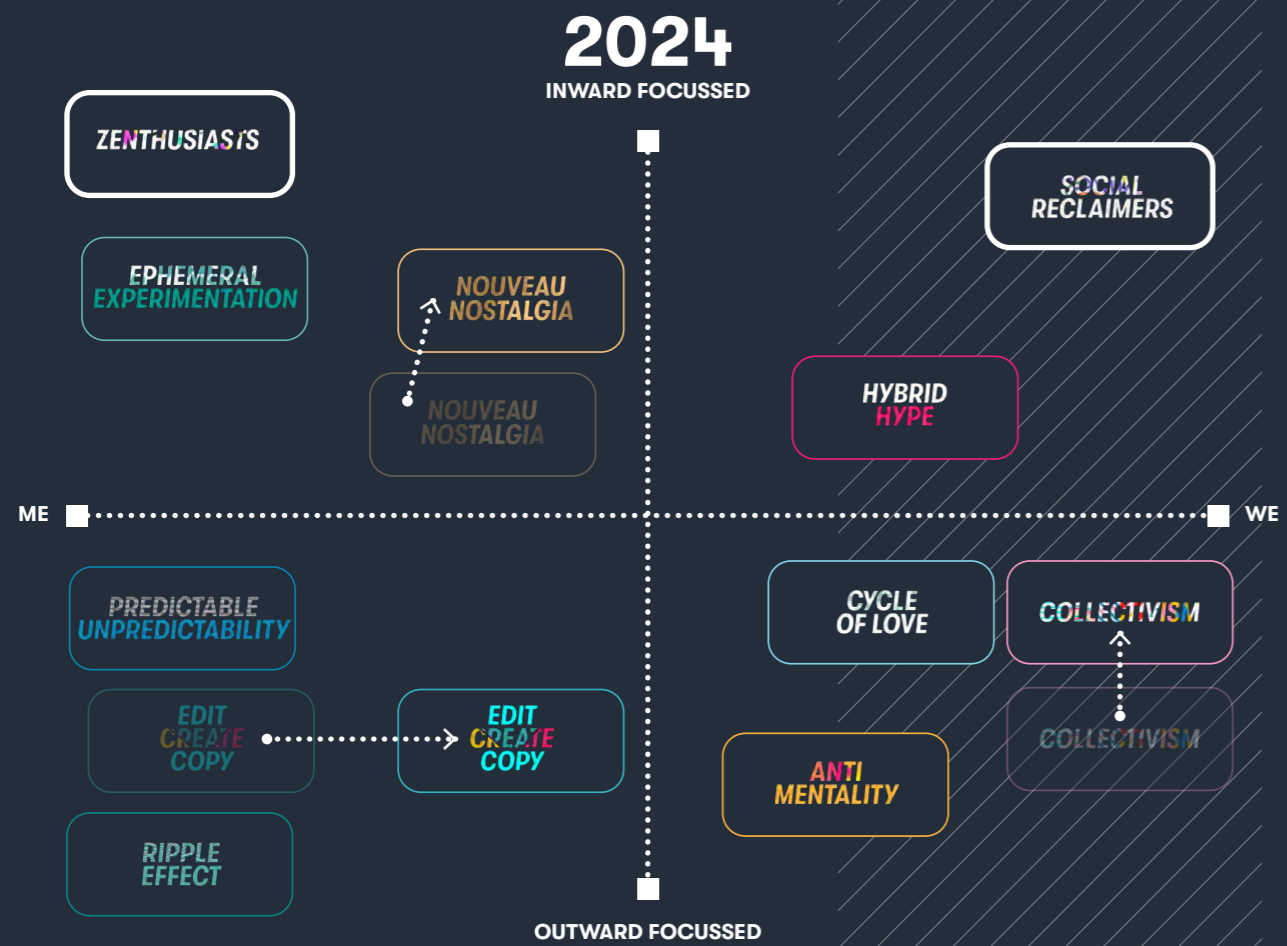


It's safe to say that 2023 did not go as hoped for many Brits. Tracking by the7stars QT revealed that just 27% of the population felt happier in Q4 2023 than they had a year before. This, excluding the lockdown year of 2020-21, was the lowest mood recorded since tracking began in 2016.

Under the surface, though, the results paint a different picture. Youth audiences have consistently felt more positively than their older peers. More than half of those aged 18-34 now say they feel more positive than they did a year ago. Among this group, 48% say they are optimistic that 2024 will be everything they hope for – almost twice that of over-55s.

How can we explain this apparent gulf in emotions? For a generation that has lived through a financial crash, a global pandemic shutdown, and a cost-of-living crisis, these attitudes feel remarkably resilient.

Amidst the sense of permacrisis, one thing has persisted: culture. By aligning themselves with communities both big and small, these audiences have maintained a sense of positivity throughout trying times, which is fast spreading to other age groups. Brands can align themselves with these macro trends, which we define as 'cultural codes' to enable positive behaviour change



Previous cultural codes leant towards being outwardly focused but there has been a shift in importance this year to more inward focused themes

Expressing personality outwardly is still important to our culture makers, but there is a sense that these drivers should come from within first and foremost before expressing it outwardly, to make a real lasting impact.

Therefore, two codes have become less prevalent this year and have been retired, whilst two new codes have been identified.

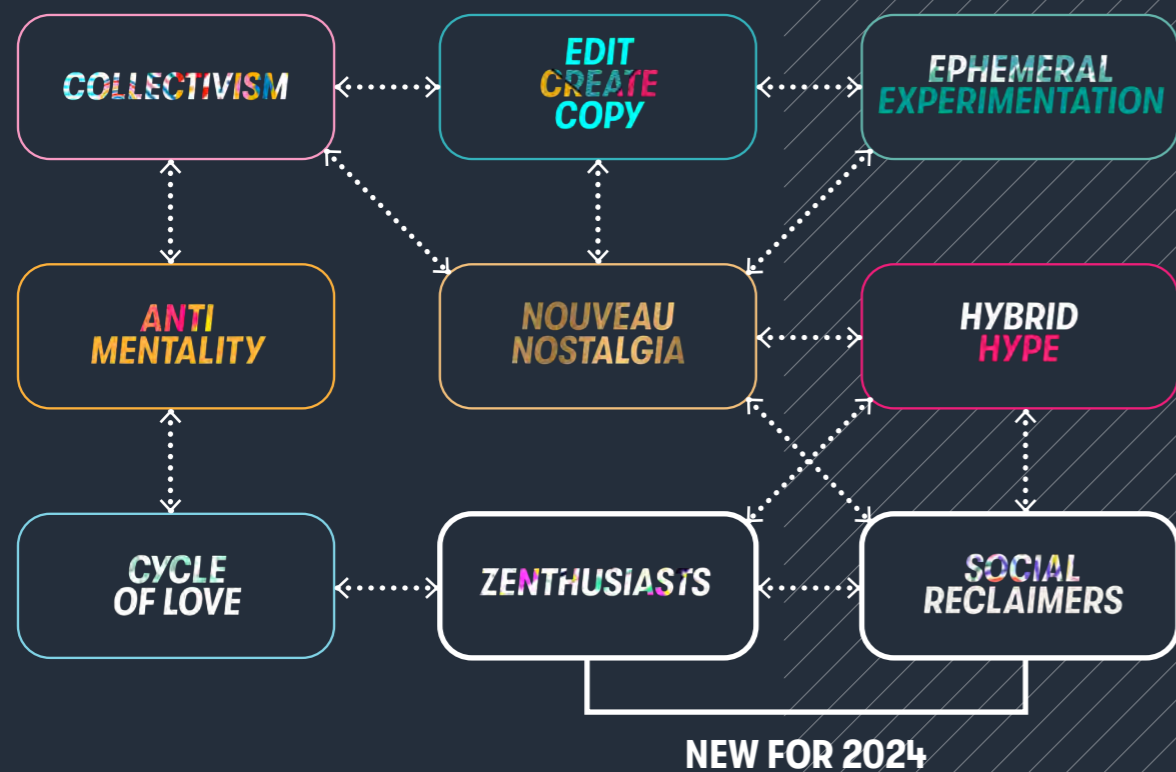


> **IDENTIFYING &
UPDATING CULTURAL
CODES FOR 2024**



CULTURAL CODES WE'RE MONITORING IN 2024

CULTURAL INSIGHTS ENGINE



With the current state of the nation, the cultural codes have evolved this year to reflect this with the addition of two new codes.

Whilst all codes fluidly link to each other, there are three that we think are most omnipresent in culture right now:

HYBRID HYPE: AI has further increased a desire for a balance between online and in person experiences

NOUVEAUX NOSTALGIA: Finding comfort in looking back and embracing a simpler time

ZENTHUSIASTS: Personalised health and wellness accessed autonomously

We have 6 other codes which also tap into the youth of today.

EPHEMERAL EXPERIMENTATION:

A freedom to experiment with fashion beyond expectations

CYCLE OF LOVE: Increasing importance in considered clothing and its longevity

SOCIAL RECLAIMERS: Taking ownership of experiences and behaviours typically not expected

EDIT, CREATE, COPY: Interacting with brands and fandom is easier than ever with TikTok

COLLECTIVISM: A shift to embracing micro-communities and self-expression

ANTI MENTALITY: Social influences and protesting as a way to express ideologies



> NOUVEAU
NOSTALGIA



Amidst the cost-of-living crisis and global protests, Brits would be forgiven for yearning for simpler times. With Gen Z & Millennials we see this manifest in two distinct ways.

There has been a surge in nostalgia for memories from a bygone age; one they did not even live through. 'Fauxstalgia' is spreading to our media tastes, clothing, lifestyle and brand identities,

We have also noted 'Nowstalgia' for as recent as yesterday. Whether through a longing for the rose-tinted 'simpler' days of lockdown, or the buzz generated by a 'year in review' for everything from books to baked beans.

2in3

GEN Z & MILLENNIALS LOVE BRANDS THAT REINVENT OLD STYLES INTO NEW

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

27%

OF MUSIC STREAMS WERE 'CURRENT' SONGS IN 2023 – A FIFTH STRAIGHT YEAR OF DECLINE

SOURCE: LUMINATE, BILLBOARD

3/4

OF MILLENNIALS ADMIT THEY REMINISCE ABOUT THINGS THEY DID DURING LOCKDOWN

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

2in3

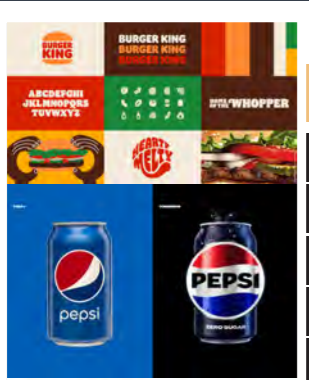
SAY THEY LIKE MEDIA WHICH REMINDS THEM OF 'THE BETTER TIMES'

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

HALF

OF UNDER-40S SAY THAT IF THEY COULD TIME TRAVEL, IT WOULD BE TO A DECADE BEFORE THEY WERE BORN

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE



> Brands including Burger King and Pepsi have sought to capitalise on 'nostalgia' for simpler times by rebranding to evoke their brand identities from the 1960s

And it's not just food & drink which is getting in on the act: NASA recently brought back its iconic 'worm' logo from 1973.



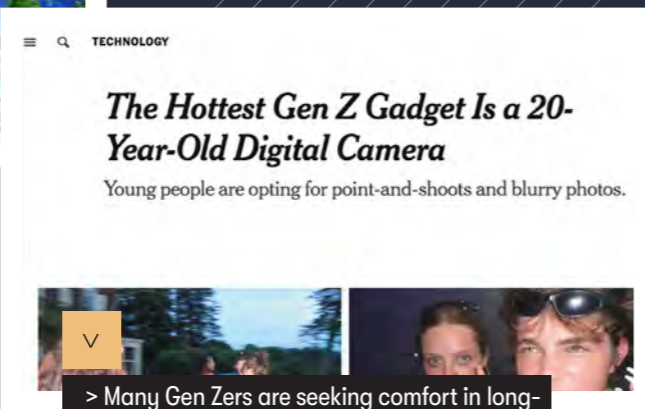
The success of Greta Gerwig's Barbie – alongside other retro throwbacks including Air – has inspired studios to commission films based on beloved childhood memories, such as Sims, Monopoly, Uno, and even the Magic 8 -ball.

With the world engulfed in crises, many seek out content that reminds them of a more comfortable past.



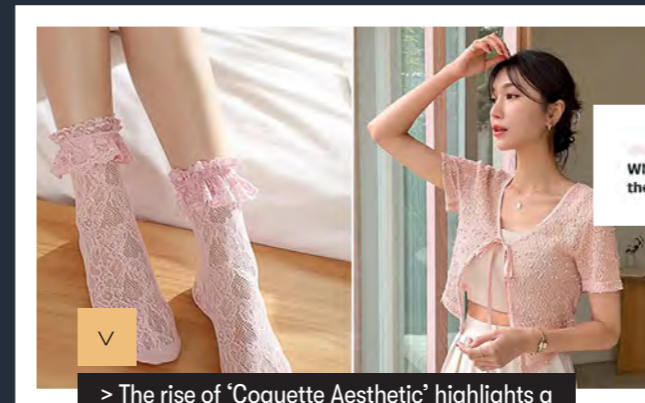
He-Man, Hot Wheels, Magic 8-Ball: why movie studios are planning a raid on your childhood toy memories

The Sims movie in the works with Margot Robbie's production company



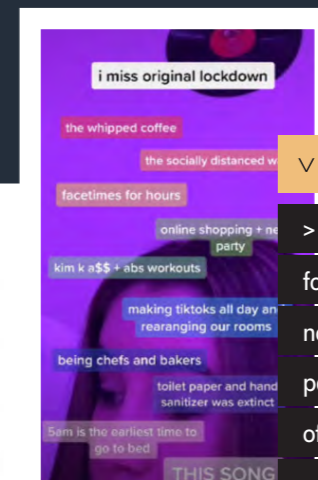
> Many Gen Zers are seeking comfort in long-obscure technologies, some from before they were born.

Communities have sprung up devoted to digital cameras and outdated phones.



What Exactly is the Coquette Aesthetic That's Taking Over the Internet Right Now?

> The rise of 'Coquette Aesthetic' highlights a desire to reclaim feminine outfits of decades past – without compromising on feminist identity.



> Young audiences are seemingly yearning for a simpler time, with a trend for 'lockdown nostalgia' emerging on social media. Gen Z in particular have focused on the rose-tinted lens of long walks, a community coming together and learning new skills at home and have chosen to ignore the obvious consequences that facilitated those things.



NOUVEAU NOSTALGIA

FINDING COMFORT IN
LOOKING BACK AND
EMBRACING A SIMPLER TIME

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

BRING IT BACK

BRANDS CAN DRIVE NOTORIETY BY BRINGING BACK THE THINGS THAT MADE THE 80S AND 90S SO ICONIC: MUSIC THAT FLOODED THE DANCEFLOORS, CELEBRITIES THAT DANNONED OUR 4 CHANNEL TVS, OR EVEN RESURFACING BRANDS WE ONCE KNEW AND LOVED.

CONNECT WITH OLD VALUES IN NEW WAYS

WE CRAVE THE SIMPLICITY OF YESTERDAY. BRANDS SHOULD CONSIDER HOW TO SUPPORT OLD VALUES IN A MODERN WAY, BE IT GETTING BACK TO NATURE, OR REIMAGINING SUNDAY FAMILY MEALS.

COLLABORATE AND LISTEN

MANY BRANDS AND PRODUCTS OWN NOSTALGIA WELL. IF IN DOUBT, LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE TRULY WANT/NEED, AND COLLABORATE WITH THOSE WHO DO IT WELL TO BRING IT TO THEM.



> Whilst Spotify wasn't the first brand to do a wrap up of the year, it certainly catapulted the concept into everyday culture and has spawned a variety of brand iterations from PlayStation to Aldi! This highly shareable content allows users to reminisce about recent activities in an engaging format.



Seeking to reconnect with Gen Z, IRN BRU have launched a range of 'nostalgic' flavours. While each flavour is new to the brand, they evoke the childhood tastes of ice cream and slushies. The launch campaign was even projected across a range of Scottish landmarks, furthering the connection between the brand and family memories.



> A seemingly harmless tweet from Elmo asking how everyone is doing led to a resounding response of "not so great"! The viral 'trauma dumping' initiated by a nostalgic childhood character, led to celebrities, brands and even the U.S. President to respond and acknowledge the trying times, directing people to helpful resources.





> HYBRID HYPE



∨

The evolution of AI and ChatGPT in mainstream culture has only enhanced the desire for both online and in person experiences, which is expected to shape, enhance and even disrupt the traditional experience and behaviours.

What's stemmed from this is a yo-yo relationship with engaging in so called 'Instagrammable' content vs being dissatisfied with social media, leading to a media detox and a desire to re-establish IRL relationships.




**PICS
OR IT
DIDN'T
HAPPEN**

33%

OF MILLENNIALS THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR BRANDS TO HAVE A PHYSICAL PRESENCE, NOT JUST AN ONLINE ONE

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

1in3

HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A VIRTUAL EVENT/GIG OR WOULD CONSIDER ATTENDING ONE

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

1in2

THINK THAT THE USE OF AI AND HOLOGRAMS IN GIGS ARE INNOVATIVE AND EXCITING

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

AI HAS FURTHER INCREASED
A DESIRE FOR A BALANCE
BETWEEN ONLINE AND IN
PERSON EXPERIENCES

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

MAKE IT EXCITING

WE LIVE IN A CREATIVE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY WHERE WE CAN ENHANCE PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE WITH DIGITAL SPLENDOUR. SO GET CREATIVE WITH HOW YOU ENHANCE THESE EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE ONLINE AND OFFLINE WORLDS.

SEAMLESS INTEGRATION

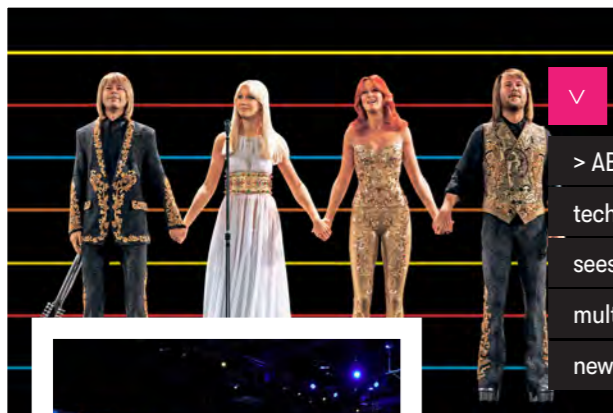
MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE EXPERIENCE, ACROSS PLATFORMS AND TECHNOLOGIES – INCLUDING MAKING IT FRICTIONLESS TO SHARE TO SOCIAL CHANNELS, TO FURTHER REACH AND INTEREST.

PROVE IT

ADAPTING YOUR MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE YOU CAPTURE RESULTS AND CAN ASSESS SUCCESS. A HOLISTIC APPROACH IS REQUIRED TO LINK REAL WORLD, VIRTUAL AND MEDIA EXPERIENCES TOGETHER.



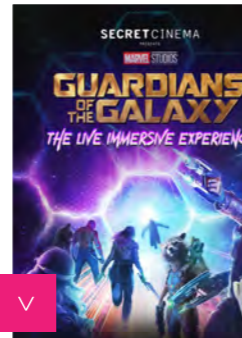
> Faux out of home (FOOH) has been on the rise transforming the traditional OOH landscape and blurring the line between what is real or not. Maybelline's viral CGI eyelash tube stunt and designer Jacquemus's bag-on-wheels video made the rounds and showcased what CGI and AI can do to build buzz and awareness.



> ABBA Voyage showcases cutting edge technology for an innovative gig format and sees the band appear as digital avatars multiple times a day, bringing ABBA to a whole new audience.



> Touring digital art and light exhibitions continue to enthrall both online and in real life. The 360-degree van Gogh experience even had VR capabilities to travel through paintings and projection mapping.



> Secret Cinema offers fans a chance to live out their favourite films in an immersive all-day experience. A strict no phones policy and strong encouragement to dress up, gives people the permission to be in the moment. The rise of the 'Dumphone' is another way to allow overstimulated Gen Z's to social media detox.





> ZENTHUSIASTS



Modern health tech advancements have come at a time where younger adults are seeking personalisation and autonomy post-pandemic. They want to take health into their own hands to understand and improve it at home, without the need to wait for professionals.

Zenthusiasts seek a curated lifestyle to enrich their day to day and by focusing on holistic health, this allows physical, mental and spiritual health to be considered.

1in2

GEN Z THINK THAT HOLISTIC HEALTH IS MORE ACCESSIBLE THESE DAYS DUE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

SOURCE: THE7STARS QT, FEBRUARY 2024



SEARCHES FOR HEALTH TRENDS ARE INCREASING WITH #GUTTOK' HAVING OVER 1.2BN VIEWS ON TIKTOK

SOURCE: TIKTOK, GOOGLE



“WELLNESS ISN'T ONE SIZE FITS ALL, AND CONSUMERS KNOW THIS. NOW, THE DESIRE FOR WELLNESS IS REALLY STRONG”

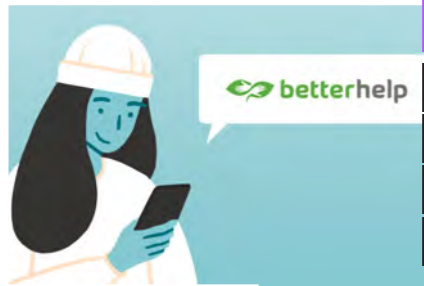
SOURCE: CANVAS8, QUOTE FROM HEALTH JOURNALIST RINA RAPHAEL.

PHYSIOLOGICAL HEALTH

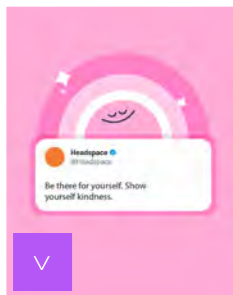


> Zoe promises tailored nutritional solutions to power better wellbeing and after \$58m in investment and a host of famous ambassadors, it's no wonder Zoe has featured so strongly on social media feeds aimed at Gen Z who want to become experts in their own health.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

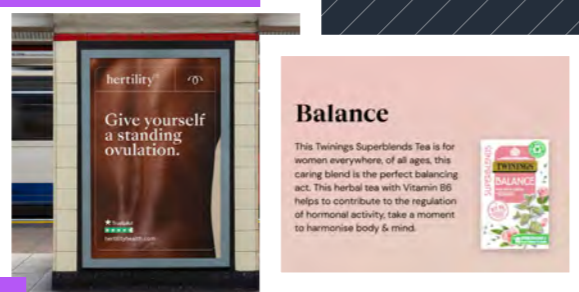


> Virtual therapy from the comfort of your own sofa is BetterHelp's premise. It's growth surged during the pandemic, and in 2022 revenues rose 41% to \$1bn. In the UK its expansion comes at a time when NHS services are increasingly overstretched.



> Headspace x Meta have launched a mindfulness-focused VR world to make the benefits of therapy more accessible.

HORMONAL HEALTH



> The topic of female fertility has been given the same at-home treatment with the launch of 'Hertility' a fertility kit aimed at younger women wanting to take charge or their hormones. This has found its way into supermarkets too with hormonal balancing teas from Twining's.

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

EMBRACE YOUR POINT OF DIFFERENCE

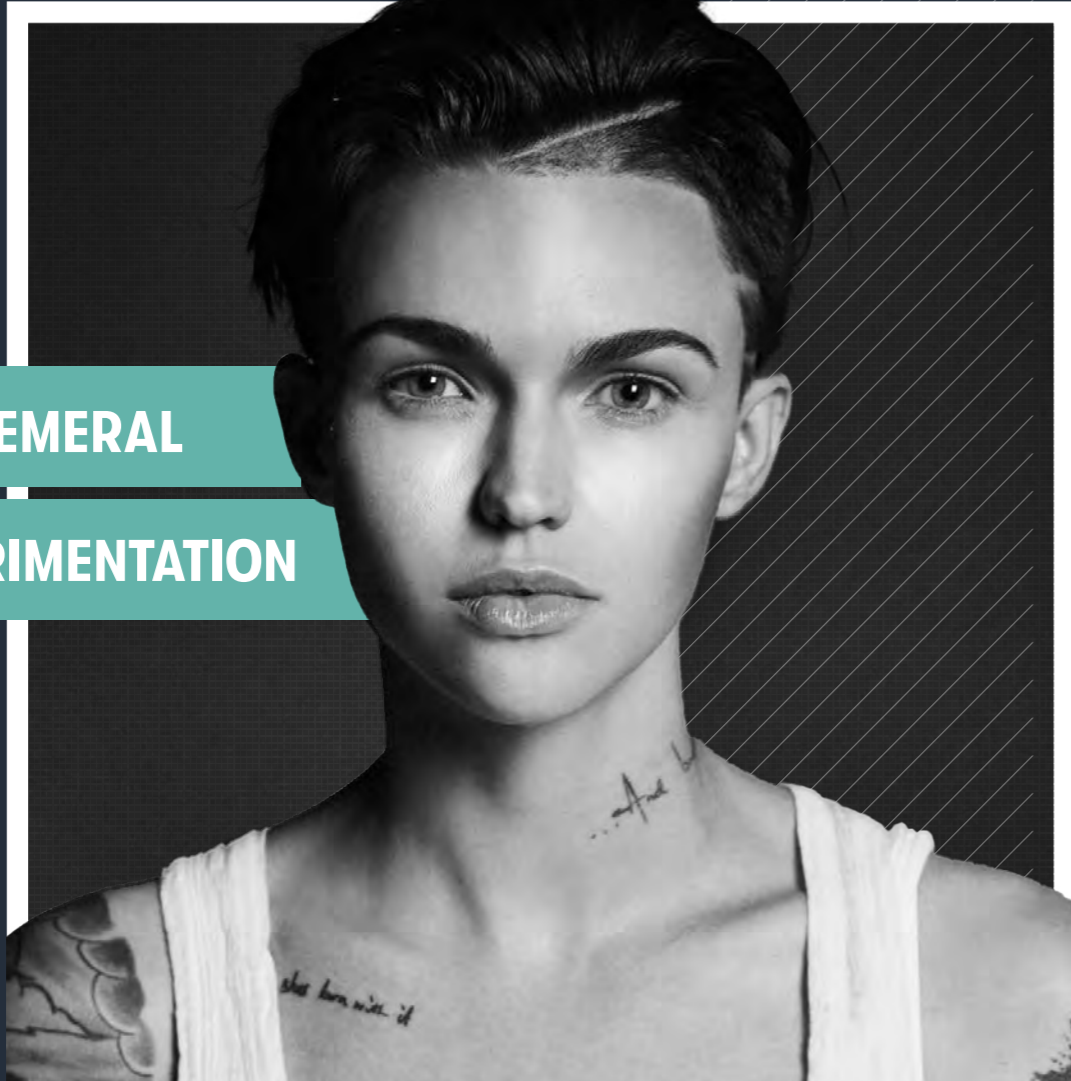
WITH HEALTH AND WELLNESS BROADER THAN EVER, ADVERTISERS CAN SUPPORT AUDIENCES IN NEW WAYS. FIND OUT WHAT CONCERNS THEM AND DECIDE IF YOUR BRAND HAS AN INTERESTING, USEFUL WAY TO SUPPORT THEM.

BE SURE, NOT SORRY

WHILST TECH ADVANCEMENTS ARE POWERING WELLNESS, TRUST IS CRUCIAL. MAKE SURE ANY HEALTH AND WELLNESS CLAIMS CAN BE BACKED UP – YOUNGER GENERATION ARE VOCAL IN CALLING OUT THOSE WHO BLUR THE LINES OF TRUTH.

IT'S THE EXPERIENCES WE HAD ALONG THE WAY

HEALTH AND WELLNESS IS A JOURNEY, NOT JUST AN OUTCOME, AND BRANDS CAN FACILITATE THE DAY-TO-DAY CURATED LIFESTYLE. EXPLORE AND LEND SUPPORT TO THE EVERYDAY MOMENTS THAT LADDER UP TO REAL, SIGNIFICANT CHANGE.



> EMPHEMERAL

EXPERIMENTATION



It has often been noted that there is a generational gap in gender and sexual identity in the UK, with Gen Z more than twice as likely to identify as LGBTQI+ or genderfluid than Baby Boomers.

However, amidst a recent uptick in hate crimes, oppressed groups are seeking to reclaim slur labels and protect cultural representation. Under the umbrella term of 'masc' identity, these groups take a complex approach to identity and encompass marginalised communities.

With few mainstream brands accurately portraying these groups, disruptor brands have emerged with a 'by the community, for the community' mantra.

56%

OF GEN Z SAY THE CLOTHING THEY BUY IS NOT CLASSIFIED BY GENDER AT ALL

SOURCE: THE BUSINESS OF FASHION/MCKINSEY & COMPANY

2/3

OF GEN Z SAY THEY ARE STILL TRYING TO DISCOVER AND LEARN ABOUT THEIR IDENTITY

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

64%

SAY THEY EXPLORE DIFFERENT SIDES OF THEIR PERSONALITY THROUGH THE MEDIA THEY CONSUME

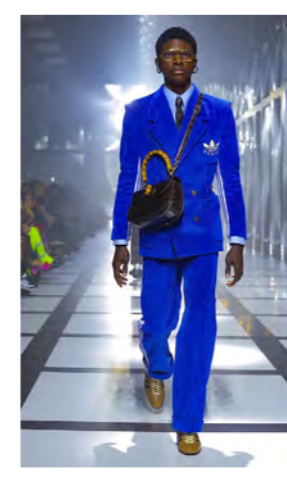
SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

HALF

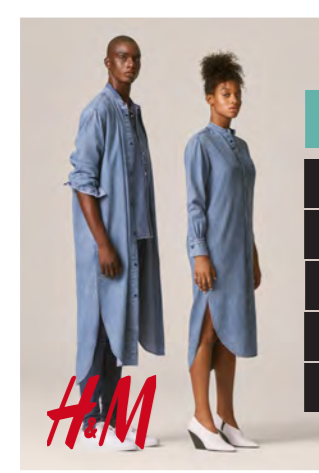
OF 16-34S SAY THE WAY THEY DRESS DOES NOT ALWAYS CONFORM TO WHAT IS EXPECTED OF SOMEONE LIKE THEM

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

>



> Harry Styles has adopted genderfluid fashion and declines to be labelled by gender or sexual identity. This has led to a high-profile representation of 'masc' identity, epitomised by Gucci's 2022 Ha Ha Ha collaboration with the singer. Outside of their collaboration with Styles, Gucci have frequently sought to explore the concept of 'masculine transformation', fashion that exists beyond the norms of gender stereotypes.



> More High street fashion brands are tapping into genderless fashion, with the likes of H&M focusing on unisex clothing and Uniqlo encouraging people of all genders to wear clothes that make them feel good.



> MAC cosmetics encouraged followers to post pics of them experimenting with makeup. In partnership with donation platform Cheerity, each uploaded photo unlocked a £10 donation for UK Black Pride.

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

CONSIDER INCLUSIVE PRODUCT TARGETING

GIVE CONSUMERS THE FREEDOM TO EXPLORE & EXPERIMENT WITH PRODUCTS BY REMOVING TRADITIONAL BARRIERS TO TRIAL. USE RESOURCES SUCH AS TUTORIALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP THEM MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT PRODUCTS.

CELEBRATE INDIVIDUALITY

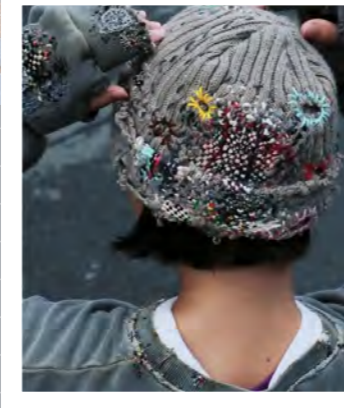
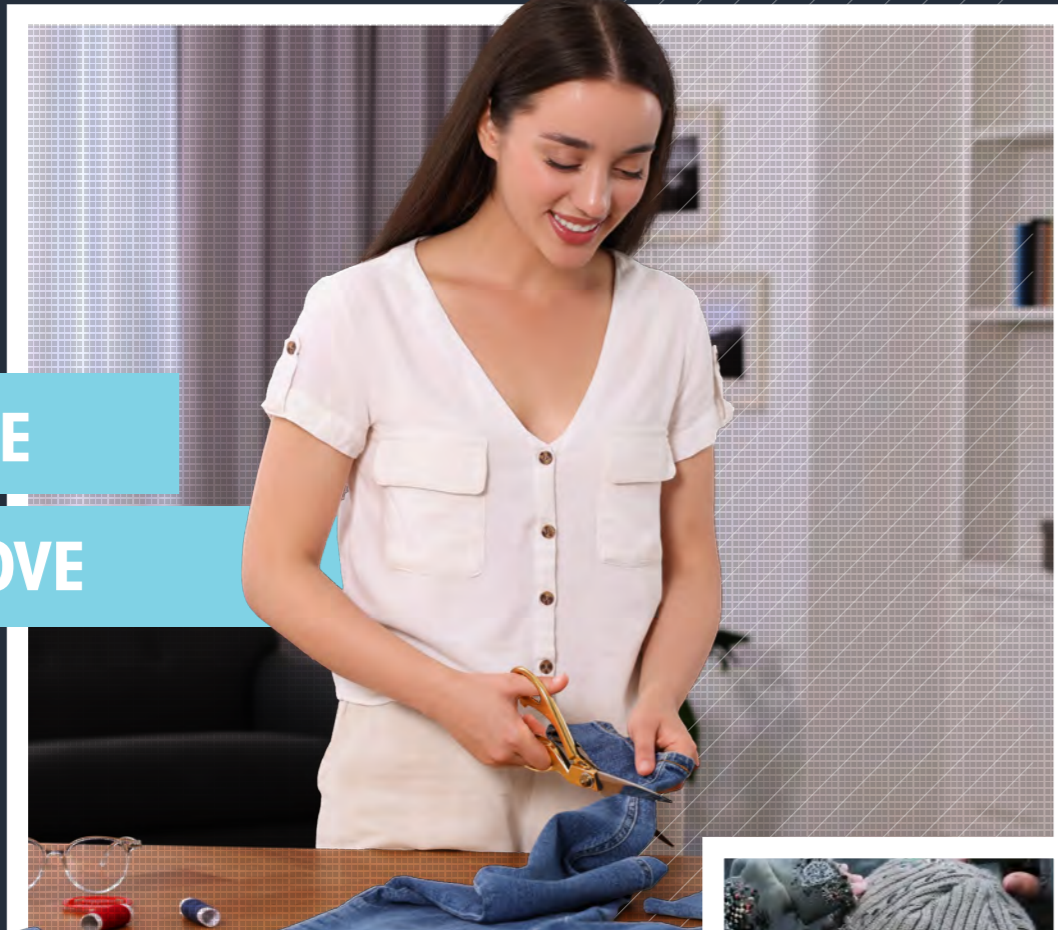
INSPIRE CONSUMERS TO EXPLORE THEIR IDENTITIES AND EXPRESS THEMSELVES AUTHENTICALLY. THIS CAN BE DONE THROUGH METHODS SUCH AS THE ART OF STORYTELLING, PERSONALISATION AND LEVERAGING THE RIGHT DATA SIGNALS.

HERO COMMUNITIES

REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN YOUR MARKETING MATERIALS, PRODUCT OFFERINGS, AND BRAND MESSAGING. PARTNER WITH INFLUENCERS, ORGANISATIONS, OR COMMUNITY GROUPS TO AUTHENTICALLY REACH A BROADER AUDIENCE AND CELEBRATE CULTURE.



> CYCLE OF LOVE



Sustainability and society's wider impact on the planet continues to be at the forefront of core values of Gen Z and Millennials. As the understanding that everything 'new' has a carbon footprint; choosing is more considered and repair culture of existing items is growing in popularity.

There is an added layer of having to prioritise eco-efforts in lieu of the cost-of-living crisis making it more difficult.

2in5

MILLENNIALS SAY THAT THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS HAS MADE IT DIFFICULT TO PRIORITISE SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

1/4

OF GEN Z/ MILLENNIALS PREFER TO MEND CLOTHES OR BUY PRE-LOVED, RATHER THAN BUY NEW ITEMS

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

66%

INCREASE IN PRODUCT LAUNCHES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS BETWEEN 2018 AND 2023

SOURCE: MINTEL

43%

ARE WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR AN ITEM FOR IT TO LAST A LONG TIME & AVOID HAVING TO BUY SOMETHING TWICE

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

STEER CLEAR OF EMPTY PROMISES

BRANDS NEED TO ENGRAIN SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO THEIR PRODUCTION, BUT IF THESE ARE SIMPLY MATTERS OF GREENWASHING, THEN PEOPLE WILL SEE THROUGH IT.

FACILITATE BETTER CHOICES

CONSUMERS TAKE ACTIVE STEPS TO BE SUSTAINABLE. COMMUNICATIONS CAN FACILITATE THIS, THROUGH BETTER PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PARTNERING WITH THE RIGHT ORGANISATIONS.

MEDIA FOR GOOD

ADVERTISING IS A BIG CARBON CONTRIBUTOR. UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT THAT THE BRAND'S MEDIA CHOICES ARE HAVING, AND CONSIDER CHANNEL CHOICES AND OFFSETTING OF MEDIA TO EARN AN AUTHENTIC VOICE WITHIN THIS SPACE.



WORN WEAR
SALES & REPAIRS



> Patagonia have rolled out their “worn wear” campaign across Europe, which aims to keep clothing in circulation and for as long as possible by fixing and mending clothing rather than buying new. Oliver Bonas has partnered with Reskinned which takes pre-loved styles and refreshes/revives them ready to resell to other customers, keeping old clothes out of landfill.



OLIVER BONAS
x
RE-SKINNED



Levi's



> Levi's focus on the longevity and timeless nature of their denim, using Gen Z singer Mahalia and Millennial 'IT girl' Maya Jama to tap into a younger audience, who may be prone to buying cheaper fast-fashion denim elsewhere.



Etsy



> Financial impacts from the cost-of-living crisis and a growing worry about the downsides to thrifting culture means Gen Z are turning to social media and places like Etsy to learn about upcycling by 'mending' influencers who use fun and colourful ways to repair.



> SOCIAL

RECLAIMERS



Researchers at Durham University found that people who engaged in “purposeful disconnection” felt after they were living more mindfully and more productive. This is a powerful movement spreading amongst a generation more accustomed to a life spent living digitally.

For most, this involves a small rebellion to regain control of their social lives. Whether through a conscious choice to set boundaries on social media use, or through reframing their relationship with alcohol, Social Reclaimers are determined to experience life on their terms.

HALF

OF GEN Z HAVE TAKEN A SOCIAL MEDIA BREAK/ DETOX FOR A SHORT WHILE AND A FURTHER THIRD HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT TAKING ONE

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

2in3

UNDER-30S SAY THEY ARE MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT IN 2024 TO DO MORE SOCIALISING THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE ALCOHOL

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

3/4

SAY THERE HAS BEEN A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THEIR WORK/LIFE BALANCE SINCE THE PANDEMIC

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

73%

OF YOUNG BRITS HAVE RECENTLY DECLINED SOCIAL PLANS IN FAVOUR OF STAYING HOME AND RECHARGING

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE



SOCIAL RECLAIMERS

TAKING OWNERSHIP OF EXPERIENCES AND BEHAVIOURS TYPICALLY NOT EXPECTED

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

BEWARE DEFAULTS

IT'S EASY TO DEFAULT TO MEDIA STEREOTYPES. FIND WHITE SPACE BY SPEAKING TO YOUR AUDIENCE OUTSIDE OF THE OBVIOUS CHANNELS. DON'T BE AFRAID TO GO AGAINST THE GRAIN IN PURSUIT OF IMPACT AND MEMORABILITY.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE OLD SKOOL

SIMPLICITY AND QUALITY ARE CLEARLY SOUGHT-AFTER TRAITS. CONSIDER TAKING A 'GOOD OLD-FASHIONED' APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION, PLAYING WITH LONG-FORM CREATIVE AND PRIORITISING THE POWER OF BRILLIANT COPYWRITING.

RULES ARE THERE TO BE BROKEN

YOUNGER CONSUMERS ARE INCREASINGLY REBELLING AGAINST WORKPLACE 9-5S AND BRITISH BOOZE CULTURE. ALIGN YOUR BRAND WITH ALTERNATIVE PATHS AND SPEAK TO THIS 'BELIEF IN A BETTER WAY'.



> Worldwide, hours-long outages of Meta platforms in 2021 and 2024 led to a reckoning for millions of users awakened to how pivotal social media was to their lives.

While initially experiencing distress, some saw this as an opportunity to rethink their relationship to social media. Studies taken in the aftermath showed a lasting happiness boost from 'switching off'.



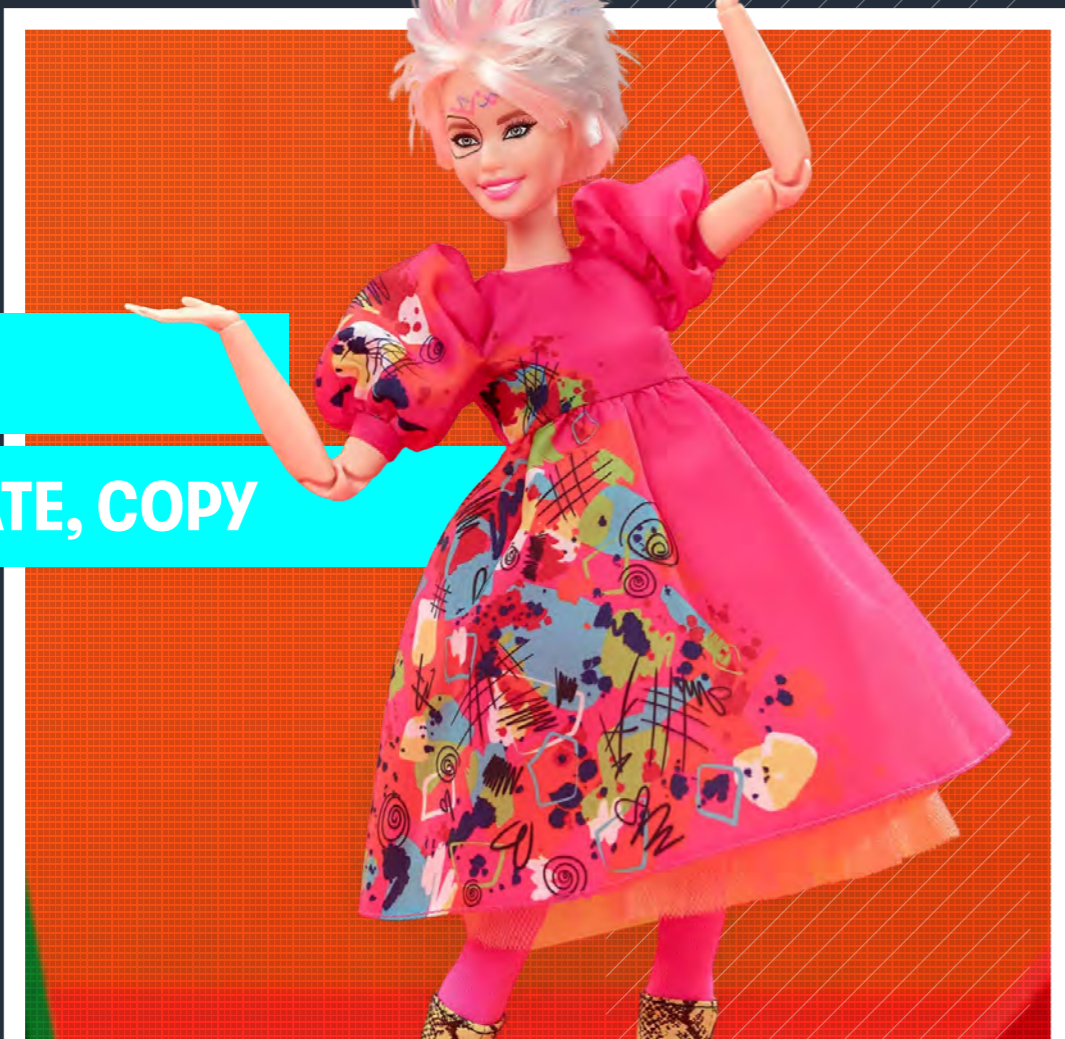
> Zero alcohol beer brand Lucky Saint put a positive spin on Dry January, promoting the idea that abstinence from alcohol does not mean abstinence from social plans. Through a provocative campaign, the brand grew search interest for a fifth straight year.



> In the latest evolution of its longstanding 'Have a Break, Have a KitKat' campaign, Nestle satirised the nation's frustrations with over-reliance on tech by depicting a medieval soldier unable to enter a castle without a password.



EDIT
CREATE
COPY



> EDIT,

CREATE, COPY



With TikTok continuing its domination and AI now readily accessible, the opportunity for Gen Z and Millennial fans to become creators is just as strong in 2024 and there are new ways for fans to join the conversation in fun and unique ways.

Brands and celebrities are jumping on the bandwagon and partaking in trending fan content and meme culture to attract new audiences and stay relevant.

59%

OF GEN Z WANT TO PUT THEIR OWN STAMP ON THE CONTENT THEY SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

7in10

OF GEN Z CREATE AND SHARE MEMES WITH OTHERS

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

1in3

OF MILLENNIALS SAY THAT TIKTOK AND INSTAGRAM ALLOWS THEM TO INTERACT WITH BRANDS AND CELEBRITIES IN WAYS THEY CAN'T DO ELSEWHERE

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

24%

OF GEN Z LOVE GETTING INVOLVED WITH SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

HAND OVER CONTROL

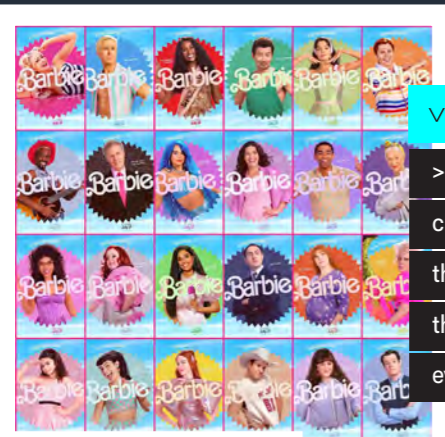
LET FANS AND FOLLOWERS PLAY WITH YOUR BRAND'S ASSETS. CREATE WAYS FOR THEM TO GET INVOLVED & GET CREATIVE. INCENTIVISE THEIR INVOLVEMENT AND MAKE IT EASY, ATTRACTIVE, SOCIAL AND TIMELY.

GRANT ACCESS

LET CREATORS USE YOUR PRODUCTS ON THEIR TERMS. GIVE THEM EXCLUSIVES TO FEATURE NATURALLY WITHIN THEIR STANDARD STYLE OF CONTENT. WELCOME THEM INTO THE BRAND AND THE EXPERIENCE, LET THEM FIND THE FUN IT.

SCREW THE LINE

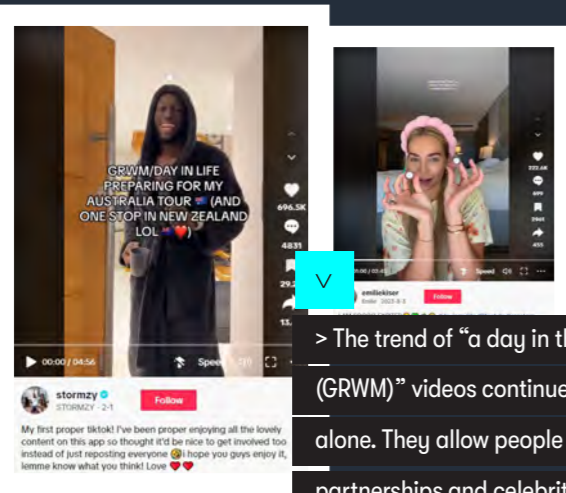
DON'T SEPARATE YOUR BIG BROADCAST COMMS MESSAGE FROM SOCIAL. FORCE THE TWO TO BLEED TOGETHER – SUCH AS BY PUSHING A THEME FROM ABOVE THE LINE MEDIA TO CREATORS, HAVING THEM COMMIT TO THE SAME THEMES.



> For the release of the Barbie film, Warner released 24 character posters, which spawned copycats all over the internet. Brands, celebrities and fans alike edited themselves into the posters using the viral line “Barbie is everything... he’s just Ken” to join the meme machine



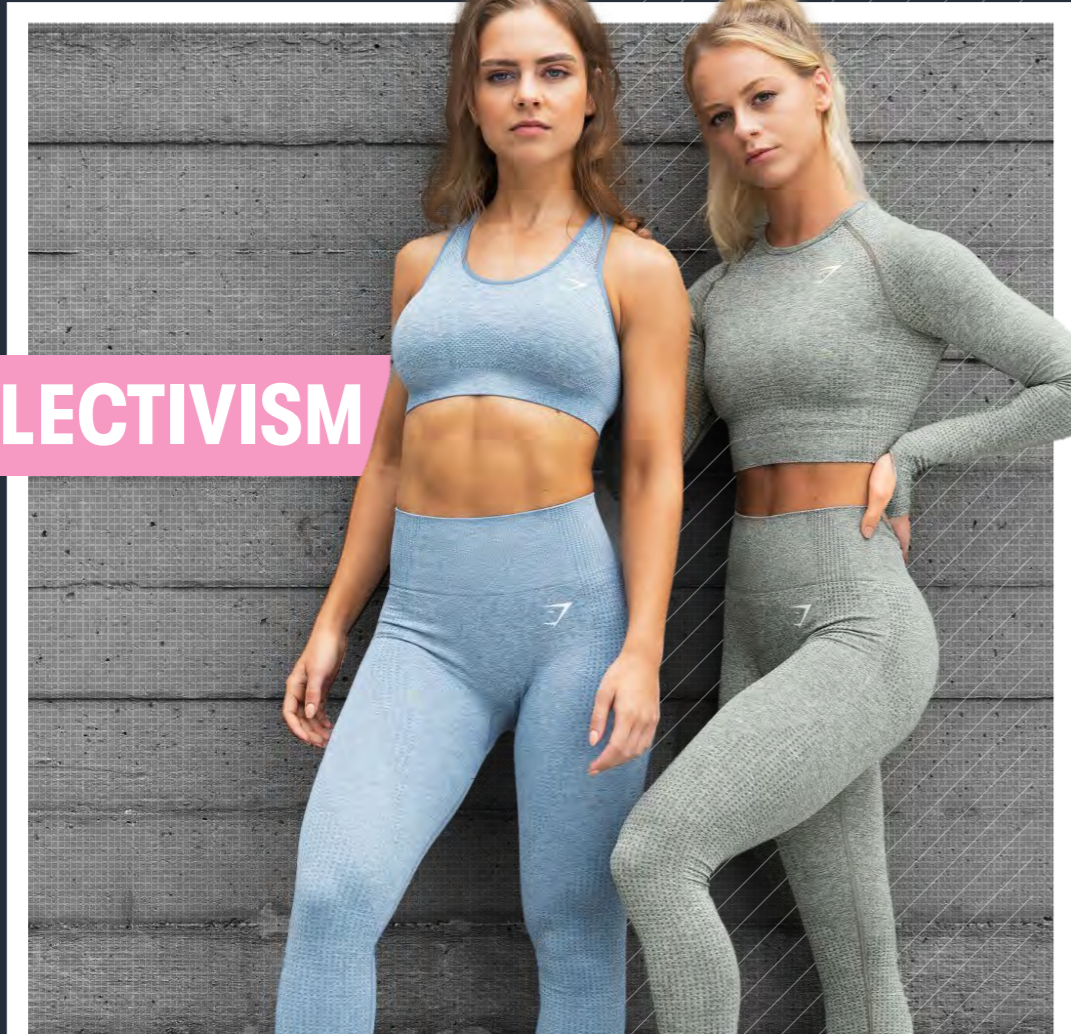
> Skincare brand CeraVe capitalised on the TikTok word play joke that Actor Michael Cera invented the brand and featured him in their latest Superbowl campaign. This resulted in widespread hilarity on social, limited edition Michael CerVa merchandise being sent to social influencers and 2.8m views on YouTube.



> The trend of “a day in the life” videos and “get ready with me (GRWM)” videos continue to see a boom with 174m views on TikTok alone. They allow people to get a behind the scenes look of brands, partnerships and celebrities. Everyday people and influencers can show their normal working day/prep for areas like the Taylor Swift tour.



> COLLECTIVISM



In 2024, the innate need to feel part of a group is stronger than ever. New technologies, behavioural shifts, and economic realities, mean how we identify and connect has fundamentally shifted.

The influence of institutions and traditional authority figures is waning, and the celebration of individuality and self-expression is gaining momentum. As a result, we have seen an explosion of micro-communities, from online to the hyperlocal. This shift from mass to micro-communities first emerged following the pandemic but has accelerated at a rapid pace over the last 12 months.

HALF

OF BRITS BELONG TO A COMMUNITY

SOURCE: REACH 'BRITAIN: A NATION OF COMMUNITIES' REPORT

64%

SAY BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY IS GOOD FOR THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING

SOURCE: REACH 'BRITAIN: A NATION OF COMMUNITIES' REPORT

4X

INCREASE IN NEW USER GROWTH FOR GENEVA, AN APP PROMOTING MICRO COMMUNITIES IN 2024

SOURCE: BUSINESS INSIDER

37%

OF GEN Z SAY THEY ARE A MEMBER OF MORE ONLINE COMMUNITIES THAN IRL

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

GET TO KNOW YOURSELF

BRANDS NEED TO BE CLEAR ON WHAT THEY STAND FOR IN ORDER TO AUTHENTICALLY CONNECT WITH COMMUNITIES AND MAKE THE CONVERSATION MEANINGFUL.

SHARE AND CO-CREATE

BY LOOSENING CONTROL A LITTLE AND LETTING THE MOST ENGAGED GET CREATIVE WITH YOUR BRAND, YOU CAN ENABLE 2-WAY CONVERSATION AND TRULY EMBED THE BRAND IN CULTURE.

LEARN THE LANGUAGE

THE BRANDS THAT SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY SEE FAME, BUZZ AND LONG STANDING BRAND AFFINITY. THESE MAY REQUIRE DIFFERENT MEASUREMENT, AND BE DIFFICULT TO FORECAST VS OTHER APPROACHES. TAKE TIME TO ALIGN WITH STAKEHOLDERS ON SUCCESS METRICS, AS THE PAY BACK WILL BE WORTH IT.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

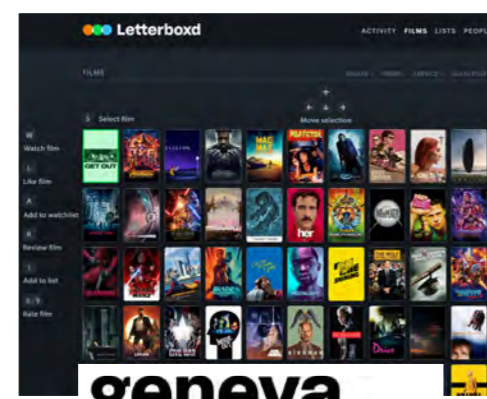
BE PREPARED TO NUANCE YOUR MESSAGE TO BEST CONNECT WITH INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES WHILE ADHERING TO A CONSISTENT OVERARCHING BRAND PURPOSE.



> Tech brands have re-defined brand communities, offering rewards to those passionate about the product for referrals and support. By incentivising users to troubleshoot on behalf of others, GiffGaff has essentially outsourced tech support to its own customer base.



> Brands including Gymshark and GoPro have strategically built tightly-knit communities where their products become synonymous with the interests they are promoting. By sharing their customers posts, these brands have formed a personal bond with their communities.



geneva

the online space to find your offline friends



> New social media sites have formed around specific and even niche interests. Letterboxd allows users to diarise & review the films they have watched, while Geneva is a free app “combining text, audio and visual tools” to keep communities connected. Both have experienced phenomenal growth in the past year and are redefining the social media model.



> ANTI

MENTALITY



For almost two decades, social media has played a pivotal role in powering political and social movements. It has now become the dominant source of news for 16-34s so much so that 2024 has been called the 'The Year of the TikTok election' in the press.

Many younger people are now shaping their social profiles around their political stances, morphing into a social movement capable of organising brand boycotts and forcing companies to be more forthright in expressing their stances.

A new form of social influencer has emerged: the 'Spinfluencer'. These high follower accounts have the power to divert public attention, with ramifications across all sectors.

76%

SAY THAT AS AN INDIVIDUAL, THEY ARE TAKING ACTIONS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SOURCE: THE7STARS QT, 2023

54%

WOULD STOP BUYING A BRAND IF THEY FOUND THEM TO BE GREENWASHING

SOURCE: KPMG

2 in 3

BRITS UNDER 40 SAY ONLINE INFLUENCERS SPEAK MORE FOR THEM THAN TRADITIONAL MEDIA

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

HALF

OF GEN Z & MILLENNIALS SAY THEIR POLITICAL AND ETHICAL VIEWS FORM A MAJOR PART OF THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

SOURCE: THE7STARS PULSE

62%

OF GEN Z BELIEVE THAT IF A BRAND DOESN'T COMMUNICATE ITS ACTIONS TO ADDRESS SOCIETAL ISSUES, THE BRAND MUST BE DOING NOTHING OR HIDING SOMETHING

SOURCE: EDELMAN, 2023



ANTI MENTALITY

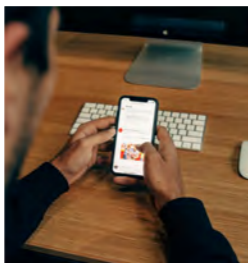
SOCIAL INFLUENCES AND PROTESTING AS A WAY TO EXPRESS IDEOLOGIES



> Following a years-long campaign and calls for a boycott from PETA activists, Frasers Group agreed to stop selling real fur products across its portfolio in October 2023. Earlier in 2023, luxury fashion houses including Hugo Boss and Marc Cain have lent their voices to calls for an EU-wide ban on animal fur products.



> Users have been turning to Metaverse-style sandbox games to organise virtual mass protests in support of causes, transcending international borders in the process. Since late 2023, more than 60,000 mostly young players have taken part in a 'protest' on Roblox in support of Palestine.



> As traditional media struggles to reach younger adults, social media 'spinfluencers' have emerged as a powerful force with the ability to influence political discourse. Amidst this vacuum, "no context meme accounts" such as @PoliticsMoments have gained hundreds of thousands of followers with the ability to educate and inform public debate through satirical posts.

> IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS

COMMIT OR QUIT

DON'T 'DO A PEPSI' AND TRY TO HITCH A RIDE ON A MOVEMENT WITHOUT CONTRIBUTING TO THE CAUSE. IF YOU WANT TO OPPOSE THE STATUS QUO, BE PREPARED TO ADD VALUE. REMEMBER, A PRINCIPLE ISN'T TRULY A PRINCIPLE UNTIL IT COSTS YOU.

MEDIA MEGAPHONE

BRANDS SHOULD SEEK SMALL CAUSES WHERE A BRAND PRESENCE COULD PLAY AN OUTSIZE ROLE, CREATING CONNECTIONS WITH FOLLOWERS OF THE CAUSE. PUTTING A BRAND'S MEDIA WEIGHT BEHIND A MISSION COULD PROVE TRANSFORMATIVE.

DON'T BE SHY

IF YOUR BRAND DOES BUSINESS THE RIGHT WAY, SHOUT ABOUT IT. WHILST IT MIGHT NOT FORM A CORE COMPONENT OF YOUR CAMPAIGN'S MESSAGE, DEPLOY MEDIA 'SPECIAL MOVES' TO REACH AN AUDIENCE THAT REALLY CARES.

> HOW WE CAN

WORK WITH YOU

the7stars can work with you and external partners to ensure your campaigns are being tailored to enhance these Cultural Codes.

We propose a four-step process to do this:

1. **Audience Surgery.** Our bespoke, audience exploration sessions will dive into the passions and motivations that make your audience tick, showcasing how each cultural code impacts them in different context.
2. **Culture Workshops.** Hosted by specialists from our Strategy and Insight teams, and bringing in partners with cultural expertise, we will tailor your comms and positioning to grow your presence around the most pertinent codes for your audience.
3. **Activate It.** Our channel specialists live and breathe the cultural codes framework and will ensure a red thread of tactical buys throughout.
4. **Measure Cultural Impact.** Through a combination of social analysis, ethnographies and campaign effectiveness testing, we will analyse and optimise from your brand's entry into cultural notoriety.






CULTURAL
CODES