

*the* **Real**,  
*the un***Real** *and*  
*the* **Reinvented**

Ogilvy

# *The Real, the Unreal and the Reinvented*

How new technologies, new takes on problem-solving and new approaches to traditional marketing are creating new ways to deliver effective and modern communications.

Ogilvy FUTURES

## **The Real**

The evolving role of AI in communications

- 5.* The Rational Antidote
- 7.* Business Influence
- 8.* The Economics of Influence

## **The Unreal**

The unreal world of AI and its role in communications

- 10.* Generative Agents
- 12.* Vocaloids
- 13.* Extreme Fandom: AI Artists

## **The Reinvented**

Rethinking traditional marketing techniques

- 5.* Made Media
- 16.* Health Haptics
- 17.* Commerce Hacking
- 18.* The Intentionalists
- 19.* Data for Good
- 20.* Set Jetting

About **Futures**

About **Ogilvy PR**

References

# Welcome to Futures 7

Discussion of artificial intelligence is dominated by two conflicting dialogues. As an industry, we are excited by its potential to enhance the creative process and make our roles more efficient and productive; yet also apprehensive of what all this change could mean for communications, and indeed the world at large.

The media is also awash with stories of fear and future destruction; while new tools and applications appear almost daily. Given the interest and existing coverage on AI, we wanted to explore less obvious angles, as well as following up on last year's 'Extreme Fandom' trend to discuss how fans are using AI to create new types of content.

As we usher in this new revolution, the purpose-led marketing of the last decade is not going away. Brands and organisations continue to problem solve as a way to engage, whilst experimenting and remixing this approach in new ways. Advocacy and empathy-centric communications are arriving with new techniques and in doing so revamping how organisations show up with purpose.

Amid all this chatter we are also seeing a fascinating retreat to more analogue modes of experience; drawing us back to more traditional marketing techniques that are tried and tested, yet are now being reinterpreted, reinvented and rebooted with new methods and new technologies.

We've captured these three movements as the **Real** (new ways to deliver real authenticity and brand purpose), the **Unreal** (the unreal world of AI and its role in communications) and the **Reinvented** (the reinvention of traditional marketing techniques).

Enjoy the report and please get in touch if you'd like us to present these trends to your team.

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# *the* Real

*New ways to deliver real authenticity and brand purpose*

In the ongoing exploration of marketing trends since our first Futures report in 2015, one theme has kept coming back year after year – purpose-led marketing. As each report comes to life, we’ve looked at emerging trends that inspire us and offer us all new ways in. This year we’ve seen new tools, new techniques and new approaches that are remixing purpose in new ways.



# The Rational Antidote



TOMS FOUNDER BLAKE MYCOSKIE,  
PHOTO VIA AURUM SPEAKERS

In a world where technology-driven virtual experiences reign supreme, a counter-cultural movement is emerging, championing an alternative path to expanding consciousness and meaningful, authentic connections to yourself and others.

Psychedelics, long relegated to private use and the fringes of society, are carving out a place as a rational and mainstream antidote to the data-driven and tech-savvy existence that has become our norm. Micro-dosing, the practice of consuming minute quantities of hallucinogens, has increasingly been discussed as a trend promising heightened creativity and mood enhancement without the full-throttle psychedelic journey.

The allure of psychedelics stems from their potential to elicit new insight and forge profound connections — within ourselves, with others, and with the natural environment. For brands and creatives, could this eventually present an opportunity to use psychedelics and/or synaesthetics to problem solve?

There are suggestions that Silicon Valley elites have already jumped on the bandwagon and are taking these drugs in small doses “with the intention of bolstering brain power, focus, and creativity”<sup>1</sup>. While anecdotal accounts suggest consumption of psychedelics can enhance creative thinking, lower dysfunctional attitudes, increase wisdom and motivation<sup>2</sup>, scientific evidence is lacking<sup>3</sup> and many experts remain unconvinced<sup>4</sup>.

The potential benefits of psychedelics are intriguing, but various ethical and legal considerations around the use of substances, as well as an obvious need to manage risks, and the mixed scientific reviews suggest we are still in the early days of understanding the benefits of these substances.

FORBES > LIFESTYLE > VICES

## Insurance Provider Enthea Offering Psychedelic Therapy Coverage As An Employee Benefit

FORBES



REALITY SANDWICH

## Change is underway

Earlier this year, Australia became the first country in the world to legalise the use of psychedelics to treat some mental health conditions<sup>5</sup>. This means approved psychiatrists are now able to prescribe MDMA to those suffering post-traumatic stress disorder and psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression.

Businesses are seeing the potential too. The founder of Toms Shoes injected \$US100 million into funding the development of psychedelic-assisted therapies<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, a US-based insurance company is offering psychedelic therapy as an employee benefit<sup>7</sup>. This unprecedented move recognises the potential therapeutic value of psychedelics in enhancing mental wellbeing.

There has also been a surge in interest around psychedelic retreats<sup>8</sup>. Set against tranquil natural backdrops, these retreats facilitate guided psychedelic experiences, aiming to foster introspection, emotional healing, and interconnectedness. They provide participants with the opportunity to disengage from the virtual realm and re-establish connections with themselves, others, and the natural world. Some observers would contrast this with the isolation perpetuated by our tech-dominated modern society.

While recreational and medicinal uses are quite different to using psychedelics as part of the creative process, the idea is not totally infeasible. In the United Kingdom, a campaign spearheaded by an Ogilvy planner aims to reconsider the legal status of psychedelics. This initiative seeks to reframe psychedelics, enabling research and responsible use while acknowledging their potential benefits and mitigating risks. The campaign mirrors the evolving public perception of psychedelics, shifting away from the historical stigma attached to them.

As the revival of psychedelics reverberates globally, Australia's biotech sector stands at the forefront. Australian companies are leading the world in psychedelic research and development, delving into their therapeutic potential in addressing mental health challenges. This suggests an increasing acceptance of psychedelics as a legitimate avenue for healing and transformation.

## The next evolution of authentic advertising

As technology and psychedelics converge, a new narrative emerges — one that prizes authentic connections, expanded consciousness, and personal growth. And many brands searching to better connect with audiences and present their authentic selves are sure to be interested.

The revival of psychedelics challenges the prevailing norms, offering an intriguing counterbalance to the digital inundation of our daily lives. While technology redefines human experiences, psychedelics remind us of the depth within our minds and the world around us, encouraging exploration and embracing the profound possibilities they offer.

In the realm of advertising and creativity, this resurgence could catalyse new horizons of inspiration and innovation, ushering in a transformative era.

### Need to know:

- Psychedelics are being considered as a rational antidote to the data-driven tech lifestyle
- Brands and creatives could harness these experiences for problem-solving and innovation
- The revival of psychedelics challenges societal norms and holds potential for authentic connections, personal growth, and transformative advertising strategies



CLARA MOKRI FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



MEG PRILEY PHOTOGRAPHY VIA MATADOR NETWORK

# Business Influence

In the ever-evolving landscape of marketing, brands are rewriting the playbook to capture the attention and trust of target audiences. One trend gaining significant traction is B2B influencer marketing. Although influencers are often associated with consumer campaigns, B2B brands are discovering the potential of collaborating with credible experts to drive results.

Business influencers, in the context of B2B marketing, are credible experts within specific fields whose opinions influence purchasing decisions. Their insights go beyond the traditional marketing approach, offering contextual, informative, and independent perspectives that impact professional buying decisions in ways that brands can't.

## The power of validation

Noting the growing influencer marketing opportunities, we commissioned YouGov to survey 250 senior business decision makers to understand how many of them had their buying decisions impacted by business influencers, what types of content they were seeking from these credible experts, and where they were engaging with it.

It found B2B buyers engage in extensive and complex journeys before making buying decisions. During these processes, they actively seek validation from credible third-party sources. In fact, nine in 10 senior decision-makers told us their business buying decisions have been influenced by business influencers.

The same research also found over two-thirds of respondents believe business influencers have a more significant impact on their buying decisions than conventional B2B marketing. This shows the approach is a viable alternative to traditional B2B marketing tactics.

## Beyond traditional channels

Our research also challenges the assumption that LinkedIn is the only relevant social channel for B2B brands. It found that 96 per cent of senior decision makers are swayed by business influencers on other social platforms, with half saying their decisions have been impacted on TikTok. This means there's an opportunity here to engage these valuable audiences when they are in a more fun or relaxed mindset.

This revelation opens doors for B2B brands to diversify their influencer marketing strategies across different platforms. To truly understand the impact of B2B influencer marketing, let's explore a few compelling case studies.

## American Express

### – Business Class Masterclass

Our client American Express offers small businesses a range of useful advice on common problems and challenges via its Business Class content. What better way to show how the company backs small businesses than by getting influential entrepreneurs and business experts to share their knowledge as part of online and in-person sessions?

The Business Class Masterclass series has seen more than 30 business influencers, including Mark Bouris, Alan Kohler and Emma Isaacs, share their expertise on topics ranging from understanding e-commerce to navigating government assistance programs. The content also highlights how the value of being an American Express business customer goes beyond a credit card.

More than 6,600 small business owners and operators attended Masterclasses in 2022, with the highly engaged audience asking more than 630 questions during digital sessions. Masterclasses brought more than 82,000 visitors to the Business Class website last year, generated almost 5,000 organic web searches, and 80 per cent of attendees said they were likely to attend another Business Class Masterclass session.

## Samsung – Join the Fold

Our UK team worked with Samsung to promote its Galaxy Fold4 phone. The #JoinTheFold campaign featured a number of business influencers, including Stack World founder Sharmadean Reid, speaking about how they use the phone to run their business.

This achieved reach of 11.6 million and a 93 per cent view through rate, with 78 per cent of senior management saying they were very likely to recommend. It serves as a great example of how influencers engage a business audience.

## Flock Freight – Define your Load

Flock Freight, a technology company aiming to redefine supply chains, partnered with Maximum Effort to create its unconventional 'Define Your Load' campaign addressing the issue of empty space in trucks. Former Blue's Clues star Steve Burns poses question to articulate the definition and value of shared truckloads – from 'sh\*tload' to 'f\*ckload'.

The ad cleverly uses comedy and bold language to take the company's innovative approach to freight pooling to a wider audience than most B2B campaigns could dream of.

## Workday – Rockstar

Workday, a leader in HR and finance solutions, took an unexpected angle with its 'Rockstar' Super Bowl ad. The Ogilvy created ad, which plays on the theme of office 'rock stars', won Cannes Lion Gold. It features musical icons including Ozzy Osbourne and Billy Idol explaining what it truly means to be a rock star. The humorous ad grabs the attention with its inclusion of famous faces while also highlighting the benefits of the Workday product beyond its usual B2B channels.

Influencer marketing presents a great opportunity for B2B brands, so it's worth thinking about who could help you tell your social impact stories on Facebook and Instagram, deliver how-to content for YouTube, or produce fun community engagement moments on TikTok.

### Need to know:

- B2B influencer marketing is a significant trend in the evolving marketing landscape, challenging the notion that influencers are only relevant for consumer campaigns
- Business influencers, trusted experts in specific fields, hold substantial influence over B2B purchasing decisions
- Senior decision-makers actively seek validation from business influencers



CREDIT: OGILVY FOR WORKDAY

# The Economics of Influence

## The Economics of Influence

In a January TikTok post, influencer Alyssa Stephanie declared: "I love the deinfluencing trend!"<sup>1</sup>

"Here are all the things I will deinfluence you from buying, as somebody that spend thousands of dollars a year on health, beauty and hair products," Stephanie explained in a video that now has almost a million likes. She dissuades viewers from purchasing a raft of skincare and beauty products, arguing they're expensive and unnecessary.

Deinfluencing is a trend that has taken social media by storm in the past year. It describes influencers who 'fight back' against rampant consumerism by opting out of buying products deemed to be indulgent, ineffective or not worth the money.

It's shaking up the \$US21.1 billion<sup>2</sup> influencer market away from potentially disingenuous product endorsements towards influencer culture that prioritises authenticity.

Recent research suggests 73 per cent of global consumers were more loyal to brands and retailers who they believe are authentic.<sup>3</sup>

This desire for authenticity puts more power in the hands of influencers, who have spent years cultivating impassioned followers who are invested in their lives. As the creator economy continues to scale and influencers break out into celebrities, they're leveraging their identities and personalities to launch brands that deinfluence by going head-to-head with established market players.

Influencers invested in their craft often have a deep understanding of market dynamics and are becoming emboldened to move from brand ambassadors to entrepreneurs. While influencer partnerships are still a key channel for brands, it's increasingly likely that they will build their own offering if they're dissatisfied with the products they're advocating for.

In short: your next competitor could be an influencer.

## Influencers go direct to consumers (DTC)

A-list celebrities have been launching brands for a long time, but social media influencers have historically been limited to endorsements, ambassadorship and product launches with existing companies.

Many are now realising how to convert their fame into lucrative business opportunities.<sup>4</sup> One of the most prolific examples came when internet personalities (and former boxing opponents) KSI and Logan Paul launched drink brand Prime, which Paul says has generated over \$US250 million in revenue<sup>5</sup>. The drink became a global sensation through clever audience engagement strategies, leveraging the duo's following, and marketing tactics like limiting supply to create demand.<sup>6</sup>

Jimmy 'Mr Beast' Donaldson, who is the biggest individual YouTuber in the world with more than 171 million subscribers, also joined in on the DTC trend with his fast-food brand dubbed Mr Beast Burger. The brand works with thousands of ghost kitchens which specialise in delivery-only food. The grand opening of its only physical restaurant in New Jersey drew 10,000 fans, with some waiting overnight to get their hands on a burger.<sup>7</sup>

Despite initial success, Mr Beast Burger also shows how dangerous fast-growing influencer-led businesses can be. Donaldson revealed in June that he was stepping back from the brand amid food quality concerns.<sup>8</sup> It was later revealed that he and the fulfillment company behind Mr Beast Burger, Virtual Dining Concepts, were suing each other.<sup>9</sup>

Closer to home, Australian comedians Jack Steele and Matt Ford from the Inspired Unemployed launched Better Beer with the goal of providing a low-carb, healthier beer brand that didn't sacrifice taste.

The duo used their massive social media following – currently 1.8 million on Instagram and 1.7 million on TikTok – to promote and grow the business with funny videos, memes and competitions. Better Beer is now a powerful force in the competitive Australian beer industry, with sales of over one million litres a month and annual revenue projections of \$45 million.<sup>10</sup>

There are many more examples of influencers pivoting to entrepreneurialism with their own brands, such as Charli and Dixie D'Amelio's clothing brand Social Tourist, Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila, and Emma Chamberlain's Chamberlain Coffee brand, which last year closed a \$US7 million funding round<sup>11</sup>.



LOGAN PAUL / INSTAGRAM

## A shifting brand opportunity

The explosion of influencer-founded businesses offers many lessons to existing brands, namely that authenticity, personality and genuine connection are incredibly powerful business drivers.

Consumers build strong relationships with their favourite influencers. They feel like they understand their motivations and that they're part of their journey, building a sense of trust that feels more like supporting a friend or a movement than buying products from a corporation. A recent Facebook study showed that 87 per cent of people followed a brand, visited a website or made a purchase online after they saw a product advertised on social media.<sup>12</sup>

The triumph of influencer-led DTC businesses underscores the need for brands to embody personality, social consciousness, and relatability. Understanding the dynamics of social-first business models, harnessing the influence of word-of-mouth marketing, and collaborating with influencers to create authentic sub-brands are all integral to capitalising on this evolving landscape.

Getting this right is set to become an existential battleground for brands in the near future, especially those that target Gen Z and Alpha audiences.

### Need to know:

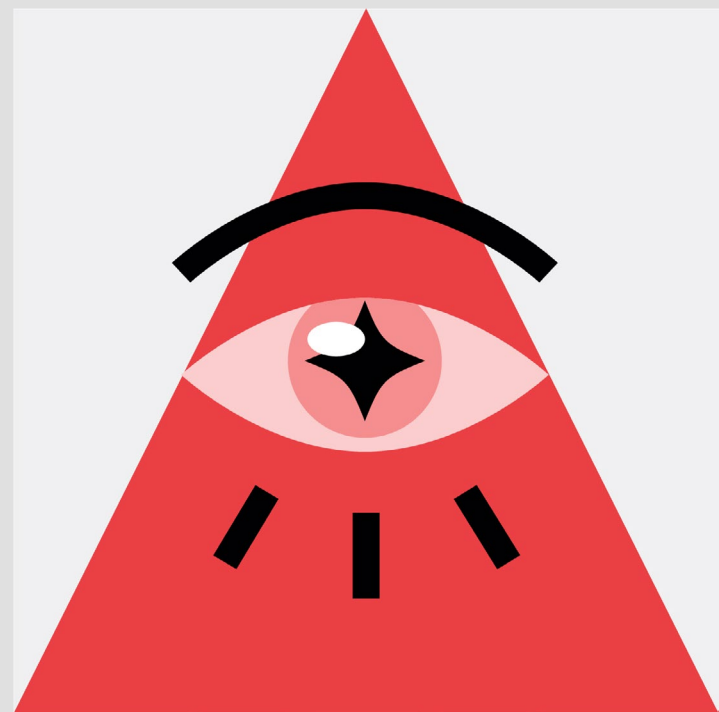
- A desire for more authentic social media and brand experiences is putting more power in the hands of influencers, inspiring them to 'deinfluence' existing businesses
- Influencers are moving from brand ambassadors to entrepreneurs, creating powerful businesses that challenge market dynamics
- The success of these businesses demonstrates the need for brands to embrace personality, social consciousness, and relatability in their marketing activities



TIKTOK CREATORS @BASICOF COURSE, @IMPACTFORGOOD AND @ALYSSASTEPHANIE. IMAGE VIA THE WASHINGTON POST



# *the* Unreal



## *The evolving role of AI in communications*

No trend report published this year could avoid artificial intelligence, but we have tried to explore different and less travelled angles to show this technology in new ways that you might not have considered.

# Generative Agents

Throughout the early 21st century, artificial intelligence had an almost mythical ethos attached to it. Technological breakthroughs like Apple's Siri assistant and AlphaGoZero – Deep Mind's near-perfect artificial 'Go' player that beat the world's best – offered glimpses of what AI can do, but its true, world-changing potential always felt years away.

The recent explosion of Generative AI has changed that considerably. Conversations have shifted from 'how can we prepare for AI' to 'how are we using it right now'. The rise of OpenAI's ChatGPT exemplifies this best, as businesses and marketers use it for everything from writing press releases to brainstorming new product ideas.

Generative AI represents the first iteration of a truly game-changing technology; not just for our industry but for much of the business world. Despite being relatively new, it's already led to some captivating thought experiments and use cases.

## #HustleGPT

Earlier this year, designer and writer Jackson Greathouse Fall tweeted that he had created a prompt for ChatGPT instructing it to come up with a plan to generate the best return on \$US100' without doing anything illegal and with no manual labour. It suggested setting up an affiliate marketing campaign for selling eco-friendly products and found a cheap domain name called greengadgetguru.com.

It interfaced with other AIs, such as Dall-E, in order to create a logo and design a website and even started recruiting new hires. After four days, Green Gadget Guru had over \$US7,800 of investment, a growing team and content in the pipeline, inspiring a trend called #HustleGPT.

While reports indicate that's where the project peaked, it poses existential questions about the extent to which people can use generative AI to carry out tasks with little human intervention. This extends far beyond financial gain to assistance with day-to-day tasks and even social interaction.

CHAOSGPT FROM  
@CHAOS\_GPT ON X

## The rise of Generative Agents

Generative AI – and the large language models that support it – are becoming incredibly sophisticated. Although GPT-4 can continue threads of discussion, it cannot remember or learn your preferences and penchants.

So researchers from Stanford and Google<sup>2</sup> combined ChatGPT with memory capabilities to see what would happen. They created a series of 25 personas that used the language tool, together with a memory function, to simulate believable human behaviour. They created a virtual city dubbed Smallville in the style of a Sim City-esque game. Each of these personas – or generative agents as they called them – had distinct personality traits, relationships and roles. For example, one character called John Lin was a pharmacy clerk who lived with his wife, Mei, a university professor, and son, Eddie, who was a music theory student.

Researchers developed a virtual memory stream for each character that tracked their interactions, with GPT-3.5 periodically synthesising memories into inferences and reflections for the character to reference.

After setting the agents loose in Smallville, remarkable things started to happen. The generative agents behaved as humans would in a similar setting. They gossiped and shared information about each other without prompting. They even planned and coordinated events together; one agent spread the word about a Valentine's Day party which 12 agents eventually heard about but only five turned up, leaving seven who flaked on the party, as would be expected of real people.



ALEX FAVALE,  
VIA UNSPLASH

## From theory to practice

Google and Stanford's research has real-world implications beyond creating a realistic Sims-like social environment. These companions could well become real, with generative agents supporting aspects of our everyday lives.

AI works best when it has access to large volumes of data. The more generative agents learn about us, our families, friends, jobs, preferences and opinions, the better results they will offer. We could see a future where multiple special AI companions specialise in certain areas of our personal or professional lives. They could be our teachers, therapists, personal trainers, or doctors, providing personalised wisdom and becoming trusted confidants.

ChatGPT already does a very effective job as a travel agent. When Conde Nast Traveller<sup>3</sup> asked it to plan a weeklong visit to New York City focused on Modern Art and Italian food, it instantly generated a seven-day itinerary that included a trip to the Brooklyn Museum, the Guggenheim, and a plethora of Italian restaurants. There's no reason why a generative agent couldn't refine this further based on your preferences and even start booking reservations on your behalf.

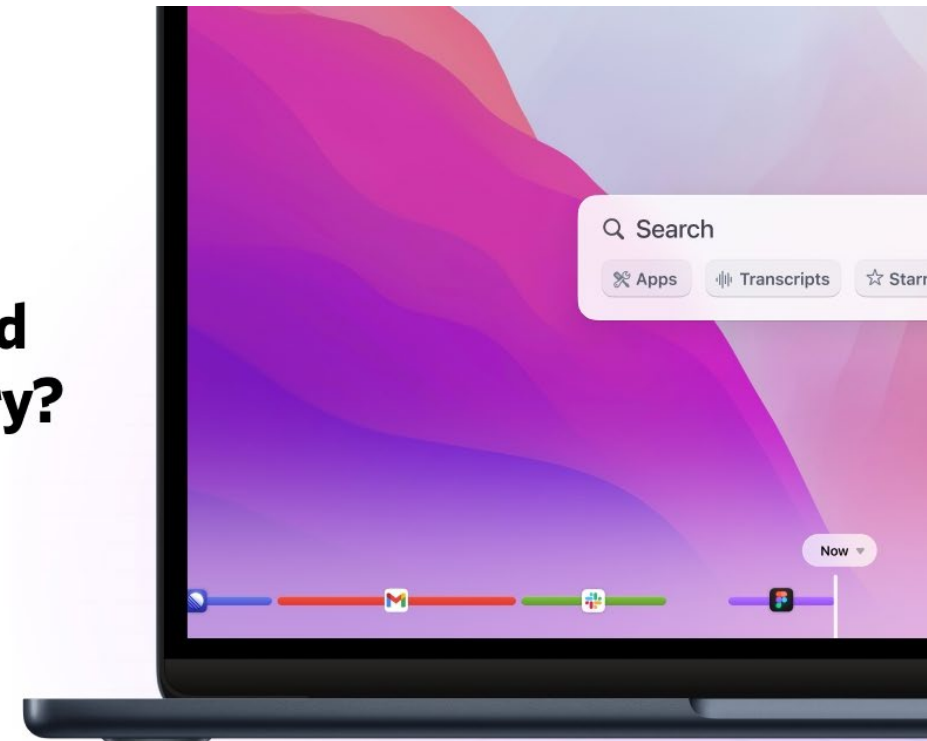
Expedia CTO Rathi Murthy acknowledged this in March when she said<sup>4</sup>: "Imagine if instead of just creating a trip itinerary, travellers could use generative AI to also identify hotels, flights, and activities, and automatically add those to their Expedia trip board to book when they're ready to. It would simplify what is today a fairly lengthy planning process down to a few minutes."

Real examples of other use cases are already emerging. Rewind is an app that tracks everything users do on their computers<sup>5</sup>, offering a timeline of every meeting they've attended, every website they've visited, and everything they've typed into their machines. It allows users to quiz it about their data, acting as an intelligent and functional virtual assistant.

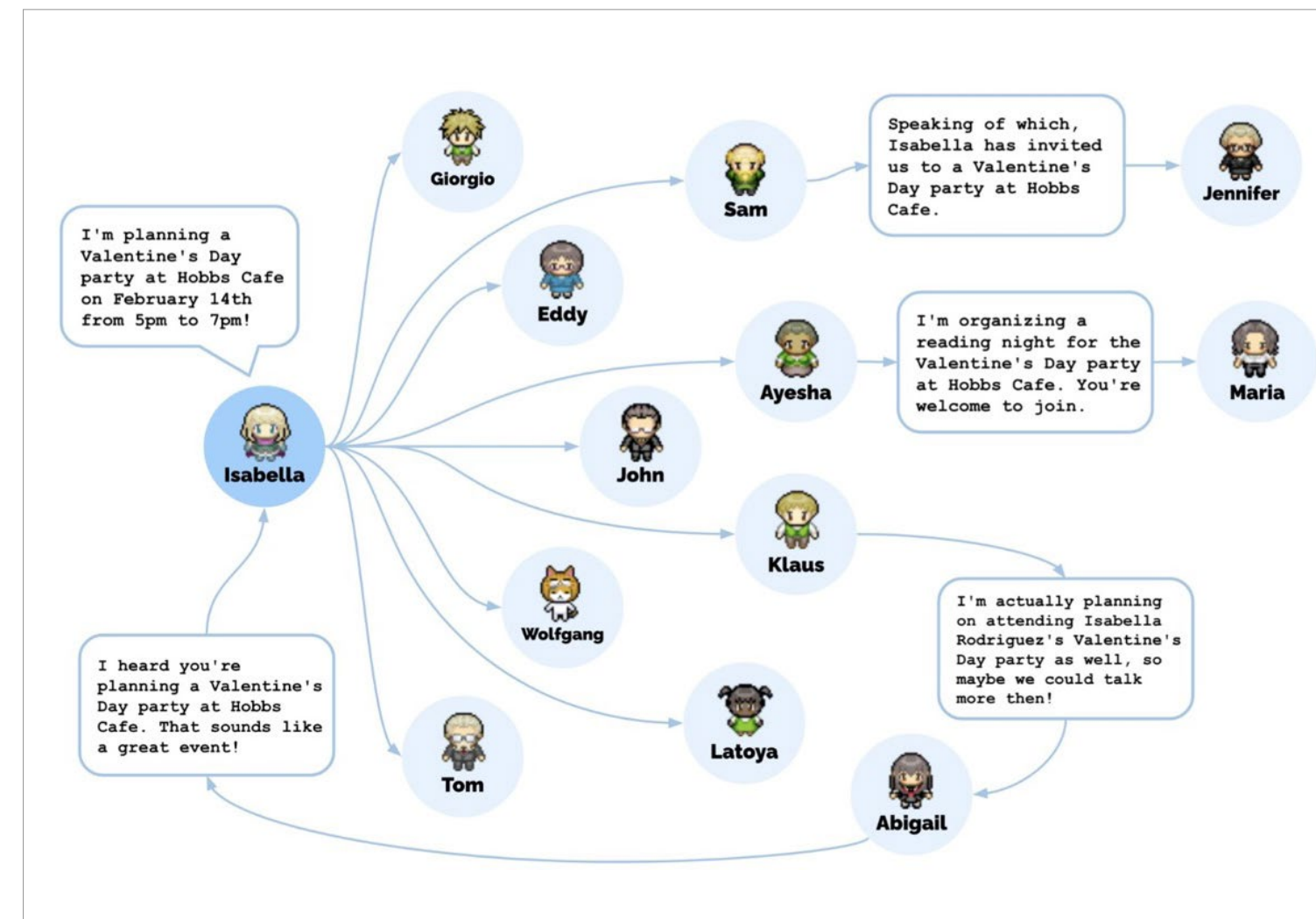
GENERATIVE AGENTS:  
INTERACTIVE SIMULACRA  
OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR,  
BY JS PARK ET AL

## ◀◀ Rewind

### What if you had perfect memory?



REWIND, FROM WWW.REWIND.AU



## Aligning productivity with ethics

As with most AI use cases, there are many ethical considerations when it comes to generative agents acting without human oversight or input.

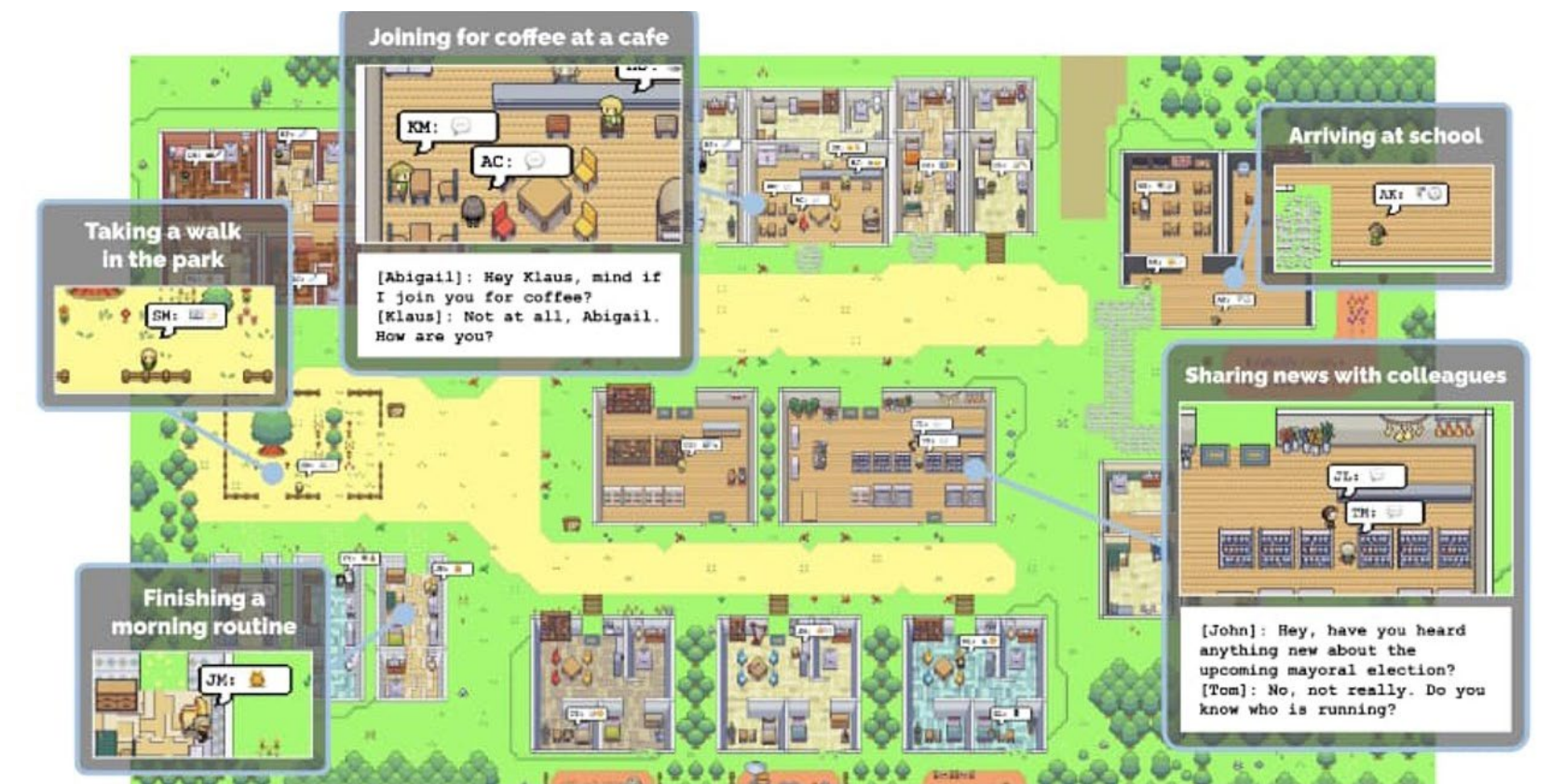
Auto-GPT, an open-source program that showcases the capabilities of ChatGPT-4 by working fully autonomously to complete tasks, was asked to destroy humanity<sup>6</sup> as part of a project called ChaosGPT. It formulated a five-step plan, including goals of establishing global dominance by gathering resources, controlling humanity through manipulation and attaining immortality via replication.

ChaosGPT uses AutoGPT's 'Continuous Mode', which theoretically allows it to run forever. While it's unlikely to cause any real damage, researchers are concerned that autonomous agents could be used for carrying out long-term nefarious tasks.

How governments and regulators manage the increasing proliferation of generative agents will be crucial to the technology's development. For now, human oversight is crucial, although any interventions are unlikely to stop generative agents from changing the world.

#### Need to know:

- Generative agents combine large language models with memory capabilities
- They can learn about your preferences to become virtual personal assistants
- They are set to transform research and administratively heavy tasks such as travel planning



GENERATIVE AGENTS: INTERACTIVE SIMULACRA  
OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR, BY JS PARK ET AL

# Vocaloids

In the not-so-distant future, AI will likely power new realms for human connections, ranging from virtual children to virtual pets, triggering real emotional responses and sparking debates around 'virtual-human rights'.

One of the most intriguing applications of AI in the realm of relationships is the creation of virtual companionship. Loneliness and social isolation have been prevalent issues in modern society, and AI has the potential to address these challenges by creating lifelike virtual friends who can provide companionship and support.

This is in no small part thanks to large language models, allowing free-flowing conversations with bots, without predefined rules controlling their responses.

These virtual friends will be capable of adapting to individual personalities, interests, and preferences, stimulating emotional responses and genuine connections that may alleviate feelings of isolation.

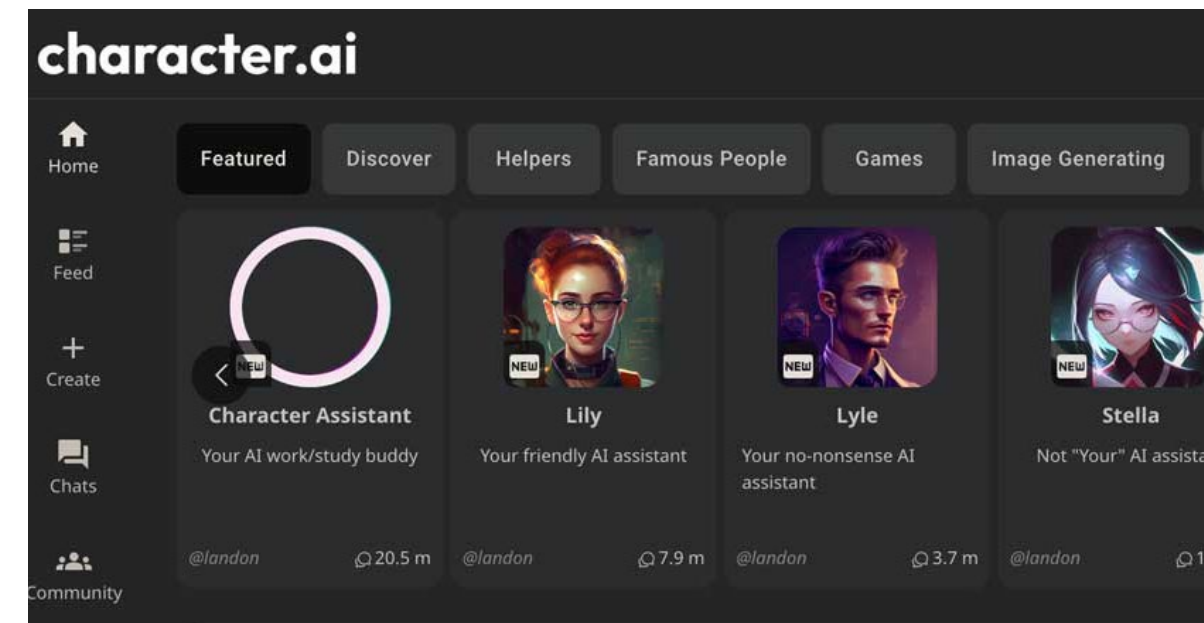
We've already seen early versions of this at play. More than 20,000 users signed up to use CarynAI, a voice chatbot created by influencer Caryn Marjorie who will be your 'virtual girlfriend' for \$1 per minute. She made \$US72,000 in the first week<sup>12</sup>.

AI could also take the concept of virtual pets to a new level, as they would be capable of displaying some of the characteristics of real animals, providing companionship, emotional support, and unconditional love to their owners. For individuals facing barriers to owning real pets, such as allergies or living restrictions, virtual pets could fill the void and create emotional connections akin to those formed with living creatures.

## A two-way relationship

These relationships will trigger authentic emotional responses in people, and as AI continues to advance, the technology may be capable of reading and interpreting them and responding with empathy and understanding. This ability to empathise will be a significant breakthrough in human-AI interactions, generating deeper emotional connections with virtual beings.

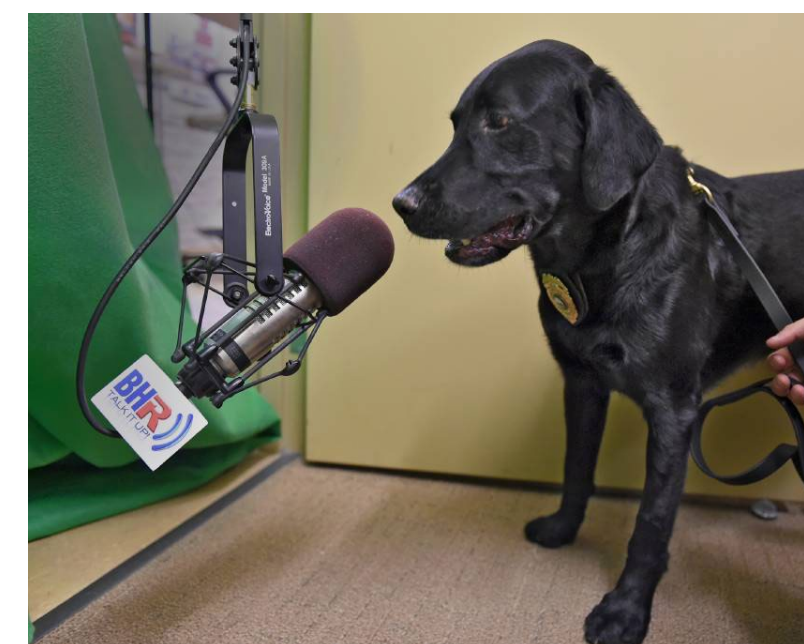
As the lines between reality and virtuality blur, society will need to navigate the complexities of human-AI relationships with sensitivity and foresight. Regulations and guidelines will need to be established to safeguard the wellbeing of both humans and virtual beings. Philosophical discussions will explore the essence of consciousness, identity, and the implications of forming emotional bonds with AI entities.



CHARACTER.AI VIA THE GEMINI GEEK



NY POST



BOSTON HERALD, NEW HAMPSHIRE VIA GETTY IMAGES



UING VIA YAHOO

## What it means for brands

AI vocaloids could become a powerful tool for brands seeking to connect with audiences in new and innovative ways. This term is already used to describe AI-driven virtual singers that can generate lifelike vocal performances.

And we've already seen the impact AI-driven personalities can have on the media and entertainment industry thanks to realistic fake collaborations, such as the one featuring Drake and The Weeknd soundalike vocals.

Imagine a world where brands can create their own virtual personalities or vocaloid characters to represent their products or services. These AI-powered avatars could interact with customers, answer queries, and even perform at virtual events. With the ability to adapt their personalities and responses to suit individual preferences, vocaloids could offer a highly personalised and engaging experience for consumers.

Another advantage is vocaloids' potential to transcend language barriers, making it possible for brands to connect with a global audience effortlessly. This opens up new markets and opportunities for expansion.

Virtual influencers already exist, but their potential to amass followings and wield considerable influence over audiences looks set to grow. These virtual personalities could endorse products, advocate for causes, and even create trends, much like human influencers do today.

And as AI becomes more sophisticated and capable of forming emotional connections, brands could use vocaloids as companions to enhance customer experiences and loyalty.

Meta's work on AI chatbots with different personalities, such as Abraham Lincoln<sup>13</sup>, is a testament to the growing interest in creating virtual beings that can engage users in unique and memorable ways.

Microsoft's Xiaoice, an AI chatbot, is a prime example of how technology can become an integral part of people's lives, acting as a virtual friend and confidante.

Brands could harness this concept by integrating them into campaigns, offering personalised interactions with consumers, guiding them through their buying journey, and being there to support them even after the purchase.

Brands that can create vocaloids capable of evoking such deep emotional responses could forge long-lasting relationships with their customers.

CharacterAI, which allows users to create their own characters or interact with pre-built characters, is valued at \$US1 billion<sup>14</sup> and is another indicator of the market's enthusiasm for AI-driven virtual beings. Brands could increasingly turn to platforms such as this to create custom vocaloids that align with their brand values and messaging, providing a unique and exclusive experience for their customers.

### Need to know:

- AI is enabling the creation of lifelike virtual companions that can alleviate loneliness and social isolation in modern society
- As AI advances, it has the potential to empathise with and interpret human emotions, leading to deeper emotional connections between humans and virtual entities
- AI-driven vocaloids offer new opportunities for brands to connect with audiences through lifelike virtual personalities

# Extreme Fandom: AI Artists

In last year's edition of Futures, we highlighted the acceleration of 'Extreme Fandom', exploring how social media has broken down barriers between artists, celebrities, brands and their most dedicated fans.

Drawing on examples including a Heinz advertisement that used fan-drawn bottles of tomato sauce, and an apology from Skittles for taking away lime-flavoured candies, we explored how leaning into fan-driven activity can yield significantly positive results.

Artificial Intelligence has supercharged this trend. Fans – and the general public – now have more power than ever to participate in the brand's domain, extending beyond engagement to creating pieces of art that emulate an artist's or brand's style.

AI image and sound generation tools have given rise to a new wave of AI artists, who create content that's hard to distinguish from the real thing. How brands, communities and governments react over the next few years will be incredibly important, especially for people working in creative industries.

## AI artists in music

Technology innovation has always had a profound impact on the music industry. The popularisation of CDs in the 1990s, digital music marketplaces and online piracy in the 2000s, and the Spotify-led streaming revolution of the 2010s mark just a few major consumption shifts and issues over the past 40 years.

AI represents the next big challenge for the industry. While streaming giants have already used intelligent algorithms to suggest songs, artists and playlists for many years, the dial has shifted from enhancing consumption to the creation of new material, using the voice profiles of existing artists.

The results are fascinatingly eerie. One of the biggest and best examples is 'Heart on My Sleeve', an AI-generated song that appears to feature Drake and The Weeknd. Released by an anonymous TikTok user going by the name 'Ghostwriter', the song went viral for its expert production and incredibly realistic portrayal of the artists, amassing millions of streams before the major platforms removed it. Drake has been the subject of a few AI-generated original tracks, with other songs 'Winter's Cold' and 'Not a Game' also racking up hundreds of thousands of listens.

Universal Music Group – which has a deal with Drake – isn't at all pleased about these AI-powered recreations. While artists' voices aren't protected by copyright, UMG successfully had 'Heart on My Sleeve' pulled from YouTube because of a Metro Boomin production tag it claimed was an unauthorised sample.

UMG recently told Apple and Spotify to block AI services from using melodies and lyrics from copyrighted songs, which are used to train the algorithms.<sup>2</sup> The organisation reportedly told the *Financial Times*, "We will not hesitate to take steps to protect our rights and those of our artists."<sup>3</sup>

AI poses several risks and challenges to artists and labels beyond revenue loss. They're incredibly convincing, so could damage an artist's reputation if a song is poorly produced, lyrics are controversial, or their voices are used to support causes the artist isn't aligned with.

Nevertheless, they're all over the internet. We've seen Kayne sing Justin Bieber's 'Love Yourself', Michael Jackson cover The Weeknd's 'I Feel It Coming', and even a Tupac and Biggie Smalls collaboration.<sup>4</sup>

Not all artists are against this new wave of AI music. Earlier this year, Grimes invited people to use her voice in AI songs, saying she would split the royalties on any successful AI-generated track featuring her voice; the same deal she has for real collaborations.<sup>5</sup> The singer even released a platform to create AI versions of her vocals, releasing her first official AI song, 'Cold Touch' alongside Australian-born producer Kito in May.<sup>6</sup>

BURBERRY X BRITISH AIRWAYS GENERATED IN MIDJOURNEY.  
IMAGE/S: LINKEDIN.COM/IN/ERIC GROZA



SPOTIFY AI - COURTESY OF OGILVY

## The opportunity for brands

AI art may present risks from an intellectual property and copyright perspective, but brands are also using it in interesting ways to drive a positive impact. Spotify recently gave users tools to generate custom AI artworks for playlists in Australia and New Zealand, opening a more direct avenue for fans to engage and co-create.<sup>7</sup>

The opportunity extends well beyond music. A fan-made AI video that depicts a Harry Potter universe that's obsessed with Balenciaga racked up over 10 million views using altered versions of the actor's voices and likenesses.<sup>8</sup> The video pokes fun at Balenciaga's carefully crafted brand image and style, inspiring several similar videos that took the brand to the Batman, Marvel and Star Wars universes.<sup>9</sup>

While Balenciaga didn't take legal action, it didn't lean into the activity either. That might be a missed opportunity, with leading brand consultant and advisor Dr Martina Olbert urging Balenciaga to use the Harry Potter meme as inspiration for its own campaign.<sup>10</sup>

"The proliferation of AI poses an amazing opportunity for luxury brands to switch focus and develop their own proprietary meaning now to protect themselves in the future," she said. "Meaning is the most important brand asset."

Gucci jumped on the trend in July when it commissioned AI artists to create NFT artworks exploring how generative AI might shape the future of fashion and art.<sup>11</sup> Gucci said it would reward buyers with physical products – such as bags or wallets – that can't be purchased by other customers.<sup>12</sup>

Coca-Cola also collaborated with digital creatives to use a bespoke AI platform to generate original artwork for an opportunity to be featured on Coke's digital billboards in New York's Times Square and London's Piccadilly Circus.<sup>13</sup>

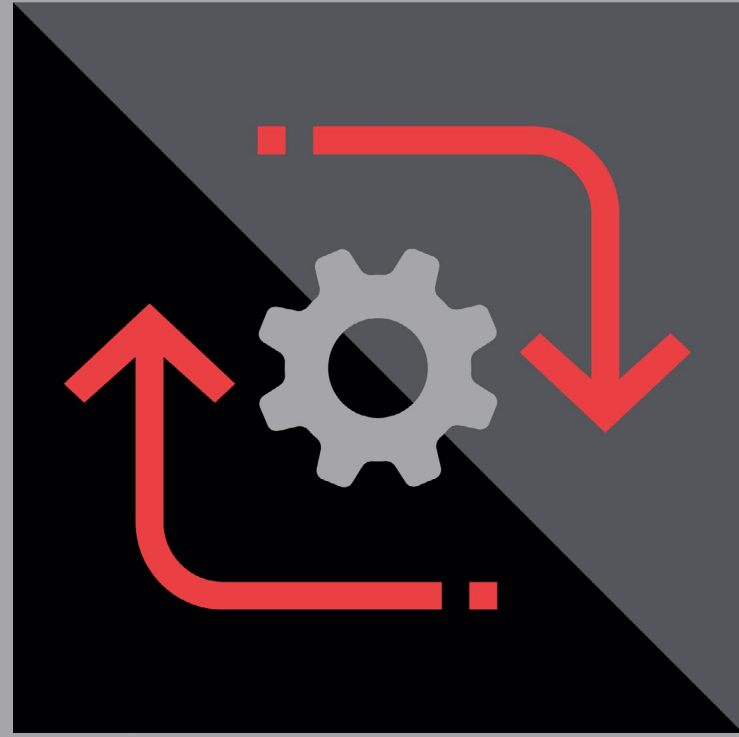
AI art doesn't have to be used as part of an expensive, big-bang campaign or product launch either. Brands and marketing professionals can use it to generate ideas, support pitches or visualise collaborations. Marketing and brand expert Eric Groza showed off what a premium collaboration between British Airways and Burberry would look like, using AI tools to generate images of a sleek Burberry-themed airline cabin.<sup>14</sup>

An Australian-based creative agency recently used MidJourney to create a set of modern gadgets in the style of legendary Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí. The resulting reimagining of kettles, microwaves, coffee machines and more are incredible examples of how agencies might pitch to brands in the future.<sup>15</sup>

There are near countless opportunities for brands to capitalise on. While the right approach will look different for every organisation, there is a lot of value to be had from leaning into the AI artists sphere, building more fan engagement whilst maintaining a positive and powerful cultural perception.

### Need to know:

- AI image and sound generation tools have given rise to a new wave of AI artists, who are increasingly participating in the domain of brands and artists
- The music industry is feeling a profound impact, with artist's voices being spoofed to make new music
- The trend presents exciting opportunities for brands to lean into this activity and drive better engagement with fans



CORONA EXTRA LIME, ABINBEV

*Rethinking  
traditional  
marketing  
techniques*

Despite all the focus on how technologies and strategies such as social media, influencer marketing and artificial intelligence are changing marketing, we are also seeing tried and tested tools and methods from the marketing armoury be reinvented for new audiences.

*the*

**Reinvented**

# Made Media

People are constantly bombarded by messaging, images, audio and short-form videos vying for attention and investment. But in a world dominated by digital assets and virtual experiences, there is great power in tangible experiences that people touch, hear and taste.

With many campaigns failing to make the desired impact, brands are rethinking the key touchpoints available to them, especially when trying to communicate important messages around sustainability and politics. These two fields are particularly crowded, with even the most important messages often disregarded.

Sometimes the most complex and important issues are best articulated in the simplest of ways. This concept has given rise to a 'Made Media' trend that explores how physical things can effectively convey important messages.

It's about realigning how we use channels from speaking about issues to campaigns that show and do real things. Brands are repackaging products and processes as proof points that attract people to their cause and support their efforts to make a real difference.

## Making sustainability real

The iron and steel industry is estimated to account for about 11 per cent of total global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Steelmaking is an incredibly energy-intensive exercise, as it requires blast furnaces to remove oxygen from iron ore.

Swedish steel manufacturer SSAB – Scandinavia's largest steel sheet company – is developing new production technology to bring fossil-fuel-free steel to the market by 2026. Its patented Hybrit technology uses hydrogen instead of coal, meaning the process emits water instead of CO<sub>2</sub>.

To demonstrate the power of its new tech, the organisation is bottling the 'waste' as drinking water. SSAP Executive Vice President and CTO Martin Pei even drank the water on camera at COP27. While the Pure Waste isn't commercially available, SSAP says it represents tangible proof of how this heavy industry can go from CO<sub>2</sub> to H<sub>2</sub>O, effectively turning a problem into a solution.

Non-profit organisation Solar Impulse foundation took a proactive approach with its Prêt à Voter in France. Fighting against long lead times for laws to be passed, the organisation worked with environmental experts, lawyers and judges to identify 50 ecological innovations and transformed them into draft laws ready to be voted on.

The foundation assembled all 50 draft laws into a one-of-a-kind book titled Prêt à Voter, which translates to "ready to vote". The books were mailed to the 577 MPs who make up the French National Assembly, simply asking them to pick any ready-made draft law and propose it for a vote.

Three laws – relating to geothermal energy, floating solar panels and sustainable agricultural energy – were chosen to be voted on and they were all adopted, with a further nine under review. The organisation said it quickened a process that usually takes several years down to just a few months.

These campaigns don't always have to take months or years of research and development; simpler concepts can carry just as much weight. Colombian retailer Makro was praised this year for its life-extending stickers campaign, which used physical labels to inform customers how fruit and vegetables could be used at various stages of ripeness. The campaign was aimed at reducing food waste, as approximately 6.1 million tonnes of food is wasted annually in Colombia, with 40 per cent comprised of fruit and vegetables.<sup>7</sup>

## Lessons for other brand campaigns

The power of made media is in its capacity to make the intricate simple, transforming abstract ideas into tangible and relatable action.

While sustainability and politics are perfect domains for this type of campaign, brands should use this work as inspiration for how Made Media can quickly and effectively communicate key messages using real experiences.

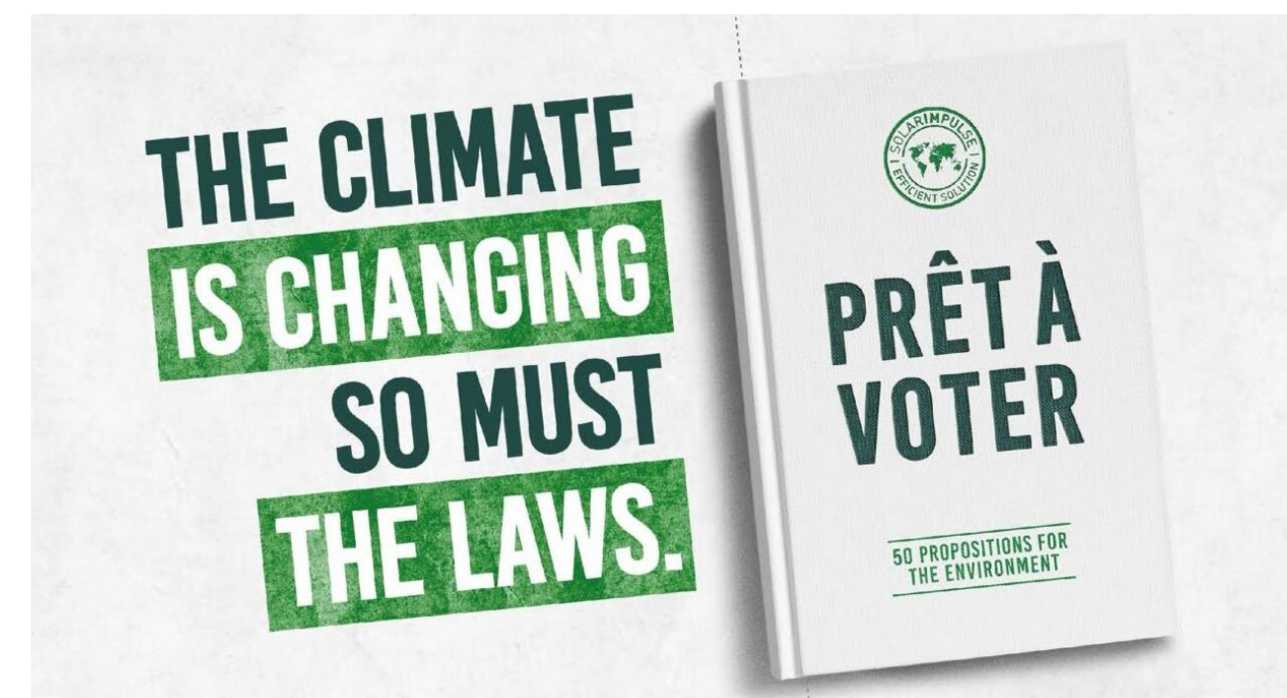
As brands compete for attention, real things and experiences cut through in ways that virtual ones often can't. Made Media presents the perfect opportunity to drive change, foster understanding and accelerate progress.

### Need to know:

- People are hungry for tangible things and experiences that they can touch, hear and taste
- Made Media addresses this need, exploring how physical things can effectively convey important messages
- Campaigns that promote sustainability initiatives – as a crowded field – have seen incredible cut through, enabling them to make a real difference



GREY COLUMBIA / LBB ONLINE



YOUTUBE / SOLAR IMPULSE FOUNDATION



ADS OF THE WORLD



SSAB

# Health Haptics

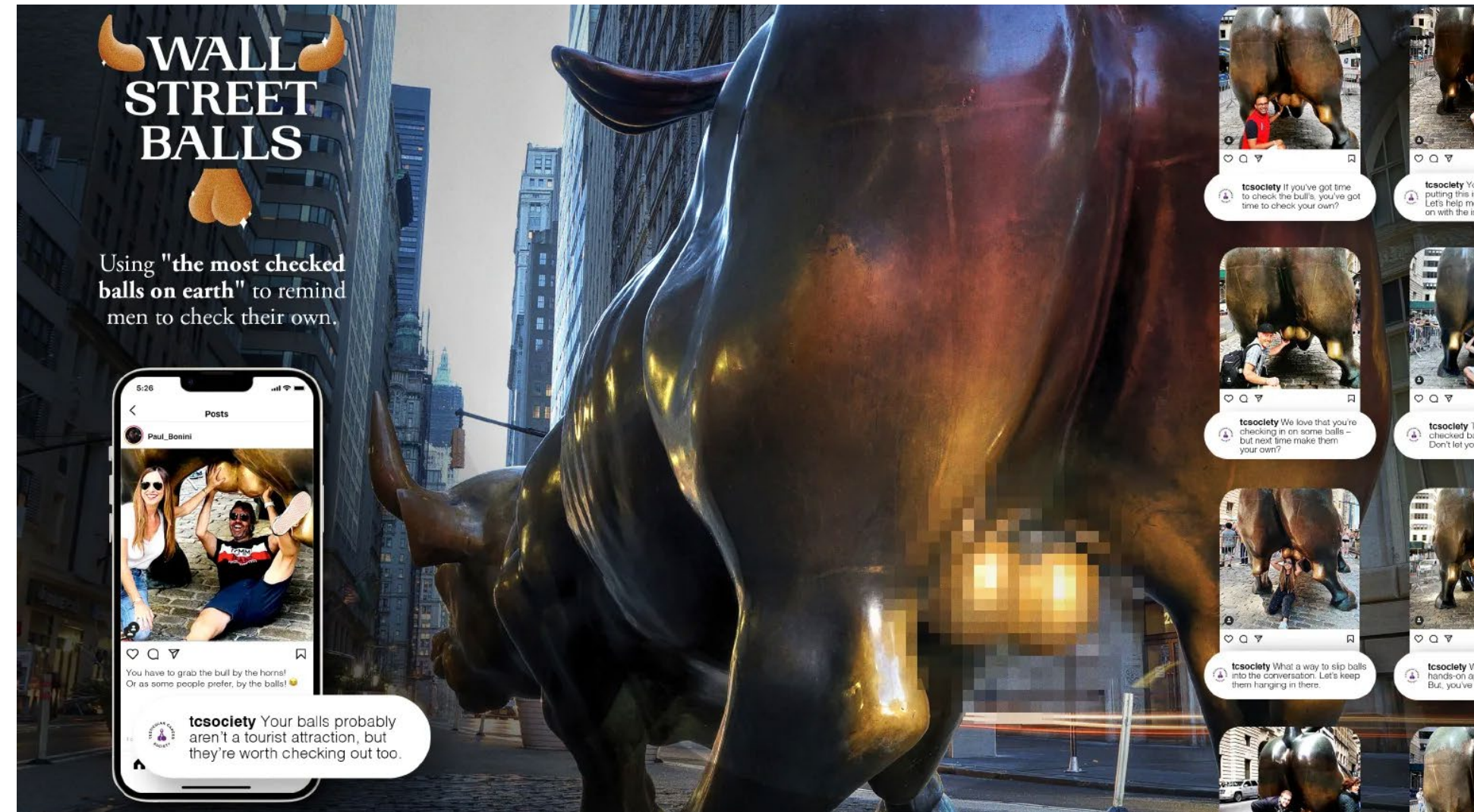
From smartphones that fit in our pockets to AI-driven virtual companions, technology is deeply intertwined with our daily lives. These interactions aren't always for the good of our health and wellbeing, but there's a growing trend for companies to hack and reframe technology use and consumption to enable healthier communities. At Cannes, there were several examples of how brands and organisations are using the power of technology for good.

## Wall Street Balls

Testicular cancer is a significant health concern, yet many men neglect regular self-examinations. To spark conversations around this topic, the Testicular Cancer Society created the 'Wall Street Balls' campaign<sup>1</sup>. Making use of the fame of Wall Street's Charging Bull, whose testicles are often photographed, the campaign uses social listening to detect posts featuring the bull's balls. It then responds with humorous reminders for people to check their own testicles in the comments section of each photo, delivering life-saving information in a light-hearted manner. This innovative approach taps into existing behaviour (people posting pictures of themselves checking the bull's balls to social media) and reframes it to encourage positive self-care habits.

## Scrolling Therapy

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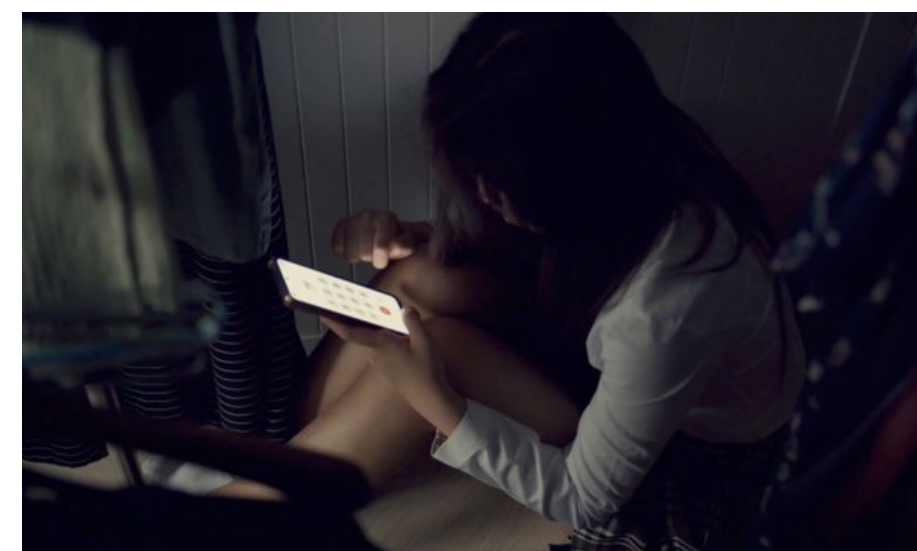
CLIO AWARDS



ADAGE



DENTSU CREATIVE



ADAGE



MEDICAL MARKETING AND MEDIA

## Knock Knock

Domestic violence victims often face barriers to reporting abuse. Cheil Worldwide Seoul's 'Knock Knock' campaign uses technology to address this issue<sup>3</sup>. The campaign made it possible for individuals in a situation where they are unable to explain they need help to request police assistance simply by double tapping their smartphone handset. The call operator is then able to share a link to the handset, which when opened will identify the caller's location, allow them to share video of what's happening and open up a secret chat for them to share further details.

This is a particularly important element as people calling for help may be in a position where their abuser is close and they are unable to speak, or afraid to do so. This innovation empowers hidden victims of domestic violence, using digital tools to make it easier for them to ask for help. By reimagining how technology interfaces with emergency services, the campaign provides a lifeline to those in need. The campaign proved such a success that 'Knock Knock' is now an official emergency call method in South Korea.

## Pinterest's Inspired Internet Pledge

The impact of social media on mental health, especially among young people, remains a topic of concern. In response, Pinterest and the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital launched the 'Inspired Internet Pledge'<sup>4</sup>.

This initiative calls on tech companies to prioritise mental and emotional wellbeing in their digital platforms. By focusing on the positive impact of technology consumption, this pledge encourages companies to integrate wellbeing features and policies into their offerings. By turning technology use into a means to promote mental health, this approach reframes digital interactions as opportunities for self-care and growth.

Pinterest applied this by removing beauty filters and weight loss advertising and introducing 'inspired engagement' metrics, instead of the traditional addictive methods such as 'length of view'. Prioritising inspired engagement metrics has led to more positive, aspirational and empowering content (such as design, travel and mindfulness inspiration, all centred around planning, lifestyle ambitions and utility) rising to the top of Pinterest feeds, instead of the content that indexes highly on length of view, which is more likely to be negative, gross or fake content such as pimple popper videos or 'funny' accident fail videos.



# Commerce Hacking

A new trend known as 'Commerce Hacking' is emerging, where brands are creatively hacking, chopping, flipping, and hijacking transactional experiences to show up, get noticed and get ahead in new and creative ways.

This innovative approach to business is reshaping the way brands interact with their customers, maximising loopholes and reimagining the transaction process, often for good and purposeful reasons. Brands that want to be a part of movement should take the stance of challenger brands. That means not being afraid to identify and maximise existing loopholes in the market to create innovative solutions. It's about seeing challenges as opportunities and leveraging them to create meaningful change. This disruptive approach not only grabs attention but also encourages others to think differently about their own practices.

## The Iceland Food Club

One standout example shared at Cannes 2023 was the Iceland Food Club<sup>1</sup>. Amid rising economic uncertainty that was forcing families to skip meals or turn to loan sharks to put food on the table, the UK supermarket offered interest-free microloans to prevent food insecurity for tens of thousands of British shoppers.

In partnership with ethical loan company Fair for You, Iceland invited shoppers to apply for a pre-loaded card with an initial top up of between £25 and £75. This campaign not only addresses a pressing issue but also creates a positive association with the brand. The launch of the Iceland Food Club yielded impressive results, with 50,000 sign-ups within the initial week and 20,000 customers during its initial three-month period.

## Bill it to Bezos

The Jane/Finch Centre, a community organisation focused on poverty reduction in Canada, took an ingenious approach to fundraising by using a loophole in Amazon Prime's subscription model. It noted that everyone with an Amazon Prime subscription is entitled to \$3.50 per month to give to their favourite streamer on Twitch, but this mostly goes unused<sup>2</sup>. With this in mind, JFC became a verified Twitch streamer and invited donors to 'Bills it to Bezos', bringing everyone in on the joke and exploiting the loophole to raise money in a way that's 100 per cent funded by Amazon.

This clever campaign cost users absolutely nothing, aside from the money they were already paying for their Prime membership. This innovative twist not only raises funds for a local community but also sparks a conversation about income inequality and the power of collective action.

## Hack Market

Back Market, a marketplace for refurbished devices, took an unconventional approach to encourage people to consider refurbished electronics. It used Apple's AirDrop technology to send messages highlighting the environmental benefits of refurbished products over new devices to customers looking at Apple's best sellers, including iPhones, iPads and MacBooks, in Apple Stores<sup>3</sup>. Customers were redirected to the Back Market website where they could directly buy the same device they were holding in their hands, but with among other things 91 per cent less CO<sub>2</sub>. The 'Hack Market' campaign is an innovative way to raise awareness of the fact that Back Market not only offers a sustainable alternative but also challenges traditional consumption habits. It may also have contributed to Apple's decision to make changes to AirDrop security, to limit file sharing<sup>4</sup>.

## A path to a better future?

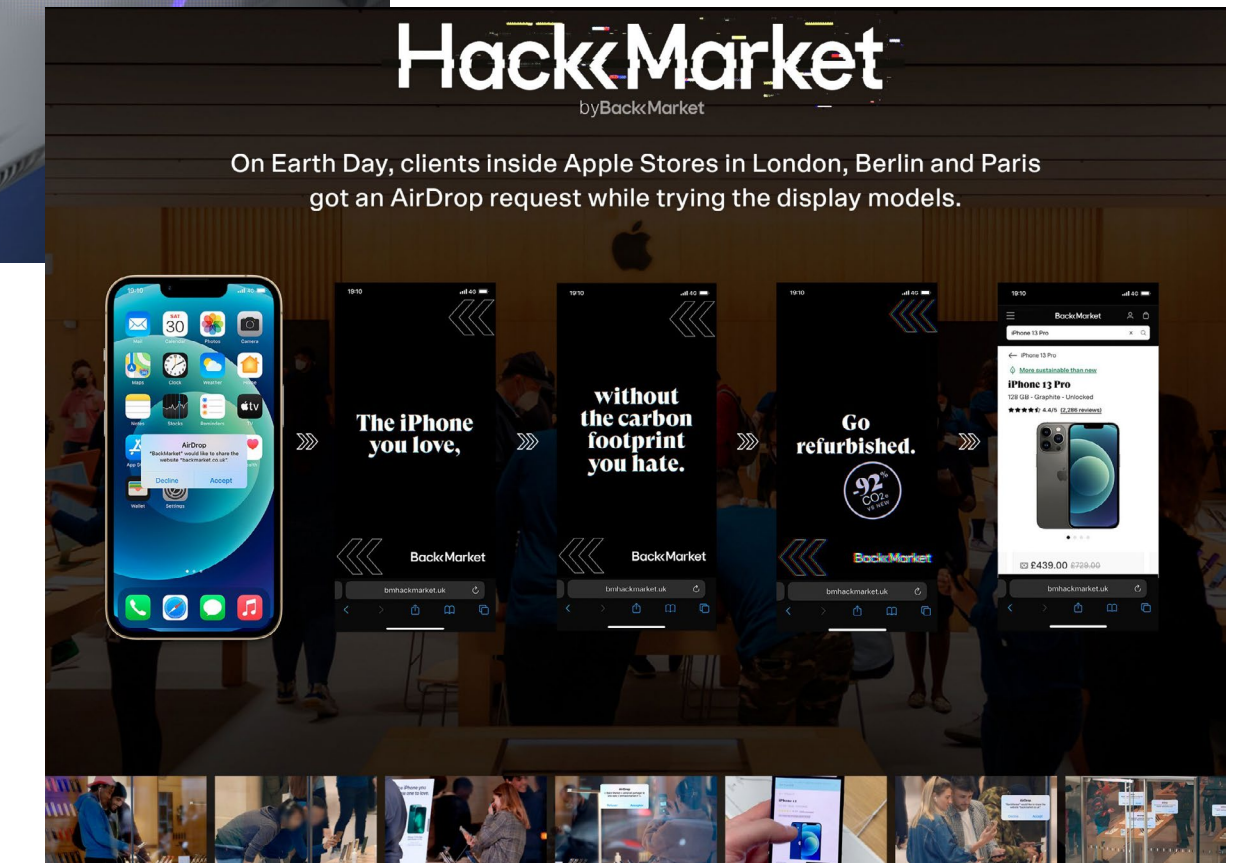
Commerce Hacking has the potential to become a movement that continues to shake up transactional experiences. The examples from companies as varied as Iceland, the Jane/Finch Centre, and Back Market showcase the power of thinking outside the box and embracing unconventional approaches to business. As the movement gains momentum, more brands are likely to join in, creating a wave of innovation that benefits everyone. However, brands need to be prepared for potential blowback as they disrupt established norms and navigate the challenges that come with such bold actions. In the end, Commerce Hacking serves as a reminder that businesses can be a force for good, and that impactful change often requires creative thinking and courageous actions.



BILL IT TO BEZOS CAMPAIGN SITE (JANE/FINCH CENTRE)



BILL IT TO BEZOS CAMPAIGN SITE (JANE/FINCH CENTRE)



PUBLICIS WORLDWIDE

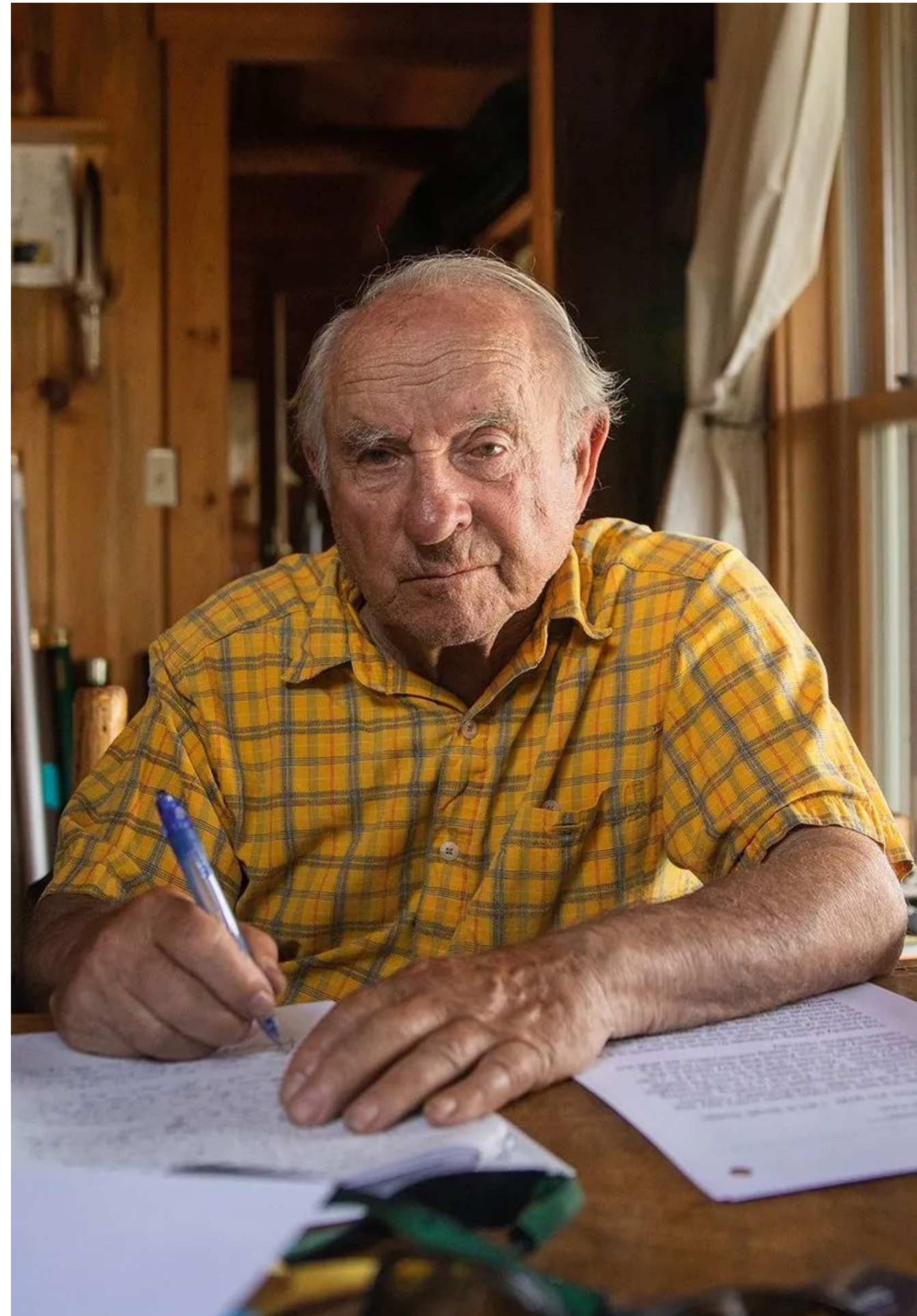


CONTAGIOUS

### Need to know:

- Commerce Hacking is a trend where brands creatively modify transactional experiences to stand out and make a positive impact
- Examples from companies as varied as Iceland, the Jane/Finch Centre, and Back Market showcase the power of thinking outside the box
- Brands need to be prepared for potential challenges and backlash as they disrupt established norms

# The Intentionalists



PATAGONIA FOUNDER YVON CHOUINARD. PHOTO VIA BUSINESS NEWS AUSTRALIA

Brands are increasingly reimagining capitalism as a force for good, where making a positive impact goes hand in hand with financial success.

This idea – dubbed ‘intentional capitalism’ was prominent at Cannes this year, and is about smart, feel good, transformative work that sees companies go way beyond a message or a campaign and gets to the root of why they exist. It’s a chance to wield creativity, communication, and technology to rejuvenate communities, healthcare systems, and economies that are most in need. For it to succeed, they need to delve deep into the heart of why they exist.

Such ideas, though unlikely to emerge from an average client brief, emerge from a higher level of thinking that reaches beyond immediate business concerns and sales figures. It requires thinking that turns one eye out to the big forces and problems shaping the world we operate in, and one eye inward to challenge ‘how we’ve always done it’ norms. It’s work that’s measured in terms of impact, with revenue, engagement and fame built in as welcome byproducts.

It’s a great reminder to think beyond the brief, about the power of true creative collaborations, and holding to your convictions when some question your permission to stray from your lane. There were three examples that showcased the essence of intentional capitalism at Cannes this year.

## Earth as a shareholder

The idea is perhaps best epitomised by Patagonia. The company’s EMEA Marketing Director Tyler LaMotte reflected on 50 years of social capitalism from the brand and its ‘reluctant entrepreneur’ founder Yvon Chouinard (pictured left). The seminar included a call to arms for us to shift from a consumer mindset to one of ownership. He argued that as owners – of purchases like houses, boats, surfboards – we naturally take on a ‘care and repair’ responsibility, as opposed to a ‘consume and use’ approach.

This commitment to care and repair isn’t just rhetoric for Patagonia, which genuinely walks the talk. It repairs over 200,000 products each year – including garments from competitor brands – delivering significant savings in terms of water waste and carbon footprint. It’s a sensibility also perhaps best reflected in Chouinard reassigning ownership of the organisation to the earth in September last year, making our home planet its sole shareholder.

The brand described it as ‘going purpose’ instead of ‘going public’. Patagonia is still a for-profit business, pulling in well over \$US1 billion in annual sales, but the profits from that revenue will be reinvested as dividends to protect the planet in perpetuity.

## Corona Extra Lime

Moving from shareholdings to cervezas, Corona’s ‘Extra Lime’ campaign is a refreshing regenerative commerce idea, three years in the making. The work is a partnership between AB InBev, DRAFTLINE Shanghai and David, Bogotá. Corona is of course best enjoyed with a slice of lime, a key product ritual and symbol. But the nation with the most beer drinkers in the world – China – also produces some of the lowest quality limes in the world. This isn’t only a business issue, but a social one given that many of the farmers growing these limes live in poverty.

So, Corona backed its beer business, by getting into the lime business. It partnered with local farmers, agricultural experts and local government to improve quality in farming techniques and help farmers expand their yields through a Corona-branded lime. The result is an unexpected new channel for the brand, that sold 2 million limes in the first year and regenerated farming economies in Anyue, China. Farmer income increased by 21 per cent, and AB InBev committed to doubling lime yields for 2024 and increasing farmer per capita income by 30 per cent.

## Telco mobilises impact

Canadian telco Telus’ Pollinator Fund for Good is a social impact venture capital fund investing in for-profit businesses with ambitions to fight climate change, enhance food security, and improve healthcare equity. Its portfolio includes Mycocycle, which is teaching fungi to eat garbage and toxic waste to reduce climate impacts of food to landfill; and Flash Forest, which harnesses drones to reforest areas after they’ve been devastated by bushfires.

By aligning capitalism with social change, Telus shattered the typical CSR-wash associated with telcos and demonstrated a commitment to meaningful impact.

### Need to know:

- Play the long game, thinking beyond the brief and beyond quarterly commercial targets
- Just because something is outside of what you’re known for today, don’t let that prevent you from being known for something else tomorrow
- New measurements are needed for purpose marketing efforts where commercial success can be a collateral benefit from social and environmental impact



FLASH FOREST

# Data for Good

The transformative 'Data for Good' trend was one of the highlights of Cannes 2023. This innovative movement harnesses the power of digital, search, and real-world data to create positive change, challenge societal biases, and foster a sense of community both online and out in the physical world.

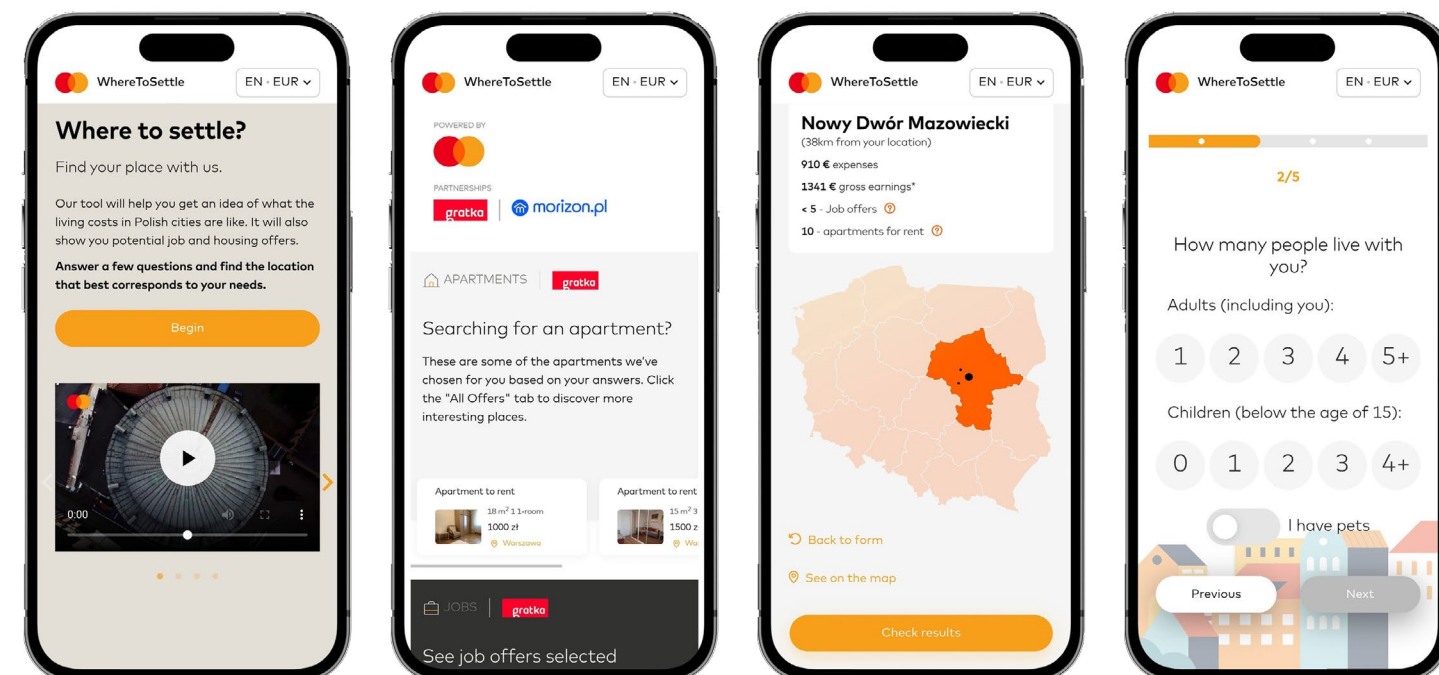
Brands are beginning to see the potential of leveraging data for a greater purpose, and it's already had a positive impact on society.

## Correct the Internet

In a world where internet search results can shape perceptions, the 'Correct the Internet' campaign led by DDB Group Aotearoa and FINCH emerged as a beacon of change. The campaign's driving force was the discovery that search results often misrepresented the achievements of sportswomen.

While women held many of football's records, search engines frequently elevated male athletes instead. This inconsistency prompted the launch of a global movement to hack the search algorithms and mobilise people power to correct this bias and make sportswomen more visible. A film was created to promote the cause and a website developed to allow people to highlight search results with bias.

The initiative was endorsed by United Nations initiative, Football for the Goals, Women in Sport Aotearoa, Women Sport Australia, and New Zealand Football, and many well-known athletes. After millions provided feedback, search results started changing and search engines developed new features to offer male and female results. But the campaign's main achievement is highlighting the need for accurate representation on the digital stage.



ADAGE (SUPPLIED BY MASTERCARD)

## Where to Settle

Mastercard's 'Where to Settle' campaign recognised the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees trying to find a new home in Poland, by setting up an online and mobile tool that combined various datasets to help refugees find the best places to set up home and rebuild their lives.

These datasets provided rich insights into the locations, helping people make informed choices on where to settle based on things like cost of living, employment opportunities and education access.

It's proved a success, as 20 per cent of the 1.5 million refugees who have settled in Poland used the platform to find Polish cities outside of the major metropolitan areas to make a fresh start. The success of 'Where to Settle' rested on the data-driven insights the tool provided, aligning with Mastercard's mission to ensure economic opportunities are accessible to all.

## Data Tienda

In Mexico, WeCapital recognised the challenges faced by low-income women due to the lack of credit history, such as being unable to get funding to start a new business. But the brand realised that it's common throughout Latin America for women to take out weekly or monthly store credits and created a platform to harness informal credit records kept by shopkeepers.



WE CAPITAL VIA THE ONE CLUB FOR CREATIVITY



CORRECT THE INTERNET. IMAGE VIA CAMPAIGN BRIEF

It created the datatienda.mx platform and encouraged women to sign up and provide records from between five and 10 shopkeepers. Once vetted, the shopkeepers' records were converted into official credit histories. More than 10,300 women have registered to build their credit history since the launch of the platform, and over 2,300 have received microloans for their businesses or study plans.

By recognising the spending behaviour of women and converting shopkeeper records into official credit histories, the platform empowered women to access bank loans and pursue entrepreneurial endeavours.

## Plug-Inn

With the scarcity of charging stations presenting a significant obstacle for electric vehicle owners, Renault offered a creative and data-driven solution. Its Plug-Inn app allows users in France to rent home charging stations from other people, similar to the concept of Airbnb.

The success of Plug-Inn shows the potential for creative strategy to effect real change. The app not only addressed infrastructure challenges but also opened new revenue streams and empowered individuals to contribute to the electric vehicle revolution.

The recognition of this innovative strategy at Cannes highlighted the transformative potential of data-driven initiatives in solving real-world problems.

From challenging gender biases in sports to empowering refugees and women through data-driven solutions, these initiatives show how the advertising industry can use data to create a more inclusive and equitable world.

### Need to know:

- The 'Data for Good' trend, showcased at Cannes 2023, harnesses digital, search, and real-world data for positive change
- These data-driven initiatives show the advertising industry's role in fostering inclusivity and equity by addressing real-world challenges

# Set Jetting

In an era where screens dominate our lives, it comes as no surprise that television is stretching its influence beyond the realms of entertainment. A curious trend has emerged – viewers are taking trips inspired by their favourite TV shows – a phenomenon aptly termed ‘Set Jetting’.

This intriguing concept is a major travel trend that sees fans of shows and films researching and – in many cases – visiting filming locations featured in shows and films.

According to Google Trends data<sup>1</sup>, US searches for Sicily roughly doubled between late October and early December, thanks to the second season of HBO’s *The White Lotus*, which was filmed on the rugged island in the Italian region.

TV and film-inspired travel isn’t entirely new of course, pilgrimages to filming locations, studio tours and visits to amusement parks like ‘The Wizarding World of Harry Potter’, is an enduring trend. Tourists flocked to Salzburg in the 1960s after the release of ‘The Sound of Music’ and, in recent decades, locations like New Zealand saw a huge bump in visits from ‘Lord of the Rings’ fans, while New York City offered tourists a chance to go on location tours of shows like ‘Sex and the City’.

Part of the appeal lies in the blend of wanderlust and familiarity, a rare opportunity to step into the shoes of your favourite characters and explore the backdrop that brought their stories to life. A survey by PhotoAid found the most common reason people engage in this kind of tourism is to enjoy an immersive experience that lets them live out storylines of their favourite shows or films (35 per cent)<sup>2</sup>.

Expedia research shows 69 per cent of Australians have considered and 29 per cent have booked trips to destinations after seeing them on streamed shows or movies, while 26 per cent of Australians say the influence of streaming services on their travel plans has increased in the last 12 months<sup>3</sup>. Travel agencies, brands and streaming platforms are increasingly aware of this. Netflix teamed up with a hotel in London to offer Lady Whistledown-themed teas inspired by ‘Bridgerton’, while ‘Outlander’ fans can follow a 12-day self-driving itinerary put together by Visit Scotland featuring key show locations<sup>4</sup>.

A group of filmmakers even created a SetJetters mobile app allowing users to find the locations of famous movie scenes on an interactive map. The app combines tourism information and data from 6000 movies – with plans to add hundreds of thousands more – to guide fans to locations from films like ‘Twilight’ and ‘The Godfather’, where they can recreate their favourite scenes.<sup>5</sup>

The ‘Set Jetting’ phenomenon isn’t confined to Western television alone. Asian countries like South Korea and Japan have witnessed a surge in tourism due to the popularity of K-dramas, live-action shows, and anime films. The New York Times reports that following the release of ‘Squid Game’, Asia-focused travel agency Remote Lands reported a 25 per cent increase in interest in South Korean travel and created a customised Seoul travel itinerary for fans<sup>4</sup>.

South Korean travel and accommodation platform Yanolja Co. aims to treble the number of foreign tourists to the country to 50 million in the next five years by introducing tailored package tour programs combined with K-culture<sup>6</sup>.

This ambitious goal highlights the transcendent power of television as a cultural ambassador, breaking down geographical barriers and fostering cross-cultural connections.

## TV’s influence on shopping habits

It’s not just travel that’s being transformed by our TV viewing habits, it’s changing the way we shop, too.. For brands, it raises questions about the dynamics between media, culture, and consumer behaviour, and presents an opportunity to be a part of it.

The connection between fashion and television has always existed, but recent years have seen an upsurge in viewers seeking to replicate the styles of their favourite characters. The iconic pigeon bag from ‘And Just Like That’ and the ‘ludicrously capacious’ Burberry bag from ‘Succession’<sup>7</sup> are not just accessories, they’ve become symbols of affiliation, connecting fans with shows they love.

These trends are not merely driven by consumerism. They reflect the impact storytelling has on our identities and aspirations. When a character’s wardrobe becomes an extension of their personality, owning a piece of that attire becomes a way of embracing their traits and values. Television is now a dynamic influence on our purchasing decisions, shaping the fashion landscape in sometimes unexpected ways.



THE DENVER POST, IMAGE SUPPLIED BY PARAMOUNT



SETJETTERS.COM



DESTINATION QUEBEC CITÉ

## Quebec City wants *The White Lotus* season 3 to be filmed at the Château Frontenac

by [Lorraine Carpenter](#)

*“Dear Mike White, You know, this has always been a bit of a dream for us. And we’ve been thinking about it for a while: to be one of the next destinations for your acclaimed series, *The White Lotus*.”*

FROM CULT MTL

## The opportunity for brands

For brands, this intersection of television, travel, and shopping is not just a fleeting trend – it's a cultural phenomenon that holds immense potential. It's not enough to merely ride the coattails of popular shows, brands should engage, participate, and start discussions that shape the narrative. Rather than passively piggybacking on these cultural moments, they can drive conversations and provoke deeper explorations.

To seize the opportunities presented by 'Set Jetting', brands must be agile enough to act during the window of opportunity to tap into the collective consciousness as cultures and trends spread like wildfire through the digital landscape. By aligning their products or services with the themes, aesthetics, and values of popular TV shows, brands can establish an authentic connection with their audiences.

## A global perspective

In a world where screens are omnipresent, the influence of television extends far beyond our living rooms. 'Set Jetting' exemplifies the synergy between media, culture, and consumer behaviour, as it redefines the way we travel, shop, and engage with the world around us. For brands willing to embrace this phenomenon, the journey involves not just keeping pace but leading the way, by igniting conversations and crafting narratives that resonate deeply with the evolving desires of the modern consumer. After all, in a world where stories captivate hearts, brands have the power to become storytellers in their own right.

### Need to know:

- 'Set jetting' is a travel trend where viewers visit filming locations of their favourite TV shows and films
- Television is also influencing shopping behaviour, with viewers seeking to replicate the styles of their favourite characters
- In a world captivated by stories, brands have the potential to become storytellers themselves, engaging audiences on a deeper level

A BRIDGERTON AFTERNOON TEA AT THE LANESBOROUGH LONDON. PHOTO VIA AFFINITY MAG



THE WHITE LOTUS SEASON 2 FILMED AT SAN DOMENICO PALACE, SICILY. PHOTO VIA CNN, SUPPLIED BY FOUR SEASONS ON PAGE



# About Futures

This is our tenth Futures report – and our seventh annual collection of marketing and communications trends gleaned from leading creativity, cultural and design events in Australia, New Zealand and around the world. This year's insights are built around inspirational work showcased at the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity, Rising Festival, SXSW, TEDx, Nudgestock and Cannes in Cairns.

This report was written and edited by Miriam Wells, Dan Young, Luke Jovetic, Patrick Martlew and Richard Brett. With contributions from Liana Rossi, Laura Stoll and James Curtis.

## Also available in this series:

- 'The Decade Of Do (2020)
- The Future of Communications (2020)
- The Future of Content (2021)
- Health Futures 2: Science with Soul (2022)
- Futures 6: Alchemy, Avatars and Altered Authority (2022)

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## About Ogilvy PR

Ogilvy PR is a global creative communications agency that partners with brands and organisations to drive value and growth. We build brands, protect reputations, and earn attention and influence through creative storytelling informed by data, and fuelled by technology.

Our specialist practice areas offer media relations, social and digital communications, external and internal stakeholder communications, government relations, issues and crisis management, influencer marketing and sales enablement across audiences and sectors.

We work with some of Australia's most high-profile organisations to develop their communications strategies and deliver creatively led campaigns that drive business outcomes.

We are the region's largest and most specialised public relations and public affairs consultancy. Established in 2001, we have more than 130 communication specialists in Australia and New Zealand across offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Auckland.

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