

# DENTSU CREATIVE TRENDS 2024



THE FUTURES LESS TRAVELED

**“Through creativity, armed with the powers of technology and storytelling, we hold potential to pave ways for many exciting ‘Futures Less Traveled’, borne of core principles of optimism and ambition.”**

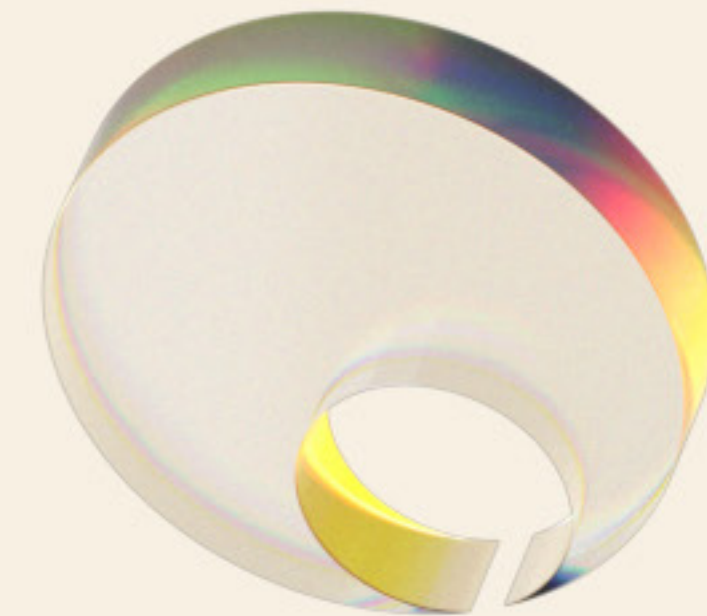


YASU SASAKI, GLOBAL CCO, DENTSU

**“Hope is not a strategy but it is a choice. At a time of exponential change, no one can predict with certainty what the future will bring. But we can design for the future we want to see.”**

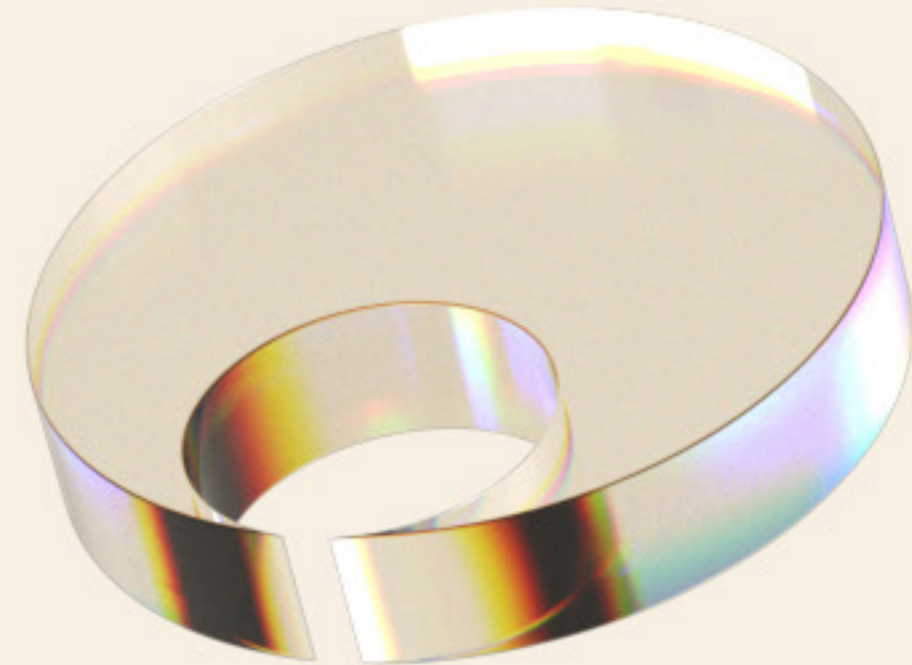


PATRICIA MCDONALD, CSO, EMEA, DENTSU CREATIVE



**“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”**

ROBERT FROST, THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



Our trends report this year is inspired by one of the world’s favorite poems, “The Road Not Taken”. It’s a poem about choices and the power of storytelling to make sense of our choices.

As we look forward we see a world where multiple possible futures coexist. Where the future is not written, where it is up to each of us—brands, businesses, and individuals—to design, innovate, and strive for the future we want to see.

It’s often said that hope is not a strategy; and as we look at the world around us it is hard sometimes to maintain our optimism about the future. Nevertheless, our report embraces hope as a conscious choice in a world where we no longer have time for cynicism.

‘The Futures Less Traveled’ is about the surprising power of small moments of joy and optimism as acts of faith, rebellion, and resistance.

It is about soft power, and about creativity as a superpower. About what happens when a generation who have grown up skilled in the art of world building meet a suite of technologies that make it easier than ever to visualize extraordinary possible futures. Indeed all the imagery in the report—aside from case studies—has been created using Generative AI.

Most of all, it is a call to design for the future we want to see. To realize that it is not written and that we are the generations holding the pen.

# 5 Trends

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**ME, MYSELF AND US**



**ODE TO JOY**



## ODE TO JOY

In a world where joy is in short supply, it becomes more important than ever. We see joy, softness, and play emerge as powerful weapons against a frightening, frantic, and chaotic world.

It is no coincidence that Barbie dominated 2023 like a cultural tour de force, radiating candy-pink positivity. Experiences such as Dopamine Land and the Balloon Museum champion playful, escapist joy while fashion embraces its surrealist side.

Meanwhile, self-care has become a form of quiet rebellion for Gen Z, with skincare emerging as a self-soothing ritual in an age of anxiety. As adulthood looks ever more daunting and key milestones look less accessible — we see a kind of Peter Pan marketplace evolve, as a generation pursues play as a form of therapy.

### OUR SUB TRENDS:

1.1. JOYFUL RESISTANCE

1.2. SELF-CARE AS SUBVERSION

1.3. UNADULTERATED PLAY

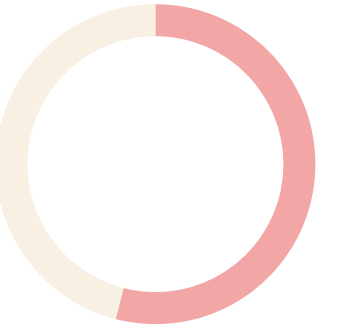


## 7-11 SLURPEE

With millions of possible flavor combos, every Slurpee pour is self-expression in a cup. With declining category sales for frozen drinks, we turned to the most important aspect of young adult lives and a key part of the Slurpee experience—creativity—to launch a new brand platform, look and tagline. As part of the revamp, we reimagined the famous flowing dollop of the Slurpee “S”.

“Anything Flows” hit the scene with a series of vivid TV spots about self-expression, flow and flavor. We then put a spotlight on a community known for its lyrical flow, hip-hop, by partnering with famous rapper Flo Milli to give Slurpee the summer anthem it always deserved. We invited brand fans to spin their own lyrics for a chance to get a spot on the song’s official remix and join Flo Milli on tour, catapulting an aspiring artist into the big leagues.

Anything Flows organically made it on Spotify’s three most coveted playlists: Rap Caviar, Most Necessary and New Music Friday (with over 40 million monthly listeners collectively). We received over 12 million views and streams on the original Anything Flows song, the music video, the TikTok rap battle and the remix. 96% said they were more likely to purchase Slurpee after exposure to the campaign.



MORE THAN HALF OF RESPONDENTS THINK THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH THE STRESS OF THE WORLD IS TO USE DARK HUMOR TO LAUGH ABOUT IT.<sup>1</sup>

## JOYFUL RESISTANCE

“Joy is an act of resistance”, Toi Derricotte.

We see brands, artists, and audiences embrace the simplest of pleasures. Joyous surrealism seems the only possible response to a world in chaos, a world where [Deloitte](#) report that 46% of Gen Z feel stressed or anxious all/almost all of the time.

Fashion and Beauty brands play with absurdity and challenge our perceptions of reality. From [Handbag cars for Jacquemus](#) to [Kusama painting the town polka dot](#) for Louis Vuitton to subway trains [with mascara](#), a playful and uplifting spirit can be seen. Even if some concepts existed more in the imagination than in reality.

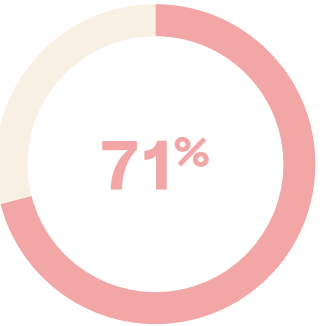
“Dopamine dressing” dominated the catwalk, featuring vibrant colors designed to boost the wearer’s mood.

As Laura Hampson puts it, in *Glamour* magazine, “How dopamine dressing works is that we actively choose to wear clothing that makes us happy and brings us joy (yes, please!) — it’s part-fashion, part-mindfulness”.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, we see humor and surrealism in advertising making a comeback with Fiat taking a stand against grey and [Husqvarna marshaling a choir of singing vacuum cleaners](#). Totino’s absurd and surreal [campaign](#) for its pizza rolls turned everyday situations into unforgettable mind-bending moments.

Moreover, as we touch on in our next trend, humor is increasingly being used for surprising purposes.





OF RESPONDENTS SAY FINDING JOY AND HAPPINESS IN EVERYDAY MOMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ESCAPE STRESS ARE IMPORTANT TO LIVE WELL.<sup>3</sup>

## SELF-CARE AS SUBVERSION

In parallel, we see Gen Z investing in self-care as never before. The “Everything Shower” becomes a moment of refuge and cocooning for a generation that is seeking comfort in the small things, while elaborate Korean-inspired beauty rituals take on an almost meditative quality.

“Typically lasting two to four hours, an Everything Shower involves a weekly head-to-toe routine that features hair masks, exfoliating scrubs, shaving oils, and moisturizing balms” explains Chloe McDonnell, *The Guardian*.<sup>4</sup>

Around the world, we see a rejection of hustle culture and the embrace of “soft life” and “lazy girl jobs”.

#Softlife has a billion TikTok views and counting<sup>5</sup>, while the #lazygirljob phenomenon coined by creator Gabrielle Judge, celebrates work-life balance and anti-hustle culture — although many argue that it is not “lazy” to expect not to work to the point of burnout.

In China, a younger generation of consumers rebel (in the softest of ways) against a fast-paced, high-pressure lifestyle where they often feel alienated from their true selves: the concept of Yi Huá. “The Lying Flat” or Tang Ping movement is a widespread reaction against constant striving and self-improvement, making time instead to just be.

## UNADULTERATED PLAY

Finally, we see a preoccupation with play and a deferral of adult responsibilities. With “adult” milestones slipping out of reach due to the cost of living crisis, play becomes a refuge.

David Beckham, ever the influencer, has revealed his love of Lego, one of a growing number of AFOLs (Adult Fans of Lego) contributing to a 17% sales boost in 2022.<sup>6</sup> “Kidult” toys are a multi-billion dollar industry, while McDonald’s Adult Happy Meals were an instant hit.

Art galleries are fusing with soft play to meet the demand, with properties such as the Balloon Museum and Bubble Planet expanding around the world alongside giant adult playgrounds such as Ballie Ballerson, combining ball pits with cocktail hour. Meanwhile, the #girlsdinner trend on TikTok gives adults permission to eat exactly what they want, however unusual the combination, often reaching for childhood favorites.

Dentsu Creative Italy extended play time with their campaign for San Remo, one of Italy’s favorite music festivals. “Neverending San Remo” celebrated the timeless allure of the festival with a mischievous campaign designed to be shared.



# WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS & BUSINESSES

## **FIND THE FUNNY**

Moments of humor and levity matter more than ever in an anxious world. Now that the Cannes Lions festival have introduced a category dedicated to humor, expect to see comedy's 2023 comeback expand into 2024.

## **MAKE THE MOMENT MATTER**

So intense is our pace of life that every moment of respite and relaxation matters. Brands who can create pauses, rituals and moments that allow consumers to exhale and be themselves will feel the benefit.

## **OPTIMISM IS NOT AN INDULGENCE**

As challenging as the world around us can feel, optimism is not naive or self-indulgent. Only through optimism, linked to action, can we make change possible.



# THE MEMES OF PRODUCTION



## THE MEMES OF PRODUCTION

Related to our first trend, we see a reclaiming of genres and formats easily underestimated as superficial, soft, or playful as tools for change. As the creator economy soars and brands embrace entertainment, we see surprising new content formats emerge as drivers of serious business growth, and societal change.

A generation raised on world-building and co-creation is taking those skills into adulthood, with heightened expectations of agency and empowerment.

Storytelling becomes a force for change, with the long-neglected topic of climate change emerging front and center. In TikTok, we see the honing of perfectly packaged content primed to educate, challenge, or disrupt on any subject, from finance to skincare to social justice.

### OUR SUB TRENDS:

2.1. FROM WORLD-BUILDING TO BUILDING BETTER WORLDS

2.2. CHANGE THE STORY, CHANGE THE FUTURE

2.3. THE MEME-ING OF LIFE

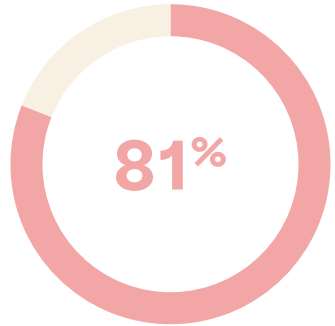


## FROM WORLD-BUILDING TO BUILDING BETTER WORLDS

A generation raised on the art and craft of world-building expect to take an active role in reshaping the physical world they live in. As part of Fortnite’s “Creative Mode”, Epic Games introduced Unreal Editor inviting players to become engineer-architect-artist-storytellers designing their own “islands”.

Nike was one of the first brands to adopt the technology creating Airphoria as a means of immersing fans in an Air Max-themed universe. Meanwhile, Saba looked to Roblox to create the world’s first menstruation education game in the multiverse, successfully educating over 30 million kids online.

We see major political organizations legitimize gaming as a space to debate and make a change. The World Economic Forum has created a virtual Swiss town, designed as a place for Davos’ stakeholders to interact and collaborate.



81% OF CMOS BELIEVE BRANDS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE.<sup>7</sup>

The Metaverse Architecture Biennale brought together architects to debate and discuss the potential of architecture and design in the Metaverse.

Beyond the virtual world, we see a Minecraft-inspired mentality infiltrate the every day. The CHI 311 site enables Chicago citizens to request tree planting, graffiti removal, and other acts of civic good. Users can track their requests and see the impact they are making in the real world.

Guerrilla gardening or “Botanarchy” as author Ellen Miles calls it, continues to engage as a gentler approach to rebellion, with an edge. Miles campaigns for access to green nature to be included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and champions guerrilla gardening as providing a vital sense of control and agency in a world where the future can seem volatile.

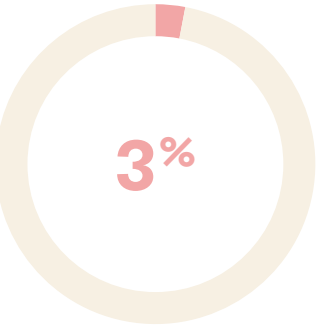


## CHANGE THE STORY, CHANGE THE FUTURE

“It is impossible to build a better world if one cannot first imagine it”. Lesley Lokko, Novelist and Curator.

Since the days when we huddled together around the campfire, we have known the power of storytelling to change behavior. Until recently, however, storytellers have shied away from some of the most pressing issues, with just 3% of scripted drama featuring climate change in any way.<sup>8</sup> In a shift in the cultural landscape, 2023 was the year of the ‘eco-thriller’ with blockbusters like “The Last of Us” and Apple TV’s “Extrapolations” confronting our darkest fears.

HBO brought the universe of “The Last of Us” to life to great visceral effect with their ‘Infected Billboard’ in partnership with Dentsu Creative Mexico. The hyper-real fungus appeared to take over everything around it, infecting even a car and street furniture, also going viral online!



SCRIPTED DRAMA SHIED AWAY FROM PRESSING ISSUES,  
WITH JUST 3% FEATURING CLIMATE CHANGE.<sup>8</sup>

With their “Mother Nature” film Apple demonstrated conclusively that purpose and entertainment are by no means mutually exclusive, as a concerned Octavia Spencer demanded a status update from execs on their progress on sustainability. Studies demonstrate storytelling significantly outperforms fact-based communication in driving sustainable behaviors.<sup>9</sup>

A good place to begin a new narrative is with new storytellers, building on a powerful desire to challenge older, colonial narratives and tell new stories, from new perspectives.

In partnership with Dentsu Creative India and Dentsu Creative Portugal, Vedantu, an e-learning platform created “The Everything Book” an innovation that shares the stories of local role models inside an internet signal aggregator to democratize education and inspire children from rural communities in India.

# 2.3.

## THE MEME-ING OF LIFE

Like parables or cartoons before them, memes and reels have emerged as a way of distilling complex ideas into bite-sized, shareable, and endlessly repeatable formats.

As TikTok demonstrates there is no topic, from finance to Excel hacks to social justice, too complex to be condensed into pithy video content. So it's no surprise that brands are experimenting with new ways to use them.

EcoTok is one such collective of 21 environmental educators and activists seeking to galvanize action through hopeful, short-form storytelling. Understanding the influence of the platform, TikTok launched the #aGoodCollective campaign marking World Mental Health Day with resources and stories to drive mental health awareness.

In France, Amazon Prime Video invited consumers to compete for a voice-acting role in one of its upcoming Amazon Original shows, using TikTok's Duet feature. The campaign earned 120,000 new followers on Prime Video France's TikTok account.<sup>10</sup>

To mark 'World Day of Theatre' Dentsu Creative Kenya invited the H-Town Kids, famous for their scrappy online parodies, to re-enact popular Netflix shows.





# WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS & BUSINESSES

## **GAMING IS SERIOUS BUSINESS**

If we want to change attitudes and behavior, it may start with play. If we can convince a generation to take the same sense of agency and ownership they feel in games into the real world imagine the impact they can have on the world.

## **MAIN CHARACTER ENERGY MATTERS**

If we want to tell new stories, we need new heroes, and it matters who is holding the pen. It's time for brands to lead the way in elevating new voices, with new and diverse perspectives.

## **NEXT GENERATION CREATORS**

The creator economy has already had an extraordinary impact on the world of marketing. Now imagine the creator economy married to the power of generative AI, the barrier to creating high fidelity assets no higher than a prompt and an imagination.



**HERE WE ARE NOW**



## HERE WE ARE NOW

“In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught.” — Baba Dioum.

In response to a world that can feel overwhelming and a cost of living crisis, we see a powerful engagement with all things local and homegrown. The post-pandemic “revenge travel” boom shows signs of fading but in its place, we see a desire to engage with local spaces and places.

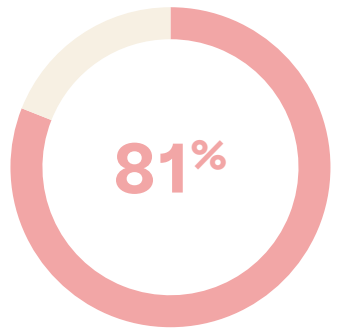
This does not mean a parochial turning away from other places and cultures. We see a hunger for authentic human stories wherever they come from, a recognition that the most compelling story of all is humanity. Those traveling look beyond the surface to understand the real story of the countries and cultures they visit.

### OUR SUB TRENDS:

3.1. EMPATHY IN ACTION

3.2. LOCAL LUXURY

3.3. THE COZY WEB



OF CMOS AGREE BRANDS CAN USE THEIR BUDGETS TO AMPLIFY INDEPENDENT AND DIVERSE VOICES.<sup>11</sup>

## EMPATHY IN ACTION

Allied with our new storytellers trend, we see a desire to hear the authentic story of places from the people who know and love them best.

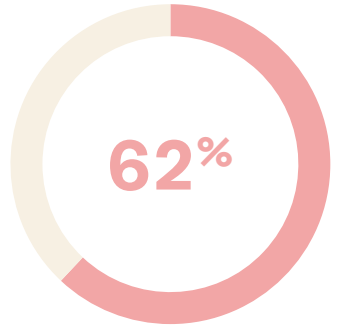
The travel industry is placing new emphasis on empowering indigenous communities to tell and profit from their own stories. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's "Original Original" campaign promotes experiences owned by Canada's First Nation communities, Inuits and Métis. Sensitive engagement with these communities is paramount as businesses navigate the line, too often ignored in the past, between exploration and exploitation.

We also see a resurgence in hyper-local media. Earlier this year, Cox Media Group (CMG) launched Neighborhood TV tapping into the need to connect with our own communities.

Corona's Native Sportscasters campaign earned the beer brand plaudits for its inclusive football match coverage inviting Mexicans to broadcast football matches in their native language. While many programs are broadcast in Spanish, there are as many as 68 native languages within the country. Aligned to this trend we see brands reminding us all of the wonder and beauty of the physical world in a world where almost anything can be AI-generated. AWAY luggage company reminds us that "The World Is Not AI-Generated" while the Nikon camera brand celebrates the extraordinary, unpredictable beauty of the real world vs the world generated by prompts.

To promote Air France-KLM's loyalty programme, Flying Blue, Dentsu Creative France told the story of member, Didi Han, as she travels to Seoul, she opens up about how different trips shaped her personality.





OF YOUNG ADULTS IN 2023 SAID THEY'D BE MOTIVATED TO BUY A PRODUCT OR SERVICE IF IT HELPED THEM ACHIEVE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY BELONGING.<sup>12</sup>

## LOCAL LUXURY

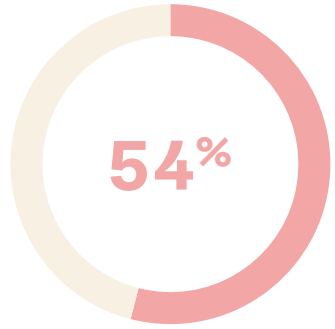
Since the pandemic, there has been a marked shift in the reliance on international networks and an appreciation for goods and services far closer to home.

A Horizon Media survey revealed that 62% of young US adults said they would be “motivated to buy a product or service if it helps them achieve a sense of community belonging.”<sup>12</sup>

A useful barometer for this sentiment in action is China where young consumers are favoring homegrown fashion and beauty brands. A network of local coffee brands has sprung up, from Saturn Bird to Manner, challenging preconceptions of what coffee “should” be according to Western traditions. Beauty brands such as Florasis and Proya are also growing rapidly, in part due to their embrace of traditional Chinese craft and ingredients.

In Vietnam, local is gaining in prestige with the likes of popular shoe brand Biti’s showcasing 40 years of progress in Vietnam, in 40 frames delivered in 1.6 seconds, the time it takes to take a physical step forward. Featuring the work of 40 local artists ‘A Step Forward’ quickly went viral as audiences were inspired by their national pride to share content from the campaign.

In India, we also see a desire to embrace local luxury brands, amidst the rise and rise of India’s middle class, the fastest-growing demographic in the country, that now accounts for 1 in 3 of the population.<sup>13</sup> India is one of the fastest-growing markets for luxury in the world, with an appetite both for imported brands that give back to the local community, and for local fashion, beauty, and skincare brands.



OF GEN Z WOULD JOIN COMMUNITIES PROVIDING CONTENT IS AIMED AT THEIR PASSIONS.<sup>14</sup>

## THE COZY WEB

Our desire for a more rooted sense of place is also being reinforced in our digital worlds.

As an evolution of the interest in decentralized social platforms, we see the emergence of the 'cozy web', a term popularized by writer Venkatesh Rao which describes the private, intimate digital spaces on the internet people are increasingly retreating to.

The cozy web also marks a shift in the content that gets shared which is less about creating things designed to go viral and instead creating slower content for a smaller audience of like-minded individuals "offering space to consider how you want to contribute to the discourse. This is also translating into novel ways to market to audiences.

Chinese influencer Annie Yi debuted a livestream shopping experience with a difference on the e-commerce platform [Xiaohongshu](#) attracting over 1 million viewers (and 50M RMB) over a nine-hour long broadcast where "the live stream was not the usual fast-paced peddling of products; rather, it felt like an intimate sharing session."<sup>15</sup>

The need for niche and neighborliness is manifesting again in the surge of small media titles covering topics closer to home. Writers for titles like [The New York Times](#) and [Bloomberg Business Week](#) are sidebarring for independent worker-owned websites like [Byline](#) for smaller audiences. 404 Media is a new independent media company founded by technology journalists pledging to dive into the stories in between the headlines.

# WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS & BUSINESSES

## **A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED**

We are moving rapidly beyond the age of the bland and universal insight, replaced by a hunger for authentic humanity. While lived experiences may be different, we recognize truth authentically told when we see it.

## **DISCOVERY AND INTIMACY**

We see a desire both for discovery and familiarity. Consumers want to explore beyond the obvious and to also take comfort in things close to home. The opportunity is there to use hyper local communications, to uplift local businesses and to show new sides of familiar cities.

## **CULTURAL CONNECTION**

Even the largest global brands can benefit from embracing local cultures and codes in how they engage audiences globally. KFC China for example combines imagery from the brand's heritage with codes borrowed from traditional Chinese iconography.



# THE MAGIC IN THE MACHINE





## THE MAGIC IN THE MACHINE

As AI accelerates, we are asking some bigger questions about the role of technology in augmenting our humanity. How can technology extend our capacities and connections? What role can it play in shaping desirable futures?

This trend manifests in multiple ways from using AI as a partner to liberate our imaginations to bridging the “digital” vs “physical” gap through touch, haptics, and gesture to the maturation of digital avatars to augment our friendships.

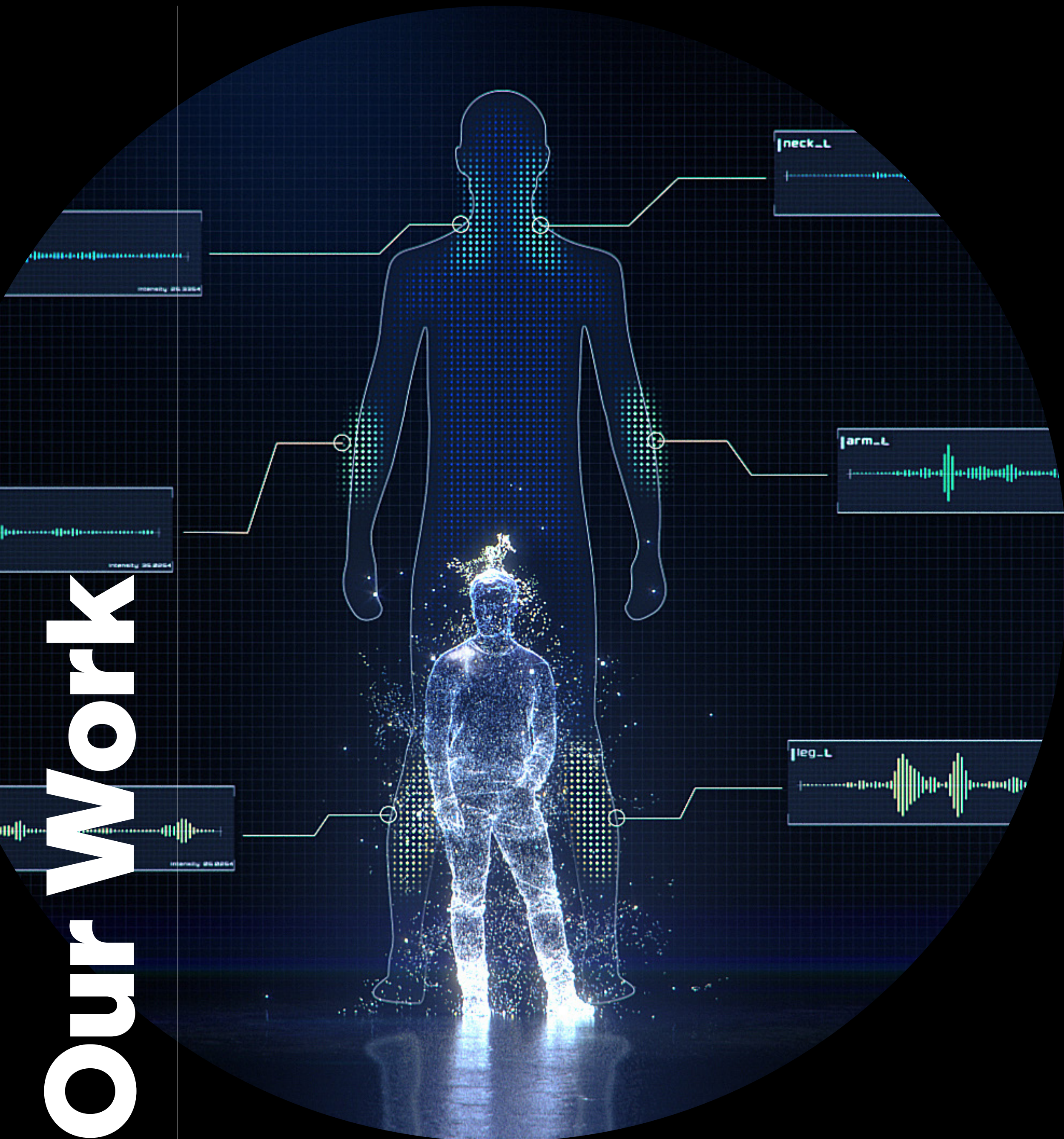
In 2024 and beyond, businesses will need to assess the role of the human touch—literally and figuratively, in the development of products and services.

### OUR SUB TRENDS:

4.1. AIMAGINATION

4.2. IN TOUCH WITH HUMANITY

4.3. BORDERLESS COMMERCE

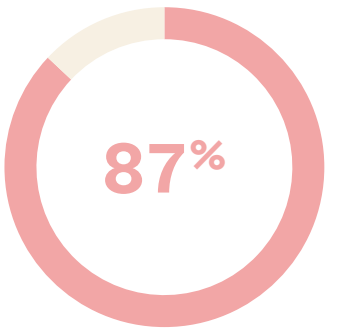
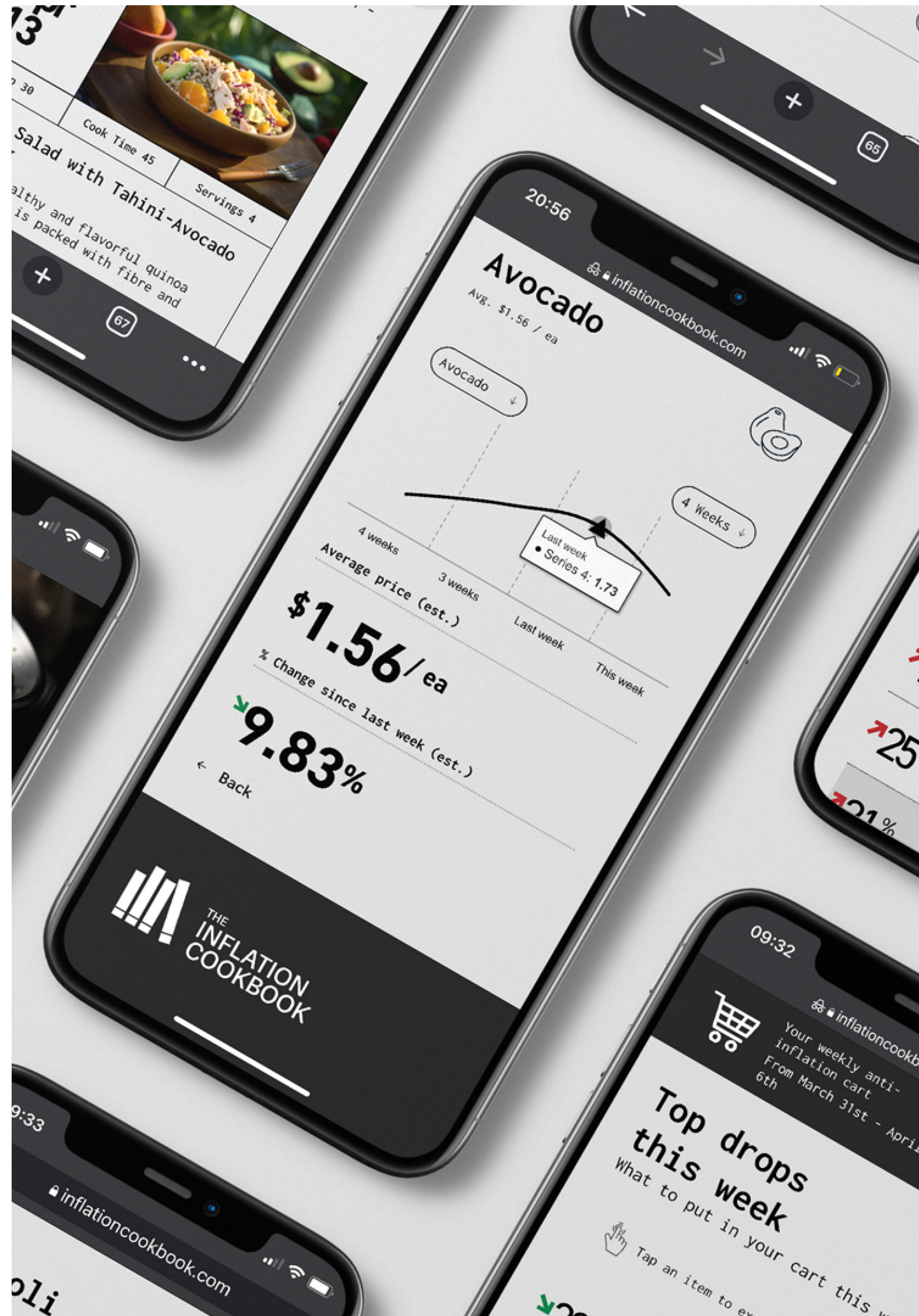


## ALL PLAYERS WELCOME

The All Players Welcome project from Dentsu Lab Tokyo was established to develop tools that will create a world where anyone, including those with physical disabilities, can express themselves. With their first project, the team gave paralyzed DJ, Masatane Muto, the ability to mix music through eye-movement technology, and more recently they made it possible for Masatane to operate an avatar using 'Electromyography Signals' in 'Project Humanity'.

In partnership with 'Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation' and 'WITH ALS', an organization established to support people living with the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) by Masatane, 'Project Humanity' detects electrical signals transmitted from the brain to move muscles with electromyography sensors.

Working with Masatane to develop the prototype, and using NTT's tech, the DJ is now able to express himself 'physically' in real-time when he performs to his fans in the Metaverse or on a digital screen using signals controlled from six sensors on his neck, arms, and legs.



87% OF CMOs AGREE THAT GENERATIVE AI REPRESENTS THE FUTURE OF ADVERTISING AND MARKETING.<sup>16</sup>

## AIMAGINATION

2023 has been the year audiences across the board have curiously embraced Gen-AI. Whether it's prompting ChatGPT to draft copy or igniting Midjourney to ideate town plans there is an inherent awe in the technology, what might it make possible? That curiosity earned ChatGPT a million users in 5 days.<sup>17</sup>

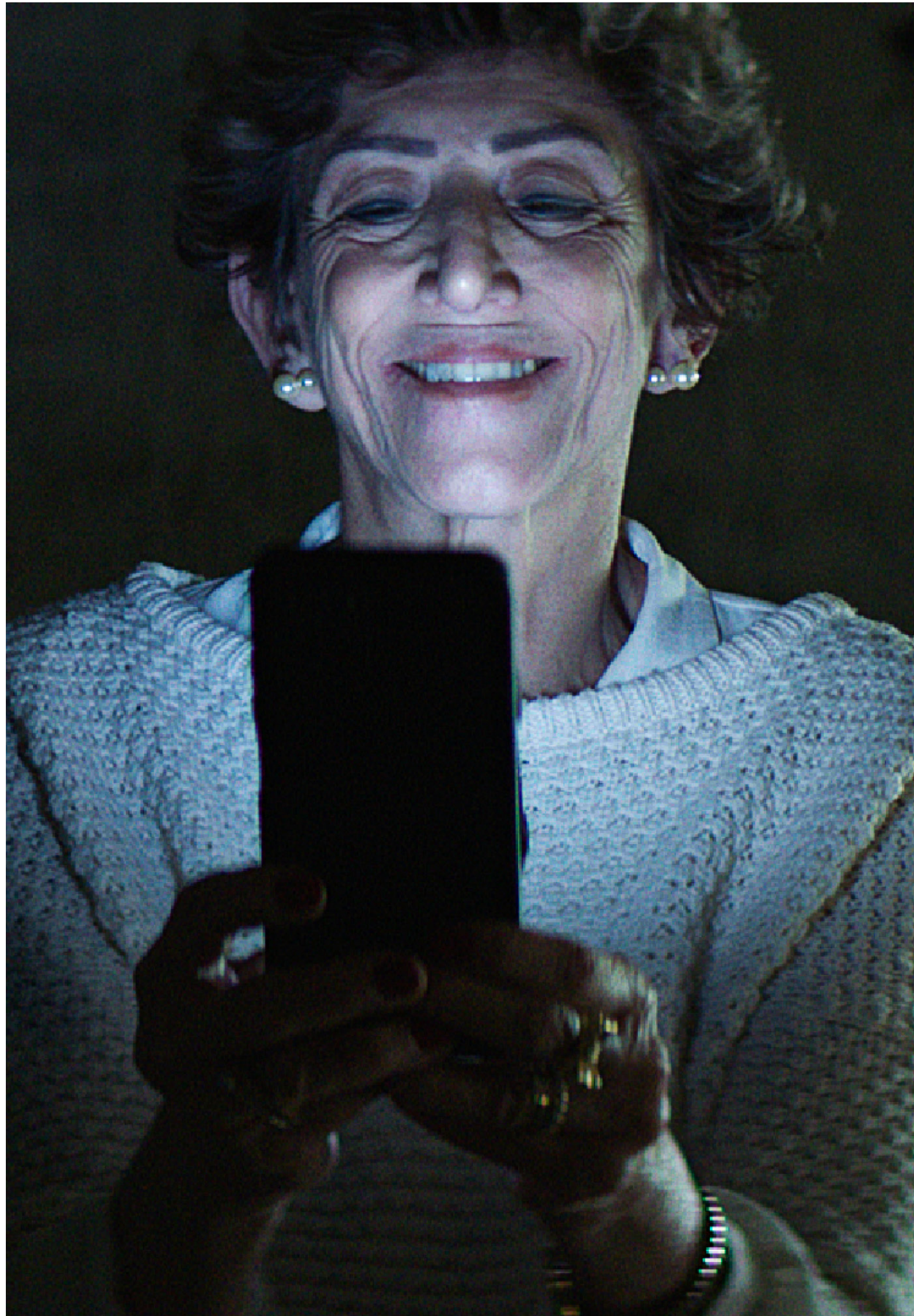
Brands are making an asset of the unexpected creative potential of Gen-AI. Coca-Cola® created Coca-Cola® Y3000 Zero Sugar in collaboration with artificial intelligence attempting to “understand how fans envision the future through emotions, aspirations, colors, flavors and more”.

Mayk.it is a virtual AI music studio for amateurs combining sound engineering, composing, and mixing in one app with some creators already signed to labels. Artist Sir Peter Blake, aged 91, is using AI-powered robots to convert photographic images to portraits in mere minutes.

The technique combines traditional Chinese calligraphy techniques with innovation; as Blake says “It’s a kind of magic, isn’t it?”

Alongside pure play creativity, in 2024 we will see use cases that enhance the customer experience in more practical ways by leveraging Gen-AI. Dentsu Creative partnered with Skip the Dishes, a Canadian food delivery brand to develop The Inflation Cookbook, an AI-assisted app that tracks volatile grocery prices and generates recipes in response to real-time pricing data.

Over 150M people have already used myAI, Snapchat’s Gen AI chatbot, for everything from design inspiration to skincare.<sup>18</sup> In Japan AI is being positioned as a kind of “spiritual partner for the elderly” creating an always-available companion that will not show signs of boredom or frustration.

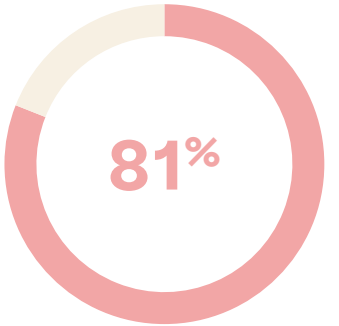


## IN TOUCH WITH HUMANITY

Even in a climate of immersive digital technologies, there is an unmatched emotional resonance in physical and sensorial stimulation.

Innovations are coming to market that engage additional senses. Chinese electronics giant TCL's Gesture Ring software is embedded on selected TV sets inviting consumers to use palm and fist gestures to control content. Its Movie Mood Explorer function senses the viewer's mood from their gestures and uses AI to make recommendations.

Also in China, we see the younger generation evolve traditional rituals into digital experiences. A Chinese Wooden Fish, traditionally used as a prayer charm has been translated into an app that has been downloaded over 600,000 times.<sup>20</sup>



OF CMOS AGREE THAT IN THE FUTURE CUSTOMERS WILL PAY A PREMIUM FOR HUMAN-CREATED CONTENT.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, Amazon plans to expand its Amazon One pay-by-palm technology to all Whole Foods stores in the US by the end of the year. Users connect their palm with a stored credit card and then can pay with a simple wave of their hand.

Dentsu Creative's groundbreaking work for Eurofarma, "Scrolling Therapy" used facial recognition and social content to help Parkinson's patients combat one of the saddest symptoms of the disease—an inability to express emotion through facial expressions. By matching some of the most common interactions on social media—like, scroll and play—with facial expressions, patients could browse their feeds using their faces, and at the same time complete their facial exercises, formerly an unpleasant and time consuming chore.

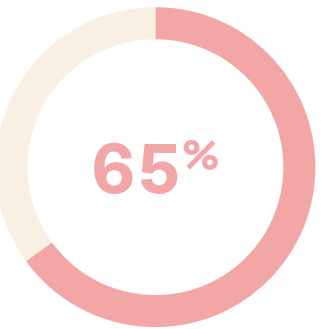


## BORDERLESS COMMERCE

AR, AI, and commerce continue to blend and embed in our lives in increasingly sophisticated ways to enhance the consumer experience. This is creating exciting new possibilities that blur the boundaries between online and offline commerce, making every moment and interaction a shoppable one.

Dentsu Creative China created the [KFC Re:Store](#) virtual store experience for a young generation of Chinese consumers, 50% of whom claim to spend more time hanging out with friends in gaming environments than in the “real world,” with 70% of Gen Z users tending to socialize online.<sup>22</sup>

Alongside custom avatar apparel and “Chicken Coin” currency that they can exchange for virtual goods, users are able to order in the metaverse and have their order delivered to a physical destination.



65% OF BRANDS AND AGENCIES CITE AI AS THE BIGGEST TREND TO COME OUT OF THIS YEAR.<sup>21</sup>

AR continues to offer an element of enchantment to real-world interactions for both adults and children alike. One such example is [The Haribo Happiness Hunt](#), an AR treasure hunt tasking families to hunt for 3D candy hidden in the scene.

Innovations in AI are also transforming search, creating concierge-like commerce experiences. Multisearch in [Google Lens](#) can help users design and track down the perfect item; enabling users to search by images customized to their needs. Shopify is enabling every merchant to create a 3D AR model in under 20 minutes in line with the release of IOS17.

Meanwhile, image recognition is transforming sectors from healthcare to skincare to agriculture. Drones powered by image recognition technology can assess the ripeness of fruit and pick it from the tree when ready.

# WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS & BUSINESSES

## **EMBRACE EVERYWHERE COMMERCE**

The idea of online vs offline commerce feels obsolete in a world where a shoppable digital layer surrounds so many of our real world interactions and technologies. Design instead for a world where any encounter can be a shoppable one.

## **KEEP IN TOUCH**

As more and more of our brand experiences are digitally enabled, interfaces such as gesture, touch and image recognition will ensure that those experiences are genuinely brand building, distinctive and delightful.

## **IMAGINE THE IMPOSSIBLE**

Generative AI lets us imagine entirely new sights, sounds and possibilities. The only limit is our collective imagination. Yet a world of unlimited possibilities can be as alarming as it's inspiring. 2023 was the year when governments around the world began in earnest to think about how to balance safety and innovation in AI; expect 2024 to see much soul searching in this space.



**ME MYSELF AND US**



## ME, MYSELF AND US

On roads less traveled we are joining travelers of our own peer group and of different generations to make sense of our worlds and encounter perspectives not previously part of our experience.

To take control in an uncertain world consumers swing between the need to attend to their own needs (“oxygen mask on first”) and the needs of the collectives we find ourselves a part of — our extended families, workplaces, or communities. What emerges is a radical shake-up of our understanding of the individual and the shared experience.

On the one hand, the relationships between generations and communities are evolving. On the other, our sense of our own identity is evolving, inspired by the possibilities of virtual personas that can engage in the world on our behalf.

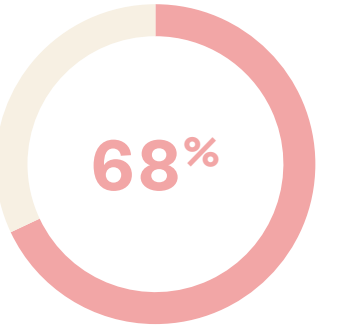
### OUR SUB TRENDS:

5.1. THE 'I' IN COLLECTIVE

5.2. MY (INTER)GENERATIONS

5.3. DIGITAL DOPPELGANGERS





OF UK CONSUMERS SAY IT IS IMPORTANT TO FEEL PART OF THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY.<sup>23</sup>

## THE 'I' IN COLLECTIVE

On one hand focusing on yourself may be a necessary strategy for self-preservation in challenging times. On the other, there is an implicit understanding that life is lived alongside others and that there are benefits to tuning into different types of wisdom. Across the spectrum, our inherent need for belonging and social bonding means people still crave the thrill and safety of connection. Sociologist Emile Durkheim calls this “collective effervescence”; “the unique surge in feeling when people come together for a shared purpose”.

“Collectivity” and “Individualism” become not binary options but two states we can inhabit simultaneously. In Western cultures, traditionally more individualist, we see a desire for more collective existences. French organization Hyper Voisins (Super Neighbors) for example inspires the art of being a good neighbor by creating in-person events and WhatsApp groups for people to both discuss neighborhood issues and socially bond.

In cultures that have traditionally been more collective, individuals are exploring individuality within the collective; not rejecting close familial and societal bonds but finding space for the individual within those structures. In India, SBI Life Insurance adapted their proposition from “Main Se Hum” (From me to we) to “Apne Liye Apno Ke Liye” (For me and mine) a seemingly small but significant shift.

In Japan, the ‘shared bookstore’ movement invites individuals to curate their own bookshelves in stores which others can then purchase from, for example, Passage in Tokyo, bringing the concept of social commerce into the physical space.

## MY (INTER)GENERATIONS

For both practical and emotional reasons, we see an increase in intergenerational living and relationships. Young people are increasingly less able to leave the family home while ageing populations rely on familial support.

More profoundly, consumers are increasingly realizing the power and wisdom of intergenerational heads together. In place of unproductive and adversarial battles, mature and youthful generations are embracing a culture of listening and collaboration.

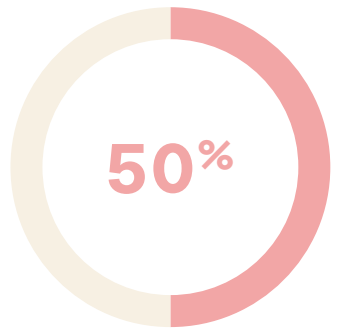
Many cultures have long embraced the wisdom of elders but only now are Western consumers recognizing the power of grandparents as influencers, with skills and aesthetics now highly aspirational to a generation craving authenticity and slow living.

The #grandmillennial style remains a surprising resilient interiors trend, alongside #coastalgrandma chic.

In the UK, media brand Lad Bible in collaboration with the Royal British Legion facilitated poignant conversations between First World War Veterans and current soldiers. In Copenhagen, Living by Alfa is a new kind of development reserving space for both families and over 55's with communal spaces designed for intergenerational mixing.

More broadly, we see a fundamental reappraisal of what it means to engage older audiences with very different lifestyles and aspirations than previous generations. Formats traditionally reserved for 'youth' audiences are reimagined for mature audiences, such as "The Golden Bachelor".

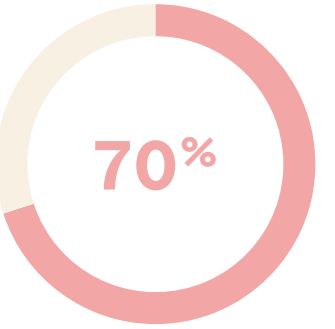
Fashion brands continued their love affair with more mature talent, with Loewe's Autumn Winter campaign featuring Dame Maggie Smith (88) while actress Naomi Watts has created a beauty brand, "Stripes" aimed at menopausal skin.



HALF OF AMERICANS AGED 18-29 LIVE WITH AT LEAST ONE PARENT, UP FROM 38% IN 2000.<sup>24</sup>

When it was reported that STI rates among Canadians over 65 had risen by 240%, Dentsu Creative Canada looked to the unique bond between grandparents and their grandchildren as a means to tackle this. F#cking Old assorted hard candies, designed to be shared, are each wrapped with a conversation starter around safer sex.





70% OF GEN ALPHA GAMERS CITE SOCIALIZING AS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF GAMING.<sup>25</sup>

## DIGITAL DOPPELGANGERS

While we navigate our relationship with our families, generations, and communities, the rise and rise of AI is also prompting us to explore our relationship with our own identity.

For Gen Z, dressing their avatars allows them to express their individuality (47%) and feel good about themselves (43%), but also to feel more connected to peers — both in the digital and physical worlds. 70% say they get physical style inspiration from dressing their avatars.<sup>26</sup>

The digital doppelganger emerges — literally a digital twin that can be used as a proxy. In France, we see ChatGPT used as a means to manage awkward conversations, rather than ghosting the unfortunate friend or partner.

Whilst AI rights and IP remains a hot topic some users are getting ahead and taking control of how their digital identity is used in the future.

For example, musician Grimes has released a program allowing artists to transform their voice samples into a “GrimesAI voiceprint” that can be used in original songs.

Adobe, which has trained its Firefly model on Adobe Stock, has openly licensed this and other public-domain content and is exploring a compensation model for creators.

A more problematic aspect of the trend is the rights models and actors hold over their images and identity in a world of generative AI. In the world of fashion, models, and agents are concerned that body scans enable businesses to use models’ virtual bodies without their consent. The issue of control over one’s own image and likeness was also a major factor in the recent Hollywood Actors’ Strike, with Tom Hanks experiencing the perils of Deep Fake technology when his image was used to promote a dental plan.

# WHAT IT MEANS FOR BRANDS & BUSINESSES

## **WISDOM OF THE AGES**

As older generations become aspirational once again, consider how brands can embrace and harness their wisdom. From DIY to education to making do and mending older generations have a wealth of practical expertise and experience to share.

## **MULTI-GENERATIONAL MARKETING**

Design for multi-generational households and cultures rather than demographic stereotypes. Find unusual commonalities. The Two Generations service matches older people living alone with younger audiences seeking affordable accommodation.

## **DESIGN FOR THE DOPPELGANGER**

While real world retail will stay with us, we will see ever increasing opportunities for virtual commerce, virtual services, even virtual workforces. How can brands and business help consumers take control of their digital identity to unlock new business models?

# IN CONCLUSION

In an uncertain world, fluidity and flexibility are everything. What's abundantly clear is that there are any number of possible futures before us, from the hopeful to the dystopian.

What will serve us best is not certainty but imagination; the mental and organizational agility to imagine new possibilities—both alarming and extraordinary—and to innovate to meet them.

There are of course key strategies we can adopt to give us greater control of our destinies. Our 2023 CMO Survey shows that CMOs seek above all else a direct, owned relationship with their customer. Moreover, we see 81% in agreement that their business will make a fundamental pivot in response to climate change.

The future-ready business will require both sustainable business models and enduring customer relationships but perhaps most of all it will require imagination and optimism. The ability to continue to hope for, design for, and innovate for a better future even when the world around us looks often like a volatile and alarming place.

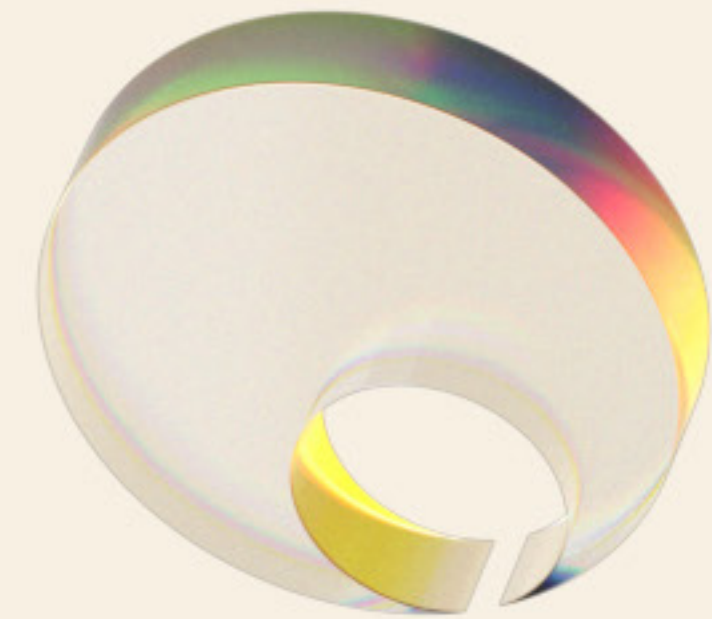
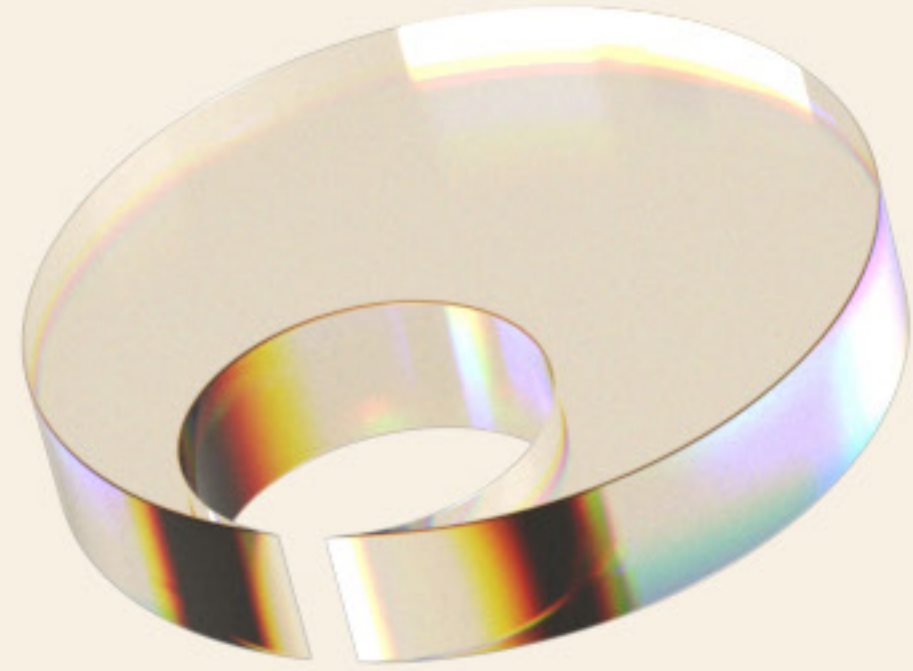
In exploring The Futures Less Traveled, imagination and creativity will remain our superpowers.



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# THANK YOU



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