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AKCELO ON

# TREND

# AKCELO ON TREND 2023

In today's ever-evolving digital landscape, staying on top of the latest trends is crucial for progressive brands to remain competitive, edgy and relevant. As new technologies, platforms and behaviours emerge, it's essential to keep up with what's hot and what's next, to ensure your marketing stay fresh, effective and resonates with a new global audience.

Here are 23 trends to watch in 2023 to help keep your brand on the cutting edge of culture.

Aden Hepburn  
Global CEO AKCELO

## CONTENTS

4	<a href="#">Evolution of search</a>
7	<a href="#">The ugly selfie</a>
10	<a href="#">Community is the new creator</a>
14	<a href="#">Virtual brand ambassadors</a>
18	<a href="#">Endless media</a>
20	<a href="#">Rise of the super apps</a>
23	<a href="#">Subscription overload</a>
26	<a href="#">Fast content</a>
28	<a href="#">Situationships</a>
31	<a href="#">Good feeds good vibes</a>
33	<a href="#">Purposeful empowerment</a>
35	<a href="#">Ageless play</a>
38	<a href="#">A toast to sobriety</a>
40	<a href="#">Beyond skin deep</a>
43	<a href="#">Crypto clubs</a>
45	<a href="#">Rewirement not retirement</a>
47	<a href="#">What works for you</a>
50	<a href="#">Making cents of money</a>
52	<a href="#">Metainclusivity</a>
55	<a href="#">Brand 3.0</a>
58	<a href="#">First-solver gaming</a>
61	<a href="#">Rise of the anti—hero</a>
63	<a href="#">The year we grappled with ai</a>



01

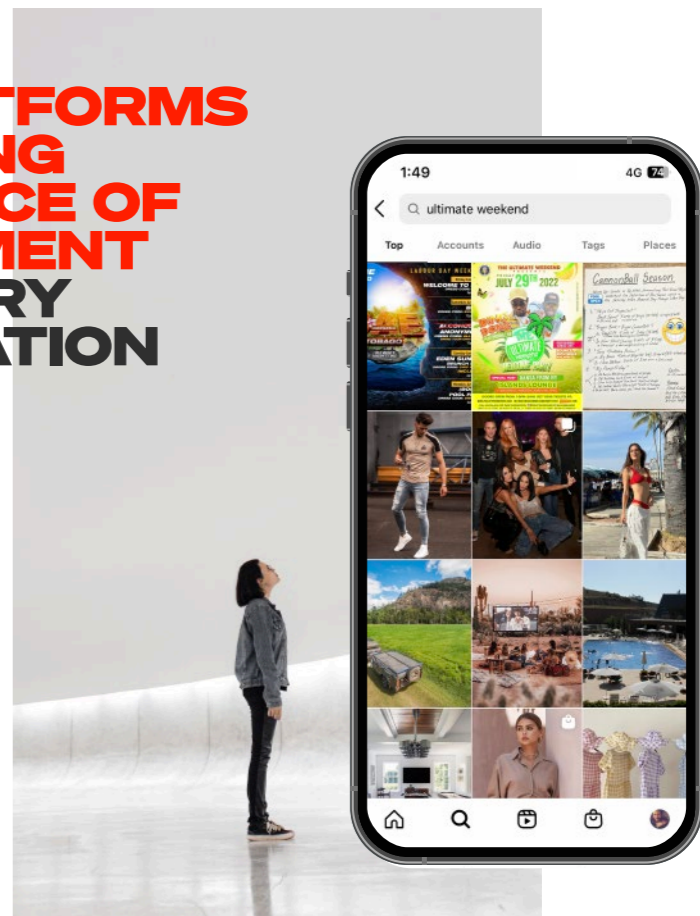
# EVOLUTION OF SEARCH

Social platforms are fast replacing Google as a go-to for navigation, inspiration and entertainment, now with over 40% of GenZ preferring TikTok and Instagram as their launchpad to discovery.

The rise of social search, with its visual capabilities and personalised interactions, is changing the game. Meanwhile, the second wave of AI has brought generative creative capabilities, making search a key battleground, with platforms like ChatGPT delivering everything we need and want in real time. In a real conversation. Brands need to adapt or die, as the world's search for something new is already here.

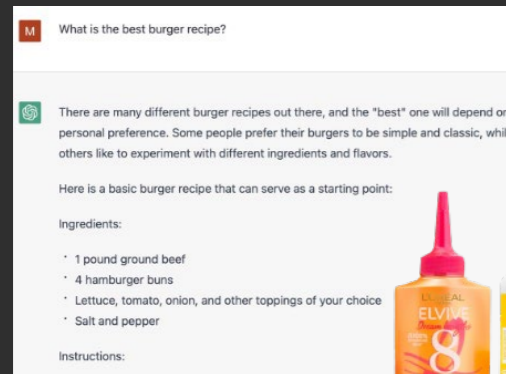


## SOCIAL PLATFORMS ARE EVOLVING FROM A PLACE OF ENTERTAINMENT TO DISCOVERY AND INSPIRATION





**Microsoft** is reportedly planning to launch a version of its Bing search engine that uses the artificial intelligence behind ChatGPT to result in human-like answers to queries rather than just producing a list of links.



BRAND EXAMPLES • BRAND EXAMPLES •



**Loreal UK** worked with **TikTok**, to tap into this virality appetite. The brand saw high interest for some of its product launches that had taken off through the #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt hashtag. To further capitalise on this, they became the first brand to partner with creators to allow fans to buy endorsed gift boxes with the official #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt branding.



02

# THE UGLY SELFIE

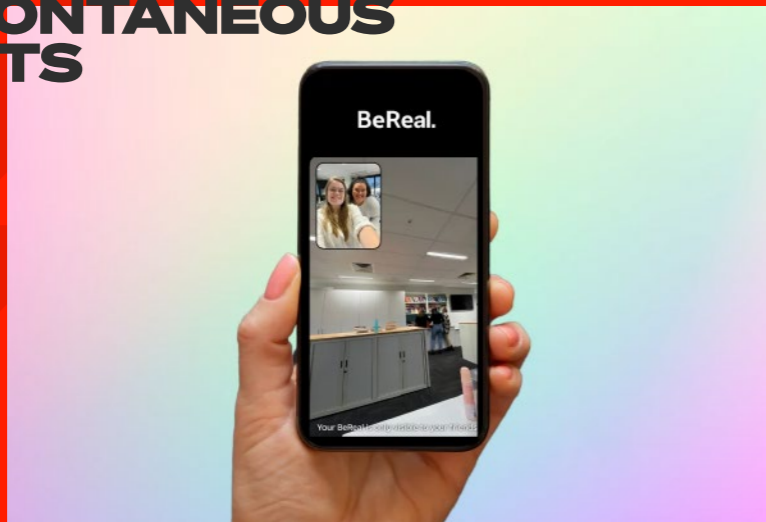


The 'old social media' had us sharing our 'best lives' through filters - but this inevitably led to constant comparisons and negative feelings. In 2023, Gen Z flipped the switch, by proudly showing their 'ugly selfies' to the world, signalling a growing demand for uncensored and spontaneous life moments that truly 'validate'.

Put simply - GenZ can see a fake filter from a mile away.



# UNVARNISHED REALITIES, AND SPONTANEOUS MOMENTS



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TikTokkers like Maddie Grace Jepson and Max Baledge are showing how 'weird' is the new cool, and brands like **The North Face** and **Amazon** are partnering with Creators as a way to up their non-conformist credentials.

Aloof, cool-girl Emma Chamberlain (huge contributor to the photo dump trend last year) collaborated with Canadian retailer **Aritzia**.

**Chipotle** joins **BeReal** and maxes out on the number of followers an account can have. They post things like limited promo codes for the first 100 people to redeem.



# COMMUNITY IS THE NEW CREATOR

03

Social energy is shifting, from network-based media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, to community platforms like Reddit, Discord, and Twitch, Roblox and the Metaverse. Gen Z in particular seems to be really into these kinds of apps, with over 65% preferring them over the feed-based ones.

What's cool about this new 'social' space is that it's less about putting yourself in the spotlight and more about creating a sense of community. Even TikTok, which is built around creators, is now focusing around communities and interests like #witchtok #foodtok #healthtok.

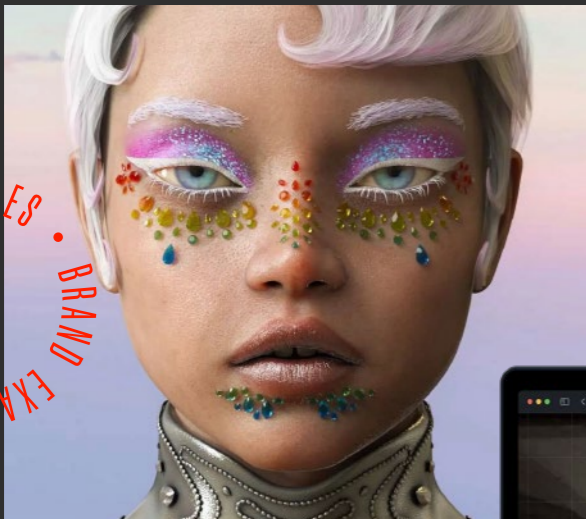
Progressive brands are moving from dictating communities, to instead co creating and serving communities, migrating from an egosystem to an ecosystem. And with the advent of new tools especially in the Web3.0 category, we see 2023 communities play a centric role in brand building.



## MIGRATING FROM AN EGOSYSTEM TO AN ECOSYSTEM



BRAND EXAMPLES



**Nike's .Swoosh:** A Web3 platform that will over time serve as the brand's ecosystem for all things metaverse and will include community co-creation of merchandise with royalty streams. It will allow its members to learn about and collect virtual creations including virtual shoes or jerseys in a trusted and safe place. In some instances, community members will be able to unlock access to physical product or events like intimate conversations with athletes or designers.



**Loreal's** portfolio brand 'Nyx' has recently decided to launch a beauty incubator in the form of a DAO called GORJS. A Decentralised autonomous organisation (DAO) will allow holders of the GORJS token to come together as a community and execute on a common goal or mission – through voting rights over proposals. This contrasts with a top-down approach, where the single entity or brands holds all the power. For NYX, it's all about "empowering a new generation of Web3 creators that will help redefine beauty".



**Chipotle's** Rewards program kicked off in 2019, but community building is still on the horizon for the brand. Chipotle is dialling up its fanbase with a new initiative called 'Freepotle' a new Chipotle Rewards perk that gives members up to 10 free food drops throughout 2023. All existing Chipotle Rewards members will be automatically enrolled in "Freepotle," and non-members can gain access to "Freepotle" by joining the Chipotle Rewards program by March 6 (2023).

**"IN AN ENVIRONMENT FULL OF PRICED SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMS, WE'RE INTRODUCING A PASS TO OUR REAL FOOD THAT IS FREE TO JOIN AND WILL PROVIDE MORE VALUE TO OUR COMMUNITY THAN EVER BEFORE"**

Chris Brandt  
Chief Marketing Officer, Chipotle



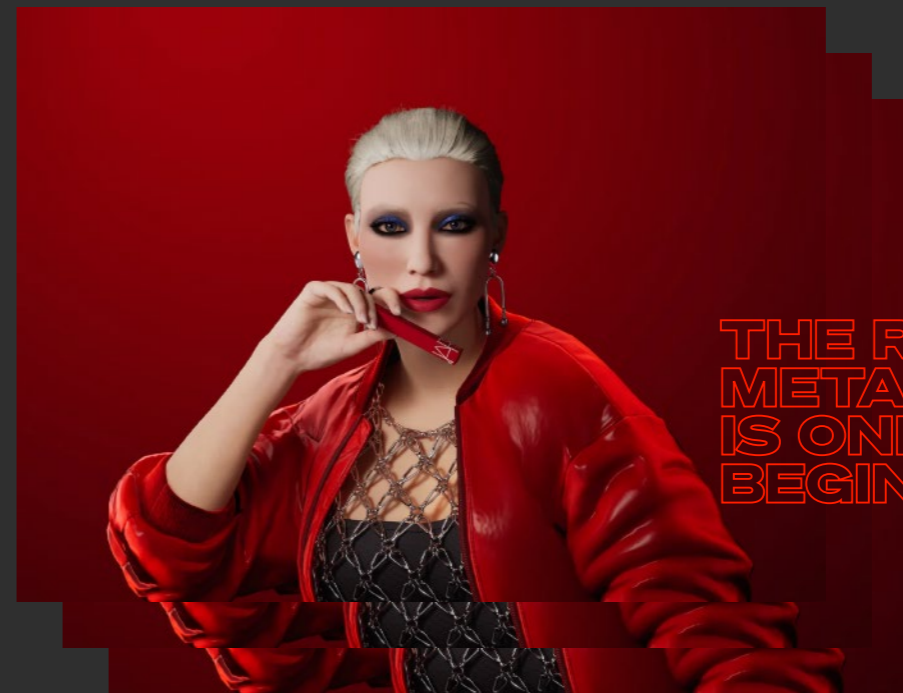
04

# VIRTUAL BRAND AMBASSADORS

The age of the 'meta-human' is upon us, and it's proving to be a powerful force in the world of influencer marketing. These digitally rendered avatars behave like traditional influencers, and they're quickly gaining popularity amongst younger generations. In fact, over half of Gen Z social media users plan to seek inspiration from digital avatars or influencers this year.

What's most surprising is that these virtual influencers are outperforming humans when it comes to engagement, yielding 3.5 times more engagement than real people. This makes them an attractive option for brands looking to build

authentic customer relationships and explore immersive experiences. In places like Hong Kong, virtual ambassadors are even being used to avoid any potential political baggage that may come with using real celebrities. It's clear that the rise of meta-humans is only just beginning, and it's an exciting time for the metaverse. With more and more brands adopting this trend, it's no wonder that Japanese marketing agency Dentsu has launched a separate division dedicated to the creation of digital identities. Get ready for the virtual world to become even more influential in the years to come.



THE RISE OF  
META-HUMANS  
IS ONLY JUST  
BEGINNING



BRAND EXAMPLES  
 BRAND EXAMPLES



**Nars'** new brand ambassadors are all virtual. Maxine, Chelsea and Sissi, all have distinct looks, personalities, and backstories, inspired by three lipstick shades.

**Burberry** introduced lookalike virtual influencers of Kendall Jenner and Naomi Campbell.

On **Twitch**, streamers who don't want to be on camera use Vtubers (animated, motion-captured characters) as a way to still give a face to the audience.

Some mimic photo-realistic humans, for example when **Qatar Airways** became the first to create 'Sama', a metahuman cabin crew, while some others take animated forms. Such as the journey of **bee\_influencer** to reach 250k followers on Instagram and help raise funds for the protection of bees.

**Hang Seng Bank** in Hong Kong introduced Hazel, a CGI model as a virtual influencer for their banking promotions.



05

# ENDLESS MEDIA

As our appetite for on-demand content continues to grow, it's no surprise that AI is stepping up to the plate. With the rise of platforms like Netflix and TikTok, we've become accustomed to consuming media on our own terms, whenever and wherever we want. But now, thanks to AI, we're entering a whole new era of storytelling that goes beyond a linear experience.

As AI continues to develop, its capabilities in generating content are becoming more and more impressive. The possibilities are endless - imagine being able to have the next episode of your favourite show or an entirely new Harry Potter plot-line created by AI at your fingertips. Already, platforms like MidJourney and ChatGPT are showcasing the potential of AI in this realm, and it's only going to get more exciting from here.

But it's not just limited to entertainment. AI has the power to revolutionise the way we create, consume, and commercialise all forms of media. With the right combination of different media tools and platforms connected through AI, we could see a whole new world of branded content on-demand that we never even thought was possible.

Of course, there are still kinks to work out and the quality of the content generated by AI is a crucial factor in its adoption. However, the potential for AI to completely change the game within media is undeniable.



**STORYTELLING  
IS NO LONGER  
LINEAR OR  
CONTAINED**

# RISE OF THE SUPER APPS

**06**

The world we live in is constantly evolving, driven by cultural shifts, changing customer expectations, and a rapidly evolving data and technology environment. One of the promises of this evolution has been the rise of super apps, digital applications that aggregate multiple services across different sectors into a single, dominant application. In Asia, they have been an increasingly dominant force for some time, with the likes of Grab, WeChat, and Alipay leading the way.

However, the concept of a super app is now evolving on a global scale, taking on a new form as a closed loop ecosystem. This means that apps are increasing their stickiness by extending their core competency and DNA via vertical integration. We are seeing this trend being exemplified by global apps such as Uber, which is beginning to form a loop around its different offerings, including Uber taxi services, courier services, and UberEATS apps. Each of these products feeds customers back into other Uber channels, creating a self-reinforcing ecosystem.

Super apps turning into closed loop ecosystems is a big deal for both businesses and customers. Companies can boost loyalty by providing a smooth and easy experience, while users can access multiple services from one platform. It's becoming more popular, and more businesses are expected to adopt this approach.

## DIGITAL APPLICATIONS THAT AGGREGATE MULTIPLE SERVICES ACROSS DIFFERENT SECTORS



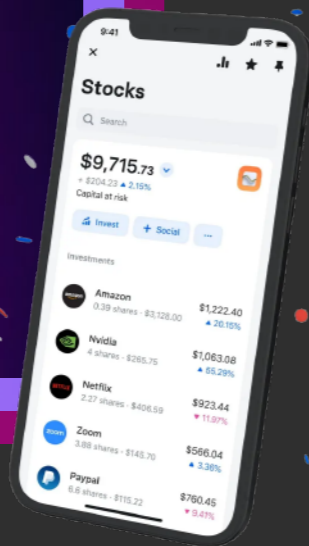


**TikTok** potential expansion into a music app.

Reward points integrations like **Aeroplan** in Canada partnering with **Starbucks** and **Uber**.

**Revolut** has built out their debit card app to investments, social payments and trading.

BRAND EXAMPLES



# SUBSCRIPTION OVERLOAD

07

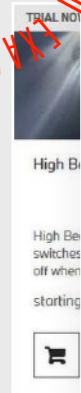
Brands are under pressure to increase their revenue and stay competitive. To achieve this, they're experimenting with a new approach: putting certain parts of their services behind paywalls. It's not just limited to streaming or food delivery anymore, even standard or essential parts of their offerings are getting locked down under subscriptions.

While some people may be skeptical or tired of this trend, others find it convenient to access multiple services through a single subscription. The data collected from subscribers also enables companies to personalise their offerings and provide a better customer experience.

In 2023, we anticipate this trend will become even more popular across various industries. This means we'll have to carefully evaluate which subscriptions we truly need in our lives. The success of these companies will depend on their ability to deliver value that keeps subscribers coming back for more.

BRAND EXAMPLES

BRAND EXAMPLES



PANTONE®

**BMW** charged an \$18 monthly subscription in some countries for owners to use the heated seats already installed within its vehicles.

“Free delivery” subscription with **UberEats**.

**Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Disney+, Crave, Crunchyroll, Paramount+.**

**Peloton** and other gym classes.

**Adobe** charging for **Pantone** swatches.

**Subway** launched a “foot long subscription”.

A new start-up is trying to monetize sidewalks and curbs, charging delivery companies for parking.

A CONVENIENT, HASSLE-FREE WAY TO ACCESS DIFFERENT SERVICES



08

# FAST CONTENT



The era of lightning-fast content is here and it's only getting faster! From TikToks to Reels, gifs, and memes, the hunger for quick and easily digestible content has always been present. But this year, the ability to curate your content and attention is set to revolutionise the game.

You may think you've experienced fast playback speeds on Netflix and YouTube, but streaming platforms in China are taking 'fast-watching' or 'smart-watching' to the next level with the help of cutting-edge AI technology. The entertainment industry is all about efficiency, and now even music streaming services allow listeners to speed up their favourite tunes.

With so much content vying for your attention, it's never been more important to have the power to curate what you watch and how fast you watch it. When it comes to content - get ready for warp-speed!

Chinese streaming services like **iQiyi** and **Youku** identify lulls in plot and users can automatically skip these scenes.

- There are also features within these platforms to skip to scenes featuring specific actors or actresses, so mega fans can focus on their faves.

**TikTok** has been testing playback speed options on videos longer than 60 seconds.





Move over traditional dating, Gen Z is here to disrupt the status quo by embracing fluid and flexible relationships that defy labels and redefine love. Enter the 'Situationships' – the newest buzzword taking the world by storm. From 'friends' to 'more than friends' to 'something in between,' this grey area of relationships is shaking up the dating game, with TikTok videos racking up over a staggering 2 billion views! And if you thought this was just a passing fad, think again.

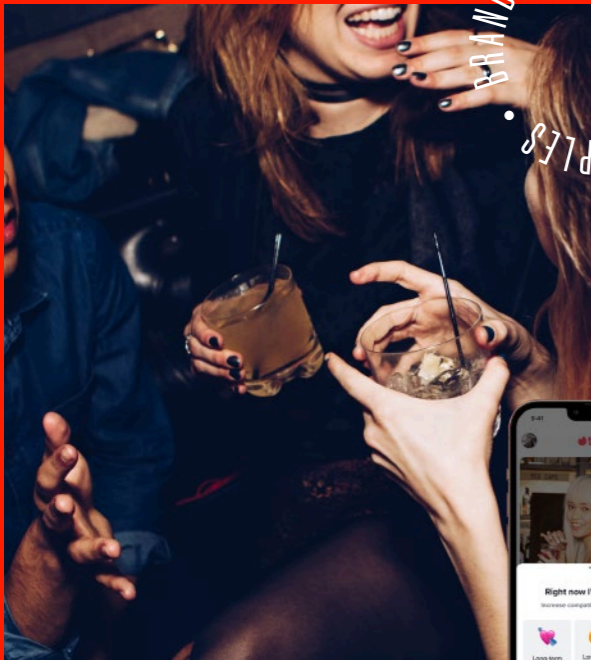
Pop culture references like Snoh Aalegra's hit song 'Situationship' prove that this trend has moved from the fringes of youth culture to the mainstream. Even Tinder's annual trends report shows a massive 49% increase in members adding the phrase to their bios this year. Brands need to adapt this new language of love - or risk sounding outdated.

09

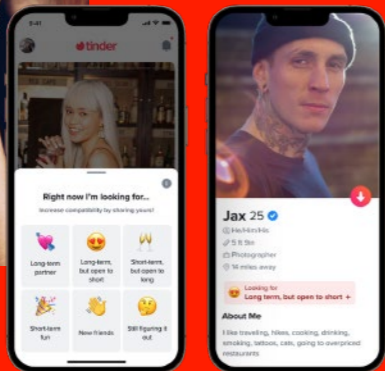
# SITUATIONSHIPS



THIS NEW FORM  
OF LOVE LANGUAGE  
IS SOMETHING  
FOR BRANDS  
TO THINK ABOUT



BRAND EXAMPLES • BRAND EXAMPLES



**Tinder** is embracing one of the biggest trends in dating; the “situationship”. The app’s new “relationship goals” feature lets members indicate what they want, from a date, a casual hook-up, or something more serious, or even a mixture of the two.

Situationships are rampant on the hit reality **Netflix** show “Love Island UK” as contestants don’t want to appear too eager or too attached.



10

# GOOD FEEDS GOOD VIBES

Rev up your social media game with the power of positivity!

The latest trend is causing a stir by promoting kindness and uplifting one another online, and app developers are taking notice. Leading the charge is Gas, the ultimate compliment app that has skyrocketed to the top of the app store charts. With its effortless and feel-good questions, users can brighten up their friends' day by showering them with compliments and putting a smile on their faces. Say goodbye to negativity and embrace the wave of positivity that Gas represents in 2023, following in the footsteps of the previous year's focus on authenticity with BeReal.

As people increasingly crave emotional support and a more hopeful outlook on social media, revolutionary platforms such as Gas and WeAre8 are emerging to light up your feeds with a ray of sunshine.

Join the positivity revolution now!

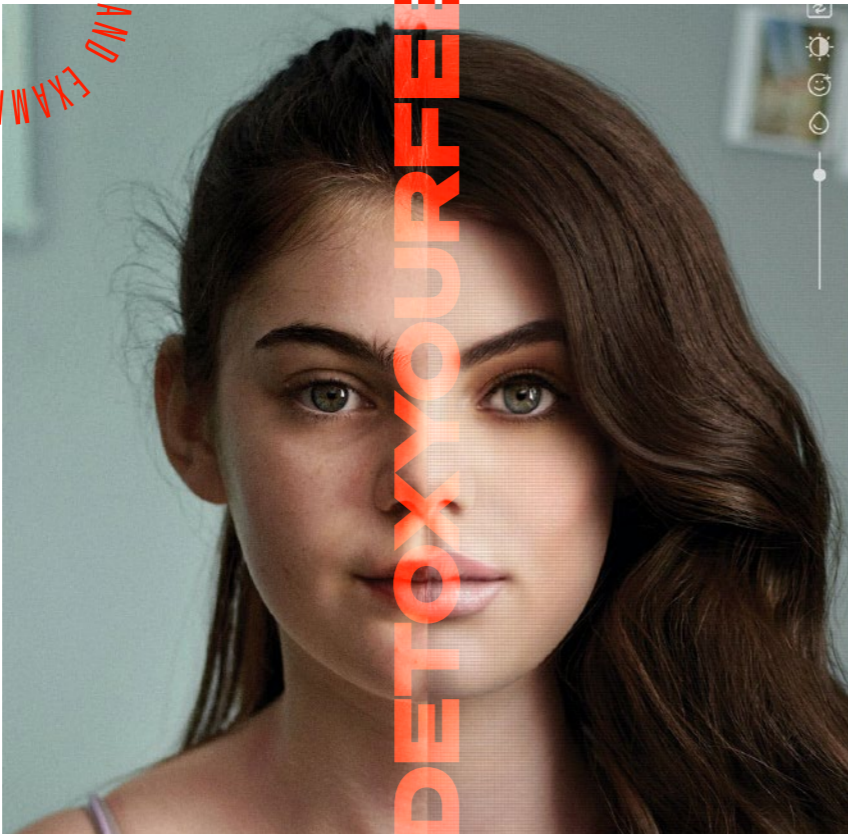




BRAND EXAMPLES  
BRAND EXAMPLES  
BRAND EXAMPLES

Brands are also playing a role by raising awareness around minimising online toxicity around themes that make sense for them, while also spreading some smiles.

For example, **Dove's** mid-2022 #DetoxYourFeed campaign. The project, supported via a short film, aims to dismantle harmful social media behaviours, empower young adults to cultivate their own social communities and reinforce positive social experiences.



# PURPOSEFUL EMPOWERMENT

11

Brands that fail to prioritise inclusivity are falling behind in the race for consumer loyalty. With diversity and inclusion dominating advertising conversations, consumers are no longer satisfied with superficial efforts. In today's world, brand approachability is measured by the extent to which companies demonstrate authentic representation.

The solution? Collaborating with talented creatives from marginalised communities to create a message that truly resonates with consumers. Surprisingly, 86% of people believe that brands should not just work for these communities, but with them. And it's worth it: a staggering 66% of shoppers are more likely to purchase from brands that publicly support diversity and inclusivity.

It's time for your brand to take action, empower diverse voices, and harness the power of advertising to make a difference.

LET'S  
PASS  
THE MIC

BRAND EXAMPLES • BRAND EXAMPLES



One of 2022's most resonant spots was **Apple's** December campaign called 'The Greatest' which showcased people with disabilities thriving and using the company's tech. While the campaign themes addressed weren't deemed revolutionary, they still highlighted the importance of making everyday things more inclusive for different communities.

**Kellogg's** consumers can now hear nutritional info in 36 languages. The brand partnered with a tech company that helps make product packaging more accessible to people with limited vision and to wider linguistic groups by the use of smart codes on the packaging of Corn Flakes, Special K Original, Rice Krispies and Crispix.

American retailer **Aerie**, with their consistent use of real, inclusive models and no retouching has proved to be the anti-Victoria's Secret, going into year 9 of featuring truly inclusive models and saw 30 consecutive quarters of profitable growth.

## RETURN OF THE INNER CHILD

12

# AGELESS PLAY



In the wake of a tumultuous few years, individuals are seeking out simpler, happier times, and brands are coming to the rescue by tapping into our collective nostalgia for the playful spirit of yesteryear. With a universal human desire for joy and release, companies are taking the concept of adult playtime to new heights, introducing the world to the Kidults phenomenon.

These are grown-ups who not only buy but play with toys, and they are now the driving force behind the explosive growth of the industry, according to research by NPD. Brands are catering to our inner child with things like the highly anticipated "Barbie" movie, to McDonald's releasing Happy Meals for adults. So let yourself be a kid again and rediscover the joy of play!



Beyond collaborations with popular action franchises, **LEGO** is tapping into adult pop culture with an exclusive set for *The Office* - retailing for \$150. The second collection of the bestselling LEGO Flower Sets have been released, allowing consumers to inject more playfulness into tasteful home decor.



“ THERE WAS A LEGO SONIC THE HEDGEHOG SET THAT CAME OUT BACK IN JANUARY ... AND I REMEMBER I WENT TO A NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY, THE NEXT DAY I'M UP IN LINE AT 7:30 TO GO TO PICK IT UP DAY ONE ”

24-year-old Anders Wennerberg, an AFOL (Adult Fan Of Lego) of the Lego Community spent nearly \$1,000 dollars on Lego in 2022. Usually, he spends more ... he really loves Lego.

13

# A TOAST TO SOBRIETY



It seems like the good old days of partying hard and waking up with a hangover - are over!

The youth of today are shifting away from alcohol and embracing a new era of sobriety. With the rise of the sober-curious trend, the younger generation is exploring the joys of living without alcohol. Driven by a growing interest in health and wellness and a preference for mindful living, alcohol is losing its grip on society. In fact, Vice reports that Gen Z is leading the charge towards a zero-proof lifestyle, with a massive 26% of British 16-24-year-olds choosing to live entirely alcohol-free!

Leading beverage brands are tapping into this trend and creating low or non-alcoholic options that are already proving to be a hit. These innovative products are blowing up on social with pop culture icons as brand ambassadors, with product selling out in trendy bars and bottle stores.

Even traditional alcohol brands are hopping on the teetotal bandwagon and embracing alcohol-free periods of the year, such as the famous 'Dry July' campaign. With this shift in mindset, it's safe to say that the future is looking brighter and healthier than ever before. Cheers to that!

BRAND EXAMPLES



**Tito's** launched its tongue-in-cheek Dry January campaign starring Mogul Martha Stewart. The ad is in line with Tito's typical humorous campaigns, which most recently included selling empty hard seltzer cans. But it's also indicative of the influence sober-curious initiatives and NA brands are having on big booze.

**Heineken 0.0** (a non alcoholic beer) will be the first non-alcoholic beer to clinch Super Bowl airtime in 2023. The campaign involves a partnership with **Marvel** to co-promote its zero-ABV brew and the upcoming release of the third "Ant-Man" film. Because even superheroes need to moderate their alcohol consumption.

The PepsiCo-owned sparkling water brand **'Bubly'**, launched its first-ever canned mocktail last summer called - Bubly Bellini Bliss, creating a nonalcoholic version of the popular peach-and-champagne cocktail.



14

# BEYOND SKIN DEEP

As the beauty industry continues to evolve, a groundbreaking new discipline is making waves. Psychodermatology is the buzzword of the moment, and it's all about exploring the complex relationship between our skin and our mind.

Once a term exclusive to medical professionals, Psychodermatology has now entered the mainstream, and beauty brands are taking note. Maybelline and Rare Beauty are among the leaders in the mental health initiative movement, and this new approach is taking things to the next level. The concept of "good skin" is being redefined, as Psychodermatology brings a fresh perspective and innovative products to support this exciting new frontier. This is not just another fleeting trend - Psychodermatology is poised to revolutionise the beauty industry and how we approach skincare.

“IT’S NOT JUST WHAT I’M SEEING ON THE SKIN IN FRONT OF ME. IT’S WHAT’S GOING ON AT HOME. ARE THEY GOING THROUGH SOME SORT OF TRAUMA IN LIFE?”

Dr. Rose Ingleton  
Celebrity dermatologist



Tatcha, a Japanese skincare brand, is leading the trend towards intentional living and holistic wellness through the use of niche ingredients. Their products promote intentional ritualisation, with ingredients like sweet fennel for focus and hinoki oil for relaxation. A survey conducted by Tatcha found that 69% of respondents felt burned out in the past year, and 74% believe their skin and mental state are connected. This trend is expected to expand to other industries as consumers seek out products and services that promote holistic wellness and intentional living.



**Starface**, with its bold pimple patches worn by celebrities such as Hailey and Justin Bieber, helped make you feel positive about acne and show it off as the new talk of the town.



## REFRAME WHAT GOOD SKIN MEANS

In 2021, **Glow Recipe** took things one step further by banning phrases and words like “perfect skin,” “poreless,” and “flawless” from its brand vocabulary. Less stress over a breakout will hopefully lead to less breakouts in general.



BRAND EXAMPLES



15

# CRYPTO CLUBS

If you think crypto is the future of finance - join the club!

As the financial world continues to evolve and decentralise, new digital communities are emerging that are changing the way we think about exclusivity and access. ‘Friends With Benefits’ is one such community, an exclusive members-only club that has been making waves in the crypto world. Think of it as a ‘decentralised Soho House’ or a VIP lounge for crypto’s creative class. But gaining entry into this elite society requires more than just a simple membership fee. In fact, the valuation of Friends With Benefits was a staggering \$100 million in 2022, making it one of the most exclusive and sought-after clubs in the world.

So what does it take to gain entry into this elusive club? Simply invest in their proprietary cryptocurrency, \$FWB tokens. And for those who make the investment, a world of exclusive benefits and services await, tailored specifically to meet the needs of the emerging crypto elite.





**JACK GREALISH**

OKX Brand Ambassador

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Football club **Manchester City** have partnered with **OKX Collective** to create a metaverse platform where fans can have a more immersive experience with their favourite team, including unique player-based experiences



# REWIREMENT NOT RETIREMENT

16

Welcome to life's third innings.

Retirement is no longer what it used to be. Many people are now embracing the concept of 'rewirement' as a new approach to the next phase of their lives. It's not just about having enough money to retire, it's about embracing change, taking risks, and pursuing passions.

Take Serena Williams, for example. When she recently announced her departure from tennis, she didn't see it as "retiring," but rather as an "evolution" towards new priorities. She's now focusing on her family and pursuing other business ventures.

This shift in thinking is not unique to Williams. As people emerge from the pandemic, they're reassessing their priorities and realising that life is too short to waste on things that don't matter. Rewirement is about pursuing new challenges and opportunities, connecting with loved ones, and making a difference in the world in new and meaningful ways. In short, retirement is no longer a destination. It's a journey, and rewirement is the new way to approach it.



# A REASSESSMENT OF PRIORITIES, SELF-DISCOVERY, AND A RENEWED DEDICATION TO PASSIONS AND FAMILY.



The seven time Super Bowl champion, Tom Brady may be exiting the football pitch ground, but this merely means a reirement to his next career path as a NFL Analyst.



# WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

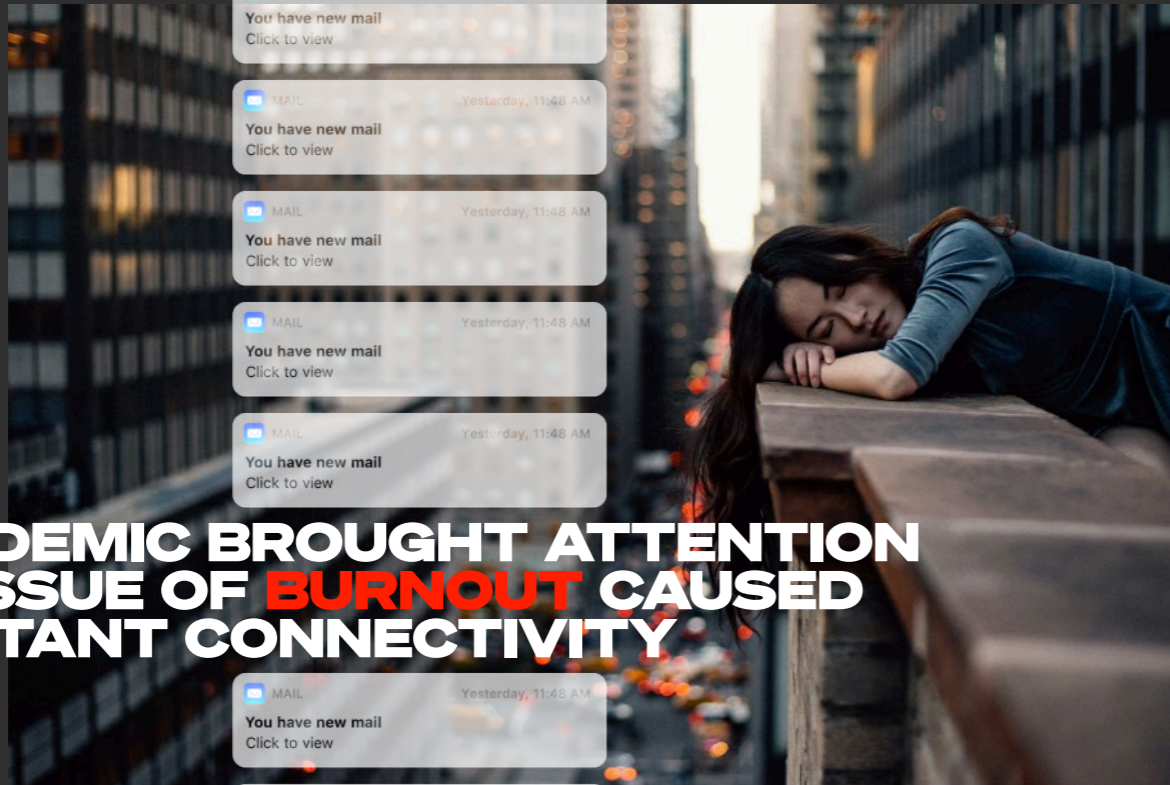
17

The 'normal working day' just isn't working anymore...

Asynchronous work has established itself as a permanent fixture in the modern workplace, rendering the traditional nine-to-five workday obsolete. The pandemic highlighted the problem of burnout caused by constant connectivity, but it also revealed the effectiveness of nonlinear work. Employers and employees are now embracing the flexibility and efficiency of asynchronous work, using new technology and platforms to overcome its challenges and amplify its advantages.

According to a McKinsey study of 13,382 global workers conducted in July 2022, workplace flexibility was identified as a top motivator for 40% of respondents to remain in their roles. The future of work is adopting a new rhythm that accommodates individuality and fosters productivity. Moreover, the appeal of a living-at-work culture's aesthetic is gaining importance. People are seeking ways to make their home offices functional while also creating a space for inspiration, productivity, and well-being.





THE PANDEMIC BROUGHT ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE OF **BURNOUT** CAUSED BY CONSTANT CONNECTIVITY

MAIL Yesterday, 11:48 AM  
You have new mail  
Click to view

MAIL Yesterday, 11:48 AM  
You have new mail  
Click to view

MAIL Yesterday, 11:48 AM  
You have new mail  
Click to view

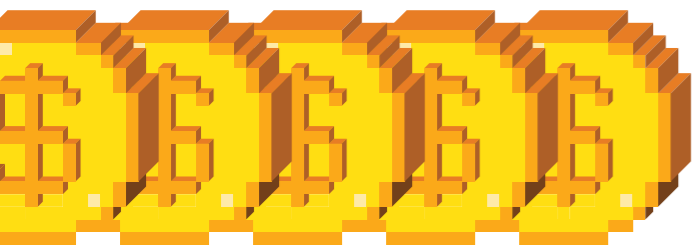
MAIL Yesterday, 11:48 AM  
You have new mail



**BUT IT ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NONLINEAR WORK**

18

# MAKING CENTS OF MONEY



Millennial parents are introducing their children to banks for the first time, as they navigate both traditional offline institutions and neobanks. However, Generation Alpha is expected to become the first digital-only consumers, highlighting the need for improved financial literacy education.

This gap in the current education system presents an opportunity for new brands to step in and offer digital tools to meet the demand. On the other hand, Gen Z is showing a renewed entrepreneurial spirit, shifting towards back-to-basics money management tools, and moving away from speculative apps like Robinhood and cryptocurrency. There is also an increased emphasis on side hustles, budgeting, and saving.

BRAND EXAMPLES



**Mydoh** kids banking app from RBC, a money management app plus pre-paid debit card.

19

# META INCLUSIVITY

As the next phase of the internet takes hold of the world, the importance of using it as a space for inclusivity is taking centre stage. Metaverse has the potential to be a shining beacon of acceptance and unity. With 65% of those familiar with this digital realm believing it will be more accepting than our physical world, brands and creators are rising to the challenge.

Beauty giant, Clinique, is leading the charge with their NFT campaign "Metaverse More Like Us", making a bold statement for equitable representation within the metaverse. It is the responsibility of brands to craft an inclusive experience, and it can start from something as simple as diverse avatars eventually extending into all-encompassing spaces and narratives. The digital realm is another creative and endless way for brands to build an inclusive value system.



**METaverse  
HAS THE  
POTENTIAL  
TO BE  
A SHINING  
BEACON OF  
ACCEPTANCE  
AND UNITY**

BRAND EXAMPLES



**Ronald McDonald House** launches a digital house on **Roblox** to help battle homesickness amongst sick kids by connecting them with their friends.

The World Economic Forum, alongside a number of partners, including **Meta, Sony, Microsoft, LEGO**, and others, announced an initiative to develop and share actionable strategies “to create an ethical and inclusive metaverse.”

In April 2022, the deodorant company **Degree** partnered with **Decentraland** to host an inclusive virtual marathon. The company partnered with disability, race, and gender experts to advise on the design elements for participants’ avatars, which included wheelchairs, prostheses, running blades, and a variety of body shapes and sizes, as well as descriptive audio for people with visual impairments.

More women-powered NFT communities like **World of Women** and **Boss Beauties** are in the spotlight for celebrating representation and equality in the metaverse.

20

# BRAND 3.0

In 2023, brands are going to be incorporating Web3 features that are more ‘down-to-earth’

They’re going to be focusing on ways to build and strengthen communities, foster loyalty, and create niche exclusivity. Instead of digital products being the final destination of the purchase journey, they’ll now be the starting point.

But the exciting part is that the impact of the metaverse won’t be limited to just brands or entertainment. In fact, it’s going to actively benefit the physical world too.



**DIGITAL PRODUCTS WILL NO LONGER BE THE END OF THE PURCHASE JOURNEY BUT RATHER THE BEGINNING.**



BRAND EXAMPLES



Numerous examples of blended realities from the alcohol space. **Suntory Whisky** used immersive technology to create a pop-up that didn't just allow customer to experience the whisky but the craftsmanship of the distillation process through blending of physical and digital elements. **Johnnie Walker's** release of seven bottles from its rare Masters of Flavour series as NFTs, plus digital artwork and a 'unique' experience, sold out in 3 minutes for US\$35,000 each. Similarly other alcohol brands like have followed suite, where they've utilized blockchain to enhance exclusive, physical experiences.

**Tiffany & Co** quickly sold out a limited custom collection of 250 'NFTiff' pendants for the CryptoPunks holders (a popular early non-fungible token collection.) Each priced at US\$50,000 each.



**Starbucks** unveiled its own Web3 loyalty experience called 'Starbucks Odyssey' that will offer Starbucks Rewards members and Starbucks partners (employees) in the United States the opportunity to earn and purchase digital collectible assets that will unlock access to new benefits and immersive coffee experiences.

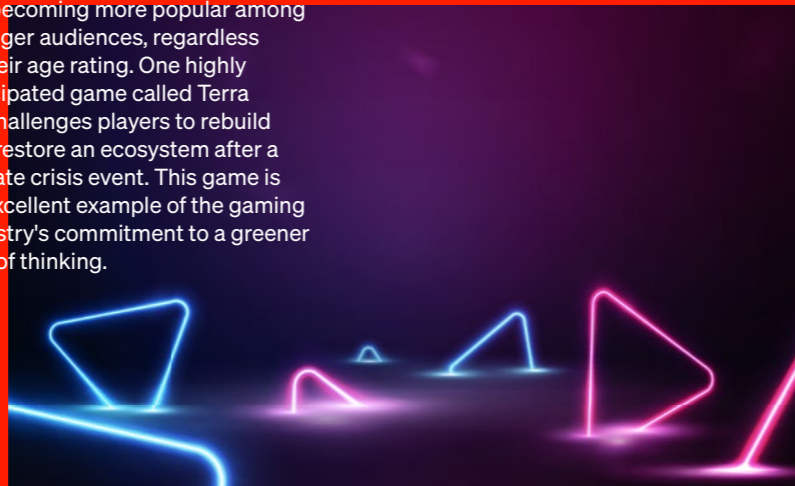
The Ukrainian government sold a collection of NFTs on Twitter to raise funds for its army and civilians.



# FIRST-SOLVER GAMING

21

The gaming industry is using storytelling to educate players about sustainability and environmental responsibility. Eco-conscious games that promote regenerative practices and address environmental issues are becoming more popular among younger audiences, regardless of their age rating. One highly anticipated game called Terra Nil challenges players to rebuild and restore an ecosystem after a climate crisis event. This game is an excellent example of the gaming industry's commitment to a greener way of thinking.



**Sony** partnered with **Arbor Day Foundation** to plant a tree for every unlock of a trophy in the sequel of its 2022 Horizon game series.

**Endling - Extinction is Forever:** As the last mother fox on Earth, your cubs need all your care to survive in a merciless world that slowly destroys itself. You have to help them, teach them and save them. And you should never forget that extinction is forever.

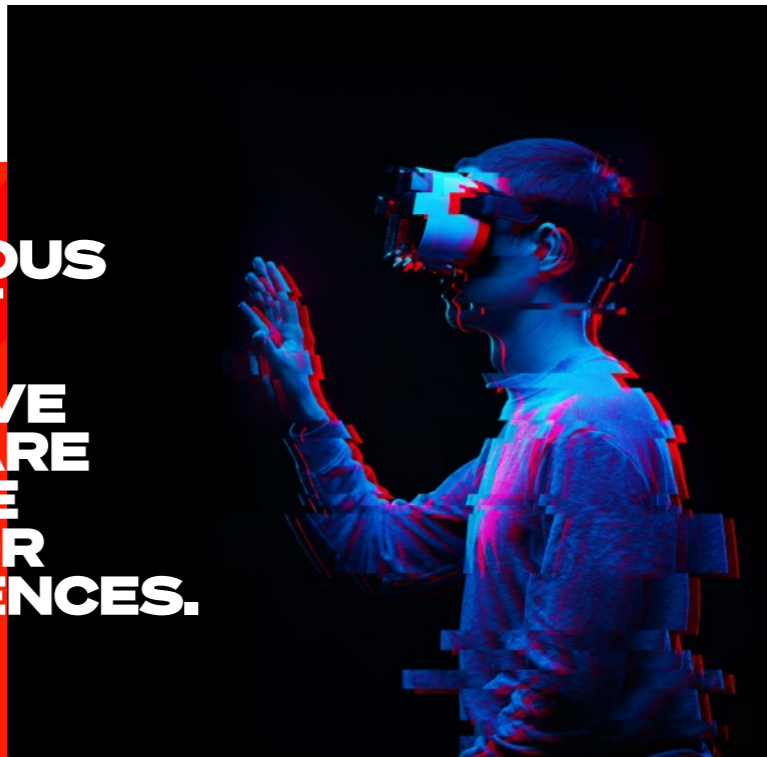
The big three gaming companies, **Sony**, **Microsoft**, and **Nintendo** are working on reducing CO2 emissions. The gaming heavyweights have big plans to become greener and are setting lofty goals in their sustainability efforts. Sony's goal is to have zero environmental footprint by 2050, while Microsoft wants to be carbon-negative by 2030.

**Plasticity** is a hauntingly beautiful puzzle-platformer where you explore a plastic-ridden world. Traverse flooded cities and ravaged lands as you make choices that profoundly change both gameplay and your future.





**ECO-CONSCIOUS  
GAMES THAT  
PROMOTE  
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PRACTICES ARE  
THE NEW AGE  
SOLUTION FOR  
YOUNG AUDIENCES.**



22

# RISE OF THE ANTI-HERO



The complexity of modern life is causing us to question the traditional narratives of heroism and villainy, and as a result, a new type of hero has emerged - the flawed hero, also known as the anti-hero. These central characters lack the typical heroic attributes and challenge our preconceived notions of good and evil.

Pop culture has evolved to reflect this shift in thinking, and we are now seeing a trend towards characters who exist in the grey area between black and white. In 2022, we witnessed the compelling character arcs of Wednesday Addams, Anna Delvey, and Cassie from Euphoria, and we can expect to see more of these complex characters in 2023.

We will also witness a rise in the 'villain era', which is not about cruelty or evilness, but rather about pushing against societal norms and setting our own boundaries. In 2023, the focus will be on pleasing ourselves and those who are important to us, rather than conforming to established moral codes.

**Taylor Swift's** anthem "Anti-Hero" spends eight weeks at #1 on top of the charts.

**Liquid Death** has made a huge name for itself purely through alternative branding.



**PUSHING BACK AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED MORAL CODES OF SOCIETY, SETTING YOUR OWN BOUNDARIES AND NOT EXISTING TO PEOPLE PLEASE**

BRAND EXAMPLES • BRAND EXAMPLES • BRAND EXAMPLES

23

2022 was the year AI technology became available to the mainstream. But now, in 2023, we're starting to see the impact it's having on traditional institutions like education and legislation. They're having a hard time keeping up with this rapidly-evolving technology.

As we explore the possibilities of AI, we're encountering some challenges. Artists are noticing that their artwork is being replicated by Midjourney, and students are using Chat GBT to get their homework done. It's crazy how easy it is to use AI for both good and bad, like creating non-consensual deepfake pornography. The thing is, AI is expanding so rapidly that it's starting to automate jobs and change the labour market. That's why we need to consider the ethical implications of AI's development and use, to ensure that it's advancing in a way that aligns with our values.



**THE YEAR WE GRAPPLED WITH AI**





NETFLIX



**Netflix** uses AI to generate background art in an upcoming anime, citing labour shortage.

**Hong Kong University** is one of the first institutions to offer a four-year program for a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in Applied Artificial Intelligence.



# THANKS

