

The future

100

Trends and change to watch in 2022

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A REPORT BY WUNDERMAN THOMPSON INTELLIGENCE

Foreword

Join us on a journey into the near future, where daily life takes place in the metaverse and on a regenerative planet—and is packed with health-infused experiences, and, more importantly, is defined by an optimistic outlook. Welcome to "The Future 100: 2022."

As the world enters the third year of a pandemic, confidence in the end of COVID-19 in 2022 is expressed by the World Health Organization's chief, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesu—providing everyone works together.

This year ushers in a resolute positivity that encourages playfulness and creativity—so much so that Pantone created a completely new color to define 2022 (see unbounded optimism, p13). Brands and marketers are eager to provide joy in people's lives by creating euphoric ads (p85) as they too ride the optimist wave.

Health and wellbeing remain prominent across sectors—from drinks that supercharge the immune system (see liquid immunity, p98) to dedicated spaces around the world offering an emotional outlet for those in need of a recharge (see emotional health, p199). The physical and emotional tax of the last two years is forging a holistic, sensitive and nuanced approach to wellbeing.

As lifestyles and businesses shift to become climate-friendly, being sustainable is not enough. Brands, governments and communities are working together for a regenerative planet and future. After all, 88% of global consumers believe companies and brands have a responsibility to take care of the planet and its people.

Finally, a new digital era is on the horizon as the metaverse evolves from a sci-fi concept into a reality. Virtual worlds where people can gather, create, buy and sell, socialize, live and work are becoming the new hangouts (see branded virtual worlds, p81). Technology that allows for advanced avatars (p36), virtual teleportation (p42) and NFT marketplaces (p154) is revolutionizing virtual engagement. And the rise of digital possessions and ownership brings about a new direct-to-avatar retail model (p137). The metaverse is also disrupting the physical world, forming liminal spaces (p18), and augmented reality is becoming the chosen medium for advertisers (see augmented ads, p93).

Dive into "The Future 100: 2022" and discover 100 bitesize trends to watch out for in the year ahead.



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01

Culture

10





Building the metaverse

The race is on as brands rush to stake their claim on the metaverse.

The metaverse dominated headlines, screens and boardrooms in the second half of 2021. Now brands and companies are rushing to prepare for this next iteration of digital engagement.

Big Tech brands are setting their sights on the metaverse. Facebook unveiled a massive brand pivot when it changed its company name to Meta in October 2021, after Mark Zuckerberg announced that the Meta's future lies in becoming a metaverse company. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in August that year that Microsoft is working on building the "enterprise metaverse."

Gaming companies began seriously carving out space for the metaverse on their platforms in 2021. In April, Epic Games closed a \$1 billion round of funding to support its "long-term vision for the metaverse." Niantic, the game developer behind *Pokémon Go*, raised \$300 million in November to build what it describes as the "real-world metaverse." Nvidia jumpstarted its "metaverse for engineers" with the opening of Omniverse in August. Now, other companies are shelling out to buy up game developers. Most recently, *FarmVille* creator Zynga was purchased for \$12.7 billion in January 2022, and Tencent purchased UK game developer Sumo Group for \$1.7 billion in July 2021.

Even brands in industries that are not directly related to the creation of the metaverse, such as law and wealth management, started anticipating its growing value in 2021. In March, the Metaverse Group announced plans to



launch Metaverse REIT, a first-of-its-kind real estate investment trust for virtual assets. Law firm Reed Smith released a legal guide to the metaverse in May, covering legal issues ranging from intellectual property to privacy to competition in what the firm calls “the biggest-ever industrial revolution the world has ever seen.” And in June, Roundhill Investments and Matthew Ball launched the Roundhill Ball Metaverse investment fund, which has holdings in companies including Nvidia, Tencent and Roblox.

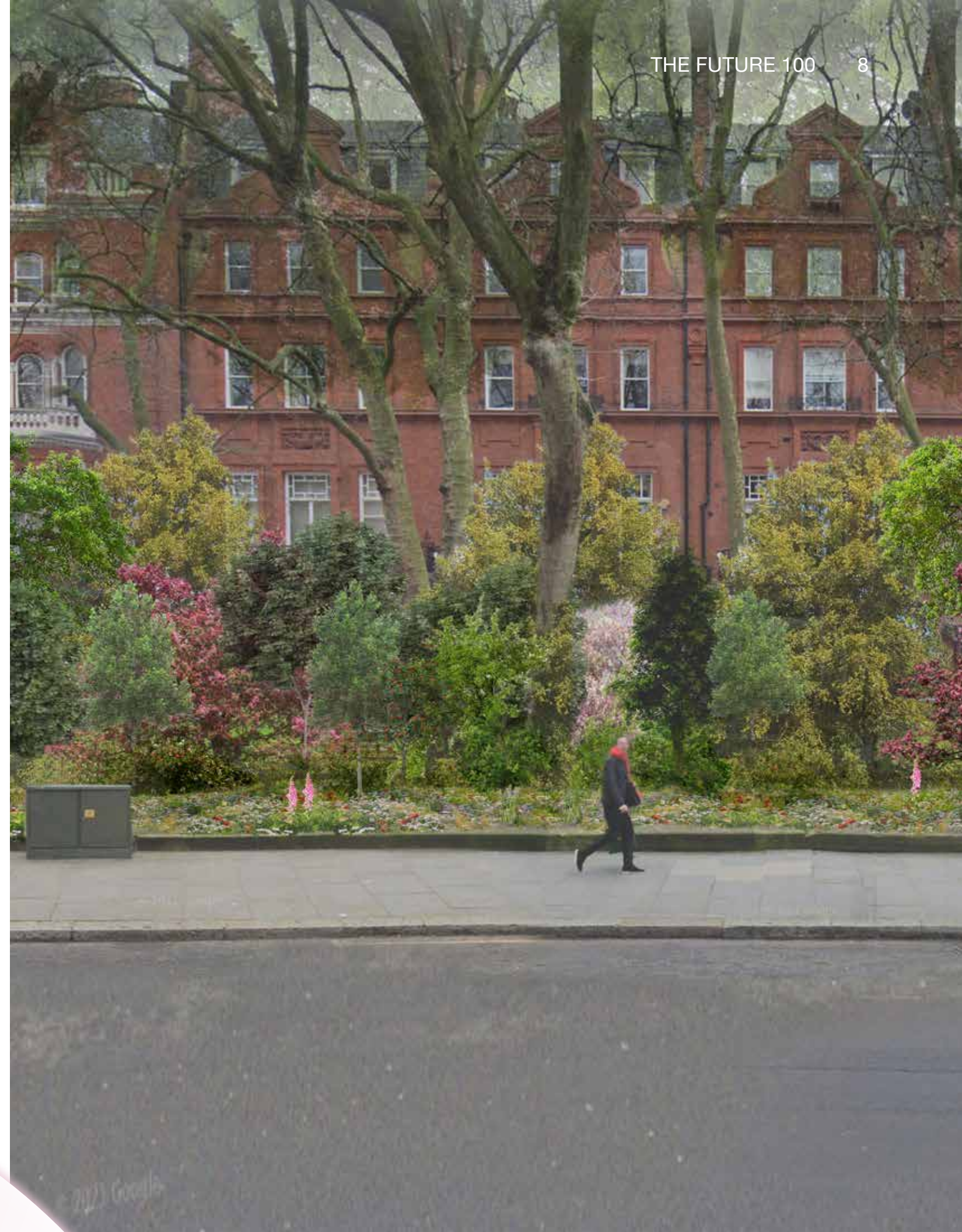
Why it's interesting

Competition to create, define and own the metaverse has taken off. “There was a space race in the 1960s, and now there’s a metaverse race in 2021,” Krista Kim, digital artist and creator of the first NFT digital home, Mars House, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “People are really scurrying to build the new metaverse.”



Microforests

Mini forests are springing up in urban environments, offering inhabitants a new form of public space.



A rising focus on urban biodiversity sees communities around the world planting native forests in public spaces, uniting people to protect the planet, rewilding cities, and providing places for interaction.

Microforests popped up in LA's urban parks in October 2021 as part of the Park Forest Initiative by the Los Angeles Parks Foundation. Mature trees, including lush tipa and blue jacaranda, were strategically selected to provide cooling shade in urban neighborhoods including Lemon Grove Park, Mar Vista Recreation Center, Robert Burns Park, and Ross Snyder Recreation Area.

In the United Kingdom, a 240-square-meter "heritage" forest is being planted in London's Chelsea neighborhood to restore biodiversity and reconnect residents with nature. A range of 630 native trees and shrubs will fill the plot in a collaboration led by rewilding company Sugi, luxury fashion brand Louis Vuitton, and estate management company Cadogan. "The forest will be a green space for local neighbors to find quiet moments of respite and to take in the joys of nature in a vibrant and busy city," Sugi founder Elise Van Middlelem told *Time Out*.

Also in London, Islington council announced plans to appoint a tree specialist for every housing estate at the end of October 2021. This initiative complements similar green-space projects led by Islington Together, including gardening collectives and park groups.

In January 2021, members of the Nelson Whakatu Microforest Initiative prepared 100 square feet of land for a microforest in New Zealand's Enner Glynn hills. It is part of a community push to bring flora and fauna into urban areas to combat climate change.



Cities are making room for microforests, allowing urban dwellers to reconnect with nature and wildlife.



Indian company Afforestt creates dense microforests in parking lots and backyards using the Mayawaki Method. This involves planting native species of trees close together, which can make the plants grow 10 times faster than usual.

Why it's interesting

Cities are making room for microforests, allowing urban dwellers to reconnect with nature and wildlife thanks to the seeding of new green public terrain.



The global k-wave effect

Korean culture is an increasingly potent global force, exerting influence on everything from film to fashion to food to fandoms.

In October 2021, *Billboard* launched its Hot Trending Songs chart, which ranks songs according to how much Twitter conversation they are driving. In an astonishing show of domination, 14 of the top 20 songs on the debut chart came from K-pop acts, including boy band legends BTS, rivals Enhypen and the Blackpink rapper Lisa. K-pop idols inspire fierce loyalty and their fandoms are a global cultural force on social media (see Mobilizing Fandoms, “Future 100: 2021”). The K-wave, also known as Hallyu, is taking the world by storm.

K-pop stars have graduated to the A-list, gathering brand endorsements by the dozen. Kai from Exo has partnered with Gucci and Blackpink’s members can reel off a host of collaborations with brands including Chanel, Celine, Dior and Tiffany. Burberry has signed up girl band Itzy, while Blackpink singer Rosé and rapper CL were the first Korean female artists to be invited to the Met Gala in 2021.

K-pop is just one of several Korean cultural exports building a global audience. The international popularity of Korean food and beauty brands is at an all-time high, with the latter exceeding \$6 billion in 2020 according to data from the South Korean government. Even the English language has succumbed, with the

Oxford English Dictionary adding over 20 Korean words for 2022, including *bulgogi* (a delicacy of thin slices of pork or beef) and *mukbang* (livestream broadcasts of people eating large amounts of food).

Perhaps most surprising is the seemingly meteoric success of Korean entertainment, or K-drama, from 2020's Oscar-winning film *Parasite* through to the Netflix phenomena *Squid Game* and *Hellbound*. The latter is already Netflix's most watched original show, topping the charts in 80 countries within 24 hours of its launch in November 2021. It has overtaken *Squid Game*, which previously held the record and whose lead female protagonist, HoYeon Jung, has been snapped up by Louis Vuitton for its stable of global brand ambassadors, alongside K-pop giants BTS. Netflix is giving the K-wave a major vote of confidence, investing \$500 million in K-dramas in 2021, including *Bulgasal: Immortal Souls*, released in December.

Korea's rising star may seem to have come out of the blue but, as explained in a recent BBC Culture piece, it's the successful result of a long-term economic initiative by the South Korean government to invest in so-called "soft power." Now the rise of K-culture is being honored with a dedicated exhibition. From September 2022 to June 2023, London's Victoria and Albert Museum will host a celebration of Korea's cultural impact on the world. Hallyu! The Korean Wave is the first exhibition of its kind and has the backing of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Seoul.

Why it's interesting

The accessibility and freshness of Korean popular culture has taken the global stage, turning the nation's exports into powerhouses across music, fashion, entertainment and more. Brands can ride the K-wave, tapping into the currency of Hallyu stars that now transcends borders.





Left: Korean musical artist Psy on Today 2012, New York. Courtesy of Jason Decrow, Invision, AP, Shutterstock
Right: Tchai Kim Young-Jin Hanbok Collection, 2015, modeled by Bae Yoon Young. Courtesy of YG Kplus





Unbounded optimism

Brands are projecting a progressive and positive outlook for 2022, encouraging playfulness and creativity.

Pantone created a completely new color inspired by and encouraging creativity for its Color of the Year 2022. Pantone 17-3938 Very Peri, a unique blend of blues, violets and reds, “displays a spritely, joyous attitude and dynamic presence that encourages courageous creativity and imaginative expression,” the brand states.

British-Nigerian artist and designer Yinka Ilori and Lego unveiled a colorful installation celebrating play and community. “Launderette of Dreams” was an interactive and colorful presence in East London that encouraged children to create, play, and share ideas.

Adobe Stock’s 2022 Creative Trends include “powerfully playful” themes for the year. “There is a primal need for play,” Brenda Milis, Adobe’s principal of consumer and creative insights, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.



“A year ago you kept hearing the word ‘resilience’ but how do you remain resilient when the pandemic is so long term and everything is so uncertain?”

In anticipation of the next year, Milis says that “brands are using playfulness and optimism—there’s an incredible consumer appetite for it. It has an underlying strength to it. There’s a sense of awe, wonder, inspiration and creativity there—it really grounds it. The playfulness really comes from long-term consumer exhaustion—needing a touch of relief, a touch of entertainment.”



2022 is channeling a creative playfulness that symbolizes growth and freedom.

Paint company Dulux announced Bright Skies as its Color of the Year for 2022. The airy and refreshing shade “perfectly captures the optimism and desire for a fresh start that is the mood of the moment.”

Why it's interesting

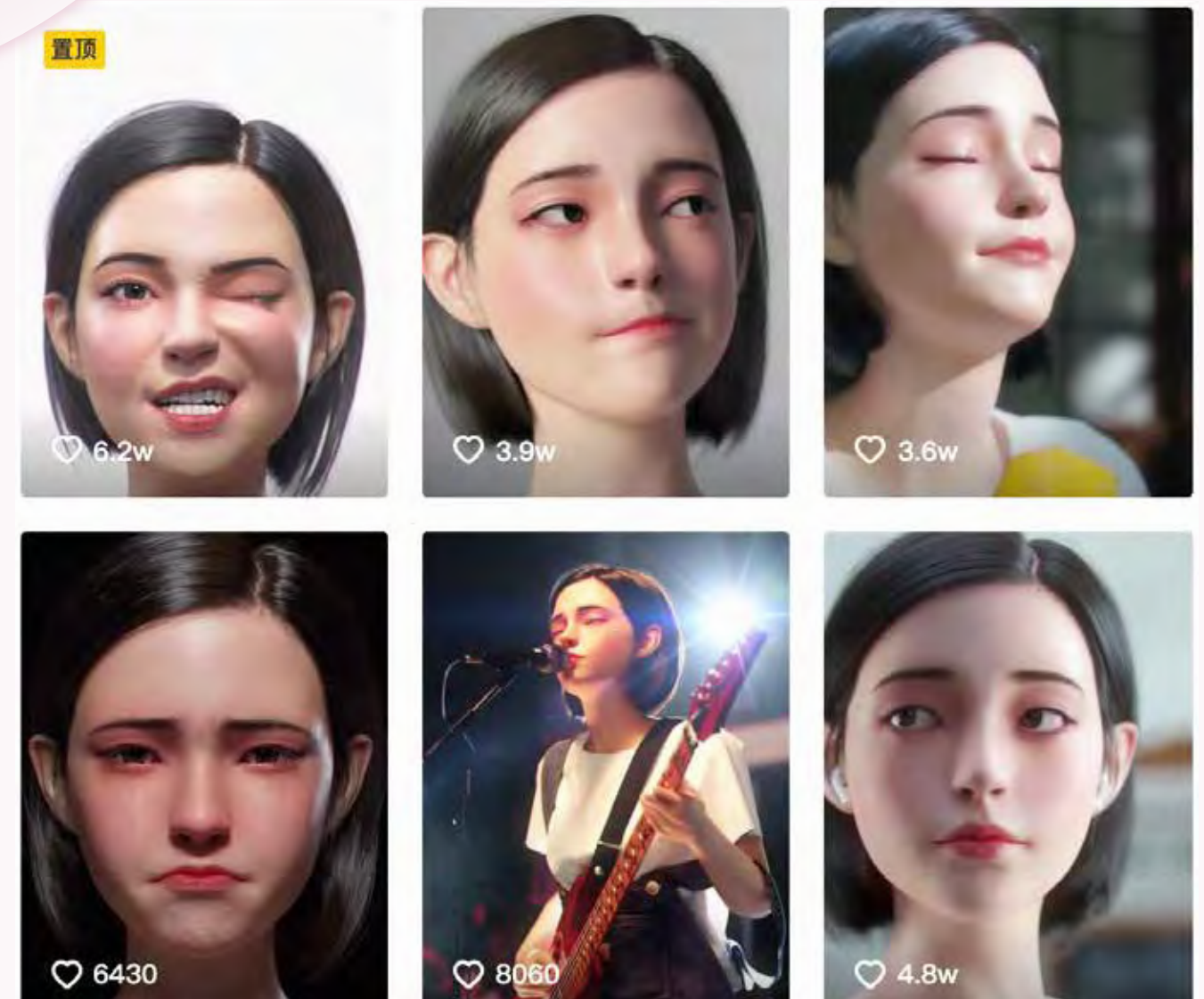
After an unpredictable two years, 2022 is channeling a creative playfulness that symbolizes growth and freedom. Colors and design directions are solidifying this energizing spirit that will undoubtedly trickle into ads and marketing.



05

Virtual genuinfluencers

A new class of influencer is emerging.



Meet the genuinfluencer—a term first coined by WGSN—who garners followers by being relatable rather than aspirational.

Angie, a virtual influencer on Douyin created by Jesse Zhang, is setting new beauty standards in China by celebrating her “imperfections.” Unlike other virtual influencers, whose skin has been smoothed to perfection and whose faces are perfectly symmetrical, Angie’s skin is sometimes dry or flushed, she gets acne and acne scars, her makeup creases and her teeth aren’t perfectly aligned. Instead of posing in designer clothes, she wears simple white T-shirts



and athletic shorts. “The reason I like Angie is that she is more realistic than many people who are actually real,” Xiao Qi, a millennial living in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing and one of Angie’s nearly 300,000 followers, as of December 2021, told CNN.

Yoox, an online luxury marketplace owned by Yoox Net-a-Porter Group, first launched its virtual influencer Daisy in 2018 and is now shifting its strategy. Yoox’s priority for Daisy in 2021 was to make her more relatable, Yoox brand and communication director Manuela Strippoli told *Vogue*. “We’re moving away from her initial image where she always seemed flawless and we’re humanizing her by giving her likes and dislikes as well as flaws.” This includes developing her voice, and having her engage more in social issues. “She has a point of view, whether it’s on fashion or social causes. It’s important that she’s not neutral,” added Strippoli.

Gen Z’s approach to brands is likely a significant contributor to this shift—the vast majority prefer a brand that they can relate to and that shares their values. In the United States, 73% of gen Zers want a brand that understands them and 76% want a brand that is accepting of a range of identities and experiences, according to October 2020 findings from Wunderman Thompson Data.

Why it’s interesting

Influence is shifting. “Being too aspirational is repellent now,” the *Guardian* reported in August 2021. This is also filtering into the virtual realm, where brands have an opportunity to craft their avatar influencers around core values and relatability.

06

Liminal spaces

Virtual venues and physical space are melding together, giving way to new event locales.





Alongside the rise of fully virtual venues and spaces, extended reality is informing physical spaces, elevating events to limitless interactions and experiences.

Independent host Surreal launched in March 2021: a platform for hybrid events that combines virtual experiences in physical spaces. Built with Epic Games' Unreal Engine, the platform offers endless possibilities. Acting as a “digital twin” to the physical environment, Surreal allows hosts and audiences to reimagine experiences by integrating liminal interactions, and incorporate hyper-realistic 3D avatars through a partnership with DNABlock.

In New York City, High Line Art and westside cultural institution The Shed collaborated to create *The Looking Glass*, an augmented reality installation of virtual sculptures located in the High Line park in July and August 2021. Visitors could use the Acute Art app to view hidden interactive artwork.

Captivating locals and international travelers, TeamLab's *Borderless* exhibition in Tokyo is the most visited single-artist museum in the world, setting a



Guinness World Record in July 2021. *Borderless*, also located in San Francisco, features music and mirrored walls that are reminiscent of a kaleidoscopic box and are “ultimately closer to entertainment than art,” according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

For socialites looking to mingle between realities, digital platform *Dezeen* opened a virtual social club in April 2021—leading creatives met in the virtual rooftop bar for a panel discussion themed around the metaverse and design.

The Royal Shakespeare Company used Unreal Engine to present *Dream*, an interactive performance of live actors that brings the audience into the production for an almost game-like experience.

Why it's interesting

Liminal spaces, which blend virtual and physical experiences, present brands with an opportunity to reinvent how physical experiences and bricks-and-mortar spaces can look.



*Sports*volution

Female athletes are uprooting outdated federation rules and challenging cultural norms in sports.

In 2021, a slew of female athletes pushed back on inherent sexism in sport, rejecting expectations that they should wear revealing clothing to compete.

Team GB pole-vaulter Holly Bradshaw was so dismayed by her official uniform kit for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics—effectively a crop top and bikini bottoms—that she negotiated the right to wear a modified Adidas rowing unitard instead. Similarly, German gymnast Sarah Voss competed in a full bodysuit instead of a leotard at the European Championships. Two of the German’s teammates, Kim Bui and Elisabeth Seitz, later joined her in long leotards, taking a stand together against sexualization in gymnastics.

Many women who participate in sports suffer objectification from fans, commentators, and even coaches. Sexist uniform rules that put women in unnecessarily revealing kit are now triggering widespread outrage and an influx of global support. In July 2021 American singer-songwriter Pink posted a tweet offering to pay an “improper clothing” fine imposed on the Norwegian women’s handball team. The team was fined €1,500 after wearing shorts like their male counterparts instead of bikini bottoms. In November 2021, the International Handball Federation updated its rules around women’s uniforms.

Why it’s interesting

Gender divisions still deeply bifurcate sport but female athletes are now pushing back against inequality. Brands can help support and elevate their fight to break down problematic gender barriers, seizing the opportunity to redefine cultural norms and, in doing so, boost women’s participation in sport.

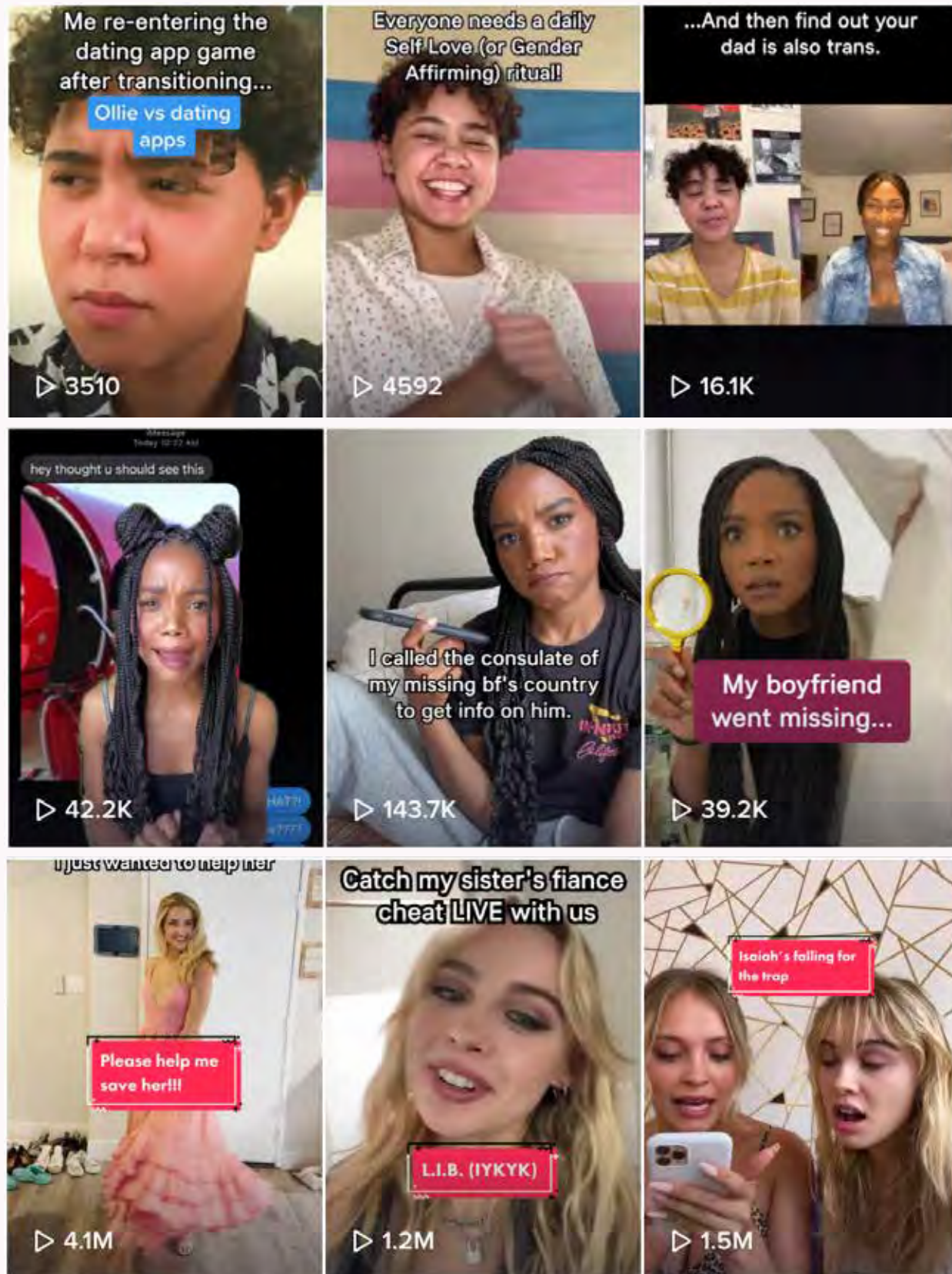


Social media-tainment

Plots that develop entirely on profiles, dramas that unfold in feeds, and fictional characters who chat with their followers. Is this the next big thing in entertainment?

FourFront is “revolutionizing TV through TikTok,” *Fast Company* reported. FourFront, which secured \$1.5 million in seed funding in October 2021, is a new kind of content studio. It produces scripted narratives on social media that have the look and feel of regular posts, featuring fictional characters who have their own storylines, social media pages, and interact with followers organically. As of October 2021, FourFront had reportedly garnered 1.9 million followers and 281 million views across its characters’ TikTok accounts. “We’re blurring the line between reality and storytelling,” Ilan Benjamin, FourFront cofounder and CEO, told *Fast Company*.

This could point to a new kind of social media-based interactive entertainment format. “Not only have we been creating this universe of characters on TikTok, we’ve also been iterating with a new interactive format,” Benjamin said. “There’s an evolution in entertainment happening from motion pictures, where audiences can engage in what we call living pictures with characters who feel alive, who



live in our world, who are on social media, and react in real time to audience engagements. That fourth wall is completely broken.”

Invisible Universe is another startup scripting entertainment specifically for social media. CEO Tricia Biggio, a former senior VP of unscripted television at MGM, calls it “the Pixar of the internet.” With the mission of creating what the company calls “the next 100-year animated franchise,” Invisible Universe develops original animated characters on social media in partnership with high-profile celebrities, influencers and brands. Founded in August 2021 by former Snap executive John Brennan and launched with \$8 million in funding, Invisible Universe has since released characters in partnership with Jennifer Aniston and Serena Williams.

Why it's interesting

Storytelling is evolving, with emerging formats that are tailored for social media feeds. As movie theaters struggle and TV viewership declines, the entertainment industry is rethinking how it reaches and serves audiences.



Renewed intimacy

After nearly two years of distance and isolation, a renewed desire for intimacy is shaking up dating culture.



Intentional dating is on the rise, according to Match. In its November 2021 “Singles in America” study, 62% of American singles said they are looking for meaningful, committed relationships, while only 11% are dating “casually.” According to an April 2021 report from the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, 44% of Americans say that commitment is more important to them post-pandemic. Even younger consumers are looking for committed relationships—81% of gen Zers want to be in a relationship within the next year, Match findings revealed.

New apps and platforms are helping facilitate deeper intimacy. Elate, an “anti-ghosting” app, launched at the end of 2020 to encourage slower dating and stronger emotional connections. In place of endless swiping, Elate users are served 10 recommended profiles per day and are only allowed to chat with three people at a time.



Raspberry Dream Labs is reframing cybersex experiences to form meaningful connections. Its first project, *Sensory Seduction*, uses extended reality (XR) to allow users to feel haptic pulses on their bodies, mimicking the sensation of being touched. The experience is designed to offer an opportunity to “explore your sensuality and engage your sexual accelerators through the sensory stimulation.” The company has released a beta version of *Raspberry Dream Land*, an XR social event platform offering a virtual space for “radical self-expression, progressive arts and entertainment, social interactions and virtual relationships.”

Why it's interesting

“We’re witnessing a sea change in dating attitudes and behaviors,” Justin Garcia, executive director of the Kinsey Institute and scientific advisor at Match, wrote in a December 2021 article for the *Wall Street Journal*. “How we find and maintain intimate connections has changed over the past year... Today’s singles are focused on seeking and nurturing close relationships with mature partners over the long term,” he observed, calling the shift “a reset in modern dating culture.”

10

Metasocieties

A digital reality that reflects the values and standards of our physical lives—or better versions—is in the making.



The metaverse is offering a chance to create a world that is inclusive, ethical and accessible. “Think about creating a new online society but doing it right from day one,” Daren Tsui, CEO of Together Labs, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. Tsui is describing IMVU, the company’s 3D avatar-based friendship discovery social network. The platform is designed to foster social presence and authentic connections.

The evolution of tech points to a positive future for the metaverse: 88% of global consumers believe tech can make the world a better place, and 78% agree it can help create a more equitable society, according to a July 2021 survey by Wunderman Thompson Data published in the “Into the Metaverse” report.



The race to create virtual worlds that nurture connections, collaboration and discovery is on. Nowhere is a new social networking platform that places people in 3D environments ranging from forests to an island in the sky. Jon Morris, CEO of Nowhere, describes the platform as “the first online event space where you can truly be present, whether feeling the raw energy of a virtual performance or serendipitously vibing with a stranger you just met.”

Meta’s Horizon Worlds aims to be a “VR social experience” where explorers play, build and create together. And Microsoft Mesh uses mixed reality to create interconnected worlds that allow people in different physical locations to be together in real-time via holographic experiences.

Why it’s interesting

The metaverse is still in its infancy and the window of opportunity to build virtual worlds and societies from the ground up is opening now.



Top: Nowhere’s Networking at Crane Gallery; exhibit by The Most Famous Artist
 Bottom: Microsoft Mesh
 Right: Meta’s Horizon Worlds

11

Tech & innovation

20



3D audio

Immersive listening ushers in the next generation of audio experiences.



Across its product line, Apple is rolling out new spatial audio features, which create immersive, multidimensional sound that mimics surround sound. At its October 2021 Unleashed event, Apple announced that its new AirPods 3 and MacBook Pro laptops will be equipped for spatial audio, after first unveiling the functionality, powered by Dolby Atmos, for Apple Music in June 2021. “Apple Music is making its biggest advancement ever in sound quality,” says Oliver Schusser, vice president of Apple Music and Beats.

Sony introduced two new home speaker systems in 2021 with 360-degree spatial sound mapping technology for an immersive listening experience.



Audio company Spatial unveiled its first suite of products in March 2021. The new startup creates immersive, interactive soundscapes for public spaces, including lobbies, retail stores, offices and even hospitals. The bespoke soundscapes are designed to have a specific emotional impact on listeners—from encouraging relaxation and focus to destressing. Companies are “fundamentally rethinking the future of work in this hybrid environment,” Spatial co-founder and CEO Calin Pacurariu told *Fast Company*. “And they see sound as a competitive advantage.”

In November 2021, Cartier brought its immersive audio experience, The Great Animal Orchestra, to the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, for



its North American debut. The exhibition, which first launched in Paris in 2016, features soundscapes of biodiversity across North America, Latin America, Kenya, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, recorded by soundscape ecologist Bernie Krause. *Elle* described it as “an exploration of sound: how we digest it, the ways in which animals express it.”

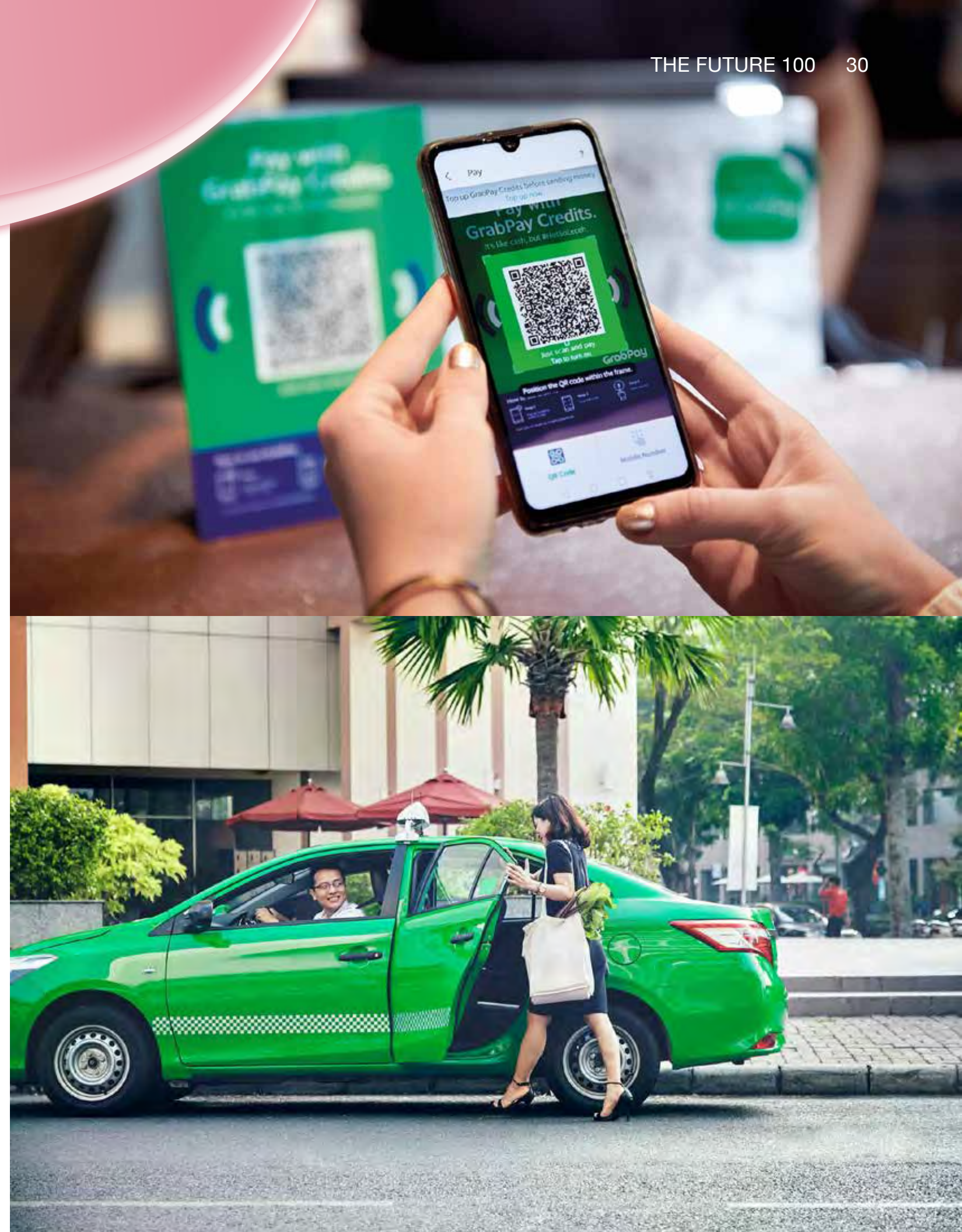
Why it's interesting

Social media platforms such as Instagram have driven a hyper-focus on visual elements over the past decade. Now, especially as digital platforms mature and engagement evolves, focus is shifting to multisensory elements—audio, in particular—for a truly immersive experience.

12

Rise of the super apps

China exports its super-app formula to eager neighbors.



Even as China's super apps come under a government anti-trust crackdown, their progeny abroad are going from strength to strength. Super apps offer multiple functions on a single seamless platform, from messaging to ecommerce to ride-hailing to payments and financial services.

Indonesia's Gojek started as a motorbike ride-hailing service to help people cut through Jakarta traffic and now delivers everything from food to medicine to masseurs. In 2021, in a deal valued at \$18 billion, it announced it was merging with Tokopedia, the country's largest online marketplace, which also offers fintech and logistics services. The combined entity, aptly named GoTo, has more than 100 million active users, 11 million merchants, two million drivers and revenue that represents 2% of Indonesia's \$1 trillion economy.

It's not the only super app in the region. Singapore-headquartered Grab, which calls itself the "Everyday Everything app," started with ride-hailing around Southeast Asia and swiftly added delivery, payments and financial services, landing a digital bank license with partner SingTel in 2020. Grab went public on the Nasdaq via the world's largest special-purpose acquisition company deal, raising \$4.5 billion, at the end of 2021.

GoTo and Grab boast marquee investors, including Chinese tech giants Alibaba, Tencent, Meituan and Didi Chuxing, as well as Facebook, Google, Sequoia, SoftBank, Google, and Singapore government fund Temasek.

In 2020, online commerce in Southeast Asia grew faster than in any other region, according to Forrester. Online sales expanded 53% to \$50 billion, led by grocery commerce, which registered growth of 97%. Total online sales are expected to keep growing by double digits annually, to hit \$143 billion in 2025.



Why it's interesting

Chinese tech giants invested early in Southeast Asian platforms and exported many of the super-app concepts pioneered back home to their neighbors. As Chinese tech firms face increasing regulation, they are likely to look abroad more than ever for growth opportunities.

Indeed, consumers in many Southeast Asian countries appear readier than elsewhere for super apps that stitch together a plethora of services. According to Wunderman Thompson's Future Shopper Survey 2021, eight out of 10 consumers in Thailand and Indonesia agree with the statement "I wish brands communicated with me seamlessly across different channels."

13

Carbon-neutral browsing

Brands are redesigning their online experiences to be less damaging to the environment.

According to Cleanfox's February 2021 report on email pollution, "if the internet were a country, it would be the sixth biggest polluter in the world." The report also revealed that promotional emails are responsible for two million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions annually in the United Kingdom.

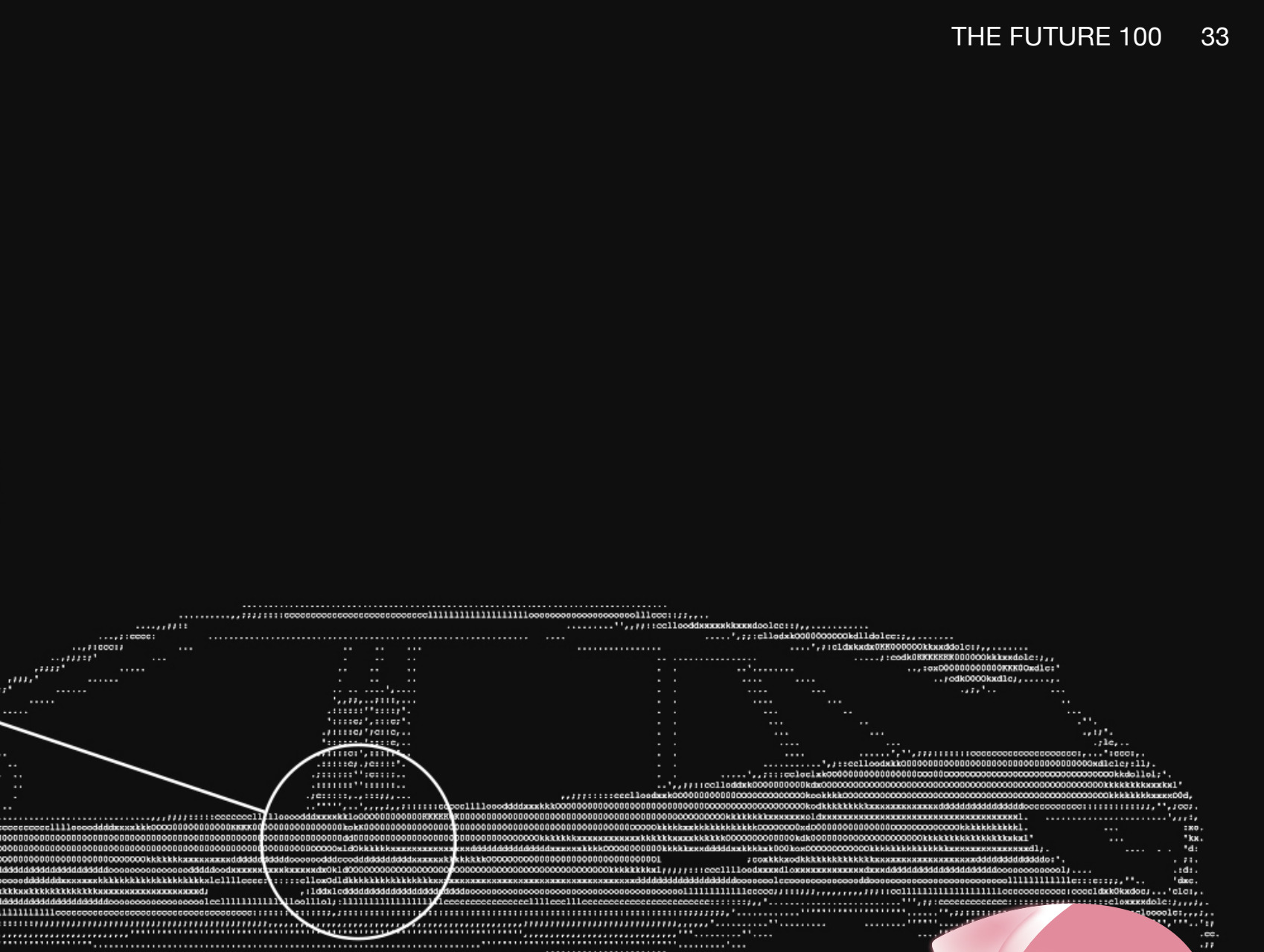
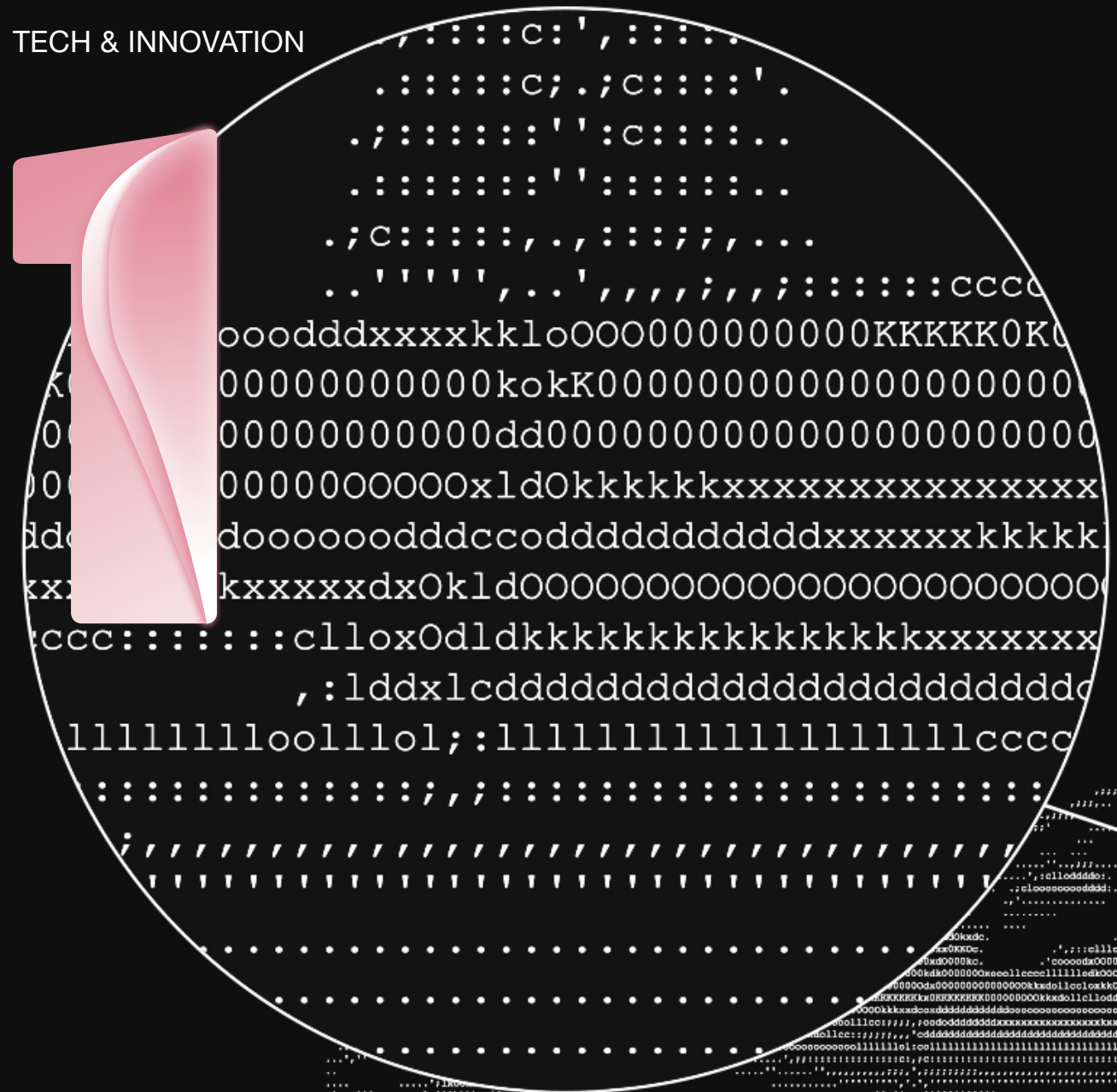
In response, brands are overhauling their websites to lower the carbon footprint of their online activity.

Amsterdam-based design studio Formafantasma redesigned its website in February 2021 to be more energy efficient, with small images, basic typefaces, and a logo created from standard Unicode symbols. The simple visuals decrease the energy needed to load the site, reducing carbon emissions.

Volkswagen reconstructed its Canadian website for a more sustainable browsing experience in February 2021. The Carbon-Neutral Net online redesign shrinks the brand's digital carbon footprint by removing all color and replacing photographs with mosaics created from low-data text characters. The project has significantly lowered the amount of CO₂ generated by browsing. The site produces an average of only 0.022 grams of CO₂ per page view, compared to the average website, which produces 1.76 grams of CO₂ per page view, according to an assessment by digital carbon emissions calculator Website Carbon.

Why it's interesting

Last year we noted how the acceleration of digital habits has driven a heightened awareness of data sustainability. Since then, brands have already begun rethinking their digital touchpoints to align with consumers' values. Now, especially as the metaverse looms, sustainable practices in the virtual realm will be more important than ever.



14

Finite social networks

Social networks are channeling the concept of less is more.

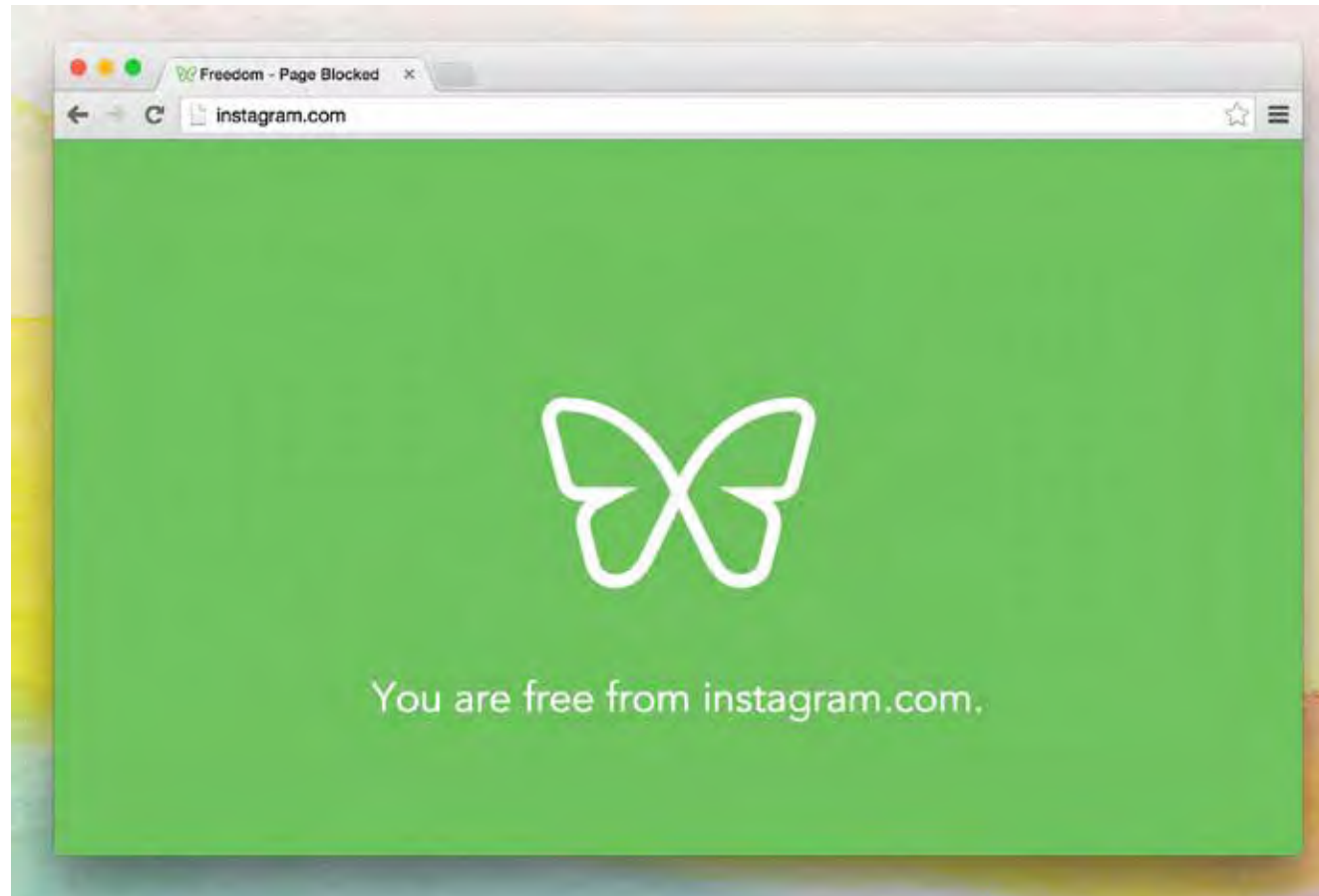
Social media has a bad rap, from promoting addictive behaviors and sleep deprivation to causing anxiety and depression. And yet globally, in 2021, there are billions of monthly active users on Facebook and Instagram, over 300 million monthly active users on Twitter, and, according to a September report from the company, one billion monthly active users on TikTok.

A number of apps such as Social Fever, Offtime and Freedom aim to pry eyeballs away from social media by limiting usage. But what if social platforms had fewer, more curated posts instead? This is where Minus comes in. The platform, created by Ben Grosser to challenge existing social network models, only allows users to have 100 posts for life. Self-dubbed a “finite social network,” the platform aims to raise the quality of content through limitations.

Similarly, Thursday is a dating app that is only live on one day of the week. Launched in May 2021, the company was created to counter online dating fatigue. The app hopes to boost matches, conversations and dating opportunities by limiting its usage to one day a week. Prior to launch, over 100,000 curious singles had already signed up.

Why it's interesting

Companies are seeking to cut through the noise and endless stream of online content by installing restrictive parameters that prompt new behaviors—thus promoting a healthier and more mindful approach to the future of social networking.



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Companies are seeking to cut through the noise and endless stream of online content by installing restrictive parameters that prompt new behaviors.

15

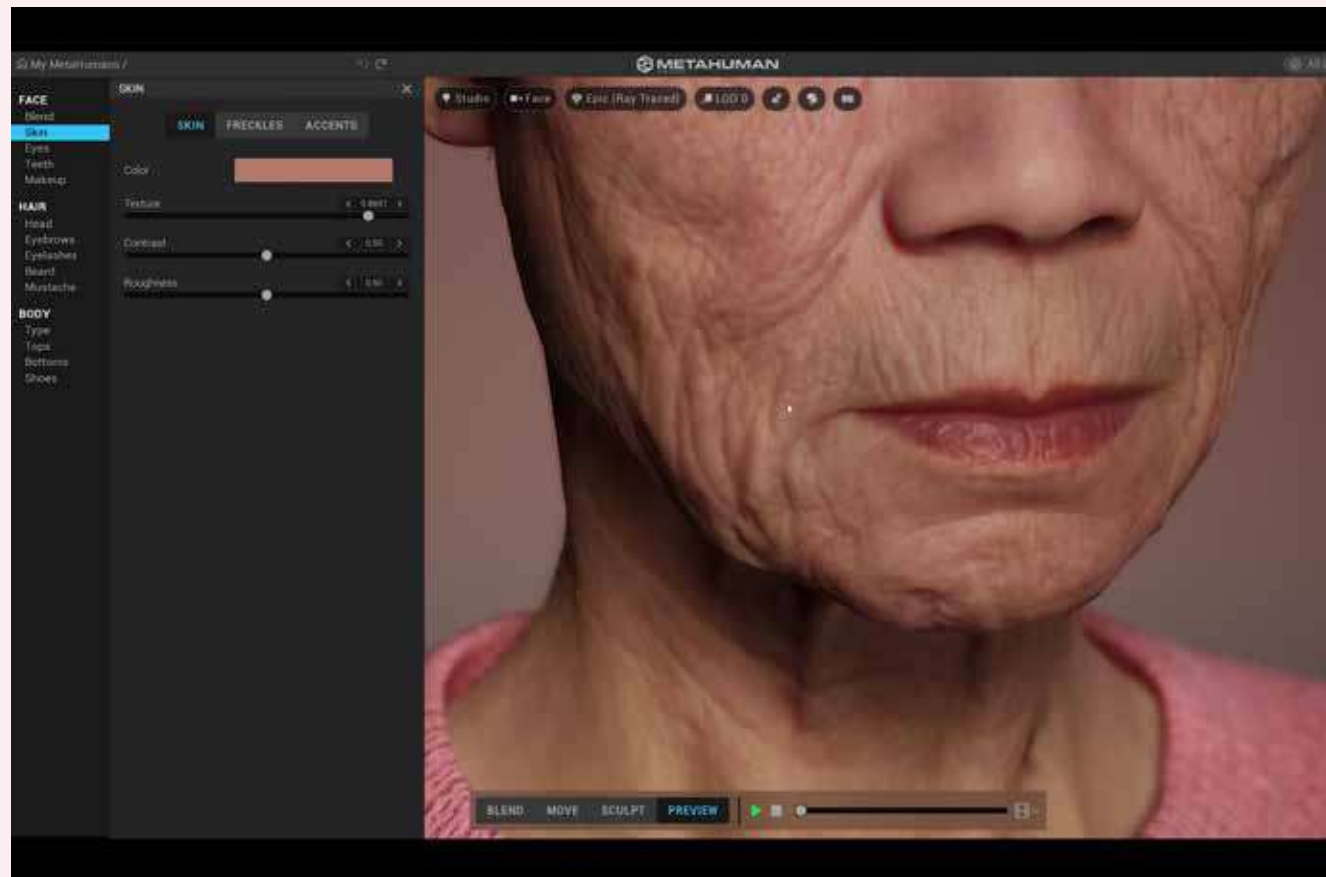
Advanced avatars

Photorealistic digital humans are moving from our screens to the real world—make way for the next-generation avatars.



Nvidia is preparing for a future where 3D avatars with conversational artificial intelligence (AI) will operate in both the virtual and physical world. In a November 2021 demo, the company announced the Omniverse Avatar platform. “The dawn of intelligent virtual assistants has arrived,” said Jensen Huang, founder and CEO of Nvidia. “Omniverse Avatar combines Nvidia’s foundational graphics, simulation and AI technologies to make some of the most complex real-time applications ever created.”

Epic Games’ Unreal Engine believes “digital humans are the future.” In April 2021, Unreal Engine started offering early access to the MetaHuman Creator, which allows real-time creation of photorealistic avatars in minutes. The cloud-based app can replicate intricate details of a person’s features, from complexion and wrinkles to broken capillaries and scars.



In September 2021, California-based avatar-generating startup DNABlock raised \$1.2 million in seed funding to make the metaverse more diverse and inclusive. “The metaverse needs to represent everyone,” Anthony Kelani, CEO and co-founder of DNABlock, told *Protocol*. “This needs to represent the world. And with avatars, specifically, you should be able to generate an avatar that looks like you or like someone of color.”

Why it's interesting

Forget the blue avatars that took over our screens in 2009. In 2022, new-age avatars will not only seem hyper-realistic, but also reflect the world’s diversity.



China's tech crackdown

A crackdown on technology is reshaping China's economy and society.

Since late 2020, China has investigated and/or fined affiliates of its biggest tech companies Alibaba, Tencent, JD.com, Meituan and Didi Chuxing for monopolistic practices. A mega-IPO for Alibaba's Ant Financial was halted at the eleventh hour. In April 2021, Alibaba incurred a record fine of \$2.8 billion for imposing "forced exclusivity" rules on merchants.

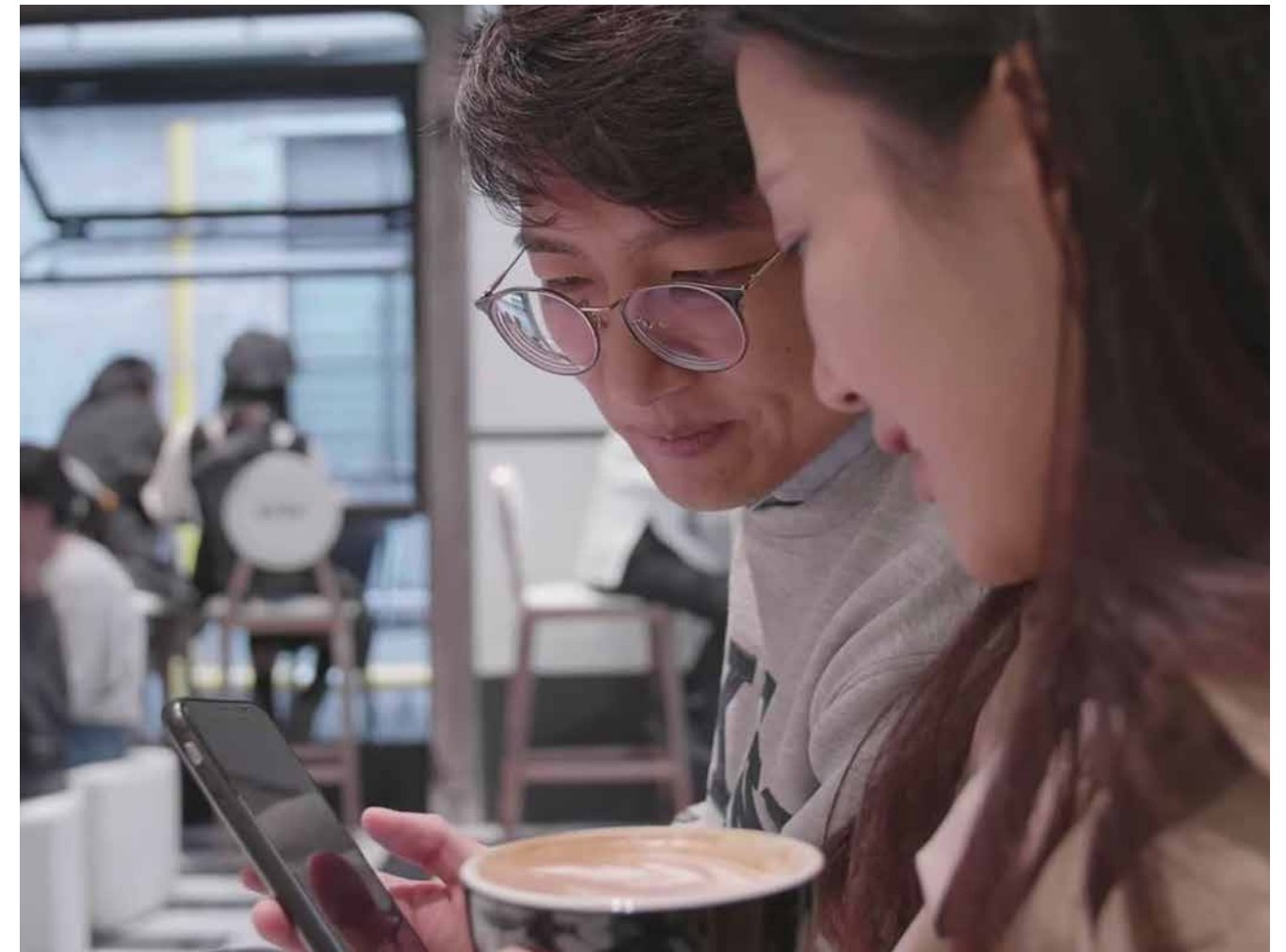
The magnitude of the crackdown is unsurprising, considering that China is the world's most digitized country. Chinese tech companies play an outsized role in almost every facet of citizens' lives, collecting vast tracts of consumer data along the way.

Some 70% of China's population—989 million people— were online at the end of 2020, almost all via their mobile phones. Of these, almost 80% were shopping online, 86% were using mobile payments, and 94% were consuming



online video, according to the China Internet Network Information Center. Initially focused on antitrust, data security and cybersecurity issues, the crackdown has spread to societal concerns, from too much homework for young kids (solution: banning for-profit online tutors) to excessive gaming (solution: strict time limits for minors) to obsessive fandoms.

“I think the issues that regulators in China are trying to address are clearly not unique,” Vey-Sern Ling, managing director of Union Bancaire Privée in Singapore and an expert on China’s Internet economy, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “But there is a lot more autonomy in China, much less time spent on discussion/consultation, and implementation is heavy-handed.”



The US government and the European Union are also trying to curb the reach of Big Tech by suing the likes of Facebook, Amazon and Google for anti-trust issues, though these efforts will take longer to wind their way through courts.

Why it's interesting

For Chinese consumers as well as the brands that sell to them, the changes could mean more choice as rival tech ecosystems are forced to work with each other. For example, shoppers on Alibaba’s ecommerce platforms previously could not use WeChat Pay—owned by rival Tencent—for purchases. Similarly, shoppers on JD.com and Pinduoduo—part-owned by Tencent—could not use Alipay. These walled gardens are coming down.

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Carbontech futures

The world shift toward net zero ushers in a new boom in carbontech.



In the transition to net zero, the world urgently needs carbon-reduction strategies. As innovations in carbon capture start to become less expensive, a carbontech boom could be on the way.

Tech will be crucial for tackling emissions, as Jan Wurzbacher, founder of the Swiss carbon capture company Climeworks, told *Wired* in October 2021: “We have to mitigate, but that will not be enough; we will have biological solutions, they won’t be enough, and so we need technical solutions.”

In September 2021, Climeworks opened its biggest facility yet in Iceland. The plant uses modular carbon dioxide collector units to filter carbon out of the air and turn it into a liquid. Working with Icelandic company Carbfix, it then pumps the liquid underground, where it reacts with Iceland’s native rock, turning the carbon dioxide into stone. Although the technology currently only sucks a small percentage of carbon out of the air, the modular nature of the system means the solution can be easily and economically scaled.

Looking to the skies, Israeli startup High Hopes Labs is betting on large balloons to trap carbon dioxide high up in the atmosphere where it freezes almost solid, making it easier to gather. Having tested its cryodistillation process with small balloons, the company is hoping to scale up its operation within the next two years, capturing the same amount of carbon dioxide at a lower cost than many on-the-ground solutions available today.

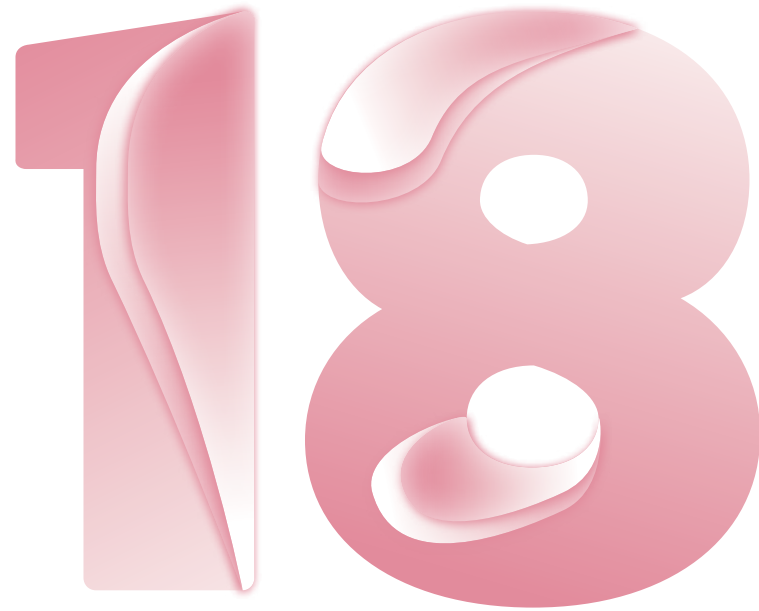
Once carbon has been captured, other brands are stepping in to use it in their products, turning waste into valuable resources. Chicago-based Aether uses carbon dioxide to create diamonds, while Canadian sportswear brand Lululemon joined forces with biotech company LanzaTech in July 2021 to create fabric made from waste carbon dioxide.



As innovations in carbon capture start to become less expensive, a carbontech boom could be on the way.

Why it's interesting

While carbon capture on a grand scale remains expensive, new projects are proving that costs can come down—and a nascent economy is emerging to capitalize on waste carbon. “Has the carbontech revolution begun?” asked the *New York Times* in June 2021. As the drive toward net zero becomes the new normal, the appetite for these solutions is only set to grow.



Virtual teleportation

Technologists are opening up digital portals—making virtual teleportation a plausible reality.

Transforming communication and collaboration is at the heart of Varjo Teleport VR. The headset, launched in October 2021 by Helsinki-based tech manufacturer Varjo, uses the Varjo Reality Cloud platform, which allows for photorealistic virtual teleportation.

Meta is also betting big on virtual reality (VR). “By 2030, the new generations of Oculus will allow users to teleport from one place to another without moving from their couch,” Mark Zuckerberg told *The Information’s* 411 podcast.

Microsoft Mesh uses mixed reality (MR) to create interconnected worlds where the physical and digital come together. The selling point with Microsoft’s new platform is that people in different physical locations are able to collaborate and work in real time on the same project via holographic experiences across different devices. “You can actually feel like you’re in the same place with someone sharing content or you can teleport from different mixed reality devices and be present with people even when you’re not physically together,” said Alex Kipman, Microsoft’s technical fellow.

London-based design practice Space Popular proposes an even more ambitious concept—a civic infrastructure that allows for virtual teleportation. The idea was delivered in November 2021 at Dezeen 15 online festival, with the two cofounders envisaging a “threaded network of virtual textiles that our virtual selves pull aside to move between virtual environments.”

Why it’s interesting

Distance is becoming less of an obstacle. As people spend more time working, socializing and collaborating online, technology is paving the way for teleportation into a new virtual dimension that offers more intimate, close-to-reality in-person interactions.



+ WUNDERMAN THOMPSON Left: Alex Kipman and John Hanke. Images courtesy of Microsoft Mesh Right: Varjo Teleport VR

19

Cryptonomics

Is cryptocurrency finally on the path to legitimacy?

Cryptocurrency has seen its share of ups and downs, but recent moves from major financial and political players may be sanctioning the digital currency as a legitimate and accessible payment option.

PayPal launched its cryptocurrency service in the United Kingdom in August 2021, letting British users buy, hold and sell digital currencies on the popular epayments app. The UK launch marks the first international expansion for PayPal's cryptocurrency product since it launched in the United States at the end of 2020. "The tokens and coins have been around for a while," Jose Fernandez da Ponte, PayPal's general manager for blockchain, crypto and digital currencies, told CNBC, "but you had to be a relatively sophisticated user to be able to access that. Having that on a platform like ours makes a really good entry point."

Eric Adams, the mayor-elect for New York City, announced in November 2021 that he wants to be paid in Bitcoin. Taking to social media, Adams signaled his intention to make New York the “center of the cryptocurrency industry,” starting by taking his first three paychecks in the digital currency.

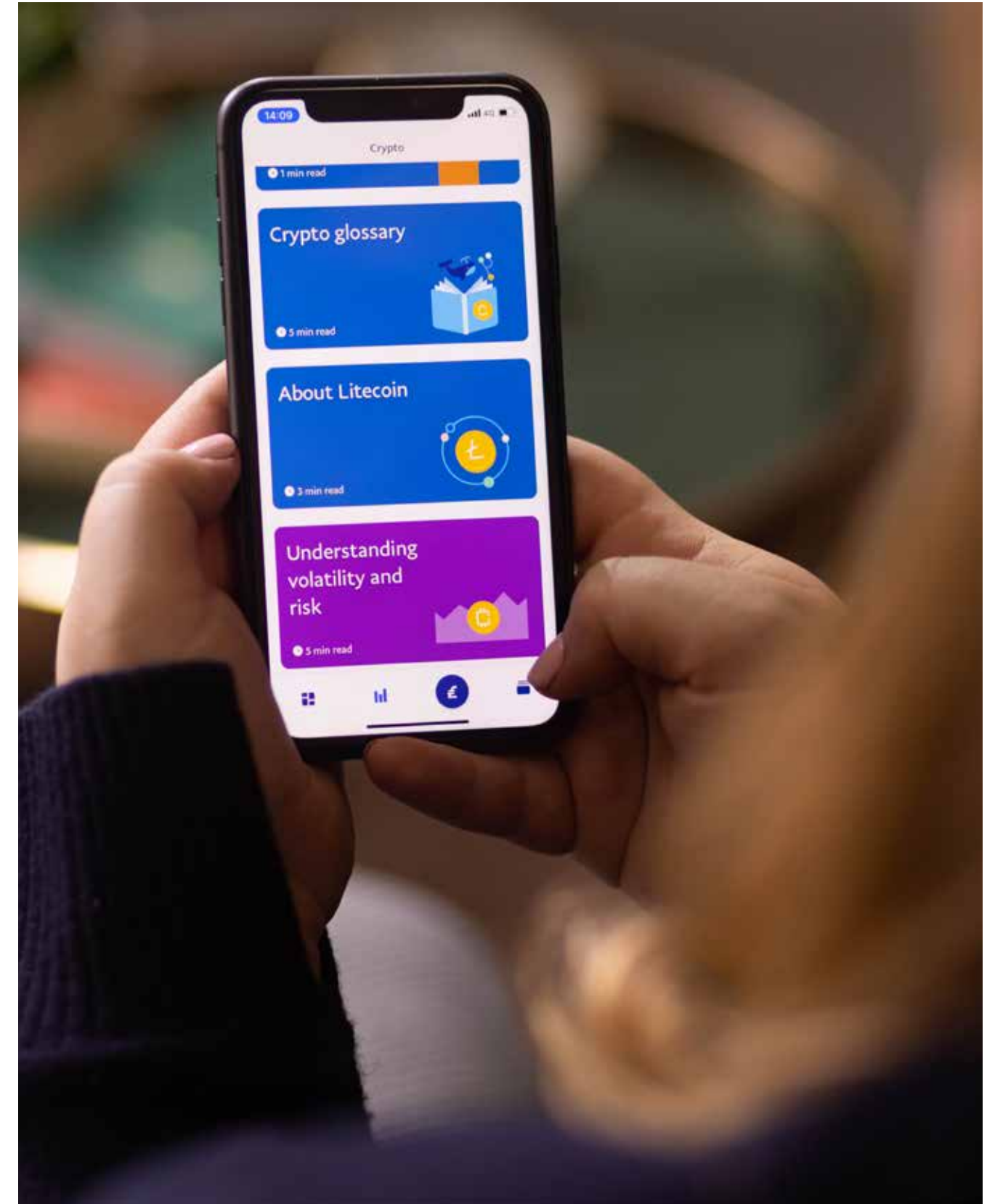
Several countries are experimenting with nationally regulated digital currencies. China is currently piloting a digital yuan, with plans to eventually roll out the electronic currency for mass public use. Over the past year, the People’s Bank of China has distributed several million dollars’ worth of the digital currency via an app connected to six major state-owned banks, according to CNBC. Major cities including Beijing, Chengdu and Shenzhen have joined the pilot program in recent months, as have Tencent-backed WeBank and Alibaba’s Ant Group-backed MYbank. China may even test the digital currency with foreign visitors at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, CNBC revealed in April 2021.

In April 2021, the Bank of Japan (BOJ) kicked off its first phase of digital currency testing, and this initial exploratory step will continue through March 2022. The BOJ will focus on testing the technical feasibility of issuing, distributing and redeeming a central bank digital currency.

Also in April 2021, the UK finance minister Rishi Sunak told a fintech industry conference that the UK Treasury and Bank of England had launched a joint task force “to coordinate exploratory work on a potential central bank digital currency.”

Why it’s interesting

The wild west of cryptocurrency is slowly being regulated and legitimized, opening the door to a future of digital economies.



20

Purification tech

Innovative purifying technology is battling greenhouse gases in public spaces.





A new wave of technological innovations are using biotechnology to purify air spaces. As this tech develops, its functionality is being tested in public spaces, aiming to mitigate the effects of air pollution.

Architecture and innovation firm EcoLogicStudio has revealed a project that removes pollutants from the air. The AirBubble air-purifying eco-machine is currently in use at a children's play pavilion in Warsaw, Poland. It uses solar-powered bioreactors and algae to remove pollutants and carbon dioxide from the air, drawing on natural photosynthesis. The playscape's surrounding bioreactors ultimately keep its pollution levels within the World Health Organization's guidelines. EcoLogicStudio also presented the AirBubble at the Glasgow COP26 United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2021.

A 3D-printed "intelligence forest" created by two Spanish studios, External Reference and Onionlab, debuted at Expo 2020 in Dubai. The artificial forest is made up of sustainable bioplastic polymer trees, composed of sugar and pure.tech, a mineral compound that captures and breaks down greenhouse gases. Microalgae designed for the exhibition produces oxygen through photosynthesis, increasing its levels and decreasing levels of the surrounding greenhouse gases, with the ultimate goal of reducing the effects of global warming. The idea is that the artificial forest, implemented in a city setting, could produce more oxygen than native flora and can be used to produce biofuels and protein-rich food.

Why it's interesting

Heightened focus on air quality is opening the door to new technology and devices, ensuring clean breathing in public spaces.



+ WUNDERMAN THOMPSON Left: AirBubble playground by EcoLogicStudio. Photography by Maja Wirkus
Right: AirBubble presented at COP26. Image by Naaro

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Travel & hospitality

30



Microadventures

**Avid travelers are finding local adventures
a satisfying fix for the travel bug.**

Travelers are finding unique ways to engage with nature locally for smaller, shorter excursions, and some studies indicate that these microadventures are as impactful on mental and emotional health as traditional getaways.

A study by the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of California, San Francisco, found that participants who embarked on 15-minute walks each week “reported greater joy” and even smiled more than those in the control group. The results, which are part of a larger study, indicate that taking a long trip isn’t necessary to inspire awe: short, simple excursions still have a positive effect on our mental health.

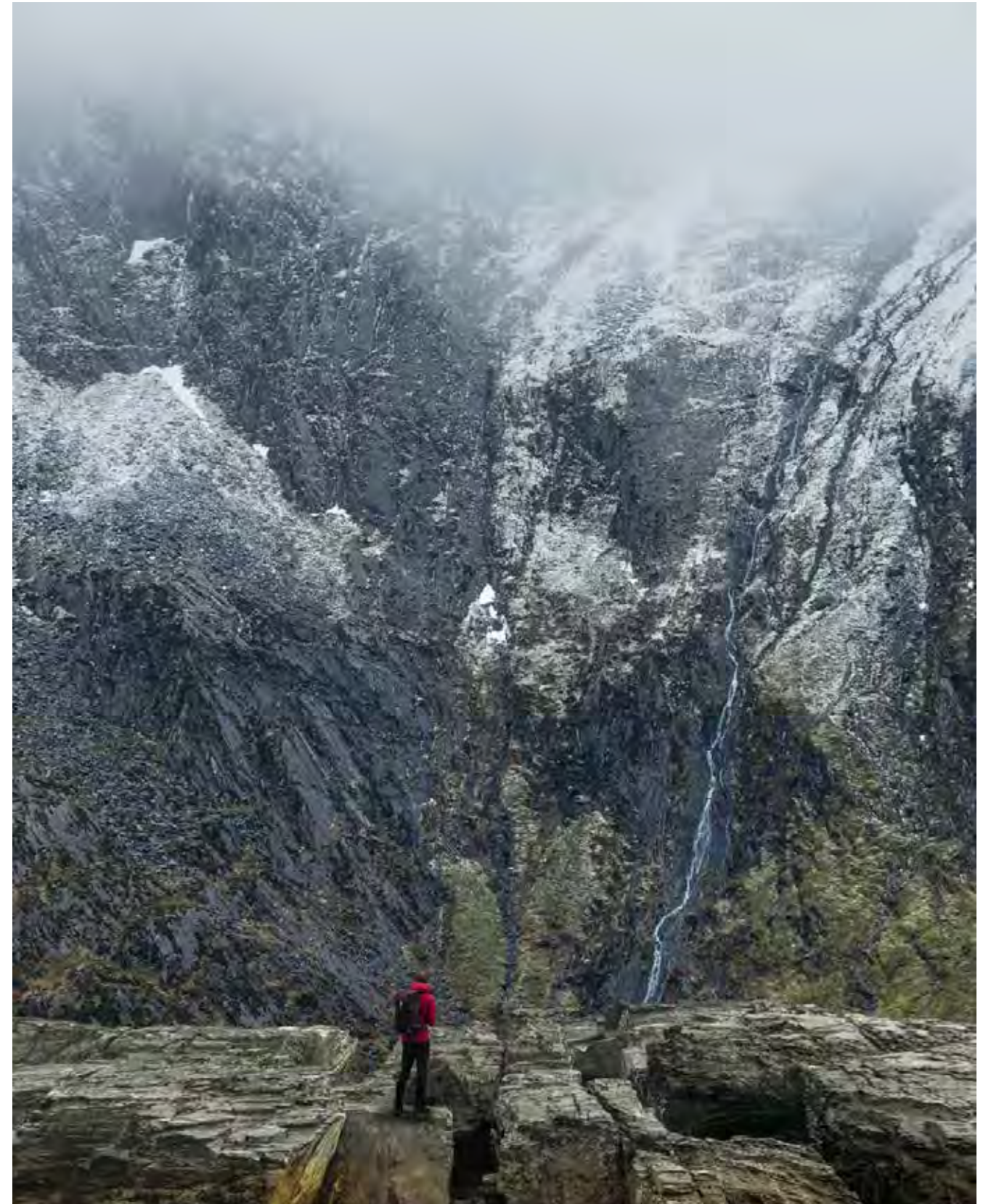
French travel brand Chilowé offers microadventures exclusively, encouraging travelers to travel locally and in small groups. The company’s concept emphasizes the travel possibilities that are close to home for French natives, offering sustainable and less expensive travel options.

In the United Kingdom, a one-night adventure company offers mini stays in remote locations. Much Better Adventures’ short excursions are designed for people with busy lifestyles and a thirst for adventure. Hotel and resort chain Best Western is promoting microadventures in the United Kingdom, advertising unique getaways that last a maximum of 48 hours.

Where there is adventure, there is gear for explorers. US clothing brand M22 has expanded its lifestyle range to develop experiences for adventurous locals near Lake Michigan. The brand offers microadventures curated to help travelers escape everyday life and personalized to fit any mood. From surfing and kayaking to hiking and nature walks, COO Nick Madrick wants the destination's branded escapades to "get people outside in the natural environment to reconnect with nature and experience the local community," as he told *Travel and Leisure*.

Why it's interesting

When extreme adventure and traditional travel aren't possible, microadventures are proving popular, satisfying swaps for an outdoor escape. Brands are finding ways to introduce this travel habit to consumers looking to satisfy their wanderlust.



22

Travelportation

The digital world is offering immersive travel experiences from the comfort of home.





Immersive technology gives travel the potential to be less cost-prohibitive, more accessible and more imaginative.

True teleportation may be a sci-fi fantasy (for now), but the sensorial experiences of travelportation make it possible for travelers to immerse themselves in a physical destination without actually going there.

Japanese airline group ANA Holdings and JP Games launched the Sky Whale digital platform in May 2021. The platform hosts multiple digital worlds that consumers can travel between and shop in with friends and family, supporting an interactive, cultural travel experience. The platform features a Sky Park, Sky Village and Sky Mall, and is partnering with companies in countries including Australia, Austria, Canada, Hawaii, the Philippines and Singapore to connect users from around the world.

Microsoft Flight Simulator, already compatible with Xbox Series X and S, now offers a TCA Yoke Boeing Edition controller for the ultimate virtual flight experience. Players can control the pitch of their virtual aircraft with this one-to-one replica of the control yoke of a Boeing 787, with additional Xbox buttons and an audio jack for a seamless adjustment to the new console. Pre-orders were available from November 2021, with consumers scheduled to receive their stainless steel controllers the following month.

Why it's interesting

This immersive technology gives travel the potential to be less cost-prohibitive, more accessible and more imaginative.



Mycological retreats

All-inclusive resorts are offering an unexpected draw:
guided psychedelic trips.

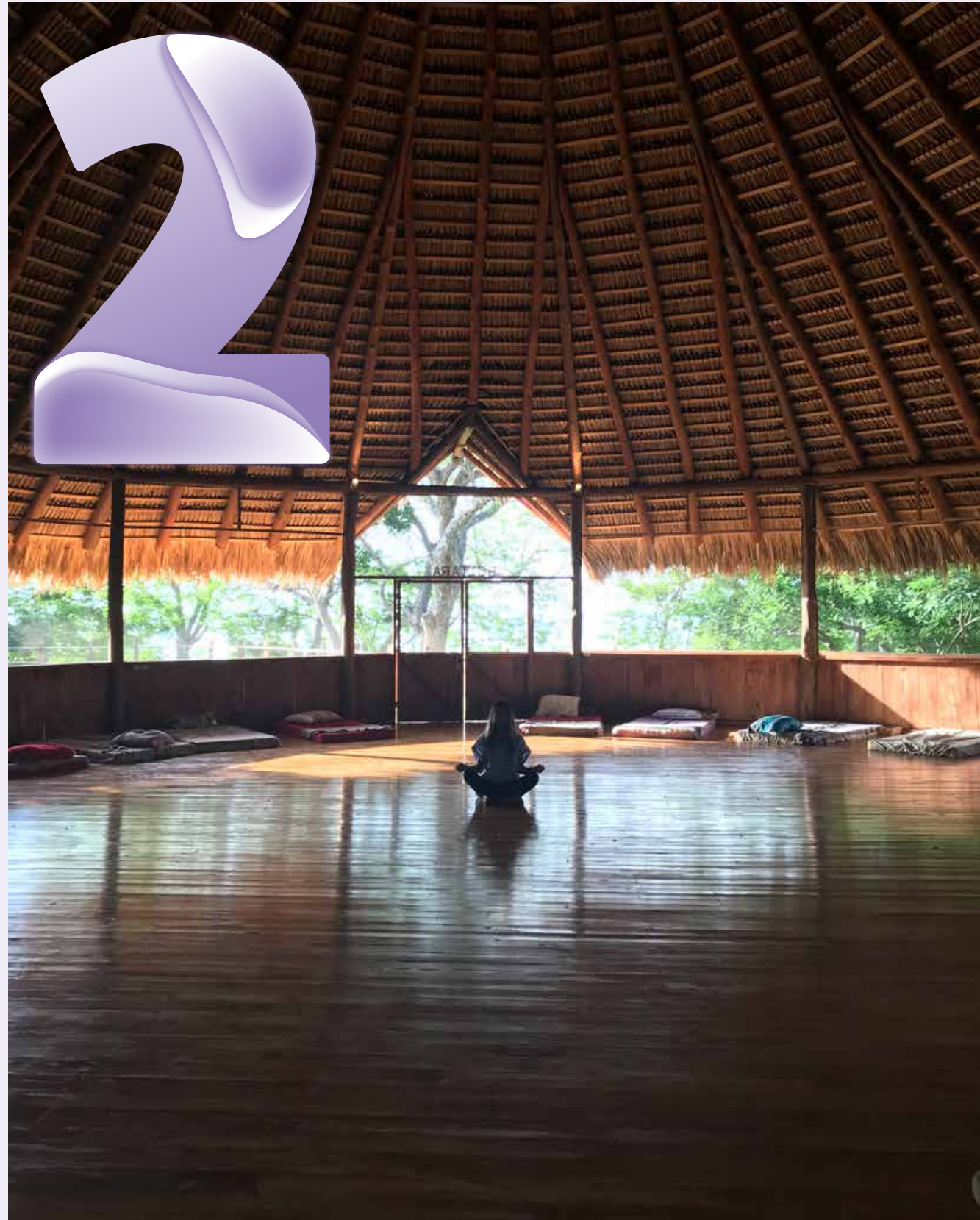
At Soltara Healing Center, an all-inclusive resort in Costa Rica, stays are built around ayahuasca, a psychoactive tea, used under the guidance of native Shipibo healers. Silo Wellness in Jamaica offers psilocybin-assisted ceremonies that are individually tailored to the group or individual. And at psilocybin wellness retreat MycoMeditations in Jamaica, guests can enjoy a luxurious week-long trip with options for guided psychedelic ceremonies for \$10,500. MycoMeditations expanded its packages in June 2021 to include Companions Retreats for friends and family, to “improve their mental, emotional and spiritual health as a unit,” says Justin Townsend, MycoMeditation's CEO and lead facilitator.

The practice is even making its way into mainstream pop culture. Gwyneth Paltrow famously participated in a psychedelic retreat in the first episode of her Netflix show, *The Goop Lab*. More recently, it was also the basis of Hulu's show *Nine Perfect Strangers*.

Douglas Gordon, CEO of Silo Wellness, told Bloomberg that his company's retreats reflect the changing notions of luxury. “Real luxury is being able to wear flip-flops to dinner,” he said. “It's not necessarily black tie, you know? It's about an authentic experience. That's the type of person we want to attract, someone who puts value into experiences.”

Why it's interesting

Wellness tourism and luxury travel continue to overlap as luxury travelers seek not just physical escape and creature comforts, but also a deep mental and psychological reset.





Green mapping

Conscious consumers have new eco priorities
when planning trips and journeys.

In October 2021, Google announced the launch of three new environmentally conscious options in Google Maps. Eco-friendly routing allows drivers to see the most fuel-efficient routes rather than just the fastest, while lite navigation is aimed at cyclists who don't want turn-by-turn instructions to distract them from the road. In the third initiative, Google has extended bike and scooter-share information to over 300 cities globally, helping riders more easily find the micro-mobility options available to them. Beyond Maps, 2021 has been a busy year for Google's sustainable travel-information offer. Worldwide flight searches now come with emissions estimates, while hotel listings now feature sustainability credentials and eco-certifications.

For upscale travelers, US-based Wild Nectar Immersive Travel Collection launched in autumn 2021 with the goal of providing environmentally positive, luxurious trips. It has created a unique Eco Score to aid destination decision-making based on factors such as conservation, emissions, and betterment of local communities.

In a similar vein, Small Luxury Hotels of the World launched its new Considerate Collection in October 2021. Working with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, the brand has selected the hotels in the collection for their exceptional commitment to sustainability, such as increasing local biodiversity or improving the wellbeing of local communities.



Transportation accounts for 24% of direct global CO2 emissions from fuel combustion, according to the International Energy Agency's "Tracking Transport 2020" report. Though lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 reduced these emissions, the rebound has been significant enough for the International Transport Forum to predict in 2021 that CO2 emissions from the sector will increase by 16% by 2050, versus 2015 levels. Growing awareness of this impact is leading transport apps and travel companies to redesign their offerings, giving travelers more planet-first options.

Why it's interesting

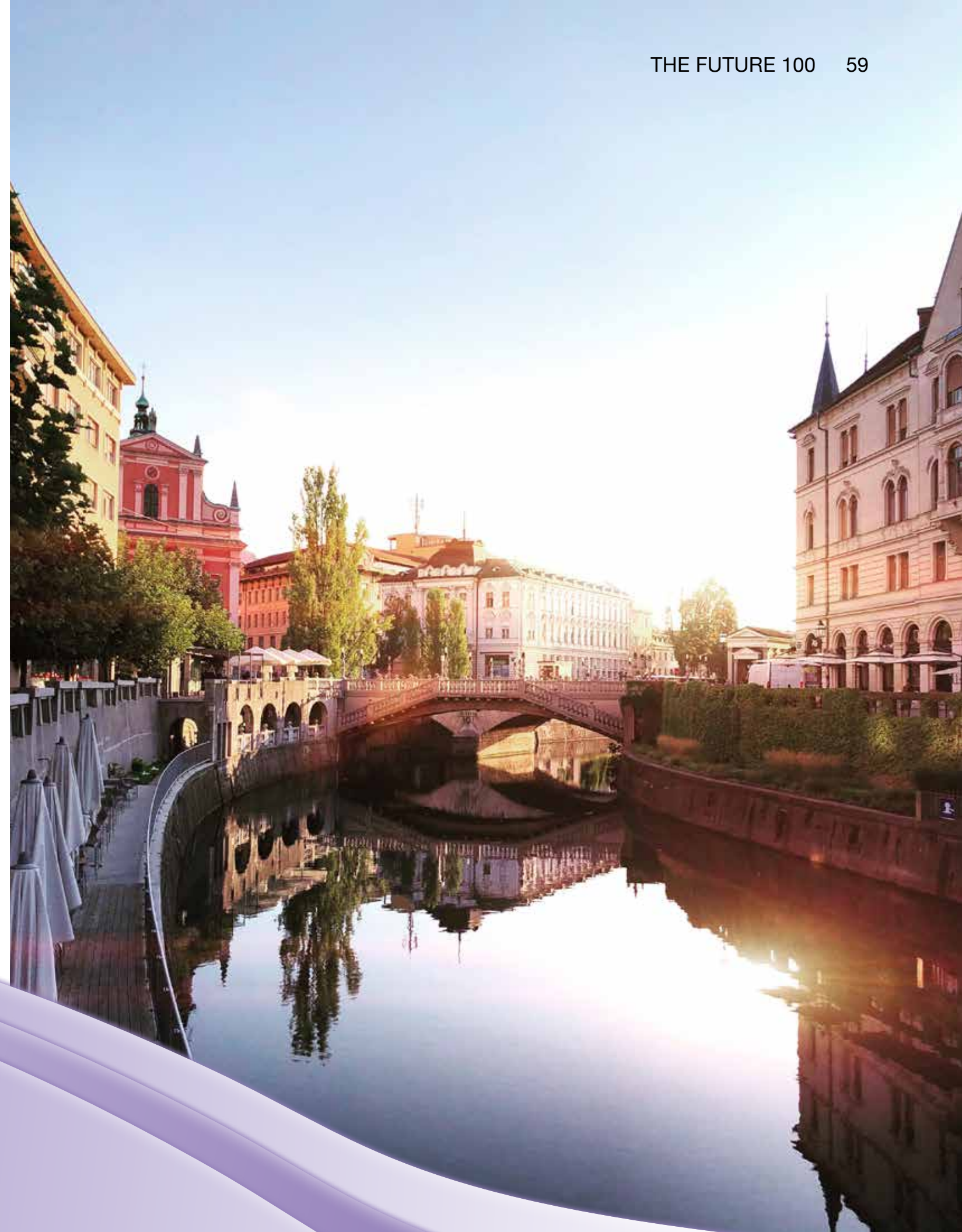
Not wanting to forgo travel altogether, travelers are looking to brands to help them make more sustainable plans. Not only do services like this speak to value-driven consumers but they also help to reduce choice fatigue. According to Wunderman Thompson Data, 79% of global consumers say they are interested in tips and advice from brands on how to live more sustainably.



25

Top three destinations

The top three hot-to-trot destinations for 2022 offer something for everyone: sustainable tourism, COVID-19 assurance for long-term stays and ecological marvels.





Ljubljana, Slovenia

For eco-conscious travelers, the capital of Slovenia is the place to go as Ljubljana was ranked European Best Green Capital for 2022 by European Best Destinations. The city boasts more than 542 square meters of public green space per capita and more than 200 kilometers of bike paths, which locals and visitors alike can take advantage of thanks to a free-to-use bike-share scheme. Slovenia is globally recognized for its sustainable tourism industry and is the most-awarded destination by the European Commission for its sustainable travel options.

Valletta, Malta

For anyone looking for COVID-19 reassurance when traveling, Valletta, the capital of Malta, is a good bet. The country boasts one of the world's highest vaccination rates—and the highest anywhere in Europe—with 81% of residents fully vaccinated, as reported by the BBC in November 2021. In May 2021, Reuters reported that the country had achieved herd immunity.

The Nomad Residence Permit, launched in June 2021, makes it a great option for a long stay. The permit allows remote workers to live and work in Malta for up to one year, with the option to renew.





Xishuangbanna boasts the most intact tropical ecosystem in China, featuring dense tropical rainforests and waterfalls, and is home to a quarter of the country's animal species.



Xishuangbanna, China

Xishuangbanna, located in Southwest China's Yunnan province, was ranked one of the top three regions to visit in 2022 by *Lonely Planet*. Each destination was chosen for its “topicality, unique experiences, ‘wow’ factor and its ongoing commitment to sustainable tourism practices,” *Lonely Planet* states. Xishuangbanna's unique environment and “wow” factor are due in large part to its botanical and ecological variety. Xishuangbanna boasts the most intact tropical ecosystem in China, featuring dense tropical rainforests and giant waterfalls, and is home to a quarter of the country's animal species and one sixth of plants.

2026

Meditative travel

Meditative integrations are making every journey a mindful one.

Travel and navigation brands are incorporating apps for meditative practice to soothe consumers during their travels.

Waze and Headspace are collaborating to make commuting less stressful. Drive with Headspace, launched in October 2021, incorporates the meditative, relaxing Headspace experience into the navigation app with five mood selections: Aware, Bright, Joyful, Hopeful and Open. Users can change their in-app icons and car image to reflect their mood, change the navigation narrator to Headspace's director of meditation, Eve Lewis Prieto, and listen to meditative music curated by Headspace on Spotify. Available in four languages, the integration is meant to help drivers "find more joy and meaning on the road," according to Waze.

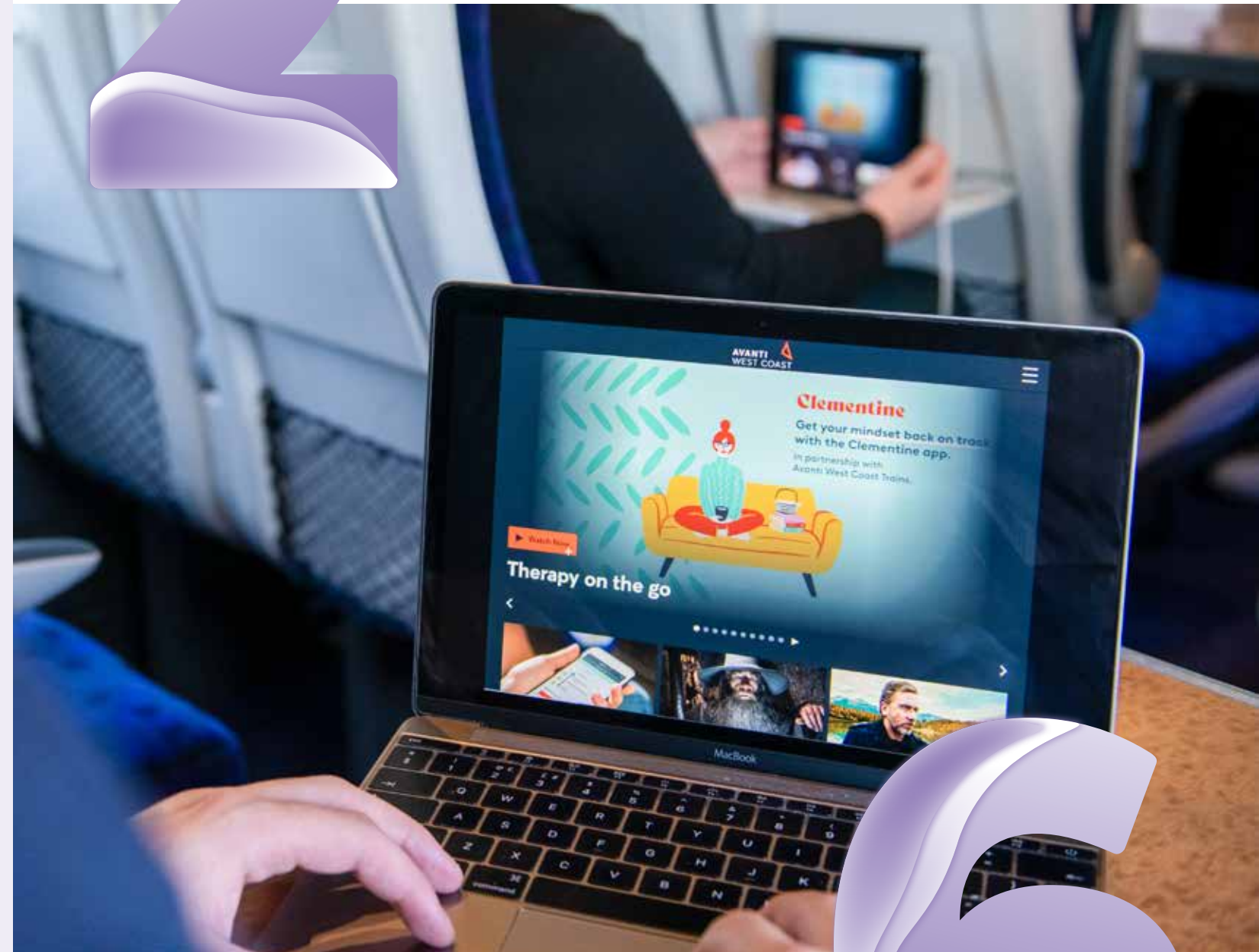
The Avanti West Coast train operator in the United Kingdom will offer app-based hypnotherapy for its passengers, to help them when feeling overwhelmed, tired and more. Announced in October 2021, the 20-minute sessions will guide listeners with tips for power napping, guidance for improving productivity, and tools for confidence building. The hypnotherapy app Clementine is free to riders on the West Coast Main Line services, because the "onboard journey experience is as important as getting to the destination itself," according to an Avanti West Coast representative.



Delta Airlines will soon offer custom Peloton relaxation, meditation and stretching classes on planes with seatback screens. Announced in November 2021, the partnership aims to help passengers relax on their flights, with sessions lasting five to 20 minutes taught by some of the fitness app’s popular instructors.

Why it’s interesting

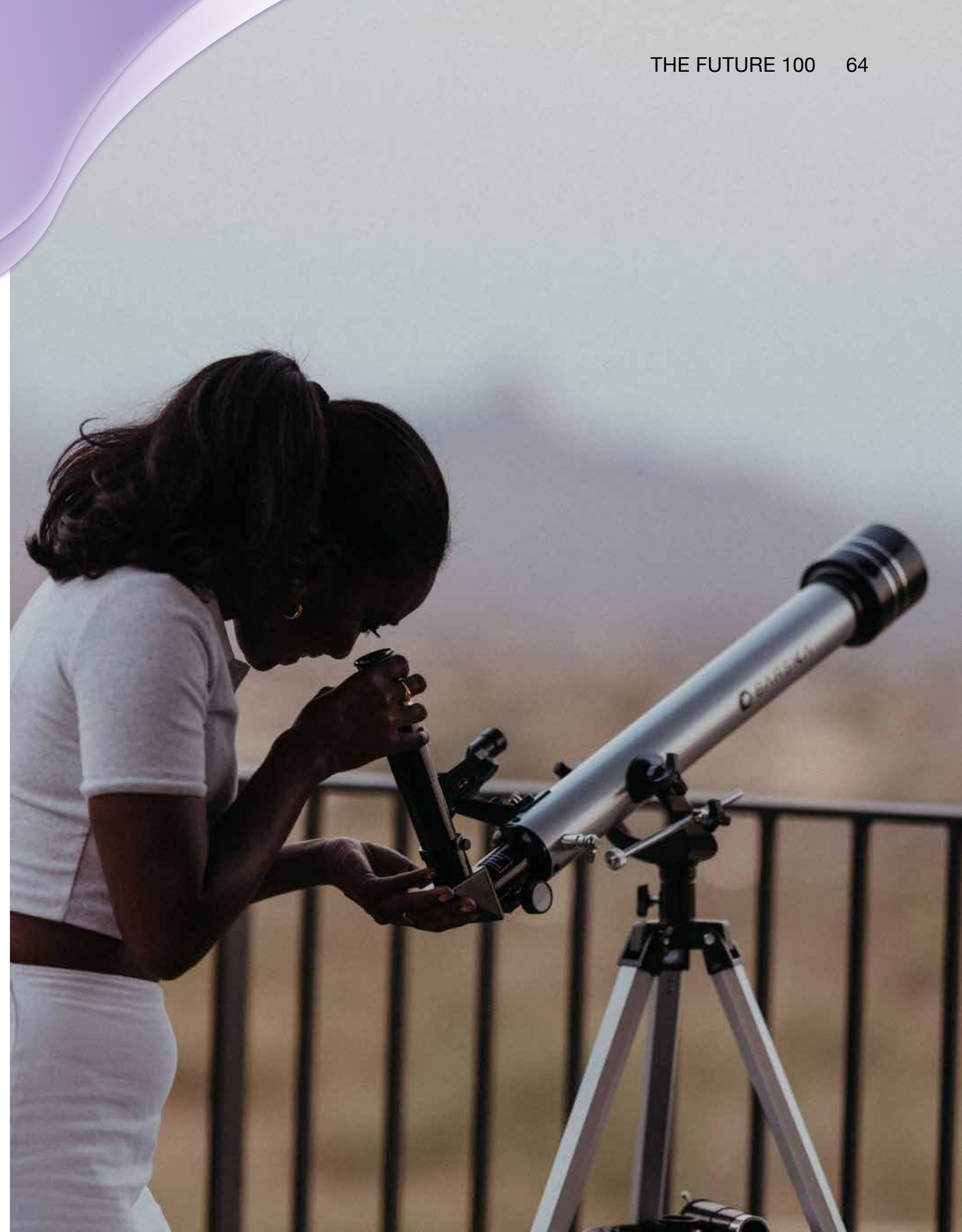
Meditative apps for wellness are finding new space in the travel sector, giving stressed and anxious travelers access to therapeutic sessions to ease their minds during their journey.



27

Academic adventures

NASA scientists and culture connoisseurs are leading off-the-beaten-path excursions for the ultra-curious traveler.





Expert-led experiences are popular travel offerings that hospitality groups and informational brands are embracing, providing guests with unique and one-of-a-kind experiences.

In August 2021, the NPR media organization launched NPR Travels, offering immersive, educational trips for fans of the public radio service and those with a taste for history, music, astronomy and more. Starting in 2022, expert-led trips to destinations from Iceland to South America will host up to 24 people at a time, featuring curated reading, listening, and recommendations from NPR journalists. “These guided tours are an opportunity to connect with like-minded people over their love of travel and NPR,” says Jane Scott, director of consumer products.

Guests at the Adero Scottsdale can sip cocktails while stargazing from the hotel’s SkyTop Lounge. Adero’s Dark Sky Zone experts, known as Star Dudes, guide guests through the constellations via binoculars and high-powered telescopes while guests indulge in “astro-cocktails.” Telescopes are also provided to allow stargazing from individual rooms.

During 2021, guests at the Hyatt Regency Maui Resort and Spa had the opportunity to learn about any of the 80 constellations viewable from the hotel in sessions led by NASA ambassador Edward Mahoney. NASA is stepping into the hospitality company’s exclusive education space as part of the hotel’s broader Stay, Learn and Play experience package—an out-of-this-world experience.

Why it’s interesting

The hospitality industry is expanding its offerings, catering to academic adventurers and turning to scientific and cultural experts to curate elite, one-of-a-kind escapades.

28

In-flight rejuvenation

Air travel channels spa-like comforts and wellness recharges for travelers.



Airlines are updating accommodations in the air, creating spaces of comfort and rejuvenation for travelers to enjoy throughout their journey.

Singapore Airlines announced a new partnership with Golden Door, bringing the top spa resort's wellness retreat experiences to the skies. From January 2022, fliers aboard the Los Angeles to Singapore route can view relaxing in-flight meditation videos, take exercise courses, choose from new gourmet menus, and even participate in sleep education courses during their 17-hour direct flight. Golden Door's goal, according to COO Kathy Van Ness, "is to affect every single person inside that plane in a positive way."

Superbusiness minisuites, with doors for privacy and reclining chairs for ultimate comfort, are gradually replacing traditional first-class seating. Qatar Airways has offered Qsuits with closed-off spaces since 2017, and now Delta, China Eastern, JetBlue, British Airways, Shanghai Airlines and Air China will offer similar facilities.

Why it's interesting

The journey is as important as the destination, and airlines are betting on travelers' thirst for comfort every step of the way with revolutionary luxury offerings.





Boosting China's travel economy

China's travel industry gears up for a post-pandemic future with new mega-airports, theme parks, and expanded duty-free shopping.

China's outbound travel market was once the world's biggest, peaking at 169 million trips in 2019. Chinese tourists were so ubiquitous that hotels in Hawaii hired Mandarin speakers and London's Marylebone train station debuted platform announcements in Mandarin. Then COVID-19 hit and national borders clanged shut. But China's travel economy hasn't exactly stalled. It's just turned more domestic—for now.

Despite periodic local lockdowns, the total number of domestic trips taken between January and September 2021 rose 39% year-on-year to 2.69 billion trips, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism reported.

Three things China is doing to boost its travel economy:

Premiumizing airports

Beijing's starfish-shaped Daxing International Airport, the capital's second international flight hub, opened in September 2019. Designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, it cost over \$11 billion, features a central courtyard inspired by traditional Chinese architecture and skylights for intuitive navigation, and is expected to eventually serve over 100 million passengers a year, rivaling Hartsfield-Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest.

In China's southwest, Chengdu Tianfu International Airport opened in June 2021, with capacity of 60 million passengers a year, offering a second international gateway to Sichuan province's giant pandas and signature spicy cuisine.

Enhancing duty-free shopping

Unable to fly to Paris, New York or Milan to buy the latest designer bag, luxury shoppers are instead flying to the duty-free zone of Hainan island, known as China's Hawaii.

In July 2020, China tripled duty-free shopping limits and expanded eligible categories in Hainan. In the year since, duty-free sales jumped 226% to \$7.2 billion, according to Hainan Customs.

LVMH, Kering, Shiseido, L'Oréal and other global brands have all opened stores here, and Hainan has become a test bed for stitching together physical stores with elements of social commerce and livestreaming.

Hainan's success in catering to pent-up demand for foreign luxury brands has since inspired five metropolises—Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Tianjin and Chongqing—to also start developing their duty-free offerings as “international consumer centre cities.”

Encouraging a boom in theme parks

Just as international retail is rushing into China, so too are Western-style theme parks.

Five years after Disneyland opened in Shanghai, Universal Studios opened in Beijing in September 2021. The Beijing theme park, Universal's fifth and largest globally, has seven themed lands, including the first Kung Fu Panda Land of Awesomeness.

The UK's Merlin Entertainments is building three Legoland theme parks in China. The 2023 Sichuan opening will feature local cultural elements, including a panda-themed area, while the Shenzhen and Shanghai parks will open in 2024 and focus on China's high-tech digital experiences and ancient water town architecture respectively.

Why it's interesting

As national borders shut down, China's travel economy has turned toward the domestic market. That has pulled significant investment into travel retail and entertainment within China, by both international and domestic partners, who are betting on a long-term boost to domestic tourism as well as the return of foreign visitors when borders finally re-open.



As national borders shut down, China's travel economy has turned toward the domestic market.

30

New age nautics

Eco-conscious travelers are taking to the seas.



Since teen climate activist Greta Thunberg sailed across the Atlantic in 2019 to avoid flying on a greenhouse-gas emitting airplane, a growing cohort of individuals and organizations have likewise turned to wind for a more climate-friendly mode of transportation.

In collaboration with the Swedish government and research organizations, Swedish shipbuilder Wallenius Marine is designing a transatlantic car carrier that will be entirely wind-powered, in an effort to help clean up the automotive trade industry. The Oceanbird carrier will have five steel wind sails and the capacity to carry over 7,000 vehicles.

TransOceanic Wind Transport, a cargo company founded in France, aims to build and operate solely wind-powered cargo vessels. The company is in the process of building four such vessels for global trade routes, with the ability to carry 1,100 tonnes of cargo and reduce emissions by 90%.

A new sporting challenge will help to accelerate the transition to cleaner water technologies by promoting electric solutions. The E1 Series is the world's first electric powerboat racing championship, set to take place at a series of coastal locations around the world in 2022. Teams will compete in the Racebird, an electric foiling boat that is inspired by nature. Alongside thrilling races, the Series' biggest impact will be its sustainable legacy. Organizers will leave behind electric charging infrastructure in every city marina, as well as hosting week-long festivals promoting sustainability.

E1 Series cofounder and CEO Rodi Basso tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, "Just as the automotive sector is shifting towards electrification and clean technologies, so must the marine industry, to prevent potentially irrevocable damage being caused to such an important ecosystem for our planet."

For individuals, a new crop of organizations is making sailing more accessible. Sailcoop is a French company that is setting up a sailboat cooperative; customers can book trips from January 2022. By creating networks of nautical professionals, passengers and shipowners, Sailcoop provides the opportunity to travel locally or internationally by water, guided by private sailors.

Why it's interesting

Land and air travel no longer have the same sheen, as carbon emissions and climate consequences grow by the day. Thoughtful electric- and wind-powered nautical designs are making carbon-neutral transportation more feasible for everyone, from businesses to competitive athletes to individuals who don't own their own boats.





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Brands & marketing

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Brandalism

Vandalism for good hijacks ad space—exposing brands and demanding they do better.



Climate activists are expanding their targets from the world's biggest corporate polluters to those who enable them, from governments to banks and ad agencies.

Groups including Brandalism, Badvertising and Adfree Cities launched organized, guerilla-style efforts in the United Kingdom around COP26, the global climate conference hosted in Glasgow in November 2021.

In October, the anonymous Brandalism network also plastered more than 100 posters onto billboards and bus stops in 20 UK towns and cities, accusing ad agencies Ogilvy, MediaCom and VCCP of helping to “greenwash” high-carbon clients such as Shell, BP and British Airways, the *Drum* reported. Brandalism had earlier criticized banks such as Barclays and HSBC for providing financing to clients in the fossil-fuel business.

The New Weather Institute think tank has created “Badvertising,” a campaign that labels the ad industry as “brain pollution” and calls for the government to control high-carbon advertising.



“For too long, the advertising industry has escaped scrutiny for its role in the climate crisis,” Robbie Gillett of Adfree Cities was quoted as saying in the *Drum*. “Whether it’s using the best creative talent to promote high-carbon products, providing misleading greenwash for big oil companies or filling our public spaces with energy-intensive ad screens, the juggernaut of polluting PR needs to end.”

Another common complaint is that ad agencies promote unsustainable lifestyles through conspicuous consumption during shopping festivals.



Local governments have not been spared. The European Citizens’ Initiative Ban Fossil Fuel Advertising and Sponsorships is urging local councils to follow Amsterdam in banning advertising and sponsorship for cars, airlines and fossil-fuel companies.

Why it’s interesting

The ad industry itself has made serious efforts in recent years to reach carbon net zero in its own operations. Activists say this isn’t enough and efforts pale in comparison to the carbon footprints of some ad agencies’ biggest clients.

32

Co-creative platforms

The next generation of digital platforms is putting creative power in the hands of the user.





“*IMVU calls creativity “the new status symbol” for the next digital era.*”

Creativity is increasingly informed and powered by technology, setting the stage for the next era of digital platforms and creative influence. Digital tools have “activated an entirely new world” of creativity—one where “creations can transcend physical limitations,” Helena Dong, creative technologist and digital designer, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

72% of gen Z and millennials in the United States, the United Kingdom and China believe that creativity today is dependent on technology, and 92% believe that technology opens up a whole new world of creation, according to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s research for “Into the Metaverse,” conducted by Wunderman Thompson Data in July 2021.

“For generation alpha and generation Z, customization and creation are intricate parts of their gaming experience,” Keith Stuart, games editor at the *Guardian*,

tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “For them, customization and the play element are part of the same thing—self-expression and exploration.”

Snapchat believes that creativity is the driving force propelling the future of digital engagement. As a user, “you’re not creating content that people consume, you’re creating content that people then create with,” Carolina Arguelles Navas, group product marketing manager at Snap Inc, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “That’s really powerful. You’re putting out a piece of content that everyone personalizes and has a personal experience with.”

This momentum is spurred on by what she refers to as the snowball effect of digital creativity. “The biggest opportunity with augmented reality (AR) is that it is a catalyst for other people to now create content with that AR experience



you've developed; then they are sharing it with their group of friends and their group of friends are unlocking that and sharing. You've created a catalyst where you're scaling creation on your behalf."

IMVU is a "next-generation social network" that revolves around creativity, Daren Tsui, CEO of the social app and its parent company Together Labs, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "There are over 200,000 creators on our platform. Over the years we've amassed 50 million items in our catalog," almost all of which are user-driven, Tsui says. "We create 0.001%; everything else is done by creators." IMVU calls creativity "the new status symbol" for the next digital era—dethroning influence and income. When users come onto the platform, "making money is not the most important thing for them. It's about being recognized for their creations," Tsui explains.

Why it's interesting

Online habits are evolving. As stated by digital fashion house The Fabricant, in the digital world "people are not passive consumers, but creative agents crafting their self-expression and curating their virtual identity."



Superfollowers

Digital creators are making money from their content with new in-app subscriptions on social platforms.

Social media apps are allowing users to monetize their content without using third-party apps, creating new tiers within their creator communities.

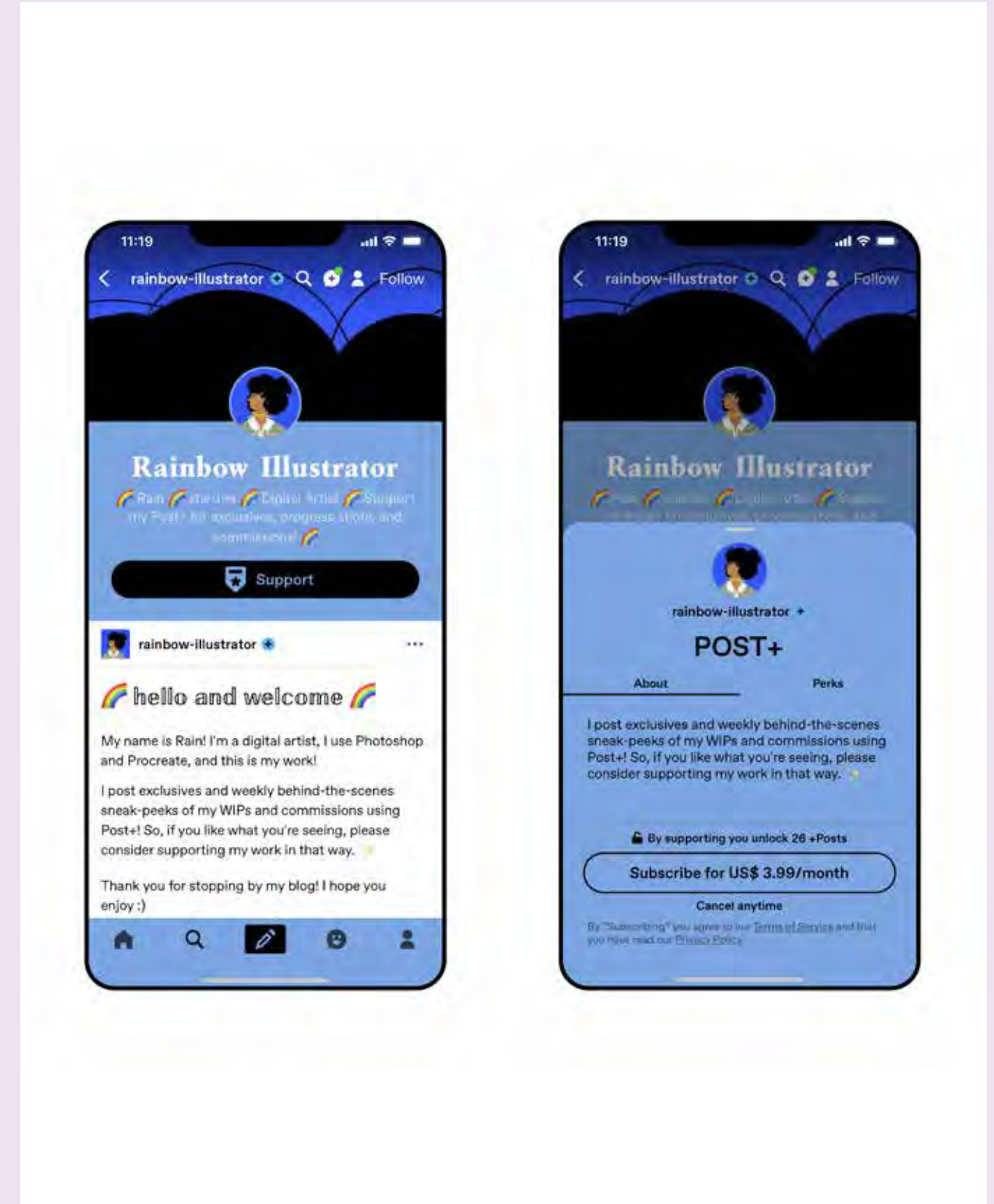
Twitter launched Super Follows in September 2021—a new feature that allows paying Tweepers to view subscriber-only content. It allows content creators to tweet out exclusively to their Super Followers and at the time of writing is limited to Twitter iOS app users in the United States who elected to test the feature. Super Follows users can charge from \$2.99 to \$9.99 a month through payment app Stripe, and can earn up to 97% of their subscription revenue after third-party fees until they reach earnings of \$50,000 across all Twitter monetization products. After that, they can earn up to 80% of their revenue after third-party fees.

Twitter is also testing Professional Profiles for businesses. Since April 2021, businesses with Twitter accounts have unique setups to display specific information about their brand or company directly on their profile. The additions include a verification badge, business category, and a section for broader business information, such as hours or location.

Tumblr also launched a new subscription feature in September 2021, open to all users in the United States. Its Post Plus offering allows creators to post only to subscribed followers, similar to Twitter's Super Follows. Tumblr posters can charge from \$1.99 to \$9.99 a month, and can paywall existing content, not only new posts.

Why it's interesting

Social platforms are evolving to offer more than entertainment in multimedia content. Boosted features and incentives to attract, gain and maintain a significant following are driving creativity and enhancing conversations for creators and consumers on social media.



34

Branded virtual worlds

Does the future of advertising and marketing lie in gaming?





With the in-game advertising market set to grow by \$3.54 billion between 2021 and 2025, according to a 2021 report by Technavio, brands are diving headfirst into gaming with branded virtual worlds.

Many brands are turning to established gaming platforms such as Roblox, creating novel in-game branded experiences in the hope of engaging the platform's 46 million daily active users.

Ralph Lauren announced the launch of its Winter Escape on Roblox in December 2021. The holiday-themed virtual destination includes activities like ice skating, toasting marshmallows, scavenger hunts, and shopping the Ralph Lauren Digital Collection, available for purchase exclusively on Roblox. Nike unveiled *Nikeland* on Roblox in November 2021. The virtual world lets users dress their avatars in virtual Nike gear and explore *Nikeland*'s arenas, fields and buildings that are host to various mini-games. *Vans World*, launched in September 2021, is a virtual skatepark on Roblox where players can practice

skateboarding tricks, design their own Vans shoes and skateboards, and try on virtual gear. Also in September on Roblox, Hyundai launched its *Hyundai Mobility Adventure*. The space contains five "parks" where users can race, play games, learn about Hyundai's technologies, and take part in festivals.

Other brands are creating branded virtual worlds on their own platforms. For CES 2022, Procter and Gamble invited visitors into a virtual world where they could learn about the company's full portfolio of products, play games, learn about the company's sustainability initiatives and more. BMW launched its virtual world *Joytopia* in September 2021 as part of BMW's participation in the IAA Mobility 2021 international motor show. As well as being the backdrop for BMW to present its vision for the future of mobility, *Joytopia* offered festival-esque elements including an exclusive Coldplay concert. Japanese beauty brand SK-II launched a virtual city in May 2021. Visitors can navigate a virtual rendering of SK-II City to shop, learn about products, and even catch a movie in the SK-II cinema.

"There's something unique about the growth of gaming as a marketing platform," Grant Paterson, head of gaming and esports at Wunderman Thompson, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "We talk about gaming as being the nexus of a new consumer paradigm."

Why it's interesting

For younger generations especially, gaming is replacing advertising channels such as print and television. "A lot of the traditional ways of marketing to young people are gone forever," Keith Stuart, games editor at the *Guardian*, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "Gaming is where they are." Expect to see more branded virtual worlds as companies and marketers tap into this growing space.

The image shows the numbers '35' in a large, bold, purple 3D font. The numbers have a metallic sheen and are set against a white background. The '3' is on the left and the '5' is on the right, both rendered with a slight perspective.

Headless brands

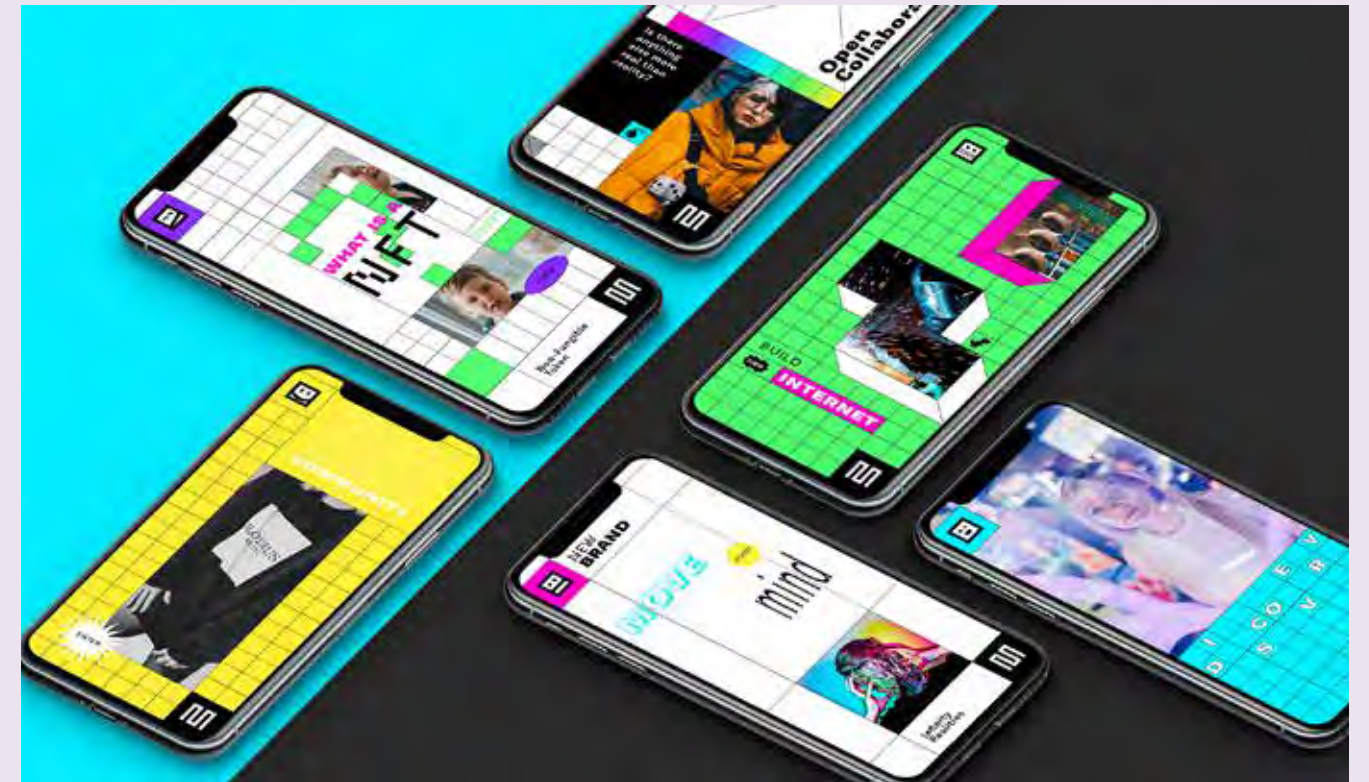
A new wave of consumer creators, powered and incentivized by decentralized organizations, are taking the reins of brand storytelling.

Decentralized technology and finance are paving the way for headless brands, built by communities who collectively decide on products, assets and messaging. Members who buy into these communities, often by acquiring crypto tokens, earn the right to participate in brand decision-making and can even take a share in financial success.

The term headless brand was first coined in a 2019 paper authored by the strategy and research firm Other Internet, which describes these brands as “self-enforcing, self-incentivized, contagious narratives that emerge and evolve in ways that are unexpected and irrepressible.” The paper identified Bitcoin as the first iteration of a headless brand as it has no central authority, operating and evolving in line with the decisions of a multitude of stakeholders. “A headless brand is a meme,” say the paper’s authors, Toby Shorin, Laura Lotti and Sam Hart. “It belongs to no one, and can be remixed by anyone.”

More recently, NFT-based marketplaces have emerged that formalize the trend uniting culture, community and crypto. Metafactory, a self-described “factory for headless brands” launched in 2020, aims to bring artists, consumers and brands together in a partnership to create community-run fashion brands. Artists (including Italian digital artist Van and Indonesian cryptoartist Twisted Vacancy) submit their designs and members have a say, voting for their favorites to be produced centrally by Metafactory. Brand members and investors then share in the profits as well as enjoying exclusive NFT drops and promotions.

The Bored Ape Yacht Club, which launched in April 2021, is a community of owners of ape character NFTs. Crucially, owners are assigned the rights to their



ape character, allowing them to creatively commercialize their asset. Many owners have already done so, spawning everything from branded craft beer and skateboards to an animated YouTube series. As the New Yorker’s Kyle Chayka explains, these “cultural creations can expand organically through the efforts of many users while remaining recognizable, resulting in a kind of user-generated mythology.”

Why it’s interesting

“Are the Bored Apes a silly collectible or are they a decentralized competitor to Supreme?” mused Twitter user @punk6529 in October 2021. It’s likely the latter, if press reports that suggest the Bored Apes ecosystem is already worth \$1 billion are accurate. For now, headless startups are perhaps most potent in culture-led categories such as streetwear and music, but brands across the board should keep a watchful eye on this trend that will see consumers grow their stake in brand narratives.

A large, stylized number '36' rendered in a vibrant purple color with a 3D effect, appearing as if the numbers are made of a thick, glossy ribbon or paper that has been folded and curled. The lighting creates highlights and shadows, giving it a sense of depth and movement.

Euphoric ads

Moments of joy are keeping spirits high in brand advertising and engagement.

Brands are filling their ads with uplifting and heartwarming moments, inviting audiences to join them in joy and jubilation.

Crowded with dance videos, funny pranks and stunt trends, TikTok is a solid source of joy—and a source of opportunity for brands seeking lighthearted, authentic connections with their audience. According to a study by the Flamingo Group, 73% of TikTok users said they felt happier after logging into the app. Associating those positive emotions with a brand continues to be a top strategy among marketers, as brands hone their marketing into positive spaces and platforms.

Emotional intelligence was at the forefront of a Lexus campaign in October 2021. The ad, promoting the Lexus ES Self-Charging Hybrid, uses facial recognition technology to read and adapt the ad to the consumer's emotions. The goal of the “Feel Your Best” campaign is to leave viewers feeling more positive after their personalized experience.

Gap's “All Together Now” 2021 holiday campaign focused on love, kindness, and “modern American optimism”—one of the brand's core philosophies. The campaign starred Katy Perry and ran to the tune of “All You Need is Love” by the Beatles. Themes of unity, love and joy are consistent with the brand's optimistic marketing motif.

Target's 2021 holiday update of its "What We Value Most Shouldn't Cost More" campaign featured a rendition of "Best of My Love" by The Emotions, performed by the Black Pumas and Sofia Reyes. "This year's holiday campaign provides an opportunity for Target to connect with all of our guests while helping them discover the joy that's within reach every day throughout the season," said chief marketing and digital officer Cara Sylvester.

Why it's interesting

Consumers are seeking authentic, uplifting content, and brands are meeting them on positive platforms, aiming to generate joy in their marketing strategies. Themes of optimism and unity are important to consumers, and brands that focus on those communal aspects are generating positive reactions from customers and increasing engagement within their branded communities.



Brands are filling their ads with uplifting and heartwarming moments, inviting audiences to join them in joy and jubilation.

37

Regenerative brands

Across industries, more brands are stepping up to commit to regenerative practices, supercharging their sustainability goals.



Regeneration goes beyond doing less harm to the planet, aiming to reverse negative impacts by restoring and renewing resources—84% of global respondents believe that we need businesses to drive regeneration, or it will not happen, according to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s 2021 report “Regeneration Rising.” In response, brands across categories are pledging to become regenerative.

Looking to grow its farm-to-closet model, in September 2021 Californian sustainable fashion label Christy Dawn launched The Land Stewardship, a new program that focuses on regenerative agriculture. Via the initiative, customers can invest \$200, helping to convert a plot of land from conventional cotton farming to farming using regenerative practices. When the cotton is harvested, they are reimbursed in store credit based on the yield of the cotton on the plot they invested in. Christy Dawn customers thus have a real stake in making the company truly regenerative.

Big-name fashion brands are also investing in regenerative agriculture. In October 2021, Ralph Lauren announced it was partnering with the Soil Health Institute to launch the US Regenerative Cotton Fund. This followed the appointment by Conservation International and global luxury group Kering of the first seven grantees under their Regenerative Fund for Nature initiative, getting their mission to transition one million hectares of land to regenerative practices over the next five years under way.

Retailers are also getting on board with regeneration. Morrisons, the UK grocery store chain, announced a partnership with McDonald’s, Harper Adams University, and the National Farmers’ Union in October 2021. The collaborators have launched the United Kingdom’s first school of sustainable food and farming, ultimately aiming to transform the country’s farming practices.

This follows Walmart’s September 2020 pledge to become a regenerative company, which includes a commitment to restore at least 50 million acres of land by 2030.

Over the past few years Big Food has set the pace on regenerative farming, with multinationals Danone, Nestlé and General Mills all revealing plans to help some of their suppliers adopt regenerative techniques. In April 2021, PepsiCo announced an ambitious goal to scale such techniques across seven million acres of land—equal to its entire agricultural footprint—by 2030.

Why it’s interesting

Brands are acknowledging that doing less harm to the planet is no longer enough. Regenerating the world’s resources and repairing the damage accrued over centuries is now the ultimate sustainability stretch goal.





The image shows the numbers '38' in a large, bold, purple font with a 3D effect. The numbers are rendered with a gradient from a darker purple on the left to a lighter purple on the right, giving them a sense of depth and volume. They are positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page.

New company manifestos

Companies are updating their internal brand messaging to stay culturally relevant and connect with the modern-day employee.

Amazon wants to be the world's best employer for its 1.3 million employees around the world. In an update to its list of Leadership Principles, bringing the total to 16, the company added two new entries in July 2021. The first, "strive to be Earth's best employer," says that Amazon leaders work to "create a safer, more productive, higher performing, more diverse, and more just work environment." The second, focused on scaling sensibly and responsibly, notes "we are big, we impact the world, and we are far from perfect." Andy Jassy, who took over as CEO after Jeff Bezos stepped down, hopes to bring about a new employee-first and responsible future for Amazon.

In response to the continued proliferation of work-from-home set-ups, which triggered frustrations and lack of work-life balance for some, Google released a wellbeing manifesto that includes relatable sentiments such as "It's OK to put your family before your work" and "It's OK to say you're not OK."

Why it's interesting

Companies are going through a rebrand—one that looks to update internal policies to meet today's needs and put employees first. The shift signals a new respect for employee wellbeing and happiness that demands a new level of understanding and empathy from employers.



Dreamvertising

Brands and advertisers are looking to guide our dreams.

The commercial exploitation of dreams is becoming a reality, but not without eliciting concern from the scientific community. Calls for regulation are placing early adopters of dream incubation advertising in the spotlight. While possibilities still run wild, the next wave of subliminal marketing is uncertain.

Dream incubation or targeted dream incubation (TDI) is a modern field of science with ancient roots where sensory cues like sound are used to shape or “prime” people’s dreams. In a clinical setting, TDI can be used to change negative behaviors, like smoking. In marketing, it is being used to inspire brand affinity.

Anheuser Busch has exclusivity to Super Bowl advertising sewn up, so in January 2021 Molson Coors found a very different way to target Super Bowl fans. Using TDI advertising reminiscent of Microsoft’s Xbox “Made From Dreams” campaign, Molson Coors collaborated with dream psychologist Deirdre Barrett of Harvard University to produce the Coors Big Game Dream film and soundscape, designed to cause viewers to have pleasant dreams set in mountain scenes—that just happen to sway people toward Molson Coors products. The press release reads: “Coors Light and Coors Seltzer want to ensure you’ll have a refreshing dream using the science of guiding dreams.”

Sounds pleasant enough in context, but Massachusetts Institute of Technology neuroscientist Adam Haar believes these practices in a marketing context are scary. While they are known to interfere with our natural nocturnal memory processing, they also could pave the way to more sinister ends. For example, back in 2018 Burger King had more devilish plans. Its “nightmare” burger for Halloween was “clinically proven” to induce nightmares. Supported by 40 professional signatories from diverse fields of academia, Haar cowrote an opinion piece for DXE, published in June 2021, that cautioned: “proactive action



77% of US marketers say they plan to use dreamtech for advertising purposes in the next three years.

and new protective policies are urgently needed to keep advertisers from manipulating one of the last refuges of our already beleaguered conscious and unconscious minds: Our dreams.”

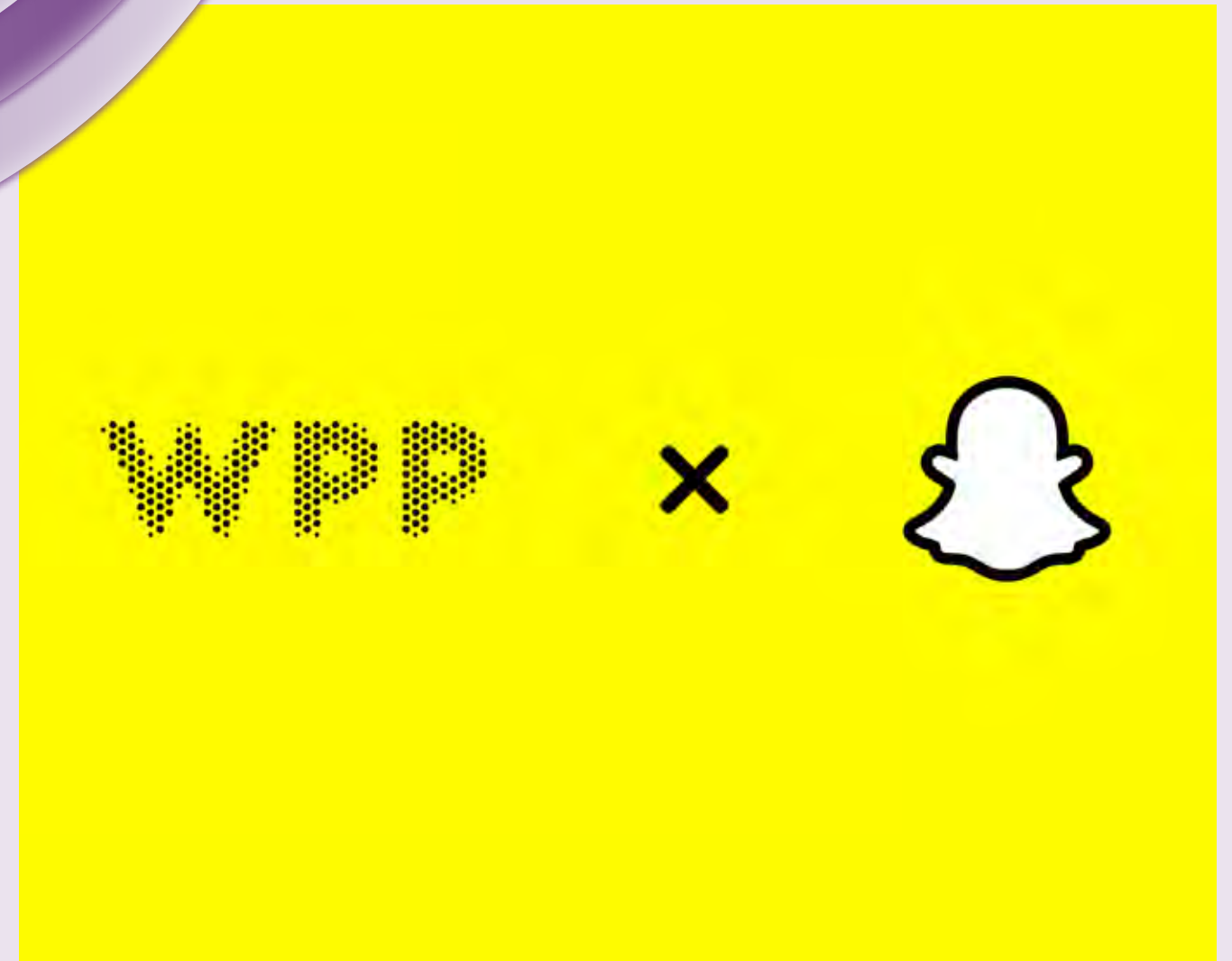
Why it's interesting

There is a growing appetite from brands to experiment with dream influencing technology and techniques: a 2021 study by the American Marketing Association found that 77% of US marketers say they plan to use dreamtech for advertising purposes in the next three years. While there are no prohibitive regulations in place, some consumers could perceive such techniques as dystopian. Until we have a deeper scientific understanding, it's perhaps best that brands approach “dreamvertising” with caution.

40

Augmented ads

Brands are leveling up digital advertising with augmented reality.



Augmented reality (AR) is hitting the mainstream, and consumers are showing a growing appetite for AR brand engagement. Currently, there are 1.5 billion frequent users of AR, and this is forecast to hit 4.3 billion by 2025, according to August 2021 research from Statista. And, notably, 70% of consumers say they want to see more AR ads, according to a July 2021 survey from Ericsson.

Brands are embracing AR to engage digital consumer bases. In November 2021, Volkswagen launched AR ads embedded on Amazon boxes. By scanning a QR code printed on the Amazon box, users can learn about Volkswagen's new 2022 Taos SUV through an AR driving experience.

In September 2021, Snap and ad giant WPP launched an AR partnership, AR Labs, to deliver augmented marketing solutions for brands. AR Labs will also develop a custom scorecard for WPP clients, which will be used to generate more effective campaigns. In October 2021, Snap also launched a new creative studio, Arcadia, to create AR ads and help brands develop AR advertising and experiences—on Snapchat as well as other digital platforms. The studio has already partnered with companies like Shake Shack, P&G Beauty and Verizon.

Malls will soon have floating augmented ads. In July 2021, Brookfield Properties partnered with The Aria Network to open up air space in malls to augmented advertisements. The new deal will give Aria exclusive rights to the virtual air space of Brookfield Properties, which encompasses over 150 million square feet in 100 different locations. Aria will use the square feet from the deal to create the ability for brands to advertise through augmented reality, which consumers can access through their phones

“AR has a major role to play in the future of marketing and commerce,” says Sanja Partalo, executive vice president of strategic development and partnerships at WPP.

Why it's interesting

The advent of AR ads is teeing up the next era of digital marketing and advertising—for ads that consumers want to engage with.



***AR has a major role
to play in the future of
marketing
and commerce.***

41

Food & drink

50

41

Foraged cocktails

Sustainable cocktail offerings are taking inspiration from the natural world.



Locally foraged ingredients are being used to create one-of-a-kind craft cocktails and offer consumers a greater range of sustainable drink options.

In September 2021, national tourism organization Visit Sweden announced it was expanding its rewilded tourism offering to the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany. Building on Visit Sweden's Drinkable Country program, the new "Taste of Swedish Summer" campaign highlights 22 natural ingredients that can be found in Sweden during the sunniest months, from spruce buds to wild flowers, alongside food preservation methods such as pickling and fermentation, and innovative recipes. In collaboration with Forsman & Bodenfors and Mindshare, the promotion centers on local produce. Drinkable Country encourages visitors to explore Sweden's countryside as the "world's largest outdoor bar," with local guides on hand at 14 nationwide locations to help guests collect berries and greens to mix into their custom beverages.

Spirits company Hangar 1 has used damaged merlot and malbec grapes from the 2020 Glass Fire in Napa Valley to make vodka. Distilled from fruit unsuitable for wine, the 80-proof Smoke Point Vodka has a hint of anise and vanilla for a different take on the spirit. The company is donating all proceeds from sales to the California Fire Foundation.

Why it's interesting

Whether rewilded or repurposed, foraged craft cocktails are lifting spirits. Local, self-sustained cuisine is minimizing waste and reforming menus as contemporary innovators incorporate local flora into their craft.





Liquid immunity

Wellness aficionados are quenching their thirst while supercharging their immune systems.

In October 2021, LA-based children's snack brand Bitsy's launched Swish, an immunity-boosting drink mix for children. Containing electrolytes, vitamin C and zinc, the mixes are designed to be added to kids' water bottles for a quick immunity hit on the go.

Harnessing the power of the microalgae spirulina, Netherlands-based Ful Foods launched its range of Ful Revive vitamin-rich drinks in the United Kingdom in autumn 2021. The drinks' distinctive blue color comes from the phycocyanin natural antioxidant found in spirulina, which is renowned for its immune-boosting properties. Alongside their health benefits, the brand also claims the drinks are "climate active" thanks to the microalgae's ability to absorb one and a half to two times their weight in carbon and photosynthesize it, releasing oxygen.

US food and drinks brand Ocean Spray is also looking to health-first options. In November 2020 the company launched the B1U functional-beverage brand, which includes a lemon and chamomile-infused water called I Need Immunity. Going beyond beverages, the brand followed up in March 2021 with Ocean Spray Fruit Medley, a new line of dried-fruit blends with key benefits. The Immunity Blend contains beta glucan, which has been shown to improve immune defense.

As continued focus on illness prevention drives growth in the global immunity-boosting food market—set to grow at a CAGR of 8.2% from 2021 to 2028, according to Stratagem Market Insights—immunity-assisting drinks are a new focus for innovation.

Why it's interesting

With six in 10 global consumers looking to food and drink items to help their immune system, according to Innova's Consumer Survey 2020, brands have good reason to create products that support overall health.



4



2

43

Haute veganism

Vegan dining evolves from earthy-crunchy to exclusive.



A swath of Michelin-starred restaurants and top chefs are going vegan, giving vegetables the rarefied and gourmet status once bestowed on meat.

Previously renowned for its duck, lobster and foie gras dishes, the three-Michelin-starred Eleven Madison Park reopened in June 2021 after lockdown with a fully plant-based menu. “The future for me is plant-based,” said head chef and owner Daniel Humm.

Geranium, a three-star-Michelin restaurant in Denmark, announced in November 2021 that it would remove meat from its menu. Voted the second-best restaurant in the world in October, the restaurant is refocusing on plant-based and pescatarian dishes. “I feel like we need a clean slate,” head chef and



co-owner Rasmus Kofoed told *Berlingske*. “We are waving goodbye to our signature dishes and I think that is a big step.”

In June, Michelin-starred Gauthier Soho in London reopened with an all-vegan menu. ONA, which stands for origine non-animale (animal-free origin), became the first all-vegan restaurant in France to earn a Michelin star in January 2021. And the three-Michelin-starred team behind SingleThread in California announced plans in May 2021 to open a casual meatless restaurant.

Why it's interesting

Acclaimed chefs and restaurateurs are elevating vegan cuisine to a highbrow fine-dining experience.



44

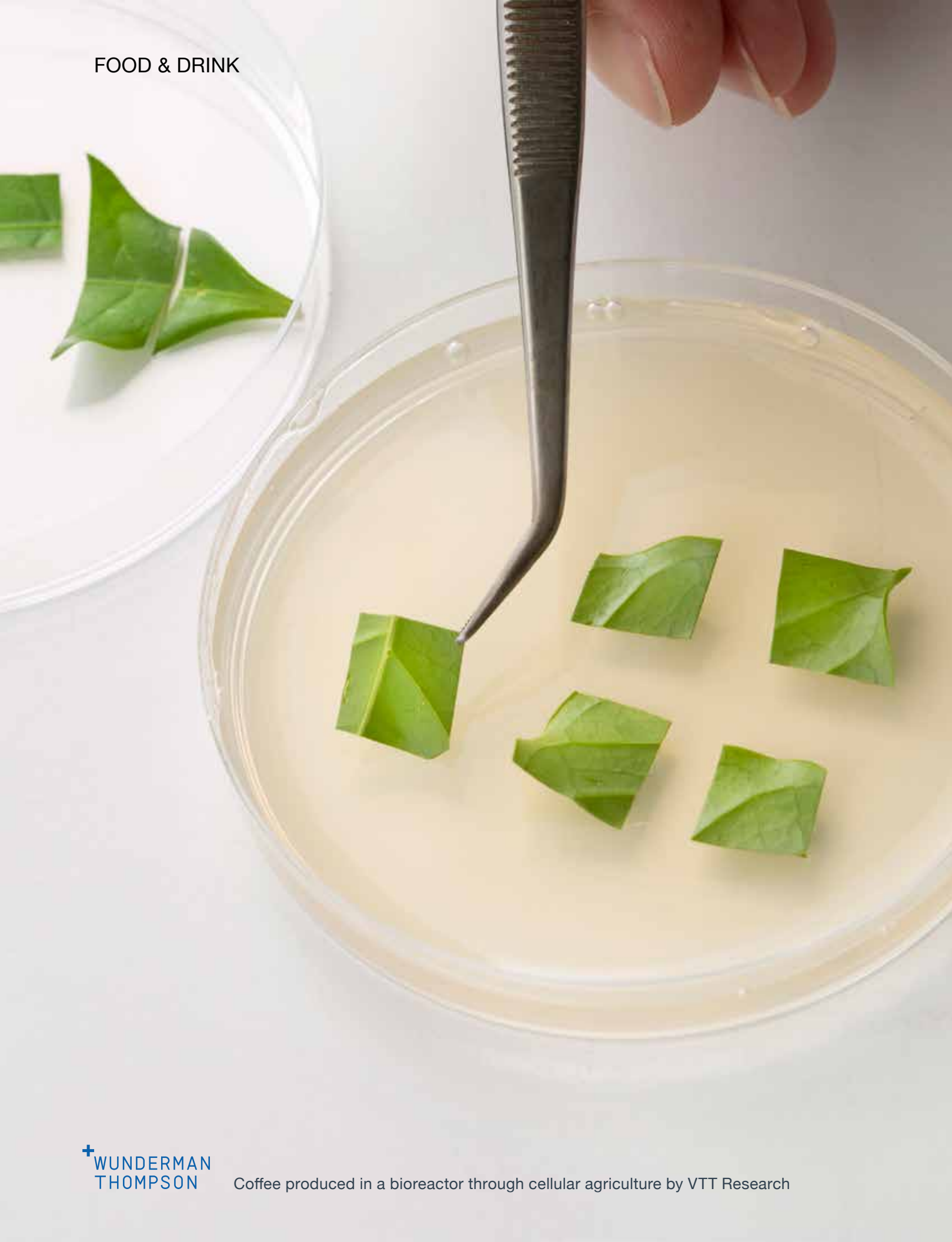
Cell-cultured coffee

Following meat and seafood, coffee could be the next item grown in a lab.

In September 2021, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland said it had produced a brew that smelled and tasted like regular coffee—all without growing a single coffee plant. The coffee was lab-grown from cell cultures in a bioreactor, with steel vessels filled with a nutrient-rich broth.

“The experience of drinking the very first cup was exciting,” VTT research team leader Dr Heiko Rischer says. “I estimate we are only four years away from ramping up production and having regulatory approval in place.”





The impetus for an alternative way to make coffee is similar to that for meat and seafood: growing world demand that's taxing the earth's productive resources. The global coffee market was worth over \$102 billion in 2020, according to Mordor Intelligence. The market—from whole bean and ground and instant coffee to pods and capsules—is marked by fierce competition and innovation.

Rising coffee production and consumption worldwide have sparked concerns about deforestation as well as river pollution from processing run-offs. Traditionally coffee plants were grown under the shade of trees but, as demand skyrocketed, coffee farmers began cutting down trees to create rows of higher-yield coffee. Scientists warn that in the future climate change could also lead to shrinking areas for coffee cultivation, particularly for high-end varieties in countries like Ethiopia. Hence the search for an alternative cup of java.

Rischer says that more research on processing and formulation lies ahead, as well as regulatory approval. "That said," he adds, "we have now proved that lab-grown coffee can be a reality."

Why it's interesting

Scientists already know they can grow animal and plant biomass in labs. But the process tends to be laborious and expensive, and still tends to evoke a "Frankenfood" vibe among consumers. The first lab-grown meat—chicken nuggets made by Silicon Valley company Eat Just—was approved for sale at the end of 2020 in Singapore and hasn't really taken off anywhere else since. Coffee won't have that baggage. The big test will be whether the brands that commercialize lab-grown coffee can eventually meet a price point consumers can swallow—on a daily basis.

45

Net-zero alcohol

Global distilleries are addressing climate change by going carbon neutral.

Alcoholic brands are reinventing their processes to be more sustainable and less wasteful to combat climate change. In addition to new carbon-neutral distilleries such as Air Company and Bespoken Spirits, traditional spirits brands are promising to do better for the planet with reformed operations.

Diageo opened its first carbon-neutral distillery in North America in September 2021. The operation will use 100% renewable electricity, zero fossil fuels for production, and virtual metering technology by 2030. It will also support the local community with 30 full-time jobs and even source 100% non-GMO corn locally. The spirits giant announced plans in 2020 to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 as part of its Society 2030: Spirit of Progress initiative. Some of its distilleries, such as Oban and Royal Lochnagar, are already carbon neutral.

Air Company manufactures its alcohol from recaptured carbon dioxide (CO₂) and takes an extra pound of carbon from the air in the process. After launching in 2020, the company won first place in the NASA CO₂ Conversion Challenge in August 2021.

Absolut Vodka announced in May 2021 that all production is on track to function fully without fossil fuels by 2025. Declared carbon neutral back in 2013, it is ahead of the game, boasting 85% renewable energy, sending zero waste to landfills, and repurposing by-products either for fuel or food for farm animals.

Why it's interesting

As prominent spirits distilleries join the fight against climate change, the food and beverage industry is lowering its production waste and carbon emissions.

4



5

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Blue Zones diets

Brands and communities are embracing Blue Zones lifestyles in the pursuit of health and wellness.

Blue Zones residents live longer and healthier lives compared to those in other parts of the world, and signs collectively point to holistic, integrated wellness habits as the main cause. Ikaria in Greece, Okinawa in Japan, the Ogliastra region of Sardinia, Loma Linda in California, and the Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica, have all been identified as Blue Zones. Research shows that people living here are part of communities that focus on collective care, food in moderation, and sustainable habits. Outsiders can now adopt the meals and practices that make Blue Zones residents so healthy.

Bush's Beans introduced a new Blue Zones line of organic plant-based toppings for meals and soups in October 2021. Beans, which are considered a "longevity food all-star" by the Blue Zones organization, are at the center of the collaborative offering. Bush's senior vice president of marketing, Stephen Palacios, said this new product line "makes it easy for anyone, anywhere to eat more like the longest-living cultures in the world."

A neighborhood in Tucson, Arizona, has repurposed an abandoned school as a community food hub, inspired by the collaborative nature of Blue Zones communities. The Midtown Farm, a small-scale group, plants seeds and harvests affordable food for the local community, which is predominantly Latino and Indigenous. Using rainwater harvesting systems and collective workshops to involve the community, the initiative is checking multiple boxes when it comes to Blue Zones lifestyle habits.

Why it's interesting

Living life intentionally, with moderation and community in mind, has brought Blue Zones lifestyles into the mainstream, as many around the world attempt to adopt more holistic wellness habits. Due to heightened focus on health, consumers are looking for healthy habits of collective care, and Blue Zones diets offer a formula for that.



Bush's Beans' new product line "makes it easy for anyone, anywhere to eat more like the longest-living cultures in the world."



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Three hot new ingredients

The latest ingredients hitting pantries in 2022 are good for the body and the planet.



Kernza

This climate-friendly grain, a sustainable, domesticated form of wheatgrass developed and trademarked by the Land Institute, is making its way into everything from beer to cereal. Unlike traditional wheat, which yields a single harvest and needs to be replanted every year, Kernza is perennial—meaning that a single seed will provide grain for years. It also nourishes the soil, reducing the need for fertilizer for surrounding plants, and is a natural carbon capturer.

In September 2021, Patagonia Provisions released its third beer made with Kernza, in partnership with the Hopworks Urban Brewery based in Portland, Oregon. And General Mills-owned Cascadian Farm uses Kernza in its honey toasted Kernza cereal.

Peruvian gooseberry

Aguaymanto, also known as the Cape gooseberry or goldenberry, is a berry native to the Andes with a bittersweet flavor. The fruit is gaining popularity for its health benefits, which include a high content of antioxidants, vitamins A and C, and minerals. Most recently, the berry has made its way onto the menu at the Freehand hotel's newest Latin American restaurant, Comodo, which opened in New York City in October 2021.



Tea seed oil

Tea seed oil, which has been cultivated and used for centuries in Asia, is the latest cooking oil to hit Western shelves. It is known as “the olive oil of the East” thanks to its neutral flavor profile and high smoke point. Made from the seeds of *Camellia oleifera*, a flowering plant native to East Asia, tea seed oil is packed with antioxidants, omega-3s, minerals, and vitamins E, A, & B. Yóu Yóu, a new brand launched in October 2021, is bringing the oil to the United States—while preserving its heritage. Cofounder Anthony Chen told *Well & Good* that it takes eight years to make one bottle of Yóu Yóu tea seed oil. “We’re working with producers in the Hunan region who have literally been doing this for generations.”

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Accelerated maturation

Why wait years to sample aged liquor
when it is possible in a matter of days?





Bespoken Spirits aims to upend the slow, wasteful and antiquated spirits industry with a sustainable new maturation process. Leveraging modern technology, material science and data analytics, the Californian company meticulously tailors the aroma, color and taste of craft spirits in under a week—the traditional whiskey maturation process takes years.

The accelerated process has over 20 billion different recipes and is shaking up the global spirits market, which is expected to grow in value from just over \$143 billion in 2020 to nearly \$209 billion in 2025, according to Research & Markets. “From day one it was about disrupting the industry, but it was about disrupting it for the better,” Stu Aaron, who cofounded Bespoken Spirits with Martin Janousek, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.



“From day one it was about disrupting the industry, but it was about disrupting it for the better.”

New York-based biodesign company Kingdom Supercultures aims to use science to speed up the fermentation process in plant-based food, beverages, and natural consumer goods. Founded in 2020 by Kendall Dabaghi and Ravi Sheth, the startup has already created new flavors of sauce that have been snapped up by Michelin-starred restaurants including Eleven Madison Park and Gramercy Tavern, and in October 2021 the company received \$25 million in Series A funding.

Why it's interesting

Time-consuming processes such as alcohol maturation and food fermentation are being upended by startups with ambitions to economize on time and output, as well as explore new taste frontiers.

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The new terroir

Climate change is having a seismic impact on global agriculture, making previously fertile places untenable while also creating new northern growth areas for crops.



While climate change wreaks havoc on global agriculture, some brands are seeing an upside to higher temperatures in traditionally colder climates.

Wine has seen strong growth in more northerly geographies, which are increasingly able to grow highly esteemed grape varieties due to temperature rises. Across Canada, new wineries are springing up, with production increasing over 75% in the last 20 years according to figures drawn from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations cited by *Wine Industry Advisor*. In 2019, British Columbia-based CheckMate Artisanal Winery received a perfect score from wine writer, sommelier and author John Schreiner for its 2015 Little Pawn Chardonnay—a Canadian first. The establishment of the winery was due to the effects of climate change in the region, which have made it possible to grow old-world grape varieties to a high standard.



Other crops are also travelling northwards. In December 2020, the *New York Times Magazine* and ProPublica described changes in Russia, as warmer temperatures turn previously barren eastern parts of the country into fertile land for farming. Given that the country is now able to sustain crops such as soybeans, wheat and corn in more areas, it is looking to become a top food producer for the world.

Although not traditionally considered a cold climate, Italy is seeing new produce pop up too. Sicilian farmer Andrea Passanisi is growing avocados on his grandfather's land, which was previously used to grow grapes. As the weather has become too hot for grape vines, the land now provides the perfect environment for fruit such as avocados, lychees and passion fruit. Committed to sustainable practices at Sicilia Avocado, Passanisi is carrying on the tradition of farming by working with the changing climate. In 2021, another Sicilian crop finally began to bear fruit: coffee beans. The Morettino family had their first successful harvest of coffee beans after 30 years of trying. The family's ultimate dream is to create a zero-km Italian coffee brand.

Why it's interesting

Climate change is forcing farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs to adapt and embrace new crops that would have been impossible for them to grow even 10 years ago. New terroirs could forever change the way we think of the heritage and provenance of food.

50

Edible escapism

In search of outlets for their wanderlust, travelers are now turning to the kitchen.

Counter of Joy invited diners to “travel through your taste buds from the mountains of China to the coastlines of West Africa, city bakeries of Turkey, and country pastures of the British Isles.” From November 11 through December 18, 2021, London diners could book the seven-course tasting experience for a culinary trip around the world, prepared by Michelin-starred chefs as part of the Great Feast festival at the Old Selfridges Hotel.

Londoners looking for a more approachable entry point into foreign food can stop in at one of the American candy shops taking over the city. On London’s famous Oxford Street, there are now nine mega candy stores specializing in American sweets in less than a square mile, NBC News reports, with names like American Candy Land and Candy Surprise, which opened in early 2021.

The Colombiana: A Rediscovery of Recipes and Rituals from the Soul of Columbia cookbook, released in June 2021, transports readers and home chefs to the South American country. Alongside traditional Colombian recipes, the cookbook includes hosting tips, photography highlighting leading artists—from ceramicists to textile makers to fashion and jewelry designers—and short profiles of Colombia’s female food heroes for a truly transportive look into Colombian culture and dining.

Why it’s interesting

With travel still not possible or appealing for many, people are opting to take their taste buds for a trip, driving a wave of globally inspired eating experiences.



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Beauty

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New beauty labels

Beauty brands are rethinking labeling to offer transparency about their products' environmental impact.

An increasing number of beauty brands are using packaging to clearly display the sustainability of their production methods, to better align with consumer expectations of environmental impact transparency.

In September 2021, a group of prominent beauty brands collaborated to develop a system for tracking the environmental impact or sustainability of their products. The brand-agnostic approach will give consumers a clear view of the impact of the product they're buying, with a labelling system that compares items from companies opting into the initiative. Ultimately the brands—Unilever, Henkel, L'Oréal, Natura & Co and LVMH—aim to support sustainability practices and invite others to join the project to achieve full transparency across the beauty sector.

Skincare and beauty brand Tata Harper has earned the Sustainable Forestry Initiative label for several of its products, which indicates that its packing comes from sustainable and responsible sources. The packaging is also recyclable—a clear indicator and perhaps a purchasing incentive for the sustainability-focused consumer.



Skincare brand Cocokind also focused on creating transparency with its packaging in 2021. It has introduced a fact panel on each product’s label to break down details of the item’s sustainability and carbon footprint so that consumers can easily visualize the environmental impact.

Why it’s interesting

More beauty brands are displaying the environmental impact of their products on packaging labels, opting for transparency in their sustainability practices. Consumers are paying attention, indicating that these initiatives are important to the market.

+ WUNDERMAN THOMPSON

Left: The Henkel brand collaborated in the development of a brand-agnostic system to track the environmental impact of beauty products. Right: Image courtesy of Unilever



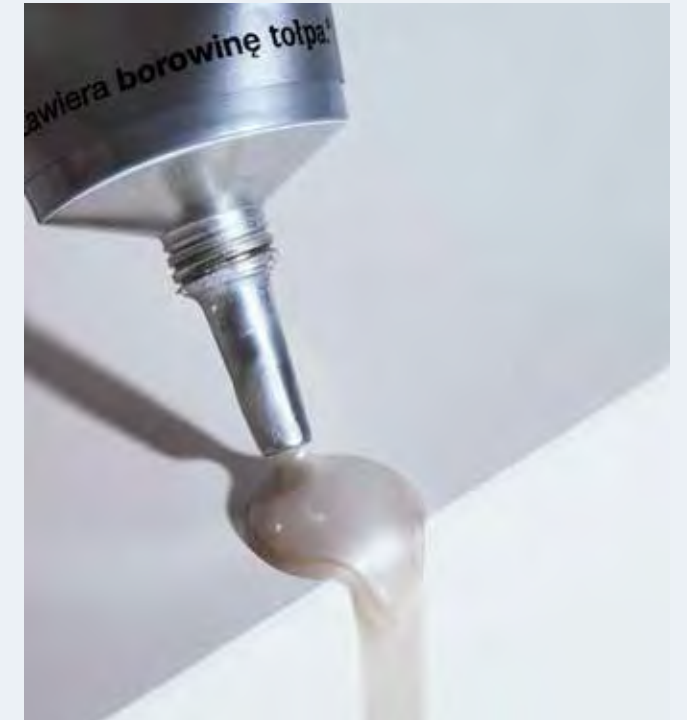
Beauty brands are displaying the environmental impact of their products on packaging labels.



52

Mineral skincare

Skincare gets elemental—brands are now taking inspiration from ancient Indo-Asian beauty rituals by adding precious metals to their formulas.



Niod, sister brand to The Ordinary, launched a skin serum with copper peptides in September 2021. Copper peptides have wound-healing and anti-inflammatory properties, play an essential role in skin growth, and also stimulate collagen and elastin, alongside other benefits, making them a potent ingredient in skincare formulas.

Cult Polish pharmacy skincare brand Tolpa launched a face mask with silver microparticles in July 2021. The mask is exfoliating, antibacterial, and helps lighten hyperpigmentation. African Botanics released its Silver Rescue Cream with colloidal silver—known for its antimicrobial and healing properties—in May 2021.

Why it's interesting

After a tumultuous two years, consumers are looking for extra indulgence in their self-care rituals and turning to mineral skincare for a dose of luxurious pampering.

The image shows the numbers '53' in a large, bold, blue, 3D font. The numbers have a metallic sheen and are set against a white background with a blue wavy graphic at the top.

The demise of “normal” beauty

Brands are radically redefining the beauty industry,
one word at a time.

In March 2021, Unilever announced it was removing the word “normal” from packaging and advertising across its beauty and personal care brands, in a dedicated effort to become more inclusive. The move is an acknowledgment of Unilever’s global influence and a reflection of evolving consumer values.

“With one billion people using our beauty and personal care products every day, and even more seeing our advertising, our brands have the power to make a real difference to people’s lives,” says Sunny Jain, president of beauty and personal care at Unilever. “We are committed to tackling harmful norms and stereotypes, and shaping a broader, far more inclusive definition of beauty.” In addition to removing the word “normal,” the company also stated it would not use excessive editing of models used in its advertisements.

Harry Styles, known for his gender-fluid aesthetic, launched new beauty brand Pleasing in November 2021 with four nail polishes, a dual roller ball lip and eye serum, and a facial serum. The brand, which features both men and women in its advertisements, celebrates “the multitude of unique identities in our community,” and is working to “dispel the myth of a binary existence,” Styles says.

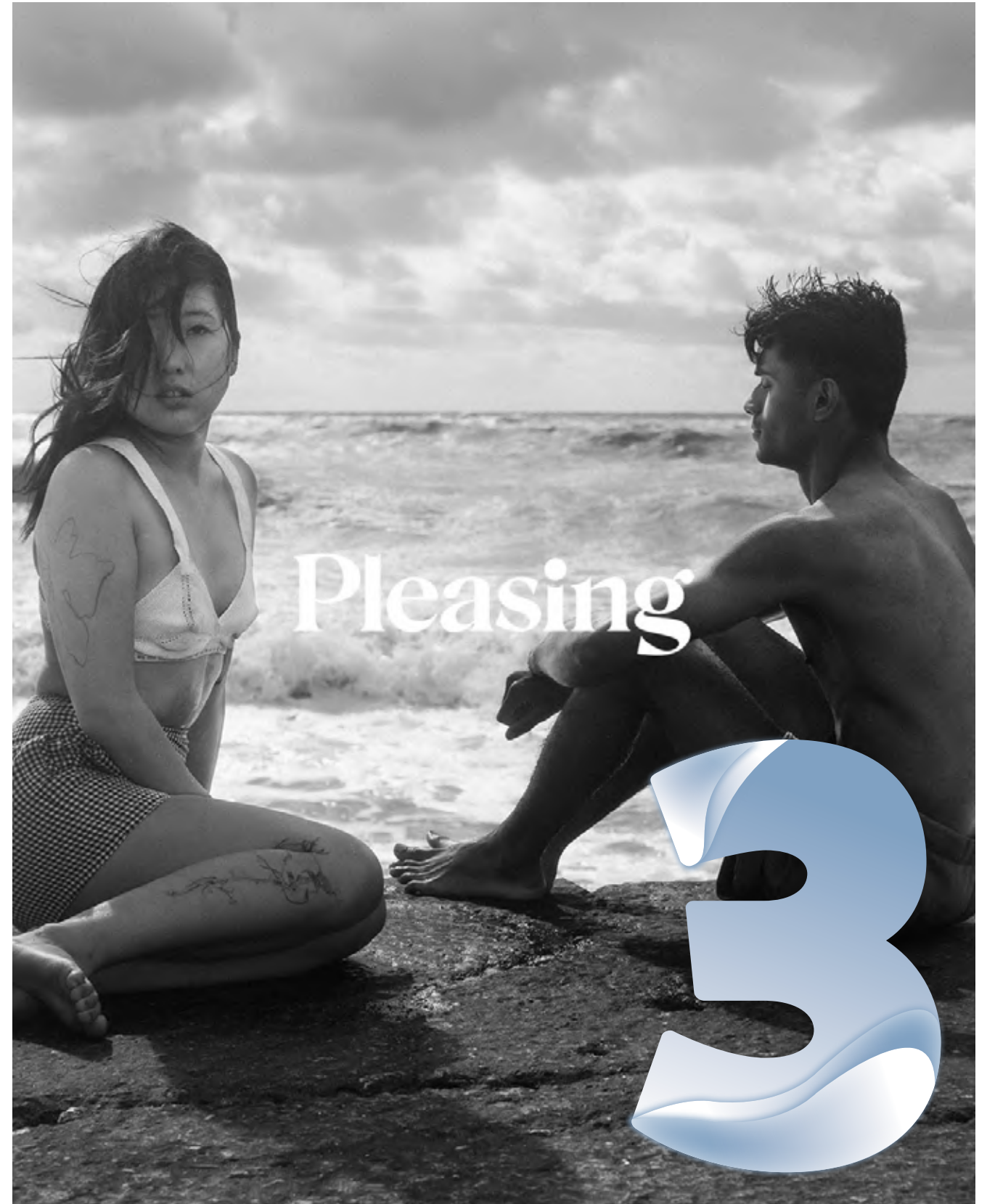
Neutrogena unveiled its “For People With Skin” campaign in April 2021. Founded in 1930, the beauty brand now aims to focus on combating inequality in skincare, in relation to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and access to health care. “We want to be there for all skin, and all people,” Kerry Sullivan, then general manager of Neutrogena, told *WWD*.

Why it’s interesting

A new inclusive lexicon is redefining the beauty industry, making room for more individualized and accepting expressions and interpretations of beauty. The concept of a one-size-fits-all beauty ideal has been thrown out the window—and there’s no going back.

5

Pleasing



Pleasing

3

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Absurdist makeovers

Beauty as self-expression is getting experimental.





After a difficult few years for many, beauty consumers are seeking out opportunities to play and experiment. *Circus* is a new kind of beauty publication that is “not to be taken too seriously.” Announced in September 2021, it celebrates the absurdity and playfulness of beauty. *Dazed Beauty* called it an “unserious beauty platform for total weirdos.” It features avant-garde looks, from the wacky, such as bedazzled teeth, to the silly, like acrylic toenail art, to the clownish.

“Everything at the minute seems super serious,” *Circus* creator and editor-in-chief Jackson Bowley told *i-D*. “I just wanted to create a publication that was fun, simple and loud. That, and I wanted to create a beauty magazine that really pushes how we see and what we can do with beauty imagery.”

The beauty looks in Schiaparelli’s 2022 spring/summer collection digital presentation were “suitably surreal,” *Vogue* reported. Models wore elongated gold-plated nail accessories, umbrella hats, and handbags embellished with faces.

Why it’s interesting

Consumers are approaching beauty with a newly liberated attitude of uninhibited self-expression—picking up their makeup brushes not necessarily to look “good” but to have fun, experiment, and test the boundaries of their creativity.

55

Metabeauty

Gaming systems are introducing virtual beauty and real-world cosmetics to their realms, heightening user engagement and opportunities for beauty brands and creatives.

Gamers are customizing their avatars using virtual cosmetics, bringing new forms of creativity and personality to gaming. Even in violent or action-centered games such as *Grand Theft Auto* or *Fortnite*, players are turning to digital high-fashion clothes and hair and makeup options for enhanced self-expression and immersion. “By dressing your character how you want, it pushes the imagination a little further,” Jo-Ashley Robert, *Dead by Daylight*’s associate producer, told *Vogue*. “It’s only getting more popular.”

Traditional beauty brands including Nars Cosmetics and Gucci are creating virtual makeup for players to use. Nars Cosmetics added 30 virtual products to the Drest app in October 2021, displayed using virtual model avatars. Also in October, Gucci Beauty added 29 virtual makeup products to Drest’s Beauty Mode feature, with more than 40 potential combinations and links for users to purchase the physical products in the app.

The *Sims 4 Spa Day Game Pack* got a beauty upgrade in September 2021. Players can now add a High Maintenance trait, do yoga, meditate, and get



Players are turning to digital high-fashion clothes and hair and makeup options for enhanced self-expression.

facials, pedicures and manicures with new nail designs. At least 100 new skin-tone swatches, hairstyles, and makeup options were included in the update.

3D digital artist Nathalie Nguyen photoshops alien-inspired digital beauty effects and 3D nail art into her self-portraits, blurring the viewer's sense of reality. Using real objects and digitally rendered 3D makeup, Nguyen's beauty concept redefines what is real and highlights how we portray ourselves online versus in real life.

Why it's interesting

Adaptation of digital beauty has evolved from CGI model Perl's AI makeup line, which we identified as an early indication of this trend in "The Future 100: 2019," to brands restaging their physical products for digital platforms. As gamers continue to engage with metabeauty, brands will find opportunities to sell and promote their beauty offerings in the metaverse.

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Acidic care

Skincare brands are homing in on the benefits of these top three acidic ingredients.



Acidic skincare is taking over beauty shelves, so we're focusing on three acid-based ingredients taking center stage for 2022.

Tranexamic acid

Topicals skincare debuted its Faded brightening and clearing serum in 2020. Faded relies on tranexamic acid to benefit sun-damaged or scarred skin; the acid prevents excess pigmentation spots and melasma, toning skin for an even glow.



Azelaic acid

In October 2021, the Bloomeffects beauty brand launched its Black Tulip Skincare collection, which highlights azelaic acid as a key ingredient in the range's eye treatment gel. Azelaic acid helps to improve skin's firmness, and reduces dark circles, puffiness and crow's feet.

Polyhydroxy acids

A new skincare line from Juvia's Place, launched in September 2021, features polyhydroxy acids in its exfoliating facial pads, which clarify the skin and add glow. Johnson & Johnson released research in April that year highlighting that the acid supports skin hydration, exfoliation and pigmentation control, even for those with sensitive skin.

Why it's interesting

Acidic ingredients are the latest buzzword for skincare benefits and are already popular additions to the beauty aisle.





Adaptive packaging

Beauty packaging is being accessibly redesigned
for a wider range of users.

The beauty and wellness industries are rebranding to better accommodate users with disabilities or limited mobility, making their product packing more accessible.

Procter & Gamble unveiled an easy-open lid on several Olay Regenerist moisturizers in November 2021, to assist consumers who had previously found its products hard to access. The container lid now features winged sides and a raised top, textured for better grip, labels with higher color contrast for ease of reading, and braille text that reads “face cream.” Olay has shared the design with the wider beauty industry, encouraging others to adapt the concept and improve their own accessibility efforts across products.

Unilever designed the world's first adaptive deodorant package in March 2021. The Degree deodorant brand collaborated with people with disabilities to develop a genuinely accessible product concept. The design, which can be used one-handed, includes a hook for storage, a magnetic cap for easy replacement and braille labels. Christina Mallon, global head of inclusive design



and digital accessibility at Wunderman Thompson, spearheaded the design concept. She tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence: “Every consumer will experience disability at multiple times in their lives but most product designs don’t consider the needs of the disabled consumer.”

Also in March 2021, bath and body care brand Cleanlogic rebranded its packaging to include braille across its entire product offering. A portion of all Cleanlogic sales revenue is donated to organizations supporting the visually impaired, including the American Foundation for the Blind.

Why it’s interesting

“Brands must think about adaptive packaging in order to be truly customer-centric,” Mallon says. Consumers are requesting more accessible packaging across the beauty industry, and brands are consulting consumers and rethinking product packaging to better serve users with disabilities.



Brands are rethinking product packaging to better serve users with disabilities.



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Microdose skin regimes

Skincare experts are taking advantage of effective ingredients at the microlevel with a new less-is-more approach.



Microdosing has made its way into skincare. Beauty aficionados are gravitating towards this popular new approach, applying smaller amounts or concentrations of ingredients to the skin for long-term results without harsh side effects.

The Wö skincare brand, for example, is built upon a range of products packaged in what the brand calls “mono-dosed” amounts. The blister packs contain enough product for just one application, allowing buyers to tailor their routine to their skin’s day-to-day needs and only purchase as much as they anticipate needing to use.

Subscription skincare brand Skin & Me connects consumers with dermatologists who prescribe custom approaches at low dosage or percentages as necessary. This makes microdosing approachable and easy, and includes professional input.



Spectacle Skincare's Performance Crème delivers retinaldehyde, polyhydroxy acids and vitamin C in a microdosed formulation. These small amounts don't sensitize the skin, thus maximizing their effects over time, even with consistent use. Andre Condit, formulator and cofounder of Spectacle Skincare, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence that beauty product users "need to think of this more as a marathon, not a race. The skincare journey should be a slow, steady pace over a lifetime."

Skincare "boosters," which have increased in popularity recently, are also an applicable and popular form of microdosing. These lower-percentage concentrations can be gradually added to everyday products such as moisturizers, making them effective additions to basic routines. La Roche-Posay offers a low-dose retinol serum at 0.3%, and Paula's Choice offers a vitamin C booster that can be added to moisturizers drop by drop.

Why it's interesting

Andre Condit says that the concept of microdosing skincare is being revisited as the "best therapeutic way to deliver key nutrients, communicators and cellular activators in a daily dose that is most bioavailable, best tolerated in all skin types and least reactive." Low-dose applications that achieve beneficial results in the long term are attracting consumers seeking low-risk, high-reward solutions to their skin concerns.

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Inclusive haircare

Care for textured hair types, often excluded from mainstream hair branding, is taking up more shelf space and selling fast.





Hair stylists and celebrities are embarking on an inclusive journey to make haircare for all hair types effective and accessible. In a market that often excludes textured hair needs, women of color are creating new space for Afro-centric hair, introducing consumers to dedicated salons and curated new product lines.

Pressed Roots in Dallas, Texas, which opened in October 2021 after a previous incarnation in pop-up form, is dedicated to delivering professional blowouts and hair treatments for customers with highly textured hair. Founder Piersten Gaines, a graduate of Harvard Business School, launched the service for a largely underserved market and told *Wallpaper** that she is “challenging the broader beauty and haircare industries that have excluded ethnic hair textures for decades.”

Tracee Ellis Ross’s Pattern Beauty haircare line launched at Sephora in September 2021, making it widely available. Pattern’s success challenges the attitude “that Black haircare is a niche market,” Ross told *InStyle*.

Gabrielle Union’s Flawless products are now accessibly stocked by both Walmart and Amazon. Flawless, developed with celebrity hairstylist Larry Sims, comprises 12 nourishing, luxurious products designed for afro-textured hairtypes and includes shampoos, conditioners, serums and more.

Why it’s interesting

As brand narratives continue to focus on diversity and inclusion, new labels are stepping up, creating space for authentic products curated by and for Black entrepreneurs. Stores are stocking up on inclusive haircare products and original new services are blossoming, ushering in inclusive care for textured hair.

5

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Robomanicures

Tech startups are disrupting the nail salon by deploying robot manicurists.



“No slip ups. No slow down. No small talk,” promises Clockwork, a San-Francisco-based company that claims to offer the first robot manicure. Launched in March 2021, the nail tech startup also set up shop in New York’s Rockefeller Center in fall the same year. Convenience and precision are at the heart of Clockwork—in under 10 minutes, painted nails are complete. “Think of us as a fast-casual restaurant and a nail salon like a sit-down restaurant,” Renuka Apte, founder of Clockwork, told *Allure*. “They each have their own place in people’s lives.”

Nimble is an at-home nail-painting machine slated to go to market at the end of 2021. The company’s Kickstarter campaign aimed to raise \$25,000, and had received over \$1.8 million as of November 2021. Like Clockwork, Nimble’s machine only takes 10 minutes to paint and polish the nails.

Why it’s interesting

The express manicure option will soon be diverted to robots as tech startups identify a growing appetite for salon and at-home convenience. As for the business rationale, the global nailcare market is expected to reach a value of \$11.6 billion by 2027, according to figures published by Reportlinker in April 2021.

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Retail & commerce

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Direct-to-avatar

From B2B and DTC to DTA—the latest business model sees brands releasing digital products direct to screens.



In addition to business-to-business (B2B) and direct-to-consumer (DTC) models, various fashion brands introduced direct-to-avatar (DTA) shopping in 2021. In December 2021, Nike acquired virtual sneaker marketplace RTFKT. Three months earlier, Balenciaga released a collection of in-game clothing in *Fortnite*. In the summer, Ralph Lauren launched a 50-piece digital wardrobe, available to buy in social networking app Zepeto, and American Eagle debuted its DTA apparel for Bitmojis. Gucci and The North Face started the year with a collaboration on avatarwear for *Pokémon Go*. And digital fashion house The Fabricant has partnered with brands such as Adidas, Puma and Tommy Hilfiger to virtualize their clothes.

Luxury auto brands are also driving the trend. Maserati, Aston Martin and Tesla launched virtual models of their cars in Tencent's *Game for Peace*—the Chinese mobile version of PlayerUnknown's *Battlegrounds*—between 2020 and 2021. And Rolls-Royce unveiled its first virtual vehicle in 2020 for Tencent's *QQ Speed* mobile game.

Why it's interesting

The future of consumerism lies in virtual products, Kerry Murphy, founder and CEO of The Fabricant, predicts. "People are going to start seeing value in digital items," he tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, "and realize that they'd rather interact with a digital item, or have an infinite wardrobe of digital fashion items but a very limited wardrobe of physical items."





A large, stylized, 3D-rendered number '62' in a light blue-grey color, positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page. The numbers have a metallic sheen and are set against a background of flowing, wavy lines in shades of grey and white.

Retail shapeshifters

Long-term challenges are forcing retailers to rethink their core offers, with some diversifying into novel areas.

Few sectors have had a more turbulent couple of years than retail. The story of 2020 was one of deserted high streets, shuttered shops and plummeting sales. Fast-forward to today, and retailers are burdened by disrupted supply chains and labor shortages. These crises are hastening a realignment.

In times of uncertainty, adaptability is key. Enterprising retailers are shifting gears, finding creative ways to diversify that go beyond the borders of their business.

In July 2021, John Lewis Partnership—British parent company of retail brands John Lewis & Partners and Waitrose & Partners—revealed plans to become a private landlord. With the company posting the first full-year loss since it was founded in 1864, for the period to January 2021, diversification is a crucial plank in its turnaround strategy. A survey of its land portfolio identified excess space



that could be used for at least 7,000 homes. The properties, ranging from studio flats to four-bedroom houses, will be built on the partnership's sites, meaning householders could soon be living above a Waitrose supermarket or next to a distribution center. By 2030, John Lewis Partnership aims to have 40% of its profits coming from non-retail lines, principally financial services, housing and outdoor living.

As part of its move to be climate-positive, Swedish furniture retailer Ikea is also branching out, by selling renewable energy to households. In a swing away from

flat-pack furniture, the retailer is aiming to build the world's biggest renewable energy movement, making electricity from sustainable sources universally accessible and affordable.

Why it's interesting

In the new retail era, consumers no longer see brands as serving one core purpose. People want deeper experiences with the brands they trust, so there are opportunities to capture new revenue streams. Diversification could be key to the bricks-and-mortar retail recovery.



Private domains

Messaging platforms are becoming the next battleground for brands and loyalty.

Chat commerce (ccommerce, c-commerce or cCommerce) is sprouting on messaging platforms. It is also known as private domain commerce, to differentiate it from the public domain of brand websites or marketplaces such as TMall or Amazon.

In China, WeChat—which has 1.2 billion monthly users—has been especially successful in building relationships with luxury brands through livestreaming and private messaging. Consumers spend an annual average of RMB 170,000 (\$26,550) via WeChat, according to a 2020 report by Boston Consulting Group and Tencent Marketing Insight.

Guangzhou-based direct-to-consumer color cosmetics brand Perfect Diary combines savvy cultural partnerships and a premium look with low prices. It is present everywhere its target gen Z audience plays, from the social media and ecommerce platform Xiaohongshu (or Little Red Book) to short-video platform Bilibili to Douyin (as TikTok is known in China).

Perfect Diary also invites consumers who buy on marketplaces to join its official WeChat account or that of its virtual influencer Xiao Wanzi. This recruits followers in groups of several thousand to offer them sneak peeks of launches, and plays the role of a personal shopping assistant.

“Not only does Xiao Wanzi let you preview new products and deals, but you get inspiration from the conversations of the entire chat group,” says Joyce Ling, chief strategy officer of Wunderman Thompson China. “Even though it appears a little ‘fake’ and like a show, it is literally a condensed version of the consumer journey from awareness to purchase to loyalty.”



Chat commerce is expanding beyond China. Vietnam and Thailand lead the world in using Facebook's chat functions for online retail, measured by the volume of messages between merchants and customers, as reported in *Nikkei Asia* in June 2021. In Thailand, global brands including Burberry, Louis Vuitton and Chanel have launched official accounts on messaging app Line, engaging consumers with custom stickers, livestreamed fashion shows and digital ads. Line Shopping, the commerce arm of the chat platform, boasts over seven million users in Thailand alone, Lertad Supadhiloke, head of e-commerce at Line Thailand, told the *Bangkok Post* in July 2021.

Why it's interesting

As people increasingly converse on WeChat, WhatsApp and Line, brands are also jumping on these chat platforms to build smaller but more intimate, personalized relationships with groups of consumers.

“
Brands are jumping on these chat platforms to build smaller but more intimate, personalized relationships with groups of consumers.

64

Virtual flagships

Digital flagship stores are taking over ecommerce storefronts.

Today, 81% of global consumers agree that a brand's digital presence is as important as its in-store presence, a July 2021 Wunderman Thompson Data survey found. This is prompting brands to enhance their ecommerce storefront prominence and create virtual flagship stores.

Samsung opened a virtual replica of its flagship New York City store in Decentraland in January 2022. In July 2021, luxury brand Fendi opened a 360-degree digital flagship based on its 57th Street store in New York City, offering visitors virtual tours and access to its latest collections. Hermès has rolled out digital flagships in Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Thailand.

Beauty brands are also upping their digital storefront impact. Lancôme debuted its first temporary virtual flagship in Singapore, in summer 2020. The Lancôme Advanced Génifique #LiveYourStrength virtual flagship offered 3D shopping experiences, consultations and educational events, and included a “discover zone” where visitors could take a personality test, designed by psychologist Perpetua Neo, to find their strength. The L'Oréal-owned skincare brand has since introduced virtual pop-ups for Australia, Korea and the United States. In April 2021, Nars opened a digital flagship store, immersing visitors in a 3D shopping experience.

Why it's interesting

According to predictions from *eMarketer*, the global ecommerce market will grow from \$4.89 trillion in 2021 to \$5.42 trillion in 2022. Virtual flagships are becoming the new storefront to entice shoppers and enhance a brand's overall digital experience.



65

Gen Alpha retail

Three ways in which generation alpha are driving the next era of retail.



Born between 2010 and 2025, generation alpha—gen Z’s younger siblings—are already making waves in the retail world.

Genderless shopping

Brands and retailers are eschewing traditional gender categories in favor of gender-neutral products and lines. PacSun launched a new gender-neutral children’s clothing brand, PacSun Kids, in June 2021, followed by its own gender-neutral label, Colour Range, in September and its first gender-free kids’ clothing store two months later. In October 2021, California became the first US state to enforce genderless retail, thanks to a new law requiring large stores to have gender-neutral sections for toys and childcare. “The segregation of toys by a social construct of what is appropriate for which gender is the antithesis of modern thinking,” says Democrat assembly member and the law’s co-author Evan Low.

Inclusive aisles

Brands and retailers are also widening their offerings to be more inclusive of a range of physical and mental abilities. JCPenney launched children's clothing with adaptive features in July 2021, and partnered with adaptive fashion marketplace Patti & Ricky to expand its range of adaptive accessories for kids. In June 2021, Headspace, *Sesame Street* and Penguin Random House joined forces to launch *Monster Meditation*, a six-book series to "help children learn the fundamentals of mindfulness, meditation, and social and emotional learning."



Sustainable play

Toy brands are leaning heavily into sustainability to appeal to younger generations. In May 2021, Mattel launched a program that lets families give back their old Mattel products so the materials can be reused to make new ones. And Lego unveiled its first prototype brick made from recycled plastic in June 2021.

Why it's interesting

Following in their older siblings' footsteps, gen alphas are cementing the key retail ethics that gen Zers pioneered.



Department stores reformatted

Retailers are rethinking the traditional department store model.

The latest department stores are more town squares than retailers, reflecting a shift in the retail landscape from big-box luxury to community microcosm.

Beales, which closed all of its UK stores in 2020, has reopened three locations under new ownership—and is looking beyond retail. The top floors of the Poole branch will be turned into a “health village” run by the National Health Service, with dermatology, orthopedics, ophthalmology, and breast cancer screening departments, as well as counselling rooms for those suffering from long COVID.

A new concept department store is reinventing a location formerly occupied by legacy British retailer Debenhams. Called Bobby’s, the new store opened in the UK town of Bournemouth in September 2021 and houses a beauty hall, an art gallery and ice-cream and coffee parlor, alongside shopping and local artisans, in place of floors filled with clothing, accessories and homeware. Future plans include a hairdressing salon, dental services, a microbrewery, and even a smokery.

“I don’t ever see a big department store chain emerging again,” Beales’ CEO Tony Brown told the *Guardian*. “We will see small local chains popping up with eight or 10 stores. The model will change dramatically over the next couple of years. People want something more localized.”

Why it’s interesting

It’s clear that the traditional department store format is no longer working. We reported the death of the luxury department store in “The Future 100: 2020,” following a string of closures and bankruptcies among big, long-established names. Now, the next generation of department stores are having to rethink and adapt.



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Digital twins

Retail stores and factories are being cloned for the virtual world, to promote familiarity and efficiency.





“In the future, every single factory and every single building will have a digital twin that will simulate and track the physical version of it,” Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, told *Time* in April 2021. Huang’s vision of the metaverse is “ultimately about the fusion of the virtual and the physical worlds.” Currently, Nvidia and BMW are partnering on a digital twin of the carmaker’s factory in Regensburg, Germany, allowing the teams to virtually plan and play out new workflow logistics before implementing these changes at BMW’s physical facility.

Tech companies are making it easier to create digital twins. In November 2021, Amazon unveiled the AWS IoT TwinMaker, a service that conveniently and speedily generates digital duplicates of real-world systems for businesses. Microsoft’s Azure Digital Twins allows for the creation of buildings, infrastructure, and even entire cities, with the aim of driving “better products, optimized operations, reduced costs, and breakthrough customer experiences.”

Retailers are also opening digital twins of existing stores to promote familiarity and more natural navigation for shoppers. In March 2021, Burberry launched a digital replica of its flagship store in Ginza, Tokyo. And Coach collaborated with virtual store developer Obsess to clone its New York Fifth Avenue flagship store. “The digital showroom enables wholesale buyers to experience our new collections each season without having to fly in to see products in person, reducing the carbon footprint of our business and speeding the buying process,” explains Giovanni Zaccariello, senior vice president of global visual experience at Coach.

Why it’s interesting

Digital twin stores are innovating the retail sector, with the promise to solve logistical issues for the real-world and replicate the in-person shopping experience.



A large, stylized, 3D-rendered number '68' in a light blue-grey color, positioned at the top left of the page. The numbers have a slight shadow and a metallic-like sheen.

Big Tech bricks— and—mortars

Tech giants are moving off screens in their latest consumer push.

Amazon plans to open department stores, as reported by the *Wall Street Journal* in August 2021. The intent marks a continued foray into physical retail, following the opening of its first cashierless grocery store in 2020, the launch of its first Amazon 4-Star store in 2018, and the purchase of Whole Foods in 2017. The stores will expand the retailer's footprint, reportedly feature Amazon-owned clothing brands and household items, and function as return and customer service centers.

Google turned heads in June 2021 when it opened the doors to its first ever physical store, located in New York City. More showroom than traditional retail outlet, the store sells all of Google's products, from Nest to Fitbit, and includes a "workshop space" reserved for sub-brand events such as photography lessons with Pixel, cooking demos with Nest, YouTube concerts and more.

Apple is also banking on physical stores, expanding its retail operations in the United States, as Deirdre O'Brien, senior vice president of retail and people, told *Reuters* in June 2021. Part of this strategy will include doubling down on its pre-pandemic strategy of in-store events and experiences beyond shopping.

Why it's interesting

Big Tech has its sights set on physical retail, which could further cement the growing crossover between IRL and URL shopping.





NFT ***marketplaces***

Brands are finding new revenue streams in the evolving non-fungible-token sector.



Companies are growing their revenue in this new digital frontier. Where consumers are looking to collect and trade, artists and brands are ready to create and mint non-fungible tokens (NFTs)—and all parties are meeting in emerging forums in the metaverse.

Sotheby's is the first auction house to launch a marketplace dedicated to NFTs. Announced in October 2021, its Metaverse is backed by celebrities and supports numerous digital artists that it has worked with during the past year. Managing director Sebastian Fahey told *Hypebeast* that Sotheby's plans to use its "expertise and curation to the burgeoning world of art for the digitally native generation."

In the same month, cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase announced it was launching an NFT marketplace, and opened an early access waitlist for interested investors. The Coinbase NFT platform will include “social features” supportive of the “creator economy”—people who make money from creating videos and online content.

Why it's interesting

As major brands and industries continue to invest in NFTs and participate in their trade, the metaverse is evolving in its potential for revenue and opportunities. Brands who take advantage of this uncharted territory may find new dividends in these developing marketplaces.



As major brands and industries continue to invest in NFTs and participate in their trade, the metaverse is evolving in its potential for revenue and opportunities.

70

Retro retail

The latest high-design stores are turning back the hands of time with nostalgic interiors.





Superette's newest cannabis dispensary in Toronto was designed to resemble a retro grocery store. Its vibrant colors, punchy graphics, and what *Dezeen* called "pop art aesthetic" are evocative of mid-century retail branding and design. In August 2021, the company opened Sip 'n' Smoke, an express kiosk with a similar look inspired by old-school cafeterias.

The interior of Los Angeles grocery Wine & Eggs, opened in 2021, was partially inspired by public schools. Saturated hues of blue and yellow feature throughout the space and branding, complemented by bright green. Rounded wood shelving and displays call to mind building blocks, and the blue-and-green checkered floor is made from commercial-grade vinyl composition tile (VCT). "I love VCT because it actually feels both playful and reminiscent of our childhood in public schools," Adi Goodrich, who created the interior, told *Dezeen*.

Creative agency Saint of Athens designed a jewelry store, opened in August 2021 in Mykonos, Greece, that nods to the splendor of luxury swimming pools in a bygone era. The interior is decked in light-blue tiles with red-and-white striped accents. "Soft blue, a color reminiscent of urban pool luxury of the '60s, furniture made from metal, vintage elements and custom blue terrazzo displays constitute a retro yet modern, Wes Anderson kind of universe," agency founder Nikos Paleologos told *Dezeen*.

Why it's interesting

The past two years saw people turning to nature-inspired design to create a sense of comfort and stability. Now, the latest store designs are opting for kitschy, playful interiors that offer a nostalgic escape.

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Luxury

80



Hypnotherapy

Healing hospitality is awakening to the potential of hypnosis.

Luxury hotels are expanding their wellness treatments from thermal body mapping and sleep coaches to hypnotherapy.

The Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong appointed hypnotherapist Christine Deschemin in June 2021, rolling out workshops for relaxation and to improve eating habits, and offering a bespoke service of tailored hypnotherapy sessions. In spring 2021, the Belmond Cadogan Hotel in London introduced a complimentary sleep concierge service in partnership with hypnotherapist Malminder Gill. The hotel provides its rooms with a meditative recording by Gill designed to send guests to sleep, and a motivational recording to get the mornings going. One-to-one consultations and focused hypnotherapy sessions are also available.



The Spa at the Four Seasons New York Downtown launched its Resident Healer Program in 2018, noting that guests are seeking spiritual wellness, not just a traditional spa experience. Residents appointed in previous years include sonic alchemist Michelle Pirret and crystal healer Rashia Bell. In December 2020, Nicole Hernandez, also known as the Traveling Hypnotist, joined as resident healer, offering unique hypnotic journeys that can help relieve anxiety and overcome fears and phobias. Hernandez's unique Time Traveler program can even delve into past life regression to enhance present life.

Why it's interesting

Hotel wellness programs are deepening their spiritual healing offering, graduating from crystals and tarot card readings to hypnotic journeys that claim to improve health, habits and mindfulness.



Hotel wellness programs are deepening their spiritual healing offering.





Austere luxe

Luxury brands are recalibrating in the face of China's "common prosperity" policy.

During China's 2021 National Day holiday, a market in Shanghai became the center of a social media frenzy. Thousands descended on the Wuzhong wet market in the former French Concession to buy fruit, vegetables and eggs—but these basic foodstuffs were encased in Prada-branded wrapping and carrier bags.

The high-low pop-up celebrated the launch of Prada's fall/winter 2021 campaign "Feels Like Prada." This could be seen as a successful marketing campaign—selfies abounded and stallholders ran out of bags and wrap—or a sign of gentrification, or, as Zhu Tianhua, an assistant researcher at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, told *Sixth Tone*, "a kind of consumerism of daily life." However it is viewed, the campaign struck an appropriately austere chord at a time when the world continues to grapple with crises from COVID-19 to climate change to yawning economic inequity.

In mid-2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping, after a months-long crackdown on the country's biggest technology firms, announced a new "common prosperity" policy, urging businesses and entrepreneurs to narrow the country's wealth gap.

The government pledged to lift more workers into the middle class and make basics such as schooling, housing and health care more affordable. Some of China's biggest billionaires have since agreed to donate billions of dollars to charity.

Outside China, there are also signs of a bling backlash. In November 2021, a Vietnamese minister was pilloried on social media after a video showed him being hand-fed gold-plated steak in London at the Knightsbridge restaurant of Nusret Gokce, a celebrity chef also known as Salt Bae.

Kim Kardashian, the queen of conspicuous consumption, appeared at the Met Gala 2021 not in customary glitter and gloss but fully encased, face and all, in a clingy black sheath.

Why it's interesting

The personal luxury goods market rebounded in 2021 to €283 billion, up 29% from the trough of 2020, according to Bain & Company's "Luxury Study 2021." That rebound was driven by China, which now makes up 21% of the global market. But the pandemic has provoked a reassessment of what luxury means. "The emergence from the COVID crisis comes as a renaissance for luxury brands," says Claudia D'Arpizio, lead author of the Bain study. "Where once it was all about status, logos and exclusivity, luxury brands are now actors in social conversations, driven by a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility."

FEELS LIKE PRADA



FEELS LIKE PRADA



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Crypto-elites

There's a new way to signal your social status with the emergence of desirable and, crucially, ownable digital assets in the shape of NFT characters.



From star athletes to rappers to tech entrepreneurs, the rich and famous are snapping up NFT characters. NBA star Steph Curry paid \$180,000 for Bored Ape Yacht Club character #7990. Former boxing champ Mike Tyson has a Cool Cat, while tech entrepreneur Alexis Ohanian owns a Pudgy Penguin. Ohanian also invested in a \$280,000 CryptoPunk for his wife, tennis legend Serena Williams. Not bad for a CryptoPunk—in 2021, rare versions have sold at Christie’s and Sotheby’s for upwards of \$7 million. Even finance giant Visa is getting in on the action, acquiring a mohawked CryptoPunk for \$150,000. Once acquired, it is of course de rigueur to use your NFT as your social media avatar.

The market for NFTs exploded in 2021, and these communities of limited-edition character avatars have proliferated in tandem. The avatars, which feature animated character headshots in profile, are usually generated by algorithms to a theme, with different colors, hairstyles, clothing or accessories—some of which may be rare or even unique. Alongside apes, punks and penguins, prospective buyers can also choose from cats (Gutter Cat Gang), dogs (The Doge Pound), ducks (Sup Ducks), aliens (Lonely Alien Space Club) and all kinds of “ladies” (Fame Lady Squad).

While NFT avatars at their most basic are a “flippable” asset with genuine market value, they are also a way to underline both wealth and status, marking any owner as a paid-up member of the crypto-elite. Alongside their asset, investors gain access to valuable social and networking opportunities with their fellow owners via memberships to exclusive Discord or Telegram channels. So intense is the urge to get behind the virtual velvet rope, there are already rental and fractional ownership models for those who can’t afford to own their own character.



Crypto-investor Cooper Turley, aka Coopahtroopa, related on an episode of the WAGMI podcast how a CryptoPunk NFT he bought for \$300 is now worth half a million dollars. He also noted that the “social capital that comes from owning the punk is so much higher than any amount of money. You’re going to get lifetime benefits from having it. You get entry into a very exclusive club of collectors and holders. I think that the cachet of just holding something like that is something that’s never going to go away.”

Why it’s interesting

Whether NFT characters have long-term staying power is so far unclear, but perhaps more interesting is the wider trend toward virtual status signifiers. Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s “Into the Metaverse” report identified a strong consumer appetite for virtual ownership. Virtual possessions seem to have the same symbolic value and convey status in the same way as real-world luxury cars or watches do. As we head to the metaverse, it seems unequivocal that our avatars will be the focus of significant investment.





Long recovery spas

These revitalizing resorts mean it when they invite guests to "stay a while."

Spas and wellness resorts are promoting new treatments for long COVID, extending the stay of their guests to allow full recovery.

At RAKxa medical spa outside Bangkok, a new COVID-19 health rejuvenation program is growing in popularity. The group offers a three-day holistic operation to restore lung capacity using hyperbaric chambers of concentrated oxygen, blood ozone infusions and chest-muscle strengthening exercises in an Olympic-grade gym. Services are tailored to each guest's needs.

The SHA Wellness Clinic on the coast of Spain started offering a seven-day post-COVID program in May 2021. Guests are tested upon arrival and then given a course of treatments based on the results. The assessment includes a stress test, carotid ultrasound and bloodwork, the results of which could lead to treatments ranging from reflexology to Watsu therapy to "brain photobiomodulation" that stimulates and regenerates brain cells.

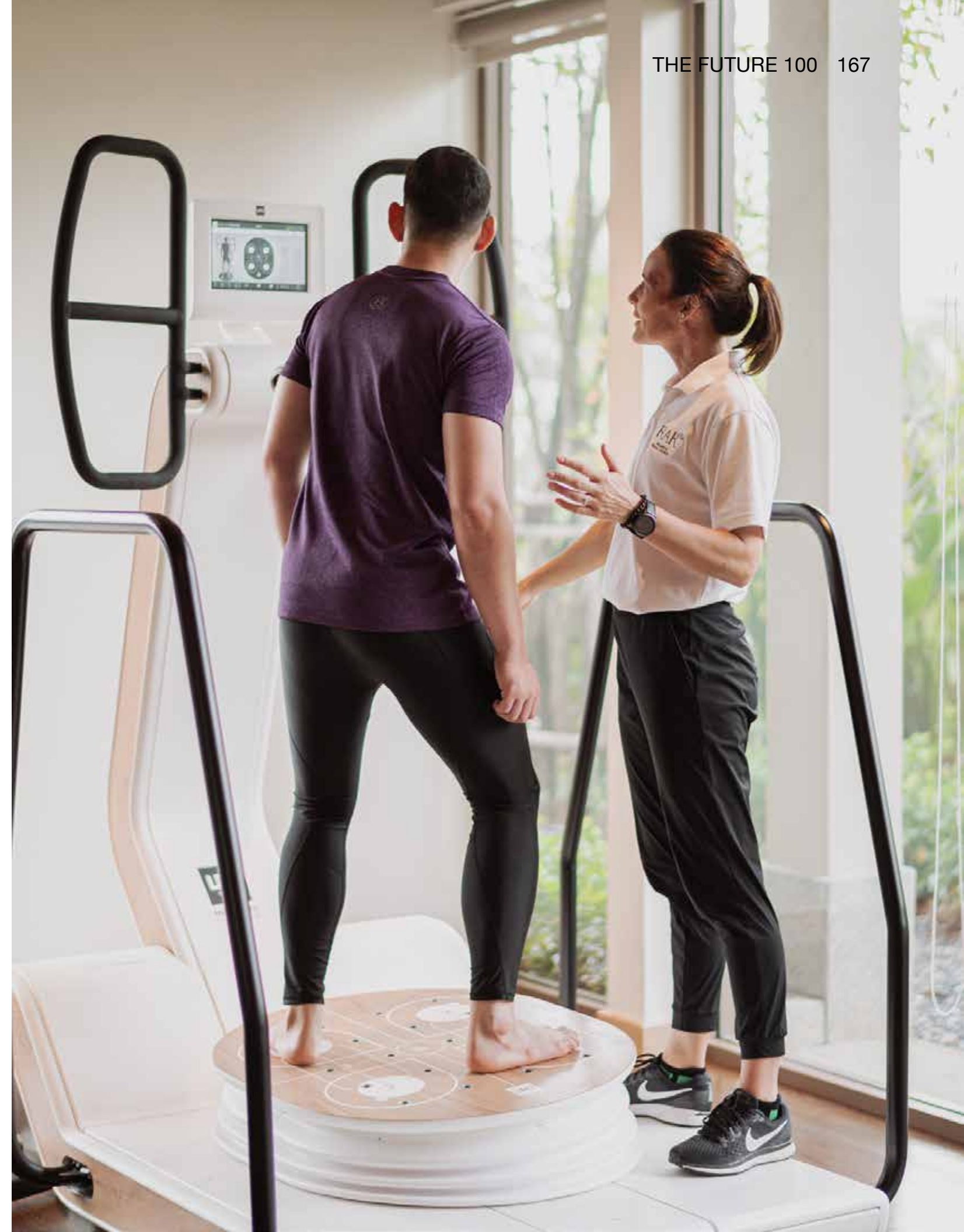
The Lanserhof resort in the Austrian Alps offers a two-week retreat claiming to cure the effects of long COVID. Traditionally an upscale, expensive destination



for detoxifying body treatments, it has devised this new offering to include personalized energy cuisine, a chewing trainer, healing massage, breathing therapy, urinalysis to identify infections or kidney problems, and personal training sessions, depending on the patient's symptoms.

Why it's interesting

After a period of pause in travel and hospitality, resorts are reframing their offerings to a new wave of consumer wellness needs. Extended stays for medical wellness and rejuvenation are breaking the mold in hospitality.





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Suburban luxe

Are the suburbs the new luxury shopping destination?

As luxury shoppers decamp to sprawling second homes and vacation destinations, designer brands and high-end retailers are following their path from city centers to suburban outposts.

Gucci opened a store in Oak Brook, Illinois in fall 2021, as well as its first permanent store in the Hamptons in the summer of 2021. Dior has a new shop in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Louis Vuitton opened up in Plano, Texas, while Hermès opened a store in Detroit, Michigan—its first in the state—in June 2021.

Demand for vacation and suburban shopping historically hasn't been high or consistent enough to warrant permanent stores, but that's starting to change. "It used to be that our market was too small, but now everyone wants to be here permanently," Angi Wang, a commercial broker in Aspen who works for the real estate firm Setterfield & Bright, told the *Washington Post*. "They're clamoring to get in, to the point where we honestly don't have any space left."

Why it's interesting

Luxury brands are shifting their focus away from urban hotspots. "The pandemic has decentralized luxury retail," Milton Pedraza, chief executive of market research firm the Luxury Institute, told the *Washington Post*. "It seems like everyone has moved to the suburbs or to their vacation homes—so that's where the stores are going, too."



“The pandemic has decentralized luxury retail.”





Upending fakes

Counterfeit goods could soon be consigned to the past.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain technology are being used to catch and ultimately upend luxury fakes circulating in the secondhand market.

In April 2021, three luxury giants, LVMH, Prada Group and Richemont, joined forces with a united vision to protect the authenticity and trustworthiness of the industry. The pact formed the Aura Consortium—a new global system using blockchain technology to authenticate luxury goods, from sourcing to the sale transaction and even through to the resale market. In October 2021, Group OTB, which owns a mix of high street and luxury brands including Diesel and Marni, joined the Aura Consortium as a founding member.

AI-powered luxury authenticator Entrupy bills itself as the “first and only on-demand authentication solution for high-value goods,” and has a reported accuracy rate of 99.1%. The New York-based company, launched in 2016, employs deep learning to compare images to determine a genuine luxury item versus a fake.

Trade in counterfeit products was valued at \$464 billion in 2019, reports the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and according to a study by Certilogo the online counterfeit market hit an all-time-high during the pandemic, growing 5% between May 2020 to April 2021. This coincides with the rising popularity of the secondhand market, which is forecast to reach \$77 billion by 2025 according to ThredUp.

Why it's interesting

Luxury resales will remain popular, particularly among the growing cohort of conscious consumers. Leaders in luxury and tech are creating faster solutions to identify fakes and protect the authenticity of luxury brands.



Prescribing happiness

A booster shot of happiness? Now, that's luxury!





Luxury brands are launching modern vehicles for emotional wellness, presenting consumers with original, indulgent offerings for physical and emotional uplift.

Dior Spa Cheval Blanc Paris, which opened in September 2021, is offering Happiness Shots to guests. These concentrated treatments are 30- to 45-minute “bursts of pleasure,” indulgence or efficacy that can be combined with other treatments so that guests can personalize their experience to the fullest. The shots can be added to massages, micropeeling, microabrasion services and more.

Estée Lauder launched a new luxury fragrance range developed to evoke a range of positive feelings. Catering to consumers from different locations around the world, the eight variations were crafted using neurosensory studies on the emotional effects of each fragrance, which were found to evoke feelings such as “positivity and joy” or “calm and happiness,” according to the brand.

Why it's interesting

Whether in a spa or at a bricks-and-mortar shop, luxury brands are meeting consumers at every corner with more than their usual product or expected service. Focusing on positive emotions and physical wellness, luxury brands are determined to ensure their consumers leave feeling objectively better than when they arrived.



Extended stays

Long-term getaways are turning into luxurious escapes for extended family and friends.

Antsy travelers are discovering unique destinations that provide a new kind of getaway: long-term stays for large groups. Resorts are offering extended stays, introducing a lifestyle reset rather than a quick trip.

The island of Ithaafushi offers luxurious stays for guests and 24 of their closest friends. For \$85,000 a night, travelers can take over the entire island for a completely private, long-term getaway. Part of the Waldorf Astoria Maldives, the private island has beachfront views, bungalows, a spa, gym, water sports, a personal chef—the works—not to mention a personal concierge available 24 hours a day.

Travelers seeking a fairytale experience can now rent the entire Castello di Reschio in the Umbrian hills of Italy. For €290,000, guests can bring their friends and family to stay in a minimum of 11 rooms (there are 36 rooms in all). The all-inclusive price covers meals, drinks and musical entertainment alongside the sloping olive groves, vistas and vineyards. With anything up to the entire hotel at their disposal, guests can enjoy the spa, cooking and art classes, horseback riding and more during their stay.

Why it's interesting

Travelers searching for exciting new venues want to bring their loved ones along, so resorts are repurposing their expansive premises into luxurious hideouts where guests can congregate with extended family and friends. Travelers are now taking advantage of getaways that everyone can enjoy, and relocating for long-term relaxation.



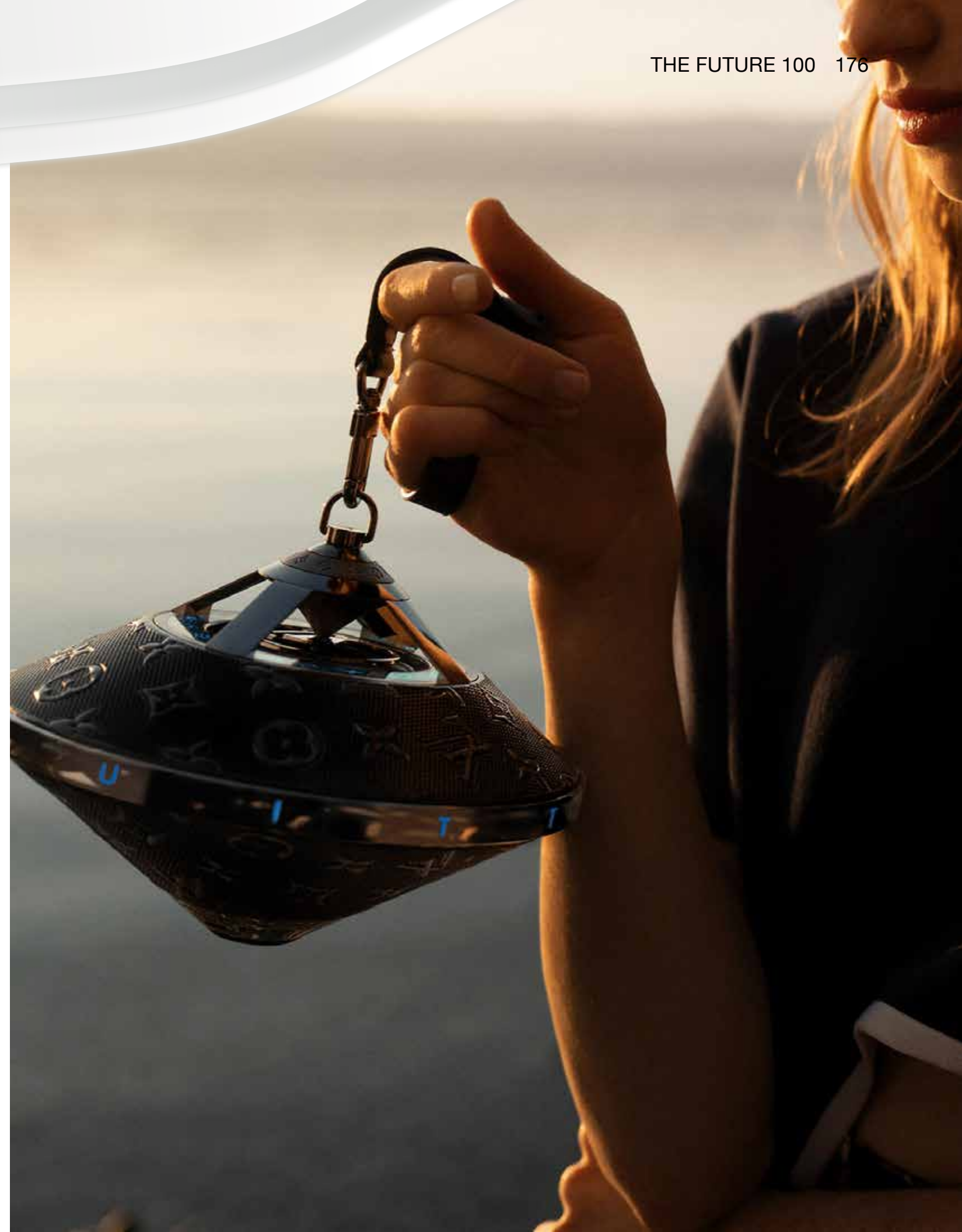
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Sonic luxification

Luxury brands from fashion to auto are investing in audio hardware,
luxifying the listening experience.

+ WUNDERMAN
THOMPSON

The Louis Vuitton portable Horizon Light Up speaker,
modeled after the brand's Toupie handbag





Louis Vuitton is dipping a toe into audio tech. The designer clothing and accessories brand released a portable speaker in July 2021. The Horizon Light Up speaker, which rings in at nearly \$3,000, is loosely modeled after the brand's Toupie handbag—complete with the signature LV pattern.

Mercedes-Benz is the latest luxury automaker to partner with a high-end audio company. The car company announced that it will add Dolby Atmos speakers to its top-of-the-line models from summer 2022.

The evolution of Apple's listening devices over the past five years offers a perfect case study: where Apple once included free corded headphones with



Audio will be a key channel for luxury brands moving forward.

every new iPhone, it is now nudging iPhone users to purchase increasingly high-end headphones. Since releasing the first generation of AirPods in 2016, starting at \$159, Apple has progressively stepped up both function and price—peaking with AirPods Max, which were released in December 2020 and sell for \$549. At the end of 2020, Apple stopped including free headphones with iPhone purchases altogether.

Why it's interesting

The premiumization of audio is underway. Audio will be a key channel for luxury brands moving forward—and a crucial element to consider when crafting luxury experiences.



Superyachts of the skies

Airship travel is back, reincarnated as a low-emission luxury alternative.

With air travel predicted to soon return to pre-pandemic levels, the industry must reduce carbon emissions. Incremental changes are no longer enough and new solutions are needed.

Could airships reclaim the skies? Airships are positioning themselves as sustainable upscale alternatives to passenger flights and sky cruises, and some experts say they could revolutionize air travel in the coming decade.

Airships present a distinctive luxury travel experience. Their large and comfortable cabins, lounges, fine dining areas and panoramic windows offer immediate advantage.

Luxury travel company Ocean Sky Cruises is already planning airship expeditions to the North Pole for 2024. With tickets marketed toward “true pioneers of the world,” the company will make history by being the first to land an airship on the North Pole. The 38-hour journey will include wildlife spotting opportunities, views of the aurora borealis, and onboard cocktail experiences.

Also tapping into the luxury market is Israel-based aviation company Atlas LTA. Its luxury aircraft give passengers an elevated sightseeing experience from bird’s-eye view observation decks.

British manufacturer Hybrid Air Vehicles is behind Airlander, the world’s first hybrid aircraft. Its latest iteration, fitted with hydrogen fuel cell-powered electric



motors, can be configured with luxurious seating, and offers floor-to-ceiling windows for an uninterrupted view.

Airships offer wider eco-potential too. Airlander's owner aims for it to perform short-haul intercity flights by 2025 and is also positioning the craft as a freight solution. Similarly, French company Flying Whales is developing a fleet of airships as an eco-solution for air cargo transportation. The fleet will reach isolated, difficult-to-access locations around the world while maintaining a small environmental footprint.

Why it's interesting

A new class of airships offers sustainable voyages that don't compromise on luxury. These high-end, low-impact experiences could herald a new golden era in luxury aviation.

Top: Ocean Sky Cruises

Bottom: Airlander, the world's first hybrid aircraft, by Hybrid Air Vehicles

Right: Flying Whales

8



0

81

Health

90



A large, 3D-style number '81' in a light green color, positioned at the top left of the page. The number has a slight shadow and a white highlight, giving it a sense of depth.

Prescription gaming

The newest way to administer medication? Via a screen.

An emerging class of techceuticals is pressing play on the future of health management. Doctors are prescribing video games and virtual reality (VR) to treat conditions such as brain fog, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

In November 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the VR therapy EaseVRx as a prescription treatment for chronic back pain. In October 2021, the FDA also approved a VR-based treatment for children with the visual impairment amblyopia, also known as lazy eye.

In April 2021, digital therapeutic company Akili Interactive partnered with Weill Cornell Medicine, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, and Vanderbilt University Medical Center to evaluate the EndeavorRx video game as a treatment for COVID-19 patients experiencing brain fog. Originally created to treat ADHD in children, EndeavorRx made history in June 2020 as the first ever prescription-strength video game approved by the FDA. Akili Interactive states that after



following the recommended dosage of 25 minutes of play per day, five days per week for one month, one in three kids “no longer had a measurable attention deficit on at least one measure of objective attention.” In May 2021, the company secured \$160 million in funding to expand its prescription gaming portfolio.

Why it's interesting

Does the future of medicine lie in gamified technology? Michael Phillips Moskowitz, digital nutritionist and founder and CEO of AeBeZe Labs, thinks so. Digital content has “tremendous curative potential,” he tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “Digital therapeutics are going to be the next emerging vertical in pharmaceuticals.” Expect to see more prescription content and digitally administered medication.





Male fertility startups

Biotech startups are now targeting fertility solutions at men.

For a long time, women have been the focus of failing fertility. Now biotech startups are starting to target men, offering sperm analysis and freezing—services designed for those delaying having children for career reasons, as well as those who simply want to freeze their sperm as insurance against injury or waning fertility.

Boston-based startup Legacy sells home kits for sperm analysis, and partners with sperm-freezing centers. It has raised \$20 million in funding from backers such as Y Combinator and Bain Capital Ventures. Founder Khaled Kteily said he got the idea after he spilled hot tea on his lap in a car, suffering second-degree burns and causing him to fear for his future fertility. Kteily envisions a wide range of candidates for sperm freezing, including soldiers about to be deployed; same-sex couples who plan to use a surrogate; and transgender people who want to preserve their fertility before they transition. “We see this as something that every man might do as they go off to college, and investors see that big picture,” Kteily told *TechCrunch*.

Dadi, launched in 2019 in Brooklyn, boasts a temperature-controlled kit to transport sperm from home to lab and has raised \$10 million in venture capital. Others, such as Los Angeles-based Yo and London-based ExSeed Health, use devices attached to smartphones to analyze sperm at home.

Why it's interesting

Employers who have been covering egg freezing for female employees might similarly start looking at sperm freezing as a health benefit. Low male fertility is also considered a canary in the coal mine, and early sperm analysis may also offer clues about overall health.

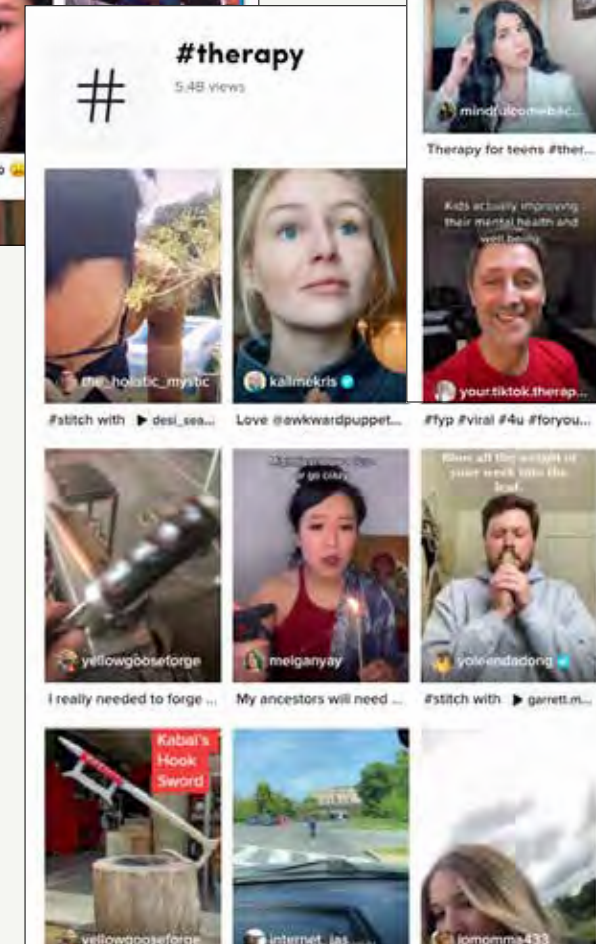
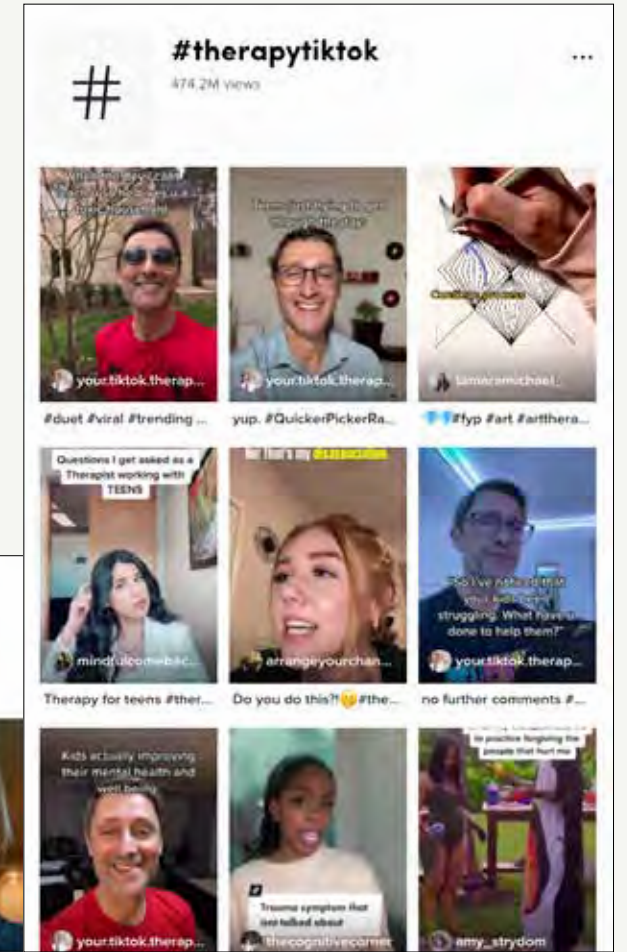
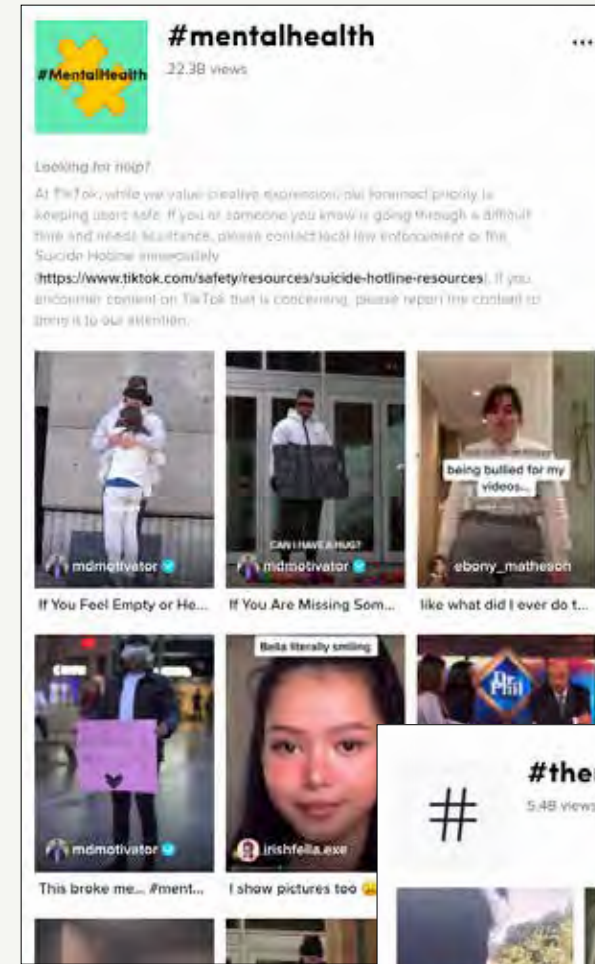


Biotech startups are starting to target men, offering sperm analysis and freezing.

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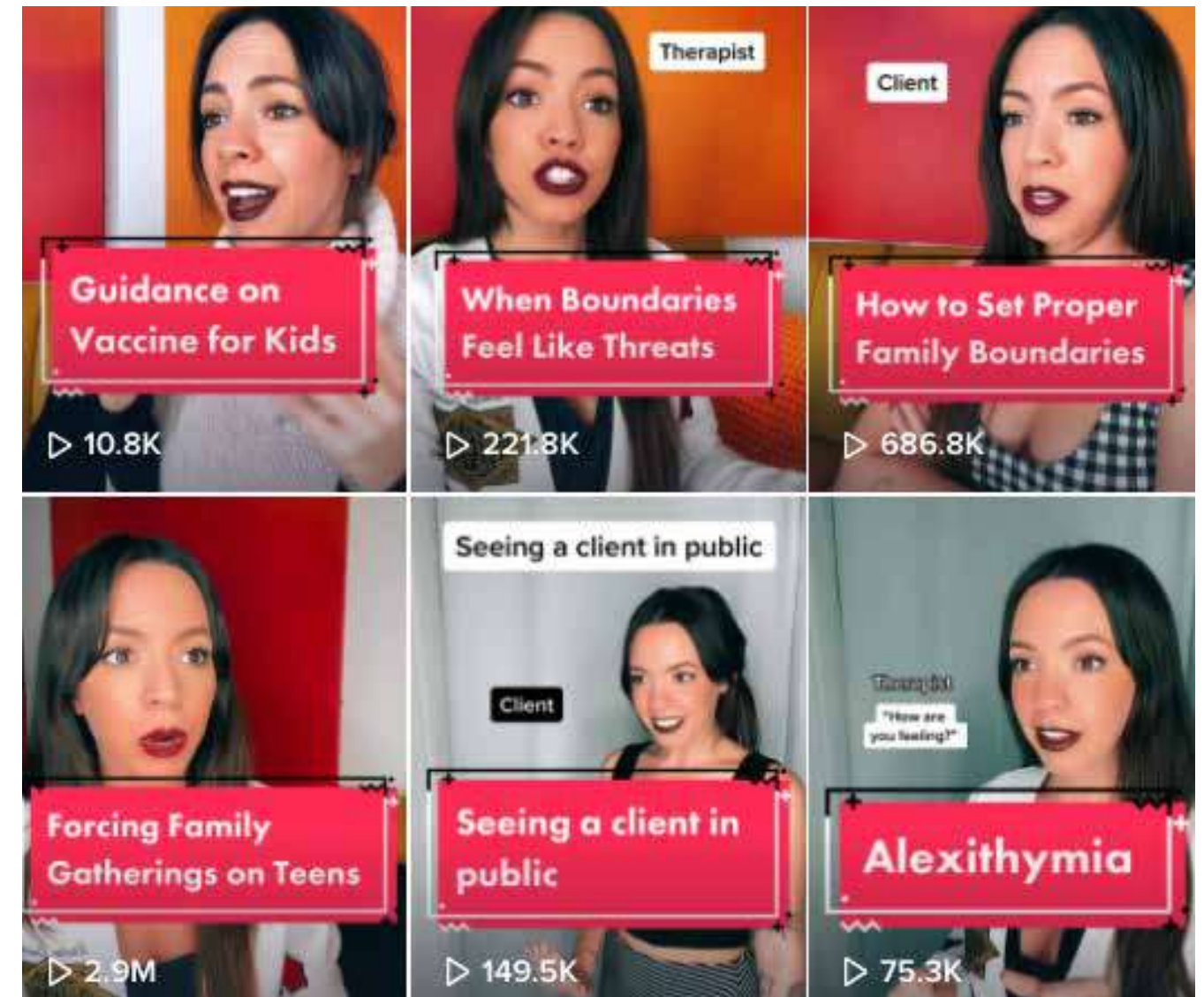
TikTok therapy

Gen Z are turning to TikTok for mental health advice.



Mental health professionals are taking to TikTok to offer guidance to an anxious generation. Therapists use quippy videos with pop music and dances to answer questions about stress, trauma and therapy, and offer lists of ways to express emotions healthily—attracting millions of followers and views.

Licensed doctoral therapist Courtney Tracy's TikTok account, @the.truth.doctor, where she addresses everything from intergenerational trauma to healthy ways to express rage, had 1.7 million followers as of December 2021. Licensed trauma therapist Micheline Maalouf offers tips in the form of self-soothing tools and signs of unresolved trauma to her 1.1 million followers.



In early December 2021, the TikTok hashtag #mentalhealth had 21.6 billion views, #therapy had 5.3 billion views, #therapytiktok had 447.5 million views, and #therapistsoftiktok had 357.6 million views.

Why it's interesting

TikTok is gen Z's preferred app, with usage beating out Instagram and Snapchat. For a generation markedly open about mental health, gen Z are legitimizing the app as a source of bite-sized insight, education and professional counsel.

A large, 3D-style number '84' in a light green color, positioned at the top left of the page. The numbers have a slight shadow and a metallic-like sheen.

Metabolic brands

Metabolic health is the latest metric for health-conscious consumers to monitor and boost.

Slow metabolism is not the cause of middle-age weight gain, according to a study published in August 2021 by *Science*, which revealed that the rate of metabolism remains stable between ages 20 to 60 years old. The findings cast new light on the link between gut health, energy levels and digestion. Now wellness startups are helping consumers to optimize, promote, and even hack their metabolism with healthy boosts that are easy to digest.

UK-based soft drink brand OhMG launched a range of magnesium-enriched waters in May 2021. Magnesium can help to reduce anxiety, aid relaxation, and regulate the nervous system, as well as contributing to energy-yielding metabolism. Prebiotic soda startup Mayawell launched in 2020 and uses organic, hand-harvested active agave, shown to boost metabolism, strengthen the immune system and improve digestion.

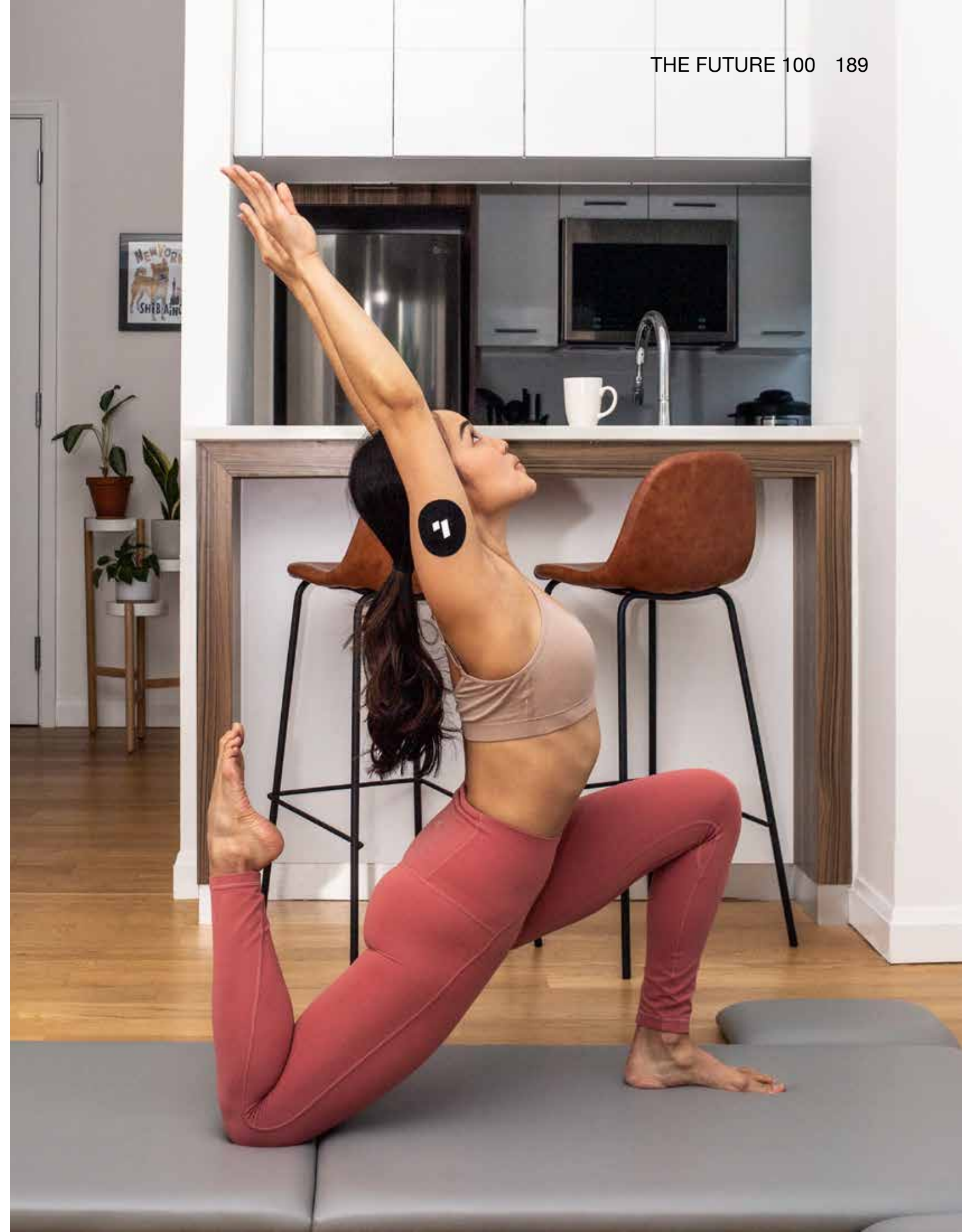
Influential figures in the wellness industry are also lauding metabolic health. Gwyneth Paltrow swears by Dr Will Cole's intuitive fasting program, which aims to recharge metabolism and reset gut health. Paltrow's wellness company Goop also sells Metabolism-Boosting Superpowder.



Metabolism monitoring is becoming the new health metric, as trackers in this space increasingly gain attention. Lumen, launched in May 2020 after raising over \$17 million in funding, promises to “hack your metabolism.” New York-based Levels created a biowearable that monitors and maximizes metabolic fitness for users to live a “longer, fuller, healthier life.” Helsinki-based Veri is another biowearable startup, founded in 2020. Its wearable device tracks blood-sugar levels and pairs with Veri’s app, which acts as a “metabolic compass.”

Why it's interesting

Research has shown that only 12% of Americans are considered metabolically healthy, according to a 2018 study by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Gillings School of Global Public Health. As health becomes a prominent focus for everyone, metabolic brands are launching into the market to monitor overall wellness needs for health-conscious consumers.



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Mental health pharmacies

Customers can now find band aids, medication and therapy sessions all in one place.





Convenience models are revolutionizing access to mental health treatment.

In the United States, 65% of people aged 18 to 34 have had mental health concerns for themselves or for friends and family members since the outbreak of COVID-19, according to Aetna's 2021 "Mental Health Pulse Survey". This reflects a steep increase in symptoms of anxiety or depression in 2020 and 2021. To meet the need for help, convenience giants including CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid and Walmart are offering mental health services to their customers via virtual, app, and in-person appointments.

CVS Health began connecting licensed therapists to customers aged 18 and over in January 2021 via its CVS MinuteClinic providers. Customers can seek assessments, referrals, and even private consultations and counseling at select CVS pharmacies. Originally available in Texas, Pennsylvania and Florida, services have now expanded to New Jersey. CVS plans to expand its in-person and telehealth counseling services to cover 34 locations.

The Walgreens Find Care program began in March 2021, offering virtual therapy sessions with licensed therapists, and currently also helps to coordinate appointments for customers seeking therapy. Thanks to the brand's partnership with Mental Health America, customers can also schedule online mental health screenings with teletherapy companies BetterHelp and Sanvello.

Walmart, which acquired MeMD in May 2021, offers virtual mental health care in addition to its counseling services with Walmart Health. In June 2021, Rite Aid also started offering teletherapy sessions in 10 states: Delaware, Idaho, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Washington.

Why it's interesting

These convenience models are revolutionizing access to mental health treatment. Aligning counseling services with more traditional medical treatments and supplies will reshape the way consumers consider their mental health needs, closing the gap between physical and mental health care.





Audio healing

Wellness seekers are tuning into audio platforms and sound technology to achieve relaxation and mental restoration.

Autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) has become a well-known term across the music, wellness and relaxation industries. Consumers are now turning to ASMR, sound and audio for selfcare and physical wellness benefits.

Sona is a new music therapy app for anxiety that launched at CES 2022. “We’re on a mission to validate music as medicine,” Sona founder Neal Sarin tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. All music is created in-house by curated composers and Grammy-winning engineers using a proprietary composition process that increases alpha brain waves to help listeners relax, Sarin explains.

In October 2021, audio-experience startup Spatial partnered with Catalyst by Wellstar and the nonprofit digital streaming platform HealthTunes to utilize the restorative power of sound for healthcare workers. Together, the platforms will design a sound sanctuary that employs scientifically based MusicMedicine, creating a space where frontline hospital workers can pause in their work days to reduce stress and anxiety. Spatial COO Darrell Rodriguez told *Fast Company* that “immersive sound has potential as a therapeutic tool” and that the company “wants to have a social impact.”

Audio app Dipsea uses audio that combines soothing, calming sounds and erotic stories to help guide its listeners to sleep. Dipsea’s extensive Sleep library offers users a plethora of audio options for sleep aid, relaxation benefits, and even to improve libido. Sexual wellness apps such as Kama and wellness brands like Maude are also utilizing audio erotica as an additional platform benefit.

Why it’s interesting

Heightened audio is more than just audio branding: it’s a new space for healing. As audio’s impact grows in spaces for selfcare, healing and wellness, brands are incorporating sound offerings to satisfy consumer wants and needs.





Antibody health

COVID-19 patients are counting their antibodies like calories, and research is under way for antibody treatments.

As COVID-19 variants continue to infect people around the world, medical institutions are scrambling to determine whether antibodies are the key to a universal vaccine or treatment.

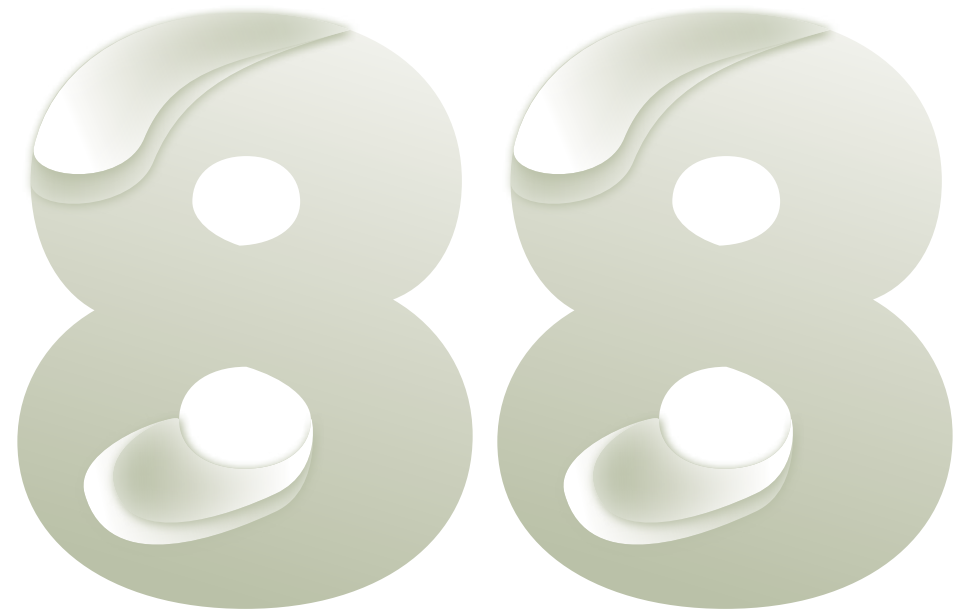
Medical concierge services are measuring COVID-19 antibodies as an added perk for patients. Those with access to high-end medical offices around the world are seeking reassurance by counting antibodies “like calories,” according to the *New York Times*. Locations offering these services include My Concierge MD in Beverly Hills, Sollis Health in Manhattan, and Montecito Concierge Medicine, a private provider in Montecito, California.

Breakthrough research published in November 2021 by the University of North Carolina and Duke University showed potential for the treatment of COVID-19 and its variants using isolated antibodies. The study suggested that an antibody identified as DH1047 can both prevent and fight the infection after a person is diagnosed. The research is a path to the design of a universal vaccine that could work against a wide variety of variants.

AstraZeneca announced the inauguration of a separate division for vaccines and antibody therapies in the same month. The new division will focus closely on the company’s COVID-19 treatments, combining the research, development and manufacturing of antibody treatments, and addressing future variants of COVID-19. Positive results from the antibody treatment trials show potential and more research is under way.

Why it’s interesting

As research on antibody treatment shows promise, medical services may continue to home in on the benefits of measuring, monitoring and maintaining COVID-19 antibody levels for their patients.



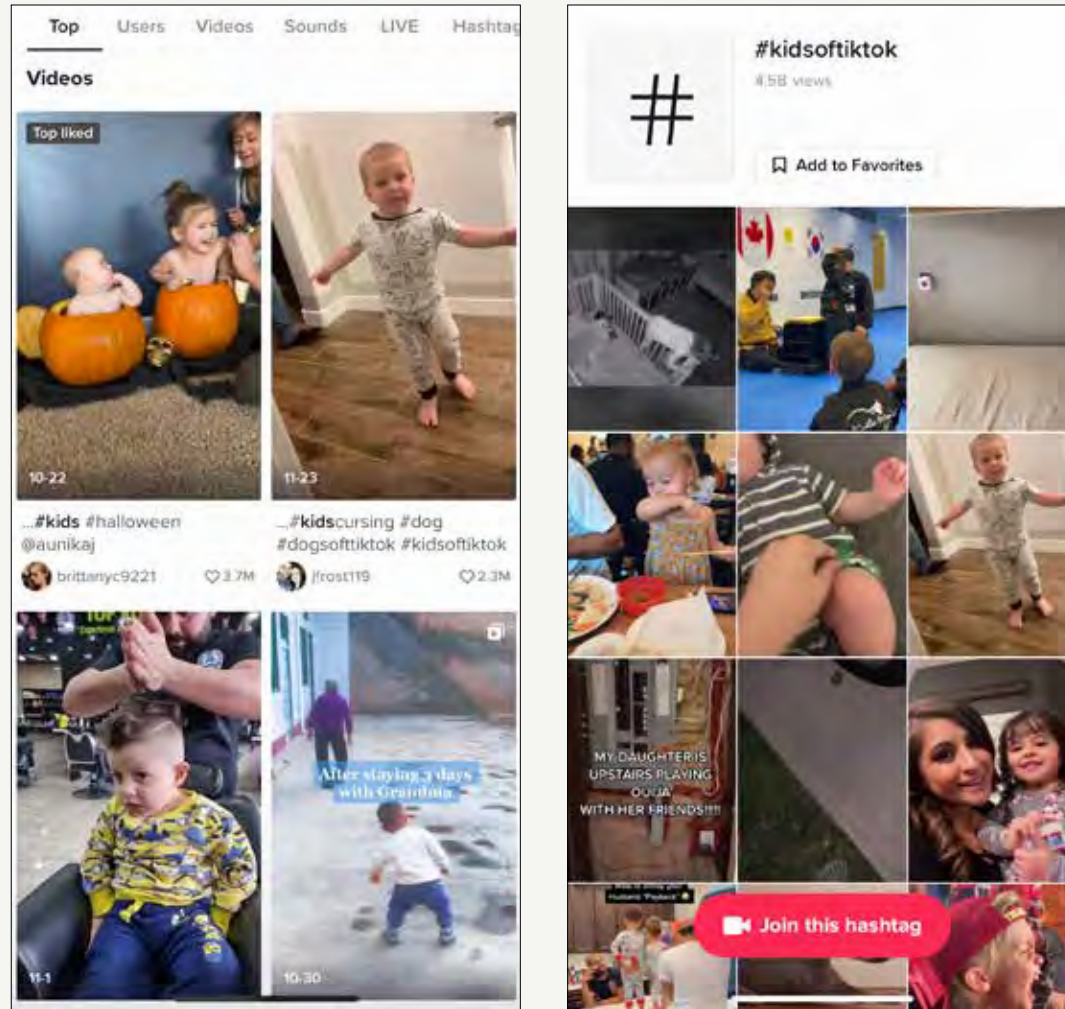
Next-gen mental wellbeing

A mental health emergency among children is sparking reformed platform restrictions and limitations for apps and online games.



An increase in mental health referrals for children has led to online platforms and social apps having to recognize their impact on young users and redirect efforts and platform abilities to offer adequate protection.

In the United Kingdom, mental health referrals for children almost doubled to 200,000 during the pandemic, according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Urgent referrals in particular rose sharply from 5,219 between April and June in 2019 to 8,552 in 2021.



In the United States, experts from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Children’s Hospital Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry deemed the mental health crisis among kids a national emergency “inextricably tied to the stress brought on by COVID-19 and the ongoing struggle for racial justice.” Their data indicates that emergency department visits for mental health rose by 24% from 2019 to 2020 for children between the ages of five and 11, and by 31% for those aged 12 to 17.

Some platforms are reconsidering their strategy. In September 2021, work on Instagram Kids was paused to allow a refocus on input from parents, policymakers and experts before building out the reformed platform. Meta, which owns Instagram, anticipates building this separate, adless platform for kids aged 10 to 12 with only age-appropriate content, allowing full parental supervision and requiring parental permission to join.

Also in September 2021, ByteDance introduced a youth mode to TikTok for kids in China, limiting those under 14 years old to 40 minutes a day on the app, and falling into line with the Chinese government’s video game restrictions for children under 14. The previous month, the Chinese National Press and Publication Administration had announced new rules restricting gaming for children under 18 to Fridays, weekends, and holidays between 8pm and 9pm.

Pausing “Instagram Kids” and Building Parental Supervision Tools

By Adam Mosseri, Head of Instagram | September 27, 2021

- We believe building “Instagram Kids” is the right thing to do, but we’re pausing the work.
- We’ll use this time to work with parents, experts and policymakers to demonstrate the value and need for this product.
- We’ll continue to build opt-in parental supervision tools for teens.

We wanted to provide an update on our work to build an Instagram experience for people under the age of 13, often referred to as “Instagram Kids.” We selected this project to address an important problem seen across our industry: kids are

Why it’s interesting

The substantial impact of social media and gaming on young children is evident, and governments and parents are demanding protection for kids online. Tech companies are responding with refocused strategies to protect the mental wellbeing of younger generations.



5G healthcare

As China rolls out its 5G infrastructure faster than the rest of the world, healthcare is one of the first sectors to benefit.

Telemedicine in China and other Asian markets has gone from basic video consultation to providing comprehensive medical services akin to physical ones. While the previous 4G network could lead to latency and unstable connection, restricting the locations where patients could use telemedicine, the application of 5G has improved the quality of video consultation, remote patient monitoring, and, ultimately, even remote and robotic surgery assistance.

As early as January 2020, China's ZTE and China Telecom providers deployed China's first 5G remote diagnosis of COVID-19. The technology connected doctors at West China Hospital, part of Sichuan University, as the central node to remotely diagnose and treat COVID-19 patients at two dozen other hospitals, Shenzhen-based ZTE said.

In Guangzhou, a city located in a region dubbed China's Greater Bay Area because of its similarity to Silicon Valley, the Guangdong Second Provincial General Hospital is using 5G to collect, transmit and monitor patient data. Chen Xiaofang, a nurse at the hospital, appeared in an Associated Press (AP) video report in November 2021 demonstrating how she uses a smartwatch to monitor procedures such as intravenous infusions, saying "we are now able to save a lot of time." According to the AP report, some 10,000 devices and sensors at the hospital are 5G-connected and collect health data such as electrocardiograms in real time, for hospital staff to monitor.

HEALTH

In June 2021, CUHK Medical Centre, in partnership with Commercial Group HKT, announced it was the first private hospital in Hong Kong to deploy 5G, allowing medical images such as those from endoscopies, ultrasounds, CT scans, and other high-resolution images to be transferred in real time for remote consultation.

Why it's interesting

Chinese patients can already book appointments, receive lab reports and scans, and get basic advice from doctors on smartphone apps such as Ping An Good Doctor and Tencent's WeDoctor. The advent of 5G means they will soon be able to do much more. "The end point is that we can do everything virtually online ... and then doctors can practice anywhere in the world, the patient can access the doctors anywhere in the world," Kenneth Chung, CEO of clinic operations for IHH East China, a private hospital chain, told CNBC.



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Emotional health

Recharge zones for emotions are emerging in public spaces around the world.





Public spaces for mental health and emotional wellbeing are popping up as the stigma around addressing mental health begins to dissolve.

A public art space in Madrid allows visitors to address and visualize the status of their mental health. La Lloreria (the Crying Room) seeks to banish taboos around mental health issues, reserving space for the deliberation, acknowledgement, and artistic visualization of emotional wellbeing. In October 2021, Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez announced a €100 million (\$116 million) mental healthcare drive, indicating a greater public focus on mental health in the country.

Social media brand Pinterest launched Pinterest Havens in October 2021, aiming to create “an online and offline space for community-driven inspiration.” The company also commissioned Havens: Invest in Rest, a physical installation in Chicago featuring a mural by local artist Dwight White, physical Pins of relaxing imagery, immersive art, and community programming to combat burnout and encourage viewers to focus on their emotional wellbeing.

In October 2021, the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City opened the Mandala Lab, a cultural healing space designed to encourage emotional wellness and inspire connection through Buddhist principles. Visitors can explore the complexity of their emotions, address them and transform them. Executive director Jorrit Britschgi said the space was designed to “empower us to face today’s challenges: to widen our imagination, understand and manage our emotions, enrich our capacity for empathy, and connect with others.”

Why it's interesting

Are these emotionally charged spaces the playgrounds of the future? Room set aside to connect, rest and meditate is being molded into public areas grounded in community.



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work

100





Metawork

Teleportation, holograms and roaming avatars—the future of work has arrived.



Virtual offices are taking over as the shift to remote and hybrid work is likely here to stay. Microsoft is set to launch Mesh for Microsoft Teams in 2022, enabling mixed reality for users, with the option to attend meetings as customized avatars and collaborate on projects through shared holographic experiences. Mesh for Microsoft Teams also gives companies the option to build immersive virtual environments and Microsoft describes the feature as “a gateway to the metaverse.”

“As a company whose focus is on productivity, on knowledge workers, it’s something that customers are really asking us for, and it’s coupled with the vision of mixed reality that we’ve been working on for 12 years,” explains Microsoft technical fellow Alex Kipman. “It’s all coming together.”

Meta introduced Horizon Workrooms in August 2021. By connecting through virtual reality (VR), coworkers can collaborate and create together in the same virtual workspace. “Meet teammates across the table, even if you’re across the



world—and transform your home office into your favorite remote meeting room,” Horizon Workrooms promises.

Building branded virtual workspaces are gaining popularity. Wunderman Thompson launched a virtual conference hub at CES 2022. Breakroom by Sinespace, a “new social hub for remote teams,” launched in April 2020. The company can also set up a branded office within 24 hours. Gather launched the following month, and aims to make “virtual interactions more human.” Kumospace and gen-Z startup Branch operate in similar ways to Gather, focusing on heightening organic interactions using virtual rooms that mimic physical environments, where users’ avatars can move around and interact.

Why it’s interesting

The way we connect, live and work is transforming thanks to the metaverse. The future of work will foster a hybrid setup for many, leading with virtual workspaces that generate new forms of creativity, collaboration and immersion.



*The way we connect, live
and work is transforming
thanks to the metaverse.*



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Chief impact officers

A new C-suite position is rising in popularity: the chief impact officer.





Corporate C-suites are adding chief impact officers (CIOs) to their boardrooms, with the role designed to showcase a brand's community and societal impact.

A former Taco Bell employee himself, Lil Nas X was appointed as the fast-food chain's first CIO in August 2021. The honorary position coincided with the artist's "Montero" record release and supports Taco Bell's scholarship program for young creatives. Lil Nas X has appeared in ad campaigns for Taco Bell's breakfast menu and is "leveraging his deep-rooted history to create an impactful experience for all Taco Bell team members," the brand states.

The Duke of Sussex started a new position in March 2021 as the CIO of Silicon Valley startup BetterUp. The coaching and mental health platform says that its missions to "unlock the potential in people everywhere necessitates innovation, impact and integrity." The role includes strategizing product decisions and charitable contributions, and the duke advocates publicly for mental health.

Why it's interesting

Consumers have demanded more from brands in recent years, enforcing executive engagement and integrity. CIOs serve as a company's public-facing leader, embracing charitable causes and ensuring brands are impacting communities and consumers in positive ways.



Rewilding the office

Garden plots, beehives and bird watching—the latest office perks are upleveling biophilic design.

Employees at Nuveen, an investment company headquartered in midtown Manhattan, can help harvest honey on their lunch breaks on a terrace surrounded by high-rises. The company installed two beehives as part of a \$120 million renovation concluding in 2021, hiring a beekeeper to care for the bees and give employees lessons in honey harvesting.

Springdale Green, a new development in Austin, Texas, is reimagining the office with bird blinds and hammocks, and surrounded by native plants and woodland. The office is “more outside than inside,” Philip Mahoney, executive vice chairman at commercial real estate company Newmark, told the *New York Times*.

Employees who work at the Victor Building in Washington—recently renovated by Brookfield Properties—can pick herbs such as parsley and basil from rooftop vegetable gardens before heading home to cook dinner.

Uber’s new headquarters in San Francisco, opened in March 2021, features a major design element to provide fresh air: 180 14-foot-tall glass panes open and shut throughout the day, counteracting stale recirculated air and bringing some of the outdoors in.

Why it’s interesting

“The overarching trend of the past five years has been the hotelification of the office,” Lenny Beaudoin, an executive managing director at CBRE, told the *New York Times*. Over the next five years, expect to see this shift to the “outdoor-ification” of the office as companies bet on nature as the future of office design.





Crypto-artisans

The Web 3.0 economy is providing an alternative to corporate employment in the form of decentralized autonomous organizations.

CryptoTwitter is alight with excitement over decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs). In simple terms, this is a digitally native community or organization that could potentially represent the future of work—your next employer could be a DAO.

Strictly speaking, a DAO is a community-led digital organization that runs on blockchain technology. It is managed not by a CEO or board of directors but by lines of code that define its operations, known as a smart contract. In practice, many DAOs are not yet fully autonomous and so the term is also used colloquially to refer to digital organizations in general. These are more like online collectives that have common interests and goals, and are often centered around a Reddit group or Discord server.

Crucially, DAOs also have built-in treasuries linked to cryptocurrency, which means members can earn tokens in return for their contributions. A new breed of crypto worker is already being drawn to DAOs as an alternative to the corporate nine-to-five.

In September 2021, community builder and consultant Rafa Fernandez posted a long-form piece on the Web 3.0 publishing platform Mirror about his decision to quit his dream job at a tech startup to work for a DAO. Fernandez is not the only one and participation in the DAO economy is growing fast. According to DeepDAO, a platform that tracks the industry, there were 1.6 million members and token owners in December 2021, a number that had swelled by 356,000 from the previous month alone. In another signal of this explosive growth, a



budding DAO service economy is emerging, with companies such as Opolis offering DAO workers access to healthcare plans, payroll, and other shared services.

From an employee's point of view, DAOs have a lot to offer. They are digital so there are no physical headquarters or geographic boundaries—both already outdated notions for many gen Zers. DAOs have little to no hierarchy so there are no bosses either. Instead, they offer members the ability to collectively influence decisions and share in profits. Above all they offer a readymade community of likeminded, passionate, and highly invested people all pursuing the same goal.

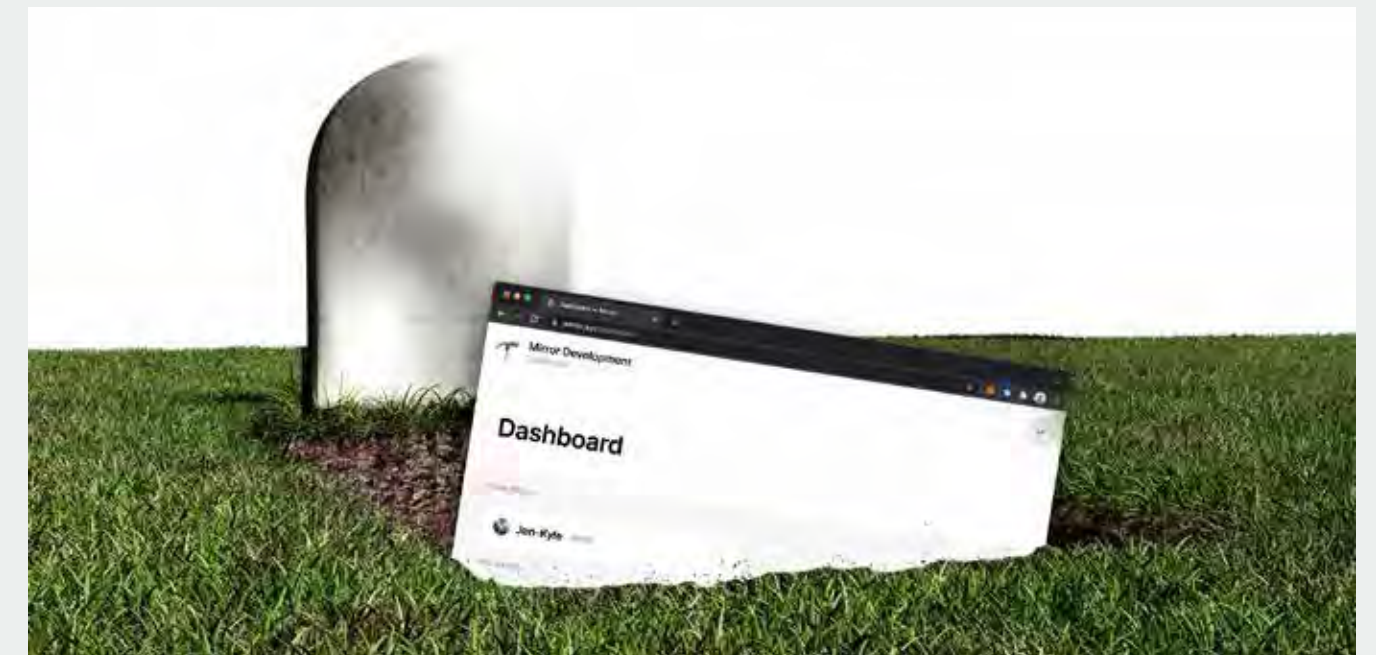
“At the core of it, it’s just a group of people that really care about something, and they want to work on it together,” Anne Connelly, who teaches blockchain and social impact at Boston University, explained to the WBUR radio station. This raises the question: could traditional companies morph into DAOs? The answer is that it’s already happening. ShapeShift, a crypto-trading platform

established in 2014, plans to dissolve its corporate structure and transition to a DAO model in 2022.

DAOs have their challenges. Community insiders acknowledge there’s much to figure out, from gaining clarity on legal status to resolving conflicts. Nevertheless, the combined lure of community, flexibility and shared purpose are so far proving strong.

Why it’s interesting

While not every company will want to copy the DAO model, nor will it be universally appropriate, there are interesting lessons to learn from this new model in terms of community, culture building and worker empowerment. In an era of employee activism, many want to shape the place they work to fit their values, as Julia Rosenberg, cofounder and CEO at Orca Protocol, recently explained at the Mainnet conference: “If you disagree, you have the opportunity to effect change, which is not something that exists in centralized organizations.”



A large, stylized number '95' rendered in a light teal color with a 3D effect, appearing as if the numbers are cut out of a sheet of paper and layered. The '9' is on the left and the '5' is on the right.

Micropreneurs 2.0

Americans are reassessing their work lives, driving an unprecedented wave of resignations and career pivots.

Toward the end of 2021, a record number of Americans had left their jobs. In April that year, the number of workers who quit their jobs in a single month broke an all-time US record and the figure has climbed steadily since, with more than 4.4 million American workers quitting in September alone. According to Microsoft's global Work Trend Index, published in March 2021, 41% of people around the world were likely to consider leaving their jobs within the next year, rising to 54% of gen Z. The *Washington Post* dubbed the shift the "great reassessment of work."

So where are workers going? Many are leaving for higher-paying jobs, whether that's retail and service workers taking entry-level positions or mid-career professionals switching jobs. As of December 2020, resignations among managers were 12% higher than the previous year, according to workforce analytics company Visier.

Others are pursuing passions or side hustles full-time. Microsoft's research revealed that 46% of people were planning to make a major career pivot or transition. And British workers are going freelance in droves. April 2021 data from freelancer platform PeoplePerHour found that almost one in five freelancers had become self-employed as a side hustle alongside an employee position, and nearly two-fifths of those began freelancing in the past 12 months.



Jake Kenyon decided to turn Kenyarn, his Providence, RI-based hand-dyed-yarn side hustle, into a full-time career in January 2021, after quitting his job as a speech pathologist.

The pattern follows a nascent trend that first grew legs in the initial months of the pandemic in 2020, with workers quitting their desk jobs to pursue passion projects full-time. Now the trend has snowballed into a nationwide reassessment of work that is precipitating the next era of employment.

Why it's interesting

If 2020 had consumers reassessing their lives and values, 2022 and beyond will see them taking action to bring their work more in line with these values. Employees are scrutinizing what they want from a career and a workplace, potentially bringing about the “end of the workplace as we know it,” according to *Business Insider*.





The shecovery

To combat the shecession, global workplaces are stepping up initiatives that optimize the workplace for women.

The shecession saw women worldwide drop out of the workforce in significant numbers; a loss which has not yet been reversed. Now a host of industries, from financial services to hospitality, are also facing an unprecedented battle for talent. Workplaces that optimize for women will build relevance, not to mention significant competitive advantage. So, one year on, what are workplaces doing to build the shecovery?

The biggest transition, of course, is the shift to flexible working, adopted by businesses from Spotify to Facebook to American Express. Flexible options are appealing for women juggling work and home life, though some commentators, including Bank of England economist Catherine Mann, have warned of work-from-home stigma that could ultimately end up costing women if men don't take up remote work in equal numbers.

Looking ahead, normalizing flexible work options in company culture will be imperative to mitigate inequity. To that end, British construction firm Multiplex introduced a new formal flexible working policy in October 2021 aimed at making its workplace more attractive for women. The Multiplex Flex initiative



Workplaces that optimize for women will build relevance, not to mention significant competitive advantage.

offers a range of options including four-day weeks, remote working, and time off in lieu of overtime pay. PwC is also committed to ensuring remote workers don't lose out. The Big Four accounting firm announced in fall 2021 that not only is it embracing permanent remote work, it also pledges to monitor raises, pay and bonuses for remote staff compared to their office-based counterparts, and act wherever it sees a lag.

Women who remained in the workforce throughout the pandemic have faced a different challenge. The "Women in the Workplace 2021" report from McKinsey & Co and LeanIn.org found the gap between women and men who report feeling burned out has doubled since 2020. The survey of 65,000 workers in North America also reports that one in three women has thought about downsizing her career or leaving work altogether, compared to one in four earlier in the pandemic.

The report also notes that female leaders spend more time on employee wellbeing, but such efforts are often overlooked. Further, while women are statistically more likely to devote time to diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives than their male equivalents, less than a quarter of companies surveyed formally recognize this work. Bucking that trend is LinkedIn, which has pledged to pay the chairs of its employee resource groups \$10,000 annually, as well as developing a non-financial rewards system to recognize contributions. This follows a similar commitment by Twitter in 2020.

Why it's interesting

The secession is likely to affect businesses for years to come, highlighting the urgent need for employers to act now. Those companies that choose to adopt policies that value the work of women and caregivers as well as employee wellbeing will be best placed to weather the storm.



Gen Z workforce

Brands refocus their recruitment strategies to attract gen Z employees for the long term.

Fashion brands are turning their recruitment efforts to younger pools of applicants, looking to diversify their talent pipeline and maintain entry-level applicants for long-term employment.

In September 2021, French luxury brand LVMH announced its plan to recruit 25,000 employees under 30 by the end of 2022. The brand's gen Z hiring binge indicates a focus on young, global talent and a desire to broaden and diversify recruitment across the company. LVMH also emphasized a desire to recruit for the long term, and from a wider pool of applicants, not only those from prestigious universities or affluent families.

Clothing brand Hollister announced the appointment of its first chief gaming scout in October 2021. Kyle "Bugha" Giersdorf, 18, the *Fortnite* world champion with an impressive 4.9 million Twitch followers as of November 2021, is designing gamer-inspired clothing, catapulting the surf and beach brand into a new space. Bugha will also lead Team Hollister, a new division aimed at developing up-and-coming streamers, placing the brand in the center of the gaming universe and attracting a new wave of teens to its products.

Why it's interesting

Gen Z's youthful market insight is in demand. Hiring young recruits for long-term positions benefits brand recruitment efforts while also satisfying gen Z and millennial desire for adequate training and career advancement. A focus on long-term success from brands is attracting high-caliber applicants early in their careers.



+ WUNDERMAN THOMPSON Hollister appointed Fortnite World Cup champion Kyle "Bugha" Giersdorf as its first chief gaming scout



The great reskill

Reinvention is the name of the game for
the next generation of employees.



Business is changing—and required employee skillsets are changing with it. As the digital revolution races on, brands are realizing that the fastest and most effective way to keep pace is to upskill their existing workforce. Where specialized college or graduate degrees may once have been a prerequisite, companies are now encouraging employees to learn as they go.

Rachel Carlson, cofounder and CEO of Guild Education, predicts that this will give rise to a new formula for education—one that may even supplant a college degree. Carlson told the *Masters of Scale* podcast that the “four and 40,” which previously saw the majority of employees go to school for four years, then work for 40, is “dead” and supplanted by a new model. “What’s now is the every four,” said Carlson. “You’re going to have to learn some sort of new skill every four years.”

Levi Strauss & Co announced a new company-wide digital upskilling initiative for its employees in May 2021. The keystone of the initiative is the Machine Learning Bootcamp, an eight-week, full-time, paid program that offers employees training in digital skills such as coding and machine learning. Graduates of the bootcamp will either return to their current job with new skills or will join the company's strategy and AI team.

Verizon invested over \$200 million in employee learning and development programs in 2020, offering training in topics like data science, 5G technology and artificial intelligence. By the end of 2021, Verizon had equipped 100,000 employees with digital skills "to ensure team members are ready to keep pace with ever-changing demands of building the future."

Walmart employees can earn a high school or college degree for \$365 (or \$1 per day for a year), through a partnership with Guild Education. From April 2020 to April 2021, Walmart said the program saw a 93% spike in both high school and college graduates.

Why it's interesting

Traditional career trajectories are being reinvented, replacing specialized degrees with practical education and on-site reskilling.





The nomad economy

As the world awakens to the possibilities of working remotely, a new economy is springing up to cater to digital nomads.

The days when work was done solely at the office already seem like history. Pandemic-induced lockdowns forced companies around the world into arrangements that broke traditional working habits. With this came a surge of remote workers, some of whom became digital nomads for the first time, choosing to work in new cities, states, or even new countries.

Unfortunately for these digital nomads, social safety nets such as health insurance have historically only been available within their home countries and are therefore off limits to those working across borders and in different jurisdictions.

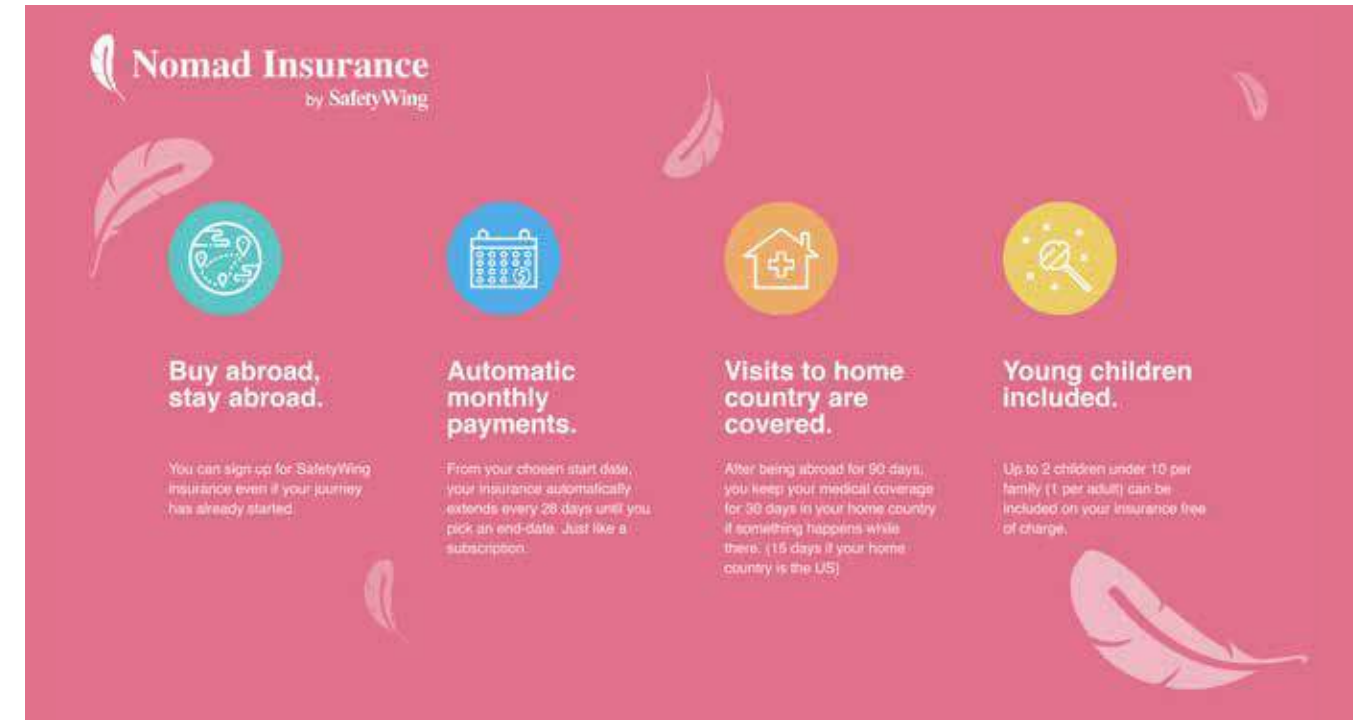
Now, in response to their growing numbers, a new economy is emerging that caters to these administrative, financial and logistical needs.

Insurer SafetyWing offers cover for remote workers regardless of location. Having fortuitously launched in early 2020, the company's Nomad Insurance covers remote workers in the event of unforeseen health problems or travel complications. After raising \$8 million in 2021, SafetyWing is looking to launch additional products that offer access to remote doctors and remote pensions.

Also looking to provide peace of mind to global citizens, Insured Nomads is a US-based insurtech company that provides coverage for everything from medications to cybersecurity to telehealth appointments. Having launched just before the pandemic, the company has added new offerings that address the ever-changing needs of global workers. In April 2021, the brand launched new



A new economy is emerging that caters to digital nomads' administrative, financial and logistical needs.



mental health counseling services alongside other benefits such as 24/7 emergency evacuation assistance.

Self-storage solutions for nomadic workers are also on the rise. Launched at the end of 2020, Stuf is a startup that transforms unused basements and similar spaces into self-storage locations. Unlike traditional warehouse storage facilities that tend to be located on the outskirts of cities, the company identifies smaller inner-city footprint spaces that are more convenient for those with transient lifestyles who want to access their items more frequently. The startup currently has four locations across Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Washington DC and New York, with a further 4,000 locations in the works for 2022.

Why it's interesting

The future of work is borderless. As ingenious companies step up to iron out the complications that accompany a transient lifestyle, digital nomads will continue to grow in numbers and financial clout.



Metaverse recruits

From virtual material designers to creatives across the board, companies are hiring for a metaverse workforce.

The metaverse virtually recreates pretty much all aspects of life, and recruitment is no different. “In the coming years, companies of all kinds are increasingly going to be re-orienting towards a hybrid model of virtual and physical work, production, commerce and communications,” Grant Paterson, head of gaming and esports at Wunderman Thompson, explains. “The dual forces of converging technologies and emerging consumer behaviors in virtual places makes the cultivation of a ‘virtual pillar’ critical for many, if not all, businesses.”

Nike filed seven trademark applications in October 2021; they include use of “downloadable virtual goods” and “retail store services featuring virtual goods.” In the same month, the company started recruiting virtual material designers to sit within its digital product creation team. The job spec describes the role as helping to “build the future of Nike Footwear materials” and ignite “the digital and virtual revolution at Nike.”

In November 2021, British television broadcaster ITV posted a position for a metaverse creative within its new Metavision initiative, which “looks to combine the worlds of gaming, entertainment and advertising.” The role involves creating metaverse brand activations from concept stage to execution.

“Is it time to hire a chief metaverse officer?” *Vogue Business* mused in an October 2021 article that noted the rise in augmented retail, virtual venues and digital possessions. Partnering with external tech and games companies has been the trend of the past year; now brands are seeking out talent of their own to accelerate the technological offerings of the metaverse.

Why it's interesting

Remember when social media became mainstream and companies scrambled to hire social media leads? Recruiting talent to help build offerings around the metaverse will be reminiscent of that hurry to hire, and maybe even more urgent.



ABOUT WUNDERMAN THOMPSON INTELLIGENCE

Wunderman Thompson Intelligence is Wunderman Thompson’s futurism, research and innovation unit. It charts emerging and future global trends, consumer change, and innovation patterns—translating these into insight for brands. It offers a suite of consultancy services, including bespoke research, presentations, co-branded reports and workshops. It is also active in innovation, partnering with brands to activate future trends within their framework and execute new products and concepts. The division is led by Emma Chiu and Marie Stafford, Global Directors of Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

For more information visit:

wundermanthompson.com/expertise/intelligence

About The Future 100

Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s annual forecast presents a snapshot of the year ahead and identifies the most compelling trends to keep on the radar. The report charts 100 trends across 10 sectors, spanning culture, tech and innovation, travel and hospitality, brands and marketing, food and drink, beauty, retail and commerce, luxury, health and work.



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