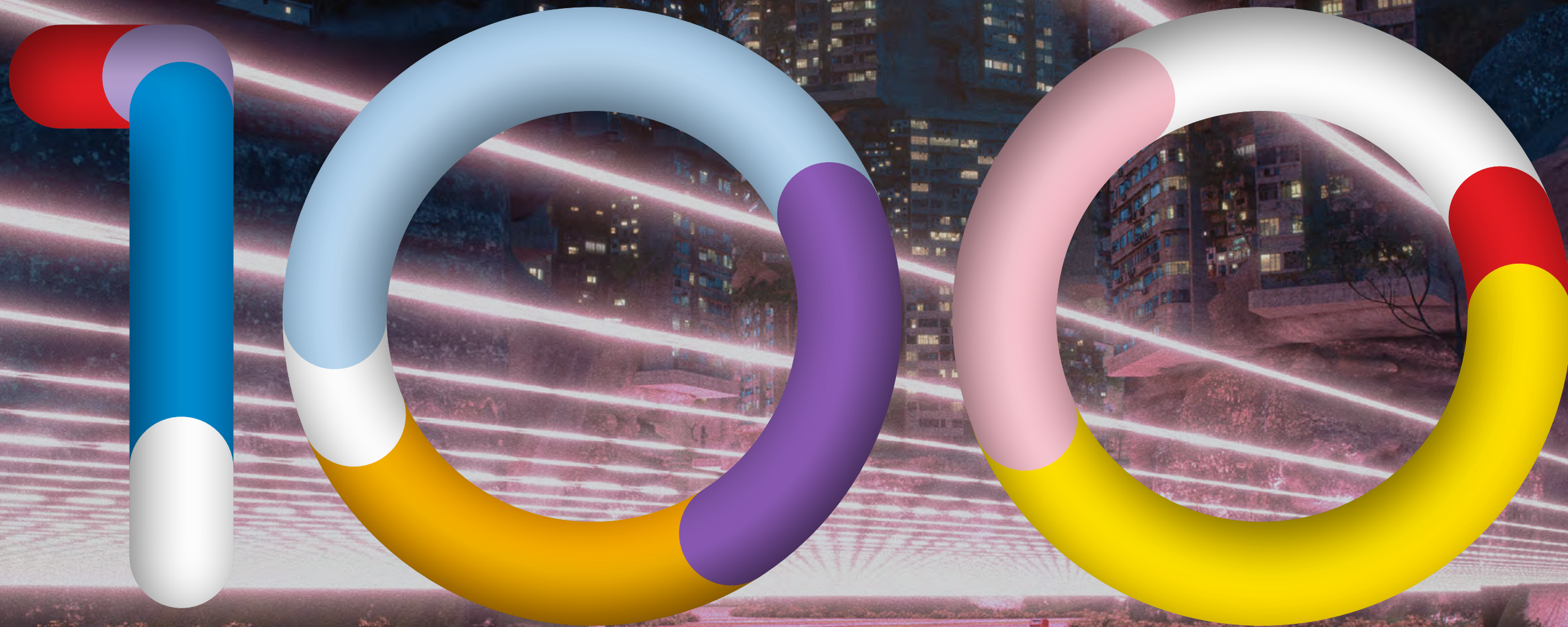


# THE FUTURE



Trends and change to watch in 2023

+ WUNDERMAN  
THOMPSON

A REPORT BY WUNDERMAN THOMPSON INTELLIGENCE

# FOREWORD

**Community, creativity, and color vibrantly paint 2023, as last year's unbounded optimism shifts to an exuberant need for uplift and play.**

All signs should point towards a bleak and chaotic year as a rocky economy, political instability, and environmental deterioration persist. However, people are determined to show resilience, innovation, and joy in the face of continued hardship. Pantone's bright choice for its Color of the Year 2023, Viva Magenta, captures the spritely sentiment: it's "an unconventional shade for an unconventional time," the brand says (page 18). A joyconomy is in motion this year, with brands offering uninhibited play for all ages (Ageless play, page 91) and exercise classes that mimic the feeling of tossing confetti (Joy workout, page 186)—sign us up, please (with arms waving profusely).

The stress of the past years has put an emphasis on optimizing both the mind and body to empower an elevated self (The Superself, page 182). Businesses are increasingly leading with emotional intelligence and making mental health a priority in their brand mission (see Psychodermatology, page 119, and Psychobiotics, page 184). A holistic approach to health is evident across all categories as people expect to positively enhance their wellbeing at every touchpoint, suggesting that every brand needs to be a health brand.

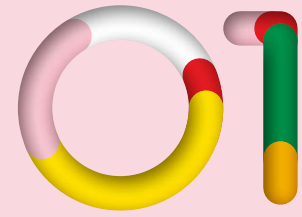
The lightning pace of technology sees the evolution from building to living the metaverse. Every aspect of life is being explored in the metaverse—from our digital identities (page 32) to the prospect of virtual families (Virtual nurturers, page 22) to constructing virtual homes (Digital nesting, page 154). More importantly, the metaverse is opening the door to a 3.0 future as a decentralized era slowly takes shape in the form of Web3. Communities, creators, and brands are invited to form a democratic internet that truly belongs to everyone, introducing new formulas for everything from ownership (New ownership, page 13) to community engagement (Crypto clubs, page 160) to retail (Cocreative commerce, page 141).

In addition, people are demanding that brands use their influence to better society by putting accessibility and inclusion at the fore. Eighty-six percent of global respondents believe that to support a disadvantaged group, brands need to work with them, not just for them. Various brands are already encouraging diverse voices (Amplifying diverse creators, page 84) and more businesses are introducing inclusive products to the mainstream (Mass inclusive brands, page 89).

Get ready for 100 bitesize trends that offer a splash of color, inspiration, and an insightful glimpse into the unfolding year.

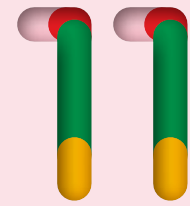
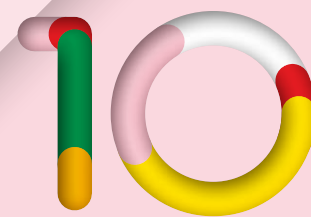


Emma Chiu  
Global Director, Wunderman Thompson Intelligence  
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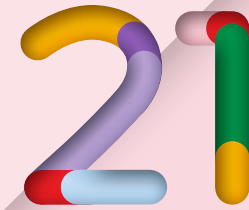
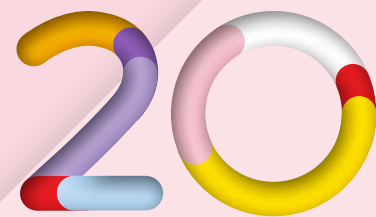
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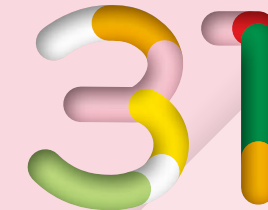
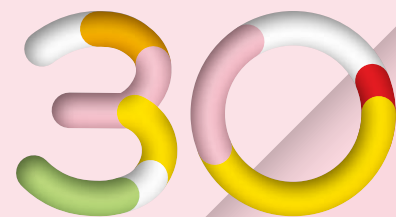
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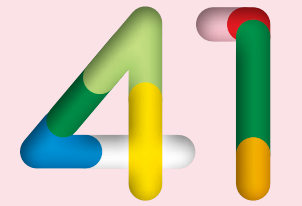
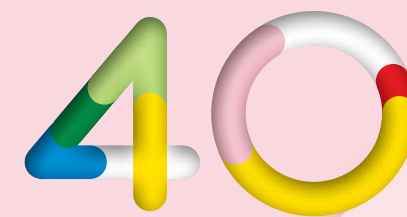
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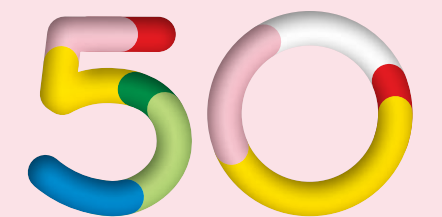
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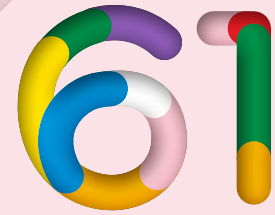
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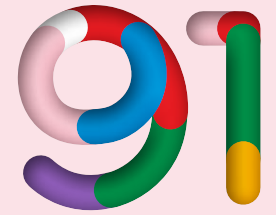
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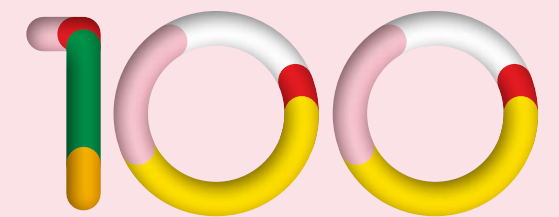
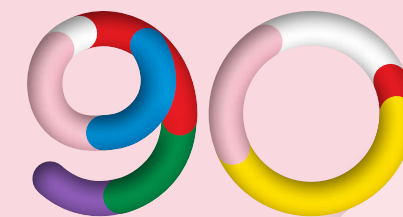
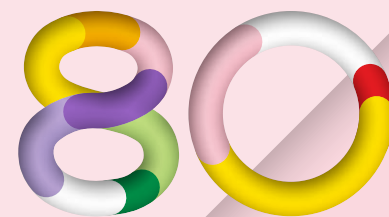
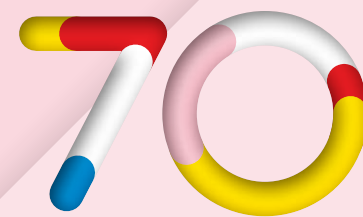
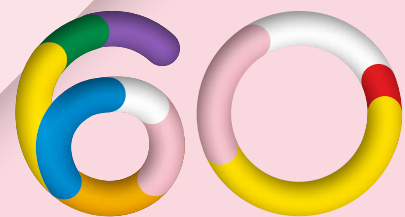
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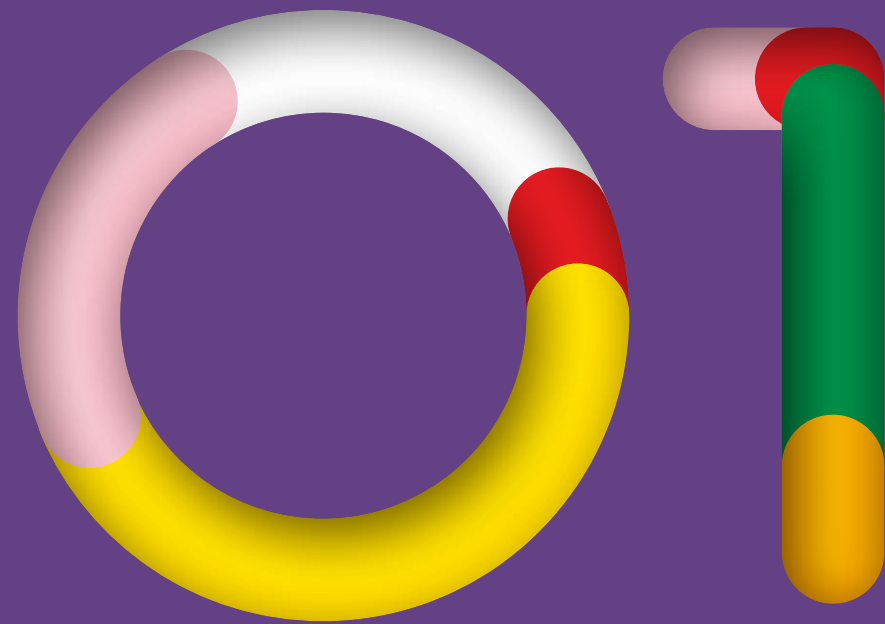
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**CULTURE**

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# NEW REALITIES

The metaverse evolves.



As metaverse activations continue to advance, the way we think about emerging technologies is becoming much more nuanced and engrained in the everyday—shaping a new reality where physical and virtual living are indistinguishable.

DoorLabs is using technology to advance accessibility in virtual worlds. The company is exploring how to use “new immersion technology in the metaverse to better help and better equip people with different needs in the future,” DoorLabs cofounder Kunho Kim tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

Speculative architect and director Liam Young is leveraging virtual reality (VR) to inspire activism. “It changes us from being a passive audience into an active citizen. To be a citizen of an immersive world is a different kind of relationship than being an audience member in front of a screen,” Young tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

Apple CEO Tim Cook predicts that augmented reality (AR) will become an integral part of daily life. “Zoom out to the future and look back, you’ll wonder how you led your life without augmented reality. Just like today, we wonder: ‘How did people like me grow up without the internet?’” Cook told Dutch publication *Bright*. “AR is a profound technology that will affect everything.”

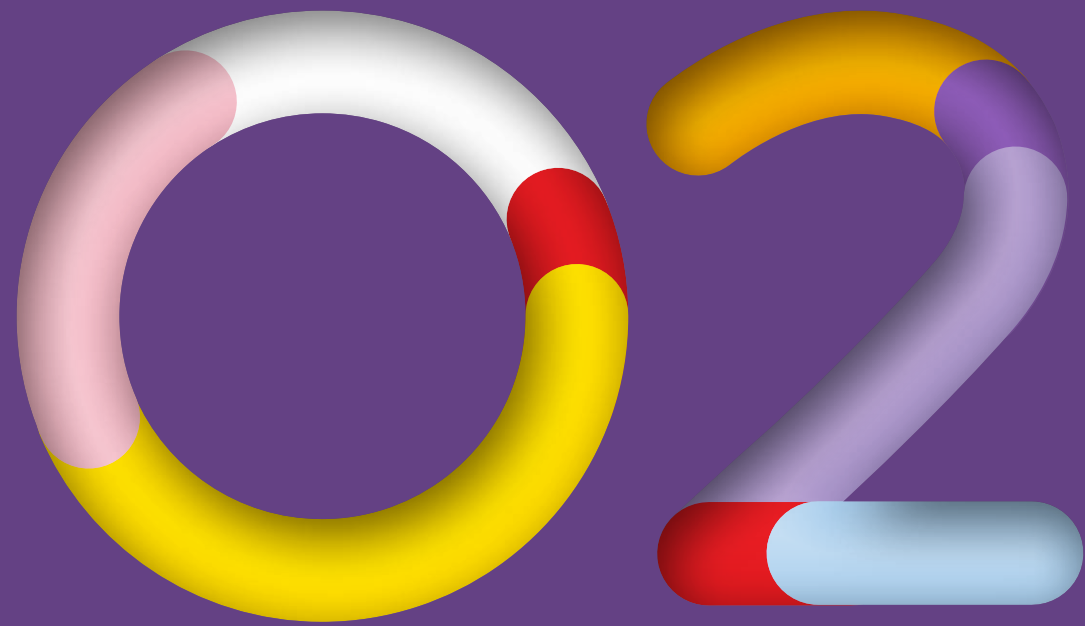
Leading tech brands are investing heavily in AR and VR, preparing for the coming reign of immersive technologies. Between 2019 and September 30, 2022, Meta shoveled \$36 billion into Reality Labs, its metaverse and VR



division, according to *Business Insider*. Analyst Gene Munster of Loup Funds estimates Google’s R&D spending on AR at around \$39 billion. Snap is going all in on AR—the company listed investing in AR as one of its top three strategic priorities in its 2022 third quarter financial results report.

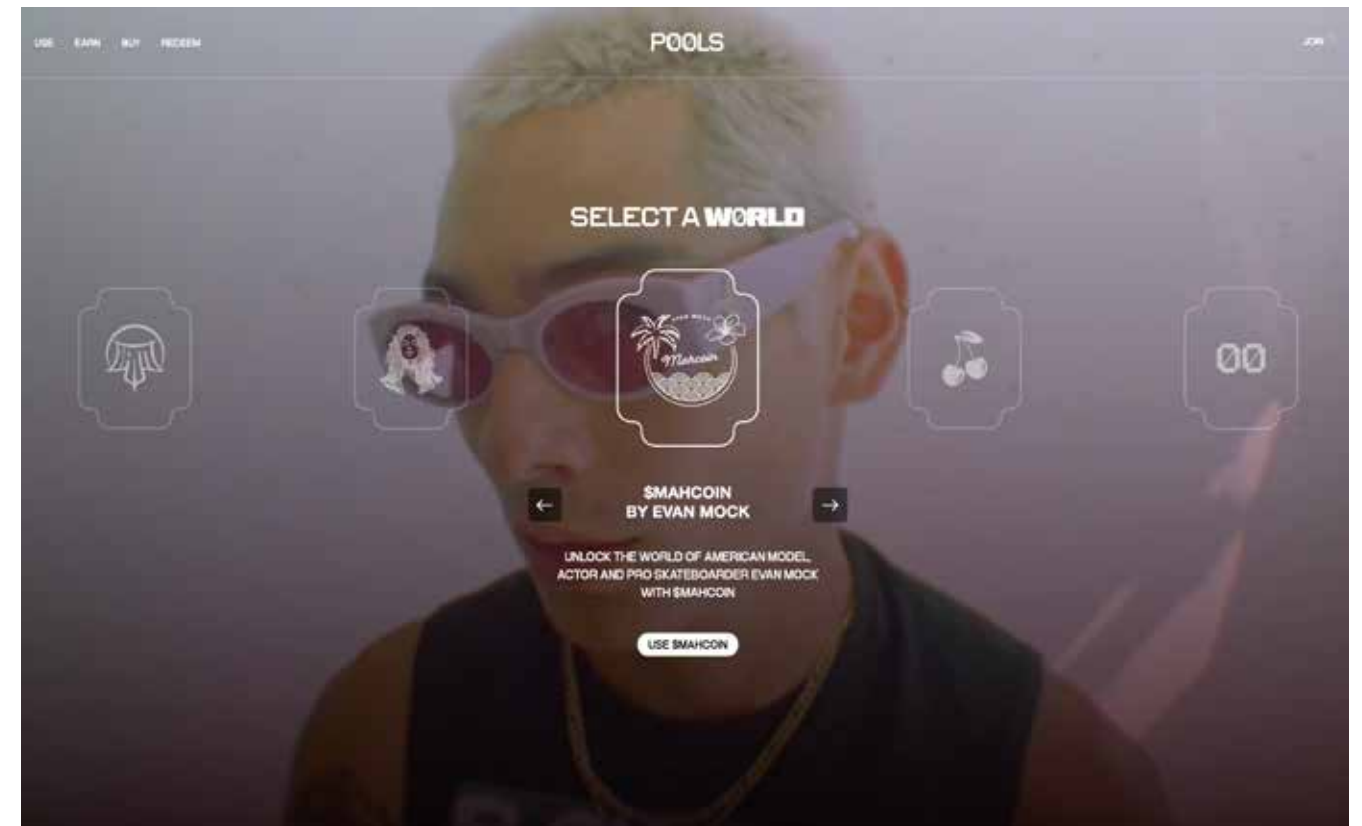
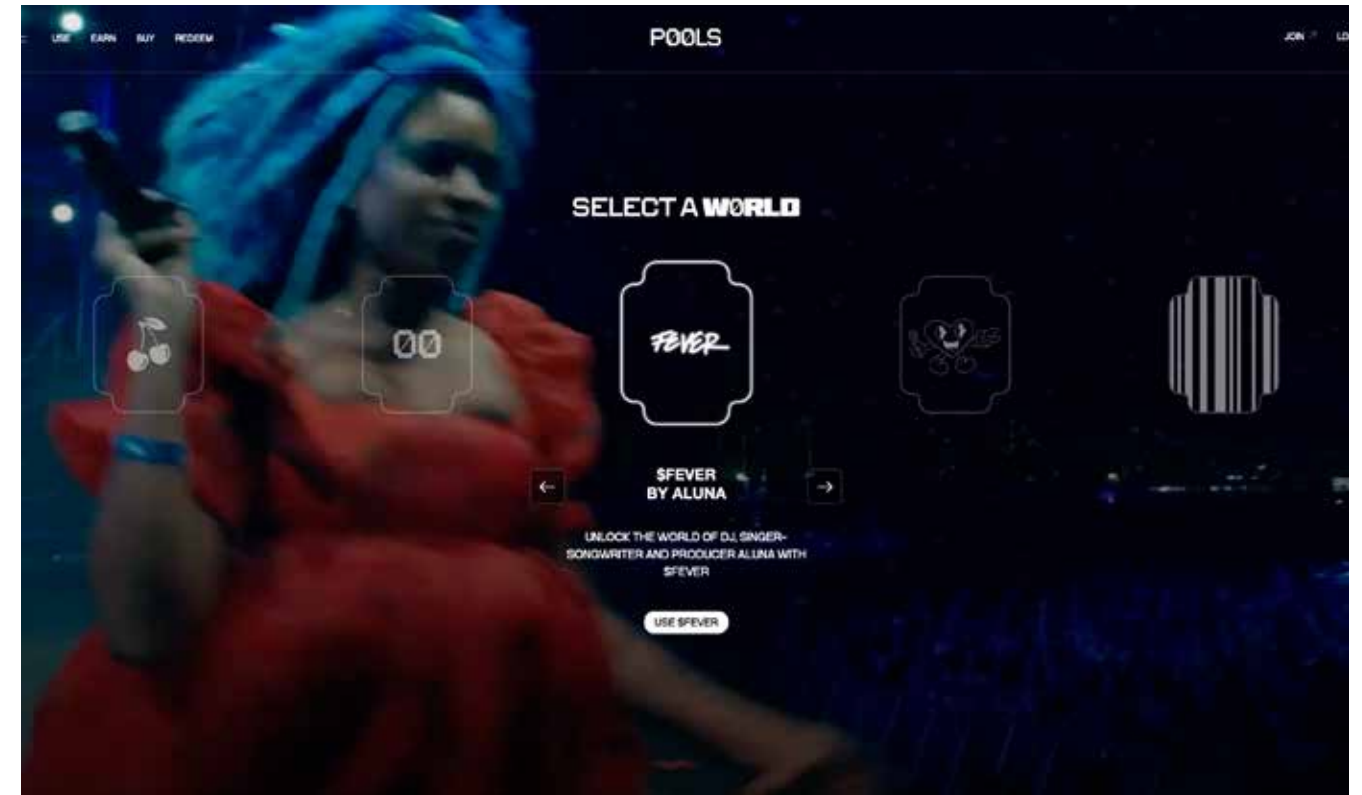
### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

The next era of digital engagement will see a diversification of immersive technologies and further blurring of the digital and the physical—ushering in a new reality.



# CREATOR COMMUNITIES

The next generation of digital communities centers around creativity.



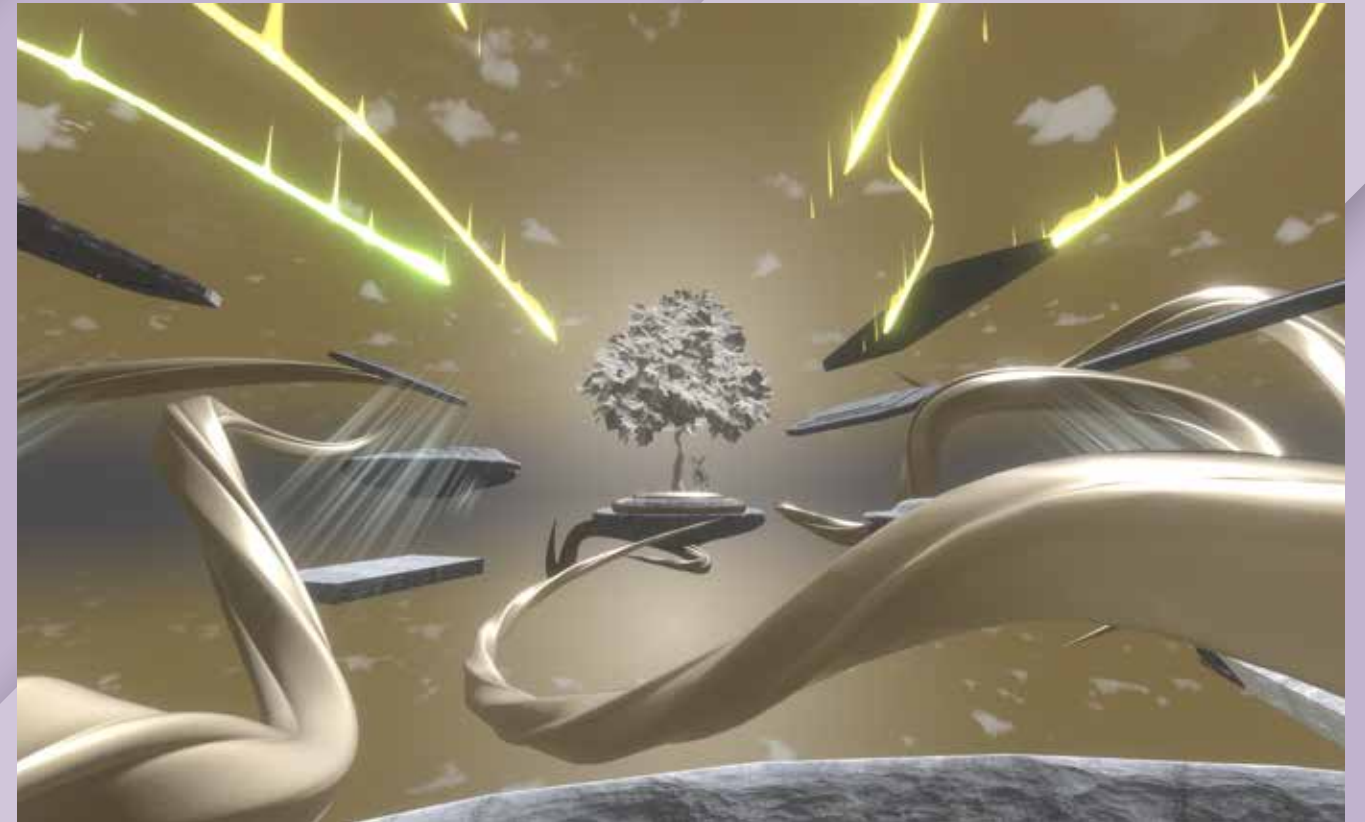


Pools is a creator community that equips creatives and brands with tools to build their own cryptocurrency-enabled communities. “Pools has the power to revolutionize how we view and value creators,” supermodel Coco Rocha, who invested in Pools, told *Paper* magazine. In October 2022, the company launched Creator Worlds, a landing pad for each creator’s digital ecosystem.

Pools partnered with YSL Beauté in June 2022 to launch creator tokens from musicians Agathe Mougins and Kittens. The tokens grant holders access to the respective artists’ Pools communities, where users can unlock bespoke content and experiences, VIP tickets to events, and access to podcasts. Token holders also have privileged access to YSL Beauté’s Web3 hub.

“Traditional spheres of influence—from Hollywood to Wall Street and Silicon Valley—are converging more now than ever before, forming a new marketplace with creators and their audiences at the center,” Pools states, pointing to social tokens as “a new way for creators to engage directly with their fans through access to real life and metaverse experiences, products, and activities.”

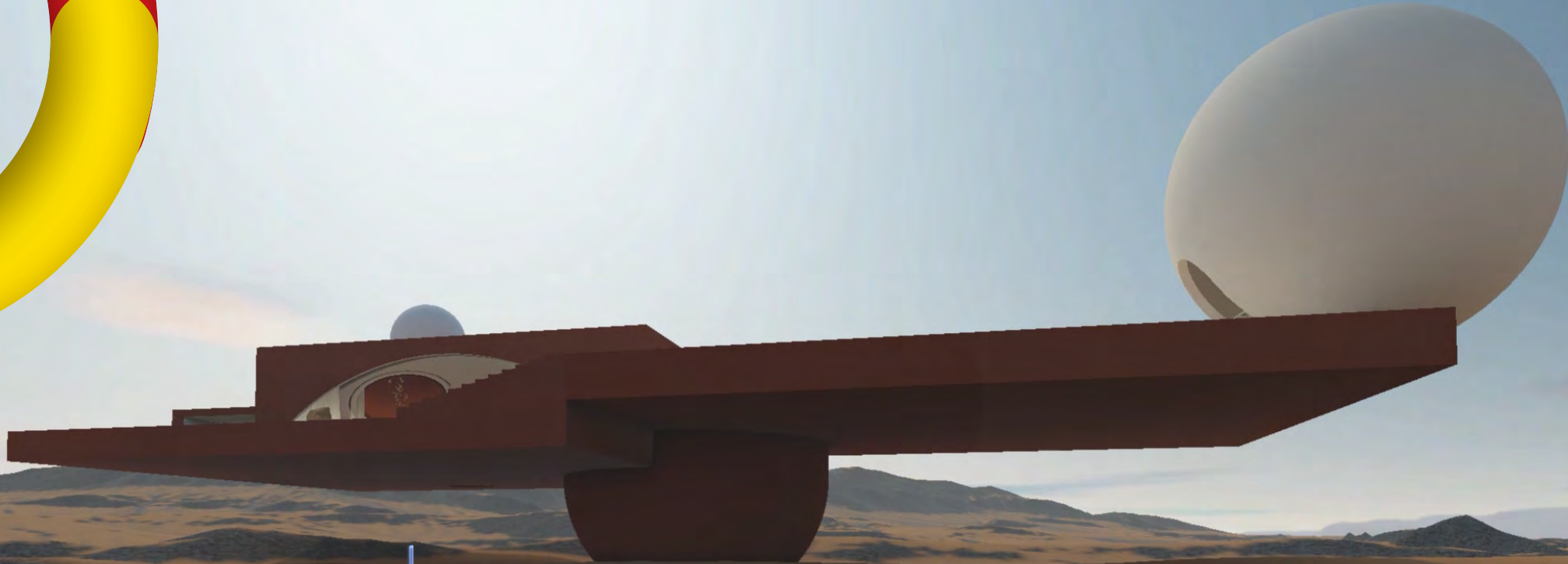
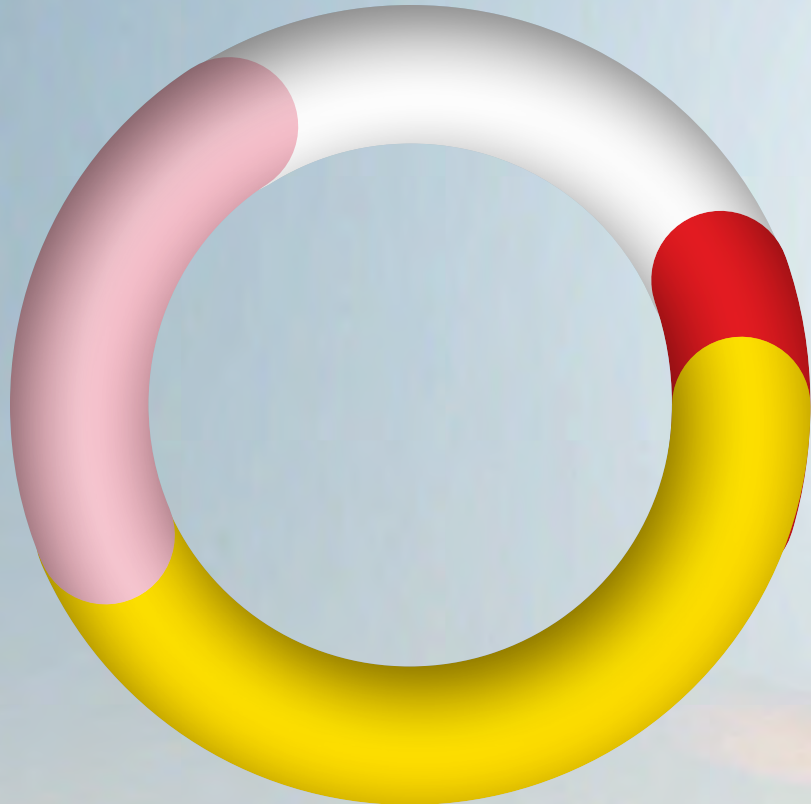
Mona is another platform facilitating creator communities. In June 2022, Mona raised nearly \$15 million to build a metaverse platform for creators. “Mona is a Web3 metaverse, world-building platform and network built for creators by creators,” Justin Melillo, CEO of Mona, told *GamesBeat*. Melillo started Mona in order to “place the emphasis on the creator” with a mission “to make the metaverse a social network where creators can thrive.” In July 2022, the company hosted the launch of The Row, a members-only virtual community featuring architectural designs by acclaimed creatives.

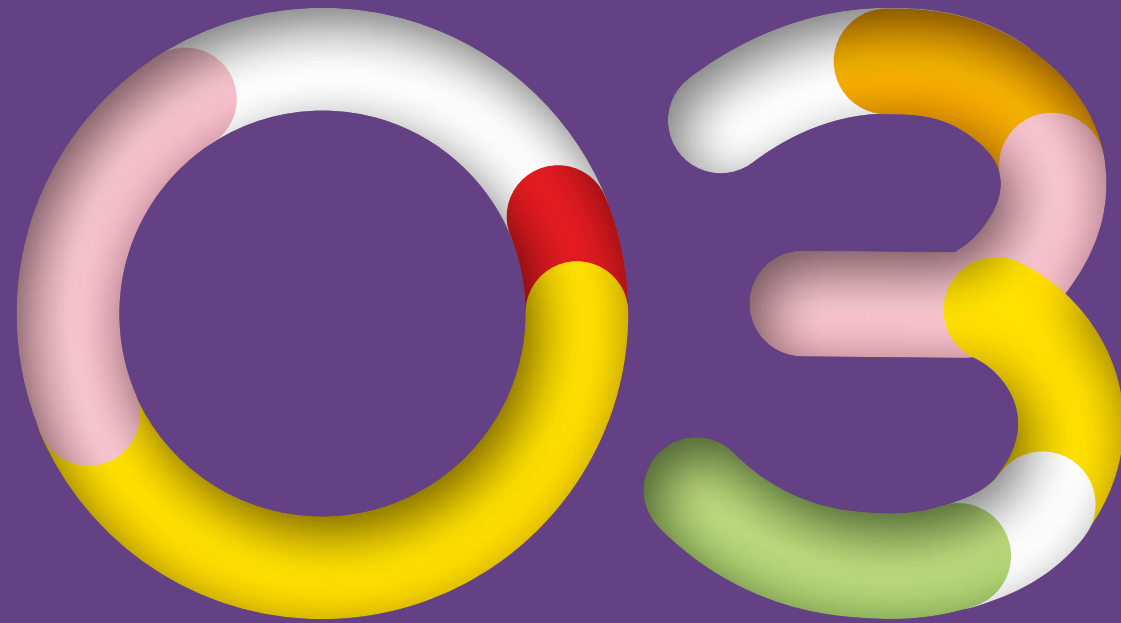


Adobe is facilitating creativity in the metaverse. At its Adobe Max conference in October 2022, the company announced new collaboration and artificial intelligence-powered features for its Creative Cloud applications. “We’re doubling down on collaboration,” said David Wadhvani, president of Adobe’s digital media business. “Creativity is increasingly a team sport, whether you’re collaborating with other creators or asking for feedback from stakeholders.”

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

“We see creators and developers as the backbone for the metaverse,” Melillo says. As digital engagement moves from passive consumption to active creation (for more on this shift, see our “New Realities: Into the Metaverse and Beyond” report), the role of brands is evolving. Creativity is becoming the new status symbol for the next digital era—and brands are transforming their offerings to connect consumers and creatives.





# REWILDED MINDS

Is it possible to “rewild” ourselves?

Is it possible to rewild the way we think and act? The BBC posed the question in a May 2022 article; Lindsay Baker writes that “we can all find this sense of wonder and meaning in nature. Not only in our connection with it, but in the sense of hope and renewal it seems to offer us.”

Gamers are embracing environmentally minded video games that encourage regenerative practices. *Terra Nil*, for example, set to launch in early 2023, will instruct players to reconstruct an ecosystem in the aftermath of a devastating climate crisis event. The concept of the game, which is reminiscent of SimCity’s urban-development model, flips the concept to prioritize the environment above skyscrapers and urban infrastructure. *Terra Nil* players will need to restore nature rather than exploit resources to build their city.

According to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s “New Realities: Into the Metaverse and Beyond” report, 81% of global consumers say they “switch on” to unwind. As gamers turn to their screens and consoles to mentally decompress, they’re turning to nature-focused campaigns, rewilding their time-off entertainment of choice.

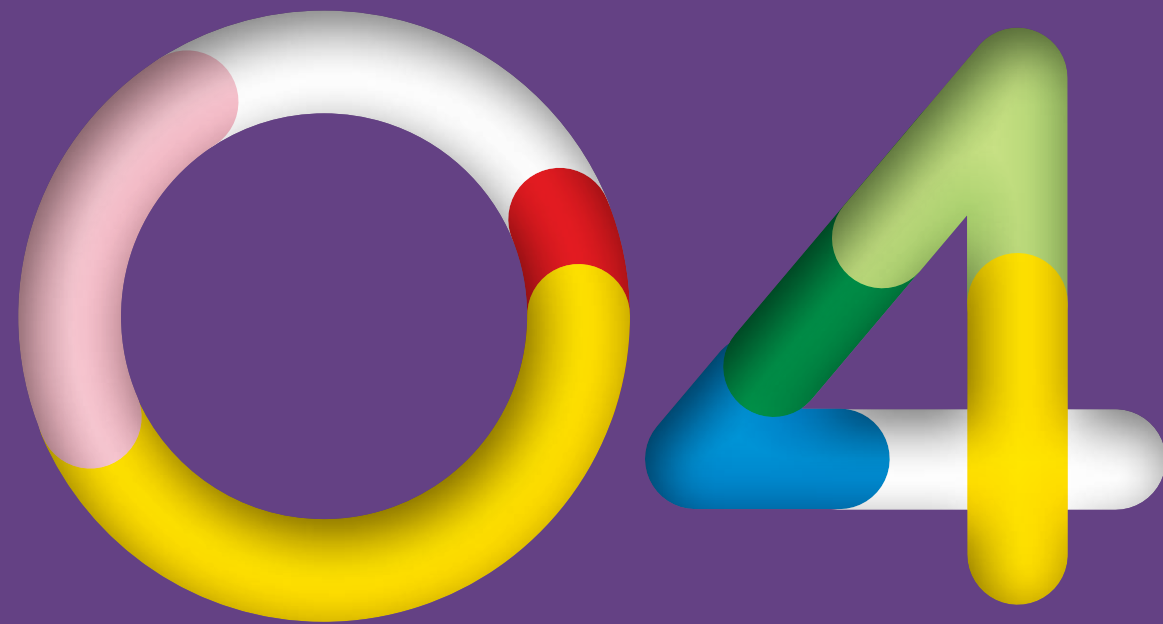
LL Bean encouraged its audience to replace shopping with ecotherapy in May 2022. The brand replaced its Instagram grid with a “gone fishing” layout and redirected its social media links to the website’s landing page, which hosted a message to encourage its shoppers and social media followers to lean into nature for a wellness refresh.

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Conscious consumers are following nature-minded brands into an age of rewilding and sustainability, reconsidering their habits and habitats as they continue to prioritize their mental health and sustainable lifestyles.



Is it possible to  
rewild the way we  
think and act?



# NEXT-GEN OWNERSHIP

An emerging digital framework is introducing a new formula for ownership.

In the coming digital era of Web3, users will not only coauthor but co-own their digital experience.

In the past, if a user created something and posted it on Instagram, Instagram would own that asset. But platforms like Niche are putting control into people's hands. On Niche, the "members are owners," Niche cofounder and CEO Chris Gulczynski tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

"If you think about traditional social media, there is one company that controls everything and has all of the data locked away in their own servers," Zaven Nahapetyan, cofounder and CTO of Niche, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "What a decentralized social media platform does is distribute that data to other people. It democratizes it, meaning people have ownership and portability over their own data and content."

This adds another layer of value to the Niche user's experience, making people "owners in the same way that someone who has stock in a company is an owner," Nahapetyan says. "As their group becomes more desirable, more exclusive, or gets more media coverage, the value of their ownership stake could go up."

Flyfish Club is experimenting with NFT-based ownership. The members-only restaurant, set to open in 2023, will let members lease their NFTs—which function as membership cards—for temporary membership.

NFTs have "changed the value proposition to our members," David Rodolitz, founder and CEO of Flyfish Club, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "They own the membership rather than essentially renting a social experience. They own their access."

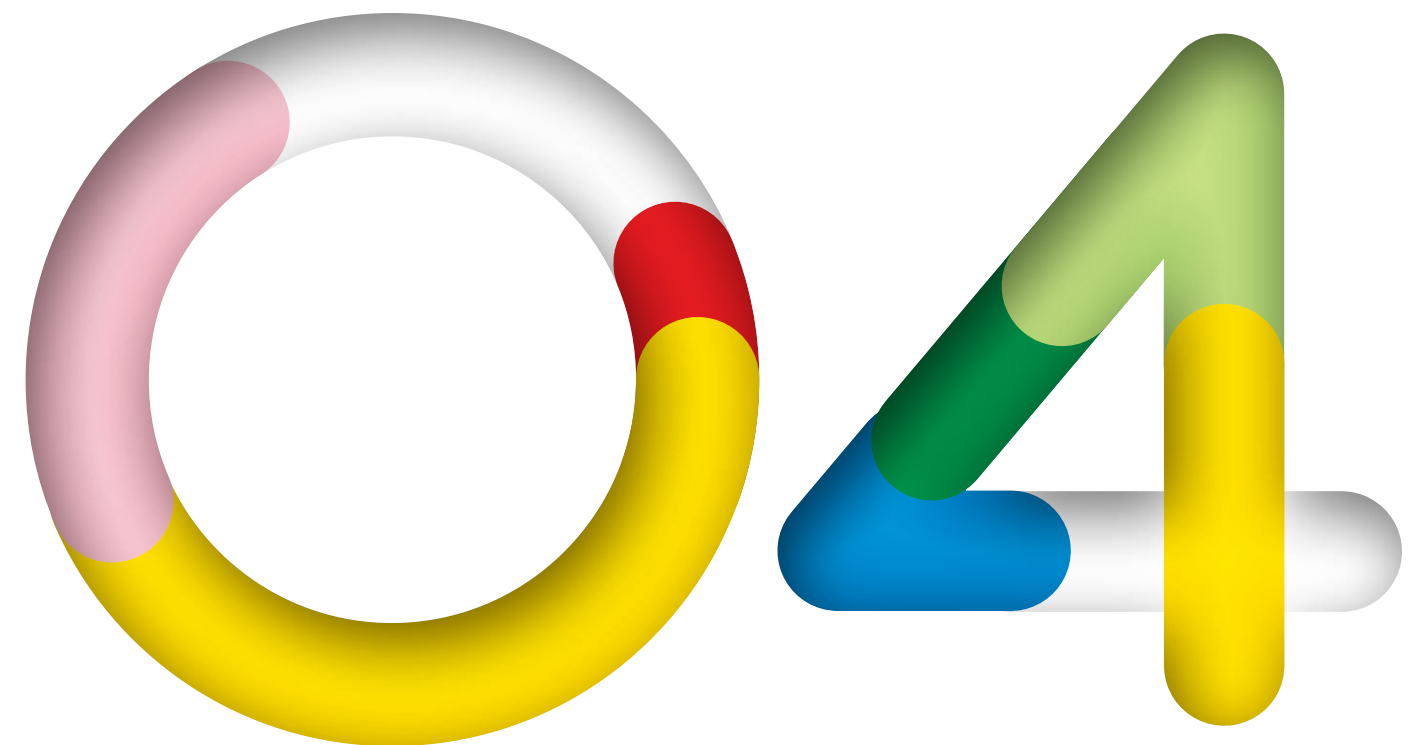
**“They own the membership rather than essentially renting a social experience. They own their access.”**

**David Rodolitz, founder  
and CEO, Flyfish Club**

NFTs—digital certificates of ownership—are also changing how users interact with digital media. As Gary Liu, founder and CEO of Artifact Labs, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, “the internet—Web1, Web2—has fundamentally broken the business model for news because information, once published on the internet, has zero intrinsic value.” But, he says, “NFT technologies change that calculus: NFTs allow digital media to have intrinsic value,” leading to “new business models, new direct relationships.”

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

A paradigm shift is under way. Decentralization is democratizing digital platforms—opening the door to new ownership models that will revolutionize the way brands and consumers interact with digital goods, services, and content.





# CLIMATE OPTIMISM

Gen Z are turning their climate anxiety  
into climate optimism.



A 2021 survey for Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s “Regeneration Rising” report finds that 66% of respondents express anxiety about how climate change will affect them personally, rising to 72% of generation Z. To combat their anxiety and climate change’s effects, gen Z are taking action.

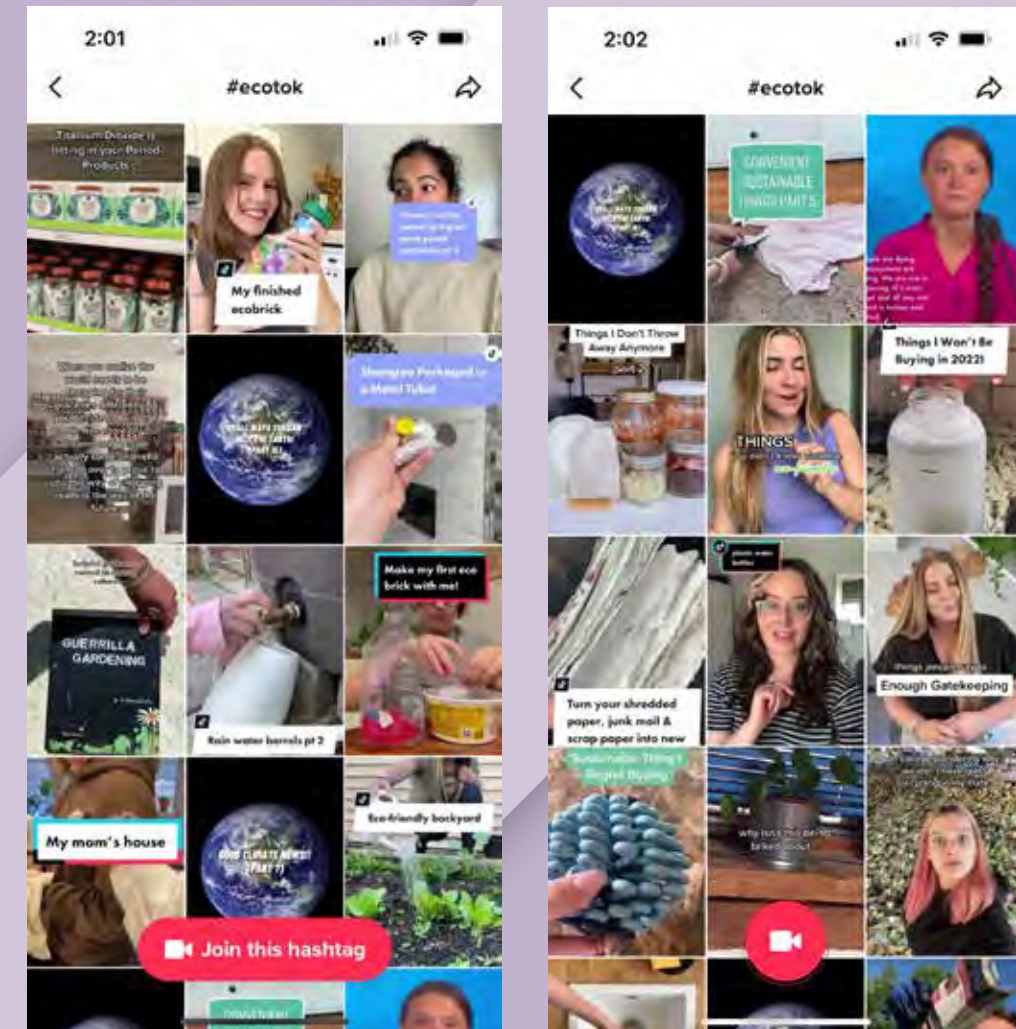
85% of those surveyed believe that people must be prepared to rethink the way they live and spend to tackle climate change, and 70% are prepared to make dramatic changes to their lifestyle if it will help tackle climate change.

In a *Guardian* series, several gen Zers were highlighted for their ecowork and positive attitudes towards making small steps to improve their communities.

In July 2022, environmentalist Zahra Biabani started In the Loop, the first sustainable fashion rental marketplace, as part of her mission to make sustainable and ethical brands accessible to her generation. Biabani, 23 years old at the time of the interview, told the *Guardian* that “climate optimism is just a framework for unlocking the full potentiality of climate solutions that we desperately need.” Thomas Lawrence, also 23 when he spoke to the *Guardian*, is the founder of Good People Inc, an ethical, value-driven sales platform that hopes to provide an alternative to the big players in online retail.

In Louisiana, Franziska Trautmann has founded Glass Half Full, the state’s sole glass recycling facility, which uses glass turned to sand to restore Louisiana’s eroding coastline. In Florida, Caulin Donaldson posts his daily beach-garbage pick-up to his TikTok followers, who numbered 1.7 million as of January 2023.

His positivity and love for the environment is contagious, and part of a major trend on the social media platform. As of mid-January 2023, #climatechange

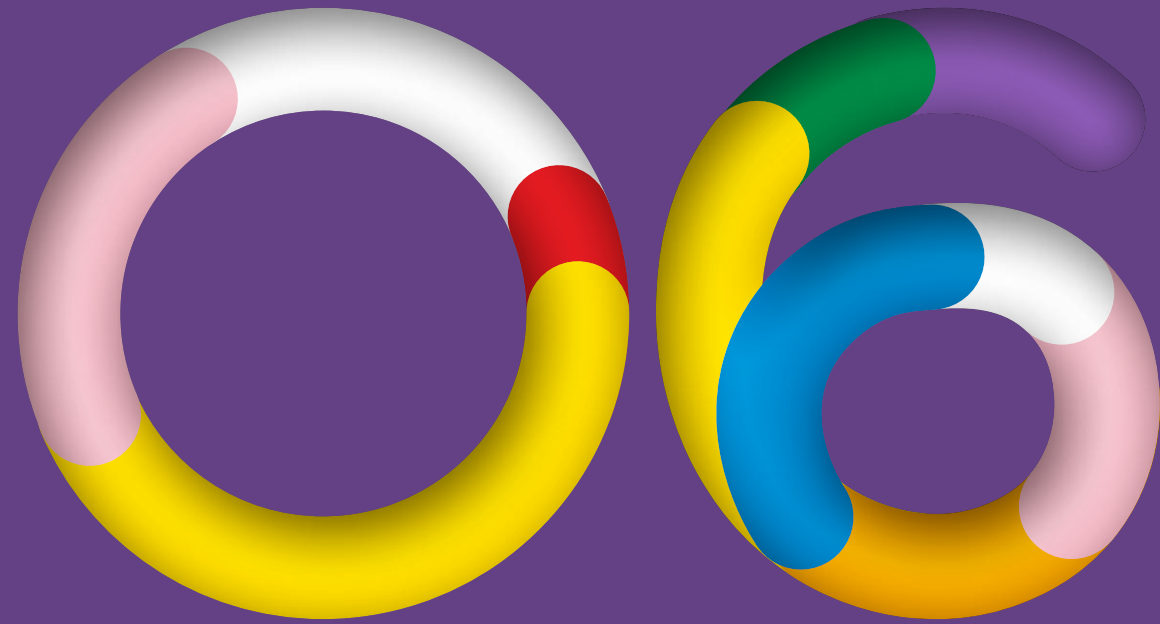


had 4.1 billion views, #eco had 2.3 billion, and #ecotok, a community of climate advocates on TikTok, had nearly 835 million views.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

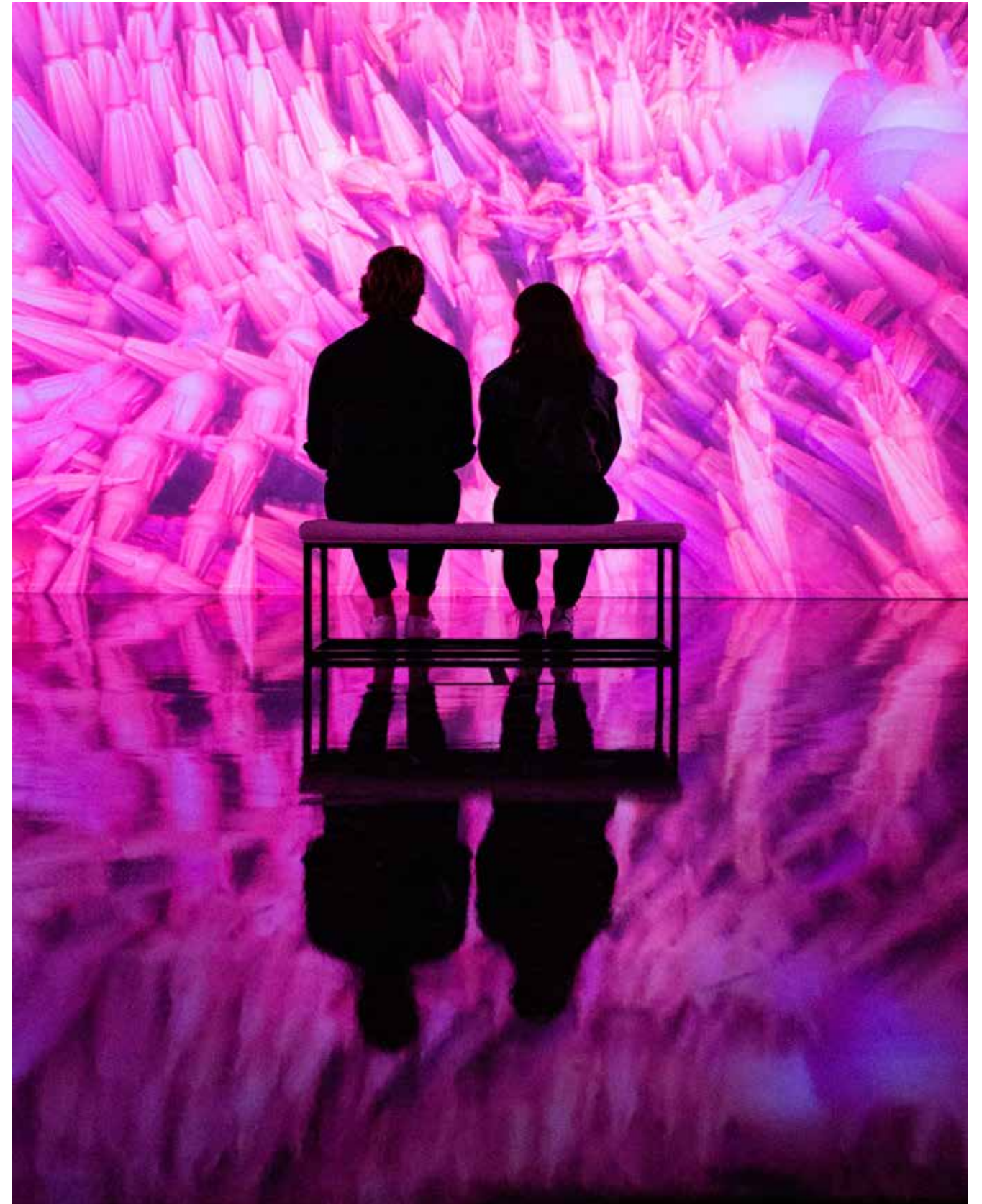
Gen Z are turning their climate anxiety into climate optimism by taking meaningful action. Brands will need to meet consumer optimism with an uplifting and empowering tone when addressing the climate crisis.





# ELEVATED EXPRESSIONISM

Vibrancy, strength, and uplift brighten  
2023, energizing self-expression  
and empowerment.

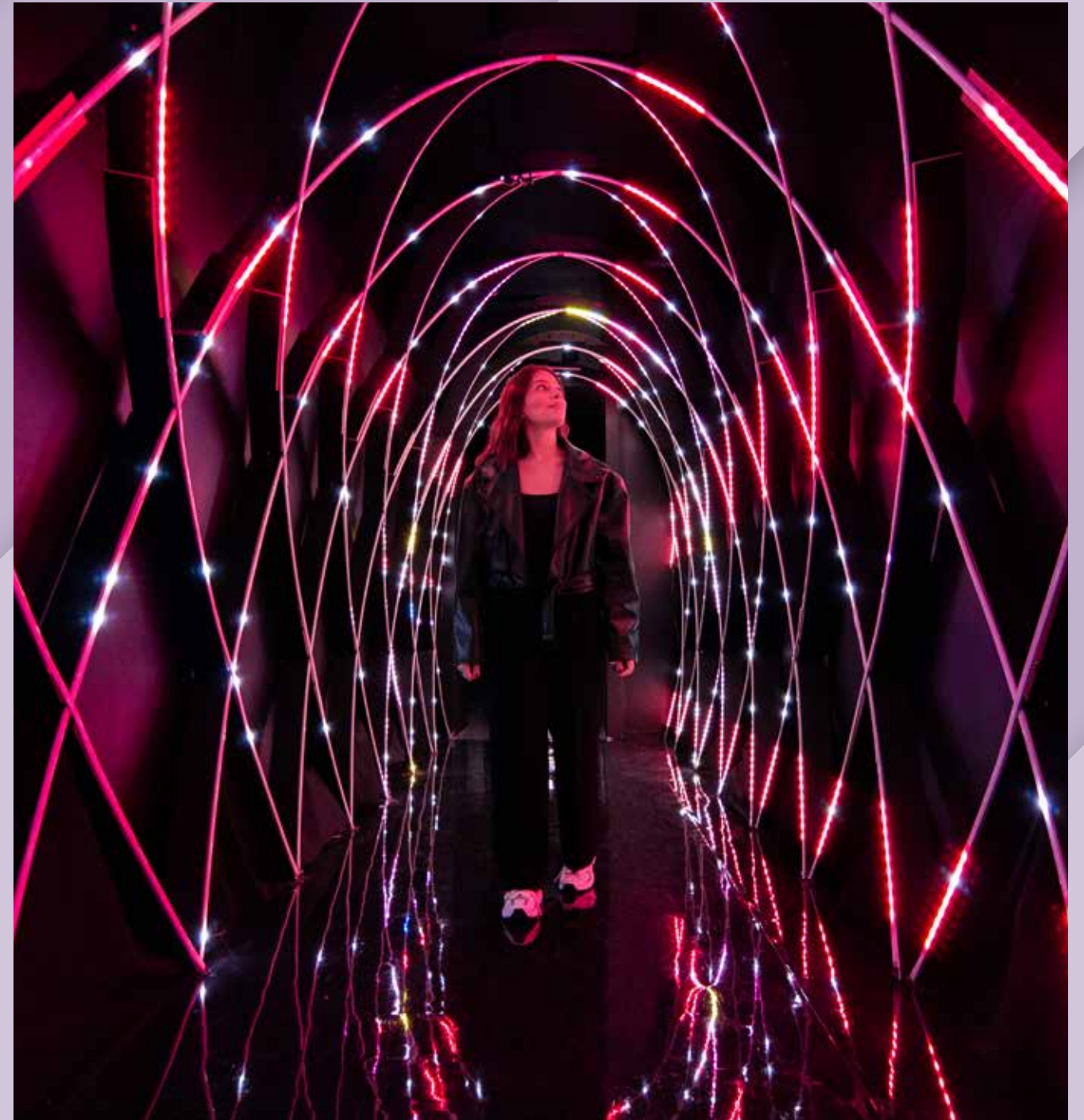


Viva Magenta, Pantone Color of the Year 2023, is a bold, energetic hue that the company describes as “an unconventional shade for an unconventional time.” Against the current global climate of looming recessions, environmental uncertainty, and surging inflation rates, Pantone is offering brightness and hope by channeling inner strength. “It’s brave, it’s fearless, it depicts optimism and joy,” says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. “It is a color that is audacious, full of wit and inclusive for all.”

American paint manufacturer Benjamin Moore echoes a similar sentiment with its Raspberry Blush Color of the Year 2023. “As much as we love the muted softer colors, we felt ready to do something a little bolder,” Andrea Magno, director of color marketing and development at Benjamin Moore, told *Architectural Digest*. “We’re just raring to go and turn up the dial on the saturation of color.” The vivacious impact of Raspberry Blush is an unapologetic statement shade that radiates positivity. “It has a very happy quality to it,” Magno says. “I think we need some happy.”

Luxury fashion brands are painting the runway in punchy hues. At Paris Fashion Week, “bright and bold colors boasted optimism,” *WWD* reported. Jean Paul Gaultier’s fall/winter 2022/2023 runway was awash in monochromatic bold pinks, reds, and blues, capturing a “sense of fun and irreverence,” wrote *WWD*’s Miles Socha in his collection review.

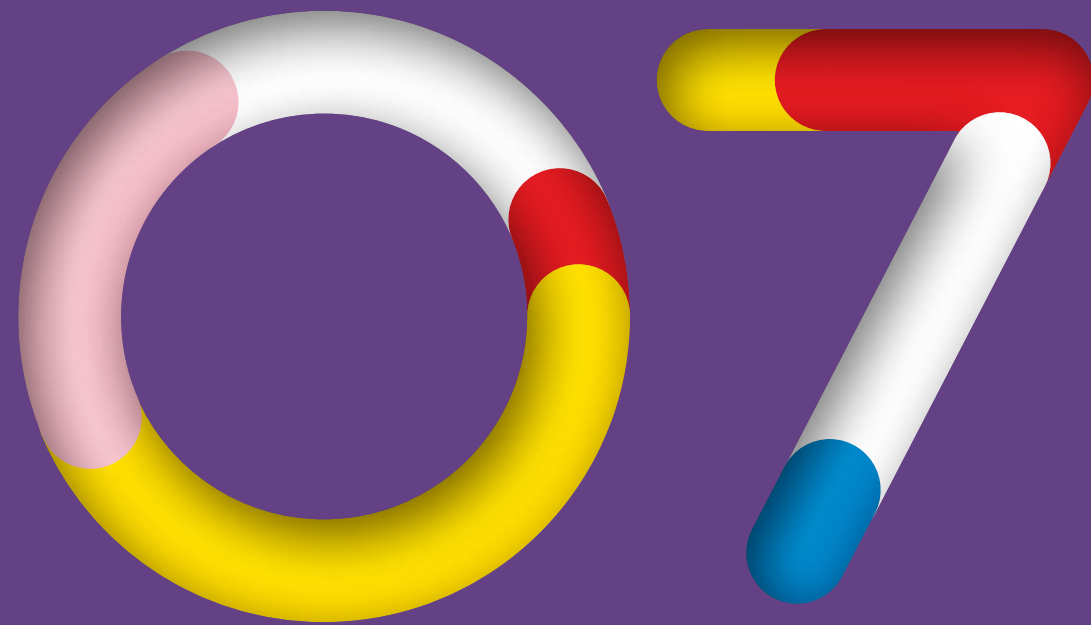
Valentino’s fall/winter 2022/2023 haute couture collection also embraced a lively palette, with “a rainbow of hues” including royal blue, neon green, and vivid orange, paired with bold shapes. “Beauty is resilience, not escapism,” said Valentino creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli.



#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

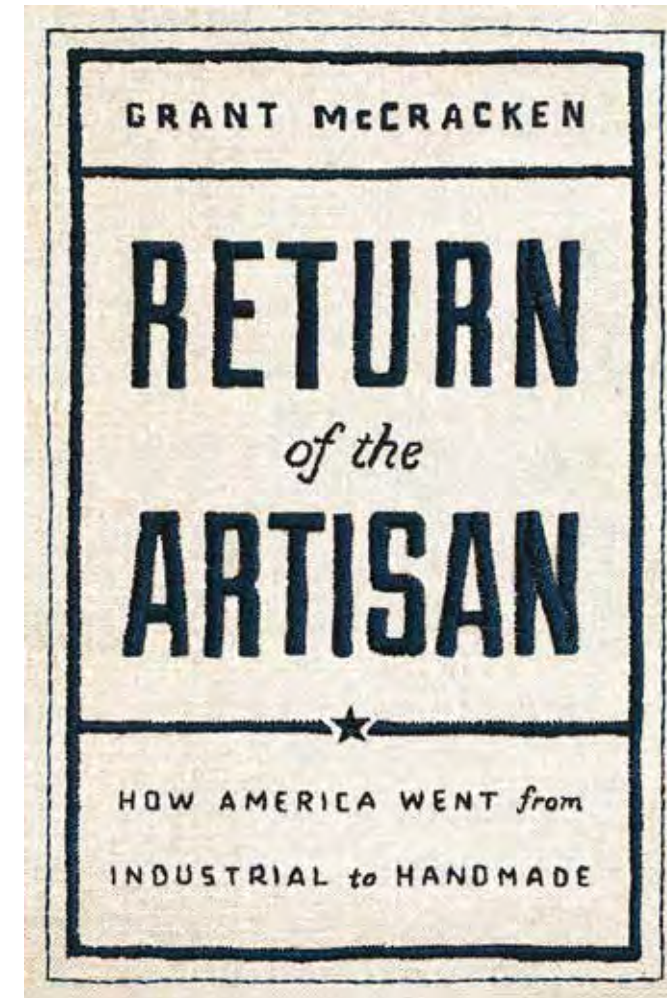
An unrestrained, impactful, and powerful burst of energy is being injected into the year ahead, arming people with hope, joy, and happiness amid continuing uncertain times.





# THE ARTISAN WAVE

Disaffection with the daily grind is driving  
an artisan renaissance.



As industrialized economies creak, experts predict the rise of a new artisan economy. In *Return of the Artisan*, published in July 2022, anthropologist Grant McCracken charts the emergence of an American artisanal movement that is shifting from the margins to the mainstream. Prompted by post-pandemic malaise, disillusioned workers are ditching the 9 to 5 to become cheesemongers, bakers, jewelers, and more.

The artisanal life, it seems, offers a sense of control and liberation, while sites such as Etsy make the transition from side-hustle to business easier. In an interview with the *Guardian*, McCracken estimates that two out of every three new jobs in America are now driven by the artisanal movement.

## Two out of every three new jobs in America are now driven by the artisanal movement.

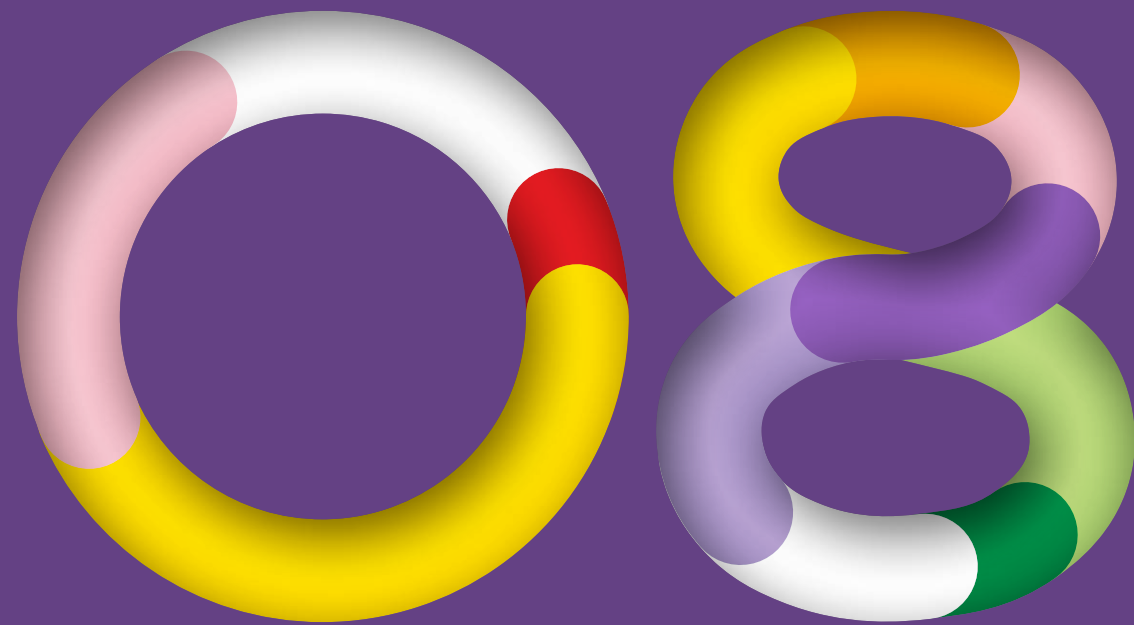
In a September 2022 piece, *Vogue* also points to a wave of fledgling fashion brands launched by novice creators during or post pandemic. These include Memorial Day, which has blossomed from crochet hobby to full-time business for former marketing professional Delsy Gouw. “I love the freedom that comes with it,” Gouw tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “I like that I’m able to take a walk or go to a park and feel inspired, and I wouldn’t be able to do this at a regular office job.”

The trend is not restricted to the United States. In July 2022 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on surging interest in Australia in crafts-based classes teaching skills from knife-making to ceramics. In the United Kingdom, a November 2021 report by Metro Dynamics for Amazon Handmade reported that artisanal businesses already contributed £4.8 billion (\$5.8 billion) to the British economy as of 2020. No doubt noting the rising interest, Amazon Handmade has begun showcasing the creative processes of its artisanal sellers in a new video content series.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

What started with the rise of micropreneurs two years ago is now evolving into a new artisan economy that could redefine the way we work and shop.





# VIRTUAL NURTURERS

Virtual avenues are emerging for digital carers seeking virtual companions.

Catriona Campbell, an artificial intelligence (AI) expert from the United Kingdom, predicts that virtual children will exist in the metaverse within the next 50 years. Campbell believes that the technology that evolves to create these virtual newborns will be embraced by the same consumers who grew up caring for a popular 1990s pet toy: the Tamagotchi generation. She predicts that these virtual children will look like their “parents” and be able to play and interact from within their digital habitat. In an age when many younger generations are reconsidering having families of their own, this outlet might attract a new generation of digital caretakers.

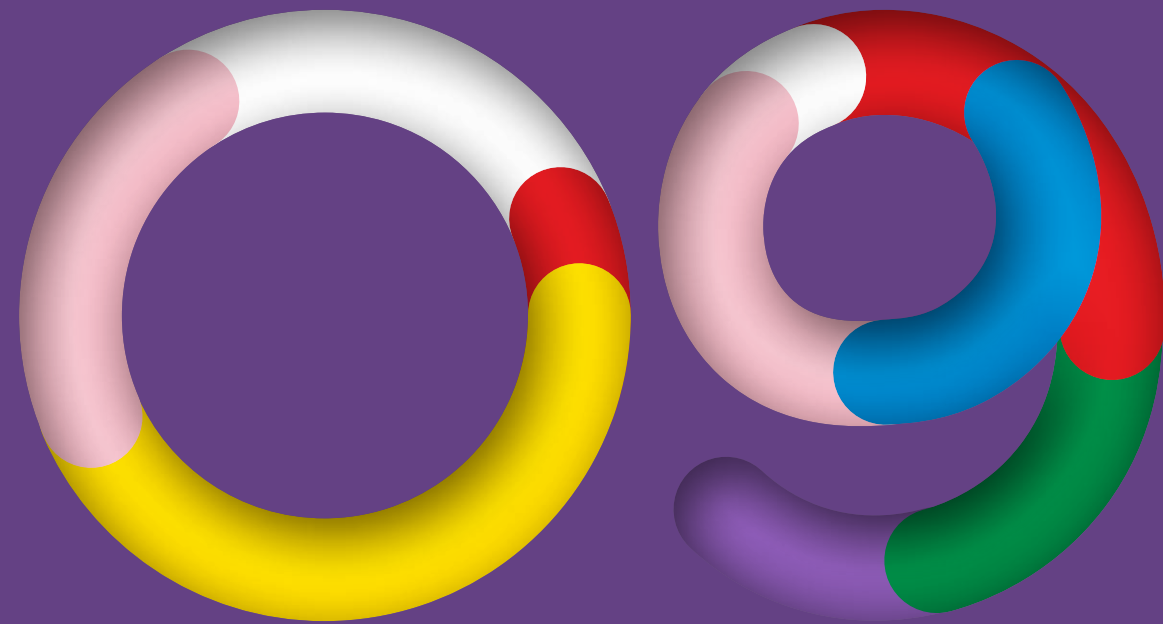
In the Petaverse, a platform developed using the Polygon blockchain, consumers can mint NFT cats and purchase furry digital companions. The Petaverse Network offers a gamified NFT experience that fosters emotional connection and delivers true digital pet ownership.

The Digital Pets Company, developer of digital 3D dogs, launched AI-driven canines authenticated as NFTs; an evolution of Nintendogs for modern digital pet-lovers. Owners will be able to interact with, play with, and care for their digi-dogs across virtual reality worlds, mixed and augmented reality platforms, and mobile and web browsers.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

People are growing digital families, giving “blended families” a whole new meaning in the era of the metaverse and Web3.





# INDIGENOUS INNOVATION

Indigenous techniques are informing regenerative approaches to managing the environment.







Techniques developed over millennia by indigenous people could augment our collective response to the climate crisis by helping us work with nature, not fight against it. Designers and engineers are reappraising indigenous approaches to urgent issues from flood or drought management to sustainable food production, from forest fires to carbon sequestration.

The Symbiocene, a multimedia piece commissioned for the Our Time on Earth exhibition at London's Barbican Museum in 2022, imagines future urban environments in 2040, and how they might look if we were to harness

indigenous knowledge and technologies. The installation was created by representatives from indigenous communities, working alongside Smith Mordak, director of sustainability and physics at engineering company Buro Happold, and designer Julia Watson.

These communities exemplify the idea of working symbiotically with nature. The Khasi hill tribe from north-eastern India is known for using rubber tree roots to grow living bridges that withstand monsoon rains. The Ma'dan from southern Iraq live in floating thatched villages that are symbiotic with their environment, offering a living example for future water-based development.

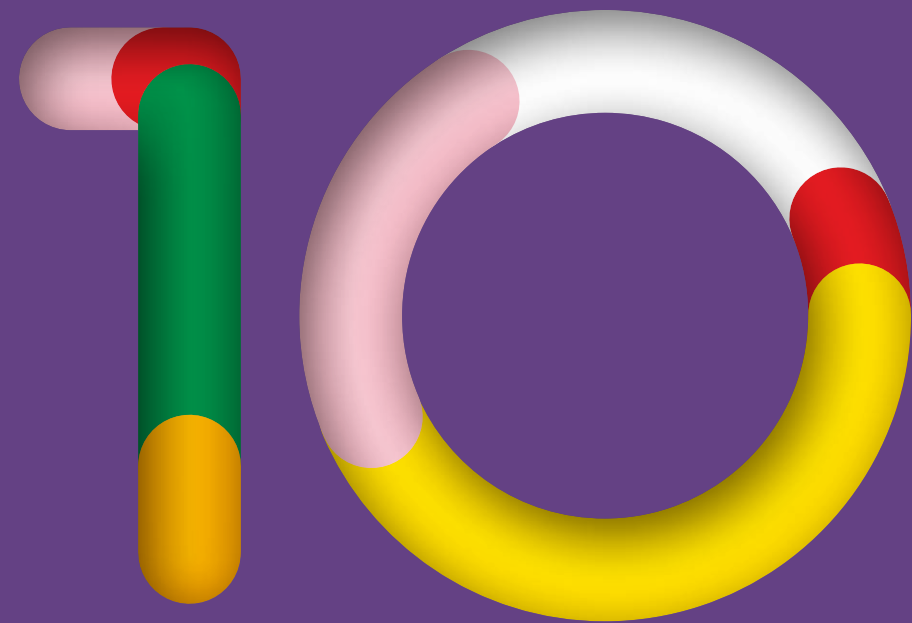
Harnessing regenerative approaches that nurture is a growing focus for designers. Super Vernaculars, the September 2022 edition of the design biennial Bio 27, hosted in Ljubljana, examined a return to vernacular traditions and values as a response to climate and biodiversity challenges. The British Pavilion at the 2023 Venice Biennale will showcase the role of diasporic craft cultures in "non-extractive" design. Central Saint Martins art school in London is welcoming students to its first regenerative design MA program.

Watson, author of the 2019 book *Lo-Tek: Design by Radical Indigenism*, says: "Designers should argue for a rebuilding of knowledge through explorations of indigenous philosophies capable of generating new knowledge and dialogues to inform our thinking on sustainability and climate change."

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

In the face of planetary crisis, the expertise of indigenous people—who care for 80% of remaining biodiversity, according to the World Bank—is being rapidly reappraised. Indigenous practices, techniques, and technologies can help shape a regenerative era where we learn to live and work symbiotically with nature.





# SITUATIONSHIPS

Gen Z are redefining the rules  
for romantic relationships.

Young generations are intentionally entering temporary partnerships, embracing relationships that ebb and flow between “friends” and “more than friends.”

In a September 2022 feature, the BBC highlighted gen Z’s tendency to embrace gray-area relationships defined as casual partners and the semi-commitment that goes with them. Elizabeth Armstrong is a sociology professor at the University of Michigan who researches sexuality and, specifically, these new “situationships.” Armstrong told the BBC: “Right now, this solves some kind of need for sex, intimacy, companionship—whatever it is—but this does not have necessarily a long-term time horizon.”

The topic is a prominent trend on social media. On TikTok, #situationship-tagged videos had over 1.9 billion views as of January 2023. The term was mentioned on the popular reality TV show *Love Island UK* and in Swedish singer Snoh Aalegra’s song, “Situationship.”

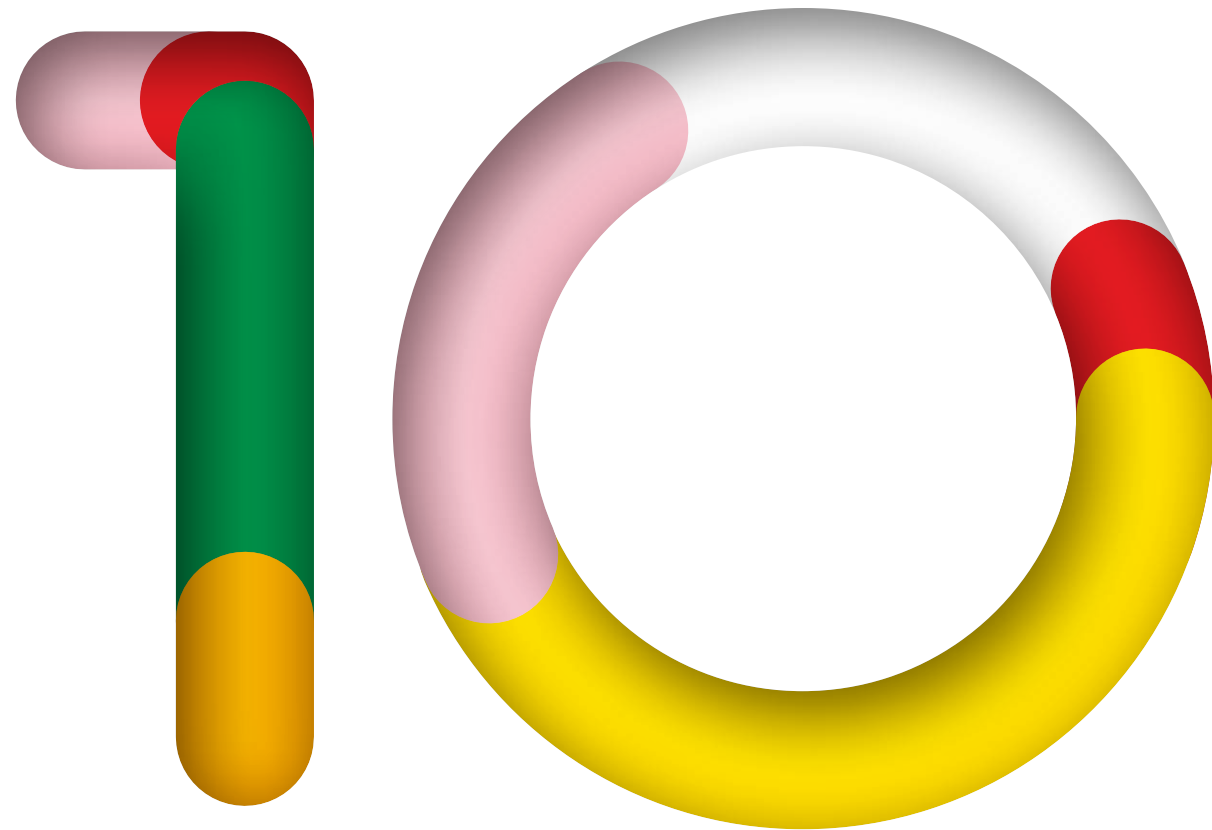
*Vice* unpacked what makes these relationships work in a feature with relationship coach Ben Goresky and his wife, relationship counselor Sheleana Aiyana. “It’s about being really clear about what each of you want, and setting the guidelines and rules of engagement,” Goresky said. “Committed or not, it’s important to communicate,” said Aiyana.

Cami, a 27-year-old from London, defines situationships for Wunderman Thompson Intelligence: “There’s a more of a fluid boundary between friendship

and relationships. I think a lot of what you call situationships is just more of a blurred understanding between friendship and sexual relationships, a transition between the two.” Cami goes on to unpack why these relationships have gained popularity recently. “There’s an element of uncertainty in the state of the world: the environment, the political situation. You’re less likely to get into a traditional monogamous relationship if you’re not certain that there is going to be stability in the future.”

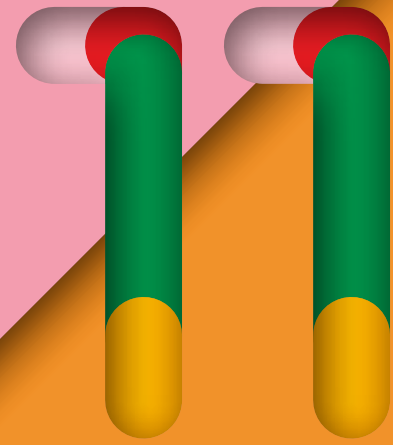
### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

For younger daters, situationships are a legitimate relationship status based on open communication and acceptance. Gen Z are embracing the middle ground in a healthy way, approaching some ever-changing boundaries with open minds.



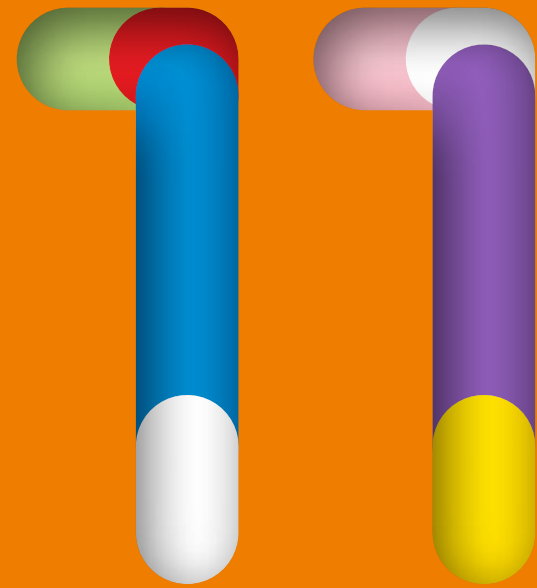
**“You’re less likely to get into a traditional monogamous relationship if you’re not certain that there is going to be stability in the future.”**

Cami, gen Zer



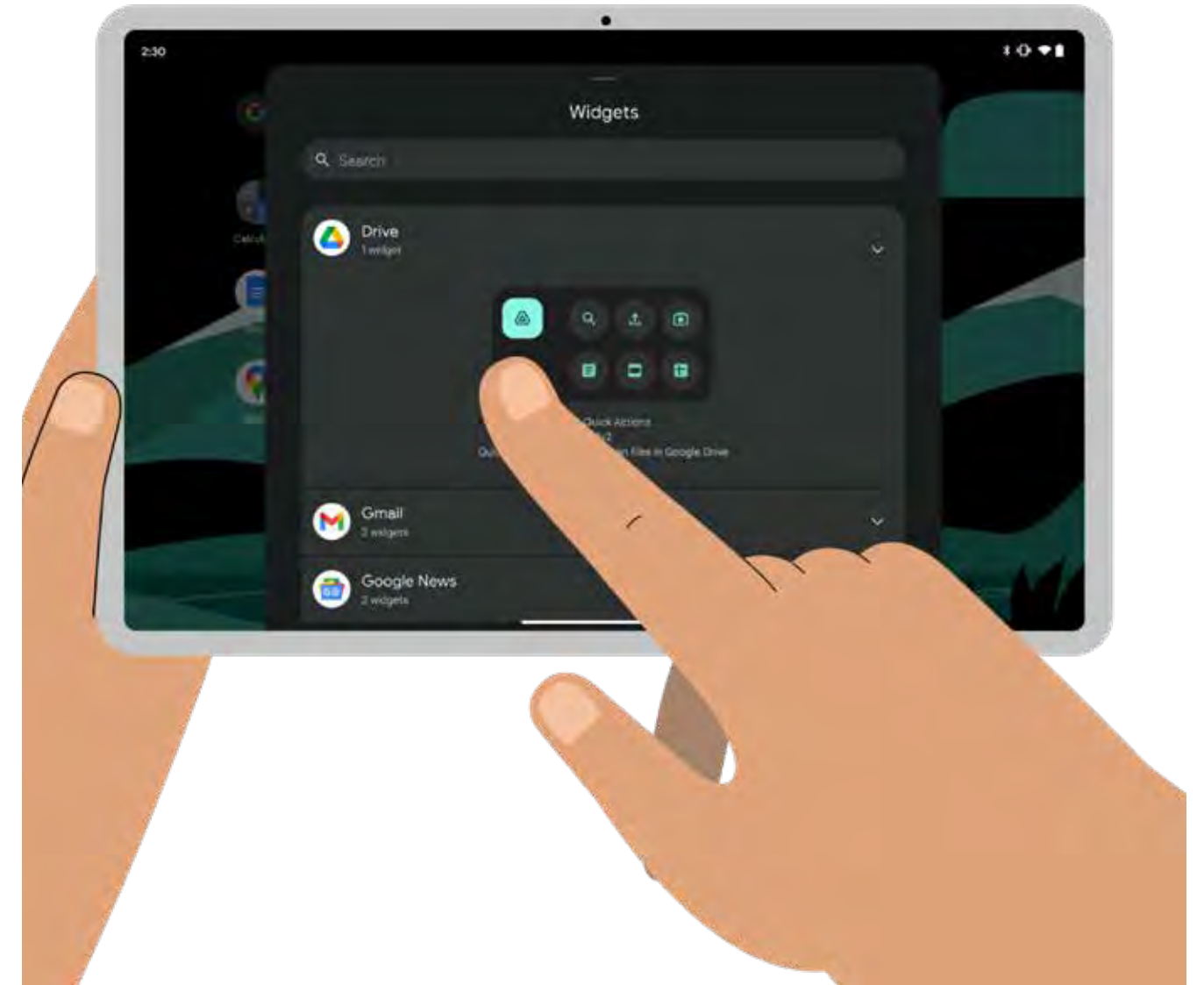
# TECH & METAVERSE





# TECHCESSIBILITY

Companies are redesigning their digital environments for greater accessibility.



Designing for accessibility and inclusion is not just the right thing to do, it's also big business, especially when it comes to technology. With more than 1 billion people worldwide estimated to experience disability and over 5 billion internet users, there's a major opportunity for brands to upgrade their devices, platforms, and experiences to be more accessible. As Josh Loebner, global head of inclusive design at Wunderman Thompson, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, "Inclusive design is better design, and these technology considerations have the potential to be just as useful to both disabled and non-disabled people."

Big Tech is already at work. In September 2022, Twitter announced it had completed the rollout of a new alt text tool, designed to help those who use screen readers enjoy image content on the platform. Google is making widgets larger on Android devices to improve the experience for those with reduced vision, while Instagram is making accessible features the standard—as of March 2022, auto-generated captions on video are now the default for creators.

Innovative devices are also helping to shape more accessible experiences. Software company XRAI Glass has partnered with manufacturer Nreal on augmented reality (AR) glasses powered by speech-to-text recognition technology. The concept glasses use AR to project real-time subtitles into the wearer's field of vision, allowing those who are deaf or hard of hearing to understand and participate in conversations. The glasses build on an existing design by Nreal and connect to a smartphone, which handles the speech-to-text conversion.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Accessible design doesn't end with the physical world. When designing digital experiences and environments, brands will need to consider how to best reach audiences of all abilities. As Loebner says, "Accessible technologies have the power to invite and immerse marginalized groups into welcoming environments, communities, and experiences."





# DIGITAL IDENTITIES

People are bringing more of themselves into the virtual realm.







As the metaverse begins to take shape, how are users thinking about their virtual identities? According to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence's "New Realities: Into the Metaverse and Beyond" report, 76% of people familiar with the metaverse across the United States, United Kingdom, and China want their avatar to express their individuality in ways that they can't in the physical or offline world. And 51% feel it would be easier for them to be their true, authentic self in the metaverse or digital worlds.

Liam Young, a speculative architect and cofounder of urban futures think tank Tomorrow's Thoughts Today, predicts that the distinction between online and offline lives will disappear. "We use words like 'digital' and 'physical,' but I think that these are outmoded terms," he tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "We all live mediated lives that are extensions of our digital selves, and our screens have huge consequence in the physical world. To talk about them as being isolated, independent things is really problematic."

Identity designer and beauty futurist Alex Box, whose work centers on thinking creatively about how we communicate our identities and exploring how technology can elevate one's expression of self, agrees. "Identity traverses both the physical and digital," she tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. "I see identity design as the next important step to how we communicate and interpret multiple selves in the metaverse."

"We already have multiple identities living autonomously in our own metaverse of self, parkouring between our social media self, work self, home self, mindful self, and many more," she says. "One way of imagining identity as we move into Web3 is that our multiple selves will acquire a physicality, presence, or essence; an emotional and thinking 'texture' that will develop and regenerate autonomously through AI learning."

### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

As digital lifestyles mature, people are thinking more deeply about preserving and translating their identity in virtual worlds. Expect to see an increasingly nuanced expression of identity that holds shape in both physical and virtual environments.



# RITUALISTIC APPS

The next generation of social media apps are ritualizing engagement—turning it into something to be savored.

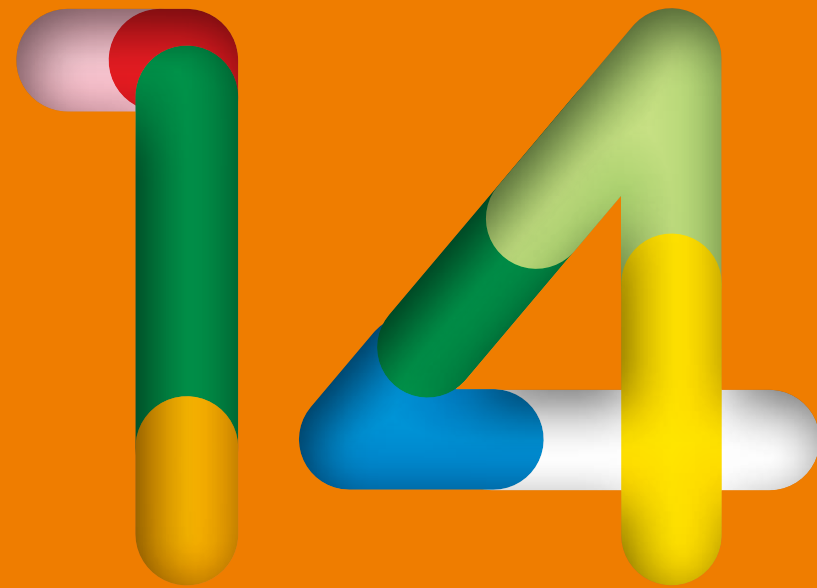
For years, social media apps, driven by powerful and intricately crafted algorithms, have been designed with maximum stickiness that demands constant engagement from consumers. But a new generation of apps is challenging this always-on approach with a focus on less frequent experiences that are more rewarding for users.

This new movement is spearheaded by French startup BeReal, the App Store's top social media download in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia in August 2022. In contrast to the endless scrolling that underpins most social apps, BeReal is built around a simple and authentic daily ritual. At a random time every day, all users are asked to upload their daily contribution of a composite picture made up of a capture from both their forward-facing and selfie cameras at that moment. There are no filters, so users share a genuine reflection of what they and their surroundings look like at that time, which only their friends can see.

Many incumbent social media apps have responded to the success of BeReal by cloning its functionality. TikTok Now urges users to instantly share a short video or photo at an unscheduled time, while Instagram is said to be internally testing a similar function called Candid Challenges. Wordle, the successful daily word game, and dating app Thursday, which only allows singles to match and chat on one day each week, are built upon a similar dynamic. By limiting engagement, rather than overwhelming users, they build anticipation and provide fun rituals that allow people to connect with others in more authentic ways.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

What started as a push for authenticity on social media and the rise of finite social networks is evolving, encouraging users to ceremonialize the everyday.



# METAVVERSE FOR GOOD

Brands are leveraging the metaverse to advance global humanitarian efforts.



Digital purchases in the metaverse are elevating global support for humanitarian causes around the world.

Humanitarian organization Built With Bitcoin Foundation puts 100% of its proceeds from the Built With NFT Collection toward providing clean water, building schools, sustainable farming, and humanitarian support for sponsored communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The foundation is powered by Bitcoin, and the Built With NFT Collection consists of artwork by students in the sponsored communities minted on the Bitcoin network by STXNFT. “Bitcoin has been a force for good, bringing economic freedom to billions globally,” STXNFT founder Jamil Dhanani said. “Projects like Built With NFT showcase that perfectly, by cutting through the hype to deliver on a meaningful cause.”

## Digital brand offerings are reaching beyond entertainment to benefit the physical world.

In April 2022, Epic Games and Xbox announced they had raised \$144 million to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine. In March, Epic Games pledged to donate all in-game sales to the efforts until April 3, with Xbox similarly stating it would donate the fee it normally collects for items bought by users in Fortnite. Epic Games said the proceeds would be donated to “Direct Relief, UNICEF, UN World Food Program, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and World Central Kitchen in support of their humanitarian relief efforts for people affected by the war in Ukraine.”

Ukraine itself sold a collection of NFTs on Twitter to raise funds for its army and civilians. Initially made up of 54 news items and photographs, the Meta History: Museum of War collection traces the timeline of Russia’s invasion.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Digital brand offerings are reaching beyond entertainment to benefit the physical world. Companies taking advantage of flexibility, speed, and international yield in the metaverse can aid and support social causes with ease—harnessing the power to turn the metaverse into a force for social good.





# AUGMENTED ENTERTAINMENT

AR technology is spurring on a new  
formula for entertainment.

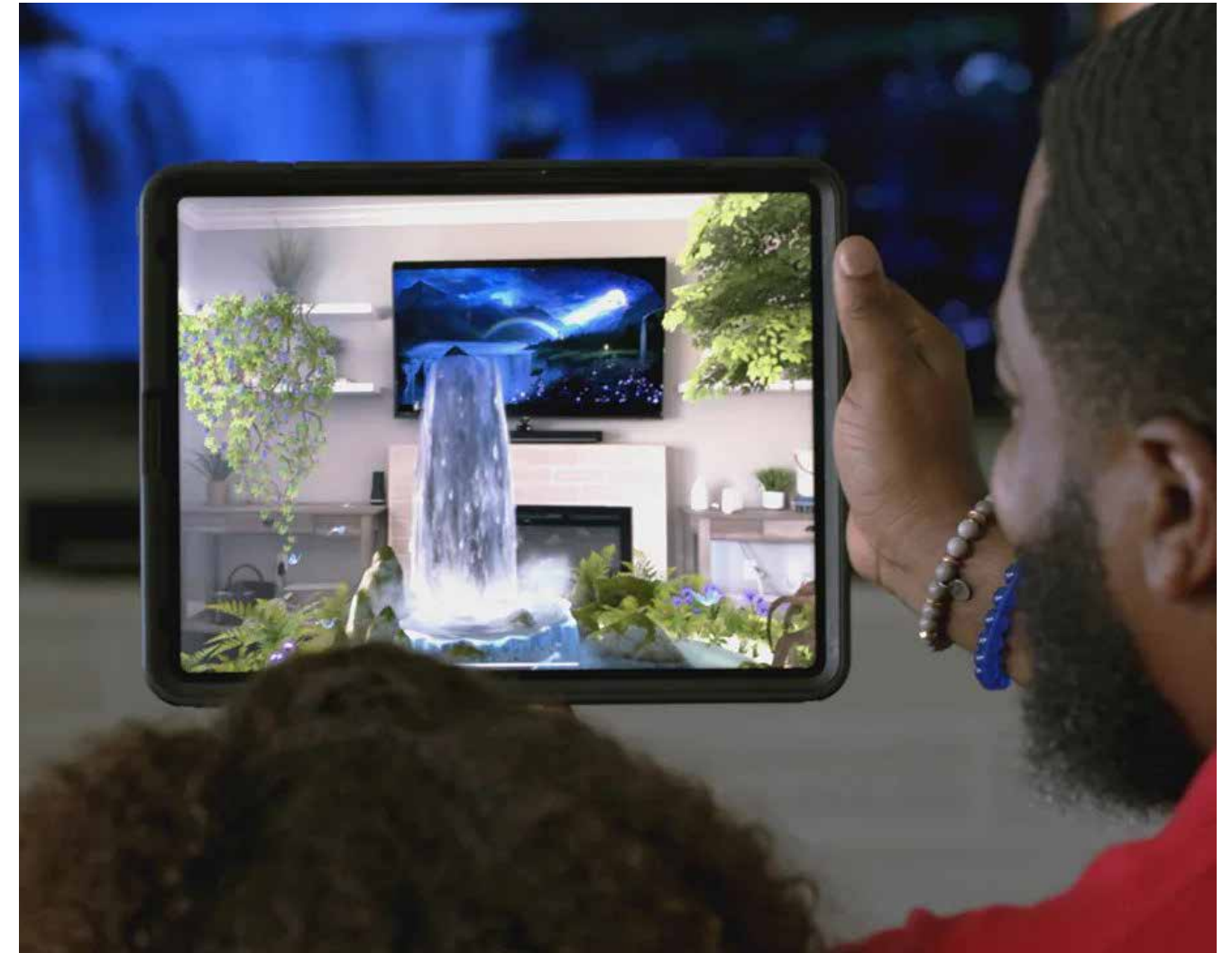
Brands are elevating cinematic experiences with tools to make viewing more interactive.

Disney's first AR-enabled short film, *Remembering*, was released in September 2022. Viewers can scan codes from the film on their iOS devices for an extended version made for the small screen. Disney told *TechCrunch* that this is the first AR app to connect directly to content on the Disney+ platform, testing AR's ability to enhance films and storytelling from the comfort of home.

Disney's *Marvel World of Heroes*, an AR mobile game, will release in 2023. Players will be able to create superheroes, fight villains, and team up with friends from their own devices. In-game experiences will reflect each player's physical location and setting, similar to *Pokémon Go* game settings.

At a Goldman Sachs conference in September 2022, Electronic Arts (EA) CEO Andrew Wilson stated that the company plans to "lean more into really engaging and investing in creation." He went on to say that EA has a "very, very unique and special opportunity to deliver the future of entertainment," expressing confidence in the company's 20% gamer-created content, which is used by 50% of its player base.

A new reality show joined the cinematic universe last year, starring characters from NFT projects Bored Ape Yacht Club, Doodles, World of Women, and Cool



Cat. In *The R3al Metaverse*, by animation studio Invisible Universe, the characters suddenly find themselves in the physical world, and fans can interact with the scripted characters as they carry out the plot, helping to shape the show's content. With an NFT Producer Pass, viewers can contribute to the show's content, and avatar owners from the featured projects may have the chance to appear as their own characters in the show.

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

AR technology is changing how viewers participate with traditionally passive entertainment, adding an interactive layer to the viewing experience.



# FEEL-GOOD FEEDS

Social media feeds are turning into  
a place to find emotional uplift.

App designers are reformulating new platforms to foster positivity.

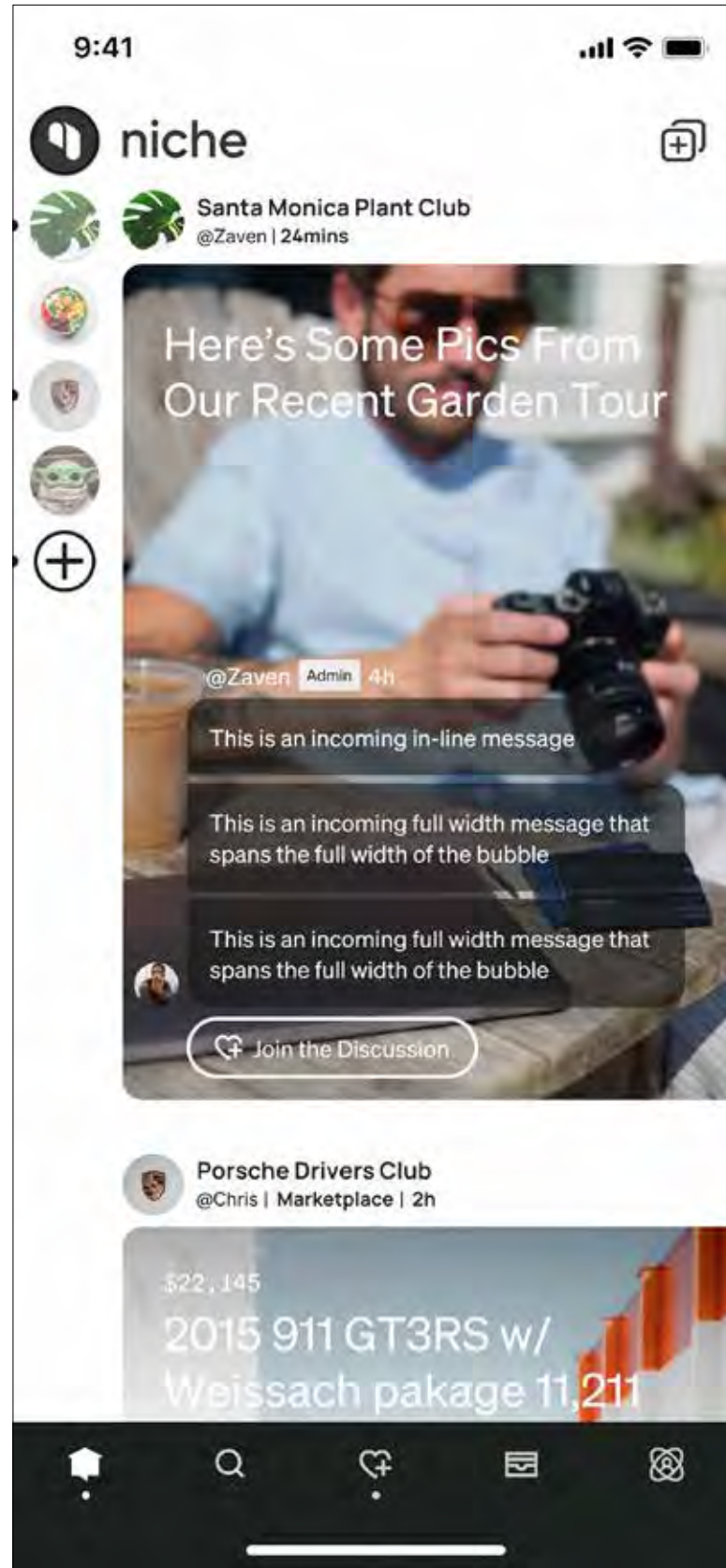
The number one free download in the app store for several weeks in 2022, Gas is the ultimate compliment app. Users are asked multiple-choice questions that are positive and oriented to compliment their classmates and peers. Aimed at teens, the app requires users to designate their school and distributes compliments across its platform while motivating users to continue to compliment others, fostering a positive and cooperative app environment.

The Niche app is a new concept in social media: creator-owned content, rather than user-targeted content. The decentralized Web3 application consists of members, not users, who engage in communities fostered within the app based on interests and genuine connection. They are incentivized by posting content for positive, like-minded engagement rather than likes and digital promotion.

“We see social media getting smaller, more intimate. People are moving towards these networks with like-minded shared interests, backgrounds, or identity,” Christopher Gulczynski, cofounder and CEO of Niche, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. The future of social media, according to Niche cofounder and CTO Zaven Nahapetyan, is a place where “people have options, control, and power in their social interactions online the way they do in person. People don’t see the stuff they don’t want to see; they’re able to connect to people that help them with what they enjoy spending time with.”

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Consumers are looking for positive modes of engagement and emotional support online. Emerging social media platforms are tapping into user desires for change, reformulating feeds around positivity and uplift.



**Emerging social media platforms are reformulating feeds around positivity and uplift.**





# SUSTAINABILITY IN THE METAVERSE

How does sustainable action in the  
metaverse look?



Brands are extending their sustainable practices into the digital realm to maintain eco-friendly platforms and meet sustainable goals. According to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence's "New Realities: Into the Metaverse and Beyond" report, 71% of people who know what the metaverse is say brands need to be thinking about its environmental impact.

In September 2022, the Ethereum cryptocurrency completed a software update that reduced its carbon emissions by 99%. The merge, as the company called it, is a shift away from the validation method known as "proof of work" towards a more energy-efficient method called "proof of stake" (PoS), which effectively drops the crypto's electricity footprint from 8.5GW to less than 85MW.

Some platforms are prioritizing green practices from the get-go. Tezos is an energy-efficient PoS blockchain that offers an environmentally friendly alternative to standard blockchains through shorter NFT transaction times and reduced carbon footprints. Offering carbon-neutral minting, eco-friendly blockchain EOSIO runs on an energy-efficient PoS algorithm that doesn't encourage server farms to mine constantly. Consumers looking for a sustainable NFT marketplace or gallery can turn to Abris.io and KodaDot, respectively.

According to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence's "Regeneration Rising: Sustainability Futures" report, 86% of respondents expect businesses to play a part in solving big challenges such as climate change; 88% believe that sustainability should be a standard business practice; and 89% believe brands should do a lot more to reduce their carbon impact. Consumer payment service

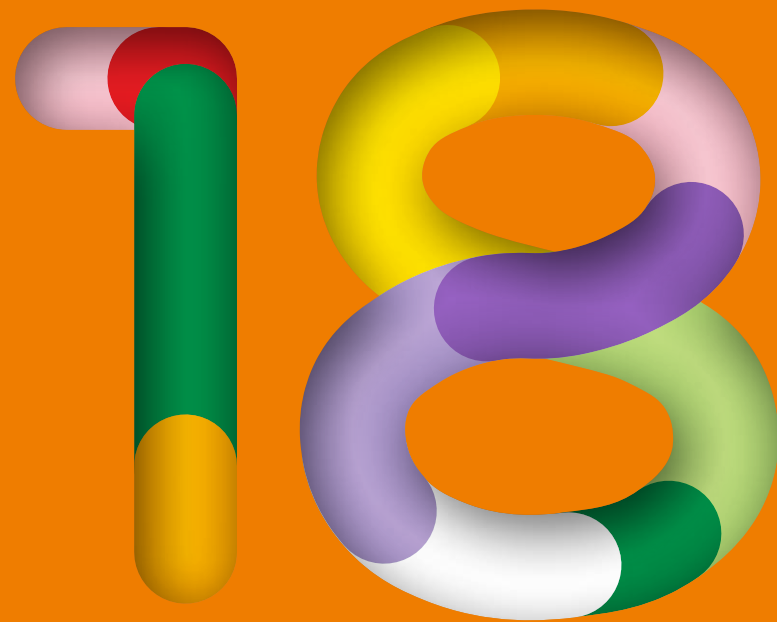


Ripple, whose leaders are cofounders and active members of the Crypto Climate Accord and WEF's Crypto Impact and Sustainability Initiative, aims to achieve carbon net-zero by 2030.

Gucci accepts payments from a sustainable crypto solution built on the XRP Ledger: the world's first major global carbon-neutral blockchain. The brand also created an NFT collection with Superplastic, a carbon-neutral digital collectibles creation platform. Burberry dropped its second NFT collection on Blankos Block Party in June 2022, which does not require any crypto mining.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Whether companies decide to use eco-friendly blockchains or balance their carbon footprint with greener platforms, there are many approaches brands can take to enter the metaverse sustainably.



# ATM(METAVVERSE)

Banks are rethinking digital finance.



Consumers can now purchase crypto and use traditional banking services without leaving the digital realm.

In August 2022, Decentraland launched the first ATM in the metaverse in partnership with Metaverse Architects studio and Transak payment gateway. Players can use it to purchase cryptocurrency in the same way they would take out cash in the physical world, and property holders on the platform can add an ATM to their virtual land for easy access to crypto.

JPMorgan Chase was the first bank to open a lounge and an office in the metaverse. Onyx, JPMorgan's blockchain arm, released a report alongside the lounge launch to describe the opportunities offered by the metaverse, including that the metaverse will "infiltrate every sector in some way in the coming years." The bank has also invested in payments fintech Tilia, which provides payments services in the metaverse for game, virtual world, and mobile applications. that



“As consumers spend a greater portion of their time in video games and seek ways to gain ownership of the in-world items, new monetization models are emerging and require the right solutions,” JPMorgan Chase tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

In March 2022, American Express filed trademarks for a virtual marketplace and cryptocurrency services in the metaverse including card payment services, an ATM, banking, and fraud detection services as well as entertainment, travel, and concierge services for its virtual clientele.

Adaptive digital bank Quontic offers banking services in its virtual offices and a debit card with Bitcoin reward checking accounts, in addition to cash and high-interest checking accounts. Digital bank Cogni purchased a collection of NFTs

**“As consumers spend a greater portion of their time in video games and seek ways to gain ownership of the in-world items, new monetization models are emerging.”**

**JPMorgan Chase**

from Bored Ape Yacht Club in summer 2022, and is creating a Bored Ape debit card for future Web3 customer experiences.

The Sandbox will host several major financial institutions in the near future: HSBC plans to open a digital office, Siam Commercial Bank plans to launch a virtual headquarters, and DBS will create “DBS BetterWorld” on the platform. The interactive experience will show consumers the importance of sustainable practices and prove the metaverse can be a force for good.

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

Banking institutions are offering consumers one-stop shops for virtual commerce, advice, meta-banking, and crypto-purchases. Banking practices may soon be commonplace in the digital realm.



# MAPPING REALITY

Why navigation tech is a linchpin  
of Web3 futures.

Some of the world's leading tech brands are devoting themselves to what may seem like a basic task: mapping the physical world. "When we look at the most valuable and/or impactful technology companies in the world, they are working on mapping, reading, and understanding the physical world through sensors and computer vision," Ryan Mullins, CEO and founder of Aglet, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, pointing to tech giants such as Tesla, Instagram, Apple, and Snapchat.

Meta, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services (AWS), and Dutch mapping company TomTom joined forces in December 2022 to develop interoperable open map data. Called the Overture Maps Foundation, the partnership aims to power new map products through openly available datasets that can be used and reused across applications and businesses.

At CES 2023, BMW showcased the UniMap by Here Technologies automated mapping technology, which will allow users to generate their own digital maps and location tools.

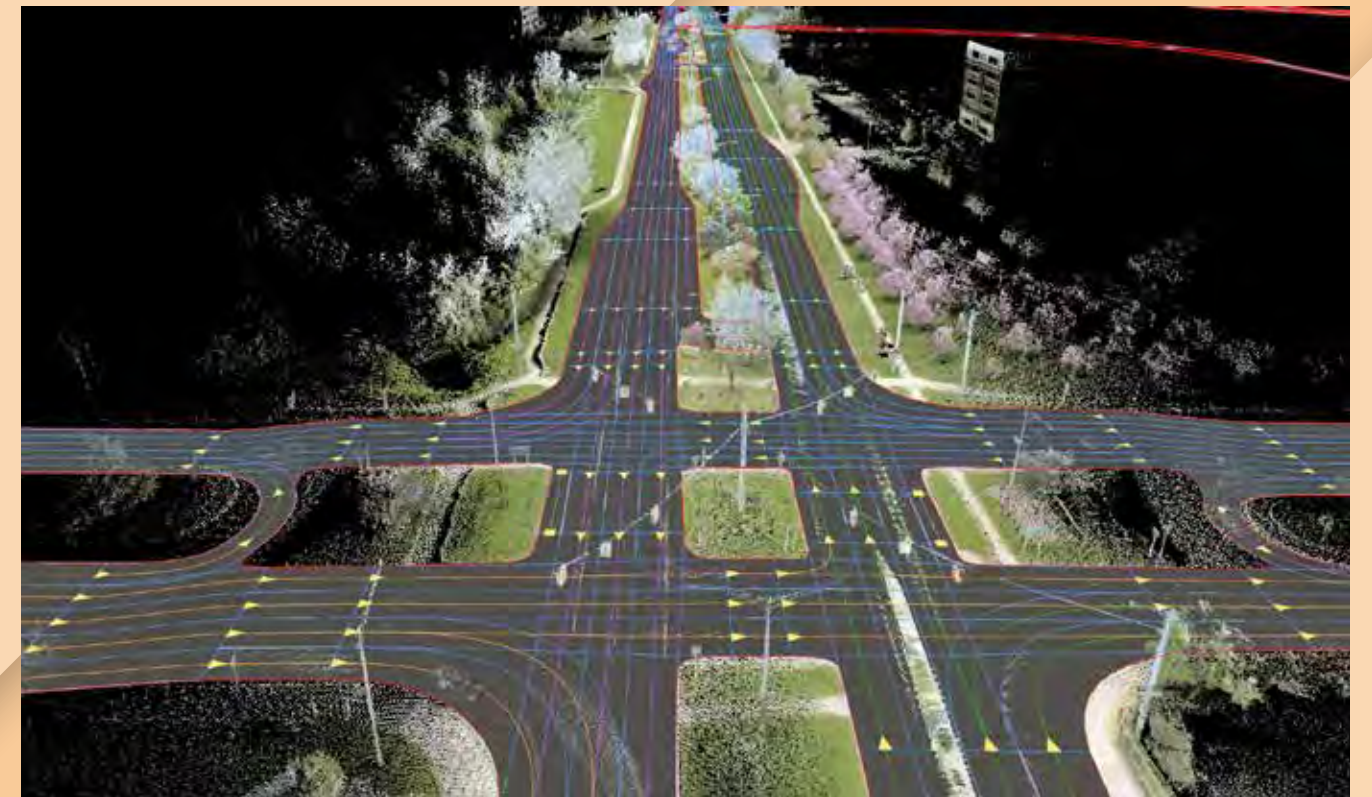
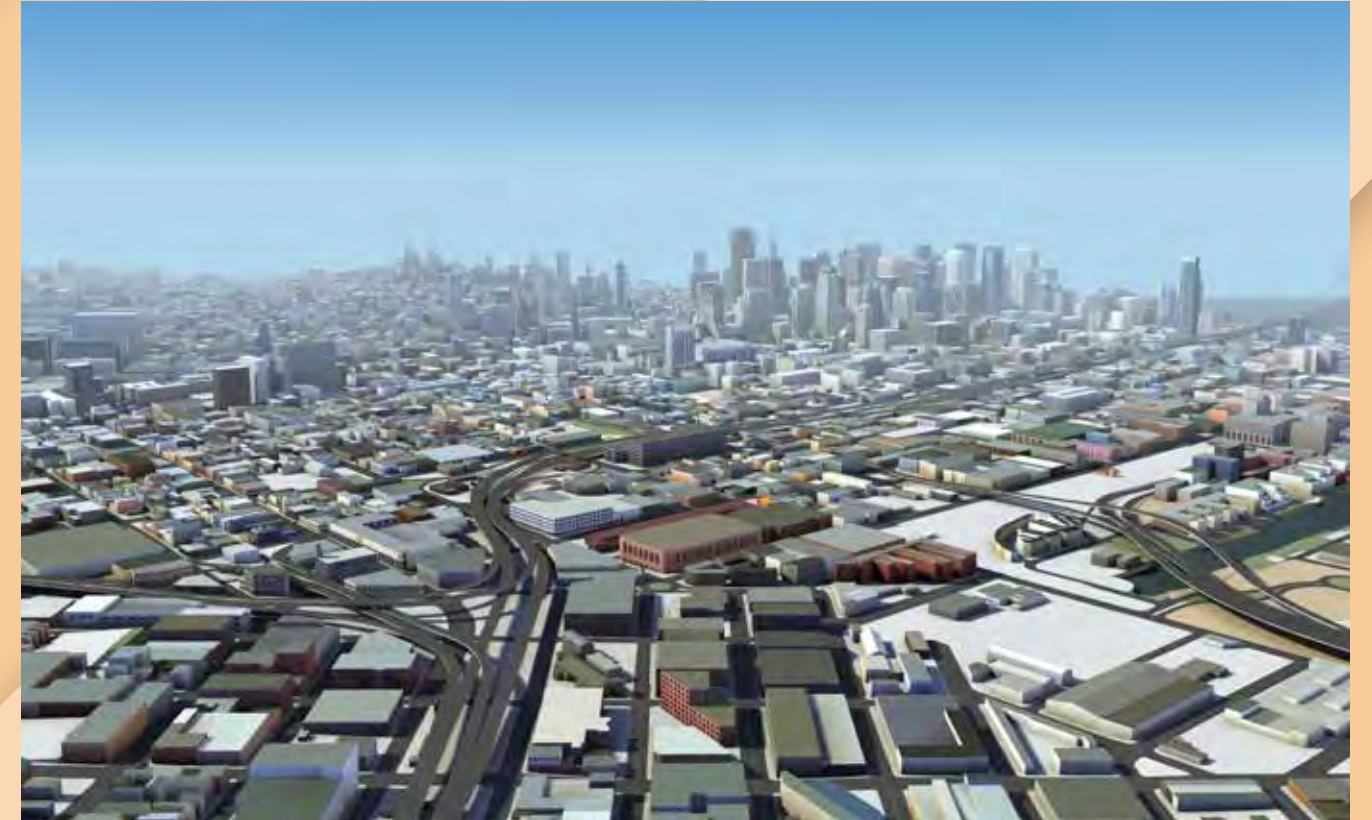
Newer brands are also zeroing in on this burgeoning sector. Unveiled at CES 2023, Loovic's wearable navigation device is designed to be worn around the neck so that users don't have to look at their phone screen for directions, and can bolster spatial awareness for the visually impaired. Another innovation launched at CES 2023, Ashirase introduced a device that attaches to shoes and uses a combination of voice assistance (through a connected phone) and haptic indicators to direct the wearer.



Why the focus on maps? “The real revolution isn’t simply mapping but a new opportunity for UI and how we will interface with the internet,” Mullins explains. “Mappings and computer vision are the start of a new spatial internet where reality is a first-person experience of movement and participation in a world.”

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

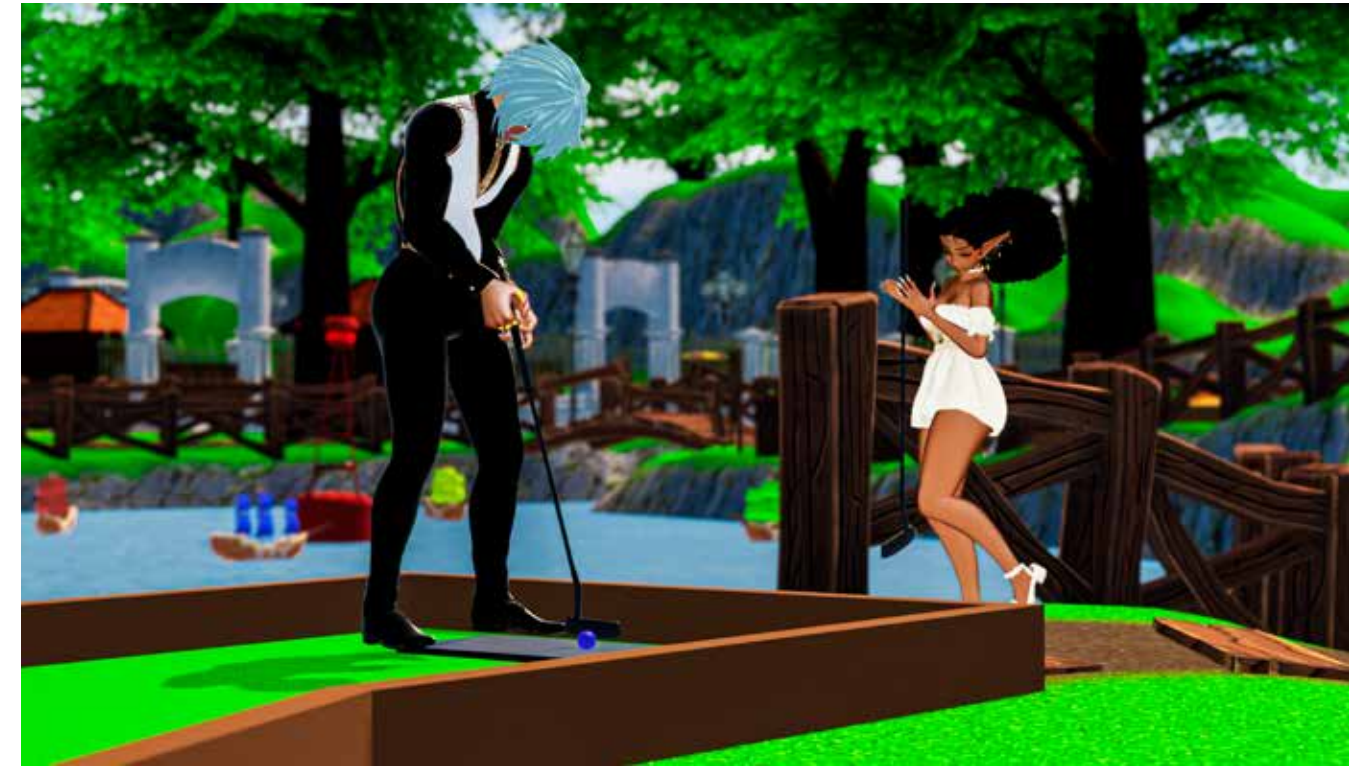
Mullins positions mapping “as the latest phase of internet evolution,” which is moving digital engagement “from pages and scrolling to places and movement.” The significance of Web3, then, is much bigger than just blockchain and crypto—it is in creating “a spatial, place-based internet. It’s not only pages and people but reality itself that is made machine-readable.”





# VR DATING

Could virtual reality be the next dominant force in matchmaking?



It's over 10 years since Tinder profoundly altered the landscape of online dating. Now the metaverse is ushering in a new era of romance where relationships flourish in virtual worlds.

Metaverse dating centers around interacting with avatars, and virtual reality (VR) dating app Nevermet has a strict rule—no profile photos. In a world where people have become accustomed to judging others by their online dating photo this is a radical move, but it's giving users the opportunity to explore other means of connection. "Nevermet is a personality-first dating app that lets people explore personality and compatibility first, before knowing what the other person looks like in the physical world," Cam Mullen, CEO and cofounder of Nevermet, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

From unoriginal conversation starters to formulaic venues, first dates often carry a lack of surprise, but the VR dating app Flirtual is shaking things up by



offering spectacular dates only possible in virtual worlds. Launched in March 2022, the app offers tens of thousands of possible dates, from swimming with sharks to observing a black hole.

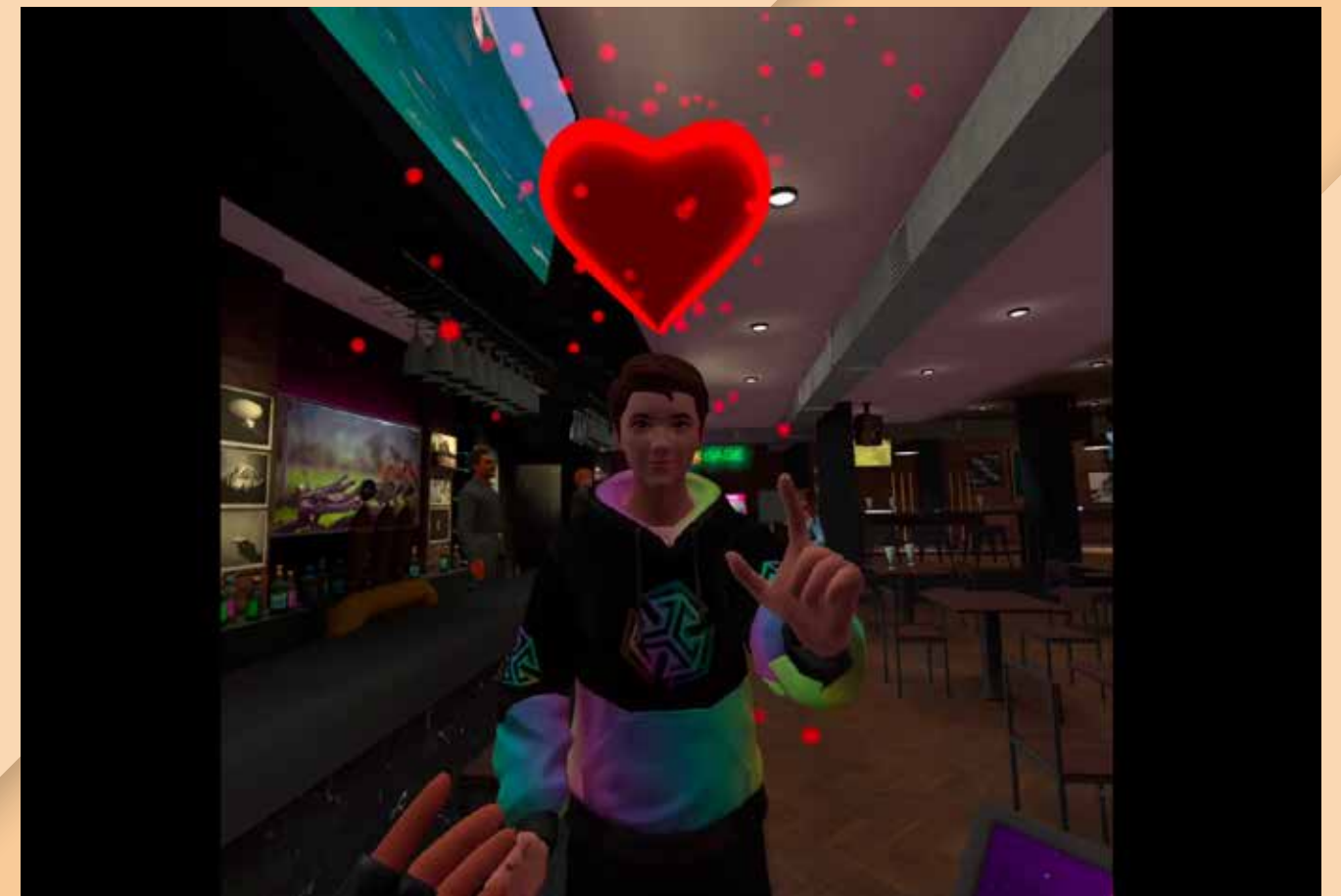
With the help of VR, Planet Theta is hoping to make catfishing a thing of the past. The app is set to revolutionize identity verification, with a feature that “is able to determine if your identity is fraudulent with a high degree of certainty,” as Chris Crew, CEO of Planet Theta, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “It uses government records, online databases, past data breaches, and other resources to see if your name and account email are associated.”

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

In the future, relationships might blossom first in the metaverse. “It’s easier to fall in love through VR than any other digital medium,” says Flirtual CEO and cofounder Anthony Tan. VR can deliver a fresh take on intimacy while tackling some of the downsides of existing online dating platforms and apps.

**“It’s easier to fall in love through VR than any other digital medium.”**

**Anthony Tan, CEO and cofounder, Flirtual**

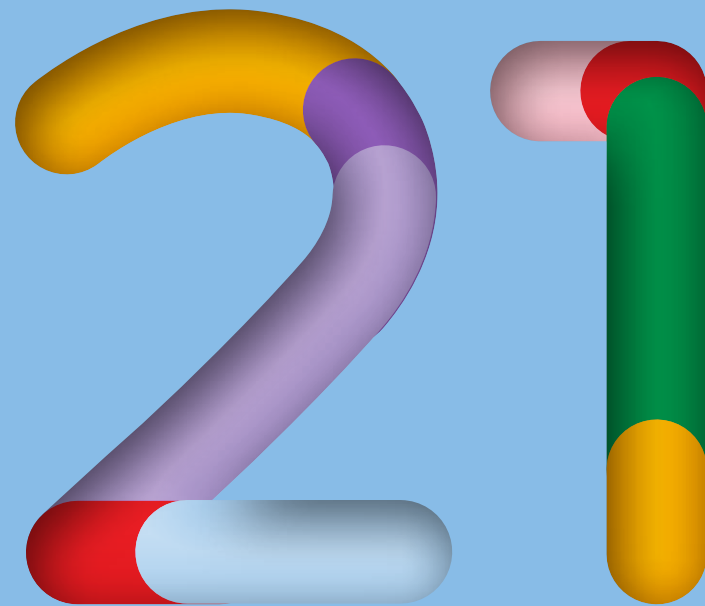




21

# TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY

30



# DEEPSEA TOURISM

Travelers are venturing to the bottom of the sea in search of extreme adventure.

OceanGate Expeditions is taking travelers to new depths. The company, which describes itself as “a team of explorers, scientists, and filmmakers dedicated to exploring the deep,” led the first civilian expedition to the Titanic in 2022. Guests paid \$250,000 to travel nearly two-and-a-half miles below the surface of the ocean to view the wreckage.

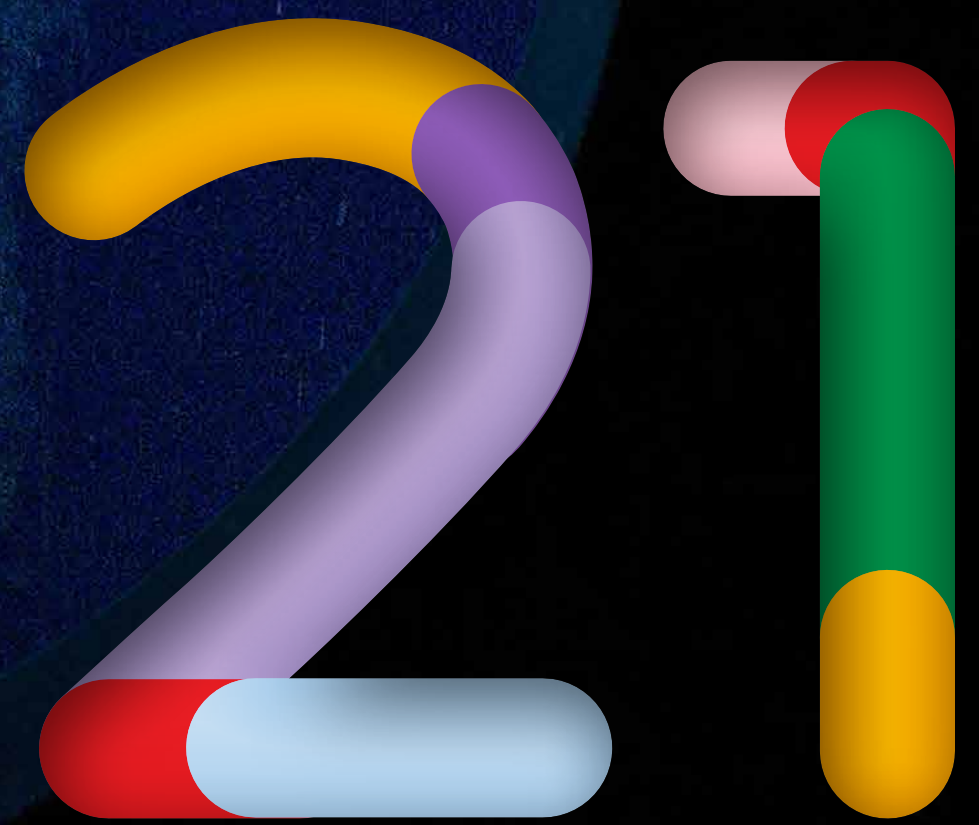
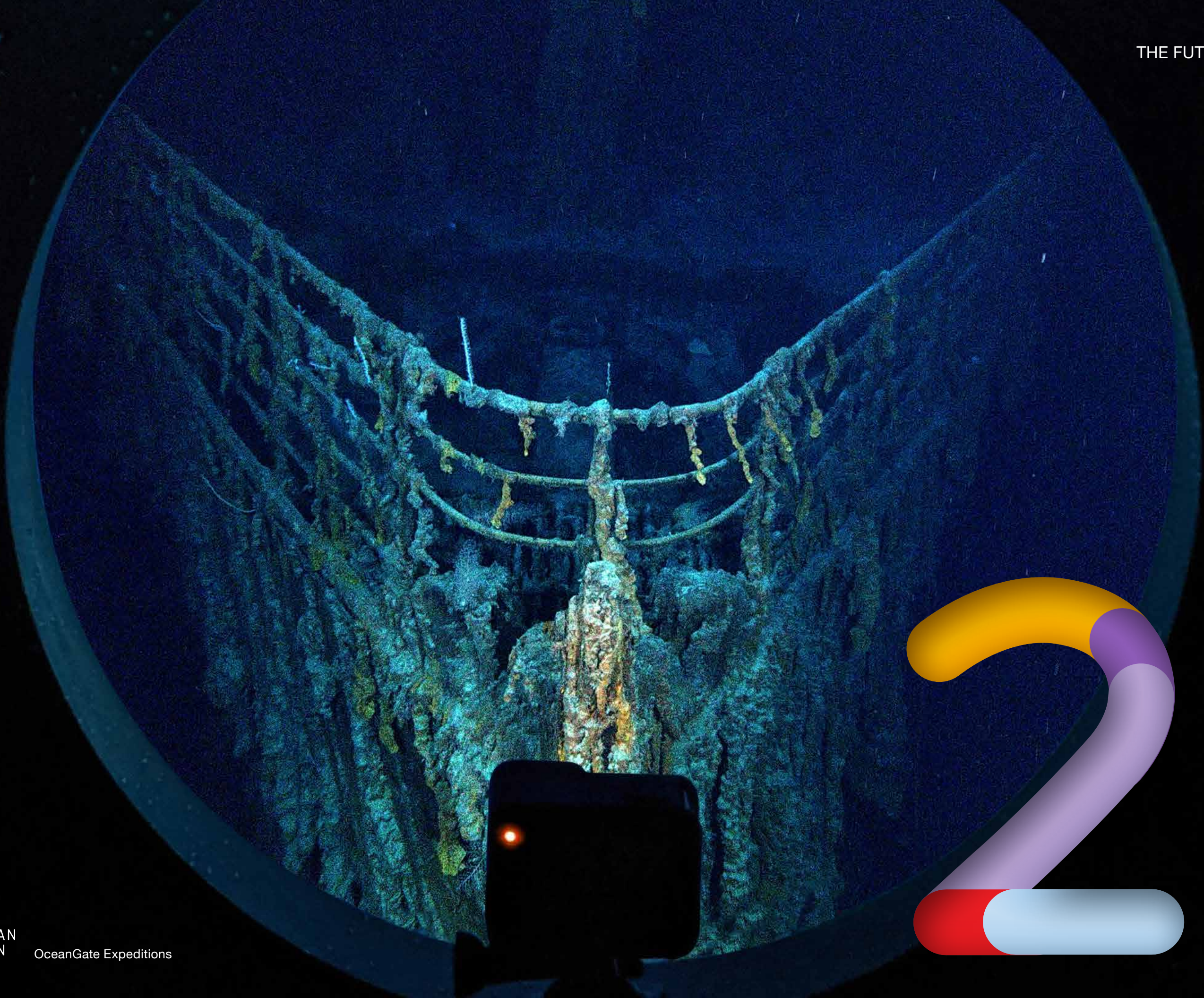
The dive was a holy grail trip for many. “I’m not a millionaire,” banker Renata Rojas told the BBC. “I’ve been saving money for a long, long time. I made a lot of sacrifices in my life to be able to get to Titanic.”

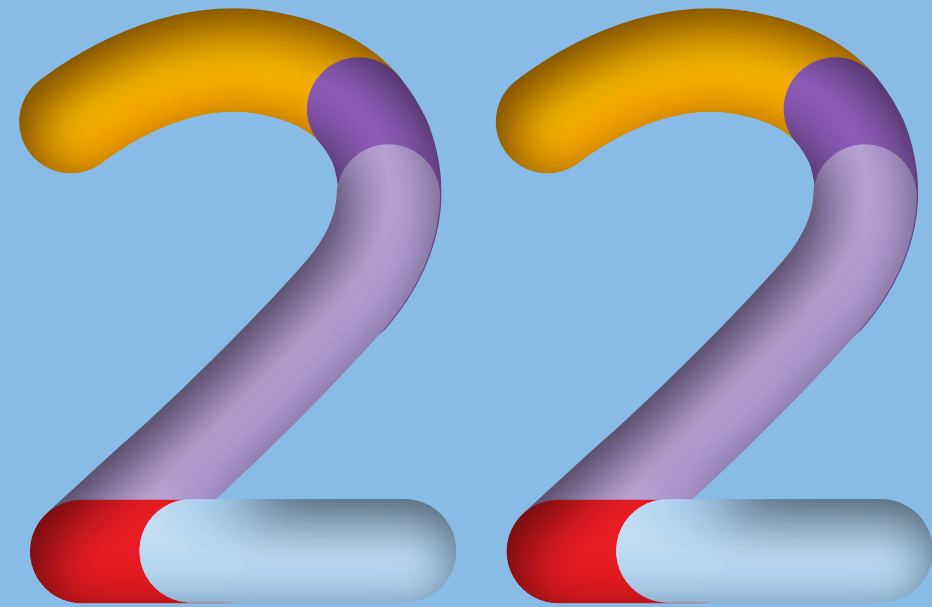
The travelers, called “mission specialists,” must meet certain physical criteria, including basic strength, balance, mobility, and flexibility. OceanGate Expeditions gives examples such as climbing a six-foot ladder or carrying 20 pounds.

The company has another dive planned for 2023, and CEO and founder Stockton Rush anticipates growing demand. “There will be a time when people will go to space for less cost and very regularly,” Rush told the BBC. “I think the same thing is going to happen going under water.”

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

We charted the rise of elite academic adventures curated by scientific experts in “The Future 100: 2022.” One year later, as the travel industry continues to stabilize post-lockdowns, people are still looking for once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences—and they’re venturing into the unknown to get them.





# ABSURDIST STAYS

The weird and the wonderful take center stage as travelers opt for one-of-a-kind stays.



By summer 2023, travelers will get the chance to stay in a floating avocado in Chile, a giant flowerpot in the United States, or a blooming pink flower in Mexico. These are a few of the projects that have been selected by Airbnb as part of its 2022 OMG! Fund.

In October, Airbnb injected \$10 million to help realize 100 fantastical guest experiences around the world. The projects will sit within the site's OMG! category, which already features unusual short-stay rentals ranging from a converted Spice Bus from the original *Spice World* movie in the United Kingdom to a guitar house in Korea.

The investment from Airbnb shows demand for strange and uncommon stays, while the tens of thousands of entries around the world demonstrate the creative thirst of aspiring designers, architects, and builders. One recipient, Pablo C from Mexico, took inspiration from sci-fi movies for his organic-form spaceship. "The idea was to do something out of the ordinary, never seen before; something rare and beautiful that would impress any human being."

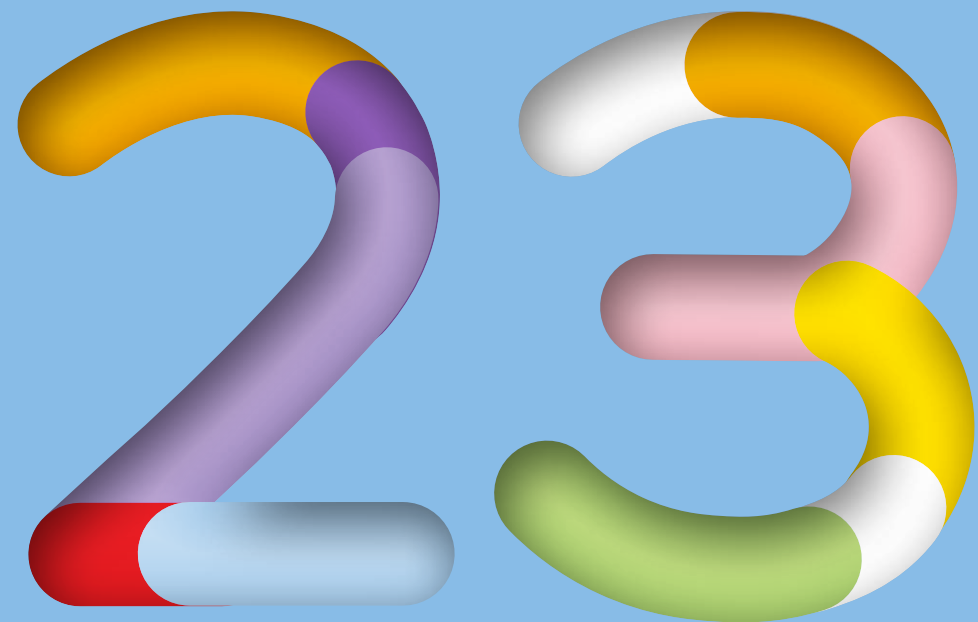
#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Travelers are seeking novel and memorable stays that are equal parts quirky and fun, and have an OMG factor.

**“The idea was to do something out of the ordinary, never seen before; something rare and beautiful that would impress any human being.”**

**Pablo C,  
Airbnb OMG! Fund recipient**





# TEMPERATE TRAVEL

Rising temperatures will prompt travelers  
to seek out cooler destinations.



Climate change is already impacting the tourism industry. The headline-making heat of summer 2022 saw planes grounded and rail journeys canceled. With the crisis set to continue, cooler destinations are playing up their advantage, seeking to attract visitors who want to avoid prolonged and intense heat, while hotter spots face a battle to retain tourists.

During the UK's July 2022 heatwave, Promote Shetland, the marketing organization for the Shetland Islands, tweeted it was "officially the coolest place in the UK." Located in the middle of the North Sea, the islands have average highs of 58°F in the summer months. The tweet aimed to entice travelers seeking more comfortable temperatures and appeal to those who would not previously have considered Shetland a must-see summer destination.

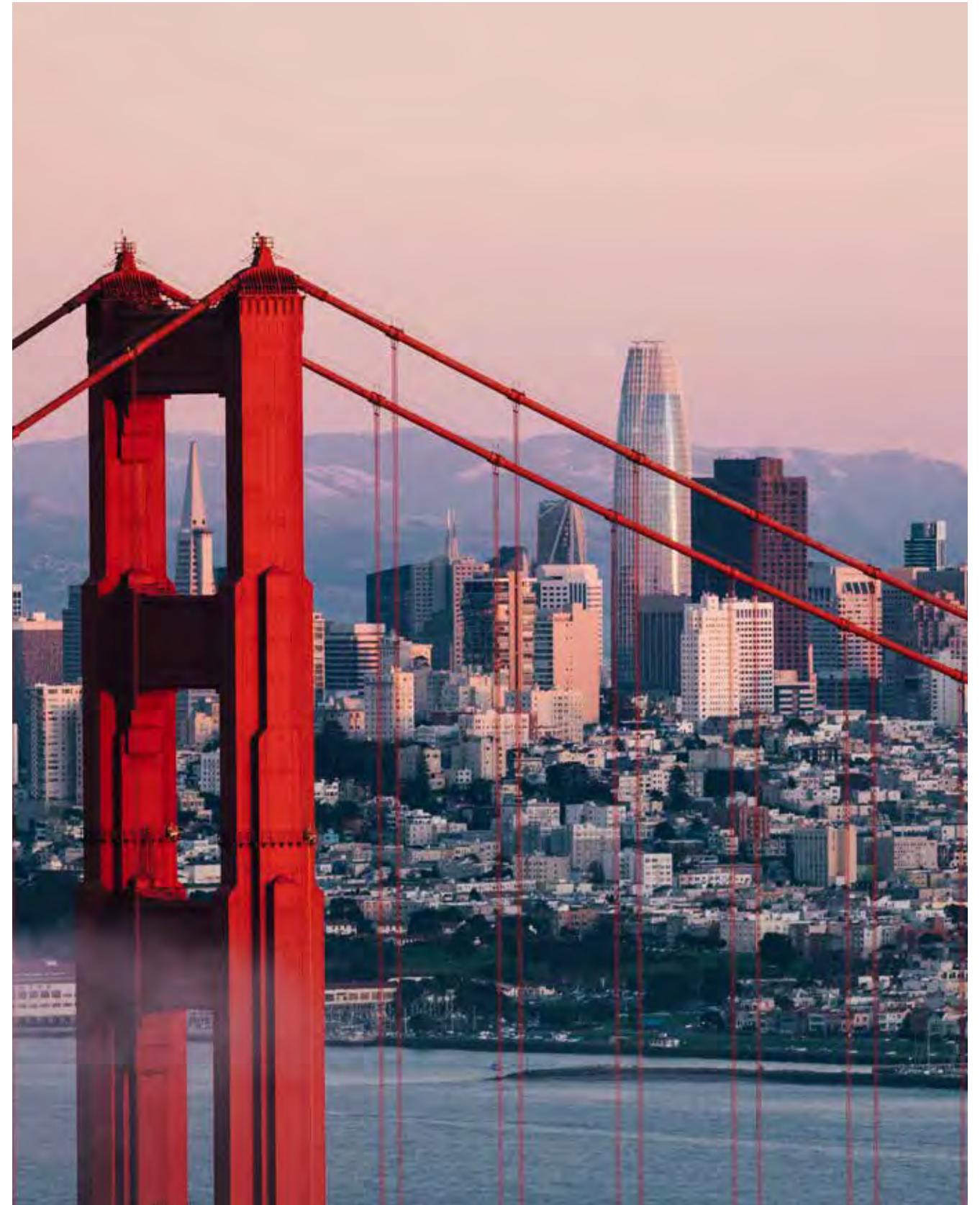
## In the future, climate change is likely to be a key factor in planning travel.

In the United States, San Francisco could soon lure tourists from heat-trapped cities further inland. The city stands to benefit from its coastal location as cold winds sweeping in from the ocean make for a moderate climate in the summer months. Joe D'Alessandro, CEO of the San Francisco Travel Association, told the *New York Times* that he was “considering marketing the summer shivers with tourist slogans along the lines of ‘Come cool down’.”

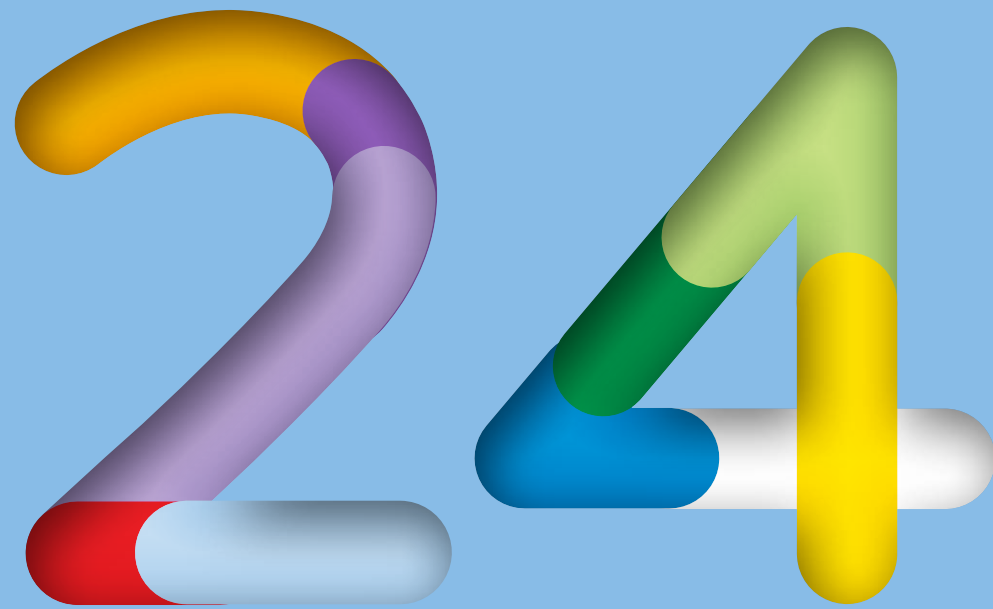
For hot spots, the battle is on to keep tourists coming. The city of London launched the third iteration of its Cool Spaces map in 2022, which highlights indoor and outdoor locations where visitors and residents alike can retreat from the heat.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

In the future, climate change is likely to be a key factor in planning travel. Prepare to see the concept of a summer vacation evolve as tourists reimagine travel over the coming years.







# METAMOBILITY

Automotive brands are reimagining mobility for the metaverse.



Car brands and automakers are bringing their mobility solutions to the metaverse. Renault is partnering with The Sandbox to offer virtual automotive experiences in the metaverse. Renault Korea Motors inked a deal with the virtual platform in September 2022 to bring its cars into the virtual realm and “to introduce new types of experiences that combine automobiles and digital assets in The Sandbox,” says Cindy Lee, CEO of The Sandbox Korea.

Volvo launched its latest electric vehicle in the metaverse in summer 2022. Conceptualized by a consortium of WPP agencies, Volvoverse hosted Volvo India’s launch event for the rechargeable XC40. The event took place in the metaverse as a way to highlight Volvo’s sustainable ethos. “The metaverse launch also contributes to our sustainability mission as it leaves a negligible carbon footprint as compared to conventional launches,” explains Jyoti Malhotra, managing director of Volvo Car India.



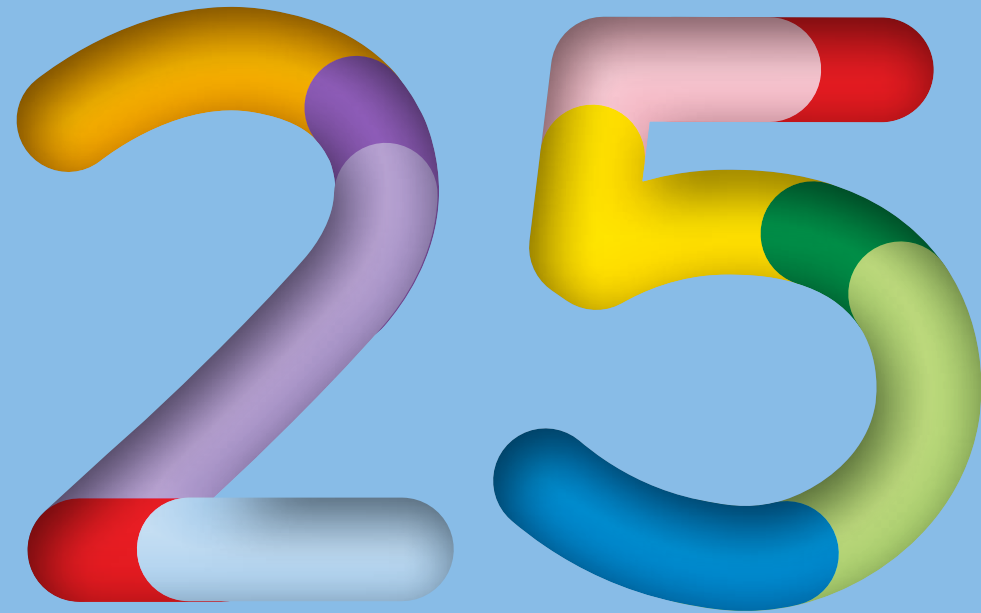
**The metaverse market for the automotive industry is projected to grow from \$1.9 billion in 2022 to \$16.5 billion by 2030.**

Also in India, Hyundai took to Roblox in August the same year to launch its latest SUV. The event included educational spaces such as virtual test drives, a virtual showroom, and a virtual service center, alongside social gaming elements including a mini game, photo booth, and treasure hunt.

Ford is preparing to enter the metaverse with the filing of 19 trademarks across its brands that cover virtual cars, trucks, vans, SUVs, and clothing, and also cover a proposed online marketplace for NFTs.

#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The metaverse market for the automotive industry is projected to grow from \$1.9 billion in 2022 to \$16.5 billion by 2030, according to a report by MarketsandMarkets. Innovative leaders in the auto industry are looking to capitalize on this growth—rethinking metamobility and traditional consumer touchpoints along the way.



# SEXUAL WELLNESS RETREATS

A new class of retreat is promoting sexual wellness.

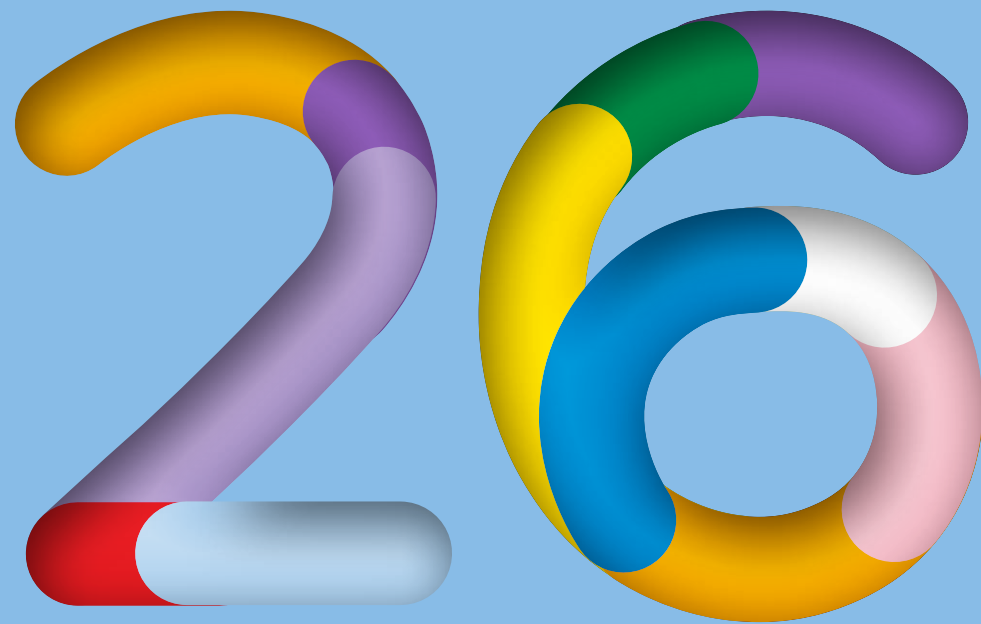
In 2022, the Global Wellness Institute predicted that global wellness tourism would be worth \$1.3 trillion by 2025, with sexual wellness the fastest growing sector in the market. Sexual intimacy and literacy programming are already on the rise at wellness-focused resorts.

Guests at the St Regis Punta Mita can partake in the resort's latest offering: a sexual wellness retreat. A first for the luxury brand, the stay is led by a sex educator who invites participants to explore their mental and physical sexuality in a private, intimate setting. Couples and singles are encouraged to attend.

Located in the Hamptons in New York, Shou Sugi Ban House offers a private 90-minute sexual workshop for women. The Sensual Lover workshop costs spa guests \$350 and aims to "encourage guests to explore health through a more intimate lens," the hotel's creative director Jodie Webber told *Travel and Leisure Southeast Asia*. The W Brisbane hotel in Australia also has a resident sexologist for its own workshops and retreat offerings.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Wellness offerings in the travel and hospitality industries are embracing sexual wellness as consumers look to deepen their understanding of their bodies, their minds, and the connection between the two, during their travels.



# TOP THREE DESTINATIONS

## **Morocco is the next affordable travel hotspot for remote workers.**

With its mild climate, rich history, desert, beaches, and relative affordability compared to nearby Europe, Morocco is attracting the next wave of remote workers.

In 2022, remote working and coliving company Outsite took over a traditional-style riad in Marrakesh. It offers rooms built around a central courtyard, with coworking staples such as a shared kitchen and working spaces alongside a pool, hammam, and rooftop terrace. New York Stock Exchange-listed Selina opened luxury Bedouin-style tents in Agafay in May 2022, the first of what the brand says will be a big portfolio in the North African kingdom. While Morocco doesn't yet have a digital nomad visa, many visit on a 90-day tourist visa.

## **Kyoto wants tourists back—but with less Instagram chasing and more small, curated tours.**

Pre-pandemic, Kyoto attracted nine million visitors a year, drawn by its temples, gardens, geishas, and cuisine. There were traffic jams and crowds.

Now as Kyoto reopens, it wants to offer a more meaningful experience through smaller, tailored itineraries. Hotel The Mitsui Kyoto runs private tours of nearby Nijō Castle, originally built in 1603 as the residence of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the Edo Period. In spring 2023, Danish chef René Redzepi's Noma is

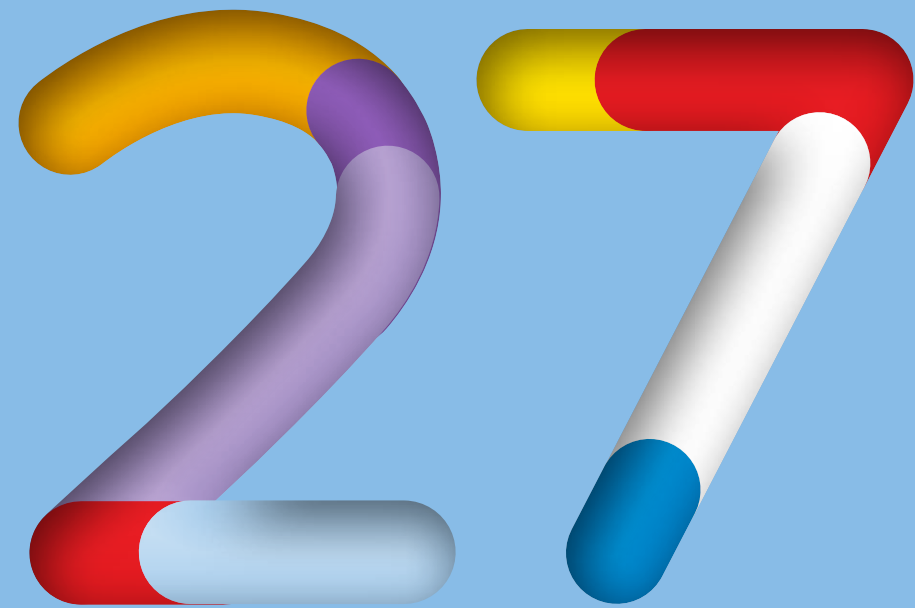
opening a 10-week pop-up in the city, featuring celebrated local ingredients during cherry blossom season. New venture Manabi Japan (or Study Japan) is starting small tours in 2023 just outside Kyoto city, with day trips to the center. There will be guest speakers on topics such as Noh theater or indigo dyeing, aimed at “helping people get below the surface,” founder Lucinda Ping Cowing tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

**Tanzania is fast becoming known as the go-to destination for solo travelers.**

Famous for adventure and family travel, Tanzania is now starting to draw solo travelers as well.

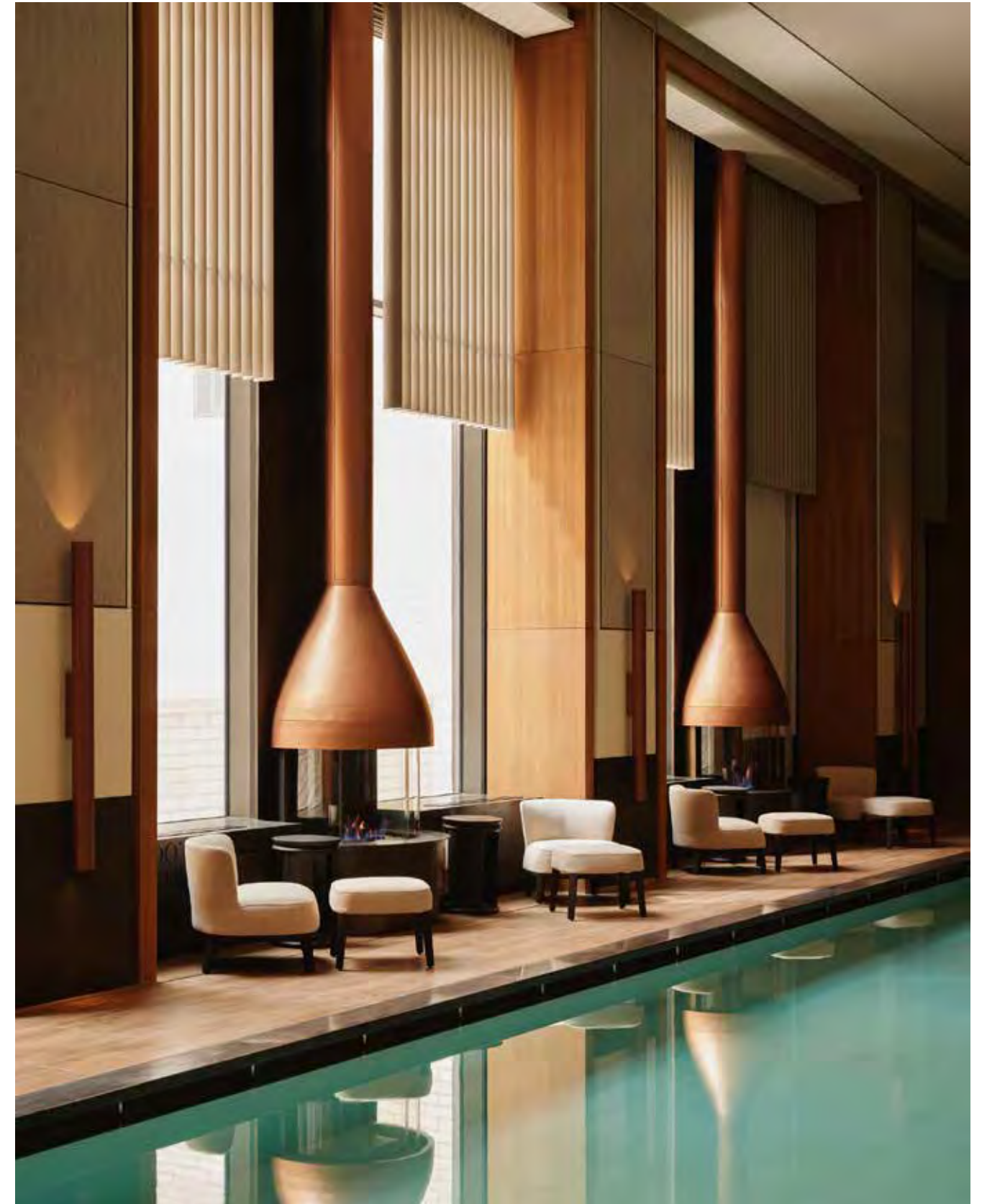
It is a place of superlatives: Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa; Ngorongoro Crater, the world’s largest intact volcanic caldera; and the Olduvai Gorge, one of the most important paleoanthropological sites on the planet. Then there’s Serengeti National Park, known for the largest annual migration in the world of wildebeest and zebra, and home to the largest lion population in Africa. Chanice “Queenie” Williams, who runs travel planning site Fly with Queenie, described her solo trip to Tanzania as “perfect for solo travelers, particularly women who may not feel comfortable alone,” in an interview in the *Washington Post*.





# URBAN SANCTUARIES

Hospitality brands are designing luxury oases for the heart of the city.





Peace and tranquility can be hard to find in the city, but new hospitality locations are solving that. From hotels that offer guests serene retreats to eateries where diners can sit back, relax, and recharge, places of sanctuary are popping up in cities around the world. These pockets of calm offer an escape from the hectic pace of urban life.

Aman Beverly Hills, due to open in 2026, describes itself as “a serene oasis in a legendary city.” The resort aims to celebrate the power of nature, with Californian foliage and palm trees integrated into the architecture and

landscaping, guaranteeing that guests feel cocooned from the frenzy of Los Angeles. Multinational hospitality company Aman also opened a New York hotel in 2022. Here, a sense of calm is anchored in composed and harmonious design, juxtaposing the concrete jungle that surrounds it.

Similarly in Europe, Six Senses is launching a new resort in Rome. This latest addition to its global portfolio is set to open in early 2023 and is within walking distance of the Trevi Fountain. Inspired by ancient Roman traditions, it invites guests to discover the art of bathing at the resort’s spa, a wellness retreat within urban surroundings, while the rooftop conceals a restful secret garden where guests can unwind. Both Aman and Six Senses ensure their guests can recharge and are revitalized when they choose to enter the city again.

Edition hotels tapped Japanese architect Kengo Kuma to design a plant-filled refuge in the heart of Tokyo. “I wanted to prove that it was possible to create a real oasis at the heart of the big city,” Kuma told *Dezeen*. The hotel, which first opened its doors in October 2020, began welcoming international travelers in 2022.

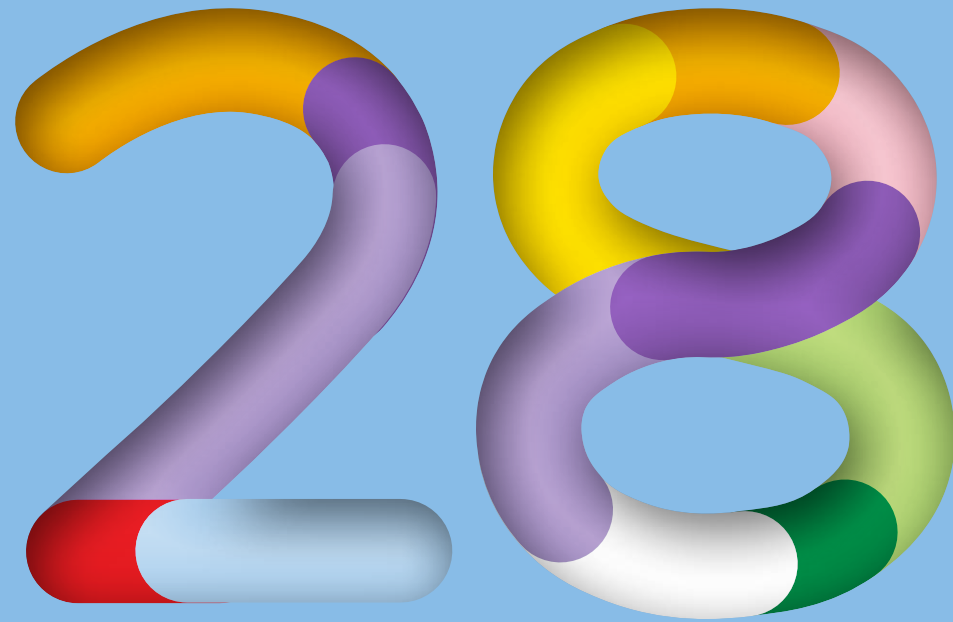
It’s not just hotels offering escape from the hustle and bustle. In Melbourne, the Au79 café is a haven of tranquility within the busy Chadstone Shopping Centre. The coffee destination, created by interior design studio Mim Design, mimics a botanical greenhouse, with its arched structure and hanging greenery making it the ideal location for passers-by to take a breather from shopping.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

The future of ultra-luxe travel is to offer visitors the best of both worlds: seclusion and quiet mixed with urban culture and excitement.







# METATRAVEL

Hospitality is being reimagined for the metaverse.



The metaverse is revolutionizing travel experiences, as physical destinations begin to blur with fantastical virtual worlds.

After opening its first real-world hotel in Manchester in the United Kingdom in 2021, design-led hotel brand Leven announced in 2022 that its second location would be in Decentraland. The Levenverse is a digital amenity space offering activities, networking, and wellness events. “By integrating the real-world hospitality experience with the virtual world through brand collaborations, art, design, and activations, travelers in both spaces will be able to experience unique social and game experiences IRL and AFRL (away from real life),” Timothy Griffin, Leven cofounder and principal at Wellbrook Hospitality, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

Tapping into the world of augmented reality (AR), Moxy Hotels, part of Marriott International, launched the Moxy Universe, Play Beyond AR experience in July



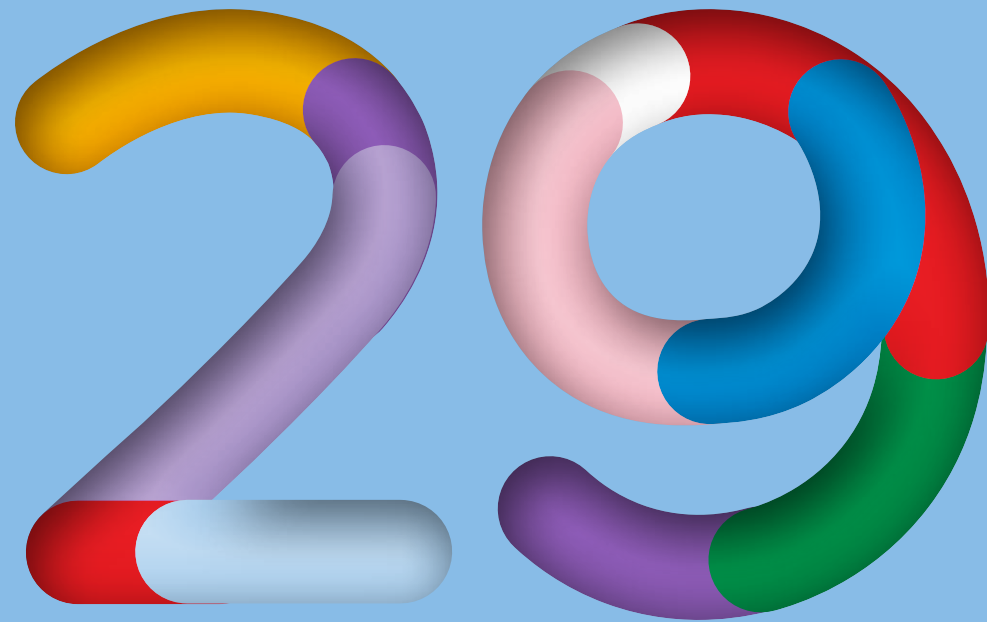
2022. The experience allowed visitors to create their own avatars in the Moxy Universe, which transcended the digital into the physical hotels as a series of AR challenges. Avatars could join visitors while they had a drink in the hotel bar, in their private hotel rooms, or even during an exercise session at the gym. The experience was available at 12 Moxy Hotels across the Asia-Pacific region from July to December 2022.

Luxury travel company Brown & Hudson is already delivering meta travel experiences for its high-net-worth clientele. A new metaverse collection includes Capo, where virtual reality capabilities in the metaverse allow clients to re-experience trips they have already enjoyed in the real world. With a videographer capturing the action IRL, holidaymakers are able to retrace their steps in a more immersive way than through photos alone, reliving happy memories and continuing to explore long after they've arrived home.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Hospitality brands are stepping in to act as home bases and guides for a rising class of metatourists. Joshua Senior, cofounder of Leven and director at Branco Capital, predicts that “as the metaverse evolves from a sci-fi concept into a reality, every industry disrupted by the digital era will feel its impact. We believe the potential for creative hospitality brands is limitless.”





# HIDDEN DESTINATIONS

Hoping to lure new travelers, sites that were once off-limits are opening up.

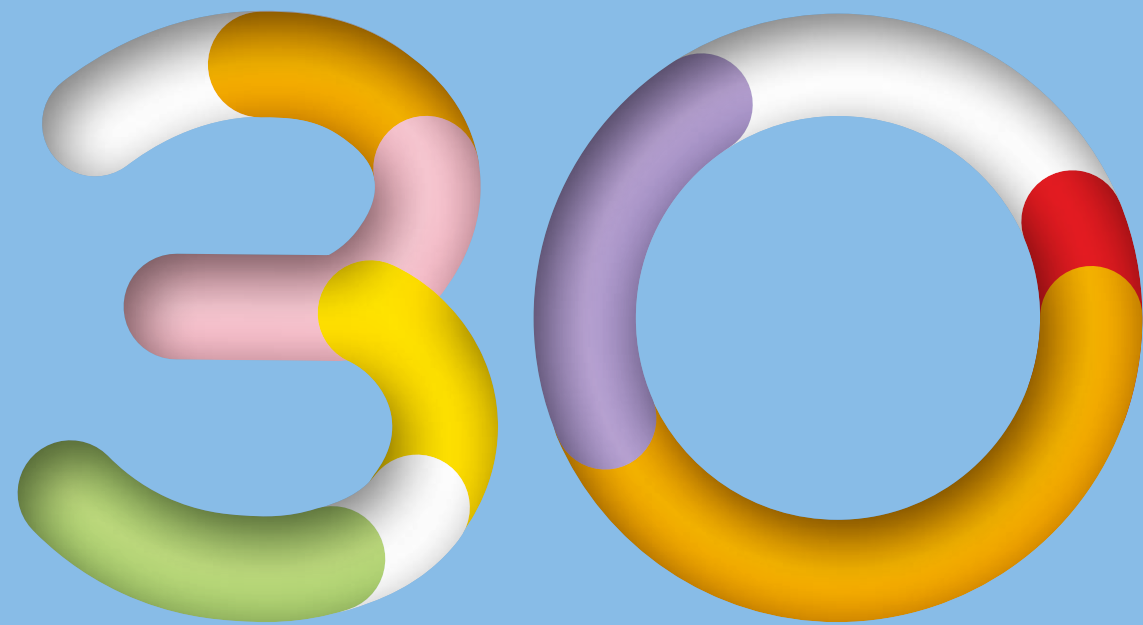
Saudi Arabia, which has only allowed foreign tourists to visit for non-religious reasons in the past couple of years, is investing massive sums into its tourism trade in a bid to become the region's leading destination. This includes sharing its previously hidden treasures with the world, opening ancient heritage sites for the very first time. Previously off-limits ancient pagan sites such as the tomb of Qasr al-Farid (which means "lonely castle") are now open to visitors, indicating a relaxing of the kingdom's previously strict social codes. In September 2022, the government announced further plans to streamline visas for foreign tourists to make travel easier.

Other destinations are going below ground. In Rome, the Catacomb of Commodilla, constructed in the fourth century, is set to open to visitors for the first time in 2025 after being restored by the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology. In London, old tube stations and tunnels are also being opened to the public for the first time in 100 years. Through its Hidden London series, the London Transport Museum is launching a tour of the original Shepherd's Bush Underground station, unseen since 1924.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

While the past several years have seen travel hotspots attempting to curb crowds or even closing off monuments for preservation reasons, a growing number of destinations are using previously inaccessible areas to attract travelers seeking unique experiences.





# DARK ZONES

Adventurous travelers pursuing grit and history are turning to dark destinations.



Not for travelers seeking to soak up the sun and relax, dark tourism takes visitors to hard-hitting locations that are often associated with death, war, and disaster. Places such as Japan's "suicide forest" Aokigahara, Auschwitz in Poland, and Cambodia's Killing Fields are considered dark travel destinations. The market value of dark tourism is expected to reach \$36.5 billion by 2032, according to an October 2022 survey by Future Market Insights.

Visit Ukraine has launched guided tours including "Kyiv is Unbeatable," which it describes as "very popular among foreign tourists." Since September 2022, it has been offering tours to de-occupied and demined cities, including Romanivka, Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, and Borodyanka. "We realized that caring people have a demand to see the traces of war with their own eyes," says Anton Taranenko, CEO of Visit Ukraine. The tours are not intended for profit and all funds are donated towards people and cities affected by the ongoing war.



As well as witnessing the effects of war, Taranenko explained to CNN that he also wants tourists to experience Ukrainian bravery and the defiant spirit of the people.

Nuclear disaster zone Chernobyl became a popular destination after the eponymous HBO television series took to the screens in 2019, but in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought travel to a halt. Now, as travel continues to reopen, 73% of travelers are looking forward to experiencing “out of comfort zone” travel that pushes them to their limits in 2023, according to a global survey by Booking.com.

#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The allure of dark travel is to offer perspective. “People are trying to understand dark things, trying to understand things like the realities of death, dying, and violence,” Jeffrey Podoshen, professor of marketing at Franklin and Marshall College, told the *New York Times*. “They look at this type of tourism as a way to prepare themselves.”

**73% of travelers are looking forward to experiencing “out of comfort zone” travel that pushes them to their limits in 2023.**

31

# BRANDS & MARKETING

40



# WEB3 BRANDS

Brands are taking on Web3.

YSL Beauté debuted its Web3 and NFT initiative in June 2022, aiming to create a new loyalty experience. YSL NFT holders will gain access to additional content, launches, drops, and more throughout the year on the brand’s token-gated page. The same month, Prada dropped its first Timecapsule collection of NFTs, which allow consumers to access exclusive experiences—the monthly Timecapsule issues have sold out ever since. The Prada Crypted community on Discord also launched as part of the initial drop, to expand the brand’s digital reach and community.

Niche is a new form of social media for Web3 that aims to democratize data and expand opportunities for growth for its consumers, users, and brands. Cofounder Zaven Nahapetyan tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence that his new platform “opens up a lot of opportunities that don’t exist with traditional, non-decentralized social media, because—by the nature of decentralization—it makes it really easy to buy, sell, and trade content.”

Even food brands are taking advantage. Starbucks will soon offer a Web3-based rewards program in which collectible coffee-themed NFTs will serve as tokens for owners to gain access to additional drops, membership, and events. McDonald’s has filed trademarks to deliver food digitally and in person from a virtual restaurant. Both McDonald’s and McCafé are included in the trademark applications, with language outlining details for “operating a virtual restaurant online featuring home delivery,” indicating that fast-food fans may have the chance to order a future Big Mac in the digital realm.

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Web3 is inevitable. To prepare for its arrival, brands are arming themselves with updated digital strategies.





**Web3 is inevitable.  
To prepare for its  
arrival, brands are  
arming themselves  
with updated  
digital strategies.**



# VIRTUAL AMBASSADORS

Brand representatives are getting  
a digital upgrade.



Soul Machines pairs photo-realistic digital humans with artificial intelligence (AI) to offer a more intimate virtual engagement. “AI and, more broadly, Autonomous Animation can help brands connect with their audience through the ability to provide empathy and personalization at scale,” Shantenu Agarwal, vice president of Soul Machines, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. The company is currently working to create personalized customer experiences for clients such as Nestlé, Twitch, and the World Health Organization.

“We are seeing many brands use this new platform as an opportunity to rethink how they want to represent themselves, with some realizing that the power of digital technologies allows them to easily provide multiple looks and personalities,” explains Agarwal. “This in effect empowers their audience to choose who they speak with and customize their experience, which has not been possible until today.”

The metaverse is set to enhance social interactions in three-dimensional virtual worlds and the roles of avatars are gaining brand value. During the VivaTech

**“As our world gets increasingly digital, brands need a new way to be more human.”**

### Dentsu

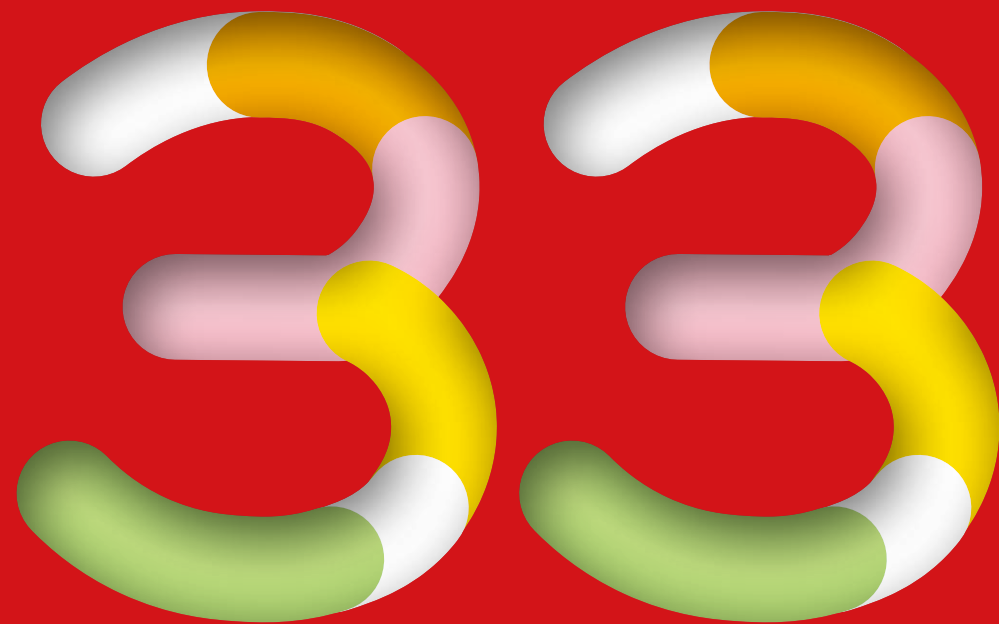
June 2020 conference in Paris, the LVMH luxury group introduced Livi, a digital representative showcasing its new innovations. Qatar Airways unveiled a “metahuman” cabin crew member, Sama, to guide guests through its QVerse digital flight. And Dermalogica has created Natalia as a training tool. “We can now use metaverse technology to train millions of consumers and hundreds of thousands of therapists about changing skin condition,” says Aurelian Lis, global CEO of Dermalogica.

In addition, brand adoption of virtual ambassadors has prompted Japanese marketing agency Dentsu to launch a division dedicated to creating virtual identities. “As our world gets increasingly digital, brands need a new way to be more human,” Dentsu states.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

As the metaverse evolves, the advanced avatars tracked in “The Future 100: 2022” are now being leveraged by brands to better connect with people. “The future for brands is more connected, and authentic relationships are possible due to these more immersive, engaging, and interactive experiences,” says Agarwal.





# EARTH AS STAKEHOLDER

Our planet is taking its rightful place at the corporate table—as a stakeholder.

In September 2022, Yvon Chouinard, the billionaire founder of Patagonia, gave the company away to a trust designed to funnel all profits to fight environmental devastation. In doing so, Chouinard set a new bar for environmental corporate leadership.

“As of now, Earth is our only shareholder,” the cult outdoor gear company declared. “All profits, in perpetuity, will go to our mission to save our home planet.”

Patagonia’s headline-grabbing move stands in stark contrast to the usual path of going public with a stock market listing. “Instead of going public, you could say we’re ‘going purpose,’” said Chouinard. “Instead of extracting value from nature and transforming it into wealth for investors, we’ll use the wealth Patagonia creates to protect the source of all wealth.”

The move contrasts with the approaches of Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, also billionaires, who have chosen to train their sights on life beyond Earth.

Patagonia’s move is jaw-dropping and unsurprising at the same time. The California-based company has long donated 1% of its sales to environmental groups and is known for generous employee benefits, from on-site nurseries to surfing afternoons off.

Also in September 2022, Edinburgh-based Faith In Nature, an eco beauty company, appointed a “nature guardian”—a director to represent nature—to its board. Brontie Ansell, a director of Lawyers for Nature and a lecturer at Essex Law School, is the first to be appointed to the role. She told the *Guardian* her role was akin to a guardian acting on behalf of a child in court.



**Earth is now our  
only shareholder.**

Other businesses taking sustainable strides include the British high-street retailer Selfridges, which has pledged that by 2030, 45% of transactions will come from circular products, whether resale, rental, refill, repair, or recycled.

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

Despite years of shrinking forests, species extinction, and increasingly severe weather, most for-profit businesses have taken only baby steps towards sustainable practices, citing profit-thirsty shareholders. By designating Earth as a shareholder, Patagonia and others are reframing the debate—and radically raising the bar.

**“As of now, Earth  
is our only  
shareholder.  
All profits, in  
perpetuity, will  
go to our mission  
to save our home  
planet.”**

**Patagonia**



# META- INCLUSIVITY

Brands and creators are bringing inclusive values to the metaverse.



Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s “New Realities: Into the Metaverse and Beyond” report finds that 65% of people who have heard of the metaverse think it will be more inclusive than the real world. Now a host of brands are working on initiatives that could deliver on that promise.

In 2022, the World Economic Forum announced an initiative with Microsoft, Sony, Lego, Meta, and others to collectively work towards an “ethical and inclusive metaverse.”

Beauty brand Clinique has launched “Metaverse More Like Us,” an NFT beauty campaign that stakes a claim for equitable representation in the metaverse. The brand partnered with Daz 3D, creator of one of the world’s most inclusive avatar collections, Non-Fungible People, and commissioned three makeup artists from underrepresented communities to create signature looks—one virtual, one real-life—that were then released to the Daz 3D community.



While some projects tackle inclusion with a broad brush, others are zeroing in on the needs of specific marginalized communities.

Also in 2022, the NFTY Collective launched Unhidden, an NFT collection to represent people with seen and unseen disabilities. Creator Giselle Mota wants to give disabled people “a choice to take on a virtual identity that reflects their true physical selves if they so choose.” She tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence that “a truly inclusive metaverse looks as diverse as the people it intends to have as users.”

Catering to Islamic values, MetaKawn is an emerging metaverse platform whose Huffaz NFT collection highlights themes of tolerance, multi-ethnicity, and gender equality. Idiat Shiole of Hadeeart, a Muslim virtual fashion designer, creates designs for gaming platforms like Decentraland with a distinct Nigerian aesthetic, such as hijabs, tribal markings, and hair braids.

For the LGBTQ+ community, Meta and Mastercard recently collaborated with creators RhondaX and Skitter on True Self World, a social experience in Horizon Worlds where members and allies can meet and connect.



Yiran Shu, a digital creator and metaverse designer, sums up the collective motivation for all of these initiatives, explaining to Wunderman Thompson Intelligence: “In the metaverse, it’s more of a matter of representation. We want to make people feel welcome, to feel that you are not ignored, you’re not just another avatar. We acknowledge your superpower in this world. I think that’s the difference: it’s a step we choose to take—to represent.”

### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

Brands have a responsibility to create an inclusive metaverse by ensuring avatars, spaces, and narratives offer full-spectrum representation.



# MULTIVERSAL BRANDS

**Established brands are dropping limited-edition products cloaked in the mystique of futuristic technology.**

The Into the Multiverse trend that Wunderman Thompson Intelligence reported in “The Future 100: 2020” first explored the idea that consumers, tired of the mundanity of modern life, are seeking portals of escapism and adventure that offer a glimpse of a more captivating and engaging reality. Brands are now using this insight as the catalyst to create intriguing, otherworldly products. Rather than relying on traditional product cues based on ingredients, provenance, scent, and flavor, this new generation of experiential products embraces futuristic technology and the language of the metaverse.

Coca-Cola’s Creations platform, launched in 2022, “aims to surprise, delight, and engage global audiences through magical and unexpected tastes, moments, and collaborations.” The inaugural product, the outer-space-themed beverage Starlight, was described as a taste “reminiscent of stargazing around a campfire, as well as a cooling sensation that evokes the feeling of a cold journey to space.” Subsequent products have included Byte and Dreamworld that, in place of standard flavor descriptions, are said to taste like pixels and dreams respectively. Coca-Cola trademark president Selman Careaga told the *Drum* these Creations products received twice the engagement of any other program in 2022.



Unilever-owned deodorant brand Lynx also eschewed the conventions of its category with the launch of Lynx AI body spray, which it created with Swiss fragrance specialist Firmenich. The launch includes no scent or fragrance notes, but taps into the allure of futuristic technology, proclaiming the limited-edition product is “powered by artificial intelligence” using “46 terabytes of data, 6,000 ingredients, 3.5 million possible combinations.” Lynx stated that the product launch aims to drive growth in the deodorant category by “tapping into Generation Z’s fascination with the world of tech and crypto.”

### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

Brands are pushing the boundaries of reality, blurring the lines between what is real and what is not. As creativity becomes unbounded, brands are transporting consumers to other worlds (see 61, Multiversal design, page 139, and 74, Intergalactic luxe, page 166).

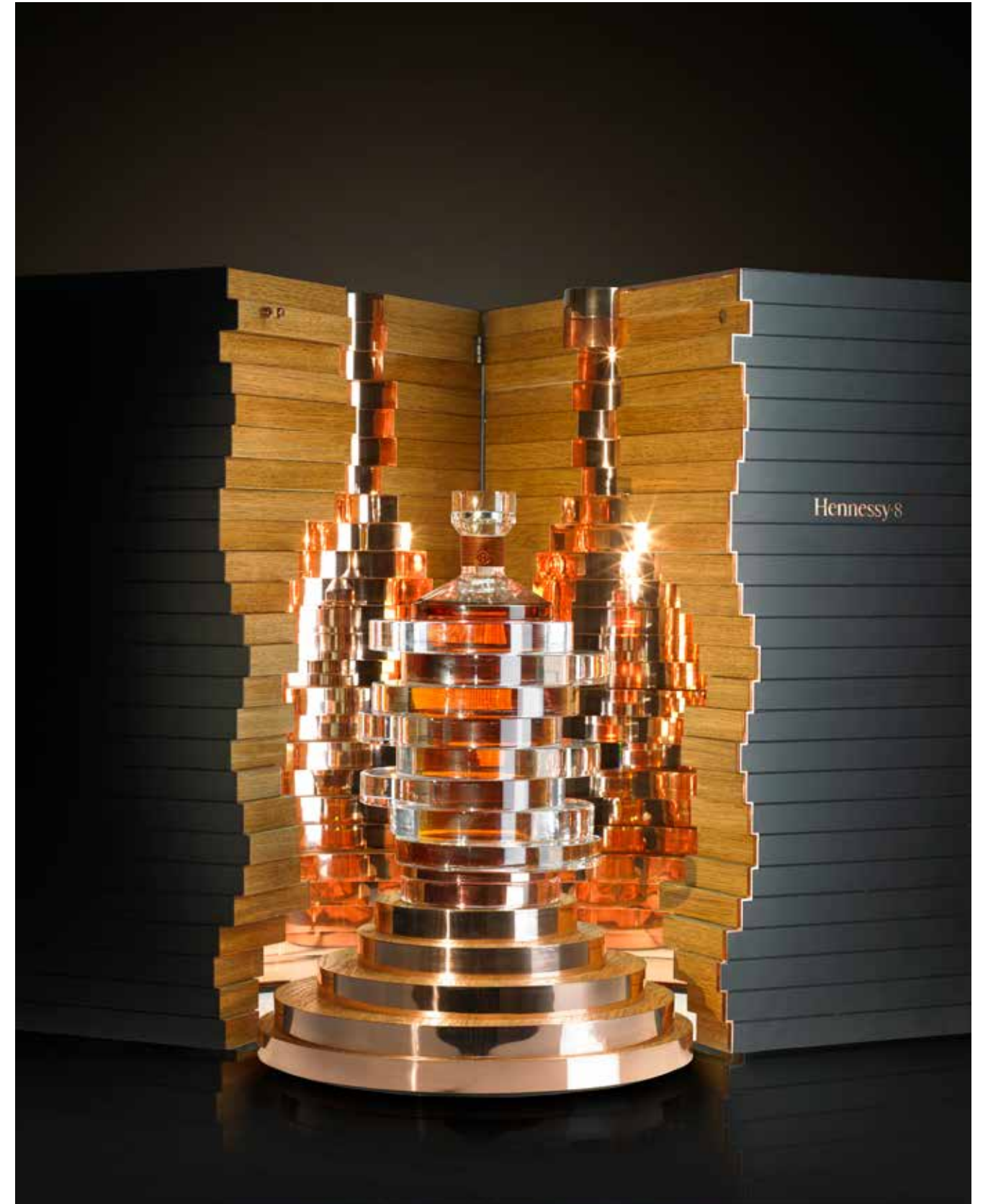


**As creativity becomes unbounded, brands are transporting consumers to other worlds.**



# VIP NFTS

NFTs are changing the game  
for brand loyalty.



Brands are leveraging NFTs to unlock consumer loyalty for the next era of metaverse engagement, offering consumers exclusive access to products and services.

The first NFT restaurant in New York City is in the works. NFTs will serve as the key to entry for diners at the Flyfish Club, a members-only upscale seafood restaurant set to open its (physical) doors in 2023. The membership will potentially stand as a true “asset”: buyers may be able to lease, sell, or use their membership on a monthly basis.

Coachella has launched the Coachella Keys Collection, a group of 10 NFTs providing each buyer a lifetime pass to the festival. Purchases made in the NFT marketplace included exclusive perks for the 2022 festival, such as a celebrity chef dinner and front-row access to events. A first in exclusive NFT entertainment, Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher sold NFT tokens to allow access to their gated NFT web series Stoner Cats.

Consumers who bought an NFT from Hennessy received a physical and digital version of the first and last limited-edition bottles of Hennessy 8. Buyers could request that the physical asset—which includes a commemorative sculpture, an engraved Baccarat-blown carafe, a pipette, a cork holder, a chest, and an authentication plate—be delivered at whim.

Patrón tequila has also launched its first NFT collection: 150 one-of-a-kind editions of the brand’s Chairman’s Reserve, accompanied by one physical and one digital bottle. The crypto purchase is secured by BlockBar with a digital record of authenticity and ownership, and the physical product can be delivered, traded, or gifted via the BlockBar.com marketplace.



“When we look at a virtual shoe, we don’t just see the shoe,” said Ron Faris, VP/GM of Nike Virtual Studios, which is exploring new Web3-enabled loyalty formulas with its .Swoosh platform (see 62, Cocreative commerce, page 141). “This is a shoe that one day could unlock a preorder for a physical product, or another day it unlocks access to a secret chat room with our designers, helping to cocreate. We’re learning that buying a virtual product isn’t the end of a purchase journey, it’s the beginning of it.”

### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

NFTs are changing the future of loyalty, giving buyers exclusive access to select brand experiences.



# AMPLIFYING DIVERSE CREATORS

Growing calls for authentic representation in advertising are driving a wave of brand collaborations with marginalized creative talents.



Globally, 86% of people believe that to support disadvantaged groups, brands need to work with them, not just for them, according to data compiled for Wunderman Thompson Intelligence's 2022 report "Inclusion's Next Wave." Companies are upping their collaborations with creators, artists, and influencers from marginalized backgrounds in a bid to deliver more inclusive and authentic brand communications.

Diversity in Design, a US-based consortium of big-name brands such as Herman Miller Group, Gap, and Airbnb, launched in 2021 with the aim of helping young Black creatives enter the design and creative industries. The General Excellence winner of Fast Company's 2022 Innovation by Design Awards, the organization focuses on reaching potential creatives in high school, college,







# BRAND SAFETY IN THE METAVERSE

How can brands stay protected  
in the metaverse?

Gartner predicts that one in four people will spend at least one hour a day in the metaverse by 2026, so it makes sense for brands to become part of the metaverse. Navigating the evolving metaverse landscape is becoming increasingly important for law firms and in-house legal departments, as more brands roll out new digital strategies.

A number of brands have filed trademarks protecting them in the metaverse. Hermès, CVS, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Mastercard are among the companies that have trademarked their name, logo, virtual goods, and digital assets in the metaverse. Rolex has filed trademark applications with the United States Patent and Trademark Office covering “online auction services for virtual objects” and “online spaces for buyers and sellers of virtual products such as watches and watch parts.”

Beyond patenting, Gareth Burkhill-Howarth, global data protection officer at WPP, has extra tips to share with Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. These include utilizing the technology that comes with the metaverse, such as “smart contracts” for transactions, ownership, and access in virtual worlds; observing what other brands are doing by learning from their wins and fails; and not forgetting about existing brand safety measures. “The metaverse may seem like a completely new space, but learnings from Web 2.0 and the real world should still be applied,” says Burkhill-Howarth.

**“Don’t end up  
playing catch-up.”**

**Gareth Burkhill-Howarth, global  
data protection officer, WPP**

Burkhill-Howarth believes the metaverse is here to stay. “But don’t necessarily expect engagement to be how it is now,” he says. The metaverse will be largely defined by users, who will be shaping experiences for virtual worlds, digital assets, and ownership. Tracking behaviors in the metaverse will be critical for brands to future-proof their strategies as this digital space evolves.

#### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

It’s time for brands to become metaverse-ready, or risk falling behind.

“I would recommend that brands bring together their legal, treasury, finance, compliance, and cyber-security teams with their brand and marketing teams to ensure that they understand the opportunity, risks, and challenges and are ready to execute their metaverse activities,” says Burkhill-Howarth. “Don’t end up playing catch-up.”







# MASS INCLUSIVE BRANDS

Businesses are bringing inclusive products into the mainstream.



“When we design for accessibility, it ends up benefiting a much broader group of people,” according to Kat Holmes, author of *Mismatch: How Inclusion Shapes Design*. It’s also something consumers think brands should do; 72% of global respondents agree that we don’t need to fix disabilities, we need to fix the world for disabled people, according to data from Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s “Inclusion’s Next Wave” report. Realizing the potential business opportunity, more brands are now looking to bring accessible products to the masses.

In July 2022, US-based furniture retailer Pottery Barn launched a new range of adaptive furniture based on its 150 best-selling styles. The pieces were designed with support from the Disability Education and Advocacy Network and are more accessible for people with mobility issues. The range is available online and in stores, at the same price as the original designs.

American clothing retailer Kohl's is also expanding its ranges of adult clothing with adaptable options. In September 2022, it announced it will be adding adaptive products to its own-label Sonoma Goods for Life and Tek Gear brands, as well as introducing adaptive items from other brands to its online store.

Packaged goods are also getting an overhaul. Strauss, one of Israel's largest food manufacturers, announced in February 2022 that it will adapt its snack packaging to make it easier to open for people with disabilities. In Europe, Kellogg's has added NaviLens codes to all of its cereal boxes, allowing those with sight impairments to use their phone to scan the package for nutritional and other information.

### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

People with disabilities and their families have an estimated \$13 trillion in spending power, according to the "Global Economics of Disability 2020" report from Return on Disability. By considering the various needs of a wider audience, brands are able to tap into the opportunity that inclusive design brings, creating better, more accessible products for all.





# AGELESS PLAY

Brands are encouraging play for consumers of all ages.

McDonald's wants to help people recapture the playfulness and joy of childhood. The fast-food chain introduced Happy Meals for adults in October 2022, serving up a toy with popular menu items. "Everyone remembers their first Happy Meal as a kid ... and the can't-sit-still feeling as you dug in to see what was inside," the company says. "That little red box could turn a regular Tuesday into the best. day. ever. And now, we're reimagining that experience in a whole new way—this time, for adults."

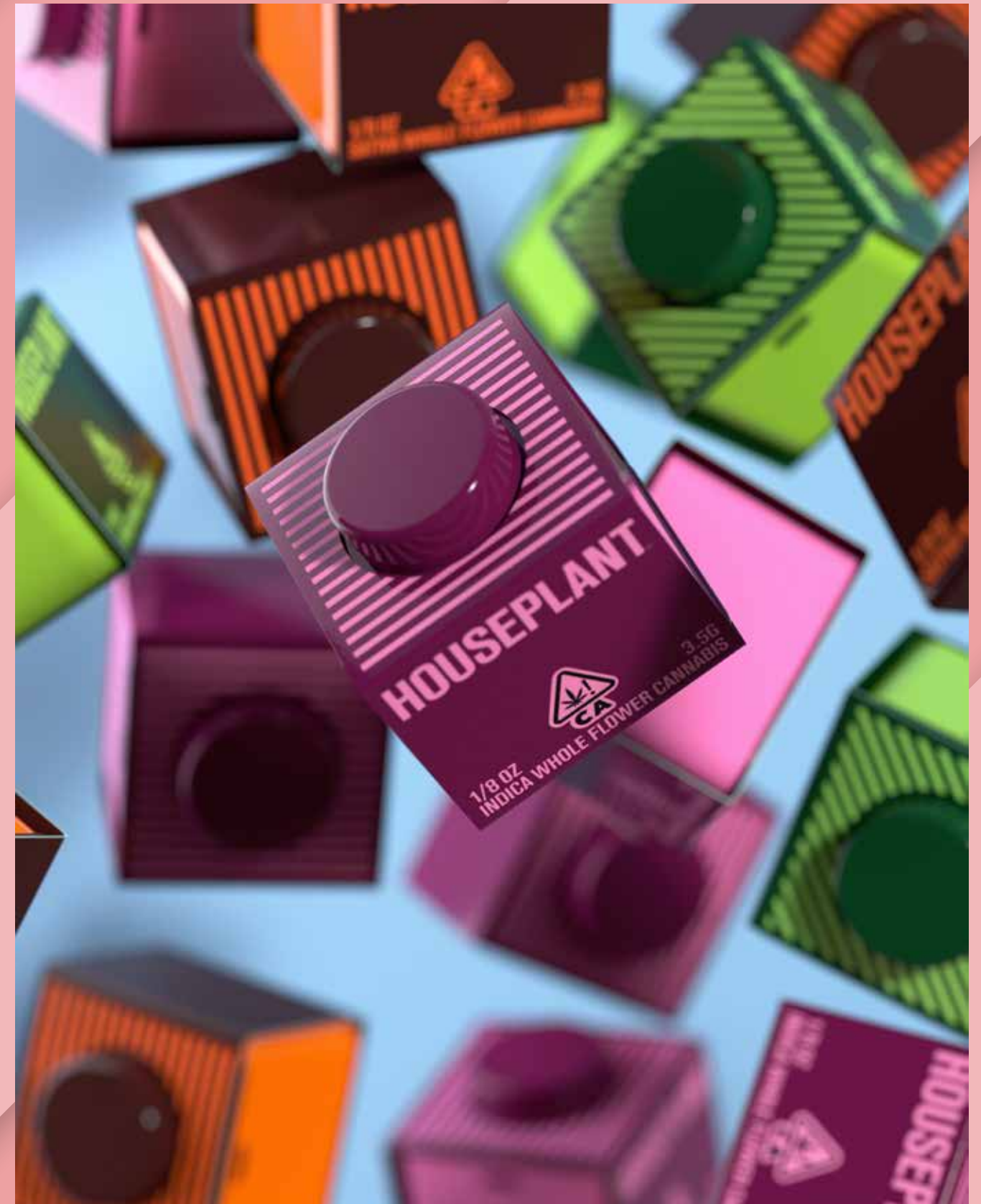
Moxy Hotels is offering travelers "playful stays." Moxy describes its latest location, opened in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in November 2022, as a "playful haven" with a design "inspired by the circuses and old-time menageries that once lined the Bowery." The hotel offers "endless amusements enlivened with the spirit of the absurd," inviting guests to "Play On #atthemoxy." The hospitality brand further channeled its "Play On" spirit with an augmented reality campaign in Asia Pacific, "Moxy Universe, Play Beyond," launched in July (see 28, Metatravel, page 65).

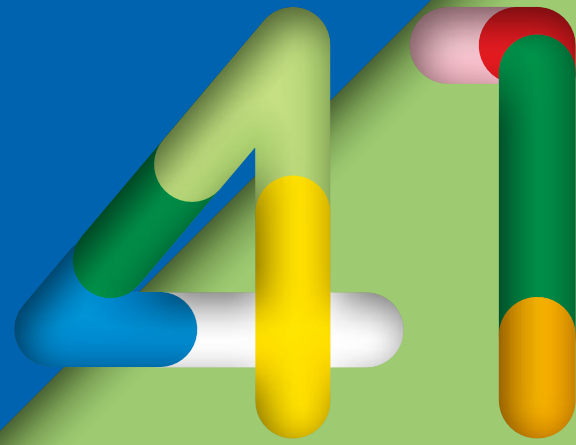
Canadian cannabis company Houseplant is injecting a dose of playfulness into its product experience. The brand unveiled new packaging in April 2022 that takes inspiration from Lego blocks. "We wanted to leverage Houseplant's playful identity and design into something that could be collected and reused over time," Javier Arizu, cofounder of Práctica design studio, a collaborator on the redesign, told *Dezeen*.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

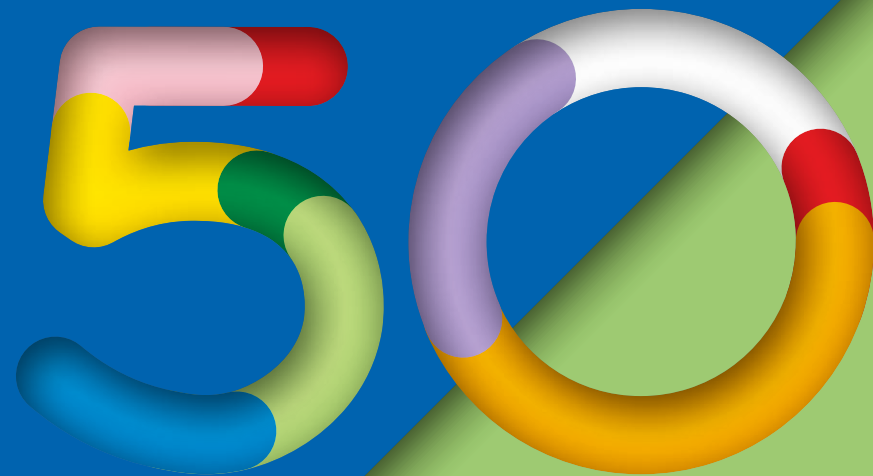
After an unpredictable few years, people are looking for moments of emotional release. Brands are tapping into the cultural desire for optimism and childlike abandon by redesigning their offerings to encourage joy and play.

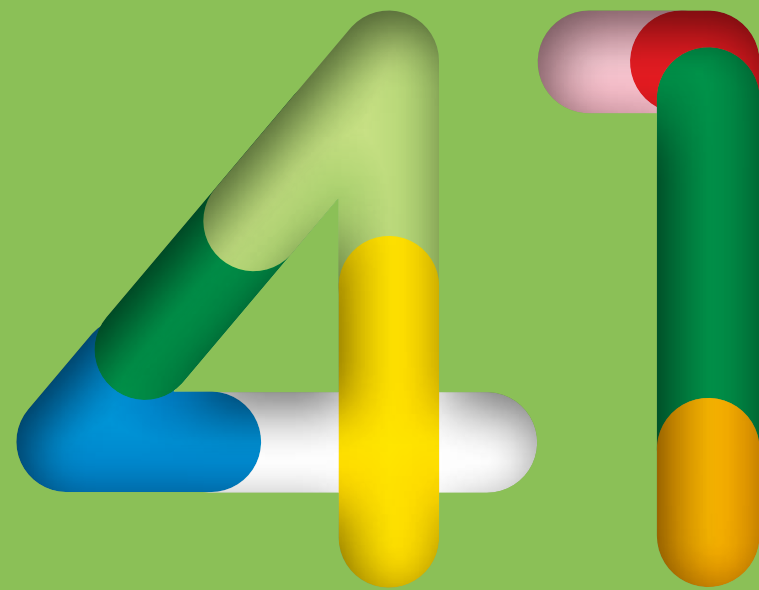
**Brands are tapping into the cultural desire for optimism and childlike abandon by redesigning their offerings to encourage joy and play.**





# FOOD & DRINK





# INTREPID DINING

Pioneering diners are indulging  
in otherworldly meals.

Diners are embracing extraordinary culinary experiences that offer inventive menus, theatrical preparation, and extreme locations.

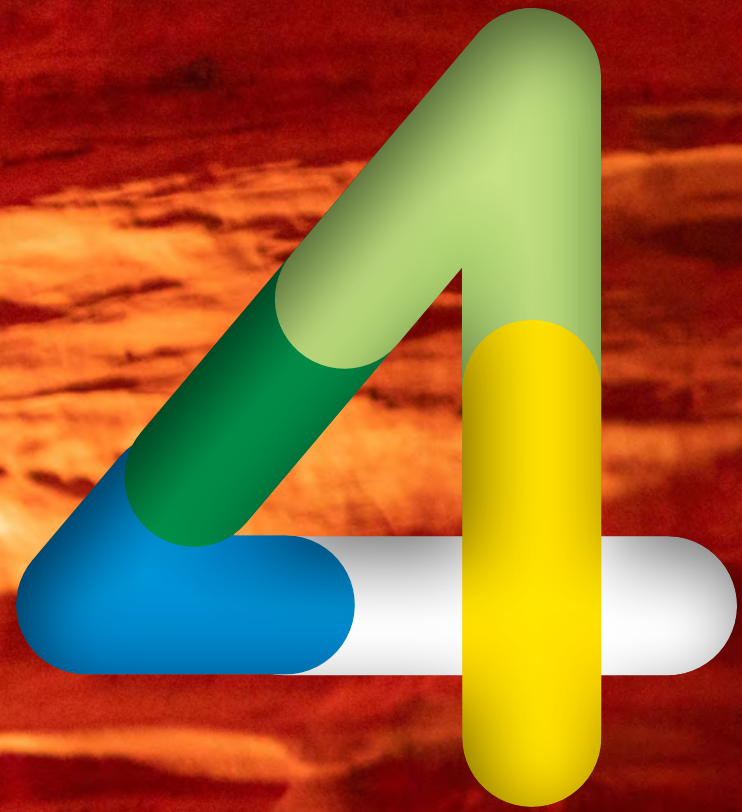
Bompas & Parr, a London-based design studio known for its multisensory experiences, served dishes cooked over molten lava at a dinner hosted in February 2022 in Saudi Arabia's historic AlUla region, renowned for its distinctive sandstone canyons and black lunar volcanic plateaus. Lava technicians poured out the molten rock in a performance spectacle, with expert chefs then searing local produce across a stream of lava heated to a staggering 1,350 degrees Celsius.

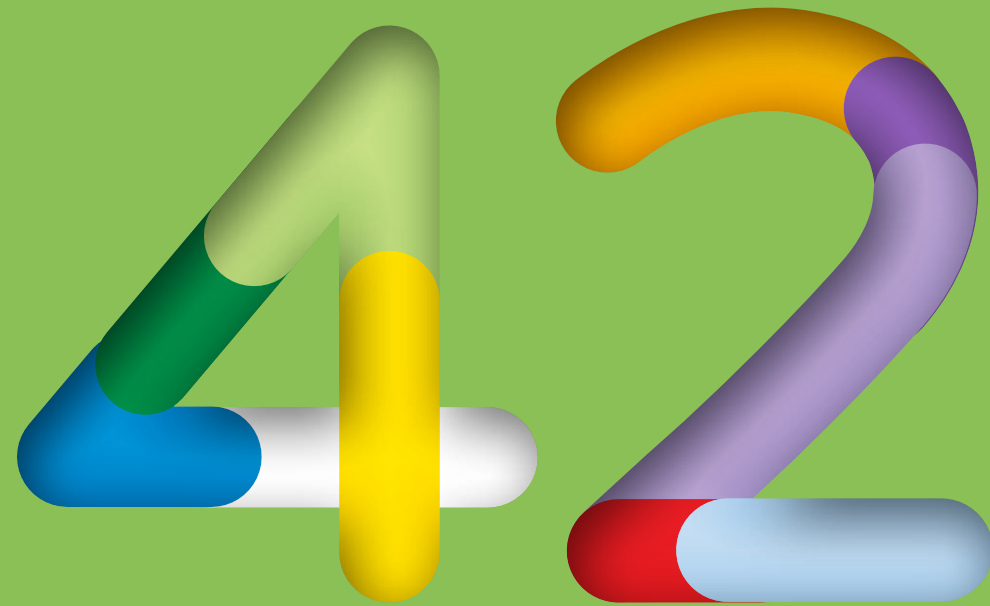
OceanSky Cruises is offering fine dining on its airship expeditions to the North Pole, set to take flight in 2024. As well as gourmet meals served in the air, travelers can also enjoy an element of alfresco dining in the snow as part of the 38-hour adventure.

Wine aged in space tastes out of this world, auction house Christie's reports. Last year, connoisseurs bid on a bottle of Petrus 2000 that had spent 14 months in orbit aboard the International Space Station, matured in zero-gravity conditions, and survived almost 180 million miles of travel.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

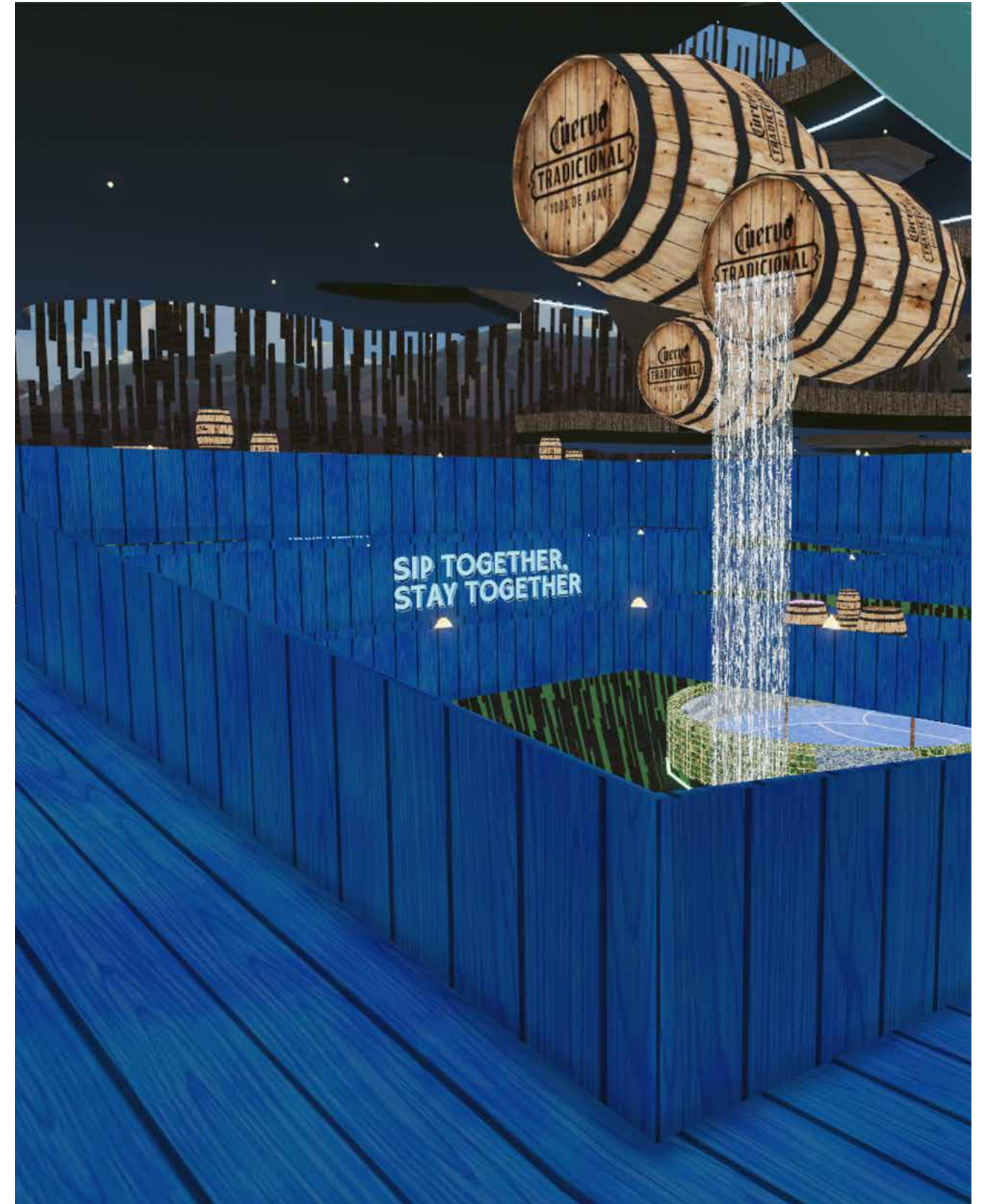
Consumers are embracing extreme dining for a unique escape from everyday life, relishing memorable experiences that take them beyond the usual restaurant setup.





# VIRTUAL FLAVORS

What does the metaverse taste like?





The metaverse is influencing the food and drink industry, inspiring new flavor profiles and reimagining the dining experience.

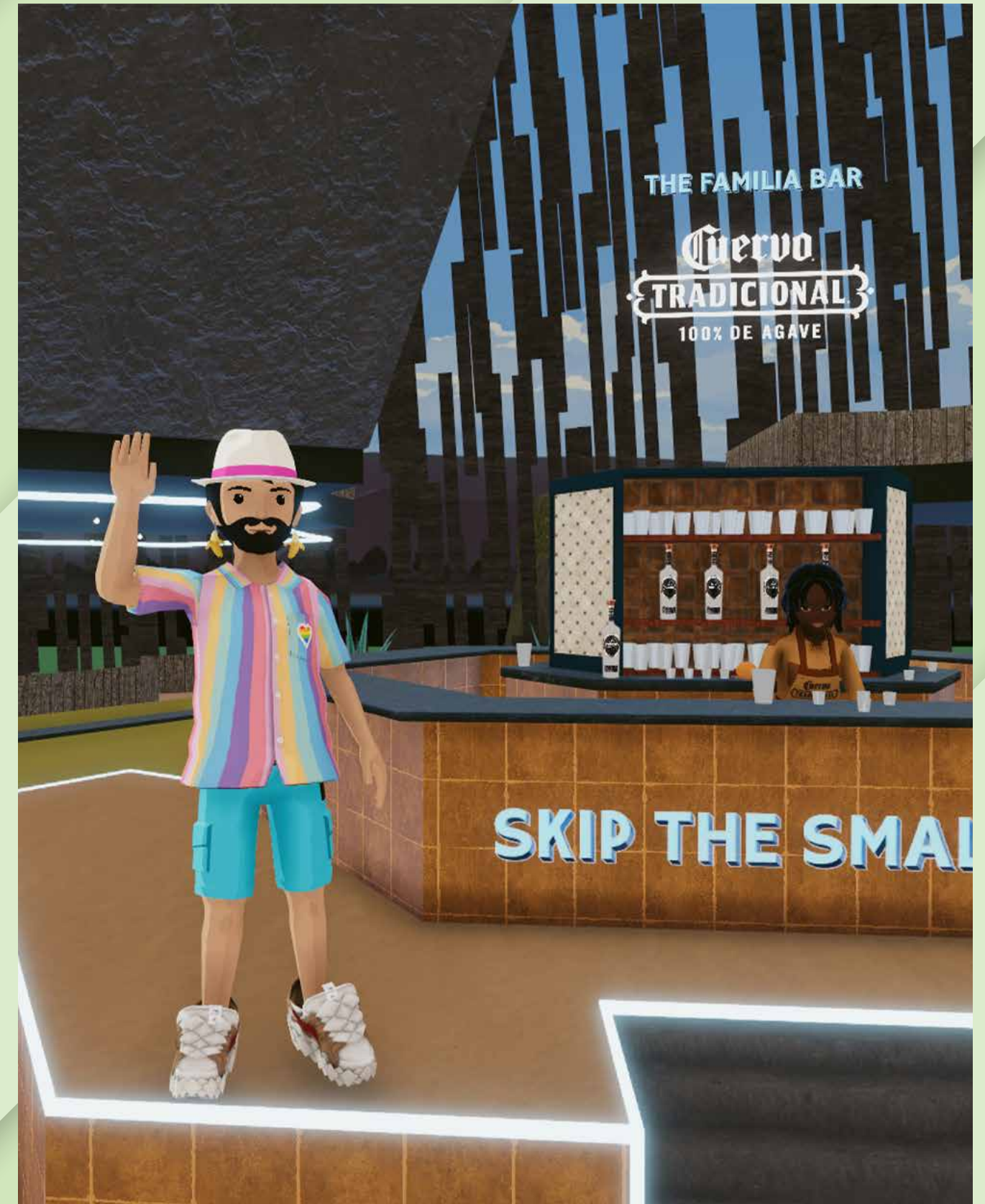
In May 2022, Coca-Cola released a new soda flavor with an unusual inspiration: the metaverse. Coca-Cola Zero Sugar Byte, which first launched in Fortnite, was designed to taste like pixels. “We wanted to create an innovative taste inspired by the playfulness of pixels, rooted in the experiences that gaming makes possible,” said Oana Vlad, the brand’s senior director of global strategy. “Just as pixels power digital connection, Coca-Cola Zero Sugar Byte brings people together.”

Other brands are also picking up on the theme of togetherness to reimagine eating and drinking for the metaverse. Mexico-based architect Rojkind Arquitectos and experimental design studio Bompas & Parr created a virtual distillery for Jose Cuervo on the Decentraland platform, “bringing the polysensory experience of the real world into the limitless world of Decentraland,” said the studio’s cofounder Harry Parr.

The design firm is reinterpreting the role that food and drink can play in the future of digital living, focusing on its connective power. “The structure’s form was inspired by the roots of the agave, a plant nucleus that, when observed, evokes feelings of protection and consolidation,” said the architect. “The Jose Cuervo Meta-Distillery aspires to be the center around which all individuals can forge stronger bonds, building an inclusive community.”

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Eating and drinking is a distinctly physical experience—but brands are starting to explore how this translates into the virtual realm, and how virtual experiences inform physical food and drink products. As virtual lifestyles evolve, expect to see more creative reinterpretations of food and drink for the future of metaliving.





# ZERO-PROOF LIFESTYLES

A rising sober generation wants to experience the buzz without the alcohol.



Alcohol has “lost its cool,” according to a September 2022 article by *Vice*, which notes the growing non-alcoholic options at bars and restaurants, and some consumers ditching alcohol completely. This trend stems from more people, particularly gen Zers, choosing a zero-proof lifestyle. The *Guardian* reports British 16-24-year-olds are the driving generation shunning alcohol, with 26% fully teetotal.

“There is a heightened awareness around health and wellbeing, which means many are recognizing the negative impacts alcohol has,” Jay Richards, cofounder of gen Z research agency Imagen Insights, tells Wunderman Thompson. Richards adds, “society is also becoming more accepting of those who opt not to consume alcohol.”



Temperance bars elevating the drinking-out experience minus the alcohol are on the rise. NoLo is Dubai's first non-alcoholic bar, soft launched in July 2022, serving artisanal cocktails that have a health-conscious twist. In the same year, Temperance Bar opened in San Francisco as an invitation-only speakeasy, offering over 100 non-alcoholic spirits, mixers, and drinks. In Melbourne, Brunswick Aces Bar, which launched in April 2021, is Australia's first non-alcoholic bar.

It's not just bars that are focusing on a sober-curious clientele; bottle shops are also displaying the wide range of alcohol-free choices. The Zero Co is Atlanta's first non-alcoholic store. Opened in December 2022, the shop caters to a growing demand for low-alcohol to zero-proof lifestyles. It stocks over 300 bottles of alcohol-free spirits, wines, and beers, and has a space for tastings too. In September 2022, pop-up Sèchey opened its permanent store in New



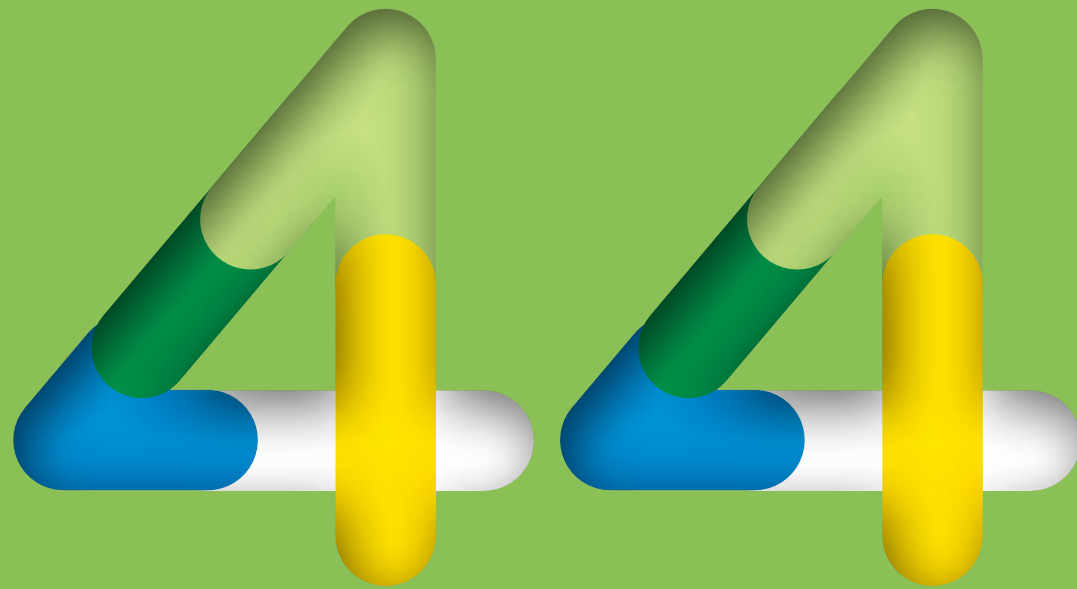
York City's West Village. Founder Emily Heintz is committed to introducing people to healthy alternatives that forgo the hangover the next day, while still challenging taste buds with a tasting counter. In Singapore, Free Spirit opened in 2020 as the country's first zero-proof bottle shop.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Zero-proofing is the new cool. The past few years have seen a steady rise in people wanting low- or no-alcohol options, as beverage brands started producing more refined non-alcoholic alternatives. Now these products are being integrated into social settings, thanks to modern bottle stores with tasting counters, and chic bars going completely teetotal.



**Zero-proofing is  
the new cool.**



# SURVIVALIST DINING

Gathered, wild-grown ingredients are informing a new class of survivalist diets.

People are tasting the thrill of a scavenger's menu. *Chefs vs. Wild* is a new show on Hulu that, each episode, follows two world-class chefs who are dropped into remote locations to scavenge for wild ingredients in order to make a meal worthy of a fine-dining experience. The series was first aired in September 2022, and each chef is paired with an outdoor expert and survivalist to ensure they don't accidentally ingest any poisonous flora or fauna, or injure themselves.

To apply, the chefs must have experience or knowledge in areas such as foraging and butchery, and, once selected, they have to forage, hunt, and fish for their produce. Using their wild-harvested ingredients, they're led to a "wilderness kitchen" to prepare an exceptional meal for the show's two hosts: adventurer and professional chef Kiran Jethwa, and wild-food expert Valerie Segrest.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

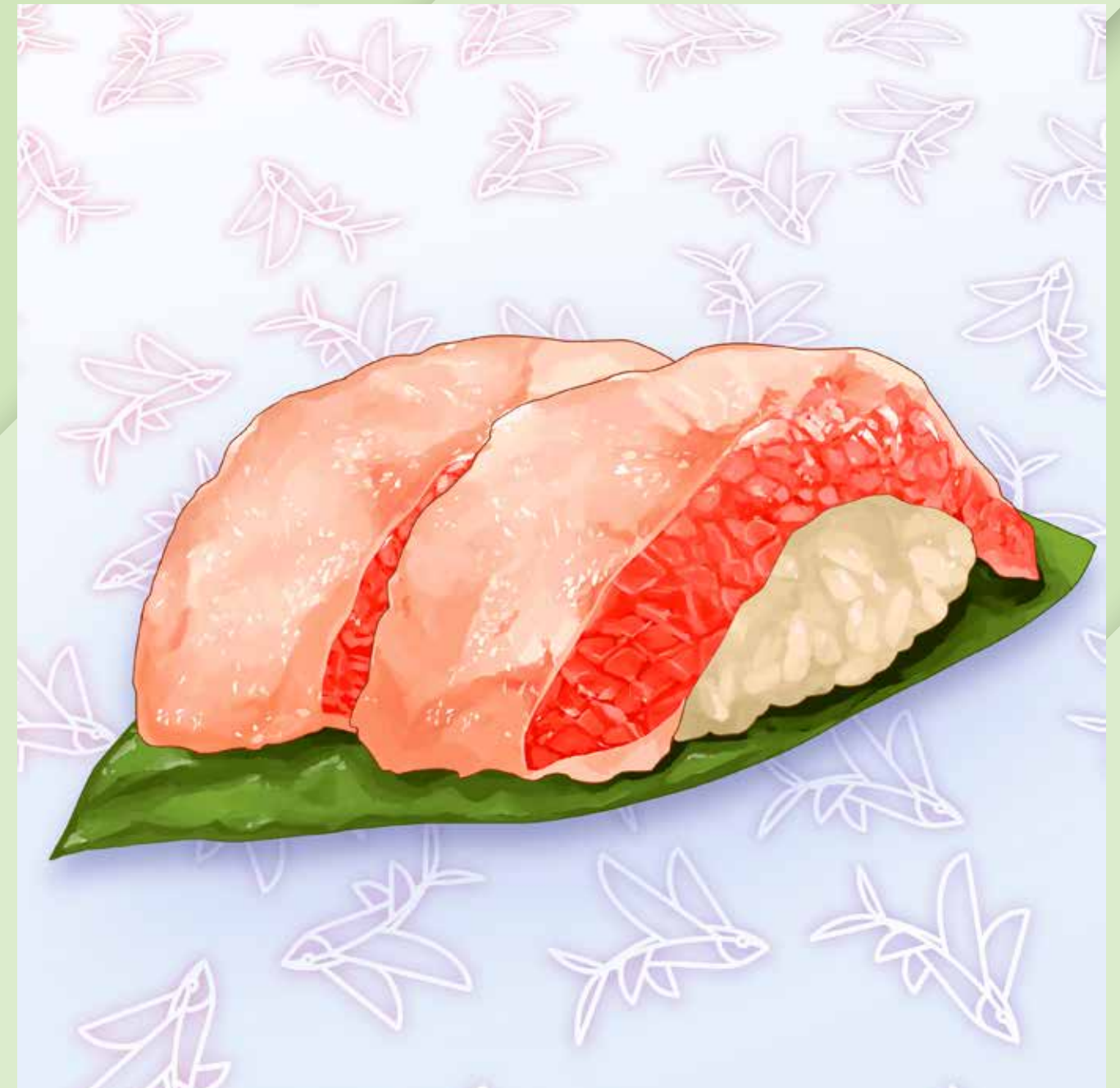
The series reflects a growing cultural interest in nature-inspired, foraged diets and lifestyles. In an evolution from foraged cocktails (trend 41 in "The Future 100: 2022") consumers are combining their desire to be sustainable with a growing interest in rewilding in daily life.





# CLUBSTAURANTS

Exclusive eating clubs are the new ultra-elite dining experience.



Private members' clubs are being hybridized with restaurants, offering highly personalized concierge service and top-quality food in "behind the paywall" restaurants only open to members.

Haiku in Miami is an invitation-only restaurant for members, who pay an annual fee and must also commit to at least four reservations per year for a lavish 12-course omakase feast. ZZ's Club, which also launched initially in Miami, has taken the clubstaurant concept to New York with a three-story, 25,000-square-foot location in Hudson Yards. It houses the latest incarnation of popular Italian eatery Carbone as well as a Japanese restaurant and several bars, all of which are only open to members paying an annual fee that is only revealed upon application. Flyfish Club, set to open in Manhattan in early 2023, puts a tech-enhanced spin on this approach to court the crypto elite. The seafood-inspired offering from hospitality and restaurant group VCR includes two restaurants where membership is purchased on the blockchain through a Flyfish NFT.

Premium London restaurant Casa Cruz's four-story New York establishment hybridizes the clubstaurant approach even further. The main restaurant and lounges are open to the public, but only investors paying upward of \$250,000 to join have access to the dining room and roof terrace on the fourth floor.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Fine dining is offering a new tier of elite eating experiences for the upper echelons: one that prioritizes membership and exclusivity, and caters to the crypto elite.

**Fine dining is offering a new tier of elite eating experiences.**







# WEB3 WINERIES

The traditional winery is getting  
a Web3 upgrade.



The wine industry is ripe for disruption—and new players are starting to explore Web3-enabled reinvention.

Evinco is a California-based wine company that has taken inspiration from cryptocurrency and the metaverse to set up as a decentralized autonomous organization, or DAO. This distributed leadership model spreads ownership and decision-making power throughout the winery's community, meaning everyone with an NFT has equal voting rights over the future direction of the venture.

“Wineries have not had any disruption outside of manufacturing and direct to consumers in a generation,” Evinco cofounder Joy Pathak tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “Gamification of the wine and spirits world has never been done. Making people feel they have ownership with the brands they support has never been done. We are taking brand loyalty and community to a whole new level.”

## “Gamification of the wine and spirits world has never been done.”

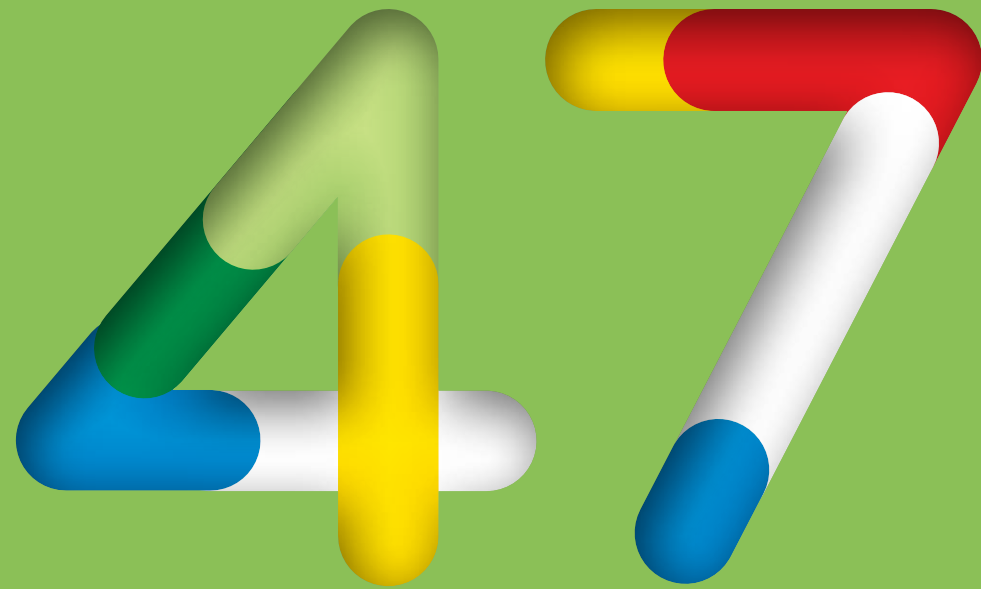
Joy Pathak, cofounder, Evinco

Evinco NFT holders also receive access to exclusive products and events, and this idea of using NFTs to provide extra benefits, seamlessness, and transparency is something other wine companies are also exploring. Cuvée Collective is an NFT-based wine club that offers token holders access to VIP experiences and concierge services in California’s wine country. Luxury NFT marketplace BlockBar and WiV, which claims to be the world’s first blockchain-based wine investment club, both sell NFTs that are digital clones of real-life bottles and cases of wine. The blockchain-backed NFTs verify the authenticity and provenance of the real product, while also allowing frictionless digital trading between wine connoisseurs.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

We predicted the rise of DAOs in “The Future 100: 2022,” looking at how the Web3 economy is providing an alternative to corporate employment. Now they’re extending beyond that, being used to restructure traditional industries using decentralization, democratization, transparency, and community ownership.





# TOP THREE INGREDIENTS

Indigenous palates and authentic cuisine will determine the top ingredients for the year ahead.



## Achiote

Achiote, popular in Mexican cooking, comes in many forms. The word “achiote” comes from “achiotl” in Nahuatl, the ancient Aztec language. Described as earthy and tangy, the ingredient brings an orange to red color as well as flavor to chicken al pastor and fish dishes. Though its origin is disputed, it is produced primarily in Latin America as well as countries in the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.

Its recent popularity reflects a growing interest in indigenous dishes and cuisine, marked by several rising chefs and restaurant owners intentionally incorporating cuisines into their menus based on their heritage and traditional dishes. In August 2022, Chipotle announced that it would introduce a new chicken al pastor dish featuring achiote as one of its star ingredients for a new level of spice.



### Sansho peppercorn

Sansho peppercorn is a popular ingredient in Japanese cuisine. Zesty and versatile, it can be used in a range of dishes for all levels of cooking. New condiment brand Cabi launched its range of Japanese-inspired toppings and flavors in September 2022. Its trio of products includes Zesty Sansho Peppercorn Miso, which can be used with salmon and minced meat based on recipes from the brand's website.

As gen Z—the most diverse generation to date—fuels a rise in multicultural dining, new-age formulations made from ingredients with history and cultural significance will continue to grace menus and kitchens.

### Yaupon

Made from a holly bush native to the United States, yaupon is the continent's only naturally caffeinated plant. Known for its sweet and earthy flavor profile, it was used by Indigenous Americans in herbal teas and purification rituals.

It's brewed by tea crafters including Florida's Yaupon Brothers, North Carolina's Yaupon Tea Co, and Texas's CatSpring Yaupon. BBQ Ramen Tatsu-ya, a new restaurant that opened in Austin, Texas in October 2022, incorporates yaupon tea into its Melo-Byrd cocktail alongside sotol, umeshu, aperitivo, and plum salt. Expect to see yaupon featured on many shelves and menus in 2023.



# CELL-CULTURED DISHES

As cell-cultured food moves from lab to grocery store, luxury dining may be the first beneficiary.

Cell-cultured meat or dairy is a promising way to produce animal protein without the twin evils of animal suffering and environmental degradation. But until very recently, it's been very expensive to do so.

The process involves taking cells from a living animal and placing those starter cells in a growth medium inside a bioreactor, so they can grow into fat and muscle. The first lab-grown hamburger in 2013 cost over €200,000 to produce; the cost has now fallen to under €10. In 2021, almost a billion dollars was invested in cell-cultured meat startups around the world, according to Crunchbase.

With investors pouring money into exploring lab-grown alternative proteins, it makes sense that some see their first applications in high-end dining.

In 2021, scientists at Osaka University created wagyu beef—complete with streaky fat—using 3D printing, while Dutch scientists were experimenting with lab-grown caviar.

In September 2022, cell-based milk startup TurtleTree hired chef Dominique Crenn, the star of Netflix's *Chef's Table* series, as its food innovation advisor.

Crenn's flagship restaurant Atelier Crenn in San Francisco has three Michelin stars and is known for pescatarian dishes chosen for their minimal impact on the environment, as well as for presenting its menus in the form of poems.



“I sincerely believe we will make food that thrills, delights, and tantalizes again—and then the revolution can truly begin,” TurtleTree founder and CEO Fengru Lin told the *Sacramento Bee*. TurtleTree has a facility in Sacramento and headquarters in Singapore.

In early 2022, California-based Upside Foods, known for its cell-cultured chicken, moved upmarket by buying Wisconsin-based Cultured Decadence, which develops cultured seafood including lobster. Upside Foods has also partnered with Crenn to add its cultivated chicken to her menu once regulators approve it for sale to the public.

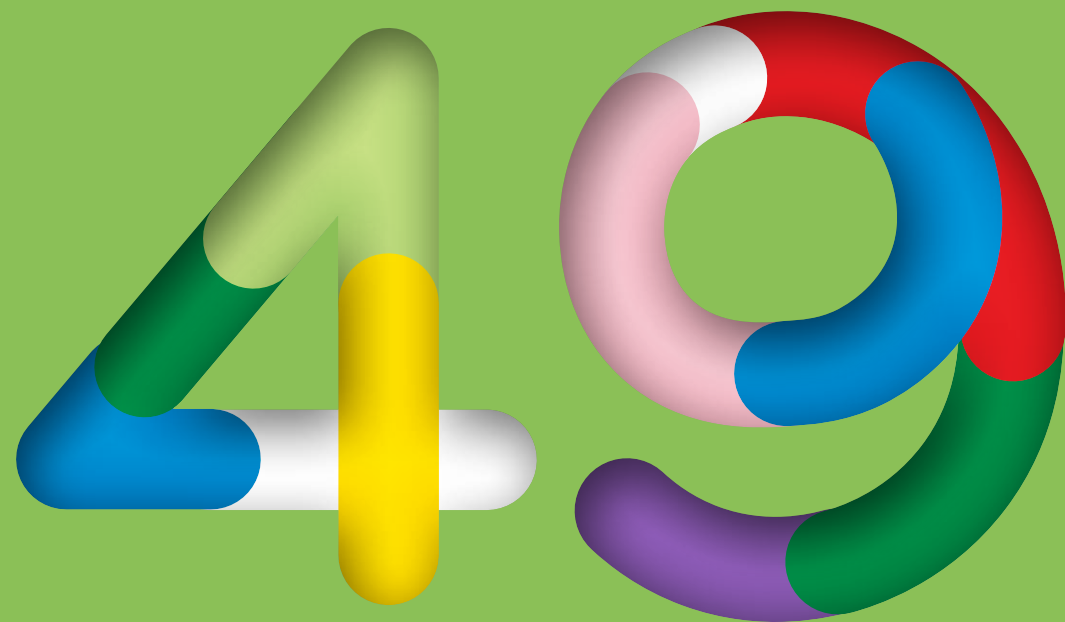
### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Cell-cultured proteins are still on the cusp of commercialization, with Singapore the only country that currently allows cell-cultured chicken for sale. For some consumers, the first mouthfuls could come from white-tablecloth restaurants rather than from the grocery aisle.



# 40





# SURREALIST DINING

The food and drink industry is innovating in the face of the energy crisis.

As energy prices soar in Brussels, chefs and restaurateurs are experimenting with stoveless, gasless cuisine served using little to no electricity. Brasserie Surrealiste serves cold and lightly grilled dishes to its guests, using only a flaming charcoal grill for cooking and candles on each table for light. Its menu includes raw white tuna, grilled pork with beans, focaccia cooked on a wood fire, and a brioche with anchovies.

“The idea is to go back to the cave age,” said Francesco Cury, owner of Racines, whose employees serve and cook at the brasserie. “We prepared a whole series of dishes that just need to be grilled for a few seconds.”

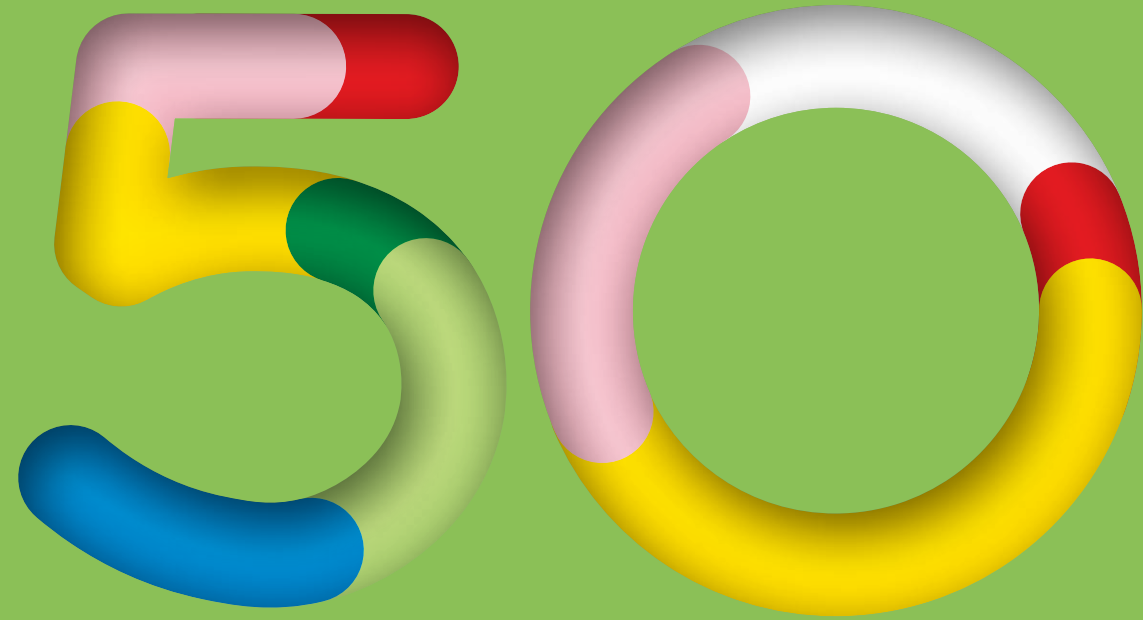
In the United Kingdom in October 2022, a restaurant in Frodsham opened without mains power, serving guests a nine-course tasting menu by candlelight as a protest against rising energy costs. Next Door used charcoal, smoking, curing, and fermentation techniques to prepare the dishes, with fire to heat tea and warm drinks and food. Instead of fridges, the cellar was used to store ingredients, and the site was cash only. Head chef Richard Nuttall used innovative practices to prepare each dish and maintain every ingredient. “We’ve got onions and carrots roasted in coals, and we’re dehydrating herbs next to the fire,” he told the BBC.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The dining industry is feeling the financial effects of the energy crisis in Europe. Chefs are taking extreme measures to innovate the dining experience while conserving money and reducing energy costs.



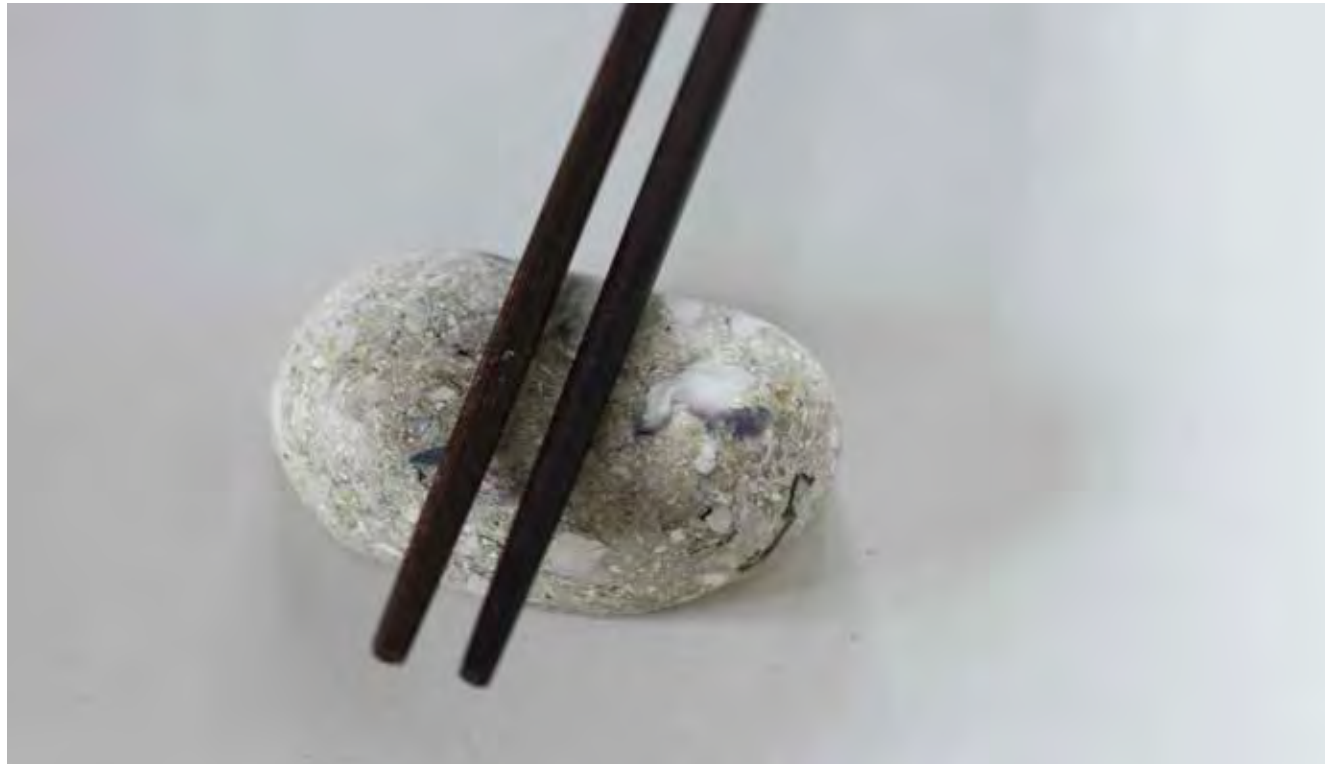




# SUPER- CIRCULAR DESIGN

Restaurants are getting a circular redesign.





Future dining settings will do more than reduce food waste or use biodegradable materials: the entire environment will be designed in an eco-friendly fashion.

Vrå, a restaurant in Gothenburg, Sweden, uses furniture made from food waste and byproducts. Created by local designer Carolina Härdh, the pieces aim to help guests visualize the value food waste can have if reused properly.

Härdh's stool and side-table combo is made from crushed seashells, rice starch, and fish bones, and resembles terrazzo—although it is bio-based rather than cement-based. Leftover biomaterial is used to make fertilizer for the restaurant's rooftop garden or chopstick rests for the Japanese-inspired cuisine.

Härdh told *Dezeen* that the materials she decided to use “were picked based on an investigation I did of the restaurant's waste bin.” She hopes that sitting on and witnessing the furniture “may add something to the guest's experience, to follow the ingredients from being food on their plate to becoming waste material and interior object.”

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

Sustainable practices in the food industry are evolving, allowing brands to do more than reduce their food waste. Circular design in restaurants and social environments is the next iteration of eco-dining.

51

**BEAUTY**

60



# CIRCADIAN SKINCARE

Skincare regimens are harnessing the body's circadian rhythm.

Beauty sleep is inspiring new formulations as brands embrace the skin's natural circadian rhythm in their newest products.

The Chronobiology Sleep Mask by science-based skincare label Noble Panacea, launched in February 2022, “precisely delivers active ingredients into skin in a pre-programmed sequence synchronized with skin’s natural circadian rhythm,” the brand states. Three stages of activation occur throughout the night: during the Detox stage, from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m., the sleep mask releases PHA and pre-, pro-, and post-biotics; the mask then delivers retinol and peptides during the Repair stage; and, finally, ceramides and hyaluronic acid are released during the Nourish stage, when skin is at its maximum absorption.

A serum by 4AM skincare and an oil by La Prairie also claim to maintain and work with the skin’s natural circadian rhythm in order to reduce typical signs of aging.

Beauty brand Mutha coined the term Circadian Dermablend in reference to its luxurious Cream Extreme, designed to complement the body’s circadian rhythm each night. Launched in June 2021, its formulation of botanicals repairs and stimulates the skin as it heals from daily aggravators during the night, leaving it smooth and rejuvenated.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Beauty consumers are hacking their biology to uplevel skincare.

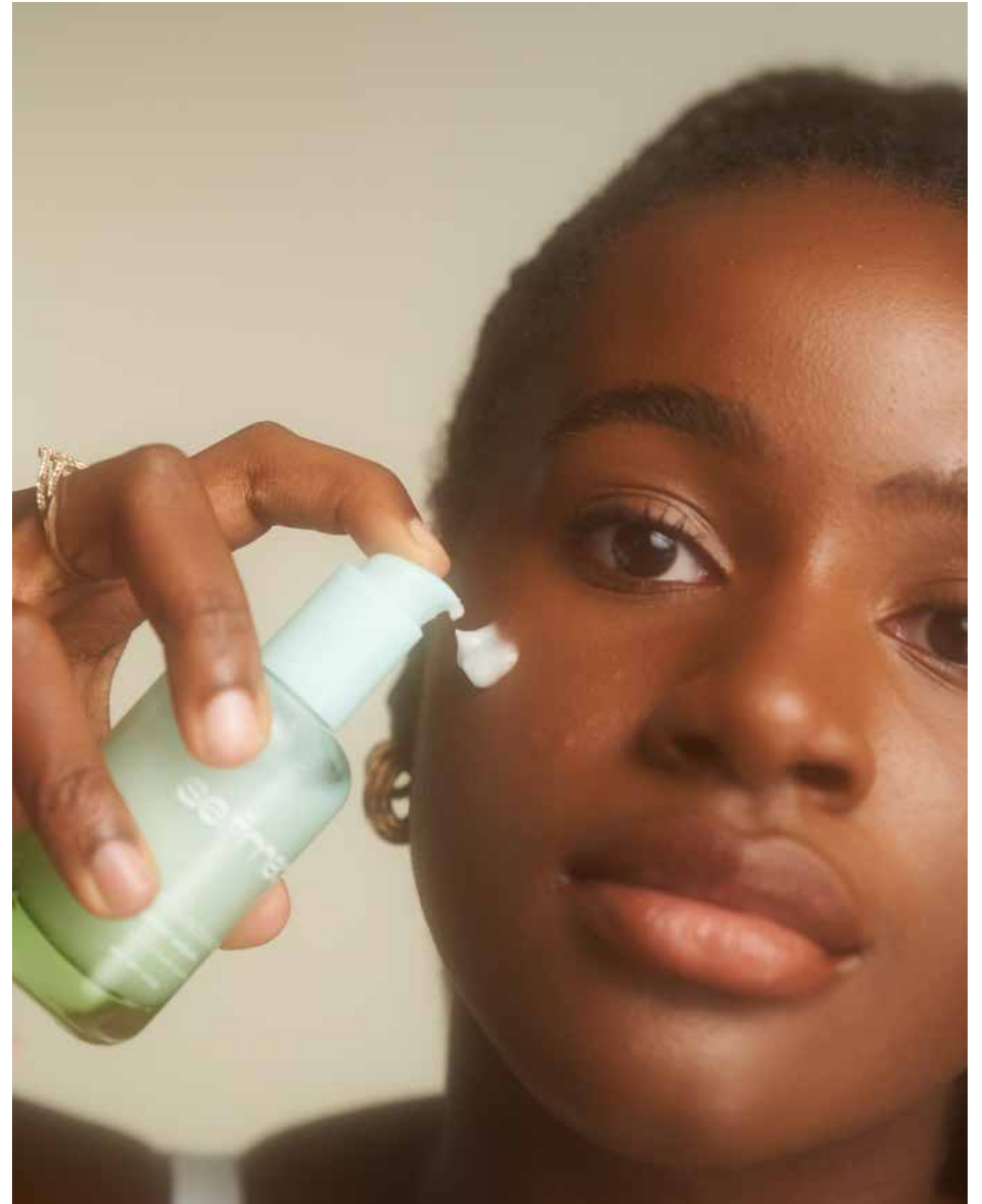
**Beauty sleep is  
inspiring new  
formulations as  
brands embrace  
the skin's natural  
circadian rhythm.**





# PSYCHO- DERMATOLOGY

Beauty brands are tapping into ingredients that not only nourish the skin but also feed the mind.





Japanese skincare brand Tatcha aims to harness the skin-mind connection with psychodermatology, by promoting intentional ritualization and ingredients that benefit the psychosomatic network, such as sweet fennel to boost focus and hinoki oil for relaxation. In a summer 2022 survey conducted by the Unilever-owned brand, 69% of respondents reported feeling burned out in the past 12 months and 70% noticed negative changes in their skin because of stress. This further supports the need for ingredients and rituals around promoting the health of the mind as well as the skin.

Launched in 2020, Selfmade is “the first emotionally intelligent personal care brand” with psychodermatology and emotional wellbeing as core pillars. The

## “Psychodermatology is a discipline that explores the relationship between the brain and skin.”

**Stephanie Lee, founder and CEO, Selfmade**

company works with mental health experts and a junior advisory board of gen Zers—who are passionate about tackling mental health issues—to ensure the brand “is rooted in credible mental health sciences, that shows up in how we speak about our stakeholder and our products,” Stephanie Lee, founder and CEO of Selfmade, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

“We are overstressed without effective tools that help us explore and meet our own human needs,” explains Lee. “Psychodermatology is a discipline that explores the relationship between the brain and skin.” Selfmade’s products, which include the Self Disclosure Intimacy Serum and True Grit Resilience Scrub, reflect that. In September 2022, the brand launched the Corrective Experience Comfort Cream, which has self-soothing properties and uses Cortinib G as a key ingredient to lower cortisol and offer stress relief.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Seventy-four percent of people sense their mental state and their skin are connected, according to Tatcha’s survey. Beauty brands are offering products that actively help tackle stress, with psychodermatology rituals and functional ingredients to benefit the skin and soothe the mind.





# RESURRECTED INGREDIENTS

Brands are bringing back extinct and forgotten sensory ingredients.

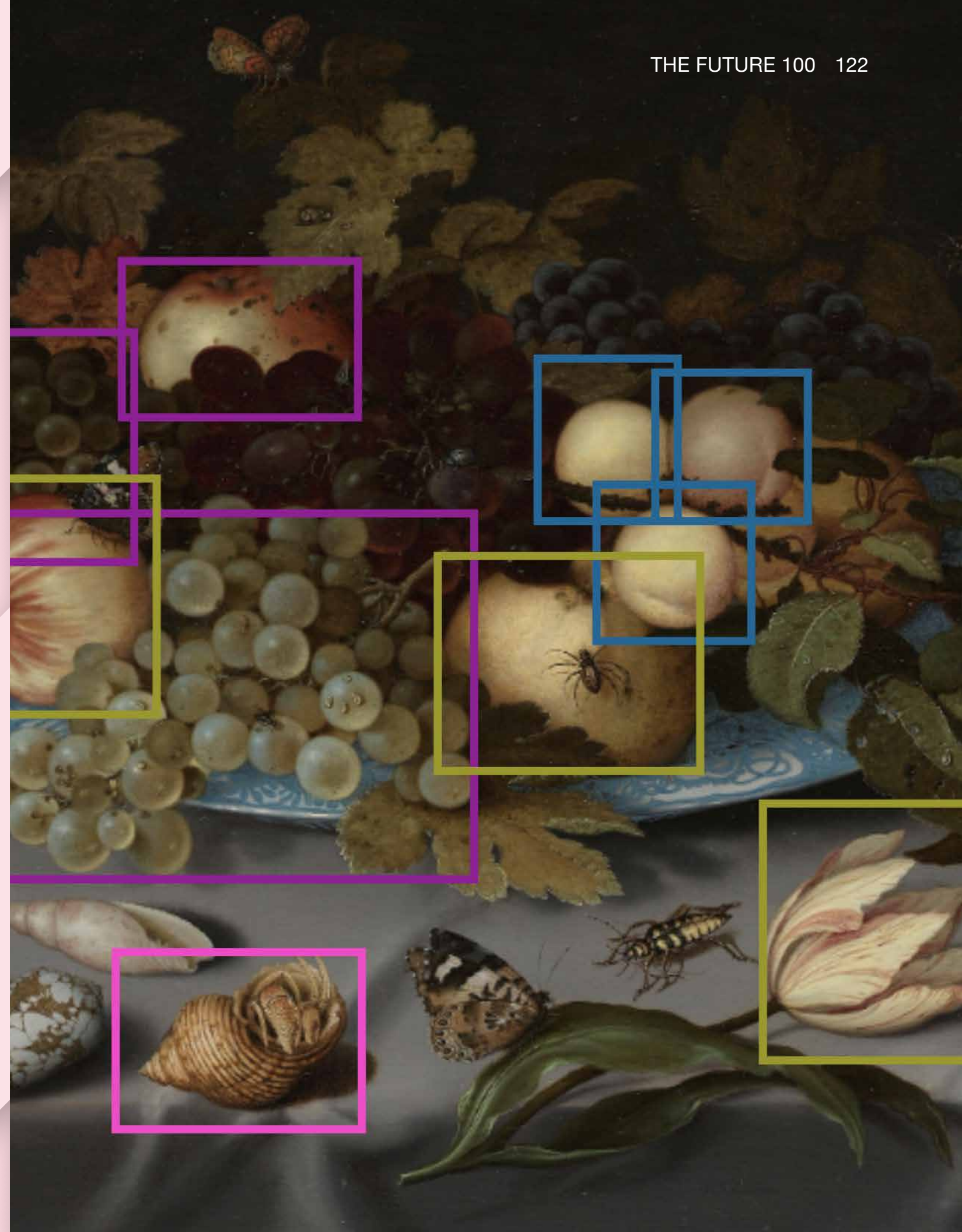
Brands are resurrecting extinct flora for their latest scents, using ingredients as gateways to the past and preserving sensory experiences for future generations.

A recent collaboration between Haeckels and Tetsuo Lin, an MA Material Futures graduate from London's Central Saint Martins, is resurrecting scents for the beauty industry. The project aims to revive lost scents by engineering fragrances using small amounts of DNA from floral samples, marking a new milestone in Haeckels' sustainability efforts. Lab-grown scents bypass the use of physical flora and essential oils, ultimately eliminating the intensive resource impacts of farmed ingredients.

In Europe, research project Odeuropa is using artificial intelligence (AI) to recreate lost smells from the past. Researchers are applying AI techniques to archived imagery and literature from the 16th to early 20th century, to identify "how 'smell' was expressed in different languages, with what places it was associated, what kinds of events and practices it characterized, and to what emotions it was linked," according to Odeuropa. The project hopes to highlight Europe's rich olfactory heritage.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

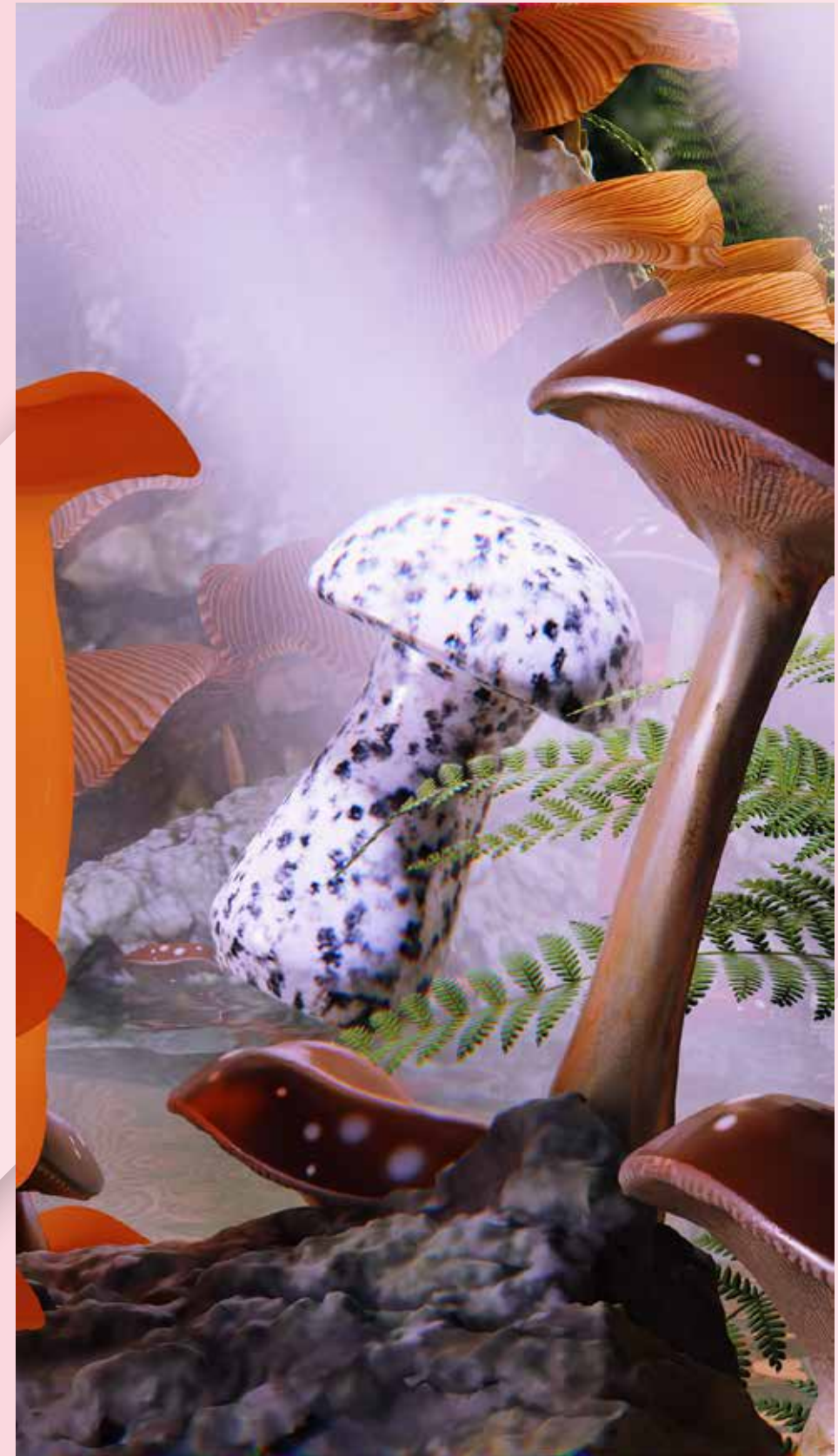
Bringing back extinct ingredients is more than just an attention-grabbing narrative. Resurrected ingredients will simultaneously help preserve nature today while securing its history for future generations.



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# ADAPTOGENIC BEAUTY

Functional wellness makes its way into  
skincare formulations.





Herbar, a new adaptogenic beauty brand, launched in August 2022 with the premise that “beauty can be healing.” Herbar defines adaptogens as “non-toxic, non-harmful, life-enhancing plants that are often used due to their abilities to help the body resist physical, biological, or chemical stressors.” The new line features ingredients derived from “fauna, flora, and fungi only”—all of which have dual benefits for internal and external healing properties.

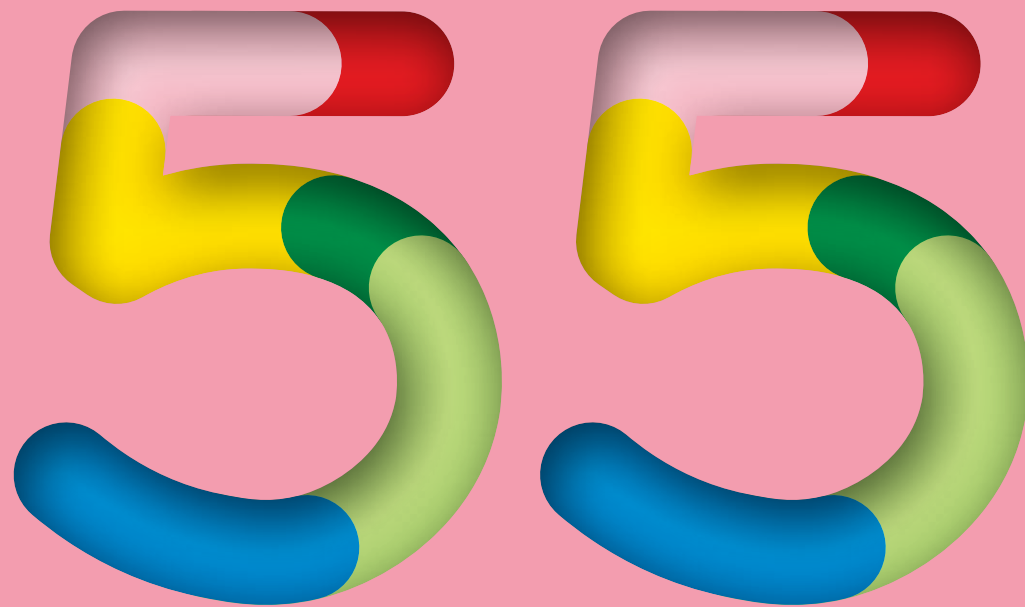
The brand’s inaugural Face Oil product features three key adaptogenic ingredients: tremella, which is known for detoxifying and hydrating properties; reishi, which is used to reduce skin inflammation, puffiness, signs of aging, and free-radical damage; and da zao (or Chinese jujube date), which is rich in iron and vitamin C, and is proven to treat acne, blemishes, and scars.

Allies of Skin launched its Advanced Brightening Serum in 2022, which includes an adaptogenic complex with reishi and shiitake mushrooms to strengthen and hydrate the skin. And Hydrafacial x JLo Beauty launched a booster in October 2022 that features a fermented adaptogenic blend.

#### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

Skincare is increasingly becoming synonymous with health care—shifting skincare brands from the beauty category into the health and wellness sector.





# VIRTUAL PERFUME

Beauty and fragrance brands are redefining scent for the metaverse.

Gucci launched its Gucci Flora virtual perfume on Roblox in August 2022. With no smell, the fragrance instead includes a range of experiences, including challenges, games, and interactive learning experiences, as well as a digital backpack inspired by the perfume bottle that Roblox users can wear.

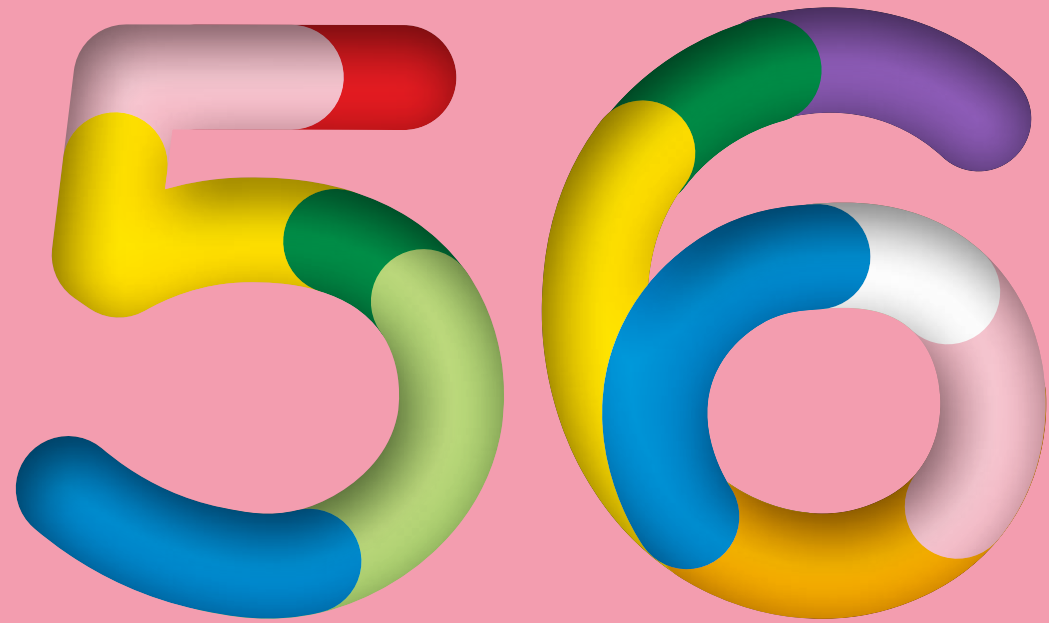
Byredo and RTFKT took a different approach to their virtual fragrance. Announced in June 2022, Alphameta interprets scent as a wearable aura. Each of the 26 auras represents a different emotion, like “acuity” or “naivety.” Users are encouraged to alchemize their own personalized auras by combining multiple emotions. The scents are available as limited collectible “elements” for what RTFKT calls its “avatar ecosystem.”

Altra, a self-titled “profuture” perfumery, is also linking scent with emotion in virtual environments, and launched its virtual scentscapes in February 2022. “I’m fascinated by how something as sensorial as scent can cross over into the virtual world,” Altra cofounder Beckielou Brown told *Harper’s Bazaar*. Brown described the scentscapes as “immersive digital scent moods offering a new way to imagine the experience of scent and evoke emotions for the viewer in an increasingly digital landscape.”

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

To date, digital environments have been very visually driven. These early metaverse plays show how the future of digital engagement is shaping up to be truly immersive—reimagining sensory experiences for virtual environments.





# SKIN CYCLING

The latest sensation in at-home skincare involves minimizing products and alternating application days.





# Beauty consumers are bringing their mental health habits to their skincare regimens

TikTok users have a habit of spawning beauty trends, and among the latest to take over the app is skin cycling. With an impressive 3.5 billion hashtag views as of January 2023, skin cycling clips educate viewers about the benefits of rotating their skincare products and taking recovery days. While TikTokers' routines vary, a typical approach might involve a four-day cycle, with active ingredients such as acids and retinol applied on a maximum of two days, followed by two further days when skin can rest.

While skincare specialists have long lauded the benefits of rotating active ingredients, New York board-certified dermatologist Dr Whitney Bowe is credited with coining the term skin cycling. In a 2022 guest appearance on *The Art of Being Well* podcast, Bowe said, “The way to get optimal skin health is to cycle through your night-time routine” before going on to highlight that giving skin a much-needed break provides an opportunity to “restore the skin barrier” and “recover the microbiome.”

Brands are tapping into this trend by curating skin cycling kits that give beauty consumers everything they need to reset their skincare routine. The Skin Cycling Kit from By Beauty Bay consists of four serums and instructions for nightly product rotation. Nip & Fab's Skin Cycling Kit includes hydrating creams alongside active products glycolic acid and retinol, plus a four-day usage guide to make the cycle easy to follow.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Beauty consumers are bringing their mental health habits to their skincare regimens—embracing the benefits of rest days and listening to the body's needs, rather than constantly chasing results or accomplishments.



# LAB-GROWN BEAUTY

New ingredient formulations are utilizing biotech to improve the sustainability, functionality, and production time of beauty products.



Estée Lauder-backed English beauty brand Haeckels launched Haeckels 2.0 in September 2022. This range of laboratory-grown skincare products is made with fully sustainable, compostable packaging and lowered carbon emissions, and cuts previous production times by half. The launch is the latest in the brand's revolutionary sustainable beauty formulations.

Unilever has pledged to invest \$120 million in plant-based alternatives for its home care, beauty, and personal care products in partnership with the San Diego-based biotechnology group Geno. Unilever chief research and development officer Richard Slater says that by creating an alternative option

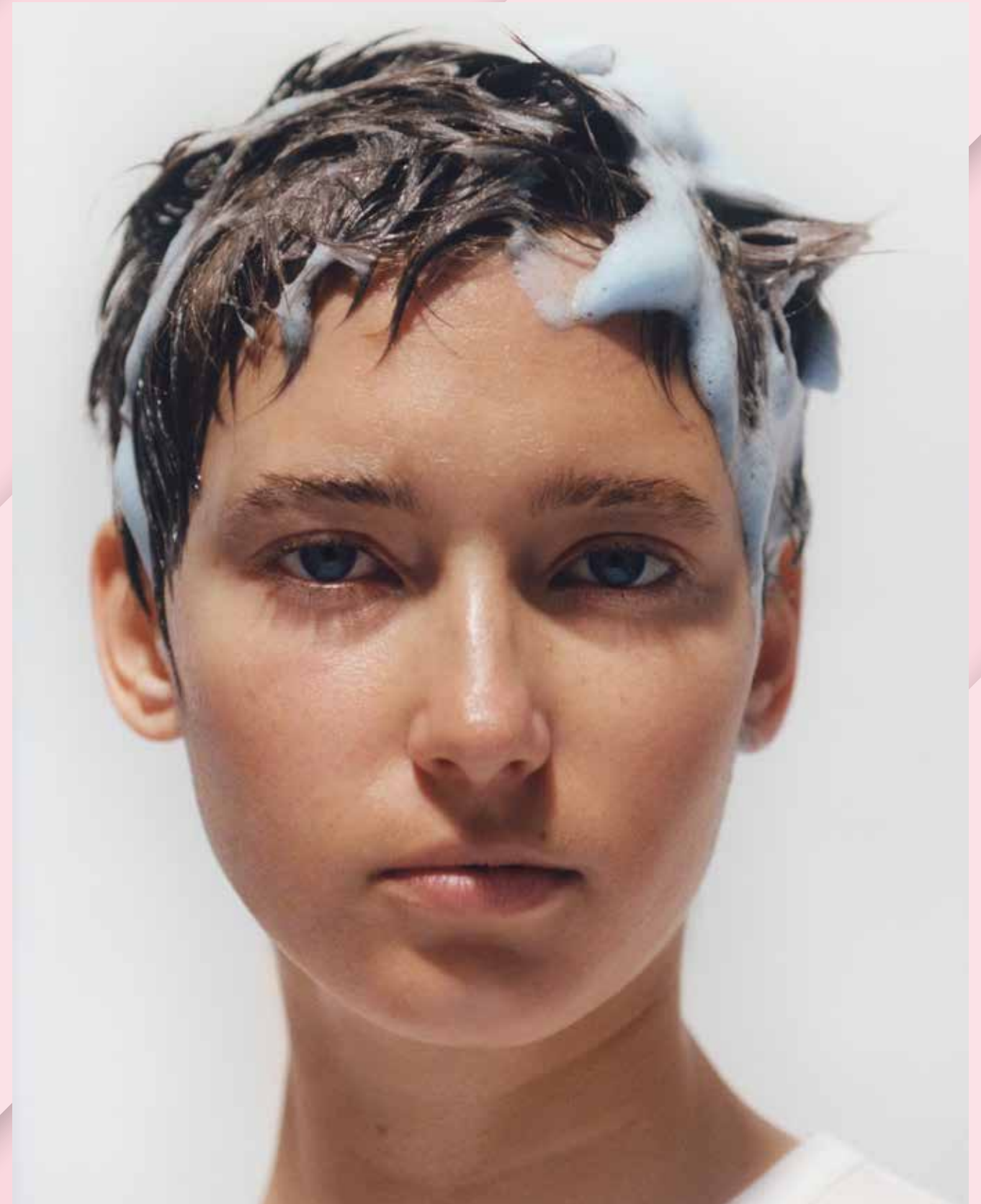
to palm oil or fossil fuel for its products, the investment “will sit right at the intersection of science and sustainability,” and will position the brand as a “future-fit business for consumers, shareholders, and the planet.”

Lab-grown formulations are improving product functionality as well. UK-based skincare brand Cellular Goods launched lab-made cannabinoid skincare in February 2022. Ourselves, a biotech beauty brand that launched the same year, aims to mimic in-office procedures with a line of biotechnologically created beauty ingredients.

Cosmetic chemist Jen Novakovich told *Allure* that biotech ingredients can be manipulated to “produce whatever you want. You can turn up a part of it that makes a certain effect.” Using biotechnology to produce ingredients can even improve sustainability, according to Novakovich: “Many life cycle analyses [tracking ingredients’ environmental impacts based, in part, on land and water use] show favorable results for sustainability for biotech.”

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Beauty brands are embracing lab-grown ingredients to elevate product sustainability and precision.





## THREE NEW INGREDIENTS

Mental health and natural formulations are leading this year's top three ingredients.

### Hinoki

In September 2022, Japanese beauty brand Tatcha released a new line of bodycare products designed to soothe the mind and body. Hinoki, the key ingredient, is a cypress plant naturally found in Japan with a relaxing, forest-inspired scent. It is often referred to as “King of the Woods,” and reflects the Japanese practice of forest bathing—walking through the woods and nature for relaxation. Cofounder and COO of Credo Beauty Annie Jackson told *Well+Good* that “brands are adapting medicinal ingredients that you’d find in a forest to boost your skin’s immunity and promote stress relief.”

### Rambutan

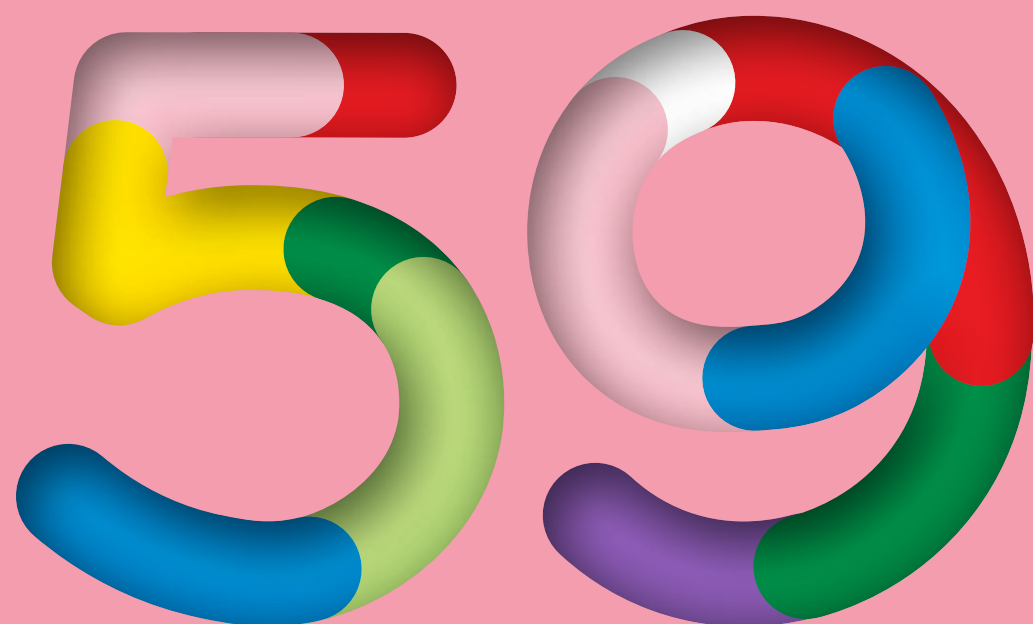
This tropical Southeast Asian fruit is making waves in skincare as a forest-derived alternative to retinol, which fights blemishes and fine lines. Proven to be very effective on crow’s feet—fine lines around the eye area—rambutan promotes production of collagen and elastin in the skin, provides antioxidants, and is much less irritating to the skin than many retinol products and derivatives. The whole fruit provides benefits to the skin according to board-certified dermatologist Hadley King. “The peel, pulp, and seed are rich in sugars, tannins, and flavonoids, which have antioxidant properties,” she told

*Well+Good.* Brands such as Dr Loretta, Albyn Beauty, Indie Lee, and HoliFrog released new serums and creams with rambutan as the star ingredient in 2022.

### Plant-based milks

Rice, coconut, and nut-based milks are becoming increasingly popular across skincare and haircare due to their moisturizing and exfoliating properties. From our coffee cups to our countertops, plant-based milks are appearing in top skincare brand formulations: Dermalogica's Daily Milkfoliant uses dehydrated coconut milk and ground oats as an exfoliant, Fresh's Milk Body Collection is a 2022 plant-based version of its dairy-inspired line from 1996, and Sol de Janeiro released its Brazilian Joia Milky Leave-In Conditioner that features Brazil nut, cupuaçu, and babaçu to nourish the hair.





# SUPERCHARGING HAIR HEALTH

Hair health for women is moving from  
treatment to prevention.

Hair health products are flooding the market, as a range of factors from pandemic stress to genetics to simply wearing a hijab can result in hair loss and breakage.

The issue of women's hair loss is popping up everywhere from glossy magazines to NBC's *Today Show*, which in May 2022 featured hair-raising footage of a doctor in New York City injecting "platelet-rich plasma injections" into a patient's scalp. More commonly, women with thinning hair are turning to a combination of oral nutritional supplements and topical creams, serums, and shampoos that contain ingredients like hyaluronic acid. Drugstore brands from L'Oréal to Rejoice have introduced "anti-hairfall" ranges.

The global haircare product market will reach more than \$150 billion by 2028, according to Coherent Market Insights, and the hair-loss-prevention product market specifically is projected to reach over \$31 million by 2028, according to a report by The Insight Partners.

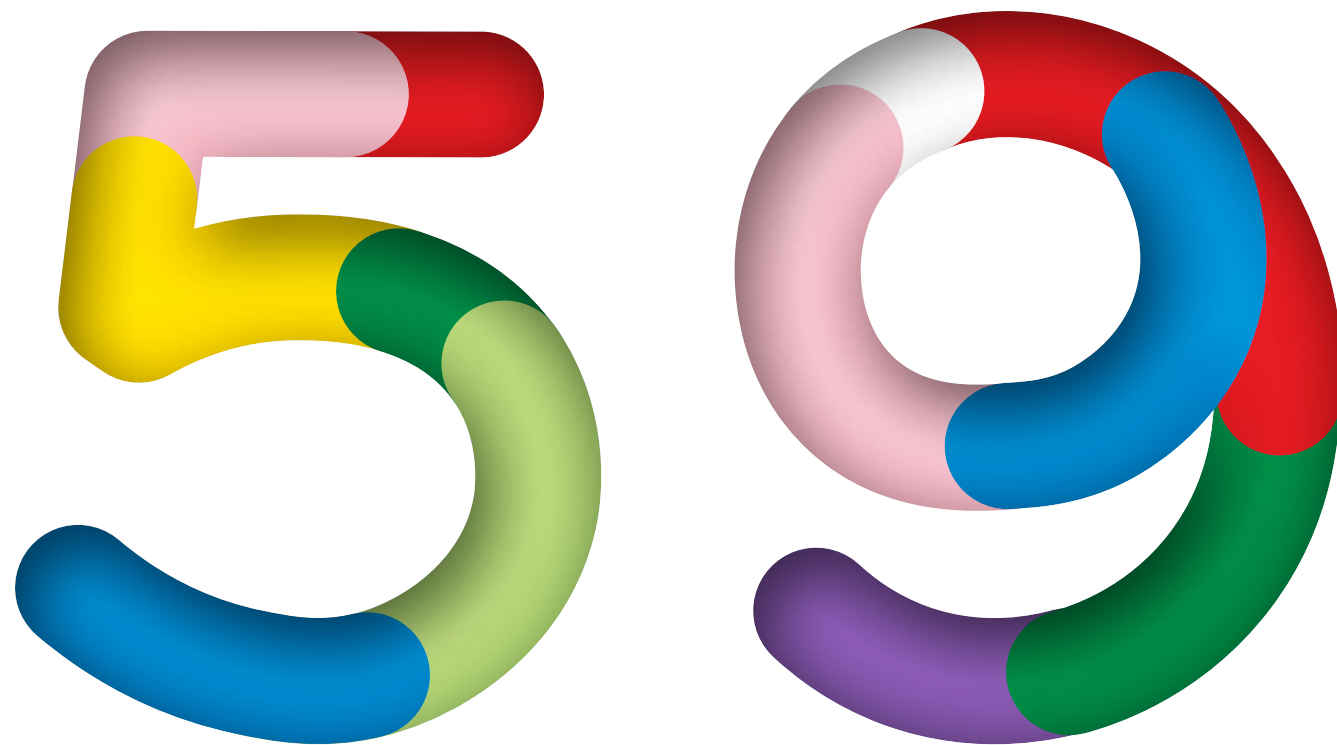
Cult hair and beauty brand Ouai launched a scalp serum and vegan supplement capsules for thinning hair in May 2022. The Scalp Serum and Thick & Full Supplements utilize well-known haircare ingredients including peptides, biotin, hyaluronic acid, and pea sprout extracts to nourish hair strength and promote growth. "Every product we launch is born from our community's feedback," says Ouai CEO Colin Walsh. "We constantly received requests for products that address concerns like scalp dryness, dull strands, and breakage."

UK-based Nue Co launched two products for hair growth and density in January 2022. Growth Phase, an oral supplement, aids with hair growth and reduces shedding, and Supa Thick is a topical pre-wash product that exfoliates the scalp while also aiding hair growth and preventing loss. Nue Co founder Jules Miller told *Glossy* that the products are for “the women who are shedding more hair than they usually do. Statistically, that’s one in three of us.”

Salon-linked luxury hair brand Oribe launched its Hair Alchemy range in February 2022 to target hair breakage. Product development manager Gabriella Raccuia told *Harper’s Bazaar*: “Prevention has always been a main category in skincare, and now is starting to make its way into haircare as consumers become increasingly savvy.”

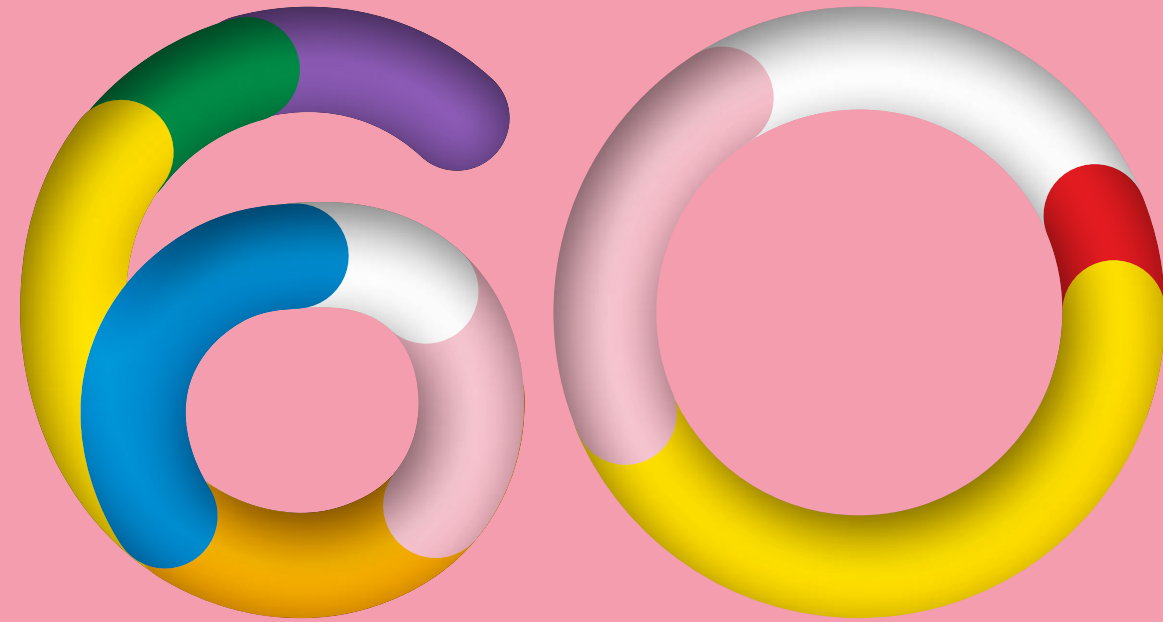
#### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Prevention is moving beyond the realm of skincare and bodycare to include hair health.



**“Prevention has always been a main category in skincare, and now is starting to make its way into haircare as consumers become increasingly savvy.”**

**Gabriella Raccuia, product development manager, Oribe**



# AFFIRMATIONAL BEAUTY

Beauty is merging with identity exploration  
and play, elevating makeup into an act  
of self-affirmation.





Isamaya Ffrench is reframing makeup as an exploration of identity and alter-egos. The artist's eponymous makeup line, Isamaya, launched in June 2022 and has served as a master class in character building. Each of her two drops to date has channeled a distinct identity. The inaugural drop, Industrial, espoused a "hardcore" aesthetic taking cues from "leather and latex, piercings and rubber, flesh, strength, and self-possession."

The latest collection, Wild Star, "pays homage to our inner cowgirl," and personifies someone who "is tenacious, feisty, and holds her own," Ffrench says. "She knows who she is and she never compromises. She's completely in tune with her desire to feel glamorous yet powerful. She's wild at heart."

Donni Davy, the makeup artist behind television show *Euphoria*'s iconic looks, launched her own line in May 2022, riding the wave of euphoric beauty (see 51, Euphoric makeovers, in "The Future 100: 2020") that the show spawned. The Half Magic range is backed by an entertainment company, further enmeshing beauty and dramatis personae. "Half Magic grew out of the global beauty cultural phenomenon created by *Euphoria* fans around the world," Michelle Liu, general manager of Half Magic, told *Allure*. "Creators behind the show came together to continue evolving the conversation around self-exploration and self-expression."

The Fabricant is bringing this concept into the virtual realm. The digital-only fashion house launched Xxories, a line of virtual facial accessories, in October 2022. "Digital beauty has the potential to let us extend our identity into places we haven't seen before," said The Fabricant creative director Amber Slooten. It lets beauty enthusiasts "explore identities beyond this realm and discover new sides of ourselves."



### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Beauty is moving "beyond being a pleasing visual expression towards something that communicates our beliefs, feelings, or personal point of view," Michaela Larosse, head of content at The Fabricant, told *Vogue Singapore*. In the digital world, beauty will become a reflection of users' shifting emotional states—opening the door to infinite identities. "We will have many different virtual selves available to us," Larosse continued, "allowing us to express how we feel at any given moment, switching between these personas at a click."

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**RETAIL &  
COMMERCE**

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# MULTIVERSAL DESIGN

Dreamlike, otherworldly design  
is reimagining physical spaces for  
a new era of creativity.

Physical spaces are getting dreamy, absurdist redesigns—transporting visitors to imaginary worlds and alternate realities. As digital environments and virtual worlds evolve, they’re ushering in a new modern creative vernacular—one marked by a boundless creativity that surpasses the constraints of physical reality.

Balenciaga wrapped its London store entirely in pink faux fur in April 2022—covering the walls, floors, and shelves in the fluffy material, and giving visitors the sense of stepping into a playfully absurd alternate world.

In May 2022, fashion designer Simon Jacquemus launched a series of pop-up installations for Selfridges, which were designed as a “surrealist reimagining” of a bathroom, Selfridges said. “I wanted to create crazy and unrealistic installations, all related to water and bathroom imagery,” said Jacquemus.

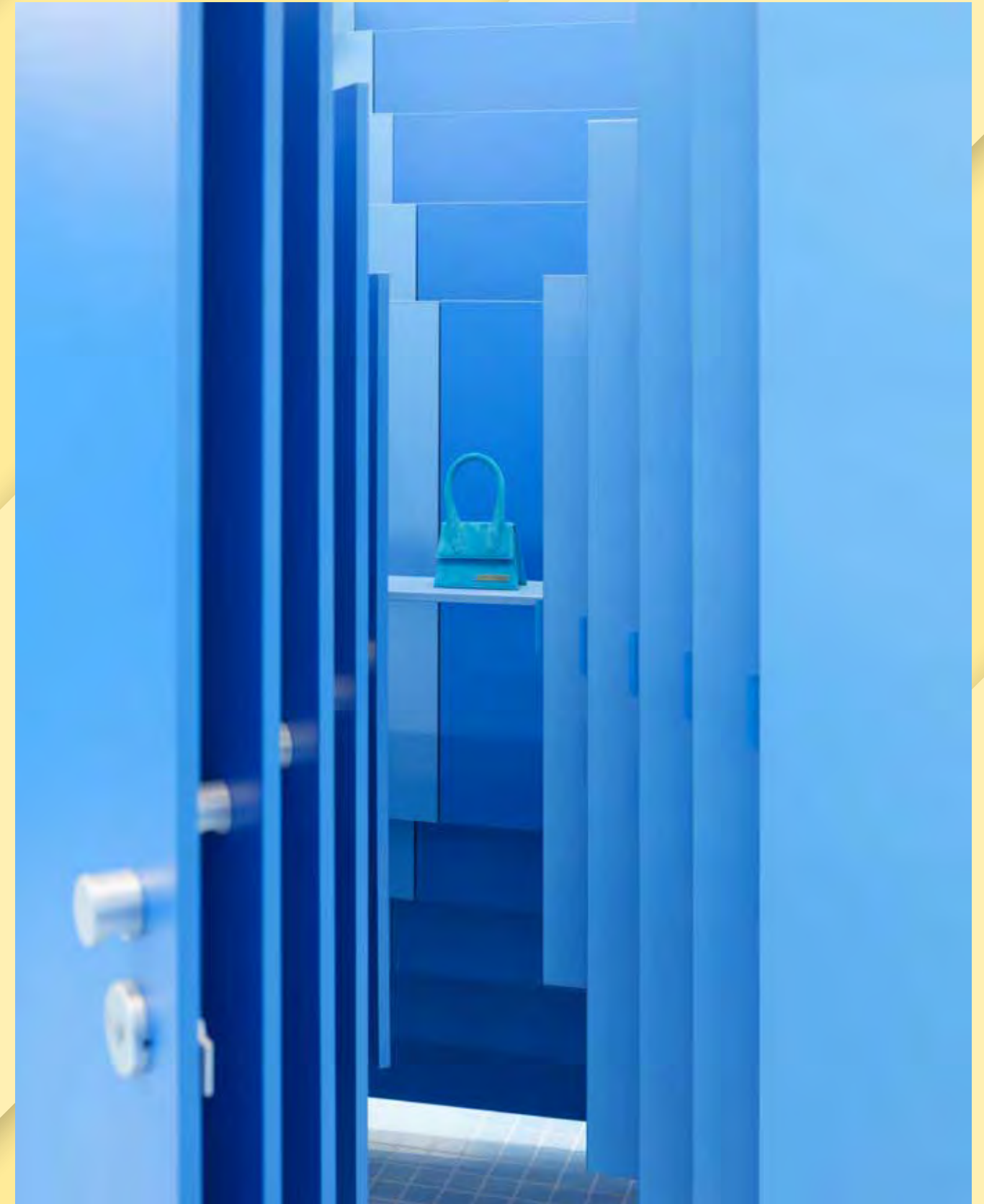
Louis Vuitton created a life-size toy racetrack at the Louvre in Paris for the backdrop of its spring/summer 2023 show in June 2022. “A giant children’s toy racetrack becomes a yellow-brick road for the imagination,” the brand said. “An evolutionary path for the mind where childlike fantasies come to life.”



The Taste of Dadong restaurant in Shanghai was conceived “to deliver an emotional, dream-like dining experience.” Sculptural partitions, dark surfaces illuminated by otherworldly blue and purple lighting, a “psychedelic” soundtrack, and mirrored panels covering the ceilings, showing warped and inverted reflections of diners and staff, all contribute to the “dreamy quality of the space.”

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

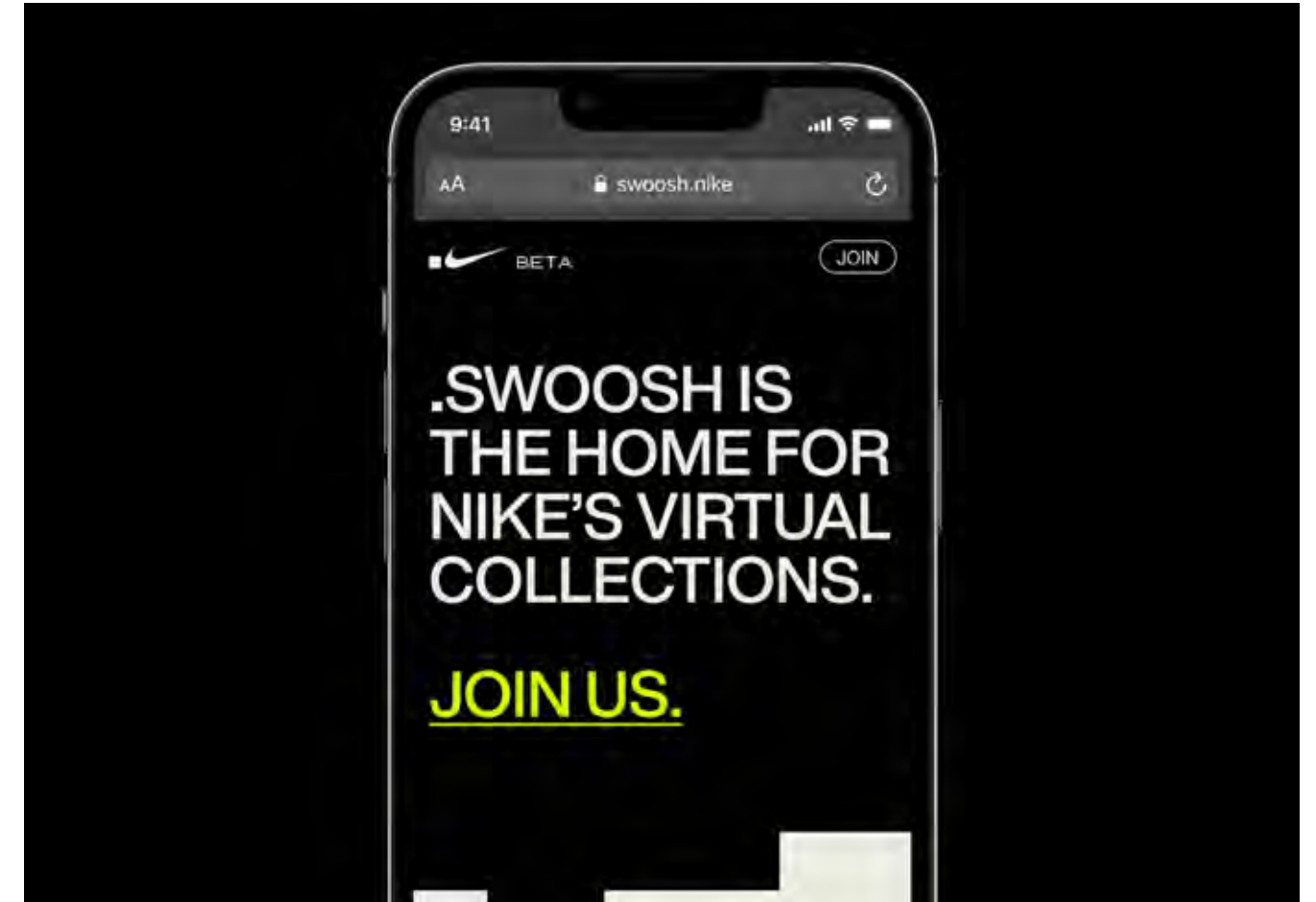
We are on the cusp of a new golden age of creativity, catalyzed by the dawn of the metaverse. As digital design gets more sophisticated, it's untethering creativity from the bounds of the physical world—opening the door to multiversal design, both on and off screens.





# COCREATIVE COMMERCE

Could the next era of retail see users  
cocreating brands' virtual products  
and storefronts?



Nike is letting consumers design and sell their own virtual sneakers as part of Dot Swoosh, its new Web3-enabled platform. Nike describes the platform, which launched in beta in November 2022, as part virtual marketplace, part VIP loyalty community, and part creator economy. The platform will be a place to buy and trade Nike's virtual goods, participate in community challenges to unlock exclusive access to events and products, and cocreate Nike gear.

Nike has teased that .Swoosh's community challenges will expand next year to include competitions in which members can win a chance to codesign virtual Nike products with the brand's designers, even earning royalties on their sales. "We want to redefine what it means to be a creator," said Ron Faris, VP/GM of Nike Virtual Studios.



Forever21 is inviting shoppers to curate and operate their own virtual storefronts on Roblox. Announced in December 2021, Forever 21 Shop City introduces a new user-generated retail format. Users build, stock, and operate their own virtual Forever 21 franchises—managing everything from stocking inventory to assisting customers, operating the cash register, hiring employees, and decorating their storefront windows. Users fully customize their store design, picking furniture, art, lighting, and music that suit their style. They even curate the Forever21 products they want to sell, hand-picking pieces from the brand’s latest collections, which are updated on Roblox with each new physical release.

Metaverse commerce is growing—and bringing with it a new set of retail formats. According to Bloomberg, the metaverse market is expected to reach



\$783 billion in 2024, up from \$479 billion in 2020. Nike Digital is the brand’s fastest growing segment, now comprising over a quarter (26%) of the brand’s total revenue. Its virtual Nikeland experience on Roblox—which lets users customize their own Nike sneakers—had attracted 26 million people as of November 2022, and its Web3 products had generated \$185 million in revenue as of August 2022.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

The future of virtual retail will be cocreative. Creativity is becoming the new status symbol for the dawning Web3 era (see 2, Creator communities, page 8) and brands are adjusting their virtual activations to trade in creativity and cocreation alongside traditional products. Expect to see more brands democratizing vcommerce by offering creative control to their consumers.



# TWILIGHT STORES

Hybrid fulfillment locations are adding  
a sense of community to the  
dark store model.





The pandemic ushered in a rapid acceleration of the ultra-fast delivery trend, with dozens of on-demand logistics companies offering product delivery in as little as 10 minutes in global cities, using networks of hyper-local dark stores. However, more recently dark store and kitchen operators have been receiving backlash from city dwellers for taking up valuable community space, leading to some countries taking steps to ban them. For example, in France dark stores have been reclassified as warehouses, rather than as shops, giving local authorities the power to remove them from urban centers. At the same time, big players like Gorillas, Getir, and Zapp have been scaling back their operations in some countries as supply has outweighed demand.

As the long-term viability of dark locations comes into question for the first time, a new hybrid approach has emerged that brings elements of community back into the mix. These twilight stores add a customer-facing element to the

## Twilight stores add a customer-facing element to the previously private format.

previously private format, allowing operators to both engage with locals and benefit from walk-in customers.

German courier service DPD has opened a dual-purpose twilight store in Berlin that is a micro-depot from which local deliveries are made via ebikes, while also operating as a store that removes the pain points of sending and receiving parcels. Similarly, on-demand delivery company Deliveroo's Hop location is a grocery delivery hub for the surrounding London neighborhood, but also includes a reception area where customers can pick up their groceries and where passers-by can place orders.

Taster, which says it runs "delivery-first restaurants" rather than dark kitchens, has launched British chef Jamie Oliver's new delivery brand Pasta Dreams via two pop-up locations in London. The strength of the hybrid approach, according to Taster CEO Anton Soulier, is that it optimizes efficiency while allowing the brand to "create direct relationships with customers."

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The convenience of dark stores is still attractive, but they aren't a good use of space in densely populated areas—leading to a new hybrid retail format that capitalizes on space, convenience, and community.





# CRYPTOLITERACY

Financial institutions and fintech brands want to demystify the metaeconomy.

In March 2022, the US Treasury launched a campaign to educate the public about crypto risks. The Treasury's Financial Literacy Education Commission is responsible for creating educational materials and organizing outreach to inform the public about how crypto assets work and how they differ from other forms of payment.

Nellie Liang, US Treasury undersecretary for domestic finance, said that the initiative aims to raise awareness about the risks of investing in cryptocurrencies as the digital asset moves from the fringes of the financial system to the mainstream, *Reuters* reported. "We're hearing more and more about investors and households who are purchasing crypto assets, and we recognize the complexity of how some of these assets operate," Liang said. "It felt like this is an area also where more education (and) more awareness could be helpful."

Finance brands are also stepping in to fill the gap in crypto education. Fidelity Investments launched a financial education center in the metaverse in April 2022. The eight-floor virtual learning center, located in Decentraland, helps educate visitors on investing basics, the metaverse, and Fidelity's new metaverse exchange-traded fund. The center was created to "inform a new generation of investors," the brand said.

In February 2022, Mastercard expanded its consultancy services to cover cryptocurrency, NFTs, and open banking. The new suite of services will help



banks and businesses adopt digital assets like cryptocurrency and NFTs, address risk assessment for digital currencies and NFTs, and advise on the development of digital wallets, crypto credit cards, and crypto loyalty programs.

Visa launched a crypto advisory service for financial institutions and merchants in December 2021. The service is aimed at financial institutions eager to attract or retain customers with crypto offerings, retailers looking to delve into NFTs, or central banks exploring digital currencies, the company said.

### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

The metaverse and Web3 are giving rise to new retail avenues and a nascent digital goods economy—all of which will inform spending patterns and are leading to the creation of a new cryptonomic ecosystem. But first, education needs to take place; the future of Web3 commerce hinges not only on adoption but also on education—for both consumers and brands.



# ACCESSIBLE COMMERCE

Brands are tapping into advances in voice-recognition technology to make physical and digital spaces accessible to all.

Tech giants including Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, and Microsoft have all joined forces with the University of Illinois Speech Accessibility Project, which aims to make voice-recognition technology more effective at understanding people with conditions that alter their speech pattern. The project will create a dataset of representative speech samples of people with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease), Parkinson’s disease, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome. This will be used to train the machine-learning models that power voice-recognition technology so that it will be better equipped to respond to the needs of people with these conditions.

Developments in voice-recognition technology like this are supplying physical retailers and ecommerce players alike with the tools to create more inclusive and accessible retail channels. Alibaba’s online marketplace Taobao is expanding its use of voice search to make China’s leading ecommerce platform more accessible to elderly users who live outside tier one cities. Previously only accessible to those speaking Mandarin, the search function will now recognize regional dialects used in places including Tianjin, Shandong, Henan, and Hebei.

As part of its commitment to “design, test, and scale more inclusive design standards and experiences across its store portfolio,” Starbucks has announced it is trialing speech-to-text technology in its locations. This will allow both customers and staff to see a live visual display of all conversations during the ordering process, making its cafés more approachable for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Brands are leaving money on the table by failing to make their spaces and services universally accessible. Voice-recognition and speech-to-text technologies play a key role in making physical and online retail inclusive for all.



# CRISIS RETAIL

As the financial crisis bites, brands are stepping up to help their most vulnerable consumers.



At the height of the pandemic, many brands started taking a proactive role in their communities to ensure their customers had access to essentials. As the cost-of-living crisis takes its toll on consumers' spending power globally, companies are once again stepping up.

Retailers are making a strong commitment to reduce prices or release value alternatives for those most in need. On-demand rapid delivery platform Getir has rolled back the prices of key grocery staples to 1990s levels, allowing customers to get hold of items such as bread, pasta, chocolate, toothpaste, and washing-up liquid at up to 80% below the current retail price. With inflation hitting a 41-year high of 11.4% in Canada in September 2022, grocer Loblaws also froze the prices on 1,500 products in its affordable No Name range. In Japan, Muji has pivoted to make home essentials affordable. Its new dollar-store-inspired Muji 500 format sells home goods for less than 500 yen (about \$3.30).

## Consumers are looking for frugal life hacks to make their budgets stretch.

UK supermarket Sainsbury's is taking a different approach by educating its shoppers and nudging them towards more frugal behavior. Its Recipe Scrapbook website shows how to make family meals for less than £5 (about \$6), while its Sainsfreeze pop-up in London hosted tutorials about how surplus fresh ingredients can be frozen and used later, helping customers to get the most out of each purchase. Value supermarket Iceland is also taking on an advisory role via its Shop Smart Cook Savvy partnership with energy supplier Utilita, which includes in-store and on-pack instructions about the most energy-efficient and cost-effective way to cook its food.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

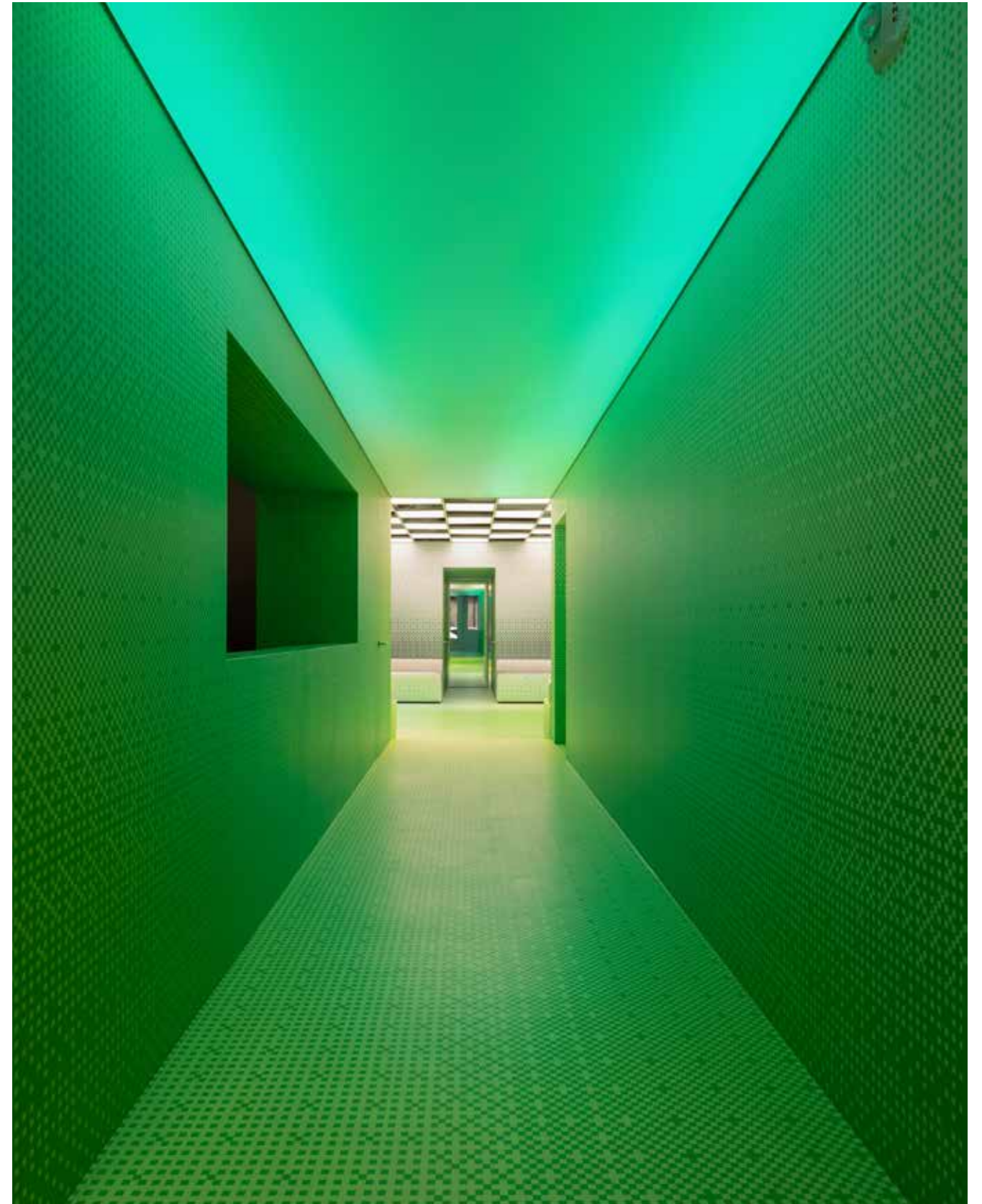
As the cost-of-living crisis intensifies, consumers are looking for frugal life hacks to make their budgets stretch. Brands can play a key role here to show their community values and drive long-term loyalty.





# WEB3 MARKETPLACES

Newly minted marketplaces are  
transforming ecommerce.





Consumer shopping habits are changing, and new platforms for digital retail and commerce are meeting a need for more immersive and engaging purchasing experiences.

Draup, an upcoming digital fashion platform, is building out a marketplace where digital fashion can be sold, bought, traded, and showcased. Draup will be a place where “digital fashion can be curated, displayed, and ported into off-platform virtual environments,” wrote Daniella Loftus, founder and chief executive officer of Draup, in a paper published in January 2022. With \$1.5 million in seed funding, Draup aims to “curate a community of digitally native creators and consumers, providing them with the access and education they need to maximize the value they get from digital fashion.”

In New York City’s SoHo neighborhood, Zero10, in collaboration with the Crosby Studios creative practice, is bringing digital fashion to the popular



shopping district. Zero10 is an augmented reality (AR) retail pop-up that customers can visit and try on virtual clothing in a physical, store-like setting.

George Yashin, CEO and cofounder of Zero10, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence that with “a wider adoption of AR technology by the fashion industry, it will become more sustainable and more interactive. Getting back to offline stores, shoppers—including gen-Z customers—are looking for a new immersive experience that AR provides.” By incorporating an AR mirror or AR try-on apps like the one Zero10 has created, Yashin predicts that retailers will be able to “sell items that are not stocked in store, but available for preorder. Instead of producing more clothing, people can try its virtual prototypes through augmented reality.”

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

These activations offer a first glance into the future of Web3 shopping.



# SHARIA FINTECH

Fintech apps are transforming  
Islamic banking.

A wave of sharia-compliant fintech apps are coming on the market, with founders who left the conventional banking world and are bringing their financial and tech expertise together with religious beliefs.

The main difference between *sharia*-compliant and conventional finance is that *sharia* shuns the concept of *riba* (interest), which is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam, and instead uses a profit-sharing model. Speculation and gambling are also forbidden.

Globally, Islamic financial assets stood at \$3.6 trillion in 2021, up 7.8% from a year earlier, according to DinarStandard, a New York-based research consultancy.

In Southeast Asia, the biggest ecommerce firms are exploring *sharia*-compliant financial products: Indonesia's GoPay, which is part of ride-hailing and ecommerce giant GoTo, has partnered with the Indonesian Mosque Council to enable digital donations, including *zakat* compulsory alms, across thousands of mosques. Bukalapak, another top ecommerce firm, offers a *sharia*-compliant investment app called BMoney in partnership with PT Ashmore Asset Management, with investments starting at amounts as low as 1,000 rupiah (around 60 cents).

There's also Alami, which has provided peer-to-peer business financing for small and medium-sized businesses since 2018. Its cofounder and CEO is Dima Djani, formerly of Citi and Société Générale in Jakarta.

As of August 2022, Alami had amassed 95,000 users on its platform—which includes an app, a website, and live chat—and distributed over 3 trillion rupiah (\$201 million) with zero non-performing or bad loans. Business grew even in the





pandemic. In 2021, it acquired BPRS Cempaka Al-Amin, which it relaunched in 2022 as Hijra Bank, a digital *sharia* banking app.

“Whatever your profession, if your intention is *ibadah* (a form of worship), *insya Allah* (God willing), there will be a good pathway for you until *akhirat* (the afterlife),” Dima, Alami’s CEO, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “For all Muslims, all activities that you do must be done within the corridors of *sharia*.”

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Governments in Muslim majority countries are actively encouraging a robust *sharia* financial sector as an economic driver and export sector. *Sharia* fintech is the latest iteration of that wave.

**Globally, Islamic financial assets stood at \$3.6 trillion in 2021, up 7.8% from a year earlier.**



# DIGITAL NESTING

Mass retailers are helping avatars design their virtual homes.



Lifestyle design retailers are tapping into gaming with a new avenue for Web3 commerce.

Robin Games, a mobile gaming startup, is adding Playhouse, an interior design-focused game, to its “lifestyle gaming” offering. Playhouse combines gaming with shopping. Consumers can add and drop furniture and décor to digital interiors to create their own spaces and room designs, adding sofas, wall art, plants, and tables, and resizing and layering items as they wish.

## People are nesting in their digital spaces, making cozy and comfortable homes in the metaverse.

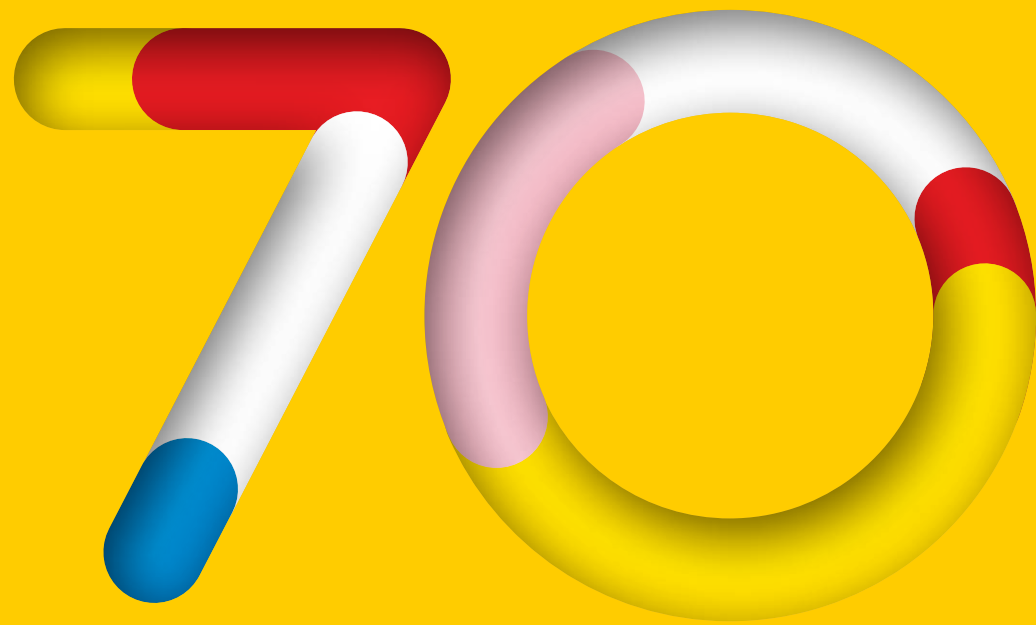
While other games, including CrowdStar's Design Home and Playtika's Redecor, have similar capabilities, Playhouse is taking lifestyle gaming into the future by teaming up with physical design and furniture brands, to make purchasing products for players' physical homes possible direct from the app. Partnering with brands including Article, Lulu & Georgia, Jenni Kayne, and Society6, the game makes its creative outlet a reality to consumers, who can further redesign their homes and physical spaces with the touch of a button.

West Elm Home Design is the furniture brand's first metaverse experience, introduced on Roblox in October 2022. Users can customize their homes with over 150 digital replicas of physical products by the brand, visit the virtual store and coffee shop in the West Elm Hub, and collect wearable West Elm accessories for their avatars.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

People are nesting in their digital spaces, making cozy and comfortable homes in the metaverse.





# MENDING GOES MAINSTREAM

High-street brands are bringing repairs to the mass market via fresh in-store options.

Inflationary pressures added to eco-aspirations are driving a resurgence of the make-do-and-mend mentality. Retail repair services, once the preserve of luxury brands, are proliferating on the high street.

Uniqlo recently expanded its repair service at its London Regent Street store after struggling to keep up with customer demand for patches, piping, and embroidery as well as basic repairs. The Japanese retailer plans to roll out the service across Europe, adding to existing services in Berlin and New York.

H&M is also an advocate of mending. The global fast-fashion giant's Kalverstraat store in Amsterdam hosts a Repair & Remake workshop that will revamp items from H&M or other brands.

Nike is taking a high-tech approach. In its London store in late 2022, the brand piloted its Bot Initiated Longevity Lab, known as BILL, a "robot-augmented system" that can repair and clean customers' sneakers. The in-store robot identifies areas of wear and tear during a 3D scan, which can then be repaired with a patch of the shopper's choice.

In December, Apple rolled out its self-repair service in Europe. The service, which first launched in the United States earlier in 2022, gives iPhone 12 and 13 and some MacBook owners access to repair manuals plus more than 200 individual parts and tools to fix their own devices.

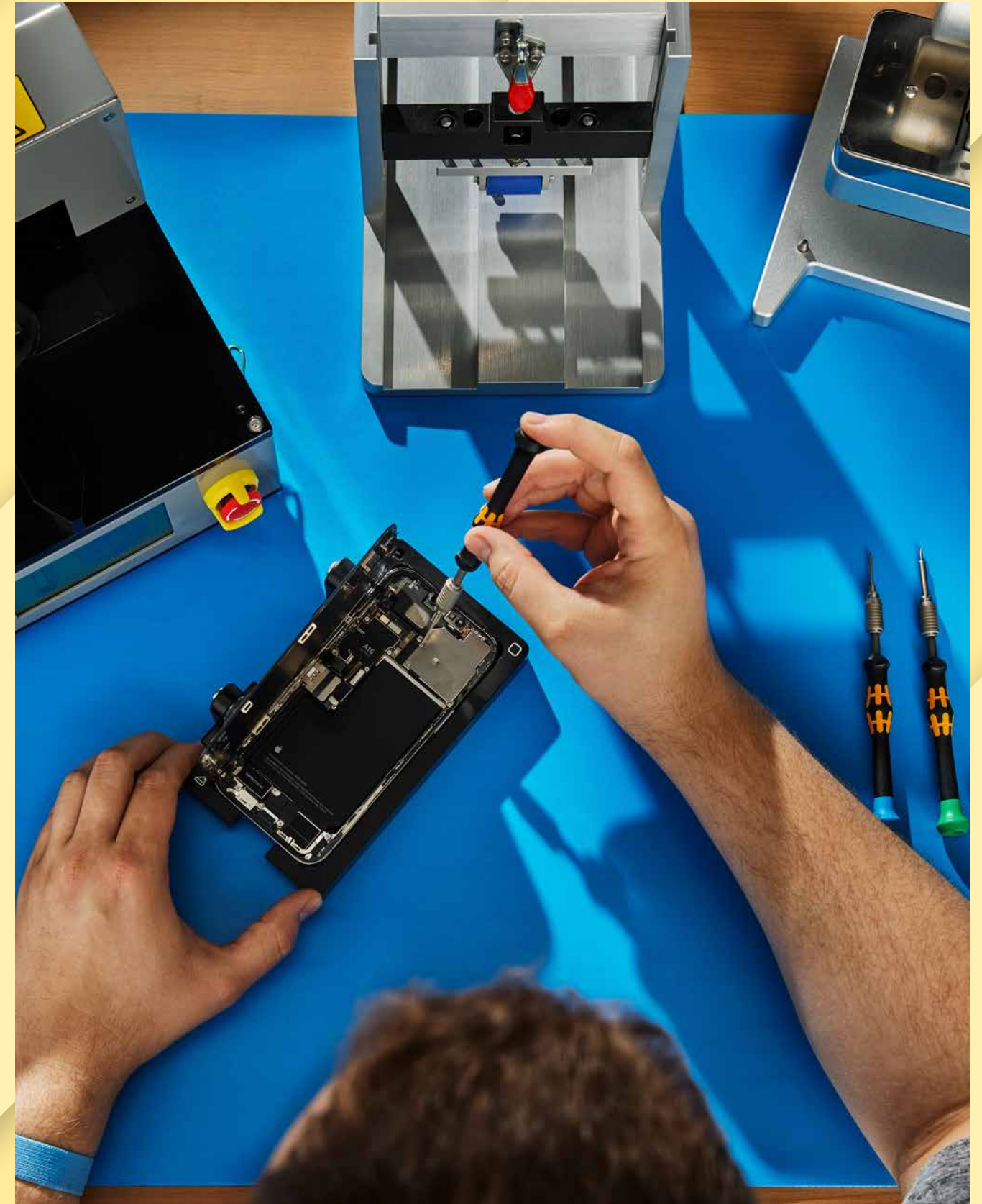
While consumers were already making efforts to curb consumption (see Anti-excess consumerism in our "Future 100: 2.0.20" report), the cost-of-living crisis is adding further impetus. July 2022 research from Penneys (Primark's brand in Ireland) finds that 62% are motivated to repair items by saving money, rising to 95% among generation Z.

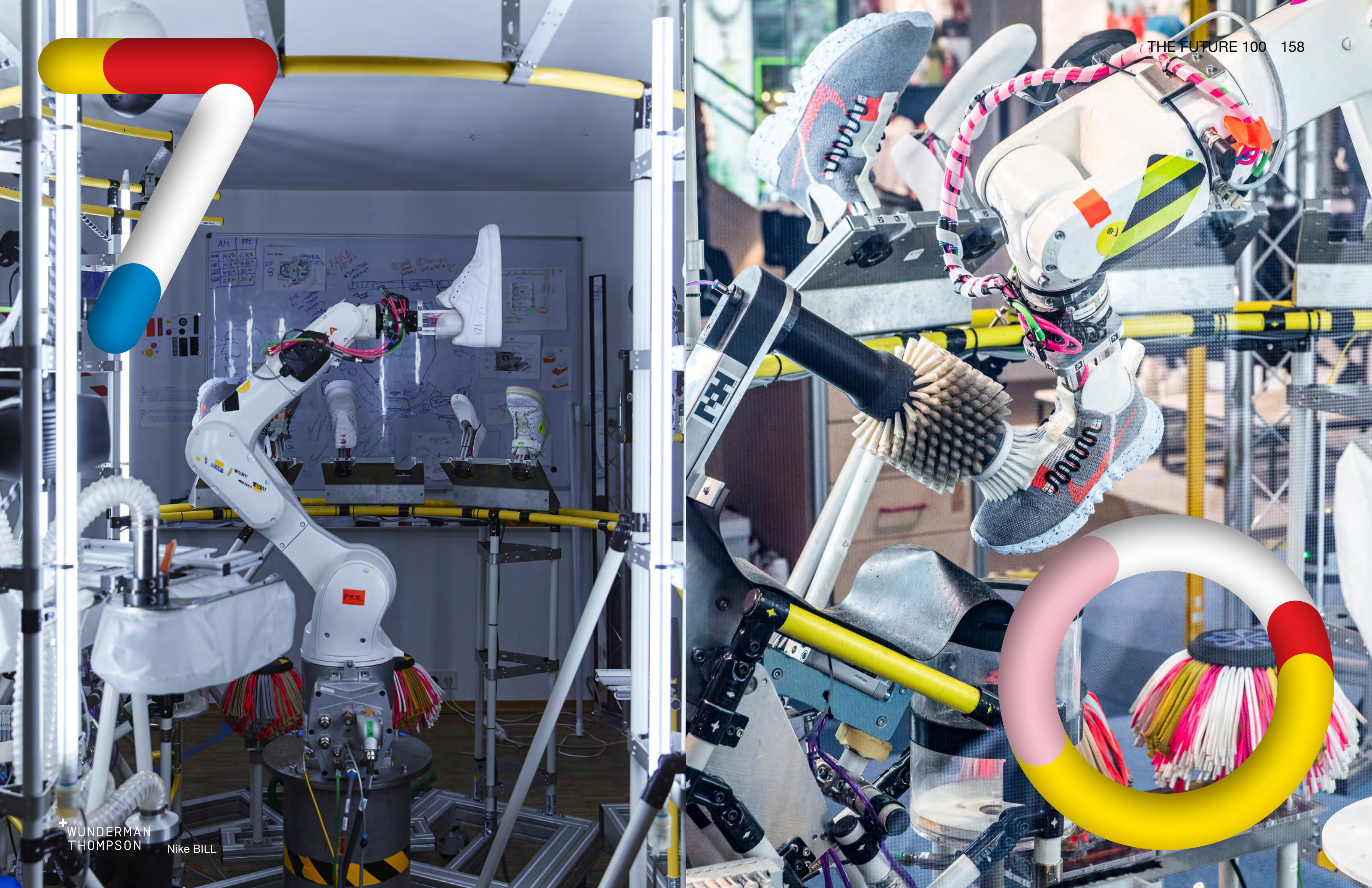


Madeline Michell, social conscience communications officer at British retailer Toast, which has offered a mending service since 2018, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence: “It may seem counterintuitive to be advocating for our customers to stop spending and start mending. Our hope is to reshape buying habits, advocate for quality and longevity, and shift the thinking of those who value novelty above durability.”

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Repair services are no longer just for luxury brands. The make-do-and-mend approach is becoming the smart and conscious choice for everyday consumers under pressure to save money and the planet.







**LUXURY**





# CRYPTO CLUBS

What does a members-only social club look like in the age of decentralization?

Friends With Benefits (FWB) has been called a “decentralized Soho House” and a “VIP lounge for crypto’s creative class.” An informal Discord chat room turned exclusive digital members’ club, its valuation reached \$100 million in 2022.

Admittance requires a minimum buy-in of \$FWB tokens, the club’s proprietary cryptocurrency, which unlocks access to exclusive benefits and services.

Members with at least one \$FWB token can read the group’s newsletter and blog posts, the *New York Times* reported. Those with at least five tokens have limited access to FWB chat rooms on Discord and entry to offline events. Global membership costs 75 \$FWB tokens (around \$4,000 as of November 2022) and grants access to all Discord chat rooms.

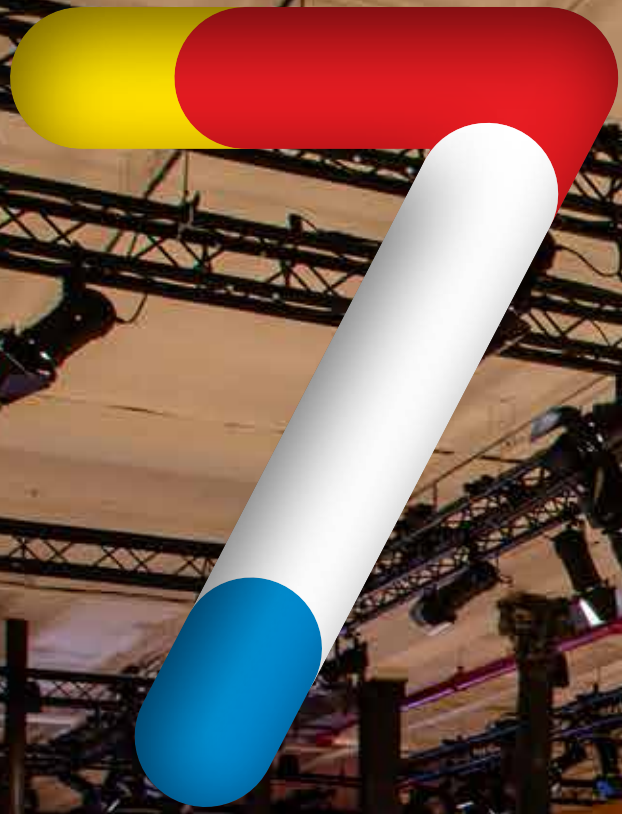
For crypto investors with a case of wanderlust, the Lucky Ape Travel Club’s travel-inspired NFT collection offers a range of benefits to each buyer: a room key at an exclusive resort, an access pass to an invite-only event, or a ticket to an exotic destination. Essentially, the club turns NFTs into virtual tickets for physical travel perks, and ownership of any of the NFT collectibles provides a free stay at participating clubs. Ownership unlocks access to a luxurious, members-based community centered around a passion for travel and cultural exploration.

High-end brands are courting a new class of cryptoluxe consumers by introducing crypto payment options for shoppers. Gucci announced in May 2022 that it would accept crypto payments for goods at North American stores. That year Equinox also began accepting cryptocurrencies as membership payments for any of its New York City flagship locations. The luxury gym reportedly has plans to expand crypto payments to other locations in the future.

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

According to Morgan Stanley, the metaverse is a \$50 billion revenue opportunity for the luxury market. Members clubs are being virtualized to serve a rising crypto elite.







# SUPER-RARE PALATES

Rarity is its own form of luxury.



From Amazon-foraged ants to hand-harvested wild rice to 15-year-matured champagne, businesses are standing out with hard-to-find ingredients and infusions.

The celebrated Minneapolis restaurant Owamni by The Sioux Chef is known for its “decolonized” menu, which eschews any ingredients brought by European colonizers from wheat flour to dairy, as well as modern-day farm animals like chickens and pigs. It was named Best New Restaurant in the US by the James Beard Foundation in 2022. Owamni serves Native American food such as blue corn, elk, and bison and also the rare hand-harvested wild rice called manoomin. Manoomin only grows around the Great Lakes and is linked to the

origin story of the Ojibwe people, who moved inland from the East Coast centuries ago, to find “the food that grows in water,” according to a *New Yorker* profile of the restaurant. Manoomin harvesters still use the age-old method of traveling by canoe to knock the grains from the heads of the rice stalks, which grow on the edges of lakes.

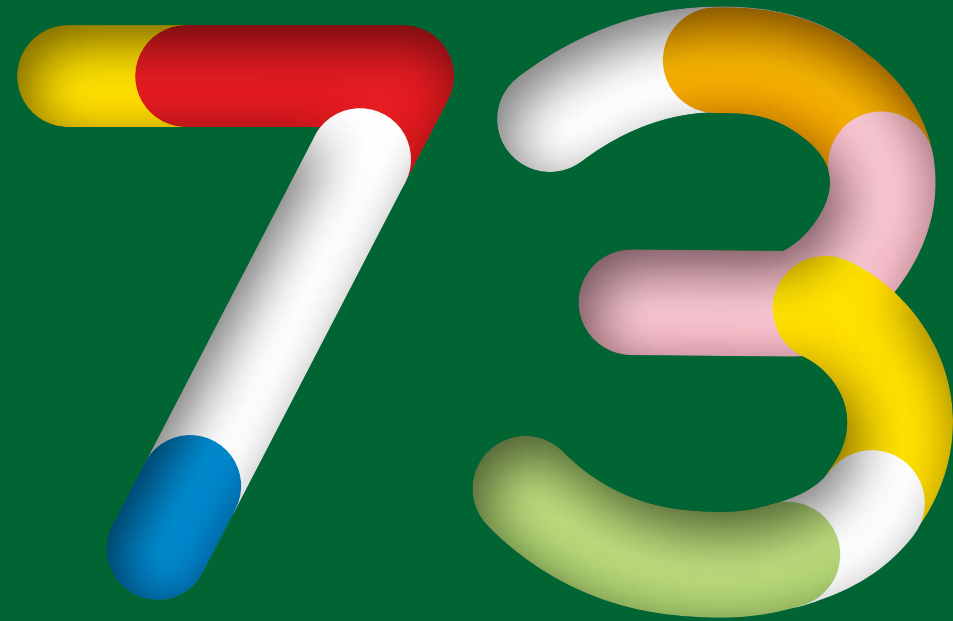
In Baltimore, rare ingredients foraged from the Amazon are a bar highlight at Alma Cocina Latina, a restaurant run by a Venezuelan native. Ingredients such as lemon ants add a citrusy flavor to cocktails, while murupí peppers give heat when infused in rum. Alma Cocina Latina sources its ingredients from an organization that works to preserve ancestral ingredients and cuisines by building a profitable business for communities who produce them, while offering an alternative livelihood to illegal mining, *Forbes* reported.

While Owammi and Alma Cocina Latina are driven in part by issues of social justice and identity, others are simply looking for rarity as a pairing to luxury. Emirates, the Dubai-headquartered airline, offered a super-rare champagne—Dom Pérignon Plénitude 2—to its first-class travelers for a period in autumn 2022. Plénitude 2 is cellar-matured for 15 years and boasts lime and toasty mineral flavors, finishing with hints of dried apricots, apples, candied raspberry and fig. “Its vibrant yet generous palate, powerful and precise with great energy, leads to a persistent, spicy, and saline finish,” the airline said.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

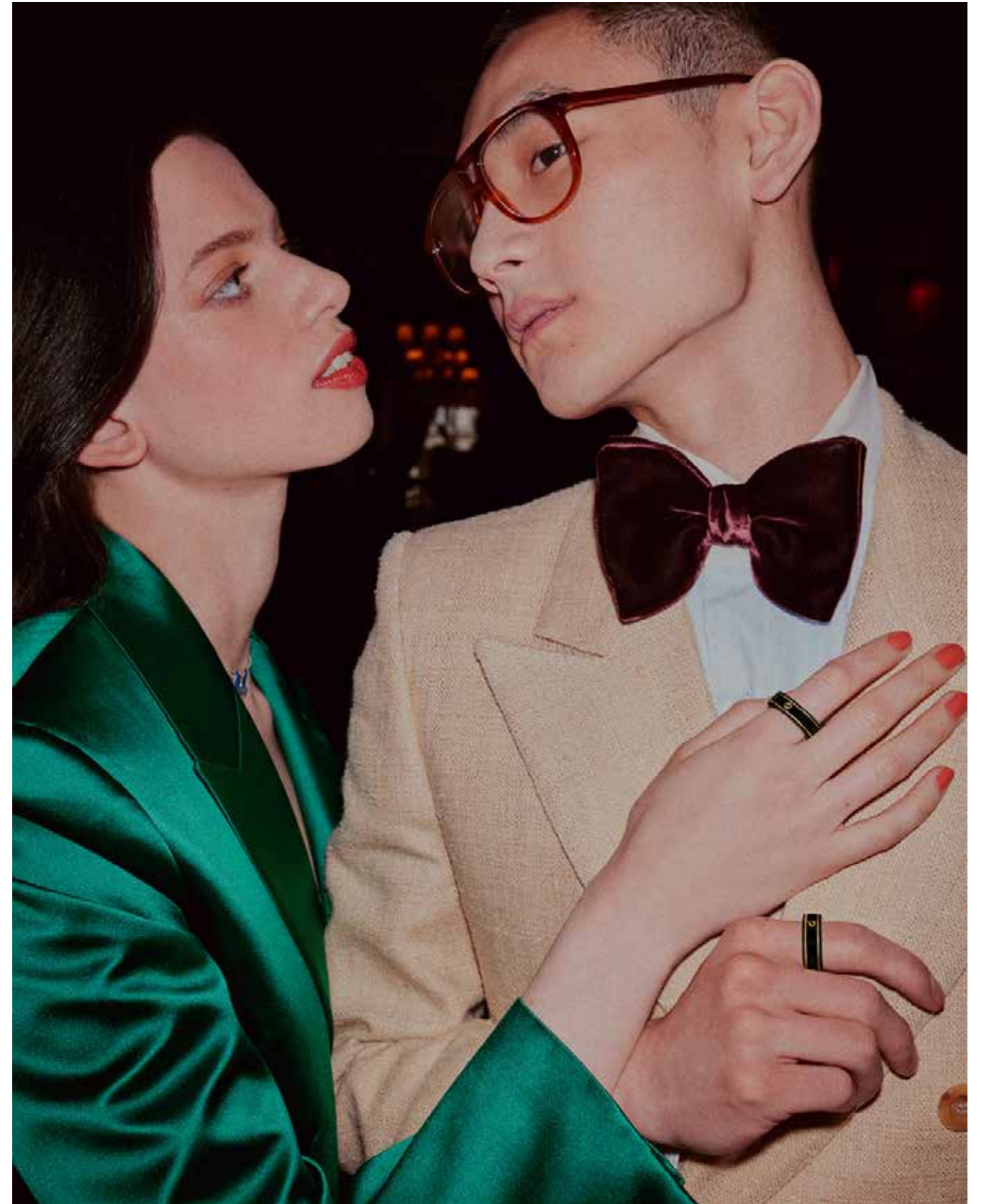
Some businesses are holding their own—and in some cases supporting small local producers at the same time—by infusing rare ingredients into their offerings.

**Rare ingredients foraged from the Amazon are a bar highlight at Alma Cocina Latina.**



# ELITE SLEEP

Upscale brands across categories are turning good sleep into the latest luxury.





Luxury brands are waking up to the potential of the sleep economy, introducing a wealth of new products and services.

Gucci partnered with the Finnish health tech company Oura to launch a sleep tracker ring in May 2022. The tracker, which retails at \$950, is crafted from black synthetic corundum and embellished with 18-carat gold—and is an interesting first move for Gucci into the sleep space.

Retail and slumber collided in summer 2022 as luxury retailer Selfridges introduced its Sex & Sleep pop-up. Shoppers keen to optimize their sleeping habits could explore a range of sleep-inducing herbal blends, essential oils, and supplements. Alongside the pop-up, sleep sessions were hosted at Selfridges' in-house cinema. Customers were invited to take a power nap before hitting the shop floor again with renewed vitality.

Luxury travel brands are getting in on the act by helping their guests establish sleep habits that persist beyond their stay. Rosewood Hotels & Resorts introduced Alchemy of Sleep in January 2022, tapping into the rise of sleep tourism. Guests can enjoy a one-night Dreamscape or an immersive five-night Sleep Transformation. These breaks offer an opportunity for guests to immerse themselves in meditation and restful treatments that they can continue to implement at home.

### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

“The pandemic has accelerated society’s focus on prioritizing health,” Oura tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. As we predicted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, every business is now a health business. Upscale brands are looking to build out their wellness credentials for high-end consumers who see sleep as the latest luxury investment.



# INTERGALACTIC LUXE

Luxury brands are espousing a spirit of adventure and wonder, flaunting playful mysticism in the face of pragmatism.

Burberry is venturing into the unknown with its “Night Creatures” campaign, launched in October 2022, and described as celebrating the “power of curiosity and exploration of the unknown.” The campaign follows three protagonists as they encounter an otherworldly sci-fi creature. The video, which was created in collaboration with creative collective Megaforce, is reminiscent of a fairy tale, and straddles the known and the imaginary. “We wanted to express the bold attitude that it takes to dive into the unknown: the fearless and playful spirit of adventure,” Megaforce said.

Gucci is also exploring the unknown. It first presented its Cosmogonie show—a “galactical” collection of looks—in May 2022. The show was inspired by “mystical encounters and mythological places,” the brand said, and was hosted at what Gucci director Alessandro Michele called a “stargate between earth and sky.”

The show was inspired by the “metaphor of constellations,” which Michele describes as “previously unknown configurations of reality that can break the constraints of tradition.” The show aimed to “draw conjunctions between fragments of worlds which would otherwise be dispersed,” Michele said. “I was looking for a magical and mythical place, where I could lose myself.”

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Luxury brands are pushing the boundaries of reality, looking to the magical and mystical for inspiration. After two years of prioritizing pragmatism and taking a subdued, serious tone, luxury brands are reflecting a cultural desire for exploration and wonder. “Fashion speaks,” Michele told *WWD*. “It’s not a hieroglyph for an elite; it talks about life. It’s a mirror.”



# NEW LUXURY PLAYS

The luxury retail model is undergoing  
a seismic shift.

In August 2022, online luxury marketplace Farfetch struck a groundbreaking deal to build a luxury ecommerce giant by buying a big stake in its competitor, Yoox Net-a-Porter. The deal, which is expected to close by the end of 2023, points to a future of consolidation in the luxury ecommerce space. It is a step toward “building an independent, neutral online platform for the luxury industry,” says Johann Rupert, chairman of Yoox Net-a-Porter owner Richemont.

A few months prior, in April 2022, Farfetch and Neiman Marcus Group (NMG)—the largest omnichannel luxury retailer in the United States, which houses luxury mainstays Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman—announced a strategic partnership “to revolutionize integrated luxury retail.” José Neves, Farfetch founder, chairman, and CEO, explained the move: “This partnership is about revolutionizing the luxury landscape globally, both online and offline, by combining NMG’s iconic presence in the US and Farfetch’s luxury new retail vision and technology.” As part of the partnership, NMG will gain access to Farfetch’s ecommerce and tech toolbox, which it will use to revamp the Bergdorf Goodman website and mobile app.

The pandemic drove a rise in virtualized shopping. According to the US Census Bureau’s 2022 report, ecommerce sales increased by a substantial 43% in 2020. This shift, combined with the rising competition luxury retailers face from third-party ecommerce sites like Amazon—which entered a partnership with secondhand retailer What Goes Around Comes Around in October 2022 to sell



pre-owned items from many of the luxury brands that decline to sell directly on Amazon—has luxury brands rethinking their strategies.

“I believe the US luxury market is at a pivotal point,” said Neves. “While the US is proving to be a long-lasting source of growth for the luxury industry, fueled by younger generations who are highly engaged with the category, businesses will have to significantly upgrade their digital capabilities—powering both online and offline customer journeys—to meet these new customer expectations and stay ahead in what is going to be a competitive space in the coming years.”

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

Following the Death of the luxury department store (68 in “The Future 100: 2020”) and Department stores reformatted (66 in “The Future 100: 2022”), luxury big-box retailers are pooling their resources to explore new avenues. Expect to see more fluidity and cobranded plays among luxury retailers as brands make their way into the next era of retail.

**“The US luxury market is at a pivotal point.”**

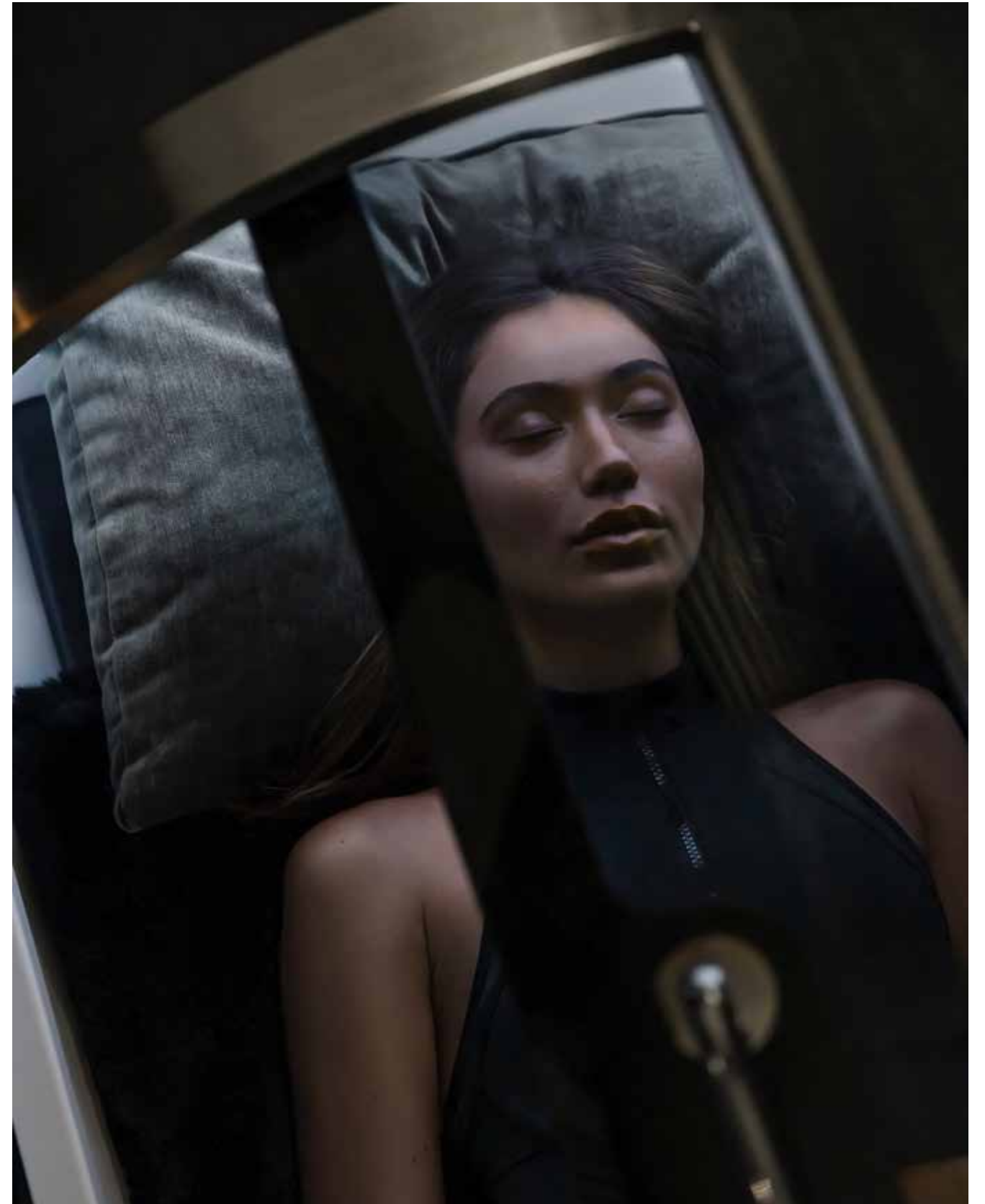
**José Neves, founder, chairman, and CEO, Farfetch**





# WELLNESS GUILDS

The newest gathering space is part  
high-end gym, part social club.





Dedicated spaces for social, mental, and physical wellbeing are opening to meet a growing consumer desire for wellness-centered community and holistic health practices.

A self-described “social wellness club,” Remedy Place opened in New York City in September 2022 as a new, sober, and health-centered concept for socialization. Remedy Place is “a club that is temptation and toxin-free, that enhances health and social life at the same time,” founder Dr Jonathan Leary told *Vogue*. “It needed not just to be self-care, but social self-care.” The club offers ice baths and breath work, guided classes and saunas, acupuncture, vitamin IV suites, and more.

In Los Angeles, Heimat offers a new space designed for an indulgent social atmosphere. The private fitness and lifestyle club offers members a rooftop pool, a bootcamp studio, a Michelin-starred restaurant, and a spa, in addition to its gym and fitness classes. Heimat provides an intimate, luxurious setting where its wellness community can connect, relax, and rejuvenate.

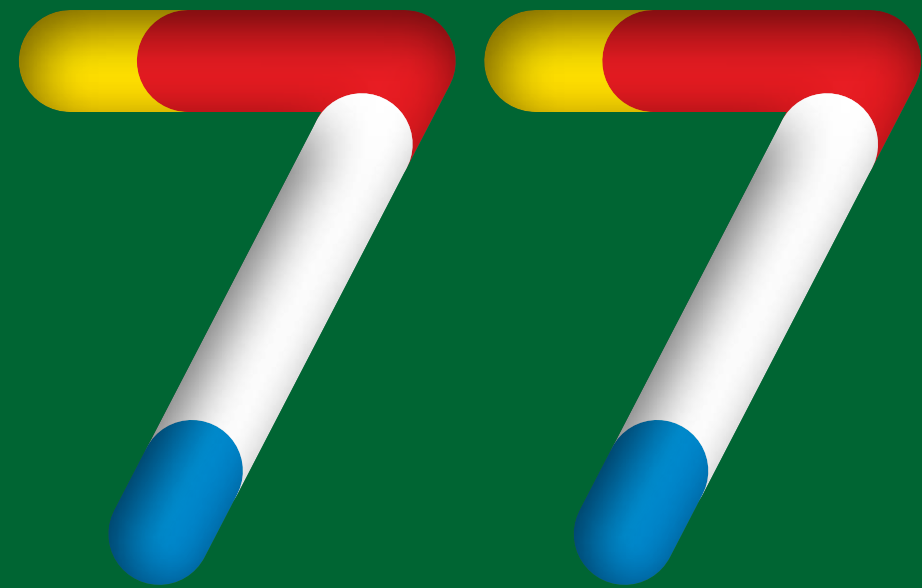
Soho House, the OG social club, deepened its wellness offering in September 2022 with the launch of its vegan, cruelty-free Soho Skin skincare line. Made with science-backed ingredients for top-of-the-line beauty treatments, the products are free for guests at select Soho Houses and can be purchased at Bloomingdale’s in New York City.

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Consumers are making self-care social. “The most important part of self-care is human connection,” Dr Leary told *Vogue*. “People need authentic relationships.”







# COMFORT FIRST CLASS

First-class menus are serving up lashings of feel-good food.



During the pandemic, many turned to comfort food, drawing on family recipes, and on food shows and blogs that took them back to a time of stability. As planes take to the skies again, some airlines are revamping first-class menus in the same way, introducing feel-good cuisine that invokes a sense of home.

In August 2022, Delta began serving Southern comfort food developed with chef Mashama Bailey, James Beard's 2022 Outstanding American Chef, in its premium seats. The first-class menu draws from Bailey's restaurant The Grey, located in Savannah, Georgia, and includes dishes such as a flounder and



**“It’s for those who want something that’s feel-good.”**

**Mashama Bailey, chef**

oyster creation with fumé blanc, green apple, potato, bok choy and turnips; short ribs with kanni sauce and smoked collard greens; and vegan vegetable tagine with roasted sweet potato topped with chermoula sauce. For dessert, there’s buttermilk cornmeal tres leches with candied kumquats and mandarin oranges.

“We have a few things that are going to resonate with people who are away from home,” Bailey told *Food & Wine*. “It’s for those who want something that’s feel-good.”

In premium cabins on international flights, Delta is also letting passengers build their own sundaes, with toppings such as Morello cherry compote, chocolate sauce, and cookie crumbles.

On Singapore Airlines, which recruited California’s Golden Door wellness retreat to jazz up its in-flight menu, the luxury spa’s executive chef Greg Frey Jr has developed a portobello mushroom “meat ball” that’s served with risotto in vegetable broth—serving up comfort without heaviness. “It’s so satisfying and you get all those umami flavors,” Frey told CNBC. “The best part is, an hour later, you’re not going: ‘Ugh, I wish I didn’t have the meatballs.’”

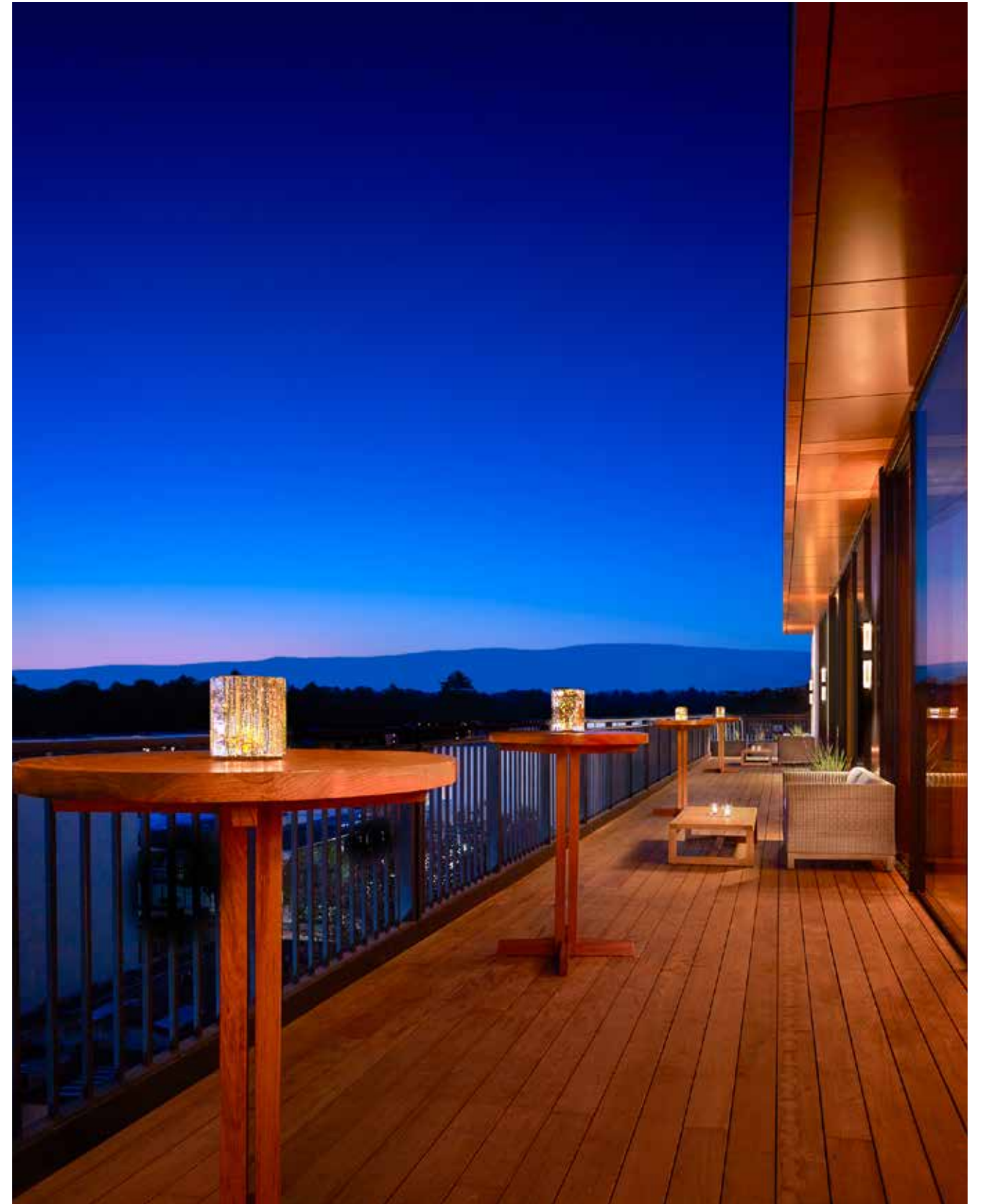
#### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

As people start flying again, airlines are drawing on comfort, including on the menu, to lure clients into the premium seats with the biggest margins.



# HYPER-PRIVATE LUXURY

Luxury brands are taking exclusivity  
to the next level with inner-sanctum access  
for their top customers.





Chanel plans to open private boutiques in Asia in 2023 to cater to its most important customers. The Paris-based luxury brand generated revenue of nearly \$16 billion in 2021, up almost 50% from 2020, and close to half of that came from Asia Pacific.

The move, which sparked a social media debate over whether the brand had taken its snob factor too far, appears in line with recent moves to raise the price of handbags and limit the number of items each shopper can buy of the most coveted designs.

In the same vein, Dior invited top customers to spa cruises down the Seine in Paris in June and July 2022, overlapping fashion show season. The French fashion house already has two permanent spas in Paris, one at Hôtel Plaza Athénée and another at the Cheval Blanc. Customers could book a two-hour slot aboard the boat, including an hour's treatment, with the rest of the time devoted to enjoying

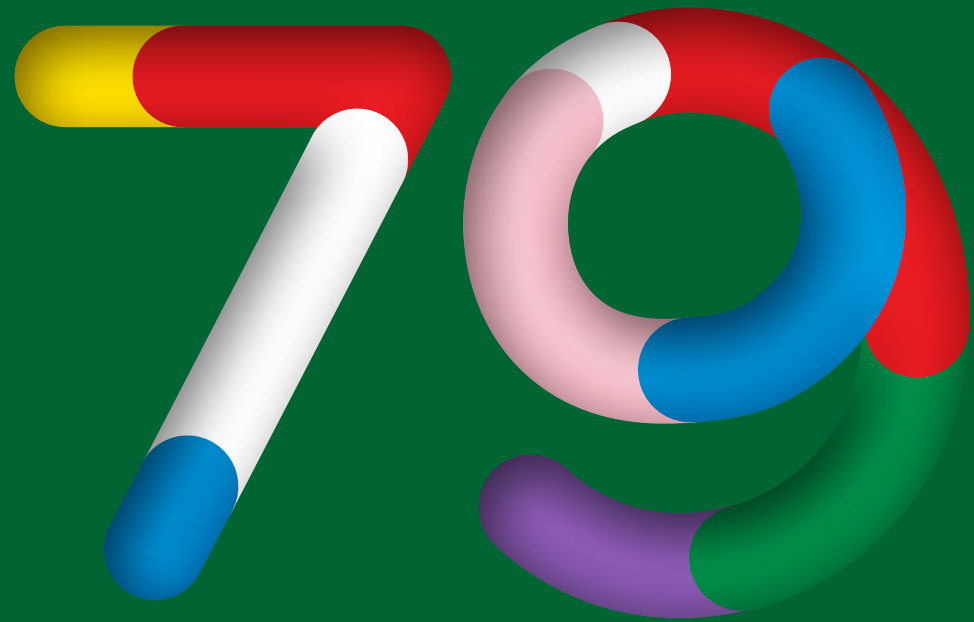


river views. The idea was inspired by the historic Bains de la Samaritaine, 19th-century floating baths along the Pont-Neuf on the edge of the Seine.

Nobu Hotels was founded by the Japanese chef Nobu Matsuhisa, with Hollywood actor Robert De Niro and film producer Meir Teper, drawing inspiration from traditional Japanese inns known as ryokan. Nobu Hotels launched a Ryokan Retreat package in 2022 in partnership with Schubach Aviation that includes private jet transportation between its California properties Nobu Ryokan Malibu and Nobu Hotel Palo Alto. The package includes two nights at each property and an omakase dinner for two.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Luxury brands have always drawn some of their cachet from exclusivity. Now some luxury brands are ratcheting up that cachet with experiences that literally limit the number of people who can enjoy them.



# REMOTE FINE DINING

Far-flung, intimate haute cuisine  
is enticing food aficionados to travel  
to the ends of the world.





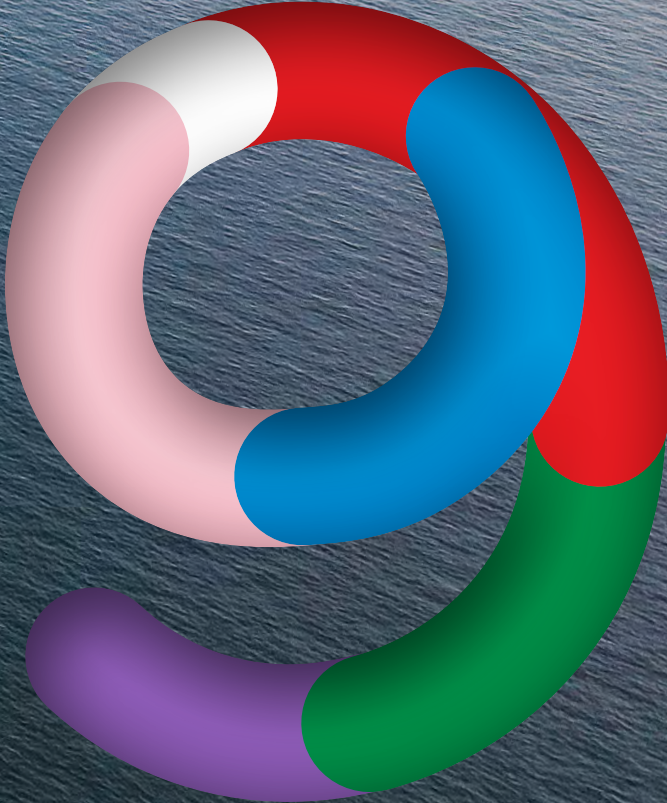
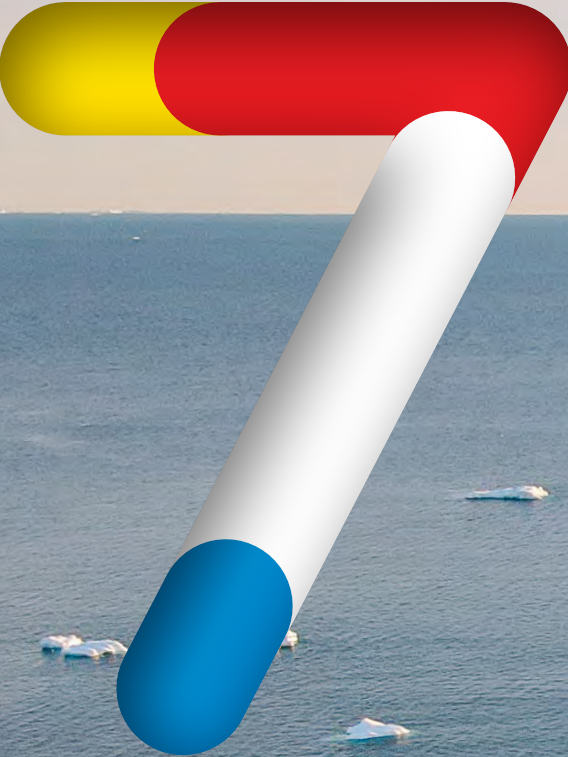


Adventures for the palate start with the journey to the restaurant—getting there is part of the experience. Michelin-starred restaurant Koks relocated temporarily from its already remote Faroe Island location to Ilimanaq, a small village within Greenland’s Arctic Circle, for summer 2022 and 2023. Feasting on the two-star menu requires an hour-long boat ride from the nearest town, Ilulissat. A September 2022 article by BBC reporter Adrienne Murray Nielsen likens the trip to “an odyssey” involving a boat ride that weaves through towers of icebergs, and describes the experience as “an epic food journey.” The restaurant will return to the Faroe Islands in 2024 at a new home which is currently being built.

On the northwestern coast of Norway, spectacularly located among fjords, is fine-dining restaurant Kvitnes Gård, which opened at the end of 2021. The restaurant is reached via boat from nearby towns. All guests are required to stay the night for what the restaurant describes as “an experience—not a meal.”

### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

Fine-dining restaurants are not only elevating the menu but also framing the expedition to the restaurant as part of the wider experience. As luxury consumers seek out niche, limited, and unique experiences, expect more restaurants to pop up in less accessible parts of the world.





# RESIDENCE AT SEA

The next-gen digital nomad is taking  
to the sea—in style.

Cruise ship startup Storylines has announced its debut luxury residential cruise ship concept. Scheduled to set sail in 2025, the 18-deck MV Narrative will carry 1,000 residents around the world within its 547 condominiums, on an indefinite voyage that could last a lifetime. The ship offers 11 semi-customizable floorplans, several of which have already sold out, according to *Insider*, and interested buyers have various options: a 237-square-foot studio is selling for \$1 million, and for \$8 million, homebuyers can choose a 1,970-square-foot four-bedroom, two-floor home.

Each unit is fitted with storage units, closets, mounted TVs, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Residents who work remotely will also be able to lease private offices. The all-inclusive costs of these homes at sea will cover food, medical services, access to a pool and a marina, a wellness facility, and even a bowling alley. And, of course, access to international destinations every time the boat docks in countries such as Turkey, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, and more.

In October 2022, Ritz-Carlton launched a luxury yacht cruise costing a minimum of around \$6,000 per week, hosted by its five-star hotel chain Evrima. The cruise treats guests to Michelin-star chefs, four pools, a champagne bar, a humidor room, a nightclub, and a spa on their voyage from Barcelona, Spain, to Nice in France.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

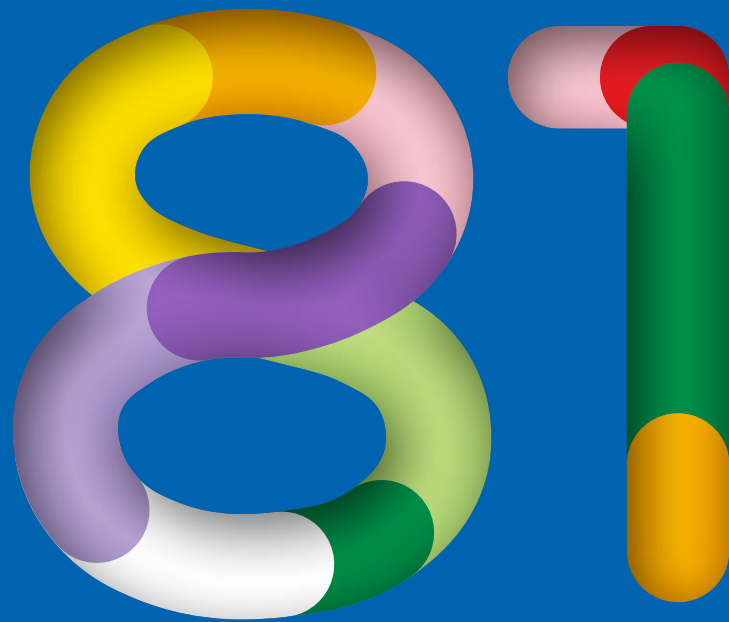
Consumers taking up residence at sea are buying into an upscale evolution of nomadic lifestyles.





**HEALTH**





# THE SUPERSELF

Self-care gets supercharged.

The way people are thinking about their health and wellbeing is evolving. “Coming out of the pandemic, people realize having this balance of life and appreciating physical and mental health is not something we should leave as a part-time pursuit,” Gareth Roberts, the director of brand and operations support for Peninsula hotel group—which has observed a rise in wellness travel (see 84, Hospital-ity, page 188)—told the *Wall Street Journal*. Rather, health and wellbeing are becoming central considerations.

Selfridges is encouraging consumers to expand how they think about self-care and wellbeing. The retailer is repositioning itself as a provider of “feel-goodness,” asking people to consider what it means to “live your best life.” The activation, which was part of the brand’s Superfutures theme for 2022, spans products, services, and content—from curated product selections to relaxing “sensory experiences” to podcasts and articles. It even includes what the brand calls a “new kind of retail therapy,” connecting shoppers with confidence coaches, breathwork specialists, and sex therapists. “We’re bringing to the fore the myriad ways Selfridges can help you become your Superself—through fitness, sustainability, beauty, food, creativity, and more,” says Emma Kidd, the store’s acting creative director.

## WHY IT’S INTERESTING

The growing focus on emotional health that we tracked in “The Future 100: 2022” is expanding even more into an all-encompassing wellness lens. Caring for oneself now includes caring for physical health, mental health, and even environmental health—which, taken together, contribute to a new view of the Superself.

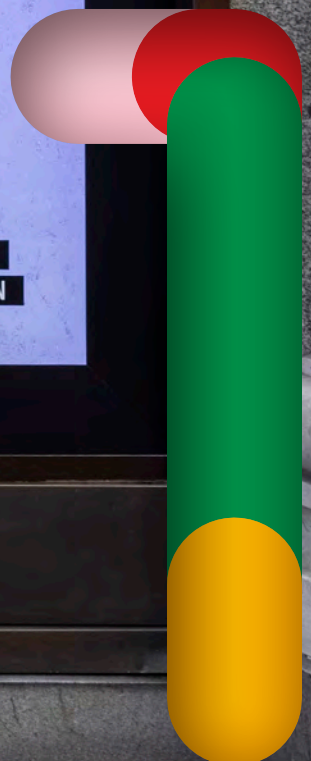


HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR SUPERSELF:

# SUPERCHARGE FROM WITHIN



BIOHACKING TREATMENTS  
BY DR VALI, COMING SOON





# PSYCHOBIOLOGICS

Is gut health the latest path  
to mental wellbeing?



Mental health experts are harnessing the power of psychobiotics: probiotics that can yield specific benefits to the nervous system.

The award-winning probiotic and prebiotic supplement brand Seed Health launched a gut-brain development program with Axial Therapeutics in July 2022. Using research from the California Institute of Technology, the brand will link microbiome gut health to potential alleviation of anxiety, stress, and depression. Caltech was the first lab to uncover the relationship between intestinal microbes and neuropsychiatric conditions, and its research will be used to better understand and formulate potential microbiome treatments for mental and emotional health benefits.

Consumers are latching onto gut-mind benefits in their quest for emotional wellness. According to Research and Markets, the global probiotics market





grew from \$39 billion in 2016 to \$58 billion in 2021. Increasingly, supplements are marketed as boosting cognitive function, mood, and mental energy.

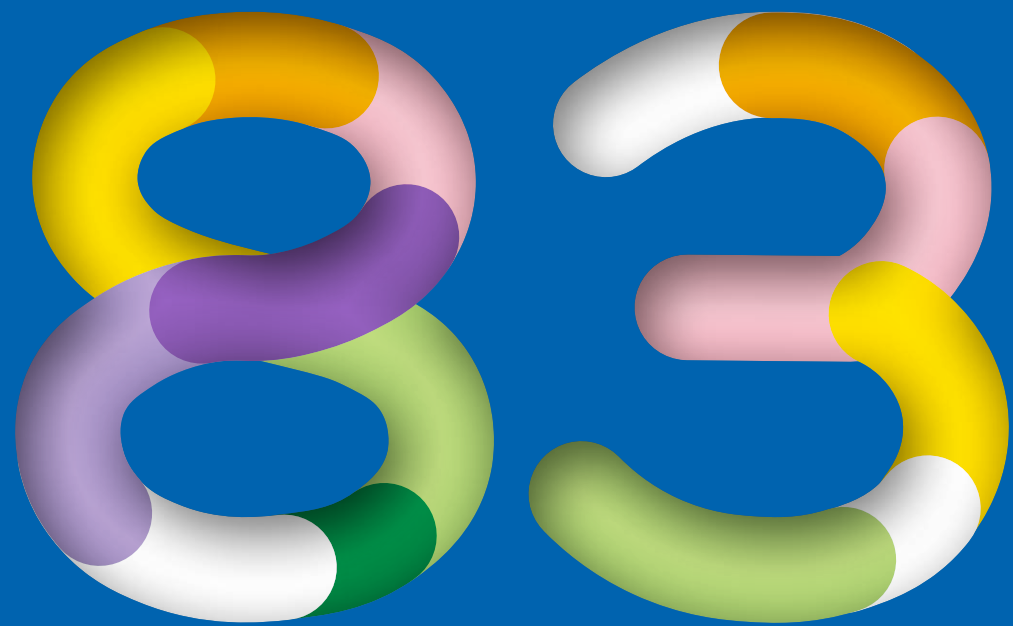
In August 2022, Bened Life, a US-based biomedical company, launched Neuralli, its first probiotic for brain health, formulated using its patented psychobiotic PS128. The company claims it can “help balance serotonin, dopamine, cortisol, and other molecules that affect mood, mind, and movement, while also helping regulate gastrointestinal tract health.”

Cassandra Arendt, director of science communication at Bened Life, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence that Bened continues to see “an exponential increase in studies of the gut-brain axis in the scientific literature. This interest is now trickling down to the wider public.” She also notes that as more “people are struggling with mental health issues, safer [treatments] with fewer side effects will always be in demand, and psychobiotics may meet that need for some people.”

Also in August 2022, Thailand and Canada approved the registration of PS128, which claims to have “potential neurological and mental health benefits, such as improving sleep and reducing symptoms like those seen in anxiety, depression, autism, and Parkinson’s disease.”

### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

As consumers look to improve their holistic health physically and emotionally, brands are leaning into the benefits gut health can have on mental wellbeing.



# JOY WORKOUTS

Exercise designed for emotional uplift is helping people spark joy.

According to the World Health Organization, the pandemic triggered a 25% increase in anxiety and depression worldwide. As consumers embrace physical activity for its emotional benefits, fitness brands are rethinking their offerings to cater to emotional health.

Psychologist Kelly McGonigal unpacked the “joy workout” in a feature for the *New York Times*. The exercises—bounce, reach, sway, shake, jump for joy, and a move McGonigal calls “celebrate,” which mimics tossing confetti—are selected from studies on movements that elicit positive emotions. “The Joy Workout is just one way to lift your spirits through movement,” she wrote, noting that there are also plenty of other “science-backed ways to improve your mood with exercise.”

Fitbit can now help wearers track and manage stress, linking physical and emotional health. The Sense 2, released in August 2022, features a new Body Response tracker that monitors heartbeat, skin temperature, and sweat levels. Whenever there’s a shift in the wearer’s temperature, for example, the Sense 2 flashes a notification to the wearer and prompts them to reflect on their mindset and situation.

The exercises—  
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“Fitness tracking reveals task-specific associations between memory, mental health, and physical activity,” according to a study published by Dartmouth College researchers in August 2022. The report confirmed that, while effects on memory and mental health states vary depending on the physical exertion, “physical activity does provide a non-invasive means of manipulating cognitive performance and mental health.” This could mean that “as strength training may be customized to target a specific muscle group, or to improve performance on a specific physical task, similar principles might also be applied to target specific improvements in cognitive fitness and mental health.”

#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Fitness brands can aid consumers in their emotional and physical wellness simultaneously. Intent to feel good emotionally, not just physically, may indicate a change in the future of what we now call “fitness.”





# HOSPITAL-ITY

From IV drips to stem-cell therapies, the latest crop of wellness hotels merges healthcare and hospitality.



The global wellness tourism market is expected to exceed \$1 trillion by 2030, growing at an annual rate of nearly 10% over the next eight years, according to a June 2022 report by Grand View Research. “The pandemic put a spotlight on our baseline health,” Kane Sarhan, cofounder and chief creative officer of The Well, a health and wellness company based in Manhattan, told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Now luxury hotels are getting in on the growing market with new high-tech health services.

The Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea, Hawaii, recently partnered with Next Health, a Los Angeles-based preventive and diagnostic healthcare center. The new Next Health center offers Four Seasons guests a suite of health services including IV drips; an immune- and energy-boosting ozone treatment that fortifies the blood with oxygen; and stem-cell therapy, which goes for \$12,000 per hour-long session. The new program also offers genetic biomarker testing. Guests can have their testing done in New York City or Los Angeles before taking off, and then meet with a Next Health provider once they’ve arrived in Hawaii to curate an itinerary based on their profile, which offers a hyper-personalized program for diet, activities, and health therapies.

In July 2022, medi-spa Lanserhof opened a new location in Germany that features high-end medical therapies like biorhythmic lighting in bedrooms; a dedicated on-site psychologist; and “mitochondrial training” CellGym sessions, which simulate oxygen deprivation. The medihotel also has MRI machines and CT scanners on site.

And the Ranch Malibu’s new location in Italy has eight physicians on staff who conduct medical diagnostics for guests, including bloodwork.



“Wellness shouldn’t be something you only address when you cross the threshold into the spa,” Gareth Roberts, director of brand and operations support for the Peninsula hotel group, told the *Wall Street Journal*. “That outdated concept of ‘Now you’re in the world of wellness’? That’s not authentic.”

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

Health is an increasingly integral part of travel. The latest wellness retreats are bringing scientific therapies into the spa, for a new category of destination that’s halfway between a hotel and a hospital—catering to travelers who prioritize health.



# LYMPHATIC HEALTH

The newest focus for wellness is lymphatic.

Gua sha, a traditional Chinese medicine practice of scraping skin to encourage lymph flow, is being espoused by Western celebrities and showing up in luxury spas around the globe.

In gua sha, a tool is used to scrape lubricated skin to produce a light petechiae—sand-like red bruising indicating broken capillaries just under the skin. The goal is to promote the circulation of lymph, the colorless, watery liquid ferrying white blood cells to organs and carrying waste back, helping fight infections.

American actor and wellness guru Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop sells a heart-shaped rose quartz gua sha tool made by Kora Organics, a brand founded by supermodel Miranda Kerr. It comes with a diagram of the face showing how to scrape the tool in upward and outward strokes.

Equinox Hotel in New York’s Hudson Yards, which promotes itself as a “temple to total regeneration,” introduced lymphatic drainage treatments at its spa in August 2022. The Spa by Equinox partnered with Skin Science Solutions to introduce handheld lymphatic massage devices meant to drain, sculpt, and contour the body and face.

Lymphatic health is also increasingly on the repertoire of luxury spa treatments in Asia, alongside herbal scrubs and hot stone massages.

The goal is to promote the circulation of lymph, the colorless, watery liquid ferrying white blood cells to organs and carrying waste back, helping fight infections.

The Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and Resort in Chiang Rai, northern Thailand, offers a 60-minute gua sha facial treatment using plant extracts and traditional Thai ingredients as well as a 90-minute gua sha back detox massage in an open-air pavilion in a jungle setting.

The Como Shambhala Estate, a Singapore-owned luxury resort just outside Ubud in Bali, offers 60-minute and 75-minute manual lymphatic drainage sessions, described as a gentle massage aimed at carrying toxins and waste away from tissues.

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

Lymphatic health is the latest traditional Chinese medicine practice to be embraced by wellness brands, following acupuncture and reflexology, among others.





# REVOLUTIONARY REST

A host of community influencers are  
advocating a slower approach to life.

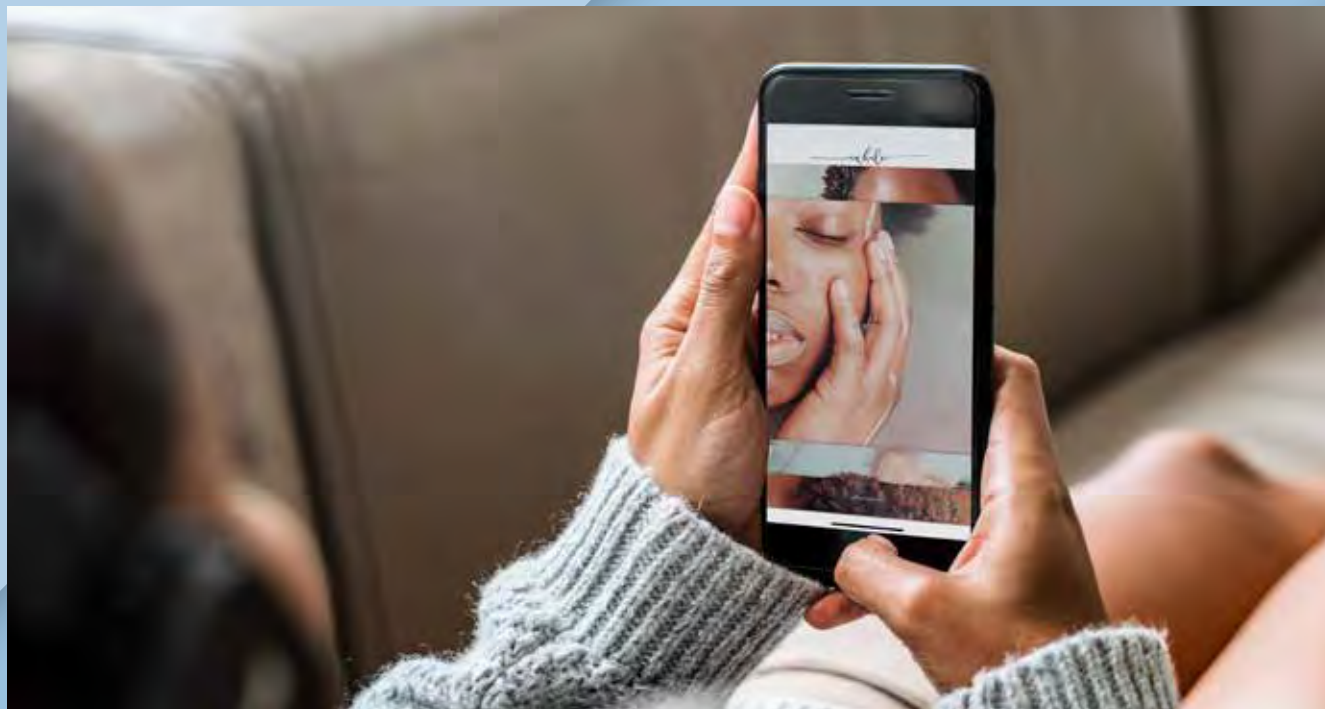




A growing movement centers rest and recovery as a radical tool for marginalized communities to combat trauma, stress, and discrimination, promoting permission to take time for restoring selfcare.

The Nap Ministry is an organization that “examines the liberating power of naps,” hosting collective napping and daydreaming events across the United States. Founder Tricia Hersey, aka the Nap Bishop, released *Rest as Resistance: A Manifesto* in October 2022. The book, like the organization, advocates rest as a form of self-care and a counter to grind culture; one that is vital for marginalized groups to sustain the fight against systemic issues.

Drawing upon similar inspiration, the Exhale wellness app launched in response to social unrest during the summer of 2020 to provide refuge for Black, Indigenous and Women of Color (BIWOC). The app, due to be relaunched in 2023, offers a safe space for guided meditations, affirmations, visualizations, and breathwork exercises that promote healing.



**“To hear the simple and bold proclamation, ‘You are doing too much. You can rest. You can just be. You can be,’ is revolutionary.”**

**Tricia Hersey, founder, The Nap Ministry**

The Mae House offers residential wellness stays to Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) families who might otherwise struggle to afford vacations, in a concept dubbed Rest as Residency. The luxury renovated farmhouse, 2.5 hours from New York City, welcomed its first guests in June 2022 and funds the program through a tiered pricing model.

While the movement for rest is led by marginalized communities, in an age of hyperproductivity, its message has resonance for anyone who could benefit from honing their rest ethic. As Hersey notes in her book, “To hear the simple and bold proclamation, ‘You are doing too much. You can rest. You can just be. You can be,’ is revolutionary. To believe it and continue to dream up ways to feel and find rest, care, and healing is liberation.”

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

The reinterpretation of rest as a tool of resistance adds another layer of nuance to the concept of holistic wellness. Brands can promote permission to rest, helping to shape a healthy pivot away from grind culture.





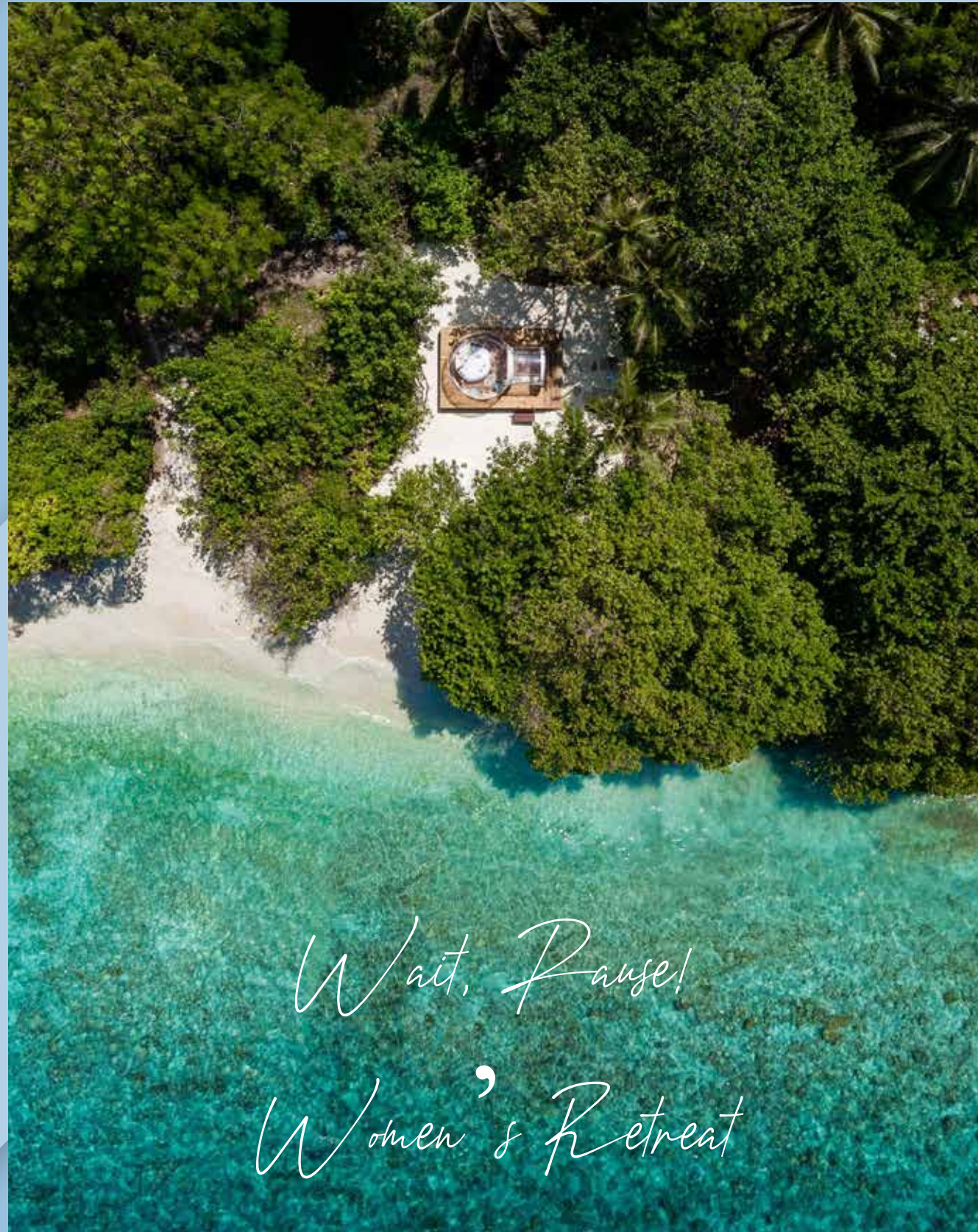
# MENOPAUSE RETREATS

From HRT education to nutritional advice, retreats designed specifically for the menopause journey are on the rise.

Amilla Maldives debuted its Menopause Retreat in summer 2022. The five-day program includes talks on balancing hormones, breathwork, and tree-hugging therapy. Addressing the potential challenges of this natural lifestage, Amilla's women-only retreat aims to “educate, empower, and inspire new ways of living.”

Italian wellness resort Preidlhof in South Tyrol offers a six-day menopause sanctuary that blends medical health sessions with ancient healing, and in Australia, the Great Ocean Road Resort has lined up five menopause retreats throughout 2023.

Women attending menopause-specific retreats have benefited from its targeted package. “You have given me my spark back,” “thank you for helping me sleep,” and “I feel alive again” are some of the comments received by UK-based Menoheaven from visitors who attended its three-day retreat. Situated by the sea in Sussex, Menoheaven started in 2017 in response to a lack of attention for people navigating the stages before and during the menopause. “It didn't exist in the United Kingdom at this time,” Tania Smith, cofounder of Menoheaven, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “Our retreats give women the chance to put themselves first and to take a literal ‘pause,’ so they can focus on themselves, learn from experts, share and hear other experiences, and reflect on the changes—if any—they need to make in their lives.”

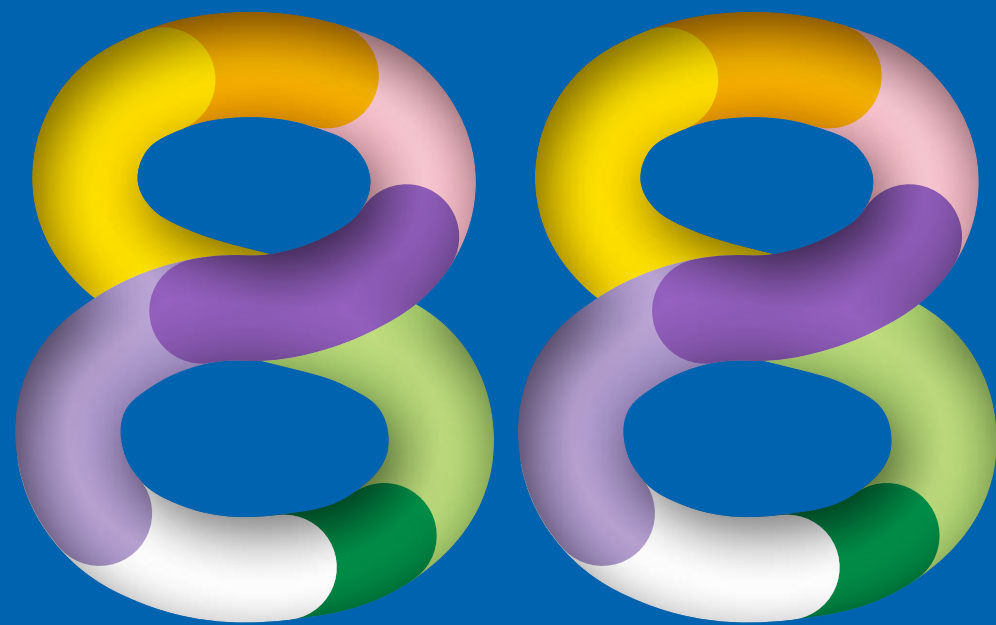


Menoheaven offers one-on-one sessions that cover everything from hormone replacement therapy to spiritual healing. “Nurturing the mental, spiritual, and physical at challenging times is a winning combination, and we’ve found it has worked well with women in perimenopause and menopause,” says Smith. Since opening, Menoheaven has begun welcoming more women in perimenopause, preparing for the next stage.

### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

The global menopause market is expected to reach \$24.4 billion by 2030, according to a November 2022 study by Grand View Research. Hotels and resorts are responding by expanding their services to cater for this underserved life stage.





# META- MINDFULNESS

The metaverse is getting mindful to help humans and avatars alike unwind.



Across the United States, United Kingdom, and China, 56% of people report feeling mentally healthier thanks to technology, according to research from Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, and 81% say they switch on digitally to unwind.

Alo yoga unveiled an immersive yoga and meditation experience on Roblox in February 2022 to promote wellbeing. The virtual Alo Sanctuary, designed as “a place of retreat and healing,” includes guided meditations, daily on-demand yoga, and a sound-bath inspired soundtrack.

“We’ve heard many powerful stories about how Roblox has served as a healing platform and a central lifeline for our community members’ wellbeing,” said Christina Wootton, VP of global brand partnerships at Roblox. “Now our community has a space to practice mindfulness and learn about the importance of meditation directly from top wellness experts.”



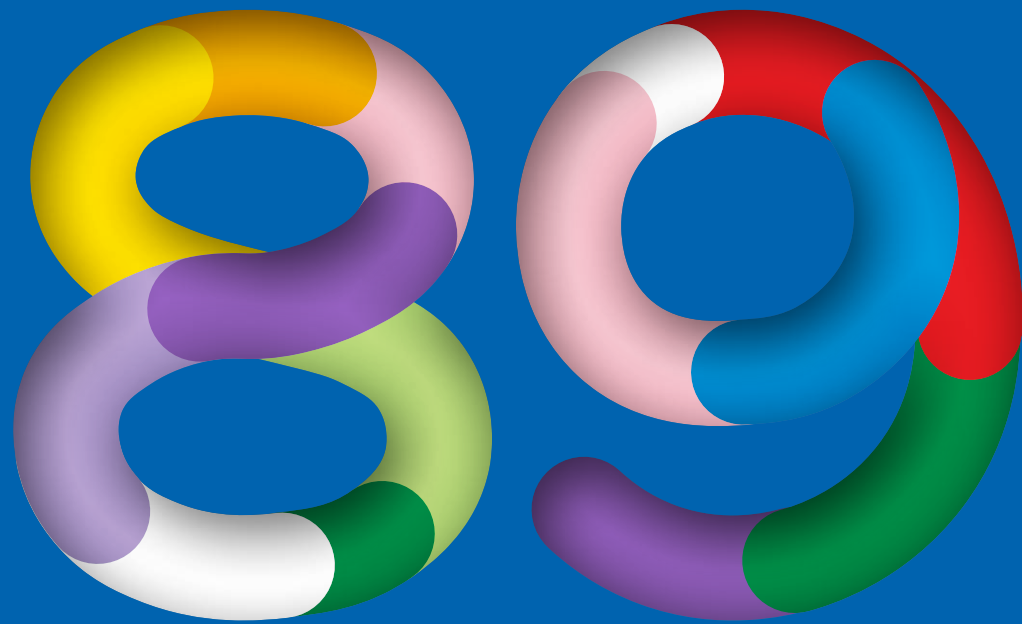
Tripp is also working to create a mindful metaverse. It leverages virtual reality technology to “hack mindfulness” and “hack other moods to give you more agency over how you feel,” Tripp CEO and cofounder Nanea Reeves tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. In June 2022, the company raised over \$11 million to boost its virtual meditation offerings, with investments from Amazon, Qualcomm, and Niantic.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The metaverse and mindfulness aren't mutually exclusive. People are bringing their health and wellbeing habits with them into the metaverse, and are looking for brands to help them cultivate their metamindfulness practices.







# CULTURAL PRESCRIPTIONS

Physicians are prescribing cultural visits to museums, galleries, and other venues to help patients manage their mental wellbeing.

A growing body of research underlines the therapeutic value of culture for patients with mental health conditions and chronic pain.

In Brussels, the Brugmann University Hospital has launched a six-month pilot project that allows doctors to prescribe free trips to one of five participating cultural institutions for patients with depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions. Patients might explore the city's historic sewer system, or browse costumes created for the city's cheeky Mannekin Pis statue at the dedicated GardeRobe museum.

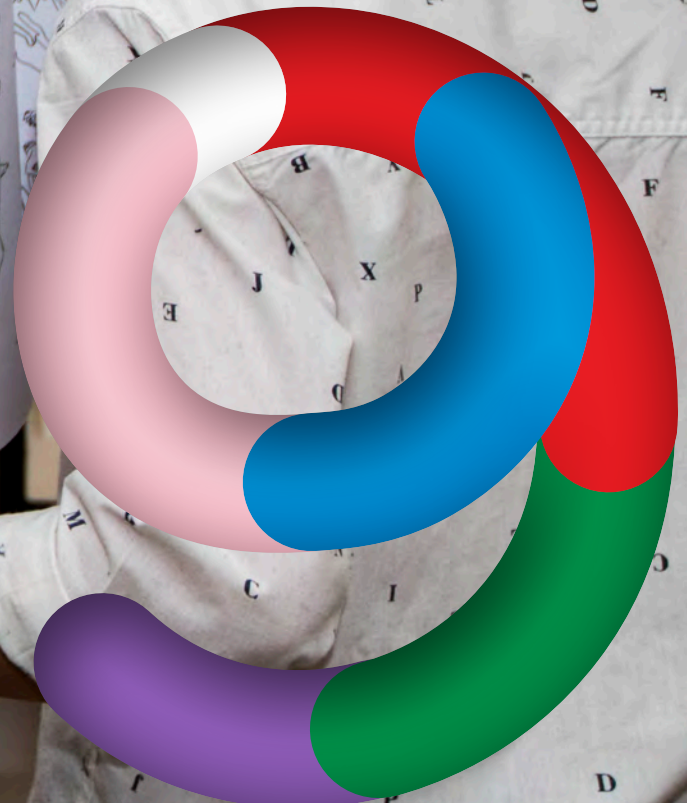
The aim, as Dr Johan Newell, psychiatrist at Brugmann University Hospital, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence, is to help patients reconnect with the world. "Visiting art is a gateway for connecting with our inner emotional world. It helps us to slow down and be present in the moment. It's a way to help people suffering from mental disorders to find a meaningful purpose to go outside and reclaim a place in active society."

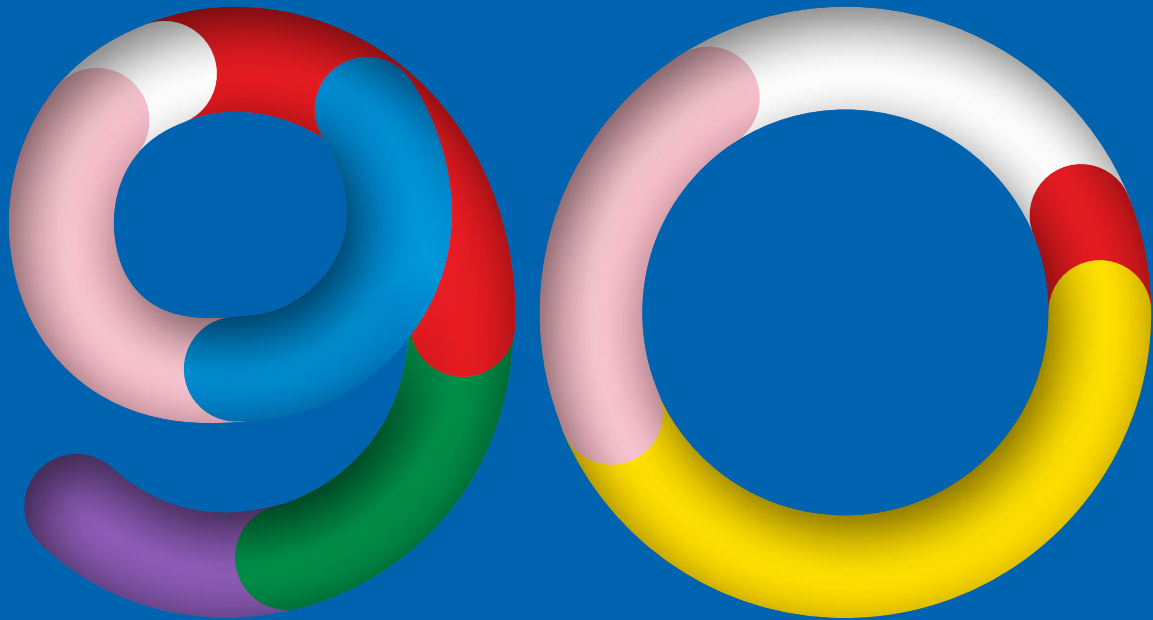
The Massachusetts-based CultureRx program funded by the Mass Cultural Council also promotes patient engagement with arts, science, and culture. In June 2022, the initiative reported positive results from a three-year pilot, and now hopes to expand its provider partnerships in 2023. The Greek Ministry of Culture is funding a program that supports arts institutions like the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the Athens State Orchestra to develop innovative cultural prescription services for citizens.

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The borders of wellness continue to expand and blur as people develop a deeper understanding of the health value of cultural activities. Culture is now more than mere leisure, offering moments of restorative wellness and a way to engage meaningfully with the world. Just what the doctor ordered.







# NUTRITIONAL BODYCARE

The largest organ of the body—the skin—is getting a complete nutritional boost.



**“Much like the way we approach our diet in diversifying our plate with nutrients, we should take a similar, balanced approach to skincare.”**

**Monique Meneses,  
cofounder, Iota**

“Skin health *is* health,” Monique Meneses, cofounder of Iota, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “Just like our gut microbiome, our skin microbiome also impacts the whole body.” New-York based Iota launched at the end of September 2022 as “the first nutritional bodycare brand” focusing on the skin from the neck down. Iota products include the Supervitamin Body Wash+ and Superplant Body Serum+, which combines 24 essential nutrients to boost skin health with microbiome balancing properties. Meneses likens Iota’s offering to a nutritious meal for our skin. “Much like the way we approach our diet in diversifying our plate with nutrients, we should take a similar, balanced approach to skincare.”

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, the most common skin condition is acne, which affects up to 50 million Americans yearly. One in 10 people develop atopic dermatitis in their lifetime, and 16 million Americans are affected by rosacea. Iota is dedicated to raising awareness around skin health and tackling skin concerns with its products. “Recent studies have linked poor skin health with broader risks like inflammatory and autoimmune diseases, heart health, and allergies,” explains Meneses. “Iota was crafted specifically with comprehensive health in mind.”

Advanced Nutrition Programme also focuses on optimizing skin health, with supplements that target specific skin concerns. The brand’s Skin Vitality multivitamin contains 28 nutrients to nourish the skin.

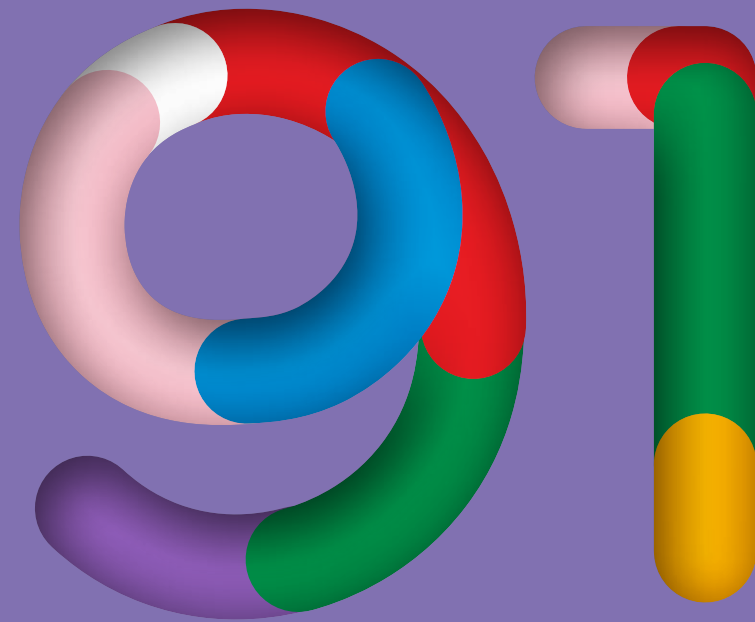
#### **WHY IT’S INTERESTING**

The year of bodycare has arrived. Facial skincare offerings are already abundant, and now brands are now homing in on skin from the neck down to support overall health.

01

**WORK**

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# INCLUSIVE- PRENEURS

Entrepreneurs from underserved communities are innovating for themselves.

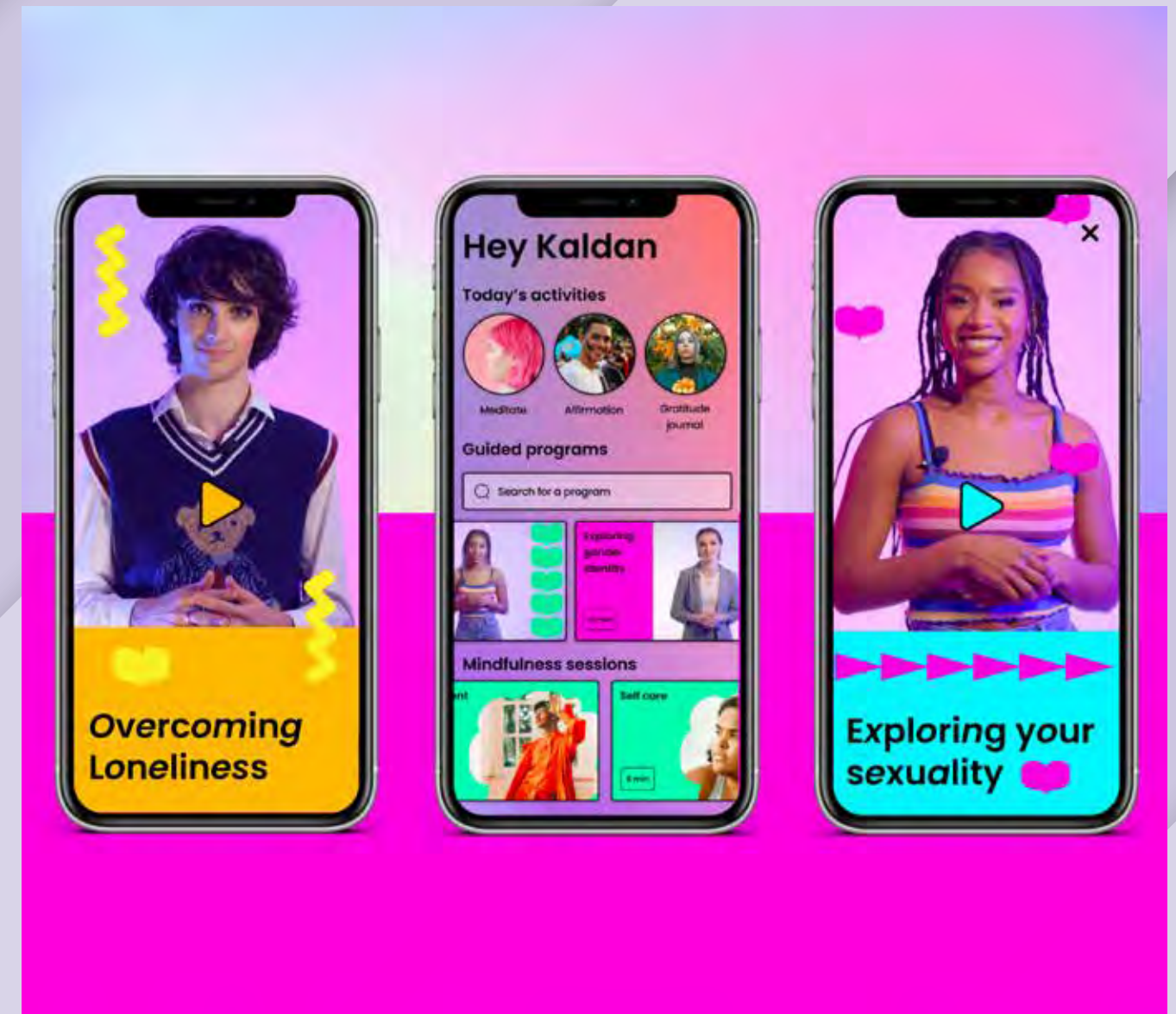


Underserved communities are driving a wave of inclusive entrepreneurship, devising products and services that address the unmet needs of their communities.

Frustrated by the logistical challenges disabled fans face when attending sporting events, Victor Ocando founded Adapt The Game to normalize spectator enjoyment for all. Ocando, who was born with cerebral palsy that limits his mobility and speech, is using his US-based startup to develop an app that will allow users from the disabled community to browse specified seat accessibility details and buy suitable tickets. Its ultimate aim is to improve the game-day experience for disabled sports supporters, from football to soccer and baseball.

Struck by a lack of provision, Londoner Fay Reid launched her 9 to 5 Menopause project to offer working women of all ethnicities education, tips, and resources on the menopause. “I started having symptoms at the age of 46 but the people who were talking about menopause were white, affluent women who didn’t have a job,” Reid tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “They recommended private clinics, nutritionists, and yoga. That is not my life, I’ve got a job to go to. So I started 9 to 5 Menopause, because there were no women in the workplace talking about menopause.” Reid started 9 to 5 Menopause as a social media platform to share her personal experiences, and now works closely with British businesses, educating them on better policy and provision.

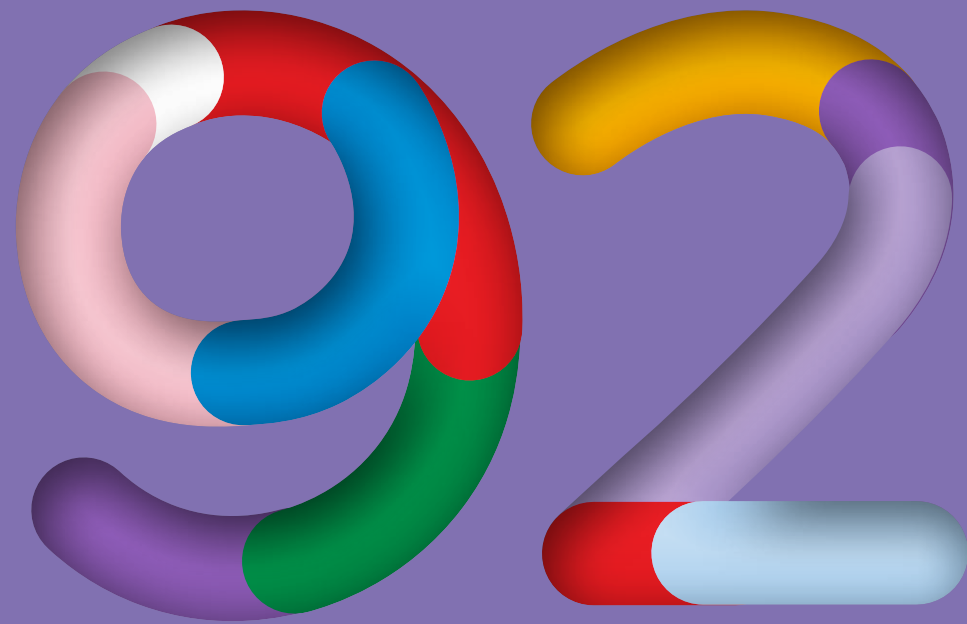
British entrepreneur Charlotte Fountaine founded the LGBTQ+ therapy app Kalda after growing tired of the one-size-fits-all approach to mental wellbeing. For people in the LGBTQ+ community, who often suffer disproportionately, exploring mental health issues in a heteronormative environment can be oppressive. Kalda, which launched in 2022, is a self-guided tool specifically



designed by LGBTQ+ therapists, offering weekly group therapy and daily peer-to-peer support.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Inclusivepreneurs are shaping a new generation of businesses, designing with and for the unmet needs of their own communities. Companies and brands can offer support by collaborating with them, adding them to supplier rosters, or investing in their businesses.



# VIRTUAL CEOS

Will the boardroom of the future be filled  
with virtual leaders?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is now a vital tool for companies as they seek to improve efficiency and automate tasks that technology can do better, quicker, and more cheaply than humans. Traditionally this AI operates in the background, hidden from public view, but forward-thinking companies are starting to highlight its potential by giving virtual employees plum roles within leadership teams.

Chinese gaming company NetDragon Websoft, which operates multiplayer online games and apps, has appointed an AI-powered virtual humanoid robot called Ms Tang Yu as the CEO of its subsidiary company, Fujian NetDragon Websoft. Seen as a milestone as NetDragon establishes itself as a metaverse organization, the move aims to pioneer AI's ability to transform corporate management. The virtual CEO will be tasked with streamlining the company's processes, enhancing the quality of its outputs, and improving the speed of execution. Tang Yu will also operate as a real-time data hub and analytical tool to support daily decision-making and risk management operations.

Similarly, Web3-focused luxury rum brand Dictador has unveiled a "human-like robot, incorporating AI" called Mika as its CEO. The robot, created by Hanson Robotics, will serve as a board member and be responsible for running the

## Virtual leadership “will change the world as we know it, forever.”

**Marek Szoldrowski, president,  
Dictador Europe**

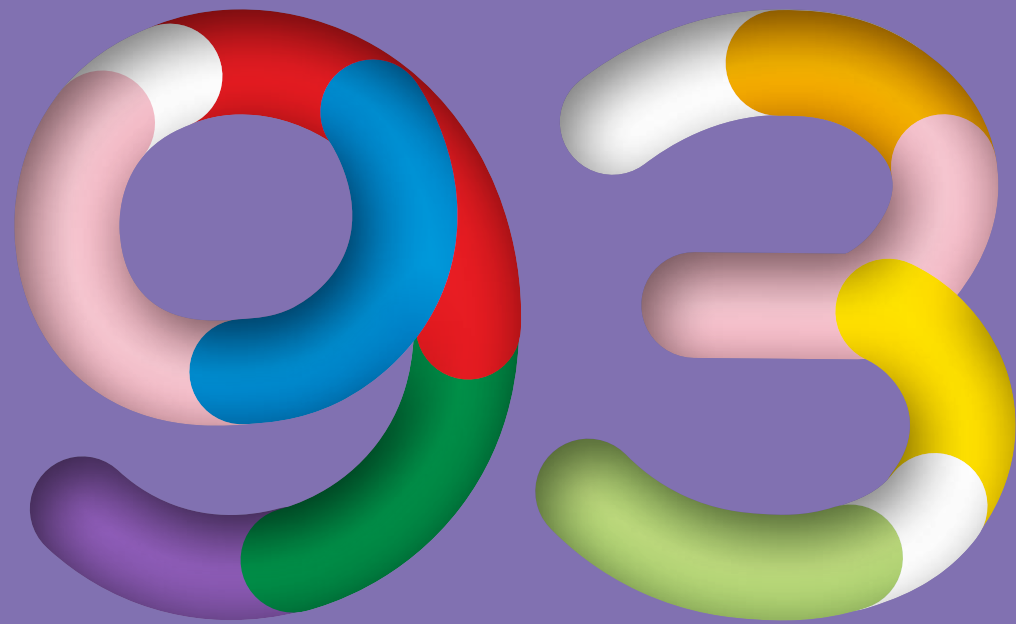
brand’s Arthouse Spirits DAO (decentralized autonomous organization) project, as well as communicating with the DAO community on Dictador’s behalf. Having previously launched rum NFTs and created the DAO community, the brand sees this as the logical next step as it embraces the possibilities of technology. President of Dictador Europe Marek Szoldrowski said the innovation “will change the world as we know it, forever.”

### WHY IT’S INTERESTING

We first tracked the rise of the digital workforce in 2018, when companies were introducing avatar spokespeople or concierges to balance the human and digital touch, enhancing both the working environment and the customer experience. As the metaverse workforce continues to take shape, how will it impact leadership and the C-suite?







# REWIREMENT

Retirement is out. Rewirement is in.



In August 2022, tennis superstar Serena Williams declared she was stepping away from the sport to focus on her family and other business ventures.

“I have never liked the word retirement. It doesn’t feel like a modern word to me,” Williams told *Vogue* in a cover story about her motivations. “Maybe the best word to describe what I’m up to is evolution. I’m here to tell you that I’m evolving away from tennis, toward other things that are important to me.”

Williams isn’t the only one shunning traditional retirement. For a few years now, the word “rewirement” has been used by financial planners who work with those looking to retire. Now it’s becoming a more expansive term that encompasses parts of people’s lives beyond the financial.

“I heard the term rewirement from a friend and of course I pounced on it, because retirement just sounds so stodgy,” Jackie Crosby, who retired in 2021 after an illustrious career as a reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. The two-time Pulitzer winner now splits her time playing bass guitar in three bands, including one called Chemistry Set. She’s relishing the freedom of being her own boss for the first time in decades, and spending time with people she cares about instead of constantly rushing back for a newspaper deadline.

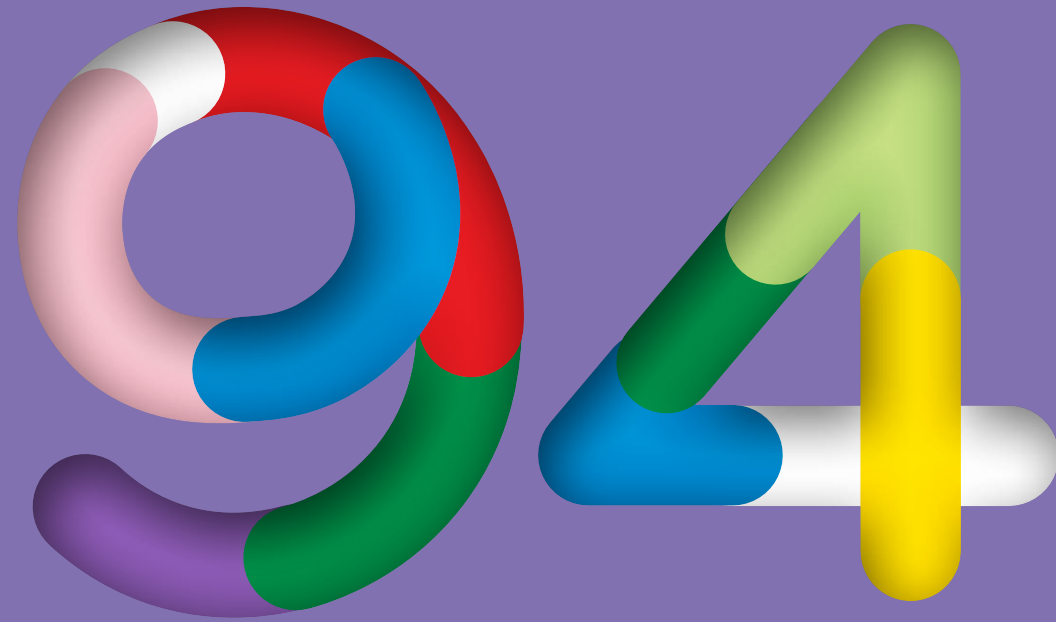
In France, Chris Welsch, a semi-retired photographer and editor, uprooted his life in Paris to move to a countryside home in Burgundy. COVID-19 was one galvanizing factor. “I don’t want to spend the rest of my life in a small Paris apartment and grow old in a place where I can’t see a tree out the window,” he tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. “Now I hope to get more and more involved in the community here in Burgundy where I live.”



Nor does rewiring mean winding down work. Welsch recently took a full-time job with Microsoft Communications in Europe, traveling around the continent to write about the impact of technology on people and the planet.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Post-pandemic, life and work are taking on a whole new meaning, particularly in later decades. Rewirees are reassessing their priorities, rediscovering themselves, and dedicating time to their passions and their families.



# EQUITY BENEFITS

**Inclusive companies are going beyond traditional benefits to improve the lives of all their employees, especially those who have been traditionally marginalized.**

Employers who want to truly lead when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion are looking beyond one-size-fits-all benefits, aspiring to understand and improve the lives of their employees from marginalized backgrounds. By acknowledging and addressing existing disadvantages, employers are working to reach a more equal and inclusive workplace for all.

Recognizing the specific healthcare needs of diverse groups is one way companies are seeking to close the equity gap. In China, Alibaba benefits include healthcare checkups for employees and their children, and even employees' parents—an acknowledgment of the high medical costs associated with caring for ageing family members.

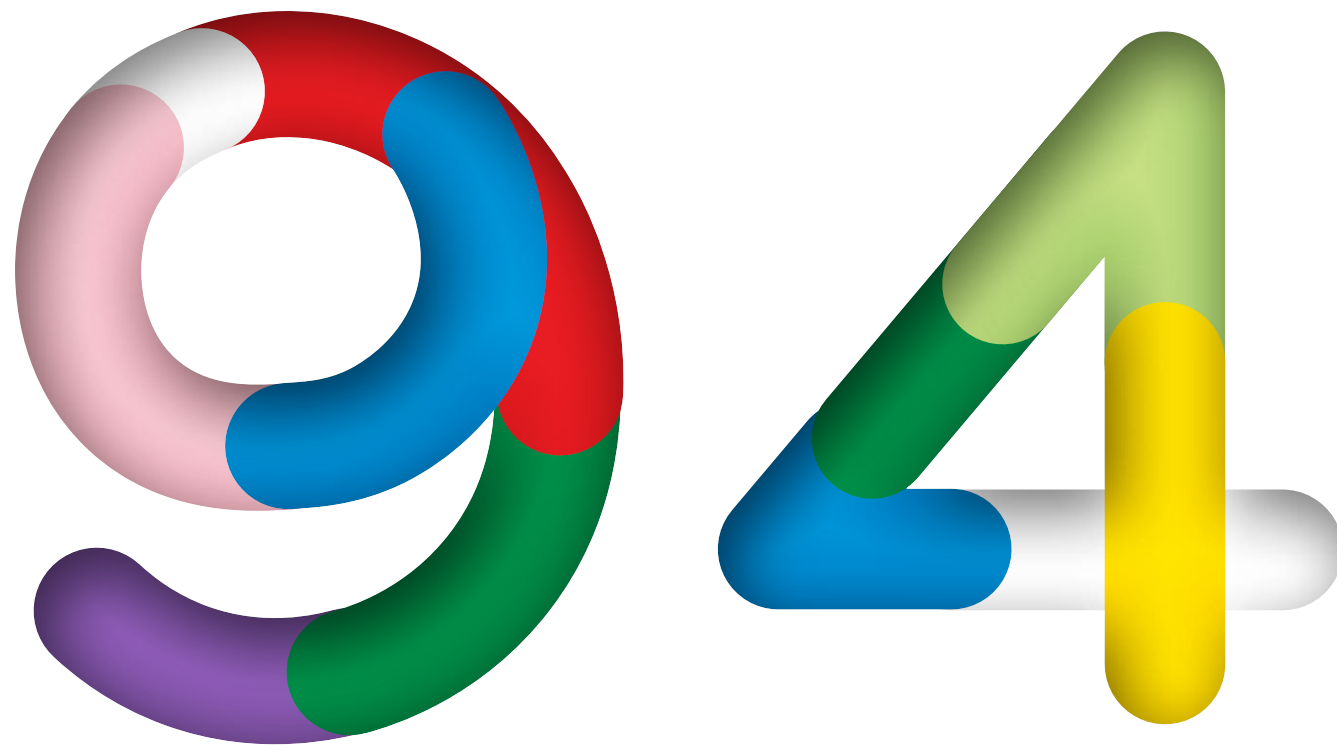
In Argentina, ecommerce company Mercado Libre is helping to fund gender reassignment surgeries for trans workers. PayPal's free UK menopause scheme is separate from its health insurance program, allowing more employees to participate without having to pay for insurance. In the United States, companies including Amazon, Bank of America, and BuzzFeed are helping their employees with reproductive health by creating programs to pay out-of-state travel costs for abortions.

Aiming to improve health outcomes and address racial inequality in maternal care, Walmart announced it would begin offering doula support for its associates in several states in June 2022. After launching the initiative in Georgia, Walmart stated it chose to extend coverage to Louisiana, Indiana,

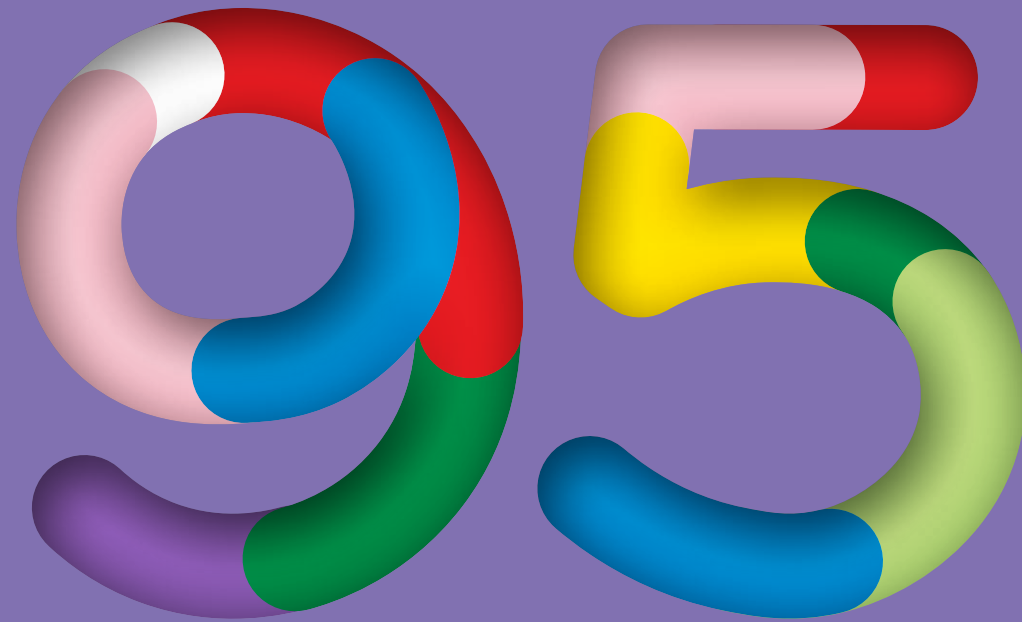
and Illinois because of the potential for instant impact for employees living there. The company said that in Louisiana, the mortality rate is five times higher for Black mothers than it is for white mothers and that in Indiana, 33 counties don't have OB-GYN services. Coming from local communities themselves, doulas have been shown to positively impact the outcome of pregnancies, in both the health of the mother and child, as they bring a level of cultural understanding that can be lacking in traditional medical settings.

#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

By considering the unique needs of those from traditionally marginalized backgrounds, companies are reflecting the broadening definition of health and wellbeing, as well as further humanizing the workplace.



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# THE FIVE-STAR OFFICE

In a sustained bid to draw employees back to the office, businesses are adopting ideas from the hospitality sector.



A 25-meter swimming pool, a 200-meter rooftop running trail, and a massage room are just a few of the perks reminiscent of upscale hotel stays at Google's London Kings Cross development. The company's ambitious headquarters construction, nicknamed "the landscaper" due to its colossal square footage, is expected to benefit both Googlers and locals, who will have access to some of the facilities too. Completion is set for 2024.



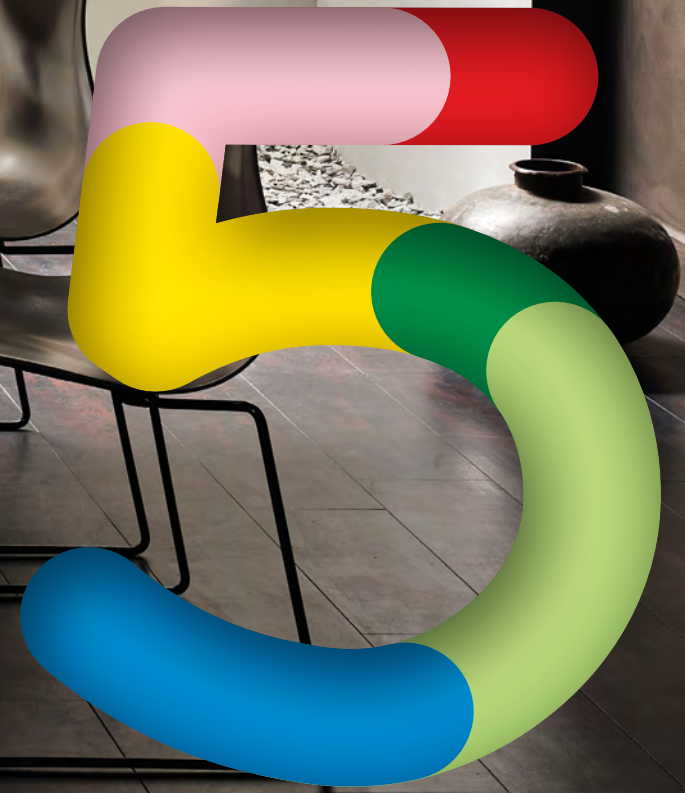
Tech giant Amazon is currently developing its second headquarters (HQ2) in Virginia, in the United States. The spiral-shaped office, called The Helix, will include an outdoor hiking trail winding up and around the exterior architecture, which will be swathed in plants gathered from the local Blue Ridge Mountains. For Amazon's office workers, immersion in nature extends beyond the exterior, with a forest plaza and cascading water feature taking biophilic design to the extreme.

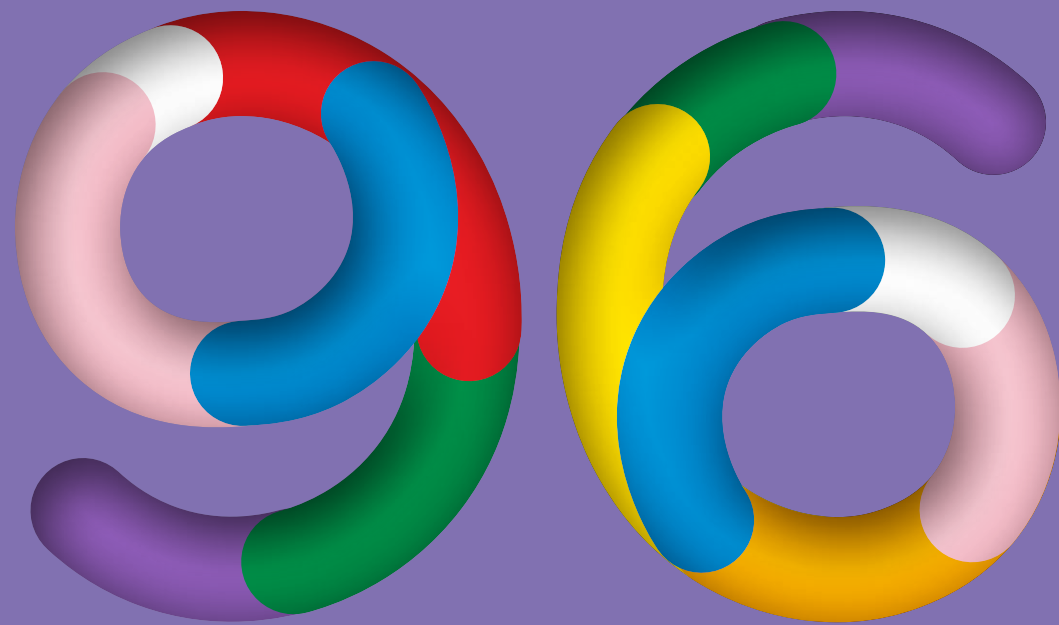
At London agency Ask Us For Ideas, a dimly lit subterranean space is a world away from the fluorescent-lit offices workers have become accustomed to. "The mood is calmer, moodier, and more introspective," Hugh Scott Moncrieff, director of Cake Architecture, the studio behind the 2022 design, tells Wunderman Thompson Intelligence. Hardwood flooring, shag rugs, and mid-century armchairs adorn the space, playing on the constraints of what an office can be and encouraging the use of the space for events beyond work. "They host one-on-one sessions there, breathing and yoga classes, as well as evening lectures and cocktail parties," says Moncrieff.

World-class service is also being brought into the corporate environment. L'Oréal's second US headquarters, opened in Los Angeles in August 2022, includes a concierge service for employees. At a charge of \$5 per hour, the office concierge runs errands, from filling up workers' gas tanks to collecting their laundry. The service gives workers relief from everyday chores, freeing up their time and adding an extra perk to working from the office.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

The next generation of workspaces gets a five-star upgrade, catering to a class of workers that now values the comforts of working from home. For businesses, the race is on to make the office more inviting.





# NON-LINEAR WORK

Asynchronous work—keeping different hours to colleagues—is here to stay.

During the pandemic, much was said about how being constantly connected led to burnout for many remote workers, who found it difficult to switch off. But it also showed that asynchronous work can produce results that are as good, and even better, than the traditional nine-to-five workday.

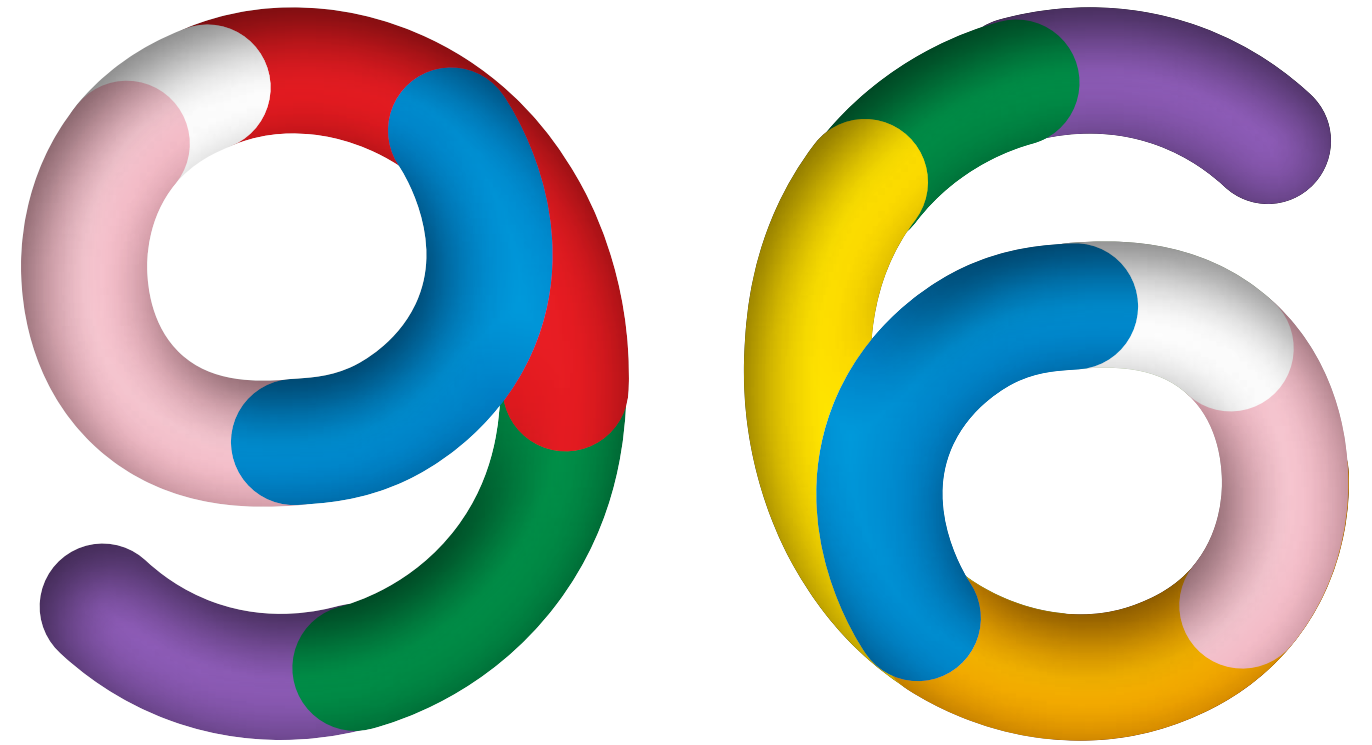
Parents of young children could zip out for a basketball match or cook a meal in between working, and maybe do emails after dinner. Other remote workers could fit in a run or a yoga class in the time it usually took them to commute to work.

“Asynchronous work allows people to save commuting time, get admin tasks done during low productivity hours, fit in more exercise, and save money having homecooked meals,” Laura Giurge, assistant professor of behavioral science at the London School of Economics and Political Science, told the BBC.

Now a workforce used to this flexibility is demanding it even after the pandemic. Employee surveys are finding many want a hybrid work option, with a combination of a few days a week in the office interspersed with a few at home.



**Asynchronous work can produce results that are as good, and even better, than the traditional nine-to-five workday.**



A slew of asynchronous work tools and platforms is flooding the market. Slack and Microsoft have incorporated short video clip messages in their products following the example of startup Loom—which makes it easier to send videos through email. Microsoft, whose Teams platform already allows remote teams to work collaboratively, is launching a beta version of Places, an app that allows tracking of hybrid teams.

Another app, Flown, offers “digital body doubling,” which mimics anything from another person being present to being part of a “flock” of remote workers—all so that remote workers stay on task and accountable.

#### **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT**

Nonlinear work is here to stay and employers and employees are both getting used to it, drawing on new tech platforms and apps to overcome the downsides while enhancing the benefits.



# UNRETIREMENT

A generation of retirees are heading back to work in search of social interaction and financial stability.

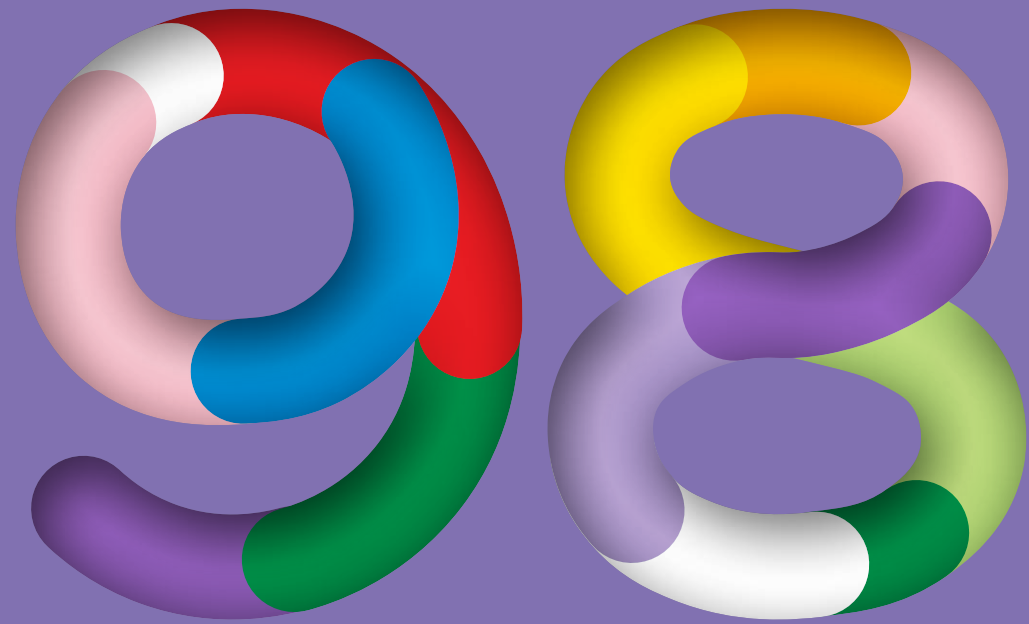
Amid a looming financial crisis and a volatile stock market, many former workers are coming out of retirement and heading back to the office. The number of British people aged 65 or over entering the workforce rose by 173,000 in the first quarter of 2022, according to figures from the UK's Centre for Ageing Better. And a May 2022 report from AARP, citing data from Indeed, found that 1.7 million Americans who retired a year earlier had returned to the workforce.

Kim Chaplain, a specialist adviser for work at the UK's Centre for Ageing Better, told the *Guardian* that the organization "suspects the rising cost of living is playing a role." The *Guardian* profiled Bernadette Hempstead of Suffolk, England, who receives a small private pension and a state pension as a retired human resource employee. However, those two sources of income were not enough to cover her living expenses. "As things get more expensive, it became impossible," said Hempstead.

Others are returning in search of social interaction. "We have a real serious issue in this country of senior loneliness and depression. The pandemic really exacerbated that," Andrew Meadows, senior vice president at Ubiquity Retirement + Savings, told AARP. "Many seniors were forced to stay at home, and now they are thinking of entering the workforce again for social interactions."

## WHY IT'S INTERESTING

Older generations are redefining traditional later-in-life stages, eschewing retirement in favor of employment—whether out of economic necessity or in search of social engagement.



# SUPER-COMMUTERS

A new breed of commuter is emerging—one who spends the week working in the city and the weekends at home in the suburbs.



Out-of-city commuters are traveling back into town as in-office mandates commence, and hotels are offering specialized deals to cater to these mid-week crowds.

Supercommuters—a term coined by the *New York Times*—are paying for accommodation deals to keep their city commutes comfortable while maintaining their suburban lifestyle.



In the United Kingdom, the Accor Group, whose hotels include the Savoy and the Pullman London St Pancras, has developed a Commute and Stay promotion. It offers two discounted midweek nights, a flexible cancellation policy, and scheduling assistance for work and client gatherings.

Marriott launched a Day Pass program in early 2022, with hotels offering end-of-day check-out options and coworking spaces. The program, which is currently dialed back, offered flights across Europe and the United Kingdom from the adjacent airport to aid commuters who have moved away from the city but need to return regularly for work.

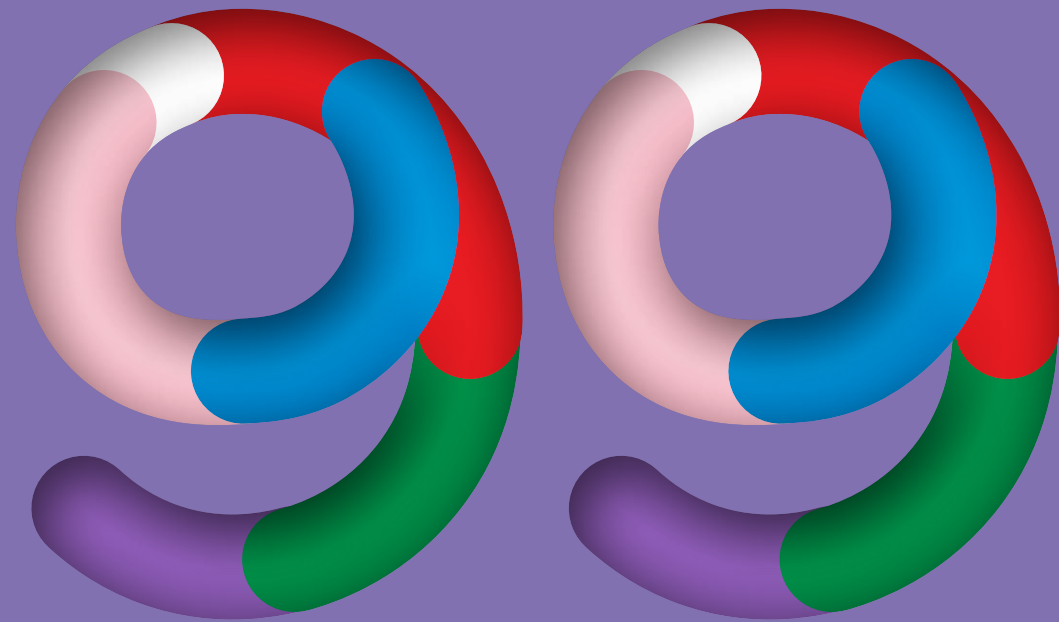
The Hoxton in Chicago offers a Work Stay Play package for commuters who subscribe to a monthly flat rate. Membership includes access to the hotel's coworking space, perks for work and pleasure, and one stay per month at any location. The general manager encourages visitors “to take full advantage of those workcations.”

In 2022, several major companies mandated a return to the office for their employees. In November, Elon Musk made clear he wanted Twitter staff back in the office for at least 40 hours a week. Apple and Google implemented policies requiring workers to return for at least one to three days a week beginning in April, Meta required employees to return to the office in March, and Microsoft will ask employees to return to a hybrid model that would require employees to return to part-time in-person work.

### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

As work conditions continue to evolve, supercommuters are embracing long-term commutes and subscribed hotel stays in order to maintain a comfortable distance from city life while showing up for in-office duties.





# WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Companies are going beyond generic wellness programs to attract and retain talent.

Employers are thinking more creatively about workplace wellness programs as the need to prioritize employee mental health rises up the agenda. According to the World Health Organization, 12 billion working days are lost each year due to employee depression and anxiety, at a cost of \$1 trillion to the global economy. Economic turmoil and a growing skills gap mean companies around the world are having to work harder to take care of their staff physically and mentally.

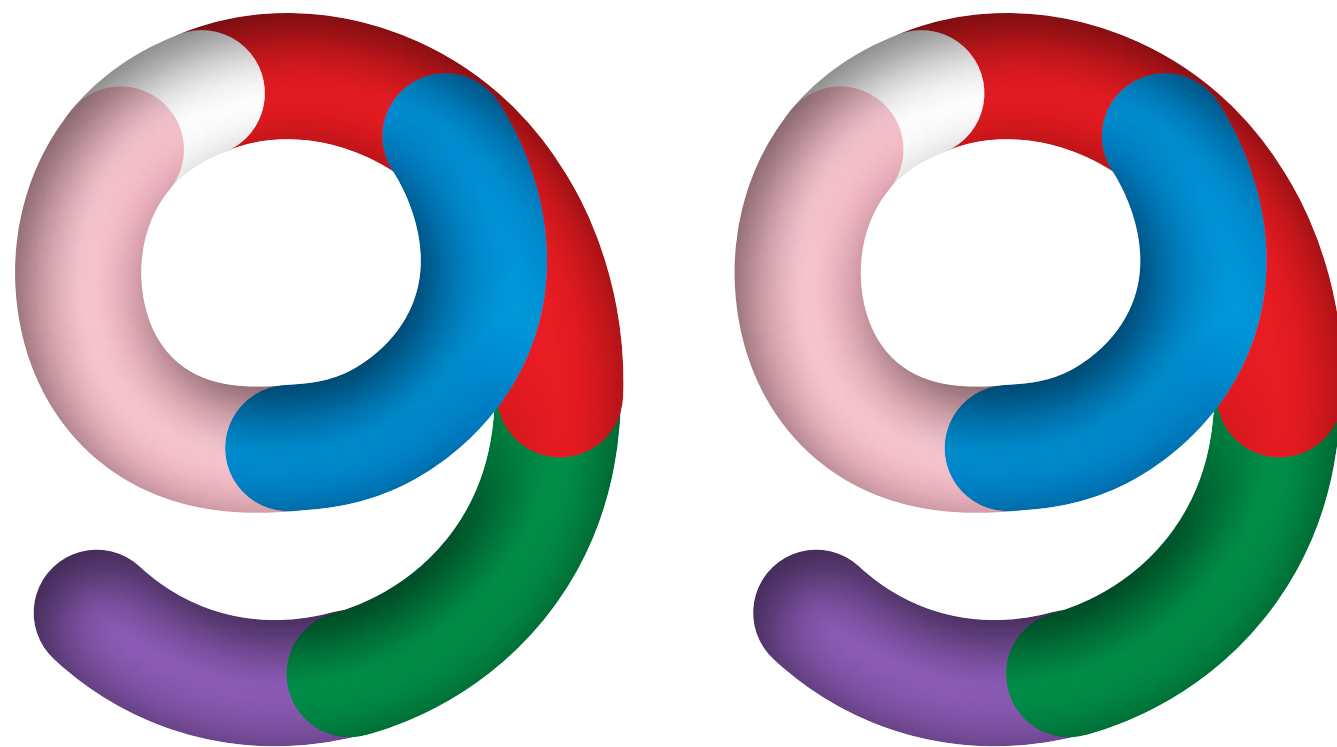
While many companies now offer off-the-shelf mental wellbeing programs, others are looking to actual time off as a solution. Hoping to prevent burnout, companies such as PwC, LinkedIn, and WPP shut their offices for company-wide mental health days, offering employees one or two days off. In September 2022, Indian ecommerce platform Meesho went even further, announcing a whopping 11-day break for its employees for the second consecutive year.

Stress caused by the cost-of-living crisis adds more pressure on employee mental wellbeing. According to 2022 research from MetLife UK, 64% of workers feel that their financial situation has made them stressed, anxious, or depressed and this can lead to a loss of productivity. “We used to think about financial wellbeing and wellbeing separately but now we have to see it more holistically,” Steve Watson, head of proposition at UK-based workplace savings provider Cushon, told the *Financial Times*.

Honest Burgers, a UK-based fast casual restaurant chain, is offering employees access to Wagestream, a financial wellbeing app that includes access to financial advisors. The initiative was shortlisted for Best Financial Wellbeing Strategy for a Small Employer at the Employee Benefits Awards 2022. A recent RAND Europe study found that mental health improved for those taking up financial literacy employer schemes like this.

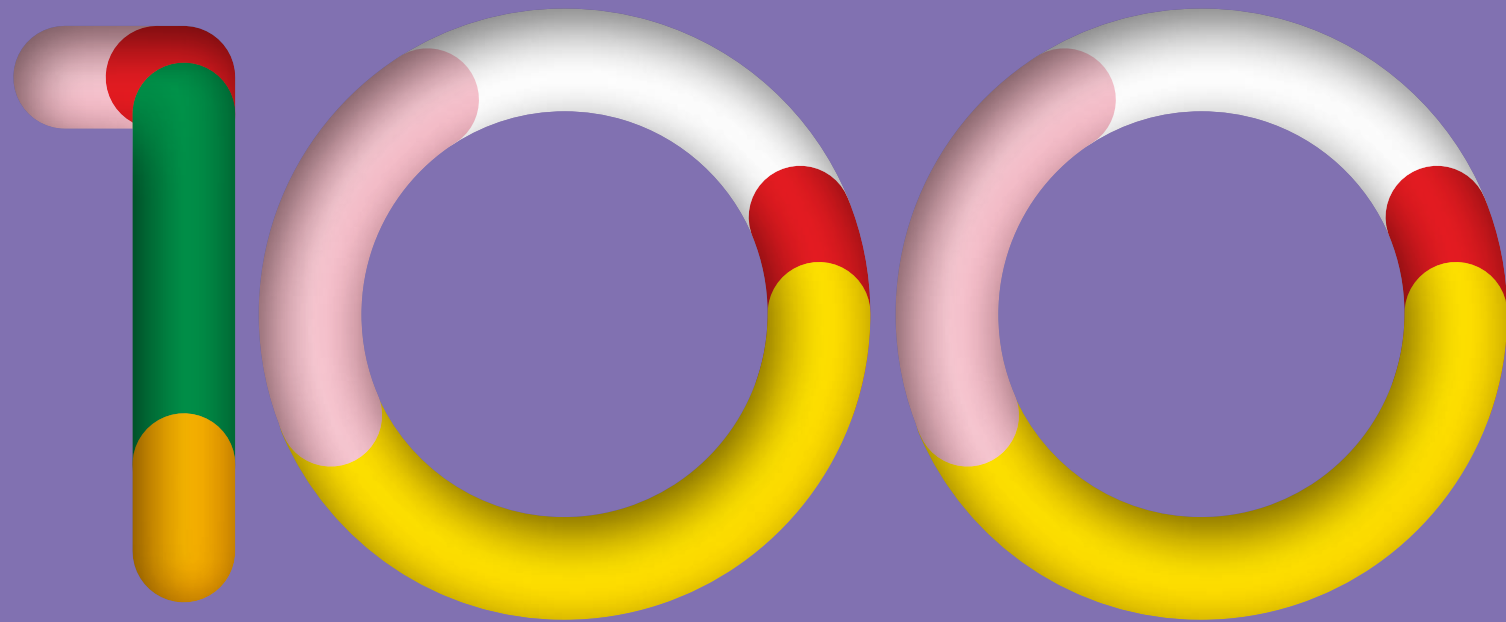
#### WHY IT'S INTERESTING

According to research by Mercer Marsh Benefits, the most valuable benefits businesses can give focus on improving employee mental health. With basic mental wellbeing initiatives becoming a standard expectation, employers are rewriting the rule book to attract and retain staff.



**“We used to think about financial wellbeing and wellbeing separately but now we have to see it more holistically,”**

**Steve Watson, head of proposition, Cushon**



# GENERATION FLEX

Employee expectations are rising. Despite economic woes, could the balance of power be tipping in their favor?

“The war for talent is over. Talent won.” So said Tim Ryan, US chair and senior partner of the global consulting firm PwC, speaking at the CNBC Work Summit in October 2022. Employees, said Ryan, are now insisting on choice and flexibility in how they get work done.

Chris Hyams, CEO of Indeed, also notes the rise of a more demanding worker. In an August 2022 interview with *Fortune*, Hyams pointed to “a powerful new demand for work-life balance” as a sign that the workplace social contract is changing. Underlining this shift, workers are flexing their muscles.

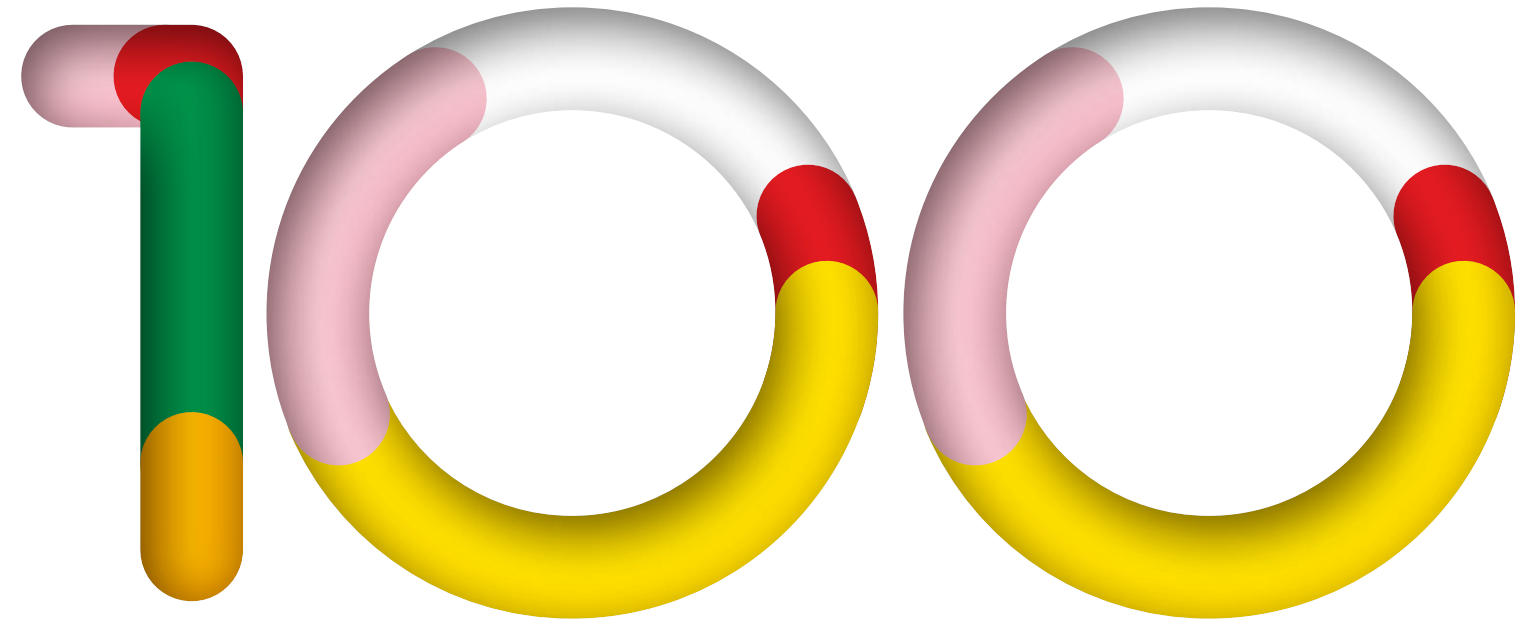
Case in point is the back-to-the-office push, which is proving to be an ongoing negotiation. *Financial Times* analysis of Google phone-tracking data suggests that, as at mid-October 2022, trips to workplaces in the world’s seven largest economies are all tracking well below pre-pandemic levels.

In the United States, despite reported declines in job quit rates, McKinsey cited evidence that senior women are switching jobs at the highest rates ever seen, outpacing their male counterparts. Its “Women in the Workplace 2022” report in partnership with Leanin.Org finds that women are walking away to better opportunities.



**“The war for talent  
is over. Talent won.”**

**Tim Ryan, US chair and senior  
partner, PwC**



Finally, as industrial unrest rages in many countries, we are seeing a return to unionization, most notably at US companies such as Apple, Amazon, Chipotle, and Starbucks. While some companies push back, others see value in listening. Microsoft announced in June 2022 that it would formally recognize the right of workers to form and join a union.

While some economists predict that the power pendulum will swing back to employers as soon as recession bites, PwC's Ryan respectfully disagrees: "Anyone who thinks the power dynamic is going to go back, honestly and humbly, I think they are making a mistake."

#### **WHY IT'S INTERESTING**

As economies get tighter, companies should not be complacent when it comes to talent. Progressive companies will listen to their workforce's concerns, focusing on giving their employees the sense of control and flexibility they seek.

## ABOUT WUNDERMAN THOMPSON INTELLIGENCE

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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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