LS:N GLOBAL

THE : FUTURE : LABORATORY

Future Forecast 2026



Introduction

As algorithms curate our desires and AI shapes our experiences, it's easy to mistake noise for nuance. True foresight lies not in chasing trends but in decoding the connections between people, systems and senses

In an era defined by geopolitical tension, economic turbulence and algorithmic saturation, the consumer landscape is fragmenting and evolving at speed. Social commerce and zero-click search are redefining how discovery, desire and decision-making unfold online, while AI-generated content is prescribing experiences and flooding feeds with indistinguishable 'slop'.

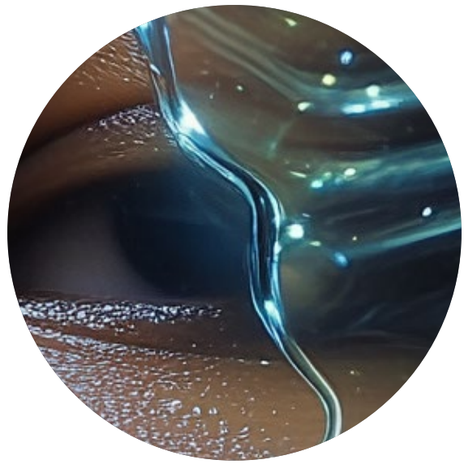
But beneath the noise lies a more profound narrative – signals of deep sociological change that we at The Future Laboratory have been tracking for years. Our human-centred methodology looks beyond viral cycles to identify the enduring behavioural patterns and needs driving them. These are not fleeting trends but reflections of a broader transformation: a search for trust amid chaos, creativity amid automation and meaning amid the endless churn of content.

In this Future Forecast 2026 report, we spotlight 50 cross-sector trends that will define the year ahead. We uncover the behavioural patterns shaping tomorrow, explain why it matters and how it connects to the broader cultural landscape. The report provides brands with practical foresight to stay ahead of the curve, demonstrating how an understanding of these deeper patterns can drive meaningful, future-ready business strategies.

The defining theme of 2026 is connection – between people, systems and senses. This report reveals how every industry is learning to design for empathy, adaptability and emotional resonance in a changing world. From transdermal wellness and influencer-curated storefronts to regenerative tourism and cultivated meat farms, these shifts set the tone for what's new and next in 2026 and beyond.

On these pages, brands and businesses will discover the value of preparedness that foresight offers, as the pillar around which The Future Laboratory's intelligence services are built. To those ready for change, we say: you can make a better future happen if you dare to know.

Rose Coffey, senior foresight analyst



Trends Intelligence
powered by LS:N Global

LS:N GLOBAL

Cover: AI imagery by The Future Laboratory, UK



Contents

4
Beauty
: Miniature Editions
: Climate-attuned Beauty
: Elevated Essentials
: Dynamic Scents
: Newsletter Networks

9
Sport, Health & Wellness
: Rhythmic Health
: Preventative Presence
: Transdermal Care
: The Wellness Paradox
: Redefining Mid-life Health

14
Food & Drink
: Ice Cream Innovations
: Silver Milk Market
: Little Luxuries
: Future-proof Foods
: Mood Mixology

19
Travel & Hospitality
: Golden Gap Years
: Souljourns
: West African Diaspora Destinations
: Epicentres of Tomorrow
: Creature Comforts

24
Luxury
: The Invisible Layer
: Live-stream Luxury
: Storyliving Stays
: Clubhouse Commerce
: Resale Provenance

29
Fashion
: Cultural Curators
: Skinwear
: Fashion Fandoms
: Wearable Resistance
: Sports Collaborations

34
Retail
: Resilient Kidswear Eco-systems
: The Transparency Mandate
: Shoppable Storefronts
: Lifestyle HQs
: Affective Commerce

39
Culture & Media
: Pop Culture Watch Parties
: Romantic Anarchy
: Creator Curricula
: Modular Content
: Virtual Idols

44
Marketing & Branding
: Celebrity Consultancies
: Branded BookTok
: Everyday Icons
: Solidarity Branding
: Brand Slogans Re-imagined

49
Design
: Biomorphic Branding
: Feelingware
: Illustrative Identities
: Co-authored Design
: Women's Sports Rising

Beauty

From miniature, discovery-led indulgences to climate-smart skincare, the beauty industry in 2026 will focus on adaptability, accessibility and emotional connection – answering calls for personalisation, transparency and care

In 2026, the beauty sector will evolve through a blend of culture, innovation and consumer intimacy. As affordable experimentation and sensorial design take hold, brands are re-imagining how products can deliver both function and feeling.

This evolution reflects more than advances in formulation – it signals a new philosophy of beauty as adaptive care. Climate-responsive skincare and elevated everyday rituals will move routines from reactive to regenerative, while new forms of storytelling and community-led communication will redefine how brands cultivate authenticity and trust.

Ultimately, transparency and emotional intelligence will become the foundation of a broader redefinition of how consumers connect with beauty – not only as a marker of identity, but also as a living expression of wellbeing.



Photography by Landiva Weber, Brazil



Superdrug, UK

1 Miniature Editions

Taking cues from fragrance sampling, miniature iterations of beauty products are resonating with consumers beyond travel and convenience. Amid rising inflation and economic uncertainty, a try-before-you-buy mindset is fuelling the boom in mini-formats. These iterations are enabling shoppers to sample widely, indulge in novelty and access treatments without long-term commitment, balancing experimentation with affordability.

Multinational beauty retailer Sephora was one of the first retailers to expand its mini-category online, while Target now offers more than 300 mini-products across nearly every beauty category (source: Beauty Packaging).

At UK beauty and health retailer Superdrug, sales of its Mini Studio range rose by 54% in the first half of 2025 compared with the same period in 2024, reaching a value of £211,000 ($282,530, €243,300). Ulta Beauty also reports strong engagement across more than 250 brands, with mini-items particularly appealing to younger consumers, who see them as accessible ways to trial trending products (source: Cosmetics Business).

Non-committal by nature, mini-products are directly tapping into the rise of little treat culture, serving as affordable, low-risk luxuries and driving spontaneous basket additions. Trialling culture is especially pronounced among Gen Z, who remain in constant discovery mode. As highlighted in our Gen Z in South Korea report, collectable minis are thriving on Instagram and TikTok, aligning with younger demographics' aesthetic sensibilities.

This rise in miniature beauty formats reflects a wider consumer shift towards low-risk discovery and playful self-expression. As affordability and novelty remain key purchase drivers, consumers are increasingly willing to trial bold colours, limited-edition launches and mix-and-match routines – turning everyday beauty into a canvas for personal creativity and experimentation.

2 Climate-attuned Beauty

As climate extremes intensify, beauty is catering for environment-specific conditions. Innovation will incubate in countries such as India; with its rising humidity, extreme UV and monsoon surges, India's changing climate is giving rise to new product formulations designed to protect.

As highlighted in I-Beauty: The Next Beauty Powerhouse, our macrotrend report produced in collaboration with global agency Together Group, Indian haircare brand Moxie Beauty creates protective and restorative hair products formulated specifically for Indian hair types and Indian weather. In Panjim, Goa, dermatologist Dr Bindu Sthalekar offers treatments designed to counteract conditions such as pigmentation and sun damage, as well as excess oil production and skin sensitivity caused by high humidity, salt exposure and intense UV levels.

In our Scenario-based Airport Beauty analysis, we featured global beauty brand L'Oréal's Skin Mist Pod, one of its three new airport lounge concepts. Predominantly a hydration solution, the mist treatments can be personalised based on the traveller's destination (beach, tropical, cold or high altitude) and any skin concerns.

As consumers increasingly prioritise personalisation, a shift from reactive care to anticipatory protection is expected to drive advances in the market, with AI-driven, climate-adaptive products offering location-specific beauty solutions.



Moxie Beauty, India

Lab Insight

Olivia Houghton, insights and engagement director

'Beauty doesn't need more, it needs better. As the category becomes increasingly repetitive, progress will come from scientific rigour and climate relevance, while still leaving space for the creativity and enjoyment that make beauty culturally vital'

3 Elevated Essentials

In 2024, consumer spending across the UK personal care industry increased by 8% and the sector is now valued at £32.4bn ($43.2bn, €37.2bn) (source: British Beauty Council). In a recent report, US consumer health company Kenvue found that 88% of consumers believe their personal care routines have a positive impact on their health, signalling a move beyond appearance to prevention and long-term wellness.

Against the backdrop of democratised healthcare and information accessibility, research suggests that 82% of Americans consider wellness a top priority in their daily routines, while 74% prioritise self-care and wellness in their beauty rituals (source: Beauty Matter).

Amid economic uncertainty, the desire for small luxuries is driving innovation in the personal care categories. In our Bougie Basics report, we analysed how a growing cohort of brands are repositioning everyday hygiene as holistic care, merging functional wellness with micro-healthcare and indulgent self-care rituals.

US personal care brand Saintly's touchless foam toilet paper dispenser releases a no-rinse cleanser infused with skin-nourishing ingredients such as aloe and vitamin E, replacing the need for wet wipes. Similarly, Swedish oral care brand Selahatin's Hypnotist toothpaste blends anise, honey and peppermint to act as 'perfume for the mouth' and calm the nervous system before bed – elevating oral hygiene into a form of luxurious self-care.



Selahatin, Stockholm

4 Dynamic Scents

As consumers move beyond one-size-fits-all formulas, a new wave of fragrances is emerging – rooted in adaptability, functionality and personalisation. Innovators are designing scents that evolve over time, offer multiple benefits and invite playful experimentation, transforming beauty rituals into dynamic, sensory experiences.

US beauty brand Rare Beauty's debut perfume features 12-hour lasting power and a bottle ergonomically designed with certified hand therapists for greater accessibility. Elsewhere, global beauty conglomerate Estée Lauder Companies and US technology start-up Exuud have developed a smart fragrance delivery system that releases aromatic molecules in controlled bursts, preserving the scent's delicate top notes and preventing desensitisation.

Based on the belief that pleasure is central to wellness, UK fragrance company Amorecco has created the 'world's first lickable perfume', combining vanilla and coconut in a formulation with reduced alcohol content to make the taste pleasurable, uniting scent, taste and touch in a multi-sensory experience.

Other innovations include US beauty brand Vexa's peptide-enhanced perfume and US perfume brand Orebella's alcohol-free, bi-phase line, which combines skincare benefits with fragrance.

These innovations signal a decisive break from fragrance as a fixed identity marker towards products that respond, adapt and perform. As hybridisation accelerates, fragrance is evolving from a static accessory into a living, personalised experience.



Rare Beauty, US



Photography by Cottonbro Studio, Russia

5 Newsletter Networks

For beauty brands, newsletters are becoming new frontiers of intimacy and storytelling. These decentralised spaces foster transparency and emotional connection, as brands adopt creator-like behaviours to build loyal, editorial-led communities rooted in voice, value and shared experiences.

In April, US beauty brand Rare Beauty joined a growing cohort of brands using Substack to share behind-the-scenes insight into team culture and product development. Similarly, Colette Laxton, co-founder of global beauty brand The Inkey List, is developing the brand's Substack with a focus on building a home-grown community, telling The Business of Fashion: 'We want people to subscribe for the content even if they never buy.' Make-up artist and beauty brand Jones Road founder Bobbi Brown's Substack reads more like a reflective journal, engaging readers through a friendly, intimate and conversational tone.

As brands adapt to an increasingly decentralised influence economy, these newsletters reflect a shift towards more meaningful, values-led engagement in the beauty sector. We highlighted this movement in our Neo-community Market report, which explored how brands are building more intimate, emotionally intelligent relationships with their audiences.

By offering transparency, authenticity and unfiltered access to brand thinking, beauty newsletters are redefining trust as the new metric of influence and positioning the inbox as beauty's next storytelling frontier.

Viewpoint

Compostable Cosmetics

British skincare brand Wildsmith and tech-bio innovator Shellworks are setting a new standard for sustainable luxury with Vivomer, a compostable, microbe-made packaging material designed to disappear into the earth without a trace

For botanical skincare brand Wildsmith, circularity means designing for disappearance. In March 2025, the British brand unveiled a collaboration with tech-bio company Shellworks, using Vivomer – a home-compostable material engineered to break down entirely after use.

The six-year partnership began serendipitously at a Somerset House Christmas market in London, where Wildsmith's general manager Katherine Pye met Shellworks CEO Insiya Jafferjee, who was then experimenting with chitin, a plastic alternative extracted from crustacean shells. Early efforts to scale the chitin-based packaging faltered due to the scarcity of the raw material, but the connection endured.

Two and a half years later, Shellworks introduced Vivomer, a bio-based, compostable packaging created from natural microbes that can act as an alternative to plastic. Grown via fermentation tanks, these microbes are harvested and formulated for use on standard plastic manufacturing lines. The result is packaging that's stable in use yet biodegrades in microbe-rich soil, where it's consumed and returned to nature.

Before transitioning Wildsmith's key products into Vivomer pots, the material underwent a rigorous nine-month process of compatibility testing – triple the industry standard.

When Wildsmith launched Vivomer in March, its website featured imagery of the packaging decomposing in soil. Sales immediately fell. 'We got so obsessed with the packaging that we forgot to talk about the fact that it's a really amazing moisturiser,' says Pye. The team quickly replaced the visuals with images that highlighted the product's beauty and sales recovered. The experience taught Pye that the beauty of the packaging is a selling point in itself. 'Next time, I would approach it slightly differently and maybe just dial up more of the wow; this is responsibly made and look how beautiful it is,' she says.

Having launched Vivomer across key products online and expanded to luxury retailers such as Harrods, Wildsmith plans to run down its glass stock and gradually transition all packaging formats to compostable alternatives. Switching over its elegant bottles presents a greater challenge, but one that Pye and Shellworks are eager to take on.

'If you've got an active compost heap that's really going for it, then the decomposing process will be quicker'

Katherine Pye, general manager, Wildsmith

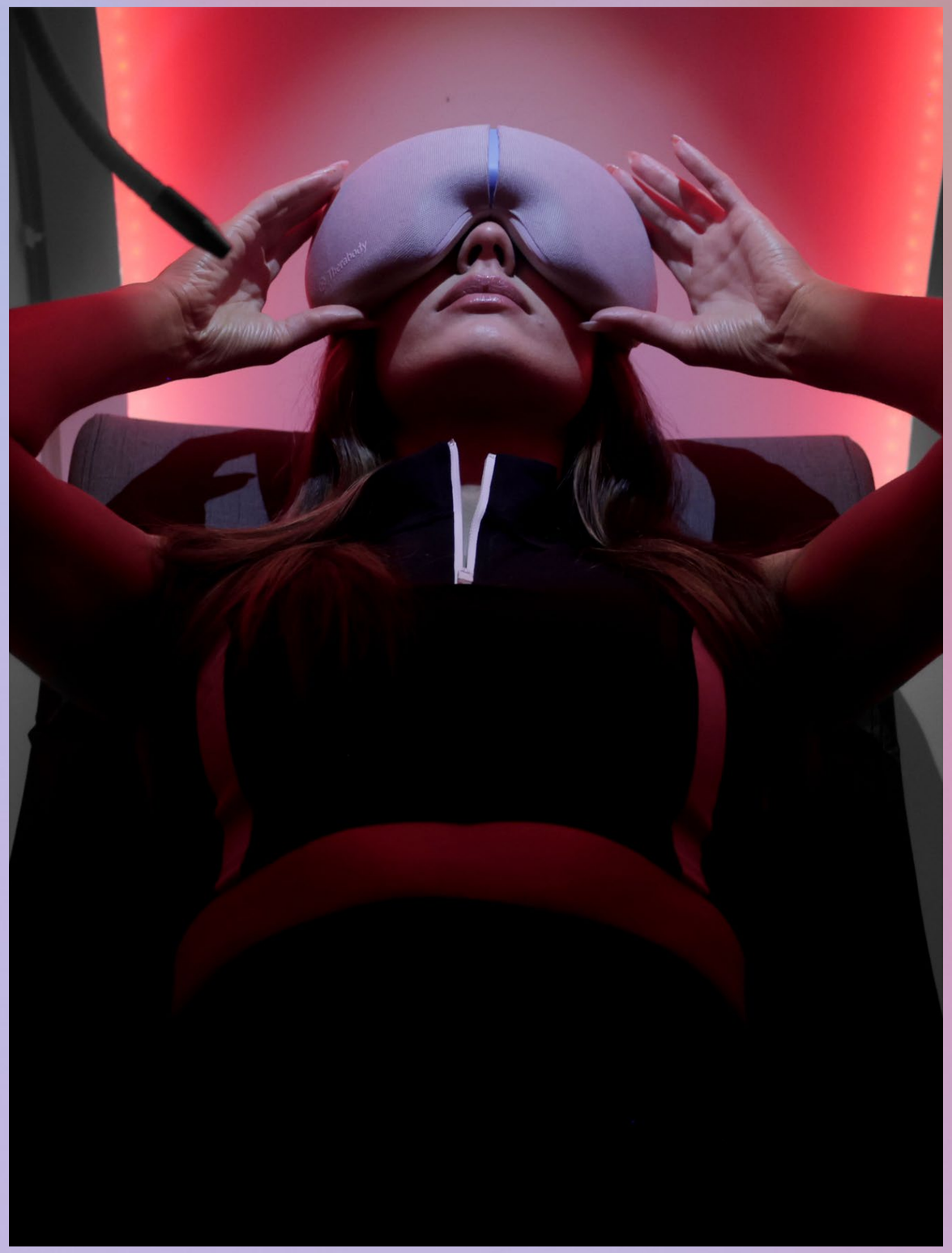


Wildsmith, UK

Sport, Health & Wellness

The sport, health and wellness landscape is shifting focus from performance to presence – prioritising empathy, community and the humans that shape the sector

As consumers grow weary of self-optimisation culture, a new mindset of rhythmic health is taking hold – one that recognises life's fluctuations and reframes wellbeing as cyclical, intuitive and emotionally intelligent. Technologies, too, are softening, with passive diagnostics, ambient systems and wearable patches extending care seamlessly into everyday life. These forces mark a decisive move beyond optimisation. In 2026, sport, health and wellness will be defined by care that listens, technologies that adapt and lifestyles that honour rhythm over rigidity – shaping a more humane model of health attuned to the body's natural intelligence.



Grey Wolfe, UK

6 Rhythmic Health

In rejection of self-optimisation culture and the myth of perfect balance, consumers are tuning into the body's natural rhythms – embracing chrononutrition, somatic intelligence and cyclical living. Rather than striving for constant equilibrium, this movement acknowledges life's ebbs and flows, reframing wellness as something dynamic, responsive and humane.

As explored in our Chronodiets report, consumers are increasingly aligning their daily routines with circadian rhythms – the near-24-hour cycles that govern everything from digestion to hormone release. Japanese health food brand Cycle.me curates meals tailored for morning, daytime and night-time consumption, reflecting a dynamic approach to nourishment.

Circadian awareness is also reshaping how people rest and recover. In September, US consumer technology company Ambient announced Dreamie, a phone-free bedside sleep assistant that replaces late-night smartphone use with a focused, sleep-centred experience. Meanwhile, London private members' club Grey Wolfe has pioneered a synthesis between advanced diagnostics and somatic intelligence to help people reconnect with their bodies.

As consumers step away from punishing self-improvement ideals, rhythm-responsive systems offer a wellbeing model centred on self-regulation. By designing for cyclical living and intuitive recovery, rather than demanding behavioural change, brands can align with a mindset grounded in natural rhythms and body literacy.



Left to right: Dreamie by Ambient, US; Smart Aid Kit by Map Project Office and Modem, UK

Lab Insight

Alice Crossley, senior foresight analyst

'The industry has been fixated on optimisation for some time now, but there is a shift happening towards something softer, more intuitive and balanced. Brands and businesses that acknowledge that often life takes precedence over performance will be the ones that resonate in 2026 and beyond'

7 Preventative Presence

With self-responsibility reshaping attitudes to wellness, consumers are becoming more receptive to passive, always-on health technologies that promise early insights without friction. This shift reflects a broader mindset of preventative attunement – a desire to manage wellbeing continuously and unobtrusively, without the burden of constant self-tracking.

US gut health start-up Throne has secured £3m ($4m, €3.4m) in seed funding to bring to market its AI-powered toilet-affixed diagnostic device, which uses computer vision to analyse waste for early signs of digestive and kidney issues. US-based health diagnostics company Lura Health is developing wearable microsensors that attach to teeth to collect real-time biometric data, pioneering a new model that visualises whole-body health through the oral cavity. Elsewhere, US period care company Comma combines software, sustainable tampon products and laboratory diagnostics to deliver predictive reproductive care.

While these concepts capture the imagination, the leap to reality depends on trust, discretion and emotional readiness. For ambient health systems to take root, consumers must see them not as surveillance, but as support – frictionless companions that extend care into the background of daily life. As preventative mindsets mature, the next leap for brands will be turning these dispersed data streams into practical, empathetic health eco-systems that support early intervention and self-trust.





Beame, UK

8 Transdermal Care

Wearable patches are evolving from clinical tools into expressive, consumer-driven wellness symbols. From colour-changing UV stickers to herbal patches and acne stars, skin is emerging as a site for culturalised care – where wellbeing, technology and self-expression converge.

The global wearable patch market, valued at £7.4bn ($9.9bn, €8.5bn) in 2024, is projected to reach £11.7bn ($15.7bn, €13.5bn) by 2030 (source: Grand View Research). Once confined to medical settings, transdermal products are now entering lifestyle spaces, driven by younger consumers who view skincare as self-expression. International skincare brand Starface has played a key role in normalising acne among younger generations by building a community rooted in skin positivity. Across social media and beyond, its colourful hydrocolloid patches have become playful, proudly visible expressions of identity – transforming how acne is perceived and represented in youth culture.

New entrants are extending the category's potential. In the UK, supplement brand Feeling has launched transdermal patches designed specifically for people who feel constantly tired despite drinking caffeine or getting enough sleep. The brand's product delivers a blend of vitamins, amino acids and plant-based extracts directly through the skin.

Global hospitality company Lore Group partnered with UK acupuncturist Ross J Barr to offer hotel guests a choice from a range of herbal wellness patches designed to ease the physical and emotional stresses of travel. Meanwhile, UK-based personal care brand Beame was launched in August 2025 with Under the Spotlight, a colour-changing UV detection sticker that signals when to re-apply sunscreen.

These developments reveal how the body's surface is becoming a platform for connection, expression and care. As transdermal innovations move further into the consumer realm, brands have the opportunity to merge functionality with identity, transforming wellness patches from discreet aids into visible markers of lifestyle, mood and belonging.

9 The Wellness Paradox

Fitness culture is splintering between hyper-competitive spectacles and community-led collectives. In the middle, a new ethos is emerging: one that blends discipline with indulgence and performance with pleasure – rejecting wellness as dogma in favour of wellness as life-enhancer.

At one end of the spectrum, branded competitions such as Hyrox are turning functional fitness into global events, appealing to athletes seeking structure and measurable progress. At the other, inclusive sporting movements and celebrity-led running events are redefining exercise as social connection and shared ritual. Between these poles lies a growing audience disillusioned with extremes of optimisation and aesthetics.

In our Gen Z Wellness Rebellion report, we spotlighted research from global activewear company Lululemon which found that 61% of people globally feel societal pressure to be well, while 45% experience wellness burnout, with marginalised groups reporting the highest levels of wellbeing burnout.

As UK-based brand strategist Tom Garland notes in The Sociology of Business newsletter, contemporary wellness culture presents consumers with two equally uncompromising positions: high-performance brands that demand monastic discipline and lifestyle-driven athleisure that sells an illusion of effortless perfection. Neither reflects how most people navigate modern life – ambitious but not obsessive, health-conscious without being joyless.

Emerging trends such as Soft Sports capture this nuanced middle ground, promoting movement for mental restoration, creativity and play. As consumers recalibrate their relationship with fitness, brands that embrace flexibility, joy and emotional balance will define the next phase of wellness – one where fulfilment, as opposed to perfection, becomes the ultimate goal.



Soft Wins by On, Switzerland



Pro-ageing beauty and wellness brand Stripes' Hotter Than Ever campaign launched summer-long activations spotlighting the power of mid-life, US

10 Redefining Mid-life Health

As highlighted in our Menopause Travel report, the global menopause market is experiencing significant growth and is predicted to increase from £14.5bn ($18.6bn, €17.2bn) in 2025 to £21.6bn ($27.6bn, €25.4bn) in 2033 (source: Global Newswire). Yet, as this rapidly growing market expands, a clear tension is emerging whereby commercial opportunity is rising faster than medical recognition.

With lack of early education leading to many women feeling unprepared for hormonal changes associated with mid-life, 63% of women find the experience difficult and overwhelming (source: University College London).

Women are still fighting for access to clinically proven interventions – making way for a rise in self-monitoring tools. Finnish wearables brand Oura's integration of pregnancy and menopause tracking reflects growing awareness of hormonal health as a continuum and highlights the value of health data.

Against this backdrop, brands are moving in to fill systemic gaps. In July, US sleep fitness brand Eight Sleep launched a temperature-regulated mattress cover designed specifically for women experiencing night-time hot flushes, while global hospitality business Equinox Hotels has partnered with US-based beauty and wellness brand Stripes Beauty to design menopause-focused spa programs and in-room offerings to address the multifaceted needs of women undergoing hormonal transitions. Elsewhere, UK-based GenM has introduced the *MTick*, a universal symbol for menopause-friendly products, initially aimed at the UK market but designed for global adoption. It seeks to deliver greater visibility, trust and choice for underserved consumers.

As hormonal health becomes both a moral imperative and a market opportunity, brands risk profiting from systemic inequities in how care is delivered and prioritised by governing bodies. The women's health sector will depend on balancing innovation with integrity, ensuring that progress serves equity, not exploitation.

Viewpoint

The Wellness Reset

Energy fields, somatic sensing and spiritual technologies are resetting elite approaches to wellness. LS:N Global speaks to Carlos Urrutigoity, general manager of London club Grey Wolfe, about what it means to heal and thrive today

As we enter The Synthocene Era – a cultural epoch defined by the fusion of biological wisdom and technological intelligence – wellness is being re-imagined.

Leading this shift is Grey Wolfe, a London-based private members' wellness club pioneering a synthesis of advanced diagnostics and somatic intelligence. 'We observed that most healing spaces either focused exclusively on the body, such as spas and clinics, or solely on the mind, such as therapy centres, but rarely addressed the energetic and 'unseen' dimensions where deep transformation often occurs,' explains Carlos Urrutigoity, the club's general manager.

This movement aligns with the rise of noetic science – a field exploring how consciousness and intuition shape reality. At a time of AI-driven logic, intuitive knowing is regaining legitimacy as a vital human technology.

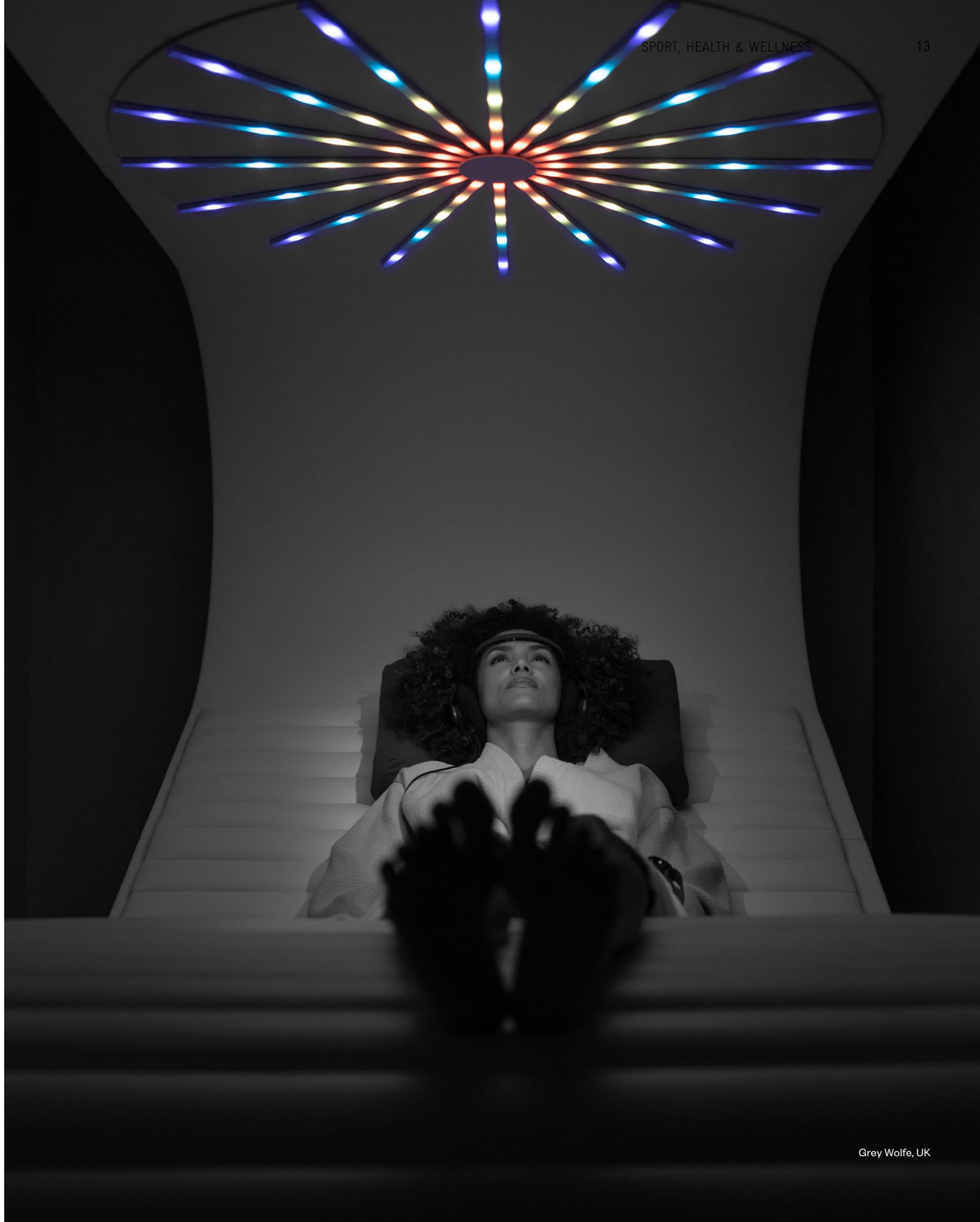
Clinics like Grey Wolfe are uniting inner and outer worlds, combining stillness, somatic awareness and advanced science to cultivate a deeper, more meaningful path to wellbeing. By creating space for inner reflection, Grey Wolfe connects clinical innovation with the body's intuitive intelligence.

Its eco-system of treatments reconnects individuals to the body's innate intelligence. Two signature therapies exemplify this fusion. Airnergy+, a respiratory therapy inspired by photosynthesis, energises oxygen to enhance cellular absorption and restore vitality. Rebalance Impulse, a light-guided therapy bed, retrains the body's relationship with rest by synchronising Alpha and Theta brainwaves, guiding users into calm and cognitive clarity.

At Grey Wolfe, ageing well isn't measured by skin elasticity but by energetic coherence, nervous system balance and metabolic adaptability. To track this, practitioners use a handful of translation metrics – selected data points that anchor each session without overwhelming clients. These tools act as 'training wheels,' says Urrutigoity. 'Once members learn to sense their own rhythms, they need analytics less.'

Clients are guided away from performance-driven goals towards felt-state success – emotional regulation under pressure, clear cognition, swift recovery and sustained harmony.

Looking ahead, Grey Wolfe envisages AI-assisted somatic artistry – bespoke, biofeedback-informed protocols designed as inner symphonies. The future of wellness isn't more data, but deeper connection – technology as guide and embodied intelligence as destination.



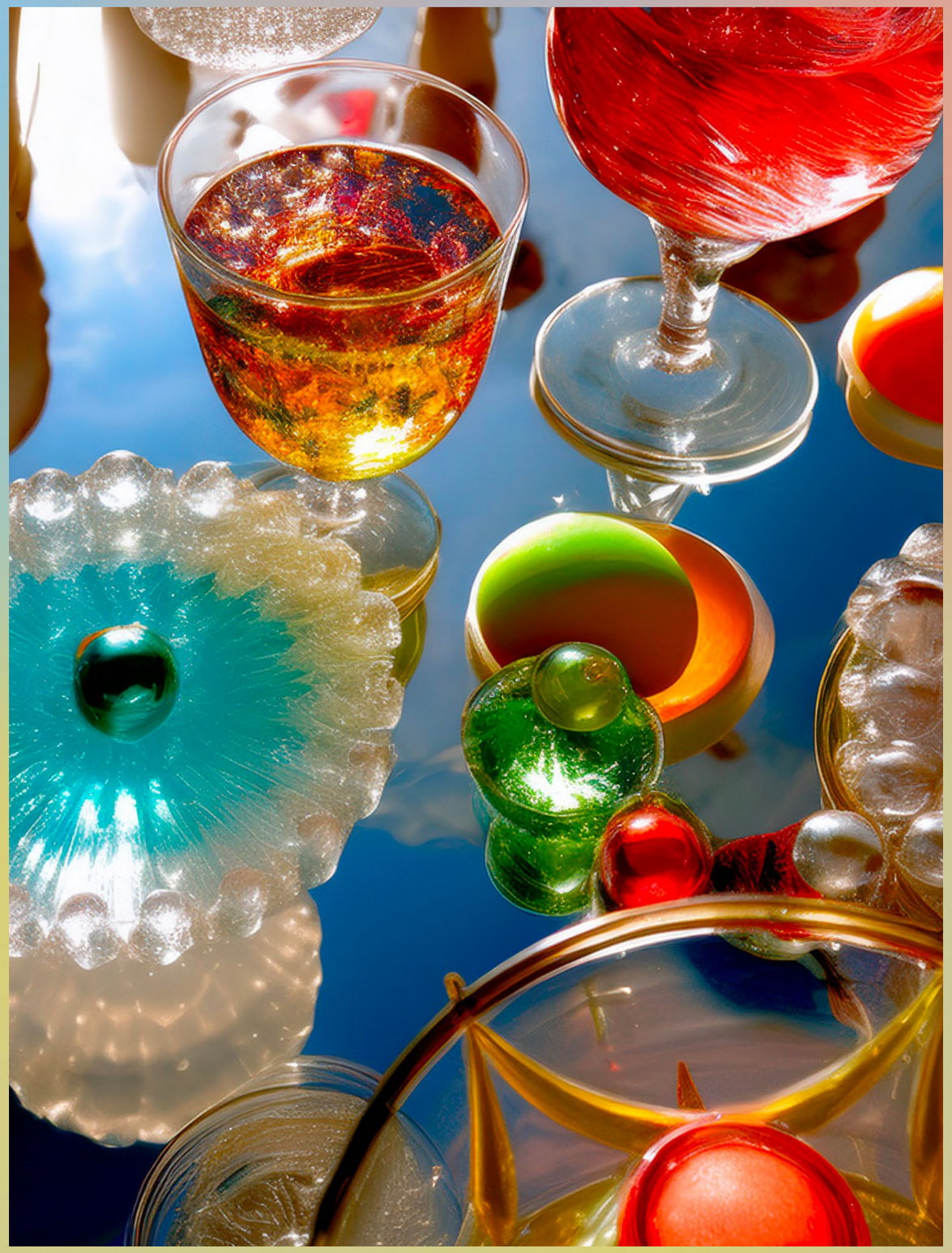
Grey Wolfe, UK

Food & Drink

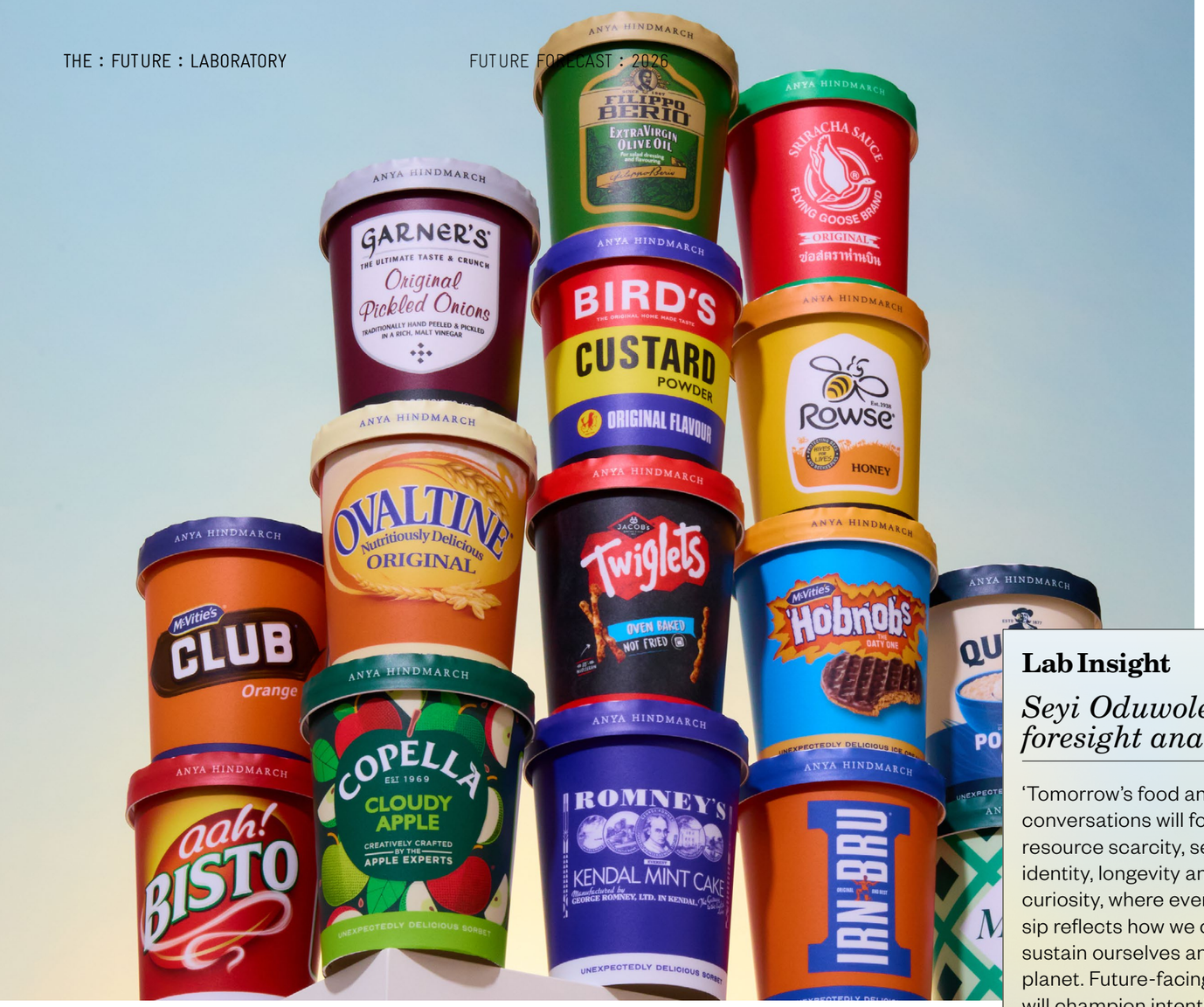
From flavour-led fashion crossovers to fortified dairy and mood-matched cocktails, the food and drink sector will further evolve into a system of emotional, physical and environmental nourishment

In 2026, the global food and drink industry will see playfulness meld with purpose. As consumers seek comfort and community amid economic uncertainty and climate strain, everyday indulgences are becoming emotional rituals that restore a sense of balance and belonging. At the same time, the pursuit of longevity is driving new forms of functional nutrition, while innovation continues to expand into the experiential realm.

Whether through fashion labels evoking nostalgia through flavour or hospitality venues re-imagining bar culture around balance rather than excess, brands are rethinking how food and drink can nourish not only the body, but also the emotions, environments and communities that sustain it.



AI imagery by Noor Dhanju, UK



The Ice Cream Project by Anya Hindmarch, UK

11 Ice Cream Innovations

Nostalgic, sensorial and indulgent, ice cream is being re-imagined as a cultural medium where joy, spectacle and storytelling merge.

In Sydney, Spanish luxury brand Loewe's collaboration with Australian gelato store Messina transformed the beachfront into a sensory experience, complete with a branded ice cream truck and limited-edition gelato flavour. Similarly, French luxury brand Jacquemus' fresh banana ice cream at its Los Angeles pop-up became a playful, flavour-led extension of its vivid yellow branding.

As highlighted in our Flavour Frenzy Market report, playful and unconventional flavours are striking a chord with consumers who seek food's functional benefits and emotional satisfaction. Unusual pairings can spark curiosity and conversation, such as a stout-infused ice cream launched by Guinness and Van Leeuwen in the US and KFC's collaboration with Hackney Gelato in London to create a gravy-flavoured gelato.

A sweet and salty ice cream inspired by breast milk was developed by US parent-product company Frida and New York ice cream brand OddFellows, which used taste to encourage dialogue about the early stages of motherhood.

As boundaries between food, culture and emotion continue to blur, ice cream is emerging as a tool for connection – a vehicle for generosity, storytelling and sensory joy. At a time defined by restraint and uncertainty, its universal pleasure offers brands a way to build belonging through simple acts of delight.

Lab Insight

Seyi Oduwole, foresight analyst

'Tomorrow's food and drink conversations will focus on resource scarcity, security, identity, longevity and curiosity, where every bite and sip reflects how we choose to sustain ourselves and the planet. Future-facing brands will champion intentional ingredients, optimal health and playful pleasures'

12 Silver Milk Markets

As global populations age and birth rates fall, traditional nutrition categories are being reframed around prevention and performance. At the heart of this shift, dairy is emerging as a frontier for functional longevity – evolving from everyday staple to strategic health vehicle.

The silver food market is estimated at £14.9bn ($19.9bn, €17.2bn) in 2025 and set to reach £25.2bn ($33.7bn, €29bn) by 2035, according to Future Market Insights, and in this landscape, milk is being engineered as a delivery system for muscle maintenance, immune resilience and metabolic balance.

Major players are moving fast to capture the market opportunity. Multinational food and beverage company Nestlé has made feeding ageing populations a strategic priority, developing fortified dairy lines that are designed to help preserve muscle mass, stabilise blood sugar and maintain healthy weight (source: Financial Times). Similarly, New Zealand nutritional brand The a2 Milk Company is expanding its senior nutrition business in China by launching adult milk powders that aim to support bone, joint and immune health.

As explored in our Muscle Longevity report, maintaining muscle strength is key to extending health span.

The refocusing of dairy as a functional, future-facing category that provides fortification presents competition and opportunity for the alt-milk sector. Plant-based brands will need to move beyond ethical positioning and deliver equivalent performance benefits.



Oatly, US



The Dreamery. Photography by Harriet Langford Photography, UK

13 Little Luxuries

As economic uncertainty persists, small indulgences are taking on new emotional weight. In snacks and desserts, little treat culture – the act of buying small, affordable luxuries to lift one's mood – is seen as emotional maintenance and a self-soothing ritual.

Nearly a third (32%) of Gen Z say they indulge daily, while 55% of all consumers replace meals with snacks at least once a week, blurring the line between necessity and reward (source: Datassential). As The New York Times notes, by sharing their rituals online, Gen Z use little treats as a form of solidarity as well as a form of self-care during unstable times.

This collective craving for comfort is shaping food innovation. Multinational retailers such as Marks & Spencer and Tesco are launching playful dessert hybrids such as strawberries and cream sandwiches, and birthday cake sandwiches. British supermarket chain Waitrose's Little Treats loyalty programme rewards everyday spending with a joyful surprise product. At the premium end, players including Italy's Prada and France's Louis Vuitton are expanding into cafés and dessert experiences that democratise luxury through sensory pleasure.

As explored in our Premium Desserts report, desserts are evolving into cultural artefacts – symbols of creativity, identity and belonging. At a time defined by restraint, these micro-luxuries provide accessible moments of affordable delight that help consumers restore balance and agency.



Left to right: Koppie, Belgium; Future Château, UK

14 Future-proof Foods

As biology and technology converge in The Synthocene Era, scientists are developing ways to protect crops against the impact of climate change.

In our Future Food Tech 2025: Resilience by Design report, we emphasised that resilience needs to be rooted in diversity across crops and diets throughout the world. Advanced biotech and AI must be grounded in affordability, inclusion and collaboration to bring about lasting change.

A new generation of climate-resilient crops and alternative farming methods are becoming essential, and are redefining how and where ingredients are grown. From coffee to cocoa, brands are investing in agricultural adaptation. Global coffee retailer Starbucks is developing two innovation farms in Central America with the aim of protecting its coffee supply from climate change, while global confectionery company Mars has partnered with US biotech company Pairwise to accelerate the development of more resilient cocoa through CRISPR gene editing.

In September, a grant was awarded to the Cellular Revolution in Agriculture and Farming Technology, a consortium in The Netherlands, to build the world's first cultivated meat farm, funded by the EU. This demonstrates how cell-based protein is shifting from speculative science to scalable infrastructure.

As previously explored in our Adaptive Appetites report, food innovation is shifting to focus on survivability and endurance. With resilience becoming a design principle for the next generation of food, brands are reprogramming taste, cultivating crops and refining cuisines accordingly.

15 Mood Mixology

As analysed in our Functional Feasting macrotrend report, attitudes to alcohol are shifting. Instead of completely abstaining, younger consumers are flexibly mixing and matching alcohol and non-alcohol in the same session (source: KAM). This shift from moderation to modulation is fuelling innovation in low-abv aperitifs, functional beverages and hybrid venues that embrace the day-to-night lifestyle.

Consumers are increasingly bringing their daytime tastes into the evening, favouring mixers and cocktails that align with their wellbeing-driven routines. This sensibility is reshaping bar culture worldwide and drove an annual average increase of 8% in aperitif sales from 2018 to 2023, with further growth expected until 2028 (source: IWSR).

In Tokyo, café-cum-bar hybrid yoL features creations such as matcha Martini, where Grey Goose vodka is paired with Kanade matcha liqueur. In the US, one in three Millennials and adult Gen Z now choose THC-based beverages over alcohol at after-work events, according to Drug Rehab USA.

A report by KAM reveals a growing trend towards 'zebra striping' – alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks during a single session. One in five drinkers choose mid-strength options to sustain moderation, known as coasting.

In October, UK alcohol brand Future Château launched at Selfridges department store in London with a debut range of premium 5% abv wines designed to bring the full flavour of the beverage into everyday life, but with less alcohol and fewer calories.

These patterns signal an evolving drinking culture that is driven by balance, choice and attunement. The next generation of hospitality will be built around choice, offering adaptive menus and multi-sensory settings that meet consumers where they are, while taking into consideration how they want to feel.



Viewpoint

Inventing the Aged Spirits of Tomorrow

LS:N Global sits down with Ben Branson, founder of Sylva, the innovative distillery using sonic maturation to create no- and low-alcohol alternatives to traditional dark spirits

In less than a decade, the non-alcoholic spirits category has seen botanic, no-lo alcohol alternatives become a familiar fixture in sober bars and homes. Dark non-alcoholic spirits, however, remain an untapped frontier.

Enter Sylva, the latest venture from Ben Branson, creator of Seedlip, the world's first distilled non-alcoholic spirit, which he launched in 2015. Meaning 'of the forest', Sylva celebrates trees and the complex flavours wood can impart, creating sip-worthy alternatives to traditional dark spirits.

By exploring the flavour potential of wood and using innovative maturation techniques, Branson aims to carve out a new category in the premium spirits market.

'Maturation is the process of extracting flavour, colour and character from a liquid's contact with wood,' he explains. Traditionally, this occurs in wooden barrels, but Sylva is exploring new methods, including sonic ageing, which uses ultrasound, oxygen, pressure and heat to extract complexity from a blend of four woods. 'This method accelerates reactions between our rye grain distillate and the wood, giving us total control over the variables while remaining technically stable and safe,' says Branson.

Sylva's packaging is plastic-free, using a biodegradable tamper shrink, a stopper made from waste wood and grain, and a label crafted from 35% waste barley – aligning sustainability with craftsmanship.

Sylva is rooted in the flavour produced by trees and Branson plans to tap into 73,000 species, each bringing its own profile. The brand's debut product, Sylva Padauk, which was launched in late 2024 at Selfridges and The Fat Duck, showcases exotic woods from West Africa and Italy and repurposed whisky barrels.

The non-alcoholic category is projected to reach £1.12 trillion ($1.49 trillion, €1.28 trillion) in 2025 (source: Statista). Sylva targets discerning drinkers who appreciate complexity and craftsmanship but prefer lower- or no-alcohol options.

Looking ahead, Branson hopes Sylva represents a shift in how aged spirits and flavour innovation are perceived. 'The second wave now begins for this movement's second decade. 'If it was easy, it would be boring.'



'Sylva is not for everyone, everywhere, any time. We are making special liquids for sipping neat and slowing down... this quiet, reflective moment of luxury in a busy world needs to feel exclusive'

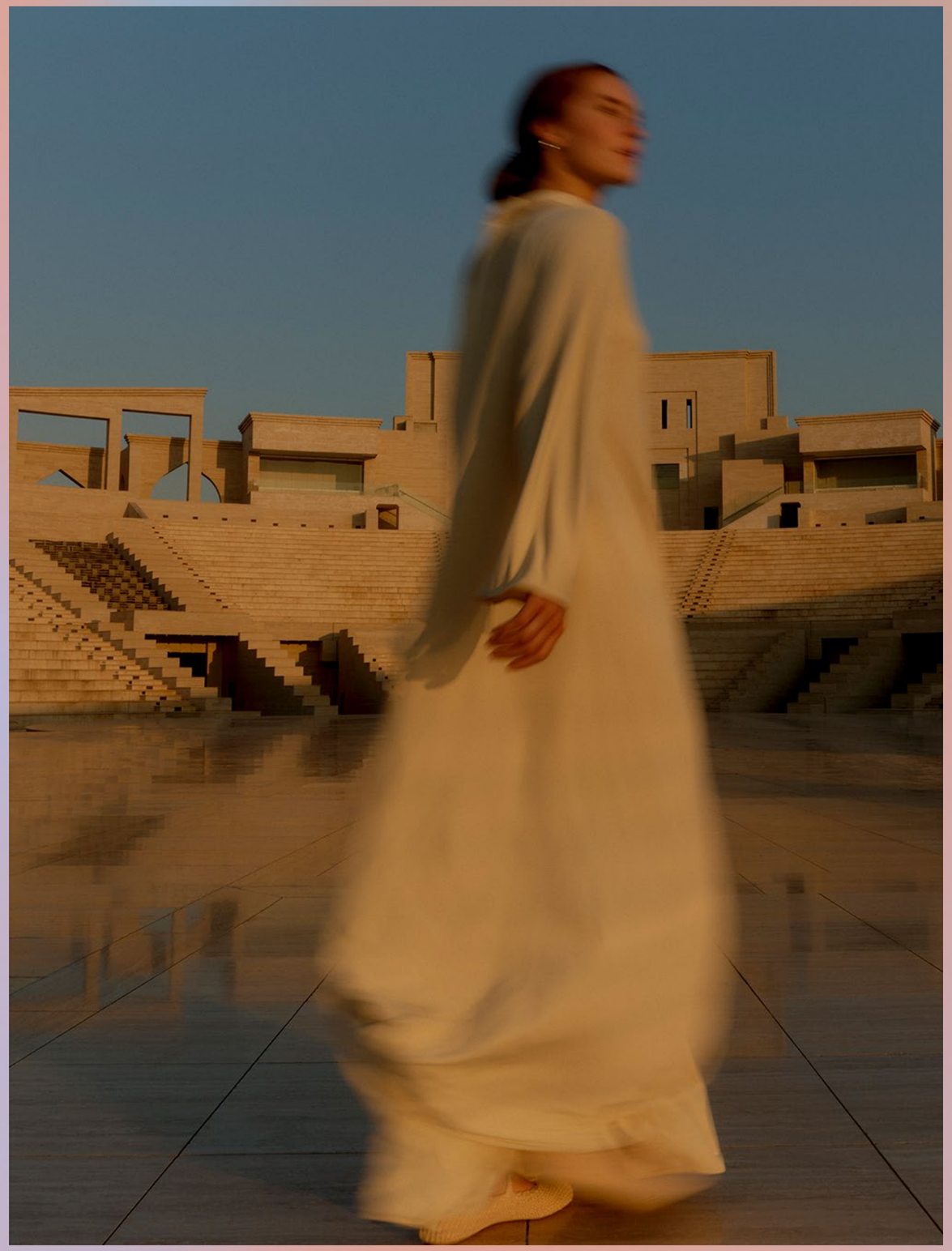
Ben Branson, founder, Sylva

Sylva, UK

Travel & Hospitality

As new markets emerge across Africa, the Middle East and India, and ageing populations reshape the future of exploration, the travel and hospitality sector will evolve through connection, consciousness and cultural regeneration

In 2026, as global travellers seek meaning over motion, the travel and hospitality industry will enter a new phase defined by emotional alignment, ecological stewardship and expanded inclusivity. From the rise of Souljourns that merge mindfulness with mobility to the growth of West Africa's cultural epicentres and the adventurous spirit of mid-life travellers, journeys will be redefined as acts of renewal, belonging and purpose. This evolution will reflect a broader rebalancing within global tourism. Wellness and spirituality will converge with sustainability and self-discovery – shaping an era when travel is no longer about escape, but about connection to place, people and planet.



Luxury hotel group Rosewood has revealed a bold new visual identity

16 Golden Gap Years

Retirees are rewriting the rules of travel, yet as the average age of retirement rises and affordability pressures grow across many countries, this market is set for transformation. The next wave of older travellers – led by Generation X – are not traditional retirees, but mid-life explorers seeking new forms of freedom, fulfilment and connection. Their approach is redefining how later-life travel can look. For them, travel is less about slowing down and more about extending life itself – through discovery, purpose and experience.

Recent research commissioned by UK-based Norwegian cruise shipping line Fred Olsen Cruise Lines found that 42% of over-55s describe themselves as adventurous, with three in 10 saying they travel more in retirement than they did previously. Many are pursuing immersive 'grown-up gap year' experiences – from extended cruises to multi-destination adventures.

Further research from UK retirement village developer and operator Inspired Villages found that nearly a quarter of retirees have either taken a year to travel or would consider doing so, with Baby Boomers and Generation X participants booking trips that range from skydiving to mountain trekking (source: Booking.com). This adventurous mindset reflects how mid-to-later-life travel is evolving beyond leisure or luxury into active, experience-led exploration.

But this spirit of discovery sits against an economic backdrop where longer working lives and affordability challenges are reshaping expectations. As retirement becomes less defined, brands have an opportunity to design travel experiences that align with longer working lives, flexible lifestyles and a desire for meaning.

Lab Insight

Seyi Oduwole, foresight analyst

'Tomorrow's travellers will chase freedom, breaking away from old stereotypes and escaping the noise, distractions and screens. Travel has become a reflection of identity; a mirror and a journey into the unknown, to discover the edges of themselves and the land'



Celine Van Heel captures her grandfather, also known as The Spanish King, in his prime senior years, Spain



Pursuit of Feeling by Black Tomato, Greenland

17 Souljourns

Travel is evolving into a quest for inner alignment and ecological connection. From mood-matched itineraries to Indigenous-led expeditions, a new wave of nature-first, emotionally intelligent and spiritually infused journeys reflects travellers' growing search for authenticity, awe and meaning. This new model of tourism reframes the journey itself as a form of renewal as opposed to escape.

As spotlighted in our Optimised Odysseys macrotrend report, a realism renaissance is under way, with consumers favouring off-grid escapes and nature-first travel experiences that prioritise awe, authenticity and emotional resonance. This shift is being accelerated by the growing value of nature tourism, which now generates more than £465bn ($600bn, €550bn) in global revenue (source: World Travel & Tourism Council).

At the same time, immersive retreats and experimental concepts are broadening the definition of soulful travel – from noctourism (experiences designed around night-time activities such as stargazing), to psychedelic and spiritual trips that blend ancient healing with contemporary wellness (source: The National News).

British luxury travel company Black Tomato is redefining how people plan trips through its Feelings Engine, a first-of-its-kind tool that matches destinations to travellers' emotional states. International travel operator Contiki has launched new eco-conscious itineraries across Kenya and Tanzania focused on cultural connection and conservation, while premium expedition cruise company Hurtigruten Expeditions has introduced Arctic community-led journeys that prioritise Indigenous stewardship.

18 West African Diaspora Destinations

From Lagos to Accra, cultural traditions are transforming nightlife and gatherings into powerful engines of tourism. These celebrations strengthen diasporic ties, positioning West Africa as a rising hub for community-driven cultural hospitality.

End-of-year festivities in Nigeria and Ghana, most notably Detty December, represent a new model for cultural tourism that connects diasporic audiences with home-grown creativity. Lagos alone attracted 1.2m visitors and generated £55.4m ($75m, €65.7m) in tourism income in December 2024, according to Forbes Africa, while Ghana's celebrations contributed to the country's £2.8bn ($3.8bn, €3.3bn) in tourism earnings in 2023 (source: Ghana Tourism Authority).

As explored in our Nigeria's Rave Revolution report, the country's evolving nightlife scene has become a vibrant nexus of hospitality, music and creative entrepreneurship where culture and community intertwine.

These destinations demonstrate how diasporic return is reshaping the tourism economy, transforming seasonal events into cultural eco-systems that merge identity, celebration and investment. This momentum is creating a new model of inclusive tourism where global connection and local ownership coexist.

As more nations look to harness culture as an economic driver, West Africa's blueprint points to a future in which tourism will grow through belonging – powered by the shared energy of community, creativity and homecoming.



Party thrown by Joey Lit. Photography by Edward Konu, Lagos, Nigeria

19 Epicentres of Tomorrow

As explored in our Optimised Odysseys macrotrend report, travellers are increasingly trading overcrowded destinations for lesser-known locations that offer meaning and discovery. Driven by overtourism fatigue, global travel patterns are shifting from traditional Western hotspots towards more dispersed, culturally rich destinations that promise authenticity, connection and depth.

In Africa**,** global hospitality chains are expanding rapidly: Hilton plans to triple its footprint to over 160 hotels, while Uganda's £4bn ($5.2bn, €4.8bn) tourism growth plan reflects the continent's rising travel confidence (source: The East African). This investment is complemented by new models of eco-luxury, like global luxury hotel brand The Ritz-Carlton's first safari camp in Kenya's Masai Mara, blending high-end design with local ecology.

In the Middle East, travel spending is projected to reach £271bn ($350bn, €323bn) by 2030, with Saudi Arabia already surpassing 100m tourists in 2024 (sources: Travel and Tour World, Ministry of Tourism Saudi Arabia). India is redefining leisure through mobility, with plans to double cruise passenger numbers to 1m by 2029, according to Skift, expanding its domestic tourism infrastructure to accommodate a growing middle class. Together, these developments point to a seismic re-alignment in travel influence.

In Denmark, this redistribution is taking on a different form. The Faroe Islands' mystery road trip tourism initiative invites travellers to explore via self-navigating rental cars that follow routes designed by locals. The programme balances discovery with stewardship – exemplifying how smaller destinations are encouraging curiosity without compromising cultural integrity.



Hilton Luanda Hotel Godinho, Angola



Louis Vuitton, France

20 Creature Comforts

As pets become integral to family identity, travel is evolving to reflect deeper forms of companionship. The rise of pet-focused tourism signals a shift in hospitality's values – from convenience to connection. Travellers are no longer satisfied with pet-friendly amenities; they're seeking shared experiences that integrate care, comfort and belonging.

Hospitality brands are embedding animal care into their premium offering. In March 2025, Mexican resort Mar del Cabo launched a Very Important Pets package for guests and their companions, featuring personalised grooming, gourmet meals and even a dedicated photoshoot. In China, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport has opened the country's first dedicated pet terminal, designed to make animal travel as seamless and dignified as human travel, complete with pet check-in, play zones and grooming areas (source: The Independent).

These developments highlight a broader shift where empathy and connection are becoming the new markers of status – a theme explored in our New Codes of Value macrotrend. As pets become part of travellers' emotional eco-systems, hospitality brands have an opportunity to design spaces that nurture shared living and multi-species wellbeing.

Viewpoint

Detty December's Cultural Capital

Beyond music and parties, end-of-year festivities in Nigeria and Ghana represent a new model for cultural tourism that strengthens diasporic bonds while driving economic transformation

In the late 2010s, the term 'Detty December' became associated with this phenomenon. Its popularisation can be traced to Nigerian artist Mr Eazi's 2016 concert Detty Rave, gaining more traction in 2019 following the Ghanaian government's Year of Return initiative, which simplified visa processes for December visitors.

In 2021, United Airlines launched a Washington DC to Accra route, improving access for travellers eager to explore West Africa. The following year, the airline partnered with the Black Star Line Music Festival to offer discounted flights (source: Travel Noire).

Detty December saw major expansion in 2024, particularly in Lagos State, which attracted 1.2m visitors and generated £55.4m ($75m, €65.7m) in tourism income (source: Forbes Africa). In neighbouring Ghana, Detty December events contributed to overall tourism earnings of £2.8bn ($3.8bn, €3.3bn) in 2023 (source: Ghana Tourism Authority).

A major pull for travellers is the region's growing musical export, Afrobeats. In 2024, Live Nation reported a 400% increase in US Afrobeats shows, while Spotify listenership has risen by 550% since 2017. Its stars – Burna Boy, Wizkid, Tems, Rema and Tiwa Savage – are selling out stadiums worldwide. Detty December offers fans the chance to experience these artists in their home environments. Moreover, these events attract a significant influx of entertainment industry professionals, creating networking opportunities and cultural exchange that extend beyond music alone.

This convergence of artists, fans and industry stakeholders transforms Lagos and Accra into seasonal epicentres of global music culture, reinforcing their status as the true capitals of Afrobeats. Bureaux of music corporations are also increasingly popping up in this region, from streaming platforms such as Audiomack, to music labels and distributors such as Sony Music and United Masters.

With Detty December projected to generate £1.5bn ($2bn, €1.7bn) by 2026 in Nigeria alone, according to Forbes Africa, brands can thrive by demonstrating genuine commitment to the culture underpinning this movement.



Free The Youth Block Party. Photography by Edward Konu, Ghana

Luxury

Luxury brands are transforming from storytellers into storylivers – crafting worlds where culture, community and craftsmanship converge through experience, emotion and sensory design

In 2026, the luxury sector will balance heritage with experimentation as it evolves from static storytelling to immersive storyliving. As consumers seek connection over aspiration, brands are moving beyond visual spectacle to create experiences that can be felt, heard and lived. Sound, scent and texture are becoming the new materials of luxury, extending craftsmanship into emotional and multi-sensory realms. From private clubhouses that foster intimacy and belonging to live-stream retail that merges access with immediacy, luxury brands are expanding the sector's eco-system. The resale market is also gaining cultural significance as provenance becomes both a creative and an ethical marker of value. Together, these shifts reveal a sector redefining exclusivity through participation – where the essence of luxury lies not in possession, but in presence.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy

21 The Invisible Layer

Luxury brands are increasingly designing for feeling – creating sensorial experiences that linger beyond the visual. Our Luxury Listening Rooms report underlines how sound is emerging as a new frontier in luxury activations, operating as an invisible layer that can be felt as much as heard, while offering emotional resonance and atmosphere.

Unlike visual spectacle, sound is ephemeral and immersive, unfolding in time rather than space. In London in June 2025, British fashion house Alexander McQueen launched McQueen Reverb, an immersive installation exploring the brand's heritage through sound and movement. The previous month, Italian luxury brand Valentino created L'Atelier Sonore in New York, re-imagining its Madison Avenue flagship as a sanctuary for sound, where curated compositions guided visitors through the space, blending acoustics with architecture.

Hospitality brands are also elevating listening into an art form. International hospitality company Rocco Forte Hotels introduced Musical Room Service, partnering with local theatres, opera houses and musicians to deliver private, in-suite performances. Paired with bespoke dining, these intimate sound experiences fuse culture, cuisine and emotion into a single, multi-sensory encounter.

These innovations signal how sound is becoming central to luxury's evolving lexicon – a medium for storytelling, immersion and identity. As the industry moves further into experiential realms, sonic design offers a way to transform retail and hospitality environments into emotional landscapes, crafting feeling through resonance.



Brutalist Pink by Yont Studio, Berlin

Lab Insight

Fiona Harkin, director of foresight

'Luxury products and services have long been emotionally evocative, but as the concept of luxury becomes more experiential, emotion becomes a core driver behind the connective and cultural expansion of this sector'



Live Now by Jelly Luise, Paris, France

22 Live-stream Luxury

To connect with high-net-worth individuals and a new generation of luxury consumers seeking participatory, emotionally resonant shopping journeys, brands are hosting live-streamed retail experiences that blend entertainment, storytelling and direct engagement.

This will continue to be driven by demand for greater transparency and immediacy, redefining how luxury brands engage with their audiences. According to Bain & Co's Luxury Goods Worldwide Market Study, published in January 2025, experiences remain the sector's key growth driver.

For global watch and jewellery retailer The 1916 Company, live-streaming is paving the way for a new era in luxury retail, says CEO John Shmerler, 'enabling clients to connect with experts and access high-value pieces from anywhere in the world'.

During London Fashion Week S/S26, British luxury brand Stella McCartney's Shop With Stella event exemplified this shift. Hosted in collaboration with Swedish video commerce platform Bambuser, the interactive show streamed from a fictional HQ dubbed Stella Corp, blending live product demonstrations, real-time Q&A sessions and instant shopping.

Online resale retailer Luxury Promise is bringing live-stream shopping to new regions, allowing customers in the US and Middle East to browse and buy authenticated luxury goods in real time.

As we predicted in our 2023 EQ-Commerce macrotrend, the potential of live-stream commerce in Western markets is being realised. It is transforming luxury's relationship with its audience – where digital presence merges expertise, intimacy and storytelling to create a new kind of direct-to-desire engagement.



Sporty & Rich in partnership with The Pridwin Hotel & Cottages on New York's Shelter Island, US

23 Storyliving Stays

As discerning travellers seek enrichment through experiences that feel personal, cultural and creatively charged, hotels are forming alliances with high-end brands, curating offerings that merge retail access, aesthetic coherence and emotional connection. The relationship between fashion and hospitality is deepening – hotels are becoming sought-after partners, serving as cultural laboratories for brand experimentation and long-term affinity building. These collaborations signal a new era of hospitality defined by storytelling, lifestyle and sensorial identity.

In June 2025, British luxury brand Burberry transformed The Newt hotel in Somerset, UK, into a living tableau of British craftsmanship – complete with equestrian-inspired décor, sculptural check motifs and curated experiences that brought the house's heritage to life. In February 2024, French luxury brand Louis Vuitton marked the first anniversary of Atlantis The Royal hotel in Dubai with a playful collaboration that included art installations, bespoke menus and fashion-forward event programming. In July 2025, US apparel brand Sporty & Rich partnered with The Pridwin Hotel & Cottages, Shelter Island, near the Hamptons, offering a range of wellness programming such as tennis clinics and Pilates sessions.

Looking ahead, these signature stays foreshadow how luxury will increasingly operate as an eco-system merging hospitality, retail and culture. They represent a move from storytelling to storyliving – a concept that builds on the idea of storytelling and takes it into the experiential realm. While storytelling is about communicating a narrative, storyliving is about immersing people inside that narrative, allowing them to live the brand story through designed experiences, environments and interactions.



Villa Zegna, Shanghai

24 Clubhouse Commerce

Luxury retailers are enhancing loyalty by merging private club culture with high-end retail. These hybrid spaces trade in intimacy, access and affiliation, developing the act of shopping into a social and cultural experience.

In our Luxury's New Clubhouse Model report, we explore how membership-only spaces are appealing to affluent residents seeking exclusive environments that blend business, leisure and culture. As flexible working continues to blur the boundaries between professional and personal spheres, these VICs (very important clients) are seeking intimate settings that cater for both. According to The Business of Fashion, this elite segment represents 2% of luxury consumers but drives 40% of global sales – spending at record levels.

In the US and Europe, luxury maisons such as Gucci and Bottega Veneta have already established private cultural hubs for high-value clients, while in Shanghai, menswear brand Zegna has created Villa Zegna – a hybrid retail-residence concept that offers curated hospitality and bespoke experiences.

At UK department store Selfridges in London, the 40 Duke members' club, which is due to open in spring 2026, will transform part of its Oxford Street flagship into a private shopping and social destination. The space will offer personalised services and curated access for the store's top-tier clientele – positioning Selfridges as a host of cultural and community life.

Together, these initiatives reveal how luxury is embracing community capital. As access becomes the new aspiration, the most coveted spaces act as sanctuaries of shared taste, connection and identity.

25 Resale Provenance

As storytelling, heritage and authentication become key drivers of value, the secondary market is being redefined by the same codes of trust, rarity and craftsmanship that shape the primary market. Luxury resale is evolving beyond a price-driven marketplace into a deeper cultural economy, where provenance acts as both a marker of authenticity and a measure of meaning. This reinforces resale as a system rooted in emotional and cultural worth.

In June 2025, global online resale platform Vestiaire Collective's Vintage Days campaign celebrated the cultural significance of archival design, featuring tv-inspired edits that revisited iconic looks from cult 1990s and 2000s shows. At Vogue Vintage Market in New York, garments tagged with origin stories and details of their former owners turned pre-loved pieces into narrative artefacts, emphasising the emotional dimension of ownership.

In July, British luxury fashion label Rixo expanded its circular ambitions with Rixo Pre-Loved, a resale platform where customers buy and sell second-hand pieces – demonstrating how resale is being embedded into the brand lifecycle rather than treated as an afterthought, a key market shift we explored in our Rebranding Resale report.

Against this backdrop, luxury's secondary market is merging digital access with cultural discernment, positioning collectors as custodians and brands as preservers of culture. As reported in The New Auction House Playbook report, provenance is emerging as a strategic asset – transforming resale into an eco-system of cultural value, where credibility, curation and custodianship define status.



Vestiaire Collective launched its first report dedicated to men's circular fashion, a key part of the brand's strategy to expand menswear with a dedicated category, France

Viewpoint

Tactile Touchpoints

Nathalie Valmary, founder of notebook brand Louise Carmen, talks to LS:N Global about repositioning the leather journal as a personal sanctuary of intent

Across sectors, consumers are embracing analogue rituals that restore clarity, presence and a sense of control. In a climate of economic anxiety and digital overload, the act of journalling – slow, tactile and deeply personal – is emerging as a cultural salve.

For Nathalie Valmary, founder of French notebook brand Louise Carmen, the journal is more than stationery – it's a curated chronicle. 'To me, Louise Carmen is a lifestyle brand that expresses a certain way of being in the world – intentional, free, creative,' she tells LS:N Global.

As identified in our New Codes of Value report, craftsmanship, emotional utility and longevity are key considerations for luxury consumers. These shifts result in richness expressed through rituals and regenerative pursuits. Louise Carmen offers material permanence and intimacy in contrast to the temporality and performativity of digital culture.

At the heart of the brand's offer is a range of customisable leather journals, crafted in France using vegetable-tanned leather. Each is hand-made in one of five ateliers, several certified under France's Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant label for excellence in craftsmanship. At a time when the global luxury leather goods market is projected to reach £104.7bn ($140.5bn, €120.6bn) by 2030, according to Grand View Research, this heritage-driven process stands in quiet defiance of mass production and disposability.

More than a tool for writing, a journal becomes a sensory artefact embedded in daily life – a marker of time, intent and identity. 'It ages with you,' notes Valmary. Underlining a broader shift at play, she adds: 'We're witnessing a return to 'faber' – the human urge to make, to touch, to own objects that carry intention.'

On TikTok, movements like #JournalSetUp and #JournalTour – where users showcase how their journals are arranged and styled – illustrate how digital tools are being used to document, amplify and celebrate these offline rituals. What is emerging is a new form of personal branding, one that emphasises intimacy over influence and creativity over curation.

In an age of algorithmic abundance, Louise Carmen answers a cultural yearning for meaning, slowness and self-authorship – offering a new blueprint for luxury measured by what endures.

'A Louise Carmen journal evolves with you. Because it's refillable, it's designed to last – for years, even for a lifetime. And to me, that's what real luxury is; not what's flashy or fleeting, but what endures'

Nathalie Valmary, creative designer and founder, Louise Carmen

Louise Carmen, France

Fashion

From archival exhibitions and activist apparel to biologically intelligent textiles and sport-fuelled collaborations, fashion in 2026 will merge emotion, innovation and identity into a living, participatory culture

The fashion industry in 2026 will embrace deeper forms of connection, craft and consciousness. As the boundaries between fashion, art and culture blur, what we wear will become a dynamic form of expression – a cultural language that archives heritage, amplifies emotion and adapts to the rhythms of modern life. This evolution will be defined by participation and purpose. Biotech fabrics will bring intimacy and intelligence to textiles, while fandoms will cement garments as vessels of identity and belonging. The rise of sport-fashion collaborations will also underline a lifestyle built on movement, authenticity and collective energy, signalling a future when fashion is not only worn, but also lived.



Vibram FiveFingers

26 Cultural Curators

In a world increasingly defined by digital experiences, fashion houses are mining their archives to stage retrospective pop-ups and art-led exhibitions – turning the act of craftsmanship into a cultural artefact, as we explore in our Heritage Brand-umentaries report. This shift marks a backlash against the disposability and dematerialisation of the digital age, positioning fashion's material legacy as something to be preserved, studied and revered.

Recent exhibitions capture this recalibration. In June, Rick Owens, Temple of Love was unveiled at Paris's Palais Galliera, and Virgil Abloh: The Codes opened at the city's Grand Palais in September. In Melbourne in December, Westwood Kawakubo made its debut at the National Gallery of Victoria, with Schiaparelli: Fashion Becomes Art set to open its doors at London's Victoria & Albert Museum in March 2026.

As part of London Fashion Week spring/summer 2026, Barbour expanded on its Tartan: The Barbour Way campaign by building a pop-up on Carnaby Street in London, which re-interpreted product heritage through craftsmanship and storytelling.

The opening of the V&A East Storehouse museum in London in May further underlines this cultural shift. Designed as a transparent archive, it invites visitors to witness preservation in progress – a gesture that mirrors fashion's growing fascination with the object's afterlife. As materiality becomes increasingly rarefied in a digital world, fashion is turning to its own artefacts to reinforce meaning, permanence and legacy.



V&A East Storehouse, UK

Lab Insight

Rose Coffey, senior foresight analyst

'In 2026, fashion will act as an interface linking body, culture and technology. As well as carrying emotional and sensory weight, what we wear will increasingly operate as a social code. Brands that design with this in mind will lead a future in which fashion will feel, adapt and speak as a living language of identity'



Skin Series™ by Rosie Broadhead, UK

27 Skinwear

As wellbeing becomes a core dimension of self-expression, fashion's relationship with the skin is entering a new phase, one defined by intimacy, biological intelligence and care.

Designers are pioneering textiles that actively interact with the body's eco-system, reflecting a growing desire for apparel that supports wellbeing, merges beauty with function and redefines sustainability through material innovation.

As highlighted in our Wearable Skincare report, Sylva uses Pyratex SeaCell 15 – a seaweed-based fibre rich in amino acids and antioxidants – to create antibacterial, skin-enhancing apparel. UK designer Rosie Broadhead's Skin Series explores the symbiosis between skin and clothing, developing materials that deliver health benefits directly to the body.

While these projects sit at the experimental end of fashion innovation, pushing material science into new sensory and biological territories, brands are innovating for the commercial market. Global apparel brand Skims's collagen-infused Seamless Sculpt Face Wrap**,** launched in August 2025 to an immediate sell-out, taps into the fast-growing collagen sector – a theme we explored in our Innovation Debrief 2025: Collagen's New Frontiers report. Released in October, French luxury fashion brand Coperni's C+ Carewear probiotic athleisure line transfers prebiotics and probiotics from fabric to skin, marking a new phase of material intimacy, where fashion becomes an eco-system of care and the body a canvas for innovation.

28 Fashion Fandoms

In an age of digital disconnection and hyper-mediated identity, merchandise is emerging as a tangible anchor for belonging. Pop culture-branded apparel and collectibles act as shared signals of loyalty and creative participation, reshaping how people connect with brands, artists and each other.

In our Parasocial Relationships in 2030 report, Mindy Weathersbee, a media psychology researcher at Fielding Graduate University in California, explains that fan merchandise provides comfort and connection to an absent figure, functioning as a 'transitional object' in attachment theory. Her colleague, Karen Shackleford, adds that these objects also serve as social bridges: 'Fans connect with the object of their affection, but they also connect with each other – and that's just as important.'

From limited-edition Labubu figurines (a key figurine driving the Kidult craze) to pop-up stores from bands such as Oasis and Coldplay, merchandise is acting as both memorabilia and emotional anchor, transforming parasocial relationships into material representations. This evolution aligns with the rise of Everyday Cosplay and the growing appetite for self-expression through collective aesthetics.

In a culture defined by intangible media and algorithmic interaction, merchandise has become a form of material storytelling – turning audiencehood into a lived identity and re-asserting the emotional power of the physical object.



Miffy and Mulberry capsule collection,

29 Wearable Resistance

In an era of corporate caution and coded messaging, designers are re-asserting the power of plain speech. The slogan t-shirt is being revived as a portable placard – a democratic, wearable declaration that blurs the lines between fashion and activism, voice and garment.

This shift runs counter to the Resilience Branding era, where language around diversity and inclusion became deliberately softened to avoid polarisation. In contrast, fashion designers in particular are doubling down on directness.

In February 2024, British fashion brand Ashish used provocation as power, with jumpers reading 'Up Yours' and 'Slut for Socialism', transforming defiance into celebration. During the same catwalk season, UK-based, US-born designer Conner Ives showcased the Protect the Dolls t-shirt in response to the Trump administration's roll-back of transgender rights. As of September this year, more than 14,000 units had been sold, raising over £900,000 ($1.3m, €1.1m) for Trans Lifeline, an organisation that provides financial services to the transgender community (source: The New York Times).

Elsewhere, in the US, fashion and accessories brand Telfar relaunched its iconic Shopping Bag for Eid al-Fitr, donating 50% of proceeds to organisations supporting Palestinian and Sudanese liberation – proof that political fashion can move beyond symbolism to tangible solidarity.

As images of young people leading protests – from Kathmandu and Jakarta to Rabat and Antananarivo – dominate global media, designers are once again harnessing fashion's visual power to reflect a world in resistance. What's emerging is a new literacy of impact, where visibility becomes a catalyst for real-world change.



KNWLS Nike, US



So Win by Nike, US

30 Sports Collaborations

As sport evolves into a cultural touchpoint for wellbeing, community and identity, fashion brands are deepening their alliances with athletes, leagues and teams. These collaborations go beyond sponsorship or product – they fuse the emotional power of sport with the expressive language of fashion, creating shared narratives of movement, empowerment and belonging.

This convergence reflects a wider lifestyle shift explored in our Soft Sports report, where movement has become a ritual of mindfulness, balance and connection. Fashion now draws on sport's emotional codes to capture a generation seeking authenticity and purpose.

Underscored by the rise of Collaboration Culture, cross-sector partnerships show how sport's iconography has become a global language for belonging, bridging nostalgia, fandom and cultural pride. Examples include McDonald's and Kappa, with the global fast food giant teaming up with the Italian heritage sportswear label; NFL and Crocs, which pairs America's leading football league with the Colorado-based footwear brand; and Snipes and PSG, linking the German streetwear retailer with the Parisian football club.

At the luxury level, NikeSkims, which was launched in September, uniting the multinational sportswear titan with Kim Kardashian's shapewear brand, and Nike and Knwls, a collaboration with the London-based independent label, embody the sector's growing appeal. As Knwls co-founder Charlotte Knowles told Vogue Business: 'We wanted to make something more lifestyle-based and rooted in reality,' signalling a shift towards fashion designed for feeling as well as function.

British label Aligne's capsule, co-designed with footballer Lucy Bronze, reflects how athlete partnerships are evolving into authentic expressions of shared values rather than transactional endorsements.

As the boundaries between these sectors blur, a new hybrid economy is emerging, where sport provides fashion with emotional gravity and fashion gives sport cultural longevity. Together, they are shaping a new lifestyle lexicon built on movement, connection and collective energy.

Viewpoint

Wearable Skincare

Fashion stylist and consultant Tallulah Harlech sits down with LS:N Global to discuss Sylva, her own functional apparel brand designed with skincare in mind

It's unusual for a fashion brand to feature an address book recommending a holistic clinic, a dermatologist or an osteopath. But for Sylva's founder, Tallulah Harlech, it makes complete sense.

Diagnosed with psoriasis at nine years old, Harlech tried steroid creams, immunosuppressant injections and even veganism. During those years she relied on Pangaia's 100% organic cotton tracksuits, which were gentle on her skin. But as the fashion industry and its fashion weeks returned post-pandemic, the stylist and consultant started thinking about how to turn the quality and protective abilities of Pangaia's ensembles into fashion-forward apparel.

Her journey as a founder started when she roamed the Future Fabrics Expo in London in search of fabrics that would protect her skin condition. 'I needed to know there's more than just organic cotton and bamboo. I needed to know if there was anything with dermatological or scientific backing,' she says.

'I went in and started finding fabrics that had capabilities I had no idea existed,' she recalls. 'I thought if something was stretchy, it had to be full of Lycra. But actually, there are techniques through yarn and weave manipulation, especially with wood cellulose, that can create stretch without synthetics.'

After reaching out to Lenzing, the fibre innovator behind Tencel and Pyratex, Harlech delved into science-backed studies of Tencel fibres. 'They detailed how dermatologists found them to be far more beneficial for the skin than organic cotton and definitely better than anything polyester or synthetic.'

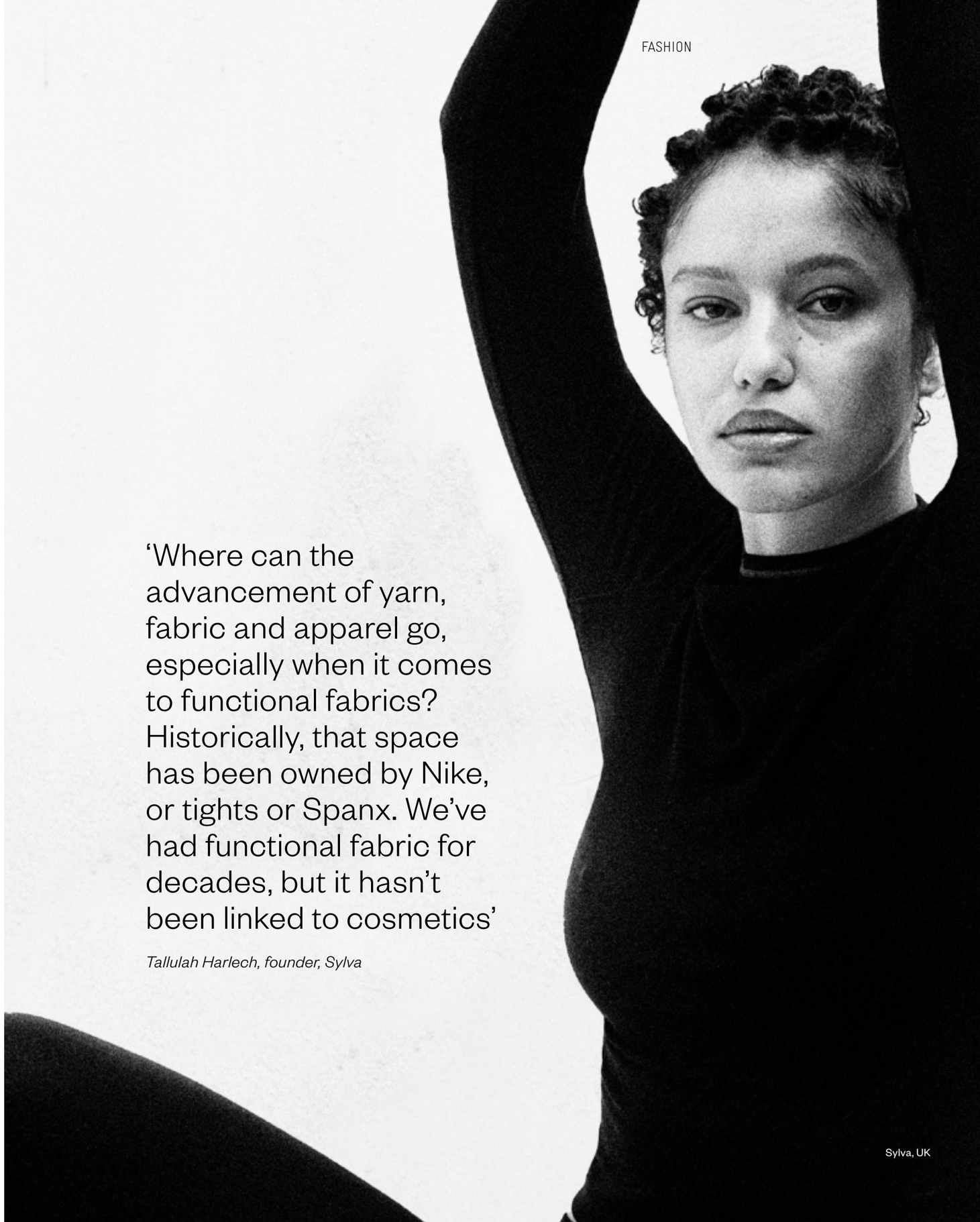
Following the fabric sourcing, Sylva's founder used her extensive network to find the right partners, including an ethical manufacturer in Turkey, and designers and pattern-makers who could turn her vision into reality.

Drop one was launched in October 2024 with three items – a top, leggings and a dress, priced between £195 ($260, €223) and £390 ($520, €446) – in Pyratex SeaCell 15.

Harlech envisages Sylva entering Selfridges and Dover Street Market. 'If people already think so much about their skin barrier... where does that stop? Because your skin doesn't end at your face. What about the rest of you?'

'Where can the advancement of yarn, fabric and apparel go, especially when it comes to functional fabrics? Historically, that space has been owned by Nike, or tights or Spanx. We've had functional fabric for decades, but it hasn't been linked to cosmetics'

Tallulah Harlech, founder, Sylva



Sylva, UK

Retail

As consumers navigate economic pressure, retail in 2026 will focus on longevity, transparency and emotional connection. The sector is evolving from short-term gratification to lasting value, where circular systems, cultural spaces and creator-led commerce define the new rules of engagement

In 2026, retail will balance resilience with re-invention. As consumers look for both re-assurance and relevance, brands will design systems that feel as trustworthy as they do inspiring. Circular design and quality guarantees will move from niche to norm, reflecting a broader desire for longevity over excess. At the same time, impending EU regulations and digital product passports will make transparency a default expectation, transforming accountability into a core brand experience. Beyond sustainability, retail will increasingly operate as a cultural and emotional eco-system. From creators hosting digital storefronts to malls evolving into lifestyle HQs, shopping will be redefined as a social act – grounded in belonging, discovery and shared expression.



La Beauté pop-up by Louis Vuitton, US

31 Resilient Kidswear Eco-systems

With growth cycles colliding against mounting sustainability pressures, the kidswear sector is shifting from disposable design to circular, service-driven systems. A new generation of brands are prioritising durability, adaptability and resource efficiency – creating eco-systems that grow with the child, not against them.

Leading this evolution, Marks & Spencer became the first UK high-street retailer to offer a one-year quality guarantee on all kidswear with the launch of its Made Well, Made to Last initiative in July 2025. Redefining value around longevity, the scheme focuses on Rewear – one of the brand's 'four Rs' (rewear, repair, recycle and resale) – offering families confidence that products are made to endure.

In Germany, fabric technology and apparel brand Gore-Tex has introduced a subscription-based rental service that tackles a long-standing parental pain point: children outgrowing high-performance outerwear before it wears out. The platform allows families to rent, return and refresh seasonal gear, extending the lifecycle of technical garments while easing both financial and environmental strain.

As explored in our Repair Renaissance report, brands are beginning to fuse circularity with community – empowering consumers to participate in care, repair and re-use. Looking ahead, sustainability in childrenswear will be inseparable from practicality, guided by shared values of adaptability, longevity and collective responsibility across families, communities and brands alike.



Lab Insight

Rose Coffey, senior foresight analyst

'In the era of affective commerce, emotion equals value. In 2026, brands that design for mood, meaning and cultural resonance will shape a future in which retail will be defined by empathy, participation and lasting emotional impact'



Left to right: Yaku and loDF and EPAM, digital product passport, John Lewis, UK

32 The Transparency Mandate

New EU regulations are making circularity and disclosure non-negotiable. Within the next decade, every garment sold will carry a digital identity – a scannable record linking consumers to its material origins, impact data and end-of-life pathways.

The EU is planning to mandate digital product passports (DPP) for every garment sold by 2030, while the Textile EPR law, which is due to be implemented by 2028, will make brands financially responsible for the waste their clothes generate. At the FT Business of Luxury Summit, Vishal Kapoor, chief operating officer at Chia, cited the Fashion Transparency Index, which found that 88% of fashion companies do not disclose their annual production volumes. Kapoor described how DPP systems will serve as 'immutable records' that verify trust.

Innovation is already under way. As spotlighted in The Download: Fashion Month Spring/Summer 26 report, British brand Yaku turned compliance into creativity by presenting data as a storytelling tool for transparency. In London, the loDF (formerly known as the Institute of Digital Fashion) partnered with product engineering firm Epam to design a next-generation DPP framework that integrates RFID, NFC, blockchain authentication and AI-powered data analytics – transforming static compliance tools into dynamic storytelling interfaces (source: Vogue Business). UK brand Nobody's Child has been an early mover, embedding QR-enabled passports that reveal more than 140 data points across its supply chain, from sourcing and resale to recycling.

As explored in our Designing for Extinction report, the test phase for DPPs marks a pivotal moment in connecting production with consumption. The next frontier of transparency will move beyond audit trails – evolving into a living eco-system where every item carries its own narrative of creation, circulation and care.



Netflix Bites, US

33 Lifestyle HQs

Gen Z are redefining how and why people gather, reshaping malls from transactional spaces into cultural eco-systems. These environments are evolving into hybrid destinations – places to explore, play, eat and connect – reflecting retail's broader shift from consumption to community.

Across global markets, shopping centres are being re-imagined as entertainment and lifestyle hubs. In the US, Minnesota's Mall of America has evolved into an all-ages leisure complex, complete with a theme park, aquarium, fragrance sampling events and live concerts. Pennsylvania's Monroeville Mall has launched Pickle Parlor, a 24-hour indoor pickleball court that turns sport into a social experience.

In the UAE, Dubai Mall's House of Hype offers a 9,000-square-metre digital playground merging gaming, AR and social media, while Mall of the Emirates has launched New Covent Garden Theatre – a 575-seat venue positioned as a cultural anchor within a retail environment. In August, a Dubai Mallathon initiative saw seven malls (including Dubai Mall and Mall of the Emirates) being used as indoor walking and running tracks, with hydration points and in-store wellness incentives enhancing the experience.

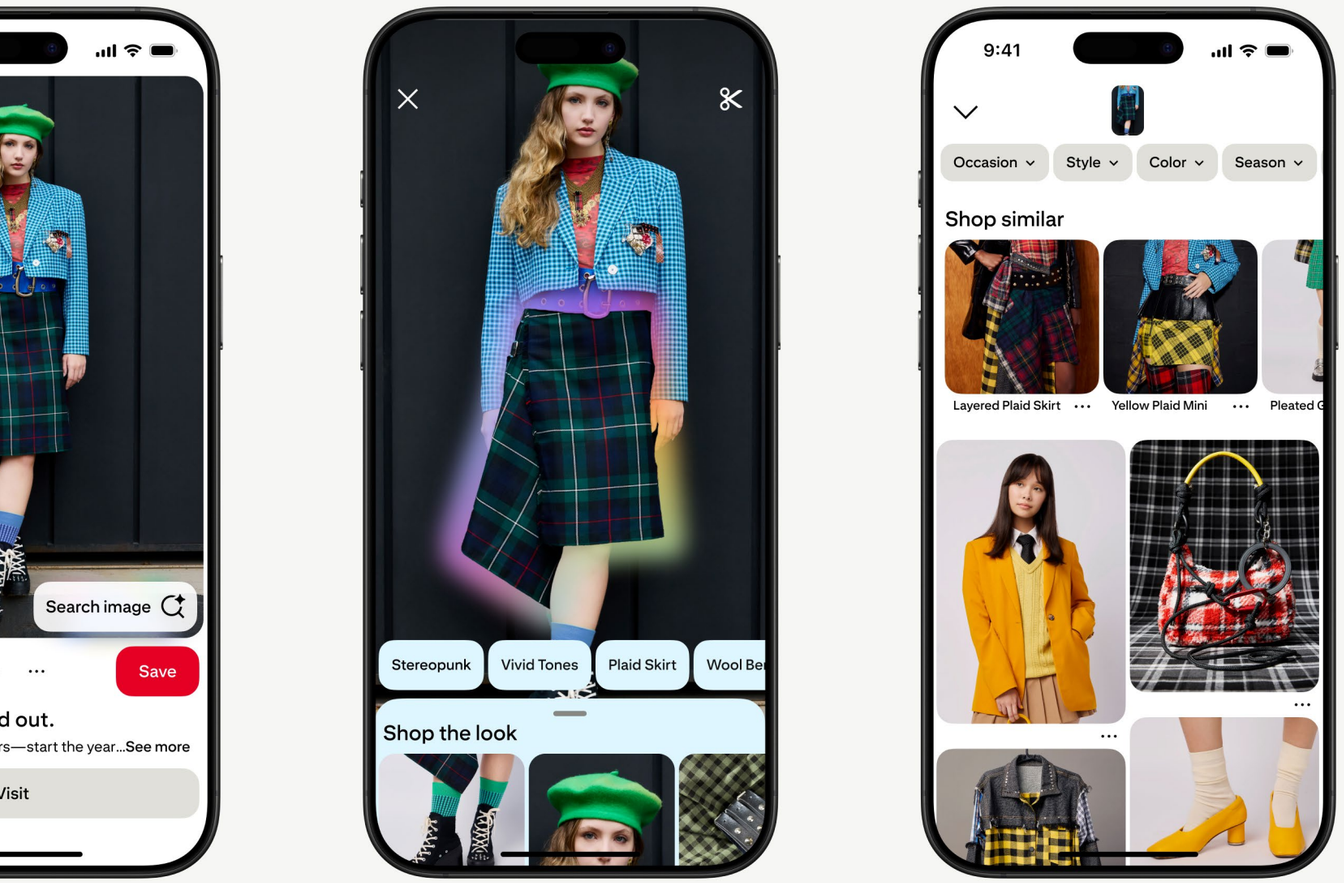
As explored in our Gen Z's Mall Revival report, this demographic is driving a new model of retail as community infrastructure. Some 60% of US Gen Z say that even without a purchase in mind, they visit malls to socialise or meet friends, while 70% believe retail centres have done a good job designing experiences for shared enjoyment (source: International Council of Shopping Centers). This signals a wider cultural shift towards environments that blur the boundaries between commerce, culture and creativity, redefining the mall as a civic site where social belonging, leisure and self-expression converge.

34 Shoppable Storefronts

Creators are evolving into multimedia brands, transforming influence from a form of communication into a form of infrastructure. Digital storefronts are redefining how culture converts to commerce – turning followers into customers and content into capital. What began as straightforward product promotion has matured into a retail model in its own right.

Global media company Condé Nast is preparing to launch Vette, its creator-led e-commerce platform that will allow creators to curate, sell and earn directly through Condé Nast-owned digital eco-systems. Similarly, multinational beauty retailer Sephora's My Sephora Storefront initiative empowers beauty influencers to build personalised storefronts on the retailer's site, complete with product curation, brand partnerships and commission models. These moves signal a shift from third-party social platforms to owned, data-rich environments – where storytelling, sales and audience insight converge.

As explored in The New Creatorverse report, creators are now operating as integrated media businesses, developing immersive IP eco-systems, retail ventures and employee-driven storytelling to build resilience in an algorithmic economy. The rise of creator-led digital storefronts represents a decentralised retail model based on transforming influence into a distributed sales network. In this new paradigm, creators are co-architects of commerce itself, designing the future of brand distribution and audience engagement.



Pinterest, US



Glossier partnered with Random Studio to launch its Fleur fragrance with an AI-driven pavilion that analysed visitors' expressions and posture to generate personalised poetry, France

35 Affective Commerce

In an era when consumers seek connection and meaning in what they buy – a key theme explored in our New Codes of Value report – brands are infusing emotional intelligence into retail. Shopping is evolving into a conduit for mood, identity and belonging, transforming transactions into moments of emotional and cultural resonance.

As outlined in our Mood-matching Fashion report, emotionally attuned styling tools are helping consumers move beyond keyword-based discovery towards intuitive, feeling-led journeys. This marks a shift from functional search to affective exploration, where purchasing decisions are guided by emotion as much as by need.

To tap into these emotional drivers, brands are turning to culture and community as access points. Multinational sports company Nike's collaboration with Indian fashion label NorBlack NorWhite celebrates local craft and colour, embedding cultural heritage into global sportwear. Multinational athletic brand Puma's partnership with Notting Hill Carnival in London, featuring sound system takeovers with Usain Bolt, demonstrates how activations can harness shared joy and identity to foster real-world connection – a key theme highlighted in our Culture-coded Retail report.

As affect becomes a new axis of value, commerce is moving from a logic of persuasion to one of participation – where products and experiences respond dynamically to the moods, identities and cultural rhythms of the people who shape them.

Viewpoint

India's Me-first Generation

From everyday kindness to India's little-treat economy, Indian Gen Z are navigating more cultural tensions than ever, as Shruti Thacker, editorial director of youth culture platform The Established, tells LS:N Global

As we explored in our Gen Z in India report, young people are caught in the middle of a rapidly changing country. They navigate tensions – between consumerism and economic precarity; tech innovation and rural stagnation; rising global visibility and local inequalities.

To understand these contradictions, journalist Shruti Thacker co-founded The Established, a youth culture platform dedicated to conversations that typically happen around the modern Indian dinner table, rather than online.

'This generation move with equal parts cautiousness and boldness, balancing autonomy with tradition,' she tells LS:N Global. 'It defines their daily reality. With jobs unstable and housing unaffordable, the future feels fragile, so they invest in the present.'

Little treats are driving spending, reflecting a 'me-first' pragmatism. Yet indulgence is tempered by prudence: three in four of India's Gen Z save 30% of their income and prefer paying for big purchases from savings rather than credit (source: The Economic Times and Snapchat). This blend of comfort in the present and future-minded caution defines their approach to life.

While Gen Z globally are characterised as activists, Indian Gen Zers are navigating a cultural contradiction that makes their approach to kindness appear, at times, abrasive. According to Thacker, while previous generations expressed care through manners, Gen Z demonstrate empathy through volunteering, crowdfunding or supporting animal welfare.

In a country with a complicated relationship with self-esteem, young Indians are beginning to prioritise themselves. In the workplace, Gen Z are quitting stable jobs to pursue creative paths, valuing flexibility over prestige and measuring success through autonomy.

'Cultural churn has young people negotiating identity, intimacy and ambition in public rather than in private,' explains Thacker. 'Economic precarity has raised the stakes, so formats that promise mobility, visibility and side income feel useful. The result is entertainment that also functions like a social simulator.'

Dating shows such as Love Island model consent and boundary-setting, while India's The Traitors – which was launched in June 2025 – exposed audiences to strategy and psychological resilience. 'It works as an informal curriculum that blends pleasure with utility,' says Thacker. 'Young people watch to rehearse behaviours, test boundaries and absorb cues about identity, ambition and relationships.'

'In a world that feels unkind and fast, small gestures – listening without interrupting, forwarding a job link, checking in on a friend – become vital currencies of care'

Shruti Thacker, editorial director, The Established



Nike and NorBlack NorWhite, India

Culture & Media

As audiences crave connection in a detached world, culture and media will evolve towards participation and co-authorship. From communal watch parties to conversational content and virtual idols, the boundaries between creators, consumers and characters will continue to dissolve

In 2026, audiences will no longer just view, but will participate in, culture and media. As people seek belonging and authenticity amid digital overload, shared experiences will replace passive consumption, re-uniting entertainment with emotion and community. At the same time, media systems themselves will grow more fluid and adaptive.

AI will transform content into dialogue, while creators, fans and virtual personalities will co-shape stories in real time. In this landscape, connection will be both the message and the medium – marking a shift from spectatorship to symbiosis, where culture becomes a living conversation between human and machine, fandom and feeling.



Photography by Young Chul Kim, South Korea

36 Pop Culture Watch Parties

As the cultural pendulum swings towards community and participation, audiences are craving shared moments that cut through the isolation of on-demand media. While already established in sports and gaming spaces, the rise of pop culture watch parties draws on this participatory impulse, with audiences co-creating their own collective viewing eco-systems. Online video platform YouTube's Watch With feature allows creators to provide live commentary and real-time reactions, giving audiences the sense of watching alongside their favourite personalities.

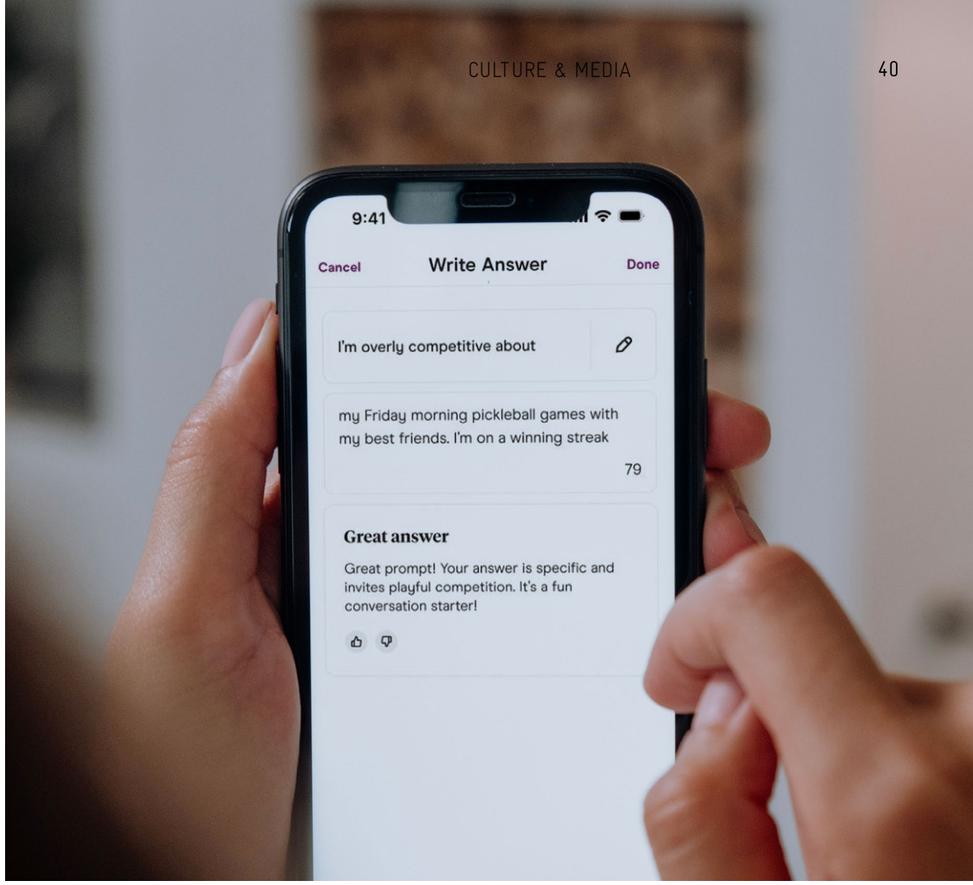
Media streaming service Netflix's K-Pop Demon Hunters show has inspired theatre-style screenings that blur cinema and concert culture – a sign of how fandom now fuels box office success.

Watch parties for reality show Love Island USA, Mexican drag competition La Más Draga and the premiere of pop singer Taylor Swift's The Fate of Ophelia music video have all created spaces of shared anticipation and emotional connection. Glamour described The Summer I Turned Pretty television series finale watch parties as 'making space for women and non-heterosexual men to get in on the joy that is screaming for your team in public'.

In June 2025, content creator and fashion narrator Elias Medini, known as Lyas, hosted a Dior Men's S/S26 live-stream screening in a Paris bar that drew over 300 attendees. By September, his concept had evolved into La Watch Party, backed by sponsors including the British Fashion Council, MAC Cosmetics, Meta, Whoopsee and Vestiaire Collective (source: CR Fashion Book). During Paris Fashion Week, the event democratised access to major runway shows by streaming them on a supersized MacBook screen for over 1,000 people to view together. These gatherings signal a shift towards synchronous media culture where presence, participation and shared emotion replace algorithms as the true drivers of connection.



Outdoor cinema at Jumeirah Al Qasr, UAE



Hinge Prompt Feedback tool

37 Romantic Anarchy

Younger generations are rewriting the rules of romance – approaching love with equal parts idealism and irreverence. As AI dating platforms promise hyper-personalised matches, Generation Z are moving in the opposite direction, rejecting algorithmic intimacy in favour of autonomy, fluidity and play.

In January 2025, dating app Hinge introduced its AI-powered Prompt Feedback tool to help users refine their answers, while Facebook Dating launched an AI dating assistant that allows users to issue commands such as 'find me a Brooklyn girl in tech'. Yet these attempts to optimise connection appear misaligned with cultural sentiment. A Bloomberg Intelligence survey of 1,000 dating app users found that nearly half said AI had no meaningful impact on their dating experience (source: Fortune).

Instead, Generation Z are experimenting with alternative modes of connection that focus on agency and choice. Polls show growing interest in polyamory and non-traditional relationships, according to The Guardian, while online media enterprise Psychology Today's survey with the Kinsey Institute research centre revealed that 16.5% of women and 9% of men identify as 'single by choice'. Offline too, new rituals are forming, including a reported rise of flirting parties among Millennials and Gen Z – social gatherings that trade swiping for spontaneous, in-person connection (source: The Guardian).

This shift marks a rejection of prescriptive models of love, whether algorithmic or traditional. Romantic anarchy doesn't mean chaos; it signals a search for connection that is self-defined and value-driven, where emotion is sovereign. As we move into an era when AI curates compatibility, Generation Z's rebellion suggests that the future of love may hinge not on optimisation, but on openness.

38 Creator Curricula

As the creator economy matures into a structured industry, brands, platforms and cities are formalising the craft of content – transforming what was once instinctive self-expression into a professionalised skill set. What began as spontaneous creativity is now being codified into curricula, accreditation and cultural capital.

In gaming, Finnish developer Supercell has cultivated a 300,000-strong creator network by mentoring superfans into skilled brand ambassadors, blurring the line between community and workforce. Streamer Kai Cenat is similarly developing Streamer University to teach aspiring creators the technical and storytelling skills behind his success.

Beyond platforms, cities are entering the space. Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism has launched an influencer academy in partnership with a travel content agency – a three-month course in social media strategy designed to equip participants to promote the 'Dubai dream' to potential tourists and relocators.

But as influence becomes institutionalised, new tensions emerge around authorship, ownership and agency. While formalising creative skills can democratise opportunity, initiatives like Dubai's academy also expose the ethical complexities of commodifying culture under branded agendas – a reminder that the professionalisation of influence comes with its own cultural costs.



Delta launched the Faces of Travel database to increase diversity in travel marketing

Lab Insight

Dan Hastings-Narayanin, deputy foresight editor

'Consumers now see themselves as the stars of their own story and aren't shy about speaking up. As audiences shift from viewers to collaborators, the industry must adapt. But with AI fuelling mass narcissism, the role of trusted tastemakers remains crucial – especially as algorithms give the illusion of expertise'

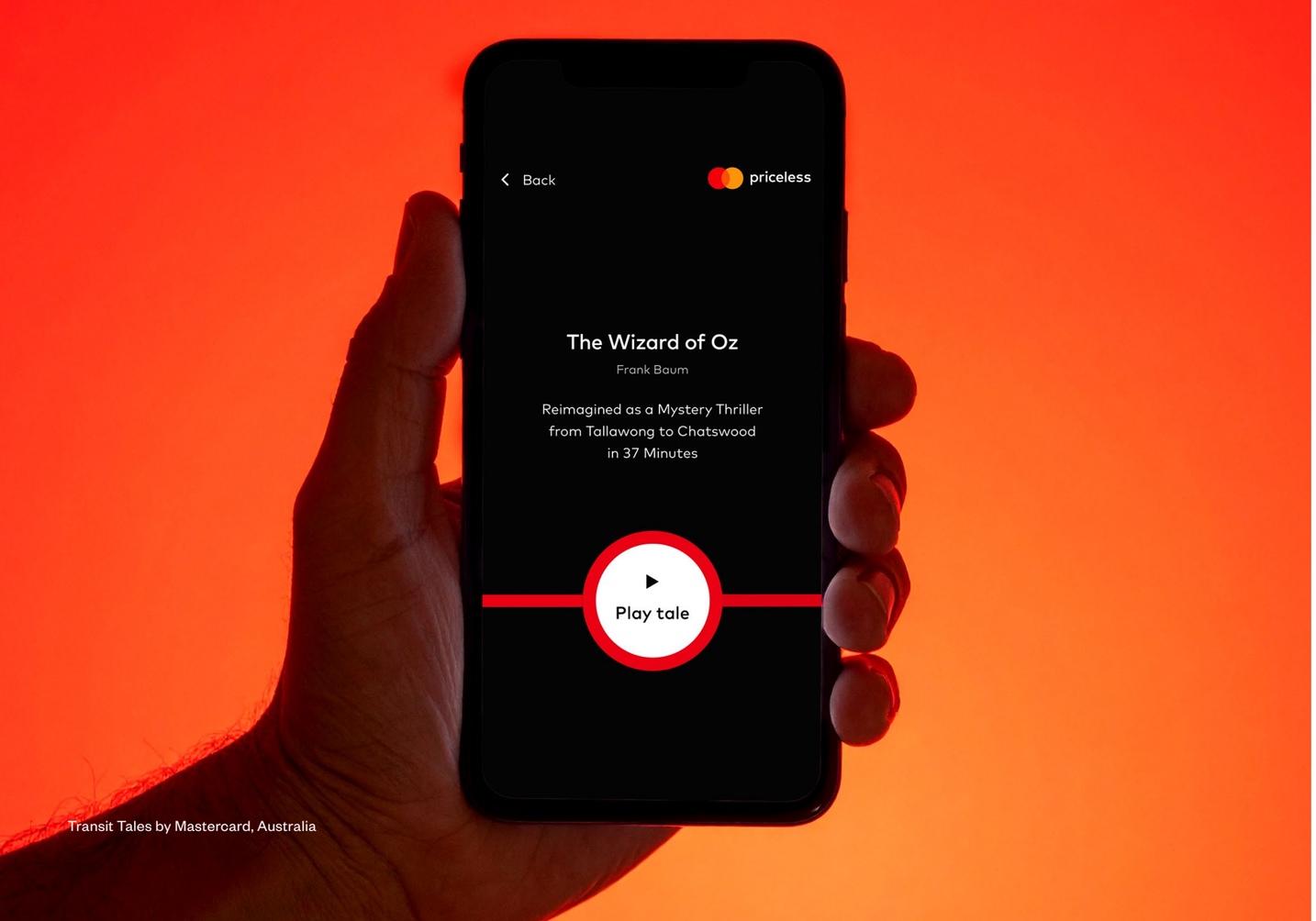
39 Modular Content

Audiences today move fluidly across platforms, languages and time zones – and content is evolving to match. As AI reshapes how people interact with media, audiences are no longer just consuming information but also conversing with it. From chatbots to personalised storytelling assistants, a new era of modular content is emerging, built to adapt in real time to context, mood and attention span.

At SXSW London 2025, Time CEO Jessica Sibley revealed how its strategic partnership with global AI company OpenAI is re-engineering journalism for a borderless world. A forthcoming site-wide toolbar will allow readers to interact with content – chatting with articles, translating them, generating summaries or switching to tailored audio versions depending on whether they have five or 10 minutes to spare. It marks a decisive step towards media that reshapes itself around the reader.

Multinational technology company Google's AI-powered research and note-taking assistant NotebookLM, is also pioneering modularity. The update allows users to query source material, explore topics through mind maps and listen to AI-generated overviews – transforming static information into a participatory, conversational experience.

Brands are experimenting too. In Australia, Mastercard's Transit Tales turns everyday commutes into narrative experiences by tailoring classic stories to the exact length of a traveller's journey. As attention spans fragment and global audiences diversify, modularity is redefining content's purpose and form. This new creative grammar prioritises empathy, adaptability and access – reshaping how stories are told, retold and re-interpreted in rhythm with our lives.



Transit Tales by Mastercard, Australia



KPop Demon Hunters, South Korea

40 Virtual Idols

As AI companions, avatars and deepfake influencers multiply, the notion of celebrity is being rewritten. These virtual entities – infinitely scalable and perpetually available – are dissolving the boundaries between fandom, intimacy and simulation, ushering in a new era of synthetic stardom.

Nearly three in four American teenagers have already used AI companions, according to Common Sense Media, underlining their growing influence and the psychological risks tied to digital dependency. From AI girlfriends offered through Elon Musk's Grok companion app to AI-powered Jesus chatbots offering spiritual guidance and taking confessions, these systems reveal how emotional connection and commercialisation are becoming deeply intertwined.

In entertainment, the phenomenon is accelerating. US-based agency A2O Entertainment has launched a chatbot that lets fans converse 24/7 with virtual versions of members of the K-pop group A2O May – simulating intimacy while extending the lifespan of celebrity personas beyond human limits.

Yet as emotional simulation deepens, so do the risks. As explored in our Parasocial Relationships in 2030 report, AI companions and virtual influencers are personalising these relationships to such an extent that simulated closeness can feel indistinguishable from genuine connection. But the infrastructures behind this emotional technology remain fragile: a recent data leak from the AI character apps Chattee Chat and GiMe Chat exposed more than 400,000 users' private interactions (source: Cybernews). 'This troubling leak highlights a huge gap between the complete trust users place in these apps – expressing their desires and fantasies with the hope that this information remains private – and the security negligence of the developers,' Cybernews researchers warned.

The rise of virtual idols signals a profound cultural shift – from fandom as spectatorship to fandom as symbiosis. These synthetic stars are transforming intimacy into an engineered commodity, challenging the very nature of empathy, influence and identity in the process.

Viewpoint

The Future of Dating Apps

Hinge is the ‘designed to be deleted’ dating app now turning to real-life connections to tackle Gen Z loneliness. LS:N Global speaks to president and chief marketing officer Jackie Jantos to uncover the strategy behind its human-first approach

Since 2023, the UK’s top four dating platforms have seen user declines: Tinder lost 600,000 users, Bumble 368,000, Hinge 131,000 and Grindr 11,000 (source: The Guardian). In July 2024, Tinder reported a global 8% decline in paying users, following a 9% drop the previous quarter (source: BBC).

Yet Hinge stands apart. Despite losing users, its revenue soared by 39% in 2024 – far outpacing its parent company Match Group, which grew just 3% (source: Ad Week). The app is also expanding into Mexico and Brazil.

Jackie Jantos, Hinge’s president and chief marketing officer, credits this success to the app’s distinct positioning: a minimalist platform for all genders and sexualities seeking serious relationships.

Gen Z, particularly those aged 18–24, now make up 56% of Hinge’s user base (source: Financial Times). This informs Hinge’s marketing, which centres on authenticity. Instead of regular social posting, the app commissions creators and runs campaigns like It’s Funny We Met On Hinge, featuring real, diverse young couples.

To connect even more with Gen Z, Hinge’s 2024 No Ordinary Love campaign found inspiration in BookTok and turned real love stories into a zine written by literary stars such as Roxane Gay. In May 2025, Hinge joined Substack to share real-world relationship stories and the ‘emotional plot twists of early dating’.

In 2024, eight in 10 Gen Z (80%) worldwide felt lonely in the previous 12 months – compared with 45% of Baby Boomers (source: GWI). Hinge’s One More Hour initiative aims to alleviate the lack of socialisation among Gen Z, helping them develop soft skills that atrophied during lockdowns.

‘When they feel more comfortable connecting generally, they’re more likely to feel confident going on dates, which creates better outcomes for our users and ultimately drives our growth,’ says Jantos.

The key metric for her is ensuring belonging and connection. Instead of clicks and views, the questions her team are asking are ‘Is this genuinely helping people feel more connected?’ and ‘Is it encouraging them to meet others in person?’



No Ordinary Love zine produced by Dazed Studio for Hinge, UK

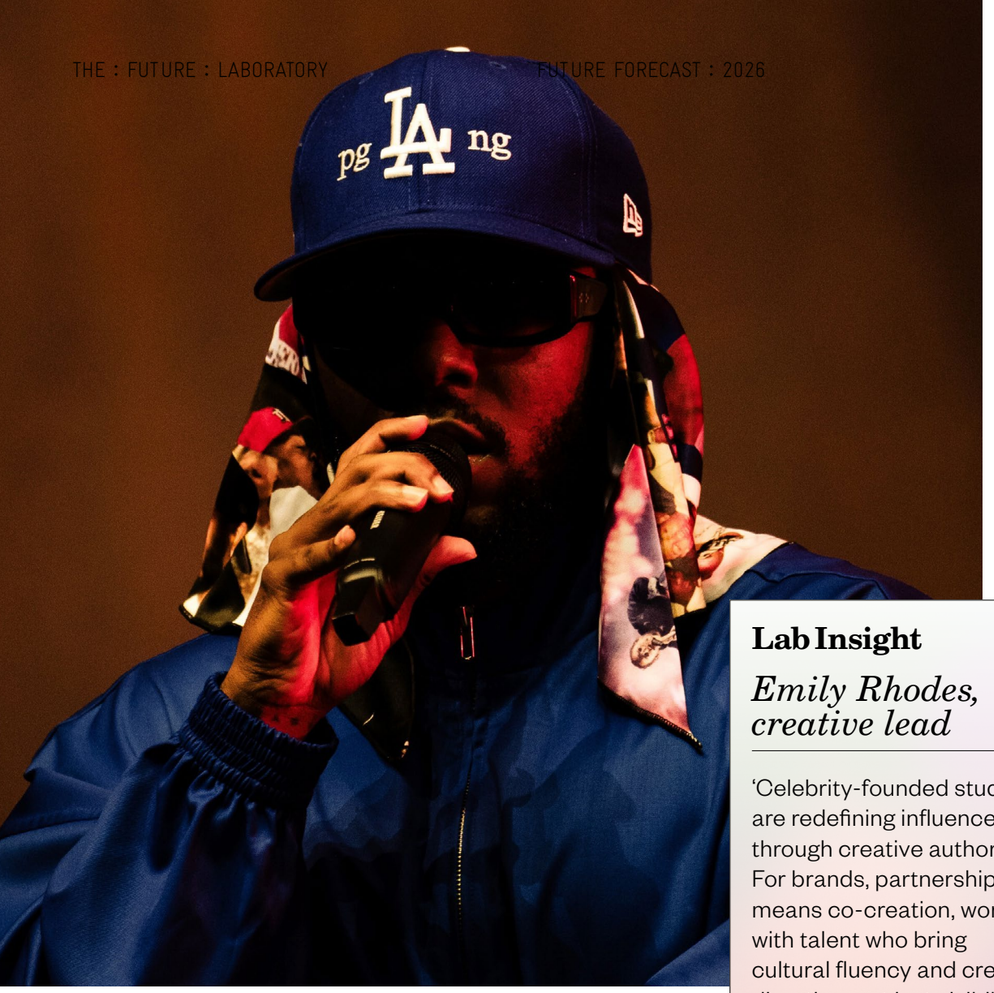
Marketing, & Branding

As audiences grow more discerning and cultural trust fractures, marketing in 2026 will be defined by emotional intelligence, creative credibility and collective purpose. Celebrity consultancies, solidarity branding and revived slogans reveal a market leaning towards cultural fluency and emotional truth over noise and novelty

In 2026, marketing, advertising and branding will evolve from persuasion to participation. As audiences demand authenticity, empathy and alignment, brands will move beyond surface-level storytelling to embed themselves in culture as collaborators, educators and allies. This shift will be driven by a deep re-orientation of values. From solidarity-led storytelling to the rediscovery of slow, thoughtful media, brands will seek to restore connection in a world saturated by noise.



KFC and Fiesta by PS21, Spain



Kendrick Lamar. Photography by Greg Noire, US

Lab Insight

Emily Rhodes, creative lead

'Celebrity-founded studios are redefining influence through creative authorship. For brands, partnership now means co-creation, working with talent who bring cultural fluency and creative direction, not just visibility'

41 Celebrity Consultancies

With social media platforms creating direct-to-fan eco-systems and brands under pressure to stay culturally fluent, public figures are moving beyond endorsement to become creators in their own right. Drawing on years of experience shaping campaigns, aesthetics and audiences from within, they are establishing consultancies that merge cultural insight with creative strategy.

In July 2025, rapper Kendrick Lamar expanded his PGLang universe with the launch of Project 3, an in-house creative agency that channels his long-standing focus on visual storytelling and cultural critique into brand consultancy. A month later, Formula 1 driver Charles Leclerc unveiled Sidequest, a creative studio bridging sport, culture and design – reflecting how athletes are evolving into multidisciplinary brand-builders.

In October, US podcaster Alex Cooper's Unwell Creative Agency translated her podcast's influence into strategic brand activations and live events targeting Gen Z women. England footballer Ella Toone launched Amicizia Studios in June, aiming to help female athletes build creative direction and commercial literacy through partnerships, campaigns and production opportunities.

This rise of celebrity-founded studios signals a broader recalibration of the relationship between fame and creativity. As well as being faces of culture, today's public figures are also its producers, using their lived expertise to shape the aesthetics, narratives and strategies that define it.

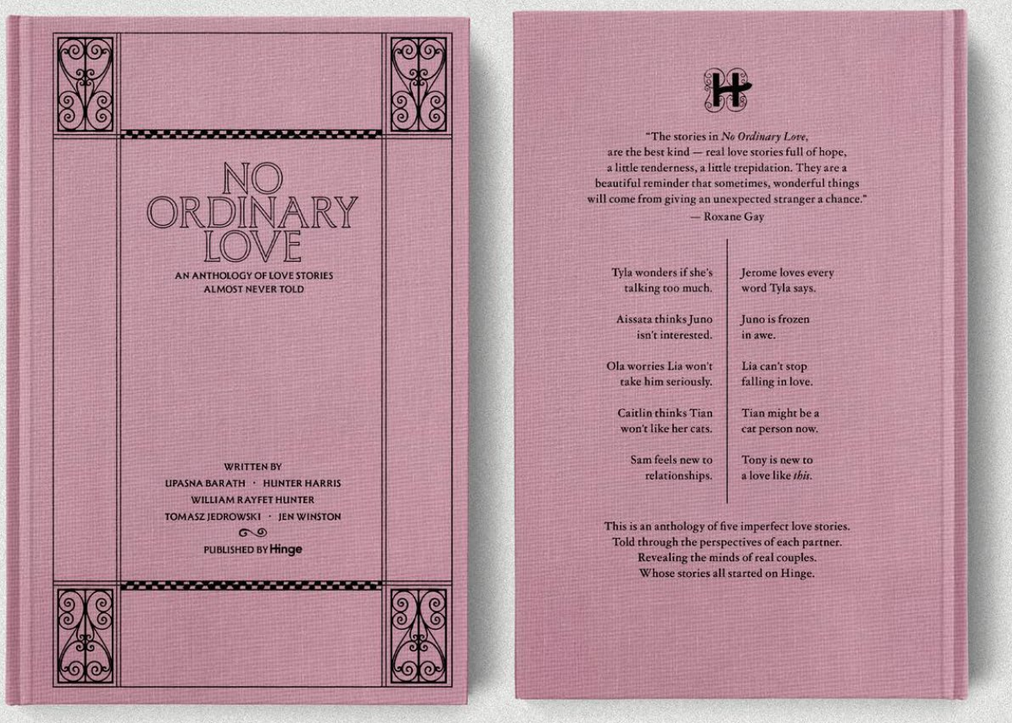
42 Branded Booktok

In a landscape dominated by visual saturation and algorithmic noise, the written word offers depth, slowness and substance. #BookTok, a TikTok subcommunity with over 67.4m video posts as of October 2025, has made reading social, participatory and emotional. As reading culture surges across platforms, books are becoming a new medium for brand storytelling – blending community, content and commerce to reach audiences seeking meaning as much as escape.

US cosmetics brand Neutrogena partnered with actress and writer Serena Kerrigan to join the #SteamyBookTok movement. The Bank Your Glow short story series on online social storytelling platform Wattpad wove themes of sexual empowerment into skincare messaging. Similarly, Downy, an American fabric care brand owned by multinational consumer goods corporation Procter & Gamble, paired the launch of its fabric softener with Almost Scandalously Soft Stories, an audiobook series on global digital streaming service Spotify that turned product sensoriality into narrative intimacy.

Elsewhere, brands are using reading as a medium for reflection and belonging. In Paris, home-furnishing brand Ikea launched Billyothèque, an outdoor library pop-up where passers-by could slow down and find calm, while dating app Hinge collaborated with writers on subscription-based media platform Substack for its No Ordinary Love campaign – a series of essays exploring the complexities of modern relationships. British online bank Monzo's Book of Money reframes financial literacy through storytelling, using illustrations, infographics and accessible language to demystify topics from budgeting to pensions, making conversations about money more open and relatable.

Reading is being reappraised as a space for intimacy, imagination and emotional connection – an antidote to algorithmic culture that invites brands to tell slower, deeper, more human stories.



No Ordinary Love zine produced by Dazed Studio for Hinge, UK



Burberry's Back to the City campaign featuring Bemi Orojuogun, UK

43 Everyday Icons

Audiences are gravitating towards moments that feel unscripted, imperfect and emotionally grounded – a counterbalance to the polished unreality of algorithmic culture. The everyday is becoming the new arena of meaning, where small rituals, human connection and local narratives carry emotional weight.

Across categories, brands are humanising their storytelling. Multinational company Coca-Cola's 125 Years in Britain campaign celebrates local shopkeepers as neighbourhood heroes, while British luxury brand Burberry's viral Bus Aunty TikTok spot reframes city life through the lens of a familiar, everyday character. Digital streaming service Spotify's Fan Life campaign spotlights listeners in all their ordinary devotion, positioning fandom as both cultural identity and emotional release.

Elsewhere, multinational car company Volkswagen's YourVolkswagen series uses real customer stories to rekindle ownership pride, while British online grocery retailer Ocado's Shopping List Stories mine meaning from moments of domestic routine. These narratives transform the ordinary into the aspirational, finding appeal and truth in the unfiltered.

In a world increasingly mediated by AI-generated aesthetics, the authenticity of the everyday has become its own form of luxury. What was once mundane is now meaningful: a quiet rebellion against perfection and a re-assertion of what it means to be human. This sensibility will shape design and storytelling alike, as consumers seek tactility, imperfection and emotional honesty in both products and experiences – qualities that technology can imitate, but never truly replicate.

44 Solidarity Branding

In an era defined by cultural tension and public distrust, brands are reframing purpose as solidarity, aligning themselves with social causes, collective wellbeing and shared humanity.

Multinational beauty retailer Sephora's recent film made with Haus Labs by Lady Gaga reframes beauty as a collective language of inclusion and self-acceptance, while Selena Gomez's Rare Beauty is expanding its Rare Impact Fund through The Giving Circle – a community-led initiative supporting youth mental health.

Alongside this, brands are demonstrating political and humanitarian awareness with tangible action. In September, British cosmetics retailer Lush temporarily closed all UK stores in protest against starvation in Gaza, redirecting its platform towards awareness and advocacy (source: The Guardian). Similarly, US ice cream company Ben & Jerry's continues to take explicit public stands on refugee rights, reinforcing its long-held commitment to social justice.

At the same time, economic boycotts are reshaping consumer consciousness. As brands such as global coffee retailer Starbucks, global fast food giant McDonald's and multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerate Disney face politically charged spending backlashes, consumers are wielding their wallets as instruments of protest. While the financial impact on major corporations remains uncertain, according to MDPI and Forbes, these actions are expanding public awareness of equity, inclusion and accountability – signalling a shift in how collective values are expressed through consumption.

As explored in our Resilience Branding report, this marks a transition from purpose as performance to purpose as participation. In an age of cultural volatility, solidarity has become both a moral and a strategic imperative.



The Liberation bath bomb by Lush, UK



Why Do It? by Nike, US

45 Brand Slogans Re-imagined

As culture moves through cycles of uncertainty and re-invention, brands are rediscovering the power of legacy language. Iconic slogans and heritage cues are being reframed through contemporary values – proof that meaning can evolve without erasing its roots. In a climate where consumers crave both continuity and relevance, these revivals act as emotional anchors, connecting past identity to present sentiment.

AG Barr's Scottish soft drink Irn-Bru has revived its iconic Made in Scotland from Girders slogan, originally a celebration of industrial strength. Now re-imagined to emphasise strength of character, it becomes a symbol of courage, individuality and national pride for a new generation. Similarly, multinational sportswear brand Nike's Why Do It? campaign re-interprets its legendary Just Do It ethos for a more introspective era, positioning greatness as a choice rather than an outcome. As executive vice-president Nicole Graham explains: 'Just Do It isn't just a tagline, it's a spirit that lives in every heartbeat of sport. With Why Do It?, we're igniting that spark for a new generation.'

This revival of heritage language signals a broader evolution in brand storytelling. In a fragmented world, linguistic continuity becomes cultural glue – a way to renew trust, relevance and emotion while preserving the familiarity of a brand's voice. Legacy is operating as a dynamic archive to be rewritten in dialogue with the present day.

Viewpoint

The Ads Don't Work for Gen Z

If brands want to genuinely connect with Gen Z, they need to dial down the ad saturation and earn their attention rather than demand it, writes foresight intern Dede Mivehchi

After moving to London, I realised how intense it feels to be constantly targeted by brand messaging. In Iran, where I'm from, young consumers aren't yet bombarded with targeted ads online. In the UK, being Gen Z comes with a flashing target sign. Every scroll and stroll feels like one more brand asking for attention and money.

We are the most targeted generation by ads and brands in history and we're aware of it. According to Analyzify, 80% of Gen Z feel they encounter more brand advertisements than any other generation. Ads follow us everywhere – on social media, between YouTube videos, embedded in apps and even in real life.

That's why Gen Z are logging off. We're embracing what Pinterest has called the 'Martha Stewart summer' – analogue rituals and digital detox.

To understand how peers feel, I shared a short Google Form across several countries. More than 70% said they often feel overwhelmed by the saturation of brand content; the rest said they sometimes feel this way. Not a single person answered 'rarely' or 'never'.

One respondent compared TikTok Shop ads to scams, while another added: 'Even when creators say 'I'm not being paid', the affiliate links in their bios say otherwise. It makes me lose trust in them and the brand.' Several said they rarely scroll without feeling someone is trying to sell them something.

Even brands that start strong become 'too much'. Hailey Bieber's Rhode was cited for crossing into inauthenticity: 'Too many fake compliments by influencers,' one person said. 'It just doesn't feel real any more.'

Still, some brands get it right. Apple and Nike were praised for consistency and clarity. Refy and Nude Project won for feeling authentic.

My peers and I aren't anti-marketing. But we will leave brands on read when marketing feels manipulative, excessive or dishonest. Flooding us with ads won't build connection – it builds resistance. Want to reach Gen Z? Stop shouting. Start listening.



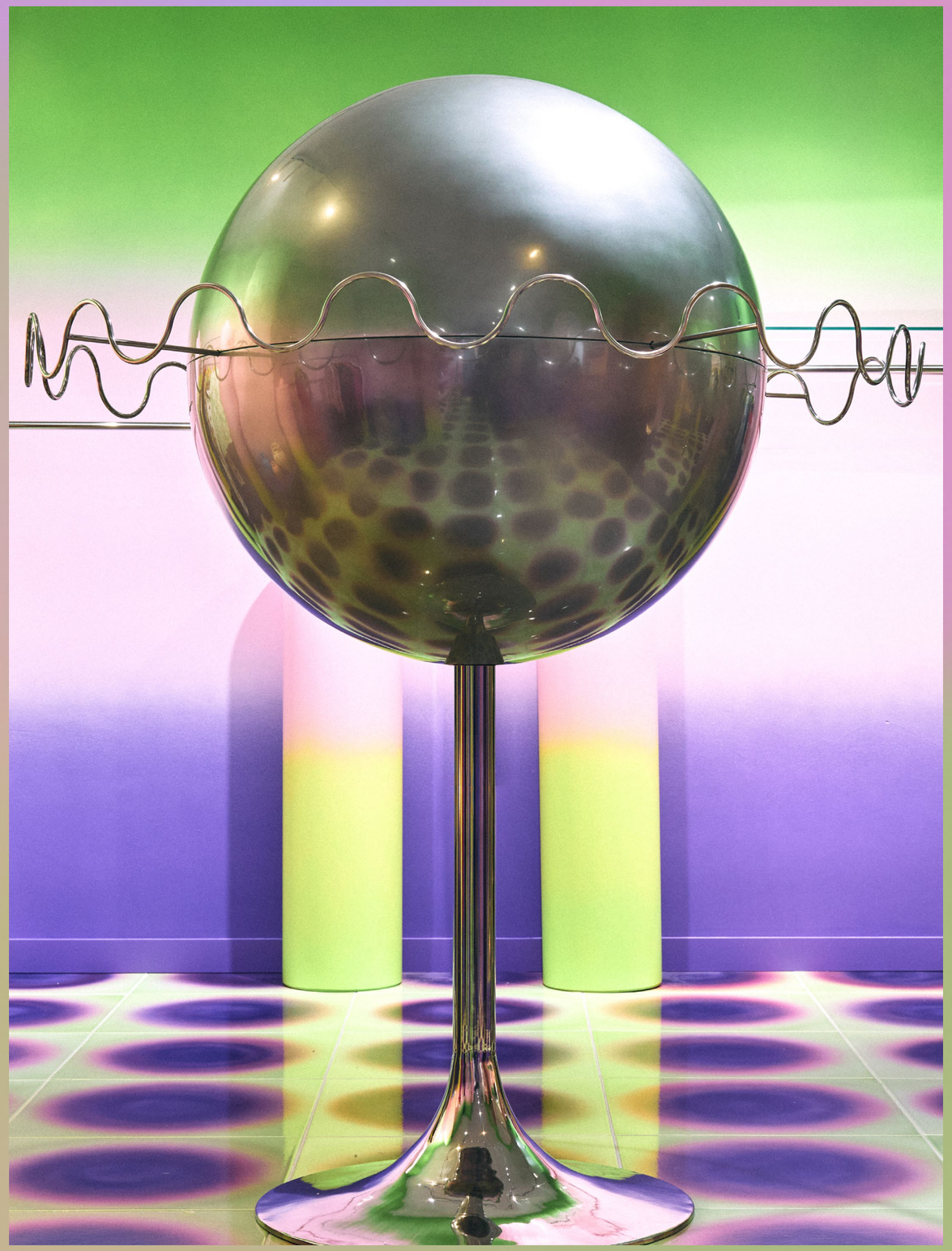
Refy, UK

Design

As we enter an era defined by symbiosis between human intuition and machine intelligence, creative practice will become a dialogue – between nature and data, hand and algorithm, emotion and system

In 2026, as the boundaries between human and machine creativity blur, designers and creatives will act as mediators between worlds: translating code into craft, logic into empathy and technology into touch. Biomorphic identities and co-authored processes will redefine visual communication as a living eco-system, while the rise of emotionally responsive products will position design as an instrument of wellbeing.

At the same time, imperfection and honesty will regain value. From hand-drawn marks to grassroots imagery, the next chapter of design will celebrate vulnerability and vitality – reshaping creativity as a humane, collaborative and sensorial force for connection.



Koibird store redesigned by Uchronia, London, UK

46 Biomorphic Branding

Tech branding is moving beyond sterile minimalism towards visual systems that feel alive, adaptive and elemental. A new aesthetic language is emerging – one that draws from biomimicry, topography and parametric design to express the fluid interplay between landscapes and data flows.

This shift reflects what LS:N Global defines as The Synthocene Era – a time when human and machine intelligence evolve symbiotically, giving rise to identities that feel both natural and computational.

Artists and designers alike are exploring this convergence. UK-based multi-disciplinary studio No Cell Coverage uses hybrid media to meditate on the relationship between technology and nature. Its Cloud Viewer project transforms an original Game Boy into a contemplative ambient interface.

In branding and systems design, this same philosophy manifests through generative visual identities. Italian software company Maiella builds on topographic, data-inspired forms that oscillate between geological and digital, merging human perception with computational precision.

Similarly, Italian design studio Accurat bridges the gap between data and design. Its work sits at the intersection of intelligence and experience: designing systems that turn raw data into living narratives and tactile experiences. The studio describes itself as building 'data-rich systems and multimodal experiences for brands to breathe life into their data stories'.

These projects show how brands craft organic, morphing identities that communicate adaptability and interconnection, mirroring the living systems technology now seeks to emulate.



Cloud Viewer by @nocellcoverage (Matt Faller), US

Lab Insight

Emily Rhodes, creative lead

'As the boundaries between human, machine and natural intelligences blur, brands must design systems that honour and harness all three, creating identities that evolve symbiotically rather than hierarchically'



Russell Hobbs Calm Kettle, UK

47 Feelingware

Emotionally intelligent, human-centred design is emerging as an antidote to the uniformity of mass-market products, blending functionality with playfulness to foster meaningful, multi-sensory interactions. Drawing on scholar Russell W Belk's seminal 1988 theory of possessions and the extended self, designers are crafting objects that mirror our inner lives – intuitive, organic and responsive to emotional states. This marks a shift towards innovation with feeling – re-introducing joy, tactility and empathy into everyday design.

In fashion, our Mood-matching Fashion report highlights platforms such as US fashion technology company Daydream, designed to interpret mood and intention, enabling intuitive, affect-led forms of discovery. In domestic spaces, emotionally intelligent architecture and EQ homes are embedding care, comfort and neuroaesthetic principles into the built environment.

Product design, too, is becoming emotionally responsive. The Russell Hobbs Calm Kettle and LG's MoodUp InstaView refrigerator use light, texture and sound to evoke calm or stimulation, transforming interiors into affective eco-systems that adapt to mood rather than dictate it.

Feelingware signals a new design paradigm, where emotional intelligence is embedded in every interface, material and object. In this future, design considers the body, and also listens to the mind – transforming the objects around us into companions of care, reflection and joy.

48 Illustrative Identities

In a culture saturated with flawless, AI-generated visuals, imperfection has become the new marker of authenticity. Human touch – with all its irregularities and inconsistencies – is being revalued as a sign of creativity, presence and emotional truth. From scribbled logos to kinetic graphics, brands are building design systems that feel fluid and alive.

As explored in our Human by Design report, the return to the tactile and imperfect mark-making reflects a broader cultural backlash against AI uniformity. Instead of frictionless polish, brands are embracing texture, spontaneity and gestural scribbles.

In July 2025, multinational consumer electronics company Polaroid's The Camera for an Analog Life campaign featured nostalgic ballpoint-pen doodles and lo-fi captures of tender moments, paired with slogans such as 'AI can't generate sand between your toes' and 'Real stories. Not stories and reels'. In London, restaurant Jolene's child-drawn logo transforms imperfection into identity, capturing the brand's spontaneous, communal spirit. In the consumer goods category, the playful packaging for New Zealand beverage company's Good Shit Soda and Canadian cosmetics brand Radford pairs bold typography with offbeat composition, signalling a growing appetite for honesty, humour and handmade charm.



Jolene. Art direction by Studio Frith. Photography by Clare Shilland, UK

49 Co-authored Design

As creative processes become increasingly entangled with AI tools, the aesthetics of authorship are being rewritten. Design has become a shared process of negotiation – where an emerging dialogue between human intuition and machine interpretation is being navigated. Designers are learning to brief, prompt and iterate with AI, developing hybrid aesthetics that carry the imprint of both the human hand and machine logic.

Our global event report SXSW 2025: Designing AI With Intent highlights how collaboration with intelligent systems is reshaping visual outcomes – from adaptive typographies that evolve in response to environmental data to generative brand imagery that embraces rhythm, variation and chance.

In global AI company OpenAI's first ChatGPT campaign, three short films visualised what the company called the 'everyday magic' of using the bot – framing AI as collaborator rather than replacement. According to Creative Review, the team noted that 'human craft was central to the campaign's creation'. Similarly, Claude's Keep Thinking campaign, developed by parent company Anthropic, positioned the AI agent as a creative amplifier, showing how humans and intelligent systems can co-compose solutions in real time.

This aesthetic evolution echoes themes from The Synthocene Era: Merging Human and Machine Intelligence, where we explore how co-creation is dissolving the boundaries between the natural and the artificial. In this new creative paradigm, value lies in the ability to design with, not against, the intelligence of systems that think alongside us.



PL'AI by Špela Petrič. Part of Other Intelligences by MU Hybrid Art House. Photography by Bram Versteeg, The Netherlands



Female-led creative consultancy Pacer created a campaign for football brand Mitre, UK

50 Women's Sports Rising

As the women's sports economy gains cultural and commercial visibility, a new design vernacular is emerging in the sports sector that rejects corporate gloss in favour of authenticity, imperfection and emotional honesty. Women's football has been so impactful that It's Nice That credits it as the catalyst 'completely reforming the visual culture of sport'.

As explored in our Grassroots Game Days design direction report, sport's aesthetic codes are being defined through a community-led visual language rooted in collective authorship. A standout example is the Peachy Den and Adidas Legends Never Retire campaign, a collaboration between the UK fashion brand and multinational sportswear retailer starring Gill Sayell – a Lioness who represented England at the 1971 Women's World Cup – that celebrated the emotional legacy of female sport legends by depicting her playing football in a conventional British back garden.

This year, the Lionesses' national team kit reveal, created with multinational sportswear company Nike, featured a lo-fi, camcorder-style film – nostalgic, community-driven and visually grounded in archival imagery. Elsewhere, Arsenal football club defender Lotte Wubben-Moy's Lots More to Give campaign used hand-drawn graphics and intimate player portraits to highlight the social fabric behind the sport.

After decades of underrepresentation, women's sport has cultivated its own creative resilience. Its design culture reflects that journey – collaborative, inclusive and decidedly human.
In contrast to the elite aesthetic of men's sport, women's sports design celebrates a grassroots spirit at scale: a visual movement built on care, creativity and collective strength that is reshaping how power, pride and identity are portrayed in sport.

Viewpoint

Rehumanising 3D Design

Fashion designer Karina Bond talks to LS:N Global about redefining couture with a printing pen and bringing the human touch to 3D design

Karina Bond is forging a fashion future without fabric. The designer uses a hand-held 3D pen, a tool now so integral to her work that she links to it directly from her Instagram biography in an act of radical democratisation.

The Covid-19 pandemic restrictions led to the designer's initial experimentation with household materials. 'One of the first things I made was a textile using a hot glue gun,' she recalls. 'It feels elementary now, but it was the start of a bigger idea.'

These early works with hot glue threads cemented Bond's signature aesthetic and caught the attention of UK-based hairstyling brand Toni & Guy, which commissioned a capsule collection for its avant-garde show. 'They liked the hot glue aesthetic, but we needed something more durable,' she explains. It was during the search for a more robust alternative that her father suggested she try a £39.99 ($53.40, €47.45) 3D pen from Amazon.

'This is the future of fashion,' she says. 'It can solve sizing restrictions, excess stock problems and you can make the process circular.' Her garments aren't cut, sewn and constructed in the traditional sense, they are sculpted and built in a bespoke manner using freehand gestures.

To create her garments, Bond uses TPU filament, a flexible and durable material often used in PPE. 'It's non-toxic and safe for the skin,' explains Bond. The material combines the elasticity of rubber with the strength of plastic, meaning it can't tear like fabric. 'You'd have to cut it with scissors… and if something breaks, you can reprint that part and fix it.'

Looking ahead, Bond is exploring new filaments that replicate the softness and breathability of natural fibres such as cotton or wool. 'I'm working with my dad to translate my drawing style – like how I make a bag – into a digital program the 3D printer can read,' she says. 'The challenge is making it look organic, not too machine-made.'

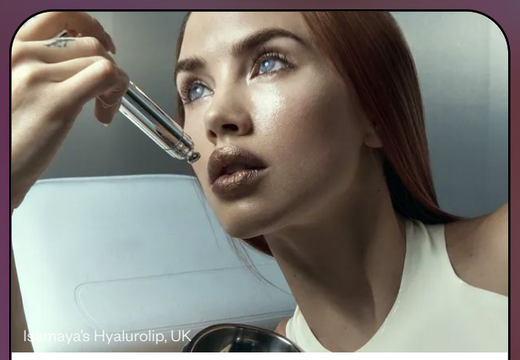
In an era of digital production and mass automation, Bond's freehand, tactile process re-asserts the human touch and signals a new framework for defining luxury where technology and craft converge.



Karina Bond autumn/winter 2025. Photography by Jude Black, London, UK

This report is based on the sector research from The Future Laboratory's trends intelligence platform, **LS:N Global**

Read our latest macrotrend reports:


Ismaya's Hyalurolip, UK

The Great Beauty Blur

Beauty has become monotonous, influenced by powerful algorithms that entrench long-standing ideals. Its future depends on embracing complexity, friction and cultural depth to spark genuine connection and consumer curiosity


Market Cube by MVRDV, Taiwan

Future Five 2026

A trend briefing designed to help you assess the impact of ongoing change, unpacking the most challenging topics of tomorrow, relevant for today


Summer Chaos by Db, Norway

Optimised Odysseys

Travel has entered a redefining age in which every element must be optimised, from planning to presence, to deliver truly purposeful, personalised and participatory experiences

We can also deliver our macrotrends to your business in a number of ways, from on-demand video presentations to strategic workshops and bespoke reports.

If you want to find out more, say

hello@thefuturelaboratory.com

Co-founder and chief creative officer : Chris Sanderson
Co-founder and editor-in-chief : Martin Raymond

Director of foresight : Fiona Harkin
Insights and engagement director: Olivia Houghton
Deputy foresight editor : Dan Hastings-Narayanin
Senior foresight analyst : Alice Crossley
Senior foresight analyst : Rose Coffey
Foresight analyst : Seyi Oduwole
Creative lead : Emily Rhodes
Junior creative visualiser : Ella Murray

Director of strategic foresight : Alex Hawkins
Deputy strategic foresight editor : Darian Nugent
Senior presentations editor : Rhiannon Hudson

Creative director : Savannah Scott
Design director : Samuel Davies
Creative artworker : Harry Parker
Senior sub-editor : Ian Gill
Production and resource lead : Maddie Watts

Director of marketing : Rodrigo Tobal
Marketing manager : Sophia Wood-Jenkins
Marketing assistant: Ayesha Evans

The Future Laboratory is one of the world's foremost strategic foresight consultancies. Members of our trends intelligence service LS:N Global get exclusive access to the mindsets defining tomorrow and the early adopters driving global change across 10 industry sectors.

The Future Laboratory
6 Orsman Road, London N1 5RA, UK

Follow us
LinkedIn
TFL Instagram
LS:N Instagram

Get in touch
+44 20 7791 2020
office@thefuturelaboratory.com
hello@lsnglobal.com

LS:N GLOBAL THE : FUTURE : LABORATORY