THE : FUTURE : LABORATORY

Inter-Covid Roadmap 2021

Introduction

With the **Covid-19** vaccine rollout offering a chance to rebuild our societies and economies, a host of new opportunities await brands and businesses.

2021 will be the year in which we begin to overhaul the systems and industries that were the foundations of society for decades. It will mark a seismic shift in a consumer mindset that will have varying implications for different sectors.

As the long-term impacts of economic collapse, remote working, expedited digitisation and a collective health crisis are felt on a micro-level, organisations will be the ones to foster a re-ignited sense of optimism and rebuild their entire businesses for a polarised commercial landscape.

After all, the responsibility for creating safer, greener and more robust systems is being placed on businesses as never before. A global study by Edelman recently found that 55% of consumers believe brands are more accountable than governments – and faster to affect positive change.

'This is a rare opportunity to change course because it won't be long before the societal antibodies from this once-in-a-century pandemic begin to fade,' says Toby Ord, senior research fellow at Oxford University.

Twelve months into the global crisis, we have come far from the novelties that came with the first wave of social lockdowns.

> 'This is a rare opportunity to change course before the societal antibodies from this once-in-a-century pandemic begin to fade'
>
> *Toby Ord, senior research fellow at Oxford University*

In stark contrast to what was initially dubbed a collective sense of solidarity, the disparities in progress between countries have left the world at startlingly different stages of the pandemic response.

Truly disruptive behaviour, services and business actions has taken place across all industries. Wellbeing and social inequality have been thrust into mainstream consciousness, businesses have changed at a moment's notice, consumers have adopted new ways of living and working on a mass scale, and brands have reset antiquated missions to focus solely on solutions.

One year on from the first global lockdowns, this report looks at what new opportunities await brands and businesses in the inter-Covid era.

Cover: Urban Sun by Studio Roosegaarde

Global Drivers

Dislocated World

Consumers and businesses alike have been dropped into a new reality of daily unpredictability in which the only certainty is constant change. But while citizens are adapting their lifestyles en masse, the younger generation will be the ones to face the long-term consequences.

Mutant Matter by Dutch Invertuals

Nike Tech Pack by Daniel Sannwald, Global

Accelerating Technologies

According to McKinsey & Co, we saw five years of digital progress in the first eight weeks of the pandemic alone. With technology becoming ever more intertwined with our daily lives, its advancements are transforming the speed at which we live, work and forge connections.

Urban Mindset

With their own cultural and economic micro-climates, cities were already undergoing transformation before the pandemic. Covid-19 has only accelerated this process, unravelling the flurry of city life and placing a greater emphasis on slow living, sustainability and health.

Parc de la Distance, Studio Precht, Austria

Guallart Architects Self Sufficient City, China

Global vs Local

The notion of a Post-growth Society has been brought to the fore as the pandemic revealed the inefficiencies and inequalities of the capitalist system. With governments flailing, businesses are now being expected to integrate new metrics that will put health, happiness and the environment at the heart of the economy.

Retail

In a climate that has never been so divided, businesses are setting their sights on the re-localisation of retail.

Last year, we explored the ways in which the retail sector adjusted to the pandemic by refocusing on trust, support and safety. While retailers were initially hit hard by plummeting sales, once the sector established a level of security – redistributing staff, halting rental services and enhancing hygiene – retailers took the opportunity to rebuild around the digital economy.

The number of new stores on the e-commerce platform **Shopify** increased by 71% in the second quarter of 2020 compared with the first, while **Amazon** has enjoyed a 74% boost to its share price in 2020.

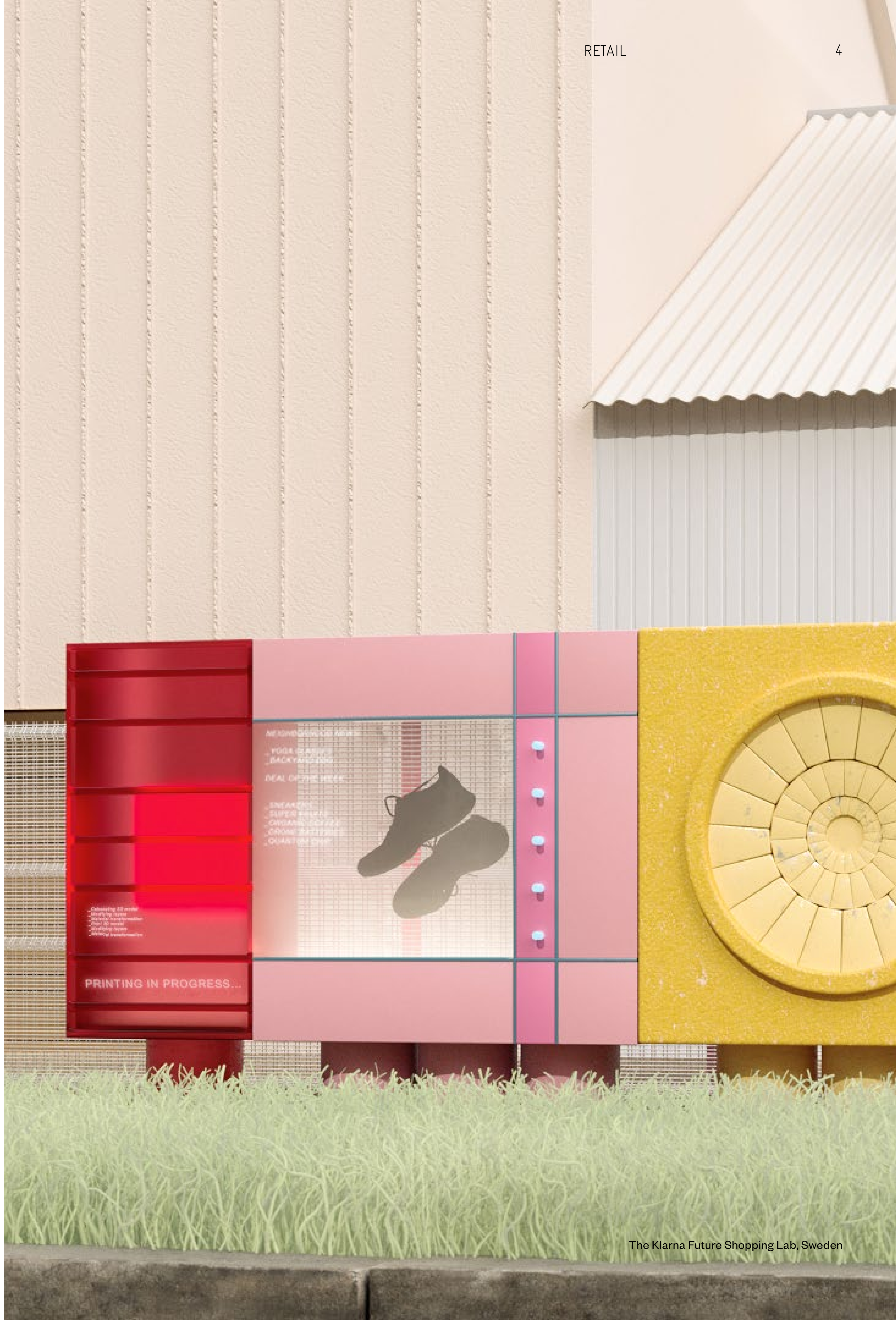
The move to e-commerce, however, does not preclude an appetite to return to in-store experiences in the inter-Covid period, when shoppers will be looking for human connection, in-person customer service, and serendipitous browsing. Retail Think Tank predicts that UK retailers should prepare for a brighter outlook in the second half of 2021, with sales growth expected to be between flat and +3% for the year.

With flexible working set to remain a feature of our daily lives, the re-localisation of retail will provide new opportunities for brands, as local consumption continues to be adopted during tight lockdowns and tourists fail to provide footfall.

'While e-commerce has become second nature for shoppers and brands of all sizes in the past year, the challenge now for retailers is how to encourage footfall back to physical stores,' says The Future Laboratory foresight editor Kathryn Bishop. 'Beyond safety and hygiene, this will lie in a far greater understanding of communities and their needs, from flexible store formats to the civic role a retailer can play in providing experiences, jobs and supporting local industry.'

UK retailers should prepare for a brighter outlook in the second half of 2021, with sales growth expected to be between flat and **+3%**

Source: Retail Think Tank



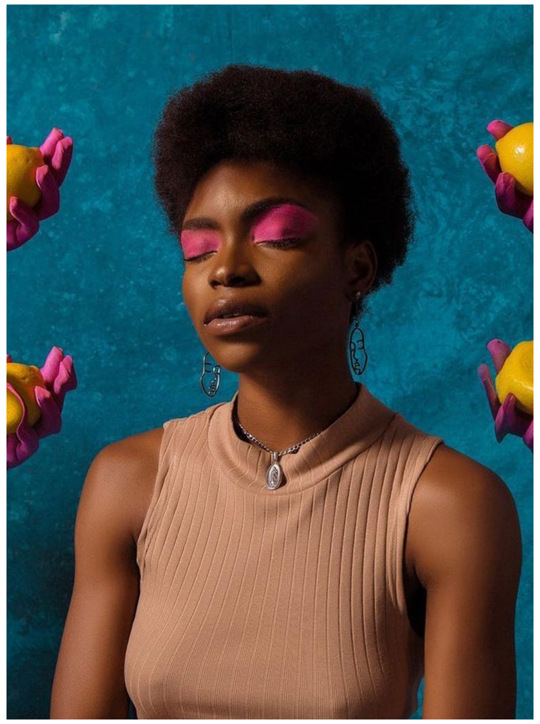
The Klarna Future Shopping Lab, Sweden

Retail Opportunities

Bricks-and-mortar:

Stores are embedding the hyper-reactivity of the digital world into their physical infrastructures. **We Are Locals**, for example, creates one-stop e-commerce platforms for high street retailers, bringing local florists, grocers and bookshops into the virtual realm, while Virgil Abloh's recently opened **Off-White flagship** store in Miami points to a future in which retail spaces will not be set in stone but will be able to provide a malleable shopping experience.

Off-White's flagship store by Virgil Abloh and AMO Design, Miami



New Comma, London

Values:

With the pandemic accelerating our awareness of issues such as domestic violence and racial inequality, the act of shopping with purpose is increasingly important for brands and shoppers. Former athlete Lanny Smith has launched sports apparel brand **Actively Black** to educate Los Angeles' Black communities on health and wellbeing at a time when they need it most, while **Boots** has launched an initiative to aid domestic abuse victims at its UK pharmacies.

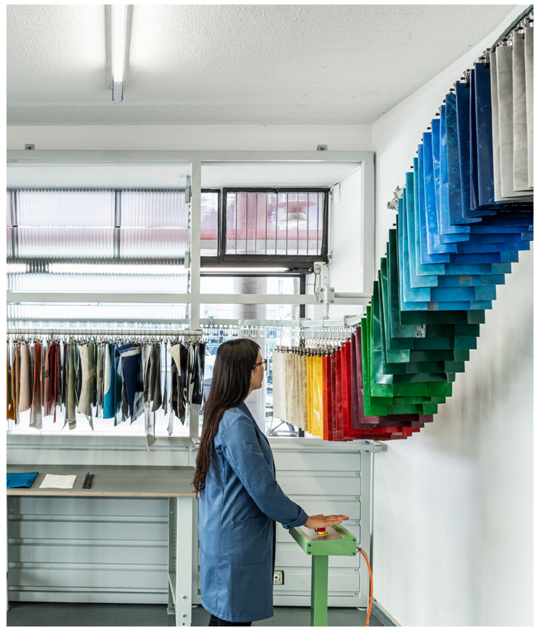
38% of retail firms have seen an employee leave their company because their mental wellbeing wasn't cared for

Source: Benenden Health

Logistics:

Although customers are shopping from home, convenience is more essential than ever. As such, third-party services are elevating, expediting and securing the delivery of online orders. In New York and Los Angeles, **FAST AF** aims to deliver items from select popular brands to shoppers in an average of 27 minutes, while **Route** is a visual package tracking service that allows shoppers to view and track multiple orders in real time.

Box by Posti designed by Fyra. Photography by Riikka Kantinkoski, Helsinki



Sweat-Yourself-Shop by Freitag, Zurich

Employment:

During the health crisis, all eyes have been on retailers that failed to provide adequate support for employees and prioritised profits over people. A UK Benenden Health study shows that 38% of retail firms have seen an employee leave their company because their mental wellbeing wasn't cared for. Retailers are also equipping staff with the tools they need to provide mental health support to others, such as skincare brand **Dermalogica's** industry-wide EQ course.

Lab notes

: For brands, demonstrate that you have considered the average lifestyle and routine of customers in the areas or neighbourhoods you want to target

: Continue to innovate at the intersection of physical and e-commerce, investing in last-mile commerce and digitising the high street

: Ensure that the health and safety of key workers is for life, not just for the pandemic, with sustained mental health incentives to retain the best talent

: As consumers shop with their sociopolitical values in mind, think about the inter-Covid social issues to which your brand has a responsibility to respond

Shaping by Eyla Llarena Aliaño proposes a different lifestyle where environmental care in consumption is a priority

Travel and Hospitality

Our grounded planet is ready to rediscover the thrills of travelling – but trips will never be the same again.

In 2020 we predicted a year of Decelerated Tourism in which a grounded planet would offer time to reflect on our increasingly excessive and unsustainable travel behaviour. And indeed, consumers took a step back from the industry. In late September 2020, just 11% of Britons planned to travel abroad in the next six months, down from 17% at the start of July (source: YouGov).

One year on, the travel and hospitality sectors are ready to be reset. Having used this time to recalibrate, brands can brace for a post-vaccine travel boom, with a strong drive from consumers to rediscover the world.

With remote working now the norm, paired with the collapse of the hospitality category, we will see a greater uptake in digital nomadism, but with a slower, more purposeful approach. After all, consumers are even more aware of the environmental and social impacts of tourism.

Of course, the world will not return to the playground it once was, and we can expect new regulations to determine future trips. From vaccine passports to branded hotel quarantines, travel will move from a free-rein to an anti-choice model, in which trips are carefully designed with Covid-19 in mind, with border controls, quarantine periods and comprehensive health policies.

'The pandemic has allowed us as a species to take a step back to pause and reflect on why we travel, and re-appreciate travel in a new way,' says Amanda Ho, co-founder of **Regenerative Travel**.'If we're going to change the trajectory of our planet, it really starts with our individual decisions.'

'The pandemic has allowed us as a species to take a step back to pause and reflect on why we travel'

Amanda Ho, co-founder, Regenerative Travel

Hygge Circles by Nordisk, Ugakei

Travel and Hospitality

Opportunities

Garden Home, Airbnb

Hotels and venues:

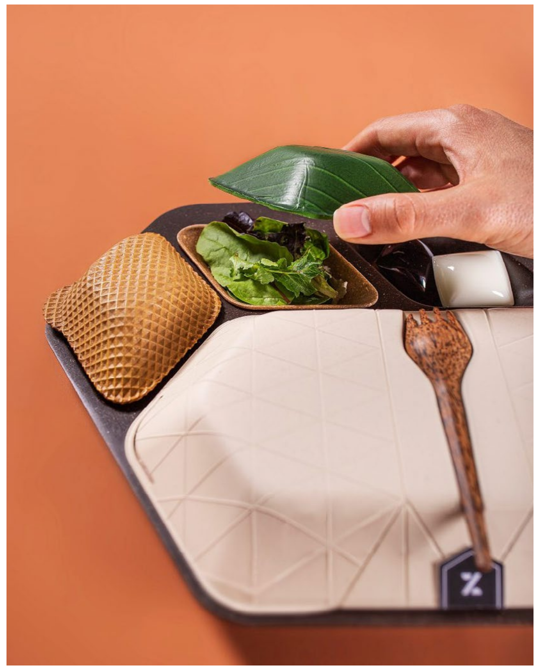
Adaptability will be key for hotels' survival in a landscape in which travel remains uncertain. Hotels will have the ability to transform into family-friendly Scattered Schools, like **Montage**; temporary offices like **CitizenM**; or even ghost kitchens like **Graduate Hotels**.

'As trips get fewer and longer, those who can work from home will find an attractive alternative in working from somewhere-a-lot-nicer-than-home'

Leo Mirani, UK correspondent, The Economist

Airlines:

For the first time in its history, aviation is scaling back. Britain's air passenger numbers plunged from 247m in 2019 to fewer than 60m last year (source: Civil Aviation Authority), while **Ryanair** has warned of a nearly £830m ($1.1bn, €950m) loss (source: The Irish Times) and **Norwegian Air** has withdrawn its long-haul routes. This is leading to a rethink of the hub-and-spoke airline model, according to **McKinsey & Co**, with particular focus on non-stop flights.

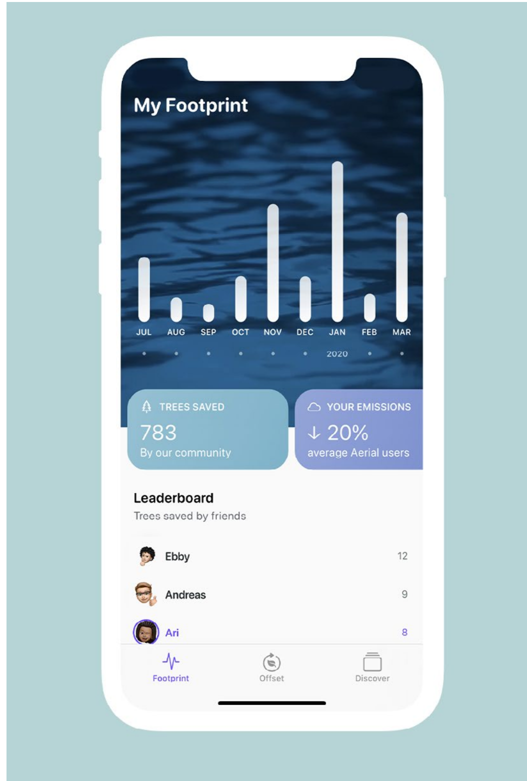


Get Onboard: Reduce, Reuse, Rethink, Priestman Goode

Detroit Foundation Hotel, Aparium Hotels

Domestic tourism:

With no certainty over the future of travel restrictions globally, the sector will continue to prioritise local citizens over tourists, enabling them to see their cities in a new light. In Singapore, hotels have launched creative staycations for people to take a break from home offices, while **Aparium** is focusing on locals as it continues its expansion into America's under-served second-tier cities.



Aerial

Sustainable travel:

With most air travel grinding to a halt in 2020, there will not necessarily be a rush to return to the skies. Slow travel is being embraced by consumers who are not only experiencing climate anxiety but have also simplified their travel horizons due to time in isolation. Already, disruptors such as **Byway** are pitching no-fly holidays as a sustainable alternative to over-tourism and carbon offsetting tools such as **Aerial** are making it possible.

Lab notes

: As long-haul travel resumes, Bleisure will turn from destination-hopping to extended, slower stays. As a result, hotel services will need to be overhauled, offering spaces to learn, work and study, as well as opportunities to give back to the local community

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: As business travel continues to blend with leisure travel, especially in the context of staycations, consider new work-from-hotel packages for local companies to cater for this nomadic crowd

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: Neighbourhood nomads differ from tourists in that they are already hyper-knowledgeable about their cities. To attract this new consumer base, re-engage them in their locale through serendipitous encounters and sustainability initiatives, or collaborate with another destination to introduce cross-cultural spaces

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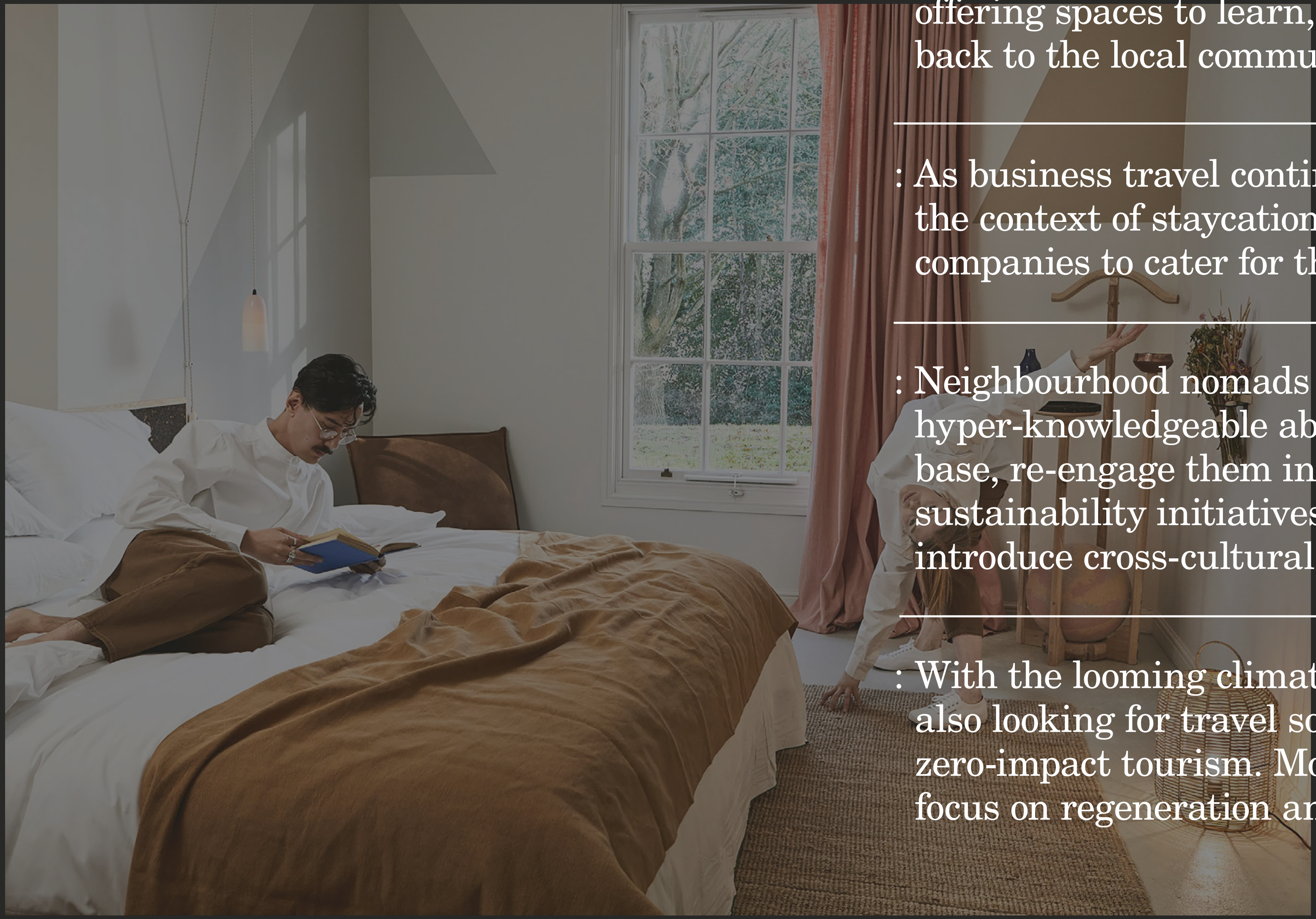
: With the looming climate emergency and time spent in isolation, people are also looking for travel solutions that encourage regeneration, going beyond zero-impact tourism. Move the conversation away from sustainability to focus on regeneration and real purpose



Birch, Cheshunt, England
Design Museum

Health, Wellness and Beauty

In the year ahead, beauty rituals, peer platforms and the rise of nature equity will create a new health lexicon.

Over the past year, health and wellness has been defined by homebodies, at-home fitness and hand sanitiser. But as the conversation about health moves beyond the immediate effects of the pandemic, a wider narrative of sustained, holistic wellbeing will take its place.

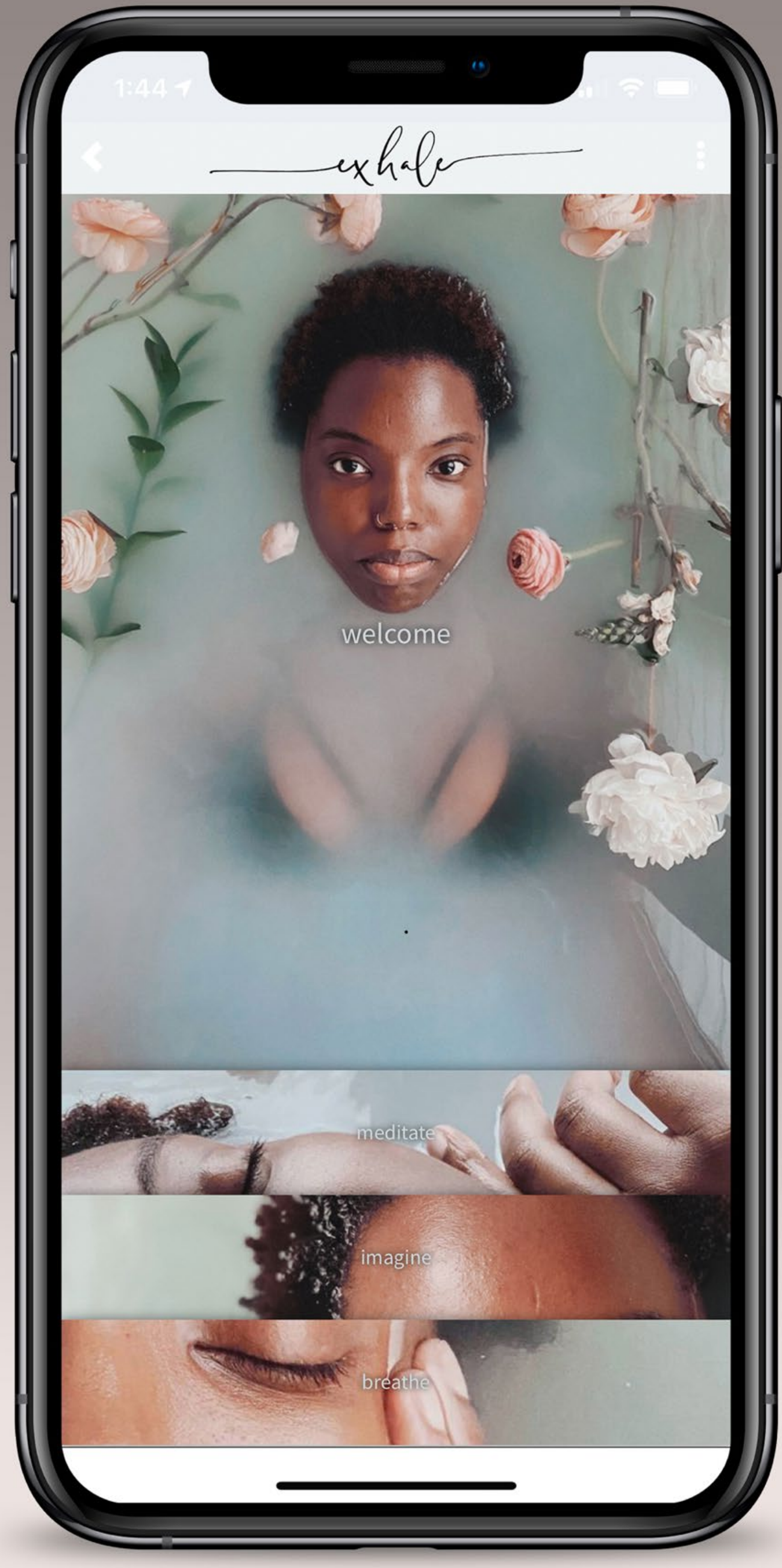
With resilience becoming an industry buzzword, consumers and companies are rejecting the narrative of 'bouncing back' to instead prioritise deceleration. Some 76% of respondents in Ogilvy's The Wellness Gap report agree that the pandemic has affected the importance they place on wellness.

This mindset is, in turn, entering our cities – as our Urban Wellness Market predicted, health and wellbeing is being decentralised and built into the fabric of our urban spaces. There is also a push towards addressing the nature gap, with the pandemic highlighting unequal access to nature among communities of colour.

In the beauty field, consumers are re-adjusting their relationship with beautification, having spent much more time indoors.

Moving away from aesthetics, a focus on mood-boosting beauty, meditative rituals and bioresilience point to a pluralised and science-backed future of beauty administered through new innovations. The global beauty devices market is expected to register a CAGR of 19.7% in the decade to 2030 (source: PS Market Research).

'With fluctuating periods of solitude and uncertainty in our lives, tracking and assessing our bodies from the comfort of our homes will become a ritual,' Lucy Hardcastle, multi-disciplinary designer, tells LS:N Global.



Exhale app, US

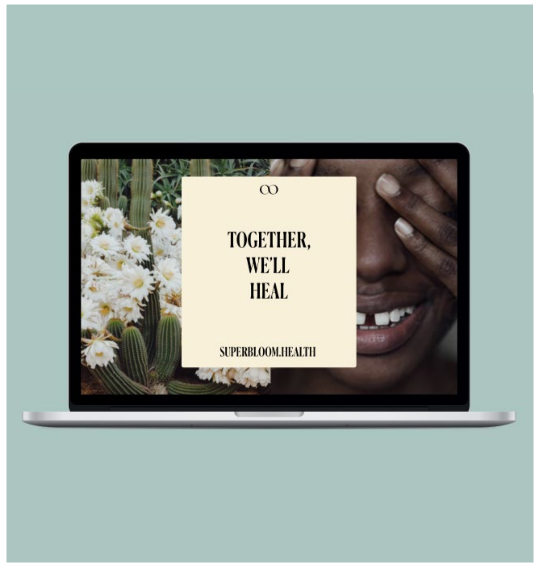
Health, Wellness and Beauty

Opportunities

Cosmetics:

With beauty routines having adapted to reflect increased periods spent at home, this is becoming a long-term mindset shift. As Enhanced Natural Beauty becomes embedded in our daily rituals, it is infiltrating categories that are traditionally decorative – **LoveSeen**, for example, aims to disassociate false lashes from the idea of heavy make-up with its more natural approach.

LoveSeen



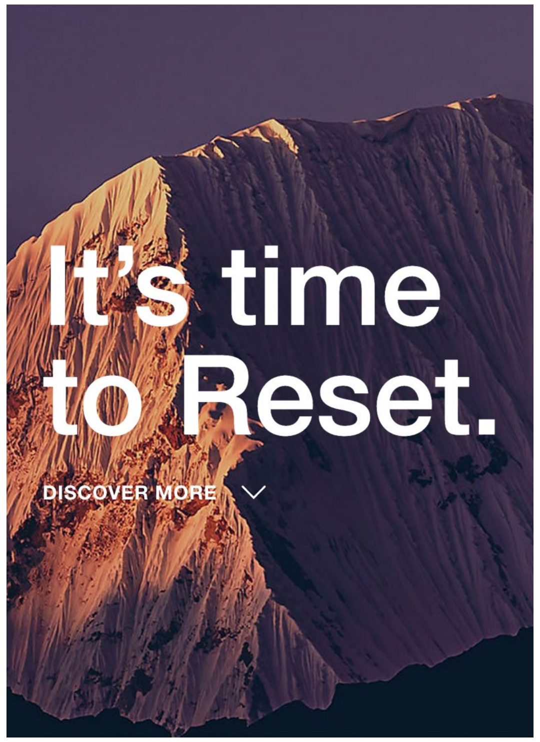
Superbloom

Platforms:

The number of people diagnosed with chronic conditions is expected to rise at a startling rate as we deal with the aftershocks of Covid-19. There are, however, opportunities to build digital communities that provide peer-to-peer support for those with chronic conditions, such as **Superbloom**, a social media platform that offers an intersectional safe space for people to track their health journeys.

Campaigns and marketing:

Health marketing is taking aim at inter-pandemic sedentary urban lifestyles and encouraging creative ways to get active. Swedish non-profit organisation **Generation Pep!'s** campaign seeks to increase Gen Alpha's activity levels with TikTok-style dances. In the US, **The North Face** is taking action against nature deprivation in communities of colour, pledging to diversify outdoor exploration.



Reset Normal by The North Face, US

Réduit

Skincare:

After a year of development, skincare is evolving to address consumers' heightened hygiene concerns. **Fortify+** has unveiled products that it claims sanitise the skin and curb the development of bacteria. Meanwhile, **Réduit** is using technology to move away from hand-applied serums to smart skincare devices.

'With fluctuating periods of solitude and uncertainty in our lives, tracking and assessing our bodies from the comfort of our homes will become a ritual'

Lucy Hardcastle, multi-disciplinary designer

Lab notes

: Quick-fix solutions and beauty fads are being replaced with more measured, long-term beauty rituals that are simpler, slower and more natural

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: Anti-bacterial and hygiene solutions may seem like a novelty, but we will take these concerns forward into the inter-Covid period. Rather than focusing solely on these properties, ensure they are integrated into your product offerings

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: Brands can look to incorporate a greater understanding of integrative wellbeing – which acknowledges the direct link between physical and mental health. Think about how your products can combine the two and promote greater understanding of their links with consumers

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: The pandemic has shone a light on inactive lifestyles, often as a result of unequal access to nature. Consider initiatives to diversify access to the outdoors and how they could become a focal part of your brand's health campaigning in the future

PROTX2 technology by IFTNA, Canada
Design Museum

Food and Drink

New disruptors will push food and drink out of the home and into video games, TikTok and exclusive chef communities.

As pantry bulk buying fades into history and Home Eatertainment services rapidly become the norm, consumers are now looking for food experiences with more curiosity, reviving vibrant restaurant settings and immersive formats.

With one in six US restaurants closing permanently in 2020, according to the National Restaurant Association, there is a renewed focus on supporting the industry at large. Although Blackhawk Network reported a 29% surge in online restaurant gift cards, delivery services remain a key part of hospitality's revival plan, and consumers are seeking a sense of occasion from food brands in the home. But physical drinking and dining experiences are already in full swing in some parts of the world. In China, nine in 10 drinkers have returned to bars and 64% are confident enough to visit large-capacity venues (source: CGA).

At the same time, the uncertainty of the past year is driving a push away from fad diets and towards comfort – and even nostalgic – eating. Some 53% of consumers have been buying nostalgic childhood snacks in recent months, according to Mondelez.

As explored in our Total Tastes macrotrend, this indulgent approach shows how Covid-19 has inspired a new era of the food-as-medicine movement. In the US alone, the percentage of consumers who want functional benefits from their food and drinks rose from 37% in September 2019 to 51% in May 2020 (source: Tastewise).

'This really is the start of the next phase in functional foods, with the current pandemic accelerating demand for products that support our mental health needs in testing times,' says Andrew Wardlaw, chief ideas officer at MMR Research Worldwide.

'In China, nine in 10 drinkers have returned to bars and **64%** are confident enough to visit large-capacity venue'

Source: CGA

Route, US

Food and Drink
Opportunities

Zero by PriestmanGoode, London

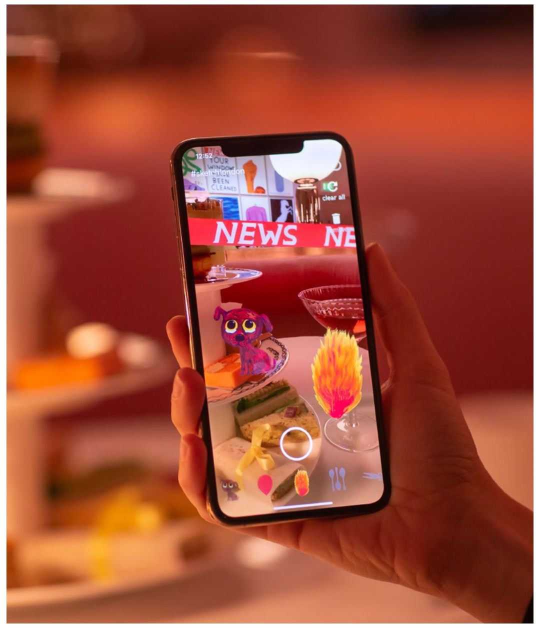
Food delivery:

With a booming market for food delivery, platforms are finding new ways to engage customers with **TikTok** collaborations that combine food with entertainment. **Chobani** recently launched a new limited-edition yoghurt product that is only available through the social media platform, while **Postmates** also teamed up with the social media app for a creator-led menu that features viral food trends.

Restaurants:

Having connected with customers through social media during lockdowns, chefs are on track to become the influencers of tomorrow. With The Guardian dubbing restaurant merchandise 'the new band tee', and platforms such as **DEMI** connecting food enthusiasts directly with chefs, the cultural impact of top chefs will soar in 2021.

Hot 4 U, Hoxton



Sketch app by Hato, London

Digital experience:

Virtual Happy Hours are growing up, and the virtual food experience is now linking up with the gaming sector. In Malaysia, **Tiger Beer's** month-long food fiesta allowed virtual guests to create avatars, interact with influencers and play games in order to win foodie prizes.

Campaigns and marketing:

Unable to ignore the societal problems the pandemic has caused, food and drink brands are taking a civic approach to their campaigns. Alcohol-free beer **Freestar** is offering advice to young job-seekers via a hotline, while **Burger King** gifted its marketing channels to independent restaurants.

Meatable brand identity by Koto Studio, London

'What if cooks could build communities where they just took that small percentage of their followers and were able to make some extra revenue?'

Ian Moore, founder, DEMI

Lab notes

: With the rise of delivery platforms, eating and drinking experiences are increasingly crossing over with social media, entertainment and even gaming. To stand out from the pack, food brands should seek media collaborations that offer fun and immersive at-home dining

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: As consumers become better acquainted with their neighbourhoods, the desire to support local restaurants has also accelerated. Expect the chef-diner dynamic to become increasingly poignant, as merchandise and cooking clubs replace meal kits as ways to support local businesses

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: Brands should use their marketing channels for social good. Food campaigns are no longer about whetting the appetite but about showing integrity at a time when thousands of restaurants have struggled to survive

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: The image of health is also changing. Consider how your brand can elevate everyday food and drink choices into a tenet of a more meaningful lifestyle

Extra by LMNOP Creative is a digital product-placement platform that connects emerging brands and hospitality venues

Media and Technology

Following a year of doom-scrolling and Zoom fatigue, technology brands are now innovating for a phygital future.

Media and technology brands went from being entertainers and enablers to lifelines in 2020, with screen time surging across the globe.

In last year's report, we highlighted the rise of isolated raves and civic media organisations battling Covid-19 misinformation, but we are now seeing the development of solution-focused tools and innovations that will remain popular parts of everyday life.

As screen time increased for remote workers and home-schooled children, escapism online has boomed. Consumers spent an estimated £126bn ($175bn, €144bn) on video games in 2020 and the market is expected to grow to almost £157bn ($218bn, €180bn) by 2023 (source: Newzoo). This is buoyed in part by the new markets for both Mundane and Activism Gaming, demonstrating how the pandemic has created the need for both passivity and action.

While the West remains focused on digitisation, the African continent is experiencing its own technological revolution in the wake of the pandemic.

During the first lockdown of 2020, telecommunications grew by 18.1% in Nigeria, contributing 14.3% to the country's total GDP (source: Nairametrics), and mobile healthcare continues to boom, from self-diagnosis **WhatsApp** chatbots to smartphones that can read temperatures.

The video games market is expected to grow to almost **£157bn** (**$218bn, €180bn**) by 2023

Source: Newzoo

We should be prepared for a backlash against excessive screen time, however. 'We will want to be liberated from screens,' says Adam Steel, strategic foresight editor at The Future Laboratory. 'But the interaction and the digitisation of entertainment will remain, woven into the fabric of our physical environment and providing us with greater access to people and places than before.'

MCQ Genesis II, photography by Felix Gaertner

Media and Technology
Opportunities

News outlets:

To combat doom-scrolling and the detrimental mental health effects of an overwhelmingly negative news cycle, the internet is being imbued with a new sense of positivity. Sites such as **Covid Good News** and MadHappy's **The Local Optimist** point to a future when people will actively go online to regain a sense of optimism.

Pop-up Positive News Feed by Amy Sellers

Bump Galaxy by Bianca Carague, Netherlands

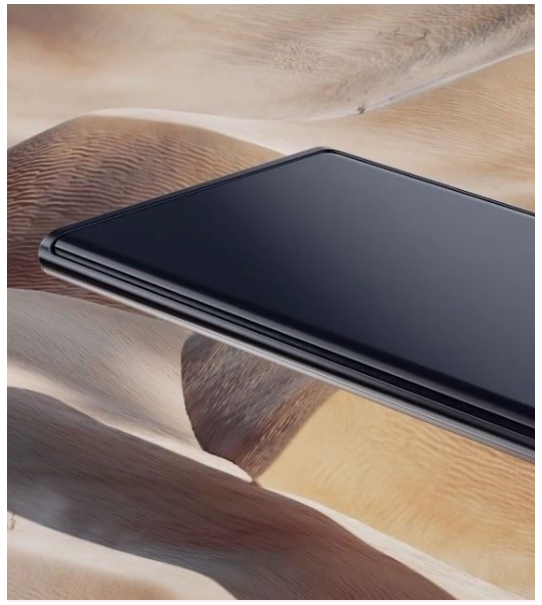
Entertainment:

As we step closer to a new reality of real-world socialising, Gen Alpha are already a step ahead. For young people, the metaverse is a digital playground where they can interact, socialise and build entire worlds. Nine-year-old YouTube influencer **Ryan Kaji** recently opened Ryan's World, a virtual world in **Roblox** for his fans to congregate.

Digital experience:

Digital twins of places and spaces will continue to enable people to explore, engage with and evolve their real-life surroundings. The **Virtual Online Museum of Art** has launched the world's first fully interactive virtual museum. Similarly, the **Virtual Factory** is a digital manifestation of Manchester arts centre The Factory, albeit living in **Fortnite**.

The Factory in Fortnite by OMA and Manchester International Festival



X 2021 by OPPO, China

Workplace:

Technology brands are racing to innovate new concepts to aid our remote working future. Electronics company **OPPO** has unveiled a smartphone that can transform into a tablet to enhance office productivity, while **Samsung** is exploring a mobility concept that turns cars into roaming workspaces.

> 'The interaction and digitisation of entertainment will remain, woven into the fabric of our physical environment and providing us with greater access to people and places than ever before'

Adam Steel, strategic foresight editor, The Future Laboratory

Lab notes

: With news fatigue a side effect of consumers' increased screentime, consider using your content to interrogate and engage in real conversations about world issues, rather than glossing over them completely

: Virtual socialising is not a temporary stop-gap until real-life socialising is possible again. For the next generation, the metaverse is the future of connections, and brands must think of these spaces as integral as real-world regions

: Brand managers should see gaming worlds as an untapped resource instead of a new frontier to be conquered. Harness gamification and digital twins to allow consumers to interact with your brand in an omnipresent space, even when it exists again as a physical entity

: Technological innovations will also transform how we work remotely, and as employers look for ways to boost productivity out of the office, the value of focus will become ever-more apparent

Adidas' ZX sneakers by Builders Club
Design Museum

Luxury & Fashion

With the sector in recovery, brands are taking the time to refocus on sustainability, intangible goods and next-level customer service.

In last year's Covid-19 Contingency Planning report we predicted a difficult year for luxury. Subsequently, the global personal luxury goods market imploded, losing £56bn ($78bn, €64bn) in sales, resulting in a 23% decline – the biggest year-on-year drop recorded over 25 years of tracking, according to Bain & Co.

The market is not expected to recover until the end of 2022 or early 2023, when it will finally return to 2019 levels of £245bn ($342bn, €281bn).

But after a year of existential crisis, 2021 will allow high-end brands to regain their footing in the industry and roll out products, campaigns and services built for a more mindful, conspicuous, and omnipresent future of luxury.

After all, a great reset and revaluing of the meaning of wealth has already been underway. For brands, priorities have shifted from ostentatious goods such as watches, jewellery, and handbags to customer service, digital experience, and even Luxtainment.

'Luxury brands will get even more adventurous,' says Kathryn Bishop, foresight editor at The Future Laboratory. 'Fuelled by digital transformation, we can expect luxury to transcend all parts of consumers' lives, from our wellbeing routines to our choice of evening entertainment. This will also be the year of the avatar, as luxury embraces lucrative retail and marketing opportunities, dressing other-worldly audiences in the virtual realm.'

The market is not expected to recover until the end of 2022 or early 2023, when it will finally return to 2019 levels of **£245bn ($342bn, €281bn)**

Source: Bain & Co

Show in a Box by Loewe

Luxury & Fashion

Opportunities

Cara Cara, US

Sustainability:

Finding themselves with a surplus of inventory, luxury brands are reconsidering production in a world where consumers are demanding higher accountability on sustainability. **New York's 260 Sample Sale** gives brands the means to launch online sample sales in a matter of days. Offline, **Scarce** offers so-called luxury mystery boxes made up from the excess stock of boutiques and factories.

Marketing:

With fewer physical customer touchpoints at their disposal, luxury brands are turning to live-streaming as a way to engage directly with consumers. **Gucci** recently made a move into the film industry, launching cinematic festival GucciFest featuring films by famed and emerging talents.

Off The Grid by Gucci with Jane Fonda, David Mayer de Rothschild, Lil Nas X, King Princess and Miyavi

Numbering flagship store, Seoul

Customer service:

The inter-Covid period will require a new generation of customer service, especially as the pandemic has shown that luxury can exist in other realms entirely. As such, virtual influencers such as Chinese beauty brand **Perfect Diary's** very own Xiao Wanzi will become personalised consultants to affluent shoppers.

Digital luxury:

With fewer tangible opportunities to experience luxury in person in 2020, luxurians are now comfortable interacting with the immaterial. Companies such as **The Dematerialised**, a blockchain-powered digital marketplace for virtual fashion assets, and **MetaFactory**, a marketplace for digi-physical apparel that is inspired by cryptoculture, are embracing the opportunities this new market represents.

Design by Nayeh, digital clothing by Scotomalab, Helsinki Fashion Week

> 'Fuelled by digital transformation, this will be the year of the avatar, as luxury embraces lucrative retail and marketing opportunities, dressing other-wordly audiences in the virtual realm'
>
> *Kathryn Bishop, strategic foresight editor, Future Laboratory*

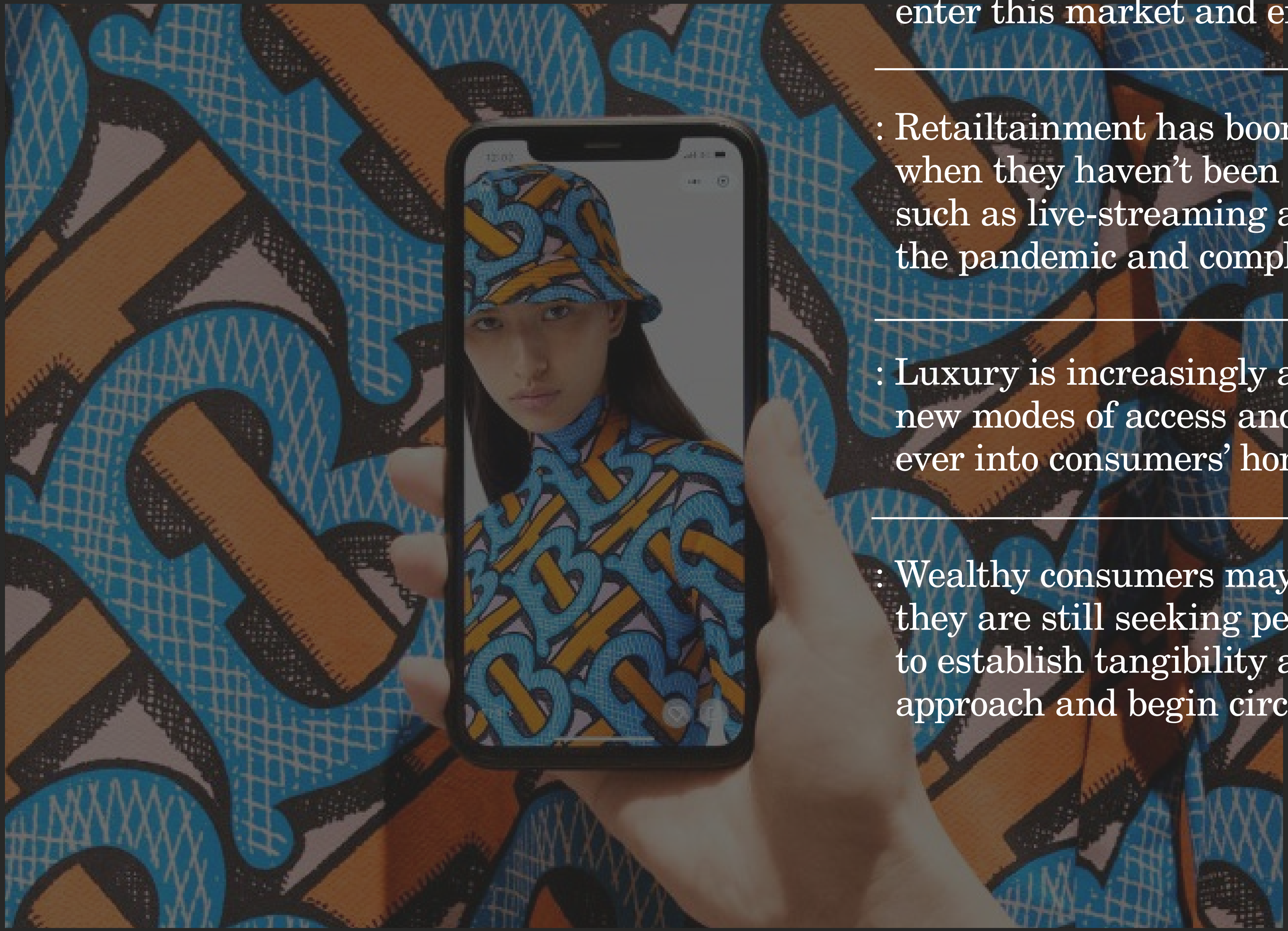
Lab notes

: As concerns about sustainability grow at a similar rate to deadstock, off-price goods are now highly desirable. Think about how your brand can enter this market and emerge with cleaner, leaner and smarter inventories

: Retailtainment has boomed as a way to keep shoppers engaged online when they haven't been able to visit the store. Consider how new innovations such as live-streaming and virtual events can continue to live on beyond the pandemic and complement physical footfall

: Luxury is increasingly adapting to luxurians' day-to-day routines. These new modes of access and data points will allow your brand to get closer than ever into consumers' homes, needs and preferences

: Wealthy consumers may be more open than ever to immaterial luxury, but they are still seeking personal recommendations and services from brands to establish tangibility and quality. Implement a Feedback Frontiers approach and begin circular conversations with customers



Burberry AR shopping tool through Google Image

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