THE : FUTURE : LABORATORY

Meta-tainment Futures

Introduction

Simply put, the metaverse is the ultimate merger between the physical and the digital. That's the ambition at least. The reality, as always, is far more complex and a lot less interesting than the scope of our current imagination permits.

In our heads, we have multiverses where we live out our dreams and ambitions in Avalons of extra-ordinary beauty. In truth, we have **Horizon Workrooms** from **Meta** that allow us to 'white-board an idea, work on a document, hear updates from our teams'. So far, so mundane.

Similarly, **Microsoft** has invested £51.8bn ($70bn, €61.8bn) into the existing realms of **Call of Duty** and **World of Warcraft** rather than contemplate new ones. All of which tells us that whatever the metaverse could be, when big tech gets its hands on it, it will be more of the same – new frontiers to grow the corporate dollar, more immersive ways to kill, and if the Horizon Workrooms project truly gets going, death by white board.

And we were thinking that, like Alice, when we stepped through the looking glass, all would be different…

But, as this report shows, it doesn't have to be like that. The metaverse, despite what big tech is hinting at, is still very much in development. With some platforms' ongoing latency issues, glitchy rendering, and avatars that look like escapees from The Jetsons, what we need is small tech – and better thinkers – to show us more.

And they are doing so, as our **Alternet Economies** macrotrend on **LS:N Global** also suggests. Many are exploring the potential of Web3 and Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs), using non-fungible tokens (NFTs) or altcoins such as Ethereum and Dogecoin to trade in worlds that are as blended as they are virtual.

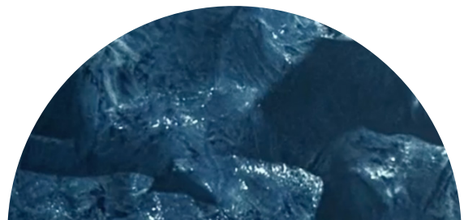
In turn, this report offers you a more realistic, practical and concrete view of how the metaverse and immersive technologies are influencing key sectors such as fashion (p.14), luxury (p.09) and retail (p.04). It shows how virtual realms are shaping attitudes and experiences among youth (p.24), media (p.29) and the metaverse's potential to transform travel (p.39).

We also explore who the players are. Familiar names such as **Nike**, **Balenciaga**, **Spotify** and **Gucci**, alongside rising pioneers such as **ByondXR**, **Republic Realm** and **MYAMI**. More crucially, we reveal how and where they are mixing, merging and magnifying different mediums and technologies to extend and explore what media, entertainment and immersive brand experiences can and should become when we fuse our imaginations with accelerating tech.

Consider NFTs as tools to promote eco-action among consumers (p.18), how gaming can drive vaccine uptake (p.26), and the evolution of entertainment shows in which avatars serenade music industry judges such as Grimes and Will.i.am (p.31).

Finally, this report reflects on how future web capabilities will up the ante of the digital spaces, places, tools and techniques we will use to engage audiences in 2022 and beyond. They might not be wholly immersive, but they will be influential – from the acceleration of social audio (p.28), to sensually sonorous marketing (p.20), and homes built with digital media studios (p.35) for future generations of content creators, curators, gamers and entertainers.





Cover: MYAMI launched its Ice Runner NFT during COP26, which digitally 'melts' at the same rate as the polar ice caps. It also has the potential to return to its original shape if action is taken, US

Contents

04 Retail
09 Luxury
14 Fashion
19 Health & Beauty
24 Youth
29 Media
34 Entertainment
39 Travel & Hospitality
44 Index
46 Glossary

Retail

Sellers are engaging with metaverse realms to elevate customer loyalty, reduce the impact of physical stores and expand their real estate investments in pixels, not bricks.



Next Now, directed by Thomas Traum, is a promotional film for STH BNK by Beulah, a mixed-use development aiming to realise the phygital future of retail, Australia



Left: Nikeland, Global; Right: GOAT, Global

Nikeverse Rising

Sportswear behemoth **Nike** has acquired digital collectibles platform **RTFKT** as it continues its push into the metaverse.

Accelerating Nike's digital transformation, the acquisition is likely to have major implications for the digital collectible community as well as the fashion industry at large.

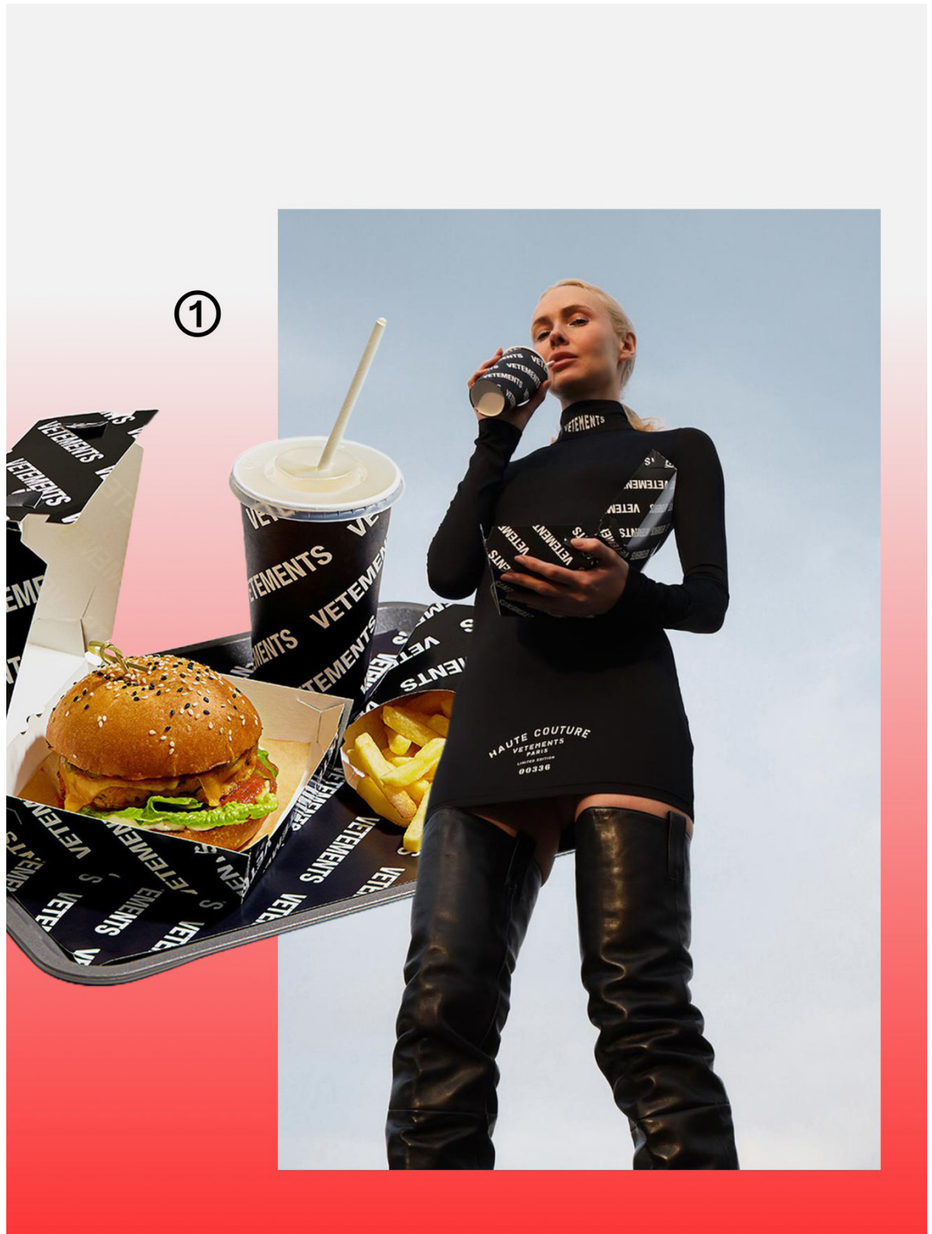
Known for its digital sneakers and virtual streetwear drops, RTFKT is well placed to join the Nike brand.

It also follows the sports company launching its digital space, **Nikeland**, inside gaming platform **Roblox**.

By purchasing RTFKT, which sold 600 pairs of virtual sneakers for £2.3m ($3.1m, €2.7m) in one month alone, Nike is firmly planting its digital fashion flag. 'Our plan is to invest in the RTFKT brand, serve and grow their innovative and creative community, and extend Nike's digital footprint and capabilities,' explains John Donahoe, CEO of Nike.

'Spaces is unlike anything we've done before… celebrating the culture and community that make up who we are'

Eddy Lu, co-founder and CEO, Goat Group



Digital Feedback

For **Goat**, a retailer of cult fashion, sneakers, jewellery and home furnishings, the creation of a proprietary digital space for its special sales days offers its sales and marketing teams instant insights into which items, design cues or trends are resonating with shoppers.

Within the feature, called Spaces, Goat encourages consumers to curate digital mood boards of their favourite or most coveted platform items in three purpose-built virtual realms – a Convenience Store, an Outlandish Garden and a Gothic Cathedral.

Based on their curated digital spaces, Goat then awards a number of shoppers with their dream edit credits to spend on the platform, while the curation itself provides Goat buyers and merchandisers with an in-depth understanding of their customers' purchase triggers.

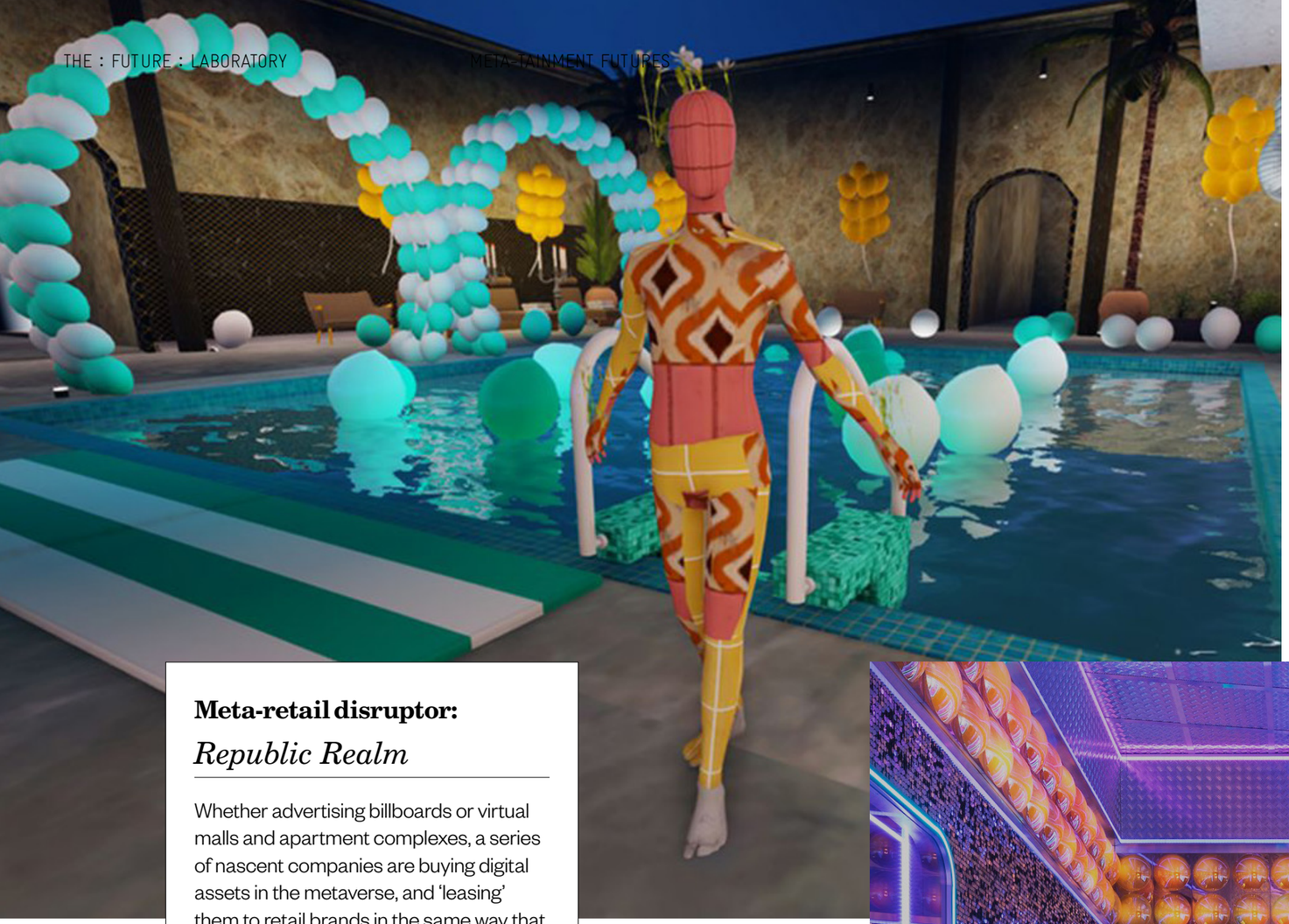
A Lighter Footprint

Bricks-and-mortar store closures are normally forced by falling sales, the need to cut costs or economic impacts such as the global pandemic.

For others, they could soon be a response to the environmental impacts of physical store operations, with Israeli company **ByondXR** positing that metaverse retail – as in true-to-life 3D shoppable environments – could be an eco-solution for conscious retail companies.

Highlighting the reduction in pollution, waste, energy use and impact from the construction and maintenance of physical stores, ByondXR's co-founder Noam Levavi believes the 3D digital stores it builds can help to eliminate retailers' tangible costs.

'Especially in fashion and home decor, sales through virtual showrooms translate to significant savings for companies that no longer have to make and supply their goods to bricks-and-mortar stores,' Levavi tells The Times of Israel.



Meta-retail disruptor:
Republic Realm

Whether advertising billboards or virtual malls and apartment complexes, a series of nascent companies are buying digital assets in the metaverse, and 'leasing' them to retail brands in the same way that property developers and landlords do with bricks-and-mortar buildings.

For retail companies – especially those that own and operate their stores – cues can be taken from **Republic Realm**. With holdings in 19 metaverse realms, its developments include a mall that's leased to brands selling virtual fashion. It also plans to develop virtual properties together with gaming company **Atari**.

Ownership of land is recorded through non-fungible tokens (NFTs), with sales completed using the cryptocurrencies accepted in each metaverse. 'And then we charge rent, just like a regular landlord,' co-founder Janine Yorio tells The Wall Street Journal.



Hosted on Roblox, The Gucci Garden is a virtual complement to the brand's physical exhibition, offering global luxury consumers the chance to visit as ageless, gender-neutral mannequins, Italy

Microtrend:

Interactive Eco-labels

Once reserved for care and washing instructions, fashion brands are redesigning clothing and footwear labels to display everything from information about a product's carbon emissions at its creation to how it can be safely 'unmanufactured' or dismantled at the end of its lifecycle.

Footwear brand **Allbirds** already adds carbon labelling to its shoes that show their CO2 emissions based on the materials, development, manufacturing, packaging and shipping required for each product.

Elsewhere, Swedish start-up **Docnomy** has created its **2030 Calculator**, a free tool for fashion brands and suppliers to calculate the carbon footprint of their products.

But design student **Maxwell Ashford** wants to see brands take this a step further with his robotically recyclable footwear. His **RUEI-01** shoe, co-created with **ABB Robotics**, features an in-built QR code that instructs robots to methodically disassemble the design once it reaches its end of life.

67% of global consumers express support for the introduction of carbon labelling overall

The Carbon Trust

Elsewhere, fashion brands are using digital clothing labels to forge new connections with customers, sharing content about an item's history and sustainable care practices when a label is scanned.

Clothing brand **Pangaia** is now working with renewable energy supplier **EON** to launch digital passports – interactive labels in its products that bring to life each garment's unique journey and offer customers access to product-level impact reporting in a more interactive way.

Yoox Net-A-Porter is doing similar things with the introduction of a Digital ID programme for its private-label collections that provides virtual certificates that document and track each item's history, from initial manufacturing to potential resale, re-use and recycling.

Translating labelling into the digital realm also points to new opportunities to track an item's history on the blockchain in order to prove authenticity or promote re-commerce.

Luxury label **MCQ by Alexander McQueen** is pioneering this with its experimental creative platform **MYMCQ**, created in partnership with blockchain provider **Everledger** and Internet of Things (IoT) company **Temera**.

This first-of-its-kind marketplace enables designers and customers to securely register and trade their MCQ items within a dedicated online community – a concept that the brand hopes will establish greater willingness to resell previously loved products. Physical garments created as part of this initiative feature NFC chips that can be linked to their digital twin, providing owners with access to each item's unique information and product journey.



Adidas, Global

Strategic Opportunities

: Fashion brands need to push beyond marketing and customer education initiatives to embed and promote longevity, allowing consumers to play a proactive role in tracking garment lifecycles

: Companies must do more than monitor and share the carbon emissions of their products. Take time to analyse these insights and how the company can use them effectively

: As we look to the future, brands and consumers could go beyond tracking garments to **rationing fashion items** as a response to the sector's negative impacts on the planet



Forever21 store on Roblox, US

Viewpoint:

How retail brands can maximise the metaverse

Justin Hochberg, CEO of **Virtual Brand Group**, explains the untapped benefits the metaverse offers, from R&D to phygital marketing and avatar behaviour analysis.

Let's begin with Virtual Brand Group (VBG). What gap in the market is it catering for?

We're a metaverse creation company, which has identified that global brands from **Porsche** to **Polaroid** are all dazed and confused about the metaverse. While the technology behind it isn't new, it is new to the consumer space and brands, so we sit at the intersection of the technology, brands and their storytelling. As a partner to brands, we're building a long-term business strategy for them, not just a marketing stunt.

What benefits does the metaverse offer shoppers?

The beauty of the metaverse is that you are combining virtual worlds and physical stores together – we've trademarked it as Infinite Loop Marketing. If you visit the **Forever21** store in **Roblox** and buy an item, that issues a code that you can use on Forever21's website. That encourages you to move from the virtual realm to e-commerce store, where you can buy your Roblox avatar the same fashion as you might own in real life. You could even choose a bundled package of clothing that allows you to buy both outfits at a discount.

Many retailers don't realise you can track consumer behaviour in the metaverse. What type of insights, lessons or data are you uncovering?

We offer all our partner brands what we call spatial data analytics. In the same way you could ask someone to wear a motion capture suit and walk through the mall, tracking every step they took, and every item they looked at or walked away from, we are able to track through our technology in the metaverse. This is data capture that will lead to new insights and innovation.

Can you share an example of how retailers are using metaverse worlds for R&D or to test products?

Through our VBG Lab we offer two levels of incremental innovation. Firstly, we can adapt and translate brands' products for the metaverse. The second level is when we build products on behalf of brands, using their DNA, but creating something they don't yet offer. You might be a car brand but want to offer a helicopter or ski gear in the metaverse. It's too risky to develop in real life, but we can build those items virtually with low risk. If an item garners high demand online, the brands may then produce it in the real world.

> 'Some products are too risky to develop in real life, but we can build them virtually with low risk'

A lot of retailers are adapting stores and supply chains to meet sustainability goals. Will we see this replicated in the metaverse?

For fashion, instead of creating fabrics, swatches and samples and shipping things around the world, they can build them and offer a teaser of them virtually instead, which reduces emissions. In this vein, we'll soon be crowdsourcing which items we should make for Forever21 in the metaverse. This is crucial, as Gen Alpha, Gen Z and younger Millennials don't make a distinction in terms of their real-life and online personas, with self-expression and sustainability probably the two key things they care about.

Luxury

From immersive brand adventures to the new collectives investing in high-value digital assets, luxury labels are turning to digital spaces to bolster access as well as amplify exclusivity.



Ambush and Gentle Monster present their latest collaboration, Carabiner. The campaign journeys through supernatural landscapes evoking forthcoming phygital exploration, Global

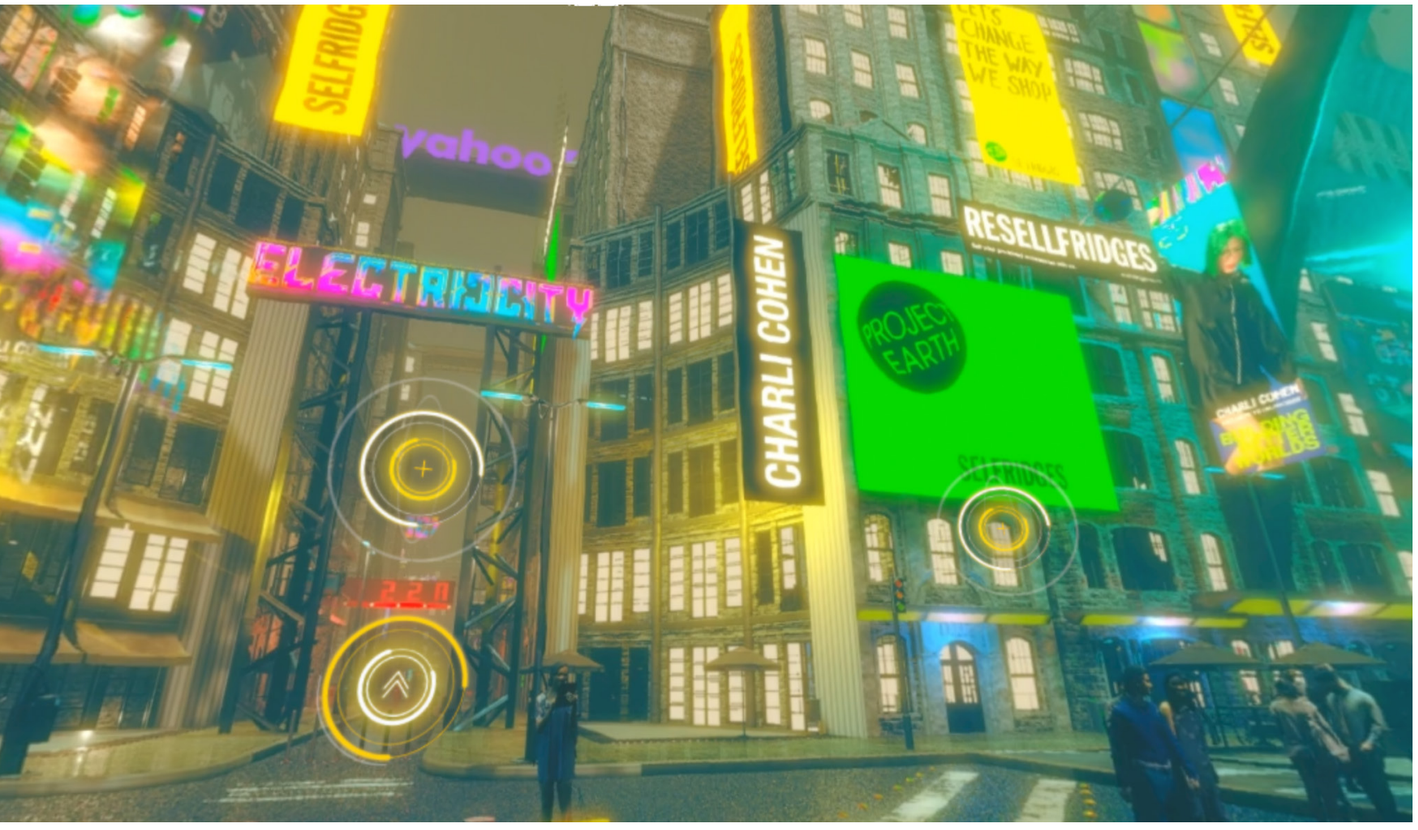
Selfridges Goes Cyberpunk

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of **Pokémon**, **Selfridges** teamed up with clothing brand **Charli Cohen** to launch a unique digital shopping experience.

Re-affirming the rising demand for metaverse retail concepts, customers wanting to shop Charli Cohen's new collection had to explore the **Electric/City**, a digital environment where shoppers could purchase both physical and virtual garments.

Created in partnership with **Yahoo Ryot Lab**, this virtual realm encourages shoppers to navigate their futuristic surrounds through a 360-degree video experience, which takes inspiration from Pokémon games, while putting a cyberpunk spin on the world's foremost fashion capitals.

Once logged in, shoppers' customised avatars can be dressed with their purchased digital garments, which can be viewed via an augmented reality body-tracking Snapchat lens.



Electric/City featuring the Charli Cohen and Pokémon collection by Selfridges, UK

Consumers in the **US (53%)** and **China (51%)** are most aware of luxury brands interacting with customers in games

Source: Altagamma and Boston Consulting Group



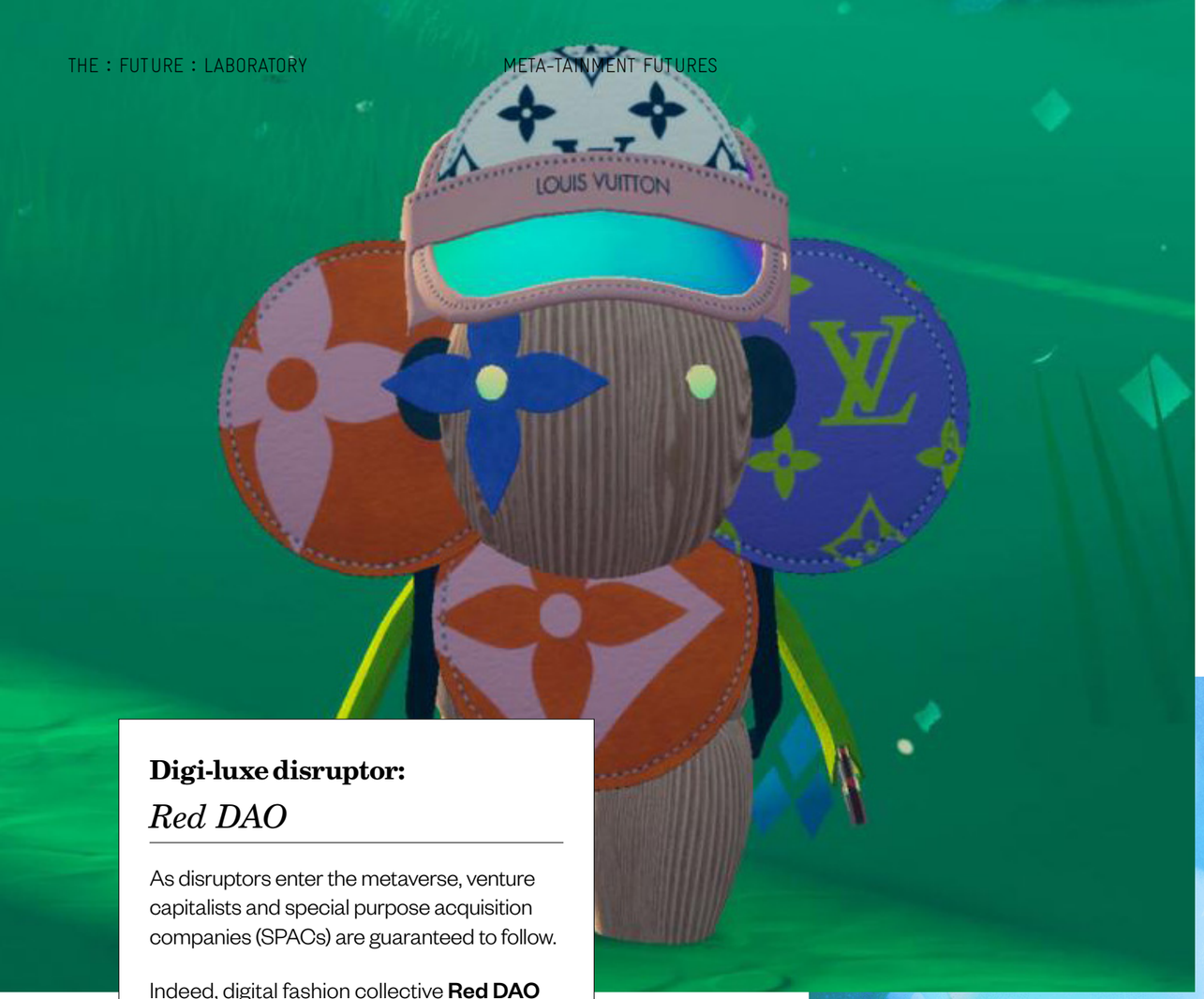
Metabirkins by Mason Rothschild, US

Non-fungible Bags

In a recent project, US artist **Mason Rothschild** challenged assumptions about the luxury non-fungible token (NFT) market with a collection of 100 faux fur virtual Birkin bags that emulate **Hermès's** iconic products.

The handbags were initially available on NFT marketplace **OpenSea** at a starting price of 0.1ETH (£339, $450, €398), but were met with a cease-and-desist letter from Hermès stating that the designs infringe upon the intellectual property and trademark rights of Hermès. But do they? Rothschild says he was prompting a debate about ownership and artistic licence in the virtual realm as the market for **virtual luxury goods** grows.

Simultaneously, the project reveals grey areas when it comes to trademarks and ownership, especially when such products are positioned as works of art or a creative response. Did Campbell's Soup try to claim copyright on those Warhols?



Digi-luxe disruptor:

Red DAO

As disruptors enter the metaverse, venture capitalists and special purpose acquisition companies (SPACs) are guaranteed to follow.

Indeed, digital fashion collective **Red DAO** has already invested in **Dolce & Gabbana's** inaugural NFT, the Doge Crown, for a cool £4.3m ($5.7m, €5m). Comprising 40 people with backgrounds in finance, cryptocurrency and fashion, Red DAO's members meet on messaging platform Discord, where they vote on which fashion NFTs to purchase.

By pooling their capital, they can purchase high-value assets, creating a market for digital collectibles. 'In future, we might use the asset as a promotional tool for the DAO [decentralised autonomous organisation] and for digital fashion in general. We could even rent it out. The idea is that you can keep monetising an asset like this in the future,' explains Red DAO member Daniella Loftus.

Find out more about Red DAO and how the collective works in our interview on page 13.

Louis the Game

Luxury house **Louis Vuitton** recently translated its founder's story into a futuristic gaming experience, **Louis the Game** – part of a series of initiatives to celebrate the label's 200th anniversary.

Embodying a virtual character called Vivienne, gamers cross seven fantasy lands inspired by global cities such as Paris, London, Beijing and New York where they collect 200 anecdotes that pinpoint moments in the brand's history – from iconic collaborations and runway moments to Vuitton family milestones.

Available as a mobile app, the adventurous game breaks away from gaming tied to product launches, and uses an adventure format for storytelling and immersion into the company's creativity. In a nod to luxury's future, gamers can even acquire one of 30 NFT artworks within the game.



Louis the Game by Louis Vuitton, France

Microtrend:
Crypto-cliques

For luxury brands to profit from the rise of Crypto-cliques and POAPs (proof of attendance protocols) they will need to immerse themselves in next-generation social media platforms as well as the metaverse itself.

As people leave **WhatsApp** for decentralised social media networks in which they own their own data, **Telegram** is among the many alternative platforms that are seeing user numbers surge among the age groups that luxury brands are keen to target. **Discord** is another. The platform's user base doubled in 2020, according to its chief marketing officer Tesa Aragones, with 25% of its users taking part in eight or more servers – closed spaces where they speak to like-minded users.

But as their popularity rises, maintaining the privacy of these communities is paramount – with considerations for brands. **Collab.land** is a system that uses cryptocurrency to manage Telegram or Discord chat groups so that only those with a certain number of tokens are permitted entry. Moderators can add a bot, which acts as a bouncer to keep the channel's guest list exclusive.

'For brands to be there at all, they need to be creators, investors or enablers, not sellers, marketers and traders,' says LS:N Global analyst Lavinia Fasano. 'They need to deal in NFTs or POAPs if they are to earn the respect of the community, or sub-group, they want to be part of.'

POAPs, explains Fasano, are digital tokens that allow brands to register the presence of a person at an exclusive event, simultaneously functioning as badges of belonging within a meta-world, or decentralised community.

The blockchain, NFTs and POAPs are in turn facilitating the growth of these hyper-exclusive communities. **Friends With Benefits** (FWB) was launched by digital luminaries including Trevor McFedries, the creator of avatar **Lil Miquela,** powered by a community of Web3 artists, operators and thinkers who each share rebellious values. When it was first launched it had a waiting list of 3,000 people, and now manages its popularity by gating the community with $FWB tokens and a strict vetting process.

While FWB is built online, members can also gain access to real-life meetings and parties, as well as co-created city guides.

> 'For brands to be there, they need to be creators, investors or enablers, not sellers'
>
> *Lavinia Fasano, Foresight analyst, LS:N Global*

In the future, anyone will be able to start their own exclusive digital club, luxury brands included. When the highly elusive start-up **Myco**, for example, is launched, it will comprise a series of digital social clubs that can be founded by any of its users. 'We believe that in the next 100 years, the boundaries between [communities, collectives, cooperatives and companies] will dissipate, and we'll be left with a simple term that describes all of them: Co's,' **writes** the start-up.



Discord The Movie, Global

Strategic Opportunities

- Rather than marketing crypto as accessible to all, brands need to tap into exclusivity to reward the early adopters
- Social media is becoming less about validation and follower counts, and more about **closed forums** and **data ownership**. Companies should use token-gating and passion-related vetting systems to create more exclusive membership eco-systems
- Finally, consider how your brand can elevate these phygital membership clubs and engage the internet users of tomorrow with real-life activations and events



This Outfit Does Not Exist (TODNE), Global

Viewpoint:

Unpacking luxury's NFT and metaverse moment

Daniella Loftus, a member of digital fashion collective **Red DAO**, explains how and why non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and digital goods can open new revenue streams and audience engagement.

Can you share some background about Red DAO?

We are a hive mind of 40 people who come from finance, blockchain, funds, crypto and fashion backgrounds. We have a Discord channel where we vote on which digital fashion projects to invest in and collect.

What does the DAO structure afford you that a conventional organisation would not?

DAOs have a multi-signature wallet, which means that no individual can access the treasury alone. At least six people need to give consensus for the wallet to be unlocked. The idea is that if you bring everybody together, the opinions will be more diverse and interesting.

What are the benefits of engaging with DAOs?

If you give users a stake in your platform, those users have a vested interest in its success. If you had a digital fashion marketplace that requires a token for access, it would incentivise users to promote products being sold on that marketplace. The more desirable those products become, the more people want access to them and the more valuable the token becomes.

Was this part of Red DAO's thinking when buying the D&G Doge Crown?

There was a lot of hype about the **Doge Crown** representing the king or queen of digital fashion. In future, we might use the asset as a promotional tool for the DAO and for digital fashion in general. We could even rent it out. The idea is that you can keep monetising an asset like this in the future.

If you could give one piece of advice to luxury brands that are interested in launching an NFT, what would it be?

In my eyes, luxury brands aren't taking digital fashion seriously. It's currently being used as a marketing tool to redirect attention to physical clothes, but it should be its own diversified revenue stream. There's a colossal market opportunity that brands are not grasping – it should have its own dedicated team.

> 'There's a colossal market opportunity that brands are not grasping – digital fashion should have its own team'

Finally, most digital fashion and NFTs are tethered to physical goods. Is there scope for innovation on this front?

Let's say I buy a **Loewe** coat for £2,500 ($3,370, €2,978). There could be a digital equivalent that retails for £200 ($269, €238). Or consumers could buy a digital asset to signal interest in a physical product. That way, a fashion company could operate on a made-to-order system. There are many interesting business models that companies can play with.

Fashion

The fashion sector is maximising on the metaverse as a tool for global connections, brand opportunities and more sustainable practices, shaping education, marketing and runway shows.



Alphonse Maitrepierre collaborated with 3D artist Adem Elahel to transform his SS21 haute couture into a digital wardrobe fit for the metaverse, France



Fashion Cults, UK

Modest Fashion NFTs

Launched in January 2022, **Fashion Cults'** range of limited-edition NFTs are designed to promote equality, diversity and racial justice through the medium of modest digital fashion.

Fashion Cults founder Afroja Khatun introduced the digital range of dresses, scarves and accessories on NFT trading platform **OpenSea**, and has also created the designs to be worn in virtual spaces. Among them is the brand's flagship product, the Queen Nefertiti Dress, a symbol of women's empowerment and leadership.

Emphasising the loyalty and sustainability benefits of such tokens, holders will gain access to exclusive offers and discounts in future projects by Fashion Cults. 'This is also the first digital modest dress to promote sustainability through virtual or meta fashion [by reducing] environmental pollution as digital clothing and accessories are not made from fabrics, they're made from pixels,' says Khatun. Next, the brand plans a launch on **Trace Network Labs**, where people can customise their own avatar based on a selfie, which can work, socialise and play in various metaverses.

'This dress is a revolution... as the first digital modest dress designed by the world's first digital modest fashion brand'

Afroja Khatun, founder, Fashion Cults



Care of the Self, Care of the World by STUDIO DNWLLNGR, exclusivley available on DressX, Global

Metaversal Fashion Design

Recognising that the next generation of fashion talent must be as au fait with pixels as they are pattern cutting, fashion school **Istituto Marangoni Miami** (IMM) is launching a metaverse-based scholarship in partnership with South Korean social media app **Zepeto**.

With grant funding of up to £36,900 ($50,000, €44,100), hopeful students are tasked with creating a capsule collection of virtual garments designed in the Zepeto app. Five winners will be selected from current IMM students, with another five chosen by the public.

'Through this partnership with Zepeto we are teaching our students the importance of engaging with the next generation of consumers through the virtual world,' says Hakan Baykam, president and CEO of Istituto Marangoni Miami.

Social Customer Service

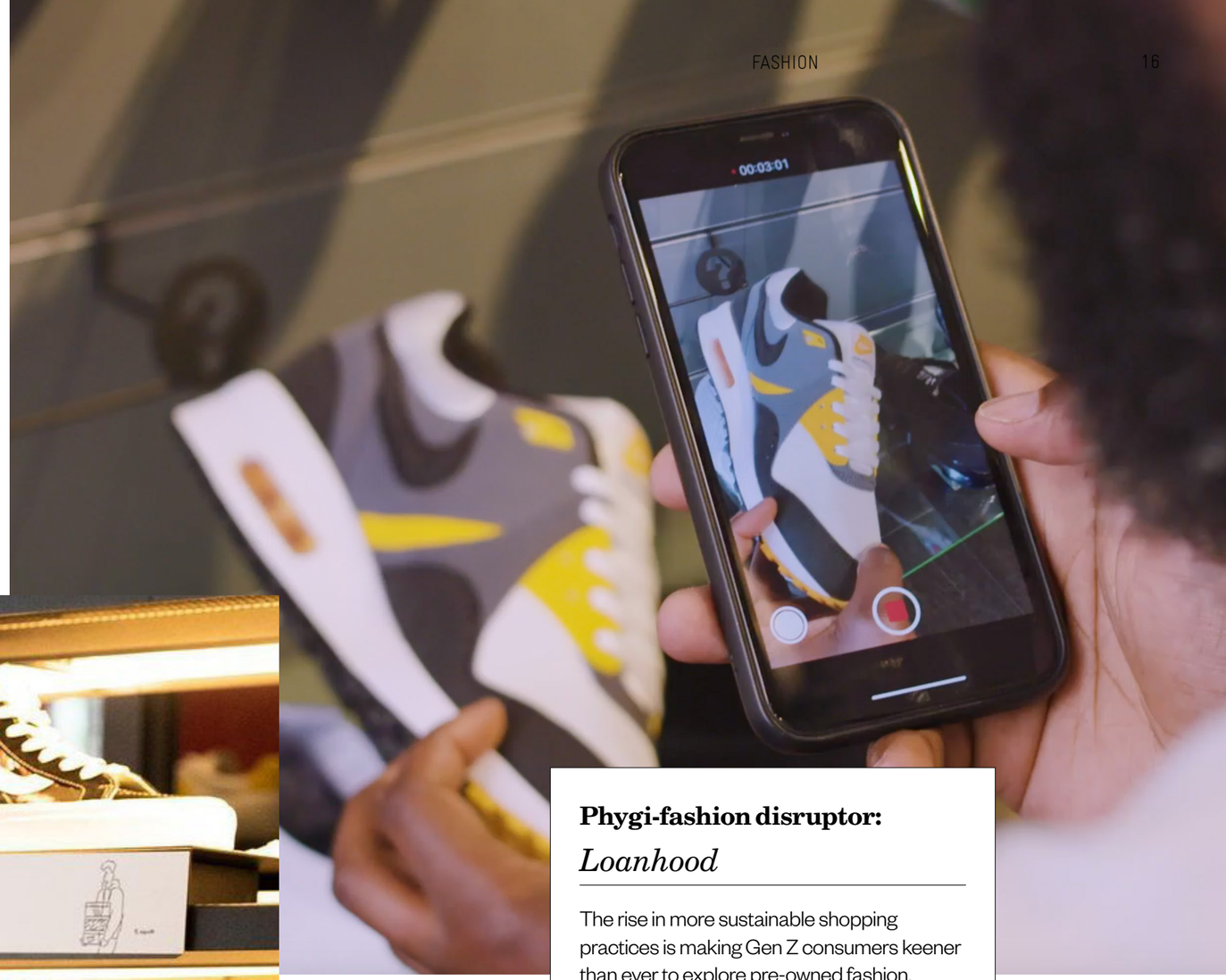
As consumers tentatively re-embrace physical stores, buy-now, pay-later (BNPL) service **Klarna** has acquired social shopping platform **Hero**.

The acquisition empowers in-store teams from Klarna's 250,000 retail partners to become content creators – offering reviews, real-time advice and product information directly to shoppers. Merging in-person customer service with the convenience of e-commerce, Klarna is setting an example for how to maintain relevance in bricks-and-mortar retail after a period when consumers have had to rely on digital shopping experiences.

As Sebastian Siemiatkowski, CEO of Klarna, says: 'This will unlock growth for retailers by creating a new hybrid shopping experience that enables consumers to make informed purchasing decisions as part of an engaging and personalised shopping journey.'

Hero and Klarna, Global





Phygi-fashion disruptor: *Loanhood*

The rise in more sustainable shopping practices is making Gen Z consumers keener than ever to explore pre-owned fashion. Some 81% of 16–24-year-olds say that buying pre-owned has become more common in the past year (source: **eBay**).

This is partly a result of digital second-hand storefronts targeting their generation such as **Depop**, which, after sales increased by 300% year on year in 2020, was bought by **Etsy** in 2021 for £1.1bn ($1.6bn, €1.3bn).

But it is also due to clothes-swap platforms like **Loanhood**, which takes a community-first approach. 'Through the app, people can upload the clothing they own, deliver items to renters or meet in person,' says Jen Charon, co-founder of Loanhood. The platform also hosts regular 'meet the loaner' events and try-on sessions, as well as pop-ups where its community can congregate in real life.

Microtrend:
Fashion Meta-networks

To reconnect and inspire fashion communities, brands, organisations and sellers are experimenting with alternative digital spaces.

Gucci has already teamed up with online metaverse gaming platform **Roblox** to develop the Gucci Garden experience, while **Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Russia** has launched an interactive platform that leans into the growing popularity of gaming among Russia's Gen Z fashionistas.

Here, visitors could take part in a selection of points-based online games, incentivised by gifts and invitations to future local fashion events. The platform also offered an educational element, providing insight into the profession of fashion design and allowing users to prepare their own collection in the virtual realm.

'The metaverse is the natural evolution of where people will shop and be seen in digital fashion'

Karinna Nobbs, co-CEO, The Dematerialised

Elsewhere, Finnish entrepreneur Evelyn Mora is behind **Digital Village** (DV). Described as the first real-time sustainable multi-player metaverse connected to a social marketplace, it hosts fashion events and digital artist residencies. The system promotes holistic sustainability – not just environmental but also on the cultural and social aspects of its users. 'Users can earn DV coins by completing challenges provided by DV or making mindful choices… taking physical and digital actions to contribute to positive social impact,' explains Mora.

Other platforms are taking inspiration from exhibitions to reach audiences and expand fashion's virtual reach. Fashion marketplace **The Dematerialised's** recent virtual exhibition, The **History of Digital Fashion**, used Ethereum-based virtual world **Cryptovoxels** as its host, with the exhibition presenting bodies of work from designers, agencies and brands operating within the immaterial fashion space.

Adding an interactive layer, attendees could chat to one another via the platform, providing a way for fashion fans and industry folk to have spontaneous interactions in a metaverse. To mark the launch, The Dematerialised also created a **Clubhouse** room for discussions around the history of digital fashion, potential barriers to mainstream virtual fashion acceptance and NFTs.

'As the metaverse becomes more accessible and attractive to fashion consumers it is a natural evolution of where people will go to hang out, shop and be seen in their digital fashion drop,' says Karinna Nobbs, co-CEO of The Dematerialised.



Digital Village by Evelyn Mora, Global

Strategic Opportunities

: Building on the fashion sector's synergy with the **gaming world**, companies need to consider ways in which traditional fashion events can be elevated through metaverse environments

: With **Fashion Weeks** becoming digitised, brands should take inspiration from the Digital Village, creating a continuously evolving online space that rewards users' positive phygital behaviours

: As the demand for **Immaterial Fashion** continues to rise, brands can take cues from the The Dematerialised, connecting digital fashion communities across visual and non-visual digital realms



MYAMI, US

Viewpoint:

How fashion NFTs can spark eco-action

Brad Morris, founder of digital fashion house **MYAMI**, discusses how NFTs can become tools for promoting environmental action among consumers.

Tell us about MYAMI's approach to community in the virtual fashion world?

We're open, inclusive and celebrate the infinite possibilities that digital fashion offers in terms of creative freedom. Virtual fashion allows pretty much anyone to wear anything. In some parts of the world, it can be liberating. We are talking to fashion stylists in Nigeria, for example, who are using digital fashion as part of the **Alté** (alternative) movement. It's allowing them to express themselves in an environment where they can feel quite suppressed.

MYAMI launched its Ice Runner NFT during COP26, which digitally 'melts' at the same rate as the polar ice caps. What's the aim of this project?

The sneaker is a barometer for climate change through a fashion lens. It can melt and warp, but if everyone starts to do the right thing, it has the potential to return to its original shape. It's a provocation – or challenge – to people. By creating an item that degrades, we're also creating ongoing conversation. Proceeds from the project are also being donated to the **DigitalArt4Climate** charity.

Why is the metaverse an ideal space for experimenting with environmentally friendly fashion?

The metaverse uses the power of creativity to be disruptive and make people think – a new mode of expressing activism. For us, the hardest thing is how to create noise and make it accessible. It meant we had to find the right platforms and ways to make [The Ice Runner] a sustainable project. Now, as MYAMI's community grows, we're exploring the idea of memberships and loyalty schemes. There are also opportunities for future partnerships with other brands.

'Brands that are born in the metaverse can start to have fun with the idea of self-expression'

NFTs have been criticised for their heavy carbon footprint. How are you addressing this?

There is a misconception that all NFTs are bad. I'd like to use an analogy here: with the blockchain, there's the idea of Proof of Work (POW), which is like a petrol car, and Proof of Stake (POS), which is like a hybrid car. And then you have Proof of History (POH), which are new protocols that are low-energy. The problem with POH and POS is that it's hard to use these new technologies unless you're a massive company. So, one of the things that we did straight away was to reach out to major blockchain providers to ask if we could use their services. There are lots of sustainable solutions now.

Is the future of fashion purely digital or will it always exist alongside physical fashion?

It will be increasingly common to get a digital garment when you buy a physical garment to wear in the real world, and vice versa. One fascinating area is the idea of smart contracts within the blockchain, because they can unlock different experiences for people. You could sell an NFT that gets you to have dinner with a celebrity, for example. Brands that are born in the metaverse can really start to have some fun with the idea of self-expression.

Health & Beauty

New tools and platforms are transforming our experience of real-world beauty and wellness – from perfume to fitness and therapy – into wondrous digital realms.



Emotional clothing by Iga Węglińska, Poland



Viktor&Rolf Spicebomb Infrared, Netherlands

Fragrant Soundscapes

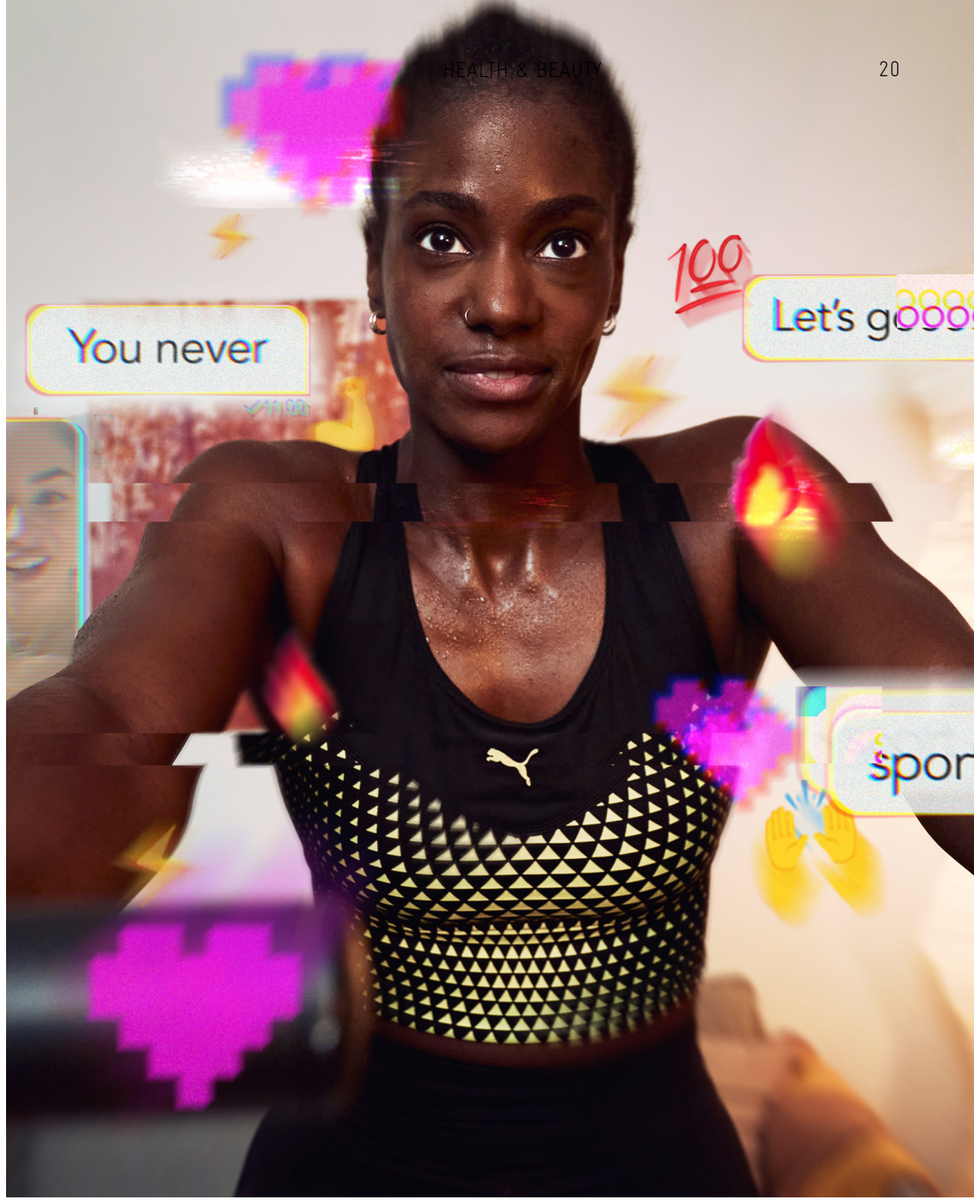
A major hurdle faced by personal care brands selling online is that of sampling different scents and trying to explain their core characteristics and notes in a medium that is still predominantly focused on sound, visuals and text.

To mitigate the limitations of the web when it comes to marketing fragrance, **L'Oréal** recently engaged acoustic experts to craft a stimulating soundscape for its **Viktor&Rolf** Spicebomb Infrared scent. Working with sound experts at **Ircam Amplify**, the goal was to expand the sensory footprint of Infrared by creating a unique palette of sounds for the fragrance, inspired by its cinnamon, chilli and red berry notes.

The result is an audio clip that raises the listener's body temperature to evoke the fragrance's olfactory imprint of heat and spiciness.

‘[With] sound, we enter a totally new dimension in terms of the perfume experience – one that is digital, universal and utterly innovative’

Guillaume de Lesquen, president, L'Oréal Designer Brands Fragrances



You Never Sport Alone by We Are Pi for INTERSPORT is a celebration of the role of community at the heart of sport, and a declaration from the brand on its undying commitment to provide support to the sporting commmunity, Switzerland

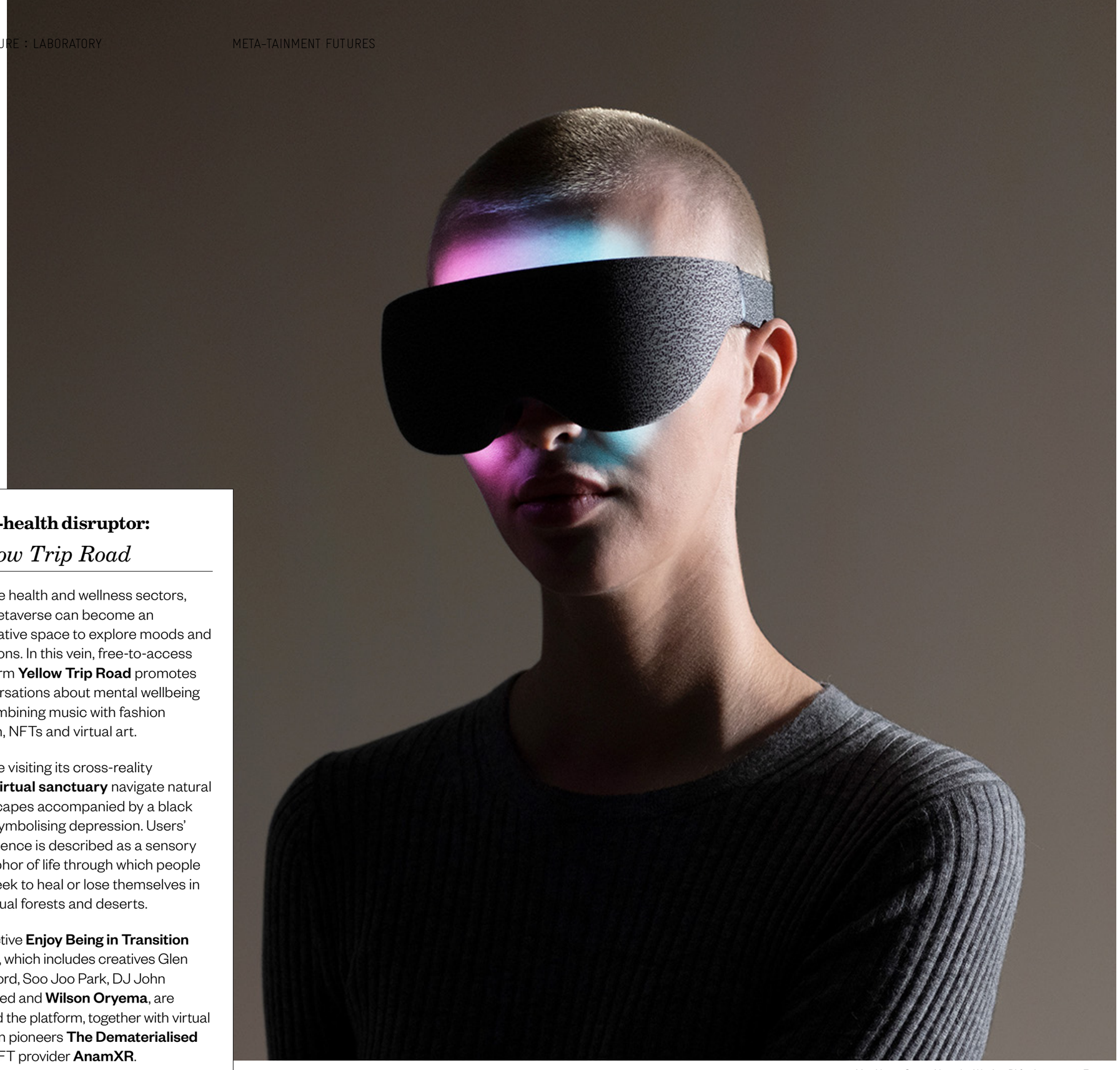
Immersive Fitness

With our digital presence invariably associated with unhealthy living, a growing number of platforms are responding with immersive social exercise experiences rooted in tech.

Focused on accessibility, activewear brand **Athleta** has created **AthletaWell**, a wellbeing platform that gives women access to curated discussion groups, advice from wellness experts and online and offline meetings.

Elsewhere, fitness platform **Obé's** Workout Parties capture the social element of group workouts, allowing up to eight friends to join a virtual class where they can chat as they exercise.

Quell sits at the intersection of gaming and fitness. Designed for people with no gaming background, it is a wearable that syncs the user's movements to on-screen avatars, while tracking their speed, accuracy, endurance and power.



You Never Sport Alone by We Are Pi for Intersport, France

Digi-health disruptor:
Yellow Trip Road

For the health and wellness sectors, the metaverse can become an alternative space to explore moods and emotions. In this vein, free-to-access platform **Yellow Trip Road** promotes conversations about mental wellbeing by combining music with fashion design, NFTs and virtual art.

People visiting its cross-reality (XR) **virtual sanctuary** navigate natural landscapes accompanied by a black dog, symbolising depression. Users' experience is described as a sensory metaphor of life through which people can seek to heal or lose themselves in its virtual forests and deserts.

Collective **Enjoy Being in Transition** (EBIT), which includes creatives Glen Luchford, Soo Joo Park, DJ John Digweed and **Wilson Oryema**, are behind the platform, together with virtual fashion pioneers **The Dematerialised** and NFT provider **AnamXR**.

Multimedia Meditation

While a growing number of people are exploring digital platforms as a way to support their mental wellbeing, US start-up **Resonate** is banking on hardware, launching a meditation headset that offers instant respite from daily stressors.

Created for Resonate by UK strategic design agency **Layer**, the **LightVision headset** features an LED light matrix that converts videos of the natural world into biomorphic patterns, complemented by a soundscape. Visible even through closed eyes, the ever-changing sequence of lights and shapes instigates a meditative state, no matter what the user's previous experience with meditation.

'In an increasingly hectic world... Resonate LightVision allows you to reach a deep meditative state, effortlessly'

Benjamin Hubert, founder, Layer

With its textile-wrapped casing and metallic details, the LightVision headset points to a future of wellbeing devices that eschew medicalised design in favour of fashion design cues that place it firmly into the lifestyle rather than medical-only sectors.

The portable nature of the headset also aligns with the emergence of self-guided **psychonautic therapy**, while highlighting the potential of multimedia **synthetic spas**.

Microtrend:
Isolated Intimacy

As the world experiences a crisis of closeness, new dating, sex and self-love services are emerging to re-assess the meaning of intimacy in a digital-first sexverse.

With just two-in-five UK adults sexually active during Covid-19 lockdowns, according to **The Journal of Sexual Medicine**, social distancing measures have also forced many singletons to swap sex for greater emotional intimacy – albeit in virtual realms.

Some consumers have been recreating old dating formats online. Single people in Lagos, Nigeria, have taken part in virtual games nights, while 'internet discos', in which attendees send private messages to one another, have boomed in China. In Japan, where a romantic reluctance is leading to a rapidly shrinking population, the pandemic has re-ignited young people's interest in matrimony, with marriage matchmakers mediating virtual dates.

Indeed, all roads point to the fact that the virtual dating may even outlast the pandemic – 94% of **OkCupid** users say they will continue to date virtually once the pandemic is over.

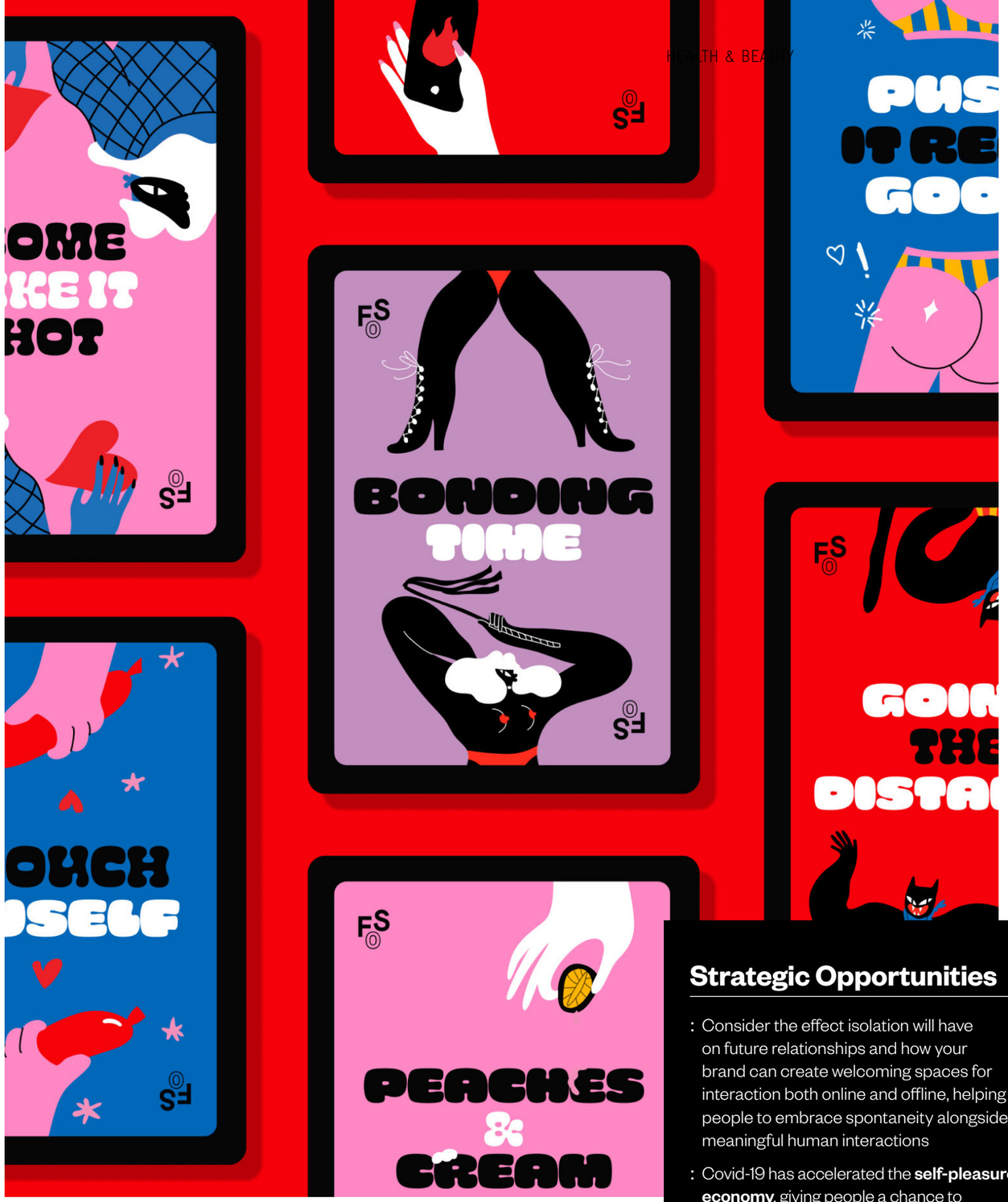
Simultaneously, new platforms are encouraging people to explore their sexual desires, with a little help from technology. **The Wheel of Foreplay** is a tool by the technology lab **Future of Sex**, which is designed to inspire conversations and activity focused on pleasure in isolation. Allowing users to choose from categories such as 'going solo' and 'long distance dating', the online spin-the-wheel game is made for individuals, couples and distanced partners alike.

Innovators are also creating speculative devices to rehabilitate our bodily responses by reproducing the sensation of touch.

> 'There is an increase in skin hunger, which is a real issue for mental health'
>
> *Sandeep Hoojan, co-designer, Feel the Conversation*

Royal College of Art students Sandeep Hoonjan and Xianzhi Zhang have designed a pair of devices that allow people to physically experience conversations while apart. **Feel the Conversation** comprises two hand-held machines that connect to a phone and translate speech into a series of haptic patterns based on their intonation and volume. One attachment can even reproduce a licking sensation against the user's ear. 'In conversation with colleagues, I found there is an increase in 'skin hunger', which is a real issue for mental health, as we are social creatures and touch is a big part of that,' says Hoonjan.

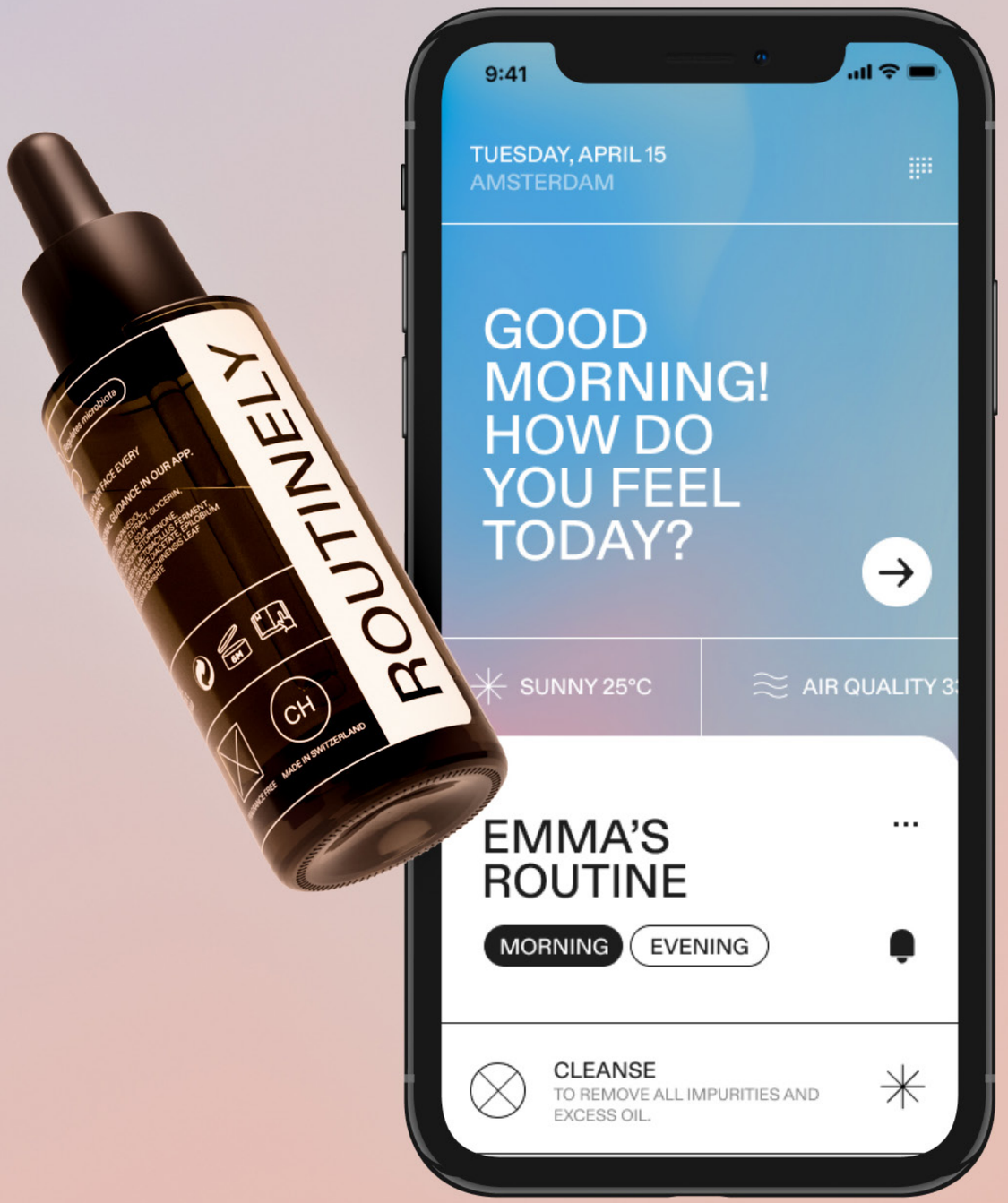
Finally, anticipating that our craving for unique and memorable tactility will escalate in the coming years, design studio Bompas & Parr imagines that we will flock to a future Haptics Museum, which dares consumers to proactively engage with various sensory objects – such as slime – to re-ignite pleasure and other emotions, while also flipping the traditional touch-free nature of art institutions.



The Wheel of Foreplay by Future of Sex, Australia

Strategic Opportunities

- Consider the effect isolation will have on future relationships and how your brand can create welcoming spaces for interaction both online and offline, helping people to embrace spontaneity alongside meaningful human interactions
- Covid-19 has accelerated the **self-pleasure economy**, giving people a chance to examine their underlying desires. Beyond sex tech, brands should help people to explore and stimulate their needs and imagination through **wellness services**
- Brands should break out of their digital bubbles to experiment with how haptic technology and sensory play in real-life spaces can re-introduce touch into their customers' lives



Routinely, Netherlands

Viewpoint:

How tech will shape situational skincare

Taking cues from fitness and health apps, **Routinely** co-founder Charlotte van Loock talks to us about using data to tailor and adapt skincare routines to people's changing lifestyles.

How do Routinely's mobile app and proprietary algorithm work to optimise users' skin?

Once a customer has made a purchase, they can download our app, which functions as a daily skin coach. That's where we differ on personalisation from many other brands, because the personal aspect doesn't stop at the purchase. The app means we can offer more guidance. If a customer wants to share their location, that can offer insight from an environmental point of view.

With 13 different serums, how do you guide your customers in finding the right products?

We start in the most accessible way possible, with a skin ID test on the Routinely website. There are different modules that help a person get the most precise recommendation possible. The first module maps the skin to get an idea of its current condition; then there's a module that assesses their environment and lifestyle. Finally, there's a research module so we can get smarter and see, for example, where overall health relates to skin health.

And how do your customers benefit from using the app?

Customers have the ability to track their progress – the educational aspect – which ensures they realise skincare is a marathon, not a sprint. It is similar to how fitness apps work in that it brings you the discipline to continue your skincare routine over time. There will be the ability to take pictures on certain dates on the app, so you can also see the evolution of your skin.

What could the wider sector learn from your approach?

There is a lot of value in the research aspect. By diving into the skincare industry I've learned that a lot of research is being done, but it's scattered, and often too broad or from small sample groups. Routinely can add to the industry's knowledge by sharing data based on its wide user base. If it can benefit the broader industry, then why not? We really believe in giving back and sharing and again, growing smarter collectively.

> 'It is similar to how fitness apps work – it brings you the discipline to continue your skincare routine over time'

Finally, what do you forecast for the future of skincare?

For the skincare industry as a whole, people will become more conscious of how essential skincare is in daily hygiene. Equally, I think people will have different expectations of skincare, so it will no longer be about an old-fashioned magical product, but being much more factual and medical.

Youth

Friendship, dating and social media are being upended by young people who – with little nuance between their real-life and online personas – are taking their digital experiences into their own hands.



Balmain is garnering the attention of sneakerheads through Balmain Sneaker Hub, a content-driven commerce platform dedicated to footwear drops, France



Left: Bumble, UK; Right: Audio Synthesis: What Does a Tree Sound Like? by Dan Hoopert, UK

Post-swipe Dating

In an era increasingly defined by social media crushes and increasingly non-committal mindsets, **Lolly** is a dating app designed specifically for Generation Z seeking post-pandemic connections.

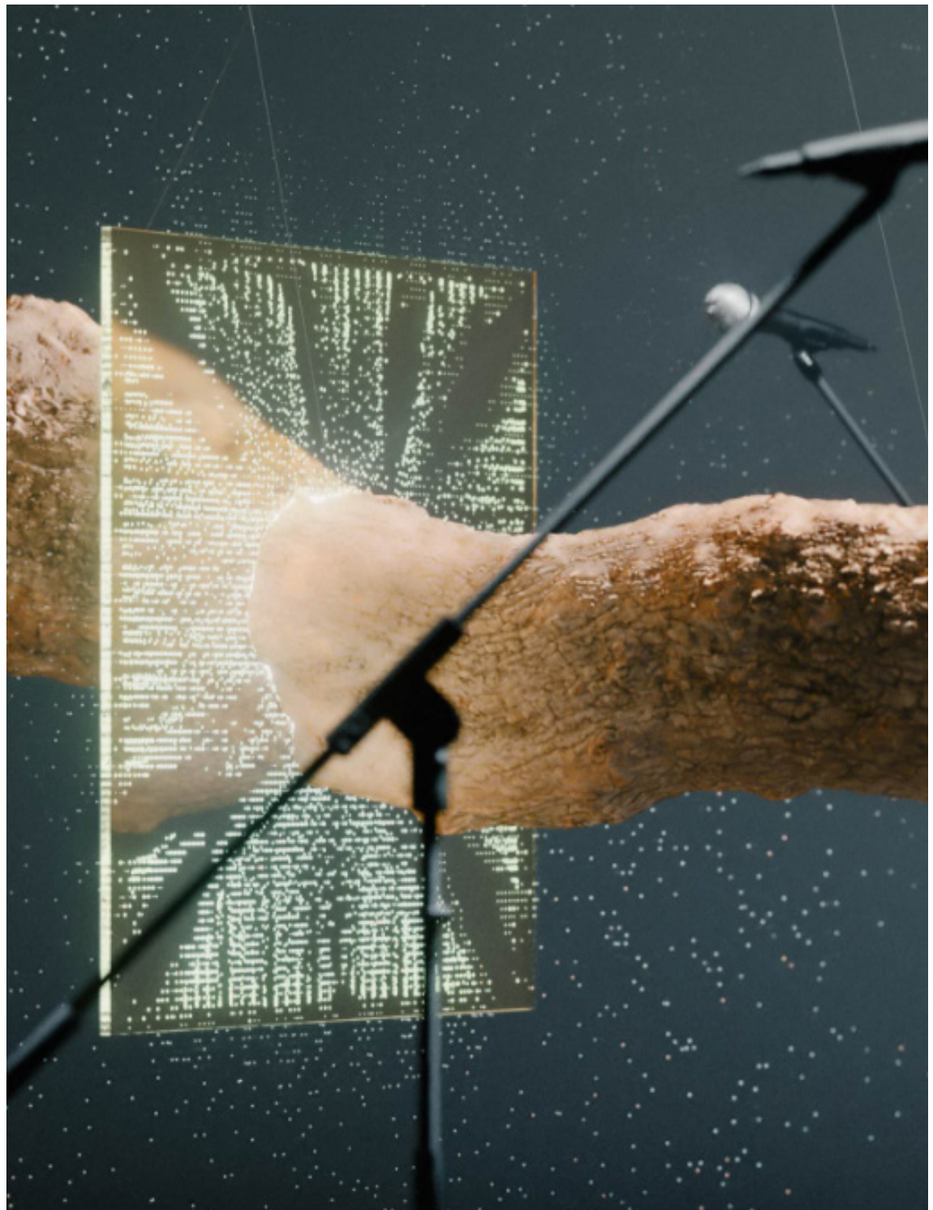
The app, co-founded by Gen Z entrepreneur Marc Baghadjian, combines the user experience of **TikTok** and **Tinder**. It uses short videos to showcase each prospective dater's humour, personality and creativity rather than encouraging swipes based on physical appearance.

'Video is a tool that allows you to tell your story in a multi-dimensional way,' says Baghadjian. 'You can see other people on Lolly and think: 'I want to hang out with them.' We've always been attracted to funny people with strong personalities. But we haven't had platforms that let you find them.'

Baghadjian argues that his generation, who are often deemed introverted, are keen to return to in-person experiences, but using the tools they are familiar with to help them do it more effectively.

'There's going to be a whole influx of new community and video platforms we haven't seen before, and they're going to be Gen Z-driven'

Marc Baghadjian, co-founder, Lolly



Creator Chart-toppers

With music central to so many **TikTok** posts and **Instagram** stories, music magazine **Billboard** has partnered with technology brand **Logitech** to introduce a ranking system for young digital creators who are driving music consumption.

The **Song Breaker Chart** ranks digital creators on a monthly basis, giving recognition to the songs they use, which in turn break into the conventional Billboard chart because of popular dance challenges, moods and memes.

By doing this, the two companies are responding to the changing landscape of music at a time when Generation Z are increasingly seeking **democratised music communities**. 'Every day we see new trends exploding in popularity across social media platforms and we are beyond thrilled to highlight these breakthrough creators who are redefining stardom in the music industry,' says Julian Holguin, president of Billboard.

Insta–television

As a way of engaging Gen Z audiences, UK broadcaster **Channel 4** and **Instagram** teamed up to launch a reality TV series about a group of young creatives.

The four-part series, **You Do You**, follows the Manchester-based collective **Sindysplace** as they use Instagram to document their lives and explore who they are by connecting with others.

The series is part of Instagram's Yours to Make campaign, which explores the lives of UK Gen Z and their communities. 'This is a show that is not just about great Gen Z characters, it's shot through with their DIY, mixed media approach to creativity,' says Joe Churchill, digital commissioner at Channel 4. 'Instagram is almost another character in the series, and it is particularly exciting to see a story play out across their real and digital worlds.'



Channel 4 in partnership with You Do You and Sindysplace, UK

In-game disruptor:
Grand Theft Auto

Pharmaceutical company **Pfizer** is targeting Gen Z gamers with the launch of a Virtual Vaccination Centre in Cidade Alta, a server within video game **Grand Theft Auto**. Created as part of a mission within the game, the digital vaccination centre extends extra protection to the characters from players who are themselves vaccinated in real life.

To be granted access, players must use the hashtag #VacinaInGame on **Twitter** or **Instagram**, as well as posting their passport number in Cidade Alta. The initiative, by advertising agency **Ogilvy Brasil** and technology company **Druid**, aims to incentivise broader audiences to get vaccinated by meeting them where they're regularly interacting. Claudio Lima, CEO of Druid, says: 'The game has a power to connect with new generations and this initiative highlights that, in addition to entertaining, it is also possible to use the platform to raise awareness.'

Microtrend:

Crowdsourced Companions

Digital apps are reviving physical meetings, helping despondent members of Generation Z to expand their social groups in safe and meaningful ways.

In summer 2021, 23-year-old Marissa Meizz went viral after a TikToker heard her friends had agreed to exclude her from a party. In response, the social media app was awash with invitations for Meizz to join various friendship groups. After hosting a 200-person gathering in Central Park, Meizz launched an online community, **No More Lonely Friends**, organising free meetings across the US and selling merchandise with optimistic and friendship-focused messaging.

Launched by a first-generation college student who struggled to find peers during remote learning, **Flox** is an app designed specifically for Gen Z group meetings. Once friendship groups sign up – the app is exclusively for New York undergraduates for the time being – they can connect and meet other clans. The group dynamic is central to Flox as it offers an element of safety, something that mitigates the risks associated with meeting people one to one.

Taking a more purposeful approach is **Locals**, which not only connects people who are digitally fatigued but those who are keen to get involved in social and planet-driven causes. Launched in London and Los Angeles, activities include nature hiking, film screenings and a meditation session with a Tibetan monk. In addition, Locals roots itself in positive impact by organising volunteering trips, as well as letting users raise funds for a charity of the host's choice, instead of paying a fee for the experience.

Evidently, Gen Z are no longer content with solely online friendships, nor the effort it takes to maintain them. Many are nostalgic for real-life or serendipitous ways of meeting others, which were temporarily halted by the pandemic.

British Gen Z have an average of six friends they've never met face to face

Source: Konnect

As Flox founder Jamie Lee highlights, dating apps have made steps forward with services for solo friend-finders, but this has led to individuals feeling stigmatised and intimidated by one-to-one encounters. What comes next will be more apps like Flox on which users are defined by their group status, as opposed to individual identities, in turn transforming the UX design of social networks.

As social starvation becomes a genuine health concern for this generation, companionship apps could be prescribed to boost wellbeing and happiness. Locals, for example, positions itself as a 'real-life solution for the epidemic of loneliness', demonstrating its use case in the healthcare sector, so it might not be long before similar platforms tout meetings with strangers as necessary modes of care.



Flox, US

Strategic Opportunities

- Brands should create digital spaces that can thrive both online and offline. Consult with young users to ensure these communities have the appropriate safeguards to allow for safe meetings in local neighbourhoods
- As shared social media grows, companies need to rethink how apps are designed to make them intuitive for groups as well as individuals. Refocus attention away from individualism towards collective identities
- Finally, to engage socially minded Gen Z, make it accessible for young people to organise real-life events that centre around doing good, from volunteering with vulnerable people to mass clean-ups



Hiba for Good Faces, Global

Viewpoint:

The audio-first future of Muslim social media

A spokesperson for social platform **Sango** describes how audio-based engagement is fostering community for global Muslims.

What is Sango and how does it work?

Sango is a voice-centric, social and entertainment app for interacting with friends. You can post about your personal life or content that interests you. There are different chat rooms that allow you to have discussions; you can join virtual karaoke with friends or send virtual gifts to each other. There's also a group section where you can find and make friends with people who have common interests; for example, gaming and sports.

'Through audio, women feel more comfortable – they're not challenging their beliefs'

Why are you focusing on Muslim users specifically?

The global Muslim community is a large market and the population on the whole are very young and growing fast. Many technology companies are targeting Muslims in particular as they believe they have more free time and money to spend on entertainment and social apps.

Why did you make Sango largely audio-based?

In the Middle East, a lot of women users want to use social media, but they don't feel comfortable showing their faces. Through audio, they feel more comfortable and they're not challenging their beliefs. Equally, we don't want the platform to become too political – it's more about people having fun and feeling happy.

How is Sango catering for the nuances or needs of Muslims compared to other social platforms?

Having undertaken comprehensive research in the MENA market, there are many religious and cultural elements in the design of this app. When you send virtual gifts to friends, for example, the design is very localised, including items like luxury cars and gold watches.

And how have you integrated Muslim belief systems?

There are a lot of elements in this vein. One section is called Tribes – it's a fun section that gives users a storyline and a mission – but it has been created based on the Qur'an. In some of our audio chat rooms, there are themes or conversations that focus on Muslim beliefs; people read the Qur'an and interpret it together. In this way, Sango becomes an extension of their real life.

What can we expect next in the world of social media?

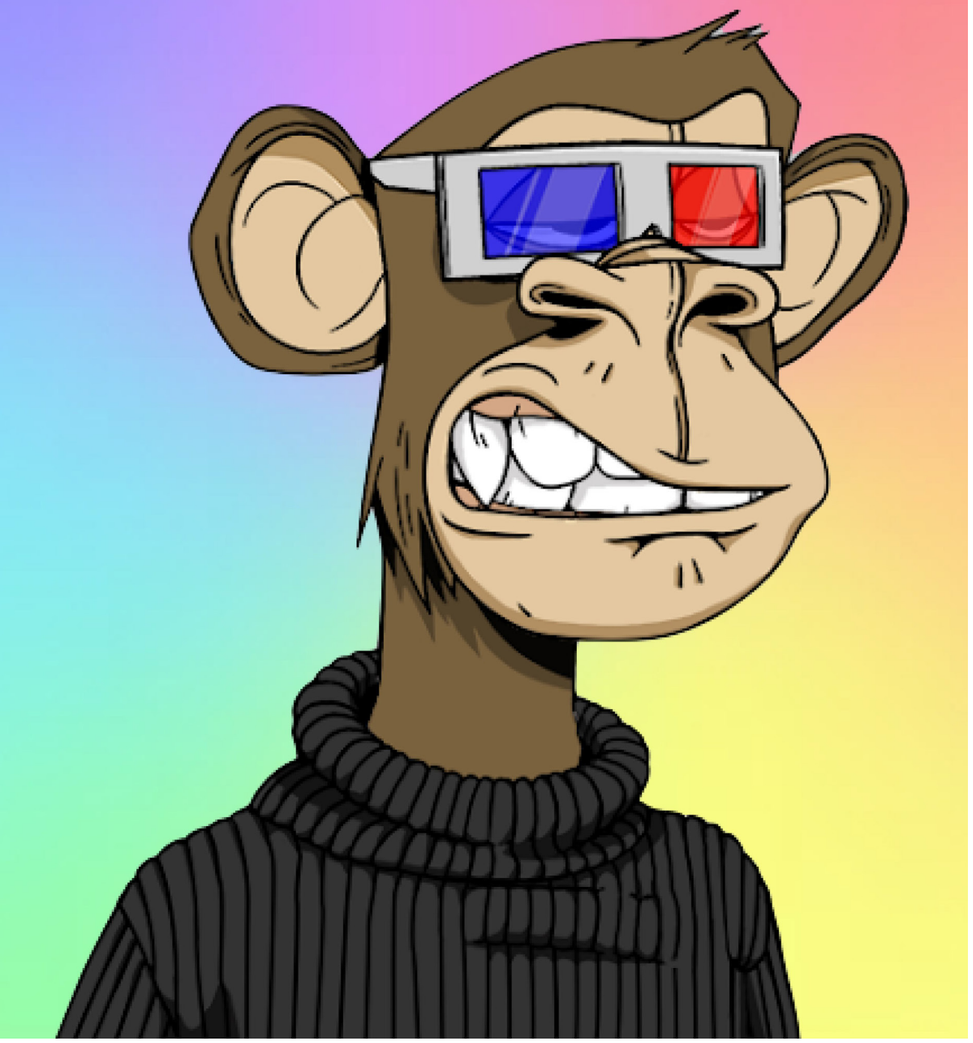
Although mainstream social media platforms such as **Facebook, Instagram** and **Twitter** have occupied a lot of global users, in the future the format of social media will diversify. Audio will be highly relevant and it will last much longer than we might think, especially in the Middle Eastern market. This is because [social media users] haven't yet had a product that is truly localised and designed for them.

Media

New digital platforms are providing room for more diverse opinions, advice and experiences for netizens – with key lessons for brands that want to create and inspire their audiences online.



GiGi campaign by Finesse x ASTRSK, US



Islands, US

Non-fungible Incubators

Billing itself as a ‘passport for the metaverse’, **Islands** is a new platform created by Tiffany Zhong and Nikhil Srinivasan that aims to help initiate newcomers into the world of NFT art, crypto-assets and communities.

With the backing of **Reddit** co-founder Alexis Ohanian, Islands is aiming to drive new users into the realm of Web3 by centralising and aggregating its participants.

As it stands, the NFT community is dispersed over various platforms, without a central space dedicated entirely to NFT owners or those interested or working in the space. This means that communication can be lost among different channels and joining an NFT community can appear opaque to outsiders. ‘Our goal is to help get more people into Web3, because clearly it’s so nascent and early,’ explains co-founder Tiffany Zhong.

Tune into TikTok

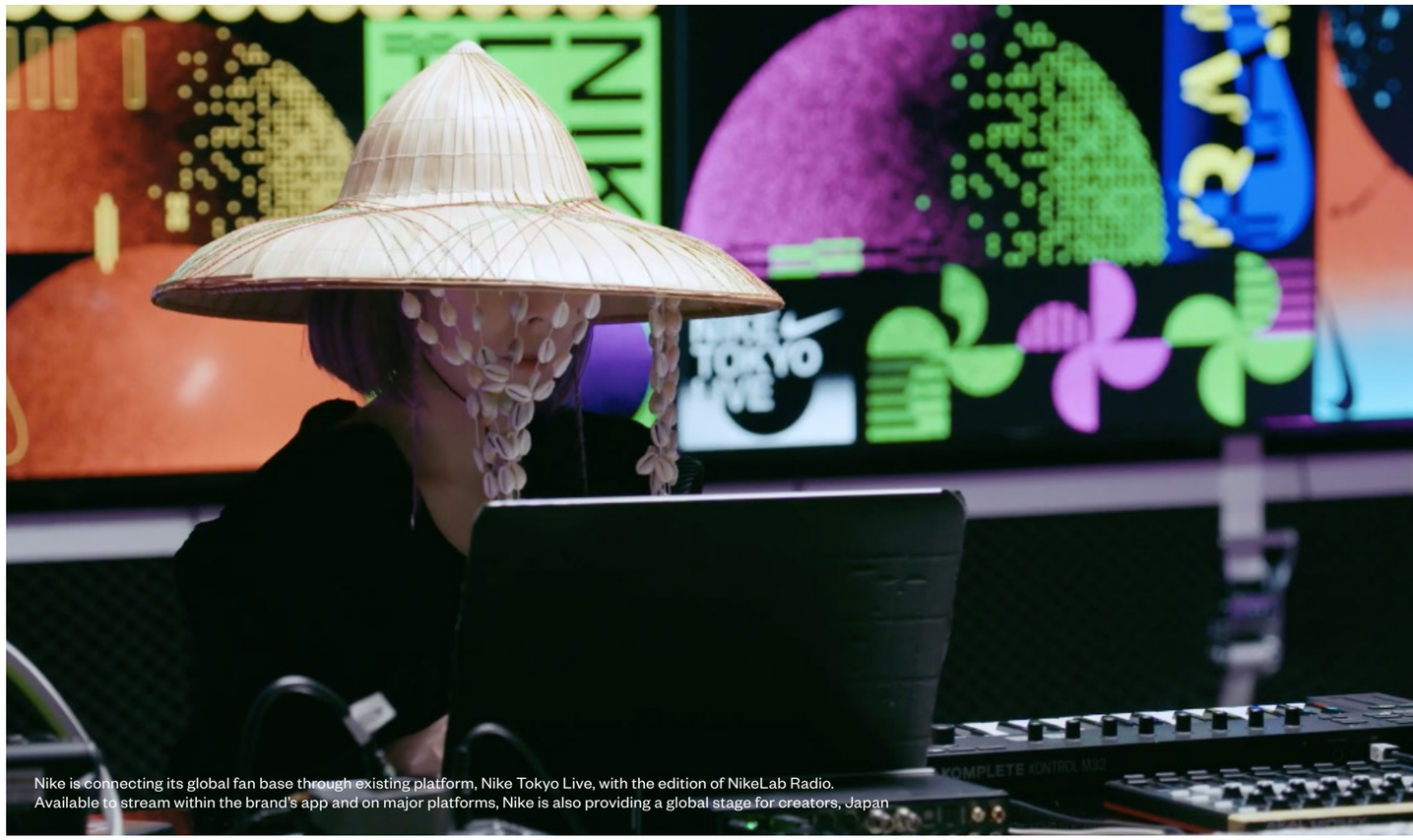
The social media platform is diversifying its offering by moving into the radio business, with shows launched on streaming service **SiriusXM**.

TikTok Radio takes inspiration from the platform’s curated For You Feed, with a group of TikTok creators presenting music and discussing trending songs.

Part of its programming will include takeovers by other members of the TikTok community.

As the platform continues to prove its worth as a music discovery tool, the decision to branch out into radio will appeal to both TikTok users and broader music fan bases.

‘Our ground-breaking new channel is a first of its kind, says Scott Greenstein, president and chief content officer at SiriusXM, ‘capturing the pulse of global music culture, and the vibrancy and vitality found on the entertaining social platform recreated as a full-time music channel on live national radio and our streaming platforms.’



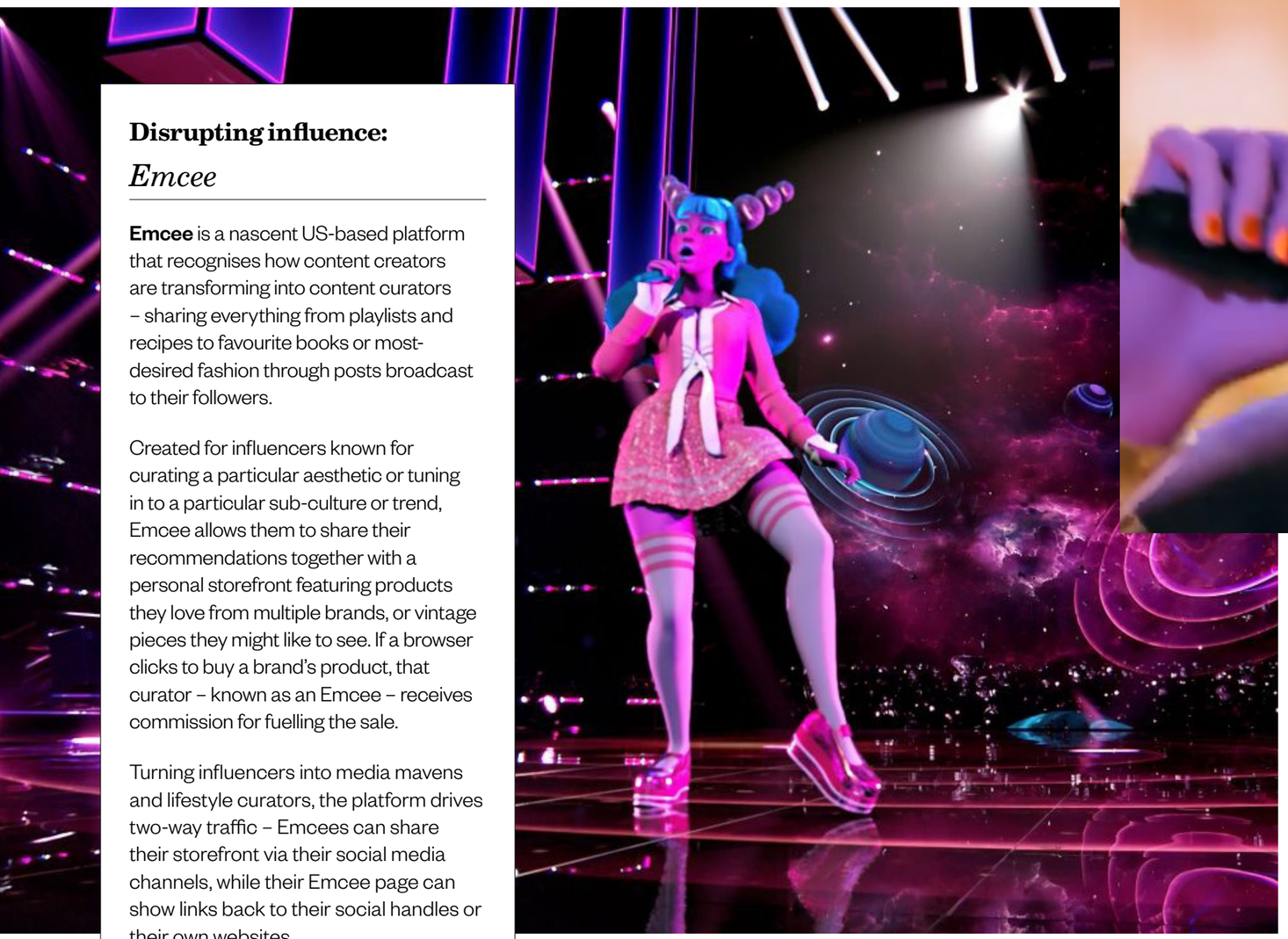
Nike is connecting its global fan base through existing platform, Nike Tokyo Live, with the edition of NikeLab Radio. Available to stream within the brand's app and on major platforms, Nike is also providing a global stage for creators, Japan

Just **16%** of non-fungible token (NFT) art sales are of works by women artists

Source: ArtTactic

75% of TikTok users say they discover new artists through the platform, while **63%** have heard music that they've never heard before

Source: MRC Data



Disrupting influence:

Emcee

Emcee is a nascent US-based platform that recognises how content creators are transforming into content curators – sharing everything from playlists and recipes to favourite books or most-desired fashion through posts broadcast to their followers.

Created for influencers known for curating a particular aesthetic or tuning in to a particular sub-culture or trend, Emcee allows them to share their recommendations together with a personal storefront featuring products they love from multiple brands, or vintage pieces they might like to see. If a browser clicks to buy a brand's product, that curator – known as an Emcee – receives commission for fuelling the sale.

Turning influencers into media mavens and lifestyle curators, the platform drives two-way traffic – Emcees can share their storefront via their social media channels, while their Emcee page can show links back to their social handles or their own websites.



Alter Ego, US

The Alternet's Got Talent

Hinting at a phygital future for reality tv, **Alter Ego** is a talent show that allows contestants to perform as avatars.

Using motion capture technology, human singers on the Fox show are encouraged to create their dream avatars to perform in front of a panel of judges, including singers will.i.am and Grimes.

By embedding technology in the reality tv process, the talent show allows contestants to programme their reality and present themselves as an idealised digital persona.

'Alter Ego merges talent and technology to revolutionise the singing competition show in only a way Fox can do,' says Rob Wade, president of Fox's alternative entertainment department.

Microtrend:

Provocation Platforms

Societal resilience has led people out of their comfort zones in favour of dissenting perspectives. Now, this search for discomfort is filtering into the mainstream media.

With major social media platforms regulated by the big tech corporations that own them, a number of disruptors are harnessing this as an opportunity to build new networks where contrasting – and often uncomfortable – opinions can be voiced. One example is the debating app **Polemix**.

Inspired by the acceleration of short-form content, Polemix uses a video format that pits debaters against one another, allowing viewers to make their own mind up about various social issues. Ian Sielecki, founder and CEO of Polemix, says the idea was 'to create, inspired from the magic of debating, a conceptual landscape in which people would hear and listen to the outside by design'.

Created by a group of 40 young people, its format reflects the comfort that youth audiences have when it comes to expressing themselves in digital spaces. Indeed, a study by **Conscious Youth** reveals that 71% of young people feel more confident than ever before speaking up about causes they are passionate about online.

Elsewhere, alternative news platform **Frame** shares stories in unconventional formats, allowing viewers to digest current affairs, with topics such as immigration and the opioid crisis. Alongside interactive documentaries and multimedia explainers, Frame also communicates with its subscribers via SMS messages, even inviting them to speak directly to the platform's journalists.

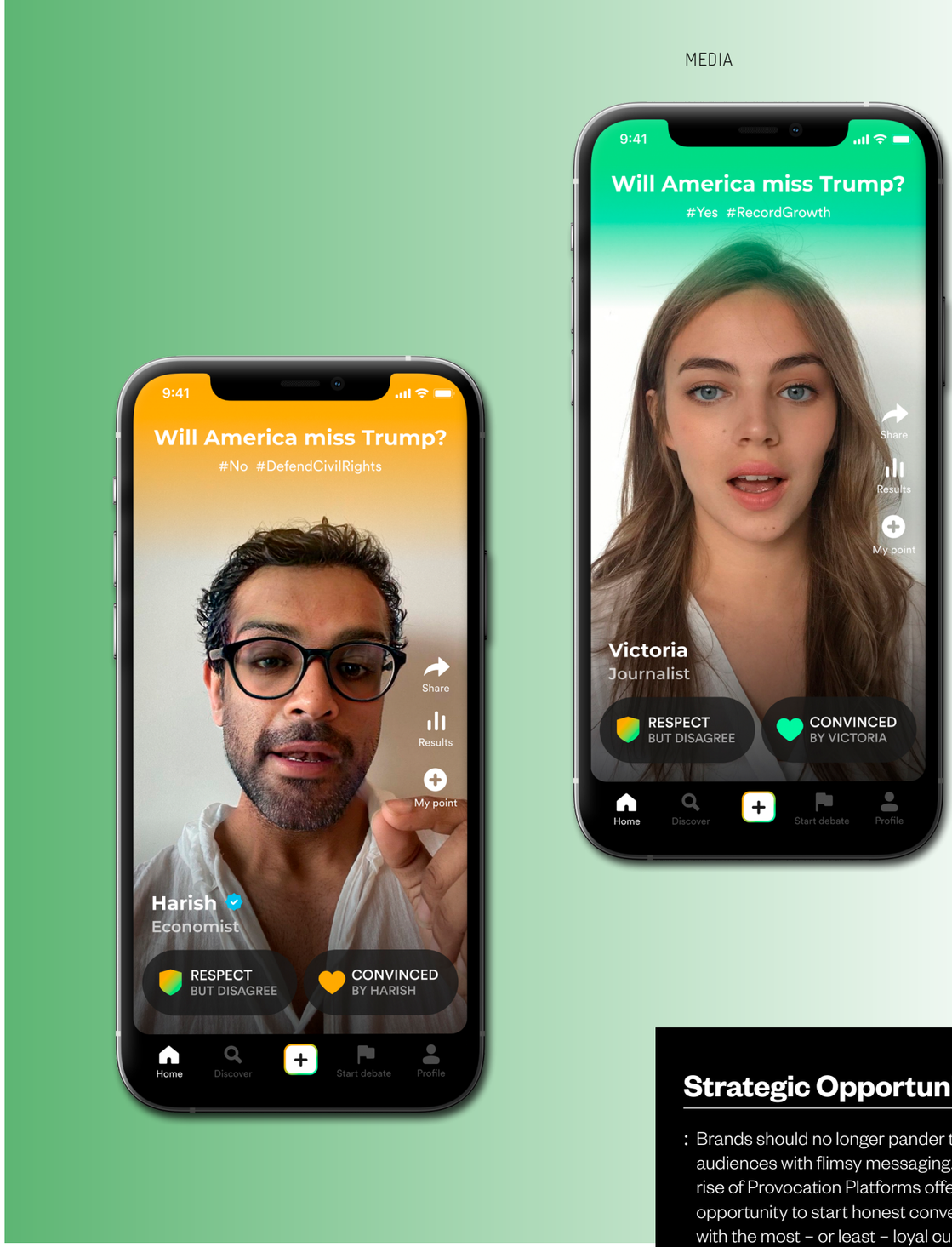
Podcasts are also diversifying to invite listeners to contribute to conversations. **Spotify** is promoting interaction among its audiences to elevate its content, giving all creators on its **Anchor** podcast app the ability to make polls or Q&As to encourage listener participation. Elsewhere, platforms such as **Meta** are trialling updates that include allowing listeners to leave comments on live broadcasts.

71% of young people feel more confident than ever to speak up online about causes they are passionate about

Source: Conscious Youth

Taking this new active media genre a step further is **Fireside**, an audio app that allows viewers to react with emojis, questions or written comments during live conversations. Showing how participation is part of its mission, Fireside is built on the notion that 'the future of entertainment is interactive'.

While Western audiences are developing an ear for this type of content, Chinese apps such as **Ximalaya** and **Lizhi** are also pioneering the Provocation Platforms trend. Indeed, many podcasts in the region already invite audiences to take part in listening circles or discussion groups – and can even offer gifts to their favourite creators.



Polemix, US

Strategic Opportunities

- Brands should no longer pander to audiences with flimsy messaging. The rise of Provocation Platforms offers an opportunity to start honest conversations with the most – or least – loyal customers
- As media is being decentralised, companies should consider handing the reins of their content to their audiences, allowing users to decide which cultural issues are discussed
- Finally, it's time to focus on real-time engagement. Use your comments sections or user participation to make all forms of entertainment an exercise in interaction



Balenciaga and Fortnite, Global

Viewpoint:

Why brands must learn from films and gaming

Brand managers should see film and gaming technology as an untapped resource instead of a new frontier to be conquered, says David Sheldon-Hicks, co-founder of **Territory Studio**.

How has the pandemic shaped consumer expectations of brand and media experiences?

Confined to four walls, the public have largely turned to their screens to find an escape from the everyday. The worlds of film and gaming have done much of the heavy lifting in this respect. At the height of the pandemic in April 2020, **Ofcom** reported that Britons were spending 40% of their waking hours watching tv, with subscriptions to Netflix, Amazon and Disney+ forecast to hit 32.4m. There was also an increase in the time spent with gaming consoles attached to TVs – doubling for the coveted 16–24 age bracket between April 2019 and April 2020.

That's a lot of media time. Are there any examples of a brand that has understood the film or gaming assignment?

With demand for audio-visual stimulation soaring, it's logical that brands would turn to these worlds for inspiration. One example of a brand doing that has done this well is luxury label **Balenciaga**, which has used video games to introduce collections, receiving rave reviews. This offered fans a fresh and immersive way to experience collections at a time when runways and stores were largely off-limits. More recently, **Oscar de la Renta** aligned itself with The Matrix franchise.

What is it about sci-fi that's particularly interesting for brands?

The sci-fi language of films has long been a source of inspiration, whether in advertisements or products themselves. It was this design language that Territory Studio's team drew from to create futuristic tv promotions for **Amazon Web Services**, showcasing its partnership with America's **NFL**. The ads illustrated real-time technology in action, including the cloud intelligence and machine learning used to track action during games.

> 'The sci-fi language of films has long been a source of inspiration, whether in advertisements or products themselves'

Are films and games inspiring new product development, too?

Wearable tech brand **Huami** came to Territory Studio with the desire to develop a science-fiction-inspired UI for its range of Amazfit Verge smartwatches. The discipline of designing for film translated very well for the brief; with such a restricted screen, and a need for clarity at a glance, the practice of translating complex information quickly on screen helped us to make the leap from silver screen to watch face with ease.

What advice can you offer companies keen to maximise on media?

Brand managers should see film and gaming technology as an untapped resource. Of course, the main incentive for brands looking to invest in new creative projects is eyeballs – audience penetration and consideration are necessary to drive sales, after all. The worlds of film and gaming already have this audience captivated, meaning it will be brands that can offer a similar level of experience that are best placed to win a seat at the table.

Entertainment

From music festivals and fandom to the design of our future homes, new technologies are transforming touchpoints in our daily lives into engaging entertainment experiences.



Tag Heuer has teamed up with Nintendo on an interactive Super Mario timepiece that integrates digital gaming tropes to track the physical activity of wearers, Global

Creator Laboratories

In the Middle East, music streaming platform **Anghami** is opening a series of **Anghami Labs** – venues with a lounge, stage and studio where creators can experiment with music inspired by both Arab and international cultures.

Initially launching in Dubai, with plans to open in Riyadh and other cities, music created in the venues will then be available exclusively within the app.

The concept also includes a partnership with hospitality provider **Addmind** to offer a fusion of Arab and international cuisines. Tony Habre, CEO of Addmind, says: 'Anghami is more than just a streaming platform. It has elevated the value of the music industry in the Middle East as a whole – Anghami Lab is an amazing and unique concept that embodies our rich Arab culture with an international twist – which we are thrilled to bring to fruition and scale.'



Race Club, South Korea



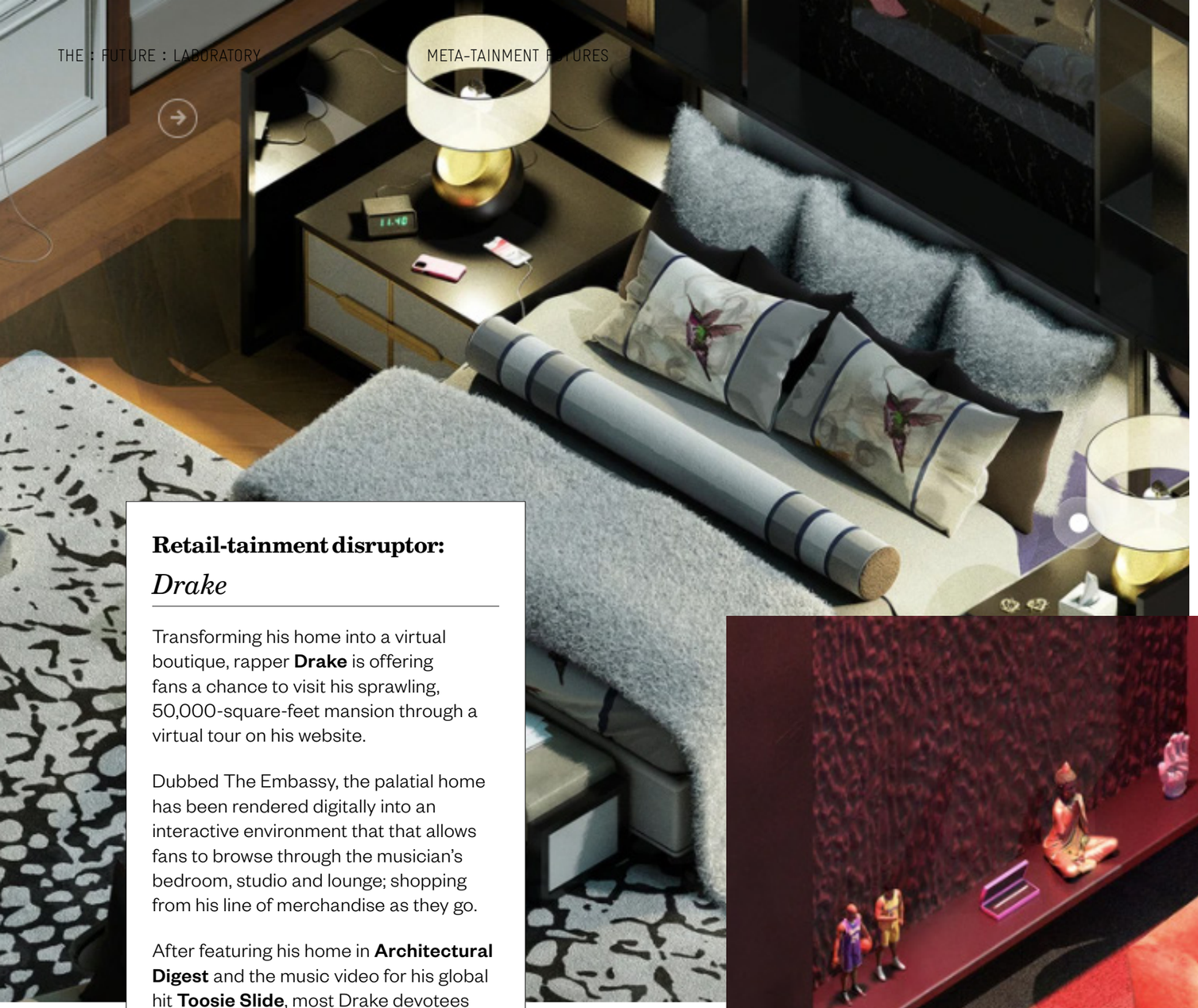
Llewellyn, Los Angeles

Media-making Homes

As the creator and curator economies reach new heights, property developers are taking inspiration from **TikTok** houses, adding media studios and recording suites to new builds.

Los Angeles-based developer **High Street Residential** is betting on this behaviour with the unveiling of its creator-friendly complex **Llewellyn**. The 318-unit building includes a soundproof room fit for musicians, video producers and social media creators. 'It's a multi-purpose room, which functions as a recording studio and a space to rehearse or even record yourself,' explains Alex Valente, senior vice-president of High Street Residential.

Elsewhere, in the Canadian province of Ontario, real estate investment trust **RioCan** is developing a two-tower residential project with a communal content studio for video and audio production that contains a green screen for special effects, production-grade lighting and acoustic panels.



Retail-tainment disruptor: *Drake*

Transforming his home into a virtual boutique, rapper **Drake** is offering fans a chance to visit his sprawling, 50,000-square-feet mansion through a virtual tour on his website.

Dubbed The Embassy, the palatial home has been rendered digitally into an interactive environment that that allows fans to browse through the musician's bedroom, studio and lounge; shopping from his line of merchandise as they go.

After featuring his home in **Architectural Digest** and the music video for his global hit **Toosie Slide**, most Drake devotees will already be familiar with the rapper's home. But in contrast to the spotless perfection in both of these projects, the digital home is strewn with personal artefacts such as misplaced papers, draped hoodies and crumpled blankets.

Granting a more intimate glimpse into his life, Drake is forging a more personal bond with his supporters and tapping into the virtual fandom market that is re-imagining the relationship between creators and fans.

Phygi-food Gets Served

Tapping into demands for phygital gaming experiences, **PlayStation** is working with Australian restaurants and **Deliveroo** to bring virtual dishes to gamers' doors.

Drawing from game titles such as Uncharted and Ratchet & Clank, the **PlayStation to Plate** campaign features in-game restaurants Mary's, The Italian Bowl and Bistro Morga, recreating virtual foods on real-life menus for people to order at home.

Led by creative experience agency **Amplify**, the campaign recognises the opportunity to promote food and drink in association with popular media and entertainment platforms.

'By surfacing the attention to detail that goes into even the incidental food found in gaming universes, we hope to give new audiences a flavour of the rich, immersive worlds and stories found only on PlayStation,' says Tim Baggott, creative director at Amplify.

In this way, PlayStation is building on the past trend for **Media Kitchens**, where dining spots from tv shows were brought to life.

Drake Related, US



Microtrend:

Digital Fandom

Forget the power of influencers – it's the power of fans that will drive entertainment's digital-first future.

Traditionally, access to musicians, actors and sportspeople has been dictated by management and contracts or tied to site-specific events. Yet, new approaches to fandom are changing this, in which the fans themselves fund – and as a result, shape – the type of experiences they receive.

Powering this shift are platforms such as **OnlyFans**, **Escapex** and **Fanhouse**, which give people access to content, live-streams and even one-to-one conversations with their idols on a subscription basis. In turn, the creators forge an additional, independent revenue stream, while building intimacy with their audience.

'[Fandom is moving] from passive appreciation and advocacy to active involvement and co-directed outcomes'

Zoe Scaman, founder, Bodacious

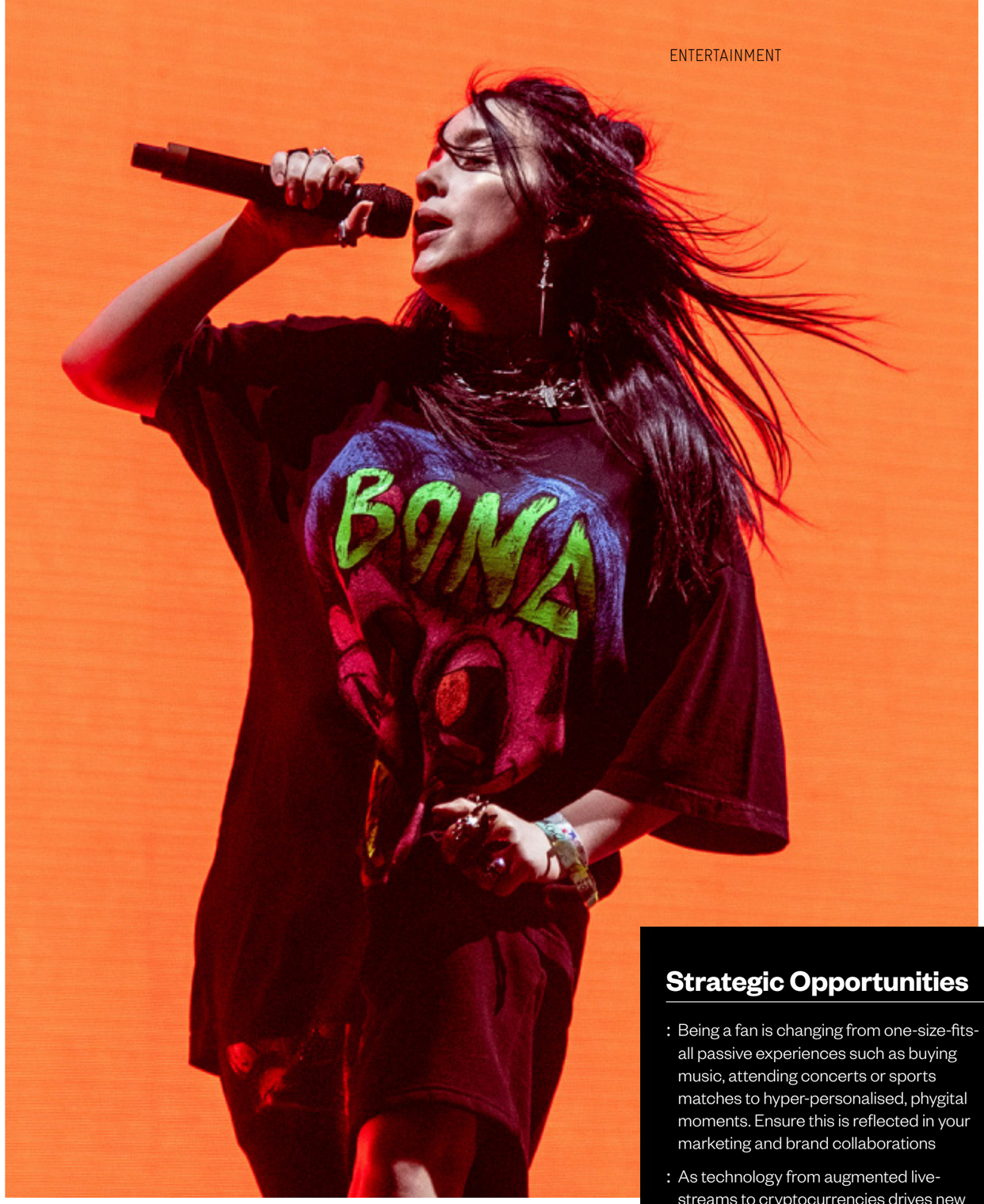
Seen in practice, rapper **Cardi B** uses OnlyFans to offer platform-exclusive content from £3.60 ($4.99, €4.04) per month, while influencer Caroline Calloway has monetised her Instagram Stories 'close friends' list. In South Korea, K-pop fan space **Universe** is hyper-personalising the fan-only experience by letting people dial into simulated telephone calls with K-pop artists, using AI-powered speech synthesis to bring the experience to life.

But the live fan experience is also evolving into immersive, game-like experiences that unite fans around a shared sense of adventure and purpose. It's what digital fandom specialist and media psychologist Dr Tunisha Singleton describes as a 'participatory culture', imbued with live chat with other fans, meme generators, retweets and customisable avatars.

In this vein, streaming platform **Twitch** rewards creators through fan loyalty by allowing fans to check in when they've viewed an advertisement during a stream, boosting creators' advertising revenue while actively engaging fans in ads and content.

Celebrities are even inviting fans to become part owners in their career journeys, rewarding those who have been integral to their success. Korean pop phenomenon **BTS** has been capitalising on the sheer force of its fan base, dubbed the BTS Army, which matched the K-pop band's donation of £728,040 ($1m, €816,470) to **Black Lives Matter** in just 24 hours. Most recently, BTS has given fans the chance to own shares in the band, after its label **Big Hit Entertainment** went public.

Other musicians are launching their own cryptocurrencies to attract support. Rapper Lil Yachty has partnered with Swiss platform **Fyooz** to create The Yachty Coin, which sold out in under 22 minutes when it was originally launched. The coin allowed fans to become shareholders in his career, while also buying access to virtual meet-and-greets with the rapper, experiences such as appearing in his music videos, private album listening parties and social media follows.



Billie Eilish's live-streamed virtual concert on platform Maestro, Global

Strategic Opportunities

- Being a fan is changing from one-size-fits-all passive experiences such as buying music, attending concerts or sports matches to hyper-personalised, phygital moments. Ensure this is reflected in your marketing and brand collaborations
- As technology from augmented live-streams to cryptocurrencies drives new forms of fan support, brands can explore how these elevated experiences can inspire greater loyalty
- Finally, as fandom thrives in the virtual realm, brands should tune into audiences and offer fan-funded events, campaigns and philanthropic moments



Lost Horizon, UK

Viewpoint:

The future of events? It's hybrid

As virtual spaces grow in number, entertainment companies must prepare for a future of immersive, hybrid events, says The Future Laboratory's applied foresight editor Adam Steel.

Why do you think a hybrid approach is the way forward for the future of events and festivals?

We've been looking at this sector in depth for the past year, and while some people are predicting a live-only return to 'normality', consumers and event organisers are now seeing the benefit in organising events that are phygital in format – it offers you a bigger reach, different ways to extend profit and participation, and allows the audience to engage with an event in ways more suited to the behaviours they developed in lockdowns or working from home.

Is there a particular event that you feel has got it right?

Lost Horizon, the world's largest music and arts event in virtual reality, is a good case in point. Created by the team behind Shangri-La, a section of the famous **Glastonbury Festival**, the fully interactive, multi-stage event could be experienced via computer, VR or mobile, and was streamed live to global viewers. Guests had computer-generated avatars, there were hologram performances, digital dance floors and hidden venues, mimicking the real-life Shangri-La.

How might this work in more commercial realms like retail and fashion?

Fashion and beauty brands also recognise the opportunity on offer. **Sephora's Virtual House of Beauty** is a phygital event in which Experience Kits are sent to attendees' homes in advance, full of products and samples to use while they tune into the event's virtual tutorials and expert Q&As. We've also seen **Selfridges** go hybrid with **Pokémon** (see page 10), while platforms like **Galaxy** feature fashion resale live-streams that fuse entertainment with sales.

> 'Lost Horizon festival featured hologram performances, digital dance floors and hidden venues, much like its real-life version'

How do you think this merging of the physical, digital and experiential worlds will pan out?

Already, relationships between physical events spaces and digital spaces are beginning to develop and become symbiotic in nature. **The Virtual Factory**, for instance, is a digital manifestation of UK arts centre The Factory, which is being built in the city of Manchester. Existing in its own right, the Virtual Factory's architecture in digital form is being reconfigured by artists who are creating work for a building that hasn't opened yet.

Finally, how do you see hybrid events developing over the next 3–5 years?

Emerging technologies will enable hybrid events to push even further forward. Haptic technology, for instance, could soon mean hands can be shaken across continents, while real-time translation tools could break down cultural boundaries between attendees. By 2030, the emergence of **advanced extended reality** (XR) and **hyper-real digital avatars** could even make it impossible to distinguish who is attending in real life and who is attending digitally.

Travel & Hospitality

Metaverse tourism is opening doors to the world, while NFT members' clubs and data-driven hotels point to a future of more collaborative hybrid hospitality.



Matthew Avallone explores the reclamation of land in La Sagrada Familia: The Collective Unification of Tijuana's Displaced Youth, about a group of artists and designers who repurpose empty infrastructures, US



TikTok Treats by Postmates in collaboration with TikTok, US

Tasty Trends

TikTok is moving into the at-home hospitality space with the launch of a virtual kitchen and delivery service. **TikTok Kitchen**, a partnership with restaurant supplier **Virtual Dining Concepts**, will use about 300 ghost restaurants to prepare meals based on the platform's viral recipes. Available in the US from March, the platform hopes to expand to more than 1,000 locations by the end of 2022.

To begin with, TikTok Kitchen will offer dishes that the platform has made viral, such as baked feta pasta – a dish that was so popular it led to feta supply chain issues across the US – as well as smash burgers and pasta chips. The menu will change each quarter, with TikTok also planning to give a cut of its profits to the creators of the recipes it features.

Some **27%** of British 18–24-year-olds post food pictures on social media daily

Source: Waitrose



Designed by Hato, the Sketch London app employs augmented realit yto add a virtual layer to the dining experience, UK

An NFT Members' Club

Flyfish Club bills itself as the world's first private dining club where membership is an NFT that allows its owners to use it as a tradeable asset.

Located in New York, the physical 10,000-square-feet space will offer cultural and culinary experiences. While all club bills are settled in dollars, membership costs 2.5 ETH (£4,574, $6,126, €5,489) and can be used by owners to generate passive incomes by leasing their tokens to non-members for access to the club's lounge or high-end sea food restaurant.

Because the fee is a one-off charge with full ownership rights attached, members also have the right to auction off their membership so that they can benefit from value fluctuations in club membership costs.



Meta-tourism in South Korea

In a new twist for travel marketing, South Korea's **Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism** and the **Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)** are encouraging people to experience the country in the metaverse before visiting in person.

The **Come Play with Korea, K-VIBE Festa** campaign allows visitors to create a personalised travel itinerary, featuring real tours and eateries, which the platform then combines into a short video reel.

> 'The metaverse is a new eco-system that can break down national borders'
>
> *Choongsub Oh, director of brand marketing, KTO*

Users can also enjoy a virtual concert by K-pop artists, as well as discover historic Korean sites within the virtual world of Korean metaverse **Zepeto**. Choongsub Oh, director of brand marketing at KTO, explains its choice of marketing medium: 'The metaverse is a new eco-system that can break down national borders and make everyone's dreams and experiences come true.'

While this builds on the ideas from our **Travel in 2030** scenario, we've also seen Singapore using streaming platform Twitch to virtually engage tourists. Both of these examples offer an evolution of **E-tourism**, where travel providers use gaming to excite customers before their trip.

Come Play with Korea, K-VIBE Festa by Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), South Korea

Disrupting censorship: *Vienna Tourist Board*

The **Vienna Tourist Board** has created an **OnlyFans** account for the city's nude works of art. The move was a reaction to possible censorship at Vienna's museums when promoting 'explicit' work by artists such as Egon Schiele and Koloman Moser on traditional social media platforms such as **TikTok** and **Instagram**.

Priced at £3.62 ($4.99, €4.28) per month, the subscription offers a free Vienna City Card or ticket to one of the featured museums in a bid to translate online engagement into footfall and tourism – a pertinent move after Vienna's tourism arrivals fell by 78.4% in 2020.

In addition to access to art, the campaign also contains promotional material, such as the **Vienna strips on OnlyFans** video, designed to connect the fine arts institutions with a young, digital-first audience.

Microtrend:
Sideline Studios

With the Creator Economy booming, broadcast studios are becoming an essential element in future residential, hospitality and leisure developments.

With 46.7m out of 50m online creators considering themselves to be amateurs, there is a growing need for accessible spaces that allow people to pursue their sideline passions, according to the **Influencer Marketing Hub**.

As examined in **Media-making Homes** (page 35), property developers are building residences with in-built recording studios and green screen rooms, which residents can rent to produce more sophisticated and creative content. Learning from this, hospitality and travel brands are also seizing the Sideline Studios opportunity.

> ‘It’s a way to create a platform for local musicians, and bring international artists to record and co-create’
>
> *Kunlé Adeyemi, architect and designer, Floating Music Hub*

The **Floating Music Hub** on the island of São Vicente, Cape Verde, promotes a collaborative exchange of creative ideas between local residents and visiting creators. Comprising three floating vessels, the venue includes a multi-purpose live performance space, a state-of-the-art recording studio, a bar and café, and a central triangular floating plaza for gatherings and live performances.

Kunlé Adeyemi, architect and designer of the Floating Music Hub, explains: ‘It’s a way to expand Cape Verde’s cultural impact, create a platform for local musicians, and bring international artists to record and co-create.’

Elsewhere, Ibiza’s **Six Senses hotel** offers guests a sense of community through an array of amenities including music and art experiences. As well as facilitating connections through its programme of creative courses, its **Beach Caves** music venue hosts emerging artist sessions, live events and has a recording studio available for private hire. By empowering guests to explore their creative potential while on holiday, Six Senses is meeting demand for engaging **Media-tels**.

In the fashion sector, eclectic streetwear brand **KidSuper Studios** has plans to establish a youthful community centre in New York. Building on founder Colm Dillane’s vision of creating an expansive art studio reminiscent of The Factory by late artist Andy Warhol, the space will cater for a range of creative interests.

In early announcements about the project, Dillane shares plans to include a football pitch, recording studio, work spaces and a delicatessen. Set to be open for 24 hours a day, the space will be sponsored by sportswear brand **Puma**, an existing KidSuper Studios collaborator.



Floating Music Hub, Cape Verde

Strategic Opportunities

- When developing properties in cities or regions known for having or attracting creative communities, companies should consider the benefit of including professional on-site studio spaces
- Take cues from Cape Verde’s Floating Music Hub. Travel firms and hotels can create opportunities and facilitate creative experimentation between local and international creatives
- Finally, future hospitality venues should tap into the hobbies and interests of younger urban dwellers – providing inspiring and effervescent destinations for enriching and collaborative hangouts



Estudio Felipe Escudero (EFE) designed a dream-like interior for a boutique motel room that hints to Japanese manga and vaporwave aesthetics, Ecuador

Viewpoint:

Data-driven escapes

Media and technology brands are harnessing their consumer insights to design tailored experiences for travellers. LS:N Global foresight analyst Abi Buller tells us how they are doing it.

Consumers are easing their way back into travel, but how are they choosing where to go?

Amid confusing pandemic-related protocols, research by **Travel Agent Central** shows that among people who sometimes or rarely used a travel adviser pre-pandemic, 44% say they are more likely to use one now. As a result, travel platforms are combining this desire for human insight with data gleaned from customer interactions to create new kinds of breaks.

Can you give us an example of how and where this is happening globally?

For technology companies, popular search terms and trending hashtags are being analysed to inform cultural events. This is already under way in China, where platforms such as Alibaba-owned **Fliggy** are tapping into online trends to create experiences that cater for hyper-local interests. Using its extensive knowledge of Chinese consumers, the platform created the **Desert Hertz Music Festival** – a three-day long music festival, inviting people to enjoy a range of cultural activities in the Shapotou desert.

Could data from people's search terms also be used to develop more consumer-centric hotels?

Online travel agent **Kayak** has used its digitally enhanced hotel and design lab to open a boutique hotel in Miami Beach, Florida, boasting tech-enhanced amenities to meet consumer demand.

There's contactless digital check-in and in-room devices such as **Apple** TVs. Its on-site restaurant Layla combines the technical capabilities of Kayak with that of dining reservations site **OpenTable**.

It still seems like a big jump – and a bigger risk – for digital-first platforms to create real-world venues.

With Kayak, it enlisted the help of lifestyle-centric hotel brand **Life House** to help guide its move into the hospitality sector. The brand also plans to use this site as a design lab to test and refine its hospitality technology for future iterations, drawing on its insights and using consumer and pricing data from the billions of travel queries it receives each year.

> 'Popular search terms and trending hashtags are being analysed to inform new cultural events'

What would your parting advice be for brands that want to unite data and real-world consumer interactions?

Examine the opportunities. Can you collaborate with local media brands to translate their market insight into new experiences? Consider how your data could be harnessed to design events, restaurants and even hotels that reflect people's passions. Finally, be transparent with customers about data-driven innovations.

Index

Retail

• Nikeverse Rising
Sportswear behemoth Nike has acquired digital collectibles platform RTFKT as it continues its push into the metaverse

• Digital Feedback
For Goat, the creation of a proprietary digital space for its special sales days offers its team instant insights into which items, design cues or trends are resonating with shoppers

• A Lighter Footprint
ByondXR posits that metaverse retail – as in true-to-life 3D shoppable environments – could be an eco-solution for conscious retail companies

• Meta-retail Disruptor: Republic Realm
With holdings in 19 metaverse realms, its developments include a mall that's leased to brands selling virtual fashion, alongside digital land

• Microtrend: Interactive Eco-labels
Brands are redesigning clothing and footwear labels to display everything from information about a product's carbon emissions to eco-conscious disposal

• Viewpoint: Justin Hochberg
The CEO of Virtual Brand Group explains the untapped benefits the metaverse offers, from R&D to phygital marketing and avatar behaviour analysis

Luxury

• Selfridges Goes Cyberpunk
To mark the 25th anniversary of Pokémon, Selfridges teamed up with clothing brand Charli Cohen to launch a unique digital shopping experience

• Non-fungible Bags
US artist Mason Rothschild is challenging assumptions about luxury NFTs with virtual Birkin bags that emulate Hermès's iconic products

• Louis the Game
Luxury house Louis Vuitton recently translated its founder's story into a futuristic gaming experience to celebrate the label's 200th anniversary

• Digi-luxe Disruptor: Red DAO
Digital fashion collective and investor Red DAO has already purchased Dolce & Gabbana's inaugural NFT, the Doge Crown, for a cool £4.3m ($5.7m, €5m)

• Microtrend: Crypto-cliques
Why luxury brands need to immerse themselves in next-generation social media and metaverse platforms

• Viewpoint: Daniella Loftus
The Red DAO member explains why NFTs and digital goods can open new revenue streams and audience engagement

Fashion

• Metaversal Fashion Design
Fashion school Istituto Marangoni Miami (IMM) is launching a metaverse-based scholarship in partnership with social media app Zepeto

• Modest Fashion NFTs
Fashion Cults' NFTs seek to promote equality, diversity and racial justice through the medium of modest digital fashion

• Social Customer Service
How social shopping platform provides reviews, real-time advice and product information directly to shoppers

• Phygi-fashion Disruptor: Loanhood
The rise in more sustainable approaches to fashion is giving rise to community-first clothes-swap sites like Loanhood

• Microtrend: Fashion Meta-networks
In a bid to reconnect fashion communities, luxury companies are experimenting with alternative digital spaces for design inspiration and trade

• Viewpoint: Brad Morris
The founder of digital fashion house MYAMI discusses how NFTs can become tools for promoting environmental action among consumers

Health & Beauty

• Fragrant Soundscapes
L'Oréal is embracing the limitations of selling scent online by creating unique palettes of sounds that emulate fragrance notes

• Immersive Fitness
A growing number of platforms are creating immersive social exercise experiences rooted in tech to counteract the rise of stationary living

• Multimedia Meditation
US start-up Resonate is banking on meditative hardware, launching a headset that offers instant respite from daily stressors

• Digi-health Disruptor: Yellow Trip Road
The collective's Yellow Trip Road platform is promoting conversations about mental wellbeing through the use of virtual art and fashion

• Microtrend: Isolated Intimacy
New dating, sex and self-love services are emerging to re-assess the meaning of intimacy in a digital-first sexverse

• Viewpoint: Charlotte van Loock
The co-founder of skincare brand Routinely on using data to tailor and adapt self-care routines to people's changing lifestyles

Index

Youth

• Post-swipe Dating
In an era increasingly defined by social media crushes and non-committal mindsets, Lolly is a dating app designed specifically for Generation Z seeking post-pandemic connections

• Creator Chart-toppers
Music magazine Billboard is working with Logitech to introduce a ranking system for young digital creators who are driving music consumption

• Insta–television
As a way of engaging Gen Z audiences, UK broadcaster Channel 4 and Instagram have teamed up to launch a reality TV series about a group of young creatives

• In-game Disruptor: Grand Theft Auto
Pharmaceutical company Pfizer is targeting Gen Z gamers with the launch of a Virtual Vaccination Centre in Cidade Alta, a server within video game Grand Theft Auto

• Microtrend: Crowdsourced Companions
Digital apps are helping despondent members of Generation Z to expand their social groups in safe and meaningful ways

• Viewpoint: Sango
A spokesperson for app tells us how audio-based engagement is fostering community for Muslims across the world

Media

• Tune into TikTok
The social media platform is moving into the radio business, with a group of TikTok creators presenting music and discussing trending songs

• Non-fungible Incubators
Billing itself as a 'passport for the metaverse', Islands is a new platform helping to initiate newcomers into the world of NFT art and crypto-assets

• The Alternet's Got Talent
Hinting at a phygital future for reality tv, Alter Ego is a talent show that allows contestants to perform as avatars

• Disrupting Influence: Emcee
A platform where content curators share everything from playlists and recipes to favourite books or most-desired fashion

• Microtrend: Provocation Platforms
As people step out of their comfort zones in favour of dissenting perspectives, this search for discomfort is filtering into the mainstream media

• Viewpoint: David Sheldon-Hicks
The co-founder of Territory Studio says brands should embrace film and gaming technology as an untapped marketing resource

Entertainment

• Creator Laboratories
In the Middle East, Anghami Labs are providing venues where creators can experiment with music inspired by both Arab and international cultures

• Media-making Homes
Property developers are taking inspiration from TikTok houses, adding media studios and recording suites to new builds

• Phygi-food Gets Served
Food is going phygital as PlayStation works with Australian restaurants and Deliveroo to bring virtual dishes to gamers' doors

• Retail-tainment Disruptor: Drake
Rapper Drake is offering fans a chance to visit his sprawling, 50,000-square-feet mansion through a virtual tour on his website

• Microtrend: Digital Fandom
Forget the power of influencers – it's the power of fans that will drive entertainment's new digital future

• Viewpoint: Adam Steel
As virtual spaces grow in number, entertainment companies must prepare for a future of immersive, hybrid events, says The Future Laboratory's applied foresight editor

Travel & Hospitality

• An NFT Members' Club
Flyfish Club bills itself as the world's first private dining club where membership is an NFT that allows its owners to use it as a tradeable asset

• Tasty Trends
TikTok is moving into home hospitality with a virtual kitchen and delivery service based on viral recipes from the platform

• Meta-tourism in South Korea
The Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) is encouraging people to experience the country in the metaverse before visiting in person

• Disrupting Censorship: Vienna Tourist Board
The VTO has turned to OnlyFans to promote the city's nude works of art – a reaction to possible censorship at Vienna's museums when promoting 'explicit' work by artists

• Microtrend: Sideline Studios
Broadcast studios are becoming an essential element in future residential, hospitality and travel developments

• Viewpoint: Abi Buller
LS:N Global's foresight analyst on how media and technology brands are using data to tailor experiences for travellers

Glossary

Artificial intelligence (AI)
A field that uses computers and machines to mimic the problem- solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind, and computer science and datasets to enable problem-solving.

Augmented reality (AR)
A technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user's view of the real world, thus providing a composite view.

Avatar
A graphical illustration of a person that represents them on the internet. This can be a 2D icon such as on social media pages or a 3D figure such as in video games.

Blockchain
A shared, immutable ledger that facilitates the process of recording transactions and tracking assets. An asset can be tangible (a house, car, cash, land) or intangible (intellectual property, patents, copyrights, branding). Virtually anything of value can be tracked and traded on a blockchain network.

Creator economy
A software-facilitated eco-system that allows creators to earn revenue from their creations. Examples of creator economy software platforms include Twitch, Substack, OnlyFans, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok and Patreon.

DAO
A Decentralised Autonomous Organisation (DAO) is a crypto-native community that uses the blockchain to manage governance. DAO structures allow various stakeholders to communally invest in and collect assets such as NFTs (see Non-fungible tokens).

Digital fashion
Also known as virtual or immaterial fashion, digital fashion comprises garments, accessories or footwear that exists only on web-based platforms. It can comprise clothing worn by people's avatars, a collectible digital asset such as an NFT (see Non-fungible tokens), or an AR filter that can be layered over a person's photograph or digital image.

Digital tokens
A digital representation of value or rights that is offered and sold online. Digital tokens can be fungible and interchangeable, or they can be non-fungible, meaning non-interchangeable and unique (see Non-fungible tokens). Digital tokens are created to generate value on the web. Some digital tokens reflect the rising trend of individuals to mint their own digital tokens for people to purchase, especially in the digital fandom realm, enabling the public to have a stake in the future decisions or output from content creators themselves.

Discord
Discord is a voice, video and text communication service where people can hang out and talk with their friends and communities. Users can create 'servers,' which are spaces dedicated to topics they are interested in, from hobbies, to study or advice groups.

Gather
Gather, also known as Gather Town, is a web-conferencing software like Zoom, but with the ability to customise and navigate the virtual space you are occupying. Users are presented as avatars that can move around the space and interact with one another.

Haptic technologies
Technologies that engage users' tactile senses to provide a deeper and more immersive experience. Products that offer haptic feedback, such as some game controllers, often provide different kinds of sensations to correspond with different visual and audio stimuli.



Forever Meadow by PITCH STUDIOS was commissioned by SPACE10's Everyday Experiments to explore how future technologies could impact everyday lives, UK

Glossary

Hologram
A three-dimensional image formed by the interference of light beams from a laser or other light source.

Live-streaming
Live-streaming technology enables users to watch, create and share videos in real time on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

Metaverse
In its current iteration, the metaverse is a digital space that combines aspects of social media, online gaming, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and cryptocurrencies to allow users to interact virtually. More broadly, it reflects a shift in how we interact with technology, and the definition could change as technologies and use cases for the metaverse evolve.

Non-fungible tokens (NFTs)
Non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, are digital tokens that exist on a blockchain with unique identification codes and metadata that distinguish them from each other. This differs from fungible tokens like cryptocurrencies, which are identical to each other and can be used as a medium for commercial transactions. Non-fungible tokens are more like collectible assets such as art. (For more, see Digital tokens)

POAP
Short for Proof of Attendance Protocol, a POAP is a method of keeping a reliable record of life experiences. Each time they take part on an event, POAP collectors get a unique badge that is supported by a cryptographic record. These badges are non-fungible tokens and be used as a tool for loyalty, to unlock benefits or access to gated online communities.

Roblox
Roblox is an online platform where people play games made by other users. On Roblox, the fun doesn't just come from playing games, it also comes from making games. Users can buy and spend virtual currency, Robux, on items within Roblox games.

Virtual reality
A three-dimensional, computer- generated environment that a person can explore and interact with. That person becomes part of this virtual world, or is immersed within it and, while there, can manipulate objects or perform a series of actions.

Web 3
This is the idea that the next era of the web will be based around blockchain, decentralisation and digital token economics. Web3 has grown in response to power on the internet currently being held by a few big companies such as Apple, Facebook and Google.

XR
XR stands for 'extended reality,' and can be considered an umbrella term that covers VR, AR, and MR (VR and AR combined). XR enhances the human-to-PC screen interface and modifies it, through either immersing a person in a virtual environment (VR) or by augmenting their surrounds, either through visual layers (AR) or sensory stimuli like scent and sound.

Zepeto
A social media metaverse where users can experience a virtual world as their own avatar (see Roblox) and can customise their 3D avatar to look like them, with the ability to connect with and meet people from all over the world, take part in online games and tasks, build spaces and explore virtual items from brands.



Next Now, directed by Thomas Traum, is a promotional film for STH BNK by Beulah, a mixed-use development aiming to realise the phygital future of retail, Australia

Make a better future happen

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

Did you know that members get free access to all of our trend reports?

We can also deliver our research to your business in a number of ways, from in-house presentations to strategic workshops and bespoke reports.

If you want to find out more, say **hello@thefuturelaboratory.com**

Co-founder : Chris Sanderson
Co-founder : Martin Raymond
CEO : Cliff Bunting
Head of strategy : Rachele Simms
Head of marketing : Rodrigo Tobal

Foresight editor : Kathryn Bishop
Deputy foresight editor : Holly Friend
Foresight analyst : Abi Buller
Foresight analyst : Lavinia Fasano
Senior creative foresight analyst : Olivia Houghton
Creative foresight analyst : Savannah Scott
Creative foresight analyst : Emily Rhodes
The Future Laboratory intern 21/22 : Isabelle Jones

Strategic foresight editor : Adam Steel
Senior strategic foresight writer : Darian Nugent
Presentations editor : Tilly Thorns

Strategy director : Louise French
Futures director : Victoria Buchanan
Futures analyst : Rachael Stott
Senior strategic researcher : Maryam Amjad
Junior futures analyst : Gursharan Panesar

Art director : Britt Berden
Designer : Samuel Davies
Creative artworker : Amber Richards
Senior sub-editor : Ian Gill
Senior production planner : Madeleine Watts
Senior events manager : Philip Franklin-Slattery

Senior brand & content marketing manager : Louise Lee
Marketing assistant : Emily Kelly

The Future Laboratory
6 Orsman Road, London N1 5RA, UK
Phone: +44 20 7791 2020
Email: office@thefuturelaboratory.com

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 eight industry sectors.

Find out more: LSN.global : thefuturelaboratory.com

Contact: For further information on all our services please contact hello@lsnglobal.com or call +44 20 7791 2020

Leeza Pritychenko for The Future Laboratory