

# VISIONS

REPORT

2022



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# VISIONS

A home for our  
biggest ideas.

We're in the midst of the greatest technological shift in a generation. The town square is now fully digitized. Our every interaction is quantified. Automation and artificial intelligence pose both the greatest hope, and the greatest challenge, that we will face in the evolution of our species.

And yet, Commerce stands at the center of it all. We all have to engage in commerce to exist in the modern era. *Where* commerce happens, however, is changing. The world is more transactional than ever before.

It's because of this we believe that Commerce can affect these outcomes to be more equitable and more sustainable. We can use Commerce to affect great change in our world. In this year's annual report, we'll examine the three areas where the greatest shifts are occurring: **Consumer**, **Culture**, and **Modernity**. We'll ask hard questions and propose some solutions. VISIONS isn't a trends report as much as it is a recognition of the underlying psychological and philosophical ideas that are shaping the world around us.

The future is up to us. We can change the future.

— Phillip and Brian

## Methodology

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+ To understand how key themes in this report manifest within the consumer mindset, we conducted an online survey with 1,000 consumers across the US, between 18-64 years old

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+ Survey was conducted May 5-12th, 2022

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+ All respondents were screened for shopping behaviors, personally earned income, and digital savviness

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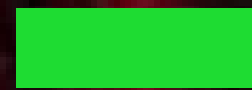
+ Fieldwork was powered by Toluna

CONSUMER / 1

# THE HOMOGENIZATION OF EXPERIENCES

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THE BLAHIFICATION OF  
ONLINE SHOPPING



2022



CONSUMER /1

# THE HOMOGENIZATION OF EXPERIENCES



+ I'm tired. Are you tired?

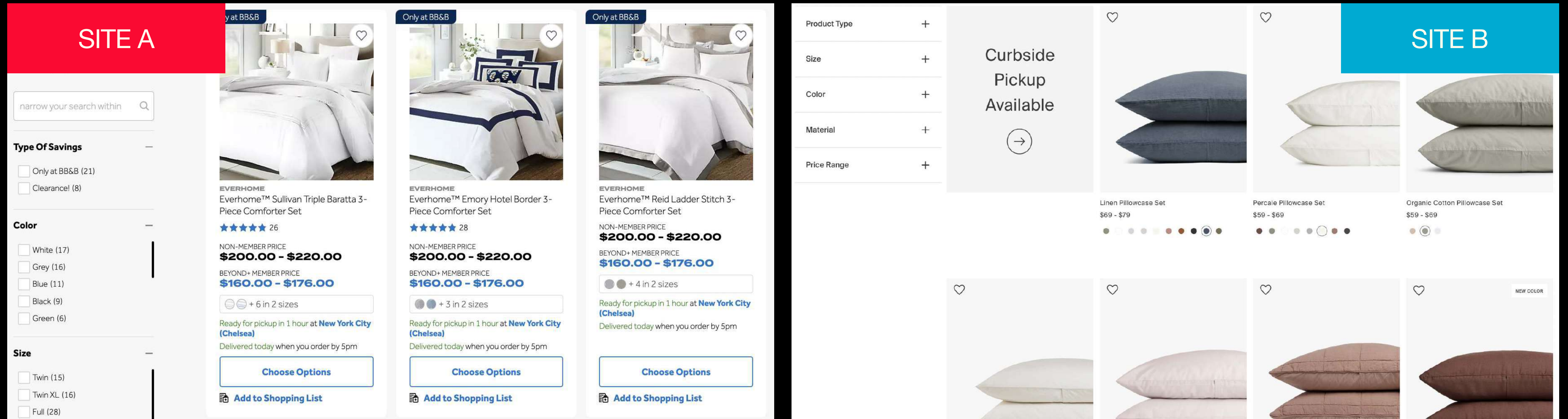
There are too many choices. What to watch, what to wear, where to go on vacation. If our personal lives are riddled with decisions, you can betcha bottom dollar that our work lives are orders of magnitude more complicated.

The latent exhaustion we all feel is being driven by a certain type of decision fatigue.

The SaaS era and cloud platforms have limited the quantity and quality of decisions that marketers and technologists need to make. This limited scope of decision making frees up emotional margin to focus on being exceptional at selling and delivering a quality product — by not implementing commoditized software.

In this era, then, doing things differently is how to stand out. Because when you give up choice and just rely on best practices or pre-baked solutions, you give up your power.

# Lose the header, lose the brand?



We showed respondents two sites specialized in bedding: a mass retailer and a luxury DTC brand. We asked them to rate a product listing page on its user-friendliness, look and feel, and perceived value. Without clear and concise brand cues, results were split on which site had a more distinct look and feel (41% vs. 41%).

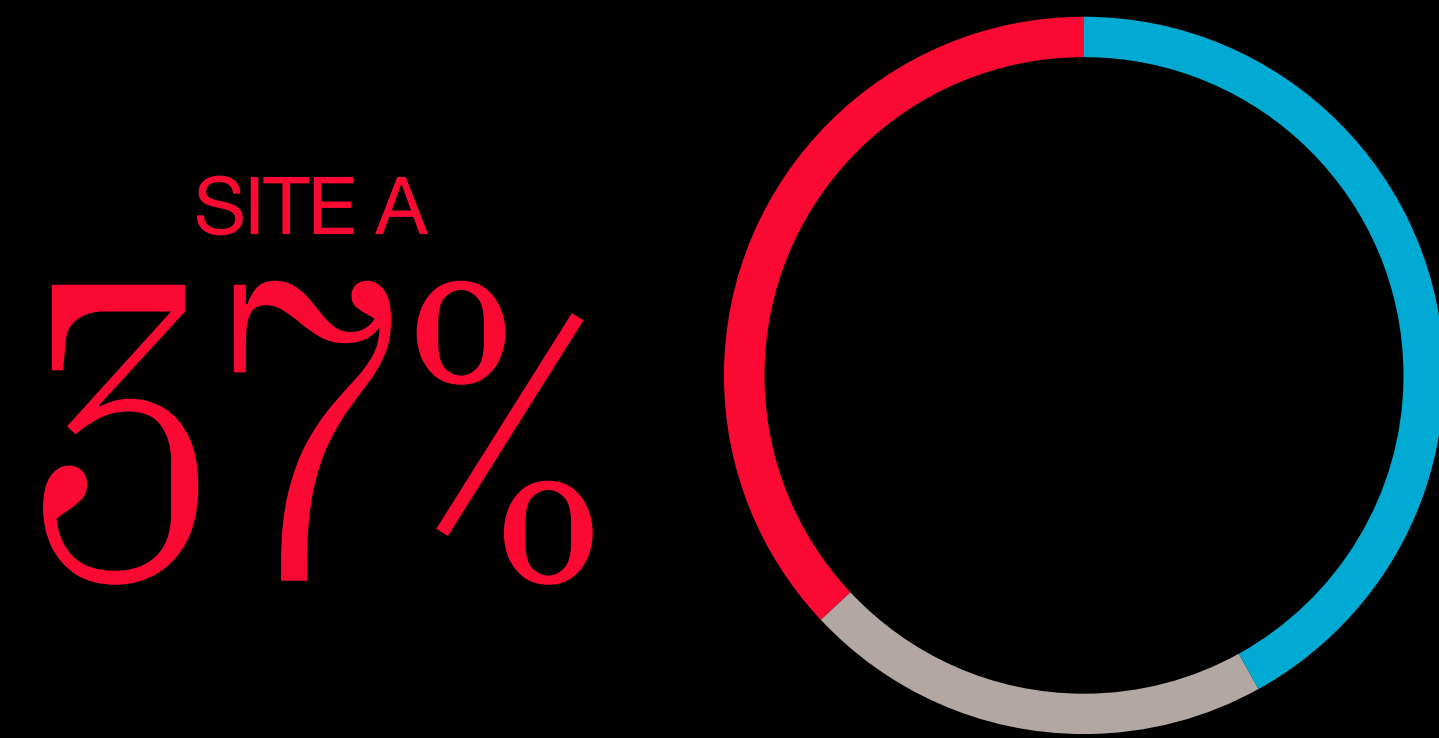
64%

Future Commerce Consumer Survey, May 2022.

AGREE IT'S RARE TO COME ACROSS A WEBSITE THAT FEELS UNIQUE OR HAS UNEXPECTED FUNCTIONALITY

# Elevated Environment ≠ Enhanced Experience

Is more luxurious & high-end



21% did not choose



Has more intuitive navigation



23% did not choose

When presented a product listing page from a mass retailer and a luxury DTC brand, respondents to our survey felt the higher-end site had a more luxe offering but had less intuitive navigation and functionality.



BUT for ALL its POWER,  
ECOM

HAS BECOME  
BORING. HOMOGENOUS.  
SAMEY-SAMEY. DECISION  
FATIGUE BEGETS a SORT  
of PRIX-FIXE MENU for  
BUYING THINGS ONLINE THAT  
HAS LED to

EVERYTHING  
LOOKING & FEELING IDENTICAL

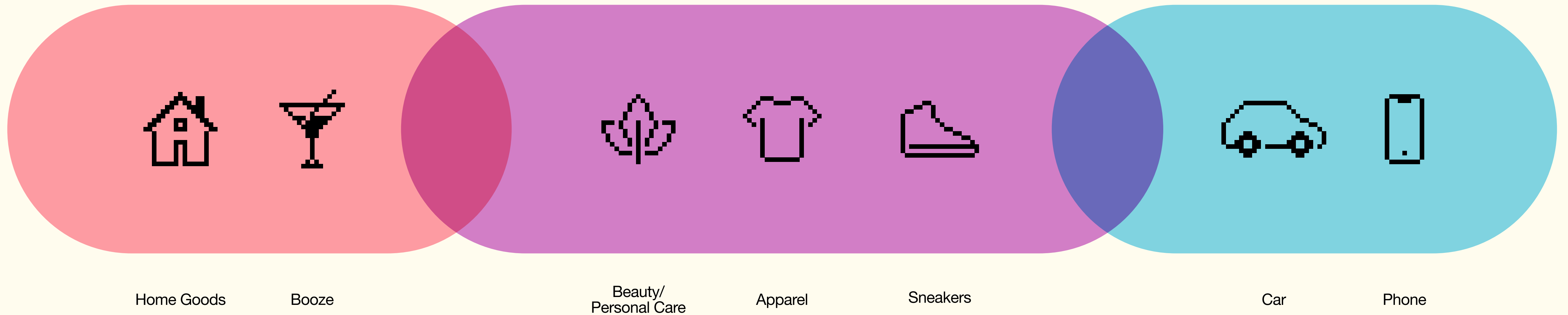
THE  
WEB HAS  
BECOME THE  
MILD-MILD  
WEST

BRANDS HAVE DONE to  
CONSUMERS

WHAT THEY HAVE DONE to  
THEMSELVES:  
BY ELIMINATING the  
“PARADOX of  
CHOICE”, THEY HAVE  
REPLACED it with UTTERLY

NO CHOICE at ALL

# Paradox of Choice: The Private Utility to Public Identity Continuum



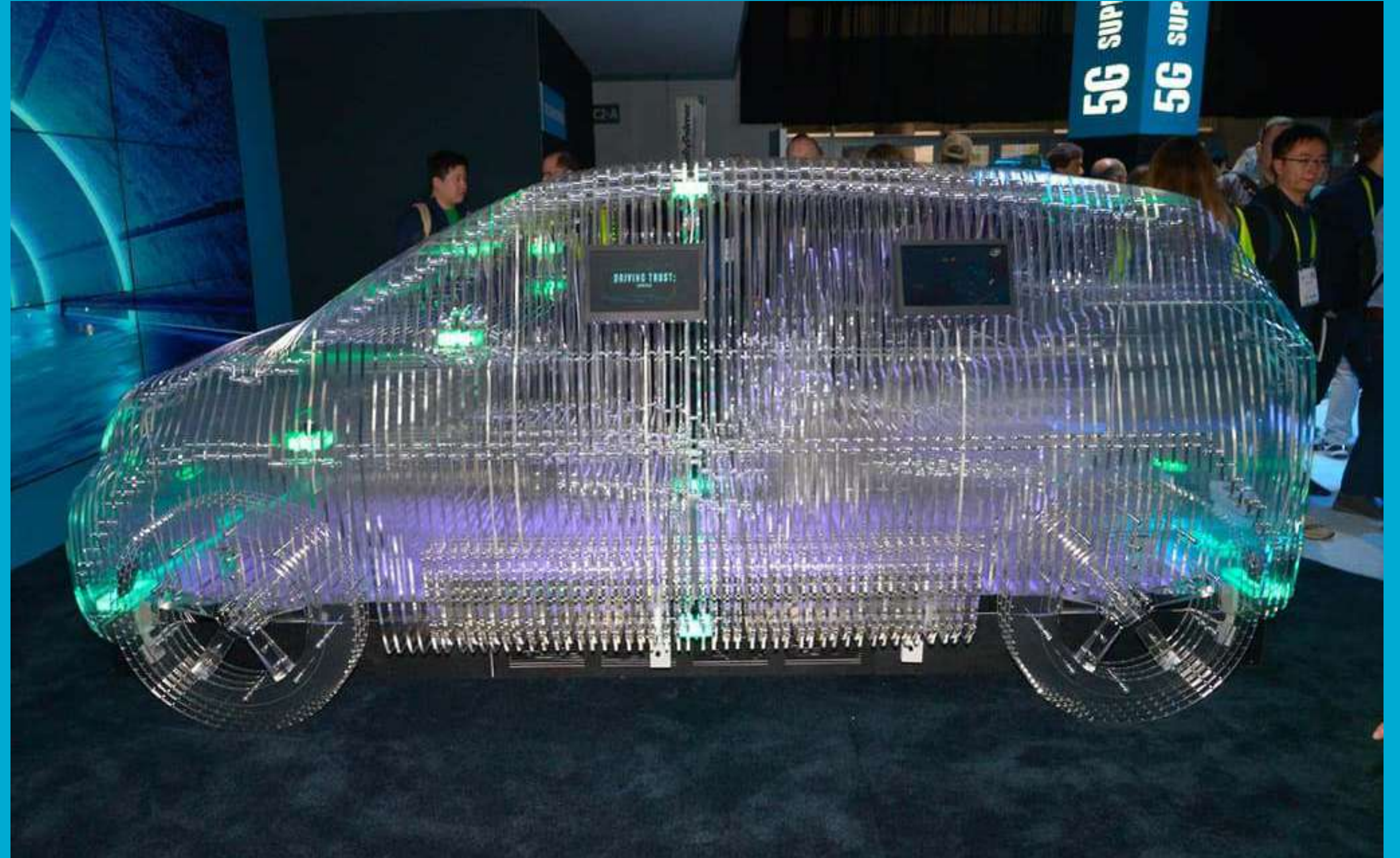
## Private Utility

In categories with infinite choice, the brand matters less than quality.

## Public Identity

In categories with a handful of choices, the brand matters most.

# Future Utility Commidification: Will Automation Make Transportation Boring?



Source: [Carsales.com, Cars Will Become Soulless  
Homogenous Blobs](https://www.carsales.com.au/news/industry/cars-will-become-soulless-homogenous-blobs)

“The future of mainstream cars is bleak... Self-driving cars, robotaxis and car-sharing will spell cheap, basic mobility. Safer, greener, connected and probably a lot more comfortable, but batsh\*t boring.”

# “Dork Mode” — An Anti-design Pattern for Emotional Loyalty

The Dork Mode manifesto — give your customers the ability to engage with your brand in a way that feels like an unlock. An Easter egg. An experience that allows them to turn off the mundane and engage the unexpected.

- + *IT SHOULD TARGET YOUR BIGGEST FANS.*
- + *IT SHOULD FEEL LIKE AN “EASTER EGG”.*
- + *IT SHOULD REFLECT AND AMPLIFY THE WAYS YOUR VIPS ALREADY CELEBRATE THE BRAND.*
- + *IT SHOULD THROW “BEST PRACTICES” OUT THE WINDOW.*

*Best practices create functional websites, but they also create boring websites. You want to create an experience that encourages the VIP to linger, browse and discover.*

Alex Greifeld, Author of *No Best Practices*

MENU

FREE SHIPPING FOR ORDERS OVER \$99

CART

# THE HOME DEPOT



## Exclusive HUSKY 16 oz. Fiberglass Claw Hammer

★★★★★ (258)

\$11.97

ADD TO CART

The 16 oz. curved hammer features a forward weight design to create more force with each swing, reducing the amount of blows needed to accomplish each task. This grip conforms with ergonomics for giving you maximum swinging and anti-vibration and has a curved grip for hooking usage while a thumb indent provides striking accuracy. The balance and smooth swing action associated with this hammer result in less user fatigue and increased productivity on the job site. It's a good and convenient design hammer for DIY striking and pulling nails.

- Forward weight design efficiency striking
- Exceeds ANSI specifications
- Magnetic nail starter
- Backed by a lifetime warranty. If your Husky product ever fails, bring it back and we will replace it. No questions asked.
- Grip conforms with ergonomics

THIS WEBSITE USES 🍪 TO ENSURE YOU WILL GET THE BEST EXPERIENCE. [LEARN MORE](#)

DECLINE

ACCEPT

We're proposing a better path forward. If the average site user can flip a switch to activate "dark mode", then a brand can identify its most loyal, engaged users and provide them with a "dork mode" experience. This is a mockup of what Dork Mode might look like for The Home Depot.



*Reducing friction is great for scraping incremental conversions off the floor – winning over shoppers who are on a mission to find “product x”, but have little to no relationship with your brand.*

*It treats your customer base as a monolith, assuming that your best customers want the same frictionless experience as casual browsers. And ironically, it completely ignores two other popular industry talk tracks: personalization and customer journey mapping.*

Alex Greifeld, *Insiders #107: Dork Mode: An Antidote to the Sea of Sameness*

# Plug and Play Has Its Limits: The Quilt

For all of our yawping about Customer Experience, the eCommerce industry has given a non-trivial amount of digital real estate licensed out to third-party companies. UGC, Ratings and Reviews, Store Locators... you name it, there's a SaaS plugin for it. As much as 30% of your customer experience is fractionalized into small windows into other businesses' experiences.

This is **The Experience Quilt**: diverse and distinct parts of the customer journey are sewn together into a larger whole. At its best, The Quilt provides a sense of warmth, comfort, familiarity. At its worst, the quilt is nondistinct, repetitious, difficult to replicate or repair; a patchwork of many eras of trends woven together into a piece that has one novel application. Brands no longer own their customer experiences — instead default 3rd party experiences are dominating the web.

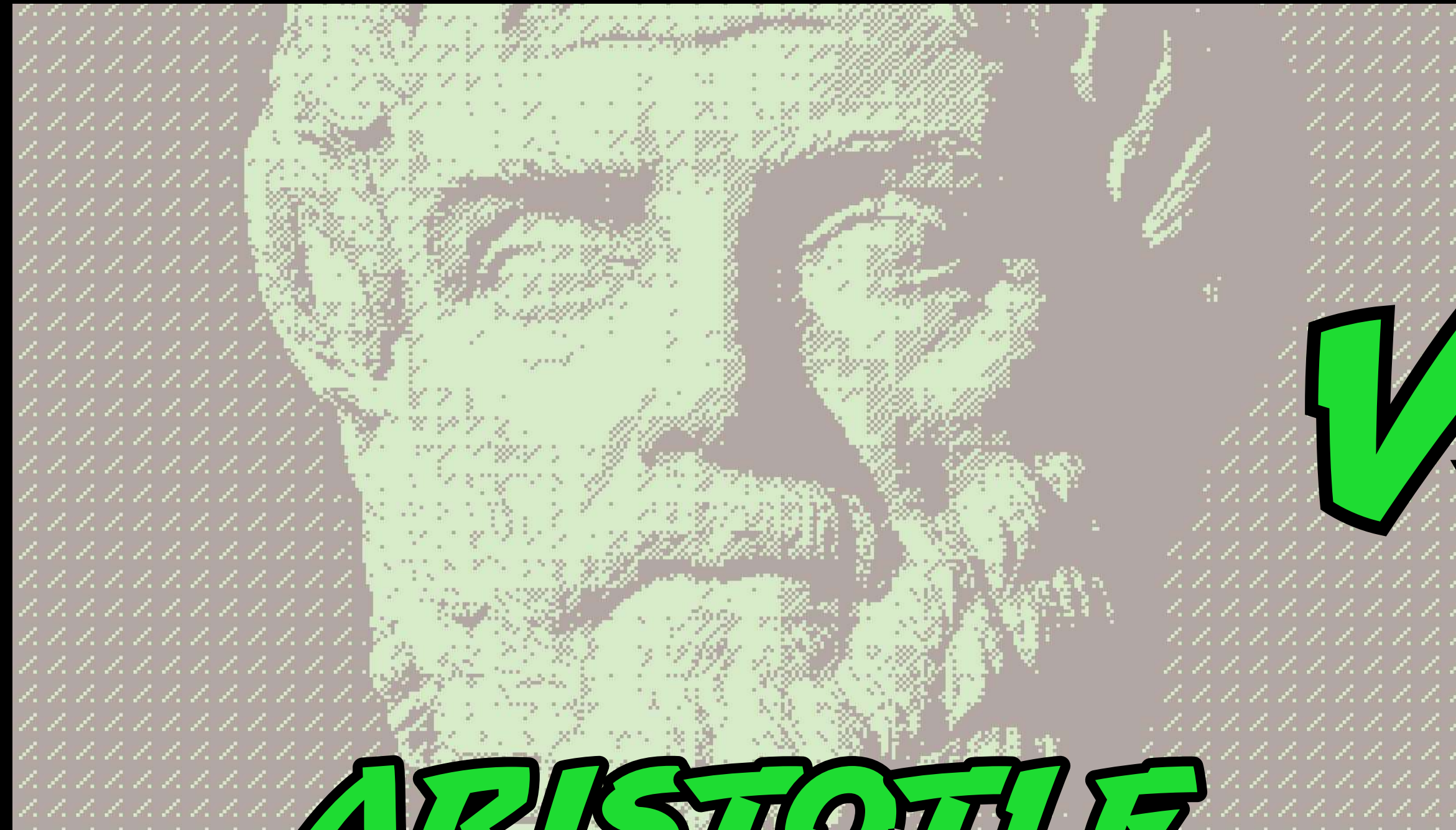
PEOPLE WANT the NICHE,  
the UNEXPECTED, the AVANT  
GARDE. BUT THAT DOESN'T  
LEAD to INFINITE  
GROWTH.

The SAME COMPANY THAT  
PRODUCED ROMA and a  
MARRIAGE STORY ALSO  
PRODUCED

is it CAKE?"

— Phillip

# Power Dynamics: Brands vs Customers



**ARISTOTLE**

Deliver on customer expectations  
*The power belongs to the customer*

**VS**



**FOUCAULT**

Engage in discourse and rebalance the power dynamic  
*The power is shared between brand and customer*

# Brands Would Do Well to Understand Philosophy

Best practice thinking today for customer purchasing paths follows an **Aristotelian Philosophy** — in terms of what is natural to the human being (i.e. what is intuitive). It is intuitive — natural — for us to use the search bar to find what we want. It is natural for us to have visual and color cues for actions such as add-to-cart. It is natural for us to use broadly-recognized symbols and words to represent navigational features and elements.

Many marketers think that permitting, demanding, and motivating are your options for controlling a consumer's behavior. **Foucault** might argue that the outcomes of these types of initiatives are nearly impossible to predict because power structures are too complex, too nuanced to understand. Instead, discourse and passing of knowledge are the only way to wield power.

# Phenomenological Brands

Brands exist to deliver experiences but our means of rating them are inherently subjective. Phenomenology is the study of consciousness and personal experiences.

The beginning of wisdom is understanding, and to understand we must promote discourse.

Instead, brands passively surveil customers, interpret their intentions, and pat themselves on the back for their cleverness. Why don't we speak with our consumers?



Plato's Meno depicts socratic dialogue between Socrates and Meno, discussing the nature of virtue.

CONSUMER / 2

# KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

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NOBODY EVER GOT  
FIRED FOR BUYING SHOPIFY

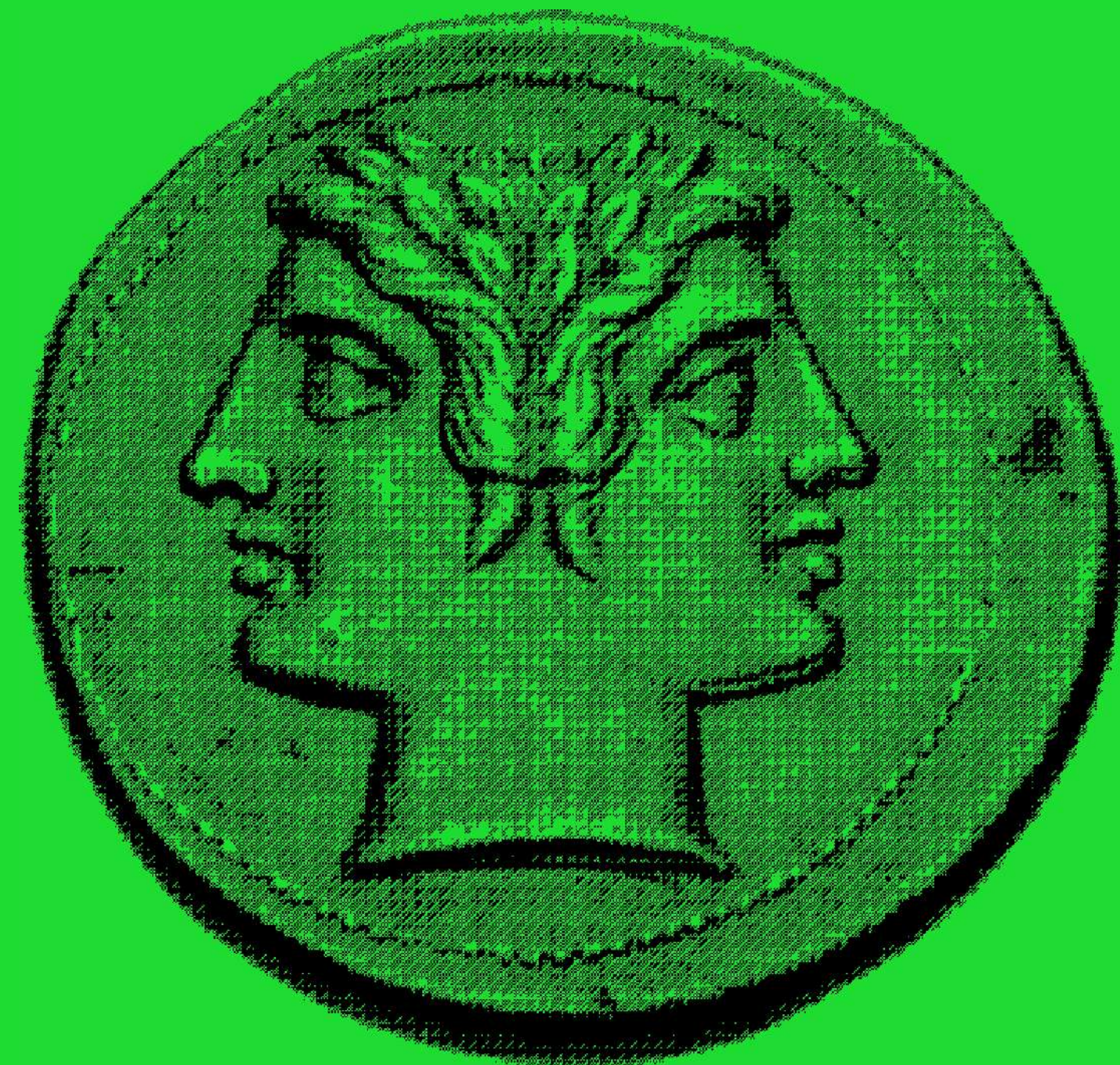


2022



# CONSUMER / 2

## KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES



+ Jonesing for change? Hardly.

People influence other people's decisions. Like. Obviously. This is no more evident than in the trends and fads that we go through in eCommerce. Businesses are not immune to this phenomena: software itself goes through fads and fashion. Salesforce and Shopify are exemplars of trends that become self-reinforcing decisions for specific industries: people buy and implement the software that their closest competitors buy and implement. And round and round we go.

But it doesn't stop there. The human need to "fit in" governs every aspect of our lives. Our language, our clothing, our careers, our digital personas; all of it in order to signal to others our identity and values.



# Algorithms Are Manipulating Product Market Fit

2/3

CONSUMERS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR TASTE IS DIRECTED BY SOCIAL MEDIA, AND THE BRANDS THEY MENTION BROADCAST THEIR VALUES TO THE WORLD.

Our tastes and interests, our preferences and desires, are being honed by algorithms. Our perspective that “everyone” uses a particular brand of software may be the result of algorithmic timelines, lookalike audience matching, and behavioral manipulation.

*“Maybe I'm happy being a sneakerhead. Maybe. Or maybe [the algorithm] is the reason that I desire anything nowadays.”*

# The Consumerization of B2B

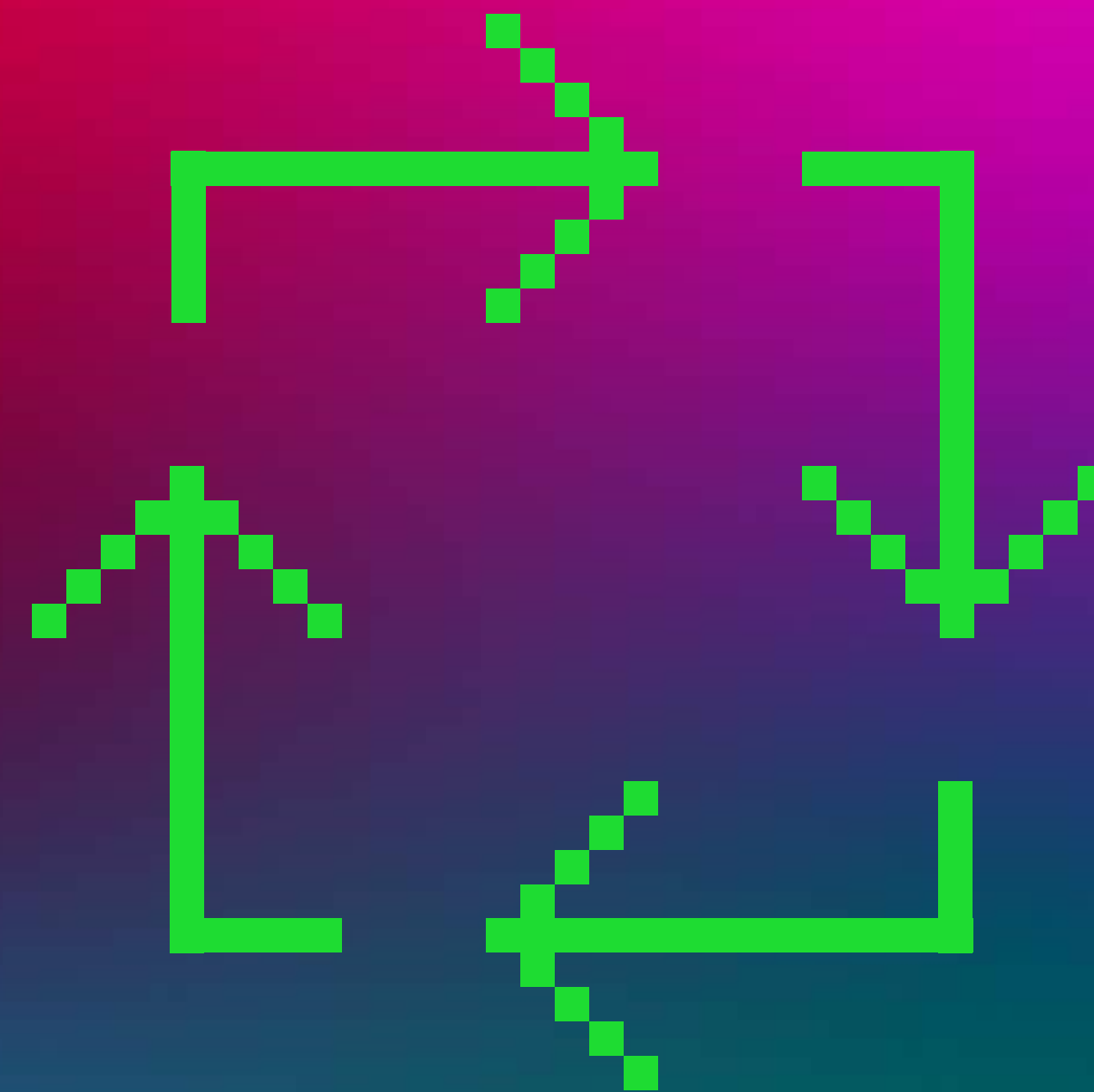
What happens when we start to factor others' perceptions into our software choices? What happens when we choose software based on a desired career path, and not on the fitness of the product?

**The Hawthorne Effect** occurs when people behave differently because they know they are being watched. For careerists, a choice of software platform or ecosystem may determine upward mobility.

“Experience is the differentiator”

“Why does our site look like everyone else’s?”

“What are others in our industry doing?”



“It’s so much easier in the \_\_\_\_\_ ecosystem”

*It's so easy to say 'we're going to be data driven - we're going to prove things statistically.' You lose a lot of cultural capital when people have to prove that the idea they have won't fail. It's really hard to prove that something won't fail.*

Mike Lackman, CEO of Trade Coffee

# Lottery winners cause neighbors to go bankrupt?



A 2016 study of Canadian lottery winners found that the neighbors of lottery winners were more likely to experience financial difficulties due to conspicuous consumption. This “keeping up with the Joneses” behavior resulted in observable causal relationships.

Source: [Does Inequality Cause Financial Distress? Evidence from Lottery Winners and Neighboring Bankruptcies](#)

*“We find that a 1% increase in the lottery prize causes a 0.04% rise in subsequent bankruptcies among the winners’ close neighbors. We also provide evidence on conspicuous consumption as a mechanism for this causal relationship.”*

# Peer Influence of Household Energy Consumption

The same “Keeping up with the Joneses” effect can be witnessed in neighborhoods with above-average energy efficiencies.

Why? Even energy efficiency has visible signals: solar panels, plug-in hybrids, and data reporting from companies like Nest provide peer pressure mechanisms that drive to efficiency.

Source: Nature.com, [Peer influence on household energy behaviors](#)



# CONSUMER / 3 PLURALITY OF IDENTITY

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PEOPLE ARE MORE COMPLEX  
THAN MARKETERS' PIGEON  
HOLES



2022



# CONSUMER / 3 PLURALITY OF IDENTITY



+ All Things to All People...  
All of the Time

From Stephen King to Isaac Asimov, creators and artists through the centuries have used pseudonyms to publish their creations to the world so as to be judged on the merits of their work alone. Now, in the internet age, we see a generation of creators, critics, and commentators who are building a trustless, anonymous network on which entire industries are being built. This pseudonymous future — if it ever comes into being — is a manifestation of the underlying truth that people are not one-dimensional.

If anything, a plurality of identity is who we are in our truest selves.

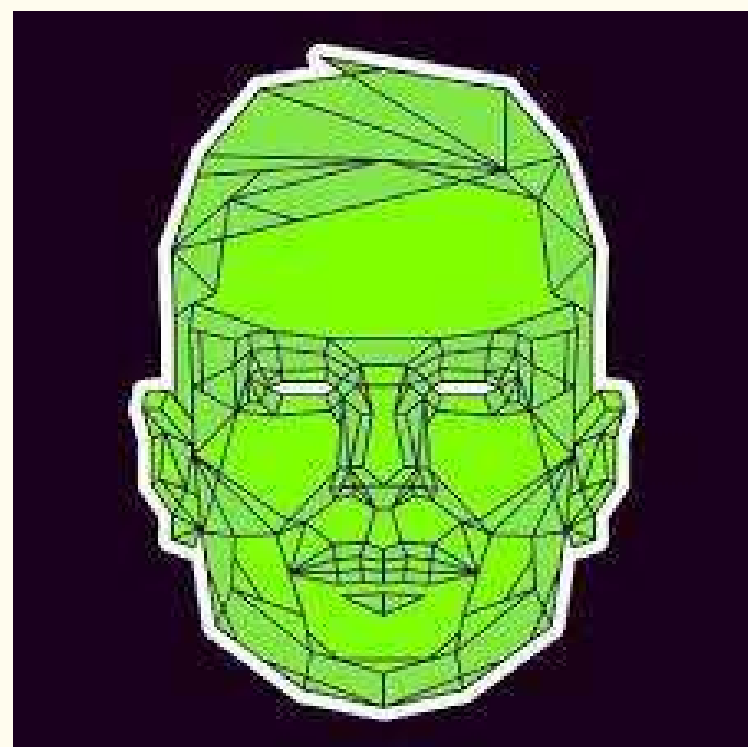
What if your online identity was as diversified as your portfolio?

# The Man Behind the Curtain

When the curtain is pulled back on large pseudonymous accounts, there will be a reckoning.

Virtual pundits — ‘velebs’ — have no past, no history to reckon with. But a threat looms: information warfare, doxxing, and discreditation will become powerful weapons to wield.

And when the Great Wizard is revealed to be human. He won't seem so powerful after all.



@boredelonmusk on twitter is a pseudonymous account with millions of followers, and hosts online and IRL sessions while speaking through an avatar.





# A Modern Brand's Dissociative Identity

Brands lost control to consumer expectations and desires long ago. It's not that the brand is selling out. It's that consumers are tearing brands apart.

Facets of a brand voice emerge in specific channels. Those channels impact a future consumer's perspective of what a brand is, what it represents.

Gucci's Rodeo Drive flagship versus its NFT aesthetic / The Palazzo della Mercanzia Gucci Garden versus the Roblox activation.



# The New Customer Expectation: The Personalization of the Brand

*“Faculty has seven different logos and lacks a strict product roadmap... There’s an openness and mutability to Faculty that is inherently different.”*

Emily Singer

DIP 028, February 2020

# 80%

EXPECT BRANDS TO BE MULTIDIMENSIONAL,  
EVOLVING TO FIT NEW CUSTOMERS AND  
ENVIRONMENTS

Future Commerce Consumer Survey,  
May 2022.

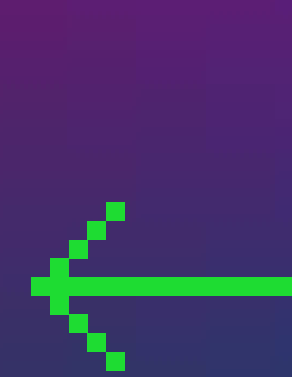


You are the bread and the knife,  
the crystal goblet and the wine.

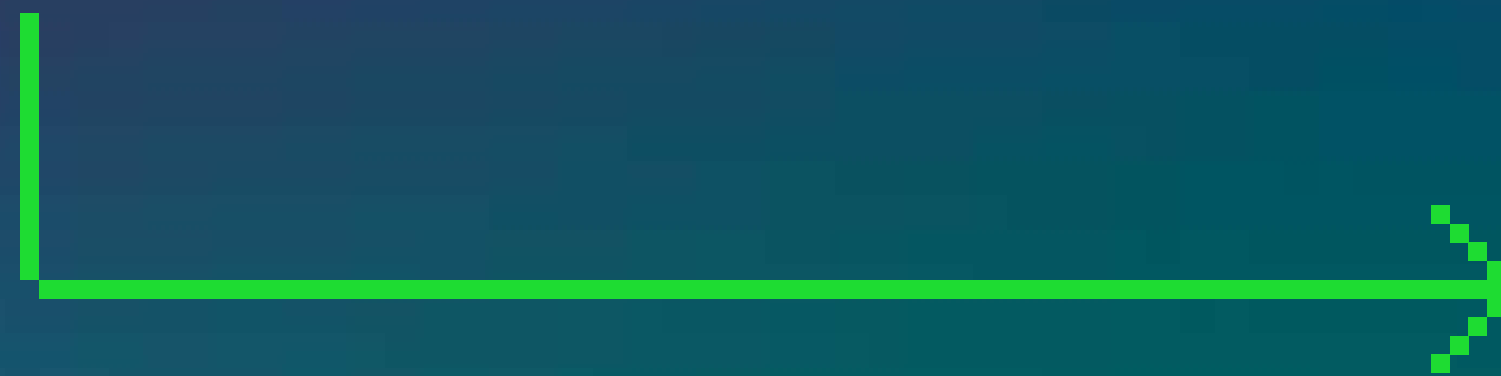


You are the dew on the morning grass  
and the burning wheel of the sun.  
You are the white apron of the baker,  
and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.

However, you are not  
the wind in the orchard,  
the plums on the counter,  
or the house of cards.



Excerpt from *Litany*  
by Billy Collins



And you are certainly not  
the pine-scented air.  
There is just no way that  
you are the pine-scented air...

# Our Pseudonymous Future

The awareness of being watched, and our actions tattling on us, is shaping how we spend money, who we interact with online, and eroding our tolerance for risk. It's changing how we interact socially.

Without controls in place to allow us to have behavior "modes" —or the ability to take on pseudonymous personalities while in the metaverse, we run the risk of having our virtual world experiences shape our real-world behavior.

Algorithm Anxiety could intensify and spill over IRL.

CULTURE / 1

# THE SACRAMENTS OF COMMERCE

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BRANDS ARE OUR  
NEW RELIGION

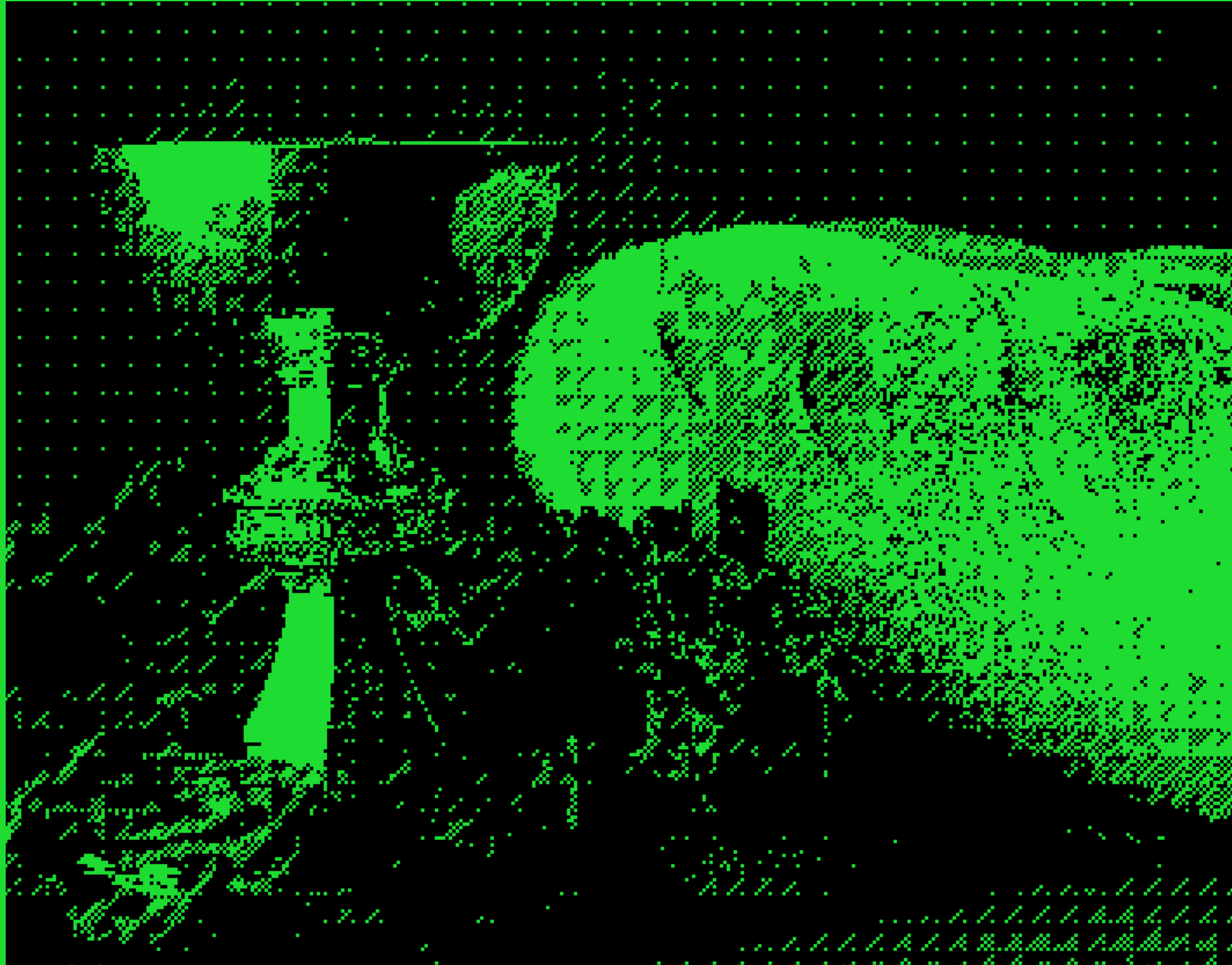


2022



# CULTURE /1

## THE SACRAMENTS OF COMMERCE



+ Secular Sacraments =  
Brand Engagements

Much has been written about the secularization of the modern age. But what if our religious rituals are manifestations of human needs; truths that our souls long to discover? A brand's ultimate desire? That we find identity, community, meaning, and collective purpose. Sound familiar?

In the modern era, brands have become more spiritual, and religious groups more brand-like. Abrahamic traditions are now but a playbook for brands to copy. If not a literal template, then an eventual common destination at which we arrive: sacraments we accidentally discover on our progression towards enlightenment.



Keith Coleman 🙏😊👍🔒  
@kcoleman



OH (from an awesome Lyft driver): “Today has been great. I’ve been blessed by the algorithm.”

Immediately had an eerie feeling that this could become an increasingly common way to describe a day.

10:58 PM · Mar 15, 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

A squandered time investment made in "perfecting" your many algorithms can be crushing. When the engine works in our favor, it feels like divine blessing. When it works against us, it feels like punishment.

Algorithm anxiety is latent stress. Will the algorithmic gods bless me or curse me today?

# Perception May Be Reality, but That Reality is Being Manipulated

Your micro-interactions give off signals to the algo about your nuanced tastes.

Based on your interaction, new information can be gained. Not just about your tastes and interests, **but also your ability for those tastes and interests to be manipulated.** Often, lookalikes aren't fully anonymized. If the algorithm in question knows about your social graph (e.g. you logged in with Insta or FB), it may take the behavior of your closest contacts into account.

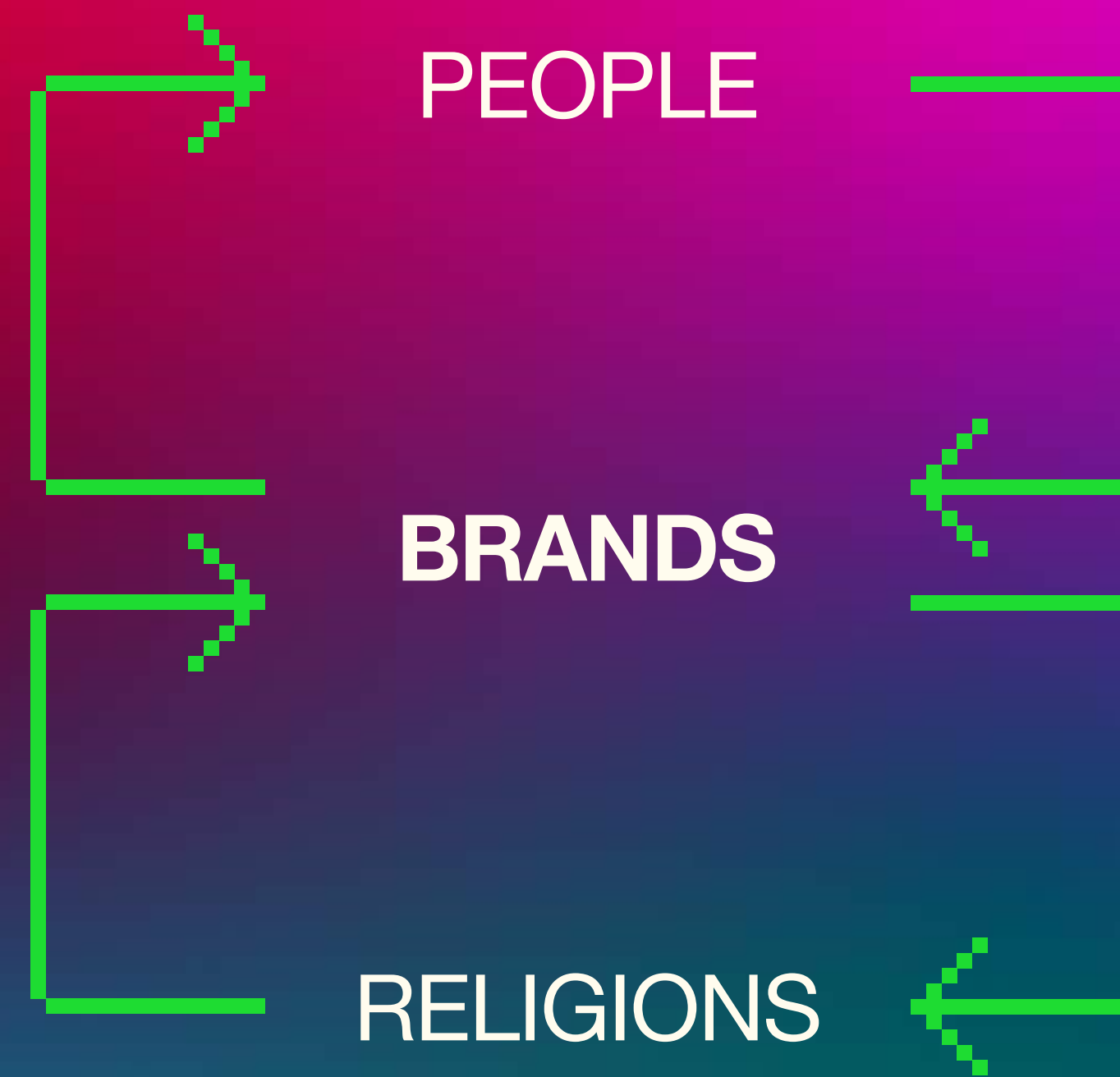
Insiders #108. "The Idolatry of the Algorithm"



# Brand Engagements Are Secular Sacraments

People are becoming more brand-like.  
And brands are becoming personified  
as corporations inherit more liberties.

At the same time, religions are becoming  
more brand-like, while brands are trying to  
evoke spirituality, filling a gap that religion  
has left behind.



From “100 true fans” to a cult. The goal is supplication, devotion, and adoration to a brand-idol.

### Cult Fans

(would buy multiples, pre-fund work, want to own the “original”)

### Super Fans

100 true fans

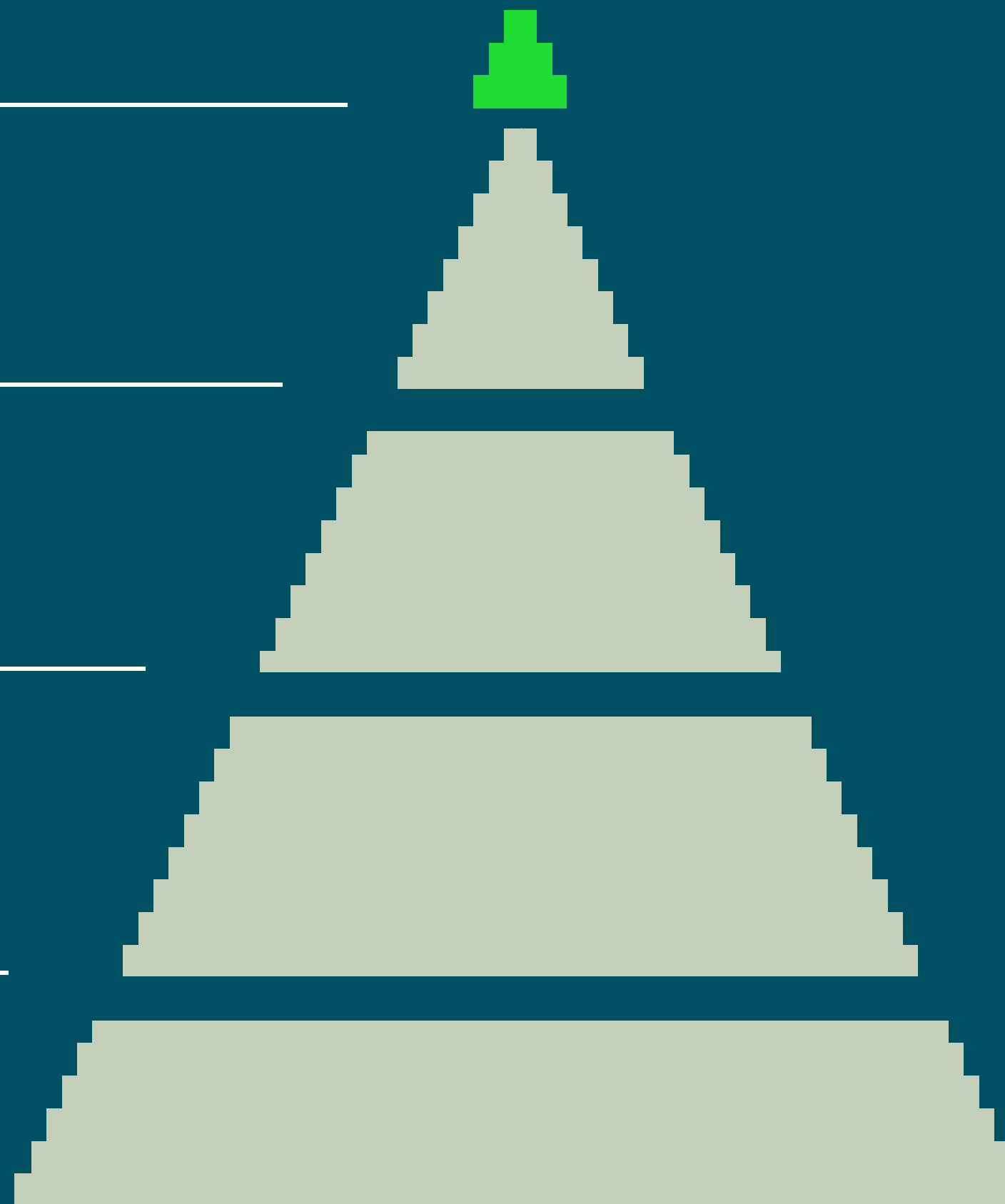
### Active Fans

1000 true fans

### Casual Fans

All social followers

### Speculators / Investors



Degree of intensity of fan affinity

# The 'Cult Brand' Enthusiast

The Cult Brand enthusiast is an affluent coastal elite, using myriad devices to enable their comfortable lifestyle. In addition, compared to the average consumer, Cult Brand Enthusiasts are:

+ *60% MORE LIKELY TO SEE THEIR SOCIAL PRESENCE AS A PLATFORM FOR A CREATED PERSONA*

+ *42% MORE LIKELY TO INCLUDE RELIGIOUS WORSHIP IN THEIR LIFE*

+ *35% MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN CIVIC/ COMMUNITY SERVICE*

Glossier = \$1.8b Cult



“My head of comms will kill me because I’m going to say something really weird right now,” she said, opening her eyes wide and pulling a self-deprecating face. “But I think about it a little bit like, how are religions scaled?”

Source: Bustle, [Last Girlboss Standing](#)

# Our Digital Golden Calf

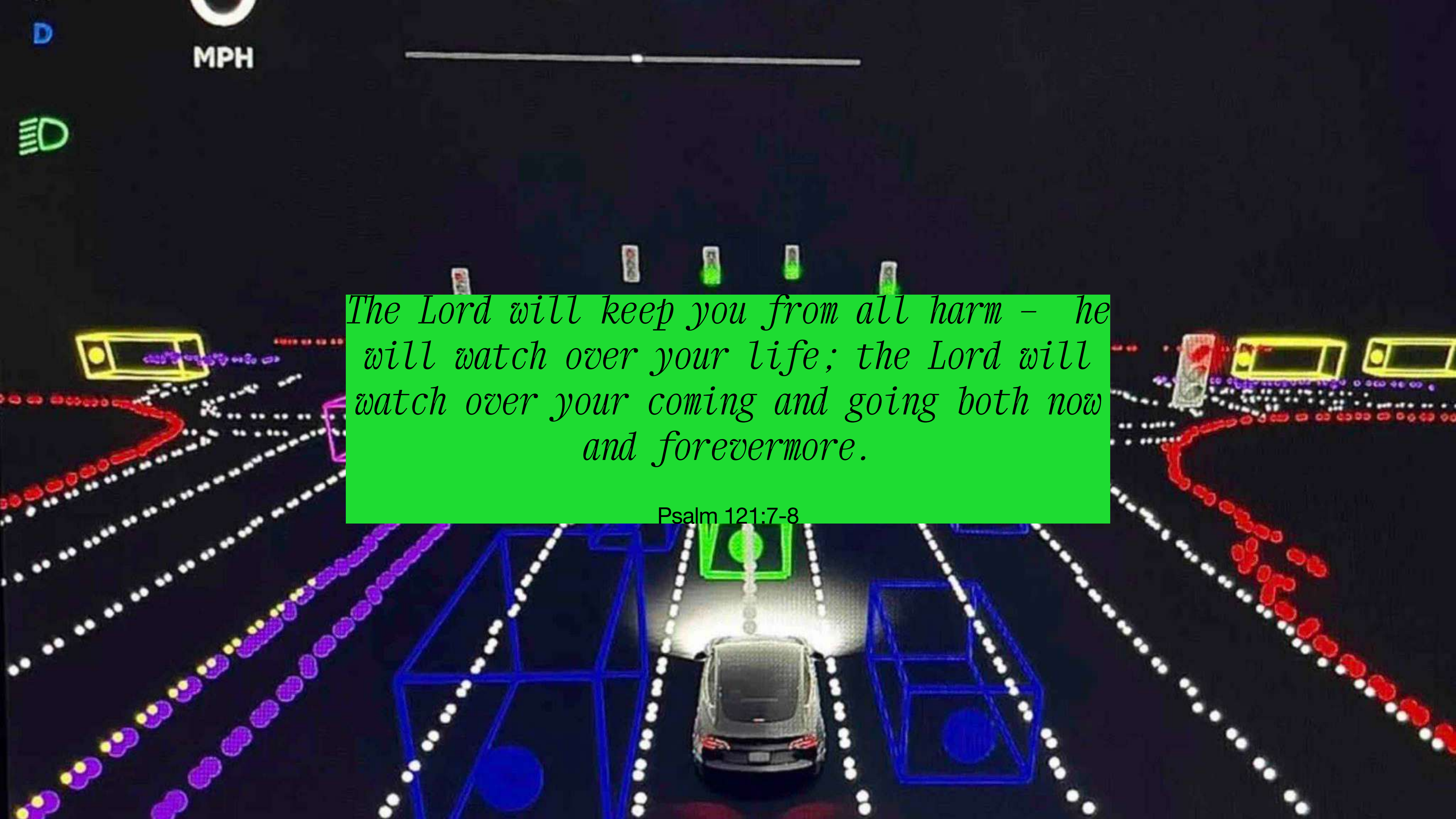


We've created new invisible gods whose blessings are fleeting, and whose curses are everlasting. Except instead of life eternal, we discover more bands like Anderson.Paak.

The algorithms that power our lives inform our worldviews, choose our romantic partners, and bless us with prosperous work. Creating new gods to please. How very human of us.

*At this point, everyone does have a responsibility to be proactive about their own algorithm... it's incumbent on humans to have a front foot there and not simply be passengers in the experience they're having.*

Grace Clarke, Founder of Grace Clarke Consulting



*The Lord will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

Psalm 121:7-8

INFLUENCE. INFLUENCE  
is the TRANSFER  
of WILL.

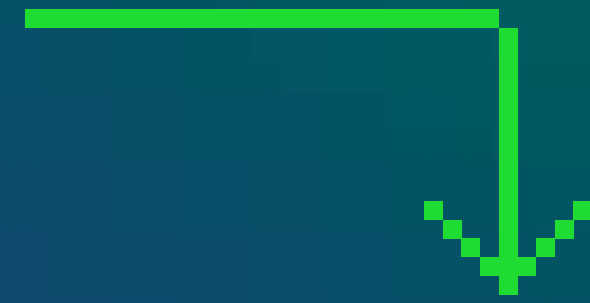
WILL and WISH are the  
OUTFLOW of IDENTITY.

THEREFORE,  
a TRANSACTION is a TRANSFER  
of IDENTITY.

*Insiders #106 — More Than  
Consumers*



Down the funnel  
Push em, shove em  
In clicks and bits  
To tunnel vision  
Addictions of  
Zippers and denim  
Trips and traps  
Always come back



Down the funnel  
Scare em, dare em  
With clocks and counts  
To panic purchase  
Searchers bound  
To fear the end  
The pretended lend  
Of a discount friend



Down the funnel,  
Bait em, snare em  
By dreams and doubts  
To ease the day  
Pieces of place  
That smoldering clay  
Ever keep up  
Never look 'way



Down the funnel  
Charm em, warm em  
Through pics and lives  
To high aspire  
Looks and peeps  
Sundering GOATS  
By texting sheep to  
Convert all hopes

# What is worship?

Participation in a ritual to appease.

43%

REPORT RECENTLY CHANGING THEIR DIGITAL BEHAVIOR TO PROTECT THEIR ALGORITHM OR IDENTITY

Future Commerce Consumer Survey, May 2022.

*Searching in incognito mode*

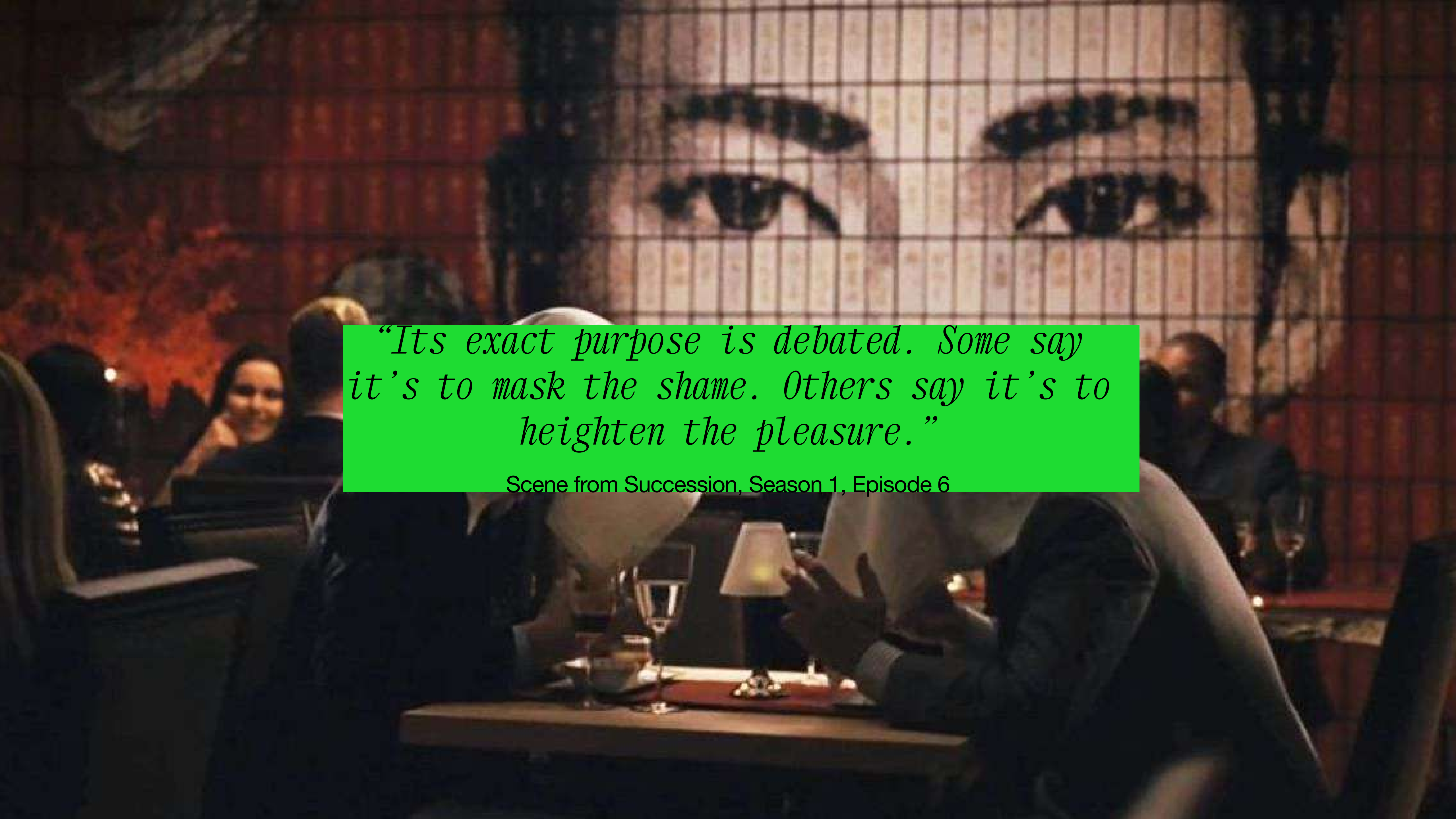
*“I put my phone in airplane mode so it can’t track me”*

*“I didn’t listen because I don’t want to ruin my Spotify”*

*“Commenting so that I can stay on CleanTok”*

*Clicking into content with the intent to train the algorithm*

*“I bought a toilet seat on Amazon and now it thinks I have an insatiable desire for more toilet seats.”*



*“Its exact purpose is debated. Some say it’s to mask the shame. Others say it’s to heighten the pleasure.”*

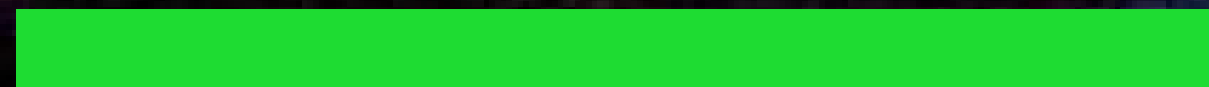
Scene from Succession, Season 1, Episode 6

CULTURE / 2

# THE CELEBRATION OF INSINCERETY

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TROLLS ARE WINNING  
THE CULTURE WAR



2022



CULTURE / 2

# THE CELEBRATION OF INSINCERETY



+ A post-sincere  
society?

Internet culture has promulgated the idea that spectators lose and participators win. The result — a devolving public conversation around nuanced topics that have meaningful impact in our lives.

Deepening the trench are algorithmic timelines, AI that indexes for engagement over enlightenment, and the sense that we're in a simulation where others are mere NPCs in an open-world first-player game, of which you are the hero. Meme culture, hype culture, reply-guys, and online hero worship are symptoms of a broader problem — we're in a post-sincere world.

SO WHAT DOES IRONY as  
a CULTURAL NORM MEAN to  
SAY?

THAT it's IMPOSSIBLE  
to MEAN WHAT YOU SAY?

TODAY'S IRONY ENDS UP  
SAYING: 'HOW TOTALLY  
BANAL of YOU to ASK WHAT  
I REALLY MEAN.'

— David Foster  
Wallace



In a now-deleted tweet from the brand who gave you your most memorable hangover, Pabst Blue Ribbon's social media manager crafted a curt response to the "Dry January" movement.

MEME CULTURE

HELPS US to

CONTEXTUALIZE  
and PARTICIPATE

WITHOUT HAVING  
RESPONSIBILITY to

DO ANYTHING

— Jesse Tyler



# Fake it 'til you make it?

*"I believe in 'faking it until you make it' - perception is reality"*

**Polarization** of consumer culture is real — perception is reality.

The idea of “faking it” reveals a schism: 51% of respondents subscribe to this modality, while 49% eschew the idea.

## Who are the people copping to it?

### Affluent Z-lennials

- <35 and earning 6-figures
- 3X more likely to feel pressure in maintaining their social persona
- 5X more likely to post an inauthentic version of their life/lifestyle

51%

AGREE



49%

DISAGREE

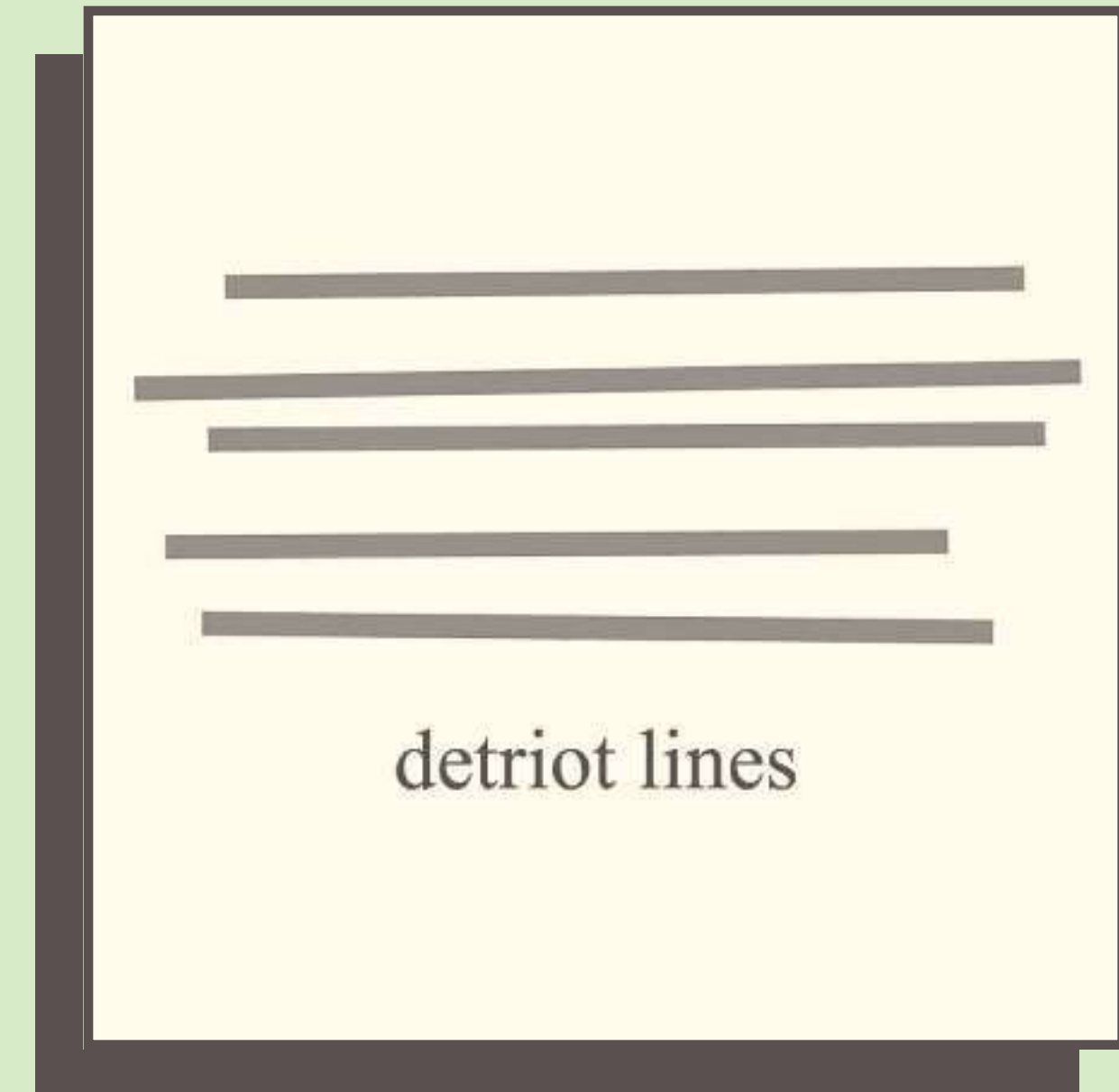
*Maybe we weren't meant to have humorous interactions with every brand that exists on the supermarket shelf.*

*Maybe that kind of public discourse quickly devolves into cheap shot insult comedy. Maybe the gladiator arena of the current environment causes us to cheer on the bloodsport, and forget the humanity of the people at the center.*

*Insiders #114: Brand Up Comedy*

# Channel-specific Voices




Brands are hitting notes that previously would have been off-key:



 McDonald's   
@McDonaldsCorp

Black Friday \*\*\*\* Need copy and link\*\*\*\*

6:00 AM - Nov 24, 2017

 1,476  22,851  72,463

 Wendy's   
@Wendys

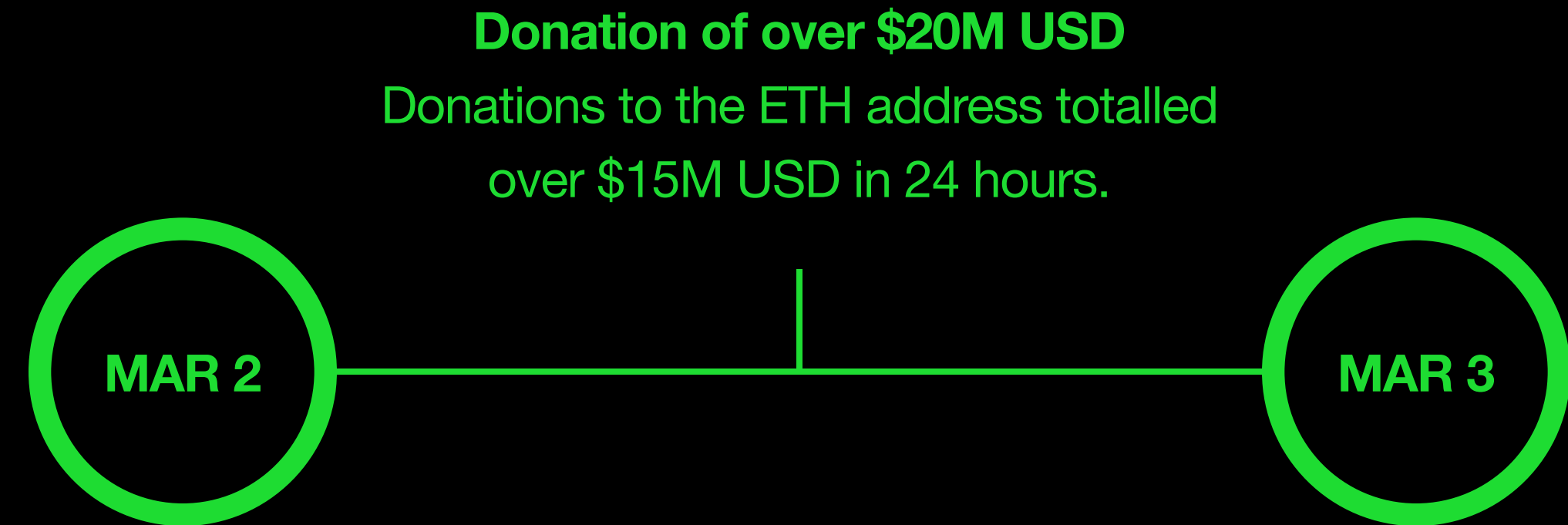
When the tweets are as broken as the ice cream machine. [twitter.com/McDonaldsCorp/...](https://twitter.com/McDonaldsCorp/...)

- + The NFL (and its teams) rebranded their TikTok accounts in solidarity with creator Emily Zugay's sarcastic redesigns, replete with intentional misspellings.
- + Wendy's shows off their ability to "roast" those who are brave enough to invite it upon themselves.

*There is a rise of insincerity. Teasing out whether it's for the force of good or bad – that is the intent. If the intent is to do good, then it's more likely to come across as intentional irony or satire. If it's just being bloody-minded and saying something for something's sake... then it's a sign of our times that we live in. But I don't think it resonates as well with the customers that you want to attract.*

*Miya Knights, Retail Technology Author*

# “The Best Rug Ever”

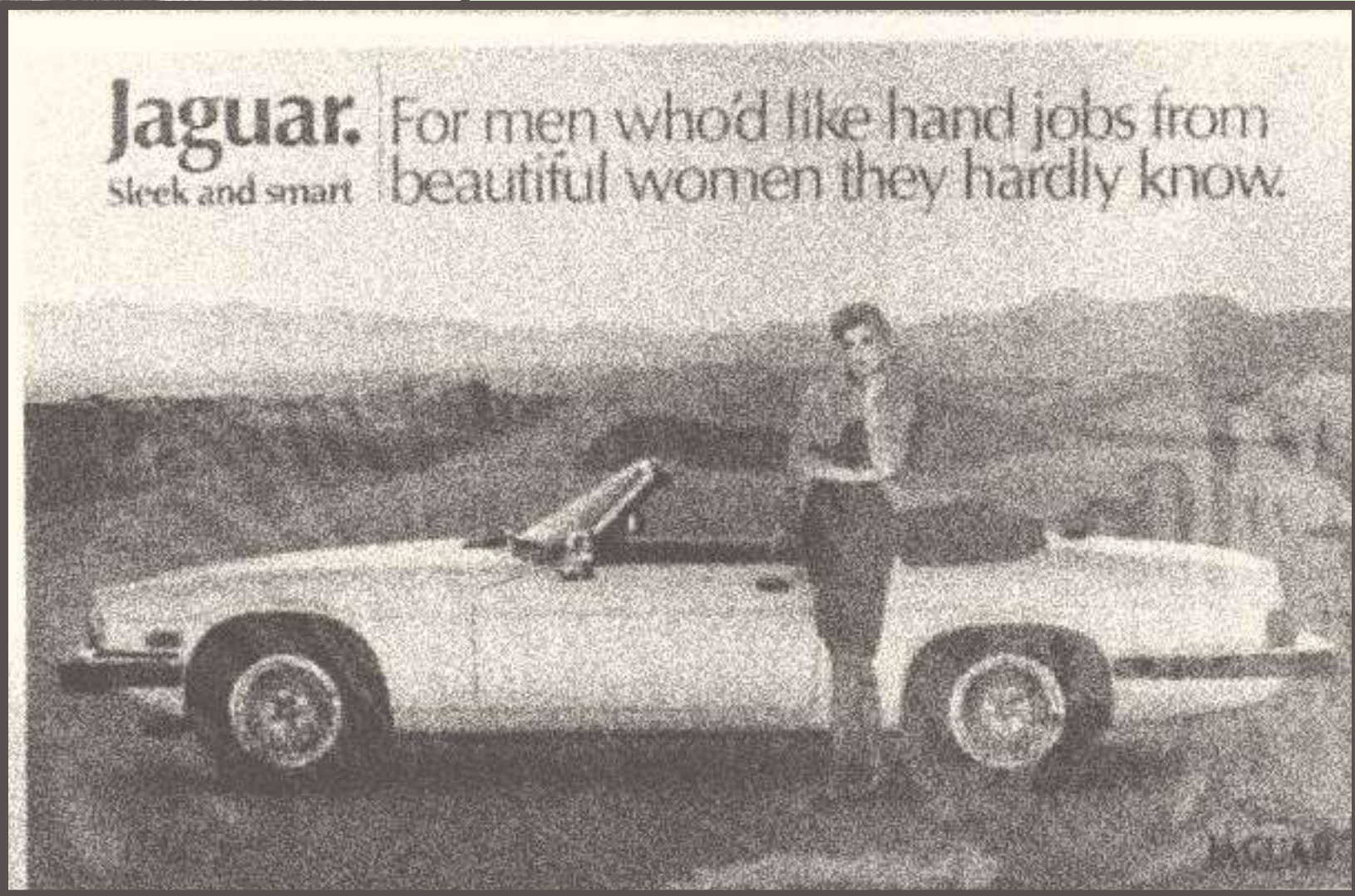
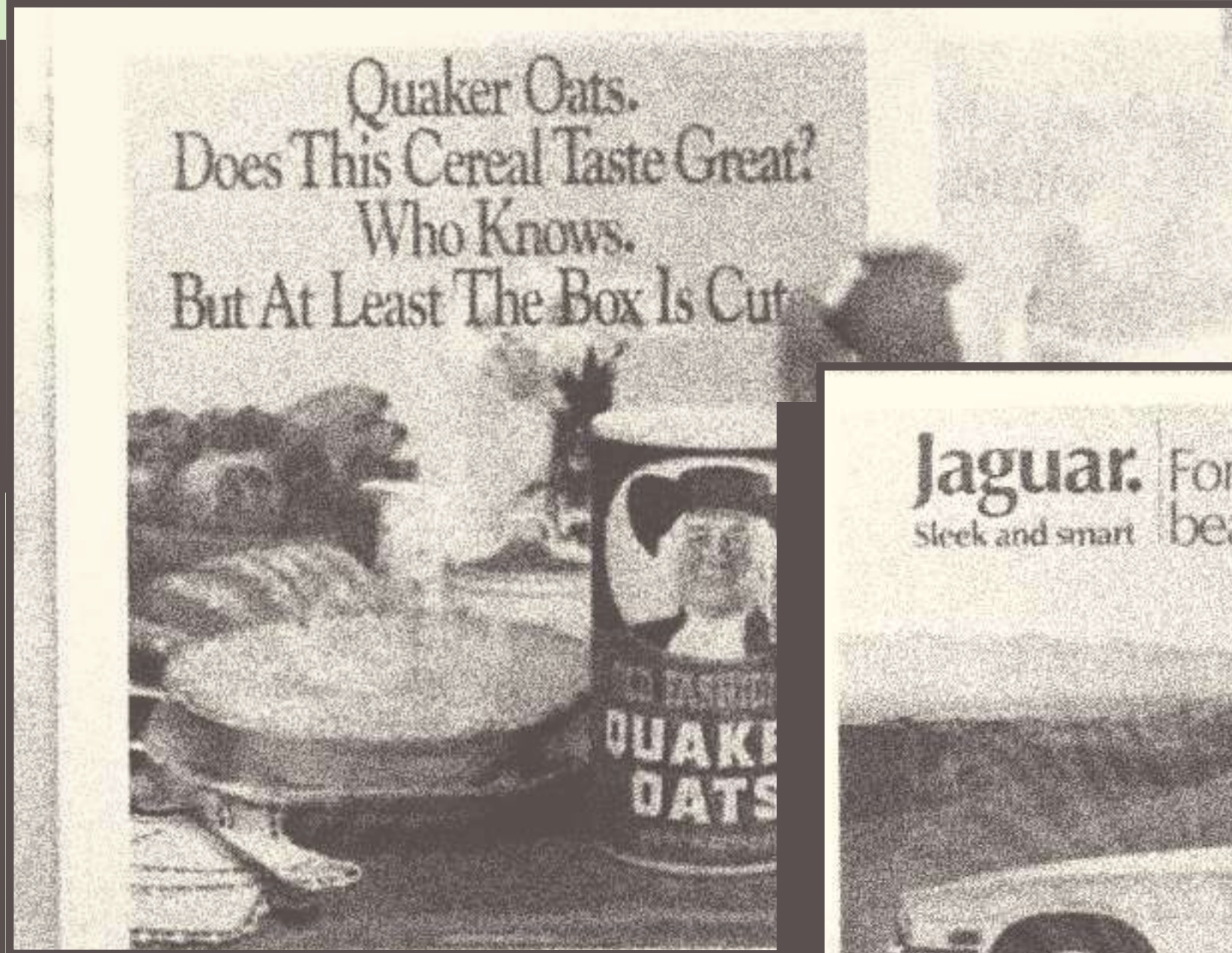


**AIRDROP ANNOUNCED**  
Ukraine announces NFT Airdrop  
“confirmed” at 1:43 AM EST

**THE RUG PULL**  
6:47 AM EDT. Ukrainian minister  
announces the decision to  
cancel the airdrop.

A sign of the times: celebration by the web3 community of a Ukrainian “rug pull” — when a crypto project reneges on a release or roadmap — after raising nearly \$20M USD to the published ETH address. To date Ukraine has received over \$47M in various cryptocurrency donations.

In the film Crazy People (1990), an advertising executive exploits patients in a mental health facility to create “earnest” ads.



**Joel Mark Witt** @joelmarkwitt · Apr 30  
Ads used to be creative. Probably because many of these were created by the Artist Generation archetype (Silents).

They blended both articulation & demonstration. This kind of compelling - clear - visceral marketing is an art form that I don't see much anymore.

Great thread...

**Best Ads Of All Time** @BestAdsTime · Apr 30  
The 10 Best Ads Of All Time (According to you):

- 1) Porsche, 1967
- [Show this thread](#)



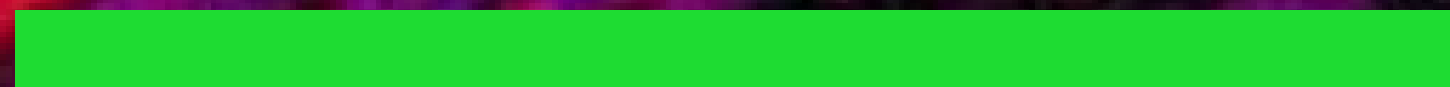
Today, these ads are being mistaken as real.

CULTURE / 3

# THE PROFITABILITY OF DISTRACTION

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OUR COLLECTIVE DISTRACTION  
IS YOUR PROFIT.



2022



CULTURE / 3

# THE PROFITABILITY OF DISTRACTION

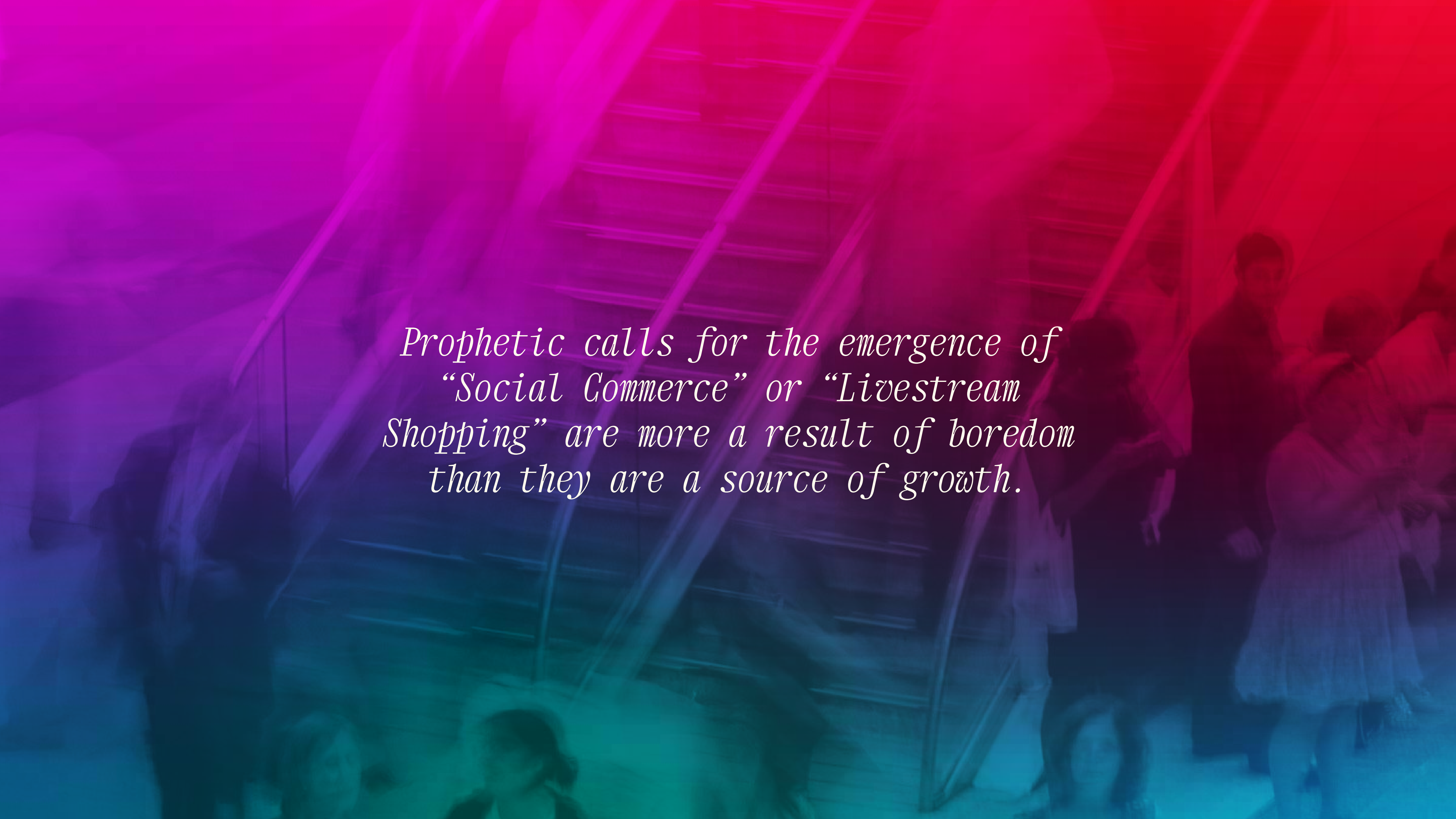


## + The Relentless Pursuit of Busy

The more successful a person is, the more distracted they tend to be. The average millionaire has seven streams of income. Can you imagine a C-level executive of a major corporation having just one gig? A board seat, a rolling fund, non-profit chair; success seems to create a plurality of distractions, vying for the attention of highly-paid, highly-influential people.

This idea — that we become more distracted as we become more successful — is key to understanding startup culture, capital allocation, and the modern media landscape, as entertainment and information are gunning for pole-position in our brains.



A photograph of a crowd of people at a social event, possibly a dance or party, with a red-to-blue gradient overlay. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

*Prophetic calls for the emergence of  
“Social Commerce” or “Livestream  
Shopping” are more a result of boredom  
than they are a source of growth.*

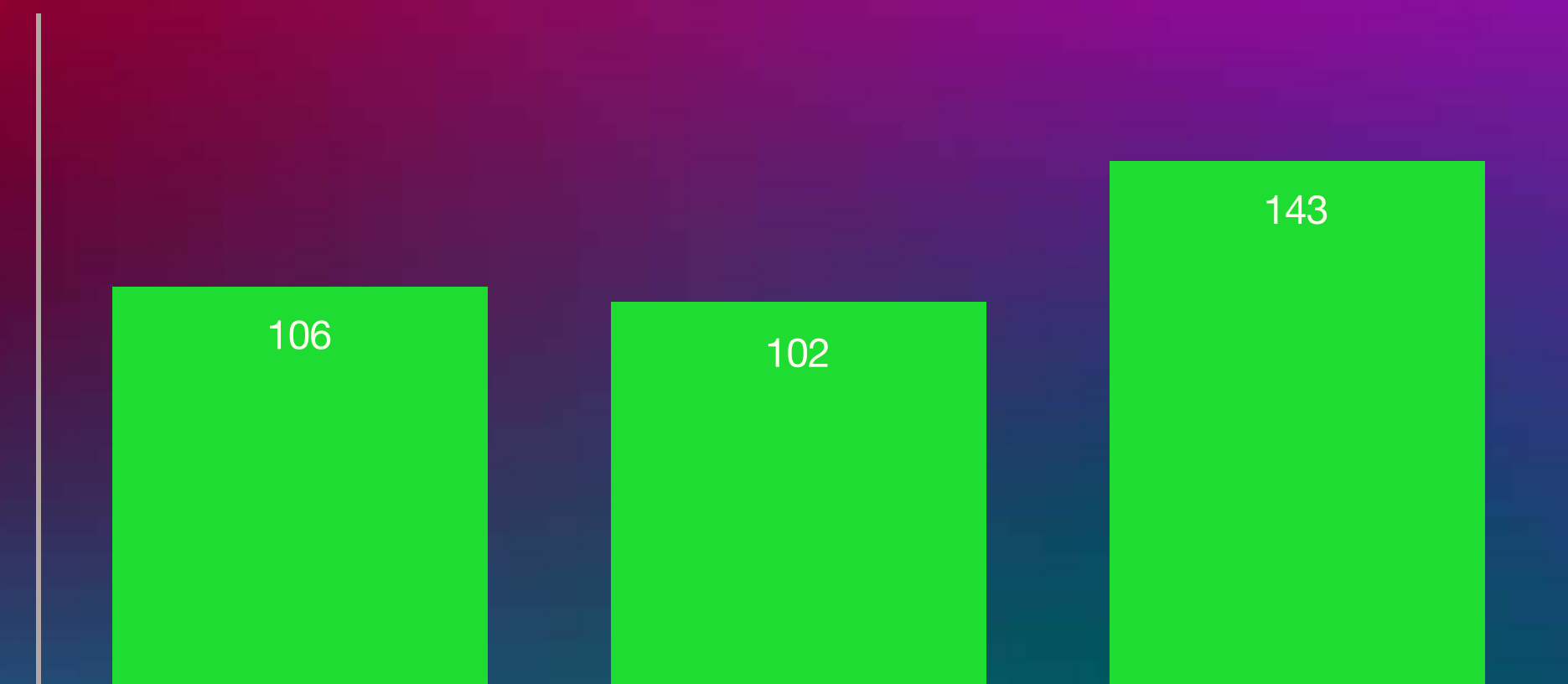
# Forget Livestream Shopping. Physical Retail's Back.

*“And herein lies the existential threat for all digital commerce: be it video or not. After marketers have stoked the purchase intent in a customer, is the customer willing to wait two to three days for the product to arrive? So what, then, does a customer do? They get off their tail and head to the store.”*

*According to Placer.ai, retail foot traffic in Q4 now exceeds pre-pandemic levels.”*

The Senses, January 12, 2022

## Apple Maps: End of January 2022 driving search traffic surpassed pre-COVID levels



Source: Audio Active Group

MULTITASKING USED

to MEAN

BUYING  
a SECOND SCREEN  
for WORK.

NOW it MEANS

LISTENING to

a PODCAST WHILE

TEXTING and DRIVING

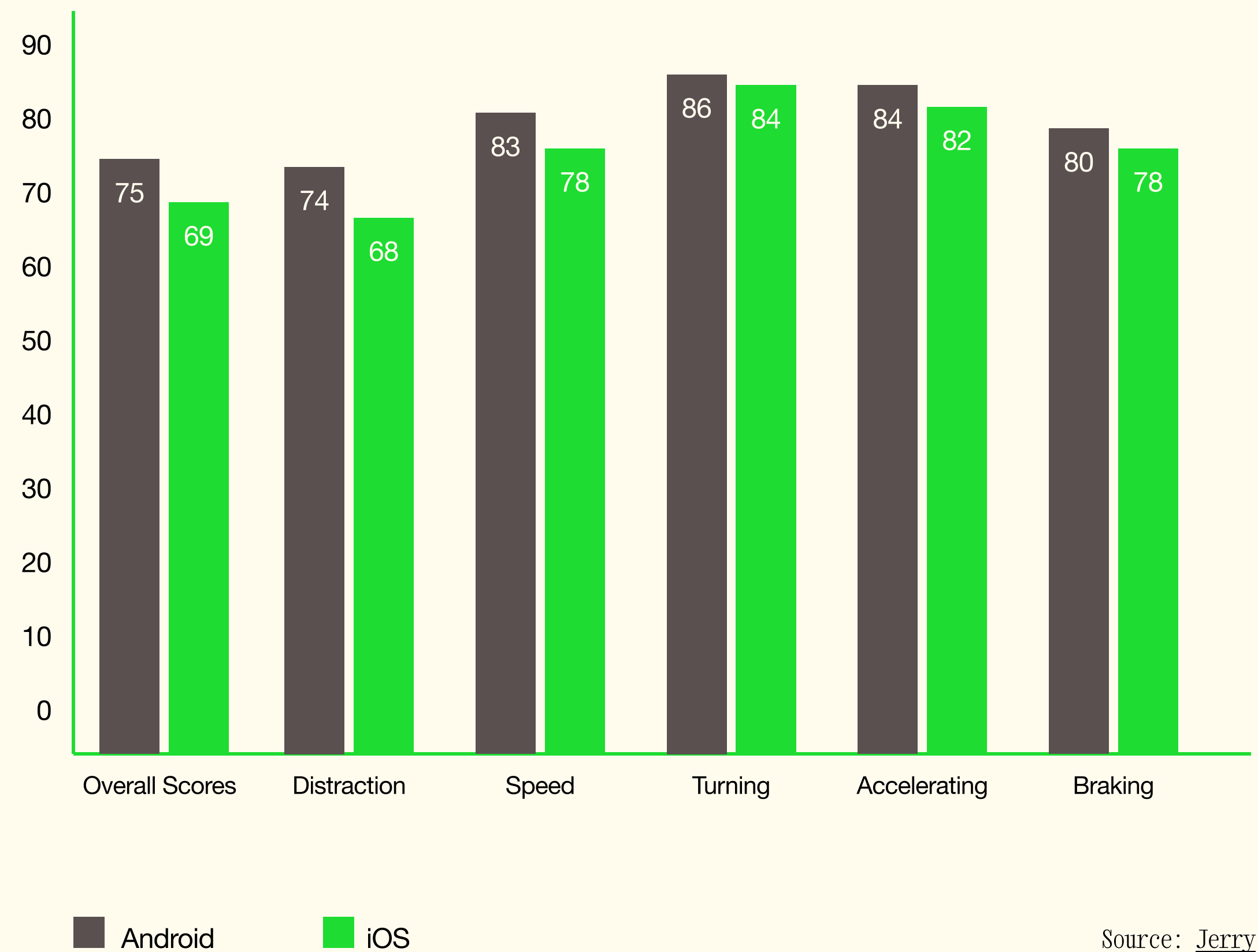
SIMULTANEOUSLY

# Apple users: higher income, more distracted?

Research firm Jerry analyzed the driving behavior of 20,000 drivers collected during 13 million kilometers of driving, and the results were clear: When it comes to safe driving, Android users outperformed their iPhone-carrying counterparts at every turn and stoplight.

Android users were found to be more open, honest, and humble — and less interested in luxuries and social status.

If they were the type to do so, they could also brag about being safer drivers.



Source: [Jerry](#)

# The High Cost to Engage in Commerce

TELFAR has launched a 24hr Live-Linear TV network. On it you can see live shows, news on upcoming drops... and it's the only place to get the new duffel bag.

*“Basically we launched a TV Channel without any content – because we are tired of being content for other channels. When you watch TELFAR.TV you will see the channel take shape LIVE – and you can take part in what it becomes by sending us your videos.”*



# New channel? Or same old same old?

YouTube is the entertainment leviathan to beat this year.

But it isn't due to YouTube's outsized influence on commerce and purchasing. It's due to the **growth of ad revenue**.

Growth in 2022 will come from "podcasts, gaming, learning, sports, across all of these areas we will take a vertical-specific look and find out how we can support creators better."

**Noticeably absent: contextual shopping.**

### YouTube Ad Revenue (In US Millions)



Data: Statista Worldwide Youtube Ad Revenue

# Is web3 a distraction?

The jury's out on the viability of web3 according to the general consumer...and those already in on the game

- + *SAY THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND FRENZY AROUND CRYPTO & NFTS: TOTAL (69%) VS. WALLET HOLDERS (58%)*
- + *BELIEVE CRYPTO IS ALL HYPE: TOTAL (55%) VS. WALLET HOLDERS (52%)*
- + *ARE INTERESTED IN MORE BRAND NFTS: TOTAL (48%) VS. WALLET HOLDERS (69%)*

# A Plurality of Income Emerges

“**Personal brand**” was coined by a writer named Tom Peters in a Fast Company article, “The Brand Called You.” He imagined empowered workers divesting themselves from corporate drudgery, but what actually happened was the opposite: Our corporations divested from us.

Over the two decades since “The Brand Called You,” full-time employment has steadily atomized into casual, part-time and temporary work, culminating in the “project world” of the gig economy.

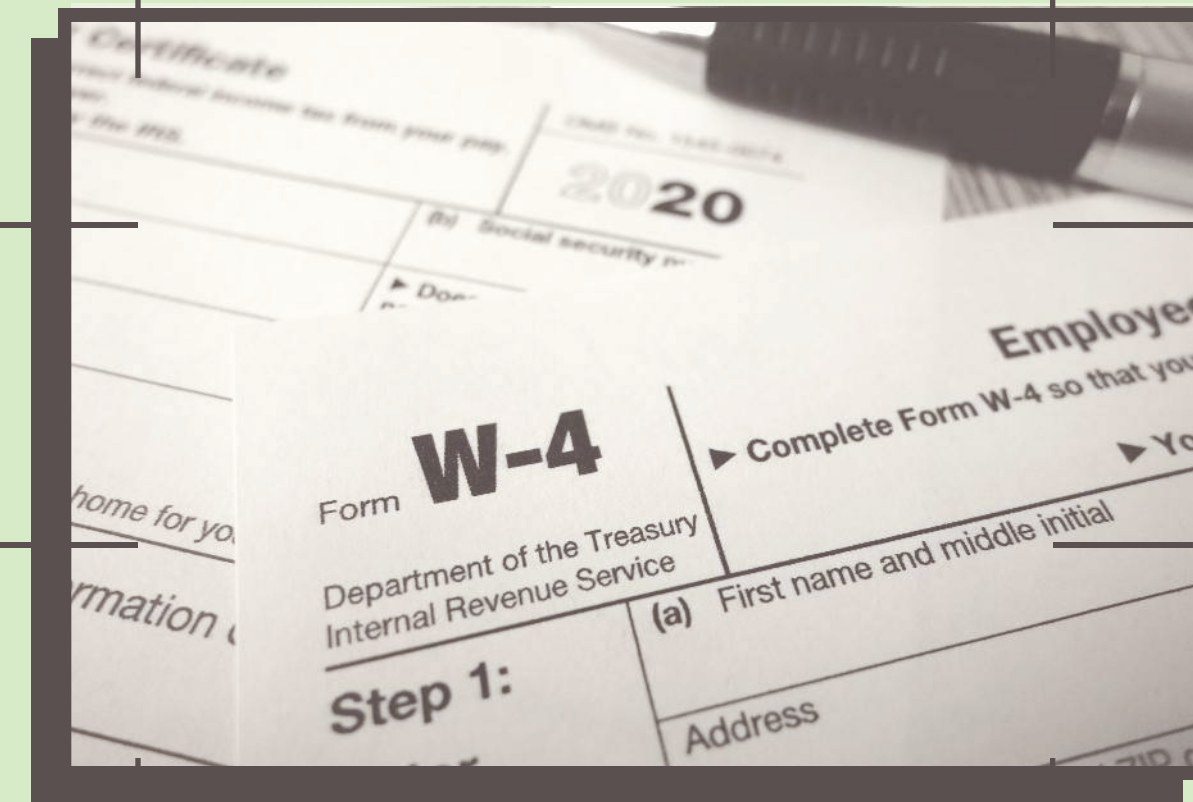
— Amanda Hess, *New York Times Magazine*, May 2018

Uber

AXIE  
INFINITY

PATREON

fiverr.



TaskRabbit

CURATED

OnlyFans

amazon FLEX



# The Flipside — Generation F

Generation F — China's Focus Generation — will grow up with digital blinders, behind the great Chinese Firewall.

The rest of the world will wrestle with China's distraction exports (namely Zoom and Tiktok). With supply-side shortages coming due to the energy crackdown, the West will have less to buy up of Chinese exports, which may lead to more digital addiction.

Meanwhile, Commerce companies race to replicate the commerce models of Asia, including live video streaming and chat-enabled concierge services.

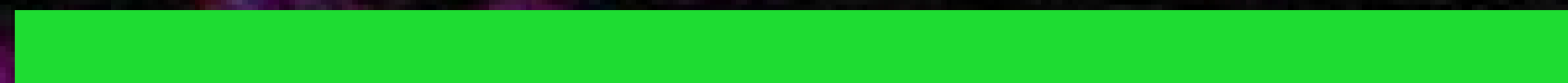
- + *They limited the use of Chinese Tiktok Competitor, Douyin, to just 40 minutes per day for children 14 and under.*
- + *Regulators limited online gaming to just three hours per week for adolescents under 18 years old, calling games "spiritual opium".*
- + *In January, China banned for-profit tutors from conducting online classes.*
- + *It has outlawed Bitcoin, and all other cryptocurrencies; as well as limited operating hours for industries to as little as eight hours per day, or in some extreme cases just one day per week.*

# MODERNITY / 1

# ROMANTICISM

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THE IDEA OF A BRAND IS MORE  
POWERFUL THAN THE BRAND  
ITSELF.



2022



# MODERNITY /1 ROMANTICISM



## + Its Mere Existence Is Satisfying

If you've ever wondered what powers the growing subculture of "hype train" participants in the world, chalk it up to romanticism. Grassroots campaigns have marked an era of Twitter echo chambers that build up everything from political figures to DTC ramen to niche eCommerce platforms. The desire to be part of "something big" is so very human.

What's curious is that the participants in such a culture are not always the beneficiaries. The very idea that something exists in the world is itself pleasing; even if that product, that company, that mission does not directly service you. Even if you'd never be a customer.

This is the new romanticism — the stuff that we want to exist, but we're not the primary audience, **assuming one even exists.**

When the solution is so perfect, so elegant, so impressive;  
but the problem is so banal, that's romanticism.

*High fashion and high design are examples of romanticism. They're intellectually stimulating, a wonder to behold, something to gawk at, and fodder for the watercooler channel on Slack. Except. Now everything is 'high fashion' - even toilet plungers.*

Pictured: "The Plunger" by Staff



## The Romantic Ideal Is Found in a Brand's Potentiality



**The almost** of the lovers embrace is the  
beauty, **not the embrace itself.**

*Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?*

*Ode on a Grecian Urn*

John Keats

If brands are a new form of art,  
where are the patrons?

*“You might appreciate the craftsmanship and the objects that a brand produces. It might not be for you, but you could recognize it as something that belongs to culture and speaks to a certain type of individual who is motivated enough to actually purchase it. You don't appreciate it any less than someone who decides to deploy some of their capital to purchase that thing.”*

Michael Miraflor

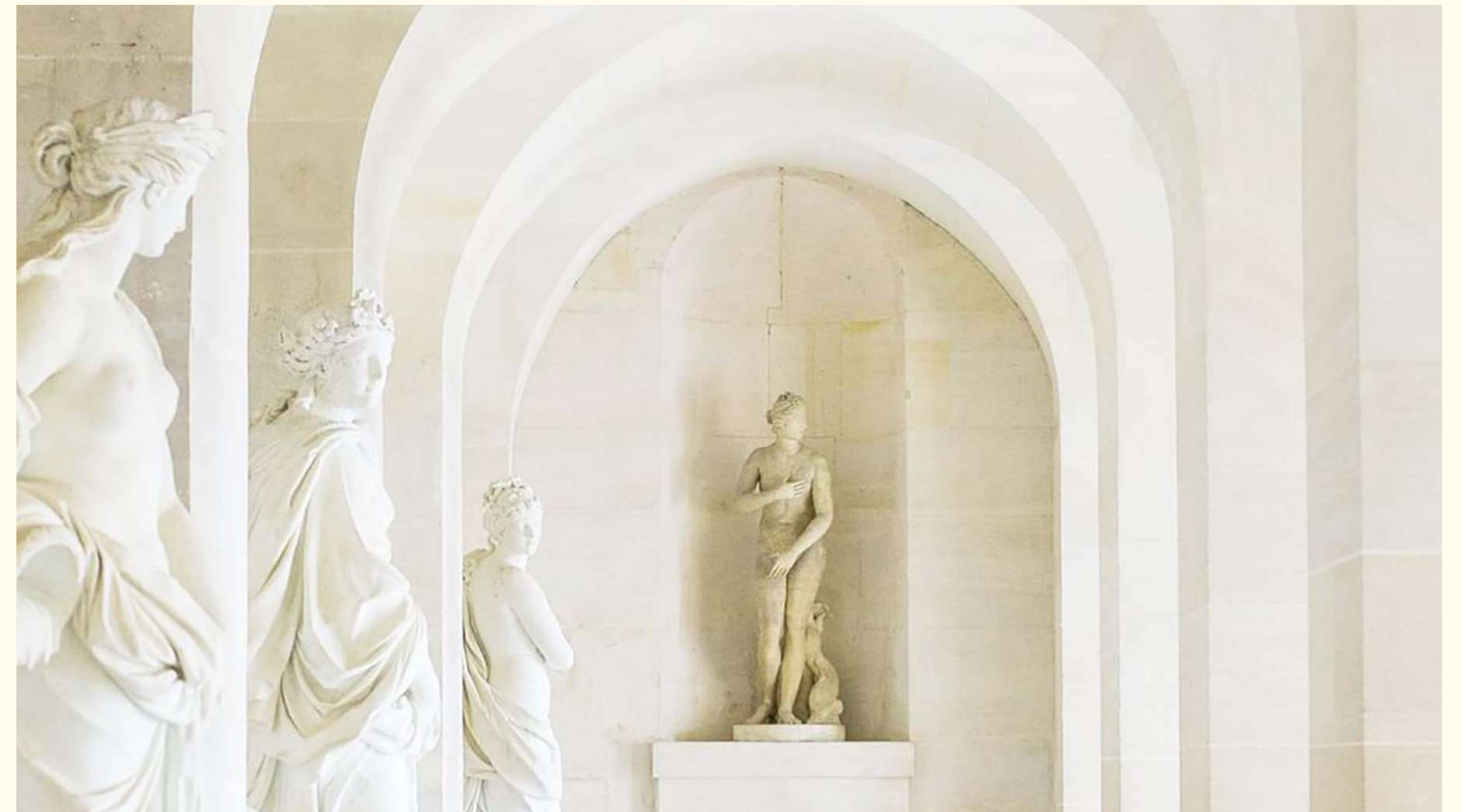
27%

OF CONSUMERS HAVE BOUGHT AN  
ITEM SPECIFICALLY TO SUPPORT THE  
BUSINESS, NOT BECAUSE THE ITEM  
WAS DESIRABLE

Future Commerce Consumer Survey, May 2022.

# Museums... or Galleries?

The personification of corporations in the modern era means that we treat Brands as people. At once, brands are artists and their products are the canvas.



Galleries are a place for commerce to take place. They are inherently transactional. Museums are a venue for art to be beheld.

What is missing, then, is a venue in which to behold art in a non-commercial setting. A museum of brand.

# Brands as Cultural Anthropologists

*“Some brands are better curators of the culture that they inhabit than others, and some brands are more purposeful about that.*

*[Romanticism is a] way for brands to tell their story about how they participate in that culture.”*

Michael Miraflor

3/4

CONSUMERS AGREE YOU CAN LOVE A BRAND OR PRODUCT, WITHOUT PERSONALLY USING IT

Future Commerce Consumer Survey, May 2022.



MODERNITY / 2

OUR SH\*TTY

ROBOT FUTURE

---

WE LIVE IN THE FUTURE.  
AND THAT ISN'T SO GREAT.



2022



# MODERNITY / 2

## OUR SH\*TTY ROBOT FUTURE

+ We Live in the Future. It's  
Not as Great as It Sounds



Despite an explosion in automation, the past decade of automation has left a lot to be desired. Delivery robots stuck in snow drifts, rovers lost on a trail, or fallen into a hole exclaiming “help me”.

The birthplace of the French Revolution, and the site of the end of World War I, we now have lawn mowing robots at the Palace of Versailles.

The robots are taking over, but they're far from replacing human work. On the contrary, they need our help more than ever.

# How We Treat the Inhuman Is a Reflection of Our Truest Self



It's been said that the measure of a man is what he does with power — if you want to know our truest, basest, selves, download your voice recordings from your Amazon Alexa devices. When it comes to dealing with assistants and robots, our basest and most vile instincts take over. Frustration, anger, even rage — the way we treat robots reveal more about us than we'd care to admit.

So what, then, do we say to a future that is more autonomous than today? Our semi-autonomous future will be filled with side-glancing frustrating at a world that almost works, but not quite the way we had hoped. The more robots can do, the more opportunity there is for them to fail our expectations.

*“So, during one overnight shift, Tina Sorg went out to a nearby arts and craft store, brought back a large pair of googly eyes and, when no one was looking, affixed them on the top of the robot.*

*The eyes were a hit with executives at the global grocery company Ahold Delhaize, which owns the Giant and Stop & Shop supermarket chains. They are now a standard feature on the company’s nearly 500 robots across the United States.*

*How this supermarket robot got its goofy eyes touches on a serious question: Will robots with friendly faces and cute names help people feel good about devices that are taking over an increasing amount of human work?”*

*Should Robots Have a Face?*

*Michael Corkery, New York Times, February 2020*





*“Well I'm a grASS-eating robot at Le  
Château de Versailles  
I don't know Jack about d\*ck in 1789  
Because my only revolution is 360-degrees  
I'm a grASS-eating robot and I do what I  
please”*

— Soupy Garbage Juice on Youtube

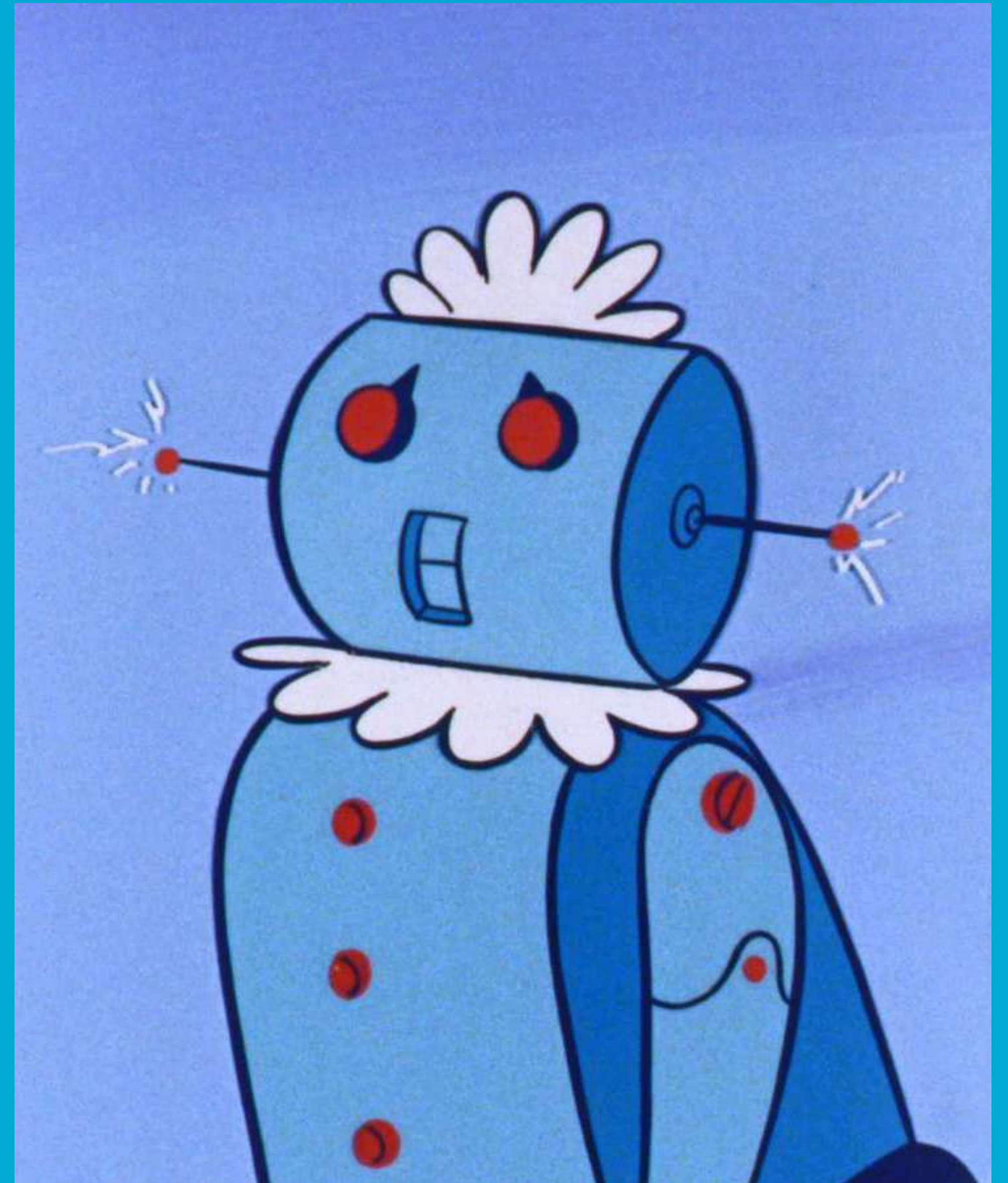
# We manifest the future of fiction. But is it all “Rosey”?

From Star Trek to Star Wars, humanity continues to build the future predicted by science fiction. Robots, digital assistants, autonomous vehicles; all subservient to our every need and want.

The Jetsons, written in the 1960s, is no exception. While it depicts a perfectly middle-class nuclear family of the future, it is firmly rooted in the social issues of the day.

In Season 1, Jane Jetson is heading out to attend a protest, she suggests “ordering in”, and offloading gendered labor roles to robotic servants. The middle class protests while the subservient class supports their lifestyle. How very modern.

Rosey the Robot, a robot maid from The Jetsons (1960)



*“Gender, social class and racial distinctions are made throughout The Jetsons when viewers meet sentient robot service providers... representing the mammy and Uncle Tom archetypes.*

*Those positions consistently filled by POC in 60’s America. Both Rosey and Mac fulfil working-class service roles in The Jetsons universe, but also manage to display core elements of humanity including emotional range and real-time decision-making reminding viewers that they are no less human than other characters.”*

*Race, Class, and Rosey the Robot: Critical Study of The Jetsons*

Erin Burell, PhD

# The Voice-Assistant Generation



Generation Alpha (2010-present) is the first to grow up with Ambient Computing. An always-on, ever-present listening device available in many homes may be shaping the way that we communicate with each other.

*“In one specific research experiment on children’s adaptation in multi-session interaction with a humanoid robot, the children adapted their interaction behaviors to the robot’s behavior even if there was no clear need for them to do so.*

*Children adapted their verbal behavior and nonverbal behavior by changing their rate of speech, pause duration, and vocal volume depending on the characteristics of the verbal behavior of the robot. People are more likely to mirror the machine’s lexical choices if they are trying to accomplish a goal.”*

Edwards & Mandagere, 2020

The Effects of AI on Children’s Use of Politeness



# The Future of Inspiration Is AI



Future inspiration will be machine-learning trained. Inspiring permutations will emerge, and inform real-world design.

The same commodity cycle that created music genres like lofi hip hop will soon begin its work on design and stock photography. Its mere existence will reinform design trends.

DALL-E, a portmanteau of Salvador Dali and WALL-E, is a 12-billion parameter version of the GPT-3 AI engine that is capable of generating images from text descriptions.

DALL-E Prompt: “an armchair in the shape of an avocado. an armchair imitating an avocado.”

# Algospeak – AI Is Changing Our Language

*“Algospeak refers to code words or turns of phrase users have adopted in an effort to create a brand-safe lexicon that will avoid getting their posts removed or down-ranked by content moderation systems. For instance, in many online videos, it’s common to say “unalive” rather than “dead,” “SA” instead of “sexual assault,” or “spicy eggplant” instead of “vibrator.”*

Taylor Lorenz

*The Washington Post (April 8, 2022)*

# Algorithmic Autosuggest Shapes Our Interests, and Not for the Better

Suggestive algorithms may be shaping our interests, and those interests may be shaping our content bubbles.

Some searches may be morbid curiosity (a celebrity's net worth, or pictures of their feet), but others may be fueling a vicious cycle, promulgating hate speech.

The Wisdom of the Crowd? How about The Hatred of the Crowd?

*Next I type: “a-r-e m-u-s-l-i-m-s”. And Google suggests I should ask: “Are Muslims bad?” And here's what I find out: yes, they are. That's what the top result says and six of the others. Without typing anything else, simply putting the cursor in the search box, Google offers me two new searches and I go for the first, “Islam is bad for society”. In the next list of suggestions, I'm offered: “Islam must be destroyed.”*

Carol Cadwalldr, The Guardian: Google, democracy and the truth about internet search (December 2016)

*This is probably the most interesting and difficult time to be a forecaster, especially when it comes to youth lifestyle trends. Tik Tok has birthed a thousand communities - trends that go in every sort of direction. It's difficult because it is self-reinforcing. You're not sure which of these trends is relegated to social media or if it actually exists in the real world.*

Michael Miraflor

## The New Luddite

*As individual sovereignty increases, new luddites will arise who rebel against the technological advances allowing for this individual autonomy. There will be a nostalgia for the past flamed by a crisis from the transition.*

— The Sovereign Individual, 1997



# Proof Points

72%

OF CONSUMERS FEEL THAT IT'S TOO FRICTIONLESS TO BUY ONLINE VIA "ONE-CLICK"

43%

REVEAL THEY'VE CHANGED THEIR DIGITAL BEHAVIORS IN SOME WAY TO AVOID DATA COLLECTION OR ALGORITHM CHANGES

2/3

THINK IT'S PLAUSIBLE WE'RE LIVING IN A SIMULATION.



# Presenting Sponsor



Shopware is an ecommerce hub allowing you to offer relevant, compelling experiences for your consumers and your back office team. Our open source core and 'open commerce' approach lets brands build however they want: turnkey, headless, PWA, or any combination thereof thanks to our "all sales channels welcome" approach.

Our features cover B2C, B2B, and multi-store, with guided shopping and a worldwide ecosystem of developers, agencies, and technology partners allowing you to compose the most engaging experiences imaginable.

[shopware.com/visions](https://shopware.com/visions)

# Presenting Sponsor



Magically manifest 37% more revenue from existing ecommerce traffic with Klevu. One product discovery platform for search, merchandising and recommendations.

Klevu captures e-commerce shoppers' intent and then leverages AI to provide highly relevant, personalized online search and discovery experiences that go well beyond keywords typed into the search box. The company's Discovery Suite technology provides a seamless, fast search online experience that drives traffic, conversion and loyalty, while reducing bounce rates. The end-to-end discovery and search solution is easy to configure, optimize and maintain and fully integrates with major shopping platforms' technology in just hours. Klevu's proprietary technology is driving traffic, conversion and loyalty for more than 3,000 leading global brands, including Puma, Yamaha, Callaway, Toys "R" Us, and Made.com.

[klevu.com](https://www.klevu.com)



Presenting Sponsor

**yotpo.**

Yotpo's eCommerce Marketing Platform helps brands of all sizes to strengthen relationships with consumers through advanced solutions for brand engagement, community advocacy, and retention. Using Yotpo SMSBump, Reviews, Loyalty & Referrals and more, innovative brands like Princess Polly, Rothy's, Moroccanoil, and Steve Madden are able to deliver winning, cohesive customer experiences that drive eCommerce growth. Yotpo is integrated with Google and Meta and is available on all major eCommerce platforms — Shopify, Salesforce Commerce Cloud, Adobe Commerce, and BigCommerce. Yotpo is a Forbes Cloud 100 company with offices worldwide including the United States, Israel, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, and Australia.

[yotpo.com](https://yotpo.com)

# Contributing Sponsors

## #paid

#paid is a creator marketing platform that sits at the intersection of brand and creator collaboration. #paid helps direct-to-consumer and Fortune 500 brands like Phillips Hue, Everlywell, Unilever, and Sephora, activate creators to drive growth. #paid is building the platform of record that powers content creation and distribution for brands globally, while also serving the creator community and providing them with the best place on earth to do what they love—create.

[hashtagpaid.com](https://hashtagpaid.com)

## nosto

Nosto enables brands to deliver carefully merchandised, and meaningfully personalized, authentic shopping experiences at every touch point, across every device. A data-driven Commerce Experience Platform designed for ease of use, Nosto empowers brands to build, launch and optimize 1:1 omnichannel commerce experiences without the need for dedicated IT resources. Leading commerce brands such as Lord & Taylor, ILY Pets, Modcloth, FRYE, Kenneth Cole or Bebe, in over 100 countries, use Nosto to grow their business and delight their customers. Nosto supports its clients from its offices in New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, Helsinki, Berlin and Stockholm.

[nosto.com](https://nosto.com)

## :::RareCircles

The internet is not just memes.  
NFTs are not just art.

NFTs will transform how we engage communities and build businesses. Rarecircles is making it easy for brands and businesses to create NFTs, build branded experiences and engage their community. Businesses are now unlocking new revenue streams, increasing customer lifetime value, and driving stronger engagement with NFTs. Enter the metaverse with a turnkey solution built for ease and simplicity.

[rarecircles.com](https://rarecircles.com)

## tapcart

Tapcart is a mobile app builder for Shopify's fastest-growing brands, including Fashion Nova, Princess Polly, LSKD, and more. With Tapcart, you can instantly turn your Shopify store into an epic mobile app with no coding required and power a low-upkeep revenue stream designed to convert mobile shoppers.

With a mobile app, brands have access to unlimited cost-free push notifications, giving stores the ability to send messages directly to their shopper's home screens—driving instant spikes in traffic, revenue, and AOV. With a streamlined mobile-first shopping experience, customers access premium features, building brand loyalty and boosting customer lifetime value.

[tapcart.com](https://tapcart.com)