

Cultural Shifts 2025

MARGARET

Foreword

As we approach 2025, amid ongoing global economic and political uncertainty and the rise of AI, we reflect on consumer sentiment and emerging cultural trends. We anticipate a backlash against perfection and self-optimisation, with a growing desire for self-indulgence and fun. Nostalgia for analogue, retro aesthetics, craftsmanship, and human connection will rise, alongside a greater push for Neurodivergent representation. Community collaboration will continue to reshape brand strategies, while gaming will increase its influence in culture and shoppers will continue to favour sustainability with the Preloved market continuing to surge.

MARGARET

Margaret is a certified B Corp, creative studio, and global communications agency specialising in arts and culture. Our mission is to craft meaningful, culturally relevant campaigns that stand for something. Working at the intersection of brands and cultural institutions, we gain unique insight into evolving global trends and consumer needs, enabling us to shape campaigns that truly resonate.

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Wellness Rebellion

“You’ll Be Fine, Because Guess What? We’re All Going To Die Anyway”

TikTok: @angelinanicolle

There can be no denying that the wellness market continues to grow but in the face of this we are seeing the rise of an **“anti-wellness”** trend, reflecting growing fatigue with the relentless pursuit of self-optimisation. As wellness culture has evolved, its focus on perfection through strict diets, rigorous fitness regimens, and constant self-improvement has led to burnout and disillusionment. In response, we’re seeing a cultural shift that embraces a more balanced approach to health and happiness, where indulgence and imperfection are valued alongside discipline.

We’re seeing wellness ideals come under fire, with campaigns like the Virgin Active’s recent ‘Leave the Cult, Join the Club’ mocking fitness obsessions and promoting more realistic definitions of health.

Brands are pivoting their messaging to reflect this broader desire for balance. Known for its meal replacements, Huel is rebranding to emphasise enjoyment alongside nutrition. Their latest campaigns, featuring influencers like Steven Bartlett, highlight how convenience and health can also be indulgent. Priority is being given to taking a break; positioning enjoyment, imperfection, and the occasional guilty pleasure as integral to well-being.



Burger King’s recent ad featuring new mothers enjoying fast food – a nod to the idea that sometimes, indulgence is just as important as discipline.

The Rise of Neurodivergent Voices and Influence

Celebrating Diverse Thinking and Finding Strength in Difference

We've seen a rise in diagnoses of Autism and ADHD over the past years, with ADHD being the second-most viewed condition on the NHS website last year (BBC). **Neurodivergent people are also standing prouder with #ActuallyAutistic (766K on Instagram) and #ADHD (5 Million on TikTok) gaining massive traction.**

We're seeing this reflected in the arts, with a greater number of Inclusive spaces and sensory-friendly or focused exhibitions in museums and the launch of The Liverpool Neurodiversity Arts Festival in 2024. Also notable was The Spectator's 'How Neurodiversity Took Over the Edinburgh Fringe' headline.

Brands are also adapting; LEGO has embraced neurodiversity in its product design by collaborating with experts to ensure its toys cater to children with sensory needs and this year stain removal brand Vanish launched a campaign around an autistic girl's connection to her favourite hoodie, emphasising how clothing can provide comfort and regulation.

The Vanish campaign, created in partnership with Ambitious about Autism, also included a sensory-friendly exhibition.

"Neurodivergent people want more than champions, funny memes, and pills. Plus, there's info fatigue to contend with. Right now, it feels like the response to this exciting boom is still in draft. The world needs brands to connect with communities to fund innovative solutions that meet all consumers where they are—and to be ambitious and experimental about it! It's an extraordinary time. There are infinite ideas and countless opportunities to collaborate, create meaningful impact, and drive cultural change. So, let's see who's ready to step up!"

Chrystal Genesis, Cultural Strategist, Founder and Host of Stance Podcast, New York-based



The Stimming Pool, a film about and made by autistic voices as part of London Film Festival 2024 worked on by Margaret.

Back to Basics



The Light phone, 'designed to be used as little as possible'

Embracing Simplicity Over High-Tech Solutions

In 2024 the Swedish minister of education Lotta Edholm decided to move students off digital devices and the Australian Senate approved a social media ban for under 16 year olds. Whilst in the UK the smartphone-free childhood movement gathers pace, with parents from 6537 schools having signed a Parent Pact calling for a ban on devices.

Realistically, we're not going to slow technological progress but what we are seeing is a growing concern about the downsides along with a nostalgia for analogue formats and simpler times. In the US, CBS recently reported on a small but growing group of Brooklyn students who have formed 'The Luddite Club' in response to the world's abuse of technology, with US analysts predicting the sales of 'dumb phones' to grow to up to 5% of the market in the next few years whilst, according to TechInsights, high tech wearable sales are down.

Classic watches have seen global sales rise by 11% and in music, vinyl sales were up by 11.8% in 2023, with artists like Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo releasing cassette versions of their new albums. Film and Polaroid cameras have also been making a steady comeback, as people seek out a slower, more intentional and less 'perfect' approach to photography (Thred.com).

According to reports from The Future Laboratory and LS:N Global, Gen Z and Gen Alpha are driving this trend, embracing physical media, retro aesthetics and meaningful human connection over digital convenience and overload.

Human Craft in the Face of AI

Choosing Craft for a More Human, Stand-Out Touch

As AI and robots become more advanced, there's a growing need to support human creativity, intuition and craftsmanship — the one thing machines can't replicate.

Engaging in crafts helps us connect to our cultural roots and gives us a sense of fulfillment that goes beyond just work. The rise in interest in crafts and analogue practices is a way to escape the digital world and embrace more personal, human experiences. Whether it's basket weaving or modern design, these crafts help preserve skills passed down through generations.

Ironic then that our craft industry is suffering, with makers reported to be struggling in response to the rising cost of living and many crafts risking extinction, with a recent article in Dezeen calling on luxury brands to support this sector.



Pernod Ricard Malibu's new 'Don't Drink and Dive' campaign featuring Tom Daley in knitted trunks.

We predict a resurgence in craft techniques used by brands in 2025. A notable recent example is Starbucks' Christmas ad, a highly laboured show of 3D, stop-motion and 2D animation craftsmanship. Not to mention Pernod Ricard Malibu's recent responsible drinking campaign with the Royal Life Saving Society featuring Olympian Tom Daley in a pair of knitted diving trunks, with an accompanying limited-edition apparel collection, to reflect the athlete's penchant for knitting.

"People in the future will pay a premium for handmade craft and creativity, because there's a story attached to it. People who can craft things with their hands, that will be the new luxury in the future."

David Lee, CCO of Squarespace

"In an already hyper-digital world, with AI threatening to dehumanise it even more, the imperfect individuality of humans will be a welcome respite. I think we'll see more brands leaning into handcrafted techniques – stop-motion, hand-drawn animation, tactile design, collage – as a way to touch audiences in ways that no algorithm can replicate. It's an emotional resonance that will make those brands stand out. Work that feels meaningful, personal, and inherently alive will remind us of and reaffirm the value of craftsmanship in an increasingly automated world".

Ashleigh Kane, Arts & Photography Editor-at-Large, Dazed

Upping Our Game

From Virtual Worlds to Cultural Powerhouse

Gaming has evolved into one of the most social and creative spaces in the digital realm, offering positive, immersive worlds and interactive storytelling. As tech strategist Zoe Scaman puts it, gaming is a “cosy pocket of the internet,” where players can escape into fantastical stories and connect with others.

Its integration into mainstream culture is already underway, influencing film, education, and digital identities. The digital human market, including avatars and virtual personas, is projected to reach \$1.5 billion by 2026, reflecting gaming’s growing cultural significance, as stated by the International Data Corporation (IDC).

Gaming is also increasingly influencing fashion and lifestyle, with brands like Balenciaga collaborating with musicians for 8-bit games and eBay partnering with gaming influencers. Additionally, cloud gaming and AI advancements continue to shape the industry. Events like the League of Legends finals demonstrate the immense talent and joy gaming brings to millions. Gaming is no longer just a hobby—it’s a powerful cultural force impacting entertainment, identity, and technology.



A new collaboration between Spanish luxury fashion line Balenciaga and French composer and musician BFRND featuring an 8-bit video game.

More Love for Preloved



OXFAM - Michaela Coel, Photograph: Tom Craig

Sustainability Reigns While Preloved is the New Luxury

In 2024 four-fifths of global consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable products (Capgemini Research Institute Study), despite economic instability and rising living costs.

Perhaps it comes as no surprise then that the Preloved market continues to gain pace, with the online second-hand clothing market driven by platforms like Depop and Vinted being projected to grow to \$218 billion by 2026 (GlobalData). These platforms, popular with younger, environmentally-conscious consumers, have made resale more mainstream, with 70% of Gen Z and Millennials now buying or selling second-hand clothing online.

Established fashion brands are also following suit, with companies like The Knotty Ones, Selfridges, and TOAST having launched buy-back or resale programs in response to growing demand. Whilst in November of this year Miu Miu launched Upcycled 2024, a collection reflecting the brand's commitment to sustainability and circular design practice.

Retail giants such as eBay are also placing more focus on second-hand fashion, with their Endless Runway collection being the first-ever Preloved fashion show at this Autumn's London Fashion Week, with Oxfam also having a presence.

But it's not just fashion, just look at Back Market, a fast growing global marketplace for refurbished tech devices which is expanding across Europe and beyond. Not to mention platforms like TikTok Shop, with their Preloved section all demonstrating how resale and sustainability are becoming integral to modern shopping culture.

Fun & Function

Letting Loose: Finding Fun in Serious Times

In the evolving world of brand collaborations, there's a growing trend where fun and function seamlessly merge. Brands are no longer just offering products—they're creating experiences that are both practical and playful, often leveraging viral moments and celebrity culture to capture attention.

A prime example is the Absolut Vodka Tomato Pasta Sauce collaboration with Heinz, which blends functionality with a sense of fun, while giving celebrities a chance to embrace meme-ification. This trend is not just about novelty, it's about tapping into cultural moments and resonating with consumers in a meaningful, engaging way.

For instance, Scrub Daddy and Dunkin' Donuts teamed up to create a dish sponge for International Doughnut Day, while KITH and Mike Tyson's Box Tee humorously referenced his iconic image. Similarly, our recent campaign with Giggs x Oatly saw them collaborate on a custard kit to address dairy allergies, combining function with a personal connection.

Collaborations like Martha Stewart & Snoop Dogg's BIC lighter also prove that when brands listen to public discourse, often driven by memes or viral content, they can create partnerships that are both fun and functional, making everyday products more joyful and relevant.

"In today's world, where things often feel a bit too serious, we aim to create brand experiences that are impactful, joyful, and unexpected. The 'Custard by Giggs' campaign culminated in a one-day takeover of Ayres Bakery in Nunhead, tapping into culture to reach new audiences and bring people together in person. We wanted to remind everyone that having fun and staying human are just as important as staying innovative. We worked closely with Giggs and his team to ensure authenticity throughout the campaign, using one rapper's love for our dairy-free custard to bring the light-hearted side of the Oatly brand to new audiences."

Olly Crown, Oatly UK & I Events Specialist



[Custard by Giggs](#)

Brand and Community Collaboration

Authentic Community as a Non-Negotiable for Brands

With consumers increasingly favouring-purpose driven brands (2024 Edelman Trust Barometer) and 72% making purchasing decisions based on influencer and community recommendations (2024 Nielsen Global Consumer report) it makes sense on every level for brands to be building long term socially-focused partnerships with communities.

We've seen some great examples of brands doing this in 2024; Levi's® with their 'The Floor Is Yours' campaign, empowering local communities by inviting dancers to participate in a global search for talent, Kickers with their 'Stomping Grounds' campaign launched with Save our Scene to help save grassroots music venues and creative spaces, and Converse with their 10th annual Pride campaign and collection as part of their commitment to supporting LGBTQIA+ communities (which has seen them donate nearly \$3 million to organisations serving the LGBTQIA+ community).



Levi's® The Floor is Yours Campaign

In 2025 we will see community collaboration continuing to reshape brand strategies, with companies increasingly involving their audiences in co-creating campaigns and products as well as addressing issues that matter to them. The brands that succeed will be those that build deeper connections through long term investment, and are prepared to listen to a communities' needs and let themselves be led by their voices.

"It's a tired trope that Gen Z demand sustainability and social impact from brands, and recent shifts in attitudes amongst young men (particularly) show the dangers of a sweeping approach. But in a world which is increasingly tumultuous, people really are looking for community where they can get it. The brands that are gaining traction at the moment, are those who are building a collective - not a following. Looking to hand the mic to their audience. And its a creatively savvy move too - 2 in 3 Gen Z consider themselves creators. Rather than competing in-feed for attention, involve them in your mission. It's time to make your customer, your creative partner."

Kate Knowles, Cultural Strategist based in Lyon, France

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MARGARET

WE CRAFT
CULTURE

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