

2024

TRENDS ✨

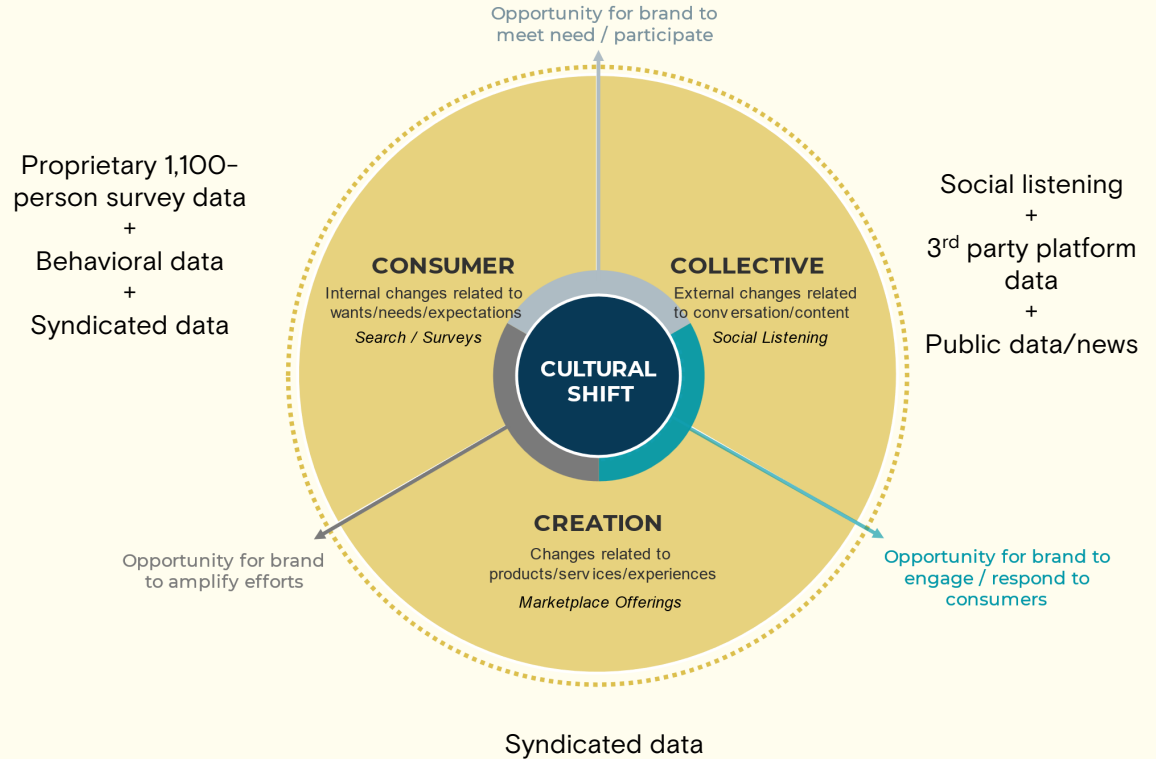
Trends at Starcom

Our Methodology

Our interdisciplinary approach contextualizes proprietary behavioral and survey data with social listening and detailed observation of the cultural climate.

After speaking to over 1000 Americans, we've boiled down the coming year into four prevailing trends for 2024, all with one, central undercurrent.

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Where We Were

2023 Update

Last year, we foresaw people reconciling conflicting emotions across their lives, and predicted seven spaces we expected to see this bubble up. While all seven remain salient in culture, three in particular (youthfulness, ambition and technology) continue to pick up steam.

Identity: Unitedly Unique

Standing out in the crowd is losing *a little* ground this year; instead, we see folks becoming a little less self-conscious about how different they are from their peers.

Youthfulness: Honey, We Lost the Kids

Off the heels of “Coastal Grandma Chic,” Gen Z is embracing hobbies and aesthetics typically associated with older Americans.

Ambition: Anti-Capitalist Millionaire

People are increasingly using the term “hustle culture” pejoratively, but influencer and entrepreneurial ambitions remain strong.

Technology: Dated Digital

Instagram finally lost some traction with younger audiences this year, a trend it hopes to reverse by rethinking its platform through Threads.

Activism: Fight or Flight

Motivated by equal parts fatalism and exhaustion, many are reporting less enthusiasm in causes they’ve typically cared strongly about like the environment.

AI: Friend or Foe?

People continue to struggle between seeing opportunity in AI vs. being nervous about all that its future may bring.

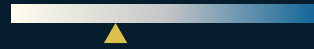
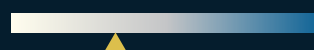
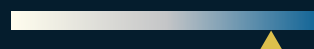
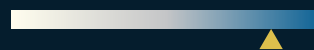
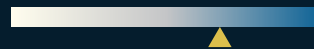
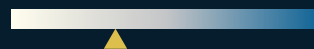
Gender: Newfound Feminism

While the summer of *Barbie* isn’t fully behind us, some of the vigor around female empowerment has slowed down.

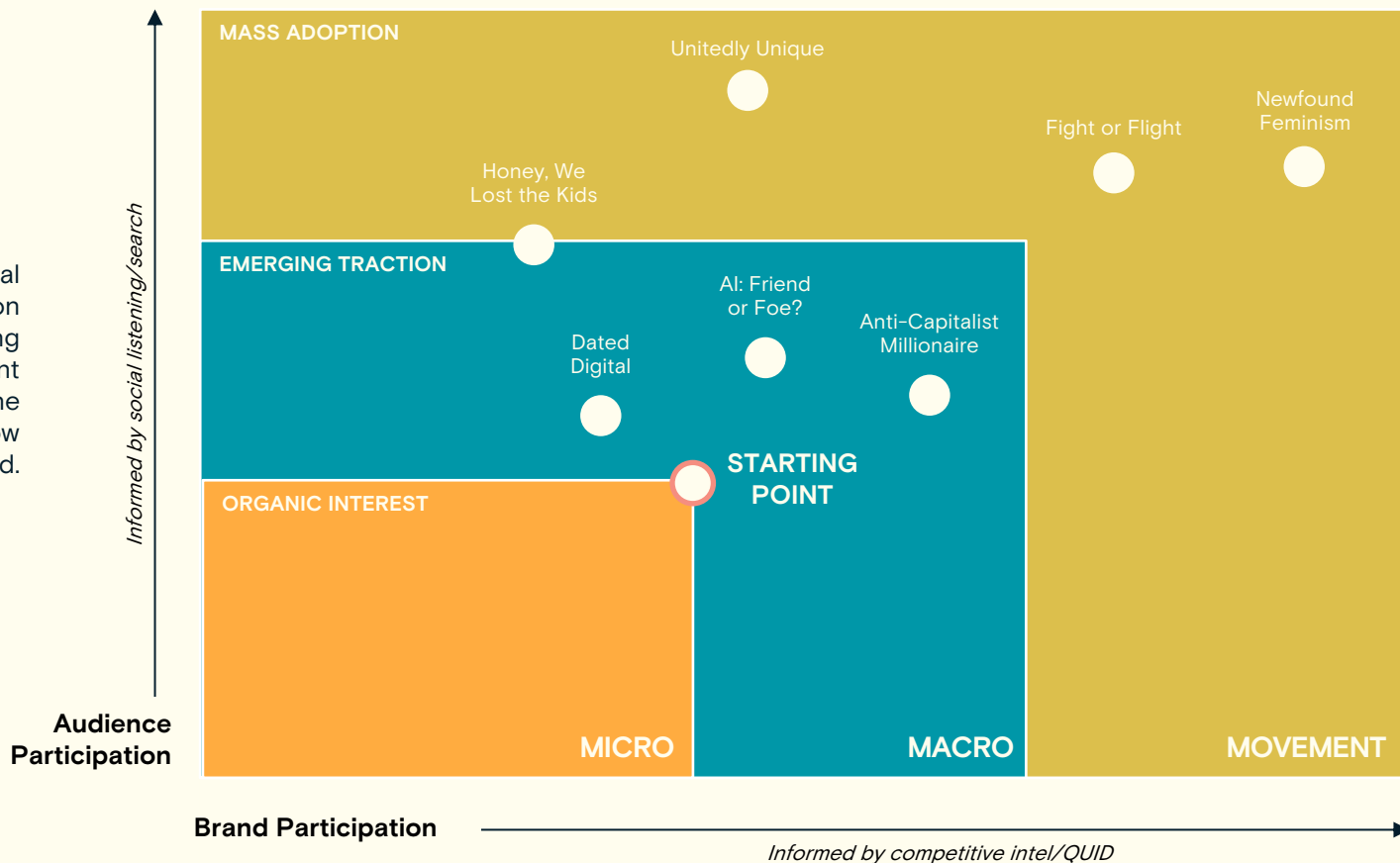


Losing
Steam

Gaining
Traction



We first articulate our annual trends right when they're on the cusp of transitioning between a micro movement and macro one. Throughout the course of the year, here's how our 2023 trends progressed.



Where We Are

Despite concerns about the state of the world and the economy, **consumers of all identities and walks of life** are largely optimistic about what the next 12 months will bring.

Top ways people are feeling going into 2024:

Hopeful (52%)

Excited (40%)

Energized (36%)

Confident (35%)

Proud (22%)

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey

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FORBES > INNOVATION > ENTERPRISE TECH

Fake Or Fact? The Disturbing Future Of AI-Generated Realities

21ST CENTURY BIAS —

People think white AI-generated faces are more real than actual photos, study says

'Hyperrealism' bias may impact medicine and law enforcement. Can you spot the fakes?

BENJ EDWARDS - 11/14/2023, 4:55 PM

TECHNOLOGY

Fake babies, real horror: Deepfakes from the Gaza war increase fears about AI's power to mislead

We've been using the term "fake news" for a few years now, but in 2023, advances in artificial intelligence took the panic to new levels. The news cycle was suddenly filled with anxious stories about Dall-E, AI-generated photos, and ChatGPT. Individuals, companies, and governmental entities are starting to respond. Case in point: in November, California public schools mandated that students receive training on spotting fake news as part of their curriculum.

This year, all of this anxiety about what is real and what is fake remains, only now it'll exist with the backdrop of a presidential election. But while most brands and people continue to think of this as real vs. fake, **individuals are starting to question what reality is in this new world we live in.**

In 2024, we'll be searching for

AUTHENTIC

The New

In a world of deep fakes, Insta filters and ChatGPT, it's getting harder to define what's real and what's not. And even as people increasingly use these technologies, they still say they want to see authenticity from brands and the people in their lives.

So what does "authentic" mean in 2024?

The answer:

Sometimes fake is realer than real.



Technology

RealGPT

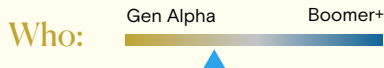
For AI, “artificial” is in the name. But for many people, it is powering a level of customization and self-expression that feels more genuine than not.

What

For a huge chunk of the population, AI is code for “fake.” Our 2023 trend refresh proved that. But many young audiences think it empowers a level of candor and reality they couldn’t achieve before. For them, AI can power experiences more tailored to their needs and enable creative self-expression—two ways in which they feel they can more authentically experience their lives.

So What

- Brands can empower this self-expression by inviting consumers to create alongside them through AI and other technology.
- Younger audiences will demand greater personalization knowing what technology can now power.



Key Drivers:

Self-Expression, Personalization

39%

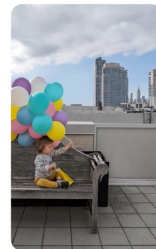
of people A18-34 say they prefer AI-powered conversational tools to standard search.

Source: Accenture

1/3

of people under 50 say they’ve used AI to get better suggestions and recommendations from brands.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey



Brand Spotlight

Google’s Magic Editor uses AI to edit out people, objects and anything else you don’t want in the pictures you take. The result is an image that more accurately represents what you *wanted* to capture, rather than what truly existed.



Culture Spotlight

Social media is full of AI-generated expressions of *Harry Potter* in other genres (e.g. here, à la Wes Anderson). Many see AI not as fake, but as a real way of expressing their artistic visions.



Life Goals

La La Land

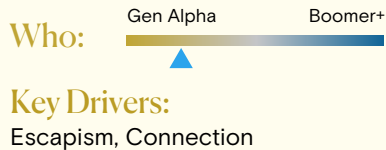
Dreaming big isn't new. But many young people are now dreaming *so* big that they're admittedly living in a fantasy.

What

With origins in K-pop fandom, #delulu took TikTok by storm this year, with millions of teens and 20-somethings posting about their delusional aspirations. Negativity from the news cycle and inflationary pressures make the optimism of dreaming very appealing. And while some of it is self-consciously unrealistic, for many, that doesn't mean it's impossible: Fantasize enough, and maybe you can manifest it into reality.

So What

- Brands will have to balance the fine line between empowering dreams and enabling the delusions.
- Brands can give people the confidence that a plausible version of success for themselves is possible.



48%

of people say they do not make realistic plans more than a year into the future.

Source: Accenture

45%

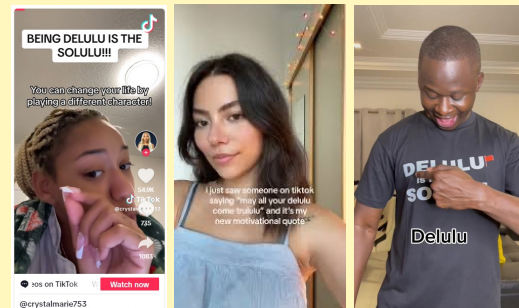
of Gen Z say they try to manifest the things they want, and 27% say they fantasize about the future.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey



Brand Spotlight

Coca Cola introduced its AI-powered Coke Studio at music festivals (e.g. Coachella), which gave attendees the opportunity to live out their dreams of being rockstars.



Culture Spotlight

TikTok is rife with influencers sharing their #delulu visions and encouraging their followers to fantasize alongside them.

Relationships

De-toxic-ing

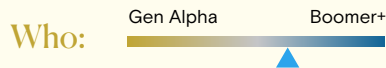
People have been talking about “found family” and “Friendsgiving” for years. This year, we’ll see people really taking a stand on who their *real* friends and family are.

What

In 2023, a record number of people reported being estranged from close family members. As we move into an election year, political polarization, stretched finances, and a renewed focus on mental health will make these divisions even more common. Furthermore, greater cultural familiarity with things like therapy is giving people a shared language to talk about things like “toxic people” and setting boundaries.

So What

- The notion of “family” might be complicated for many, requiring different messaging and imagery for things like Mother’s and Father’s Day and holiday.
- Shrinking and changing family/social structures will alter who influences purchase decisions in your household.



Key Drivers:

Wellness, Connection

27%

of American adults report being estranged from at least one family member, citing “toxic behavior” as the main reason.

Source: [Cornell University](#)

37%

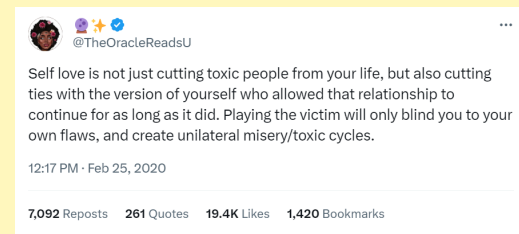
of Gen Z says setting better boundaries with family is one of their main 2024 goals.

Source: [Starcom Proprietary Survey](#)



Brand Spotlight

Converse's “Found Family” Pride collection acknowledged the challenges many LGBTQ+ consumers face with acceptance in their genetic families by celebrating the love they’ve received from their communities instead.



Culture Spotlight

Borrowing language from mental health professionals, people are becoming more and more vocal and public about what and whom they are cutting out of their lives.



Social Media

Alter-Egos

People know the profiles they see on social are heavily edited and curated. Even the ones that look filter-free. They're instead seeking out real human stories, even from non-human personalities.

What

The promise of BeReal was always that #nofilter photos would provide the unvarnished truth about people's lives. But over the past year, the app has seen a steep decline in users. People instead find authenticity in content creators using multi-part TikToks, multiple simultaneous profiles, long-form text and social as a diary. Paradoxically, many of these creators are spoof accounts, virtual and otherwise "not real."

So What

- Influencer marketing has a whole new dimension.
- Being stripped down on social isn't enough to convince consumers you are being open and honest with them.



Key Drivers:

Connection, Self-Expression, Status

36%

of Gen Z say they have multiple profiles on some of their social media apps to reflect multiple parts of their personality.

Source: Cornell University

1/4

of people under 50 say they follow AI or other non-human influencers.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey



Brand Spotlight

Diesel, **Dior** and **Calvin Klein** have all partnered with Lil Miquela, a virtual influencer who is a 19-year-old Brazilian singer and social media personality. And also entirely fictional.



Culture Spotlight

The data is in and younger audiences have told us that BeReal isn't really all that real.

(Source: YPulse)

Recap

The New Authentic



Technology: RealGPT

Authentic self expression through AI and other technology

Brands should:

Let people choose their own brand adventure



Life Goals: La La Land

Authentic future goals through daydreaming and manifesting

Brands should:

Empower plausible goals and implausible dreams



Relationships: De-Toxic-Ing

Authentic self acceptance through found family

Brands should:

Be sensitive to changing influence dynamics and familial sensitivities



Communication: Alter-Egos

Authentic content from virtual influencers

Brands should:

Recalibrate what honesty looks like on social