

CONTENT TRENDS 2024

**HOW BRANDS CAN WIN
BY TAKING THE PRESSURE
OFF FOR CONSUMERS**

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WHY CEDAR?

Cedar is an industry-leading creative content marketing agency, working with the biggest global brands to create award-winning content experiences. Today, we manage or consult on a 90% digital content portfolio for clients including British Airways, Tesco, Nikon, Iberia, Eurostar, Cathay Pacific, Mandarin Oriental, TUI and Dorchester Collection. We also partner with a wide range of brands, including Amex, Barclays and Expedia, to help them reach audiences within those portfolios.

CEDAR
made different



ARE YOU READY FOR 2024?

These are wild times: from channel transformation to spending shifts, plus the biggest election year on record, not to mention the Olympic Games in Paris... 2024 is going to be anything but quiet.

Fortunately, you're now reading Cedar's flagship Spark+Fuel content marketing trends report for 2024, designed to give marketers the foresight they need to plan the right content, channels and personalised media to succeed with customers in 2024.

The core theme of this report is 'Take the Pressure Off'. Marketers and consumers alike are fed up with the doom and gloom, and are actively looking for moments of entertainment and ease from brands. That means personalisation and humour, plus a much smarter and more nuanced approach to audience targeting that prioritises mindset over demographic.

This report is the flashlight that smart marketers need to cut through the overwhelming marketing challenges of 2024. Our ambition is to help unlock new ways to connect with consumers who are equally in need of a signal that brighter days lie ahead.

OUR METHODOLOGY

- 100 marketing professionals surveyed
- More than 100 trends reports reviewed
- Editorial and creative content lens applied

ANATOMY OF THIS REPORT

Our overarching theme 'Take the Pressure Off' is supported by five fundamental trends. This report breaks down each of these trends into key sections, making it easy for marketers to understand: what it is; real-world examples; and how to get ahead.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF

The permacrises of pandemic, inflation and information overload have caused us to adapt the way we live our lives.

But despite some challenges (or possibly because of them), the 2024 consumer is searching for lightness in their content worlds.

They are paying attention to brands that help them take the pressure off and enjoy the moment, either by bringing unexpected (and sometimes unruly) sparks of joy, or by being so tailored and on-trend that their pain points disappear altogether.



5 TRENDS BUILDING THE MOVEMENT



WHAT'S DRIVING THE MOVEMENT IN 2024?

WILD TIMES

A year of big moments, plus the biggest election period in global history.

SPEND SHIFTS

Falling growth and higher prices continue to drive changes in consumer spending.

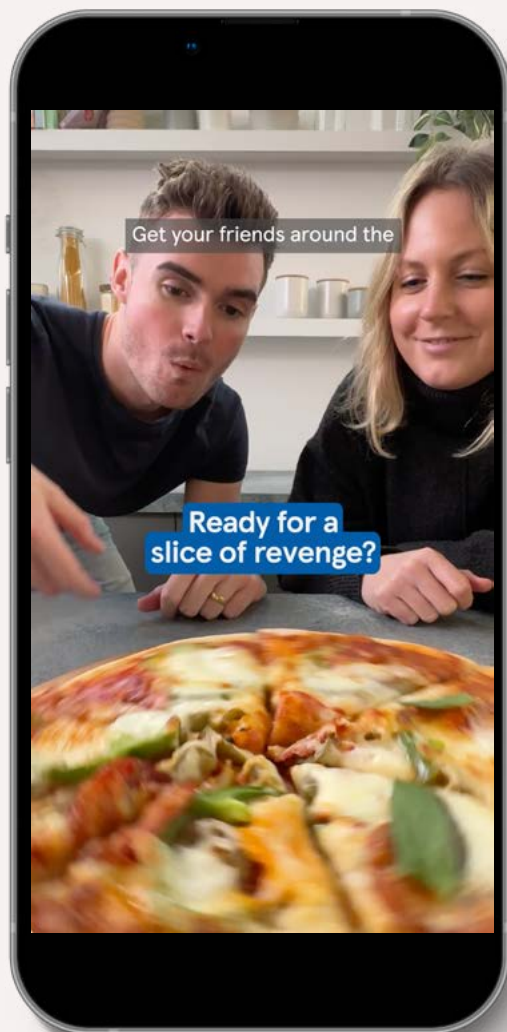
CHANNEL RESET

Our hyperconnected world – but a channel landscape that's more fragmented than ever.

THE ENTERTAINERS

*Whether content is purposeful or for pure
LOLs, entertainment is now a prerequisite.
Brands are raising a smile to capture hearts
and wandering attention spans*

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

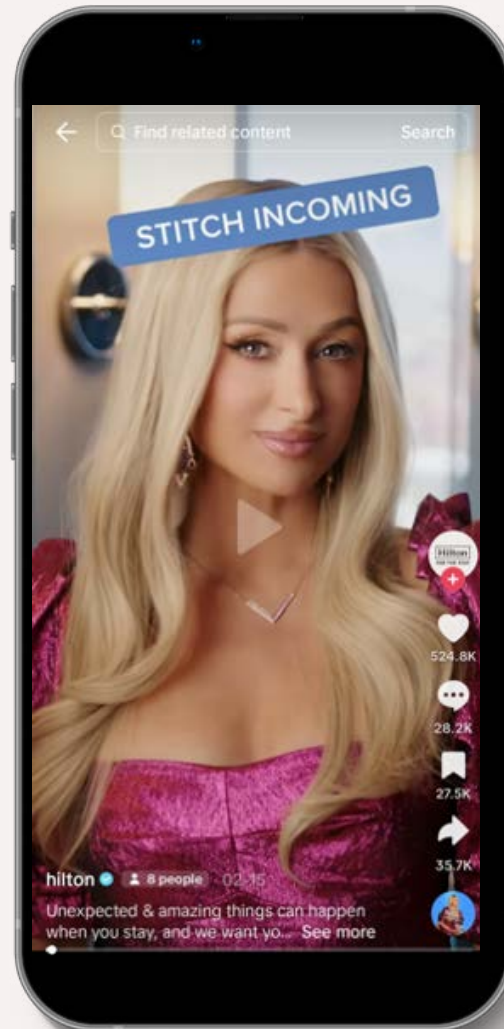


When entertaining trends are the filter, content permissions expand. Take the Cedar Tesco team jumping on *The Traitors* finale hype with this roulette pizza, with one deceitful extra spicy slice. Or Hobbycraft Wimbledon colleagues receiving viral views and celebrity shout-outs for dancing to trending tracks.

Brands are thinking laterally when it comes to trends, looking beyond what's trending in their category and joining wider cultural conversations to reach and engage new audiences.



WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

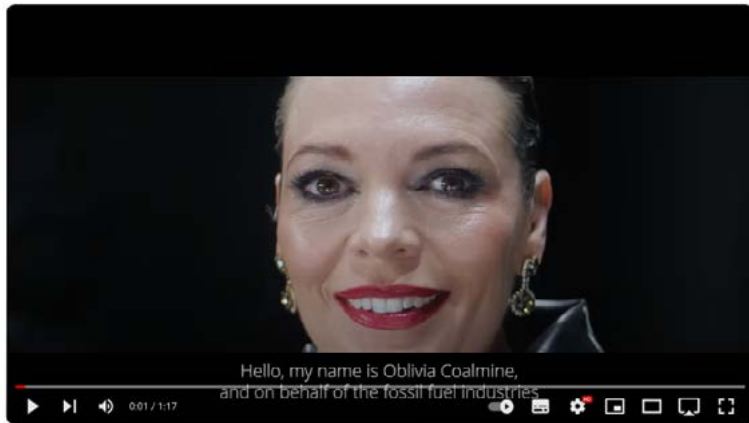


Brands and big studios are playing with storytelling conventions, reframing long-form content to pique curiosity with old and new fans alike.

Hilton broke the rules with a 10-minute TikTok. (Or was it just a series of standard snappy TikToks stitched together?) To promote the new *Mean Girls* musical movie on 3 October last year (*'Mean Girls Day'* to those in the know), Paramount released the OG movie in 23 parts on TikTok. And in January, HBO did something similar, creating TikTok-first episode recaps of *The Sopranos* to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the show.

Don't be afraid to go long, but take inspiration from short-form hooks.

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT



Be it comedy, music or gaming, brands and public figures are using an entertainment lens to attract attention to causes and inspire action.

Make My Money Matter used satire to provoke laughter, disgust, and even sadness to make people think about how their pension might be financing fossil fuels. *Comic Relief* invited gamers to fundraise by streaming, tapping into the culture of watching and ‘tipping’ streamers to engage a new, younger crowd with fundraising. And Idris Elba put out a single as part of a campaign to put pressure on the government to crack down on knife crime.

Make people feel to make them think.



THREE WAYS TO GET AHEAD

1

CHANNEL SOCIAL SPLITS

Harness the split between private and public social. Private (messaging) for 1-2-1 chat support. Public (feed) for entertaining.

2

TAP INTO GAMES

How could your brand enter the world of gaming to engage, entertain and even educate, new audiences?



3

THINK WILD COLLABS

Drive fame beyond traditional product launches through offbeat collabs. High-low, cross-category – the weirder the better.

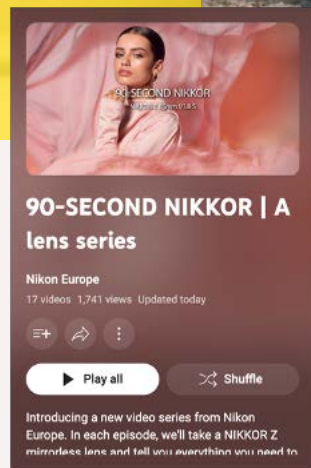
STRESS-FREE ERA OF ME

As culture becomes more 'me'-centric, brands are harnessing data and AI tools to create inclusive experiences that make audiences feel understood and respond to their needs at an individual level

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

BLEND AI WITH HUMAN INGENUITY

Nikon's 'Human prompt' campaign pits AI against the human behind the lens... and Cedar's 90-second YouTube shorts help photographers find exactly the right kit to push the boundaries.



(IMAGE CREDIT: NIKON PERU)

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

PERSONALISED INTERACTIVE CONTENT

Blending personalised subscription content with free evergreen content to help the nation take charge of its health.

Zoe serves personalised nutrition content to subscribers...

ZOE INSIGHT

What a great breakfast!

You've already packed in 3 of your gut boosters. Thank yourself on behalf of your bugs!

ZOE INSIGHT

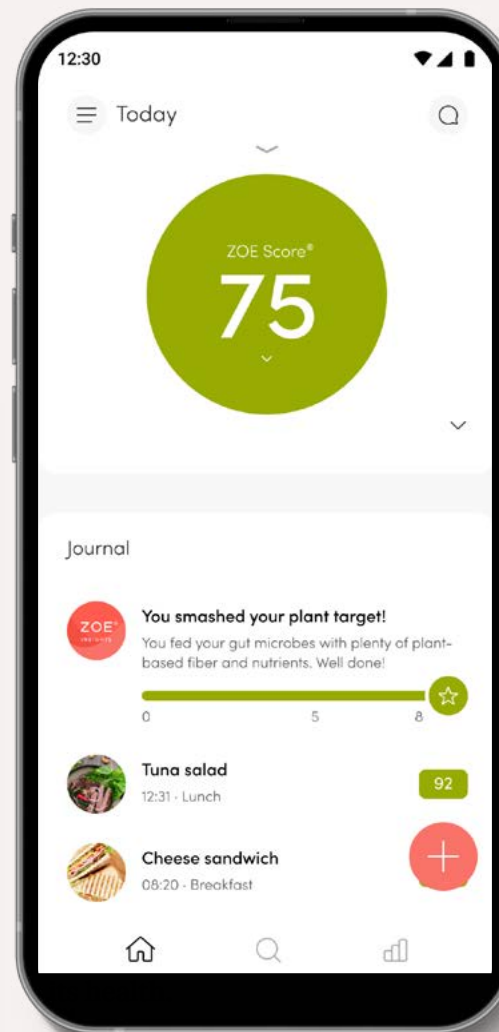
Have this your day score.

You've had too much of time. To help your fats and avoid inflammation, avoid fat-rich food until 20:00.

ZOE INSIGHT

Overcome that 3pm slump

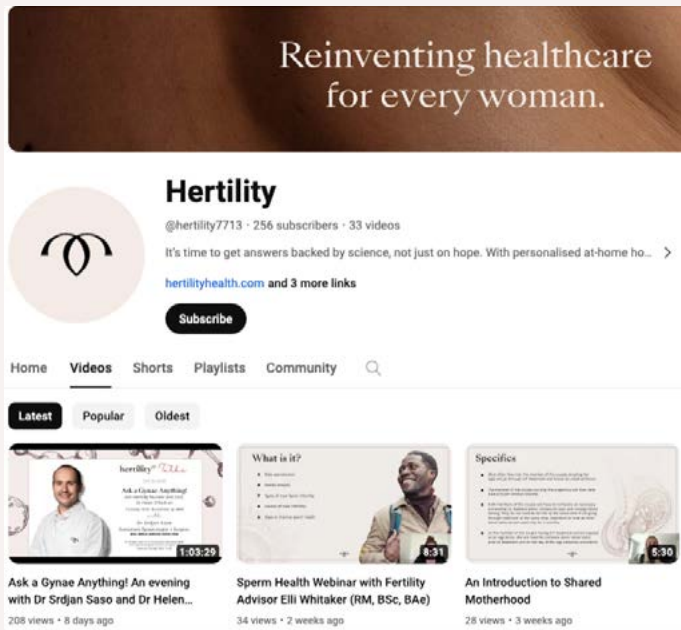
You probably feel tired 😴 and hungry after that lunch as it will have released lots of sugar into your blood very quickly. Any of these snacks will make a great pick-me-up!



... supported by free generalised material for all.

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

INDIVIDUALISED HORMONE AND FERTILITY SUPPORT, TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITY



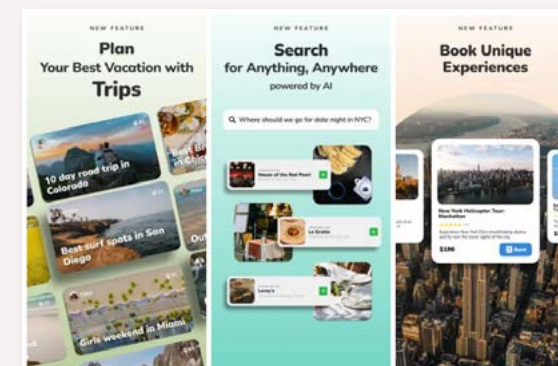
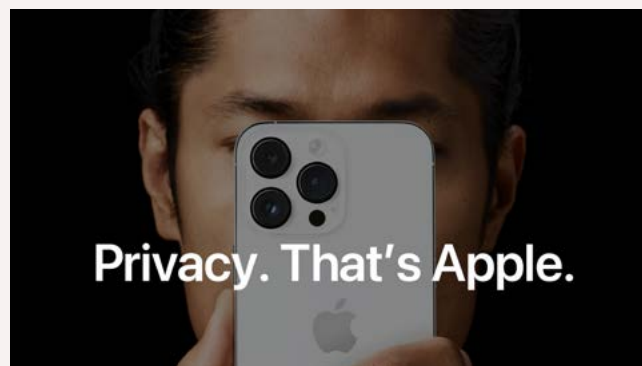
Bringing reproductive science out of the lab and into the hands of every woman.



Hertility is researching Black health inequalities and serving the individual needs of previously overlooked audiences.



THREE WAYS TO GET AHEAD



1 PERSONALISE INTERACTIONS

Does it feel right for your brand to use AI to offer personalised interactions at scale? Meta's AI personas deliver engagement with every single fan of celebrities like Kendall Jenner ('Billie').

2 TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

Help consumers take control of their data.

3 AI-POWERED PLANNERS

Use AI to fill gaps in your data and content to make customer experiences customised, stress-free and enjoyable.

REALITY REMIX

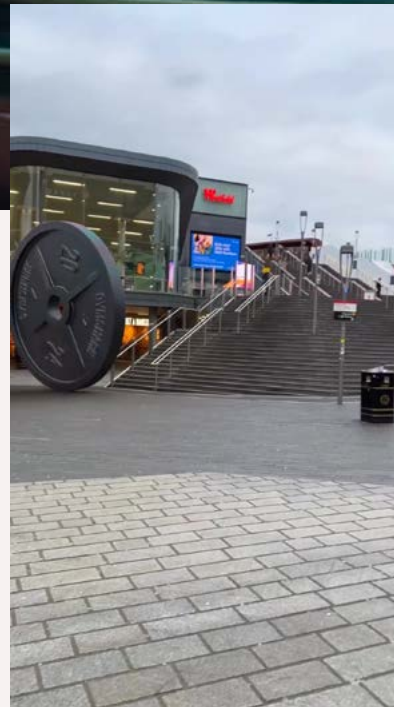
Brands are harnessing new tech and old-fashioned creativity to blur the lines between reality and fiction. Too good to be true? You better believe it!

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

Elvis hologram coming to London in November



OpenTable highlights 'right table, right time' USP for Valentine's.



Gymshark announces new Stratford Westfield store.

VIRTUAL OUT OF HOME

This trend sees brands using AI and CGI tools to create fake stunts in real, live spaces, generating surprise, delight and cut-through on increasingly noisy social channels.

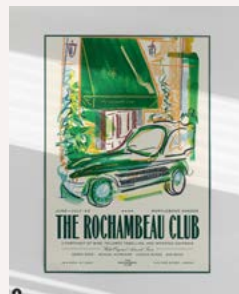
WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

THE ROCHAMBEAU CLUB

This is the world's most exclusive private members club in the South of France; the place to play tennis with aging sport stars or rub shoulders with royalty over a cocktail. Their social and digital content is second-to-none, inviting membership applications and merch sales where fans can buy into the brand world.

The only thing is: it isn't actually real.

The entire world has been crafted by the editorial team at Airmail, creating the perfect environment to promote Racquet rosé wine. It's a beautiful example of what stunning copy, Midjourney imagery and human ingenuity can do.



WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT



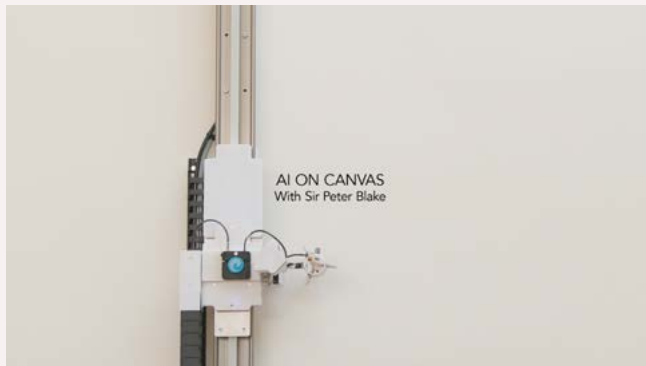
And finally, a simpler way for brands to play with reality is to play with size and scale to turn products into heroes.

We've seen KFC's Tower Burger campaign give this iconic burger a giant-sized, main character makeover, while Heinz zoomed in on their favourite ingredient to create the ultimate baddie to celebrate Halloween.

It's reality – but in super-sized/
bite-sized form.



THREE WAYS TO GET AHEAD



1 EXPERIMENTS

Map your brand journey for places where the virtual and the real can meet.

2 EXPLORE NEW WORLDS

Identify audience-adjacent worlds your brand could 'cameo' in.

3 LEAN INTO THE REAL

In a world full of fakery, define which brand assets will always be 100% real.

LOOSER LABELS

Tokenism is dead (or should be). Brands are ditching demographics and embracing personality-centred content to represent diverse identities in a more nuanced, everyday way

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

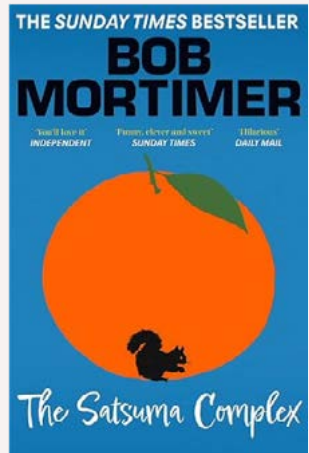
NETFLIX RECOGNISES MULTI-PROFILE PERSONALITIES

In this trippy spot directed by Juan Cabral (the man behind the Gorilla advert for Cadbury), Netflix shows it knows one profile means multiple viewing personalities. We meet a woman called Norma, who is having trouble reconciling her craving for Hungarian cinema with her love of reality shows. Ultimately, she's encouraged to embrace all her 'who's'. The agency behind the ad described it as: 'Weird yet normal. Alternative yet commercial. Complex yet simple. Full of contradictions. Just like all of us.'

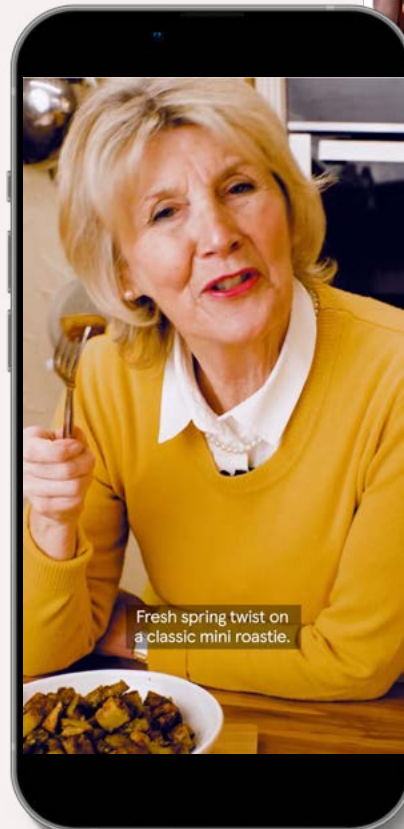
It's normal. You don't have one profile. You have many.

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

AGELESS INFLUENCERS



FORRESTER'S INNOVATION & SOCIAL MEDIA
'Running Up That Hill' - TikTok And YouTube Are Giving Old Songs New Life



How Bob Mortimer became a millennial hero
 Mortimer's debut novel, *The Satsuma Complex*, has won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse award for comic fiction - the comedian's unique brand of silliness captivates younger generations

Older gens are defying stereotypes of being tech-shy, or shy and retiring full-stop. Take national treasures like Bob Mortimer and Miriam Margolyes: the new 'unhinged' content stars. Or the success of Tesco's team-up with budget-and-eco-expert Nancy Birtwhistle, whose social-friendly attitude and tips have won her more followers than her grandchildren.

Likewise, Gen Zs are countering clichés around young people and 'young' platforms being all about fun and frivolity with the rise of #FinTok and #Deinfluencing, trends mixing old-fashioned thrift with social-first appeal.

Entertainment legends – human and non-human – are showing up on new platforms. See the love for *Family Guy*'s Peter Griffin in Fortnite and

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

**VISIT NORWAY
REINVENTS
MIDLIFE**

Visit Norway positions midlife differently – as a time for you and your friends.

THREE WAYS TO GET AHEAD



DITCHING DEMOGRAPHICS

Create pen portraits based on interests, not demographics.



HARNESS 'REAL' AMBASSADORS

Bring forward diverse colleagues, customers and contributors in everyday ways.



DIVERSIFY YOUR DATA AND MEDIA

Consider diversity throughout, from insight to distribution, not just the creative.

WELLNESS EXCELLED

In these tumultuous times, wellbeing and relaxation are becoming necessities. And brands are stepping in to help with nostalgic content formats, tailored travel inspiration and innovative new ways to tackle mental health

WHAT'S DRIVING IT

PURPOSE RE-EVALUATED

'Debate around sustainability and purpose has generated more heat than light... We will stop force-fitting purpose to all our brands'

Why purpose isn't relevant for some of its brands
- Unilever's CEO

MENTAL HEALTH

50%

of Millennials now rank their mental health as the aspect of their wellbeing they're most concerned about
- Kantar 2021

TECH'S NEGATIVE IMPACT

41%

of frequent tech users say tech has complicated their lives as much as simplified it
- Accenture Life Trends Survey 2023

40%

of Millennials are likely to seek mental health support
- Kantar 2022

55%

of women say they can't be their authentic selves online
- Communia app

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

**PERSONALISED
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**



Happi AI offers AI-powered therapy, with an avatar providing psychological support drawing on the principles of compassion therapy. How society responds to help from non-human 'therapists' is yet to be determined.

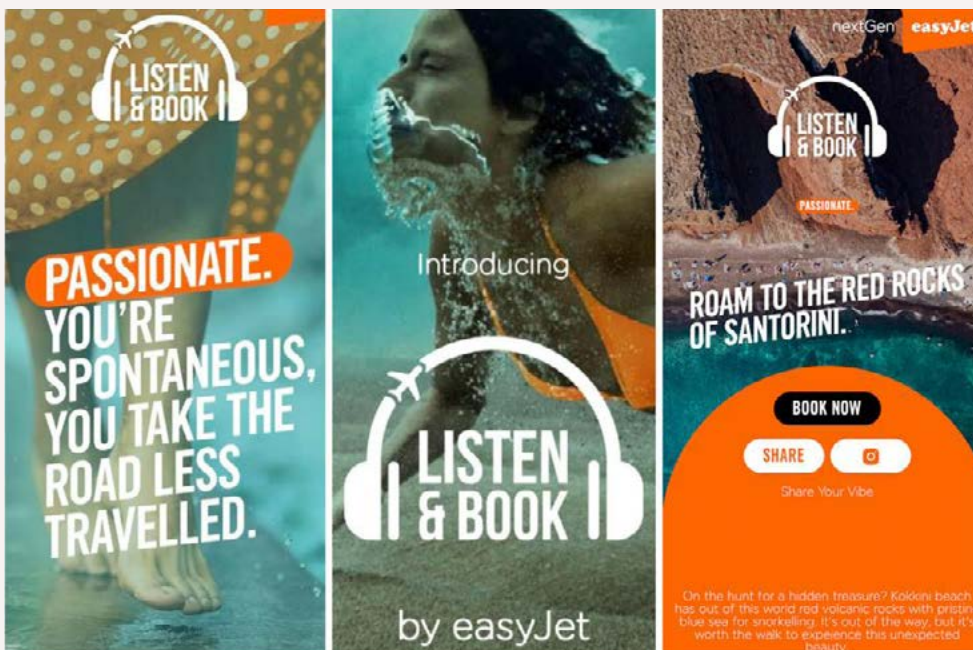
Meeno – founded by Renate Nyborg, former Tinder CEO – aims to fight loneliness using an AI chatbot. The more you use your personal relationship mentor, the better the advice becomes. (Although Meeno stresses that the app won't be a virtual girlfriend, boyfriend, therapist or coach.)



Communia is a social wellness app that creates a safe space for women and marginalised genders.

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

AN AUTHENTIC APPROACH TO TRAVEL PLANNING



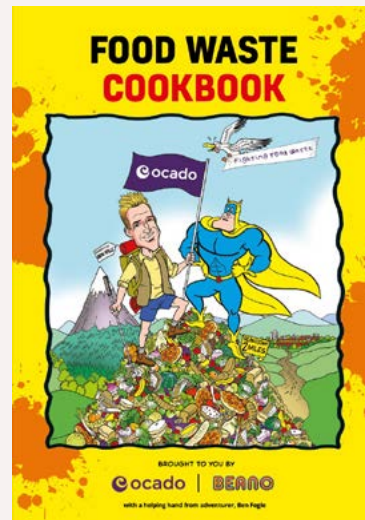
The 'Listen & Book' campaign by easyJet and Spotify was created to help customers discover their next holiday destination, based on mood and music. It provided an innovative way of taking the pressure off the travel planning process, and tapped into the growing interest in what your music personality says about other aspects of your personality.

WHERE WE'RE SEEING IT

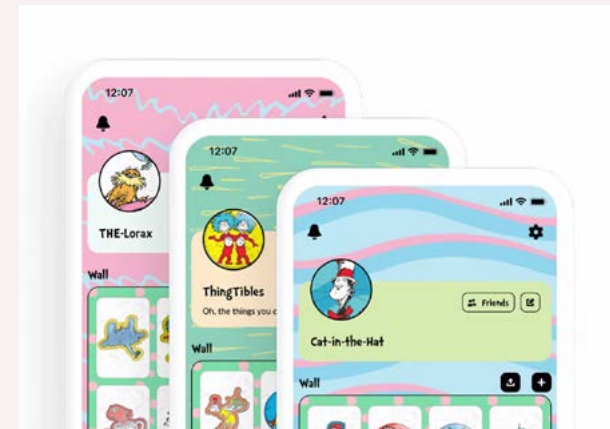
**FEELGOOD NOSTALGIC
FORMATS**



Selfridges' nostalgically-named 'zine highlighting the fashion, culture and events in store



Ocado partnered with Beano on a comic book-style cookbook, educating kids about food waste.



Dr Seuss's NFT platform shows how tech (in this case blockchain) is used to channel nostalgia.

THREE WAYS TO GET AHEAD



1

SUPPORT MOOD-BASED PLANNING

Flip negative emotions of indecision or stress around everyday planning with mood-based inspiration.

2 WORK WITH POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

Prioritise positivity over reach when collaborating with creators.



NEARLY GONE-OFFEE PIE

THE MIGHTY BANANA IS THE UK'S FRUIT SUPERHERO, BUT AS SOON AS THEY GO BROWN, TOO MANY OF US CHUCK THEM OUT! BUT THIS IS WHEN THEY'RE THE TREAT! FOR BANANA, THIS RECIPE WILL HELP YOU GO GOOD BY MAKING A YUMMY PUDDING.

- INGREDIENTS**
- 300g Biscoff Cream Sandwich biscuits
 - 4 tbsp caramel sauce (we used Caramell Caramell)
 - 2 bananas, sliced into 1cm slices
 - 150ml whipping cream
 - 100g Greek style yoghurt or half milk chocolate

- METHOD**
- 1 Put the biscuits into a bag then seal and bash with a rolling pin until they turn into crumbs. Tip into a bowl then microwave for 1 min, mix well, then press into the base and sides of a 20cm tart tin. Chill for 10 mins in the fridge.
 - 2 Spread the caramel over the chilled biscuit base then add a layer of banana slices, then return to the fridge while you make the topping.
 - 3 Pour the cream and yoghurt into a large mixing bowl and whip until it forms soft peaks.
 - 4 Remove the banana base from the fridge and spoon over the cream-yoghurt mix. Sprinkle with ground chocolate and slice to serve.

BANANAMAN



COOK'S TIP
TO SPEED THINGS UP, TIP THE BISCUITS INTO A BOWL ON A GOOD NON-SLIP SURFACE, THEN WHIP TO PEAKS BEFORE PLACING IN THE MICROWAVE AS PER STEP 1.

PREP TIME
15 mins, plus chilling time
SERVES
8 (4 adults, 4 children)

3 EMBRACE NOSTALGIA

Boost positive feels with nostalgic formats and characters.



*For more info on
trends or innovation,
get in touch at
cedarcom.co.uk/contact/*