

GRAPHITE

Consumer Insights & Retail Futures Report

2025 and Beyond

An annual review of global trends, influences and impacts that will affect how brands connect with consumers.

We explore the global influences and cascading impacts that are evolving how the most influential brands in the world connect with their consumers.



As part of our mission to help both established and emerging brands navigate the ever-changing retail and customer landscape, Graphite's Retail and Brand Experience **Studio 6B** produces an annual **Consumer Insights and Retail Futures** report.

We will look at design outcomes that set the stage for future experiences. We'll start by **identifying and analyzing global influences driving consumer behavior** - the factors impacting all aspects of life today.

We'll then dive into **examples of innovative strategies** that leading-edge brands are employing to address these evolving behaviors and explore what we believe will be the **lasting impacts** for the next generation of retail and brand experience.

It has been nearly 5 years since the pandemic disrupted all aspects of the world around us, and we now see that those impacts will be long lasting and pervasive, particularly in how, where and when consumers engage with brands.

Emerging from the past several tumultuous years are five global factors that are having an undeniable impact on consumer behavior moving into 2025.

UNSTABLE TIMES

politically, socially, and environmentally and a desire, particularly among Gen Z, for more authentic human connections, have consumers seeking mood-boosting environments that evoke a sense of comfort, calm, connection and joy.

TECH ADVANCEMENTS

including AI, AR, and VR continue to disrupt previously established norms of how consumers connect with brands both online and offline.

CONVENIENCE CULTURE

continues to be a primary driver for how, where and when a consumer engages with a brand. The desire for effortlessness and immediacy is no longer seen through the lens of online engagement, but now an expectation across “clicks and bricks.”

COST OF LIVING

increases and inflation-driven financial pressures are driving consumers towards frugality, resourcefulness and re-commerce offerings, while diminishing their loyalty towards brands that do not align with their economic realities or ethical expectations.

VALUES-LED

consumers are becoming the norm, particularly amongst Gen Z and Millennial groups. Sustainability is not just a trend, but an essential aspect of modern consumer behavior that influences purchasing decisions across various demographics.

As these global influences signal, there are some real constraints on consumers right now. They feel pressure from multiple directions, and the pace of change in our world shows no sign of slowing. As we continue to navigate this increasingly complex global landscape and extraordinary advancements in technology, consumer mindsets and expectations are shifting.

So, is there a silver lining of the changes of the last few years? We believe the answer is an emphatic “YES.”

We believe that consumers have largely emerged with re-evaluated priorities and with their values firmly re-established:

*self,
community,
sustainability
and an openness to
leveraging advanced
technology*

to better connect us with what matters.



Looking ahead, retailers, brands, and the designers and strategists that serve them, have an opportunity to meet and exceed these ever-evolving customer expectations, **or be sent to the sidelines like so many brands have recently experienced.** While we acknowledge that there is still plenty of uncertainty in the world, we feel optimistic about what lies ahead.

We've identified three major themes, born from the global impacts and re-evaluated consumer priorities discussed above, that demonstrate how retail experiences in 2025 and beyond will be reflective of - and drivers for - betterment on an individual and collective scale.

THE JOY ECONOMY

Feel-good spaces that prioritize health, happiness, and heart

OPTIMIZED EXPERIENCES

Efficiency and personalization supercharged by tech

(RE)CONSIDERED CONSUMPTION

Reevaluating how, why and where we spend - for the better

The Joy Economy

*Feel-good spaces that prioritize
health, happiness, and heart*

CRAVING CALM - CRAVING CONNECTION - CRAVING DELIGHT



In the wake of recent turbulent economic and political times,

74% of people say they feel like they are just waiting for something good to happen.¹

Increasingly, brands are realizing that they have something to contribute here - whether through a sense of obligation or opportunity is yet to be seen. The instability of the pandemic era also drove us away from “hustle culture” and instead towards a renewed desire for stability, authenticity and a slower pace of life. Hustle culture has given way to “soft living” - defining success through fulfillment and happiness, and focusing on mental and physical health and personal connections.²

The Joy Economy speaks to the rise of feel-good spaces that provide consumers with escapism, comfort, and even self-improvement mechanisms. Elements of nostalgia, immersion, storytelling, and multi-sensory theatrics all come to the forefront. In the face of malaise, consumers want to feel something good and seek a range of emotion-inducing experiences... a desire for calm, for human connections, and hope for unexpected delight.

The majority of Gen-Zers say they want to slow down their lifestyles and have more of a sense of regeneration.³

CRAVING CALM

Retail respites that encourage fatigued customers to focus on wellness amidst a busy day or bustling urban setting respond to these desires. Simplicity, sensory engagement, and spa-like settings characterize this category, manifested through a mix of digital immersion and analog authenticity, depending on the experience.

Some of the best examples are facilitated by tech to create highly immersive experiences, such as **EE Studio’s Digital Spa** in London, an immersive sensory “theater” in-store. As a telecom provider, EE is acknowledging the role tech devices play in our elevated stress levels and has created a Digital Spa as an antidote, encouraging customers to pause in the atmospheric theater and walk through a guided meditation surrounded by surreal visuals.



Visitors to EE Studio’s Digital Spa can utilize AR and other tools to experience guided meditations in immersive sensory spaces.



EE Studio’s Digital Spa showcases the telecom brand’s technological advancements in a unique way - creating a digitally-enabled moment of pause in their customers’ days.



“Mental maintenance for modern life”

Rituals Mind Oasis combines high-end hospitality-inspired design elements with integrated technology to create bookable experiences from a “Brain Massage” to the “Breathing Bubble” where people can relax and recharge their mind and body through three pillars: breathwork, meditation, and deep rest.



Advanced technology combines with ancient meditative practices in Rituals’ Mind Oasis digital spa. Customers can find emotional wellness and balance through various tech-enabled immersive experiences.



Complimenting their digital therapy offering, Self Space in London operates storefronts on the high street to host on-demand, in-person sessions.

On the other side of the spectrum is UK-based **Self Space** who creates calm with an analog “less is more” approach to design. They are the world’s first on-demand mental health service on the high street. Customers can benefit from in-person sessions “in-store” anytime they need, linking therapy with the physical retail landscape and revolutionizing access. They describe their offering as “**Mental Maintenance for Modern Life**” and have created simple and inviting spaces through a combination of tactile textures, muted tones and eclectic furnishings and art.



A soft material palette helps make Self Space inviting.



The Miramonte Resort by Tommy Bahama is designed to foster connection between guests centered around the brand’s “Island Life” ethos. A restaurant, spa, bar, and other premium amenities maximize points of connection with the brand and each other.

Tommy Bahama’s foray into hospitality is one of the latest and best examples of the blurring boundaries between industries and categories.



Tommy Bahama breathed new life into the Miramonte Resort and Spa in Palm Springs, furnished with the brand’s furniture and decor line.



CRAVING CONNECTION

Desiring connection can hardly be considered a trend, but what makes it interesting is the increasingly authentic ways in which brands are responding. Blurred boundaries between industries and categories are creating experience multipliers for brands that previously operated through the mindset of singular experiences. These multipliers lean into social experiences that bring people and communities together, like up-skilling, outdoor experiences, food & beverage, co-working and squad shopping, to name a few. While these types of blended experience aren’t necessarily new for retailers, previously reserved only for the most premier of locations, we see this trend becoming a mainstay for brands regardless of the size, scale, or location of the venue.

Since the pandemic, 85% of young people globally value in-person connection more and wish their favorite brand had a community.^{4,5}

Graphite Design Group works with apparel and lifestyle retailer **Tommy Bahama** in their quest to bring their brand ethos to life across the full spectrum of retail, restaurant and resort. Their newest concept, **the Marlin Bar**, aims to bring their “Island Life” ethos to customers across the US, from expected beachy locales to the Midwest. This experience gives customers the opportunity to “shop,

sip and savor” without the longer time commitment of their full service restaurant offering. Taking things one step further, the Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort and Spa is a further connection to community for the lifestyle brand, allowing Tommy Bahama to show customers what the brand is about over the course of days, not minutes, such is the case in a retail store.



Tommy Bahama's Marlin Bars create an opportunity for customers to engage with the brand in an expanded way, contributing to the true “lifestyle” offering.



F&M's Food & Drink Studio, in contrast to Tommy Bahama's hospitality offerings which create outside settings for connection, bring customers into an exclusive experience in-store, redefining the traditional department store framework.

Department store **Fortnum & Mason's Food & Drink Studio** is an experiment in infusing education and F&B, creating a catalyst for connection adjacent to shopping. The Studio taps famous chefs to host community masterclasses in-store. Responding to preferences of its base, the masterclasses are also live streamed, pulling international audiences from farther afield. Initiatives like this showcase the compelling overlap between gathering spaces, retail, education, and novelty.

The key to spaces that foster connection is that they are social first, shopping second.



Described as “a playground of delicious discovery,” F&M's Food & Drink Studio sits among other community-based offerings in the retail store.



Highly theatrical, Anya Hindmarch's designs in London speak to consumer's desire to feel surprise and delight from brands.

CRAVING DELIGHT

Sometimes the best antidote to anxiety is a little escapism,

which has gained popularity as consumers are overwhelmed with the increasing complexity of day-to-day life.

Nostalgic motifs in highly-themed retail environments, especially storylines of domesticity and decades gone by, are in the spotlight for their familiarity, lightheartedness and whimsy. Several

retailers are harnessing this desire with experiences that feel simple, joyful and unexpected, such as **Anya Hindmarch's recent London shops**, that surprise and delight with rotating explorations rooted in nostalgia. From The Ice Cream Project to Anya Mart and Anya's Summer Shop, they are all smile-inducing spaces filled with homages to various tropes and all feel delightfully familiar yet quirky and new, bringing customers back for more.

Nostalgic, irreverent themes characterize every new redesign of Anya Hindmarch's store.



The brand's permanent storefront is anything but constant - it serves as a home for continuously re-imagined brand experiences, from an ice cream shop to an immersive collaboration with the Peanuts universe. Always different, but always smile-inducing.

40% of Gen Zers, who have had the Internet their entire lives, actually crave a time without it.⁶



The offerings range from commercial kitchen supplies to small-batch olive oil made by the founder and textiles by the founder's mother.

On the other end of the spectrum from Anya's retail theater is the "hyper-authentic" anti-store of **Beverly's Homewares'** recent NYC location. Reminiscent of The Apartment at The Line circa 2017, her latest shop is inspired by the Vietnamese-American founder's mother's house and an idealized NYC Chinatown apartment, reflecting on ideas of home and family. The shop, and its offerings, are a mix of highs and lows that encourages discovery – a celebration of the act of shopping in real life. The shop even sells products made by the founder's mother, lending an authentic warmth to the entire experience.



Nostalgia, quirkiness, and familiarity characterize Beverly's new permanent boutique.



Dubbed "A Return to Comfort," the heart of the Beverly's boutique is a kitchen filled with items commonly found in Chinatown apartments, a personal touch from the owner's upbringing and something familiar to many of the brand's followers.

Optimized Experiences

*Efficiency and personalization
supercharged by tech*

AUGMENTED EFFICIENCY - PERSONALIZATION PERFECTED - SUPERPOWERED CO-PILOTS



Omni-channel retail and tech-enabled spaces are the baseline now. Brands whose spaces will continue to connect consumers are ones that utilize advanced technology, generative AI for example, to augment authentic human agency. While still in relative infancy, AI-infused physical spaces will progress both omni-channel and visitor-reflexive experiences. This may look like hyper-personalized experiences that seem to know the customer's preferences better than they know themselves, or associates that have all the brands' resources at their fingertips, yet can still provide that crucial personal connection. Integrated systems that bridge the gap between physical and digital retail are also making the in-store experience more efficient, leaving room for creativity and exploration - a reason we would still choose to shop in person instead of online. It's popular, too -

more than half of consumers say they would like to use augmented or virtual reality to shop and think that AI could improve their shopping experience.^{7,8}

We believe we're in the "de-gimmicking" era of tech-enabled retail - there are no just-for-likes viral experiences to be found in this movement. These innovative uses of tech remove physical and logistical obstacles to get back to intuitive, optimized, human experiences.

Over half of global consumers express interest in using AI, AR and VR to improve their shopping experiences.⁹



Omni-channel capabilities seamlessly communicate between users' app profile and the physical store environment at Adidas Terrex.

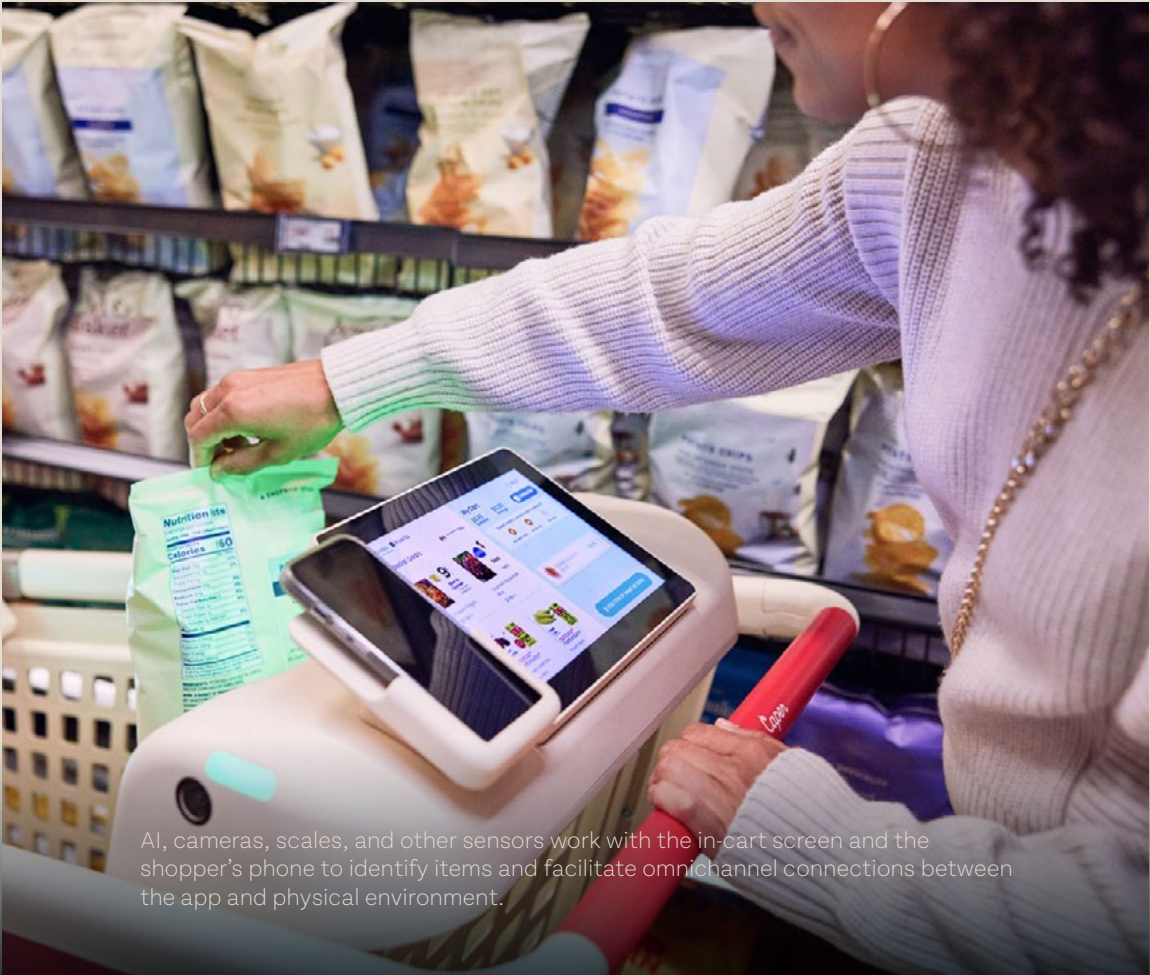
AUGMENTED EFFICIENCY

Effective deployment of technology in stores can take many forms, with the best being so seamless that it anticipates customers' needs without calling attention to itself. Customers are embracing tech, with over half globally expressing interest in using AI, AR, and VR to improve their shopping experiences.⁹ Here again we notice a blurring of boundaries - between physical and digital, and between logistical and social benefits to both brand and customer. The result is highly effective environments where the technology is so intuitive that it fades, leaving the spotlight for authentic human experiences.

The **Adidas Terrex Flagship** in Munich is an interesting study in this arena. RFID-enabled fitting rooms detect which items have been brought in to try on, communicating with the user's Adidas app to enable them to purchase immediately, save items to their profile for later, or request another size to be brought to them. The integration continues at the Community & Service hub, where the shopper can download local trail routes, again enabled by the app.



In addition to being digitally connected, the Adidas Terrex flagship puts sustainability at the forefront, using bio-based and recyclable materials in its mannequins, fixtures, and displays.

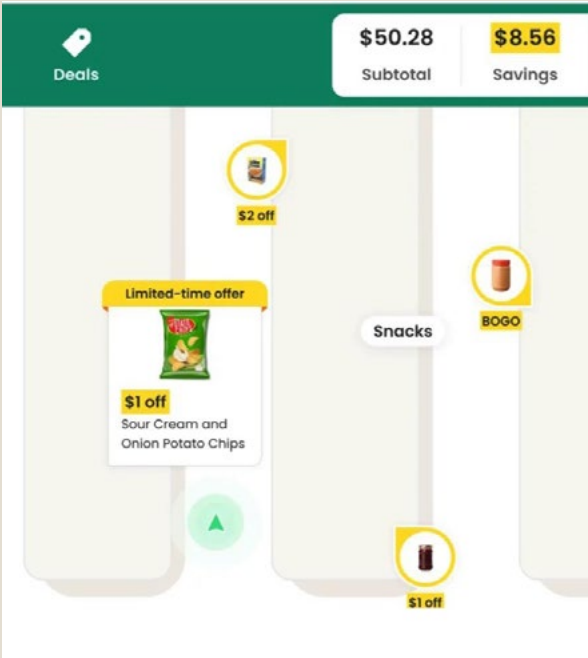


AI, cameras, scales, and other sensors work with the in-cart screen and the shopper's phone to identify items and facilitate omnichannel connections between the app and physical environment.

Intuitive tech is also enhancing the grocery shopping experience. The newest iteration of **Instacart's Caper Cart** boasts several new features, using integrated scales, AI, and a QR code-enabled connection to the Instacart app. Linking to the customer's in-app profile, the cart displays their shopping list on screen, can stick to a specified budget, displays the most efficient path through the store, and highlights additional product promotions that the shopper might be interested in based on their purchase history and location

within the aisles. Scales and cameras in the cart can also suggest new recipes based on what ingredients are placed into it. These *phygital* (physical plus digital) features result in an in-store experience that is more seamless and informed,

responding to customers' desire for both convenience and inspiration.



The most recent update to Instacart's Caper Carts is navigation assistance and aisle-aware product promotions.



Caper Carts are making the shopping experience more seamless in some of the largest grocery chains in the US and Australia, such as Kroger, ShopRite and Aldi.



Dubbed a “polysensorial fragrance finder,” the Scent-Sation experience is a premium offering that combines leading-edge tech wearables with personalization.

Emotiv’s headset monitors the wearer’s neural response to olfactory and visual stimuli, quantifying emotions that can be hard to articulate.



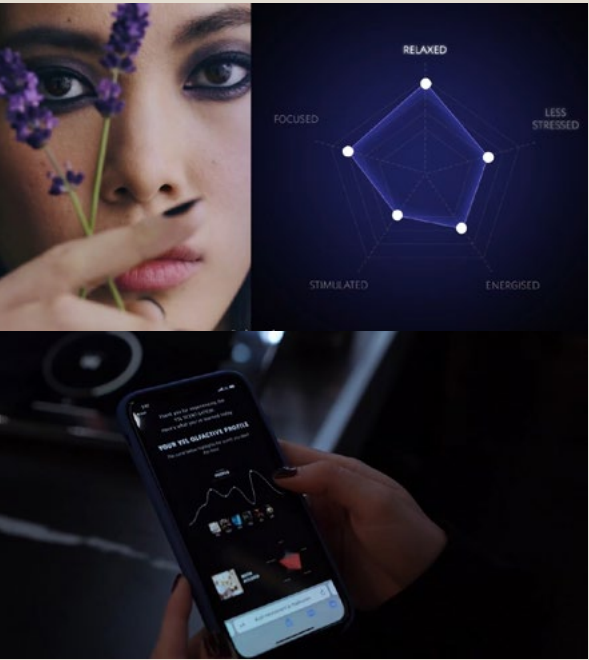
PERSONALIZATION
PERFECTED

Being able to see ourselves reflected in a brand has always been a desire of customers, but artificial intelligence is taking this to the next level with hyper-personalized experiences.

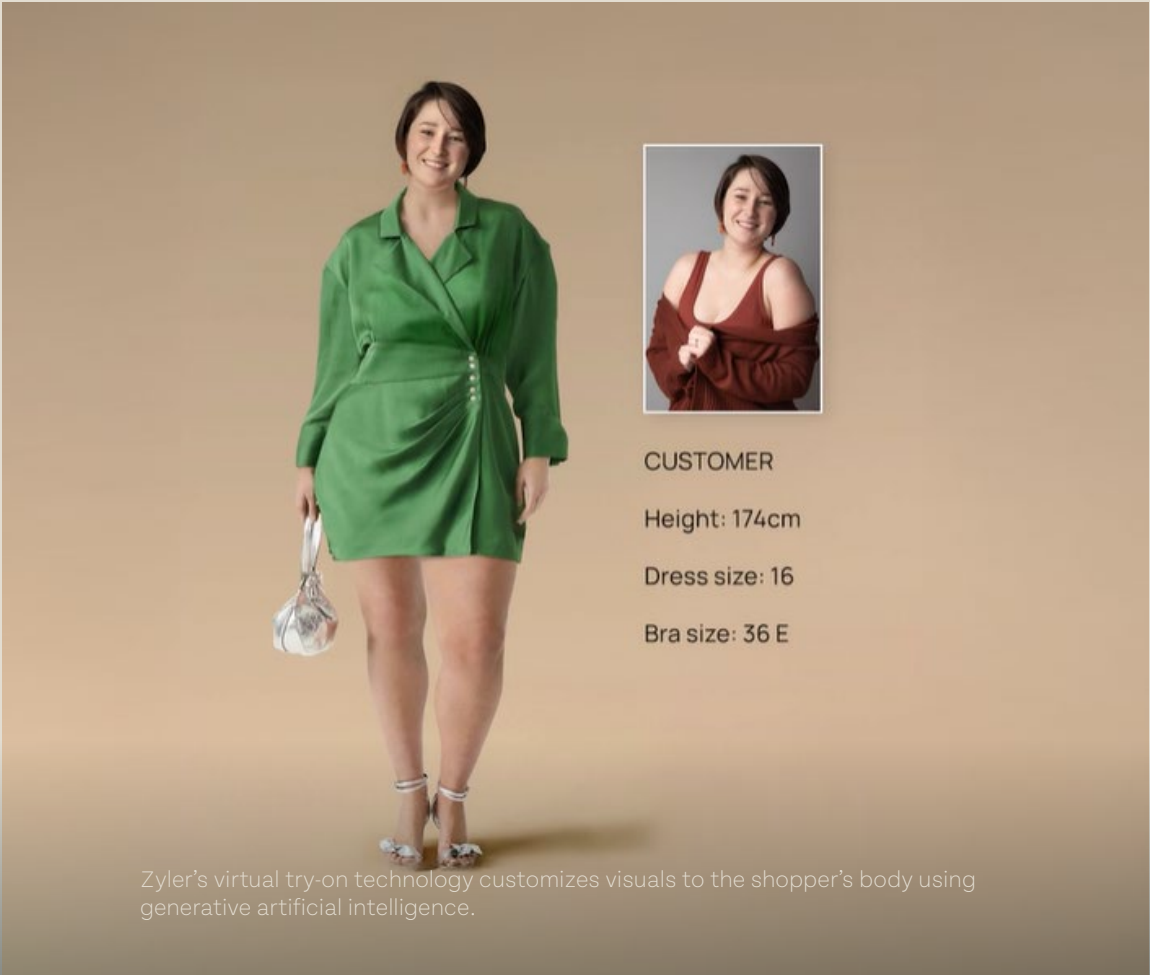
*The rise of “me-tail”
has a strong backing:*

more than 80% of American consumers want AI to personalize product recommendations,¹⁰ and 20-30% of consumers in the UK, US, and China want to go a step further and use biometric data.¹¹

Capitalizing on conversion, the customer receives a copy of their “emotional profile” on their device for immediate purchase or to continue exploring.

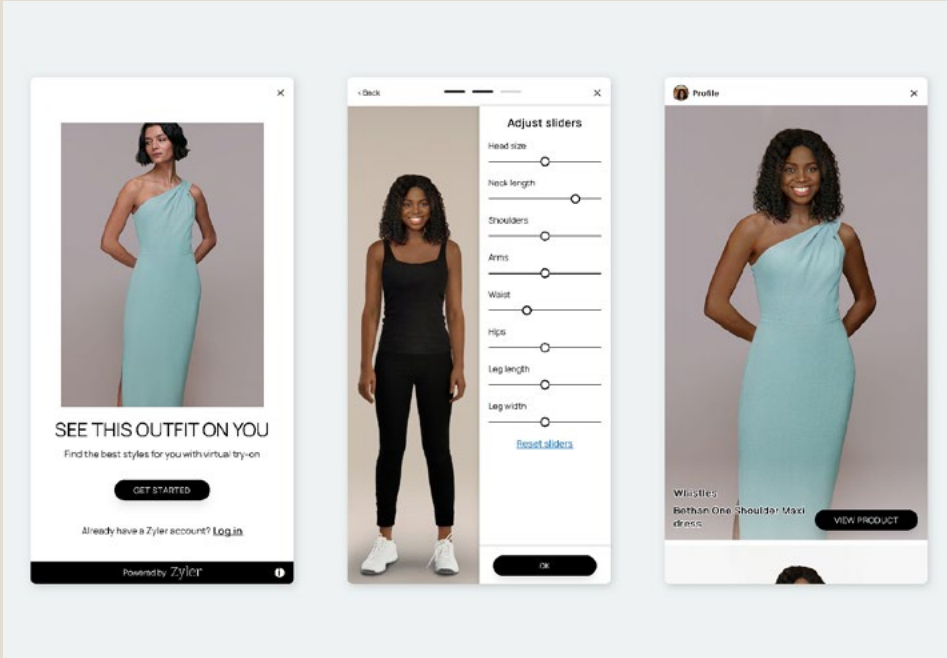


Bioinformatics company Emotiv has recently partnered with YSL Beauty to create a neural-response-measuring headset to do just that. Part of **YSL’s Scent-Sation** experience, users don the headset to measure their brain’s response to scent and visual stimuli, resulting in “emotional profiles” that direct customers to the fragrance that best suits them. This is an early example of tech being employed to decode a customer’s preferences even better than they might be able to on their own.



Consumers are also looking to see themselves reflected in a brand's outward expression and expect a higher level of profile integration. Virtual clothing try-on company **Zyler** has enabled this in a literal sense. Customers can input their measurements, skin tone, and a photo, and then using deepfake imagery, the app will display clothing from participating brand partners on their “real” bodies instead of the commercial model's. The shopper can also consent to the brand using those personalized images in ad campaigns, adding an unprecedented level of interconnectedness between brand and individual.

20-30% of consumers in the UK, US and China want product recommendations personalized by their biometric data.¹¹



Above: Zyler recognizes that customers are more likely to view clothing items, and later purchase them, when they see themselves already “wearing” the garment.

Right: Customers can consent to brands using their personal images in ad campaigns, a radical and enticing opportunity for many seeking novelty and inclusion.

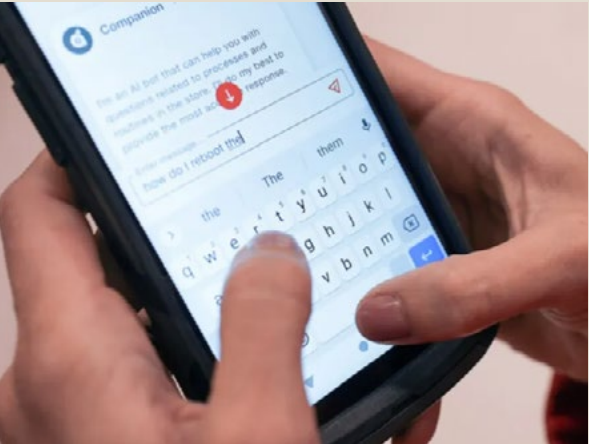




Target’s newest product in its initiative to utilize generative AI across its business is Store Companion, a chatbot that can empower employees in anything from questions about how to complete certain tasks, coach new team members, and answer customer questions.

**SUPERPOWERED
CO-PILOTS**

Also on the rise are “pro-human” AI tools for associates on brand front lines. As only 37% of global consumers trust AI customer service to be as effective as a human,¹² this is a powerful tool that can blend the best of both capabilities. Retailers such as Australian department store Myer reports that their AI-enabled app for store staff has freed up 20% of staff time and resulted in a 23% uptick in customer satisfaction since its 2023 release,¹³ quantifying the value of well-integrated tech in the retail environment.



Target associates access the Store Companion chatbot directly from mobile devices they were already using, making adoption seamless.

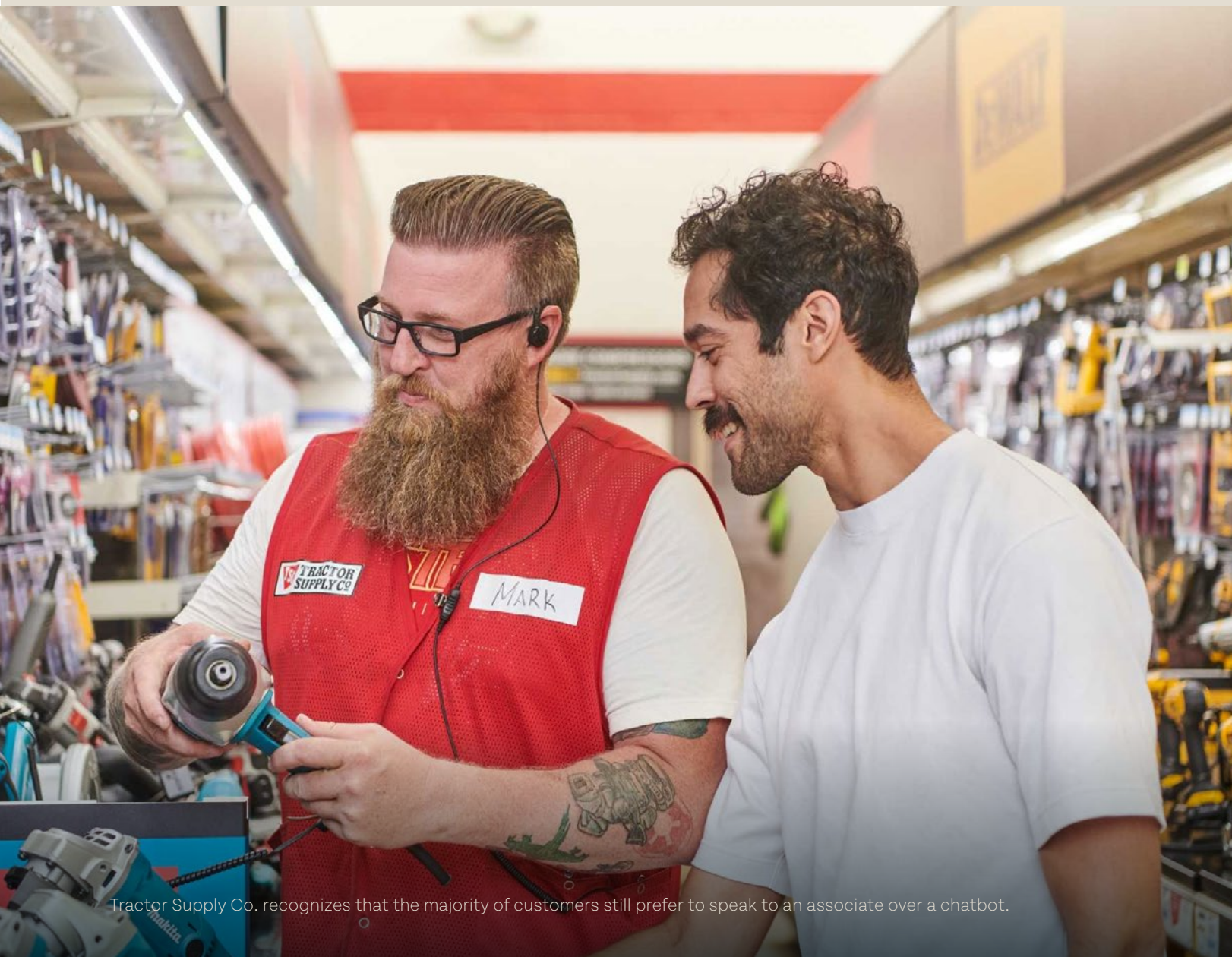
“Pro-human” AI tools augment, accelerate, or complement the expertise, soft skills, and life experience of store associates.



Target’s Store Companion chatbot assists associates on the floor, which ultimately improves the shopping experience for customers, too.

Only 37% of global consumers trust AI customer service to be as effective as a human.¹²

Other stateside examples that empower staff to do their best work are **Target's Store Companion chatbot**, rolled out onto their existing mobile devices, which can assist with anything from product questions to training new employees, and **Tractor Supply Co.'s generative AI voice app**, called Hey GURA, which connects to employee's headsets to give real-time in-ear responses to product questions from customers.

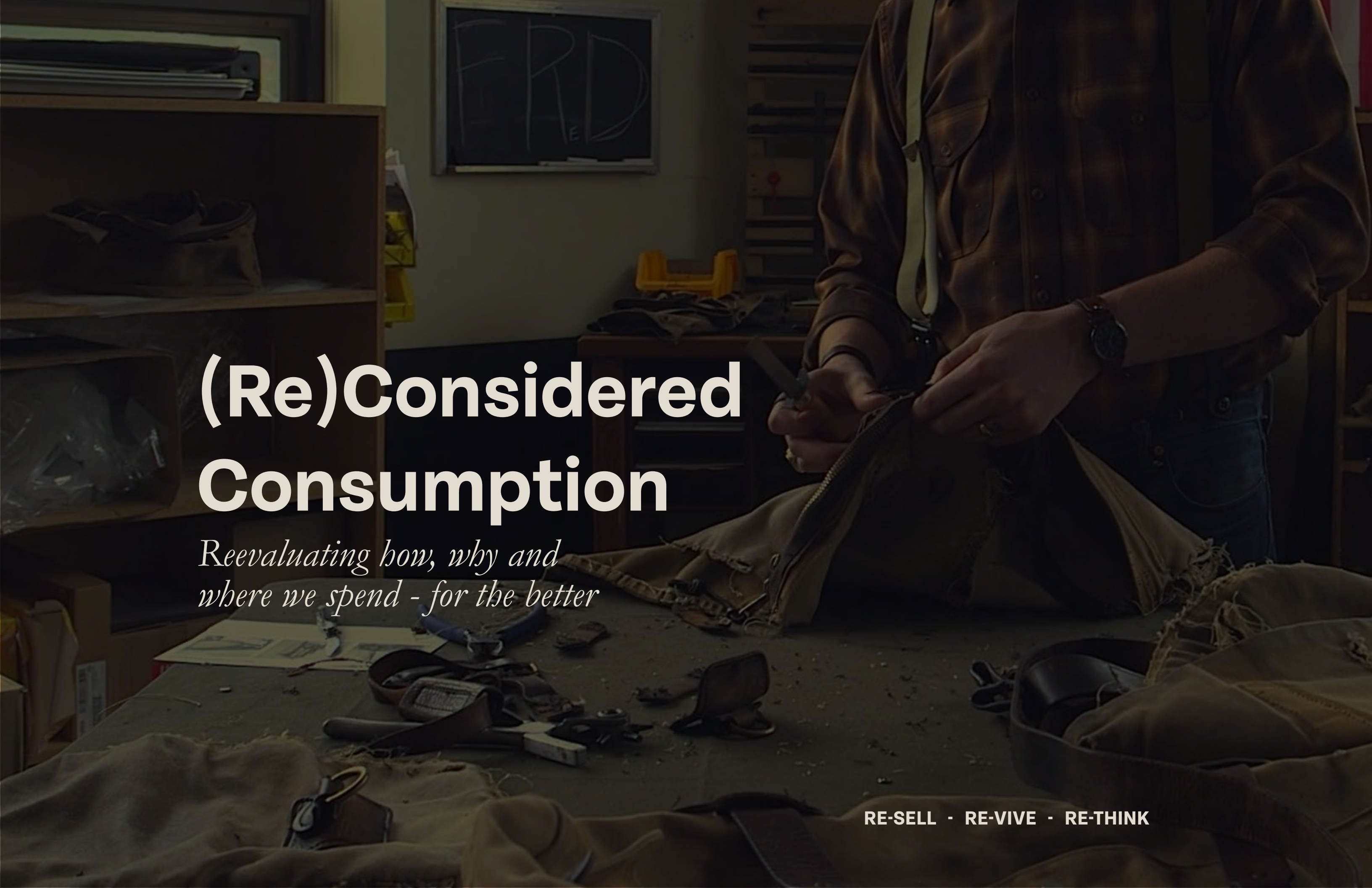


Tractor Supply Co. recognizes that the majority of customers still prefer to speak to an associate over a chatbot.



Tractor Supply Co.'s Hey GURA AI voice app empowers store associates with the information they need to help any customer with their questions.

These innovations highlight the desire to keep humans in the driver's seat but create ever-improving digital co-pilots to augment our service experience.

A person wearing a brown leather jacket and a watch is working on a piece of clothing in a workshop. The workshop is filled with various tools, materials, and finished items. A chalkboard with the letters 'FRD' is visible in the background.

(Re)Considered Consumption

*Reevaluating how, why and
where we spend - for the better*

RE-SELL - RE-VIVE - RE-THINK



Strategic consumption is on the rise amongst consumers, 50% of whom name sustainability as their top purchase consideration.¹⁴ Amidst economic pressures and concern for the environment, consumers are re-thinking their relationship with “stuff”. For some, this means embracing the underconsumption movement and focusing on activism. For others, this means making the items they do purchase last longer and become part of a circular economy. In fact, the revenue of this global market, comprising

second-hand, rental and refurbished goods, is forecast to more than double by 2026, reaching \$713bn.¹⁵

And for others still, strategic consumption means buying the best, most luxurious goods, because those items become assets to be passed onto future generations - or at least cycled onto the luxury resale market with a new hype-generating backstory. Brands and spaces that encourage consumers to fashion their own version of strategic consumption will attract the growing group of consumers who make pragmatic choices without compromising on quality, convenience, or storytelling. Below are three primary ways re-commerce is becoming a sought-after experience for the large number of consumers who want to be intentional about their purchases.

Brands are embracing the resale market, many creating initiatives similar to Cubitts’ Anew circular program.



Experiences that play up the storytelling of a swap mentality are charming savvy consumers, as seen in **Cubitts’ Former-Flame Frames** campaign in London. Donated eyeglass frames were refurbished and displayed with a retro luggage tag telling a short story from the frames’ “former life,” romanticizing and elevating the circular economy.



Handwritten notes about the eyeglasses’ “past life” romanticizes the circular economy for premium brands such as Cubitts.

RE-SELL

Particularly among Gen Zers, who have entered adulthood during times of environmental and economic stress, and who are still feeling the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic,

possessions are increasingly being seen as assets to swap and re-sell.

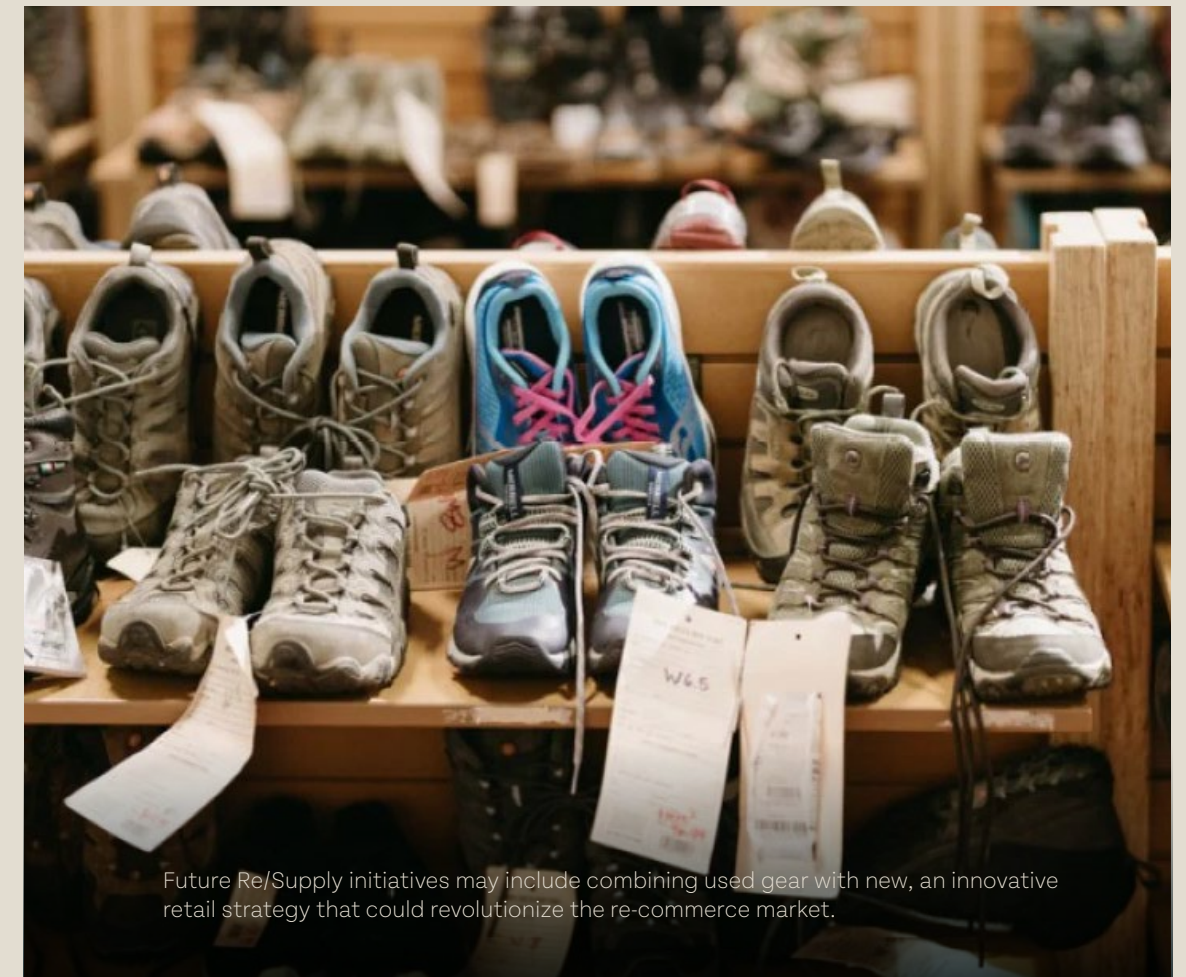
This “asset culture” doesn’t mean that consumers don’t want premium goods and experiences, however. 30% of American GenZer’s choose second-hand goods to afford higher-end labels.¹⁶ 42% are less likely to purchase clothing that doesn’t have good resale value.¹⁷



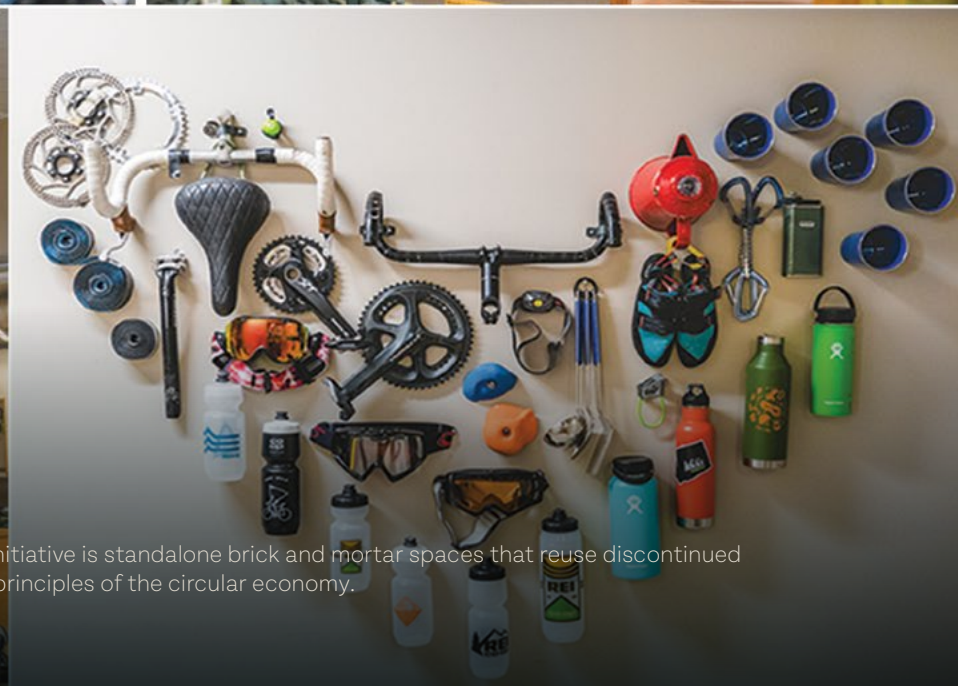
“Spectacles with a story to tell.” Cubitts’ initiative is based upon the idea that “a frame with a life already lived is all the more beautiful.”

Closer to home, **REI Co-op's** mission to “give used gear a second life” through the launch of their **Re/Supply** offering was supported by Graphite’s Alex Shapleigh during his tenure leading REI’s in-house Physical Design and Experience team. A suite of scaled experiences were developed and tested in a variety of formats, from shop-in-shops to standalone store locations. Pursuant to their motto “reduce, reuse, reimagine,” the gently

used items are inspected for quality and re-sold. This results in cost savings for co-op members as well as a reduction of carbon emissions of 50% or more, based on the retailer’s estimates of buying used instead of creating new. Future expressions of Re/Supply may see used gear sold alongside new (both online and in physical), putting stock in the assertion that both are highly valued and thus revolutionizing the approach to re-commerce.



Future Re/Supply initiatives may include combining used gear with new, an innovative retail strategy that could revolutionize the re-commerce market.



The most recent expressions of REI’s Re/Supply initiative is standalone brick and mortar spaces that reuse discontinued fixtures from other locations, committing to the principles of the circular economy.



30% of American GenZers choose second-hand goods to afford higher-end labels.¹⁶

42% of American Gen Zers are less likely to purchase clothing that doesn't have good resale value.¹⁷

Not all of the asset culture movement is taking place in shops, however. **Bergdorf Goodman's Conscious Closet** experience is a premium in-home service where a stylist edits a customer's closet, setting aside items for repair, tailoring, resale, or donation. Aimed at the luxury market, the experience dovetails nicely with the retailer's in-store eco-friendly collection, the **Conscious Curation** edit. The marriage of these initiatives, as well as the fact that they span web, store, and personalized service, is a key aspect of its success and emphasizes the "brand as partner" mentality. "Shopping your closet" has officially been elevated to aspirational status.



Bergdorf Goodman has made themselves a partner in their customer's move toward strategic consumption, offering decluttering services and enticing customers with their Conscious Curation collection of sustainable garments.

Crossovers from in-store shopping to in-home services are innovative ways that premium brands especially can provide new value propositions to customers, such as the case with Bergdorf Goodman's Conscious Closet experience.

RE-VIVE

Mending, patching, and making new goods from scraps addresses many of the top concerns on customer's minds today. It can make financial sense, bestows some personality onto a much-loved item, and is eco-friendly. However, customers also cite roadblocks to making these repairs - low resale value, high cost of repair, and lack of convenience.¹⁹ Spaces and brands that make it easier, more engaging, and more cost-effective to re-imagine items will enjoy a loyal customer base who see their values reflected in that brand ethos.



Craftsmanship and tradition pair with current trends in luxury footwear to create an engaging celebration of the circular economy at Golden Goose's Forward Store.

Golden Goose's Forward Store, the most recent iteration of which opened in Miami, does just that. With a strong heritage lean to its design, the space offers four “co-action” services to extend the life cycle of products. These are in addition to the brand's signature made-to-measure suit tailoring and custom sneaker offerings. The four pillars of services are Repair (including cleaning), Remake (customizing new or pre-owned items), Resell and Recycle. Interestingly, the Repair and Recycle services are available for any brand's product, part of the brand's sustainable “Forward Agenda.” Bringing customers back to the store for aftercare increases exposure and creates a strong community, which was important for this luxury Italian brand.

Post-pandemic, 71% of Europeans intend to keep their purchases for longer and 57% are willing to make repairs to extend a product's life.¹⁸



The calzoleria, or cobbler, anchors one side of the Forward Store. The space is outfitted with vintage machines used for shoe-making as well as repairs and customizations.



The 360 Activism Hub by Patagonia is the first permanent expression of what had previously been pop-ups and temporary concept spaces for their Worn Wear program.

Patagonia’s concept responds to themes on many customer’s minds - sustainability, community, personalization, and making wallet-friendly purchases.



Adding another layer to the notion of “Re-Vive” is the **360 Activism Hub by Patagonia**, a space that aligns repair with community events. This Chicago brick-and-mortar expression of their Worn Wear re-commerce program taps into the adjacencies between underconsumption and activism, hosting not only repair workshops but also eco-focused volunteer programs and petition-signing events. It’s unsurprising that the current leaders in this trend are outdoor retailers - they’ve had this mindset for a while. But combined with a renewed interest in heritage craft among consumers and constant pressure on wallets, we see this trend continuing to move into the mainstream.

Workshops and events help consumers repair, personalize, and otherwise extend the life of their gear.

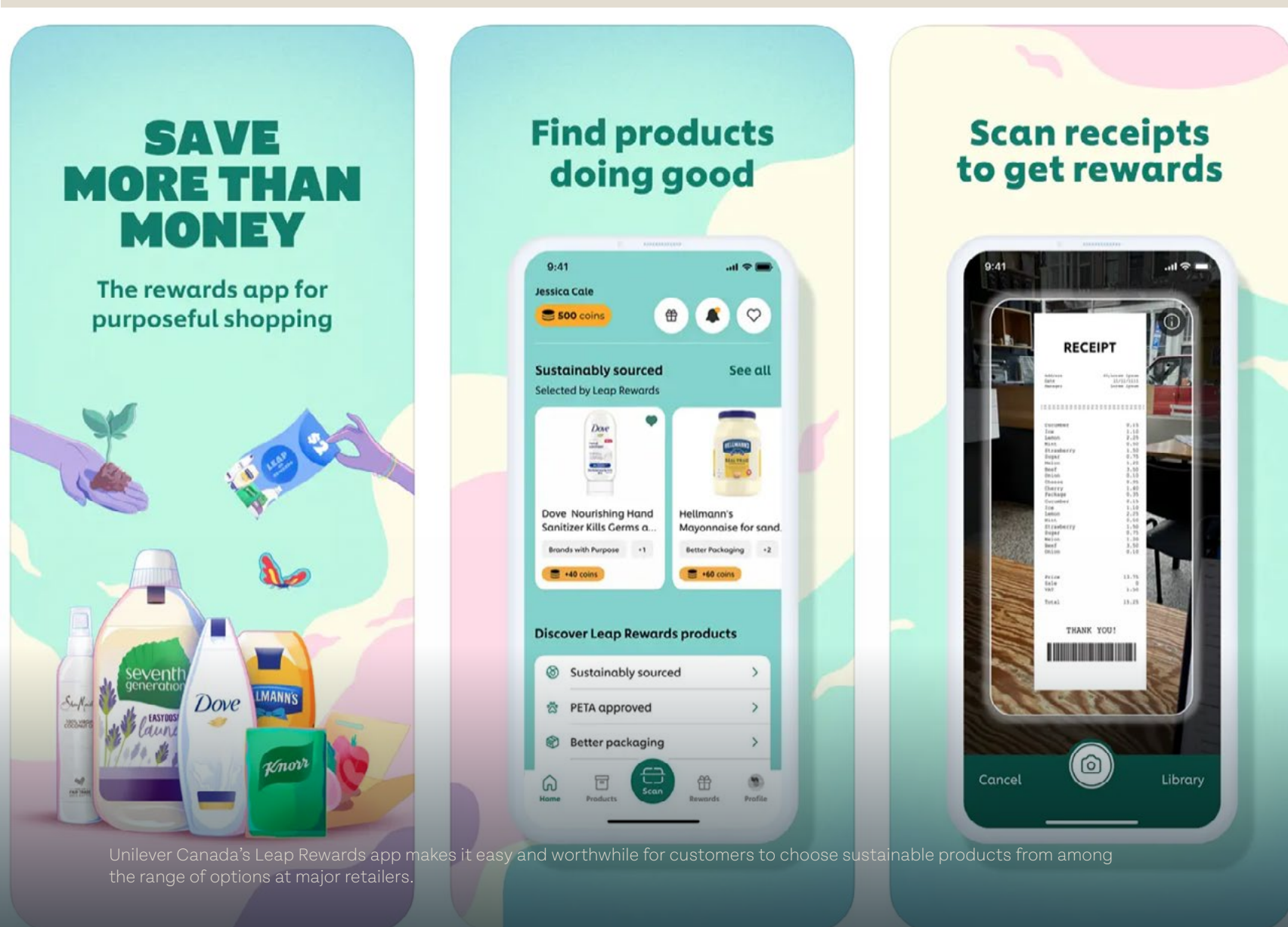


Over half of all consumers are prioritizing sustainable and ethical practices in their purchasing decisions.²⁰

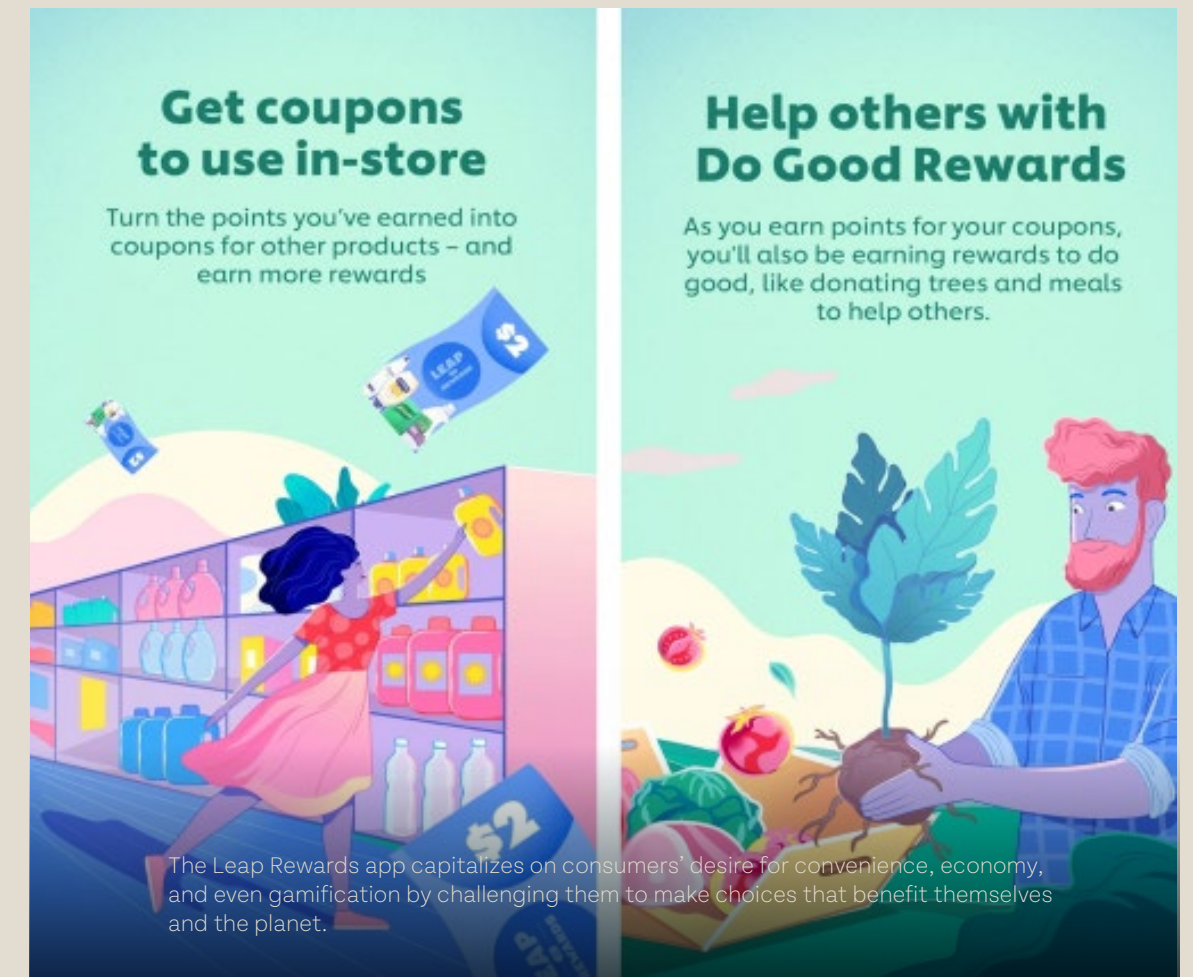
RE-THINK

Over half of all consumers, and even higher numbers of young shoppers, now consider themselves eco-conscious,²⁰ increasingly prioritizing sustainable and ethical practices in their purchasing decisions. Brands are responding by rethinking their messaging and inventing new ways to become partners with their consumers on the path to sustainability.

Retailers that demonstrate a genuine commitment to environmental and social responsibility are likely to gain favor with conscientious shoppers. Creative, artful, and pragmatic solutions are going to provide lasting benefits to brands, consumers, and the planet.



Unilever Canada's Leap Rewards app makes it easy and worthwhile for customers to choose sustainable products from among the range of options at major retailers.



The Leap Rewards app capitalizes on consumers' desire for convenience, economy, and even gamification by challenging them to make choices that benefit themselves and the planet.

One such example is the **Leap Rewards app by Unilever Canada**. A simple but effective approach that incentivizes eco-friendly purchasing, the app gives extra rewards points to customers who purchase sustainable products from the Unilever range at any store. Part education, part tech innovation (the app scans receipts for built-in “sustainability scores”), it

encourages both brand and consumer to make better choices.



Conceptualized as “growing an optician,” every material used in Op’t Oog’s interior was selected for its sustainability, such as the cellulose acetate screens.



A 3D printer constructs columns from recycled paper coffee cups, which becomes the armature for mycelium to grow and create the final product.

Creative, artful and pragmatic solutions are going to provide lasting benefits to brands, consumers, and the planet.

The construction of retail stores and fixtures is a different but no less creative example of re-thinking retail’s relationship to sustainability. Design firm WeWantMore with fabricator Blast Studio designed sculptural product displays for Belgian eyewear brand **Op’t Oog** made from recycled paper coffee cups and mycelium. The result is a functional and eye-catching feature in the space, complementing the rest of the design which utilizes other sustainable materials such as cellulose acetate. The creative potential of this movement is limitless, highlighting how sustainability and beauty are far from at odds with one another.



The mycelium and recycled paper displays at Op’t Oog are just one example of sustainable materials being used artfully and functionally in retail environments.

So, what are our takeaways?

Retail experiences that prioritize joy, human-focused tech and our evolving values are going to provide the most benefit to customers and brands in 2025 and beyond.

The case studies discussed in The Joy Economy, Optimized Experiences, and (Re)Considered Consumption reflect the ways in which consumers and brands are making the most of challenging times.

We're inspired by the potential we see to make the most of the incredible tools at our disposal. Even though there is still a lot of uncertainty in our world, the good news for brands is that consumers are increasingly seeing them as partners able to help navigate it.



We see 2025 being a year of getting back to what matters most:

- **A renewed desire for connection to self, community and planet.**
- **A more intentional relationship with technology and commerce.**
- **A desire for awe-inspiring spaces and experiences.**
- **Authentic human connections.**

Perhaps 2025 will be the year of evaluating brands and environments based on what they contribute to their customers' lives. And that's a rich opportunity for all of us!



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STUDIO 6B AT GRAPHITE DESIGN GROUP

Graphite Design Group is a Seattle-based design firm recognized for crafting people-focused integrated environments that elegantly solve complex problems. Their diverse portfolio spans office, retail, hospitality, and mixed-use typologies, serving a broad clientele from boutique retail spaces to \$400M development projects. With a team of experienced architects and designers, Graphite Design Group seamlessly blends creativity with functionality, consistently delivering bespoke designs that surpass expectations.

Graphite’s newly expanded Retail and Brand Experience offering, **Studio 6B**, is a multi-disciplinary group of dreamers, schemers, designers and doers... inspired by the stories behind the brands they serve, and driven to bring those stories to life in the physical realm. They are guided by an insatiable curiosity and courage to ask “what if” and “why not,” as they partner with brands at an inflection point in their business, products and consumers.

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Reach out to learn more or to schedule a virtual or in-person presentation of this content to your team.

In addition to our annual Consumer Insights & Retail Futures report and quarterly deep dives, Studio 6B offers bespoke research, brand translation and ideation services to support the unique challenges your brand may be facing.



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