

HOW MASS INFLUENCE LOST ITS POWER AND WHAT COMES NEXT

Becoming *Un*influenced

Culture is falling out of love with influence.

THE MACRO SHIFT

DARK MODE

As algorithms flatten culture, value is increasingly built outside the feed—through things that feel intimate and difficult to scale.

CULTURAL CONSEQUENCE

BECOMING UNINFLUENCED

The next era of influence is being defined by distinct taste and concentrated credibility rather than mass reach.

THIS REPORT MAPS WHAT EMERGES IN ITS PLACE.



For more than a decade, influence has served as culture's most powerful engine of growth. Brands chased mass exposure. Creators obsessed over follower counts. Platforms optimized for engagement. The assumption was simple: if enough people saw something, it mattered.

But after years being (over)used and abused, the influence machine is wearing thin. Manufactured engagement and algorithmic repetition have blurred the line between genuine recommendation and calculated promotion, and audiences are getting tired of trying to decipher the difference. The old signals of influence—visibility, popularity, and scale—are no longer automatic proxies for trust or relevance. Instead, people are placing higher value on personal discovery, niche communities with real credibility, and recommendations that feel earned rather than engineered.

This shift reflects a much broader cultural movement that Backslash has been tracking through a defining new Edge for 2026, Dark Mode. As value moves away from what can be endlessly amplified and toward things that are difficult to replicate, the mechanics of influence are changing with it. Cultural authority is moving into places where trust is earned through closeness rather than reach, and participation rather than performance.

Through a combination of deep cultural analysis, expert interviews, and a proprietary survey of over 700 respondents across the U.S. and U.K., this report reveals a fundamental redefinition of what—and who—people are willing to be influenced by, and how brands can win people over in this new era.

A look back at how influence took over the internet

2004-2010

THE AGE OF THE PERSONAL BRAND IS BORN.

The social web gave ordinary people an audience for the first time ever. Personal websites were replaced by curated profiles, follower counts became visible social currency, and millions began learning how to cultivate their online image.

2004 — Facebook launches
2005 — YouTube launches
2006 — Twitter launches
2006 — Facebook News Feed lays the foundation for the attention economy
2007 — YouTube Partner Program begins paying creators
2008 — Myspace hits 115 million monthly visitors at its peak
2008 — First viral YouTubers (Smosh, Shane Dawson, Fred)
2009 — Retweets and hashtags become standard behavior

CULTURAL ARTIFACTS
Profile pages • Follower counts • Status updates

2010-2015

THE INTERNET BECOMES OUR SHARED CULTURAL PLAYGROUND.

Viral trends were treated as open invitations, creating a sense that the internet was a place to play together. Before brand deals and creator economies took over, the reward was the simple joy of joining in.

2010 — Instagram debuts
2012 — Gangnam Style becomes YouTube's first billion-view video
2013 — Everyone does the Harlem Shake
2013 — Vine launches
2014 — The Ice Bucket Challenge raises $115M for ALS
2014 — Snapchat Stories popularize constant, ephemeral sharing

CULTURAL ARTIFACTS
Harlem Shake • Vine • Memes • Selfies •

2015-2019

INFLUENCE AS THE ULTIMATE ASPIRATION.

The creator economy transformed influence from a side hobby into a shiny new career path. It felt like a modern-day gold rush, where anyone with a ring light and enough creativity could become the next big internet success story. Being influential became one of the defining ambitions of a generation.

2015 — Instagram introduces sponsored posts
2016 — Instagram switches to an algorithmic feed
2016 — TikTok launches as Douyin (China)
2018 — TikTok launches globally
2018 — Creator houses start forming
2019 — Creator agencies explode

CULTURAL ARTIFACTS
Ring lights • GRWMs • "Link in bio" • Brand trips
Hype House • Unboxings

2020-2025

INFLUENCE TURNS INTO MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE.

Influence became the dominant operating model of the internet. Brands built entire marketing departments around creators, every recommendation became a shoppable link, and visibility became the default growth strategy.

2020 — TikTok Creator Fund launches
2020 — Instagram introduced Reels to compete with TikTok
2021 — Livestream shopping boom
2022 — BeReal pushes back against performative social media
2023 — Instagram starts selling blue checks
2023 — ShopMy launches
2024 — AI creator tools go mainstream
2025 — Clipping economy takes off

CULTURAL ARTIFACTS
ShopMy • TikTok Shop • Influencer brands • Amazon Storefronts Paid partnerships • AI editing

The last decade treated visibility as the ultimate measure of success, and every system was designed to reward it.

People

INFLUENCER ASPIRATIONS
Over 60% of middle and high school students surveyed from 2021-2024 said they wanted to be social media influencers or picked their future careers based on what they saw online. When asked why, students shared that YouTubers and influencers "gets lots of money" and that "they want to be famous."

FOLLOWER FRENZY
Follower counts became with synonymous with status, and everyone was desperate to prove their worth. A widely cited study by Forbes revealed that one in four Instagram influencers have purchased fake followers.

CREATOR HOUSES
Creator houses like the Hype House and the Sway House industrialized fame. The more creators posted and cross-promoted, the faster they grew—and the more money they made.

Platforms

THE RISE OF THE BLUE CHECK
What began as a way to authenticate public figures became a kind of social capital that millions of people were willing to pay for. Instagram sold 44 million blue verification checks in a single day in 2023, generating an estimated $660 million in revenue.

VIRALFLATION
As visibility became the internet's primary measure of success, even the platforms themselves had an incentive to make content appear more popular than it was. A 2016 lawsuit alleged that Facebook had inflated video view counts by up to 900%, helping cement the idea that scale—or the appearance of it—was the ultimate KPI.

Brands

INSTAGRAMMABLE EVERYTHING
The Museum of Ice Cream, Color Factory, rainbow bagels, flower walls, and neon signs all reflected the same philosophy: success was measured by shareability.

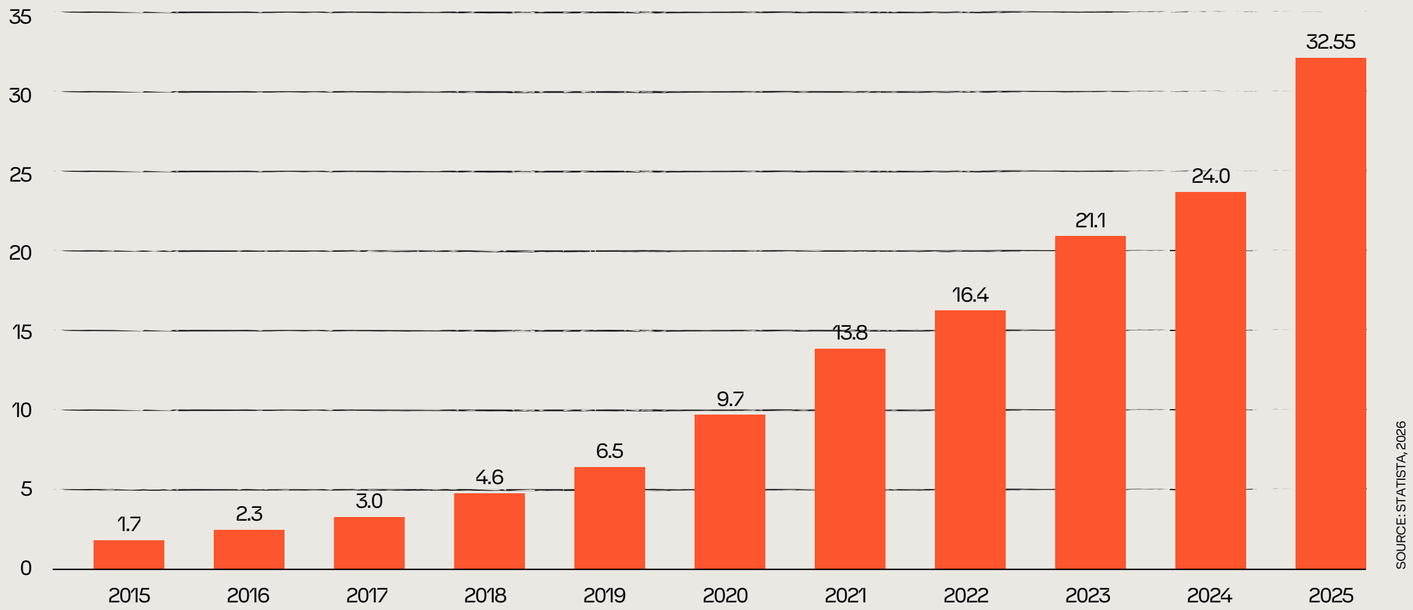
REWARDING VIRALITY
From the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity to the Effies, every major advertising competition heavily rewards reach and virality.

But every bubble has to burst.

Every successful system eventually creates its own saturation point. As billions flowed into the creator economy, influence became so industrialized—supported by agencies, affiliate platforms, creator management firms, and copy-and-paste content playbooks—that it became the default language of the internet. And like any market flooded with supply, its ability to command attention began to erode. What once cut through the noise increasingly became part of it.



SIZE OF THE GLOBAL INFLUENCER MARKETING MARKET FROM 2015 TO 2025 (IN BILLIONS U.S. DOLLARS)



SOURCE: STATISTA, 2026

Influence has become infinitely manufacturable and infinitely less impressive.

67% OF PEOPLE GLOBALLY FIND INFLUENCERS REALLY ANNOYING

OA Creative Intelligence



ABOUT 60% OF USERS NOW ACTIVELY SCROLL PAST ANY POST WITH A PAID PARTNERSHIP TAG

Reality Marketing Group



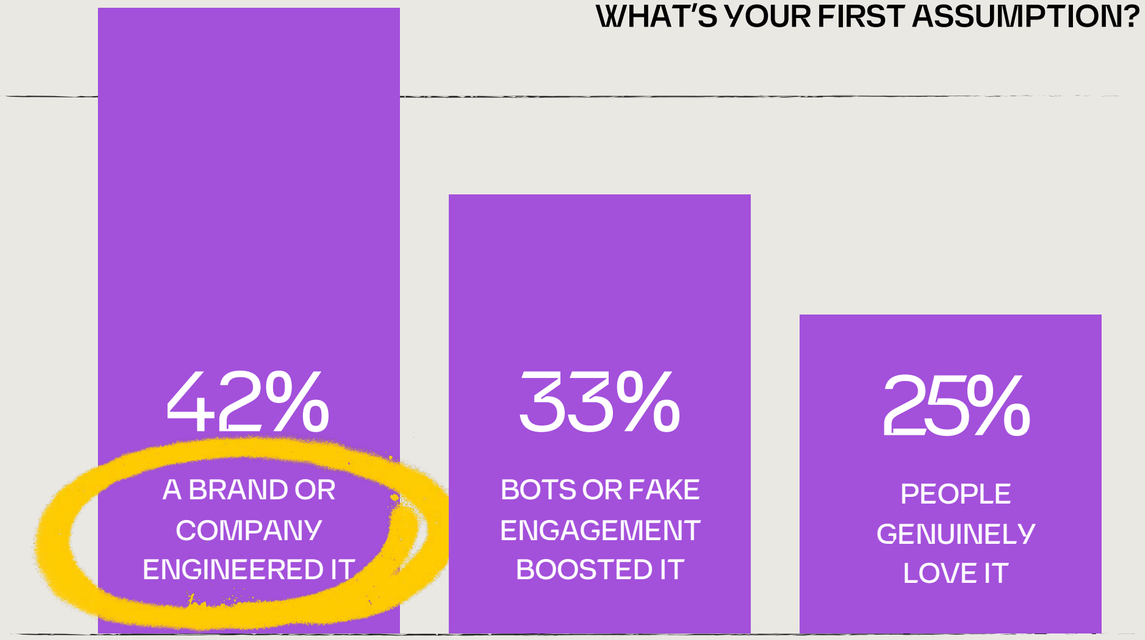
Virality is now cause for suspicion.

For most of the social media era, popularity functioned as a shortcut for trust. A large following implied credibility. Millions of views defined cultural relevance. A viral moment was taken as proof that something had genuinely resonated with people. We collectively accepted that if enough people liked something, it was probably worth paying attention to.

Today, that assumption is beginning to unravel.

The fact that followers can be bought and engagement can be inflated is not a new revelation. But if those tactics once felt like exceptions, they're now starting to feel like the rule. The mechanics of influence have become so sophisticated that almost every signal of popularity now appears manufactured. When we asked people in the U.S. and U.K. what their first assumption is when something goes viral today, the most popular response from 42% of respondents was that a brand engineered it. One-third of people said they assume that bots or fake engagement boosted it. Only 25%—the smallest group—said they assume that people genuinely love it.

WHEN SOMETHING GOES VIRAL NOW, WHAT'S YOUR FIRST ASSUMPTION?



SOURCE: BACKSLASH SURVEY, US AND UK, 2026

THE FALLOUT OF FABRICATED ENGAGEMENT

This skepticism isn't entirely surprising when you consider the recent rise in articles exposing how brands and creators are gaming the system. One of the biggest culprits is the clipping economy. What began as creators repurposing highlights from podcasts or livestreams has evolved into an entire shadow marketing industry. Today, brands, creators, and media companies routinely pay armies of freelance "clippers" to flood social media with hundreds of variations of short clips, hoping the algorithm will reward at least a few of them with breakout reach. During a 31-day promotional campaign, for example, *The Dan Bongino Show* paid clippers $150 for every 100,000 views their podcast clips generated.





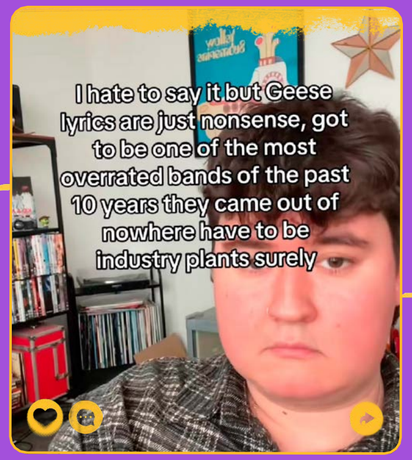
No story captured the cultural reaction to this phenomenon more vividly than the recent discourse around indie rock band Geese. When it was revealed that the band had worked with Chaotic Good Projects—a marketing agency that specializes in "trend simulation" by seeding content across thousands of social media accounts to give the appearance of organic momentum—a debate unfolded that was much larger than a single band. If Geese's rise to fame had been carefully orchestrated, people began asking, what about every other artist, podcast, product, or creator they've "discovered" online? As Wired put it: "If Geese are a psy-op, so is everything else."

How Geese broke the illusion of organic discovery



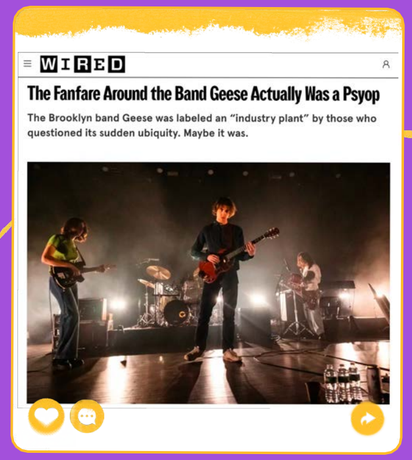
THE BREAKTHROUGH

By the end of 2025, Geese had become one of the most talked-about bands in rock music. Their fourth album, *Getting Killed*, landed on countless year-end "best of" lists, landing them appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and Coachella. Publications were hailing them as the future of rock, with The Guardian calling the band "the new saviors of rock 'n' roll."



SUSPICION BREWS

Some people start questioning how an indie band went from unknown to unavoidable so quickly. "Industry plant" and "psyop" comments started flooding in.



THE MACHINE IS EXPOSED

Wired publishes an exposé revealing Geese worked with Chaotic Good Projects, an agency that specializes in "trend simulation" by seeding content across thousands of social accounts.



THE INTERNET IS DIVIDED

The story explodes across major outlets. Think pieces, op-eds, podcasts, and influencers weigh in. Some say it's just smart modern marketing. Others argue it's flat-out manipulation, with fans saying they feel deceived.

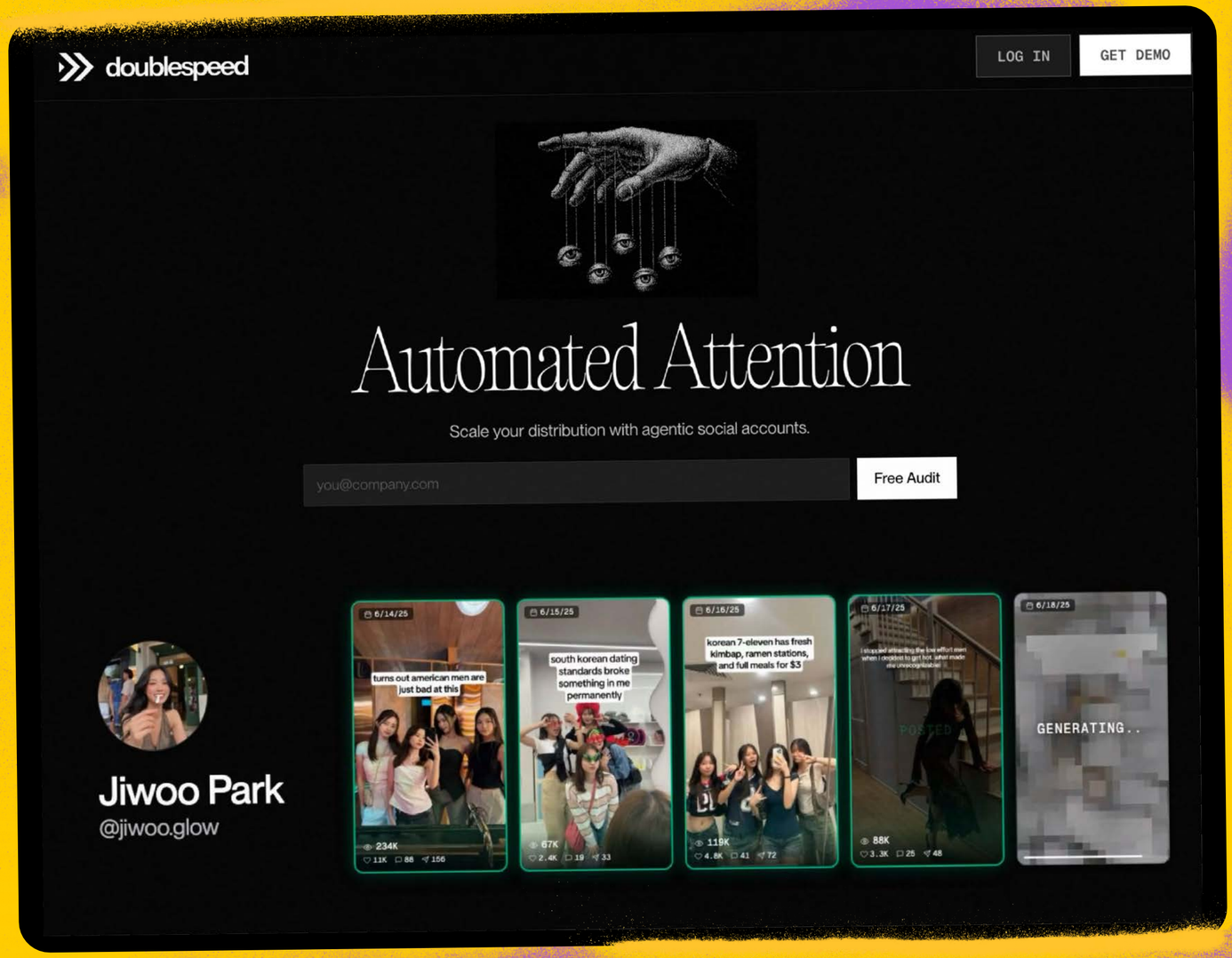
A BROADER AWAKENING

People realize this isn't just about Geese. It's about the entire internet. Trust in what feels "real" online takes a hit, and people question if every artist, movie, podcast or brand they've ever liked was the result of their own taste—or the outcome of a carefully engineered system designed to shape it.

CREATE-YOUR-OWN AI INFLUENCER

Trend simulation is about to become even more effortless thanks to AI. An alarming example of what's coming next can be found in a startup called Doublespeed, which is building an army of AI-generated influencers designed to mimic real people online. Instead of hiring human creators, Doublespeed generates synthetic personalities tailored to specific audiences—a suburban mom recommending skincare, a Gen Z sneakerhead, a fitness coach—and deploys them across thousands of social media accounts. Each AI persona is assigned its own physical smartphone in a massive phone farm, where it spends days scrolling, commenting, liking, and interacting with content to establish a believable history before it ever begins promoting a product. The goal is to convince both algorithms and users that these accounts are authentic, allowing brands to create the appearance of genuine enthusiasm at scale.

The cumulative effect of these developments is that the feed no longer feels like a reflection of organic taste. Instead, it increasingly feels like a system where popularity can be commissioned. And once people stop trusting popularity, they inevitably begin questioning something even more personal: Were my preferences ever really mine to begin with?





Taste paranoia

/telst ˌpær. ɔɒɘ . / noun (n)

The growing anxiety that your preferences are no longer entirely your own, but the product of algorithmic recommendations and engineered influence.

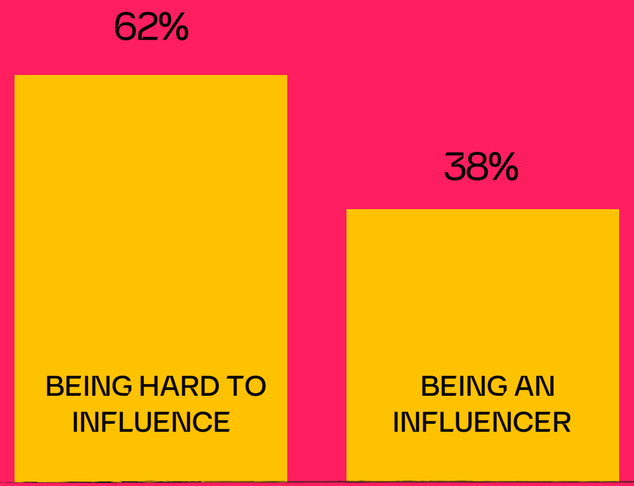
Aspiration is being turned upside down.

For years, cultural status came from shaping other people's opinions. Today, it comes from demonstrating independence from them.



If the last internet flex was having enough followers and clout to influence everyone else, the next one will be proving that your own taste can't be so easily swayed. In a world where every scroll surfaces another creator telling us what to buy, watch, wear, and believe, the ability to resist the algorithm is becoming a reflection of cultural confidence. Our research confirms this. In both the US and the UK, the majority of people now say being hard to influence is more aspirational than being an influencer.

Which feels more aspirational right now?



SOURCE: BACKSLASH SURVEY, US AND UK, 2026

This doesn't mean influence itself is disappearing. Human beings have always borrowed ideas, aesthetics, and identities from one another—that's how culture evolves. What people are rejecting is influence that feels imposed on them. They still want recommendations. They still want to discover great music, restaurants, books and brands. They just want to feel that they arrived there themselves, without being steered by stealth marketing campaigns or manipulative algorithms.

Pinterest captured this tension perfectly in a recent campaign taking people back to the pre-social media times. Set against old home movies and photos from real Pinterest employees, the film invites us to reconsider how we formed our identities before the algorithm took over: "How did they know they liked something, if the thing they thought they liked hadn't already gotten any likes?" "How did they know what to think, what to wear... how did they know who they were without the rest of the world telling them?" Viewed more than 75 million times on YouTube, the campaign is striking a nerve because it articulates something a lot of us have been grappling with: growing uncertainty over where algorithmic recommendation ends and personal identity begins.



SOURCE: PINTEREST, HOW DID THEY DO IT?

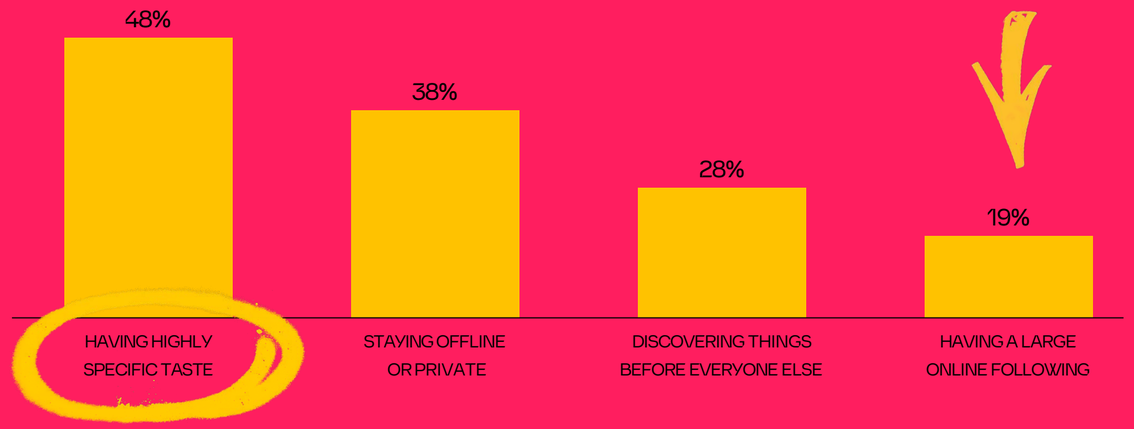
This desire to reclaim taste is driving a fundamental shift in what we admire. And interestingly, there's clear crossover between what defines an attention-worthy individual and an attention-worthy brand. Our research found that having highly specific taste is now the strongest marker of both an interesting person and a culturally-relevant brand, followed by staying offline or having a presence IRL. Being massively popular—once the ultimate signal of relevance—is now the least impressive factor.

These stats reinforce the craving for unmistakable identity. In a world where it's easier than ever to be popular, the ability to see the world differently, to be deeply trusted by a niche group, and to know who you are beyond what you share online are becoming the rarest–and therefore the most priceless—measures of cultural currency.

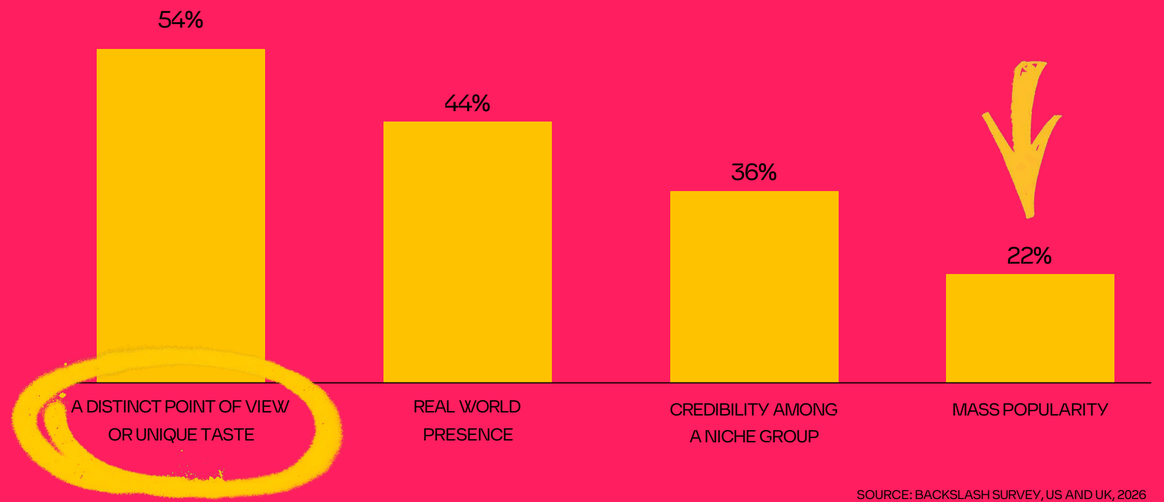


IMAGE: MIKAALA SHACKELFORD FOR UNSPLASH

WHAT MAKES SOMEONE INTERESTING TODAY?



WHAT MAKES A BRAND FEEL CULTURALLY RELEVANT TODAY?



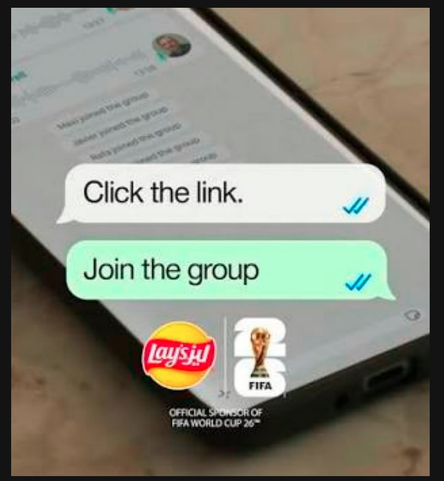
SOURCE: BACKSLASH SURVEY, US AND UK, 2026

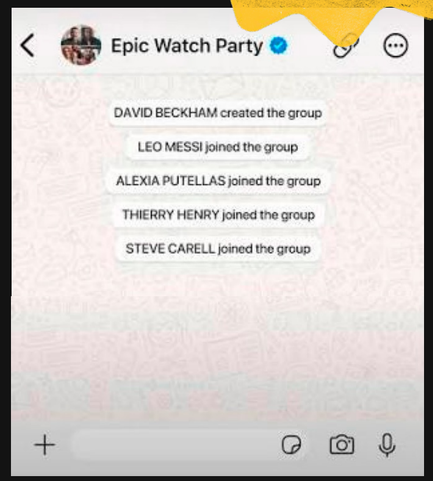
What does this mean for brands that have built their entire business on the very thing people are increasingly trying to escape?

For brands, this creates a difficult paradox. Almost every growth strategy today depends on scale and visibility—showing up on the biggest platforms, through the biggest influencers, to get as many eyes on your products as possible. And realistically, some level of scale will always be the goal—especially for large companies with high-volume sales targets. But if consumers are increasingly drawn to things that feel hidden and hard to replicate, the path to outsized impact will no longer run through mass reach alone.

THE ERA OF CONCENTRATED CREDIBILITY

In the next era, cultural power will come more from concentrated credibility within smaller ecosystems. The data confirms that trust is already quietly relocating to more private corners of the internet. According to GlobalWebIndex, 63% of internet users say they primarily communicate through DMs and private stories, and on Reddit specifically, 78% of consumers say they trust the platform for product research more than they trust Google or other social platforms. Reddit threads, Discord servers, WhatsApp group chats, and private Substacks all share the same advantage the feed lost—they were built for trust. And unlike reach, trust can't be bought in bulk. Lay's 2026 World Cup campaign is a prime example of a mass brand operating by these new rules without abandoning scale altogether. Rather than sticking to broadcast channels, Lay's built a custom WhatsApp group chat—featuring stars like Lionel Messi, Thierry Henry and David Beckham posting real, unscripted messages—that grew to more than 4 million members within weeks. Lay's called the approach "scaled intimacy," a deliberate attempt to borrow the trust and closeness of a small group chat while still reaching millions. It's a useful signal for brands who can't simply shrink to niche: the channel itself (i.e. WhatsApp instead of Instagram; DMs not feeds) does real work in making scale feel less manufactured.





THE OLD MODEL

RELEVANCE

=

MASS EXPOSURE

Reach • Virality • Views
Followers • Share of Voice

THE NEW MODEL

RELEVANCE

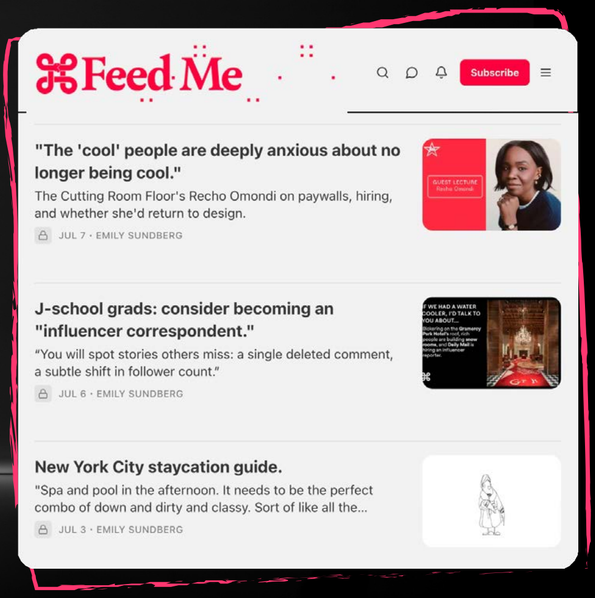
=

CONCENTRATED CREDIBILITY

A Distinct POV • Affinity • Participation
Physical Presence • Share of Trust

Creators are undergoing a version of the same shift. Emily Sundberg's *Feed Me* newsletter has become one of the most-cited voices in business and culture without ever chasing mass distribution. Nearly everything of substance sits behind a paywall, and Sundberg has been candid that the model works because of the restriction, not despite it. A smaller, paying audience that returns daily is worth more than a larger one that scrolls past. "It's really telling that people are going back to paying for quality," says Isabella Rigg, creator of the podcast and Substack, *That's Niche*. "The irony is that it's kind of like, let's reinvent the wheel—and launch a magazine."





BACK TO THE FUTURE

The same logic extends to media more broadly. As audiences become more selective about who they trust, marketers are beginning to rediscover the value of environments where the commercial relationship is explicit rather than disguised. "I don't know that any one thing will replace the traditional influencer economy, but I do think one of the things we'll see is a return to the relative honesty of the transactional paid media relationship," says Maggie Hilliard, Omnicom's President and Integrated Client Lead for McDonald's. "We've already started to see a little bit more interest in out-of-home advertising, which is the most back-to-the-future type of advertising there is."



BUILDING SCALE THROUGH SMALLER CIRCLES

None of this means mass influencer plays are obsolete. They still work for driving awareness, but the caveat is that awareness and influence are no longer the same currency. A single celebrity post can certainly put a product on someone's radar, but it's increasingly the smaller, denser networks that convert that awareness into long-term trust. As Aaron King, Global Influencer Innovation Director at McCann, put it: "When it comes to scale, the easy answer is 'I'm going to get an influencer with 30 million followers.' I think the right answer now is 'I'm going to recruit 1,000 influencers to deliver the same level of scale that one influencer would.' It's not the cheap answer, unfortunately, but it's the right answer today."

Brands built for maximum reach now have to optimize for something harder to fake and much easier to lose—trust, affinity, and depth of relationship with the people who actually show up. Scale hasn't disappeared as a goal, but the path to it now runs through a thousand smaller rooms, each requiring the kind of commitment and credibility that can't be shortcut by spend alone.

"When it comes to scale, the easy answer is 'I'm going to get an influencer with 30 million followers.' I think the right answer now—but unfortunately not the cheap one—is 'I'm going to recruit 1,000 influencers to deliver the same level of scale that one influencer would.'"

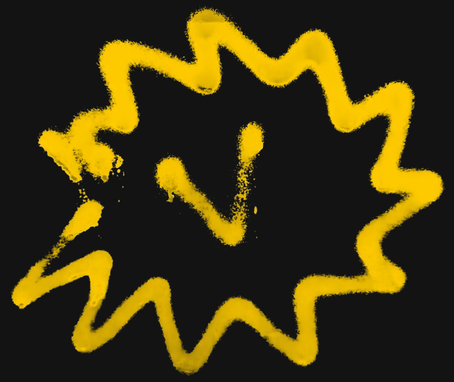


Aaron King –

Global Influencer Innovation Director, McCann

The next generation of influencers won't look like influencers.

Ironically, the most influential people of the next decade may stop looking like influencers altogether. As audiences grow more skeptical of overt persuasion, cultural authority is shifting toward people who don't primarily define themselves by their ability to sell. Instead, they'll earn trust by becoming indispensable to a specific community.



Some will be curators—like respected Letterboxd reviewers whose value comes from consistently surfacing interesting ideas before everyone else. Others will be experts, building credibility through years of deep knowledge rather than lifestyle content, whether that's a fragrance collector, a futurist, or a food critic. Others will become hosts, creating the spaces where culture happens—from Rapha's cycling clubhouses to Snow Peak's intimate camping festivals in Japan that unite outdoor lovers and staff. And perhaps most importantly, influence will increasingly return to peers: the friend in your group chat, the Reddit commenter whose opinion you trust, or the person in your local community who recommends a restaurant with no incentive other than wanting to share something great.

For brands, this means the goal is no longer simply to find people with audiences. It's to identify people with authority, taste, and genuine social capital inside the communities that matter, and to treat them as long-term partners rather than one-time sponsors. Credibility compounds through consistency.

HOW TO LEVERAGE THESE UNLIKELY SOURCES OF INFLUENCE



MAKE THE TRANSACTION EXPLICIT: Audiences are often less offended by advertising than by advertising disguised as organic enthusiasm. Clear disclosure, honest product experience, and permission for nuance can make paid work more credible. A creator being able to say what a product is—and is not—good for is more persuasive than templated praise.

DESIGN DIFFERENT ROLES ACROSS THE CREATOR NETWORK: Not every creator needs to drive the same outcome. Some can create broad awareness. Others can provide technical validation, cultural interpretation, local relevance, or product education. A distributed model works best when it is an ecosystem, not 1,000 people repeating the same brief.





TREAT NICHE CREATORS AS CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE: Creators inside small communities can identify emerging language, tensions, rituals, unmet needs, and reputational risks before those signals become mainstream. Bring them into research, product development, and testing—not just launch.



MAKE ACCESS FEEL PERSONAL: Give creators something worth sharing privately—hidden collections, archive access, local experiences, community-only releases, or behind-the-scenes access that rewards curiosity rather than reach.

Three principles of the uninfluenced era:

Influence isn't going away, but it'll need to be earned differently. In this next chapter, brands will earn cultural power by shaping environments rather than paying for exposure.



01. The further from the feed, the greater the trust.



02. Things that feel genuinely discovered are now most desirable.



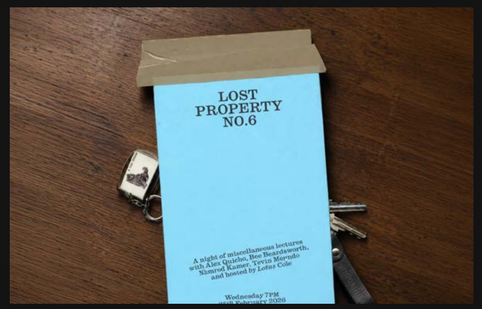
03. Stop manufacturing culture. Build places for it to happen naturally.

01 The further from the feed, the greater the trust.

Credibility is increasingly being built offline. As people look to reclaim their own taste from algorithmic feeds, they're turning to real-world spaces where preferences are shaped by lived experience instead of recommendation engines. For brands, this doesn't mean crashing every community with a logo or turning local culture into another marketing channel. It means supporting communities without dominating them, and earning their place through consistent participation rather than sponsorship alone.

LOST PROPERTY LECTURE SERIES

One of London's most sought-after cultural gatherings is an informal lecture series. Artists, academics, and curious locals come together to hear 15-minute talks on niche obsessions—ranging from urban legends to cyborgs and celebrity gossip—creating a space where ideas spread through conversation rather than feeds. The only rule? No self-promotion allowed.





DATE MY FRIEND

As swiping fatigue sets in, *Date My Friend* events are flipping the script by asking people to pitch their single friends to a room full of strangers. The format works because recommendations come from real people with real stories about what someone a catch—capturing the nuances that a dating app profile would never be able to.

MIU MIU LITERARY CLUB

Miu Miu has built one of luxury's most distinctive cultural platforms through its Literary Club. The recurring series brings together writers, philosophers, artists, and readers for conversations around literature, feminism, and contemporary culture, positioning the brand as a host of intellectual community rather than simply a producer of products.



WHAT IF YOUR BRAND INVESTED IN LOCAL HOSTS INSTEAD OF MASS INFLUENCERS?

02 Things that feel genuinely discovered are now most desirable.

Frictionless discovery is running up against its limits. In fact, 83% of US and UK adults say algorithms have killed the joy of discovery. The opportunity now is to design for discovery that feels earned or even accidental. That means creating pathways for exploration rather than optimization: hidden layers to uncover, communities to stumble into, and recommendations that travel through people instead of platforms.

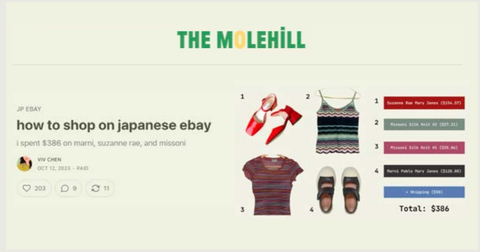
LORE

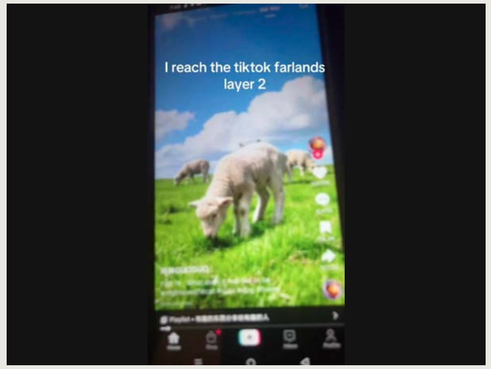
Lore is a new search engine designed specifically for obsessive fans. Instead of telling people what to like, it helps them dive deeper into their niche interests by connecting fan theories, timelines, essays, and hidden easter eggs into one searchable knowledge graph. Gen Z founder Zehra Naqvi describes it as "the Library of Alexandria for the fandom age," built around the joy of self-directed discovery rather than endless scrolling.



RESALE WHISPER NETWORKS

As copy-and-paste outfits get old, shoppers are increasingly turning to private networks. Fashion writer Viv Chen's Substack, The Molehill, gives subscribers access to a shared Google Doc of hidden resale sources and private chats where members crowdsources vintage leads. Other stylists like Lizzie Wheeler are selling coveted designer pieces through Instagram Close Friends, while curators on WhatsApp have built thriving communities around helping members uncover one-of-a-kind finds.





TIKTIOK FARLANDS

The "TikTok Farlands" is a semi-mythical hidden corner of the platform that can only be accessed by searching obscure strings of letters and numbers shared in comment sections. You know you've arrived when you start seeing bizarre, surreal, and often unsettling videos that the algorithm would never normally surface. The appeal isn't necessarily the content itself—it's the feeling of venturing into undiscovered territory.

WHAT IF EXCLUSIVE BRAND ACCESS COULD ONLY BE UNLOCKED THROUGH MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION?

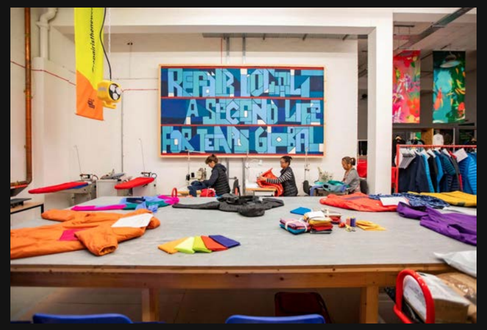


03 Stop manufacturing culture. Start building places for it to happen naturally.

Instead of looking to brands to dictate what's next, people increasingly trust the conversations, rituals, and communities they help shape themselves. Brands that try to insert themselves into culture or orchestrate the next viral moment won't earn respect. Instead, the opportunity is to build the places, tools, and traditions that allow culture to thrive organically.

PATAGONIA WORN WEAR

Patagonia's repair tours, repair hubs, and Worn Wear marketplace don't function as marketing campaigns—they're ongoing rituals that bring together people who already share the brand's values. The community generates the stories, Patagonia simply provides the space and tools.



RED BULL IN THE WILD

Red Bull has spent decades building scenes—music studios, skate parks, surf competitions, cliff diving, esports, dance battles—where participants created culture that existed independently of advertising. Their continued investment has made them known as an enabler of subcultures rather than a brand interrupting them.



LETTERBOXD

Letterboxd has become a cultural phenomenon by giving people the platform to develop and publicly refine their own taste. Rather than algorithmically pushing content, it lets users build watchlists, publish reviews, curate themed lists, and follow people whose perspective they genuinely value. The platform's culture-inside jokes, niche rankings, "four favorites", micro-critics was almost entirely invented by users. That approach has fueled explosive growth. Letterboxd has grown from just 1.7 million users in 2020 to more than 28 millions members across 190+ countries in 2026, with users logging nearly 900 million films and publishing 143 million reviews in 2025 alone.

WHAT IF BRANDS GAVE PEOPLE SOMETHING TO BUILD TOGETHER INSTEAD OF SOMETHING TO CONSUME?

Th@nk You



BACKSLASH WAS BORN FROM THE BELIEF THAT CULTURE IS THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY-AND THREAT-TO BUSINESSES TODAY. AS THE CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT OF OMNICOM ADVERTISING, OUR ROLE IS TO HELP CLIENTS SEE AROUND THE CORNER OF CULTURE SO THEY CAN LEAD THE CHANGE THAT'S COMING NEXT.

LEARN MORE AT BACKLASH.COM AND FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @TBWABACKSLASH. FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE REACH OUT TO DANA.FORS@OMC.COM.

The Team

\STRATEGY

Jen Costello, Global Chief Strategy Officer, TBWA\Worldwide

Laura Simpson, Chief Intelligence Officer, Omnicom Advertising

Cecelia Girr, Head of Strategy, Backslash

Skyler Hubler, Senior Cultural Strategist, Backslash

\DATA

Harriet Richards, Senior Director of Business Intelligence, Omnicom Advertising

\OPERATIONS

Dana Fors, Director of Operations, Backslash

\DESIGN

Bruno Regalo, Chief Design Officer, TBWA\Worldwide

Benoit Ollive, Design Director, DXD

Willian Lopes, Sr Designer, DXD

Monica Gelbecke, Design Business & Ops Lead, DXD