

*Tacos & Trends*

# MY GAMIFIED LIFE

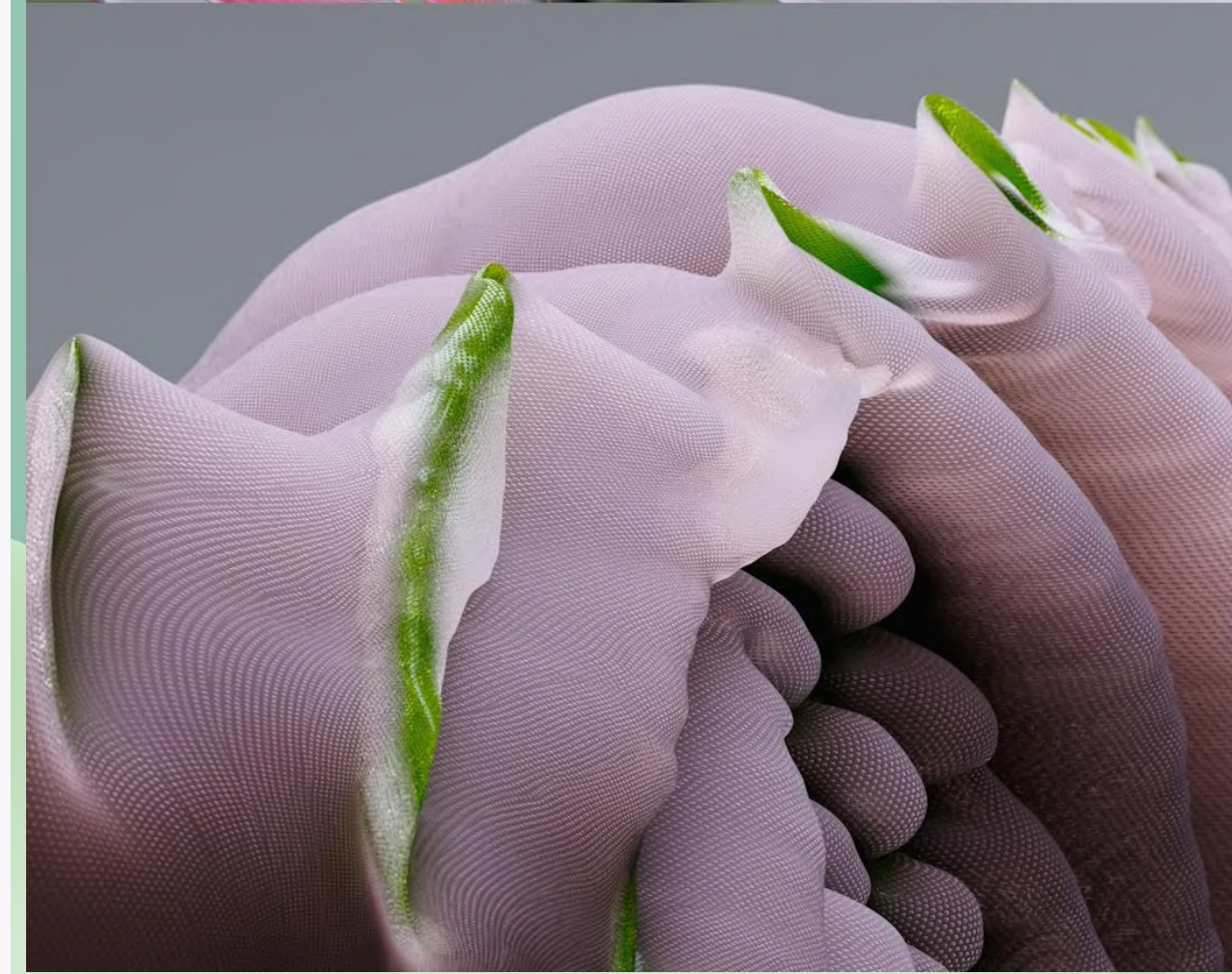
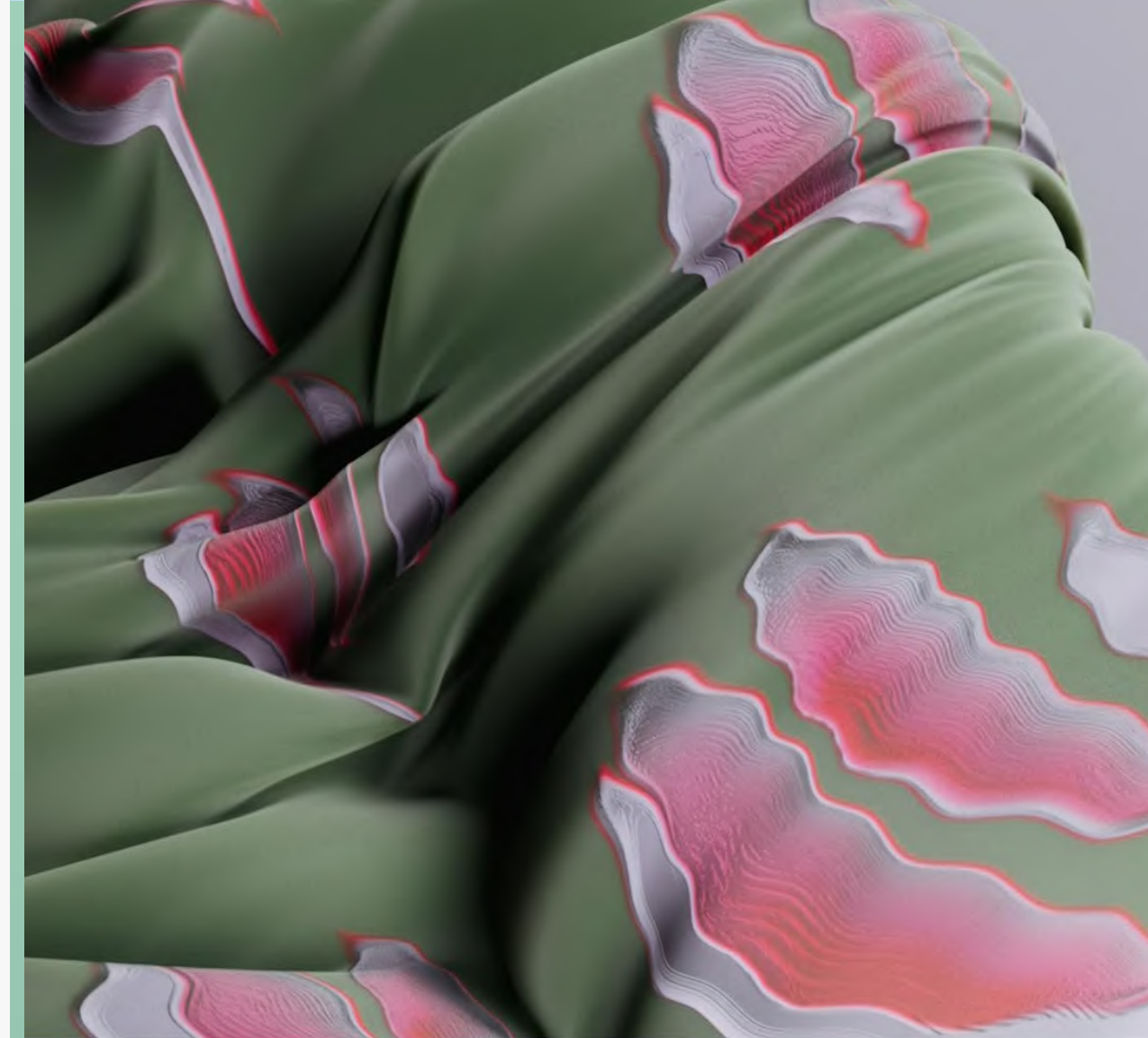
The Digital Language of the Future Consumer

# *Tacos & Trends*

**Where Culture, Conversation, and Insights Collide**

Welcome to Tacos & Trends, a resource for bite-sized trend insights, vibrant conversations, and brand discovery. Powered by MADE Trends, it's a hub for discovering the trends shaping industries and connecting with the community driving them forward.

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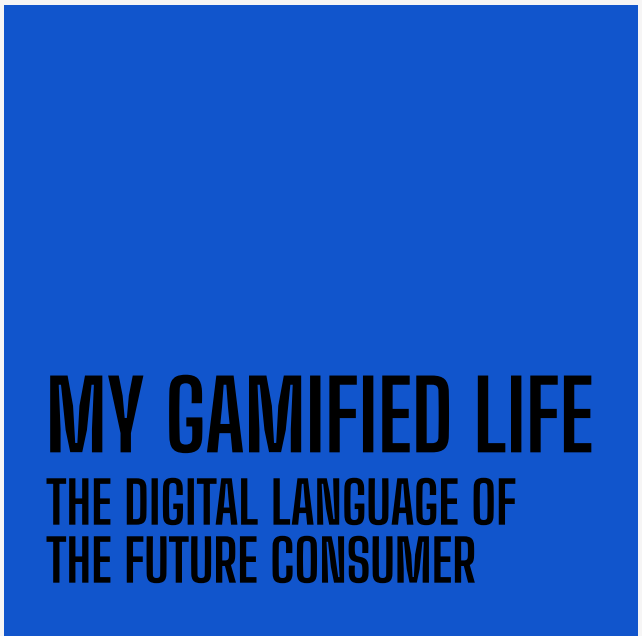
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Our megatrends series of four reports explores the trends shaping 2026 and beyond. Each report presents a forward view of the macro forces set to influence product, marketing, and merchandising decisions.

# OVERVIEW

## **The new rules of participation and brand connection**

Play and motivation now guide how consumers interact with brands. We break down the mechanics that drive participation and loyalty, and provide frameworks to turn everyday engagement into measurable growth.

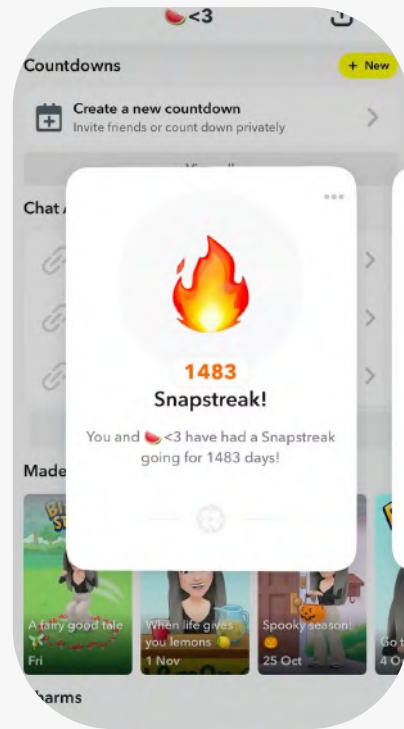


# HAVE YOU EVER?

learning a language is **f**o**r**ing hard. that's why we made it **f**o**r**ing fun.



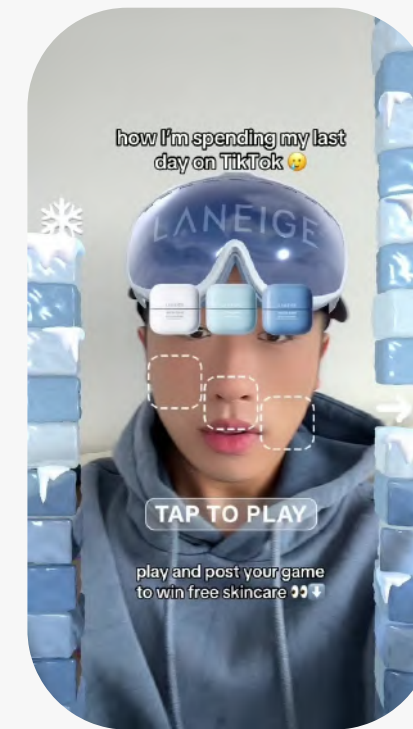
Duolingo



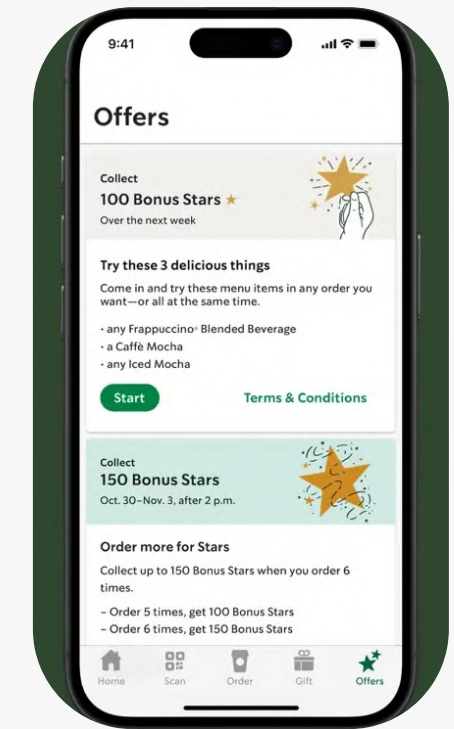
Snapchat



Tinder



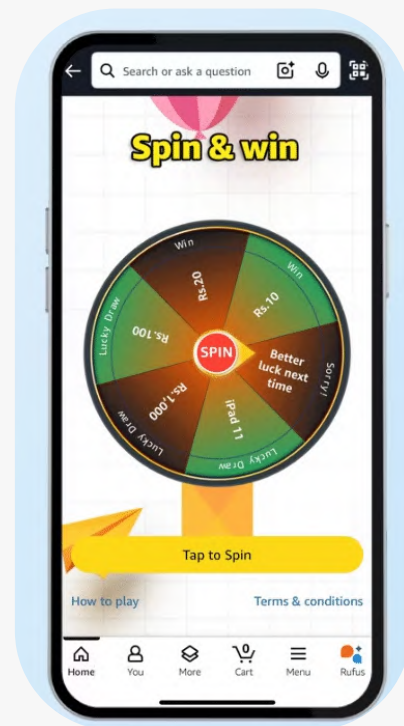
TikTok



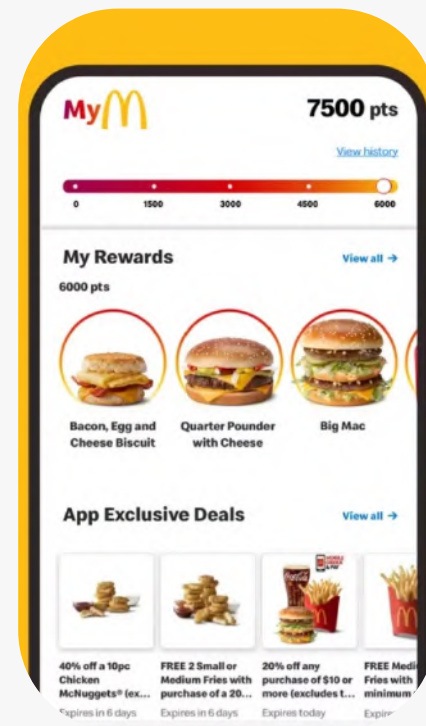
Starbucks



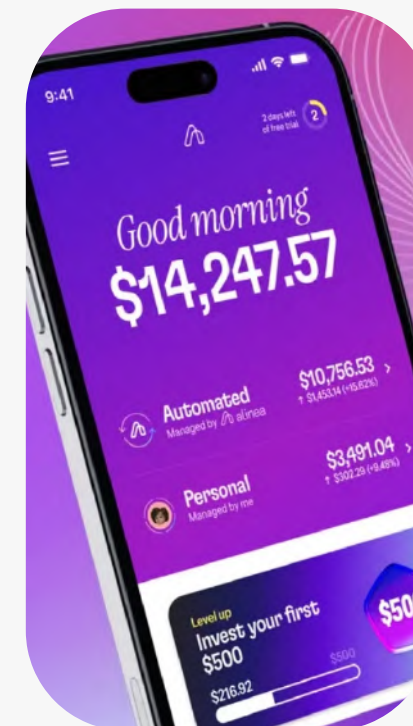
Airline Miles



Amazon



McDonalds



Wealth Management



e.l.f Beauty Squad

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# OUR FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

Always-On Audiences

1

**Future Consumer**

Endless Engagement

2

**Gameful Worlds**

Habit Engineering

3

**Motivational Design**

Purposeful Play

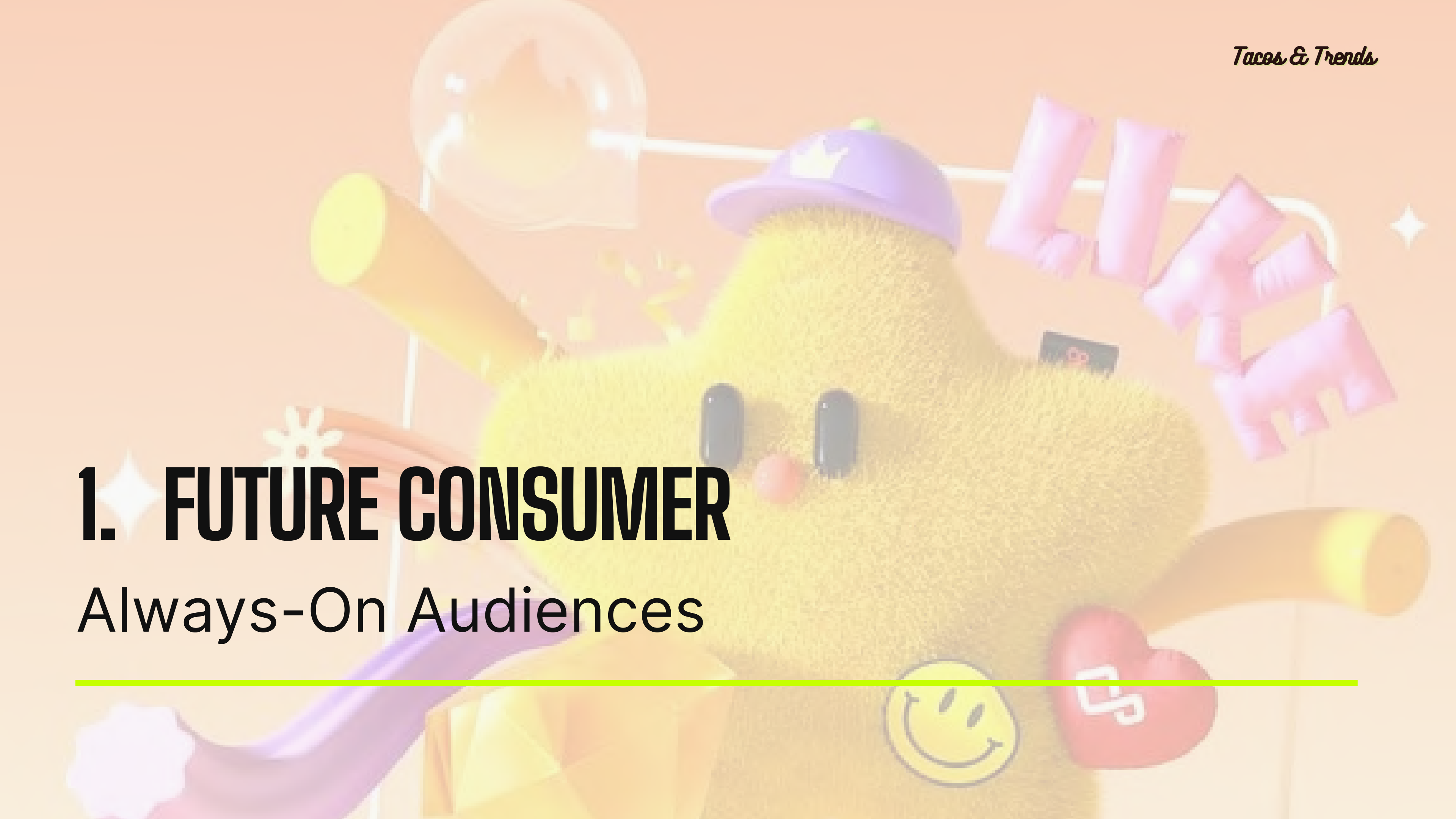
4

**Future Frameworks**

# 1. ✨ FUTURE CONSUMER

Always-On Audiences

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Future Consumer

# INTRO TO FUTURE CONSUMER

## Behavior in Motion

Today's consumer moves through life with a play-driven, always-connected mindset. Entertainment, identity, and commerce now exist in a single blended experience.





# THE FIRST DIGITAL NATIVES

## Raised by the internet

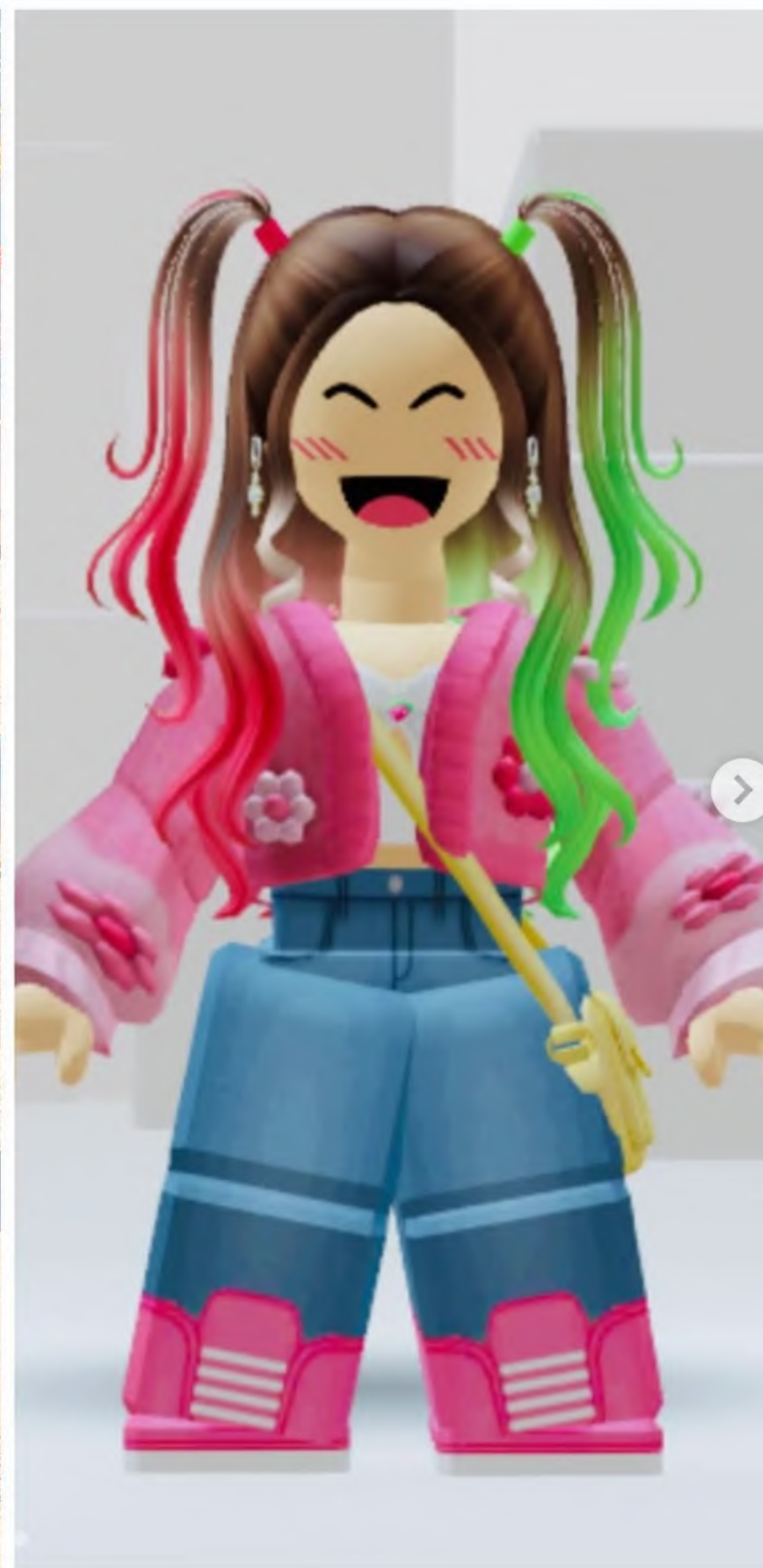
- Influence over \$100B in spending each year.
- Digital identity feels as real as physical life.
- Expect online and offline to function as one continuous experience.

Future Consumer

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# CULTURE AS CURRENCY

**Creators first, consumers second**  
Gen Z drives the trends that define the internet. Identity evolves through what they share, support, and participate in.



# GENERATIONAL CONTINUUM



Gen Beta

0-5 months  
2025-2039

Gen Alpha

1-15  
2013-2024

Gen-Z

16-28  
1997-2012

Millennials

29-44  
1981-1996

Gen-X

45-60  
1965-1980

Boomers

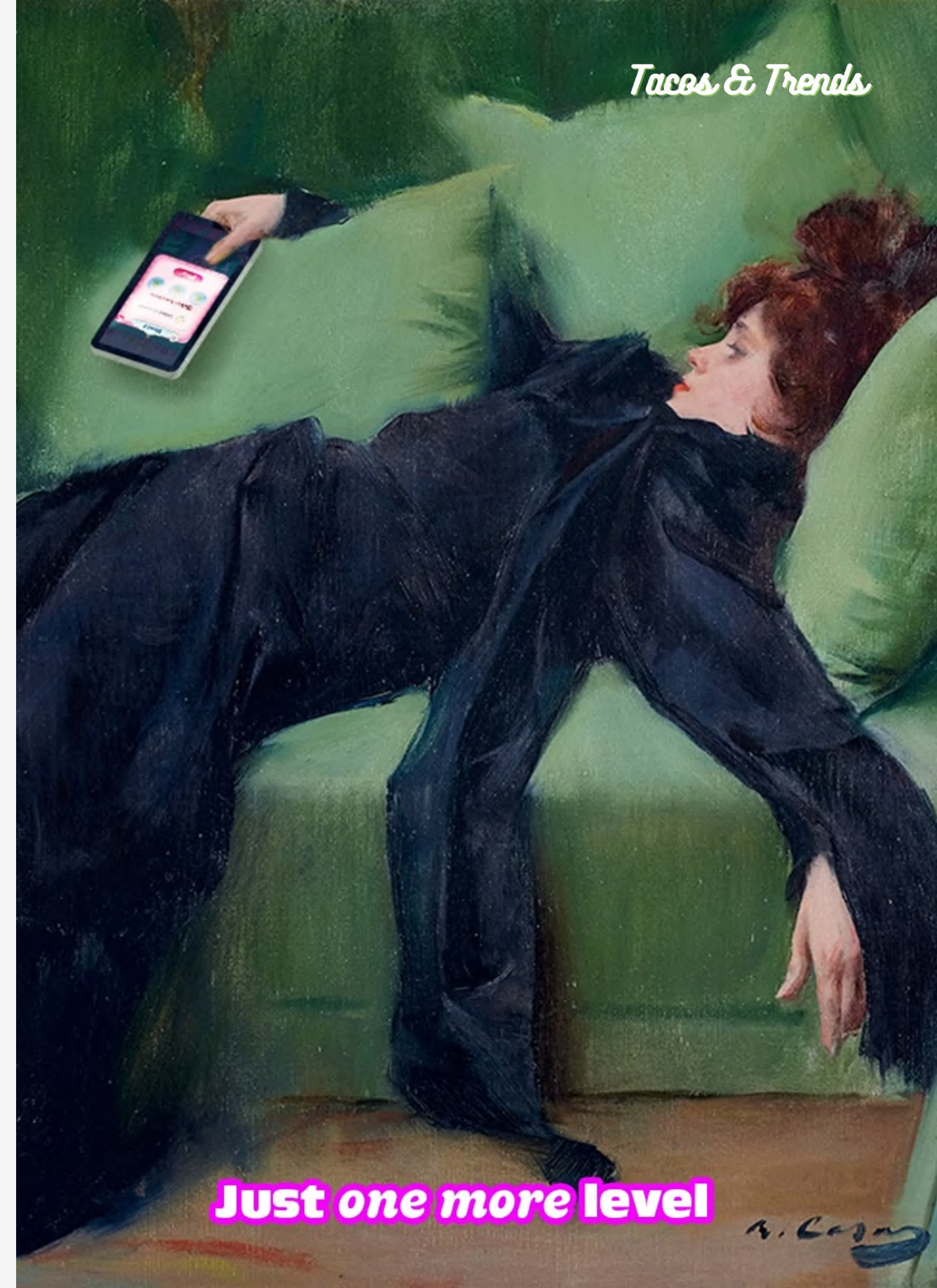
61-80  
1964-1946

# BOOMERANG EFFECT

## Bidirectional Influencing


Cultural influence no longer moves top-down. Gen Alpha and Gen Z shape the tastes and tech habits of their Millennial and Gen X parents.

Playful design, feedback loops, and digital rewards are now universal behaviors. From Duolingo streaks to TikTok discovery, **everyone's playing the same game at different levels.**



# WHAT EACH GENERATION WANTS IN GAMES

	1946–1964 <b>BOOMERS</b>	1965–1980 <b>GEN X</b>	1981–1996 <b>MILLENNIALS</b>	1997–2012 <b>GEN Z</b>	2013–Presence <b>GEN ALPHA</b>
PROGRESSION	Casual, low-grind games. Enjoy puzzles and slow-paced mastery without time pressure.	Strategic, story-rich games. Comfortable with grind and deep progression over time.	Narrative-driven and grind-friendly. Like story modes, quests, and clear level goals.	Quick wins & fast action. Love battle passes, short sessions, and fast rewards.	Sandbox and short levels. Prefer clear goals and immediate feedback.
SOCIAL	Mostly solo players. Occasionally game with family or grandkids.	Limited multiplayer. Prefer solo to watching others.	Hybrid players. Enjoy both solo adventures and online multiplayer.	Highly social. Use games as hangouts, love battle royales and Discord.	Gaming is playtime. Love co-op and see games as social playgrounds.
CHALLENGE	Prefer low difficulty. Play for relaxation or mental exercise like puzzles.	Moderate challenge. Like strategy and persistence over fast reflexes.	Prefer more casual sessions due to busy lives.	High skill tolerance. Practice to win, love ranked and fast games.	Learning fast. Enjoy fun challenges and adapt easily to tech and controls.
REWARDS	Prefer practical rewards. Like new levels, power-ups, and achievements.	Prefer rewards that extend the game or improve capabilities, not cosmetics.	Mix of content and style. Like upgrades and cosmetic status items.	Love skins, emotes, and badges. Show status with cosmetics and trophies.	Collect everything! Customization, toys, and visible in-game flair matter.
MONETIZATION	Frugal. Prefer free games or one-time buys. Avoid microtransactions.	Cautious spenders. Buy full games or DLCs, dislike surprise costs.	Open to most models. Pay for value, content, cosmetics, or subs.	Spend freely but smart. Love battle passes and cosmetic buys.	Spend through parents. Favor flashy items and season passes.

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# WHAT PLAYERS WANT

## Gaming Across Generations

When designing gamified experiences, brands should consider the unique wants of each generation while recognizing how their behaviors influence one another across age groups.





# WHAT IS GAMIFICATION?

## Turning Interaction into Incentive

Gamification uses **game-inspired design and mechanics**, like points, streaks, missions, and rewards, to make non-game experiences more engaging and rewarding.

## It works because it taps into:

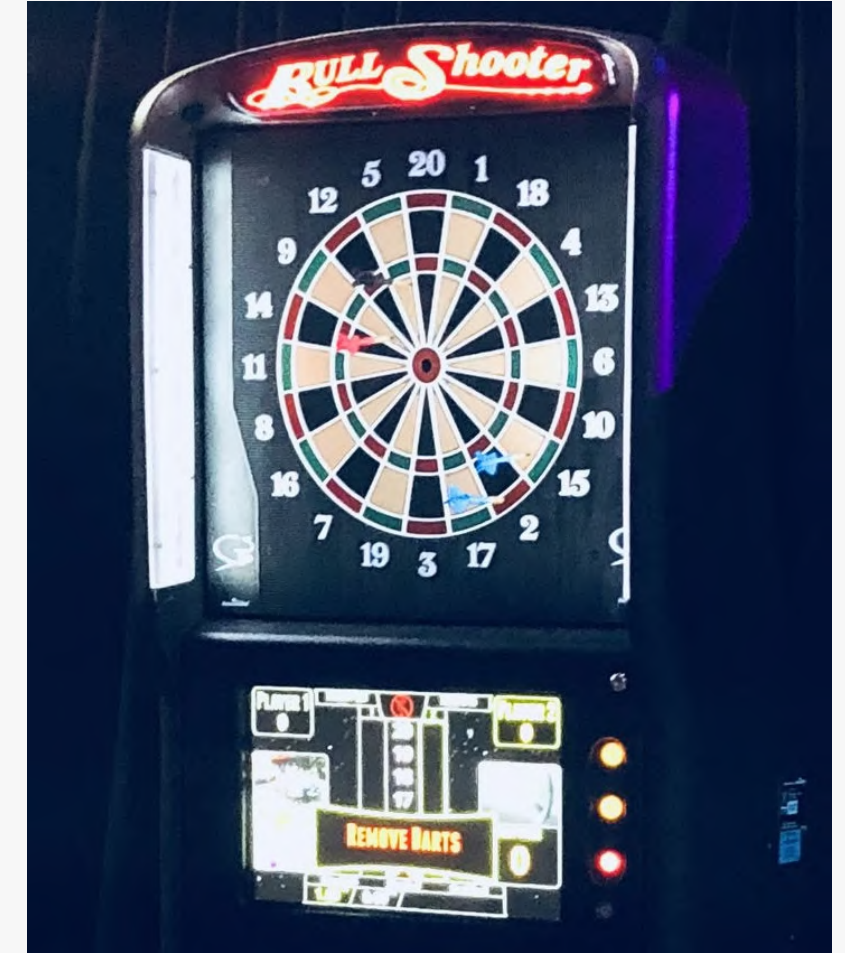
- **Achievement** — feeling capable and recognized
- **Mastery** — seeing progress over time
- **Autonomy** — having a sense of control

# WAYS TO WIN

## Decoding Game Types

Different games engage people in distinct ways. Brands can use these mechanics to drive participation and reward interaction.

- **Skill** – Success depends on strategy, talent, and decision-making.
- **Chance** – Outcomes are determined by luck or randomness.
- **Labor** – Progress is earned through effort, time, or repetitive actions.



# PLAYER ARCHETYPES

The mechanics behind motivation

Each player type reflects a different motivation. Knowing who's playing, and why, lets brands design experiences that feel intuitive, rewarding, and built for them.

## Killers

Play to compete with others

## Achievers

Play to gain success and prestige

## Socializers

Play for the social aspect rather than the game itself

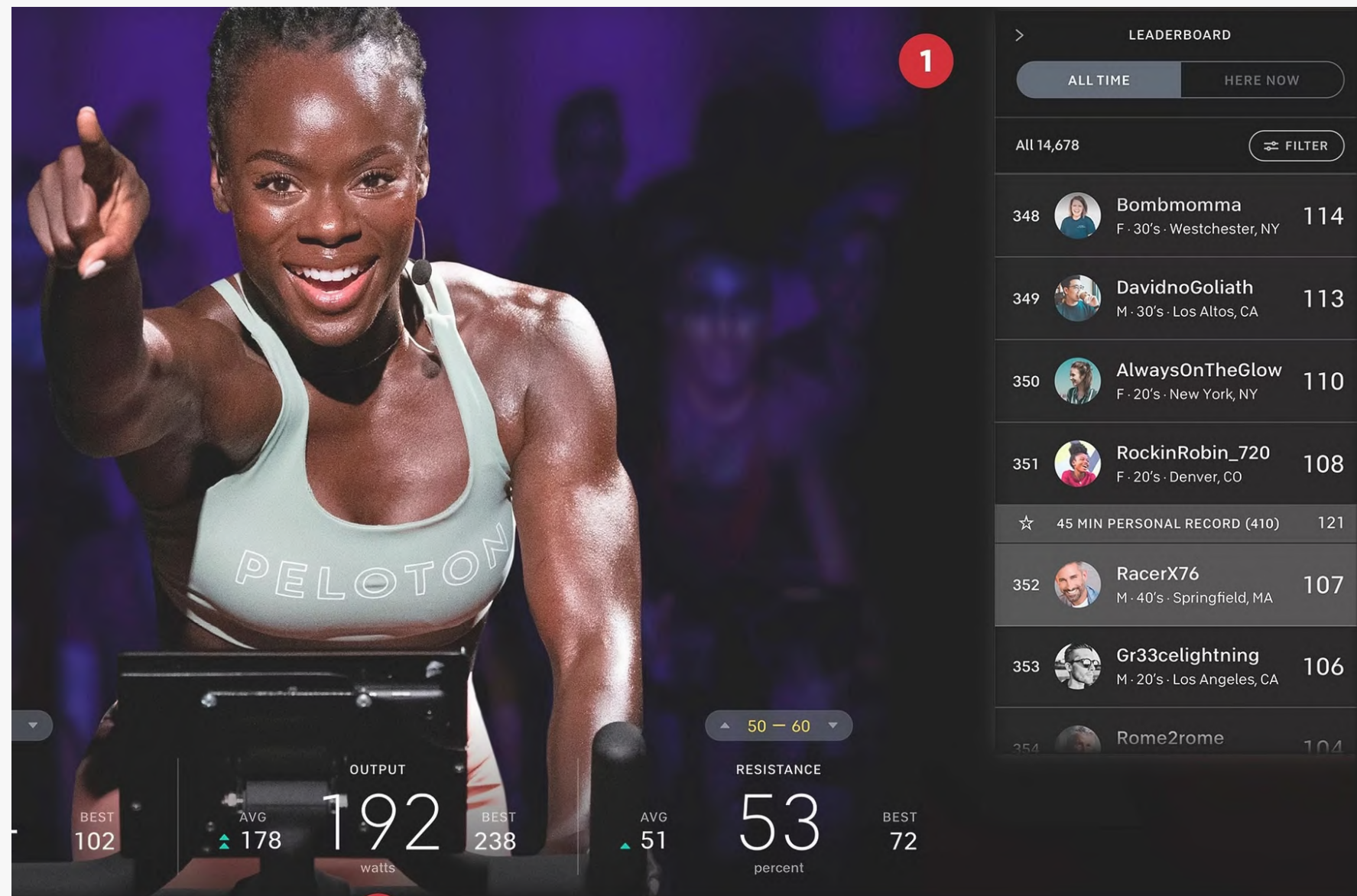
## Explorers

Play to discover new areas and possibilities

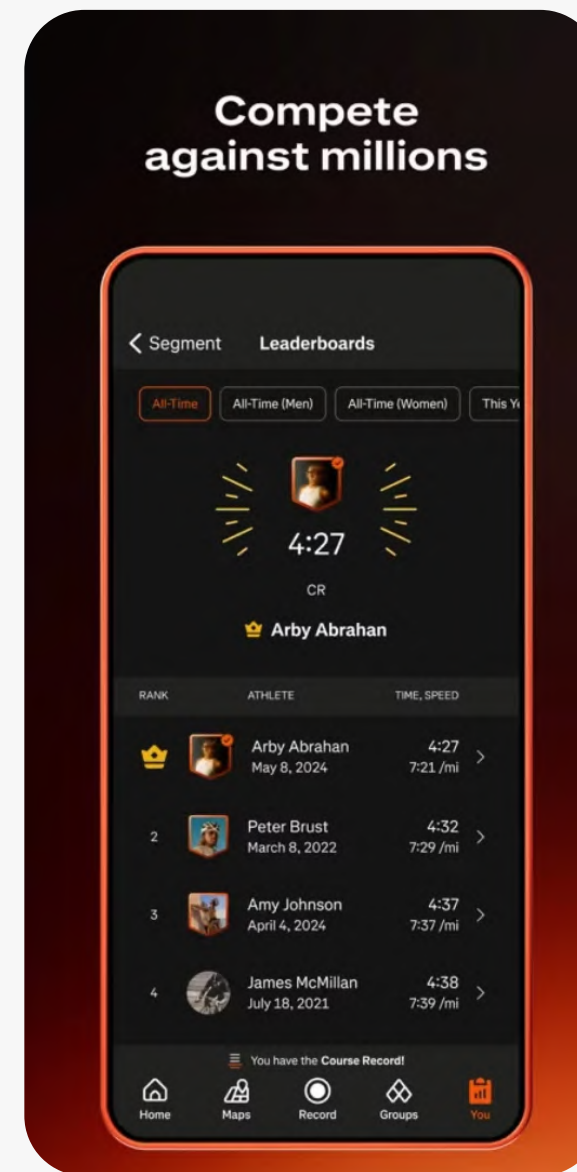
# KILLERS

Play to compete with others

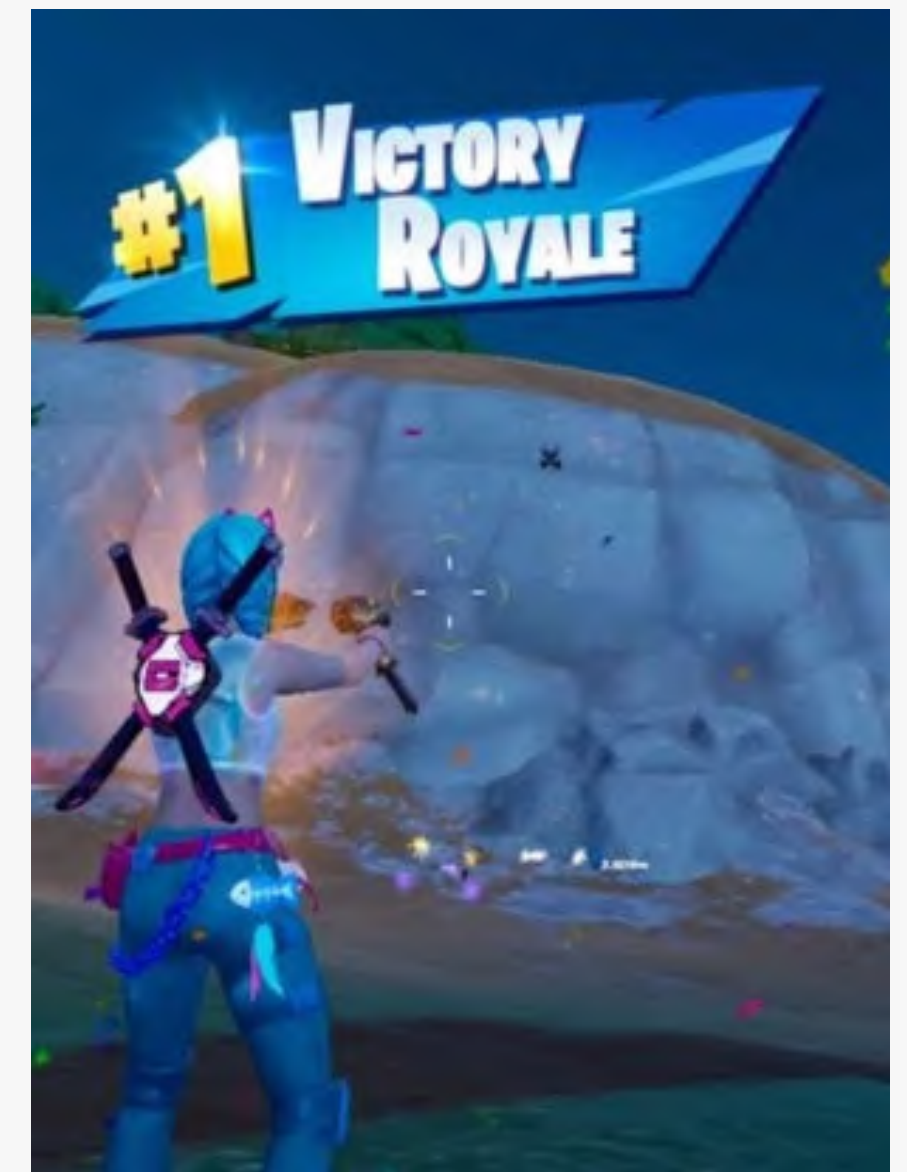
Thrives on challenge, ranks, and visible wins. Competition fuels their motivation.



Peloton



Strava

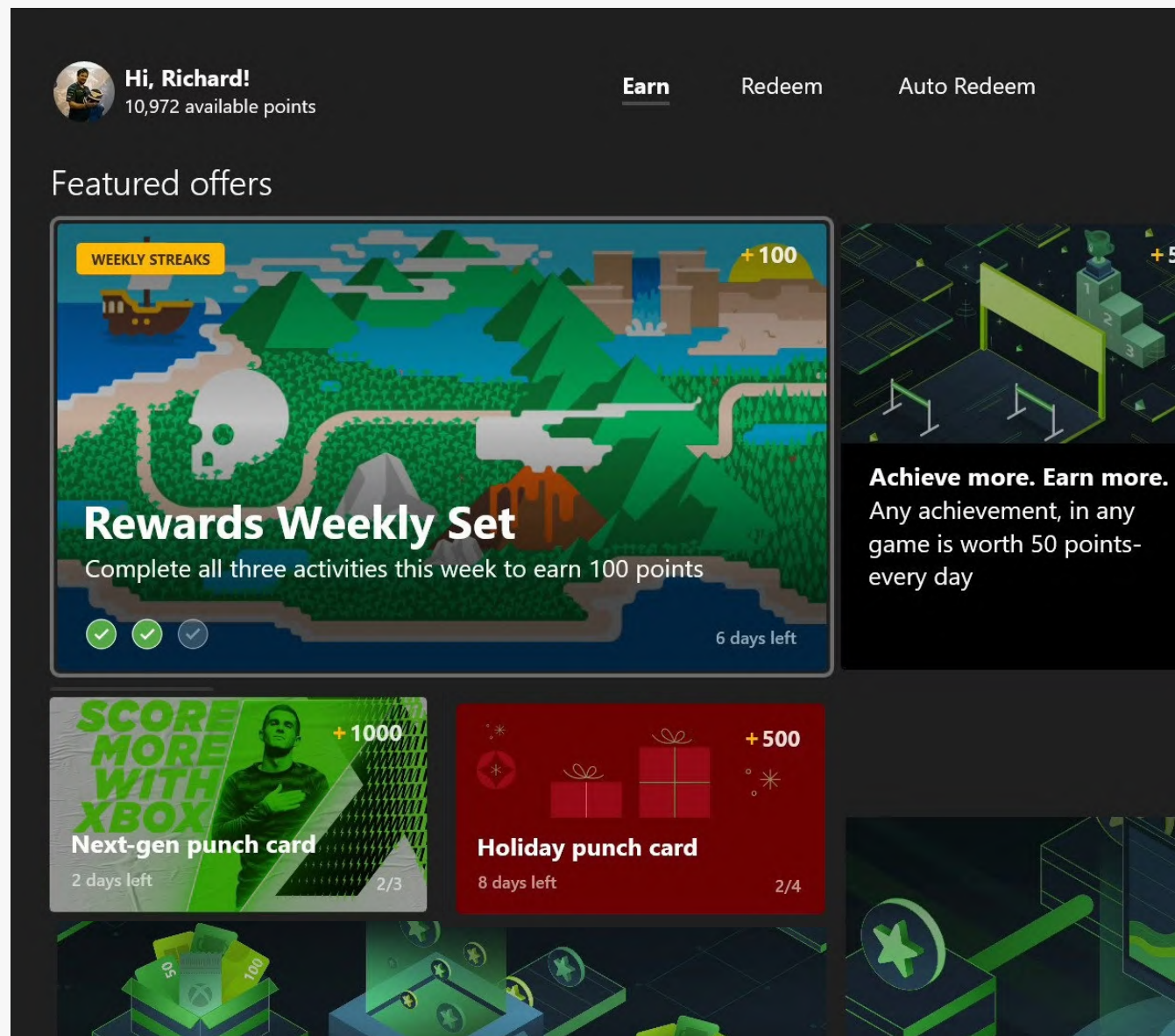


Fortnite

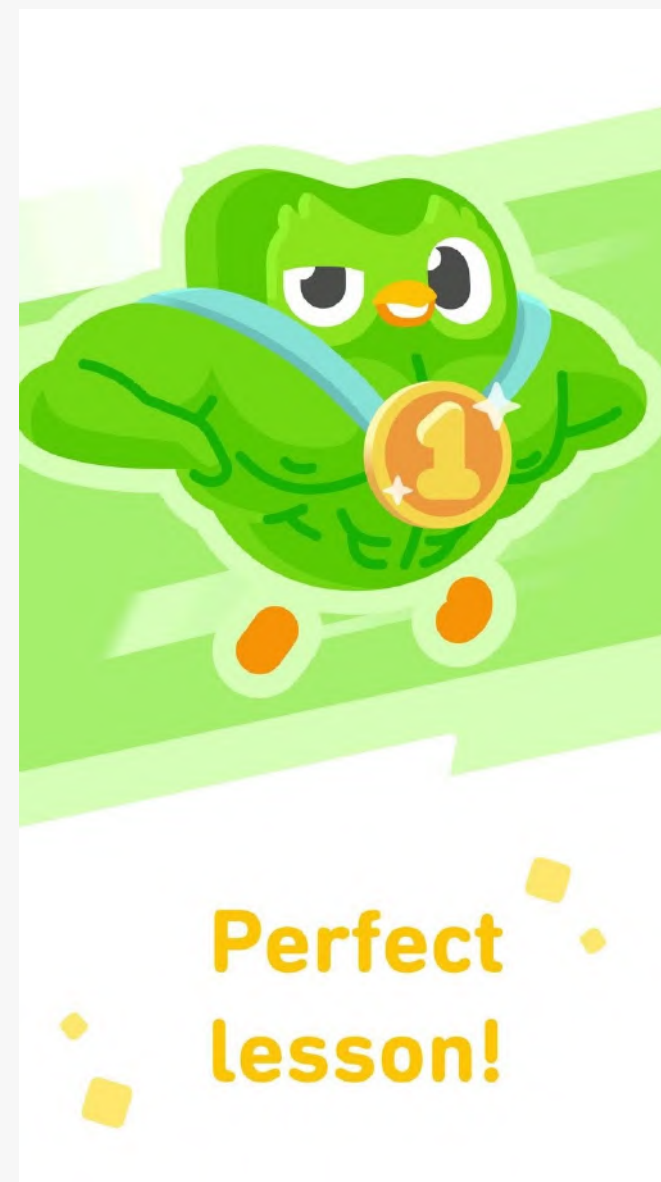
# ACHIEVERS

Play to gain success and prestige

Achievement is the reward. Goals, progress, and personal bests motivate every interaction.



Xbox Live Rewards



Duolingo



Growth Habit Tracker

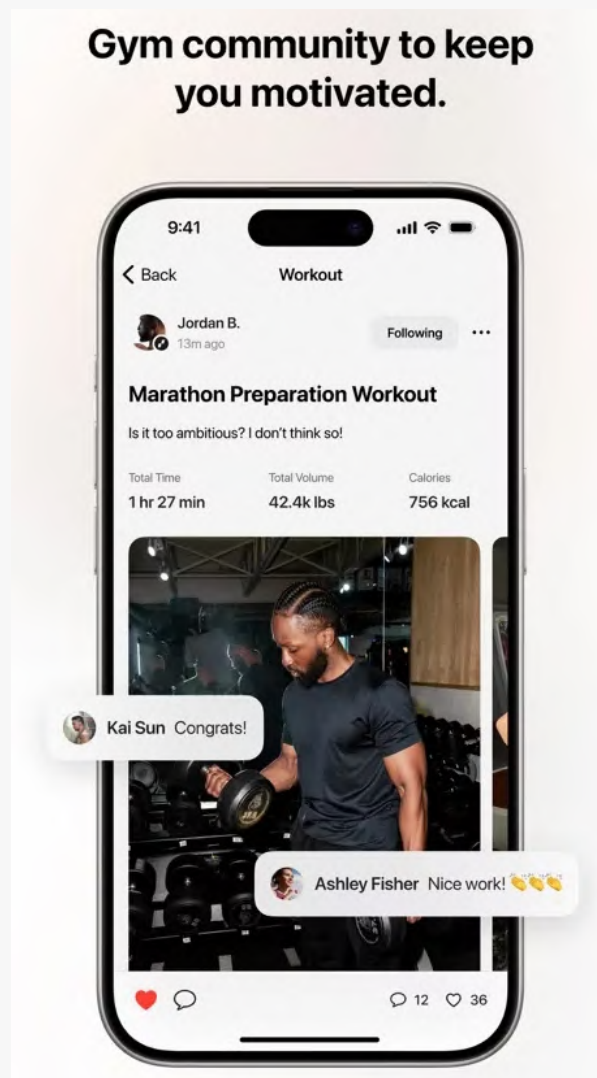
# SOCIALIZERS

Play for the social aspect rather than the game itself

Fueled by connection, social status and shared moments make participation rewarding.



Benefit x Twitch



Train Fitness



Fenty x Roblox



Essence x Roblox

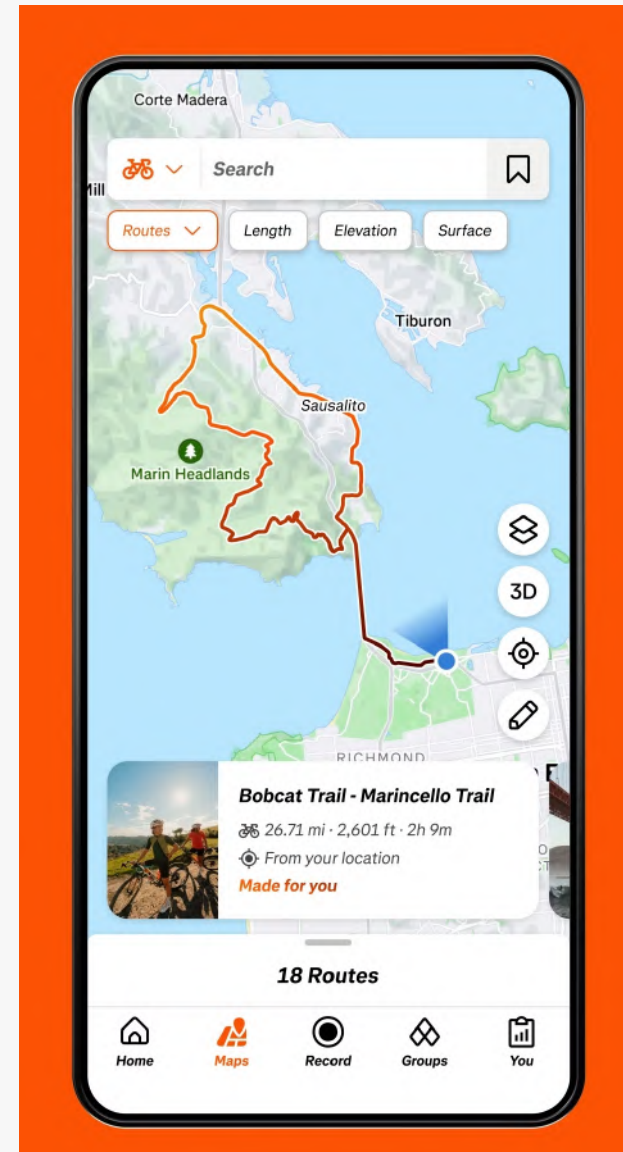
# EXPLORERS

Play to discover new areas and possibilities

Driven by curiosity. Discovery, novelty, and surprise keep them engaged.



Minecraft

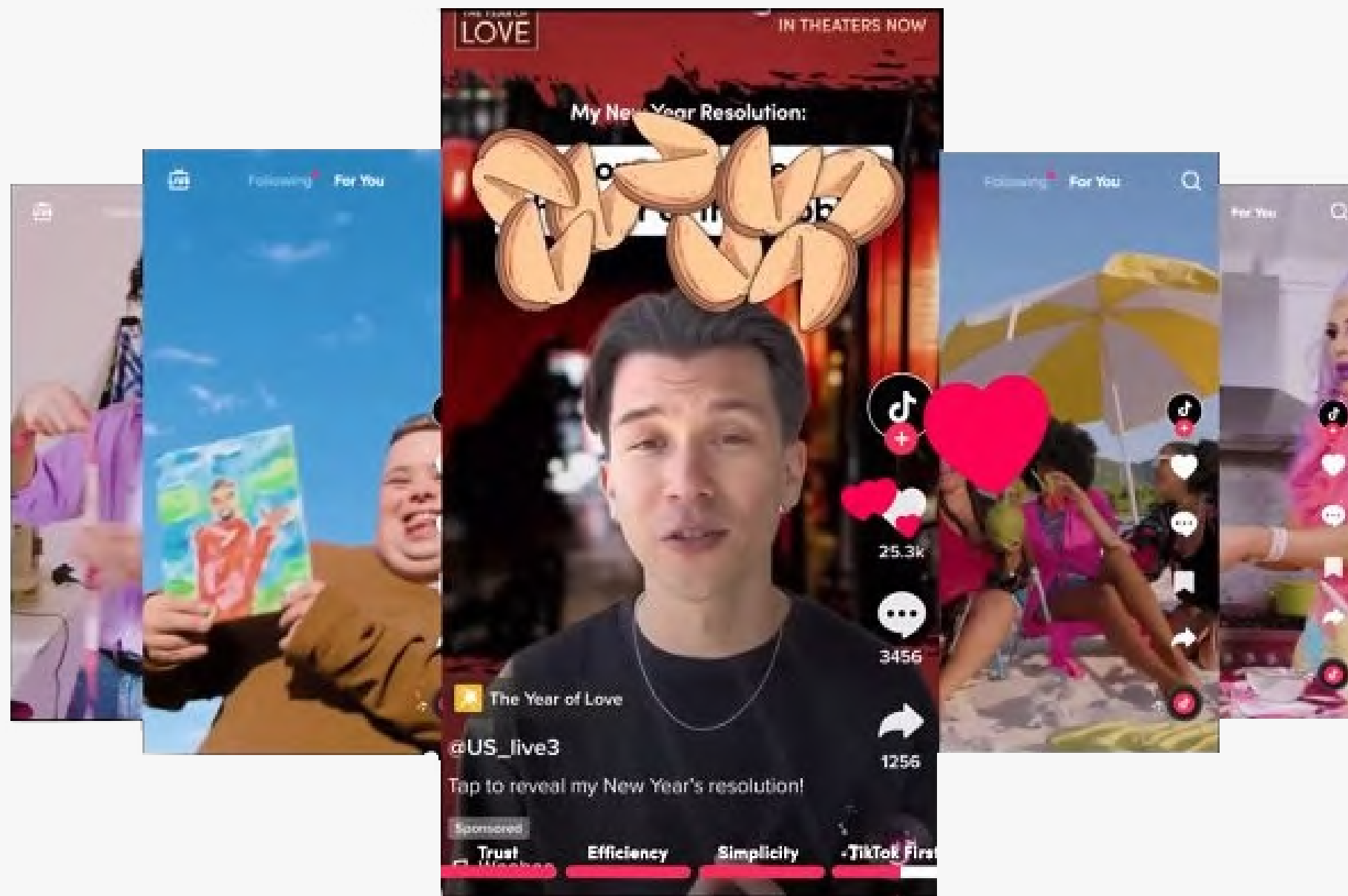


Strava



Pokemon Go

# DOPAMINE ARCHITECTURE



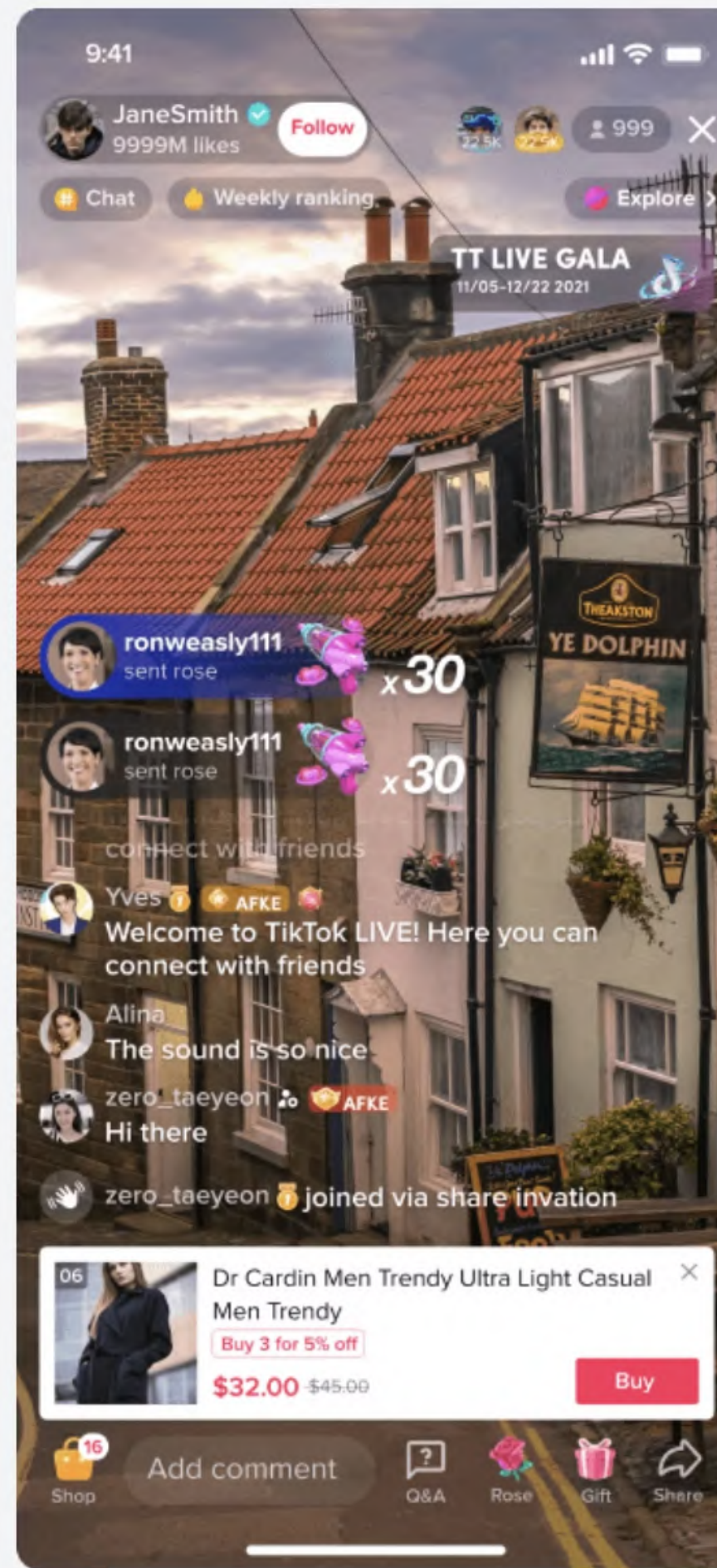
## From Game Theory to Behavior Design

Gamification has shifted from obvious mechanics to subtle behavioral design. Apps use rewarding micro-interactions to keep users engaged. TikTok's infinite scroll shows how UX itself delivers the dopamine loop.

# SHOP. PLAY. REPEAT.

## TikTok Shop gamifies shopping

TikTok Shop blends entertainment, discovery, and instant purchase. Flash sales, livestream events, and exclusive rewards create a **“shop while you scroll”** loop, turning transactions into fun, social, and engaging experiences.



LIVE Shopping



Short Video

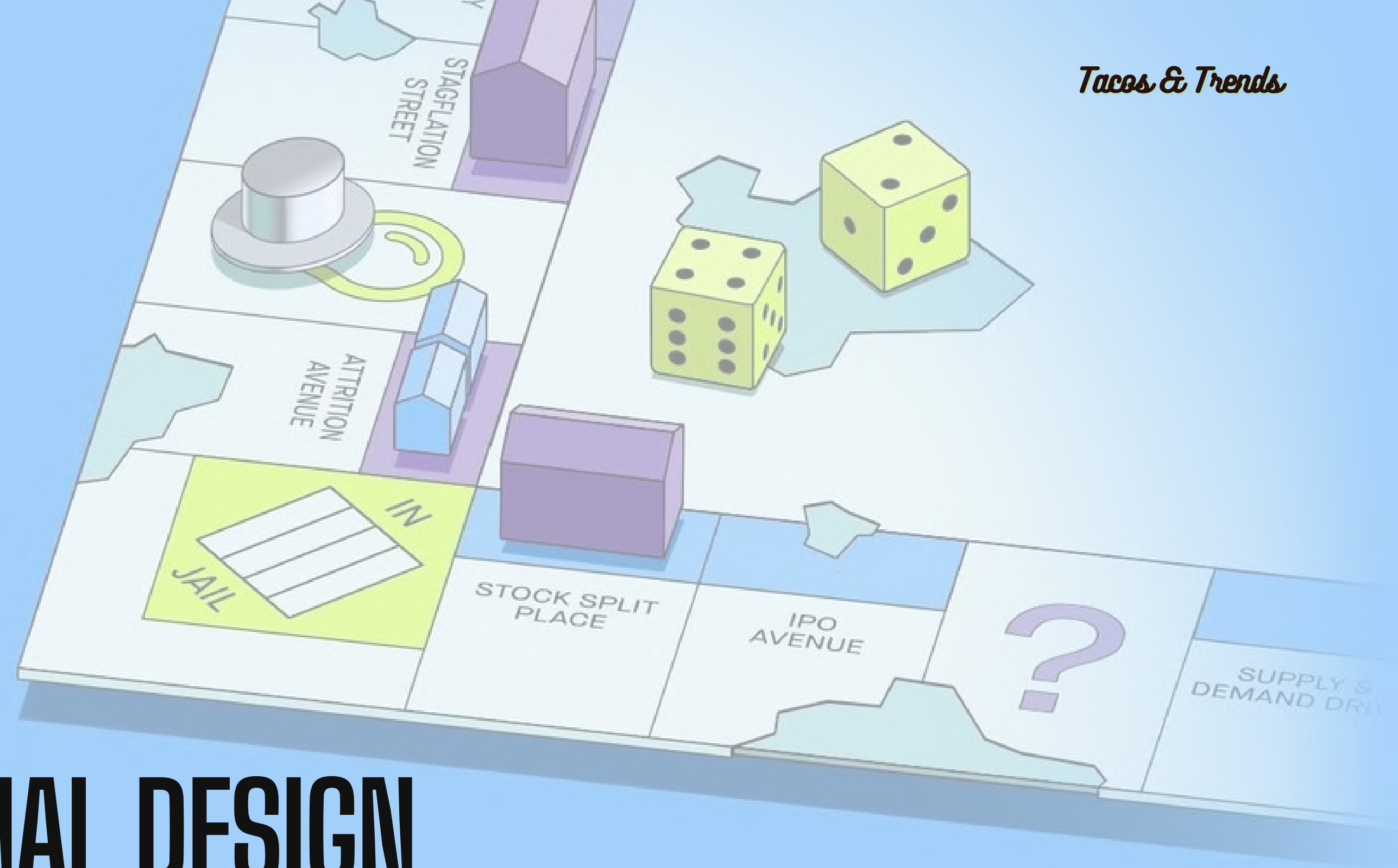
# THE INFINITE STOREFRONT



## **Shopping as a lived environment**

Gamified ecosystems are evolving into gameful worlds. Shoppers now navigate interconnected spaces where rewards, identities, and social feedback are part of the environment itself.

Platforms like Fortnite, Roblox, and TikTok Shop are training consumers to expect brand universes, not programs.



# 3. MOTIVATIONAL DESIGN

## Habit Engineering

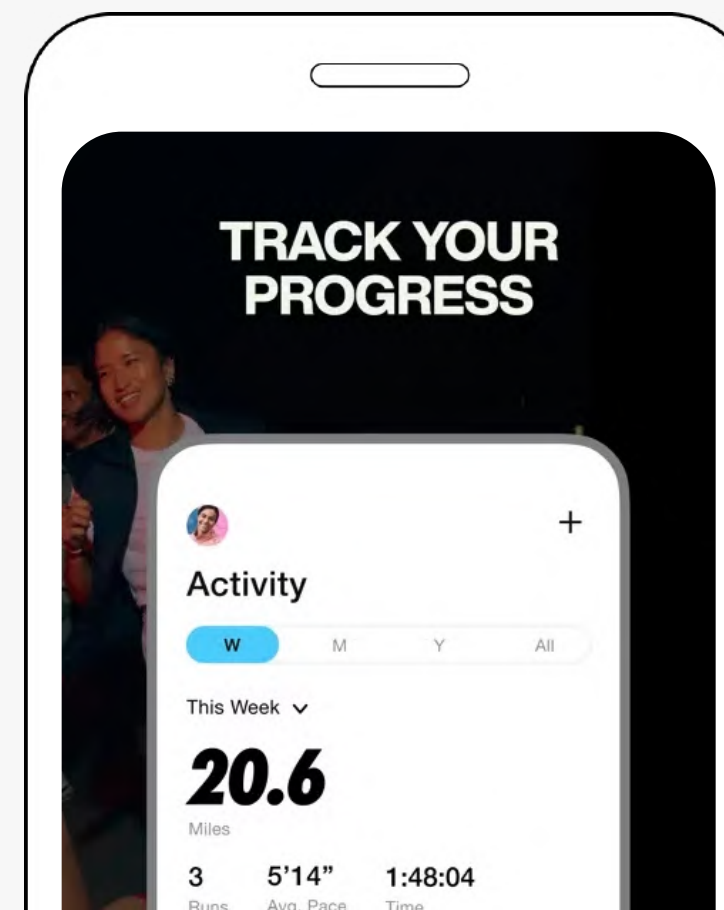
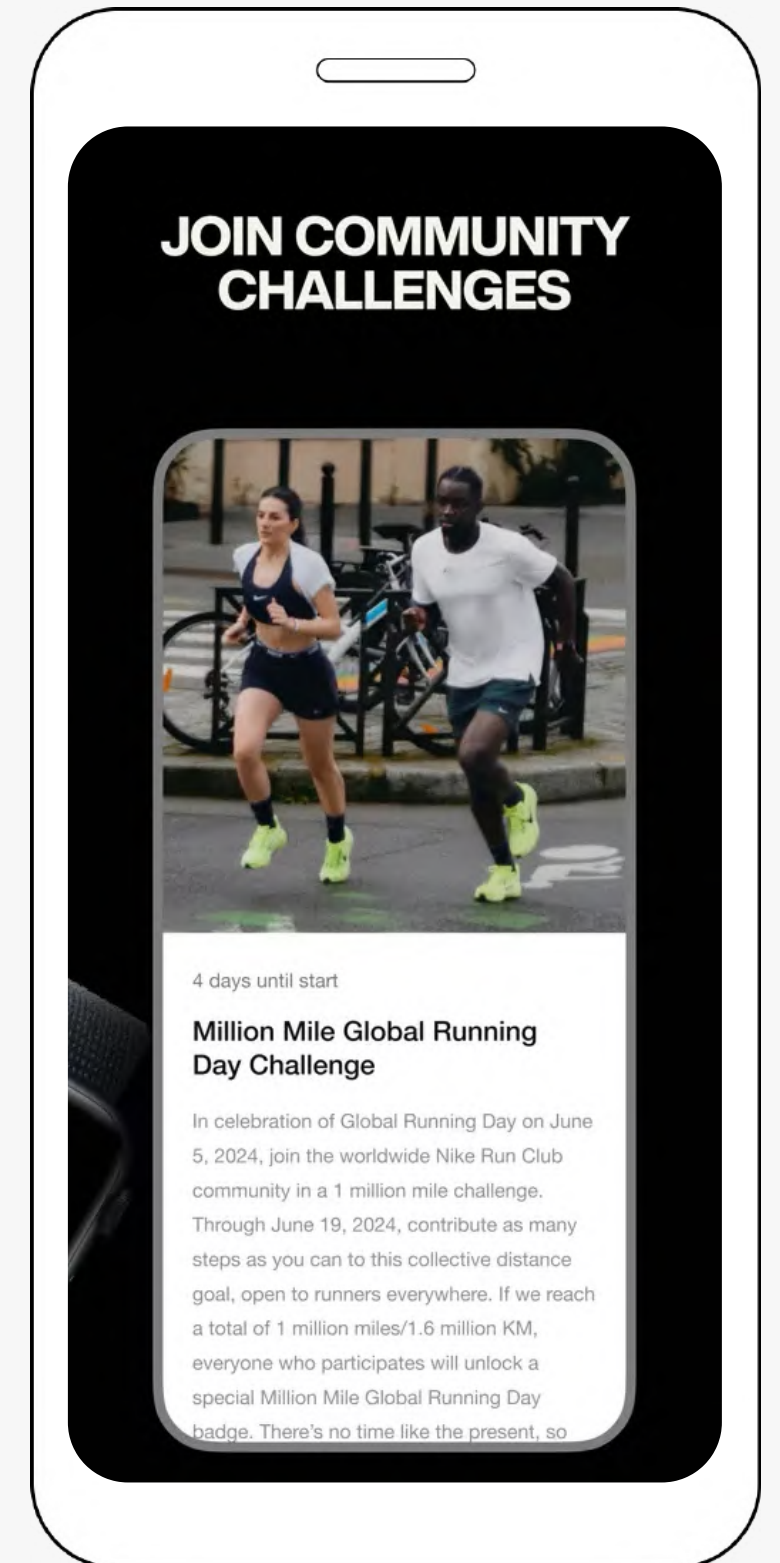
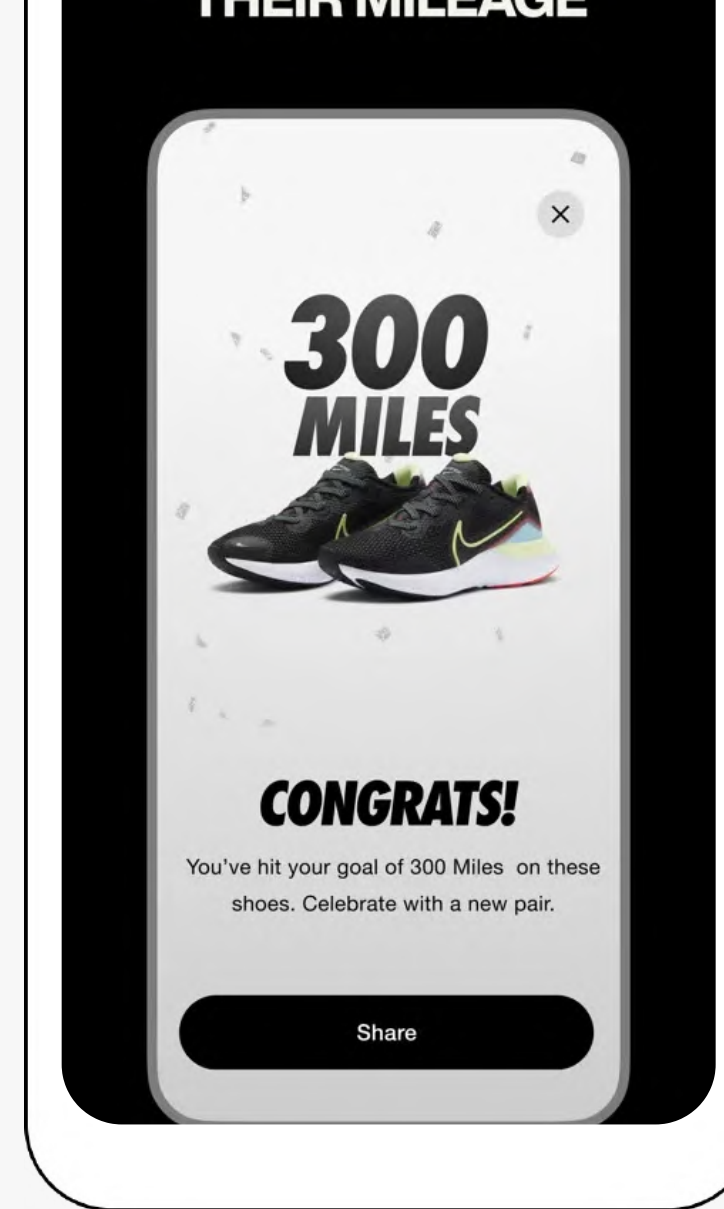
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**GAMIFICATION DIDN'T DISAPPEAR, IT EVOLVED.  
WHAT BEGAN AS POINTS AND BADGES IS NOW THE  
INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE OF MODERN BEHAVIOR.**

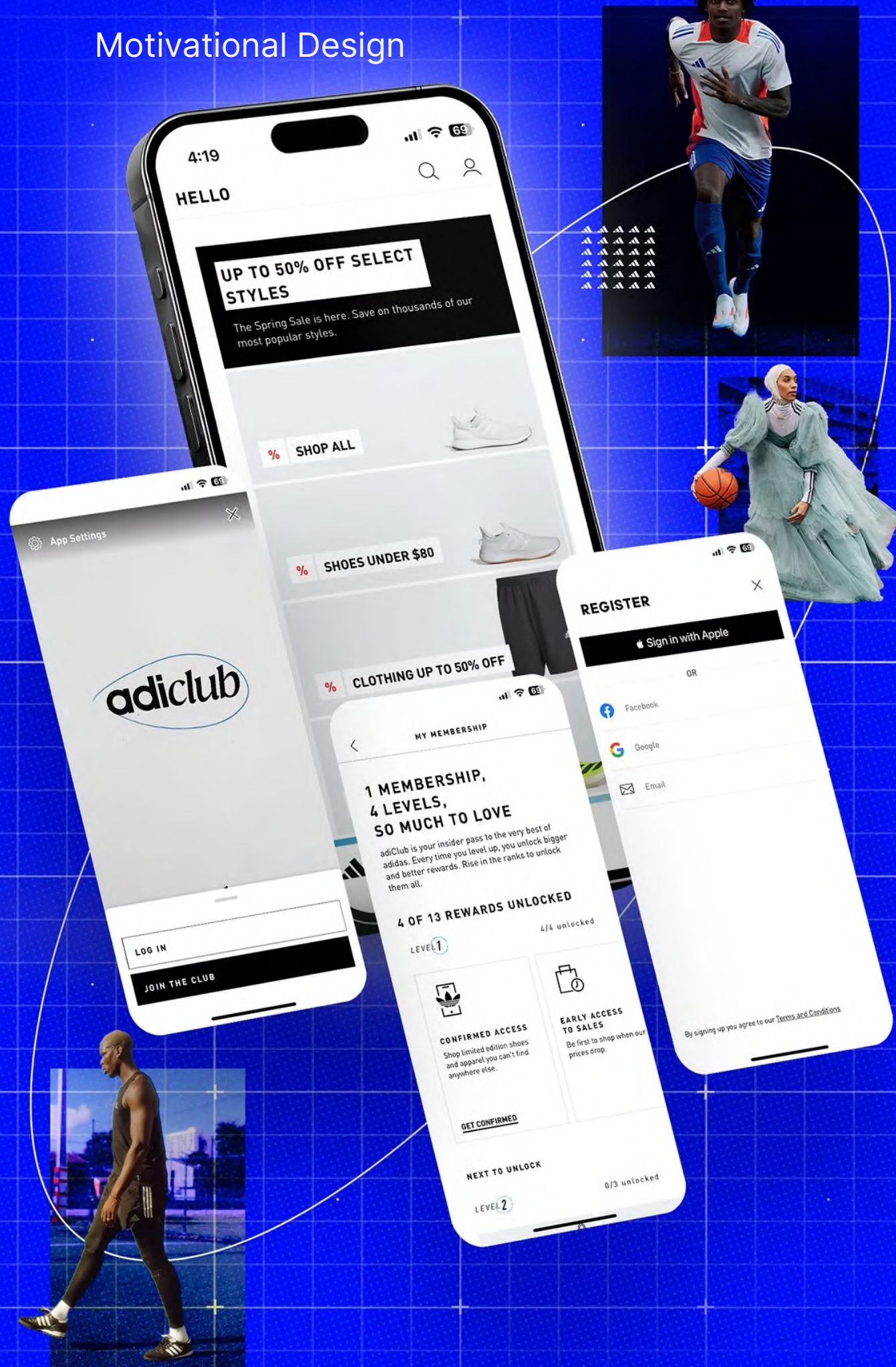
# EVERYDAY MOTIVATORS

Good design doesn't trap users, it inspires them to stay.



Motivational Design

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# STATUS BY DESIGN

**Identity becomes the new loyalty metric.**

The modern “reward” is identity itself. Consumers use brands, apps, and platforms as tools to **build, signal, and share who they are**. Motivational design harnesses this impulse to drive loyalty without coercion.

# GATEKEEPERS OF IDENTITY



**Beauty Insider Challenges (2)**

9 DAYS LEFT

BEAUTY INSIDER  
**+500**  
BONUS POINTS

**Passport to Beauty**  
Get the best of all worlds when you shop different product categories. Earn 100 points for each task and an additional 100 points for completing all four tasks. For all Beauty Insiders, including past participants. Ends 3/27/24.

**100** Earn an additional 100 points by completing all tasks

<p>Buy a Fragrance Product ▶</p> <p><b>100 pts</b></p>	<p>Buy a Hair Product ▶</p> <p><b>100 pts</b></p>	<p>Order with Online, Pi Store ▶</p> <p><b>100 pts</b></p>
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Home Shop Offers Alanna Community Stores

## How brands shape status and participation

Brands create systems of status that shape engagement, aspiration, and self-expression. Recognition carries social and cultural weight, rewarding participation and identity.

- Exclusivity that feels participatory
- Rewards with social or cultural significance
- Experiences that let consumers express identity



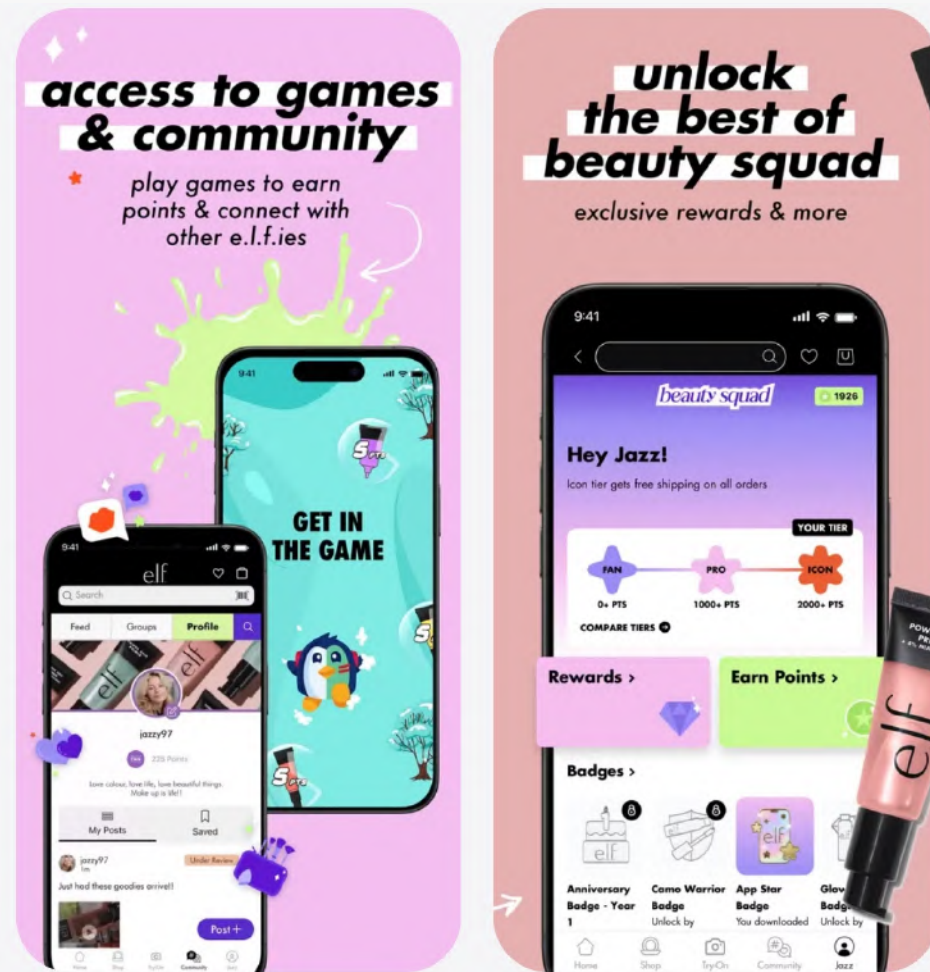
# THE MIRROR INTERNET

*The feed becomes your reflection.*

The next evolution of engagement goes beyond motivation, it responds to the person behind the screen. Digital experiences now anticipate your needs, moods, and context, shaping content, ads, and interactions in real time.

# SOCIAL PLAY

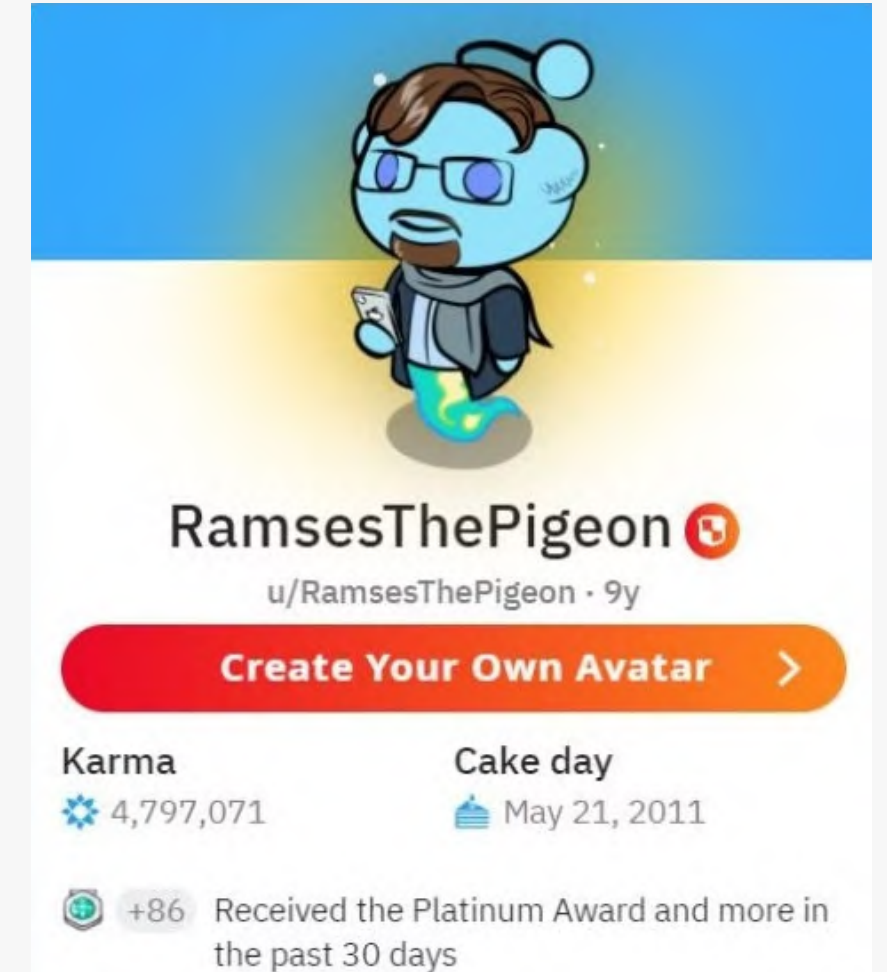
Brands are building social layers that empower consumers to:



**Join vibrant communities:**  
Groups foster belonging and shared purpose



**Collaborate & co-create:**  
Fans shape products or experiences

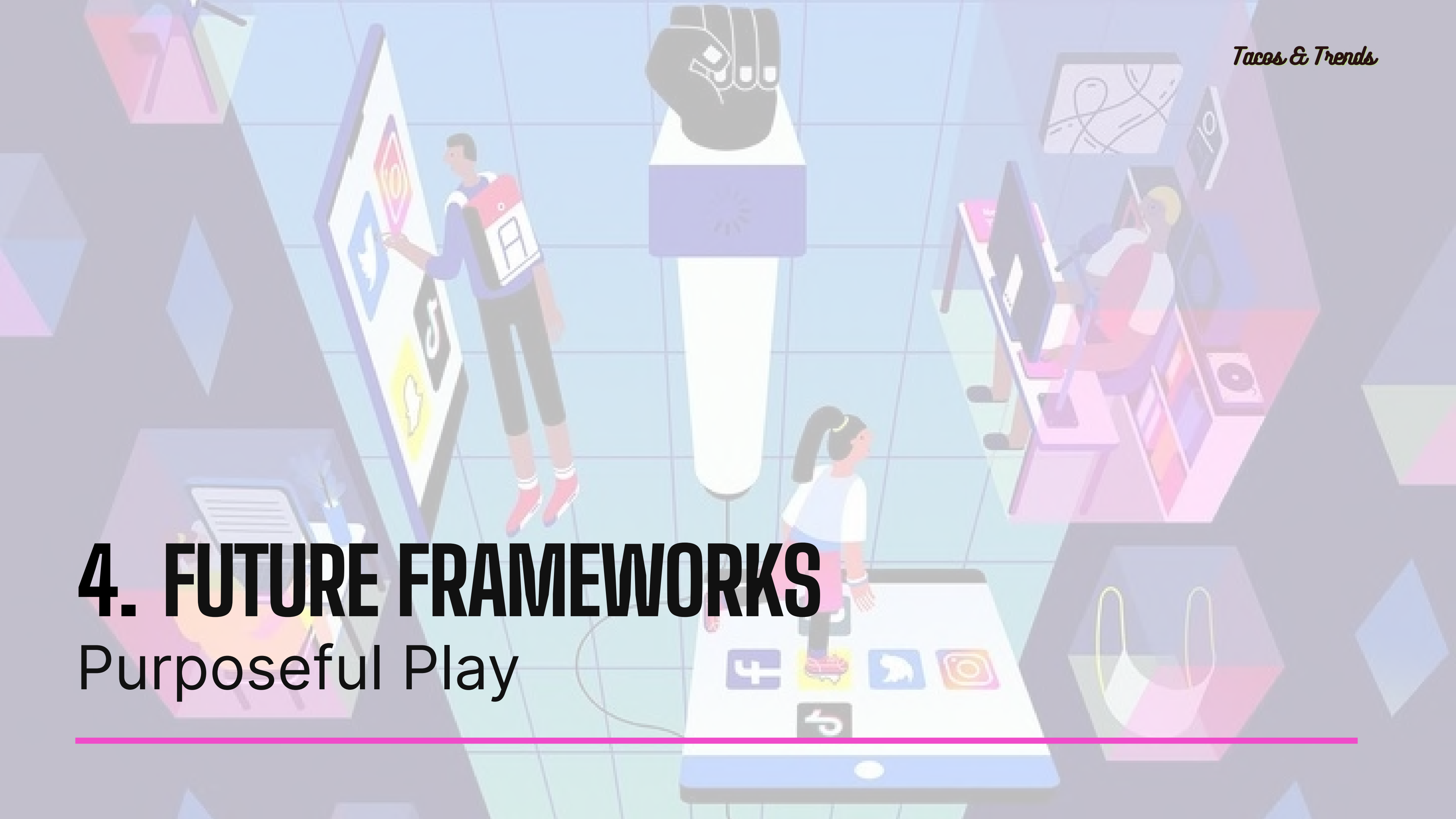


**Earn influence:**  
Recognition comes from meaningful contribution

# 4. FUTURE FRAMEWORKS

Purposeful Play

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# MARKET IMPACT

## Ecosystem Loyalty Over Brand Loyalty

- Consumers navigate digital and physical worlds seamlessly
- Brand loyalty now comes from engagement in gamified ecosystems.
- Key mechanics: AR filters, digital fashion, metaverse experiences, AI companions.



# DESIGN FOR DESIRE



## Gamify Experiences the Right Way

- Align experiences with goals and identity.
- **Use five keys to effective gamification:**  
Appealing, Engaging, Effortless,  
Uncheatable, Non-Embarrassing.
- Offer relevant rewards, social mechanics,  
visual progress tracking.

# EMOTION AS INTERFACE

## Accomplishment as loyalty

Modern consumer psychology is built on the emotions of play. People respond to progress, creativity, and community impact more than simple usefulness.



# HOW ENGAGEMENT BECOMES GROWTH

## **Captures Attention**

Interactive rewards and AR/VR cut through digital noise

## **Encourages Exploration**

Mechanics keep users curious and engaged longer

## **Incentivizes Action**

Rewards convert engagement into sign-ups, purchases, and referrals

## **Boosts Conversion**

Real-time feedback lifts sales and lowers acquisition costs

## **Raises Spend**

Achievement-based incentives encourage higher order values

## **Builds Loyalty**

Challenges, tiers, and ongoing engagement drive repeat visits



## THE FUTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

**Designing ecosystems that reward, motivate, and connect**

Consumers now expect experiences that align with their goals, identity, and social behavior. Thoughtful gamification makes interactions meaningful, rewarding, and habit-forming. By meeting these expectations, brands can turn everyday touchpoints into loyalty, participation, and growth.

# THANK YOU

To receive the full report or learn more about upcoming trend presentations, please contact: [autumn@madetrends.com](mailto:autumn@madetrends.com)

This presentation is part of our **5-part The Future in Motion series**. Follow us to stay up to date on the latest cultural and consumer shifts.

