

# GLOBAL BRAND LAB REPORT

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four



Our brand lab report is compiled by Four's team of retail and lifestyle experts and analyses some of the latest innovations, experimental campaigns and transformative developments, which are keeping iconic destinations, retail and lifestyle brands alive for consumers on a global scale. We also explore how consumer behaviour is changing - now and forever - and how brands are evolving to succeed during this evolutionary time.

*Images on this page and the cover are of Japan, our destination spotlight this month. See page 6 to find out more.*

# CONSUMER TRENDS, CAMPAIGNS & BRAND ACTIVITY

## BEAUTY FROM WITHIN, SPECSAVERS IN SPACE AND WINDOWS NOSTALGIA



The report identifies 4 key trends for 2024: menstrual health, raising energy, beauty from within and brain health.



The eyewear brand & optician has sent a pair of glasses into space after NASA astronauts lost sight of their tools.



The jumper takes inspiration from the iconic Windows XP background.



Quality Street has released a rap video starring John Barnes, which aims to encourage shoppers to recycle their paper sweet wrappers this Christmas.

# FASHION & LIFESTYLE

## L'ÉCOLE'S JEWELLERY CAMPUS, COP28 AND NET-A-PORTER MAKING HISTORY



### L'ÉCOLE shines in Dubai with new jewellery campus

Parisian institution L'ÉCOLE, School of Jewellery Arts, has expanded its global footprint with a permanent campus in Dubai Design District, marking its fourth establishment worldwide. With existing campuses in Paris, Hong Kong, and Shanghai, L'ÉCOLE's move into Dubai underscores its prominence in the global jewellery education scene. Situated in d3, a hub for creativity and innovation, the new campus reflects a modern design by Constance Guisset. Dubai's appeal to iconic brands aligns with L'ÉCOLE's commitment to providing a platform for creative minds to thrive globally.



### Fashion at COP28: not enough progress on climate action

Media have noted the distinct lack of substantial progress at COP28, the United Nations Climate Change conference held in Dubai. Despite a disappointing outcome for fossil fuel phase-out commitments, the fashion industry had a strong presence. Stella McCartney's "Stella's Sustainable Market" installation showcased innovative materials, emphasising the need for viable solutions. While some fashion companies set science-based targets aligned with the Paris Agreement, Maxine Bédard, founder of the New Standard Institute, notes a lack of real progress. At COP28, the sentiment echoed was that the fashion industry falls short in meeting climate commitments, calling for greater transparency to distinguish between greenwashing and genuine climate leaders.



### Abadia makes Saudi history on NET-A-PORTER

Luxury e-tailer NET-A-PORTER has welcomed Saudi brand Abadia, marking it as the first Kingdom-based label on the platform. Co-founded by Shahd Al-Shehail and her aunt Naeema Al-Shehail, Abadia strives to empower Saudi female artisans through the integration of traditional crafts like sadu and naqda in their designs. Using luxury deadstock material and end-of-roll remnant fabric, Abadia emphasises sustainable practices. The brand employs real leather only when its origin and processing are traceable. Since its debut at Paris Fashion Week in 2018, Abadia has garnered attention from notable figures like Jordan's Queen Rania and American singer-songwriter Alicia Keys.

# SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS

## AUTHENTICITY, PHOTO DUMPS AND BITESIZE CONTENT

### AI is on trend

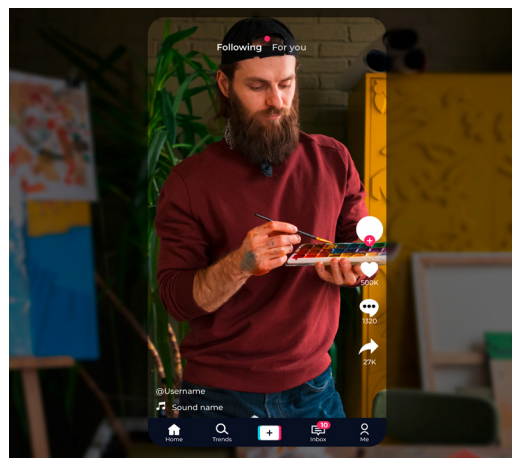
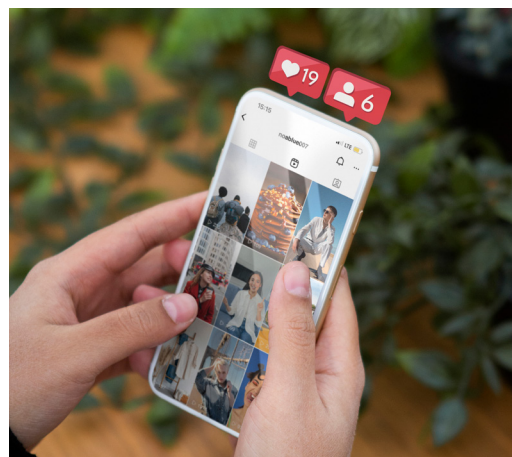
The AI Trend- AI forces brands to redefine authenticity. Interest was so high that from 2022 to 2023, topics on learning about AI increased by 550%, according to an analysis we conducted of over 15,500 news articles and blogs. Recently, TikTok school photo AI images have gone viral.

### Instagram photo dumps

Every Instagram social media post will become a grid dump. Photo dumps, formerly known as carousels, are now the only way to post on Instagram — and since TikTok introduced photo mode, they've taken off on that platform too. The multi-photo format allows creators and brands to tell longer stories, participate in photo-specific trends, and connect with their audience in a way that feels authentic and unfiltered.

### Bitesize content

Short-form and bite-sized content will dominate social platforms and continue to rise, given that 91% of businesses are already using videos as a marketing tool and **73% of people** prefer to watch a short video to learn more about a product or service.



# DESTINATION SPOTLIGHT

## JAPAN SHINES IN AIRBNB AND SKYSCANNER'S 2024 TREND REPORTS ON MOST SOUGHT-AFTER DESTINATIONS



As the world anticipates the arrival of 2024, **Airbnb** has highlighted Japan as a trending destination for 2024, with Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto ranking among the trending places. Paris gains heightened popularity in light of the upcoming 2024 Olympic Games, while Brazil, particularly Rio de Janeiro, captures attention for its vibrant Carnival celebrations.

Japan stands out as the fastest-growing destination, leading the list of countries and regions experiencing significant increases in searches from Q1–Q3 2023 to Q1–Q3 2024. Following Japan, the list includes Taiwan, Albania, Singapore, Finland, United Arab Emirates, Curaçao, Aruba, Thailand, and Guatemala.

**Skyscanner**, supplements these findings by identifying three Japanese cities as top trending destinations for 2024. Sapporo, celebrated for its exquisite seafood, annual snow festival, and proximity to premier ski resorts. Osaka, renowned for its street food, shopping, and its upcoming role as the host city for the 2025 World Expo. Last but not least is Tokyo, offering everything one could imagine from traditional temples, to some of the best spots for enjoying the beauty of cherry blossoms in the spring and red autumn leaves, to neon illuminations and high technology.

# INFLUENCERS & KOLS

## ONES TO WATCH



### 400K TikTok Followers

Dubbed as the UK's Emily Mariko, Maddi is the newest internet sensation to grace the London foodie world. Her series - 'carbs before a night out' - has become a regular on the TikTok timeline, and Maddi is a firm go-to for London food recommendations, particularly local bakeries, Korean fusion dinners and homemade pickle ventures.



### 24.5K Instagram Followers

Reanne has hit the London travel scene hard with her series of viral reels, documenting the best highlights and hotspots the city has to offer. Alongside social media and marketing work for John Lewis, Reanne makes the most of her time off curating short and snappy reels of London life which include several Christmas 'things to do' that have garnered over 380,000 likes.



### 35.1K Instagram Followers

It's all about cosiness this winter season, and Petite Elise is the wellness influencer we're all looking toward for that warm, wellness aesthetic. Her 'days in the life' reels and dinner party inspo are a source of comfort for her 35,000+ followers who look to recreate her table spreads and neutral-toned outfits.

# ARTS & CULTURE

## GENERATIVE AI AND POP CULTURE PHENOMENA

### Midjourney

Midjourney represents an impressive stride in generative AI, transforming natural language prompts into vivid images. Among its peers like DALL-E and Stable Diffusion, Midjourney has swiftly ascended to the upper echelons of AI innovation despite being self-funded and shrouded in closed-source operations, leaving the inner workings somewhat enigmatic.



### Pop Culture & PR

In marrying PR and pop culture, brands can tap into the emotional connections and social conversations generated by pop culture phenomena. By leveraging cultural trends effectively, PR professionals can craft campaigns that garner heightened attention and establish meaningful connections with their clients' desired audience.



### Top examples from 2023:

**McDonald's** shakes loose for Grimace's birthday - Honoring PlayPlace birthday memories with a multi-platform campaign featuring ads, an 8-bit game, merchandise, Snapchat AR, and a birthday wish text hotline.



**Mattel** says, 'Hi, Barbie!' - Barbie dominated this year, teaming up with brands like Bumble for character matching and going viral with a selfie generator that drew 13 million users. The widespread success marked a win for both Barbie and its partner marketers.



**Dunkin'** builds brand with Ben Affleck, Ice Spice - Dunkin' successfully tapped into Boston-native Ben Affleck's meme-worthy love for the local breakfast spot, showcasing authenticity and humor. Expanding its approach, Dunkin' then leveraged Affleck's connection with Matt Damon, from their shared production house Artists Equity. To reach a younger audience, the brand collaborated with rapper Ice Spice to create and promote a limited-time drink blending Pumpkin Munchkins with Frozen Coffee, a move described by CMO Jill McVicar Nelson as operating at "the speed of pop culture."



# CONSUMER FINANCIAL PLANNING TRENDS

## INTEREST RATES, CHANGING VALUES AND THE QUEST FOR CALM



### Interest rates expected to curb UK household incomes in 2024

Gucci is rewarding owners of its NFT, *Gucci Vault Material*, with exclusive physical items not available for general purchase. This is a fresh approach in the NFT strategy of premium brands, aimed at fostering interest in a private community of token holders. It suggests that we can expect to see play-to-earn or engage-to-earn models a lot more in the future, which bridges the digital divide and rewards customers with a physical product.

### More than money – consumers are reassessing what matters to them

2024 will see consumers' perception of value shift. Mintel's 2024 Global Consumer Trends report identifies sustainability, convenience, heritage and flexible payment as factors consumers are directly trying to value, beyond prices themselves.

### What goes up must go down – pent-up pandemic savings reach their end

Forbes forecast that consumers will be on a quest for calm in the year ahead. Spending, largely funded by pandemic savings, has remained high since 2022 but is likely to settle. In a year where 2 billion people are expected to vote, consumers are expected to avoid uncertainty, tighten purse strings and exercise financial awareness.

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

## GEN AI IS ON THE HORIZON IN 2024

### AI legislation, ethical AI and augmented working

Leading nations, including China, the EU, the U.S. and India, are diligently sculpting comprehensive AI policies and global collaboration on AI benchmarks and norms could soon materialise.

Experts foresee a blossoming interest in AI ethics education and a heightened prioritisation of ethical considerations within AI research and development realms.

As remote work and online education surge, AI stands poised to revolutionise tailored curriculum designs and optimise virtual team dynamics. 2024 heralds a symbiosis of human aptitude and AI prowess, amplifying both productivity and excellence.

### Marketing executions

AI and machine learning will play a significant role in data optimisation and audience segmentation in the digital media industry. They can enable predictive audiences based on first-party data, as well as more efficient campaign planning and optimisation.

### Gen AI

AI will continue to enhance the way we work, increasing the need to develop new data science skills at a breakneck speed. Gen AI will also cut down go-to-market time for enterprises, which calls for agile leadership and ongoing change management capabilities.



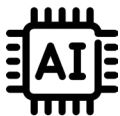
# RISING TRENDS FOR 2024

## SELECTION OF TRENDS



As the year come to a close, we look ahead at some rising trends for 2024:

- 1. Smart tech solutions** – Recent developments in AI being incorporated into product offerings have attracted interest as well as raising some concerns.
- 2. Future green shopper** – Fashion rental is on the rise as shoppers become more conscious of their environmental footprint.
- 3. Financial Concerns: struggling squeezer vs. cautious spender** – Regardless of the consumer segment, they all navigate the economic uncertainty by monitoring both what they purchase and where they allocate their funds.



**52%** of UK consumers agree that AI will make them value things that are created by humans more



UK rental apparel market is forecast to be worth **£142m** by the end of 2023, with growth of **62%**



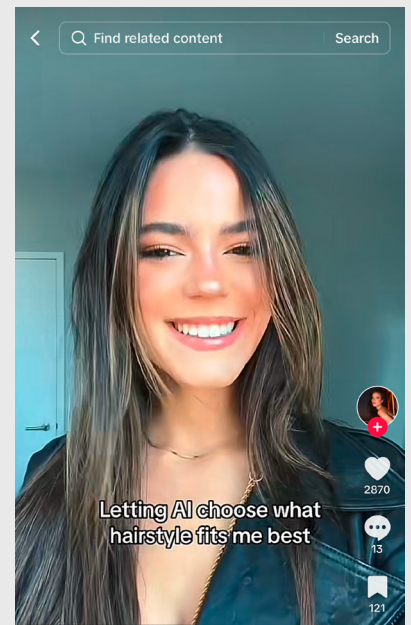
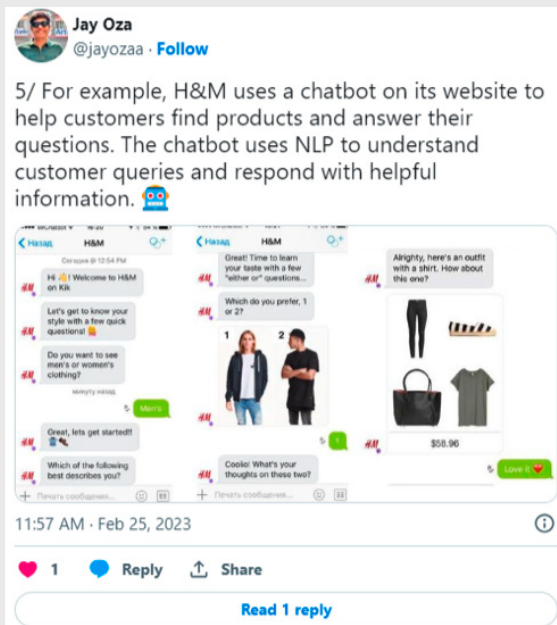
Around **3 in 4** UK adults reported feeling very or somewhat worried about the rising costs of living

# SMART TECH SOLUTIONS

## GEN AI IS ON THE HORIZON IN 2024

Entering into a world increasingly dominated by algorithms, brands have the opportunity to formulate predictions and offer personalised products; however, they also need to bring human skills and emotions in to make the most out of this technological revolution.

Brands leverage AI to help customers find clothing and accessories based on their preferences



People worrying / complaining about the lack of human touch in AI

We don't have to accept AI as progress. At some point we have to say no. Particularly to fashion brands using diversity as the reason why they need AI models. It's bullshit.

We need to talk more about how easy it is to abuse the report system because it's runned by AI. People will be out here getting their accounts banned for nothing and the devs just ignore the problem.

The few problem in image-generating AI now are :

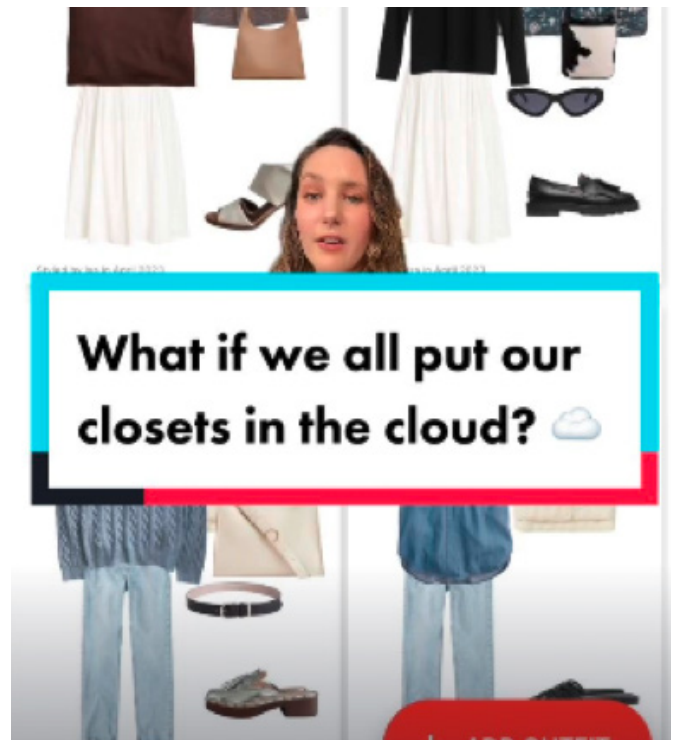
1. No copyright law
2. It still needs human retouch but many people ignore that

THX for this share, Alex! 🙌 I am sure that automated customer service ultimately harms or destroys brands. It already happens without AI, only with automation via forms & supporting processes. Best example for me: Microsoft. As a customer, I'm just angry & disappointed.




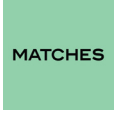


# FUTURE GREEN SHOPPER

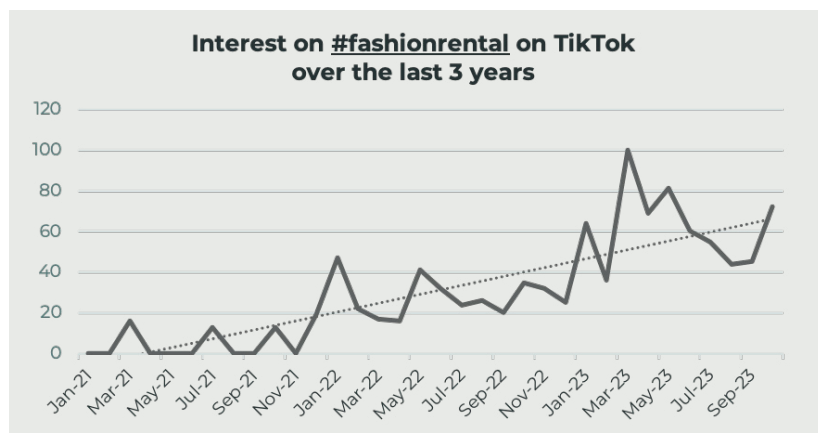
## THE SUSTAINABLE SHOPPING MOVEMENT

Having sustainability in their minds, shoppers who do not want to give up on fashion are searching for new ways to wear and buy on-trend clothes. Models of borrowing or buying second hand are becoming more popular.



### Top affinities

		
By Rotation	Skin and Me	Arket
		
Matches Fashion	TK Maxx	Selfridges

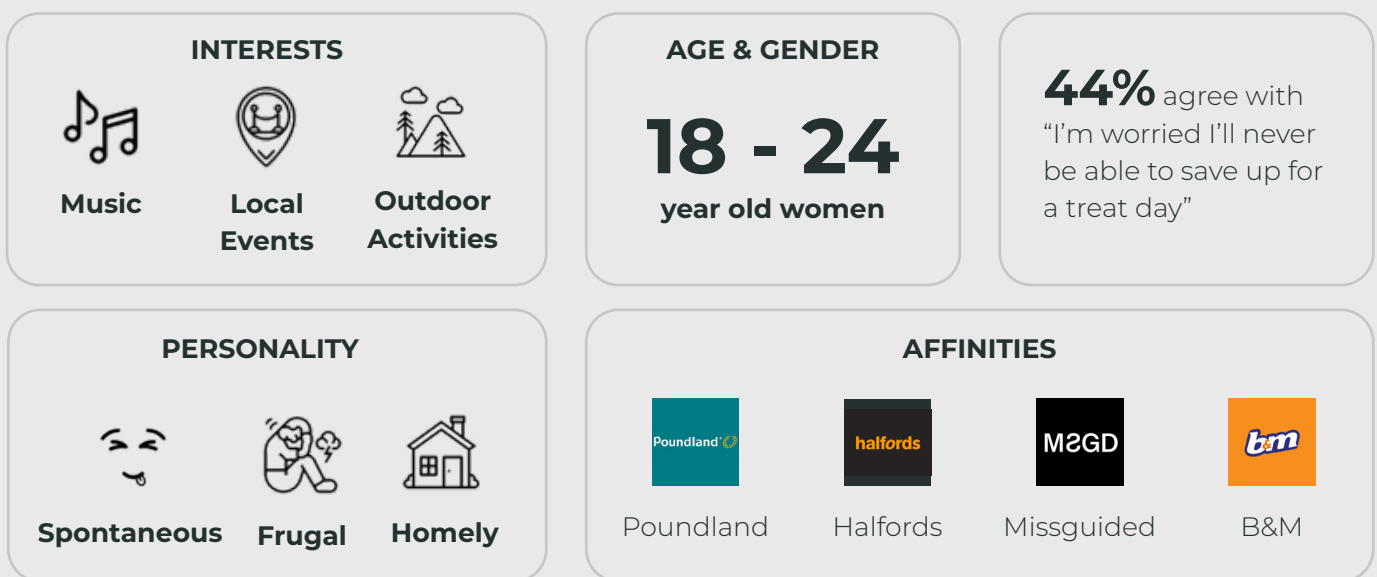


# FINANCIAL CONCERNS

## CURRENT ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY IS DOMINATING CONSUMERS' MINDS.

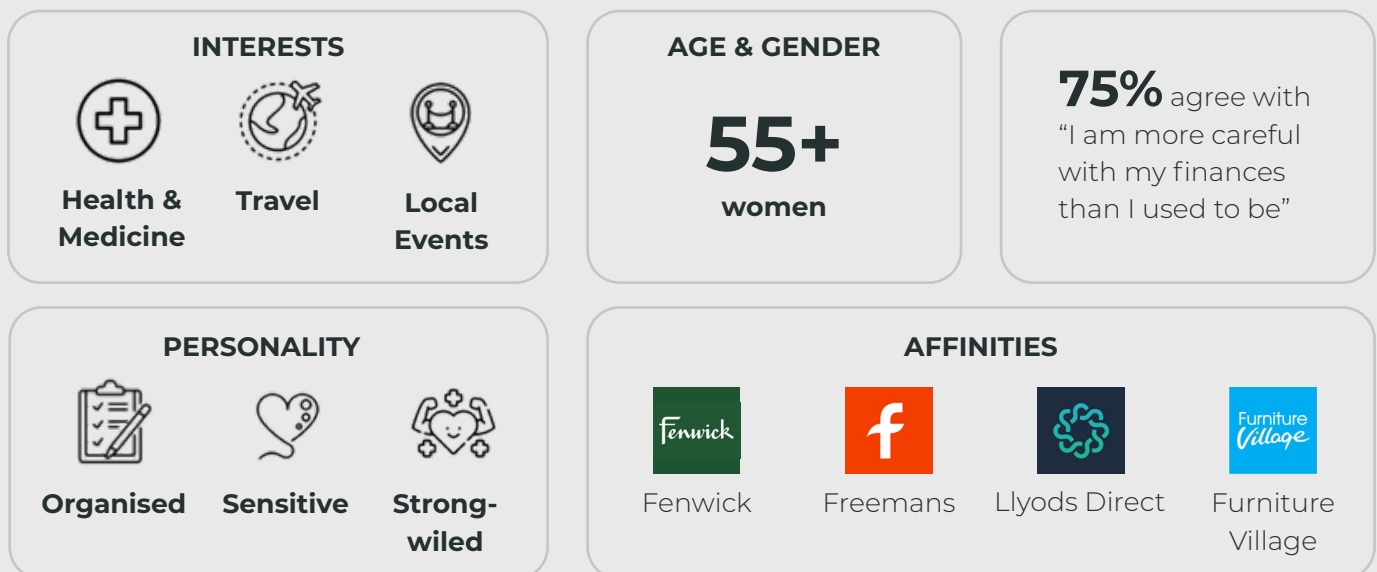
### Struggling squeezer

Consumers are reassessing their goals and priorities, affecting not only what they want and need from the things they buy, but also their perception of what constitutes value...



### Cautious spender

...even people who are more financially comfortable are watching what they spend.



Source: YouGov. Sampling: Acorn category – Comfortable communities vs. Financially stretched.\*2.7 million population size. \*\*15.2 million population size.



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