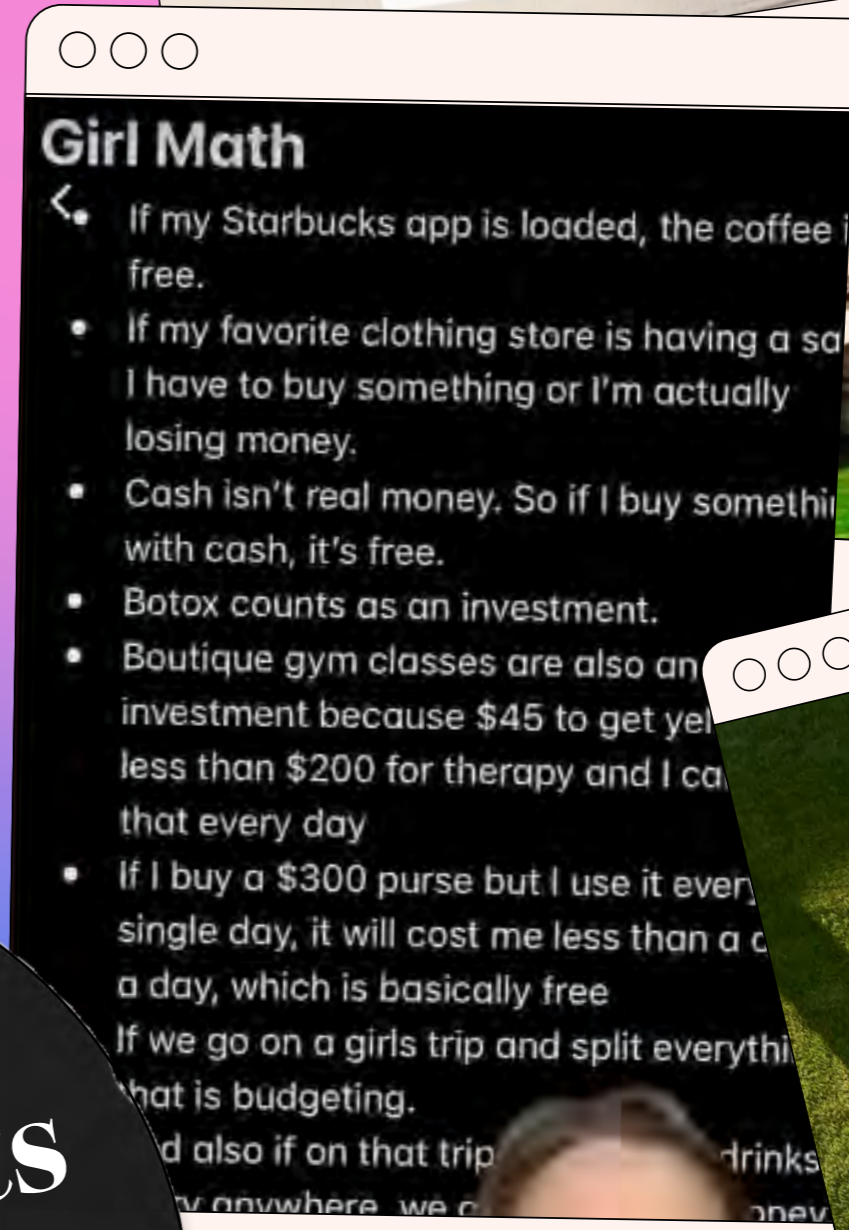


Best insights of 2023

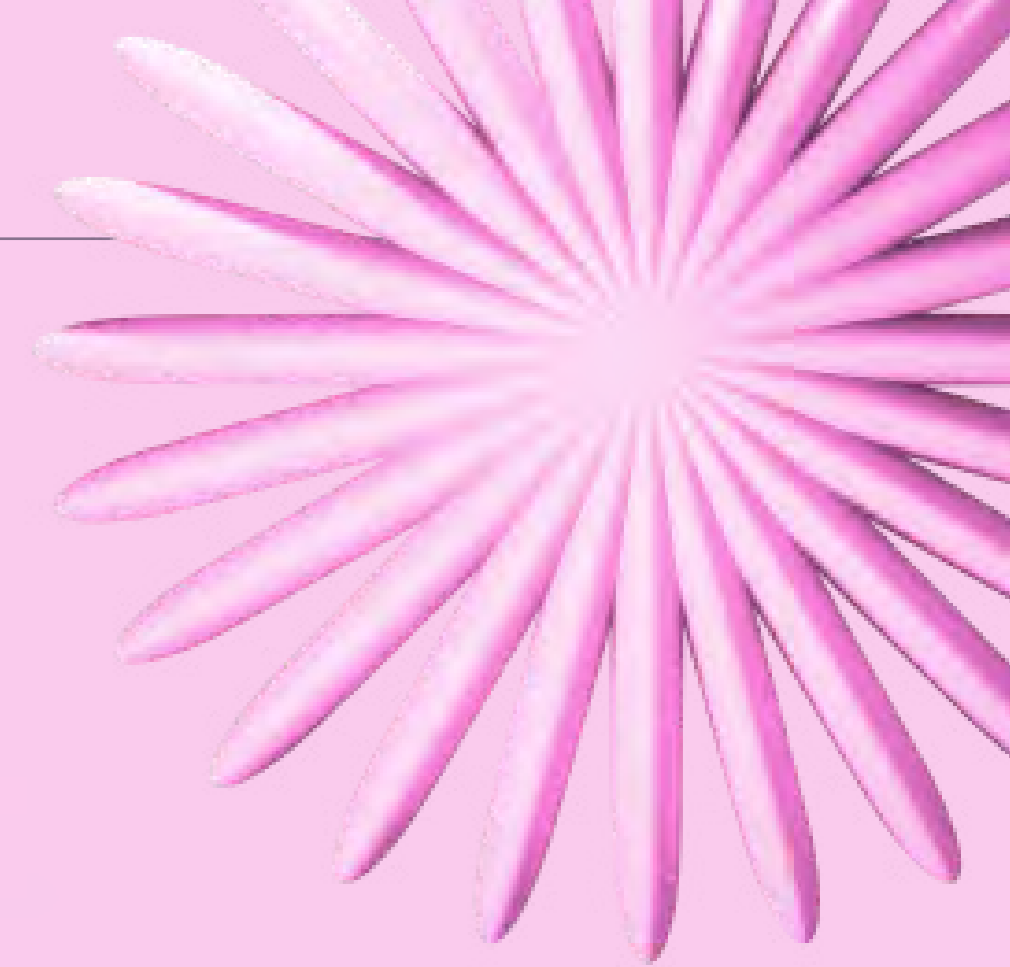
CANVAS8

Keeping Tabs 100



100 insights
that shaped
culture this year

Introduction



Schiaparelli lion heads, sexy Napoleon, Girl everything, kidults, stealth wealth, stealth wealth backlash, bedbugs... it's hard to categorise 2023 as a coherent year, generating as it did more questions than it answered. What's up with 'eat the rich' content? Why is Gen Agitation battling algorithmic anxiety? And what's the deal with peak parasocial behaviours moving from online to offline? Swifties, you out there?

2023 has certainly made people feel existential, with AI radically and rapidly re-orientating people's perception of their role in the world and what the future holds. Relentless heat waves served as an uncomfortable reminder of the unfolding climate crisis, and inflationary pressures continued.

We know that people are resilient and adaptable; 2023 has stretched behavioural versatility to the max and generated new frameworks for responding to deepening pluralities of stress, fear, and frustration. These challenges have seen people seek out reflections of the surreal and absurd in culture and their wider environment.

Canvas8 tracks behavioural insights and cultural shifts daily. On the Library and Keeping TABS, our team of analysts and editors monitor, analyse, and explain audience behaviours that generate over 80 unique insights every week. Each month, we look back on our bank of active insights and identify ten stand-out examples of behavioural change. It's called Keeping10. Coming to the end of what can be understatedly categorised as an unpredictable and unsteady year, Canvas8's editors have mined through our Library of signals, case studies, reports, Sector Behaviours, and Macro Behaviours, as well as our blog – Keeping TABS – to pull out the behaviours and key moments that defined 2023.

While there were hundreds of great options to choose from, we've narrowed it down to the instances where we saw an escalation or repetition of behaviour across content formats, representing the shifting nature and mainstreaming of a theme beyond its sector, generation, or market. Once we had defined the behaviour, we chose our favourite content examples that dig into each theme. For every insight you see here, there's lots more coverage on the Canvas8 Library.

The result? Keeping100: our bumper, end-of-year insight review.



India Doyle
Editorial director



J'Nae Phillips
Insights editor



15%

of British Gen Xers strongly agree that they actively look for new retail experiences

Canvas8, 2023

THEME 01

Infinite Niche

In 2023, cultural gatekeepers have totally shifted. As niche knowledge becomes the norm, insider clout is getting more specific even as the culture becomes more shareable and open.

Related macro: **Inside Track**

Edible Euphoria

How we've tracked this across the year...

In 2023, hype culture spread to food and beverages, transforming how people approach eating and drinking. With food as a central tenet of cultural credibility, insider eats and one-of-a-kind treats have become status symbols that offer moments of permissible pleasure – and the thrill of being more clued in than the rest of the crowd.



FEB 2023

01

Prime: influencer-led energy drinks for Gen Z hypebeasts

MAY 2023

03

Resy's 'Reservationships' celebrate foodie hype culture

OCT 2023

05

Doritos releases divisive coriander flavour

APR 2023

02

Caffs not Cafes: celebrating the humble greasy spoon

JUN 2023

04

Erewhon smoothies become Gen Z status symbol

Open Secrets

How we've tracked this across the year...

New age drop culture rejects the traditional standards of gatekeeping but still thrives on secrets and insider knowledge. As traditional subcultures are diluted and original forms of counterculture dissipate, people are looking for deeper ways to connect with the products and people they admire. This is gamifying insider status – everyone is invited to play, but the rules are more covert than ever.



MAR 2023

06

Corteiz: community-led streetwear for Gen Z hypebeasts

JUL 2023

08

Barbie: generating hype in popular culture

OCT 2023

10

Crocs x Aespa launch exclusive clogs for K-Pop fans

APR 2023

07

LL Bean x BEAMS collab appeals to clout-seeking Gen Zers

AUG 2023

09

Gen Z's Sandy Liang x Baggu dupes rethink drop culture



Just
22%
of US Gen Zers say they
are 'very confident' about
the economy in the future
Canvas8, 2023

THEME 02

Absolute Overwhelm

2023 saw compounding pressures across markets. With stress and anxiety rising, we've seen people push sensory experiences to maximalist and minimalist extremes.

Related macro: **Soft Touch**

Deep Immersion

How we've tracked this across the year...

One form of stress release through 2023 has been increased engagement with immersive experiences that allow people to be rooted in the moment. As desires for tactility grow and audience attention remains a challenge, experiences that tap into multiple sensorial avenues are resonating with those looking for major moments to help them switch off.



MAR 2023

11

Opera is brought into the 21st century in Tokyo

AUG 2023

13

The rise of LitRPG merges reading and board games

OCT 2023

15

TERSA elevates mindfulness with multisensorial sound pod

MAR 2023

12

Forest bathing improves access to menopause treatment

SEP 2023

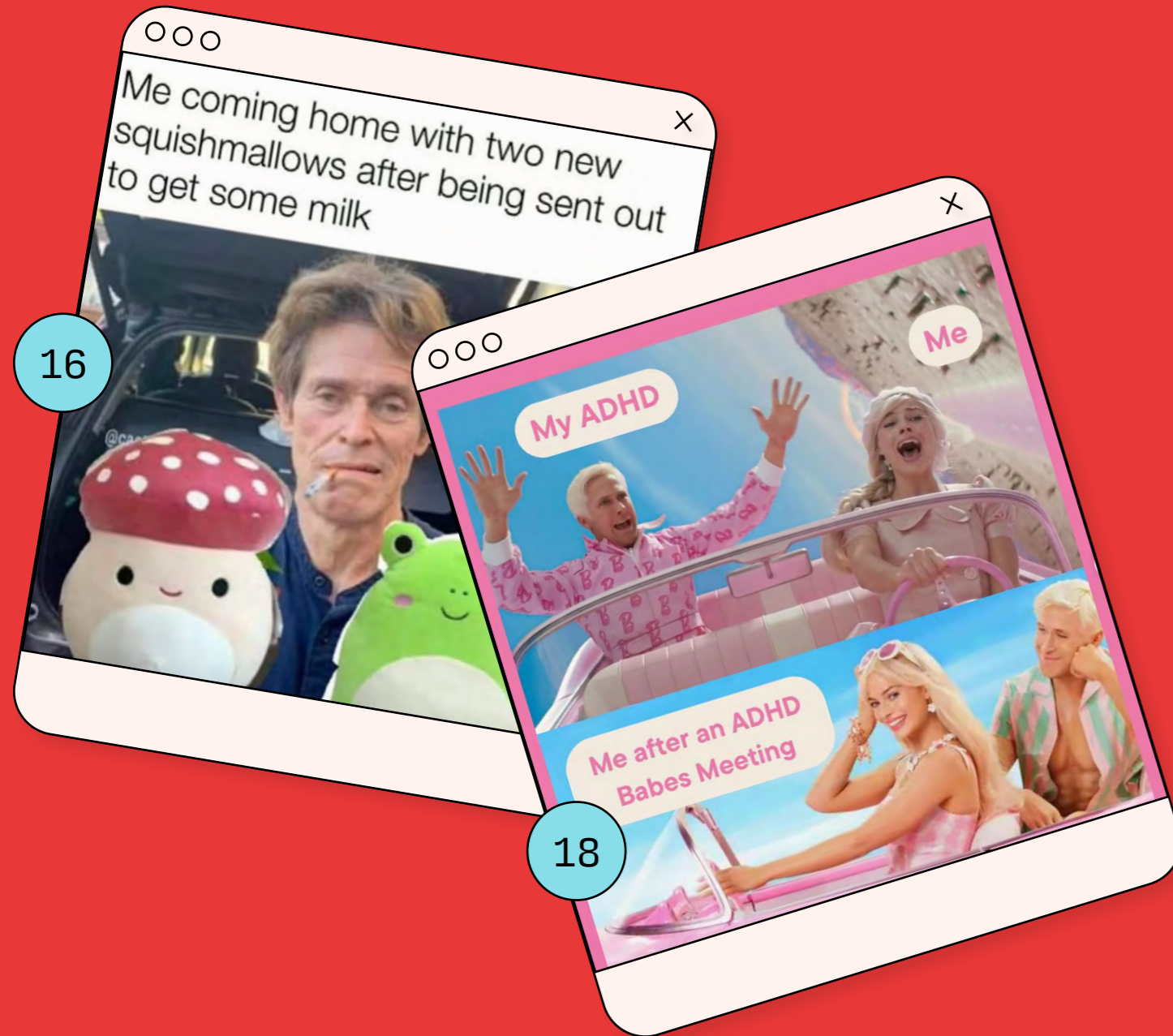
14

Chanel targets sensorial shoppers with Brooklyn diner

Sensorial Subtlety

How we've tracked this across the year...

People's demand for personalisation has informed experiences of retail, entertainment, and product design in 2023. This has been particularly noticeable regarding neurodiversity innovation, as businesses have levelled up their offerings to help people with diverse needs navigate the mainstream with greater ease.



FEB 2023

16

Squishmallows: soft sensory toys for all ages

MAY 2023

18

ADHD Girls: empowering neurodivergent women

OCT 2023

20

Niura's earbuds monitor brain for proactive support

FEB 2023

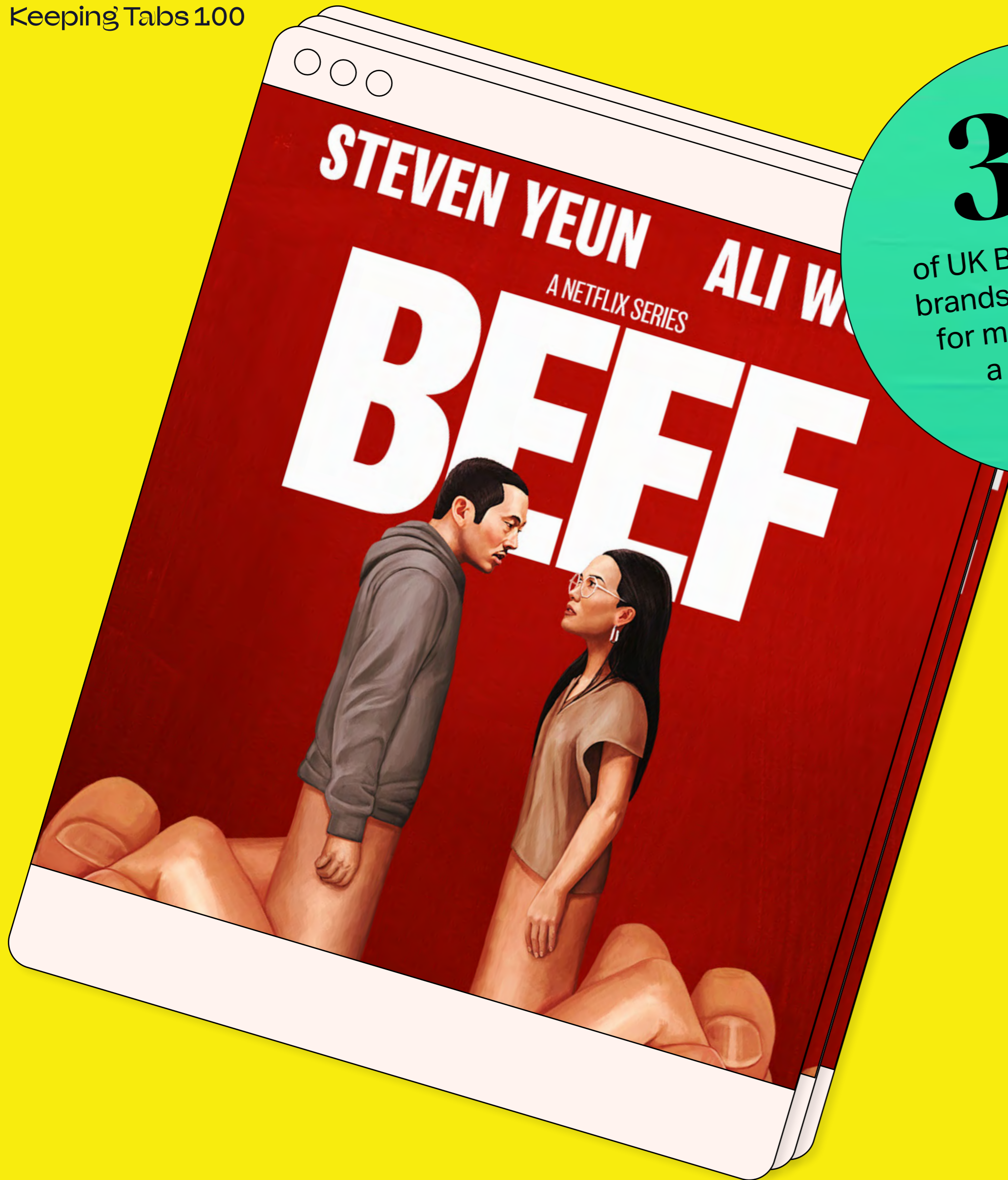
17

Currys 'Quiet Hour' supports neurodiverse shoppers

JUN 2023

19

Singapore malls launch spaces for sensory-safe shopping



33%

of UK Boomers believe brands are responsible for making the world a better place

Canvas8, 2023

THEME 03

Fury Road

With uncertainty deeply permeating lived experiences, people are processing their anger at the status quo in more extreme and novel ways.

Related macro: **Assertive Audiences**

Rage Rave

How we've tracked this across the year...

A state of global instability, uncertainty, and unpredictability is giving rise to heightened emotional states. As people process the complex crises they find themselves in, novel means of expressing anger are emerging – signposting opportunities for release that directly acknowledge rage.



MAY 2023

21

Does rage sell in 2023?

AUG 2023

23

Barbenheimer cinema chaos reflects permacrisis anxieties

SEP 2023

25

Study finds anger is what drives climate change action

JUN 2023

22

Reddit users demonstrate the power of online community

AUG 2023

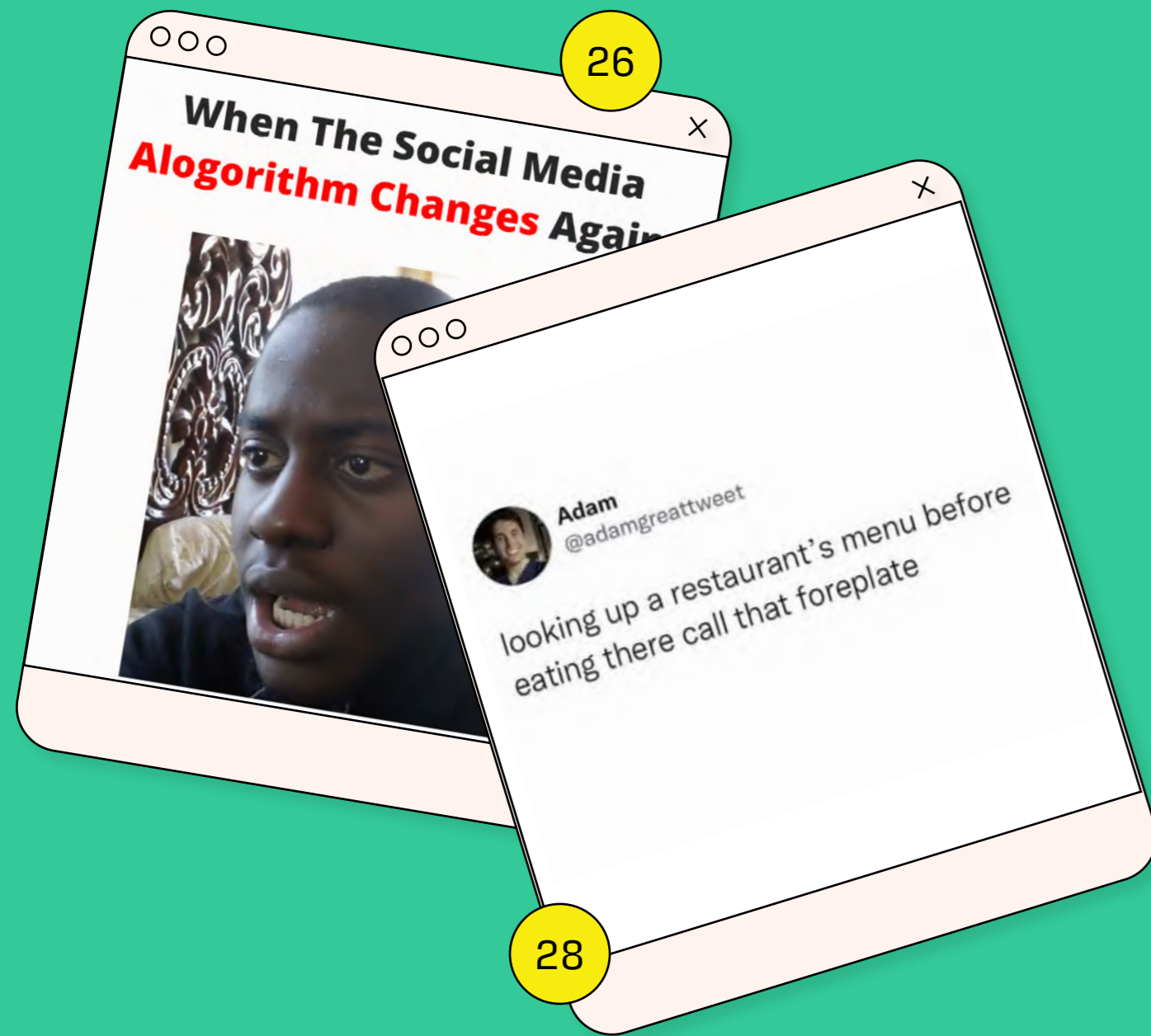
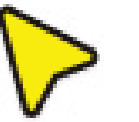
24

Grief raves offer collective catharsis through dance

Gen Agitation

How we've tracked this across the year...

In 2023, feelings of overwhelm have collided with increasing stress triggers, leading people to seek out micro-moments that help them deal with the chaos of the outside world. As society becomes more agitated, deepening personalisation and made-for-you experiences have emerged as helpful solutions.



JAN 2023

26

Why we're entering a new era of algorithmic anxiety

JUL 2023

28

Younger diners struck by 'menu anxiety' when eating out

AUG 2023

30

Calm x Disney aims to tackle anxiety among Gen Alphas

FEB 2023

27

Chani Nicholas: processing chaos through modern astrology

AUG 2023

29

Apple Pay campaign targets people's security anxiety



22%
of Gen Zers, **34%** of Yers, and **27%** of Xers in the UK 'strongly agree' they like to reminisce about the good times past
Canvas8, 2023

THEME 04

Purer Pleasure

Digital fatigue is leading people to search for screen-free hobbies that are tactile and support IRL bonding.

Related macro: **Ultra Cosy**

Hands-on-Fun

How we've tracked this across the year...

Tactile pastimes reflect a desire for interactive and touch-centric activities, offering more engaging and tangible screen-free experiences. As people seek community connection, a low-key approach to relaxing and unwinding is enabling many to exit solitary online environments and forge fresh IRL bonds.



MAY 2023

31

Why has pottery become a wholesome Gen Z hobby?

JUL 2023

33

How is urban fishing connecting youth with the outdoors?

OCT 2023

35

Are hobbies becoming extinct?

JUL 2023

32

What's fueling America's bookstore boom?

AUG 2023

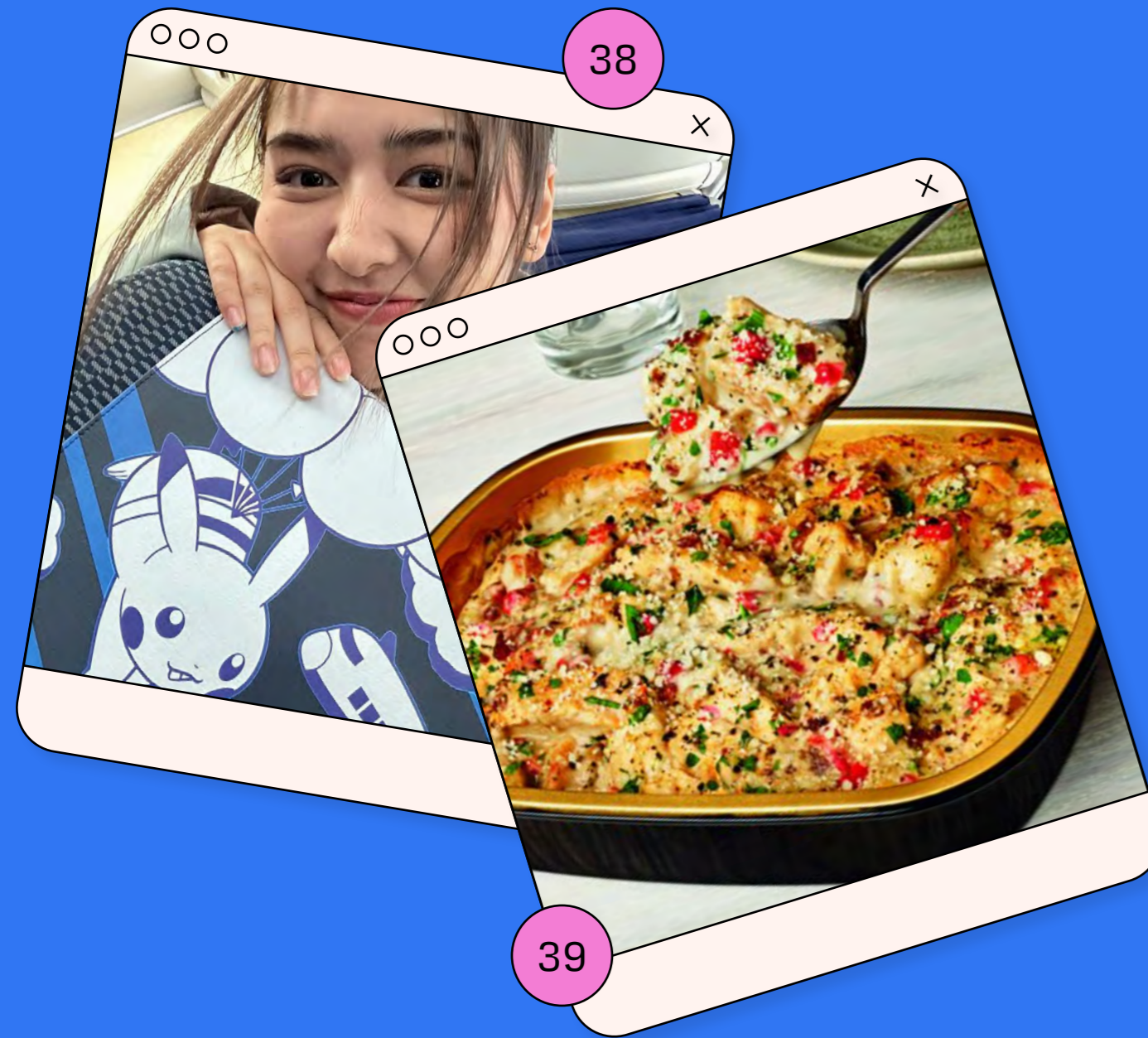
34

Boys who sew are rewriting gendered crafty hobbies

Past Lives

How we've tracked this across the year...

The cost of living crisis has driven a surge in basic forms of comfort as people rely on tried and tested coping methods to manage their anxieties. With desires for entertainment based on the familiar, people have continued to hack the past to support them in the present.



JAN 2023

36

Basic Comfort

MAR 2023

38

Pikachu Jet brings nostalgic comfort to air travel

NOV 2023

40

Nostalgic Netizens

JAN 2023

37

UGG x MadHappy boots foreground self-care and comfort

MAY 2023

39

Kraft Heinz frozen dinners offer comfort and indulgence



57%

of US Gen Yers say they always have access to the latest, most innovative tech and often get tech before others have even heard of it

Canvas8, 2023

THEME 05

Custom Care

People have taken wellness into their own hands, building clout around rituals, practices, and routines that push established narratives further.

Related macro: **Being+**

Meta Goop

How we've tracked this across the year...

People have been embracing weirder and more niche forms of self-care as a way of flexing their curiosity around wellbeing practices. The wellness-obsessed pushed it further this year, geeking out on life hacks, personalisation, and new treatments that set their self-care practices apart from the rest – even if they're not scientifically backed.



FEB 2023

41

Goop's London closure signifies a change in wellness

JUN 2023

43

Nike boosts holistic wellness with Well Collective

SEP 2023

45

WeGLOW: body neutral at-home fitness for women

MAY 2023

42

Consumerhaus: a digital wellness marketplace for Gen Z

JUL 2023

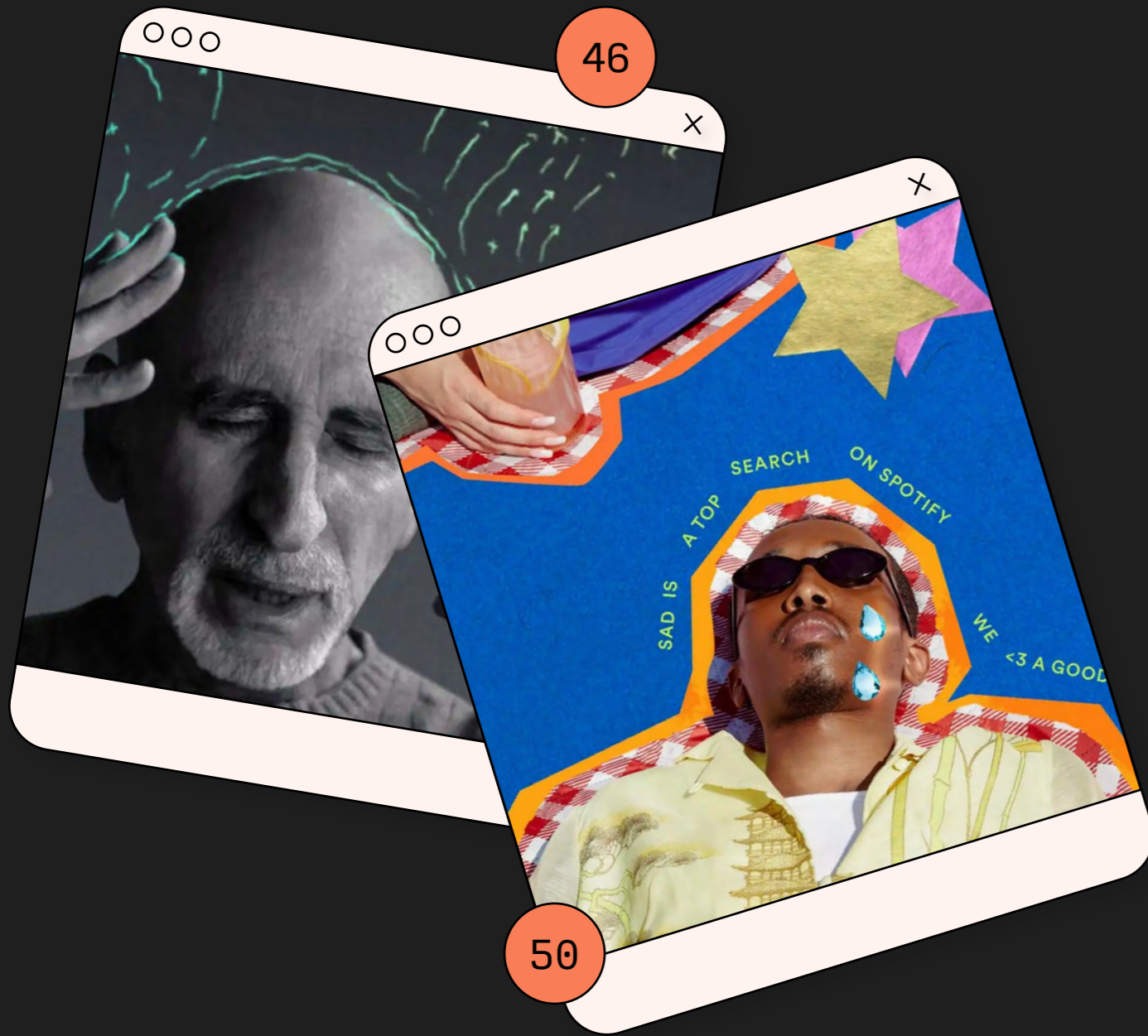
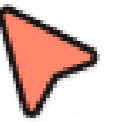
44

Erewhon: wellness utopia with cult appeal

Therapy Speak

How we've tracked this across the year...

The mainstreaming of 'therapy speak' has been driven by a growing awareness of mental wellbeing and a desire for open dialogue about emotions and mental health – making it an accessible and valuable tool for self-improvement. People are experimenting with wellness-led dialogue as it shifts from being used by a select few to being widely adopted.



JAN 2023

46

'Stutz': infusing therapy into wider culture

JUN 2023

48

Trusted Therapy

SEP 2023

50

Spotify's 'bummer summer' playlist caters to sad Gen Z

APR 2023

47

How is therapy culture changing in the US?

JUL 2023

49

Jonah Hill scandal shows the problem with therapy speak



THEME 06

Re-identity

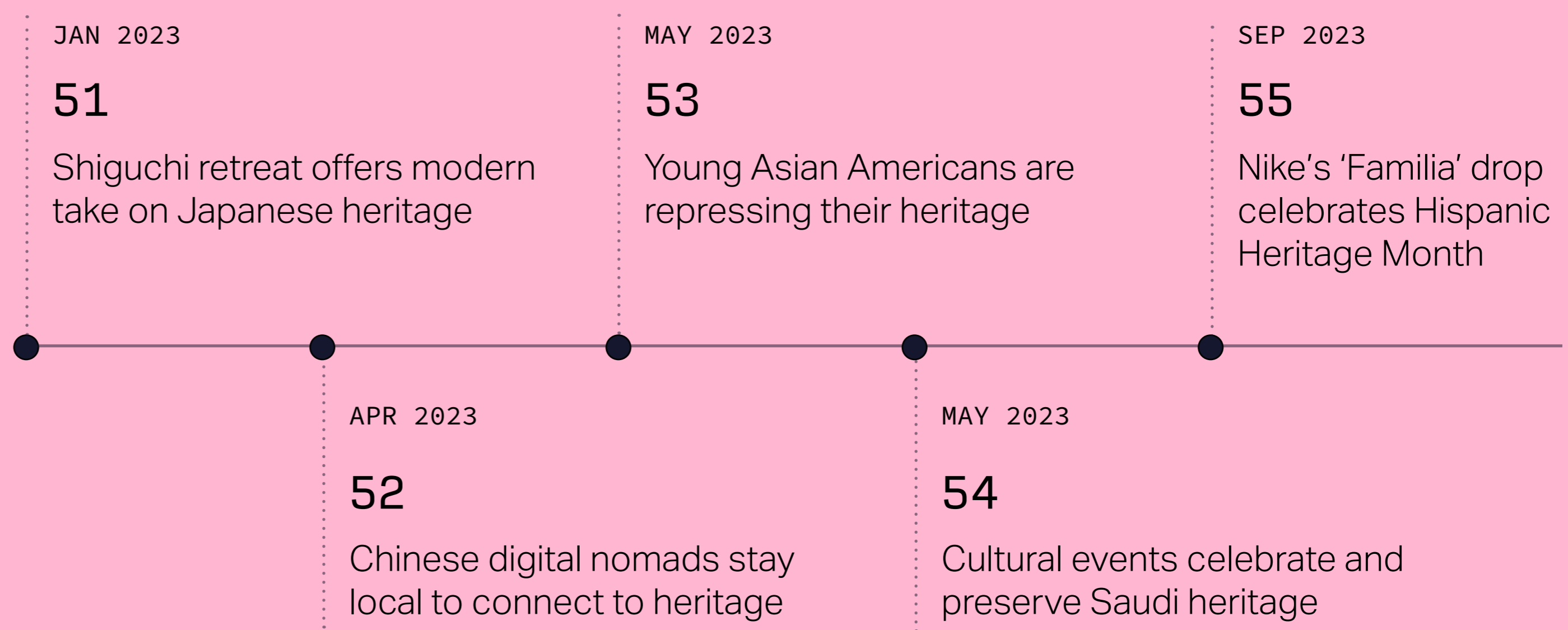
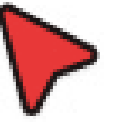
Local identity and heritage are becoming more important to people in an increasingly globalised world.

Related macro: **Border Reorder**

Legacy Link

How we've tracked this across the year...

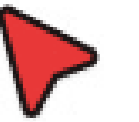
People are placing greater value on their national heritage and culture as they seek connection, belonging, and shared values with others from similar backgrounds. This feeling of togetherness provides a strong support network – especially for global diasporas – and reinforces a communal sense of identity and belonging.



Power Players

How we've tracked this across the year...

Identity expression is levelling up as people are bridging cultural gaps to foster a deeper understanding of themselves and others, using points of difference as a source of strength in divided times. New-age identity pursuits encourage empathy, enrich personal growth, and promote inclusivity in an increasingly diverse and globalised world.



JAN 2023

56

BSA: reclaiming Black heritage through outdoor sports

MAR 2023

58

Mexican university aims to preserve Indigenous languages

OCT 2023

60

Adidas celebrates subcultures with local artists

MAR 2023

57

Jackson Wang: pop icon bridging the East and West

MAY 2023

59

Asian American kids build hybrid identities on TikTok



THEME 07

Why So Serious?

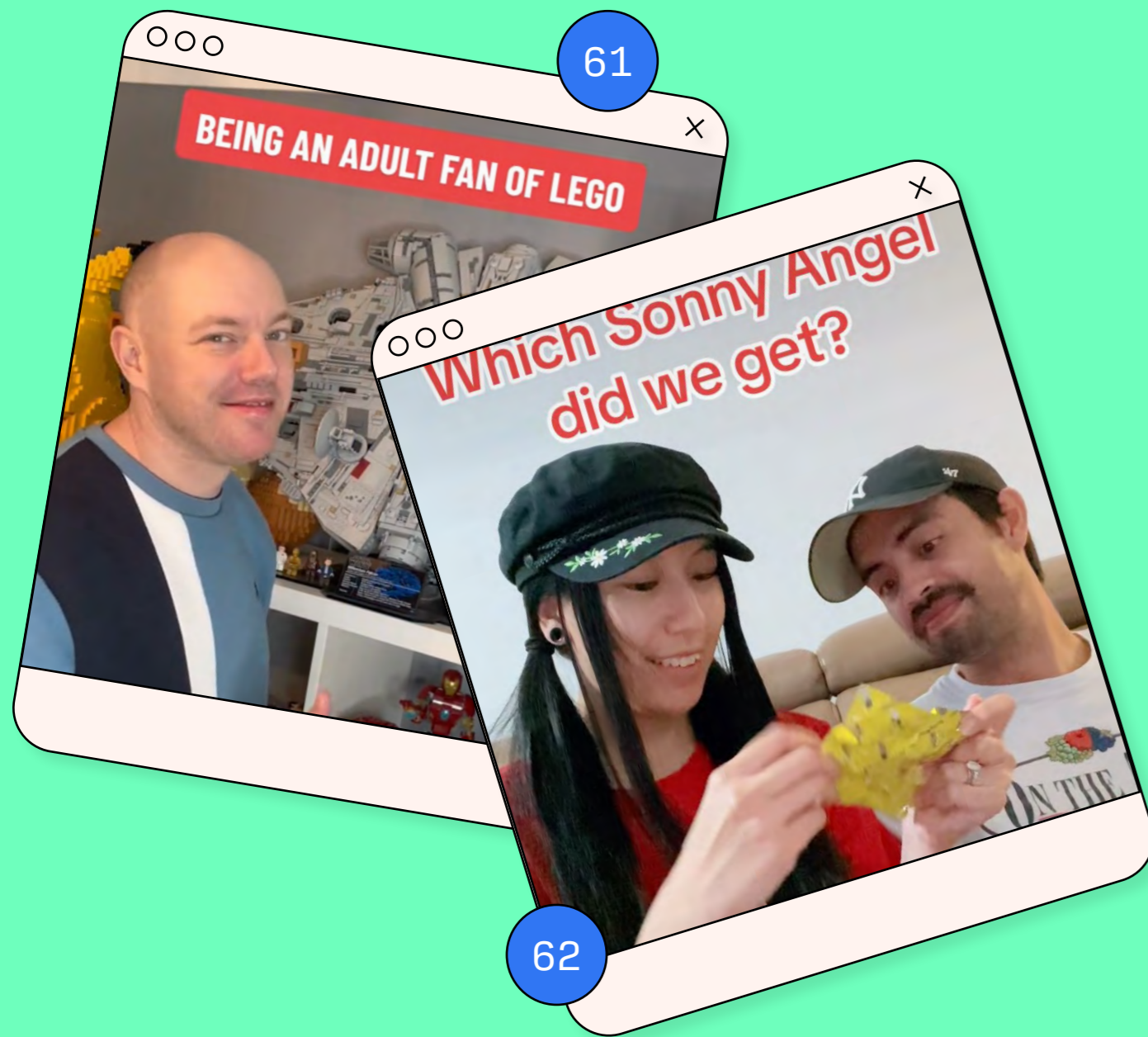
Burnt out by on-demand 24/7 lifestyles, people are turning to play as a way to escape the stressors of modern life.

Related macro: **Experience Hunters**

Eig Kids

How we've tracked this across the year...

Adults are returning to tried and tested methods to build emotional resilience and connect with others, prioritising play behaviours to reduce stress, boost creativity, and enhance overall wellbeing. Recognising the therapeutic benefits and moments of satisfaction that play can bring, 2023 has seen the growth of 'kidults', a cohort using play to unwind.



JUN 2023

61

Why are Australian 'kidults' prioritising play?

JUL 2023

63

How Barbiecore is fuelling the 'kidulting' obsession

AUG 2023

65

Sand tray play transforms 'kidulting' into art therapy

JUN 2023

62

Why young adults are obsessed with collectible figurines

JUL 2023

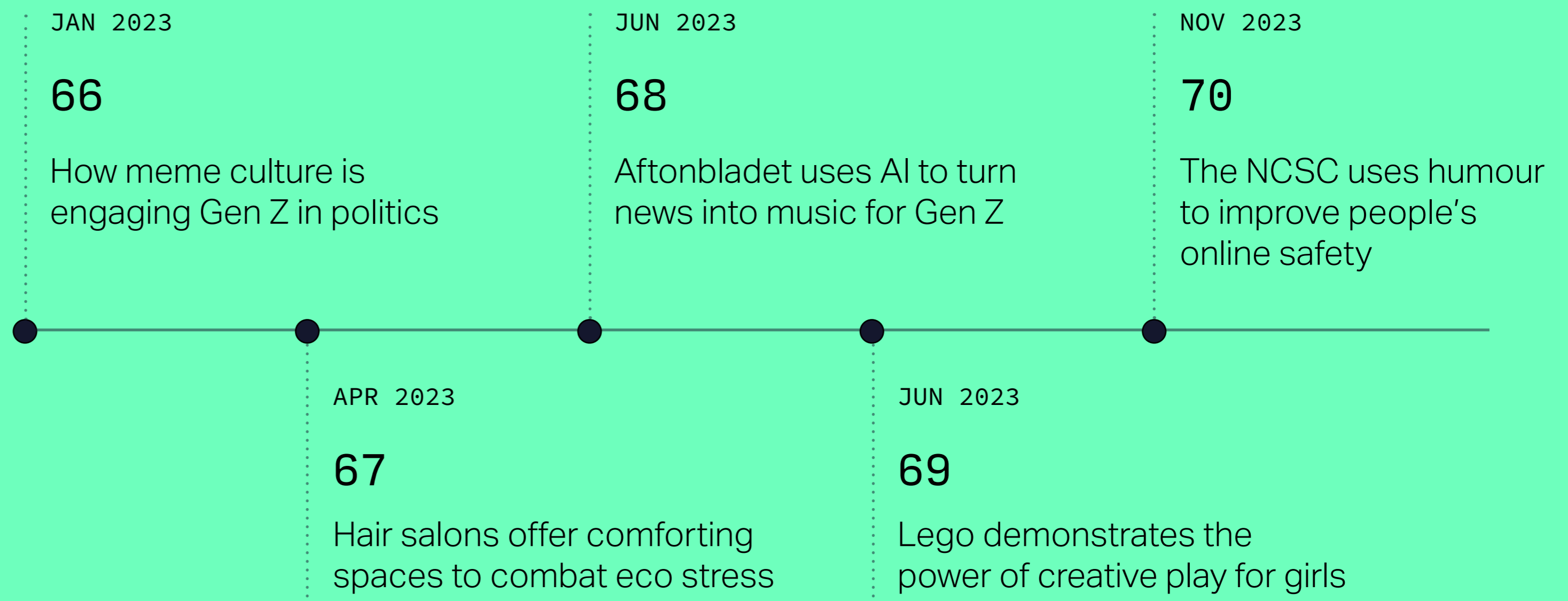
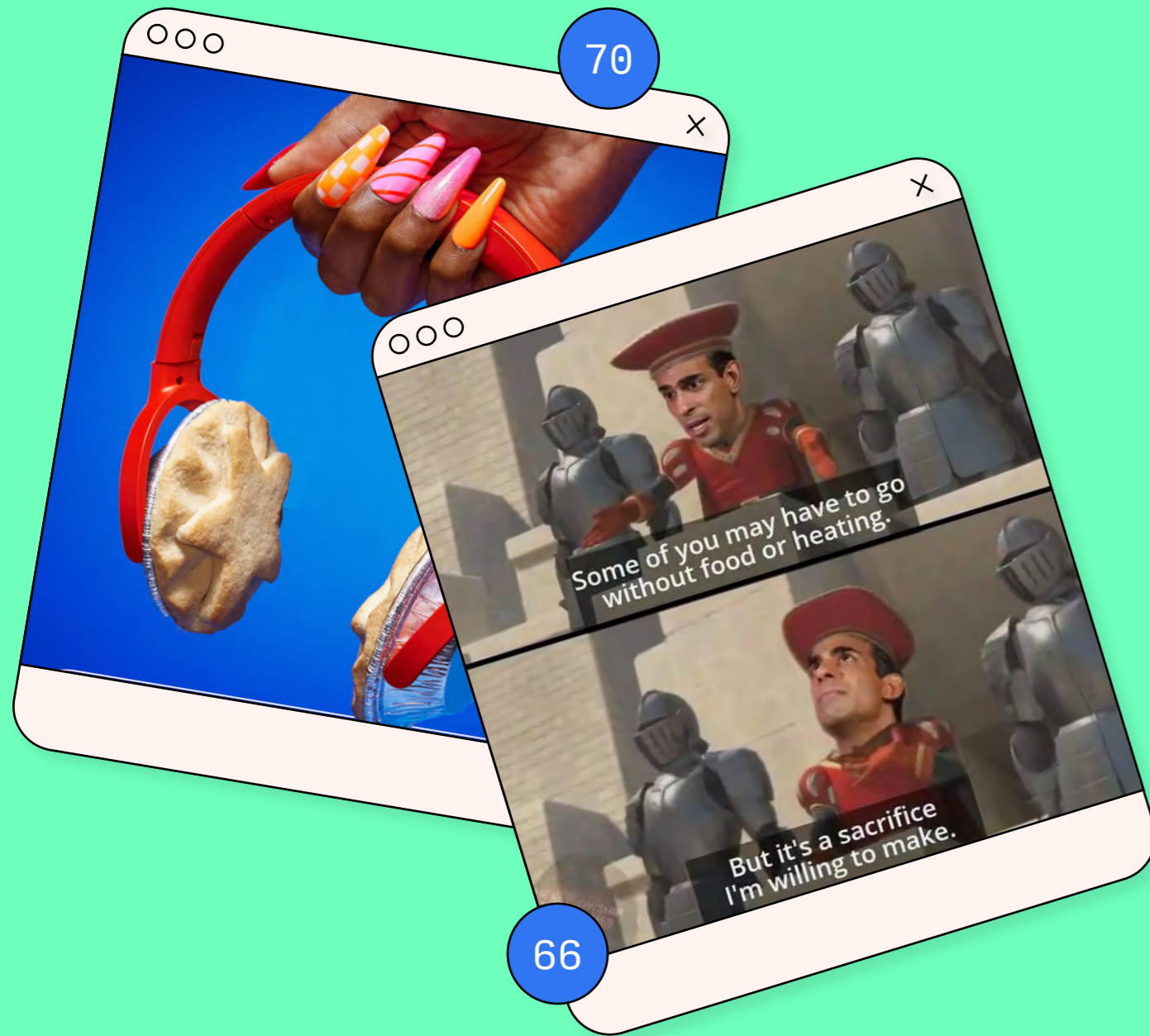
64

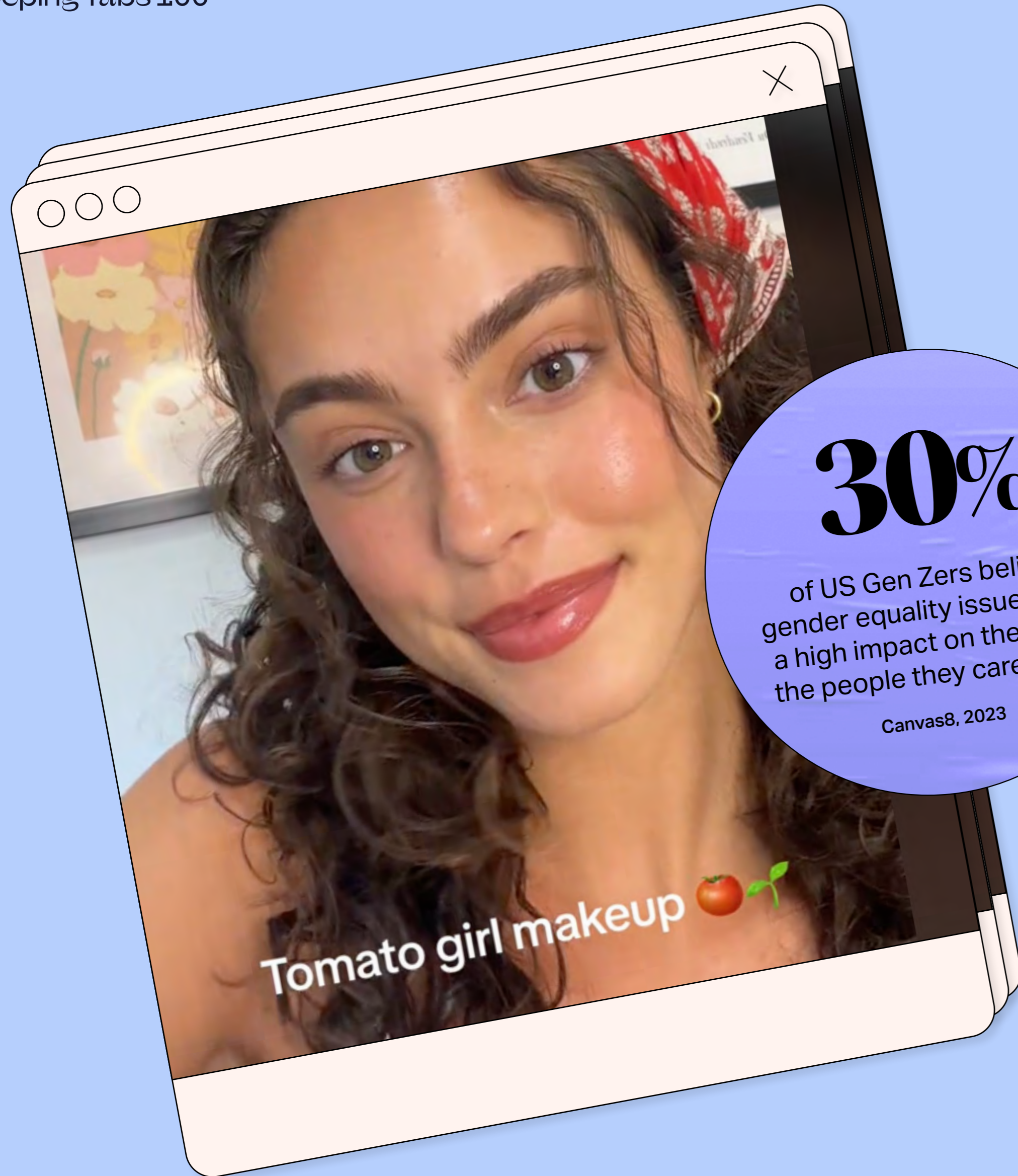
Furby relaunch appeals to kids and 'kidults' alike

Light Relies

How we've tracked this across the year...

As crisis narratives have been integrated into experiences and expressions of culture, 2023 has seen people seek out more novel and playful ways to engage with serious topics. From the climate crisis to financial welfare, lighthearted means of engaging with challenging issues have resonated with those who want energising perspectives on macro stresses.





THEME 08

Everything Girlification

Trends, tropes, and cultural norms are being rewritten as 'girl' topics emerge as routes to analysing and exploring culture.

Related macro: **Byegender**

New Sisterhood

How we've tracked this across the year...

Hyper-niche girl communities are shaping the evolving landscape of womanhood, encouraging empowerment, solidarity, and self-expression among women of all ages. These movements challenge narratives and seek to redefine what it means to be a woman moving through the world today.



JUN 2023

71

#ShyGirlWorkout helps women navigate male-centric gyms

JUL 2023

73

Why is 'lucky girl syndrome' taking over TikTok?

SEP 2023

75

Deloitte campaign empowers women in sports and business

JUL 2023

72

Home Girls Unite: a space for supporting eldest daughters

AUG 2023

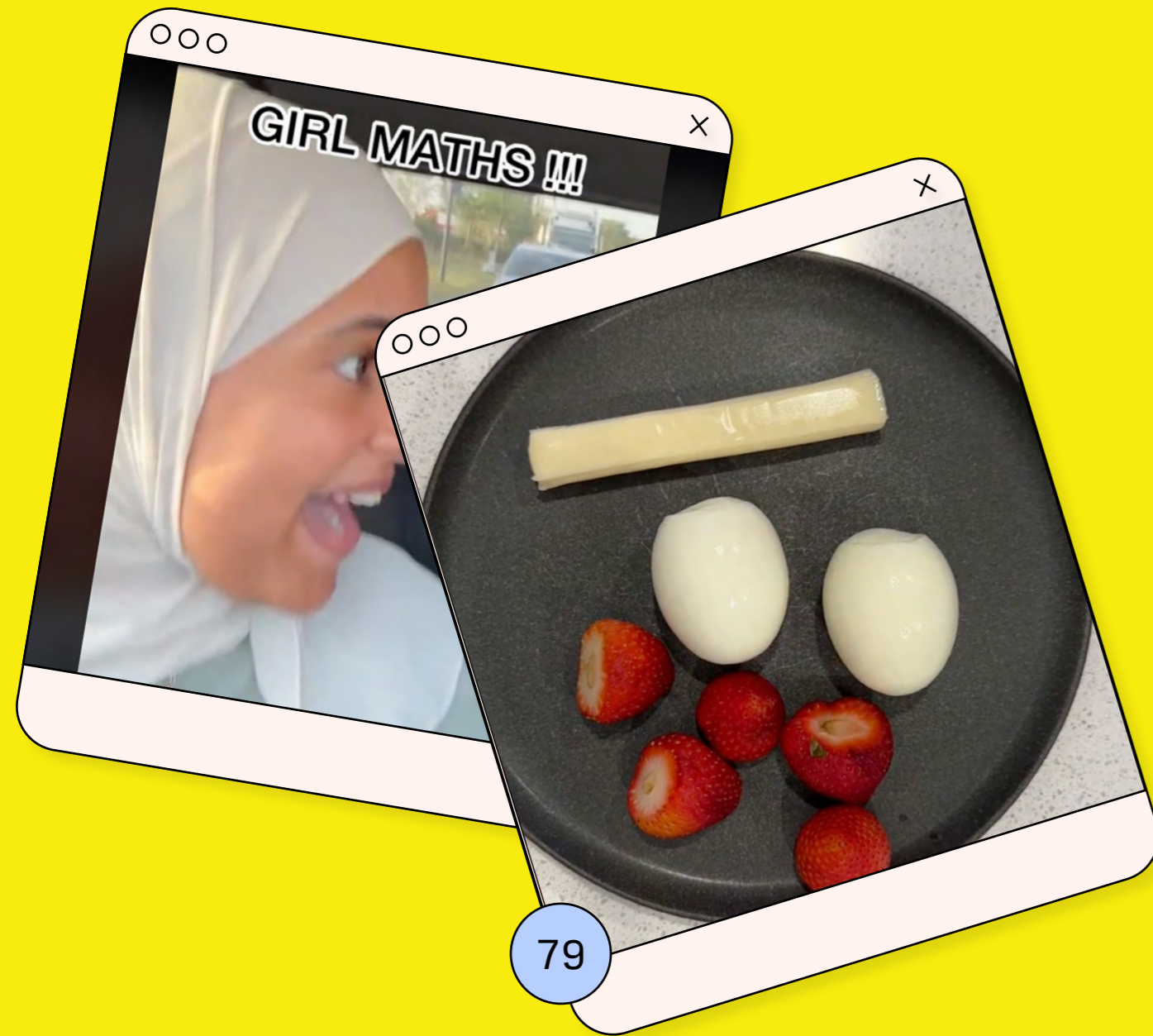
74

Garage Girls: a community for female petrolheads

Tomato Season

How we've tracked this across the year...

The adoption of girl-dom as a byword for opting out and doing what you feel like has impacted culture majorly in 2023. While the language of girlhood has become a way to create community and connection, the same language has also presented challenges by implicitly advocating for exclusionary ideals.



MAR 2023

76

'Vanilla girl' trend pushes exclusionary beauty ideals

JUL 2023

78

Tomato Girl trend is all about embracing slow living

AUG 2023

80

What does the 'lazy girl job' trend mean for work culture?

MAY 2023

77

Why the clean girl aesthetic is changing beauty ideals

AUG 2023

79

How 'girl dinner' began to boom on TikTok



51%

of US Gen Yers say caring about and contributing to local communities is influential when engaging with a brand

Canvas8, 2023

THEME 09

New Believers

In a year where traditional systems seem to have collapsed, hyper-engaged fandoms have taken their interactions offline to come together IRL and feel the power of passionate community.

Related macro: ***Alt Faith***

Peak Parasocial

How we've tracked this across the year...

Intense and engaged fandoms are increasingly coming together offline to forge deeper connections and bond over their shared passions. In a year that finally marked an end of lockdowns worldwide, in-person gatherings have provided a tangible sense of community and camaraderie, enhancing the fan experience beyond the digital realm through real-life activities.



JUL 2023

81

Can I get involved? The science of fan participation

AUG 2023

83

Swiftogeddon: taking digital fandom IRL

OCT 2023

85

The 'Tube Girl' effect takes over

JUL 2023

82

BravoCon: fostering live fandom passion on reality?

SEP 2023

84

The psychology behind pop culture fandoms

Fan Voyage

How we've tracked this across the year...

After the pandemic shutdown, fandom-inspired travel has boomed in a year of peak experiential demand and in light of a slew of global tours by major stars. By blending travel and their passions for heightened immersion in the world of their idols, people have experienced deeper levels of escapism and connection.



FEB 2023

86

Hallyu tourism guides encourage fan-led Korean travel

AUG 2023

88

Jay-Z exhibit creates boom in public library memberships

NOV 2023

90

Swifties' cruise brings music fandom on holiday

AUG 2023

87

Why the travel industry is getting a superfan boost

SEP 2023

89

'Paris by Emily' trips immerses fans into Netflix show



29%

of UK Gen Zers say they trust influencers more when they share negative product reviews

Canvas8, 2023

THEME 10

Messy Realism

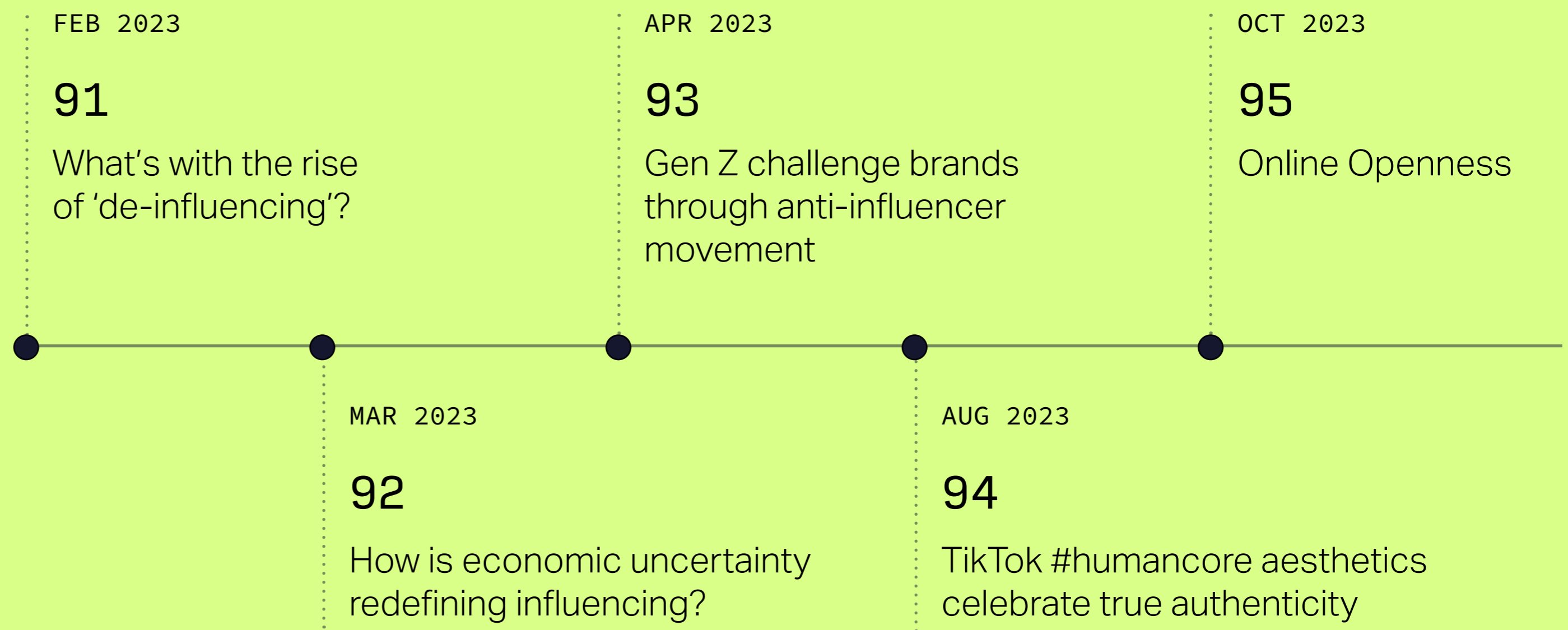
With cost consciousness on the minds of many, an era of low maintenance has taken over as people adapt to more mess and find ways to invite joy into their lives.

Related macro: ***Critical Spenders***

Counter Capitalism

How we've tracked this across the year...

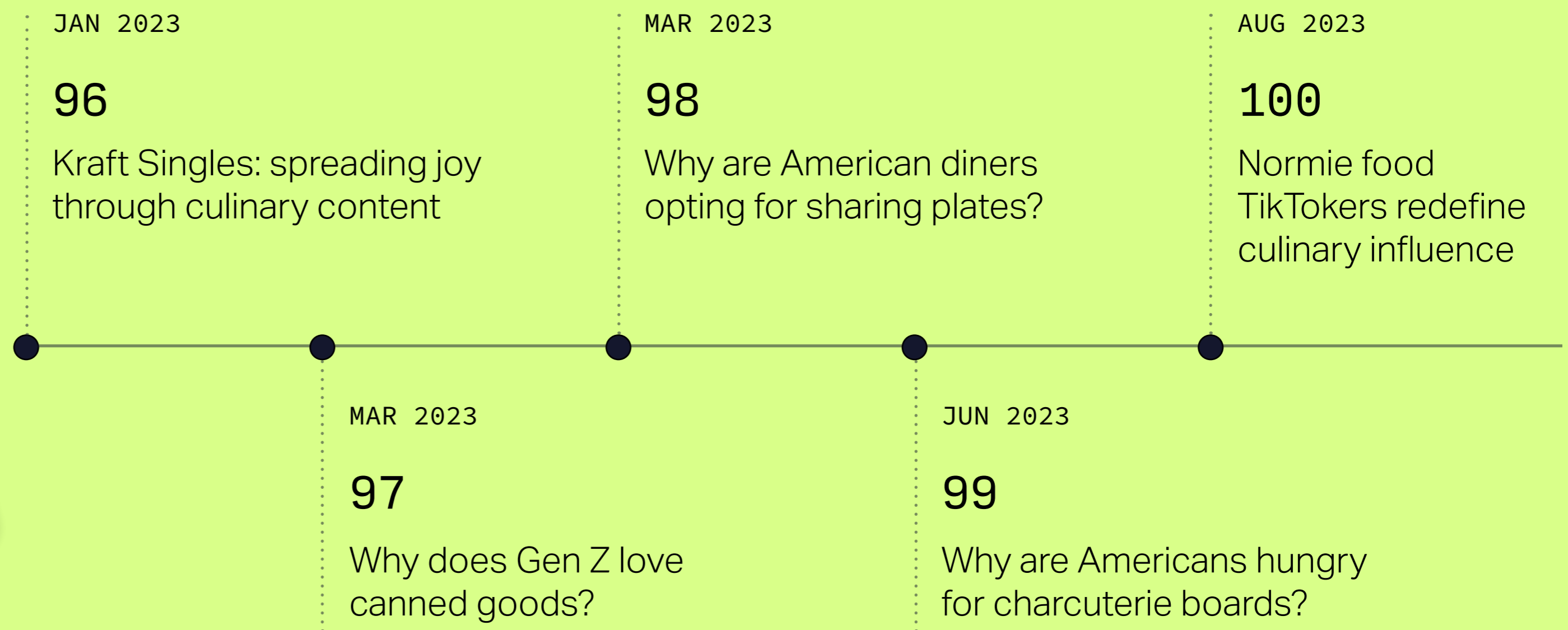
With the cost of living rising in 2023, people have begun to embrace de-influencing, anti-perfection, and anti-aesthetic movements. A response to the overwhelming pressure of curated online content, the counter-capitalist shift has placed a premium on messy human interactions and slower forms of consumption. This shift prioritises authenticity, individuality, and self-acceptance, offering audiences a counterbalance to the pursuit of unattainable standards.



Deconstructed Dining

How we've tracked this across the year...

Low-maintenance vibes have been playing out in the food space in 2023, most obviously through sharing boards and communal dining experiences that challenge traditional meal structures. Foodies are taking a simple, creative, and casual approach to what they eat, reflecting a reevaluation of what constitutes a satisfying culinary experience.



Want to know more?

Sign up to Keeping Tabs

Keeping TABS is where Trends, Anthropology, Behaviour, and Strategy come together to offer the best culture-led behavioural insights. [Sign up for our free insights newsletter.](#)

Explore the Canvas8 Membership

[The Canvas8 Library](#) is an unrivalled resource of 36,000+ articles on global consumer behaviour and is available exclusively to members. Canvas8 members can also connect with experts and thought leaders directly via our Access platform and get the latest research delivered through our Live events.

CANVAS8

Bespoke solutions

From ethnographic research to strategic planning workshops, we offer a range of solutions tailored to enhance your understanding and inspire creativity. Ask about our award-winning consultancy projects. Always bespoke, we use blended methods to solve significant human challenges in areas like strategic planning, concept development, public relations, behavioural change, content strategy, and brand positioning.

If you're already a Canvas8 member and want to learn more about how we can help, reach out to your client services manager.

Toolkit

Want to explore cultural insights and what they mean for your brand? Using decade-tested templates and proprietary techniques, Toolkit solutions are a quick and affordable way to uncover the answers you need. Launched in June 2023 as one of our five Toolkit research solutions, Trend Snapshots offer a quick and affordable way to stay current and safeguard your future. Use them to understand how new shifts in culture will impact your business.

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