

**NOT ANOTHER REPORT
ABOUT MILLENNIALS
AND GEN Z**

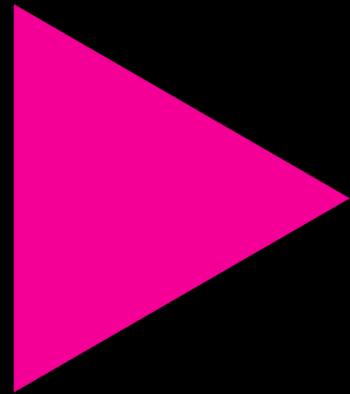
THE PEOPLE



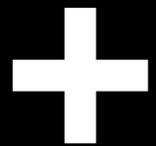
YOUTH

IN 2020

THE PEOPLE



CLICK HERE



TLDR

**An audio-visual snapshot
of Youth In 2020.**

INTRODUCTION

Words like 'Millennials' and 'Gen Z' get thrown around like meatballs in a food fight. They're often flung far and wide from the perspective of media outlets, marketing agencies and management consultancies, but rarely by young people themselves.

Millennials and Gen Z are not a marketing segment. Youth culture isn't one thing. And it most definitely isn't just the cool stuff.

Young people are people.
People, not consumers.
People, not targets.
People, not users.
Human beings, filled with unique hopes, dreams and aspirations, coupled with doubts and challenges.

Youth in 2020 offers a human layer of understanding amid a deluge of emotionless data. The report paints a rich, nuanced and varied picture of youth culture today.

The People is an award-winning youth culture consultancy powered by 150+ young creators and cultural frontrunners. Therefore, we never make assumptions; we rely on the truth, the voice of the youth.

For this project, we actively focused on identifying the biggest pain points facing young people today. We begin with an analysis of the current brand-consumer relationship, before exploring the emergence of young people as new shareholders. At last, we provide a practical guide on how brands can turn their challenges into opportunities by maximising action and minimising anxiety.

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01

CONTEXT

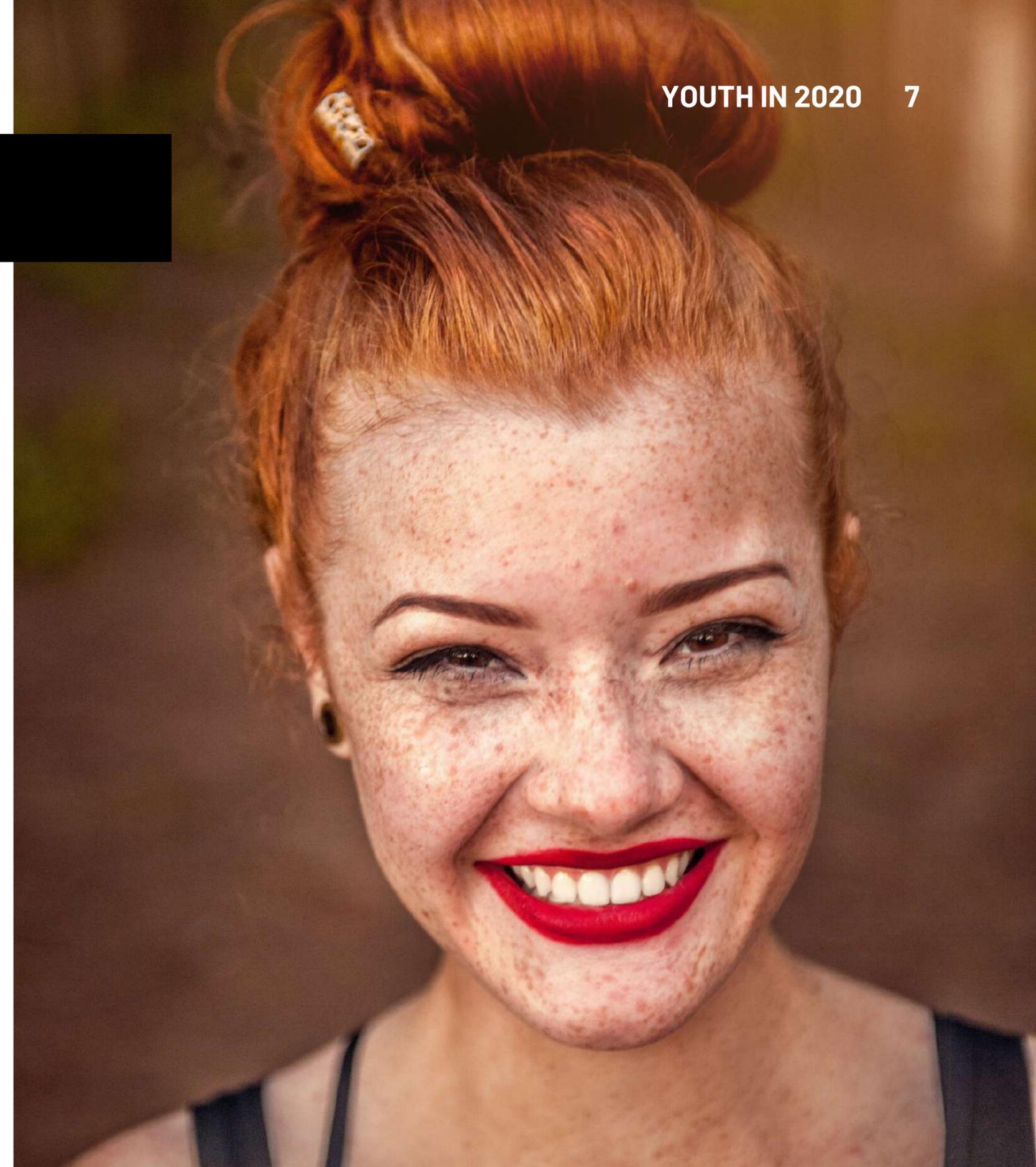
PEOPLE-BASED MARKETING

We live in a post-demographic world, where patterns of behaviour can no longer be predicated on age alone. So, we need to move away from old school marketing segments towards people-based marketing.

In the past, demographic information was the only way brands could segment their customer base. Today that is no longer the case. Thanks to the abundance of available tools and data, we now have unprecedented insights into group and individual attitudes, behaviours, needs and interests. Once layered on top of demographic data, it paints a far richer picture of real people.

THE PEOPLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEENAN CONSTANCE





"ME AND MY BEST MATES ARE SO ALIKE
AND I STILL WOULDN'T SAY WE'RE
EXACTLY THE SAME. I'M MORE THAN JUST
A NUMBER ON A PAGE, I'M AN INDIVIDUAL
AND IT'S IMPORTANT THEY [BRANDS]
KNOW THAT"

- JOSEPH, 23



Key Takeaway: Brands have the chance to ditch demographic segments for tribes with shared passion points. The right blend of first party-data and rich, qualitative research can help establish your distinct set of tribes based on attitude, behaviour, interest and affinity towards your company.

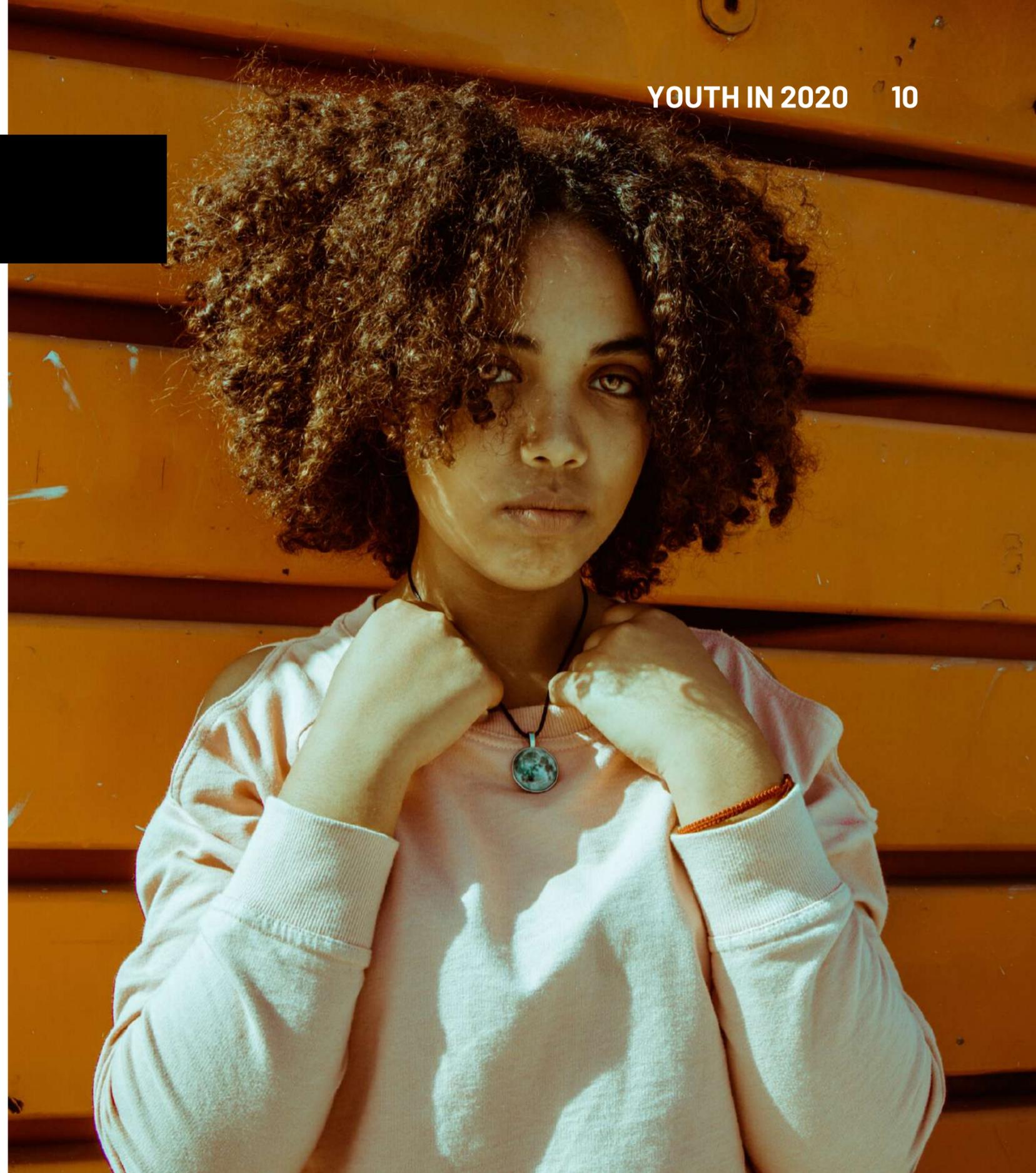
NO MORE GATEKEEPERS

In a not so distant past, to reach an audience, individuals had to go through a gatekeeper first. To write an article, you had to pitch to an editor. To get your music heard, you had to get signed by a major record label. To publish a book, you had to submit your work to a publishing house. None of this holds true anymore. The game has changed. There are no more gatekeepers.

Today, the right mix of talent can get you everywhere. It's no wonder we're seeing the emergence of young entrepreneurs, side hustlers and multi-hyphenates. In fact, 70% of young Brits admit to having a side hustle. As young people, we now have access to tools and platforms that offer the opportunity to work on what we love most which were beyond the reach of previous generations. At the same time, necessity is as much of a powerful driver as a choice, since many young people require an extra revenue stream to pursue their desired lifestyles.

THE PEOPLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOUCHE NCIB





"I'VE DONE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR VOGUE AND
IAMDDDB BECAUSE OF INSTAGRAM, I USE IT
TO SHOWCASE MY PORTFOLIO AND THEN
PEOPLE EITHER DM ME OR I REACH OUT
DIRECTLY TO THEM"

- KIMMIE, PHOTOGRAPHER, 22



THE PEOPLE

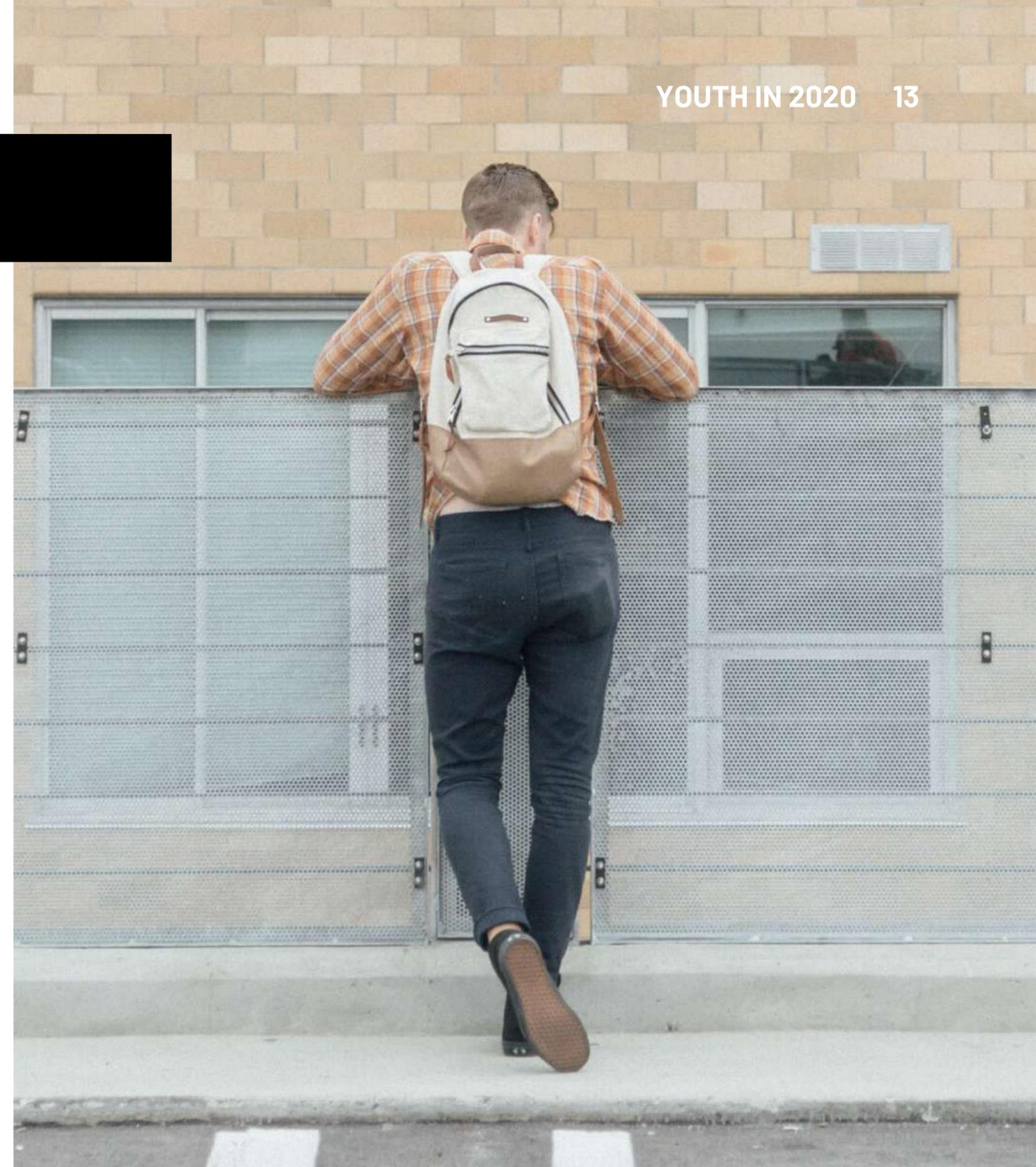
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEE BRODHURST-HOOPER

Key takeaway: The brands that nurture and encourage the unfulfilled passions and creativity of young people – both as consumers and employees will be the same companies that attract the best talent and achieve the greatest results in the future.

EARNING ATTENTION

Historically, brands have spent large budgets trying to buy people's attention. The problem is when you buy attention; you have to buy it again and again. Most online advertising - bought attention - gets in the way of what people actually want to do with their digital lives; whether it's reading an article, watching a documentary or scrolling through Instagram. As a consequence, ad-blocking is becoming the new normal. Unsurprisingly, the highest rate is amongst 18-24-year olds (44%) who expect to control every aspect of their online experience.

Young people are now dictating when, where and how they engage with brands. And they are beginning to use this newfound power to voice their concerns and to boycott brands that go against their values and beliefs.





"EVERY TIME I TRY AND WATCH A VIDEO ON YOUTUBE I GET THESE ANNOYING ADS BEFORE, AFTER AND IN BETWEEN THE VIDEO"

- SCOTT, EVENTS MANAGER, 21



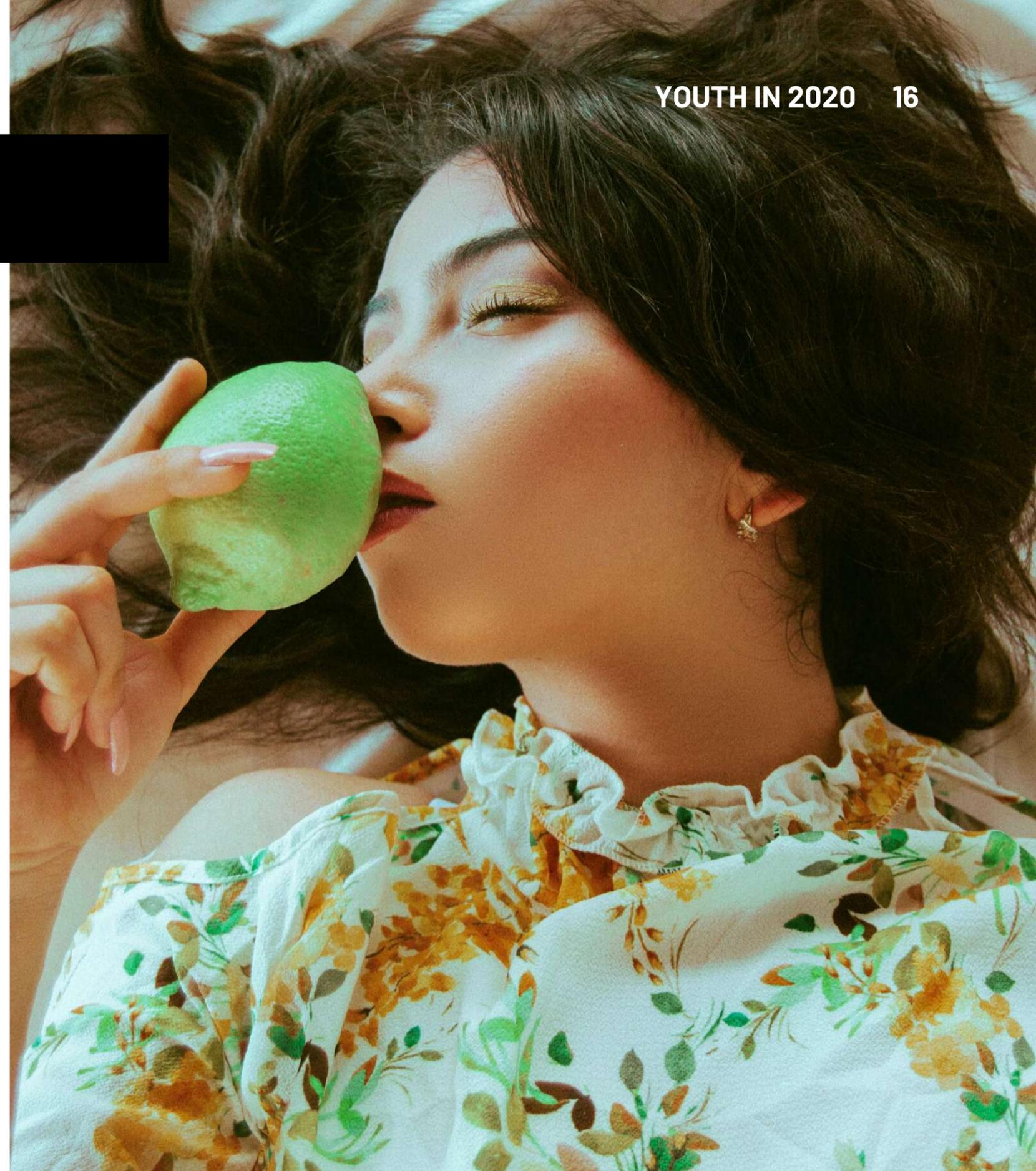
Generally speaking, they don't trust that what have to say is genuine. This is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the advertising industry today. After all, trust is the cornerstone of any healthy, long-term relationship. Digital bombardment, fake news, data privacy scandals and brand safety issues have caused consumer trust to hit an all-time low. Against this backdrop; brands can no longer buy attention as they once did in the old advertising model. They must earn it.

Key Takeaway: Young people are no longer the consumers of stories, but rather the creators and authors of their own narrative. Therefore, brands need to actively fit as a chapter in their life's story, as opposed to a misplaced ad. A compelling narrative backed by real action can help brands gain credibility and establish their position within youth culture.

RELEVANCE OVER REACH

Influence is everywhere, not only online, and certainly no longer limited to celebrities. The nature of influence has undergone a fundamental shift, from top-down to bottom-up. In this new model, it's the people and particularly young people that hold large sway on what brands and celebrities say, do and can get away with.

Nowadays, influence is rooted in day to day, peer to peer interaction. It the close friend co-signing a new tracksuit in the WhatsApp group, more so than a slick brand video featuring Gigi Hadid. Trends travel in real-time at a grassroots level, way before they hit the mainstream. Young people are no longer passive consumers, but creators in their own right. They influence friends with their actions.





"I ALWAYS REMIND MYSELF THAT MY FOLLOWERS ARE PEOPLE JUST LIKE ME, SO MY PAGE AND DMS SHOULD ALWAYS BE SAFE SPACE FOR US TO TALK AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER"

- SARAH, WRITER + POET, 27



Being an influencer is no longer determined by the number of followers one has. A point perfectly illustrated by social media influencer @arii, who failed to sell 36 t-shirts despite having 2.6 million followers on Instagram. A clear signifier the influencer bubble is bursting.

Key Takeaway: Brands once owned the monologue, a one-way conversation about the product or services being sold. That monologue has turned into a dialogue. Thereby, marking a clear opportunity for brands to co-create with people who add value and are culturally relevant in the eyes of the community they have cultivated, irrespective of their follower count.



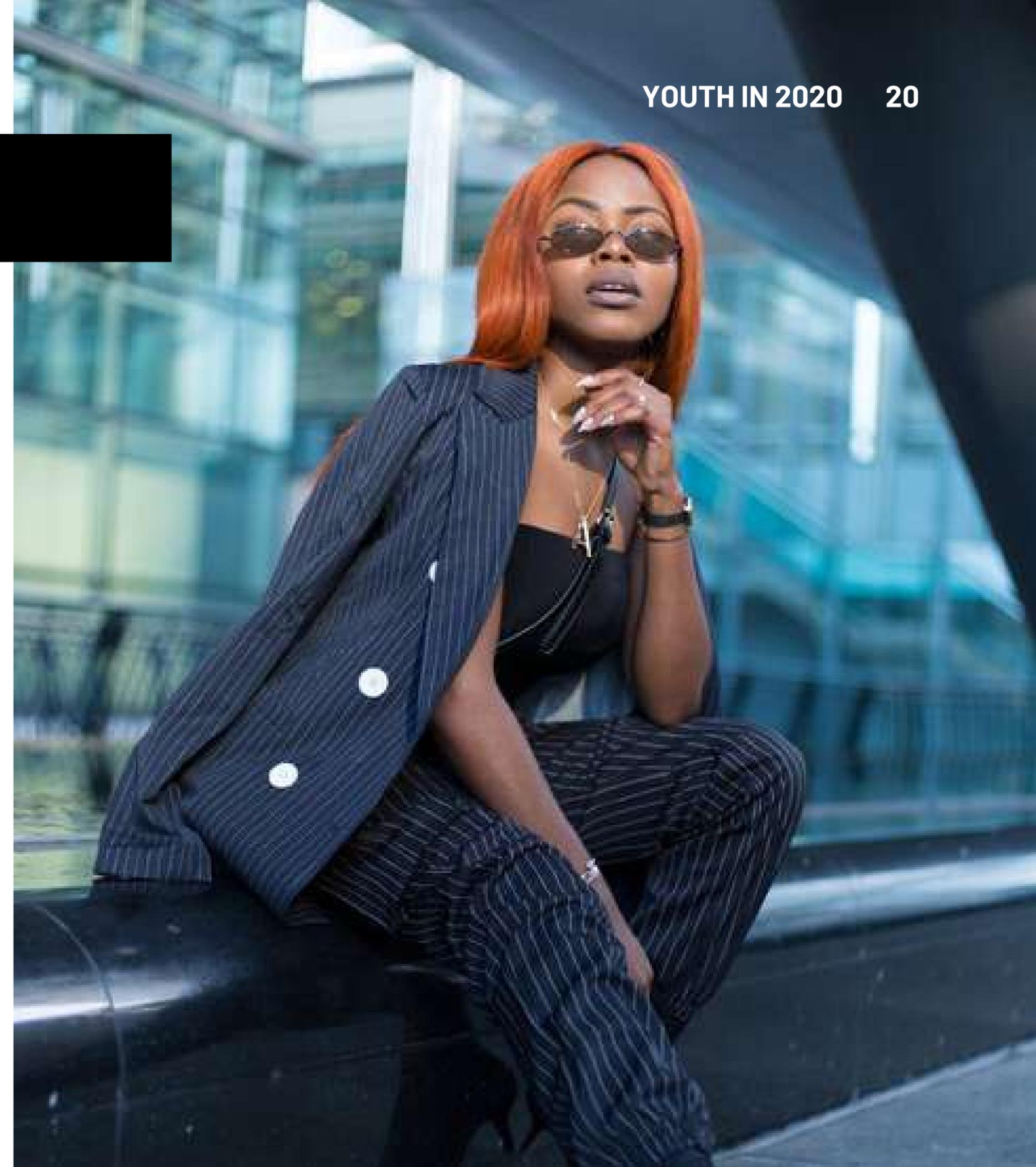
02

NEW SHAREHOLDERS

NEW SHAREHOLDERS

Companies are beginning to evolve from corporate entities with a single goal - maximising profit – towards platform and lifestyle brands. The evolution in function is symptomatic of a fundamental shift in the brand-consumer relationship. Brands no longer belong solely to the company that invested in shaping, growing and monetising it. They are now community property. And so, young people are demanding experiences on their terms, influencing others to buy (or not), co-developing products, and even acting as sales channels.

From posting comments on social media to participating in boycotts, young people are forcing brands to sit up and take notice. It's they who hold power to influence global corporations' reaction to an event or its stance on a public issue.





"IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT WE SPEAK UP AS
YOUNG PEOPLE AND USE OUR VOICES TO
CALL OUT BRANDS THAT AREN'T DOING THE
RIGHT THING OR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF
VULNERABLE PEOPLE"

- SHAREEFA, POET, 22



Extinction Rebellion is a prime example: young people from all around the world recognise previous generations have caused irreversible damage to our planet. And unless they take collective action, the status-quo will continue. In the UK, young people from all around the country with different upbringings, viewpoints and interests are gathering around a shared belief of a better, more sustainable future.

During a peaceful disruption at Cannes Lions Festival, they wrote an open **letter** to the advertising industry.



This is not a case of your typical teenagers rebelling against authority or established norms, but rather, a generation that has taken things into their own hands. Globally, 64% will choose, switch, avoid or boycott a brand based on where it stands on a social issue they care about. Young people are using the negatives they've inherited from previous generations as the fuel to create positive change. Through such activities, they're also developing new norms, customs and traditions centred around collective action.

Key Takeaway: As a result of our investments financially, socially and culturally young consumers are the new shareholders, a group that demands and expects meaningful products, services and promises. They will champion brands they believe in and boycott the ones that don't. Ultimately, they know our reaction has a direct impact on your bottom line.



03

ACTION + ANXIETY

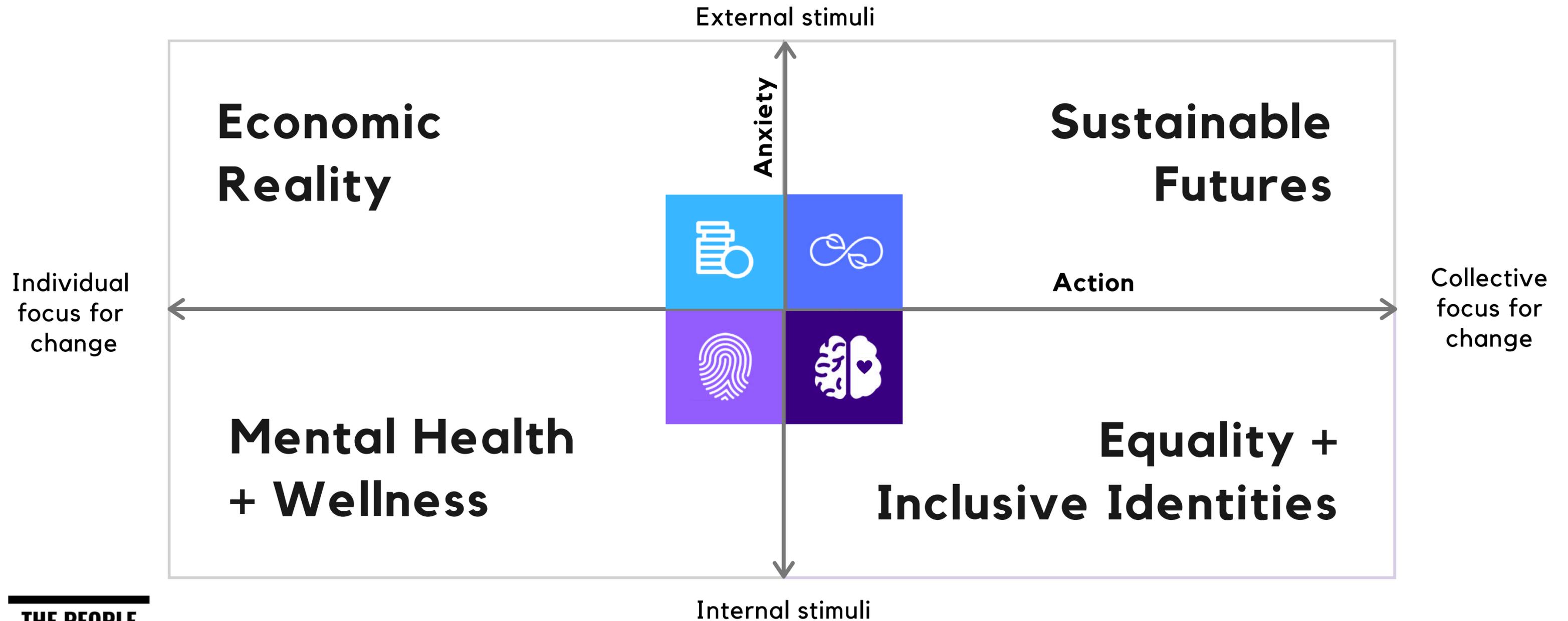
ANXIETIES + ACTION

When it comes to the issues that matter most, young people expect brands that they invest in and engage with to maximise action and minimise anxiety. Young consumers are now expecting social, political, economic and environmental responsibility be embedded into the product or service, at no extra cost or inconvenience.

- I Economic Reality
- II Sustainable Futures
- III Mental Health + Wellness
- IV Equality + Inclusive Identities



FRAMEWORK: ANXIETIES + ACTION



A low-angle, close-up photograph of a person's legs as they walk. The person is wearing light blue denim shorts, multi-colored striped socks, and colorful sneakers with a rainbow-like pattern. The background is a teal carpet and a light-colored wall. The overall aesthetic is vibrant and urban.

04

ECONOMIC REALITY

ECONOMIC REALITY

Young people have been disproportionately affected by the economic downturn of the mid-2000s. Globally, young adults now earn 20% less than their average compatriot thirty years ago. On top of that, they're less likely to buy a home and more likely to live with their parents. Across the globe, young people are finding it difficult to achieve the status and accomplishments that previously signalled adulthood. The majority of research focuses on the notion that young people prefer experiences over stuff. Though unstated, this change in preference is an outcome of circumstance, not choice. Many young people have been forced to re-adjust their tastes and expectations.

THE PEOPLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIRIO BERATI





Students are notably synonymous with never having enough money. However, some students are now making quick cash on websites like Seeking Arrangements as Sugar Babies, where they get paid for going out on dates with older men or women. Some online platforms target students offering premium membership to those signing up with their university email. The average UK student will leave university with more than £50,000 worth of debt. While on these platforms, students get paid up to £2,900 a month together with an opportunity to network, advance their careers and fund the lifestyle that they've always dreamed of.

Dating older people for financial gain might be an extreme example, but resemblances can also be seen in many young people's everyday lives. For example, instead of spending money going to the bar, they can now find a date on Tinder for free. Rather than going to a flashy restaurant, they can order a decent takeaway and watch Netflix on a shared account.



"GOING OUT AND BUYING DRINKS CAN GET EXPENSIVE, SO UNLESS IT'S SOMEONE'S BIRTHDAY I MOSTLY JUST HANG WITH MY FRIENDS OR STAY IN AND WATCH NETFLIX ON A FRIDAY NIGHT"

- TEGAN, 21



All of this is in the context of the bigger picture: extreme generational inequality and lack of political agency. In the UK, young people feel left out of public policy even when they engage in the political process. Many feel powerless and unheard when it comes to determining their own future.

Key Takeaway: Experience hasn't necessarily replaced the desire for things. Young people are finding greater return on investment investing their time, money and attention in building their social currency and cultural capital. Leading to a significant change in consumer behaviour within a dual economy, where social currency is as, if not more significant than financial. A shift from buying to belonging.

A hand with a watch is reaching up from a dark, textured surface towards the number 05. The background is a blue, textured surface with a pattern of small, rounded stones or pebbles.

05

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

The existential threat of climate change is jeopardising young people's futures. At the present rate, we would need 1.7 Earths to make current consumption sustainable. For the first time, we could see entire communities, cultures and countries destroyed – within our lifetime.

Climate change is creating a clear tension in young people's lives. A tension between anxiety and action. For many they see no other choice but to act, as seen with the School Climate Strikes, culminating in the Extinction Rebellion. Others feel powerless, causing a new phenomenon, Eco-anxiety: the feeling of being overwhelmed by the existential challenge of climate change. Eco-anxiety is symptomatic of the growing frustration felt by many young people towards the inaction towards the most noticeable, yet mostly ignored threat facing humanity.





Sainsbury's recently released a new line of products edge products aimed at 'Millennials' following research which indicated that younger shoppers are keen to try out edgy products in emerging categories – including plant-based and alcohol-free – that also have eco-credentials. The new range includes fermented Kombucha and a new line of salmon skin crisps. When we asked our community about the range, their scepticism was evident. In truth, salmon skin shavings that would otherwise go to waste are unlikely to save the planet from destruction, let alone even taste nice. Similar moves by other brands will be viewed as a marketing gesture, rather than social or environmental backed by substance.

At the same time, it's important to remember that a large chunk of young people are less caught up about the environment and sustainability than they say they are, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who are more likely to live by ethical codes and practices that impact their immediate communities.



"THERE WAS THIS COAT I REALLY WANTED
BUT IT WAS MADE OF FUR SO I DIDN'T BUY
IT. BUT I WAS TEMPTED BECAUSE FAKE
FUR DOESN'T LOOK AS NICE"

- NATASHA, 21



THE PEOPLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEE BRODHURST-HOOPER

Key Takeaway: Young consumers expect sustainability to be incorporated into the product, service or enjoyable experience - creating a seamless experience at no extra effort or cost on their side. Being carbon negative, or neutral is no longer a competitive advantage, but a necessity, no longer impressive, but expected by those who have to live in the future that it creates.



06

MENTAL HEALTH
+ WELLNESS

MENTAL HEALTH + WELLNESS

Thanks to social media and the growing speed of digital communication, we are more connected than ever before. Yet at the same time, we've never been more alone. In the UK, 16-24-year-olds feel lonely more often and deeply than any other age group (40%) – including over 75s (27%). Social media has been found to have an impact on the mental health of young people, especially causing or intensifying feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

Large numbers of young people have replaced talking with texting and the expression of emotions with emojis. Physical interaction has given way to the online world. The increased reliance on digital interaction and connection can come at the expense of basic social skills. To the point that it becomes intimidating to engage with people and particularly strangers IRL.





On the web, young people can create an idealised image of who they are and how they'd like to engage with others. Physical interactions have given way to the online world. Life online is a comfortable, constructed bubble in stark contrast to the random, tough and uncontrollable realities of the physical world. Although we appreciate the benefits and shortcuts that come with social media, there is still a need to think long and hard about holding social media platforms accountable. Without action, it becomes easy to foresee a world where physical interaction would need to be taught in schools.

Growing up can already be stressful, having to navigate the pressures of school, work, family and friends, all while managing and maintaining an online presence. In this context, algorithm-based recommendations like Netflix, Spotify and Amazon can deliver peace of mind by giving young people one less thing to think about. Offering a sense of predictability that they feel is scarcely available.



"SOMETIMES I FEEL QUITE ANXIOUS OR LIKE I'M NOT DOING ENOUGH COMPARED TO OTHER PEOPLE MY AGE WHEN I'M ON SOCIAL MEDIA, IT'S REAL PROBLEM NOWADAYS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE"

- DUARDA 21

The acknowledgement that wellness should work for everyone, not just those who can afford it is beginning to drive a more inclusive approach to wellbeing as we start to measure the success of society beyond its economy. At the end of the day, we are inherently social animals; the need to belong is part of our human nature. Digital means of communication are fantastic, but it will not necessarily fill the need for a deep, meaningful human connection.

Key Takeaway: During this vulnerable stage of their lives, tech companies and advertisers have the opportunity to play a positive role in the emotional and cognitive development of young people without trying to exploit it. By doing so, they will become a social glue: supporting a disconnected generation while establishing a deep, meaningful, human connections early on.



07
EQUALITY +
INCLUSIVE IDENTITIES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VLADIMIR PROSKUROVSKIY

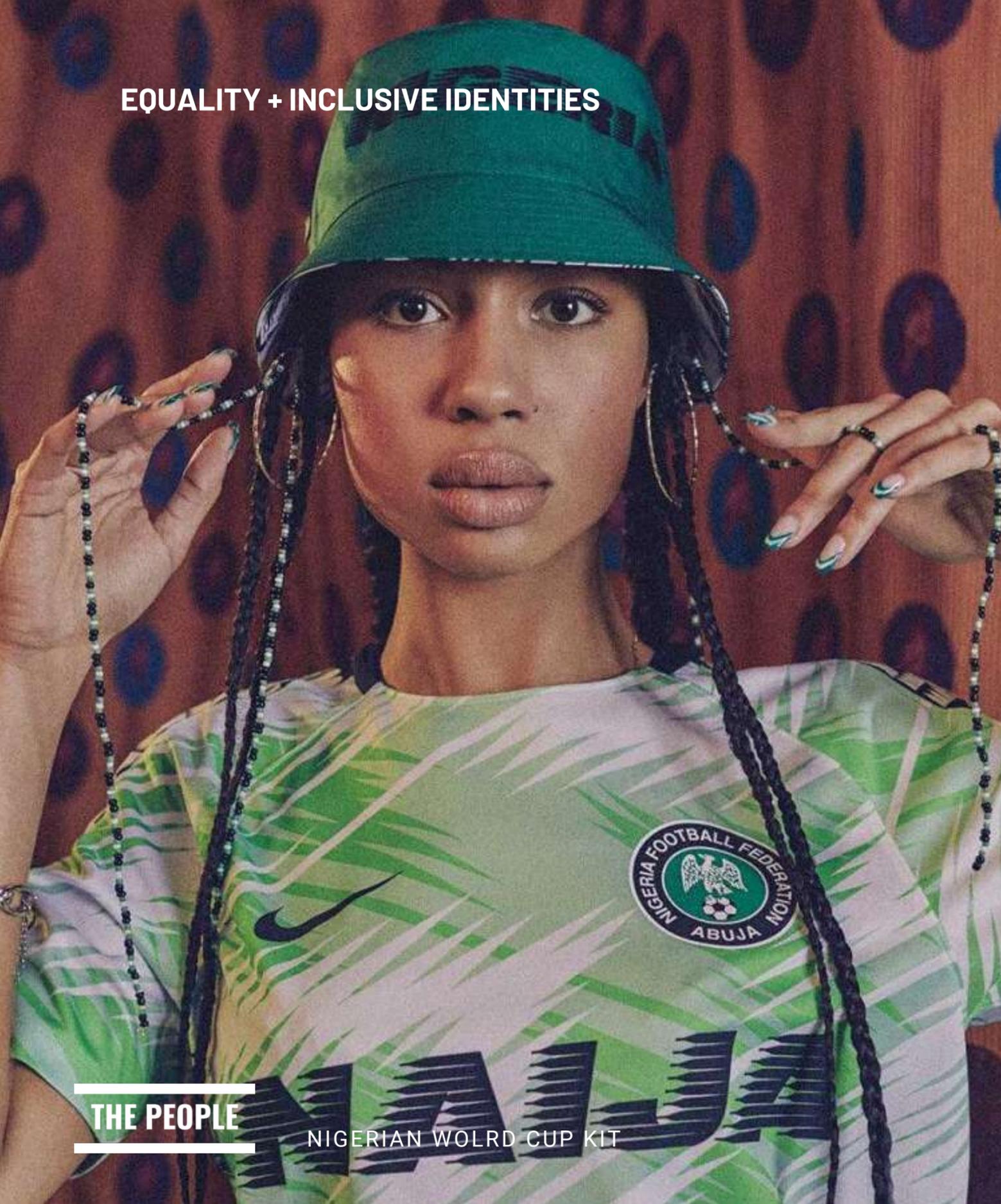
EQUALITY + INCLUSIVE IDENTITIES

Young people across the land have been born into a new cultural landscape with a diverse mix of ethnicities, genders, religions and cultures. They view the world from a wider lens than previous generations. Research suggests they are more open and tolerant of differences. The change in attitude correlates with the UK's changing demographics, with the number of ethnic minorities estimated to rise to 40% by 2050.

THE PEOPLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KUNJ PAREKH





THE PEOPLE

NIGERIAN WORLD CUP KIT

In 2018, football, fashion and culture collided with Nigeria's World Cup kit breaking pre-order records with a staggering 3 million kits sold. That's more than any other club in the world sells in a year. The desire to belong – especially among ethnic minority groups – is essential to the way they express who they are and their sense of identity and culture.

At this stage in their lives, many young people's expressions of identity are still surface level. However, below the surface, they're defining diversity as the ability and freedom to be themselves. The demand for diversity and inclusion is not only a struggle for equality. It also represents a personal desire to live, work and socialise in a thriving environment. In a space where individuals can let their guard down; without having to hide who they are, what they think or how they feel. When these freedoms are constrained, young people, in particular, become more reluctant to share their unique experiences and much-needed perspectives with others.



"DIVERSITY IN FOOTBALL IS IMPORTANT
BECAUSE I'VE MET DIFFERENT PEOPLE THAT
I PROBABLY NEVER WOULD HAVE MET
AROUND SOMETHING WE ALL LOVE"

- FELIX, SEMI-PRO FOOTBALLER, 20



Key Takeaway: It would be irresponsible to reduce diversity to a conversation about visible differences. Brands ought to view diversity and inclusion, not as an achievement or badge of honour, but rather an environment where all individuals can be valued, included and understood. Doing so requires a fundamental shift from being reactive to being proactive in building a culture where difference is accepted.



08

CREATE WITH, NOT FOR

CREATE WITH, NOT FOR

The most effective brands leverage their customers' energy and involve them in everything from co-creating new products, services, brands and experiences to using their insights to rapidly test and iterate new features and capabilities. While business leaders, investors and employees all bring essential perspectives and expertise to a brand's identity. It's a new legion of young consumers that possess an unrivaled insight into that will enable brands to future proof their business.

THE PEOPLE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JODINE WILLIAMS





"YOU CAN TELL WHEN A BRAND HAS
WORKED WITH YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE
SOMETHING, IT MAKES WHATEVER THEY'RE
DOING A LOT MORE AUTHENTIC"

- LEENA, GRAPHIC DESIGNER, 22

Key Takeaway: Young people's desire to create and contribute will only continue to grow thanks to the increased power and share of voice handed to them via social media. Those who decide to create with young people will maintain cultural relevance and more importantly future proof their business. On the flip side, those who fail to adapt risk entering the annals of irrelevancy, which already includes a long list of extinct brands.

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DON'T BE A STRANGER

The People is an award-winning youth culture consultancy powered by 150+ young, creators and cultural frontrunners. The findings in this report can have a direct impact on the future of your business.

If you'd like to discuss how action + anxiety might impact your brand, contact us at kian@thepeople.work

www.thepeople.work

