

Issue No.12 · Feb 2022

Make ↘ Shift

# BEYOND WORDS

Venture into the metaverse with initiatives  
that hit different

Make→Shift is part of TrendWatching's Free Trend Updates. Each monthly issue examines one cross-industry movement no brand can afford to ignore, answering 'why now' and spotlighting the opportunities brands can act on today.

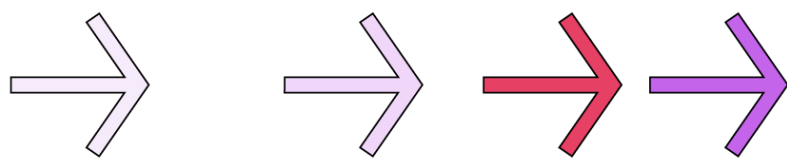
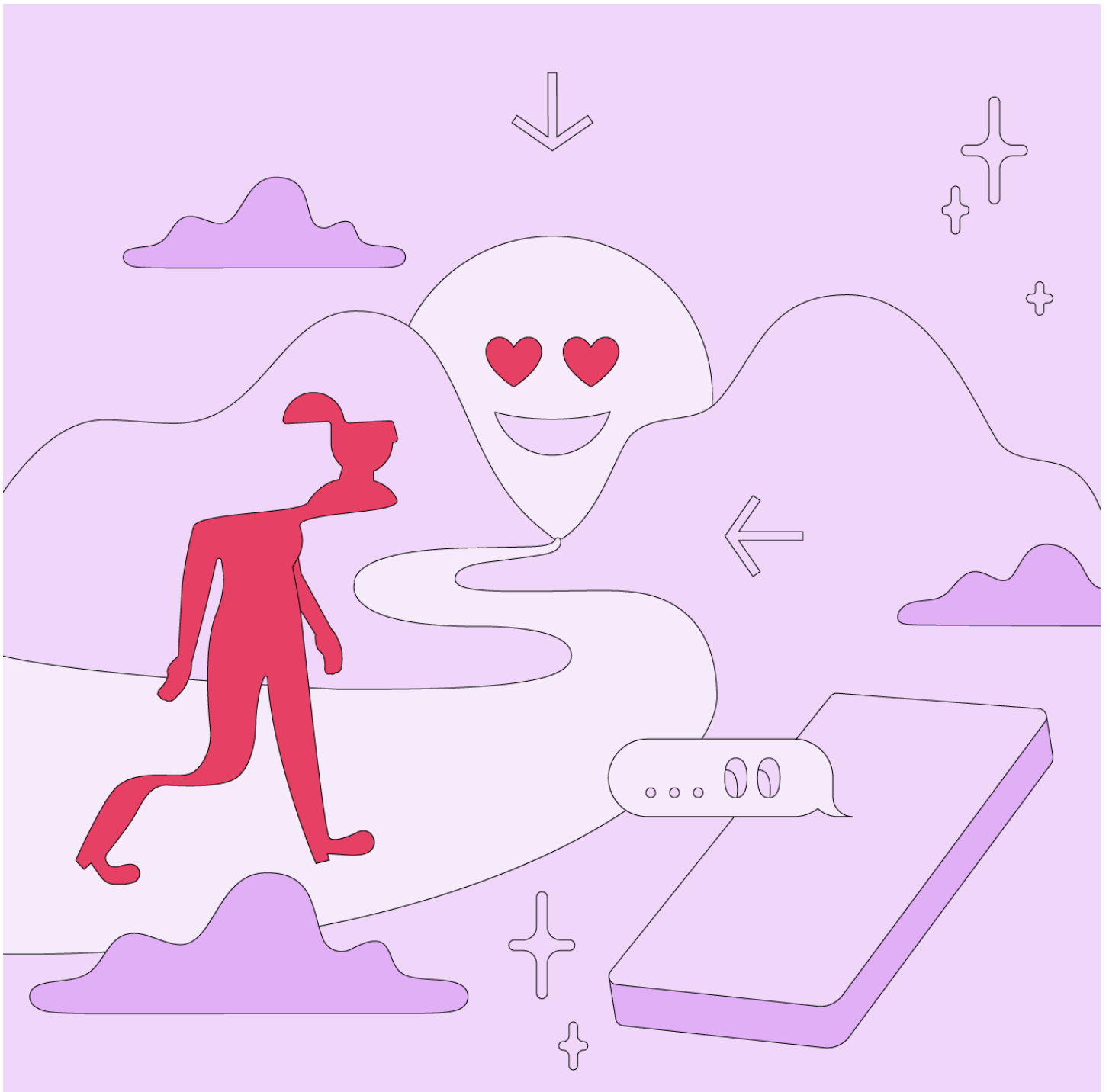
**All in a six-minute read.**

**Prompted by Facebook's Meta rebrand, 2021 was the year 'metaverse' officially entered popular vernacular.**

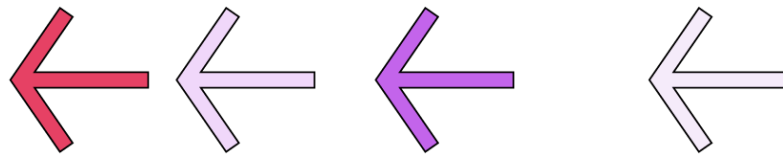
But how can your brand dive in? Our advice: take baby steps. Use the individual components of the metaverse - AR, VR, virtual avatars, gaming platforms, and more - to convey relevant information that not only speaks consumers' (increasingly informal) language but also empowers them in new ways. In brief, capture new audiences by going ✨ BEYOND WORDS ✨.

## **Prefer to listen instead?**

Check out the audio version here →



**WHY NOW?**

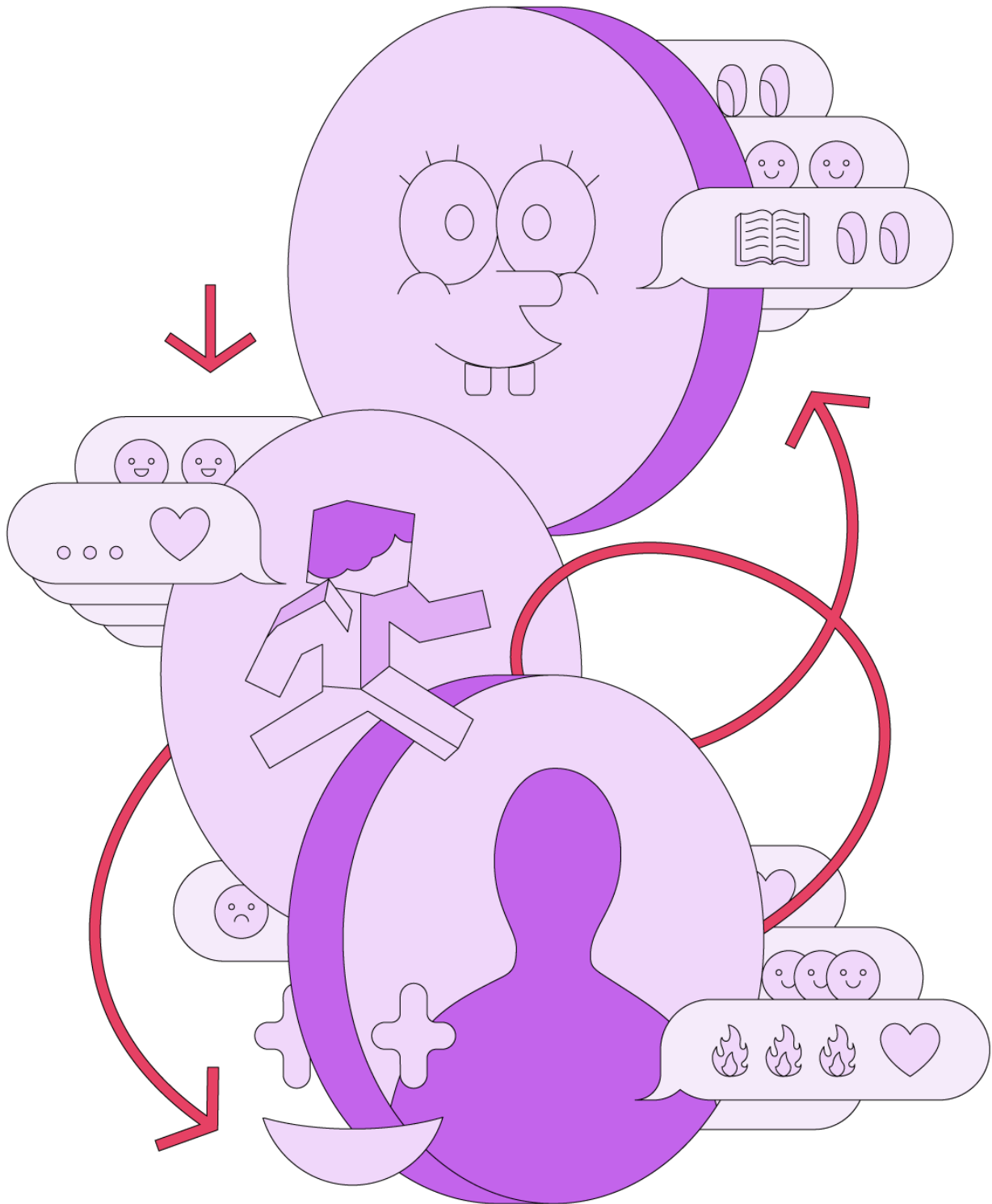


## CASUAL COMMS ON THE RISE

Chatbots, social media, messaging apps, old-school SMS... consumers are used to interacting with brands across multiple (and informal) channels. When communicating with each other, emojis, short videos and memes, which “speak rich collective truths”, are the go-to – particularly among Gen Z. Like it or not, communication is more varied than ever. If the existing vocabulary doesn’t work for you, don’t panic – 838 new emoji characters will be released through 2022.

## PLAY THE GAME

Games are no longer simply spaces for entertainment, they’re destinations where people can hangout. Brands are experimenting with ways to engage players within gameplay (hey Vans, meet H&M and CU). But this goes beyond branded worlds: the gamification of learning means young people are learning through non-traditional channels. As edutainment scales up, some are already re-thinking the classroom: Musk-backed Synthesis offers one-hour simulations where kids can collaborate.



## AVATAR ACQUAINTANCES

Imagine a world where a virtual customer service assistant interacts with you at a food kiosk or in a driverless car. NVIDIA are working to make that happen - soon. Avatars are already big in China, where some estimates suggest the virtual idol

industry could grow from CNY 100 mn (USD 15.5 mn) in 2018 to CNY 1.5 bn by 2023. Although virtual avatars mostly exist within music and fashion, they have the power to engage and connect with consumers at a deeper level.



## SEOUL METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

**Seoul aims to be the first city government to join the metaverse**

In December 2021, the **Seoul Metropolitan Government** launched its municipal metaverse - a virtual space in which citizens will be able to put on VR goggles and do everything from tour a historic site to file a civic complaint. By 2023 the city plans a 'Metaverse 120 Center' - a place for virtual public services. The full metaverse will be realized by 2026. In the city, an **AI chatbot** already deals with public inquiries and complaints.



## ALLY FINANCIAL

**Education space in Minecraft introduces students to financial concepts**

Developed by US-based Ally Financial, **Fintropolis** is a financial literacy gaming experience built within Minecraft. Players are introduced to financial concepts like cash flow, budgeting, taxes and investing through real-world scenarios. Teachers are encouraged to integrate Fintropolis into lesson plans. Released in July 2021, as of August Fintropolis had been downloaded more than 670,000 times.

*As seen in our **22 for '22** publication*



## **BEHAVR**

### **VR program reduces anxiety and fear in pregnant women**

US-based VR and health innovator, **BehaVR** launched its NurtureVR program in September 2021 - a program designed to relieve anxiety, fear, and stress in pregnant women. The platform uses VR to provide an immersive, calming environment where users can tap into meditation tools, breastfeeding simulations, and support. The program takes the prospective mothers on a 22-week journey, from the third trimester to eight weeks post-partum.





## CORONA

### AR experience highlights how plastic is destroying oceans and beaches

To encourage consumers to cut down on their plastic consumption, in June 2021 Corona launched its **Plastic Reality** AR experience. After answering a six-question quiz about their consumption habits, users' annual plastic footprint is visualized in their surroundings. The Mexican beer brand was the first global beverage brand to reach a net zero plastic footprint, meaning Corona recovers more plastic from the environment than it releases into the world.

## THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

### Game aims to inspire young players to learn more about the holocaust

**The Light in the Darkness** video game is designed to teach players about the Holocaust. The game follows a French family's experience in the lead-up to the Vel d'Hiv roundup in Paris in July 1942. Unlike a typical game - and to highlight what Jews faced at the time - players don't have choices. Developed by Luc Bernard in collaboration with 83-year-old Joan Salter, a Holocaust survivor and educator, the game is set to be released on Xbox in 2022.



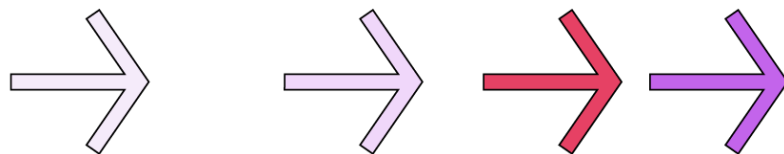


## EU POLLINATORS INITIATIVE

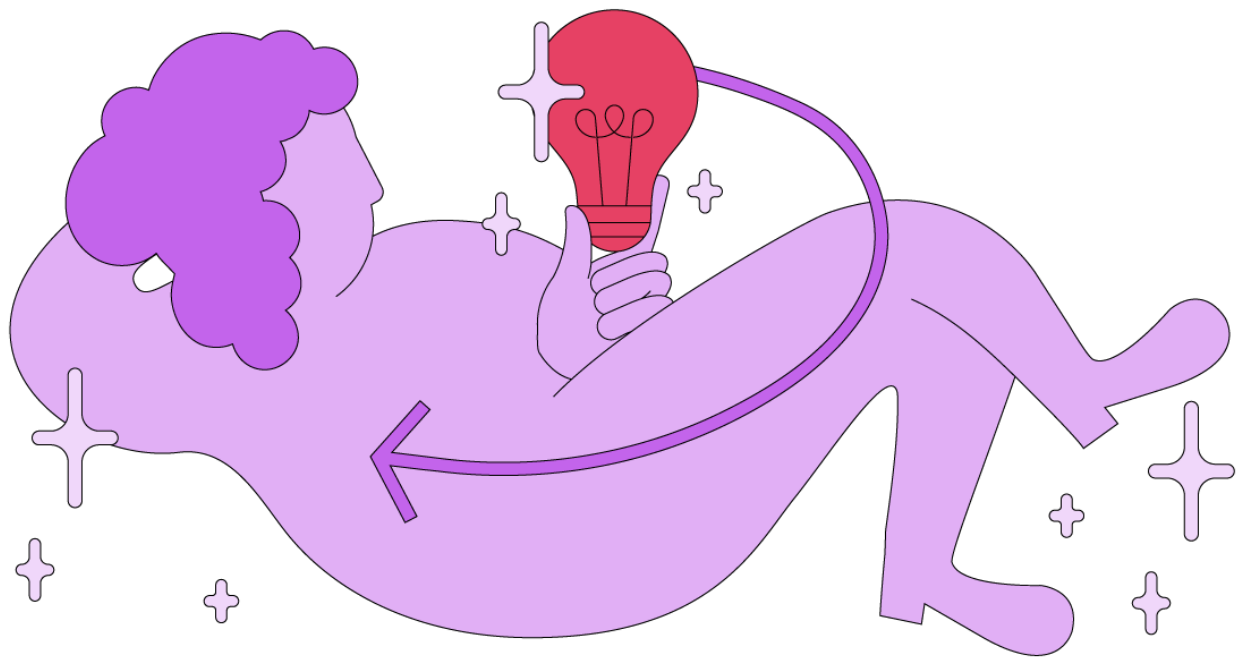
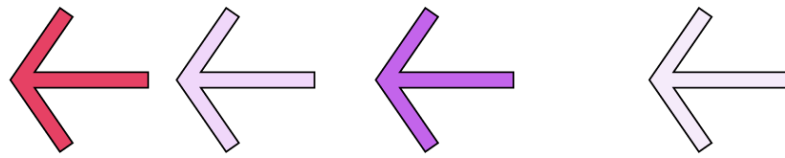
### Interactive VR experience imagines a future without pollinators

Set in 2050, **Pollinator Park** is a 30-minute VR experience that explores a future without bees and other pollinating insects. During the experience, users can re-pollinate the world and go grocery shopping in a pollinator-deprived world. Launched in May 2021, Pollinator Park was conceived by the EU Pollinators Initiative and created with 'archiobiotect' Vincent Callebaut. It's based on scientific research about the global decline of pollinator species.

*As seen in our **22 for '22** publication*



## OPPORTUNITIES



## NEW OWNERSHIP

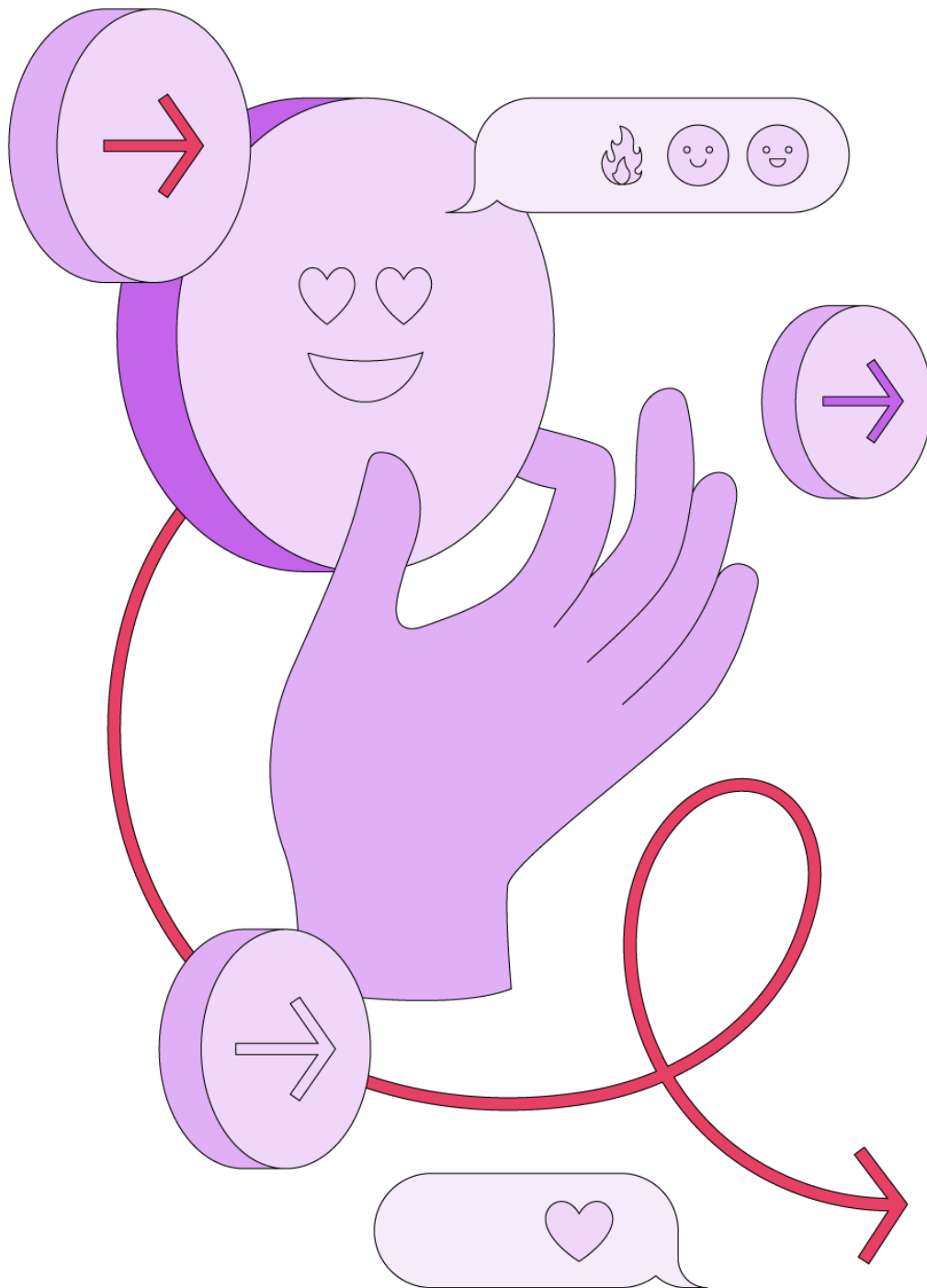
In the contemporary consumer arena, anyone can create content. Media is horizontal, with 'ordinary' people (particularly Gen Z) driving cultural conversations. Why not work with these creators to build effective ✨ BEYOND WORDS ✨ strategies? Working with new voices could help your brand step into new spheres and solve communication challenges in new ways: Fintropolis was conceived by interns from HBCUs who were challenged to devise a new way to teach kids about money. Who can help you see your blind spots?

## IMMERSION & EMPATHY

Sustainability messages are at risk of getting lost in a sea of sameness. Cut through the noise with more immersive information experiences – Corona’s AR activation and the educational Pollinator’s Park are just the start. The link between VR and greater empathy is already understood – could it help rebuild the human-planet connection and encourage pro-environmental behavior? These activations could be particularly powerful for brands looking to supercharge green campaigns and deliver on pledges.

## **MASTER THE STORYTELLING**

While gaming and serious subjects might seem a mismatch, it could help educators and nonprofits reach a whole new generation. But trying new formats isn’t always enough – Luc Bernard is also experimenting with the game experience, limiting player choice to simulate the helplessness many Jews felt during the Holocaust. Can you develop digital experiences that allow participants to see through the eyes of another? To engage with consumers in the metaverse, you’ll need to go beyond entertainment and novelty.



## Five easy ways to start venturing ✨ BEYOND WORDS ✨:

1. Introduce your colleagues to the metaverse by hosting an interactive team meeting on Skittish (prepare for chaos) or by testing out Tangle.
2. Building the metaverse will require 1,000x the computational power available today. If you haven't already, it's time to think about how you might offset your digital footprint.

3. Follow Ally Financial's lead and invite the younger members of your team to come up with a BEYOND WORDS innovation using our [Consumer Trend Canvas](#). For a metaverse example, [click here](#)!
4. Team-building exercise: Start thinking about new ventures by splitting your colleagues into groups and letting them loose with free AR-building platforms like [Halo AR](#).
5. We've rounded up a handful of brands already using the metaverse as a force for good. [Use these ideas](#) to power your next brainstorming session.

## TREND BEHIND THE TREND

At TrendWatching, we track trends on various levels, from micro to macro, mega to meta. This big picture thinking allows us to spot how expectations transfer across industries, regions, demographics and more. ✨ BEYOND WORDS ✨ sits under our METAPHYSICAL mega-trend, which explores the next evolution of the internet through the convergence of the physical and digital worlds. While yesterday's web was dominated by websites and the social media's infinite scroll, the next iteration will be defined by virtual worlds, metaverses, and augmented digitalphysical realities. Get ready!

Want *even* more? Take a look at [Amplify](#), our Trend Intelligence Platform.



## The Make→Shifts you may have missed:

From "[ACCLIMATORS](#)" to "[IN-FLUENCERS](#)", our previous Make→Shift issues provide a cornucopia of purpose-driven insights, plus actions you can take on the trends that matter.

[Previous briefings](#)

## And what's more...

- **Did someone say 4-day workweek?**

Companies across the globe are trialing or permanently implementing 4-day workweeks and employees are embracing the change. Head over to our sister publication [Business of Purpose](#) for tips on reducing hours and boosting your staff's wellbeing.

## Never miss an opportunity again.

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## 2023 Trend Check

Discover the opportunities you're not running with, yet... but should.

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