



Trendipedia 2025

Authentic connections

Executive Summary

Welcome to Trendipedia

Executive summary 2, 2025

We are happy to share our second Trendipedia executive summary for the year 2025, with another report that brings you up to speed with cutting-edge trend information, evidential data and expert analysis.

This edition focuses on the **Authentic connections** trend, which is a response to our fast-paced technology-driven world. In the search for belonging, lots of people are leaning closer into local communities,

and buying locally produced, authentic or ethnic foods. Many are seeking - and feeling nostalgia for - a simpler, slower way of life.

Discover some inspiring real-world examples of how businesses are responding to this emerging consumer trend, as well as ideas on how your own business might respond.

We hope you will enjoy reading, using and building on this material!

Anna Larsson and the Business Insights and Analytics team, Market Operations, Tetra Pak



Introducing Authentic connections

Technological advancements have significantly reduced how much time we spend interacting with one another face-to-face — a trend that was exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Thanks to the rise of self-service apps, online delivery and automated pre-ordering, there is rarely any need for small talk with local cashiers and baristas. This absence of casual conversation is having a negative effect on our mental health.

Authentic connections is about reestablishing everyday social interactions, and making people feel seen and heard, as opposed to just being an order number or a customer profile in 'the system'. Some brands are attempting to address the trend by communicating in a more natural, friendly way, but the research shows they don't always get it the right!

56% 

of consumers worldwide aged 18-42 say that a brand's attempt to engage with them often goes wrong because they lack authenticity.

What's behind the trend? ①

Below are some of the main driving forces behind, and responses to, the Authentic connections trend.



1. THE PURSUIT OF AUTHENTICITY

This translates into a desire for locally sourced and ethnically inspired products, both of which lean heavily on transparency and connection to community. Consumers are often willing to pay a premium for origin-sourced ingredients, such as Colombian coffee or Madagascan vanilla because they are perceived as genuine.

2. THE DESIRE FOR FACE-TO-FACE SOCIALISING

In the pursuit of meaningful social interactions, many now favour time well-spent over time saved. In China, for example, home bars are a growing trend where people set up small, personalised bar areas in their homes for entertaining guests, mixing drinks, or simply enjoying a drink in a cozy, private space.

<https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1014755>



What's behind the trend? ②



3. NOSTALGIA FOR SIMPLER TECHNOLOGY AND FAMILIAR OLD THINGS

Some of the simpler, more tangible technologies of the past are being revived. One example is old-school devices, such as Nokia's classic 3210 "brick phone", which was relaunched in 2024 and sold out in just two days.* Meanwhile, some Gen Z consumers are consciously choosing digital point-and-shoot cameras**.

* <https://www.techtimes.com/articles/304232/20240502/nokia-hyping-brick-phone-era-3210s-return.htm>

** <https://www.barrierestartjournal.com/entertainment/why-gen-z-loves-the-old-school-digital-point-and-shoot-camera-7514187>

4. THE CRAVING FOR A 'DIGITAL DETOX'

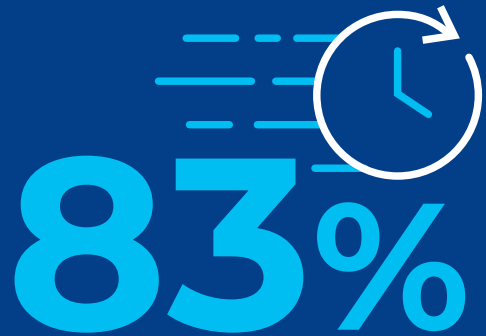
As an antidote to rapid change, Gen Z is embracing the TikTok trend of dopamine detoxing, known as 'raw dogging'. This is manifested in, for example, sitting silently on long-haul flights, rejecting digital entertainment and even abstaining from food and drink.

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20241009-a-better-way-to-raw-dog-travel>



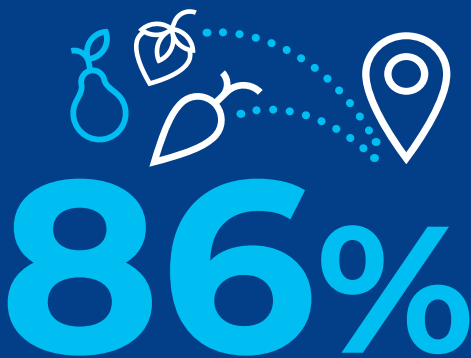
Overwhelmed by the pace of change

Many feel they simply can't keep up with the pace of change. This is particularly true in countries which are experiencing rapid economic development, such as Indonesia (96%), the Philippines and Kenya (both at 95%).¹ But the statistics tell us that this is a global phenomenon.



of global consumers agree that the world is changing too fast¹

Authentic connections offers a much-needed counterbalance to help people cope. It encourages us to move away from the relentless drive to “optimise” and “hack” our time for maximum productivity. It invites us to slow down, to be fully present, and to engage more deeply with one another.



of people surveyed are “generally willing to spend extra for a product that is produced locally”¹

Buying local

Most people have full access to convenience stores and fully stocked supermarkets, yet they still choose to go out and meet local producers on a Saturday. Perhaps the local farmers have an interesting story to tell about how the food was grown?

The desire to buy local is particularly strong in emerging economies such as the Philippines, Zambia, Egypt, Thailand and Indonesia. The figures indicate that consumers not only seek out locally produced food; they are also willing to pay extra for it.

On a deeper level, focusing on local impact allows people to feel they are actively contributing to their community — a response to the anonymity of the fast-paced, globalised world.

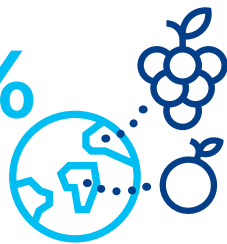
¹ Ipsos Global Trends (Base: 50,237 adults surveyed in the markets shown between 15 February and 23 April 2024)

The stories behind the products

When consumers choose a product based on its connection to a specific country or region, they are often curious to learn more about its back story.



63%



of European consumers want to know about the ingredients used (where they come from, how they are produced, etc.)¹

Not surprisingly, some people are also willing to spend extra to get a hold of the genuine item, whether they're shopping for ingredients or eating out.

56%



of UK consumers say that they would pay more for a dish that they perceive as more authentic.²

63%



of Western European consumers consider chocolates more 'premium' if they come with an origin story.³

¹ Suedzucker 2024

² Bidfood 2024⁴

³ <https://www.barry-callebaut.com/en/trends-insights/top-chocolate-trends>



The rise of social commerce

With social commerce – i.e. selling products and services through social media – the entire customer journey from product discovery to payment happens on social channels such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest.

Shoppable posts, stories with product links and in-app checkout processes enable a frictionless shopping experience — which explains why social commerce is becoming big business.

\$571
billion



In 2023, social commerce generated an estimated revenue of 571 billion USD, with a projected global CAGR of +13.7% within five years

Perhaps more importantly in the context of this report, social commerce gives consumers the sense that they are connecting authentically with the influencer or celebrity from whom they're buying. Even if the connection is one-sided, social media's inherently up-close-and-personal nature fosters a sense of intimacy that makes shopping more appealing.

Thailand and Colombia boast some of the highest percentages of social commerce buyers globally. China, the United Arab Emirates and India follow closely behind.

91%



91% of online shoppers in Thailand and Colombia were already making purchases through social media platforms in 2023.



Putting our phones down

Despite the rise in social commerce, people are discovering the best way to nurture authentic connections is by setting aside their mobile phones.



52%

Over half of the world's population, 52%, agrees to the statement: "I try to limit use of my smart-phone these days."

India leads the anti-phone trend, with a striking 75% saying they actively aim to reduce screen time. However, countries with mobile-first cultures are less likely to share this mindset – for example, China, at 37%.

In tandem with reduced mobile phone-use, socialising in person is making a comeback.



60%

When asked if they preferred to "socialise online rather than physically in person," 60%, said they prefer to meet in person.

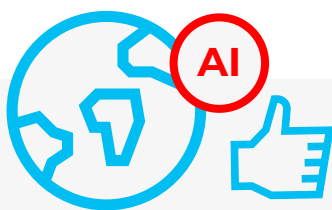
Concerns about AI

Although the numbers vary from country to country, a sizeable segment of global consumers worries about the increasing dominance of digital technologies, and especially AI.

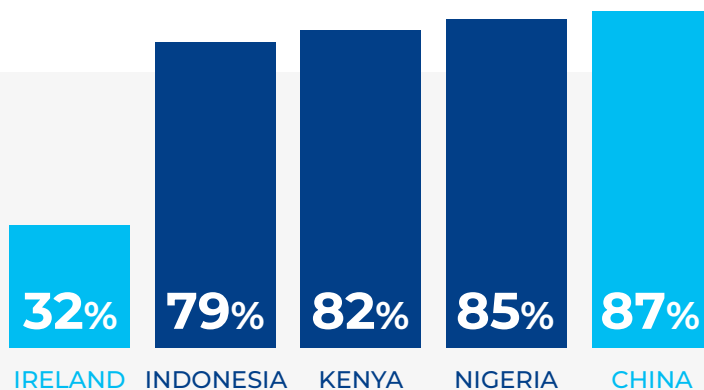
Recent examples show that, when applied with an empathic eye, AI can actually help foster deeper connections between people and brands. With a better understanding of consumers' needs and preferences, products and experiences can be crafted to suit the individual.

For one example of a meaningful application of AI, see the recent Pedigree petfood campaign on page 13.

It's interesting to note that countries which are leapfrogging from low to high-tech environments without going through an intermediate stage, tend to have a more positive view of modern technologies.



Percentage* of people who agree that Artificial Intelligence is having a positive impact on the world we live in:



* Global average: 57%

Ipsos Global Trends (50,237 adults surveyed in the markets shown between 15 February and 23 April 2024)



Marketing that doesn't feel like marketing

Taking Authentic connections a step further, an emerging phenomenon is 'unhinged marketing', where brands ditch perfectly polished content in favour of something that feels more real.



For example, Wendy's social media campaigns 'roast' users and competitors like McDonald's, Burger King, and others on Twitter. Wendy's "National Roast Day" is a recurring event where Wendy's invites users to tweet at them, asking to be roasted. Wendy then responds with clever and sometimes over-the-top (but good-spirited) comebacks, contributing to their "unhinged" persona.



Similarly, Duolingo, the language-learning app, has attracted massive attention on TikTok for its wild, chaotic, and over-the-top content featuring their mascot, Duo the Owl. Duo is portrayed as a slightly menacing mascot, jokingly threatening users to finish their language lessons. The content includes absurd humor, pop-culture references, and collaborations that resonate with Gen Z.

The rationale behind unhinged marketing boils down to the demographics brands are trying to reach. It's tough to win the attention of Gen Z consumers. They want marketing that doesn't feel like marketing, and they appreciate when corporations show self-awareness.

Market examples: How businesses are responding ①

Without going as far as the unhinged marketers, there are lots of fun and easy ways to embrace the Authentic connections trend. Here are a few examples to show how brands are being creative and trying new approaches.



Connected dining

In Verona, Italy, Al Condominio restaurant offers free wine to diners who lock up their phones during dinner, encouraging genuine connections. The idea has been a hit, with 90% of customers choosing to disconnect.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/apr/15/restaurant-in-italy-offers-free-bottle-of-wine-to-customers-who-hand-in-phone>



Social staff

At Toyko-based “Cafe Run By Friends,” the staff treat patrons like old friends, greeting them with an “It’s been a while!” and asking, “How’s your mom doing?” The idea is for customers to have the experience of dropping by a shop or bar where a friend works part-time. The part-time bit is true: the cafe’s employees are also actors and models.

<https://www.trendwatching.com/innovation-of-the-day/no-need-to-be-a-regular-a-new-cafe-in-harajuku-treats-all-customers-like-friends>

Selfless shelves

The Lebanese cream cheese brand Puck has launched ‘Selfless shelves,’ empowering women from villages across Lebanon to sell handcrafted, locally sourced products in Carrefour supermarkets. Packaged in repurposed jars, each product tells the woman’s story, supporting her family with the income earned.

<https://www.puckarabia.com/en/campaigns/selfless-shelves/>



Market examples: How businesses are responding ②

Adopt a dog with AI

Pedigree petfood used AI to turn snapshots of real-life shelter dogs waiting to be adopted into professional-looking billboards. The technology intelligently placed ads based on the viewers location and switched them out in real-time whenever a dog was adopted.

<https://www.marketing-beat.co.uk/2024/04/12/pedigree-dogs-ai-adverts/>



Community-centric food hall

IKEA is helping revitalise San Francisco's food scene while fostering community connections with a new, community-centric food hall, opened in April 2024. It includes a bakery school, various cocktail bars and five local food vendors, reflecting the Bay Area's cultural diversity – all under one roof.

<https://chainstoreage.com/high-end-food-hall-arrives-san-franciscos-meeting-place>

Integrating global and local

Riding the so-called 'Guo chao' trend which celebrates Chinese heritage, traditional aesthetics, and modern innovation, Starbucks has opened a new heritage concept store in Suzhou. The shop is themed around 'Gardening & Dreaming' and features a large-scale art installation with 70 pieces of Su embroidery bandages and a grand mural of ink and blue, created with needle brush painting techniques.

<https://daoinsights.com/news/starbucks-china-opens-third-intangible-cultural-heritage-concept-store-in-suzhou/#:~:text=In%20early%20June%2C%20to%20mark,in%202021%20and%202022%20respectively>



Implications for your business

How might your business meet the Authentic connections trend? To get the ball rolling, we've selected a few ideas to consider below:



Food and beverage brands:

4 THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Find ways to transform food shopping into a social event, both in real life and digitally.
2. Stress the authentic aspects of your product using e.g. cultural storytelling in your branding.
3. Partner with local artisans and farmers to launch co-branded products and run collaborative campaigns.
4. Use nostalgia as part of your positioning strategy and include nostalgic elements that appeal to different generations such as traditional tools, toys, and garments.



Product development:

4 THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Explore and introduce new ethnic foods - spices, like pink pepper, masala, and za'atar which are traditionally used in food, but put them into beverages.
2. Highlight traditional recipes, including those passed down from grandmothers.
3. Support and source from local farmers.
4. Offer seasonal flavours to keep your product range authentic to consumers.



Packaging:

4 THINGS TO CONSIDER

1. Build a compelling story behind the product, detailing its creation, purpose, and intended audience and dedicate more space on the package to sharing this story
2. Use QR codes or other interactive elements to provide additional information about the product's journey or engage consumers with the brand
3. Consider community support initiatives, such as local artwork or partnerships and highlight them on your packaging to demonstrate the brand's commitment to the local area.
4. Use packaging with e.g. nostalgic tear-opening features, packaging formats or graphic designs from the past.

Example:
Coffee concentrate sold
in Tetra Classic® Aseptic
packages





What's next ?

🔗 [Click here](#) to book a meeting with us and dig deeper into how you could meet the needs of your consumers as they seek authentic connections in their lives.

