

# Think Forward

2024 global report — 



<https://thinkforward.wearesocial.com/>

# THE SOCIAL RECKONING

Last year, with algorithms funnelling people into ever more specific corners of the internet, users found empowerment in their niches - from **ButterTok** to **r/LiminalSpace**. In those smaller spaces, they looked for the kind of pure authenticity and unhampered creativity that defined **the early days** of social media. Niches were meant to rescue social: to bring it back to its un-commodified roots.

Enter 2023. Offline, a cost of living crisis put everyone's minds on their wallets. But looking back to their screens for some respite, users didn't see a space free from commercial interests. Instead, even in a fragmented landscape, profit was loudly informing play. Platforms like X would verify anyone **for a price**; brands raced to hop on quick-moving trends, from **goblincore** to **rat girl summer**; algorithms surfaced **lukewarm-but-palatable** content rather than fringe creativity; influencers **sang the praises** of Shein's fast fashion factories.

'**Eat the rich**' might have been pop culture's favourite storyline, but there was no denying it: money was being made on social. For nostalgic users, this was cause to mourn the lost innocence of the early days of MySpace and **Tumblr**. But for future-facing ones, this meant staging a new kind of revolt: one that reframes how creativity can coexist with a 'sellout internet'.

First came the **deinfluencing movement**, where influencers balanced criticism and consumerism. Now, this balancing act of the commercial and the creative has become digital culture's ongoing theme. Creators like **@2girls1bottl3** and **@mattisontwins** make brands into background props in their creative flow. Influencers like **Bobbi Althoff** straddle fakeness and authenticity, becoming a self-aware hybrid of the two. Cultural phenomena like **Barbie** show that people will willingly buy into manufactured hype, as long as it makes space for **community, creativity, and play**.

In this new era of social, people have realised that neither commerciality nor creativity can govern alone. Instead, users are looking for new avenues for genuine self-expression - even within a commodified landscape. And unlike the idealised days of the early internet, this new coalition government of capitalism and creativity has an inbuilt space for brands - but also a new and nuanced set of demands. In 2024's **Social Reckoning**, **every brand will be judged. Sponsored ad? Or patron of the arts?**

SCROLL TO SEE



## ATTENTION LAYERING

Having reached peak stimulus, content is finding more nuanced ways to hold people's focus.



## POST- REPRESENTATION

As notions of identity compound and deepen, communities want to see messy complexity over neat narratives.



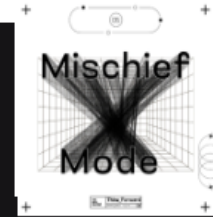
## OFFLINE INTERNET

As the power balance between online and offline is shifting, people expect greater interplay between worlds.



## EVERYDAY FANDOM

In search of mainstream collectivity, everyday users are acting like ultra-fans.



## MISCHIEF MODE

As social media and the internet become more commoditised, users are breaking out of the sameness by channelling their rebellious spirit.