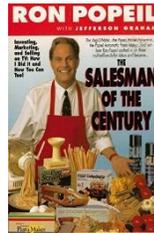


2021 Global Brand Letter December Edition



2021 Global Brand Letter December Edition

“The comfort of the rich depends upon an abundant supply of the poor.” - Voltaire

“We know they are lying, they know they are lying, they know we know they are lying, we know they know we know they are lying, but they are still lying.” - Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

“*Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas.*” [The critic spares the crows, and torments the doves.] - Juvenal

Do you feel as if you're suffering a semipublic breakthrough case of neurotypical vaccine failure? It introduces the potential for a Squid-Theranos merchiverse. If only the social credit system would permit such phytosanitary productization during an extinction-level event, the Wuli-Shili-Renli requirement would be satisfied, and we can overcome lockdown and get back to idiopathic bioengineering.

“I don't like this world. I definitely do not like it. The society in which I live disgusts me; advertising sickens me; computers make me puke.” - Michel Houellebecq

Advertising

Meta, formerly FB, has 10,000+ people working across both virtual and augmented reality platforms. After less than one week on board, its first Oculus headset ad partner **Resolution Games** asked for a divorce. Meta had sought to grow its virtual reality business by adding advertising dollars, but the gaming community would have none of it. Headsets endeavor to block out the real world and gamers resisted the suggestion that their beloved paid-for games were about to be barraged by ads. Meta-averse Oculus users complained that this type of advertising didn't *click* with them, so Resolution suggested it might move a small temporary ad test to its free fish-catching game, the aptly-named *Bait*.

In the Middle Kingdom, foreign products were historically viewed as safer and of higher quality. They formerly represented a superior western lifestyle, and held a formidable advantage over local rivals. But no longer. In a dynamic turnaround, startups and domestic brands take an ever-growing share of **China's** booming consumer market. Homegrown Chinese products turned cool. Consumers demonstrate growing confidence in China style. Native products don't have the heritage brand equity or baggage, and interact with consumers in a more intimate youthful and automated environment. Some of this is the result of hefty investments in social media marketing and the ability to accelerate development of new products. Chinese consumers have eclectic tastes and a keener desire to chase trends. They rely on a sophisticated ecommerce experience that bridges influencers, social media platforms, easy online purchase via places like Alibaba, and access to vast archives of customer feedback and photos. This is all propped up by a network of micro-influencers and influencers with huge fanbases like the lipstick king Li Jiaqi, who boasts over 45m Douyin followers.

POP QUIZ

Match the Chinese home-grown brands with the Western competitors they overtook in 2021:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Babycare | A. Coca-Cola |
| 2. Genki Forest | B. Estée Lauder and Maybelline |
| 3. Perfect Diary | C. Nestlé |
| 4. Three Squirrels | D. P&G |

ANSWERS

1-D, 2-A, 3-B, 4-C

A Virginia couple stole more than \$31m directly from consumers, retailers and manufacturers through a **fake coupon scam**. They offered counterfeits with inflated values far in excess of authentic coupons, forgeries virtually indistinguishable from the real thing. The couple preyed upon groups of coupon enthusiasts and took in money via online payment methods that included Bitcoin and PayPal. But a disgruntled coupon lover began to unravel the scheme. In a raid on the couple's home, Federal agents seized \$1m in fake coupons and discovered 13,000 separate and distinct counterfeit coupon designs in their computer. Charges included felony level offenses for mail and wire fraud. A separate 5-year scheme defrauded Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. For their trouble, the remorseful offenders received a 12-year sentence, wings clipped.

The metaverse may turn out to be a mashup of a big box store and the wall in the boy's bathroom at your high school. A proto marketing strategy by **Budweiser** turned into a bust after the beer's brand management authorized a change of their Twitter profile picture to a suggestive sketch of a rocket featuring the Bud logo. What was intended as an opportunity to sell beer from the metaverse to remind you of Bud's trend-setting Web 3.0 appeal, found itself reviled, lampooned and surrounded by adolescent-grade dirty-minded scrawls which proliferate in the decentralized world. Bud's OpenSea wallet was flooded with unwanted gift NFTs, including many that looked strangely like penises. The same user who shared "Minimalistic Cock" with Bud boasted of having done the same to VISA, who had their own besmirched NFT space. Augmented reality applications enable mischievous hackers to realistically integrate unicorns and dicks into telepresences. While pundits believe that the biggest use in practice will be advertising, the other obvious application will trend in adult entertainment.

"You have to let other people be right. It consoles them for not being anything else." - André Gide

AI

What motivates the new strategic partnership between **LVMH** and **Google**? The official party line describes a 5-year deal encompassing demand forecasting, inventory optimisation, and co-innovation opportunities which integrate the Google Cloud, data and AI. Google will use the digital ecosystem to spot trends, project what a customer may want, fine-tune and personalize the customer experience. Using data gleaned from 75 brands across multiple industries and 5000 stores around the world, the retailer will segment ultra-VIP customers, connect their first,

second and third-party data and predict and identify patterns in a unified view of luxury. Under the presumption that privacy, personalization and luxury are synonymous, LVMH looks to *boost* high customer lifetime value. It's hoped that the partnership will lead brands to know *what kind of product to push* and reinforce *their purchase frequency*. It sounds like unenlightened post-consumerist bottom-line drivel, doesn't it? The era of AI-driven strategies for business pillars has arrived, and will cast its dark spell over creatives, ad content, product and logistics.

Disney's chief executive says the company is interested in materiality and the transformational impact on [its] business from a yield standpoint. An ambitious new digital service called MyMagic+ at the megalith's theme parks aspires to make Mickey more profitable by innovating automated guest management. It was developed at a cost of around \$1bn. The Magic Kingdom in Florida gets 21 million visitors annually. DisneyWorld alone has six separately ticketed parks and entry to one park for one day can approach \$500 for a family of four. People will spend more time if they find the experience less overwhelming. The Seven Dwarfs Mine train, a gentle rollercoaster, often has a standby wait that can exceed two hours on busy weekends. Consumers have become increasingly accustomed to paying surcharges for special access and perks, a phenomenon which Disney understands. It's retiring its free line-skipping FastPass and will now charge \$15 for the privilege, with upgrades charged per day, which will contribute to a colossal new revenue stream. Thanks to a magical digital navigation tool called Disney Genie, first, second and third-party data will be employed to create personalized itineraries. The price will fluctuate based on date, attraction and park, taking its leads from surge pricing, similar to Uber. The service will update like GPS does. It will integrate mobile food ordering, ride wait times, restaurant reservations and distribute demand through the theme park's ecosystem. AI isn't the only component, though. Analog world will be served with new hardware, slated to equip 28,000 hotel room doors with radio frequency readers.

"What fresh hell is this?" - Dorothy Parker

Crypto

It pays to be popular among ransomware gangs. Bitcoin leaves a visible digital trail of transactions, but the privacy coin **Monero** was designed to obscure the sender and receiver, as well as the amount exchanged, thus its popularity with illicit payment schemes and money launderers. Russia-headquartered REvil, a notorious ransomware group, removed the option of paying in Bitcoin altogether and demanded Monero only. DarkSide, last year's bad guys, charge a 10-20% premium to their victims paying in riskier Bitcoin. Big cryptocurrency exchanges have shied away from listing privacy coins for fear of attracting regulatory scrutiny. The IRS even offered a bounty of \$625k to develop tools to help trace Monero.

“I’ve had great success being a total idiot.” - Jerry Lewis

Epiphanies

It’s no longer enough to offer **streaming** only. As competition heats up among the digi-Goliaths, a struggle to monopolize the online entertainment space begins. It’s all-out war as companies beef portfolios, develop new skill sets, amass media rights to expand beyond video. **Netflix** looks to diversification and recently hired experts in podcasting and video games. They’ve launched an online store to sell products linked to programming and are set to offer a single, ever-expanding subscription. **Disney** tests new interactive activities, including sports betting. Walt would be scandalized. **Amazon** deploys video streaming as a perk to its Prime shipping service. Main requirement: communications-based services that thrive on *smartphones*.

With a series of collaborations and physical events, **Balenciaga** knocked Gucci off the top luxury brand position. A rise in demand for dressier styles and resort wear coupled with partnerships with Fortnite, Kim Kardashian, the Met Gala, a special Simpsons episode, and sponsorship of a new Kanye West album launch spoke authentically to different groups, utilizing statements strongly rooted in pop culture. Gucci retained the #2 position via its tie-in with the new Ridley Scott movie and event-based initiatives: the Olympic Games, EURO 2020, and the US Open. We’re witnessing the rise of anytime, anywhere brand engagement. Digital is suddenly at the center of the fashion universe. Multi-platform mentions of product spread the word. The brands continue to make dubious claims about their positive social impact.

The highly competitive and lucrative online sports betting business has a glut of new fans. **Authentic Brands**, owners of **Sports Illustrated** introduced a new mobile betting app built on the ashes of the now defunct iconic sports weekly magazine. September’s special edition “The Gambling Issue” plumps SI Sportsbook on the back cover, and there are plans for Club SI, linked to *motorsports events*. **Disney** is said to be seeking \$3bn to license its ESPN name for sports wagering. Lesser known brands **DraftKings** and **FanDuel** have online presence offering daily fantasy-sports games. **888**, a sports betting app is already available in NJ and Europe, yet has no significant brand profile in the USA. In the UK 40% of 25-34 year olds participate in sports betting, wagering a whopping \$4.4bn in 2020. Casino and mobile betting operator **Penn National Gaming**, who own the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas, launched plans for branded bars in Philadelphia and Chicago.

Discord, an ironically-named platform with 150m subscribers who chat with one another while gaming, heard from users that their app was difficult to learn; they quickly removed niche gamer language from it. In August 2021 they refused a \$12bn takeover offer from Microsoft. The company jettisoned advertising as a business model in favor of offering its users premium features like exclusive emojis, animated avatars and higher video resolution, for \$99.99 a year. Subscription equals money: it’s predictable, recurring, less sensitive to economic downturn. The hope is that users eventually make purchases within the games. **Sony PlayStation** took notice and acquired a minority stake. But researchers found Discord was a hotbed for the spreading of

malicious links. The company snapped up **Sentropy**, a start-up whose AI-powered software detects and removes online harassment.

Barbie turned 62 years old last year and she feels significantly better after a visit to rehab and a makeover, thank you very much. Her midlife crisis occurred at a time when brand **Mattel** had lost its Disney license to Hasbro, and a critical retailer, Toys “R” Us, dematerialized in a cloud of bankruptcy. Millennial parents turned on battered Barbie. Other brand stars were adrift and unsure of how to compete for attention. Revenue plunged, profit became loss. A new CEO focused on extending the parent brand into film, television, digital gaming, live events, consumer products, music and digital media. After her makeover, Barbie received 150 different body shapes, skin tones and hairstyles. Wheelchair Barbie was a runaway success and during the pandemic Mattel sold more than 100 Barbie dolls a minute. Netflix will annually stream Barbie cartoons. Barbie craves more, so Mattel Films, created in 2018, plans an eponymous live-action movie directed by Greta Gerwig. They promise smart, playful films ostensibly without condescension for young women and not designed to encourage conspicuous consumption. And 13 more films are in the works, including other sub-brand toy flicks themed on *Hot Wheels* and *Magic 8 Ball*. Mattel’s stock price has climbed, but the reinvented doll has her suspicious and wide-open eyes firmly planted on competitor movies in development themed by *Play-Doh* and *Peeps* Easter candy.

There’s rumblings under the sea about a themed drive-into SpongeBob SquarePants hotel, an indicator of **experiential location-based licensing deals**. Warner Bros. opens a hotel on Abu Dhabi’s Yas Island, managed by Hilton, under the Curio Collection sub-brand. In its corridors, the 257-room *story-driven hospitality experience* will display a collection of curated archives, props and costumes, giant digital screens, five restaurants, and room service delivered by your favorite Looney Tunes characters. It’s located next door to the world’s largest indoor theme park, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, which boasts 29 rides. Local government plans to make Yas Island a contactless destination, removing the human element from transactions and operations. This means mobile-friendly, robotics and voice activation, smart kiosks, contactless payments, touchless check-in, all in the interest of avoiding crowds and long queues.

One of the symptoms of Covid-19 infection is loss of smell or taste, a factor affecting **olfactory branding**. These days almost everything is scented. The pandemic has changed how people want themselves, their clothes and homes to smell. Fragrance now signifies hygiene, as well as social status. The extent to which products need to be adapted to local cultural tastes and expectations is more and more important, so large fragrance providers rely on big data to shape product creation preferences. It’s an important driver of sector growth. In the past, uniqueness and originality were signifiers of elite status. The big social divide in the future may be between those who can afford to be original, and those whose fragrant tastes are shaped by algorithms.

Taco Bell wants your old sauce packets back, though it is something of a mystery why. Gen Z isn’t ready to pay for sustainable behavior, even though investors are attracted by ESG policies and greenwashing. Roughly 8 billion of those little plastic sauce packets a year wind up in

landfill. Since most of its business is takeaway, Taco Bell teamed up with Terra Cycle, who convert non-recyclable products and waste into raw materials that can then be used in new products. Taco Bell is asking customers to collect the packets and ship them back using free shipping labels. A noble effort to try and lure kids away from their virtual landscapes long enough to visit a real post office or mailbox outside the metaverse.

Shein, a Chinese fast-fashion retailer known for rock-bottom prices overtook Amazon as the most downloaded app in the USA; investors flocked to the company. Its popularity contradicts polls that insist young adults are sustainably minded. Shein has low scores for ethics and ESG, a spate of trademark disputes and low sustainability ratings. It treats employees poorly, has bad customer service, fewer delivery options. Price and availability are still the leading drivers for Gen Z purchase decisions.

"What does the money machine eat? It eats youth, spontaneity, life, beauty, and, above all, it eats creativity. It eats quality and shits quantity." - William S. Burroughs

IP

The **EU's intellectual property office** invalidated trademarks claimed by British street artist **Banksy** following a lawsuit brought by a greeting card company. Citing his inappropriate behavior, a panel found no evidence that the disruptive artist was actually producing, selling or providing any goods and had acted in bad faith in registering the works. His case was undone by public statements and those of his lawyer. Banksy treasures anonymity, which means he's ineligible to secure copyrights.

Clint Eastwood won \$6.1m in a judgment against a Lithuanian company who made it appear he was endorsing their CBD products. Charges were filed by the company that owns rights to his likeness after they discovered a fabricated online interview and manipulated meta tags which blatantly altered search results.

"The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." - Dr. Johnson

Miramax sued **Quentin Tarantino** over the director's planned sale of NFTs based on Pulp Fiction screenplay pages. Miramax argues the right to sell NFTs is owned and controlled by them, that Tarantino signed away rights to *all media*. Tarantino's lawyer says the outlaw director holds reserved rights to print publication of the original script. Miramax says print publication and NFTs are not the same thing. The "proposed sale is a *one-time transaction* which does not constitute publication, does not fall within the intended meaning of print publication or screenplay publication."

Trademark applications indicate **Nike** plans to sell **digital sneakers**, and to offer virtual goods as part of videogames and other online platforms.

Recur, a technology company that designs and develops on-chain branded experiences that help users collect, buy, and trade digital products, announced its first strategic partnership with Sanrio for **Hello Kitty-branded NFTs**. Labeling it a bespoke experience which is both eco-friendly and blockchain agnostic, the tokens are projected to be interoperable across chains. In a humble example of gross understatement, RECUR said its planned Portal Pass allows access to their entire IP library, "*the greatest digital collectibles for generations to come and that's only the beginning.*"

Vans announced a collaboration with the **USPS** for licensed footwear and a workwear-style apparel collection. Drawing on signature Priority Mail designs, the line will feature familiar branding colors, red laces and red text on midsoles, and adaptations of the mail carrier's light blue denim uniform.

Luxury brands risk losing their appeal and value as they ponder offering **NFTs**. Without flattening the experience of the five senses, how does the idea of developing and selling intangible products represent the category? The use of new digital tools like the non-fungible token which lives in a virtual world, or a presence on a blockchain-based gaming platform runs counter to the touchy-feely aspect of a heritage luxury object. The challenge will be to recover perceptions of creativity and innovation, especially during the act of reselling.

Second Life, a virtual community founded in 1994, was first-to-market and offered avatars, shopping, clubs, games, socializing in cyberspace, a proto-environment where brands risked losing appeal and value IRL. In a new bid to enable customers to dream and find a purpose in what they buy, **Decentraland**, an open source 3D virtual world platform governed by the Blockchain - with a current valuation of \$1.5bn - surges forward.

"I once went to a party at Muddy Waters' house and I woke up in Howlin' Wolf's house." - Keith Richards

Obits

Alice Clark Brown, 68

The elephants would come thundering into the ring, stand on their hind legs, then pivot earthward into a headstand. In this deceptively dangerous stunt the rider could not hold on. It was a skill Brown developed as the first Black showgirl in one of the Ringling Brothers two touring companies. Celebrated both for her arena acrobatics and work as an aerial ballet artist, she experienced discrimination while touring the South. Later she became a public face for the circus, and was interviewed by Barabara Walters on the *Today* show.

Alan Heller, 81

In those days plastic was ugly and it was cheap. Heller came upon a set of stackable plastic dishes and cups by Massimo Vignelli in a museum exhibit, upsized the coffee cup for American tastes and created Hellerware, affordable, dishwasher-safe housewares in witty, rainbow colors. Later he produced the acclaimed molded plastic Bellini chair, still being sold, and collaborated with Philippe Starck and Frank Gehry on other objects. In partnership with Studio 65, as an homage to Salvador Dali, he produced an iconic red sofa shaped like lips.

Ron Popiel, 86

The ultimate television marketer, he invented infomercials, mainstay of the business of direct response tv sales. Among products he successfully flogged: Veg-O-Matic, Pocket Fisherman, Ronco Electric Food Dehydrator, Mr. Microphone, the Inside-the-Shell-Egg-Scrambler. Popiel sold them all without shouting, a folksy calming presence over the airwaves. He sold the Ronco company in 2005 for \$56m; after he left it was forced into bankruptcy, so he bought back its trademarks and inventory two years later for \$2m. He's best remembered for pitches reduced to 1-minute, and the oft-uttered catch-phrase, "But wait! There's more!"

Robert Sacchi, 89

Michael Jackson and Elvis impersonators are a dime a dozen and rely on costumes, wigs and makeup in their acts. In the early 1940s friends and neighbors noticed Robert Sacchi was a doppelgänger with a conspicuous resemblance to Humphrey Bogart. He turned it into a career with multiple movie roles, college campus performances, a touring one-man show, voice-overs, a rap single, appearance on *Fantasy Island*, and numerous tv commercials. Though he played the lead in the 1980 comedy *The Man With Bogart's Face*, he does not appear in Woody Allen's 1972 movie *Play It Again, Sam* where real Bogart footage figures.

Mort Sahl, 94

Unlike his brother comedians who appeared on stage in sober, dark suits, Sahl favored an open-necked shirt and v-neck sweater. Clutching a rolled up newspaper as his only prop he was a warrior against hypocrisy. Contentious, contrarian, skeptical, ironic and unsparing, he referred to himself as a very likeable guy who makes ex-friends easily. He talked about the news and let politicians fuel his anger. Today's comics owe everything to him. The Library of Congress refers to his albums as the earliest example of stand-up comedy on record. He changed the nature of the practice, infecting it with social commentary. Mort Sahl fell out of favor in the 1960s and 1970s, after a period of remarkable credentials: joke-writer for JFK's presidential campaign, host of the Academy Awards, a TIME magazine cover. He made a comeback in the 1980s with a successful one-man show on Broadway. At the end of his act he always asked the audience, "Are there any groups I haven't offended?"

Sylvia Weinstock, 91

She did not start baking cakes until she was in her 50s. Known for her towering 10-foot tall wedding extravaganzas with flowers crafted petal by petal and multiple layers of buttercream frosting, she served the likes of RBG, Whitney Houston, LeBron James, Robert DeNiro, Oprah

Winfrey, Martha Stewart, Kennedys, Kardashians, and Clintons. The Saudi royal family ordered a cake to feed 3000 people, then had it delivered on a royal jet. She disdained cupcakes, and refused to bake a cake for a bride who wanted it to taste like a Twinkie. Following her retirement in 2016, she continued to lecture, teach, and guest judge on baking shows. She licensed her name, taught flower-making technique to luxury brands including Ladurée. In October 2021 she came out of retirement to craft a 6-tier cake for the wedding of the daughter of Bill and Melinda French Gates.

"The secret of happiness is to face the fact that the world is horrible, horrible, horrible. " - Bertrand Russell

Place Branding

Spain pledged to grant citizenship to certain qualifying Sephardic Jews in 2015. In reparation for expulsions that began in 1492, its parliament announced citizenship would be granted to anyone who could show they had a single Jewish ancestor who had been expelled during the Inquisition. Spain formally stopped taking applications for the program in 2019. 34,000 were accepted, 3,000 were rejected. Among the 17,000 applicants who received *no response at all*, one person spent \$53,000 for lawyers and acceptable proofs, nearly depleting family savings.

China (population 1.4bn) has some of the world's toughest weapons laws, including broad definitions of what counts as an illegal gun. Strict gun controls mean that shootings are rare. Automatic and semi-automatic weapons are illegal in private hands. Other regulations are vague and hard for people to understand. China's gun control law of 1996 states that to be legally classified as a gun a weapon has to be capable of killing someone or knocking them unconscious. A toy gun that fires a projectile with enough force to tear a sheet of newspaper - far short of lethal or dangerous force - can be considered a gun. In 2010 the Chinese Ministry of Public Security imposed stricter rules that defined many toys as illegal guns. Unsuspecting buyers of compressed-air and spring-powered toys were turned into criminals. An app developer who ordered plastic replica pistols as props for his business designing shoot-em-up games for smartphones was arrested and put in jail charged with illegal weapons possession.

USA (population 334m) has 394m firearms in civilian possession. It is claimed by gun advocates that fully and semi-automatic rifles hold a practical value, such as for *defending property*. They also represent a *familial value*, the ability to pass down weapons to future generations. AR-15-type rifles are cherished as sporting rifles because they are accurate, versatile, light and easy to disassemble. They are simple to shoot - anyone could be trained in a few hours. 52% of Americans support and 43% oppose a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons. Says an advocate, "I think when we start to look at bans on entire classes of firearms, what you're doing is taking a tool away from those who would choose to defend themselves."

“The sheep will spend its entire life fearing the coyote, only to be eaten by the shepherd.” - Navajo proverb

Social Media

The digital content moderation industry is projected to reach a volume of nearly \$9bn in 2022. **Meta** isn't only traumatizing the general population with noxious posts and toxic content. FB has quietly paid third parties to take on much of the responsibility. It's giving both its workers and contract employees PTSD. Employees who policed content discovered they were soon overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work. A moderator in Texas, for example, reviewed 500 to 700 posts a shift and later joined a class action suit against FB where the judge ruled in the workers' favor and awarded \$52m to employees. Sandberg pushed to find automated solutions; more than 90% of objectionable material that comes across FB and IG is removed by AI. For the rest of the objectionable material, outsourcing proved cheaper than direct hires - and provided *tax and regulatory benefits*. No company has been more crucial to the endeavor than **Accenture**. Its subcontractors hired to moderate such content started experiencing depression, anxiety and paranoia. Accenture bills FB up to \$50/hour for moderation services. There was controversy after the revelation that offshore subcontractors were being paid as little as \$1/hour. With annual contracts valued at more than \$500m, Accenture management determined - despite workers' mental health issues from reviewing the posts and disturbing images, FB's demanding hiring targets and performance goals, despite many shifts in its content policies, growing ethical, legal and reputational risks, not to mention the psychological toll of the work - it was too lucrative a client to lose.

The internet was never designed for kids, and children's entertainment is big business. You may never have heard of *Cocomelon*, *Little Baby Bum* or *Blippi*, but their videos were viewed more than 2.37bn times in the month of October. Ask anyone with children. A California couple believed there was a niche market for garishly animated versions of nursery rhymes, and founded **Moonbug Entertainment**, which was recently bought for \$3bn by a group led by a former Disney exec, backed by the Blackstone Group. Its astronomical rise in value is linked to intellectual properties and merchandising juggernauts with associated Netflix series. The category is still victim to terrible videos, and the violent, horrific, misappropriation of beloved characters. A mountain of malicious content survives, but the larger the exploitation grows the harder it will be to regulate. Expect more scandals, fines, bans, prohibitions.

“Words are all we have. Each word is like an unnecessary stain in the silence and nothingness.” - Samuel Beckett

Vocabulary

catfish - to lure into a relationship by means of a sinister fictional online persona, vis. "*he was being catfished by a cruel prankster.*"

convolutional neural networks a class of artificial-intelligence algorithms designed to help computers make sense of images.

demisexuality – a lack of sexual attraction to others without a strong emotional connection.

DTC - direct-to-consumer, a byproduct of digital native brands enabled by eCommerce.

gradient descent (GD) - an iterative first-order optimisation algorithm used to find a local minimum/maximum of a given function. Commonly used in machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) to minimise a cost/loss function, e.g. in a linear regression.

hyperobjects - entities massively distributed in time and space to the extent that their totality cannot be realized in any particular local manifestation. See: Musk's wealth.

iel - controversial neutral French pronoun, an amalgamation of *il* (he) and *elle* (she), added to the alternative Le Petit Robert dictionary

mass casualty incident - euphemism for a crowd surge at Astroworld Festival where 8 died.

MDP - Markov decision process - a discrete-time stochastic control which provides a mathematical framework for modeling situations with variable outcomes.

mDL - mobile driver's license - a digital identity that will tie in to retail, health care, law enforcement and travel sectors, and act as vaccine passport. See also *social credit system*

nested if statement - an if statement placed inside another if statement, often used when you must test a combination of conditions before deciding on the proper action.

neurohistory, a miniscule academic field which uses neuroscience to help better understand the distant past.

normcore - a style of dressing that involves the deliberate choice of unremarkable or unfashionable casual clothes; often applied to the American comedian Larry David.

sideloading - the practice of installing weird software, especially an app obtained from a third-party source rather than an "official" retailer.

continued

Web3 - a decentralized internet service that runs on public blockchains, with token-based reward systems that allow users to profit from their online activities.

youthwashing - organizations using young activists to put forward a progressive image, without delivering substantive change.

“To be silent the whole day long, see no newspaper, hear no radio, listen to no gossip, be thoroughly and completely lazy, thoroughly and completely indifferent to the fate of the world is the finest medicine a man can give himself.” - Henry Miller

What Is A Brand?

A brand has issues of abandonment.

That is, it doesn't easily accommodate desertion.

A brand supports the case for mindless, innocent and irresponsible validation.

There is little latitude allowed for independent thought.

A brand doesn't tolerate argument, only acquiescence.

You're expected to blindly accept whatever it offers.

Let's think positive about the next variant.

Sorry, maybe I meant negative.

See you in the Summer.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "SMOSS". The letters are cursive and connected, with a stylized, flowing appearance.