

The Culture Shift by VML



A series of a-la-carte reports that explores meta culture shifts and brand category implications

Diverse team leveraging a diverse set of tools to maximize impact

At VML, we have a set of expert strategic teams united with a mission to reinvent the future of brands and businesses — to drive real and sustainable growth.



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About: The Culture Shift by VML.

Culture is a set of values, conventions and social practices that help people feel connected to themselves and their community.

Brands can invest in culture, give culture a platform, amplify culture, partner with culture, and elevate culture. But brands do not create culture, people do. How do we know? Anthropology is the study of humanity, related cultures, societies, linguistics and other human interests. Anthropologists estimate that people began creating culture at least 300,000 years ago when they started to move across geographies and away from centralized norms. New geographies meant new experiences, ways of living and even exposure to new technology that allowed them to mix and remix culture.

Modern humans are still mixing and remixing culture as The Internet, and more specially, Social Media has broadened their global exposure without leaving their home. Further, people also create culture to find a place to fit in when the dominant culture excludes them, from Hip-Hop to Facebook.



In The Culture Shift by VML, we center the people who are creating culture and give brands a point of view about how they can find their place in culture to thrive. A.I. helps sort lots of complex data and information. Still, we need a human lens on the data to understand current context, what's bubbling just beneath the surface and assess real brand impact.

Join us on our journey of bite-sized reports to peak your culture interest.

We'll begin with observations about high level meta shifts in the local or global community. Then, we'll dive into a series of short reports that unpacks how these shifts are playing out in various brand categories. We'll also provide provocations that will get you thinking differently about what culture means to your brand.

Welcome to The Culture Shift!

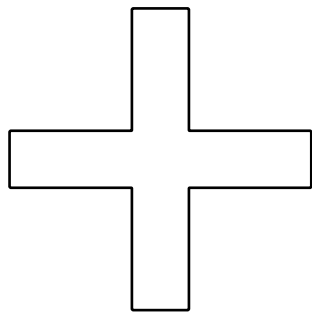
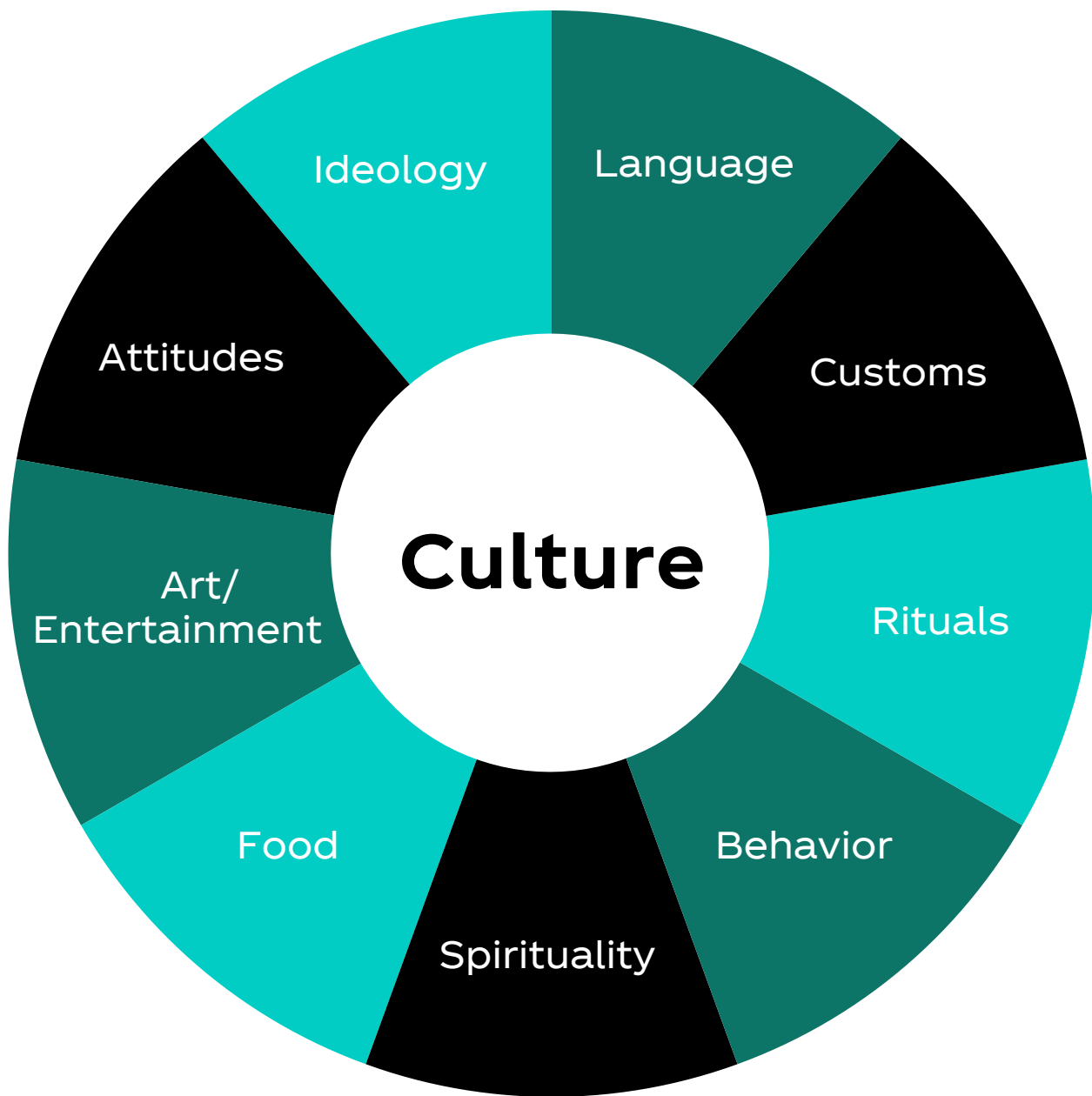
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Amber Chenevert'.

*Amber Chenevert, PhD
Managing Director Strategy & Insights,
Culture*

GETTING STARTED

Our approach mixes **SCIENCE** and **ART**. After we've defined our audience, we use the culture variables to categorize data from our marketing research tools (*the science*). Then, we unearth the insights and craft the culture narrative that will make a meaningful difference for the brand now and in the future (*the art*).

Culture Variables Grounded in Anthropology



Marketing Research Tools



Benefits of The Culture Shift

- Unearth significant, culturally grounded meta shifts based on decades of research
- Deliver a consistent, comparable framework to measure culture, locally and globally
- Provide culture first insights that are relevant to both an individual brand or portfolio

What are Meta Shifts?

Extensive meta-analysis informed by data representing decades vs one year or less

Focusing on fundamental cultural variables rather than solely monitoring contemporary trends

Meaningful collective shifts transcending individual organizations or contexts



First Up: Meta Shifts - USA



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Breaking the
Binary

[Informal]
Education
as the
Accelerator

Transformation
not Elimination

Inward vs.
Extrinsic
Motivators

Technology as
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Example Category Implications

BEAUTY

The Global Gender-neutral cosmetics market is projected to reach [\\$55.5B by 2031](#), reflecting the growing acceptance of Non-binary Beauty standards.

Are we actively seeking feedback from gender-diverse consumers and incorporating their perspectives?

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Gen Z and Millennials are purchasing [more wellness products and services](#) than previous generations. They view their health holistically and expect personalized solutions to their unique health needs.

How can we provide personalized help to consumers navigating their health and wellness journey?

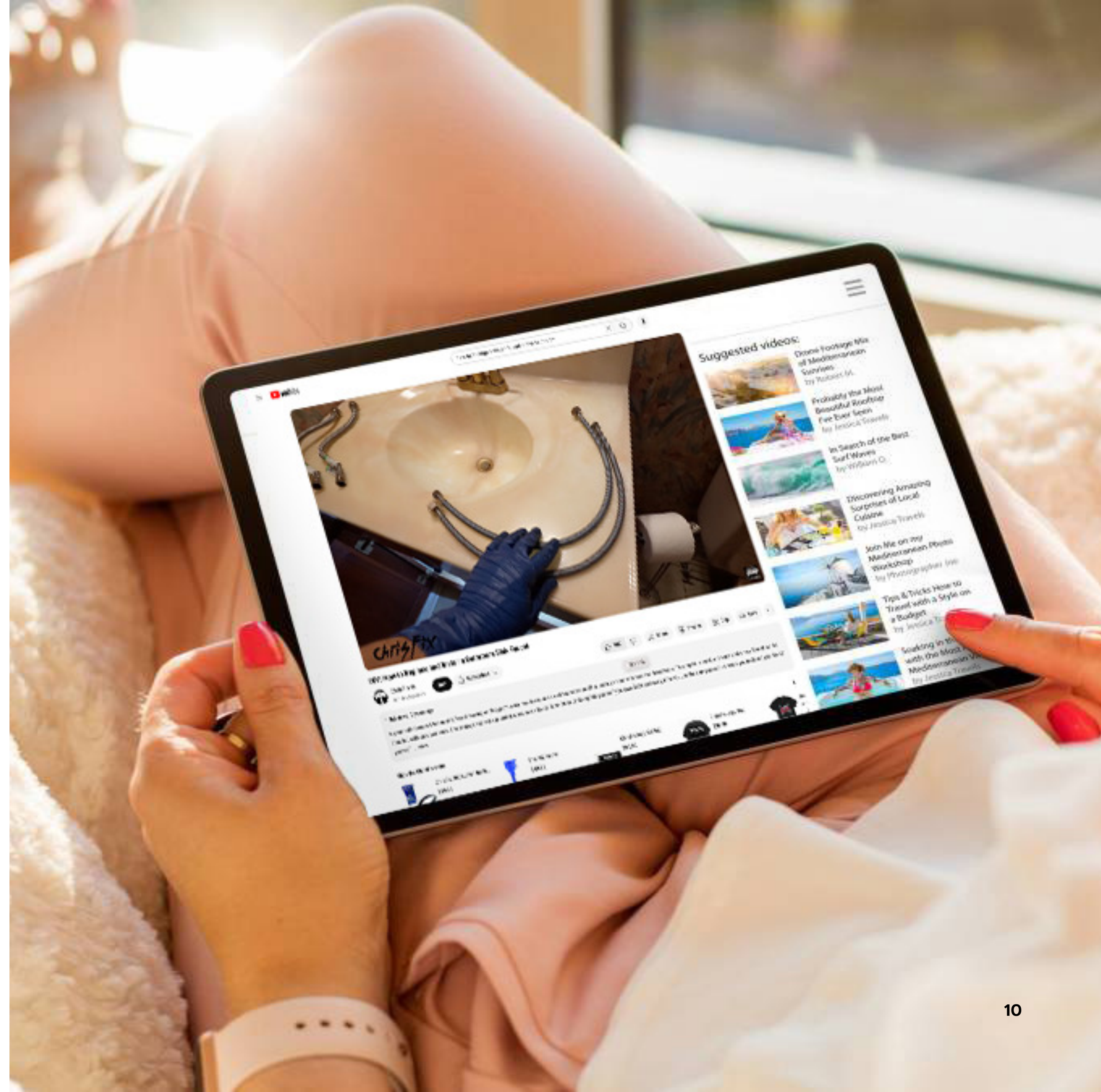
FINANCE

The rise of the gig economy and remote work has revolutionized work and [payment structures](#), fostering flexible payment models that diverge from traditional binary setups. Freelancers, contractors, and gig workers now enjoy access to diverse on-demand payment solutions, flexible earning options, and tailored alternative financial services

What role can we play in driving conversations and initiatives around financial inclusion, advocacy, and empowerment?

[Informal] Education as the Accelerator

Many cultural shifts are driven by **an added layer of intentionality, exposure, and earlier education** that make people consider — and act on — more intercultural dynamics sooner.



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Example Category Implications

FINANCE

Reddit, TikTok, and other unconventional platforms, together with [robo-advisors](#), function as focal points for exchanging know-hows and immersion into investment. Those who were previously underserved by established financial institutions find the accessibility to be appealing.

How can we position ourselves as relatable trusted partners for these communities?

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Gen Z and Millennials are increasingly [turning to patient influencers](#) for health advice. They want to see the person behind the symptoms, be a part of a community, and learn how to navigate life with their health conditions.

How can we use social media and influencers to highlight authentic patient stories and empower consumers?

SPIRITS

Homebrewing is rising in popularity as consumers want to craft alcoholic beverages from their favorite ingredients and flavors. Through social media and accessibility to at-home brew kits, the home brewing market is expected to [grow 8.5% from 2021 to 2028](#), reaching a revenue of more than \$28B.

How can we recreate the creative joy of crafting flavors for consumers?

Transformation, Not Elimination

Major shifts are resulting in an evolution in people's desires, tensions, and self-awareness. These changes are **complementary to existing behaviors and beliefs** and are evolving, not replacing "decaying" systems.



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Example Category Implications

AUTOMOTIVE

The way that consumers access mobility is shifting with the advent of [subscription-based](#) car ownership models, in which users pay a monthly fee to use a vehicle without committing to ownership, allowing a change between car models—ICE and EV options included—yet this does not eliminate traditional car purchasing.

What steps can we take to improve consumer confidence and dependability when it comes to the auto experience?

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Rather than eliminating traditional religious structures, individuals are seeking personalized spiritual paths, and practices, including guided meditations, spiritual readings, and virtual community gatherings, to cultivate personal growth, meaning, and fulfillment.

What role can we play in facilitating meaningful connections and community-building?

FINANCE

[Peer-to-peer \(P2P\) lending platforms](#) have emerged as alternative sources of financing, offering borrowers greater access to capital and investors higher returns, while traditional banks continue to serve as key lenders and financial intermediaries in the lending ecosystem.

Amid increasing rivalry and shifting consumer expectations, how can we stand out from the competitors and secure a special place in the market?

Inward VS Extrinsic Motivators

Ambitions, goals, and desires fluctuate widely based on cultural context, but **there's an increased desired to do more with a purpose.**



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Example Category Implications

LUXURY

As global customers change their habits for sustainability and give priority to businesses that support mental health efforts, [Mindful Luxury](#) is now being prioritized over purely Exclusive Consumption.

How do we design luxury experiences that transcend status signaling and foster more meaningful relationship with consumers?

COMMERCE

There's a discernible transition from merely following fads to opting for products that evoke true inner wellness and positive emotions, reflecting the influence of [dopamine buying](#) within commerce.

How do we evoke a genuine feel-good commerce experience in a meaningful way?

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health and wellness food brands are creating meals that provide consumers with [a sense of joy and comfort](#), and functional [mood boosting support](#), all while backing away from niche, complicated macronutrient-based meal plans.

What are those small moments of joy that we can create for consumers?

Technology as the Creative and Entrepreneurial Amplifier

Helping people find favorable niche
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Example Category Implications

B2B

[AI tools \(like ChatGPT\)](#) are revolutionizing how B2B brands connect with businesses by generating content, managing SEO and web analytics, and providing personalized consumer experiences.

How can we simplify the transition to and usage of tech and AI tools for consumers?

TECH

The way that creators and users engage is changing due to modern [direct-monetization](#) platforms and [decentralized technology](#), which are making more fair systems for creative expression and ownership possible.

How can we innovate supporting and amplifying the voices of creators and entrepreneurs within our ecosystem?

TRAVEL

The rise in [influencer-hosted trips](#) allow consumers to travel with likeminded individuals on highly-curated trips, with an influencer they trust. They get an "insider's" perspective of the destination, Instagram quality pictures, and an unforgettable experience without the hassle of creating an itinerary.

How do we create a seamless journey from online travel scrapbooking to real-life adventures?

For every Meta Shift, there are many different category provocations

We'd love the opportunity to dive into your category of interest in short or long form, if budget and time allows.

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Thank
you!