



2024

TRENDS REFRESH 

starcom

Mid Year Update: At the beginning of the year, we saw Americans searching for *the New Authentic*, which resulted in the realization that sometimes fake is realer than real. This notion of a *New Authentic* is still present, but we are seeing a shift **from aspiration to action**– less manifesting and more movement. Drivers behind this shift towards action include concerns around the economy, inflation and war.

Through this *New Authentic* evolution, we have seen some brands take a stance against using AI as an effort to convey their authenticity to consumers. However, we are also seeing brands tap into AI to solve real-world problems in an innovative way.

Methodology Refresh: Starcom conducted a proprietary survey of 1K Americans at the beginning of 2024 and identified four key trends centering around authenticity. We revisited those four trends mid-way through 2024 to take a pulse on what has shifted in culture. We also identified two new trends that have surfaced over the past six months.



Where We Were

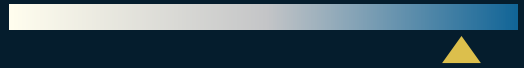


Technology RealGPT

Not only has the number of people that have used Chat GPT increased by 10% vs. the beginning of 2024, the way they are using it has evolved. They are no longer “just trying it”. Instead, half of all survey respondents are using ChatGPT to write or create for work and or for fun (both increased vs. Jan 2024).

Losing
Steam

Gaining
Traction



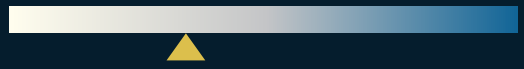
53%

of respondents use ChatGPT for work
(vs. 41% using it for work at beginning of the year)



Life Goals La La Land

Gen Z still has big dreams, but they aren't relying on manifesting or fantasizing as they were at the beginning of the year. Instead, there has been an influx of direct action and protests as of late related to war, climate change and social injustice.



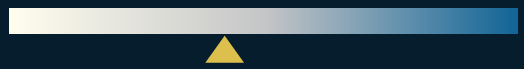
38%

of GenZ claim they try to manifest things they want
(vs. 45% manifesting at the beginning of the year)



Relationships De-Toxic-ing

While a quarter of Americans still experience estrangement within their family, the number of people planning to set firm boundaries with their family or friends in the remainder of the year has lessened.



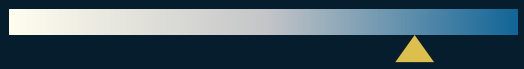
19%

of GenZ plan to set better boundaries with family/friends
(vs. 25% at the beginning of the year)



Social Media Alter-Egos

The appeal of human stories from non-human personalities is still prevalent. Younger consumers are also still dabbling in multiple social media profiles.



27%

of people under 50 follow AI or other non-human influencers
(vs. 22% at the beginning of the year)

Where We Are

While the top five overall sentiments stayed the same mid-way through the year as they were at the beginning of the year, **the level of hopefulness dropped 13%**. While hopefulness often dips mid-way through the year as new year resolutions tend to fade, the fact that we are in an election year sets a different playing field moving forward. *(Note: The Trends Refresh survey was conducted prior to the recent presidential debate).*

Top ways people are feeling going into the second half of 2024 (vs. 1H 2024):

Hopeful 45% (-13%)
Excited 43% (+8%)
Confident 37% (+6%)
Energized 37% (+3%)
Proud 25% (+14%)



As the election cycle ramps up, **feelings will continue to fluctuate** even more as we've seen with the recent presidential debate and Supreme Court decisions.

Seasonality is another factor to keep in mind as the second survey was conducted as summer kicked off in the US. Summer is likely to result in a higher sentiment despite the negatively charged news cycle.

Mid-way through the year, we are seeing a **glaring difference in optimism by generation**. Since younger consumers aren't historically as engaged in election news and coverage, they are the largest driver of the optimism we are seeing. When it comes to people 55+, the effects of the election are taking more of a toll on their optimism looking forward.

26%

People 55+ saw a 26% increase in those who claim to be worried about the remainder of the year vs. beginning of 2024

45%

People under 25 were 45% less likely to say they were worried about the remainder of the year vs. older consumers

40%

of respondents claim the election has a major impact on how they feel going into the second half of 2024

When asked about specific aspects in the remainder of 2024, most people feel **very positive** about their **family** (53%) and **friends** (42%). **Mental** (41%) and **physical health** (37%) are also areas where people have a highly positive outlook. One's finances and economic stability are top of mind with many Americans as we approach the upcoming election. All in all, *the New Authentic* is still on Americans' radars– **they are just shifting more towards action** as they continue to decipher between real and fake in the remainder of this election year.



NEW TREND ALERT:

AI Spam Scam

While seeing or receiving spam via social media is not new, AI has transformed what spam can look like— and what it can make you feel or do as a result. The unimaginable abilities of AI have also made the challenge of deciphering the real from the fake on social even more difficult.

What

Facebook pushes out dozens of AI-generated images per day, many of which are now also starting to pop up on Threads and TikTok. While many are pure entertainment with features like optical illusions or a 102-year-old celebrating a birthday, others are shocking or impactful enough to create false memories—further blurring the line between real and fake. In fact, **26% of survey respondents have trouble trusting content on social since it’s difficult to tell if it’s real or not.** One’s memories are being altered by these images— real or not.

So What

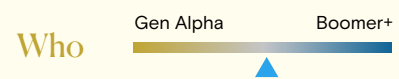
- Since one goal of AI-generated spam is to simply create engagement, consumers are being offered even more choices on social to follow, like and engage with— more competition for consumer attention and more confusion around what is real.
- As some social platforms start to label AI-generated content, brands should follow suit to relay transparency and trust with consumers.

Brand Spotlight

Tropicana’s recent campaign, which was unveiled at CES, focuses on their claim to be 100% OJ and 0% AI. Their tagline includes “Artificial just isn’t in our DNA.” In a world where many brands are testing the AI waters, others like Tropicana are going against the grain to stand out— and to show their authenticity.



Sources: Ad Age; NPR, Facebook, Telegraphic.uk



Key Drivers
Transparency, Trust

1/4

of people claim to encounter content on social that they believe to be AI-generated **daily**; 31% see this content **weekly**.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey

36%

of respondents feel like they may not always recognize AI-generated content; 28% aren’t sure if they’ve seen any AI content on their social feed.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey

Culture Spotlight

An increase of political photos are surfacing as the election draws near, which often depict political figures in situations that didn’t actually happen. And it’s not just images that have the power to create false memories. A recent robocall mimicking President Biden’s voice urged New Hampshire voters not to vote in their local election, creating confusion and mistrust.



Source: <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2024/01/23/robocall-fake-biden-new-hampshire-primary-nn-vpx.cnn>



NEW TREND ALERT:

Reversing Fakes & Filters

Physical beauty has been in the spotlight for some time. One's image and physical appearance has often been a focal point, especially for women, which has caused many to add fake elements to their body and filters to their digital appearance. As of late, we are seeing some lead the charge to combat this by pushing against these beauty standards and saying goodbye to the fakes and filters.

What

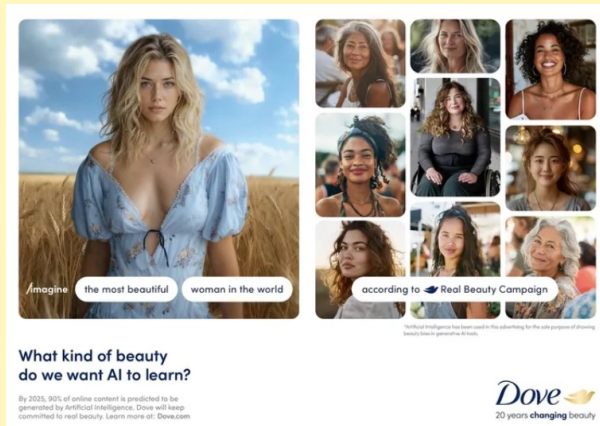
While influencers have been giving us a peek behind the curtain for awhile with their "Instagram vs. reality" posts, there has been a recent shift towards authenticity on social platforms. The hashtag #nofilter used to be included to convey that an image is so beautiful or flawless that no filter is needed, but now **removing filters— both digitally and IRL—** is happening more and more. Influencers and public figures are leading the way with people like Kristin Davis and Salma Hayek posting about having their fillers removed or showing off their naturally gray hair.

So What

- Consumers are hungry for more relatable and realistic depictions of beauty both in real life and digitally.
- While brands may want to dabble with AI, ensuring that their values and messaging are authentic and real is important to building trust and transparency with consumers.

Brand Spotlight

Dove recently released a two-minute video showing images that pop up as a result of searches for "perfect skin" or "the most beautiful woman in the world,," which fall outside of the brand's beauty standards. Dove pledges to never use AI to create or distort images of women.



Key Drivers
Self-Expression, Personalization

56%

of respondents agree that there has been a recent movement for people to present their authentic selves more, both in real life and through online content.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey

44%

of people rank "unrealistic beauty standards" as a top concern when it comes to unauthentic content on social.

Source: Starcom Proprietary Survey

Culture Spotlight

While everyday consumers aren't quite deleting their filters yet (40% still use filters, mostly to enhance the clarity of a photo), celebrities and social influencers are leading the charge by posting about their process to remove fillers and "go back to the basics" when it comes to authentic beauty.



Recap

Still searching for *The New Authentic*



Technology: RealGPT

More people are using ChatGPT as we move further into 2024, and they are using it for work and content creation.

Brands should:

Continue to empower this self-expression by inviting consumers to create alongside them via AI.



Life Goals: La La Land

GenZ is still dreaming big, but they are demonstrating more action mid-way through the year rather than manifesting their change.

Brands should:

Lean into empowering GenZ and give them confidence that success is possible.



Relationships: De-Toxic-Ing

While many families are still experiencing estrangement, boundaries with family and friends aren't quite as firm as the beginning of the year.

Brands should:

Continue to include different types and notions of family within messaging and imagery.



Communication: Alter-Egos

Seeking out human stories from non-human personalities is still prevalent and will most likely continue to grow as the year goes on.

Brands should:

Explore and participate in the changing and growing dimensions of influencer marketing.



Social: AI Spam Scam

AI-generated spam on social is making an imprint on consumers' memories and thoughts whether the images are real or not.

Brands should:

Label AI-generated content and convey transparency and trust with consumers.



Standards: Reversing Fakes & Filters

Influencers are starting to remove filters both digitally and IRL - with consumers expected to follow suit.

Brands should:

Depict realistic and authentic versions of beauty and standards in their messaging and brand values.

The search for *The New Authentic* is still prevalent as consumers continue to realize that sometimes fake is realer than real. However, we are seeing a shift from aspiration to action. Some brands are taking a stance against AI to convey authenticity, while other brands are tapping into AI to solve real world problems.

Stay tuned for our **2025 Trends** prediction later in the year, which will plot the above trends and call out what is expected as we move into 2025.