

CULTURE THROUGH THE SENSES

Beyond the moment: Centering culture as your channel

Culture is the engine behind trends, movements, and evolution and looking ahead, it is also one of the most powerful media channels available to marketers. Our Poly 2.0 research in 2025 confirmed what many already sense: most Americans are genuinely open to and curious about cultures beyond their own.

By embracing cultural mindsets, we can better understand culture and apply it to the foundation of our campaigns and messaging. As audiences grow more discerning about the content they consume and how brands show up, the opportunity and imperative are clear: go beyond demographics and engage growth audiences as communities, not just consumer segments.

When you tap into culture, you tap into community. Brands that show up for the movement, not just the moment, break through the noise and build something more durable than reach – they build trust. The result is culturally equitable media planning that drives relevance, resonance, and measurable ROI.



5 THINGS TO KNOW

1. **Culture enables brands to go beyond demographics**

When you tap into Culture you reveal deeper insights, longer lasting connections, and opportunities standard planning often misses

2. **Tap culture as a channel, not just a moment**

Culture gives brands the agility to stay relevant as consumers and algorithms grow more sophisticated, breaking through the noise wherever the brand shows up

3. **It's time to go beyond representation**

From flavor profiles to emerging sounds, today's culture is driven by multicultural creators and communities, making it time to genuinely acknowledge growth audiences, not just capitalize on their influence

4. **It's more than just spots and dots**

Culture isn't confined to a single placement or format. It lives across contexts, platforms, and moments, demanding an evergreen strategy that's as fluid and dynamic as the audiences you're trying to reach

5. **Get ahead of cultural trends to be a part of the action**

Cultural trends move fast, and brands that wait for the moment to peak have already missed it. By identifying signals early, you position yourself to shape conversations rather than simply join them

INTRO TO THE SENSES

Culture is the throughline between identity, passion, motivation, and community. It shapes our tastes, fuels our curiosity, and evolves alongside us. Like the senses, culture is instinctive. It draws people toward what feels familiar, exciting, or true.

And just as no single sense operates in isolation, culture works holistically: a taste that triggers a memory, a sound that signals belonging, a visual that sparks aspiration. For brands, this is the opportunity: culture isn't just a context to show up in, it's a single-entry point to engaging the whole person & what they see, hear, feel, taste, and crave.



SOUND

From the rhythm of a genre to the cadence of a language, what we listen to tells the story of where we come from and who we are becoming.



SIGHT

The colors, aesthetics, stories, and imagery communities gravitate toward are expressions of identity and belonging.



TOUCH

When athletes and designers from diverse backgrounds reshape what we wear and how we move, they aren't just influencing aesthetics, they're changing what it feels like to belong.



TASTE

From street food stalls to grandmother's recipes, what we eat & drink carries centuries of memory. Flavor is how culture gets passed down, not through words, but through the body.



SMELL

Scent is the most involuntary sense and the most honest. The smell of a place, a season, or a person tells us instantly whether we belong there.

SOUND

Sound is our first language. Before words carry meaning, music already tells us who we are and where we come from. For multicultural communities, it carries memory, emotion, and belief through the songs we stream, the podcasts we trust, and the stages we share.

With multicultural artists driving culture forward, brands have an opportunity to show up where attention is already earned and audiences are deeply connected.



29%

of **Multicultural podcast listeners** are more likely to turn to podcasts to connect with and celebrate their culture and community compared to the average listener



79%

of **Hispanic music event attendees** say they would view a concert sponsor more favorably if it handed out branded merchandise



+70%

increase of podcast listening within the **Black community** over the past 3 years

HEAR THE BEAT, FEEL THE EVOLUTION

MUSIC

Music shapes how we interpret our feelings and express our beliefs and passions. Multicultural artists are shaping today's music landscape by driving trends, expanding representation, and creating cultural moments that audiences across the U.S. want to be part of.

PODCASTS

Podcasts inform opinions by giving hosts and guests a powerful platform to introduce ideas, build credibility, and spark conversation. The dialogue format makes perspectives more relatable, memorable, and easy to share.

EXPERIENCES

Shared stages have a way of dissolving distance. When thousands of people reach for the same lyric at the same moment, culture stops being something you belong to alone and it becomes something you belong to together. Experiences don't just reflect who we are. They expand it.



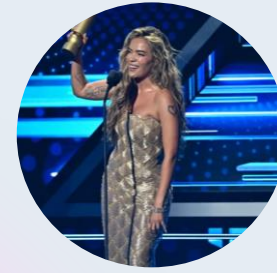
Bad Bunny's residency celebrated Puerto Rican musical heritage, generated **\$200M+ for the local economy**, and became **Amazon Prime's most-watched single-artist event ever**



On **the multi-Webby-winning, chart-topping** "The Bald and the Beautiful," **Trixie Mattel** and **Katya Zamolodchikova** deliver unfiltered queer banter and chaotic humor that makes listeners feel in on the joke



With his **"Not Like Us"** single and GMX album hitting new heights across streaming platforms, **Kendrick Lamar** delivered the most-watched Super Bowl halftime show **ever (133.5M U.S. viewers)**



With **111.6M viewers** across platform engagements, the Latin Billboards became **the #1 program** watched on Spanish Language cable and broadcast networks



With **650K weekly listeners**, Code Switch brings authenticity and continued conversation among diverse groups through humor, highlighting how **race is intertwined** with **culture and politics**



Singing in **13 different languages**, Rosalia's new album **Lux** received universal acclaim, pulling **42.1M streams** on its first day

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Multicultural talent are mainstream cultural drivers

Diverse talent amplifies audiences yearning for culture. Brands should move from having specific diverse campaigns to including them into the overall strategy. You don't need a headliner to do it, it's about showing up genuinely, not just transactionally.

2. Audio creates deeper engagement

With *listenership up 400% among diverse audiences* in the past decade, podcasts can create credibility and become conversation builders. Utilize voices from different communities to build trust and continued authenticity.

3. Culture moves fluently across platforms

Audiences discover content on one platform and engage with it across many others – a song trends on TikTok, gets streamed on Spotify, and sparks conversation on Instagram. Brands that show up cohesively at each touchpoint are the ones that earn real cultural relevance.



In 2025, visibility became currency.

Multicultural viewers are the engine behind Hollywood's biggest box office moments, yet their stories remain underrepresented on screen.

From the Senate to social media, multicultural personalities are setting the agenda. Political figures energize their parties through a distinct multicultural lens, while creators turn personal perspectives into viral cultural movements.

For brands, that gap is an opening: the creators and narratives multicultural consumers rally around are some of the most potent forces in culture right now.

People don't just watch; they look for themselves.



25%

Multicultural artists represent lead roles in film



+70%

of **Multicultural spending** goes to programs that have diverse talent and content



28%

Of **Multicultural creators** represent the marketplace

NUANCED NARRATIVES, DRIVE VISIBILITY

CULTURAL LEADERS

Look to influencers and cultural leaders to shape what matters by spotlighting new ideas, elevating emerging voices, and turning niche conversations into cultural moments. They do not just reflect culture. They drive it by guiding the conversation, shifting perceptions, and determining how people think and show up.

TELEVISION & FILM

Multicultural creators are reshaping entertainment with nuanced, culturally resonant storytelling. By developing multi-dimensional characters and complex narratives, they are proving this approach drives success, capturing massive audiences and sparking cultural conversations. Despite systemic underrepresentation, these storytellers are achieving unprecedented success, creating a new blueprint that empowers future talent to tell stories that elevate their own communities.



K-Pop Demon Hunters dominated in the US. Reaching **325M** views within first 90 days, recognized as **“Breakthrough of the Year”** 2025 by TIME. Further cementing K-Pop’s cultural influence



Heated Rivalry took the entertainment industry by storm. Surpassing **10.6M** US viewers and viewership growing tenfold from **30 million to 324 million**



Marco Rubio is shaping U.S. national security policy in the Senate, while **Zohran Mamdani** is driving progressive change at the state level; both energizing their party through a distinct multicultural lens.



Lauren Giraldo and **Bretman Rock** demonstrate the power of authentic influence, turning personal routines like the '12-3-30' workout and the 'Ab-solutely Not' challenge into viral moments



Zoe Saldana has become the **top grossing actor** of all time., surpassing Scarlett Johanson and Samuel L Jackson. Due to her appearances in **highest grossing movie franchises** like Avatar & Marvel

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Creators & cultural leaders drive connection

Well known personalities bring credibility to brands when they collaborate. Resulting in strong resonance & connection with growth audiences.

2. Video needs to be part of your media mix

Tap into Linear, OLV and CTV environments as video continues to play a key role in representation and consumption with growth viewers.

3. In-culture and nuanced narratives win attention

Surrounding complex and nuanced storytelling will drive strong visibility and engagement whether through sponsorships or custom campaigns.



TOUCH

The cultural impact of sports and fashion is no longer just something audiences observe, it's something they can physically grasp, wear, attend, and participate in.

Multicultural communities have always shaped these industries, providing the inspiration, talent, and cultural language behind some of their biggest moments. Now, multicultural athletes and designers are not waiting for permission. They are building their own worlds and becoming the architects of culture across courts, boardrooms, and runways.

For brands, this is where attention is already earned. Multicultural consumers show deep loyalty to the creators, movements, and spaces that leave a lasting mark on culture and authentically embrace their own.



75%

of **Black Americans** fall into segments that show love for fashion and style



\$2.7 trillion

in spending power makes **Hispanic shoppers** one of retail's most influential growth drivers



31.7%

Black viewership make the NBA postseason the strongest major sports property for reaching these audiences



113%

% **year-over-year growth** in **Asian American** viewership for the 2025 MLB Tokyo Series

WHEN CULTURE IS IN PLAY, AUDIENCES TAP IN

SPORTS

For diverse communities, sports have always been a platform for visibility, pride, and cultural expression & 2025 redefined what it means to show up with the conversation moving from representation to ownership, from participation to power. Athletes, artists, and cultural leaders are no longer just the faces of the game, they're the architects of it. The most powerful play isn't on the field. It's in the front office.

FASHION

Fashion has always reflected culture — but for too long, diverse communities were the inspiration without the invitation. In 2025, that dynamic shifted in a powerful and permanent way. Black, Latino, and multicultural designers, stylists, and image architects stepped into the industry's highest rooms not as guests, but as architects of its future. Representation on the runway evolved into authorship of the entire story.



Madison Keyes
Australian Open



Coco Gauff
French Open



Tyler Adams
US Soccer Player



Shohei Ohtani
MLB MVP



Bubba Wallace
NASCAR

Sports & Fashion didn't just reflect culture in 2025, it became a driving force for *cultural expression that you can feel and touch*

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Culture Evolves spaces & places to be a 360 experience

A logo slap is not a cultural strategy. The brands that win with growth audiences are the ones that show up inside the moment and not just beside it. When culture is the entry point, the halo effect is limitless.

2. Culture is a channel

Heritage Month is not a cultural strategy. The brands that win with growth audiences are the ones who show up 365 days a year — treating culture as a channel, not a calendar moment. When you commit to that consistency, you stop marketing to a community and start becoming part of one.

3. Representation isn't enough, it's ownership

Growth audiences are no longer *just* participants. We own the cultural narrative itself. As consumers grow more discerning, performative efforts are no longer enough. Brands must stop reserving seats at the table and start building tables worth sitting at



TASTE

Our palate already knows what it likes, and for Multicultural communities, taste carries memory, migration, and meaning in every bite and sip. Diverse taste palates are increasingly influencing American culture ranging from how we gather, celebrate, and recognize ourselves in one another through the flavors we crave and the tables we share, and Multicultural creators are helping bring global tastes center stage in 2025.

For brands, this creates endless opportunities to show up where connection is established and in spaces where taste is tied to identity, and consumers notice who understands the difference between simply being present and truly belonging.



73%

Of Gen Z say they actively seek out global or unfamiliar foods on social media before trying them in real life



3X

Consistent search volume growth for **Global ingredients** over the last 5 years



~56%

Of top performing food content on TikTok and Instagram include **global or fusion cuisines**

TASTE SPARKS EXPLORATION

FOOD

From the flavors of our childhood to the excitement of discovering uniqueness from foreign cultures, what we eat is often our initial connection to unfamiliar traditions. In the US, the American palate continues to evolve via global influence

From Chinamaxxing to fermentation driven wellness – **America's latest food trends show a growing appetite for global flavors.** Today's favorite dishes extend further including more international cuisines like Korean BBQ, jollof rice, and boba; These **shared experiences turn meals into bridges among cultures.** Across communities, the dining table is where curiosity, connection, and culture come together, transforming food from a trend into a gateway of exploration, celebration, and belonging



Hot Ones as evolved from a niche spicy challenge into a cultural mainstay and celebrity press-tour staple, bringing bold global flavors to mainstream audiences while generating linear-TV-level reach (**5.4B views**)



Ube is leading the charge in brining global flavors mainstream with rising demand and UbeLand x Philippines fest debuting nationwide, drawing **75-100K+ attendees** transforming Filipino cuisine from nice to the next big thing



America's Test Kitchen: The Next Generation highlights diverse culinary voices, with **Season 2 set** to premiere on Prime Video

CREATORS



@briancantstopeating



@chefkwame



@abigailmarquez

AND CONSUMERS DISCOVER NEW CULTURES ONE SIP AT A TIME

BEVERAGE

It's not just food, beverage consumption is evolving in tandem, with globally inspired mashups (especially from Latin American and Southeast Asian) remixing familiar American drinks. Major chains have leaned in, rolling out custom menus and seasonal items that tap into these social trends, using global flavor as an entry point for consumers to experiment and engage.

Nearly **+30% more U.S. menus feature beverage “global flavor inspiration” beverages** which simultaneously drive new launches. One standout is Yuzu, which has become a defining beverage flavor of 2025 amid demand for more “elevated” alternatives to standard lemon and lime flavors. Its momentum is so strong that Monin named it *Flavor of the Year*, citing both its social media appeal marking a clear shift of global flavors from niche imports to mainstream staples



Latin American flavors are bridging Hispanic heritage and mass market appeal like Horchata which entered mainstream chains like Starbucks where it's summer '25 seasonal debut **outperformed all previous seasonal launches by +44%**



The Quarter Zip & matcha trend among Black Gen Z marked a shift from Nike Techs and sugary drinks toward elevated, styles and healthier beverages, driving a **+210% rise in matcha-related searches**



The “swicy” flavor profile evolved from a TikTok trend to mainstream, fueled by viral content and soaring interest in ingredients like hot honey (**+240% searches**), with nearly 1-in-10 restaurants like Dairy Queen embracing dedicated sweet-spicy offerings

CREATORS



@feedmeimei



@jarbae



@abigailmarquez

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Make Cultural Discovery a Core Marketing Strategy

Recognize cultural exploration as a core consumer behavior by showcasing global flavors, ingredients, products, and tools in future campaigns positioning your brand to meet the growing demand identified by 70% of restaurant, manufacturing, and retail professionals

2. Tap into the Premium perception of global flavor

Food is one of the most powerful gateways for inspiring trial, with 74% of consumers willing to pay more to experience globally influenced flavors

Brands can capitalize on this by leveraging visually rich video and immersive audio to spark sensory connections and ignite consumers' desire to explore

3. Localize your approach

Global flavors aren't just dominating digital spaces, they're showing up in neighborhoods nationwide.

Multicultural food festivals now thrive in major markets like NY, LA, and Chicago each supporting over 20+ large-scale events annually

Leverage these festivals as live experiential test labs where discovery happens in real time



SMELL

Whenever we enter a new environment, a smell has already taken us somewhere whether it's back home, across oceans, and into moments we didn't know we kept. For Multicultural communities, scent is testimony and it lingers with memory, ritual, and identity, carrying what can't always be spoken.

Smell shapes how we remember, how we comfort ourselves, and how we recognize where we belong through the spices in our kitchens, the incense in our rituals, and the fragrances we wear. Diverse content creators are expanding this sensory language by blending heritage with new expressions opening more intimate methods for brands to show up in spaces where connection is already felt, culture lives in the air, and people notice who understands the difference between presence and resonance.



85%

Black and Hispanic consumers are among the highest fragrance users making them especially influential in driving fragrance trends



45%

of social-driven fragrance purchases come from TikTok, where #PerfumeTok has ~6B views, making it a leading beauty discovery ecosystem



56%

Of Gen-Z lead in adopting new, global scent rituals buying fragrances without smelling first, relying on social content to champion discovery

SCENT IGNITES CURIOSITY

BEAUTY

Not everything that smells good is edible, but that curiosity remains an invitation to explore something new. The US beauty industry is reflecting a more Ambicultural mindset as diverse-owned brands and global traditions enter the mainstream. Rituals once rooted in specific cultures are now being embraced more widely, shaping how Americans relax, recharge, and express themselves

This shift is visible on store shelves too with major retailers like Sephora, where global influences like gender neutral oud and bakhoor-inspired scents are gaining popularity. As these traditions move from niche to everyday, they're redefining beauty and self-care proving that the more we share, the more we have



The rise of scent bars like Olfactory reflects a shift toward personalized, discovery-led fragrance, with consumers creating custom blends to express their identity fueling rapid growth, with **fragrance personalization projected at +17.6%** and **niche scents growing ~9% annually**



A Culture milestone was achieved as the scent of Black legacy Harlem Perfume Co. joined Sephora's Beauty cohort reporting **2.3x YoY Sales Growth**



Niche international brands are leading Sephora's fragrance momentum into the new year, with **Kayali emerging as the #1 fragrance brand of 2025** growing 18% of Sephora's top sales



Kayali's success expanded to bakhoor wood chips at Sephora proving how traditional Middle Eastern scent rituals are now driving growth with Kayali earning **+108% YoY earned media growth fueled by TikTok**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

1. Tap Into Cultural Remixing to Drive Brand Engagement

Consumers are remixing global traditions to fit into everyday life

Brands can tap into this by creating custom digital/social content that inspires audiences to become leaders in co-creating the next wave of culture

2. Consumption is becoming a pathway to both identity & belonging

Smell is a dynamic gateway to Culture and brands can harness this entry point with immersive experiential activations or visually rich content across social and video environments to invite consumers to explore this sensory connection

3. Fragrance discovery moved from retail to social culture

Consumers now discover fragrance visually through storytelling, aesthetics, and reaction content that turns scent into identity (e.g., #CleanGirl, “hot girl summer” scents)

Brands can leverage influencers as sensory translators to embed fragrance into culture and drive identity-led discovery

CULTURE IS THE SIXTH SENSE

We experience the world through five senses. But there is a sixth that shapes all the others.

Culture is the filter that tells us what music moves us, what flavors feel like home, what images signal belonging, and whose hands built the things we love.

True leaders in the market distinguish themselves through cultural fluency. Brands should understand culture is **more than a backdrop**, but a signal to build relevance, trust, and growth.

SOUND

SIGHT

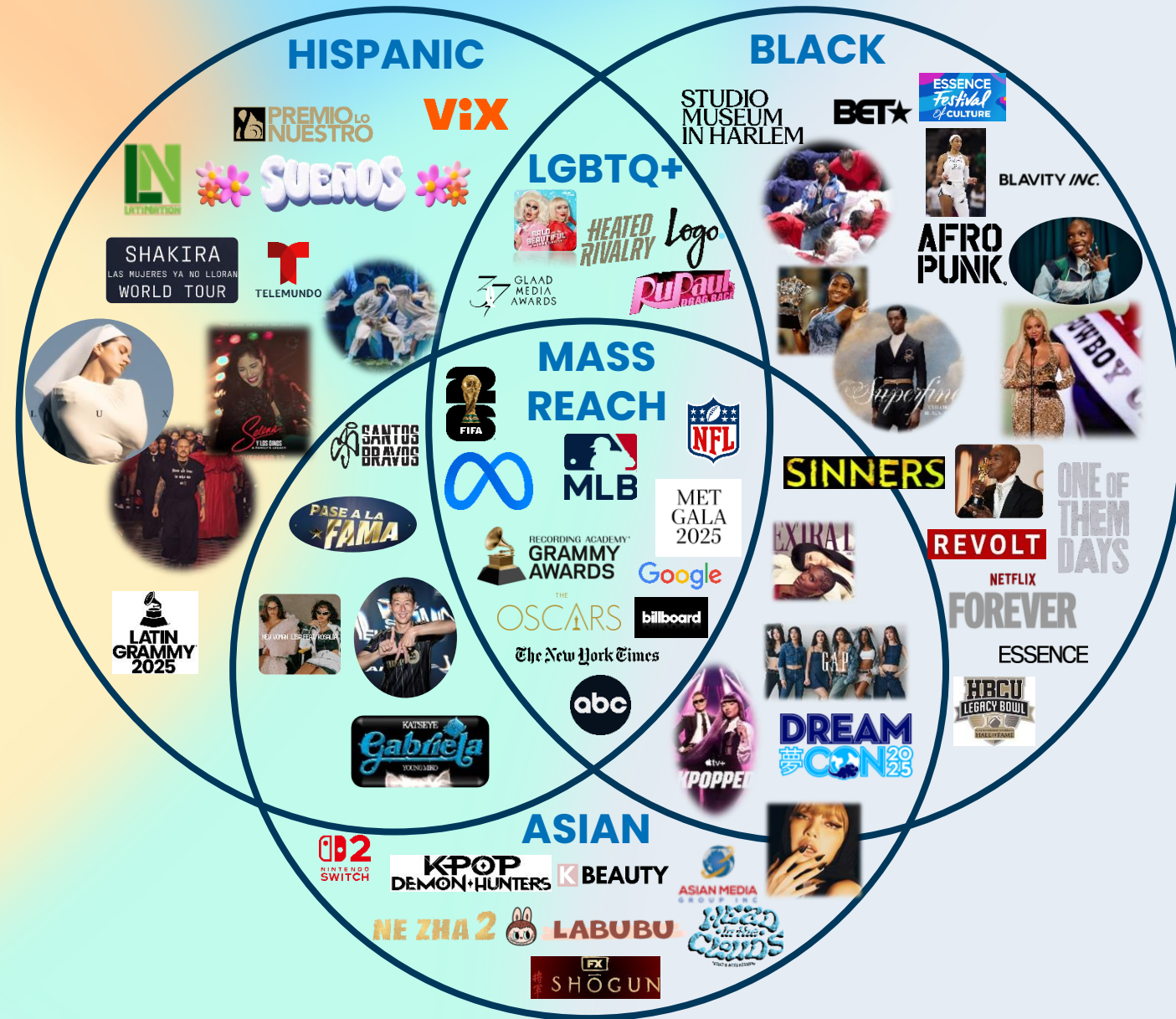
TOUCH

TASTE

SMELL

CULTURE

When brands meet multicultural audiences **in the cultural moments** they shape, they create impact beyond the segment, extending relevance, reach, and influence across mass market.



SENSES IN MOTION

Best practices for a culture-first approach

WHEN BRANDS DON'T LEAN INTO CULTURE, AUTHENTICITY DISAPPEARS



e.l.f.
eyes lips face

MATT RIFE

Consumers were shocked Matt Rife appeared in an e.l.f campaign, as he had recently made jokes about domestic violence.

By not understanding culture, the controversy highlighted the clash between the brands "value driven" image and its decision to partner with a polarizing figure.



"GOOD JEANS"

When American Eagle's ad claimed, "Sydney Seeney has great jeans," some consumers interpreted it as coded messaging tied to eugenics and white supremacist ideas.

This ad sparked cultural debates regarding the intersection of advertising, race, and politics as the campaign felt tone deaf to the current cultural climate.



"DEI ROLLBACK"

Amid political volatility, Target's rollback of its DEI commitments in 2025 sparked backlash and boycotts, contributing to declines in sales, foot traffic, and market value.

By failing to be consistent with its support of diverse groups, Target faced the consequences of being caught between opposing audiences.

BUT WHEN YOU SHOW UP INTENTIONALLY, YOU CREATE BUZZ



GAP

KATSEYE

After American Eagle had a campaign controversy, GAP seized the opportunity to go the opposite direction and produce a campaign with Katseye.

Using Eyes and Hands, they authentically caused positive sentiment towards the GAP Brand



SEPHORA

MARIAH CAREY

Ringin' in the Christmas season, Sephora leaned in to America's favorite inside joke, leveraging Mariah Carey and her song "All I want for Christmas" to kick off the holiday cheer.

With Eyes and Ears, Sephora sparked positive memories and incorporated it into their campaign



d lingo

BAD BUNNY

With the announcement of Bad Bunny being the Superbowl Halftime performer, Duolingo capitalized on the moment, offering a chance to learn more Spanish ahead of the performance.

Eyes and Ears were utilized to countdown to the biggest moment for the USA

AI IS TRANSFORMING ADVERTISING, BUT HUMAN INSIGHT STILL MATTERS

While AI can scale insights and efficiency, human perspective ensures cultural nuance, fairness, and authenticity

SHAPING DECISIONS AT SCALE

AI can analyze massive datasets and optimize campaigns at scale, but human marketers provide the cultural understanding and nuance that data alone cannot capture.

NOT A NEUTRAL SOURCE

AI reflects the people who design it. Without diverse human perspectives, cultural blind spots can become embedded in AI systems.

FUELS BIAS AGAINST DIVERSE GROUPS

Research shows AI systems can underperform, misdiagnose and exclude diverse groups. A lack of representation in training data and design teams lead to bias in areas like facial recognition, healthcare and advertising

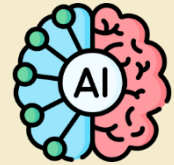
AI ONLY WORKS FOR EVERYONE WHEN EVERYONE IS REPRESENTED IN HOW IT'S DESIGNED

TELLING US THAT....



DIVERSE TEAMS BUILD FAIRER AI

Teams that reflect the population AI serves are more likely to manage bias and build more equitable, effective systems



BIAS ISN'T JUST CODE, ITS HUMAN CHOICES

Bias can creep in during problem framing, data collection and model design. Developers must be trained to recognize and counter social bias



ETHICAL AI NEEDS ACCOUNTABILITY

Scholars now call for greater transparency, stakeholder involvement and accountability in AI development

TACTICAL RESOURCES TO ACTIVATE IN-CULTURE

A football stadium at night with confetti falling and a trophy in the center.

2026 World Cup
Opportunities

Bad Bunny in a white outfit standing in a cornfield with other people in the background.

In Culture
Bad Bunny POV

A pair of hands holding a globe with small figures of people on it.

2026 Cultural
Calendar

A group of four diverse people sitting and talking.

Multicultural
Newsletters

A group of people with their hands stacked together in a circle.

Diverse Media
Partner Guides

A group of four people playing video games and smiling.

In Culture
Gaming POV

**THANK
YOU!**