



SPIKES ASIA CREATIVE CAMPUS FIELD GUIDE 2026

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HOW TO USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

Welcome to the inaugural **Spikes Asia Field Guide**. Drawn from the presentations, conversations, and ideas shared at the Spikes Asia Creative Campus 2026, this guide is designed to help you navigate the creative challenges facing brands, agencies, and platforms across APAC today.

Our aim is simple: to distil the most useful thinking from Creative Campus and translate it into clear signals, practical perspectives, and implications you can act on in your work today.

Throughout, you'll find:

Signals

Observable shifts in how creative work is being made, distributed or values. These markers help you read the landscape.

Field Notes

Practical observations from practitioners navigating this terrain, grounded in experience.

Watchpoint

Critical junctions where inaction or misapplication have consequences. Pay attention here.

What this Means

Strategic implications translated into actionable directions. What changes for your team, your brief, your next campaign.

How to Win in 2030

“The brands that will thrive will move from creating desire and selling products, to defending needs and becoming a scaffolding for people’s lives.”

~ Rica Facundo, Lions Intelligence

The Creative Campus opened with a clear eyed assessment of the forces shaping our world and the everyday realities of the people brands are trying to reach. Across economic, environmental, technological, and social dimensions, pressure is being felt at every level of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs.

As a result, we are entering an era where traditional marketing by desire is no longer enough. Brands that want to remain relevant will need to shift from creating want to defending needs, earning a role as trusted, indispensable parts of people’s lives rather than optional extras.

Climate Crisis

Accelerating environmental instability requires fundamental shifts in production, consumption, and brand purpose.

Economic Pressure

Rising costs, stagnant wages, and financial precarity are changing what and how people buy.

Employment Shifts

AI and automation are transforming work, requiring new skills and threatening traditional creative roles.

WATCHPOINT: THE STRATEGY SHIFT

Brands built for the 20th century were optimised for creating desire. They manufactured wants, amplified aspirations, and sold dreams. That model breaks when people are defending needs.

When your audience is making hard choices about what they can afford or justify emotionally, financially, environmentally, desire creation feels tone-deaf.

WHAT THIS MEANS

Stop asking: How do we make people want this?

Start asking: How does this become essential infrastructure in someone's life?

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CREATOR SPRINT

Where Relevance Lives Now

In partnership with

 **Meta**

CREATOR SPRINT

Before platforms, tools and systems at scale, there is a more fundamental question: where does relevance come from now? Across industries and categories, the answer keeps resolving in the same place, with individuals who are embedded in culture, not positioned above it.

Creators are no longer simply a way to distribute messages. They are where taste forms, where behaviours are normalised, and where audiences decide what feels worth paying attention to. Everything else explored across Creative Campus – AI, B2B storytelling, cultural systems, builds on this human signal.

Signal: The Creator Economy Has Moved Beyond Marketing

The creator economy in APAC is projected to reach **\$1.2 trillion by 2030**.

This isn't brand spend on influencer campaigns or creator fees. This figure captures the broader commercial impact creators now have on how people discover, choose, and buy across categories.

What surfaced repeatedly during this sprint was a reframing of value. Creators are influential not simply because they reach audiences, but because they sit inside communities and life moments. They don't speak at people; they move with them.

This shift explains why creators are increasingly shaping product design, service models, and brand behaviour, not just communication.

Field Note: From Partnerships to Life Stages

"When we work with creators, it's less about briefs and more about life coaching."

~ Isaac Tan, Chief Creative Officer, Hepmil

Rather than thinking in campaign timelines, the most effective creator collaborations now track life stages. Where is this person going? What's about to matter to them and to the audience following along?

Learning to drive.

Getting married.

Moving cities.

Buying a first home.

Each of these moments opens up entirely different categories of relevance, often years before a traditional campaign would ever show up. When brands commit to creators early, they earn permission later and avoid the scramble to insert themselves once the moment has already passed.

What This Means

Short-term creator buys optimise for speed and scale. Long-term creator relationships build something else entirely: Trust.

When brands invest in multi-year partnerships, friction drops and creative ambition increases. Brand safety becomes a shared responsibility rather than a constraint. What begins to form is not just content, but shared IP, a body of work that both brand and creator benefit from over time.

Campaigns end. Relationships accumulate value.

WATCHPOINT: THE COMFORT OF THE WRONG METRICS

“Follower count doesn’t matter.”
~ Adam Mosseri, Instagram CEO

Follower count remains the easiest metric to report, and one of the least useful. Today, algorithmic distribution means engagement, alignment and creative voice matter more than raw scale.

Stop measuring follower count and start measuring:

- Average engagement
- Views and retention
- Shareability
- Creative voice alignment with brand

Signal: The Return of the Human Face

As AI-generated content becomes more prevalent, a counter-movement is emerging in creator behaviour. Talking head videos, raw formats, and lightly edited content are gaining renewed traction, precisely because they are recognisably human.

"There's something non-negotiable about seeing a real person speak."

~ yuuno, Creator

In an environment saturated with synthetic perfection, signs of humanity such as pauses, imperfections, idiosyncrasies have become signals of trust. Audiences don't need everything to look better. They need it to feel real.

What This Means

Production value has not disappeared, but its role has changed. Overpolishing can now distance rather than attract. For brands, this requires a recalibration: trusting creators to speak in their own cadence and resisting the impulse to sand down everything that feels rough.

Field Note: AI as a Creative Accelerator — Not a Shortcut

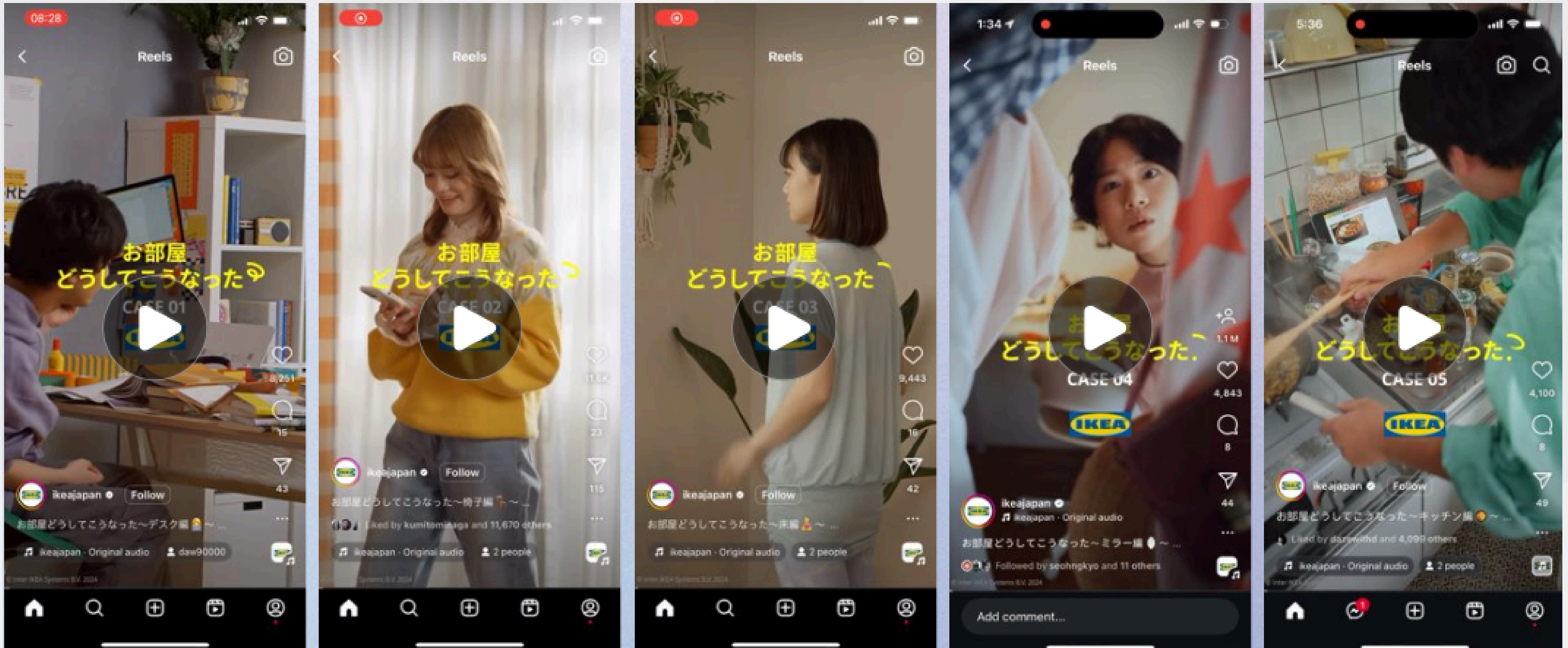
"I didn't go to film school. AI is how I learned."

~ yuuno

For many creators, AI tools are not replacing creativity but removing barriers that previously limited it. Storyboarding, editing, visual effects, even concept development, all are becoming more accessible to people who previously lacked technical training or budget.

As execution becomes cheaper, creative judgement becomes the true differentiator. Taste, intent, and point of view are what separate memorable work from noise.

From Influence to Innovation: A Field Application IKEA Japan — Singles Series



The Singles Series emerged from a cultural reality rather than a media objective. With a growing population of single-person households in Japan, IKEA chose to explore how people actually live, and what loneliness looks like in everyday moments.

The work took the form of episodic storytelling, following different individuals over time. Products were present but never foregrounded. Instead, they appeared as enablers of small, human rituals.

Rather than a single burst of attention, the campaign resulted in sustained engagement. Characters returned. Stories extended. Relevance compounded.

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AI SPRINT

Defending Creativity in an Age of Abundance

AI SPRINT

Defending Creativity in an Age of Abundance

AI entered the Creative Campus not as a theory, but as a reality already reshaping how work is made, who gets to make it, and how creativity is valued.

The conversation focused on the question: **how do we protect and elevate creativity when execution is no longer scarce?**

Across the sprint, a common understanding emerged. AI is powerful, but it is not creative in the human sense. It recombines. It predicts. It averages. Without intervention, it tends toward the expected.

Which makes the role of the creative mind more important, not less.

Signal: AI Recreates, Humans Create Meaning

"AI, by definition, cannot create. It recreates."

~ Armand De Saint-Salvy, Founder, Supaflr



User 1 - CHATGPT



User 2 - SORA



User 3 - NANO BANANA



User 4 - NANO BANANA

A simple experiment illustrated the point. Given the same prompt, multiple AI tools produced almost identical outputs. They were visually polished, technically competent, and fundamentally interchangeable. What looked impressive at first glance quickly revealed itself as AI slop.

AI defaults to the most likely answer. Creativity, by contrast, often comes from the least likely one.

The implication is clear. Left alone, AI moves work toward sameness. Differentiation only appears when human taste intervenes repeatedly, and with intent.

WATCHPOINT

- AI naturally moves toward the average
- Without creative direction, sameness scales faster than originality
- “Good enough” output is not the same as meaningful work

Field Note: Taste Is Now the Bottleneck

Much of what once constrained creative ambition, budget, time, production capability, has begun to dissolve. What remains is something less easily automated: **judgement**.

Which idea is worth pursuing?

Which output deserves refinement?

Which version carries meaning rather than novelty?

As AI lowers the cost of making, it raises the value of making the right choices.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Execution is no longer the constraint
- Taste, judgement, and editorial conviction are paramount
- Creative leadership matters more, not less

Signal: The Big Idea Is Back

“When budgets fall away, you realise how much more room there is to think.”

~ Armand De Saint-Salvy, Founder, Supaflr

As AI reduces production barriers, something unexpected is happening; creative ambition is resurfacing. Ideas once dismissed as too expensive or too complex can now be prototyped, tested, and iterated at speed.

The constraint, it turns out, was never imagination. It was execution cost.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Use the advantage of lower production costs to push ideas further at the concept stage
- Replace pre-selling with rapid prototyping. Show the idea, don't explain it
- Remove permission gates that exist purely because execution used to be expensive

Signal: The Real Risk Is the Skill Gap

"Creatives who know how to use AI properly are taking jobs, not the AI itself."

~ **Tuomas Peltoniemi**, Accenture

AI is not evenly distributed, and neither is confidence in using it. The sprint surfaced a growing divide between teams experimenting hands-on and teams waiting for permission, training, or perfect frameworks.

The employment impact is already visible. Entry-level roles are shifting, expectations are changing, and the definition of "baseline capability" is moving faster than most organisations are prepared for.

WATCHPOINT

- Waiting for certainty creates creative stagnation
- Skill gaps widen quickly in adaptive systems
- Inaction is not a neutral choice

WHAT THIS MEANS

A consistent recommendation emerged: Start with practice, not policy or structure.

Building a simple AI agent, testing a workflow, or experimenting on a live brief does more to develop fluency than abstract training ever will. Familiarity breeds discernment. Discernment builds confidence.

AI Sprint Summary

AI changes how work is made, but not why it matters.

It rewards clarity of intent, sharpens the consequences of creative decisions, and exposes weak thinking faster than ever before. In this context, creativity is not threatened, it is tested.

The organisations that thrive will be those that treat AI as a force multiplier for human judgement. The future belongs to teams who understand that defending creativity now means actively shaping it at every step, not just at the start.

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B2B SPRINT

The Myth of Rational Buyers

In partnership with

LinkedIn

B2B SPRINT

Where Humanity Re-enters the Funnel

For a long time, B2B marketing has told itself a comforting story: that it is rational, fact-based, and fundamentally different from consumer marketing.

The Creative Campus challenged that assumption.

What emerged was a recognition that **the people making B2B decisions now behave very differently from the models most B2B marketing was built on**. They scroll. They watch video. They absorb culture. And they make judgements long before a sales conversation begins.

In that context, creativity is no longer an accessory. It is the entry point.

Signal: The Buyer Has Changed Faster Than B2B Marketing 71% of B2B buyers are now Gen Z and Millennials.

-LinkedIn B2B Institute

This shift changes how information is found, filtered, and trusted. Younger buyers form opinions through content long before speaking to sales. They expect clarity, tone, and relevance, not dense decks or feature overload.

B2B buying is no longer a linear, rational process. It's fragmented, emotional, and shaped by moments of interest rather than formal discovery.

WATCHPOINT

- If your B2B marketing only makes sense in a sales meeting, it's already too late
- Buyers form opinions long before they fill in a form
- Awareness and trust now happen upstream, or not at all

Signal: You're Not Selling to Businesses. You're Selling to Humans.

"We're not selling to B2B decision-makers. We're selling to humans who make B2B decisions."

~ Jon Stona, CMO, Airwallex

This reframe surfaced repeatedly across the sprint. People don't switch off their identity, curiosity, or emotion when they come to work. The same individual evaluating enterprise software at 10am is watching entertainment content at 10pm.

B2B brands that ignore this reality default to being forgettable. Those that acknowledge it earn attention.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Brief for human response, not committee approval
- Use tone, story, and emotion to earn attention, then deliver substance
- Stop assuming seriousness requires blandness

Field Note: B2B Marketing Is Like Dating

"You don't have to get married on the first date"

Similarly, you don't have to lead with credentials and commitment on a first interaction. You build familiarity. You create interest. You let trust develop over time.

Too much B2B marketing still behaves as if every impression needs to close the deal.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Don't force commitment too early
- Design content for curiosity stages, not final decisions
- Let buyers warm up before expecting conversion

Signal: Discovery Has Moved to Machines

AI-driven research tools are now a primary discovery layer in B2B buying.

Between **94–95% of B2B buying committees** research extensively before speaking to sales, with LLMs increasingly replacing search engines.

This creates a new pressure point. If AI can't find you, contextualise you, or explain what you do clearly, your brand effectively disappears from consideration before the first human interaction.

WATCHPOINT

- If AI tools can't summarise your value, neither will buyers
- Clarity beats complexity in machinemediated discovery
- Obscure positioning becomes invisible, not premium

Signal: Emotion Is a Performance Lever in B2B

Less than **10% of B2B advertising** currently evokes positive emotion, leaving a vast creative and commercial opportunity.

The Creative Campus discussions made a compelling case that emotional resonance is not at odds with performance. In fact, it multiplies it.

Data shared across the sprint showed that:

- Strong creative drives significantly more leads
- Integrating brand and demand outperforms running them separately
- Video content increases conversion rather than diluting intent

Emotion opens the door to logic.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Treat emotion as a growth lever, not a brand garnish
- Integrate brand and demand instead of separating teams and briefs
- Use video to explain, not just to entertain

Field Note: Give Great Creative Time to Embed

"Great creative doesn't wear out. It wears in."

~ **Pooja Dhanothia**, LinkedIn

One of the biggest self-inflicted wounds in B2B marketing is the constant rotation of creative. As soon as performance stabilises, work is killed just as recognition and memory are beginning to build.

Think in terms of building IP rather than campaigns. Characters, platforms, and repeatable creative ideas compound over time. On the other hand, campaign-by-campaign thinking resets progress just as it starts to pay off.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Stop mistaking familiarity for fatigue
- Invest in repeatable creative platforms
- Let recognition work before replacing the work

B2B Sprint Summary

B2B marketing doesn't have to be serious, it has become more human.

Buyers bring their habits, emotions, and expectations with them, and they reward brands that respect that reality. Creativity is no longer decoration around rational selling. It is how trust is built, interest is earned, and relevance is established long before a sales conversation begins.

The opportunity for B2B brands is not to imitate consumer marketing, but to **apply creativity with greater confidence, clarity, and continuity** than the category has ever allowed itself before.

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CULTURE SPRINT

From Campaigns to Culture Systems

CULTURE SPRINT

Branding in a World That Expects Participation

The Culture Sprint surfaced a simple but uncomfortable truth: most brands still approach culture as something to use, while audiences now treat it as something they shape. Cultural relevance is built through systems that people can enter, adapt, and amplify.

"Asia doesn't need better storytelling. It needs better participation models."

~ Zoe Chen, Virtue Asia

Signal: Culture Rewards Adaptation, Not Replication

Culture is layered, local, and fast-moving.

From **Chagee** adapting its brand pillars to prioritise well-being in South Korea and low-sugar choices in Malaysia, to **McDonald's China** localising the Big Mac with a black sesame bun without diluting its core brand meaning, and **Anta and Haier** building global relevance through region-specific premiumisation and product design. Each example reinforces the point that a brand's global core only becomes meaningful when interpreted locally.

WATCHPOINT

- Copy-paste culture weakens global brands
- Cultural shortcuts read as inauthentic
- Local nuance is a competitive advantage, not a risk

Field Note: Real Cultural Work Requires Patience

A recurring theme in this sprint was the tension between cultural timelines and corporate timelines.

Culture compounds. Companies want results next quarter.

Chinese brands scaling globally have increasingly taken the long route to relevance by investing first in product quality, community, and cultural credibility before expecting brand affection to follow. The work shows that global success is rarely accelerated by shortcuts.

At the same time, a recurring tension surfaced around Asia's well known short-termism. Cultural work struggles to take hold when teams rush from launch to launch, replacing ideas before meaning has had time to accumulate. When everything is built for immediacy, long-term cultural value is often the first casualty.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Treat cultural relevance as a long-term investment
- Let platforms, people, and ideas mature before replacing them
- Slow down launches; speed up learning

Signal: Culture Lives in Micro-Communities

Across the conversations, one pattern emerged: culture lives at the edges.

Rather than broad cultural gestures, the strongest examples were highly specific responses to real communities. From gaming products designed around actual pain points like heat and battery life, to micro-cultures in food, wellness, and creator ecosystems where small groups exert disproportionate influence. These spaces reward brands that observe closely and intervene with care, rather than impose meaning from above.

The implication? Cultural relevance rarely emerges from trying to speak to everyone at once. It is built by engaging micro-cultures with precision, respect, and genuine utility, and allowing momentum to grow outward from there.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Build for a specific community, not for "everyone"
- Meet people inside the culture they're already living
- Solve real needs before building narratives

Culture in Practice: Johnnie Walker – The Walkers

Johnnie Walker showed how culture systems scale when anchored by a mission, rather than a campaign or product objective.

The mission: reignite social spaces post-COVID.

Each market interpreted it through its own cultural codes:

- South Africa: concerts and a Pan-African documentary
- South Korea: dance-driven experiences and live activations
- India: the revival of after-hours social spaces through contemporary music
- Southeast Asia: collaborations pairing established icons with emerging local talent

Instead of dictating execution, the brand achieved success by creating space for culture to lead.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Set the mission centrally
- Give markets creative autonomy
- Judge success by participation, not sameness

Field Note: Participation Is Proof, Not a Problem

One of the clearest cultural signals to emerge was the role of remix behaviour as a marker of success. When audiences adapt, reinterpret, or extend a brand's work, it's often a sign that the idea has moved beyond communication and into culture itself. Yet this is precisely the moment when many brands instinctively pull back, seeing reinterpretation as a threat rather than a measure of relevance.

What we learnt was that cultural fluency requires a willingness to loosen control on purpose, not as an accident of distribution.

WATCHPOINT: Don't Police the Remixes

When your cultural moment goes participatory, legal will want to shut down remixes that "misuse brand assets." Don't. The remixes are proof of cultural penetration. If people aren't remixing it, you haven't built culture. You've built a campaign.

Bringing It Together

Where Creativity Goes Next

Marketing and communications are increasingly about **earning a place in people's lives** by being useful, recognisable, and worth returning to.

What We Learned

Creators lead relevance.

Creators understand culture from the inside. Long-term creator relationships now shape trust, taste, and behaviour upstream of marketing.

AI accelerates everything, including mediocrity.

As execution becomes abundant, differentiation depends on judgement. Taste, intent, and decision making matter more than tools or speed.

B2B has become unmistakably human.

Rational decision making still matters, but it no longer arrives first. Attention, trust, and emotional connection now determine which brands buyers even consider.

Culture doesn't respond to campaigns.

It responds to systems that invite participation. Cultural relevance compounds when brands allow people to reinterpret, adapt, and extend ideas over time.

The Throughline

Each sprint pointed to the same underlying transition:

From creating desire
→ to **defending needs**

From chasing attention
→ to **earning trust**

From launching campaigns
→ to **building systems**

From control
→ to **cultural fluency**

- END OF REPORT -



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