

# FEEDING CULTURE: SOCIAL STRATEGIES WITH *SUBCULTURES*



Image source from  
Exactitudes by Arie Versluis  
& Ellie Uyttenbroek



Welcome to the Social Innovation Lab Social Bites. In this edition, we talk about the impact of subcultures on brands & how to engage with them to help feed novelty in social media strategies. We hope you enjoy it.

Sincerely,

Monks

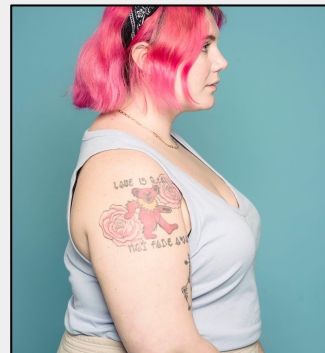
# WELCOME TO *SUBCULTURES!*

Subcultures constantly feed mainstream culture with novelty.

These niche groups of people are destined to change beliefs, rituals, languages and codes in our daily lives, and this is how they are impacting brands' social strategy today.



Image source from Exactitudes by Arie Versluis & Ellie Uyttenbroek



# WHY *SUBCULTURES*?

When it comes to cultural strategies, it's understood that brands want to have a deeper knowledge of what's bubbling on the fringes of the zeitgeist. But the process of getting into culture is the **most challenging stage for a brand to be in** due to our current turbulent times. Audiences demand brands that are truthful, purposeful and transparent. Therefore, we're examining culture closely, because it comprises the truth of what people are experiencing now and in real time.

We as humans always have **the urge to revolutionize ourselves**, and we do that based on what's around us. We get inspiration from friends, social groups and more, and from that intake, we design our own identity.

**Brands are built from humans and belief systems so they tend to do the same.** In this paper we're going to see **an exercise** in how these subcultures can help **create paths to novelty**. This process is done with **the greatest respect**, where we understand the brand's social equity and the essence of these emergent subcultures to **translate new narratives, essences and meaning into social strategies**.

As witnesses of these social phenomena, we want to give back the value audiences deserve, so they can always get *GENUINE. TRANSPARENT. MEANINGFUL. PURPOSEFUL BRANDS.* 🙏

Overview

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01 Subcultures: An Assertive Way Into Culture

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02 Feeding Culture: The Subculture Equation Exercise

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03 Powering Communities in Social Media

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04 Dynamics into Tactics: Achieving Social Cultural Insertion

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SUBCULTURES:  
*AN ASSERTIVE WAY*  
*INTO CULTURE*



In our last edition of social bites, we brought you:



*Fandoms and subcultures* sometimes operate hand-in-hand, but they don't come from the same *essence* or *factors*.

*Let's find out the factors that make subcultures so valuable to brands!*

“They’re everywhere, and you don’t even have to look that hard – or get off your arse – to find them. They’re in your very pocket, posting Stories on Instagram, selling stuff on Depop, shaking up the TikTok algorithms. And out in the real world, today’s youth are occupying spaces of their very own, dressed like they belong to something *you* wouldn’t understand.”

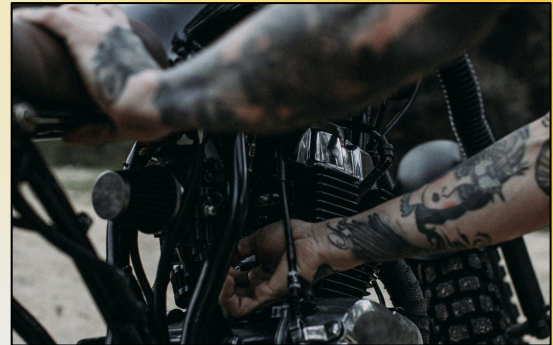
TJ Shidu for The Face Magazine  
“Supersonic Youth: who said subcultures were dead?”

# Let’s think about what can be considered a *subculture*.

## Subculture

A set of people who have a deep ideology. Centered on codes and languages (look and feel), they mostly come from youth culture and are considered trendsetters, usually rebelling against the status quo.

*Subcultures are subtypes of a community, and they tend to blend together a little depending on the ideology.*



Subcultures Examples...

They're just a bunch of

# *GABBERS*

having fun





## Subculture Examples

# GABBERS



Image source from Exactitudes by Arie Versluis & Ellie Uytenbroek

What we study about a subculture is summarized in these main points.

This information constantly nurtures mainstream culture and helps to understand both the current zeitgeist and to predict what's to come.

- Ideologies/meaning
- Rituals
- Meeting Points
- Look & feel

Known as “Gabbers,” this is a 90’s subculture born in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Sons of the working class found spaces where they could dance all night without worrying about their current living conditions. They are considered the fathers of the techno rave hardcore scene, and engaged with culture through their look and feel and aesthetics proposal. The Gabbers disappeared with the 90’s, but their ideology, look and feel prevail.



Subculture Examples

# GABBERS



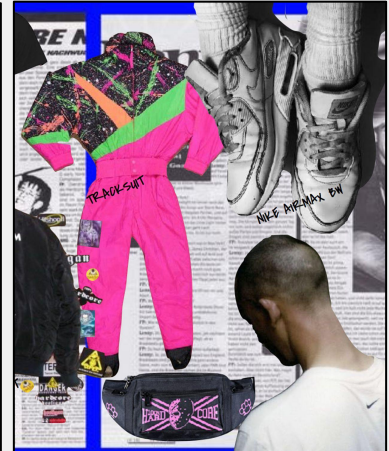
Image source from Exactitudes by Arie Versluis & Ellie Uytenbroek

“ — Some people meditate, I just turn up the bass.

Ideologies/meaning. Rituals.  
Meeting points. Look & feel.



STYLE CODES



# FEEDING CULTURE: THE *SUBCULTURES EQUATION* *EXERCISE*



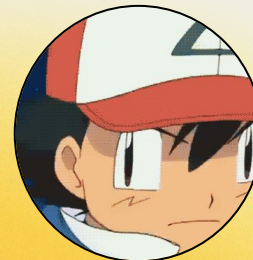
# FEEDING CULTURE: *FROM MICRO TO MACRO*

Subcultures tend to begin in the niche sector, *exclusively from trendsetters*, due to their disruptive way of thinking and counterculture.  
For us this means:

- An opportunity to study what's to come in cultural trends
- A full culture study of the current zeitgeist
- Feeding the mainstream with novelty
- A new way of powering social communities



[ Trendsetters ]



[ Mainstream ]

\*Based on Ana Andjelic "The Business of Aspiration"

\*Based on Danilo Venturi's "Uncovering the Uncover"



Why are  
subcultures  
important to  
culture & brands?

## FOR EXAMPLE: HOW THE DRAG SUBCULTURE WENT MAINSTREAM

Thanks in part to Drag culture, we have ideals of diversity and inclusivity, their mastering of performance and a new era of fluid identities for the society.

Owing this to the **constant translation from culture trends to the mainstream**, the Drag community set new values, rituals and habits that cannot be dismissed.



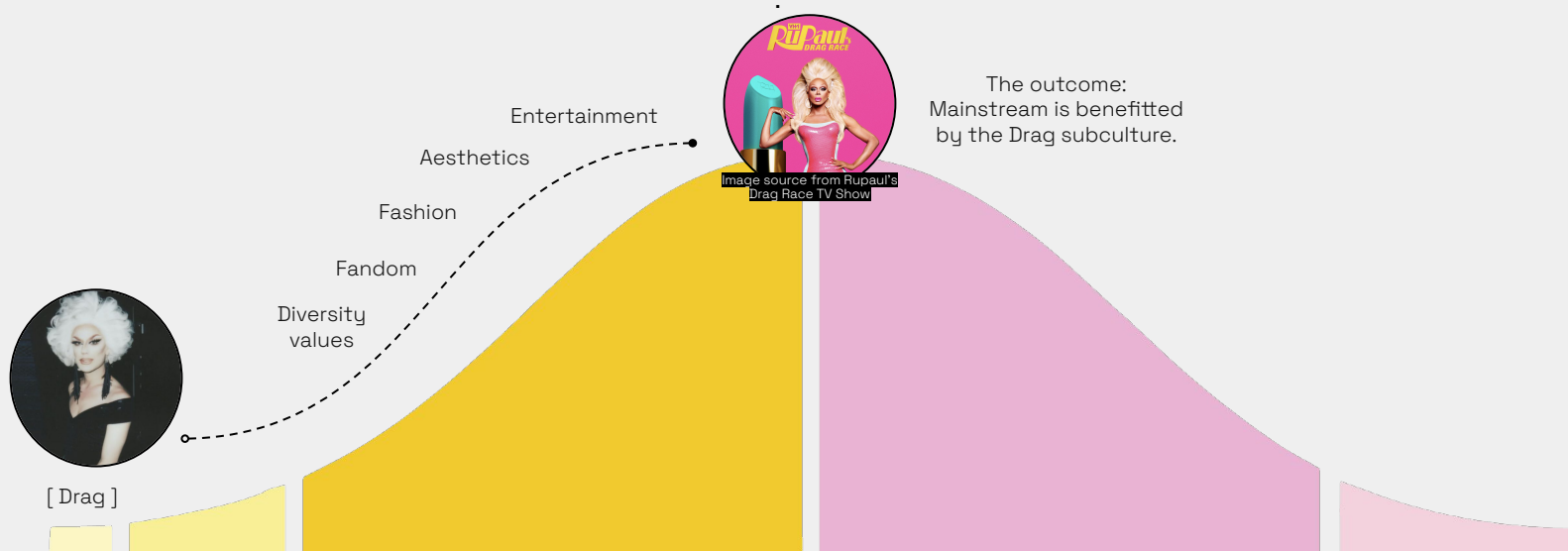
Now we have a big  
community of drag  
in the mainstream



*Drag racing to  
the evolution of  
fluid identities!*

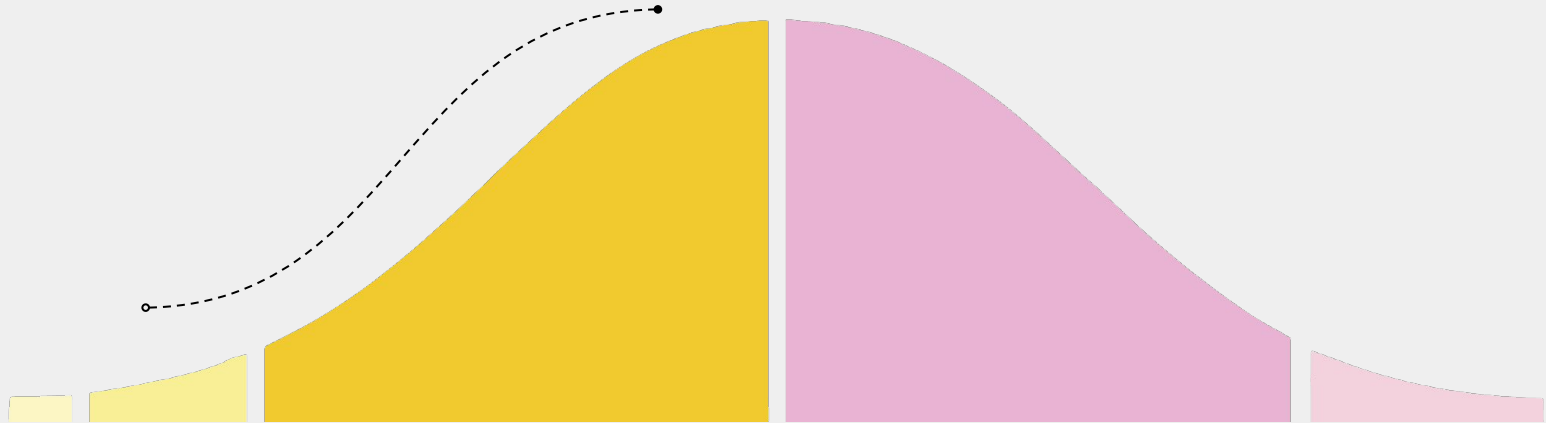
## HOW DOES THIS TRANSLATION WORK?

In the example, let's remember that the Drag subculture were originally a niche group. But their actions, codes, languages and ideologies transcended. This phenomenon occurs as trendsetters introduce new trends to the early-late mainstream across the adoption curve. The process occurs simultaneously across areas like fashion, entertainment and fandom, where everybody contributes to make it cross the chasm.





# *THE SAME TRANSLATION HAPPENS WITH BRANDS*



Feeding Culture

## HOW DOES THIS WORK?

These are  
examples of  
how that  
translation is  
taking place  
simultaneously  
in today's  
culture.

Subculture Examples

# NEO-PERREO

\*Based on "Subculture: The Meaning of Style (New Accents)" by Dick Hebdige  
\*Based on Danilo Venturi's "Uncovering the Uncover"



Tomasa del Real

@techgrl

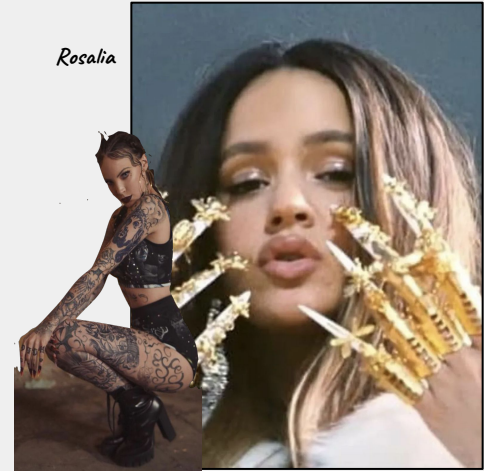
**The subculture equation**  
*abstracts meaning,  
look and feel*

**Meaning:** feminism, matriarchy,  
empowerment.



**L&F:** bellaca, tattoos,  
nails, clothes.

POP Culture



Rosalia

Belinda

[ Trendsetters ]

[ Mainstream ]

Feeding Culture

HOW DOES  
THIS WORK?

These are  
examples of  
how that  
translation is  
taking place  
and pushing  
brands to speak  
to current  
codes &  
languages in  
the zeitgeist.

Subculture Examples

## OTAKU-KAWAII

\*Based on "Subculture: The Meaning of Style (New Accents)" by Dick Hebdige  
\*Based on Danilo Venturi's "Uncovering the Uncover"

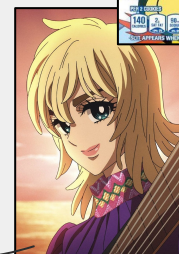


[ Trendsetters ]

How are brands translating  
these *cultural* traits?

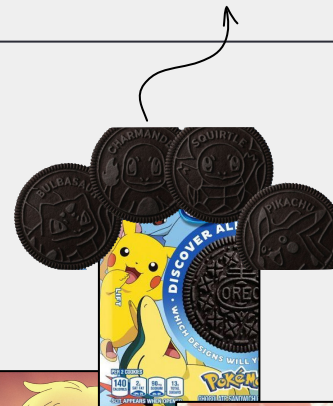


Gucci

Bad  
Bunny

[ Mainstream ]

Oreo + Pokémon  
by Media.Monks



# ACCELERATING CULTURE EVEN FASTER



**The mirror effect:** Values from subcultures dilute in order to “soften” the message into the mainstream. This transaction is accelerated by hyper-connectivity inside social media platforms that keep sending information faster than ever before.

# *POWERING COMMUNITIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA*





Subcultures  
can be  
approached by  
2 different  
translations:



## 1. A SUBCULTURE CAN BE HELPFUL AS A COMMUNITY BUILDER

\*Based on "Subculture: The Meaning of Style" by Dick Hebdige

More than ever, subcultures today are born and powered on social media platforms such as TikTok and Reddit. These platforms digitalize the spaces where subcultures are formed—and due to this, they may merge or blend with other subcultures into hybrid communities.

**Hybrid communities** are a phenomenon prompted by diversity and Gen Z thinking. Previously, subcultures used to only stay in their groups. Today, hybrid communities are breaking down these barriers by setting new boundaries of immersion and gaining cultural currency.



“ ——— Communities are groups of people who enjoy a common interest.

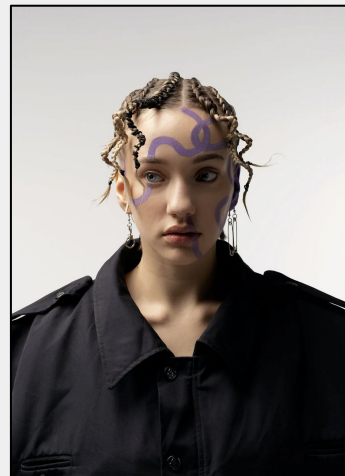
Several brands have achieved good results by targeting different subcultures into their social strategies. As a result, they became cultural brands at the cusp of the zeitgeist.

Subcultures  
can be  
approached by  
2 different  
translations:



## *2. SUBCULTURES AS A SUPPORT TO BRING NOVELTY INSIDE THE BRAND AND TRANSLATION INTO THE MAINSTREAM*

Subcultures can be a key ingredient to become culturally relevant inside marketing strategies as we saw in the subcultures equation exercise, or as trendsetters who can predict/insert upcoming trends.



DYNAMICS INTO TACTICS:  
*ACHIEVING SOCIAL  
CULTURAL INSERTION*



## Subculture dynamics into tactics:



We integrated a dynamic with our internal team at Media.Monks' Phenomena Forum and successfully created activities for brands that can be part of this cultural translation strategy.

The first step was studying one subculture called "Witchcore" that comes from youth culture.

We studied their ideology, rituals, habits, look and feel, elements and where it is located within the adoption curve to understand how to translate to the mainstream.

**We located manifestations and patterns that were already occurring in the mainstream market.**

Here



## WITCHCORE



Ideologies - meaning

Rituals

Meeting Points

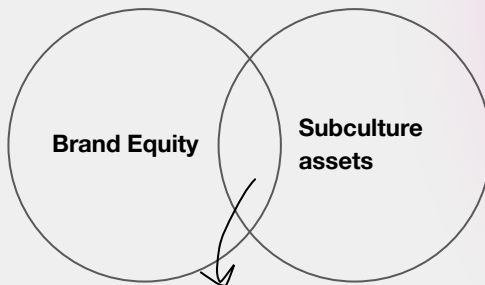


## Subculture dynamics into tactics:



**The result:** We did the exercise with the beer brand Modelo, a Media.Monks client. Taken from “witchcore,” we established a series of ideas and thinking to make Modelo a translator of codes and languages, then combined the equity of Modelo and some assets from the subculture.

**...All while keeping in mind the sweet spot between brand equity & subculture!**



**Sweet Spot:** new ideas to speak cultural's current language from a youth culture Gen Z perspective.

Brand client example exercise



### Reminder:

*Welcome to the new generation of witches. These witches are not evil, they care about nature, emotions, desires and they believe that the universe is the ultimate companion on the search of happiness & love in life.*

### Ideas:

- Tarot lecture through the foam of our beers.
- We are going to form the coven as a social community to make a drink feast.



## Achieving social cultural insertion

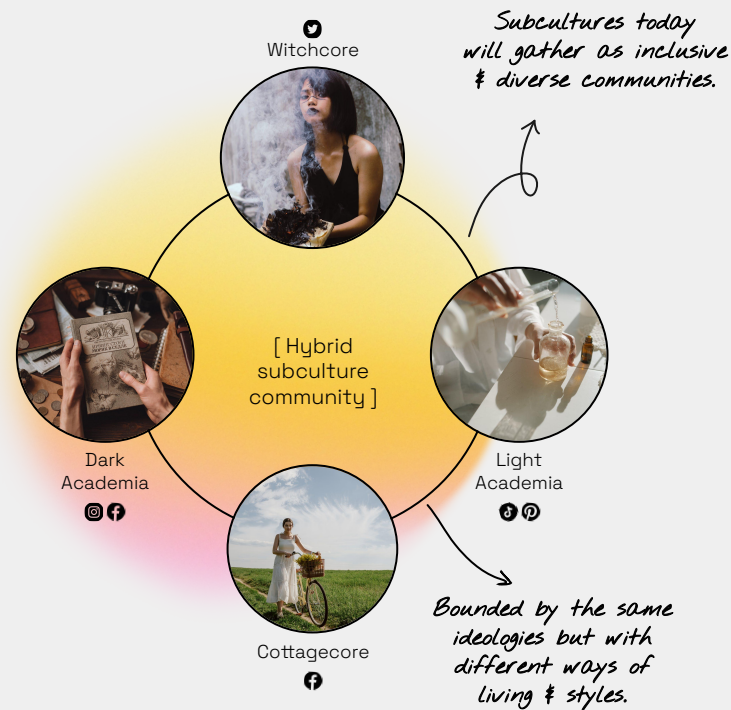
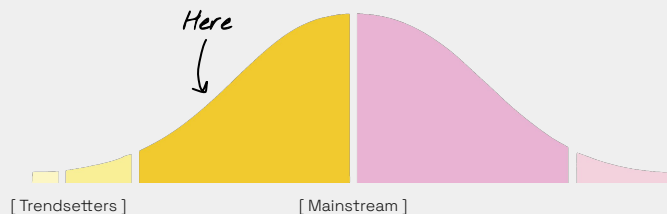


The rise of subcultures on social happens fast. This makes their exposure to communities within the audience exponential, turning them into hybrid phenomena as they gain momentum.

Achieving social cultural insertion requires an acute reading of the culture and brands—and at the same time, the deep study of the social platforms where they collide.

Brands have the power to become fluent in the speech of culture in social media, navigating between trendsetters and mainstream.

Driven by Gen Z—a generation that found a place on the internet to create emergent subcultures—Reddit, TikTok, IG, Tumblr are the new spaces where the groups are born.



OUR TAKE ON THE FUTURE  
OF SOCIAL STRATEGIES BASED ON THE  
TRANSLATION:  
**CULTURE IS NOT A MONOCULTURE**

In the midst of this era of hyper-connectivity, culture is constantly reconfiguring due to social media and globalization where **seas of diversity intermix. Subcultures are part of these seas.** and they interweave symbolic components, rituals and codes to **give meaning** to our present and future in different shades and tones—prompting **BRANDS TO ADAPT. FAST. MEANINGFULLY. ALWAYS ON.** ✨

Appendix

Subculture Archive & Dynamic Example:  
*IDEOLOGIES, RITUALS, LOOK  
& FEEL IN ONE SPACE.*

Subculture

# WITCHCORE



"WitchTok content is so relevant right now because we learned last year we can't control (things). ...Many of us are looking inward," Yale psychology professor James Alcock explained to CNN. And in times of uncertainty, people have historically looked to the occult to "get some kind of answer about the future...something that's reassuring in some way."

## Ideologies/meaning.

Welcome to the new generation of witches. They care about nature, emotions, desires and they believe that the universe is the ultimate companion on the search of happiness and love in life. They are highly conscious of their senses.

Their meaning is acquiring spiritual growth and guidance from nature, galaxies and magic rituals that'll enrich the future and provide reassurance of better times.

## Rituals.

Tarot card reading; meditation with incense and candles; energy manifestation through crystals; collecting herbs, flowers, plants for natural remedies; journaling; long walks in nature; astrology reading to friends; universe manifestations; decrees, affirmations and spells for love, prosperity, etc.

## Meeting Points.

Tiktok  
Instagram  
Forests  
Houses

*"When it comes to getting witchy, [TikTok](#) is the new Platform 9 3/4."*

*The TikTok hashtag #WitchTok has 20.5 billion views.*



Subculture

## WITCHCORE



## AESTHETIC ELEMENTS:



## Elements

- Tarot rituals/tarot cards
- Botanical knowledge
- Astrology knowledge
- Interest in nature
- Spiritual practice
- Incense
- Candles
- Crystals



Subculture

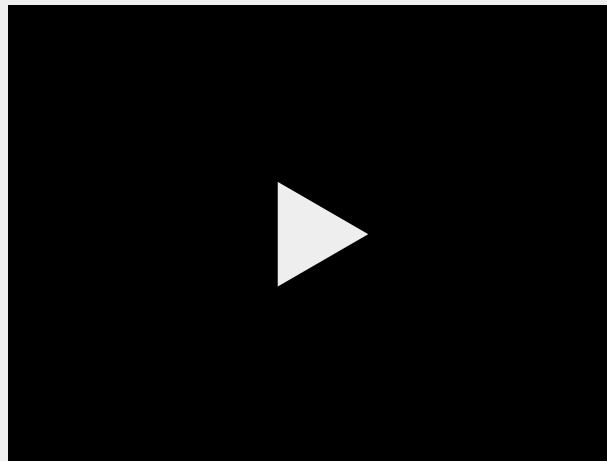
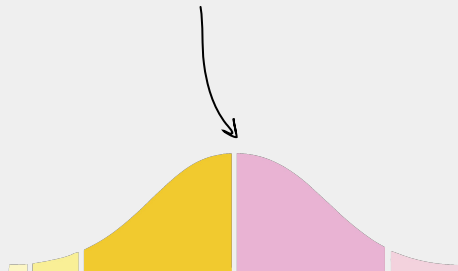
# WITCHCORE



HOW HAS THIS  
SUBCULTURE  
BEEN PORTRAYED  
IN THE  
MAINSTREAM?



Here



Images from  
Urban  
Outfitters



Image from:  
The Witcher  
Netflix series



Image from:  
#WitchTok by  
TikTok

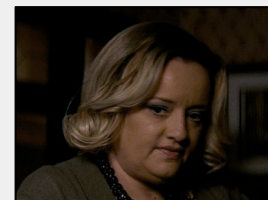


Image from:  
The Chilling  
Adventures of  
Sabrina  
Netflix series

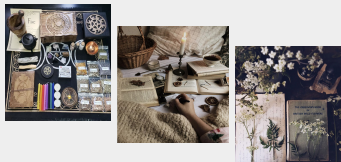


Image from:  
Daughter of Witches  
Hulu series

# Subculture Canvas | *WITCHCORE*

## Reminder:

Welcome to the new generation of witches. These witches care about nature, emotions, and desires, believing that the universe is the ultimate companion on the search of happiness and love in life.



Here



## For whom:



Brand example exercise

## What am I learning from their ideology?

Connection with nature and spiritual rituals.

## How could your client better engage with this subculture?

Activations, experiences, beer rituals with astrology innovation.

## What am I identifying from their look & feel?

Arcana  
Horoscope  
Simbology

## Ideas:

Divination using the foam of our beers.

We are going to form a coven as a social community to make a drink feast.

# FEEDING CULTURE: SOCIAL STRATEGIES WITH *SUBCULTURES*



Image source from Exactitudes by Arie Versluis & Ellie Uyttenbroek

