



ALIGNING R&D WITH WHAT CONSUMERS WILL CARE ABOUT TOMORROW



Cheryl Auger
Senior Director of Research

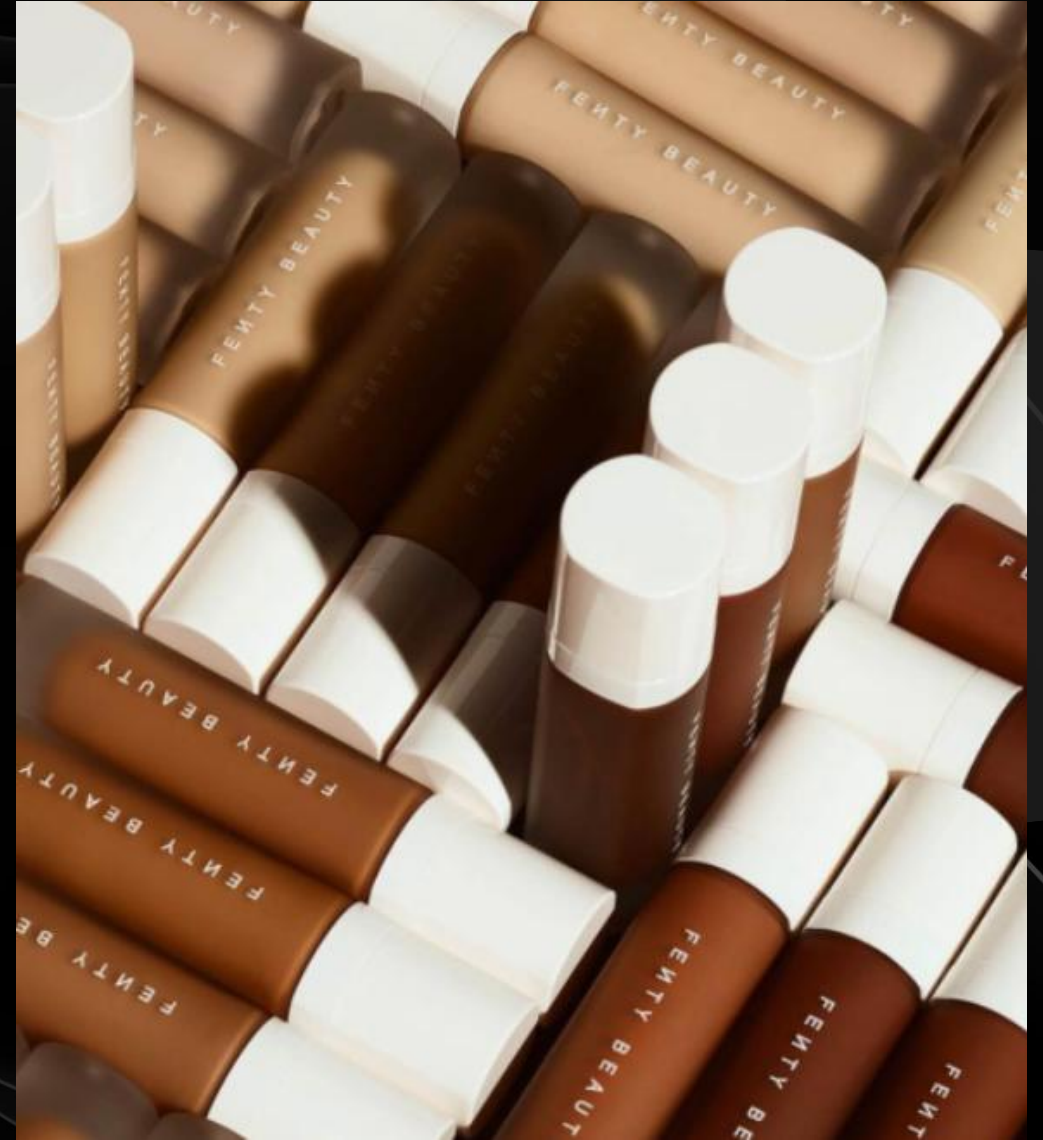


Matthew Watton, Ph.D.
Analyst

FENTY BEAUTY

Inclusion as cultural default

- Signal: Online frustration over limited beauty shades and token representation
- Solution: Launched 40 shades of foundation from day one
- Success: USD 100 million in sales in the first 40 days and USD 570 million in revenue in its first full year



LEGO'S REVIVAL

Embracing adult creativity

- Signal: The rise of the “kidult” — adults seeking mindful, nostalgic, creative escapes in a high-stress digital world
- Solution: The Lego Ideas platform and “18+” line, rebranding play as adult creativity
- Success: Adult users now make up 25%–30% of Lego’s customer base





**Innovation succeeds when we
translate signals of cultural change
into strategic opportunity**

WHAT TO EXPECT

01

What is a signal?

02

Using anthropology to detect signals

03

Examples of signals for innovation

WHAT IS A SIGNAL?

EMERGING CULTURAL MEANING

A signal is new way consumers are framing, talking about, or connecting ideas

- Not yet mainstream
- Potential long-term shift
- Invisible if you looked only at narrow terms



NOISE

Loud but fleeting

- Random spikes of attention
- Driven by hype or novelty
- Short lived, no deeper meaning

FAD

Flashy but burn out fast

- Catch on quickly but don't last
- Surface-level excitement
- Rarely change culture in lasting ways

SIGNAL

Small, growing, enduring

- Emerging cultural meanings
- Rooted in deeper beliefs and values
- Show growth, resonance, and staying power
- Potential to evolve into mainstream trends

USING ANTHROPOLOGY TO DETECT SIGNALS



Signals Live in Meaning, not Mentions

Signals live in meaning, not mentions

TOPICS IN THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXT

Web of connections reveals meaningful signals

By studying this broader cultural context, Lux can see early, peripheral signals that would otherwise be invisible if you looked only at narrow terms.



MEASURE GROWTH, DON'T TRACK MENTIONS

- Mention tracking fails to give real understanding
- Historical data reveal how signals *resonate, grow, and sustain*



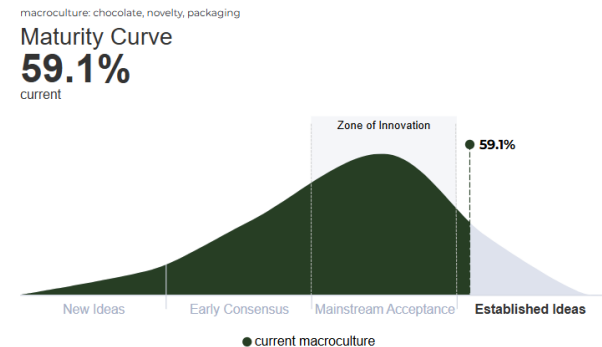
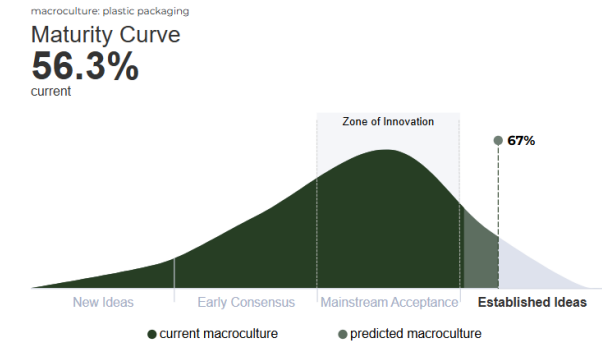
HOW WE PREDICT GROWTH

Lux predicts the future state of consumer culture by analyzing a year's worth of conversation data.

- Growth occurs when consumer discussions increasingly use the same language to describe a topic, indicating alignment in how people think about it. The growth rate measures how quickly this dominant language is spreading.
- Volatility occurs when consumer conversations remain fragmented, with no clear consensus emerging on how to discuss the topic.

LUX TAKE

Lux recommends using predicted maturity (rather than current maturity) to plan timing, messaging, and strategy for product launches and messaging campaigns.



THE MATURITY CURVE & BUSINESS STRATEGIES

NEW IDEAS

Few people agree what the topic is — or why it matters

GOAL: Monitor the culture for signs of stability

EARLY CONSENSUS

Shared meanings are emerging but still flexible

GOAL: Gain early mover advantage and shape the category

MAINSTREAM ACCEPTANCE

People “get” the trend, but expectations aren’t fully set

GOAL: Fit solutions more seamlessly into people’s lives.

ESTABLISHED IDEAS

Meanings are fixed, and expectations are ingrained

GOAL: Differentiate or disrupt

EXAMPLES OF SIGNALS FOR INNOVATION

FOOD FORAGING

FORAGED FOOD

Foraging resonates as a path back to nature and timeless practices

Foraging is viewed as a way to sustain local foodways and community heritage:

- It taps into a broader cultural narrative of preserving and celebrating local traditions and resources.
- Foraged foods carry a perception of superior freshness and nutrition.
- It empowers consumers to learn about edible plants and the natural world through hands-on discovery.

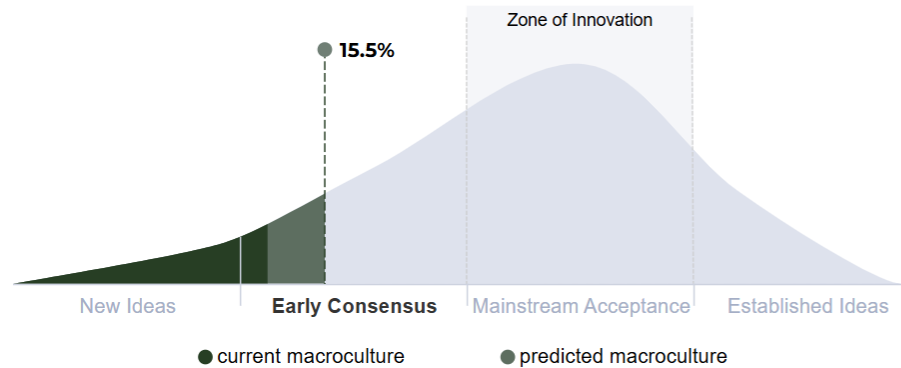


FORAGED FOOD SIZING

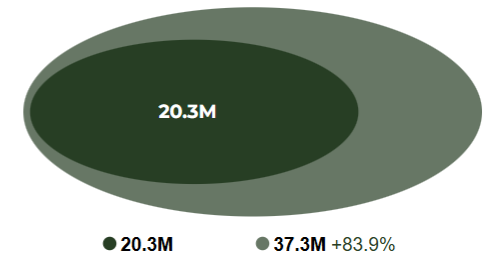
Foraged foods sits in the early consensus stage of maturity.

- There is still room to shape consumer perception.
- But food foraging is not yet close to mainstream.

macroculture: foraged food
Maturity Curve
8.4%
current



Population



This topic scores **8.4%** on the [maturity curve](#) and is expected to expand to **15.5%** in 12-24 months.

This culture is currently relevant to **20.3M** people and is expected to grow by in 12-24 months.

LUX TAKE

Foraging-inspired innovation lets brands shape emerging ideas of authenticity and sustainability, building credibility with future-focused consumers.

FORAGING-INSPIRED INNOVATION

Leveraging the ethos of foraging to redefine authenticity, sustainability, and consumer connection

- Natural differentiation: Incorporate seasonal, locally sourced, and foraged ingredients to meet growing demand for authenticity and connection to nature.
- Innovative formulations: Use botanicals and natural actives to create distinctive, benefit-driven products that stand out.
- Cultural relevance: Tap into foraging's heritage and sustainability narratives to forge deeper emotional ties with modern consumers.



BIOHACKING

BIOHACKING

Data and self-experimentation are empowering consumers to optimize health and longevity

Consumers pursue peak mental and physical performance through focused habits and enhancements.

- Technology enables consumers to track, measure, and fine-tune their health in real time.
- DIY health routines reflect a growing motivation to test, customize, and sustain long-term energy and vitality.

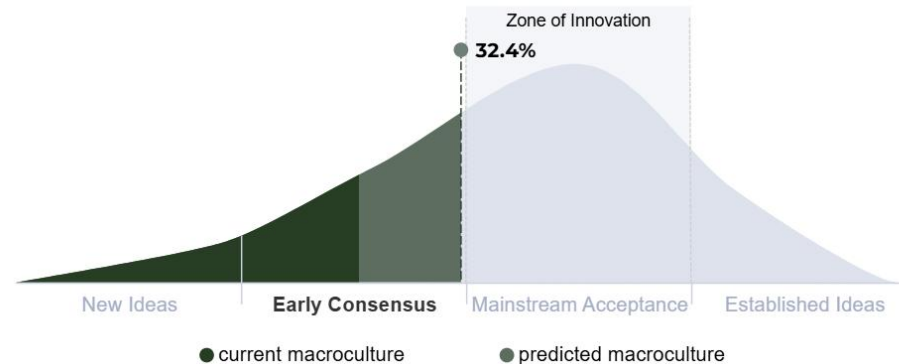


BIOHACKING SIZING

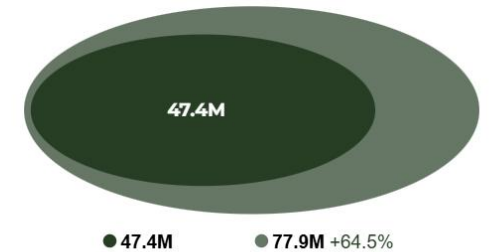
Biohacking sits in the early consensus stage of maturity.

- Consumer perceptions are still forming.
- There's space to influence how consumers perceive biohacking.

macroculture: biohacking
Maturity Curve
19.7%
current



Population



This topic scores **19.7%** on the [maturity curve](#) and is expected to expand to **32.4%** in 12-24 months.

This culture is currently relevant to **47.4M** people and is expected to grow by in 12-24 months.

LUX TAKE

By aligning with biohacking values — personalization, optimization, and transparency — brands can create products and platforms that redefine consumer health and wellness.

NEXT-GENERATION WELLNESS INNOVATION

The future of wellness is personal, measurable, and empowered

- Personalized solutions: Develop tailored nutrition, supplement, and wellness offerings that adapt to individual health data and goals.
- Performance optimization: Create functional products and tools that enhance cognitive and physical vitality through science-backed innovation.
- Data-driven empowerment: Leverage AI, wearables, and analytics to give consumers real-time insights and control over their well-being.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Not all that's new is meaningful.

True innovation depends on distinguishing fleeting noise and fads from genuine cultural signals — the early, meaningful shifts in consumer beliefs that will shape tomorrow's markets.

2

Signals reveal where culture is going, not just where it's been.

By decoding emerging meanings in consumer conversations, Lux helps innovators see early stage shifts before they become mainstream trends.

3

Predictive Anthropology turns culture into foresight.

By analyzing how meanings evolve, measuring maturity, and tracking momentum, we give R&D teams a roadmap to align innovation with what consumers will care about next.



THANK YOU



READ

<http://www.luxresearchinc.com/blog/>



LISTEN

[Innovation Matters Podcast - Spotify](#)



VISIT

www.luxresearchinc.com



EMAIL

questions@luxresearchinc.com



FOLLOW

[@LuxResearch](https://twitter.com/LuxResearch)



CONNECT

[LuxResearch](https://www.linkedin.com/company/luxresearch)

ABOUT LUX

Our mission is to advise leaders about commercially viable science and technology to enable sustainable innovation. We deliver research and advisory services to inspire, illuminate, and ignite innovative thinking that reshapes and grows businesses. Using quality data derived from primary research, fact-based analysis, and opinions that challenge traditional thinking, our experts focus on finding truly disruptive innovations that are also realistic and make good business sense.

The “Lux Take” is trusted by innovation leaders around the world, many of whom seek our advice directly before placing a bet on a startup or partner — our clients rely on Lux insights to make decisions that generate fantastic business outcomes. We pride ourselves on taking a rigorous, scientific approach to avoid the hype and generate unique perspectives and insights that innovation leaders can’t live without.



READ

<http://www.luxresearchinc.com/blog/>



VISIT

www.luxresearchinc.com



FOLLOW

[@LuxResearch](https://twitter.com/LuxResearch)



CONNECT

[LuxResearch](https://www.linkedin.com/company/luxresearch)



LISTEN

[Innovation Matters Podcast - Spotify](#)



EMAIL

questions@luxresearchinc.com