



# THE UNSEEN FORCES BEHIND CONSUMER TRENDS

Beliefs Driving Consumer Behavior



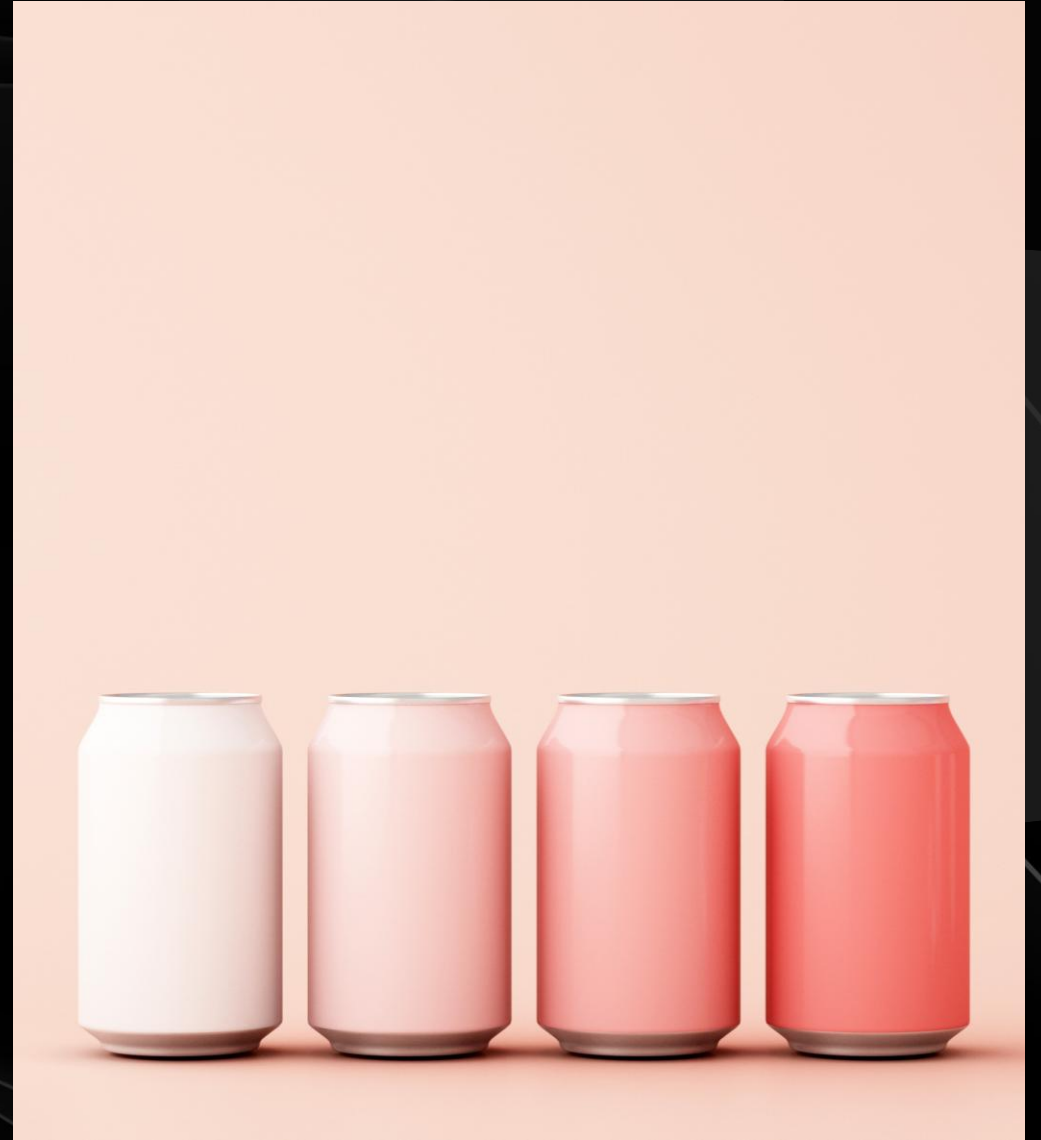
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# SODA OF SHAME





**When consumers can't explain their  
behaviors, your business needs  
insights that go deeper.**

# THE UNSEEN FORCES BEHIND TRENDS

**01** | Anthropology and deeper understanding

**02** | Case study: Junk food as self-care

**03** | Case study: Guilty pleasures

**04** | Case study: Tariffs

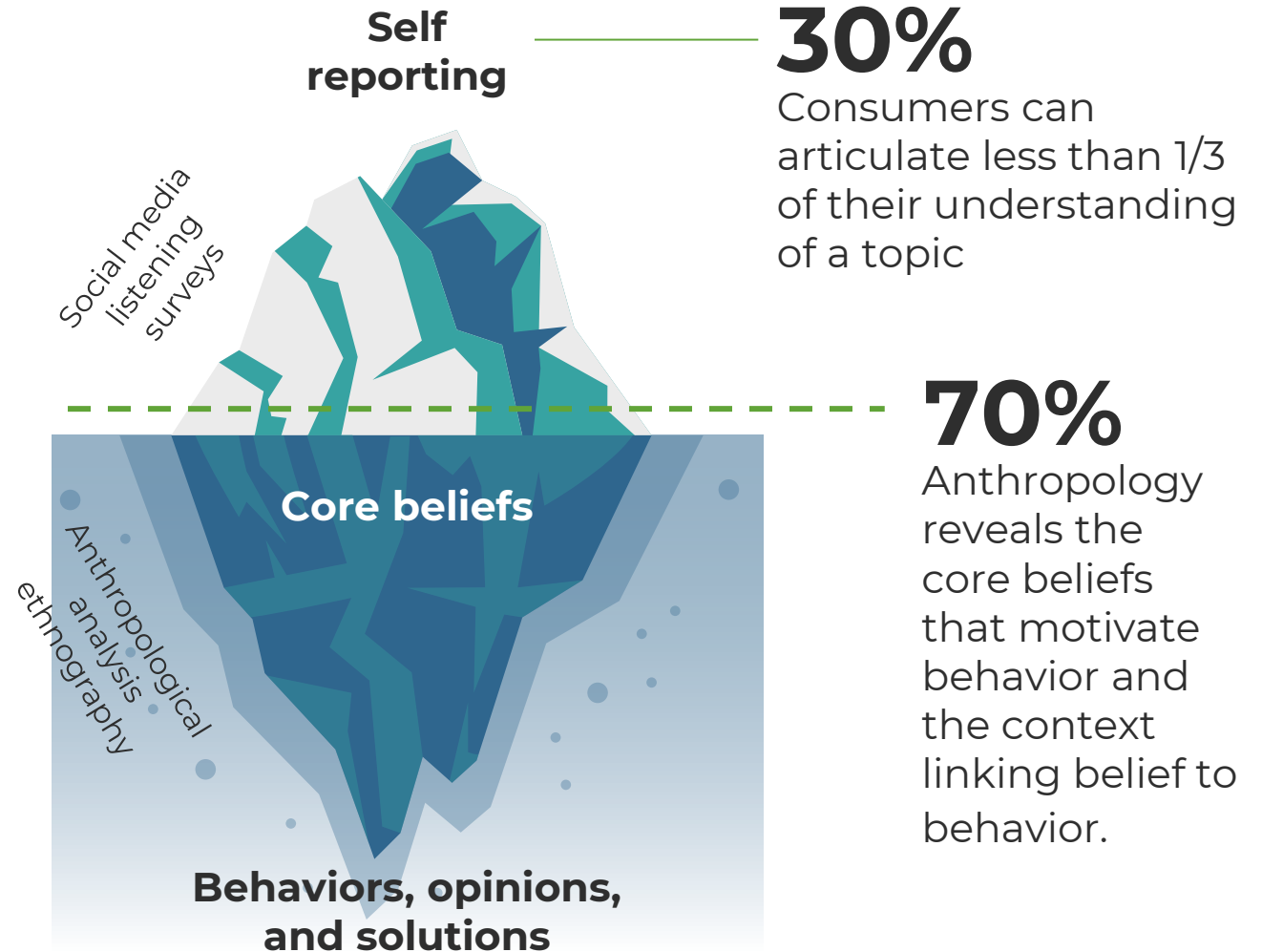
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# ANTHROPOLOGY AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

# DECODE BELIEFS, MAKE THE RIGHT BETS

Align your strategy with consumers' core beliefs for long-term revenue growth:

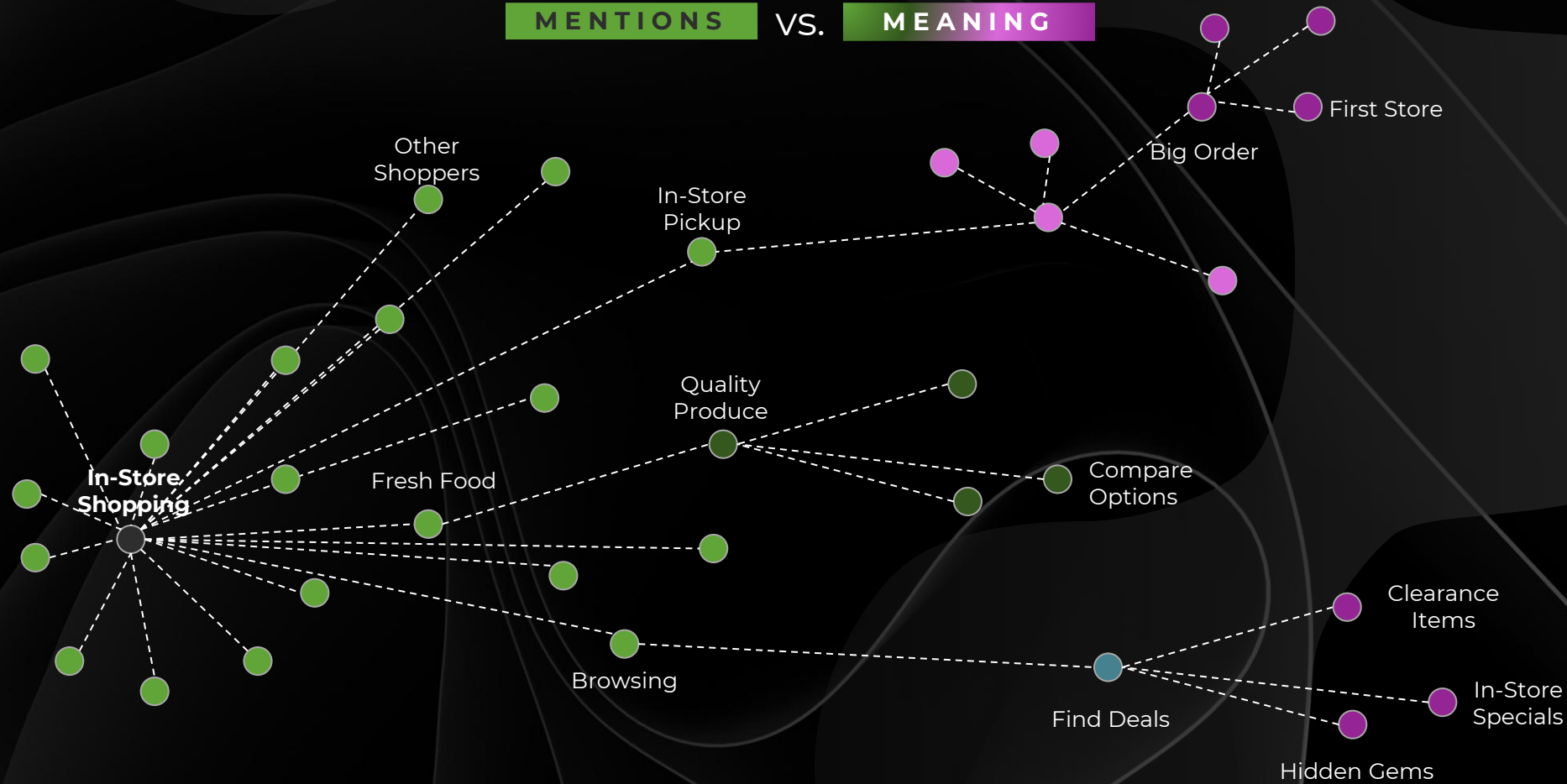
- Align with consumers' values and needs
- Improve market timing
- Discover opportunities in cultural trends
- Foster brand loyalty by resonating with your audience
- Future-proof strategies



# CULTURAL CONTEXT = LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Cultural context goes beyond the belief system consumers can articulate (30%), revealing the reason why topics matter today (the 70%).

This lets us anticipate what they'll care about in the future.



## IN-STORE SHOPPING

**In-store shopping isn't just about getting what you need, it's about turning a routine errand into a personalized hunt for value, quality, and meaning.**

### Surface Level

In-store shopping is about browsing for deals and finding quality fresh food.

### Core Belief

Consumers believe in-store shopping is a strategic experience; they go in with goals but stay open to discovery. The ability to physically compare produce and discover hidden deals makes the trip worthwhile. It's not just about buying; it's about optimizing the process.

### Hidden Meanings

Consumers see themselves on a voyage of discovery, combing store shelves like they would comb a beach for pirate's treasure.

Consumers see themselves as providers seeking out the best supplies for nurturing their families.



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# JUNK FOOD AS SELF-CARE

# INDULGENT FOOD

Consumers feel emotionally connected to junk food, even knowing it's unhealthy

Junk food often evokes feelings of comfort and nostalgia.

- It's associated with positive memories from their past, such as childhood treats.
- This makes junk food a comforting, go-to choice in times of stress.
- It also provides an escape, adding novelty to daily life.



# SHAMEFUL HABIT OR SELF- CARE?

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- Consumers don't generally proclaim that they love "junk food."
- Doing so risks the social stigma of being exposed for being proudly unhealthy.
- Our research shows how consumers see eating junk food as an act of self-care.
- Junk foods boost endorphins.
- Thus, they believe junk food is in some way good for them, without explaining that directly.



## PERMISSION TO INDULGE

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## ELEVATED INDULGENCE

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## REWIND TO RECONNECT

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# GUILTY PLEASURES

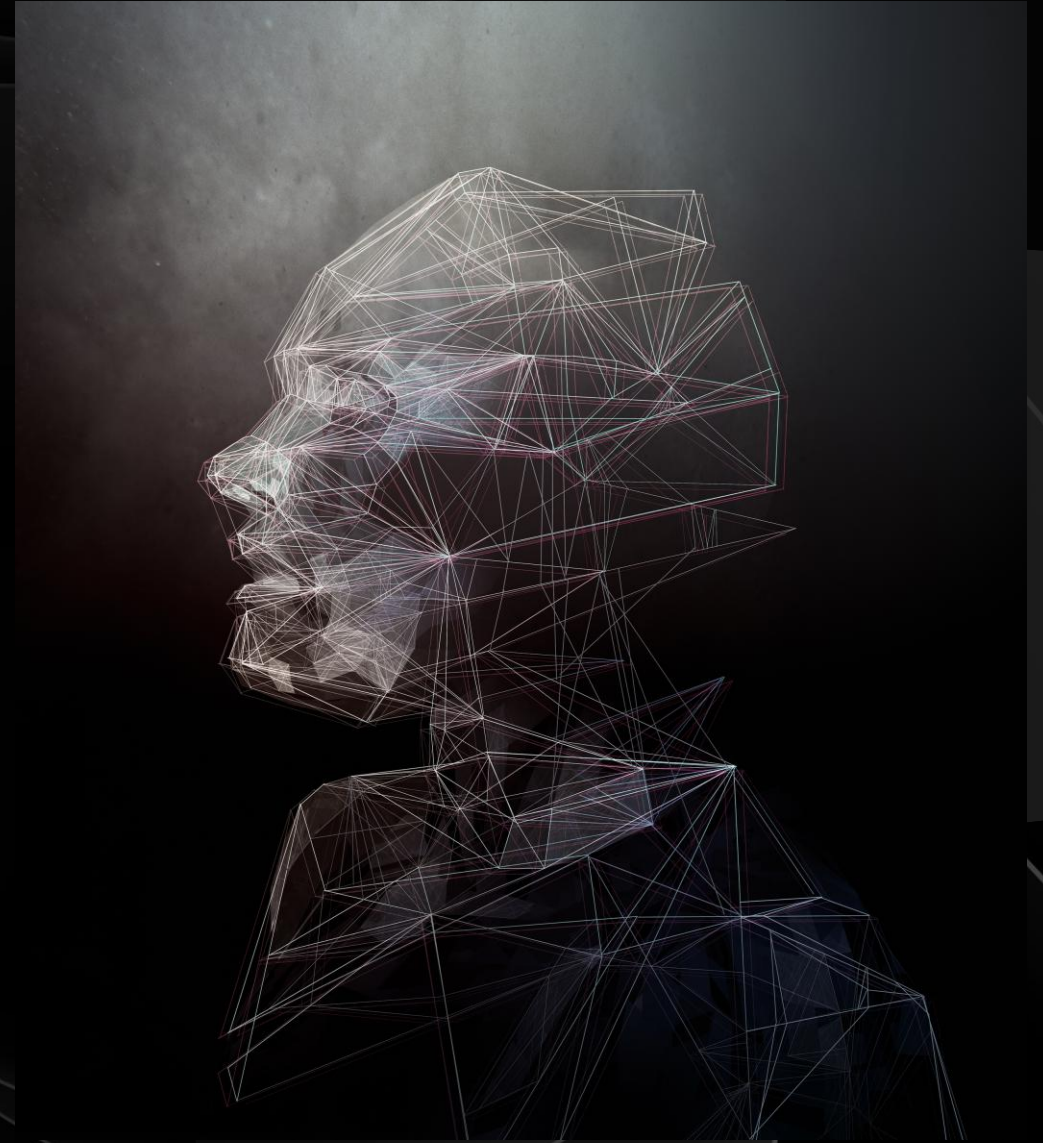
# UNCONTROLLABLE URGES

Historically, desire was morally suspect

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Mainstream American culture moralizes certain desires, especially those around sex and addiction.

- Sensual desire and addiction appear irrational, uncontrollable, and driven by emotion or impulse.
- Dangerous because viewed as threats to self-mastery and social order.
- But this narrative is shifting.



# REDEFINING DESIRE

From an untamed threat to a measurable, clinical process

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Consumers increasingly believe modern science is redefining desire as something that can be engineered and not just endured.

- GLP-1 drugs are reframing overeating as a medical issue rather than a taboo lack of self-control.
- Alcohol cravings are seen as a neurological condition that can be treated with medication and not willpower alone.



# UPDATING THE AMERICAN CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

Redefining freedom as the ability to buy products/services that either control or harness taboo desires

Consumers are increasingly seeing taboo pleasures themselves, or stigmas against taboo pleasures, as barriers to their personal freedom.

- They're updating American freedom to mean the ability to buy products that let them pursue taboo pleasures without the downside those pleasures entail.
- Thus, drugs like Ozempic free them up to enjoy eating minus the "food noise" that leads to overeating, and previously taboo medical cannabis now gives them the freedom of enhanced pleasure from food and sex.



# BIO-HACKED BLISS

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# CHOICE, CUSTOMIZED

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# SENSORY FIRST DESIGN

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# TARIFFS

# BUYING LOCAL AS PATRIOTISM

It's an act of solidarity and self-worth in the face of tariffs

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Consumers in the U.S., Germany, Mexico, and China are all increasingly focused on buying local as a strategy.

- Buying domestic goods helps them to feel empowered and connected.
- Investing in local companies feels like a civic duty — a way to support the national economy while gaining a sense of control in a volatile global climate.



# DECLINING AMERICAN INFLUENCE

It's about no longer tacitly accepting American cultural influence

By purchasing local in response to American tariffs, consumers in Germany, Mexico, and China are rejecting the American influence they had heretofore accepted as the norm.

Buying domestic goods is an unspoken way to signal that they'll no longer accept American economic power as the default.

It's not just about patriotism; it's also about questioning American economic dominance across the globe.



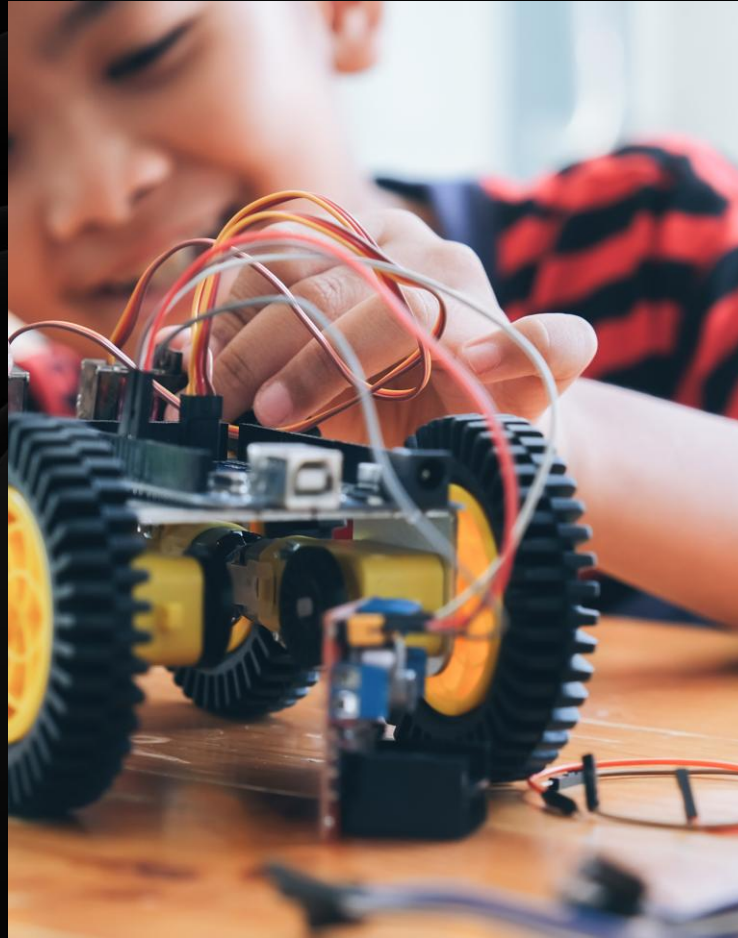
# LOCAL AS IDENTITY

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# GRASSROOTS INNOVATION

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# ECONOMIC INTIMACY

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# KEY TAKEAWAYS

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## **Anthropology unlocks deeper human truths.**

Traditional research misses what consumers can't say. Anthropology reveals the why behind the buy — the cultural and emotional forces shaping behavior.

2

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## **Emotional needs help to reveal new demand spaces.**

Innovation that taps into how people *want to feel*, like in control, relieved, or excited, uncovers unmet needs and future opportunities.

3

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## **Emotional insight is a springboard for innovation.**

Great innovation goes beyond function. It connects emotionally. Drawing on emotions and motivations helps create more human-centered products and messaging.



# THANK YOU

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