THE WEBER FORECAST

WEEKLY TRENDS REPORT

Friday 23 October 2026



Pictured: Envato

THIS WEEK'S FORECAST

THE WEBER FORECAST

Micro trend — Macro trend

Difficult to action

Easy to action

- The 'Ballhog'
- Don't act your wage
- Quest for love
- Smoke signals
- BOYTHROB is complete
- Frosty reception

Icon Glossary

- Trending
- News you should know
- On the up
- Cancelled
- It's gonna be big
- That's the tea
- Sustainability
- Consumer habit
- TikTok trend
- Be quick

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FOR YOUR INFO

This week's dates & microtrends

TikTok trends

What iPad? **The hiding the iPad in plain sight** trend.

The rise of TikTok live stars. **Loozecannon's Viral freestyle** and the twins **fiftyfifty's thank you baby song**.

ICYMI

Across the world, the **youth are rising to protest**. The future is now.

Lime bike jousting is the second greatest thing we've seen this week.

Phrase of the week

"**How 'Alignment' Took Over the Worlds of Business and Tech.**" How sick of hearing that word are you?

Digi updates

The boys vent and eat on **r/boydinnerdiaries**.

The **viral WeChat app that polls strangers** to talk the user out of spending money. We need a poll for if we should buy the **$5,899 Gold-Plated Walkman**.

Tea of the week

The Cut article about the importance of **an entry-level boyfriend/relationship**.

What we're loving

All the *League of Legends* fictional music groups are back! ***Heartsteel*** and ***True damage*** made a return but we're **most seated for *K/DAs***.

The **greatest visa story ever**. ***Boy Throb* is finally complete**! Throb Mob rise up!

Established trends

The social media scrutiny of young **women who are chronically ill**.

Kids meals are for the adults now. Comes in a cute box, with a toy, better portions and cheaper. Like why wouldn't we??

Rising trend

SWAG has returned, **the 'ballhog' is here**.

On our radar

Primetime – 30 October
Wicker – 30 October

KDA: Firestarter – 21 October
Queens of the Stone Age: Perfecth – 30 October



Image: **@stefanthephotographer**

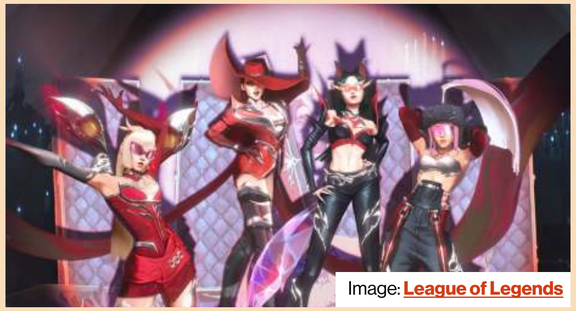
Insights of the week

Asking 48 US students **how it feels to be at college** right now.

Datacentres are opening their barbed gates for **kid's field trips**.

Weekly doses of cute

Elvis town, **Bayeux re-enactors**, **rallying for a teen**, **Julia Stiles's tribute**, **Meal deal society**, **cinematic orchestra**, **Big snails**, **tiny frogs** and **dog parade**.


Image: **League of Legends**

The future

Japan **investigates Martian moons**. This could be the start of an Alien movie or the debut of the Martian Manhunter.

Flying cars aren't happening anytime soon even after that **Tesla's showcase**. Maybe in 20 years.

Stat of the week

YouTube overtakes TV as primary news source with a 16.5% share.

Ones to watch

Baywatch* is back** and **so is *Glee!, ***Fourth Wing*** casting, **RIP BBC Three/Scot**, **Mr Apu is back**, ***You Can See Everything*** makes $, **Kylie's $50 mil bra**.


Image: **:@boy.throb**

TREND TRACKING

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How some of the trends we've identified have evolved in recent months

Don't act your wage



Image: @shevonsalmon_

Tiktok is taking delulu thinking to the extreme in the quest for financial and work success, a practice dubbed **LARPing rich**. Videos share tips on how to cheat your way into 'rich' scenarios, like "ordering the cheapest thing at an expensive restaurant, photographing it, and leaving; renting a Maybach for the weekend; or opening a laptop and merely *pretending* you work at your dream job." Thanks to social media, the meaning of LARP has shifted from high fantasy character dressing to hustle culture, luxury fashion and exclusive holidays. Experts have thoughts. Gabriele Oettingen, a professor of psychology at New York University, said this type of thinking "can actually be a trap that sets you back." Smart brands will help Gen Z experience the fantasy while also helping them actually achieve it.

Trend: Niche riche

Frosty reception



Image: @erinparsonsmakeup

This season's look is taking inspiration from the weather – frosty! It's the latest relic of the Y2K era to get the Gen Z treatment. MAC is bringing back it's **Frost lipstick**, described by its head of product development as experimental, creative and expressionistic. The bronze Frost is already sold out on ASOS. And why not accompany your frosted lips with frosted tips, which, according to **Bustle**, are back; "Pete Davidson, Troye Sivan, and Benito Skinner have all gone bleached, and Mott Salon stylist Ian Whitman said clients keep showing him photos of a very blond '90s Brad Pitt as inspiration." Any bets on the next Y2K trend coming back? Jane Nor bags?

Trend: Newstalgia

Quest for love



Image: @drinknixie

Several new signals in the dating world display novel tactics in finding romance. In one video with almost 8 million views, a creator **describes** cold-calling the restaurant to ask where there were any "cute guys there" and to give it a vibe check before committing. Elsewhere, a 36-year-old woman went viral for her **husband application**, receiving over 1,000 DMs and 240 applications from men all around the world. The application itself was three pages long, so you have to commend the commitment from all who applied. And in China, women are spending thousands on **recruiting male models** for "an hour-long session featuring couple-style poses, including hand-holding, embraces, staged kisses, and even touching the models' abdominal muscles", allowing them to briefly live out their romantic fantasies. With women saying "the bar is on the floor" for men, yet men saying dating has never been harder, both sides are convinced they have it harder...

Trend: Disappointing dating

This week's long read



SMOKE SIGNALS

Smoking as performative conviction

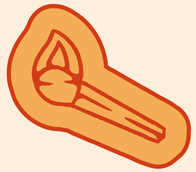
Here's the latest on AI – and no, it's not what you think. Apparently, some AI researchers have started smoking to signal their faith that AI will eventually cure cancer. At least, that's the claim from **Palantir CTO Shyam Sankar**: bet so hard on the future that you're willing to risk your health in the present. It's a pretty unhinged proof of concept. Nothing says "I believe in the future" quite like betting against your own lungs. But it taps into something both current and timeless about smoking: **the performance of conviction**.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in smoking's alleged comeback. The aesthetic is certainly there: from **@ciginfluencers** to cameos on **Vanity Fair covers**, smoking is creeping back into the cultural moodboard. Models are hitting the **NYFW SS27 runway** with cigarette holders, while **Dua Lipa's wedding trays** became an internet talking point. I mean, **Girls** is coming back?

But the look is spreading faster than the habit. **Pinterest searches for "smoking pose"** among US Gen Z were reportedly up 70% YoY, while just **1.7% of US high school students** reported smoking cigarettes in the past 30 days in 2024.

Because it's not necessarily the behavior we want, but the attitude that comes with it. Lighting up says you're a little unbothered, uninterested in playing by the rules, maybe too cool to care. From the original Marlboro Man to '90s heroin chic, smoking has always signaled a belief, an identity. The point isn't to smoke. It's to be *seen* smoking.

And if a cigarette can communicate glamour, nonchalance, nihilism or faith in a future where AI fixes everything – without requiring us to fully commit to the bit? Well, that's some serious smoke and mirrors.



Sorry to Report That Very Thin Women Smoking Cigarettes Is Back in Style

Thanks to GLP-1s, the '90s "heroin chic" aesthetic is alive and well at Fashion Week and beyond.

Image: **@Cosmopolitan**

Palantir's CTO claims AI researchers are smoking to prove they believe AI will cure cancer, and he says it's a sign of tech-fueled 'mass psychosis'

Image: **@Fortune**

Weber Forecast Insight

For brands, the takeaway isn't to jump on the smoking aesthetic, but to understand what it signals: conviction, rebellion, a little IDGAF energy. Make the belief real in your branding and skip the edgy props while you're at it.



Image: **@gracelingofficial**





Image: **@DuaLipa**

BRANDWATCH

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Inspiring creative from around the world

McDonalds



Image: @mcdonaldsau

Leave it to **McDonald's Australia** to turn a humble drinks tray into a fashion accessory. The limited-edition **McCafé Tray Bag**, for **a lucky few**, taps into the growing overlap between food, fashion and social culture. By reimagining a familiar brand asset as a must-have accessory, the launch creates instant shareability and proves that everyday brand icons can still generate buzz. Suddenly the coffee run has a dress code.

Chips Ahoy x Heinz



Image: delish

Proving that weird sells, Chips Ahoy and Heinz have teamed up in China to launch limited-edition **tomato sweet chilli cookies**, blending sweet, savoury and spicy flavours into one conversation-starting snack. The pairing turns a simple product release into a **cultural talking point**, tapping into consumers' appetite for surprising collaborations. A cookie, a condiment and a masterclass in earning attention.

TAC x Shredmill



Image: @ClemengerBBDO

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has found a clever way to make an invisible safety issue impossible to ignore with **the Shredmill**, a road-sized machine that **demonstrates how different motorcycle gear** holds up against simulated asphalt. Rather than telling riders why protection matters, the campaign lets them see the difference firsthand, turning education into a memorable live experience. It's a strong example of how brands can bring data and behaviour change messaging to life through tangible, highly shareable demonstrations.

Knix x ACOTAR



Image: @knix

While plenty of brands race to jump on the ACOTAR hype, Knix stands out by treating fandom as more than a logo licensing exercise. The intimates brand spent 18 months developing a **huge 82-piece collection** inspired by **characters**, storylines and fan-favourite moments, even **consulting readers and fan communities** to ensure authenticity. That attention to detail transforms the partnership from a product launch into a love letter for a highly engaged audience. We can't wait for 27th October to consume the new book in our new reading uniform.

Pringles



Image: @pringles

Trust Pringles to put a Halloween spin on brand fandom. Its tongue-in-cheek "**Once You Drop**" campaign offers fans the chance to win a **custom Pringles-can urn** and a lifetime supply of crisps, inspired by the real-life story of the brand's can inventor being buried with one of his creations. By leaning into its own quirky lore, Pringles turns a simple sweepstakes into a wildly shareable cultural moment that's designed to spark conversation far beyond the snack aisle. They even got **Dan the Funeral Man** to do an urn-boxing!

WANT TO KNOW WHAT ELSE IS ON THE HORIZON?

Talk to us for:

Reports

Our '**Signals**' reports provide deep dive insights and implications for your brand, audience or category.

Workshops

Our own '**Culture Collider**' workshop methodology approaches briefs through the lens of cultural trends to help teams create culture first ideas.



Pictured: Envato

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