

AD-FREE

## Chatterbox #317 – Trend Predictions for 2024 from the USA

### Episode description

In this episode, Andrew and Anna continue exploring trend predictions. This time, they're looking into five trend predictions coming out of America. They talk about all the details and share their own opinions and attitudes towards these trends. By studying with this audio lesson, you can improve your listening skills and learn vocabulary related to trends, personal well-being, technology advancements, chatbots, consumerism and second-hand shopping.

### Fun fact

Did you know that ice baths have been around for ages? People in ancient times, like the Egyptians and Romans, were already using them. They believed that dipping into icy water could help with sore muscles and inflammation. Even today, athletes and fitness enthusiasts swear by them for a speedy recovery after a tough workout. Also, Orthodox Christians have a tradition of plunging into icy waters through holes cut in thick ice on rivers and ponds during Epiphany Day celebrations.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- On the edge of [one's] seat
- To chime in
- To live in the now
- Sticky spot
- To latch onto [something]
- The writing's on the wall



---

## Transcript

---

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

---

**Andrew:** Chatterbox Episode 317, "Trend Predictions for 2024 from the USA." Featuring Andrew and Anna. Hello everyone. Welcome back to Culips. Today I'm joined by my co-host, Anna. Hello there, Anna. How's it going?

**Anna:** I'm great. Thank you, Andrew. How are you?

**Andrew:** I'm good, Anna. And I'm excited that today we can finally continue part two of the episode that we planned to record and release a long time ago at the start of the year, actually. But we just didn't have time to do it. And we left our listeners probably **waiting on the edge of their seats**, Anna, because the last episode that we recorded was all about trend predictions coming out of South Korea for the year 2024. And Anna, do you remember any of those trends? I'm going to put you on the spot.

**Anna:** I remember something around... ooh, I think you put me on the spot there, Andrew. It was quite a while ago now, but there were a few trends on there.

**Andrew:** Yeah. Yeah, there were five. I think there were five that we talked about and actually I cheated because I had to go back and look as well. But the two that popped out to me that I remember, and as soon as you hear them, you'll remember them as well. There were hexagonal humans, that trend prediction. And also, I believe it was called millennial hubbies. So like home husbands, that kind of trend prediction. And there were some other ones as well. But what we're going to do for this episode is shift our focus. And we're not going to talk about trend predictions coming out of Asia, but we're going to go to the Western world, and we have exactly the same thing, trend predictions for the year 2024 that were made and are specific for a Western target. So, these predictions are coming out of America and they're specific for the American population. So, I think it'll be really interesting to talk about this, Anna. We'll notice some similarities and some differences. And even though we're well into 2024 now, now it's the spring. I still think that it's OK

to talk about these because they're kind of general predictions for the future. So don't worry too much about it being like a new year's episode, everyone. It's not really that important that you talk about it right at the start of the year.

And with that being said, Anna, I think we should jump in and get started with the main conversation topic for today's episode, which is again, the trends that have been made for 2024 and for the future coming out of America. And there are five different trends that we'll talk about. We'll just go through each of them one by one here, guys, and we'll describe them, tell you what they are, and then Anna and I will **chime in** with our two cents and give our opinion and we'll progress through the episode that way. Anna, do you want to kick things off and introduce what trend number one is?

**Anna:** Sure. The first trend that we've got on our list today, guys, is neo hedonism. And this is really a trend where we're talking about consumers prioritizing meaningful experiences. And a lot of the stuff that me and Andrew looked at, it's talking about how consumers have changed post pandemic, especially. So, let's say for example, people and consumers, what they're predicting is that people are prioritizing things like, let's say concerts, the big concerts that have been around recently, Taylor Swift, Beyonce, people are paying thousands of pounds to go and have these experiences or maybe immersive art exhibitions, and people want to spend more money doing things rather than, let's say saving for retirement or saving for a rainy day. I'm not really sure. So, people want experiences rather than spending money on saving or saving money, let's say. I wonder, Andrew, if you think, what you think about that trend, do you have any thoughts on that?

**Andrew:** Yeah. So, I just wanted to back up just for a moment and describe this word "hedonism" because it's an advanced word. Maybe some people will know it, but I think many of our listeners won't. So, hedonism is the philosophy.... Usually if something ends with "-ism", that means it's a philosophy or a belief system. And hedonism is the philosophy of having fun, could we say, Anna? It's like the pursuit of pleasure, right? Of enjoying yourself and feeling good. So, hedonism is that school of thought, that kind of philosophy that thinks you should live your life to maximize pleasure as much as possible. And "neo", spelt N-E-O, this is a prefix that means a new take or a new look on this philosophy. So neo-hedonism then is this kind of new idea, this new take on hedonism, which is essentially that you should prioritize spending your money to enjoy your life instead of

saving your money for retirement or for maybe saving up to buy a house or, you know, some responsible thing like that. And you gave some great examples there, Anna. People paying tons of money to see concerts, people traveling a lot these days, spending money on expensive art installations, all of these things. Consumerism is really rampant these days.

And to me, I think this makes a lot of sense. Even I felt this a little bit during the pandemic. There's that old cliched expression, "You don't know what you've got till it's gone." And during the pandemic, I think a lot of us were trapped, right? We felt trapped. We felt lonely. We felt like maybe I wasted my life up until now and will the future ever be the same as it was before? We had these kinds of thoughts and coming out of the pandemic, you're like, oh, OK, I really, I got to take that trip that I've always dreamed of doing. I might never have another chance. Who knows? It was kind of a wake-up call for us to follow our dreams and do what we want and not really care too much about the future, **live more in the now**. So yeah, I think definitely this rings true for me. And it might also be, like, the economy might be involved as well. I think, you know, it seems weird to talk about spending money when we see global inflation and prices rising around the world. In many countries around the world, at least, but I think some people, and we've talked about this before on different Chatterbox episodes, some people have kind of given up on saving for those traditional things that you buy in life, like a home or an apartment or a car, because they're just sort of out of many people's leagues right now. It's so expensive for real estate, for example, around the world that you're just like, OK, there's no way I can ever afford a house in the city that I want to live in. So instead of doing that, I'm just going to go on vacation every year and I'm going to see all the concerts that I want to see, and I'm going to enjoy my life that way. And I don't know, I just have a gut feeling that that might be a little bit involved in this as well.

**Anna:** Absolutely. And I think I totally understand that in a way, because, you know, when you feel like something is so out of your reach, you're like, well, what's the point? What's the point saving money? But for me, maybe I've gone against this trend somewhat because in 2021, I turned 30, and when I turned 30, all my priorities started changing. I'm sure you guys, maybe if you've turned 30 at some point, things start to change. You start to think about the future more. And so, I think there is an element of, you know, when you're young and you're in your early twenties, sure, you want to go out, you want to do stuff, you want to travel, you want to go to concerts. And then when you get a little bit older, you kind of realize, yeah, that doesn't last forever though.

And for me, we were talking about this just before the episode, Andrew, there's an expression or saying in English where it's, "Live fast, die young." And we'll actually, you know, in Spain, for example, the average life expectancy is I think 82 years old. So, let's say most people are going to live till they're like 80 or 70, in which case it's more like live slow, die old. In which case this type of model of I'm going to spend all my money and I'm not going to save for the future. It sounds great in the moment, but that worries me for me personally, but also for others is that in a way I feel like we're being tricked to be like, yeah, you want to experience this. You want to go out and you want to experience the world, but actually it's like, but we still have a future too. In fact, we're probably going to live longer than a lot of people now because maybe there'll be health advances, et cetera. So, it scares me that there's not that dialogue about saving money, the future. But then I also think it's part of like, when you're young, you don't want to think about when you're 85. You want to think about going to a Taylor Swift concert. So, I think there's also that element of just people being young and that is kind of just what you do when you're younger.

**Andrew:** Sure. Yeah, completely. And just because this is a trend prediction, it doesn't mean that it's a good idea, right? I think probably for a financial planner, or somebody would tell you, no, no, no, this is a bad idea. You should always save your money for a rainy day, save for retirement. But yeah, I guess they're predicting the people who made this trend prediction are suggesting that going forward, more people will be willing to spend their money on experiences than we've seen in the past. I think that's the main takeaway here.

**Anna:** I think just a little thing to add before we move on is, as you said before, like a lot of people have less money, so maybe in the past it was a question of, I want to go to the Taylor Swift concert and I'm going to save a little bit of money as well, but now it's like either, or it's like either you go to the Taylor Swift concert or you save your money, you can't do both, you know? So, I think people are in a bit of a sticky, a **sticky spot**, you know, a bit of a tricky situation, but like you said, a trend doesn't necessarily mean it's good, but I would like there to be also a dialogue about, you know, making sure you're thinking about the future. It doesn't have to mean you're putting thousands of pounds into a pension fund when you're 22, but, you know, I would like there to be also that opposing dialogue as well, you know, to this, like live fast, die young trend.

**Andrew:** Sure. I have some friends who are really responsible like that and started saving for retirement, even when they were in high school and gotta say, I'm jealous. They were, they were smart.

**Anna:** Yeah, they were ahead of the pack. They were smart. They were the smart ones.

**Andrew:** For sure. Let's move on to trend number two. Trend number two is supporting brands with positive impact. So, this trend prediction is suggesting that in the future, consumers are going to become more conscious of their impact of their purchases. And because of this, they'll look to buy things that are more sustainable, or they're sourced responsibly. Responsible sourcing is all about ethical purchases. So, you know, often you can look at the tag, maybe of a t-shirt. You want to buy a new t-shirt and you can see where it was made. Right. And often, unfortunately, it's not made in a place where labor standards or human rights are really respected. So sometimes we can feel pretty guilty. I know I feel guilty sometimes if I look at the tag of a piece of clothing and I think, oh, this is probably built in a sweatshop in a country that doesn't really pay its workers very fairly or doesn't respect human rights. But responsible sourcing is maybe about all of the things that go into the production of that t-shirt, the cotton, the labor, and doing it in a way that respects those things, that respects the environment, respects human rights, respects labor, pays workers fairly, all of those things. That's what responsible sourcing means. And so going forward, these American researchers who made this trend prediction are thinking that consumers are going to pay more attention to this and are going to consider this more and more when they make their purchases. Now, Anna, we were chatting about this a little bit before we started recording and we didn't have as much to say about this trend prediction. I really don't see this too much in my day-to-day life right now. I mean, it might change in the future, who knows, but right now I don't see it too much. How about you?

**Anna:** I occasionally buy things where I am thinking specifically about a brand in Spain that makes clothes. And they, one of their key selling points is that the clothes are made in Spain and Portugal. And, you know, I sort of think, OK, well, that's, that's great. I want to support that. So maybe that's one time I made a decision, but most of the time, my daily purchases, I'm looking for quality products, not necessarily that there, I'm not sort of going into detail about the company, but one thing I really do is I do buy locally, and I've always been really big on that. So, I go to the local

fruit shop. I try to, I go to supermarkets as well, obviously, but I do try to go to local places, local coffee shops, for example, because I really believe it's like, if you want these things in your neighborhood, you have to use them. If you want these independent shops, you have to go there and give them money and help them grow and to keep them otherwise they'll just leave. OK? Or butchers, for example, or florists, independent florists. So that is one thing that I'm really big on, but it's less about the ethics. It's more about supporting my neighborhood. I don't know about you. What do you think, Andrew, have you ever made a purchase thinking about the positive impact?

**Andrew:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, when I buy clothes, sometimes I often look to try and find clothes that are not just produced in a sweatshop and that are, you know, as much as possible, maybe made in Canada or made in America, but to be honest, it's hard to do and it's often like so much more expensive that I can't do it for everything that I buy, I can do it from time to time, but it's really hard to do often. I'm totally on the same page as you when it comes to supporting local businesses. And I completely agree that it's like, use it or lose it in your neighborhood. If there's a cafe that you like, if there's a butcher that does a good job, if there's a dry cleaner, anything that's in your neighborhood, that's like a small independent local business, you have to go there, you have to spend your money in your neighborhood or else these businesses will fail and then you won't have those cool, convenient services in your neighborhood. So, I'm totally on the same page as you with that. I also do try to shop at local markets instead of the big chains.

But I'm trying to think from an American point of view, I think these days, you know, I'm not an American, but I do watch enough TV that I see advertisements and stuff coming out of America. These days, a lot of brands are connected to some kind of social issue. Maybe it's about fighting racism. Maybe it's about LGBTQ rights, you know, something regarding that. And also, American society these days is very tribal. So, it's really a polarized society with kind of two big camps, right? Broadly, you have a conservative camp, and you have a more liberal camp. And depending on what camp you're in, you support a product or don't support a product. There was a huge controversy over the last year with a beer brand, Bud Light. I'm sure a lot of listeners will have heard of that story. You know, I think maybe that's part of it. And since we don't live in America, you live in Spain, I live in South Korea, we don't really see that as much, but I'm thinking that this trend is more in line with that. And going forward, you may see more and more companies support a kind of social issue or political issue to try and get the trust and the support of the people who



support those political issues. So, it's almost like the companies are **latching on to those social issues** to try and get customers for free, almost. At the same time, they're alienating half the country, but they're getting half of the country to support them. So, I guess if they did the math and it worked out in their favor, they could jump on and support one of those issues.

**Anna:** OK, great. Should we move on and have a look at the third trend, Andrew?

**Andrew:** Yeah, let's do it because I think we have a lot more to say about this one, which is personal well-being. Anna, do you want to introduce what this trend prediction is all about?

**Anna:** Sure. I mean, guys, you probably are familiar with the term personal well-being, but really this trend about what they're predicting, and me and Andrew spoke about this before, it's, you know, personal well-being is something that's been on the agenda for a while. But what they're predicting with this trend is that there's going to be an even more intensified focus on psychological, emotional, social, and financial well-being. Mainly, again, coming from the post-pandemic, you know, how we change during the pandemic, and that we're really focused on how we are, our stress levels, our work-life balance, et cetera. And another thing they note about this trend is that perhaps people are going to be spending more money on things like spa treatments, meditation, mental health services, maybe things like therapy, for example, or types of products that help you enhance your mood, maybe like music apps. But really anything that improves your personal well-being, as we said before, and how you can integrate that into your daily lives.

One of the examples they get, Andrew, and I was going to ask you, because I love mine, is they said that smartwatch ownership is massively on the rise and that more people going forward are probably going to buy more technology like this, and people are tracking everything obsessively, sleep, steps, everything. Now, I love my smartwatch, but I only really use it for my steps. I really count my steps. I'm super obsessed with that.

**Andrew:** How many are you at per day?

**Anna:** I like to do 10,000 a day, even though apparently that's a complete myth. That limit, this has kind of become a thing that you're supposed to do 10,000 steps every day, but it actually just



came out of thin air. It's not based on any scientific research. It was just a kind of finger in the air. Yeah, 10,000 steps. Actually, what they say is that people should be doing much more than 10,000.

**Andrew:** Really?

**Anna:** Yeah, but with our lifestyles, it's really difficult to, it's not a bad target to meet, 10,000, but actually they were sort of saying that hunters and gatherers are doing like, I don't know, 17,000 steps a day or nearly 20,000 steps a day, but obviously most people are not hunters and gatherers right now, so it's hard for us to sort of match that. Do you have a smartwatch, Andrew?

**Andrew:** Yeah, I do because I'm a runner, so I have a Garmin brand watch, which is one of those fancy ones. Now they range in price from just a couple hundred dollars all the way up to over a thousand dollars. I have the lowest end model, but it's amazing. I've had it for several years now and I love it and I really deep dive into the data. It's one of the first things I do every day when I wake up is I check my sleep, how much deep sleep I got, my sleep cycles. It has this function called a body battery and it tells you your score of what it thinks your condition is for the day. So, if I look at my body battery and it's high, like in the 80s or 90s, then it kind of puts me in a really good mood and sets me up for a good day. I'm like, I'm all recharged, I'm ready to take on the day. And if it's low, then it's really depressing. And I'm like, oh, maybe I should go back to bed for a little bit, or I have to drink an extra cup of coffee. I have a friend who got so obsessed with his Garmin stats that he ended up deleting the app off of his phone because he said it was messing with his mental health, looking at the body battery and his score. If it wasn't high enough, he would just, you know, be depressed about it all day.

So, to get back to what you were saying about smart gadgets, there are rings now that you can buy that do the same kind of thing. Track your sleep, track your steps. So, if you don't like the fashion and the look of a smartwatch, you can do it with a ring. I think this is going to be a huge, huge trend going forward. **The writing's on the wall** pretty much for this one. As we get better technology, I can just see it expanding. And I've heard about people now that are using devices to monitor their blood sugar, their blood pressure. And, you know, I'm interested in trying both of those, to be honest. I don't think they're available for consumers in Korea yet, but if they are or

when they are, then definitely I'm thinking about trying those kinds of things out because I really do enjoy following the data and the statistics about my health with these kinds of devices.

**Anna:** Yeah, I've seen those. I would love to do that as well, especially the blood sugar one. I think that's going to be a big trend. I don't think it's available in many places. You're right, but they're growing really fast. So hopefully it'll be available in more places soon. Another example that we saw when we were looking at these trends was things like natural energy boosters. So rather than just drinking water, for example, people are adding in these different types of electrolytes or vitamins. Also, another big trend that was in one of the articles we were reading was about taking digital detoxes, eating healthy food or I don't know, it's all kind of the same stuff. But for me personally, this is where I'm going to give my two cents. For me, it's like it's all great. Anything that makes you feel healthier for me is a good thing. But for me, a lot of these things are just it's just another fad. I'm traditionalist with this. It's like drink enough water, eat healthily, sleep well. Do a little bit of exercise. It's not that complicated. And all of these things for me are just about like making things more complicated.

And I was saying to Andrew before it was like, you know, you feel like nowadays another thing that's been really trendy and I think will probably continue is this idea of like ice baths and saunas. And it's like if you don't have a cold shower in the morning, you're a bad person. I'm like, OK, let's just relax for a second here. All right. This is one thing I'm not signing up to. If it helps you, then great. But I mean, I'm not having I'm sorry, I'm not having an ice-cold shower in the morning before I go to work. It's just not happening. So, for me, these are fads. If it helps you, great. No problem with it. But for me, it's just repurposing the old thing, which is eat healthily, do exercise, sleep well. Those are the core things at the end of the day.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I completely agree. I think a lot of these are trends and fads, especially in regards to using the sauna and using cold showers and ice baths. I don't know about our listeners out there, but guys, this has been a huge trend on many, many different podcasts, health podcasts on YouTube videos. It's a huge, yeah, fad in the States and in the Western world right now is hitting up the sauna and hitting up the ice bath. There are three doctors that I listen to via podcasts that are all into like health and exercise and fitness, longevity, all of these things. Dr. Rhonda, Dr. Peter, and Dr. Andrew, these three famous podcasters. And they all just harp on and on about the

benefits of ice baths and the benefits of saunas. And I think like they're too disconnected from the real world. Like I just live in a small little house. I can't install a sauna in my home. I can't install an ice bath. I don't know. So, it's like this funny trend, but it's a trend that's like a lot of rich people seem to be talking about online. And for the regular everyday folk, it's funny. I've seen on YouTube a lot of people trying to install like these saunas, these portable saunas that go up to your neckline. And it's just for your body in this little inflatable swimming pool type of thing. And it's just kind of ridiculous. I don't know. I'm sure it's good. I'm sure it's beneficial, but not so easy for everyday folks to do.

**Anna:** I think that's a really good point. Like you said, I mean, whatever floats your boat, if you want to get one of those little portable saunas, I'm all for it. Guys, maybe right now listening to the podcast from your portable sauna in your house, maybe. But for me, it's great if it helps you. Fantastic. But for me, actually, I think the last thing I'd want to say is I think me and Andrew, we're both really interested in kind of health and fitness and that type of thing. And maybe you are as well. But for me, the most important thing that I've noticed recently is by far sleep. Sleep for me is the absolute number one thing. I've been working really hard on my sleep to try and have a good bedtime routine to try and go to bed at the same time, because for me, the next day all depends on the night before. And so, for me, the one thing that I've noticed has made a big difference to my life is getting better sleep. Nothing compares, I don't think. For me anyway. And I mean, this is me, you know, going off my intuition. But it was one thing that was so hard for me was to go to bed at a reasonable time. And I've had to work really hard on it. But I would say that that for me is the one sleeping. And maybe I would say water as well throughout the day. But yeah, I like the classic things, drink enough water, go to bed on time and eat healthy food. And for me, that's enough. I'm not really into lots of different fads, but if it helps you, then I think great. Anything that helps you feel better and have a better lifestyle, feel better, less stress. I think that has to be a good thing.

**Andrew:** For sure. We're completely on the same page there. And yeah, the quality of my life when I have a good night's sleep versus a poor night's sleep, it's night and day. So, I'm totally with you there. Anna let's move to the next trend, which is about technology engagement. And yeah, I think, you know, I said for the last trend, the writing is on the wall. That's a nice expression to add to your vocabulary, guys. If you don't know this one already, "The writing is on the wall". And that just means that it's clear to see that this will be happening more and more in the future. Of course,

technology is just growing by leaps and bounds year after year. Seems like day after day, really. We're having new technological breakthroughs every day. And of course, we're going to be more engaged with this new technology. Of course, as we have more VR technology coming out, more AR technology coming out, which is augmented reality. So, there's virtual reality, which is where you're completely immersed in a virtual environment. Maybe you're wearing a headset like one of the new Apple ones that has come out recently, or there are some other brands that create these headsets as well. And AR stands for augmented reality. And this is where maybe you could use your smartphone or a tablet or something to change the way that reality looks. And Anna, you were telling me some cool examples with AR in regards to shopping for makeup online.

**Anna:** Yeah, so the beauty industry, definitely this is where I've seen a lot of AR being used and for example, you go to a beauty brand, and they have their different products and a lot of products now people buy online beauty products rather than necessarily going into a store. But obviously you've got a problem there, because how do I know if this color looks nice on me? You're kind of taking a bit of a risk when you buy it online. So, what they do is they have these different filters that you can put on your face, and you can try out the different lip colors. You can have a look. I'm going to say some things here. I'm not sure if you're aware of them, what they are, but foundation, this is the first layer or one of the first layers that you can put on. And I don't know, they're OK. I'm a little bit skeptical sometimes about the colors and how realistic they are. But I mean, that's one area that I've seen it, but I haven't bought something. I guess the interesting point is I haven't bought something after trying it using an AR filter because I was like, well, OK, it looks OK, but I still don't 100 percent trust it. The technology is not quite advanced enough yet where it looks absolutely real.

**Andrew:** Right. So maybe it's still in its infancy, this technology, and consumers need to trust it a little bit more before fully accepting it. I've heard, I think Ikea has a feature. Now, I haven't tried this. I've just heard about it. But they have a feature with one of their apps, I believe, where you could take a photo of your room or maybe you just like even hover the camera over your room and you can see it in real time. I'm not sure exactly how it works, but there's some kind of function where you can decorate your room in your home with their furniture to see how it would look and see how it would fit in your space before you purchase it. And I think that's really cool. You know, I just went through this home renovation project for the last over a year, and we've done a lot of

interior decorating and a lot of just imagining and sketching on pen and paper to see what it would try and look like. If you could see that in real time, I think that would be amazing. So, I guess it depends on the product, right? Maybe for makeup, you'd be a little skeptical. I think in terms of decorating your room, maybe you'd be more like, yeah, the couch that I see is probably going to be like the couch that I end up getting.

**Anna:** Probably, yeah, I would definitely use that service. I haven't used it either, Andrew, but I think that thing of like buying, because I want to buy a new, some new shelves, for example, for my living room. And I would love to just like see what it actually looks like, because sometimes it's hard to visualize. Another example I just wanted to bring up is another trend we were noticing was coming up was about chatbots and virtual assistants providing customer support, personalized recommendations. And this is a really interesting one for me because, well, as an introvert, I love a chatbot. I'm all about the chatbots. I'm like, if I don't have to call somebody and ask them a question, fantastic. I love them. And even more than that, I like the chatbots, but then they sometimes connect you to an actual person who then helps you with your order or whatever. And I've used that a few times and I love it. I don't have to call anyone. It's a little box that pops up. I can do my work at the same time. That is one trend that I am all about. Customer service via chat. I love it. I think it's great.

**Andrew:** Yeah, I recently had an experience using a chatbot for customer service for the first time. As listeners will know, I just returned from a trip to Australia recently. And when I was flying back home from Australia, I noticed on my ticket it says that I could have up to 25 kilograms of checked baggage, but it didn't tell me how many bags. So, I was like, does this mean I can have unlimited bags? Could I have 25 one-kilogram bags? It didn't tell me. So, I went to try and find their customer support number. I was like, oh, I'm going to have to phone this airline to find out the answer to this question. But I went to their website, and it said, have a question, chat with our chatbot. So, I asked my question and instantly I got the answer. I didn't have to click around their website. I didn't have to call anybody. And it was awesome. Gave me the information that I needed right away. And yeah, it was a really good experience overall, so.

**Anna:** Yeah, I've had that as well with airlines, like with the chat. It's great. And I just want to clarify as well. The reason why I said I'm an introvert, so I love chatbots, guys, just so you're aware

is because if I don't have to call, I would rather not make the call. I don't know whether that's an introvert thing. I don't know. But I'm a little bit shy when it comes to calling people. So, I'm like, if I don't have to call, that's fine by me.

**Andrew:** I don't know if it's like this in England or Spain, but at least in Canada, we have a lot of call centers that are not actually located in Canada. They're located overseas. And often when you have to call customer service, it can be a stressful, difficult time because you're talking with somebody that is located in a different country. Often the quality of the call is really bad. And for me, this is not so much an issue because every day I talk with English non-native speakers and I'm really good at communicating with non-native speakers. But for people who aren't so used to that, they often complain about the accents or a language barrier, and it can be really frustrating for them. So, yeah, I think maybe for these people as well, this could be more convenient. And I'm also in the same boat as you, Anna. I'm kind of introverted when it comes to phoning people. For whatever reason, a lot of people have this phone phobia, right? So, if I can just chat online and get an answer quickly, then I'm all for it. And let's move on to our fifth and final prediction that we will talk about for this episode. And this prediction is: secondhand is in. Secondhand is in.

Anna let's just break this down quickly. Secondhand means a used product, right? Could be some secondhand clothing, secondhand furniture, secondhand electronics, just means that there was a previous owner. And if something is "in", it means it's trendy or it's popular these days. So "secondhand is in" means that in the future, these researchers are predicting that people will be more willing than they are now to buy and purchase secondhand items. And I found when researching for this article, I found a quote by a researcher from George Mason University in the USA. Her name is Christine McDaniel. And I thought I'd read this quote for our audience quickly here, Anna. Maybe I won't read the whole thing cause it's kind of long, but I will just read the highlights. So, Christine McDaniel, the researcher wrote, "My willingness to pay for new clothes also is not what it once was. My favorite top used to cost \$28. On sale, it was \$19. Now I can't even find it. And the closest substitute is \$72. There are two great consignment stores in my neighborhood and online bargains are to be found." So essentially, I think this echoes what a lot of people maybe are feeling is that. Clothes are really, really expensive these days. And often the quality is not really there. And there might be even some ethical issues like we talked about earlier, about where it was sourced from or who made it, where it came from. And so, because of that, more and more people are turning to secondhand clothing. You can buy a perfectly good shirt from

the thrift store that will be a lot cheaper and yeah, it's perfectly fine. I don't know about you, Anna. I love thrifting, not necessarily for clothes. I do do that from time to time, but I'm more a thrifter for furniture and dishware. I love thrifting for like coffee mugs and plates and cutlery. I'm kind of a geek like that. And also, electronics. I love vintage electronics and I love going to the thrift store and searching through the old electronics, the records, the books even. So, for me, secondhand has always been in. What about you?

**Anna:** I would say the same. I think secondhand is great. Sometimes I buy really nice secondhand pieces, really nice secondhand clothes, but there is a big industry around secondhand furniture and like other things. We've got a couple of apps here in Spain that are super popular where people just, I don't know, upload a picture of their sofa. They're like, OK, somebody come and pick it up for 50 euros or something like this. So, there is that culture around secondhand furniture. And actually, now that I think about it, there are actually a few apps that have come out in the last few years for secondhand clothes. I think it is a growing, a growing sector, a growing market because people want to make the most of things that they have just sitting in their house. And there's a really nice saying that in English, which is "One person's rubbish is another person's treasure." Or something like that. Maybe I'm not hitting that exactly right.

**Andrew:** Yeah. Yeah. "One man's junk is another man's treasure." It's what we say in Canada, at least. Yeah.

**Anna:** Yeah. And so, it means like, maybe you don't want it, but somebody else is like, oh, that's the perfect sofa for me. So, I think it's great if we can use things that we already have rather than buying new things all the time. I think it's great to promote that. Definitely.

**Andrew:** I think it's great. However, I'm a little bit sad that it's a growing trend because it's already hard enough to find amazing things.

**Anna:** More competition for your plates.



**Andrew:** Yeah. More competition. And when I was in Australia, my wife and I did a lot of vintage shopping and we didn't really buy too much, but we did go and browse a lot of vintage stores. And there were some amazing vintage stores. They had all kinds of cool, awesome items, except I know that what these people that operate these stores do is they go to the thrift stores, and you know, they go every single day. And as soon as they find something cool, they buy it and then they bring it to their vintage store, and they mark up the price by 10 times and then sell it for more money. So yeah, it was kind of sad. We went to this really amazing, huge thrift store and right beside it was a vintage store. The difference between a thrift store and a vintage store is usually the price. Usually, a thrift store just has donated items, and they sell things very cheaply and the profit that they make goes to support some kind of charity. Whereas a vintage store is more curated. So, you know, thrift store is just like random stuff. You never know what you're going to find. A vintage store on the other hand, is curated and usually all of the products are good quality and fit a specific kind of niche for whatever kind of, you know, era or style you're looking for. But the main difference is the price. So, these vintage store and this thrift store were side by side. And I just knew that the staff from that vintage store was going over to the thrift store every day to pick it and yeah, just sell them next door for 10 times the money. So more and more of this happens. I'm going to be a little bit sad, but overall, it's a good thing. So, it's OK.

**Anna:** And just so you know, guys, as well in the UK, we would call those, we say vintage shops and we say charity shops. So, we don't have the term thrift store in UK culture. I just thought that was an interesting point to highlight. We normally say charity shops. A charity is a voluntary organization that, as you said, just before Andrew, they raise money to spend on certain social causes, for example, but that's the terminology that we would use in the UK rather than the thrift terminology, which is more American Canadian vocab. Just so you know.

**Andrew:** Cool. Yeah. Good point. And in Australia, did you know this, Anna? They call it an op shop.

**Anna:** Op shop?

**Andrew:** Can you guess what that means? Op shop?

**Anna:** No. What does it mean?

**Andrew:** Stands for opportunity shop. So, you have an opportunity to find a treasure. So, I really liked that an op shop.

**Anna:** I like that. Yeah, that's cool. I like that.

**Andrew:** Yeah.

**Anna:** Yeah. Nice.

**Andrew:** Of course, the Aussies have the cool slang, right? All right, Anna, we are going to keep our conversation going just for a little bit longer here in the ad-free edition of this episode for our members. And we have three rapid fire questions to discuss. Let's get right to them. Question number one, if you had to choose between a fancy car and a once in a lifetime travel experience, or I'm going to throw another one in specifically for you, Anna, or saving for your retirement, which would you go for and why?

**Anna:** Oh, that's a little bit of a tricky one. OK, I'm going to do a process of elimination. OK, I'm going to get rid of the fancy car. Don't care. A car for me is it's metal. It's a metal box. It's got four wheels. Don't care if it's fancy or not. So, let's get rid of the fancy car. Don't care. Once in a lifetime travel experience? Yeah, that does sound pretty good. If I could maybe do that and put a little bit into retirement, that would be great. Let's say somebody gave me a chunk of money. Like let's say 50,000. Like for example, I don't know, would I spend it on going on holiday? Maybe I might invest some of it. I would probably invest some of it and then use the rest to do something like an experience. So, I'd probably try if I can, if that's an option, Andrew, try and do a little bit of both.

**Andrew:** I think with \$50,000, you could probably go on a couple of trips and still save.

**Anna:** You could go on a couple of trips, right? Sure, sure, sure. And still save up, but I would probably try and do something with a chunk of money. I'll probably try and invest it in some way or something. What about you, Andrew? I think I maybe know your answer for this one.

**Andrew:** At this point in my life, you know, I'm turning 40 and I've never owned a car in my life. And my wife and I are talking about buying a car soon just because yeah, it's time. Like I used to drive when I lived in Canada, but now I've lived in Korea for so long. I haven't driven for a long time. And you know, there are things we want to do in the future, most of it regarding traveling, where it's like, it would be, just be nice to rent a car when we travel and go on road trips and do those kinds of things. So, I don't think we're going to buy a fancy car. I think we're going to buy a basic car. So, if I can change it to a basic car, but yeah, that would be my choice for right now. I think that's my priority going forward.

**Anna:** OK. Should we do rapid fire question two?

**Andrew:** Yeah, let's do it. So, question two is, have you ever stopped using a brand or a product because it didn't align with your values on a social issue? And what was the deal breaker for you?

**Anna:** I haven't stopped using a brand because it didn't align with my values. But the reason why I stopped using brands is probably the same as you guys as well. If I have really bad service, either in the shop or online, or if the quality of the product gets worse, or it's just a bad quality product. So, for me, it's all about the quality of the product. And I don't think I have stopped using a brand because they have certain values or social issues. But I'm going to throw a bit of a curve ball in here. Sometimes actually the kind of green washing or the eco, everything eco, whatever, it actually puts me off because I think, I don't know whether you really are eco or you're just trying to market this to me. I'm going to give a really quick example. There's a coffee shop near my house that opened and it's a small chain in Madrid. And their kind of branding is like eco-coffee, green coffee. And you know what? I never buy my coffee there because it puts me off that branding because I just don't believe it. I don't trust it. So maybe that's a bit of a curve ball there because I'm stopping using a brand because I don't believe in their values. I guess I don't trust their values.

**Andrew:** Right. Yeah. Well, it kind of goes to what we were talking about in the main part of the episode with brands aligning themselves with social issues, not necessarily because they support that issue, but because maybe they can tap into a bigger customer pool if they do support that issue. As for me, I don't know. I'm sure that there has been a time when I stopped using a brand or stopped supporting a company because of some bad thing I've heard them do. You do hear some horror stories from time to time. And sometimes these horror stories about, you know, like the way that companies treat their employees or the way that they're sourcing their materials, something like that, that does put me off if I hear it from time to time. So, I'm sure that I have stopped or made different consumer decisions based on stories that I've heard in the past, but no specific example comes to mind. Other than I know that when I was living in Canada, I would avoid certain stores and shops and restaurants and cafes that I knew had bad managers. Maybe my friends had worked there in the past and they're like, oh, this, "The owner of this cafe is a real jerk. He treats all his employees really poorly." You know, they try to look like a friendly neighborhood cafe, but behind the scenes, it's kind of hell for the employees. So, after hearing those stories from my friends who have tried working, I'm thinking of one specific cafe in mind, then I was like, all right, I don't want to support that kind of business. So, I have done that before for sure. Question number three, Anna. Well, we already spoiled the answer to this question. I think that's all right. And we'll just go through it quickly. It is, do you prefer human customer service or are you comfortable with AI and chat bots? And we both talked about liking chat bots. I'm wondering, have you ever had a bad experience with the chat bot before? Like just a frustrating experience where you couldn't find the information that you wanted?

**Anna:** Yeah. Sometimes they don't give you the information you want, but normally what they do then is they connect you to a customer service advisor, so an actual person. So, if they can't find the information you need, they give you the option to start a chat with somebody else. And that's my ideal. I'm, I probably should have been clearer there. I like chat bots, like you said, with that example of the airline. But what I like the most is that it connects me to an actual person, but the form of doing that is by chat rather than actually calling them up. That's perfect. So, I really like human customer service, but I like it in the form of chat because it's just so time consuming to have to call people up and wait in the queue and da da da da, whatever. And I don't know, it would be interesting to ask somebody who works in that type of role, like do they prefer it? If they have people writing to them rather than actually speaking to them on the phone, maybe people are a

little bit less aggressive or a little bit less rude, or I'd be really interested to know guys, if any of you have a role like that, where you have to interact with customers, like, do you prefer it with the chat or would you rather have somebody call you up? I don't know.

**Andrew:** That's really interesting. I wonder if chat bots could be effective for calming people down. When I was a university student, I had a job in a call center where we provided customer service for, well, I worked in two different ones. First was for a cell phone company. And the next was for a credit card company. And I had a lot of really angry customers call me all the time, all day angry customers at the credit card company. Well, I won't go into the details, but for whatever reason, really angry regarding their credit card statement and credit card usage and all of this. And so, I'm wondering if these chat bots could be good at kind of settling the customer down and, you know, calming them down before connecting them with a human employee. That could be a really awesome breakthrough for all of the people who do customer service on the phone like that, because it is a really difficult job. And that also goes to what we were talking about in our last Chatterbox episode, which was the trend prediction out of Korea that was predicting that we're going to see more coupling of human oversight over AI. So, humans and AI working in tandem, and this could be a really, really effective way to speed up customer service is to have people go through a chat bot first, find out exactly what the issue is, hopefully solve the issue with the chat bot. But then if you can't solve it, then you pass it over to the human and the human has that history there of what you've talked about, what you've tried already, and could find the solution much more quickly than having to go back and forth for like an hour on the phone before finding a solution. So yeah, I think things are looking good for customer service in the future. Cool. Well, I enjoyed this conversation. Anna, thank you so much, and we'll catch you in the next Chatterbox episode.

**Anna:** Bye, everyone.

**Andrew:** That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### On the edge of [one's] seat Idiom

At the start of this episode, Andrew expresses his excitement about finally continuing part two of their planned recording, which they had intended to do earlier but didn't manage to. He mentions that in their last episode, they discussed trend predictions from South Korea for 2024, leaving listeners on the edge of their seats waiting for the next one.

**On the edge of [one's] seat** is an idiomatic expression that means in the state of anticipation or excitement. It's often used in situations where something keeps a person in suspense and holds their attention. When someone is on the edge of their seat, they're waiting for something to happen, or are captivated by something, such as a book, a movie, or a podcast.

This expression originates from the literal image of someone sitting on the very edge of their seat, which happens when someone is nervous or excited, so they're tense and paying close attention to something.

This expression is commonly paired with the verbs "to keep" or "to have." For example, if your boss announced that he would share important news at the end of a meeting, you would likely spend the entire meeting on the edge of your seat, in anticipation of this news. In this scenario, your boss would be keeping you on the edge of your seat.

There's another expression that's similar to this one, "on pins and needles", which also means being anxious or excited, waiting for something important to happen.

Here are a couple more examples with **on the edge of [one's] seat**:

**David:** So, did you do anything fun last night?

**Sandy:** I watched the final episode of my favourite reality show. It was so intense! The suspense **had me on the edge of my seat** until the very end!

**Maria:** How did your doctor's appointment go?

**Emmet:** Oh, it was so stressful. I **was on the edge of my seat** for hours waiting for the doctor to explain everything to me. Nothing to worry about, though. It's a standard procedure! I should be fine.

## To chime in

Phrasal verb, informal

When introducing the topic of this episode, Andrew explains the plan for the discussion. He and Anna will describe each trend one by one, and then they'll chime in to share their personal opinions on these predictions.

**To chime in** means to say something, typically in a group discussion. When someone chimes in, they share their ideas or opinions on a certain topic, contributing to a conversation. Sometimes, to chime in can also mean to interrupt someone else who is speaking. For instance, someone might complain about their colleague by saying, "He kept chiming in during the presentation!"

You might have encountered the word "chime" being used to describe the sound that a bell or a clock makes. Similarly, when used figuratively, to chime in means "to make a sound" with your voice, by adding your comments when participating in a conversation.

There are multiple ways you can use this phrasal verb. You can use it as a question, such as "Can I chime in?", to ask for permission to give your input. You can use it to give permission as well, by saying "Feel free to chime in." You can express your desire to comment on something specific by saying, "I want to chime in on this subject."

A similar expression that Andrew also uses in this episode is "to put [one's] two cents in", which conveys the same idea of sharing your thoughts on a subject of a discussion.

Here are a couple more examples with **to chime in**:

**Connor:** Hi, everyone! What did I miss?

**Patrice:** We're choosing a lunch place for the new client. Please **chime in** if you have any ideas.

**Connor:** I do, actually. There's this new place in my neighborhood, I was there just yesterday. It's quite impressive! I think it'd be perfect for our client.

**Matt:** I overheard you talking about the surprise party for Tom. **Can I chime in?**

**Ann:** Absolutely! What do you have in mind?

**Matt:** He's a huge fan of Star Wars, right? How about we make it a theme? We could put up some decorations and encourage everyone to wear costumes. I think it'd be awesome!



## To live in the now Expression

When discussing the first trend, Andrew explains that the term neo-hedonism is this new idea about enjoying life instead of worrying about saving money for later. He mentions examples like people going to concerts, traveling, and splurging on expensive art. He agrees that it makes sense, especially after feeling trapped and lonely during the pandemic. It's like a wakeup call to live in the now and chase our dreams.

**To live in the now** means to be present and focus on the present moment, rather than dwell on the past or worry about the future. Living in the now is one of the key principles of mindfulness, which is a practice of being fully aware of what's happening in the present moment and making the most of it. Mindfulness is all about appreciating what you have, embracing the present, and reducing stress.

In this episode, living in the now refers to enjoying life as it happens and spending money on things that bring pleasure, rather than saving it for a house, a car, or retirement. Andrew uses this expression when talking about the current tendency of people spending money on experiences instead of saving it for a rainy day and waiting until a better time in the future.

Similar expressions that communicate this idea include “carpe diem” or “seize the day”, “enjoy the here and now”, and “live in the moment.” These expressions are often used in the context of mindful living, self-awareness, personal growth, and mental health.

Here are a couple more examples with **to live in the now**:

**Naomi:** What a breathtaking view! It was totally worth the hike.

**Dennis:** I know, right? I love this place. When I'm here, I just forget about everything and enjoy the here and now.

**Naomi:** I totally get it. Being in nature reminds us of importance of **living in the now**, making every moment count.

**Kate:** Hey, I know you've been dealing with a lot lately, but today let's try to just **live in the now**, you know? Forget about all the worries and just focus on the present moment.

**Will:** Yeah, that sounds like a plan. It's just hard for me sometimes, you know? My mind is always racing with thoughts. But I'll give it a try.

## Sticky spot

Idiom, informal

As the hosts discuss the neo-hedonism trend prediction, Anna notes that many people have less money these days. In the past, they could do both: save a bit and go to a concert. But now, it's either one or the other: go to the concert or save money. She adds, "I think people are in a bit of a sticky spot, a bit of a tricky situation."

**Sticky spot** is an idiomatic expression that means a problematic situation that's difficult to resolve. When someone is in a sticky spot, it means they're dealing with something challenging, and finding a solution isn't easy. The word "sticky" here refers to feeling stuck, unable to progress with a situation and feeling like there's no way out of it.

This expression is often used when talking about challenges, obstacles, or dilemmas. It's versatile and can be applied to various contexts, such as work, relationships, or personal matters. For example, a person might find themselves in a sticky spot if they realize that they've accidentally sent the wrong file to their boss for a meeting that has already started, so nothing can be done to fix it.

Common variations of this expression are "a sticky situation", "a tough situation", "a tight spot", or "a tough spot." All these variations convey the same idea of being in a difficult position that involves problems.

Here are a couple more examples with **sticky spot**:

**Sarah:** Hey Mike, what's up?

**Mike:** Hi Sarah, sorry to bother you, but I'm **in a bit of a sticky spot** here. I locked my car keys inside the car. Could you come by and bring the other key, please?

**Sarah:** Oh, no! Sure, I'm on my way. Just send me your location.

**Gina:** Are you going to your kids' concert tonight?

**Kyle:** I was going to, but then I promised my team I'd stay late and help them finish the project today. I don't really want to let them down, but my kids are going to be disappointed if I don't show up.

**Gina:** Sounds like you **got yourself into a sticky spot**! Try explaining everything to your colleagues, I'm sure they'll understand.

## To latch onto [something]

Phrasal verb, informal

When talking about trend number two – supporting brands with positive impact – Andrew points out that nowadays a lot of brands are associating themselves with social issues, making it look like they're latching onto these issues to try and get customers for free.

**To latch onto [something]** is a phrasal verb that literally means to grab and hold something tightly. However, it's often used figuratively, with several meanings. In the context of this episode, it means to become interested in something and keep using it, because it brings benefits.

The verb "to latch" means to attach or lock something securely, like using a latch mechanism to keep a door closed. Similarly, when someone latches onto something figuratively, they're emotionally attached and fixated on it, refusing to let go. This phrasal verb is commonly used with ideas, concepts, or interests.

For example, if someone is fixated on their dream of winning a marathon and dedicates their life to achieving it by training daily, researching other marathon winners, and constantly improving their skills, you could say they have latched onto this dream.

The phrasal verb to latch onto can be used in various scenarios: professional, personal, educational. It describes being deeply engaged or attached to something, pursuing it in a passionate and enthusiastic way.

Here are a couple more examples with **to latch onto**:

**Abby:** My daughter is having a garage sale, she asked me to help. Do you want to join?

**Liam:** Didn't she have one last week?

**Abby:** Yeah. She seems to **have latched onto the minimalism lifestyle**, so she's getting rid of all the unnecessary things in her life. I've been thinking about doing the same in my home, too.

**Laura:** You look amazing! Have you lost weight?

**Paul:** Thanks! Yeah, I've been trying to take better care of myself. I decided to ditch those fad **diets I was latching onto** and focus on eating healthy, balanced meals instead. It's made a huge difference!

## The writing's on the wall Idiom

When sharing his opinion on the third trend, personal well-being, Andrew mentions new smart gadgets – rings, that can do the same thing that smartwatches do, like tracking your sleep and steps. Andrew believes that this trend will become really popular in the future, stating, “The writing’s on the wall for this one.”

As Andrew explains, this expression means that it’s clear to see that this (people using health-related gadgets) will be happening more and more in the future. When we say, “The writing’s on the wall”, it means that we’re certain that something’s going to happen, because we see clear signs of it. This idiom is often used when making predictions about the future, when the outcome is inevitable or obvious, and nothing can be done about it.

For example, if a small business is struggling, facing tough competition and declining sales, its owner might say, “The writing’s on the wall for my business”, meaning that it’s doomed and unlikely to survive.

The idiom "the writing's on the wall" originates from the biblical story in the Book of Daniel. During a feast, mysterious writing appeared on the wall which Daniel interpreted as a warning that the kingdom would soon fall to the Persians.

Here are a couple more examples with **the writing’s on the wall**:

**Lily:** Hey, Alex, I’ve been doing some research on renewable energy sources. I’m thinking about putting solar panels on our roof.

**Alex:** That sounds like a great idea. Considering all the warnings about climate change, it seems like **the writing’s on the wall**. We definitely need to make more sustainable choices.

**Ryan:** Did you hear? Dan and Iris are getting divorced!

**Lisa:** Well, I’m not surprised. I think **we could all see the writing on the wall** when he moved out. Poor Iris, she must be devastated. Let’s go check on her later today, maybe bring her dinner or something.

**Ryan:** Sure, sounds like a good idea.

## Quiz

**1. Which of the following is NOT a good synonym for “on the edge of your seat”?**

- a) In anticipation
- b) In suspense
- c) In the now
- d) On pins and needles

**2. If a friend says, “Can I chime in?”, what do they mean?**

- a) They want to come by your house.
- b) They want to share their opinion on something.
- c) They want to know what time it is.
- d) They are asking for permission to leave.

**3. If you find yourself in a sticky spot, it means that \_\_\_\_.**

- a) You lost your concert ticket
- b) You solved a problem
- c) You ate too much
- d) You're stuck in a difficult situation

**4. If someone is fixated on an idea and can't let go of it, they're \_\_\_\_.**

- a) Launching onto it
- b) Catching onto it
- c) Latching onto it
- d) Melting onto it

**5. True or false? When someone says, “The writing’s on the wall”, they mean that it’s impossible to predict the outcome.**

- a) True
- b) False

---

## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the trend predictions discussed in this episode? Do you think any of them can take off in your country? Feel free to chime in and share your opinion!
2. Can you think of a time in your life when you were on the edge of your seat? Please share what happened.
3. Do you ever practice living in the now in your daily life? How do you do that?
4. Can you think of a time when you found yourself in a sticky spot? What happened and how did you get out of it?
5. Are there any past experiences that you found yourself latching onto?

---

## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.b    3.d    4.c    5.b

### Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Anna Connelly

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke for Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Marshall Vaillancourt

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Alina Morozova

English editor: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Oleksandr P (Pexels.com)