

THE 5 LAWS OF CULTURAL RELEVANCE



What actually makes a brand
matter to **young people**.

DOSSIER: **2026**

CASE FILE #WOTC-5LCR

SUBJECT: 5 LAWS OF

CULTURAL RELEVANCY





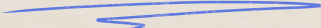
92%

of young people
recognize Nike.

4%

find it culturally
relevant.

**"Being known
is not the
same as
being relevant."**



SOURCE

WOTC Cultural Relevance Report • 1,051 UK 16-29s • 2026

SAMPLE

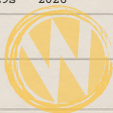
5 LAWS TO CULTURAL RELEVANCE

DATE

2026

VERIFIED BY

WORD ON THE CURB



ARTICLE 01

STOP MISTAKING FAME FOR RELEVANCE



Everyone knowing your name isn't
the same as anyone caring.

THE EVIDENCE:

Wingstop turns awareness into
relevance at 12%. Nike manages 4% —
on a fraction of the budget.

THE VERDICT:

Don't ask how famous you are. Ask how
many of the people who know you
actually rate you.



ARTICLE 02

LEARN THE LANGUAGE OR GET LEFT BEHIND

You can't fake fluency. Young people can always tell.

THE EVIDENCE:

Only 12% say a brand being all over social makes it more relevant. 25% say it just looks try-hard.

THE VERDICT:

This is a hiring problem, not a content problem. Get someone in the room who actually speaks the language — and let them say no.



ARTICLE 03

EARN TRUST BEFORE YOU EARN RELEVANCE

Honesty travels further than cleverness. Trust is the price of entry.

THE EVIDENCE:

Across every category, the top reason a brand gets picked as relevant is "people like me actually use it" (65%). The weakest is "creates moments people want to share" (22%) — the thing brands chase hardest.

THE VERDICT:

Relevance isn't performed, it's conferred. Build something people actually use and trust — then **earn the right to be talked about.**



ARTICLE 04

BUILD THE TABLE. LET YOUR COMMUNITY DECIDE WHO EATS.

Brands don't decide they're relevant. The people do.

THE EVIDENCE:

Vinted is the most relevant brand in the whole study — 45% — and it isn't even a fashion brand. It wins because community isn't bolted on, it is the product: every sale is two young people dealing with each other.

THE VERDICT:

You can't fake community. Build the thing young people use with each other, then get out of the way.



ARTICLE 05

MAKE IT AFFORDABLE OR MAKE IT WORTH IT

Value is the new status.

THE EVIDENCE:

The food brands young people rate most: Greggs 10%, Lidl 9%, Aldi 8% – then a long drop to Burger King at under 1%. Getting a bargain is something to brag about now, not hide.

THE VERDICT:

Young people haven't dropped their standards, they've changed what counts. Smart with money beats flashy – and the brands that get that are winning.



THE RELEVANCE AUDIT

15 QUESTIONS.
ONE HONEST
LEADERSHIP
MEETING.



Score your brand
against the 5 Laws
— one point per "yes."

FAME

- ☐ Do you measure relevance as seriously as awareness?
- ☐ Do you know how many people who know you actually rate you?
- ☐ Could you name the scene that would claim you as theirs?

LANGUAGE

- ☐ Is there someone in your sign-off who actually speaks the language?
- ☐ Can you get a reactive post out in under 48 hours?
- ☐ Do you know which topics you've earned the right to talk about?

TRUST

- ☐ Does your product live up to your advertising?
- ☐ Have you ever published something you'd normally hide?
- ☐ Do you know what people say about you on Reddit?

COMMUNITY

- ☐ Do young people use your brand assets with each other when you're not in the room?
- ☐ Would the conversation survive 90 days of you saying nothing?
- ☐ Have you given your community any real control?

VALUE

- ☐ Does your brand acknowledge what life costs right now?
- ☐ Do you know if there's a cheaper version of you going round?
- ☐ Is there an honest, affordable way in?

12-15: rare company

7-11: leaking relevance in fixable places

0-6: you're in the Deadzone