Foreword

I believe that it is fundamentally important to reach out across boundaries, connect with the world around us and try to understand one another.

When I started Culture Trip, it was my choice to nurture a global, open-minded and culturally inquisitive world. Now, with so much of the world going in a different direction - Trump, Brexit, nationalism - it is no longer a matter of personal choice, it has become an imperative. Culture Trip has become a mission-led brand.

The current socio-political context is pushing many people to engage with culture, and with the meaning of culture, in a new and deeper way. When we feel there is a crisis of identity and politics within our own countries, or the countries where we live, we’re more inclined to look outwards, at other cultures and seek different perspectives. That is what we do at Culture Trip: we inspire people to go beyond their cultural boundaries. We want to bring the world to everyone and bring everyone closer together at a time when borders seem to be going up and minds appear to be narrowing.

The Cultural Mindset study came about as an ambition to fully grasp the world of modern experiences and travel from our unique perspective of cultural exploration and exchange. At times it felt like this project endeavored to understand the entirety of humanity, drawing on themes from psychology, anthropology and sociology. It swept into travel and leisure as an expression of our cultural selves.

What it achieved was to capture the cultural essence of our modern times – contradictory, dynamic – and to produce the realisation that our attitudes to culture are an important part of what makes us human, both uniting and dividing us.

Culture Trip is an exchange of culture, creativity and compassion, both digitally and out in the world. This study establishes just how fundamental culture is to the way we tell stories about ourselves and our journeys. And, ultimately, how we make sense of our place in the world.

Dr. Kris Naudts
Founder & CEO
Culture Trip
Welcome

We live in an interconnected world where cultural exploration is considered a fundamental component of how we live and how people perceive us. How this social shift came about is fascinating.

We’d like to take you on the journey of our research and share our findings to inspire you to see culture and travel in a whole new light.

Meet The Global Community

Globalisation is usually talked about in the context of the sharing of trade and capital between countries. But let’s not forget that the driving force behind all that is people. Education, travel, exposure to other customs and geographies, and the cultural mashup that emerges are the more influential social effects of globalisation. What happens as a result has a profound effect on the very nature of culture.

During our six months of research, we’ve seen that US and UK citizens are placing a greater emphasis on cultural openness and diversity. In particular, people in urban areas with high densities of multicultural populations (think: London, New York), are showing conscious interest in other communities and their associated cultural codes such as food, art, language, music and traditions.

60% of people in the US and UK say that their outlook on life is shaped by influences from different cultures.

In conversations with our study participants, there was no doubt that, for many, the political climate actually acts as an incubator for cultural debate, driving a desire to champion cultural openness.
On a more practical level, globalisation has also meant more people are settling in, or have been living in different countries. International migrants make up a group of some 258 million people, which would make them the world’s fifth largest nation – albeit a virtual one.

18% of study respondents in the UK and US were born outside those countries. Among 25-34 year olds, this number rises to 32%

Some of these global citizens begin adopting parts of their host culture, while retaining and adapting their own. A prime example are Third Culture Kids (TCKs), a term popularised by academic researchers David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken to describe children who spend their formative years in places that are not their parents’ homeland.

TCKs often develop an identity that’s rooted in people rather than places. They’re more likely to be multilingual, have long distance friends and relationships, be more culturally sensitive and more open to absorbing and adapting to other cultures. While many TCKs have been the early adopters of the openness movement, these characteristics aren’t limited to TCKs alone.

27% of our respondents speak more than one language. For those under 34, this figure increases to 40% - and is as low as 15% for those over the age of 55.

Overall, it is evident that a move towards a more globally connected, multinational system of values and beliefs has created a greater propensity for cultural curiosity.

**YOLO: The Rise Of The Experience Economy**

While the global backdrop shaped trends, the domestic backdrop shaped attitudes.

The context of student debt and unaffordable housing created a shift in spending patterns and, with that, a new set of values emerged – where experiences matter more than ownership. For ‘Generation Rent’ in particular, no matter how expensive an experience or a trip, it is still more affordable than a house.

43% of people save their money to travel more often, and 18% save to take more luxurious trips. In contrast, only 13% are saving for a house deposit.
In the past, possessions defined us. In modern times, personal identity is shaped through discovery. People are increasingly seeking to experience moments that create their sense of self and place. Travel, as an expression of self in a place, empowers people to discover their likes and dislikes outside of the confines of their domestic cultures. Risk-taking on holiday is more within reach, authenticity within grasp. YOLO (You Only Live Once) is a reflection of that drive.

68% of people think it’s worth taking some risks to have an adventure but it’s particularly true of young people: 81% of those under 35.

Yet we always were, and will be, social beings. The drive for social recognition in our own cultural tribes is still strong. It’s just that now we seek to achieve it through travel.

Young Millennials and Gen Zers are the demographic groups that suffer from FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) the most. Travel experiences and engaging in cultural exploration are now a fundamental component of how others perceive us.

59% of those aged 18-24 don’t want to feel out of touch or left behind so will travel to the same places their friends do. For those older, the effect is less prevalent with only 41% feeling this way.

No wonder then, that combining cultural activity with everyday life has become a core part of how we represent ourselves – it helps us construct our identity, both online and offline. We bring new tastes, new objects, new ideas back into our home environment and continue exploring even when we are at home. This is how travel influences a virtuous circle for the evolution of cultural codes.

49% of people bring back a greater cultural understanding and confidence from their travels whilst 21% bring back new friends and 29% bring back a new taste in food or spices.

So here we are. The collision of two powerful trends – globalisation and the rise of experience economy – have ignited a new zeitgeist, where cultural curiosity occupies a fundamental place in modern life.
The Cultural Curiosity Framework

We’ve covered some big themes so far, and there’s more. To make sense of how individual attitudes towards culture emerge, we’ve uncovered two more layers in our research.

1. CULTURAL CONTEXT
   How macroculture is driving social change. See pages 3-5.

2. SOCIAL CONTEXT
   Peer influences, community affiliations, shared passions and interests.

3. PERSONAL CONTEXT
   Family heritage, language, traditions, values, hometown.

Social Context

The social layer refers to how individuals engage with their immediate surroundings – the people, the communities, and the cultural codes they share with them. Social media has expanded this network further to include digital influencers (both near and far) who shape our tastes.

What’s more, it’s now more common to know somebody who has settled in another part of the world, which expands global networks further still. This often means people have an additional, much more personal ‘way in’ to other cultures.

Nearly 1 in 5 people (18%) use Instagram and 30% use YouTube as a source of travel inspiration.

45% of people have friends of different nationalities (and ethnicities); 53% have friends living in other countries.
Finally, there’s a personal layer to cultural curiosity. To our surprise, that layer has four very different origins:

**Cultural Deprivation**
Growing up in a sheltered environment can drive the urge to escape and explore.

“I was born in Lincoln, UK. I grew up with my parents and my younger sister in an upbringing very different from my peers. All I cared about when I was young was leaving home so I could leave and earn money and travel the world.” UK, male

**Cultural Saturation**
Growing up in multicultural surroundings can make people more aware of different lifestyles, and therefore more interested in other cultures.

“I was born and raised in Colorado Springs, CO, to immigrant parents from the Philippines. My mom and dad moved to Colorado because I had a few aunts and uncles living here already. I was always immersed in Filipino culture, but unfortunately my parents never made a point to teach me the language, Tagalog, but I do feel I value learning, trying new things, and being open-minded a lot more than others.” US, female

**Cultural Adaptability**
Growing up while moving around a lot can result in a fluid cultural identity, where juggling between cultures becomes second nature.

48% of people have lived in a lot of different places, and 18% were born outside the country where they now live.

“I’m a Third Culture Kid. It means that sometimes I feel like a foreign exchange student in the country that I am supposed to own (by my passport anyway) and I have no qualms about jumping on a plane to just about anywhere.” US, male

**Learned Curiosity**
Growing up in a household that places emphasis on culture makes people more attuned to the world around them. As the experience economy makes travel a fundamental feature of life, we see the number of people who grew up with this mindset increase and, in turn, apply it to their own parenthood.

59% of people agree that being seen as someone with wide experience of the world is important to them.

When we add these factors up - the effects of global multiculturalism, the shift towards experiences, increased exposure to other cultures and a generation that values cultural curiosity – we can envisage a future that is fundamentally open-minded.
Introducing Cultural Mindsets

Four mindset groups emerge based on cultural contexts. They are on a spectrum of least to most open to cultural immersion. Collectively, the curious, immersive and fluid mindsets are on the rise – suggesting that societies are poised to become more open to cultural exploration.

Culturally Aware
Motivation for travel is anchored in pleasure. Seek out familiarity and select destinations close to home or reflective of their own culture. Superficially interested in cultures and want to experience it from a dispassionate distance.

More prevalent among older age groups: 89% of those aged 55+ say they "know what they like and don’t like", compared to 78% aged under 35.

Culturally Curious
Motivation for travel is to discover new things and disrupt everyday routines. Seek some familiarity, but also want to explore boundaries. Quantity is important, they want to ‘collect’ experiences and countries. Want to be seen as someone who is interested in culture, but this is often expressed in terms of visual interest and well-known sites or architecture.

For 59% of people, it is important to be seen as someone with a wide experience of the world. Young Millennials and Gen Zers (those under 24) exhibit this feeling more than any other group (76%).

Culturally Immersive
Motivation for travel is adventure and personal progression or growth. Travel is their identity; trendsetters and trailblazers, they want to explore places where others haven’t been. Very interested in other cultures and immersing themselves within them. Want to be seen as highly cultured and an ‘explorer’.

Love adventure and happy to celebrate when things go wrong, which they see as the key ingredient to making memories. Travel all over the world, in places ‘off the beaten track’, as they search for differences from their more predictable world back home.

Personal growth is incredibly important: 86% of people say they’re always looking for ways to educate themselves, and 79% choose leisure and travel experiences that help them grow as a person.

Culturally Fluid
Identity is shaped by their familiarity with travel: natural nomads with travel in their DNA. Feel at home everywhere and have adopted a hybrid cultural identity.

Very interested in exploring, analysing and immersing themselves in deeper cultural codes.

Memories are often tied to experiences with people that represent the culture they’re travelling to – rather than sites or activities.

81% of people believe the only way to understand a place is to experience it like a local.
These diverse cultural groups are united by a generational insight – no one wants to be a tourist. There’s a paradox with cultural discovery. Despite the world becoming more accessible, exploring someplace truly new has never been so difficult.

42% of people actively avoid places tourists go.

“They may not be hidden gems to some people, but I found a cat sanctuary people could visit in Rome and help out, which me and my friend loved. I found a place in New Zealand with hot tubs by a lake looking out into the mountains and a gorgeous new café in Amsterdam that did Unicorn breakfast bowls!” UK, female

With that insight, we introduce the final concept in our research: that of fast and slow culture based on anthropologist Grant McCracken’s framework.

Fast culture is contemporary, slow culture is timeless. Fast culture are the food fads, latte art, nightlife, destinations trending on social, influencer taste-making and popular entertainment.

Slow culture is made up of the elements that create deeper cultural codes – language, storytelling, traditions, history, even nature and geography as explainers of a way of life. The interplay of the two creates a highly personal experience of authenticity and blows away any traditional definitions of culture.

The UK and the US are global hubs of fast and slow culture. Their citizens, particularly in urban areas, are constantly exposed to diverse stimuli and opportunities for exploration. As a result, traditional definitions of culture have broken down.

Art is no longer exclusively a museum or a gallery, it’s street art and graffiti. Food is enjoyed as much in a spice market as in an award-winning restaurant. Accommodation is not only about an elegant hotel, or a local rental, it’s a yurt under the stars.

Our four cultural mindset groups seek out experiences that combine elements of fast and slow culture as a way to avoid feeling like a tourist. How they do so depends on where on the cultural curiosity spectrum they fall into, the degree of novelty-seeking, risk tolerance, and other factors described in this paper.

Of the 74% who still want to see classic sites, over half (52%) want to avoid touristic places. This strongly suggests that modern travellers still want to experience famous places, but want to do so on their terms.

Understanding such nuanced interplay of social trends and individual cultural contexts is how we approach travel at Culture Trip. It’s no longer just about spotting the latest ‘thing’, but about incorporating rich storytelling into the experience of travel.

Culture Trip reaches an audience of well travelled people: they’re more than twice as likely as non-users to have visited the Middle East, South Asia, or South America – and 7 out of 10 people trust Culture Trip to advise them in their travels.

Moving forward, we will continue to respond to growing demand for cultural experiences: moments that deliver the most memorable blend of the familiar yet surprising, the contemporary and the old, and shape the very concept of culture in a curious world.
About the Cultural Mindset Study

The inaugural Cultural Mindset study is based on interviews with 150 consumers and a survey of 10,500 respondents in the UK and US. The survey was conducted amongst an audience who in the three months prior to fieldwork had been active in activities defined as the ‘experience market’. The study redefines a modern zeitgeist, exploring people’s attitudes towards culture and new experiences, spending priorities and motivations for travel. The study was independently conducted by Crowd DNA on behalf of Culture Trip.

For press inquiries and more information about the study, please contact:

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About Culture Trip

Culture Trip is a global start-up operating in travel, media and entertainment. With offices in London, New York and Tel Aviv, it tells stories that reveal what is special and unique about a place, its people and its culture. In-house creative teams together with a global network of 300 freelance creators and a growing team of engineers, designers and data scientists produce location-based inspiration from around the world, including articles, videos, photography, illustration and animation. Founded by former academic psychiatrist Dr. Kris Naudts, Culture Trip has been dubbed one of the UK’s fastest-growing companies by Forbes UK. The website attracts approximately 18M monthly unique visitors with 2B+ video views in the last two years alone. The app has been downloaded 2M+ times, with a social media reach of 8M+*. Culture Trip brings the world to everyone, and in doing so, brings us all closer together.

Apple’s App Store App of the Day: “You’ll never feel out of the loop again.”

About Crowd DNA

Crowd DNA is a cultural insights and strategy consultancy with offices in London, Amsterdam, New York, Singapore & Sydney. Formed in 2008, operating in 55+ markets, we bring together trends specialists, researchers, strategists, writers, designers and film-makers, creating culturally charged commercial advantage for the world’s most exciting brands.

* Figures correct as of May 2019. For the latest audience numbers, please visit theculturetrip.com/advertise