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Tech Talks @ Club Street

The Human Algorithm

3-PART SERIES

PRESENTED BY

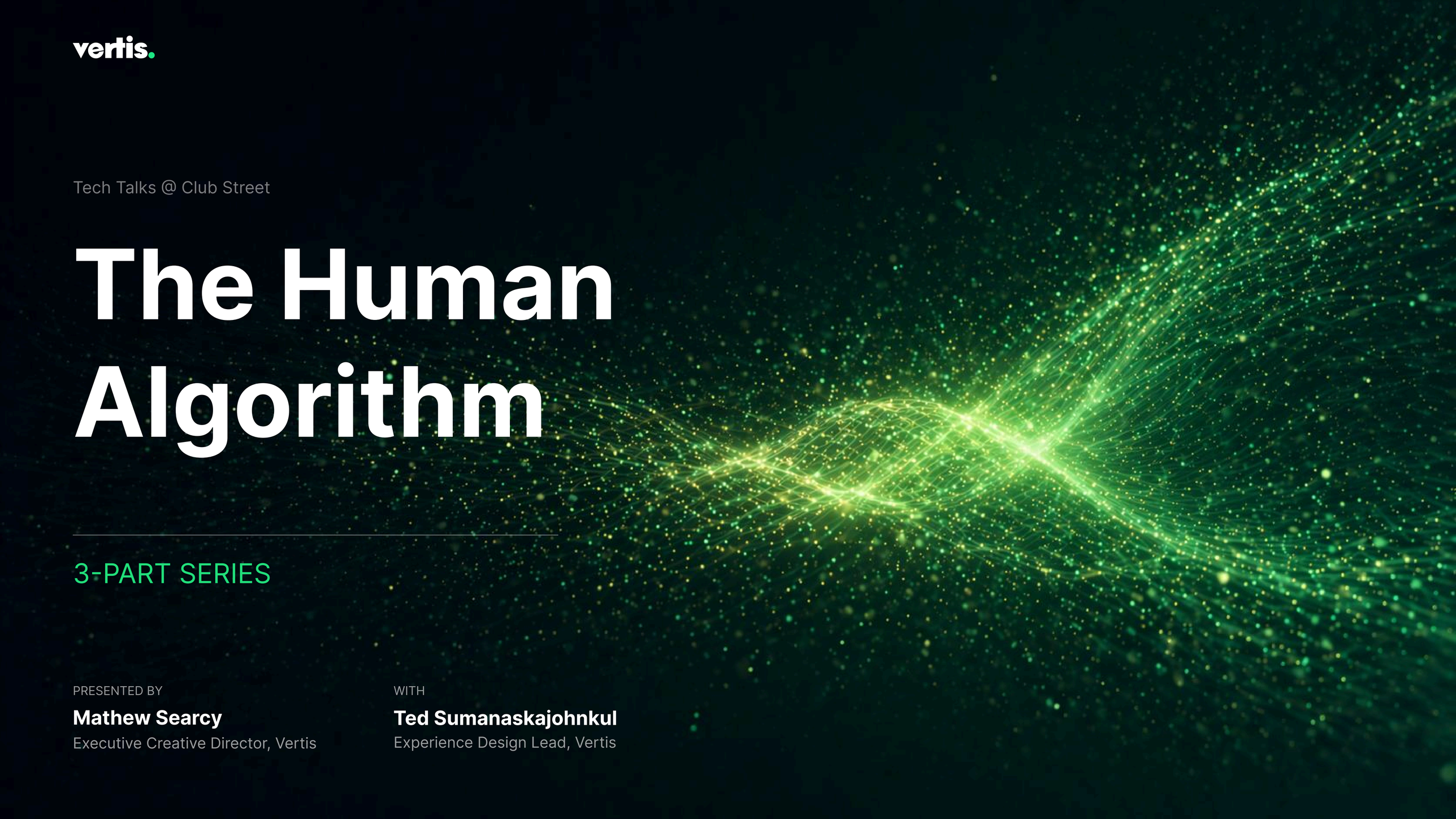
Mathew Searcy

Executive Creative Director, Vertis

WITH

Ted Sumanaskajohnkul

Experience Design Lead, Vertis



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Agenda

5:30PM: Welcome and Networking
6:00PM: The Death of the Interface
6:30PM: Q&A and Discussion
6:40PM: Networking and Pizza

vertis.

THE HUMAN ALGORITHM · TALK 1 OF 3

Tech Talks @ Club Street

The Death of the Interface

Designing for a Post-screen World



PRESENTED BY

Mathew Searcy

Executive Creative Director, Vertis

WITH

Ted Sumanaskajohnkul

Experience Design Lead, Vertis

22 APRIL 2026

5:30 – 8:00 PM

40 CLUB STREET, SINGAPORE

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Every app is an apology.

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WHERE WE CAME FROM

A short history of the bridge.

1950s

Mainframe

You learn the machine's language.

1970s

Desktop GUI

Xerox PARC. The mouse, the window, the icon.

1990s

Web

The interface becomes universal.

2000s

Mobile

A screen in every pocket.

NOW

?

Is the screen still the right answer — or just the one we kept refining?

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Users don't struggle with complicated tasks. They struggle with the very existence of the interaction.

TYPICAL SESSION REPLAY		LIVE
00:04	Variant default loaded	AUTO
00:12	Tap · Add to bag	INTENT
00:14	Tap · Add to bag (x3)	RAGE CLICK
00:19	Scroll back to hero	HESITATION
00:27	Tap · Size ▼ (x4)	RAGE CLICK
00:41	Checkout · Wrong size added	COMPLETED
+6d	Return initiated	REVERSAL

> They didn't come for the interface.
> They came for the outcome.
> The screen is what's in the way.

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UI = Friction.

Every button, every modal, every tooltip, every loading spinner is the measured distance between what someone wants and getting it.

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Zero UI

Not the absence of an interface, it is the evolution of it.

From a layer you push instructions into, to one that reads context, anticipates intent, and responds before you've had to fully articulate the request.

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THE ZERO UI SPECTRUM

Four surfaces where the exchange is already changing.

01 / VOICE

Voice

Designing for how humans actually talk. For ambiguity, for context, for requests no dropdown was built to handle.

“Play the album we listened to on the drive up.”

02 / GESTURE

Gesture

Every physical environment now has an interface. Designing it means thinking like architects and choreographers.

A hand reaching toward a shelf; the shelf responds.

03 / PRESENCE

Presence

A space knows who's in it, what time it is, what that person typically needs and begins responding before a request is made.

The room that recognises you are the one who walked in.

04 / PREDICTION

Prediction

Anticipating a need before it's articulated, a problem of deeply understanding the person, not of technology.

Ten blue links become one synthesized answer.

SAME INFORMATION. TWO EXPERIENCES.

You return to a hotel you've stayed at before.

VERSION A · THE APP

Welcome back, tap here to open your saved room preferences.

Notification. Settings screen. A form that knows your name.

Feels transactional.

VERSION B · THE DESK

Hello Ted, shall I put you in the same room as last time?

Eye contact. Recognition. A question you didn't have to ask.

Feels like home.

EXAMPLE 01 HOSPITALITY

The digital was optimized for efficiency. The guest still felt nothing.

WHAT THE INDUSTRY HAD ALREADY OPTIMISED

- Native apps across hospitality have been polished exhaustively. Check-in, room service, concierge, loyalty - **all centralised, clean, fast.**
- By any standard UX benchmark, the category is **doing most things right.**
- And yet the memory guests carry away is never about the flow or the form.

MEMORIES THAT MATTER

- Being recognised by name, by face, by history.
- Not having to explain themselves again (or at all). Not on the second morning of a three-night stay.
- Feeling like the place knew them before they asked.

REMEMBERING THAT THEY ARE GUESTS AND NOT USERS

> Optimising the digital gets you *less-friction,*
> Personalising the experience gets you frictionless.

EXAMPLE 02 HEALTHCARE

Feeling known beats being served.

THE PROBLEM BEHIND THE PROBLEM

Patients managing chronic conditions weren't logging in. Not because the portal was hard to use. Because logging in wasn't the moment that mattered.

When asked about good healthcare experiences, what they described were human moments. A doctor who remembered what they'd discussed six months ago. A nurse who noticed something had changed before they had to say it.

They wanted to feel known and cared for.

THE PRINCIPLE

Not a portal to log into.
A call at the right moment, from a person who already has the full picture.
Technology doing the watching. A human doing the caring.

THE CONSIDERATION

Simplicity of the interface ensures that we are not adding onto that anxiety. but true connection with the patients stems from addressing the problem itself.

> It is about getting technology to do what it does best,
> to enable humans to do what we do best.

EXAMPLE 03 E-COMMERCE

People complete purchases based on what they can find. Not always what they need.

THE PATTERN ACROSS THE CATEGORY

- Browse-to-purchase rates look healthy in aggregate. Returns, complaint volumes, and CS tickets tell a different story.
- People came in with an intention, often imprecisely expressed, and the system gave them a list of results instead of an answer.
- When stakes were low, they got it wrong and moved on. When higher, they abandoned.

THE INSIGHT

- E-commerce doesn't have to be a site. The moment of purchase receptivity doesn't live on a single surface, it lives across a broader ecosystem. Social commerce. GEO. A well-timed message through a platform like Braze. The purchase can happen anywhere a person is already paying attention.
- The brands getting this right aren't building better search. They're building systems that read intent across the full ecosystem that meet people at the moment they're ready, with the right context already in hand.

THE SHIFT

The interface stops waiting to be instructed and starts participating in the decision. Prediction replaces browsing.

The brand shows up where you already are.

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Stop designing for screens.
Start designing for intentions.

A great environment doesn't wait for your input.
It reads the situation, intentions and responds.

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WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THIS ON MONDAY MORNING?

Three questions for every brief.

QUESTION 01

What does the user actually want?

Not the feature request. Not the use case in the brief. The underlying want. Nine times out of ten: “this outcome, with as little effort on my part as possible.”

QUESTION 02

Where is the friction?

Chart every moment of decision, entry, wait, or interpretation. Make each either ambient or irreducibly human. If it's neither, it's a screen that shouldn't exist.

QUESTION 03

What if there were no screen at all?

The disruptive one — asked genuinely. Across luxury, hospitality, healthcare, government — the answer is almost always better than the app.

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The tools change.
The discipline doesn't.

New tools will always exist. What has never changed and never will, is the ability to really dive into a problem and solve the root cause.

That's not a Zero UI skill. That's just good design.

The industry shifts. **The method stays the same.**
The landscape changes. **The understanding matters more.**
The technology moves faster. **The human insight leads.**

vertis.

What would you build if there were no screen?

vertis.

Thank you.

Questions, arguments, and counter-examples are all welcome.

PRESENTED BY

Mathew Searcy

Executive Creative Director, Vertis

WITH

Ted Sumanaskajohnkul

Experience Design Lead, Vertis

The Human Algorithm

Talk 1 of 3 · 22 April 2026

vertis.

Don’t miss part 2

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Tech Talks @ Club Street

The Human Algorithm

3-PART SERIES

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Agenda

5:30PM: Welcome and Networking
6:00PM: Why your AI needs a soul
6:30PM: Q&A and Discussion
6:40PM: Networking and Pizza

vertis.

THE HUMAN ALGORITHM · TALK 2 OF 3

Tech Talks @ Club Street

Why your AI needs a human soul



Radical Authenticity

PRESENTED BY

Mathew Searcy

Executive Creative Director, Vertis

WITH

Ted Sumanaskajohnkul

Experience Design Lead, Vertis

20 MAY 2026
5:30 – 8:00 PM
40 CLUB STREET, SINGAPORE


News
News
What does AI do when no-one's watching?

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We spoke about what is ending

The Death of the Interface

“UI = friction.” The interface is an apology; it is becoming ambient. The live question: which parts of an experience should have an interface at all.

It answered what is ending. It did not answer what survives.

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When the interface recedes, the brand’s character is what’s left.

And AI is eroding it. This is not an aesthetics problem.
It is a trust problem and trust is what your brand is won and lost on.

Not the visual identity. Not the tone-of-voice guide. The genuinely-held point of view.

vertis.

The machines have learned to sound like us and the sound of everything is blending together.

vertis.

human?

A. EXCERPT ONE

We’re pleased to see the progress you’ve made during your stay. To support a smooth recovery, please continue your prescribed medication as directed and prioritise rest over the coming days. Should you have any questions or concerns, don’t hesitate to reach out to your care team — we’re here to help every step of the way.

B. EXCERPT TWO

We’re excited about the progress your team has made this quarter. To support continued growth, we’d love to share a few tailored recommendations and prioritise the areas that matter most to you. Should you have any questions, don’t hesitate to reach out — our team is here to help every step of the way.

Both touched by generative AI. Both fluent, reasonable, weightless.
Held side by side, they rhyme.

vertis.

How sameness becomes a trust problem.

01

Everything sounds the same.

02

People stop reading closely (or at all).

03

They stop trusting what they do read.

04

The premise of brand communication collapses.

A message from this organisation used to mean something specific. That is the premise now under threat.

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This is not just a copywriting problem.

The same erosion is playing out across every generative output
(image, video, template). The voice was simply the easiest place to notice it first.

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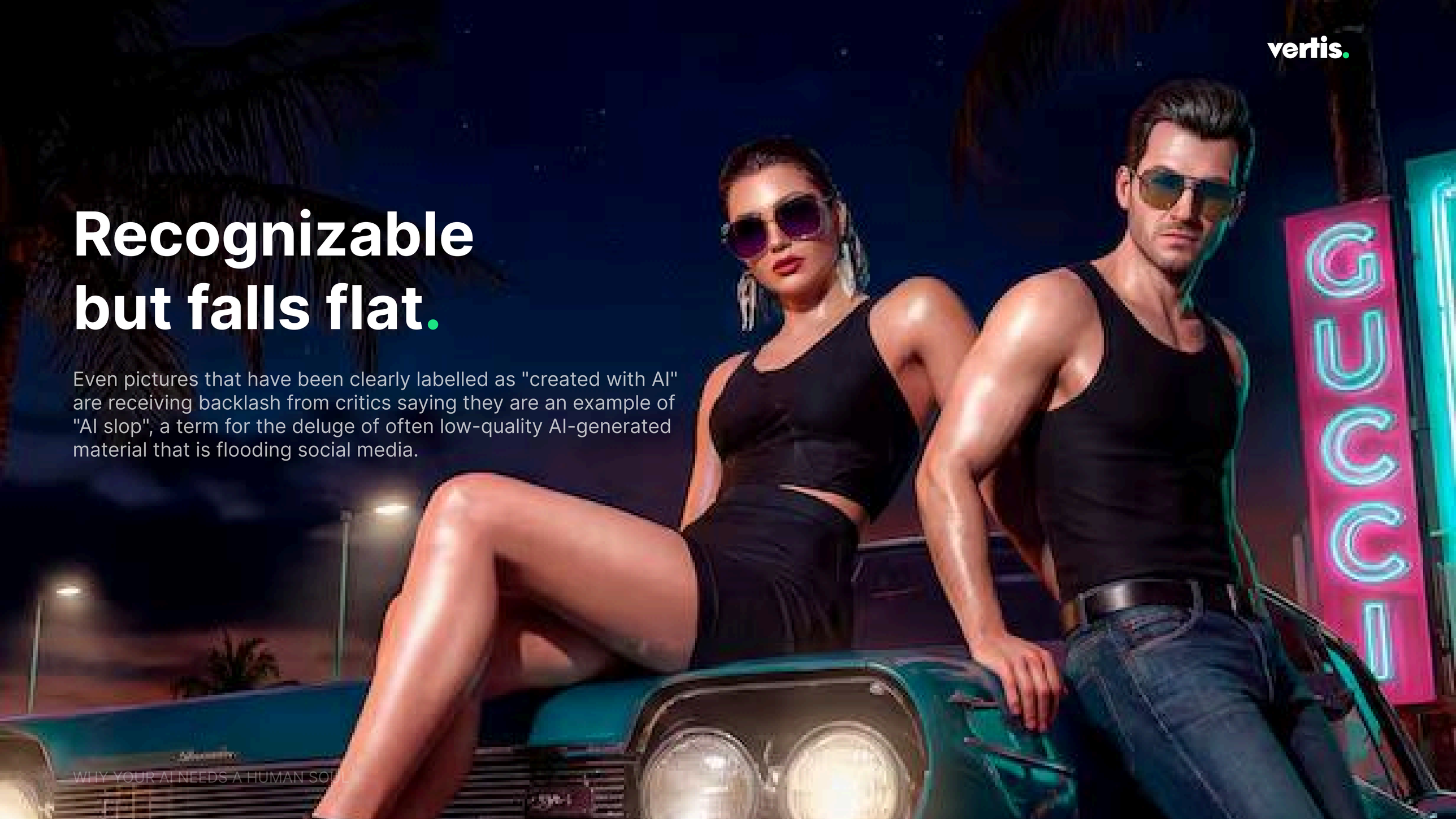
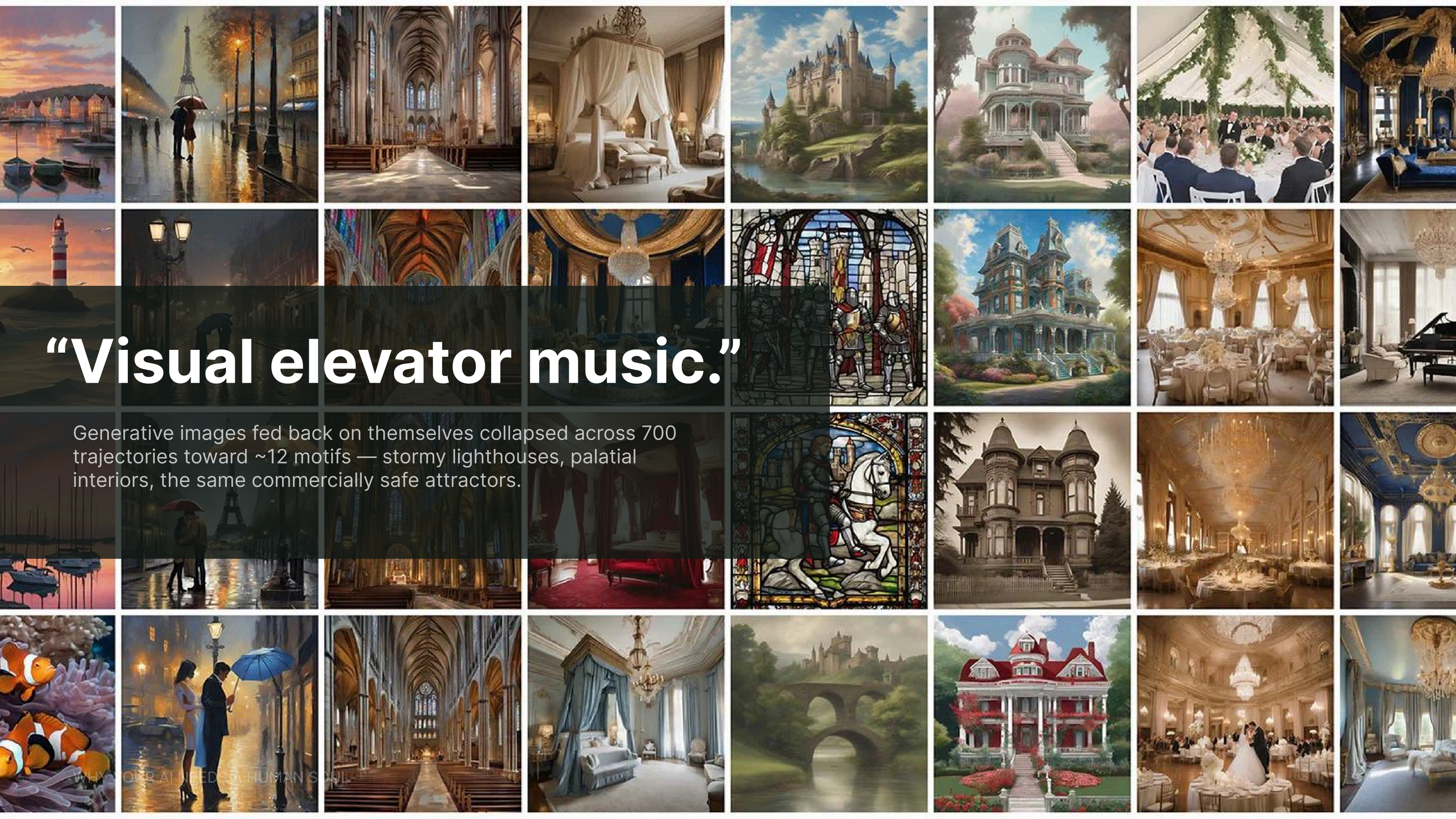
Lets looks at Luxury as an early warning system.

Recognizable but falls flat.

Even pictures that have been clearly labelled as "created with AI" are receiving backlash from critics saying they are an example of "AI slop", a term for the deluge of often low-quality AI-generated material that is flooding social media.





“Visual elevator music.”

Generative images fed back on themselves collapsed across 700 trajectories toward ~12 motifs — stormy lighthouses, palatial interiors, the same commercially safe attractors.

Every house climbs the same hill.

Generative production tools don’t just make films, they optimize them against performance data. And the data treats hook retention rate with “who watches past the first three seconds” as a primary signal.

vertis.

Convergence, industrialised.

A before and after production cost example

~~$14,000~~

From one approved “key visual,” generative tools produce dozens of variations to feed every channel.
No procurement department turns that down.

$4,000

But the template is the convergence, industrialized
One set of choices stamped across a thousand surfaces, and the same thing inside every other house. The output scales. The point of view does not.

vertis.

What a human soul actually looks like.

vertis.

Authentic

A brand voice guide that says “be authentic” is giving instructions with a word that has been used into meaninglessness.

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People respond to the presence of judgment not polish.

Someone decided this word, this frame, for a reason and was willing to be specific, or uncomfortable, or odd, because it was true.

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AI drafts it.
AI polishes it.
A junior approves it.
It ships.

There is no human in the loop a reader can detect.
Pressing send is not judgement.

vertis.

The models haven’t taken our voice.

They’ve shown us we never fully committed to using it.
The blandness pre-dates AI and that makes this an opportunity.
Real judgment now stands out more easily than it has in twenty years.

vertis.

Not a guide.
A set of commitments.

A model can produce any voice on demand. What it cannot do is decide when to break its own rules. So the instrument changes — a small number of things the brand will not delegate, whatever the efficiency argument says.

LUXURY

No AI-generated communication about a specific craft process — in copy or in film.

HEALTHCARE

Any message acknowledging a patient outcome is written by the clinician, not the CRM.

HOSPITALITY

The first message to a returning guest comes from a named person at the property.

vertis.

A diagnostic you can run tomorrow

Take a representative week of your brand's output:
emails, posts, campaign images, films, the templated variations of all of it.
For each piece, ask

> *If I removed this tomorrow, would anyone notice?*

> *If a competitor's logo were on it, would it read differently?*

> *Is there a single choice here a model wouldn't have made?*

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We've talked about what your brand says. Next: where it shows up.

The Empathy Economy - Why feeling understood is the most valuable product
June 2026

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Thank you.

Questions, arguments, and counter-examples are all welcome.

PRESENTED BY

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WITH

Ted Sumanaskajohnkul

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The Human Algorithm

Talk 2 of 3 · 20 May 2026

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Tech Talks @ Club Street

The Human Algorithm

3-PART SERIES

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6:00PM: Why feeling understood is the most valuable product
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THE HUMAN ALGORITHM · TALK 2 OF 3

Tech Talks @ Club Street

The Empathy Economy

Why Feeling Understood is the Most Valuable Product



PRESENTED BY

Mathew Searcy

Executive Creative Director, Vertis

WITH

Ted Sumanaskajohnkul

Experience Design Lead, Vertis

24 JUNE 2026
5:30 – 8:00 PM
40 CLUB STREET, SINGAPORE

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Doing AI well and doing experience well are no longer the same question.

TALK 1 - THE DEATH OF THE INTERFACE

The interface was always friction and it’s disappearing.

TALK 2 - RADICAL AUTHENTICITY

What survives is character, not technology.

TALK 3 - THE EMPATHY ECONOMY

Where, precisely, you spend the human attention you’ve decided to protect.

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“Welcome Back, Mr. Chen.”

Every fact was right.

vertis.

The information was retrieved.

But, it was not recognised.

Mr. Chen can feel the difference even if he can’t name it - and so can you.

The email that knows your first name and nothing else that matters.

The “we thought you’d love this” from a model that has never met you.

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A system takes over a human job - and the connection the experience was selling disappears.

WHERE IT OPENS

The greeting. The follow-up. The apology. The “we noticed something” moment.

WHAT REPLACES IT

A CRM template. A model-written reply. A personalization token standing in for attention.

WHAT THE GUEST GETS

Something fluent, on-time, on-brand, but unmistakably from no one in particular.

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Performed recognition is not connection.

The un-personalised version was honest. This is a system performing intimacy at you, and the gap between the performance and the real thing is exactly what the guest remembers.

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What guests actually remember

It is always been

“They remembered me.”
“They knew what I needed.”
“I didn’t have to explain anything.”

NOT limited to

“Did the email have my name?”
“What did I order the last time?”
“You may also like”

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It used to be about the technology.

For thirty years, advantage in experience was a technology question: better site, smarter CRM, faster app. Whoever deployed first won, until everyone caught up.

“That race is ending. Not because the technology stopped improving, but because it stopped being scarce.”

The same foundation models reach you and your competitor on the same afternoon, for roughly the same price. When everyone can generate the fluent, on-brand, personalised message, that message stops being an advantage. It becomes the new baseline.

Increasingly, it becomes a liability, because customers have learned to recognise the texture of it.

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The advantage is not in what you automate.

It is in what you decide not to.

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“The companies winning the next decade are not the ones with the best AI.”

They’re the ones who know exactly where not to use it.

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Hospitality is about selling the connection.

Not the room, nor the meal

And it is the category most aggressively retrofitting AI into exactly the moments where the connection is supposed to live: the pre-arrival note, the concierge reply, the “personalised” email. Each one is cheaper, faster, scalable, consistent.

Together they produce something worse than what they replaced.

vertis.

The Empathy Blueprint

AUTOMATE AGGRESSIVELY

The parts guests never remember

- Logistics, inventory, routing
- Silent pattern-matching that flags change
- Everything the guest never thinks about

PROTECT, ALMOST JEALOUSLY

The two or three moments a human owns

- The greeting
- The recovery after something breaks
- The small gesture that says someone noticed

How will we achieve this???

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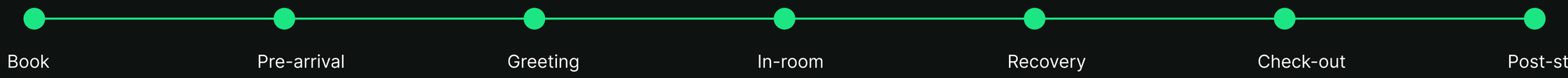
Stop mapping touchpoints. Map stakes.

A touchpoint map treats every interaction as equivalent: a dot on a line, each one optimized the same way. It’s useful for operations and misleading for strategy.

THE TOUCHPOINT VIEW



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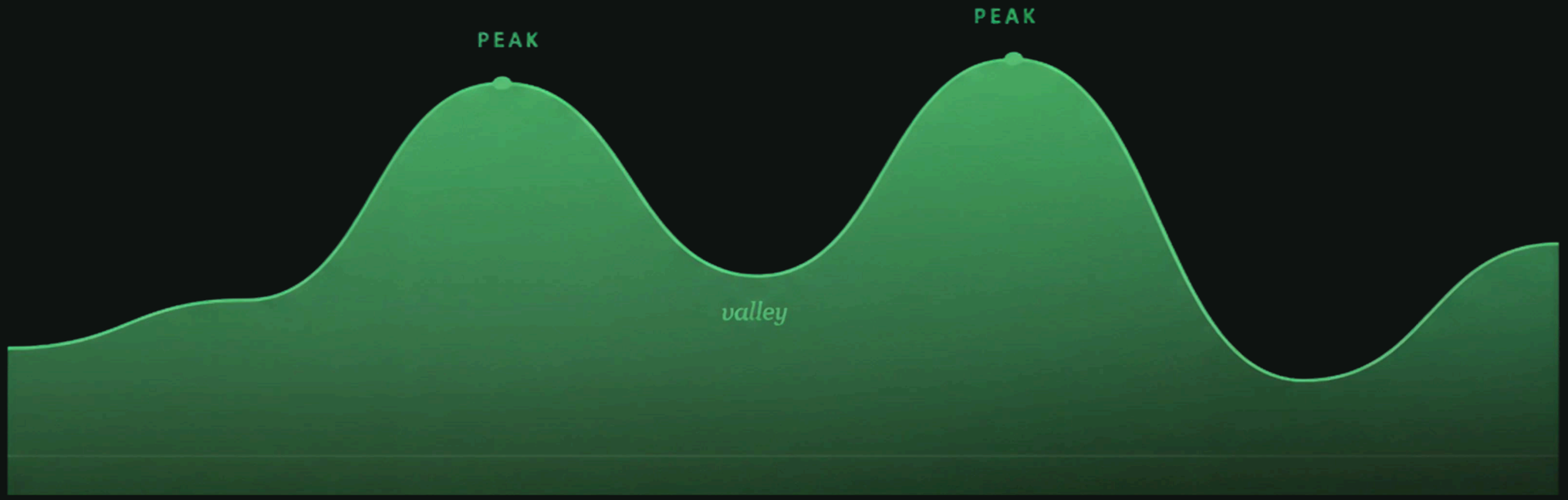
Every journey is terrain, not a line.



Peaks: something is at risk; being seen does real work. **Valleys**: the guest just wants it to happen, with as little thought as possible.

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One map, two rules

IN THE VALLEYS

Automate without hesitation.

Friction here is pure cost. A guest who never thinks about check-out because it simply happened is a guest well served.

AT THE PEAKS

Protect. Staff. Spend.

The whole game is refusing to treat a peak like a valley in the name of efficiency. This is where your advantage is built.

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Where to beign

Take one journey (a guest stay, a patient episode, a citizen interaction). Walk it step by step. At each moment, ask one question:

“Would this feel like being served by a system, or understood by a person?”

Answers “person” → a PEAK.
Where your advantage is built. Audit, urgently, what AI has quietly been asked to do here.

Answers “system” → a VALLEY.
Where the efficiency case is strongest and least contested. Automate with enthusiasm.

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Identifying the peaks and valleys within Hospitality

The moments you should selfishly protect because that is where the emotional connection is made.

PEAKS - The human being the interface

1. **The first conversation after a complaint on a previous stay.**

The CRM flagged it. The system knows. But the moment of acknowledgment - "I saw what happened last time, and I want to make sure this stay is different"

2. **Surfacing a personal detail that actually matters.**

The guest mentioned at check-in two stays ago that they were celebrating something. The system has it. But the moment a staff member walks up at dinner and says "happy anniversary".

3. **Welcoming back a guest who hasn't returned in a long time.**

The system knows the gap. But a front desk manager saying "It's been a while, we're really glad you're back" is a different act than an automated.

VALLEYS - The system

1. **Pre-arrival room configuration.**

Pillow type, floor preference, dietary flag for the minibar, room temperature preset. The guest never wants to think about this. They just want it to be right when they arrive. Silent, invisible, automated.

2. **The check-out billing reconciliation.**

Reviewing charges, processing the folio, emailing the receipt. If it's frictionless, the guest barely registers it happened.

3. **The mid-stay "we noticed" nudge.**

Flagging that the guest hasn't used the gym despite noting fitness preferences at booking, and sending an automated reminder with a class schedule.

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An AI roadmap with no map of where humans are non-negotiable

is half a strategy. The cheap half, the half your competitors already have.

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We told you the interface was dying. That the screen was only ever a bridge...

Then, what survives it. Not the technology, but a character...

Tonight, where to put it. Automate the valleys...

Decide where will be human and defend it, everywhere else will just be efficiency.

vertis.

Thank you

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The Human Algorithm

Talk 3 of 3 · 24 June 2026