

SEPTEMBER 2023

NBCUniversal

From Comment To Content

Measuring the Influence of Fandoms

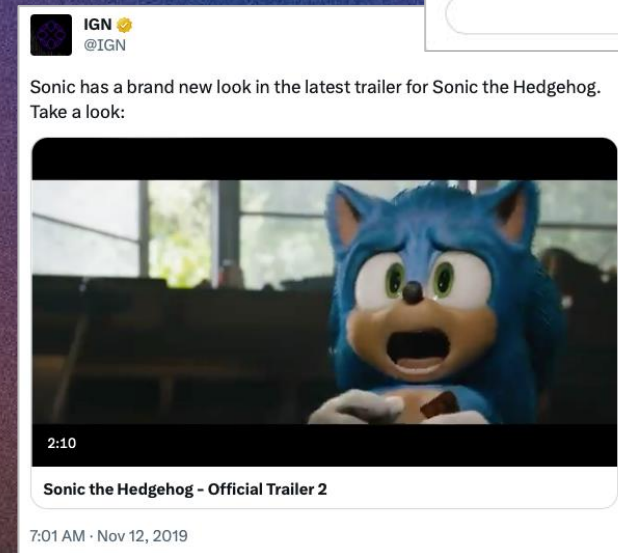
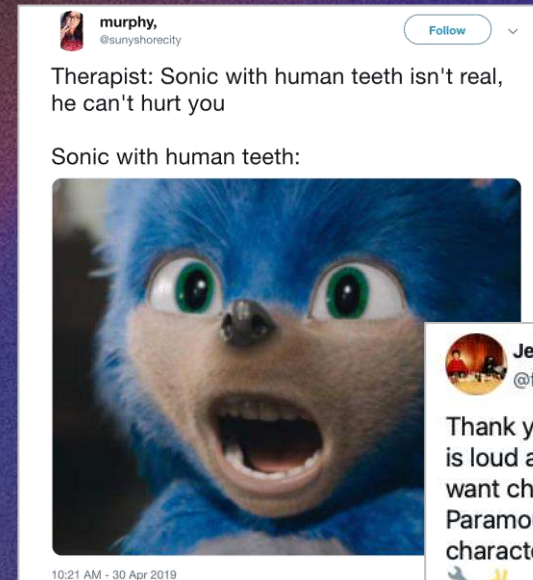


Giving The People What They Want

The Evolving Relationship Between Fans & Creators

For as long as content creators have existed, so too have fans – fans with no shortage of opinions. The proliferation of the internet has given these fans a megaphone to share their opinions, and if they're loud enough, they can reach the ears of the creators themselves. This direct line of opinion has evolved the relationship between creators and fans.

As we see the spread of fandom-related discourse online, fans are now witnessing how their voices can influence their favorite franchises. How does this constant fan feedback affect a creator's process? What does the role of social fandom play? And how can brands find inspiration in this trend?



The Power Of Fandom

Fandom (noun):

The fans of a particular person, team, fictional series, etc. regarded collectively as a community or subculture

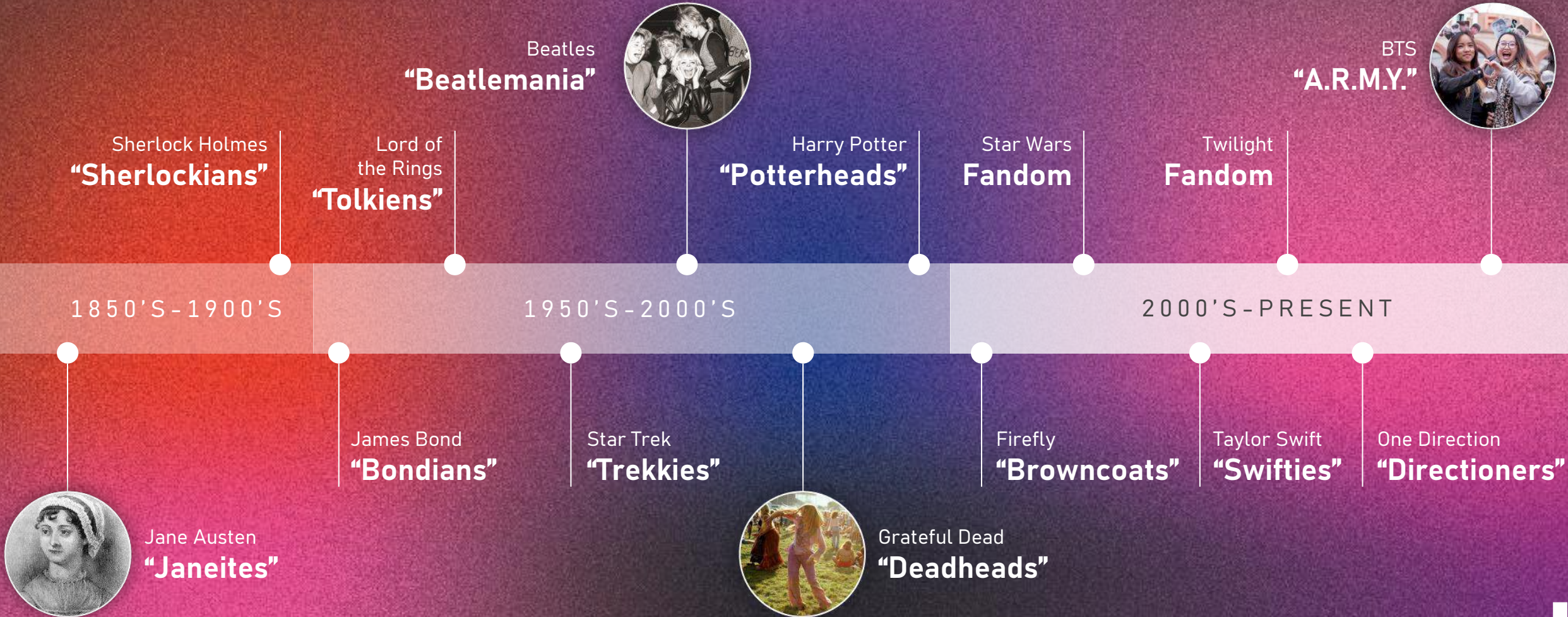
Fandom communities have historically had limited capacity to influence their favorite content, outside of voting with their dollars to demonstrate support. However, thanks to the rise of social media, UGC and micro-influencers, fans have discovered a new collective power in finding ways to persuade creators.

Whether its **Veronica Mars'** fans funding a Kickstarter campaign to produce a long-awaited film, or demanding alternative song cuts featuring their favorite artists as with **Lana Del Rey** on Taylor Swift's album "Midnights" or including storylines meant to address fan demands as in **Game of Thrones** - **the fan's voice is resonating.**

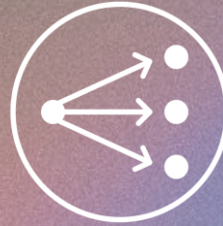


For As Long As There Have Been Fans, There Have Been Fan Communities

The power of fandom is evident throughout history manifesting as countless fan communities spanning industries

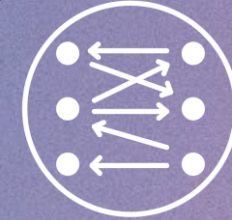


As technology and global communication platforms bring more fans together, the dynamic of how content is being consumed and created has grown more complex



One:Many

Historically, content followed a “one to many” approach focused on widespread, broad appeal to account for limited distribution channels ensuring content was easily accessible.



Many:Many

Today, oversaturation and shorter relevancy windows have left brands at the behest of high impact fans. Continuous feedback channels have evolved content to become “many to many” with an emphasis on personalization at the risk of alienation.

Some Of These Community-Driven Channels Have Become Havens For Creativity

Opening Lines Of Communication Between Creators And Fans



Participatory Entertainment

Voting mechanisms and audience video submissions in TV programming allows viewers the ability to directly contribute to content and influence show results.



Rise of Social Media

The boom of social media platforms in the 2000's has created spaces for fandoms to connect, freely share their opinions, and further build global connections.



Fan Fiction

Online platforms provide the perfect space for fan-communities to share and promote their own world-building fiction based on existing IP, sometimes becoming mainstream in its own right.



Today's Evolving Landscape

The feedback loop between fans and content has become constant and immediate through self-publishing outlets and niche-communities.

These Forums and Communities Have Fostered The Global Rise in Fandom Identity

2 in 5 global consumers consider themselves to be a **dedicated member of a fandom.** (NBCU Global Viewers +21% index)

As fandom behavior continues to grow globally, the classification of being a “fan” is no longer a binary definition, instead a more dynamic and complex identity.

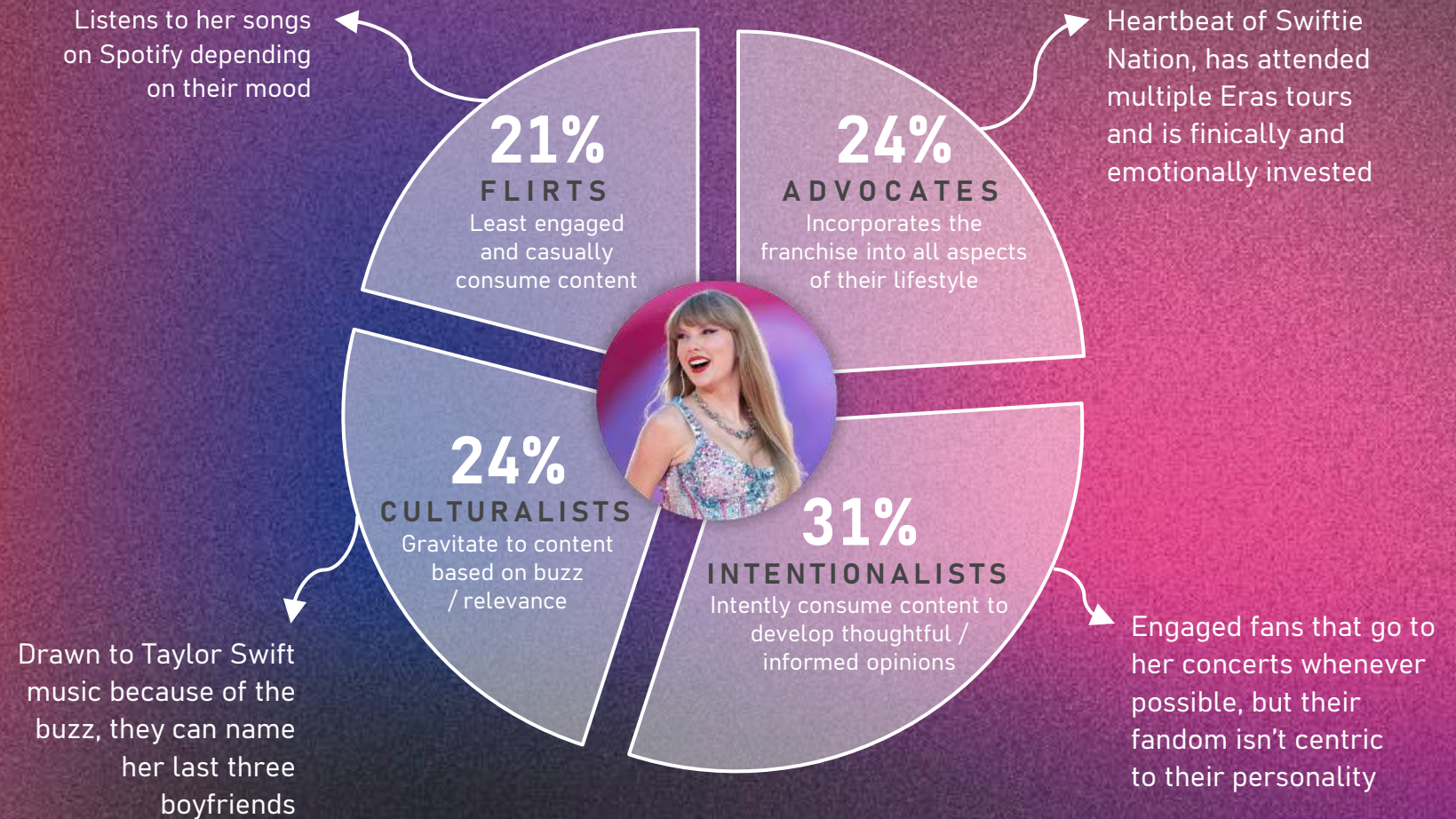


There Are Four Fan Identity Archetypes In Every Fan Community

Because there are millions of different fans and subcultures of fan communities, Fandom Media in a recent study identified four primary fan archetypes.

Understanding the nuances of fan psychology is critical to understanding how to reach consumers in impactful ways, especially because it is not one-size-fits-all.

Fan Identity as Told Through the Taylor Swift Fandom



No Matter The Fan Type, The Cycle of Engagement is Clear

According to a recent TikTok study, the cycle of social engagement on the platform breaks out into three stages:

DISCOVER

52%

discover a new actor, movie or TV show through social media

CO-CREATE

69%

watch or co-create content related to their favorite IP

SHARE

1 in 4

have discovered and then shared content on social



But What Are the Implications Of This Fan-Creator Dynamic?



Benefits

- > Higher visibility to fan feedback provides validation of the creative process and affords opportunities to tap into audience mindsets that maximize fan receptivity
- > The public discourse alleviates the tunnel vision that creators may have throughout the creation process



Implications

- > Strictly giving fans what they want can make content feel less accessible to general public and can hurt creativity/originality
- > If the future is to be determined by the fans, the entertainment industry will only make more sequels, reboots, and unoriginal, play-it-safe content



The Circular Relationship Between Content & Fans is Infused in NBCU's DNA



There's a difference between having an audience and having fans. The fans of Syfy are different from the fans of Bravo, which are different from the fans of The Voice. But NBCU knows how to speak to them authentically, in the right way, in the right voice, and through the right connection points."

- **Josh Feldman**
GLOBAL CMO
ADVERTISING & PARTNERSHIPS, NBCU



Our fandoms start with storytelling and a commitment to world-building. We're constantly creating detailed worlds for fans to get lost in. That's why NBCU has some of the most dedicated superfans, because we know how to keep their attention and grow their dedication.

- **Steve Rummer**
SVP, HEAD OF CREATIVE
ADVERTISING & PARTNERSHIPS, NBCU



CASE STUDIES

Fan Co-Creation In Action

Thinking to the three cycles of engagement (Discover, Co-Create and Share), brands and advertisers can learn from these consumer behaviors to tap into existing cultural conversations or begin their own.

Content Case Studies:

NBCU speaks to fans and informs our content

Content Case Studies:

Capitalizing on culture to fuel a moment

Brand Case Studies:

Leaning into current trends builds new fandom

Brand Case Studies:

Fan demands lead to new product development

CONTENT CASE STUDY:

Pedro Pascal's "Fancam Assembly" SNL Sketch

Understanding and Capitalizing on the Circular Relationship between Fans and Content:

1

Pedro Pascal Becomes an Internet Sensation

In February 2023, Pedro Pascal had amassed a plethora of Fan Edit TikToks (2.8B views) because of his self-appointed "Daddy" moniker and seemingly playful relationship and interaction with fans.



2

SNL Taps into this Phenomenon with its "Fancam Assembly" Sketch

Hosting SNL, Pascal was featured in a sketch that poked fun at fan edit culture. Showcasing a self-awareness and alignment with their audience, the fan culture and TikTok community in a playful wink and nod to his fans.



3

The Relationship Between Fans and Content Becomes Circular

Fans co-opted the sketch online, incorporating SNL's content into their own Pascal fan edits resulting in the show's highest social activity and sentiment lift.



CONTENT CASE STUDY:
**Vanderpump Rules'
Scandoval**

Understanding and Capitalizing
on Pop Culture High Impact
Moments & Fan Reactions:

Source: Vulture, NetbaseQuid

1

Vanderpump Rules Sets the Internet Ablaze

In March 2023, news broke that Bravo favorite *Vanderpump Rules* stars Ariana Madix and Tom Sandoval had split following an affair with costar Raquel Leviss. Bravo writers quickly coined the affair “Scandoval” and set the internet ablaze.



2

Bravo Coins “Scandoval” and Announces Additional Episodes

Bravo producers quickly capitalized on the social fever of the shocking moment by extending the season another two weeks and announcing emergency episodes including a 3-part unedited reunion special on Peacock.



3

Joining the Conversation: Uber One Partnerships

The day before the finale, Uber partnered with *Vanderpump* stars Lala Kent, Ariana Madix and Scheana Shay for a commercial that celebrated the show’s insider references and jokes, and even directly nodded to the scandal. Overall, the partnership generated 279M+ impressions and had created sky-high positivity for the brand



+2,766%

More positivity generated by the spot than the Vanderpump franchise alone

CONTENT CASE STUDY:

Duolingo Dominates Fandom

Taping Into Pop Culture,
Social Discourse, and Internet
Trends to Build Content:

1

A Meme Filled Marketing Strategy

Duolingo has a very clear understanding of internet culture, playing into social media trends and not being afraid to take itself too seriously. Marketing prioritizes the brand mascot, Duo, with often “unhinged” and guerilla style comedy.



2

Understanding & Engaging with Followers

While not everyone might be a Duolingo user, the brand has created a strong following and fandom (**7.6M** followers on TikTok) that is able to easily interact with the brand.



3

Duolingo & Peacock Create “Love Language” April Fool’s Joke

In 2023, Duolingo partnered with Peacock for an April Fool’s stunt promoting a fake reality dating show where no one speaks the same language. The faux trailer for “Love Language” was an immediate hit across social media garnering 14M views



1

Pickle-Themed April Fool's Prank

As a prank, Spritz Society announced it would add a pickle-flavored drink to its lineup, expecting disgust from its followers.



CONTENT CASE STUDY:

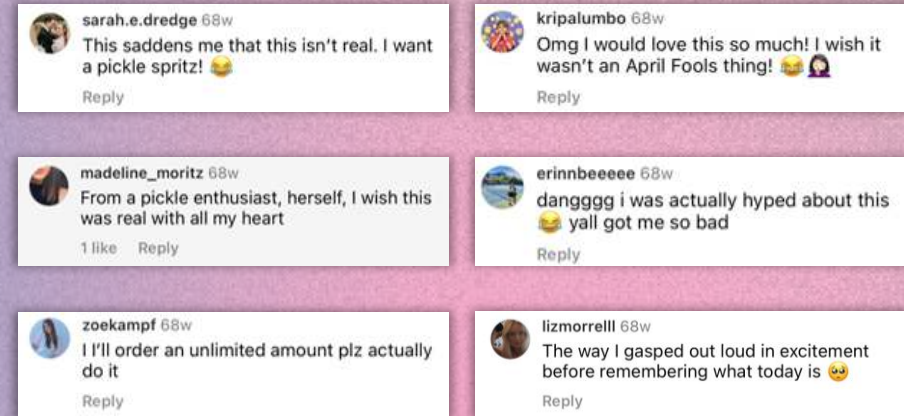
Spritz Society

Consumer feedback & Demand can lead to new product development:

2

Positive Sentiment from Consumers

Instead, Spritz Society received an influx of positive consumer responses, urging the brand to create a pickle-flavored cocktail.



3

New Cocktail Added to Lineup

One year later, the company announced its partnership with pickle brand Claussen to create the cocktail, which launched July 2023 and sold out in a week.



A photograph of a large crowd of fans at a concert or event. Many fans are reaching out their hands towards a performer on stage. The performer is a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark, sequined jacket with patches, including one that says 'RHODE ISLAND'. The scene is lit with warm, reddish-orange stage lights. The overall mood is one of excitement and connection between the performer and the audience.

How can brands
**leverage the power
of these fandom communities**
to build their own relevancy
and generate new audiences?

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

There are A Variety Of Ways Brands Can Leverage The New Consumer Feedback Ecosystem



Tap into Relevant Communities

61% of consumers enjoy seeing brands sponsoring or creating content for their existing fandoms¹. Brands must tap into existing communities that are relevant to their offering to foster organic reach and engagement.



Create Your Own Community

Create and cultivate your own community to foster engagement, amplify brand loyalty, and generate consumer insights. Through these interactions and feedback loops, brands can establish an authentic and lasting connection with their audience.



Apply a Fan Filter

While fan discourse should not define your brand decisions, it must still inform them. Campaigns should be run through a “fan-filter” to ensure that they meet the criteria of existing fans and avoid backlash from the general consumer.



Engage a Fan Ambassador

Establish a fan ambassador role to amplify your brand’s reach and receive direct fan feedback. By giving influence to fans in this way, brands can cultivate a loyal community and create a more genuine connection with audiences.

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Thank You

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