

The Power of Brand Fandom



Fan culture is what elevates a brand into relevance, power, and popularity. Our research shows that the value of brand fandom extends beyond the traditional metrics of loyalty and relevance. It creates a fan ecosystem where everyone benefits—brands become core to a consumer’s identity, and fans show up with deep commitment and a desire to advocate for the brand.

Brands, and the products and services they deliver, represent more than a product experience. The brands we love say a lot about who we ARE or who we WANT to be, and brands commonly act as tools for that self-expression. Two in three consumers say the specific brands they are fans of help express their personality. Our passions—our obsessions, even—are our shorthand for what we care about. And the brands that know how to forge and nurture those expressions and connections thrive.

Thinking of your relationships with customers in terms of fandom unlocks new opportunities for engagement, collaboration, innovation, and growth. Here are five trends defining the power of brand fandom right now to help guide and maximize your relationships with your fanbase.

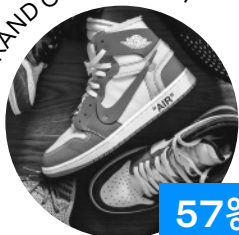
1.

Brands drive more fandom than sports and celebrities—and not just in the most “buzzworthy” categories.

When we think about fandom, we tend to think about sports teams, celebrities, or pop culture franchises. Yet, more people are passionate about a brand or product than in the categories that might immediately come to mind.

% of Consumers Who Are Fans of a...

BRAND OR PRODUCT



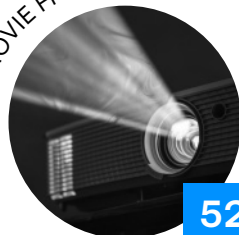
57%

CELEBRITY



54%

MOVIE FRANCHISE



52%

SPORTS TEAM



48%

ONLINE PERSONALITY/CONTENT CREATOR



37%

Leading categories for brand fandom include food and beverage brands and personal electronics. Home care brands (think Lysol and Clorox) surpass the gaming category when it comes to number of fans. Even among Gen Z, consumer packaged goods (CPG) brands are supported at similar levels to fashion, gaming and electronics categories.

2.

Brand fandom is strong across all ages.

Top 5 Brand Categories by Generation



Although younger consumers are often assumed to have only a fleeting sense of brand loyalty, these generations actually report strong levels of fandom to brands and products. 58% of Gen Z and Millennials are a fan of at least one brand – on par with or higher than Gen X (56%) and Boomers (53%). Younger consumers, it turns out, are just as likely to be fans of brands as older generations—and their tastes aren’t too dissimilar either.

3.

Beyond loyal, brand fans are passionate and engaged advocates.

Loyalty is about habits whereas fandom is about relationships. A customer can be loyal simply due to a lack of alternatives; conversely, a person can be a fan of a brand without ever having purchased their products. Think, for example, of the Elon Musk superfan who closely follows the billionaire's brands, even though they don't have the resources to buy a Tesla. Beyond the functional offerings of a product, brand fans derive a sense of identity and community from the properties they love.

Common Ways Fans Engage with Brands

● I'm sometimes a fan ● I'm a big fan ● I'm a superfan



Gone are the days of embarrassing obsessions—today's fans are proud of their loyalty.

54% of fans agree they “want everyone to know” they are a fan of a given brand or product.

Fans, even “sometimes fans,” engage with their favorite brands in a number of ways. The vast majority of fans (85%) talk to others about the brand and consider themselves to be advocates. They also follow and engage with brands on social media, wear or display brand logos, and even donate to causes the brand supports.

FANS DO NOT EXIST IN A VACUUM

For most fans, brands and products are tools of self-expression—a marker of who they are and what they value most. Two in three consumers (67%) say the specific brands they are fans of help express their personality.

A sense of tribalism is a strong component of fandom. Brands have the opportunity to serve as a north star for what consumers value most.

The strongest fandoms, regardless of fan demographics or brand categories, are those that feel their brand deeply understands them, and stands for something that matters to them. As such, providing clarity around a brand's personality and values is critically important to attract brand fans.

17%

I don't really identify with other fans

79%

I somewhat or strongly identify with other fans

4%

I don't identify at all with other fans

ANATOMY OF FANDOM

IDENTITY

What does the brand say about me and my values?

COMMUNITY

How does the brand connect me with others?

FUNCTION

What is the brand providing me?



4.

The power of fandom draws upon a brand's past, present, and future.

For a fan, the brand represents more than a singular product experience. Just over 3 in 4 (77%) fans say they will at least try different products this brand comes out with, and less than 1 in 4 (23%) say they are a fan of only one specific product related to the brand. Thus, a fan is a consumer who has become open to a brand's larger portfolio, new product launches and partnerships.



For a brand, hooking a fan is more than earning a loyal customer. To gain a fan is to earn a customer's faith not only in its current products but also its potential, fueling opportunities for successful long-term brand growth and development. The strongest commitment to a brand's product portfolio is shown in the categories of food, beauty, fashion, luxury, and home care.



58%
I at least try different products this brand has or comes out with

23%
I'm a fan of only one specific product related to the brand

19%
I'm a fan of anything and everything this brand creates



LEFT: How Millennials, Gen X, Boomers discovered the brand or products they're a fan of

ABOVE: How Gen Z discovered the brand or products they're a fan of

FANDOM LOOKS TO THE FUTURE OF A BRAND AS WELL AS ITS LEGACY

Brands that build memories over time are also shown to have a stronger fanbase. 1 in 4 (25%) of fans say they grew up with the brand they're a fan of, and the longer a consumer has been a fan of a given brand, the stronger a fan they are.

For brands without a long history, or those seeking new fans, advertising proves an effective tool for laying the groundwork for fandom. 1 in 10 fans were first introduced to the brand through advertising, which is almost three times the influence of an influencer or celebrity. However, Gen Z is a notable exception where influencers have equal influence as traditional advertising channels.

Brand collaborations and events are also valuable entry-points for potential fans, as new fans are more likely to attend these engagements than fans who have been with a brand for some time.

5. The brand-fan relationship must be nurtured.

Brands that enable excitement, discovery, expression, connection, and belonging have the ability to create passion and devotion—converting customers to fans, and cultivating fans into superfans. To nurture relationships beyond the transactional, brands need to enable or associate with meaningful experiences.

Specific brand characteristics and experiences have the power to generate and drive fandom. When looking to cultivate a customer base from loyalists and followers to die-hard advocates, brands can consider the following four tenets as a pathway to fandom:

PASSIONATE FANS SAY THEIR FAVORITE BRANDS DO THESE THINGS WELL



PROVIDE FUN

Bring enjoyment to their lives



EXPAND HORIZONS

Help them discover new things



CREATE MEMORIES

Help them make memories or have memorable experiences



FUEL EXPRESSION

Express their personality and values



FACILITATE CONNECTION

Connect them with others

BRAND FANDOM IS RICH WITH OPPORTUNITY

This research is the beginning of a series that will unpack the journey to fandom across key categories and audiences. We will explore the pathways for brands to successfully build and activate a fan community and understand the modern-day fan ecosystem. Armed with this information, brands will understand the value of each fan type, which is right for their brand, and how to nurture and track their own fan culture.

THE CORE DRIVERS OF FANDOM



1 INNOVATE & LEAD

Innovation is the top driver of fandom. It's important to lead with new and fresh ideas.

2 WELCOME & CONNECT

Brands encourage fandom when consumers feel a sense of belonging—when they feel welcomed into a community bound together by a common interest, goal or value.

3 SURPRISE & DELIGHT

The thrill of the unexpected has the power to convert customers into fans, creating lasting memories and cementing positive associations.

4 ENABLE GOOD

An important component at the consumer and brand level. For consumers, brands that help them feel good about themselves and help them be the person they want to be set the stage for passionate fans. Brands that care about positive impact on the world and give back to their community also establish a baseline for fandom.

METHODOLOGY

Data used in this report comes from a study of 1,018 US consumers, ages 18 to 65, conducted in October 2022—representative of the national population in terms of age, gender and ethnicity.

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