

Factories of Happiness

How brands can navigate today's fan communities

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Anthony Martin, CEO, BAMM



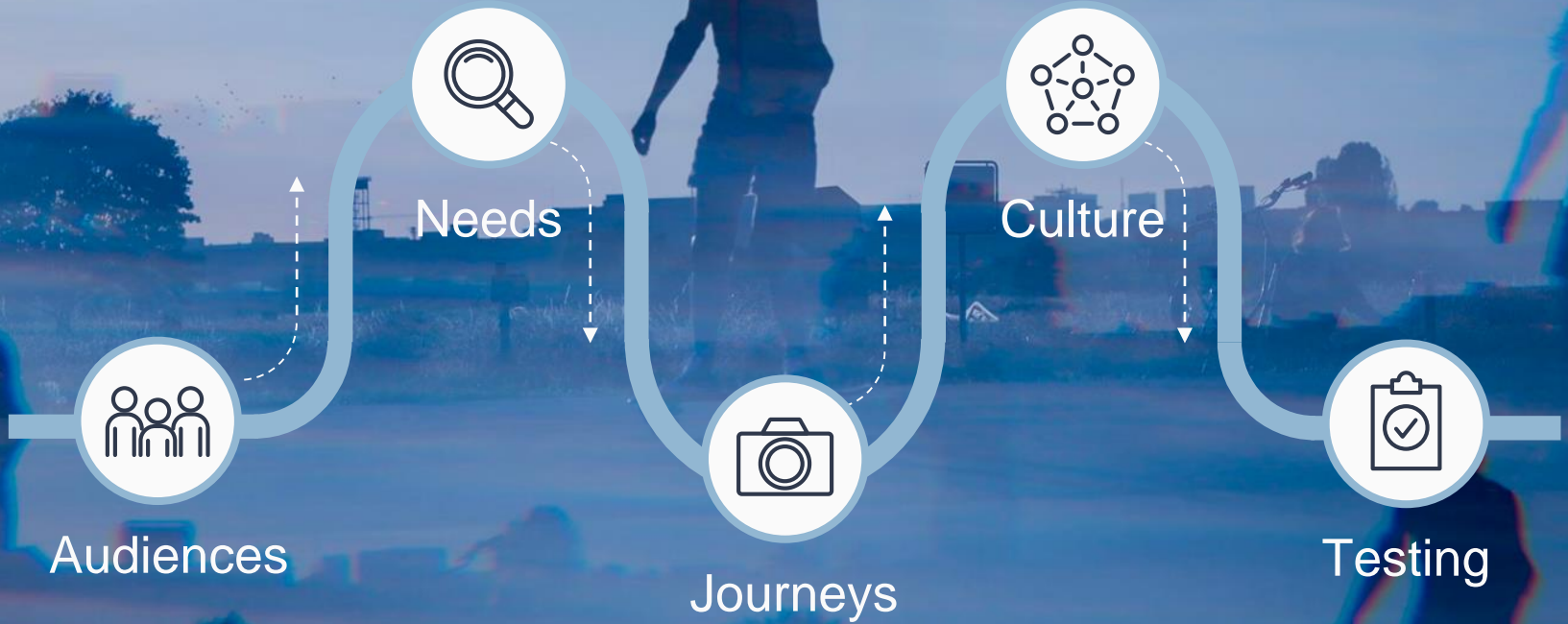
BAMM is a global insights and strategy company

We deliver vibrant, strategic research
which moves clients to act – making
things happen for businesses and
brands.

We call this Insight in Motion



Our expertise



The fandom story

- 1 Interest Glue
- 2 Doxicity // Toxicity
- 3 Brandom
- 4 Opportunities



What we did

Culture Sampling

Narrative analysis

50+ sources

Current cultural context of fandom

Conversation Sampling

Social media sampling

Fan communities & conversations

Natural Language Processing

Expert Interviews

3 x 1 hr Expert Interviews

Kim Townend Social and Digital Media Strategist

Dr. Jonathan Gray Professor in Media

Nicolle Lamerichs author of Productive Fandom

BAMM Ethnography

US & UK & Spain

14 x 1hr Fan IDIs

4 x 1.5hr Group Fan Interviews

Range of celebrity, brand, music, sport, and anime fans and ex-fans

BAMM Survey

US & UK

1,000 respondents total

Age 18+, fans

10 min survey



Why Fandom?

#1.

Create
Cultural
Relevance

#2.

Connect
with your
Audiences

#3.

Cookie-
ocalypse



**INTEREST
GLUE**





Philcon, 1936

Fan

a person who has a strong interest or admiration for something or somebody

Fandom

a subculture of fans characterized by feelings of empathy and camaraderie with others who share a common interest



“YOU ARE A FACTORY
OF HAPPINESS!”

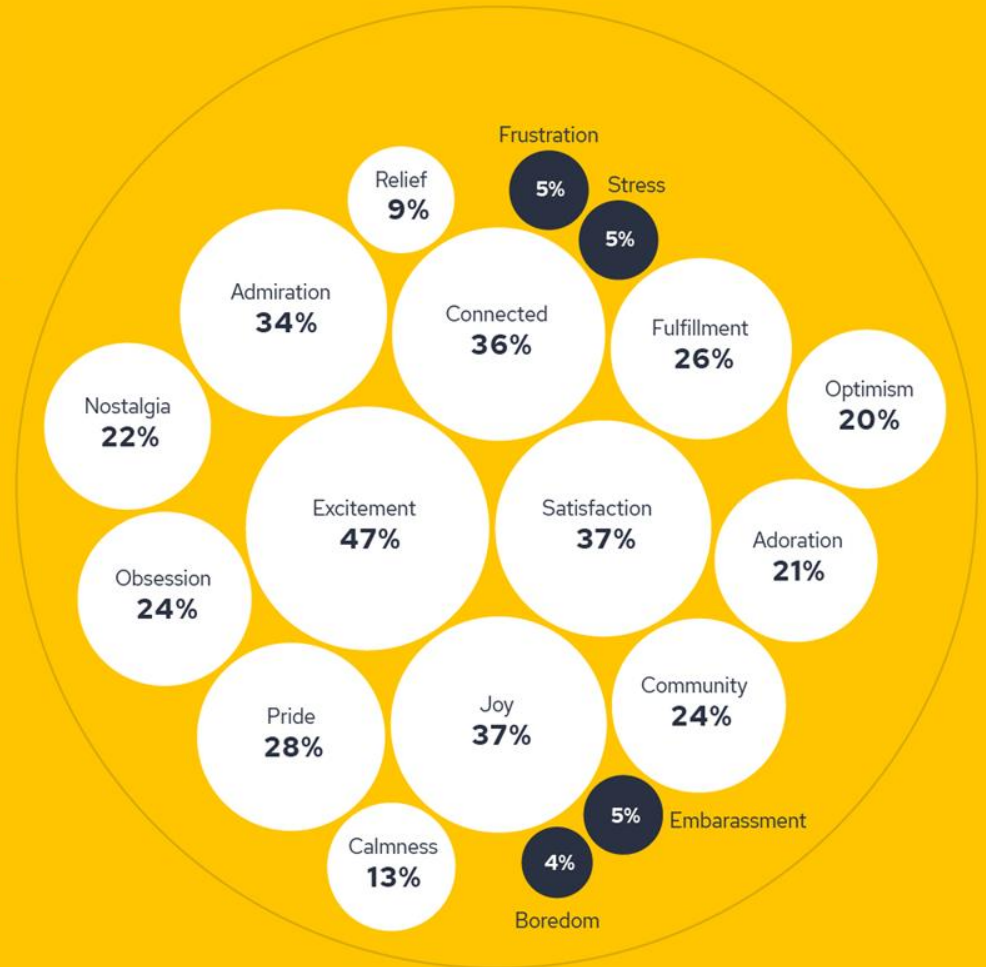
*When we feel like we're
part of a group we feel
good, our brains are
flooded with dopamine,
the happiness chemical.*

Zoe Fraade-Blanar
Author Superfandom

Factories of excitement, joy, connectedness

What words do you associate
with being a fan?

● Positive ● Negative



55%

Gives me a sense
of community/
belonging



Brought together by rituals



Xena Warrior Princess
Annual Convention



West Ham pre-game bubbles



Sharing a common language

Taylor Swift



joe
1989
midnight
rep
folklore
ylm
karma
lavender
bracelet
evermore
haze
red
fearless
ice
spice
mastermind
maroon
bejeweled
swiftie
clock

BTS



army
yoongi
jimin
jin
suga
rm
hobi
agust
bangtan
military
ot7
dday
jhope
tae
festa
namjoon
weverse
butter
jungkook
bam

Beyoncé



bey
renaissance
cuff
groove
virgo
beyhive
alien
thique
destiny
renny
rwt
superstar
crazy
church
ahap
purehoney
blow
vip
lemonade
plastic

Harry Styles



satellite
matilda
sub
skip
house
sunflower
watermelon
canyon
kiwi
tpwk
hs1
grapejuice
space
freak
sugar
moon
daydreaming
medicine
cherry
stomper

Rihanna



fenty
riri
savage
sexy
damn
ri
bbhmm
queen
umbrella
rocky
diamond
r9
barbados
riris
a\$ap
devil
eye
thicc
pon
censored

Connecting via common, sometimes subtle **symbols**



43%

have bought a product / merchandise as a fan



Bonding through giving, receiving and reciprocation



Fandoms themselves can be very anti-capitalist. They're very much based on gift economies like you create things for each other. You're not there to sell.



Professor Jonathan Gray



Having a collective **shared history**



Discussion over a fandom Canon* is an excellent way of building rapport. Watching their idol and passion grow with them deepens the bond in fans and creates its own kind of nostalgia

*'Canon' is what is considered the authoritative source for the fandom material, i.e. the truth

Connecting to the past & each other through **nostalgia**



ABBA Voyage: World Tour



New Balance MT580 relaunch



Girls viewing back up



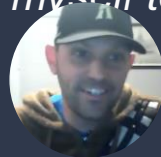
Finding relevance through self-identification

I'm obsessed with Batman. A few years ago, I started struggling with my mobility and started reading more comics. A character, Barbara Gordon, is paralyzed from the waist down and uses a wheelchair and I'm getting a wheelchair soon. She means a lot to me.



Skye, 19, US
Batman Superfan

Luke Skywalker wasn't the strongest guy, he wasn't the fastest, he was just the kid that was there. He's very guy next door. That's probably how I classify myself too.



Scott, 42, US
Star Wars
Superfan



And through **shared values**



Lady Gaga has promoted LGBTQ+ causes since 2008, and fans say her music has helped them **come out** to their parents or deal with **bullying**.



42%

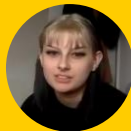
Being a fan is as important as my other relationships in my life

1 in 10

Missed a birthday/ anniversary/ wedding for their fandom

Platforms like **Instagram** and **TikTok** are widening fandoms, bringing them to new generations

There's a whole new generation of people that went onto TikTok, and that brings the younger people in and shows them, oh, this show is a staple



Alicia, 19, UK
Skins Fan

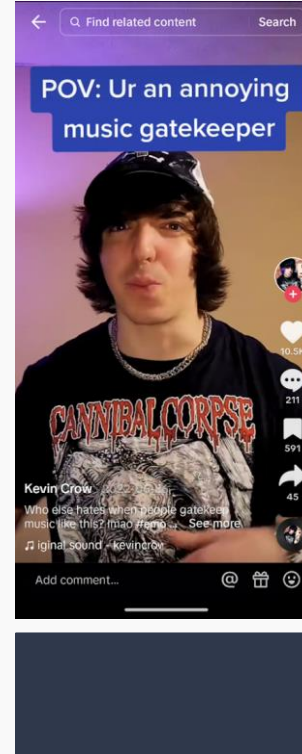
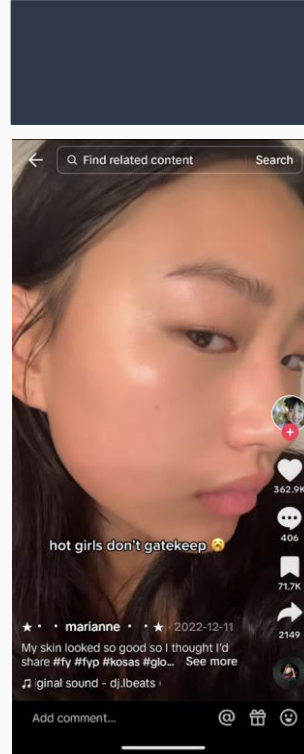


Creating a new form of fluid fandom

It's now quicker and easier to immerse yourself in fandom

No culture of “gatekeeping”

Easier for fans to jump between fandoms



Implications

1

Reflect the tone, energy and positivity in your comms about and within fandoms

2

If planning to communicate to a fandom, **immerse yourself in its rituals, symbols, language, history, and values** to ensure you're reflecting, and showing understanding of, the community



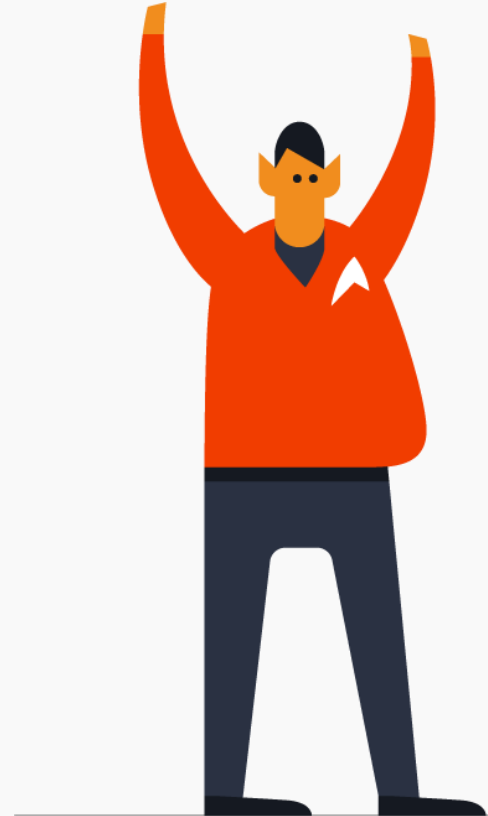
DOXICITY //
TOXICITY





DOXA:

The norms and rules that are taken for granted in a fandom.



Breaking the Doxa



“OK. I’ll Hold”

“Fandoms are always doxic in specific ways that tend to exclude certain kinds of fans”

Matt Hills
Professor of Fandom Studies



CRACKER BARREL

“Are you kidding me? Who do you think your customer base is?”



UFC

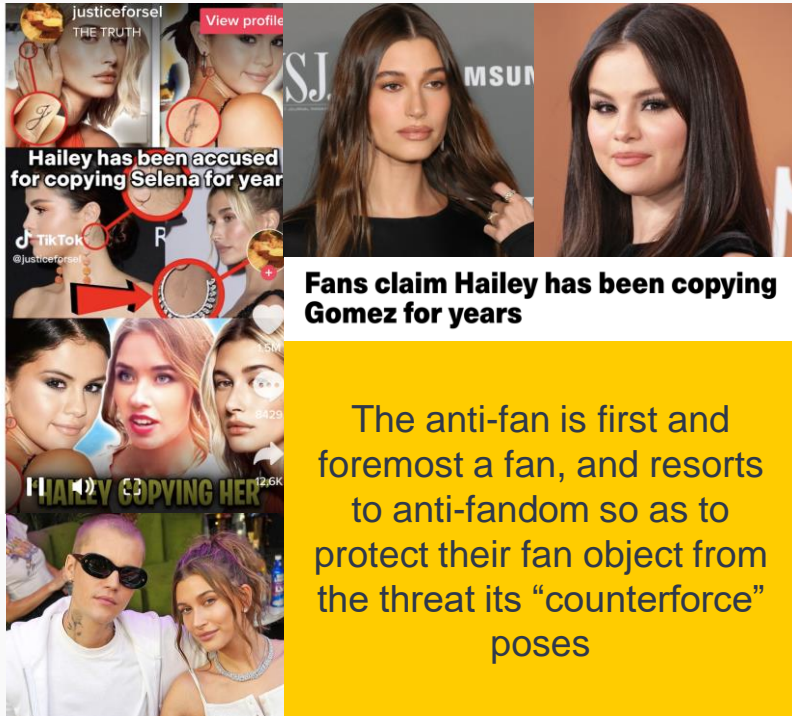
“How do I not see this? Unfollow the UFC”



BUD LIGHT

“The boycott against Bud Light is hammering sales.”

Protecting the reputation and identity of their fan objects; creating subcultures of Anti-Fans



Brands can use these “Stan Wars” to maintain contemporary cultural relevance. Using trending topics in marketing works extremely well when done right

We don't use our money to support Britney's dad or the people that were keeping her prisoner. The whole #FreeBritney campaign did a good job of making us, as a community, aware of the ways we should support her.



Jerica, 40, US
Britney Spears Fan

I'm a fan of Kpop music. I'm not a fan of the Kpop industry. An idol called Moon Ben committed suicide yesterday, he was only 25 years old. There's been at least five suicides in the past five years in the industry. That intensity I will never support.



Lexi, 27, EE
KPop Fan



Growth of social platforms make toxic side of fandom more visible

Fandoms have migrated to platforms like Twitter and TikTok, and fans are no longer interacting with mostly like-minded people. Creators are also accessible, facilitating personal attacks against them.

Dr Lynn Zubernis
Psychologist

*That's what deterred me from social media. I would hit the negative tweets and it's like 'ah, I can't do this sh-t. Some people just be evil bro. People say words don't hurt, but that sh*t pierces sometimes.*

Paul George
LA Clippers



35%

There are more
aggressive fans today
than in the past

22%

Fan communities can
be more toxic today
than in the past

Implications

1

Map and test the doxa of your brand's fan community (if you have one), **and the fan communities you're communicating with** so that you have some visibility into the unwritten rules you either should abide by or knowingly break

2

Understand your brand's anti-fans (if you have them), the impact they have on your business, and how you might improve perceptions among them

3

Be a voice against the toxicity within and between fan communities



BRANDOM



CREATE

FACILITATE

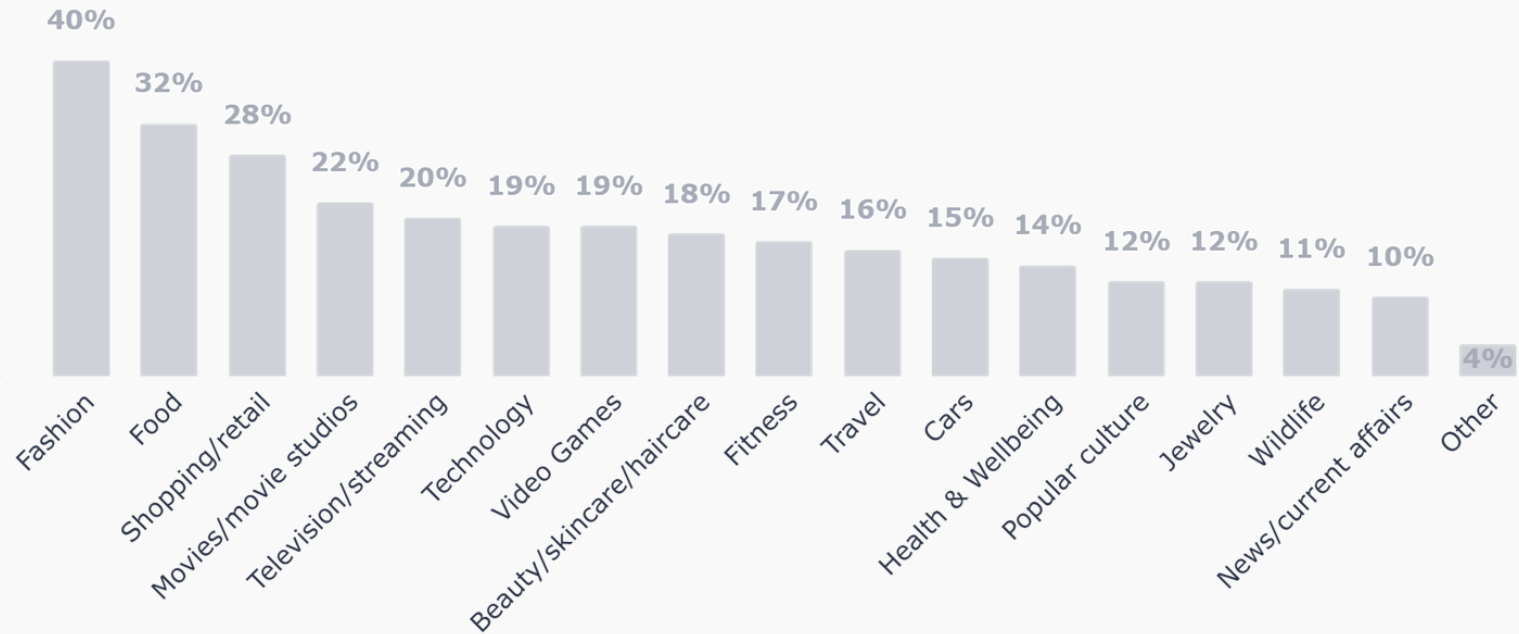
PARTICIPATE

COMMUNICATE

The brand community

Other existing fan communities

Create: Some categories, like fashion, are more likely to naturally spark brand communities than others



Base: Those who said they are a fan of at least one brand (706)

Q41. You mentioned you would consider yourself a fan of at least one brand. Which categories do those brands fall into?



Create: Brands with good product or experiences and strong values can create fandoms



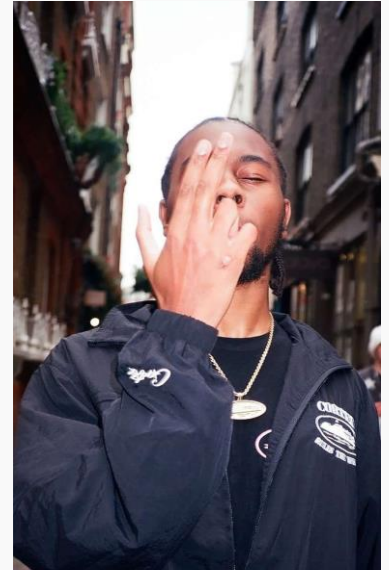
Ben & Jerry's campaign flavours



Apple iPhone drops



Disneyland milestones



Cortez surprise releases



Create: Brand fandoms are built on values, and the brand having a strong, creative identity

What other reasons (aside from products/experiences), would make you a fan of a brand?



Entertaining content isn't enough for a brand to build a fandom

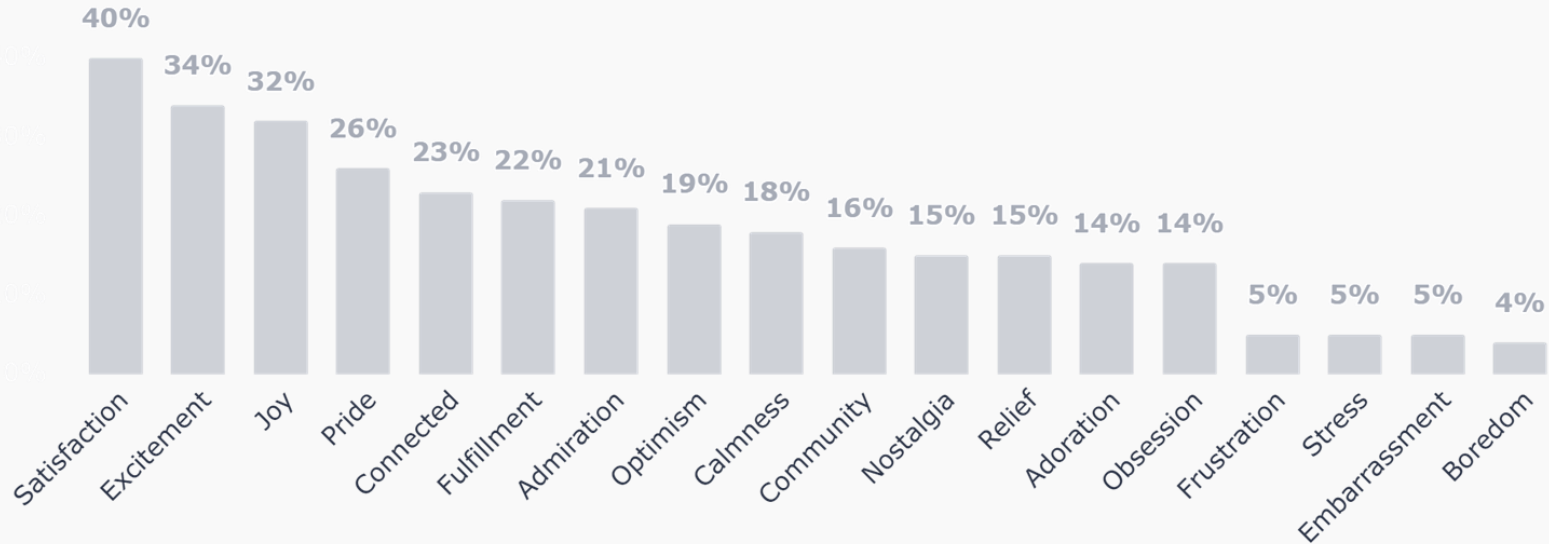
Base: All respondents (1,008)

Q55. What other reasons, aside from the products/experiences they provide, are likely to see you become a fan of a brand?



Create: However, brand fandoms are less emotionally intense & fuel less connectedness vs. other fandoms

What words do you associate with being a fan of this brand?



Base: Fans of a brand (706)

Q52. What words do you associate with being a fan of this brand?



Create: Perhaps because there tend to be fewer ways to engage in a brand community outside of the product

A key difference comes from engagement - non-brand fandoms can provide active engagement, giving people a sense purpose, escape and self-expression, whereas brands typically provide content or products to be consumed/purchased passively

What have you done/like to do, as a fan?

	Any Fan	Brand Fans	Ppt Diff
Join online groups	20%	12%	-8%
Waited in long lines	20%	11%	-9%
Stayed up all night	22%	12%	-10%
Talk about it with peers	33%	22%	-11%
Travel somewhere	27%	14%	-13%
Gone to an event	31%	14%	-17%



Facilitate, Participate, Communicate: Brands should identify fandoms that give them reach & relevance

Ownability

Can my brand stand out in the fandom, e.g. is there category whitespace there?

Ease

How easy is it for my brand to enter and execute in the space, e.g. are fans open to it?

Enhancing

Can the fandom and its values support and halo onto my brand's positioning or personality?

Sizeable

Does the fandom provide enough audience reach to justify the investment?

Targeted

Is the category audience, or are my key segments, present in the fandom?



Facilitate: One approach is to help facilitate the way fans experience and connect with others within the fandom



Ben & Jerry's Concerts



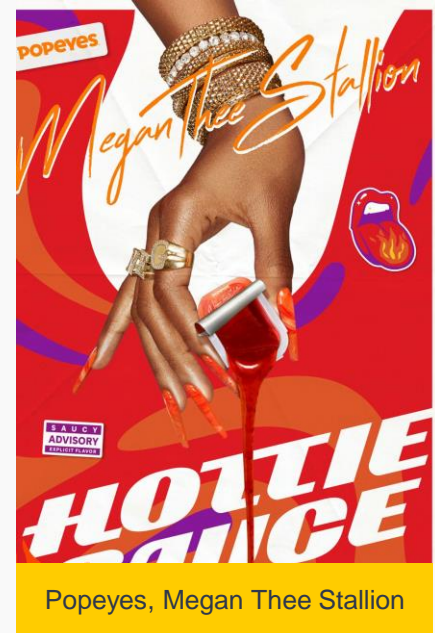
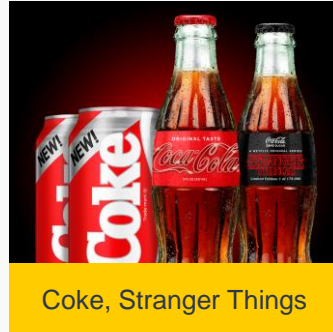
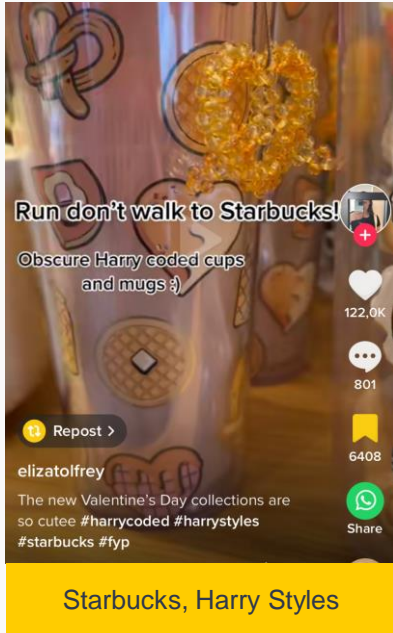
McDonald's & Pokémon GO



Amex Tennis Experience



Participate: Showing the brand is connecting to the fandom through its codes, language and tone



Communicate: The new spaces



Samsung in Fortnite



Virtual Product Placement



Implications

1

Consider whether you Create and maintain your own fandom, or play in other fandom communities (or both)

2

People think about being a fan of a brand (and feel emotions) differently vs. other types of fandoms - know the limits that may exist in creating your own community

3

To decide which fandoms to play in, consider using the following filters: target, size, enhance, ease, own



OPPORTUNI-
TIES



Opportunities

1

Have a fandom strategy

To create cultural relevance, reach your audiences, and play in the post-cookie world

2

Decide how you're going to play

Do you create, facilitate, participate, or communicate? Depends on your category, brand, and appetite

3

Decide where you're going to play

Where are good numbers of your audience? What supports or enhances your brand positioning? Where can you stand out?

4

Jump into new fandom opportunities

Play fluidly across fandoms, as the new fans do. Fuel new/re-emergent fandoms. Play in the new fandom spaces.

5

Spread happiness & connection

Reflect the energy, excitement, joy and feelings of connection that define why people are fans



THANK YOU

Maria Maione, Senior Researcher, Meta
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