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Harness the power of
fandoms to drive growth

Fandoms present opportunities to **expand brand partnerships** and **tap into new networks of consumers**

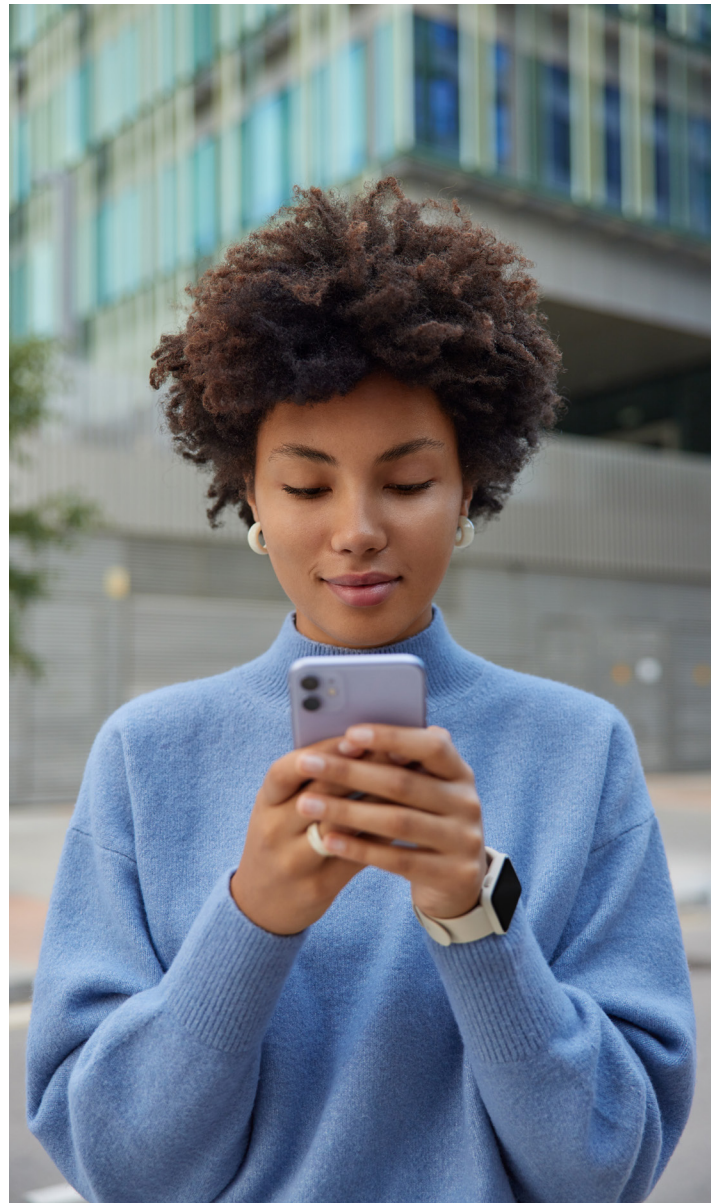
Fandoms have become a prevalent and powerful way people connect with and understand the world around them. A Deloitte survey found nearly 75% of Americans age 18 and older today consider themselves to be part of a fandom,¹ and 64% of fans say that fandoms are a defining part of their identity.² Marketers responsible for managing intellectual property (IP) should know the power of fandoms for driving consumer engagement for enhanced reach and relevance—especially when partnering with other brands. But it's not just about making a lot of noise.

Fandoms are communities of passionate individuals that rally around a common interest in anything from broad topics (such as music genres, hobbies, or sports) to more narrow topics (such as an individual team, celebrity, or IP).

Social-first brands, being among the best at meeting and serving customers in their own digital communities, achieved an average revenue increase of 10.2% as a direct result of social strategies.³ But IP-owning marketers also should know tapping into a fandom's potential is far more complex than simply showing up. A strategic misstep may result in a waste of time and resources—or in some cases, may spur backlash among your most loyal customers.



50% of surveyed consumers reported **purchasing a product or service from a brand for the first time** because it partnered with their fandom.⁴



Use the **underlying passions** of a fandom to connect identities, interests, and activities

To meaningfully tap into the potential of their fandom, IP owners should maintain data streams and direct community engagement to define the root of the fandom's unifying passion. Whether it's a love for epic adventures, the thrill of victory, or the power of self-determination, the emotional element is a strong tie that brings fans together—and brands should engage their fans at this level to help build lasting emotional ties.

These emotional ties, the foundation of any fandom, can serve as the crucial context to create an addressable map of the market that creates a more complete tapestry of what resonates with fans across:

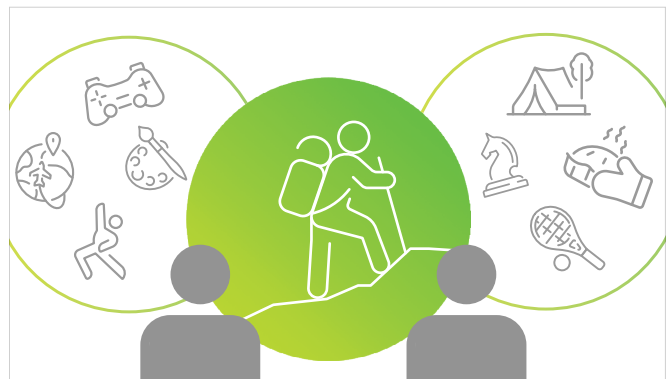
- Their shared **identities** that shape the way they belong to and navigate the world.
- The related and/or conflicting **interests** that take up their mindshare.
- The **activities** that they spend time and energy on.

Taken together, these factors can improve brand leaders' ability to speak authentically with confidence, retain consistent attention and engagement, and create opportunities for action that can reaffirm commitment to both the fandom and the brand's involvement.

Fandoms create a community around a single point of shared interest



Fans bring a host of other interests, values, and activities that spark broader connection with the fandom



These connections are strongest when formed across a shared underlying passion



Assess your IP and fandom dynamics as part of a wider strategic assessment

Alongside a deep understanding of your fandom's underlying passions and behaviors, IP owners should look at the dynamics of the IP and fandom as a whole to assess their best strategic options to leverage that fandom. IP owners should look at factors such as the degree of social engagement, breadth of cultural relevance, the age and volume of IP content, and audience factors such as the total addressable market (TAM) or willingness to pay. For example, a high cultural relevance in different customer segments can open the door to novel partnerships that can increase total market reach. A high level of engagement around an IP with a relatively low amount of content may signal a strong opportunity to allocate additional content development spend to this IP.

Brand and IP managers should also assess their fandom and IP within the context of their broader IP portfolio. Understanding which IPs are developing, are stagnant, or hold untapped potential can be critical to stabilize the health of your IP portfolio and lay the groundwork for building accretive long-term value.



Help set your business up for success:

A fandom engagement checklist

Getting a strong footing in the fandom space is going to look different depending on your brand's IPs, the nature of its fandom, and overall goals of your organization. With that, there are a few boxes to check that could benefit any brand looking to engage in this space.

1. Know your IP's core guiding principles

Brand leaders should be able to consistently articulate the core principles of their brand or IP that guide your decision-making and ensure consistency and coordination across executions. In other words, brands and IP owners should know the principles or elements that must be true for that world to be authentic and consistent. These values help form the cornerstone and guardrails for any creative direction or brand partnership you take, and any inconsistencies in this area may cause friction with your fandoms before you ever engage them.

2. Develop a deep understanding of your fandom through human listening, engagement, and research

Fandoms will often interpret and connect with your IP in ways that make it their own—sometimes counter to the intentions of the brand. Brands should look to understand the fan interpretation of the IP and what your fans are connecting with—that is, the “why” behind their passion. IP owners should direct their teams to conduct thorough qualitative research, listen and speak to members of this community, and blend this understanding with quantitative research to develop a

meaningful understanding of their fandom, who its members are, and what they value. To drive actionable insights, pinpoint the connective tissue between the guiding principles of the IP and the identities, attitudes, and behaviors of the fandom. Nailing down this overlap can help you understand the multidimensionality of that fandom and its subsegments, and to execute initiatives in a way that stays true to the IP while energizing the fandom.

3. Assess your IP environment to map out strategy and opportunities for fandom activation

A vibrant fandom provides multiple opportunities for brands to expand their monetization opportunities—whether through exploring untapped opportunities within the fandom itself such as merchandise or live events, or through exploring new partnerships and licensing deals. IP owners should conduct a comprehensive assessment of their IP and fandom dynamics, considering factors such as social engagement, cultural relevance, content volume, and audience characteristics. Understanding the status of each IP within the broader portfolio is important for maintaining portfolio health and building long-term value.

Endnotes

1. Deloitte Summer 2024 Market Temperature Survey. Q: *"Do you consider yourself to be a member of a fandom under any of the following categories? (select all that apply)"*
2. Amazon, "[Fandom goes mainstream](#)," in *Anatomy of Hype Survey*, fielded September 2022 to February 2023.
3. Kenny Gold and Christina Kavalauskas, "[New research: Driving resilience and revenue through social business transformation](#)," Deloitte Digital, January 2024.
4. Deloitte Summer 2024 Market Temperature Survey. *"Q: Have you ever bought a product or service that you had never tried before specifically because they partnered with something you are a fan of?"*

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