

CULTURE & TRENDS CULTURE & TRENDS



# CULTURE & TRENDS REPORT

## FANDOM

How fans have shifted from consumers to creators – and how they brought viewers along with them.

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# FANDOM'S VIRTUOUS CYCLE

As any devoted fan will tell you, fandom isn't some frivolous pastime. It can be a deeply fulfilling and mood-elevating experience, helping people shape their identities and cultivate stronger connections to their community.

According to KR&I's Fandom Institute, fandom is a relationship between people and an object of their fandom; an object that is relatable, elevated, and inspires devotion and investment. As technology is evolving, so are fans' relationships with their favourite creators, artists, and other entertainment vehicles.

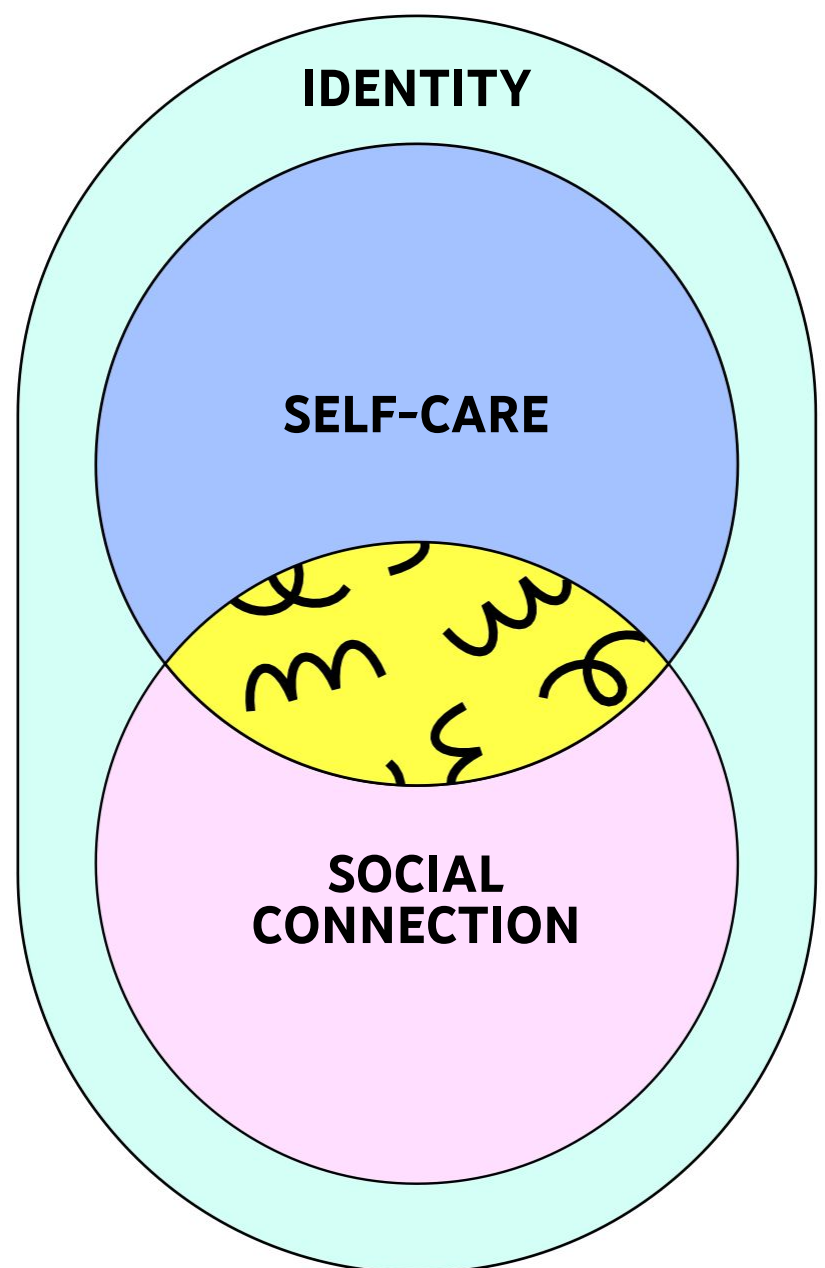
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To learn more about how the nature of fandom has changed, the YouTube Culture & Trends team researched dozens of trends from the past year, consulted the Fandom Institute, and ran surveys with SmithGeiger, asking thousands of people about how they spend their time online as fans.

Respondents were adults who are active online, age 14–44; and Gen Z who are active online, age 14–24.

## KR&I'S HUMAN NEEDS MODEL: THREE OVERLAPPING PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS THAT SHAPE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR.

KR&I's Fandom Institute has identified these fundamental human needs that are satisfied through participation in fandom.



# THE NEW PROMISE OF FANDOM

Fans aren't just consuming their favourite content anymore – they're actively in conversation with it – creating their own videos to showcase their devotion to the source material and to strengthen bonds with other fans.

## HOW

**How? Between trends, memes, recreations, watchalongs, fan art, and hour-long video podcasts, fan content often extends well beyond its source material and attracts its own fans in the process.** Meanwhile, brands and traditional creators have learned to actively respond to their fans' content, forging a mutually beneficial creative relationship.

93%



**of Gen Z fans (online 14-24 year-olds who identify as fans) use YouTube to consume content about the person or thing they're a fan of at least weekly.**

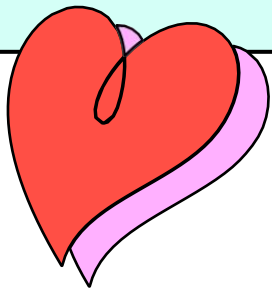
*Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=344 online Gen Z fans age 14-24.*

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# FROM FAN TO SUPER-FAN

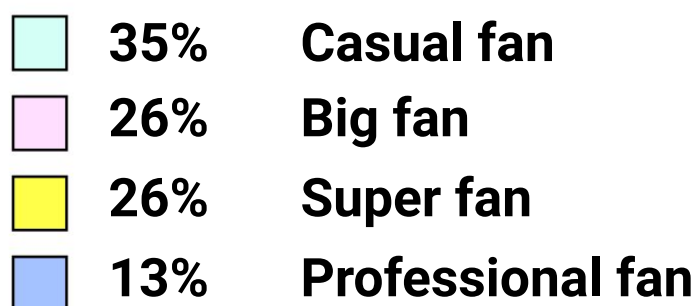
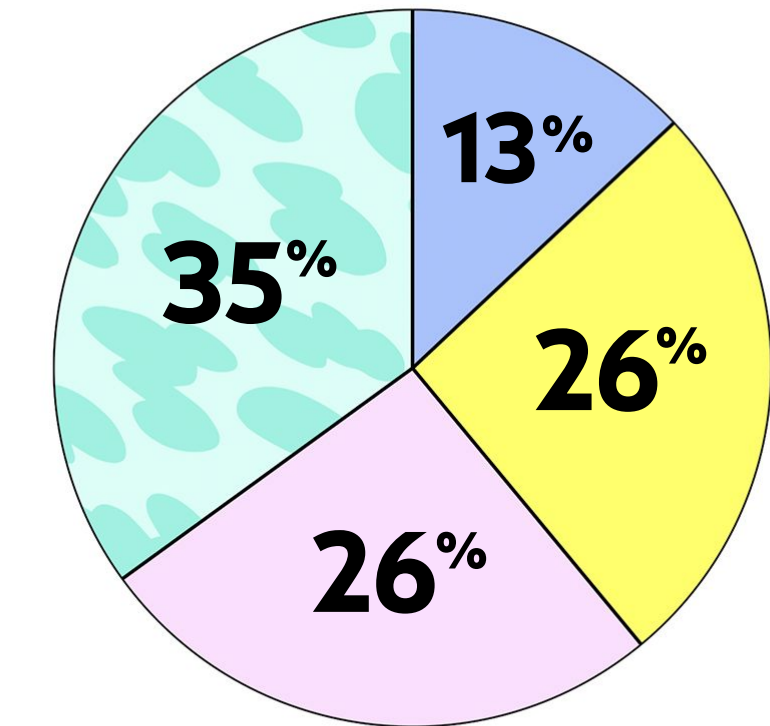
87%



of GenZ (online 14-24 year-olds) describe themselves as a fan of someone or something.

Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=394 online Gen Z age 14-24

## Gen-Z Fandom\*



Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=344 online Gen Z age 14-24.

In recent years, technological shifts in short form video creation and generative AI have given fans more – and increasingly creative – ways to participate in their fandoms. That participation, with its varying degrees of commitment and engagement, has led to a stratification of fandom. **Casual fans may just consume media, but super fans routinely create media about the object of their fandom,** and often spend money on it. In short, the bigger the fan, the more content they are likely to consume and create.

**Creators are often objects of fandom and fans at the same time.** They are experts in how to foster fandom online because, as fans, they know what fans want, and as creators, they know how to use the technology and platforms available to them. As they build their own audiences and fandoms, they expand the reach of the things they're fans of.

\*According to a SmithGeiger study, fans describes themselves as:

- A casual fan: someone who sometimes engages with the person or thing they're a fan of.
- A big fan: someone who engages in the important moments and regularly spends money on that fandom.
- A super fan: someone who engages regularly, participates in the fandom community, and goes out of their way to be a fan.
- A professional fan: someone who earns revenue from a fanship.



# NICHES OF ALL SIZES

YouTube routinely serves as an on-ramp to massive, well-known fan communities as well as smaller, niche interests that fewer people know exist. Consider K-pop groups like Stray Kids and BLACKPINK. While casual fans enjoy the music, to fully appreciate the artists, today one needs to know their back catalog, their personal lore, and even their different marketing strategies.

**The community of Blinks, Stays & Bunnies (K-pop fandoms) on YouTube make it possible for new fans to learn everything they need to know.** Creators like **@krisssthetic** & **@mooncovers** dedicate their channels to K-pop dances, lyrics, lore and fashion, making YouTube a one-stop shop for new fans to become super fans.



**@KRISSTHETIC**  
519K SUBSCRIBERS

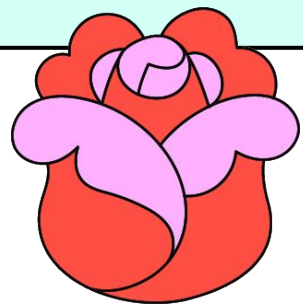


**@PLEASESITDOWN**  
521K SUBSCRIBERS

On the opposite end of the spectrum, **@PleaseSitDown** is a channel by Vijender Masijeevi, one of the most well known faces on YouTube for UPSC #mockinterviews. His channel focuses on current affairs topics, interviews, and career motivation, fuelling a community of over 500K aspirants that may have never met, but the **camaraderie of the channel's comment section allows them to come together.**

**62**

%

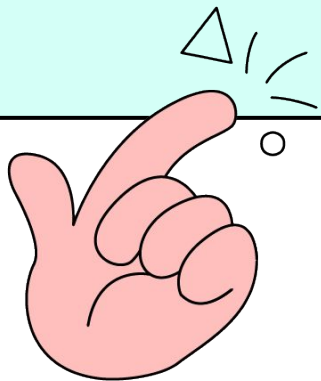


**of Gen Z report belonging to a fandom that no one they know personally is a part of.**

Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=344 online Gen Z fans age 14-24.

# SUPERSIZING CULTURAL MOMENTS

78%

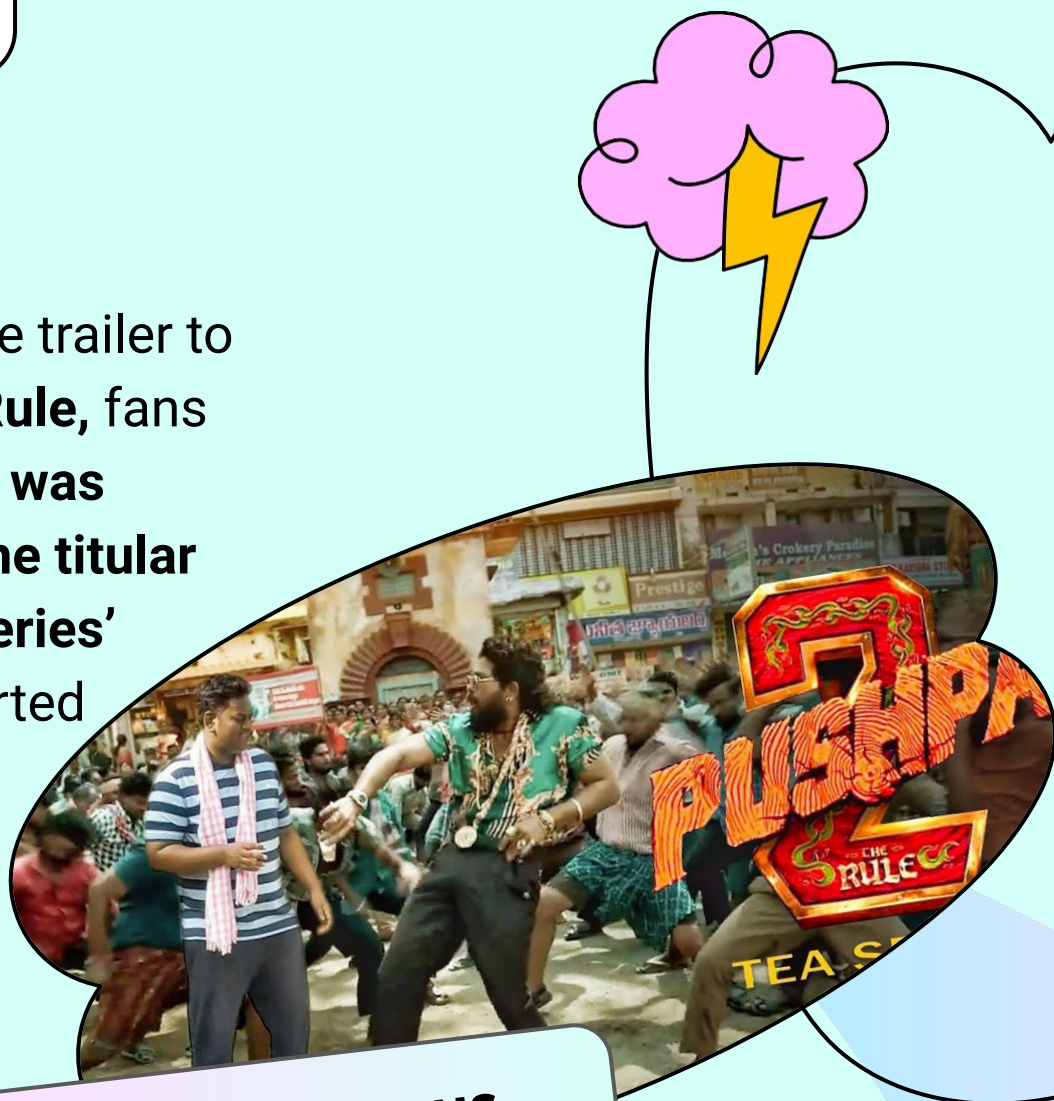


of Gen Z Indians agree that they often spend more time watching content that discusses or unpacks something than the thing itself.

Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=394 online Gen Z age 14-24.

When **@MythriMovieMakers** released the trailer to its long-awaited sequel, **Pushpa 2: The Rule**, fans began watching immediately. The trailer was viewed over 100 million times, as was the titular music video **Pushpa Pushpa** across T-Series' channels. But beyond that, fans also started creating reaction videos, trailer breakdowns, memes, dance trends and even VFX edits literally embedding themselves into the movie frames. This fan content expanded the cultural moment, allowing viewers to re-experience and re-interpret it through different lenses.

The volume and variety of fan content being created today means unimaginably more entry points and opportunities for fans to spend time with the shows, celebs, movies, music and other things they're fans of, increasing and expanding the cultural relevance for those things.



**@JOSHCREATIONS**  
658K SUBSCRIBERS



# CULTIVATING NEW FANDOMS

If creators are great at increasing and extending the cultural relevance of things people love in pop culture, it was probably only a matter of time before they began to apply it to their own projects to make new pop culture. With expertise in fan and platform dynamics, creators are swiftly nurturing massive fandoms, propelling their projects into the public's consciousness at astonishing speed.

**77%**



of Gen Z fans (online 14-24 year-olds who identify as fans) are part of a fandom with a "name".

Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=129 online Gen Z fans who are part of a fandom age 14-24.



**@TOTALGAMING093**  
42.5M SUBSCRIBERS

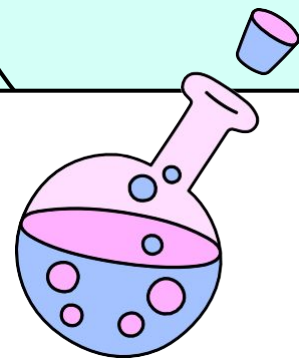
Take **AjjuBhai** or **@TotalGaming093**, one of Asia's biggest gamers who orchestrated Youtube's biggest fan moment in recent years by finally revealing his face to over 40M+ fans. The 'face reveal' video collected over 35M views, over 400K comments & hundreds of reactions. On the other end are creators like **Abhishek Malhan** or **@FukraInsaan**, whose fanbase (*the Panda Gang*) was instrumental in his success at the popular reality show Bigg Boss - with regular voting livestreams, episode reactions and live meetups through the season.

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# TAPPING FAN DYNAMICS

As fandom increasingly shapes how content is created, content optimized to take advantage of these fan dynamics could have an advantage. International brands and top creators are already benefiting from this phenomenon by plugging into the fandoms their audiences, consumers, and fans are into.

80%



**Gen Z fans surveyed (online 14-24 year-olds who identify as fans) agree they like seeing brands engage with things they're a fan of.**

*Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=344 online Gen Z fans age 14-24.*

**McDonald's** tapped into anime fandom by launching a campaign based on the way McDonald's is often represented in anime as "**WcDonalds**". They even created their own version of an **AMV**, an abbreviation for anime music video, a fan-created music video featuring anime clips. Then there are international creators like **@MrBeast** who are savvy to their Indian fanbase, and teamed up with local creator **@Mythpat** to dub a special video in Hindi. And when **@IShowSpeed** visited India, he was sure to create a fan favourite moment by collaborating with singer Daler Mehndi, whose songs often feature in the creator's livestreams.

So, to reap the benefits of fan culture, creators and producers will have to be responsive to it. And even actively nurture it. As evidenced by Tamil creators like **@VjSiddhuVlog** who also host community food feasts for their loyal fans.



**@MCDONALDS**  
700K SUBSCRIBERS



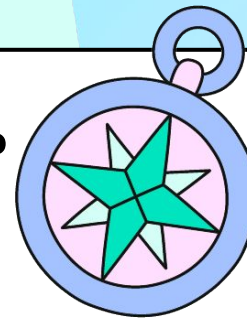
# FAN DRIVEN POP CULTURE

The modern entertainment experience is increasingly informed by the products of fan culture.

Technological advances have made expressions of fandom easier than ever, increasing participation and creating additional value for fans and the objects of their fandom. As a result, the people and things that inspire fandom are becoming as diverse as humanity itself, and less connected to mass media.

**As fans become creators, their creativity elevates mass media, while also spawning entirely new breakthrough phenomena.** Creation tools like Gen AI make fan creativity even more accessible, and fans expect their media to be malleable and to be **empowered** to remix it.

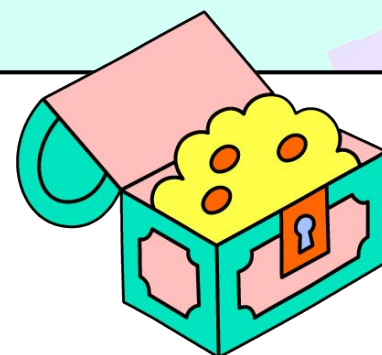
83%



**of Gen Z respondents consider themselves to be “creators”.**

*Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=394 online Gen Z age 14-24.*

91%



**of Gen Z fans (online 14-24 year-olds who identify as fans) have engaged in any fan-related activities in the past 12 months.**

*Source: Google/SmithGeiger, YouTube Trends Survey, IN May 2024, N=344 online Gen Z age 14-24*

Today's fans understand the value their participation creates for the things they're fans of. And the people and things they are fans of have become increasingly responsive to their participation, from conceptualization to distribution. As a result, **fan culture has become the central driver of emerging popular culture.**

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# WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



01

Your success isn't just about your content anymore. Because the popularity of fan content often eclipses that of the original work, the volume and success of that content can be even more impactful. **Closely follow what your fans are creating** to get a better idea of what your audience is and isn't responding to in your own content.

02

Maximizing your cultural relevance requires loosening the grip you have on your creations, letting your fans remix and remake your creations in their own image. **Your fans are going to play with your content anyway; you may as well use it as an opportunity** to strengthen your connection to your audience.

03

**Be responsive to what your fans are passionate about** and highlight the things you're passionate about, even when it isn't directly related to your own content. This can help you build stronger, more authentic connections with your audience.

04

With YouTube, fans of anything, no matter how niche, can easily create content and connect with other fans, 24/7. So **don't be afraid to lean into new and unfamiliar phenomena** that people are becoming fans of. Today's niche can be tomorrow's mainstream.

