



CULTURE & TRENDS REPORT 2024

**AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE NEW ERA OF FAN PARTICIPATION ON YOUTUBE,
AND HOW THAT IS DRAMATICALLY SHIFTING POP CULTURE.**

We're seeing a fundamental shift in video viewership: Today, 89% of Gen Z describe themselves as a fan of someone or something.¹ And as more people become engaged fans, fans have also moved from being consumers of culture to directly shaping it. YouTube is at the center of this shift as it allows viewers to deeply engage with things they're fans of, find new fandoms, share a space with other fans, and express their own creativity.

To learn more about fandom's impact on culture, the YouTube Culture & Trends team researched hundreds 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.



80% OF FANS

USE YOUTUBE TO CONSUME CONTENT ABOUT THE
PERSON OR THING THEY'RE A FAN OF AT LEAST WEEKLY²

TREND #1

VIEWERS HAVE GONE FROM CONSUMING CONTENT TO CREATING IT

Viewers once participated in their fandoms by consumption — now, they do it by creating content. This isn't limited to super fans, either — as new tools, Shorts, and generative AI have made creation easier for all fans.

On YouTube, this large volume of fan content, from reaction videos to costume recreations, deep dives, and commentary means that viewers often spend more time with fan content than the *actual* original source material.

65% OF GEN Z

DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS
VIDEO CONTENT CREATORS³

^{1,3} Google/SmithGeiger, U.S., YouTube Trends Survey, n=350 online Gen Z respondents age 14-24, May 2024.

² Google/SmithGeiger, U.S., YouTube Trends Survey, n=847 online fans age 14-44, May 2024.

RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE

While RuPaul's Drag Race season 16 aired in 2024, YouTube creators **UPLOADED 1,500 HOURS OF CONTENT** related to the show.⁴

@rupaulsdragrace

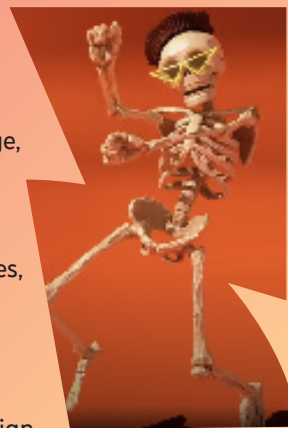


FALLOUT 4

After the TV adaptation of the Fallout video game series debuted this year, views *and* uploads of Fallout content exploded on YouTube as fans created an entire library of content, from videogame walkthroughs to lore explainers, for new fans who were just discovering the community.

REESE'S

For Halloween, Reese's launched #ReleaseTheReese, a Shorts dance challenge, with YouTube creators like Kyle Hanagami and Katie Feeney — gaining millions of views, remixes, and responses to the challenge, ultimately reaching **38 MILLION UNIQUE USERS** with the campaign.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

More fandoms mean more opportunities for brands to create deeper connections. Make it easy for fans to display their fandom — for instance, by providing remixable videos — to help your brand benefit from the exponential power of fan-generated content.

TREND #2

CREATORS ARE ENCOURAGING NEW FORMS OF FAN PARTICIPATION

As experts on and drivers of new technologies, creators are perfectly positioned to benefit from fan behavior. Successful creators provide ways for fans to express their fandom through remixes, custom merchandise, or turning on alternative monetization features on YouTube like channel memberships or Super Thanks stickers. Creators also direct attention to things that they're fans of — creating a mutually beneficial, self-sustaining web of relationships.

SUGAR HIGH

Creator Scott Frenzel used Shorts to reinforce his relationship with his fans. After announcing via a Short that he would comment on every fan-made video that used his track, he saw his song soar to the top of the Shorts chart as fans used his song to soundtrack everything from nail art tutorials to food challenges.

SASASAKI KIKI

Vtuber Kiki held a contest soliciting fan-drawn pictures of herself — and set a new record for most weekly views on her YouTube channel.



SAMSUNG

To wow Gen Z with the Galaxy S24, Samsung challenged MrBeast to put the phone's features to test, which he did—in true MrBeast style—while suspended up to 100 feet in the air. The video was featured in the #1 trending video spot on YouTube. And the brand's Creator Takeover on his channel resulted in 25 million impressions in less than 72 hours.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

Partnering with creators — who understand how to encourage their own fandoms, and direct their fans to things *they're* fans of — can be hugely beneficial. With **Partnership Ads by BrandConnect**, advertisers can leverage authentic creator videos as ads to drive brand outcomes — promoting videos made by creators and even creating audience segments from viewers of those videos.

74% OF GEN Z

FANS AGREE THEY LIKE SEEING BRANDS ENGAGE WITH THINGS THEY'RE A FAN OF⁵

66%

OF GEN Z AGREE THEY OFTEN SPEND MORE TIME WATCHING CONTENT THAT DISCUSSES OR UNPACKS SOMETHING THAN THE THING ITSELF⁶

⁴ YouTube data, Global, Jan 5 - April 19, 2024; excludes official RuPaul's Drag Race channel.

⁵ Google/SmithGeiger, U.S., YouTube Trends Survey, n=312 online Gen Z respondents fans age 14-24, May 2024.

TREND #3

YOUTUBE GIVES VIEWERS THE FULL FAN EXPERIENCE

Fans constantly turn to YouTube to deepen their fandoms — either to watch the galaxies of fan-created content that surround the subjects they're into, or to create their own. Creators and brands use everything from Shorts to livestreams to create content that goes beyond what traditional media can provide — giving fans more ways to engage.

DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE

THE MOVIE TRAILER HIT #1 on YouTube Trending and was accompanied by three other videos that were either reactions to or analyses of the trailer.



GTA

The first trailer for Rockstar's GTA IV got over 93 million views in 24 hours, with hundreds of creators riffing off the video with reaction videos and speculation on the game's content. Fan content has kept the GTA series in the top five games on YouTube for the past decade.

THE NFL

The NFL has turned schedule release into an unofficial holiday for its younger fans with teams posting videos on YouTube a la popular internet fandoms like ASMR, anime, The Sims, or leaning into video game aesthetics. In 2024, the teams posted 78 release videos on YouTube over the course of a few days, getting thousands of comments and millions of views.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

Brands should make sure they're showing up where fans are most engaged. And with **YouTube Select**, which features the top 1% of YouTube content, brands can seamlessly show up across content where viewers are most engaged. A custom Google/ Nielsen MMM meta-analysis found that, on average,

YOUTUBE SELECT DRIVES 1.9X HIGHER ROAS THAN LINEAR TV AND 2.1X HIGHER ROAS THAN OTHER ONLINE VIDEO⁸

TREND #4

THE NEXT WAVE OF POP CULTURE IS COMING FROM FANS

Today, many of Gen Z's cultural touchstones come directly from creators and creative communities. In some cases, one video spurs thousands of fan-videos that generate as many or more views than the original. The size of these fandoms allows these projects to transcend YouTube and become part of mainstream culture. Traditional media is beginning to invest in these projects and their creators in order to maximize cultural relevance.

⁶ Google/SmithGeiger, U.S., YouTube Trends Survey, n=350 online Gen Z respondents age 14-24, May 2024.

⁷ Google/SmithGeiger, U.S., YouTube Trends Survey, n=847 online fans age 14-44, May 2024. Average includes: Reddit, Discord, TikTok, Instagram, X/Twitter, Tumblr.

⁸ Equity-to-Sales MMM Meta Analysis commissioned by Google, covering a 2-year measurement period of 20 CPG brands from across the 2021-2023 timeframe.

⁹ Google/SmithGeiger, U.S., YouTube Trends Survey, n=1,000 online people age 14-44, May 2024.

73% OF FANS

TURN TO YOUTUBE FOR CONTENT ABOUT THEIR FANDOM. THAT'S SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN ANY OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM (32% AVERAGE)⁷

57% OF PEOPLE

WATCHED VIDEOS MADE BY FANS OF SPECIFIC CONTENT, ARTISTS, OR PUBLIC FIGURES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS⁹

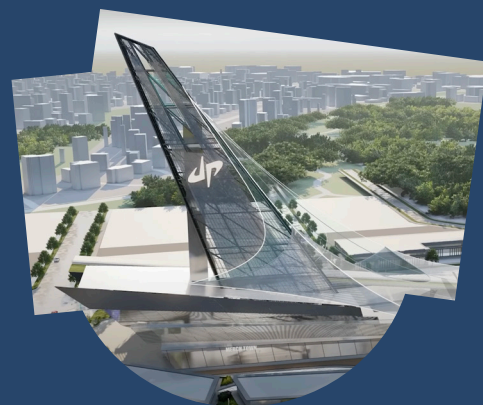
HOW FANDOM FUELS FRANCHISES

HAZBIN HOTEL

Created by Vivziepop, an animator who has been uploading content to YouTube for over a decade, this series set a global record as Amazon Prime's largest debut for an animated series. This record was no doubt facilitated by Vivziepop's YouTube release of a complementary series, Helluva Boss, set in the same universe.

THE AMAZING DIGITAL CIRCUS

The pilot of Glitch and Gooseworx's animated dark comedy quickly racked up hundreds of millions of views. During the six months between the first and second episodes, fan content related to TDAC, from songs to memes, accrued over **39 BILLION VIEWS**.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

This is a new era of entertainment. Creators are revolutionizing well-loved TV formats like challenges and reality TV – generating their own franchises and fandoms that brands can be a part of. With **Creator Takeovers**, brands can go deeper with some of the most influential YouTube creators by owning 100% share of voice, delivering maximum brand visibility across engaged audiences.

@dudeperfect This American sports and comedy group amassed millions of followers on YouTube – and is now creating its own theme park.

THE FUTURE OF FANDOM

As generative AI and new video tools continue to improve, we'll continue to see fandom become a primary generator of our pop culture rather than a simple reaction to it. And as more fandoms emerge and reach huge audiences, we're reaching a point where brands that don't have a structured way to engage with fans will be left behind.

MCDONALD'S

McDonald's tapped into anime fandom by launching a campaign across 30 markets based on the way the brand is often represented in anime as "WcDonald's" introducing a four-episode anime shorts series on YouTube and a new sauce in its restaurants. Fans responded by creating even more content on YouTube explaining the WcDonald's universe, giving an inside look at the immersive pop-up, reviewing the savory chili sauce, unboxing the new packaging, and more.



COCA-COLA

To promote a limited-edition soda, Coca-Cola gathered some of K-pop's biggest names for an original music video. But the brand took it one step further, creating an AI-powered experience where fans could insert their name, voice, and face into a fan music video to share the screen with their idols. Fans could then download these customized videos to share, edit, and remix them on their own.



LET'S PUT THESE INSIGHTS TO WORK

1 EMPOWER FAN CREATION:
Enable fans' creativity by offering templates, and challenges that inspire fans to express their passion through content.

2 LEAN INTO FAN COMMUNITIES:
Pay attention to what your fans are up to – or into – and embrace their interests for new ways to engage them.

3 SHOW UP WHERE CREATORS ARE:
Leverage their communities and tap into longstanding YouTube trends.

@dudeperfect

