

# Why Brand Communities Are the Key to Unlocking Your Audience Development

For brand-side marketers, your brand's ability to thrive in a competitive marketplace is directly impacted by your audience's level of experience deficit & overall well-being.

A growing challenge for companies vying for enviable market share & brand equity, this deficit is also an opportunity for a more effective approach to audience development that bolsters your overall brand stature.

Now more than ever, brands need to develop tangible relationships with their audiences that pull them into their brand's orbit & turns them into brand communities.

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In January 2023, U.S. customer satisfaction fell to its lowest point in more than 20 years—and numbers remain far below where they need to be for a well-functioning market economy. Record-low U.K. consumer sentiment scores show similar declines.

The driving forces behind this obstacle to brand growth? A collective experience deficit, human interaction debt & declining consumer trust across industries & institutions.

At the heart of your audience's human condition is a desire for connection—to feel valued, to align & interact, and to share experiences, knowledge & ideas. Yet, roughly half of all adults in the U.S. are experiencing loneliness, with record-high numbers among young adults. Sharp public trust declines are affecting all organizations—from big businesses & banks to technology companies & healthcare.

This quandry directly impacts your brand's health & the business bottom line.

For brand-side marketers, connection & trust are imperative to gaining brand loyalty, greater brand resiliency, increased sales & brand advocacy. Nearly two-thirds of consumers have purchased from their favorite brands at least three times in the past six months—and 63% say they're more likely to forgive a mistake from a brand they're loyal to, vs. brands they've only known for a year or less.

How can you overcome this experience deficit? Intentionally & systematically establish brand community, thereby expanding your audience & strengthening relationships in ways that bolsters your overall brand stature.

## Connection & Trust are Key to Brand Loyalty

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# The Value of Brand Community: A Better Approach to Audience Development

You can get immense value from nurturing a community built around your brand—especially in times of economic uncertainty & ongoing consumer behavior change.

A thriving brand community can serve as a flywheel for your business. Just as this heavy wheel makes an engine move smoothly by using stored kinetic energy to maintain a constant speed, your brand community nurtures & strengthens your audience relationships, which in turn drives brand loyalty & helps you maintain a consistent brand presence.

The stronger these emotional connections between your brand and your most important customers & stakeholders grow, the more it reinforces your brand community.

At the same time, your community members advocate for your brand, deepen each other's connections & encourage new members to interact with your brand, helping you to strategically create greater profit with lower risk. Nielsen reported that 89% of consumers trust word of mouth over other recommendations, followed by 84% who trust brands' websites.

A strong emotional connection to your brand results in a much higher lifetime value. 95% of our purchasing decisions are driven by subconscious urges, the largest of which is emotion. Customers who are emotionally invested in your brand are less price sensitive, more loyal & more likely to contribute to a recurring sales revenue model.

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# Events & Experiences: The Catalysts of Brand Community

Events & experiences are the most powerful opportunities to sow the seeds for your brand community to grow. Their very purpose is to connect your brand to your audience—and to facilitate connection between your customers & stakeholders.

In turn, each experience a customer derives from interacting with your brand impacts their customer preference. By designing for connection that turns into brand community, you can sway customer preference toward your brand through the relationships that you forge at your events & activations—maintaining that preference through growing brand loyalty.

## That's bonding your brand & your customer.

Your audiences are seeking that bond: 70% of consumers say they want to feel part of something bigger than themselves & 61% want brands to help them feel intense emotions.

Nearly half say that they'll purchase from brands that surprise, delight or help them feel a sense of joy (& that's before the impact of brand community kicks in!).

Your next brand activation or experiential marketing campaign is an opportunity to develop your audience & your brand loyalty. Unlock this competitive advantage by designing for brand & customer connections that last long after the moment of experience is over—when your customers go back to their day-to-day routines.

Remember: **People attend events, but they join communities.**



## Designing experiences for community requires you to:

- Dig deeper than demographic segmentation to discover your audience's behaviors & engagement drivers.
- Map out the various connection points & spaces for interaction that will meet these drivers.
- Build high-impact connections both "in the room" of your event & far beyond, through meaningful, emotionally evocative experiences.
- Continue nurturing these relationships through consistent interactions that further bond your brand & your customer.
- Measure your experiences' & your brand community's impact, using actionable measurement to inform future brand activations & campaigns.



# Curated insights for the brand marketer who is short on time.

Welcome to a community of like-minded innovators. Here, we offer insights & ideas to transform your brand experiences. Put innovation & technology to use—across industries—with pragmatic applications you can adopt.

There's a lot of noise out there. We cut through the faff, sharing our POV on the most important insights you can apply to your portfolio, to propel results & ultimately bond your brand to your customer.

Sound like you?

Discover More

**CITATIONS:**

American Customer Satisfaction Index: [U.S. Overall Customer Satisfaction](#)  
Deloitte Digital: [Creating Human Connection at Enterprise Scale](#)  
Gallup: [Reversing the Customer Trust Deficit](#)  
Harvard Business Review: [10 Ways to Boost Customer Satisfaction](#)  
McKinsey & Company: [A Better Way to Build a Brand: The Community Flywheel](#)  
Sprout Social: [Brand Experience: Why It Matters And How To Build One That Works](#)  
The Drum: [People trust ads that talk about values, not products, finds Nielsen](#)  
The Index of Consumer Sentiment: [Quarter 4 2022](#)  
U.S. Surgeon General Advisory: [Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation](#)  
Wunderman Thompson: [The Age of Re-enchantment](#)

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& inspire.

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