

A background image showing a group of people, mostly of African descent, holding hands in a circle. The image is slightly blurred and has a blue-green color overlay. The text 'The POWER of community' is centered over the image. 'The' and 'of community' are in white, while 'POWER' is in large, bold, yellow-green 3D letters.

The **POWER** of community

CONNEC+S

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Community.

A word that is seeing a lot of hype in our industry at the moment, as brands and creators alike look to cultivate their own. But what does it take to authentically build a community? And how can we offer consumers a sense of belonging without it feeling like a sales push?

In 2024, consumers are looking for more from the brands they invest in – and why shouldn't they? We're all craving connection, experiences and a sense of belonging.

This shift has ignited a strong desire for community, both online and offline.



of people who belong to online groups feel a sense of belonging to that group*

For brands and creators, this presents an opportunity to nurture deeper relationships with their audience and drive meaningful engagement.

Read on as we delve deeper into the notion of community and how to harness it to drive success for your own brand.



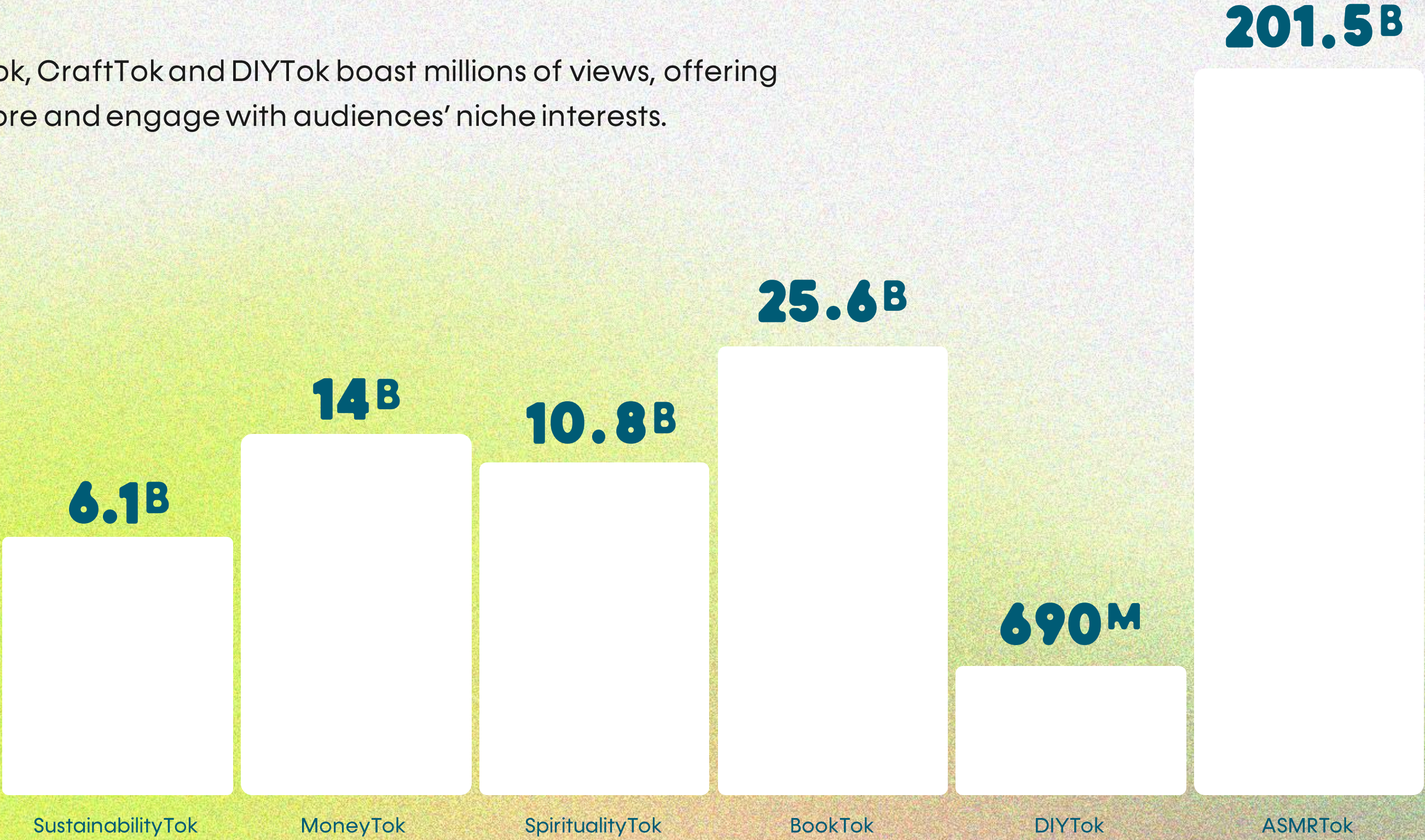
Finding your niche

There's been a huge shift in consumers seeking hobbies outside of their 9-5 over the last few years, with Gen Z in particular seeking inspiration from TikTok, YouTube and Instagram to whet their extra-curricular appetite.

Brands and creators can utilise these platforms to cultivate their own micro-communities by tapping into relevant sub-groups, after all, 54% of Gen Zs say that their favourite brands are the ones that make them feel like they're part of a community.*

TikTok, especially, can vouch for the rise in the uptake of hobbies amongst Gen Z, having seen a monumental rise of sub-communities on the platform – which see people connect virtually over these common hobbies, pop culture trends, life hacks and more.

Sub-communities such as BookTok, CraftTok and DIYTok boast millions of views, offering a unique way for brands to explore and engage with audiences’ niche interests.



In our work with eBay, we tapped into the Sneakerhead community to raise awareness of eBay sneakers and its Authenticity Guarantee service. We linked eBay with Krupt FM and their sneaker obsessed followers, rolling out a five-month-long partnership via a three-part series on their YouTube and Instagram.

We also took to the streets and set up shop with a stall on Bethnal Green Road, manned by Krupt FM, to bring the campaign to life offline and connect with the community in-person.

With over 750 hours of watch time and 946K impressions, it's clear our content achieved its awareness aim. But it didn't just hit, it hit in the right area — our Krupt FM content was scripted with sneakerheads in mind, so every joke would land. And with a £0.15 CPE — it did. Proving that it pays off to delve into these communities and speak to them directly.



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TikTok recently reported that **76%** of its users prefer brands that engage with niche communities*...

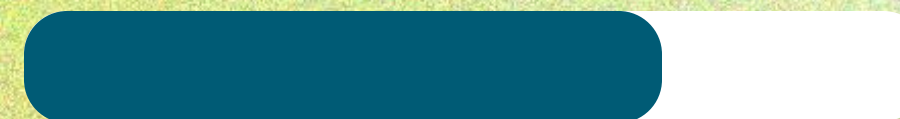
It checks out with the research; according to a report by No Good:

82%



of consumers said they were “highly likely” to follow a recommendation made by a micro-influencer.

73%



highly likely to act on a recommendation from an average person.

The stats don't lie. It's worth entering the metaphorical group chat and sourcing the micro-communities that feel relevant to your brand. Users are looking for brands who are sparking up conversations and actively integrating themselves in the community to offer fresh storytelling and creative hooks.

With micro-communities come micro-influencers. Whilst smaller in followership, on average they boast a higher engagement rate than their celebrity or elite-tier counterparts. These micro-influencers are able to connect with their audience on a personal level – take our H&M 'Back to Campus' campaign, for example, we worked with a range of TikTok creators from entry through to elite tier. The campaign reached 2.8M people and worked at a combined £0.05 CPE. @nasreen.ahm had 19.8k followers at the time, but one of the highest organic engagement rates of the campaign at 15%, meanwhile @jasminegeex performed well in paid, delivering over 200k engagements with a strong 9.9% engagement rate.



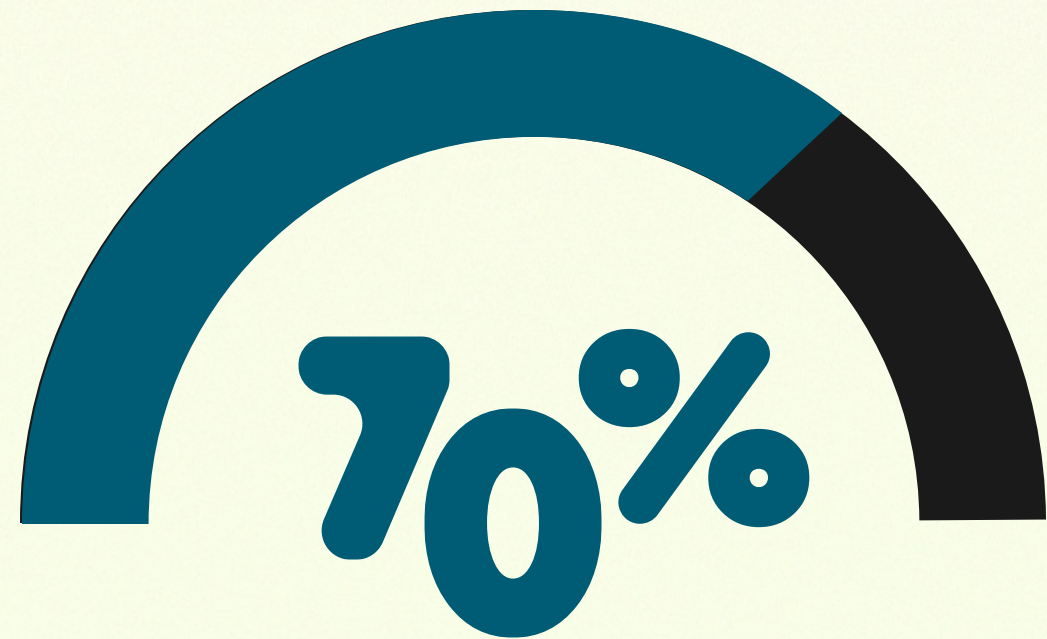


“Instead of yelling to the masses,
these micro-influencers are able to
whisper straight into their audience’s ear.”

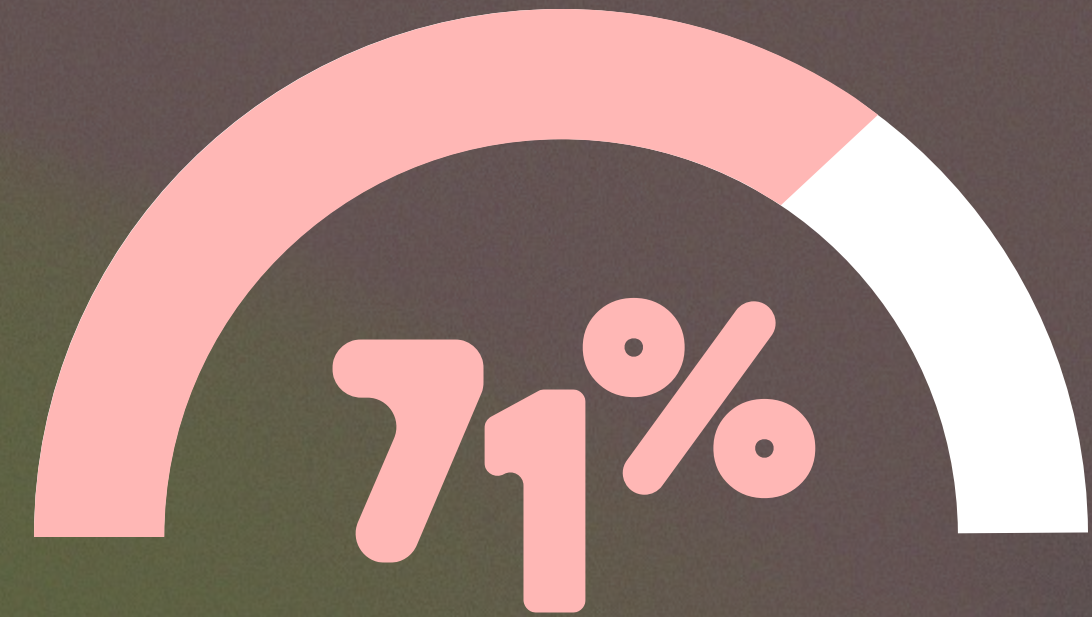
A photograph of two women sitting on a dark couch, laughing heartily. The woman on the left is seen in profile, wearing a white top. The woman on the right is facing forward, wearing a light-colored cardigan over a dark top, with her hand near her hair. The image has a warm, reddish-pink tint.

Power of the female community online

#GirlPower isn't just a trend, it's here to stay; with women and girls drawing the central focus of major cultural moments over the last year, from world tours to top-grossing movies. These trends weren't just residing offline though, hashtags like #GirlMath and #GirlDinner were always just a scroll away. 77% of women on TikTok agree that brands who post or reply to comments on TikTok feel like part of the community, fostering a sense of belonging and trust.*



of women on TikTok agree they can join groups on TikTok that they couldn't find anywhere else



of women on TikTok feel it's easy for strangers to connect and bond around shared life experiences on the platform

We've seen a shift this year, as brands start to recognise the impact of speaking to a female community in what has previously been male-dominated industries. From the Taylor Swift effect at the 2024 Super Bowl to Charlotte Tilbury becoming the first female-founded beauty brand to sponsor the F1.

This year's Super Bowl was watched by 58.8 million women – the most ever, and an increase of 9% from last year. These stats saw advertisers scrambling to use the opportunity to expand their reach and connect with new audiences during ad space at the Super Bowl halftime show.

Watch this space, as we expect more brands will be looking for ways to align their messaging with topics and trends that spark conversation and curiosity among women.





Fostering brand advocacy with UGC

User-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a powerful tool for community building in the digital age. Brands that feature UGC on their websites or social media can see up to a 161% increase in conversions.*

By encouraging user participation and incorporating UGC into their marketing strategies, brands can generate diverse and creative content that builds recognition and creates a sense of belonging. UGC gives the sense that post-purchase, consumers can remain part of the conversation, not only driving engagement but also fostering brand advocacy and loyalty among consumers.

79% of consumers say UGC influences their purchases*

Fashion and beauty brands in particular have successfully utilised UGC to involve consumers in their brand's narrative, reinforcing the idea that they are integral to the brand's story. As seen with the likes of Sol de Janeiro and e.l.f. cosmetics – both brands' popularity has skyrocketed alongside strong UGC tactics as they regularly feature real customers using and reviewing their products on their feeds. Incorporating UGC into social media campaigns can increase engagement by up to 50%.

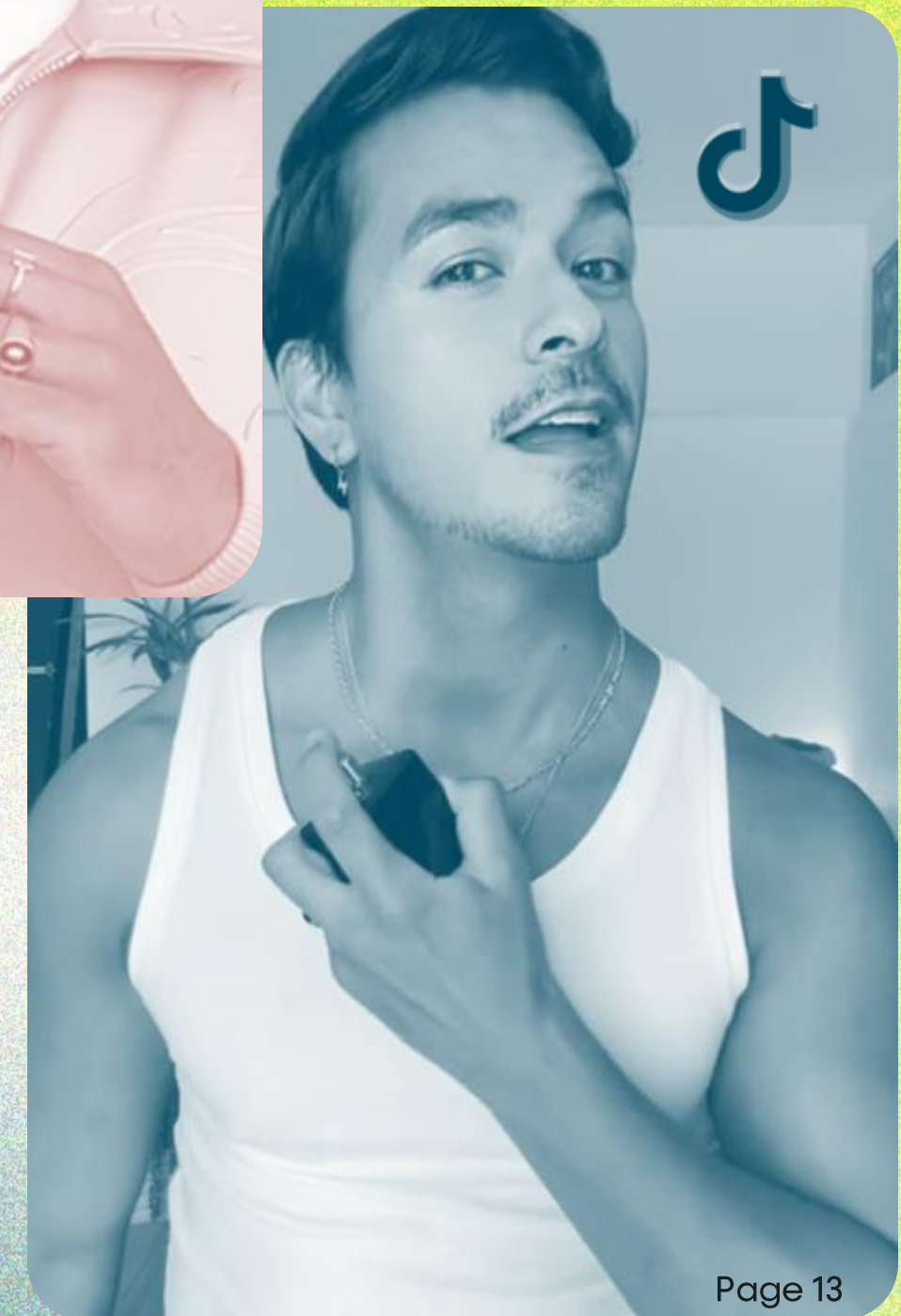
As quoted in a recent Vogue Business trend report, "UGC is another key factor in community building for fashion and beauty players. It creates the idea that post-purchase, consumers can remain part of the brand's story."



The results speak for themselves. e.l.f. cosmetics is now ranked Gen Z's number one cosmetics brand, and we can't open Instagram or TikTok without spotting the sunny packaging of Sol de Janeiro's viral products. UGC builds a sense of community based on shared interests and generates buzz straight from the consumer's mouth as they inform other users about their experiences with a brand.

Advertising based on UGC can result in a 400% increase in click-through rates, according to Joinbrands. So, it's no surprise that in response to the growing importance of UGC, TikTok launched "Branded Mission", a tool that allows brands to master UGC by approaching users with over 1,000 followers to participate in a challenge. TikTok users can then create videos, generating authentic and relevant content directly related to the brand.

TikTok may have been one of the first to recognise the importance of tapping into communities this way, but they won't be the last. By 2033, 78% of all online content will be user-generated, while UGC creators are set to increase by 65% over the next decade.*





Our key takeaways

By harnessing the power of community, brands can foster meaningful relationships and drive engagement with their audiences. Tapping into these conversations with authentic use of creators, provides a great opportunity to build trust in these spaces through niche storytelling and connection.

**Embracing the niche:**

By embracing niche communities, we can create stronger connections with more engaged audiences – after all 76% of TikTok users prefer brands that engage with sub-communities.

**Leveraging the female community online:**

#GirlPower is more than a passing trend, it's here to stay and it's time brands delved into these conversations. 77% of women on TikTok agree that brands who reply to comments feel like a part of the community.

**Don't shy away from UGC:**

Consumers want to see themselves in a brand. UGC generates a sense of belonging while building brand recognition, and incorporating UGC into social media campaigns can increase engagement by up to 50%.

As consumers continue to prioritise experiences and connections, brands must seize the opportunity to become an integral part of their community narrative, moving beyond traditional sales-focused approaches and towards relationship-driven strategies like those outlined in this report.

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Get in touch with our team to discuss how your brand can build a community.



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Extension of the Power of Community section from our TikTok in 2024: Beyond the FYP Webinar, hosted in collaboration with George Nikolaou, Creator and Brand Strategy Consultant, formerly Community Lead, TikTok. Visit our website for all the key takeaways.

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