

THE REBIRTH OF **SOCIAL COMMUNITIES**



INTRODUCTION

Approximately 10 years ago, social communities were considered the digital marketing Holy Grail. At that time, the organic reach of social platforms was still double-digit and it was uncommon that marketers had to invest in paid media to reach their customers. If you were a brand with an active community (read with a large chunk of followers), it is likely that your page engagement and interactions were extremely high.

Fast forward to 2021: organic reach is at its all-time low, page engagement hardly takes off despite smart content marketing plans, and media investment is becoming a no-brainer if you want to reach specific audience segments. Even if you owned a large community in the 2010s, today's algorithms determining organic reach prevents you addressing more than 1-5% of your followers (exception occurs).

As a result of the drastic changes in the social distribution algorithms, more and more social communities were progressively ignored in favour of niche paid media targeting tactics, which ultimately proved to perform better. This is mainly explained by the fact that many brands were competing to attract customers into their communities

using tactics like Like Ads, easy contests or rewards, and, as a result, unconsciously attracted a large number of 'fans' that had very little real connection with the brand. Paid media targeting offered the opportunity to reconquest quality customers and keep them engaged within the brand comms.

Social communities however still provide added value to their members in a crowded, mistrusted and sometimes toxic social media environment. While communities may not be the answer to every short-term business objective, they can prove helpful in the long run and act as a useful addition to your digital marketing strategy.

In this new Red Paper, we will explore what makes of an effective social community, why you should care, what you should learn from them, and, importantly the new business models of community-focused platforms that are emerging.

¹ As of the end of 2020, organic reach is still on the decline. The average reach for an organic Facebook post is down to 5.2%. (For the record, at the end of 2019 it was 5.5%, and the year before that it was 7.7%). Source: Hootsuite, 2020

**BY ARNAUD
VANHEMELRYCK**
GLOBAL SOCIAL DIRECTOR



DEFINING A SOCIAL COMMUNITY?

From families to friendships, we share experiences and interactions with groups. Our attachments to these groups -strong or weak- makes the fabric of association and community. In sociology, a community is a social structure that shares personal values, cultural values, business goals, attitudes, or a world view. What binds it is a community culture of social rules and group dynamics that identify members. ²

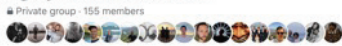
An online community isn't built or befriended, it's connected by offering and accepting. Community is affinity, identity, and kinship that make room for ideas, thoughts, and solutions. Social platforms offer spaces for discussion of topics that a community or network finds mutually interesting or beneficial.

² Source: Successful Blog, 2020

In the most concise terms, an online social community is a group of like-minded individuals connected by interactions around a specific brand, topic, theme, activity, ideology, etc.

See below for different examples.

Ogilvy Social.Lab Brussels



Joined + Invite

Stefan Bisoux
22 July at 21:04 · 🌐

It's a hot week for Influence too!

- TikTok now allows to boost existing content. After all, great content is not always (often?) commissioned: <https://www-adweek-com.cdn.ampproject.org/.../tiktok.../amp/>

- YouTube is testing live-stream shopping!
<https://www.socialmediatoday.com/.../youtube.../603738/>

- IG video feed auto-caption, be heard even with the sound off (that will save studio time):
<https://www.socialmediatoday.com/.../instagram.../603267/>

- Instagram Story draft is back. Influencers will be able to save it instead of redoing the whole thing once approved (hopefully it will prevent mistakes to be made):
<https://www.socialmediatoday.com/.../instagram.../603498/>

- Your Instagram "Explore tab" has too much "sensitive" content? The app introduces a feature that will certainly affect extra organic reach:
<https://www.google.co.uk/.../instagram-sensitive-content...>
But let's be honest, the algorithm knows you pretty well, don't act all surprise when you see your explore page 😊

> EMPLOYEE COMMUNITY:
OGILVY SOCIAL.LAB BRUSSELS

Private community (invitation-only) of all OSL employees discussing all things agency-related.

> ACTIVITY COMMUNITY:
NORTH BROOKLYN RUNNERS

Public community open to anyone interested in running the North Brooklyn area (from starters to experienced athletes). The vision is that people will find running partners, share tips about how to run in cold weather, run races together, and ultimately just make new connections.



North Brooklyn Runners

Public group · 4.4K members

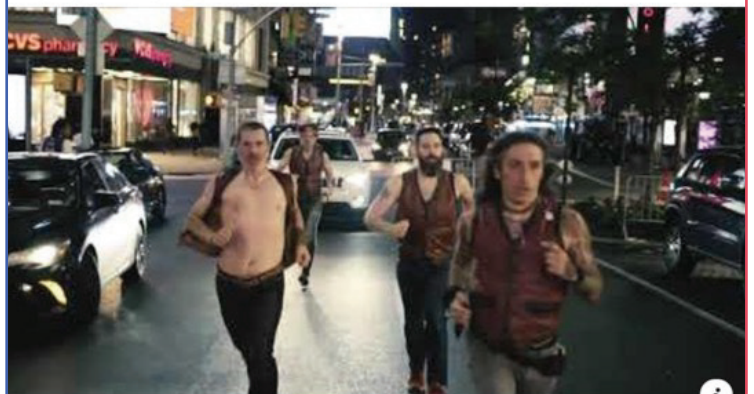
Join Group

Todd Aydelotte shared a link.
19 July at 14:12 · 🌐

Hey North Brooklyn Runners — we have just 20 spots left and over 100 runners signed to date. Join us in NYC Aug 28-29 for The Warriors UltraRun, a 28-mile night ultra and the first 'GPS-enabled urban chase' in history. After a 1 AM Conclave, members of our Warriors Elite Team (shown here training in NYC) will be given a 10 minute head start before being chased by the entire field, who are all dressed as gang members from the iconic cult film (register for event at thewarriorsultra.com)

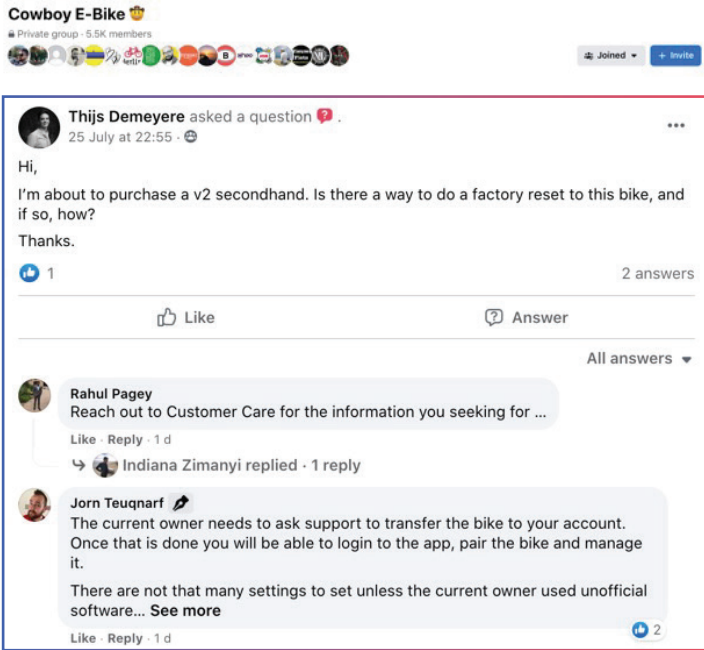
Video by @outtherenj

<https://youtu.be/qhUqGcRW32o>



YOUTUBE.COM
thewarriorsultraran master

3



> CUSTOMER COMMUNITY: COWBOY

Private global community of Cowboy e-bike owners, future owners and people interested in the bike. Discussions happen daily about the design, the availability, firmware problems, bike issues, bike parts, community gathering, etc.



> CUSTOMER COMMUNITY: LEGO CITIES

Private global community of Lego fans sharing ideas about city planning, layouts and/or building LEGO cities of all sizes.



STAY@ WEZEMBEEK-OPP'aimé

we love onze commune

Les bons plans de Wezembeek-Oppem

Private group · 6.4K members



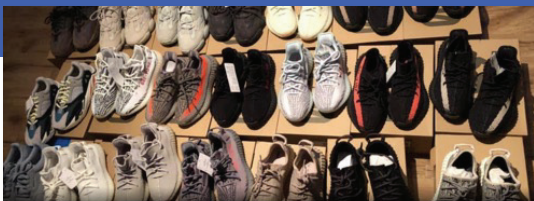
Joined + Invite

> LOCAL COMMUNITY: LES BONS PLANS DE W-O

Private community gathering people living in the same area. Discussions happen daily around topics such as tips, bargains, traffic information, service offering, etc.

> SECOND-HAND COMMUNITY: SNEAKERHEAD BRUSSELS

Private second-hand group for trading/reselling sneakers in Brussels, as well as sharing information and news about sneakers brands and sneakers drop.



SneakerHead Brussels

Private group · 4.7K members



Joined + Invite

Andreas Suederick

21 July at 15:36 · 🌐

HELLO A TOUS,

WtB 38/38,5

dunk unc💙

Dm me your price



€185 · BRUSSEL, BRUSSEL

WTB 38/38,5

Message

3 comments

BENEFITS OF SOCIAL COMMUNITIES

Either owned by the brand or by customers, social communities offer benefits in many different ways³.

01

Insights into customers' preferences and needs

By listening and analyzing customer conversations or frequent themes within social communities, brands can understand what their customers preferences are and what their current and future needs are. Brands can extract these insights from online conversations (manually or with social listening tech) but also have the opportunity to run quick surveys or polls within the community, which can substitute for massive survey panels.

02

Increase in customer retention and loyalty

The most powerful sales increases come from communities where customer retention/loyalty is the goal and helping existing customers to succeed better the focus. The other way around, failing to use community efforts for essential yet crucial business functions such as customer support, can lead to diminished loyalty. According to Gartner, customer fallout will drive down customer satisfaction into 70 percent of organizations if they fail to integrate communities into support.

03

Improvement of reputation

Another great thing about online customers and branded communities is that the community members freely discuss the pros and cons of brands/products. If members of the community are satisfied with what the brand/product do, it's likely that they will share their praises with the rest of the community and beyond. This reputation will spread outside the community as well.

³ Source: iScoop

04

Decrease support costs

In good customer communities, customers interact with one another, and questions get answered by other community members. Customer communities can lead to cheaper costs in support but also in up-selling, generating new contacts, etc. Gartner states that if organizations integrate communities into their customer support, it can lead to cost reductions of up to 50 percent. Similarly, well-curated and managed communities can also inform how to program conversational interfaces for support, e.g. FAQs.

05

Collaborative way of working/ crowdsourcing

When people are brought together in a community to discuss new ideas or address issues, unexpected solutions are often the result. Public communities can be used for collaboration if they are properly designed for it and enable you to identify and involve the members in a mutually beneficial way. In some cases, community feedback and close customer/fan relationships can contribute to product and services improvement or additional engineering. In the US, for example, the emerging cooking appliance manufacturer Blackstone taps into its online communities for product hacks and which accessories they should be producing for a better experience.

THE NEW COMMUNITY- FOCUSED PLATFORMS

AS COMMUNITIES ARE EVOLVING OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, NEW ENTRANTS (READ INFLUENCERS, GAMERS, ARTISTS OR LOCAL BUSINESSES) ARE BENEFITING FROM NEW COMMUNITY BUSINESS MODELS AND DIRECT MONETIZATION AND ARE ULTIMATELY CREATING NEW MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS.

A FEW NICHE BUT GROWING GROUP OF PLATFORMS CATER TO THE AUDIENCE NEED-STATE OF ACCESSING EXCLUSIVE, PERSONALLY RELEVANT AND LONG-FORM CONTENT.



01

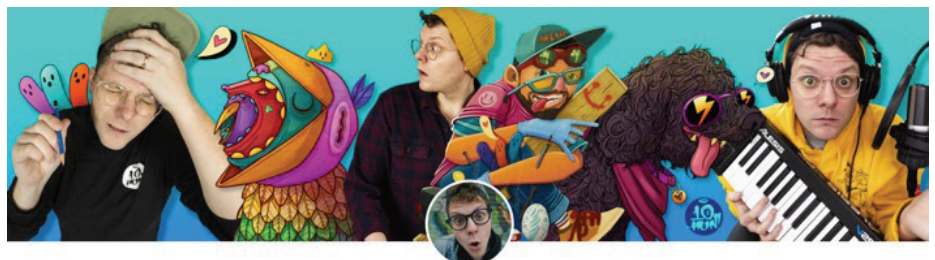
Patreon:

Creators of all kinds (from podcasters to local businesses to non-profits) use Patreon to develop a recurring income stream and build a direct and meaningful connection with their audience. On Patreon, you can let your fans become active participants in the work they love by offering them a monthly membership. You give them access to exclusive content, community, and insight into your creative process. In exchange, you get the freedom to do your best work, and the stability you need to build an independent creative career.

In terms of scale, Patreon accounts for more than 6 million monthly active 'patrons' supporting 200K+ creators, generating \$2B revenue stream for creators.

In addition, Patreon is also a great example of cross-platform community building. Users get familiar with creators' content via big displays such as YouTube or Instagram, then get locked into a subscription in Patreon and then finally move the conversation further in Discord (see next section).

Example: TenHundred – visual artist and designer based in USA: 573 patrons (Source: Patreon, 2021)



Select a membership level

Team Hundred	The Watchers	The Instigators
<p>€2 PER MONTH (+VAT)</p> <p>Join</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -10% discount on all items on the merch shop! - Early Access to my YouTube videos - Access to Private Ten Hundred Discord Server <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Includes Discord benefits 	<p>€4.50 PER MONTH (+VAT)</p> <p>Join</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% discount on all items on the merch shop! - Early Access to my YouTube videos - Access to private posts of behind the scenes goodness and stuff I am working on. - Access to Private Ten Hundred Discord Server <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Includes Discord benefits 	<p>€9 PER MONTH (+VAT)</p> <p>Join</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -15% discount on all items on the merch shop! - Early Access to my YouTube videos - Access to private posts of behind the scenes goodness and stuff I am working on. - Your name in the credits of my Youtube videos. - Access to Private Ten Hundred Discord Server <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Includes Discord benefits

O2



Discord:

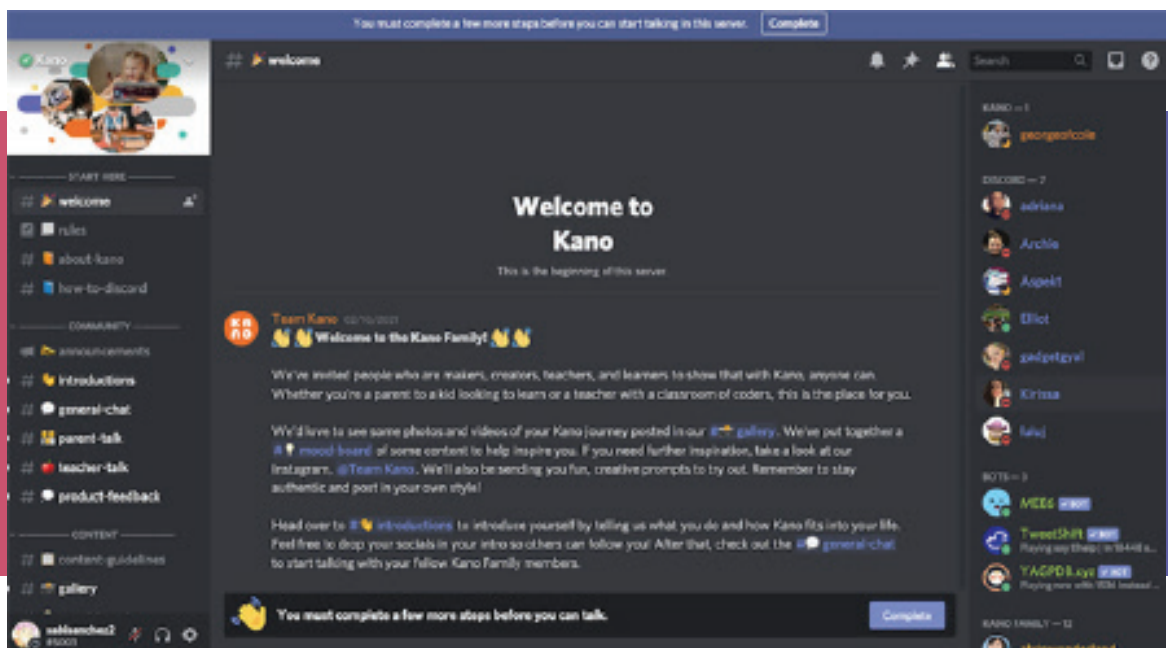
Voice communication and multimedia platform designed for instant messaging among digital communities. Users communicate with voice calls, video calls or text messaging in private chats or as part of communities called 'servers'.

Discord is used by everyone from local hiking clubs to art communities to study groups, talking for upwards of 4 hours per day on the platform. From exclusive sales to giveaways to customer service, Discord servers can benefit brands in many ways.

In terms of scale, Discord had over 250M registered users and over 150M monthly active users, active in 19M servers weekly. Discord also has a partner program in which brands can create their own servers.

Kano (coding company) created its own public Discord server after several customers requested it. What began as a Q&A forum has since evolved into a community for parents, teachers and children using Kano's products, said George Cole, social media lead specialist at Kano. Users who join Kano's server are met with a "welcome" channel that introduces them to the server. They can then navigate to other channels, including a chat room for parents and teachers and a place to discuss product inquiries. Kano also has a gallery where people can submit photos of themselves or their children using its products.⁵

⁵ Source: PRWeek, 2021





03

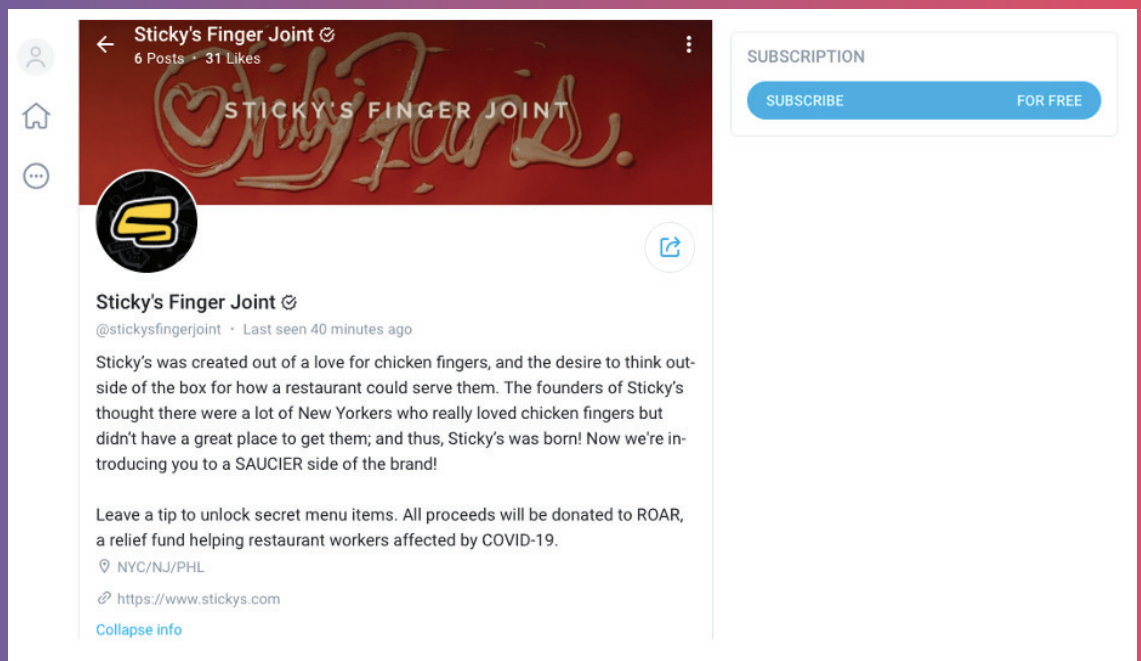
Onlyfans:

While OnlyFan's has a reputation as a hub for adult content, it has a broader mission. OnlyFans' goal is to revolutionize creator and fan connections. The site is inclusive of artists and content creators from all genres and allows them to monetize their content while developing authentic relationships with their fanbase. The platform is design to optimize creator engagement: when a creator posts, over 60% of their fans see and interact with their content. And over 80% of direct messages sent by creators are seen and opened.

In terms of scale, OnlyFans has paid out over \$3B in creator earnings since 2016 and established itself as the go-to platform for over 100M registered users and over 1M creators worldwide.

*Sticky's Finger Joint - In April, the fast casual chicken chain that operates in North America, launched their own account, and fans who subscribed to their channel have gained access to exclusive content, which includes menu items, polls, and potential rewards. As of now, the brand isn't making plans to charge a subscription fee for users, and any donations or tips given to them have gone toward the hospitality relief fund Relief Opportunities for All Restaurants (ROAR) in New York City. According to the chain's founder John Sherman, their decision to join OnlyFans resulted from their desire to "reach hardcore fans in an out of the box fashion." He said they want to "push content boundaries" and reach a different target audience—specifically Millennial and Gen Z users who usually engage with "food porn."*⁶

⁶ Source: YPulse, 2021



04


Strava:

(Swedish for 'strive': to make great efforts to achieve or obtain) defined itself as the social network for athletes. Its sophisticated fitness application tracks running and cycling activities and delivers performance metrics and individual data. The application connects with friends and share activities into your Strava feed, where friends can share their own races and workouts, give kudos to great performance and leave comments on each other's activities.

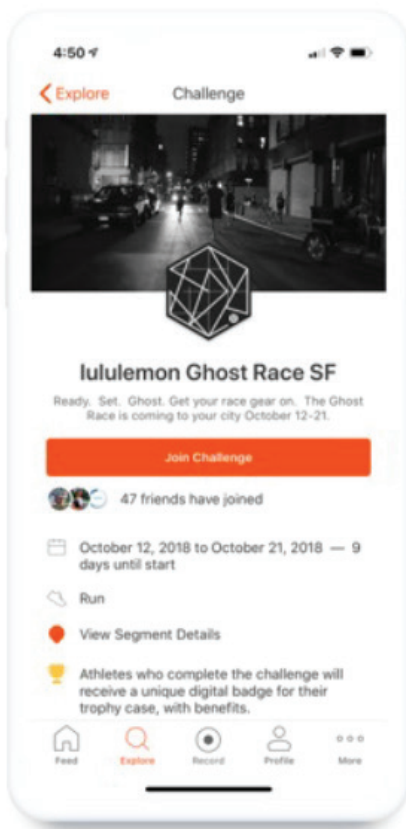
In addition to athletes and everyday joggers, hundreds of thousands of clubs are present on the platform and organizing activities and building communities: from friends, teams, brands, gear shops and more.

Strava is free, but a premium feature exists, allowing to benefit from (on top of free activity recording, device support and social network) route planning, segment competition, training dashboard, heart rate & power analysis, advanced metrics, goal setting, training log, beacon, personal heatmaps and premium support.

In terms of scale, Strava reports 76M users and 1B activities uploaded in the last 13 months.

Lululemon (sporting & yoga apparel) began by organically building its global run free club on Strava and getting the word out through its other social channels. Lululemon also created local Strava clubs in cities with brick and mortar stores, which combine to include more than 100,000 athletes. In addition to their online community, Lululemon motivated club members with unique challenges. The 40 | 80 Challenge, hosted in January, encourages runners to start the new year with the goal of completing either 40 km or 80 km in two weeks. In 2019, 220,000 people from 180 different countries ran 9.7 million kilometers during the challenge. Athletes who completed the 40 | 80 Challenge were awarded with a 25% discount off a full-price purchase. Although the prize could be redeemed online, athletes were encouraged to use their reward in person at a local store. Overall, the challenge is the largest event Lululemon has organized to date and resulted in a 10x return for the brand.⁷

⁷Source: Strava Business, 2021



05


Clubhouse
Clubhouse:

Coined as the social audio network, Clubhouse allows users to discover and take part to millions of conversations (rooms), filled with fascinating and unexpected conversations: from morning news to tech topics to deep thoughts.

Brands can either create specific rooms to discuss the in-and-outs of specific topics (rooms can be public or private) or create so-called 'clubs' which are dedicated to a limited amount of club members.

In terms of scale, Clubhouse has more than 10M weekly active users and gained lots of traction during the previous lockdowns as it quickly became one of the most downloaded app on iOS and Android marketplaces.

Durex was the first FMCG brand to enter on Clubhouse in Hong Kong. While love and sex is one of the most important elements for couples, Hong Kong is widely known as one of the cities that is more sexually inactive. Hong Kong people are shy and hesitate to talk about sex. Durex is not only a condom brand, it stands for love, sex and excitement. As a leader, Durex sees a responsibility to encourage and facilitate conversations to liberate sex. The objective with this event was to lead Sexual Wellbeing Discussion on Clubhouse, resulting in +500K social reach and 45K+ minutes of high quality engagement.⁸

⁸Source: Ogilvy APAC, 2021





06

Twitch:

The world's leading live streaming platform for gamers, but not only. With the many lockdowns impacting concerts and nightlife for instance, many artists and clubs turned to Twitch to go live with their fans.

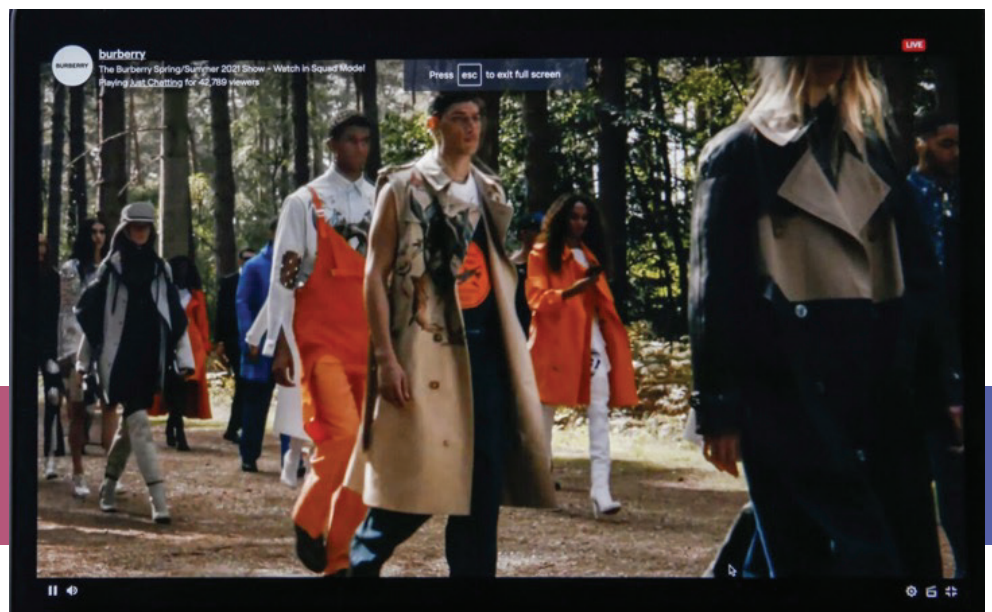
Twitch (which is owned by Amazon) is where millions of people come together live every day to chat, interact, and make their own entertainment together. Streamers can enjoy anything from games, music, talk shows, sports, travel & outdoors, chat, food & drink or special event.

Twitch also defined itself as a developer's dreamland, meaning that it allows developers to custom so-called 'extensions' that will benefit entire communities of streamers. In addition, Twitch is home to the biggest gaming influencers (and communities) making millions of dollars of revenue partnering with video game studios but also big corporations such as KFC.

In terms of scale, Twitch had 140M unique monthly visitors and 9.5M active streamers in 2021. Daily active users spend an average of 95mins on Twitch.⁹

*Burberry became the first luxury brand to livestream its 2020/2021 fashion show on the livestreaming platform. In the context of UK strict health measures in Sept. 2020, Burberry live streamed its fashion show on Twitch and had several viewpoints into the same window and 4 guest speakers commenting the show in real time.*⁹

⁹Source: Burberry, 2020

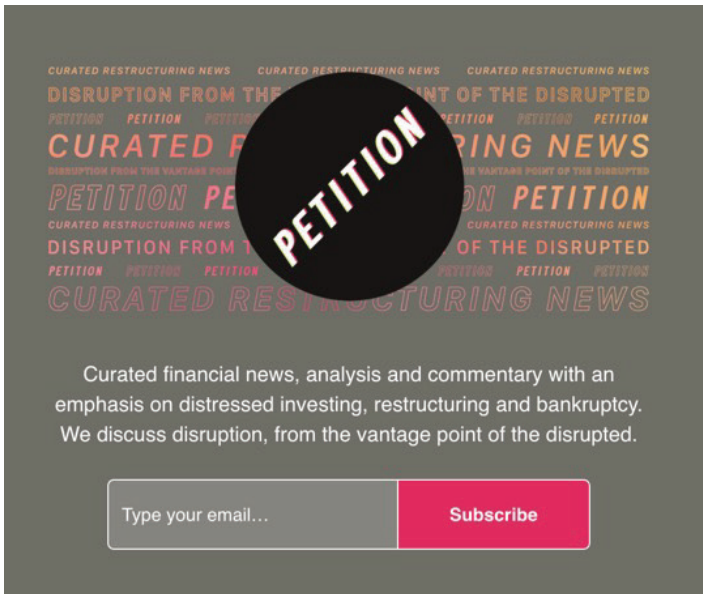




07

Substack:

Substack is home to writers of every size and shape. The service allows authors to easily create a newsletter, build a community and make profits from their own subscriptions. In a sense similar to Patreon, Substack focuses on newsletter and offers easy newsletter and community features so that writers/SMBs can focus on doing what they do best – writing.



Vittles

A food newsletter for novel times. Vittles publishes food and culture writing from across the world, platforming writers, illustrators and chefs, particularly those not given space within traditional food media.



BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY:

WHERE TO START

As mentioned previously, we believe communities are worth considering as part of holistic digital marketing strategies. Well managed communities can improve long-term business KPIs such as brand preference, customer retention, loyalty or even reputation. But in some cases, when done well, communities can also help deliver on short-term performance objectives by pushing its members to Social Commerce tactics for instance.

Here are some considerations to take into account for those exploring building a quality and engaged social community.

WHY:

Define the role and the purpose of your community. Do you want to rally customers around a specific goal/topic (i.e. preparing for a marathon if you're a running brand)? Do you want to create a community of users that help each other's with tips and tricks? Do you want to create a community that acts as customer support? The definition of the role of your community should base itself on solid competitive benchmarking and take into account what is the unique added value you're bringing to consumers (vs your competitors).

WHO:

Define who you want to attract (and retain) within your community. From niche to broad, keep in mind that quality overpasses quantity as recurrent exchanges and interactions are the cornerstone of efficient communities.

WHERE:

Define on which social platform you want to reach your community. From traditional community building on public/closed groups on Facebook to niche and exclusive forums on Patreon or Clubhouse, the type of platform used will influence the type of content and interactions to create and to expect. The definition of your community target audience will also influence the platform selection.

HOW:

Define how you will advertise and participate within your community. You have the option to brand or un-brand your community, and therefore engage frequently or not. We believe that brands should provide the canvas for efficient interactions (strategy, guidelines, moderation) but let the community interact without too much of interference.

BRAND ANGELS:

Define who will be the internal stakeholders for maintaining and managing your community on a daily basis. These internal curators will be responsible for moderating and monitoring community success as well as deploying new community features and engage with community members if needed.

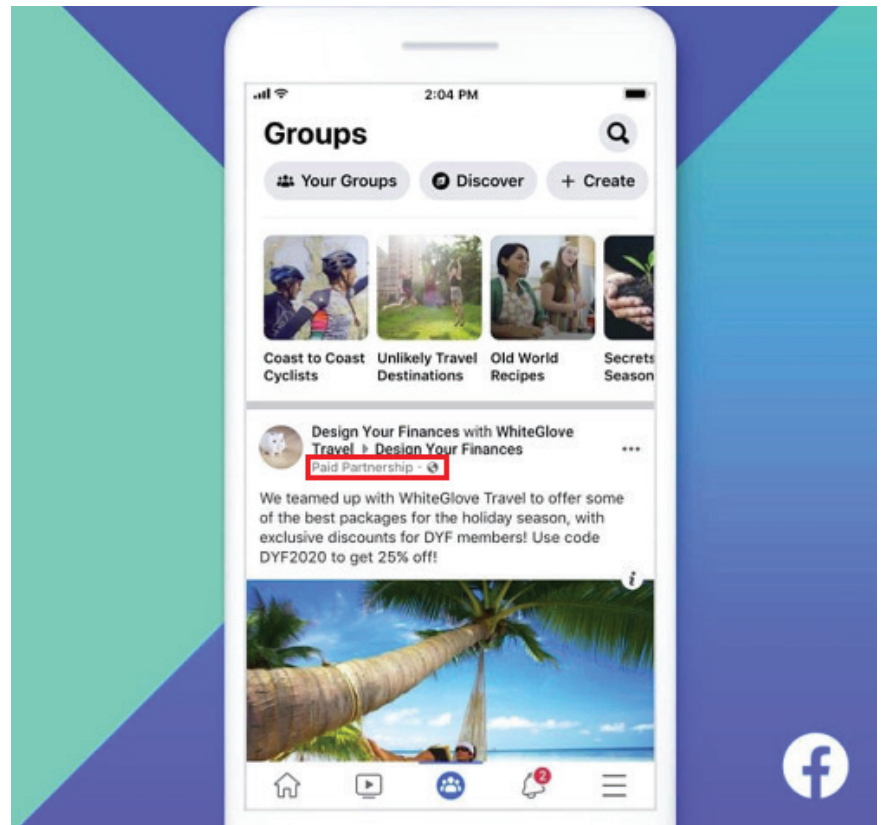
OMNI-CHANNEL:

Define how your community will have access to your omni-channel customer offering. From linking discount codes to your D2C to providing extra customer support on WhatsApp or even sending exclusive content privately to your super fans, there are several ways to operate your community holistically and build bridges with other existing digital tactics.

TAPPING INTO EXISTING COMMUNITY

As most of existing communities are either properties of brands, private or closed groups, it's extremely difficult for any brand to tap into an existing and external community. However, Facebook recently released Brand Content ads for groups, which means that brands can now partner with group admins to advertise within these groups (groups must be public and contain at least 1,000 members). Group admins can apply at Facebook and see if they meet all of eligibility criteria.

Branded content ads in partnership with influencers or publishers are another great way to engage a specific community with the help of the community owner, without being too direct nor too 'creepy'.



CONCLUSION

Communities can benefit your brand and its holistic digital marketing strategy in many ways: short-term or long-term, improving brand preference, reputation, locking in clients, increasing loyalty, delivering increased value, decreasing customer support costs or even helping in innovation and R&D.

Social communities (no matter the form nor the place) provide the playground for individual, relevant and meaningful relationships and will be key moving forward as social environments become more impersonal and more crowded than ever.

Lastly and most importantly, there is an opportunity to create and engage a community around virtually any brand, topic or theme.

*For more information around social communities, please contact Arnaud Vanhemelryck:
arnaud.vanhemelryck@ogilvy.com*

Contributors:
Dimitri Cologne
Rob Hill
Mathieu Gillain

