

The Brand Builder's Guide to Socials: Drive Loyalty & Advocacy in 2024.

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Introduction

Winning on Social Media can feel more complicated than ever in 2024.

As trends evolve, the fusion of fashion, beauty & Social Commerce has been cemented; shaping consumer behavior and informing brand strategies.

The year ahead holds exciting promise, alongside its challenges. A strategic understanding of emerging social practices and priorities is key. You can't begin to foster loyalty, or build Brand Advocacy, without it.

With consumers expecting to seamlessly transition from inspiration to purchase within feeds, the opportunity to add to your brand's bottom line cannot be overstated.

Illuminating the path for fashion & beauty brands to win, let's dive into the trends, tactics, and exact opportunities to leverage to see success.

For this report, the team at Duel have been joined by two special guests; *Grace Andrews*, Marketing Director for *Steven Bartlett & The Diary Of A CEO*, and *Sian Pilkington*, Senior Marketing Manager at *Mint Velvet*. Together, we delve into the beating heart of 2024's social trends – delivering strategies, exact tools, and expert advice to empower brand builders like yourself.

Embrace these trends, and enable the brand you build to transform audiences, followers & customers into passionate superfans.



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Trend #1 –

Community on Steroids

2024 is the year to engage, energize, and monetize your brand community.

Building a community is no longer enough. Now, it's all about strategizing around them and rewarding loyal fans in new ways.

This is the era where brands have woken up to knowing whether they have a community, or simply an audience. An audience is there; they exist. They might check in, they might check out. A community, however, sees fans going out of their way to connect over, and with, your brand. They're talking about you to a friend at the pub, they're suggesting their mum checks you out, and they'd recommend your product to anyone asking.

They're your Advocates, and they bring new customers to your community, CRM, and business daily.

The year ahead is for brands to transform more community members into Advocates; rewarding them, and providing value to nourish and nurture them.

We'll touch on how to do this in the next trend. Here's why you should...

A big shift from the back of 2023 was the rise of private communities. Adam Mosseri (Head of Instagram) shared that the biggest growth on Instagram happened through DMs, with much of the app's usage focused on private sharing. This has been amplified by new features, such as Broadcast Channels, that cater to these behaviors on the platform.

As communities begin to become more privatized, Advocates will be key to keeping your brand relevant in new social spaces.

“The only way you can really combat dark social is through community.

You want to make sure you're showing up in those conversations where... it might be Maddie down the road has posted an Outfit Of The Day on her Close Friends, and people want to know where she's got the outfit. Or you're at an event and you're like, ‘oh my God, I love her silver trousers’.

Those are the conversations you want to be authentic in and [where] you want to be showing up.”

Sian Pilkington,
Senior Marketing Manager @ Mint Velvet



What will communities expect from brands in 2024?

“Gen Z wants transparency. They want authenticity. They want all these buzzwords. It's the most cliché saying ever, but people buy from people – and that's because people connect with people's experiences, and people's stories, and people's journeys and struggles and all of that wonderful stuff.”

Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC

“2024 is all about how you make your customers feel a part of your brand. Our customer isn't Gen Z. She's a little bit older and she just wants to feel that she's buying from a brand that recognizes her, values her and appreciates her. We all like feeling part of something. How good does it feel when you get a freebie or some brand notices you?

Allow them to feel that, because that's the top tip there; be a part of something.”

Sian Pilkington,
Senior Marketing Manager @ Mint Velvet

Top tips for strategising your community...

- Show up where your community is; on the platforms they use, in the spaces they frequent
- Making them feel like they're part of something
- Giving them the opportunity to be noticed
- Rewarding them for being a fan
- Lead the conversations they want to be part of



Trend #2 –

Harnessing your Superfans

This is the hottest influencer marketing tactic of the year.

In today's Social Commerce landscape, we all have the power to influence. Social media platforms have revolutionized the way we connect, communicate, and consume. We are all creators, hyperconnected across multiple platforms, with our own circles of influence.

For successful brands, this means you have plenty of on-the-ground storytellers. The power lies in getting your customers to tell your story for you, bringing your community of storytellers together.

In 2023, many brands shifted their influencer tactics – moving away from bigger, professional content creators and instead tapping into nano-influencers, micro-influencers, and customer-led user generated content (UGC).

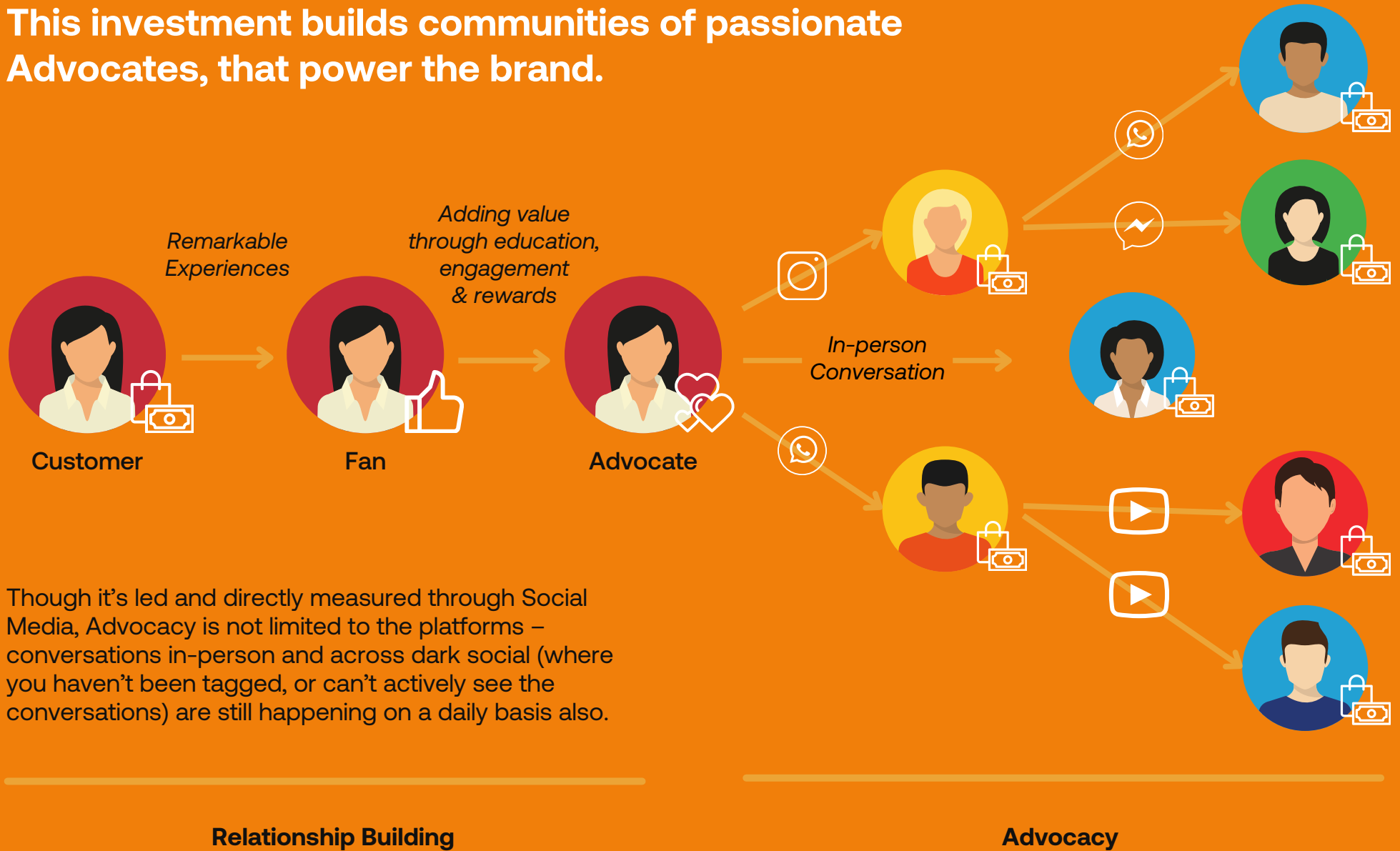
Since, this approach has tightened customer relationships and helped draw a brand's potential superfans into the customer funnel; giving them someone authentic, and perceived to be more trustworthy, to relate to.

Earlier this month, the [BoF-McKinsey](#) 'State of Fashion 2024: Consumer Survey' found shoppers now prefer content from “relatable and authentic” creators over “aspirational lifestyle or celebrity status” – Gen Z or not.

This kind of authentic engagement unlocks the Advocate, who goes on to tell your brand story and nurture others to become Advocates also.

So, how do you transform a customer into a fan, and a fan into an Advocate?

This investment builds communities of passionate Advocates, that power the brand.



Though it's led and directly measured through Social Media, Advocacy is not limited to the platforms – conversations in-person and across dark social (where you haven't been tagged, or can't actively see the conversations) are still happening on a daily basis also.

Relationship Building

Advocacy

Top tips for creating superfans...

1) Work with existing customers

As the creator economy evolves, so does consumer behavior – particularly their skepticism around being ‘sold to’. In 2024, we predict many brands will reduce their influencer spend and funnel these budgets towards existing customers.

Customers not only convert, but they also create long-term visibility.

2) Craft a unique place for them to belong

“The magic with fan to Advocacy, or fan to ambassadorship, is allowing them a place to be; allowing them a place to belong. The absolute brand that smashes it is Sephora. Their Sephora Beauty [Insider] Community is the most phenomenal example of community marketing I've ever seen. They've created a community content generating machine, and it's because they invested in community marketing [with] the biggest chunk of their marketing budget about four or five years ago. So they were ahead of the game.”

Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC

3) Develop long-lasting relationships & partnerships

It's one thing to say you work with lots of people, but to make a community you have to do more than that.

This is about incentivising customers to continue to share their love.

4) Provide value for their Advocacy (before they're an Advocate)

“We worked with Spotify to find our 10 most engaged listeners, and we've rewarded them with lifetime membership for The Diary Of A CEO events, and all these other kinds of things. We want to know how we can do that with YouTube, and how we can be the first tiered loyalty scheme for content consumption.

So, how can we reward our most loyal, engaged people that come back week on week? Who come and DM us, or tell us about events? And how do we curate all of that into a membership?”

Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC

Trend #3 –

The Art of Long-Form Storytelling

For the past three years, short-form content centered around trending audio has been a key strategy for growing on TikTok and Instagram.

But in 2024, solely hopping on trending audio isn't a complete strategy for your channel anymore. In some cases, jumping on big trends that don't align with your niche can even be more harmful than helpful...

“Virality in a trend that sits over here, when your mission is over here, is actually really detrimental to the brand. People don't talk about that very often. Your content's been sent by the algorithm in a certain direction, and you're reaching [those] sort of people.

Then next time, because you're not in that circle with that community, suddenly your content dies a death and you're like, ‘why is our engagement plummeting when we just got this viral Reel?’. That's how the algorithm works.”

Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC

We are loving the lean into authentic, longer-form content; even on short-form first platforms.

TikTok alone has gone from capping videos at 1 minute, to 10, to now 15 minutes. At first, this emerging trend will seem counterintuitive. After all, most marketing professionals have spent years mastering the skill of capturing attention within 1.5 seconds.

Who's going to watch a 15 minute long post?

Attention spans are not decreasing in 2024. In fact, the data shows us that the world is giving more attention to content & paid ads than ever before.

Users on TikTok now spend half their time watching videos of 1 minute or longer, according to [Insider Intelligence](#). After surpassing YouTube's average time spent by adult users in 2022, it's predicted TikTok's users will average 55 minutes-a-day of content consumption in 2024 – 5 minutes longer than viewers on YouTube.

“People are loving the long-form because it's leaning into all of the other trends we're seeing.

The really highly engaging content that tells a story, something where you feel really connected to the creator or the brand because you're being let into their world to some degree.

And it's not that kind of clickbait, two second content – it feels like you gain something, you learn something.

There's a piece of value here.”

Grace Andrews,

Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & The Diary Of A CEO



Storytelling opportunities...

To stand out, we predict creators and brands will get more creative with longer and more original content. It's what consumers are craving. They don't want to be sold to. They want to see something they haven't seen before.

Creativity and engaging storytelling is currency, as long-form becomes more popular.

This may seem daunting for many brands, as short-form feels more accessible. Instead, see 2024 as the year brands and creators can experiment with crafting longer content; producing pieces that resonate with the community in new ways, and humanize the brand.

This is a shift that enables brand builders to present stories in a cohesive, engaging way. Its burgeoning popularity promises a deeper level of consumer-brand engagement, by affording fans the opportunity to intimately connect with a brand's essence and the minds behind its creation.

“Storytelling is not a trend, it's one of the most powerful marketing tools in your toolkit.”

*Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC*

Expert advice for resurrecting a long-form strategy...

“When you're thinking about your content or creator briefings, think about how you can do an experiment...

Try and get 10 minutes worth of content, and give it a go and see what resonates.

That's all you can ever do on social media, anyway. I could sit here and tell you all the rules for social media – the only real rule is to experiment, because it changes at the speed of light. But, I think [TikTok] is going to be the most powerful storytelling platform next year.”

*Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC*

First, YouTube. Now, TikTok. It only seems natural that Instagram will follow suit.

If long-form is not currently part of your content plans, you know it should be.

Trend #4 – In-House Creators

In 2024, there will be a shift. Brands will migrate from contracting work with creators, to bringing their favourites in-house as owned creator talent.

Why?

The creator economy is currently valued at \$250 billion, and is expected to reach \$480 billion by 2028.

Per a recent study by IAB:

- 44% of advertisers plan to increase their spend with content creators in 2024
- Brands anticipate increasing creator content budgets by 25% across the year
- 39% of potential customers consume more content now than they did last year

Creators don't solely support driving potential customers through the top-of-funnel anymore.

Now, they can support customers through every part of your brand journey. This year, meaningful connections with creators will matter more than ever – as the importance of top quality content becomes imperative, at every part of the funnel.

Creator content is outperforming traditional branded content, organically and via paid channels. For brands to get a step ahead, they need to think like a content creator when it comes to their content strategy.

“Definitely leaning on that; brand[s] thinking like creators. We are hiring creators to work for us in house to create the content, which I think is really important. And we work with creators on longevity projects. We don't like to be a ‘flash in the pan’ kind of campaign, and that will continue for foreseeable with Mint Velvet.”

Sian Pilkington,
Senior Marketing Manager @ Mint Velvet

How do brands approach this in-house move?

Integrating well-aligned, established (but not hugely followed) creators with an existing brand in an authentic way to bring audiences together.

Together, this makes for a lovely combination of power, influence, and audience-leveraging for the brands that mean business.

“I think what works well is when an existing brand – or an existing business, company, product, or offering – brings on a very highly aligned creator into a very senior integrated ambassador role.

Maybe they take on part of the business, or they take on an actual role.”

*Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & DOAC*

The one factor all successful collaborations have in common...

“The difference between a successful and not successful brand partnership is probably longevity.

And you get that when you truly, truly invest in the creator. You're not handing them a brief and going, ‘get back to me on that campaign, we'll see how it performs and then we'll see what happens’.

You're going, ‘we want to talk to your audience, how do you think is best to do that? You lead on the creative because you know your audience better than anyone else. We'll build into that and we'll work with you on that’.”

*Grace Andrews,
Marketing Director for Steven
Bartlett & DOAC*



Ones to Watch

#1 – Using AI to Your Advantage

“The piece around dark socials and getting in the DMs is really interesting. We've just invested in an AI tool called ManyChat, where you are automating the DM process. Because if that's where the conversations are happening, you need to be investing time in that.

You can invest in a community manager who can get through X number of DMs an hour, or you can invest in tech that personalizes the responses. And these tools can read that message and send them in the right direction instantly, because the worst thing you can do is leave people hanging. That's when they're going to disappear and go somewhere else.

So there's really interesting tools emerging that can automate that world. And this platform in particular we've been working with really closely, but the ROI brands have seen working with them is phenomenal. And I think... that's where AI and community going forward is going to be interesting; because not only have we got this opportunity to hyper-personalize, we've got this opportunity to connect with as many people as we possibly can.”

Grace Andrews,

Marketing Director for Steven Bartlett & The Diary Of A CEO



Ones to Watch

#2 – Platform Selectivity

The average social media user logs into seven platforms each month ([Hootsuite](#)). Yes, seven. For any brand, trying to maintain a successful presence on one platform is hard enough; let alone trying to cover all the bases, avoid cross-posting, and meet their audience on every one.

But brands want, and need, to do more than maintain a presence to meet the expectations of consumers online.

In 2024, brands should strategically consider which of their platforms are driving KPIs, ROI and growth.

Brands will be focusing on their champion platforms, especially as resources and time are become more limited. Identifying top-performing platforms and focusing mostly (if not solely!) on those will become the norm.

This will result in Social Media Managers becoming experts in individual platforms. They will know and understand their audience, identify content that resonates by being able to experiment more, and find themselves easily able to stay on top of trends and platform-specific updates.

“If it doesn't feel right, don't do it. I'd say the ultimate thing is to stay true to who you are as a brand. If they're not right for your brand, don't just hop on them because everyone else is. Just turn it off, get out, [and] quit while you're ahead.

But we're putting more effort, time and money-wise, into the likes of TikTok. Instagram is our holy grail. We know it works, we know we can get the return there. Whereas TikTok this year alone... I looked at a stat this morning that said we've grown 19,000% year-on-year on TikTok, and we're literally just touching the surface.

How incredible is that?

So next year, that's where I'm taking the Finance Directors. Like, ‘this is where we need to be putting all of our money; into TikTok.’”

Sian Pilkington,
Senior Marketing Manager @ Mint Velvet



Summary



In the ever-evolving world of social media, mastering the art of brand building has never been more critical. The trends uncovered here go beyond mere observation – they are strategic imperatives, straight from the experts.

‘Community On Steroids’ sets the stage for the paradigm shift in how brands engage with their audience, transcending the conventional notions of community. ‘Harnessing Your Superfans’ delves into the transformative power of brand advocacy, turning loyal customers into fervent promoters. ‘The Art of Long-Form Storytelling’ reminds us of the potency of narrative arcs, providing brands with the tools to captivate and retain their audience in a world bombarded with content. Lastly, ‘In-House Content Creators’ explores the shift towards owned influencing, as brands increasingly recognize the impact of cultivating in-house talent.

Each of these trends will reshape the social media landscape in 2024.

Armed with these tactics and tips, you are empowered to not only navigate the challenges of social media but to transform them into opportunities.

Verity Hurd,

Brand Advocacy & Community Lead @ Duel

