F.01

F.02

F.03

Fandom

What Does it Mean to be a Fan?

Elizabeth Shea

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As a 10+ year UX Researcher, I've had the pleasure of working on a variety of household names. I especially love to improve technology that brings people closer to the things they love.

Disney

Mc Graw Hill

Google

facebook

amazon

D&D BEYOND

250 K

Fan Communities

From Halo Infinite to Hulu Originals, Game of Thrones to Golden Girls, fan communities have united to build wikis on our platform for just about every movie franchise, TV series, video game, or cultural phenomenon out there.

50 M

Pages of Content

Fans use our platform to document their favorite fictional worlds, creating millions of pages of specific content. How specific? We have 74 pages about the furniture of Star Wars alone.

350 M

Monthly Users

Thanks to thousands of dedicated admins around the world, our wikis are the definitive resource for information about the franchises they cover.

Fandom

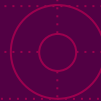## The World's Largest Fan-Generated Entertainment & Gaming Platform

Our Standard Screening Question

How much of a fan are you of the topics listed below?

[Not a fan / Fan / Superfan]

- ➔ Movies
- ➔ Video Games
- ➔ TV/Streaming Shows
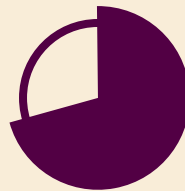- ➔ Music
- ➔ Books/Comic Books

The Problem

FANS RESIST LABELS

Many

of those that identify themselves as fans do not identify as superfans even when engaging more with the content

Some

of those that identify themselves as fans do not interact frequently with the content
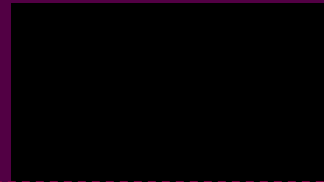
Question

What do you call yourself?

What do you think most people said?

A) Fan

B) Superfan

C) Gamer

D) Otaku

*Audio from Interviews*

Question

What do you call yourself?

A) Fan

B) Superfan

C) Gamer

D) Otaku

"Fan" was the most common term people used to describe themselves often adding a modifier such as "big" "avid" or "huge" rather than "superfan" or vertical specific terms.

Varying the intensifier has inconsistent impacts across levels and types of entertainment

Self reported fandom does not tell the whole story, and can easily be skewed by word choice
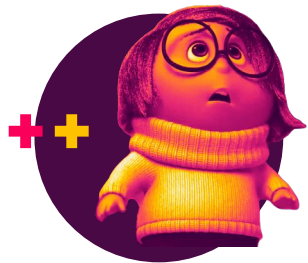
Movies (Vertical)

Super	**43%**
Avid	**36%**
Huge	**48%**

Games (Vertical)

Super	**55%**
Avid	**49%**
Huge	**58%**

Movies (Genre)

Super	**28%**
Avid	**21%**
Huge	**28%**

Games (Genre)

Super	**25%**
Avid	**33%**
Huge	**31%**

Movies (IP)

Super	**17%**
Avid	**12%**
Huge	**17%**

Games (IP)

Super	**11%**
Avid	**13%**
Huge	**12%**

Toxic Fans

→ Are obsessed to the point at which they are defined by their fandoms

→ They have no time for a normal life or other interests

→ They gatekeep others from being able to say they are fans

Non-Toxic

→ Are multifaceted individuals with many interests

→ Have balance between their hobbies and the rest of their life

→ Allow anyone to participate with them in celebrating a Fandom
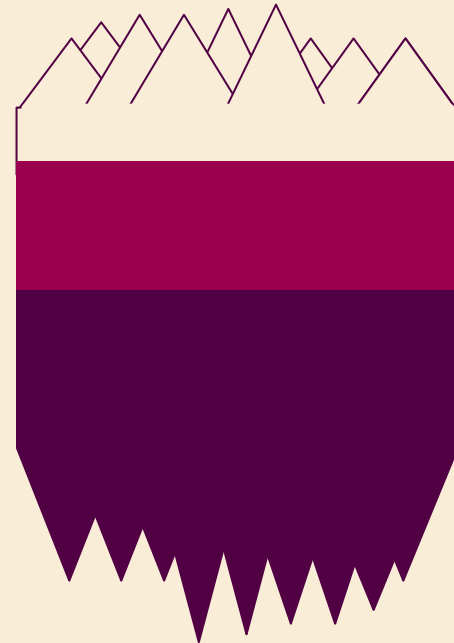
Fan Iceberg

Those who are more involved in a fandom are more likely to know the depths of the fandom and to know people who are more involved than themselves.

Less of a Fan

More of a Fan

Question

Who can be considered a fan?

A) Anyone

B) You must at least watch/play

C) You must at least have an emotional connection

D) All of the above

Question

Who can be considered a fan?

A) Anyone

B) You must at least watch/play

C) You must at least have an emotional connection

D) All of the above

Fans can have a generous interpretation, wanting anyone to be able to consider themselves a fan.

Minimum qualifications would be some amount of engaging in the content and getting some amount of enjoyment or developing an emotional connection.

To better understand fanship nuances, we developed a 25 question model

EMOTIONS

→ Investment in the universe

→ Stories that help me connect

→ Lasting memories

→ A feeling of accomplishment

→ A sense of immersion

→ Excitement of discovery

→ Guilty pleasure

BEHAVIORS

→ Discussing with friends or family

→ Discussing on social media / boards

→ Reading or writing fanfiction

→ Participating in cosplay

→ Buying collectibles

→ Attending themed events

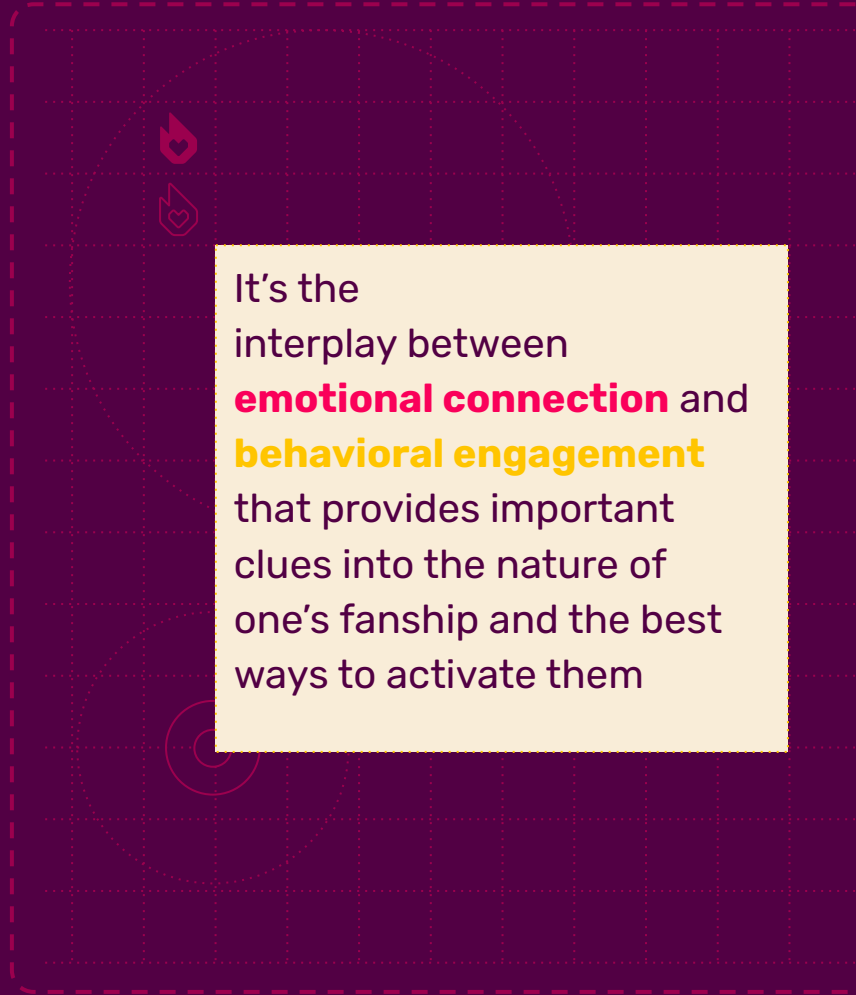→ Making it a permanent part of life (pet name, tattoo, etc.)

More ≠ Better

With two questions we are able to achieve the same predictive power on fanship

How frequently do you interact with…?

How connected do you feel with …?

25 QUESTIONS

R2 = 66%

2 QUESTIONS

R2 = 67%
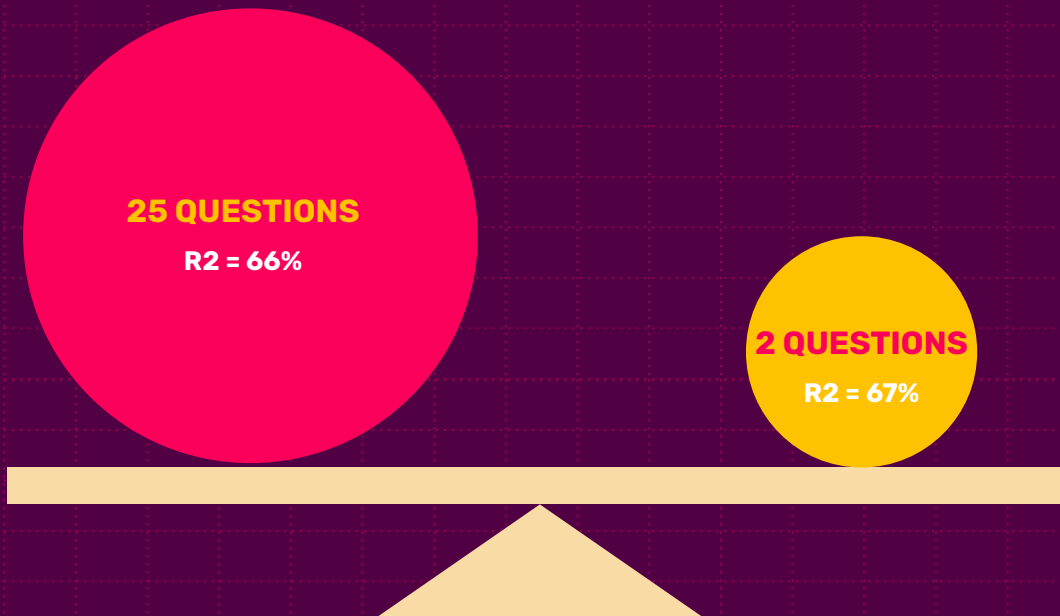
It's the interplay between **emotional connection** and **behavioral engagement** that provides important clues into the nature of one's fanship and the best ways to activate them

LEGACY FANS

Can be re-engaged through win-back strategies that remind them why they love the IP

DIEHARDS

Drive organic growth and help sustain long-term engagement with the franchise

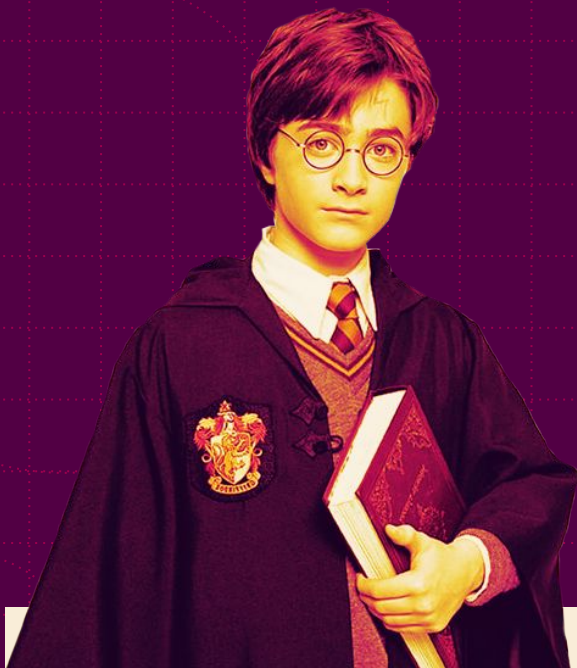High Connection

Low Engagement

High Engagement

Low Connection

DRIFTERS

Limited opportunity to convert into fans, but could be nudged to connect via low-commitment entry points and social proof

HABITUAL BROWSERS

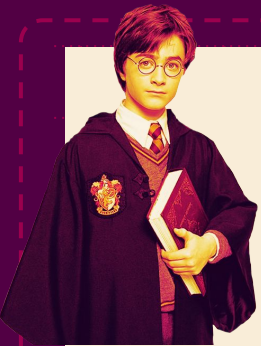Can be converted into deeper fans through opportunities to feel like insiders rather than passive consumers

Self-reported
Fan of
Harry Potter

Self-reported
Fan of
Lord of the Rings

**Self-reported
Fan of
Harry Potter**

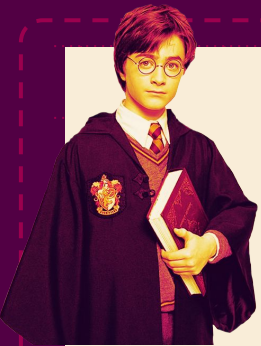**Self-reported
Fan of
Lord of the Rings**

Self-reported Fan of Harry Potter

➔ Discuss with family and friends **regularly**

➔ Seek out other in-universe media **regularly**

➔ Dive deep into the franchise or lore **regularly**

➔ Read/write fanfiction or fan theories **regularly**

➔ Attend themed events **occasionally**

➔ Participate in cosplay **rarely**

Self-reported Fan of Lord of the Rings

➔ Discuss with family and friends **occasionally**

➔ Seek out other in-universe media **occasionally**

➔ Dive deep into the franchise or lore **occasionally**

➔ Read/write fanfiction or fan theories **occasionally**

➔ Attend themed events **never**

➔ Participate in cosplay **regularly**

Self-reported Fan of Harry Potter

↑ **High Connection**

↑ **High Engagement**

Self-reported Fan of Lord of the Rings

↑ **High Connection**

↓ **Low Engagement**

Takeaways

Study

→ Fanship can be fraught with toxicity but many still want their fan spaces to be inclusive.

→ "Fan" is often the term people choose to identify themselves but don't use consistent modifiers to indicate levels of fanship.

→ Fans are made of two essential elements; their emotional connection and behavioral engagement. When taken together these dimensions provide a more useful measure.

Takeaways

Talk

→ Use this study as a case study of mixed methods research on research to determine if there is a better way to ask the questions that have become standard for you

→ *Ask Yourself:*
   ◆ How confident do you feel in your most essential screening questions?

   ◆ Do you have any terms that are nebulous or different people may interpret differently?

Thank You

Elizabeth Shea

Fandom

2025
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