

NSR

New Society Rules |



The Rising Superpower

NSR is a research platform exploring the changing rules of society. If you want to better understand these changes and do something about it, then get in touch with Alex@wearepi.com.



Cover: The Fabricant
x Zeeuws Museum

Current: The artists
behind a music NFT
collaboration between
Sturdy Exchange and
Bacardi. Left to right:
Serwah Attafuah, Denise
De'ion and Perfxn.

We're entering a new world order where fandoms are the new cultural superpower.

In 1971, when John Lennon released "Power To The People", the only real power most fans had was to buy the record and sing along at concerts to words inspired by Black Panthers "All Power To The People". Fifty years later, we're entering an entirely new age of fandom, propelled by grassroots communities using emerging Web3 technology to take more control. This new movement is putting power in the hands of fans by making them active stakeholders who are co-creating the cultural narrative—and even sharing the profits with artists and brands.

How did we get here? Historically, fandom has been a one-way street. Your main job as a fan has always been to consume: buy the movie ticket, stream the album, frame the print, cheer from the stands. No matter how much you loved your favourite sports club, musician or artist—you didn't have any say in what they did. Historically you couldn't even really interact with them. You were a passive viewer and while you may have felt invested in their success, financially, you weren't.

In the social-media age, fans' influence grew as a new economy flourished on likes, two-way conversation threads and big tech harvesting everyone's personal data. Now, on the back of new Web3 technologies, fandoms are evolving to become more active contributors and co-creators. People are coming together like never before to

form communities of real influence. The movement is decentralising power away from the businesses and systems that control the decisions, towards putting meaningful control in the hands of fans. Fans are giving input on business decisions, product decisions, creative decisions—and even gaining financial benefits. They're investing in their favourite musicians, and reaping the rewards down the line. They're helping their teams find untapped talent. They're developing fan-fiction web series for their favourite artists.

Like the early days of the internet, many of the initiatives are purpose-driven community projects that don't yet have all the answers. This new age of Web3-enabled fandom is being built ground-up by passionate explorers at the intersection of culture and technology.

This is the latest edition of our ongoing report on society's changing cultural rules. It's intended for any curious mind that, like us, is trying to figure out where the world is heading. By hearing from global voices leading this movement, we take you beyond the hype of Web3, NFTs and Metaverse, to gain a deeper and more honest understanding of how fans have become powerful stakeholders. We hope you finish this report feeling enlightened about this new era of fandom; sympathetic to the efforts being made to drive change; and excited to get involved.



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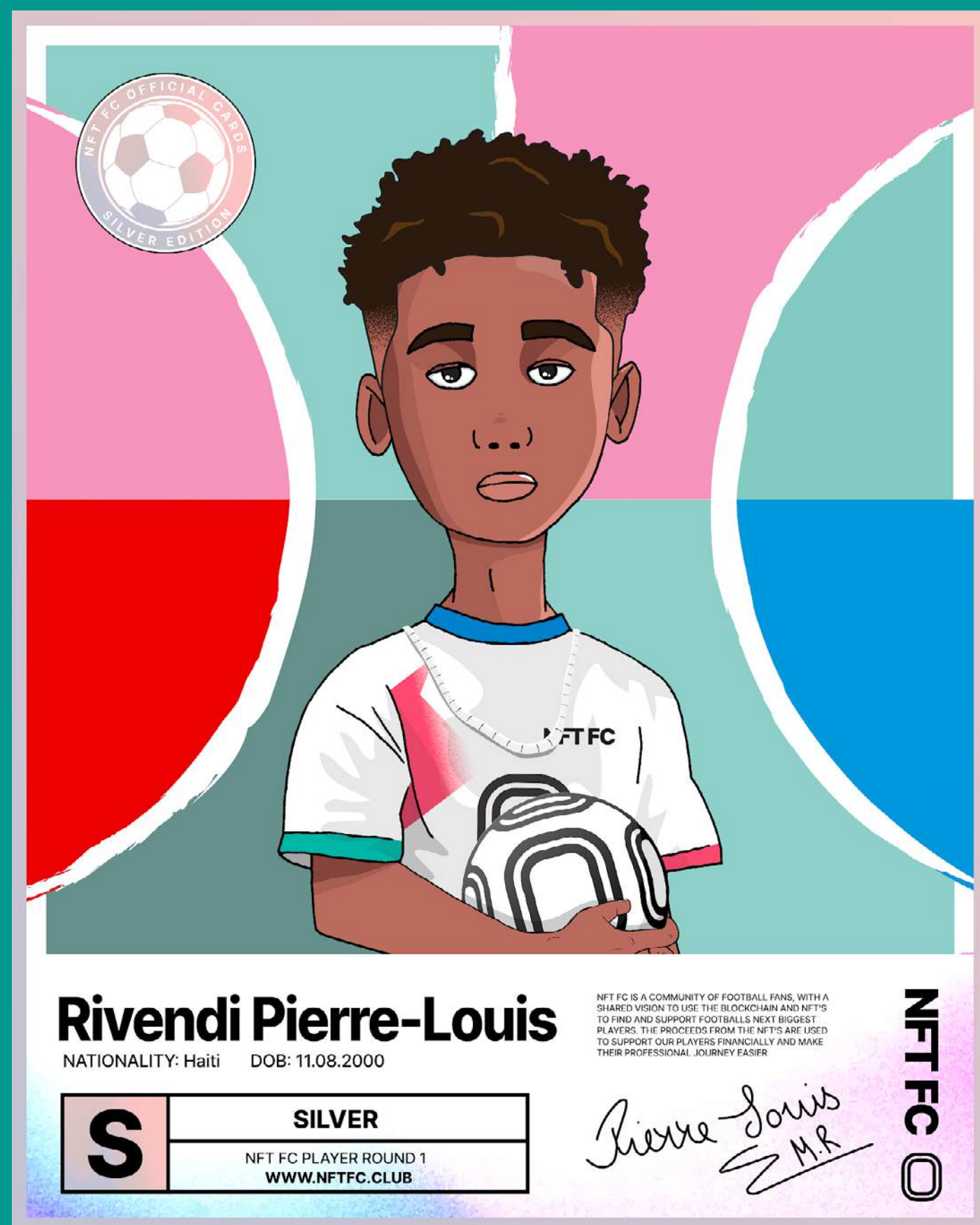
A Guide to Web3 Terminology

Web3 is a new and evolving space and with it come a whole new vocabulary. This glossary is our way of explaining some key Web3 terms used in this report, in a way that feels clarifying but also actionable.

Football's Future Belongs to Fans

We spoke to *Finley Hayhurst* about how Web3 is taking the power away from the football establishment and putting it into the hands of fans.





One of the player cards from the first 'drop' NFT FC ran at the beginning of 2022.

Finley Hayhurst is a former professional football player and founder of NFT FC, a community of football fans using Web3 to revolutionise the future of football.

For those who are new to NFT FC, how would you describe what it is?

NFT FC is a decentralised sports agency and scouting platform that aims to support upcoming football players and enhance their relationship with supporters. We believe the strength and knowledge of a well-resourced community over any one individual is better suited to finding upcoming sport stars.

“We believe the strength and knowledge of a well-resourced community is better suited to finding upcoming sport stars than any one individual.”

Members are able to vote on the players they want us to support, prior to each season, via a vote2earn model. As a reward, we are going to give away a token to whoever partakes in the vote, and tokens can be used to earn exclusive benefits. It's a fully decentralised platform that finds and supports athletes together.

Who makes up the current NFT FC community?

I'd say it's a pretty healthy mix of football fans that are really into NFTs and then football fans in general, who are looking to get into NFTs, cryptocurrency and the blockchain in general.

Being a former professional player yourself, you have a personal connection to football, but what inspired you to create NFT FC?

Competition is huge to becoming a professional footballer. Most kids are turned away from a young age and they have a slim chance of making it. If you don't know the right people and you're not in a country where the infrastructure and the academies

are promoting youth, it can be quite difficult. For example, I never had a big reputation in Australia, so for me it was hard.

It can also often cost a lot to go overseas to try your luck at trials—an amount of money which many young players don't have. When I went to England, I went before the season started during pre-season and spent a few months trialling at that club. For a young player especially, it's hard to have that upfront money to support yourself while you're on trial.

Even for those that do have the potential, the barriers to becoming professional are big. They might be lucky and an agent will come along and support them. But because they're so young and early on in their career, these agents have more leverage. They use that to their advantage, taking five to ten percent of their future salaries and sometimes even up to fifty. It's been evident as the years go on and as more money is being made from football, that the power is slowly shifting to the bigger corporations and businessmen that are running football.

“At NFT FC, we're trying to put the power back into the hands of players and fans, because they're really the two driving forces of football.”

In this day and age, there are more ways that we can support these players without actually having to take away from their footballing salary. At NFT FC, we're trying to put the power back into the hands of players and fans, because they're really the two driving forces of football.

NFT FC is all about shifting the power imbalance in sport from the institutions and corporations, back to the players and fans. Talk to us about some of the ways you are empowering that shift.

Our focus is on supporting the players that are in academies and don't necessarily have agents—or are in a position where they need an agent. The long-term goal is to create a platform where players can create their own profiles and our community can

vote on the players they want us to support, having no need for a centralised team or scouts finding the player.

We've supported one player already. His name is Rivendi Pierre-Louis and he lives in New York. One of the community members on NFT FC found his highlights on social media. We looked at them and saw the potential in him; his backstory resonated with what we are trying to build at NFT FC. He had a really rough upbringing. He lived in Haiti during the earthquakes and his whole family moved to America. We saw it as a perfect opportunity to support a player early on in the project and help give some exposure to his career.

We sold about 370 NFTs and when he's ready to go on trial and take a chance of becoming a professional footballer, that's where we'll step in and support him financially. The way we see supporting players is with the bills that they have to pay, the accommodation, the travel costs, and stuff like that. The goal of the project is very much to have all of the players who we support turn professional, because that's where the benefit for the fans that buy into NFT FC comes from.

What are some of those benefits fans get in exchange for their player support?

NFT FC gives more access and benefits to the community that sports fans otherwise wouldn't be able to get. The first one being the access to the early stages of the player's career.

As a football fan, the idea of finding a player in their early years and watching them grow into a successful player definitely resonates in games like FIFA's 'Career Mode' and 'Football Manager'. Imagine if you played a part in supporting Cristiano Ronaldo when he was at the football academy Sporting Lisbon and if, years later, while he's at Manchester United, you got game tickets in exchange for the support you gave him in his early years.

How do those benefits for fans change as a player progresses throughout their career?

It's not just a case of supporting these players early on and then following them on social media.

We want to give more of an in-depth look at their player journey and how they're going week to week.

As part of the NFT FC community, you get access to the player's journey later in their career as well with giveaways, signed jerseys, meetups, and calls when they make it professionally. The blockchain allows us to give that back to the fans. We can do that through token-gated channels in our Discord, which is where our community comes together and talks about the project and football in general.

"Imagine if you played a part in supporting Cristiano Ronaldo when he was at Sporting Lisbon and if, years later, while he's at Manchester United, you got game tickets in exchange for the support you gave him in his early years."

Beyond connecting players and fans, how else do you see NFT FC shaking up the industry?

For any sports player, a community of people looking to support you without any strings attached is going to be more interesting to you than an agent that's just taking a large percentage of your salary.

What we are trying to do goes bigger than just any one agent. We want to provide what these agents provide to players, but we can help players with other areas as well, like their merchandise and their personal brands.

By collaborating with our players on their merchandise and creating a proper clothing brand, we can actually look to give a percentage of merchandise profits back to our stakeholders—the fans. For example, look at the music industry. People who like the music of up-and-coming musicians can now support them in return for their future salary. We are going to aim to do something similar with our merchandise.

It's not just all about one company profiting off of fan bases that already exist or trying to build a fanbase just so they can profit off it. It's about actually giving the community a chance to make money as well.



Rivendi Pierre-Louis, the first athlete to be supported by NFT FC's community fund.

As a sports fan, is there anything else happening in the space right now that is really exciting to you?

There are a few good projects now that are looking to collectively own sports teams. There's a big one in basketball called Krause House where they're looking to collectively own a basketball team. We're talking about something that—for football fans, or sports fans in general—it would be in their wildest dreams: to own a football or sports team! Web3 technology is giving fans a chance to actually do that.

"For football fans, it would be in their wildest dreams to own a football or a sports team. Web3 technology is giving fans a chance to actually do that."

Based on this trajectory, what does the future look like for NFT FC and football fans?

It's going to put the power back in the hands of fans. Web3, and the rise of projects using blockchain, DOAs and NFTs, is actually giving the fans more of a voice. If we can give these fans more of a voice and more of a say in how the clubs are run and certain voting decisions, it is only going to benefit sport in the long-term. You're going to see a lot of the smaller teams and smaller clubs first give more access and ownership to their fans.

From just a pure fan perspective, it's definitely an exciting future. It's not necessarily about how much money we can make, but the impact we can make together. When projects do it well, there's that big sense of community and they're all in it together and they're all going to win together.

You can learn more about NFT FC and the ways they are shaking up the sports industry [here](#), and connect with Finley [here](#).

As the world's most popular spectator sport, football has always had a massive and passionate fanbase. Now, new technology is empowering football fans in unprecedented ways—harnessing fans' collective power to effect change.

455m

Cristiano Ronaldo's fanbase on Instagram alone. He is the most followed person on Instagram today.

Instagram, 2022

€1.52b

The amount of money Premier League fans spent on supporting their teams in 2019. That's enough money to buy three Premier League clubs—Leicester City FC, Everton FC, and Aston Villa FC, based on their 2022 enterprise value.

eToro & KPMG, 2019; KPMG, 2022

50%

The amount of athlete income some agents take, particularly for athletes from working-class backgrounds. Agents typically earn between 5-10% of player salary per year and agents may earn 10-20% of product or service endorsements.

NFT FC Whitepaper, 2022

€584

The amount of money 15% of Premier League supporters claimed to spend annually funding their football fanaticism. That's £95 more than the average annual water bill (€474) per household in the UK.

Tribuna, 2021

The Rise of 'Niche' Fandoms

We talked to *Deere*, a full-time streamer about building fanbases on Twitch, and why the future of gaming is going to be all about embracing 'niche' fandoms.



Deere is a full-time streamer on Twitch and the founder of the Twitch team ‘Stream Queens’. One of a growing number of creators on the platform who are carving out a space for drag culture within the gaming community, Deere sees thousands of fans tune into her streaming live, five days a week.

Today, gaming is your full-time job. Let’s rewind to when you were growing up. Has gaming always been a big part of your life?

I have loved gaming ever since I was a kid—I am absolutely a fan. I loved how, like movies, you could resonate with the characters and the stories, but also have input in how it played out by being active and engaging.

I’m not sure if the word “gamer” completely clicks for me, I feel like it has connotations with toxicity and competitive players, but essentially I am one.

What inspired you to bring the world of drag into the gaming space?

I have simultaneously loved fashion and makeup, and been effeminate, from a young age as well. So I wanted to imagine a way where my love for fashion, makeup, and gaming, could intersect. Initially, I struggled with how to merge them in ways other than cosplay.

“I wanted to imagine a way where my love for fashion, makeup, and gaming, could intersect.”

In 2016 I decided to create a Twitch channel specifically for combining drag and video games. I felt passionate about it, but I never really knew if it would be financially viable. Nobody was combining drag and playing video games at the time. Who knew if there was a market for it? I wasn’t sure if I’d ever have a single fan, let alone thousands!

Did your fanbase kick-off immediately, or did it take time to build up?

I had to work really hard to get where I’m at. At first I was paying out of pocket, like most drag artists and gamers do. After years of grinding, streaming as often as I could around my day job, and trying to establish myself as a live-streamer and entertainer, it started to pay off. Both with making friends and fans, but also in generating revenue to sustain it. Now it’s my full-time job, which is a dream come true.

For those who have never had the pleasure of watching you live-stream on Twitch, could you describe your gaming aesthetic?

“My name is DEERE, let’s play what you fear!” That’s my catchphrase. I’m fabulous and I like to think I look mystical. I appear in drag every stream—I think of it as an experience, just like when you go watch a drag show. At the same time as all the glamour and beauty, I like to play scary-themed video games to keep everyone on the edge of their seats.

I have a pretty calm demeanour and so I’m not reactive to the scares much at all. I’ve had so many people tell me that I make horror-genre games more accessible by presenting them in a calm tone. Fans on TikTok call me “the unbothered queen” because I don’t jump!

You’re on Twitch five days a week. What’s it like streaming to a live audience?

I love engaging and having conversations with fans in real-time, while getting to be comfortable in my own space. Like lots of queer people and gamers, I am more introverted, that’s why I love being able to put on my costume and play a more extroverted version of myself. My drag gives me that power.

The other beauty of live-streaming is that it’s all very in-the-moment. In live-streams many people filter in and out, so you get lots of different perspectives and thoughts. There’s this connection I feel when we all experience something together and then discuss it. It’s like when you watch a movie, you immediately want to talk about it with the friends you saw it with.



In 2019, Deere founded the 'Stream Queens' channel on Twitch.

Who is your core fanbase on Twitch?

My fanbase is amazing and consists of so many different people across lots of different ages, backgrounds and walks of life. Most love drag, love horror, love both, are queer themselves, or allies to the queer community, and want that space to be themselves and to be authentic.

“People don’t have to question whether they are accepted in my space, and I’m so proud to be able to provide that for others.”

By doing drag on Twitch, I’m sending a signal to the queer community, as well as allies to the community, that I’m here and unapologetic about my queerness—and that being queer is intrinsic to my channel space. People don’t have to question whether they are accepted in my space, and I’m so proud to be able to provide that for others.

When you first started combining drag and gaming, you weren’t sure if there would be a big fanbase for it. Now you’ve not only seen it take off, but have helped grow the movement through a collective you founded called Stream Queens. Tell us about it!

Stream Queens is an all-drag troupe of content creators on Twitch. It’s like a hub for fans to discover and experience drag on the platform. Since we are international, there’s almost always someone live. It puts drag at the fingertips of the fans.

Drag is a tool that can unlock parts of your personality that you don’t always get to express, and bringing that to an online platform is so important to me. It makes drag more accessible because not everyone can go to the club to do or enjoy drag.

You’ve been gaming since you were a kid, and live-streaming on Twitch for over six years. How have you seen fan culture and engagement change over that time?

The world is so interactive these days. Everyone has a voice, and simultaneously, everyone’s a critic. When I was a kid, we were at the mercy of game developers because we couldn’t give any input. But nowadays, with social media and downloadable content for games, fans can have more input.

In 2019, so many fans demanded that a character named Mileena be added to Mortal Kombat 11—myself included—that the developers eventually added her. It was a huge win for the fans, and proof we have a say.

Fan mods are also one of the coolest things in the world. Mods are adjustments fans make to a game to change and add variety—most popularly, changing costumes of the characters. It allows creative fans to not only learn how games are made, but to also add to them themselves. The constant creativity is so fun and inspiring. The thing with fan modifications, unlike the actual companies that make the games, is that they’re ever-changing and evolving.

As fans gain more visibility and power, is gaming culture as a whole becoming more inclusive?

I feel like now there are so many ways to discover content creators to resonate with. There’s Twitch, Twitter, TikTok and more platforms that encourage and support establishing fandoms. In a general sense, the gaming industry is still shifting more and more. The days of always having a white dude as the main character are over. There’s something for everyone.

What worries me the most is that the generalised main audience is so resistant to change. What hasn’t changed is that there are still trolls, haters and naysayers in gaming culture.

I still see comments on Twitter and YouTube, especially regarding me, saying things like “who asked for this?” and “this doesn’t represent gamers”. Anyone that doesn’t fit the young, white, cis-men standard can unfortunately relate.

That’s what bothers me about the toxic homophobic fans that come across what I do. To them it’s a zero-sum game. Every single idea needs to appeal to them or it’s a “who is this for?” question. It never crosses their mind that maybe this isn’t their thing and maybe they’re not the target customer.



Deere with Ongina from Rupaul's Drag Race season 1. Ongina is also a streamer on Twitch, you can follow her [here](#).

What will it take to get to a gaming environment where every type of fan feels welcome?

A cultural shift—instead of listening to the main audience, acknowledging all the parts of the audience individually. “Gamer” is not an absolute concept. Not everyone will always feel represented in every single project, and that’s okay. There’s nuance to gaming and so many different layers.

“Most people out there form a real connection with their fans by connecting with a niche.”

I just hope to see a time where we aren’t attacked for simply having different interests. Most people out there form a real and true connection with their fans by connecting with a niche. That’s how we feel seen, appreciated and celebrated.

When I was featured on Xbox’s Twitch channel last year for Pride, the biggest reaction was generally homophobic. However, I also had tons of individuals

coming to me and noticing me for the first time, with supportive comments like “I never knew something like this existed and I love it!”. I want this for all niche interests in gaming.

How can we as fans of anything—gaming, music, fashion, sports—play a role in creating more positive fan environments?

I think the best thing we can do is just be there for the individuals, creators, artists, and collectives that bring us joy. Prop up and celebrate the ones that are doing the things we like to see. Be fans of the things that make the world a better place.

The more that we have people championing for diversity, demanding inclusion and celebrating it when it happens, we will continue moving forward.

You can follow Deere’s live streams on Twitch [here](#). To explore the wider world of drag on Twitch, follow the Stream Queens channel [here](#).

With the rise of platforms like Twitch, there are more ways to connect with gamers and gaming communities than ever before. It's bringing visibility and power to a wider world of voices, interests and subcultures in gaming.

140m

The number of monthly active users on Twitch and Discord in 2021.

Business of Apps, 2022

9m

The number of streaming creators on Twitch in 2021.

Business of Apps, 2022

1100

The number of streaming 'tags' on Twitch—including interest areas like K-Pop, Drag, Travel, Cooking, Body Positivity and Knitting.

Twitch Directory, 2022

200k

The number of game modifications that have been created by fans in The Sims. More than 110,000 mods have been created for Minecraft.

The Sims Resource, 2022; CurseForge, 2022

Re-imagining the VIP Pass

We spoke to *Ryan Abary*, Community Manager at Sturdy Exchange, about how artists are curating NFT experiences for their fans.



One of the exclusive live events thrown by Sturdy Exchange for holders of a Hoodlums NFT.

Ryan Abary is the Community Manager at Sturdy Exchange, a music platform working directly with musicians and creators to curate exclusive NFT experiences for music fans and collectors. As a Community Manager, Ryan oversees community-led offline and online events, as well as the moderation of Sturdy Exchange's Discord channel.

Within this new exciting world of NFTs, most are still being sold only as digital collectables, they have few benefits offline aside from financial investment and clout. But Sturdy Exchange is taking the usage of NFTs a step further, leveraging them in new ways. Talk to us about this model, and why you've decided to take the value of NFTs to the next level.

In music, what we're hearing is that fans don't just want an NFT. As much as they enjoy the album-cover artwork or the song, they want access to the artist. They want to really be heard by them. They want to be known as a collector of this particular piece.

Going from casual listener and fan to NFT collector opens up a world of access to music fans. At Sturdy Exchange, we're enabling all of this.

“In music, fans don't just want an NFT ... They want access to the artist.”

What are some of the types of 'access' you offer music fans through NFTs?

The NFTs we offer, allow artists and musicians the opportunity to provide exclusive merchandise to their biggest fans—the things they couldn't find anywhere else. We've also used them as a means for launching and supporting undiscovered artists. As an NFT collector, a fan can also split song earnings with artists, and get access to private Discord channels to connect with their favourite artists.

The concept of NFTs—and the benefits they can offer—are still new to most people. Are the people who are buying them from Sturdy Exchange tech fans, or are they music fans?

It's about a 60/40 split, sixty percent being tech and crypto fans, and forty percent being purely music fans.

In general, there's a bit of a roadblock with fan onboarding, because of the stigmas that exist around NFTs and crypto. Some people are still somewhat wary of the space.

So it's mostly tech and NFT fans with a shared interest in music that are dominating the space right now, as they are already comfortable.

Fan hesitation surrounding NFTs seems to be a big barrier, not just in music, but in other industries, like sport and fashion. What is it about the NFT space that makes people so wary?

I think what it boils down to is that people are not familiar with the new tech yet, and a lot of the fans aren't reading up on NFTs. Digital ownership is a new concept to them—it just sounds like a scam. It's like in the late Eighties or early Nineties, when people were unsure of the internet.

It's just very early on, we are only a year or year and a half into this whole industry. And I guess from our side, we're not communicating it right. We are still trying to figure that out.

What are some of the ways you're experimenting with how to explain the benefits of NFTs to music fans?

If we're talking to people completely new to NFTs, and we describe them as 'digital collectibles', it adds some clarity for them.

But when we add a layer and start to talk about NFTs from the point of view of access, that's when fans start understanding more. This is especially true for the super fans, because they recognize the value of NFTs as a means of getting close to their favourite artists.





“When we talk about NFTs from the point of view of access, that’s when fans start understanding more ... From their lens, it’s like a VIP pass.”

From their lens, it’s like a VIP pass. It’s their way of saying, “Hey, I collected your NFT. I collected your digital art. Look at me. I’m a super-fan of yours!”

Positioning NFTs as a VIP pass definitely sounds like an appealing selling point for fans. Can you give us some examples of VIP music experiences you’ve created?

We did an album drop with PartyNextDoor; fans were able to go to listening parties, get exclusive merch, and meet the artists.

We also did a launch for Hoodlums, an NFT artist. All Hoodlums NFT-holders received white glove VIP treatment: penthouse suite, party at the Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, free drinks—all just for holding the Hoodlums NFT.

So fans see music NFTs through a VIP, all-access pass-lens. What lens do the artists see NFTs through?

Artists and musicians tend to understand it through a merch lens, as a way to engage their community on another level to what they’d find at a merch booth. Let’s say there’s a limited number of T-shirts at a merch booth. Well, we are selling NFTs in limited numbers. This helps fans show the status of their fandom for that artist.

Another way artists look at it is from a streaming angle. Artists are tackling it from a publishing standpoint; they’re trying to break the system of streaming platforms and how artists get paid.

What are some of the ways Sturdy Exchange has helped artists to take on the traditional streaming model using NFTs?

One of my favourite drops was when we featured three female artists who hadn’t really gotten the attention they deserved in the music industry. We paired them up with one of the most popular NFT artists out there, Serwah Attafua. Then we partnered with Bacardi as a brand, to promote it.

The artists and producers got all the proceeds from the NFT sales, while the shares and streaming royalties from platforms like Spotify and Apple were given to the fans that bought the NFTs.

It’s really like kickstarting a mixtape or a song, and letting fans really come in and support it from the get-go.

What advice would you give to artists or brands that are interested in using NFTs to supercharge their fan experience?

The advice I give now is to really do your research before jumping in. Be sure to communicate clearly what NFTs are, and why you’re stepping into the space.

“At Sturdy Exchange, our approach is to throw things against the wall and see what sticks.”

The space moves a little too fast to keep up with sometimes. You really have to keep your ear to the ground, because people are always playing around with how NFTs can create and unlock communities.

At Sturdy Exchange, our approach is to throw things against the wall and see what sticks.

You can learn more about Sturdy Exchange [here](#), and connect with Ryan on all things music and community building [here](#).

Fans are becoming more invested in the fan communities behind the music they love, and it's enabling artists to build more intimate and direct-to-fan experiences.

46%

The percentage of Gen-Z who follow a music creator on social media after listening to their music, compared to 40% of Millennials.

Spotify Culture Next Report, 2022

47%

The percentage of Gen-Z who have joined a digital community, such as a subreddit or Discord server, for fans of a particular creator.

Spotify Culture Next Report, 2022

€1.43b

The economic impact of the fan 'A.R.M.Y' behind one of K-Pop's biggest groups, BTS.

WARC, 2022

€77.5m

Gross earnings made by music artists from the sales of music NFTs in 2021. With music NFT sales, artists keep all sale earnings, outside of platform fees and artist collaborations. A vast difference from the traditional model, where music labels take up to a 90% cut of an artist's earnings.

Water & Music, 2022; Fortune, 2022

Co-Creating the Future of Beauty

We sat down with content creator *Diipa Büller-Khosla* to talk about what it's like building a next generation skincare brand with 1.7 million fans as co-founders.



Diipa Büller-Khosla is a content creator, model, activist and the co-founder of indē wild—a next generation skincare brand serving the South Asian diaspora. In 2019, Diipa founded indē wild, tapping into her Instagram fanbase of 1.7 million followers for step-by-step insight and guidance.

You have a massive fanbase on Instagram. How did you first get into the world of content creation?

The world of social media sort of fell onto my path, and changed my trajectory in such an incredible way. At 18, I left India and moved to Europe, to study Human Rights Law. I interned at the United Nations' International Criminal Court as well as at the IMA Influencer Agency.

Working at IMA opened my eyes to the world of social media. The industry was exciting and new to everyone at that time, but what was lacking was representation. There was no one else who looked like me, or had a similar upbringing. I felt this immediate pull to change the narrative.

“There was no one else who looked like me, or had a similar upbringing. I felt this immediate pull to change the narrative.”

So much of my community has been with me from the start, so I like to think I've grown through seasons of life with them. At the end of the day, I'm a proud Indian woman simply finding balance between tradition and modernity, my way; my audience gets it because they've lived it.

At what point did you look at the community you had built and think, 'I want to build a company with all of you'?

I knew from the start that indē wild would be a people-powered 'for-us-by us' brand that would shake up the beauty industry. Having been one of many affected by colourism at a young age—then chronic acne for over a decade of my life—my confidence was shattered. I had this feeling of being

'othered' by unrealistic beauty norms, and I knew I wasn't the only one who wanted change.

As I shared my unfiltered experiences, in return, I was lucky enough to hear the stories of so many others who also felt unseen in the beauty space. That only pushed me further to ask more questions and to intently listen to exactly what my community was saying and wanting.

“I knew from the start that indē wild would be a people powered 'for-us-by us' brand that would shake up the beauty industry.”

What was it that your community wanted to see more of within the beauty space?

We learned that not everyone in my Instagram community was aware of skincare and what ingredients do for their skin. Beauty is such a top-down industry. We grow up being told what to use, and what we should like—but no education about the ingredients. You assume that certain products work as advertised, because everyone else is using them, but later, you come to find out that the ingredients are actually really bad for your skin.

If you're melanated [have high skin pigmentation], you have different skincare concerns and that just wasn't something people were talking about. Now, not only are we talking about the ingredients so that everybody has access to that knowledge, but we're building a brand for our community that has been made by people who look like them.

Skincare today is complicated, but it doesn't have to be. We urge our community to ask questions, and we're continually learning and excited to share.

You call your community the co-founders of indē wild. What does that mean, and how did you invite them on the journey towards building the company?

Community is the heartbeat of indē wild. From the beginning of our brand, we've constantly been asking and listening to our community about what they want from skincare products. Prior to even



Diipa Büller-Khosla, the founder of indē wild.



indē wild's first two hero products : an AM and PM skincare serum, co-created with Diipa's online community.

launching the company, my team and I held countless focus-group sessions with our community. We asked for their opinions on formulation, packaging, experience, you name it.

That gave me the personal opportunity to connect with our community, while giving indē wild a more solid understanding of consumer perception—specifically the needs and concerns of the South Asian diaspora when it comes to skincare.

Now that indē wild is launched, is your community still actively involved?

Absolutely! They've seen the brand from the very beginning, when it was a baby, and shared that process, so the emotional response is strong.

We still hold sessions, and continually look to our community as a gut check. We take polls, run surveys, share product reviews, and conduct focus groups—all via Instagram. If something doesn't pass our community's pulse check, it doesn't go too far.

“We continually look to our community as a gut check ... It will forever be part of our way of doing business.”

These touchpoints make us better, and we're so humbled to receive such candid feedback. It will forever be part of our way of doing business.

Within the beauty industry, there are many companies that have been started by content creators, musicians, or actors—but few succeed. What defines success in this space?

The differences between the ones that do well and the ones that don't are two-part. First, the brands that really listen, and look for a gap in the market, succeed. With FENTY BEAUTY, it was the fact that no one else had ever given such a large range of tones before—and Rihanna listened to that. Same

with her lingerie line, SAVAGE X FENTY. No one had ever given such a large range of sizes before.

Why make a product that no one wants, when you can make a product that everybody has been needing for ages? A lot of the brand cadence that we have is a result of listening to what the other products are that people are missing and/or still need.

The second difference is whether or not your customer base actually relates to you as a person. If there's no relation or real connection, then they're not going to buy it.

What advice would you give to brands interested in co-creating with their customers?

Don't just co-create for the sake of it. Think about what actually needs to be co-created. It's all about listening and learning from your community.

What about when it comes to acting on what fans are saying?

There has to be a proper structure for the input of customers as stakeholders, so that it's not too confusing and you can filter out what you need.

When you're a new company starting out, it's easier to make decisions and factor in what your community wants and asks from you. We are not testing on animals. We are vegan. We don't use perfume. We don't use preservatives. Sustainability is top of mind—but we also don't shout about it, because it should just be the norm by now.

“When you're a new company starting out, it's easier to make decisions and factor in what your community wants... If you're a legacy brand, it's really hard to make that shift.”

If you're a big legacy brand, it's really hard to make that shift because you have such a long history behind you. Unless you're up for a huge cultural shift in your whole business, people are not going to see you as a brand that is serious about their values.

So far this year, indē wild has raised \$3 million in seed funding. Congratulations! Any exciting plans in the pipeline?

Yes! We are about to expand markets, and finally go home to launch in India. We're also planning to roll out a customer-loyalty program soon, which will help to create a more established relationship between us and our community.

You can learn more about indē wild [here](#), and follow Diipa on her journey towards co-creating the future of beauty [here](#).

The creator economy is stronger than it's ever been. More and more creators are finding new and innovative ways to disrupt industries by listening to—and co-creating with—their fandoms.

82%

The percentage of consumers who trust opinions they find on social media—including those from friends, families and influencers—to help them make the right decision about buying a product or service.

Digital Marketing Institute, 2021

€1.7b

The 2020 valuation of Glossier, one of the world's most successful 'people-powered' brands. Originating from a community-driven beauty blog in 2010, Glossier was founded in 2014 and has co-created multiple products with its community.

Byrdie, 2021

€2.6b

The valuation of Rihanna's beauty and makeup brand, FENTY BEAUTY. Rihanna listened to her fanbase and created a line with a range of over 50 skin tones—far more than any major make-up brand at the time of launch.

Forbes 2021, Business of Fashion, 2021

The Ground-up Digital Fashion Revolution

We spoke to *Nirmala Shome*, Head of Community at The Fabricant, about how digital fashion is inspiring a community driven revolution.

Stephy Fung's Zodiac Wardrobe collection. Dropped during Season Two of The Fabricant Studio.



Nirmala Shome is the Head of Community at The Fabricant—a digital fashion house that creates digital garments for AR and the metaverse. Focusing on community co-creation, The Fabricant aims to turn fashion on its head using digital design—and by giving fans the designer brush.

Digital fashion—and digital fashion houses like The Fabricant—are a new concept to a lot of people. How would you describe it to people who are not familiar with this concept?

The way I'd describe it, we're a decentralised fashion house. And we're really on a mission to create a decentralised fashion ecosystem, a digital-only fashion hyper-structure that we will build together with our community.

It's funny. I think I often change how we describe what we do, because the whole culture in Web3 changes so quickly. It is still so early in the industry that we're often getting pulled in many directions. We have these moments where it shifts, and we have to realign things that we thought we had sorted out previously.

But, no matter the shifts in the industry, our core focus at The Fabricant is always to support creators and create a platform and ecosystem where they are all equitable.

What do you mean when you say The Fabricant is a 'decentralised' fashion house?

To understand what decentralisation means for us, you have to look at the traditional fashion industry and the way it works. It starts with a label or a fashion house that dictates trends at a high level—at probably quite a high price-point as well, making it quite inaccessible. It then trickles down into larger consumer markets that people can access.

We're trying to reverse the existing fashion-industry structure, and build something new. We are starting from the ground up. When we launch a collection, it's all about co-creation, it's all about trends coming from the community.

But in terms of what we actually do, we make digital-only garments and we work with different fashion designers to create them. We have a platform where you can come and mint them. Minting is the act of making it an official NFT. On our platform, people are able to design a unique fashion item, and no one else can make that combination through our platform again.

“We're trying to reverse the existing fashion-industry structure, and build something new.”

We are now also working on developing a marketplace where you can trade them—as well as looking at how you can bring them into different metaverses, and on how you'd wear them.

Why do you think subverting the whole industry is worth pursuing? What do you think is the benefit to the community?

To be a traditional fashion designer, you generally have to go to fashion school. In the digital space, there are even more barriers to entry, in the sense that you need all these different softwares and knowledge of how to use them.

At The Fabricant, we want anyone to be able to design. We've been really building our community of fashion designers since the company started. And now, we're creating a tool that's an easy-to-use platform to create and design your own custom items. You come up with ideas and concepts that other teams execute on. We're trying to make the design process as accessible as it can be.

Do you see major differences between how the community creates, versus how a fashion house creates?

Yes. We give everyone the palette and the tools—and then the trends emerge through the community's co-creation. For example, our Season One collection or the one we recently did with Stephanie



Nirmala Shome,
Head of Community
at The Fabricant.

Fung: it's not one entity that creates the collection, but several designers creating a palette for a collection to emerge.

When you entered The Fabricant [digital] studio, you basically were given these garments. You could pick material from an artist, create this colour palette and create a unique item. But that item that you've made is actually the combination of a different garment designer, a different material designer and your own creative input.

The outcome is that the community tells us what the most popular fashion trend is, as opposed to us saying, "Yellow is the colour for this season", or, "It's pink this season". What's really interesting is that we don't actually know what the most popular fabric is. When we see all the data in the end, that's when we know what the trends are.

“The community tells us what the most popular fashion trend is, as opposed to us saying ‘yellow is the colour for this season’ or ‘it’s pink this season’.”

As the Head of Community, what role do you play within the company?

The community is a critical part; you can't really think of The Fabricant as existing without our community. This is a movement, and in a movement you need many, many people. I'd say that's the same for any artist—your fans or the people that follow you are an inherent part of what you do. You're all kind of deeply connected, and it allows you to create a much deeper, more direct relationship.

Our goal at The Fabricant is to create an ecosystem that can house all these different people in one place. My role is to create a healthy community. When you think about what makes a healthy ecosystem, diversity is so critical, as well—making sure our community is diverse.

We also look at what the environment is, and at tools such as Discord, Twitter and Twitch streams. We think about how we can connect all these tools so they function well. A well-organised Discord

is critical infrastructure that we need to work on. Discord is a private platform where we all meet, chat and share projects with each other. We design it as a space for the community to thrive.

Do you ever look to fan bases within other industries like music or sport for inspiration on The Fabricant's community model?

I think the eSports model is a really interesting community model. You have your [game] builders—or the people that design the games. Then there's people that come and play those games. Then you have the people that watch people play the games—who we call spectators. But the spectators are a huge part of that economy, and bring in huge value.

We have the same type of structure with our fandom. But for us, it's probably a little bit more active than passive, as with a spectator. We're creating a platform for people to come and build, and designers can come and put their designs on the platform. Players and co-creators can come and create this next layer of items, which they can merchandise, sell and wear. Then, there's all the people that are just here to watch, experience and give it a try.

We make sure there's always a path for each of those groups to have something to do—to have a way to engage that brings value.

It's clear that those active within The Fabricant community see themselves as either fashion designers or fans in some way. But when it comes to financial incentives, do they also see themselves as fashion ‘investors’?

Some might come for the money, but it's not the reason they stay. It's not like coming to buy or profit, and that's where the relationship ends. When someone co-creates, it's a piece of themselves as well. When you co-create you will receive royalties. But beyond that, we always think, 'How can they give back to our community'?

For us, we really need to think about what goes beyond the financial. What I love seeing in our community is that people will come and share a bit about themselves, or their real-life story, or why they're here. Some of them came from the fashion industry



Founding team of The Fabricant. Left to right: Amber Slooten, Kerry Murphy, Adriana Hoppenbrouwer

and hated it. Now, they're making their lives a part of our community.

What gets you most excited about the shift to Web3, and the opportunities it unlocks for fans?

“Being a fan now in Web3 can be a legitimate career.”

I think one cool thing is that being a fan now in Web3 can be a legitimate career. You could be a fan, and get paid to be one, and earn money in a very tangible way that wasn't possible before—now you really can do that. You can just be a fan and find a way to live off that.

You can learn more about The Fabricant [here](#), and connect with Nirmla on all things digital fashion and community [here](#).

The growth in digital fashion represents a growth in self expression. A new generation of digital-only fashion houses are responding to Gen Z's desire to hold more sway and influence over designing fashion and creating trends.

94%

The percentage of Gen-Z who foresee digital fashion becoming mainstream.

The Screenwear Paper, Virtue 2022

€180b

The estimated market valuation of the global virtual-goods market by 2025.

Dazed, 2022

76%

The percentage of those familiar with the metaverse, who say they want their avatar to express their creativity and individuality in ways they can't in the physical world.

Wunderman Thompson, 2022

41%

The percentage of digital fashion purchasers who say they buy virtual fashion to be part of a community or to take part in a new trend.

The Screenwear Paper, Virtue 2022

A Guide to Web3 Terminology

Web3 is an emerging and evolving space that is being built on new technology. With it comes a whole new vocabulary, and a whole new set of opportunities. So, if you find yourself wondering what people mean when they say something like “I just minted my first NFT and put it up on Discord”, just know you’re not alone.

This glossary is our way of explaining some key Web3 terms used in this report, in a way that feels clarifying as well as actionable. Like the Web3 space itself, the definitions of these terms, and the possibilities of what you can do with them, will continue to evolve long after this report is published.

(Decentralised) Blockchain

Description: Blockchain is a new kind of database which is used to process and store data on a shared (publicly owned) decentralised network, rather than in a private centralised database which is managed by a company. It acts as a public ledger, which means it is great at tracking online transactions and ownership between people or companies.

How are people using it? The decentralisation of blockchain technology allows for more transparency, reliability and independence. It's the backbone of Web3 and has laid the foundations for new tech like Cryptocurrencies and NFTs to take off in the mainstream. Many say the best is yet to come for blockchain, and that it's on track to change the way businesses and governments operate for good.

Web3

Description: Web3 is being hailed as ‘the next generation of the internet’—and it runs on blockchains. Within Web2 (the internet we are accustomed to using) any action we make surfing the web generates data. Although we are the ones that generate this data, we don't get to own it or to consent to how it is used. Instead, the data is captured and kept privately by individual companies. Web3 aims to dismantle this model, by putting the power back in the hands of internet users. Web3 allows us to demand consent for how the data we generate is used.

How are people using it? Anything that is created using Web3—running on decentralised, public blockchains—is a part of this next generation of the internet. Web3 can be used as open-endedly and as

extensively as the internet itself. Web3 is a new space that's both thrilling and constantly changing. Curious to keep up with where Web3 is headed? Check out [Friends With Benefits](#), an “online base camp for the artists, thinkers and creators leading the Web3 transformation”.

NFT (Non Fungible Token)

Description: A digital certificate of authenticity. An NFT proves your ownership of a digital piece of property. This record of authenticity is stored on a decentralised, public blockchain, which means it can't be deleted, altered or faked. NFTs work for physical items too. You can use them to keep digital authentication of rare physical items—like clothing, art or other collectables.

How are people using it? To date, the use of NFTs has been discussed primarily in the context of art (e.g., Beeple's iconic 2021 sale of a digital NFT artwork for \$69 million). But, everyone from musicians and creators to tech enthusiasts and brands are exploring ways to bring versatility and added value to NFTs. For example, Web3 animation studio [Toonstar](#) has invited fans to purchase NFTs for the right to co-create shows.

Minting

Description: Minting is the process of creating a new NFT. Just as signing a certificate authenticates an item offline, minting an NFT authenticates it online. Minting involves entering all of your authentication information into a system which then processes the NFT, stores it and makes it 'official' through a decentralised blockchain. After that, your NFT exists forever.

How are people using it? Every NFT has undergone the minting process; it is an essential step to

authentication. If you want to see some NFTs that have been minted, you can check out [OpenSea](#) and [NBA Top Shot](#).

DAO (Decentralised Autonomous Organisation)

Description: DAOs are like crowdfunds in the age of Web3. They are set up and run on decentralised blockchains, and people can 'invest' in them similarly to how you can crowdfund around common interests via Kickstarter. They often function similarly as a traditional company, fund, or NGO—but they tend not to have a leader. Instead, DAOs use collective voting systems to guide decisions and investments

How are people using it? DAOs can be as versatile as the funds and ideas found on Kickstarter. They can be used to support social initiatives, business ventures and moonshot dreams like [Krause House](#) and the fan-funded community's ambition of buying an NBA team.

Metaverse

Description: It's the virtual universe. There is no single place or destination in which it exists, and no single company or person owns it. The metaverse includes everything on the Internet and all virtual worlds (like Roblox and Fortnite), whether they are 2D, 3D or mixed into the real world via Augmented Reality.

How are people using it? As a virtual universe, the metaverse is being used in a multitude of ways. Companies are exploring ways to not only invent new virtual experiences, but to create virtual versions of everything you can find offline—including fashion shows, art galleries, concerts, travel and work offices. To attend free, upcoming events in the metaverse, check out [Decentraland](#).

Avatar

Description: Avatars are characters you create and personalise to represent yourself in online spaces. They are not 'permanent', which means you have the freedom to update their features and aesthetic as you please. Right now, you have unique avatars across each digital space, but in the future you may be able to transfer them across various destinations in the metaverse.

How are people using it? Avatars are used primarily for chat (think Memojis) or entertainment purposes (think video games), but are also increasingly being used in virtual work environments. Avatars are not just about recreating an exact replica of your offline-self in virtual spaces; avatars can also be about exploring ways to express yourself, and your identity, in ways you can't offline.

Discord

Description: Discord is a social-messaging platform that lets you communicate easily between video, voice and text messaging. It's got all the passion, fun and subculture of Reddit, but with the functionality of Slack or Microsoft Teams. Anyone can create and host community chat groups, called 'servers', for people to come together and discuss common themes. Discord servers can host anywhere from just a few people to hundreds of thousands (Fortnite's Discord server has more than 800,000 members).

How are people using it? Thought leaders in every major industry—including tech, music, fashion and sport—are all turning to Discord as a place to build a community. [Musicians](#) are one of the latest groups of creatives using Discord to build more intimate relationships with their fans by inviting them to come 'hang out' and co-create on the platform.

Fan Mods (In-Game Fan Modifications)

Description: Fan Mods are fan-made adjustments (items, character features, filters) that can be added to existing video games. Mods are downloadable as 'packs' for games, though game developers play no role in creating them—mods are purely fan-driven. Some games, such as Roblox or Minecraft, embrace Fan Mods, whereas others like Fortnite do not allow them.

How are people using it? Players create mods when they feel as though there is a feature missing from the game they love, and they would like to see that feature included. One of the most well-known mod creators for the game 'The Sims' is Amira Virgil ([Xmiramira](#) on Twitch). Virgil's [mod packs](#) have broadened representation within the game by introducing hundreds of skin tones where previously, only limited skin tones were available.

Co-Creation

Description: Co-creation, in the context of business, is a model for collaborating with others to shape ideas or build products and content. Co-creating can be done in small groups, or on a larger scale—with hundreds, thousands or even millions of people.

How are people using it? Co-creation is a strategic tool for both community building and business innovation. Co-creation can be employed to make one-off decisions, such as finding the name for a product or choosing the colours for its packaging. Co-creation can also be embedded in an organisation's business model. That means inviting people to participate in every decision, from what product to create, to how it should be made, to how it should be marketed.

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