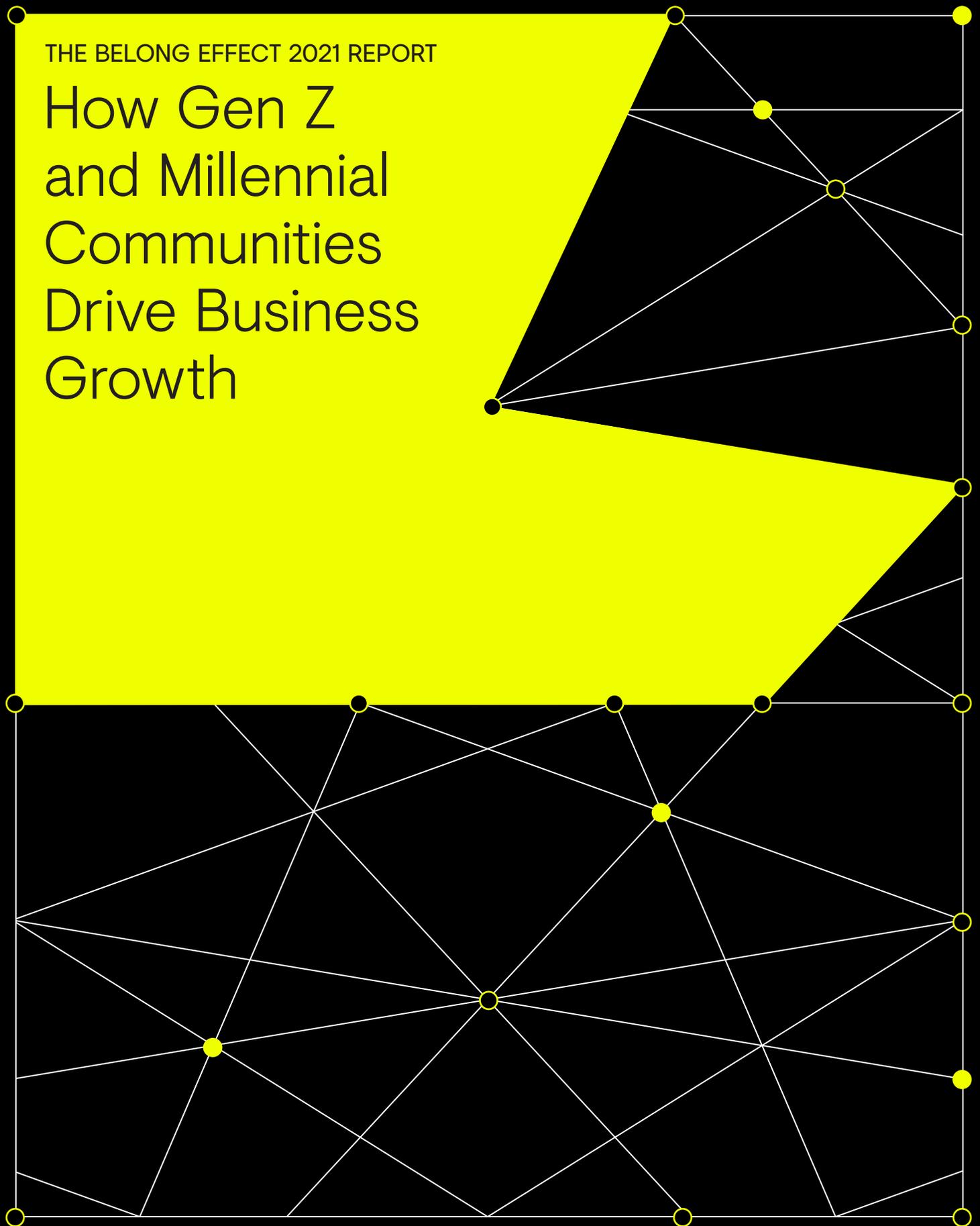


THE BELONG EFFECT 2021 REPORT

How Gen Z and Millennial Communities Drive Business Growth



The Belong Effect

by
sidlee

Executive Summary	04
Methodology	05

SECTION 01

CONTEXT

We Belong to Each Other	08
Yet We're Still Lonely	11
The Power of One to Many	14
Brand Participation Is Key	16

SECTION 02

RESEARCH + TOPLINE INSIGHTS

The People Story	19
The Brand Story	25
Long Story Short	31

SECTION 03

THE FOUR COMMUNITY PILLARS

Identity	37
Social Capital	40
Oneness	44
Mobilization	47
Leveraging the Pillars	50

SECTION 04

THE FIVE COMMUNITY TYPES

How We Organize	55
Family	59
Lifestyle	61
Work	63
Interest	65
Values	70
A Spectrum of Emotions	74
Communities Are Not Monoliths	76
Where Is Community?	79
Cultivating Belonging	82

SECTION 05

THE BUSINESS VALUE OF COMMUNITIES

Now, Let's Talk Business	86
--------------------------	----

Executive Summary

We set out on a journey to understand how brands can harness the power of community to create a sense of belonging.

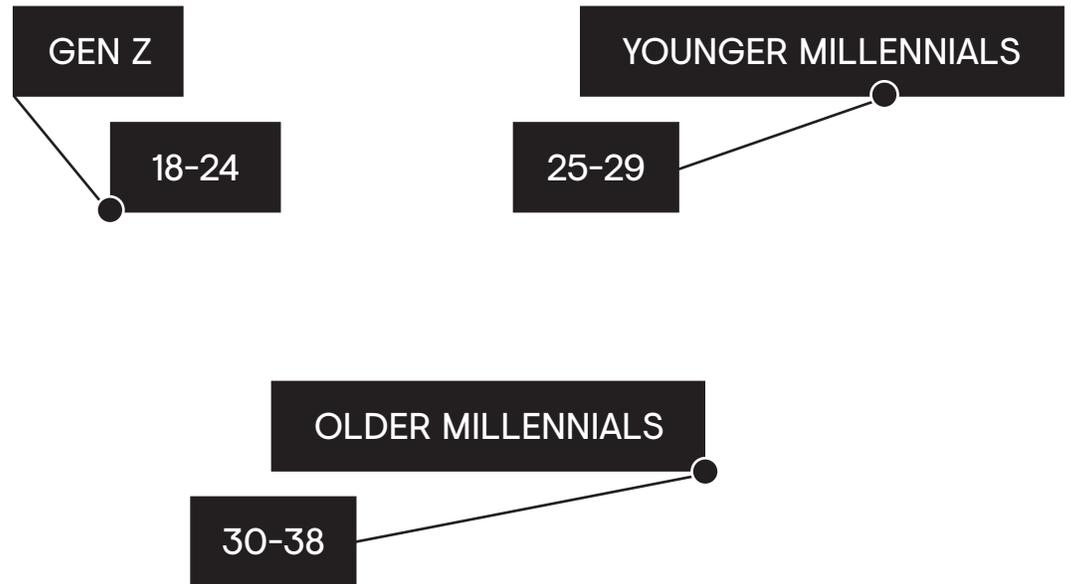
What makes people seek out specific brands? In what ways can brands influence and build long-lasting ties with their communities?

Last year we conducted an internal research study, and this year we scaled up to a global survey to see how the pandemic has affected our previous findings. To test our hypothesis, we set out to:

- Evaluate and refine our understanding of what makes a strong community;
- Assess whether the pandemic has altered the role communities play in the lives of our sample;
- Assess and refine our findings on different types of communities (*family, values, lifestyle, work, interests*) and their role in the lives of young adults (Generation Z and millennials);
- Determine how brands can engage with and influence communities.

With the support of the Angus Reid Group, we surveyed 8,000 Gen Z and millennials in the US, Canada, UK and France.

The representative sample of n=8,000 was balanced on gender, region and the following age groups within each market:



* Surveys were conducted in English and French; locations were chosen for their relevance to Sid Lee's global operations and business base; field window: April 30 – May 21, 2021

Methodology

We followed a funnel-down approach in three phases to arrive at our key observations, define our metric and create this report.

01

We looked into academic journals to determine the meaning of community, considering disciplines of sociology, anthropology, political science, and mathematical theories. From this research, we identified four characteristics of a strong community:

IDENTITY

SOCIAL CAPITAL

ONENESS

MOBILIZATION

02

Next, we identified the strongest communities through our surveyed sample across the US, Canada, UK and France. We found that communities are generally organized around one of three driving factors:

PEOPLE

Family, friends, ethnicity,
organized religion / beliefs

PLACE

Where you live /
come from, school, work

INTEREST

Belief / values, lifestyle
and entertainment

03

Within these three categories, we delved deeper to discover which forces drive community formation in the context of 2021.

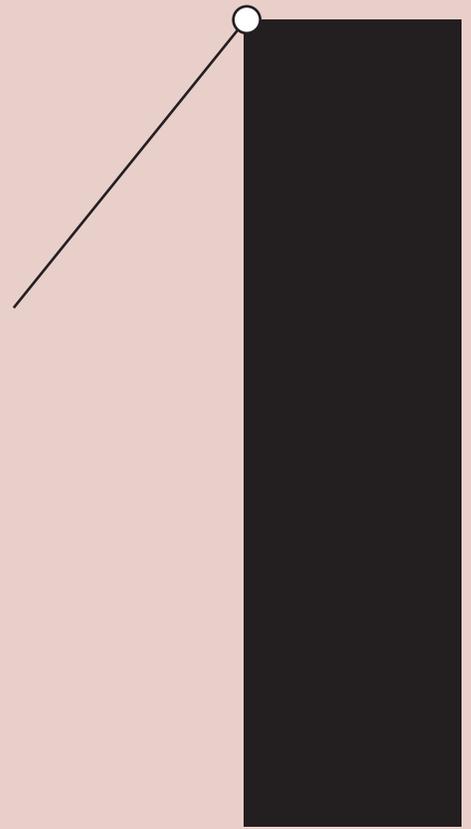
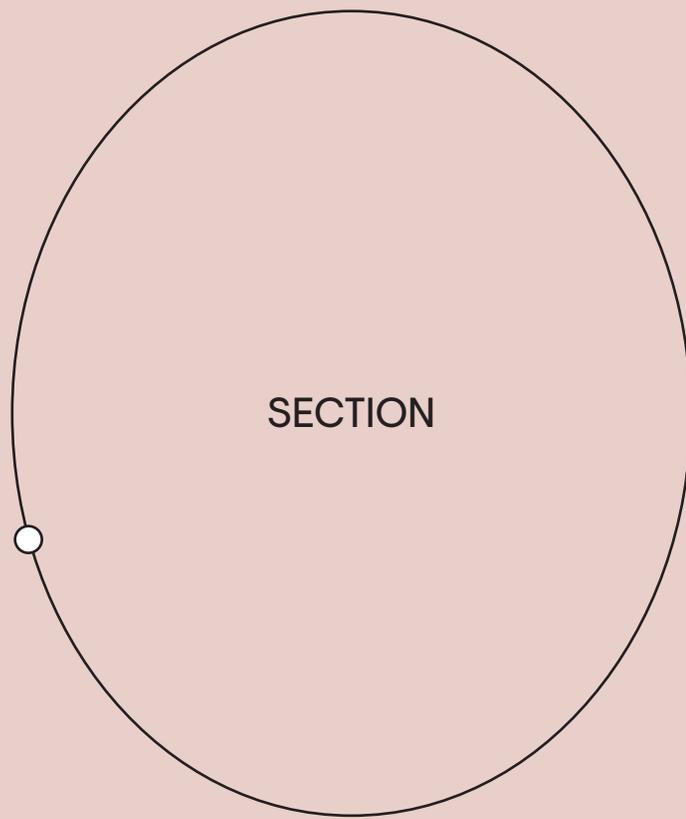
FAMILY-BASED

VALUE-BASED

WORK-BASED

LIFESTYLE-BASED

INTEREST-BASED



CONTEXT

We Belong to Each Other



As with the need for food and shelter, belonging is a fundamental hallmark of being human.



It is the sense of participating in something *special* that allows us to thrive as individuals and groups and opens the door to more fulfilling ways of living.

Where does this feeling of belonging come from?

It comes from *communities.*

Communities nurture and feed us emotionally. Without them, we cannot function.

In fact, the deprivation of belonging, or in other words isolation, is one of humanity's greatest pains. Think of the different communities in which you belong and how they have forged your identity, shaped your worldviews and inspired your actions. Now think about the community members with whom you share something strong and how together, you feel you could move mountains. Here lies the power of communities.

When we *truly* belong, we act on behalf of our community.



Yet We're Still Lonely



While the pandemic is starting to recede (at least for some), the loneliness epidemic it spurred seems to be here to stay, especially among Generation Z and millennials.

After a year of social isolation and digital fatigue, we long for real-life connections with friends, family and colleagues. We are ready to step outside and embrace new bonds. Now, more than ever, communities have a role to play in combating the loneliness epidemic and fulfilling our need for belonging.

“

The best of community
does give one a deep
sense of belonging and
well-being; and in that
sense community takes
away loneliness.

”

HENRI NOUWEN
professor and writer

Before we wade any further, let's dissect the basic fabric of communities and the potential of network effects.

Network effects
can occur

in any
network

or interconnected
group

such as
a community.

The Power of One to Many



Network effects are essentially the benefit gained by existing members for each new member that joins the group. This is demonstrated best in platform businesses that fundamentally connect the supply-side and demand-side, such as Facebook, PayPal, and eBay.

The value of a platform grows with the number of users on either side of the exchange. The more users a platform has, the more attractive it becomes, leading even more people to use it. The greater the number of user connections, the greater the potential for an exponential effect, where one individual in the group can influence many others. In digital environments especially, the interconnections can be infinite.

THE GREATER
THE NUMBER OF USER
CONNECTIONS



THE GREATER
THE NETWORK
EFFECT



THE GREATER
THE BRAND VALUE

Brand Participation Is Key



A user in the network, or an individual of the community, can be a brand. And that's where you come in.

It is critical to note that your community engagement can only positively impact your brand if you participate in an authentic way, as an individual would. Your brand can empower communities by providing them with tailored content, products, services and actions that will help you gain traction and fuel the flywheel of engagement and participation. And as a brand, you can harness the network effects to increase awareness, boost profitability and capture a greater market share.

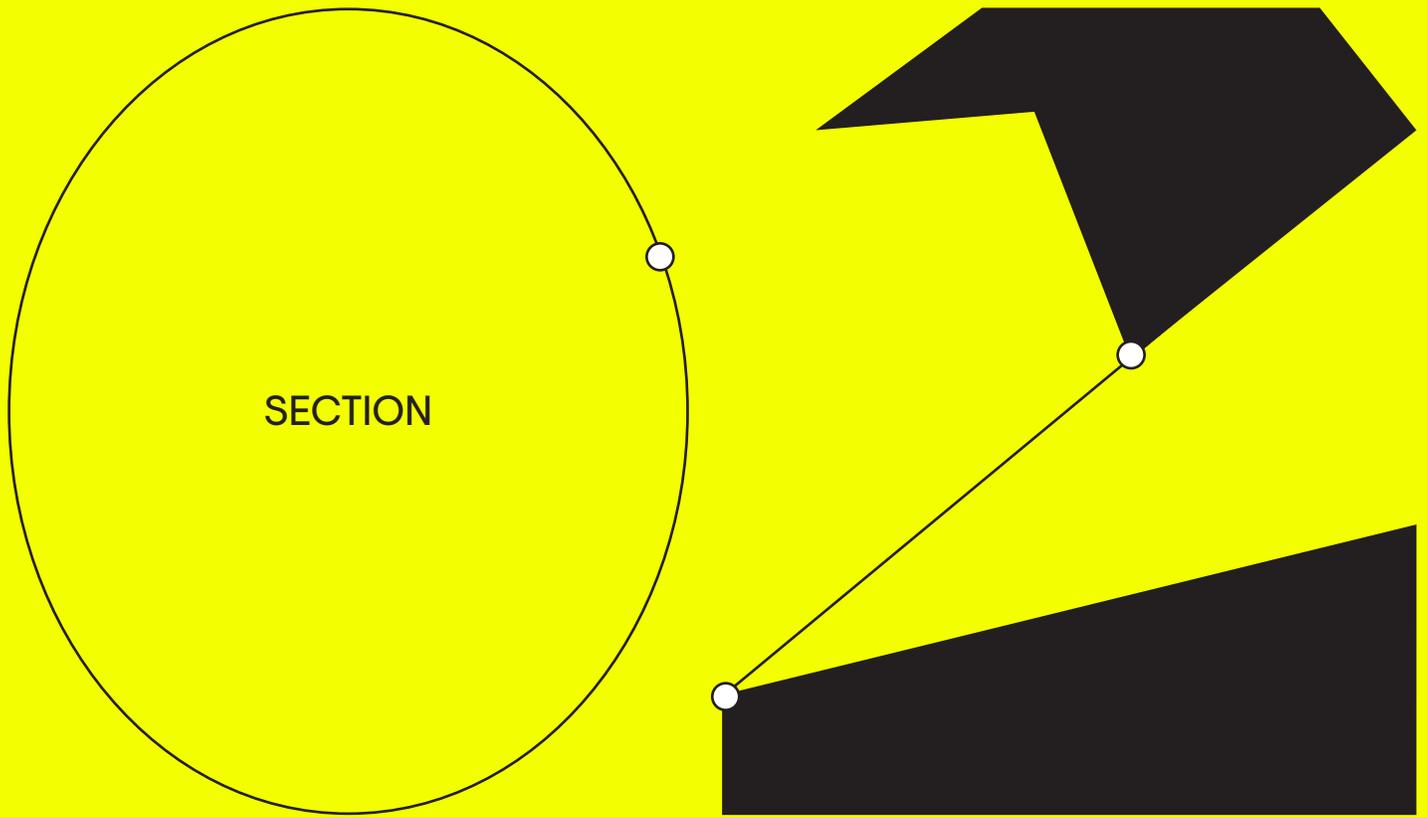
“

Get ahead in a market with
network effects and chances
are you win everything.

”

BHARAT ANAND

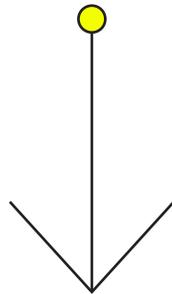
professor and author of *The Content Trap*



RESEARCH + TOPLINE INSIGHTS

THE PEOPLE STORY

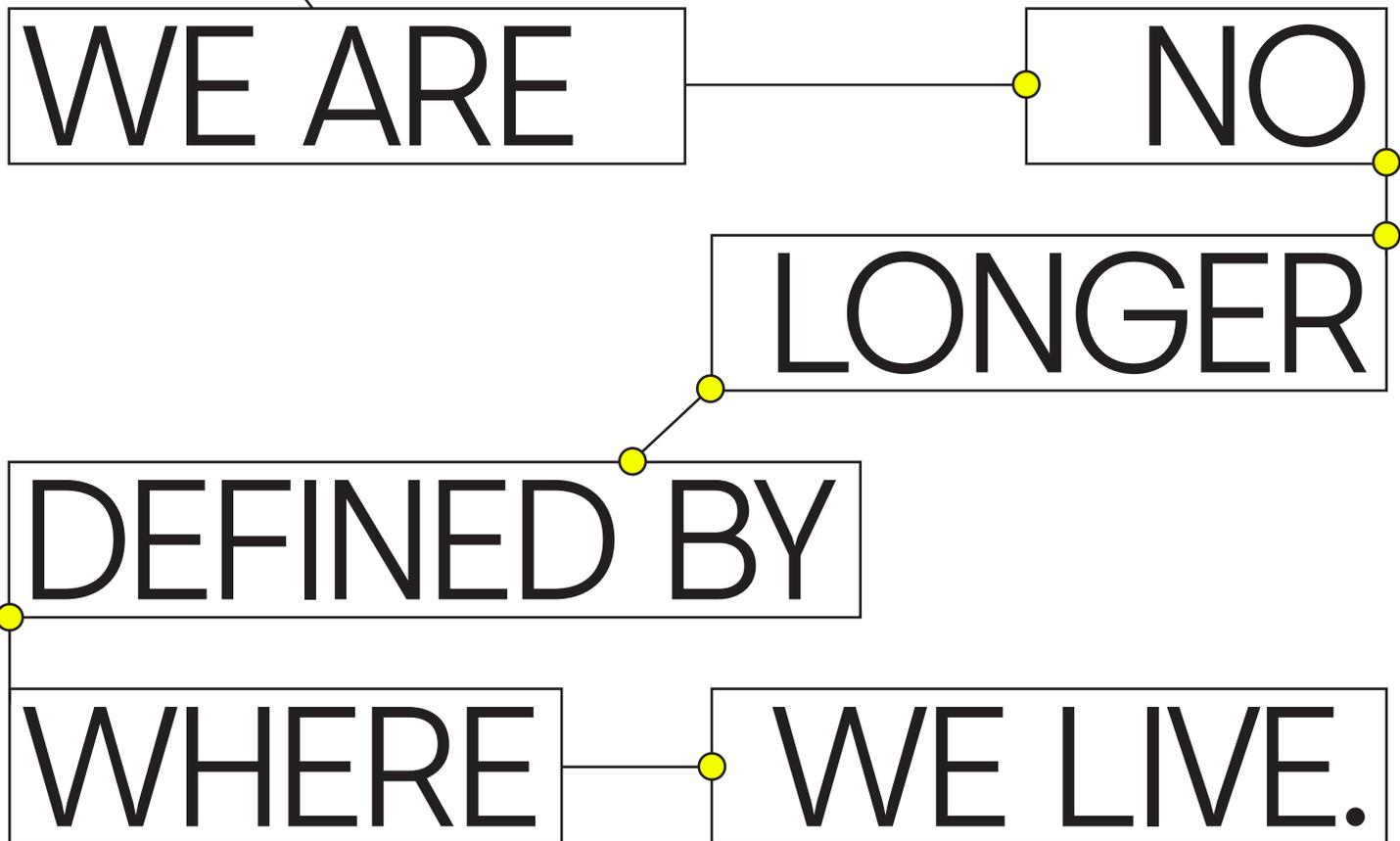
We have identified key behavioural trends that define our interactions with communities.



NOTE

Our research identified nuances between the countries surveyed. Where statistically relevant, they are noted in the detailed analysis that follows.

01

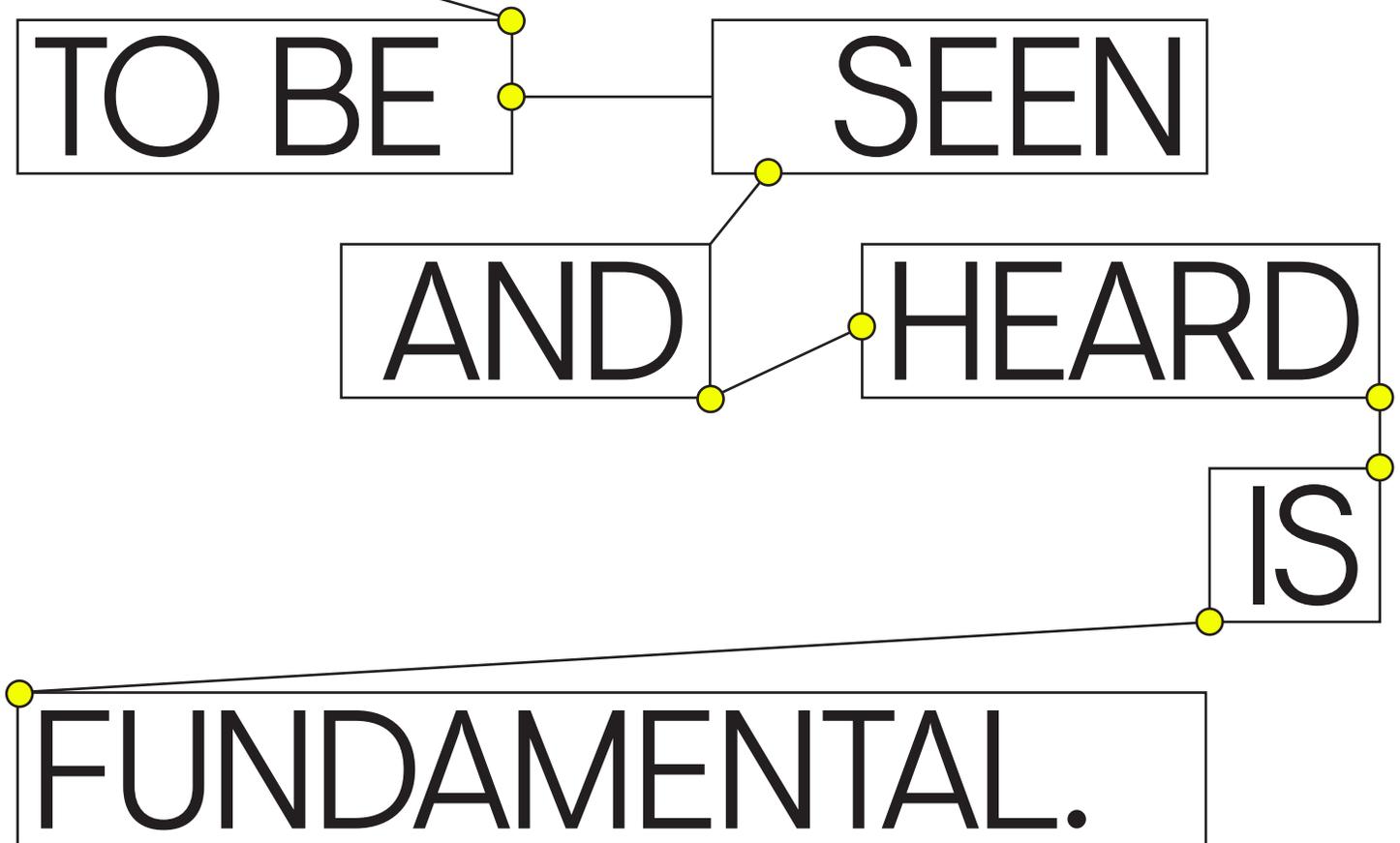


Where communities have forever been defined as local and proximate, we now see them increasingly as geographically independent. This means that digital networks have become as compelling, if not more so, than physical networks.

————— 82% rely on social media to connect with their communities;

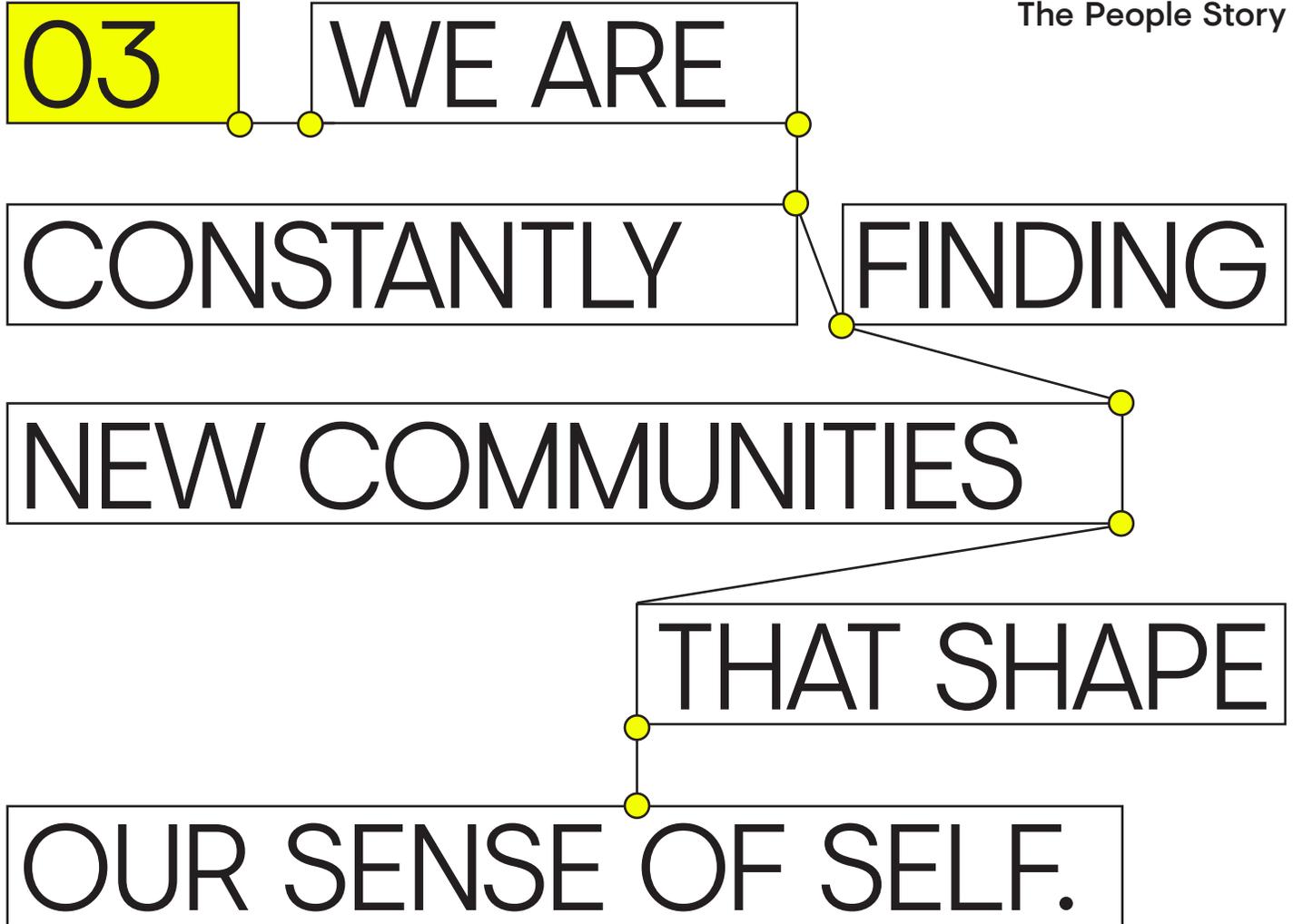
————— In a post-pandemic era, connections are made in person across all types of communities, driven mainly by family and work.

02



Communities are where we come together to act. With the majority of us expressing that communities are where we exert personal influence, there is no doubt that these are a powerful force for driving change.

- 76% feel like they have a voice and social capital within their community;
- 83% feel a sense of unity, or oneness, as a member of a community;
- 78% say their community works together to mobilize.



Our community involvement is fluid. We have an emotional attachment to our communities, which makes each experience unique in terms of who, what, where, when and how.

- 1/3rd of communities are long-standing for us (more than 10 years);
- 1/3rd are more recently defining us (less than 2 years);
- 45% say their community defines them a great deal.

04

FAMILY

MATTERS.

OR

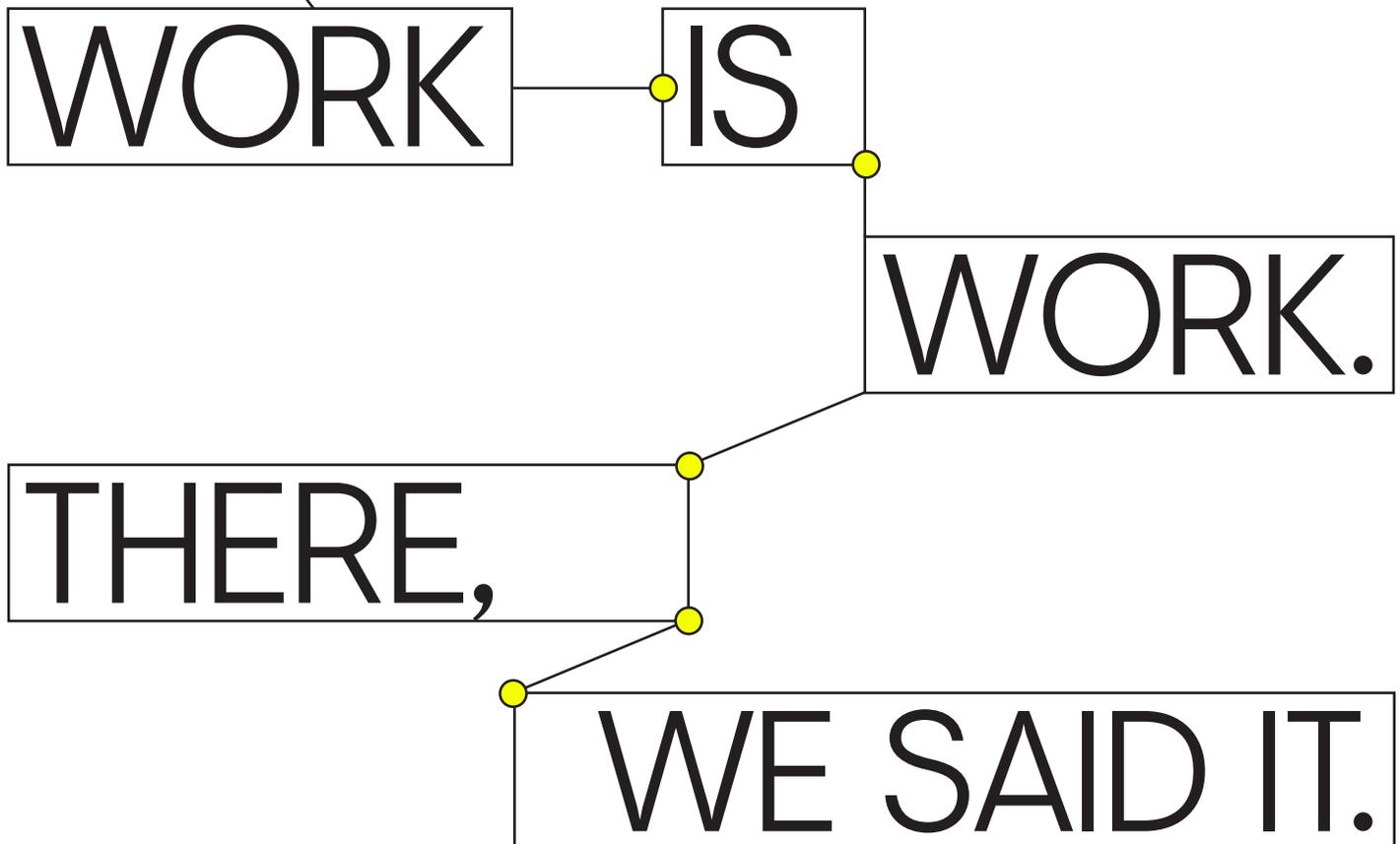
DOES IT?

Communities are essential drivers of emotional value, and we turn to certain types of communities for specific needs. Data shows us that more Gen Z and millennials are deriving emotional satisfaction from values-based communities.

While family-based communities matter because they are foundational, they are considered more passive.

- 94% say communities feed their emotions with entertainment, inspiration and joy as the top emotional benefits;
- Values-based communities outperform all others for empowerment and inspiration, over-indexing on less lonely and caring.

05



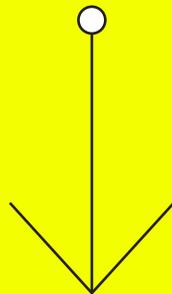
Work communities are just for work, despite all the efforts to drive purpose into organizations. They rarely mobilize for broader social change, and even when they do, they seem to fall flat and feel inauthentic.

————— Gen Z and millennials find inspiration and empowerment from work communities, but it's focused solely on their careers and aspirations – it's not crossing over into personal identity;

————— The pandemic lockdowns are changing the dynamic of work, with this community wanting less in-person engagement in the future.

THE BRAND STORY

**Our study identified
a massive role for
brands to engage, and
significant benefits for
doing so.**



01

BRAND

PARTICIPATION

EQUALS

BRAND

ADVOCACY.

If Gen Z and millennials feel a connection to the community, they also feel connected to the brands associated with it.

- People who self-identify with their communities are also likely to self-identify with the brands associated with them; 39% say “yes – very much”;
- 43% of communities have brands associated with them;
- 85% say their community is aligned with a brand.

02

THE X-FACTOR:

VALUES COMMUNITIES

This is the biggest opportunity for your brand. Values-based communities have lower brand penetration and mobilize more people more often. But too few brands are participating.

- Only 36% of values-based communities have brands linked to the community;
- Values communities are influential in the U.S., with 75% of members most likely to mobilize for their beliefs or to belong to Values-based hobby/leisure activities (86%), political (60%) and religious/spiritual (54%) communities.

03

TAKE OFF

YOUR

TRAINING

WHEELS

AND GET PAST

INTEREST COMMUNITIES.

Because Interest-based communities are the realm of entertainment and instant gratification, they are popular for brands. But the landscape is crowded, and connections are shallow.

- Of the five community types, interest communities are the least likely to derive their identity from it, feel they have a voice or sense of unity, or work together.
- Interest-based communities are the least likely to mobilize for community affiliated brands;
- 54% of Interest-based communities have brands already showing up, the most of any community type and the most competitive landscape for brands;
- 65% of sports groups, a subcategory of Interest-based communities, have brands linked to them, the highest of all community types surveyed (see more in Section 3).

04

USE DEEDS,

NOT WORDS,

TO

RALLY PEOPLE

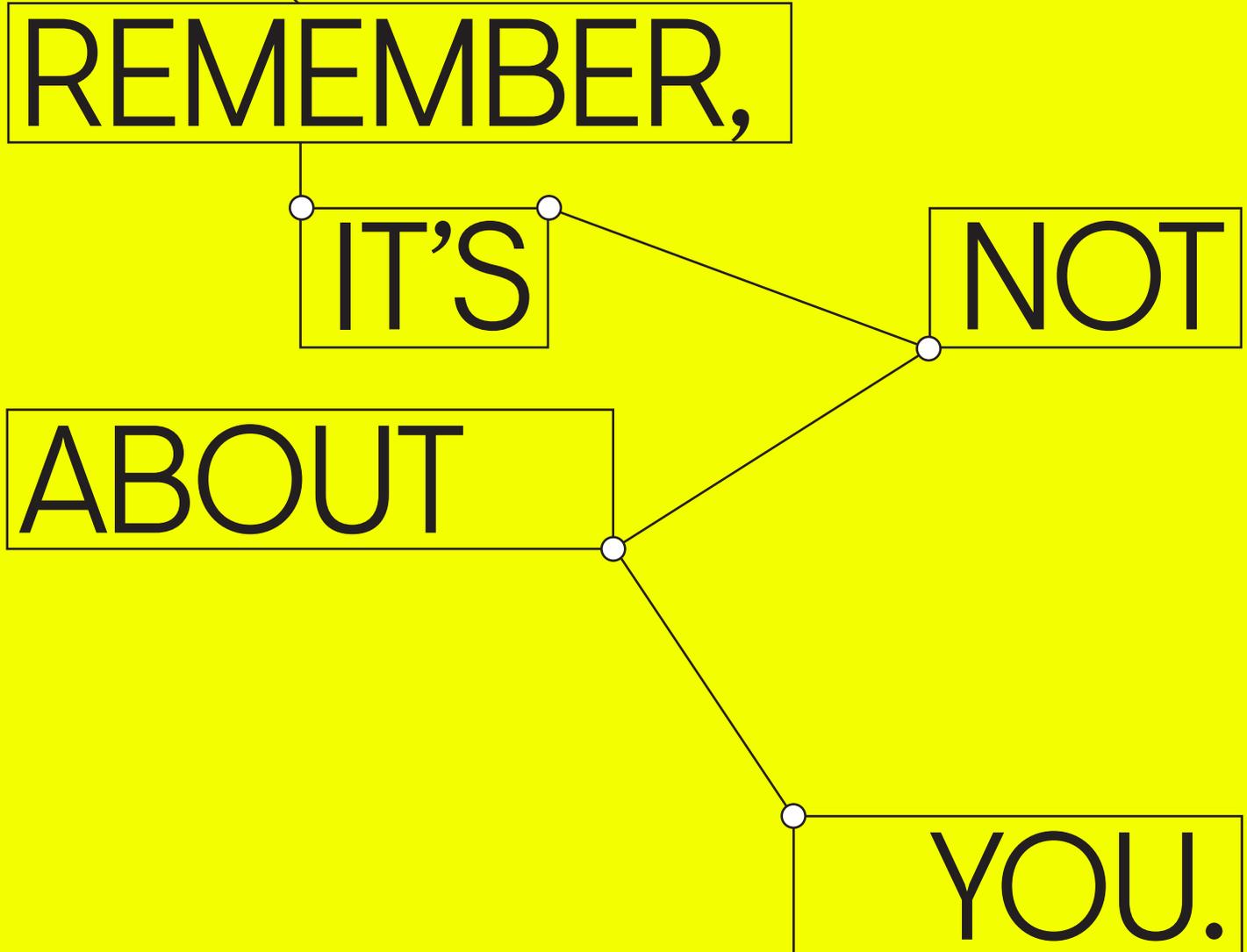
AND

MOBILIZE COMMUNITIES.

People who feel they belong to their communities feel similarly toward the brands affiliated with that community and are willing to act on their behalf. They participate in initiatives and also recruit fellow community members and those outside the group to join. Remember the *network effects*.

- 78% say that their community works and takes action together;
- 79% of community members would participate in an initiative launched by a brand connected to a community;
- 90% of whom would try to get others to join, both members from their community and people from outside the community;
- 23% say they share community content outside of the community, making mobilized community members influential ambassadors.

05



In whichever communities you choose to participate you must continue to listen, be ever more transparent and open to amplifying the group identity. To thrive and benefit from network effects in communities, never force your brand's message.

————— 77% say that brands linked to their communities reflect their identity;

————— 75% say their communities, and their individual voices, influence brands linked to those communities.

Long Story Short

Ultimately, as free agents, we choose which communities we want to engage with.

More than ever, community participation is fluid and linked to an individual's identity. This gives brands a more practical and compelling way to segment people, less by demographics or psychographics, but rather by the communities to which we belong.

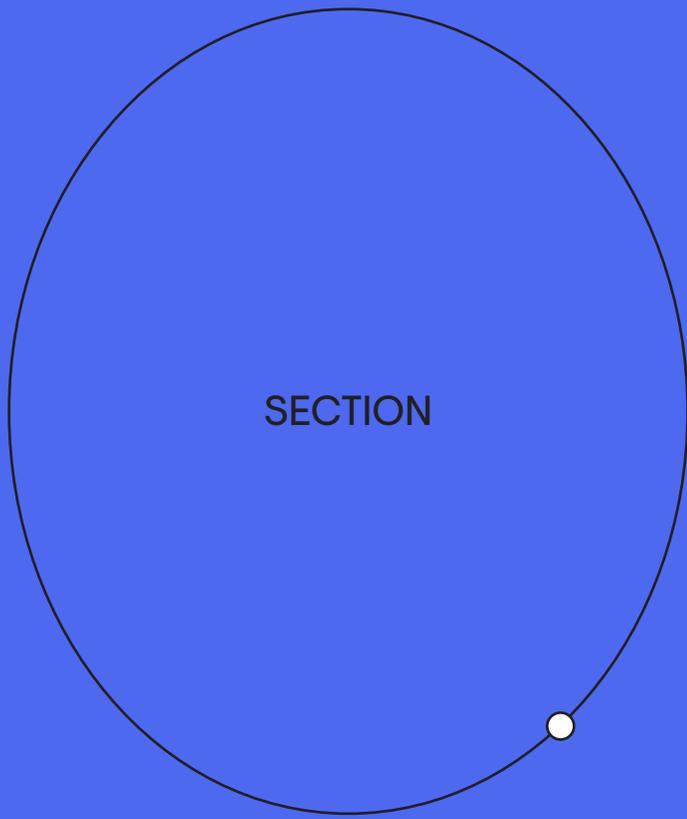


“

There is no power for
change greater than
a community discovering
what it cares about.

”

MARGARET J. WHEATLEY
writer, teacher and speaker

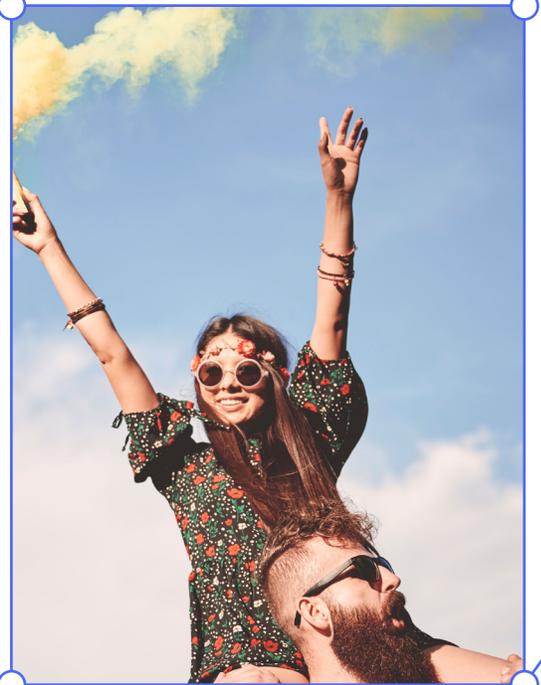


THE FOUR COMMUNITY PILLARS

People form and maintain communities to meet common needs. Members of a community have a sense of trust, safety, and caring for each other.

We identified four pillars that form the foundational structure of a community.

These pillars contribute to a person's ability to derive a sense of belonging from the community.



Four Pillars of Community

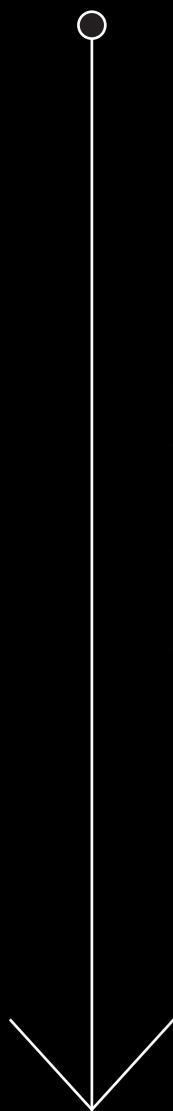
IDENTITY

SOCIAL CAPITAL

ONENESS

MOBILIZATION

THE HIGHER INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS SCORE ON THESE PILLARS



In fact, at least 75% of members feel at least some sense of identity, oneness, social capital and mobilization with their community.

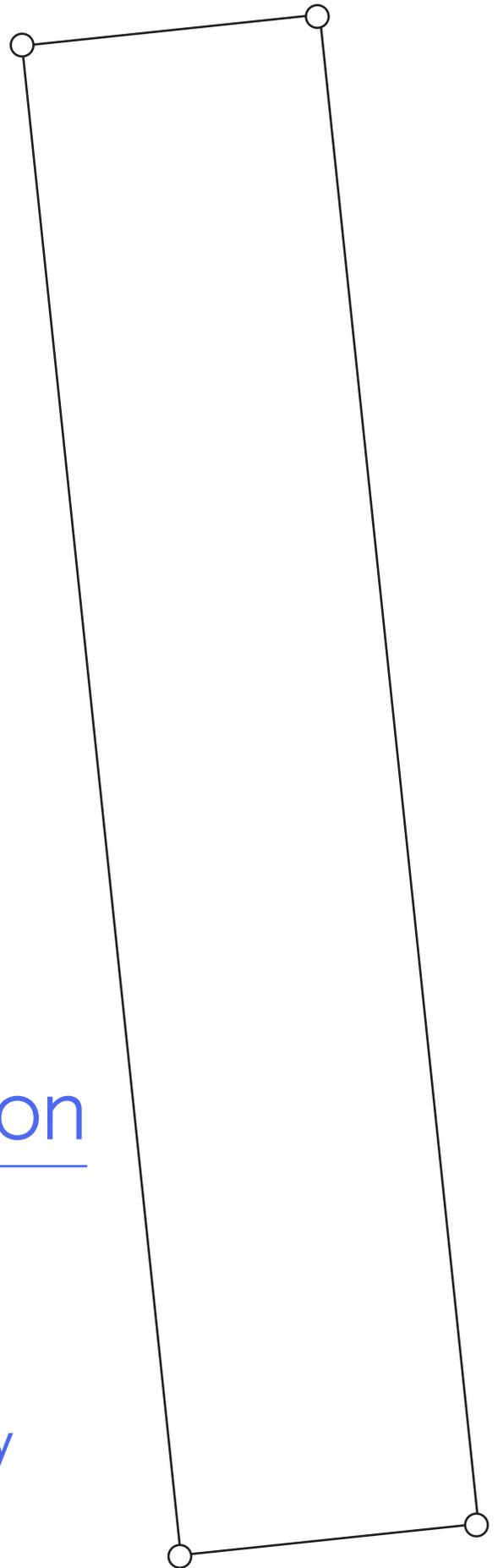
Between 33% and 45% feel this a great deal.

THE STRONGER THE COMMUNITY

Identity

An individual's
emotional connection
to a group.

The higher the attachment,
the higher they feel their identity
is derived from the community.



83%

Say their community defines them as a person

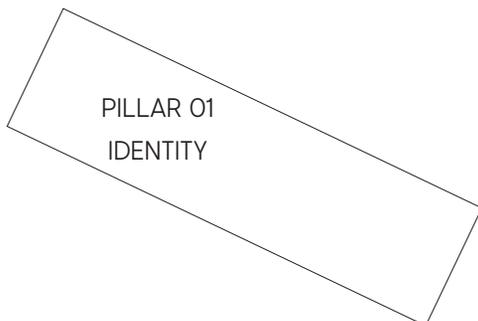


KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Communities are a foundational part of how people self-identify. In fact, 45% say that their community defines them *a great deal*;
- This identification also applies to the brands that are linked to communities; people who identify with their communities are also likely to identify with the brands associated with their communities.

77%

Say that brands linked to their communities reflect their identity.



HOW BRANDS BENEFIT

Loyalty

EXAMPLES

OMSOM

Omsom was born to reclaim and celebrate Asian flavours, Asian cuisines, and therefore Asian communities. From the chefs they collaborated with to the packaging and visuals, everything in this brand embodies what it means to be Asian American.

AWAY

Using inspirational travel content, affordable pricing, and a social-focused channel strategy, Away turned a utilitarian commodity item into an aspirational status symbol.



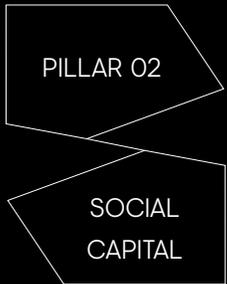
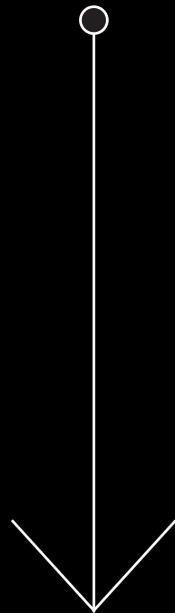
PILLAR 01
IDENTITY

Social Capital



The collective value
the community places
on each member's
influence.

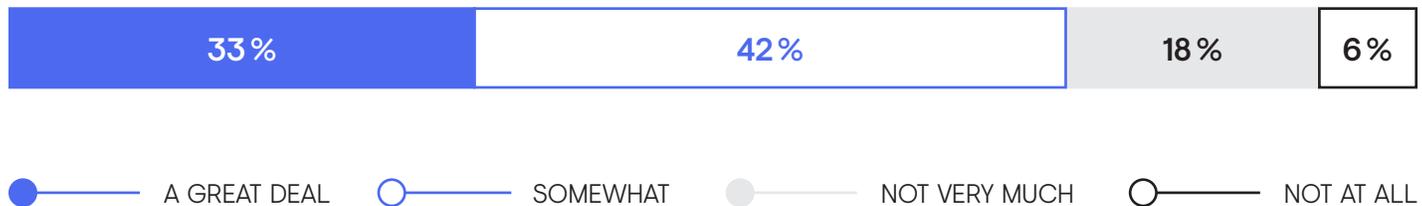
PEOPLE FEEL
LIKE THEY HAVE
A VOICE



AND THAT
THEIR VOICE
IS HEARD

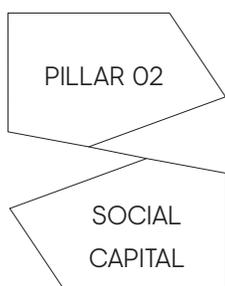
76%

Have a voice and feel heard as a member of a community



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- _____ Communities with high social capital are most likely to have deep conversations and share content;
- _____ This social capital can be seen in evidence by:
 - _____ their ability to engage in *real-time*;
 - _____ the ability to have deep conversations;
 - _____ sharing / seeking community-related content.



HOW BRANDS BENEFIT

Loyalty

Advocacy

Virality

Word of mouth

EXAMPLES

DECATHLON Following a year of home confinement and lack of competition sports broadcasts, French people are rediscovering sports practice and wanting to try different things at their own pace. Affordable and beginner-friendly, France's leader in sporting goods, Decathlon provided a powerful social medium for people to connect through sport and foster a healthy lifestyle. Over the past year, it has rolled out its unique retail brand in England and across the sea, in Canada.

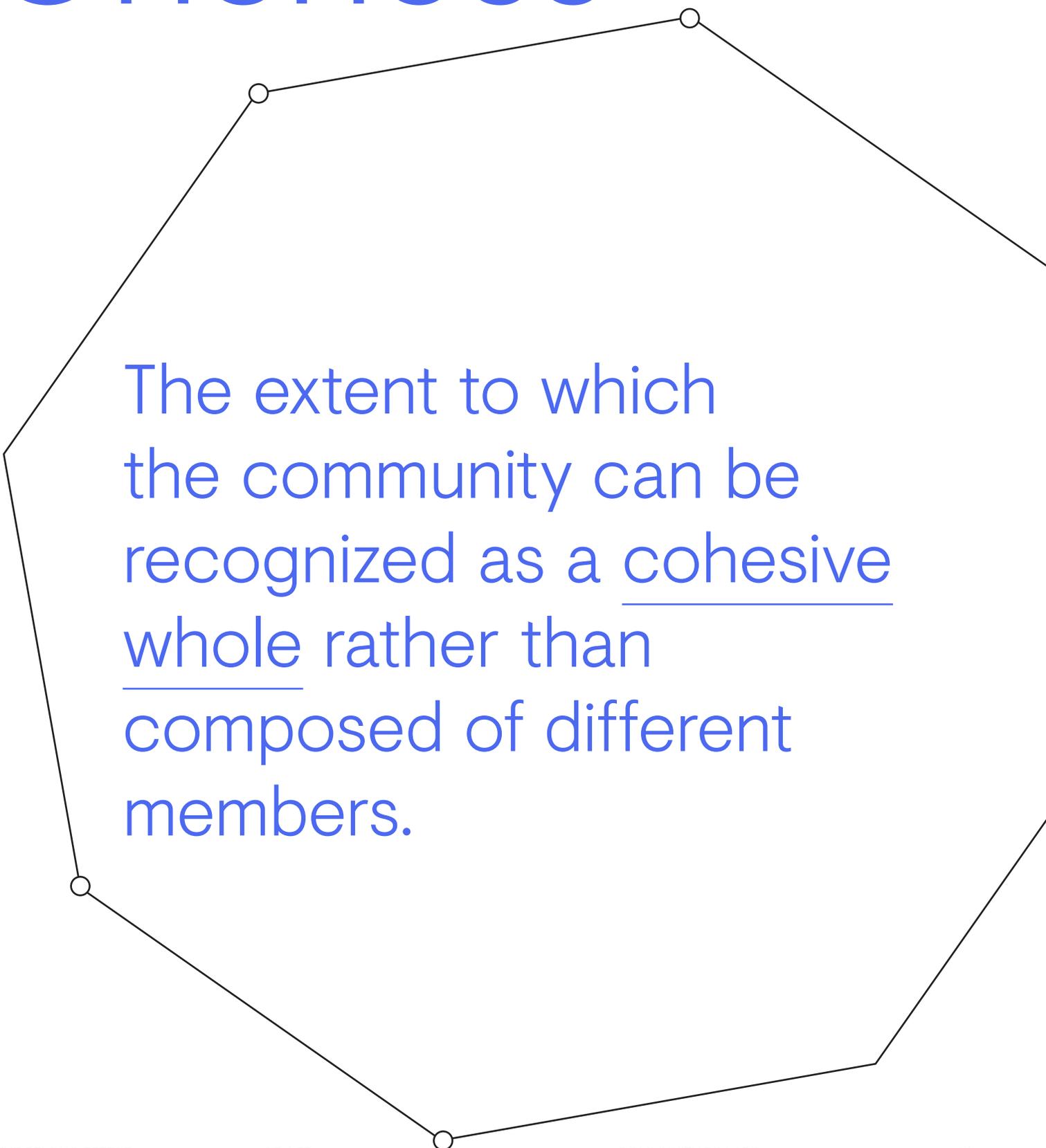
GLOSSIER This beauty brand may be the best model of a business having two-way conversations with their community, called Generation G. The team constantly engages with customer feedback in comments, tweets, emails, reviews, and dedicated social platforms. A few years ago, the company launched a Slack channel for its most engaged community members to connect directly with each other.



PILLAR 02

SOCIAL
CAPITAL

Oneness



The extent to which the community can be recognized as a cohesive whole rather than composed of different members.

83%

Feel a sense of unity as a member of a community



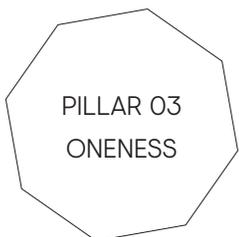
● A GREAT DEAL ○ SOMEWHAT ● NOT VERY MUCH ○ NOT AT ALL

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Of the four pillars, community members are the most likely to report feeling a sense of unity, and this feeling extends to all affiliated brands;
- In terms of oneness traits, members are most likely to associate their community with demographic diversity and inclusiveness;

85%

of their community is aligned with a brand or community.



HOW BRANDS BENEFIT

EXAMPLES

Loyalty Advocacy

GIRLS NIGHT IN

This community started as a weekly newsletter and blossomed into a self-care community. Each month, members around the country can join a local book club to make new connections and experience the brand's promise of friendship and wellness.

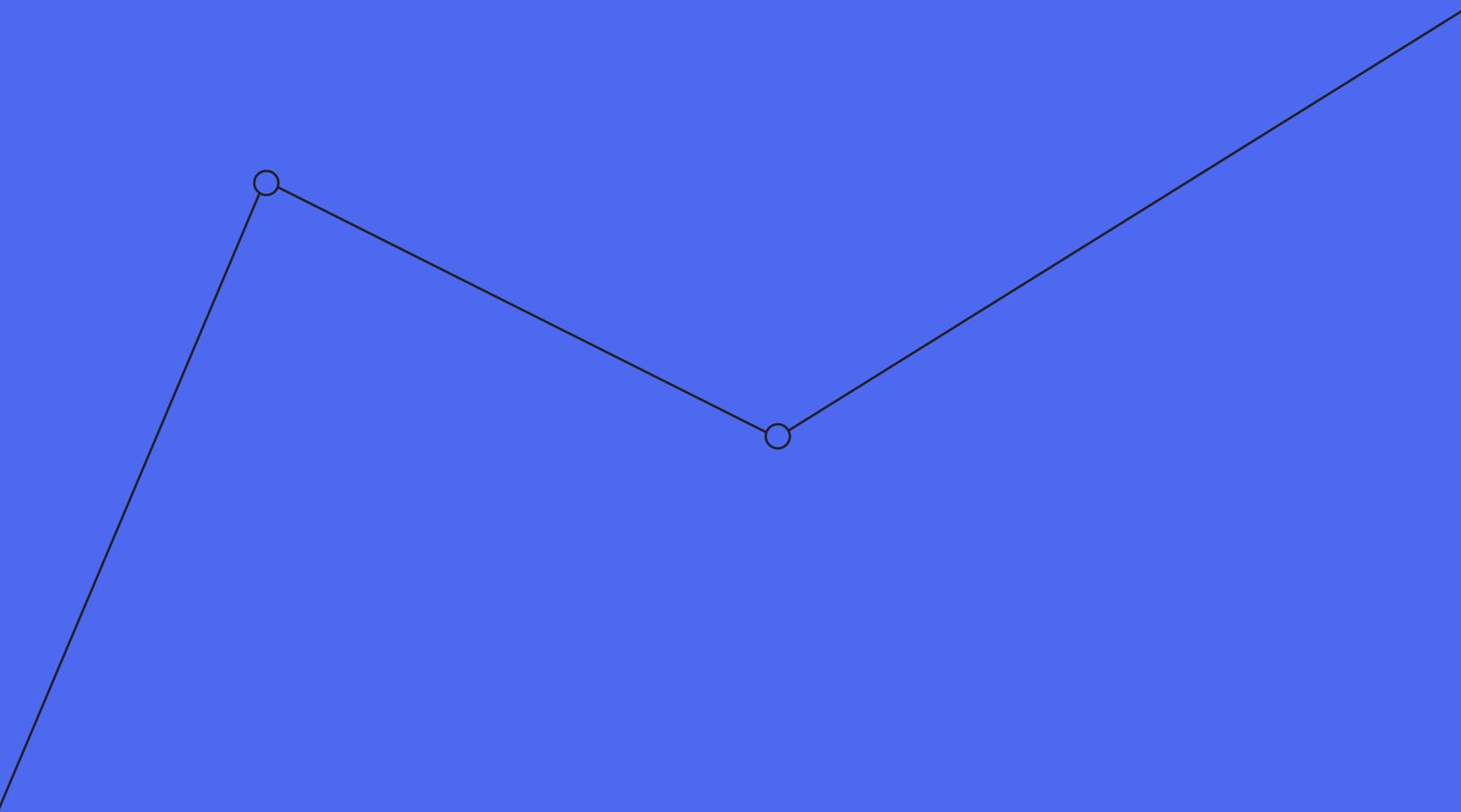
TELFAR

Before its big takeoff over the past year, Telfar was worn by creatives and queers in NYC. However, with growth came new supporters from all ages, races, and backgrounds. Telfar has reached everyday style-setters, government officials, and celebrities, creating a space where we are all one.



PILLAR 03
ONENESS

Mobilization



The ability and degree to which members of a community will cooperate to take action.

78%

Say their community works together to take action



● A GREAT DEAL ○ SOMEWHAT ● NOT VERY MUCH ○ NOT AT ALL

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Not only are they willing to participate in initiatives, but they're also willing to recruit fellow community members and those outside the community to join.

79%

would participate in an initiative launched by a brand affiliated to a community:

90%

of whom would try to get others to join the initiatives, both members from their community and people from outside the community;

23%

say they spread community content outside of the community making in-group members influential ambassadors of a cause.



HOW BRANDS BENEFIT

Advocacy

Network effects

Earned media

EXAMPLES

PATAGONIA Patagonia has always been more than just a clothing brand. They've launched plenty of campaigns ("Don't Buy This Jacket") and initiatives that brought their brand environmental mission to life. The launch of their digital platform, Patagonia Action Works, allows users to volunteer skills and time, sign petitions, discover events and donate money to local causes. This is an excellent example of community mobilization, which tackles a greater purpose and goal.

OUTDOOR VOICES Since its launch, the OV approach to exercise has been the antithesis of Nike and Adidas' intense, performance route. They created a fun, casual and playful brand that's all about "doing things" (their slogan). To rally their community of 'Doer's, they transformed stores into gathering spots where customers can socialize. They've also created virtual workouts, meetup sessions, social challenges and a community magazine.



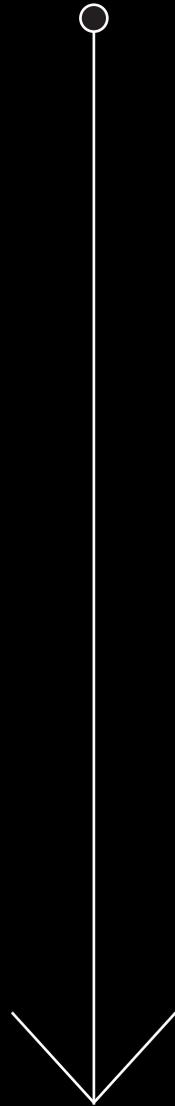
PILLAR 04
MOBILIZATION

Leveraging the Pillars



Marketers can use the community pillars as metrics to measure the degree of attachment their brand has to pre-existing communities. Consider these pillars as critical tools for determining your brand's potential impact and highlighting areas for growth.

WHATEVER CONNECTION
PEOPLE FEEL TOWARDS
THEIR COMMUNITIES



CARRIES OVER TO
YOUR BRAND

If people self-identify with the four pillars, the effects extend to the brands associated with the communities.

COMMUNITIES

Identity

83%

Being part of these communities defines your identity as a person.

Oneness

83%

Feel a sense of unity as a member of these communities.

Social capital

75%

Feel like you have a voice and are heard as a member of these communities.

Mobilization

78%

Communities work together to do things or take action.

AFFILIATED BRANDS

Identity

77%

Feel like these brands reflect your identity.

Oneness

85%

Feel like your community is aligned with this company or brand.

Social capital

75%

Feel like your community has influence over these brands/companies.

Mobilization

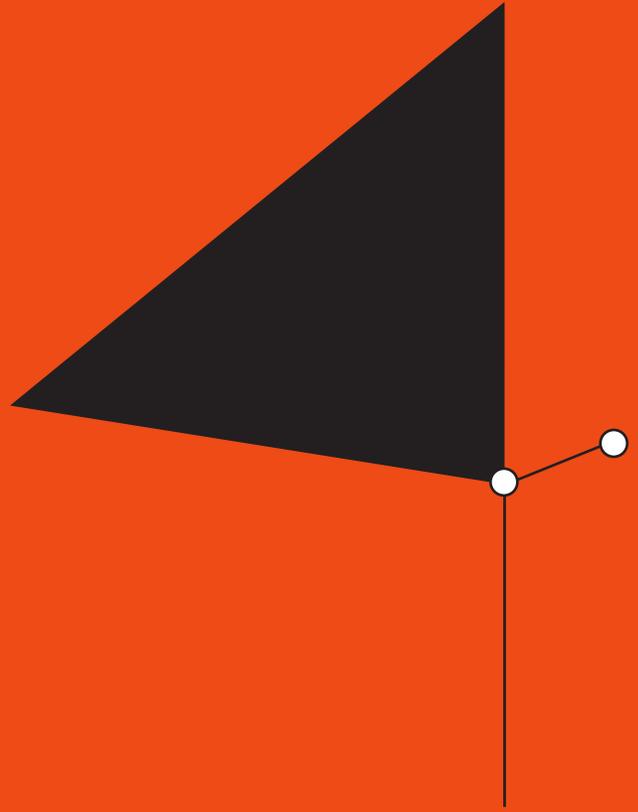
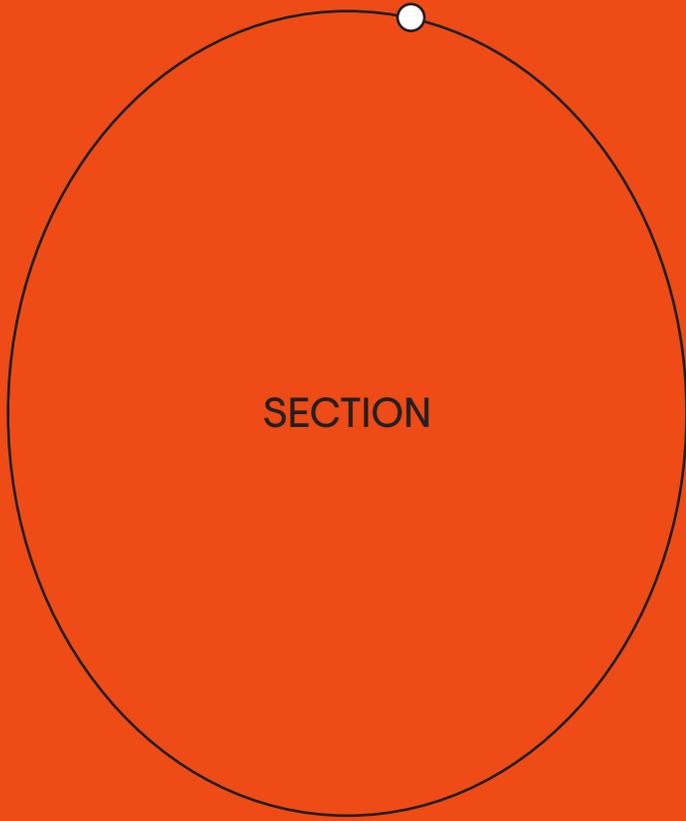
79%

Would participate in an initiative launched by a brand connected to your community (if agree with the initiative)

COMMUNITY IS
DERIVED FROM
THE MIDDLE
FRENCH WORD
COMMUNITÉ



WHICH
MEANS *JOINT
OWNERSHIP*



THE FIVE COMMUNITY TYPES

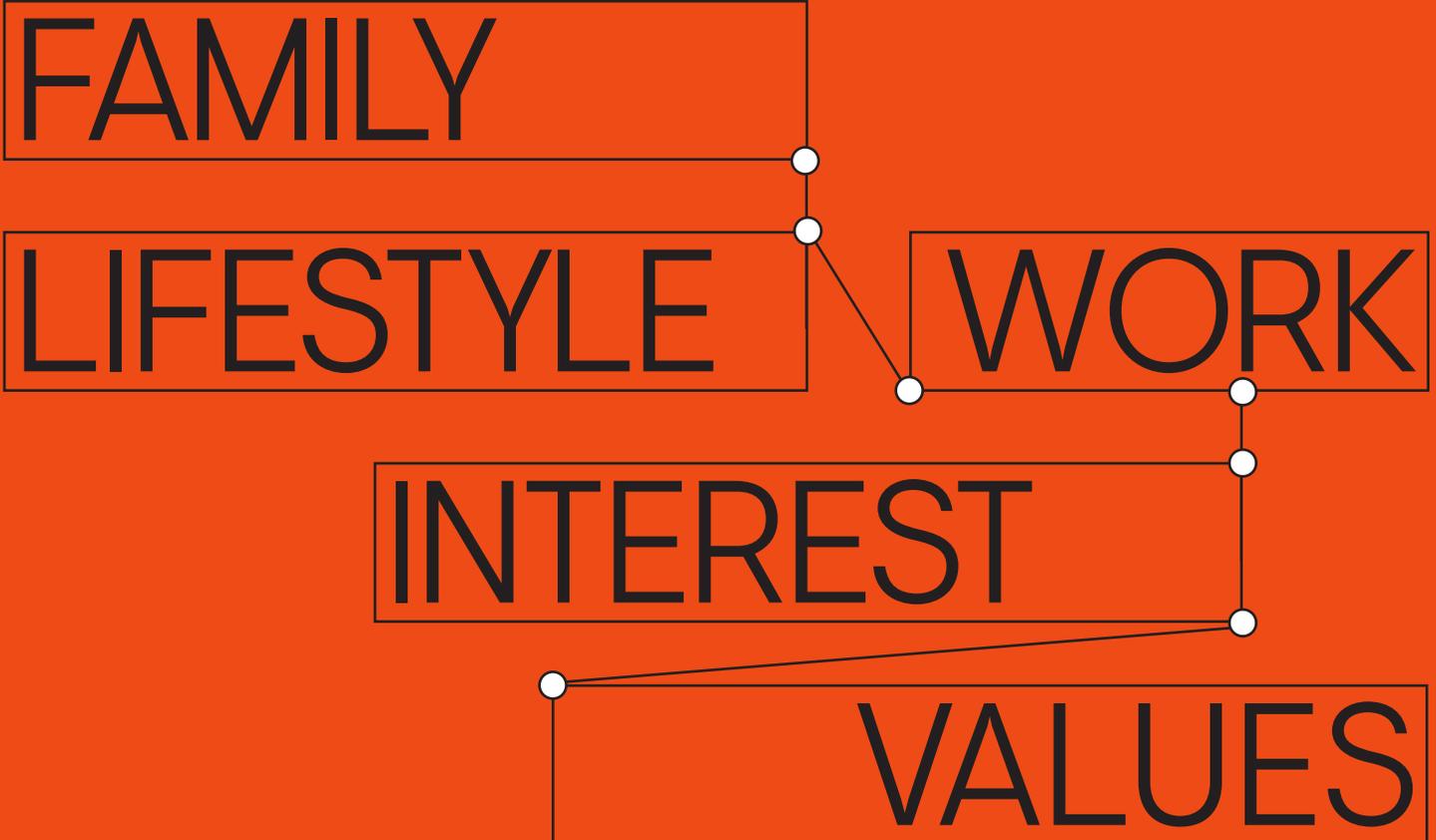
How We Organize



Sometimes our communities find us. Sometimes we find our communities. They are inherited, chosen, sought after, found by fate, fleeting and enduring. We find community in a myriad of ways — from where we live to what we believe.

Each community is organized differently to meet the needs of its members. We have identified five types of communities in which we express ourselves and form a sense of belonging: *family, lifestyle, work, interest and values.*

Five Types of Community



Our five types of communities have the following sub-categories.

FAMILY

The community where you live physically

People from a similar ethnocultural background

People who share a religious or spiritual identity

WORK

People who work together

People who share an interest in the same field of work

People who have similar aspirations (e.g., mentally, physically, financially, creatively, career)

People you know from school / college / university alumni group

VALUES

People who advocate for their values / beliefs

People who share a religious or spiritual identity

People who share political beliefs

People involved in the same community organization or volunteer group

People who share a common identity / life experience (such as being LGBTQ, living with a disability, being a person of colour, etc.)

LIFESTYLE

The community where you live physically

The community where you spend time online

People who are at a similar life-stage (such as new parents)

People who share a common identity / life experience (such as being LGBTQ, living with a disability, being a person of colour, etc.)

People who have similar aspirations (e.g., mentally, physically, financially, creatively, career)

People you know from school / college / university alumni group

People that use the same product or brand

INTEREST

The community where you spend time online

People who share a common hobby or particular activity

People who are fans of some form of entertainment (e.g., gaming, movies, TV, books, music, celebrity)

People who are fans of a particular sports team

Groups of people that use the same product or brand

Sense of belonging by community categories



NOTE The 17 categories above were placed into one or more of the five types of communities.

Family



These groups
overperform
on caring
and mitigating
loneliness.

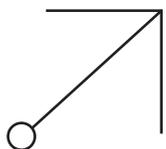
Family communities are for caring but do not create strong advocacy. Members feel a deep emotional attachment and get together in-person, but that will move more online in a post-pandemic world.

Family-based communities will be slow to mobilize and brand penetration is the lowest, but if they find a brand initiative they can get behind, they are more likely to participate.

PARTICIPATION

Brands can help these communities feel joyful and cared for through sponsorships, but should also consider in-person experiences or online gatherings.

BRAND PENETRATION



34%

SPOTLIGHT BY TYPES

Lifestyle

An abstract graphic consisting of three white circular nodes connected by thin white lines. One node is at the bottom left, another is at the top center, and the third is at the bottom right. The lines connect the bottom-left node to the top-center node, the top-center node to the bottom-right node, and the bottom-left node to the bottom-right node, forming a large triangle.

Lifestyle communities
are unremarkable.

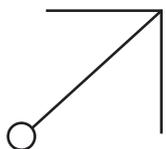
Lifestyle communities could be described as behaving like the *average community*.

Apart from having higher levels of social capital and being more likely to engage on social media, lifestyle communities act very similarly to the norm. They are safe zones with room for many voices.

PARTICIPATION

Lifestyle communities are the least likely to go to physical locations or share content, so brands should continue to bolster their online platforms and encourage social media engagement.

BRAND PENETRATION



40%

Work

Work is
focused
on work.

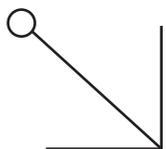
While we can form friendships and share diverse ideologies at work, this group does not give members a sense of identity or unity. Members feel empowered and appreciated but lack an emotional attachment.

As a result, they are less interested in mobilizing outside of the office – and want to engage less in person in a post-pandemic world (pay attention, employers).

PARTICIPATION

Brands can help these communities feel heard and appreciated for their contributions through a strong work culture and consider mobilizing around a profession.

BRAND PENETRATION



38%

Interest

The good time
group, where we go
for gratification.

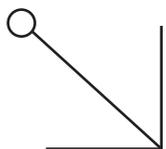
Interest communities are the most passive and shallow communities. Think of a house party with good-time vibes and casual interactions. Members engage mostly online through social media, discussion boards and video channels.

There is high brand penetration and low mobilization, meaning competition for their attention will be fierce, and they won't be hard-working brand advocates.

PARTICIPATION

Brands can help these communities feel joyful and entertained through products or events and consider interacting directly with the community.

BRAND PENETRATION



54%

SPOTLIGHT ON SPORTS COMMUNITIES

Our research categorized sports as an Interest-based community, and we identified a few notable behaviors that present opportunities for sports brand engagement.



49%

Almost half of Gen Z and millennials say they are a member of a sports community.

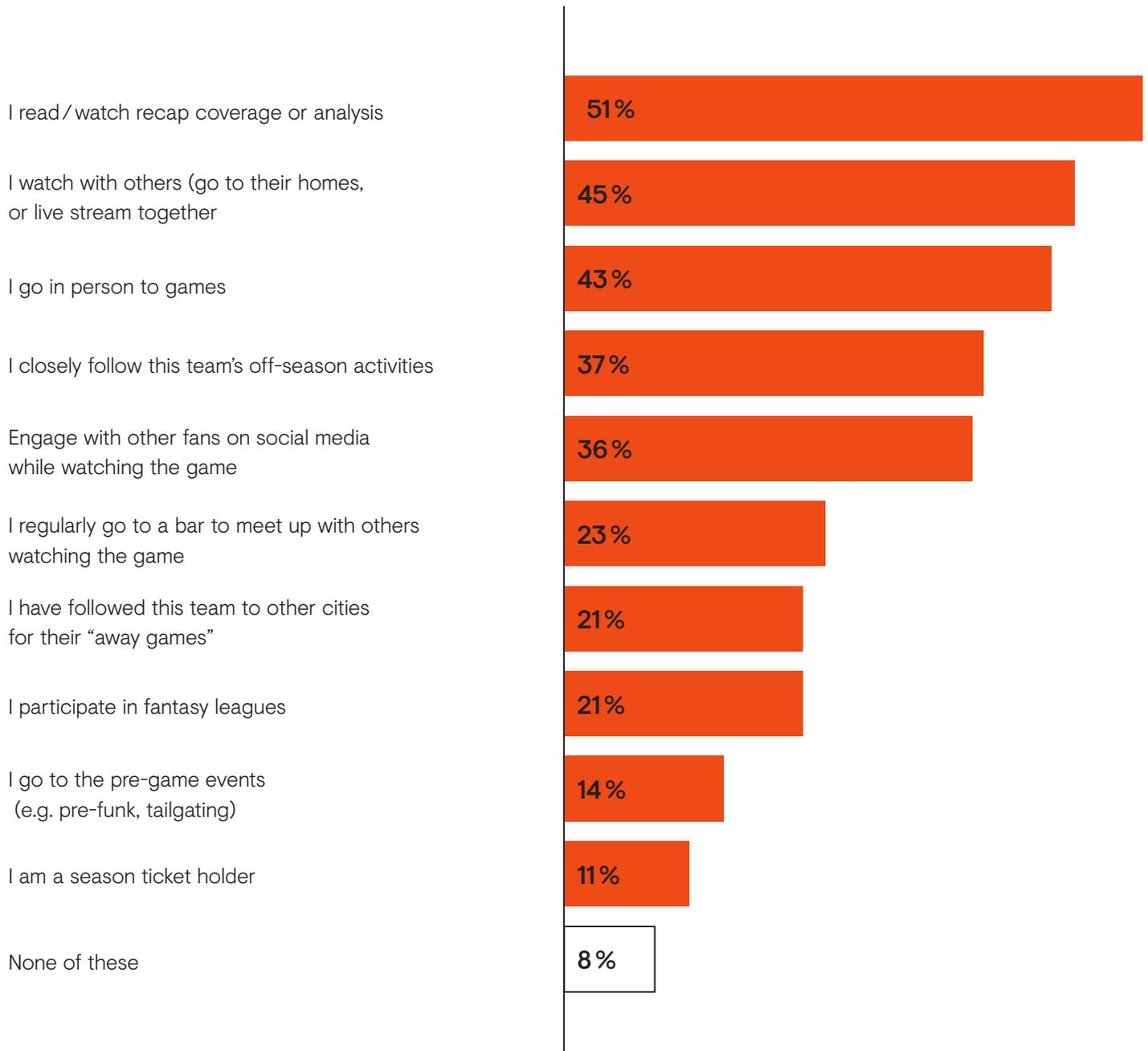
Where most other Interest groups prefer to engage online, we found that millennials are more likely than Gen Z to go in person to games, regularly go to a bar to meet up with others to watch games, and read / watch recap coverage and analysis.

Despite preferring to root together online, Gen Z and younger millennials are willing to spend money to participate in person, with these cohorts having a higher percentage of season ticket holders than older millennials.

MEMBERS OF SPORTS COMMUNITIES

- Stay for a long time with their communities
- Often become members through family / background (35%)
- Engage on social media (85%), in-person (53%), and online discussion boards (33%)
- Top emotional benefits: entertained (55%) and joyful (39%)
- Have a brand linked to their community (65%), the highest of all community types
- Buy merchandise related to their community (45%), the highest of all community types

Sports communities behavior



Values

The communities
for soaring
to new heights.

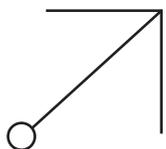
Values communities are the strongest of all five community types. Members engage deeply and derive many emotional benefits.

While this group ranks lowest for entertainment, it outstrips the other communities for the benefits of inspiration and empowerment. Most importantly, members mobilize and share / recruit outside of their community, making them great ambassadors.

PARTICIPATION

Brands can help these communities feel empowered by working on a common goal or sharing content from the group, but they should also consider in-person experiences or discussion boards.

BRAND PENETRATION



36 %

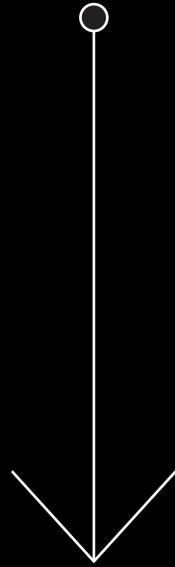
“

Community, in this sense, is not merely something that one fits into; it is also something one chooses for oneself, through a process of self-discovery.

”

MEGAN GARBER
journalist

COMMUNITIES
ARE PERSONAL
JOURNEYS



THEY REFLECT
OUR LIFE NARRATIVES
AND SHAPE
WHERE WE SPEND
OUR COLLECTIVE
ENERGY

A Spectrum of Emotions

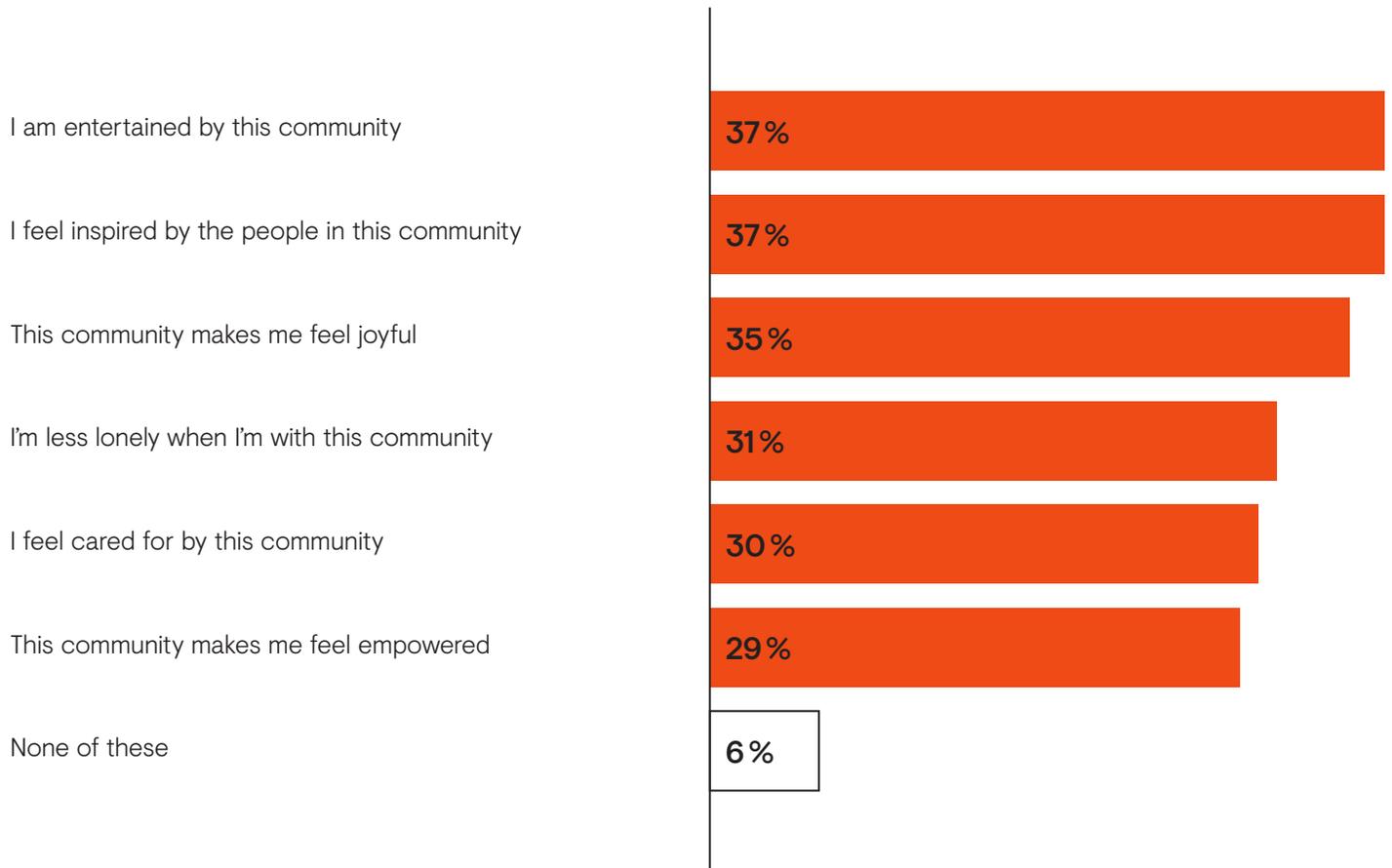


Naturally, we gravitate towards the people that are similar to us. We build friendships with individuals with whom we feel a common sense of purpose and solidarity.

By cherishing the same activities, reading or running, for example, we create strong bonds and tap into a broad spectrum of positive emotions, such as gratification, inspiration, and caring.

Emotional benefits from communities

What are some of the emotional benefits that you get by being a part of your communities?



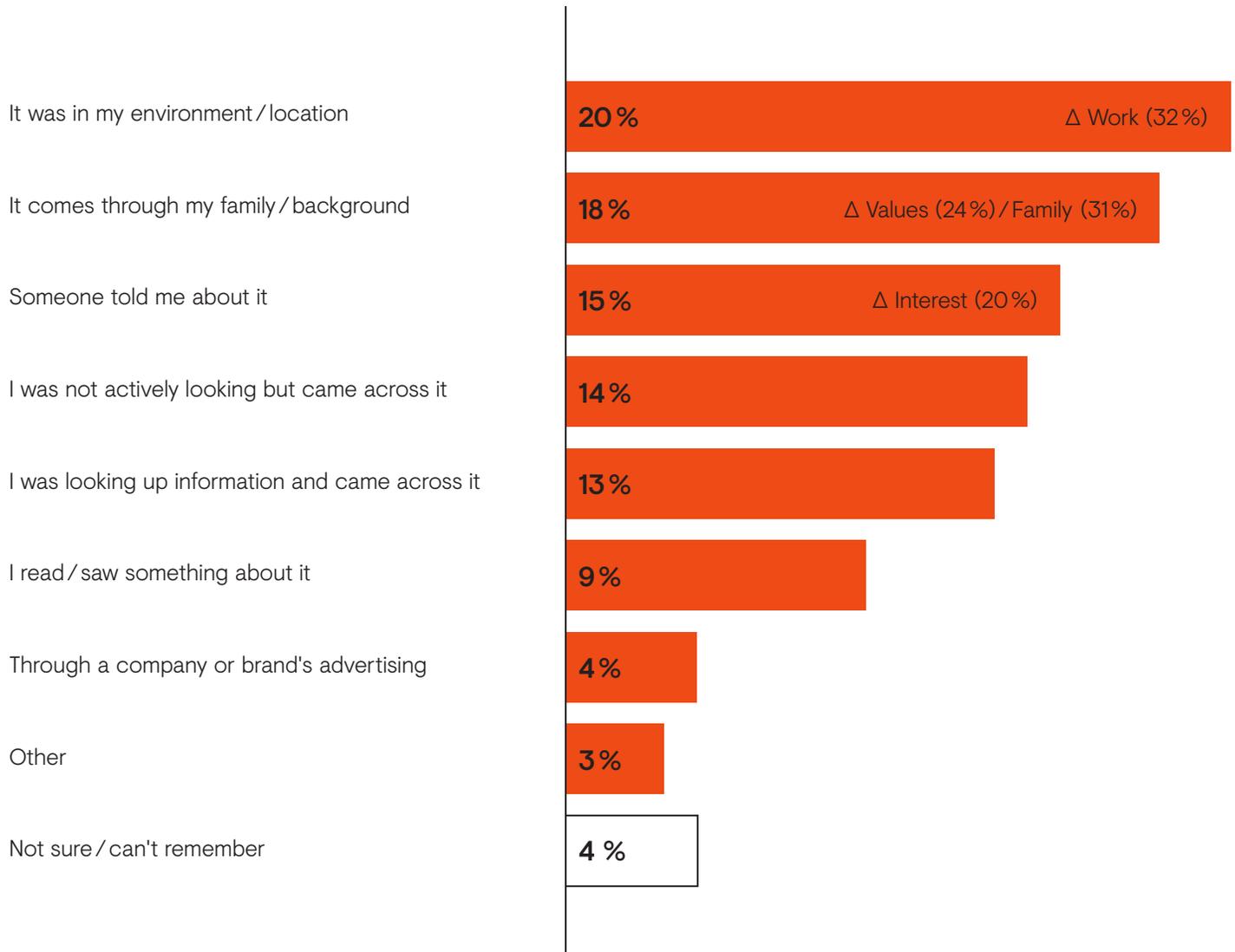
NOTE Only 6% of respondents said that they don't feel any of the benefits listed. Entertainment, inspiration and joy are the top emotional benefits.

Communities Are Not Monoliths

Just like their members, communities come in all shapes and sizes. There is a great diversity of communities and how and why we join them.

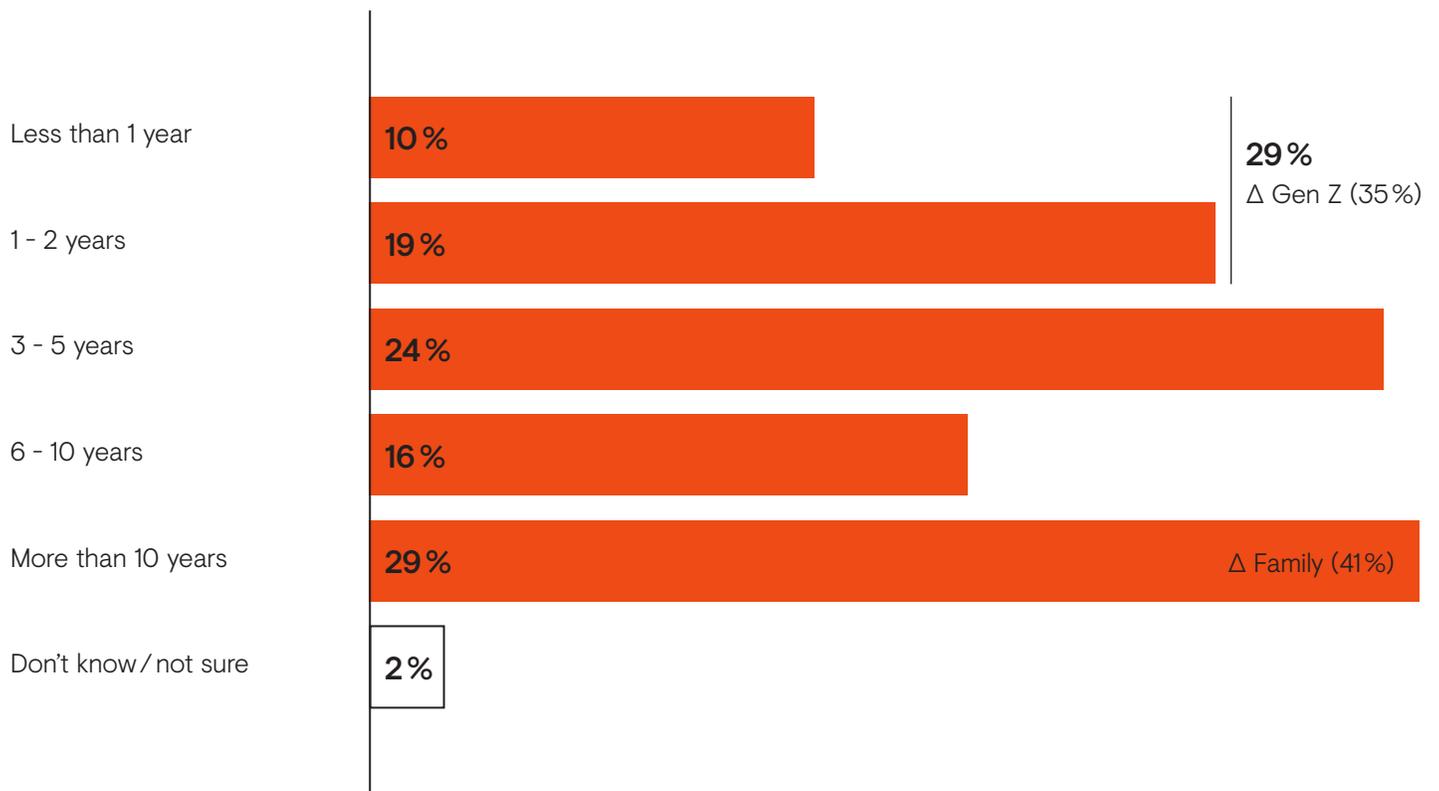
Most of us participate in multiple communities within a given day. The top ways we find our community is either through our immediate environment or our family/background. Although we are constantly joining new ones, we remain *loyal* to those we already feel a true sense of belonging.

How did you find your community?



NOTE 32% of respondents find their community through work.

How long have you been part of your community?



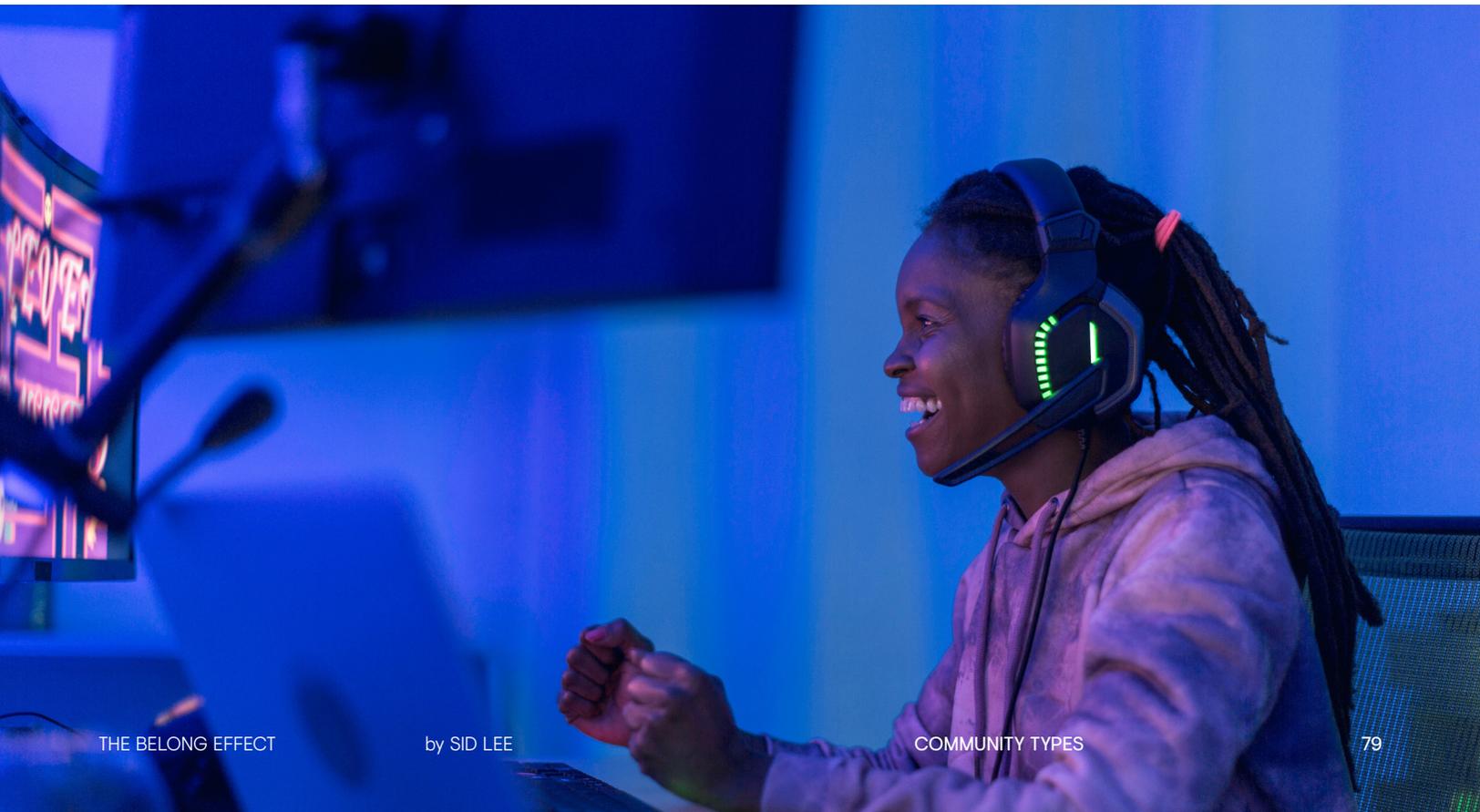
NOTE

There is great diversity in how long people have belonged to their community with almost one-third (29%) being apart for more than 10 years and almost another third (29%) having been apart for less than two years (including 10% who have found their community during the pandemic).

Where Is Community?

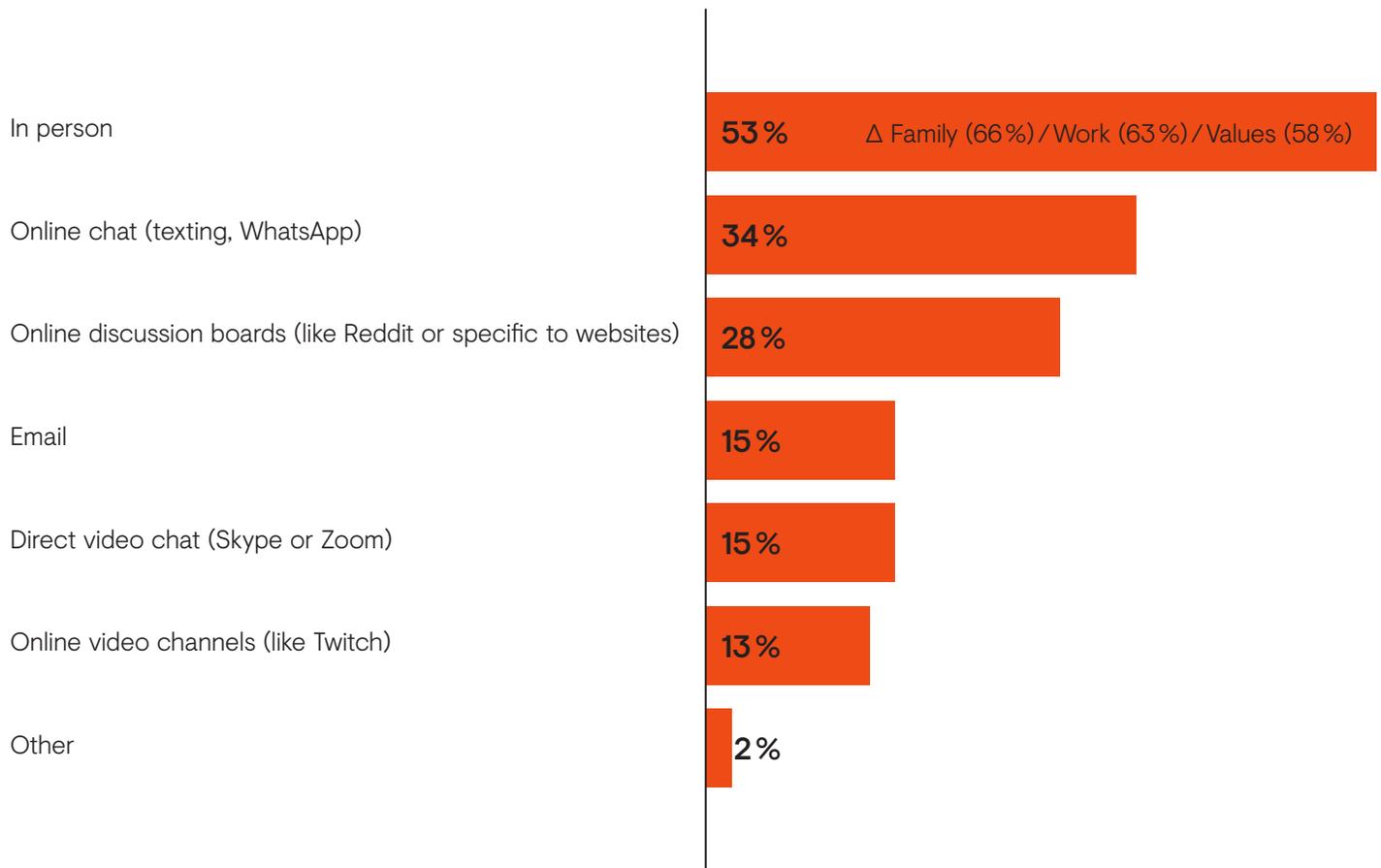
We often associate the word *community* with our school, community center, neighbourhood or city. A physical place with which we can identify.

While communities have always been local and close, we now realize that the *strongest* communities are no longer dependent on geography.



Where do people engage with their communities?

In-person is the top way to connect in all types of communities but this is mainly driven by family, work and values communities.



NOTE People engage both in-person and online across platforms and apps. Social media plays a significant role in connecting communities, with 4 out 5 respondents using social media to engage with their communities.

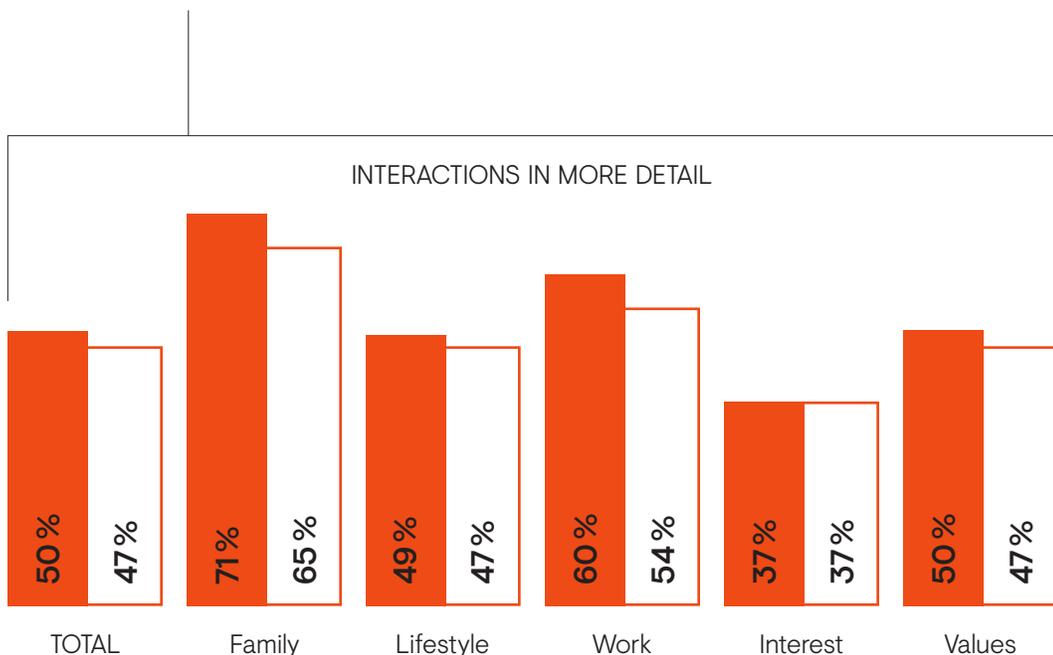
How did people engage before the pandemic?



How will in-person interactions change after the pandemic?



● EXCLUSIVELY OR MOSTLY IN-PERSON
 ● EQUALLY IN-PERSON AND ONLINE
 ○ EXCLUSIVELY OR MOSTLY ONLINE



Community members report that they want their in-person engagement (exclusive / mostly) to decrease post-pandemic (particularly among family and workgroups).

● BEFORE
○ AFTER

NOTE The pandemic has mostly affected work and family communities. While the shifts won't be dramatic, the pandemic lockdowns have had an effect.

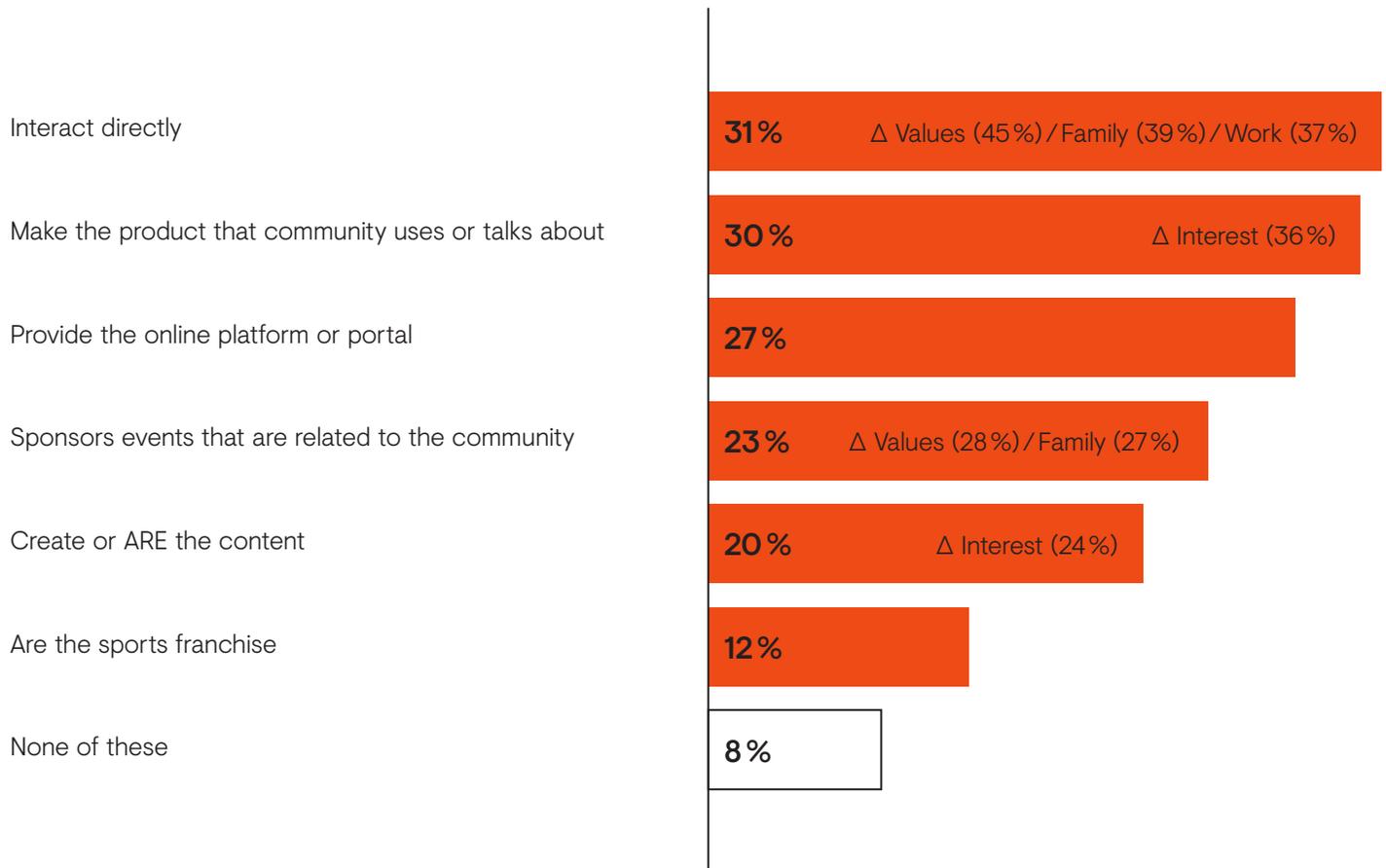
Cultivating Belonging

If brands are part of the community, then they are part of the personal journey.

As a brand, you have a tremendous opportunity to align yourself with communities, particularly among values and family-based communities. The more active you are in communities, the better you will do compared to other brands and generate greater engagement, awareness, brand value, revenue. Consider this as your competitive edge.



How do brands engage with communities?



43%

of communities have some sort of brand associated with them.

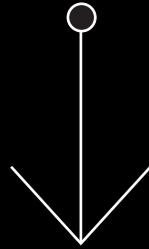
Δ Highest: Interest (54%)

∇ Lowest: Values (36%) and Family (34%)

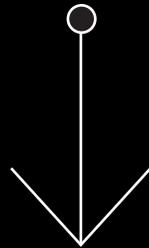
NOTE

Interest communities are the most likely to have brands attached to them of all community types. Brands that make products used or discussed by community members are more often linked to interest communities than other types of communities.

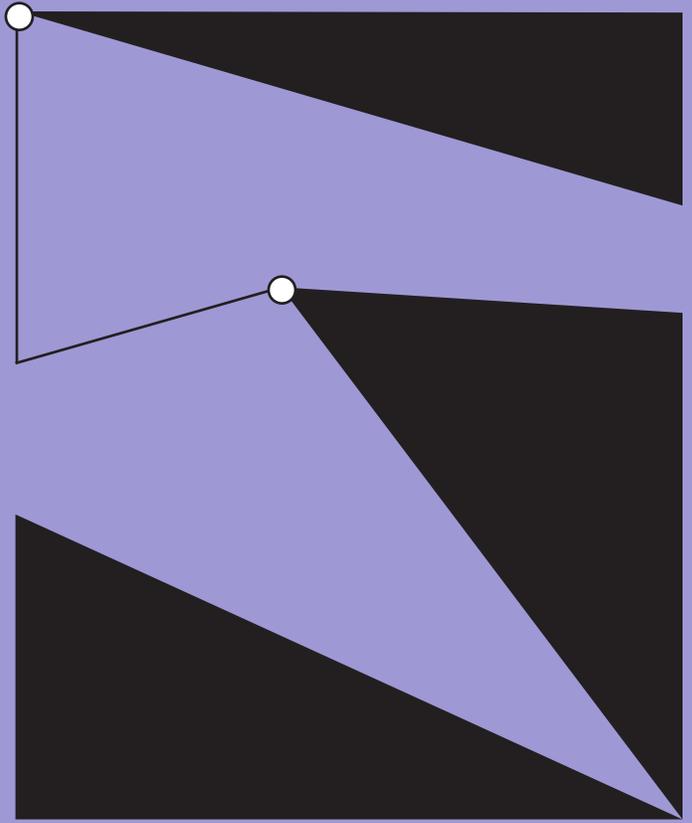
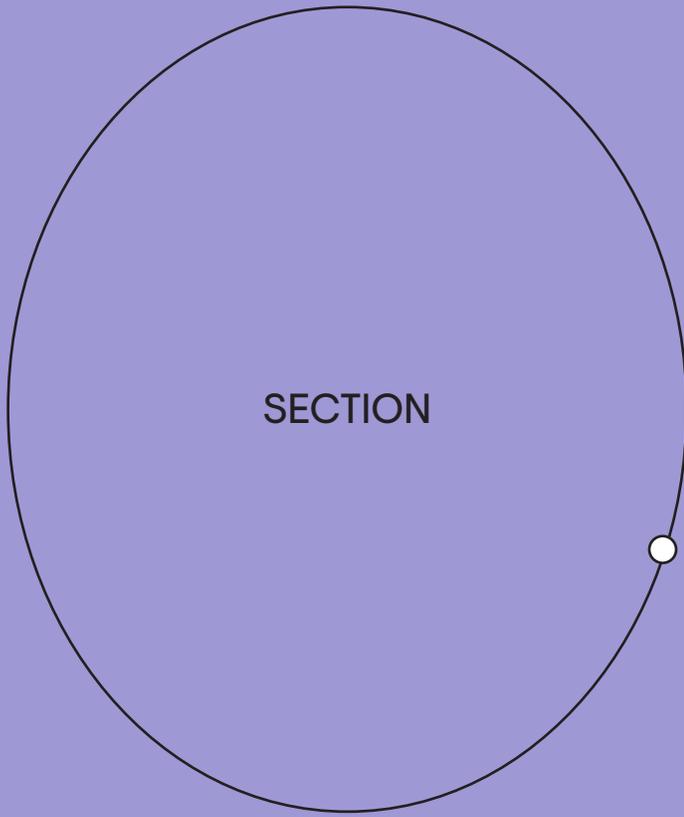
IT'S ALL ABOUT
PEOPLE



OFFLINE,
ONLINE



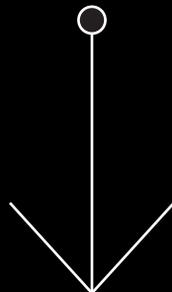
WHEREVER
THEY ARE



THE BUSINESS VALUE OF COMMUNITIES

NOW, LET'S TALK *BUSINESS.*

**Here are three ways to
take our insights
and start applying them
to your brand.**



Brands can serve as catalysts for action by pivoting from ownership to *participation*.

Next step ○ → **Identify your communities**

This cuts deeper than traditional demographic and psychographic segmentation. Similar to an individual, this is where you get to choose which communities you want to participate in. To get there, you'll have to listen and observe.

Think strategically and assess the core pillars. How is identity expressed by the customers? How do individuals come together and show strength as a whole? How does the community mobilize?

Through your findings, you'll begin to see how network effects and behaviours occur within core communities, and you can better tailor your campaigns to create advocacy.

Brands must engage with communities *intentionally* to drive growth through network effects.

Next step ○ → **Define your objective for communities**

Your community strategy is part engagement strategy and part editorial point of view. To be a true participant, imagine the way audiences experience your brand. Demonstrate an incremental mindset and worldview. What kinds of actions and organic engagements fuel sharing and conversation?

Remember to be clear about your objectives and keep track of them, as this will inform which strategies and tactics best fuel growth.

Brands must participate as a *member* to create authentic advocacy.

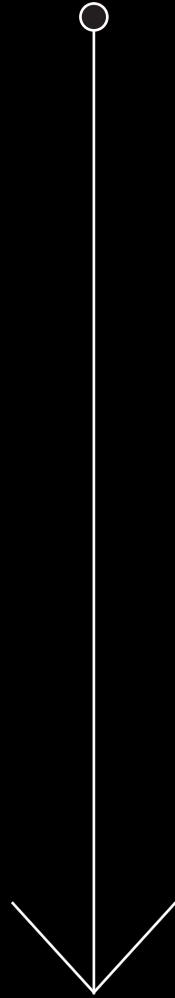
Next step ○ → **Give customers agency within the communities**

Once you've done the groundwork, aim to create a platform allowing people to express themselves meaningfully, without any brand interference.

Keep in mind the following questions. How might your brand contribute to elevating individual voices? Where can you build new connections? What does the community need to become more cohesive? Are there existing or emerging channels, both online and offline?

Stay humble and community-minded, and remember to always participate as a member.

TRUE
BELONGING



IS NOT
PASSIVE

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THIS JOURNEY.

To share your thoughts or learn more,
follow us on *LinkedIn* at
www.linkedin.com/showcase/belongeffect
or drop us a line at belong@sidlee.com

The Belong Effect 2021 Report was created and produced
by Sid Lee with research support from Angus Reid Group.