

How fashion brands are using Discord, Substack, and Facebook Groups

Article

It's hard to deny social media's influence on how consumers discover and purchase products. But there are other platforms besides Instagram and TikTok that can help brands engage with consumers, especially in fashion.

Substack is growing in popularity among consumers looking for expert fashion advice. Meanwhile, Discord gives consumers a voice and an opportunity to connect with other brand

fanatics. And Facebook Groups is the place to reach older women seeking “real” recommendations.

Here’s a breakdown of each platform and how brands can use them to connect with their audiences.

1. Substack

The fashion blog is back, but it has evolved from Tumblr and WordPress. Instead, fashion creators are using Substack to offer advice and recommendations, acquiring hundreds (or thousands) of subscribers who want to hear about what they’re currently wearing or what trends they think are on their way in (or out).

Consumers are paying attention. Last year, Substack subscriptions in the fashion and beauty category were up 80% YoY, according to Substack, as reported by The Guardian.

- Substack is gaining popularity while many users are **decrying TikTok**, frustrated as their feeds fill up with cheap goods pushed by TikTok Shop.
- For some users, Substack’s more curated approach may feel more “authentic” (though many creators still get a commission from products they feature).
- Plus, the platform boasts many current and former fashion journalists, like former Wall Street Journal deputy fashion director **Becky Malinsky**, adding an element of authority that other social platforms may not have.

Recently, Substack has come under fire for publishing Nazi newsletters, which has **caused leading journalists** to leave the platform. **Substack said it removed five publications** that violated the company’s rules, but some creators may still be wary, which brands should keep in mind.

The target audience: Consumers looking for expert fashion advice, not just the latest TikTok trend. Malinsky told The New York Times her audience “sweet spot” is 25- to 50-year-olds who aren’t on TikTok and want a place to find fashion advice that isn’t “just tap-click-tap-click.”

2. Discord

Voice, video, and text chat app Discord enables brands and creators to tap into their most engaged customers.

Though it represents just a fraction of clothing brand Cider's 5 million followers on Instagram, the brand has found that its **15,000 fans on Discord** are incredibly valuable when it comes to giving feedback and opinions on its clothing collections, per Marketing Brew.

Cider says the Discord is a "tight-knit" place where consumers can connect with each other and share things other than a common interest in the brand.

The target audience: Loyal customers who want an opportunity to make their mark on the brand. For example, when Cider was rolling out its plus-size line, Curve, the brand's Discord community helped guide the fit and design of the products, Yu Oppel, co-founder of Cider, told Marketing Brew. Now, the Curve line represents over 15% of its business.

3. Facebook Groups

Facebook Groups has become a major place for women to go for fashion advice and recommendations.

Similar to Substack, many of these groups have been started by fashion industry veterans, like Kim France, founding editor-in-chief of Lucky magazine, who has both a Substack and a Facebook group for women over 40, per the New York Times.

And like Discord, there's a community element to these groups—they want real reviews from real people who have actually tried the products, not influencers who are being paid to shill an item they'd never try in real life.

"I've built an influencing community, but I don't consider myself to be the influencer," Caroline Moss, founder of the "Gee Thanks, Just Bought It!" community on Facebook, which has 18,000 followers, told the New York Times. "I'm not showing you beautiful Reels of me waking up and yawning and splashing water on my face. If you want to buy something, you're coming to me."

Target audience: Baby boomer women who already use Facebook as a social media and commerce platform. This year, 32.9 million baby boomers will use Facebook, per our May 2023 forecast. In addition, 22.1 million US consumers ages 55 and up will make a purchase via social media this year, per our September 2023 forecast.

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