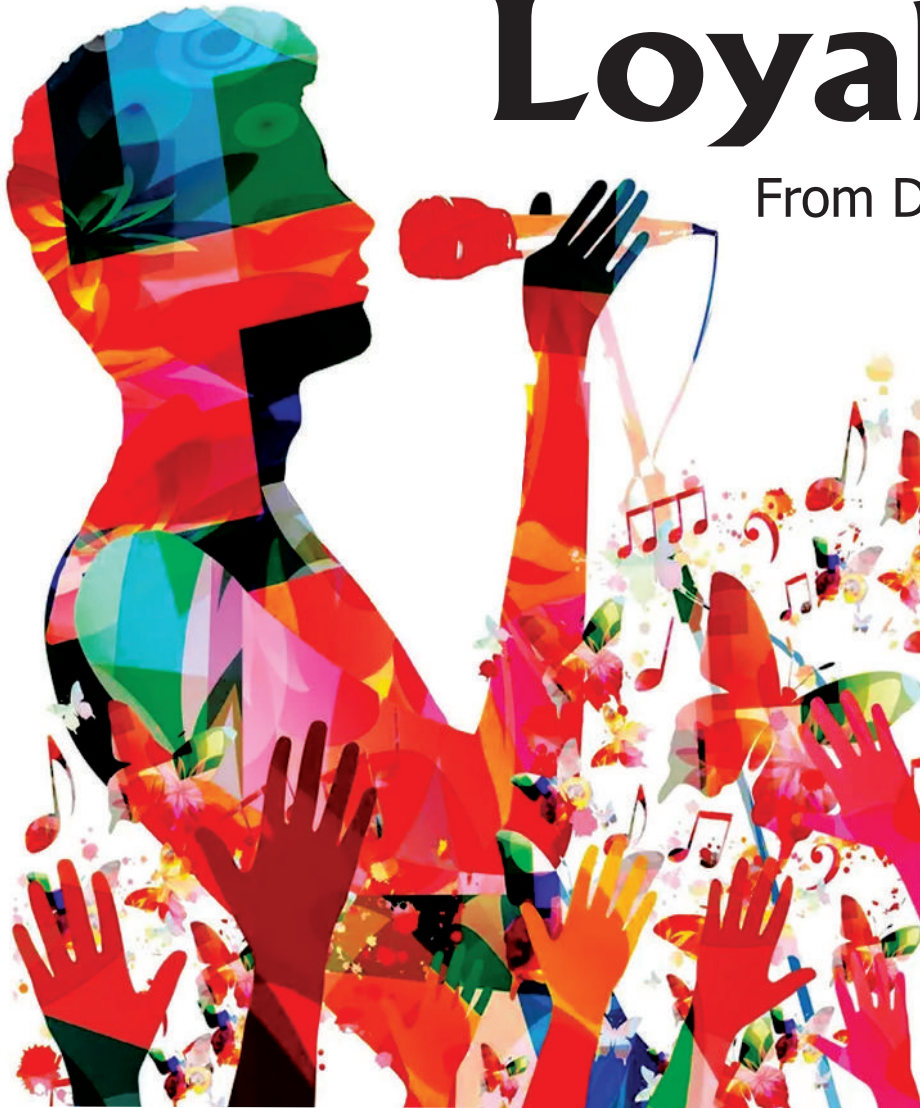


Loyalty for sale

From Devotion to Revenue: Price Of A Fandom



tent creators and gamers use tipping features on apps like Discord and Twitch, while video games rely heavily on in-game purchases to extend their profitability. Around 79% of video games include in-app purchases. The global in-app purchase (IAP) market was valued at approximately 166.6 billion USD in 2024 and is projected to grow up to 582.6 billion USD by 2033, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.18%. Royal Match (earning 618 million USD) uses virtual currency microtransactions exclusively, offering boosters and premium perks to enhance gameplay. Diablo IV made 150 million USD from microtransactions alone – 15% of its lifetime revenue.

The fan-event fix

Monetisation extends well beyond digital spaces into real-world experiences. San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) generates roughly 165 million USD annually, with nearly 90 million USD from attendance alone. Theme parks like Universal Studios and Disney World not only rake in billions but help boost local tourism economies. Fan events such as Esports tournaments and conventions attract massive sponsorships and business tie-ins. On an individual level, artistes like Taylor Swift have seen enormous gains – her net worth reportedly jumped from 740 million USD to 1.1 billion USD after only 57 shows of The Eras Tour. Merchandise too has a crucial role: the Pokémon franchise has earned US 113.7 billion USD, with 91% of it from just retail sales. At concerts, approximately 10-35% of attendees purchase merchandise. K-pop fans are amongst highest spenders, with 37% of fans purchasing merchandise at these events.

Individual enterprises

Beyond official ventures, fan-made enterprises also generate significant revenue, often creating micro-economies that revolve around franchises with little or no official support. Unlicensed businesses sell themed merchandise across movies, books, games, and music. Fan-made merchandise often fills gaps where official merchandise is lacking, such as specific art styles, costumes, or niche characters/pairings, catering directly to specific fan demands. The Souled Store, which began with 5 lakh INR as a brand selling licensed fan merchandise, connecting to sci-fi buffs, comic book geeks, or superhero fanatics on a personal level, is now highly successful, with a total revenue of 365.4 crore INR in FY24, achieving profitability. Fan-created content thrives too – like MuggleCast (for Harry Potter) and The Hunt for Gollum (for The Lord of the Rings). Collector's items such as special edition Pokémon cards add to the frenzy; the 1998 Pikachu Illustrator card, for instance, sold for 1.275 million USD. Games like Roblox and Minecraft too empower user creativity – Roblox alone paid over 700 million USD to community developers in 2023.

The monetisation of fandoms is a double-edged sword – while it enables artists and creators to build sustainable incomes for themselves, it also risks over-commercialisation. After a while, even passion projects begin to resemble quick cash grabs. One can only hope that there maintains a balance between fan service and profit-making, and that creators continue to value the opinions of audiences to ensure that genuine, high-quality content endures. **GT**

Aditi Hrishikesh, AIS Vas 6, XI D

acting as the newest revenue strategy.

Subscription swindling

One of the most significant methods adopted is the direct fan-to-creator subscription. Official fan club memberships – or certain features of them – often require regular payments that directly contribute to a creator's income. Major K-pop groups use paid platforms such as Weverse and Bubble, giving the illusion of private conversations with idols while quietly monetising access. Con-

There's nothing more exciting than hearing about a new merchandise drop by our favourite creator or a concert tour by our favourite singer. But a question that arises in the wake of such announcements is: Are these simply clever ways to turn fan loyalty into an income source? Fandoms across various media and genres now seem to operate more like business models, with every release or feature

THE GT POLL

Has the Met Gala become just a fashion affair for celebs and designers, losing its purpose of being a fundraiser?

A) Yes
B) No
C) Can't say

To vote, check out our Instagram page @the_global_times

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...more on page 3

What's inside



Operation: melt your mind
The beginning of the new Science Behind Snack Series, where snack shall have its moment. Get ready to dig in!
...more on page 4



Too pretty to be true
Beneath the allure of some flowers, hides toxicity. Unveil the truth behind the enigmatic buds of these pretty little liars.
...more on page 7

POLL RESULT
for GT Edition May 4, 2026

Delhi's Urban Heat Island effect is on the rise. Which 2026 government action plan would best manage the risks?

State Heat Action Plans	Percentage
Plans for heat-related illnesses	51%
Rescheduling of work hours	29%
Other	21%

Results as on May 8, 2026