

From Signal to Shelf

Emerging Guest Behaviors Through the Bandwagon Society LLC

Project Type: Cultural Trend POV / Consumer Insights

Context: Small business-driven, field-based observation

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Project Overview

The Bandwagon Society LLC operates at the intersection of fandom, nostalgia, and self-expression—selling artist-designed accessories and goods online and in person at conventions and markets.

This Cultural Trend POV translates **real guest behaviors** observed through direct selling environments into **actionable retail opportunities**, demonstrating how emerging cultural signals can inform product strategy, storytelling, and experiential retail design.

Objective:

Identify fandom-driven guest behaviors and translate them into scalable, consumer-centric retail opportunities.

Signal

What's emerging

Across conventions, social platforms, and e-commerce touchpoints, consistent cultural signals emerged:

- Short-form video demonstrations showing how products are worn, styled, or customized
- Outfit photos where accessories function as identity anchors
- Fandom symbolism driving emotional attachment beyond utility
- Guest-led customization through mixing, matching, and collecting
- Repeat purchases tied to emotional resonance rather than need
- Language that frames purchasing as “collecting,” not shopping

Pattern:

Guests are using retail objects as **belonging signals**, not functional goods.

Observation

What's happening in real life

Through direct guest interaction at conventions and markets:

- Guests frequently share personal fandom stories before asking about price
- Purchase decisions are justified with emotional language:
 - “This feels like me”
 - “This reminds me of my childhood”
 - “I’ve never seen merch like this”
- Guests return to:
 - Complete sets
 - Purchase multiples
 - Bring friends back to experience the brand
- Products are often worn immediately and photographed for social sharing
- The booth experience itself becomes part of the product’s perceived value

Observation:

Retail engagement extends beyond the transaction into social and emotional validation.

Insight

What this behavior reveals

Fandom-driven purchasing has shifted from affiliation to identity performance.

Guests use accessories and small goods too:

- Publicly express nostalgia in low-risk, wearable ways
- Signal taste, humor, and emotional alignment
- Participating in fandom without the commitment of full cosplay

- Create moments of play and self-expression in everyday settings

This reflects a broader cultural shift toward:

- Emotional commerce over functional retail
- Low-commitment identity signaling
- Community validation through shared visual symbols

Core Insight:

Guests seek retail experiences that allow them to play, remember, and belong—without asking for permission.

Opportunity

What could this become

Product

- Modular or collectible accessory systems
- Limited drops tied to cultural moments rather than traditional release cycles
- Products designed to be styled, shared, and re-contextualized

Experience

- Retail environments designed for discovery and interaction
- Try-on-first, photo-forward layouts
- Guest language that invites storytelling and emotional connection

Packaging & Storytelling

- Packaging that functions as a keepsake, not a container
- Copy that validates emotion and identity
- Clear signals that products are meant to be worn, shared, and seen

Retail Shift:

Transactional → Emotional → Communal