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## THE BODY-POSITIVE BRAND BUILDING A CULT FOLLOWING

LIVELY HAS BUILT A CULT-FOLLOWING FOR THEIR BODY-POSITIVE INTIMATES BRAND, AND THE DIGITAL-FIRST COMPANY JUST OPENED AN IN-PERSON STORE TO CONNECT WITH THEIR COMMUNITY IN PERSON...

Backlash brews quickly when young consumers feel something goes against their body positive outlooks. Just take the time that Kim Kardashian West [experienced backlash](#) from her followers and [the entire internet](#) after posting an #ad for appetite-suppressing lollipops from Flat Tummy Co—but she didn't seem to learn her lesson since she's [landed on the viral list](#) once again for a similar offense.

The story goes to show that the court of public opinion is quick to condemn anyone who doesn't take their commitment to self-love and inclusivity seriously. And that goes double for brands, especially in the intimates category. Victoria's Secret has struggled to move into modern times, and it's biting into their bottom line. [Fashionista reports](#) that sales were sluggish all through 2017 and into 2018. Moving beyond the infamous "formulaic annual fashion show" and aligning with young consumers' [body positive mindsets](#) could put them on the road to reclaiming their former glory.

But of course, there are plenty of other brands looking to claim their crown before they can rebound. In fact, [the New York Post reports](#) that Aerie reported a lift in sales last quarter, and it could be coming directly out of Victoria's Secret Pink's bottom line. While Aerie's revenue spiked 38% year-over-year, Pink's growth has stagnated. Using real, unedited models is the underwear line's claim to fame, and they're not the only ones using body positivity as a core message.

Lively has taken a unique approach to intimates by blending the [everlasting athleisure trend](#) with comfortable, size-inclusive lingerie, calling it "Leisuree." The brand that the CEO says was "definitely born on Instagram" is also getting an edge on competitors by leveraging social media learnings to create new products based on fans' feedback and requests. But it's not just about online sales. Seventy-six percent of Millennials & Gen Z [told Ypulse](#) that shopping should be an experience, and Lively is listening to them. They just opened an in-person store to connect with consumers IRL, focusing on building a community through succulent workshops, workout classes, and more.

Michelle Cordeiro Grant, the Founder and CEO of LIVELY, spoke to Ypulse all about Lively's size-inclusive mission, their [experiential](#) store, and how other brands can appeal to Millennial and Gen Z females today:

### **Ypulse: What has changed about the conversation surrounding lingerie in recent years?**

**Michelle Cordeiro Grant:** Since the beginning of time, it feels like this category was built for significant others and men and for how women felt when their significant other was looking at them. What's really changing now is that we're acknowledging that this is a category for women, and by women, and that it should be about how women feel in a product when they look at themselves, first and foremost.

I think the category is also changing into a space where it's about women buying products that conform to them, versus them conforming to a product. We're not all trying to be what we see in an ad anymore. We're acknowledging that we're uniquely different.

**YP: How about the conversation surrounding body image in the lingerie industry. How has that changed?**

**MG:** It's such a beautiful story now where it's not about supermodels and angels and fantasy anymore. It's about what we believe is truly sexy. It's being confident and healthy and smart and acknowledging that we are unique. Now, it's all about showcasing different body types and size ranges. At Lively, we launched with 22 sizes out the gate, which doesn't cover everybody but it covers a lot of ground. And now we're going to 26 sizes with a lot more to come in the next six months to a year.

**YP: What do you think young consumers expect from lingerie companies today? What attracts their business and what makes them turn away?**

**MG:** It starts with asking what the brand stands for. People are very much more in tune to what the products that they're buying represent these days. I think they expect to see size inclusivity. They expect to see amazing products for a price that most can afford. And they expect to see that brands and communities are building themselves *with* them, not talking *at* them.

**YP: [The New York Times wrote](#) that Lively sources ideas from Instagram. Can you tell us more about how the brand does that?**

**MG:** One of the things that we're most proud of is that our best-selling products are products that were innovated based on conversations with our customer. From the beginning, we said we would look at trend lines that we see in customer service, Instagram comments, and Facebook or community conversations. Some of our best products have come out of that. For example, our busty bralette or our no-wire strapless. If you listen to your customers and really respond with products and conversations that are relevant to them, they will stay 100% loyal.

**YP: Can you tell us about your influencer marketing strategy?**

**MG:** We don't really look at how many followers you have. For example, we're also looking at your feed to see that you're living the lifestyle that we want our brand to represent. So that's how we built our brand. We had 100 ambassadors when we launched, some great press, and an email list, and we shipped to every state in the country within 45 days without any paid media. That really is a testament to how powerful an ambassador community can be. That started with 100 girls and now we're at 40,000.

**YP: We attended the Lively store opening! Why did Lively decide to open an in-person store instead of staying online only?**

**MG:** We're very proud that Lively has built a very strong ambassador community. From the beginning we would always make sure that we have physical, IRL experiences because, although we're digitally native, we needed to bring our communities together. As we were doing these events, that ranged from succulent workshops to entrepreneurship panels, we realized that people were enjoying them so much that we needed physical spaces to keep the momentum going.

We started doing pop-ups around the country, and we saw the impact in marketing and impressions. To have a place for ambassadors all to come together and share what they did caused new ROI (Return On Investment) immediately. For example, we saw our online

customer transactions in the city of Dallas spike by a 175% during the time that our pop-up was opened. The entire state of Texas went up by 80%, showing a direct correlation to what we were doing in the physical impacting our digital performance.

**YP: What kind of experiences can consumers have at the store?**

**MG:** Only a third of the store has actual racks of products. There's a lot of corners for people to swing in a chair and have a chat and there's even a cafe area in the front, but we don't sell coffee or food. We really want it to be a place where women can gather and feel welcome and have creative discussions or experiences. For example, on Friday morning, we have a morning matcha mingle where girls are going to come together and ideate. We have a HIIT class next week. We have a book reading to launch a book that's being published by one of the girls in our community. We're going to have a panel on health and wellness that'll discuss how you don't have to starve yourself or restrict yourself. All the things that we believe go into making sure women are living fulfilling, balanced, and confident life.

**Michelle Cordeiro Grant, Founder and CEO of LIVELY**

Grant has spent the tenure of her career creating brands and product for some of the world's largest retailers including Federated, VF Corporation, Limited Brands/ Victoria's Secret and Thrillist Media Group. Grant instantly fell in love with the entire process from concept to customer, and realized that her passion was in supporting, creating and developing amazing brands and products. While working with Victoria's Secret, she learned that this \$13B lingerie category, in the US alone, was dominated by this one brand, with one point of view. Grant was inspired to create a completely new experience for the category—one she coined Leisurée—and so LIVELY was born.

*This article has been edited and condensed.*

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