Original Research Article

Exploring the role of social media in music promotion: A study of artist-fan engagement and brand loyalty

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Abstract: Since social media platforms have turned into essential tools for music promotion, it is crucial for artists and other industry stakeholders to comprehend how exactly they contribute to the development of the parasocial bond and the improvement of brand loyalty. In a quantitative method, online questionnaires investigated 167 young active consumers who engage with artist on social media platforms. Specifically, the study focuses on the interaction of social media music promotion, artist-fan engagement and brand loyalty with its dimensions of repurchase intention, word of mouth, and commitment and attachment. The results indicate a positive significant relationship between the use of social media music promotion and the artist and fan contact. Besides, social media promotion has a large and positive effect in enhancing brand loyalty outcomes, among which artist-fan engagement has a strong moderation effect. This study offers theoretical advancements to the development of parasocial relationships in the context of digital media and offers practical implications to music industry stakeholders.

Keywords: Social media marketing; Music industry; Artist-fan engagement; Brand loyalty; Parasocial relationships

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

The music industry has gone through a noteworthy change as social networks have become one of the key tools to advertise artists and their content. Particularly, among people who discovers new music via social media, 50% is the youth aged at 18-24, 43% for those aged at 25-34, 37% for those aged at 35-44, which reflects the growing role of social media among future generations (MarketingCharts, 2022)[25]. The rise of social networks has also affected how fans get engaged in promoting and celebrating their admired artists. For example, fans can post updates, show support for their idols, contribute content to be used by idols and even interact with specific idols to inspire their creation direction of their idols (Byrnes, 2023)[6]. However, with the changing dynamics of the music industry, it has become imperative to look at the specifics of social media promotional strategies and the effects it has on artist to fan relations and brand equity which leads to this research question that "What kinds of social media promotion can enhance the parasocial relationship between artists and audience and how can them enhance brand loyalty in the music business in the long run?".

2. Literature review

2.1. Promoting music on social media and its effects on fans

Since the impact of SMM on music promotion has become one of the most important trends for studying in the last decade, the most recent works started to uncover more complex impacts and dynamics of the artist-fan connection and consumer behaviour. (Koosel, 2013[18]; Archambeaud, 2015[3]; Óskarsdóttir, 2017[29]; Rosenfeld,

2024[32]). However, considering the limitations of existing studies above, the research develops the develops the hypothesis (H1) that effective social media music promotion has a direct positive effect on fans' brand loyalty to artists.

2.2. Fandom effects between artists and fans

The changes in the artist-fan dynamics in the new media era have been a focal point of many academic papers, which continuously examine the various aspects of social media influence on fandom and consumers' loyalty. The existing studies reveal the process of the development of the concept of fandom effects, their transition from the classical type of environment to the digital one, as well as the consideration of different aspects of the interactions between artists and their fans (Oppenhuisen and van Zoonen, 2006[28]; Hudson et al., 2015[13]; Zhuang, 2019[39]; Wert, 2021[35]; Kong, 2024[17]). Nevertheless, certain questions are still left unanswered regarding the detailed impact of certain social media promotion strategies on parasocial relationships and loyalty to the brand in the music industry in the long run. Hence, the research develops the hypothesis (H2) that artist-fan engagement plays a moderate role in the effects of social media music promotion on fans' brand loyalty to artists.

2.3. Social media content, engagement, buying

The analysis of the role of social media in consumers' decision-making process and as a tool for brands to engage customers has been an important area of interest among scholars in the last ten years. The existing literature of artist-fan relationships, the duality of music as a tangible good and an intangible service, and the dynamically changing environment of music consumption and promotion suggest that the research questions proposed are challenging and relevant (Malthouse et al., 2016[24]; Pütter, 2017[30]; Rahman et al., 2018[31]; Bilal et al., 2020[5]; Chan, 2022[7]; Agra and Prakoso, 2022[2]).However, the effect of social media engagement on the loyalty of the target market in the music industry has not received enough attention. Hence, the research develops the hypothesis (H3) that effective social media music promotion has an indirect positive effect on brand loyalty at the aspect of repurchase purchase behaviour, moderated by increased artist-fan engagement.

2.4. Social media content, engagement, eWOM

The literature review on the social media content, engagement, and electric word-of-mouth (eWOM) is quite rich and has developed in the last few years, providing both theoretical grounding for the current study and identifying the directions for future research. Although existing works offer useful methodological and conceptual approaches, they as a whole show that there is no sufficient knowledge about the real mechanisms of social media promotion in the music industry and the formation of parasocial relationships and their effect on brand loyalty (Gvili and Levy, 2018[11]; Shen, 2021[33]; Moisescu et al., 2022[27]; Izogo et al., 2022[14]; Abbasi et al., 2023[1]). Hence, the research develops the H4 that effective social media music promotion has an indirect positive effect on brand loyalty at the aspect of advocacy and positive word-of-mouth, moderated by increased artist-fan engagement.

2.5. Social media content, engagement, commitment and attachment

The social media has provided a new way of engaging the consumers and building brand-consumer relationships through content sharing. Existing works provoke the specificity of music consumption, the relationship between fans and artists, and the shift in music promotion through social media (Ma and Chan, 2014[23]; Ashley and Tuten, 2015[4]; Lim et al., 2015[21]; Kowalczyk and Pounders, 2016[19]; Dwivedi et al., 2018[10];

Li et al., 2020[20]). However, there is a general lack of knowledge regarding the application of these principles concerning the music industry and the relations between artists and their fans. Hence, the research develops the H5 that effective social media music promotion has an indirect positive effect on brand loyalty at the aspect of long-term commitment and attachment, moderated by increased artist-fan engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Online questionnaires

This research utilizes a survey technique as its main method of research. A structured questionnaire is prepared (see details in Appendix 1) according to the research objective and hypothesis taken for this research, administered on the sample of music fans and responses collected and analysed to test hypothesized relationships between variables. The design of questions was adapted from previous studies of Tuten and Solomon (2017)[34] to measure social media music promotion, Yoshida et al. (2018)[38], and Xu et al. (2023)[36] to measure artist-fan engagement; Yoo and Donthu (2001)[37], Loureiro et al. (2017)[22] and Yoshida et al. (2018)[38] to measure brand loyalty as lens of buying behaviour, WOM and long-term commitment and attachment.

3.2. Sampling

Target participants are active consumers of music, who interact with performers on social media because they are likely to have formed parasocial interactions with the artists and thus display brand loyalty behaviour (Patton, 2015). To get the target participants, several methods were used such as social media advertising, music forums and fan groups, snowball sampling, music streaming services, and artists' help through a purposive sampling. The final collection of samples reached 194 participants at the beginning of the study. Considering the refusal from some participants, which might be caused by mistakenly chosen, the valid sample was reduced to189.

3.3. Reliability and validity

All the items of the questionnaire were categorized into various variables which were then related to some of the theoretical concepts identified for the study like Social Media Music Promotion (SMMP), Artist Fan Engagement (AFE), and aspects of Brand Loyalty (BLY). The analysis of the reliability of the employed instrument provides high and quite satisfactory coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.7 across all constructs (Collins and Hussey, 2014[9]). Hence, it is indicated that the items within each scale are indeed capturing their intended constructs and thus offers a sound platform to examine the complex aspects of social media advertising, artist's fans' interaction, and brand allegiance in the music industry.

4. Results

4.1. Regression model of social media music promotion and loyalty

The simple regression analysis with AVSMMP as the independent variable and AVBRLY as the dependent variable in Table 1. The regression results support H1, which states that effective social media music promotion has a direct positive effect on fans' brand loyalty to artists, are the positive and significant coefficient of AVSMMP on AVBRLY (β=0.798, $p<0.01$). The R^2 of the model is 0.730, which indicates that artist-fan engagement is probably acting as a mediator for the relationship and is in line with H2 by 73% . The positive and significant impact of AVSMMP, which stands for effective social media promotion, on the

dependent variable AVBRLY, which measures brand loyalty, offers indirect support for H3, H4, and H5. Despite AVBRLY=0.798*AVSMMP+1.052, to confirm the moderation hypotheses, it is necessary to conduct further analysis with the inclusion of the interaction terms.

Table 1. Regression model of AVSMMP and AVBRLY.

Parameter Estimates (n=167)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity diagnosis	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	1.052	0.167	-	6.295	0.000**	-	-
AVSMMP	0.798	0.038	0.854	21.115	0.000**	1.000	1.000
R^2	0.730						
Adj R^2	0.728						
F	F (1,165)=445.858,p=0.000						
D-W	1.572						

Dependent Variable: AVBRLY

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

4.2. Regression model of social media music promotion and loyalty

As demonstrated in **Table 2**, H1 receives backing from the finding that AVSMMP has a positive influence on AVBRLY in Model 1 (β=0.854, p<0. 01). This implies that proper utilization of social media for music promotion boost the loyalty of fans to the artists. H2 is supported by the interaction term AVSMMP*AVAFE in Model 3 with the beta coefficient of -0.332 and p<0.01. The findings imply that social media promotion has a greater effect on brand loyalty when the level of artists' fan engagement is low because there are areas of the relationship that can be developed.

Table 2. Moderate Regression model of AVAFE between AVSMMP and AVBRLY.

Parameter Estimates (Summary)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	4.542** (187.609)	4.542** (262.280)	4.580** (280.216)
AVSMMP	0.798** (21.115)	0.334** (7.310)	0.221** (5.054)
AVAFE		0.603** (12.589)	0.431** (8.729)
AVSMMP*AVAFE			-0.122** (-6.790)
n	167	167	167
R^2	0.730	0.863	0.893
Adj. R^2	0.728	0.861	0.891
F	F (1,165)=445.858,p=0.000	F (2,164)=514.942,p=0.000	F (3,163)=453.081,p=0.000
△ R^2	0.730	0.133	0.030
△ F	F (1,165)=445.858,p=0.000	F (1,164)=158.482,p=0.000	F (1,163)=46.106,p=0.000

Dependent Variable: AVBRLY

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 t statistics in parentheses

Paying specific attention to artist-fan engagement from the parasocial relationship perspective (AVAFER), **Table 3** reflects the same confirmation of H1. H2 is supported by the interaction term AVSMMP*AVAFER in

model 3 (β=-0.425, p<0.01). Hence, the hypothesis of artist-fan engagement (AVAFER) as a moderator of the relationship between social media music promotion and brand loyalty is valid.

Table 3. Moderate Regression model of AVAFER between AVSMMP and AVBRLY.

Parameter Estimates (Summary)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Constant	4.542** (187.609)	4.542** (228.632)	4.590** (270.620)
AVSMMP	0.798** (21.115)	0.552** (13.371)	0.316** (7.488)
AVAFER		0.333** (9.003)	0.233** (7.309)
AVSMMP*AVAFER			-0.160** (-9.253)
n	167	167	167
R^2	0.730	0.819	0.881
Adj. R^2	0.728	0.817	0.879
F	F (1,165)=445.858,p=0.000	F (2,164)=371.605,p=0.000	F (3,163)=404.107,p=0.000
△ R^2	0.730	0.089	0.062
△ F	F (1,165)=445.858,p=0.000	F (1,164)=81.048,p=0.000	F (1,163)=85.622,p=0.000

Dependent Variable: AVBRLY

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 t statistics in parentheses

However, both moderate regression models in **Table 2** and **3** cannot directly supported H3-H5. But the strong moderation effect and the positive main effects of AVSMMP and AVAFER on AVBRLY indicate that social media advertisement may possess indirect positive effects on the different dimensions of brand loyalty through the improvement of the interaction between artists and fans, which requires further analysis of H3–H5 definitively. This finding contributes to Horton and Wohl's (1956)[12] early framework by showing how social media can enhance the perceived closeness and the affective component of the artist-fan bonds. It also extends previous research by Chung and Cho (2017) [8]concerning parasocial interaction in social media.

4.3. Moderate regression model of artist-fan engagement between social media music promotion and repurchase behaviour

The results of the moderated regression analysis indicate that H3 is supported in **Table 4**. In Model 1, effective social media music promotion (AVSMMP) showed a significant positive effect on repurchase behaviour (AVRPB) (β=0.825, p<0.01). When AVAFE was added into the Model 2, both the AVSMMP (β=0.380, p<0.01) and AVAFE (β=0.552, p<0.01) had positive effects on AVRPB. The moderator artist-fan engagement was supported by the significant interaction term (AVSMMP*AVAFE) in Model 3 (β=-0.259, p<0.01). The negative coefficient of the interaction term indicates that the use of social media for promotion of artists' brand is more effective when artist-fan interaction is low. In the case of low levels of artist-fan engagement, the impact of social media promotion on repurchase behaviour is the highest (β = 0.348, p < 0.001). However, the effect is somewhat smaller and statistically significant only at the highest level of engagement (β =0.223, p <0.01). This suggests that social media advertising is more effective in influencing repurchase intention when artist-fan interaction is weak,

perhaps because there is a lot of room for enhancement in the artist's fans' relationship. The findings of the study indicate that there is a relationship between strategic management of social media content and fans' purchase intentions, as posited by McCornack et al. (2014) on information control as a determinant of behaviour.

Table 4. Moderate Regression model of AVSMMP, AVAFE, AVRPB.

Parameter Estimates (Summary)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Constant	4.460** (158.125)	4.460** (193.074)	4.492** (190.334)
AVSMMP	0.825** (18.735)	0.380** (6.229)	0.285** (4.515)
AVAFE		0.579** (9.055)	0.435** (6.097)
AVSMMP*AVAFE			-0.102** (-3.934)
n	167	167	167
R^2	0.680	0.787	0.805
Adj. R^2	0.678	0.784	0.802
F	F (1,165)=350.987,p=0.000	F (2,164)=302.639,p=0.000	F (3,163)=224.725,p=0.000
△ R^2	0.680	0.107	0.018
△ F	F (1,165)=350.987,p=0.000	F (1,164)=81.996,p=0.000	F (1,163)=15.475,p=0.000

Dependent Variable: AVRPB

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 t statistics in parentheses

4.4. Moderate regression model of artist-fan engagement between social media music promotion and word-of-mouth

The results of the moderated regression analysis indicate that H4 is supported in **Table 5**. In Model 1, effective social media music promotion (AVSMMP) showed a significant positive effect on word-of-mouth (AVWOM) (β =0.806, p <0.01). When AVAFE was added into the Model 2, both the AVSMMP (β=0.380, p<0.01) and AVAFE (β=0.317, p<0.01) had positive effects on AVWOM. The moderator artist-fan engagement was supported by the significant interaction term (AVSMMP*AVAFE) in Model 3 (β=-0.341, p<0.01). The negative coefficient of the interaction term indicates that the use of social media for promotion of artists' brand is more effective when artist-fan interaction is low. In the case of low levels of artist-fan engagement, the impact of social media promotion on word-of mouth is the highest (β=0.265, p<0.01). However, the effect is somewhat smaller and statistically non-significant only at the highest level of engagement (β=0.107, p<0.01). This suggests that social media advertising is more effective in influencing word-of mouth when artist-fan interaction is weak, perhaps because there is a lot of room for enhancement in the artist's fans' relationship. The model has a good fit and predicts 81.0% of the variance in word-of mouth, which supports social media marketing and the relationship between the artist and the fan as being vital in influencing the fans' word-of mouth. This echoes and builds on the literature by Valenzuela et al. (2017) noting social media's agenda setting function.

Table 5. Moderate Regression model of AVSMMP, AVAFE, AVWOM.

Parameter Estimates (Summary)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Constant	4.548** (159.539)	4.548** (199.971)	4.589** (203.997)
AVSMMP	0.778** (17.482)	0.306** (5.093)	0.186** (3.085)
AVAFE		0.614** (9.758)	0.432** (6.347)
AVSMMP*AVAFE			-0.129** (-5.239)
n	167	167	167
R^2	0.649	0.778	0.810
Adj. R^2	0.647	0.775	0.807
F	F (1,165)=305.621,p=0.000	F (2,164)=287.691,p=0.000	F (3,163)=231.877,p=0.000
R^2	0.649	0.129	0.032
F	F (1,165)=305.621,p=0.000	F (1,164)=95.228,p=0.000	F (1,163)=27.450,p=0.000

Dependent Variable: AVWOM

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 t statistics in parentheses

Table 5. *(continued)*

4.5. Moderate regression model of artist-fan engagement between social media music promotion and long-term commitment and attachment

The results of the moderated regression analysis indicate that H5 is supported in **Table 6**. In Model 1, effective social media music promotion (AVSMMP) showed a significant positive effect on long-term commitment and attachment (AVLTCA) (β =0.835, p <0.01). When AVAFE was added into the Model 2, both the AVSMMP (β =0.335, p <0.01) and AVAFE (β = 0.621, p<0.01) had positive effects on AVLTCA. The moderator artist-fan engagement was supported by the significant interaction term (AVSMMP*AVAFE) in Model 3 (β = -0.360, p<0.01). The negative coefficient of the interaction term indicates that the use of social media for promotion of artists' brand is more effective when artist-fan interaction is low. In the case of low levels of artist-fan engagement, the impact of social media promotion on word-of mouth is the highest (β =0.275, p <0.01). However, the effect is somewhat smaller and statistically non-significant only at the highest level of engagement (β =0.110, p <0.05). This suggests that social media advertising is more effective in influencing long-term commitment and attachment when artist-fan interaction is weak, perhaps because there is a lot of room for enhancement in the artist's fans' relationship. The model has a good fit and predicts 86.0% of the variance in long-term commitment and attachment, which supports social media marketing and the relationship between the artist and the fan as being vital in influencing the fans' long-term commitment and attachment. Also, the current research contributes to the study conducted by Kowalczyk and Pounders (2016)[19] to reveal how the interaction on social media platforms can lead to the formation of long-term emotional bonds between consumers and artists in the music industry.

Table 6. Moderate Regression model of AVSMMP, AVAFE, AVLTCA.

Parameter Estimates (Summary)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Constant	4.618** (177.878)	4.618** (238.429)	4.661** (253.846)
AVSMMP	0.791** (19.522)	0.317** (6.198)	0.192** (3.915)
AVAFE		0.617** (11.509)	0.428** (7.702)
AVSMMP*AVAFE			-0.134** (-6.660)
n	167	167	167
R^2	0.698	0.833	0.869
Adj. R^2	0.696	0.831	0.866
F	F (1,165)=381.111,p=0.000	F (2,164)=408.598,p=0.000	F (3,163)=359.203,p=0.000
△ R^2	0.698	0.135	0.036
△ F	F (1,165)=381.111,p=0.000	F (1,164)=132.455,p=0.000	F (1,163)=44.359,p=0.000

Dependent Variable: AVLTCA

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01 t statistics in parentheses

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This research explored how it facilitates engagement of musicians with their fan base and hence, the creation of music brand loyalty. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on parasocial relationships in the digital age, extending its application to the music industry. Practically, the research findings are helpful to the music industry professionals on how to engage the fans through social media platforms to foster close relationships. However, there are some methodological issues that can be deliberated. Considering the inherited limitation of cross-sectional design and the limited research scope, it is recommended that further research should investigate the impact of the above factors on the effectiveness of the social media strategies across cultures.

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