

THE USE OF THE ARTIST-FAN ENGAGEMENT MODEL AS A STRATEGY TOOL

Sarita M. Stewart

Belmont University

Nashville, Tennessee

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**Abstract**

The Artist-Fan Engagement Model helps explain the relationship between music artists and their fans. This theoretical model, based on hedonic consumption and parasocial interaction theory, explores how the effects of music and of artist can drive engagement through access or ownership between an artist and their fan base. Furthermore, the practical implications of this model can be used strategically to provide recommendations on how to best monetize the relationship between the two parties.

**Keywords:** artist, fan, engagement, music, marketing

## The Use of the Artist-Fan Engagement Model As A Strategy Tool

### 1. Introduction

The Artist-Fan Engagement Model (e.g., Figure 1) is a theoretical framework that was developed to help explain the relationship between music artists and their fans. The model proposes a theoretical framework, based upon hedonic consumption and parasocial interaction theory (PSI), to provide recommendations on how to best monetize this relationship between the two parties. In an industry where the music consumer has unprecedented access and prefers ongoing interaction with their favorite artists (Borden, 2009), it is important to identify how these relationships can be best leveraged. Many musicians are already communicating directly with their fans through the use of various internet platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, and Tumblr, among others. In one example, United States media personality Conan O'Brien referred to this phenomenon as a "symbiotic relationship." As he notes, "It's not just driving people on social media networks to your television show... you want to get people on the TV getting emotionally involved in what you're doing on Facebook or Twitter" (Ingraham, 2012). In an era where the increased use of digital and social media interaction helps to develop an artist's brand, it is essential to consider how engagement can provide economic value to artists, whether through music access or ownership.

The purpose of this paper is to better understand how the various factors present within the relationship between a music artist and their fan base influence engagement. It was also important to determine if the fan tended towards recorded music access or ownership following engagement between the two parties. Therefore, the following research questions were posed to this end:

R1: How is the “Response To Artist” construct related to the PSI factors of “Identification,” “Affinity,” “Similarity,” and “Imitation”?

R2: How is the “Response To Music” construct related to “Emotional,” “Sensorial,” “Imaginal,” and “Analytical” music responses?

R3: Is “Engagement” related to the “Response To Artist” and “Response To Music” constructs?

R4: How does “Engagement” drive whether an individual chooses to access or own recorded music product?

Following an examination of the theoretical components of the Artist-Fan Engagement Model, the study methodology will be detailed, followed by the research outcomes. The paper concludes with a discussion of how to apply the results from this research as a strategic tool in terms of building a synergistic plan around a music artist.

### Theoretical Description of the Artist-Fan Engagement Model

#### **2.1 “Response To Artist” construct**

As previously noted, parasocial interaction theory provided the theoretical underpinnings of the “Response To Artist” construct found in the model. PSI is defined as “a false friendship between an audience individual and a media character” (Sood and Rogers, 2000: 387). Shen and Zhou’s (2011) expanded construct of PSI was used to construct the model’s framework which includes four facets, “Identification,” “Liking,” “Similarity,” and “Imitation.” These researchers had found high positive associations between PSI and identification ( $r=.74$ ), affinity/liking ( $r = .74$ ), similarity ( $r = .51$ ), and imitation ( $r = .51$ ) during the course of their study. A more thorough examination of these factors follows on the next page.

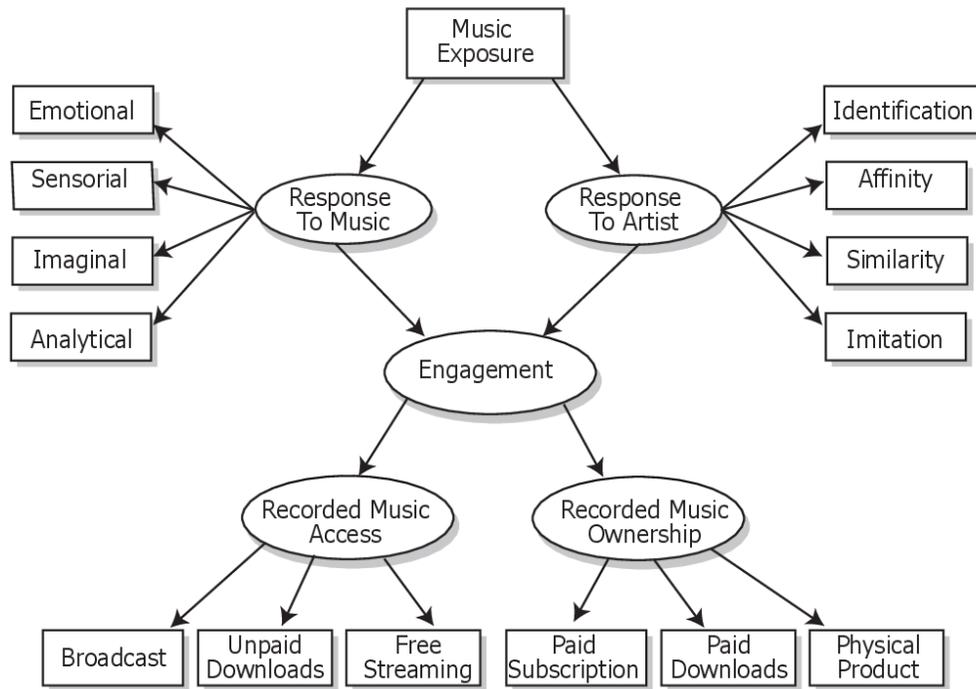


Figure 1: Original conceptualization of the Artist-Fan Engagement Model.

**Identification.** Cohen conceptualized identification as “a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them” (Cohen, 2001: 245). There is confusion in the literature surrounding the constructs of identification and PSI due to how previous studies have operationalized PSI, defining it “as a kind of long-term identification or parasocial relationship with a media performer” (Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011: 1104). Shen and Zhou (2011) delineated this factor a bit more cleanly, noting that identification “entails media users’ temporary merging with the media figures; para-social interaction involves media users’ response without losing their identities” (p. 59).

**Affinity.** Affinity occurs when an individual displays “a liking for a media figure, without identifying with, or forming a parasocial relationship” (Giles, 2002: 290). Cohen and Perse (2003) noted in their study of viewer-character relationships that “parasocial interaction, the sense of ‘friendship’ with a character, is most strongly linked to liking the character” (p. 22). Interestingly, affinity towards a media character is likely to increase fandom (Cohen, 2001). The audience is expected to reward successful performers with loyalty from their fan base. This includes, among other measures, not only buying the products that the media figure recommends, but keeping his sponsor informed of “the esteem in which he is held” (Horton and Wohl, 1956: 219). According to Davisson and Booth (2007): (a) the fan may want to participate in commerce based around the show; and (b) “the activities and commercialism based around the show can cause the fan to become attached to the character” (p. 35).

**Similarity.** Perceived similarity (i.e., homophily) is considered “a basic principle” that leads to interpersonal attraction between two people (Turner, 1993: 444). Within the context of the viewer-character relationship, this refers “to the degree to which an individual perceives that he or she is similar to a character” (Moyer-Gusé, 2008: 410). These perceptions generate a judgment of the viewer’s commonalities with a given character. Similar demographic characteristics include age, ethnicity, gender, and social status. Other perceived similarities surrounding a viewer’s impression of a character may include shared behavioral tendencies, experiences, life situations, or personality attributes (Hoffner and Cantor, 1991). Additionally, similarity is often considered a predictor of parasocial interaction (Shen and Zhou, 2011).

**Imitation.** Hoffman and Buchanan (2005) defined a viewer’s identification with a character to occur when an individual loses their identity by: (a) assuming the role of a selected character within the program or text and (b) then vicariously participating in the character’s experiences.

This type of long-term attachment is referred to as wishful identification, or “the desire to be like or behave in ways similar to the character” (Hoffner, 1996: 390). Imitation is considered both external and behavioral as well as key to the relationship viewers form with media characters (Cohen, 2001; Cohen and Perse, 2003). Emulation is another term that is often used to describe wishful identification, whether in a general (i.e., as a role model) or specific (i.e., imitating behaviors) context (Giles, 2002). Research has shown that actions of popular culture heroes have strong effects on adolescents in terms of their clothing, food preference, hairstyles, music, verbal expressions, as well as their basic social values (Englis, Solomon and Olofsson, 1993).

## **2.2 “Response To The Music” construct**

Hedonic consumption is the second theory synthesized into the framework of the Artist-Fan Engagement Model. This theory focuses upon subjectively oriented experiential products that generate emotion and arousal. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) defined hedonic consumption as “facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive experience with products” (p. 92).

Lacher (1989) first began to explore music as a hedonic consumption product in the late 1980s. She suggested a paradigm for studying music as a product, based on diverse research in music education and psychology. Her 1994 study with fellow researcher Richard Mizerski, used hedonic consumption to predict the purchase of rock music. The “Response To Music” construct used in this study included the “Emotional,” “Sensorial,” “Imaginal,” and “Analytical” responses to music (Lacher and Mizerski, 1994; Ouellet, 2007). These four facets, defined below, were tested in order to measure the “Response To Music” construct.

**Emotional response.** Music is recognized as “the language of the emotions” (Farnsworth, 1969: 78), and is capable of arousing strong and significant emotions within individuals (Sloboda,

1991). Hesmondhalgh (2011) considered music, more than any other cultural form, to be linked “with the emotional dimensions of our selves” (p. 107). The current study focused upon how an individual’s emotional response to music (i.e., induction) represents the feelings they experience when listening to music, whether joy, rage, sadness, love, etc. (Gatewood, 1927; Yingling, 1962; Hargreaves, 1982; Lacher and Mizerski, 1994). Emotional response has also been recognized as one of the primary factors in music appreciation, as well as a potential factor in the purchasing process (Lacher and Mizerski, 1994; Ouellet, 2007).

**Sensorial response.** The sensorial response is simply the “raw sensory material” of music (Ortmann, 1927; Yingling, 1962: 109). Hodges (2009) categorized bodily responses to music as being either physiologically or physically based. He noted “when we listen to music our bodies naturally respond with largely involuntary gestures, such as head nodding and foot tapping” (Hodges, 2009: 126). Ortmann (1927) considered the sensorial music response to be primitive and “essentially physiological” (p. 43).

**Imaginal response.** The third variable is the imaginal response, which researchers have defined as involving “images, memories or situations that music evokes” (Myers and Valentine, 1914; Lacher and Mizerski, 1994; Ouellet, 2007: 109). Myers and Valentine (1914) referred to this response as “the associative aspect, which means a given sound tends to suggest various ideas, either with or without accompanying concrete or visual imagery.” Ortmann (1927) considered this individual response psychological, “based upon the presence of an auditory subjective stimulus” (p. 66), and labeled it “imaginal.” Yingling’s (1962) definition of the imaginative response (which he later referred to as “associative”) was the “translation of tonal stimulus into objective terms – pictures, story, impersonation or the like; suggestion” (p. 109). Baumgartner’s research (1992) focused on how music can trigger an individual’s autobiographical episodes. He

cited Dowling and Harwood's (1986) work in order to distinguish between music's iconic representation (i.e., the patterns within the music itself) and the indexical representation (i.e., the pairing of a musical event with an extramusical object). Basically, this means that a transfer occurs in which the emotion associated with the extramusical situation becomes associated with the musical event.

**Analytical response.** Various music studies suggest that the elements of music (i.e., mode, tempo, pitch, rhythm, harmony, volume) are capable of producing both main and interactive effects on the affective, behavioral, and cognitive responses of consumers (Bruner, 1990). Active participation in the music process, whether by a composer, listener, or performer, engages mental-processing capabilities (Hantz, 1984). Hargreaves and Colman (1981) found three of the five music categorical responses generated in their study (e.g., categorical, objective-analytic, objective-global) tied directly into the cognitive aspects of music response. Lacher and Mizerski (1994) used Hargreaves' (1982) research to delineate three separate areas of music cognition as a component of music's analytic response for their empirical study.

### **2.3 Engagement**

The influence of both the "Response To Artist" and "Response To Music" constructs was assessed upon "Engagement." Scott and Craig-Lees (2010) referenced audience engagement as a "multi-dimensional, holistic measure that describes a person's emotional and cognitive engagement with entertainment content" (p. 53). The term "Engagement" was used to describe this variable in the study, since it was believed to best reflect the relationship between the audience members and the selected content within the current media environment. This is especially important given all of different methods that individuals now use to search information and consume content around music artists. Examples mentioned previously include

various engagement platforms, including the social utility site Facebook, the microblogging platform Twitter, the visual storytelling platform Instagram, Internet search engines, wikis, YouTube videos, artist fan clubs, and artist-specific music apps. Promotional and publicity vehicles, such as music blogs, music videos, artist-domain websites also allow for an individual to potentially engage with the music artist.

#### **2.4 Music Consumption constructs – Access and Ownership**

The Artist-Fan Engagement model includes six recorded music consumption variables that reflect current music market realities. Recently, there has been much discussion around the use of streaming platforms in relationship to music consumption. This is an especially important issue given that scholars have recently noted that consumer trends are shifting towards a “post-ownership economy” (Sinclair and Tinson, 2017: 1). The IFPI, the non-profit worldwide trade association for the recorded music industry, references two main outcomes, access and ownership (IFPI, 2012: 7).

**Access.** Access is a term used within the industry to describe the outcomes from the various publicity and promotional avenues that help drive marketing exposure around artists and music through various media platforms. Audiences now have greater control over the media content that they choose to consume, given the transformative changes within the technology sector (Scott and Craig-Lees, 2010). The defining factor concerning music product access for the purposes of this research study was that no direct monetary exchange takes place between the end consumer and the artist. Simply listening to music is considered “free,” although the artist is generally compensated for their work through various music revenue streams, which is dependent upon the consumption medium that the consumer has chosen. Traditionally, music has usually been consumed through some type of media platform prior to purchase (Lacher, 1989).

“Free” music consumption can eventually lead to the purchase of recorded music product or other artist-related artifacts (e.g., concert tickets, artist merchandise, branded consumer products). Access was measured using the following variables in the study as shown in Table 1.

Access Variables	Mediums/Platforms
Broadcast	Radio Television YouTube
Unpaid Downloads	Piracy (Illegal Downloads) Unpaid Downloads (NoiseTrade)
Free Audio Streaming	Interactive Streaming (Spotify, Napster) Non-interactive Streaming (Pandora, iHeartRadio)

Table 1: Music Consumption Access Variables.

**Ownership.** Lacher (1989) noted, “it is important to understand and predict the elements of a hedonic product that will impel the consumer to purchase the product” (p. 372). Recorded music ownership is defined for the purpose of this study as when a consumer directly purchases recorded music content, or pays an annual subscription fee to be able to stream their music without commercial interruption. The IFPI (2011) reported that “ownership still has value when artists build sufficient audience appeal” (p. 8). The music ownership path has three possible consumption outcomes: (a) paid subscription models available through various streaming and satellite services. The consumer who pays for the right to access the various subscription services doesn’t technically own the content in the same way as a music download or physical product. However, given the fact that many of these consumers have invested considerable time in discovering new music and building playlists, as well as the right to download music through a paid streaming subscription app, the individual may feel as if they have psychological ownership of the music product (Luck, 2016). David Porter, CEO and Founder of 8tracks website, an online radio station, has commented that “I think ownership is access, you don’t have to have music on

your local hard drive to own it” (Imam, 2012); (b) paid (i.e., licensed) music downloads (e.g., iTunes, Amazon MP3); and (c) physical recorded music products (e.g., vinyl, compact discs, cassette tapes). In fact, numerous record labels now direct their marketing efforts towards the “superfan,” a dedicated follower of a band or genre who is more likely to buy a physical copy of an album” (Plambeck, 2010). Table 2 details the various music consumption ownership variables.

<b>Ownership Variables</b>	<b>Service/Products</b>
Paid Subscription (Psychological)	Spotify Apple Music Napster
Paid Downloads	iTunes Amazon MP3
Physical Product	Compact Disc Vinyl Records Cassette Tapes

Table 2: Music Consumption Ownership Variables.

### 3. Methodology

Study participants completed a 75-question survey which took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to review to complete in a physical environment of their choosing. The study’s research questions were tested with an anonymous survey using Qualtrics Online Survey Software. A total of 1,576 participants accessed the survey, who were recruited using two separate email correspondence lists supplied by a middle-sized teaching university located in the Mid-South region of the United States. The first study invitation was sent out via the college’s monthly email newsletter to its 975 entertainment industry partners, and the second to approximately 2,000 undergraduate students and recent alumni. Interested participants either informally forwarded the anonymous survey link to their friends and colleagues, and/or posted the link on

various social media sites. The survey was also distributed using snowball sampling due to initial low participation rates.

**Pretest.** The survey instrument pretests had been tested using several sections of students in upper-level business undergraduate courses at a large Southeastern university, located several hours away from where the main study participants were recruited. One hundred and twenty-eight students completed the pilot study for extra credit, for an 84% participation rate. These students were approximately the same age as the college undergraduate group recruited for the main survey. Following the pilot survey's deactivation, the survey data was reviewed to determine if the participants understood the questions correctly. To this end, only two slight revisions were made, mainly to clarify categorizations listed in the music consumption section of the survey.

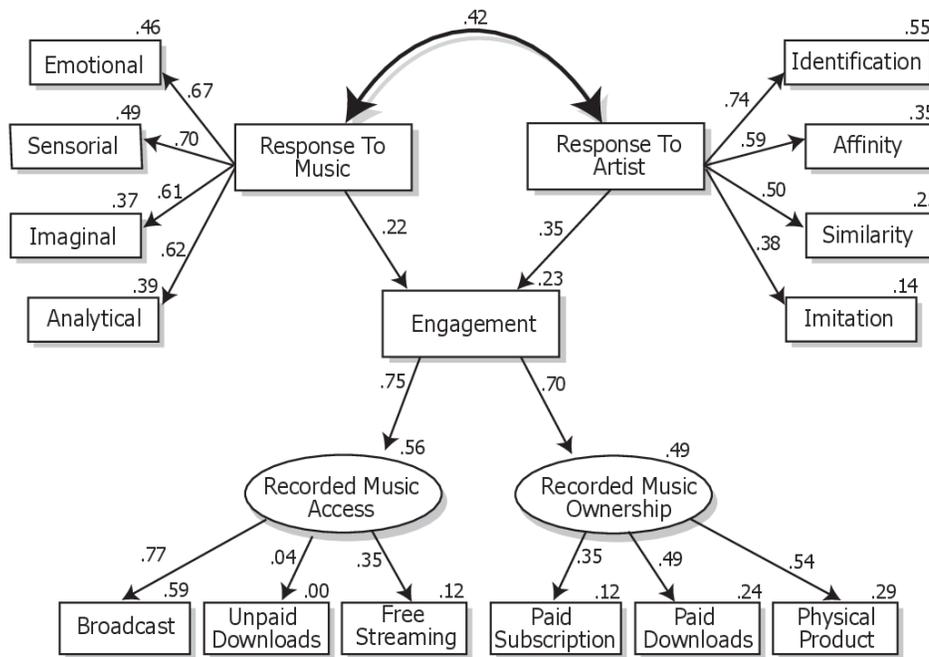
**Survey.** The survey used validated measures from previous studies in order to measure the various constructs within the Artist-Fan Engagement Model. The survey's question order was arranged so that the respondent identified a song of their choice. The respondent then answered questions regarding their listening preferences to their song selection as part of the "Response To Music" construct. Next, participants listed the name of the artist who performed the song they identified as part of the first survey question. This forced an evaluation of an artist whom the respondent may or may not have had a preference toward as part of the "Response To Artist" construct. The survey design was laid out in this manner, as there was a concern that question order could become a confounding issue. Undue bias could have been created if the survey's questions had been ordered so that the participant first listed the name of an artist whose music they preferred, prior to listing the name of a song by that same artist. Other survey sections focused on other variables of interest, including "Engagement," "Purchase Intent," and

“Consumption type/Purchase habits.” The survey concluded with questions related to respondent demographics.

**Analysis.** The Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software, Version 21, was the quantitative methodology used to analyze the survey data. After reviewing the initial survey responses, six hundred thirty-six incomplete surveys were listwise deleted from the final sample. These entries were deleted since it was most important to have both a valid artist and song title tied to the actual survey response for analysis purposes. Most of these deleted entries fell into one of three categories: a) no inputted information, resulting a blank survey; b) the song title was either listed as unknown, or just left blank; and c) no corresponding artist was listed in conjunction with the song. As a result, a total of 940 surveys were available for analysis, 836 of which were fully completed surveys. The other 104 surveys contained incomplete survey answers and/or demographic responses, although the included responses could be tied both to an individual artist and song title. The end analysis determined that 940 survey respondents listed 806 individual song titles performed by 568 music artists.

#### **4. Research Outcomes**

Figure 2 highlights the correlations found among the variables incorporated across the Artist-Fan Engagement Model. Support was found for all of research questions, with all of the p values associated with the sample data significant at .05, with the exception of “unpaid downloads.” One unexpected relationship surfaced as a result of executing the data, specifically, the moderately strong association between the “Response To Music” and “Response To Artist” constructs, with ( $r = .42$ ). This finding was generated when the original conceptualization of the Artist-Fan Engagement Model was revised in order to run the necessary statistical tests.



$\chi^2[119] = 2920.31; p = .000; n.s.$

Figure 2: Revised Artist-Fan Engagement Model.

Within the sample data, the research outcomes indicated strong correlations among the “Response To Artist” and its various facets in answer to the first research question: “Identification” ( $r = .74$ ); “Affinity” ( $r = .59$ ); “Similarity” ( $r = .50$ ); and “Imitation” ( $r = .38$ ). These findings were consistent with previous studies (Shen, 2009; Shen and Zhou, 2011). In response to the second research question, all of the listening responses had strong associations to the “Response To Music” construct: “Emotional” ( $r = .67$ ); “Sensorial” ( $r = .70$ ); “Imaginal” ( $r = .61$ ); and “Analytical” ( $r = .62$ ).

Support was found for Research Question 3 as well. Both “Response To Artist” ( $r = .35$ ) and “Response To Music” ( $r = .22$ ) were determined to influence audience engagement. In both cases, there were moderately positive relationships between these constructs and “Engagement,” although “Response To Artist” was moderately stronger than “Response To Music.” This was

not unexpected since the “Response To Artist” construct contains the component of human interaction between the two parties (i.e., music artist and fan).

Finally, in response to Research Question 4, “Engagement” highlighted strong positive correlations that influenced both the “Recorded Music Access” ( $r = .75$ ) and “Recorded Music Ownership” ( $r = .70$ ) constructs. The strong relationship between “Engagement” and “Recorded Music Access” was not unexpected, given the market shift of music consumption preferences toward streaming, especially with freemium streaming in widespread use. The strong relationship between “Recorded Music Ownership” and “Engagement” was unexpected, due to the fact that revenues from physical products and music downloads have substantially declined over the past few years.

## 5. Discussion

The Artist-Fan Engagement Model is a complex model, with numerous “moving parts.” It is important to understand how all the various theoretical elements of the model can be applied synergistically as part of a music artist’s overall marketing plan. As Tom Silverman, founder of both the Tommy Boy record label and the New Music Seminar, famously stated several years ago, “nobody knows where the music business is going, but I know one thing: it’s going to be about fan-artist relationships and how you monetize that” (Halperin, 2011). And indeed, many artists are aware of “the fundamental importance of the direct engagement with their audiences, of the resources that are required to build this relationship, and of the role of new technologies in enabling and developing it” (Bernardo and Martins, 2014: 12). Many successful music artists have already found enormous success building upon the factors (whether knowingly or unknowingly) contained within both the “Response To Artist” and “Response To Music” constructs in their relationship with their fan base (Stewart, 2013).

The first question which this research sought to answer was how the “Response To Artist” construct related to the PSI factors of “Identification,” “Affinity,” “Similarity,” and “Imitation.” The results suggest that an artist’s music marketing team should incorporate promotional activities based around these various factors to help support the artist’s relationship with their audience. Given the strong relationships among its various facets: “Identification” ( $r = .74$ ); “Affinity” ( $r = .59$ ); “Similarity” ( $r = .50$ ); and “Imitation” ( $r = .38$ ), the marketing focus should be creating promotional and sales content to help draw potential fans toward engagement with the music artist. Narrative content (e.g., video interviews) that contains both the affective and cognitive elements necessary to directly engage the music artist with their audience would be helpful to this end. Music publicist Ariel Hyatt has suggested one of the keys to success involving the relationship between music artists and their fan base is that “consumers want more personal interactions and artists should engage fans before trying to sell to them” (Cusic, 2012). This parasocial relationship between the artist and their fan base can be utilized whether the recorded music product is front-line, mid-line, or catalog product. As an example, pop music artist Taylor Swift has been heralded across the media as a recording artist who enjoys this type of relationship with her fans. A *L.A. Times* article reported:

“she has brilliantly created a level of conversation with her followers that most other entertainers can only dream of...Swift has made it abundantly clear that she is paying equal attention to what her fans are doing: their wants, needs, joys, fears and dreams, and she incorporates that awareness into an ongoing dialogue with them (Lewis, 2015).

Next, the results found in reference to Research Question 2 focused in upon the listening responses around the “Response To Music” constructs. Specifically, there were quantified

relationships between the “Response To Music” and its various facets: “Emotional” ( $r = .67$ ); “Sensorial” ( $r = .70$ ); “Imaginal” ( $r = .61$ ); and “Analytical” ( $r = .62$ ). What these results suggest that when the music artist and their recording team (i.e., music producers, engineers, songwriters) are working in the studio, the songs they create from an Artists and Repertoire (A&R) perspective should build upon these four listening responses in terms of music creation. Jimmy Harnen, President of Nashville’s Big Machine Label Group, spoke to this point, “Great music does a lot of things. It makes your toe tap, your heart pound, and your mind think, and as long as it touches your soul in one way or another, it’s real” (Waddell, 2013: 24). And, as Luck (2016) has pointed out, “we do not just listen to music; we experience it on a range of levels” (pg. 57).

The third research question examined how “Engagement” was related to the “Response To Artist” and “Response To Music” constructs. Again, the research results did find support for these relationships: “Response To Artist” ( $r = .35$ ) and “Response To Music” ( $r = .22$ ), albeit it with moderately positive correlations. It wasn’t necessarily surprising that the respondents felt more inclined toward engagement with the artist, rather than the music, once a human connection between the two parties was established, most likely through mediated communications. What these results indicate that the artist’s music is important, but the artist’s connection to their audience is even more important. The individual’s response to the artist helps drive the parasocial relationship between the parties.

Research Question 4 examined how “Engagement” influenced whether an individual chose to access or own recorded music product. “Engagement” was found to have surprisingly strong positive correlations that influenced both “Recorded Music Access” ( $r = .75$ ) and “Recorded Music Ownership” ( $r = .70$ ). This result was a bit surprising regarding “Recorded

Music Ownership” given the dominance of music streaming platforms in the United States. The Recording Industry Association of America reported overall U.S. music revenues of \$7.7 billion in 2016. Streaming served as the main revenue driver for the U.S. music industry, accounting for 51.4% of revenue, or \$3.9 billion. Digital downloads and ringtones accounted for 24.1%, or \$1.86 billion; and physical product, 21.8%, or \$1.68 billion, made up the bulk of the remaining revenues (Friedlander, 2017).

In reviewing the findings from the eight survey questions that focused upon the “Recorded Music Access” construct, “Broadcast” ( $r = .77$ ) received the strongest level of empirical support. This was not unexpected since the “Broadcast” variable was created by combining several measures related to an individual’s consumption of music via radio, television, and YouTube access. YouTube is not a traditional broadcast medium in the same sense as radio or television. However, recent studies of consumers aged 13-24 reported watching 12.1 hours per week on YouTube, social media, and other online sources as compared to traditional television at 8.2 hours weekly in a recent study. 67% of the survey respondents agreed that YouTube was a “must-have video source” (Spangler, 2016).

A non-significant relationship was found between “Recorded Music Access” and “Unpaid Downloads” ( $r = .04$ ) in the current study, which was a bit surprising. It is speculated however, that, with a sample population of music business students and music business insiders, social desirability may have been an issue. If these individuals were involved in illegally downloading pirated music, they may have not wanted to reveal this information in a survey.

The relationships among “Recorded Music Ownership” and the various paid streaming, paid downloads, and physical product purchases variables, were also examined. It was found that the correlation between “Recorded Music Ownership” and “Paid Subscription” was exactly the

same as between “Recorded Music Access” and “Free Streaming” ( $r = .12$ ). These similar results were surprising, given the prediction was that both outcomes were expected to have been stronger, even in light of the fact that the study was conducted early in the music streaming era. These results might have been a bit complicated by the fact that two questions were devoted to understanding the respondent’s streaming consumption use, whether through the freemium or paid subscription model. The most recent numbers from the Nielsen 2017 Mid-Year Report highlighted the fact that on-demand audio streams in 2017 are now currently over 184 billion streams, a 62.4% increase compared to the same time period in 2016. The overall on-demand streams, which include video streams, increased 36.4% during the same time period to 284 billion streams (Aswad, 2017). Paid music streaming subscriptions doubled in 2016, growing 109% to average 22.6 million users in the U.S. Paid subscriptions accounted for \$2.5 billion, or 64% of the overall streaming revenue (Friedlander, 2017). David Bakula, Nielsen’s Senior Vice President of Music Industry Insights recently stated that “the rapid adoption of streaming platforms by consumers has generated engagement with music on a scale that we’ve never seen before” (Aswad, 2017). This marketplace shift is key, given that many individuals, especially those in the younger demographics, specifically the Millennial and Generation Z demographics, are firmly planted in streaming platforms rather than music product ownership (Pandora, 2016).

The correlation between “Recorded Music Ownership” and “Paid Downloads” was also found to be relatively strong ( $r = .49$ ), which made sense, given that the paid download business model was relatively steady at the time the study was undertaken. “Paid Downloads” had been expected to have the strongest relationship to “Recorded Music Ownership” given digital download’s popularity and ease of use. Then again, Motal (2011) reported that 81% of the music on an individual’s personal iTunes accounts never gets played.

Unexpectedly, the correlation between “Recorded Music Ownership” and “Physical Product” ( $r = .54$ ) was found to be the strongest among the three ownership variables. Even at the time this study was conducted, album sales were in a serious decline. In spite of this market reality, a Nielsen study discussed how content was becoming even more integral to the music marketing process, commenting that “artists and retailers and providers are getting together and making really great packages of content with extra songs, live tracks, booklets, behind-the-scenes (video), things that enable fans to become more engaged” (Gunderson, 2013). Perhaps the reason some study respondents reported such a strong positive correlation toward product ownership is that they are superfans of the music artist whose song they listed in the survey. Thus, these respondents may be predisposed to buy the music by these artists because they want to have actual ownership of the given music product, whether compact disc, vinyl, or cassette.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the music marketing landscape has changed greatly over the past decade. This paper highlights four main “takeaway” points for an artist and their marketing team as follows, using the Artist-Fan Engagement Model as a strategic tool to this end:

#1. The music often introduces the artist to the audience through various promotional platforms (e.g., Spotify Weekly Discover Playlist). Once the fan is “in the know” about the act, then the focus of the relationship often switches from the music to the music artist.

#2. Streaming is now the dominate distribution medium in the United States. As industry insiders have noted, streaming platforms help to generate music engagement between the artist and their fan base. The audience tends to engage with the artist through their mediated content (e.g, Facebook, Instagram) and listening to their music through video or audio streams.

#3. Physical product is still important as reflected in the continuing growth of vinyl record product. Again, superfans tend to buy any and all physical artifacts (e.g., music, merchandise, etc.) connected to their favorite artists.

#4. All of the variables discussed within the Artist-Fan Engagement Model are important consideration factors. This synthesis model can be used to help the artist and their management team think through how to cohesively approach the music marketplace.

**Contribution.** The blending of PSI and hedonic music consumption theory has components that can be practically applied by music industry professionals for marketing and monetization purposes. The results from this research can be used to help provide a strategic foundational basis from which a music artist's team can begin to start building or revitalize an artist's career.

**Limitations.** There were several study limitations. First, this convenience sample was focused upon the responses of music industry executives and undergraduate college students who have a strong interest in working in the music industry. Thus, these results cannot be generalized to the greater public from this highly targeted Caucasian sample population that preferred pop and rock music. Also, this study was conducted in early 2013, and the U.S. music industry "currency" has shifted from a music download to a music streaming model.

**Future Research.** The current plan is to rerun this study using differing age demographics with interest in differing music genres in order to determine if the results are similar to those found in this surveyed sample. The development of parasocial interaction theory within the music market segment could lead to many fruitful avenues of academic and industry research, especially in the arena of music management. As a final thought, it is hoped that this model will help invigorate interested business professionals and academic researchers to join together in better understanding the nuances of artist engagement in relation to music consumption.

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