



MASTER'S DISSERTATION

THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE BRAND: HOW ACTIVISM AND EMPOWERMENT MESSAGES IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S SONGS SHAPE HER PERSONAL BRAND AND FANS' EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

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INSTITUTO PORTUGUÊS DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE MARKETING, JUNE, 2025

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Dissertation submitted to IPAM, to meet the requirements for the obtention of the degree of Master in Marketing Management performed under the scientific supervision of Mafalda Nogueira – Ph.D.

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DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL WRITING

I, Maria Leonor Teixeira Rigaud declare on my honour that the work presented here to obtain a Master's degree in 2025 from the Instituto Português de Administração de Marketing is original, the result of research I have carried out, and that the use of contributions or texts by other authors is duly referenced, in accordance with the principles and rules of Copyright and Related Rights.

Furthermore, I declare on my honour that in the case that this work includes content developed with total or partial origin from artificial intelligence tools, these are clearly identified and duly referenced.

Porto, 14 of June of 2025.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Taylor Swift's empowerment and activism messages, conveyed through her music and live performances during the *Eras Tour*, shape fans' perceptions of her personal brand and their emotional connection with the artist. Addressing a gap in the literature that specifically addresses artists' personal branding, particularly through the lens of musical content, the study adopts a qualitative case study approach combining document analysis and 16 semi-structured interviews with Portuguese Swifties. Participants were selected based on their emotional connection to the artist and experience with the *Eras Tour*, either in person or through the concert film. The document analysis examined selected lyrics from the *Taylor Swift | The Eras Tour (Taylor's Version)* film and additional sources, based on five dimensions of female self-empowerment.

The findings reveal that fans interpret Swift's authenticity, emotional vulnerability, and consistent values (such as feminism, resilience, and emotional honesty) as central to her brand identity. These messages are seen not only as personal but also as socially meaningful, reinforcing her credibility as both an artist and a public figure. Furthermore, music emerged as a key trigger for parasocial relationships, expanding current academic research that focuses heavily on social media.

This research enhances the underdeveloped field of personal branding in the music industry by emphasizing the importance of emotional storytelling and value alignment. It also adds to parasocial relationship theory by demonstrating how empowerment messages can foster personal identification, fan loyalty, and self-reflection. Finally, it provides practical contributions for artists and brand managers seeking to build authentic, value-driven personal brands through emotionally relatable narratives and performances.

Keywords: personal brand, Taylor Swift, female empowerment, activism, parasocial relationships

RESUMO

Este estudo explora de que forma as mensagens de empoderamento e ativismo transmitidas por Taylor Swift, através da sua música e atuações ao vivo na *Eras Tour*, moldam a perceção dos fãs em relação à sua marca pessoal e a ligação emocional com a artista. Colmatando uma lacuna na literatura relativa às marcas pessoais de artistas, particularmente através da análise de conteúdo musical, este estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa de estudo de caso, combinando análise documental com 16 entrevistas semiestruturadas a fãs portugueses da artista (Swifties). Os participantes foram selecionados com base na sua ligação emocional com Swift e na experiência com a *Eras Tour*, presencialmente ou através do filme-concerto. A análise documental incidu sobre letras selecionadas do filme *Taylor Swift | The Eras Tour (Taylor's Version)* e fontes adicionais, com base em cinco dimensões de autoempoderamento feminino.

Os resultados revelam que os fãs interpretam a autenticidade, vulnerabilidade emocional e valores consistentes de Swift (como o feminismo, a resiliência e a honestidade emocional) como centrais para a sua identidade de marca. Estas mensagens são percecionadas não apenas como pessoais, mas também como socialmente significativas, reforçando a sua credibilidade enquanto artista e figura pública. Além disso, a música revelou-se um fator-chave no desenvolvimento de relações parassociais, alargando a investigação académica existente, que se foca maioritariamente nas redes sociais.

Este estudo contribui para o campo ainda pouco explorado do *personal branding* na indústria musical, ao destacar a importância da narrativa emocional e do alinhamento de valores. Acrescenta, ainda, para a teoria das relações parassociais, demonstrando como mensagens de empoderamento podem promover identificação pessoal, lealdade dos fãs e autorreflexão. Por fim, oferece contributos práticos para artistas e gestores de marca que pretendam construir marcas pessoais autênticas e orientadas por valores, através de narrativas e performances emocionalmente relevantes.

Palavras-chave: marca pessoal, Taylor Swift, empoderamento feminino, ativismo, relações parassociais

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1. INTRODUCTION

“To be human is to be musical” (Mithen, 2009, p. 4). Music is a universal and deeply ingrained aspect of human life, with its consumption constantly increasing (Danilova & Krupa, 2021). This growth has been fueled by the digital revolution and the rise of streaming services, which allow us to listen to our favorite artists more conveniently and practically than ever before (Pizzolitto, 2023). Music holds transformative power: many fans claim that certain songs have saved them, healed them, or offered them comfort when they needed it most. Music has the ability to empower listeners, and, in turn, elevate the musicians who create it (Bennett, 2014).

In an industry as competitive and saturated as the music industry, having a personal brand that is distinctive is crucial for artists. A strong personal brand makes it possible to establish a deeper connection with fans, fostering their loyalty to the singer and a more sustainable and long-lasting career (Stankova, n.d.). However, there is still some reluctance amongst artists to see themselves as brands, not just as artists creating their art. Also, even though there are studies that investigate the brands of musical artists, they do not study their personal brands, having only a commercial brand perspective (Pizzolitto, 2023). Although the concept of personal brand is so important, several authors agree that it is still an area with very little presence in academic literature (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020).

One artist in particular who is considered a global phenomenon is Taylor Swift, a singer with a career spanning almost 20 years, countless hits and unparalleled tours. She is an emblematic figure for her legion of fans and a very successful businesswoman who has managed to give her brand great value, not only material but also in terms of public recognition (Théberge, 2021). Swift constantly breaks records, even being named the fifth most powerful woman in the world in 2023 by Forbes. In addition to her musical success, the singer is considered “the ultimate marketing machine” (McGrath, 2023). More recently, she wrapped up her record-breaking *Eras Tour*, a 3.5-hour show, showcasing songs from all the eras in the artist’s career. Having garnered over \$2 billion in ticket sales, in 149 shows, across five continents, this global event has been recognized as the all-time highest-grossing tour (Horton, 2024). Furthermore, Taylor Swift was named Spotify’s top global artist of 2024, with over 26.6 billion streams globally (Spotify, 2024).

Beyond the music industry, Swift's influence extends into unexpected domains, such as professional sports. Her presence at Kansas City Chiefs' games, in support of her partner, reportedly generated \$331.5 million for the NFL (National Football League), according to Empire (2024).

This raises the question: how can one artist wield such widespread influence? The answer lies in her unique connection with her fans, known as "Swifties".

This kind of relationship is called a parasocial relationship, a concept first introduced by Horton and Wohl (1956) to describe one-sided emotional bonds formed by audiences with public figures. Although there has been some research on this topic in the past years, most of the studies are conducted in the context of social media, meaning the relationship between celebrities and fans on social networks (see Su et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2023; Zafina & Sinha, 2024). However, to the best of our knowledge, no research has been conducted where the concept of empowerment through song is connected to the parasocial relationship and emotional connection formed between fans and their favorite artists.

Having said that, the main objective of this research is to understand how the messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* songs shape fans' perceptions of her personal brand and emotional connection. To achieve this, the following specific objectives were defined:

- To explore if fans identify messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* songs as part of her personal brand;
- To explore how these messages influence fans' parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift's personal brand;
- To explore how these messages influence fans' emotional relationship with Taylor Swift's personal brand.

To specify the scope of this study, and given the artist's extensive discography, we have chosen to limit our exploration to the songs performed on the *Eras Tour*. Furthermore, regarding the methodology, since we are conducting a qualitative study, this research follows a case study design. In terms of data collection, we employed two complementary methods: document analysis of selected song lyrics, supported by additional sources, and semi-structured interviews with fans who identify as Swifties.

Finally, this dissertation is organized into five chapters. The current chapter introduced the topic, presented the gaps in the existing literature, defined the research objectives, and

outlined the methodology and structure of the study. Chapter 2 provides a literature review first contextualizing Taylor Swift's career and key moments, and then reviewing core concepts related to personal branding, empowerment and activism, and parasocial relationships. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach, detailing the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Following that, Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, organized according to the dimensions that emerged from the data. The final chapter, Chapter 5, concludes the dissertation by addressing the established objectives, discussing the findings in relation to the theoretical framework, highlighting the contributions of the study, acknowledging its limitations, and suggesting possible paths for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the key theoretical concepts that form the groundwork of the analysis of Taylor Swift's personal brand activism and its role in promoting female empowerment and fostering parasocial relationships. It begins by examining the phenomenon that is Taylor Swift and her career, followed by an exploration of the notion of personal brand and its attributes, activism, and their intersections with feminism. Lastly, it addresses parasocial relationships and their emotional impact, providing a foundation for understanding the broader implications of Swift's influence.

2.1. THE TAYLOR SWIFT PHENOMENON

The first part of the literature review provides context for Taylor Swift's unique position in the music industry. By exploring her evolution as an artist and her ability to reinvent herself, this section sets the foundation for understanding how she developed a personal brand that goes beyond music and connects with broader social issues.

2.1.1. The Art of Reinvention

The music industry is a great force, with the capacity to unite audiences and influence people. Music show business today "creates a musical product in the form of artistic and aesthetic service" (Danilova & Krupa, 2021, p. 60). For a musician, it is important to promote their music, something that is possible through brand management. Creating a brand in this industry means registering the name of the artist or band as a brand, allowing artists to be recognized, create a community of fans and promote their brand in the market. However, for an artist to be successful, they must have a unique style, which is expressed through their image, creative presentation and external design. Everything that involves their appearance and public presence has to be well thought out and planned. In other words, the artist must

stand out from others in the market. Thus, with efficient brand management, the target audience will create a relationship with the artist, even be influenced by them, listen to their music and buy products with their brand, such as merchandising and concert tickets (Danilova & Krupa, 2021).

A great example of an artist who is part of the music industry and who, more importantly, has been referred to as the industry itself, is singer Taylor Swift. With a career that began at a very young age (merely fourteen years old), Swift has had moments of reinvention over the years, also known as her eras. At first, she was seen as a teenager whose lyrics seemed as if they had been pulled from her diary, the “good girl” of country music. Then, as she matured, she started to become more of a woman who uses her platform to touch on important issues, whether social or political (Théberge, 2021).

The transformations that the singer goes through in each of her eras are made possible by the positioning she adopts, as a pop princess and a music industry professional, but always maintaining the image of an authentic and hardworking person. She consistently shows herself as someone with a lot of resilience and adaptability, qualities that are conveyed in her songs (Wilkinson, 2019; Driessen, 2022). Even when she made her political views public during the 2018 US midterm elections, something that had its fair share of controversy, Swift managed to preserve her community of fans. This resilience stemmed from her ability to maintain the image the fans had of her – a person who addresses issues that are important to her and who uses her extensive platform to bring attention to them. Despite going through moments in which her reputation suffered, the artist overcame them and reinvented herself, never neglecting her authentic and hardworking image (Théberge, 2021; Driessen, 2022).

Swift’s celebrity status extends beyond her music, as her personal life is often subject to intense public scrutiny. Every aspect of her persona – her statements, actions, and even fashion choices – receives widespread attention. Given the intertwined nature of her career and personal life, Swift employs sophisticated public communication strategies to maintain and strengthen her fan base. These efforts are particularly crucial in navigating the challenges of global fame while preserving her authenticity as an artist (Zafina & Sinha, 2024).

Central to Swift’s connection with her audience is her storytelling. Her music fosters a deep bond with fans, allowing them to relate to her experiences and values. Songs like “The Man” exemplify her embrace of feminist themes, reinforcing her personal brand activism

(Théberge, 2021). Whether one identifies as a “Swiftie” or not, Swift’s influence is widespread, leaving an indelible mark on the music industry and popular culture (Volpe, 2021).

2.1.2.From Artist to Industry Leader

Besides her capacity for reinvention, Swift has also positioned herself as an industry leader, combining creative autonomy with strategic control over her career and public image. Taylor Swift’s career showcases a unique mix of artistic skill, business savvy, and cultural impact, making her a prominent figure in contemporary music. Her commercial success began early with her album *Fearless* (2008), which was the top-selling record in the United States in 2009 and established her as a powerhouse in the music industry (Arroyo, 2023).

Beyond her musical achievements, Swift has demonstrated remarkable strategic foresight by re-recording her earlier albums, owned by her former record label (Big Machine Records), to regain ownership of her work. This move not only bolstered her artistic integrity but also secured her financial stability. This dual focus on creativity and business highlights her ability to thrive in a male-dominated industry while actively advocating for creative rights (Théberge, 2021; Arroyo, 2023).

While some critics attribute her initial breakthrough to privilege and industry connections, Swift’s sustained success and her ability to adapt to the evolving music landscape underscore her exceptional talent and resilience. A notable testament to her commercial impact is her most recent world tour (the *Eras Tour*), which has shattered records to become the highest-grossing tour worldwide. This tour was not only her most ambitious but also a significant contributor to the global economy, further cementing her influence within the entertainment sector (Arroyo, 2023).

Through her commercial achievements, advocacy for creative rights, and powerful storytelling, Taylor Swift has redefined success in the modern music industry. Her ability to blend artistry with business vision while maintaining cultural relevance underscores her status as a phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of entertainment. As such, Swift has created a personal brand with immense value that has captured the attention and love of millions of fans.

2.2. PERSONAL BRAND, ACTIVISM AND EMPOWERMENT

After outlining Taylor Swift's artistic and professional journey, this section introduces the core concepts of personal brand and personal brand activism. These frameworks are crucial for understanding how Swift intentionally crafts her public image and promotes empowerment-focused messages.

2.2.1. Defining Personal Brand

Although the main focus of this research is not personal branding, we cannot study such an iconic artist without understanding what a personal brand is. While these concepts are separate, both the notions of personal brand and celebrity brand will be used throughout this dissertation as they have been employed as synonyms in several studies (see Ilicic & Webster, 2016; Kucharska et al., 2020). Given that we will be exploring an undeniable celebrity, we chose to follow this line of thought.

When it comes to the concept of personal brand, we must mention Tom Peters, who coined the term personal branding, in 1977, in a Fast Company article. Since then, various authors have suggested different definitions of personal brand (Scheidt et al., 2020). For Gander (2014), our personal brand is the concept that comes first in people's minds when they think of us. It should be positive and represent who we are, what we do and what makes us different. Goffman (1956, as cited in Scheidt et al., 2020), described self-presentation as the intentional and tangible component of identity. Kotler and Levy (1969) stated that human brands are a definitive feature of the traditional concept of marketing, which is becoming increasingly comprehensive. Thomson et al. (2006) define the term human brand as "any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts" (p. 104). For their part, Moulard et al. (2015) stated that, from a social psychology perspective, rarity and stability affect the authenticity of celebrities. According to McNally and Speak (2011), "your brand is a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you" (p. 4).

Scheidt et al. (2020) stated that it is possible to identify three common pillars in all notions: the individual's personal qualifications, such as their skills, abilities, experience or expertise; the focus on a specific target audience and their perceptions of the individual's personal brand, as well as relevant associations with it; differentiation arises in the final product of the brand-building process, the ultimate goal of which is to distinguish the person from their peers by emphasizing the points of differentiation and the unique value proposition of the personal brand. For Montoya and Vandehey (2009), we can all be like celebrities in a unique way, because we can have a public image that means something clear, powerful and eye-catching in the minds of the people we encounter. This is how they define the concept of personal brand: "A clear, powerful, compelling public image" (p. 4).

Our personal brand reflects who we are and what we believe in, which is expressed in what we do and how we do it. The perception we have of a personal brand is a reflection of what we believe that person to be, based on the values we think they live by (McNally & Speak, 2011).

When it comes to the benefits of personal branding, individuals with their own brand generally benefit when competing for positions, seeking career advancement, or certain career paths that lead to higher salaries. Another benefit to note is the visibility that the individual receives, improving their social capital (Scheidt et al., 2020).

According to Kucharska et al. (2020), a personal brand is an asset in that it gives its owner all the identifying and distinctive elements. Identity is the way we present ourselves to others. When it comes to public figures, a celebrity must build their public identity, based on a social process, to have a presence in front of others that meets their expectations and needs and that they like. At the same time, building an identity is also a way of guaranteeing their livelihood because their image sells (Zafina & Sinha, 2024).

The personal brand is also a promise, which tells others what they can expect when they work with us and creates expectations in their minds about what they will receive from us (Kucharska et al., 2020). It is therefore very important for our brand to have a value proposition that is achievable and that is always delivered (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009).

Our personal brand is us, enhanced and expressed in a more polished way, with well-thought-out communication methods. It should communicate who we are as a person and our expertise. It is the mental image that others have when they think of us, representing our

values, personality, expertise, and qualities that make us unique from our competitors (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009).

Consumers associate brands with values that are based on feelings, they focus on the emotional side, on quality rather than quantity. For people to relate to our personal brands, the emotional part must be aligned with the rational part. The more positive the measures of quality and quantity, the stronger the relationship (McNally & Speak, 2011). The special relationships that are established have emotions attached to them. That's why the best brands, whether personal or corporate, evoke strong, positive emotions. This is how brands gain power and, consequently, value. When we manage to leave the impression of our personal brand in someone else's mind, then we have a strong personal brand (McNally & Speak, 2011).

For McNally and Speak (2011), a personal brand exists based on a set of perceptions and emotions that are in the mind of another person, i.e., it doesn't matter so much what we think it is, it matters what other people think. When our values are accepted by other people, they will judge future experiences in relation to what they think is at the heart of the brand. If they think of us as trustworthy people, when we make a mistake, we won't be judged as harshly as if we had left the impression that we weren't trustworthy.

2.2.2. Attributes of Personal Brands

Now that we have explored the concept of personal brand, we will delve into the set of elements that constitute these types of brands. Credibility and authenticity are seen in literature as crucial attributes for personal brands. Authenticity affects attitudes towards the individual and is therefore a very important aspect used in consumer judgments and decision-making. What consumers are looking for are authentic human brands, which are representative of the individual's true self. Other important elements are clarity and rarity, which contribute to authenticity and are linked to differentiation (Scheidt et al., 2020).

According to Campagna et al. (2023), there are four common dimensions in the literature regarding the definition of brand authenticity: self-authentication and empowerment, having a unique idea or originality, being genuine and faithful to the brand that is presented, and longevity, i.e. surviving and surpassing times and trends. Based on this conclusion, they

define the term brand authenticity as “a genuine brand with a unique style that cares about being open and honest with consumers and will survive times and trends” (p. 138). For their part, Nunes et al. (2021) define brand authenticity as something that changes depending on the context of consumption and whose nature is based on an evaluation by the consumer, based on six components that make up this evaluation: accuracy, connection, integrity, legitimacy, originality and proficiency. In their research, the authors concluded that proficiency is the most predominant factor in brand authenticity, while legitimacy tends to be the least impactful. Furthermore, their findings reveal a connection between brand authenticity and consumer behavior, as authenticity influences information-seeking, purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth communication.

When building a personal brand, we need to understand the relevance that other people have or can have for us. Our values must be respected in every relationship. Clarity is also a major advantage of a strong personal brand. People will respect our values more because they realize that they are very important to us and don’t expect us to act otherwise (McNally & Speak, 2011).

Montoya and Vandehey (2009) point to clarity, specialization, and consistency as essential elements for a good personal brand. They also emphasize the importance of authenticity as a very important attribute of a personal brand, “people want to work with you, not with some slick marketing creation” (p. 5).

Ilicic and Webster (2016), through a study conducted by focus groups, concluded that the participants valued the characteristics of celebrity brands as being attractive, successful and authentic. Regarding authenticity, they indicated that an authentic celebrity is one who is real, genuine and not fake, someone who reveals their true self, with an original and distinctive style. In other words, they valued celebrities who are human, who show their strengths and weaknesses, victories and failures. The participants identified more with celebrities who made mistakes, who were honest about their shortcomings. They concluded that for consumers, celebrity brands are authentic when they convey humanity, through behaviors and values that they can relate to and understand. In other words, when celebrities are transparent about who they are and what they stand for, they always remain consistent. In addition, they value celebrities who are sincere and honest in their interactions with the public (Ilicic & Webster, 2016). In short, an authentic celebrity is someone who conveys a sincere and genuine image through their attitudes, and consumers can connect with them and

form a type of relationship. The concept of authenticity is directly related to the concepts of continuity, originality and reliability. The more authentic the celebrity appears the more fans identify with them and the more loyal they become. Hence the crucial role of authenticity (Moulard et al., 2015).

In short, we discovered that the various attributes differ in relevance based on the application assigned to them by the authors, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1:

Attributes of Personal Brands According to Different Authors

Attribute	Description	Authors
Credibility	Crucial for judgments and decisions.	Scheidt et al. (2020)
Authenticity	Representing the individual's true self.	Montoya & Vandehey (2009); Illicic & Webster (2016); Scheidt et al. (2020); Nunes et al. (2021); Campagna et al. (2023)
Clarity and Rarity	Contribute to authenticity and differentiation.	Montoya & Vandehey (2009); McNally & Speak (2011); Scheidt et al. (2020)
Clarity, Specialization and Consistency	Essential elements of a strong personal brand, with authenticity as a central attribute.	Montoya & Vandehey (2009)

2.2.3. Personal Brand Activism Towards Feminism and Female Empowerment

With the concept and attributes of a personal brand established, it is now important to understand how these ideas intersect with activism and feminism, especially for female artists navigating traditionally male-dominated industries.

For a long time, women have felt disadvantaged in their access to careers and professional success. As a result of gender stereotypes, they were victims of exploitation in the musical and artistic world and were denied the autonomy and creative freedom they needed to assert themselves. It is therefore worth highlighting the role of artists such as Tina Turner and Aretha Franklin, who, with their perseverance and unique talent, managed to rise to the top as figures with the much-desired artistic and financial independence in such a prejudiced environment, which shows women's ability to overcome the difficulties of the status quo and overcome stereotypes, bringing a new dynamic to the entertainment industry (Arroyo, 2023). Examples of this are the singers Taylor Swift, Beyoncé and Adele who, as well as dominating the world music charts, earn substantial income from the sale of their albums, world tours, and merchandising, becoming examples of the growing financial power of female artists. By achieving widespread economic success, these women challenge traditional norms and demonstrate their capacity as lucrative forces in the business of entertainment (Arroyo, 2023).

Beyond their contributions to the music industry, female celebrities often extend their influence on other sectors, such as fashion and business. Rihanna, for instance, has constructed a thriving empire that spans multiple industries, showcasing the potential for personal and institutional advancement. Her ventures exemplify how female entrepreneurs can transcend traditional roles and achieve prominence across diverse spheres, reinforcing the importance of empowering women in all areas of the economy (Arroyo, 2023). Additionally, figures like Taylor Swift and cultural phenomena such as Barbie highlight the significant market for female-driven content and products. This demand underscores the necessity for industries to prioritize diversity and inclusion, creating more opportunities for female creators and influencers to thrive (Arroyo, 2023).

Due to their legion of fans, a celebrity has immense power that they can use to defend causes close to their heart. Through the closeness they create with their fans, they convey messages that mobilize their followers in the direction of what they advocate, which gives them tremendous strength in defending the causes they get involved in and for which they lead a mass of loyal fans (Bennett, 2014).

Personal brand activism refers to the deliberate alignment of personal branding with social causes to enhance reputation and emotional resonance with audiences (Kucharska et

al., 2020). Unlike corporate activism, personal brand activism integrates the individual's authenticity and values, making it a powerful marketing tool in building trust and loyalty.

More specifically, when it comes to celebrities, Howarth (2000, as cited in Chidgey, 2021) asserts that celebrity activism is a social-political construct that allows us to articulate orientations and structure broader phenomena with which social actors can identify.

Activism tied to feminism has become a hallmark of many contemporary celebrities, with many public figures actively identifying as feminists and advocating for gender equality, including Taylor Swift, the subject of this study. By championing women's rights through her music and public statements, Swift aligns her personal brand with the principles of female empowerment. This approach mirrors the practices of other influential figures, such as Lady Gaga, who leveraged her platform for philanthropy and activism (Bennett, 2014).

Chidgey (2021) describes "celebrity feminism" as a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing varied representations and political claims (p. 1057). This movement not only elevates the visibility of feminist discourse but also contributes to the normalization of feminist values within mainstream culture. By leveraging their platforms, female celebrities effectively amplify the message of empowerment and encourage a broader societal shift toward gender equity.

An artist who has done exactly that is Ariana Grande. Ruanglertsilp (2022), using critical discourse analysis, examined the singer's 2019 album, *thank u, next*, in which the author concluded that personal brand activism can be an effective tool for conveying feminist ideals and promoting female empowerment. The study explored Grande's use of linguistic techniques to construct a narrative of self-empowerment, representing the singer as an independent, powerful, self-aware, sexually autonomous, and unapologetically vulnerable woman (Ruanglertsilp, 2022). As such, this narrative not only aligns with neoliberal feminist values but also reinforces gender equity, thereby leveraging Grande's personal brand as a platform for activism, strengthening the argument made by Chidgey (2021).

Through their communication with fans, celebrities can encourage them to understand that they can make actual changes in society and their roles as citizens, as well as encourage and foster their civic and political engagement (Bennett, 2014). They also have the capacity to generate new types of discussions and to pay attention to social and political issues (Chidgey, 2021). Furthermore, the rise of prominent young female activists during the 2010s

highlights the significant appeal of girls participating in social justice initiatives (Duvall, 2023).

Through their personal brand activism, female artists and celebrities demonstrate the power of leveraging fame to challenge gender stereotypes, advocate for feminist ideals, and empower women in various fields. Their contributions highlight the transformative potential of representation and diversity within and beyond the entertainment industry.

2.3.PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

The final section of this chapter explores parasocial relationships, a key lens for understanding fans' emotional connection to Taylor Swift. These relationships help explain how fans internalize the artist's values and feel personally invested in her journey and messages.

2.3.1.Conceptualizing Parasocial Relationships

Horton and Wohl (1956) introduced the concept of parasocial relationships, which describes a one-sided relationship between media figures and their audiences. Having first been applied to celebrities on TV, at the time, the concept has evolved, especially in the context of social media we live in today (Zafina & Sinha, 2024). Parasocial relationships have evolved into much more interactive experiences, allowing fans to feel an intensified sense of intimacy with celebrities (Su et al., 2021), thus fostering deeper connections between artists and fans (Xu et al., 2023).

There is a greater desire by the fans to establish parasocial interactions with the celebrities they follow, the greater their perceived degree of authenticity. Since the image the celebrity shows is often the work of a management team, this representation doesn't always correspond to the celebrity in reality and is, therefore, a construction. It is the celebrities who are perceived by fans to be the most authentic in their interactions that they connect with the most, establishing parasocial interactions. These parasocial relationships are formed

between the fans and the celebrity when, by following the celebrity's performances, watching their shows, for example, they create bonds of intimacy due to the emotional moment they are experiencing (Xu et al., 2023; Zafina & Sinha, 2024). Fans also feel connected to musicians through their music. In their study, Zafina and Sinha (2024) gathered various testimonies from fans of Taylor Swift, some of whom described feeling a sense of comfort from the singer's songs.

As Marshall et al. (2019) (as cited in Zafina & Sinha, 2024) point out that "celebrities serve as some of the most prominent, performative and instructive instances of the practice of persona, which broadly refers to the process of creating and establishing forms of public identity" (p. 533). And they do this by sending messages to fans who replicate and respond, creating an interaction in which one of the parties involved becomes familiar with the life of the celebrity they follow, having a very close relationship with them.

The major contributor to the construction of parasocial relationships is fans' behavior towards celebrities' actions. When they feel an affinity with the celebrity in question, an emotional bond and a kind of friendship are easily created between the fan and the celebrity they follow. This bond becomes stronger the more time they spend interacting with the celebrity and the more often they appear in public (Zafina & Sinha, 2024).

2.3.2. Empowerment Through Parasocial Bonds

As we explored before, parasocial relationships between celebrities and fans carry immense value. Also, a celebrity's capacity to portray an image of someone who has a sense of social responsibility and that knows how to communicate it in order to make a change, is very important. As such, the synergy between parasocial relationships and personal brand activism creates a unique empowerment dynamic. Fans internalize the artist's values and feel motivated to advocate for similar causes, transforming their admiration into actionable support (Zafina & Sinha, 2024).

Bennet (2014) explores the influence that the love and admiration for a celebrity can have on fans' desire to act, and support causes close to them. For example, in the study, the author recounts a specific case where Lady Gaga was advocating for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, a policy that enabled the United States military forces to discriminate against applicants

or individuals from participating in military service due to their sexual orientation. Gaga's actions caused her fans to act and call their local Senators. This perfectly illustrates the power that the parasocial relationship and emotional connection between celebrities and fans can have on fan empowerment and "that seemingly works to strengthen the involvement of fans in her charity and activist practices" (Bennet, 2014, p. 147).

Théberge (2021) highlights Taylor Swift's strategic integration of activism into her branding, demonstrating how advocacy for causes like feminism reinforces her audience's loyalty. Fans feel a sense of kinship with the singer because they relate to her values and beliefs, bringing them closer to her.

In sum, by reviewing the existing literature on parasocial relationships, celebrity activism and empowerment, we conclude that the term "fan empowerment" doesn't only mean that fans feel better about themselves. A celebrity's ability to empower also means incentivizing the group of people who love them and look up to them to fight for what they believe in and to make the world a better place.

3. METHODOLOGY

After establishing the theoretical framework of this dissertation, the current chapter presents the methodological framework employed in this study. We begin by outlining the selected approach, followed by a description of the data collection methods and data analysis techniques.

3.1. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study aims to understand how the messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* songs shape fans' perceptions of her personal brand and emotional connection with the artist. To address this overarching aim, the following specific objectives have been outlined:

- To explore if fans identify messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* songs as part of her personal brand;
- To explore how these messages influence fans' parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift's personal brand;
- To explore how these messages influence fans' emotional relationship with Taylor Swift's personal brand.

In accordance with these objectives, it is essential to first explore the qualitative nature of the methodological approach chosen for this study.

According to Yin (2016), this type of research provides a deeper understanding of the phenomena and allows us to capture their complexity. It enables researchers to explore social and cultural contexts that shape the object of the study, giving context to the data. Furthermore, it is a flexible approach, allowing for adjustments in the research focus and methods as new understandings emerge. Another great advantage of this approach is its descriptive nature, which is ideal for interpreting complex phenomena that cannot be easily quantified.

This methodological framework supports the use of document analysis and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods, explored further in this document, which enable the researcher to explore both the lyrical content and the personal interpretations of fans. As such, this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how empowerment messages are perceived and internalized, aligning with the research objectives proposed.

3.1.1. Case Study

This research adopts a case study design as described by Yin (2014), which is particularly well-suited for exploring complex phenomena within their real-life contexts. A case study is defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how and why particular events occur, making it ideal for studying the interplay between the messages in Taylor Swift's songs and fans' perceptions of her personal brand.

According to Yin (2014), case studies can be categorized into exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory types. As the focus of this research is on the *Eras Tour*, as was mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, we adopted a descriptive case study design. This means that the aim is not to test a theory or explain causality, but rather to describe the characteristics, context, and dynamics of the case in detail. In this study, the *Eras Tour* serves as a bounded system where Taylor Swift's musical messages of activism and empowerment are communicated to her fans through both the lyrics performed and the concert experience itself.

This choice of case study is supported by the theoretical foundation presented in the literature review, which explored Taylor Swift's evolution as a personal brand. By understanding her brand-building strategies and public positioning, we can better contextualize the significance of the *Eras Tour* as a moment where these narratives are performed and reinforced in a highly curated and impactful setting.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

This study employed a dual-phase data collection process, comprising secondary data from selected documents and primary data gathered through semi-structured interviews with self-identified Swifties.

3.2.1. Document Analysis

The first data collection phase involved watching and transcribing the movie *Taylor Swift | The Eras Tour (Taylor's version)* (Wrench & Swift, 2023), available on Disney+, Disney's streaming platform. Given that one of the objectives of this study is to identify messages of empowerment in Swift's songs, and considering the extensive nature of her discography, the songs performed in the movie were the ones selected for analysis. The *Eras Tour* setlist serves as a curated representation of Swift's works, encapsulating the core messages that define her personal brand.

In addition to transcribing the lyrics, we also observed elements beyond the songs themselves, including the singer's interactions with fans during the show, the overall atmosphere, and the performance dynamics. These aspects contribute to the artist's portrayal of empowerment, offering valuable information for further examination.

In this study, document analysis was employed as a data collection method to compile and examine the transcription of the movie, along with additional sources such as news articles and interviews, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2:

Overview of Sources Used in the Document Analysis

Source Type	Title	Link	Access Date
Film	<i>Taylor Swift The Eras Tour (Taylor’s version)</i>	Disney+	February 8, 2025
Website	Genius Song Lyrics & Knowledge	https://genius.com/	February 8, 2025
Online Article	“Fearless Femininity – Taylor Swift’s Empowering Narrative and Resonance in The Feminist Movement” – <i>The Spark</i>	Link	April 14, 2025
Online Article	“Jennifer Stewart on why Taylor Swift is the feminist of our generation” – <i>The Honest Talk</i>	Link	April 14, 2025
Online Article	“Taylor Swift is sending a powerful message to women on the Eras tour” - <i>CNN</i>	Link	April 17, 2025
Online Article	“Taylor Swift Accepts Woman of the Decade Award at Billboard’s Women In Music: Read Her Full Speech” - <i>Billboard</i>	Link	April 17, 2025

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computed-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (p. 27). This method allows researchers to gather and interpret textual data from various sources, including the ones mentioned above.

Bowen (2009) further outlines that document analysis as a data collection method involves an initial reading of the text, followed by a more in-depth examination, ultimately leading to data interpretation – a process that “combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis” (p. 32). Similarly, Labuschagne (2015) highlights that document analysis enables researchers to categorize and organize data into meaningful themes.

The approach adopted ensured a comprehensive dataset for further analysis, which will be explored later in this dissertation.

3.2.2. Semi-structured Interviews

The next step in the data collection process consisted of semi-structured interviews with fans who identify as Swifties.

The semi-structured interview is a widely used qualitative research method due to its ability to balance structure and flexibility (Kallio et al., 2016). Unlike structured interviews, which follow a rigid set of questions, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to explore emerging themes, offering a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences (Yin, 2014). This method is particularly valuable in studies exploring subjective experiences and social phenomena, as it enables the researcher to capture participants in their own words (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Given that this study seeks to understand how themes of female empowerment and feminism, as conveyed through Taylor Swift's music, influence fans' perceptions and relationships with the artist, semi-structured interviews provide the necessary depth to explore these complex and personal interpretations.

The interviews followed a guide, shown in Table 3, which was designed based on the works of several key authors. Since all participants were Portuguese, a version of the guide was adapted to their native language, as can be found in Appendix A. However, since these were semi-structured interviews, as the conversation progressed, the interviewer asked questions other than those in the script, allowing the participant to elaborate on aspects that were considered relevant to the study.

Table 3:

Interview Guide

Specific Objective	Questions	Key Authors
SO1: To explore if fans identify messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift’s songs as part of her personal brand.	Q1: When you think of the image that Taylor Swift has built throughout her career, what messages or values come to mind?	McNally & Speak (2011); Gander (2014); Gorbatov et al. (2018)
	Q2: Which songs in particular remind you of those messages or values?	Chidgey (2021); Ruanglertsilp (2022); Duvall (2023)
	Q3: How do you think those messages connect to what she stands for as a public figure and artist?	Th��berge (2021); Chidgey (2021); Campagna et al. (2023)
	Q4: How do you interpret the way she conveys these messages – does it feel authentic? What signs make you feel that way?	Moulard et al. (2015); Ilicic & Webster (2016); Nunes et al. (2021)
SO2: To explore how these messages influence fans’ parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift’s personal brand.	Q5: Can you describe how you feel about Taylor Swift as a person, based on her songs?	Xu et al. (2023); Zafina & Sinha (2024)
	Q6: What values or ideals that she shares in her songs do you feel are also part of your life?	Bennett (2014); Arroyo (2023); Zafina & Sinha (2024)
	Q7: When have you felt a closer connection with her, even though you don’t know her personally?	Bennett (2014); Driessen (2022); Arroyo (2023)
SO3: To explore how these messages influence fans’ emotional relationship with Taylor Swift’s personal brand.	Q8: Can you describe a song from the <i>Eras Tour</i> that impacted you emotionally? What did you feel in that moment?	Bennett (2014); Volpe (2021); Ruanglertsilp (2022)
	Q9: Is there a message in her songs that you feel has helped you face something or made you feel understood?	Bennett (2014); Volpe (2021); Duvall (2023); Arroyo (2023)
	Q10: After experiencing the <i>Eras Tour</i> (live or through the movie), did your perception of Taylor change? In what way?	Bennett (2014), Zafina & Sinha (2024)

A total of 16 interviews were conducted between May 2nd and May 21st, 2025. Each interview occurred on Google Meet in Portuguese and lasted an average of 30 to 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

3.2.3. Participants' Characterization

As mentioned above, the participants consisted of self-identified Swifties who had to meet two criteria to participate: having a connection with the artist and having either attended an *Eras Tour* concert or watched the *Eras Tour* movie. These fans consistently follow new album releases, attempt to decipher the hidden messages in the songs and music videos, attend the *Eras Tour* and engage with concert footage and related content on social media.

To recruit participants who met these specific criteria, a snowball sampling technique was employed. Snowball sampling means that one group of samples leads to another, increasing the number of participants. In other words, it allows researchers to begin with a few initial participants, selected based on their known engagement with the subject, and then ask these individuals to refer others who also meet the eligibility criteria. This method is particularly suitable for qualitative studies where the population is niche or difficult to access, such as dedicated fan communities (Naderifar et al., 2017). The approach chosen not only facilitated access to highly engaged Swifties but also ensured that the sample consisted of participants deeply familiar with Taylor Swift's artistic evolution and the *Eras Tour* experience.

Of the 16 interviewees, most were female (12 out of 16), with ages ranging from 20 to 33 years old. Most participants reported having started listening to Taylor Swift during their early adolescence, with an average age of approximately 13 years old, indicating long-term engagement with the artist's career.

All participants attended the *Eras Tour* concert, which took place in Lisbon in May 2024, and 14 out of 16 had also watched the *Eras Tour* film. Additionally, most participants wore or created outfits inspired by Taylor Swift, a specific album, or a visual aesthetic from one of her Eras during the concert. This highlights the performative and identity-expressive elements and symbols of fan engagement among the Swifties. Table 4 summarizes participants' profiles.

Table 4:

Participants' Characterization

Participant	Age	Gender	Age started listening to TS	Attended Eras Tour	Watched Eras Tour movie	Wore TS/Era-inspired outfit
P1	23	F	11	Yes	Yes	Yes
P2	23	F	12	Yes	No	Yes
P3	21	F	13	Yes	Yes	Yes
P4	23	F	14	Yes	Yes	Yes
P5	22	F	12	Yes	Yes	Yes
P6	33	M	16	Yes	Yes	Yes
P7	25	F	11	Yes	Yes	Yes
P8	23	F	18	Yes	Yes	Yes
P9	23	F	20	Yes	Yes	Yes
P10	25	M	16	Yes	Yes	Yes
P11	23	F	16	Yes	No	Yes
P12	29	M	12	Yes	Yes	Yes
P13	24	F	12	Yes	Yes	Yes
P14	20	F	15	Yes	Yes	Yes
P15	30	M	16	Yes	Yes	Yes
P16	20	F	10	Yes	Yes	Yes

This detailed characterization allows for a deeper contextualization of the participants' perspectives during the analysis phase, ensuring that their interpretations of empowerment and feminism are understood in relation to their level of fandom and the specific ways in which they engage with the artist's brand and messaging.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

3.3.1. Thematic and Content Analysis of Document Data

To analyze the data collected in the first phase, we employed a triangulation approach, combining thematic analysis and content analysis. This dual strategy provided both a qualitative and a more quantitative understanding of the data, enhancing the depth and validity of the findings.

Braun & Clarke (2021) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). The authors highlight its flexibility and effectiveness in exploring content such as song lyrics, particularly when the goal is to identify recurring themes and deeper meanings. In this study, thematic analysis was applied through a hybrid approach: initially using a deductive framework based on four dimensions of female self-empowerment identified in the study conducted by Ruanglertsilp (2022), and later incorporating an inductive element. A fifth dimension emerged during the coding process, inspired by the works of Chidgey (2021) and Arroyo (2023). This shift reflects the adaptability of thematic analysis, which, as Braun & Clarke (2021) argue, allows researchers to begin with theoretically grounded categories while remaining open to new patterns and codes within the data. Table 5 lists the different dimensions used in this study and the corresponding key authors.

Table 5:

Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment

Dimension	Key Authors
Being Independent and Powerful	Ruanglertsilp (2022)
Having Self-Love/Growth	
Owning Sexuality	
Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	
Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	Chidgey (2021); Arroyo (2023)

Following the coding process, an Excel table was created, organizing the songs by Era in the first two columns and mapping them against the five predefined dimensions. To facilitate the analysis and offer a more structured overview, we adopted a binary classification (1/0) system to indicate the presence or absence of each dimension in each song. This approach allowed us to quantify the results, identify which songs reflected more dimensions, and assess the relative frequency and distribution across the dataset. A total of 44 songs were analyzed, with 33 of them featuring at least one of the dimensions represented.

This quantitative aspect aligns with the principles of content analysis, defined by Bardin (2016) as a set of communication analysis techniques aimed at obtaining indicators (quantitative or not) that allow for the inference of knowledge related to the conditions of production and reception of messages. Content analysis allows researchers to systematically categorize textual data, enabling comparisons and highlighting trends within the text.

According to Bardin (2016), content analysis has three fundamental phases: i) pre-analysis, where the material is compiled and preliminary readings are conducted; ii) material exploration, which involves systematic coding and categorization; and iii) treatment of the results, which includes inference and interpretation. In this case, these stages were followed: first, the transcribed lyrics were read and organized; then, codes were assigned based on the five dimensions; and finally, the classification table and dimension frequency were interpreted to identify data patterns and support the qualitative analysis.

By combining the two techniques, this triangulation approach ensured a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the messages conveyed in the songs. It provided a richer understanding of how the lyrics reflect broader themes of empowerment and feminism while supporting the coding process's reliability and transparency.

3.3.2. Content Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

As stated in the topic above, thematic analysis was the main technique used to identify patterns and meanings in the collected data, with content analysis serving as a secondary technique. However, content analysis was selected as the primary method for conducting the interview analysis.

While the lyrics were analyzed using five previously defined dimensions (Being Independent and Powerful, Having Self-Love/Growth, Owning Sexuality, Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness, and Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations), the analysis of the data collected from the interviews followed a different yet complementary content analysis approach.

In alignment with the methodological structure of content analysis, as defined by Bardin (2016) and explained previously, the interview data was examined through categorization and inference processes. This began with identifying the main analytical dimensions and subdimensions that were deductively derived from the research objectives. These dimensions directly aligned with the three specific research objectives of the study and guided the design of the interview guide. Each interview question was formulated in accordance with the theoretical framework established in the Literature Review.

The process began by defining the main analytical dimensions based on the study's objectives. Subsequently, we established more targeted subdimensions related to the topics explored in each interview question. When multiple questions addressed similar concepts, they were grouped under the same subdimension to avoid redundancy and to ensure clearer data organization.

This categorization process corresponds to the second phase of content analysis described earlier: the systematic exploration of the material, during which the data is coded and structured in a meaningful way. The resulting analytical framework, summarized in Table 6, provides the structural foundation for presenting the findings in the following chapter.

Table 6:

Research Objectives and Corresponding Analysis Dimensions

Specific Objective	Dimensions	Subdimensions	Questions	Key Authors
SO1: To explore if fans identify messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift’s <i>Eras Tour</i> songs as part of her personal brand.	Perception of Taylor Swift’s Personal Brand	Values and messages associated with Taylor Swift and her music	Q1, Q2	McNally & Speak (2011); Gander (2014); Gorbатов et al. (2018); Chidgey (2021); Ruanglertsilp (2022); Duvall (2023)
		Alignment between personal values and public persona	Q3	Théberge (2021); Chidgey (2021); Campagna et al. (2023)
		Perceived authenticity of the messages	Q4	Moulard et al. (2015); Ilicic & Webster (2016); Nunes et al. (2021)
SO2: To explore how these messages influence fans’ parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift’s personal brand.	Parasocial Connection with the Artist	Perceived personal connection through music	Q5, Q7	Bennett (2014); Driessen (2022); Arroyo (2023); Xu et al. (2023); Zafina & Sinha (2024)
		Relatability and shared values	Q6	Bennett (2014); Arroyo (2023); Zafina & Sinha (2024)
SO3: To explore how these messages influence fans’ emotional relationship with Taylor Swift’s personal brand.	Emotional Impact and Identification	Emotionally impactful songs and moments	Q8	Bennett (2014); Volpe (2021); Ruanglertsilp (2022)
		Songs as emotional support and understanding	Q9	Bennett (2014); Volpe (2021); Duvall (2023); Arroyo (2023)
		Evolving perceptions of the artist post- <i>Eras Tour</i>	Q10	Bennett (2014), Zafina & Sinha (2024)

A visual content analysis technique further complemented the analysis through the creation of a word cloud that highlights the most frequently used and emotionally meaningful words across the interviews.

4. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings obtained through the two complementary phases of data collection and analysis: the document analysis of the movie transcript and supplementary materials, and the semi-structured interviews conducted with Swifties.

The analysis is divided into two main parts. The first section (4.1) explores the five dimensions of female self-empowerment (Being Independent and Powerful, Having Self-Love and Growth, Owning Sexuality, Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness, Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations) identified in the lyrics performed during the *Eras Tour*, complemented by performative elements as well as information from secondary documental sources. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, to support the coding process, a binary classification matrix was created to identify the presence or absence of each dimension in the songs performed during the *Eras Tour* (see Appendix B). Additionally, we chose to create a complementary table specifying the lyrics corresponding to each dimension (see Appendix C), to ensure transparency in interpretation.

The second part of the chapter (sections 4.2 to 4.4) focuses on the thematic analysis of the interviews. These findings are categorized according to the previously defined analytical dimensions and subdimensions. It is important to note that, whenever relevant, results from the lyrics analysis are discussed in relation to the interview data, allowing for triangulation and enhancing the validity of the results.

4.1. ANALYSIS OF DIMENSIONS OF FEMALE SELF-EMPOWERMENT

This section explores how Taylor Swift's lyrics reflect the five dimensions of female self-empowerment mentioned above, as identified through the analysis of the *Eras Tour* setlist. Each dimension portrays different aspects of empowerment that resonate with her audience and reinforce her personal brand. The following subsections present these dimensions in detail.

4.1.1. Being Independent and Powerful

This dimension captures lyrical content where Swift asserts control and shows strength. Independence emerges through storytelling rather than outright declarations. Taylor often frames independence in nuanced, emotionally resonant ways. The analysis revealed its presence in fifteen of the songs, making it one of the most dominant categories in the data.

Notably, songs such as “Long Live” and “You’re On Your Own, Kid” portray empowerment through resilience and self-reliance. The latter reflects on the evolution of her independence across different stages of her life, encapsulating a journey marked by hard work, loneliness, and perseverance.

In “Midnight Rain”, the artist reflects on prioritizing ambition and self-improvement over a romantic relationship and comfort, stating, “He wanted a bride, I was making my own name” (Swift, 2023)¹. This line highlights her personal agency and reveals her deliberate choice to break away from conventional expectations. Likewise, “Bejeweled” serves as a powerful declaration of reclaiming self-worth, where Swift, feeling neglected, chooses to shine once more: “Don’t put me in the basement / When I want the penthouse of your heart”, illustrating a sense of empowerment (Swift, 2023).

Throughout the concert, Taylor Swift repeatedly expresses her sense of empowerment, often crediting her fans for making her feel powerful and supported. She frames these moments not only as personal triumphs but as shared celebrations with her audience, especially female fans.

As noted in a CNN article, Swift’s performances in the *Eras Tour* are a celebration of ambition and self-actualization, sending “a powerful message to women” that embracing their desires and careers is valid and empowering (Halnon, 2023).

¹ In this study, citations of lyrics and performance elements from the movie are attributed to Taylor Swift (2023), given her dual role as performer and primary songwriter. While Sam Wrench directed the concert film, the focus of this analysis is on Swift’s authorship, brand identity, and performative narrative.

4.1.2. Having Self-Love and Growth

Beyond independence, Swift's journey through self-discovery and emotional development is evident in many of her songs. Once again, "You're On Your Own, Kid" is especially reflective, summarizing her career and personal evolution. Despite addressing loneliness and pressure, the song ends with a hopeful message that one can overcome adversity through self-reliance.

In "Shake It Off", she responds to public judgment with confidence, portraying resilience and personal growth. By taking a lighthearted approach to criticism, the singer encourages resilience and self-confidence. Likewise, "Lavender Haze" challenges outdated views of single women while emphasizing her identity beyond societal labels.

In the *Midnights* era, Swift continues to assert her independence and defiance of societal expectations. In fact, this era is the one in which all five dimensions are the most present. "Lavender Haze" carries on the theme of not caring what society makes of the singer.

"Bejeweled" also reflects this theme, turning sparkle into a metaphor for emotional strength, emphasizing the importance of self-worth and warning listeners to never let someone else dim their light. Sparkles, often seen as childish or over-the-top, are here reclaimed as symbols of self-appreciation and empowerment.

As discussed earlier, "Midnight Rain" delves into the clash between personal ambition and societal expectations regarding relationships. The lyric "I broke his heart 'cause he was nice / He was sunshine, I was midnight rain" (Swift, 2023) reveals an internal struggle, recognizing that she left someone to chase something greater. In this song, Swift embraces her transformation, acknowledging that while some of her choices may not have been ideal, they ultimately served a greater purpose. This theme reflects Swift's artistic growth, highlighting a shift from her earlier songs focused on romantic loyalty to a more mature viewpoint on personal development and ambition.

"Karma" connects this theme with a spiritual perspective, framing her current happiness as a reward for emotional maturity and accountability. She has made mistakes, owned up to them, and grown stronger because of them. Swift has often referred that she believes in karma, this having been a recurring theme in her discography.

4.1.3.Owning Sexuality

Empowerment in Taylor Swift’s music also extends to the realm of sexuality, with the singer conveying control in subtle, nuanced ways. Her treatment of sexuality is confident, multi-faceted, and symbolic. In “cardigan”, the line “Sensual politics” (Swift, 2023) speaks volumes, linking her transition from country girl-next-door to an empowered woman who embraces her desires and opinions. The lyric is also a nod to her increasing political voice and battle for ownership of her music, reinforcing that sexuality and agency go hand-in-hand. Lyrics like the one mentioned provide further commentary on the interplay between femininity and resistance, a subject we will explore in greater depth below.

Tracks such as “Style”, “Wildest Dreams”, and “...Ready for It?” convey desire intertwined with empowerment, showcasing a more romantic aspect. In contrast, “Vigilante Shit” stands out as Swift’s most prominent declaration of her sexuality, where she redefines sensuality as a form of power. During this segment of the concert, the visuals change: the lighting shifts to red, a color often linked to sensuality, while Taylor and her backup dancers perform burlesque-inspired movements around chairs (Swift, 2023, 2:43:19). Colechin (2024) notes that Swift’s visuals and lyrics work together to normalize female sexual agency, avoiding simplification to mere provocation.

Rather than presenting sexuality as a performance for others, the singer reframes it as part of her multifaceted identity. This is subtle yet significant, offering fans a nuanced, feminist approach to female sexuality in mainstream pop. Although this is the least present dimension among the five, its impact remains relevant.

4.1.4.Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness

Vulnerability, alongside strength and confidence, plays a crucial role in Swift’s depiction of empowerment, as she candidly reveals personal flaws and emotional needs. Her openness about emotional vulnerability is fundamental to her authenticity. In “Anti-Hero”, she confesses, “It’s me, hi, I’m the problem it’s me” (Swift, 2023). The song explores themes of depression, insecurity, and impostor syndrome, topics often avoided in pop music. A notable

lyric states, “Did you hear my covert narcissism I disguise as altruism / Like some kind of congressman?” (Swift, 2023). Continuing the theme of self-criticism, she first acknowledges a flaw she sees in herself and has previously been criticized for: inauthenticity. Then, she draws a parallel between herself and a politician, who is often perceived as dishonest and self-serving. This comparison is particularly striking since the singer has largely remained apolitical throughout her career, until 2018.

“The Archer” provides a parallel level of introspection to the earlier track, illustrating how she has inflicted and endured emotional pain, saying “I’ve been the archer, I’ve been the prey” (Swift, 2023). She further confesses that she occasionally seeks drama and behaves immaturely in her relationships: “I never grew up, it’s getting so old” (Swift, 2023).

“Delicate” refers to the backlash Swift faced in 2016 and the subsequent years due to her feud with Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. Featuring the lyric “My reputation’s never been worse, so / You must like me for me” (Swift, 2023), it conveys hope for unconditional love amid public shaming. It expresses a vulnerability in hoping her partner values her for who she is, even though her reputation is at its lowest.

“Midnight Rain” also blends strength and regret, as she reflects on leaving behind a good man for personal growth: “I broke his heart ‘cause he was nice” (Swift, 2023). Her honesty shows emotional depth and an acknowledgment of the cost of ambition.

“Mastermind” expands this by acknowledging her tendency to control outcomes in relationships, tracing this need back to childhood loneliness. She admits that her relationship with her partner didn’t happen by mere accident of fate, even playing on the image that the media have portrayed of her as someone manipulative and calculating. Her self-awareness further humanizes her and resonates deeply with fans. However, there is also an aspect of empowerment in the song, as she takes the negative connotation of being “the mastermind” and owns it.

4.1.5. Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations

Finally, a prominent dimension across the songs is the challenge to social stereotypes and expectations, reinforcing Swift’s support for individuality and social change. This last dimension is the most prevalent in the analysis, appearing in 17 songs. Swift consistently

breaks down gender norms and criticizes how women, especially public figures, are perceived, particularly in the media.

In “The Man”, she contrasts how her actions would be interpreted if she were a man. During the song, she addresses gender inequalities, especially in the music industry, saying that if she were a man, her accomplishments would be celebrated instead of being labeled as calculating and money hungry. She sings, “I’m so sick of running as fast as I can / Wondering if I’d get there quicker if I was a man”, and “When everyone believes ya, what’s that like?” (Swift, 2023), the latter referencing disbelief in survivors of sexual assault, contextualized by her 2017 lawsuit win. Even while performing “The Man”, Swift can be seen wearing a blazer over her outfit (Swift, 2023, 9:00:00), and the set resembles a corporate office. During the song, she ascends the stairs and sits on an office chair, resting her feet on the desk (Swift, 2023, 10:20:00), which conveys the image that she is the boss.

“Blank Space” is a brilliant satire of media representation, mocking the image of Swift as a serial dater who uses her relationships for songwriting. It highlights the double standard that allows male artists to release breakup songs or songs about their relationships, sometimes even depicting their former partners in a very negative light, without scrutiny. Furthermore, the song critiques the media’s portrayal of her, depicting her as both a frivolous, immature individual and a highly manipulative woman.

“You Need to Calm Down” defends LGBTQ+ rights and critiques online bullying. Released during Pride Month, the song’s message is strengthened by its direct call to support GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and to stop pitting women against one another. In fact, she illustrates this in her 2019 “Woman of the Decade” speech, where Swift mentions fellow female artists and addresses the standards of the music industry, stating, “Women in music, on stage or behind the scenes, are not allowed to coast. We are held at a higher, sometimes impossible-feeling standard. And it seems that my fellow female artists have taken this challenge and they have accepted it.” (Schiller, 2019).

Swift has frequently voiced her concerns regarding mental health. In “champagne problems”, mental illness is depicted with empathy, while also highlighting how society often trivializes these struggles, particularly for women who reject traditional roles like marriage: “She would’ve made such a lovely bride / What a shame she’s fucked in the head” (Swift, 2023). Even the song’s title references how mental illness is sometimes perceived as both trivial and significant.

One of Swift's most fan-beloved songs is "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)", due to its richness and brilliance in lyrics, as well as its real-life references. In the span of ten minutes, the singer explores various themes, all while recounting a relationship from her early 20s that ended in heartbreak. She reflects on how her boyfriend made her feel immature ["You said if we had been closer in age, maybe it would've been fine" (Swift, 2023)], despite him continuing to date younger women after their breakup: "And I was never good at tellin' jokes, but the punch line goes / 'I'll get older, but your lovers stay my age'" (Swift, 2023). She points out the double standard she encountered when dating younger men, facing significant criticism. Additionally, Swift highlights the unrealistic expectations imposed on her, as he desired her to be a "never-needy, ever-loving jewel whose shine reflects on you" (Swift, 2023), illustrating the societal pressure on women to maintain an image of perfection.

When it comes to the *folklore* era, although most of the songs on the album center around a made-up story about a teenage love triangle, the singer still makes some statements. In "cardigan", Swift sings, "When you are young, they assume you know nothing" (Swift, 2023), pointing out the tendency to disregard the voices of younger people, especially young women. This line resonates throughout her transition from a teenage country star to a politically aware woman who expresses her opinions, as mentioned earlier. Additionally, circling back to the line "Sensual politics" (Swift, 2023) and connecting it with the line "Draw the cat eye sharp enough to kill a man" (Swift, 2023) in "Vigilante Shit", we see a theme of weaponizing sexuality and femininity.

In this song, Taylor uses the concept of femininity as a form of resistance, challenging the expectation that women should always remain composed, kind, and compliant. Whether it is by drawing her signature eyeliner "sharp enough to kill a man" or "dressin' for revenge" instead of for the gaze of others, the song embodies this inversion of expectations. In "Vigilante Shit", Swift reimagines vulnerability as strength, using femininity as a weapon in response to injustice. While the song is an anthem of empowerment, it sends a powerful message to her fans, especially young girls, to never conform to society's expectations of who and what they should be.

Also in the *Midnights* era, an interesting lyric to note is "You see, all the wisest women / Had to do it this way / 'Cause we were born to be the pawn / In every lover's game" (Swift, 2023), present in the song "Mastermind". In the game of chess, pawns are the weakest pieces, so Swift suggests that women have historically been viewed as pawns in relationships.

However, she also indicates that wise and intelligent women navigated the game effectively, meaning they didn't allow themselves to be used as pawns due to their relationships.

As highlighted in Swift's Woman of the Decade speech, she directly critiques the structures of toxic male privilege in the music industry and emphasizes the importance of artists owning their work. This real-world position resonates through her lyrics and performances, reinforcing that her feminist statements are not only artistic but also lived.

According to Stewart (2023), Swift represents a new kind of feminism: layered, self-aware, and unapologetically ambitious. Stewart argues that "she has shattered" the flat stereotypes of female pop artists, proving that women are "like onions... with an abundance of layers and complexities". This recognition of emotional evolution and personal growth is central to her appeal.

Colechin (2024) and Stewart (2023) also emphasize how Swift's image, career choices, and lyrical narratives have redefined modern femininity and feminist visibility in pop culture. She is no longer just a pop star, but, as Stewart (2023) argues, "the feminist of our generation".

4.2. PERCEPTION OF TAYLOR SWIFT'S PERSONAL BRAND

While lyrical content highlights empowerment, participants' perspectives help clarify how Taylor Swift's brand is viewed beyond her music. This section explores how fans interpret the values, consistency, and authenticity of Swift's personal brand, based on interview data.

4.2.1. Values and Messages Associated with Taylor Swift and Her Music

During the interviews, participants consistently identified feminism, empowerment, resilience, authenticity, creativity, and inclusivity as the core values in Taylor Swift's public persona as well as in her music. Fans see these values represented not only through her lyrics but also through her actions, career choices, and broader cultural impact.

Feminism was the most frequently referenced value. Many interviewees identified “The Man” as the clearest example of this stance. One participant explained, “I don’t think there’s a better song than this to talk about the problems that exist and the differences in treatment that exist in the industry and even in ordinary life between men and women”, adding that “while women have to walk twice as far or try much harder, sometimes men are praised for the bare minimum” (P7). Another stated, “she represents women, and that we should all have the same rights and that we shouldn’t demean ourselves just because we’re women or stop speaking our minds because we’re ‘afraid’ of men and what they’ll think” (P9). Songs like “You Need To Calm Down”, “mad woman”, and “Only The Young” were also associated with feminism or socially critical messages. While “mad woman” and “Only The Young” are not part of the *Eras Tour* film setlist and were not included in the lyrical analysis, they were spontaneously referenced by participants. Similarly, other songs mentioned throughout the interviews that fall outside the concert’s official repertoire are considered part of participants’ personal interpretations and are not analyzed in depth.

Closely tied to feminism is the message of empowerment, both on a personal and professional level. Participants frequently highlighted Swift’s decision to re-record her albums as a means of reclaiming control and asserting her independence. They remarked that she is “above all, a woman who is fighting for her independence in terms of owning her own music and helping other women and younger girls to gain a sense of confidence too” (P15). In this regard, fans also observed that the singer utilizes her platform to uplift other artists, empowering them, helping them gain visibility, and supporting fellow musicians and their achievements. P12 stated, “it also shows a lot of Taylor’s humanitarian side, that she’s not selfish [...]. And it’s great that she’s taking her friends and the people she also admires on this adventure that has been her life”.

Resilience emerged as another key value highlighted in the interviews. Swift’s capacity to recover from media criticism and industry conflicts was framed as inspirational: “She’s always there, no matter what happens, she’s in the industry, and I think that’s an important message for her fans and the world” (P7). P7 added, “throughout her career, Taylor has shown that she is not only a talented artist, but also a woman who doesn’t let people write her story for her”. One participant viewed the *reputation* era as a symbol of this resilience, calling “Look What You Made Me Do” a “slap in the face [...] because it’s such a good message and the music itself is so catchy too, that even people who aren’t very interested in

her art will end up appreciating it too” (P12). Similarly, P6 reflected on how Swift embodies perseverance. Despite everything she faced, whether regarding her master recordings, conflicts with Kanye West, or personal challenges, she never faltered and continued to convey her message of resilience to her fans. Tracks such as “You’re On Your Own, Kid” and “mirrorball” were often associated with this theme.

Fans also emphasized authenticity and staying true to one’s beliefs: “There’s a lot of this message of there’s no point in changing things about yourself [...] to try and please others, because you’ll never be able to do it, so you might as well be true to yourself” (P11). Many noted that this authenticity became more visible in her later albums, and particularly after the release of *Miss Americana* (Wilson, 2020), a documentary where she voiced her political views and showed her vulnerability.

Although mentioned less often, creativity was also seen as a fundamental part of Swift’s brand. One participant pointed out that the reason for her immense success is “because she inspires a lot of creativity in her songs” adding that, “her concerts are never about her coming on stage, singing and leaving. She does all the shows with decorations, outfits, choreography, acting, if needed” (P3).

Participants highlighted her message of inclusivity, particularly through the community she fosters and her advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights: “I think her music in general is really for everyone. And since she has this image of inclusivity and often makes a point of talking about it, [...] you end up with this ever-growing community that includes lots of different people” (P16). Songs like “You Need To Calm Down” were praised for promoting both feminist and queer-positive values.

Finally, emotional honesty emerged as a powerful recurring theme. Participants spoke about finding comfort and validation in Swift’s lyrics, which we will delve deeper into further on. Her ability to address shame, regret, and emotional growth resonated with many.

These values identified by the participants align closely with the themes found in the lyrical analysis. Songs like “The Man”, “You Need To Calm Down”, and “Bejeweled” emphasize gender equality, self-worth, and the right to take up space, which were also highlighted by fans as central messages in Swift’s personal brand. The prevalence of empowerment messages in the lyrics supports the way fans describe her as “a woman who fights for her independence” and someone who actively promotes female confidence and equality.

Overall, Taylor Swift is perceived not just as a singer-songwriter but as a symbolic figure whose values are embedded in her lyrics, choices, and evolution. Her music becomes a vehicle for shared ideals, empowering fans, especially women, to feel heard, represented, and inspired.

4.2.2. Alignment Between Personal Values and Public Persona

In addition to identifying these core values, participants also reflected on how well these values align with Swift's public image. Overall, they consistently viewed Swift as someone whose public persona and artistic work are fundamentally aligned. This consistency was seen as a cornerstone of her authenticity and one of the reasons she is so admired by fans. As one participant stated, "I think she ends up being a reflection of what she sings, you know? [...] I don't think there's that big a difference between Taylor as an artist and Taylor as a person" (P7).

Many interviewees linked this alignment to the fact that Swift writes her own songs, which allows her music to reflect her actual beliefs and experiences: "Because she writes her own songs, it makes everything seem more real and like I really know her" (P7). This participant also added that they believe that "the fact that she writes her own songs and that we feel this connection, knowing the person, enables her to use her art to assert herself" (P7).

References to the documentary *Miss Americana* (Wilson, 2020) particularly reinforced this, with fans viewing it as point in her life where she showed a lot of vulnerability that validated her lyrical themes: "[*Miss Americana*] perhaps represents her in a more personal way and I can see some messages of female empowerment, the ups and downs of her life and how she managed to overcome them"(P1).

Once again, fans highlighted Swift's resilience in the face of criticism, particularly regarding her public persona. One fan observed that there were times when the singer faced significant hatred and held a poor reputation, but because of that "I also value her immensely for that, because she really managed to turn around all the obstacles in her life, both professional and personal, and her reputation, which was awful" (P1).

Several interviewees pointed out that while Swift may no longer be as politically outspoken as she was during the *Lover* era, her values remain visible: "She doesn't make

grand gestures, or grand proclamations of feminism, empowerment, gender equality, LGBT rights, ..., but we know they're there and it's something she supports" (P10). This fan also added that despite the lack of direct public statements, Swift consistently makes her views known and that for them, "that's what's important. That she has her values aligned and she doesn't need to be reactive" (P10). This statement was echoed by another participant, stating that while they wish she were more vocal, "I think that through music, she can convey a clearer message" (P4).

Some participants interpreted her intentional privacy as a form of empowerment in itself: "She only shows what she wants. [...] There is a calm and stability that was built around her after 2016 that I think is very important" (P10). This discretion was also linked to her maturity, describing her as someone who has grown into a more stable and self-aware public figure. One participant added that "I think that she doesn't feel the need to hide anymore, that she can be herself" (P13).

The perceived coherence between Swift's music and public behavior is reinforced by the lyrical themes found in songs such as "Anti-Hero", "Mastermind", and "The Archer", where she openly explores imperfection, self-doubt, and vulnerability. These songs match participants' impressions that the singer "is who she sets out to be" and that her evolution, both personal and artistic, is transparently communicated through her music. Participants also associated her choice to re-record her albums and challenge the music industry with lyrics that express resilience and autonomy.

Furthermore, the media's portrayal of Swift was also a central point of discussion. Many fans expressed frustration that the public often focuses on shallow aspects of her life: "I think that outside of music, she's not as well regarded as maybe her fans see her [...] and I think she's still seen a lot only for what's mainstream and not so in-depth" (P5). Participants mentioned the idea portrayed in the media that Swift is a serial dater, only writing songs about her past relationships, noting the double standard between male and female artists, "but the only criticism you usually hear is that she's just a girl who's had a bunch of boyfriends and only writes about her exes. [...] most male artists do exactly the same thing" (P11).

Participants also recognized her influence beyond music: "She's very much a girl's girl and when she's at an event and sees that a woman is winning an award or giving a performance, she really celebrates the moment" (P8), adding that "when she appears in

public, she always tries to support women and let them know that they have value” (P8). Others praised her quiet philanthropic efforts: “As much as she’s in the spotlight, she’s a very discreet person. We’ve had donations in the millions for every stop on the *Eras Tour* that weren’t even reported in the media” (P10).

Ultimately, interviewees saw Taylor Swift’s public actions – from political posts to fan engagement and live performances – as reflections of the same values present in her lyrics: feminism, empowerment, emotional honesty, and kindness. As one participant put it, “I think she manages to be what she sets out to represent throughout the years” (P12).

4.2.3. Perceived Authenticity of the Messages

A key element that supports this alignment is the perceived authenticity of her messages, as described in the following accounts. Participants generally viewed Taylor Swift’s messages as emotionally genuine and tied to her personal experiences. While some acknowledged the existence of strategic elements within her public image, most described her communication, both lyrical and performative, as fundamentally authentic.

A common point of reference was her early songwriting. As one participant noted, “the feelings she conveys are ultimately authentic, because there’s no way a 15-year-old girl can write ‘Fifteen’ and be trying to please someone” (P1). Many fans linked her perceived sincerity to the autobiographical nature of her lyrics and her continuous artistic evolution. One explained, “I think *Red* is where she starts to have songs that really feel like they’re more about her feelings and not so much about pleasing an audience” (P5), further noting that “over time she’s focused less on the mainstream and more on conveying what she really feels and what she’s really going through” (P5). Fans attributed this change to her position and success in her career, which gave her the freedom to write about what she truly wants.

Emotional expressiveness, particularly in live performances, is frequently regarded as a sign of authenticity. As one fan noted, “I think watching her concerts or videos of her recordings, you can tell that she feels the music she’s singing as much as we do” (P3), recalling a specific moment from the *Eras Tour*, where Swift performs “illicit affairs.”. During this emotionally charged segment, she kneels and delivers the chorus with

remarkable intensity (Swift, 2023, 01:58:20). Her body language and vulnerability on stage were seen as genuine expressions of emotional depth.

Participants noted her readiness to acknowledge personal imperfections as a mark of honesty. One fan commented: “One of the things that impresses me about Taylor as a woman, artist and person is that she is never afraid to show her darker sides, so to speak” (P7). This participant added that they see her as genuinely authentic because “she writes about loss, about hurt, about loneliness, about being vulnerable, and I think this honesty is a bit lacking in the industry” (P7).

Some of the participants did acknowledge the presence of strategy in her work. However, this was not seen as incompatible with sincerity. One participant reflected: “I don’t know if she’s 100% authentic because I think we have marketing behind all of it. But I don’t care. It’s used well, and it still feels honest” (P6). Another explained: “I think it’s been so many years of her career [...], that I think if she wasn’t genuine, the whole facade would have cracked by now” (P14).

Participants noted that authenticity can manifest in various ways. Some pointed out her evolving political engagement, specifically her more measured tone in recent years. One interviewee expressed a desire for her to be more vocal on political issues but acknowledged that she “has a heavier burden to speak, but also to remain silent and to protect the people who really matter, which are her fans, family, and friends” (P5), alluding to the criticism the singer has encountered previously. Furthermore, P5 remarked, “I think it’s a double-edged sword. I think that if she speaks, she faces criticism; if she remains silent, she faces criticism”.

The consistency of lyrical themes further strengthened her perceived authenticity. One participant observed that the concepts of high school and innocent teenage love are evident across her entire career and all 11 albums, remarking, “it’s still the same theme that she always touches on, and I think that shows a bit of authenticity when she’s talking about love and when you realize that it really is that genuine love” (P10). Others saw this lyrical coherence as a reflection of deeply held values and emotional truth.

Some fans described Swift’s spontaneous or awkward public behavior, particularly during awards ceremonies, as an indicator of authenticity: “I think that if she was so worried about what other people think or what people are seeing, she might behave a little differently” (P8).

Even those who expressed mild doubt still defended the sincerity of her core messages: “It may not be 100% honest, but if that’s the image she wants to convey, it’s still a good message” (P16). Another said, “there are very few songs in which she isn’t authentic, unless she’s writing about fiction, and even then, I think there are always hints of her personal life that she subtly includes in the songs” (P15).

The lyric analysis strongly supports the authenticity perceived by fans. Songs such as “tolerate it” and “champagne problems” showcase deeply personal, emotionally nuanced narratives. These lyrics, which highlight vulnerability, insecurity, and quiet suffering, reinforce the sense among fans that Swift is not simply performing, but sharing real parts of herself.

Therefore, we can conclude that most participants saw Taylor Swift as a figure who balances artistic professionalism with emotional honesty. Her lyrics, performances, and public actions are understood as reflections of her personal life, even when they are part of a larger narrative or brand strategy. This authenticity, as fans interpret it, is not about perfection or constant transparency, but about emotional coherence and long-term consistency, which reinforces trust and admiration over time.

4.3. PARASOCIAL CONNECTION WITH THE ARTIST

Beyond brand perception, fans experience a unique and deeply personal bond with Taylor Swift, which can be described through the lens of parasocial relationships. This section explores how this perceived connection is shaped by her music and shared values.

4.3.1. Perceived Personal Connection Through Music

Participants shared a profound personal bond with Taylor Swift, significantly shaped by her music. This bond often arises from the belief that she can express emotions that fans find difficult to articulate. As one participant noted, “she puts into words what we sometimes feel but can’t quite describe” (P15). Participant P6 echoed this feeling, remarking: “Sometimes

she uses metaphors to illustrate emotions we recognize but cannot put into words, or that we're even unaware of. [...] this is the beautiful thing about her”.

This emotional connection is what allows fans to feel personally recognized and understood by the artist. Several participants described this sensation using metaphors of closeness or direct dialogue, even referencing the language that Swift has developed with her fanbase, including easter eggs – symbols that carry hidden meanings. One fan mentioned: “I went to the concert and, although there was a full stadium, I felt that there were certain parts where she was speaking to me” (P7), while another echoed, “I think there are aspects that people might not fully grasp, and as Swifties, we feel a strong connection to her, [...] and with the language she uses in her songs, we understand her point of view more easily” (P4). These comments reveal a common parasocial mechanism where music serves as a perceived private communication between the artist and the listeners. One participant even commented: “An artist that uses symbolism, where a color can evoke an entire era, a scarf or a seagull represents a certain time... I think it's brilliant. Clearly, she's a marketing genius. These elements help fans feel closer to her” (P10).

Many participants noted that their connection with Swift intensifies thanks to the lyrical tone, emotional depth of her songs, and their personal situations. One fan shared that they deeply resonated with the song “marjorie”, which Swift wrote for her grandmother, especially at a time when they had lost their own grandmother. This brought them closer to Swift: “When my grandmother passed away, [...] even though you've already lost someone, you're trying to look for the little things that remind you of that person. I think I felt very close to her in that sense and in that moment” (P8). This indicates that the connection felt is dynamic and responsive to the fan's current life situation.

For some, the feeling of being understood goes beyond occasional resonance and becomes a consistent emotional presence. As one interviewee put it, “I feel that you create an empathetic connection with her, it's almost as if she understands you at certain moments. It feels like she understands you and that you're experiencing things that she's already experienced” (P10). This emotional support is not necessarily explicit but arises from the feeling that someone else has felt and survived the same pain, joy or doubt. P6 shared that they recently experienced a breakup from a long-term relationship and listening to Swift's songs daily has helped them process their emotions: “I ended my seven-year relationship

with my boyfriend just six weeks ago. It's challenging to cope, but I listen to Taylor every day because she always has a message for me".

Several participants noted the enduring connections formed by growing up with Swift's music: "When I was younger, I remember moments spent at my mother's work, having nothing to do and just watching music videos. That is vividly etched in my memory" (P16). P11 shared, "Reflecting on early albums, I find them sweet. Now at 24, I notice significant differences between my current self and who I was at 15. It's fascinating how noticeable these changes are". They also commented on Swift's evolution: "For example, transitioning from a *folklore* song to a Taylor Swift song highlights the contrast in maturity". This fosters a cumulative emotional bond, where each era enhances the feeling of a shared life journey.

The *Eras Tour* was also described as a powerful reinforcement of this bond. One participant said that one of the moments they felt closest to Swift was at the concert: "Being in that setting with so many people, all there for the same reason, not only being physically closer to her, but also the entire atmosphere that was created...". The live performance was not only a musical event, but a highly emotional and symbolic moment of shared presence.

In several cases, participants mentioned how Swift's vulnerability and openness in her lyrics strengthened this emotional connection between the artist and the fans. As one put it, "I think she's very authentic and honest. I feel she conveys that in her songs. She isn't ashamed to write about her personal life or to share what actually happened on certain occasions" (P8). The imperfections and admissions of fear, sadness, or failure made her more human, and thus, more relatable.

The emotional depth found in tracks such as "marjorie", "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)", and "champagne problems" contributes to the strong personal connection fans feel with the artist. The lyrical analysis revealed that these songs contain themes of grief, regret and memory, experiences that participants explicitly linked to their own lives. This connection is further enhanced by the use of symbolic language and metaphors, which fans see as a "shared code" that reinforces closeness.

Overall, participants expressed a deep and lasting emotional connection to Taylor Swift, driven by the sincerity and emotional richness of her lyrics. This parasocial bond is felt not just as admiration, but also as a kind of emotional support, which many fans revisit during different life moments.

4.3.2. Relatability and Shared Values

Besides the emotional bond established through music, fans also emphasized the role of shared values in nurturing this connection. Across the interviews, participants expressed a deep sense of relatability with Taylor Swift, grounded in shared values such as those mentioned earlier (feminism, emotional honesty, resilience, inclusion, and authenticity). Her lyrics and public positioning often reflect ideals that fans consider part of their own lives, reinforcing a meaningful identification with the artist.

A recurring theme is Swift's emotional vulnerability, which many fans find empowering. As one participant stated, "it's great that a person with so much fame, money, and power in society admits that sometimes he's not okay either" (P1). They noted "Anti-Hero" as an example of showcasing vulnerability. This capacity to normalize imperfections particularly resonates with those who value self-acceptance and emotional complexity. P1 further mentioned that Swift's ability to reveal her flaws is "the best feeling of empowerment for women. It's not just knowing that they're on the same level as men, but also knowing that it's okay to fail".

Following this idea, feminism and female empowerment were often highlighted as key shared values. "Feminism is something that should be part of every girl's life. At least I hope so" (P3), one participant said, while another confirmed, "She's one of the most important artists today. [...] she represents a landmark, in this case for feminism, for women to feel more confident and that they can own their work" (P15). For many, Swift's representation of female strength and independence feels deeply personal.

The value of authenticity emerged strongly throughout responses. "I don't think the fact that Taylor Swift is authentic is going to change the world or your perspective, [...] but I feel like something always sticks with you", P11 stated. They added that the most important ideal Swift conveys is to "despite everything, always keep your common sense and your ideas and don't let yourself be influenced too much by external parties" (P11). Several fans explained that they can't distinguish the artist from the person: "I'm one of those people who can't separate the artist from the person. I think it's very important to have someone protecting our rights. [...] if she didn't have this role in music, I probably wouldn't be a fan" (P14). Fans believe that her perceived integrity reinforces their admiration and trust in the artist.

Inclusion and empathy were highlighted by participants who value how Swift represents diversity and compassion. “Feminism, inclusion, empathy, wanting to help the other person, caring about others, I think I take a lot from that too” (P16). Another fan commented on her support for other women, saying: “It’s important for me to see her support other women. I like to believe I’m also a girl’s girl and that I also live to support the achievements of my friend, of the people around me” (P8).

Several participants also related to Swift’s political positioning and subtle activism. One shared: “It’s very important to me. [...] because a little post from her on Instagram can move massive amounts of people” (P6). Some of the fans did recognize that there are other artists more publicly engaged in activist causes, such as LGBTQ+ rights, however, as P6 stated, “I don’t know if she’s an ally in real life, but at least we have something”, referring to the accusations of queerbaiting against Swift in the “Lover” music video. For this fan, it felt different: they believed it was “the first step to start something. [...] We have many artists who don’t send any messages, and she is doing it” (P6).

Fans also described how shared emotional experiences and personality traits deepen their identification with Swift: “She’s an overthinker and is always rethinking what she’s done and hasn’t done. I relate to that a lot” (P8). Another noted, “I really relate to her when she expresses her fear of losing everything she’s achieved or seeing everything she’s achieved start to fall apart” (P10).

Finally, participants linked relatability to growing up with Swift or sharing her worldview. “She’s been present in big and mundane moments of my life, and she’s helped me stay true to who I am” (P7).

In summary, relatability in this context goes beyond surface-level connections. It is rooted in common principles, emotional similarity, and perceived sincerity, which enables fans not only to feel understood by the artist but also inspired to embrace the same values she advocates. Additionally, the themes of “You’re On Your Own, Kid” and “The Archer” – centered around emotional vulnerability, insecurity, and the desire for validation – mirror traits that participants said made Swift feel relatable. In the document analysis, these songs reflected the dimensions of “Having Self-Love and Growth”, but from a place of internal conflict. Fans echoed these sentiments, stating that Swift is “just like us” in how she overthinks, seeks approval, and processes pain, reinforcing a sense of shared humanity and personal alignment.

4.4. EMOTIONAL IMPACT AND IDENTIFICATION

The emotional impact of Taylor Swift's music was a recurring theme across interviews. This section presents how specific songs and concert moments triggered emotional responses, provided comfort, and shaped participants' views of the artist.

4.4.1. Emotionally Impactful Songs and Moments

The *Eras Tour* was described by participants as not only a spectacle but also an emotional journey filled with powerful personal moments triggered by specific songs. Many fans shared how the live performance amplified their feelings, causing certain lyrics or melodies to resonate even more profoundly than in the studio versions.

A recurring emotional highlight among fans was the mashup of "You're On Your Own, Kid" and "Long Live". Several participants singled it out as a turning point during the show, with one saying: "she put the songs together and decided to give us one of the best gifts of the whole tour here in Portugal and it was... it was magical" (P15). Another shared, "she put those two songs together and it really felt like she was reading my mind" (P5).

Emotional connection was often tied to personal associations with specific songs. One participant remembered: "I had just lost my dog and she sang 'Long Live' as a surprise song... I cried through the rest of the show" (P3). Another fan recalled: "'marjorie' made me think of my grandmother, who was ill at that time. With every word she sang, I cried even more. [...] It seemed like we were both expressing the same feelings for the same reason to the same people" (P4). The emotional weight of the performance extended far beyond the music, creating intimate moments of reflection and grief during the concert.

Several fans described the impact of shared audience experiences. One fan said, "when she sang 'All Too Well' I cried. Everyone around me cried too. I wasn't thinking about my life, I was thinking about hers" (P6). Others recalled the change in the atmosphere during the *evermore* and *folklore* eras, particularly during "champagne problems" and "cardigan": "There was a shift in the set and in the general atmosphere in the audience, everyone calmed down. It intensified the emotion of the moment" (P11). Nostalgia also played a major role

in the emotional impact of the show. Fans highlighted songs that reminded them of specific life stages, such as “You Belong With Me”, “22”, or “Love Story”. One participant explained: “I was 22 when she sang ‘22’. It was like I’d won at life” (P2). Another said: “Hearing songs from the beginning of her career live made me feel like I was giving a gift to my inner child” (P12).

For some, the emotions stemmed from the lyrical storytelling itself. As one interviewee put it, “‘All Too Well’ is a masterpiece. It’s ten minutes long and you don’t get bored. That’s a sign of how she tells a story” (P5). Another added, “‘You’re On Your Own, Kid’ is the best song she’s ever written. And singing that live felt like closure and like everything was going to be okay” (P4).

In many cases, emotions were amplified by the environment, being close to the stage, the surprise songs, or seeing others cry and dance. As one fan put it, “when she started singing [‘marjorie’] I really felt in the stadium a wave of mourning, but at the same time of connection”.

In essence, the emotional influence of the *Eras tour* resulted from a distinctive blend of music, memory, presence, and shared experience. Each show transformed into both an individual and collective occasion, as songs that had once been tied to personal feelings were revitalized through shared catharsis. Several of the most impactful songs mentioned by participants, such as “All Too Well (10 Minute Version)”, “You’re On Your Own, Kid”, and “Long Live”, also emerged as emotionally significant in the document analysis. These tracks represent key moments of personal catharsis, nostalgia, or affirmation. Their placement in the setlist and their lyrical content enhance the emotional experience for fans, who described feeling deeply moved during live performances and highlighted these songs as emotional anchors in their own lives.

4.4.2. Songs as Emotional Support and Understanding

For many, Swift’s songs were not just impactful. Participants’ described her music as a constant emotional companion, particularly during moments of heartbreak, self-doubt or anxiety. Her lyrics were often perceived as therapeutic, offering support, validation, and clarity in emotionally complex situations.

A recurring theme we have covered before is Swift's ability to verbalize emotions fans struggle to articulate. As one participant explained, "I think sometimes it's complicated to express our feelings. So, when we hear a song by someone who is likely reflecting on a similar emotion, it makes me identify so strongly that it feels like there's a close connection" (P5). This participant also added: "I feel like I can understand her feelings when she wrote that. It resonates with my own emotions, although my experiences differ. Even so, I really feel understood" (P5). This experience of feeling understood, even from a distance, was echoed repeatedly.

Many interviewees highlighted the comfort derived from shared struggles, noting that Swift's songs helped them feel less alone, particularly during crucial or difficult times. One participant shared: "[I feel] that there was someone there who had been through the same thing" (P3). Another described a challenging period in their life, stating that while listening to certain Taylor Swift songs, it felt "as if she was almost holding my hand at that moment. And I felt a very strong connection. Not just as her fan, but as a person" (P7). Others noted: "Whenever I am dealing with something difficult, I know there's a song of hers that resonates and lifts my spirits. Even if she hasn't faced the exact situation, I can connect a song to that feeling or event" (P4).

Participants often associated specific songs with personal turning points or healing processes. One shared: "'Long Story Short' was also a turning point for me to move past a lot of things from my past" (P5). Another recalled: "I think 'tolerate it' was that closure that I couldn't get. [...] Taylor did that for me" (P12). These emotional connections are not abstract, they're deeply tied to lived experiences and memories. Additionally, this sentiment echoes the way her lyrics offer space for reflection, validation and healing.

Others explained how Swift's music helps them reframe or cope with pain: "'Dear John' and 'The Story of Us' [...] express anger, but it's fun to scream-sing. [...] you belt them out in the car without even realizing it, and if it's something sad, you sing it in a happy way" (P1). Similarly, "'You Belong With Me' helped me to romanticize life a little. [...] to take things more lightly and enthusiastically" (P2).

Several participants mentioned specific eras or albums as emotional anchors, particularly *folklore* and *evermore*. One participant expressed that they believe the former is a work of art, especially during the pandemic when it was released, stating, "she took a moment when we all needed to escape from reality and wrote something entirely fictional, supposedly, and

it was a story that I believe we all needed to hear as an escape, helping us relax a bit too” (P15). P10 shared this sentiment, they felt *folklore* and the messages present in the album “helped me get through the pandemic and I felt it in a very particular, very intense way and it was very important to me”, while also highlighting the song “mirrorball”: “It’s what unlocked most of the pain that was the lockdown. Like, ‘where do I belong now?’” (P10). What is interesting is that most participants mentioned specific songs that captured their most vulnerable moments, even if those songs weren’t exactly about what they were experiencing.

There was also a strong narrative around emotional rituals. P4 stated that they have a specific playlist designed for when they need to cry, which includes many Taylor Swift songs, along with tracks from other artists. This participant explained: “I cry with her and then that’s it. Let’s listen to happy songs to cheer things up” (P4), adding that they feel like Swift is with them in those moments, whether they are sad or happy. Another shared a funny detail about a TikTok account dedicated to edits using Taylor Swift songs: “Whenever something happens in real life, there’s an edit on TikTok with her songs” (P10). For this fan, it demonstrates that there is a Taylor Swift song or era for every moment.

Beyond romantic heartbreak, fans noted that Swift’s music helps them face emotional complexity with acceptance: “I think that’s why the sad songs end up being very special for Swifties in general. Because they help realize that this is part of the human experience and we all, in a way, end up feeling the same things” (P5). One participant linked this to a collective empathy, stating that even though we sometimes feel like we are the only ones experiencing a particular emotion, Swift’s songs help them realize that it is, in fact, a shared sentiment: “There are many songs that have really impacted the fans, and I feel that it’s a shared emotion she conveys, which is unique” (P4).

What we see here is Taylor Swift’s songs serving not only as soundtracks but also as emotional tools. The idea of Swift’s music functioning as emotional support was substantiated by the lyrical content of songs such as “tolerate it”, “champagne problems”, “All Too Well (10 Minute Version)” and “Anti-Hero”, as well as other songs mentioned by participants that are not part of the setlist, which contain elements of emotional honesty and fragility. Her music helps fans process their feelings, reframe experiences, and feel accompanied. This transforms the act of listening into a journey of mutual understanding

and healing. “I can compare her to a friend who is here holding my hand, it feels like she understands what I’m experiencing at nearly every moment of my life” (P7).

4.4.3. Evolving Perceptions of the Artist Post-*Eras Tour*

These emotional experiences contributed to an evolving perception of Taylor Swift, especially following the *Eras Tour*. Participants often described the concert as a transformative experience in how they view Swift, not merely as a performer but also as a person, artist, and symbol of emotional and professional resilience. The scale, detail, and emotional intensity of the tour led many fans to develop a deeper sense of admiration and respect, often reinforcing or expanding their existing perceptions of her.

One of the most common reflections was on her physical and emotional endurance: “It really took a lot of physical and emotional work for her to be able to do that. And it was, without a doubt, a moment that I don’t think anyone who witnessed it will ever forget” (P12). Similarly, P7 stated, “I think it takes a lot of willpower, and a lot of love for what you do, and for the people you do it for”. Another described the show as a narrative arc: “She created an immersive career experience... In the concert, she uses her best hits, allowing everyone to sing along deeply. The show’s atmosphere is so intense that it provides a truly unrepeatable experience” (P10).

Several fans mentioned that the tour helped humanize the singer, bringing her closer despite the grandeur of the production. “I think she’s always been attached to her fans, even from afar. She tries to connect with them, whether through choreography or the “22” hat trend. For instance, the friendship bracelets. We felt part of the concert too” (P3). Furthermore, one participant said: “It was lovely to see her professionalism, and also the respect she has for her fans” (P7). Fans often described the experience of seeing the artist in person – the contrast between viewing her from a distance and the intimacy felt during the show – as emotionally impactful. “She shows the process from start to finish, ‘I’ve been here, I’ve worked hard’... she’s not worried about her appearance, she’s focused on creating a good experience for people” (P9).

The experience of witnessing Taylor live also prompted reflections on her career evolution and reinvention. One fan explained, “her music is what she makes of it, and it’s a

reflection of her experiences. I think that's the most interesting part about her and about the eras" (P10). Another observed, "her different eras represent evolution, they show the different phases she went through. Each one had its moment and was written at different times, and you can see the differences between them" (P16).

For some, the *Eras Tour* served as a reflection of their own growth, reinforcing a lifelong connection. P12 stated, "I think Taylor's growth has always gone hand in hand with the growth of her audience. [...] I think the fact that she can speak to the hearts of several generations is really important", referring to both the concert and Swift's career evolution. This perception of parallel development between fan and artist deepened emotional identification and admiration.

The lyrical progression across the eras identified in the document analysis as a journey of self-discovery and narrative control was also reflected in participants' evolving perceptions of Swift. Songs like "Look What You Made Me Do", "Bejeweled" and "Karma" were associated with her transformation and empowerment, while the structure of the concert allowed fans to experience this growth as a unified narrative.

One theme that recurred across the interviews was the environment that fans felt during the concert. They felt safe and as if they were surrounded by friends, even if there were only strangers around them and they attended the show alone. One participant said, "I would look at the people talking to each other, exchanging bracelets, making friends and I would always get emotional. I'd almost start crying, I'd get goosebumps. The community she created on the tour was incredible" (P4). Another added, "there's a shared feeling at that moment that transcends words. It's communal. It's almost a sense of belonging so strong that if you exchanged a glance with any of those people, it would be comfortable" (P10).

Overall, while the *Eras Tour* didn't trigger a significant shift in how participants relate to and interpret Taylor Swift's persona, it did amplify what they already felt. What may have once been framed as "just music" was experienced as a living archive of personal, social, and emotional growth, reflecting both her journey and theirs. The tour acted as a rite of passage for both the artist and her fans, strengthening their admiration and emotional identification with the singer. "I think that's what the *Eras Tour* was all about, it showed a lot of her work over all these years and how hard she's worked to get where she is" (P12). It was also a moment of community among the fans, all thanks to the overall shared love for Taylor Swift.

In conclusion, Figure 1 illustrates a word cloud designed to visually emphasize the most frequently occurring and emotionally significant terms used by participants throughout the interviews. This visual representation strengthens the findings presented in this chapter by demonstrating the prominence of concepts such as empowerment, feminism, vulnerability, resilience, and authenticity, all of which are central to the perception of Taylor Swift's personal brand and her emotional impact on fans.

Figure 1:

Word Cloud of Key Terms Extracted from the Interviews



Note. This image was created using the online tool WordClouds.com

(<https://www.wordclouds.com/>).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter reflects on the study's findings, connecting them with the research objectives and theoretical framework outlined in earlier chapters. We start by addressing each specific research objective in light of the collected data, while also responding to the study's main objective. Next, we discuss how the findings relate to existing literature, identifying both alignments and new perspectives. The chapter then outlines the practical implications of the research, and we conclude by acknowledging the limitations faced during the study and proposing directions for future research.

5.1. FINDINGS IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to explore how messages of activism and empowerment present in Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* songs influence fans' perceptions of her personal brand and their emotional connection with the artist. The data gathered from a combination of document analysis and semi-structured interviews with fans provided a comprehensive understanding that directly addressed the research objectives.

The first specific objective sought to explore if fans identify messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* songs as part of her personal brand. The document analysis clearly demonstrated that all five identified dimensions of female empowerment (Being Independent and Powerful, Having Self-love and Growth, Owning Sexuality, Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness, and Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations) are a part of the *Eras Tour* setlist. These messages are not isolated to one era but span the artist's career. More importantly, these lyrical themes are further amplified through performance elements and secondary sources such as public speeches and media portrayals. The interviews corroborated this perception, fans consistently identified feminism, empowerment, resilience and authenticity as core values in Swift's identity as an artist. Songs like "The Man", "You Need to Calm Down" and "Bejeweled" were repeatedly cited as emblematic of her activist stance and empowering voice. For fans, these messages

are not merely artistic choices but fundamental components of who Swift is and what she represents.

The second objective focused on how these messages influence fans' parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift's personal brand. The interviews revealed a strong sense of personal connection fostered through her music. Fans spoke of Swift as someone who understands them, with lyrics that articulate complex emotions they themselves sometimes struggle to express. Symbolic language, emotional vulnerability and consistency across eras were cited as mechanisms that deepen this perceived closeness. Notably, the *Eras Tour* was described as reinforcing this parasocial bond by offering a space where music became a personal and communal experience. Many participants expressed that, despite the scale of the performance, Swift felt emotionally accessible, and her openness through song allowed them to relate to her not just as an artist but as a person. This emotional resonance is further supported by the lyrical content identified in the document analysis, with tracks that explore internal struggles and emotional depth ("Anti-Hero", "Mastermind", and "You're On Your Own, Kid"). These themes act as relational bridges between the artist and the audience, sustaining and identifying the parasocial relationship.

The third objective addressed the influence of these messages on fans' emotional relationship with Taylor Swift's personal brand. Both the document analysis and interview data suggest that Swift's music provides fans with emotional support, a sense of understanding, and even healing. Her ability to articulate vulnerability and resilience resonates deeply with fans, especially in moments of personal hardship or growth. Participants often described specific songs as emotional anchors that accompanied them through life experiences, whether it was grief, heartbreak, or personal transformation. They felt as though certain lyrics had been written for them. The *Eras Tour* was described as an experience that allowed fans to relive memories, connect with others, and feel validated in their emotions. Most importantly, it was the moment that most felt the closest they had felt to Swift, especially due to her emotionally charged performances, which reinforced the sincerity that Swift's brand is known for among fans. This emotional impact is heightened by the authenticity perceived in both her lyrics and public actions, creating a lasting affective bond with fans.

Table 7 visually summarizes the alignment between the research objectives and results, highlighting the key conclusions for each one. As illustrated, all specific objectives have been fully addressed.

Table 7:

Summary of Key Findings in Relation to the Specific Research Objectives

Specific Objective	Key Findings	Achieved
SO1: To explore if fans identify messages of activism and empowerment in Taylor Swift’s <i>Eras Tour</i> songs as part of her personal brand.	Participants consistently associated her with values such as feminism, empowerment, resilience, and authenticity. These messages were acknowledged as intentional and coherent, forming an integral part of her identity as an artist.	✓
SO2: To explore how these messages influence fans’ parasocial relationship with Taylor Swift’s personal brand.	Fans feel these messages deepen their connection to her, even without direct interaction. They described a sense of knowing her through her songs, strengthening the parasocial bond. Shared values are crucial for this closeness.	✓
SO3: To explore how these messages influence fans’ emotional relationship with Taylor Swift’s personal brand.	Lyrics provide emotional support, helping fans process their personal experiences. Participants noted strong reactions to songs or felt understood by the lyrics. Many linked specific songs to pivotal life moments, showcasing the connection’s emotional depth.	✓

Overall, findings from both phases of data collection show that messages of activism and empowerment are not only viewed as intentional elements of Taylor Swift’s brand but are also central to fans’ parasocial and emotional relationships with the singer. By conveying values such as feminism, self-worth, vulnerability, and inclusivity through her lyrics and live

performances, Swift has created a brand that fans perceive as truly authentic and personally meaningful. These messages influence how fans connect with her as an artist, a public figure, and a symbol of resilience, fostering a lasting emotional bond. Therefore, the main objective of this research has been fully addressed and supported by the study's findings.

5.2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The findings of this study align with and expand upon existing literature in different key areas, particularly regarding personal branding, personal brand activism, and parasocial relationships. To begin, we confirmed what Ilicic and Webster (2016) noted regarding the importance of authenticity in how celebrity brands are perceived. Participants in this research consistently described Taylor Swift as authentic, primarily due to her emotional openness, vulnerability, and the steady expression of her values throughout her lyrics, performances, and public actions. These characteristics align with what fans value most in a celebrity, according to Ilicic and Webster (2016): someone who is authentic, honest and relatable. Furthermore, the findings support Moulard et al (2015) in showing that audiences are more likely to feel loyal and emotionally connected to celebrities who reveal both strengths and weaknesses, reinforcing the significance of perceived humanity in constructing strong personal brands.

In agreement with McNally and Speak (2011), who defined personal brand as a set of perceptions and emotions that others form based on their experiences, this study shows that Swift's personal brand is not only built through strategic messaging but also actively shaped by the emotional interpretations of her audience. The emotional relatability participants spoke about, especially in relation to lyrics addressing feminism, self-worth, or emotional struggle, shows that personal brands gain strength and longevity when they reflect values the audience perceives as sincere and consistent, confirming the arguments made by Scheidt et al. (2020).

Scheidt et al. (2020) also emphasized clarity, consistency, and differentiation as pillars of strong personal brands, which this study supports. The document analysis and interviews highlighted that fans clearly identify Swift's core values (resilience, feminism, emotional honesty) and distinguish her from other artists because of these. They also saw these values

as consistent across the different eras of her career, reinforcing the perception of a coherent and credible brand.

In terms of brand authenticity, the findings reinforce what Campagna et al. (2023) defined as a brand that is genuine, unique, transparent, and resilient across time. Participants viewed Swift as an artist who has consistently communicated her values while evolving artistically and personally, which supports the idea of longevity and originality as components of authenticity. Nunes et al. (2021) also stated that authenticity is dependent on the context, evaluated by consumers through multiple criteria such as integrity, connection, and proficiency, all of which were reflected in fans' descriptions of Swift's professionalism and emotional connection with her audience.

One of the key gaps identified in the literature was the limited academic research focus on personal branding within the music industry, particularly from a personal perspective rather than just a commercial one. This research addresses this absence by demonstrating that fans actively construct and interpret Swift's personal brand through emotional and value-based associations, even as they acknowledge the businesswoman aspect of her brand. As Gorbatov et al. (2018) pointed out, personal branding remains an underdeveloped field in scholarly research. This study contributes to the field by framing it through the lens of emotional connections and fan loyalty, rather than just focusing on image management or marketing strategy.

Regarding personal brand activism, the findings strongly support what Chidgey (2021) described as "celebrity feminism," where female artists use their visibility to promote feminist ideals and challenge gender norms. Swift's fans interpreted songs like "The Man" and public statements, such as reclaiming her masters, as forms of resistance and empowerment, not only for herself but also as messages of strength for others. This aligns with Ruanglertsilp (2022), who argued that female artists can use lyrical narratives to construct and communicate feminist values. Participants in this study understood Swift's songs as expressions of personal and collective empowerment, reinforcing the idea that personal brand activism can effectively merge strategic identity-building with meaningful social advocacy.

Furthermore, this study supports the idea argued by Bennett (2014) that celebrities who align themselves with social causes can inspire their audiences to care, reflect, or even act. Several participants noted that Swift's feminist and empowerment messages shaped their

own beliefs or made them more confident in expressing themselves, which confirms the view that a celebrity's influence can extend beyond admiration, fostering identification and personal empowerment.

In terms of parasocial relationships, the findings resonate with what Xu et al. (2023) and Zafina and Sinha (2024) observed about the role of authenticity in intensifying the perceived intimacy between fans and celebrities. Participants described Swift as someone they felt emotionally close to, even without real-life interaction, due to the honesty and depth of her lyrics. The parasocial dynamics were not only triggered by social media, as many previous studies emphasized, but also by lyrical storytelling, symbolism, and live performance, particularly during the *Eras Tour*. This expands the scope of existing literature by confirming that music can serve as a primary vehicle for forming one-sided emotional bonds. Moreover, it explores the topic of parasocial relationships beyond social media, which is the focus of the existing literature on the subject.

Additionally, the findings support Théberge (2021), who noted that fans' loyalty often increases when they perceive alignment between a celebrity's values and their public communication. In this study, participants described Swift's music and activism as deeply connected, stating that they admire her not only for her art but also for what she stands for.

Finally, this study confirms and extends theoretical perspectives on personal branding in the music industry, personal brand activism, and parasocial relationships. It reinforces the notion that strong personal brands are created through emotional openness, value alignment, and perceived authenticity, and demonstrates that empowerment messages in music serve as a powerful driver of emotional and parasocial bonding, identification, and relatability.

5.3. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

While the present study is grounded in a qualitative approach and at a small scale, this research offers some practical contributions that extend beyond the academic sphere, which are relevant to individuals and professionals involved in personal brand building, artist management, and cultural production, especially those who seek to integrate social values into their work.

The findings provide guidance for artists or public figures who wish to build a personal brand rooted in activism. The case of Taylor Swift illustrates how activist messages, when perceived as authentic and consistent, can strengthen emotional connection and brand loyalty. Aspiring artists and content creators can draw from this study to understand the importance of showing their personal values in their creative work. Instead of relying solely on social media statements or public campaigns, they can use storytelling, lyrics, or symbols to convey their causes in ways that feel both personal and emotionally compelling. This approach also demonstrates greater consistency, indicating that it is not merely a situational response. This approach also humanizes the artist and creates long-lasting relationships with audiences who share or are moved by those values.

This study can also help public figures navigate the balance between strategic brand building and emotional vulnerability. As shown in this case, by showing imperfections, self-doubt and personal growth, Taylor Swift enhances perceptions of authenticity within her fan base, rather than diminishing credibility. This may serve as a reference for those in the spotlight, such as activists, influencers, or entrepreneurs, who fear that showing emotional depth might conflict with maintaining a strong brand. On the contrary, an important takeaway from this research is that vulnerability is not a weakness; it can be, in fact, a symbol of strength. We also learned that being open with an audience can intensify their sense of trust and relatability.

For music industry professionals and brand managers, the study also demonstrates how live performances create key opportunities for emotional connections between the artist and the audience, while also reinforcing brand identity. Taking the *Eras Tour* as an example, industry professionals can move beyond aesthetics or entertainment value and learn that, while this is still important, they should also invest in creating experiences that communicate identity and values in subtle but powerful ways.

Ultimately, what this research demonstrates is the transformative power of representation and cultural storytelling. By studying the emotional and social impact of empowerment messages in Swift's music, the research illustrated how pop culture can become a vehicle for feminist discourse, identity-building, and emotional support. This contributes to the ongoing understanding of how cultural narratives can inspire individuals to reflect on their own values, challenge stereotypes, and feel less alone in their struggles. For educators, activists and those who have, or want to have, active roles in their communities, this

reinforces the idea that music and storytelling are not only artistic expressions but also tools of social influence and personal empowerment.

5.4.LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

As with any qualitative research, there were some limitations within the scope and context in which the data were collected and analyzed. However, these limitations offer potential directions for future studies.

One of the limitations relates to the underrepresentation of male participants. Although the predominance of female fans reflects the reality of Taylor Swift's fan base, this study encountered noticeable reluctance among male fans to participate in interviews. As a result, the views captured primarily reflect a feminine-coded experience of fandom and empowerment. Future research could explore gendered differences in the perception of empowerment and parasocial dynamics, possibly through a comparative approach that includes more male-identifying fans to enrich the spectrum of interpretations.

Another limitation emerged during the document analysis phase, particularly in the overlap of thematic dimensions across many song lyrics. While the presence of multiple empowerment messages within the same song illustrates the complexity of Swift's songwriting, it also posed interpretative challenges during coding. This ambiguity did not weaken the analysis but highlighted the richness of the research material. Future studies might consider focusing on a specific album or era, allowing for a more in-depth, context-specific interpretation of the narratives and messages presented during a particular creative phase.

In terms of scope, it is also important to note that participants were all Portuguese. While their responses provide valuable cultural perspectives, views from other countries or cultural settings may offer different interpretations and emotional responses. Future studies could adopt a cross-cultural perspective, exploring how empowerment messages and personal brand perceptions are influenced by varying socio-political and media contexts.

Beyond these considerations, this research points to several interesting paths for future exploration. One such direction could involve comparing different artists, either within the same genre or across contrasting musical styles or public personalities. This could offer a

better understanding of how personal brand activism operates in diverse settings. It could also shine a light on whether certain patterns observed in this study resonate beyond Swift's fandom or are specific to her unique branding and narrative style.

Another path could be to complement the present qualitative approach with a quantitative study aimed at tracing the profiles of Swifties. Such research could help identify patterns in fan engagement, emotional investment, and perceived impact of empowerment messages. This could offer a more macro-level view of the fandom while still being supported by the qualitative findings already identified. It would be interesting to learn exactly who Swifties are, what defines them, and the personality traits or other characteristics that are typical of this fan base.

Lastly, future studies could explore the evolution of fan-artist relationships over time, particularly in long-term fandoms like Swift's. By investigating how parasocial bonds and emotional connections change across various career phases or public controversies, researchers could understand the sustainability and adaptability of personal brands in relation to public opinion.

In conclusion, while this study provides important data on the intersection of music, activism, and emotional connection, it also highlights opportunities for further exploration. These future directions can enhance our understanding of personal branding in the entertainment industry, deepen the study of parasocial relationships beyond social media, and help contextualize fan behavior across diverse cultural and demographic contexts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide in Portuguese

The following questions constitute a version of the interview guide, written in Portuguese, that was used during the interview process to facilitate communication, as it is the participants' native language.

1. Quando pensas na imagem que a Taylor Swift construiu ao longo da sua carreira, que mensagens ou valores te vêm à cabeça?
2. Há alguma música em particular que te faça lembrar essas mensagens ou valores?
3. De que forma achas que essas mensagens se ligam ao que ela representa enquanto figura pública e artista?
4. Como interpretas a forma como ela transmite essas mensagens – parece-te autêntica? Que sinais te levam a sentir isso?
5. Como descreverias o que sentes em relação à Taylor Swift como pessoa, com base nas letras das suas músicas?
6. Que valores ou ideais que ela transmite nas músicas sentes que também fazem parte da tua vida?
7. Consegues lembrar-te de algum momento em que te tenhas sentido mais próximo/a dela, mesmo sem a conheceres pessoalmente?
8. Consegues descrever uma música da *Eras Tour* que te tenha marcado emocionalmente? O que sentiste nesse momento?
9. Há alguma mensagem nas músicas dela que sentes que te ajudou a ultrapassar algo ou a sentires-te compreendido/a?
10. Depois de experienciares a *Eras Tour* (ao vivo ou através do filme), sentiste que a tua perceção sobre a Taylor mudou? De que forma?

APPENDIX B

Binary Classification of the *Eras Tour* Songs According to the Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment					Σ
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
			<i>Lover</i>			
Miss Americana and The Heartbreak Prince	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cruel Summer	0	0	0	1	0	1
The Man	0	0	0	0	1	1
You Need to Calm Down	0	0	0	0	1	1
Lover	0	0	0	1	0	1

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment					Σ
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
The Archer	0	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Fearless</i>						
Fearless	0	0	0	0	0	0
You Belong With Me	0	0	0	0	0	0
Love Story	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>evermore</i>						
willow	0	0	0	0	0	0
marjorie	1	1	0	0	1	3
champagne problems	0	0	0	1	1	2
tolerate it	0	0	0	1	1	2
<i>reputation</i>						
...Ready for It?	0	0	1	0	0	1

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment					Σ
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
Delicate	0	1	1	1	0	3
Don't Blame Me	0	0	0	1	1	2
Look What You Made Me Do	1	1	0	0	0	2
<i>Speak Now</i>						
Enchanted	0	0	0	0	0	0
Long Live	1	1	0	0	0	2
<i>Red</i>						
22	0	1	0	0	0	1
We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together	1	0	0	0	0	1
I Knew You Were Trouble	0	0	0	0	0	0

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment					Σ
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
All Too Well (10 Minute Version)	1	1	0	1	1	4
<i>folklore</i>						
the 1	0	1	0	0	0	1
betty	0	0	0	0	0	0
the last great American dynasty	1	0	0	0	1	2
august	0	0	1	0	0	1
illicit affairs	0	0	0	0	0	0
my tears ricochet	1	0	0	0	0	1
cardigan	0	0	0	0	1	1
<i>1989</i>						
Style	0	0	0	0	0	0

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment					Σ
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
Blank Space	0	0	0	0	1	1
Shake It Off	1	1	0	0	1	3
Wildest Dreams	0	0	1	0	0	1
Bad Blood	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Acoustic set</i>						
Our Song	0	0	0	0	0	0
You're On Your Own, Kid	1	1	0	0	0	2
<i>Midnights</i>						
Lavender Haze	1	1	1	0	1	4
Anti-Hero	0	0	0	1	0	1
Midnight Rain	1	1	0	1	1	4

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment					Σ
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
Vigilante Shit	1	0	0	0	1	2
Bejeweled	1	1	0	0	1	3
Mastermind	1	1	1	1	1	5
Karma	1	1	0	0	0	2
Σ	15	15	6	11	17	

APPENDIX C

Relevant Lyrics from the *Eras Tour* Songs Corresponding to the Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
			<i>Lover</i>		
Miss Americana and The Heartbreak Prince					They whisper in the hallway, “She’s a bad, bad girl”
Cruel Summer				Said, “I’m fine”, but it wasn’t true / I don’t wanna keep secrets just to keep you And I scream, “For whatever it’s worth I	

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
The Man				love you, ain't that the worst thing you ever heard?"	They'd say I played the field before I found someone to commit to / And that would be ok for me to do When everyone believes ya, what's that like? I'm so sick of running as fast as I can / Wonderin' if I'd get there quicker if I was a man They wouldn't shake their heads and question how

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
You Need to Calm Down					<p>much of this I deserve / What I was wearing if I was rude / Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves I'd be just like Leo in Saint-Tropez If I was out flashing my dollars / I'd be a bitch, not a baller They'd paint me out to be bad / So it's okay that I'm mad Why are you mad? / When you could be</p>

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations	
				GLAAD?	
				<p>You just need to take several seats and then try to restore the peace / And control your urges to scream about all the people you hate / ‘Cause shade never made anybody less gay And we see you over there on the internet / Comparing all the girls who are killing it / But we figured you out / We all know now, we all got crowns</p>	

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Lover				<p>Can I go where you go? / Can we always be this close? And I'm highly suspicious that everyone who sees you wants you Swear to be overdramatic and true to my lover</p>	
The Archer		<p>Combat, I'm ready for combat</p>		<p>Easy they come, easy they go / I jump from the train, I ride off alone / I never grew up, it's getting so old /</p>	

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
				<p>Help me hold on to you I've been the archer, I've been the prey / Who could ever leave me, darling / But who could stay? And I cut off my nose just to spite my face / Then I hate my reflection for years and years</p>	

Fearless

Fearless

You Belong

With Me

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Love Story	<i>evermore</i>				
willow					
marjorie	Never be so kind / You forget to be clever / Never be so clever / You forget to be kind	Never be so kind / You forget to be clever / Never be so clever / You forget to be kind			Never be so kind / You forget to be clever / Never be so clever / You forget to be kind
champagne problems				Because I dropped your hand while dancing / Left you out there standing / Crestfallen on the landing	Champagne problems “She would’ve made such a lovely bride / What a shame she’s fucked in the head, “ they said

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
tolerate it				“I made you my temple, my mural, my sky / Now I’m begging for footnotes in the story of your life	I know my love should be celebrated / But you tolerate it
				<i>reputation</i>	
...Ready for It?			In the middle of the night, in my dreams / You should see the things we do, baby		
Delicate		My reputation’s never been worse, so / You must like me for me	Long night with your hands up in my hair	My reputation’s never been worse, so / You must like me for me	Is it cool that I said all

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
				that? / Is it too soon to do this yet? / 'Cause I know that it's delicate	
Don't Blame Me			Lord, save me, my drug is my baby / I'll be usin' for the rest of my life		They say, "She's gone too far this time"
Look What You Made Me Do	But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time / Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time I don't trust nobody and	But I got smarter, I got harder in the nick of time / Honey, I rose up from the dead, I do it all the time			

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
	nobody trusts me / I'll be the actress starring in your bad dreams	"I'm sorry, the old Taylor can't come to the phone right now" / "Why? Oh, 'cause she's dead"			
<i>Speak Now</i>					
Enchanted					
Long Live	I was screaming, "Long live all the magic we made" / And bring on all the pretenders, I'm not afraid / Long live all the mountains we moved / I had the time of my life fighting dragons with you	Long live the walls we crashed through			

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
			<i>Red</i>		
22		We're happy, free, confused, and lonely at the same time / It's miserable and magical, oh yeah			
We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together I Knew You Were Trouble	We are never, ever, ever gettin' back together				
All Too Well (10 Minute Version)	I'm a soldier who's returning half her weight	Time won't fly, it's like I'm paralyzed by it / I'd like to be my old self again, but I'm		The idea you had of me, who was she? / A never-needy, ever-	And you call me up again just to break me like a promise / So casually cruel in the name of bein'

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
		<p>still tryin' to find it Now you mail back my things and I walk home alone</p>		<p>lovely jewel whose shine reflects on you</p>	<p>honest You said if we had been closer in age, maybe it would've been fine / And that made me want to die The idea you had of me, who was she? / A never- needy, ever-lovely jewel whose shine reflects on you And I was never good at tellin' jokes, but the punch line goes / "I'll get older, but your lovers stay my age"</p>

folklore

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
the 1		I'm doing good, I'm on some new shit / Been saying "yes" instead of "no" And if you never bleed, you're never gonna grow / And it's alright now			
betty					
the last great american dynasty	Who knows, if I never showed up, what could've been / There goes the loudest woman this town has ever seen / I had a marvelous time ruining everything				"There goes the last great American dynasty / Who knows, if she never showed up, what could've been / There goes the maddest woman this town has ever seen / She had a

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
					<p>marvelous time ruining everything”</p> <p>There goes the most shameless woman this town has ever seen</p> <p>Who knows, if I never showed up, what could’ve been / There goes the loudest woman this town has ever seen / I had a marvelous time ruining everything</p>
august			<p>And I can see us twisted in bedsheets</p>		
illicit affairs					

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
my tears ricochet	And if I'm dead to you, why are you at the wake? / Cursing my name, wishing I stayed / Look at how my tears ricochet And you can aim for my heart, go for blood / But you would still miss me in your bones				
cardigan			Sensual politics		When you are young, they assume you know nothing Sensual politics

1989

Style

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Blank Space					Got a long list of ex-lovers / They'll tell you I'm insane
Shake It Off	And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate / Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake / Shake it off, I shake it off	And the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate / Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake / Shake it off, I shake it off			I go on too many dates / But I can't make them stay / At least, that's what people say
Wildest Dreams			You'll see me in hindsight / Tangled up with you all night /		

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Bad Blood			Burnin' it down		
<i>Acoustic set</i>					
Our Song					
You're On Your Own, Kid	You're on your own, kid / You always have been You've got no reason to be afraid	Everything you lose is a step you take You've got no reason to be afraid			
	You're on your own, kid / Yeah, you can face this	You're on your own, kid / Yeah, you can face this			

Midnights

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Lavender					No deal / The 1950s shit
Haze	I'm damned if I do give a damn what people say	I'm damned if I do give a damn what people say	No deal / The 1950s shit they want from me		they want from me The only kinda girl they see (Only kinda girl they see) / Is a one-night or a wife
Anti-Hero				I have this thing where I get older, but just never wiser One day, I'll watch as you're leaving / 'Cause you got tired of my scheming It's me, hi / I'm the problem, it's me Did you hear my	

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Midnight Rain		All of me changed like midnight		covert narcissism I disguise as altruism	
	He wanted a bride, I was making my own name	I broke his heart 'cause he was nice / He was sunshine, I was midnight rain		I broke his heart 'cause he was nice / He was sunshine, I was midnight rain	He wanted a bride, I was making my own name
Vigilante Shit	Draw the cat eye sharp enough to kill a man I don't dress for women / I don't dress for men / Lately, I've been dressin' for revenge The lady simply had enough				Draw the cat eye sharp enough to kill a man I don't dress for women / I don't dress for men / Lately, I've been dressin' for revenge Now she gets the house, gets the kids, gets the

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
Bejeweled	Baby love, I think I've been a little too kind / Didn't notice you walkin' all over my peace of mind And by the way, I'm goin' out tonight Best believe I'm still bejeweled / When I walk	Best believe I'm still bejeweled / When I walk in the room / I can still make the whole place shimmer And I miss you (Miss you), but I miss sparklin' What's a girl gonna			pride / Picture me thick as thieves with your ex-wife Ladies always rise above / Ladies know what people want / Someone sweet and kind and fun / The lady simply had enough Familiarity breeds contempt

Track title	Dimensions of Female Self-Empowerment				
	Being Independent and Powerful	Having Self-Love/Growth	Owning Sexuality	Admitting Personal Flaws and Neediness	Challenging Social Stereotypes and Expectations
	<p>in the room / I can still make the whole place shimmer</p> <p>I think it's time to teach some lessons</p> <p>I can reclaim the land / And I miss you (Miss you), but I miss sparklin'</p> <p>What's a girl gonna do? / A diamond's gotta shine</p>	<p>do? / A diamond's gotta shine</p>			
Mastermind	<p>What if I told you none of it was accidental?</p> <p>What if I told you I'm a mastermind? / And now you're mine / It was all</p>	<p>To make them love me and make it seem effortless / This is the first time I've felt the need to confess</p>	<p>And the first night that you saw me / I knew I wanted your body</p>	<p>What if I told you I'm a mastermind? / And now you're mine / It was all by design / 'Cause I'm a mastermind</p>	<p>You see, all the wisest women / Had to do it this way / 'Cause we were born to be the pawn / In every lover's game</p>

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by design / 'Cause I'm a mastermind			No one wanted to play with me as a little kid / So I've been scheming like a criminal ever since / To make them love me and make it seem effortless I'm only cryptic and Machiavellian / 'Cause I care		
Karma	Cause karma is my boyfriend / Karma is a god / Karma is the breeze in my hair on the weekend / Karma's a relaxing thought / Aren't	And I keep my side of the street clean / You wouldn't know what I mean Ask me what I learned from all those			

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<p>you envious that for you it's not? Ask me why so many fade, but I'm still here Sweet like honey, karma is a cat / Purring in my lap 'cause it loves me / Flexing like a goddamn acrobat / Me and karma vibe like that</p>	<p>years / Ask me what I earned from all those tears / Ask me why so many fade, but I'm still here</p>				