



## **MASTER'S DISSERTATION**

WHY ARE STANS STANS?

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INSTITUTO PORTUGUÊS DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO E MARKETING, JUNE, 2024





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Dissertation presented to IPAM to fulfill the requirements for a Master's degree in **Global Marketing** under the supervision of Phd Professor **Miriam Tais Salomão**.

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*"Stan" featuring Dido (Eminem, May. 23, 2000)*

*[Verse 1: Eminem]*

*Dear Slim, I wrote you, but you still ain't callin'  
I left my cell, my pager and my home phone at the bottom  
I sent two letters back in autumn, you must not've got 'em  
There probably was a problem at the post office or somethin'  
Sometimes I scribble addresses too sloppy when I jot 'em  
But anyways, fuck it, what's been up, man? How's your daughter?  
My girlfriend's pregnant too, I'm 'bout to be a father  
If I have a daughter, guess what I'ma call her? I'ma name her Bonnie  
I read about your Uncle Ronnie too, I'm sorry  
I had a friend kill himself over some bitch who didn't want him  
I know you probably hear this every day, but I'm your biggest fan  
I even got the underground shit that you did with Skam  
I got a room full of your posters and your pictures, man  
I like the shit you did with Rawkus too, that shit was phat  
Anyways, I hope you get this, man, hit me back  
Just to chat, truly yours, your biggest fan, this is Stan*

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- Me
- Magally and Francisco, Filipe and Lara
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- The Art Of Slowing Down, DAMN., Slow J | Unplugged
- Travis Scott - PARASAIL ft. Yung Lean, Dave Chappelle
- Seu Jorge - Zé do Carçoço
- Slow J – Às vezes (Unplugged)
- Miguel Luz - Meditação
- Slow J - Serenata (Unplugged)
- Mac Miller - Congratulations (feat. Bilal)
- Kendrick Lamar - FEAR.
- NERVE x IL-BRUTTO - "TRÍPTICO"
- NAPA - 760
- Tihuana - Tropa de Elite
- Raimundos - Puteiro em João Pessoa (Roda Viva)
- Radiohead - You And Whose Army?
- Radiohead – Everything In its Right Place

- Linkin Park - No More Sorrow
- Kraftwerk – Radioactivity
- Legião Urbana · Eduardo e Mônica
- Slow J – Comida
- Deftones – Change (In the House of Flies)
- The White Buffalo – The House of the Rising Sun
- Isaiah Rashad - Tity and Dolla (feat. Hugh Augustine & Jay Rock)
- Mick Jenkins – Spread Love
- João Maia Ferreira – Girassóis
- Beatbombers – Puristas (feat. Slow J)
- Kendrick Lamar – Money Trees (feat. Jay Rock)
- Kendrick Lamar – Bitch, Don't Kill My Vibe
- Pink Floyd – Wish You Were Here
- Kanye West – Everything I Am
- Kanye West – Flashing Lights
- Kanye West – Can't Tell Me Nothing
- Kanye West – Devil In A New Dress (feat. Rick Ross)
- Kanye West – Runaway (feat. Pusha-T)
- Kendrick Lamar – PRIDE.
- Slow J - Cristalina
- Johnny Virtus – A Sós
- Praso – Quando a música acaba (feat. Montana & Sara D. Francisco)

Much can be said about the art of penning a master's thesis. Each soul has its reasons, its tastes, its inclinations. Yet within me stirs a profound difference: a fierce longing to break free from the norm, to dance with the ridiculous, the absurd, the nonsensical, with that which grants me life. Perhaps it is because I see myself in these things, for, in truth, they mirror who I am. Life becomes lighter, and peace, if it exists, seems nearer.

Thus, I chose this theme: to lay myself bare, to reveal my feelings, my suffering, my joy, my love, and my hatred. These are the flames that fuel a soul living in the margins, numb, yearning to be a colossus in a world of the small. I am nothing, I am everything. I exclude none, I embrace all. I know no bounds. I am not blessed. I sabotage myself. I drown. I devour myself. And yet, I rise anew.

All this is for me, by me,  
peace.

## ABSTRACT

In contemporary culture, the phenomenon of stan behavior has emerged as a prominent aspect of fan engagement and loyalty. Stemming from Eminem's 2000 song "Stan", the term denotes individuals who exhibit intense and sometimes obsessive loyalty towards specific celebrities, artists, or pop culture icons.

Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as parasocial relationships theory, psychological theories of attachment and consumer behavior in the music industry, this empirical research adopted a qualitative approach delving into the experiences of why individuals become stans.

Through a qualitative research design, this study delves into the experiences and perceptions of individuals who identify themselves as stans.

One of the main findings of this research is that stans often immerse themselves in unhealthy behaviors, and some are reluctant to admit their obsessive attitude. Also, fans exhibit remarkable resilience in maintaining emotional ties with artists, frequently explaining their continuous support with significant confidence in the artist's integrity and a sense of shared understanding.

This phenomenon exemplifies a form of brand (or artist) loyalty whereby dedicated followers, commonly referred to as stans, consistently support and promote their favored celebrities. This steadfast loyalty frequently influences

broader consumer trends and market dynamics within one of the world's largest industries.

This research contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of stan behavior and its implications for brand loyalty. Moreover, it offers valuable insights to the music industry, highlighting how such intense fan loyalty can be harnessed to drive consumer engagement and market influence.

**Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Music Industry, Parasocial Relationships, Fandom, Crisis Management, Stan, Loyalty**

## RESUMO

Atualmente, o fenômeno do comportamento stan surgiu como um aspecto proeminente do envolvimento e da lealdade dos fãs. Com origem na canção "Stan" de Eminem, de 2000, o termo designa indivíduos que demonstram uma lealdade intensa e por vezes obsessiva para com determinadas celebridades, artistas ou ícones da cultura pop.

Com base em enquadramentos teóricos como a teoria das relações parassociais, as teorias psicológicas da relação e o comportamento do consumidor na indústria da música, esta investigação empírica adotou uma abordagem qualitativa que investiga as experiências que levam os indivíduos a tornarem-se stans.

Através de um modelo de investigação qualitativa, este estudo investiga as experiências e percepções dos indivíduos que se identificam como stans.

Uma das principais conclusões desta investigação é que os stans envolvem-se frequentemente em comportamentos pouco saudáveis e alguns têm relutância em admitir a sua atitude obsessiva. Além disso, os fãs demonstram uma resiliência notável na manutenção de laços emocionais com os artistas, explicando frequentemente o seu apoio contínuo com uma confiança significativa na integridade do artista e um sentido de compreensão partilhada.

Este fenômeno exemplifica uma forma de lealdade à marca (ou ao artista) em que os stans, apoiam e promovem de forma consistente as suas celebridades favoritas. Esta lealdade inabalável influencia frequentemente as tendências mais amplas dos consumidores e a dinâmica do mercado numa das maiores indústrias do mundo.

Esta investigação contribui para a literatura existente, fornecendo uma compreensão diversificada do comportamento dos fãs e das suas implicações para a lealdade à marca. Além disso, oferece informações valiosas para a indústria da música, destacando como uma lealdade tão intensa dos fãs pode ser aproveitada para impulsionar o envolvimento do consumidor e a influência do mercado.

**Palavras-chave: Comportamento do Consumidor, Indústria Musical, Relações Parassociais, Fandom, Gestão de Crises, Stan, Lealdade**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

PSR – Parasocial Relationship

PSI – Parasocial Interaction

PSB – Parasocial Breakup

## INTRODUCTION

For as long as artists and brands have existed, there have been people willing to do extraordinary things for them, to support them in a way that no one has ever seen, to defend them with every cell in their body. To this customer, listener or fan, the world began to call stan, as an attribute to Eminem & Dido (2000) for their song "Stan". This term has evolved beyond its origins and has become an adjective used for fans whose devotion to an artist extends to extraordinary limits.

In the lively and ever-changing world of the global music industry, the phenomenon of customer loyalty and fan devotion has taken forefront, notably in the shape of stans — enthusiastic and often obsessive fans of certain musical artists. This thesis, aptly named "Why are Stans, Stans?" conducts a thorough investigation of the intricate factors that inspire and sustain customer devotion and loyalty to artists.

Given an era of interconnection and internet access, the nature of fan-artist connections has undergone significant change. Fans establish significant bonds with artists they may never have met, creating a unique and intricate web of emotional ties, resulting in a phenomenon that requires a certain comprehension. Besides the fan-artist relationship, also communities of fans devoted to one artist emerged, names given to those communities emerged (Example: "Swifties" for the most devoted fans of Taylor Swift) and all of this transcends geographical boundaries. One thing

connecting those fans is their feeling and emotion for the artist, their loyalty, their devotion, all the psychological space that a specific artist occupies in their mind. A number of scholars claim that emotion is the basic foundation of human behaviors, with reason serving as a secondary tool for crucial thinking and public discussion; since Aristotle, philosophers have recognized a significant link between feelings, judgment, and conversation (Marcus, 2003).

According to Shell (2022) all the fandom is, in most cases, based on parasocial (one-sided) relationships, that can psychologically feel like face-to-face relationships you would develop in your day-to-day life. But they aren't, they are mediated and curated by one side.

As stated by Hesmondhalgh (2008) emotions play a pivotal role and, this emotional investment and profound connection have the potential to make contributions to the fields of consumer behaviour and marketing, particularly in the context of the music industry. Artists have many opportunities to directly communicate to their fan-bases showing who they are, how they behave, what they love, what they eat, how they dress, how they talk, in a way of humanizing them, creating a sort of relationship that sustains their fans' love and devotion. It's not a reciprocal relationship but it doesn't seem to bother fans as they stay hours in lines, spend big amounts of money in concerts and merchandising, create fan art and fan pages or blogs, therefore creating a community of fans who share the same passion.

This paper precisely relies on understanding what creates and sustains a stan behaviour. Or, in other words, why are Stans Stans?

Finding what makes a stan be a stan will be obtained by fulfilling the following specific objectives:

1. Investigate the underlying motivations that cause individuals to engage in stan behavior, focusing on the emotional and social factors.
2. Investigate the psychological dynamics of one-sided fan-artist relationships.
3. Understand how supporters perceive and deal with asymmetry in these ties.
4. To examine the influence of crisis management on fan devotion and loyalty (referred to as stans).

There are many studies related to consumer behavior, music marketing and even the joint of both, but just a few about the customer devotion and loyalty to artists which are the objectives aimed to be fulfilled throughout this research.

The importance of this research can be justified by recalling the music industry's significant economic footprint. This significantly economic footprint, as evidenced by its multibillion-dollar valuation and the dominant position of streaming services in the market, emphasizes the industry's

importance on both cultural and commercial fronts. Streaming platforms have not only impacted music consumption, but also the industry landscape, causing significant changes in audience interaction and industry procedures. Understanding the dynamics of fan loyalty and devotion in this dynamic environment is critical to realizing the industry's full potential and assuring its continuous growth and relevance in the digital era. The music industry is constantly changing and these transformations are further accentuated by the growth of streaming services that have revolutionised consuming music, as the number of users of these services keep increasing (IFPI, 2021). Overall, streaming (including subscription and advertising supported), accounted for the highest proportion of the market, increasing to a 67.0% share of the overall market in 2022 (IFPI, 2023). The normalization of streaming has affected consumption practices and the 'lore' of the industry (Burroughs, 2019). In addition, economic contribution of music is significant, and the music business is an important sector. According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA, 2020), the size of the United States' music industry is over \$11 billion and digital music accounts for more than 80% of the market. For example, as Netflix championed a new 'matrix era' of television, audiences became 'cord cutters' who left cable networks in favour of 'the perceived wireless minimalism of a streaming culture' (p. 13). Similarly, audio-streaming services like Spotify and various 'Play' services linked to traditional broadcasting corporations have set a new norm for music consumption – a norm, as well as a discourse, that bespeaks

immediate, unlimited and seamless access to culture (Fast, 2018; Scott Mcquire, 2017). This research emerges in light of those shifts, transformations and trends.

This dissertations' structure is divided into 6 chapters. After this introduction, the literature review providing a scientific perspective on the study's primary issues and facts is presented. The methodology chapter outlines a qualitative approach where 6 interviews are made and further analysed. The dissertation continues with a discussion chapter where the findings gathered through the interviews are compared with the current and latest literature. Finally, the conclusion summarizes and answers the research objectives, outlines possible contributions to the area and also highlights limitations and future directions.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

As the quality of our lives depends on our consumption, the consumption of music is an essential part to cultivate our lives (Kim & Kang, 2022). Music provides a particularly interesting example of modern relations between consumption and self-identity with many people reporting that music plays a very important role in their lives (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Melodies and lyrics that resonate with us, can awaken our inner feelings and thoughts; being in touch with these feelings and expressing them allow us to understand ourselves better and increase our self-awareness (Cai et al., 2023). Music is generally thought to represent social, cultural, group, and individual identities (Mack & Martin, 2024).

As one leading music sociologist has put it, music is a set of cultural practices that have come to be intricately bound up with the realm of the personal and the subjective (Martin, 1995). Based on Hesmondhalgh (2008), music's widespread influence, transcends beyond its auditory attraction, functioning as a vital axis for collective and public activities across different societal layers. Music, whether experienced through the immersive atmosphere of live performances or the widespread dissemination of recordings, serves as a conduit for the shared experience, triggering a convergence of feelings and emotions within the fabric of human

consciousness. This phenomenon of communal resonance, where emotions ranging from excitement to sadness are amplified by perceived social response, is an integral aspect of the human experience. Such nuanced interplay is particularly evident during live musical performances but is also observable in individualized consumption scenarios. It emphasizes the numerous purposes and roles of music, including affective expression and interaction, as well as its significance to cultural development and stability (Hodges, 2020).

Music possesses a profound power that transcends comprehension, yet humans are fortunate enough to not only perceive it but also to be profoundly affected by it. As seen earlier, extensive research in music psychology has delved into the intricate relationship between music and emotion. A fundamental function of listening to music is to resonate with the listener's current emotional state and to facilitate the release of suppressed emotions. Moreover, studies have revealed that individuals often have varied preferences when it comes to using music to regulate mood and emotions. These preferences are influenced by factors such as personal taste in music, active engagement with musical experiences, and age (Shiffriss et al., 2015; Hallam et al., 2009). Music, like emotions, is subjective and can be experienced differently depending on one's unique experiences, background, environment, and so on. Harold F. Abeles et al. (1984) recommend three major ideas that explain why people want to listen to

music and value specific types of music. The philosophies of referentialism, expressionism, and formalism emphasize various aspects of music.

According to Harold F. Abeles et al. (1984), referentialists seek "references" outside of the music itself, such as a particular nonmusical idea or feeling; expressionists believe that tempo, tension, key, and other instruments represent human psychological processes and feelings; formalists focus solely on the rigid musical properties of the music and believe that feelings elicited by music cannot be controlled or predicted. The various theories of reasoning for listening to music demonstrate the subjective nature of music and how easily it may be changed by an individual's experiences and views. Depending on the content of different genres of music, different interpretations and reasoning emerge for the listener who prefers that style of music or musician. It makes sense to believe that musicians include their personal beliefs into their works, establishing a genre as formalist or expressive. Moreover, listeners are able to recognize these nuances and apply them to their own lives. Nothing, though, prevents listeners from interpreting what they hear and reacting in any way that suits them.

Some decades later, literature investigating the functions of music emerged, as shown on table 1, revealing three main dimensions: (1) self-awareness, which indicates that music elicits self-related thoughts and helps people think about who they are and how they feel; (2) social relatedness, which suggests that people use music to express their own ideas and thoughts to others, to understand the way others think, and to feel closer to

their friends; and (3) arousal and mood regulation, which shows that music is used as a form of entertainment or to improve mood (Schäfer et al., 2013). Moreover, according to psychology and neuroscience research, music can affect our brain and cognition; when people listened to their preferred music, they found themselves having unsolicited self-related thoughts (Hodges & Wilkins, 2015; Schäfer et al., 2013; Wilkins et al., 2014).

**Table 1: Psychological Functions of Music**

Dimensions	Description
Self-Awareness	Music prompts introspection and self-reflection, fostering the contemplation of personal identity and emotional states. It encourages individuals to delve into their inner thoughts and feelings, facilitating a deeper understanding of oneself.
Social Relatedness	Music acts as a medium for interpersonal communication, allowing individuals to express their thoughts and emotions to others. It facilitates the exchange of ideas and perspectives, enhancing social bonds and fostering a sense of belonging and closeness within social circles.
Arousal and Mood Regulation	Music serves as a tool for emotional regulation, influencing mood states and arousal levels. It can uplift spirits, provide solace during times of distress, and enhance overall well-being. Additionally, music functions as a source of entertainment, offering enjoyment and pleasure to listeners, thereby contributing to mood enhancement and relaxation.

Source: Own Elaboration based on Schäfer et al. (2013)

Humans are beings of habit and seek consistency, thus it is possible that individuals will favor the style of music which represents who they are and the surroundings they are accustomed to (Mack & Martin, 2024), as

demonstrated on Table 2 below. Also, previous studies found that many people participate in music festivals in order to express their sense of identity (Goulding et al., 2002), obtain opportunities for self-expression and show their self-image (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

**Table 2: Identity Expression Through Music Consumption**

<b>Aspect of Identity Expression</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
Music as Cultural Practice	Music reflects societal, cultural, group, and individual identities, serving as a conduit for shared experiences and cultural continuity.	(Mack & Martin, 2024)
Social Functions of Music	Music acts as a medium for interpersonal communication, fostering social bonds, and enhancing a sense of belonging within social circles.	(Hesmondhalgh, 2008)
Expressionism in Music	Different theories, such as referentialism, expressionism, and formalism, explain individuals' preferences for certain types of music and their interpretation of musical content.	(Harold F. Abeles et al., 1984)
Impact of Music Festivals on Identity	Many individuals participate in music festivals to express their sense of identity and self-image, further demonstrating the role of music in identity expression.	(Goulding et al., 2002; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011)

Source: Own Elaboration

The consumption of music, as present in Table 3, whether physical (live performances, events, etc...) or digital (streaming), occupies a significant mental space for consumers. Also, music is a daily presence in people's lives,

and as Burroughs (2019) suggests, the normalization of streaming has profoundly affected the consumption practices of music.

Fans now have, at their fingertips, a world of emotion where they can authentically express themselves and feel a sense of belonging while also creating a “close” relationship with the artist and establish an expectation of them which not always is fulfilled.

**Table 3: Impact of Streaming on Music Consumption**

<b>Streaming Impact</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
Transformation of Consumption Practices	Streaming services have revolutionized music consumption, providing consumers with convenient access to vast libraries of music content.	(Burroughs, 2019)
Influence on Music Industry	The normalization of streaming has profoundly affected the music industry, leading to changes in distribution models, revenue streams, and artist-fan relationships.	(IFPI, 2021; RIAA, 2020)
Role in Identity Formation	Streaming platforms enable consumers to curate personalized music libraries, allowing for the expression and exploration of individual identity through music consumption.	(J. Kim & Kang, 2022)
Challenges and Opportunities	While streaming offers unparalleled convenience, it also presents challenges such as issues of fair compensation for artists and concerns about the homogenization of music consumption habits.	(Burroughs, 2019; IFPI, 2023)
Future Trends in Music Consumption	The continued growth of streaming services is expected to shape the future of music consumption, with implications for artist-fan dynamics, industry revenue models, and cultural trends.	(Burroughs, 2019; IFPI, 2021)

Source: Own Elaboration

### 1.1.1. Crisis Situation and Management

Pearson & Mitroff (2000) described crises, in an organizations' context, as: high magnitude situations, requiring immediate attention and action, involving an element of surprise, and somewhat outside the organization's complete control. They further conceptualized crises in terms of severity and whether the event occurred as a result of human/social or technological/economic pressures. An organizational crisis is an unexpected and harmful event characterized by a high degree of initial ambiguity regarding the cause and the resolution, which affects organizational operations and results in negative perceptions of the organization giving rise to the crisis (Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015; Coombs, 2007; Pearson & Clair, 1998). As stated by A. Marcus & Goodman (1991), not every crisis is equal, but contrast in at least two fundamental ways: 1) influence on potential victims, and 2) level of deniability of the origin of the disaster. Coombs & Holladay's (1996) categorization of crises distinguish between intentional and unintentional acts, in addition to internal and external acts, which lead to a matrix of faux pas (false step) (unintentional, external), accidents (unintentional, internal), terrorism (intentional, external), and transgression (intentional, internal) crises as seen in Table 4.

**Table 4: Crises Categorization**

	<b>UNINTENTIONAL</b>	<b>INTENTIONAL</b>
<b>EXTERNAL</b>	Faux Pas	Terrorism
<b>INTERNAL</b>	Accidents	Transgressions

Source: Adapted from Coombs & Holladay (1996)

Wilson et al's (2010) typology, which is based on the model developed by Coombs & Holladay (1996), is primarily geared toward investigating crisis management upon the incident, with an emphasis on future research directions, as opposed to an investigation of best practices in public relations aimed at preventing or minimizing reputational damage. Based on what has been read some argue that investigating the best practices in public relations is better, some say that investigating crisis management upon the incident is more relevant. There really is no certainty of which one is better but the loyalty from the consumers is the common part. Crisis management relates to a company's efforts to avert crises before they occur, as well as effective management of crises when they occur (Pearson & Clair, 1998). Effective crisis management after a crisis has occurred relates to individual and organizational readjustments of basic assumptions, as well as behavioral and emotional responses aimed at recovery and readjustment' (Pearson & Clair, 1998). During a crisis, companies are often faced with decisions in terms of how and what to communicate to their stakeholders (Coombs & Laufer, 2018). It is not only important to address it in the most safe way but also it is

fundamental to consider how the organizational crisis response is received in different cultural regions (Bowen et al., 2018).

According to Nicholson et al. (2015), who distinguished crisis from scandal, a crisis is an external occurrence which impacts the organization and possesses structural factors, whereas a scandal originates from an individual's misconduct. During a scandal, people's sense of fair play is frequently violated (Marcus & Goodman, 1991). Both crises and scandals can destabilize an organization, however a crisis might happen without media attention, whereas a scandal necessitates attention from the media. Scandals, which frequently revolve around sex, corruption, money, or incompetence and violate social norms (James Lull & Stephen Hinerman, 1977), can be appealing to the media as well as difficult for organizations because of their limited control over the event's media coverage (Nicholson et al., 2015). Central to the development, establishment and consolidation of audiences, the media play an informative, expositive, supportive, and interpretive role (Nicholson et al., 2015). As illustrated in Table 5, organizations must navigate crises while considering the informative, expositive, supportive, and interpretive role of the media.

**Table 5: Crisis Management and Media Role**

Subtopic	Description	Author(s)
Typology of Crisis Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasizes investigating crisis management post-incident.</li> <li>Suggests a shift in focus towards exploring avenues for future research in crisis management rather than solely relying on established public relations practices for mitigating reputational harm.</li> </ul>	(Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Wilson et al., 2010)
Crisis vs. Scandal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characterizes crisis as an external event affecting the organization due to structural factors, while scandal arises from individual misconduct.</li> <li>Emphasizes that both crises and scandals have the potential to destabilize an organization.</li> <li>Points out that crises may unfold without media attention, whereas scandals typically require media coverage to gain prominence.</li> </ul>	(Nicholson et al., 2015)
Role of Media in Crisis Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledges the significant role of media in influencing perceptions and responses to crises and scandals.</li> <li>Highlights that media coverage can directly impact an organization's reputation.</li> <li>Recognizes that artists, akin to organizations, often have little control over media coverage during scandalous events.</li> </ul>	(Nicholson et al., 2015)

Source: Own Elaboration

Understanding the dynamics between artists and fans, similar to organizations and consumers, is crucial. Just as media attention plays a

significant role in shaping perceptions and responses to crises in organizations, the media's portrayal of scandals involving artists or brands can significantly impact their reputation and relationship with fans or consumers.

Marcus & Goodman (1991) investigated the impact of various crisis management solutions following various kinds of crises. They discovered that following a scandal, organizations ought to provide accommodating signals in order to fulfill the interests of all stakeholders. Accommodative signals relate to the organizations' efforts to apologize, admit the existence of the problem and attempt to implement organizational and managerial changes in order to prevent the scandal from reoccurring (Marcus & Goodman, 1991). Accommodative crisis response provides a valuable strategy for organizations to influence the public's first impression of the crisis and the organization (Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015; Coombs, 2007). Accommodative signals enable firms to provide explanations for perceived actions (Marcus & Goodman, 1991) and offset negative impressions that occurred as a result of the crisis, thus reducing negative affect (Coombs, 2007). By means of accommodative signals during a crisis, firms can conciliate (Xie & Peng, 2009) customers and convince them that the relationship is worth upholding (Walster et al., 1973).

Like organizations, artists often have limited control over media coverage during scandalous events, which can exacerbate the challenges they face in managing their public image and maintaining audience support. In

summary, the parallels between crises and scandals in organizations and the experiences of artists highlight the importance of effective crisis management and reputation, trust and loyalty preservation strategies in the entertainment industry. Just as organizations must navigate crises to maintain consumer trust, artists must address scandals to uphold their credibility and connection with fans. Grégoire & Fisher (2006) contend that trustworthy clients may be hesitant to do harm to the firm.

The role of the media and social media users in crisis communication is vital. Crisis communication enables the general population to share information, discuss situations, and confront those accountable. In the context of crisis communication, two key players are the news media and social media users. With the rise of social media, the public can now engage in framing and sharing news (Billings et al., 2015).

Converged media spaces, collapsing settings, networked interaction, and online/offline connections all provide problems to crisis communication and management. Furthermore, cultural globalization and celebrities' rising visibility in both traditional and social media have made identity and image management vital for them (Billings et al., 2018; K. A. Brown et al., 2015).

Media management is theorized to be centrally influential in crisis management (Benoit, 1997; Bruce & Tini, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Pearson & Mitroff, 2000; Summers & Johnson Morgan, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010). It is theorized as a staged process involving signal detection, preparedness, containment, recovery and learning phases (Pearson &

Mitroff, 2000); however, research shows that organizations' crisis management preparedness is constrained by contextual factors (Kovoor-Misra et al., 2000).

Some Public Relations theorists describe crisis management best practice in terms of a process in which activities and actions are undertaken to avoid or prevent, contain or reduce, and recover from or mitigate damage to the organization's operation from crisis (Pearson et al., 1997; Pearson & Mitroff, 2000). The function of a crisis manager has grown from a reactive damage controller to a proactive speaker who engages fans, the wider public, and social media communities (Amber Hutchins & Natalie Tindall, 2016). Table 6 delves into the relation between crisis and social media as it briefly summarizes the topic.

**Table 6: Crisis Communication and Media Dynamics**

Subtopic	Description	Author(s)
Crisis Communication and Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media's growth has empowered the public to shape and distribute news.</li> <li>• Converged media spaces have introduced complexities to crisis response efforts.</li> <li>• Users on social media play a crucial role in sharing information.</li> </ul>	(Billings et al., 2015)
Media Management in Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media management is crucial in crisis management, encompassing detection, preparedness, containment, recovery, and learning phases.</li> <li>• Crisis managers increasingly engage proactively with fans, the public.</li> </ul>	(Benoit, 1997; Bruce & Tini, 2008; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Pearson & Mitroff, 2000; Summers & Johnson Morgan, 2008; Wilson et al., 2010)

Source: Own Elaboration

### 1.1.2. Real examples of crises in the context of artist-fandom

This following chapter moves away from the formal, scientific literature previously covered. This section will instead look at real-life examples sourced from non-scientific articles. While these situations may not technically follow peer-reviewed research protocols, they are relevant for the thesis's direction.

They provide tangible scenarios that deepen learning and provide practical insights into the theories addressed previously. Despite their lack of academic rigor, these cases perform an important function in offering an integrated perspective on the topic under consideration.

A celebrity scandal is a crisis in which the popularity and identification of the celebrity, the newsworthiness of unlawful or immoral activity, and the entertaining character of the bad information converge, allowing readers to escape their dull daily routines (Ilana Hanukov, 2015).

The news coverage of a crisis occurrence influences the public's attribution of accountability (framing effects) and perceived importance (first level agenda-setting effects), as well as the primary cognitive and emotive aspects of a specific event (second-level agenda-setting effects) (Iyengar & Simon, 1993).

Additionally, corporations should constantly monitor public opinion and interact with the audience during a crisis.

Regarding a real case of a celebrity scandal, Kanye West's controversies throughout the years really make for some. According to an article Ewan Larkin (2022) wrote for Campaign "a business relationship with the rapper now known as Ye has often been more trouble than it's worth. The producer-turned-rapper has always been prone to controversy, seemingly unable to avoid negative headlines." "During a "secret" catwalk event during Paris fashion week in early October, Ye, along with some models, wore a "White Lives Matter" t-shirt. Less than a week later, the musician was locked out of

his Twitter and Instagram accounts after making anti-Semitic comments.”

“Entering into a business relationship with [Ye] right now is like slapping your logo on a car accident,” he says. “Even though people might stop to look, it’s a bad situation for everyone involved.” Other articles such as Marisa Dellatto (2022) for Forbes, made comments about Ye’s recent (at that time) controversies like “Kanye West’s latest controversial outbursts have included wearing shirts with “White Lives Matter” printed on them, making several anti-Semitic remarks, spreading false information about the death of George Floyd.” “Soon after, West was temporarily banned from Twitter and Instagram, for making anti-Semitic posts on the platforms, including saying he was going to go “death con 3” on Jewish people. Days later, unaired footage leaked from West’s recent interview with Tucker Carlson, which included him making more anti-Semitic claims.” It got to a point where “Adidas said it was putting its relationship with his company, Yeezy, under review.”

Caught in the intricacies of scandal, Ye seeks reconciliation in the unstable environment, reflecting his lyrical thought: “I feel the pressure, under more scrutiny, and what I do, act more stupidly”. Nonetheless, in line with his ability to transcend heated debates while remaining relevant, crisis communication and public relations experts informed Forbes that the rapper and fashion designer’s recent tribulations are unlikely to be a final blow to his professional trajectory. “The public will forgive a lot from a performer if they can continue to bring the product that made them famous in the first place.”

(Marisa Dellatto, 2022). This resilience mirrors the ongoing discourse on fan engagement and loyalty amidst crises and scandals.

Even though a growing body of research into the impacts of crises and scandals has provided useful insights into the aftermath of these scandals and crises within fan loyalty and perception (Bruce & Tini, 2008; Smith et al., 2014) it doesn't state whether this impact may be, in the end, neutral. Which was what happened with Ye as, year after year, he was able to maintain his fanbase and its loyalty, attract new consumers (new fans) and continue to deliver what he was known for in any streaming platform and/or channel.

In understanding fan engagement, it's crucial to differentiate between organizational brands and celebrity brands by examining their fundamental attributes. Notably, celebrities, as individuals, fulfill audiences' desires for gossip, fantasy, identification, and emotional attachment, evoking positive responses (Billings et al., 2018; Colapinto & Benecchi, 2014). As evidenced by Ye's persistent fan base and continued success in delivering his distinct talent across various platforms, the bond between celebrities and their audiences transcends difficulties, demonstrating the profound impact of celebrity brand dynamics on consumer behavior and perception.

Schöller & Fröhlich (2016) argued that the fan base is particularly committed to expressing different kinds of emotive devotion to an organization's consumer brand or a celebrity's personal brand. This concept emphasizes the complexities of fan interaction, in which supporters not only consume the product or material, but also actively participate in the

creation and maintenance of the identity of the brand (artist as a brand). This active involvement frequently leads to the establishment of deep emotional bonds and a sense of belonging within the fan group. Furthermore, the strength of these emotional attachments can impact consumer behavior and relationships, resulting in loyalty and advocacy even in the face of hardship.

After analyzing real-life examples of crises in the context of artist-fandom, several key insights emerge. These insights are summarized in Table 7, which presents the lessons learned from these cases and their implications for crisis management and fan engagement.

**Table 7: Insights from Real-Life Celebrity Scandals**

<b>Subtopic</b>	<b>Description</b>
Impact of Media Coverage	Media coverage of crisis events affects the public's attribution of responsibility, perceived salience, and objective cognitive and affective attributes to the event.
Corporate Monitoring and Interaction	Corporations should continuously monitor public opinion and engage with the audience during a crisis to manage perceptions effectively.
Celebrity Resilience in Crisis	Despite facing controversies, celebrities like Kanye West demonstrate resilience, maintaining fan engagement and loyalty by delivering consistent quality in their work.
Dynamics of Fan Engagement	Fans play a crucial role in shaping the perception and behavior of celebrity brands, actively participating in the creation and maintenance of the brand's identity.
Emotional Attachment and Loyalty	Strong emotional bonds between celebrities and their fans can lead to enduring loyalty and advocacy, even in the face of crisis or scandal.

Source: Own Elaboration

## 1.2. PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Parasocial relationships (PSR) are a term brought by Horton & Wohl (1956) to explain the “intimacy at a distance” felt by people consuming media content.

Parasocial relationships are essentially one-sided connections that individuals develop with media personalities or performers as they engage with their content over time. Despite the lack of direct interaction or personal acquaintance, individuals in PSRs often perceive a sense of relational development with the performer. This feeling of closeness is built upon the illusion of knowing the performer intimately, even though the relationship is entirely constructed through media consumption (Brown, 2015). In essence, PSRs reflect a form of social interaction that exists predominantly within the realm of media and entertainment, where audiences develop a sense of connection and familiarity with the figures they admire or follow (Brown, 2015).

The roots of parasocial relationships can be traced back to the concept of parasocial interaction (PSI). PSI refers to the phenomenon where individuals experience a sense of interaction or engagement with a media personality, despite the absence of real interpersonal communication. It's similar to a simulated form of social exchange, creating an illusion of back-and-forth dialogue or connection with the performer. This concept was initially articulated by Horton & Wohl (1956), who described it as a

"simulacrum of conversational give and take." In other words, PSI lays the groundwork for the development of PSRs, as individuals begin to feel a pseudo-relationship with media performers through their consumption of media content. According to Horton & Wohl (1956), the lack of reciprocity is the distinguishing feature of PSI.

However, the boundary between parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships was initially vague in Horton & Wohl (1956) study, which caused conceptual clarity concerns in recent research (Dibble et al., 2016).

Research that has highlighted the link between parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships shows that parasocial interactions happen while media watching and can be impacted by a variety of performance characteristics, including the persona explicitly addressing the viewer (Dibble et al., 2016). Parasocial relationships, on the other hand, last longer and can exist regardless of parasocial interactions, even though they are frequently strengthened by them (Dibble et al., 2016). Additionally, evidence reveals that parasocial interactions function parallel to everyday life relationships, enabling interpersonal interaction theories to forecast parasocial occurrences (Cohen, 2010; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Perse & Rubin, 1989).

Like interpersonal relationships, parasocial relationships can dissolve or be terminated. This process is referred to as parasocial breakup (PSB). PSB distress is defined as the negative emotional reaction to the termination of a PSR with a liked persona (Cohen, 2003; Hu, 2016). However, it is possible that

those with the strongest parasocial relationships are so invested in their relationship partner that they would seek ways to prevent PSB rather than experience PSB distress. Also, expectancies are a key factor as they allow individuals to predict how others will behave. These expectancies are based on societal norms, relationships developed between individuals, and previous life experiences (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

Expectancy violations theory is an interpersonal communication theory that has been used to examine responses to the behavior of others (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). It addresses the expectations individuals have for the behavior of others and how the violations of these expectations impact communication patterns and relationships.

Social expectations include the expectation for others to be friendly, polite, and decent, and to refrain from belittling others. Trust expectation violations include deception, breaking promises, and inauthenticity. The moral expectations we have for others can be violated in ways that range from minor (such as shoplifting or cheating on taxes) to major (including drunk driving or assault). Social and trust violations resulted in reduction of closeness regardless of whether they were committed by a media figure or a friend. However, both major and minor moral violations were more detrimental if committed by media figures than by friends (Wing, 2021).

The previous explanation of parasocial relationships (PSRs) gives light on media celebrities' tremendous influence on audience views. This understanding is critical for digging into the complex dynamics of fan loyalty

and accountability in celebrity culture. Even when celebrities' wrongdoings are exposed, the continuing loyalty displayed by certain portions of their fan base demonstrates the strength of parasocial bonds. Such allegiance not only shows the power dynamics inherent in PSRs, but it also underscores the high standards to which media figures are held in public. As a result, knowing the complexity of consumer behavior within fan communities is critical for understanding the greater impact of media personalities in modern society.

When an individual's wrongdoings are exposed, particularly those of celebrities and public figures, they are rejected or "cancelled," often by those who previously supported and even admired them. However, individuals who feel close to celebrities may remain loyal despite these wrongdoings, rationalizing or defending poor behavior they would otherwise find unacceptable. This is significant because fan support plays a large role in the amount of power celebrities have and is thus a main source of accountability for behavior (Wing, 2021). Media figures are, in the public eye, seen as having an elevated status, they are held to higher standards than the average person (Cohen, 2010).

Despite an artist's missteps and involvement in scandals, consumer loyalty and parasocial relationships can persist, indicating the resilience of artists in their fans' eyes. This complexity underscores the significance of understanding consumer behavior and parasocial relationships in the music industry. This is important when considering the social nature of fan communities as the more integrated the celebrity is in the fan community,

the more invested fans will be in the relationship, leading to more loyalty and effort in relationship maintenance (Wing, 2021).

### 1.3.STAN BEHAVIOR

By what has been read so far, one might conclude that this love for a specific artist starts as PSI evolving into a PSR and then falling into a PSB or increasing into an obsessive behavior coined as Stan Behavior. In a broad way the Stan is the fan that takes it too far, the overly obsessive fan that loses the track of real feelings, loyalty and trust.

The idea of stan behavior is a testament to the strength of fandom and the deep bonds people may develop with the artists they love or celebrities in the vibrant universe of fan culture. Since its inception by Eminem's well-known song stan, the term has taken on a variety of meanings, frequently obfuscating the distinction between healthy adulation and unhealthy fixation. Celebrity worship apparently becomes a significant behavioural phenomenon that dominates peoples' lives (Caldwell, 1962; Giles, 2000). For fans of musicians, Krause et al. (2018) found that when musicians participate in social media platforms, it can positively and/or negatively affect fans' experience with them and their music.

Stan's behavior is based on trust, which is shown in his behaviors as well as his cognitive views. The unshakeable dedication and commitment of fans

are fueled by their idols' honesty and dependability, which they invest their trust in (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Andreassen, 1994). A cornerstone is reputation, as followers' contentment and loyalty are influenced by how trustworthy superstars are viewed (Andreassen, 1994).

The rise of social media platforms has altered the nature of fan-celebrity relationships by providing fans with never-before-seen access to their idols and encouraging a feeling of closeness (Kim & Song, 2016). Through "reciprocal" exchanges on these platforms, fans deepen their relationship with their favorite celebrities (Tao et al., 2019). However, there are risks associated with this increased accessibility, as evidenced by severe celebrity worship behaviors including stalking and inappropriate correspondence (Dietz et al., 1991; Leets et al., 1995). When it comes to Taylor Swift's fandom, fans—often referred to as "Swifties"—remain devoted and gladly engage in online exchanges with their idols, even in the absence of direct reciprocity (Zafina & Sinha, 2024). The emotional depth of these relationships is shown by the intense desire these people have to build a sense of camaraderie and connection with their favorite celebrities (Konjin & Hoorn, 2017; Kim & Kim, 2020).

Stan's actions are essentially the result of a complex interaction of social behavior, incentives, and emotions. The line between fandom and obsession can occasionally become blurred when what starts out as sincere support and adoration turns into an unhealthy obsession. Examining stan's psychological foundations allows us to better understand the complexities

of fan-celebrity connections and how they affect social dynamics and personal well-being.

## 2.METHODOLOGY

Following a thorough review of the available literature, there is a significant gap in research on the issue of stans within the area of artist-fandom relationships. This research gap emphasizes the important requirement to defend the technique used in the upcoming empirical study. The literature reveals a significant lack of research on the complexities of stan behavior and its consequences for fan loyalty and involvement in the entertainment business.

Additionally, no research has been found that investigates the intricacies of stan behavior in response to crises and scandals involving artists. This gap in the literature emphasizes the importance of a rigorous technique for collecting empirical evidence and insights into the complex dynamics of artist-fandom connections and their impact on consumer behavior. In essence, the discovered research gap highlights the need of justifying the approach used to properly address the study's objectives.

The following sections will go over the research design, data collection and approaches used to answer the question of "Why are Stans Stans?", the interview guide and interview process, data analysis, discussion of results and

conclusion including the answer to the main and specific objectives, Scientific, Marketing and Psychological contributions and finally, in the conclusion, limitations and recommendations for future studies.

## 2.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The following investigation has as a main objective answering the question “Why are Stans Stans?”.

Finding what makes a stan be a stan will be obtained by fulfilling the following specific objectives:

1. Investigate the underlying motivations that cause individuals to engage in stan behavior, focusing on the emotional, and social factors.
2. Investigate the psychological dynamics of one-sided fan-artist relationships
3. Understand how supporters perceive and deal with asymmetry in these ties.
4. To examine the impact of crisis management on fan devotion and loyalty (referred to as stans).

The methodological approach chosen in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is selected due to its capacity to dive deeply into individuals' subjective experiences, perceptions, and motivations, making it ideal for investigating complex phenomena such as stan behavior within artist-fandom relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach enables a thorough examination of the emotional, psychological, and sociological variables that motivate people to engage in stan behavior, as well as the less obvious dynamics of parasocial fan-artist relationships and the impact of crisis events on fan devotion and loyalty.

For a variety of reasons, qualitative research is ideal for addressing this study's research questions and objectives. To begin, understanding the fundamental causes for stan behavior involves a thorough study of individuals' subjective experiences and viewpoints (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative methods, such as interviews allow researchers to capture the complexities and variety of fans' experiences, revealing emotional attachments, psychological requirements, and social influences.

Secondly, studying the psychological and sociological dynamics of parasocial fan-artist connections demands an approach capable of revealing the complexities of these interactions. Qualitative research enables a thorough analysis of how fans perceive and handle these relationships with their favorite artists, offering information on the coping processes and methods individuals use to preserve their loyalty (Smith et al., 2009).

Finally, studying the impact of crisis management and events on fan devotion and loyalty necessitates attention to the contextual and situational aspects that influence fans' responses. Qualitative methods allow researchers to investigate fans' interpretations and reactions to crisis events, capturing the intricacies of their experiences and the underlying causes for their sustained support or disillusionment (Bloor et al., 2001).

## 2.2. DATA COLLECTION

The primary data gathering strategy for this study is semi-structured interviews with one specific group: those classified as Stans. Semi-structured interviews are a valuable qualitative research tool that is recognized for its adaptability and depth, allowing researchers to delve deeply into participants' opinions and experiences (Liamputtong, 2020).

Semi-structured interviews, according to Liamputtong (2020), incorporate a series of predefined questions in addition to open-ended discussions that allow participants to freely express their opinions. Semi-structured interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under examination, providing valuable insights into individuals' motivations and behaviors in the context of fan-artist relationships (Given, 2008). This approach enables a more thorough examination of the emotional,

psychological, and social elements that contribute to fan engagement and loyalty.

While semi-structured interviews offer several advantages, such as enabling in-depth exploration and fostering rapport between researchers and participants, they also present challenges, including the potential for social desirability bias and difficulties in probing sensitive topics (Brinkmann, 2018).

Despite these limitations (which will be minimized through a carefully designed interview guide and appropriate interviewer's conduct), semi-structured interviews remain a valuable method for capturing the complexities of human experiences and perceptions. In line with the objectives of this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected participants (stans) ensuring that a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of "Why are Stans Stans?" is achieved.

### 2.2.1. Participants Profile

Participants were chosen based on their exhibited stan behavior, identifying themselves or being recognized by society as such due to their actions towards a specific artist. A brief structured pre-interview consisting of four questions was conducted to confirm their status as stans.

1. How much time do you spend each week engaging with content related to [Artist]?
2. Can you describe any memorabilia, collections or tickets you have of [Artist], and do you often spend money on such items?
3. Would you be willing to wait in a line more than 5 hours to see or be with [Artist] or to just get tickets for a concert?
4. Have you ever defended [Artist] online against criticism or engaged in debates with other fans? What motivates you to do so?

As the pre-interviews were occurring, some of the participants even exposed tattoos referent to their favorite artist which helps characterizing them as a stan.

Since there aren't any other filters regarding the participants, a sample of six people who met the requirements was created, and their profiles can also be seen in Table 8. Social media platforms were used to recruit the participants.

**Table 8: Participant Profile**

Designation	Age	Occupation	Stan's Artist	Gender
P1	22	Student	Slow J	Male
P2	23	Waiter	Beyoncé	Male
P3	26	Student	Eminem	Male
P4	25	Marketeer	Kendrick Lamar	Female
P5	24	Dancer	SEVENTEEN	Female
P6	24	Student	Larry June	Male

Source: Own Elaboration

### 2.2.2. Interview Guide

The interviews were structured based on the concepts covered in the literature review, the main goal, and specific ones. The guide is divided into three categories with corresponding sub-categories which were previously defined to be later used in the data analysis step. As shown in Table 9, the first category (Identity Expression) investigates how people express their cultural identities and personal experiences through their interactions with musicians and artists. A second category (Crisis) investigates instances in which artists or celebrities have a substantial impact on fan behavior and

emotional responses, making it critical to understand how fans manage and cope with such obstacles. The third and last category (Parasocial Relationship) has a significant impact on fan culture, shaping their impressions of artists and emotional ties. Exploring this category reveals insights into the nature of fan-artist interactions and broader ramifications for fan behavior.

Before the interview, the interviewee is asked to name his or her favorite artist. The script contains thirteen questions, where the first (Q1) serves as an "icebreaker" and to introduce the Stan concept; then, the following questions are integrated into the analysis category/subcategory structure, aiming to reach the specific objectives presented in this dissertation's introduction. In Table 9 the questions are organised according to the analysis structure, but the flow of questions effectively used throughout the interviews can be verified in the Appendix.

**Table 9: Interview Script**

Category	Sub-Category	Questions	Author(s)
-	-	Q1- Describe what you feel for (insert artist).	-
	Cultural Identities Reflection	Q5- How do you think music reflects cultural identities and shared experiences within society?	(Liamputtong, 2020)

Music Identity Expression	Interpersonal Communication means	Q4- In what ways do you believe music serves as a medium for interpersonal communication and fostering social bonds? Have you experienced this personally?	(J. Kim & Song, 2016; M. Kim & Kim, 2020)
	Self-Awareness	Q3- How do you think your experiences as a Stan have shaped your understanding of love, loyalty, and sacrifice in the broader context of relationships and community?	(Giles, 2000)
Crisis	Perception of Artist Integrity	Q7- Do you separate the art from the artist? Elaborate	-
	Artist's Controversy Defence	Q11- Have you ever defended or supported an artist during a public scandal or controversy? Why or why not? And how did you feel doing that?	(Giles, 2000)
	Negative Actions Reaction	Q13- How would you react if your favorite artist all of a sudden did something you hate?	(Leets et al., 1995)
	Reaction to Celebrity Headlines	Q12- Can you recall a time when a celebrity's actions or behavior made headlines and caught your attention? How did you react to that situation?	(Leets et al., 1995)
	Media Influence on Public Perception	Q9- What role do you believe the media plays in shaping public perception of celebrities during times of crisis or scandal?	(Caldwell, 1962; Giles, 2000; Krause et al., 2018)

Parasocial Relationship	Experience as a Fan Leading to Stan Behavior	Q2- Can you tell me about your experience as a fan of [insert artist] and how you became a stan?	(Dietz et al., 1991; Giles, 2000)
	Emotional Connection	Q8- Can you describe any instances where you felt emotionally connected to an artist, despite negative media portrayal or controversy surrounding them?	(J. Kim & Song, 2016)
		Q6- Can you describe a time when you felt a strong emotional connection to an artist? What made you feel that way?	(M. Kim & Kim, 2020; Konijn & Jang, 2017)
	Influence on Perception and Behavior as a Fan	Q10- How do you think your parasocial (one-sided) relationship with [insert artist] influences your perception of them and your behavior as a fan?	(Konijn & Jang, 2017)

Source: Own Elaboration

Besides being connected to the categories of analysis, questions also address the study's specific objectives, as organised in Table 10.

**Table 10: Theoretical justification for Interview Script**

Specific Objective	Questions	Author(s)
SO1: Investigate the underlying motivations that cause individuals to engage in Stan behavior, focusing on the emotional and social factors.	Q3/Q4/Q5/Q11	(Giles, 2000; J. Kim & Song, 2016; Tao et al., 2019)
SO2: Investigate the psychological dynamics of one-sided fan-artist relationships	Q2/Q8/Q13	(Dietz et al., 1991; Leets et al., 1995)
SO3: Understand how supporters perceive and deal with asymmetry in these ties.	Q6/Q10	(M. Kim & Kim, 2020; Konijn & Jang, 2017)
SO4: To examine the impact of crisis management on fan devotion and loyalty (referred to as Stans).	Q7/Q9/Q12	(Caldwell, 1962; Giles, 2000; Krause et al., 2018; Leets et al., 1995)

Source: Own Elaboration

### 2.2.3. Interviews Procedure

The participants were selected using social media platforms, and the interviews took place in person at cafes or their homes. The interviews began on April 20th and ended on May 3rd, with an average duration of 44 minutes (ranging from 26 to 61 minutes). All interviews, conducted in Portuguese, the participants' native language for deeper responses, were audio-recorded with their permission and later translated into English for the purpose of this research.

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, the interviews will be analyzed. The first question (Q1), serving as an "icebreaker" and setting the tone for the interview, is not assigned to any specific subcategory. "Describe what you feel for [Artist]" sets a good base for the interview as what is wanted are true and deep feelings. The responses reflect a deep emotional and personal connection between interviewees and their favorite artists, highlighting the importance of music as a means of emotional support and personal development. Generally speaking, the interviewees express gratitude for the help provided by music during difficult times, viewing this relationship as a unique and intense form of love that developed obsessively. Furthermore, they highlight the transformative role of music in their lives, assisting them in personal growth, self-confidence, and overcoming personal challenges. The lyrics of songs provide understanding and support, as if the artists were friends or counselors. Artists' ability to transform adversity into art serves as motivation to persevere and achieve success in their lives, reflecting the significant impact of artistic figures on personal and emotional development.

*"It's love, it's a very pure, very unique form of love that I don't feel with anyone else. I don't like anyone else the way I like Beyoncé, and there are times when it's obsessively sick. It's like sometimes it feels like I like her more than my own family, or myself. Beyoncé*

*releases an album and it's like my whole body shakes and when my mother says she's coming to Portugal, it's like ok. I like it a lot, but it's unhealthy, it ends up being unhealthy, it's a real obsession. In fact, the first tattoo I got was Hold Up, from the album Lemonade which means a lot to me. It really helped more than anyone else in this world." (P2)*

*"For me, it's like an escape from my personal reality. When I found out about SEVENTEEN I was 18, I was going through a rough patch in my life. It was the pandemic plus a lot of shit was going down on my life. I have great admiration for them because they also came from nothing, and seeing the numbers and everything they're achieving now is something that motivated me to want to be persistent like them. It also made me want to feel that feeling of success, of achievement, of being able to achieve something and feel proud of myself, of what I'm doing, of the journey I've made and where I am. They make me want to go further when I was way closer to quitting." (P5)*

### 3.1.CULTURAL IDENTITIES REFLECTION

The six replies collectively indicate the enormous impact of music and artists on individuals' feelings of love, loyalty, and personal values, embodying the subcategory "Cultural Identities Reflection." Participants describe how music is a strong instrument for emotional expression and understanding, allowing them to negotiate complex feelings and relationships. Icons like Beyoncé and Kendrick Lamar appear as mentors, teaching lessons about love, family, and self-esteem. Their music are referred to as inspiring and consoling, giving listeners a sense of purpose and empowerment. Furthermore, respondents recognize the diverse character of their fandom, enjoying many artists but being steadfastly devoted to their favorites. This delicate interaction highlights music's importance in reflecting and creating cultural identities and personal ideals, as well as providing insights into the complex interplay of artistry, appreciation, and self-discovery.

*"I don't love anyone the way I love Beyoncé. I don't feel capable of doing half of what I do for Beyoncé, for anyone. It's never going to be the same and I try to make my personal relationships a little healthier but she has moulded the way I relate to people, she teaches me how to be with people and sometimes it's hard to show that same love to people." (P2)*

*"It changed my approach to these issues. I was always in my own corner, but it gave me a certain motivation to 'get out of bed' and not be a nobody. Even if I wasn't talking about a specific subject, Kendrick gave me that, that comfort, and I was able to be more for the world." (P4)*

### 3.2.INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION MEANS

In the "Interpersonal Communication Means" subcategory, the insights gathered from these responses illustrate music's complex significance as a universal language for facilitating social interaction and connection among music fans. Participants underlined that music not only helps to improve communication skills, but it also serves as a common foundation for starting talks and developing relationships. Shared music tastes foster camaraderie and deeper relationships among individuals, resulting in continued conversations and mutual understanding. Moreover, music's widespread appeal transcends cultural and social barriers, uniting individuals from diverse backgrounds and fostering a sense of community during gatherings and concerts. According to the participants, music acts as a potent conversation starter and icebreaker, allowing people to participate in meaningful discussions and build relationships in a variety of social circumstances. These findings highlight the importance of music as a primary

vehicle for interpersonal communication, allowing members of the music fandom community to interact, share experiences, and develop long-lasting ties.

*“Bro, it's everything. I think music is the most universal thing for communication. It's like... I don't see any other kind of communication form that manages to do social, cultural communication, to draw attention to problems the way you can with music.” (P4)*

*“It's a way that everyone can connect with. Music brings people together, in other words. Even if I went there for the first time without knowing the artist, without seeing anything, I know that the person next to me was going to push me to enjoy it as much as they do. So much so that when I couldn't imagine a band that I didn't like or didn't identify with the music, I know that the people around me would make me think twice about what I was seeing and pull me to love it.”(P5)*

### 3.3.SELF-AWARENESS

Within the "Self-awareness" area, responses highlight music's enormous impact on cultural awareness and personal development. Slow J's album "AfroFado" was mentioned as a perfect example of music's capacity to reflect cultural variety and pique interest in other ethnic origins. Furthermore, Beyoncé's music was also cited for its ability to elicit empathy and foster a shared cultural experience among listeners from many origins. Additionally, respondents described how music is a strong agent for personal and cultural transformation, shaping their identities and viewpoints. Albums and songs provide listeners with significant insights into many cultures and societal challenges, driving both social activism and personal improvement. Moreover, the interviewee emphasizes participation with K-pop as a way for fans to learn more about Korean culture, demonstrating the importance of music in creating cultural understanding and ties.

In conclusion, music emerges as a catalyst for self-awareness, allowing people to expand their knowledge and understanding of different cultures and societal challenges.

*"Slow J is the perfect example of this. You have the release of 'AfroFado', his latest album, which is a cultural album, it's a mix, Slow J is a mix of 2 genres that aren't even the most popular and out of nowhere you have the album receiving awards left and right*

*and you end up getting interested, learning, becoming more cultured so the music reflects a lot of culture!" (P1)*

*"These albums, these songs have informed me and many people about these realities and cultures. I probably wouldn't have the patience to read a thousand articles, to read a thousand documentaries, but listening to music has given me the interest and knowledge to have a different perspective on these issues. I think these things influence and put people who have never been in these environments to move, to speak out and to improve these situations in which they are not at all involved or informed. They become informed and motivated to act on it." (P4)*

### 3.4. PERCEPTION OF ARTIST INTEGRITY

When it comes to the idea of artist's integrity during crises, fans have varying opinions toward separating an artist's personal behavior from their art. Some fans argue for a clear demarcation, claiming that their relationship to the musician stems solely from the music, not the artist's personal life. Others use a conditional approach, shaped by the artist's values and behaviors. The complexities of this topic are clear, since some fans find it impossible to distinguish between the two when the artist's personal struggles

and viewpoints are thoroughly buried in their work. Those who admire the art but disagree with the artist's personal beliefs or conduct also acknowledge the need for separation. Selective separation is also mentioned, in which the importance of the artist to the fan determines the degree of separation. These diverse responses highlight the complex dynamics of fan loyalty and even obsession and parasocial interactions, stressing the necessity of understanding these perceptions in handling crises and retaining fan support in the music business.

*I don't separate because, like, imagine, there are artists that I separate and artists that I don't separate. It also depends a lot on the artists. If it's Larry June, I don't separate because I have him on a pedestal and I wouldn't support someone who did shit, but if it's Kanye West, who I enjoy listening to but I'm not crazy about him, I have to separate logically, otherwise I'm just being stupid and missing out on a musical genius." (P6)*

*"Clearly I separate them, I don't have much to say other than you like an artist for their art and not for who they are. Of course, eventually you feel a connection with the artist but deep down you don't know who they are, you know what their music is and that's it." (P1)*

### 3.5.ARTIST'S CONTROVERSY DEFENCE

In the framework of this thesis, fans demonstrate varied degrees of commitment and engagement in defending their favorite artists amid disputes, as evidenced by the subcategory "Artist's Controversy Defence." Some fans, such as the participant who mentioned Michael Jackson, fiercely defend the artist against public opinion, relying on judicial outcomes and opposing media narratives. They show indignation with perceived injustice and take satisfaction in standing up for the artist, while incurring criticism themselves. Others feel driven to defend artists because of personal connection and admiration, even if it involves confronting detractors and facing personal insults.

For example, some participants feel a personal need to protect their idols, viewing it as an extension of their dedication and affection. This defense frequently leads to passionate disputes with friends and family, in which supporters argue about preserving the artist's reputation and distinguishing between their personal activities and artistic achievements. Some fans, however, have difficulty with this defense when the artist's acts are indefensible or when confronted with unreasonable and obstinate opponents, showing the complexities and emotional strain of supporting an artist.

On the other hand, some fans prefer not to defend artists, either because there have been no controversies involving their favorite performers or

because they have a personal attitude against supporting problematic behavior. These diverse answers demonstrate the strong emotional commitment and personal values that drive fan behavior in crisis situations, emphasizing the complex dynamics of parasocial interactions and the defense of artist integrity within fan groups.

*“Yes, Michael Jackson. I remember everyone commenting that he was this or that and I would confront them with ‘based on what? On what the newspapers say? It’s the police and the courts who have to tell the truth’. I don’t like to see people I admire being misjudged by stupid and ignorant people, I get possessed and defend myself with what I have. I think I made people think, it was good.” (P1)*

*“I defended Kanye. I can say specifically about the fundamental issues of people attacking his art, his music, just because of his opinions and, in certain situations, even his opinions, which I agreed with and so I defended him against friends of mine if I had to. I felt proud, with attitude and afraid because I felt they were lumping everything he did in the same bag and I think that’s a big problem and at certain times you have to be aware. And I decided to speak out and I felt that it gave me arguments. So, I mean, they’re meddling in a person’s life, in a person’s personal life,*

*and just because he did wrong things, they're saying it's right that he shouldn't have access to his family. It's not." (P4)*

### 3.6. NEGATIVE ACTIONS REACTION

The thesis's subcategory "Negative Actions Reaction" investigates how fans react when their favorite artist does a heinous conduct. This subcategory explores the emotional and cognitive processes that fans go through when their appreciation is challenged by the artist's negative activities, such as acts of violence, hateful words, or admissions of inauthenticity. Fans endure a wide spectrum of emotions, from deep disappointment and betrayal to ambivalent allegiance. Some describe a sense of loss and defeat, unable to enjoy new releases and unable to separate their previous admiration from the artist's current behavior. For example, one respondent stated that they would feel "defeated" and avoid listening to new material, yet they might still engage with earlier works they previously liked. Fans frequently face an ethical dilemma when their principles clash with their emotional attachment to an artist. Some may continue to listen quietly but refrain from public support, particularly if the artist's actions, such as making a homophobic statement or domestic violence, are inconsistent with their identity or principles. These behaviors are in stark contrast to the artist's earlier positive statements, producing

significant friction and potentially forcing followers to disconnect partially or totally. Discovering an artist's inauthenticity, such as not living the situations they sing about or not creating their own music, can feel like a betrayal. This undermines confidence and makes ongoing support difficult.

*"Domestic Violence, maybe. But that's the thing, I'm not going to be a hypocrite either, am I? You never know if one day I'm going to hit a woman, but I'm assuming not. Because that's a fucked-up case, you never know 100% what happened for that to happen and it's common for people to push others to the limit. I'd be fucked because he (Eminem) taught me the opposite of that, and out of nowhere it would weigh heavily and cause a change. I'd go from something positive from my teenage years to something negative, and my regard for him would plummet. It was going to be difficult to continue listening to him, supporting him, with the same emotion, all of that. But I wouldn't stop listening 100%." (P3)*

*"If Seventeen really had something that I really hated and I looked at it and I was like, 'No, I don't want this in my life'. I wouldn't have this in my life. No matter how much admiration, how much loyalty I have to Seventeen, if it was really something I didn't identify with at all, I think I'd stop being Stan. Maybe I wouldn't even look for answers or things to justify the mistake." (P5)*

*“Imagine discovering that everything he said, he never lived it, he never wrote it, he didn't write his own music. That's how I felt betrayed. A lot of what connects me to him are principles, principles that I believe in and trust that I share with him, and out of the blue all that was a lie, I'd never be able to listen to him again.” (P4)*

### 3.7. REACTION TO CELEBRITY HEADLINES

The thesis context's subcategory "Reaction to Celebrity Headlines" investigates fans' emotional and behavioral reactions to favorable and negative news about their favorite celebrities. These replies indicate fans' emotional connections, moral bounds, and how these interactions shape their identity and behavior.

Many fans are filled with pride and delight when their favorite celebrities reach major milestones or get renowned prizes. For example, after Slow J's album smashed streaming records, one fan felt obligated to share on social media, comparing the experience to seeing a close friend triumph. Similarly, Beyoncé's historic Grammy performance inspired a fan with pride, emphasizing their emotional connection. Conversely, negative publicity frequently results in disillusionment and internal conflict. Allegations against

Puff Daddy, for example, left a fan feeling disillusioned and distant, making it difficult to enjoy his music following the controversy. The conflict between the artist's deeds and the fan's morals can be so intense that some fans withdraw their support completely. Some fans attempt to reconcile their admiration for the artist with their undesirable behavior. For example, a fan was offended by allegations against Beyoncé's clothing line but focused on her good business achievements, demonstrating a nuanced approach to navigating the challenges of celebrity worship and personal ethics.

In conclusion, "Reaction to Celebrity Headlines" investigates the diverse and deep emotional responses that followers have to celebrities' public acts. These sentiments range from pleasure and excitement to disappointment and despair, demonstrating the intricate and intensely personal nature of the fan-celebrity relationship.

*"I immediately get possessed when people talk badly about Beyoncé and it's like, it's touching my heart. Saying that she hired kids in China to make the collection she made with Ivy Park is just dumb, but there was controversy and I wasn't as possessed by the bad-mouthing as I was saddened that it's a shot they're taking at her. And if it's a good thing, I'll be in heaven. Imagine at the last Grammys they didn't even say her name, they just said 'We've just witnessed history.' And out of nowhere she stood up and that was it for me, that moment was legendary, she's the queen." (P2)*

*“The bad one is Puff Daddy. Like his recent rape and drugs scandal. That made me change my perception of him a bit, because I saw him as a good pure artist, untouchable, and after those controversies, I'm a bit shoked and I don't have the same view of him as I did before. I'm no longer as interested in him. In fact, I can't even listen to his music any more because his controversies are so serious that it turns me off. The good thing about Larry June was that he made a whole album with a great producer, The Alchemist, and for him, as an independent artist, it's a difficult thing and to reach that level is very good. I was very happy because it meant that not only here in Portugal, but also in other countries like Brazil, Angola, also started to get to know Larry June, and it was very good, proud.”(P6)*

### 3.8.MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The subsection "Media Influence on Public Perception" in this thesis investigates how the media, particularly social media, shapes public opinion about celebrities during crises or scandals. It investigates how media can either promote or detract from a celebrity's image, as well as the dynamics of these narratives among fans and the general public. Participants reported that they believe that social media has a huge impact on perceptions,

exposing both the positive and negative sides of celebrities' acts. For instance, Beyoncé's media representation frequently highlights controversial themes, overshadowing her important accomplishments. While positive news, such as a celebrity's 16 years of sobriety, helps to project a favorable image, negative news spreads quickly and has a greater impact due to the media's emphasis on controversies.

According to the participants, the level of engagement a celebrity has with social media influences its impact. Celebrities who rely extensively on social media feel the pressures more acutely, increasing both praise and condemnation. Media coverage can quickly shift from supportive to condemning, influencing public opinion. Fans' reactions to media narratives are important. Social media can escalate conflicts by allowing fans to attack or support celebrities, impacting public opinion. Because of the speed and breadth of social media, any news, particularly negative news, can have a far-reaching and long-lasting impact on a celebrity's reputation.

In summary, "Media Influence on Public Perception" examines the media's powerful and volatile role in affecting how celebrities are perceived during crises. The media's emphasis on criticism, the speed with which news spreads, and the scope of a celebrity's social media presence all have a substantial impact on public perception, reflecting the complex interplay between fans, celebrities, and media narratives.

*“Social media, of course, has its pros and cons, especially in the artistic world, so much so that you can see in a piece of news that he has fucked up, or you can see in a piece of news that he's done or achieved something good, obviously that's going to have a big influence on the artist. I think that also depends on the artist, it's how they deal with the situation and within those factors it can go well or badly. Of course, it's much easier to go wrong, but nobody wants that either.” (P1)*

*“The role is very strong. The role of social networks depends on the connection that artists have to social networks and that the fans of those artists have to social networks. The more you depend on networks, the heavier they can be for you.” (P4)*

### 3.9. EXPERIENCE AS A FAN LEADING TO STAN BEHAVIOR

In the context of this thesis, the subcategory "Experience as a Fan Leading to Stan Behavior" investigates fans' journeys from casual appreciation to obsessive dedication, focusing on the personal experiences and emotional ties that motivate individuals to become "stans" of a specific artist. This transformation frequently entails a stronger emotional attachment and

identification with the artist's work and persona, resulting in increased involvement and loyalty.

Fans' experiences reveal different aspects of this transition. One respondent noted how Slow J's album "You Are Forgiven" touched his heart during a terrible time in their life, confirming their respect for the artist. This emotional connection frequently strengthens as fans discover more about the artist, boosting their enthusiasm and making it difficult to perceive any defects in them. Another respondent expressed frustration with Beyoncé's absent reaction to fan requests when compared to Taylor Swift, demonstrating the high expectations and impatience that come with being a loyal fan. The level of dedication can also be seen physically, as evidenced by a participant who got many tattoos to honor his favorite artist, suggesting a meaningful and personal tribute.

In conclusion, the subcategory "Experience as a Fan Leading to Stan Behavior" explores into the personal and emotional journeys that convert fans into stans. It demonstrates the immense impact that an artist's work and presence can have on people, resulting in deep loyalty, personal identification, and a desire to go to considerable measures to support them. This investigation illustrates the complex and intensely personal character of the fan-artist relationship, emphasizing the critical role that emotional and experiential aspects play in this interaction.

*"It was when he dropped the You Are Forgiven album. I was going through a bad phase and I really identified. Then I started listening to Slow J a lot more. Being a fan is funny because if you ask me why? It's difficult to explain why, honestly, he's not even one of the people who appears in public to speak, he appears on one podcast or another, but you like him for some reason, so what I mean is the way he expresses himself. He has such a beautiful way of expressing himself, he says so much with so little. He doesn't need to use expensive words, he simply creates expressions that you might end up identifying with. Of course, I get all excited when I see him in public. I always like to know more about him and every time I know more about him, I like him even more, he doesn't even seem to have any faults. It's strange that I can't see any faults in him. It doesn't make sense because I don't even know him." (P1)*

*"It gets boring. Imagine Beyoncé, she's not like Taylor Swift. Taylor Swift plays with Taylor Swift fans. Taylor Swift's fans want videos. Taylor will make videos. Beyoncé fans want something. They wait and wait. Just Us. It's frustrating but that's how it is, I can't do anything about it, it's still everything to me." (P2)*

*"It's like an old school thing. I don't know, man, a unique thing. You know, being a Stan. I got a tattoo and it's like a tribute, it's the*

*tribute to Eminem. I made it for him, for being his stan and of course in Portugal it's hard to be a fan of anything from abroad but I am and I'm happy with it." (P3)*

### 3.10. EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

The thesis's subcategory "Emotional Connection" investigates how fans sustain emotional connections to superstars in the face of bad media representation or controversy. This subcategory delves into the complexities of these connections, emphasizing the tenacity and depth of fan loyalty in the face of negative information.

It also investigates how individual moments and songs strike a chord with listeners, leaving a lasting emotional imprint and a strong sense of connection, typically during difficult periods in their life. This group of participants showed a larger attachment to artists during times of negative emotions such as pain, grief, breakups, betrayals, and loneliness. This finding emphasizes the intense emotional connection that music may generate, particularly through its resonance with negative emotions, which are more easily diffused and understood by fans.

One Frank Ocean fan expressed how, despite a terrible Coachella performance, their emotional connection to his music remained strong. Similarly, a Beyoncé fan continued to support her despite the controversy

surrounding the presentation of a documentary in Israel, demonstrating a strong personal explanation for their loyalty. Another admirer sympathized with Kanye West's mental health issues, condemning the public's harsh reaction and feeling especially connected during his difficult times.

In essence, "Emotional Connection" emphasizes the strong links that fans have with celebrities and how easily connected to negative emotions they can become, which are based on personal identification, empathy, and a profound love for the artist's work and character, especially in the face of bad representations or scandals looking at the artist (brand) or a difficult period of the fans' life. This goes to show how obsessive fans find a way to keep loving the artist despite negative media portrayal.

*"Frank Ocean, he did a shit show last time he did Coachella. He didn't sing anything, but even so, I was watching it and finding it incredible. I think that's the best I've got for you. It was kind of a scandal and I was there listening to him anyway even though I didn't agree at all with his attitudes as if his music was more important than his actions, I guess it is. Because all he has to do is give us music or news and we're happy."(P1)*

*"Kendrick is difficult, because I don't see any negative moments about him, but we can take Kanye. I kept feeling connected when he was having these behaviors, because he's a person with mental*

*problems and everyone in society talks about paying more attention to mental problems and all that. And then, when a person who is known for having bipolar and head problems, says something out of the blue and everyone comes down on him, like they're stalking him or they're going to be creating a snowball effect on top of his problem, just because what he said was against what they thought. I really felt for him, especially when I saw fans turning their backs on him when they know Kanye's condition."(P4)*

*"I've known Sade since I was three. I'd never stopped to listen to her and my mother very recently started playing it at home. One day I came home from a break-up and this song was on. And it made me think about the lyrics I was listening to, which were about the end of a relationship, by the way. And that made me deepen a sadness for my feelings." (P6)*

### 3.11.INFLUENCE ON PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOR AS A FAN

The subsection "Influence on Perception and Behavior as a Fan" of this thesis investigates how a fan's one-sided interaction with a celebrity influences their perception of the artist as well as their own fan behavior. This

parasocial contact entails a strong, often emotional bond with the celebrity, despite the artist's lack of reciprocal knowledge. The replies show how followers reconcile appreciation with the reality of being one of millions.

Beyoncé's fan realizes that a deep, personal relationship may reveal information they would prefer not to know, such as strong religious beliefs. They value the fan-artist interaction, admiring from afar without digging into personal details. Fans of artists such as Kendrick Lamar value the indirect benefits, such as learning and being happy as a result of their work. They cherish the artist's influence in their lives while also acknowledging the limitations of this one-sided relationship. The "boyfriend concept" prominent in K-pop exemplifies how some fans blur the distinction between imagination and reality. They participate in fan calls and goods sales, acknowledging the superficiality of these relationships despite their intense emotional attachment. This interaction can occasionally lead to undesirable behaviors when fans place too much value on their relationship with the artist.

Despite these difficulties, fans frequently treasure the little encounters they have with their idols. In summary, the subcategory "Influence on Perception and Behavior as a Fan" investigates how fans manage their emotional investment in celebrities, striking a balance between admiration and recognition of their limited position in the artist's life. This dynamic molds their perception and behavior, resulting in a deep, albeit one-sided, connection that has a considerable impact on their identity and actions as fans.

*"In Korea they use the boyfriend concept a lot. There are fan calls they (SEVENTEEN) have with fans and they have a job which is: he's there for you like you're there for him and you often see fans flirting with them and them flirting back, some of the members enjoy it but others don't. When I see that, I don't know how can that be cool. I seek to create a relationship with them. You have that and you have the darker side which is the people who follow them everywhere, buy all their merch, have these calls with them and then think they're in a relationship with them and think they're bigger than others. I look for everything and even fantasize a bit, but I'm aware that I'm not dating any of them, unfortunately." (P5)*

*"I mean, both my perception of him and my behavior remain the same. I know he (Kendrick Lamar) doesn't know who I am and doesn't interact much with the public, but I'm sure he appreciates it. Of course, I don't expect him to know who his millions of fans are. He's indirectly giving me knowledge, happiness, ways of understanding my problems and that's more than enough because I believe in his words, I trust him and I defend him. You have to make that distinction and sometimes it's difficult, because he's someone who shares so much with me and you listen, but he doesn't listen to you." (P4)*

*"I live well, I'm perfectly aware of that. And I think the important thing here is that I feel good about supporting him, even though I know it. I know it's annoying to know that I'm invisible, but I also have reasoning and I know that he won't treat me like a king because I'm so supportive. I don't let it affect me the way it would in a relationship with someone closer, but it's the same feeling. If I die, that's it, people know I was an Eminem fan." (P3)*

## 4.RESULTS DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the interview results are compared to the literature previously analysed to contextualize and interpret the data gathered. The examination of the participants' statements lead to a better understanding of the consumer behavior in the music industry, dynamics of parasocial relationships and the media's influence on public perception. This discussion looks at the similarities and differences between fan experiences and previously established ideas, presenting a critical and integrative perspective on fan-celebrity relationships.

Through the data analysis it is possible to see that, in general, the participants have similar opinions, with a few exceptions. It is safe to assume, or generalize, that stans think alike. It is normal in specific situations for a stan (consumer) to act in a way that surprises others, because these behaviors depend on many external factors and can lead to different actions.

Putting that aside, a stan is not difficult to identify, but some participants, after explaining the meaning of the term, were somewhat reluctant to admit that they were. They assume that they almost are, not realizing that the behavior they show or exhibit is stan-worthy, therefore considering them as stans.

When asked the first question (Q1 - Describe your feelings for [artist]?), every participant articulated an intense connection to their favorite artist. They mentioned how the artist's music triggers strong emotions and serves as

a tool for self-discovery and personal development. This is in line with Schäfer et al. (2013) findings on the psychological functions of music. Music goes beyond mere entertainment, and both Schäfer's et al. (2013) and the findings obtained through the interviews support the idea that music has a significant psychological impact on people, with enormous potential for meaningful uses.

In the "Music Identity Expression" category of the interviews, participants consistently demonstrated that music is a powerful channel for emotions, communication, self-reflection, and mutual understanding. For countless individuals, music becomes an essential part of their identity. Previous research by M. Kim & Kim (2020) indicated that fans frequently seek to develop a relationship or connection with their favourite musicians, incorporating this connection into their own sense of self. The interviews verified this, demonstrating that the deeper the music resonates with fans, the more their desire to identify with and connect with the artist is. Fans typically accept being labeled as a Kendrick Lamar or Slow J stan if they receive a sense of reciprocation from the artist's music, interviews, or even brief interactions. According to J. Kim & Kang (2022), music is an important part of these fans' life since it helps them grow and develop personally. Music consumption allows fans to better understand themselves and others, emphasizing its significant role in identity formation and building a sense of belonging and community.

All participants declared that music plays or has played an important role in their life, consistent with Hesmondhalgh (2008) assertion. Somewhat contrary to Giles' (2000) claim that celebrity worship controls people's lives, the interview results indicate otherwise. Only a small fraction of people are considerably influenced in this way, whereas the majority have no problem with it. Fans, or "stans," are conscious of how much time and attention they devote to an artist and understand the necessity of keeping their own unique identity. This understanding allows individuals to avoid the traps of parasocial connections, preventing them from losing themselves in their appreciation for the artist.

One of the most important questions in relation to "Crisis," the second study area in the interviews, was Q7 (Do you separate the art from the artist?). This question examined the degree to which fans are prepared to overlook the behaviors of their favorite artists. Diverse opinions were voiced by participants on this issue. Some people think that regardless of an artist's personal life, respect should only be shown to their work. Others stress the significance of evaluating an artist's morality and actions and deciding not to support them if they go against their personal beliefs. There is a medium ground where some fans acknowledge that an artist's personal troubles can impact their art, but find it impossible to fully separate the two. They contend that appreciating art does not always entail agreeing with everything an artist says or does. Finally, some participants believe that an artist should be held accountable for their acts while also upholding certain principles.

Participants display differing, trust-based viewpoints on defending an artist. Some want to protect the artist's reputation, while others put justice for a loved one first. In the end, they defend their favorite artist from criticism, which is consistent with the findings of Wallin Andreassen (1994) and Giles (2000) about celebrity worship and loyalty. This kind of behavior is indicative of a dedicated "fan," and it is especially noticeable in times of crisis.

There is a larger chance of disappointment the more you love and trust. Love, like all great emotions, has a dark side. Participants were surprised and hesitant of how to think, act, or reply when asked Q13, "How would you react if your favorite artist suddenly did something you hate?" They had to reevaluate how much they loved and devoted themselves to the artist because they were afraid of having so much faith in them and then realizing it was all for nothing. This is consistent with the findings of Leets et al. (1995) which emphasizes the dangers of more accessibility to an artist. Because of this accessibility, fans are able to develop closer "relationships" with the artist, frequently without realizing how reliant on this relationship they have grown.

Participants acknowledged that media plays an important role in this category by making an artist (brand) more accessible to fans (consumers). This is consistent with the findings of Krause et al. (2018), who pointed out that media can influence a fan's opinion of an artist in a good or negative way. Despite the participants' claims that they did not let their admiration for the artist to take over their lives, it always does, at least partially. They incorporate the artist's universe into their everyday life by reflecting on, debating, and

engaging with it. According to Caldwell (1962), this conduct forms a crucial component of their consumer identity.

Regarding the last research category, "Parasocial Relationship," it is clear that the quantity and quality of these interactions have increased as a result of contemporary media platforms. Fans of certain musicians excessively follow and monitor their every move on social media, sometimes with unfavorable results such as obsession. This validates Dietz et al. (1991) and J. Kim & Song (2016) observations that address the risk of obsessing over a celebrity. These relationships are complicated because they are founded on one-sided love, the tenacity and loyalty a fan (or stan) feels for their artist in the absence of communication from them.

The artists' actions had a major impact on the participants, making it difficult for them to remain neutral. They felt intense positive or negative feelings and reacted according to that, implying that, to some extent, they let the artist's life control their own, as suggested by Caldwell (1962) and Giles (2000).

Participants shared K. A. Brown's et al. (2015) perspective that media use fosters sentiments of belonging. They believed that by sharing the same emotions and struggles, they might form a link with the artist, although one that may not be genuine. This phenomena is consistent with Horton & Richard Wohl (1956) concept of social exchange through music, in which shared experiences, empathy, loyalty, and trust combine to create the illusion of a relationship.

These parasocial relationships demonstrate the significant impact that music and artists can have on people, providing peace, understanding, and a sense of belonging in the midst of personal and societal challenges. Konijn & Jang (2017) investigated people's desire to connect with their favorite artists and be a part of their universe. In similar way, people frequently seek this connection to fill an empty space in them or validate their emotions, which coincides with the topics represented in the artist's music, developing a parasocial relationship. Finally, the intricate connection of love and pain creates these seemingly unreal interactions, necessitating that participants reach a certain level of awareness in order to grasp the nature of these ties.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the final chapter of this dissertation, the answers for the specific research objectives, specified at the start of the study, are answered. The contributions to both scientific knowledge and practical life are addressed. In addition, the limitations that influenced the research's conduct are discussed and specific recommendations for future studies that could deepen or expand on the findings reported here are provided.

### 5.1. RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Following an analysis and discussion of the research findings, this section provides answers to each of the four specific objectives. The fundamental goal of this thesis is to determine the underlying reasons why stans are stans. Four particular goals were defined to ensure a thorough and nuanced understanding. These objectives serve as focal points for investigating various elements of stan behavior, allowing for a deeper examination and a more comprehensive response to the core study question. Each objective is addressed in turn, with findings clarified in relation to current literature and theoretical frameworks, highlighting new insights while also verifying previous research.

In answering the thesis's first specific objective which was to investigate the underlying motivations that cause individuals to engage in stan behavior, focusing on the emotional and social factor reveals a complex web of emotional and sociological aspects underlying fan-celebrity relationships in the music industry. A comparative review of interview data and current literature reveals that fans' profound emotional connections to their favorite artists act as a trigger for their involvement. The findings are consistent with Schafer's views on the psychological functions of music, emphasizing its significant impact on self-discovery and personal development. Furthermore, the concept of music identity expression emerges as a prominent theme, demonstrating how fans incorporate their adoration for artists into their own sense of self, as observed by M. Kim & Kim (2020). This strong desire for connection and belonging emphasizes the necessity of reciprocity in fan engagement, as well as the complex interplay between emotional attachment and social approval.

The second specific objective of the thesis, an investigation into the psychological dynamics of one-sided fan-artist relationships, gives light on the complexity inherent in parasocial interactions in the music industry. A synthesis of interview findings and current literature reveals that these relationships are marked by tremendous emotional involvement and loyalty on the part of fans, often in the absence of equivalent communication from the artist. Participants' perspectives suggest that artists' behaviors have a tremendous impact on their emotional well-being, implying a level of

influence that goes beyond respect for their work. This study emphasizes the complex interaction between love and disappointment in these relationships, as well as the sensitivity that fans feel when their favorite artists behave in unexpected or unacceptable ways. This is consistent with the findings of Leets et al. (1995), who emphasize the hazards associated with increased access to artists via current media platforms. Furthermore, participants' recognition of the media's role in shaping opinions of artists emphasizes the necessity of understanding the larger sociocultural framework in which fan-artist connections emerge. Overall, the study of psychological dynamics provides vital insights into the complicated ways in which fans negotiate their connections with artists, offering light on the underlying motivations and emotional intricacies at play.

Addressing the thesis's third specific objective which is understand how supporters perceive and deal with asymmetry in these ties provides critical insights into the complex dynamics of these collaborations. A comparison of interview data to current research suggests that fans engage in a complicated interplay of emotions and behaviors in response to the inherent one-sided nature of parasocial interactions. Participants' observations suggest a number of coping strategies employed to balance the asymmetry, including rationalizing artists' actions, separating personal feelings, and fostering a sense of community among followers. Finally, supporters deal with asymmetry in fan-artist connections through approaches like reasoning and community building. They recognize the

one-sided nature of these relationships, but they manage their emotional investments by integrating the artist's influence into their personal identity and daily life. The media plays an important role in influencing these perspectives, revealing the complicated elements at play. Finally, fans show perseverance and adaptability in dealing with the inherent constraints of parasocial interactions, seeking meaning and purpose from their relationships with artists despite the lack of reciprocation.

Addressing the fourth specific objective, to examine the impact of crisis management on fan devotion and loyalty, indicates that stans, use a variety of methods of coping when their favorite artist is involved in a scandal. According to the interviews and literature comparison, fans frequently explain or try to justify the artist's behavior, detach their personal feelings from the artist's acts, and establish community relationships in order to overcome crises. This crisis management approach demonstrates fans' tenacity and adaptability, as they continue to support and forcefully identify with their favorite artists in the face of conflict with their values. Finally, good crisis management by fans strengthens their loyalty and devotion, demonstrating their commitment to maintaining the fan-artist relationship even during difficult circumstances.

## 5.2.SCIENTIFIC AND MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis, based on consumer behavior, contributes immensely to the literature related to the same topic, as it gives an in-depth perspective on how an obsessive consumer (stan, in the context of this thesis) behaves in relation to the brand for which he shows his feelings (artist, in the context of this thesis). The idea of understanding the direct and indirect influences on this behavior, understanding the psychological influences that lead this behavior to happen and to be maintained in the face of life's unexpected adversities. It's another step towards mastering consumer behavior in all possible contexts. The research done here introduces a new consumer behavior term called stan behavior (in the music industry), thus contributing to the existing science of consumer behavior and also to stan behavior in the music industry.

In terms of contributions to real life, this research elaborates on many themes that professionals in marketing and the music industry can benefit from, such as defining better marketing and loyalty strategies, given that they now know in depth what the behavior of an obsessive fan is like and how they act, or as a rule will act, in the face of any adversity or crisis.

With the study carried out in this thesis, it is recommended that marketing professionals, specifically CRM (Customer Relationship Management) and professionals in the music industry, adopt positions in the face of these behaviors and make the most of them. An opportunity for "healthy"

manipulation with the potential for very positive results, without forgetting that crises and scandals happen and that, as a rule, it is these same episodes that disappoint these consumers, so some concern with managing these problems and investment in the accessibility that brands can have with their consumers (social networks) is necessary to maintain this parasocial relationship between consumer and brand, respectively fan and artist, and the continued growth of the brand (artist).

### 5.3.LIMITATIONS

One of the study's key limitations is its small sample size. With only six participants, the results may not be representative of the larger population. The small number of respondents limits the data's generalizability and raises the possibility that the findings are impacted by individual anomalies or outliers rather than reflecting a true trend. A greater sample size would improve the study's reliability and validity, allowing for more strong statistical analysis and conclusive results.

Furthermore, the sample used in this study was excessively homogeneous, posing another serious problem. Homogeneity in the sample suggests that the participants had many comparable qualities, such as demographics, backgrounds and points of view. This lack of diversity can result in biased outcomes and restricts the ability to investigate how different variables may

influence the results. Diverse samples are critical for ensuring that the findings apply to a wider range of people and situations.

One significant restriction of this study is the lack of current literature or scientific research on the subject of stans. Stans, as a subgroup of fandom culture, are very understudied, consequently there are no established frameworks, theories, or prior findings to guide and contextualize this research. The scarcity of earlier work makes it impossible to compare results or expand on existing information, emphasizing the exploratory nature of this study. Future research could benefit from establishing a more extensive theoretical foundation and contributing to the emerging body of literature on stans.

## 5.4. FUTURE STUDIES RECOMMENDATION

For future studies, numerous exciting approaches can be pursued to better understand fan behavior and the dynamics of parasocial relationships:

One point of interest is the contrast between stans who have an intense, focused devotion to a single artist and generic stans who are deeply passionate about music in general but do not focus on a specific artist. Investigating these differences may reveal distinct patterns in emotional investment, identity formation, and crisis management techniques.

Another crucial consideration is the complexities of separating art from the artist. Future research could look into the psychological and behavioral effects of fans who try to maintain perfect separation from those who partially or cannot separate. This study could look into how partial separation affects fan involvement, consumption habits, and public sharing of the artist's work, particularly when the artist's activities clash with the fan's beliefs. By exploring these research topics, researchers can acquire a more thorough understanding of the complicated interactions between fans and artists, providing vital insights into the mechanisms that maintain or test audience loyalty and dedication in the face of controversy.

A significant recommendation for future research is to create a method to quantify how intensely someone identifies as a stan and loves an artist. This could be modeled after the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a metric widely used

in marketing to measure customer loyalty and satisfaction. A "Stan Score" could measure various dimensions of stan behavior, such as: Emotional Investment; Time and Engagement; Defensive Behavior; Impact on Identity and of course Willingness to Promote.

Future researchers should also look into the dynamics between stans and their favorite musicians being from the same country. This cultural connection may influence the strength and type of the fan-artist interaction. Understanding how similar cultural backgrounds influence fan actions and perceptions may provide further information about the significance of identity in fan loyalty and engagement.

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## APPENDIX

Good afternoon, thank you very much for taking the time to be interviewed. I'd like to talk with you about music, love, passion, loyalty, dedication and sacrifice. Would you allow me to record the audio of the interview? It will only be used for scientific and academic purposes.

- 1- Describe what you feel for (insert artist).
- 2- Can you tell me about your experience as a fan of [insert artist] and how you became a stan?
- 3- How do you think your experiences as a Stan have shaped your understanding of love, loyalty, and sacrifice in the broader context of relationships and community?
- 4- In what ways do you believe music serves as a medium for interpersonal communication and fostering social bonds? Have you experienced this personally?
- 5- How do you think music reflects cultural identities and shared experiences within society?
- 6- Can you describe a time when you felt a strong emotional connection to an artist or celebrity? What made you feel that way?
- 7- Do you separate the art from the artist? Elaborate.
- 8- Can you describe any instances where you felt emotionally connected to an artist despite negative media portrayal or controversy surrounding them?

- 9- What role do you believe the media plays in shaping public perception of celebrities during times of crisis or scandal?
- 10-How do you think your parasocial (one-sided) relationship with [insert artist] influences your perception of them and your behavior as a fan?
- 11-Have you ever defended or supported an artist during a public scandal or controversy? Why or why not? And how did you feel doing that?
- 12-Can you recall a time when a celebrity's actions or behavior made headlines and caught your attention? How did you react to that situation?
- 13-How would you react if your favorite artist all of a sudden did something you hate?

